

Research Proposal
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Methods or Research and Imagination

Discovering the Delights of the Daily





How can the design of the threshold between individual and collective spaces reflect and mediate the tension between personal expression and social identity?

How can thresholds be defined and understood within the urban context of Tallinn?

What is the role of thresholds in shaping Tallinn's urban fabric and architecture?

How do thresholds influence architectural elements, particularly windows, in Tallinn?

What impact do thresholds have on individual experiences and perceptions of space?

This research delves into the relationship between individual and collective spaces, emphasizing the transitions from one to the other. In Tallinn's current urban network, thresholds are mostly absent, creating a disconnect between different areas and architectural styles within the city.

Establishing a clear definition of a 'threshold' is essential to accurately identify and analyze these transitional spaces. This research will then proceed to document and analyze these spaces to lay a foundation for a future design that can bridge these gaps. By examining the different scales of transitions, it is possible to create connections that bring back the human scale. Lastly, to be able to create a well-rounded design, the influence of thresholds on individual experiences and perceptions of space will be explored.

Threshold

The level or point at which you start to experience something, or at which something starts to happen or change.

- Cambridge Dictionary

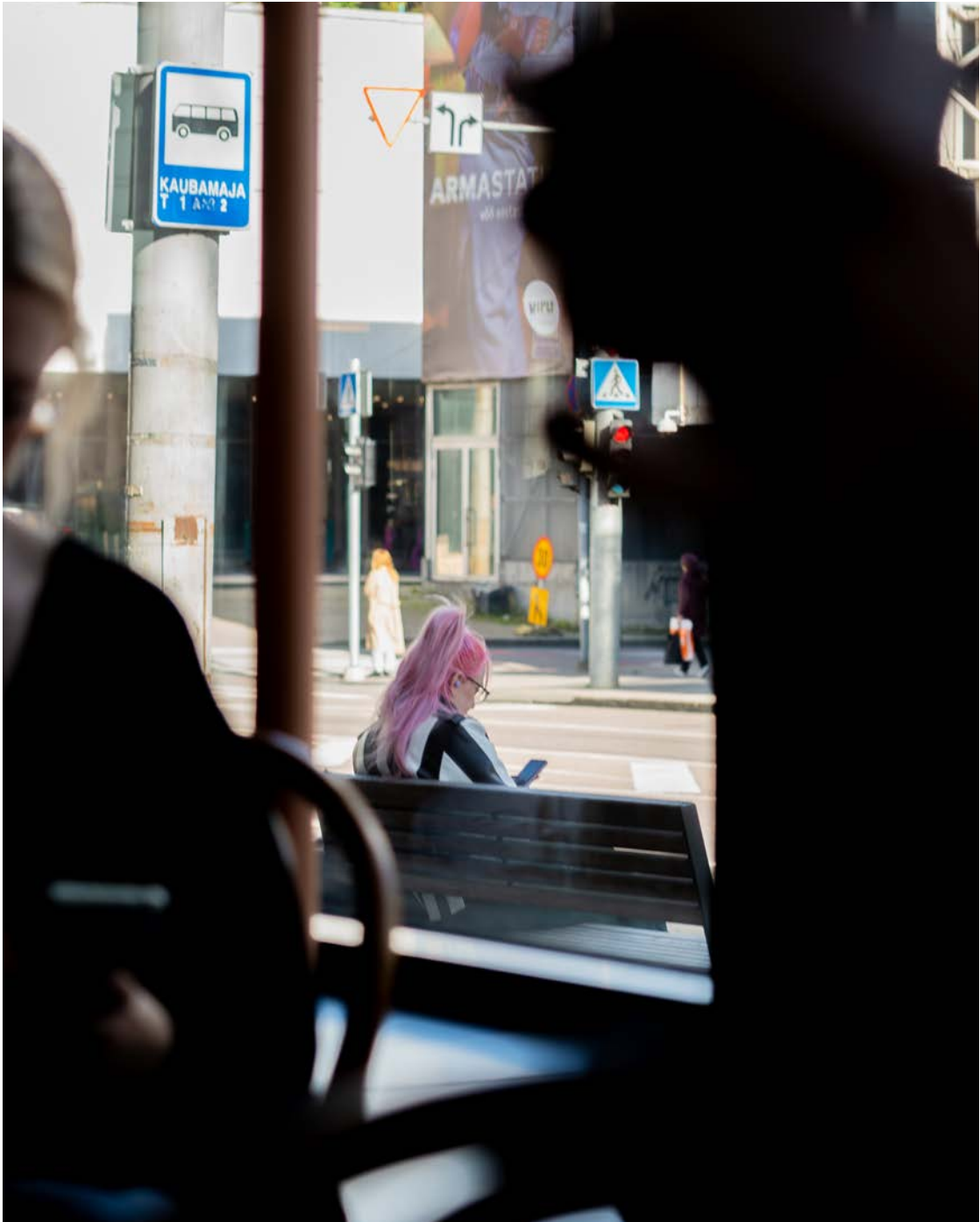
Personal motivation

Over the years, I have developed a special interest in finding the extraordinary within the ordinary moments of life. I capture these moments through various media - photography, films, sketches. Often playing with contrast, framing specific areas, or capturing reflections across mediums. What I find captivating about these moments is their accessibility; they don't require a curated gallery, museum or expensive equipment to experience. They are accessible to everyone and can turn mundane interactions with our surroundings into something memorable. I often notice that when I stop to capture these moments, others around me pause as well, creating a small shared experience and moment of connection.

During my studies, I have been able to integrate this fascination with overlooked moments into my projects. These overlooked moments in my daily life, turn into overlooked possibilities on sites in architecture. Initially, this integration was more intuitive, but in the last two years I recognised the value of intentionally embedding these experiences into architectural design.

