

Graduation plan

Hand-in at the Board of Examiners, Mentors and Delegate of the Board of Examiners

Graduation Plan: All tracks

Submit your Graduation Plan to the Board of Examiners ([Examencommissie BK@tudelft.nl](mailto:ExamencommissieBK@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	Marieke Russchen
Student number	4857607

Studio	
Name / Theme	Transitional Territories
Main mentor	Irene Luque Martín Urbanism (Urban Design)
Second mentor	Caroline Newton Urbanism (Spatial Planning and Strategy)
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>I have chosen the Transitional Territories as graduation studio, because I am interested in being able to take the angle of 'refounding', rather than 'repairing' in my graduation. This radical approach is offered in the studio. Furthermore, the studio has a cross-disciplinary approach. In deciding on a graduation topic, I started with a fascination for the role of Urban Design and Democracy. After seeing people protesting on the highway in The Hague, this relation of space and system sparked my interest. Since this topic requires a critical, and, in my opinion, radical approach, I wanted to continue in Transitional Territories.</p> <p>In my thesis subject, the direction could be also on the policy and strategy side of the field, but I wanted to focus on the spatial implications of the democratic system and like the approach of the studio, to work with visual material, and having the space to explore implementing means like art, photography and more into my project.</p>

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Spaces for Democracy
Goal	
Location:	The Netherlands, The Hague (Central Station area)

The posed problem,

Summary Problem Statement

Currently, the world is in a state of radical uncertainty, pressing the importance for strong democracies more than ever, in order to make sure decisions are made in a socially and environmentally just manner. However, in the past years, a global trend of democratic erosion has been identified. This trend is threatening even the older, well-established democracies. In the Netherlands, a growing distrust towards politicians has been identified as well. Solutions to restore this distrust and to bring citizens and government together, have a hard time addressing all different groups in society and are causing even more frustration among citizens.

Therefore, in order to strengthen the system, scholars propose to 'deepen' the democratic system of today, creating the radical, pluralist democratic system. Researchers have concluded that creating a 'societal democracy' could also help to strengthen the Dutch system, in a recent report on democratic erosion in The Netherlands.

In the conceptualisation of the radical, pluralist democracy, democracy is seen as an a way of life, and focuses on active citizenship. This active citizenship also has a spatial component and therefore, it can be designed for.

In order to spatialise this concept, the case of The Hague will be explored, a city with important symbolic relevance to democracy, housing the Dutch parliament and the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

The main question this research focuses on is the following:

'How can spaces for a radical pluralist democracy be identified, designed and used in order to strengthen the democracy of The Netherlands?'

In order to tackle the issue of democratic erosion, and to offer solutions to prevent the continuation of this phenomenon, this research proposes a radical approach of strengthening the democratic system, through a spatial lens. First, it determines what can be considered spaces for a radical pluralist democracy. Then, it applies a pattern language of said spaces in the context of The Hague.

Problem Statement and context problem field

Global trend of democratic erosion

The planet is currently in a state of radical uncertainty (Executive Summary – The Global State Of Democracy 2024, n.d.). This stresses the need for socially and environmentally just decision making processes, thus for strong democratic systems. However, in recent years, democracies all over the world are in decline, including high-performing democracies in Europe and the Americas (Executive Summary – The Global State Of Democracy 2024, n.d.).

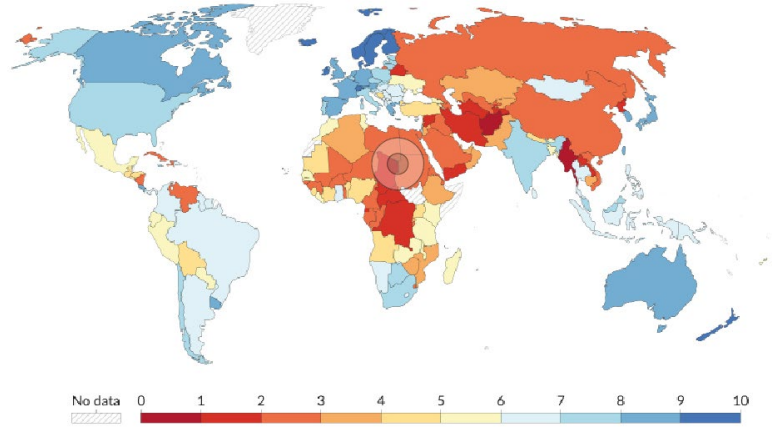
While the Democracy Index of Economist Intelligence Unit might not evoke the thought of urgency in the European context, in the recent years, a growing distrust towards national governments has been identified (Trust in Crisis: Europe’s Social Contract Under Threat | European Foundation For The Improvement Of Living And Working Conditions, n.d.).

