

The Gown Above Town

Rethinking spatial dynamics in the Hague's Vertical Campus for a more symbiotic relationship between the university and the city

title derived from:

Town and Gown

noun [U, + sing/pl verb]

the university and the local people of a city, considered together

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My lifelong fascination with towering structures and a deep passion for architecture have led me to a remarkable opportunity—the creation of a “Vertical Campus.” As urbanization accelerates and available land diminishes, the need for vertical educational spaces has become increasingly evident. This shift from sprawling horizontal campuses to vertical structures presents a host of unexplored challenges and opportunities.

In this research plan, I embark on a personal journey to explore the concept of a “Vertical Campus.” This journey is not merely about adapting to changing urban environments but about redefining the very essence of educational architecture. By delving deep into the intricate interplay of design, functionality, and sustainability within vertical campuses, I aspire to develop innovative solutions that will shape the future of education and urban planning.

Introduction and Problem Statement

In the rapidly urbanizing world, the scarcity of land has prompted architects and urban planners to think vertically, much like Manhattan's evolution in the 20th century, where "vertical expansion became the ultimate symbol of urban progression"¹. Le Corbusier shared the passion for verticality, aspiring to create a "vertical city" where living spaces would rise above the ground, basking in light and air². This interest in vertical development has been a core theme in modern architectural thinking.

Educational institutions, traditionally sprawled across vast horizontal campuses, are now confronting the need to adapt to this vertical trend. University campuses have mainly stayed the same: they're places designed for regular face-to-face networking³. Bringing knowledge activities to one spot can spark new ideas from different fields. Past studies show that a campus's layout and features strongly influence how people interact, learn, and think creatively⁴.

Most of our understanding of campus design stems from the historical context of horizontal campuses, which, while rich in heritage, may not entirely translate to the demands and nuances of vertical structures. Vertical campuses need to serve many purposes—they are places for learning, working together, relaxing, and often living. The move to vertical campuses affects all these aspects in ways we're only starting to understand. The evolution of university campuses over centuries mirrors societal and architectural shifts, often reflecting a dichotomy between academia and urban life. Initially, universities were integral parts of their cities, with academic edifices adorning city centers, symbolic of knowledge being a public good. However, a notable shift occurred in the 20th century, epitomized by the establishment of pastoral campuses amidst nature, distanced from urban centers⁵. Yet, this separation bred a form of isolation, distancing academia from the societal context it inherently serves⁶.

The vertical campus in The Hague is part of a contemporary persuasive paradigm shift, a prime example of reintegration into the urban fabric. This vertical trend also brings with it a set of problems. The most significant drawback of the skyscraper craze is the loss of urban identity. Architect Jan Gehl remarked, "I would say that anyone living above the fifth floor should generally address the airspace authorities. You are no longer part of the earth, as you cannot see what is happening on the ground, and the people on the ground cannot see where you are."⁷ What high-rises do is separate large numbers of people from the street, resulting in a city that is detached from street life, a city based on enclaves and gated communities. The high-rise becomes your world, especially when looking at the program of the Vertical Campus. You never have to go outside or encounter other people, which creates a separation between the city and the campus.

This brings up the question: Is it possible to create a fully public education building that can seamlessly extend the city vertically? In doing so, the vertical campus could provide a positive impulse to both education and the street life of The Hague.

¹Koolhaas, R. (1978). *Delirious New York: A retroactive manifesto for Manhattan*. Monacelli Press: p. 89

²Le Corbusier (1987) *The City of Tomorrow and its Planning*. New York: Dover Publications.

³Asheim, B., Coenen, L., & Vang, J. (2007). Face-to-face, buzz, and knowledge bases: Sociospatial implications for learning, innovation, and innovation policy. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 25, 655-670.

⁴Strange, C.C.; Banning, J.H.; Delworth, U. (2001). *Educating by Design: Creating Campus Learning Environments That Work*. Jossey-Bass.

