

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	Giorgos Xanthopoulos
Student number	5855373

Studio		
Name / Theme	Planning Complex Cities	
Main mentor	Rodrigo Cardoso	Spatial Planning and Strategy
Second mentor	Leo van den Burg	Urban Design
Argumentation of choice of the studio	Exploring the multidimensional topic of rurality within the Greek context, my goal is to envision an alternative way of living in the rural beyond the constraints of the prevailing growth paradigm. To tackle this, an in-depth examination of relevant theories and spatial planning in both regional and local scale is needed; hence the Planning Complex Cities studio was my first choice for my thesis project.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	another rural a post-growth imaginary for rural Greece
Goal	
Location:	Greece
The posed problem,	For more than half a century, rural areas of Greece have been becoming increasingly more abandoned and neglected, in favour of living in urban centres. Many settlements that were once vibrant small-scale communities of a couple thousand people are now vacant, with as few as five permanent residents for many cases. Rural abandonment from both people and government has led to a myriad of issues: the ageing population in the rural areas experiences poor access to public services, infrastructure, resulting in lack of appropriate land management, biodiversity and heritage loss. Simultaneously, the pressures of climate change have become painfully apparent, through recent devastating floods and wildfires. Weather phenomena like this are expected to become more frequent and intense in the future, however the response from high-level government

	<p>agents is either poor or absent. This has forced public discourse about rural issues into the forefront, presenting an important moment in time - an opportunity for change. The tardiness in governmental action - exemplified through the lack of transparency, implementation and evaluation in the top-down planning approaches - is failing to address the nuanced topic of rurality. Here, the perception of growth within the Greek context is recognised as the main barrier towards meaningful change. Tourism-dependent growth has slowly become the norm, infiltrating all aspects of public perception of what constitutes “development”, reducing <i>place</i> to <i>destination</i>. Within this context a counter narrative is needed - one that can present new opportunities of living in the rural beyond the confines of growth dependency.</p>
<p>research questions and</p>	<p><u>Main Research Question</u> To what extent can a bioregional approach to territorial planning result in spatial interventions that are compatible with a post-growth transition?</p> <p><u>Research Sub-Question 1</u> How could a bioregion be defined in the Greek context?</p> <p><u>Research Sub-Question 2</u> What are the barriers of the post-growth approach and to what extent could bioregionalism address them?</p> <p><u>Research Sub-Question 3</u> What does a post-growth imaginary in the context of the selected key-region consist of?</p> <p><u>Research Sub-Question 4</u> What are the necessary spatial interventions that outline a post-growth imaginary?</p>
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>The overall goal of the project is to approach a spatial imaginary, beyond the constraints of the growth paradigm. I will argue that bioregionalism is not only compatible but necessary in operationalising the post-growth paradigm, by applying and testing these concepts to a key-region within Greece. To provide the necessary background, various ways of defining a bioregion will be explored in a national scale, with one option chosen as a way forward. An imaginary will be formed, through the collection of various references from literature, theory, art and on-site exploration, attempting to define a visual story. It will be organized through various themes, ranging from an exploration of radically-local decision-making and governance, alternative work practices or redefinition of</p>

mobility. This imaginary will also be spatialised through mapping and spatial analysis, making it simultaneously tangible and just-out-of-reach.

Process

Method description

Main Research Question

Drawing from the defined theoretical framework, the extent of the bioregional approach in resulting to an operational post-growth vision will be tested in Greece. This main research question will be approached through four research sub-questions, by experimenting with ways of defining the bioregion, by investigating general & site-specific barriers and testing the compatibility of the bioregional opportunities through a specified key-region, by envisioning a contextual imaginary and by experimenting on spatial intervention which help achieve it. In the end, the process and results will be evaluated to clarify the initial claim.

Research Sub-Question 1

In order to test the extent of bioregionalism in assisting the post-growth vision, first, the spatial manifestation needs to be researched - the definition of the bioregion. Drawing from a varied literature basis concerning ecological regions, some alternative definitions will be drawn. In the end, one will be selected after reflecting on opportunities and limitations. Using the selected definition, a key-region will be selected.

