

Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences

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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:

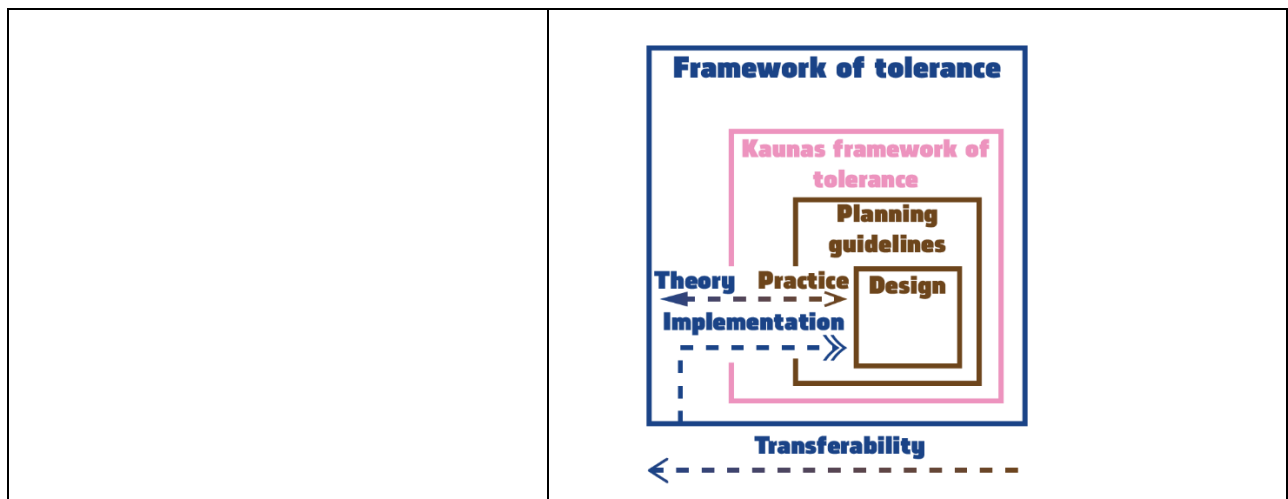
Personal information		
Name	Algirdas Ramonas	
Student number	5351383	

Studio		
Name / Theme	Planning Complex Cities	
Main mentor	Dr. Ir. Gregory Bracken	Chair of Spatial Planning and Strategy, Department of Urbanism, TU Delft. Expertise in architecture and urbanism theory and history, spatial planning, and development strategies. His research interests include the right to the city, philosophy and cities, citizenship, governance, cities as nodes in networks, and related sustainable development.
Second mentor	Dr. Juliana E. Goncalves	Section of Spatial Planning and Strategy, Department of Urbanism, TU Delft. Expertise in socio-technical systems, urban data science, and policy analysis. Her research interests include urban inequalities & spatial justice; climate change adaptation & urban resilience; just energy transition; housing & buildings; public participation & citizen empowerment; and related planning and policy implications.
Argumentation of choice of the studio	Based on the initial motivation, I believe that my interests in the Graduation Project are best aligned with the Planning Complex Cities studio. Firstly, I am interested in researching and proposing changes in topics of social justice, equality, tolerance, and self-governance, which are topics important for the studio curriculum. Furthermore, intrinsically for the topic, I am keen on analysing and working with different stakeholders and target groups. The everyday experience of citizens is critical for my topic. Moreover, I would like to work in the area of my choosing, namely the city of Kaunas, Lithuania, because I know the place very well, would have good access to various materials, and I am very excited about the opportunity to propose changes for this city. What is more, I believe that my proposal is essentially research-based and theoretical. Without strong historical, theoretical, philosophical, and spatial analysis, both global and local, it would be hard to continue with intervention proposals. I believe that this studio strongly emphasises the need for research-based graduation. Finally, the goal of my topic is to have a multi-scalar	

