

# 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	Tanishka Sarma
Student number	5484804

Studio		
Name / Theme	Heritage & Architecture – Studio: Revitalizing Heritage   Zero Waste Church	
Main mentor	Catherine M.N. Visser	Architecture (Heritage & Design)
Second mentor	Mo Smit	Buildings Technology
	Wido Quist	Research (Heritage & Technology)
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>My decision to do this graduation studio was driven by two reasons. First, throughout the first year of my master's, I was fascinated by heritage building vacancies, majorly churches in the country and their adaptive reuse. Most churches act as landmarks in the cityscape of the Netherlands, but with rapid secularisation, many churches have lost their place in everyday society. To deal with preserving these buildings that have acted as anchors for the community for a long time is essential. This, alongside the reuse of existing buildings for sustainability in the building industry, seemed like an interesting question.</p> <p>Another reason for choosing this studio was that I come from a very religious country and the case for the transformation of churches seems like a compelling problem. With many people's emotions and opinions attached to religion and religious spaces, the respectful transformation of these churches seemed to be an interesting dilemma to be worked on.</p>	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Mediating Religious Elements: Collective memory of the church and its religious objects for the transformation of decommissioned churches
<b>Goal</b>	

Location:	Amsterdam, Netherlands
The posed problem,	<p>While churches in the Netherlands become less important as the country secularises, so do the architectural elements within them. Much like the church itself, these elements carry with them the stories of the people who have come across it over the years and have imbued it with value. Religious architectural elements here are defined as any movable, detachable architectural elements such as altars, pews, benches, stained glass windows, etcetera that can be removed from the church's built structure, according to the 'Guidelines on ways of dealing with Religious Objects' by the Catherijnconvent in Utrecht. When the church is decommissioned or has to close, these objects may risk losing their value. This research is aimed at understanding the relationship between the church, the elements inside the church, and the narratives of the people who are associated with it.</p> <p>The relevance of these religious elements that would otherwise go into disuse or lose their significance also reflects directly on the theme of the studio, the zero waste aspect, starting from the people of the community and their relationship to the church and linking it to the optimum use of every element in the church. This would allow the church's innate qualities and the emotional quotient of the people involved to determine their most appropriate alteration or transformation.</p>
research questions and	<p>The focus of the research will be the Saint Augustinus church in Amsterdam Noord and the multitude of elements within it. With the church's decommissioning in 2014, it has become an integral part of the neighbourhood, with the community coming together to save the church multiple times, but not one has transformed the church into a</p>

	<p>usable space. The supposition here is that with a more detailed look at the church and its collective memory, Saint Augustinus church could be converted into a more socially sustainable space, intertwined with the lives of the people in the neighbourhood. It would also focus on bringing in the community's opinion through a participatory design approach in the second part of the design phase (which will be further detailed in the methods).</p> <p>The research question being dealt with is thus, how intangible narratives associated with religious artefacts in decommissioned churches can provide incentives for their transformation and conservation.</p> <p>This deals with the problem on two levels: understanding the collective memory of the church and its objects and using that to spatially transform the church towards a function that would prevent the church from going into future futility. The focus is on the material nature of the church, its objects, and its social and emotional backbone.</p>
design assignment in which these result.	<p>The design would intend to identify and bring together a function that would bring the neighbourhood together. Stemming from its previous use to possible future uses mentioned by the community, the design would identify the church as a collection point for the people of Nieuwendammerdijk. The design output would be a version of a lived space, something that lends a sense of belonging to the people in the neighbourhood and employs the stories of the community towards a more socially resilient structure that would hopefully not be vacant again. The design would also focus on the creation of functions that would allow for the future maintenance of the</p>

church. As churches continue to secularize, the use of the stories behind objects in a church can help build a backbone for the decommissioned church that can be adapted for the needs of today and the future, making a resilient community space that would otherwise go into desolation or be demolished.

## Process

### Method description

In the first quarter (P1), the study began with outlining the theoretical framework of the choice of the church, and the need for collective memory to save the now-decommissioned Sint Augustinuskerk. This was done in three steps, with the basic contextual analysis done on the scale of the building, the neighbourhood and the region of Amsterdam Noord, where the church is located. Another study was undertaken to create a list of all the elements in the church and collate it into a catalogue. Alongside this, a value analysis of the church and its objects was conducted. Simultaneously, a study on the existing methods laid out by the Catherijnconvent and the LAMO guidelines was studied to understand how the Netherlands is dealing with all the religious elements left over from vacant churches.

This extended into the second quarter with the 'Buildings as Elements X Elements as Building' study, where the quantitative analysis of the church was presented. This formed the basic support for the framework of research conducted in the second quarter.

