

# Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences



## Graduation Plan: All tracks

Submit your Graduation Plan to the Board of Examiners ([Examencommissie-BK@tudelft.nl](mailto:Examencommissie-BK@tudelft.nl)), Mentors and Delegate of the Board of Examiners one week before P2 at the latest.

The graduation plan consists of at least the following data/segments:

Personal information	
Name	Houry Jamkojian
Student number	5741025

Studio		
Name / Theme	Borders & Territories: Transient Liquidities along the New Silk Road III	
Main mentor	Oscar R.G. Rommens	Architecture and the Built Environment, Theory, Territories & Transitions
Second mentor	Pierre H.M. Jennen	Architecture and the Built Environment, Architectural Technology
Third mentor	Negar Sanaan Bensi	Architecture and the Built Environment, Theory, Territories & Transitions
Argumentation of choice of the studio	The exploratory approach of the studio allows for a nuanced investigation into the diverse elements of the contemporary territory, presenting a unique method that aligns with my interest in experimental design and spatial analysis.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Housekeeper: Mediating Between Body and Territory
Goal	
Location:	Darién Gap, Panama
The posed problem,	Amidst the intricate choreography of our globalized world, a continual movement expands across borders, one that is not restricted to the circulation of capital, goods, technologies, and information, but also that of people. Economic transactions while fostering disparities among nations, propel large numbers of people into motion in the pursuit of stability, safety, and opportunity beyond the confines of geographical origins.

	<p>One such prominent current flows in Central America.</p> <p>As the landmass that connects the Americas, the Isthmus of Panama is considered a gateway territory within this movement. Geopolitical, social, economic, and environmental developments in departure geographies have instigated an increase in the number of bodies crossing Panamanian borders annually. From an average of 11,000 yearly crossers since 2010, the number drastically increased to around 130,000 in 2021, 250,000 in 2022, and 500,000 in 2023. Given these recent developments, Panama has become an ideal location to explore the complexities that constitute migration.</p> <p>This graduation project delves into the subject of migration in the realm of architecture. The words 'architecture' and 'migration' are often thought of as opposing forces, with architecture representing principles of solidity, stillness, and permanence, while migration represents principles of movement, mobility, and transience. As a result, scholars have frequently framed migrants as deterritorialized subjects who exist outside of conventional spatiotemporal orders of territories. However, this project aims to challenge the misconceptions about migration being a timeless and spaceless phenomenon. It argues that space and time are integral concepts to comprehending the process. It aims to redefine migration by considering it as an essentially architectural process, unveiling the profound ways in which a territory shapes and is shaped by this movement of bodies.</p>
research questions and	How does the interplay of space and time contribute to the understanding of the movement of bodies across borders?

	<p>In what ways does the migrant body shape and respond to the complex spatio-temporal conditions within the migratory territory?</p> <p>How can the body be used to frame a architectural outcome?</p> <p>How can architecture respond to a constant state of crisis?</p>
design assignment in which these result.	<p>Expanding on the outcomes derived from the various exercises outlined in the Method Description section of this document, the body emerges as a central node within the triad comprised of Space, Time, and Body. Through movement, the body not only traverses but also catalyzes a profound spatialization of time and a temporalization of space. Interactions between the moving migratory bodies and static transitory territories create a new dimension. Which is considered as an exchange between both parties that materializes through imprints.</p> <p>Of the spaces traversed by migrants in Panama, the Darién Gap stands out as a prime arena for the exploration of imprints as a space that presents the furthest departure from the commonplace landscapes of everyday life. Here, the body's interactions with the territory and all entities that constitute it are heightened marked by an incessant fear of death, and an innate drive for survival. With particular gestures, bodies use available items such as shrubs, stones, branches, tents, backpacks, and clothes with the help of tools such as limbs, eyes, and language to transform the unfamiliar jungle into "homely" spaces. Through homemaking, they satisfy the need to create an interior setting to isolate</p>

themselves from the chaos of the wilderness.

In this heightened state of physiological dependency, touch becomes a reciprocal vehicle through which the migrant body imprints onto the territory, and in return, the territory imprints onto the migrant. Touch is not limited to the exterior barrier but extends to cavities through which fluids, air, and vibrations are exchanged.

However, as highlighted through the analysis of the moments of intensity, these exchanges are rather violent, where instead of a harmonious relationship, one intrudes onto the other. This intrusion occurs when one surpasses the limit of exchange allowed. Excess or insufficient stimulation can lead to detrimental consequences.

The design assignment involves the creation of a "Housekeeper" who assumes the role of a mediator within this dimension. By habitually organizing imprints, it strives to establish a harmonious equilibrium between the migrant body and the surrounding territory, fostering a reciprocal inhabitation rather than intrusion. This orchestrated ordering of imprints materializes through a series of interventions, strategically placed along the Tuquesa and Membrillo rivers, which are central features in the two migratory routes through the jungle, forming a closed-circle exchange. The continuity of these interventions relies on the active participation of both territorial elements and migrant bodies, sustaining the dimension. Once the exchange ceases, the architectural assemblages undergo a self-destructive process, marking the end of that particular dimension.

	<p>This approach embraces migration as an inevitable and dynamic process and, therefore, avoids creating systematic and permanent solutions. The architecture in this context is not static but rather evolves and disappears in response to the temporariness inherent in migration. Aligned with the project's exploration of migrants' placemaking strategies the project explores the potential of a body-centric approach for architectural endeavors.</p>
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## Process

### Method description

Embarking on a year-long exploration, I chose migrants as a central theme of interest to unravel throughout this project. This decision followed the initiation of the graduation studio with a collective mapping exercise on the borders of Panama in relation to migratory movements that jump-started a familiarization of the territory of intervention. Moreover, this exercise served as an introduction to the studio's adopted method of mapping as an object of investigation. The resulting map goes beyond traditional cartography, employing gamification to provide an immersive experience. Readers are cast into the role of 'players,' required to actively engage and make decisions as they navigate the map. The map follows a diverse cast of characters - migrant, indigenous, conquistador, tourist, eagle, banana, copper, and cocaine - in their pursuit of crossing Panamanian borders. The projection of diverse narratives onto the same distorted canvas challenges the territorial and temporal representations, revealing the interconnectedness of these narratives.

