

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	Johnathan Subendran
Student number	5031923

Studio	
Name / Theme	Planning Complex Cities / Urbanism
Main mentor	Caroline Newton Spatial Planning and Strategy
Second mentor	Diego Sepulveda Carmona Spatial Planning and Strategy
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>Planning Complex Cities Planning Complex Cities (Critically Engaged Practices): The increased frequency of populism, nationalism and racist discourses have gained traction within our global community which has exacerbated the risk of disadvantage groups. This increasing tension has strong implications within planning structures, governance processes and space, which makes it urgent to understand and potentially reimagine how things could be in the future with increased attention to the marginalized.</p> <p>I am strongly motivated to further understand the spatial implication of these topics, especially how they relate to politically sensitive, areas of internal conflict such as Sri Lanka that require immediate attention.</p> <p>This studio offers a great opportunity to spatialize and explore topics of governance, processes, and spatial justice within the built environment. I believe it is the topic that lacks most depth within my knowledge but also requires increased attention especially in recent times. Thus, I am intrigued to learn and engage with a collective that is dedicated to these topics.</p>

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	<u>Geographies of Conflict</u> : Towards Liberation, Self-determination and Spatial justice in Sri Lanka's North-East
Goal	
Location:	North-East region of Sri Lanka
The posed problem,	The ethnocratic state of Sri Lanka continues to deny and oppress Eelam Tamil self-determination. This has led to spatial and systemic repression of economic, social, political, and cultural prosperity of Eelam Tamil people, who seek access to

	<p>basic human rights and conditions for a proper livelihood. In conjunction, the decontextualization and Western dominant Spatial Justice theory have undermined the vulnerabilities of minority ethnic groups within conditions of oppressive power and ethnic-conflict. This demands an alternative approach and reconceptualized perspectives that are context-specific, to better address the realities of marginalized populations towards justice and self-determination.</p>
<p>research questions and</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can spatial planning in geographies of conflict help facilitate contextualized and alternative processes towards spatial justice for marginalized Tamils in Sri Lanka's North-East? <p><u>Analyze</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. How can spatial justice be contextualized in contexts of ethnocracy and more specifically for Tamils in Sri Lanka? 3. How has ethnic conflict evolved over time and shaped the social, spatial, political and cultural dynamics in Sri Lanka's North-East? 4. What are the systemic and spatial injustices faced by Tamils in Sri Lanka's North East? <p><u>Expose</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Where are most geographically marginalized areas and socio-economically vulnerable populations in Sri Lanka's North East? 6. What can be learned from alternative planning and counter-practices that can empower self-determination and spatial justice of Eelam Tamil peoples? <p><u>Propose</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. What are the socioeconomic, institutional and spatial capacities in Sri Lanka's North-East that could support self-determination, liberation and spatial justice of Eelam Tamils? 8. How can spatial justice of Eelam Tamils and global sustainable development agendas be envisioned through alternative planning socioeconomic-political-spatial processes? <p><u>Politicize</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. How can spatial and governance strategies support the conditions needed for a just transition towards spatial justice and resilient sustainable development?

	<p>10. How can civil society, institutions, professional, public, and private actors all be active agents of change in the quest for spatial justice and sustainable development?</p>
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>Outcome 1: Capacity & Potential Study; Understanding the spatial-socioeconomic-environmental potentials and opportunities toward self-determination and spatial justice</p> <p>Outcome 2: Spatial Provocations on Alternative Futures; exploring possible scenarios to investigate the potential of the region through the combination of varying potentials and capacities</p> <p>Outcome 3: Strategic Framework/Vision (Regional) + Projects (Local); to materialize a combination of spatial and procedural potentials into a strategic socio-spatial framework along with procedural guidelines toward spatial justice and self-determination</p>
<p>[This should be formulated in such a way that the graduation project can answer these questions. The definition of the problem has to be significant to a clearly defined area of research and design.]</p>	
<p>Process</p>	
<p>Method description</p>	
<p>The methodology largely operates through the lines of inquiry. The structure of the inquiry draws from the Critical Planning approach of Peter Marcuse.</p> <p>This critical approach aims to engage with structural issues and mechanisms that traditional communicative and justice planning concepts fall short to address. The following suggests Analyze (analyzing the roots of the problem); Expose (converting findings into a weapon to achieve goals); Propose (developing a vision while pushing the limits of practice); Politicize (forming strategies for achieving change and addressing issues of power). In doing so, four series of sub-research questions act as a line of questioning along with the four steps of Critical Planning as a back bone.</p> <p><u>Literature Review</u></p> <p>The literature review comprises a critical survey of scholarly articles, books, and other sources to unveil key aspects of the research in both theory and context. To which a critical evaluation, summary, and description will be composed in relation to the theoretical foundations and context-specificity of the selected case.</p> <p>This method aims to support the explorative approach of the research, to draw interrelations of ideas that are rather under-explored. This compromises two key steps, first is to understand the relevant bodies of literature toward finding the knowledge gap within spatial justice and planning theory. And secondly, to diversify the centers of knowledge used, by referring authors and theories positioned from largely the global south and suggest</p>	

