

## Reflection

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### Defining the road as in-between

The project was instigated from an interest and observation of the in-between and all of its happenings involved. How things are placed in the landscape with a specific intent, resulting in unforeseen effects that not only show in these things, themselves, but are also noticeable in their peripheral and surrounding conditions. In the research part of the graduation project, these in-between spaces are found, observed and investigated within and around the port area of Strasbourg.

A focus was placed on an urban masterplan that was drawn up for an area east of the city, in which residential and commercial zones are introduced to an island that was once almost wholly dedicated to port activities. For it, specific stipulations were made by the port authorities that largely promote the separation of the residential and industrial, in spite of several (to-be built) physical delimiting conditions that – while guaranteeing the (future) port functioning – unavoidably exert influences on the residential of the masterplan. One such stipulation, in which this is clearly visible, is the introduction of a road whose primary purpose is to maintain the accessibility of certain port areas to France's highway infrastructure and to Germany. Furthermore, it will facilitate through traffic from certain parts of the city to these same destinations, and vice versa. Despite of (and as a consequence of) the way the road is treated in the masterplan, as one partly sunken and hidden away from the site's future residents, it unavoidably defines its surrounding territory by demarcating spaces in-between existing pieces of infrastructure. Additionally, it exerts a strong influence through its own particular presence as being an object in-between different spaces and conditions. While the road would, at present, simply be one serving its immediate surroundings – its industrial use will instead be surrounded by cultural, residential and recreational functions.

### Research, design and methodology

As a result of these observations and through the research, the focus of the project was placed on this road and how its presence would shape its surroundings. At first, the intent of the project was placed on designing the road, itself, and creating conditions on its borders so to facilitate its immediate surroundings. As a consequence, the road was researched and subjected to modifications through a layered process of sections, that creating an understanding of its sequential conditions more than it shaped a concrete project. It took much time to figure out that, instead, the goal of the project was not to place emphasis on the design of the road and its border conditions, as if the road was already there and as if it had to be appropriated one way or another to hide it even further from view. Instead, the project's focus lay on using the logic of the road, itself, as a condition that demarcates and appropriates, through its physical properties and gestures. This was supported by the understanding of its sequential conditions that was done, at first, whilst keeping in mind the particularities of the research that defined the project, to begin with.

The design phase of the project meant for design choices to be made decisively and accordingly to the process that was defined in the research phase through the plan and section. This meant that, firstly, the site was to be articulated so to help create and define a context that would prompt the start of the actual project. By following the existing logic of the site in which infrastructure defines the topography of the island; several paths were introduced following the context outside the project territory in plan. Consequently, these paths, together with the road of the masterplan shaped much of the topography of the territory. They were implemented through the tool of the layered section, so that – step by step – these roads (and the existing topography) allowed for the addition, distribution and excavation of ground and earth by means of earthworks within and through their boundaries. Additionally, several layers of material usage were introduced on the level of both the site plan and its sections, which provided an understanding to the articulation and function of the context. As a result of these interventions, the building was placed in-between different conditions of the landscape; in-between a piece of infrastructure and topography. The project is a bus transferium. Its function was determined through modifying the site and retracing the steps made in the first semester. It is a building which mediates between the territory of the designed park and the urban infrastructure, between residents and tourists, between workers and artists.

These methods that defined the contextual logic of the site, and the initial stages of designing the project were done accordingly and decisively, yet with some difficulty. The greatest difficulty was to disregard any eventual programme of the site and the project, but to initially solely focus on the decisive layering of this design process. While many decisions had to be made promptly, to start the actual design of the eventual building, itself – this took, instead, until shortly before the P3 presentation. Furthermore, when the programme was finally decided around the time of the P3, a functional emphasis was placed on the workings of the project. As it is a bus transferium, there are many factors that play a role that guarantee the eventual workings of the project. These are not merely representational or even architectural, but coincide strongly with a functional approach. Consequently, much of the building design was delayed to the later stages of the second semester and proved a struggling point during the design. In retrospect, many things had to be decided upon more decisively and concretely, for even the most rational decisions may change over the course of the project. However, once determined, they greatly helped shape the design of the project which followed through these earlier gestures.

### **Social role**

Much of the function of the project results from an observation on how tourists arrive in Strasbourg by cruise ship. Many of these ships dock along the canals of the city. What awaits them are busses, parked along these canals – in front of the homes of the city's residents. These busses bring these tourists to various places close to the city centre, where they spend their time. While these mooring locations are sometimes places of flux and transition, they are most often places without activity or interaction. The tourists are immediately brought to their sight-seeing destinations without any actual interaction with the city, while these busses stand waiting for new ships in the front yards of the city's residents.

The purpose of creating the bus transferium is to firstly facilitate this flux of tourist traffic and to reduce the impact they exert on these mooring locations, together with creating a centralized

location in the city in-between these unique conditions of the port island where they are free to choose what to see or do. Instead of being solely brought to the city centre, they are brought to a place where they are free to choose where to go; to the city centre, to the surrounding (natural) parks, to the cultural district in the port area, etcetera. They will become part of the city flux, instead of being alienated from the city's workings.

#### **After P4**

The weeks following the P4 will be focused on processing the feedback given during the P4 and finishing the project. Since most (if not all) design decisions have been made, further progress will be mostly concerned around finishing it both in terms of building technology and representation. While small details regarding the design may be better addressed, they are not to overshadow the large scale of the project, as they coincide to make it one.