

Adapt, on Continuity in Building



learning outcomes

The master's thesis is the culmination and synthesis of your journey as a student. On the one hand, it is the culmination of your studies but, on the other, it also represents the stepping stone to a professional or academic career. With a successful master's thesis you prove that you are capable of independently exploring a complex problem, acquiring knowledge and insight about it and that you can offer an authentic answer in a scientifically robust and artistically relevant manner. Specifically, the master's thesis challenges you to bring together a wide range of competencies. After all, it involves an interplay of design, research, knowledge, reflection and communication. You will find a summary of the objectives of the master's thesis in the ECTS sheet.

In the master's thesis in architecture, you research an architectural problem statement of a spatial, social, and/or artistic nature. Because of this emphasis on probing and assessing possibilities, the master's thesis transcends a "problemsolving" approach to a research task. In addition to searching for the best answer, the master's thesis is about formulating your answer. This is not an optional thing. After all, in an academic program, you are expected to clearly structure that research process and provide a good foundation for it. This means that you set clear, concrete objectives that are in line with your approach to the research question and that you make reasoned choices based on a broad, contextual study of the problem. The further process and the final result must follow logically from this.

Typical of research is that not only the result but also the process is important. Therefore, during your research process you build up a critical reflection on your own research findings and design ideas. The purpose of this is on the one hand to make the process legible and traceable (i.e. an outsider can follow the steps you have taken) and on the other hand to arrive at a clear positioning within the broader architectural or urban discourse. Who are you as a designer-researcher, and what position do you take on the given theme? The challenge of the master's thesis is to make a statement about this through research (design research or theoretical research) and to correctly use the appropriate research tools and methods (drawing, model, installation, moving image, written text and/or reflection ...).

Semester	<i>Semester 2</i>
Campus	<i>Gent</i>
ECTS Study Points	<i>30</i>
Titular	<i>Ignaas Back</i>
Teachers	<i>Ignaas Back</i>

The student is able to make a design based on research.
 The student is able to work independently and methodologically in his/her design process.
 The student is able to continuously and creatively expand his/her knowledge.
 The student is able to critically situate a complex (architecture) design.
 The student is able to think and act interculturally.
 The student is able to communicate his/her research to a wide array of stakeholders (international, cross-disciplinary).
 The student is able to communicate his design in a personal way graphically and orally from an artistic and architectural perspective.
 The student is able to formulate an own research or project strategy.

contents and approach

Generous architecture aims to create new meaning in building, through an approach that is process-based and inclusive, dynamically anticipating to a fast-changing context, with the main focus to connect people, place, space and time.

Although architects are essentially dealing with material culture, we feel the need to activate and invigorate the often intangible and ineffable elements of local traditions with the aim of safeguarding the memory of traditional and sustainable ways. We therefore believe that it is precisely the continuity of a living tradition that identifies people and creates a sense of belonging.

This design studio aims to safeguard and reactivate natural knowledge as a generator of meaning in a globalized and superdiverse world. Our main focus will be on understanding traditional knowledge and vernacular architecture that generates sustainable, climate-resilient buildings and infrastructures. By translating globally available knowledge to locally available resources and skills we achieve low-impact and low-tech building. In short, designing and creating physical spaces in remote rural areas which have to deal with hardships such as difficult climate conditions, urban and economic pressure, social isolation, etc is our core activity.

We currently work in Nepal ('post-school' project), the Democratic Republic of Congo ('des centres généreux'), Greenland (Inuit village of Ittoqqortoormiit) and Peru. In the past we built in Haiti (BBBC, Building Back Better Communities) and did research in The Netherlands (Groene Hart) and South Africa (Cape Town, UCT, adaptive re-use). In attachment you can find more information about the school project in Nepal.



Nepal, Rebuilding School, CEPP, KULeuven



Haiti, building back better communities (bbbc), UGent



Greenland, Ittoqqortoormiit, KULeuven



SA, Cape Town, Adaptive Re-Use, UCT



NL Utrecht, Groene Hart



DR Congo, Beni, Centres Généreux, COPAK, KULeuven



Peru, Pisac, Sacred Valley, KULeuven (in start up)

ON CONTINUITY

From an architectural perspective our interest in the continuation of the ancestral knowledge is twofold:

1/ Climate - We consider a tradition as a treasure-box of knowledge that has been fine-tuned for many generations. It teaches us for instance how to build in a climate-adaptive way and with locally available resources and skills. Or, in more contemporary words: in a sustainable and low-tech manner.

