

Course PM, ARK641, Master's thesis preparation course 3p
Autumn semester, 2021
URBAN CHALLENGES

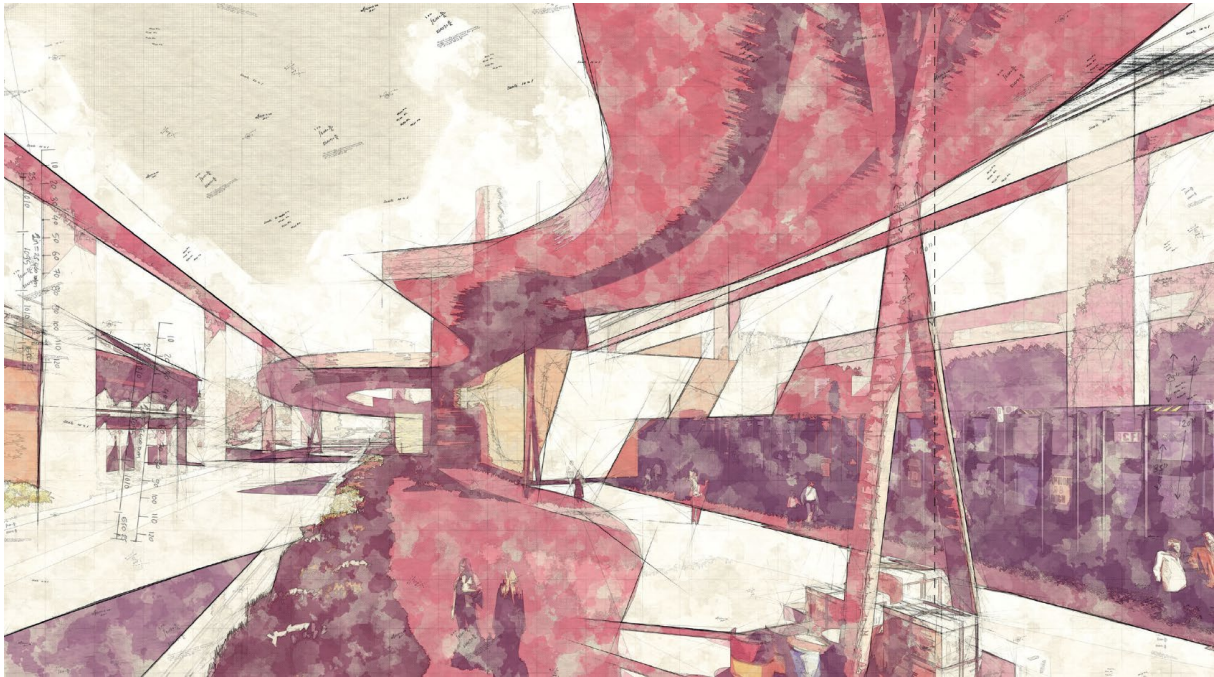


Image: Cao, Huizhong (2021). "RENEWAL MONUMENT – From circular strategies to Heritage Renovation" (Master's Thesis)

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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Webb: www.chalmers.se/arch



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.

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 believes of **transdisciplinary 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.

Learning outcomes *(after completion of the course the students 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.
- 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 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 to innovate.

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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 24th 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

- 06th October, **Course intro, thesis ideas seminar**, zoom link [urban challenges](#)
- 13th October Self-study
- 20th October **seminar**, zoom link [urban challenges](#)
- 10th November **seminar**, zoom link [urban challenges](#)
- 17th November Self-study, 17.00, **submission draft Project Plan for review**
- 24th November presentations, **final review and feedback** zoom link [urban challenges](#)

- 8th December, deadline 12.00, **final hand-in for the course on Canvas**
- 8th 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 3rd floor
- 12th 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 3rd 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 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?

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- **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
- **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)

Evaluation criteria

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
 - 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 (HT21) 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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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.

