

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	Francesca Guarnieri
Student number	5372852

Studio		
Name / Theme	Complex Projects / Beirut	
Main mentor	Ir. Hrvoje Smidihen	Architecture Design
Second mentor	Eline Blom	Architecture Design
Argumentation of choice of the studio	Complex Project Studio appeal is in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - its proposal of resolving complex contexts in simple architectural solution; - its questioning of globalization and cultural diversity in architecture; - the opportunity it offers to design public buildings as activators of its urban surroundings; - its proposal of working in a fixed group of students for research and vision proposal at the urban scale. 	

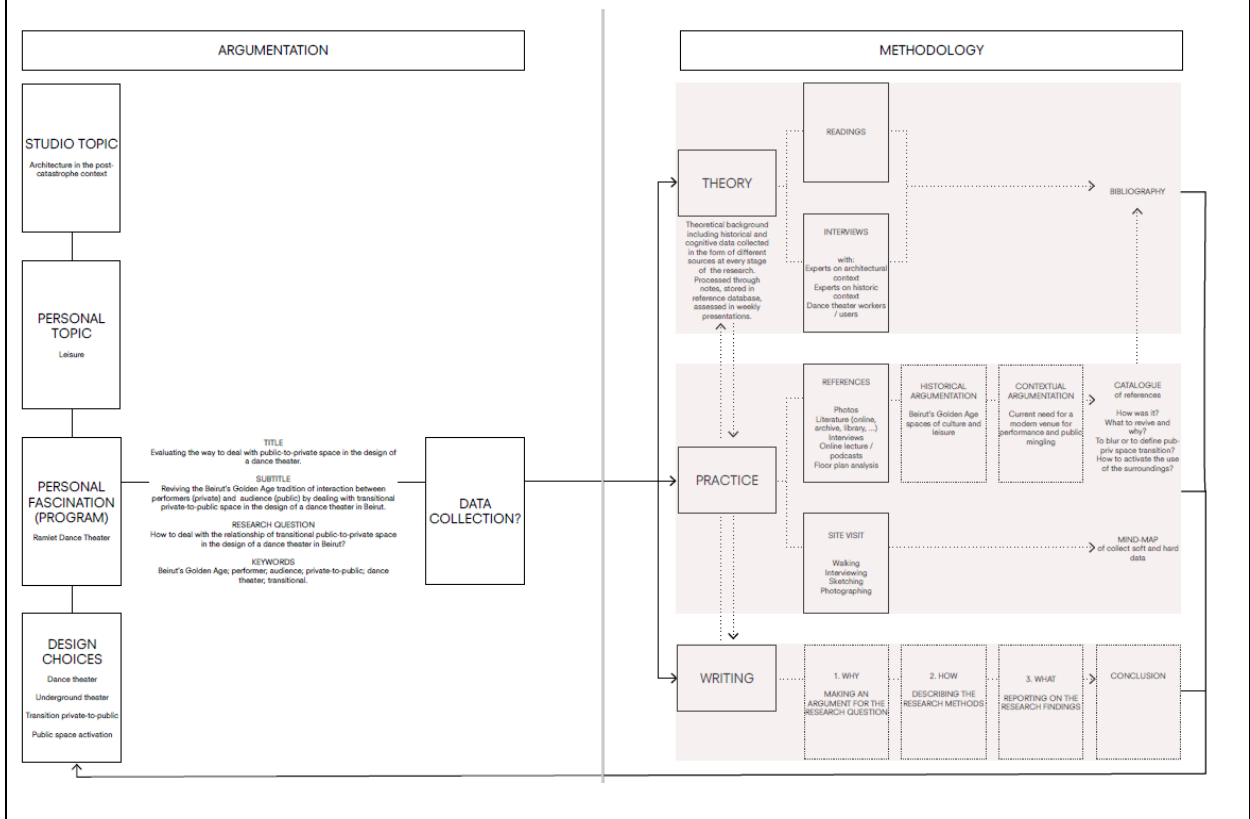
Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Lebanon Dance Theater & Park (Leisure Architecture)
Goal	
Location:	Ramlet Al Baida, Beirut, Lebanon.
The posed problem,	The project attempts at establishing an official dance institution as a mean to provide and activate public space for leisure, by reviving the Beirut tradition of underground theaters.
research questions and	Preliminary question were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can a dance theater enable the citizens' right to the city? - How to define the transitional public-to-private space in the foyer of a dance theater in Beirut? The final question is:

	- How to define the transitional public-to-private space in a dance theater in Beirut?
design assignment in which these result.	The resulting assignment is the project for Lebanon Dance Theater with particular attention to the progressive open to enclosed space of the foyer, that connects and activate the surrounding Dance Park and Dance Pavilions.

Process

Method description

Given the challenges posed by: the physical and cultural distance to the site of research; the limited information retrievable online; the limited literature and archival information retrievable on-site. And given the impact of the information gathered during the one-week group site visit of October 2021, this project is fit for context-led research. Meaning that it allows the contextual research done on-site (emic research, i.e. from the perspective of the subject) dictate the research process and establish the hierarchy of the information retrieved non-on-site (etic research, i.e. from the perspective of the observer). Hence, physical, social and historical settings are of primary importance. The goal is to use a mix of resources to sustain a 'future-proof' argument for the narrative of the project that projects architectural speculation into 2050. The figure below proposes the diagram of the research structure, including argumentation and methodology.



