

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	Annika Gabriela Mayer
Student number	5781499

Studio		
Name / Theme	Architectural Design Crossovers	
Main mentor	Agnes van der Meij	Architecture
Second mentor	F. Speksnijder	Building Engineering Studies
Argumentation of choice of the studio	I chose the Studio of Architectural Design Crossovers because I have been intrigued by the wide range of research directions available. It has been my desire to pursue a Studio in which I can explore beyond the architectural scale, the scale of urban design and discover the social relevance of practicing architecture.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Places of Common as Social Incubators of Public Space: De-constructing Systems of Neglect and Fostering Networks of Growth

Goal	
Location:	Orcasur, in the South of Madrid
The posed problem,	The increasing amount of un(der)-used large-scale public spaces, particularly within modernist housing developments at the fringes of large cities, raises critical questions about the applicability of existing definitions and theories regarding public space. Unlike conventional challenges like e.g. contested usage and ownership, the predominant characteristics are their seemingly never-ending abandonment. The primary concern is whether the conventional frameworks and principles for the creation of vibrant public spaces remain valid in the context of these marginalized neighbourhoods. Consequently, it prompts an exploration

	<p>of whether a differentiated perspective and approach is essential to effectively address the unique challenges presented by the abandonment of public spaces within modernist housing developments.</p>
<p>Research questions and</p>	<p><u>Research Question:</u> What if under-management is considered as quality in public space? <u>Design Research Question:</u> How does spatial nuancing and a punctual implementation of places of common in the socio-spatial network of neighbourhoods help with the regeneration and reactivation of un(der)-used, large-scale public space? <u>Sub-Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is spatial nuancing? - What is a place of common? - What is the existing socio-economic condition? - What are the potentials and strengths of the neighbourhood? - What activities and features do the people living in the neighbourhood wish for? - What is the existing socio-cultural network of the neighbourhood? - Which missing links can help strengthen the identified networks in the neighbourhood?
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>The nuanced understanding of public spaces helps to look at the challenges of large-scale, un(der)-used public space through a new lens. My ambition is to explore the potential of so-called places of common for the reactivation of these kind of public spaces. The focus of my investigation is Orcasur, a neighborhood situated in the southern part of Madrid, which emerged in 1954 and underwent further development between 1983 and 1987. The people from the neighbourhood face financial</p>

challenges often connected to unemployment and poor education.

In addition to the abandoned public space, a shopping mall with the name "Centro Comercial Orcasur" is located in the centre of the neighbourhood. This building, aside from a small supermarket and a Café Bar on the ground floor, as well as a neighborhood association occupying one of the stalls on the top floor, stands empty. Aiming for an intervention at both the urban and architectural level, a **two-step placemaking strategy** is proposed. The **first step** is the redesign of the shopping mall into a **place of common**, fostering community interest and involvement with the particular focus on entrepreneurship and tertiary education for young adults. The **second step** is the **reactivation** of the public space by the involvement and networking of the community.

Process

Method description

The methodological framework consists of three main parts. First, research on the theory surrounding public space is conducted, which underlines the position I take in this Thesis: the need for a nuanced understanding of the diversity and complexity of public space and a lack of literature that addresses how to intervene in un(der)-used large-scale public spaces. The framework that helps conceptualising **places of common** consists of theoretical input taken from the conclusions of the thematic literature review.

The context, which composes the second part of the methodology, frames the demographical, physical, and socio-cultural specificities of the neighbourhood and through the findings of fieldtrip to Madrid.

Lastly, through the design exploration a **place of common** is being proposed that incorporates the theoretical foundation and the site-specific findings which come together cross-disciplinary: architectural and urban.

1) Position, Definition, Concept

The literature review frames the various definitions of public space and how to intervene in or create public space. It underlines the urgent need to think beyond most of the existing literature, that is evaluating public space according to certain qualities. In view of the many unused and abandoned public spaces, especially in city fringes, this categorisation would appropriate public space by naming and qualifying it, thereby restricting its very own potential.

The concept of **spatial nuancing** promotes a differentiated understanding towards public space, that brings forth new approaches on how to activate it. This concept refrains from categorising public spaces based on a catalogue of qualities but instead calls for a more holistic view onto the inherent opportunities of unconventional public spaces. The term **place of common** derives from the semantic analysis of the term public space. It acts as an example for the application of spatial nuancing. A **place of common** is a place embedded in the public space with a distinct location. Conversely to the word **space**, the word **place** is connected to value and meaning and fosters the growth of the individual.

2) Context

The examination of Orcasur will be carried out through the lens of four research areas. Initially, a demographic analysis will be conducted, involving the evaluation of demographic data presented visually in choropleth maps. Subsequently, the site analysis will delve into the urban morphology, land-use, and functions of the neighbourhood. Following this, a socio-cultural analysis will bring together research on the existing community infrastructure and neighbourhood activities. To incorporate the community's voices, investigation into past community engagement via the online platform "Decide" will be conducted, alongside an analysis of perspectives gathered from local newspaper articles. To conclude this phase of the neighbourhood-specific analysis, insights from the field trip will complement the earlier stages. Through on-site observation, photography, and interviews with

stakeholders in the social sector, particularly neighbourhood associations, a comprehensive portrayal of Orcasur can be compiled that sheds light on the program of requirement for the urban and architectural intervention.

