

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	Lorenzo Novajra
Student number	5838398

Studio		
Name / Theme	Transitional Territories	
Main mentor	Luisa M. Calabrese	Urban Design
Second mentor	Elena Longhin	Urban Design
Argumentation of choice of the studio	The approach and philosophy proposed by the Transitional Territories studio align impeccably with the methods I aim to employ in disclosing the complexities of the case study of the Maritime Alps. The studio's emphasis on robust theoretical investigation harmonizes with my aspiration to elevate my design work to a strong conceptual dimension. The diverse scales to be considered and the possibility to challenge conventional methodology for urban design inspire me to explore a familiar territory with fresh a perspective and critical eye.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Narrating the Landscape <i>A disclosure of marginal stories shaping the land and soul of Western Liguria</i>
Goal	
Location:	Maritime Alps (Italy and France) 

The posed problem,

Problematization 01: Unraveling Criticalities of the Territory

The anthropogenic transformation and infrastructural development in the site of investigation pose challenges not only to ecological balances but also to its identitarian dimensions. Past-century processes, together with limited landscape preservation, expose the area to environmental and cultural oblivion. Abandonment of Ligurian inland areas for coastal regions, along with the shift from agriculture to the tertiary sector, has nearly depopulated the inland region. The environmental degradation is attributed to the high labor density required by this type of anthropogenic landscape (Quaini, 1981). Terraced landscapes, once human-dependent, face de-territorialization and increased geo-hydrological risks due to neglect. Coastal urbanization disrupts environmental harmony, in favour of new buildings and cementation that disrupt natural cycles. Culverting rivers and altering riverbeds heighten the susceptibility to disasters during extreme events. This "outrage to places" (Vallerani, 2021) inflicts indelible wounds on the territory. Globalization intensifies detachment, causing loss of local identity. Massimo Quaini emphasizes the need to reconnect with the landscape, reinstating a bond through rediscovering values and identity. Reflecting on the lost landscape's value is crucial for assigning new meaning and reversing the disorientation experienced by the local population (1981).

Problematization 02: the contemporary Domain of Urban Design

Urbanism, with its interdisciplinary nature, addresses sociocultural, ecological, and technological challenges in the urban environment, integrating spatial planning, urban design, and landscape architecture (Nijhuis et al., 2016). However, the evolution of urban planning into a highly multidisciplinary discipline introduces challenges, occasionally delaying the validation of scientific findings, given the necessity for approval from diverse realms. This synergy enhances the comprehension of urban dynamics but demands meticulous reflection and prolonged validation processes. The current crisis in urban design calls for a redefinition of the urbanism agenda, emphasizing a significant knowledge gap in understanding the contribution of knowledge arising from the convergence of art, science, and technology. In light of this understanding, there is a necessity to incorporate art as a domain capable of informing urbanism, without dismissing the validity of established theoretical precedents. This integration requires a cultural shift in the domain of urban design, combining culture-based subjects with well-established evidence-based ones.

	<p>Unconventional knowledge sources like artworks and poetry are now considered valuable methods of inquiry for urban design. A culturally sensitive approach to urban development becomes imperative. Acknowledging culture's historical role in urban studies, innovative practices must incorporate cultural assets into urban development strategies (Duxbury et al., 2016). This approach emphasizes rather than only data-driven and evidence-based knowledge also context-specific insights derived from the site and its cultural processes. The aim is to develop a comprehensive urban development strategy that transcends the conventional, acknowledging the profound impact of culture on shaping urban landscapes.</p>
<p>research questions and</p>	<p>Research Question</p> <p>In the context of ecological and cultural fragility of the Maritime Alps, how can a culture-based approach to urban design, along with a comprehensive understanding of territorial structures, help mitigate environmental risks and restore the identity of the place?</p> <p>Sub-questions</p> <p>How can unconventional forms of information such as literature and poetry help inform urban design and research?</p> <p>How can a culture-based approach help define design interventions integrated with data-driven analysis?</p> <p>What are the main territorial actors within this territory? And what interrelationships exist with one another?</p> <p>What are the key environmental and ecological risks prevalent in the territory, and how can these risks be quantified to inform strategic planning?</p> <p>How can urban design interventions contribute to the restoration and redefinition of the identity of place, emphasizing a cultural and site-sensitive approach?</p>
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>The intended outcome of this thesis comprises two distinct phases: a comprehensive research phase and a subsequent design intervention.</p> <p>The research process aims to gather the essential knowledge for justifying proposed design interventions. This involves a meticulous analysis of the current situation in the investigated region, delving into its history and anticipating future challenges.</p>

