

SeaLine

Where Sea, City, Land and Sky Connect in the Coastal Zone of Tallinn

GRADUATION STUDIO

Title
SeaLine
Subtitle

Where Sea, City, Land and Sky Connect in the Coastal Zone of Tallinn

Student Information
Silva Lisanne Haarbosch
5638895

Studio Information
A Matter of Scale
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Tutors
W.W.L.M Wilms Floet
N.L. Tilanus
E. Ferreira Crevels

Delegate
D.A. Groetelaers

Study Information
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Project Description

SeaLine

The SeaLine is an ambitious architectural proposal located in the coastal zone of Tallinn, Estonia, between two main ports: (i) the guest harbour, where visitors enter the city via ferries, and (ii) the fish harbour, known for its weekly fish market. Next to the project, the Linnahall, a robust Soviet-era structure can be found.

Design concept and relationship with the surroundings

The project is situated on a desolate piece of land. The aim is to restore the connection between the city of Tallinn and the sea, a vision in line with the city's urban development plans, as formulated in the plan 'Opening Tallinn up to the Sea'. It overcomes the historical restrictions imposed by the Soviet regime, which made the coast inaccessible to the public, by creating a publicly accessible space connecting the city to the water.

SeaLine's architectural design integrates recreational (urban) functions with the natural environment. The eastern side of the building lets nature take its course, with a walking area surrounded by greenery, while the western side provides space for activities such as water sports. This dual character reflects the ambition to embrace both recreation and nature in one design.

Architectural features

The building consists of a ground floor which is partly buried in the surrounding hill, creating a smooth transition between the building and nature. A close relationship between architecture and landscape, where the use of outdoor space changes as one moves from the east to the west side, see figure 1.

On the south side, facing the city, there is a wide, inviting staircase connecting the urban space to the roof of the building, which serves as a public space. On the one hand, views over nature, and the other, views of the activity plaza. The staircase leads to the pavilion which is an important addition to Tallinn's skyline. On the north side, a descending staircase offers views over the water and the adjacent harbour for water sports, symbolically marking the end of the urban route and leading the user to the sea. Referred to as a 'poetic activity staircase', it provides space for ceremonial and informal activities, such as the awarding of sailing diplomas or simply enjoying the view.

Features and programme

SeaLine is designed with a focus on multi seasonal use. In summer, the building is dedicated to water sports and walking activities. The ground floor provides direct access to the water sports facilities and the first floor has a summer day terrace overlooking the sea, nature, and the activity plaza, where visitors can enjoy the maritime environment. The project connects to the increasing demand for water sports facilities in Tallinn, as indicated during several conversations such as with Andres Ojari.

In winter, the dynamics of the building change. The pavilion, with its panoramic view on the upper floor, provides a cosy place to seek shelter while overlooking the rugged winter landscape of the Baltic Sea. This seasonal functionality adds to the versatility and sustainability of the project, keeping it attractive to both residents and visitors throughout the year.

Connection to the coastal area

A key feature of the design is the walkway that connects to the urban area, winds through the natural environment, and then runs through the building. This path creates a seamless connection between the city, nature, and the activity plaza on the west side. As a result, SeaLine acts as the starting point of a wider recreational route along the coastal zone, connecting, among other things, the host port to other parts of the coast.

The path emphasizes the accessibility of the area and allows people to explore the coastline without disturbing the natural environment. The design responds to the desire to open Tallinn up to the sea and offers a unique experience where nature, recreation, and architecture come together.

Use of materials and sustainability

In line with Linnahall's robust aesthetic, SeaLine is largely constructed of concrete. Concrete is a material that stands up well to the harsh climate of the Baltic coast, and the design plays with the rough texture of the material to create a dialogue with the surrounding nature and character of the harbour.

However, the project is not only focused on aesthetics but also on ecological responsibility. In SeaLine, local flora and fauna are respected. The building is designed to work harmoniously with the surrounding landscape, enhancing rather than disturbing the long-term ecological value of the area.

