

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	Cristina Nistor
Student number	5848601

Studio		
Name / Theme	Urban Architecture. Up Town Down Low	
Main mentor	Leeke Reinders	Research Tutor
Second mentor	Rosie van der Schans	Design Tutor
Argumentation of choice of the studio	The Urban Architecture Studio offers freedom to explore architecture across multiple scales, from the intimate to the urban. It blends a realistic approach to design with bold experimentation which results in hands-on explorations of complex and layered topics. The studio encourages freedom not only in the choice of the project's direction but also in the process itself, where design and research are intertwined until the very end. This non-linear methodology allows ideas to evolve organically, starting from a small idea or observation, to a complete project. The studio also delves into relevant themes, such as marginalized neighborhoods, bottom-up design approaches, material reuse, the importance of artistic expression, cultural differences and architectural heritage, all while maintaining a strong connection to its specific context: Hoboken, Antwerp. These themes are critical to the practice of architecture today, and the studio provides a platform to meaningfully engage with them, ensuring the exploration is both grounded in reality as well as relevant for the future.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Traces of transition. An exploration of change.
Goal	
Location:	Blikfabriek, Antwerp, Belgium
The posed problem,	Architecture is often designed with the illusion of permanence, prioritizing static forms and rigid

	programming over adaptability. However, the reality of urban spaces, particularly those rooted in industrial history like Blikfabriek, is one of constant transition. Buildings evolve as their functions, users, and societal needs change over time. The challenge lies in how to design or adapt spaces to embrace these transitions while preserving the essence of their identity. The chosen site embodies this dilemma: once a factory for production, it has transformed into an abandoned transient space for artists, a shelter for squatters, a stage for performances, an escape for teenagers, a home for pigeons, but its future remains uncertain. If its adaptability is not carefully nurtured, it risks erasure and its essence replaced with faceless real estate developments that bear no regard for what was there before.
research questions and	This research aims to address the conflict between architectural design and the realities of time and change. The factory is an evolving entity, constantly shaped by those who pass through it, who take what they need and leave their unique mark behind. Its impermanence is not an endpoint but a continuous process of becoming. Therefore, I would like to explore the question: How can architecture embrace uncertainty and change while maintaining a sense of identity and place? - What elements of the building's past hold cultural, historical, or architectural value, and how can they be preserved in a meaningful way? - What challenges and frictions exist in the current use of the building, and how can design interventions address them? - How can architecture not merely coexist with the passage of time but actively engage with and enhance it?
design assignment in which these result.	The design will result in an exploration on how architecture can transcend static definitions, becoming a framework for transition, creativity, and long-term relevance. The chosen location includes an existing concrete structure previously used as a production site. The proposal for its transformation includes spaces that visibly preserve and adapt traces of the past, such as incorporating machinery, industrial materials, or spatial layouts. It will reflect the evolution of the building from production to creative reuse, including elements that can adapt over time to hint towards what its future could become.

The design proposal will be a transformation of an existing structure. The project will respond to current needs in the community such as the housing crisis, the lack of spaces for teenagers and the lack of publicly accessible facilities while preserving the historical qualities of the existing.

Process

Method description

Literature studies will guide my understanding on the topics of transience, ephemerality, uncertainty, and change.

To uncover the layered essence of the building, I will begin by delving into its **archival memory**, gathering images, documents, maps, and media articles that unfold its industrial past and the stories of its transformation over time. These fragments of history will guide my understanding of how it once thrived and how it has arrived at this moment of potential rebirth. Additionally, an **interview** with a former worker at Lemmerz rim factory will further inform my understanding of the past.

Building on this, through **on-site observations** I will get to know the building as it is; in its current state; its spatial qualities, materiality and decay, remnants of the past, while also examining the dynamics of current interactions—by artists, residents, and the natural environment. These observations will be supported by **photographs, analytical drawings, and modelmaking**.

Lastly, through the act of **model-making**, I will imagine the building's future—layering the transient and the flexible over its industrial bones. Through speculative experiments, I aim to test various infill scenarios, testing how the structure might embrace change. The result will be an artifact of the design process, an object that showcases all the transient ideas that were alive at a point in time. This method will guide and intertwine both design and research, informing one another.

Literature and general practical references

Brand, S. (1994). How buildings learn: what happens after they're built. Viking.

Bishop, P., & Williams, L. (2012). The temporary city. Routledge.

Isaacs, K., & Snodgrass, S. (2015, November 16). Enter the Matrix: An Interview with Ken Isaacs [Interview]. <https://walkerart.org/magazine/enter-matrix-interview-ken-isaacs/>

Hollis, L. (2013). Cities are good for you the genius of the metropolis. Bloomsbury.

Mehrotra, R., Vera, F., Mayoral, J., Sennett, R., & Burdett, R. (2017). Ephemeral urbanism: does permanence matter? (First edition). LIST Lab.

Cupers, K., & Miessen, M. (2018). Spaces of uncertainty : Berlin revisited. Birkhäuser.

Antwerp Felix Archief. <https://felixarchief.antwerpen.be/>

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 explores multiple topics, including the 20th century belt of Antwerp, downtowns and microcenters which are themes that deal with transformation by regenerating areas that are currently in a moment of uncertainty. It highlights the potential of underutilized and neglected urban areas on the city's periphery. These spaces, once vibrant industrial or residential zones, now exist in a state of flux—neither fully active nor entirely abandoned—offering a fertile ground for regeneration and reinvention. My project and the masterplan aim to regenerate through careful interventions that respect the history, present functions, and future needs of the area, without wiping out layers of identity.

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

Buildings are often demolished far too quickly if they don't have an obvious historical value. My project seeks to challenge this practice by encouraging a new approach to architecture and transformation. By looking at the site as an evolving entity through different lenses of history, community and potential, the architect can become an advocate for the building and stand against soulless developments that erase identity for profit. This perspective resists erasure and fosters sustainable and creative solutions to transformation. It encourages designs that embrace continuity and change, proving that buildings can adapt and thrive in moments of uncertainty without losing their essence.