	design, planning, and policy change proposal. This studio is the one that offers the integration of these three fields for the graduation project.
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Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Brave Tolerant City: Planning for diversity forbearance in Kaunas
Goal	
Location:	Kaunas, Lithuania
The posed problem,	<p>To summarise the posed problem I systemised the problem statement into four main issues I will address in this research. Namely, they are:</p> <p>1.Duel of the fates Globalisation, political polarization, and increasing social conflict make instruments for peaceful coexistence necessary.</p> <p>2.Washed concept As a method for peace is more discussed than ever, however it is a washed-up concept.</p> <p>3.Knowledge gap There is a knowledge gap between the socio-spatial environment and tolerant attitudes toward difference.</p> <p>4.Intolerant Kaunas? Kaunas is a good place to research tolerance because of hidden intolerance and homogenous demographics.</p>
research questions and	<p>Based on personal motivation, problem statement, and hypotheses I formulated a main, underlying research question for this graduation project:</p> <p>How can spatial and policy planning be used to foster more tolerant attitudes towards difference in everyday Kaunas?</p> <p>This main question defines instruments that will be used to make a change (spatial and policy planning), the main research field (tolerant attitudes towards difference in everyday), and the specific location (Kaunas, Lithuania). Another important aspect of this question is that it narrows the research field into specific tolerance for difference in everyday life, which essentially means analysing a mean how each citizen of Kaunas reacts to diversity and strangers in the city.</p> <p>Furthermore, based on research aims, two sets of research sub-questions could be defined. The first set, described below, will be used to analyse the concept of tolerance and its relation to the environment in general, allowing to systemise it into the framework of tolerance. From this knowledge, the second set of research sub-questions and methodology could be derived.</p> <p>1.1.What is tolerance? What are its history, definition, and limits?</p> <p>1.2.How tolerance for difference relates to other concepts of spatial justice? What are its negative aspects?</p>

	<p>1.3.What is the relationship between tolerance for difference and socio-spatial environment? How one impacts the other?</p> <p>2.1.What is the national “deep story” of the specific society being investigated?</p> <p>2.2.What are large-scale spatial elements shaping people’s social relationships?</p> <p>2.3.How diverse and mixed is the area? What are the subcultures in the area?</p> <p>2.4.Does the area foster contact?</p> <p>2.5.What are small-scale spatial elements shaping momentary people’s attitudes towards each other?</p> <p>2.6.What is the perceived “image of conventional society” and “image of a good stranger”? On what it is based and how strong it is?</p>
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>There are four main intended outputs. The first one is overarching, the other three are implementations of the first one, each smaller in scale, but also more operational and practical.</p> <p>The framework of tolerance. It is the main theoretical output of this research. It will be a summary of all deductive and inductive observations made throughout this research. It will be a tool that will guide the other outputs by proposing a methodology to analyse tolerance and its relationship to the environment in a specific location. However, It does not propose neither an issue nor a solution, just a way for finding them. Yet because of this reason, it is the most transferable output. Reference to how it could look like is “Life Between Buildings”, the book by Jan Gehl, where he summarised his observation of public life in guidelines for further implementation and research (Gehl, 2011). This outcome can be called a theoretical framework.</p> <p>Kaunas framework of tolerance. It is the operationalisation of the previous output. Its goal is to summarise issues and opportunities for tolerant attitudes in the city of Kaunas. It’s a product in between theory and practice, essentially showing how the framework of tolerance works. Moreover, it guides further outcomes. This outcome can be called a conceptual framework.</p> <p>Planning guidelines. They will be a direct output from the Kaunas framework of tolerance. The goal of the guidelines will be to outline the socio-spatial trajectories that would address issues raised by previous output. “A New Theory of Urban Design”, a book by Christopher Alexander, proposing new guidelines for planning cities, is a reference for this output structure (C. Alexander et al., 1987).</p> <p>Design. It will be the most practical output element of the research. Knowing very well that I won’t be able to address all issues and guidelines, I will select a few of the most influential trajectories and intervene with institutional, policy, and spatial design interventions.</p>



Process

Method description

Methods

Autoethnography. Since I spend different stages of my life in Kaunas, I can reflect on my past and present experiences to investigate tolerance in this city. This will also help me to position myself as a researcher and uncover potential biases.

