

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	Alessia Angela Sanchez
Student number	5865042

Studio		
Name / Theme	Methods of Analysis and Imagination, "A Matter of Scale"	
Main mentor	Jorge Mejia Hernandez	Architecture
Second mentor	Freek Speksnijder	Building Technology
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>The selection of the studio "Methods and Analysis" stems firstly from the initial exposure to the studio's presentations that left an extremely positive impression on me: the level of autonomy and freedom offered to us students in investigating our projects and our methods of research and representation, coupled with the right balance of mentorship provided, convinced me of the studio's efficacy.</p> <p>Additionally, the choice of location for the studio's project holds particular significance for me: the city of Tallinn, with its Soviet legacy and the associated architectural and urban challenges, aligns perfectly with my fascination for revitalizing such contexts. The prevalence of Soviet neighborhoods in Tallinn presents a unique opportunity to address the problem of human scale, an issue that particularly resonated with me and that happened to be exactly the thematic focus of the studio.</p>	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	"The Market House, A Mat Building In-between Soviet Blocks"
Goal	

Location:	Kivila Blocks, Mustakivi, 13917 Tallinn, Estonia.
The posed problem,	<p>The primary concern that propels this research is the noticeable absence of purposefully designed spaces and infrastructures beyond mere residential buildings.</p> <p>This critical deficiency has cast a veil of neglect over the district, transforming it into a mere dormitory where inhabitants retreat solely for rest, leaving the streets bereft of life and activity.</p> <p>Drawing upon insights gathered from interviews conducted during my field trip and information sourced from online platforms, it is evident that the district has acquired an unfavorable reputation, a perception influenced by the looming specter of unfair segregation and the frequent unjust portrayal of Lasnamäe as a Russian-inhabited ghetto.</p> <p>However, upon closer examination, a hidden narrative unfolds: Contrary to the perceived sterility, pockets of life persist. Commercial basement shops have sprung to life, fostering a unique social fabric:</p> <p>The resilient inhabitants of Lasnamäe have ingeniously repurposed the underutilized spaces beneath the concrete surfaces of aging residential panel Soviet blocks erected in the 1970s.</p> <p>Unfortunately, some of these adaptive spaces are facing closure, grappling with the tension with colossal capitalist malls and supermarket that have sprouted in areas left unbuilt since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.</p>

<p>research questions and</p>	<p>My fascination lies in this hidden world at the basement floor of the huge and repetitive soviet blocks, where work, life, and community intersect, and that I believe can form the catalyst for urban revitalization.</p> <p>Thus, my research question guiding the trajectory of my inquiry is: "How does the integration of living, working, and social spaces challenge modernist monofunctional urban practices?"</p>
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>Building upon my discoveries, my research hypothesis will take shape in Mustakivi, particularly focusing in the courtyards of Kivila Streets.</p> <p>The housing in the area does not meet the current needs and lifestyle of resident: the projects of the post war period were based on architectural ideals in line with the welfare state's politic of equality. But the housing blocks created suddenly appear architecturally uniform and oppressive to the real human needs of individuals: in the following decades, societal individualization emerged, and equality as ideal was replaced by diversity. My project will be to establish areas for both production and consumption, with a focus on micro economy as a tool for facilitating employment opportunities for district residents and creating a sense of place and belonging within their local community.</p> <p>For my design proposals I propose live-work units to be placed in the courtyards, forming a Mat Building in-between Soviet Blocks.</p>

The ground floor of this architectural configuration is envisioned to host shops owned by the residents residing on the upper floors. Originally conceived as vibrant streets aimed at revitalizing the sterile ground level of the expansive courtyard, after the realization of the area's shape and the implementation of a Mat Building typology, it became apparent that these ground-floor shops could evolve into a market, thereby fostering a unique hybridization of market and housing typologies. The market concept goes beyond mere economic transactions, transforming the once-static soviet courtyard into a lively space where residents and visitors alike can converge, reinforcing the sense of community.

Process

Method description

In the methodology and techniques employed for my research and design, I initially utilized photography as a primary method during the field trip to document and visually analyze the prevalence of local basement shops in Lasnamae. Capturing over 80 images, this extensive visual documentation serves as tangible evidence, guiding the definition of activities and design strategies for these spaces. The photographs underscore the potential for integrating small businesses into the community fabric, indicative of residents' desires to activate urban spaces for living and entrepreneurial activities.

Inspired by the spatial journey narrative in Kees Boeke's "Cosmic View: The Universe in 40 Jumps," my research employs a sequence of scale-specific plans or atlas to illuminate and study the nuanced fabric of Mustakivi, my chosen site. The central narrative revolves around the imagined journey of a father and son, whom I encountered during the field trip, as they navigate Mustakivi for grocery shopping, with a deliberate stop at a commercial basement shop. This methodical sequence aims to provide a holistic view, using varying scales to reveal intricate relationships between people, spaces, and commercial activities in the area.