⁵Nurner, P. V. (1984). *Campus: An American Planning Tradition*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

⁶Hajrasouliha, A. H. (2017). "Master-Planning the American Campus: Goals, Actions and Design Strategies." *Urban Design International* 22 (4): 363-381. doi:10.1057/s41289-017-0044-x.

⁷Gehl, J. (2010). *Cities for People*. Island Press.

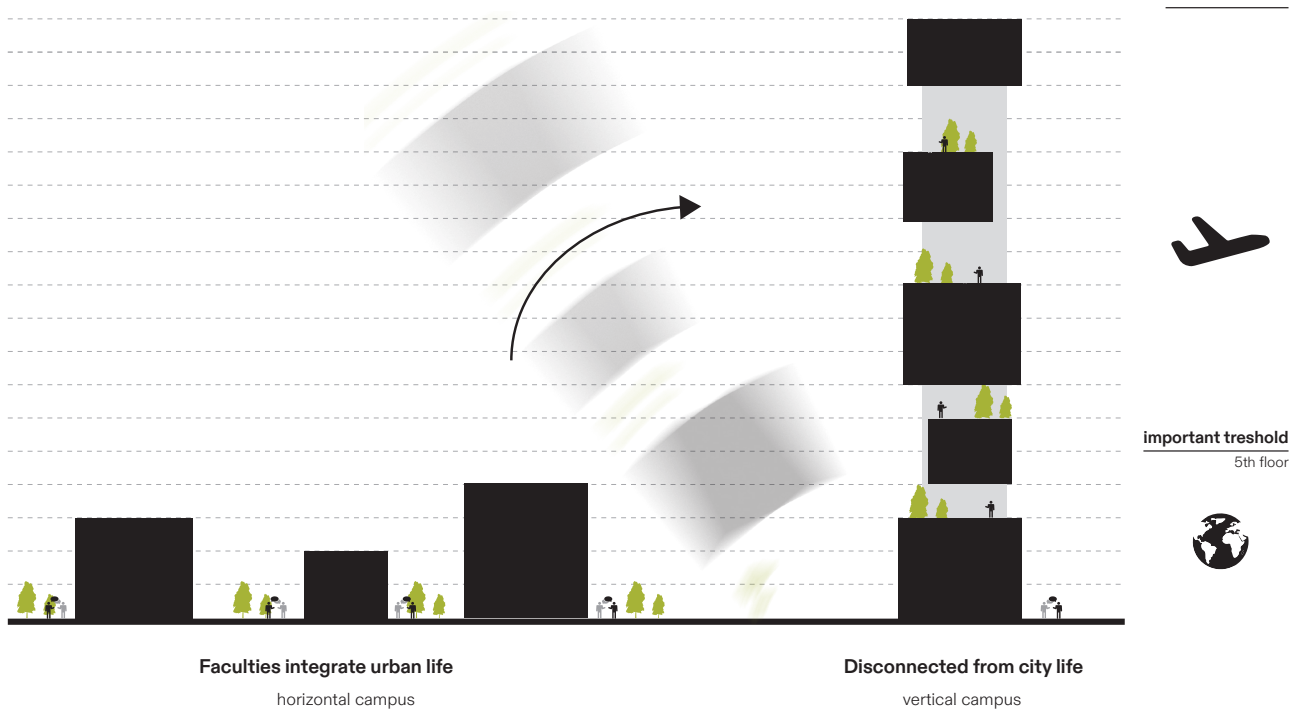


Figure 1 - Translation from a horizontal to a vertical campus compared to the theory of architect Jan Gehl. Author

