

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	Vlad-Gabriel Dobran
Student number	4853679

Studio		
Name / Theme	Public Building Graduation Studio	
Main mentor	Stefan Witteman	Project Design
Second mentor	Ger Warries	Building Technology
Third mentor	Sang Lee	Research
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>During my bachelor's and master's programs, I had the opportunity to design both public and private buildings and what fascinated me was the fact that public buildings are not designed to create a profit but rather to enhance the community and its experience. In this sense, I believe that public buildings are designed not only to host a specific function but rather to create a space based on experience that can be used by the community in multiple ways. As such, the theme of the Public Building studio, namely, public condenser, resonated with my beliefs that the center of the future cities is going to be this hybrid structures that host multiple functions and are catered to condense different people from society.</p>	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	The Middle Ground of Social Debate
Goal	
Location:	Friedrichshain, Berlin, Germany
The Posed Problem	
<p>The tumultuous history of Berlin is that of clashes between ideologies. This created a divided city from an architectural point of view as well as from the socio-political one. The initial fieldwork in Friedrichshain (and in Berlin in general) has shown that diverse people with different and sometimes opposing ideologies congregate in the same public space. An ideological background of the residents results from the combination of the shared beliefs in religious, cultural, and societal identities. This difference plays a crucial role in the formation of each individual's worldview, which forms their ideologies. The various social groups observed</p>	

in the analyzed area show almost no interaction, with each group discussing their ideology and social problems internally. This leads to polarization in the local community.

Therefore, ideology represents a prism through which people can deal with real social-political problems, presenting a singular point of view for each problem. By becoming exposed to a different ideology (looking at the prism from a different direction), people can understand other points of view and start a conversation that brings them closer to a common ground. Such a place is already present in Berlin (as in other cities), though to a different degree, namely the presence of street expressions such as protests or creative elements (posters, stickers or graffiti) that tries to spark interest and discussion of the people passing by. Architecture can play a role in such a process by taking a proactive role and providing a meeting point in the debate. Such a role of architecture is not new, and as Vladimir Mako states in his thesis 'Architecture and Ideology', historically, architecture was a direct political and ideological practice that expressed the societal debate and, as such, contributing to the cultural identity.³

Research Questions

How can architecture act as a middle ground in the ideological debate?

How to incentivize the users to take a proactive role in the development of the community?

How can architecture be used in the amplification of the public debate?

How can the spatial organization contribute to the starting of discussion and interaction between different socio-economic groups of people in the Friedrichshain neighborhood?

Design Assignment & Results

This design research aims at understanding the division in Friedrichshain and discovering ways for architecture to act as a middle ground and contribute to the mediating conversation. By amplifying the existing effect of the public space, people can exchange their views and approach local problems more constructively, while at the same time celebrating the diversity of opinions that enrich the community. As such, the design project consists of creating a hybrid structure, combining the traditional structures of a debate forum and a cultural center in order to amplify the community debate already present in the district. This translates into the program on three layers of interaction: leisure, skills, and knowledge. The leisure functions are designed with the scope of attracting people from the neighborhood by providing activities that are not present in the district. The residents expressed interest in such as performance spaces, art galleries, gathering spaces, and others that encourage the concept of 'Kiez' ("Kinder-Eltern-Zentrum" which emphasizes the community as a family) present in Berlin.

The "skills" functions activate the community by providing space for creative or co-working and the so-called skills labs. They are implemented in community centers and intended to teach residents specific skills that can improve the community and learn about the challenges arising from the division and problems in the community. These skills labs are accessible to people from all socio-economical backgrounds present in the neighborhood, including the homeless

and squatters who are marginalized and ignored. In the skills labs, people work in close proximity or have workshops together to learn how to interact more, even if they are part of different groups, and open up about certain problems and learn to see other points of view regarding the community.

Finally, the center of the project, the knowledge functions, with the debate space at the center, activate the discussion and different ways of information communication and debate that provide a wide range of media for different types of people to get involved in the community. In the traditional auditorium, residents learn and interact with specific presenters. The library (physical and digital) and the exhibition space provide space for residents or guests to present works or exhibit specific topics, showing the different possible points of view. The users of the center can take the knowledge gained from the program in the "forum" and present different world views about the community and the richness of diverse opinions, thereby helping the neighborhood to develop in harmony.