Literature review. Due to the theoretical nature of my topic, this method is one of the most important for my research, especially for the first methodology part. I will use mainly scientific literature in combination with fictional novels, essays in newspapers and magazines, and reports as well as declarations from various institutions related to the topic. The goal is to combine and critically reflect on insights and ideas from a broad spectrum of theoretical and practical disciplines: philosophy, history, cultural geography, political theory, architecture, spatial planning, sociology, psychology, and urban studies. It will use and compare both international and local Lithuanian literature related to the topic. It is important to do because future investigators could build up on this research by analysing their native literature.

Ethnography. To analyse the tolerance situation in Kaunas I will use ethnographic research methods: a thin online survey and thick semi-structured expert interviews. Moreover, I believe it is important to keep exploring the topic of tolerance in informal discussions with peers and people from different disciplines. Finally, statistical analysis of the case-study area, such as research on statistics of the demographical distribution of inhabitants or criminal incidents, will provide important contextual information.

Arts & culture. I believe that analysing the cultural representation of tolerance will bring an important understanding of the topic. Especially because artists can use mediums that show social action in context, putting moments of interaction in the environment. For example, Lithuanian photography and cinema from the soviet union period reflect on rapid urbanisation with emphasis on the strong change in context as well as behaviour.

Spatial analysis. I will do a contextual analysis of the case study area using forms of synchronic and diachronic documentation. I will do mapping, sketching, filming, and photography in relation to ideas uncovered with the main theoretical analysis.

Institutional analysis. Institutional context forms an important societal background for tolerant attitudes. Based on insights by civic participation activists (de la Pena et al., 2017), by analysing stakeholders, government structures and power relationships, public facilities and NGOs, and policies, I aim to uncover its influence on people's behaviour and tolerant attitudes for difference.

