

Spring 2019
MArch Final Review Day
Abstracts

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Laila Abdallah

A Tale of Two Cities: Re-Imagining Tahrir Square's Muggamaa Complex.

In 2015, the Egyptian Minister of Housing and Development announced a new, nameless administrative capital city 75km away from Cairo spanning 700 km, approximately the size of Singapore, to be complete over the span of 10 years. The spokesperson for the project claimed that: "Cairo isn't suitable for the Egyptian people (...) it has started to become ugly, there's no humanity." After surviving for thousands of years, is it really time to give up on the capital and move on? This thesis addresses that question and others by exploring the area of Tahrir square and downtown Cairo and by focusing on an adaptive re-use and retrofit of Al Muggamaa, a central governmental building known to Cairenes as the nightmare of beaurocracy.

The governmental district in the new capital will be the first area populated by the government in a move of all ministry buildings. This poses the question of what will be done with the vacated buildings mostly located around downtown, this thesis aims to experiment in designing the Muggamaa which houses departments from 13 different ministries and 30,000 government employees set to evacuate in one year with no official public plan of how the building will be re-used.

How can adaptive re-use architecture be used to rehabilitate the buildings evacuated by the migration to the new capital? How can the building help re-strengthen the sense of community and development by evolving in a change on functions? How can architecture in and of itself be a revolution to give back the space to the people? How can this project remain economically mutually beneficial to remain viable in today's world of development and fast profit?

Folusho Ashish Afun-Ogidan

VENICE OF LAGOS Reviving the fishing culture in Makoko through Aquaponics

Lagos, Nigeria is a rapidly growing mega-city in a nation of 200 million inhabitants. It faces issues such as overpopulation, pollution, waste management, sanitation, poverty among a host of others. The coastal nature of Lagos causes the city to experience annual flooding with greater frequency of rising sea levels. Lagos is one of the world cities that must begin to think of solutions to adapt to changes due to the harsh reality of climate change.

Makoko is a small fishing community within Lagos, located along the Lagos lagoon. It is also one of the biggest and most prominent slum communities in Lagos and has been described as an “illegal settlement” by the Lagos state government.

It is also located on one of the most desired waterfronts in the entire state and is best known for its homes on wooden stilts and extremely rich fishing culture and history; but Makoko also has an extremely vibrant fishing and lumber industries within. These industries are its major economic drivers, the markets attract customers from all around Lagos and this has ensured the survival of Makoko for over a decade. It is also the major reason for the growth and sustenance of the community over the past decade. There have been constant threats of eviction by the government over the years but the recent change in Government brings renewed hope to its inhabitants.

This Thesis explores the economic drivers and local constructing techniques in play with Makoko, with an emphasis on tapping into the local fish and Timber industry for sustainable solution to some of the major problems within the community; Fishing practices, food security, Flooding and Accessible Water. It looks to study these problems to use them as guides in proposing a lowcost, easy to build architectural solution centered on community participation and local building techniques. These interventions also help in preserving the knowledge of indigenous fishing and construction techniques.

This project proposes a general upgradation strategy. This would be centred on the use of Aquaponics as the key technology to improve fish practices as well as help with food security and as a result improve the living standards and live quality.

Robin Castonguay

Diving in: The architecture of urban lake swimming

In the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, the Lake Ontario along the Greater Toronto Area waterfront was packed with swimmers enjoying its waters. Today, on a hot summer's day, one could find the beaches, splash pads, and pools packed, but few swimmers in the lake. Fear of swimming in urban lakes, fuelled by a history of pollution and social constructs related to health, have propelled us into filtered and chlorinated alternatives. By moving away from using Lake Ontario as a place for swimming, we've turned a blind eye to our negative impact on the water.

This thesis aims to bring urban swimming back to the lake. To realize this, I propose three strategies implemented at a site along the Mississauga waterfront: architecture will be used to inspire people back into the lake, improve lake ecosystem health, and educate the public regarding water quality misperception.

Salim El Filali

GREY TO GREEN: 13 Gates to the Greenbelt

Location: The Greenbelt of Ontario, crossing points between the 13 highways coming from the inner ring (GTA) and the Greenbelt boundaries. For this review two of them will be designed (HWY 400 and HWY 48).

The Greenbelt was created by the Government of Ontario in 2005 to protect working farms, wetlands, natural habitats, woods, and river valleys that surround the Greater Toronto Area. Its vast 7500 square kilometers connects the Niagara escarpments in the west with the Oak Ridges Moraine in the east. Less than 20 years after its formation, its survival is threatened by the suburban sprawl it was intended to contain.

This thesis poses a question that is very pertinent to the present conditions: how can the Greenbelt declare and assert its legitimate boundaries and defend itself against vigorous incursions from multiple stakeholders? Adding to the complexity of the current situation, many politicians unhesitatingly blame the Greenbelt for causing rampant escalation of housing prices in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) while at the same time advocating policies that favour both densification and new highways as a solution to urban sprawl.

