REFLECTION

8

ON RESULTS & OUTCOMES

How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?

The increasing effects of commodifying urban structures results in the appearance of smooth environments, both in the way they look as well as in the way they function. This thesis triangulated smoothness as the imposing of norms within a framework that drives around the accumulation, protection, or representation of capital. This process results in exclusive urban environments that serve only those who fit into the dominant norm or have the power and commodities to contribute to the general understanding of norms, and in which otherness is removed or kept out of the public view. This in turn affects important democratic processes, for spaces for 'commononing', negotiating, and conflict in the public realm are diminished or erased, and different user groups of the city are isolated and fragmented.

Although processes of smoothening are not a new phenomenon, the explorative nature of this research thesis contributes to the spatial understanding of the manifestation and its socio-spatial consequences of smoothness in order to unlock (spatial) solutions towards a more inclusive and Just city. The spatial understanding and conditionalities of the urban fabric therefore served as the backbone for moving towards this final aim.

A link was found between theoretical claims and real-life evidence. Coming from theory, a complete 'smooth' environment was expected in the case-study area (Fig. 137). Extensive fieldwork, however, revealed how the imposing of norms was different and more complex layered than initially anticipated. In line with theoretical assumptions, smoothness indeed was linked with high-quality materiality, program and user groups. However, by just viewing smoothness as one particular spatial entity that is a result of capitalist structures, important layers are overlooked that comprise the understanding of a neighbourhood and their social networks. Solutions towards Just cities therefore can not be found in the counter-smooth, or by simply viewing the urban as a dichotomy of smooth or non-smooth.

This research demonstrated how the built environment rather is built up from a sequence of territories that make up our understanding of the spatial context through which we move and make up our lives. The design of the urban directly influences the way we behave, feel and act in a certain place, for it informs us of the local urban script: unwritten rules that prescribe what you can or cannot do in a certain place (Boer, 2023). A rich transition from the private realms to the public realms in addition contributes to changing spatial conditions that help in the important communication of local territories. Referred to as urban depths, these different conditions allow a variety of activities to take place for a variety of user groups. It is exactly in the rich transition from public to private where otherness or informality can be shaped, and form the physical arena in which local communities are comprised (Clossick, 2017). Smoothening processes demonstrated how an unequal distribution of opportunities to make a spatial claim developed, resulting in extreme social fragmentation, isolation, and the transformation of public streets into exclusive entities. The fixed design of 'what is allowed and tolerated to happen and in what way' also eliminates important alternative understandings of urban space. The combination of the two results demonstrates that smoothness is not a fixed entity, but rather a process of flattening out local depth-structures in order to impose a more harsh transition that excludes imaginary or spontaneous alternatives.

