

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), 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	Gawein Verbiest	
Student number	4284135	
Telephone number		
Private e-mail address		

Studio		
Name / Theme	Dutch Housing/Between Standards and Ideals	
Main mentor	Pierijn van der Putt Theo Kupers	Architecture Architecture
Second mentor	Ferry Adema Maarten-Jan Hoekstra	Architectural Engineering & Technology Urbanism
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>Firstly, I realised the primary reason to study architecture was to be able to have a positive impact on cities and people's daily lives. The social aspect of architecture; the human scale; the way people interact (in certain spaces) - it has always fascinated me. I believe that within the domain of Dwelling lie many solutions to certain problems our society faces today. The increasing feeling of loneliness or isolation throughout all classes of society, as well as the increasing amount of burn-outs and depression, are in some way related to the way we dwell. I do not claim to be able to solve these problems, but I would like to contribute in a way. The same goes for the rather extreme issues regarding climate: I want to research in what way cities (or: the way we dwell) can benefit the climate rather than damage it. The large scale, high profile project that the Dutch Housing studio offers seems to be a good project to research and experiment on.</p> <p>The reason to choose Dutch Housing over Global Housing is the fact that it seems more appropriate to work in an environment which I know; which I am familiar with; which I dwell within. It's difficult to imagine working and intervening in a country that is alien to me. I prefer to work in a culture that I know by heart, at least until I find myself to be good enough in what I do to call myself an asset in a foreign place.</p>	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	The Open City: A Home for Nature How the solo dweller can flourish in a nature-inclusive city
Goal	
Location:	Minervahaven, Amsterdam
The posed problem,	Over the past century, in many different cultures, people have come to live alone increasingly often. In fact, a major reason we have to construct a million homes in The Netherlands in the coming decades is the rising number of solo dwellers. In spite of a cultural shift that took place over the last century, resulting in more freedom and tolerance towards others which allowed the solo dweller to flourish, living alone is still stigmatized and can lead to loneliness and social isolation. The shifting population within cities needs an adapted urban environment. A re-interpretation of (urban) nature can change the way we think of cities and its ostensibly unused spaces. Excessive control of what we call nature can lead to closed social systems, whereas a tolerance towards it can lead to experimentation and social activities: an open system. Because of this, we can develop the acquired freedom of the previous century further and allow the solo dweller to flourish and tackle issues such as loneliness and social isolation. There is a social problem that urban and architectural design can help to solve. The hypothesis is that different forms of urban nature can help in this matter.
research questions and	What is the value of urban nature for solo dwellers? Who is the solo dweller? What are the driving forces behind the rise of the solo dweller? What are the benefits and risks of solo dwelling? What type of urban environment allows the solo dweller to flourish? How has our relationship with nature developed historically? What is urban nature? Which open forms allow people as well as nature to flourish?
design assignment in which these result.	The assignment is to design a building that provides opportunities for people – especially solo dwellers – as well as nature to inhabit it in a way they want to. The building should allow spontaneous activities to occur and vegetation to grow. Several open forms, such as urban wastelands and shared facilities, should be incorporated in the design. The building must be open to time, meaning that it allows people and nature to make changes. It is about providing and allowing rather than controlling. Perhaps the main challenge is to include a strategy of 'non-design'.

Process

Method description

The main research method is an extensive literature review, including the fields of sociology, geography, ecology, history and architecture. Besides literature, several documentaries and films will be studied, especially about urban nature. Additionally, a heuristic approach using film and photography will be used to study occurrences of spontaneous nature in cities, and the behaviour of people within urban wastelands – spaces in which there are no clear rules of how to behave. Finally, throughout the semester, we have been offered courses that have helped in taking position, doing research or designing. The course *Research Seminar* has helped us to define what type of city we want to design, in relation to Richard Sennett's idea of the open city. Moreover, by means of weekly discussions we were continually challenged to take position based on either Sennett's thought or the ideas of our peers. The course *Research Tutorial* has offered an introduction to using Virtual Reality, which can assist us in the upcoming design process. Personally, I was able to study how to incorporate urban wastelands into the design and see in what way people behave in such spaces. Several *Case Studies* into precedents allowed us to study existing ways of, in my case, solo dwelling and examples of how nature can be used in a design. The course *Research Methods* has challenged us to think of how we structure and conduct our research and assess whether the methods are appropriate. As a result of this course, I have included the aforementioned heuristic film and photography study in the research. The first three examples have a place in our final research report. We are expected to indicate how the entire body of research has informed our conceptual design. In this way, the design will be based on a broad scope of study and allow us to critically reflect on our own biases and choices.

Literature and general practical preference

The used literature is shown below. Moreover, two experts on urban nature have been contacted and I have conducted a personal research into incidences of spontaneous vegetation in cities. For the upcoming design, I will mainly use physical modelling techniques I have learned in the MSc2 Studio *The Delta Shelter* and the electives *Analytical Models* and *Ornamatics*, all part of the chair of form studies.

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Reflection

1. In our studio, we are expected to create a certain type of city for a certain target group. We are challenged to consider a certain social idealism, without losing sight of realistic limitations and standardisation. I am designing a nature-inclusive city for solo dwellers. A part of the approach is allowing nature to become the "details" of the city to create a slightly run-down building that bears the marks of time. Thus, the advantages of standardisation can remain while the building is continually changing through inhabitation by plants and people. Ideally, nature and people will not be two opposites within a city, but instead coexist in a

dynamic way. The master track as well as the entire programme's main aim is, in my opinion, to challenge its students to take an architectural position; to be aware of the role of the architect within society and subsequently find and master the tools that are required to fulfil that role. My personal view of the position of the architect is that he is a master of designing and therefore a true generalist. An architect must know something about many things (ventilation capacity, brick patterns, human psyche, etc.). Only then can he make informed choices in a design. The graduation project is both a result of many years of acquiring knowledge and skills and a way to expand those. Having the possibly naïve goal to make the world a better place for all its inhabitants, I was happy to be able to dive into the topic of urban nature, introducing me to the field of urban ecology. Acquiring this knowledge helps me to become a true master of building and develop personal theories on nature and sustainability.

2. The relevance of this graduation work lies primarily in connecting both sociological and ecological theories directly to the architectural field. The subjects of solo dwelling and urban nature are very topical and both cause friction within society. Architecture is one of the primary agents able to solve these issues. I have attempted to rethink our attitude towards urban nature and design open urban forms that can contribute to the well-being of mainly solo dwellers, but other social groups too. However, I consider this graduation work to be only the beginning of my own professional career, in which I want to conduct further research and experiments on the topic in order to develop the theories further. I have had contact with the municipality of Amsterdam and will meet several employees in a few weeks in order to discuss their vision on Minervahaven as well as my graduation work, so hopefully this work will do something more than collect dust on the shelf.