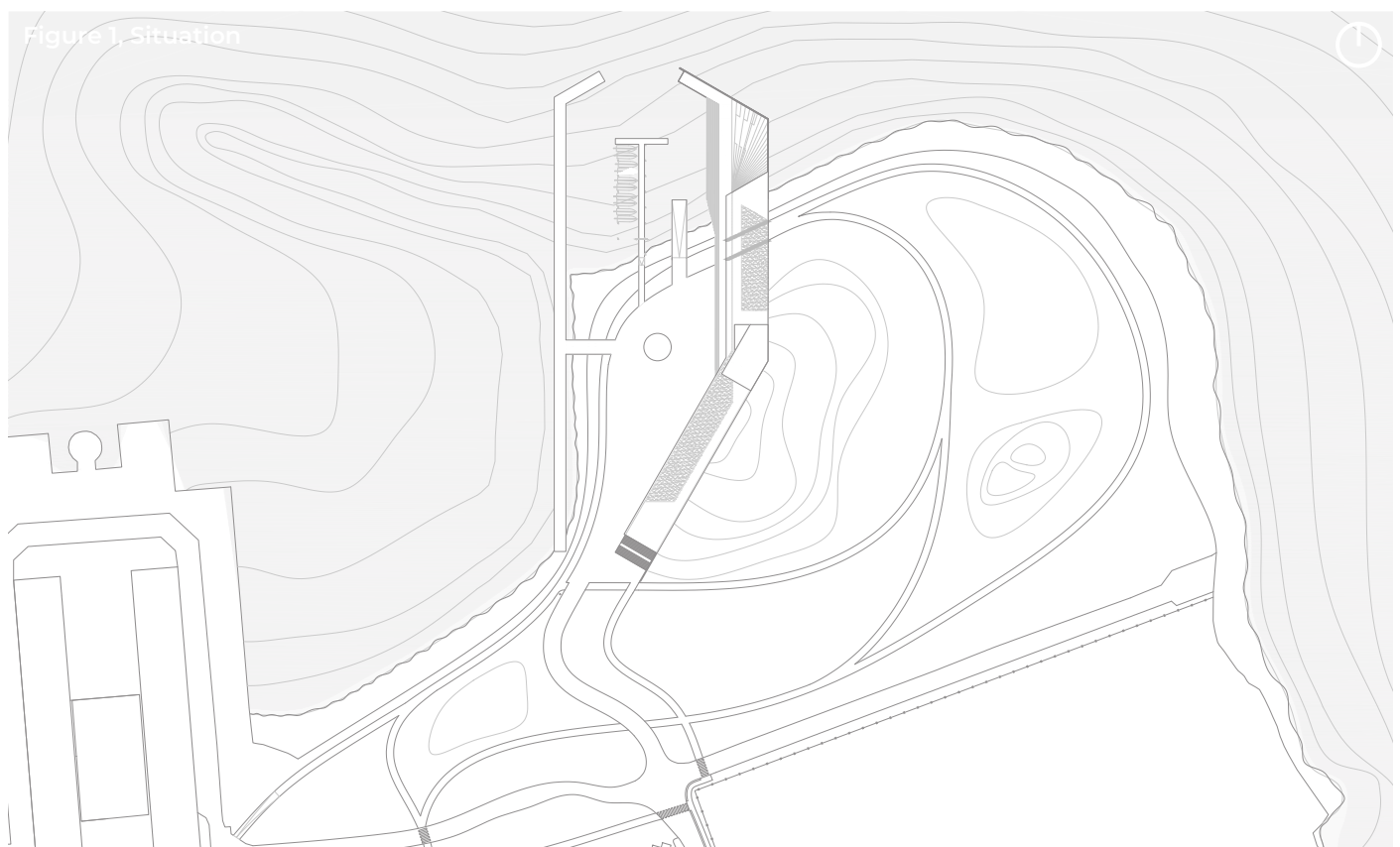
Target groups

SeaLine has been designed with a wide variety of users in mind, making the project accessible and attractive to different target groups. For children, it provides a safe and stimulating environment where they can participate in sailing school, learn about water sports, and discover the value of nature. Moreover, parents can enjoy the proximity of recreational facilities while supervising their children, and take full advantage of leisure facilities such as the summer terrace.