This thesis proposes a series of landscape scaled intervention along the 13 highways that intersect the Greenbelt. Because these highways carry 668 400 cars a day through the Greenbelt, they offer an opportunity for bringing a precise awareness about the vague and amorphous Greenbelt boundaries to the citizens of southern Ontario as they traverse its otherwise invisible boundaries. The thesis posits that by bringing awareness to these “gates,” it is possible to create a more visible Greenbelt, one where the public directly understands the need to protect the fragile ecology of these lands, helping them to become more visible, more respected, and more likely to thrive.

Ammar Ghazal

Prosthetic Landscapes: Reclaiming the Iraqi marshes

Hidden within the sands of the middle eastern desert, there lies a vast aging Petropolis, occupying territories in southern Iraq through the injection of infrastructure such as mechanical drills and mobile machinery. The "West Qurna" Petropolis oil field is situated in the southern part of the Iraqi marshlands. Marshlands that once consisted of freshwater bodies were transformed into a desert landscape by the oil industry, through a series of terraformation projects for the past three decades. With the current oil production capacity in Iraq, the projected abundance of oil is expected to lead to the suspension of any oil extraction processes near 2050. The expulsion of the industry from the marshlands will render these oil terraformed strata obsolete and abandoned in the long run due to low maintenance and upkeep.

In reference to multiple instances in history where the Iraqi government failed to take responsibility of the state of affairs, this thesis proposes a scenario where the Marsh-Arabs (Me'daan) who were forced to abandon the marshes will be reclaiming land ownership from the private industry by squatting. The flexible nature of their resettlement will introduce new tools for inhabitation, by repurposing oil drills and mechanical equipment into construction tools that could mould silt terrains into a hybrid landscape, adjusted and manipulated to be adaptable over multiple scenarios.

Naeimeh Hosseininam

In Transition: Re-contextualizing the Persian Garden Paradigm in Toronto as a platform for Supporting the Persian Cultural Identity

The aim of this thesis is to examine the methods in which a Persian cultural archetype can contribute to the creation of a sense of belonging for the Persian communities living abroad. Here, the challenge was selecting the appropriate urban forms that may better manifest the Persian socio-cultural values. In this study, the paradigm of Persian gardens is discussed as the strongest and the vital element of the Iranian's national identity in terms of the built environment.

The results of analyzing the Persian cultural spaces in Toronto framed the approach of this thesis regarding the recontextualization of the Persian garden paradigm. "In transition" aims to examine the flexibility and potential of a Persian archetype to be applied into a new urban context and provide a platform for cultural celebration opportunities in Toronto. For this study, it seems valuable to investigate how might a contemporary Persian garden contribute to the creation of a cross-cultural dialogue, providing a dynamic space for social integration, while remaining an anchor towards the memory of homeland.

Madiha Khan

Establishing a Foothold: An economic, social and cultural model of integration for New Canadians

With Canada's rapidly aging population and low birth rate, a very real fact is that immigration is the future of the country and Toronto, as a gateway city and one of the most multicultural and multiracial cities in the world, is a prime destination for these newcomers.

However, due to rising rents within the city, many recent immigrants are being pushed out towards the inner suburbs in search for affordable housing and they often find themselves living in residential towers which are deteriorating and are isolated from the rest of the city due to a lack of public transport and inadequate amenities and services for its tenants.

Combined, these factors create significant difficulties for these new Canadians and can prevent them from becoming healthy active citizens of the community and consequently, this creates areas of low income and high poverty, resulting in a fragmented city.

This thesis, looking specifically at the Bangladeshi community located in Oakridge, Scarborough, Toronto, explores and investigates ways in which physical infrastructure and urban design strategies can promote economic resilience and social and cultural integration, within the society, for new Canadians. The goal of this thesis is to create a socially inclusive and dynamic model of engaging and active public spaces through urban intensification and the leveraging of economic opportunities and cultural capacities of an existing tower neighbourhood.

Tanvi Kundliwal

Dharavi: Merging Boundaries.

Dharavi, an area in Mumbai, occupies over 525 acres and houses a million people, making it one of the world's largest informal settlements. In ever-expanding Mumbai, Dharavi, once at the city's edge, has become its heart.

With 20,000 industries specializing in leather, textile, pottery, food processing and recycling; numerous schools and hospitals; multiple religious structures, Dharavi has successfully created jobs for thousands, contributing to almost 3% of Mumbai's economy.

While rich in culture, residents of Dharavi live in very poor conditions. The government wants to push its dwellers aside and replace their dwellings with offices and towers. My research demonstrates that Dharavi, a place that formed one of the original islands in Mumbai, where thousands of families have been living for generations, is worth saving. They need their lives to be upgraded, not uprooted.

The first step of creating positive changes in Dharavi is to influence public perception: to present Dharavi as a vibrant place that is worth saving. Hence my thesis proposes a visiting center for tourists and Mumbaikars, where they will learn about the positive aspects of Dharavi, and observe workers in action in its attached workshop.

My goal is to create significant awareness, so that progressive development that caters to the needs of the people living in it, can begin in Dharavi.