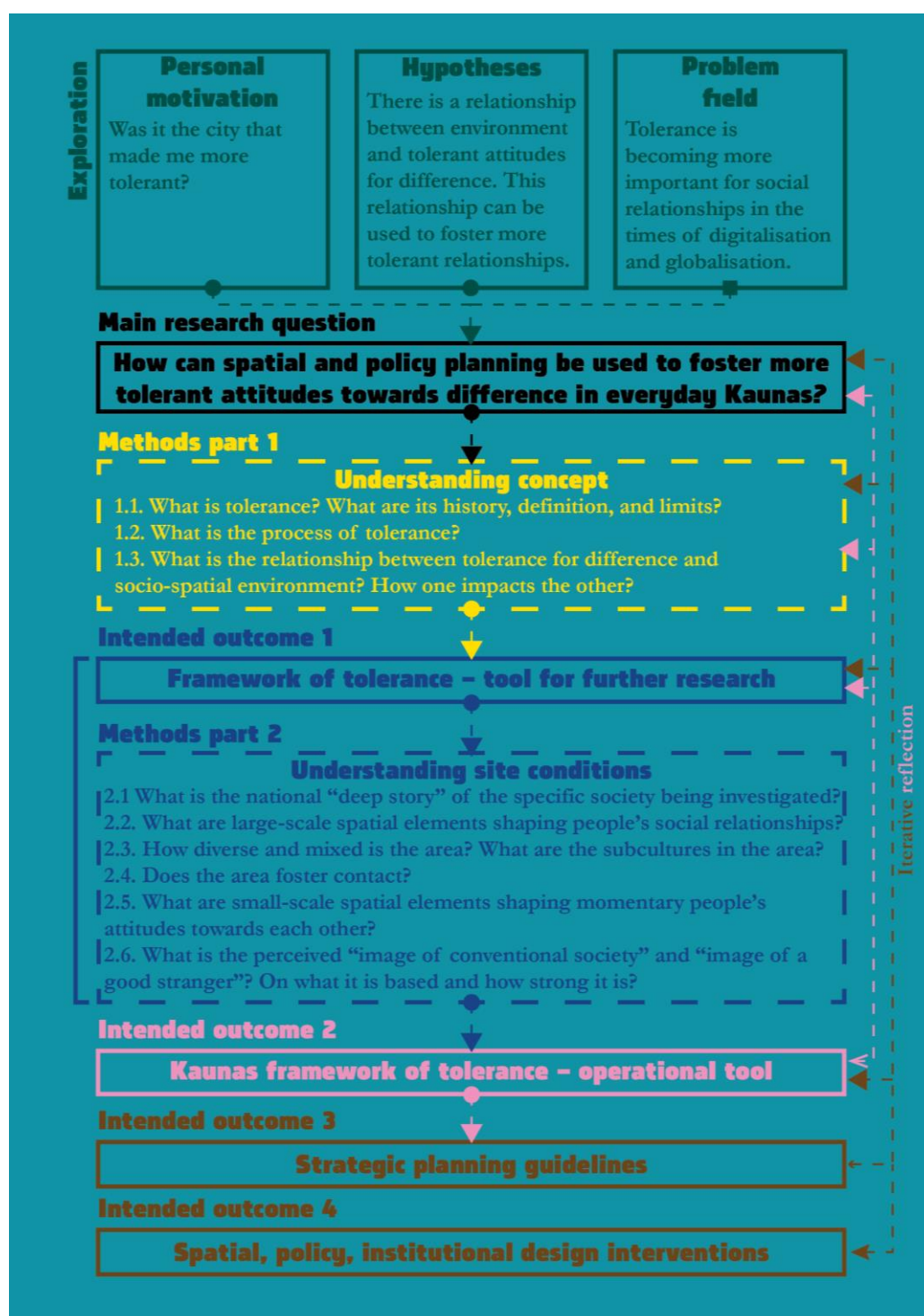
Sub-questions	Methods	Outcomes	To consider
1.1. What is tolerance? What are its history, definition, and limits?	Autoethnography, literature review, expert interviews, arts and culture;	Definition and description of urban (critical) tolerance for difference, bibliography of tolerance,	It is important to look at the broad spectrum of disciplines; how the concept changed over time and what can be learned from historic understandings; what are critiques on tolerance; what are its conceptual limits
1.2. How tolerance for difference relates to other concepts of spatial justice?	Scientific literature, reports review, policy review;	Placement of tolerance for difference in larger debates on spatial justice and inclusivity	Consider not only how it relates to positive, inclusive concepts, but also negative, discriminatory terms
1.3. What is the relationship between tolerant attitudes for difference and environment? How one impacts the other?	Autoethnography, literature review, expert interviews, arts and culture; spatial analysis, institutional analysis;	Framework of tolerance, methodology for further research, questions for survey and interviews	It is critical to look at different disciplines and mediums; through different scales; not only at spatial, but also institutional, cultural, (geo)political, and historical environments;
Sub-questions	Methods	Outcomes	To consider
2.1. What is the national “deep story” of the specific society being investigated?	Autoethnography, literature review, expert interviews, arts and culture, policy review;	Description of national and regional socio-cultural and spatial elements shaping people's attitudes and behaviour towards each other. Main issues and potentials should be highlighted. Not all of them can be addressed. Nevertheless, they will shape the trajectory of further planning and design.	It is important to look into these elements: are people more individualistic or community-based; is society more religious or secular; are people more trusting or mistrusting; are there unresolved historical traumas; what is socio-political situation and structure.
2.2. What are large-scale spatial elements shaping people's social relationships?	Autoethnography, literature review, survey, arts and culture, mapping and observations, policy review and governance analysis;		It is important to consider the primary mobility means of the area; do people feel comfortable or anxious in the area; is it polycentric or monocentric?
2.3. How diverse and mixed is the area? What are the subcultures in the area?	Scientific literature and reports review, statistical analysis, spatial analysis, stakeholders' analysis;	Description of possibilities for contacts and conflicts with diversity. One of the main prerequisites for tolerance by definition is active contact or even conflict. Analysis of diversity and spatial possibilities for contact will allow to bring forward potential issues to be addressed to foster more active contact.	If there is no diversity, then there is no need for tolerance. And the higher the mixture of differences in the area, the more likely that two distinct individuals or groups will meet.
2.4. Does the area foster contact?	Personal experience, literature review, survey, spatial analysis, governance and institutions' analysis;		It should be analysed if the space assembles or disperses people; integrates or segregates; invites or repels; opens up or closes in; is it comfortable for walking, standing, sitting; are institutions decentralised
2.5. What are small-scale spatial elements shaping momentary people's attitudes towards each other?	Personal experience, literature review, expert interviews, arts and culture, spatial analysis, policy review;	Description of how specific environment shapes people's attitudes towards each other. Issues nudging for more intolerant behaviour should be highlighted to address them in further implementation process.	It is important to analyse whether people feel fear, anxiety or comfort in the space; are people hurrying in the rush or slowly walking; are there disciplining design elements; are there any specific rules for the usage of space; is the place standardised and homogenous or heterogeneous with diverse identity.
2.6. What is the perceived “image of conventional society” and “image of a good stranger”? On what it is based and how strong it is?	Autoethnography, literature review, expert interviews, arts and culture, institutional analysis;	Description of stereotypical perceived images of “us” and “good them”. This information cannot be addressed directly, but will inform further planning and design decisions.	The final question summarises other inquiries into individually or collectively perceived social norms of how others should look and behave to be tolerated. The strength of this belief is an important element influencing tolerant attitudes toward difference.

