

# 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](mailto: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	Ifrah Ariff
Student number	5567254

Studio		
Name / Theme	City of the Future	
Main mentor	Joran Kuijper	Design Mentor
Second mentor	Piero Medici	Building Technology
Third mentor	Maurice Harteveld	Urbanism
Argumentation of choice of the studio	The studio enabled me to study Bengaluru, my hometown, through the lens of interdisciplinary thinking beyond architecture and into the realms of urbanism, management, transport and logistics. It also fostered an independent research practice. Despite everyone having different studio projects, it has been fascinating to apply lessons and theories from my peers' projects to my own.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	A Trifle Strife? Public Space, Rituals and Communalism
Goal	
Location:	Chamarajpet Eidgah Maidan, Bengaluru, India
The posed problem,	The ownership and usage of the Chamarajpet Maidan in Bengaluru became a controversy in the summer of 2022 when right-wing Hindu groups demanded that the ground, which is also known as a Muslim <i>Eidgah</i> (open ground for mass prayers on Eid) be used for Hindu rituals. It has become one of many architectural instances emblematising Hindu versus Muslim social tensions across India. Whilst media coverage and architectural imageries symbolise clear-cut binaries of Hindu or Islamic spatial use, such perceptions bely the harmonic fluidity, transience and multiplicity of public-space typologies like the <i>maidan</i> . As such, both interreligious relations and the maidan's day-to-day public activities (e.g. children playing games, local entrepreneurs selling snacks, neighbours socialising) are at risk due to needless religious contestations.

	<p>The problem is three-fold: firstly, it is about architectural identity, and secondly it is about day-to-day urban life at the <i>maidan</i>. Both layers are, unfortunately, tinted with communal strife. Thirdly, the context of Bengaluru as an overpopulated metropolis with vanishing (social) infrastructure requires an adaptive and resilient way forward which also responds to the first two issues.</p>
<p>research questions and</p>	<p>Main research question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the relationship between public space, rituals and Hindu-Muslim communal strife?</li> </ul> <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does theorising the maidan and its representations explain the Chamarajpet Maidan controversy?</li> <li>• What is the relationship between communalism and Chamarajpet Maidan's everyday rituals?</li> <li>• How can rituals and their meanings (re)produce claims over Chamarajpet Maidan?</li> </ul> <p>Main design question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can public space address religious communalism?</li> </ul>
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>On an architectural scale, a mixed-use proposal on the Chamarajpet Maidan aims to emblematised interreligious harmony and a common vernacular identity, in addition to consolidating local actors. It is to house combined offices and archives for the municipality (BBMP) and water &amp; sewerage board (BWSSB), Hindu and Muslim spaces of worship, and social spaces for staff and the local public. Existing local activities on the maidan such as cricket games, kite-flying, goat selling and snack stalls are to be retained, possibly through the retention of a large tract of open ground (retaining the qualities of a <i>maidan</i>).</p> <p>On an urban scale, a long-term adaptive strategy is required, tackling problems related to and beyond religious architectural identities such as the provision of public space, consolidation of water infrastructure and traffic management. This proposal is to be tested by application to the maidan's vicinity, particularly the urban spine of Mysore Road connecting Bengaluru Town Hall in the East to the nearby Jadeedh Eidgah in the West.</p> <p>The design aim is to address religious communalism to instill long-term social inclusivity, managerial veracity and</p>

infrastructural resilience in Chamarajpet, its neighbouring wards and perhaps Bengaluru at large.

[This should be formulated in such a way that the graduation project can answer these questions.

The definition of the problem has to be significant to a clearly defined area of research and design.]

## **Process**

### **Method description**

The research methodology is based on a framework of pedagogical decolonisation to 'de-world' (Spivak, 1985) existing knowledge about Chamarajpet Maidan and Bengaluru by grounding it in the Indian cultural context. Key methods included a case study about Babri Masjid/ Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya, India, historical mapping exercises and interviews with Bengaluru-based architects and an excursion to Bengaluru. The excursion consisted of visits to Chamarajpet Maidan wherein architectural-ethnographic data was collected through urban mapping walks, photography and interviews with locals. In addition, visits to other public spaces (e.g. parks, lakes, markets, historical sites, places of worship) were used to gather data on how public space is used specifically in Bengaluru, to complement the historical mapping exercise. Primary and secondary data was used to produce an ethnographic countermap which represents the maidan beyond its life in mass media and provides a forum to represent those disempowered by the communalism controversy.

The design methodology is highly influenced by the potential of a common architectural identity which can be embraced by Hindus, Muslims and all Bengaluru citizens alike. Therefore, the design of architectural elements will require form-finding exercise at various scales facilitated by physical model-making and 3D CAD modelling. On the other hand, the ethnographic nature of the project will also require design testing, which will hopefully be possible through remote design reviews with Bengaluru-based architects.

[A description of the methods and techniques of research and design, which are going to be utilized.]

## Literature and general practical preference

The project consults theories on Indian and colonial socio-spatial identity as expressed by Gayathri Spivak (1985) and Romila Thapar (2023). In addition, the emphasis on the 'maidan' as a theorised urban typology is underpinned by Anuradha Mathur and Dilip da Cunha's 2016 paper, 'The *Maidan* as a Ground of Design', combined with a theorization of urban land-rent obfuscation (Haila, 2015). The mass-media element of this project necessitated reference to Petrescu and Trogal's book, 'The Social (Re)Production of Space' which discusses tactical media.

