CRAFTING TALLINN

Research Plan
Methods of Analysis and Imagination
AR3MET105_2023
Sean Hajdu

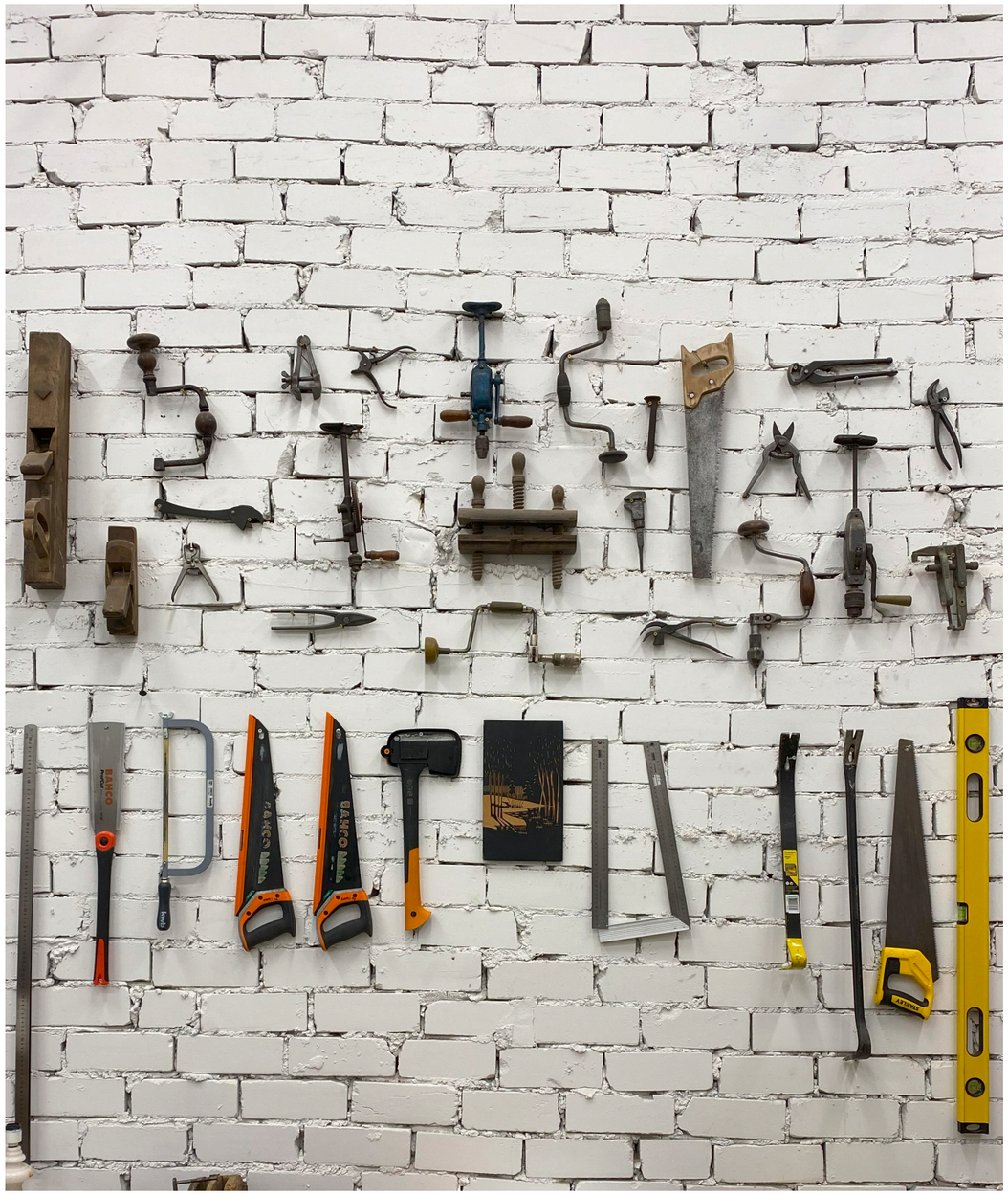

Fig. 01: *Tool wall from Kopli 93 Makerspace*

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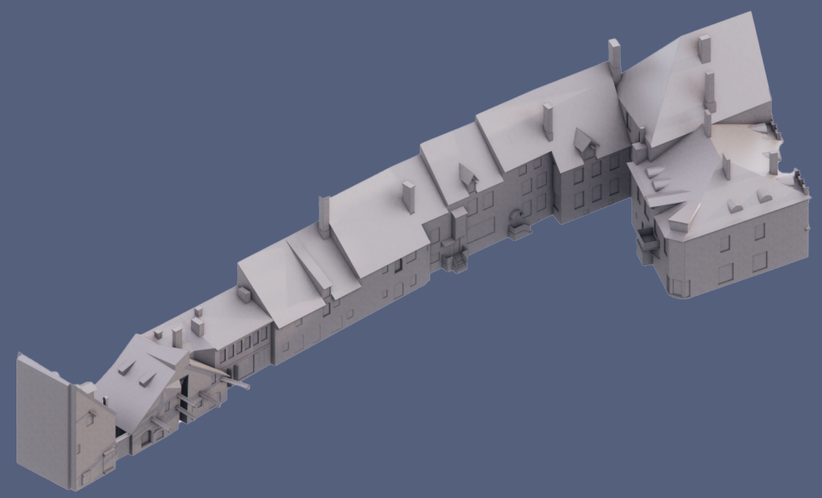


