

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	Nick van den Oever	
Student number	5492327	

Studio		
Name / Theme	Explore Lab	
Main mentor	Elise van Dooren	
Second mentor	Georgios Karvelas	
Third mentor	Janina Gosseye	
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>The Explore Lab graduation studio provided me a platform to conduct research based on my personal fascination, which is the physical/social impact of the privatization of public space in Bunker Hill, Los Angeles. Los Angeles is the second most populous city and metropolitan area of the United States, known for its ethnic and cultural diversity, but its also known for its immense urban sprawl, socioeconomic inequality and the sense of social segregation which is deeply rooted in the psyche of the city. Bunker Hill is especially interesting since it is the starting point of the redevelopment of the entirety of Downtown Los Angeles and became the most prevalent in terms of social issues. There's a lot of potential in improving public space in the Bunker Hill area, due to its higher density and the many initiatives to reshape and improve the accessibility of public spaces.</p>	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	The privatization of public space and the erosion of spatial justice
Goal	
Location:	Bunker Hill, Downtown Los Angeles, CA.
The posed problem,	The issue of spatial injustice is common among street vendors in Bunker Hill, due to the high percentage of privately owned public spaces designed to exclude street vendors from access. The remediation of public space, by means of exclusionary design elements, results in public spaces that enable street vendors from conducting business in the public realm, while it being an important aspect of the overall culture of Los Angeles. It becomes an industry that has no place in the existing urban fabric of the city, yet helps improve pedestrian traffic to neighboring shops and their presence resulting in safer streets.
Research questions and	<p>Research Question: <i>How has the privatization of public space shaped the cityscape of Bunker Hill, Los Angeles?</i></p> <p>Sub-question concerning the design assignment: <i>How the notion of street vending could be integrated in a private establishment, by means of collaborative use of space, within a privately owned public space?</i></p>
Design assignment in which these result.	A Food market/ Food Court that enacts on the notion of collaborative use of space with street vendors—on a privately owned public space—that provides space for street vendors to conduct business, which translates to reintegrating street vendors in the public realm of Bunker Hill.
<p>[This should be formulated in such a way that the graduation project can answer these questions.</p> <p>The definition of the problem has to be significant to a clearly defined area of research and design.]</p>	

An important note is that in previous studies on the private redevelopment in Downtown Los Angeles, there has never been established a visual relationship with the underlying social issues and how this is represented on a map. Rather, this leads to a generalization of the social issue and the inability to link the overall problem to a specific site or place. Therefore, it's important to collect information specific to a particular location or site—in this case Bunker Hill—in order to visualize this on a map. As a result, a conclusion can be drawn or opportunities for improvement can be found, resulting in the design proposal. Therefore, the spatial analysis will lay the foundation for future analysis on the area of interest.

Process

Method description

[A description of the methods and techniques of research and design, which are going to be utilized.]

The research consists of a combination of incorporating literature studies and observation into a spatial analysis of the urban fabric of the Bunker Hill area. The literature studies evinces a sequence of events that provides a deeper understanding of the underlying issues that shaped the Bunker hill area from a social standpoint, whereas analyzing the urban fabric through plans will provide an insight on how the privatization of public space has shaped the Bunker Hill area from a spatial/urban perspective. This results into a map that visualizes the physical cityscape of Bunker Hill, with additional layers that illustrate exclusionary design elements that cause the sense of social exclusion.

Visualizing spatial injustice will be accomplished by the research of Steven Flusty, in which he defines five 'spaces' that relate to the sense of social exclusion. These barriers are as follows: *Stealthy-*, *Slippery-*, *Crusty-*, *Prickly-* and *Jittery spaces*. A clear distinction will be made between 'spaces' and 'barriers' that are implemented in these public spaces. (E.g. a public space could be defined as a *Jittery space* and consist of other barriers.) As a result out of the observation of the urban fabric, an additional barrier is added to the spatial analysis. A *Faintly barrier*, a barrier that is not prominent or readily noticeable, due to minor contrast e.g. the design/materialization of the sidewalks.

In addition to the spatial analysis, a collection of images will be analyzed, highlighting certain parts of the Bunker Hill area from a street vendor's perspective. Visualizing their perception of space and the relationship between the sense of social exclusion and the exclusionary design elements that are implemented in public spaces in Bunker Hill, Los Angeles. The perception of space will be based of the 6 defined 'barriers' in public spaces, and provides an overview on a human-scale. This answers the research question posed in the introduction.

With regard to the sub-question concerning the design assignment, research will be conducted into the possibilities for integrating street vendors in privately owned public spaces in Bunker Hill. The assumption is therefore made that, given the past, there were no or few initiatives from LA County or the City of Los Angeles to finance or provide public spaces, due to lack of funding, and that private parties are taking into consideration to provide initiatives to improve the urban fabric of Bunker Hill.

