

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	Ricardo Ruiten Kanamori
Student number	4596552

Studio		
Name / Theme	Urban Architecture	
Main mentor	Paul Vermeulen	Architecture
Second mentor	Freek Speksnijder	Building Technology
Third mentor	Eireen Schreurs	Architectural Research
Argumentation of choice of the studio	I thought that the studio would allow me to explore the connection between people, nature, and sustainability.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Architecture of Social Cohesion
Goal	
Location:	Droixhe, Liège
The posed problem,	<p>Droixhe is a neighborhood in the city of Liege characterized by its high rising modernist style towers, it was considered a model district in the 1960s upon its construction. It strictly followed the urban planning principles of the CIAM (Congres Intemationaux d'Architecture Moderne) with the proportion of "free-spaces" and functionalist principle structure.</p> <p>Initially, the socio-professional composition of Droixhe was quite varied and for some tenants, living in Droixhe represented a transit solution before becoming homeowners. However, in the 1980s, a change in housing regulations which linked rental prices with the inhabitant's income led to a dramatic change in the social-economic demography of the neighborhood.</p>

These new measures brought the departure of the small middle class, who preferred to turn to home ownership or a private rental housing. Moreover, the apartment towers welcomed more and more families of immigrant origin, who were often large families, but predominantly had low incomes, were pensioners, or unemployed. With that, La Maison Liégeoise, the Belgian social housing association that was responsible for the competition of Droixhe in 1950, eventually did not have the resources to maintain the buildings, leading them to their degradations. These degradations went so far to the point where several of the towers had to be emptied in fear of collapse and eventually demolished, leaving most of that space as a wasteland. Once an up-and-coming area when first built, it soon became scarred with overpopulation and high crime rates leaving its inhabitants to suffer from anonymity and a general feeling of unsafety.

Today, Droixhe houses approximately 2500 people of over 63 nationalities. With this rich multi-cultural background of the inhabitants, several different cultural centers can be found around Droixhe and Bressoux. Apart from these, there aren't many other places for social interaction between these different communities and the social cohesion continues to weaken. The parc de Droixhe is dark and gives a feeling of unease at night; the existing library is tight with few sitting spaces, with limited opening hours and is sometimes disturbed by the school's gym on the floor above.

The requalification of Droixhe is one of the municipality's urban development projects with an objective to reconstruct a positive image for the neighborhood. Projects such as "around the pond" tries

	<p>to strengthen the social cohesion and improve the quality of life of life. Also, it promotes the involvement of the residents and associations to be part of the management of the public space, thus strengthening the knowledge and trust between inhabitants and the municipal authorities and multiple other actors.</p>
<p>research questions and</p>	<p>Considering the context and problems described above, I want to investigate the question: "How can strengthening the social cohesion among the inhabitants of Droixhe through architecture contribute to the urban revitalization of the neighborhood?"</p> <p>Are there lessons to be learned from the 1960s modernist urban layout?</p> <p>Being a place of great that was</p>
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>A key point in the research question at hand proposed is the specification of architecture as a means to improve social cohesion in Droixhe. By shaping our daily environment, architecture implicitly affects interpersonal relationships. It can produce a synthesis between the complexity of a context, a programme and research into collective well-being.</p> <p>Considering this, the integration of the still standing and highly occupied modernist social houses, school and urban planning structure along with an understanding of the socio-professional context is essential for devising an appropriate programme and design to promote social cohesion. I intend to allow the inhabitants to develop themselves as individuals and while promoting them to also connect beyond their ethnicities. The program, therefore, is a group of mix-used buildings including a library, substituting</p>

	<p>the existing library, local food production, makerspaces, a fabrication Lab (FabLab), and co-living apartments.</p> <p>The idea is to allow the individuals to develop their own skills, broaden their interests, bring awareness to sustainability, support the local economy and improve the socio-professional demography of the Droixhe. At the same time, allowing people from not only Droixhe, but also Bressoux and around Liege to be able to come together based on same interests.</p>
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Process

Method description

To better understand how architecture can be a catalyst for social cohesion, I plan to observe the relation between the human and their surroundings. I will revisit the modernist layout by investigate a few case studies such as the project of the Lijnbaan and Schouwburgplein, the Bijlmermeer, and of course Droixhe itself. For each of these projects, I want to know if there are any principles of the modernist movement that work well and can be incorporated, what failed and should be considered. For that the primary method of data collection for the research will be observations, in combination sketching and photography. Also, when possible, some informal interviews with users of the space may also give insights into the everyday life of the space in question. To analyze this raw data, collages and diagrams will be used. Particular attention will be given to their flows within the space, where do people stop, how they interact with each other others (if at all), who they interact with, and what architectural characteristics of the space led to that interaction. By observing these multiple factors, I hope to get insights into how I can orient my design to not only fit with but improve the current modernist urban layout of Droixhe, consequently revitalizing the neighborhood.

Another case study that is worth investigating is the Leeszaal in Rotterdam West. This is an interior project, so a much smaller scale than the previous ones. However, it is one of the inspirations to investigate the theme of social cohesion. It is a prime example of inducing a betterment to a neighborhood through architecture and its programme.

The design will follow in parallel with the research as the research will give insights on design details throughout the process that will be useful to answer problem statement mentioned previously. In a group of five, we have discussed a potential

masterplan for the neighborhood, allowing us to get a better understanding of the urban interconnections and potentials that each plot can bring for the whole. Starting with massing studies, digital and physical, of the plot a good understanding of spatial relations is explored.

Literature and general practical preference

To help guide my exploration and give some background to the investigation, literature works will also be explored. Works from Jan Gehl such as "How to study public life" (2013) and "Soft City" (2019) and "Life Between Buildings" (1971) will serve as great tools as research frameworks tools for design. Moreover, other books like Herman Hertzberger's "Lessons for students in architecture" (1991) describes several principles of how people occupy space which can help give better insight into what to look for when observing the case studies. Lastly, the book "Collage City" (1984) would also be of great interest for this research as it critiques the utopian visions of modernist urban planning and designs, proposing instead a 'collage city' which can accommodate a whole range lifestyles.

Reflection

The focus of my graduation project is bringing social cohesion through architecture to what is now a troubled neighborhood. This is directly related the Urban Architecture Studio topic of "Scar" as it is working directly on a site that went through multiple physical adaptations, from the appraisal of the International Exposition of 1930, putting Droixhe on the map, to the modernist movement which held its glory for 30 years there, to eventual degradation and demolition, ending partially as a wasteland.

Exploring the connection between this theme of social connectivity through architecture by completing the design of a group of buildings, it falls in line with the objectives of the Architecture track within the MSc AUBS. Nevertheless, the track is very broad, allowing people to explore their fascinations and different kinds of studios, all of which have completely different ways of thinking about architecture and how to approach it. Relating to the master programme, I find it interesting how the approach of the research side of the graduation is completely new and different than anything taught before (bachelors or master's in architecture).

This graduation work can serve as an example for future investigations on revitalization of a neighborhood by focusing on the promotion of social connectivity in architectural design. Moreover, it builds knowledge on the current social state of Droixhe, the interactions between the people and how they use the public space.