In the second quarter (P2), the methods used for the individual research were:

1. A questionnaire was distributed within the neighbourhood asking for their stories of the church for data collection.
2. The information gathered from questionnaires was gathered as a booklet of stories (a graphic novel). This helped identify aspects of the church and the objects which were determined as valuable by the neighbourhood.
3. The phenomenological output of these objects and their perception were studied through sketching and sensory mapping. This was done with respect to the book *Sacred Senses in Sacred Space: A Journey into a Church* by John Darretta.
4. With collages and mixed media drawings, the material nature of the church and the objects was studied
5. Potential functions for the church were tested with sketching and axonometric drawing analysis of the previous functions of the church and its future possibilities.
6. Potential future uses of the objects in the church through sketching and 3d modelling

7. A research paper was written on the analysis, the collective memory of the church and the potential transformation of the church with literature research presented in conjunction with the other methods of research.
8. A model study of the church and its spatial nature and the use of the object with respect to the church was conducted

In the third quarter (P3), the beginning of the participatory design approach will be introduced, where the people in the neighbourhood will be brought together in a workshop. They will be asked to look at the different options for interventions created within the model of the church and choose which one they prefer and why. The function of the church and the broad strokes of the design of the church would be determined at this point. Here, the research would be focused on the design interventions studied through the model study and try to contrast them to the original narratives that make up the collective memory that drove the redesign of the element. Another set of people would study how they would experience said elements and their potential uses. As an architect, one may imagine that a certain design approach will cause a specific method of use by the non-architect, the user of the building may use it entirely differently. This is what will be investigated through the second question: How do you think one would use it?

This workshop would provide the beginning point of the elaboration of the design proposal for the community space inside the church. This would be done in relation to the literature study and spatial study of the church and its objects conducted in P2. A look at the existing guidelines and a reflection on them would be part of this elaboration. Thus, comparing the introduction of a social element of valuation to these elements alongside the more historical and material-based valuation underlined by the guidelines. Through this process of comparison and self-reflection, the design would develop into one that encompasses the needs of the neighbourhood and the need to safeguard the church from future neglect and disuse. This design elaboration and finalisation would be continued between P4 and P5.

### **Literature and general practical preference**

On the Secularization of religious space-

Cuperus, Jerrold. "The Sacred Lives of Things: Revaluing Church Objects as Heritage and Commodities," 2019.

Flanagan, Kieran, Peter C. Jupp, and André Droogers. "Beyond Secularisation versus Sacralisation: Lessons from a Study of the Dutch Case." Essay. In *A Sociology of Spirituality*, 81–99. Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2010.

Harris, Cynthia, and Rudolf Schwarz. *The Church Incarnate the Sacred Function of Christian Architecture*. Chicago, Illinois: Regnery, 1958.

Turner, Harold Walter. *From Temple to Meeting House*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Mouton Publishers, 1979.

#### On Narratives-

Appadurai, Arjun. "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value." *The Social Life of Things*, 1986, 3–63. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511819582.003>.

Dankert, R. "Actor–Network Theory." *International Encyclopaedia of Housing and Home*, 2012, 46–50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-08-047163-1.00606-8>.

Ochs, Elinor. "Narrative." *Discourse as Structure and Process: Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, 1997, 185–207. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446221884.n7>.

#### On Collective Memory-

Assmann, Jan, Rodney Livingstone, and Jan Assmann. "What Is Collective Memory." Introduction. In *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, 1–30. California, United States, California: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Bluestone, Daniel M. *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory: Case Studies in Historic Preservation*. New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011.

Boyer, M. C. *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*. Cambridge, MA, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2006.

Sakaranaho, Tuula. "Religion and the Study of Social Memory." *Temenos - Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 47, no. 2 (2011). <https://doi.org/10.33356/temenos.5151>.

#### On Design methodology-

Barrie, Thomas. *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place: Myth, Ritual, and Meaning in Architecture*. Boston: Shambhala, 1996.

Boardman, Philip, and Lewis Mumford. *Patrick Geddes: Maker of the Future*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944.

Darretta, John. *Sacred Senses in Sacred Space: A Journey into a Church*. Columbus, Ohio: Gatekeeper Press, 2022.

Knippenberg, Hans. *GeoJournal* 45, no. 3 (1998): 209–20. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1006973011455>. Lock, David. "Patrick Geddes: The Conservative

Surgeon." Built Environment Quarterly 3, no. 4 (1977): 325–28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42921164>.

## 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)?

This project in the Revitalising Heritage/Zero Waste studio deals with research on collective memory and the transformation of churches while delving into methods such as participatory design and the role of the materiality of the church and religious objects in the adaptive reuse of vacant buildings. This connects to the concept of zero waste on two levels, the physical waste of the objects in a church which would be gotten rid of in the general redevelopment of the church. Also, at the level of the waste of the community's views of the church, which would otherwise be forgotten as the churches are transformed, safeguarding cultural heritage. This connects the topic to not only the studio context but also to the state of architecture now, as more buildings go into disuse. Using the local's emotions and their perception can be a driving factor in the adaptive reuse of many buildings which have an existing connection to the community.

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

The relevance of the research conducted and the use of this method is rooted in the fact that it creates a structure that is established in the stories of the past and can sustain itself in the future. While many guidelines look at the shift of these religious objects into museums, other churches or their destruction, this method would allow for optimum use of the church at all levels, creating a truly zero-waste scenario. From a sustainability point of view, this investigation would also be helpful in understanding how collective memory and its use in the redesign. Safeguarding cultural heritage, as stated by the Faro convention in its 'People Places Stories' initiative, the focus on these aspects could lead to more socially sustainable transformations of vacant buildings. As more countries secularise, the use of the emotional aspect of the buildings may act as a way to find a binding factor.