Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences

Graduation Plan: All tracks

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<tr><td>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.</td></tr>
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The graduation plan consists of at least the following data/segments:

Personal information	
Name	Jowel Asia
Student number	5043387

Studio		
Name / Theme	City of the Future	
Main mentor	Agnes van der Meij	Architecture
Second mentor	Ruurd Kuijlenburg	Architectural Engineering +Technology
Argumentation of choice of the studio	In the first year of the Master Architecture (MSC2), all students follow a short history or theory thesis course. I chose a mentor who had no specific topic mentioned and who told me that there was opportunity in exploring own fascinations or interests. I ended up writing a thesis on the Citadel of Aleppo, and even though my mentor had no background in architecture, this short course ended up being one of my favorites as I got to develop my own interests. When we got to choose a graduation studio, I in the same way wanted to join one that encourages exploring own design and research interests and one that had no specific topic for the students given yet. The graduation studio that aligned with these ideas was the City of the Future studio. I did not have any city in mind yet even though I wrote about the fortress in Aleppo earlier and learning more about Aleppo seemed very appealing, but I was already happy to learn that the location was not picked out for us and was of free-choice. All the themes mentioned in the studio briefing seemed broad to me as well, and having the graduation topic open in the beginning sounded inviting to me. The studio put an emphasis on tackling challenges of the future and transformation in cities and hereby named, for example, inclusivity, and climate adaptation, so I started wondering how that would turn out when combined with extreme cases; such as cities that have been 'transformed' by for example natural disasters or conflicts. I liked the idea that we got to think about and discuss such cases and that the studio is interdisciplinary too, as to get a more holistic view on the subject of choice.	

Graduation project

Title of the graduation project	Rebuilding Aleppo: Architecture of recovery in a war-torn city

Goal

Location:	Aleppo, Syria
The posed problem,	The war in Syria has caused widespread damage to the city of Aleppo. Big parts of its urban fabric have been destroyed. The destruction of this historical city presents a major challenge in the post-war reconstruction: how to rebuild the city in a way that acknowledges its rich urban identity while also meeting the demands of urban life after the war. In post-war reconstruction, cities as Aleppo face the challenge of preserving their identity while trying to address the needs of the post-war city. But, Aleppo's urban identity risks being overlooked if introduced to generic, globally influenced modern designs that do not reflect the city's unique character. Previous examples of post-war urban design in other cities, such as in the Netherlands, have shown that the pressures of modernization, and such developments often lead to architectural/urban homogeneity which can result in the erasure of the city's identity. Added to this, the rebuilding process in Aleppo includes even more complexities; of political instability, which Aleppo is facing at the moment, the economic challenges, and post-war community needs that have to be addressed. Public architecture plays a key role in facing all these challenges, but to achieve a balance between addressing everything mentioned, a thoughtful and context-sensitive approach is required. The problem in this research lies in how to design public spaces in Aleppo that preserve its urban identity, while supporting community healing, and provide resilience against

	ongoing (political and economic) challenges.
research questions and	The main research question posed is: 'How can Aleppo's urban identity be preserved in post-war reconstruction, particularly in the design of public spaces?' To answer the central research question, the following sub-questions have been formulated: 1. Which elements define Aleppo's urban identity? 2. How has the war impacted the site's urban fabric? 3. Which role can public architecture play in preserving Aleppo's cultural memory and supporting community recovery during times of political instability?
design assignment in which these result.	The design assignment is Bayt Al-Madina, or translated "House of the City," a multifunctional hub in the heart of Aleppo. The project addresses the challenges of post-war reconstruction with an emphasis on preserving Aleppo's urban identity while helping social recovery and resilience. The design includes spaces for craftsmanship and workshops, a learning and knowledge center, and a general public social zone, creating a hub that reimagines the historic urban fabric as a future-forward intervention.

Process

Method description

The research consists mostly of a site analysis of Aleppo using both primary and secondary data next to the use of literature. The site analysis is rather a combination of tools/methods, such as maps, photographs, architectural drawings, videos, and archival documents to help understand the city and its history better. It also includes different methods of mapping such as the Lynch mapping method. Kevin Lynch's work in The Image of the City (1960) emphasizes how cities are perceived and structured through elements which are paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks.