alternative notions on challenging the dominant pedagogies of planning theory and spatial justice. This second step will also include the scanning of policy documents, news articles, and non-academic sources to gain a broader understanding of the context and the applicability of the theoretical framework.

Mixed Media Review

This method includes the review of mixed media sources such as documentaries, short stories, and other alternative media sources that demonstrate the challenges and dimensions of the selected case.

The main aim of the media review is to gain a deeper understanding of the case-specific conditions due to lack of formal data availability and the practice of documentation. In doing so, it could unveil a wide range of perspectives of the selected case that would expand the traditional centers of knowledge and also empower voices that would be represented through formal mediums.

Statistical Analysis

Within the scope of this project, Statistical Analysis involves a critical investigation of collected statistical data from a wide range of sources such as government institutions, non-governmental organizations, financial institutions (ie Worldbank), and stand-alone reports from journalists and news organizations.

To draw quantifiable measurements of non-spatial data that unveil insights on the societal, economic, cultural, and political dimensions within Sri Lanka and the North-Eastern regions. The collected and analyzed data will be used as inputs for spatial and stakeholder analysis. Moreover, it will be used to help frame the challenges and tangible dimensions for further exploration.

Transcalar Mapping

This mapping method involves understanding the transversal relationship of context across multiple scales.

This aims to demonstrate defining characteristics at both spatial and systemic levels at each scale and unveil their interdependence and relation to each other. This will, in turn, decompose the complex systems to understand their relative structures and processes.

Socio-Spatial Analysis

This combined analytical approach involves the interacting relationship between the built environment and society. This method will also involve principles of ethnography, to further understand the relationship of people and their cultures, customs, habits, and differences over space.

This method will aim to understand the inner workings of spatial injustice and the responsible forces perpetuating oppression and discrimination of marginalized groups. This method is a core tool across the research as it formulates a way to communicate the problematic dimensions through a unique spatial perspective.

Interviews

Due to the restrictions on travel amidst the pandemic. A range of interviews is to be conducted with experts, NGOs, members of the diaspora who are currently engaged with challenges of Eelam Tamils within their own practice and disciplines as well as life experience.

To gain a better understanding of the challenges of ethnic minority Eelam Tamils and the role of key actors in countering oppressive forces, advocacy, and promoting change from the scale of the neighborhood, to the city and region, as well international community.

Stakeholder Analysis

This involves the identification of key stakeholders operating at various scales and investigating their roles, interests, relative power, and desire to participate in the selected case areas. And, to understand the cooperation and conflict between various actor groups and other scales (IA State, 2019).

To understand the key players and forces in the continued oppression of injustice and key actors at various scales who have the capacity to advocate and promote reform. This stakeholder analysis will also be combined with spatial dimensions to understand the capacity of the selected case area and how it can promote opportunities and alternative futures.

Scenario Building

The process of creating various pathways or courses of action to forecast the implications of potential opportunities, explorations, and futures situations.

