

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	Bálint Kerekes
Student number	5848911

Studio		
Name / Theme	Methods of Analysis and Imagination – A Matter of Scale	
Main mentor	Dr. Jorge Mejía Hernández	Architecture Studio Coordinator
Second mentor	Freek Speksnijder	Building Technology
Third mentor	Willie Vogel	Research Mentor
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>This academic year, the Methods studio concentrates on Tallinn, which provides the opportunity for my graduation project to be grounded in the former Eastern bloc. As a Hungarian national, I am especially interested in the socio-political aspects of architecture in this context. Apart from the chosen city, the studio offers complete freedom in developing one's own research and design brief, which enables this project to be closely aligned with my personal topics of interest. Furthermore, the representational awareness which characterizes the studio allows for reflecting on my own working methods before I start working in practice.</p>	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	"Stages of Democracy: Exploring the political capacity of theatre for the design of a representative public square in Tallinn"
Goal	
Location:	Tallinn, Estonia; Toompark and Toompea Hill
The posed problem,	<p>Our notion of the public sphere is inherently tied to Western ideas of democracy, as the domain where political decisions are being debated. However, the implosion of official communism and the consequent neoliberal onslaught have fundamentally altered the conception of public space. The availability of space in which public</p>

	<p>roles can be performed has been drastically reduced, as large organisations strive for political compromises with the state and with each other excluding the public whenever possible. However, spaces near symbols of national importance are inherently charged with political meaning, allowing citizens to position their claims for or against their symbolic values.</p> <p>In Tallinn, the castle on Toompea hill still accommodates political power (government offices and the parliament), and the conservational approach at this UNESCO world heritage site preserves the medieval hierarchies. The open spaces surrounding the Old Town – the ring of old fortifications - are allocated for recreational use only, including private, commercialized venues as the result of the privatization process in the 90s. Therefore, politically charged events happen elsewhere, detached from the venues of the formal public sphere which, I argue, constitutes a democratic deficit in spatial terms.</p>
<p>research questions and</p>	<p>How can the immediate vicinity of the Estonian Parliament be transformed through architectural interventions to accommodate spaces appropriate for performative representation?</p>
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>The proposal is a redesign of the portion of Toompark which lies at the foot of the Estonian Parliament into a new, representative public square.</p> <p>The brief aims to generate a design which is inherently sustainable in both social and material terms. The site currently accommodates a private sports field with artificial finishes, which presents the opportunity to improve both the political and ecological performance of the park - the former by</p>

making it public, and the latter by properly landscaping it.

Apart from the design of the square's surface and the general landscaping of the hillside, the project comprises of structures accommodating a variety of stages. In- and outdoor, from the small to the very large, these stages are designed for both the everyday and the extraordinary. Designed to meet the programmatic requirements of professional theater and event spaces, they can be appropriated for political narration (speeches) and claim-making (protest) – whether organized or not.

Process

Method description

At the start of the research an extensive literature review has been carried out to understand the relevant urban and political theories which shaped our understanding of the public sphere since modernity, and which describe contemporary challenges and approaches to public space. By carrying out interdisciplinary research the hope is to avoid asserting architectural ideals not grounded in the sociological context.

To understand the history of public spaces in Tallinn, and how they accommodate the performance of public roles, I conducted archival research on notable gatherings which shaped Estonia's history, and did a morphological study of their locations, studying their layout, capacity, and relationship to representative monuments. This branch of the research informed the site selection process tremendously and helped calibrating the spatial extents of the proposal.

As the site falls under UNESCO world heritage protection, a thorough understanding of the already existing is indispensable to respect the historical, political, and ecological importance of the location. I produced an analytical site survey by reconstructing the site in both digital and physical form using publicly available Ordnance Survey and Lidar data and drew a set of archaeological plans, elevations, and sections to investigate site conditions – such as topography, canopy cover, and buildings under heritage protection – and their inherent qualities.

The design aims to work with the existing: these architectural interventions make use of and amplify the site's intrinsic qualities, which in return inform and delineate them. In order to develop a formal language in conversation with the geometry of the site, I progress the design through overlaying orthogonal drawings on the matching analytical surveys, taking inspiration from the works of Estonian graphic artist Mare Vint, who explored the relationship between abstract geometric architectures and ideal landscapes in her work. This layering, both literally on tracing paper and figuratively, has been productive across scales from 1:1000 to 1:200, and will be

continued at smaller scales as the design gains resolution. For the more developed spatial planning, precedents and literature on indoor theatres, outdoor stages, and public pavilions have and will be studied to understate the specific programmatic requirements.

