The House is Never Complete!

A Cartography of Idiosyncrasy in Sociopolitical Maelstrom

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Introduction

The preliminary planning delineated in the "research plan" and the final product of the thesis are more connected than I would have noticed in the middle of the process. The circuitous route to the end goals has provided a result which satisfies the expectations, but through methods and drawings which I did not initially imagine. It is because the problematization was expanding in scope and constantly fed with additional information (from both reading and continued firsthand experiences), that the creative process has been consonant with the title: *The House is Never Complete*. In fact, I will dare to say that the thesis is altogether *not* complete, and that that is becoming more essentially the point. As I have been researching and exploring complex ecological processes which would take an immense amount of time to problematize (much longer than is needed to make a meaningful physical intervention), the reliance on consciousness and intuition, informed by the collection of experiences, has become a necessary method for production. This could not be envisaged in the earlier stages of the work, and my personal stubbornness would not allow me to discard experiences and information that would typically be seen as irrelevant.

1_ Research and Design:

Without the constant examination and re-examination of different phenomena and their process of materialization, it is difficult to reach what Vitruvius calls the "holy ground of architecture." The neverending pursuit of that "holy ground," as a concept, is precisely the ambition of architecture – that the house is never complete. I would assert the position that there is no true research without the push beyond latency and into the subject of research – this requires curiosity, empathy, and activity. The role of the architect is that of a dreamer, and dreams can only be clarified through the process of exploring the internal, subconscious, to be externalized in the constantly produced *conscious*. Architecture should however, not only rely on the examination of our dreams independently, but the collective dreams of the reality that we intend to operate with interventions or material manipulations. For this reason, the course of research that I have taken has been an extended process of reflection on several years and practical experience, memory, reading, and conversations in Tbilisi, Georgia.

It is impossible to say that the process has been singular, and not constantly informed and constantly changing with new inputs (affects, experiences, explorations into memory), but it is continual invigoration that makes for meaningful interventions. The process of examination, and

then the capacity to design thereafter can only happen when the process of architecture is internalized by the "architect". More than anything, I would further assert that the capacity of empathy to be the most important tool of understanding how to intervene meaningfully.

Research enables meaningful interventions in space – and again I would assert that research should be both expansive and intimate, informed by practical concerns, desires, and collective imaginations. No stone should be left unturned because of the challenge that it presents to personal idealism.

In the specific case of this thesis research and project, there were several moments of severing with concepts and attitudes that I had previously taken for granted, and supplantation with vocabulary and concepts that better express my architectural pursuit. Though many ideas were abandoned, and many thoughts were left open-ended, the conclusions which I have reached for the present moment are an expression and materialization of all of my concerns with territorialization and imperialism, political narratives, political subversion, the concept of identity, heterogeneity and homogeneity, and memory.

2_ Relevance to Architecture Track and Explore Lab:

As Explore Lab should be a space for exploration and elaboration of independent initiative, I see that my topic and process fit within the boundlessness. It is the capacity to get lost which enables the further advancement and capacity to go beyond conventions of basic problem solving, and moving towards wider and wider problematization. Problematization should extend beyond the limits of time and space, and encompass the farthest limits of inquiry on the subject at hand. As an example, my inquiry into the works of Mosei Ginzberg and his ideas of social engineering can be observed from the perspectives of his process of ideation, the nation building and industrialization processes which were occurring simultaneously, and the ultimate failure of the *social condenser* as a model retrospectively. As another example, the critique of progress of the Russian avant-garde, and the subsumption of their ontology by the Socialist Realist artists is an essential historical point to understand the layers of the context in question, the origins and methods of political subversion which would resurface in later materializations, and altogether forming the contemporary assemblage which is Tbilisi. To what degree and intensity has Georgia been affected by the political subversion and historical reconstruction of Russia (and then the Soviet Union), and how it produces the contemporary political, social, and cultural disbalances is are all important points of inquiry in being able to operate and curate an intervention with a substantiated architectural position. In my pursuit, I must challenge the role of the architect as an agent, and which position an architect can take in addressing territorialization and attempts towards historical erasure.

In the end, my focus and interest in the Tbilisi *ezo house* as a flexible typology in its multiple materializations and energization as an assemblage over time, is an inquiry into the dimensions of interiority and exteriority in the production of space, the production of the individual, and the production of collectivity. The investigation into the particularities of what is typically taken for granted as "informal" or "do-it-yourself" architecture, to understand the mechanisms of the production of space, and the dimensions of the interiority and exteriority which are produced as a result of the negotiations, becomes a springboard into a reality of heterogeneity. In Tbilisi, it is the materialization of heterogeneity in diverse and idiosyncratic architectural expression which is at odds with the grandiose and subverted narratives of historical reconstruction. The monuments, such as the *Freedom Monument* and the *Monument of St. Nino*, which make use of elements of the local assemblage and attempt to produce identity through a process of sterilization, becomes a

basis for silencing of linguistic complexities manifested in space through manifold negotiations of boundaries. It is through conversations with my mentors while explaining these broader concerns, that my position has become more clear, and my architectural intervention has been concretized. The deeper problematization of the concept of identity and its reductiveness that further energized the ideation process, and provided the lexicon needed to understand the intervention that I would produce.

3_ Research Method:

My research method has proved to be less linear than it has been cyclical or centrifugal, which is something that I had predicted from the beginning of the process. It is the continued enhancement of the matrix of information which I already had from previous investigations; an enrichment with new concepts which afford deeper perspectives in inquiry. However, the process, tasks, and investigations which I had envisaged had been significantly altered from what I had initially conceived. Further reading, investigation, and conversations with my mentors brought me to the track that I needed for addressing all of my concerns through an architectural intervention.

4_ Social, Professional, and Scientific Relevance:

As my research has been informed by political, social, economic, and cultural literature, as well as philosophical inquiry, it has also been informed by the simultaneous practice as an architect in the context of interest, Tbilisi. The ongoing professional project, *Kibe Projekt*, which I have decided to pursue simultaneously with my thesis, has been mutually effective, most importantly in defining my interest in cultural conservation, and what conservation means in its furthest extents. As a local team of local and international architects, we decided to take initiative on the conservation of a single spiral wooden staircase which stands 13-meters tall in the center of Tbilisi. This effort has been a large first step in conservation in Georgia, as the current state of cultural heritage conservation has been a process of reduction.

The simultaneity of these pursuits helped me to problematize and arrive at conclusions in the process of physical conservation. The results of the thesis are very much intertwined with the ongoing practical conservation effort, as I understand the practical limits and technical skills and working methods and attitudes. The final architectural project is based in great part, not only on a scanning of the city, but on a thorough engagement with it.

Furthermore, the graduation project is socially, professionally, and scientifically relevant because it demonstrates an approach to problematization of territorialization, assemblages, and the navigation of place which is needed to produce a substantive architectural intervention. The results of the theoretical and practical work done can be transferred and applied to a professional process because it offers a trajectory for dealing with the production of space. I do not attempt to answer any of the "big questions" with concrete definitions or ways forward, but as I do professionally, I try to answer complex questions through critical focal intervention.

5_ Ethics:

As stated several times before, my research and project have been predicated on ethical concerns related to cultural conservation in post-colonial, post-industrial environments. As the premise of my project has been concerned with territorialization, imperialism, and cultural reduction, those problems are encompassed in the design process as well. Furthermore, as previously stated, the

application of these concerns is already relevant to architectural practice in the field of conservation, but is also only the beginning of the potentials of application, as I intend to practice architecture on the same premises.