The observation of the territory extends beyond scientific data and archival research, encompassing seemingly unrelated disciplines like literature, poetry, and art. The analysis, conducted through these various fields, tries to carry out a comprehensive understanding of the territory from different perspectives. This ensures a holistic view of its characteristics. The acquired knowledge is then restructured through a process of simplification and rationalization, synthesizing information into macro-territorial issues. This initial phase of the thesis involves a thorough investigation into the territory's processes, ongoing dynamics, and actors, considering environmental and historical-cultural aspects in the current decline.

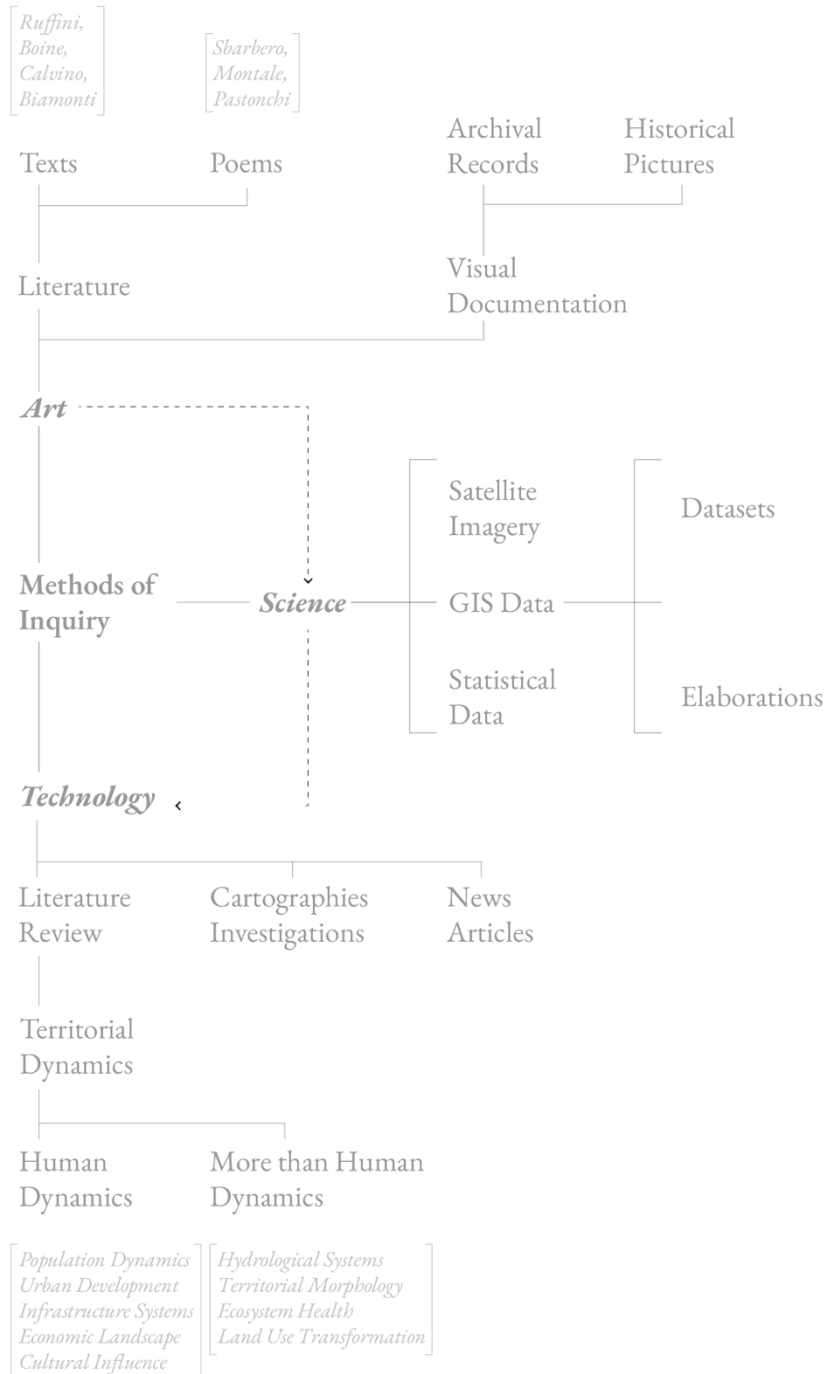
Design interventions can be initiated only when the understanding of the territory and its dynamics is finalized. The project underscores the imperative for maintaining the landscape and its cultural identity. It advocates for a "Poetics of Cure," acknowledging the value of what remains and actively striving for its preservation. Strategically located design interventions target specific hotspots identified through literature review and cultural significance, later validated by ecological urgency. These interventions are driven not only by the imperative to preserve and safeguard existing elements but also to directly intervene and potentially revert to a previous state, if necessary. Achieving this goal involves a clearance process, evaluating the current validity of structures in the landscape. This assessment helps determine what requires removal or repurposing and what should be maintained and adapted. The challenge in this design process lies in translating the intangible (the identity of the place) into tangible aspects of the spatial context (the landscape).