The main issue that I faced while designing the research plan was that tolerance for difference is very subjective and therefore hard to measure topic. Moreover, according to my analysis, there is a little amount of knowledge about the relationship between tolerance for difference and socio-spatial environment. As a result, many questions were unknown at the beginning of the research. That's why I designed the process in a few interconnected stages, each supporting and iteratively strengthening the other and producing different outcomes.

Starting from personal motivation, problem field, and hypotheses I constructed the main research question followed by the first methodology. Its purpose is to in understanding in general about tolerance for difference and its relationship to the environment. By addressing the first set of sub-questions mainly through theoretical exploration I will construct the first outcome of this research – the framework of tolerance, which also will be the most transferable element. It will be a tool that could be used to study different sites by raising further, more specific questions and fields of inquiry. My idea of it is like a flashlight, that guides the way for future research.

To investigate further, with the framework of tolerance I will propose a 2nd methodology – a set of research sub-questions and methods that would allow analysing of the topic in the case-study area – Kaunas. This time the methods used will be more related to space, governance and policy analysis. The

outcome of this research stage will be Kaunas' framework of tolerance, which will show the elements impacting tolerant attitudes for the difference in the area and ways to intervene. Finally, I will show how this operational tool could be implemented with policy, planning, and design proposals in the city of Kaunas.