The cause of this decline of distrust is declared a result of a cost-of-living crisis, among others (Trust in Crisis: Europe’s Social Contract Under Threat | European Foundation For The Improvement Of Living And Working Conditions, n.d.). More and more people, mainly groups living in rural areas and marginalized groups, feel a lack of trust and feel unrecognized by politicians and policy makers. Furthermore, social media platforms have an increasing devise role, exploiting and amplifying discontent of citizens. These trends could possibly influence the strength of the democratic systems in the European Union and destabilise society (Trust in Crisis: Europe’s Social Contract Under Threat | European Foundation For The Improvement Of Living And Working Conditions, n.d.).

It becomes clear these strong democracies cannot be considered a given fact, but have to be carefully monitored and researched, in order for these societies to include all voices. The question whether the present-day systems of liberal democratic capitalism can be considered ‘the end of history’, already posed in 1992 by Chantal Mouffe, becomes ever so relevant in 2025 (Mouffe, 1992).

Democracy index, 2023

Based on the expert estimates and index by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2006-2023)¹. It combines information on the extent to which citizens can choose their political leaders in free and fair elections, enjoy civil liberties, prefer democracy over other political systems, can and do participate in politics, and have a functioning government that acts on their behalf. It ranges from 0 to 10 (most democratic).



Data source: Economist Intelligence Unit (2006-2023)

OurWorldinData.org/democracy

Democracy index. (2022, 10 februari). Our World in Data.
<https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/democracy-index-eiu>

Democratic erosion in the Netherlands

While The Netherlands has been considered a stable democracy for decenia now, as can be seen in the graphic on the right, a similar pattern of distrust towards politicians and the presence of anti-pluralist parties, is present, among other symptoms that could indicate democratic erosion (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2023) (Honingh et al., 2023). People feel the next generations will have less opportunities than themselves. This makes them feel insecure and powerless (De Ree, 2024). People desire politicians who are in close contact with the people (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport, 2024).

Since the covid pandemic, the level of trust people indicate having in De Tweede Kamer (The House of Representatives) and politicians is declining. In 2023, the Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek (the Dutch Central Statistics Office) measured the lowest level of trust for these two in the past 10 years (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2023).

Attempt of institutions in strengthening democracy and frustration in participation processes

In this area of a trend of democratic decline, governmental institutions attempt to restore the relationship with their citizens, among other things, by focusing on the integration of participation processes in decision-making. The United Nations, for example, have included participation as part of their Sustainable Development Goals, namely in goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) (SDG 16 - Verenigde Naties - Nederlands, 2020). They are committed to strengthening people's social capitals and state that participation as part of decision-making is essential for a just and secure society.

In the context of the EU, the statement of Massimiliano Mascherini, Head of the Social Policies unit at Eurofound, shows the awareness of the limitations of present day democracies. He stresses the need for rebuilding institutional trust, by concentrating on several key areas, namely on effective and transparent dialogue, delivering on promises, combating disinformation and manipulation and investing in social cohesion (Trust in Crisis: Europe's Social Contract Under Threat | European Foundation For The Improvement Of Living And Working Conditions, n.d.).

Similar ambitions are set in The Netherlands. The Dutch government wants to involve citizens more actively in decisions through participation processes (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2024). However, research shows that the current form of participation often turns out to have a low democratic content. Citizens find it frustrating that there is little opportunity for 'political conversations'. Moreover, certain groups are underrepresented in these processes, and it appears that mainly highly educated people participate (Burgerparticipatie Zonder een Politiek Gesprek Leidt Alleen Tot Frustraties, n.d.).

Solutions offered by governmental institutions do not yet address the root-cause of the distrust

However, even though all kinds of institutions, from the EU, to the UN, to the Dutch government, seem to acknowledge the limitations of the existing frameworks of present-day democracies, they struggle to not only treat the symptoms of these limitations, but the root-cause of the distrust and struggle, caused by the individualistic, universalistic and rationalist nature of liberal democracies (Mouffe, 1999).

Applying this conclusion to the Dutch context, this quote of the director of the socio-cultural planning office (Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau), Karen van Oudenhoven, is relevant:

‘Structural inequality in the Netherlands is on the rise, accompanied by a sense of unease and distrust in politics. This is a focus for the future. We need to look for connections, otherwise polarisation could take flight .’(De Ree, 2024)

Spatial dimension in strengthening democracies

Addressing and resolving the struggles of present-day democracies, like fostering social connections, is, apart from being a social problem, a spatial problem.

Relating the struggles of present day democracies back to the context of the city, Lefebvre’s stand in ‘the right to the city’, is relevant to bring forward. In his writings, he demands not to consider the urban fabric solely as a neutral morphological condition. He considers the way that the urban fabric shapes, more or less intensely, a way of life. This is called ‘the urban society’ (Lefebvre, 1996).

This conceptualisation of the impact of the configuration of the city on social structures and vice versa, is the base of the hypothesis that the problems emerging in democracy have a spatial dimension. The conclusion is that the city can be considered as a condition that brings together and shapes virtual bodies, democracies for example, physically (Beveridge & Koch, 2023). If cities are the places where different kinds of people, with different ideas come together, then places to discuss and confront these ideas are essential (Jenlink, 2007).