Fig. 02: *3D massing of Vene 12*

PREFACE

INTEREST IN MAKING

Over the past several years of working within the realm of architecture I've learned several key things that drive my interest in the field. Small scale projects, which allow for time and focus to be placed on expressing my design language through intimate programs and small details, have risen to the forefront of what drives me to pursue architecture. One of my main reasons for starting the MSc program at TU Delft was for the purpose of reigniting my passion for architecture within the scope of small scale design. After four years of working at various architecture firms, which left me unsatisfied with the profession, I felt myself drifting away from what I know now is one of the principal elements of my design philosophy. During my professional career the day to day tasks became overly repetitive, the completion of projects became mundane, and the timely process of project development made a lot of the design work feel unfulfilling. My goals while at TU Delft have been to reignite my interest in design, and to hopefully find a direction and specialization that will bring me fulfillment. Achieving these goals will naturally take much more than just the completion of this two year program, but I do believe it is at the very least an opportunity for exploration. This program has provided me with a chance to explore new paths that excite me within an environment that supports such exploration. This return to small-scale and hands-on projects has fulfilled me far more than most of the professional work I have done in recent years, and the shift away from the uncontrollable complexity of urban planning, or the repetitiveness and lack of detail of large scale buildings, has been a welcomed and much needed change.

I wish to further highlight how important it has been for this process to have access to the model hall resources. The process of model-making has greatly sparked my curiosity for working with my hands, and I have found that being required to solve problems with solutions that I am physically capable of building has been incredibly beneficial for me. This enjoyment of model-making has also translated into an interest in furniture design. When moving to a new country like the Netherlands one undergoes a certain level of "starting new," and a big part of that is making a home for oneself. An important part of making a home is being able to interact with objects and furniture that help create a space that one feels comfortable in. As I attempted to make this "new start" I found myself designing and building some furniture pieces for my living-space. A desk, a night stand, shelving, ceiling lamps, curtain holders, all relatively simple and small pieces, but the process of building them fostered an enjoyment in design that I have been missing for a few years. The implementation of these objects had a transformative effect on the space that I was living in. Which is why I've become increasingly fascinated with the effect that small scale interventions can have on a space.

Making things with my own hands through both models and furniture has an inherent satisfaction built into it. The process of taking a drawing from paper, and physically building it, is such an enjoyable thing to do. Each project is filled with a new set of challenges and problems to solve, each requiring the employment of diverse skill sets. One of the aspects that I've identified from this process that really resonates with me is the near immediate realization of the process. After a week of sketching and modeling a design that responds to a simple problem, the building process begins, and within another week the product is sitting in front of me. Whether it's good, bad, or needs to be improved can be immediately evaluated. That evaluation then becomes knowledge which can be used to respond to a new design problem that arises the next day. This shortened timeline of immediate feedback, and by extent more directly understood knowledge, is something that I have grown very fond of. If I compare it to the timeline of a building for example, where a year is spent imagining and sketching the project - and another half a year is spent revising it due to uncontrollable complications like permits, costs, and change in ownership - so much time elapses and so much change occurs that the project is no longer the building you designed. Even if your original designs make it through this initial period it will take another 2-4 years in order for the building to be constructed, and another 2-4 years on top of that before you can accurately evaluate the success or usefulness of the project. The result is a timeline of roughly 10 years before you are able to get an honest understanding of your designs. Meanwhile the knowledge I gained from building a piece of furniture was gained within a month.

These are two very different scales of design of course, and I understand that they both have very different levels of impact and importance within the built environment. But the point I am trying to make in regards to my personal interests for this project, is that there is an immensely important and invaluable knowledge behind working with your hands in the most tactile of ways, and that process deserves to be celebrated.

PROJECT GOAL

Using the ideology of the Methods of Analysis and Imagination chair, my goal for this project is to respond to my research in Tallinn with a design that looks beyond a traditional architectural formula and instead becomes a project that is focused more on the intimate and tactile side of spatial design. Whether that be catered more towards Interior Design, Furniture Design, Industrial Design, or Graphic Design even, that question will remain optimistically open through my research.

Using the framework from the Methods of Analysis and Imagination chair of analyzing, formulating, designing, and evaluating, this project will celebrate craftsmanship throughout every step, and idealize the knowledge that handcraft offers. (Fig. 03)