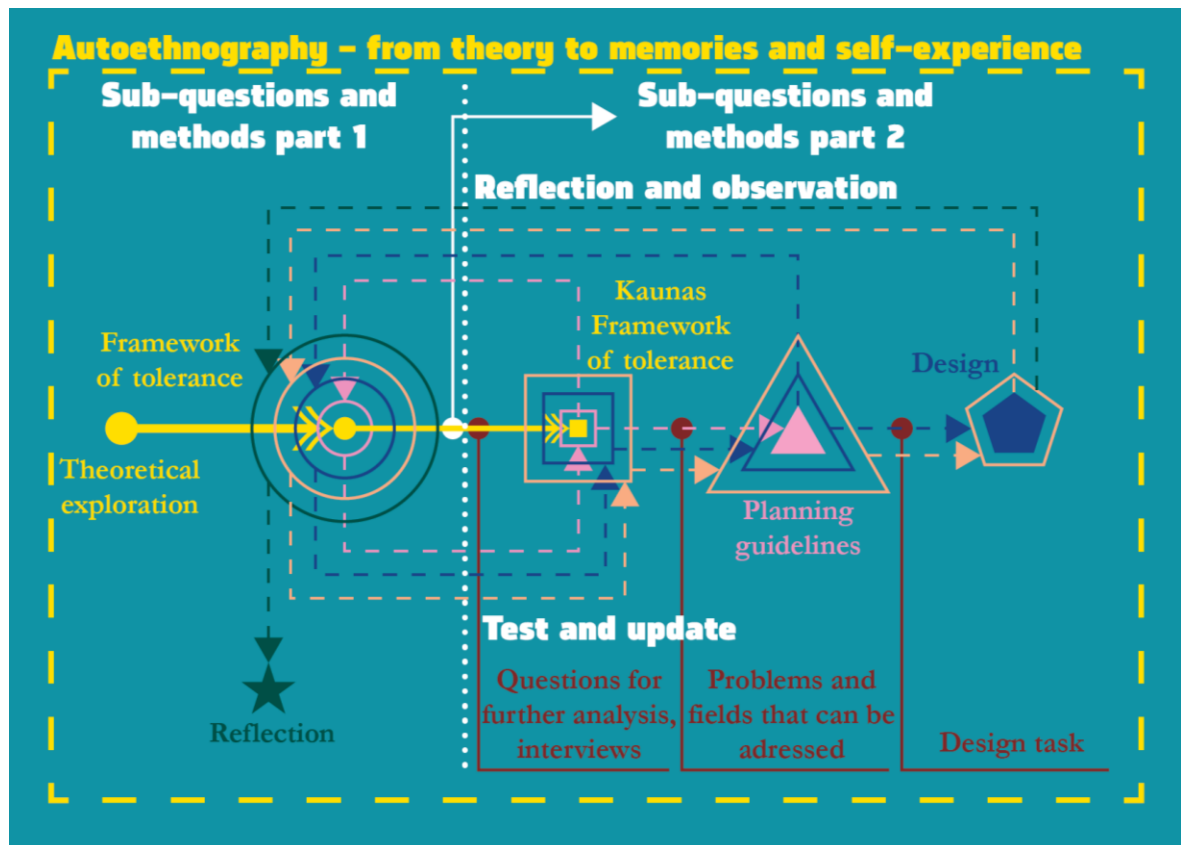


I designed this research to work in an iterative, constantly reflecting process. Different stages are continuously interconnected, with outcomes supporting and updating each other. The goal is to start from theoretical observation to build up knowledge and an initial framework of tolerance, connecting it with the case-study area. The former will show how to analyse the latter through 2nd methodology and interview questions. I will reflect on the theoretical framework of tolerance through specific observations

from Kaunas. In this way, each product will give way to the other, while strengthening each other and the whole research.

