

Lucrative promenades

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Problem statement

The project's theme is within the general topic of Hyperbody's studio investigation on experimental green strategies of, thus 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.

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.

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? And what is the interaction between promenades, space of movement and space of institutions?

Reflections

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

The first step was to simulate in Processing how users's movement is affected by existing and new facilities within the site investigated. According to the analysis, four types of areas are set in the site; a cultural center that will strengthen the existing exhibition area, a farm, a building for seminars near the existing school, and a market to promote the products of farming and support existing commerce. Therefore, the walkabouts (four types, one for each function) were generated 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.

The second step was to generate the clustering of facilities in each functions, so to have a more specified topological identification of the programme. The facilities' location is affected by important parameters, such as the routes formed in the first step (so the walkabouts can become part of the buildings' circulation), existing plantation areas, areas unsuitable for cultivation, solar radiation.

After generating the footprints of walkabouts and data of clustering, the next step was to translate this into architectural space. The focus was given at the needs of each space implemented according to function, sunlight and circulation. By using solar radiation analysis, a form/ component was designed using computational tools for each function, in order to achieve the best conditions. The main component consisted of a base for circulation, and others manipulate sunlight and according to local needs. Therefore, instead of repetition of the same component, there is a variation of it, so as to have consistency at an architectural level.

All in all, this project aimed at using computational tools to adress issues of social, economical, educational aspects in a moment of dipression. In particular, the main goal was to use computational tools to design a model where landscape, public space and urban agriculture can merge, where the user can act, produce, socialize.