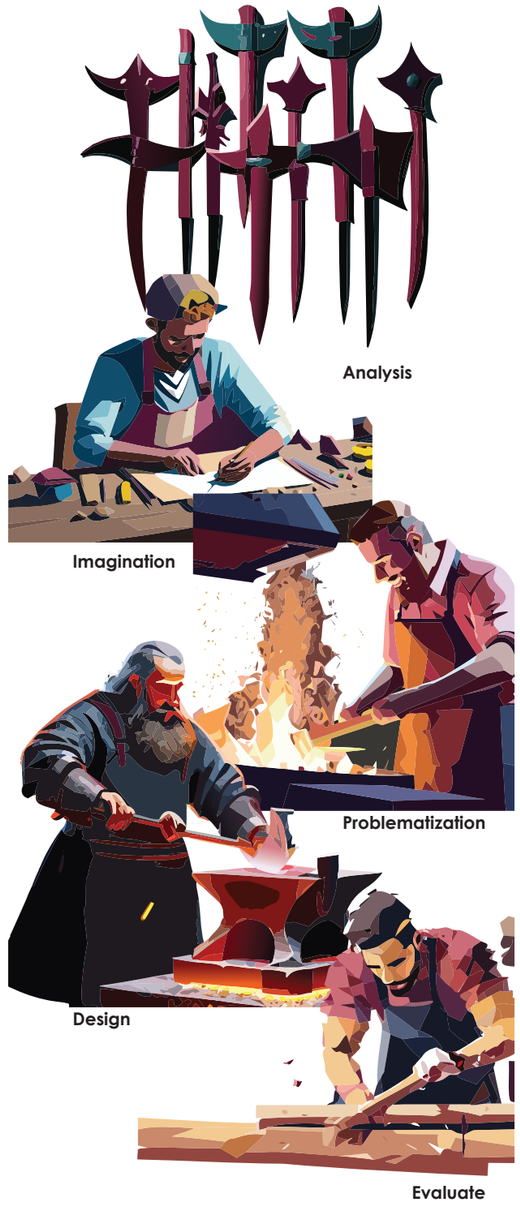


Fig. 03: *Framework Diagram*

CRAFTSMANSHIP

Using the design philosophy I have outlined in the preface as a guide, the topic of my project will be centered around craftsmanship in Tallinn, and the intended outcome will be positioned around finding a way to support and develop the craftsmen community. It will be a project that engages with artisans and makers, and any other individuals that fit into the realm of tool mastery and tactile creation.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do you create an environment that fosters craftsmanship at its core, and promotes the exchange of handcraft knowledge?

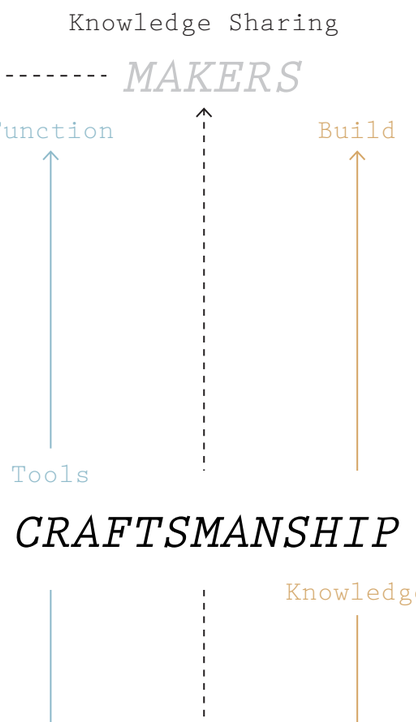
The value behind this kind of community is that it allows for an environment of knowledge exchange, and co-creation. They act as nodes of inspiration for the local community to engage with skillful designers and traditional masters that remind people of the value of the handmade and the beauty that can result from it. In a time where we are witness to the results of the industrial revolution, which created a consumerist economy void of any understanding of where products come from or how they are made, I would like to research the value behind handcraft knowledge sharing communities.

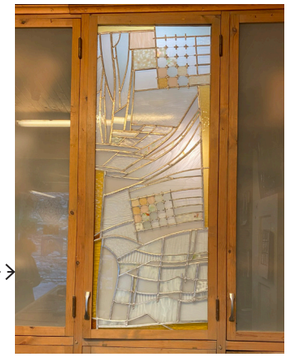
As strongly as I believe in these kinds of communities based on my own personal experiences with them, I also understand that maker movements also have their pitfalls. Part of my research will also be to investigate the shortcomings of these communities, and potentially comparing other cities which already have strong roots in craftsmanship.

In order to help focus my research I have divided my target users into two parts, artisans and makers. The reason for this is not to value one over the other, but rather to help understand the specialized benefits that each can bring to the table. Artisans are masters of a specific tool that focus on producing a highly crafted object as their final outcome. Whereas Makers tend to be knowledgeable in a variety of tools (usually specialized on a specific material) and they tend to offer their knowledge so that others can learn to hone such crafts as well. The diagram Fig. 04 elaborates further into this classification.

My research into this topic will culminate in a way that celebrates both makers and artisans, and provides a space for both to positively influence the other.

Innovative mobile blacksmith station, Kopli 93 Makerspace + Vocational School, 2022





Stained glass mural by Dolores Hoffman, n.d.

Fig. 04: *Types of Craftsman*

... IN TALLINN

As valuable as a topic I believe this research will be on its own, I want at least one chapter of my research to be focused on positioning craftsmanship in Tallinn. This chapter will be used to help support my arguments for its relevance within the city, as well as help me to locate an ideal site for the project to take place in. My trip to Tallinn was already very fruitful in this aspect in that I was able to find multiple locations of interest that can help inform my research. However, I will expand more on that in the next segment.

Before visiting Tallinn, I investigated the existence of maker communities within the city and found that a maker movement had already begun in August of 2021. A pilot project was started at Kopli 93, and knowing that it is in its infancy within Tallinn, I believe I will be able to position my project within the development of this young community.

While wandering the streets of Old Town Tallinn, I came across two different artisan locations: the Katariina Guild, and the Masters Yard. Both locations were a grouping of handcraft focused designers that had their workspaces mixed together with their shops. This is the exact type of user I am interested in framing my project around. I absolutely loved having the chance to see their process and their products at the same time. While at both of these locations, I had the pleasure of interviewing many of the artisans. These interviews have now become an inspiration for a potential project type which I will address later in the research plan.

Also of note was finding that Tallinn's history already supports much of what I am proposing. Reval, as Tallinn used to be named, was part of the Hanseatic League, and the entire city was filled with merchants, craftsmen, and smithy's. Part of my research will look into Tallinn's past in order to reference its historic connection to craftsmanship.

