



POLITECNICO
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Honors thesis

COURSE OF ARCHITECTURE CONSTRUCTION CITY

Abstract

**Building Peace in Mosul.
A propulsion system for returnees**

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by

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The project started from an interdisciplinary approach between architecture and socio-political disciplines through a collaboration with the master thesis of Caterina Giacomello, a student of International Sciences of the University of Turin, to respond to the huge humanitarian problem caused by the Mosul war. The thousands of IDPs who fled during the years of battle wish today to return to their city which is in a state of rare devastation. In addition to the issue of those who spontaneously decide to live among the rubble, many returnees remain stuck in temporary camps outside the city walls, in precarious situations that in many similar cases have lasted long the decades. The “Mosul Postwar Camp” Competition’s brief, used as a base for the project strategy, proposed to design a two-phases camp in an empty peripheral area of North Mosul in order to firstly host people who wish to return to their houses and secondly help in a process of peacebuilding inside the population. We decided to take the distance from the brief and provide an alternative solution to that of the refugee camp, proposing to avoid the risks due to external control, temporariness, closure, standardization and peripherality, by virtue of a double intervention aimed at rebuilding the city on the one hand and investing in the empowerment of the population on the other. Moreover, we assumed that involvement in the social dynamics of the population was not sufficient without a clever intervention on the city tissue and that architecture could have the opportunity to have a successful part in the peacebuilding process only developing the spaces of the Mosul people’s daily life. To do this it is proposed to implement a process of “urban acupuncture” to insert a network of temporary and emergency punctual settlements within the destroyed urban fabric of Mosul, which will allow the population to return immediately to the city and actively participate in the reconstruction of the buildings and society mutilated by war. So, this project aims to perform as a driving force for a sustainable peace through the starting act of inserting the population directly into the city, replacing the option of the camp, to initially offer an emergency solution to alleviate the wounds of the inhabitants and provide a comfortable space where to wait for the reconstruction of the city, thereby controlling peace in the short term. Then, in a second phase, the project is supposed to leave the future decision-making power to the citizens themselves to stimulate the processes of realization and empowerment of individuals that will smooth the frictions within the population by virtue of lasting peace. For this reason, we decided to describe this process in time and users’ participation as a “propulsion system”, according to the physical definition, as the act of giving a force to a body and maintaining it over time. This process starts with the choice of a suitable area for the insertion of a first pilot project. It was decided to operate inside the Old City, as the most destroyed part. Inside, the area of the Al-Nuri mosque is then selected among the suitable sites due to its great historical and identity importance and to its site’s morphological characteristics. Starting from a morphological and typological analysis of the area itself the settlement is developed, generated by a constant dialogue with the monumental ruins and the urban fabric in which it is inserted, allowing the citizens to come back while their houses are rebuilt. The construction process, based on a first public service street to which residential areas are connected, is reversed when the houses return to being inhabited and the temporary cell is dismantled, leaving room for a binary system between a new urban void returned to the city as a public space, and a permanent building with the function of a hub for the empowerment of the population through education, training, space sharing and debate.



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