Therefore, to ensure that everyone has a voice in decision making for the future, a new way has to be found to bring different groups of people into contact and provoke dialogue. The places existing for the purpose of facilitating conversation between different groups, are pressed by a pattern of the replacement of mixed-spaces, spaces bringing all kinds of groups together, by homogenised districts (Sennett & Sendra, 2022). This effect is caused by a process of sorting and segregating. Richard Sennet states: ‘Flexible capitalism unfolds now in a rigid city. The city has become an iron cage - one that imprisons disoriented, labouring animalis.’ (Sennett & Sendra, 2022).

Reconceptualising the current democratic system: Introducing the radical pluralist democracy

Concluding the crisis of the present-day liberal democracy, including the Dutch democracy, a broad reconceptualization of the status-quo by many different thinkers is needed (Beveridge & Koch, 2023).

Nevertheless, in order to keep this research concise, the focus of reconceptualising the current democratic system, will be on implementing the concept of the radical pluralist democracy. The goal is to address the root-cause of the current struggle, stressing the importance of taking into account the pluralist nature of democracies.

In order to give a brief understanding of the later further defined concept of the radical pluralist democracy, the definition of these terms is:

Radical democracy is an understanding of the democratic system extending 'beyond the formal procedures of democratic governance (e.g., voting, elections) to encompass broader dimensions of participation, inclusion, and empowerment in all areas of social life.'(Rocco, Gonçalves, & Lopez, 2024, p. 110)

The focus of this research will be on not only a radical democracy, but a radical pluralist democracy. The aim of this focus of this form of democracy is to address the political demands of all members of society, all with different ways of viewing the world, connecting the social and political dimension, as proposed by Chantal Mouffe, among others (Mouffe, 1992).

The radical pluralist democracy in spatial context: the case of the city of The Hague

In order to examine the spatial dimension and the role of the urban designer in a radical pluralist democracy, the concept will be explored in the context of the city of The Hague. This city is the administrative capital of The Netherlands, thus having an important symbolic, both from an historical perspective, as a present day symbolic and practical relevance for the democratic system of the country. The city has this relevance on multiple scales, hosting the national government, the province of Zuid-Holland and the municipality of The Hague. The city also has an international relevance, seating embassies from all over the world in the Netherlands and being the host for the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

Furthermore, the city is considered the most segregated of the 4 big other cities in the Netherlands (Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Utrecht) (Segregatiemonitor - 5. Werk en Inkomen - Den Haag, n.d.).

Conclusion:

In conclusion, in order to strengthen the democratic systems, it is important to take into account the spatial dimension. This research will attempt to find spatial opportunities for the implementation of the concept of the radical, pluralist democracy, in the context of the city of The Hague, administrative capital of the Netherlands, by focusing on the main question:

'How can spaces for a radical pluralist democracy be identified, designed and used, in the context of The Hague?'

This thesis will explore ways to discover ways to further deepen democracy, by proposing the implementation of spaces for a radical pluralist democracy. In order to answer the main question, spaces for a radical democracy will be defined. Also, the role of the urban designer in radical pluralist democracies will be investigated. Furthermore, the limitations of mapping for pluralist democracies will be identified. The research will focus on the urban fabric of The Hague, by identifying existing and possibly new areas for democracy and by creating a pattern language of possible design interventions, translating this to an urban design proposal.

Problems:

Limitations of Territorial democracy



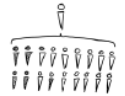
Democratic erosion



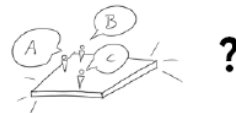
Distrust towards politicians



Limitations of representative democracy



Hypothesis:



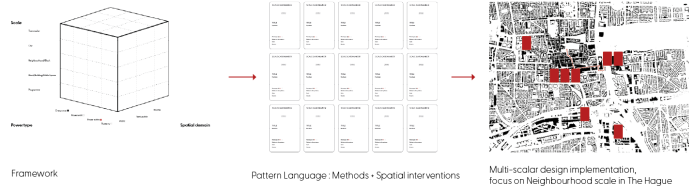
Research questions

Main question: 'How can spaces for a radical pluralist democracy be identified, designed and used, in the context of The Hague?'



Main goal:

To determine which mapping methods can be used to design for the radical, pluralist democracy
To design a pattern language with spatial and methodological interventions for spaces of the radical, pluralist democracy
To create a spatial design, by implementing the pattern language, on the Neighbourhood scale. The context of the design is in the area around The Hague Central station.



Sub questions, research aims and methods per question

Reflect and disclose:

What context, motivation and personal assumptions have to be acknowledged before the research process?
What are the limitations of this research?

AIM: To reflect on the context, motivation and personal assumptions involved in this research. To disclose the limitations of this research.

