



Proposal for Senior Honors Thesis

HONS 497 Senior Honors Thesis Credits 2 (2 minimum required)

Directions: Please return signed a proposal to the Honors Office **at least one week prior to your scheduled meeting with the Honors Council**. This proposal must be accepted by Honors Council the semester before the presentation.

Student's Name: **Gwendoline Albright Ndikumagenge**

Primary Advisor: **Andrew Von Maur**

Secondary Advisor: -

Thesis Title: **"Strengthening social bonds in Bujumbura through public space: Redesigning Jardin Public de Bujumbura for the restoration of the city's sense of community"**

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Expected date of Graduation: **May 2019**

- I. Provide goals and a brief description of your project or research.
- II. Outline your methodology. **Please be specific.** How does this achieve your goals and how reliable is it?
- III. Explain in what sense your project is original, unique, or beyond normal senior expectations. How does it relate to current knowledge in the discipline?
- IV. Include a substantive annotated bibliography of similar or related work.
- V. Provide a statement of progress to date and list the research methods coursework completed.

Department Chair Approval

- **This student's performance in his/her major field is acceptable.**
- **He/she has completed the requisite research methods coursework for the research to be pursued.**
- **I understand that he/she plans to graduate with Honors.**


Department Chair (signature)

Research Advisor Approval

I have read and support this proposal:


Primary Advisor (signature)

I have read and support this proposal:

Secondary Advisor (signature)

If human subjects or if live vertebrate animals are involved, evidence of approval from the Institutional Review Board or an Animal Use Committee is needed through the campus scholarly research offices (Ext. 6361).

I. Goals and a brief description of my project.

“We are never going to save the rural places, or wild places or scenic places unless we identify the human habitat, and then strive to make it so good that humans will voluntarily inhabit it”

- James Howard Kunstler.

Public Spaces in the past century have been a subject of interest to architects and urbanists because of their reputation of making great cities. While there are plenty of reasons why these public spaces are significant to cities' design, they are mostly known for bringing more life, connections and strengthening bonds within communities. It is for this reason that most cities strive to keep these spaces as accessible and as effective as possible. Unfortunately, the necessity of making public spaces beneficial to communities is not a focus everywhere. In some places, the public realm is perceived to cause problems in cities rather than promote their well-being.

Cities like Bujumbura in Africa that have continuously experienced war and instability over the years see public spaces as settings that contribute to an increase in death rates, rapes and many other security problems in the city. However, as an aspiring architect and designer, I believe in the potential that public spaces have to enhance peace and security as long as it becomes clear to architects that the public realm is the missing piece to community design. I believe that public spaces can be revived in such a way to promote social bonds and human flourishing in communities and give a chance to cities that have lost hope in humanity to have peace and security.

My experience as an architecture student made me believe in design as a potential contributor to solving social problems. I believe that public spaces are meant to be designed appropriately and intentionally for a specific purpose. For my senior year thesis, I will seek to analyze different ways in which public spaces can be designed with a specific goal to help promote Bujumbura's peace and security. My goal is to design and create a public space that will have the chance to revive Burundi's hope for a safe capital city. With the help of different design methodology and values, I wish to come up with the prominent design that will change public spaces perception in Burundi. For this, I chose to base my study on “Jardin Public de Bujumbura” which is a park that is currently an under-utilized urban space in the middle of the city of Bujumbura. I chose this park not only because of its location at the center of Bujumbura but also because it personally resonates with me as the park of my childhood.

II. The Methodology

Since my thesis is a creative endeavor, the majority of my research will be in the investigation and learning about the place that I am attempting to improve; and investigating and learning about the creative process of urban design. Using the analogy of cultivation and restoration, the project will seek to test design solutions that aspire to contribute to the social success of an urban space. The project will promote an empathetic awareness of sensitive environmental values through urban experience that will promote social bonds strengthening and promote Burundian culture of gathering. In order to achieve the project's goal, a number of design methodologies to the specific environment are going to be used.

This study methodology will include two main parts: the investigation and the design. In these two parts, I will have different sections that will enable me to get to the projects' goal. During my study, I will analyze

the effectiveness of public spaces in African cities using a variety of literature reviews. I will study different reasons why some public spaces are successful and why others are not. I will also use the particular site documentation of the location to get an insight of the likelihoods of the project to succeed and be informed about different precautions to consider while redesigning Jardin Public de Bujumbura. My intention will be to get an understanding of the place and become familiar with it in order to have enough motives and guide for the community to restore the park.

From there, I will seek to further inform myself about key criteria that should drive my design concepts through books and articles. I will gather appropriate principles and design patterns based on Christopher Alexander's book: A Pattern Language and Jane Jacob's book: The Death and Life of Great American cities in order to develop strategies to restore and cultivate a new growth of compelling places in this war-ravaged city. The goal is that overtime Burundi will see a cultivation of increased participation in the public environment by Burundian community which will promote and restore Burundi's culture of gathering.

III. How this project goes beyond expectation?

Though Burundian culture is known for social gatherings and social interaction, Burundi has been a country of the fight, war, poverty, death, and problems for so many years now that that culture is slowly fading away. I remember growing up in a neighborhood that was never safe to walk in at any time of the day. Where no one ever knew that they will make it to the next day because of the gunshots that would be the last sound in their ears before going to bed. I remember our family praying every night before sleeping asking God to give us another day the next day with the hope of not being awake up in the middle of the night to run away. I grew up going to school in fear every day because no roads were 100% safe for children to walk in or play in.

