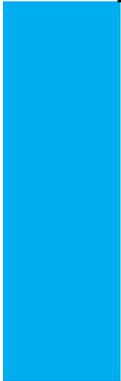


Graduation Plan

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	Niek Lurling
Student number	5092043

Studio		
Name / Theme	Planning Complex Cities	
Main mentor	Gregory Bracken	Urbanism, Philosophy
Second mentor	Zef Hemel	Urban Planning
Argumentation of choice of the studio	The studio is chosen because of (1) the critical position it takes regarding the role of the urban planner; (2) the theory-informed approaches that are used ("theory-heavy design"); (3) the possibility to look at urban planning and theory as subject besides location-based design.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Spinoza and Urbanism
Goal	
Location:	The Netherlands
The posed problem,	There has not yet been a systemic study into the implications of Spinoza's philosophy for the discipline of urbanism and, more specifically, urban planning. This thesis forms a first exploration addressing this knowledge gap. The principal aim of this research is to explore an urbanism derived from Spinoza's ethical and political philosophy. In other words, this research aims to facilitate an encounter between Spinozist thought and urbanism.
research questions and	Main Research Question: Can Spinoza's ethical and political philosophy inform a theory of urban space and become

	<p>operationalised for analysing and planning urban environments in the Netherlands?</p> <p>Subquestions: SQ1 to what extent can Spinoza’s ethical and political philosophy inform a theory of urban space? SQ2 how can a Spinozist theory of urban space be used in analysing urban environments in the Netherlands? SQ3 how can a Spinozist theory of urban space be used in planning urban environments in the Netherlands?</p>
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<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>The overall (design) assignment of this research is to create a Spinoza-informed urban theory that is tested and workable. In a sense, this thesis project is a very conventional research in product development: a “product” is first created (SQ1) and subsequently “tested” (SQ2 and SQ3). The product, in this case, is a new urban theory. The test is an exercise in analysis and design/planning in the Netherlands.</p>
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Process

Method description

[note: this text is almost verbatim lifted from the P2-report]

This research project employs four methods: literature analysis, expert dialogue, data analysis & mapping, and research by design. The process of the **literature analysis** consists of citation analyses (the so-called ‘snowball-method’) for grasping the extent of a topic covered in literature; making diagrams of such results; using key-word research in scientific databases (mainly Scopus and Google Scholar) for linking terms.

As this research project falls within the field of urbanism, external knowledge regarding the philosophical discipline is required. Therefore, at two places that closely work with Spinozist concepts, **expert dialogue** is built into the research project. In the development of a Spinoza-informed Urban Theory, **expert interviews** are held. The experts on this field follow from the literature analysis. In these interviews, the key concepts that are to be used in transposing Spinozist ideas to a workable urban planning framework are discussed. If possible, these interviews can have an exploratory character: finding out new ideas, literature, etc.; or can be held in a semi-structured manner, addressing some already created work in an in-depth

manner. These interviews can be done in written form, but preferably (online) in person. Secondly, when different possibilities for applying this Spinoza-informed theory are researched (i.e. the testing phase, SQ2 and SQ3), the experts can function as a **reviewing panel**, critically assessing whether the application is in line with Spinozist thinking and general logic within the philosophy. This expert evaluation can be done in written form.

A major part of testing the Spinozist theory consists of **reworking data** using the new frame and terminology. Datasets from governmental agencies (CBS, RIVM) are especially applicable here. **Mapping data** will be done using QGIS or by designing new analytical maps (see also M4). Mapping and analysing urban environments on a lower/urban scale will also be done using mostly QGIS or by designing new maps (M4). A thorough location-based research is not within the scope of this research (the focal point will always be *testing the spinozist theory*). The analysing is done by comparing and evaluating various new frames (i.e. values and spatial characteristics). Different variables are tested on each other to get a good grasp of the urban environment via this new lens.

By using various **urbanism-specific design techniques** (mapping, making plans, sections, visuals, diagrammes, abstractions, etc.) the input from the other parts of this research are combined. The aim is not to create a beautiful or too-detailed plan; the focus here is testing the workability of Spinoza-informed urban planning principles. The cases that are to be used as "test site" for the designs will be selected using criteria following the Spinoza-inspired urban analysis (outcome 2). These criteria are developed during the research. From the structure of the research, nonetheless, it follows that these cases must be (1) well documented already (extensive location-based research is not within the scope of this project), and (2) somehow notable (extreme value, low/high value, etc.) using a Spinozist lens.

