Graduation Plan

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Context

Ankara has been named the capital of Turkey when the republic was founded in 1923, as a counterpart of Istanbul, and a rebel of the identity of the latter, which the centre of Ottoman Empire for centuries. The first quarter of the republic portrayed its ambition for modernization by building its capital inviting many foreign architects, planners, designers and sculptors.

The city of Ankara is always a symbol of Turkish modernization and the utopian idea of the young regime. Among all the elements which represent this idea, the Ankara Forest Farm is one of the most important one which can never be ignored. The Ankara Forest Farm was established in 1925 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Turkish Republic, as a private farm. In 1937, Atatürk donated the farm to the Turkish state. In the report prepared for the donation to treasury on June 11, 1937, farms owned by Mustafa Kemal were mentioned as 154,729 square km. The Farm was originally located in the periphery of the city. While with the westward expansion of the city, the farm, especially the part in the valley, more or less 1.5 times of the size of the Central Park in Manhattan, now becomes a green belt which wedges into the heart of the city of Ankara.

Consequently, Forest Farm is discussed neither as a land problem nor as a heritage issue in the present paper. Its being is evaluated as a conscious contribution for the cultural transformation of the Turkish nation. Therefore, its genesis is elaborated in relation to the main definitions of culture in history: 1. ‘cultivating nature’ with the idea of increasing the efficiency in products and lands. 2. ‘cultivation of minds’ in relation to the education of human beings. 3. the ‘process of social development’. 4. ‘meanings, values, ways of life’. 5. ‘practices which produce meanings’ (Bocock, 1992, 234) and finally 6. the meshing of anthropological views linking the two definitions of ‘a way of life’ and ‘the production of meaning’ as ‘a network of representations’ (Frow and Morris, 1993, viii).1

Problem Statement

There are several problems which are quite obvious in this young capital city and the Forest Farm.

First of all, it is the isolation of the different part of the city. The city is divided by both physical and ideological borders.

Highways and railways which are really hard to cross run through the centre of the city, tearing

1Duygu KAÇAR, A Unique Spatial Practice for Transforming the Social and Cultural Patterns: Atatürk Forest Farm In Ankara (1), DOI: 10.4305/METU.JFA.2011.1.10
the city apart. In this sense, adjacent parts lose connection. In the case of the Forest Farm, the Forest Farm is located right between the highway Faith Sultan Mehmet Blv. and a railway, which means anybody who wants to get approach to the farm has to encounter the man-made canyon of 40 something meters wide. In order to cross these dangerous high speed vehicle traffic, he or she has to find a small pedestrian bridge and walk up and down. With all the inconvenience and unpleasant environment such as ashes and noise of the cars, the difficulty of approaching makes the Forest Farm in the physical position of being thrown outside the city and functions no more although actually it is just beside the old centre of the city of Ankara. For this reason, the physical unaccessibility is the first serious problem that has to be pointed out.

But the situation of being abandoned is not only a result of physical canyons; it is also an active choice of the city. Once the unique spatial practice representing the main philosophy of the Turkish Republic, the Forest Farm, the gigantic void adjacent to the centre of Ankara, is still extreme precious for the city and has great potentials. Now the whole farm is fenced, with very limited accessibility, which ensures that nobody can occupy the farm of the city, and keeps the ownership by the public (the city) in the best situation. Thus the Forest Farm is both abandoned and protected. But the protection now is not perfect. In the area of the farm there are still some industrial and governmental buildings adjacent to the Fişeksan Tren İstanbul train station, and some commercial buildings including a big shopping mall.

There are also ideological canyons in the city, working classes in the north, and government bureaus and universities in the south. We can easily tell the different between the north and the south by the sharp contrast between the building (styles, scales and densities), the cleanness, the noise and even the dressing style of the people. In the interview, students told us they seldom go to the old centre which now is basically occupied by the poor people. In the case of the Forest Farm, the location of the farm is in between. The presence (or absence) of the farm physically deepen the gap between the north and the south. That is the other problem about the farm for me to solve.