To move from this closed system, this thesis looked at ways to enrich local depth-structures, so that informality and the opportunity for a variety of norms to publicly
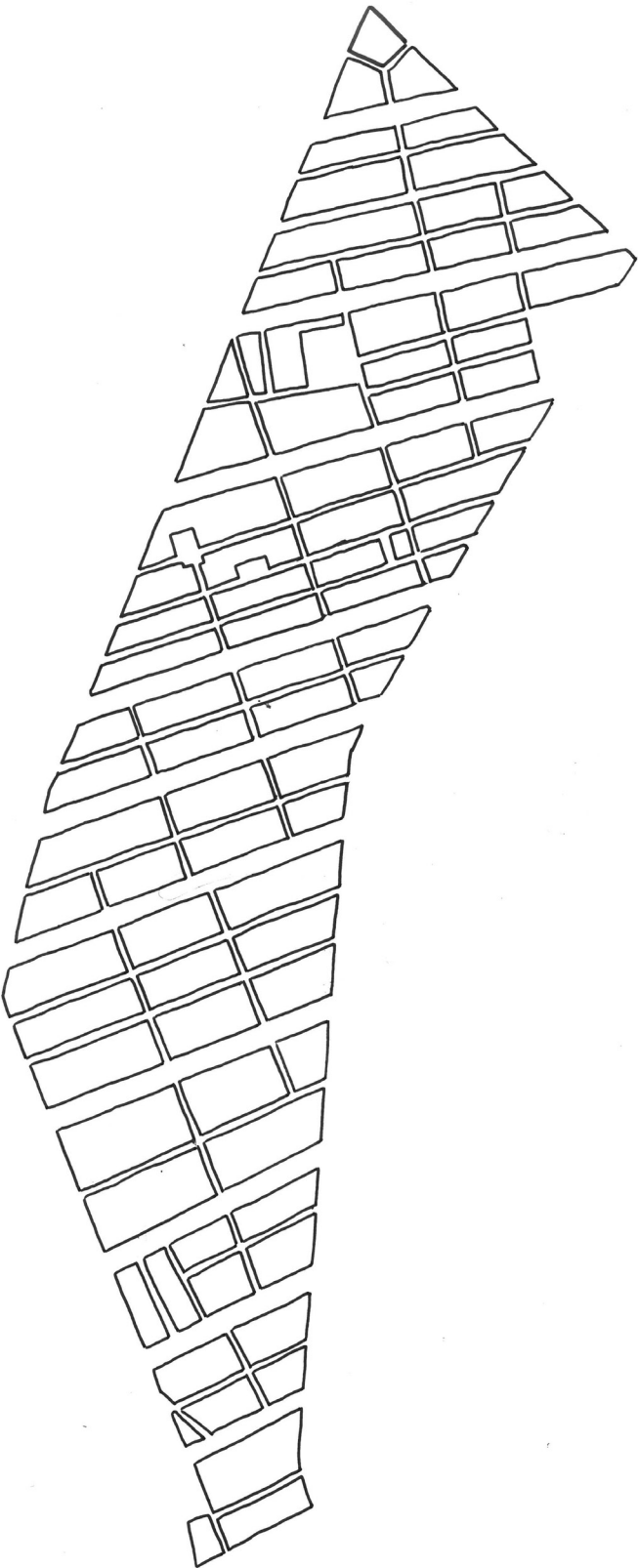
Fig. 147: Expected depth-structure
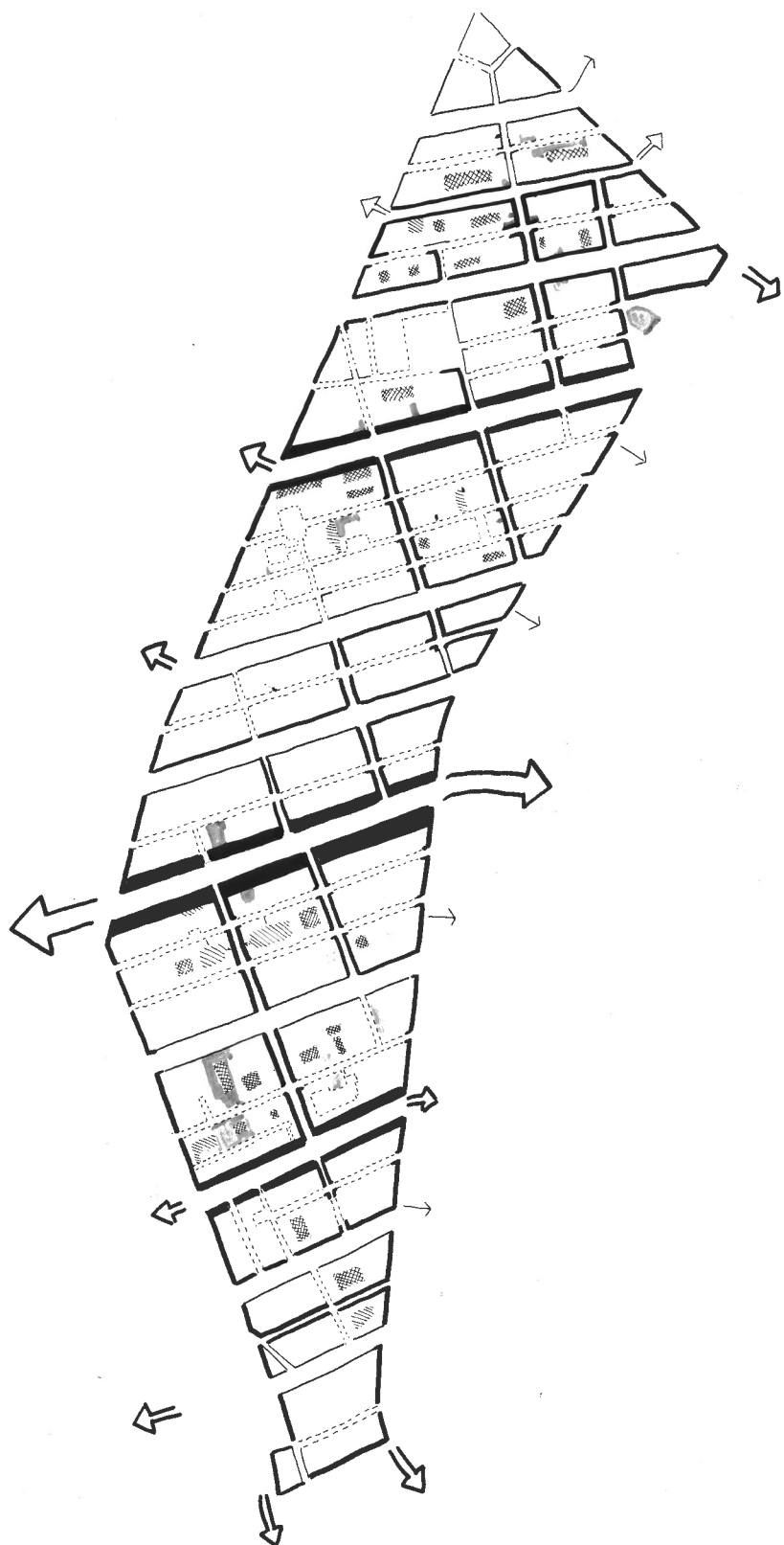detail level 1:5000