In addition, the project appeals to recreationists who like to participate in water sports or simply enjoy walking trails through nature. Tourists will find an inviting place that combines Tallinn's cultural and historical heritage with modern recreation, while Tallinn residents can benefit from improved access to the coastline and new recreational facilities that enrich their daily lives.

Conclusion

SeaLine is more than an architectural statement; it is a symbol of rebuilding the relationship between Tallinn and the sea. By connecting the city to the water and providing a place for both recreation and reflection, the project acts as a model for future coastal design. SeaLine will be a new destination for residents and visitors, where Tallinn's urban and natural elements come together in a harmonious and meaningful whole. In conclusion, SeaLine offers a unique destination that is both functional and inspiring for young and old, and for both the city and its visitors.



Project Reflection

SeaLine

This reflection is written for the graduation studio 'A Matter of (human) Scale' from the chair of Methods of Analysis and Imagination of the Master Architecture at the Technical University of Delft. The reflection will answer a set of predetermined questions. The questions are as follows.

- 1) What is the relationship between your thesis project topic, your master's track, and your master's program?
- 2) How do you assess social value, scope, and implication of your thesis project, including ethical aspects?
- 3) How did your research influence your design/recommendations and how did the design/recommendations influence your research?
- 4) How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, methods used, methodology used)?
- 5) How do you look back on your personal process?

A Matter of Scale, the subject of the studio. Scale can also be translated to range. Despite being able to specialise within this study through the master track, studios and projects, there is also the space to learn a huge range of different aspects. During my graduation project, I was able to broaden my range of knowledge. I researched watersports, environmental change, but I also experimented with design methods. Widening your range of knowledge is, in my opinion, important, certainly at the beginning of your career. Where later, as you start gaining work experience, you can create more depth and specialize yourself even more.

My graduation project is located within the coastal zone and provides a link to an urban planning vision pursued by the city council of Tallinn. The site is located on the Baltic Sea next to the guest harbour which is the arrival station of visitors to the city. The term scale is not only being used within the field of architecture. It is also used in biology and ecology, where scale relates to the understanding of the evolutionary and growth processes, ecosystems, and different natural phenomena through changes in time. In the project research a distinction was made between the four seasons a year contains. A wide range of information was collected for each season and compiled into a databank. This research helped to form a more detailed vision for the project.

The relation between my graduation project and the Architecture master track relates to being able to respond to different conditions. Both throughout my studies and during my graduation process, I have developed the ability to deal with and apply to different conditions. To practice a water sport, one needs to be able to react and work with different environmental conditions. Water sport has everything to do with making optimal use of these conditions, think of waves, wind or width of the waterway. Within architecture, one should also be able to react to different conditions. Every location is unique and requires a different plan of action, function, and design (1).

By integrating a water sports centre with a natural park, the project promotes community involvement and well-being and fosters a culture of physical activity and appreciation for the environment among diverse social groups. It contributes to urban regeneration, transforming underused areas into vibrant spaces, thus improving the quality of urban life and promoting sustainable urban development.

The nature-inclusive design emphasizes ecological responsibility and raises awareness of the importance of preserving natural habitats in urban environments, rather than destroying them. The detailed analysis of climate, flora and fauna in the project area contributes to environmental science. In the field of architecture, the project can serve as a model for integrating design with ecological awareness. The facility can serve as an educational resource, with programs teaching water sports as well as environmental management and sustainability. A direct link between theory and practice (2).