Yina Li

The Children in "Orange"

Behind an increasing rate of parental incarceration, the public is facing a significant amount of the children of incarcerated parents. The children who experienced the imprisonment of the parents become the hidden victims under the criminal justice system. In response to the contemporary correctional philosophy, certain efforts have been made for the purpose of rehabilitation and social reinsertion. Therefore, interactions between incarcerated parents and their children that adopted a wide range of formats have been designed. Specifically, the children-oriented visitation program and the prison nursery provide children with possibilities to continue the bonding process inside the correctional facility. Regardless of valid criticisms, the existence of both programs proves the benefits for an inmate and a child outweigh the potential negative impacts. However, those impacts should never be ignored. The thesis explored the space designed for a group of children who are forced to be separated from their parents. It proposed a children-friendly environment inside the correctional facility to accommodate positive parent-child interactions.

Melika Mehdizadeh

MOCA Gateway-Sculpture Garden

The inner peace is significantly lacking in today's life. Gardens are one of those places in which the inner peace can be achieved. This is due to the close relationship between human being and natural elements or green spaces. However, the garden by itself is not enough to help the urban dweller reach inner-peace in today's world. Unlike previous decades and centuries, today, we would also need to interact with other people in order to achieve inner peace. A garden with a specific program that serves as an event space for the targeted community is a place for people to find their inner peace.

"MOCA gateway-sculpture garden" holds a combination of different sceneries which play a major role in shaping space and creating an atmosphere of social interaction and organized cultural-artistic events. As in the case of this thesis, among these different sights, the sound of the train is the most important factor. It acts as a narrator and tells the history of this specific site. It cuts the historical superimposed layers to build walls that divide the garden space into the different sequences that continue through the cavity inside the walls, shaping a continuous view to the MOCA.

Ali Mohebali

Urban Room: Dynamic reinterpretation of Toronto's urban voids

Over the past few decades, Toronto's downtown core has experienced extreme and rapid intensification, seen through an exponential increase in both employees and residents. This growth has severely outpaced that of public space, in the form of parks, parkettes, and urban squares available to service an ever-densifying area. This thesis proposes a way to alleviate strain on the existing public spaces by identifying intermittent spaces within the urban core that, in aggregate, forms a significant area of underused land. The proposed designs demonstrate ways of realizing the potential of this land for all scales of public gathering through dynamic reinterpretation.

Two main strategies are combined for a holistic design approach. First, top-down methodology investigates and analyzes the existing urban fabric through mapping to identify existing intermittent space. A subsequent, bottom-up approach brings emphasis to the importance of user experience by documenting select spaces from a pedestrian perspective with focus on the qualitative assets of each. The results are translated through principles of place-making theory into innovative urban design elements, presented as a kit of building components. Derived from and to be assembled according to a series of guiding principles, these designs aim to create a new social dynamic in the public sphere. The efficient but dynamic reinterpretation of each individual pocket of space will, as a collective whole, contribute a strong and effective network of public space allowing Toronto's wealth of underused land to be accessed, enjoyed, and of support to its vibrant and ever growing population.

Alireza Taghipoor

The Story of the Hands: On Earth and Community

It is not a very recent phenomenon that the universalization of the urban (and rural) form has disadvantaged many Iranian cities and villages of a sense of place, culture, and identity. Neither is it a novel understanding among architects and urbanists that the quality of locality in our living spaces needs to be improved. The connection between the people and their buildings has been forgotten and so in our settlements we have given in to the more reachable and mass-producible ways of building. In doing so, we have deprived ourselves of the intimacy that was once the blood in the veins of our alleys.

In search of this lost meaning, I have read the words of visionaries, looked at their words, and have gotten my hands to experience. I learned that a true sense of meaning is given to a building when it tells a story, and to me, the story is that of the hands that raised its walls. What would give a neighbourhood a greater sense of community than for the neighbours to have helped build each other's home? Participation of the community in the building process, however, faces many limitations. Our contemporary ways of building are too complex for the unexperienced and our customary materials are not local to most places.

I have therefore explored building methods that would be simple enough for the community to easily involve themselves. And earth, this abundant and generous substance that lies beneath our feet, is the most accessible and affordable building material of all. I have worked on a set of strategies and policies through which my ideal building project can be accomplished, and have chosen my paternal village to be the site for it to happen in. In a village that is rapidly losing its vernacular architecture, I envision a building that could be planted as a seed by its people to grow out a new fabric of local, meaningful, and intimate architecture.

I have learned that a true sense of meaning is given to a building when it tells a story, and for me, the story is that of the hands that raised its walls.

Rui Wang

A Journey to the Inner Peace Of Your Heart, Modernization of Traditional Chinese Buddhist temples

Buddhism is the most important religions in China. Chinese Buddhist temples are the primary spaces for religious rituals. In history, these temples were built in the traditional wood structure. However, the development of conventional wood structure terminated in the early 20th century. The problem of how to reconcile traditional and modern architecture started then and still currently exists. Built by concrete structure and disguised as traditional wood building appearances, these temples infringe the authenticity of the material. Besides, Buddhism has evolved during the past century, so should Buddhist temples. The research aims to search the contemporary form of Chinese Buddhist temples by translating the traditions into modern architectural languages while conveying the spirit of the modern society in China. The conclusion of the research can be a new approach to coordinate traditional and modern architecture, a new temple linking to the history while moving forward.