Project Description

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Project Title  Lucrative Promenades

Location  Thessaloniki, Greece

Contents  The project proposed is a network of promenades along with a group of facilities, in order to create a synthesis of a viable urban park and a profitable network of gardens.

Problem statement  In general, inhabitants of Thessaloniki, as every city in Greece, have been experiencing psychological issues and depression, along with unemployment (almost 30%), due to the economical crisis since 2009. In particular, according to recent statistics held by the Hellenic Statistical Authority, the major depression level in a nationally representative sample of adults 18-69 years old was almost doubled from 2008 to 2011 (3.3% to 8.2%). Also, according to the same source, the risk for experiencing is 2.6 times greater than 2008, especially in younger age and married people.

Therefore, as stated in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (from bottom to top: physiological needs, safety and security needs, love and belongingness needs, self-worth and self-esteem needs, need to know and understand, aesthetic needs, self-actualization needs), self-worth and self-esteem needs are at a low level. This fact leads to a complication regarding both deficiency and growth needs of the people.

Furthermore, the ratio of green areas in the city is 2,5%, which means that there is a significant lack of parks and green areas.

The site is located in an urban residential area near
the seaside. It is a former army campus. There are many functions around the specific site, including markets, schools, stadium, marine. But the site includes only three functions located near its borders (exhibition area, school, stadium). Those meeting points do not activate the area regularly. In addition to that, users tend to avoid crossing the site and prefer moving around it; thus they visit it periodically.

**Research question(s)**

During research of the cultural context of public spaces in Thessaloniki, the notion and value of meeting place emerged. More specifically, the idea of meeting points or points of gathering people are of great importance in a greek urban environment. These points of plurality can play a crucial role in the improvement of social aspect of the users, since plurality is needed for the construction of a social space. Except from established spaces, landmarks, or buildings, other meeting points can be linear promenades, markets, balconies, areas where children play, or people exercise. All this points provide users with collective experience and improve their social, educational, cultural state.

Also, since 2011, another category of meeting place was created; urban community gardens. The team Perka started cultivating a former army campus, for non-commercial reasons. This occupation improves their daily life, including their psychological state (horticultural therapy), economical state, and socialize.

So, can values of meeting points, promenades, and urban farming be extracted and implemented in the site, in order to respond to the basic culture of society, and meliorate the economical, social, and educational level of the urban realm?

Another aspect of investigation is the level of control and freedom in public spaces. Louis Kahn stated that “It is a fact that some spaces should be flexible, but there also some which should be completely inflexible”. The first is just a place to be, a place of freedom within social limits. The latter should act as an institution, a landmark that helps organizing the society and serves as an orientation mark.
Thus, how a hierarchy of controlled spaces (controlled spaces where one needs permission to enter and is open during particular hours, semi-controlled spaces where a function is implied but can work without it still, and non-controlled spaces) can compose a viable urban environment? And what is the interaction between promenades, space of movement and space of institutions?

**Design Assignment**

The design proposal investigates the generation of a possible social and physical structure within the area of the former army campus of Kodra.

Three types of infrastructure are suggested, which correspond to the three different levels of controlled spaces. First, three buildings are set in the site; a cultural center that will strengthen the existing exhibition area, a farm, a building for seminars connected with the farm and the existing school, and a market to promote the products of farming.

Another important architectural aspect is the one of promenades. The walkabouts generated start from key points where either a large amount of people gather or are points of traffic. These paths enter the site and interact both with the existing facilities and the proposed ones. In particular, the routes approach the buildings, and integrate with the function.

This interaction is based on the topological diagrams of archetypal morphologies of Rene Thom. Thus, the lines generated may cross the envelope of the building to become part of its circulation, reject the boundary and travel around the boundary to create its envelope etc.

The next step of this process will be to optimize the form concluded by the above manipulation in order to fulfill requirements of satisfactory sunlight, especially where the gardens are situated.

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