2/ Culture - Traditions are shared memories that are essential carriers of social networks and meaning. In countries where people still live a rather traditional life, they are under heavy pressure because of the drive towards a modern lifestyle that threatens the heterogeneity and the natural complexity of ecosystems and traditions. This often leaves them, and especially their children, who no longer learn the traditional knowledge that their parents and grandparents possess naturally, with a feeling of alienation. It teaches us to build by including elements that demand full community participation and maintenance and evoke social engagement.



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OBJECTIVE

Building on the expertise that we acquired from our previous projects in Belgium and abroad, it is our aim to further research and design resulting in actual built spaces, by investigating lesser-known local technologies and traditional ecological knowledge. By research and design we are looking for building systems that are embedded as well in culture as in climate.

We therefore initiated projects -in close collaboration with local partners in the field of education, research and practice- resulting in actual built spaces. We intend these projects to be places of knowledge transfer through hybrid buildings that combine functions such as a community center, dispensary, school, kitchen, sport's center, ...

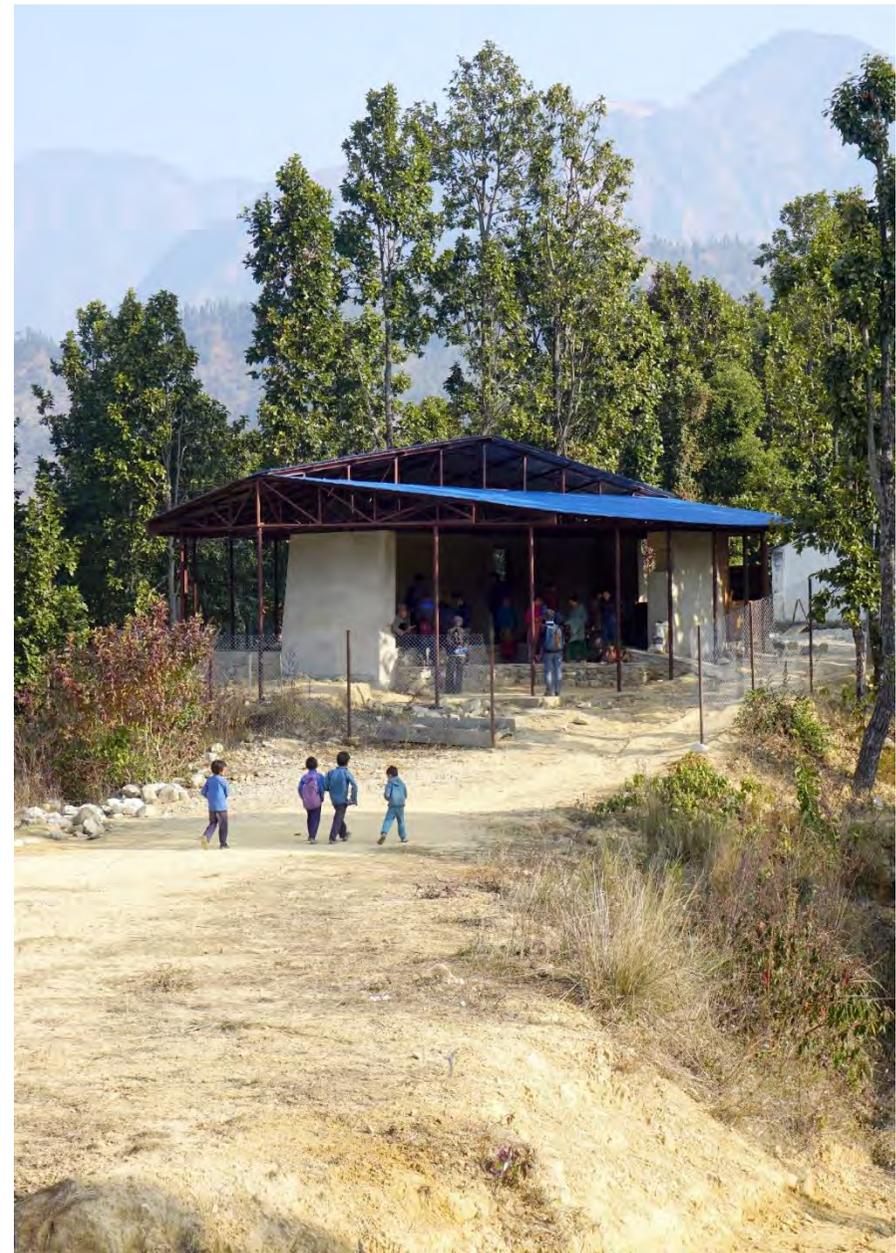
In the first part of the master dissertation, the students analyze a site on his embedded traditional ecological knowledge. In this analysis we are looking for as much information as possible to nurture the design phase. Students can propose