| N

☐ edge smooth street

Fig. 148: Existing depth-structure
detail level 1:5000

make a spatial claim persist. Extensive observation, ethnographic mapping, morphological analysis, data-analysis (program, usergroups, Space Syntax) and spatial analysis formed the main source of information for generating an updated understanding of local depth-structures in the area (Fig. x). However, since otherness is often removed from the public eye, a more thorough understanding of depth-structures needs a in-depth insider-analysis. This research is limited to only few interviews and conversations with human subjects on the street, as well as time- and place-bound related observations. Conclusions from insider-perspectives in this research are therefore limited and do not cover a reasonable understanding of the exact needs and depths of local social networks.

More discussions about local social structures may reveal additional information. This could be obtained through local (design) workshops, additional conversations with local residents, interviews with people who are influential in local social networks, and actively participating/organizing in public events.

The conclusions drawn from urban depth analysis aided in abstracting design principles that contribute to the richness of depth structures through scales. The spatial adaptation framework is then applied to determine where the spatial transformations can occur, which is site- and context-specific, and determined by the existing opportunities and needs of the location. This leads to a new proposal for urban depth structures in the neighbourhood (Fig. 138), which promotes more private, in-depth activities and appropriations. Careful attention is paid to the transition between territories, through scales, for this strongly influences the perception of the local urban script and determines our ability and opportunity to actually express a norm or make a spatial claim.

By incorporating richness into contemporary depth-structures in the Jordaan, this study discovered new territories that can provide the spatial framework required for otherness to occur while actively participating in public life alongside other norms. This allows for different perspectives on the urban, as informality is encouraged and reflected upon. In modern urban development strategies, a final design output is typically provided that spatially imposes norms: 'we determine what is allowed to happen in this place, in what way, and by whom'. By setting a rich variety of territories ranging from public to private, this form of imposement is as much removed as possible, for it allows individual and bottom-up interpretations and usages of the urban environment. This may imply that a particular street is occasionally underutilised or overutilized, but this thesis emphasises that it is precisely this breathing mechanism over time that allows us to understand and critically reflect on modes of commoning, which frequently reflect larger societal concerns.

For this reason, urban time is important, because it takes time for people to feel comfortable enough to adapt, and different needs and uses of urban spaces change over time. The urban framework should support such changes and allow for various interpretations and negotiations over time. Strategic points of reflection could be embedded to determine whether the designed territory actually supports local structures, as well as what a place's local needs are at any given time.

Furthermore, many of the successful safe spaces were the result of local residents taking ownership of the area. Further research could focus on understanding ownership in the urban realm, as well as how urban depth can resonate and foster different levels of ownership.

