

FROM URBICIDE TO THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE CITY

SYRIA - THE MAKING OF THE FUTURE

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Salma Samar Damluji

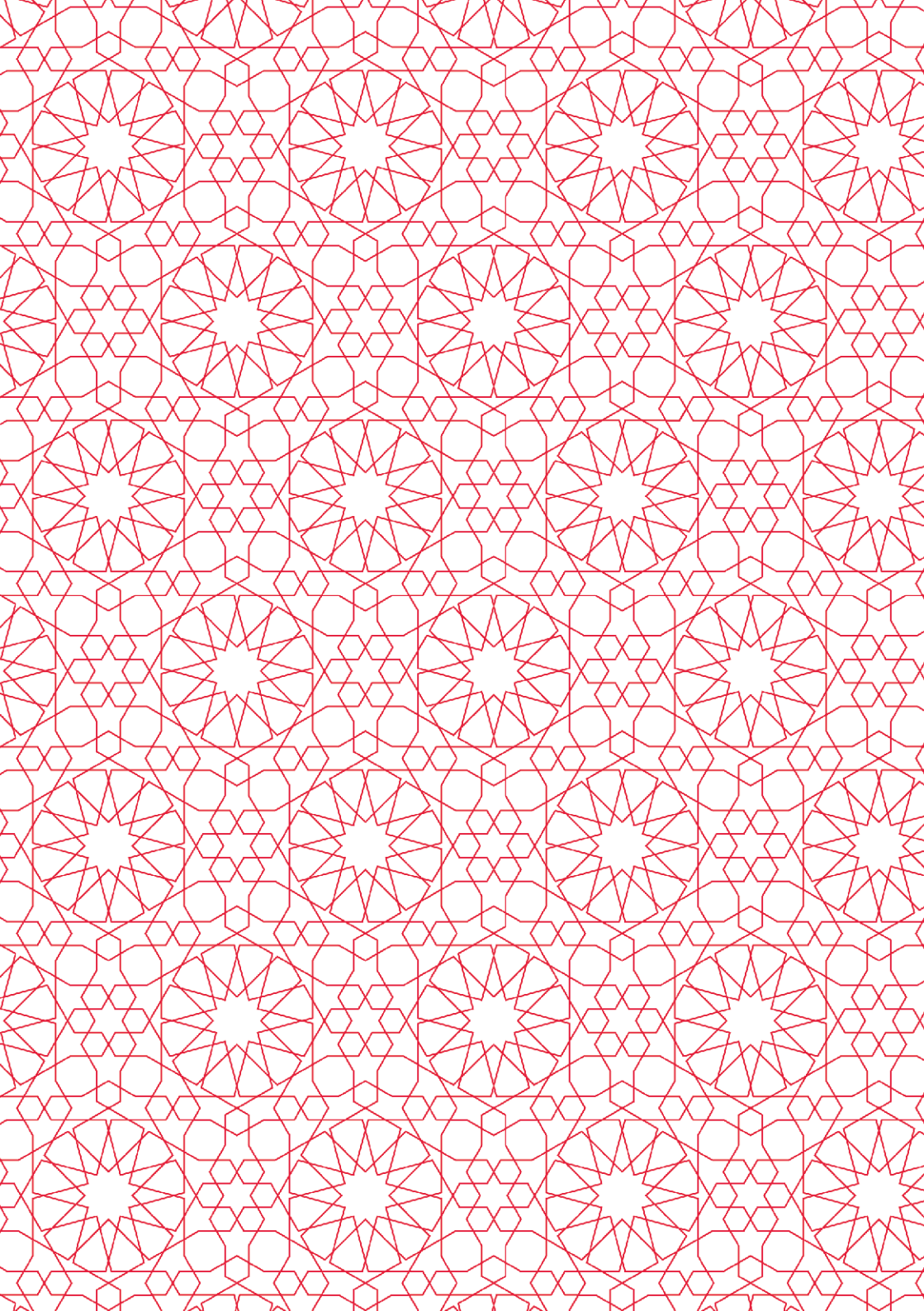
— MA'LŪLĀ / 33°50'44"N 36°32'52"E

REINVENTING MA'LŪLĀ



WAVE.
2017


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SYRIA – THE MAKING OF THE FUTURE FROM URBICIDE TO THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE CITY