For this reason, my research (proposal), and the accompanying design brief represent an exploration into how far I can lean into my personal fascinations that it can still be incorporated into architecture, particularly through the concept of thresholds in an urban context.





Introduction

When arriving in Tallinn, my expectations weren't met but exceeded. It's a vibrant city where history and new architectural styles meet, and it creates a fascinating playground for new developments.

However, this blend of Tallinn's urban fabric is not widely appreciated by the local community. It's often viewed as complicated and unduable. When shared that this is the location of a graduation research project, the common response is a combination of wonder and confusion to understand this choice.

The contrasting opinions on managing heritage; the balance between large and small scales; materials; and the choice between preservation or new constructions, continues to grow.

Within this growing division, an opportunity shows itself. A threshold is lacking and therefore to be found. Linking impersonal spaces to each another and create a small notion of meaning within, a possibility is created for the community to re-love their city.

Combine this with an architectural element, that can be interpreted both symbolic and physical, holds as much individuality as anonymity, is perceived on many different scales, materials and architectural styles, generates a fruitful research gap to dive into.

Window

A space usually filled with glass in the wall of a building or in a vehicle, to allow light and air in and to allow people inside the building to see out.

- Cambridge Dictionary





Theoretical Framework

This research draws from a range of theoretical perspectives, including the works of Pallasmaa, Herzberger, Boomkens on thresholds; Colomina and Pallasmaa on windows; Ingold, Núñez, Vidler on spatial anthropology; and historical insights from Eesti Arhitektuurimuuseum, Brüggemann on Tallinn and Estonia. Together, these sources create a multi-layered approach on thresholds and windows within the urban and architectural context.

This research interprets 'thresholds' not only as physical identities, but as a symbolic transition, that can guide individual movement, perception and experiences. The concepts are centered around scaling, which addresses the clash between large and small scales and sensory engagement, guiding views, framing, and movement within space. To inform later design proposals, photographic documentation, soft maps and diagrams are used to categorise thresholds and windows across Tallinn's urban fabric.



How can thresholds be defined and understood within the urban context?