Analyse:

What is democracy? *Literary review*
What are the limitations of present-day democracies? *Literary review*
What is a radical pluralist democracy? *Literary review*

AIM: To define the definitions of 'democracy' and 'radical pluralist democracy'. Furthermore, the aim is to explain the struggle of present day democracies and explain why the implementation of a radical pluralist democracy could possibly serve solutions.

How does the democratic system The Netherlands currently function?
Literary review

How can the implementation of the radical pluralist democracy benefit the current system of The Netherlands? *Literary review + Expert interviews*

AIM: To explore the possible struggles of the democratic system of The Netherlands and to explore the possibilities of strengthening this system through the approach of the radical pluralist democracy.

Expose:

What are other works in relation to urban design and democracy?

Literary review + Expert interviews

AIM: To examine related works in order to gain a broader perspective on the matter. To create a pattern language.

Reflect:

What is the role of the designer in a radical pluralist democracy? *Literary review + Expert interviews*

AIM: To examine the role of the Urban Designer in designing spaces for a radical pluralist democracy, especially in mapping, to identify design methods that can be translated into the part of a pattern language.

Expose:

How can spaces for a radical pluralist democracy be identified? *Literary review + Expert interviews*

AIM: To identify spaces for a radical pluralist democracy, looking at best practice examples and literature. Furthermore, interviews with experts and street interviews will be conducted. The goal is to translate these spaces into a pattern language, functioning as the base for the 'propose' phase.

What spaces for a radical pluralist democracy can be identified in The Hague by exploring the historical, spatial and social context? *Literary review + Spatial analysis, Socio-spatial analysis, Subjective mapping techniques, Soft Mapping + Street Interviews + Field trip + Pattern language*

AIM: To examine the context of the city of The Hague, identifying important areas of focus for the implementation of spaces for a radical pluralist democracy, by exploring the social, historical and spatial context of the city. Furthermore, the goal is to research if, and what kind of spaces for a radical pluralist democracy already exists. To translate conclusions into a pattern language.

Propose:

How can spaces for a radical pluralist democracy can be designed in The Hague? *Research by Design*

How can spaces for democracy be implemented by actors in The Hague? *Literary review, stakeholder analysis*

To create a spatial design, exploring the possibilities for implementing the concept of spaces for a radical democracy.

To examine the roles of different actors involved in implementing the proposed design.

Politicize:

What are the social and political consequences of the implementation of the design proposal, when implemented into reality? *Literary review, stakeholder analysis*

To examine the social and political consequences of the design proposal.

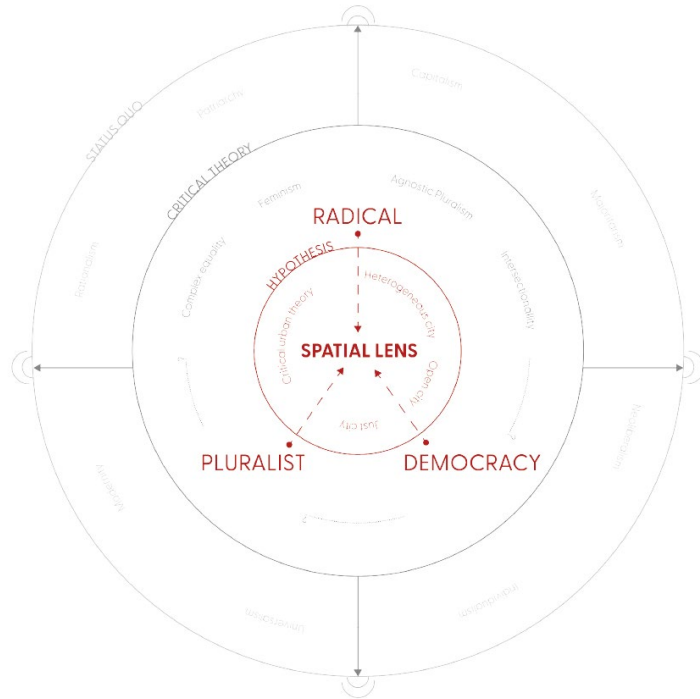
Reflect

How did the context, motivation and personal assumptions influence this research?

AIM: To reflect back on the context, motivation and personal assumptions involved in this research.

Process

Conceptual Framework



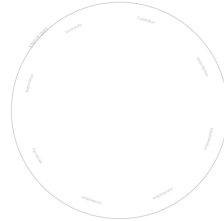
In order to address the struggles of today's democratic system, this research will examine the possibility of addressing the existing problems at their root, focusing on the opportunity of addressing in exploring the pluralist nature of the democratic system, proposing an examination of the opportunity of the radical pluralist democracy to strengthen today's system, through a spatial lens. In this approach, the concepts that shape the existing status quo are examined, and limitations are identified by implementing critical theory, related to the three core concepts of this research (Radical, Pluralist, Democracy), in a spatial manner.

