

# 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:

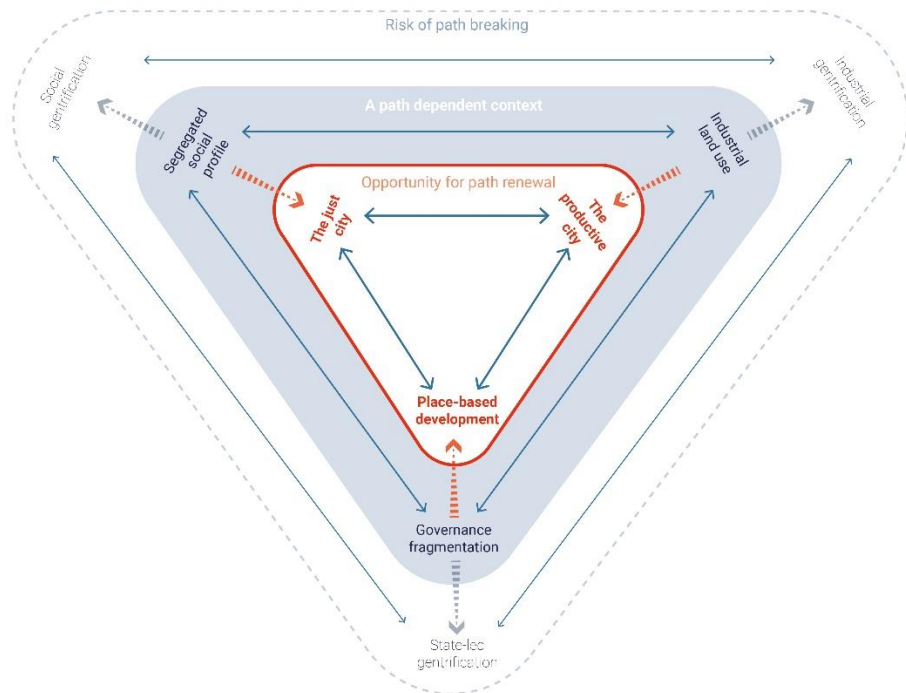
Personal information	
Name	Siene Swinkels
Student number	4575946

Studio		
Name / Theme	Planning complex cities	
Main mentor	Rodrigo Cardoso	Planning complex cities
Second mentor	Birgit Hausleitner	Urban fabrics
Argumentation of choice of the studio	My initial interest to choose this studio has been to investigate socio-economic issues and how these relate to cities. I envisioned a mainly research driven design assignment for my graduation project. Furthermore, my research aims to contribute to the knowledge on how these social and economic processes form the physical environment and aims to combine both planning and design to intervene in these interactions.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	<b>Reframing Brussels' Canal zone: From path dependence to path renewal, a strategy for a just, productive and place based development</b>
Goal	
Location:	Canal zone, Brussels
The posed problem,	Many western European cities have undergone a process of deindustrialisation. This has resulted in a changed economy focused on knowledge. This went hand in hand with urbanisation, which resulted in explosive population growth in many cities. This in combination with the rise of neoliberal planning has made cities an attractive investment object. All three of these trends have caused many industrial areas to be transformed in often glamorous projects to revamp cities images. While aesthetically improving cities, it has also often started or intensified processes of gentrification. The canal zone of Brussels however seems to be very stable in this regard, and has not undergone any big transformation. My hypothesis is that this could be attributed to strong path dependencies within the area, which expresses itself in three ways: the segregated social profile, the industrial land use and its governance fragmentation. Often neoliberal planning treats these types of path dependent location as a sort of 'tabula rasa' that can be used to maximise profits and thus deals with these path dependencies by path

breaking: demolishing urban fabric and displacing people and/or economic functions.

Due to the fact that these path dependencies seem quite strong in Brussels and have not yet undergone such a transformation, makes it a unique opportunity to look at a different approach of urban development. Looking at these path dependencies from the perspective of path renewal, These could be starting points for a just, productive and place-based development, that addresses gentrification and the challenges the area faces.



research questions and

**Main question: How can a just, productive and place-based development be achieved in the Canal zone of Brussels, utilizing the area's path dependencies through path renewal?**

*SQ1: How did the path dependencies in the Canal area develop and how do they manifest themselves in the current urban landscape and urban policy?*

1a. How did the prevalent path dependencies develop overtime?