A tool I discovered myself but perhaps is not an 'official' research tool or method, is YouTube 'walkthrough videos'. There are YouTube channels with videos of the person just walking through a neighborhood or from point A to point B in Aleppo City with a camera strapped to themselves. These videos are not vlogs, they are really walkthroughs, showing the viewers how one navigates through the city. As there is no Google Street View available for the city of Aleppo, these videos ended up being very useful as a bottom-up tool. I call this method the 'virtual Lynch method'. The overall focus of the site analysis will be to:

• Examine urban fabric: Using maps and satellite images to analyze for example the city's urban grid, infrastructure, street layouts and more.

• Evaluate the state of destruction and current conditions: By for example reviewing reports, photographs, and satellite imagery of post-war Aleppo.

• Identify elements to be preserved: Focusing on materials, forms, and patterns that define the city's architectural identity, and how these can be used for future reconstruction.

For the first sub question I use both literature and site analysis as research methods, while the second question uses mostly the method of site analysis and the third sub question uses mostly literature.

Literature and general practical references

Literature I have applied the most in my research:
- *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* by Christian Norberg-Schulz (1979): used as a framework for understanding how architecture and urban form contribute to the spirit of a place. I used this mostly for framing the urban identity of Aleppo City, the first sub-question.
- *The Image of the City* by Kevin Lynch (1960): A work on urban perception/how one navigates through the city, offering tools for analyzing the spatial elements (paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks) that defines the city. I applied the theory but also ended up making a Lynch map to analyze the chosen design site.
- *Memory and Architecture* by Eleni Bastéa (2004): This book examines the connection between architecture, memory and identity. I used this book for the third sub-question.
- For the second sub-question I ended up using different sources, not literature, but for example damage analysis reports from UN Habitat and photographs of before and after the battle of Aleppo.

Reflection

1. What is the relation between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic (if applicable), your master track (A,U,BT,LA,MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

The project aligns with the City of the Future studio in exploring transformative approaches to urban design. Here, war is the more 'extreme' transformation case that I mentioned earlier. By addressing the challenges of post-war reconstruction in Aleppo, in my project I'm envisioning how future cities can preserve their unique identity, particularly using public architecture to help in the recovery of the city. The project is related to the Architecture track as it emphasizes the role of public architecture in shaping the urban environments and their communities. Rebuilding Aleppo involves designing spaces that respond to a historical urban context (with the Ancient Old City being a UNESCO World Heritage site itself), ensuring that the cultural and historical layers of the city are not only 'kept', but actively integrated into its future development. It also aligns with the MSc AUBS programme as it integrates research, design, and interdisciplinary thinking (important part of the research-studio) to address complex urban challenges.

2. What is the relevance of your graduation work in the larger social, professional and scientific framework.

The Bayt Al-Madina project emphasizes community resilience and inclusivity. By creating inclusive spaces that revive local craftmanship and support learning/knowledge recovery, social interaction, and the local economic activities, it aims to help in rebuilding the social fabric of Aleppo. Especially because of the recent situation in Syria it is of big importance, as the country has shown itself to have major political instability. The project further contributes to the architectural profession by exploring how culturally sensitive and resilient design can address the

challenges of rebuilding old cities and balance preservation with a future-orientated design strategy or vision. This thus would contribute to the architectural field of rebuilding heritage cities. The project further highlights the importance of integrating local materials, sustainable building techniques, and contextual-sensitive design approaches (contextual-design as in; what makes the idea of Bayt Al-Madina ideal for Aleppo and suitable in the context of the site) in post-war reconstruction. Lastly, the project contributes to discussions on post-war reconstruction and the role of architecture in preserving cultural memory. It integrates theoretical frameworks of, for example, the genius loci, with practical design ideas, and thereby contributes to knowledge on how public architecture can address the complex challenge of rebuilding such cities while balancing their historical preservation and future needs.