

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	Cassandre Albane van Duinen
Student number	5637198

Studio		
Name / Theme	Dwelling Graduation Studio – Global Housing	
Main mentor	Nelson Mota Antonio Paoletti	Design Research
Second mentor	Ludovica Cassina	Technical Building Design
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>I have always been drawn to humanitarian architecture and social projects, and have applied to the Global Housing graduation studio in an effort to explore this interest.</p> <p>Previously, on an exchange to Lausanne, I worked on a humanitarian project in South Sudan and had really loved using my experience and education for something meaningful.</p>	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Made in Bangladesh
Goal	
Location:	Sylhet, Bangladesh
The posed problem,	<p>Humanitarianism is portrayed as a benevolent force aimed at alleviating suffering and fostering development in underprivileged regions. However, many humanitarian interventions inadvertently catalyze dependency and perpetuate systems of inequality and exploitation, mirroring the dynamics of colonial rule. In Bangladesh's textile industry, this dependency is particularly evident, where the interests of Western stakeholders overshadow the needs of local workers.</p> <p>Bangladesh, once celebrated for its heritage in weaving, particularly through Jamdani, Manipuri, and Dhaka muslin, saw this traditional craft decline under colonial and commercial pressures in the 18th and 19th centuries. Today, foreign investments in Bangladesh's textile sector echo similar patterns,</p>

	<p>reshaping the industry to serve external demands rather than promoting sustainable local growth.</p> <p>This research examines the intersection of humanitarian aid, neocolonialism, and economic dependency within Bangladesh’s RMG industry. Very often, associations and social workers direct their attention to the working conditions of garment factories. However, very little effort is brought to the living conditions of garment workers, and the places they go home to after work. However, garment workers often find themselves leaving their rural village to move to Dhaka, where they work in factories and live in slums around them.</p> <p>Drawing inspiration from initiatives like the Grameen Bank Housing Program, the idea is to envision models that prioritize local autonomy and empower garment workers to have suitable housing conditions.</p> <p>Addressing these dynamics is crucial to achieving a decolonized textile industry wherein garment workers, who truly depend on the industry for their financial situation, have the ability to set new standards as to what it is to work in a factory.</p>
<p>research questions and</p>	<p>How can the reopening of the Sylhet Textile Mill provide an opportunity to improve the living conditions of garment workers, and what lessons can be drawn from experiences in Dhaka-based factories in addressing the housing and migration patterns.</p>
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>The Sylhet Textile Mill is a factory on the outskirts of the city center that closed in 2003 because it couldn’t keep up with the fast fashion industry. It’s been left abandoned for over 20 years and is the only remaining textile factory in Sylhet.</p> <p>It is meant to reopen in 2026 as a shoe factory, and the whole industrial complex of 11 hectares offers opportunities to reimagine how the project could integrate housing for workers, as well as community spaces.</p>
<p>[This should be formulated in such a way that the graduation project can answer these questions. The definition of the problem has to be significant to a clearly defined area of research and design.]</p>	

Process

Method description

Prior to the trip to Bangladesh, I had spoken to a few garment workers and exchanged with one of the garment workers' unions in order to understand the situation and discuss the issues they are facing both individually and as a community (**interviews**).

During the trip, I met with these same garment workers in the Savar region next to Dhaka, visited their homes, and managed to get inside a garment factory in an effort to see how the working conditions are and to understand how the day to day routines of these workers usually go. This really helped me envision the priorities that should come up in my design (**field work**).

Also, after doing some research about the industry in Sylhet, it became clear that nowadays almost all the factories are actually in Dhaka. But I had stumbled upon one factory in Sylhet – the Sylhet Textile Mill, which closed over 20 years ago. I went, and met the director of financial affairs of the factory, and he had me visit the whole complex of the abandoned site. He showed me the abandoned factory, the old workers' housing, the abandoned cafeteria, etc. And told me that the site would reopen in 2026. And then it became clear that as 2 000 workers will come here to work in one year, the existing housing block (which can only house about 80 people) is not suitable (**site selection**).

Literature and general practical references

As we started the research phase of the project, I studied two reference housing projects – one that I felt highlighted the colonial dynamics (Tema Manhean in Ghana) and one workers' housing project situated in Bangladesh (Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute Workers' Housing).

I then studied the history of Bangladesh's relationship with textile making and handloom fabrics to understand how it went from an artistry to a fast-fashion making machine.

I also read lots of literature about the colonial dynamics still omnipresent in the humanitarian sector. These included books, articles, poetry even, that reflected how all colonized countries are now receiving foreign assistance to develop. I'll include these here:

- Alexander, C. (1979). *The timeless way of building*. Oxford University Press.
- Aloudat, T. (2021). Who gets to decolonize humanitarianism? Centre for Humanitarian Action. <https://www.chaberlin.org/en/blog/whogets-to-decolonise-humanitarianism-2>
- Aly, H. (2022). Ten efforts to decolonise aid. Changing practices around funding, leadership, narrative, and identity. *The New Humanitarian*. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/feature/2022/08/12/10-efforts-to-decolonise-aid>
- Ashraf, K. K. (2012). *Designing Dhaka: A Manifesto for a Better City*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Loka Press.
- Aranya Crafts Limited. (2019, February 12). *Crafts for conservation* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjo2d1PuqhA>
- Ban, S. (2014). *Humanitarian Architecture*. Aspen, CO: Aspen Art Press.
- Barnett, M. (2011). *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*. Cornell University Press.
- Barnett, M. (2016). *Paternalism beyond Borders*. Cambridge University Press.
- British International Investment agrees \$52 million loan to DBL Group. (2023). British International Investment. Retrieved September 25, 2024, from <https://www.bii.co.uk/en/news-insight/news/britishinternational-investment-agrees-52-million-loan-to-dbl-group/>
- Chatterjee, D.K. (2004). *The Ethics of Assistance, Morality and the Distant Needy*. Salt Lake City, UT: Cambridge University Press.
- Correa, C. (1988). The new landscape. In *The new landscape* (pp. 119–135). Concept Media. (Original work published 1985)
- Dasgupta, B. (2000). Trade in Pre-Colonial Bengal. *Social Scientist*, 28(5/6), 47–76. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3518180>.

