



T(h)respassing

*treating Kopli Freight station  
as a threshold on the urban  
tissue of Tallinn*

TU Delft, AR3MET105  
Research plan Athina Pappa\_  
5842824



# Introduction

*Problematique: How to deal with remnants of past infrastructure within the context of stitching the urban fabric?*

Tallinn is a rather small capital city located on the shore of the Gulf of Finland on the Baltic Sea. Thanks to its location is the main financial, cultural and industrial center in Estonia. ("Tallinn," n.d.) The identity of the city has been strongly influenced by the countries that previously occupied it and most importantly by the Soviet Russia as the more recent occupant. There is also a big exchange and influence between Tallinn and Helsinki as they stand across each other on the Baltic Sea.

The subdistrict of Kalamaja located Northwest of the historical center of Tallinn, was once the fishermen's area as it was serving as the main fishing harbor of the city. The connection of Tallinn with Saint Petersburg after the middle of the 19th century through the railway station of Balti Jaam, which is located on the boundary of Kalamaja and the city center, led to an influx of new workers as big factories started to appear. The increasing need to house those workers had as an outcome the development of the wooden houses in the area of Kalamaja and later on in Pelgulinn which nowadays have become their architectural legacy. ("Kalamaja," n.d.)



The train lines from the Balti Jaam station, that were extended to house the new freight station around the 1930s, had as a result the creation of a border between Kalamaja and Pelgulinn. Pelgulinn consists of a residential area and is characterized mostly by the same type of wooden houses as Kalamaja.

An interesting historical information about the area of Pelgulinn is that the meaning of the word translates to the "City of fear" and the origin of the name comes from the fact that people used to hide there from the enemy or after committing crimes in the city. ("Pelgulinn," n.d.)