their own site and program to be analyzed and designed. However, fieldtrips on site can only be organized taking into account the evolution of covid-19.

In the second part, students design in ways they learned from their analysis on site. Together we will look for designs that are both embedded into the culture as well as climate. The design is a search for the continuity of building with limited resources. Scarcity of raw material as a starting point for design.

EXAMPLES OF MASTER TOPICS

- Metamorphosi – Chapp, Nepal – Empowering Nepal’s rural schools: an adaptable system and an architectural prototype – Eleni Tsiamparta
- Rural Watermarks – Tanzania – Reinforcing identity and encouraging self-reliance through community-centric water utilities in the Ulyankulu Settlement – Mihika Sarkara
- From road to ropeway – Nepal – Challenges of transportation in mountainous Nepal. Rethinking cable car terminals – Hetauda – Lucas Renson
- Beyond Aegis, Enabling disaster resilience through local community based adaptive shelter in the coast of Bangladesh – Sarah Binte Haque
- The misplaced waste of Nepal – Engaging the community to create sustainable waste management – Basak Isik
- Opening up the microcosm – Jugal, Nepal – A reflection on the limits of Nepali women’s national involvement despite their economic contribution
- The Forgotten Garden, a reflection on Persian gardens and their new role in cities – Shiraz – Iran – Seyedeh Reyhaneh Mesbahi
- Architecture in a City without architects – Kathmandu – Taking advantage of self-construction – Carlos Cardenas
- Muskuy, Exploring ways to facilitate opportunities to a resilient society – Quito – Ecuador – Sofia Vega Lulo



timing

Week 1	Preliminary Research Presentation. You present your case and determine the concrete objectives you want to achieve. These objectives are a personal translation of the intended objectives.
Week 6	Midterm Review. Just before Easter you present your master's thesis in 'outline phase'; you show how you realize the above-mentioned objectives, you propose a method, and a clear plan of approach with regard to the further elaboration.
Week 13	Final review. During this review you present your reflection paper and the project (or a draft of your master thesis in case of a theoretical master thesis) to the internal evaluation team (supervisor, co-supervisor ...).
Week 17	External jury. After the final review you still get time to perfect your master's thesis and in particular to thoroughly prepare its public presentation. This gives you the opportunity to emphasize its strong points.

procedure of evaluation

Each master's thesis is different and will have its own structure. If you are working on a design master's thesis, then the emphasis will be on a design flanked by a reflection paper in which deep reflection is developed. If you are working on a theoretical research, then you will give all your attention to writing a thesis rather than creating a design. Between the two extremes are also many intermediate forms of master's theses that pay attention to both a research or design output to a greater or lesser degree. Therefore, make clear agreements with your supervisor about the expected end result.

Design output includes an architectural intervention, building, installation, ... with a spatial impact, as agreed with your supervisor. You present this design by means of graphic documents, audiovisual media, models, etc. Follow the guidelines of your supervisor and respect the existing quality standards and (drawing) conventions of the discipline and the academically correct citation of your references (ideas, images, or quotations). Make your presentation a consistent whole in which images and text are in proper balance. As befits robust research, the master's thesis is not only about ideas, but also about their concretization/materialization in design and how you communicate this.



Written Output

For a design master's thesis, this is a reflection paper in which you demonstrate that your project meets the academic standards mentioned above. This document is more than just a concept note or a log. This reflection paper illustrates your approach and demonstrates that you have acquired academic maturity. In doing so, you strive for interaction and a proper balance between word and image.