I consider architecture as a career that involves a lot of problem-solving. And, since urban design in Africa has generally not received a lot of attention in this area, my project seeks to study how urban design concepts and values may provide some solutions to African cities. This project will be an opportunity to use my architectural expertise to propose a variety of solutions to my home city and country using creativity and design, in this case, tackling the issue of security. It will be creating a possibility for Burundian next generation to be able to live the dream that I dreamt as a child. The project will help cultivate human flourishing, social interaction, and human connection that the community needs as one of Bujumbura's possible solution to achieving a sense of security in its communities and ultimately peace.

My project intent is to intentionally collect principles and values to incorporate in my new design for the specific goal of cultivating social bonds and promote a sense of community in the city of Bujumbura. As a result, Jardin Public de Bujumbura new design will show the potential that the public space has in reviving the city's hunt for security. Furthermore, by developing a suitable design, the project will be a chance for Burundian to bring back the gathering culture. The new Jardin public will enhance social bonds strengthening in the community by being a place that people will willingly go to and commute.

IV. Annotated Bibliography

Davis, Charles. Nature and Cities: Bringing back nature in the city. United States: Throughline production, 2010.

This was a study that explored the benefit of nature in cities and on people. The study argues that the 20th century was about getting around while the 21st century is becoming about staying in places worth staying in. The authors discussed that the problem is that people have separated themselves from nature, while they need it every day. It gives different examples of nature in the middle of the cities that are known to have contributed to the community's well-being. The study supports my hypothesis that the public spaces (in this case nature) are perceived as hazardous in some cities while in others they give people a sense of belonging. From this study, I will get concrete insight on how my project is essential and how it can work.

Jacobs, Jane. The death and life of great American cities. New York: Vintage Books, 2016.

Jane Jacobs in this book writes about what makes streets safe, what constitutes neighborhoods, and how they all function within the larger organism of the city. She discusses why some neighborhoods and cities stay impoverished while others regenerate themselves. From this book, I am hoping to get some answers to the question of why Bujumbura has not been able to restore itself besides the fact that it has gone through war instability for so long. Jane Jacob also provides essential frameworks for evaluating the vitality of cities which will give me ideas on what I can focus on while redesigning Jardin Public.

Alexander, Christopher. A Pattern language: Towns, Buildings, Construction. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

A Pattern language is one of the most popular books in the history of Architecture. It is the second volume that the author has published as a guidebook from which he believes that anyone can use to design and build any house and solve any design, urban and construction problem. The book discusses that people always rely on certain languages while designing. This according to the author allow people to articulate and communicate design concept in two-phase – the problem statement and the problem-solving. These languages consist of describing a problem that occurs in an environment and then finds the solution to that problem which a designer will use as an inspiration or guidance to implement in the design. This book has a collection of over 253 different pattern languages that will provide diverse ideas on how to use the pattern and principles in my project.

Whyte, William. The social life of small urban space. Washington, D.C.: Conservation Foundation, 1980.

This was a study that was conducted specifically to test the efficiency of different public space design; William Whyte was studying difference design features and concept that made these public spaces enjoyable or not. From his study, he discussed seven important elements required for good public spaces: the relationship to the street, seating, sun, water, trees, food and triangulation. These are some of the many other conclusions that he drew from his study that will enable me to gather a variety of criteria to use in my project as design concept and principles.

White, Gary. African Drawn: One hundred cities. DOM Publishers, 2016.

Africa Drawn is a book that shows one hundred of the most connected cities on the continent. It was written mainly to break the norm that Africa is just a continent of small villages in the jungle and Savannah. The author presents the historical character of African locations while illustrating their contemporary and historical place-making actions in Africa. The book will introduce me to not only to the history of urban spaces in Africa but will provide me with a variety of urban forms that exist across the continent from which I can base some of the studies I am doing about public space. It will help me analyze urban space more specifically for this continent and will direct me in the design concept choices for my project.

Nxumalo, James. Searching for the promise of Public Space: the key to equitable African cities. Durban, 2014

This was a recent study done in Durban, South Africa in 2014 about how Public space can revive African cities. The study aim was to promote public space as a key structural element of the city to improve the quality of life for local citizens. Another of its aim was to involve African Urban planners and architects to advocate for Public spaces, encouraging them to rethink the methodologies of design responses. The study was done with a similar approach as mine and will give me a different perspective and methods that can direct my project.

V. Progress to date

At this point, I started writing my thesis paper from the peer-reviewed articles and books that I am basing my research from. I will be expanding this paper in my research project as I am currently studying and analyzing African public spaces specifically. In addition, I have read a lot about different research about public spaces that I understand how my research project should look like. I am currently enrolled in a comprehensive design studio and personal environmental theory. These two classes help me develop my understanding of designing for people and how to use patterns and principles as an inspiration for design strategizing for an intended use and cultural meaning. My next step is to make a site documentation for the current Jardin Public de Bujumbura and its neighborhood from which will help me understand the project more and give me guidance to what design solution I should focus on.