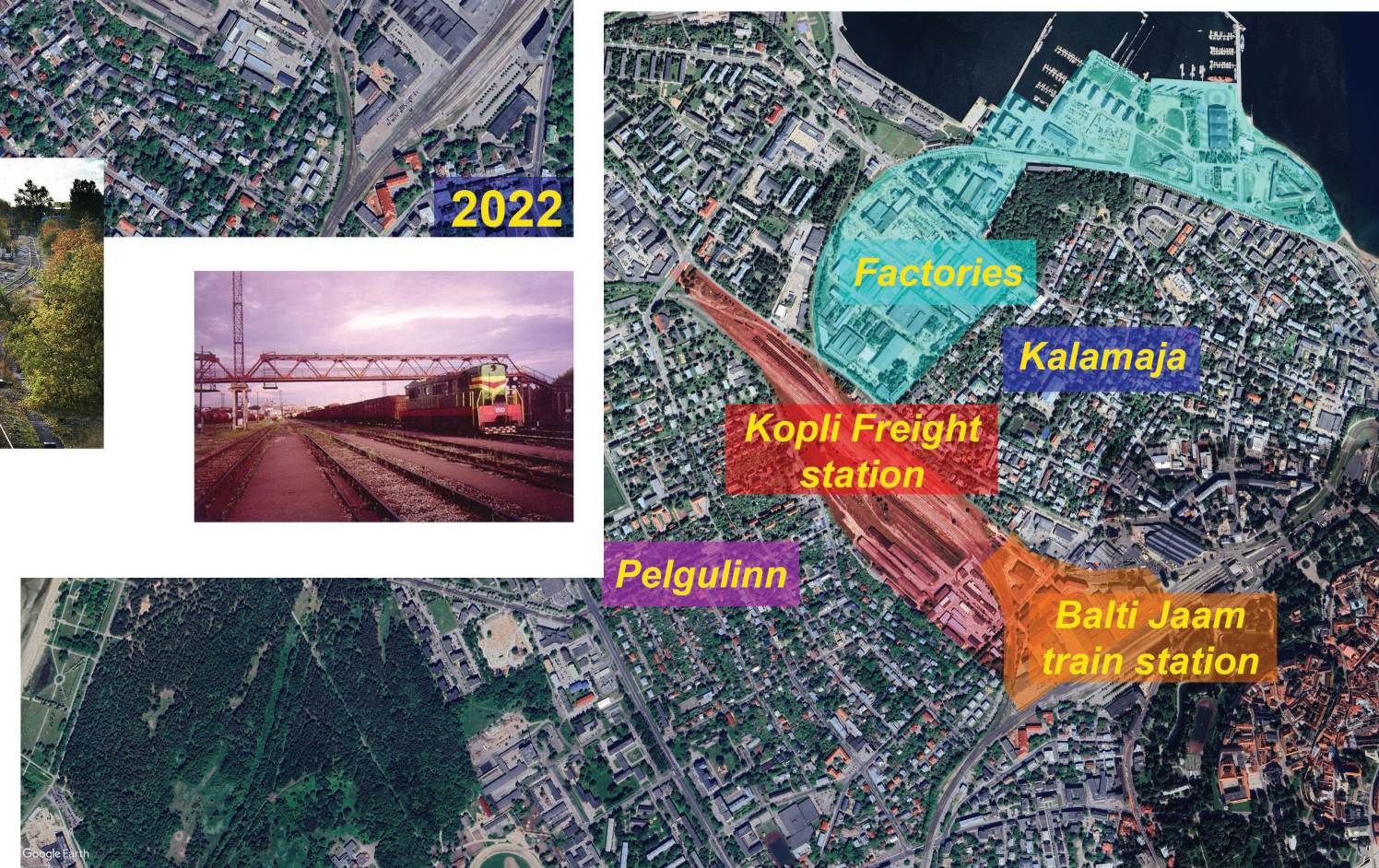


images of the bridge taken from :<https://ajapaik.ee/map/?album=122880&mapType=roadmap&lat=59.44607210224377&lng=24.716381985841604&zoom=18&limitToAlbum=0>

Some years later, a pedestrian bridge was installed to restore the connection between the two areas which was demolished at the beginning of the 21st century. After the removal of the bridge, the Kopli freight station created a hard border in the urban tissue.

Considering Kalamaja and Pelgulinn as a whole because of their residential character and their position they could be read as one continuous landscape. By having in between a space that “separates” them, we could assume that the Kopli freight station acts as a threshold or as a rite of passage between the old and the new (as Kalamaja pre-existed to Pelgulinn).

The Kopli freight station in its current state and location is placed in the middle of transformation. Currently, the area is not accessible to the public, but it holds a lot of potential in becoming an active piece in the puzzle of bringing back the lost connection of the two areas and being a vital part of the urban tissue.



On one side, around the Balti Jaam train station which is on the east part of the freight station, buildings were part of a redevelopment that transformed the area into a cultural and entertainment center of the city called Telliskivi Creative Center.

On the other side of the train lines, on the northwest part, the enormous stock of factories that have stopped operating and have become ruins in Kalamaja, are part of a massive private redevelopment plan that has already begun.



Examining the Northwest part of Tallinn can be beneficial in understanding how to treat those neglected areas and buildings that are remnants of past socio-economic and political conditions. Such spaces can be found anywhere, and it is always crucial to take into consideration their existing context and current needs before addressing their future appropriately.

*Hypothesis: How can the bridging of the existing structures of Kalamaja and Pelgulinn area can be achieved by treating the Kopli freight station as a Threshold?*

Treating urban issues, means to deal with a constant state of change and most importantly when dealing with spaces that act as borders or are at the threshold between existing structures. Those spaces are influenced by any change of the neighboring spaces and structures.

While trying to understand the potentials that could emerge on those spaces, it is of great importance to examine the tendencies that start to form around them to find the link between them. The example of past infrastructures that are no longer in use due to the current way of life are found easily within the context of a city. A question that arises is how can we manipulate liminal spaces by using their potentials to establish a connection between the surroundings?