An additional urban timeline can furthermore can help in reviewing and updating understandings of territories. Reflection moments, captured in public events, can

help open up conversations with local residents of different norms that contribute to an updated understanding and spatial output of a specific street or part of a neighborhood. Design workshops in addition can help in bettering the urban conditions that are needed for otherness to happen. This in turn might result in a revised legal- and financial support. Additional stakeholder analysis could also serve as a catalyst for enacting the changes required to reshape local territorial conditions, as well as assisting in determining who is preventing informality and otherness from occurring.

KEY-TAKEAWAYS
How can the project findings inform the disciplines of urban design?

When focusing on a different urban area, a few key conclusions emerge that can aid in determining how future urban developments can be shaped to produce more just and inclusive outcomes.

First, it is critical to recognise how the urban requires a sequence of territories, as this contributes to the richness of activities at the scales required for local individuals to equally make a spatial claim and shape the urban, and thus society at large.
The streetscape is an interesting starting point for this because it is the first and most visible public entity in any city and is used by everyone in an urban setting. By distinguishing a rich variety of publicness and privateness through streets, different roles of streets can be assigned that support local social networks and their activities by offering the spatial conditions for individual appropriation and interaction. This research indicated the importance of well-designed streets that fit to their level of publicness, and how they can either support or break apart social structures of the neighbourhood. By emphasising various street types, levels of publicness, and how they can function, a more mixed, well-used, and diverse streetscape can emerge, influencing public life and allowing a diverse range of users to express themselves in the public realm. This is crucial, for it helps us understand, confront, and update existing power structures for a variety of norms need to negotiate over space.

An in-depth understanding of the local context is required to determine which street should serve whom, in what way, and with what type of programme or level of publicity in an existing context. In here, specific attention must be paid to what gets designed space and what is actively kept out of public view, informing designers and policy makers on the dominant or imposed norm and the ability to support the counter-narrative that lies beyond their frame of reference.

In the current context, analysis of local depth-structures is critical for this reason, as they provide the primary source of information for later determining strategic design transformations that eventually lead to a more diverse and inclusive public (street) network. To accomplish this, two major components are required: 1) information gathered from observations, ethnographic mapping, fieldwork, socio-spatial analysis, morphological analysis, programme analysis, and historical analysis, and 2) information retrieved from insider perspectives. In here, a very explicit understanding of spatial design and its opportunity to enrich depth-structures are the key-component in unlocking opportunities for otherness to take place. This can be accomplished through conversations, interviews, public events, or key figures who play an important role in local social networks. This research showed the value of photographs (and more particularly: photography from an insider) as well as mapping. Furthermore, documentaries can assist in framing various urban settings

and their distinct atmospheres. The small-films in addition could function as a mediator in conversations between the designer, policy-makers and local residents, for depths become easier to discuss. Reflections and suggestions to films, photos and maps in addition work as a catalyst tool between different stakeholders in both understanding a site as well as working towards a new output.

The sequence of territories in new urban development projects can be implemented from the beginning of the design process. In this section, reference cases with similar contexts can be examined in order to implement existing design outcomes that have proven to be effective. Additional design implementations can be considered that thrive in urban environments and support commoning and negotiation processes. For this reason, observation can be a valuable source of information, as it reveals behavioural tendencies that do not always have the necessary spatial conditions to be expressed properly. Street typologies require special attention, as distinguishing between them aids in a better understanding of depth structures in the neighbourhood and prevents misinterpretations of local territories.
Public debates among various user groups about the role of the city, the meaning of neighbourhoods, and the needs of public space contribute to a better understanding of what the urban environment should support. Additional design competitions and experiments could provide the necessary testing grounds to determine how spatial perspectives can support these needs. Constant feedback loops should remain an important component of policy timelines because they aid in reviewing and updating existing knowledge on depth structures. When an urban structure is porous, informal interpretation and re-structuring can occur, resulting in an important source of information on socio-spatial needs and opportunities.

Finally, this thesis emphasises the emergence of smoothening as an unjust process that remains within ideological concepts that prioritise economic sustainability and profit over democratic and inclusive values. In reaching more Just urban environments, core beliefs on the role of the city and its importance for society at large need to be critically reflected upon and integrated in spatial design strategies. While a richness in depths and territorial conditions allows for a more diverse and inclusive environment, the process of achieving a more democratic urban environment is far more complex and starts with the more philosophical question:

what is the role of urban space, and who has the right to it?