As can be seen in the drawing from the conceptual framework, the hypothesis is that exploring the issue of democratic erosion through a spatial lens, in a critical manner, could possibly reveal some solutions for strengthening the present-day democratic system. This conceptual framework is open-ended, meaning that the goal is to add on to the framework throughout the entire research process. It would also be interesting to see the framework used in other research in the future, to compare the conclusions on what concepts are part of the 'status quo' and what concepts could deepen the critical understanding of this status. The goal of the framework is to be able to explore the concept of the radical pluralist democracy in this research, but also to provide a tool for others to change the framework, adding their own world view and experience into what 'critical theory' entails. It can serve as the basis for a broader discussion, rather than being a conclusion.

Theoretical Framework

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK + IMPORTANT REFERENCES

Status-Quo



Critical Theory



Critical Urban Theory



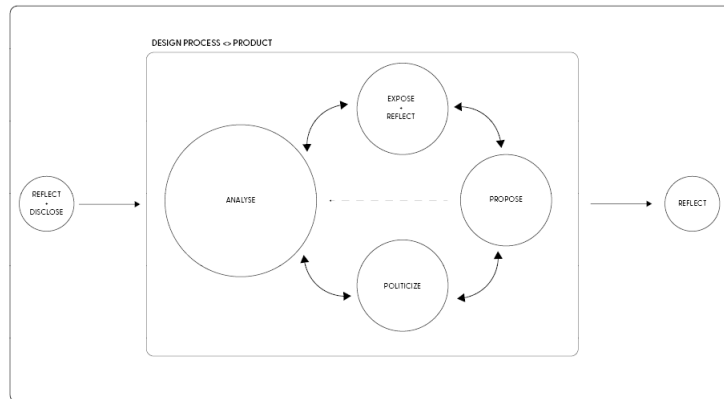
- Verkanting en verdeling democratische erosie en regions in Nederland
- Marjan Hoogheggen, Caroleen van Keulen, in collaboration with Cornelia van Aalbeek, Joep van Lij, Steven Bruijns, Sarah Krulkeneker, Jorkeke Mageroy, Tom van der Meer, Maaike Meijers, Bastiaan Rigbeens en Bets Vlegelhart
- The Negatives of the World's data how do researchers measure democracy?
- Our World in Data - Boston Herie
- What is 'good' democracy? - Leandra Medina
- Powercube - The Participation, Power and Social Change team at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.

- Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics - Kimberle Crenshaw
- The Concept of Representation in Contemporary Democratic Theory - Nadia Ibrar and Mark E. Warren
- Democratic Politics and Conflict: An Agnostic Approach - Chantal Mouffe
- Waarheid en democratie - Luca Conso and Ronald Tinnevelt
- Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism? - Chantal Mouffe
- Dimensions of radical democracy - pluralism, citizenship, community - Chantal Mouffe
- Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism? The Relevance of the Habermas-Mouffe Debate for Third World Politics - Ivan Kapoor
- What is democracy? A technocratization of the quality of democracy - Gerardo L. March
- The Paradox of Democracy - Chantal Mouffe
- Representative Democracy Retains a Popular Ideal, but People Around the World Are Critical of How It's Working - PENI research centre
- Richard Wilke, Janelle Fettes, Maria Smetkovich, Sarah Austin, Sneha Goutbar and Jordan Lippert

- The Right to the City - Henri Lefebvre
- The City is not a Tree - Christopher Alexander
- Art and Democracy - Chantal Mouffe
- From critical urban theory to the right to the city - Peter Marcuse
- Democracy and Urban Form - Richard Sennett
- Designing Disorder - Richard Sennett and Pablo Seneviratna
- What Do Cities Have to Do with Democracy? - Clive Barnett
- Smart democracy like a City - Ross Beresford and Philippe Boch
- An introduction to radical participatory design: decolonising participatory design processes - Victor Lobbard
- Actors, classes and aims: A conceptual framework for public participation - Kati Imhof and David Kaufmann
- Creating Public Spaces and Practical Places for Democracy: Discourse on the Emergence of Civil Society - Patrick M. Jenkin
- The Phenomenology of Change: How Conflict Drives Urban Transformation - Nanki Verko and Diane Davis
- Conflict Mediations - Aleksandar Stankovic, Marc Schoonderbeek and Heidi Sohn
- Processes for just products: the capability space of participatory design - Apurva A. Freedman and Camillo Bochio
- The Spatial Justice Handbook - E. Rocco, J.E. Gonçalves and H. Lopez
- Design for the Periphery - Arturo Escobar
- The Agency of Mapping - James Corner
- A Leader of Citizen Participation - Sherry R. Arnstein

Methodological Framework

RESEARCH PROCESS ⇔ PRODUCT



In order to be able to translate Henri Lefebvre's right to the city into action, thus to apply critical theory in a spatial manner, the critical urban theory of Peter Marcuse will be used as the base of this methodological framework. The methodology of this research is structured around the idea to use six different main concepts, identified by Marcuse, in an iterative way.