In this context, it is vital to interpret this thesis as a form of heritage urbanism, placing significant emphasis on recognizing the landscape under investigation as a cultural landscape, including its entire process of recognition and later intervention. The design sites possess the ability to narrate a marginal story of this endangered landscape, embracing its essence and relevance. Furthermore, these sites cover all previously studied territorial structures, with each holding its own unique qualities. While one may stand out as the primary focus for intervention, the design approach is holistic and territorial, ensuring the entire site is considered as one comprehensive project. After delving into these micro-designs at the architectural scale, it is fundamental to illustrate how these specific interventions will not only be advantageous on a smaller scale but also contribute positively to

the broader territorial context, actively addressing environmental risks on a larger scale.

Process

Method description



This thesis adopts Art, Science, and Technology Studies (ASTS) principles to shape its methods of inquiry, emphasizing interdisciplinary insights from diverse fields. Muller et al. (2020) advocate for a dialogue among art, science, and technology to prompt reflection on their unique epistemologies and methodologies. In this context, the thesis demonstrates an interdisciplinary synergy in urban design by integrating unconventional sources like poetry and literature into its inquiry methods. The goal is to showcase how diverse and unconventional information enriches urban design methodology. In Liguria, incorporating these methodologies gains particular significance, offering deeper insights into the understanding of the landscape. Quaini underlines the perceptive role of writers and poets in capturing landscape issues, emphasizing the rational and innovative nature of poet's knowledge (Quaini, 2006). Literature, becomes a vital source for understanding local geography and history, beyond a more technical understanding of the structural composition of the place. To deepen the investigation, the "Geocritics" tool is employed, following Westphal's approach (2007). Geocriticism focuses on geographic spaces, allowing for a multifocal and dynamic analysis. The exploration extends to the artistic domain, incorporating visual documentation from historical photographs and paintings. Additional Scientific inquiry delves into GIS Data, also drawing from comprehensive investigations using raw data materials like Digital Terrain Models (DTMs) where data is not available otherwise. Technology inquiries focus on investigating practices within the territory through a literature review of main territorial structures and dynamics. Synthesizing insights from literature, art, science, and technology provides a comprehensive understanding of the territory, contributing to a well defined subsequent design approach. (Westphal, 2007; Quaini, 2006; Muller et al., 2020)

Literature and general practical references

The following list includes the main bodies of literature used for the development of this thesis up to now. The complete version is contained in the report.