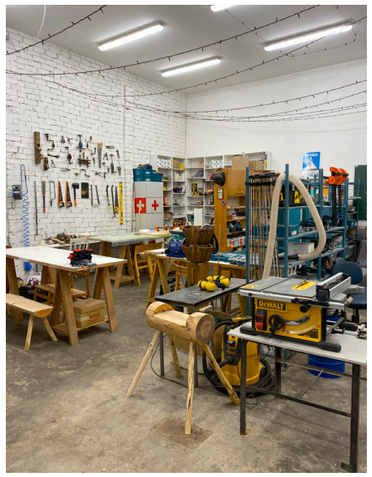
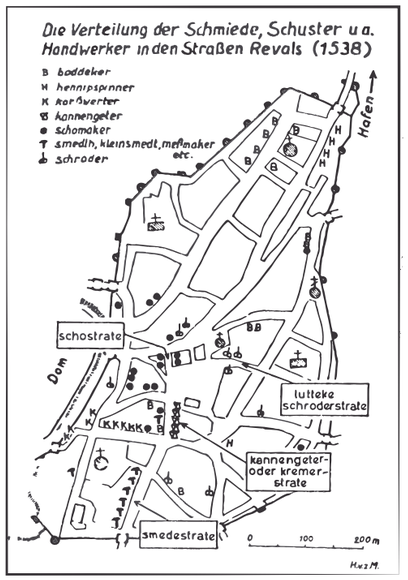


Fig. 05: *Kopli 93 Maker Space pilot project, 2023*

Fig. 06: *Laura Shmideberga, Glass Studio in Masters Yard. 2023*



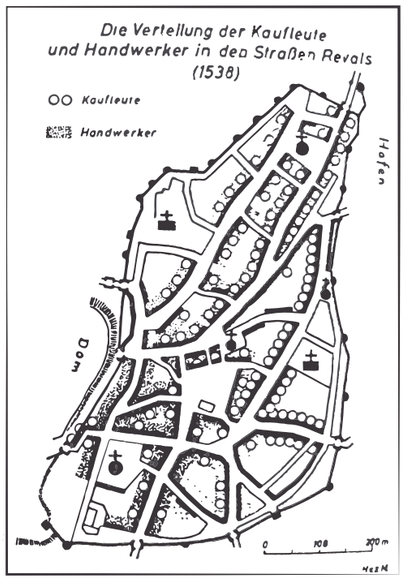


Fig. 07: *1538 maps of Craftsman and Merchants in Reval, Paul Johansen, Heinz von zur Muhlen. 1973.*

PLACES. PEOPLE. THINGS.

RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

In order to understand the current state of the handcraft community in Tallinn, I have grouped the relevant research points into 3 overarching categories: places, people and things. Each of these categories is a different lens from which to view the topic of craftsmanship in Tallinn. All three categories are of equal importance and can be researched as independent sources, but by structuring the categories in a more linear format, I believe the research will be more connected and specific to my topic. As you can see from Fig.08, this methodology works in two parts. The first part being the individual paths (thin arrows), where each category contains general information gathered throughout Tallinn and Estonia. This information will play a supporting role throughout the project's development. The second and more important part is the tiered path (thick arrows), where each category flows into and informs the next category, thus a tiered waterfall effect. The PLACES I visit allow me to meet specific PEOPLE, and by communicating with these people I can discover the THINGS that they need.

PLACES

PLACES is a process of identifying the existing locations that house craftsmen in Tallinn. This includes existing maker spaces, ateliers, art studios, vocational schools, art academies, and any other program type that harbors handmade practices. Within this category I will mainly be using disciplinary analysis as my methodology. Taking inspiration and understanding from relevant precedents in order to help inform my decisions throughout the project. My primary source for precedents at the moment is the town of Fiskars, Finland. It is a design-driven community focused on locally hand made products, and has developed large enough to the point where it has become the heart of the town. I will also be using mapping as part of my methods in order to help fuel my project at an urban scale. Mapping material waste locations will allow me to identify different material depos that could be used by the makers and artisans. During my time in Tallinn, I visited Kopli 93, a makerspace pilot project located in Kopli. I also stumbled upon two artisan communities while wandering through the old town, the Masters Yard located at Vene 6 and the Katariina Guild located at the Katariina Passage. These are the three main LOCATIONS that I used for engaging with local handcrafters while in Tallinn.

PEOPLE

The second category, PEOPLE, is a process of identifying organizations as well as individuals that are actively participating in the handcraft community. In this category, I will be researching organizations that are currently working towards supporting local artisans, and developing maker communities. An example is the Centrinno group which launched the Kopli 93 Makerspace pilot project, and the Estonian Folk Art and Craft Union that helps local artisans establish their business. This category also encompasses the individuals, and by visiting the locations I had previously researched in Tallinn, I was able to interview several artisans in the old town and one of the head organizers of the maker space in Kopli. Interviewing these individuals opened up a line of COMMUNICATION that has allowed me to begin my investigation into the types of problems that are encountered within the handcraft community.

THINGS

The third category, THINGS, is where design implementation comes in. This part of the research will be focused on translating my findings into a design narrative. Collecting the problems uncovered from my interactions with the people I interviewed and proposing solutions that help celebrate the handcraft community in Tallinn.