The development of scenarios to help to identify the possible pathways to achieve targets toward a vision of the future. This scenario building process aims to understand the spatial, procedural, and socioeconomic implications on the potential impact and level of change or adaptation toward the desired outcome. This will also project speculative conditions that will show how things could possibly evolve and would provide valuable insights by testing the various pathways

Explanatory Case Study

The selected case intends to provide a basis to explore the implications of a phenomenon and explorative research approach to which attempts to advance theoretical notions that can better engage across broader context specificities. This will also be used as an example that could potentially help understand phenomenons in similar contexts

To explore the implications of spatial justice in conditions of conflict that are rather under-explored. In doing so, it could contribute valuable insights to the discourse on spatial justice, bridging the knowledge gap between planning theory and practice and help disseminate theoretical frameworks through a tangible case, based on realistic parameters.

Backcasting

This method was used to extend the horizon of possibilities to tackle the pressing challenges of the research. The backcasting technique is used to explore spatial and procedural actions, as well as project a desired future. Wherein, the use of various scenarios, in this case

provocative spatial futures were used to explore three distinct trajectories that would connect the current with future conditions.

Literature and general practical preference

This section aims to theoretically underpin the research framework through key phenomena, notably speaking, spatial justice, spatial planning, ethnocracy, and critical perspectives on planning ethnocracy. In doing, so this review departs from Western dominant notions on spatial justice and spatial planning theory toward reconceptualizing through the lens of ethnocracy and by contributing to momentum created by critical perspectives, stating the urge to contextualized and reconceptualize planning theory to acknowledge difference and better engage with political and societal constructs beyond Western liberal ideals on democracy.

In turn, this theoretically underpinning provides valuable insights to define alternative direction on spatial justice and planning theory within conditions of oppressive power and ethnic conflict.

On Spatial Justice

Since the early works of Lefebvre (1968) and the Right to the City, and more recently of David Harvey and Edward Soja, the notion of space is intrinsically related to the socio-temporal dynamics of human beings (Soja, 2009). Therefore the socio-spatial dialectic is related to the geographies we live in, may either have positive or negative consequences (Soja, 2009). This idea is further explored by Edward Soja to 'expose the spatial causality of justice and injustice' and extends itself to the multiscalar geographies in which humans operate; from the body to household, to city, region, nation, and global scale (Ibid). According to Soja, spatial justice or injustice involves the 'fair and equitable' distribution of public and social resources over the dimension of space. In this vein, the spatial dimensions can express the unjust and just distribution of resources. Spatial injustice can mainly be attributed to 'locational discrimination', where biases of race, gender, class to name a few, on a population's geographical location produces spatial disadvantages and inferiority (Ibid).

To understand the origins of the spatial aspects of justice, it is important to consider the ideals and realities they stem from. Firstly, it is important to recognize the ideals and assumptions rooted in the term 'justice'. What does justice mean? Generally, there are two epistemological pathways in regards to justice. The Rawlsian liberal notion of justice concerns seeking justice based on individual rights and fair treatment (Rawls 1971). These ideas have been largely criticized due to liberal foundations lacking to address sources and structural issues of inequality (Soja 2015, Mirafteb 2017).

Writers such as Susan Fainstein in her recent writing on spatial justice and planning, also attribute Rawlsian ideas of inclusion and fair treatment to normative justice planning theory and acknowledge the limitations of this perspective and its influence on the concept of spatial justice (Fainstein 2009). On the contrary, the work of Iris Marion Young argues for the need to "contextualize justice in more concrete, historical, and institutional terms" (Soja, 2015). Youngian notions of justice involve recognition of difference and politics such as understanding the systemic policies that perpetuate issues such as racial inequality (Young 1990). She promotes a politics of difference and challenges the idea of integration because "[it] tends wrongly to focus on patterns of group clustering while ignoring more central issues of privilege and disadvantage" (Ibid). She goes further to urge the preservation of differentiated solidarity amongst diverse groups.

More recent works of Faranak Mirafteb, suggests that such an understanding of justice could shift the debate from inclusion and representation to self-determination (Mirafteb, 2017). Moreover, contextualizing notions of justice to the specific conditions of inequality such as race, ethnic, gender-based discrimination, policies, and the demand of oppressed communities, could unveil a range of dimensions that could lead to structural and spatial reform.