General Literature Review

Birsel, Z., Marques, L., & Loots, E. (2023). Daring to disentangle: Towards a framework for art-science-technology collaborations. *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, 48(1), pp. 109-128.
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Reflection

Relation between the thesis' topic and the topic of the studio Transitional Territories:

The foundation of the thesis lies in the philosophy proposed by the Transitional Territories studio, emphasizing the intricate connections between evolving natural processes, societal practices, and geopolitical frameworks. The central inquiry of the research revolves around exploring the sense of disruption, ongoing instability, and the factors contributing to this alienation. Furthermore, the studio promotes critical thinking, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary methods, and a search of innovation in design, forming the basis for our studio. This freedom has proved immensely beneficial in adopting a well-defined and unconventional methodology in my thesis. Deeply ingrained in the thematic focus of the academic year, themed "Altered Nature," my investigation aims to advance the "Poetics of Change." Building on this premise, the project emphasizes the vital need to preserve the landscape and its cultural identity. It advocates for a "Poetics of Cure," recognizing the worth of what endures and actively striving for its safeguarding.

Relation between the thesis' topic and the master track of Urbanism:

The thesis follows the comprehensive investigative methods outlined in the "Delft approach" (Nijhuis, S., Stolk, E., & Hoekstra, M., 2016). It particularly strives to integrate research and design holistically, justifying design interventions with a strong theoretical background and research validity. The approach involves examining territorial dynamics on various scales, aligning with the multidisciplinary education method of this track. Emphasizing a site-sensitive design, the thesis considers local dynamics and proposes interventions that align coherently with the context. Sustainability and addressing the ongoing global instability are integral aspects of the investigation, reflecting a commitment to finding solutions at the core of the research.

Scientific Relevance

The primary significance lies in revealing the ongoing ecological decline within the Maritime Alps region, analyzing its current state of susceptibility. It emphasizes the interrelation of all territorial structures in maintaining environmental balance, explaining that disturbances in individual components can disrupt the entire territorial system. Moreover, this thesis holds significance in suggesting an expansion of conventional disciplines used in addressing urban challenges, using this study as an example. The research takes an experimental approach, intending to recognize literature and poetics as valuable sources for comprehending the territory. Rather than relying solely on evidence, the research and design inputs are culturally based, later confirmed by scientific data. This thesis serves as a successful illustration of how such synergy can be applied as a methodology in urban design. It showcases the fruitful integration of unconventional sources, such as poetry and literature, into the spectrum of inquiry methods. Lastly, the project attempts to broaden conservative theories and practices beyond their traditional realm in architecture to

include the field of urban design. In doing so, it aims to be more than a mere preservation effort for a cultural landscape and its identity. Instead, it seeks to illustrate how design interventions employing the method of philological restoration can effectively rebuild both the lost identity of the place and mitigate environmental risks.

Societal Relevance

The social relevance of this thesis lies foremost in recognizing that the landscape is essentially a projection of human choices and actions. By analyzing the territory and its transformations over the centuries, it becomes evident that these changes are a consequence of societal decisions. Focus is placed on narrating local practices and stories that are currently at risk of oblivion. The thesis addresses the feelings of displacement and melancholy arising from the current environmental degradation. Preserving the ephemeral memories of the inhabitants and comprehending the landscape as a historical stream of consciousness contribute to redefining the multifaceted identity shaped by historical processes. To achieve this, the thesis proposes reflecting on what endures and presenting solutions rooted in local knowledge and aligned with the community's collective imagination.

Professional Relevance

This work is a crucial milestone in my professional development, guiding me within the working environment. The substantial freedom in approaching the project theme and strategy offers a unique opportunity to shape my future career path as a designer and researcher. The extensive research depth, thanks to the long duration of the thesis, allows for a thorough exploration of multiple aspects. In summary, this work not only signifies the culmination of my academic journey but also serves as a starting point for shaping my future professional path in academia and research.