My goal for the design implementation is to have a heuristic approach that celebrates handcraft at every level of design and throughout the design process. The research, the problematization, the presentations, and even the methods I use should all be understood through the eyes of the craftsmen. Taking this ideology even further, I would like to challenge my design to have a requirement of being constructed in one of these maker spaces or through the collaboration of the artisans within my project. Forcing me to make considerations at every level of detail and to solve the project to the same degree to that of a carpenter for example.

CRAFTSMANSHIP IN TALLINN

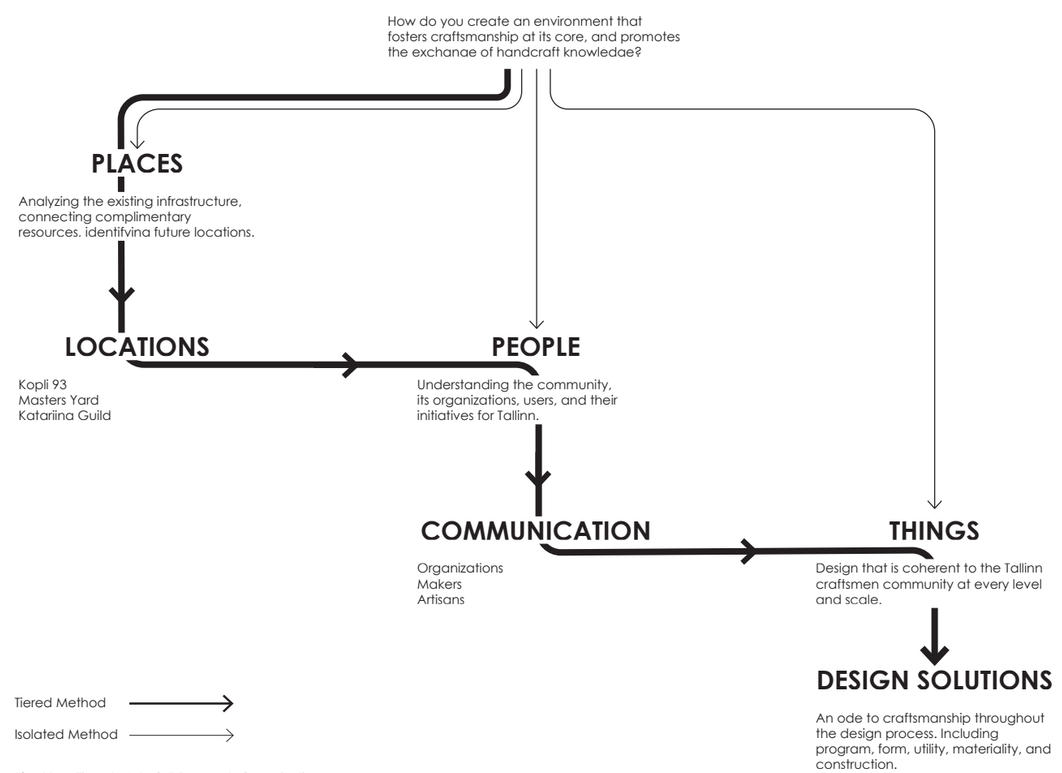


Fig. 08: *Tiered Waterfall Research Organization*

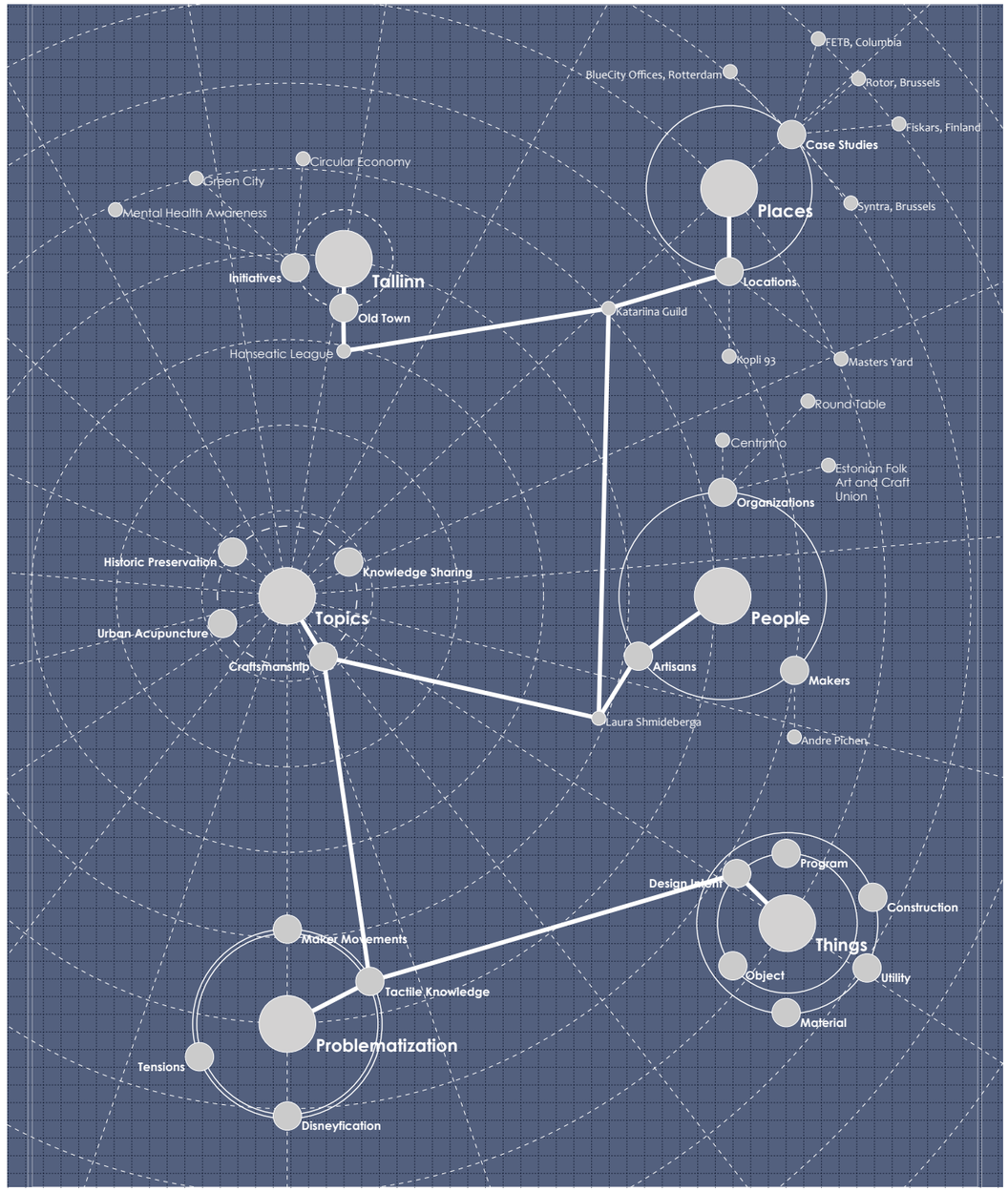


Fig. 09: *Star Map*

Although this project is still in its infancy, I have jumped a few steps ahead to try and envision a potential direction based on the interviews I had with the makers and artisans. Jumping forward like this has allowed me to begin problematizing the hypothetical project, which I will then use as the basis for topics that need to be researched during P2. I have listed the problems to investigate in the next segment.

In order to help filter the information that I collected in Tallinn, I created a star map (Fig. 09) that acts as an illustration of hierarchy for the topics that I have been investigating. Within the star map is a constellation that I have used to help navigate my design proposal. Each "astral body" is one of the main categories of my research and the constellation is formed between the more relevant "stars" from each category.

Programmatically, I am envisioning a project that merges both maker and artisan communities in one location. This location will act as a craftsmanship hub, catered to both artisans who sell their designs, and makers who share their knowledge with the community. Combining these two users stems from the idea that they can work as a complimentary unit. The artisans provide a sense of inspiration, demonstrating the beauty that can come from handcraft skills. While the makers can provide the knowledge and expertise behind how things can be crafted or repaired. My discussions with the artisans in Tallinn have also resulted in a potential list of supporting programs that would help benefit the community, but this list will be investigated further as the project develops. One of the primary programs will definitely be a maker space, and this decision was informed from my discussion with one of the Kopli 93 Pilot project organizers Andre Pichen. He communicated to me that the pilot project has been so successful that they plan to open another 8 maker spaces within Tallinn. So naturally I will claim one of these maker spaces and place them within my project.