Main research question: *How to use the potentials of Kopli freight station as a threshold to bridge the areas of Kalamaja, Pelgulinn and the Telliskivi Creative center.*

Other research questions:

- Can a building become the tool for treating borders?
- Should the past infrastructure be preserved?
- Is it useful to keep boundaries in the context of a city or should they be blurred?
- How can the existence of a boundary act as a threshold that links the neighboring areas by bridging their similarities and differences?



# Theory

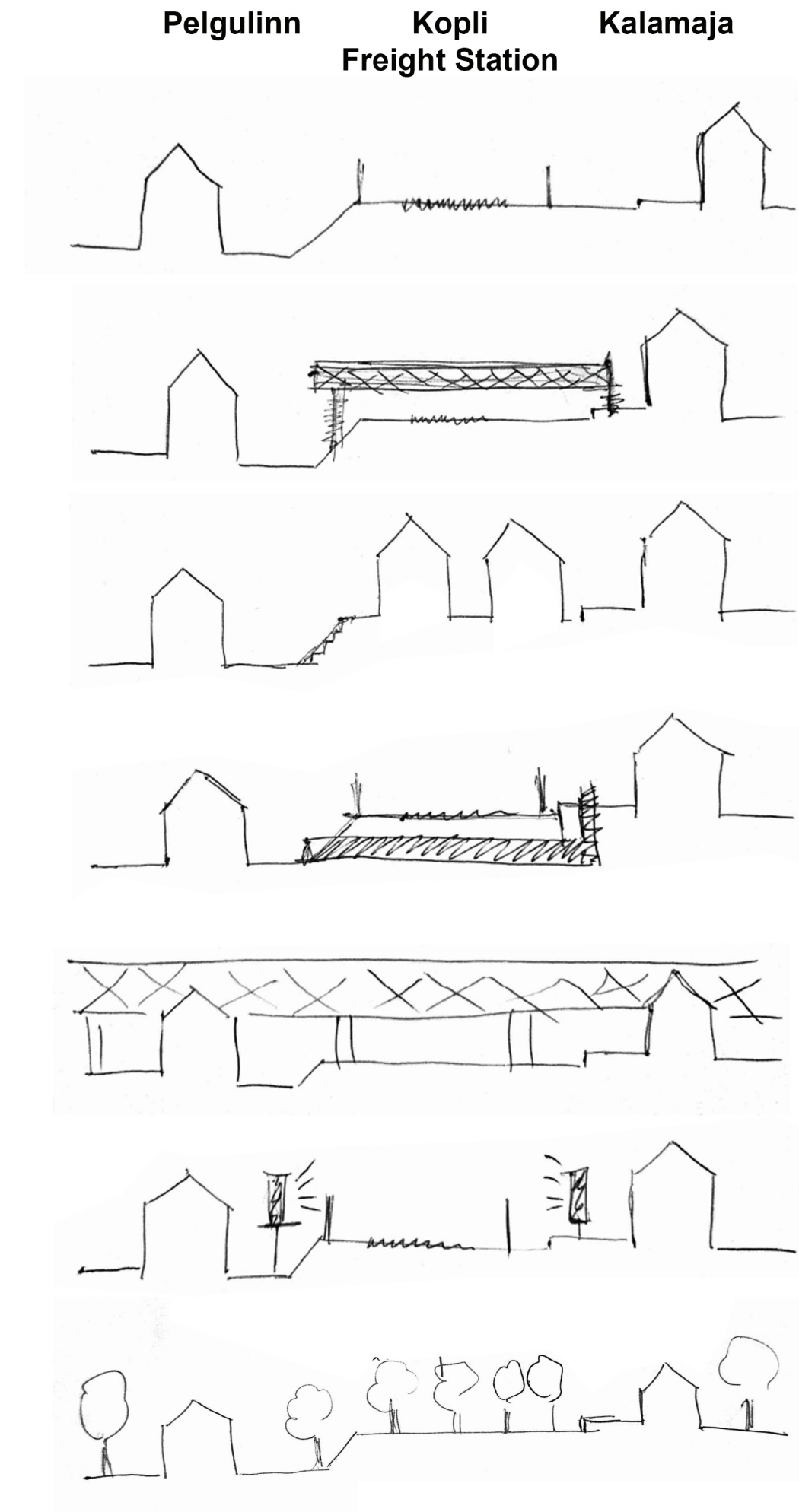
The key concept for my research will be the term Threshold which is part of the process of the rites of passage. According to Arnold van Gennep's book "the rites of passage" (1960), the rites "accompany every change of place, state, social, position and age." (Turner 1969, 103) and for him they are all divided in three major phases the Separation, Transition, and Incorporation. (Van Gennep 1960, 9) The transition is closely related to the Threshold as the rites that happen on the Threshold are considered transitional rites. For me, the Kopli freight station from the previous perspective consists of a Threshold as it passed the phase of separation during the removal of the bridge crossing it and now is currently in the state of transition.

