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), 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	Klaudia Justyna Kurzacz
Student number	5851165

Studio	
Name / Theme	Architectural Engineering / Stock
Main mentor	Stephan Verkuijlen	Design
Second mentor	Lex van Deudekom	Building Technology
Third mentor	Jos de Krieger	Research
Argumentation of choice of the studio	Ability to develop individual interests with practically-oriented design approach that focuses primarily on circularity and innovative technical solutions.

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Structure of Free Zones. Community-oriented approach to vacant building adaptation.
Goal	
Location:	Landbouwbelang, Maastricht, the Netherlands
The posed problem:	Building vacancy and urban voids present a significant global challenge, particularly in the context of a lack of affordable and inclusive spaces. Politically promoted visions for a prosperous future often emphasize individualism and property-based frameworks (Harvey, 2012), leading to the conversion of common and collective property rights into exclusive private ownership. This trend exacerbates unequal access to capital (Squatting Europe Kollective, 2013).

Squatting emerges as a form of resistance when the demand for space intersects with vacant properties. Rooted in self- |

	organization, squatting communities frequently foster vibrant, non-profit-driven environments that address needs unmet by conventional systems (Boer, Verzier, and Truijen, 2019). Despite their positive contributions, squatting and the practice of "commoning" remain largely unrecognized within legal frameworks (Minkjan, 2019). Current legal systems primarily aim to limit the potential of these communities and their initiatives. This results in a persistent cycle of evictions and profit-driven redevelopments, prioritizing commercial interests over socially beneficial collective projects that promote well-being and equality. This pattern deepens social divides and undermines opportunities for inclusive, creative urban transformations that could benefit society as a whole.
Design question:	How can adaptive reuse strategies be applied to vacant buildings to meet the evolving needs of communities while complying with safety and comfort standards in order to facilitate inclusive, collective, urban zones?
Thematic research questions:	What architectural interventions can support self-organized (squatting) communities in adapting their spatial arrangements and living spaces as part of the negotiation for legal recognition? - What are the pathways through which squatting communities can gain legal recognition? - How spatial organization and architecture of formerly squatted communities transformed as an impact of legal recognition? - Who are the stakeholders and contributors involved in the process?
Design assignment in which these result:	The design objective envisions sustaining the platform of the self-organized community by systematically addressing the importance of free spaces and alternative spatial practices that generate social value, with a focus on neighborhood-scale interventions. This involves the adaptive reuse concept for the Landbouwbelang in Maastricht, a free zone created in abandoned grain warehouse by a squatted community in the past 25 years, now threatened by eviction. The goal of the proposed architectural intervention is to provide an alternative scenario to the eviction of the existing self-organized community.

By exploring the role architects play in mediating various stakeholders and diverse spatial practices while accommodating participatory and gradual architectural interventions the process seeks to balance legally enforced spatial requirements with spatial appropriation, addressing the opportunities that vacant buildings provide.

Ultimately, the goal is to evaluate the role of self-organized communities and their spatial practices in urban transformations and assess the potential for integrating new forms of agency into the urban landscape, given a multitude of vacant buildings.

Process

Method description

The process begins with thematic research that establishes a foundation of knowledge for the subsequent design phase. Squatting practices in the Netherlands are examined as a socio-spatial system through six case studies of former squatted communities that have successfully adapted to legal frameworks. The selected examples meet specific criteria, including their residential status during squatting, the spatial legal status obtained, and their demonstrated success in the adaptive reuse of space. The case studies include OT301, Tetterode, and Plantage Dok in Amsterdam; Het Domijn in Weesp; Poortgebouw in Rotterdam; and Boschgaard in Den Bosch. The study employs a combination of methodologies, including reviewing publications, archives, and community websites; conducting site visits; participating in events; holding semi-structured interviews; and attending official meetings. Each case study analysis yields insights into spatial and legal transformations, their interrelations, and the broader socio-political contexts in which they occur. These findings form the basis for systematic recommendations for stakeholders. This strategy leverages the potential of vacant buildings, the demand for affordable spaces, and the squatting movement's creativity and commitment to socially beneficial, non-profit goals.

The next step involves analyzing the spatial and social aspects of the existing urban context. These aspects are studied through observation, mapping, and interviews, focusing on three key areas:

1. Urban analysis and future planning
The Boschstraatkwartier, located in the north of Maastricht, is strongly influenced by its industrial past, which thrived during the last century. As manufacturing facilities began to close or relocate, the area became largely abandoned. Following years of stagnation, the city launched the Belvedere masterplan, aimed at revitalizing the area with a focus on market-driven developments for housing and entertainment.

