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](mailto: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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Personal information</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Osman Ural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student number</td>
<td>4512596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone number</td>
<td>0643738254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private e-mail address</td>
<td><a href="mailto:o_ural@yahoo.com">o_ural@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Studio</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name / Theme</td>
<td>History and Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers / tutors</td>
<td>Teake Bouma, Luisa Calabrese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentation of choice of the studio</td>
<td>My thesis is based on the social housing projects of New York. To better understand the state in which they exist today, the history of why they exist in the first place needs to be examined. By doing so, an understanding of their cultural and historical significance can be constructed. This will increase the value of the social housing projects, which are currently ignored and being left to rot to a point beyond repair. The studio will provide both a research field and a set of methods in which to understand what do do with culturally and historically sensitive urban tissues such as the social housing projects of New York.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Graduation project</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title of the graduation project</td>
<td>Finding the “Soul” of Public Space in Harlem’s Social Housing Projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Goal</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>East Harlem, New York, U.S.A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The posed problem,</td>
<td>The current functionality of public space in the social housing projects of East Harlem are passive, low in activity, and has no variety in space and function - propagating problems of health and safety that the low-income families of the projects face on a day-to-day basis. In order to help these inhabitants attain a higher quality of life, their public space needs to be redeveloped through a design brief which incentivizes developers to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
add social and programmatic elements that will help bring more activity, self-awareness, and diversity without displacing the current inhabitants of the projects. This needs to be done within the current boom of construction going on in New York, allowing the people living in the projects to be better positioned to protect themselves from future gentrification and preserve their community. Finding the “soul” of their public space will prevent further isolation from the city, a state that the projects currently find themselves in.

In what possible ways can the passive public spaces of social housing projects in East Harlem be redeveloped in order to provide their inhabitants with a better quality of life, while keeping the community intact and protected from an increasingly gentrified New York?

Is there a zoning or legislative system that can be implemented which would motivate developers to help provide the necessary investment required to redevelop the public space of the projects?

Can the community of the projects increase the quality of public space and still be protected from the effects of gentrification?

How can improving the quality of public space in the projects provide a better quality of life?

What kind of needs or requirements will be provided in the design brief for the public space of the projects? How can this be enforced on the developers who will be responsible for redeveloping the public space?

A “design brief” that informs and regulates a “development plan” which provides a framework of zoning and regulation that can help in providing a better quality of life to the public spaces of social housing projects in New York.

The project location chosen to be the test site of the design brief and parameters
which will be defined is on the East side of Harlem, which exists in the North of Manhattan Island. The project site is made up of four social housing projects: Jefferson Houses, Johnson Houses, Taft Houses, and King Towers. There are multiple reasons for this selection, but one of the most motivating factors is that its a continuous super block of social housing projects which happen to exist at the corner of Central Park. The spatial realization of social inequality is apparent in this case when one considers how some of the most expensive real estate exist around Central Park. From a morphological standpoint, the project area is a massive interruption in the planned grid of New York, and sits isolated around the infill tenement morphology that defines the city. There are also different typologies of residential blocks on the site, and has a good potential to connect to the waterfront with Central Park.

These projects are also a good sample set of the health and safety issues that plague other projects that are controlled by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). When looking at recent stories in the news like residents in the Jefferson Houses had to threaten to sue NYCHA just to clean up their basements which had flooded with sewage water, which was reported by Nolan Hicks (2018) in the New York Post in a story titled NYCHA Cleans Up Sewage in Basement After Residents Threatened Lawsuit. Crime is also a major issue at the Jefferson Houses, according to Greg B. Smith in his story titled Spike in Violent Crime in Housing Division where Slain NYPD Officer Randolph Holder Worked published by the New York Daily News. In the report, he explains that in 2015 there were 7 murders in Police Service Area 5 (PSA 5), which is responsible for protecting 30 NYCHA projects in Harlem. The Jefferson Houses accounted for 3 of those murders, including Officer Randolph Holder, and is considered the housing project with the most amount of crime in PSA 5. By implementing the design brief in this area, the thesis aims to help alleviate these problems that plague the project location.

**Process**

**Method description**

The methods and techniques of research and design that will be used in this thesis are to help produce a “development plan” framework in which passive public spaces in the social housing projects of New York can plausibly be regenerated, combined with a “design brief” that will test spatial theories that will increase the quality of life in these spaces and not gentrify them at the same time. By providing the “development plan” first, zoning rules and regulations can be discovered, which in turn can provide parameters and limits that can inform the framework of the “design brief.”

The “design brief” will have a “research by design” approach that implements concepts and guidelines from multiple scholarly sources that criticize and suggest elements in the planning and use of public space. The site needs to be analyzed at a macro scale to first understand issues of circulation, access to public goods, surrounding functions, and other issues of context. Next, data needs to be gathered at a smaller scale, such as the plans of the buildings in the social housing projects, in order to better understand the interaction between the ground floor of the buildings and the public space that surrounds them. This knowledge will also provide a
structure that can be manipulated in order to make a functional new public space possible. Another level that needs to be considered are the wants and needs of the residents. This data needs to be collected somehow, either by interviews of local inhabitants, or a questionnaire done previously by a reputable source.