Literature and general practical preference

The methodology includes primary and secondary sources to achieve a wholesome perspective on the topic and to ultimately establish a framework of design rules. Primary sources include on-site urban and architectural surveys like walking, mapping, sketching and photographing. In addition to interviews with Beirut Urban and Architectural Institutes, practicing architects, Dance Companies and locals. Visits of dance theaters and attending dance performances in the Netherlands also constitute a form primary source. This data is processed and archived in mind-maps which support site and program related decisions.

In terms of secondary sources, withdrawing information from Beirut local archives proved to be impossible given the limited amount of time on-site and given that archival material is difficult to retrieve because in times of war it was not a priority to archive it or because it got lost through a history of catastrophes. However, from the beginning and at every stage of the research, key are secondary sources withdrawn online and mixed-media literature withdrawn from the BK Library at TU Delft. Both on the topics of the historical development of Beirut and on the design of dance theatres. These include maps, typological case studies and literature review. A catalogue of architectural references with a focus on the transitional space public-to-private informs the brief and layout of the project's program.

Ongoing conversations with Beirutees studying at TU Delft provide insightful guidance on how to approach the context rather distant from the European reality. Moreover, conversation with members of the research group informs the advancement of the architectural topic.

The literary framework evolves around four points:

1. Urban literature to educate on the historiography of urban practices, particularly in terms of the changes in public spaces between the pre and post Civil War periods in sources like *Beirut Urban Design in the Arab World* by Robert Saliba, *Lessons in Post-War Reconstruction: Case Studies from Lebanon in the Aftermath of the 2006 War* by Howayda Al-Harithy.

2. Urban literature to inform good practice of urban design such as *Making Leisure Work* by Brian Lonsway, *Insurgent Public Space* by Jeffrey Hou.

3. Architectural literature to inform good practice of (dance) theaters such as *Theatre Buildings* by Judith Strong, *Theater* by Yukio Futagawa, *Buildings for the Performing Arts* by Ian Appleton, *The Shapes of our Theater* by Jo Mielziner, *Complex Buildings: Generators, Linkers, Mixers & Storytellers* by A+T Research Group.

4. Architectural references of dance theaters to understand the peculiarities that make a dance theater:

- i. in Beirut, for the opportunity to inform culturally appropriate design, this includes:

- Golden Age theaters, particularly looking at the 'basement theater' and its relationship with the adjacent public space (walkways) and its places for interaction across performers and public, ex.: Caracalla Dance Theater and Baalbeck International Festival;

- Contemporary venues for rehearsal and performance and their challenges to maintain independent dancers associations alive in Beirut, ex.: the Beirut Dance Company;
- ii. in The Netherlands, for the opportunity they provide to visit them in person to better understand their spatial organization, ex.: Luce and Amare Dance Theater in The Hague;
- iii. Internationally, to contextualize decision of good practice.

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)?

Dance is ingrained in the local culture of leisure but a history of catastrophes has left Beirut today with close to no venues to practice and perform dance, causing dancers and choreographers to flee the country. However, when given the chance, dance remains a popular live art form to watch, characterized by moments of encounter between audience and performers. It is also an inclusive popular leisure activity with festivals dedicated to it, stimulating the audience to come together in public spaces. This situation calls for a new model of affordable non-commercial theatre to resuscitate the artistic life that Beirut of the Lebanese Golden Age (1955-1975) was famous for. While reclaiming its artistic identity from the aggravating cliché that defines Beirut as 'Paris of the Middle East', through an innovative reinterpretation of the 'underground' theaters that used to populate the streetscape of Beirut.

As a result, the project ambition for the Lebanon Dance Theater & Park is to create an official institution for Lebanese dance, supported by the local government & recognised internationally to house a diversity of forms of dance, of dancers and of audiences. The urban ambition sees the Theater as a public building to act as a catalyst in appropriating and activating the last public beach of Beirut, along which it is located.

This fascination arose from the assigned individual topic of Architecture of Leisure, which brought to attention that the Beirut population has access to less than 1/10th of public space than what recommended in the guidelines of the World Health Organisation. In concomitance with on-site findings, such notion lead to question how a dance theater can enable the citizens' right to the city. From here, the project evolved considerate of the question "How does catastrophe impact the design of a dance theater in Beirut?", reflecting the studio overarching question of how catastrophe can impact the urban development of Beirut. Resulting in a focus on defining transitional public-to-private spaces.

This process reflects the TU Delft Master in Architecture aspiration to enable its students to create strong narrative and motivation behind a project's concept. Arising from comprehensive multi-disciplinary research (design, physical and social sciences, technology, engineering) and groupwork to create integrated and innovative design solutions.

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

The relevance of the chosen graduation topic presents three key potentials:

- Secondly, in the proposal of a prototype of reinterpretation of the Beirut's Golden Age traditions as a culturally appropriate design tool through the lens of today social practices.
- Firstly, in foreseeing a prototype of public space appropriation through transitional spaces in public buildings.
- Finally, in the suggestion of a model for architectural intervention on the last public beach of Beirut that simultaneously opens the shoreline for free quality public use, while generating income for the city to boost further revamp of the area.

