Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences

Graduation Plan: All tracks

The graduation plan consists of at least the following data/segments:

Personal information	
Name	Fynn Nikolas Mengel
Student number	5634849

Studio		
Name / Theme	Explore Lab	
Main mentor	Georg Vrachliotis	Theory of Architecture and Digital Culture
Second mentor	Rachel Lee	History of Architecture and Urban Planning
Argumentation of choice of the studio	Explore Lab offers the fantastic possibility to embark on a journey along personal fascinations and unique research and design methodology co-developed by the students and their respective teachers of choice. To me, Explore Lab is best reflected in a scaffolding that holds me safely and enables freedom in elaborating, researching and designing its infills. I perceive my project approach to be mainly revolving around optimism, intuition and exploration. The studio grants the necessary means to synthesise this position and carry it to a coherent result.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Bodenschatz Berlin. Preparing the Ground with Design Science Fiction

Goal	
Location:	Berlin, Germany
The posed problem,	As the financialisation of Berlin's land advances, the unique cultural and ecological diversity of the metropolis is increasingly threatened. The subsequent intangibility of land tenure results in diminishing agency of human and non-human actors in the city. These challenges are, amongst others, reflected upon in Germany's *Bodenfrage* discourse, oftentimes translated along 'property issue'. The mostly economic *Bodenfrage* discussion, however, only

	peripherally stresses the ambiguous significance of the term *Boden* (ground, soil, territory, habitat,…), abandoning the three-dimensionality and stratification of the ground, which results in a mere technical discourse about ownership of an over-conceptualised *Boden*. The role of architectural research and design is to be re-explored along the spatial, social and ecological complexity of Berlin's ground.
research questions and	To what extent can an operative, narrative and curative science-fiction approach counter-speculate towards anticipatory, inclusive urban futures? How can agency be redistributed along subversive cyber-socio-ecological alliances to adequately act towards Berlin's *Bodenfrage*?
design assignment in which these result.	Architectural design as a conclusive step in an operative and narrative subversion strategy: What role can architecture play in a speculative future of self-generating urban landscapes? What could characterise architecture as a *machine of loving grace* (Brautigan, 1967)?

Process

Method description

As the title implies, my project is working along design, science and fiction and translates and mediates between three different products: A) a technical paper introducing and explaining the first blockchain-based eco-Community Land Trust as an enabler of autonomous land tenure in Berlin [science / code] B) a territorial myth explaining said model in an accessible and appropriable narrative [fiction / myth] and C) an architectural design that is the result of the two former parts and forms a logical conclusion within the fields of architectural science-fiction and urban subversion.
The methods and techniques applied and utilised are:

A) Applied research: technological-entrepreneurial approach, White Paper conception, business plan orchestration
Qualitative research: interviews with established foundations like CLT Stadtbodenstiftung Berlin

B) Historic research: study of indigenous territorial myths, land evolution and the role of Arcadian landscape configuration over time
Field research: photographic and sonic exploration and documentation of key sites
Experimental narration: Fictional Criticism (Frichot & Stead) and Speculative Fabulation as well as Sonic Fiction (Drexciya, Sun Ra): Sonic curation of landscapes and fictional approach towards landscape and architectural narration

C) Field research: photographic and sonic exploration and documentation of design site
Research-by-Design: Science-Fiction in architecture
Experimental narration: Fictional Criticism as a tool to conceive and narrate architectural interventions, set-and-script approach (Eisenstein, Tschumi)
Curation techniques: atlas of references specifically dedicated to the relation of machines and architecture

Literature and general practical preference

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- Chan, C. (2022). Interview with Ngo, A.-L., Nehmer, A. in *ARCH+ 247*, p. 86-93
- Colomina, B. & Wigley, M. (2016) *Are We Human*? Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers.
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- Mumford, L. (1966). *The Myth of the Machine. Technics and Human Development*. London: Secker & Warburg.
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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)?
   - My graduation project roots in diverse theoretical backgrounds actively investigated within the research framework of TU Delft / Bouwkunde, yet branches out into manyfold directions with different degrees of relation to the existing research and practice within the university's research community, the master programme and the track. I perceive this 'tree' as an essential quality of my project, as it is moving through boundaries between existing research topics and methods from the fields at BK, yet simultaneously navigating into other disciplines. I operate, for example, on an urban scale while trying to subvert the regime of financialisation in Berlin. This urban scale is informed by architectural theory and history, but it is simultaneously regarded through the lens of economic, sociological, ecological, sonic and technological theory and methods. Therefore, the thesis is embarking on an interdisciplinary design route, where the products are all to a certain degree designed, as they are part of the same underlying science-fiction story. Design thinking, as it is present in every architecture project, is therefore expanded into other disciplines and used as a core method to understand, implement and finally narrate the project-based approach throughout my graduation project. The thesis, in both research and design, is advancing into a combined approach of declaring itself a speculative proposal that is informed by architectural, urbanist, but also financial, digital, social and ecologic research. However, it is the very mode of research and thinking by design that ties them together and links back to the programme and track at TU Delft, just like the roots of a tree supply its branches with water and nutrients.

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

   - Karl Marx in his Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach famously stated in 1845: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it". My project responds to this statement as an active driver of change, a proposal to re-think the city - starting from the ground and preparing such as the basis of an utopian future. As the thesis is mainly revolving around speculative subversion of current challenges within Berlin's land tenure and the related agency in the city, it is conceived as a case study on three layers:
   A) First, I am proposing a new way of living together in the city along re-thought land ownership, agency and narration. By bringing forward the idea and showcasing the feasibility of such, it becomes a model-like approach to be used, appropriated, and hopefully realised – achieving a high degree of social and ecological relevance for Berlin.
   B) Second, I am testing science-fiction as a medium of separating space and time. This leads to a range of entry points into the questions of how we are going to live, design, narrate together in a non-fixed future scenario that

could be set tomorrow – or in a hundred years. This brings forward an intriguing scientific approach in which volatility/uncertainty in research and design are (to a certain degree) ruled out in favour of enabling utopian and dystopian discussions and narratives through which we can imagine, discuss and navigate the future of cities and their architecture.

C) Last, understanding the architect's role as a coordinating activist and re-thinking the role of architectural research and design along these lines is terminating the passive role designers often have beyond their contracts and tasks. I want to emphasise the enormous potential of a background in design education for this 'beyond', as architects are trained to perform on abstract tasks and deliver real-world solutions for them. In that sense, my graduation project is also a case-study for architectural agency beyond the typical disciplinary boundaries – not in the self-declared grandeur of Le Corbusier, but in a humble and yet effective way of perceiving more of the world and its challenges as design opportunities.