

Rewriting the Ihme-Zentrum: Exploring Fiction Writing as a Method of Knowledge Creation in Architecture

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This thesis explores fiction writing as a method of knowledge creation in architecture through research situated at the Ihme-Zentrum, a post-war megastructure in Hannover, Germany.

It combines experimental fieldwork (documented in a Research Diary during a two-week research stay) with critical contemplation.

The result is an experimental narrative with two voices: the Research Diary and the “meta-voice”. The former leads through the thesis chronologically and blends genres such as letters, poetry, reports, and stories, while the latter contextualizes findings through theories of ontological design, performativity, and agential realism.

Those two voices are interwoven throughout the thesis and interrogate how fiction writing can reframe architectural epistemology, critique dominant practices, and speculate on alternative futures and ontologies.

At one point, a speculative story set in the Ihme-Zentrum interrupts this flow to show another facet of fiction writing: The story reimagines the Ihme-Zentrum in a potential future scenario with a focus on people, and tells a tale of a flood-resilient community rooted in care, interdependence, and non-human alliances. The story further demonstrates fiction’s capacity to transcend material and economic constraints and to imagine an otherwise.

Key findings of this thesis encompass fiction’s potential in fostering empathy with non-human actors (e.g., the building itself), critiquing neo-liberal urban development, and unearthing marginalized narratives.

Challenges of fiction writing as a method include the sidelining of social and material realities, subjective bias, a centering of authority on one person, the risks of anthropomorphism, and the method’s limited transferability. On the other hand, fiction writing shows as a transformative practice: as a tool for architects to engage with sites reflexively, prioritizing sensory experience and speculative world making over technical pragmatism.

In summary, the thesis advocates for integrating fiction writing into architectural practice and education to challenge disciplinary norms, envision regenerative futures, re-shape worldviews, and recenter care, imagination, and communal agency in spatial production.

This thesis aims to broaden the realm of knowledge creation in architecture while also playing with forms of knowledge creation in academia and thesis standards, all done in an open and experimental way.

Keywords: architecture; epistemology; fiction writing; Ihme-Zentrum Hannover; empathy; ontological design; critique; speculative futures