2. Building history, current state and relation to the surrounding environment
The Landbouwbelang is a former grain warehouse located along the Maas River. Construction began in 1939, with parts completed in 1941 and 1962/3. It was closed

in 1970. Studying its current state is essential for proposing suitable technical solutions for its adaptation.

3. Community dynamics, activities, and other stakeholders
The building was squatted in 2001 and has since evolved into a free zone, offering an alternative social hub for a variety of cultural activities, including music performances, concerts, theater, exhibitions, and a dance venue. It also supports community-oriented initiatives such as workshops, give-away stores, a food bank, and recycling consultancy. This self-organized social center has become an important creative and inclusive space in the city.

The thematic research and contextual analysis are further supported by theoretical frameworks, including theories of urban commons and the just city (Lefebvre, 1974); distinctions between public and private spheres (Arendt, 1958); the concept of social third places (Oldenburg, 1989); and the structure of spaces (Habraken, 1972; 2000). Technical solutions for adaptive reuse will be studied using existing projects of similar scale and industrial character as references. All these elements will be combined in a design proposal, representing one of many possible approaches to adapting the building.

Literature and general practical preference

Alkemade, F., van Iersel, M., Ouburg, J. & Minkjan, M. (2020). Rewriting architecture: 10+1 actions. Amsterdam: Valiz.

Arendt, H. (1958). The Human Condition. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Boer, R., Verzier, M.O. & Truijen, K., (2019) *Architecture of Appropriation: On Squatting as Spatial Practice.* Rotterdam: Het Nieuwe Instituut.

Brenner, N., Marcuse, P., and Mayer, M. (2012) *Cities for People, Not for Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City*. London and New York: Routledge.

EHBK/OT301. Autonomy by Dissent - Autonomie Door Tegenspraak.

Harvey, D. (2012) *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. London: Verso.

Habraken, N.J. (1972) *Supports: An alternative to mass housing.* UK: Urban International Press.
Habraken, N.J. (2000) *The Structure of the Ordinary: Form and Control in the Built Environment*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lefebvre, H. (1996) *The Right to the City*. In: Kofman, E. and Lebas, E. (eds. and trans.) *Writings on Cities*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 2–17. (Originally published in 1968 as *Le Droit à la Ville*).

Minkjan, M. (2019) Tracing the impact of squatting on the Dutch urban landscape. In Boer, R., Verzier, M.O. & Truijen, K. (eds) *Architecture of Appropriation: On Squatting as Spatial Practice.* Rotterdam: Het Nieuwe Instituut.

Norberg-Schulz, C. (1996). Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture. New York: Rizzoli.

Oldenburg, R. (1989). The Great Good Place. Paragon House Publishers.

Polanska, D. V., and Weldon, T. (2020). In search of Urban commons through squatting: The role of knowledge sharing in the creation and organization of everyday utopian spaces in Sweden. *Partecip. e Conflitto* 13, 1355–1372.

Pruijt, H. (2017) Squatting in the Netherlands: the social and political institutionalization of a movement. In Anders, F. , Sedlmaier, A. (eds) *Public goods versus economic interests: global perspectives on the history of squatting.* New York: Routledge, 256-277.

RECLAIM. Remediate Reuse Recycle, a+t 39-40.

Squatting Europe Kollective (ed.) (2013) *Squatting in Europe: Radical Spaces, Urban Struggles*. Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions.

Wong, L. & Berger, M. (2021). Interventions and Adaptive Reuse: A Decade of Responsible Practice.

Reflection

1. What is the relation between your graduation and your master programme?

The graduation project falls under the Stock Studio theme, focusing on evaluating the potential of existing buildings. By leveraging the opportunities that vacant buildings present, the project addresses urgent societal challenges, such as the lack of affordable spaces and the prioritization of profit-driven developments that exacerbate social inequalities. Developing strategies and concepts for adaptive reuse serves as an architectural intervention aimed at promoting sustainable development and fostering positive social impact through the built environment.

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

Cities, as dynamic entities, constantly evolve alongside changes in ways of living. This graduation project explores alternative approaches to adapting buildings that no longer serve their original function, emphasizing community-oriented goals over profit-driven developments. The subject of self-organized and squatting communities remains underexplored and insufficiently documented, largely due to their often temporary or legally contested nature.

These alternative spatial practices, rooted in mutual aid, shared knowledge, and experimentation, offer valuable insights into adapting to the evolving needs of society and the world. Architectural interventions informed by such practices can play a critical role in fostering sustainable and inclusive development.

The project's design aims to propose a compromise and demonstrate a viable alternative that benefits multiple stakeholders. This approach seeks to inspire support for, or allowance of, self-organization as a strategy to address the growing lack of affordable spaces, offering a potential model for equitable urban development.