Not only will this iterative process be part of the research process, the proposal is also to apply these concepts to test the design outcome, thus in the product of the research and design outcome itself. The six concepts implemented are analyse, expose, propose, politize, reflect and disclose (Marcuse, 2009).

First, the role of the designer will be reflected upon, being aware of the influence that my own world view, upbringing and identity has in this research, taking into account the non-rational aspect of research and design. Also, assumptions involved and the limitations of this thesis will be disclosed.

Secondly, the root-cause of existing problems will be analysed, by analysing the 'status quo' and critical remarks that have been made upon this.

Thirdly, the possible role of the designer and mapping in a broader context will be reflected upon. The role of urban design in present-day struggles will be exposed, identifying the roots of the problem in the current practice and a proposal for a new conceptualisation of the practice will be made.

Then, it is proposed to work with those affected by the present-day system and concrete actions will be explored. In the politicize phase, the political nature of the actions exposed and proposed, will be examined and it will be investigated how these proposals could be implemented.

Finally, the research will be reflected upon, to see if the initial reflection of the possible influence of personal values and the role of the urban designer in general, have influenced the process and project in the way that it was expected.

Research methods

In order to answer the research questions in the previous paragraph, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods will be used, in an iterative manner.

Literary review:

The literary review will be conducted to explore the core definitions of this thesis, to examine the current status of democracies in general and in the dutch context. It will also be used to explore best practice examples and to examine the historical context of The Hague.

Interviews with experts:

In order to get a better understanding of the core concepts of the thesis, radical, pluralist and democracy, through a spatial lens, interviews with experts will be implemented. Experts are people that work with these concepts in their daily life. These experts can have a spatial background or a background in other fields, related to the previously mentioned concepts.

Spatial analysis:

Spatial analysis will be used to get an understanding of the morphological conditions of The Hague, throughout different relevant scales.

Socio-spatial analysis:

Socio-spatial analysis will be implemented to get a general understanding of the social-spatial condition of the city of The Hague, taking into account the limitations, due to the quantitative nature of this practice.

Experimental street interviews:

In order to get a more qualitative understanding of the city of The Hague, a sequence of experimental street interviews will be conducted, with the attempt of finding multiple options to interact with the citizens and visitors of the city of The Hague. The goal is to experiment with the way these interviews are approached, in order to reach out to different types of people.

Field trip:

The field trip will be implemented as a way to explore the spatial layout of The Hague, by sketching, walking, photography and interviewing.

Subjective mapping techniques:

Since this thesis has a spatial base, the field trip, street interviews, the literary review and the expert interviews, will be translated into a sequence of 'soft maps', showing the different experiences and worldviews through a spatial lens. Think of drift maps, Jan Rothuizen maps, layering techniques, rhizome drawings, palmbout drawings. This type of mapping is based on and inspired by the critiques of James Corner, in his paper Agency of Mapping (Corner, 1999).

Pattern language:

In order to translate the research findings into a spatial outcome, a pattern language of design methods and spatial interventions is made. The goal of the pattern language is to be able to translate the core concepts of the radical, pluralist democracy into a spatial design, not only in the context of this thesis, but to provide tools for other designers and researchers to implement these patterns in their own work.

Research by design:

In order to translate the pattern language to a spatial plan, research by design is used as a method to explore the different spatial configurations of spaces for a radical pluralist democracy.

Stakeholder analysis:

In order to politicize the pattern language and spatial plans, a stakeholder analysis is conducted, to get a better understanding of the social and political consequences of possible design proposals.

Analytical Framework



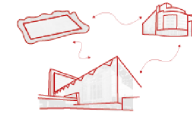
Global scale:
Limitations of present-day democracies will be explored on the global scale. Theories regarding democracy will be explored from researchers, internationally



City-scale: The Hague
On the city scale, the social and spatial context will be researched, focusing on mapping and stakeholder analysis. The focus will be on The Hague, since this is the administrative capital of The Netherlands, housing the National Parliament, the International Court of Justice, embassies from countries all across the globe and is the centre of a lot of protests in The Netherlands. This city has a symbolic significance in relation to Dutch democracy and is therefore considered an interesting case.

