

# Vertical Campus Culture

Redefining the meaning of vertical campus by exploring its potential with campus culture.

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Abstract FINAL version

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## Abstract

### *Introduction*

Most of the universities are located in sparsely populated areas and benefit from an excess of outdoor spaces (Edwards, 2013). They are disconnected from the urban context and consist of large buildings, each often being a landmark. Their public spaces, inside and in-between educational buildings are regarded as crucial to the students' well-being, creativity, and academic growth. It is where community creation happens and students' sense of belonging emerges (Soares, 2020). These spaces allow the growth of campus culture, which is a collective combination of users' different cultures. It consists of campus material culture, which is the built environment and its objects, institutional culture which is the rules and management of the organization, and campus spiritual culture - students' participation in social and academic life (Xi, 2012). The last one is the spine of campus culture, highly influenced by the spaces available for social interactions. Maintaining a strong university culture leads to the expression of societal values, beliefs, and ideas that guide societal development (Gonondo, 2016). Moreover, university's innovation depends on its adaptability to temporal changes in campus culture (Lawrence, 2006).

The objective of the Public Building studio is to create a vertical campus in the center of Den Haag. The direct physical connection to the urban fabric increases the potential of the university (Addie, 2014). New opportunities require a new approach to designing a vertical campus. Its multifunctionality is what diversify it from the rest of the built environment in the area. It needs spatial differentiation to support productivity (Penn, 1999). Nonetheless, its spaces also need to be multifunctional. Just like a cafeteria is not only a place for lunch but also a study place, a meeting point, and even a public

forum. The interactions between the people themselves and people and spaces create a meaning of a place, thus marking its significance (Morrill, 2008). The physical environment of a campus shapes students' behaviors, attraction, and even satisfaction with the university as an institution (Strange, 2015).

### ***Problem Statement***

The ever-evolving universities need radical changes in their functions and spatial configurations to use their full potential in an urban fabric. A vertical campus cannot follow a modernized type of an office building with rather few communal or leisure spaces. It needs to redefine its own type. As academia becomes interdisciplinary and universities multifunctional, connectivity, communication, and a sense of belonging are crucial in achieving innovation. Treating them as of secondary importance during the design hinders the productivity of the university. Therefore, campus culture needs to be the leading force in this change. If left as it is, the universities stay as disconnected from the urban fabric as office and residential towers are in Den Haag now. Such change from a horizontal campus to a vertical one can miss the opportunities and negatively impact users' quality of life. Creating personas from street interviews on the 26th of September 2023 in Den Haag for Design Thinking Assignment showed that communal and public areas for students are lacking. Students' sense of belonging was hindered as they had to use outside retail spaces to socialize. Finding a new function and redefining the new type of university is necessary to achieve its full potential.

### ***Research Questions***

The research questions aim to examine and challenge campus culture in the evolving new type of university. The objective is to redefine the meaning of vertical campus building and identify its potential with the use of campus culture as the leading concept.

The first question stands as "What is a campus culture in a traditional, horizontally expanded campus?". It provides the basis for understanding social activities in an academic built environment. It includes mapping culturally significant spaces and the reasons for their importance, as well as their evolution and flexibility.

The second question focuses on "How can a university tower benefit from an analogy to a theatre?". It pushes the understanding of a campus culture and provides the building with a new function. By dealing with the campus as a non-hierarchical theater, the users gain a forum for sharing their opinions, therefore, empowering their impact on society and policymakers.

The third question stands as "How can a vertical campus become a landmark in a dense urban setting?". It aims to map physical differences to office and residential

towers and the reasons behind them. Additionally, it highlights the relation with the urban fabric. But above all, it questions the achievement of monumentality through the use rather than physical appearances. With that, it aims to acquire public recognition to expand campus culture with new points of view.



Diagram 1. Three sub-questions

**Methodology**

The analysis method is qualitative, led by a theoretical literature review. It consists of studying historical campuses, starting with the established in the 11th century Oxford University, and their approach to campus culture through architecture. Moreover, studying the meaning of social interactions in modern universities and within an urban fabric helps in applying the knowledge to vertical built environment. Case studies help to understand the meaning of a campus in 21st century. Site visits in Den Haag provide insight into site-specific elements. The Public Building studio approach is research by design, meaning that the knowledge acquired during the literature review influences the design process, and vice-versa, design helps to structure the research.

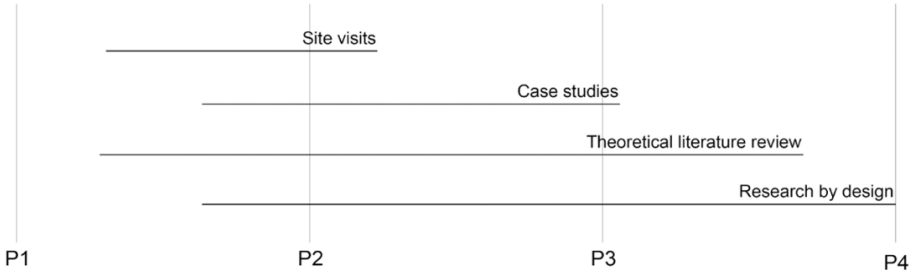


Diagram 2. Methodology Timeline

**Design Goal**

The goal of the design is to create a multifunctional campus tower that act on its opportunities given by the connection with the urban setting. It aims to create multifunctional building that provide forum for public debates and social cohesion. As universities already facilitate innovation with wide societal impact, the objective is to

amplify it through inclusive and wheelchair accessible public spaces (Deiaco, 2012). Making those spaces flexible ensures adaptability to temporal changes in campus culture and longevity of the building. Following the example of LSE Marshall Building (Grafton Architects, 2022), the design aims to create a durable structure that allows for future expansion. Moreover, its aim is to also expand the program with sports, arts and flexible communal spaces for enhancement of campus culture.

***Project's contribution to the larger discourse***

On a larger scale, the project contributes to redefining the meaning of the campus in a dense urban setting. The often-overlooked campus culture becomes its main feature as the need for connectivity and communication is stronger within the city. The direct impact of universities on civic agendas and scientific progress can only benefit from the connection to the urban context (Addie 2014). This project questions the ways those connections can be achieved resulting in a proposal of a new type of campus.

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