

BORDERS & TERRITORIES

Academic Year 2019–20
Session #11
Thursday 16 April 2020

INTRODUCTION

Under the auspices of the Graduate School of the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, Delft University of Technology, the architectural research group 'Borders & Territories' (B&T) invites PhD dissertation proposals to help expand its doctoral portfolio.

The B&T is part of the Department of Architecture's research program and is coordinated by program director dr. Marc Schoonderbeek. Current research members are, amongst others, Alper Alkan, Filip Geerts, dr. Stavros Kousoulas, Stefano Milani, dr. Heidi Sohn, dr. Aleksandar Stanicic and dr. René van der Velde. We invite all interested academic and/or professional candidates who are qualified to pursue PhD-level research work aligned with the B&T group's research agenda.

The B&T program offers a rich and challenging environment that provides rewarding research experience. The group consists of diverse, international academics and professional architects. The B&T research group facilitates in-depth, independent research work that relates to the major themes of the B&T's program as well as educational activities.

For the new round of PhD candidacies, the B&T program will accept and consider proposals that will contribute to B&T's existing research portfolio, based on three specific and pre-defined topics. The successful candidates will be expected to contribute innovative, leading-edge research work to the B&T group.

BORDERS & TERRITORIES PROGRAM

Concerning architecture as embodying complex physical and spatial phenomena, and socio-political conditions shaped by a complex milieu, the B&T's overall research modalities comprise: (1) the analysis and critique of philosophical, cultural, social, political and aesthetic value systems that influence the production of architectural construct; and (2) the theorization of instrumental and indexical qualities inherent in architectural construct. In addition, the B&T emphasizes the trans-disciplinary approach that connects architecture to other related disciplines such as urbanism, engineering, aesthetics, critical theory, media studies, social science, and so forth.

The B&T research outlines four main areas of research: (1) the role of borders in **spaces of conflict** and conflicts of space; (2) the context and situated-ness of architectural construct and form conceived as **territorial entity**; (3) the discursive field of disciplinary 'borders' of architecture and the **transgression** of such borders; and (4) the development and practice of **operational instruments and methods** through which architectural construct is conceived and composed, such as drawing, mapping, inscription, sampling, encoding, and so forth.

B&T's studies approach the architectural construct not as coherent singularity that continues a historical discursive tradition, but as a precursor of 'now' discourse. The basic premise behind the view is that the catalogue of possible architectural forms is neither complete nor exhausted. Therefore, 'other' possibilities of architecture should be addressed by speculating on the relevance of the appropriation, implementation and application of methods and instruments that have been external to the historical disciplinary core (cartography, literature, art, philosophy); and the constructs and objects that have not been considered as architectural 'material' as such in the historical sense of the discipline.

PHD PROJECTS

For the new round of this Open Call for PhD Proposals, the B&T group has outlined three research topics, each constituting a potential contribution to its research portfolio. The first pre-formulated PhD research trajectory is related to an already ongoing research project ('Securing Democratic Society') of the research group, while the two other trajectories are formulated more generally and address the third and fourth category of the outlined B&T research areas.

PhD Trajectory #01 is intended for the research project 'SECURING DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY; State Policies, Technological Surveillance and Spatial (Cross-)Boundary Practices'. In this case, we are looking for a candidate that will develop Case Study 1 of this project, namely 'SECURING DEMOCRATIC PUBLIC SPACE', by investigating the 'New Normal' of Everyday Life; The Policy-Practice-Perception of Spatial Boundaries at Schumanplein/Brussels'. This sub-project will investigate the spatial implications and implementations of the increased security measures taken in Brussels following the wave of terror in Europa, particularly after the 2016 Brussels airport attack, when scenes of soldiers patrolling streets with firearms in hand, people opening bags instinctively before entering stores and spreading arms for magnetic wand searches, checkpoints, security barriers, random ID checks all seem to have become part of the everyday routine.

The study lays focus on both planned and unplanned outcomes of security policy schemes employed in one of Brussels' major public squares, namely Schumanplein. Mapping spatial boundary conditions, with an emphasis on the policy, practice and perception aspects of the attack's aftermath, the study aims to uncover the increased security measures directly impacting everyday life experiences and consequently make (in)security visible. The urban developments and transformations, based on a 'War on Terror' line of reasoning, seems to make no exception materializing the inseparability of war, terror and modern urbanism. This particular condition created an extensive effect on the everyday urban spaces, since advanced weaponry and complex surveillance systems prove to have an immense impact on places themselves, as well as on how people live, work and socialize in them.

