

# 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](mailto: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	Ron Weissenburger
Student number	4676971

Studio		
Name / Theme	Borders & Territories – Transient Liquidities along the New Silk Road II	
Main mentor	F. Geerts O.R.G. Rommens	Architectural design mentors
Second mentor	G. Koskamp	Building technology mentor
Argumentation of choice of the studio	My decision in choosing the Borders & Territories studio is based on the freedom within this studio, where you can conduct research based on your own interest in a topic. But to question everything at the same time. In this way the B&T studio gives the space to do deep research into this theme, to take a strong position in contemporary architecture. Almost no vision or idea seems too crazy, which results in experimental architecture. This freedom, but also the precision in expressing ideas, research and design using different methods (drawings, models, maps, etc.) gave me an interesting challenge, because this method sometimes lies outside my own comfort zone.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Modernization of a City of Migrants
Goal	
Location:	Istanbul, Turkey - Tarlabası
The posed problem,	The focus of this thesis is on the phenomenon of the informal settlement and its informal economy. The location of the graduation project called Tarlabası is an informal settlement in the middle of the city center of Istanbul. The neighborhood has been a shelter for the poor, refugees and minorities for generations. The district functions as its own hidden and self-regulating world. This has created an informal economy that is inextricably linked to the rest of Istanbul, such as the waste/recycling

	<p>industry. It cannot exist without the informal branch of waste pickers, who are responsible for 80% of recycling in Turkey. The unique district of Tarlabası is seen as bad and criminal by the authoritarian neoliberal city planners. Therefore, the neighborhood has already been hit by gentrification processes, ignoring the unique characteristics and social roots of this neighborhood. Urban renewal or gentrification or however you want to name it, is seen as a necessary tool to erase certain parts of social and physical identities created in the last 50 years via programs of demolition and resettlement. Residents are evicted or given unfair compensation to leave their homes or workplaces. As a result, the gentrification processes result in a displacement of the poor, driving them away from the city center and their informal work. In 2009, at least one million residents in Istanbul were under threat of forced eviction due to the Urban Transformation Project. The unique characteristics, such as creativity, flexibility, intrinsic value and self-regulation are ignored by the top-down view of modernization, leading to generic neighborhoods without economic flexibility and with social segregation, but also resulting in a further decline of informal settlements.</p>
<p>research questions and</p>	<p>This thesis aims to take a critical look at the current neoliberalist modernization processes of urban areas around the world through the case of Istanbul. Urban informality is receiving more and more attention in the literature, but there is still a lot of uncertainty about how we can deal with this phenomenon in urban design and architecture. That is why the following questions are central to this thesis:</p> <p>Research-oriented questions:  What is the impact of neoliberal modernization on the informal settlements in Istanbul and how can the modernization of the informal settlement be planned in an inclusive way?</p> <p>In which way do the innerworkings of Tarlabası's informal practices contribute to a larger system?</p> <p>How is the informal economy of Tarlabası spatially expressed?</p> <p>Design-oriented questions:  How can architecture advocate self-regularity?</p>

	<p>How can using techniques of informal practices contribute to architectural design?</p> <p>In which way can architecture contribute in creating awareness in the importance and strengths of informality and address that formality and informality are linked in a dynamic, interrelated and complex system?</p>
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>The design location of this thesis will focus on the demolished part in the Tarlabaşı district of Istanbul to translate these research questions into an architectural project. This "tabula rasa" pit is located on the edge of the neighborhood and was originally intended for a neoliberalist way of gentrification. This building site is the connection and contrast between informality and formality. It is only a matter of time when Tarlabaşı and its rich identity and memories will disappear completely through this urban transformation project. A compromise should be made to have a chance in keeping the neighborhood alive. In order to use this special location as a site for the design, an exchange will be made between the real estate developer who is building in Tarlabaşı and the residents of Tarlabaşı. The real estate developer may get the entire neighborhood without resistance, in exchange for the empty tabula rasa construction pit. The design forms a shelter for informality, with a new typology providing space for the accommodation of informal practices related to recycling, dismantling, repair and upcycling. The design serves as a hybrid structure, with room for self-regulation, creativity and craftsmanship that make the informality strong in Tarlabaşı. In addition, the design offers an anonymous safe haven for minorities and the poor, as Tarlabaşı has functioned for decades. It will provide sleeping spaces and spaces to accommodate the community and social life. By making the location of the design and the informal world more accessible to outsiders, the building aims to avoid the stigma and further alienation of this important work. The hybrid informal structure for the poor will also influence its environment, because surrounding new homes will be cheaper than originally intended. In this way, the design will take over its new gentrified environment and keep it accessible for low incomes. Due to the location and new typology of the design, this thesis aims to take a critical position with regard to the contemporary mode of urban modernization in many areas of the world, but above all to address the value of economic and social sustainability that</p>

characterizes these informal neighborhoods. Because informality often takes over the system when the mechanism of formality fails.

