

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	Carolina Bongiorno	
Student number	6064337	

Studio		
Name / Theme	Urban Architecture <i>Low Town Downtown</i>	
Main mentor	Elsbeth Ronner	Architecture
Second mentor	Jos Lafeber	AE + T
Third mentor	Chiara Pradel	Research mentor
Argumentation of choice of the studio	Architectural practice strongly revolves around responding to the urban context. I chose the studio as it emphasizes viewing the site's identifying factors within their historical, architectural, and social complexity as the primary resource that informs the research and shapes the direction and outcome of a grounded design.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Low Town Dialogues: in between living and learning.

Goal	
Location:	Lageweg, Hoboken, Antwerp, situated within the 20th-century city belt. Includes the site of the former Crown packaging factory, now hosting the Blikfabriek, a temporary social and cultural occupation.
The posed problem,	Lageweg presents itself as a patchwork of evolving urban structures that reflect its gradual and fragmented development. While it already offers a variety of scales and functions, including row housing, social housing high-rise blocks, industries, schools, and logistic facilities, the focus on industrial activities has progressively overshadowed attention to the qualitative public urban space and places for social interaction. The site's rigid enclosure restricts access from the surrounding neighborhood, further isolating these spaces and obstructing opportunities for integration.

	<p>These elements have contributed to several social issues, including limited contact among neighbors, a lack of social cohesion due to social differences, low education levels, and the absence of recreational spaces for youth. Since the current needs are not being adequately met, the partially abandoned areas and vacant industrial buildings need to be reinterpreted and strengthened to better serve the community's demands.</p>
research questions and	<p>In Lageweg, housing, production and education are grouped together, but the lack of coherence and the rigid boundaries prevent a meaningful physical dialogue between its parts. Despite the mixed program, the question remains: what elements are missing to facilitate positive interactions between functions, where they not only coexist but actively support each other's presence? And, what are the physical components within the site's built fabric that shape spaces of interaction, friction, or overlap?</p> <p>In reintegrating the vacant industrial buildings, through a balance between demolition, preservation and addition, what program can be developed to support communities with diverse backgrounds while preserving the site's identity in the process?</p>
design assignment in which these result.	<p>The design task begins with the development of an urban design proposal for Lageweg that addresses its challenges by breaking down its rigid enclosure and integrating different typologies. The latter are shaped by strategic demolitions and the relation to a "new existing". At the individual project level, in the chosen site existing identity and new intervention interact. The intention is working on an existing industrial laundry facility, which currently houses a primary school. The current function will be preserved to maintain important community facilities already integral to the neighborhood, while an extension will be developed to address the insufficient space for the number of students and school activities.</p> <p>The school, as a micro-reproduction of a larger community, functions as a space where individuals from diverse social, cultural, and generational backgrounds intersect. This creates an opportunity to engage with a wide range of users and investigate alternative programmatic combinations.</p>

	The design intent, grounded in these considerations, is to create a school that integrates housing, together with intermediate functions that can emphasize their collaborative interaction and mutual support.
Process	
Method description	
<p>Fieldwork serves as the primary source of information. The core methodology is site observation, focusing on the functional relationships that shape the chosen area. The research specifically examines the relationships between the school and its surrounding buildings, including the parking lot, row housing with private gardens, and the vacant hall of a former wheel factory. It also investigates the school's interior, focusing on its layout, functional divisions, and spatial organization to understand how these aspects influence both the interactions within the building and the broader dynamics of the site.</p> <p>The observation explores how spaces are used, who occupies them, when, and how behavior shifts, with the aim of exposing underused areas, potential frictions, and opportunities for improvement. Looking at user groups, such as children, workers and residents, analyzing when spaces are used to reveal time-based patterns, such as peak activity periods, quieter moments or total closure. Observing how behavior shifts across different types of spaces, such as open areas, private zones, and corridors, providing insights into how the built environment shapes interactions and movement.</p> <p>In addition, the study looks closely at the physical architectural elements: entrances, walkways, and walls define boundaries, direct movement, and create transitions between areas. More subtle elements, such as changes in levels, materials, or spatial qualities, also play a role in shaping how people perceive and make use of the space.</p> <p>Through this close observation, I aim to understand how the interaction between physical and social factors influences the current use of the area and shapes its potential for future development.</p>	

Literature and general practical references
<p>A selection of references, writings, projects, artistic works and drawings guided the initial exploration. These references helped to define the thematic focus and create a framework that supports both the research and design process. The works consulted revolve around key themes, including the definition of function and multifunctionality, weak and punctual architecture, the relationship between building and function, non-functional spaces and the interplay between objects, boundaries and the connections between different functions.</p> <p>Branzi, A. (2006). <i>Modernità debole e diffusa: il mondo del progetto all'inizio del XXI secolo</i>. Skira.</p> <p>Fang, H. (2016). Towards a Non-Intentional Space. In <i>Garden State: Cinematic space and choreographic time</i> (Vol. 3). Spurbuchverlag.</p> <p>Fujimoto, S. (2008). <i>Sou Fujimoto : Primitive future</i>. INAX.</p> <p>Lerner, J. (2014). <i>Urban acupuncture</i>. Island Press.</p> <p>Per, A. F., Mozas, J., & Arpa, J. (2014). <i>This is hybrid : an analysis of mixed-use buildings</i>. a+t architecture publishers.</p> <p>Solà-Morales, I. d., & Whiting, S. (1997). <i>Differences : topographies of contemporary architecture</i>. MIT Press.</p>

Solà-Morales, M. d., Frampton, K., Mason, P., & Hewison, R. (2008). *A matter of things*. NAI Publishers.

Zeidler, E. H. (1983). *Multi-use architecture in the urban context*. K. Krämer.

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)?

The project directly aligns with the studio's theme by addressing how to transform temporary urban vitality into lasting quality in a medium-sized, complex site. It builds on the studio's emphasis on integrating research and design through site observation and fieldwork.

The project also ties into my master track and broader programme by building on themes I have researched in previous projects, despite their varying contexts and scales. Central to all my work is a consistent interest in examining the relationships between architectural elements and the spaces of separation, interaction, and friction between them, making this project a continuation and strengthening of that inquiry.

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

The project holds significant relevance as it addresses current urban issues such as densification, adaptive reuse, and multifunctional integration. By emphasizing the quality of urban space and responding to tangible societal needs, it investigates how architecture can evolve in response to contemporary imperatives for sustainability and social engagement. Professionally, it proposes methodologies for balancing preservation with new interventions, contributing to the discourse on transforming existing fabric within evolving urban landscapes. It further refines the understanding of how architectural practice can engage with layered social, historical, and ecological conditions to create responsive urban environments.