This also resonates with a critical review on the opportunities for a variety of norms to live and appropriate the urban. This study emphasised the distinction between those living in social housing and the urban wealthy. A significant gap remains between the two, acting as a polarising force that prevents interaction and results in an unequal distribution of opportunities to stake a spatial claim. A more diverse city starts with the opportunity for a more mixed group of people to live in a place and take ownership of it. This means attracting and providing the space for the middle class to live in the city and start making it their own as well.

ON ACADEMIC AND SOCIETAL RELEVANCE

COURSE RELEVANCE

What is the relation between your graduation project topic, the studio topic, your master track (A/U/BT, LA, MBE), and the master programme (MSc AUBS)?

This project interacts with different scales, through literature as well as through social-spatial analysis. By incorporating important spatial elements within the urban realm, this thesis incorporated connections between architectural form and social processes. For this reason, urban fabrics was a logical studio selection from the start, for it focusses largely on social-spatial analysis. In here, rather than only coming from theory, this studio approach helps in getting important informational input from the physical, contemporary context. Because of this, a more legitimate understanding of existing issues in the urban can be detected and responded upon. At the same time does a more thorough theoretical body give the in-depth understanding of the processes that become evident in the physical urban realm and help envision alternative, but realistic, design outcomes.

This project specifically focusses on elements to Open Up a city, counterbalancing the existing closed-systems that characterise Smooth environments. By specifically looking into urban depth theories, this thesis revolves around the understanding and adaptation of territorial settings that offer the change in spatial conditions necessary to make an urban claim. Because of this focus, this project perfectly fits within this years' theme of the Urban Fabrics studio: porosities.
At the same time, an interscalar approach gives relevant insights that help in looking for possible spatial transformation that can unlock spatial justice. In addition, the phenomenon of Smooth Cities as described is an urban phenomenon, but becomes relevant to the scale of the body for this is where the urban is lived and perceived. For this reason, a link is also made to architectural scales. The tracks of both architecture and urbanism can, however still evident, be impossibly seen as two separate entities for they strongly interrelate with each other. This also becomes clear from this thesis, that shows how information from both disciplines overlap and (re)inform each other. This works improving and leads to a better understanding and design solutions.

The distinct focus on aspects of the urban (both in its social processes and its form as well as the interrelation between the two) clearly defines this project within the boundaries of the master programme MSc AUBS. At the same time, this project recognizes the fact that the urban is built up from multidisciplinary elements, such as economical, sociological and ecological. Including aspects of these in the research help in getting a more broad understanding. However, a distinct urban design proposal, focussing on spatial transformations in the urban fabric, confine the project into the limits of the master track.

SOCIETAL RELEVANCE

How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?

In the increasing commodification of cities, the likelihood of smooth environments appearing is high. As a result, opportunities to (re)shape the urban are unequally distributed. At the same time, important spaces that allow for informalities are erased, and important spatial elements describing the spatial script overlooked. This leads to both static and expected appropriation of public spaces, as well as conflicts with the various needs of a public space. In addition, any space for 'the other' is removed.
Important frictions are eliminated from the public sphere in a static urban environment where the norm is imposed and controlled. As a result, uncomfortable and confrontational positions that expose existing power structures no longer occur. This inevitably leads to an increase in social injustice in society as a whole, as well as the prevention of democratic processes.

This thesis explored ways to understand how existing closed systems can be opened up through spatial design interventions, that eventueally lead to more Just environments. This is relevant, for our physical urban environment plays a crucial role in the complex processes of city-making. When this can be done in a Just environment, meaning with a Just distribution of opportunities, the protection of individual norms as well as a Just distribution of burdens and benefits, this would positively influence important democratic processes that shape the opportunity to explore ourselves, be confronted with otherness and shape society at large.

ON RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

ON ETHICS

One of the project's many goals is to realise and systemize knowledge and experience at the community level, so it is critical to maintain the authenticity of their voice and avoid distorting it in order to achieve other goals. This study recognises the vulnerability of marginalised groups in society, who frequently find themselves on the wrong side of the spectrum. Feelings of shame also contribute to withdrawel patterns, making it difficult to properly include their perspectives. As a result, the security of their inputs is critical. This research did its best to achieve this by maintaining anonymity and properly storing collected data. Consent forms also aided in the development of a transparent agreement in which one party could withdraw from the research at any time.