## **Process**

### **Method description**

Various methods were used to answer the research questions. The research started by mapping 4 themes that are relevant for the entire Marmara region in Turkey:

- Border/migration map
- Infrastructure/congestion map
- Soil/fault lines map
- Water/aquifer map

These maps were made in groups and distributed throughout the B&T studio. By sharing information through maps, everyone was able to form their own interest in the complex and large scale of the research area. In this phase my interest in the informal settlement and its practices has developed.

During an excursion in Istanbul, an ethnographic research method was used to better analyze the inner workings of Tarlabası. The first few times, purely observation, mapping and photography was used to understand the complexities of the district. Later on during the excursion, a more interactive way of ethnographic research was applied to understand the system behind the informal activities, but also where the people behind this system come from. This was done through interviews. In addition, the interviews were used to analyze ownership, self-regulation and the social functioning of the neighborhood and how this is expressing itself in spaces and physical contexts.

After the excursion, a theoretical paper was written to investigate the political position and context of the informal settlements in Turkey on the basis of literature. In addition, this method has been used to investigate the current urban and architectural context in relation to the informal settlement. The ultimate goal of this method was the creation of a conceptual framework that attempts to break the vicious circle of decline into virtuous circle of improvement using the self-regulating effect of the informal settlement. The theory paper was therefore used as a design tool.

Further more location-oriented analysis, was carried out on the themes, waste/recycling system, gentrification processes and materialization and tectonics using drawings and maps. Part of the input for these methods was created by field work and part by literature research.

The last method that was applied are the three 2.5D models during the Modi Operandi Workshop organized by the studio. Phenomena or techniques have been analyzed that cannot be done on the basis of drawings. During the workshop I analyzed how the techniques of disassembling and reassembling can be used to

create an architectural assemblage and how to lose control of a spatial situation in order to analyze the self-regulating aspect of the topic.

## Literature and general practical preference

Abbott, J. (2002). A method-based planning framework for informal settlement upgrading. *Habitat International*, 26(1), 317–333.

Antonopoulou, A. (2022). Mediating between Formality and Informality Refugee Housing as City-Making Activity in Refugee Crisis Athens. Article from: *Making Home(s) in Displacement Critical Reflections on a Spatial Practice* (eds: Luce Beeckmans, Alessandra Gola, Ashika Singh & Hilde Heynen). 265-284.

Atkinson, R. & Bridge, G. (2005). *Gentrification in a Global Context*. Routledge, Oxon: United Kingdom.

Bilgiç, A. (2018). Reclaiming the National Will: Resilience of Turkish Authoritarian Neoliberalism after Gezi. *South European Society and Politics*, 23(2), 259-280.

Desai, M. (2004). *Marx's Revenge: The Resurgence of Capitalism and the Death of Statist Socialism*. Verso, London: United Kingdom.

Enilil, Z. Ş., Dinçer, İ. S., Akyos, C., Can Çetin, B. (2015). Changing Spatialities of Istanbul From a Bottom up Informal Development Towards a State Led Flexible Urban Transformation. *2nd International Conference on `Changing Cities? Spatial, Design Landscape Socio-economic Dimensions, Porto Heli*, 22(26), 5-15.

Ergun, N. (2004). Gentrification in Istanbul. *Cities*, 21(5), 391–405.

Gündoğdu, I. & Gough, J. (2009). Class-cleansing in Istanbul's world-city project.

Hochstenbach, C. & Musterd, S. (2018). Gentrification and the suburbanization of poverty: changing urban geographies through boom and bust periods. *Urban Geography*, 39(1), 26-53.

Huq, E. & Miraftab, F. (2020). "We are All Refugees": Camps and Informal Settlements as Converging Spaces of Global Displacements. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 21(3), 351-370.