The second problem of the city is the lack of public sphere. There do have some small public spaces in many neighbourhoods, but these public spaces are small and self-contained, hardly interact to the outside world. There are urban parks in the city, but they are not attractive (neither in scale nor in appearance) and thus not popular enough to seduce people to leave their own neighbourhood and gather together. That means the perception of the city as a whole, like the flaneurs have, is now lost in this capital city. Shopping remains as the last motivation for them to go the wider public. Thus the city focus transfers along with the construction of the new shopping malls.

The third problem in my opinion is related to the lifestyle of the local people. Public transportation lacks relatively because people here prefer private transportation to public ones since private cars are the symbol of modern life style for the locals. Air pollution, noise and traffic jam are the result. But the situation is improving as the metro system is developing rapidly. At present, Ankara’s rapid transit system consists of two metro lines, which are called Ankaray and Ankara Metro, and a suburban rail system. Three additional metro lines are currently under
construction and several other lines are planned for the next phase of expansion. Beside, according to the interviews, except in the self-contained universities, ordinary people in the city seldom go out and pay to go the cultural or recreational places such as theatres, museums or even cinemas, although Turkish people do love recreation. A lot of people simply can’t afford the costs.

**Goal of the project**

This graduation project has the design goal to come up with a new project (including a system and a single building) which could function better than the current ones at the area of the Forest Farm. The alternative should lead to a more coherent region in both spatial and social terms with more public activities within and a higher environmental quality.

The second design goal is to prevent the Forest Farm, which is expected to be one of the most precious heritages both in terms of ideological and spatial qualities and has great potential in the region, from being nibbled by mercenary development. This also means that a better adjustment of layout of the existing built programs and the balance of public and commercial interests.

The research goal of this project is to study by the means of design to understand in which way and how architectural form and structure and one or a series of new programs can influence the built environment, either in a good way, or in a bad one. And in which way and how these elements I mentioned above can influence the larger social aspect, if it is really possible.

The aspect of ideology of identity of Ankara and ideas of Utopia should be understood, such as how they still influence the situation today positively or negatively and how the new project could be related to these notions. As we all know, the identity of a modern republic is extremely strong in the city of Ankara, compared to its counterpart, Istanbul, and the image of a gigantic farm in the city in which people gather to cultivate, to produce and to learn contains very strong Utopian ideas. We may say, to understand the roots of Forest Farm and the ideas behind are very crucial for shaping its future.

**Process**

1. Literature research
   Literature research will be based on scientific sources but also on sources like internet.

On Utopia:
On Ankara:


Other materials:


2. Case study.

This graduation project started with the group works of case studies on series of projects of different scales, more or less with some Utopian ideas, from a big city to a small building in order to have a rough idea of Utopian projects in ten different themes. Maps redrawn in black and white drawings, whose tend is to abstract the information from the complicated situation, are the main tool of study in this phase. This method of analysis is also used to analysis the situation of Ankara, especially the border condition of the Forest Farm, which is one of the starting points of my graduation project.

A series of projects with Utopian ideas are selected as references, such as Constant’s New Babylon, Superstudio’s Continuous Monument and OMA’s Saitama Arena.

The project of New Babylon is based on the negation of all that is false and fraudulent in the present societal condition... New Babylon does not lend itself as an instrument of semblance or consolation. Its truth lies in its very negativity and in the dissonances that pervade the images of harmony. 2

Superstudio proposed a gridded superstructure that would wrap around the world. The point was exaggerated but well made: Superstudio was commenting on the way globalisation was swamping the world. Given the way the world was developing, we might as well all live in one anonymous megastructure, with local cultures stripped away. 3

OMA’s Saitama Arena has an event-box that floats high above Saitama over the sports field, being visible from afar. A second element moves up and down between the ground and the top, rotates in different directions to create an unheard of quantity of programmatic possibilities, to turn every level of the building into an event-space. 4

3. Design approach

The design is processed both in bottom-up and top-down way.