Supplementary to the series of individual mapping attempts, the exploration of migration themes was further deepened during the two-week Modi Operandi workshop. This intensive workshop involved the creation of three distinct physical models, each focusing successively on Site, Form, and Program which unpacked themes of non-absoluteness, intersubjectivity, and tactility. The produced models not only contributed to the structuring of the theoretical framework of the project but also facilitated discussions concerning the transition to the design phase.

Following the completion of the workshop, the initial theoretical framework developed in the form of a paper was revisited. This revision provided a fresh perspective for analyzing the experience of migration, establishing a triad between Space, Time, and Body as a foundational framework. This triad served as a basis for selecting specific phenomena to be dissected through literary references. The paper is divided into three chapters, consecutively titled: Body in Space and Time, Space and Time in Body and Embodied Timespace. The paper aims to comprehend each of node by analyzing how they influence, counter, and reinforce each other. The paper concludes by identifying three distinct states encapsulating the migratory experience, later culminated in three distinct maps:

1. The initial chapter highlights how the systematic control of time and space impacts the mobility of the migrating body. By manipulating scalar representations of each phase of the migrants' journeys through Panama, a map is developed to depict their perception of space with respect to the quantity of time spent in that space.
2. In the second chapter, the exploration of time and space takes on a different dimension as migrants engage in acts of transgression against the systematic relationalities. Here, the concept of relationalities is reconceptualized as "moment sites," acting as dynamic settings which allow migrants to practice temporal and spatial homemaking. The drawings reference Bernard Tchumi's Manhattan Transcripts to map moments of intensities throughout the journey, embodying space and time through bodily movement.
3. The third chapter marks a shift in focus, as the investigation places the body at the forefront. The map delves into the embodiment of a multiplicity of timespaces, highlighting the physiological nature of the temporal-spatial interactions between the body and the territory.

The design approach integrates various exploration methods, converging into a mediating entity between the moving body and the territory it traverses. This approach will be dissected at the beginning of the upcoming MSc 4 graduation studio. An initial assessment of the limitations inherent to both will inform the adoption of a design strategy, guiding subsequent architectural decisions.

### **Literature and general practical references**

Awan, Nishat, 2020, "On Navigating Horizonless Worlds: a countergeoography of border regimes," *The Large Glass* 29 (30): 49-54.

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Grabowska, Sam, 2016, "Anxious Architecture: Sleep, Identity, and Death in the US-Mexico Borderlands," *Footprint* (19): 115-136.

Heidegger, Martin, 1962, *Being and Time*, Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Heidegger, Martin, 1975, "Building Dwelling Thinking," In *Poetry, Language, Thought*, by Martin Heidegger, 141-160, New York: Harper & Row.

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Lee, Kim, and Jose Espinosa, interview by Houry Jamkojian, 2023, *Migrants in Panama* (November 3).

Pons, Miriam, interview by Houry Jamkojian, 2023, *Recounting of Encounters with Migrants and Members of the Local Indigenous Communities in the Darien Gap* (November 10).

Shubin, Sergei, 2015, "a Heideggerian approach to understanding the mobile being of Eastern Europeans in Scotland," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 40 (3): 350-361.

Simonsen, Kirsten, 2005, "Bodies, Sensations, Space and Time: The Contributions from Henri Lefebvre," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 87 (1): 1-14.

Simonsen, Kirsten, 2007, "Practice, Spatiality, and Embodied Emotions: An Outline of a Geography of Practice," *Human Affairs* 17: 168-181.

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## Reflection

1. 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)?

In alignment with the studio's overarching goal to decipher emerging spatial complexities along the New Silk Road, my project delves into the intricacies of migration as a pivotal spatial process. Focusing on the journey through Panama, it examines the dynamic interplay between migrating bodies and the transitory territories they navigate. By emphasizing the nuances of this movement, my proposed graduation design resonates with the studio's focus on the "transient"



nature of the emerging spatial conditions from global economic, ecological and sociopolitical shifts.

By embracing a body-centric design approach, the proposal diverges from architecture's predominant dependency on optics, which has resulted in the abstraction and fetishization of the world, and thus man's estrangement from his surroundings. Instead, the project highlights the sense of touch as a means to affirm an individual's existence in the world. The migrant experience becomes an invitation to scrutinize the static references deeply embedded in our architectural approaches. By re-embrace a tactile body-centric ethos, the project contributes to the ever-evolving conversations on the relationship between space and body tackled in the Architecture Master track.

In delving into the potential design outcomes emerging from the discourse surrounding body and territory, it is crucial to recognize the multiscale nuances inherent in such conditions. The multi-disciplinary nature of the master program provides a valuable framework for identifying and comprehending diverse strategies adopted at different scales, aligning with the multifaceted investigation embedded in the graduation project.

**2. What is the relevance of your graduation work in the larger social, professional and scientific framework.**

Migration, with its vast geographical scope, tends to prompt discussions that zoom out to an exchange between countries. These conversations typically revolve around the social, economic, and political factors leading to or resulting from migration, where the departure and destination points take center stage, referring to migrants collectively, often anonymously, by their country of origin. This project aims to shift the focus, magnifying the discussion's scale to emphasize the nuanced experiences and challenges encountered by migrants whilst on the move.