For a theoretical master's thesis, this is a dissertation (written thesis) in which you demonstrate that your project meets the above-mentioned academic standards. This dissertation illustrates your approach and demonstrates that you have acquired academic maturity.

In both cases the structure and layout are free. You will choose the structure in consultation with your supervisor. Nevertheless, at least the following aspects will certainly be addressed (and in this order of importance):

1) Vision & positioning: you will develop a vision, both in relation to your role as designer/researcher, and specifically in relation to the assignment and/or the research topic, and identify the resulting objectives and choices. In doing so, take a clear stance in relation to the theme and the culture of architecture. Do you align yourself with certain prevailing beliefs and ideas, or do you go against them? If so, how and why? If not, what continuity do you pursue? You argue your answer on the basis of concrete figures, data or statements from scholarly authoritative sources.

2) Method & process: you explain which methods you have used or developed to achieve the objectives. Which facets did you highlight more than others? How and why did you deploy, withhold, or reject certain concepts or assumptions? In short, what choices have you made and why? You give a picture of the evolution of your work process, indicating the 'tipping points' or 'breakthroughs'. The intention is that an outsider gets sufficient insight into your work process to be able to give feedback or comment on it or to make use of your acquired insights and build on them.

3) Conclusion: here you provide a structured summary of the insights, results and findings you gathered in the course of your research process, clarifying how they influenced your research process and your output and are visible in the final result. In other words, this is a critical-reflective section, in which you yourself look back on the whole of the master's thesis. In doing so, be honest and sincere;

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if things went differently than planned, that's not a bad thing - as long as you understand and explain how that came about.

4) Reference list and bibliography: here you collect the details of all sources (books, articles, websites, blogs, meetings, etc.), reference projects, images, visits, exhibitions, etc. that have given you ideas or inspiration. The quality (not quantity) of these sources reflects the depth of your research, i.e., better one solid article from an academic journal than four blogs or websites of which the academic value of the content is questionable or cannot be checked or needs additional academic review. You will find the conventions regarding the correct notation of sources in the Methodology course (OPO bar 32). It is important that you clearly state the source of any idea, image or quote that you borrow from someone else. If you don't, you are committing plagiarism - a form of 'intellectual theft' that is severely punished! On the latter, also note that all documents are sent through Turnitin upon submission as part of the plagiarism detection process.



evaluation criteria

The evaluation criteria are a concrete translation of the learning outcomes in relationship to the specific assignment. Use transparent and active evaluation criteria.

The master's thesis comprises 30 credits and is developed, presented and assessed individually. Regardless of the proportion of group work that may be imposed, you will receive an individual assessment on both the process and the final result. The quotation distribution is as follows:

60% of the points are awarded on the process and are awarded by the supervisor and cosupervisor (if applicable). Here your preliminary research, your research question and research method, the design and/or research process, the result and the output (up to and including the reflection note), as well as your contribution in group work (if applicable), and the interaction with the (co-)supervisor are assessed. In the case of a design master's thesis, the reflection note plays an important role: it serves as a critical mirror of your process, your reflection and the research output. In the case of a theoretical master's thesis, the master's thesis will in all likelihood (but always to be discussed with your supervisor) occupy a central position and should contain all the elements mentioned above.

40% of the points are awarded on the basis of an oral presentation before a jury consisting mainly of external jury members. This jury is informed beforehand about the content of the project/research (depending on your supervisor, this may also include the reflection note), the evaluation criteria and the objective as described in the ECTS sheet. At the time of the evaluation, this team is supervised by a lecturer from your own corps. In the case of a theoretical master thesis, each jury member must receive a copy of the master thesis for reading before the actual judging by the jury team. The program director will monitor the equality of the juries. Strict timing is provided for each student, e.g. 20' presentation, 20' question round and discussion. During your presentation, using your documents (plans, models, texts, diagrams, etc.), you will make use of the various components of your master's thesis (research question, research

method, process, project, etc.) and show how all of that led to your final result/output. Be aware of the fact that you cannot tell everything in this short time; therefore, make a targeted selection and make sure your documents speak for themselves.



output, deadlines and formal criteria

Week	Formal criteria
Week 6	Midterm review documents and presentation
Week 13	Final review documents and presentation
Week 17	External Jury documents and presentation