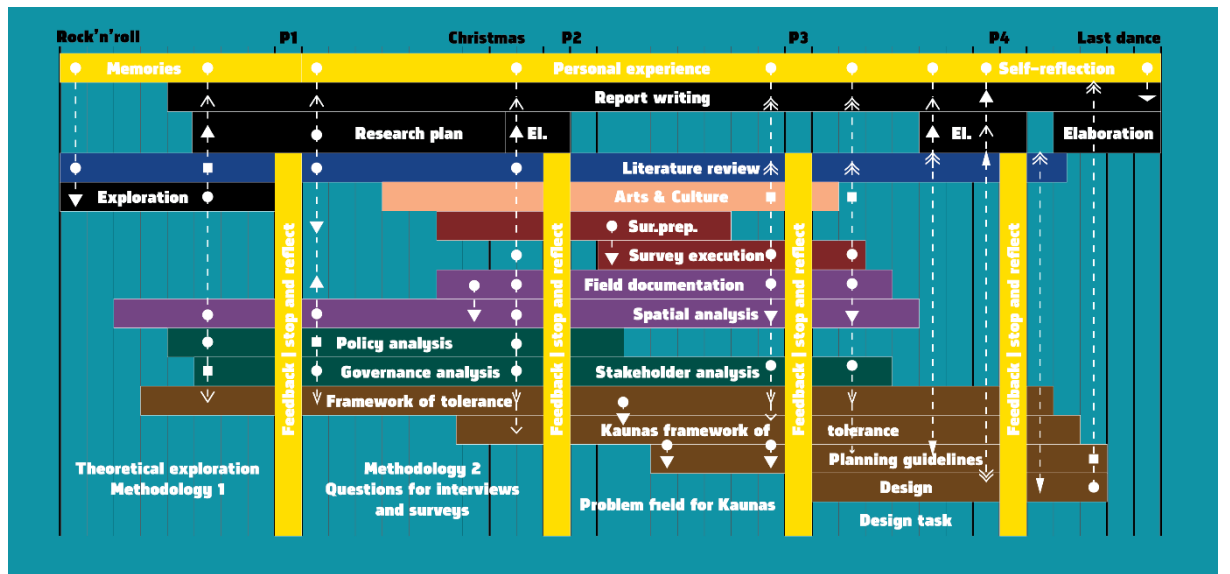
Moreover, planning guidelines and design is intended to be both a demonstration of how a tool works and a research instrument, both implementing and updating the framework of tolerance and other products.

It is important to mention that the autoethnographic approach is a very important method and process for my research. The conceptual and theoretical nature of the topic would make it very hard to analyse tolerance in an unknown environment. My memories and experience with Kaunas help me to immediately reflect on theory. In this way, I can base concepts on something tangible from the case-study area, connect different elements in an iterative process, and move from thought to action.



The thesis timeline represents elements of the research plan. Starting with exploration, I continued to create the 1st set of research questions and methodology. During this time already, I have started investigating other fields. Self-reflective part is a never-ending, overarching assessment and analysis process. Because a huge part of the project is theoretical base, I have already started the literature review and related activities, which are scheduled to be ongoing till the last elaboration phase before the 5th and final presentation. Contextual analysis of space, policies, and stakeholders is already in process, however, its main intensity will be after the P2 presentation. With it, I will be able to conduct the survey and interviews, as well as more directed spatial and institutional analysis. Practical implementation outcomes of the project are also scheduled to be ongoing throughout the year, with peak intensity after the P3 presentation.

5 scheduled presentations are not only the moments of elaboration of ideas at that moment in the process but also feedback and reflection (or "sink in") moments, where it would be possible to take a step back and look at results so far.



Literature and general practical preference

I will conduct a wide literature review, consisting of both Lithuanian and international texts on tolerance and related concepts of spatial justice. The goal is to combine and critically reflect on insights and ideas from a broad spectrum of theoretical and practical disciplines: philosophy, history, cultural geography, political theory, architecture, spatial planning, sociology, psychology, and urban studies. In connection with the critical literature review, I will do a spatial analysis of the case study area using forms of synchronic and diachronic documentation. Finally, because tolerance is a very personal feeling, to describe it and understand its spatial effects I will engage with different stakeholders in Kaunas. The results of prior research would allow me to prepare for field interviews, workshops, and other forms of informal engagement practices. The information I would retrieve would allow me to test theoretical concepts from the literature review.