Literature and general practical references

Scope of literature (see P2 report page 23): 'Regarding the scope of the literature analysis, a first distinction has to be made between the two primary topics of this research: Spinoza and Urban Theory. Then, a distinction has to be made in literature related to Spinoza, namely between primary and secondary sources. Three bodies of literature, therefore, are analysed. The scope of each is different. For Urban Theory, general and conventional theories suffice (see research aim). For primary works by Spinoza, this research project focuses on his works on Ethics and Political theory (in line with the RQ). This narrows this body of literature down to just three works: the Ethics [Ethica] (widely regarded as Spinoza's magnum opus), the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (TTP) and the unfinished, lesser known but arguably more thought-provoking Tractatus Politicus (TP). Lastly, the scope for secondary sources on Spinozist philosophy is determined by a spatial dimension in the works (see research aim). A source must, one way or another, be connected to (urban) space, the city, architecture, etc. The process of analysis consists of citation analyses (the so-called 'snowball-method') for grasping the extent of a topic covered in literature; making diagrammes of such results; using key-word research in scientific databases (mainly Scopus and Google Scholar) for linking terms.'

Other data/consultations:

- Expert dialogue: gathering input regarding theory; critical reviews of the application of theory
- Research data: QGIS-usable datasets related to values following from research
- General practical experience/precedent: skillset developed during MSc in terms of urban planning and design

Reflection

[note: this text is almost verbatim lifted from the P2-report]

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 research topic presented in this P2 is not a conventional one. The focus on urban theory makes the research already an outlier, the focus on philosophical theory makes this research highly unorthodox for an urbanism thesis. And, this research is not a location-based research - starting from the ground up (attached theories to the specific location-based case) - but uses location-based research as investigative tool. As such, as this is an exploration, the (in my view) correct academic attitude should be open in terms of the results. The extent to which an urban theory can be formed (SQ1) might be very, very limited, with few spatial concepts or ideas of use. Or, if a theory can be formed, it might be too complex, with too many atypical lenses for it to be practical in analysis and planning. I hypothesize that this is not the case, but this possibility should at least be mentioned in this reflection.

These unconventional approaches offer, on the positive side, some interesting perspectives for reflection too. A reflection on the relationship (or usefulness) of philosophy for urbanism can be formed following this research. Answering the call by Friedman (2008), this thesis might subconsciously deliver critique on established thought patterns and advocate for more theorising and philosophising in urban planning. A case could be made against the “apolitical” or “aphilosophical” planner. I hope to be able to expand on this point of reflection later. Spinoza might, namely, offer a framework of radically political planning in a sense that is completely new for us (for example, political without left-right thinking; Spinoza is a pre-capitalist philosopher!) Secondly, this research might reveal surprising uses of urban design and planning techniques as educated in this MSc AUBS. Surely, some techniques are not meant for mapping early modern philosophy. On the other hand, design is flexible and the go-to solution for wicked problems for a reason. Using a method for a problem it was not meant to address? Let’s find out!

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

As described in the introduction to this report [the P2-report], this research finds its scientific and to a lesser extent its societal relevance following three current developments in and around the discipline of urbanism. The first development is a (re-)emerging interest in Spinoza’s philosophy in academic fields related to urbanism. As Spinoza is becoming more prominent in fields that closely relate to urbanism, researching Spinozist thought and its implications for urbanism are becoming increasingly relevant. The second development revolves around the discourse around ethics and power in relation to urban planning, which makes Spinoza’s peculiar ethical-political system of great interest. The third development entails increasing demands that are placed on urban planning, especially regarding environmental protection, social justice, and the expectation of integral solutions for the built environment, which makes Spinoza’s holistic system that negates most of the entrenched dualisms in conventional thinking (human versus nature, built versus natural, etc.) of great interest.

To these mostly scientific reasons, I would like to add a societal one here. When scholars and philosophers talk about Spinoza, they often invoke the metaphor of wind (Deleuze, 1988): a wind in the back. Spinozist thought has an immense confidence in human intelligence and ability to make a better world. It is inspirational (Goethe, Einstein). Moreover, it is known that Spinoza himself lived a happy life, despite all his hardships; surrounded by friends in an almost Epicurean ideal. Spinozist thought is life-affirming and optimistic - in a sense that there is great freedom in accepting its determinism. I think that investigating a new theoretical perspective on a philosophy that is advocating for tolerance, the variety/diversity that exists in the world, freedom, social cohesion, and acceptance of this life is something worthwhile, especially in times of climate despair and a global crisis of mental health.