Part of B&T's 'Securing Democratic Societies' project are also case study 2 (i.e. 'SECURING DEMOCRATIC URBAN SPACES; Urbanism during the 'War on Terror'.

The Policy-Practice-Perception of Spatial Boundaries in Paris’) and case study 3 (i.e. ‘SECURING DEMOCRATIC TERRITORIAL SPACES; The Re-Emergence of the Border on the ‘Balkan-Route’. The Policy-Practice-Perception of Spatial Boundaries on the Hungary/Serbia border’).



PhD Trajectory #02 is intended for the research project ‘TRANSDISCIPLINARY PROBLEMATISATIONS’. In this case, we are looking for a candidate who will focus on developing novel methodological trajectories regarding architectural research. Relying on what one can broadly call ‘neo-materialism’ and following a conceptual line that emanates from Henri Bergson’s method of problematization, the candidate will focus on examining architecture as a problem-posing practice (instead of its common conception as a problem-solving discipline). In this PhD research, the thorough investigation of transdisciplinary research practices that transgress established and traditional disciplinary boundaries will be crucial.

While one would be correct to underline the importance of interdisciplinarity in architecture, the urgency and complexity of contemporary issues (apparent now even on a planetary scale) would highlight that interdisciplinarity is not adequate enough. To produce architecture theory, or even aiming for a productive architecture theory, one needs to move from the interdisciplinary to the transdisciplinary. As interdisciplinary research entails the collaboration of different domains, it does so from a point of integration, where any of the disciplines involved share methodologies and theoretical frameworks in order to work towards a unified, and thus integrated, research. Transdisciplinary research, however, established the preconditions and thus enables the production of methodological, theoretical and conceptual innovations. As a result, novel trajectories emerge that address what binds each discipline: *a shared problem*. In other words, transdisciplinarity does not obey to the constraints of any discourse, but, on the contrary, transforms them into productive opportunities.

Focusing on shared transdisciplinary problems, the PhD candidate will introduce research methods that conceptualize architecture as a problem-posing field. Consequently, moving beyond ‘if...then’ deductions, the candidate will develop abductive (albeit not arbitrary) methods of performing architectural research based on ‘what...if’ speculations. Therefore, transgressing disciplinary ‘borders’ in the field of architecture and beyond, the PhD candidate will examine (1) the importance of framing an architectural problem, (2) the tools, methods, logics and research practices that can assist in doing so, (3) the assessment of value regarding speculative research as opposed to traditional norms and in face of contemporary challenges, (4) as well as the potential means, ethics and implementations of transdisciplinary architectural thinking and doing.



PhD Trajectory #03, ‘DEPICTING ARCHITECTURE: the analysis, critique and theory of design principles’, is directed at proposals investigating the relationship between the means of architectural representation and the theory of architectural design (i.e. a media and medium related theory of architectural design). This PhD-project calls for research proposals examining the role of architectural representation as a mode (of both operation and agency) to perform a systematic analysis and critique of the architectural conventions and, at the same time as the basis for the development of innovative theoretical constructions in architecture. Herein, the notion of architectural conventions and theory are understood in their most general understanding, namely as the system of procedures,

principles, rules and techniques guiding the creative process of architectural design while at the same time constituting the configuration of a coherent architectural position.

In this context, architectural media, representation and notation are not only considered as instruments illustrating architectural ideas, but also as a real conceptual apparatus enabling the formulation and subsequent development of a reasoned architectural approach. At the same time, the field of architectural representation is also considered as a research field in which an architectural position can be analyzed. It is precisely the conceptual understanding of architectural thought as and through ‘mediated depiction’ that should be considered the focus of disciplinary research aiming to redefine the system of relationships governing the architectural conception, through a rigorous system of signs.

In synthesis, this research area can be summarized as followed: (1) the investigation of an autonomous theoretical construction of architecture developed within the field of architectural representation; (2) the role of forms of representation for the genesis of architectural ideas; (3) the role of representation for the analysis and critique of architectural conventions and approaches; and (4) the analysis of the relationship between drawing and architectural language/notational systems. The call will favor two types of research: the first, centered on pure speculative investigations on the definition of notational system and architectural languages; the second, approaching the main subject of the call through the analysis of precedents; i.e. individual case studies, that can comprise both architectural design research and built architectures.

GENERAL INFORMATION PhD RESEARCH PROJECTS

All three PhD candidates will conduct scholarly research and other related activities. The candidates will be fully integrated into the B&T research staff, working closely with its members. The research group will provide a collaborative platform for gaining extensive experience and skills for independent research work.

