

m

Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences



Graduation Plan: Architecture Track

Personal information	
Name	Hanna Adamczyk
Student number	5753155

Studio		
Name / Theme	Urban Architecture Studio / Last Green in Town	
Main mentor	Elsbeth Ronner	Design, Architecture
Second mentor	Jos Lafeber	Building Technology
Third mentor	Leeke Reinders	Research, Anthropology
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>As an architecture student with professional experience, I started to question the role of architects today, noticing the tendency of working in a closed group of one profession, often destroying the environment and in a self-centered way forgetting about other actors. As a culmination of my education, I want to look for other ways of creating architecture, which will be more democratic and empathetic, which will not be focused on commercial solutions but on the involvement of future users of the space.</p> <p>Urban Architecture aims to contribute to a widely felt need for an ambitious engagement, theoretical and practical, to develop new concepts, methods and practices of thinking and doing architecture. With this year's subject related to preserving nature in the city of Brussels, I see great potential for architecture of appropriation, where a currently abandoned Friche Josaphat in the city can become a natural place for social encounters. Approaching any design intervention with caution, the process takes into account the opinions of various actors in the city, ecologists and naturalists, thus providing a chance to preserve biodiversity while sharing it with users to improve wellbeing and relationship with nature. The structure of the studio, where research goes in parallel with design, allows me to identify the problem in depth without making premature design conclusions. The nature of the studio which is site specific research and where group work is of great value, allows me to expand my interests and test them in practice.</p>	

Graduation project	
Title	The Common Ground
Subtitle	Towards the City of Empathy
Goal	
Location:	Brussels, Belgium
The posed problem,	<p>Brussels is already a highly fragmented city. Being separated into nineteen municipalities, dealing with a full range of social classes, exclusive spaces are naturally created within the city. This also applies to nature in the city, where only a few communities share small gardens, and more and more green spaces are getting privatized and do not function as a common anymore. The city is moving away from nature by putting strong borders between what is urban and what is natural - we can also encounter it with the Friche which is highly protected from human intervention. The policy of ownership affects how spaces with potential for public use are shaped - through the housing crisis, more and more dwellings are planned, including on the Friche plot.</p> <p>All this complexity calls us to rethink how we use urban wastelands, which, not accessible to the public, begin to become home to a variety of flora and fauna. How to open up this fragile Friche to people and be a place to exchange knowledge and learn to be more sensitive to nonhuman species? According to Bruno Latour, We are nature as well, and we tend to forget about this societal relevance.</p> <p>To engage other-than-humans in city life requires not only spatial change but a major shift in the way of thinking about to whom the space belongs. It is a complex task that involves different individuals together by engaging in a dialog and interactive actions. Richard</p>

	Sennett highlights the challenge that togetherness faces today, when modern politics emphasizes unity and similarity, which often leads to a preference for simple and easily identifiable groups, rather than embracing diversity and complexity.
research questions and subquestions	<p>What strategies can enhance the existing natural values of Friche Josaphat and facilitate collaboration among diverse urban agencies?</p> <p>How to work with empathy for humans and non-humans?</p> <p>How do stories and different voices of activists, ecologists, and citizens inform the process of an architect?</p> <p>What are the networks and dynamics between existing actors?</p> <p>How to strengthen the existing awareness of the rich biodiversity and share it within the public realm?</p>
design assignment in which these results.	
<p>As a research result, I aim to create a flexible space in the southwest part of the Friche, which will allow for social encounters and to share knowledge about the rich biodiversity of the site. Inspired by the complex network of humans and non-humans and its various dynamics and connections, the design will resemble a network of pavilions/spaces that will allow for various activities – a visitor center with exhibition place and studying area; a meeting center with communal space for dining and gathering, with a workshop to engage in making activities; and an observation and contemplation space, which will allow having a personal connection with nature from a different point of views. The key is to design a space from different scales and perspectives (block with plaza, building, path) to be able to support both collective use of the site as well as more personal exploration.</p> <p>The structure needs to be flexible and adaptable for future needs. The key is to support the 'open city' idea, which is against the creation of spatially and socially isolated islands. With the help of softening the edge, the Friche will open up and within new architecture integrated into its context, it will support the wildlife and human connections.</p>	
Process	
Method description	

From the beginning of a bottom-up approach to my research, I analyzed how nature shapes human relations through grasping stories, interviews, and observations into drawings. I addressed my findings in the bigger context, with an analysis of residents' access to green spaces and how social segregation translates into access to green spaces and coexisting with nature.

Following that, I question the role of our profession today, where mainstream architecture lays its work on market functions and profit. Instead of finding ready solutions, we should design new ways to see and ultimately understand the problem in the first place. I suggest an approach laid by empathy, which brings to the front existing human actors and respects non-human species. I call for 'mutual knowledge', which is grounded in exchange and abandoning the hierarchies embedded in a most professional relationship.

The inspiration for conducting the project came from the idea of commons, which is existing also on the site. The notion of commons relates to the idea of collective resources and goods, which can be translated as our common good is Nature.