Research and design have a close relationship during the design of the SeaLine. A distinction can be made between four different types of research that took place.

First of all, contextual research was done on the city of Tallinn, potential project locations, and water sports culture in Tallinn. This information led to the determination of a final project location. The project site is a desolate piece of land which I didn't even notice at first. Currently overshadowed by the Linnahall and the guest harbour. This site is an extremely convenient water sports location, has beautiful views and has the potential to reconnect the city and the Baltic Sea.

In addition, this research helped position SeaLine as a beacon to the other active port activities. Next, practical research was conducted on spaces and materials people occupy while practising various water sports. This is also called the study of references, materials, and equipment. Think of analysing reference projects but also establishing a materials list and the dimensions that belong to it. This information was then incorporated into the design. Anchoring the substructure to the ground and creating an interplay between building and nature stems from the research on the term scale in the fields of biology and ecology, and the seasonal climate analysis.

Later in the graduation phase, I chose for a postponement to give myself time and space to further develop my design knowledge and skills. During this period I reflected on my process and worked with my tutors to find an appropriate interpretation for this period. The extra time gave me space to experiment with maquette studies. These studies were mostly related to the design of the pavilion which is located on the embedded substructure (3). The variant studies forced me to make informed choices within the design. In addition, working with models and finding a systematic approach helped lead to a well-thought-out design. An instructive and valuable process. It was an instructive experience and a good opportunity to let go of the technical side for a while. However, I later realized that it is important to keep switching between spatial and technical design, and that finding a balance is essential. I hope to keep developing myself in making design choices from an overarching theme (4).

Finally, I like to reflect on my personal process. I quote my own words written in the graduation plan, at the beginning of this process:

'My interest in the studio Methods of Analysis and Imagination derives from curiosity and the urge to step outside my comfort zone, to enrich my knowledge and abilities.'

This graduation process consisted of applying research and design methods that were familiar to me but also exploring new ones. Towards P2, the methods that were new to me were working with collages and combining various information into one illustration. This contributed to the progress of the project and gave new insights into the project. However, these are both 2-dimensional methods. Later, I started researching and designing using models, which has enabled me to take steps towards a final design.

'Partly because of the freedom within the studio, but also because of the interest in challenging myself and exploring what suits me as an architect, I decided I wanted to take part in the graduation studio 'Methods of Analysis and Imagination''

As an MSc 1 studio, I participated in the studio heritage, which was immensely successful. But I wanted to challenge myself to explore and experience other facets of architecture. After all, the master studios provide the perfect opportunity for this. All in all, I enjoyed this graduation process immensely, it also made me realise that my enthusiasm is fuelled by working with existing heritage. The grip of an existing building and the challenges this brings is what interests me. A fine realisation that gives direction to my, hitherto undefined, future as a future architect (5).



Ütle meri, mu meri

Merel puhumas on tuuled
tuuled need on trotsi täis.
Kas mind suudlesid su huuled
või ehk tuul neist üle käis?

Ütle meri, mu meri
miks sa siia mu tõid?
Ütle meri, mu meri
kas ma lahkuda võin?

Mere kohal särab taevas
taevas see on tähti täis.
Palju tähti alla langes
palju rohkem alles jäi.

Ütle meri, mu meri
miks sa siia mu tõid?
Ütle meri, mu meri
kas ma lahkuda võin?

Mere kaldal liivaluited
luited need on jälgi täis.
Kes need jäljed siia jättis
kes neid jälgi mööda käis?

Ütle meri, mu meri
miks sa siia mu tõid?
Ütle meri, mu meri
kas ma lahkuda võin?

Merevetel sõitvad laevad
palju laevu merre jäi.
Mere kohal särab taevas
taevas see on tähti täis.

Ütle meri, mu meri
miks sa siia mu tõid?
Ütle meri, mu meri
kas ma lahkuda võin?