A different approach on my key concept is provided by Laurence Kimmel in her book "Architecture of Threshold Spaces" (2022) in which she argues that those spaces can be considered as public spaces in which private uses are integrated through a process of not only connecting but separating as well. In my case scenario the Kopli freight station will be examined through both those lenses of connection and separation and their overall effect on the urban tissue will be evaluated before continuing to a design decision.

Making use of bibliography around the Thresholds I will try to understand the impact that a design decision at Kopli freight station will have not only spatially but also socially to the people of Tallinn. Identifying my site of interest as such, gives me also the opportunity to understand "the level and type of social interactions" that are currently present in this particular area of the city. (Kimmel 2022, 75)

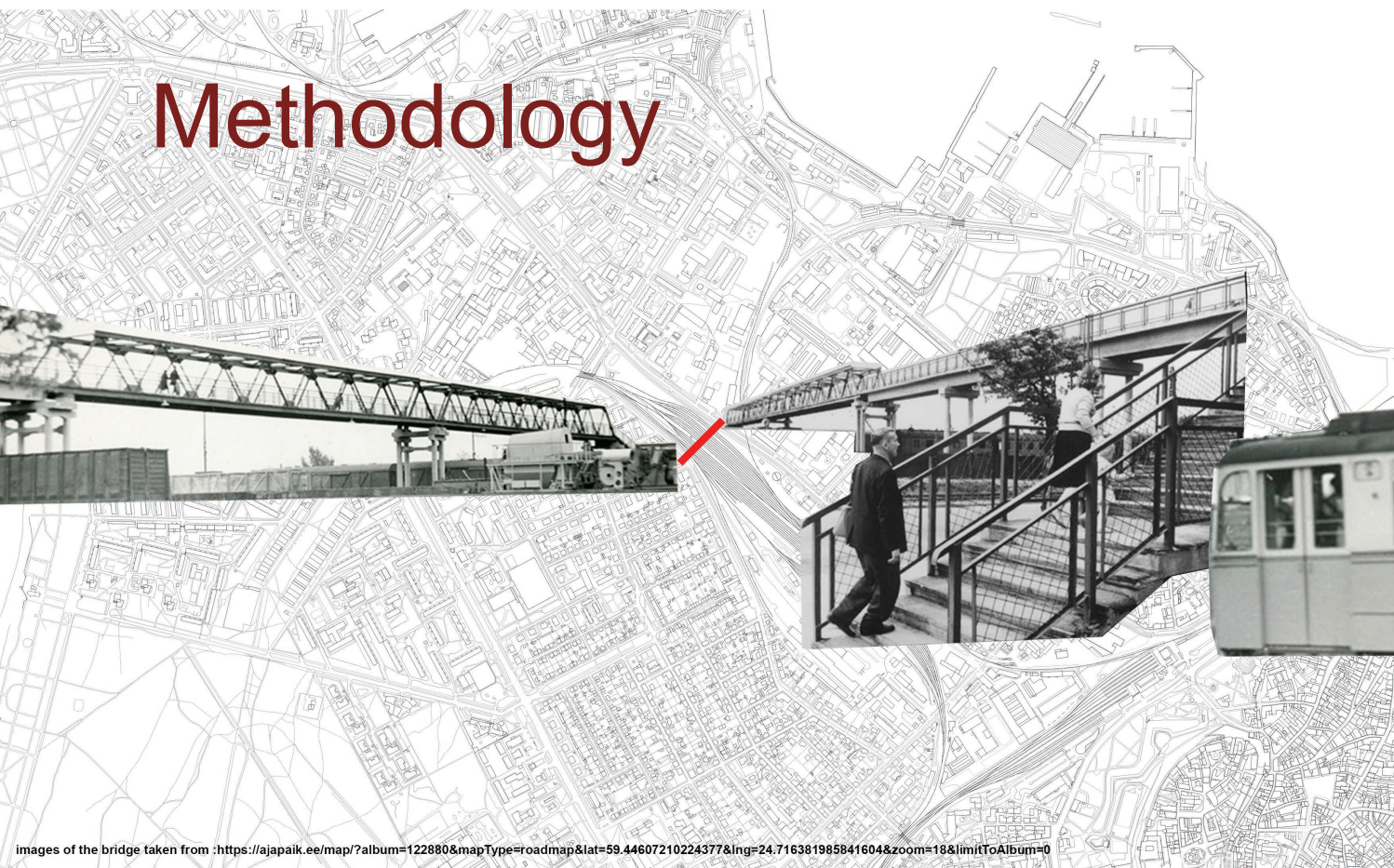
The above mentioned positions, and others that I am going to research further, will help me not only to understand the area better, but will also become tools on how to treat the almost abandoned train infrastructure and stitch the urban fabric in a beneficial way not only locally but also in the scale of the city.

