

DRAFT REFLECTION

I am using this final, graduation project as an opportunity to explore the agency of spatial design to instigate behavioural change. My research framework therefore follows an 'emancipatory' approach¹, with the ultimate aim of not only recording and analysing current systems of power, but also taking steps to enable their transformation.

Within this umbrella approach, I am following two complementary methodological routes – mapping and scenario building as quantitative measures at the territorial scale, balanced by a qualitative approach through narrative at the scale of the body. Combining these approaches (*how*) aims not only to gain an understanding of patterns and impacts at a societal level, but also to centre the experience of the individual. I believe this is fundamental in order to understand the lived impacts under systems of power - the driver for me to carry out this research (*why*).

Aspect 1 | *the relationship between research and design*

The Transitional Territories studio has followed a 'research by design' methodology, learning to utilise design as a tool in the exploration of issues across the scales. In the past, I have always subconsciously understood research separately from and preceding the design phase, a process followed in order to inform the design. Through this project however, I have aimed to blur the division between the two, repeatedly returning to my core research questions and intentions. I have found this approach very helpful in reframing my ideas about the role of design, seeing it not as an endpoint or solution but as another tool of education and exploration.

Though I found the approach particularly helpful during the focussed research phase of MSc3, I initially found the transition from MSc3 to MSc4 much harder than expected, struggling to integrate design into the research process established throughout MSc3. Reflecting upon the process over the course of the project, I feel this can be partially attributed to a lack of the employment of design in the earlier stages, meaning the translation of fairly philosophical and high level ideas into a spatial language at the architectural scale felt abrupt. I therefore feel the 'research by design' approach could be far stronger by employing design tests and spatial manipulation from a much earlier stage.

Aspect 2 | *the relationship 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 takes the studio topic, which seeks new forms of coexistence in the North Sea, and applies this specifically to the coexistence of humans and other animals. Recognising the food industry as a huge area that requires transition in order to emancipate other animals, my project focuses particularly on issues related to food production within the larger studio framework of occupation at sea.

Through carrying out this project under the MSc architecture track, the project and studio topic are framed in terms of the agency of design as an instigator of change. The studio is concerned with urban, landscape, water management and architectural responses alike, therefore my proposal navigates the territorial scale of the issues initially through an infrastructural scale. However, as an architecture student, the project ultimately reflects upon the scope of architectural design to have an impact at the scale of the body and tests the potential to impact the experience and choices made by each individual.

I am researching the agency of design to create spatial relationships, connections and qualities that can afford and encourage change, focussing not only on the infrastructure needed, but also the volumes, details and finishes that can achieve an impact at the scale of the body and individual relationships.

¹ Groat, Linda, and David Wang. *Architectural Research Methods*. New Jersey: Wiley, 2013.

Aspect 3 | *Elaboration on research method and approach chosen by the student in relation to the graduation studio methodical line of inquiry, reflecting thereby upon the scientific relevance of the work.*

The chair of Transitional Territories follows an over-arching methodology of research by design, which I have also followed closely through my own project. Within this, the studio heavily utilises mapping, as well as scenario building and literary review as its predominant research methods. I have found this a useful launch point to gain an overall understanding of the quantitative impacts of the industry at a territorial scale, highlighting general patterns, the scale of the concern and applicability at a global level. However, due to the complicity of mapping as a tool of commodification², I aimed to balance this method with a qualitative methodology at the scale of the body. Following a narrative-based research methodology, I used a combination of interview and observational, praxeological techniques to also consider the experience of space at the scale of the individual. This emphasis on the qualitative has also led my research through the intense design phase, designing through narrative, serial vision and tactical approaches to manipulate space at a fairly small, community and individual scale.

Since my methodology largely follows and complements the overall studio approach, they complement each other well, hopefully allowing my project to contribute to the larger body of work already underway within the studio.

Aspect 4 | *Elaboration on the relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific framework, touching upon the transferability of the project results.*

The combination of intersectional vegan theory and spatial design is seldomly approached. The majority of current research and literature addresses ecological concerns via a very broad lens, the conversation centring around increasing biodiversity and reducing species loss. The outcome therefore reflects this, treating and representing members of other species as one mass, addressed mainly by large landscaping projects/disciplines and therefore often lacking a connection to the human. This spatial treatment inevitably feeds into our perception of other animals as one commodity rather than complex, varied and sentient individuals, ultimately further alienating them from our awareness.

