

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	Timon Titus Kuiters
Student number	4848365

Studio		
Name / Theme	Metropolitan ecologies of place	
Main mentor	Alexander Wandl	Department of Urbanism, section of Environmental Technology and Design
Second mentor	Adriaan Geuze	Department of Urbanism, section of Landscape Architecture
Argumentation of choice of the studio	The focus of the MEP studio is social and ecological urban landscapes and systems. My topic is focused on urban in-between spaces. In this studio, my focus is on the cultural and ecological value these places have, and the connection between those. This fits very well in the main focus of the studio. The approach of urban ecology and biophilic design is key to the central topic of my thesis.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Life in the Leftovers: Cultural and ecological values of urban interstitial spaces in the Netherlands

Goal	
Location:	Case-study sites throughout the Netherlands. Namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Amsterdam west ● Den Haag / Leidschenveen ● Rotterdam north ● Nijmegen / Arnhem ● Tilburg / Berkel-Enschot ● Venlo north-west
The posed problem,	Interstitial urban spaces form an exception in the very organised urban-rural monocultural landscapes in the netherlands. These unplanned in-between spaces are

	<p>rarely valued from a traditional planning perspective, in which they are seen as “empty” or “unused”, thus ready for development. They are, however, an important refuge for people and wildlife alike, who do not fit in the monocultures of urban life and agriculture. However, the unplanned character that is core to their nature and arguably their value might be easily disturbed by design activities, and thus urban densification in the Netherlands is a threat to the existence of these often undervalued spaces. Balancing the imperative to act with the necessity to preserve their unplanned nature is the challenge in urban design, aiming to enhance rather than destroy their value.</p>
<p>research questions and</p>	<p>Main research question:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How could urban interstitial spaces in the Netherlands provide cultural and ecological value? <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2a. What cultural value do interstitial spaces provide for people? 2b. What ecological value do interstitial spaces provide for wildlife? 3. What spatial factors enable the existence and formation of culturally and ecologically valuable interstitial urban spaces? 4. How could interstitial spaces be used to provide value to people and wildlife?
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>(see below)</p>
<p>The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of the values of interstitial urban spaces in the Netherlands to different valuable and vulnerable groups (of people and wildlife). I will study these spaces mainly through two lenses: those of the cultural and ecological values they provide. In that way I will attempt to develop a better way of understanding, describing, designing around, and appreciating these not straightforward to name spaces.</p> <p>By studying interstitial urban spaces in the Netherlands through the perspectives of cultural and ecological values I hope to gain insight into how these values can be protected or maybe even enhanced. Through explorative design I aim to combine values for multiple actors, to benefit healthy and biodiverse ecosystems, while preserving value as refuge for people as well. While I will use design as a method of exploration and research, the aim is explicitly not to produce a single project or plan that could be realistically implemented, but to imagine how interstitial urban spaces could look and function to support and sustain the values and ways of living of the target groups, and inspire by illustrating what is possible.</p>	
<p>Process</p>	
<p>Method description</p>	

To answer the research questions, the methods used will be:

- **site analysis**
to be used in combination with field work. Visualisation of geospatial data, as well as more manual morphological and diachronic analyses of spaces through the dual lenses of cultural and ecological values. Not all locations will be studied in the same amount of detail, this depends mostly on what data is available for each.
- **data research**
addition to literature research to quantify and specify some aspects and provide a general sense of scale.
- **scientific literature review**
for theoretical and empirical research on the studied values of interstitial spaces, and where applicable also scientific literature on specific case study locations.
- **public media analysis**
As the spaces in question feature heavily in artists' work and life, analysing their depictions in media will be of useful to analyse their cultural value
- **fieldwork**
For an experiential perspective that cannot be replicated by studying available data. to record and communicate my experiences I intend to use a variety of techniques, such as mental mapping and a serial vision, experimenting with combining video and analytical drawing/animation.
- **Research by explorative design**
In and around at least one of the case study sites, with which I will have familiarised myself through analysis, I intend to experiment with spatial designing as a tool to imagine the possibilities of interstitial urban spaces through their ecological and cultural values. Precise CAD tools do not seem appropriate in designing for the kind of undetermined spaces that are my topic, so a less precise and more imaginative form of illustration seems more suitable.

Literature and general practical references

For fieldwork, I intend to use a number of techniques to record and communicate my experience that I have some previous experience with: I do have some experience in photography, and in a previous course I applied the mental mapping as well as serial vision techniques. While trying to combine this with video/animation is new, in a previous course I also used a sketch-like animation technique to communicate a spatial design.

For data, I will rely on available geo-data through government websites, and topotijdreis maps for historical maps. Data on ecology and biodiversity can be difficult to find, so I will not focus on each location in equal detail. For some, like Rotterdam north, there are recent omgevingsstudies available from the current highway construction project.

Literature consulted so far, which will also be helpful in the future to further develop mainly the theoretical side of the thesis:

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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)?

My graduation project focuses on understanding, designing and appreciating interstitial urban spaces through their cultural and ecological values. These values are core to the social and ecological focus of the studio Metropolitan Ecologies of Place. In the field of urban design and spatial design in general the discussion on how to deal and design in/around interstitial spaces which seem to develop their value as a result of a lack of planning is very relevant.

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

In design practice there seems to be a lack of attention and appreciation for the values that these ambiguous urban spaces provide. In theory however, while there is no crystallised terminology, there is a growing abundance of terms used to describe different variations of concepts and perspectives related to these spaces. I think this terminological fluidity is inherent to the typology of these places and fruitful for further conceptual developments and explorations in urban design. Meanwhile, the typologies that are the subject of this thesis are very prevalent and cover a significant portion of the country.

To gain a better understanding of these spaces I will focus on the perspectives of cultural and ecological values. Through research by design, I will study ways to combine these values, and thus provide inspiration for the value these places could bring to vulnerable and valuable people and wildlife.

Often the character of these spaces is temporary, almost by definition. Because from the perspective of traditional planning these spaces are perceived as left-overs, as soon as an opportunity for further development presents itself these spaces are easily lost to new planning following well-trodden paths.

As densification forms a threatening pressure to the existence of these more ambiguous remnants in the urban fabric, it is important to highlight and investigate the value that they

actually have, and advocate for preservation and cultivation of those values, through the imagining of a virtual leftover space.

There surely is some public acknowledgement that these spaces have irreplaceable value. In news articles like “Laatste rafelrand van Zuid dreigt te verdwijnen” (Van Gelder, 2023) and “Waarom Grunn rafelranden moet koesteren in plaats van volbouwen” (SIKKOM Redactie, 2022) the in-between spaces lost to urban developments are lamented. In summer of 2023, in Utrecht a “rave voor de rafelranden” (rave for the frayed edges) called for municipal policy to protect these spaces and prevent their demise (Masic, 2023).

The unplanned and relatively wild character of these spaces could be cultivated in a way to foster opportunities to reconnect city-dwellers with close natural elements. Recognising and protecting the ecological value of these often informal urban green spaces also contributes to the urgent planetary topic of countering biodiversity loss.