The following sections depict different scenarios of treating the bridging of Kalamaja and Pelgulinn that I will try to examine and evaluate before choosing which one I will follow for my final design study.





# Methodology



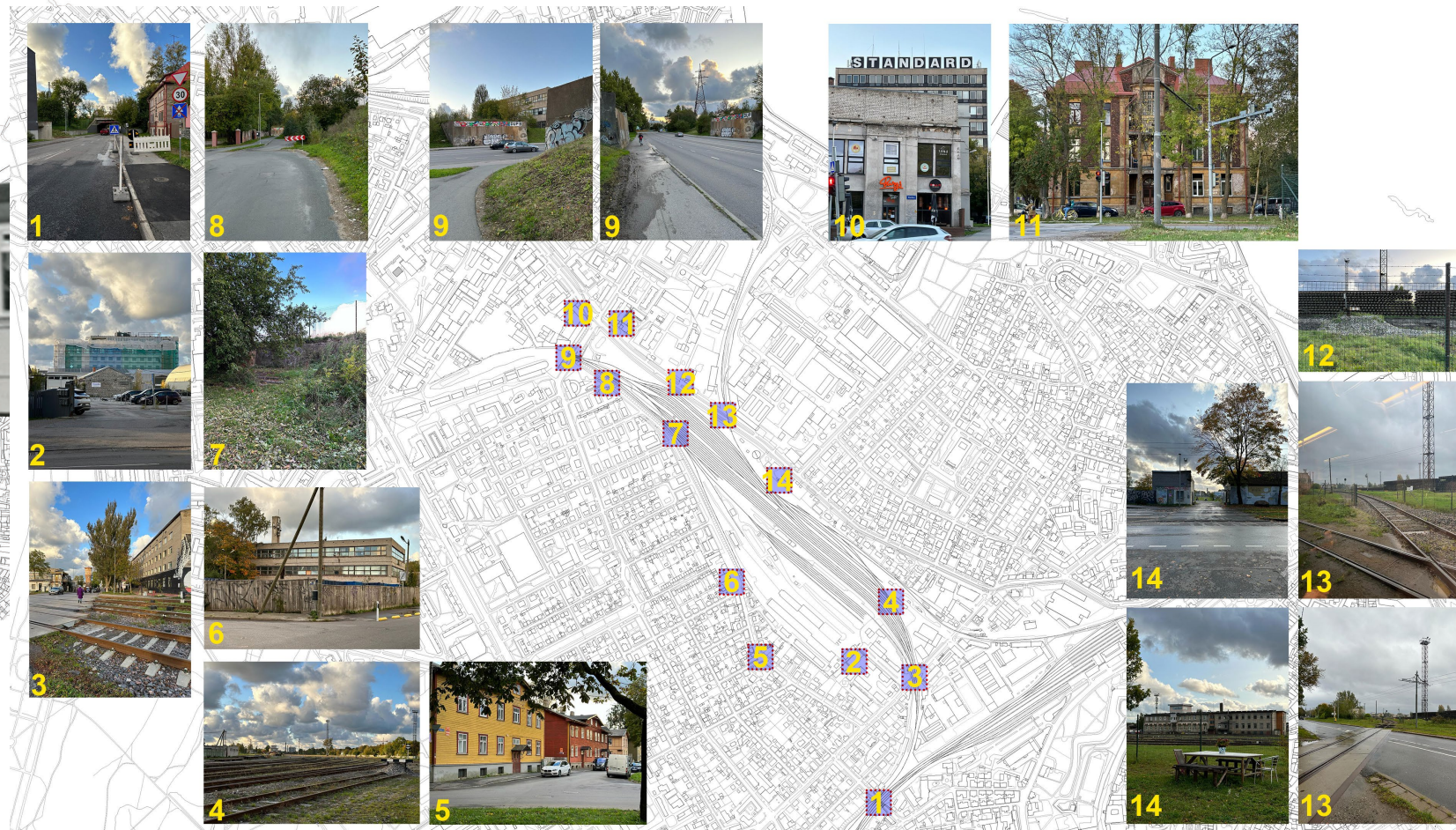
The methodologies that I used to examine my site of interest, the Kopli Freight station area, during my stay in Tallinn were mainly Assembling the Pasts and Bordering. My interest for this specific site begun when we were doing the contextual analysis as a group, and we found old narratives of residents (of Kalamaja and Pelgulinn) mentioning the existence of a bridge that used to connect the two areas.

The first story that we came across was from an exhibition organized by the Kalamaja museum in which old and current residents of the area were interviewed and stories were collected: “Grandmother lived on Timuti Street in Pelgulinn and to visit her they crossed the railroad bridge, which has now been demolished.” (“Outdoor exhibition on the streets of Kalamaja “Lost Fragments of Kalamaja. Pictures from family photo albums”,” n.d.)

Two stories of the bridge that were presented at a BlogSpot show the importance to the residents of the area on their everyday life to be able to cross the Kopli freight station and I quote them below.

Peeter Krall’s memories of the bridge: “As boys, we liked to watch the steam locomotives maneuvering under the bridge and, if we succeeded, throw a stone into their steam chimney. If we hit it, the stone flew towards the sky like a rocket...”