In line with the concept of working with the existing, the tectonics of the project will be informed by the material cultures of the site. I intend to explore the materiality of the project through large-scale tectonic models focusing not just on the final form of the design, but also the processes of making it, in a way which is sympathetic to the genius loci. The role of the grid and proportion in architecture emerges as the principal theoretical question, allowing for disciplinary self-reflection. As a result of the design methodology, grid dimensions – and thus proportion – is expected to emerge from the materials used for the project; this grid is intended to establish the connection between the scales, granting the site-specific project its own integrity as well.

Literature and general practical references

Literature

Avermaete, Tom, Klaske Havik, and Hans Teerds. *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity, and the Public Sphere*. Amsterdam: SUN, 2009.

Epner, Pille. *City Unfinished: Urban Visions of Tallinn*. Tallinn: Eesti Kunstiakadeemia arhitektuuri ja linnaplaneerimise osakond, 2021.

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Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1991.

Lefebvre, Henri, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. *The Production of Space*. Malden, MA.: Blackwell, 2009.

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Padovan, Richard. *Proportion: Science, Philosophy, Architecture*. London etc.: Spon, 1999.

Parkinson, John. *Democracy and Public Space: The Physical Sites of Democratic Performance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Pérez Gómez, Alberto, and Louise Pelletier. *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997.

Perucci, Tony. "Irritational Aesthetics: Reality Friction and Indecidable Theatre." *Theatre Journal* 70 (01/01 2018): 473-98. <https://doi.org/10.1353/tj.2018.0098>.

Riha, Tadeas, Laura Linsi, Roland Reemaa, and Exhibition International Architectural. *Weak Monument: Architectures Beyond the Plinth = Nõrk Monument: Pjedaalialused Arhitektuurid*. Zürich, Switzerland: Park Books, 2018.

Smith, Neil, and Setha Low. *The Politics of Public Space*. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2006.

Strong, Judith, and Association of British Theatre. *Theatre Buildings: A Design Guide*. Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2010.

Tschumi, Bernard. *Architecture Concepts: Red Is Not a Color*. New York: Rizzoli, 2012.

Precedents

"Theatro Del Mondo", Venice, Italy. Aldo Rossi, 1980.

"Teatro Oficina", São Paulo, Brazil. Lina Bo Bardi & Edson Elito, 1994.

"NO99 Straw Theatre", Tallinn, Estonia. Saalto Architects, 2011.

"Potemkin Theatre", London, United Kingdom. Maich Swift Architects, 2019.

"Recovery of Merola's Tower", Puig-Reig, Spain. Carles Enrich, 2019.

"Skanderbeg square", Tirana, Albania. 51N4E, 2019.

"Mantinum", Bastia, France. Buzzo Spinelli Architecture, Antoine Dufour Architectes & Atelier Gama, 2020.

"Aire", Granada, Spain. P+S Estudio de Arquitectura, 2022.

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)?

The topic of the studio, a matter of scale, stimulates the project in many aspects. The scale of the project, its overall size and capacity is a pivotal concern to be suitable for a medium-sized European capital; meanwhile, the scale of the architecture is carefully considered to achieve the design aim of linking the abstract urban and political considerations down to the human scale through its form and proportions.

In architectural academia, exploring ways of sustainable practice is of paramount importance; however, the answer often seems to be that we should not build at all. I hope this project will suggest progressive approaches towards how we can build sustainably in a climate emergency.

The relationship of the public sphere and architecture was one of the first problems I encountered at TU Delft in the course Architectural Positions. Before, the connection between my forming political awareness and the field I chose to study seemed far-fetched; this project now presents the opportunity to express what kind of practice I stand by, posing my answer to the open question which underpins the course.

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

With this research, I would like to contribute to the discourse on the state of public sphere in the former Eastern bloc. I believe the shared historical aspects amount to a context which differs from that addressed by Western literature and thus necessitates research directly concerned with it.

In disciplinary terms, the proposal will bring forth understated criteria for the treatment of public space, highlighting how limiting our use of "public" as an umbrella term is, while scientifically it explores site-specific circular practices which tie use, form, and location together through materialization.