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	**Ruba Ammiwala**
Student number	5080932

Studio		
Name / Theme	Inclusive communities	
Main mentor	Gerard van Bortel	Real estate and housing
Second mentor	Roberto Rocco	Spatial justice
Argumentation of choice of the studio	The studio "Inclusive Communities" aligns closely with my personal interest in understanding the social dynamics of urban development and how these can be shaped to promote equity and belonging. The theme allows for a critical exploration of how communities experience spatial change, particularly in the face of regulatory and institutional frameworks. It also offers a space to connect academic knowledge with real-world practices in socially responsible urban redevelopment.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Meaningful urban neighbourhoods, measurable social impact
Goal	
Location:	Urban redevelopment projects in the Netherlands
The posed problem,	Developers are increasingly expected to align their social strategies with regulatory frameworks such as the CSRD and ESRS S3. However, these principles are abstract and difficult to operationalize, especially in the absence of sector-specific tools. Meanwhile, affected communities experience redevelopment through highly localized, context-specific realities. This results in a misalignment between institutional (system world) strategy and lived experience (lifeworld).
research questions and	**Main question**: *How do developers in the Netherlands interpret and integrate social sustainability*

	in neighbourhood development, and how does this align with ESRS S3 reporting requirements on affected communities? Sub-questions **SQ1**: How do the ESRS S3 standard and the Shirazi & Keivani (2018) framework compare and contrast in their treatment of social sustainability in urban redevelopment, and how can their integration inform an adapted, more operational framework? **SQ2**: How do Dutch developers define and strategize around social sustainability and affected communities in urban redevelopment projects? **SQ3**: What are the key gaps and overlaps between the adapted framework and the strategies of developers regarding social sustainability in urban redevelopment? **SQ4**: How can the misalignment between the adapted framework and the strategies of developers regarding social sustainability be addressed by incorporating the local context?
design assignment in which these result.	To develop and test an integrated analytical framework for assessing social sustainability in urban redevelopment, grounded in both regulatory and academic perspectives, and applied to real-world development cases to evaluate alignment between policy, developer strategy, and community needs.

Process

Method description

This thesis follows a qualitative, exploratory research design, aimed at understanding how social sustainability is defined, implemented, and reported in Dutch urban redevelopment. It focuses particularly on the alignment between regulatory expectations (ESRS S3) and developer strategies, using a phased, multi-perspective approach.

1. **Framework Development (SQ1)**
   - A comparative analysis is conducted between the ESRS S3 reporting standard and the Shirazi & Keivani (2018) academic framework on social sustainability.
   - The goal is to develop an adapted operational framework to assess social sustainability in urban redevelopment.
   - This framework is validated through expert interviews with professionals in ESG reporting, urban planning, and social impact.

2. **Case Study Analysis of Developer Strategies (SQ2 & SQ3)**
   - 2–3 redevelopment projects in the Netherlands are selected, focusing on urban renewal with social ambitions.
   - Data is collected through:
     - Semi-structured interviews with developers involved in these projects.

    - Review of project documentation such as vision statements, sustainability reports, and design briefs.
- These interviews explore how developers interpret and implement social sustainability and how their strategies compare to the adapted framework.

3. Alignment Analysis with Expert Reflection (SQ4)

- For SQ4, the same experts interviewed in SQ1 are re-engaged to evaluate the gaps and overlaps between the adapted framework and the developers' strategies (based on findings from SQ3).
- Experts are asked to reflect on:
    - The practical applicability of the adapted framework,
    - The relevance of the identified misalignments,
    - Potential improvements or implementation strategies.
- This stage closes the analytical loop by integrating academic, regulatory, and professional perspectives.

Data Analysis

- All interview transcripts and documents are coded using thematic analysis (e.g., in Atlas.ti).
- Findings are mapped against the adapted framework and ESRS S3 principles, highlighting gaps and overlaps.
- Analysis is informed by Habermas's system vs. lifeworld lens to understand how institutional logics compare to value-driven social sustainability ambitions.

Literature and general practical references

Academic Literature

- Social Sustainability and Urban Redevelopment:
  - Shirazi & Keivani (2018)
  - Colantonio & Dixon (2009, 2011)
  - Dempsey et al. (2011)
  - Woodcraft (2012), Dixon & Woodcraft (2013)
- **Regulation and ESG Reporting:**
  - EFRAG (2023): *European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS)*
  - European Commission (2022): *CSRD Directive*
  - Chen et al. (2023), Baumüller & Grbenic (2021): *Double materiality & CSRD compliance*
- **Sociological/Philosophical Frameworks:**
  - Habermas (1987): *System and Lifeworld*
  - Janssen & Basta (2022): *Capability Approach in Urban Planning*
  - Missimer (2017): *Social Systems and Resilience*
- **Practical References and Reports**
  - CitiesDAO (2024): *ESG-local gap in urban planning*
  - Nevejan (2024, BPD): *ESRS in development practice*
  - Social Value Foundation reports and tools
  - KPMG (2024): *CSRD and ESG landscape in Dutch real estate*
  - Developer documentation: project-level data from BPD, Heijmans, ERA Contour, etc.

These sources support both the conceptual grounding and practical applicability of the study, bridging the academic and professional domains.

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 project is rooted in the *Inclusive Communities* studio, focusing on how urban environments can be planned and developed in ways that support equity, belonging, and well-being. The project also aligns with the MBE track's emphasis on integrating management, policy, and the built environment, particularly through regulatory frameworks like the CSRD and their strategic implications for developers.

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

Social sustainability remains an underdeveloped area within both academic research and professional practice in the built environment. This thesis contributes to the field by developing a hybrid framework that operationalizes ESRS S3 using grounded theory. It addresses a real-world problem, how to define, measure, and report on social impacts, and proposes a way to bridge the gap between system-world strategies and community realities. Professionally, the outcomes of this research can support developers, municipalities, and investors in aligning their reporting practices with emerging regulatory expectations while maintaining local sensitivity and accountability.