Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences
**Graduation Plan: All tracks**
The graduation plan consists of at least the following data/segments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Personal information</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name</strong></td>
<td>Nikolas Kourtis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student number</strong></td>
<td>a commemoration site to the diverse cultural histories of Mostar</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Studio</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name / Theme</strong></td>
<td>Flowscapes/LAB or individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td>Armina Pilav, Saskia De Wit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Argumentation of choice of the studio</strong></td>
<td>Architecture Studio</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Graduation project</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title of the graduation project</strong></td>
<td>Palimpsest Park- a commemoration park to the diverse cultural histories of Mostar</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Goal</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Location:</strong></td>
<td>Mostar, Area of Older Lakici Harem</td>
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<td><strong>The posed problem,</strong></td>
<td>The recent wars of the 90s have left their very visible mark, both on a national scale as well as the urban scale of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The city of Mostar is arguably one where the scars of the war are more visible still to this day. Marks of gunshots on the walls of building, marks of grenade in the streets, as well as whole buildings in ruin are very much a common sight in Mostar. On a social level the civil wars have left Mostar, the once most intercultural city in BiH according to some of its inhabitants, divided on numerous levels. After the war various ways have been adopted in dealing with the issue of moving forward from the horrific events of the 90s. The most famous (or infamous) example the reconstruction of the ‘Stari Most’ Old Bridge, which was reconstructed as a symbol of unification of the city. According to various articles and opinions by both local people as well as international writers, the reconstruction of the bridge is more of a follie, a false architectural image to be consumed by the media and tourists and does not really address any of the problems that the city faces to their core. This new narrative of the bridge as a symbol of unification between the two sides, showcases how the war has altered the city and its built environment not only on a physical level but also in the collective memory of the people. Though the new narrative of the bridge aims to symbolize the reconciliation of the two sides of Mostar, at its core it is still derived</td>
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from the tragic events of the war, as are most of the stories that are currently showcased in the city.

During the site visit, one of the most striking observations I made was how the war narrative has infiltrated in all elements in the city, and how this narrative is even fetishization throughout Mostar. Whether through, unofficial museums focusing on the War, an abundance of memorials and monuments dedicated to one side or the other, or even the war-themed touristic souvenirs (war-helmets, knives, bullets, etc) that litter the touristic streets and the vendor stands.

The project will center on the general site of the old Lakici Harem, more specifically area around the current Croatian National Theatre. Through unearthing and highlighting Mostar’s diverse and culturally rich history in the area, the project aims to shift the omnipresent war narrative of the city and celebrate and showcase Mostar’s history to shift focus of the collective memory of the city.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>research questions and design assignment in which these result.</th>
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<tr>
<td>How can architecture aid in unearthing and showcasing the history of a site, and shift the collective memory of the city.</td>
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<td>How to shift the idea of memorials/monuments away from ethnically charged elements and design a series of interventions that celebrates the diverse nature of a site?</td>
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<td>The project will aim at designing interventions to the current site that will highlight, unearth and showcase the history of the site, and counter-act the various techniques of obstruction of collective memory. By enriching and informing the collective memory through these interventions the project will aim to showcase the rich history of Mostar, and shift the historical narrative away from the war/division-driven approaches that dominate the city.</td>
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**Process**

**Method description**

Theoretical Framework:

- Memory, History, Forgetting
- Memory & Architecture
- Memorials/Monuments
Site Analysis/Mapping:

Through a thorough mapping and historical analysis of the site, the project will identify the various instances that the site, has been of particular importance to the historical and cultural development of Mostar.

-Urban Analysis
-Timeline of Events
-Types of attitudes/approaches to urban regeneration
(Monuments/Memorials/Culturally charged areas, Sites of photos/postcards/Ruins)

Additionally through an evaluation of the current situation of the site, (users/duration of use/state of site) as well as the anticipating changes to the site, that will happen after the coming re-developments, the needs of the areas will be evaluated.
(in terms of public space/traffic/parking/etc)

-Site analysis (views to/from & levels/types of obstruction of image)
-Construction methods of such obstructions and what does it say about their permanence/temporal qualities
(vegetation, posters/billboards, artists initiatives, leftover remnants of old HIT)
-Current users (bus stop, casual walking, parking, Croatian theatre)
-Future development of the ‘Glass Bank’ into federal department will create an influx of people in the area, both in terms of cars but also pedestrians.

Design:

The design will attempt at showcasing the history of the site/Mostar, while accommodating for the needs of the area in the culturally and ethnically charged site, that is supposed to be within the Neutral Zone of Mostar. The design will attempt to achieve this in a subtle and sensitive manner, one that will not alter the overall feel and image of the site drastically.

**Literature and general practical preference**


‘Ghost House’ Ventury, Scott Brown:
The complex was constructed on the site of Benjamin Franklin’s home and includes a 30,000-square-foot underground museum, topped by two "ghost houses" approximating full-scale representations of Franklin’s house and adjacent print shop. To meet the challenge, the design places the main exhibit area underground and presents two steel “ghost” structures above ground to represent the original house and the adjacent print shop, leaving the location of Franklin's garden as open space. Viewing ports in situ allow visitors to see the few archaeological remains of the house unearthed during earlier research. Quotes from Franklin’s letters to his wife during the house’s construction are incised in the paving.

**Reflection**

**Relevance**

**Social Framework:**
The importance of image in such an age of fast consumption of imagery is not to be ignored. The way we build, the way we consume images and engage with our built environment have a direct effect on ourselves and our identities, both individual but also on a larger societal scale. This project will attempt to analyse and/or theorise on the reasons and effects of the choices made on the site of the HIT department store on the social memory of the city.

The design assignment will try to counteract or respond to these choices in an effort to re-start the conversation about the use of the areas within the “neutral zone” not for the benefit of one or the other community but for the people who use it, as well as encourage new use. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, the design proposal will attempt to showcase the rich history of Mostar, while shifting the narrative away from the wars of the 90s. The aim is not to discard those events but simply to include them as just a part of the on-going history of the city.

**Scientific Framework:**
Through the design proposal and the mapping/analysis that precedes it, the project will attempt to set a precedence for an alternative way of dealing with such contested sites in Mostar as well as other cities in conflict.

**Time planning**

**September:**

Motivation
October:

Theoretical Research/Concepts
Mapping
Fieldwork

November: (P1)

Theoretical Research/Concepts
Mapping
Fieldwork
Design Brief Development

December:

Theoretical Research/Concepts
Post-fieldwork analysis
Findings analysis
Design Brief Development

January:

Design Development (strategy/models/scheme)

February:

Design Development (strategy/models/scheme)

March:

Design Development

April:

Design Development
Visualisation of design (initial stages)

May:

Design Development
Visualisation of design (finale stages)

June:
Reflections/Conclusions

July:

Presentation