An important aspect of the design assignment is to analyze the possibilities for designing “a collaborative use of space”, in which private businesses will collaborate with local street vendors. Research has shown that different forms of collaborative use of space and partnering with street vendors can contribute to the overall amount of foot traffic (which ultimately results in a more profitable business) and increases the overall safeness of the area.

The site has been selected based on the spatial analysis, which is *330 South Hope Street*. The design assignment will be a revised plan of an existing building, located on a privately owned public space, that enacts on the notion of collaborative use of space and integrates street vendors within a private business. The site was strategically chosen as it lies on the diagonal pedestrian linkage, connecting the majority of privately owned public spaces in Bunker Hill, and is centrally located within Bunker Hill. The site connects the South Grand Avenue—which contains of several privately owned public spaces—to the Bunker Hill Steps, which enacts as the connecting element of West 5th Street and South Grand Avenue.

The Wells Fargo Center consists of three buildings, two corporate office towers and a three-story building that offers eateries, retail and art, specifically targeting corporate employees of the surrounding offices. The three buildings are connected by a privately owned public space, which is strongly linked to the three-story building. The three-story building is particularly interesting due to its diagonal shape that results in a diagonal linkage between South Grand Boulevard and West 5th Street, however, it contains a lot of exclusionary design elements that cause the sense of spatial injustice from a street vendor’s perspective. Therefore, a revised plan for this particular building could be an opportunity of integrating street vendors into the public realm of Bunker Hill, which translates to a more inclusive plaza and Food Court/Food Market that would still facilitate the needs of the surrounding corporate offices, while increasing the amount of foot traffic and providing a wider audience.

Ultimately, this results into a design that acts as a proposal on how the notion of street vending could be integrated within a private business on privately owned land, how this results in an improved sense of inclusiveness of privately owned public spaces and, in the end, how this improves the overall perception of privately owned public spaces and use of the public streets in Bunker Hill.

Literature and general practical preference

[The literature (theories or research data) and general practical experience/precedent you intend to consult.]

The preliminary research mainly consisted of literature studies, which provided a better understanding of the underlying social issues, the origin of the problem and what consequences this could have for the future of Bunker Hill. In addition, various municipal websites were consulted for information regarding ownership of land, general information concerning the buildings within the area of interest and information on agencies/organizations that propose initiatives to improve Downtown Los Angeles. The archives were also used in order to make the spatial analysis, in which I obtained all building permits of every building within my area of interest, to be later applied to the spatial analysis.

Search Online Building Permits:

<https://ladbsdoc.lacity.org/>

Property information:

<http://zimas.lacity.org/>

The research with regard to the design assignment will be a combination of analyzing reference projects concerning collaborative use of space, literature studies on street vending/street vendors, analysis on the urban context and site, and in addition, tutoring sessions that will result in a design that enacts on the notion of collaborative use of space with street vendors—on a privately owned public space—that provides space for street vendors to conduct business, which translates to reintegrating street vendors in the public realm of Bunker Hill.

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

The relationship between my graduation topic and my master track (architecture) is mainly about recognizing the importance of private developments with a strong disconnect to its surroundings and what consequences this can have on a larger scale. Partly due to the many parties involved in the redevelopment of Bunker Hill, in which the emphasis was more on maximizing the profitability from the perspective of the investors, it resulted in a collection of individual projects that provided public spaces purely for financial gain.

From a personal perspective, having lived in Los Angeles provided me a clear insight into how the importance of public space is dealt with and how differently we use our public spaces from a European standpoint. Los Angeles is a car-centric city, known for its US urban grid, and many public spaces tend to become destination public spaces due to the city's immense urban sprawl. There is also a strong disconnect between the urban blocks, in particular due to the private developments that take place on a small scale, resulting in individual projects that have no mutual connection or that make no positive contribution to the use of public streets. It is important to emphasize that this problem can hardly be solved on a large scale, partly due to the large financial costs and the feasibility of this idea, whereas the opportunities lie in creating more walkable areas and looking for solutions on a smaller scale. In addition, there is a lot of potential in Bunker Hill, due to its high density, which is also the reason for looking into this specific area within the context of Los Angeles.

To conclude, in my opinion, it is important to deliver an architectural design that also has an impact on a larger scale and can be seen as a small-scale solution to the problem the city is facing. It can therefore be seen in my research that the influence of individual developments that have taken place can actually have large-scale consequences for a neighbourhood. And that it is therefore important to take this into account for my design assignment.