

# GRADUATION PLAN

## **Personal information**

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## **Studio**

Studio ExploreLab20  
Teachers / tutors Jorge Mejia Hernandez, Gregory Bracken  
Argumentation of choice of the studio Explore Lab is a studio made by the students for the studio where everyone can follow their personal fascination. This is the main reason why I chose it, in order to investigate my personal concerns about a city which is going through a really particular moment as Kathmandu is. Moreover, I chose ExploreLab because of the freedom this studio is giving to its students, giving us the chance to organize everything, from the choice of the teachers to the organization of the field trip and of a workshop with a specific thematic group.

## **Graduation Project**

Title Unleashing Kathmandu  
The posed problem The actual urban condition of Kathmandu which started after the opening of the borders in 1951 and then continued during the decade of civil war between the '90s and the '00s is affecting the public spaces and its original hierarchy, which is slowly disappearing, forcing the inhabitants to live their public life within their houses or at the outskirts of the city.  
Research Question If the socio-political events affected the urban environment making slowly disappearing the spaces where the inhabitants were living their public life, how do they live it right now? what kind of tactics did they develop to live the public space? What kind of urban plan would reflect the most and adapt to their way of living the public space?

Design assignment in which these result

The design is a urban project which has the goal of intervene on the city modifying it but at the same time keeping its identity and its characteristics. The hierarchy of how the Nepali people were used to live their public spaces and the tactics they developed over the years had been applied with particular attention both to the built environment and to the topography of the territory, considering the needs and necessities the city and the inhabitants have.

The project works as a series of gradient of spaces from the ones of privateness to the ones of publicness starting from the courtyards, and it is applied both to existing and designed spaces, which implies the neighborhood squares, the market and temple squares till the main square of the city, Durbar Square, which represents the highest level of publicness.

In order to reach this goal two tools are used: the diaphragm, in order to re-create some courtyards, traditional characteristic of the architecture of the city, and the surface, which works as a layer of connectivity that would add in different ways a sense of urbanity to the city.

The elements present in the project, in addition to the private and public buildings, are the nature, the agriculture, the water and the collectiveness, and they interact with each other in different ways.

## **PROCESS**

### **Method description**

The research had been structured in three different parts:

1. In September, for more than half a month, through the research on site, where different places of interest were analyzed and some people from different fields were interviewed; I would define this part of the research crucial because anything I had read before did not picture at all the reality I found once there and allowed me to have a first real understanding of the Nepali reality. Moreover it allowed me to collect books and photographic material.

2. From October to mid November, once back, although I already knew I wanted to focus mainly on the public spaces and on all the different dynamics which shaped and changed it, I read texts and literature starting from the very broad topic of the city on different thematics such as the history, the influences, the architecture, the public realm, the urban development and how the earthquake affected the city and then I made it become more and more focused on. This was also done in order to have a better understanding of the city in its entirety.

3. From mid November to P2 the research has been developed through texts, diagrams and drawings and pictures as well. Indeed the aim is to show the complex dynamics which exist within the city.

In parallel with the research, the more I knew on the city, the clearer idea I had about what kind of project I wanted to develop. This started with the clear fascination -for me- and importance -for the city- the courtyard has or used to have and how the private and the public life were taking space in these yards. The first aim was to create new courtyards which could be both private and publics, as the traditional ones, and could be permeable with the outside. Once I started developing more the topic on the research, the hierarchy of the public spaces started being the topic of greater interest for me. Because of that, my interest for the courtyards started to develop relationships with other elements of the urban environment, indeed it had to work as a backstage of the square; in order to do so, some rules had to be applied, these courtyards had to be at last big  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the square, in order to make really clear the hierarchy between the two, and had to have specific proportions (the relationship between one side and the other has to be more than 1 to 4 in order to

not create an alley). At the beginning I developed this method as an exercise of declination of the kind of courtyards I wanted to apply.

Later I defined the area of intervention which could include most of the places of interest, this area is located in the south part of the city center where the floodplains are. Once defined the area the project started to develop through the urban fabric, unleashing itself, creating relationships between different spaces.

## Literature

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## REFLECTION

### Relevance

The graduation project aims to underline the social (and political) implication embedded in the uncontrolled urban development of a city, studying the specific case of Kathmandu, which faced in the last 30 years many political events that strongly influenced the development of the city and the (un)planning of the public spaces, which had been slowly disappearing. The relevance of this graduation project is also supported by the lack of contributions on this topic, only in the last few years some researches on this topic have been investigated, and the total lack of updated maps from the Nepali institutions.

### Time planning