1b. How do these path dependencies shape and manifest themselves in the current urban landscape?

1c. How does policy in Brussels deal with these path dependencies?

1d. Based in these analysis, what can we say about the future of the canal area?

*SQ2: What values can be synthesised from these path dependencies and how could these be integrated in an alternative vision for the Canal area?*

2a. What are the challenges and risks related to these path dependencies?

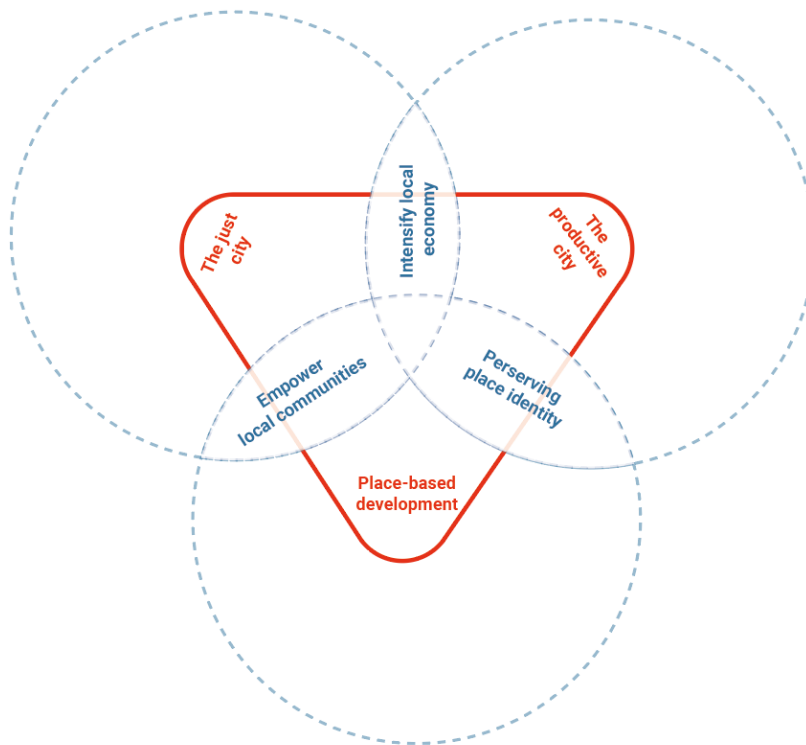
	<p>2b. What are the opportunities and strengths related to these path dependencies?</p> <p>2c. What values can be extracted, that should be preserved, based on this synthesis?</p> <p>2d. What would the canal area look like if it would be developed, based on these values?</p> <p><i>SQ3: How can this vision be operationalised, through a strategic framework, utilising the path dependencies?</i></p> <p>3a. Which spatial- and planning principles derive from these analysis and vision, in the form of a pattern language?</p> <p>3b. How can this pattern language be implemented spatially and strategically?</p> <p>3c. What type of stakeholder organisation and phasing is necessary for the implementation of these interventions?</p> <p><i>SQ4: How can the implementation of this strategic framework be spatialised on a smaller scale?</i></p>
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>The first output is a vision map. This map will show an alternative vision for the canal zone and thus providing a different narrative towards dealing with its path dependencies, which uses values derived from the analysis as a base for the vision. The main objectives of this vision map are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highlighting the strengths of the canal zone and altering the narrative, based on this.</li> <li>- Showcasing what designing with the values, derived from the research phase, would look like.</li> </ul> <p>In order to make this vision more concrete the second output of this project is a strategic framework. This strategic framework will consist of three components. Firstly, a pattern language, containing both spatial solution as well as policy recommendations, that are organised in a pattern field. Secondly, a strategy map will be made, which will operationalise this pattern language. And lastly, an implementation strategy, consisting of a phasing and stakeholder organisation. The main objectives of this strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deriving a set of easy to understand design solutions and policy recommendation, that can be used to communicate with different types of stakeholders and actors. And that while specific to the canal zone, can be used as reference for other projects.</li> <li>- Spatialising this pattern language and operationalise the vision in a strategy map and implementation strategy, illustrating how it would be applied in practice.</li> </ul> <p>The last output are three case study designs, in three locations along the canal, show casing and testing the strategic framework in practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Illustrating how the strategy would be applied in practice</li> <li>- Testing if the strategy would give satisfactory results in accordance to the vision and values.</li> </ul>