Research Sub-Question 2

This is intended as an initial examination of the potential of bioregionalism in assisting the post-growth approach to become operationalised. A set of barriers will be identified through examination of post-growth literature and media relevant to the key-region, like newspaper articles and reports. Discussing with locals during fieldwork is also a valuable source of information. For each barrier the opportunity of bioregionalism will be examined, while all will all be visualised through mapping and spatial analysis.

Research Sub-Question 3

Design fiction is the method to approach the construction of a post-growth imaginary, in the context of the selected key-region. A brief exploration of post-growth history, as well as discussing with locals, can provide relevant myths and stories. Exploring contemporary artwork related either to post-growth or the key-region can provide another layer to the imaginary. Through this collection of references, a new vision will be constructed. This can be executed through a storyboard - visually narrating the daily life of a person in such a post-growth society.

Research Sub-Question 4

This research question works in parallel to the previous one. The constructed imaginary will become spatialized: each chapter or episode will be mapped and detailed in space, making it more tangible. This will be approached through mapping, spatial analysis and design exercises. Fieldwork and discussing with locals and municipality representatives can also assist in the spatialization aspects of the imaginary. In the end, I will reflect on the capacity of bioregionalism to lend the post-growth approach spatial qualities, making it operational and tangible for people.

Literature and general practical references

Various sources from theory and media were used. This bibliography is listed below following the themes and chapters presented at the P2 report.

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Reflection

Relating to Urbanism

The general relation of my project towards the field of Urbanism is evident in the engagement not only with theory but also through an investigation of its spatial manifestations and implications. Through my project I aim to aid in the operationalisation of the post-growth paradigm, specifically for a context that is lacking a tradition and appreciation of spatial planning. This is the lens of the Planning Complex Cities studio, which focuses on aspects of spatial planning through a research-based approach. In my project, this is exemplified in the examination of Greece's struggles with an ageing and depopulated rural, in a context of a politically corrupt and neglectful system, which permeates to various planning processes. Such a problematic relation contributes to an overall inability to adequately plan and respond to social and ecological pressures, thus a measured yet imaginative response is required.

Societal Relevance

My project is ultimately aimed towards the revitalisation of rural areas of Greece, enhancing human happiness and social cohesion, while ensuring ecological welfare and long-term environmental resilience. Engagement with decision-making is quite limited in Greece, due to a problematic, politically corrupt and inert context. Through the formation of new bioregional, administrative units I aim towards the re-organisation of local governance and the empowerment of rural dwellers in decision making processes.

At the same time, the bioregional approach has the capacity to enhance trans-national cooperation. I also believe my project to be of importance specifically for Greek people, in providing a concise critique of existing planning, governance and participation practices - as well as to propose another operational framework. I believe the main barrier towards a transition to a post-growth way of living is the perception of rurality. Forming a counter narrative that goes beyond tourism-dependent development can help people to imagine and relate to another way of living - in my project, explored through both an idealised imaginary and a concrete spatial vision.

Scientific Relevance

While there has been a noticeable research interest regarding rural issues as of late, several knowledge gaps still remain. One such gap can be located in post-growth theory and regional cooperation, as current literature is mostly concerned with urban contexts and do not address explicitly the role of rurality. For example, after engaging with the work of Kate Soper, it is evident that while she offers many interesting views towards the necessary individual and societal changes needed, the work also shows a rather urban-normative approach. The role of rurality is implicitly expressed only through general concerns for the natural world. Through this work, I will attempt an application of such concepts and ideas to a rural context, exploring implications, limitations and opportunities, ultimately highlighting the importance of rurality in a post-growth vision. Also, the bioregional approach employed in this project ensures a degree of transferability: defining the operative territory through natural, morphological features defies existing administrative boundaries. However, bioregionalism is a broad concept with even broader literature references. My project explores contextual practical applications, through the formation of bioregional units and investigating the extent of bioregionalism to bypass barriers of the post-growth approach in Greece. Lastly, rural life in Greece is neglected by both citizens and government, with very little formal research found about contemporary rural life. While I hope that my work can contribute to expanding the knowledge basis, further research is needed to investigate rural issues.