The "development plan" framework will therefore be born out of the "design brief" that is produced. The parameters and ideas extracted from it will be codified in typologies that can be implemented as part of the zoning regulations defined by the City Council of New York. Based on these regulations, potential developers will have to abide by the rules developed in the zonal coding. These rules will not only be limited to morphological regulations, such as set backs, heights, et cetera. But also, percentages of available potential development, and a bonus system that rewards developers for meeting certain benchmarks which help the passive public spaces of the social housing projects attain a better quality of life for their inhabitants. A key component to this approach will be preventing gentrification and preserving the community that lives within the projects, yet developers need to be incentivized to improve these public spaces in the first place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature and general practical preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The search for the “soul” of public space in the social housing projects of East Harlem is a combination of three fields of knowledge that need to be studied in order to produce the "design brief" and the "development plan:"

1. Social Housing in New York City

This field involves the history and current situation of the social housing projects in New York. Not only does this provide reasoning to the overall understanding why they are important to not only the residents of the projects, but also to the urban morphology of the city and the implications of their development. The current literature fields and sources are:

*The Rise and Fall of New York Public Housing: An Oral History* by FERRÉ-SADURNÍ, L. (2018) - An article which describes both the history, and the current health and safety issues which have plagued the social housing projects of New York.

*The Housing Crisis in New York* by KAYSEN, R. (2018) - An article about the challenges New York is experiencing in providing affordable housing to its residents, and how the city is trying to meet them.

*A Brief History of Affordable Housing in New York City* by PALETTA, A. (2016) - An article which describes the processes that took place in order to develop and build the social housing projects of New York.

2. Deficiencies of Public Space

This field deals with the criticisms of the planning processes that have produced the contemporary city, more specifically on the degradation of public space and its
meaning to the inhabitants that use it. The current literature fields and sources are:

*The Death and Life of Great American Cities* by JACOBS, J. (1961) - A book that takes an in-depth look at the relationships between the people, the built environment, and the public space around them.


*New York: The Revitalization of Public Space. Recent Interventions in the Manhattan Grid* by MORCILLO PALLARES, A. (2012) - An article that explains the history of public space in New York, and the major implications that the urban grid had on the city.

3. Nourishing the “Soul” of Public Space

This field provides potential guidelines and approaches that can be taken in order to improve the quality and functionality of public space. Though not specific methods, there are suggestions and recommendations made from multiple sources that, when looked at comprehensively, can help provide a framework for designing public space. The current literature fields and sources are:


*Public Space* by CARR, S., FRANCIS, M., RIVLIN, L. G., & STONE, A. M. (1992) - A book explaining the link between civic space and public life, and offers approaches that need to be considered when designing public space.

*Placemaking and the Future of Cities* by Project for Public Spaces (2012) - A handbook advocating that public space is an important key to building inclusive, healthy, functional, and productive cities.

**Reflection**

**Relevance**

**Societal and Ethical Relevance**

The social housing projects of New York are isolated morphologically, but also socially as well. Since low-income families live in the projects, there tends to be issues of unemployment, crime, etc. Since the “White Flight,” social housing has been seen as a place of undesirables and this sentiment continues to this day. Though the Mayor of New York has tried to provide affordable housing to the masses, it really only effects people who can actually afford decent rents. As the city develops with new residential towers, the social housing projects have been sliding into disrepair as neoliberal economic and governmental approaches have deemed them obsolete. The motivation behind this thesis is to recognize that the people living in these projects
have a right to the city, and do not deserve the quality of life that they are living through now. What is the most ironic is that reason why the slums were cleared in order to make way for the social housing projects was to eradicate poverty and other social ills, but history just ended up repeating itself.

Scientific Relevance

The most relevant scientific aspect to this thesis might be the psychological implications regarding the connection between public space and the people who use it. This can be acknowledged by asking questions such as:

Does improving public space really improve the quality of life?
What makes users more connected to public space?
How does public space affect the way people interpret the world?

Time planning

The timeline of the project will be as follows, and is divided by the two products which are the “design brief” and the “development plan:”

By P2:
For the “design brief:”

Potential design interventions should be in the process of being explored.
Preparining the base files, plans, and other information necessary for the design intervention should be in the process of being finalized.

For the “development plan:”

Potential incentives to developers should be in the process of being explored.
The research and defining of all potential stakeholders in the re-development of public space in social housing projects should be ongoing.

By P3:

For the “design brief:”

Potential design interventions should be in the process of being finalized and transitioning to a finalized design intervention.
The research into the design characteristics that can be implemented in public space should be in the process of being finalized.
The development of potential parametrics needed for the development plan should be ongoing.

For the “development plan:”

Research about NYC zoning regulations should be ongoing.
Research about NYC legislation and processes required in development should be ongoing. The gathering of data about the needs of the inhabitants in the social housing projects should be ongoing.

**By P4:**

For the “design brief:”

The development of potential parametrics needed for the development plan should be finalized.
The design interventions planned for the public space should be finalized.

For the “development plan:”

The zoning options for the public space of the social housing projects need to be finalized.
The legislation needs to make redevelopment of public spaces possible need to be finalized.

**By P5:**

Final touches and feedback based revisions should be done.