

**Course PM, ARK641, Master's thesis preparation course 3p**  
**Autumn semester, 2021**  
**Critical Spatial Perspectives**



## **Description and aim**

The purpose of the course is for the students to develop and finalize **a critically and methodologically informed master's thesis project plan** that allows an examiner to assess the potential and feasibility of the project.

The course prepares the students for their master's thesis under **the guidance of assigned examiner(s) and supervisor(s)**. It explores **specific theories** and/or design methods associated with a particular niche of architecture and urban design.

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It trains the students' **ability to use** design studies, precedent studies, context studies, material studies and/or theoretical texts **as a basis for formulating a design problem and/or research query.**

The master's thesis direction **Critical spatial perspectives** asks as a central question how architects and planners can analyse, intervene and design in space using critical perspectives. Such perspectives can be understood to point to the importance of social responsibility, environmental justice, intersectional feminism, norm-critique, democracy, and subversive and resistant spatial practices, in responding to political and socio-economic challenges connected to the built environment. The direction emphasises such perspectives because they are urgent. Indeed, as Jackson (2009) has pointed out we now live in "an age of irresponsibility" which currently is creating social polarisation, segregation, over-consumption and unsustainable living. Hence, at the heart of this thesis direction is the need to develop an ability to formulate critical questions of how power, spatiality and meaning are produced and reproduced.

Students in this direction can express their critical proposals through design projects, written academic work, or a combination. It encourages an expanded scope for spatial interventions at different scales, and accepts that ways of responsible and critical spatial interventions are not limited to architecture/buildings or urban plans/design, but can include a wide range of interventions, including theoretical schemes, countercultural work, manifestos, collaborative design, and embodied spatial practices.

## **Method & Process**

Master theses within this direction use theory and design practice to explore a critical perspective. Common approaches within the studio are qualitative, discursive and regenerative approaches. We critically investigate how we talk about, plan and reproduce society and (natural) environment, but also how new approaches for the design professions can contribute to making a difference. Such critical spatial perspectives can for example imply an analytical focus on how inequalities materialise in the built environment, through urbanisation, gentrification or segregation processes, and thereby contribute to creating unsustainable spatial hierarchies between people and places. Critical spatial practices can also question how uneven development, damaging environmental and spatial practices, and unsustainable consumption, devastate natural environments.

## **Learning outcomes** *(after completion of the course the student should be able to)*

### Knowledge and understanding

- Define a particular trajectory of design and research in architecture and urban design.
- Define the design media (i.e. specific types of drawings, models, diagrams, software, etc.) and writing style associated with a particular trajectory of design and research in architecture and urban design.

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- Discuss their own work in relation to a particular trajectory of design and research in architecture and urban design.

#### Abilities and skills

- Plan and structure their own work during the course of the master's thesis.
- Develop a critically and methodologically informed master's thesis project plan that fulfils academic standards.
- Formulate a design problem and/or research query based on design studies, precedent studies, context studies, and / or theoretical texts.
- Demonstrate the ability to move from the personal discourse of a design process to a more formal discourse appropriate for a master's thesis.

#### Ability of assessment and attitude

- Understand and promote the importance of drawing from the work of others in order to innovate.

### **Content and structure**

Students are divided in groups based on assigned master's thesis examiner(s) and supervisor(s). Based on the course plan, each team of examiner(s) and supervisor(s) present their own course description and set of specific deliverables.

The brief and its context is introduced in an introductory presentation. Learning is structured around assignments and/or feedback provided in desk crit sessions. Students work individually or in pairs, depending on how they are planning on pursuing their thesis.

The course consists of an introductory lecture, text and/or precedent studies seminars, and individual feedback. The lecture gives an introduction to the field in which a given thesis direction operates and prepares students for planned learning activities such as seminars. Seminars aid students in mapping and critically reading precedents and/or source texts, and aid students in defining the context for their thesis. Interplay between design studies, precedent studies, context studies and the formulation of text is emphasised, and studies may precede text or the other way around. With the aid of these activities, and in dialogue with the examiner and supervisor, students develop a final draft of their project plan for the master's thesis. The project plan should contain a thesis title, an abstract, a bibliography and a schedule of the master's thesis semester. It should in addition contain design studies, precedent studies, context studies, material studies and/or arguments laid out in writing, as outlined in a course description.

- 6<sup>th</sup> of October, 09.00-17.00, lecture and presentation
  - The teacher gives a short lecture
  - The students present and get feedback
    - Ideas, background and relevance to direction and get feedback
- 13<sup>th</sup> of October 09.00-16.00, Individual work
- 20<sup>st</sup> of October, 09.00-16.00, Individual work
- 10<sup>th</sup> of November , deadline 09.00. hand-in for mid-critic on Canvas
- 10<sup>th</sup> of November , mid-critic

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- The students present their project plan and receives feedback based on the presentation
- 17<sup>th</sup> of November, 09.00-16.00, Individual work
- 17<sup>th</sup> of November, deadline 17.00, Hand in project plan
- 24<sup>th</sup> of November 09.00-16.00, Final presentation and feedback
  - The examiners have read the project plan and gives feedback
- 8<sup>th</sup> of December, deadline 12.00, final hand-in for the course on Canvas
- 8<sup>th</sup> of December, deadline 12.00, final hand-in for initiating the MT term
  - Deliver final project plan and registration form
  - There will be a folder in the reception on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor
- 12<sup>th</sup> of January, deadline 12.00, Deliver a final project plan for the exhibition
  - Starting the master's thesis term
  - There will be a folder in the reception on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor

## 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 Critical Spatial Perspectives

Critical question/problem the thesis aims to explore; relevance to society; theory/relevant concepts to use for analysis; method

## Evaluation criterias

Grading: Approved / not approved.

Student are required to participate actively in a minimum of 80% of all scheduled activities. The project plan is reviewed and graded after submission at the end of the semester

## Literature

- Ernstson, H. and Swyngedouw, E. (2019) *Urban Political Ecology in the anthropo-obscene: Interruptions and possibilities*. Routledge.
- Fitz, A. and Krasny, E. eds. (2019) *Critical Care. Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet*, Architekturzentrum Wien and The Mit Press
- Harvey, D (2006). *Space as a keyword. In Spaces of global capitalism*. London, New York: Verso
- Mang, P., Haggard, B. & Regenes (2016), *Regenerative Development and Design. A Framework for Evolving Sustainability* Wiley.
- Massey, D (2006). *London inside-out*, Soundings. 32, 1, 62-71(10).
- Rendell, J. (2018) "Only resist: a feminist approach to critical spatial practice", *The Architectural Review*, 19 Feb 2018

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## **Faculty**

Marco Adelfio, Nils Björling, Isabelle Doucet, Julia Fredriksson, Bri Gauger, Kristina Grange, Anna-Johanna Klasander.

## **Course specific prerequisites**

Minimum 30,0 credits from courses (in principal the first semester of the MPARC or MPDSD master's programme) with architectural design focus or corresponding qualifications. Masters thesis preparation course 1.

Please note limitations for combining Masters thesis preparation course 1 and Masters thesis preparation course 2 with other courses.

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