W.A.Ve. 2017

Curator: Alberto Ferlenga

Scientific director: Benno Albrecht

Coordination: Jacopo Galli

Organization: Sara Altamore, Alessandro Dal Corso, Letizia Goretti, Tania Sarria

Tutors: Wesam Asali, Maria Thala Al Aswad, Mariam Eissa, Lujain Hadba, Reem Harfoush, Hasan Mansour, Rolana Rabih, Mounir Sabeh Affaki, Fares Al Saleh

Administration: Lucia Basile, Piera Terone

Graduate Students: Lorenzo Abate, Stefano Bortolato, Leonardo Brancaloni, Michele Brusutti, Stefano Busetto, Davide Cargnin, Susanna De Vido, Pietropaolo Cristini, Martina Fadanelli, Martina Germanà, Eugenio Gervasio, Maria Guerra, Irene Guizzo, Alessia Iannoli, Vartivar Jaklian, Michele Maniero, Maddalena Meneghello, Avitha Panazzi, Silvia Pellizzon, Camilla Pettinelli, Mariagiulia Pistonese, Giacomo Raffaelli, Elena Salvador, Antonio Signori, Sonia Zucchelli

Salma Samar Damluji Reinventing Ma'Lulā

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Introduction

Viola Bertini, Celeste Da Boit, Giada Saviane

The title of the workshop - *Re-Inventing Ma'lūlā* - aims at defining the theoretical context within which the workshop activities were defined. The word invention comes from the Latin *invēntu*, past participle of *invenīre*, that means discovering, re-finding something by looking for it. Therefore, we mean to investigate Ma'lūlā in order to try to understand the spirit of the place and the sense of the space. Both these aspects are in fact essential in trying to figure out any eventual process of reconstruction and, more in general, a possible future for Ma'lūlā. The topic was developed following four different themes, to which each group was assigned.

Village layout

A study on the theme of the “village” was developed, in order to understand the logic according to which the village was shaped, with a main focus on the relationship between the buildings and the topographic condition of the site. The study included a survey of the demolished areas, aimed at recognising how the urban layout changed after the war destruction and, therefore, also aimed at defining the areas of future transformation. The study resulted in a maquette of the site and a masterplan that, reinterpreting the ancient structure of the village, suggests its possible expansion and transformation.

Housing

From a reading of the main existing housing types, the plot of a demolished village was chosen as a

case study in order to experiment new housing solutions. The remaining traces of the pre-existing houses were considered as a footprint to be followed in the reconstruction process, so as to not modify the general sense of the space. After defining the overall layout of the plot, a project of a courtyard house was developed in detail, trying to match the traditional domestic features with the new residential needs of the local people.

Monasteries and sacred buildings

The presence of many sacred buildings in Ma'lūlā was recognised as one of the main characteristics of the village and as a fundamental part of its specific identity. Eight of these buildings were chosen and, with reference to the limited existing visual documentation, analysed in order to understand their structure, the recurring parts they are composed of, and their relationship with the general layout of the village and site. The study was developed in drawings and maquettes, and used as a tool to define the project of an abstract sacred space to be intended as a symbolic, multicultural, and multi-religious place.