In the Western world, the relation between justice and space can date back to the Greek polis, where many Western writers describe where democracy was largely practiced (Soja

2015). However, scholars have credited even earlier practices of democratic societies in Southwest Asia (Ibid). Practices regarding communal living and collectivity can also be seen in the ancient Islamic civilizations and religious texts such as in the city of Medina, where the Prophet Muhammad drafted a constitution to regulate democratic participation and organization between various tribes to deal with tribal issues such as economy, crime, and leadership (Lecker 2013).

Despite diverse practices of democracy, emerging Western, due to European Imperialism and colonization, has developed universal frameworks of justice. The diverse spatial linkages to justice and justice itself have historically been disregarded in the development of Western theories such as the Nation-State which now fuel hegemonic discourses on planning and built environment (Soja 2015). In turn, this universalization generated universal notions of democracy, citizenship, rights, and overall state-citizen relations (Soja 2015, Miraftab 2017). The dominating notion of spatial justice is mainly concerned with distributional and procedural aspects of justice in space (Soja 2015, Fainstein 2009). However, as Young and more recent works of Soja, Fainstein, and Miraftab describe, the recognitional component is vital to understand the various structural layers of inequality.

This is notably relevant within postcolonial geographies of oppressive power and conflict, where imperialist democratic structures were transformed and put in the hands of ethnic dominant groups who are actively succeeding in exerting their ethnic dominance within the legislature, resource distribution, and development

On Spatial Planning

This section aims to develop an understanding of spatial planning through key readings from Andreas Faludi and Albrechts Louis, two notable scholars on Spatial Planning in the Western context. This will then be extended to understanding spatial planning perspectives from South-East Asia and the particular context of Sri Lanka. The aim then is to combine these two sub-theory perspectives to formulate a combined approach and understanding of the implications and opportunities of spatial planning in the context of oppressive power and ethnic conflict. The understanding of spatial planning is crucial for this research because by grasping the core ideals and principles, it can then be manipulated to better engage with conditions outside of Western liberal notions.

On Ethnocracy and Ethnocratic Regimes

Over decades, Oren Yiftachel has explored and theorized the term ethnocracy to define a regime that aims to preserve and gain full ethnic control over a contested territory composed of multiple ethnicities (Yiftachel 1998). Ethnocratic regimes are driven by forces of ethnonationalism which Yiftachel states, "...one of the most powerful forces to have shaped the world's political geography in general..." (Ibid). Examples of this dominant control and oppressive power structures can be seen amongst conflicts in Israel/Palestine, South Africa, and Sri Lanka. Although these regimes may appear as dominant, they are also unstable due struggles of ethnic minorities who also make claims for the homeland. Often, these struggles materialize into political campaigns for autonomy and self-determination such as the quest for Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka carried out by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and in South Africa with the Anti-Eviction Campaign, another counter-hegemonic insurgent movement. Thus, ethnocratic regimes are prone to destabilization and counter-action. To name a few, these regimes can be characterized by several principles, the allocation of rights and privileges are based on ethnicity (and usually that of the dominant group), the state structure is under the control of the dominant ethnic group, and distribution of civil and political rights are partial for minority ethnicities (Yiftachel 1998).

Despite the authoritative and oppressive power structures, the ethnocratic regimes attempt to operate under the facade of democracy and project this position to ensure participation on the global stage, especially in a growing global economy. Yiftachel further

explains that the claim of a democratic institution often excludes indigenous or rival minorities, for example in Sri Lanka where such groups were left outside of the decision-making networks. Moreover, these regimes often pivot around cultural and ideological beliefs that further legitimizes uneven realities (Yiftachel 1998).

The ethnocratic state poses a major threat to ethnic minorities who are marginalized in their claim of a homeland, in which their rights and identity are classified as secondary to the superior ethnic group. Ultimately the dominance, oppressive power, and discrimination exercised by this regime type threaten the socioeconomic, cultural, and political autonomy and identity of minority ethnic groups, in which the perpetuation of violence and segregation continues to be legitimized.