Theories of justice of difference emphasise the importance of recognising existing differences between usergroups, because only just outcomes can be achieved when some groups are treated differently, giving them a better chance of achieving fair outcomes. This means that special attention is given to the marginalised, as they frequently lack the power or commodities to resonate with the urban realm in the same way that the dominantly successful do.

The act of mapping is furthermore a projection of power-knowledge (Corner, 1999). Therefore, one should be aware of the cautions that the projection of depth-structures entails, as well as carefully consider one's own role in this process of doing so. Mapping can be destructive in the sense that it ignores or overlooks important insider perspectives, but it also provides an intriguing opportunity to discover new knowledge and work towards new solutions that may not yet exist in the urban environment. 'As a creative practice, mapping precipitates its most productive effects through a finding that is also a founding; its agency lies in neither repro duction nor imposition but rather in uncovering realities previously unseen or unimagined, even across seemingly exhausted grounds' (Corner, 1999: 1). The process of mapping thus has the potential to remake, rethink, and reshape existing territories. Not every map accomplishes this. 'Make a map, not a tracing,' say philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in Corner (1999), referring to the process of only mapping what is already known rather than revealing anything new. In this case, actively involving local residents throughout the mapping process can reveal new understandings of the area, providing critical knowledge on depth-structures and potential enrichment. Known as counter-mapping, this becomes a political tool 'to understand struggles, conflicts, identities and sense of place in different territories' (Hernández, 2023). The knowledge translated into the maps coming from insider-perspectives in addition exposes their local territorial understandings while communicating their needs and understandings of the territories. Switching mediums can help enrich information translated onto maps, for it offers different ways to communicate the understandings and needs of a palace.

SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

This study fills a significant knowledge gap by attempting to understand how to move from a smooth urban condition to a Just one. This research goes beyond what others have done by incorporating design as an important final product: it puts ideas about the Open City into practice.

Recent reflections on the book 'Smooth City' by various urban designers usually end with the question: 'but how do we reach this?", such as the reflection that was opened up by the Urbanistas on Archined.nl (2023). This highlights the need for a perspective and spatial solutions based on urban design. This research in addition links to existing theories on public streets (BRON BIRGIT), urban depths (BRON CLOSSICK), territories (BRON HABRAKEN) and (imposed) norms (BRON NEWTON). The outcome, however, is translated as a site-specific design strategy that showcased how alternatives can be reached that lead to more Just and inclusive environments, which is not yet been explored in such detail. This helps in opening up important discussions among urban planners, designers, academics and in politics in determining 'what should a city be and how should it look?'.

RESEARCH BY DESIGN

What is the relation between research and design in your graduation project?

Moving on from a theoretical phenomenon, urban design was chosen as the starting point to investigate how a more inclusive and just outcome can be achieved in contemporary urban contexts that are the result of commodifying processes. Understanding the design of the local fabric was thus a critical component of the entire project, as it served as the foundation for understanding the relationship between human patterns, social networks, and the role of our physical environment. The extensive analysis of design proposals and design outcomes assisted in formulating critical transformations that are required in specific depths or transition zones to aid in the communication of local scripts. The thorough understanding of design also contributed to the ability to enrich local depth-structures, which served as the foundation for otherness to occur.

Design iterations helped to raise new questions, which necessitated additional research. This is relevant when considering future urban developments ('How do we want to live, why, and how can design support this?'). During the design process, new alternatives that support a common goal can be considered. As a result, design has served not only as a final goal or end product, but also as an important means of repositioning, assisting in the framing of the research questions needed to answer the problem statement. This in addition helped in revealing new opportunities, urgencies and made the solutions more specific.

ON METHODOLOGY

How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)?
What additional methods can be of use in a different urban context in the process of understanding and mapping depth-structures?

In order to reach the main objective of this thesis, a thorough investigation on processes of smoothening remained central. This started by raising the question 'what is smooth'. The theoretical framework helped in understanding the conditionalities under which smoothness was contextualised, which is an important first step for

this might change over time as well as through both cultural- and geographical differences.

The understanding of smoothness as the imposing of norms helped in understanding who and what is valued and who and what is not. This becomes quite clear from the urban fabric by particularly looking for what gets designed space, and what is actively removed from (public) view. Morphological design choices, materiality, social traces, activity, usergroups (or lack of) and program contribute significantly in understanding what the norm is and what any form of otherness is. Historical analysis in comparison with contemporary structures in addition helps in understanding shifting norms, and the process of removing or opressing particular norms.