Location-wise, I see a potential in further developing the Katariina Guild, one of the artisan locations in Old Town Tallinn. It currently houses a successful group of artisans, but lacks a real sense of identity to its location. The buildings it is composed of are from the 1300s, and they still maintain their charming medieval character; this is especially true in the interiors. However, the problem with these buildings is that they are on a rather inactive secondary street. The street has a courtyard and an abandoned church that are begging to be activated in some way. Following methods learned from the book Urban Acupuncture by Jaime Lerner, and the power that simple and focused interventions can have within society, I see a potential in turning this street into a proper cultural location for the old town. This location will be focused around celebrating craftsmanship in Tallinn. I envision this location becoming a place for community, for craftsmanship, and for knowledge sharing.

Fig. 10: *Old Town Tallinn*

In an effort to try and keep towards the goals stated earlier in this research plan, I envision the project being focused more towards small scale interventions that prioritize more detailed solutions rather than larger architectural developments. For example, from my discussion with the artisans one of their main complications is how to optimize their storage spaces, their work spaces, and their display spaces. For this specific problem I envision a set of adaptable furniture pieces that grant them the flexibility they need. These types of solutions can be related to the book Furnitecture by Anna Yudina which is a collection of furniture projects that have a transformative effect on space. I plan to have a large portion of my project be dedicated to this type of design ideology. I believe that having my project be focused around the scale of furniture will be a more ideal response to the craftsmanship mentality.

In Fig.14-17 I have overlaid my design proposal onto the existing buildings of the Katariina passage. I started by mapping its circulation within the context of Old Tallinn, followed by the existing program, the newly proposed program, and finally the potential small scale interventions.