To have a good base of tools for design interventions, the chosen methods follow:

Ethnographic research:

Being able to understand the site means understanding different points of view. Conversations with people related to Friche (citizens, ecologists, naturalists, activists) allow me to have a better understanding of the value of the space and its future desires. Depending on the profession, I asked about the history of the space, the feelings people share, and the ecological facts and concerns.

Observations, interviews, immersion and collaborative data generation, this approach integrates disparate disciplinary perspectives which allow me to unfold the complexity of the space.

Atmosphere collage & photographs:

With the awareness of the plot's vulnerability, I intend to create a collage of fragments of Friche to understand its character, its space and forms. In the spirit of empathy, which is an effort of decentring, of stretching worldviews, photographs and collages allow me to perceive the world from different perspectives, to distort and make reality more flexible.

Human and nonhuman traces drawings:

Drawing my observations allows me to unfold different actors and connections existing on the site, and to see their dynamics and scales. My findings will follow with the collage drawing, which leads me to understand patterns between users and the space.

I believe that the chosen methods will create a solid base for design decisions, where seemingly intangible values will give shape to the design. Supporting with literature study and architectural references, I'll be able to support a site-specific approach with a broader understanding.

Literature and general practical references

- Awan, N. Schneider, T. Till, J. (2011). *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of doing Architecture*. USA: Routledge
- Avermaete, T. Schmidt-Colinet, L. Herold, D. (2018). *Living Lab: Constructing the Commons*. Vienna: IKA
- Clément, G. (2015). *The Planetary Garden: and other writings*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press
- Dars, S. Menon, C. (2019). *ACCATTONE 6. Garden Politics Matter*. Brussels: Accattone
- De Cauter, L. (2021). *Ending the Anthropocene: Essays on Activism in the Age of Collapse*, Rottedram: nai010 publishers.
- Fisher, A. (2013). *Radical Ecopsychology - Psychology in the Service of Life*. New York: Suny Press
- Franklin, A. (2002). *Nature and Social Theory*. London: Sage Publications
- Grusin, N. (2015). *The Non-human Turn*. University of Minnesota Press
- Harvey, D. (2012). *The creation of Urban Commons: Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. source: <https://mappingthecommons.wordpress.com/2012/11/13/the-creation-of-the-urban-commons-by-david-harvey/>
- Kępiński, K. Adriana Krężlik, A. (2022). *Antropocen. W stronę architektury regenerującej. (Anthropocene. Towards a regenerative architecture)*. Warsaw: Narodowy Instytut Architektury i Urbanistyki
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. Oxford University Press
- Mang, N. S. (2009). *The Rediscovery of Place and our Human Role within it*. San Francisco
- Osten, M. Hiller, C. Nehmer, A. Ngo, A. L. Spillmann, P. *Cohabitation: A Manifesto for the Solidarity of Non-Humans and Humans in Urban Space* curated by ARCH+. source: <https://archplus.net/en/cohabitation-EN/#article-29891>
- Petra, M. Radim, L. (2022). *Meanwhile City: How temporary interventions create welcoming places with a strong identity*. Bratislava: Milk
- Pestana, M. Upham, S. Muraben, B. (2001). *Empathy Revisited: Designing for more than one*. Istanbul: Onomatopée 209
- Rieniets, T., Sigler, J., Christiaanse, K. (2009). *Open City: Designing Coexistence*. Amsterdam: SUN.
- Sennet, R. (2012). *Together*. London: Penguin Group.

- Sngiama, S. Tavares, P. (2019). *Constructlab: How Together*. Barcelona: dpr-barcelona
- Stavrides, S. (2016). *Common Space: The City as Commons*. London: Zed Books
- Wei, A. (2023). *Which new centrality for urban wastelands?* Brussels: Université Libre de Bruxelles
- Yaneva, A. (2009). *Making Social Hold: Towards an Actor-Network Theory to Design*. UK: BERG, source: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233606873_Making_the_Social_Hold_Towards_an_Actor-Network_Theory_of_Design

Reflection

I believe that my research and methods will help me create a space on the border of the city and nature, and offer a new place for the exchange of knowledge and education about the importance of biodiversity in the city. The chosen methods will allow me to look at the problem from a different perspective and make architecture a spatial mediator between existing human and non-human actors. With my research, I contribute to the idea of stopping the privatization of green spaces and calling it to become a common good, while respecting the environment. I believe that my work is a valuable contribution to the academy, where through drawings I turn what is intangible to be physical.

My findings are a small but important step in showing what I believe the future of our profession should look like, how different voices matter and are not only visible in theory but also in the design process. As a future architect, I have the tools to design a space, but it is the users who will shape it. By studying the network of connections and their dynamics, I unfold users invisible at first glance, whose patterns are valuable design keys.

In addition, I believe that my approach does not have to end with Friche Josaphat, but to be an inspiration for the approach of other natural Westlands in cities.