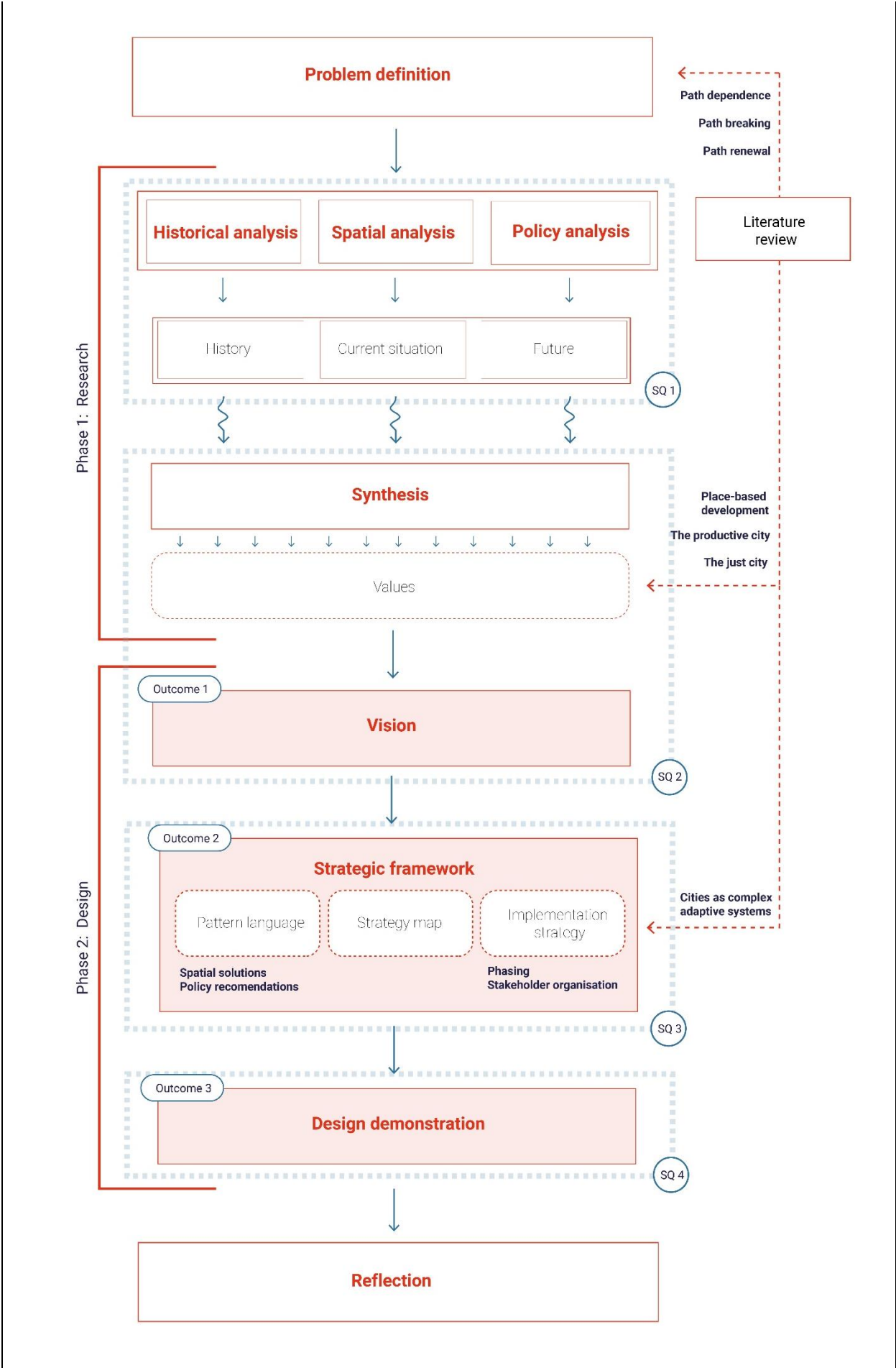
## Process

### Method description

The aim of the project is twofold. It aims to investigate the prevalence of path dependencies in the area and research alternatives ways of dealing with path dependencies, in the form of path renewal. This approach will show a different perspective on urban development in heavily path dependent context and thus, could potentially be an example.