- Dussart, F., & Lester, A. (2019). *Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Government: Protecting Aborigines across the Nineteenth-Century British Empire*. Cambridge University Press.
- Duffield, M. (2019). *Post-Humanitarianism: Governing Precarity in the Digital World*. Polity Press.
- Fanon, F. (1961). *Les Damnés de la Terre*. Francis G.H. Crown Publishers.
- Fauzia Erfan Ahmed. (2004). The Rise of the Bangladesh Garment Industry: Globalization, Women Workers, and Voice. *NWSA Journal*, 16(2), 34–45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4317051>.
- Fehrenbach, H., & Rodogno, D. (2015). *Humanitarian Photography. A History*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fugita, Y. (2020). *Rethinking Humanitarian Aid from a Postcolonial/Decolonial Perspective*. [MA Thesis]. Erasmus University.
- Giovetti, O. (2023). How colonialism shaped many of the world's biggest humanitarian crises. <https://concernusa.org/news/colonialismhistory-humanitarian-crises/>
- Hayes, Z. (Director). (2014). *Clothes to die for* [Documentary].
- Jencks, C., & Silver, N. (2013). *Adhocism: The case for improvisation* (Expanded and updated ed.). MIT Press.
- Khanna, P. (2011). Making Labour Voices Heard During an Industrial Crisis: Workers' struggles in the Bangladesh garment industry. *Labour, Capital and Society*, 44(2), 106–129. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43158407>.
- Kroll, L. (1986). *An architecture of complexity*. MIT Press.
- Lang, J., Desai, M. [Madhavi], & Desai, M. [Miki]. (1997). *Architecture and Independence: The Search for Identity in India 1880 to 1980*. New York City, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Lester, A., & Dussart, F. (2014). Colonization and Humanitarianism: Histories, Geographies and Biographies. In *Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance Protecting Aborigines across the Nineteenth-Century British Empire* (pp. 3–36). Cambridge University Press.
- Michelle Moyd. (2016). What's Wrong with Doing Good? Reflections on Africa, Humanitarianism, and the Challenge of the Global. *Africa Today*, 63(2), 92–96. <https://doi.org/10.2979/africatoday.63.2.10>.
- Morshed, A. (2018). *Dhaka Totem*. Alltrim Publishers.
- Mukherjee, J. (2015). *Hungry Bengal: War, Famine and the End of Empire*. Oxford University Press.
- Pallister-Wilkins, P. (2021). Saving the souls of white folk: Humanitarianism as white supremacy. *Security Dialogue*, 52(1), 98–106.
- Plowright, W. (2024, June 10). Le passé impérial et l'avenir décolonisé de l'action humanitaire - Alternatives Humanitaires. <https://www.alternatives-humanitaires.org/fr/2024/03/20/le-passe-imperial-etlavenir-decolonise-de-laction-humanitaire/>.
- Report, T. (2020, November 11). Sylhet Textile Mills: A case of 19 years of indecision. *The Business Standard*. <https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/industry/sylhet-textile-mills-case-19-years-indecision-156481>.
- Sabaratnam, M. (2017). *Decolonizing Intervention: International Statebuilding in Mozambique*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Sarker, M. M. I. (2018). Garments Exports in Bangladesh: The Unexpected Success Story. *Social Scientist*, 46(9–10 (544–545)), 61–70. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26611324>.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. New York City, NY: Knopf.
- Serageldein, I. (Ed.). (1997). *The Architecture of Empowerment: People, Shelter, and Livable Cities*. Academy Editions.
- Sinclair, C. (2006). *Design Like You Give a Damn*. New York City, NY: Metropolis Books.

Although these readings/consultations were helpful, I think most important were the correspondences with garment workers and the garment workers' union. I intend to keep these exchanges going throughout my design process to receive real-life feedback from the people that I'm designing for.

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 involves housing for garment workers in Sylhet, and the studio's topic relates to the complexity of global housing, focusing on the country of Bangladesh. Bangladesh faces many challenges – floods, over densification of the capital, ender segregation, amongst others.

I believe my project brings forward one group out of this complexity, wherein I will be focusing on a low-income labour community that makes up one of the largest of its kind in Bangladesh. This approach brings together many if not all challenges faced by the country – migrants going to Dhaka to work in garment factories, it is the only industry where women can work easily, the workers live in flood-prone areas, etc.

My master program aims to challenge students by proposing this type of complexity, and guiding a process of solution-oriented research and design approaches. Within the field of architecture, projects often come with infinite layers of complexity, and I believe that my graduation project aims to address this kind of challenge.

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

Considering that lots of research is done about the working conditions in garment factories, I believe that focusing on the places garment workers go to after work truly bridges the gap in the knowledge we have of the industry. After gaining first-hand experience in how these communities live (usually 5 people sharing one bedroom of 20m², one toilet and one kitchen for about 60 people), I have identified a real problem, and my ambition is to propose a realistic housing project which can be applied to a real-life factory that will reopen its doors in one year.

Also, considering that most garment factories in Bangladesh export to Europe and the United States, and that in the end it is our society that is the benefactor, this research is extremely relevant. We know the working conditions are cruel, but many don't think about the extent to which these communities struggle.