

Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences

Graduation Plan:

Personal information	
Name	Annelot Boukje Siegers
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Studio		
Name / Theme		Complex Projects / Bodies & Building Milan
Main mentor	Olindo Caso	Building Knowledge – Research and Design
Second mentor	Florian Eckardt	Building Technology
Third mentor	Yağız Söylev	Building Knowledge – Research and Design
Argumentation of choice of the studio	The Complex Projects studio appealed to me based on the description and lecture given in preparation for the studio's selection in 2024. I was interested to really put into practice their motive of research-through-design and design-through-research. Furthermore, the projects they described, which involve complex thinking about how to better involve humans in design, sparked my interest. I was interested in looking deeper into the relationship between simplicity and complexity. How can you allow a design to be perceived as simple or logic when it actually requires a very complex design to achieve simplicity?	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Beyond the classroom
Goal	
Location:	The Bocconi University in Milan, Italy
The posed problem,	Universities are recognized as places for academic learning, as knowledge centres. However, aside from teaching academic knowledge, university spaces are used to shape a collaborative society. Universities practice a civic role. They contribute by creating social engagement in a city. This could be described as democratization, but rather than focusing on the political meaning, democratization refers to the process by which students develop social skills and actively participate in society through social interaction (Sanborn & Thyne,

	<p>2013). In this sense, social engagement can be defined as the civic role of universities within society.</p> <p>Today, this civic role of Universities is increasingly under pressure. What happens if attending a university is no longer necessary for learning? More and more, digital technologies are shaping educational methods. Developments such as artificial intelligence, hybrid learning and different realities are causing learning to shift away from the physical spaces of university (Alenezi, Wardat & Akour, 2023). Although these new educational tools and methods offer new positives as flexibility and easy accessibility, they also raise questions about the changing role of the university. If the exchange of knowledge can happen anywhere at any time, what role do university spaces still play?</p> <p>The physical university could become more about what happens in between, the conversations people share and the informal encounters. These moments make students relate to each other and the world surrounding them (Temple & Fillippakou, 2007). This is often where democratization happens, where there is listened, debated and differences are encountered (Sanborn & Thyne, 2013). Most universities already support this civic role, but what if it became the main purpose of their physical space? What if universities are social spaces, more than learning spaces?</p>
research questions and	When the traditional role of the university as knowledge centre is changing, perhaps the civic role should become the main subject in order for the physical spaces to stay relevant. Universities not just as a places for knowledge exchange, but as a spaces where students participate in society. If

	<p>the civic role of universities can be defined as social engagement in society, the question becomes how universities can shape their spaces to support this role, while acknowledging the changing educational methods and the influence this has on their spaces. Therefore the main question for this research is:</p> <p>'How can university spaces adapt to the digital transformation of educational methods while sustaining their civic role in social engagement?'</p>
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>In order to explore this research question a design assignment is formulated.</p> <p>While education is becoming increasingly digital, the civic role of the university remains essential. This project will explore how architecture can both support the digital transformation of education as the civic role of universities in social engagement. Within this context, the Bocconi University in Milan offers an interesting case for the design assignment.</p> <p>The Bocconi University in Milan is striving for more global recognition and to expand its involvement in innovation and entrepreneurship. As the university is an economics and business university, it could be valuable for them to connect more with the creative economy that defines Milan. To support this, a new university building will be designed to replace an old university building currently vacant and planned to be demolished.</p> <p>The new Bocconi building will be designed as a social and innovation-stimulating space that connects students with the city. The design will support the ambition of Bocconi to achieve a more</p>

prominent role as global university. This will be accomplished not by traditionally expanding the university, but by better connecting the university with society, through innovation, civic and social engagement, and collaboration with the creative economy of Milan.

Milan as an important city in design, fashion, and entrepreneurship, provides the perfect environment for this approach. By connecting students to the creative economy in Milan, Bocconi will provide students with the opportunity to test their ideas, build networks and engage with real world developments. The building will facilitate this by providing work and collaboration spaces that are flexible, innovation labs (AI, VR, media), and designed social areas. The building will become a space where students are encouraged to take initiative and engage with each other and the city.

By providing spaces for innovation and student initiative alongside areas where social interaction, community, knowledge, and creativity intersect, the new design will explore the question of how university spaces can adapt to the digital transformation of education while maintaining or enabling their civic role in society.