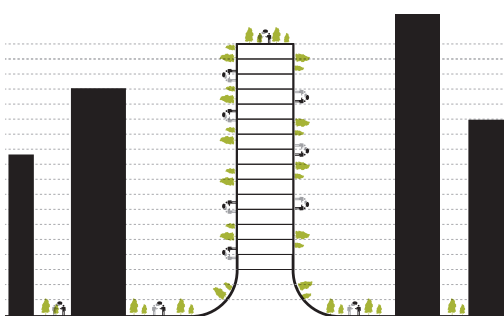


Figure 2 - Vertical Campus as extension of the city. Author

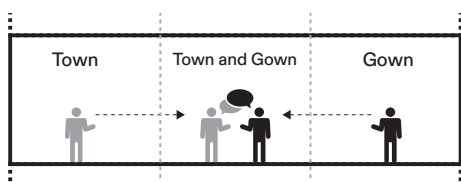


Figure 3 - In the context of vertical translation, it is essential to consider the horizontal relationship between the public/private spheres, as well as the aspect of encounter. Author

The concept of a “Vertical Town and Gown” refers to the integration of an educational campus with the urban fabric of a city, particularly in a high-rise form. Traditionally, “town and gown” describes the relationship between a university (gown) and the non-academic community (town) it’s part of. However, The Hague faces a challenge with its closed high-rise structures, which engender a sense of urban anonymity and a scarcity of engaging public spaces. This issue would also arise in a straightforward translation from a horizontal campus layout to a vertical one (Fig. 1). The vertical campus could revolutionize this by creating an open, accessible space that promotes interaction between students and the city’s residents, enhancing cultural exchange and community integration. This vertical integration could counteract the impersonal circulation efficiency seen in The Hague’s inner city, by providing vibrant, multipurpose spaces that welcome both the academe and the public. The architectural design must foster private areas within a public realm, redefining the urban campus as a lively, inclusive vertical town square. (Fig. 2 & 3)

Research Questions

The core essence of a campus is not just in its physicality, but in the experiences it curates, the interactions it fosters, and the sense of community it nurtures. These dynamics, deeply rooted in the traditional horizontal layouts, face potential disruption as we transition to vertical designs. Thus, the main question arises:

“How does a vertical campus in The Hague alter the traditional spatial dynamics of educational campuses to create a more symbiotic relationship between campus and the city?”

subquestions:

- How does the design and layout of horizontal university campuses impact social interactions and cultural exchange between students, faculty, and the local community?

- How do vertical (educational) buildings affect the social fabric and sense of community in urban setting?

- How can the design and architecture of a vertical campus contribute to its integration as an extension of the urban environment?

- How can the integration of private spaces in a vertical campus be re-imagined to approach the concept of an entirely public building?

This research aims to understand the transformative potential of a vertical campus in The Hague and investigate how it can redefine spatial dynamics to promote a symbiotic relationship between the educational institution and the city.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The research begins by examining the spatial relationship between urban educational institutions and their surrounding cities, guided by key theoretical concepts. Kevin Lynch's 'Image of the City'⁸ helps interpret urban structures through ideas like legibility and urban elements. Henri Lefebvre's works 'Production of Space'⁹ and 'Right to the City'¹⁰ provide a theoretical framework for studying socio-political dynamics and spatial claims in urban environments.

Attention is given to the intermediate or public spaces of the campus, exploring their role in facilitating interactions between students and the city. Inspired by Whyte's¹¹ insights on the social life of small urban spaces, the research explores how these communal spaces can facilitate exchanges, create connections, and shape identities.

Contextual Approach

The research is divided into three main investigations. First, it examines the relationship between campuses and their urban contexts, providing a historical and spatial overview and emphasizing the importance of understanding examples. These could include campuses like Leiden, Erasmus, and/or Delft, as they may be stakeholders for the vertical campus. Field visits and interviews can be integrated at this stage for in-depth understanding.

Second, the study focuses on global vertical case studies to extract insights about the spatial configurations of these vertical campuses and understand how they blur the boundaries between (academic) spaces and the urban environment.

The third investigation concentrates on The Hague and conducts a comprehensive site analysis to examine aspects such as urban development, architecture, socio-economic dynamics, and cultural and demographic factors. This localized contextual analysis is crucial for formulating strategies to integrate the proposed vertical campus into the fabric of the city.