Reflection

Scientific relevance

At this point of research, I see a missing link between the concept of tolerance towards difference and spatial planning literature. Mostly it is discussed by political theorists and sociologists, such as Susan Mendus, or philosophers, such as Herbert Marcuse, John Locke, or John Mill Stuart. While there are few studies and discussions on tolerance and urbanity relation (Bannister & Kearns, 2013; Huggins & Debies-Carl, 2015; Kent, 2022), the majority of literature addresses theories related, but different from tolerance (for example Richard Sennet discussed disorder and Henri Lefebvre argued for the right to urban life). From a more practical side, Jan Gehl, David Sim, and Jane Jacobs wrote about lively, diverse cities and contacts. Therefore wide discussion and its practical implementation on tolerant attitudes towards difference would be relatively new, combining concepts from various disciplines.

Societal relevance

Tolerance is an essential element for an equal, free, and just society. Without tolerant attitudes, diversity would be unimaginable. It creates mutual trust between stakeholders. Even in its most passive form, tolerance is a barrier between inclusivity and discrimination. It fosters acceptance of individual or group differences, allowing for free expression and gathering. Moreover, it could lead to more inclusive forms of attitudes, such as respect, empathy, acceptance and engagement. In this way, fostering tolerance can create active intergroup encouragement, interest and involvement, resulting in empowered subcultures.

In addition, the rising issues of chauvinism, political polarisation, and discrimination shows that intolerance is rising and spreading. While this thesis cannot address all current issues on all scales, it can potentially shed light on specific Lithuanian socio-cultural and spatial environment and their conditions for tolerance. I believe that strengthening these conditions can create a more just and equal society.

Relation with the studio group and master programme

My motivation and experience have led me to investigate tolerance and its relationship with spatial justice and the right to the city in Kaunas, Lithuania. These complex concepts and diverse research locations are at the heart of Planning Complex Cities studio. Consequently, my approach is heavily connected to the trajectory of the studio. It is about addressing systemic societal and scientific issues in a holistic, interdisciplinary way. Because of the complexity of the task at hand, the research group supports diverse and innovative research and planning methods, which are at the heart of my investigation. Tutors and peers aid me with comprehensive theoretical and practical knowledge and discussions. Moreover, I look not only into urban design and its relation to tolerance, but also at how it is influenced by spatial planning, institutions, and policies. This diversified approach is largely linked to Planning Complex Cities approach.

In addition, my research is heavily connected to the Urbanism Masters programme. I follow iterative, multiscalar urban planning and design methods practised in TU Delft. Tolerant attitudes toward difference are influenced by national, regional, and most local socio-cultural and spatial elements, therefore working through scales is critical to influence social relationships. Nevertheless, my project is largely theoretical which is not usual for this master's programme. I do not intend to use design or planning as an end, but as a means to show how the theoretical part could be implemented.

Yet I believe this is still highly relevant for the trajectory of the Planning Complex Cities studio and urbanism in general because I am targeting to increase understanding and rise awareness about spatial justice.

Ethical reflection

Tolerance can be a very subjective, context-dependent concept. Various historical, socio-economical, political, and spatial aspects might have an impact on the way people feel towards "otherness". This means that not all results of this research are transferable to other locations. Most of the outcomes are specific for Kaunas and Lithuania in general. Nevertheless, my thesis could be extended by research in other contexts. Therefore, results need to be described scientifically and transparently so that further research could comment and extend on my ideas.

My knowledge of the case study brings certain biases. Firstly, I lose "outsider's perspective". While I lived outside of the city for a few years now, I still visit it often and therefore I could lack critical thought, which a stranger would have. Moreover, my feelings for the city – love, remembrance, or mere nostalgia – could create a "veil of perception", thus reducing my criticality further. Addressing these elements will be necessary.

Finally, since tolerance is a relationship between two parties, it is vital to understand both sides. Not only to get more knowledge but also to keep the thesis balanced. Having information only from subcultures could swing results towards this side. Moreover, I could miss out on some critical knowledge by not engaging with both sides.