Islam, T. (2010). Current Urban Discourse, Urban Transformation and Gentrification in Istanbul. *Special Issue: Turkey: At the Threshold*, 80(1), 58-63.

Jessop, B. (2019). Authoritarian Neoliberalism: Periodization and Critique. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 118(2), 343–361.

Kaminer, T. (2009). The Decline of the Industrial City: The Limits of Neoliberal Regeneration. *The 4th International Conference of the International Forum on Urbanism (IFoU), The New Urban Question – Urbanism beyond Neo-Liberalism*. In Delft & Amsterdam. 143-150.

Karimi, K. & Parham, E. (2012). An Evidence Informed Approach to Developing an Adaptable Regeneration Programme for Declining Informal Settlements. *Proceedings: Eighth International Space Syntax Symposium Santiago, PUC.*

Lara-Hernandez, J. A., Coulter, C. M. & Melis, A. (2020). Temporary appropriation and urban informality: Exploring the subtle distinction. *Cities*, 99(1).

Lees, L. (2008). Gentrification and Social Mixing: Towards an Inclusive Urban Renaissance? *Urban Studies*, 45(12), 2449-2470.

Lees, L., Shin, H. B. & Morales, E. L. (2015). *Global Gentrifications: Uneven Development and Displacement*. Policy Press, Bristol: United Kingdom.

Lovering, J. & Türkmen, H. (2011). Bulldozer Neo-liberalism in Istanbul: The State-led Construction of Property Markets, and the Displacement of the Urban Poor. *International Planning Studies*, 16(1), 73-96.

NCRC. (2019). *Shifting Neighborhoods - Gentrification and cultural displacement in American cities*. Visited on November 14, 2022 at: <https://ncrc.org/gentrification/>

Oğuz, Ş. (2014). From Gezi Resistance to Soma Massacre: Capital Accumulation and Class Struggle in Turkey (with Fuat Ercan). *Socialist Register* 2015.

Prieto, E. (2021). The Possibilities of Urban Informality: Two Views from Istanbul. In: Salmela, M., Ameal, L., Finch, J. (eds). *Literatures of Urban Possibility*. Literary Urban Studies. Palgrave Macmillan.

Rideout, A. (2016). Beyond the Façade: Haussmannization in Paris as a Transformation of Society. *Pursuit - The Journal of Undergraduate Research at The University of Tennessee*, 7(1), article 20.

Roy, A. (2005). Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71(2), 147-158.

Tsavdaroglou, C. (2020). The Refugees' Right to the Center of the City and Spatial Justice: Gentrification vs Commoning Practices in Tarlaşa-Istanbul. *Urban Planning*, 5(3), 230-240.

Tsenkova, S. (2012). Urban Planning And Informal Cities in Southeast Europe. *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 29, (4), 292-305.

Turkish Statistical Institute. (n.d.). Data retrieved on November 17, 2022 from: <https://www.tuik.gov.tr/Home/Index>

Van der Graaf, P. & Veldboer, L. (2009). *The effects of state-led gentrification in the Netherlands*. From the book: *City in sight: Dutch dealings with urban change* (eds: J.W. Duyvendak, F. Hendriks & M. van Niekerk). Amsterdam University Press: Netherlands. Pages 61-80.



Yavuz, M. H. (2009). Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey by M. Hakan Yavuz. *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 33(2), 396-398.

Yetiskul, E., & Demirel, S. (2018). Assembling gentrification in Istanbul: The Cihangir neighbourhood of Beyoğlu. *Urban Studies*, 55(15), 3336–3352.

## **Reflection**

Since I studied the master's degree in architecture, I am interested in how architecture can contribute to addressing problems in complex situations and power fields. The theme of modernization and informal neighbourhoods and its practices is still a major issue in architecture and urban planning and is also an interesting and challenging theme for me to research and design with. The graduation topic is relevant for my master track architecture, because it is part of a global problem, to which architecture can offer an answer or create awareness. The Borders & Territories studio offers space and helps to create experimental architecture in socio-political contexts, in which my graduation topic fits well.

The graduation project can be seen as an attempt of designing an inclusive way for a group that in reality is pushed out of the city centre. The unfamiliarity with the inclusive modernization of informal settlements is linked to a larger social and scientific framework, because practice shows that no clear strategy has yet been found for this issue. My project can contribute a small part in addressing the urgency and relevancy in finding this strategy.