In addition to the program that sparks and amplifies the debate, the building itself plays a role in it by including different architectural theories and ideologies about the creation of a community space. 'An Architecture of Anarchism' by Michael Coates explains that in order to activate the community in the development of the socio-political landscape, the architect, instead of holding all the power over the design, should only provide the framework for development and "surrender some elements of their power to residents/users of these projects."⁴ As such, the design should create a balance between the space that is designed and the un-designed space. It can be then 'colonized' by the users and their needs, and involve the users in the design in order to create a debate first about the development of the building and then the development of the neighborhood.

As a result, the project is not thought of as a finite element but as an evolving organism at different stages. First, the stage of the construction of the fixed spaces mentioned previously is meant to encourage dialog and show the potential of the space. Second, the stage of the implementation of the additions is decided by the users and can range from studio spaces, workshops, offices, or any function needed by the community. To facilitate this evolution, the additions can be created as a modular structure that can be easily joined and configured to host different functions.

Process

Method description

The research is constructed around a critical literature review of previous research in order to understand the core problem in the polarization of different social groups and to understand how architecture can play a role in sparking the discussion by taking a proactive role and providing a middle ground for debate incubators. In addition, the research will include the analysis of various case studies of the previous architectural project which tries to generate debate/knowledge centers, such as the example of the Seattle City Library or the Amsterdam deBalie.

Furthermore, the research is based on interviews on one hand of people already involved in the creation of debate spaces, such as the director of the deBalie debate center. On the other hand, the research will be based on interviews with the local community in order to understand the necessities of individuals impacted and in order to include them in the design phase for the purpose of creating a flexible space that can adapt and morphs around the community needs.

Literature and general practical preference

Literature:

1. The Federal Returning Officer. "Results Berlin-Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg – Prenzlauer Berg Ost - the Federal Returning Officer." The Federal Returning Officer, 2021. <https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/en/bundestagswahlen/2021/ergebnisse/bund-99/land-11/wahlkreis-83.html>.
2. Greene, Abigail. "Together but Apart: German Unity Day's Significance in an Election Year." Columbia Journal of Transnational Law, October 1, 2021. <https://www.jtl.columbia.edu/bulletin-blog/together-but-apart-german-unity-days-significance-in-an-election-year>.
3. Mako, Vladimir, Mirjana Roter Blagojević, and Marta Vukotić Lazar. "Architecture and Ideology - Cambridge Scholars Publishing." Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014. <https://www.cambridgescholars.com/resources/pdfs/978-1-4438-5671-3-sample.pdf>.
4. Coates, M. (n.d.). *To hell with architecture: An architecture of anarchism - core.ac.uk*. To Hell with Architecture: An Architecture of Anarchism. Retrieved December 17, 2022, from <https://core.ac.uk/download/161889859.pdf>
5. Dobraszczyk, P. (2021). *Architecture and anarchism: Building Without Authority*. Paul Holberton Publishing.

Precedent:

1. Arminius, August 24, 2021. <https://arminius.nl/>.
2. "Berlin's Newest Landmark." Humboldt Forum. Accessed January 24, 2023. <https://www.humboldtforum.org/en>.
3. "De Balie in Amsterdam - Programma's, Cinema & Café-Restaurant." De Balie, January 19, 2023. <https://debalie.nl/>.

4. "Kennis, Inspiratie En Hands-on Vaardigheden." Waag Academy. Accessed January 24, 2023. <https://academy.waag.org/>.

5. "Mediamatic.net." Mediamatic. Accessed January 24, 2023. <https://www.mediamatic.net/>.

Reflection

The topic of debate at the center of the interaction of different cultures and ideologies is at the center of the development of direct democracy at the base level of cities. The topic of my graduation project is primarily based on the four core pillars of the public condenser innovative idea, which represent the main studio topic. These four pillars are multiplicity, hybridity, sustainability, and resilience. Multiplicity by creating a middle ground for debate between people from different cultural and ideological backgrounds present in the district but also by creating a space that celebrates the diversity of opinions. Hybridity by creating a space that celebrates and integrates different forms of expression from cultural functions to community and technological functions. And finally, resilience and sustainability by offering the creation of a space at the core of the community which can be modified and adaptable for the needs of the community not only in the present but also in the middle to long-term future.

In addition, the research on the role of architecture as the middle ground for social interaction and the understanding of how the architecture itself, through its organization, functions, and aesthetics, influence the interaction between individuals is an essential aspect in understanding and developing the future public building. As such, the research and findings of this graduation project can become part of the understanding of the development of the public condenser concept and the development of public buildings in future cities that should help in the creation of a more inclusive and democratic society by celebrating diversity.