This paper is a personal reflection of the graduation process and its various aspects within the Architecture & Dwelling, Dutch Housing studio. More specifically, I will reflect upon the overall theme of the studio, the relationship between research and design, the methodology used in the process and finally, the position of the project within the social context.

**Relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject chosen by the student within this framework.**

The Dutch Dwelling studio is concerned with densification and transformation of Dutch inner-city locations. In particular, the field of experimentation for my graduation project was the city centre of Amsterdam and the entire belt of former defence works. The studio is seeking housing solutions based upon the development of a future scenario for the city as a whole. Having the freedom to create my own future scenario for the city, was very intriguing as I had the opportunity to develop a far-reaching and rather ambitious plan based upon the city's history and the current developments on a national and international level. My chosen theme was the impact of Brexit and how Amsterdam could benefit from a possible relocation of business and capital in the European Union. My scenario was for Amsterdam to develop into a global hub for trade and business, a real Metropolis, competing with other cities such as Paris or Frankfurt.

**Relation between research and design.**

The extensive group analysis of the site's various aspects, including history, socioeconomics and future plans of the city itself, helped me come up with the Metropolis scenario, which then needed to be further elaborated and clarified, developing into a concrete design project. After studying literature on the notion of a Metropolis but also taking into account how it is perceived by the general public, mainly through the media, I came to the conclusion that the high rise is one of its integral symbols. The city of Amsterdam is definitely not a high-rise city and past experiments of high rise developments have failed and still have a very negative reputation. This led to my main research topic of how high-rise structures can be integrated into the city fabric especially through the use of the plinth and the surrounding public space. The research helped me get a better understanding of the city's fabric but also the importance of buildings' plinths, as this is the main connecting element with the public realm. The research helped me develop the urban form and the program of the building for the P2 stage. Later, the focus turned mainly to the architecture of the dwellings deviating from the plinth and the public space. However, the research results became relevant again when it came to the architectural treatment and materiality of the building, especially on the ground floor. The results, despite being focused on a particular topic, demonstrated how research can facilitate design decisions even only as far as a specific topic is concerned.

**Relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework.**

The methodical line of the studio was more structured until the P2 stage with the group work and the individual research on an individual theme. In retrospect, my chosen theme of the metropolis, was quite vague and theoretical, finding it difficult to come to a solid research outcome that could be implemented into the design task of a dwelling complex, except for the high rise as a form. The use of case studies helped into narrowing down the scope of the research and focus on more specific aspects such as the public space, the plinth and street level perception. The process continued swiftly with the architectural design on an individual dwelling scale mainly in 2d drawing format and 3d digital modelling. Until the P3 the design process went relatively smoothly and the project was pretty much complete. However, I then realised that my proposal was pretty generic and lacked a strong concept that would create a unique living environment, a symbol for my theme of Amsterdam as a metropolis of the future. Thus, I went back to defining the concept, which shows that design is not a linear process. I thought of the fundamental characteristic of high rise living, which is the view. A personal fascination by greenery in high-rise buildings helped me define my strategy further. The view towards the city combined with the soothing effect of the presence of actual greenery led me to try and
combine these two, as a guiding theme for my design. Using my existing design as a basis and through manipulation of the mass by subtracting or adding elements I came up with new housing typologies developing into a fully updated design proposal. The progress was quick due to the flexibility of the previous design proposal. The next step was to continue with the detailed design, the materiality and the various technical challenges associated with buildings of such scale. Overall, there was no prescribed methodology, especially after the group work period, which gave me the freedom to pursue my own interests and find ways that work best for me as a person.

**Relationship between the project and the wider social context.**

Many cities around the world are faced with the problem of population growth, lack of available space and exorbitant land values. With suburban sprawl no longer seen as a sustainable solution, densification of inner cities seems like a one-way solution. High rise is a form of densification with a relatively small footprint that can take the most advantage of tight urban space. The city of Amsterdam faces a competition from other EU hubs to attract business boost economic growth, which entails a large influx of expats and their families. In the current state, the city fails to provide adequate housing to accommodate such changes and faces the danger of becoming irrelevant in an international context. The lack of availability of good quality housing drives up competition and pushes prices higher for an often-sub-standard quality. Many cities facing similar issues are turning to the high rise as a solution so it could be the case for Amsterdam to explore this option and implement it on a larger scale as it is already happening in some of its districts (eg. Zuidas, Noord, Zeeburg) The design proposal offers a unique living environment for the residents with nature and views forming an integral part of it. The public plinth including retail and leisure functions activate the public street and connect the high rise with its surrounding context. The publicly accessible rooftop garden provides an alternative public space with uninterrupted views over the city turning into a landmark for the city attracting residents and tourists alike as a new sociable space and promoting economic growth.