• Paper / Proposal Title:

New Old Territories of Islam

• Author(s) Name:

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• University or Company Affiliation:

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• Presentation Method. I would like to:

present via pre-recorded film with a written paper

• Abstract (300 words):

The war in Kosovo resulted in the youngest independent country in Europe, as well as its poorest by GDP per capita—only after Moldavia. It’s government, still weak as it struggles for international recognition and while dealing with internal corruption, has created a vacuum that is been used by diverse foreign powers to exercise their influence. While the West—i.e. the USA and European Union—thought it had been enough to militarily support the young nation’s independence in order to win its hegemony, other emerging powers seem to be taking advantage of the war’s outcome. While Turkey is forging strong economic and political ties with a country it considers its own—most of the Balkans became part of the Ottoman Empire after defeating the Serbs at an important battle in the outskirts of Pristina—other nations such as Saudi Arabia or Qatar, who have recently joined the race for global hegemony, are
also marking their presence by claiming its appurtenance to a universal Islamic community, that happens to be controlled by the oil rich countries of the Persian Gulf. This struggle for hegemony has its battlefield in the realm of Architecture. As the government of Turkey dedicates important resources restoring ancient Ottoman mosques, private and public institutions from the Arab states of the gulf sponsor the building of new mosques. While these brand new mosques embrace modern technology, such as reinforced concrete and LED lighting, their style doesn’t engage with contemporary architecture discourse. Rejecting any reference to modernism, the great majority of these sacred buildings replicate the traditional Ottoman mosque, with the only exception of them being highlighted by taller minarets, made possible by using modern construction techniques. Sponsorship is also given to local religious leaders to be trained in Salafist Islam at schools in the gulf, with the idea to generate an understating of religion non-existent in former Yugoslavia. In a vision for a world where culture is given by religion, there is no need for architecture to express cultural development where it doesn’t exist, but only for it to be perfected through technology. My presentation, accompanied by a recent photographic survey of around a hundred mosques built in the last decade, explores how contingent cosmogonies express themselves and claim new territories through a particular use of architectural language which questions all Western understandings of what heritage should be.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**
  Trained as architect and urban designer, I am currently working as an architecture broadcaster, through Actar publishers and the newborn digital platform urbanNext.net, assisting in the coordination, edition, organisation and production of books as well as architectural events. Previously, as Project Coordinator at the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, I was involved in the Historic Cities Programme in architecture preservation and urban regeneration projects located in West Africa, the Middle East and Asia; I also assisted the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in the process of documentation and outreach of the Award proceedings. Alongside my professional work, I have been lecturer and critic at the Architectural Association Mittelmeerland Visiting Schools in Algiers, Alexandria and Izmir, at Cornell University in Ithaca, at Columbia University GSAPP Studio in Paris, and at the Barcelona School of Architecture (UPC-ETSAB). I’m currently working on a comparative research project on the urban sprawl developments in Kosovo and Switzerland, taking into consideration the remittance economy and cultural exchange between both countries, which will result in an exhibition and book to be published in 2018. I received my Architecture degree with honours from the Institut d’Architecture de l’Université de Genève and realised studies in Architecture and Urban Culture at the Metropolis Programme at the Centro de Cultura Contemporánea de Barcelona.