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 graduation project topic lies at the intersection of spatial planning, spatial justice, and geographies conflict. One the aims of the project is to explore alternative perspectives on spatial planning and spatial justice that could empower marginalized groups within nations rooted in ethnic-conflict. The project largely operates under the Planning Complex Cities Studio and aligns to studio central focus around spatial planning, development, governance and participation, its relation to conflicts of disparities and inequalities amongst communities and territories. The expectation of graduation projects within this studio suggest student work should address the interrelations between spatial and institutional development. In doing so, this graduation project acts a vessel to explore the spatial and procedural implication of the distribution resources and development across an impoverished region with vulnerable communities.

At the more general of the Urbanism track and Masters of Science program, this graduation project acts an example in which an integrated social, cultural, economic and political perspectives are combined through the dimension of space. And, also promote the importance of ensuring a mutliscalar approach, which in the case of this graduation project, a combination of regional and local community development will be explored while responding to global trends of globalisation, climate change, energy transitions and ultimately toward an equitable, sustainable and resilient future. Additionally, this graduation project also aligns to programs tradition of working in multidisciplinary way through the communication and collaboration between spatial planning experts, justice advocates and local community members.

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

Societal Relevance

Increasing social polarization and neoliberalism, wreckage of colonialism and rapid urbanization is widening the gap of socio-economic inequality which is materialized in the segregation of communities due to differences of culture, ethnicity, race, wealth, power, caste and politics to only name a few. Pre-existing inequalities have partially been widened due to the neglect of vulnerable and marginalized populations from public and private sectors. Within the domain of planning and design, civil society is a critical aspect in both theory and practice. Critical because, the environment both physical and non-physical are contingent on the participation, production and interaction of civil society. Therefore it is important to promote inclusive and equity to ultimately design and plan for all. Moreover, as we reap the impacts of colonialism and universal perspectives on how

society operates, it is crucial to develop perspectives based on the knowledge and experiences from cultural and societal conditions. This in turn, raises the capacity of planning and design that can respond to the challenges of communities, cities, regions and even nations in a more contextualized way. Sometimes, the hegemonic perspectives we have on society, economy and the environment must be brought under critical lens to truly understand if they operate under foreign assumptions such as liberal democracy, social participation or even the use of public toilets. This demands an alternative approach and perspectives that are context specific to which can engage with the realities of marginalized populations towards the quest for justice.

This research project aims to understand the spatial and procedural implications of planning and spatial justice in conditions of oppressive power and conflict. Ambitions towards spatial justice amongst marginalized ethnic minority populations are at further risk if liberal notions of government and planning continue to operate under the ethocratic state regime. The project's relevance sits right in the middle of the concerns of universalized planning perspectives and its misalignment to the ground realities outside of the western context that is often privileged in topics of democracy, citizenship and self-determination.

Nevertheless, the research ensures to align with global agendas on sustainable development and social justice such as Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. In doing so, the research could act as case to better understand how to engage with political sensitive climates with high degrees of social unrest amongst opposing groups. As these conditions of political divided become more prevalent within our society, its becomes more relevant to develop methods, tools, and perspectives on they can be addressed through various disciplines and practices such as planning and spatial practice.

Scientific Relevance

The research project aims to position itself within a critical discussion amongst planning scholars and practitioners in regards to the questions of how to better equip the planning discipline to engage with realities and conditions in a non-western context. The exploratory research approach addresses the both critical and explorative nature of the research and how it aims to understand and perhaps advance the discussion of re-engaging planning and justice within conditions of the non-western context such as the global south, or where unilateral democratic government falls short to address the complexity of multi-ethnic groups, cultural practice and political dialogue.

In doing so, the research intends to contribute to this prevailing discussion towards further content development and publication of relevant work in various academic networks.

Moreover, in the midst of a global pandemic, it becomes more urgent to innovate empirical research methods to better understand the anthropological, societal, cultural and environmental dynamics of a context. This research project will provide the opportunity to explore new methods and ways to engage with people that could suggest alternative precedents for engagement and research.

Ethical Considerations

One of the main ambitions of the project is to realize and systematize knowledge and experience from the community level so it is especially important to preserve the authenticity of their voice and to not distort it to meet alternative goals. This material produced in this project must also not compromise the safety, security and well-being of any individual and proceed in a respectful way. The ambitions of this project is led by initial assumptions of unethical acts and injustices perpetrated by the state of Sri Lanka, which makes it important to validate any argument with facts and evidence.

