

Reflection

MSc. 4: Architecture & Public Building

AR3AP131: Projections to City and Utopia

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Reflection

Maintaining mixed neighbourhoods

Fatih plateau: The completed nucleus

A generative strategy for historical Istanbul

The product of our studio's shared research effort is a large poster summarizing and mapping our visit to Istanbul in the fall of 2012. It attempts to combine and relate information about all aspects of our city walks, facades, ground, time, orientation, speed, morphology, topography and street profile, within one single graph, revealing Istanbul as a city of discontinuous experiences.

This conclusion corresponds with my early personal research on earthquake risk and changes in people density within the street fabric through time. As it turned out, some of the main connections in the city haven't changed since the Ottoman empire as they are strongly related to the topography.

What I found was a fabric, cut apart by these a-temporal connections that through time evolved into large traffic arteries, dividing the city into autonomous islands among which the extent of deterioration of the building stock varied extremely. This condition is caused by a tendency to commodify buildings and re-appropriate them as needed for very current demands, choosing to ignore the decline in structural integrity that accompanies these make-shift alterations.

In a series of seminars we read theoretical texts, background information specific to Istanbul and a personal selection of books, typically followed by an open discussion. One of the notions from the seminars that plays an important part in my project is that of a monument's adaptability to a multitude of functions through time in spite of their specific form in combination with the transposition between building and city. On top of that, our research of Istanbul showed a correlation between monuments as the nuclei of urban islands, topography and a-temporal connections.

The thirty utopia case studies we researched as a group, realized and theoretical, provided us with a diverse body of thought to draw upon. The theoretical project *Cities within the City* by the Cornell summer academy for Berlin has been a particular influence on the development of my project. The densification or intensification of specific parts of the city, in my case the aforementioned a-temporal conditions, as a means to compress the valuable assets of an area and to subsequently allow the area to redevelop and repair from the nucleus outward. In short: intensifying a-temporalities as a strategy to neutralize commodification.

The project that developed from this topic is the result of a combination of operations performed on the site adjacent to Fatih mosque. It aims to programmatically complete the area's nucleus to adequately provide for a pluralistic society in conjunction with Fatih mosque that currently dominates the area with its singular religious program.

The intention of the project is not to provoke with what could be considered as an intrusion on the mosque's territory. The essential objective is to repair and revitalize the area in the heart of the historical part of the city that apart from the mosque is in a very bad state, by bringing additional public program in, to accommodate for every facet of life in this metropolitan city.

The project marries the old fabric below with a new public space above that facilitates virtually all kinds of public program. It consists of three stacked interpretations of universal space. A plinth that negates the hierarchy caused by the topography that does not rely on program to give it its form but rather, inspired by the permanence of monuments, is capable of housing any kind of program for any period of time. On top of the plinth on grade with Fatih mosque the possibility is created for large public programs to take shape as a multitude of expressive buildings that, together with the mosque, form a unity in diversity. The new public space is the interface between, vertically, the existing city and the intensified public program and horizontally, the collective space around the mosque and the new square while at the same time providing all the services for the large public programs on top to allow them to be as autonomous as they can be.

The tools provided by the studio are unmistakably responsible for the direction in which my project developed. The implications of the theory discussed in the seminars or researched in the case studies is still clearly present, as well is the research on Istanbul, both in the seminars and on location, in the intention of the project to improve an issue that was exposed.