

Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences

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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	
Student number	

Studio	
Name / Theme	Architectural Design Crossovers / "Heterogeneous City"
Main mentor	Design (Architecture)
Second mentor	Technical Building Design (A+E)
Third mentor	Research (Architecture)
Argumentation of choice of the studio	The multidisciplinary design approach to architecture.

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Loft out - the creative void in the city
Goal	
Location:	Victoria Kent Social Integration Centre, Madrid, Spain

The posed problem,

Nowadays it seems impossible to find complete freedom in the city. Around every corner, you can find different strategies to prevent unwanted behaviour in public spaces. From metal brackets on the edges of pavements, anti-sticker coatings and half-benches to more obvious surveillance cameras, these elements directly influence our behaviour. In this heavily controlled environments, we lose our creativity and vitality, and with it our humanity.

There is a lot we can learn from artists' communities and other creatives to understand how we can find the creativity, self-expression and freedom we seek. It is well known that artists act as the hackers of our society, fighting against the capitalist authorities who are taking it away. With this project I want to show that anyone or anything can become a "hacker" and help shape the world and environment we live in.

Another form of control is the act of demolition. Cities all over the world are forcibly demolishing buildings that are meaningful to communities and selling the land to developers for profit. In this way, they get rid of unique spaces with amazing atmospheres and contribute to the process of gentrification. Many citizens with lower incomes, including artists, have to move out of certain neighbourhoods and look for areas with lower rents, usually being forced to move to the outskirts of the city. In addition, the act of demolition has a huge negative impact on our environment. It is a common knowledge that the most sustainable buildings are those that remain standing for a long time.

The central problem of my research is to deal with the most oppressive form of denial of freedom in the example of prison. Firstly, by challenging this institution as a model. Secondly, to learn from the positive changes it could have on the neighbourhood. Finally, apply it to everyday life, helping citizens make their own mark on the city.

Through my research, I want to discover ways of design to bring freedom and the feeling of belonging back into architecture as a system of empowerment. In this respect, the prison as the antithetical model seems to be a fertile ground to investigate the mechanisms of control and disempowerment. I think, through the use of creativity and a new form of openness of the penitentiary institution it is possible to reverse its qualities. Architecture's agency for the betterment of life. Not just to take, but to have the possibility of mutual exchange. My project seeks to explore the potential of the institution to become an empowering model for the whole city.

research questions and

How does the city become uncreative, and how can architecture empower the freedom and self-expression of its citizens?

design assignment in which these result.

The aim of my graduation project is to establish design parameters for empowerment particularly leading to spaces of creative use for the citizens of Madrid.

A Victoria Kent Social Integration Centre, formally known as Yaserías Prison, is the main focus and starting point of my design.

Of the twenty-one prisons that operated during the Franco regime, CIS Victoria Kent is the only one still functioning as a penitentiary institution. The rest of the former prisons have been returned to their original educational or religious functions or, to bury an uncomfortable history, have been demolished and the land sold to profit-seeking developers for housing. This building contains an important part of the city's history, having originally been built in the late 1920s as a beggar's asylum, then as a prison for political prisoners and finally as a women's prison. Currently, the building serves as a social integration centre for third-grade male inmates.

The main ambition is to challenge the prison to become an open institution and a valuable asset to the city and the community. Both spatially and programmatically - how can such a structured and controlled space become a system that opens the guarded wall to the community and helps inmates make a more seamless transition back into society?

Firstly, from a programmatic point of view, I would like to extend the curriculum with a cultural aspect, to create a programme that invites artists, writers and academics from inside and outside the prison to collaborate on public projects that will allow them to have an impact on their surroundings and the neighbourhood. I believe that art, education and creativity should be accessible to everyone, wherever they are, because they have the means to positively influence people, systems and shape the future of many.

Secondly, it is important to rethink the spatial structure of the prison, so that the space can be more open and flexible, and connected to its surroundings. By intergarting it spitally, it can become a more accessible and welcoming point in the neighbourhood.

The aim is to combine the prison with other cultural and social programmes and to establish an institution based on interaction and the exchange of knowledge. From a closed and inaccessible space, it can become the heart of the neighbourhood and eventually, by building a network based on trust and commitment, it can slowly spread through the whole city to become an influence for the whole of Madrid.

[This should be formulated in such a way that the graduation project can answer these questions.
The definition of the problem has to be significant to a clearly defined area of research and design.]

Process

Method description

In Architectural Design Crossovers studio, understanding that the building is not just the site, but part of the system, has a distinctive methodology of conducting research.

For my graduation project, it will be necessary to use mixed methods to fully analyse the problem statement and find possible solutions to it.

In order to understand what kind of opportunities the CIS Victoria Kent can bring to its community in a wider perspective, I will apply the actor-network theory and through mapping the key actors in its context can understand the needs of the society to positively influence the area. In this part of the research, I have been using a mixed-method research approach. Most of my site investigation, therefore, started with selective mapping and documentation of the area through video making to be complemented with data collection, literature review and historical triangulation.

In addition, I will use social critical theory as my next step in research to understand and challenge the institution of power in the relationships between the chosen actors, and map the systems and flows between them to understand the gaps that need to be addressed.

Furthermore, the historical context of the site is crucial to fully embrace its past. The archival approach to research is much needed, through which I can find old documentation of the place and rediscover the untold stories of its past inhabitants, which still resonate like an echo within the walls of the institution.

In my next step, I will use ethnographic research to understand the behaviour of the prisoners and the community around the prison, to document their interrelations and the social and behavioural aspect of the project. To do this, I would like to conduct a series of interviews not only with the prisoners, but also with the staff of the institution, such as social workers, the director of this centre and the guards, as well as with the citizens of the neighbourhood and local artists.

Finally, I want to analyse the spatial qualities of the prison and how certain spaces and architectural elements mentally influence the inmates, this will be achieved by photographing the spaces mentioned above via photography and will give me a base to deconstruct certain parts of the prison and allow more spatial scenarios and options.

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 relationship between my graduation project and the studio topic is mainly the architectural approach that works as an interdisciplinary architectural design and the understanding that the project works in a larger context as part of a socio-political system. By thoroughly addressing the project at the intersection of conflicting actor-networks, I will be able to approach the problem of the project beyond the building only, which I believe is a great foundation for preparing to work as an architect after the graduation.

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

The problem of my research topic is an important issue in contemporary society and for the future of the built environment applicable to many big cities around the world. Trying to set up a model for design approach based on the case study in Madrid will be a good way of learning and preparing myself to deal with the problem of uncreative city as an example for other places. The prison model and its programmes need to be evaluated in order to improve the conditions in which prisoners interact with society, rather than being isolated from it. I would also like to give an example of how to deal with the stigma not only of the prison as an institution, but also of the uncomfortable memory of the past. In my opinion, not only as architects, but also as citizens, we should challenge the authorities' attempt to erase memory through demolition or silence.