Design Approach

This study explores the architectural and design aspects of implementing a vertical campus in The Hague, drawing from a strong theoretical and contextual foundation. Research-by-design, particularly emphasized in the Public Building studio, is used to address important design challenges, such as reconciling the contrast between public and private spaces in a vertical structure. The study aims to create a cohesive vertical campus that seamlessly integrates into the urban environment, with an emphasis on connectivity, accessibility, and permeability to foster interaction between the educational space and the city below.

⁸ Lynch, K. (1960). *The image of the city*. Mit Press

⁹ Lefebvre, H. (1992). *The production of space*. Basil Blackwell Inc.

¹⁰ Lefebvre, H. (1968). *Right to the City*. Economica

¹¹ Whyte, W. H. (1980). *The social life of small urban spaces*. Project for Public Spaces

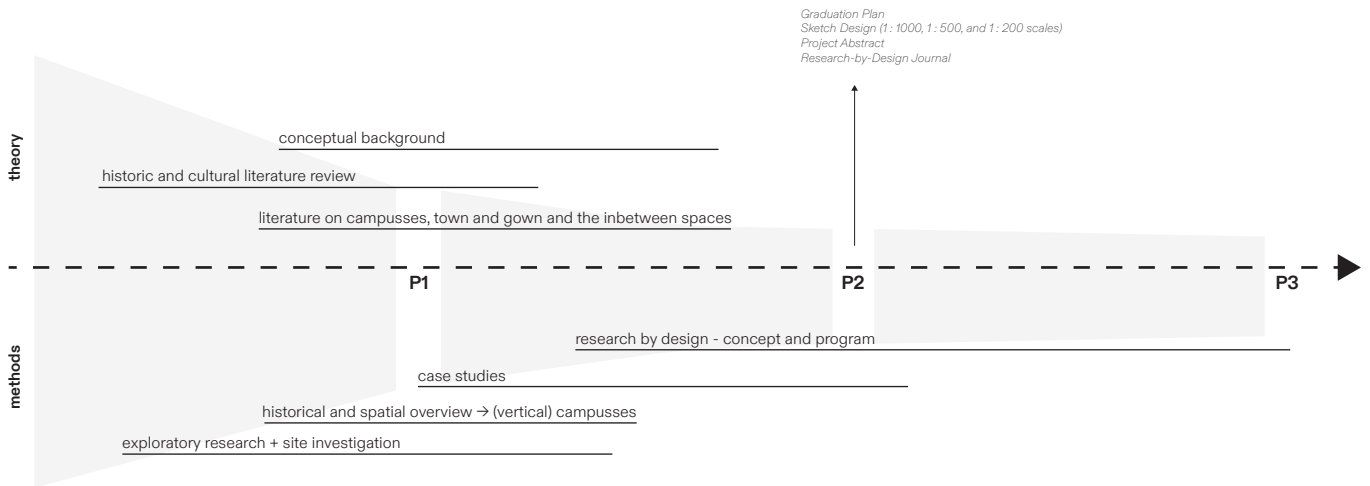
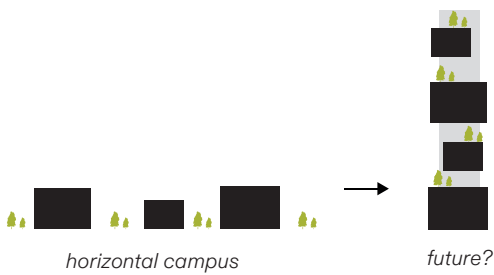


Figure 4 - Framework for Methodology Execution. Author

Project's Contribution

The purpose of this project is to delve into this paradigm shift, investigating how vertical campuses can redefine the traditional spatial dynamics of educational campuses to create a more symbiotic relationship between the campus and the city. It aims to enrich the academic experience by reimagining integration with the urban fabric, drawing from the rich history of universities being intertwined with city life. The project contributes to the larger discourse by challenging existing norms in campus design, proposing innovative solutions that embrace verticality, and highlighting the potential for a richer interaction between educational institutions and urban spaces.

