

Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences



Graduation Plan: All tracks

The graduation plan consists of at least the following data/segments:

Personal information	
Name	Tarini Vajpeyi
Student number	5796199

Studio		
Name / Theme	Urban Architecture Graduation Studio/ Last Green in Town	
Main mentor	R.M van der Schans	Design Mentor
Second mentor	Leeke Reinders	Research Mentor
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>As a studio, Urban architecture resonates deeply with my own design philosophy of a carefully studied, yet freely and vividly imagined solution to a given problem. The studio is site specific, and field work intensive from the very beginning, which not only allows a seamless dialogue between research and design throughout the process, but also helps set foot early on into the nuances and challenges of real-life situations. The design grows directly from the roots of an intimate study of scenes, site and city. For me, the last green in town as a theme transcends its immediate suggestion of ecological turmoil in today's Brussels. It goes on to challenge all that this green really entails – ecology and nature in all its forms, the politics of top-down planning, the voices of non-human actors, and lastly, the spirit of collective and democratic space in the city.</p>	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	The bathhouse of enchantments (and other tales of heterotopia)
Goal	
Location:	La Friche Josaphat, Schaerbeek, Brussels
The posed problem,	<p>In the transforming urban life of a multicultural Schaerbeek, sits a piece of fallow land or "friche". Once a marshalling yard, it seized to operate about twenty years ago and fell prey to an ongoing debate about its future development. Authorities found themselves at odds with locals, ecologists and naturalists who advocated for the emergent landscape to be left to its own devices, eventually leaving the friche in a state of limbo and uncertainty.</p> <p>And therefore, a "heterotopia" or counter space in the city was born.</p> <p>The heterotopia of the friche is completely removed from the constructs of traditional</p>

	<p>time and space, embodying its inherent atmosphere of magic, enchantment and beauty in the absence of a regular unfolding of life and human involvement.</p> <p>-The future of this heterotopia is, however, threatened. Its potential to truly embrace its unique offerings of time, space and rest for human and non-human beings remains untapped.</p> <p>The friche constantly dwindles between the pressures of urban acquisition and its own qualities of "otherness" in the traditional functioning of Schaerbeek, which continues to grapple for space and quench its needs for housing.</p> <p>-In addition to this, the urban culture surrounding nature in the immediate east of the site lacks rigour. The friche is unexplored and uncharted by the local communities because it is inaccessible to them. While parks and public spaces exist around the site, the relationship with nature and its restful offerings is rather subdued.</p>
research questions and	<p>Therefore, the research deals with the following questions -</p> <p>-What are the virtues of heterotopias which make them essential parts of urban life today? What are the unique qualities of the friche "as found?" Can these qualities become clues for an imagined future?</p> <p>-Can the Heterotopia of the friche retain its essence as a unique counter space in the neighborhood and city, through an architectural or urban intervention?</p> <p>- How can architecture, in its innate ability to capture space-time-event, not only capture but also <i>enhance</i> the heterotopian qualities of the friche as a place of rest, leisure and healing for both human and non-human actors?</p> <p>-How is the transition between the immediate city and the heterotopia of the friche facilitated through this intervention?</p>

	<p>-Can the proposed intervention also redefine the urban culture of green in the surrounding neighborhoods, while becoming a space of community engagement which is now lacking?</p>
design assignment in which these result.	<p>The borders of a heterotopia are neither entirely open to the city, nor entirely closed, but demand a kind of purgatory action - perhaps, a shedding of the traditional time and regularity that comes with living in the city. Just as the <i>Hammam</i> and ablution tank of the mosque purify the body and soul before one is permitted to offer prayers, the heterotopia requires a rite of passage to the other side.</p> <p>Drawing from these concepts, I aim to create a proposal that serves as a vessel for the purification of the being (human or non-human) as one transitions from the surrounding city into the haven of the heterotopic friche, purged from the weights of regular life and time.</p> <p>I aim to create a "bathhouse of enchantments"- a physical and metaphorical place where people and the other migratory guests of the friche come to rest their weary minds and bodies, away from their traditional time. They enter the enchanting world of the heterotopian friche and are refreshed anew.</p> <p>The bathhouse is not only a spiritual vessel of wellness, but also performs a social function of synergizing communities and rekindling an intimate relationship with the nature of the friche that is so far missing. In the bathhouse, all are equal. It is a democratic space.</p> <p>In addition to the bathhouse itself, the proposal also aims to become a water collection and management system for the east side of the friche, where it can facilitate the growth of a constructed wetland as a habitat and resting place for the growing species of migratory birds, bees, dragonflies and others.</p>

Process

Method description

The methods for research and design are continuously integrated and can be categorized into a three-fold methodology:

1. An argumentation of a larger **theoretical discourse on the heterotopia and related themes**, where I have found the beginnings of my fascinations and questions.
2. **Field studies and observation mappings** of the "as found" friche to understand its inherent virtues and qualities as a Heterotopia. The mappings and observations are in the form of drawings but also pieces of writing (short essays, prose or poetry) which augment and substantiate the theoretical argumentations.
3. **Precedent studies on space-time-event and border conditions** of heterotopia through a selection of projects from within and outside Brussels, as well as personal anecdotes.
4. Precedent studies and field observations on typology, programme and urban cultures associated with the proposal.

The methods come together in the form of a collection of written and visual essays which describe the tales of "the friche and other enchanting heterotopias" through words, drawings and imageries and sometimes collected objects. Like the travelogue of cities by Marco Polo (Calvino, 1974) as he travels to lands far and wide, these essays seek to collect stories and tales of counter spaces, which will eventually feed the tale of the enchanted bathhouse.

Literature and general practical references

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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)?

The last green in town calls for an immediate response to the burgeoning crisis of urbanization and its effects on ecology, nature and everything that they encapsulate. My proposal is an attempt to truly understand and value this last green in town as a heterotopia "as found", by dissecting in detail its innate qualities of peace, leisure, surprise and enchantment. The proposal questions the role of architecture in such a case, where it can have the power to uplift and enhance these qualities of the site, mediating between ecological stresses and the needs of humans in the city.

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

This proposal is perhaps an urge to look at a new narrative of derelict and industrial plot development, shifting the focus from looking at sites as always preparing for top-down human appropriation schemes to a more sensitised framework of intervention. The need for development cannot be disregarded, however, the kind of solution that is born out of this need can become a driving force in maintaining an equilibrium between ecology and human need. With a keen eye for the "as found" worlds within the heterotopia, a careful approach towards mediating between the city and the counter space, and finally, a symbiotic means of building - where human and non-human actors benefit in synergy, the heterotopia shall prevail.

Is architecture as a discipline only meant to inhabit, obtain and colonize spaces of emptiness? Where is the breathing space of the city? spaces of reflection, pause and surprise like paradise gardens? Spaces where ecology flourishes?