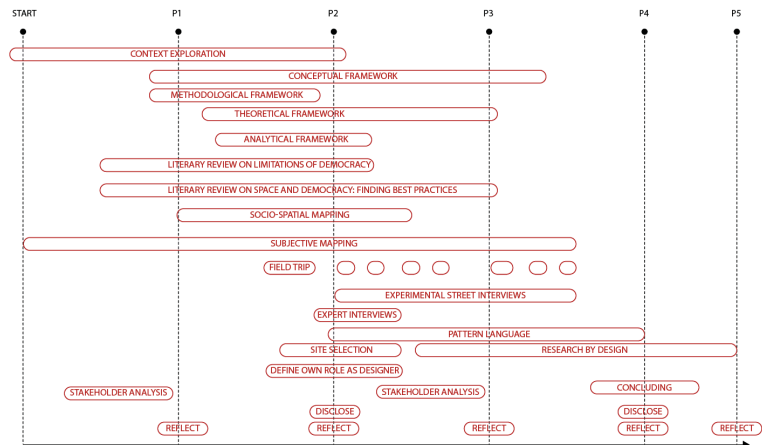


National scale: The Netherlands
The focus will be on The Netherlands, because this is the area where the researcher is from, and lives and studies currently. Specific limitations of present-day democracy of The Netherlands will be examined on the national scale. Policies and visions of the national government, regarding deepening the democracy, will be examined. It has to be noted that this section will focus on the country of The Netherlands, acknowledging that on most maps the 3 'special' municipalities are not drawn, namely the municipalities in the Caribbean Netherlands: Bonaire, Sint-Eustatius and Saba (Ministerie van Algemeen Zaken, 2024b).

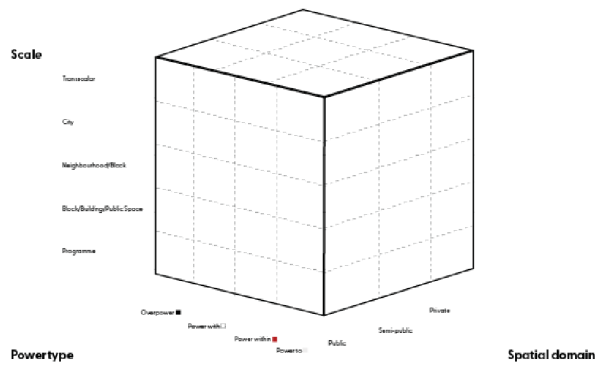


Neighbourhood scale:
The focus of the research will be on the area around The Hague Central Station and the route from the station to the Mollenveld, the Headquarters of the Municipality/Library building and the Binnenhof area. This is a crowded area where a lot of people have to be, they live there, work in the government, or come to The Hague via the train station to protest, for example. The focus will be both on public space, on semi-public and on public buildings in the area. It will be the main focus for subjective mapping, field work, street interviews and research by design.

Planning:



Pattern Language Framework



In order to structure the design phase of this process, the hypothesis is that the present-day democratic system of the Netherlands can be strengthened, by designing spaces that create the possibility to be an active citizen. Thus; citizen-empowerment will become part of the urban fabric. In order to structure what type of power, we use the 4 different types that were identified by the University of Sussex (Understanding power for social change, powercube.net, IDS at Sussex University, 2011).

The goal of structuring the research in this manner, is to facilitate empowerment in an complete and diverse way, in order to create 'complex equality'; thus, creating all kinds of opportunities for active citizenship, to reach a broad group. The framework allows for a multi-scalar approach, that focusses on both policy and spatial interventions.

The goal of the pattern language is to create an example of spatial interventions that could help to actualise the radical pluralist democracy, by other designers and policy makers. Ideally, others would add onto the language, in order to get a broad understanding of the possibilities.

The way the pattern is structured, is inspired by the scales and the card layout by Foundries Hill, Adrian V (ed.). (2020) Foundries of the Future. The power axes are a consequence of the Powercube research of the University of Sussex.

<p>Reflection</p>	<p>1. How do you see the relation between your graduation project topic, the studio topic, your master's track (Urbanism), and your master's program (MSc Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences)?</p> <p>The project focuses on the relation of Democracy and Space, this topic fits closely with the Transitional Territories studio, because the focus of said studio is to develop radical projects that pose a critical remark on present-day systems. The project fits within the master track of Urbanism, because it focuses on both the design and the planning and strategy side of the master. The research explores spatial design methods, reflects on the role of the urban designer in Democracy and reflects on the effect of the Urban Form on social systems.</p> <p>It relates to my master's programme, because it is a multi-scalar project that examines design on the architectural and urban scale. Also, the project also strongly relates to the Management in the Built Environment track, since it also explores the status-quo of management practice and relates to actor analysis and participatory design.</p> <p>2. How do you see the relation between research and design in your graduation project?</p> <p>There is a strong link of research and design in this project. The role of the Urban Form and Democracy is being thoroughly investigated. Conclusions on this issue are directly translated to the design methods, for example the mapping techniques that James Corner discusses in 'The Agency of Mapping' are implemented. Furthermore, the argumentation on why the design is a spatial design intervention and a pattern language, is based upon research. Also the critical urban theory of Peter Marcuse is used as a way to structure the methodology, but also the design phase.</p> <p>The hypothesis of the Radical Pluralist Democracy in space, is used not only in the research, but also in the way the process is structured and as the brief for the design product.</p> <p>3. What do you see as the value (and limitations) of your way of working: your approach, your used methods?</p> <p>The value of my way of working is that I have a critical, spatial approach to a topic that is oftentimes explored mainly in theoretical and strategic sense. I think my attempt to translate the main idea of the research, the racial, pluralist ideal, to the thesis as a whole, is also a valuable part of my way of working. While I am not educated as a political or social scientist, I think it is valuable to explore and understand the system to its roots more than I have learned in my Academic career so far. However, this also poses one of my limitations: I have not been educated as a political scientist and do not have much knowledge on social science. I think this is why my mentors are important, to guide me and help me to find a way to explore the spatial side of the issue.</p>
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Another limitation of this research is my own identity and experience. While I also consider it an opportunity, since it is one of the reasons to initiate this research, I think that in designing for a radical, pluralist democracy, it would be beneficial to have a much larger group of researchers, with a multitude of experiences and identities involved, since the research core is on pluralism. I have to acknowledge that a certain level of bias will be limiting this research, this consideration also has to be applied to the literature and data that will be used for this thesis. Furthermore, the fact that I only speak Dutch and English will limit my ability to interview certain people in their mother tongue.