The successful candidates must be able to:

- 1) situate the dissertation within the B&T’s research interests
- 2) illustrate clearly the hypothesis and the theoretical framework the dissertation seeks to explicate
- 3) demonstrate the proposed dissertation’s value and contribution to the existing discourse
- 4) elaborate on the ambition of the research work.

The PhD track will commence with a one-year probationary period, at the end of which the candidate will submit to the peer-review process. The review panel of both external and internal jurors will evaluate the research work for its quality and rigor. When the research work is deemed satisfactory, the track will be extended for an additional period of three years. We expect completion of a PhD thesis in approximately four years in total. The B&T research group will appoint the promoter, co-promoter as well as daily supervisor. Please note that TU Delft does not provide financial support and that the candidate has to demonstrate the availability of funding to sustain her/himself during the PhD research.

All specific conditions will be determined according to the TU Delft’s Doctorate Regulations and the Graduate School rules, to be found on:

<https://www.tudelft.nl/bk/onderzoek/graduate-school-a-be/>

Additional Graduate School requirements are described online:

<https://www.tudelft.nl/en/education/programmes/phd/fees-and-funding/>

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Cover letter (one A4 or US Letter page)

The applicant should elaborate on the personal motivations, interests, and aspirations behind pursuing a PhD degree and describe the qualifications. The applicant should explicitly argue how the proposal is closely aligned with the B&T's research interests. Specify one or more general areas of focus and elaborate on how the applicant's research proposal pertains to those areas.

Full CV

The CV should contain comprehensive chronological information on your academic and professional experience, as well as any pertinent record of publication. (Do not include any information prior to the first year of your university-level education.)

The CV should also include the names and contact information of three referents or recommenders. Also mention in which capacity they are familiar with your qualifications and capabilities (e.g. teacher, employer, colleague, etc.). Do not enclose any letters of reference or recommendation in the proposal package. We will contact your referents/recommenders directly.

Research Précis

The précis should include the following:

I. **Provisional Title:** this should form a general introduction to the project, framing it conceptually and/or thematically.

II. **Abstract:** Short summary (300-500 words), including keywords.

III. **Question(s)/Hypothesis, Aims and Goals:** Clearly and succinctly spell out the question(s) or hypothesis that drive your research and carefully articulate the aims and ambitions of your proposed study.

IV. **Preliminary outline:** describe the overall intended structure of the PhD research and explain how it will address your question(s)/hypothesis.

V. **Disciplinary Approach:** Introduce your research methodology and position it in its larger disciplinary (or cross/or inter/or trans-disciplinary) framework.

VI. **Research significance:** Explain why this research is relevant and original, and explain its overall contribution to the discourse of architecture. In addition, carefully position the proposed research within the framework of the B&T research program.

VII. **Preliminary Annotated Bibliography:** Distinguish primary and secondary literature.

VIII. **Addendum:** (e.g. letter of Motivation, portfolio-type information) This can include anything you find relevant to advancing a clear picture of yourself as a potential PhD candidate – an example might be a published text.

Document Length: The first draft research should be limited to +/- 2500 words (exclusive bibliography & addendum).

SUBMISSION SPECIFICATIONS

All the above-mentioned items must be consolidated in one PDF file of no more than 30 pages and 20 MB. Please name the PDF file as: *Lastname_keyword.pdf* (e.g. Smith_Neomodern.pdf).

SUBMISSION

The deadline for submission is 16 March 2020, 12PM.

QUESTIONS & PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

dr. Marc Schoonderbeek [m.g.h.schoonderbeek@tudelft.nl]

SELECTION PROCESS

The senior members of the B&T research group and a representative of the departmental research council will first screen the proposals for qualification. After the initial screening, the reviewers will assemble a short list of candidates and invite them for a presentation. Based on the results, the B&T research group and a representative of the departmental research council will decide whether they will accept the selected candidate as a PhD or not. In certain cases, the Department of Architecture may ask the candidate to answer additional questions and revise the proposal for a follow-up meeting before a decision is made.

SCHEDULE

Invitation:	15 January 2020
Submission:	16 March 2020
Interview and Presentation:	16 April 2020
Notification of Acceptance:	1 May 2020
Start of Research Work:	September 2020 (subject to meeting our GS requirements)
One-Year Peer-Review:	September 2021
Completion:	September 2024

WEB:

For further information on the Borders & Territories program:
<http://www.borders-territories.space>

For further information about the Graduate School A+BE:
<http://phd.bk.tudelft.nl/>