

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	Iman Ramshini
Student number	4741064

Studio		
Name / Theme	Complex studio / Bodies and Buildings Milan	
Main mentor	Olindo Caso	Architectural Design and Research
Second mentor	Florian Eckardt	Building Technology
Third mentor	Yağiz Söylev	Architectural Research
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>The Complex Studio was selected because it closely aligns with the rich socio-political and architectural context of Milan, offering a fertile ground to explore the intersection of social, political, and spatial discourses. Milan's evolution, from its historically state-based democratic structures to the peak of centralized power manifest in its monumental, enclosed courthouses; provides an ideal case to investigate thresholds as sites of both power and civic reflection. The studio's emphasis on complexity allows for a nuanced exploration of how these thresholds shape and are shaped by broader societal forces, enabling a critical examination of architectural design as an instrument for decentralizing power and fostering participatory justice.</p>	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Thresholds of power - Decentralised courthouse
Goal	
Location:	The Palace of Justice (Courthouse) Milan, Italy
The posed problem,	The monumental structures of Italy, especially Milan's Palazzo di Giustizia, stand as enduring symbols of centralized power, projecting authority from their fortress-like gates to the core of the

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Thresholds of power - Decentralised courthouse
Goal	
Location:	The Palace of Justice (Courthouse) Milan, Italy
	<p>city's urban fabric. These architectural thresholds do more than demarcate space; they perform justice behind closed doors, consolidating power through layered corridors and imposing facades that discipline civic presence. This dynamic reinforces a power imbalance that extends from the city's streets to its courtrooms, shaping how justice is experienced and perceived.</p> <p>This is not merely a socio-political issue but an architectural one: thresholds and gates serve as instruments of control, separating the governed from the governors, embedding hierarchies of power into the very structure of the city. As Foucault reminds us, architecture itself is a mechanism of power—naturalizing binaries of inclusion and exclusion, openness and closure. Milan's courthouse epitomizes this dynamic, where monumentality meets enclosure, reinforcing the centralization of authority at every level.</p>
research question	How do architectural thresholds in courthouses act as material-discursive assemblages that mediate and manifest power structures, and how can they shape an civic subjectivity toward decentralization?
design assignment in which these result	Thresholds of power (decentralized power) reimagines Milan's monumental courthouse architecture as a decentralized, participatory space that functions both as a judicial machine and as a site for civic reflection. Instead of reinforcing centralized power behind closed doors, the design integrates

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Thresholds of power - Decentralised courthouse
Goal	
Location:	The Palace of Justice (Courthouse) Milan, Italy
	<p>flexible zones art installations, broadcast areas, and community platforms where justice is continuously questioned and redefined.</p> <p>The design honors Milan's monumental legacy, transforming it from a symbol of authority into a democratic, open sphere embedded in the urban fabric. By challenging the traditional spatial binaries of authority/public and openness/closure, the project reconstructs thresholds, gates, and surveillance layers into transparent, participatory encounters.</p> <p>This new judicial machine balances efficiency with moments of pause and reflection, inviting all to engage in shaping justice as a civic act.</p>
Process	
Method description	
<p>The research combines desk research, case studies, and fieldwork to investigate the spatial and socio-political dynamics within Milan's judicial system, its structures, and courtrooms. Desk research traces the historical evolution of power thresholds from medieval civic halls to Napoleonic civil law, culminating in the centralized structures seen in Milan's Palazzo di Giustizia. This historical lens reveals how monumentality and enclosure have shaped power dynamics over time. A case study of the Milan courthouse analyzes key thresholds: gates, corridors, and transitional spaces; where authority is spatially enacted and negotiated. Fieldwork complements this analysis through site visits, visual mappings, and documentation of spatial and social relationships, capturing how these thresholds mediate between state power and the civic public.</p> <p>This approach highlights the need to balance state and public programs, transforming the courthouse from a closed fortress to a civic machine that invites reflection. By mapping spatial and social configurations and analyzing their influence on participation, the research aims to propose spaces that empower public users to question and engage with justice. Material-discursive analysis of documentation</p>	

Graduation project

Title of the graduation project

Thresholds of power - Decentralised courthouse

Goal

Location:

The Palace of Justice (Courthouse)
Milan, Italy

challenges the mechanisms of authority, proposing repurposed spaces for public expression. Collages illustrate the role of artistic interventions in shaping civic subjectivity and reflecting social and political relations within the courthouse.

Literature and general practical references

The research is grounded in critical theory, spatial studies, and architectural analysis, drawing on key thinkers to frame the examination of thresholds and monumentality in courthouses.

Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *Of Other Spaces* (1984) provide a foundational lens for understanding how architectural thresholds operate as sites of surveillance and exclusion—structuring power relations within judicial spaces. Foucault's broader writings on heterotopias and societies of control inform the analysis of how thresholds mediate between governance and the civic public.

Arendt's *The Human Condition* (1958) and DeLanda's *A New Philosophy of Society* (2006) contribute to the study of civic participation and assemblage theory, offering insights into how spaces can be reimagined to support dynamic, participatory justice. Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) further enrich the theoretical framework, enabling the analysis of thresholds as assemblages that challenge static power relations.

Goldhagen's *Welcome to Your World* (2017) and Mulcahy's *Legal Architecture* (2011) inform the empirical investigation by linking built form to lived experience and examining how justice is spatially staged. Rowe's *Civic Realism* (1997) and Zumthor's

Thinking Architecture (2006) contextualize monumentality and materiality in civic structures.

The study also draws on historical research into courthouses in Milan, Amsterdam, Zwolle, Oslo, and Paris, analyzing their thresholds and public interfaces as benchmarks for design transformation. These cases illustrate how architecture has historically mediated power dynamics in different civic contexts, offering comparative insights into how monumentality can be reimagined for a decentralized judicial system.

Reflection

1. What is the relation between your graduation (Thresholds of power) topic, the studio topic (Bodies and Buildings), your master track (A), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

The graduation topic, Thresholds of Power, aligns closely with the studio theme Bodies and Buildings, as both investigate how architecture mediates power relations and shapes human experience. Drawing on Foucault's theory of power, my work applies a multiscale lens to examine the social, political, and spatial dimensions of justice, emphasizing how thresholds; both physical and symbolic structure authority and civic engagement. This focus extends my background from my Bachelor's in Architecture to my Master track (A) by deepening my engagement with architecture's philosophical and socio-political dimensions, while still connecting design thinking to real-world contexts. It aligns with the MSc AUBS programme by situating architecture within broader urban, social, and political frameworks, demonstrating that the built environment both reflects and shapes power dynamics. This integration of theory and design practice bridges bodies, buildings, and the complexities of social structures, offering a critical perspective on how justice is both performed and challenged through architectural thresholds.

2. What is the relevance of your graduation work in the larger social, professional and scientific framework.

The graduation work critically examines the relationship between architectural thresholds and power dynamics, using Milan's courthouse as a case study. Socially, it highlights how architectural design shapes civic experiences of justice; offering insights for more democratic and inclusive spaces. Professionally, it equips architects and urban planners with tools to challenge and transform the fortress mentality of civic buildings, advocating for participatory design approaches. Scientifically, it advances discourse on architecture as an agent in socio-political systems, contributing to interdisciplinary research on power, space, and subjectivity.