On the other hand, the impact of spatial design and therefore its potential as an instigator of change, is frequently undervalued in philosophy and theory outside of the architectural profession. The intersection and overlap of these two disciplines is therefore a highly important lesson, research and design challenge to be undertaken.

In a time of transition, we are facing critical pressure on the climate, human and non-human populations, as well as a growing movement towards social justice. The urgent need to find new, sustainable forms of food production is highly relevant. With growing awareness of environmental and ethical issues surrounding our current cultures of food consumption, particularly the consumption of animal products, it is a pressing question and I hope this project could contribute to a growing strong movement seeking other options.

I see this project as a body of research which is transferable to the search for a better solution to our food production in modern times, tackling the need for an increase in production, a more ethical and sustainable production and a more integrated, visible production. In this way, the concepts behind making the invisible visible in order to encourage a collective and individual responsibility are directly transferable to so many other aspects of life which are hidden from the public view and conscience today.

² There has been a growing criticism of mapping as an instrumental tool in various acts of domination, for example colonisation. Eg. Bélanger, Pierre, and Alexander Arroyo. *Ecologies of Power*. Chicago: MIT Press, 2016.

Aspect 5 | *Discuss the ethical issues and dilemmas you may have encountered in (i) doing the research, (ii, if applicable) elaborating the design and (iii) potential applications of the results in practice.*

My project actively aims to instigate a change in peoples' cultures, lifestyles and livelihoods. Though I am acknowledging this as a core part of the challenge, consciously incorporating design tools to encourage a net positive change in culture, the impacts on some people's livelihoods is bound to be beyond my full understanding.

The call for a phasing out and ending of the fishing industry clearly requires a change of lifestyle and career for those currently involved in the industry, which has ethical implications. I have treated this with importance, prioritising the narrative-based aspect of my research on talking to local fishermen and processors. However, I also take these ethical decisions within the wider context of ethical implications, realising that the change required by these people involved enables a great change for the billions of fish and other animals impacted, as well as a necessary step in order to secure the environment and food supply for humans and other animals alike in the future.

In designing for a change to local ecologies, I am also cognisant of the responsibility that comes with this. I have aimed to do as much research as possible into the projected impacts of proposed changes, but in reality have struggled to find resources to do more than secondary, fairly general research. Though I feel this is not ideal, and has ethical implications, I acknowledge that all proposals made also cause a change in ecologies. However, since these impacts can often be unintentional, they are consequently granted less research. Therefore, though I hope to focus more effort and resources on investigating the ecological and behavioural changes the project may bring, particularly its impact on other animals, I still feel confident that the proposal has a net positive ethical contribution.

Overall, I feel my approach to research and design has allowed me to explore interesting and relevant aspects of the agency and potential of architecture, therefore providing a suitable methodological framework for the exploration of my research questions. I have come to recognise and frame my research via three key agencies of spatial design, an understanding which helps me clarify my reasons for choosing architecture as a discipline and remind me how I want to utilise it.

I have had good feedback from tutors which I have tried to incorporate throughout the process, whilst still retaining the core of my own interests and approaches. This has helped me see issues I can become blind to and clarify the best spatial compositions and decisions to achieve my design goals. I have been reflecting upon the student-tutor relationship, in particular how to best communicate and discuss my design decisions confidently and effectively. I feel this is something that often becomes a barrier for me in projects and therefore is something I will continue to explore and work on through the next phase of my education.

I have learned a lot from my own work and process, embracing the opportunity to explore my heuristic approach to design and to both incorporate and challenge it via an increased awareness of my process. The opportunity to really explore a personal design fascination has been a great experience. I feel the journey from such a wide set of problems, down to the smallest detail of how these could possibly be addressed has been a highly beneficial process. It has caused me to really question why I want to design, why I am designing the way that I am and what can be achieved through this. I am still grappling with questions over whether spatial tools really are the most effective way to bring about change, how to build efficiently to minimise input and maximise outcome, and whether spatial design really is right for me, but I feel the fact that the project has challenged these questions and ideas, so fundamental for the discipline and certainly in my attraction to it, proves to me that this project is exploring exactly that which it needs to.