

Well-Being within All Scales

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

The goal of this graduation studio is to design a public condenser. This public condenser will be designed in a neighborhood with socio-economic challenges. This specific context is chosen to enhance the design challenge and addresses societal challenges through architecture. My interest in well-being can be woven into the fabric of the public condenser and its close context, using the 5 thematic pillars of the studio: hybridity, resilience, multiplicity in design, sustainability and healthiness to guide this ambition. My graduation project focuses on designing a public condenser in Sundholm, Copenhagen that addresses physical, mental, and social well-being issues by applying the knowledge that comes from research on the environment, neuroscience, and spatial design strategies, with special attention to safety. Such project fits well within the Architecture master track, with its the emphasis on spatial design, materiality, atmosphere, and social engagement through built form.

How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)?

It is important to understand how the public space impacts the direct surroundings and residents. For this, a site visit is needed, not only to see how the area functions but also how the neighborhood feels and how the inhabitants live in it. The interviews conducted in and around the site were of great value and shaped the research. From this point, research has been done to find a suitable design principle for this specific neighborhood. Well-being is a relatively new concept with a lot of research being conducted at the moment looking at a wide variety of variables. In the case of Sundholm, because of the many different (cultural) groups and individuals, the chosen research should target these groups in a universal way that gives space for connectivity but also individuality. The new economic foundation is an independent think tank that was commissioned to develop a set of evidence-based actions to improve personal well-being. From former research they developed a long list of evidence-based actions to enhance well-being in a universal way and then reduced this to 5 points that reflected the key findings of their research. These 5 ways to well-being are: Connect, Be active, Take notice, Keep learning, and give. They helped define spatial goals that can support social interaction, movement, awareness, creativity, and care, which can not only be applied on the building scale but also on the urban level.

For the interior environment, the design principle should focus on shapes, color, materials, and comfort to create spaces where people feel safe, comfortable, and happy. The research method that connects neuroscience with architecture is called Neuro-architecture. Neuro-architecture

introduces key insights into how the brain responds to space, emphasizing coherence, biophilic design, sensory comfort, and emotional safety. Together, these systems gave me a clear structure to assess and design environments that actively support mental, physical, and social well-being. They formed the basis on which the following decisions were made.

Academic and societal value, scope and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?

By stimulating well-being and fostering connection through the different scales, the project intends to empower communities, reduce social isolation, and enhance urban resilience. Its scope extends beyond the building itself in trying to impact urban dynamics at the scale of the neighborhood. By translating the principles of well-being into spatial strategies, the project tries to contribute to the ongoing discussions of how architecture can enhance quality of life, particularly in vulnerable urban contexts. It intends to serve as a case for designing beyond the aesthetic, focusing instead on evidence-based interventions that support mental, physical, and social well-being. The project wants to engage with vulnerable groups respectfully, prioritizing dignity, accessibility and safety without causing unnecessary friction. Ethically, the project strives to avoid creating spaces that segregate or marginalize and instead promotes environments that foster equality, health, and empowerment for all users.

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

The importance of the project lies in its integration, in looking how a connection can be made not only to building and neighborhood, but also neighborhood to neighborhood or even building to building. When looking at well-being on the building scale, it is good to note that this is a new but fast-growing subject in the built environment with multiple studies rising over the past few years. The topics that are discussed and the way they are integrated are relatively new. Well-being is very personal, which means that the needs of the direct residents are of great importance to how a place is perceived. This means that my design results depend on the contextual specifics. The research itself can be transferable but how results are interpreted are more site specific. In assessing the value of the transferability of my project results for Sundholm, I believe that the core principles behind promoting well-being through architecture, such as fostering social interaction, ensuring perceived safety, and supporting mental and physical health, are transferable to other urban contexts facing similar societal challenges.

1. To which extent are spatial characteristics able to influence well-being in the public space?

Spatial characteristics play a crucial role in influencing well-being in the public space. As people are all different, spaces should allow for different spatial layouts to provide options for them. Public space not only acts as a connector, but also a buffer for social, mental and physical well-being. What also has to be taken into account is how the direct surroundings react. Users are not only effected by space, but also each other. Where special design is able to control, people are not. In a district like Sundholm, where some people may feel excluded or invisible, careful spatial design with attention to dignity and interaction can transform public space into a shared, uplifting experience. The degree to which well-being is supported is therefore directly dependent on how intentional and human-centered the spatial qualities are and the intention of the user itself

2. Is it possible to assume a public building can make everybody feel comfortable and safe?

It is not realistic to think a public building can make everybody feel comfortable and safe. However, this makes it the more important to design with inclusivity and well-being as guiding principles to accommodate a wide range of needs. Creating active and passive zones, or enclosed and open areas. By trying to provide accommodation for as many people as possible, the chance that the public building itself becomes a problem for comfort and safety can be minimized.