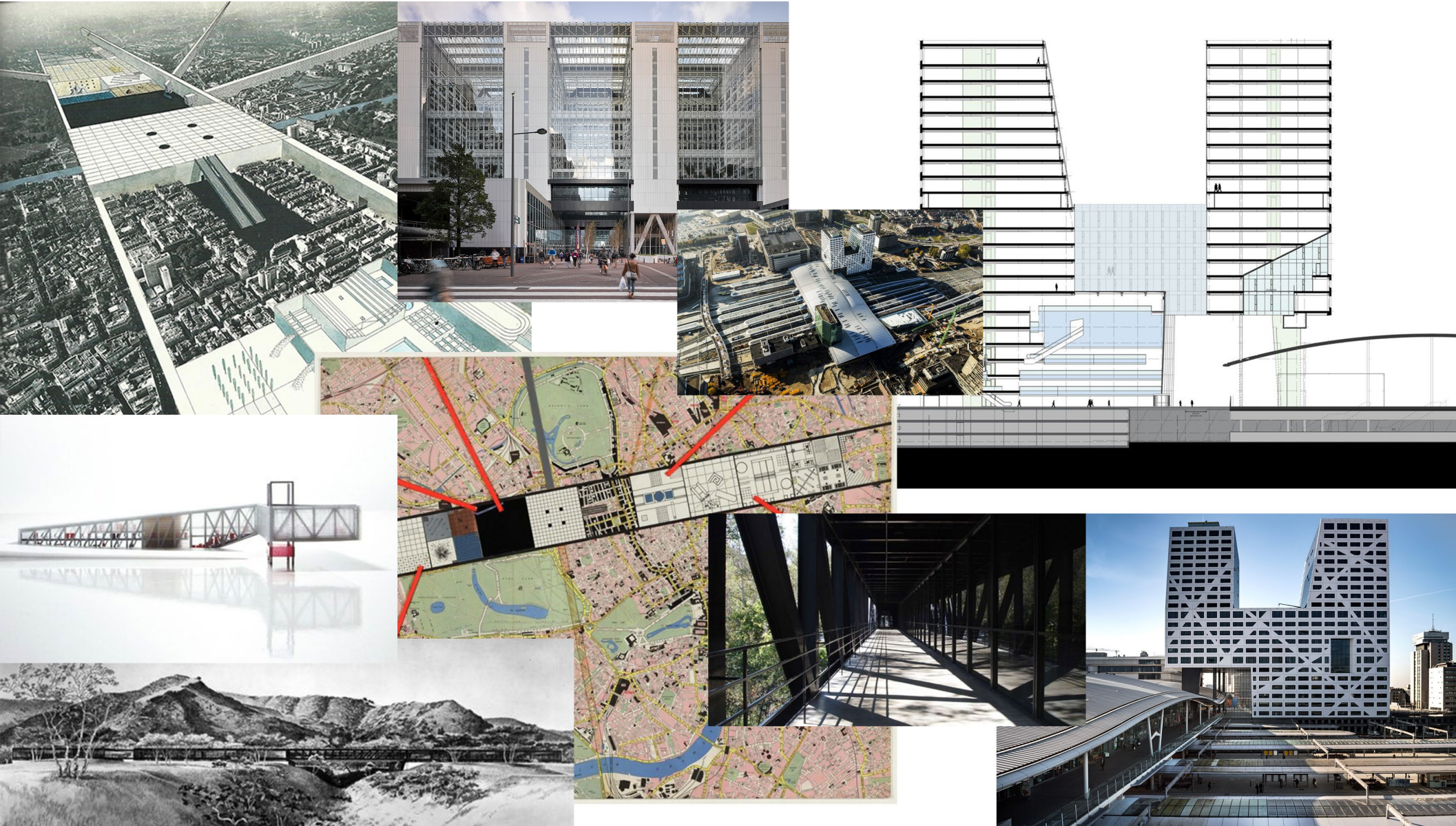
Erik Boltowski also recalled: “It was always cool to stay in the thick smoke of the steam locomotive when it slipped under the bridge... we jumped out of the back carriage of the tram at the railroad crossing on Kopli Street in order not to walk the long way to the bridge. - In our opinion, the official tram stop was quite far... you just ran up the stairs and walked across the bridge straight to Pelgulinn” (“Jaak Juske,” n.d.)



Searching for the bridge and looking at the current state of the area on google maps, there was no evidence that a bridge ever existed. While being there and walking along the borders of the site, as it has fences surrounding it, I was taking pictures and videos to map the surrounding conditions.

Not having enough information to determine the exact location of the bridge I was searching for leads but my attempt proved unsuccessful at the moment. Later, after contacting the Estonian Center for Architecture to find information about a competition organized in 2019 for a small part at the border of my site, I finally had access to information that determining the exact location of bridge. Going back to my pictures I found the remains of a concrete staircase that had become part of the landscape on the Pelgulinn side, and it was the spot that the bridge was starting.





