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Royal Architectural Institute of Canada
Institut royal d'architecture du Canada

RAIC 690 Thesis Proposal Outline

Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Syllabus Program

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Role of the Thesis Proposal

The intention of the Thesis Proposal is to frame the project and research and intentions. The Proposal is an important part of the thesis process; it provides an outline of what the student intends to research, how the research will be conducted, and how the research informs the project. The student should include a clear and concise thesis statement that will guide the research and provide a basis for the project.

Proposal Sections

(In this order)

1. Proposal Cover Page (appropriate signatures)
2. Title Page (student name and ID, submission date)
3. Table of Contents (including page numbers)
4. Thesis Statement/ Research Problem (hypothesis)
5. Introduction (thesis approach, precedents to be explored)
6. Project Statement (case study(s))
7. Methodology (project development)
8. Resources
9. Literature Review
10. Bibliography
11. Advisors' Documentation (supporting documentation: letters of agreement to serve on review panel)

Thesis Proposal Checklist

- Proposal includes the following sections
 - o Cover Page
 - o Title Page
 - o Table of Contents
 - o Thesis Statement/ Research Problem
 - o Introduction
 - o Project Statement
 - o Methodology
 - o Resources
 - o Literature Review
 - o Bibliography
 - o Advisors' Documentation
- Text Body: 1,000 – 3,000 words
- Meet with your advisors to discuss the full scope of your topic before starting the thesis proposal
 - o Identify constraints and boundaries of the project scope
- Proposal is reviewed and signed by all advisors and the Syllabus Director
- The Thesis Proposal includes all appropriate references throughout the document
- Final review and read through
- Spelling and grammar check

Cover Page

The purpose of the Thesis Proposal Cover Page is to provide a summary of the submission and indicate whether the proposal has been reviewed by all required parties.

The Thesis Proposal Cover Page includes:

- Thesis Proposal Title
- Student Name
- Student Number
- Date
- Advisors Names and Signatures

**See Appendix A for a suggested template*

Title Page

The purpose of the Thesis Proposal Title Page is to provide a summary of the submission.

The Thesis Proposal Title Page includes:

- Thesis Title
- Student Name
- Student Number
- Submission Date

**See Appendix B for a suggested template*

Table of Contents

The purpose of the Table of Contents is to provide an outline of the proposal. The Table of Contents should include all applicable section titles and page numbers.

Thesis Statement/ Research Problem

The purpose of a Thesis Statement/ Research Problem is to summarize your thoughts and provide the reader a clear and important purpose for the upcoming research. After reading the Thesis Statement/ Research Problem the reader should understand the authors viewpoint on the topic and how the upcoming research is going to support this statement.

For further guidance on how to write a thesis statement please see the list of writing references on the RAIC Syllabus webpage, [Report Writing References](#).

Introduction

The purpose of the Thesis Introduction is to provide a brief background on the thesis research, introduce the reader to the topic, and provide an outline of the key ideas guiding the research. The introduction may include the thesis statement again.

**The introduction should be approximately one page of text.*

For further guidance on how to write an introduction please see the list of writing references on the RAIC Syllabus webpage, [Report Writing References](#).

Project Statement

The Project Statement provides an outline of the thesis project to be undertaken and the case studies that are informing the work. The Project Statement should include a short summary of the case studies and the reason they are applicable. If possible or appropriate, the author should include a proposed project site(s) and reason for this selection.

Methodology

The purpose of the Methodology section is to provide the reader with a framework for how the research will be undertaken. The author should indicate the process used for data collection and the research methodology to be used. Reference should be made to any specific research methodology theories or resources that will be followed. The Methodology section can also include an outline of how the project will be developed.

Resources

The Thesis Proposal should include a section of the available resources to be referenced during the research. If possible, the list of resources should be broken up into primary and secondary sources. Sources could include but is not limited to interviews, questionnaires or surveys, journals or magazines, newspapers, photographs, professional resources or reports, organization or firm research or whitepapers.

Literature Review

The Literature Review should be a comprehensive summary of what has been published on the topic. This section should give the reader a general understanding of the research that has already been published on the author's topic and some of the key influencers. Students pursuing the Illustrated Textual Thesis will be required to submit an EXHAUSTIVE literature review in the thesis.

Bibliography

The Thesis Proposal needs to include a bibliography of all resources referenced.

For further guidance on how to write a bibliography and appropriate referencing styles please see the list of writing references on the RAIC Syllabus webpage, [Report Writing References](#).

Advisors' Documentation

The Advisors' Documentation section of the Thesis Proposal provides the reader with a summary of each of the advisors' backgrounds and why they were selected for the role of advisor on this thesis. The Advisors should provide letters of agreement for serving on the Thesis Review Panel.

Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Syllabus Program

RAIC 690 THESIS PROPOSAL

TITLE: _____

STUDENT NAME: _____

STUDENT NUMBER: _____

DATE: _____

ADVISORS:

NAME

NAME

NAME

NAME

RAIC SYLLABUS DIRECTOR:

NAME

RAIC 690 THESIS PROPOSAL

TITLE: _____

This Proposal is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Professional Diploma in
Architecture with the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Syllabus Program.

STUDENT NAME: _____

STUDENT NUMBER: _____

DATE SUBMITTED: _____

Appendix C – Examples

Thesis Statement/ Research Problem

Example One:

“The built environment impacts behaviour and can be manipulated to effect ones mental health in a positive way. The intent of this thesis is to examine the role architecture and the built environment can play in the re-integration of people living with mental illness.

The research will inform a set of guidelines outlining the effects of the built environment on human behaviour, how people perceive space, and which architectural elements can influence mood and behaviour in a positive way. The underlying principles discovered will uncover new approaches to institutional facilities that have not been previously considered. This project will focus in on how architecture can ease the transition between institutional environments and the surrounding community to promote social integration between ex-patients and surrounding residents. Finding the connection between mental health and architecture will add to the architectural discourse by providing a foundation for further research and application for future institutional developments and healthcare design.”

Example Two:

“I propose to examine the preservation of neighbourhood identity in the downtown Vancouver central business district. In order to control the scope of the project, I wish to specifically look at an example of a large, single occupant building from the mid to late 20th century, such as the Canada Post Building or the Sears Building, and examine strategies for retaining its presence in the urban fabric following the impending departure of the current occupant. It is my supposition that in adapting, repurposing and possibly adding to these iconic buildings, we would be able to programmatically address the same social and urban issues as we would with a new construction, while maintaining the shared memory, identity and character of the neighbourhood.”

Example Three:

“It is my belief that food in all its various forms help define and bind communities together and that this connection has been diminished as a result of the increased size and density of cities and the profit driven actions of large scale agra-business. Until the growing of food is reintroduced into communities in dense urban environments modern families will miss out on the intimate, fulfilling and time honoured activity of gardening and contributing to the food eaten at the family dinner table.

I do not propose to design a vertical farm but rather a facility in a dense urban setting where the growing of food crops can be undertaken by small businesses, local community groups, families or individuals. This building could be a precursor to the actual vertical farm, a place accessible to the public where urban farming related activities could be conducted and a showpiece and resource for the urban farming movement and local community. Such a facility by its very existence and accessibility could aid in broadening public awareness about urban farming and food production and could strengthen the public's relationship with one of the key elements that ties communities together – food.”

Thesis Introduction

Example One:

“The architectural environment exerts a profound effect on the emotional well-being of the people who experience it. Humans “adapt to their environment in both intentional and unintentional ways and are, in turn, changed by the places we inhabit.” (Bell, 2001, p. 57). Infinite combinations of social relationships and physical spaces can influence the state of mental health or mental illness of each individual. The impact of early family experiences and quality of group relations strongly relates to the physical space that surrounds us. Community, family and interpersonal relationships continuously shape one’s self worth and motivation while the surrounding environment intensifies feelings and emotions. Whatever an individual’s initial reaction, it can always be improved or obstructed by his or her environment.

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), recent statistics show that 1 in 5 people in Ontario are affected by mental health issues. Throughout Canada, an ever-growing amount of people are living with mental illness on a daily basis and as the population increases the need for recovery facilities continues to rise. While there are several different types of mental illness some are more affected by the surrounding environment than others, such as depression, anxiety and other mood disorders. Although some patients are successful in their recovery, many who enter rehab facilities or psychiatric hospitals have difficulty coping as they transition back into general society, and often ‘fall through the cracks’ (Gerstein, 1983, p. 13) between large hospitals and community systems. Others experience adverse problems and cannot adapt to living in institutional facilities. This difficulty is not only caused by a lack of support system but also by the drastic change of environment which can become overwhelming for someone dealing with an unstable state of mind. The challenge is bridging the disconnect that exists between institutional care and general society to ease the transitional period for ex-patients.

There have been many studies that examine the effects of natural environments on our behaviour and well-being. However, it is important to explore and thoroughly understand the relationship between the built environment and mental health since the man-made environment continues to represent more of the total environment for the majority of people.”