It addresses the potential disruption in traditional spatial dynamics, community interactions, and the sense of belonging that might occur as educational institutions transition from horizontal to vertical structures. By exploring how vertical campuses can foster a more interconnected and engaged urban academic community, the project positions itself as a crucial inquiry into the future of educational and urban development, contributing valuable insights and potential design solutions to both the architectural and educational professions.



exercise

limited public interaction in a vertical setting

potential

Vertical campuses in urban areas may exacerbate the “town and gown” divide by privatizing inter-faculty spaces and limiting community engagement compared to the open, accessible layouts of horizontal campuses.

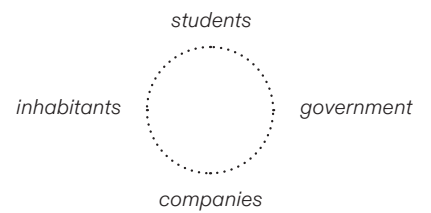
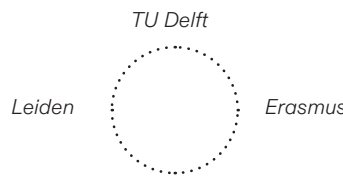
Fully vertical integration of education and urban life.

research

relevant campuses to project

users?

“How does a vertical campus in The Hague alter the traditional spatial dynamics of educational campuses to create a more symbiotic relationship between campus and the city?”



subquestions

theoretical Framework

methodology

SQ 1
How does the design and layout of horizontal university campuses impact social interactions and cultural exchange between students, faculty, and the local community?

(historical) literature/concept research
→ - History of the campus and Town and Gown
- Defining the role of the inbetween space on horizontal campuses
Lynch, K. & Lefebvre, H. & Whyte, W. H.

→ - Perform a spatial and social analysis of public spaces within these campuses.
- Conduct field visits (and interviews)

SQ 2
- How do vertical (educational) buildings affect the social fabric and sense of community in urban setting?

thematical background
→ **The vertical campus as a fully public building.**
Parakh, J., Gabel, J., & Safarik, Strange C.C. & Banning, J.H. & L. & Al-Kodmany, K.

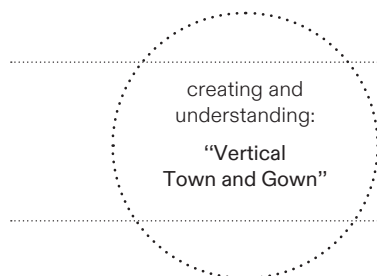
→ - Study global vertical campus case studies to evaluate spatial configurations.
(- Analyze the role of vertical campuses in urban community building through observational studies)

SQ 3
How can the design and architecture of a vertical campus contribute to its integration as an extension of the urban environment?

conceptual background
→ **The vertical campus as a vertical town and gown and extension of the city.**
Kemp, R. L., Gehl, J. & D. Penn, A., Desyllas, J., & Vaughan, L.

→ - Research-by-design: develop integration strategies for a vertical campus in The Hague.
- Comprehensive site analysis in The Hague to inform design decisions.

SQ 4
How can the integration of private spaces in a vertical campus be re-imagined to approach the concept of an entirely public building?



→ - Research-by-design: prototype public-private space configurations in a vertical campus setting.

Annotated bibliography

Asheim, B., Coenen, L., & Vang, J. (2007). Face-to-face, buzz, and knowledge bases: Sociospatial implications for learning, innovation, and innovation policy. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 25, 655-670. Social connections

The study illuminates how face-to-face interactions and “buzz” in sociospatial settings contribute to learning and innovation, which can be pivotal in examining the dynamics of horizontal campuses. Translating these insights to a vertical campus model may provide a theoretical framework to understand how spatial configurations impact knowledge exchange, fostering a conducive environment for innovation and learning.