In terms of design, my focus centered on architectural elements fostering vibrant streets and mixed-use areas. During my exploration, the Mat Building typology emerged as a pivotal concept. In alignment with the Smithsons' vision, the Mat

Building serves as a valid alternative to modernist urbanism, drawing inspiration from traditional lively streets: The Smithsons' Urban Re-Identification Grid proposed a departure from the four functions of the Athens Charter in favor of celebrating the traditional street.

Delving into the Mat Building typology, I discovered its evolution from the 20th century to contemporary urbanism. Initially constrained by structuralism, the Neo Mat Building has undergone transformative developments. Moving beyond repetitive units and horizontal aggregation, contemporary Mat Building involves overlapping programs, forms, and surfaces. It creates indeterminate, densely textured entities, characterized by flux, multi-layered complexity, and porosity. This evolution reflects an innovative system that weaves, warps, folds, interlaces, and knots diverse elements, expressing a dynamic balance between solid and void, that I wish to implement in my design.

Literature and general practical references

My research will first draw upon the insights of renowned theorists such as Jane Jacobs, Jan Gehl, and Hollis, Anderson and others that have each contributed to a unique perspective to our understanding of the quality of the streets and the implications of mixed functions, like live-work units.

Hollis, in her work "Beyond Live and Work," critiques the monofunctional approach of Modernism, particularly noting the absence of the live-work concept in socialist planning due to fundamental differences in zoning principles. This realization prompted a focused exploration of how such a typology could be effectively integrated into socialist buildings, thereby enhancing the vibrancy and diversity of streets and public spaces. Building upon Jacobs' emphasis on the pivotal role of ground-floor spaces in stimulating street life, her assertion that "you can't make people use streets they have no reason to use" underscores the necessity of creating engaging and attractive ground floor environments. This notion is reinforced by Gehl (2011), who succinctly captures the essence of urban vitality with the statement, "Nothing happens because nothing happens."

To delve into the study of the Mat Building typology, I have consulted architects and theorists from the last century, including Alison and Peter Smithson, Piet Blom, and Candilis-Josic-Woods and their projects like "Kasbah" in Hengelo, Netherlands or "The Free University of Berlin". This exploration is complemented by an examination of recent articles pertaining to the new generation of Mat Building, encompassing projects such as the 21st Century Museum or the Eda Apartments by SANAA, and the Convention Center in Agadir by OMA. By bridging historical perspectives with contemporary developments, this research seeks to glean insights that can inform innovative approaches to my urban design and architecture.

(Main) LITERATURE:

1. Anderson S. (1978). *On Streets*. MIT Press.
2. Bakema J. (1962). *De Anonieme Opdrachtgever*. Forum, Nr 1.
3. Gehl J. (2011) *Life Between Buildings. Using Public Space*. Island Press
4. Holliss F. (2015). *Beyond Live / Work: The Architecture of Home-based Work*. Routledge.
5. Jacobs J. (1961). *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Random House, New York.
6. Rossi U. (2018). *The Streets as a Living Space*. L'architettura delle città. The journal of the Scientific Society Ludovico Quaroni. Edizioni Nuova Cultura
7. Rudofsky B. (1969). *Streets for People*. Anchor Press, Doubleday.
8. Smithson A. (1974). *How to recognise and read mat-building*. Architectural Design.
9. Van den Heuvel D. (2011). *De huiselijke superstructure van Piet Blom*. DASH.
10. Yuan Zu. (2009). *Neo Mat Building*. The 4th international conference of the international forum on Urbanism.

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)?

My graduation project, rooted in architectural principles, draws profound insights from elective courses within my master's program, particularly those in "Urban Geography" (AR0049), "People, Movement and Public Space" (AR0168), and the "theory thesis" course for which my paper has delved into the problematics of urban mobility.

The integration of urban geography insights allows for a nuanced understanding of Tallinn's unique socio-spatial dynamics, guiding my design decisions to create an environment that resonates with the community's needs.

Leveraging the knowledge acquired from the electives mentioned, I aim to contribute to Tallinn's urban fabric by tackling the challenges in Soviet neighborhoods associated with human scale, the main theme of the studio.

By strategically activating the ground floor, the design of my mat building aims to facilitate meaningful interactions among residents and visitors. This multifunctional space integrates shops, retail establishments, and community areas, thereby enhancing the overall quality of design centered on the human scale.

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

My graduation project holds significant relevance within a larger social, professional, and scientific framework as it stands poised to serve as a prototype for future developments in neglected urban areas, where several governmental renovation programs are implemented, but limited to insulation and energy efficiency of prefabricated housing.

The neglected areas of a city, characterized by social and spatial issues, often grapple with a lack of dignity and a coherent sense of place for their residents. My project emerges as a responsible and impactful architectural intervention, poised to provide not only physical enhancements but also a renewed sense of pride and identity to the inhabitants of these marginalized neighbourhoods.

By introducing a process of hybridization of housing and market typologies, my project has the potential to influence the discourse of urban design and architecture on mixed functionalities where live and work can coexist in the same building, offering residents opportunity to interact with each other and develop a sense of community, by activating the ground floor of the area.

The Mat Building concept of my design presents an innovative approach that holds potential for addressing the challenges in neglected social neighbourhood as it offers a traditional pattern that is opposite to the modernist one applied on soviet blocks.