- Romila Thapar: *Why Indian History Cannot be Reduced to "Hindu vs Muslim"* (CD Deshmukh Lecture, 2023) [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved January 24, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0i5YqaYREo>
- Mathur, A., & da Cunha, D. (2016). The Maidan as a Ground of Design. *Unbound: A Journal of Discourse and Creative Practices*. <http://www.unboundjournal.in/hello-world-2/#:~:text=The%20maidan%20is%20familiar%20to,familiar%20as%20an%20appropriated%20space>.
- Haila, A. (2015). *Urban Land Rent: Singapore as a Property State*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Petrescu, D., & Trogal, K. (2017). *The Social (Re)Production of Architecture: Politics, Values and Actions in Contemporary Practice* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Sahgal, N., Evans, J., Salazar, A. M., Starr, K. J., & Corichi, M. (2021). *Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation* / Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/06/29/religion-in-india-tolerance-and-segregation/>
- Spivak, G. C. (1985). The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives. *History and Theory*, 24(3), 247. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2505169>
- Sundaresan, J. (2019). Decolonial reflections on urban pedagogy in India. *Area*, 52(4), 722–730. <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12596>

Historical maps and accounts were found online and in the book 'Discovering Bengaluru' (Iyer, 2019) - published by the Bengaluru chapter of INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) – respectively. Contemporary urban statistics were found on an ArcGIS storymap titled 'Spatial Inequality in Bengaluru' (Pathak, 2020) which consolidated and geolocated a diverse range of data on Bengaluru.

- Iyer, M. (2019). *Discovering Bengaluru: History. Neighbourhoods. Walks*. Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) Bengaluru chapter.
- Pathak, B. J. S. (2020). *Spatial Inequality in Bengaluru*. ArcGIS StoryMaps. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2913eaa5564d4a0ea1e1de8d9ee9d364>

The case study on Babri Masjid was based on news accounts, and also architect Habib Rahman's design proposal to address the communalist sentiments it emblematised.

- Bacchetta, P. (2000). Sacred Space in Conflict in India: The Babri Masjid Affair. *Growth and Change*, 31(2), 255–284. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0017-4815.00128>
- Rahman, H. & Noble, A. (1990). "Do not kill man to protect God" - the Babari Masjid Design Proposal. *The Statesman*, July 28, 47(1).
- Jadeja, H. (2013). *Architectural of Habib Rahman* [Undergraduate thesis]. CEPT University.

Viewing this project's countermapping as a tactical exercise against sensationalism, works by Counterspace Studio, Eyal Wiezman's book 'Forensis' (2014) and 'This is Not an Atlas' (2018) provided precedents.

- Forensic Architecture. (2014). *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*. Sternberg Press. <https://www.sternberg-press.com/product/the-architecture-of-public-truth/>
- Orangatango+, kollektiv. (2018). *This Is Not an Atlas: A Global Collection of Counter-Cartographies*. Transcript Verlag.
- Vally, S. (2021). *Choreography of a Procession*. Counterspace Studio. Retrieved January 24, 2023, from <https://www.counterspace-studio.com/projects/choreography-of-a-procession>

[The literature (theories or research data) and general practical experience/precedent you intend to consult.]

## Reflection

1. What is the relation between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic (if applicable), your master track (A,U,BT,LA,MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

The *Cross Domain City of the Future* studio does not have a particular topic per se. Rather, it engages the other master tracks to provide a holistic understanding of the MSc AUBS program. I have found that, without this multidisciplinary approach, it would have been difficult to analyse the urban complexity of Bengaluru. Though religious communalism and architectural identity is not ostensibly related to water infrastructure, for example, the Bengaluru context is one where now depleted water tanks were sites of Hindu rituals and shrines. Water is also required for Islamic prayer rituals. It would require engagement with the urbanism, landscape architecture and management tracks to create religiously inclusive spaces which use water as a social attractor, whilst also rejuvenating the city's lost network of water tanks.

The studio, by employing this holistic approach, has provided an argument for why an architect with an awareness for all the disciplines in the MSc AUBS track, is becoming ever more necessary.

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

This graduation project was born out of a personal frustration with increasingly divisive Indian politics over the past decade. Despite the country's economic, environmental and infrastructural issues, religious communalism - or rather, the othering of Muslims and religious minorities - is increasingly brought to the fore as the country's main issue to be addressed by forms of social erasure and othering. In a country where Hindu and/ or Islamic architecture is politically emblematised and turned into political agenda, and where Islamic architecture is sometimes seen as mutually exclusive to Indian architecture, a unifying architectural and urban identity is much needed for social coherence.

Architecture, as an interdisciplinary profession, is in a unique position to address the social problem of interreligious strife whilst simultaneously tackling more technical issues such as water management and flooding, carbon emissions, energy supply and poor mobility, for example. In Bengaluru, there are different, independently-operating governmental entities - BESCOM, BDA, BWSSB, BBMP, BMRTC for each of these issues which fail to communicate whilst addressing overlapping issues. In addition, corrupt and bureaucratic administrative practices prevent any urban improvement projects from proceeding. As a result, the city has developed haphazardly and incoherently. It is left to grassroots movements to make neighbourhood improvements.

I view this project as one such grassroots proposal, unaffiliated to any official organisation and tactical in its calling foul mass media and the government for failing to prioritise and publicise the right issues. The hope is that the research outcomes and design proposals is seen as an architect mediating between the municipality, the media and the local citizens to demonstrate the social and infrastructural potential of a space as valuable and potentially harmonious as the *maidan*.