Al-Kodmany, K. (2017). *Understanding tall buildings: A theory of placemaking*. Routledge. Vertical Buildings

This book is essential for researching vertical campuses as it explores how high-rise design influences social interactions and community building. It provides a theoretical basis for integrating vertical structures into urban environments.

Gehl, J. (2010). *Cities for People*. Island Press. Vertical Buildings

Gehl’s book provides valuable insights into urban planning and design, which can be relevant for a study of a vertical campus. By examining Gehl’s principles of creating people-centric urban spaces, this can explore how these concepts could be translated into a theoretical framework for designing a vertical campus that fosters a sense of community, accessibility, and human-scale interaction within a vertical architectural context.

Kemp, R. L. (2013). *Town and Gown Relations: A Handbook of Best Practices*. McFarland. Town and Gown

This book offers critical insights into optimizing the interplay between educational institutions and urban settings, which is essential for understanding the social and cultural impacts of campus designs. It could provide valuable strategies for integrating vertical campuses into the urban fabric, ensuring they contribute positively to the city’s social fabric and sense of community.

Lefebvre, H. (1992). *The production of space*. Basil Blackwell Inc. Spatial dynamics

Henri Lefebvre’s work is relevant for studying a vertical campus and researching the transformation of a horizontal campus into a vertical model because it offers insights into how physical spaces are socially constructed and how they impact human interactions and experiences. Lefebvre’s examination of the social and symbolic dimensions of space can provide valuable theoretical frameworks for understanding the dynamics of vertical and horizontal campuses and their effects on the educational environment.

Spatial dynamics	<p>Lynch, K. (1960). <i>The image of the city</i>. Mit Press</p> <p><i>This book is relevant for the study of a vertical campus and the research of the horizontal campus because it provides foundational insights into how individuals perceive and navigate urban environments. His concepts of legibility, imageability, and the mental maps people create can be applied to understand how students and faculty experience and interact with both vertical and horizontal campus layouts, helping to inform the development of a theoretical framework for translating a horizontal model into a vertical one.</i></p>
Inbetween space	<p>Parakh, J., Gabel, J., & Safarik, D. (2017). <i>The Space Between: Urban Places, Public Spaces & Tall Buildings</i>. Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat.</p> <p><i>The work could be relevant for this research as it delves into the interplay between urban spaces and tall buildings, which is central to understanding how vertical campuses might interact with their urban surroundings. It may offer insights into how the architecture and design of tall structures influence public spaces and social dynamics, which can inform how a vertical campus could foster community and cultural exchange</i></p>
Social connections	<p>Penn, A., Desyllas, J., & Vaughan, L. (1999). The Space of Innovation: Interaction and communication in the work environment. <i>Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design</i>, 26(2), 193–218. https://doi.org/10.1068/b4225.</p> <p><i>The paper could be significant for this research as it explores the relationship between spatial design and interaction within work environments, which can be analogous to educational settings. It provides a foundational understanding of how space can influence communication and innovation, which are key to fostering social interactions and cultural exchange on a campus.</i></p>
Campus Design	<p>Strange, C.C.; Banning, J.H.; Delworth, U. (2001). <i>Educating by Design: Creating Campus Learning Environments That Work</i>. Jossey-Bass.</p> <p><i>This book presents a comprehensive exploration of concepts and models related to the design of effective higher education environments. It is divided into two parts, with the first part discussing the various components of human environments, particularly in the context of colleges and universities, while the second part emphasizes the importance of creating educational environments that provide students with a sense of security, involvement mechanisms, and a community experience to enhance educational success.</i></p>
Inbetween space	<p>Whyte, W. H. (1980). <i>The social life of small urban spaces</i>. Project for Public Spaces</p> <p><i>This book offers valuable insights into the dynamics of human interaction and behavior in compact urban environments, which can be relevant for studying the design and functionality of a vertical campus. By applying Whyte's observations and theoretical framework, this research can adapt principles of social engagement and spatial design from horizontal campuses to create a cohesive and effective vertical model for educational institutions in urban settings.</i></p>

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