Process

Method description

The research will be conducted using multiple methods, including a literature review, case study analysis, and a field study. Furthermore, as the research begins on the basis of design through research, in Msc4 this will shift to research through design. This will ensure a comprehensive approach and offer a fresh perspective on the research.

Literature

Through analysing literature it will become clear what is already known about topics such as the role of universities in society, the digitalization of educational methods, and the relationship between behaviour and spatial design. This will serve as a foundation for the research into how university spaces can adapt to digitalization while also fostering social engagement in a society.

Field Study

This research will include a field study in Milan. This is where the design assignment is located, namely at the Bocconi University. The field study consists of two methods. The first method involves interviewing students from Bocconi University, as they will be the main users of the new building. The interview will include questions about the role of the physical university buildings for them now and in the future. Questions that will be asked are: 1. What role does the university have for you? 2. How do you think the digitalization of education has changed your interactions with physical university spaces? 3. Do you feel like the university provides the needed designed collective spaces to enhance social engagement? 4. Is Bocconi providing spaces for you as a student to participate in innovation and perhaps even the creative economy of Milan? 5. How does the design of spaces shape your sense of belonging or identity as a student? 6. Could you describe the university spaces that you need or want? The second method will involve mapping using annotated drawings and pictures. In the mapping there will be a focus on the social spaces on and around the campus of Bocconi University. This will investigate the relationship between existing designed spaces and human behaviour on the campus.

Case Studies

Furthermore, case studies will be analysed. This will provide insights into how other architects approached aspects as social interaction and connections to the city in their designs. The case studies will provide a better understanding of program requirements and spatial aspects, as well as how things were done correctly or incorrectly in previous projects related to the research. The case studies that will be analysed in this research are the Bocconi University building in Milan designed by Grafton Architects, the Law Faculty in Paris designed by Chartier Dalix, the Architecture Faculty in Delft designed by a collaboration of five architecture firms, the Haus der Digitalisierung in Tulln designed by Gallister and Kronaus Mitterer Architekten, and the Aalto University Väre Building in Espoo designed by Verstas Architects.

While these case studies are all about different aspects of architectural design that are relevant to different aspects of the research, they do overlap in some ways. Bocconi University investigates the defined relationship between public and private as part of a private campus in Milan. Furthermore, it investigates the relationship with the city using designed transparency and limited openness. The law faculty in Paris explores the relationship between university and city by designing public spaces and repurposing historical barracks positioned in the city structure. It delves deeper into circulation and flow in relation to the interaction of behaviour and spatial design. The Architecture Faculty at the Technical University of Delft focuses on the design of social interaction and engagement. The BK city explores the themes of unintentional interaction and flexible and adaptable spaces. The Haus der Digitalisierung building investigates the link between innovation and architecture. The design focuses on creating spaces that reflect innovation and the future of technology, as well as areas for innovation research and exploration. It both showcases and creates opportunities for innovation. Lastly, the Aalto Väre building in Finland is a building that has a collaboration concept. The building combines different functions in one space to improve interaction in various fields and encourage research and innovation.

Literature and general practical references

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Reflection

My graduation project focuses on the evolving role of university spaces and the relationship between spatial design and human behaviour. The project will look into how digitally transformed educational methods influence human behaviour, How this behaviour shapes the use of university spaces, and how spatial design, in turn, can respond to and guide that behaviour. The goal is to better understand how university spaces can support transformed educational methods while maintaining their civic role in cities.

This relation between spatial design and human behaviour relates with the broader studio topic, namely Bodies & Building. The relationship between humans and building design will be explored through a variety of themes, including digitalization and its impact on the physical university space, as well as the interactions that design can facilitate between humans. Furthermore, the project is related to my track and program of 'Architecture' by providing a design assignment that consists of the task of designing a building in its entirety that will touch upon the various scales of architectural design such as global relevance, urban context, specific building concepts, functionalities and technology, materialization, and critical details.

The completion of this graduation project has value because digitalization and its impact on people are among the most pressing topics in today's society. As AI and different realities become more present, we can start to question what their impact will be on architecture, especially within specific architectural typologies. This project will focus on universities, which serve as a crucial bridge between individuals and society. Universities are often the starting point for connecting students to society. If digitalization starts to play a bigger role within this typology, it becomes important to better understand the university's function and how we can maintain its civic role of social engagement, without holding on to tightly to traditional ways of studying or working. We need to learn how to move with the flow of change, without losing the essential qualities that make the university meaningful.