Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences

Maste

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	Elodie Fabre
Student number	5627826

Studio		
Name / Theme	Explore Lab	
Design mentor	A.S. Alkan	Architecture
Research Mentor	G. Vrachliotis	Architecture
Technical Building Design Mentor	E. Hehenkamp	Building technology
Argumentation of choice of the studio	The subject I wanted to tackle at first was neoliberal architecture, as a follow-up to my thesis. I chose Explore lab as it was the only studio enabling me to work on this particular topic and to select specific tutors. Also, I was interested in constructing my own subject and having a more theoretical approach, which was possible in this studio.	

Graduation project
Title of the graduation project :   **The empowerment monument,**   **A multiscalar model for empowerment-oriented design.**
Goal
Location: **Rotterdam**

The posed problem,

Last year, I wrote my thesis on the architect confronting neoliberal processes, from 1980 to nowadays. I tried to understand why it didn't seem like the practising architect had the social responsibility that we get taught in university for instance. Using actor-network theory, I mapped the « organisational backstage» of architecture production.

Ever since I am interested in the empowerment of the architect's profession and the question of our « social responsibility ». As the research went along, I came across notions like biopolitics, society of control or behavioural economics and I became fascinated with these overarching power structures that appeared to be « ruling our lives ».

If I can make the naive statement that architecture reflects society, what is then the involvement of architecture within these control systems? If it is involved, how can architecture transform the narrative towards the empowerment of the population?

Nevertheless, the empowerment of the population isn't only a matter of design, it involves different actors across several scales of action. From national policies and urban regulations to site-specific design interventions. Within that spectrum, I would like to rethink the role of the architect, or at least my project, as a designer of a structure for empowerment-oriented design.

If we then consider architecture as an infrastructure for empowerment, how can we define a framework for empowering design strategies?

research question :

How can architecture empower citizens to regain their response-ability through a counter-narrative to the neoliberal finance fiction?

design assignment in which these result :

The project is a testing ground, a building hosting hybrid programs whose objective is the empowerment of its users and the creation of new narratives. Based on the research, I realised that the conflict between actors or functions is a fertile ground for empowerment strategies to be born in. Working with this notion of « limit », I am anchoring the project in a site that is left over and left out of the city, on its edge. Hybrid programs, then enable me to confront these limits and create user-empowering combinations. In that dynamic, the building is also evolving, it transforms according to different time frames and the experimentations performed inside.

Process

Method description

The research: the atlas of empowerment

My research output consists in creating an « Atlas of empowerment », constituted of architectural projects and literary references. The objective laying behind the Atlas is to provide a structure for empowerment-oriented design. I envision it as a guide for designers to apply multi-scalar empowering strategies, according to a set of specific situations.

A heuristic design database

This database of reference projects is centred around a selection process, codified by several parameters that I chose. The selected projects all reflect empowerment strategies, revealing themselves in different aspects of the design process.

A matrix of empowerment strategies

Each project is analysed according to different lenses and scales: Instigator, Plannificator, Perpetuator, Time, Opinions, Politics, Institution, Maintenance system, Urban, Local, Surface, Architectural, Ecosystem, Non-humans, and Subterranean. This results in a matrix of project characteristics, allowing their comparison and the determination of an « empowerment factor », a specific empowering design strategy.

From research to design: From situations to strategies, toward a model of empowerment-oriented design strategies

From each case study in the atlas, I deduced: a situation in which the project is anchored and a main empowering strategy. Each situation and strategy are linked to an ambition of the project. I then extracted this information to create the project: a multi-scalar structure of empowering strategies, applicable to specific recognisable situations in different contexts. This model is the structure for empowerment-oriented design.

Architectural design: a testing ground for new empowering narratives

Towards the design project, I then chose a specific situation in Rotterdam, to which I applied the model. The design is then a testing ground for the empowerment-oriented design model.

Site conditions: working across the limit

Based on the Atlas, it seems that the conflicts between actors or actions, the limit between them, are fertile ground for the creation of new narratives. The site for the project is then a leftover space in Rotterdam, left out of the city, on its edge. The limit is the ground on which the project can develop. According to this situation, I can then employ several strategies from the empowerment-oriented design model.

Hybrid programs and building evolution

I am then designing hybrid programs to tackle these limits, combinations of functions from which user-empowerment could be born. The design project is then a collaborative testing ground for these narratives to be experimented in. Within the same ambition, the building would then evolve in time, according to the experiments performed inside.

Literature and general practical preference

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Zuboff, S. (2019). The age of surveillance capitalism, the fight for a human future at the new frontier of power (Profile book Ltd).

Projects analysed:

Permis de végétaliser, Mairie de Paris

Aula de conviviencia, Recettas urbanas

Sitopia, Carolyn Steel

L'écume des jours, Boris Vian

World brain, D-W

The arcades project, Walter Benjamin

Co-migration : aeroplankton, The expanded environment

Do you hear me when you sleep? DOGMA

Reggio School, Office for political innovation

Rolling house for the rolling society, Office for political innovation

The planet after geo-engineering, Design Earth

Mapping the commons, Hackitectura

La preuve par 7, Patrick Bouchain

Citizen communication and participation regarding sensors, Responsible sensing lab

Fake properties, real estate, Gordon Matta Clark

Detroit think Grid, Cedric Price

The preston model, Preston city council

Finance fiction, Alain Damasio

Faire système, Chartier-Dalix

CLT Amsterdam

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)?

Through my project, I am trying to have a transdisciplinary approach to architecture, where I consider public policies, urban and architectural projects, but also digital platforms and citizen movements for instance. I am an architecture student (architecture track), but I am using the frame of the TU Delft faculty of architecture and the built environment to understand the different actions that can transform our built environment. The resulting research allows me to construct an architectural project, more aware of these different topics.

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

In the larger social framework, through my analysis of empowering projects, I am trying to understand what strategies different actors can have to empower the less priviledged parts of the population.

Professionally, I am analysing the position of the architect in the project as an actor that could maybe interfere in other aspects than architectural design. I am also developing a database for empowerment-oriented projects and strategies for architects to use. I am creating a selection of precedents, to be used for future designs. I am also using a research method based on the creation of synthetic diagrams of each project's strategies and their combinations, as a way of creating a structure for empowerment-oriented design strategies.