Based on the situation that collective space lack in the city, the first design approach derive from the imagination of a gigantic collective space covered by a mega-structure underneath which everything can happen. The covered space can be used as market, sports field, performance space, political gathering space or any other activities which ask for a unified space. It is an attractive spot in the city which functions like a magnet where people are willing to gather. That is the basic position to answer the question on the lack of publicness in the city. The other imagination is the huge park in the centre of the city, just like the Central Park in the New York City or Hyde Park in London, answering the situation the Forest Farm doesn’t function to the city in a positive way although with all the potentials.

The other approach is top-down. In order to protect the Forest Farm, all the existing programmes now occupying the farm (not too many fortunately) are removed and relocated either on the border of the farm (commercial programmes and governmental programmes) or to the suburb (industrial programmes) considering different original programmes. A new border is built in the form of continuous building enclosing the whole farm, which is the strong position to protect the Forest Farm. The whole farm is thus walled. Entrances are made in the distance of every 1 to 1.5 kilometres to make the farm accessible. The entrances are also the place where the mega-structures are placed. Then the bottom-up approach and top-down approach meet.

The mega-structures ask for huge span and cantilever, which is the starting point of the structure system, and the structure system reacts on the composition of the project as well. Since the spam and the cantilever are so huge, instead of consider a single beam or single slab, I choose to consider the structure as a whole. Thus the structure itself becomes an essential element in the architectural composition, both in the appearance for its scale is gigantic and its form is plastic and contains an strong order and technological expressionism, and in the inner spatial perception since inside the mega-structure plans and sections are liberated, which also respond to the architectural position of creating a space of various possibilities.

Cultural facilities are the main programme of the nodes above the entrances, which both come from the situation of people’s lack of cultural actives and the ideal of the founding fathers of the republic that the Forest Farm represented civilization, enlightenment, development, production and the rejection of colonial relationship since the beginning. It is the product of the modern world and the contemporary civilization. The space within the mega structure contains three parts vertically, among which the middle one is directly connected to the ground level as the expansion of the outdoor public space. This space is a mix of theatre and forum. Free cultural activities can happen here. Shopping, dining programmes and car parks are also located to serve the public space. There is also a hotel on the top of the node, residential on the border, these people who spend night here make the whole system a 24/7 one.

A new light railway line is planned to be constructed to connect the nodes and wedge the Forest Farm into the existing public transportation system.
Reflection

In the social level the project criticise the existing situation of the city and the lifestyle of the locals. This project tried to find an answer if a spatial approach could change the life style of the people and if could, in what way, in what extend and in what scale. The project, with its radical face, is tending to make an experiment.

In the level of architecture, this project is trying to find an interpretation among position, composition and materialisation. The relationship among those three should not be lineal but more interactive. The design possibilities derived from the structure should be discussed, within which more freedom of architecture maybe found.

Phasing & time schedule

In this paragraph the project is placed in a timeframe. The scheme contains all supporting subjects for the graduation project and all sub-researches are placed in time.

The whole graduation project contains 5 phases. Each phase will be ended with a moment of examination where of (P2) and (P4) are formal and restrictive and (P1) and (P3) are informal. The project will be ended with a final product including all the drawings and models and a public presentation (P5).

P1
In (P1) the stuffs are mainly about the productions of the group works focusing on the analysis of the site, namely the Forest Farm and the wider scale. Besides, the personal initial design concept based on the research and analysis should also be presented. The (P1) presentation is on the end of October, 2011.

P2
In (P2), the architectural position of the project should be presented, thus the orientation of the project is found. Composition of the project and the concept of materialisation should also be presented. The (P2) will be ended with a presentation about first version of the complete products of architectural design. The (P2) presentation is on the end of January, 2012.

P3
In (P3) engineering and detail design will start based on the composition of the project. The architectural design will continue (and will be adjusted in respond to technical demands and then end). This period will be ended with an informal presentation. The (P3) presentation will be on the middle of April, 2012.

P4
In (P4) the engineering and detail designs will be ended and the process of design ends. The
whole set of Position-Composition-Materialisation works will be evaluated in the formal (P4) presentation. The (P4) presentation will on the end of May, 2012.

P5
In (P5) all the work can be refined. This period will be ended with a delivery of the final version of the design and a public presentation of the whole project. The (P5) presentation will on the end of June, 2012.

Literature