Secondly it aims to utilise these path dependencies to enable this alternative development guided by the concepts of the just city, the productive city and place-based development. Overlapping these theories more concrete objectives can be established: Firstly, intensifying the local economy and thus creating employment, educational and economic opportunities for the local communities. Secondly, empowering local communities and incentivising participation. Lastly, preserving spatial identity and embedding the development within the context of the Canal.





The research framework shows the set-up of this research. It is divided into two phases: a more research focused phase and a more design focused phase. In the first phase there is focus on an extensive research. Information will be gained about the past, present and future of Brussels and the trajectories of the path dependencies. This will contain a historical analysis, shedding light on how these paths have developed in the past, and how they relate to one another. Furthermore it will contain a spatial analysis, which shows how these path dependencies currently manifest themselves. Also it contains a policy analysis. This will show what mainstream position is on dealing with these path dependencies and speculate how they will evolve in the future. The output of this phase will be a synthesis, which provides an overview of challenges, risks, strengths and opportunities related to the canal zone and the prevalence of path dependencies. From this synthesis, filtered by literature review on the theories of the just city, the productive city and place-based development, values will be derived.

These values will be the base for the next phase. This phase will be more design focused, starting with an alternative vision for the area. Based on this a strategy will be made that addresses the path dependencies, consisting of a pattern language, a strategy map and an implementation strategy that operationalises this strategy. Than lastly this strategy will be tested and showcased on three key locations.

In the last phase, a reflection will be given on the research process. The research will be concluded and the research questions will be answered. Also, a reflection will be given on the results and limitations will be explained, giving an advice on further research.

The methods that will be used are: Literature review, spatial analysis, policy analysis, synthesis, vision-making, research by design and pattern language.

## Literature and general practical preference

- The problem definition has been mainly shaped by path dependent theory in relation to neoliberal planning. The most important literature for this section in my thesis are:

Martin, Ron & Sunley, Peter. (2010). The place of path dependence in an evolutionary perspective on the economic landscape. *Handbook of Evolutionary Economic Geography*.

Peck, J., Theodore, N., & Brenner, N. (2009). Neoliberal Urbanism: Models, Moments, Mutations. *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 29(1), 49-66.

Tasan-Kok, MT. (2012). Introduction: contradictions of neoliberal urban planning. In T. Tasan-Kok, & G. Baeten (Eds.), *Contradictions of Neoliberal Planning: Cities, Policies, and Politics* (pp. 1-19). Springer Science+Business Media.

- The vision will be shaped by literature on the just city, the productive city and place-based development. The most important literature for this section in my thesis are:

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Fainstein, S. S. (2011). *The Just City*. Amsterdam University Press.

Hill, A. (Ed.). (2020). *Foundries of the Future: A Guide for 21st Century Cities of Making*. TU Delft Open.

Daniels, Jennifer & Vodden, Kelly & Godfrey, Baldacchino. (2015). *Matters of place: the making of place and identity*.

- The strategy will be guided by literature on cities as complex adaptive cities and urban diversity. The most important literature for this section in my thesis are:

Davis, H. (2020). *Working cities: Architecture, place and production*. Routledge.

Jacobs, J. (1992). *The death and life of great American cities* (Vintage Books ed). Vintage Books.

## Reflection

In most western European countries urban developments have become increasingly profit driven, which has had enormous effects on cities, such as increased inequality, a housing crisis and (industrial) gentrification. Therefore there is need to find a different approach towards urban development. This study will explore the theories of the just city, the productive city and place-based development as a starting point for urban development. This will provide further insight in how these theory could operate in practice and how they could be implemented.

Furthermore, on a more local scale this research could potentially establish a different narrative for the canal area and showing its different possibilities, instead of the current approach that is taken towards its development. This project could also be an example for similar brownfield developments.

Also, although quite a few studies have been done on how path dependencies have shaped our institutions and economics, the built environment remains fairly unexplored, though of course linked with these sectors. Furthermore, often these studies focus on the 'unlocking' of path dependencies and establishing new paths, instead of finding ways to renew certain paths. Therefore this thesis could provide an opportunity for a different perspective on this and to see how to utilize path dependencies to shape future developments. This could be a new way to study developments with complex contexts that are heavily influenced by path dependencies and find more nuanced context-specific solutions for this.



