

**Architecture and War Abolition | Architecture as a Medium**  
*How to present and represent the concept of abolition of war?*  
*Post-war reconstruction of the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo.*

| Reflection Paper



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### **1 | Intro: Relation between the research and the design**

The project is conducted within the chair of Explore Lab, graduation studio #23, year 2016/17.

The aim of the thesis is to examine the potential of architecture as a platform for *war abolition* — concept introduced by visual artist Krzysztof Wodiczko (2011). In this context, the definition and understanding of the medium (McLuhan, 1964) and the means of representation relevant to the theme of war and architecture are essential.

The study consists of two parts. First is an extensive research carried out, among others, in the field of social sciences, media studies and theory of architecture; second is a design proposal located in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The latter follows up the research, thus both are inextricably connected.

### **2 | Research topic and the case study**

To raise the subject of war abolition it is important to study the war itself.

A city during the war and the resilience of its inhabitants carry an important lesson, therefore have educative value. In order to examine it there has to be an optimum distance in time which allows for a reflective analysis. For that reason Balkan war, with particular attention to siege of Sarajevo 1992-96 is an appropriate case study.

There seems to be a distinctive relation between people and space in the besieged city — the city and everything that it consists of becomes a resource. By investigating spatial outcomes in terms of destructions and relations between people and space I examine the impact the besieged city had on its inhabitants and the formation of connotative meanings which arise from it.

### **3 | Methodology of Explore Lab in relation to the individual process**

The chair of Explore Lab provides with a very flexible framework for work, which was a decisive factor in selecting the graduation studio. Within and following the guidelines of the TU Delft Graduation Manual, each student has the right to choose his/hers individual subject and tutors.

It leads consequently to tailoring of the methodology and approach.

My process took full advantage of the receptive structure of Explore Lab. I would describe it as a *methodology of inspired chaos*, turbulent at times but pursued with strong personal motivation.

The chosen method of work consisted of three main aspects:

#### *1. City at War: Case Study Sarajevo*

Analysis of the transformations that Sarajevo underwent in the time of Bosnian War, especially during between April 1992 and February 1996. The aforementioned area of study consisted of investigating the city under siege, spatial outcomes in terms of destruction and urban resilience, rather than stressing out political, historical and religious matters.

Outcomes: Timeline of the siege, detailed 3d model of the city, series of studies in maps and drawings.

#### *2. Abolition of War: Concept Revision and Theoretical Considerations*

Following research re-examines the original assumptions of the concept of war abolition in relation to architecture. The aim is to expose fundamental ambiguities regarding the original approach, as well as to formulate new methodology for application. This study considers the issue of representation noted by the artist, and links it with the notions of semantics and semiotics, thus relevant to the interpretation of war abolition.

In the research I introduce the definition of modern warfare (Mary Kaldor, 2013). The investigation displays the untapped potential of war abolition concept. The revision follows the introduction of micro-shifts (Marek Krajewski, 2012), therapeuticism of culture (Małgorzata Jacyno, 2007) and architecture as medium (Marshall McLuhan, 1964).

The study concerns the potential of architecture to become a platform for dissemination of war abolition concept and its application in Sarajevo.

Outcomes: Thesis paper, Research Book, series of drawings and collages.

### 3. *Architecture as Medium: Post-war reconstruction of the Historical Museum of BiH, Sarajevo*

Architectural application of the aforementioned consideration and research. The broad proposal refers to consecutive scales/issues of the terrain, city, building and the objects of the museum.

The museum was originally founded in 1945 as the Museum of National Liberation, to later change its name and location a couple of times, before moving to its current location in 1963. After the war, in 2012, the building was given the status of a national monument remaining active. Nonetheless, the museum is neglected and ignored. It exists in very poor physical condition, which is a result of the lack of political decisiveness regarding maintenance of the heritage of modernist architecture. This is an important issue, as it applies to many modernist legacy buildings in ex-Yugoslavia.

The museum is not only an important landmark in the city and a showcase of Yugoslavian design, it also holds a crucial location in the city and a significance for its inhabitants. The museum sits meters away from where the siege line used to be, in the place where the enemy penetrated the city deepest, entering Marijn Dvor along the riverfront.

To propose an intervention on the museum offers a challenge to address the momentous history of the site. It also allows to take advantage of the positive features of the building to ensure the success of the project, such as its connotative meaning in the minds of residents, cultural relevance, and meaningful location.

Outcomes: Series of architectural drawings, diagrams, visualisations and collages

## 4 | *Broader relevance*

It is difficult to imagine the world free of warfare. The phenomenon of wars is an integral part of human history to such an extent that it rarely comes to mind to question their inevitability in conflict resolution. However, assuming that the fate of people is intertwined with wars, all the attempts to subvert this view present an opportunity to understand the mechanisms and the medium of warfare, as well as our inestimable role in it.

My architectural design is based on the cultural matrix of Sarajevo in which the museum (an architectural medium) functions, as it is the basis for its content and message. However, it refers to the universal experience of war allowing to engage a larger audience. Therefore, the concept of war abolition is likely to be tested elsewhere and with the use of different medium. Due to common connotations there is a possibility to heal war trauma in the process.

The topic of wars has not and will not disappear, that is why it is important to be aware of how wars evolve. In many respects it is possible to say that nowadays there is always an ongoing war that we are unaware of. Often it is based on an ideological conflict and very ambiguous to bystanders.

Gone are the days in which no tanks on the streets meant no war. Modern warfare in particular cannot be abolished without understanding what it really is. Therefore, in the process of overthrowing wars, instead of writing manifestos, one must read between the lines.

Theoretical considerations are an important clue that can be addressed in the fields of politics, art, culture, sociology, psychology, and so on. The concept of war abolition can be tested in many ways which would generate experimentation and a feedback loop. One of the goals of my thesis is an invitation to further inquiry.