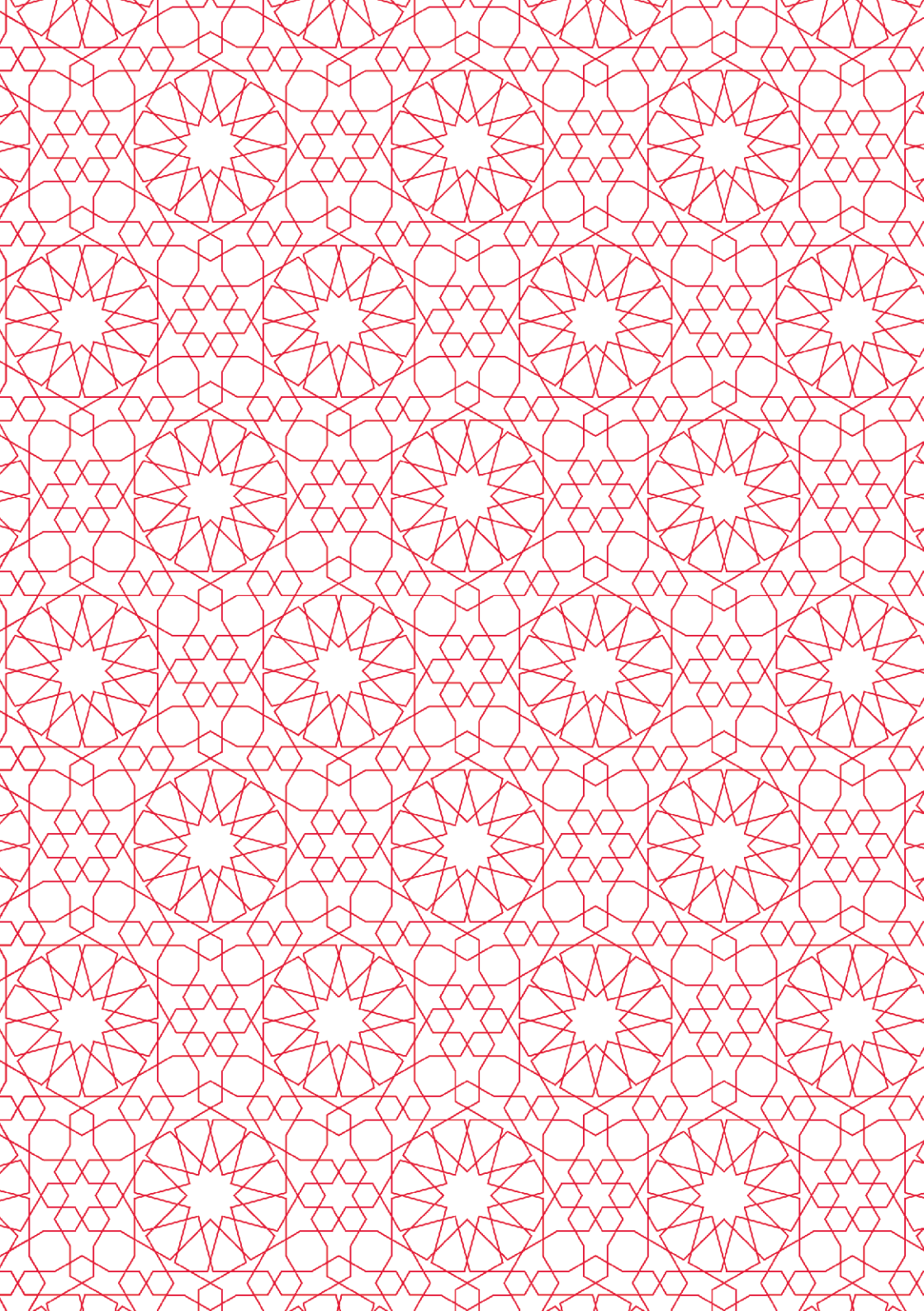
Homage to Ma'lūlā

Finally, we brought homage to Ma'lūlā by creating two installations: a dome and a sculpture. The dome, with a 3 m diameter, was built with green and gold-painted polystyrene blocks to cover a hexagonal room. The sculpture, consisting of several black boards painted with Arabic and Aramaic calligraphy (with the names of the monasteries), hung from the ceiling of the central space that served as an enclosed court. Both installations had a symbolic meaning, expressing the identity of Ma'lūlā and a hope for its future.

The workshop results were exhibited in total darkness, and the experience was articulated with Aramaic chants from the monasteries and choirs of Ma'lūlā. Conceived as an abstract village layout, with narrow passages and small squares around the central court, each space was dedicated to one of the four themes. The idea, once again, was that of recreating a Sense of Ma'lūlā's space and place, evoking a sombre atmosphere leading to lightened interventions within each section. At the end of the passage to the bronze dome, with the representation of a star lit sky, a prevailing feeling of quiet and peace emerges and rises.



web: wave2017.iuav.it
mail: workshop2017@iuav.it



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Roberta Albiero

Felipe Assadi

Aldo Aymonino

Beals Lyon Arquitectos

Solano Benitez

BOM Architecture

Francesco Cacciatore

Ricardo Carvalho

Armando Dal Fabbro

Salma Samar Damluji / Reinventing Ma'Lulā

Fernanda De Maio

Gaeta Springall Architects

Antonella Gallo

Sinan Hassan

Ammar Khammash

Camillo Magni - Operastudio

Giancarlo Mazzanti

Patrizia Montini Zimolo

Paredes y Pedrosa

Ciro Pirondi

Plan Collectif

Attilio Santi

TAMassociati

UNLAB

João Ventura Trindade

VMX Architects



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