

# 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	Isabel Mathers
Student number	5736277

Studio		
Name / Theme	Architectural Design Crossovers/The Expanded City/Madrid	
Main mentor	Agnes van der Meij	Architectural Design
Second mentor	Freek Speksnijder	Technical Building Design
Third mentor	Roberto Cavallo	Research
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>The studio produces projects which situate themselves within the broader networked territory of the city, with an extensive research phase. This style of work will facilitate a more well-rounded architectural education (as it differs more greatly from my MSc1 and 2 studios) and aligns more closely to my interdisciplinary career goals, of entering architectural policy or urbanism focused practice. By working in Madrid, I hope to apply the ADC approach to a city that is completely unfamiliar to me, and yet has the digital resources and proximity to NL to enable intensive site-specific research. To diversify my design portfolio, I particularly hope to take this opportunity to work with retaining existing historic buildings: by being based in a capital city, there will be enough building survey documentation for this design strategy. Additionally, the freedom that the studio provides enables me to focus on my personal interests in post-occupancy adaptations and structures that support social cohesion within the city.</p>	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Living Rooms of Lavapies
Goal	
Location:	Lavapies, Madrid
The posed problem:	The inner-city neighbourhood of Lavapies, Madrid has always hosted working-class new arrivals. In the face of government disinvestment, self-managed social centres

	<p>and community gardens emerged as the neighbourhood's "living rooms", places at the threshold between public and private supporting coexistence and belonging amongst the diverse population groups. Since the turn of the century, these spaces of cohesion have been lost: many of these 'living rooms' have been evicted, and the 21<sup>st</sup> C redevelopment of the neighbourhood's public plazas actively deters inter-community collaboration. The research seeks to use Lavapies as a 'laboratory', using the success stories of its past to understand how to reincorporate coexistence into interstitial areas of its public realm.</p>
<p>research questions and</p>	<p>Main Question:</p> <p>Which spatial and programmatic characteristics of Lavapies' self-managed social centres can be used to promote social cohesion in the neighbourhood's hostile public plazas?</p> <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Who are the competing community forces within Lavapies, and where do these converge within the neighbourhood?</li> <li>-What is a 'A Space of Thirthing' and how can it be used to inform an architecture of social cohesion?</li> <li>- Which characteristics of the previous editions of Lavapies' squatted social centres determined their success as Spaces of Thirthing?</li> <li>-What is preventing the current public plazas of Lavapies from becoming similarly successful Spaces of Thirthing?</li> </ul>
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>My design will embrace the informality and vitality of cultural production that these self-managed squatted social centres used to host, to address the hostility of Lavapies' public spaces, and the disintegration of the neighborhood's cohesion. By studying</p>

occupant-led adaptations of existing buildings, I challenged traditional forms of knowledge exchange between end-user and architect. By analysing why each building or plot that hosted the squatted social centre led to a different relationship between social centre and neighbourhood, I created a toolkit for improved community spaces. By applying this to the public plazas that currently invoke the most hostility between community members, I hope to create a new interstitial public 'living room' for Lavapies. This social centre will step away from the rigidity and enclosure of current governmental institutions, and instead accommodate processes of cultural knowledge exchange that celebrate and encourage the neighbourhood's diversity.

As part of this approach, I will re-work the design of one of the hostile public plazas. By learning from the relationship between squatted social centres and the street, I aim to create a more networked approach to the cultural centre, in which activities can spread further throughout the neighbourhood from this central hub, activating utilitarian public spaces. In this way I hope to decrease barriers to entry, incentivizing pre-existing residents and the new migrants at risk of exclusion to find commonalities in a shared social centre, to ensuring more peaceful coexistence.

## Process

### Method description

To negotiate an architecture of social cohesion, I used literature reviews to build up a theoretical framework called 'A Space of Thirthing'. Through historical research, literature reviews and semi-structured interviews, I discovered the key competing social forces of Lavapies and the reasons why these community members would need a 'Space of Thirthing'. Using a combination of archival drawings, historic photographs and recounted narratives, I activated the lens 'A Space of Thirthing' to discuss how each building that the El Laboratorio association occupied generated spaces of coexistence. By comparing the morphological and ethnographic characteristics of current public spaces to these historically successful Spaces of Thirthing, I argue that the qualities of these squatted social centres are currently missing

from the neighbourhood. My design aims to incorporate these characteristics (programmatic, accommodation of informality, and relationship with public space) into a new centre of cultural exchange, which will invoke conviviality to generate a more peaceful coexistence amongst Lavapiés' multicultural community. To understand where it is possible to reuse the existing built fabric, I will rely on photographs and archival drawings (collected during my previous site visits to Madrid).

