THE OBJECT AND CONTEXT OF DESIGN BOTH MAY BE DETERMINED OR VARIABLE

You can distinguish 4 types of design-related study.[a] The English distinction between 'research' and more ecompassing 'study' makes sense. If the object is already designed, and thus known in detail, then you speak of 'research'. If the object is still variable, then it is 'study' (the columns in *Fig. 2*). There are two variants of both (the rows in *Fig. 2*).

The physical, technical, economic, cultural and administrative **context**[b] can be determined ('known'), or still variable also. If the object and the context are known, then you may speak of 'design *research*', a kind of (art) history.

		OBJECT	
		Determined	*Variable*
CONTEXT	*Determined*	Design research	Design study
	Variable	Typological research	Study by design

Fig. 2 Types of design related study

If it, however, concerns known objects in *different* contexts, then it is more professional 'typological *research*'.

Both are characterized by an empirical method, but this method is inadequate if the object is still variable. In an ordinary design assignment the *context* is known, but the *object* varies in the head of the designer ('design *study*').

However, important inventions have also been made in which even the context of the variable object was not yet determined. The inventor had no idea in which context his object could ever be used ('*study* by design').[c] I have in mind the electrical experiments of the 18th century. Nobody had a valid idea of the object 'electricity' and of the countless contexts in which it would prove its use in the centuries thereafter.

DESIGN CRASHES IN EMPIRICISM

My doubt goes beyond a design training that crashes in empiricism[d]. Design study requires an imagination that goes beyond the mass of circulating ready-made images via various media. Such representations do not train your own imagination. They discourage it.

Our representations have already been uniformed by the linear language in which we communicate and generalize, the logic by which we are convinced, the cliched learned prejudices and collective errors that we do not know because everyone has them. There are many learned and forced assumptions that we are not aware of. They can, as seemingly self-evident paradigms, imprison and stifle our imagination for a long time. They then stand in the way of developing design and science.

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a Jong, Voordt eds (2002)Ways to study and research urban, architectural and technical design (Delft) DUP Science p20
b 'Context' refers in principle to a textual environment, but this concept will be used in a more general sense of 'environment'.
c Hintikka(1985)Logic of discovery and logic of discourse(New York)Plenum Press is about answering a question, solving a problem and not about making a design.
d Winy Maas outlines the limitation of the Delft architectural education as "... coming up with solutions to problems …". Hannema (2017) Land van Maas (Volkskrant) 1014