3) Design Exploration/Urban and Architectural Approach

This last part brings together the theory with the neighbourhood-specific research in an architectural and urban expression. The design application on the building "Centro Comercial Orcasur" informs the second step of the **two-step placemaking strategy** mentioned in the design assignment above. Therefore, a comprehensive picture that gives answer to the research question is expected after the design exploration. The **place of common** acts as a social incubator, tying together desired features and functions in one place.

Therefore, the existing building is first being peeled off its elements. First, the different elements will be seen through the lens of the neighbourhood, that is by evaluating the interviews and newspaper articles about what the neighbours think of the building and consider as important features of it. One of those important features are the two spiral staircases on the south side of the building, after which the building is named in the popular language: El Caracol. Secondly, the elements are investigated through the lens of the new urban strategy to see their impact and importance in this process. That would be e.g. the axis leading through the building which situates the building already in the existing urban fabric as centre piece of the neighbourhood. Like this, the building will be reduced to these essential elements, keeping its character and at the same time being able to implement the urban strategy architecturally.

In the design stage, the architectural expression and implementation of the program should be informed through the surrounding physical environment.

Therefore, I make use of the design method recommended in the book "Designing Disorder" by Sennett and Sendra (2020). There Pablo Sendra explores designing through the longitudinal and cross section to explore and embrace disorder found in so-called "narrative spaces" (disorder, in this book is expressed as "contestation of imposed orders" - the imposed order in the case of Orcasur is the ideal modernist understanding of functionalist and structured urbanism; the disorder it evokes is the under-management and abandonment of the public space). Sections always start with the base line, the ground, the public space. Therefore, the vertical look at the plan instead of taking on a solely horizontal and morphological perspective puts the human scale first. Additionally, it helps to understand greater interdependencies between the urban and the architectural scale.

Literature and general practical preference

Carmona, M. (2010). Contemporary Public Space: Critique and Classification, Part One: critique. *Journal of Urban Design*, 15(1), 123–148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574800903435651>

Carmona, M. (2010b). Contemporary Public Space, Part Two: Classification. *Journal of Urban Design*, 15(2), pp. 157–173, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574801003638111>

Carmona, M., & Wunderlich, F. M. (2013). *Capital Spaces: The Multiple Complex Public Spaces of a Global City*. Routledge.

Deutsche, R. (1998). "The Question of 'Public Space.'" Lecture at the *American Photography Institute National Graduate Seminar*. New York: The Photography Institute.

Franck, K. A. (2013) 'Isn't All Public Space Terrain Vague?', *Terrain Vague: Interstices at the Edge of the Pale*, 153-170.

Krier, L. (2009). *The architecture of community*.

Low, S. M. (2022). Why public space matters. In Oxford University Press eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197543733.001.0001>

Sennett, R., & Sendra, P. (2020). *Designing disorder: Experiments and Disruptions in the City*. Verso Books.

Sendra, P. (2013). Revisiting Public Space in Post-War Social Housing in Great Britain / Repensando el espacio público de las viviendas sociales de post-guerra en Gran Bretaña. *Revista Proyecto, Progreso, Arquitectura*, 9, 114–131. <https://doi.org/10.12795/ppa.2013.i9.07>

Sorkin, M. (1992). *Variations on a theme park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*. Macmillan.

Reflection

Public space in modernist housing developments is becoming more and more important, especially due to the increasing pressures on cities. These pressures are not only related to overpopulation and therefore the need for more housing, but also to the increasing need for public space in cities that contribute to the quality of life for the city's residents. In the past decades, more attention has been drawn to the redevelopment or redesign of residential units and blocks of modernist housing developments. Yet, there have not been many new proposals on how to revive the public spaces in those areas mostly driven by gradual under-management and heading towards abandonment.

With the Studio's focus on Madrid, areas in the city fringes, often connected to poverty and unemployment move into the focus of investigation. By implementing the concept of a **place of common** by design and research, a point can be made which shows, conversely to conventional interventions, that not every public space needs to fulfil certain criteria that ascribes it to a level of quality, but that the disorder of a place can become its strength. This then embraces the existing network of places and disruptions and makes use of what is already there: the people and the empty public space, bearing witness and telling a story of the contestation of the imposed order. Herewith, the understanding of public space and the practices surrounding it are challenged and are dared to be reconsidered. It is therefore that the mindset of spatial nuancing is applicable in the general realm of public space and is not limited to Madrid. However, by explicitly examining the public space in the

context of modernist housing developments, the design outcome of the **place of common** is very specific, yet it can provide an outlook and a motivation to take on a new perspective towards the possibilities that abandoned and un(der)-used public spaces may hold.

Through the conducted research I have been able to assemble a comprehensive picture of the process and pressures in and around Orcasur. Regarding the development of the design, I've been working on bringing together the findings about the neighbourhood's needs and the application of the design theory into an architectural and urban expression. However, it remains a challenge to stay grounded in both the theory and the site-specific findings, when working on the design. I hope to be able to reconnect the design decisions I make back to how I started off and that the considerations from the start find a clear formulation in my project by the end of my Graduation.