## Literature and general practical references

### Theory Literature:

Aelbrecht, P., & Stevens, Q. (2018). *Public Space Design and Social Cohesion: An International Comparison*.

Boer, R., Verzier, M., & Truijen, K. (Eds.). (2018). *Architecture of Appropriation. On Squatting as Spatial Practice*. Het Nieuwe Instituut. <https://nieuweinstituut.nl/projects/architecture-appropriation>

Bhabha, H. K. (2004). *The location of culture*. Routledge London; WorldCat.

Crossan, J., Cumbers, A., McMaster, R., & Shaw, D. (2016). Contesting Neoliberal Urbanism in Glasgow's Community Gardens: The Practice of DIY Citizenship. *Antipode*, 48(4), 937–955. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12220>

Ganji, F., & Rishbeth, C. (2020). Conviviality by design: The socio-spatial qualities of spaces of intercultural urban encounters. *URBAN DESIGN International*, 25(3), 215–234. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41289-020-00128-4>

Lefebvre, H. (1974). *The production of space = La production de l'espace*. Blackwell Oxford; WorldCat.

Oldenburg, R. (1999). *The great good place cafes, coffee shops, bookstores, bars, hair salons, and other hangouts at the heart of a community / Ray Oldenburg*. Da Capo Press.

Pruijt, H. (2013). The logic of urban squatting. *International journal of urban and regional research*, 37(1), 19-45.

Saunders, Doug. (2010). *Arrival city: How the largest migration in history is reshaping our world / Doug Saunders*. W. Heinemann.

Sendra, P., & Sennett, R. (2022). *Designing Disorder: Experiments and Disruptions in the City*. Verso.

Soja, E. W. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places / Edward W. Soja*. Blackwell.

Zhuang, Dr. Z. C., & Lok, R. T. (2023). Exploring the wellbeing of migrants in third places: An empirical study of smaller Canadian cities. *Wellbeing, Space and Society*, 4, 100146. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wss.2023.100146>

### Lavapies specific:

Archivo de la Villa de Madrid / Archivo Regional de la Comunidad de Madrid

Esteban, M. S. (2021). *A quien pertenece la ciudad? Espacio y conflicto urbano en Lavapies*. ETSAM.

Feinberg, M. (2011), 'Lavapiés, Madrid as twenty-first century urban spectacle', [https://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1219&context=gradschool\\_diss](https://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1219&context=gradschool_diss) Ph.D. thesis, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky

Saiz de Lobado, E. (2021). Immigration's Identity Construction in Madrid's Landscape: Lavapiés and San Diego. *Migraciones Internacionales*, 12.  
<https://doi.org/10.33679/rmi.v1i1.2358>

Sindominio, & Omeka S. (n.d.). *Colecciones*. Hacer Laboratorio.  
<https://hacerlaboratorio.sindominio.net/s/principal/item-set>

SinDominio. (1999). *Documentos y Publicaciones del CSOA el Laboratorio*. Archivo de Documentos y Publicaciones CSOA 'EL LABORATORIO'.  
<https://sindominio.net/laboratorio/documentos/home.htm>

### **Precedent Projects:**

Grand Parc Bordeaux, Lacaton & Vassal

Sala Beckett, Flores & Prats

Grand Hotel Cosmopolis

### **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)?**

The studio addresses the urban commons in Madrid, through the Crossovers interdisciplinary research approach. My project specifically examines the role of user-modified social centres for neighbourhood coexistence in inner-city Madrid. These squatted social centres can be deemed as core parts of the city's urban commons, as the process of squatting in itself expands the realm of the public into a formally private area, and they contributed to the success and livelihood of the neighbourhood's other commons e.g. the public plazas. The resources provided by these social centres and my design also programmatically aid the commons, by providing places of cultural exchange for the whole community. The project embraces the interdisciplinarity of the Crossovers approach by not merely remaining in the realm of the 'built', but seeing the public plazas and community gardens as equally important characters in my story.

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

In previous studio projects I have taken a problem-solving approach to these situations, aiming to facilitate integration and cultural exchange through the creation of new community centres and housing schemes. However, when working with such complex sociological processes, I have always felt uneasy with the imposing role of an architect. Within this research I hope to interrogate the relationship and forms of knowledge exchange between architect and user: by analysing the occupant-led adaptations to buildings which created squatted social centres, I demonstrate value of user-driven informal design. By comparing the richness of these squatted buildings to the utilitarian hostility of the

neighbouring public plazas, I hope to challenge the traditional hierarchy of an architect in the design process: despite these plazas appearing to be suitable architectural interventions, by inhibiting user modifications they lack the vitality and sense of belonging seen in the squatted plots.