Fig. 11: *Vene 12 Elevation 1:250*

Fig. 12: *Katariina Passage 1:1000*

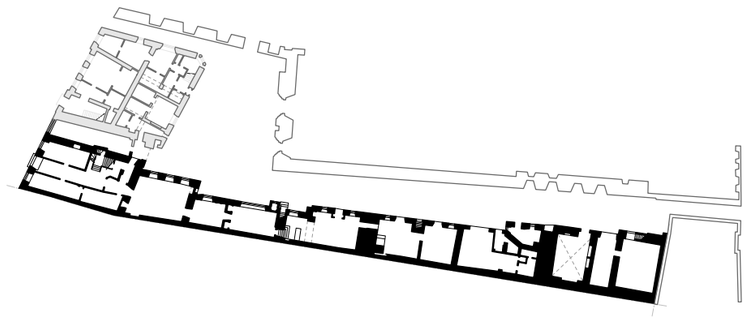


Fig. 13: *Vene 12 Ground Floor 1:1000*

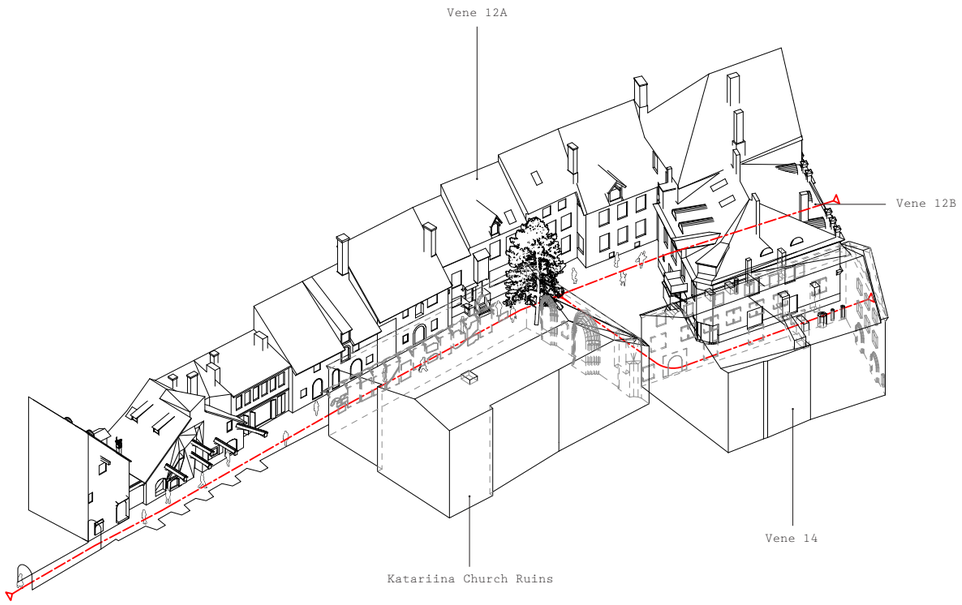


Fig. 14: *Axo Katariina Passage*

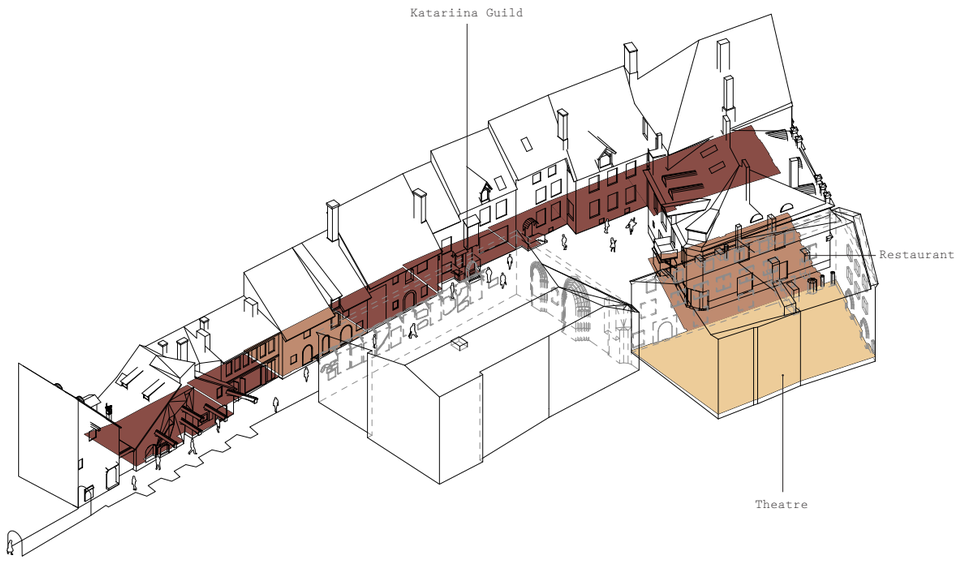


Fig. 15: *Axo Existing Program*

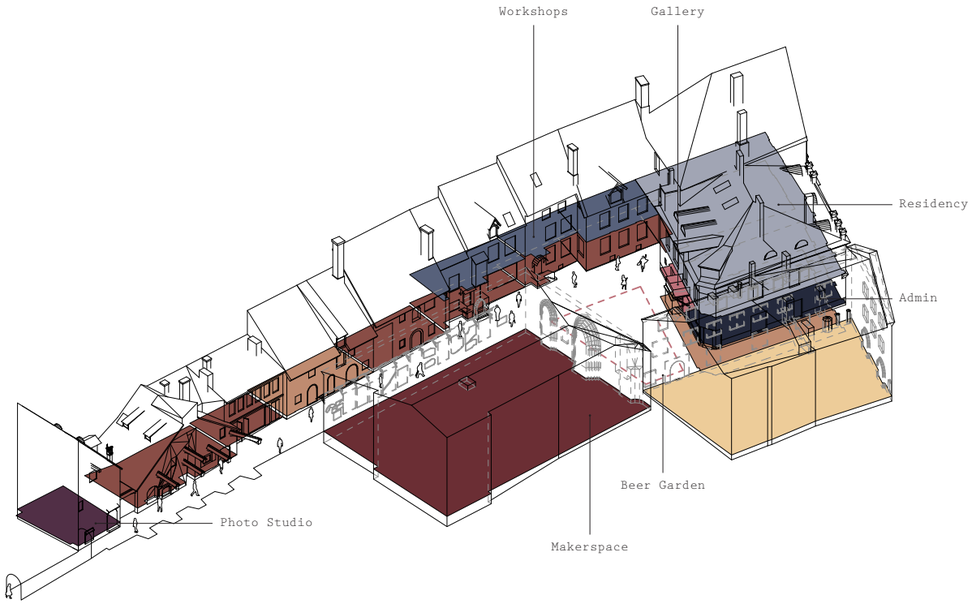


Fig. 16: *Axo Proposed Program*

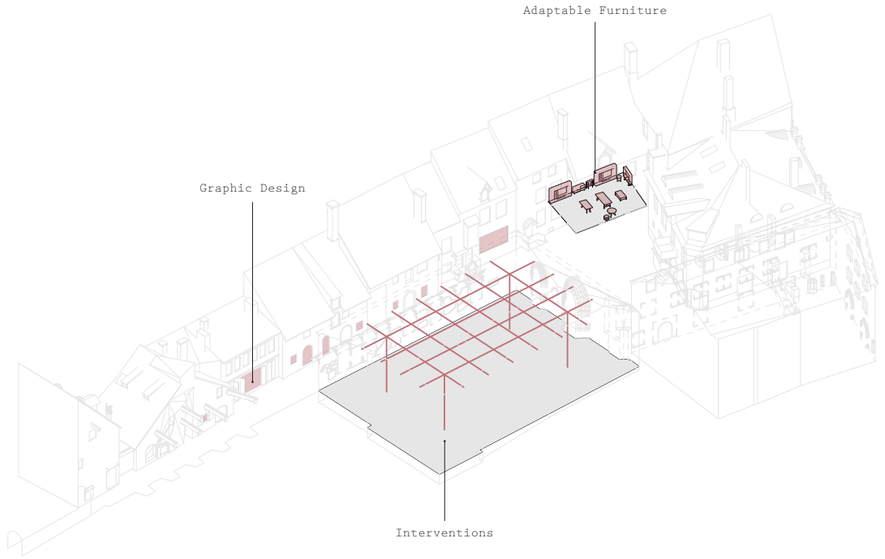


Fig. 17: *Axo Small Scale Interventions*

PROBLEMATIZATION

The following list and their short descriptions are the already identified conceptual problems that my project has begun to uncover. Each of these topics are listed here because I believe researching each of them will provide me with accurate and specific knowledge that can be used to make informed decisions later on. As the list no doubt continues to expand I also plan to give these problems a level of hierarchy in order to help inform my focus and the direction of the project.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

Although I have a personal connection to this topic which provides me with insight to the effect that craftsmanship can have on the individual, I also plan to research a more academic understanding of the value behind working with your hands. Part of my research will be to investigate the benefits or pitfalls that craftsmanship can have on the individual and the community.

MAKER MOVEMENTS

For this topic I would like to discover their effectiveness in other cities that have already properly established a maker community. Since the maker community in Tallinn is in its early development, I would like to gather some information from communities where it has become successful and long lasting, while also investigating its shortcomings.

TENSIONS

There are three tensions so far that I would like to investigate. The first being the tension between specialization and generalization. There are of course a lot of benefits to creating such a specialized community like the craftsmanship community I am envisioning, but there is also some benefit to having more generalized interactions in this community happening as well. The second tension is between traditional and modern practices. In a community so focused towards traditional methods of crafting objects, will there still be room for more modern, digital works? Should there also be space for digital creators? The third tension has to do with feasibility. This involves investigating how much regulation should be put in place to determine who can use these communal services. If I am constantly referring to the artisans and makers as masters of their craft, then where is this evaluation of mastery coming from?