Looking back at my roots and more specifically at my hometown which is a city that was developed around a lake, I always found important the connection of the city with the element of the water. What surprised me during my visit to Tallinn was the fact that even though Kalamaja was developed as the fishermen's settlement had no connection to the sea and the harbour and one of the points that I would like to explore is how can the connection between the sea and the areas of Kalamaja and in extension Pelgulinn can be reestablished through design.

On the collage above, while trying to reflect on my personal fascinations I found this specific site of Kopli freight station interesting, as it reminded me of the project from Rem Koolhaas "Exodus or the voluntary prisoners of Architecture" in which the good and the bad part of a city is separated by a huge construction, a building acting as a border or a threshold between them. This project relates to the area of interest by looking at it from the perspective of the history of Pelgulinn.

As I mentioned before Pelgulinn has the "bad" history even on the origins of the word, and on the other side Kalamaja had always been of a great importance for the city of Tallinn through history and was considered "good".

Another point of interest for me is the way that infrastructure can create discontinuities on the urban fabric and how these can be resolved through Architecture. One example is the train station of Utrecht in which the flows of people are articulated through a building.

To further my research, I chose the following set of methods to explore the potentials of the site to bridge the areas of interest. First, I will map the border conditions using sections, collaging the material collected during my visit to capture the character of the site and its surroundings, as well as examining the typologies found on the surrounding areas. I will try to understand the potentials for future developments by comparing the current situation to archival material from the area like photos, narratives, paintings, and old uses of the space.

To conclude to a design, I will pay close attention to projects and plans for redevelopment of the area already shaped by local Architects or the municipality and I will try to evaluate their elements in order to make or not use of them.



# Bibliography

& links for images, websites

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tallinn>
2. <https://et.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalamaja>
3. [https://et.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pelgulinna\\_asum](https://et.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pelgulinna_asum)
4. <https://www.linnamuuseum.ee/en/kalamaja-en/outdoor-exhibition-organised-by-the-kalamaja-museum-on-the-streets-of-kalamaja-lost-fragments-of-kalamaja-pictures-from-family-photo-albums/>
5. <https://jaakjuske.blogspot.com/2017/09/kui-u-le-kopli-kaubajaa-ma-viis.html>
6. <https://www.haus.ee/?c=teosed&l=et&id=11638&>window=1>
7. <https://www.facebook.com/TallinnaRaudteeMuuseum/photos/pb.100064301944129.-2207520000/117759097002148/?type=3>
8. <https://ajapaik.ee/map/?album=122880&mapType=road-map&lat=59.44607210224377&lng=24.716381985841604&zoom=18&limitToAlbum=0>
9. <https://www.tehranprojects.com/Exodus-or-the-Voluntary-Prisoners-of-Architecture>
10. <https://www.oma.com/projects/rijnstraat-8>
11. <https://www.kraaijvanger.nl/nl/projecten/stadskantoor-utrecht/>
12. <https://www.benthemcrouwel.com/projects/utrecht-central-station>
13. <https://www.atlasofplaces.com/architecture/art-center-college-of-design/>
14. <https://www.oma.com/projects/shanghai-lujiazui-exhibition-centre>
15. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.11116/digest.5.2.0>
16. Davis, Mike ed. City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles. London, New York: Verso, 1990.
17. Kimmel, Laurence Architecture of Threshold Spaces, A Critique of the Ideologies of Hyperconnectivity and Segregation in the Socio-Political Context, New York: Routledge, 2022
18. Turner, Victor, and Jon P. Mitchell. Liminality and Communitas: Form and Attributes of Rites of Passage, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969.
19. Gennep, Arnold van, Monika B. Vizedom, Gabrielle L. Caffee, and Solon T. Kimball. The Rites of Passage, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960