Also, I have little to no budget for the thesis. Additionally, the research will take a year, so there will be limited time to engage in a comprehensive iterative process. Also, due to ethical considerations, I will have a limited ability to engage with stakeholders. Another limitation of this research is the renovation of the buildings of the national government, 'Het Binnenhof', since this creates limited to no ability to see and interact with the space, in the way that it would if it was in function. However, there is now another building used for the same purpose.

Lastly, due to the political nature of the research, it is important to be aware and mindful of other opinions and values. Therefore, this is a strong part of the methodology. However, it should be noted that this also causes a subjective opinion, while supported by research, on what a 'solution' is, let alone a 'good' solution. I think the main goal is not to show a 'good' solution, but rather a sum of possible solutions that could serve as the base of a broader discussion.

4. What are the academic and societal value, scope and implications of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?

The academic value of my project is the fact that I attempt to link Urban Design and Political Science, by focussing on spatial interventions. Creating this link is valuable, because it bridges different disciplines. The societal value of my project is the fact that I address and research the recent trend of democratic erosion and try to implement the conclusion of research that in order to strengthen our democratic system, the 'societal democracy' or active citizenship should be further conceptualised and actualised.

The scope of the research is the context of The Netherlands, in The Central Station of The Hague. The research will take about a year and will be conducted as part of the graduation year of the second year of the master programme Urbanism of the University of Technology, Delft. The focus will be on the Urban Design field. It will not examine the political system of the Netherlands as a whole or propose a new system, rather the focus is on strengthening the current system, by researching spatial design and methods that could contribute to that goal.

The research also is based upon interviews, the data and information should be carefully managed. During the interviews, it should be communicated what the reason for the interview is. Interviews should only be conducted, if one has expressed consent.

5. How do you assess the transferability of your project results?

The transferability of the research is assessed, by clearly defining the context of the research. Furthermore, the methods, aims, scope and questions are clearly communicated. Limitations are identified and communicated. Also, the motivation, my own personal values and interests are explained.

The conceptual framework creates the base of further research and can be adjusted, if concluded necessary, by others. The theoretical framework shows what literary the research was based upon and was created with the idea that the literary list can be changed or expanded upon.

6. What are the learning objectives of the graduation?

The learning objective of this thesis is to develop skills to link social and political science to spatial sciences. The goal is to gain an understanding of methods and theory to link these fields. Furthermore, the goal is to develop design skills further, by exploring different types of mapping and drawing. Also, the aim is to develop academic writing skills and skills to critically examine the existing practice.

7. What is your motivation for this research?

Ever since I was a kid, political discussions were at the table in my family. While my parents align in their values, they have a different interpretation of them in a political sense. This created an inspiration to listen and think about these political problems from a young age and was one of the reasons why I started to master Urbanism. Urbanism, to me, is a research field where a lot of issues, also addressed in political debate, are present, the climate crisis and questions around diversity for example.

In the first year of my master's degree, my teacher showed me a book by Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin, both 'paper architects', explaining that in a time of Soviet utilitarianism Brodsky and Utkin were limited in expressing their ideas, only on paper. Their goal was to create a more emotional and humane form of architecture (Viva, 2022). One of the drawings contained a bridge, made out of a city. I interpreted this drawing as a conceptualisation of the importance of the city to bridge different people together.

In deciding on a topic for my master thesis, I started with a couple of fascinations. This fascination started in my first year, when I was seeing pictures of protests in The Hague and started participating in the climate justice protests that took place on the A12 highway. I also started noticing stickers on the streetlights representing all kinds of opinions and the upside-down flags of farmers along the highways. I thought back to the paper architects and wondered what urban design means. The highway was bridging all kinds of people, from bystanders, to activists, to policemen, but also all kinds of worldviews, a bit like in the drawing of Brodsky and Utkin. This made me want to explore the role of the urban designer in relation to democracy and protest.

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