By viewing the urban environment as a sequence of territories, the appearance of a variety of norms becomes evident. This research particularly emphasized how the dominant norm was associated with public realms of the city, whereas forms of otherness were associated with private realms. The process of formulating, grasping and mapping the different depths concentrated around fieldtrips. Extensive observation, ethnographic mapping in combination with photography and Space Syntax analysis revealed a more public understanding of the sequence between public and private in the Jordaan. In order to graph the private depths, insider perspectives are crucial. This research made use of interviews, conversations with human subjects on the streets as well as the active interaction of local residents and letting them map out important elements in their neighbourhood. By giving away a camera to people living in the area, a more personal portrayal of the neighbourhood is conveyed that helps in understanding both the meaning of the area for its citizens as well as links social structures to spatial elements. This research so far only ended up with one final outcome, which does not resonate with a better general understanding of the space, but did reveil interesting insights that would not have come up from observation and conversation strategies. A more quantitative approach, but from an insider perspective like this, could help in better portraying the meaning of specific spaces for social networks. Overlaps in specific spaces in the neighbourhood in addition could serve as an important source of information that can be spatially analysed to understand what the spatial conditions are that contribute to an overall value of the space.

Photography as well as small films in addition can work as a catalyst for local conversations, that open up different aspects of the neighbourhood or help in comforting human subjects to speak about the area, for it is easier to understand and grasp than the (formal) distance of a map.

Other ways to abstract insider-information is through the organizing or attending of local public events that attract a variety of norms, to help open up conversations about the area.

Finally, design principles were extracted from conclusions on existing depth-structures that formed the main source for determining where what particular spatial transformations can take place. The proposed plan therefore is a response to an existing context. However, as discussed, sometimes particular depths might be uncovered, social traces and networks lacking or overlooked or particular behavioral tendencies might not be expressed while evident. For this reason, the urban should mostly function as a porous system that allows different interpretations of the urban, to also allow appropriations and usages that the designer might not think about at all. This research focussed on the enriching on depths to reach this, but alternatives might be found in the organizing of public events that provoke processes of commoning

and negotiation. Design experiments (partially closing off a street, adding specific urban furniture, contributing new infrastructure) can furthermore work as a test-ground that facilitates other understandings and means of the urban. Reflection moments, discussion groups, less legal objection as well as open communication with local residents furthermore inform an updated understanding of how the urban could function. This can be enriched with design challenges and interdisciplinair discussions on the role of a (particular) urban area.

An additional stakeholder analysis could help to identify opportunities for location-specific and targeted design interventions. It would furthermore highlight existing power relationships (who has power over what type of space), assisting in determining who and where to contact in order to change the power and space dynamic.

Finally, many spatial interventions take place in public spaces, but they are made possible by bottom-up strategies. Subsidies, creating 'space' for the other, and providing the necessary infrastructure to support informalities are all linked to the existence or absence of legal boundaries. An in-depth review of legal documents could serve as a catalyst, allowing for interesting opportunities to arise by utilising or tweaking rules governing what is permitted to occur in the public realm. Since the research is currently limited to only the spatial manifestation, a successful outcome might be blocked due to a lack of legal support.

ON PROCESS
How does one deal with uncertainty, which is a significant factor in the professional field of urbanism and a key component of the overall graduation trajectory?

An important method that helped cope with stress and uncertainty during the graduation process was with the 'from don't know to workflow' method, as as described in the New Urban Design Guide (van der Veen, Sand: 2022, unpublished). Here, they describe how to structure an iterative process such as the design- or graduation process (FIG X). A constant iterative loop is established by clearly defining a workflow that includes moments of convergence and divergence. Methods and exercises can be established during the process to achieve a better focus and a stronger, more direct path to the final (design)outcome. Using this method, you can allow for iteration and reflection in a structured manner, thus controlling the process and minimising room for surprises or stress.

In addition, switching between several methods of working helped in gaining a better understanding of the problemfield from various angles, while activating different parts of my brain, which in turn worked as a catalyst for thinking processes. The Dual Coding Theory, which holds that our memory has two distinct processing systems: verbal and nonverbal, describes this process. Learning occurs faster and improves when both systems are used consistently and coherently in relation to each other (Pavio, 1969).

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