

Course PM, ARK641, Master's thesis preparation course 3p
Autumn semester, 2020
URBAN CHALLENGES



Image: Kika, Anna (2016). "SAIL IN MOTION – Transformation of a public space for an adaptive reuse" (Master's Thesis)

Description and aim

The course prepares the students for their master's thesis under the guidance of the team of teachers involved in the master's thesis direction Urban Challenges.

The Master's Thesis direction Urban Challenges starts with the intention of establishing a common study platform between the two Master's Programmes MPARC and MPDSD, with the purpose of researching and developing projects on those contemporary challenges that the urban environments face, having implications in social, environmental, cultural and economic aspects.

The processes of urbanization affect a diversity of contexts and face all scales of the architectural discipline, from constructive detail to planning. From that point of view in these studies we do not work with predetermined scales, but with all of them and with different definitions of what scale might mean. The Urban Challenges line fosters a transdisciplinary perspective, as the only way to solve complex issues. This makes our thesis direction a platform that encourages the diversity of looks and approaches to bring new answers, also advanced and original in terms of design.

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Method & Process

This direction intends to have a strong Research by Design methodology through a continuous **iterative process** involving all the inquisitive and explorative tools of the profession. Here, the focus methods are chosen to sustain an analytical and critically reflective process through a **continuous design development of an inventive, coherent and integrated proposal**. The student is asked to formalize all ideas (theory or practice related) through design from the very beginning of the thesis process. **Drawings and model making are main research tool** in our Master Thesis direction. We also ask the students to start working in early stages with the elaboration of both a written and a graphical manifesto as vehicles of project articulation throughout the thesis process (including prep.-course and thesis course).

Empirical and speculative, however strongly motivated, ways of **exploring theoretical concepts through design** are therefore expected as a necessary strength in the development of the work.

This thesis direction combines approaches, teachings and experiences from different masters' studios: Architecture and Urban Space Design, Public Buildings and Dare to Build, since all of them share the belief of **transdisciplinary as a way to develop the understanding and design of the urban physical space**. That means exploring the field in between landscape architecture, infrastructures and Building Design, in its multiple scales and their impact and implications in terms of cultural and social aspects.

Content and structure

The course starts off with a presentation by the Urban Challenges faculty and students presenting their material and thoughts from the first phase of the master's thesis preparation course (ARK636). Students then discuss their first draft of their project plan in desk-feedback format in small groups. After incorporating comments on the first draft, students submit a final draft of the project plan. Comments on the final draft are given in a final review presentation, including student peer review (on the 25th November). The project plans that achieve the minimum requirements and qualities shall be then immediately registered for the thesis semester. Then, the comments and feedback from the final review presentation are to be included in the material for the final version and course submission (ARK641) by the 8th January.

schedule

- 07th October, **Course intro, thesis ideas seminar**, zoom link [urban challenges](#)
- 14th October Self-study
- 21st October **seminar**, zoom link [urban challenges](#)
- 11th November **seminar**, zoom link [urban challenges](#)
- 18th November Self-study, 18.00, **submission draft Project Plan for review**
- 25th November presentations, **final review and feedback** zoom link [urban challenges](#)

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- 25th November, deadline 18.00, deliverance to **registration to the master's thesis term**, up-load project plan to Canvas and deliver a paper version of project plan and a registration form. Leave the project plan and the form in a paper-folder in the reception on the 3rd floor. The form will be signed by the examiner and MPA afterwards.
- 11th January, deadline 10.00, deliverance of **revised/adjusted project plan** (integrate the feedback from final review) for examination in ARK641. And leave a paper version of the project plan in the reception on the 3rd floor, for the exhibition.

Submission requirements

We use Canvas course page for all our deliverances. As the course only has one Canvas page, please make sure you are uploading to the right thesis direction.

Specific requirements to be included in Project Plan at Urban Challenges:

- **Title**
- **Abstract**
- Purpose, subject and **background**
- Only **one** thesis **question**
- **Relevance to profession** (theoretical, practical): specify how will the thesis contribute for the wider (theoretical and practical) perspective of the profession?
- **Relevance to sustainability**: specify how the thesis is integrated in a sustainability discourse
- Specify the thesis **delimitation** through e.g. a **diagram** focusing on:
 - how to shorten the focus and scope of action
 - what the thesis will **not** do
 - the definition of the main aim and research field
- A specific site or physical **context** (site, situation, location(s) for the project)
- Speculative **program**, typology, functionality
- The **method(s)** intended to be explored in the thesis Initial concept
- **Written manifesto** (direct and objective) explaining the thesis main statements and motivations as well as situating the knowledge within the thesis direction
- **Graphical manifesto** (a diagram, a collage, a sketch...) that synthesises the project's problem and first conceptual approach in a graphical way
- **Project Plan content** composed on a **poster format**
- References / Bibliography
- Images (diagrams, studies, collages, sketches) synthesizing project's problems, approaches
- **Portfolio samples** of the student's previous work relevant for the thesis (only individual work, but if from group work then specify what was your individual contribution)

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Evaluation criteria's

Grading: Approved / not approved

Criteria for examination in ARK641:

- Presence at all scheduled meetings with teachers.
- All required elements in the content of Project Plan have to be handed-in.
- Those required elements will be assessed within the quality of the overall thesis proposal in terms of:
 - Contemporary and relevant urban aspects and questions
 - Relevance and motivation of contextual integration
 - Sustainable discourse; properly situated within the field
 - Coherence between initial thesis questions, thesis process, and final result
 - Use of (written and graphical) manifestos as discourse statement and design contextualization
 - Quality of the visual and graphic material in how it properly explains the complexity of the work in a concise synthesis and as the ground for all work and presentations

Literature

See document *ACEX35 (HT20) Urban Challenges Direction Description*

Faculty

Joaquim Tarrasó, lecturer_ Supervision & Examination:

Emilio Brandao, artistic teacher_ Supervision

Kengo Skorick, artistic senior lecturer_ Supervision

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