Methods: photography, soft maps, literature overview, diagrams

1. Outlining the definition of a threshold. This is based on literature and some examples of thresholds on different scales in the urban fabric are shown. The goal is to clarify the concept of a threshold at multiple levels, from intimate spaces to larger public domains. The works of Pallasmaa and Herzberger will serve as foundational texts.
2. Overview of the urban context of Tallinn. Photography documents different types of thresholds within the city. These findings are combined with the previous mentioned literature review, and an analysis is conducted to create a collection of the current thresholds, organised in different categories. This collection enables further understanding and creates a direction towards possible solutions or implementations on site.
3. Conclusion. Small conclusion on combining these two elements and why/where the lack of thresholds is found. Diagrams are used to create an overview of various thresholds and the relations with the urban context.

In this chapter the social side of a threshold is outlined and researched. How can they influence daily life? For now, four variations of thresholds are found and implemented differently.



What is the role of thresholds in shaping Tallinn's urban fabric and architecture?

Methods: soft-maps, contextual analysis, photography, literary overview

1. Outlining the historical influence on thresholds in Tallinn's fabric. To create a complete overview of the Tallinn's relationship with its heritage and view on architecture, it's important to understand the historical layers that are present.
2. Man and Machine, the relation of machine like buildings with its city. Introduction of the contextual analysis, the used framework and outcomes in soft-maps and diagrams. This dives into a threshold on large scale and what the influence of it is on the human perceptions.
3. Conclusions. Defining relations between history, heritage and the influence on a threshold. Continuation of diagrams, here the diagrams highlight the relation with scale and thresholds.

In this chapter the spatial side of thresholds is highlighted and explained. Looking into 'Machine' buildings, and their non-connection with the city's fabric. Machine buildings are buildings that are, due to its scale, no longer connected to their surrounding buildings or to the sense of human scale. These buildings are often defined by its use and characterised by large facades where little fragmentation or differentiation in depth is found. Due to this lack of fragmentation and depth, people often tend to avoid these buildings or seek elements of the building where there is fragmentation or depth to be found, to stay for a while.



Thresholds and Architectural Elements: the case of windows.

Methods: Literature, photography, disciplinary analysis, archival drawings

1. Small vs. large. Introduction of the disciplinary research based on Telliskivi. This is an industrial train area, founded back in 1880 by the Estonian government, which is later used by the USSR for development and maintaining of trains and later as a mercury alloy plant and electricity plant. Throughout the years, many renovations and renewal projects took place and through this change and use, human scale got lost.

2. Window definition. Based on literature, a definition is created to explain the notion of a window. Examples are given of the differentiations in windows and examples of elements that can be defined as windows but are often overlooked due to common beliefs.

3. Analysis of Tallinn's windows. Starting from Telliskivi, with photographs and archival drawings, an analysis is conducted to find the human scale and later various thresholds found in windows. To pinpoint the shift of human scale towards 'machine' scale, windows are used to find the specifics and conclude improvements and notions for later designs. This is then compared to the other windows in Tallinn, by photography and diagrams, to find relations and exceptions.

4. Conclusion. A short conclusion is made that relates scale and thresholds, combined with locations in Tallinn. Continuation of diagrams, the diagrams are used to create an overview of the various thresholds, based on scale.

In this chapter the detail side of thresholds are explored and highlighted. For now, five definitions of windows are found and within this relation an overlap is found with thresholds.



What impact do thresholds have on individual experiences and perceptions of space?

Methods: analysis of reference projects, literary review, diagrams

1. Perceptions of space. Literary review on perceptions of space, and the influence of thresholds on them.
2. Individual experiences. Literary review on individual experiences, how can they be adapted or found in various thresholds
3. Reference projects. Use of reference projects to research various ways of adapting to individual experiences and perceptions of space.
4. Conclusions. Final reflections will synthesize the research findings, providing a coherent picture of how thresholds shape Tallinn's urban experience.



Conclusions.

1. Overview of previous chapters. In this overview, important conclusions and themes are highlighted and grouped. This to create a streamlined output of the influence of thresholds on an urban fabric.
2. Diagrams. All the diagrams, made in previous chapters are combined, grouped and possibly ranked on positive-negative influence on social, spatial, urban and material scale.

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