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Working in a historic building in Old Town Tallinn, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site, comes with its pros and cons. The charm and character of the building can work as an inspiring context to design within, but it comes at the cost of severely difficult building regulations. A part of my research should also involve uncovering all of the regulations that my project will have to adhere to by being in a protected site.

DISNEYFICATION

The other benefit of working in the old town is the chance to provide it with a new local location. One of the issues that old town Tallinn is facing is the so-called “Disneyfication effect” that tends to happen to a lot of historic towns. This effect speaks to the idea that these localities become more of an open air museum, rather than an active and living community. Old Town Tallinn is no exception to that and like so many other historic cities it is packed with tourists while locals avoid it. Providing a new community location in the old town could be beneficial towards the effort of getting the historic city center to become more integrated with its local community. This topic will also work as a bit of a tension because the tourists in this area are also what helps provide for the local artisans. Therefore, a balance must be achieved.

CONCLUSION

Craftsmanship focused.

Supporting programs.

Small scale design interventions.

Fig. 18: *Design Objectives*

By building off of the existing Katariina guild within the heart of the old town the project will create a new cultural location for the locals of Tallinn while still benefiting from the tourism that the historic city provides. Combining the beauty that artisans create with the knowledge that makers provide and adding new programs that help to activate the location will result in the project becoming a true celebration of craftsmen. By researching the problems I stated earlier and resolving them through the lens of a craftsman, my aim for this project is to not only complete it to the smallest meticulous detail, but to also gain some level of craft mastery along the way.

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IMAGES + ILLUSTRATIONS

*All images and illustrations are by the author unless otherwise stated.

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