

# Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences



## Graduation Plan: All tracks

| Personal information |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Name                 | Hannah Judith Wehrle |
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| Studio                                |   |                     |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Name / Theme                          | Explore Lab 31  |                     |
| Main mentor                           | Roel van de Pas   | Architecture        |
| Second mentor                         | Jan van de Voort  | Building Technology |
| Argumentation of choice of the studio | Possibility for <i>true</i> exploration of this specific fascination – theoretical findings during the research phase can lay the foundations for the design without being pre-given. |                     |

| Graduation project              |                       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Title of the graduation project | Value in Architecture |

| Goal                                      |   |
|---|---|
| Location:                                 | Rotterdam, Netherlands  |
| The posed problem,                        | In contemporary neoliberal systems, the value of something is quantified in an abstracted one-dimensional number, which is not able to convey the true value that something can have and what values it initially emerged from. If value in our world is understood through numbers, the way we - for example - do architecture is conversely too much focused on this misunderstood notion of value. During the present graduation process, I aim to develop an understanding for the multi-layered essence of true value in architecture. |
| research questions and                    | How can we design spaces that allow a true expression of their value?   |
| design assignment in which these results. | Shared urban landscape of affordances   |

The design deliberately does not follow a strict program. The misunderstanding of value cannot be properly addressed and answered with the invention of a special program. What rather is necessary is to establish a design approach and design attitude, that focuses on the qualitative notion of value (see Method description).

Therefore, I concluded a few things that this design should be able to do. Firstly, it should to the greatest extend express the material qualities and production processes that it incorporates. A very **legible** architecture makes it easier to relate to and to understand an otherwise obscure creation of value.

Secondly, the value of an architectural intervention can also be understood as its affective power or **affordances**. Something in space is valuable to me, if it provides me with a useful action. It is my aim to express these values in an amplifying way by focusing on the potential of the

intervention. A shared urban landscape, accessible to many people, seems to be the best approach to achieve this.

And thirdly, in this legible landscape of affordances I aim to express the values of architectural aspects like texture, material, composition, topography, color, climate (and many more) through the tension field of **contrasts**. This is best achieved by designing for a multiplicity of experiences. A potential response to this might be to design a variety of different architectural elements situated in an urban landscape.

## **Process**

### **Method description**

The strategy for this graduation trajectory follows a multiplicity of methods. The problematic of value calls for a change in attitude and manner of doing architecture. As opposed to a rather distanced starting point which might be sketching some lines in a certain scale, I want to develop a more hands-on approach as an alternative, which will be an integrated process within the research.

Firstly, by the means of literature research I will be informed about negative implications of endless economic growth and theories of value in capitalism in order to define the problem statement accurately. Those readings stimulate thinking and reflection on the notion of value itself.

Secondly, I want to explore these notions in practice. The approach of an observational endeavor will examine how qualitative values express themselves in space and how we can capture that. I want to understand the value of a form in a relational manner and investigate the potential it bears for the encounter with it. The observation will therefore focus on the activities and actions in space and how they are meaningful. By doing so, I will try to capture their affective power or affordances. I will further reflect on the field of action in those spaces and speculate on what kind of architectural techniques could amplify their affective power.

Thirdly, I want to conduct hands-on research through experimentation, which will be an integrated process even up to the design. Research and design through making, traversing all scales, will help to discover the space of possibilities of expressing values differently. Through technically pluralistic means I plan to investigate the expression of materials and their qualities, of production processes and the affordances that a space can offer. The expression of materials and operations through which a space came into being can potentially stimulate a better understanding of the essence of architecture and defy the absence of knowledge that we are faced with nowadays. I am planning to carefully test and observe my experimentations on processes and resources in interaction with living beings.

This process is by no means linear: an experimentation with value-expressing techniques will provoke new thinking and reading which will in turn be tested in new experiments and observations. Through this rather cyclically evolving graduation process, I hope to arrive at a more accurate understanding of how to express qualitative values in space in a manner that amplifies sensibility towards value as such.

As a point of reference, I will critically study the work of more experimental practices such as Studio Ossidiana or RAAAF.

## Literature and general practical preference

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- . "The Autonomy of Affect ." *Cultural Critique*, 1995: 83-109.
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## Reflection

The issue of the misunderstanding of value has multiple implications and is also greatly relevant for the architectural field and education. Rationalising something so ambiguous and singular as values into a one-dimensional number is a reductive process. The consequence of this reduction process is a certain loss of pluralism in the world.

Furthermore, the abstraction of values causes us to not see the value of something to be embedded in a relational context. On the global market this effect stimulates the thrive for short-term profit, while on the long run an investment might be anything but valuable to the life on this planet.

The culture of understanding value as a number can therefore 'block' the architectural practice to work towards value as a quality. An architectural intervention might emerge based on normative factors and pre-given purposes, while affective potentials might have not been expressed to a satisfactory degree. It is imperative for architectural students to learn how to think in those qualities and what they actually mean. Part of this process is to accept that we as architects are not

in control of the use of a building. In my point of view, a less distanced but more hands-on approach of designing can help to better understand the true value of an architectural situation. Especially now, since architecture as 'real estate' became more and more instrument for investment and quantitative value-making, it is important to make clear the distinction of quantitative and qualitative value as such. The goal is not to abolish the money-value of an architectural intervention, but to understand its abstracted nature and to not let it prevent us from thinking in potentials.

Therefore, architects have to reflect more on the value their creation can have for its users and what values it originally emerged from (materials and production processes, so to speak).

My design should evoke architects to think about what value is. The design methods applied aim to challenge the distanced norm of doing architecture. This research and the documentation of the design process can potentially stimulate the courage for more practical and hands-on design approaches.