Example Two:

“Vancouver urbanism is unique among North American cities. The podium/tower model, or ‘Vancouverism,’ has in many ways been at the heart of its development for the last twenty-five years. Large sections of the downtown peninsula are dominated by this archetype. Indeed one cannot cross any of the three Falsecreek bridges without running headlong into the forest of thin, contemporary towers atop their voluminous bases. In many ways this has been a great success for the city in terms of densification and creating a living, breathing downtown core, but what of identity? The absolute consistency of this paradigm has resulted in a homogeneous fabric, devoid of individual identity. Some towers may be round, some may be rectilinear and still some may be a combination of the two, but they all tend to grow collectively as if a steel and glass reflection across Burrard inlet of the trees and forests of the North Shore Mountains. From afar the impression is pleasant enough, but at the street level is where the problems arise. As one navigates this scene, the rhythmic repetition of standardized street/building interfaces and treatments evoke a sense of sterile monotony.

Vancouver is, however, more historically diverse than it first appears and this movement represents only the most recent development in the growth of the city. The post-war period right up until the 1990’s saw quite a different form of development. This earlier period offered a much more individualistic form of architecture particularly along the eastern Georgia Street and Dunsmuir Street corridors as Vancouver transitioned from railhead and resource-exporting port to a provincial corporate center (Hutton 1998.) These imported archetypes tended to be scaled down variations of the block-size modernist corporate towers found in Chicago and Manhattan and acted as permanent stamps certifying the city’s transmutation and its new-found prominence. More than buildings, they are expressions of the identities,

the needs and the ambitions of their original single client. These singular visions, combined with the freedom of form prior to the restrictions implemented under Director of Planning Ray Spaxman in the early 1970's (Boddy 2004,) resulted in buildings exhibiting a wealth of variety in design not seen since and created a distinct identity in the expansion of the central business district.

Unfortunately time has not been a friend to these buildings with many of the original businesses either moving out, many relocating their western headquarters to other cities such as Calgary (Hutton 1998,) or being bought out by multinational corporations who saw little value in maintaining a major presence in the city. Finding new occupants to simply step into these vacant spaces proved to be problematic as the distinctiveness and specialization of the buildings that created their legacy in the urban fabric also rendered their spaces impractical to many prospective occupants. Additionally, the huge profits associated with residential development has created pressures to either tear down the existing buildings and redevelop the lots, or wholesale transform them into residential buildings, as was the case for the Westcoast Transmission building and the BC Electric Building. However, with this trend continuing, it has recently been announced that Sears will be closing their downtown location, combined with the City of Vancouver's restrictions on the indiscriminate conversion of commercial occupancies to residential occupancies (COV 2009,) a more thorough search for viable alternative strategies needs to be performed with special awareness paid to neighbourhood identity in the central business district."

Example Three:

"For many of us, the image of farm and farmer is that of a hardworking man or woman in denim overalls looking across sprawling green fields with a red barn in the distance and a quiet homestead with a large open porch. This image is from another time, likely enhanced for us through movies, television and advertising and is sadly inaccurate. The disparity of this bucolic scene and the reality of the modern industrialized farm is startling and contributes to the general disconnect we have between what is on our plates at meal times and our understanding of where it comes from, how it is made and who produced it.

We live in an era in which much of the food we eat is produced through large scale industrial farming methods on factory farms which are often located thousands of miles away. This type of farming is generally run by large corporate entities whose underlying obligation is to make a profit and the production of food is only a means to that end. This generally necessitates growing only those crops in which the demand and ease of production ensure the required profit margins are met. The unfortunate by-products of this include a host of issues such a reduced selection for the consumer, the use of GMO plants, degradation of the soil, polluting runoff into local waterways due to the use of massive quantities of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizer as well as the displacement of the natural environment with seemingly endless landscapes of mon-cultures. Negative environmental impacts from this type of food production extend beyond the physical limits of the farm due to the significant amounts of fossil fuels consumed transporting product great distances to the final points of sale and the copious production of greenhouse gases which go hand in hand with the production and use of fossil fuels.

Considering the continued growth in the world's population, the increase in size and density of cities worldwide and the negative impacts of the industrialized large scale farming model on the natural ecology, there is a need for an alternative method of food production. This change can only occur if there is a better understanding of where and how our food is produced. If food were to be grown and produced locally then its quality and availability could improve and its distribution costs could go down as the grower and the consumer are in close proximity. Growing food locally would also have a positive effect on our understanding of what we eat, where it comes from and what is required for our food to be produced since the facilities for growing food crops would be part of the urban fabric. Further, this close relationship would have a positive impact on the natural ecology as less land would be required for traditional open field farming.

It is clear that due to the high land costs in urban settings that any proposal for farming in a dense urban environment would include a layered or stacked design. This idea has been in place since shortly after

the sky scraper became part of the built city vernacular and is now commonly referred to as a “vertical farm”. It is also clear that developers do not see the value in this sort of project as only a few examples have been built to date and none have been a purpose-built hi-rise dedicated entirely to vertical farming or incorporate a significant public component as part of their functional program.”