

# Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences



## Graduation Plan: All tracks

Personal information	
Name	Martin Rafael Grech
Student number	5366283

Studio	
Name / Theme	Complex Projects / Beirut Studio, Catastrophe
Main mentor	Hrvoje Smidihen
Second mentor	Hubert van der Meel
Argumentation of choice of the studio	The chair of Complex Projects furthers an all-encompassing approaches towards the architectural context. In doing so, the insight achievable becomes applicable to a variety of projects all part of the greater system to which architecture and people fall under. After having learned a lot already in the M.Sc.1 Complex Projects Studio, working on a project which this time revolves around understanding and reacting to what is currently going on in Beirut, gives rise to an even greater opportunity to achieve a more advanced cultural and architectural understanding. This having the potential to become knowledge applicable to other global cities.

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Cultural Reform: Rethinking cultural manifestation in the urban environment
Goal	
Location:	Beirut, Lebanon
The posed problem,	Across a period of multiple crises and a structurally instable government, amongst other things, there has been a strong national decline in cultural activity, production, and presence. With this, national identity is faltering, and people start to give up on their home nation. Who can is emigrating, and the rest lay abandoned and discouraged in an increasingly privatized and unwelcoming environment.
research questions and	What role can culture play in the complex transitions cities are currently going through? What aspects can be combined in order to suggest architecture appropriate for a scenario of hardships, which also strengthens national identity and the image of the

	city? Ultimately, how can a building complex informed by cultural production contribute to the narration and revival of cultural activity?
design assignment in which these result.	The task at hand is the design of a productive building which revolves around a culturally relevant produce and manages to evoke the social rituals and greater historic context which go with it. This should strengthen and reinstate pride towards local produce, reform ties to the country and its rich lands, and also support the citizens and the complex urban life which surround it. The design of an urban winery and arak distillery shall be the assignment utilized as means of researching and exploring this challenge.

## **Process**

### **Method description**

The journey of grape based drinks, from the Phoenicians across the Mediterranean to the Arabs and then to the French and back to Lebanon, indirectly unfolds a substantial part of the history of the country and region. The challenge is to tell this story through the architecture which processes the grape. The various stages in the process vary in telling ways from culture to culture and these differences need to be studied and utilized strategically in order to curate the experience. Starting from wineries in Lebanon, a comparison needs to be formulated between these varying examples themselves, as well as in comparison to French, ancient, and additional relevant references. Through this the typology will be thoroughly understood but also the varying nuances and their cultural implications.

The construct also requires qualities of a museum to be integrated within, whilst simultaneously needing to remain functional and eventful in order to establish an integral link to the community. For this reason the museum typology will be analyzed once a clear and extensive understanding of the history has been devised. Successively I shall delve into the typologies and practices surrounding local bars and drinking culture, and restaurants and traditional dining practices which are so often coupled with wine or arak by those that do enjoy drink. Like this I would be able to understand trends and traditional practices which can help design meaningful but also simply more popular configurations.

This project would need to deal with the suburban context within which the selected site is situated. Being exactly within the open center, at which also the various socio-cultural groups come together, gives rise to a specific responsibility which aligns with the public and influential ambition of the winery. To an overly congested, segregated, and privatized city, it is imperative that a cultural project reacts to such factors, and

adapts itself to the specific variations within the site. For this reason the winery shall need to understand typologies within central public spaces, more specifically a park, and understand also how a production entity can configure itself within whilst accomplishing various ambitions. Relevance to traditional and culturally relevant architectural typologies will help understand what constitutes a popular landmark building fit for the Beirut context which supports the life of its diverse population.

### **Literature and general practical preference**

The literature to be consulted will consist of; Historic data on the traits and architecture of the various cultures which influenced Lebanon and contributed to the nation's story of wine. Namely books such as "Tears of Bacchus", and "Lebanese Wines", written or edited by Michael Karam, which revolve around Wine in the Middle East. Additionally articles and journals which focus on viticulture in Lebanon and the Mediterranean, both present day developments but also historic and archaeological findings which bring about a series of perspectives from which to assess the context.

Amongst others, practical precedents studied in order to understand the site and winery typology include:

- Antinori Winery, Bargino
- Chateau Cheval Blanc, Saint-Émilion
- Les Davids Winery, Ménerbes
- IXSIR winery, Lebanon
- Chateau Ksara, Lebanon
- Chateau Musar, Lebanon
- Building Typologies in Parc de Bercy, Paris
- Building Typologies in Het Museum Park, Amsterdam

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

The graduation studio revolves around the theme of catastrophe. With regards to the selected project topic, Beirut is an exaggerated scenario of changes which many cities are going through in this regard. There are many difficulties in upkeeping a strong cultural identity within the urban environment, and often times cities start to lose their unique character.

In this regard, the chosen topic and research to be expanded upon, will allow me to improve my understanding of the correlations between varying cultures and architectural design. It will help refine my execution of contextually driven designs

and also emancipates a human-centric design approach, qualities becoming increasingly more rare as material values often take first priority.

Therefore, dealing with the critical topics of culture and placemaking holds value applicable throughout the architectural profession. Through the modification of the winery typology, I can attempt to provide an architectural solution which incorporates cultural values within an otherwise culturally less significant typology which in turn would be more necessary economically.