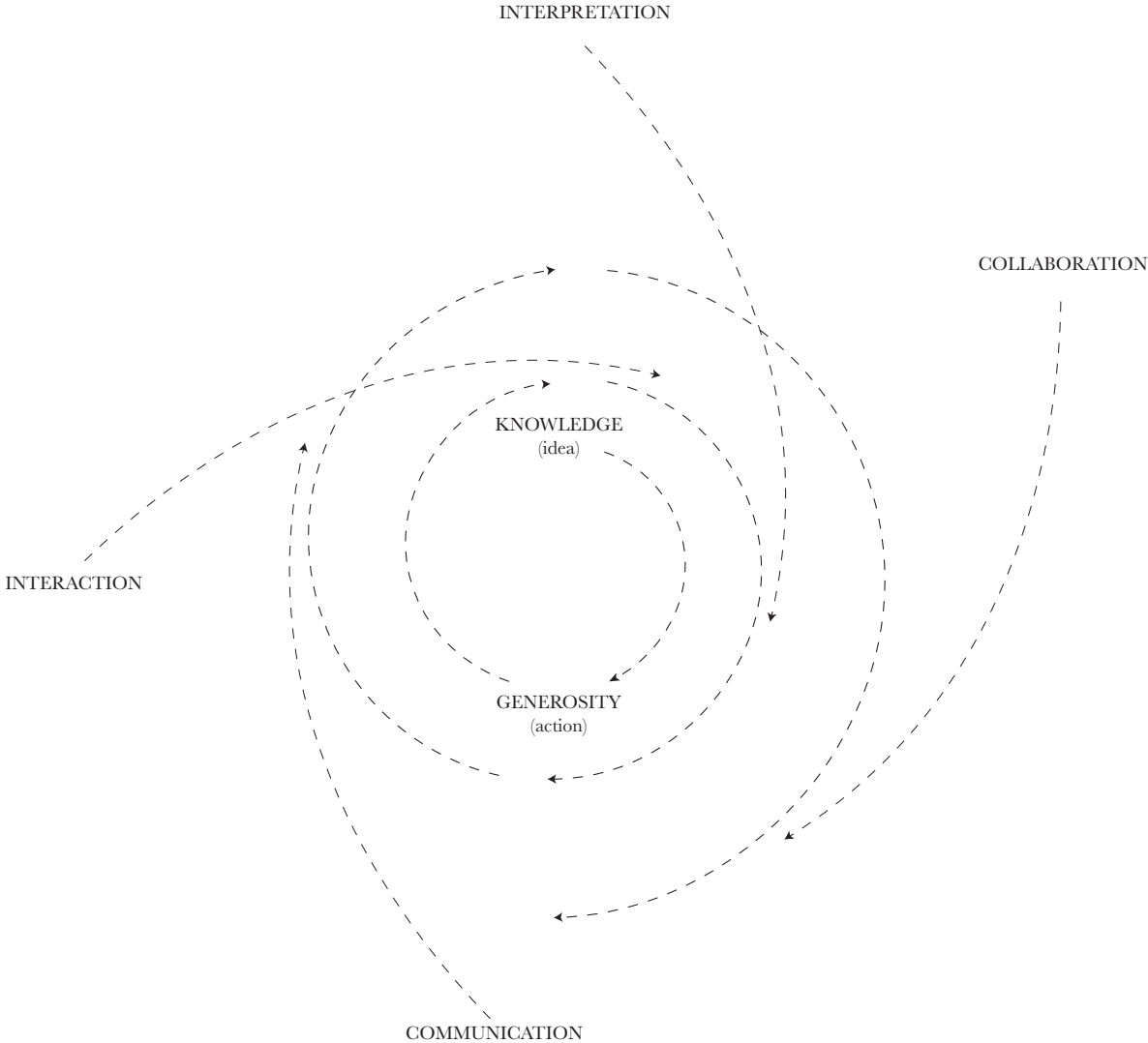


The Intimate City

Holly Dale

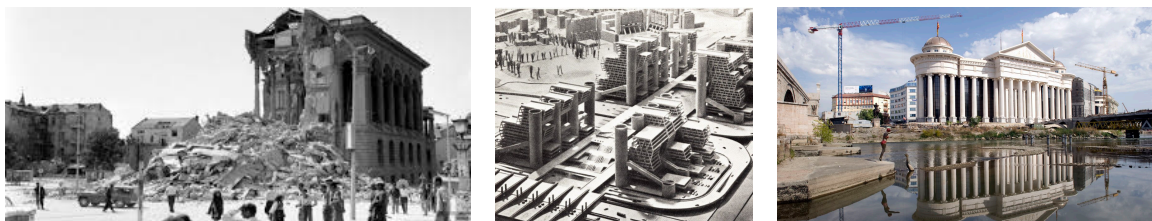
The aim of the research is to investigate how architectural intervention can be envisioned in a more democratic way. The research explores ways to develop an approach to architecture that promotes generosity, through sharing social and cultural knowledge, creating a cycle of 'knowledge, generosity, knowledge...' within the public realm.

The research is carried out through architectural interventions, exploring issues such as: public and private thresholds, habit and inhabitation, and "open architecture". The city of Skopje serves as a laboratory for research by design, experimenting with techniques to create democratic architectural interventions.



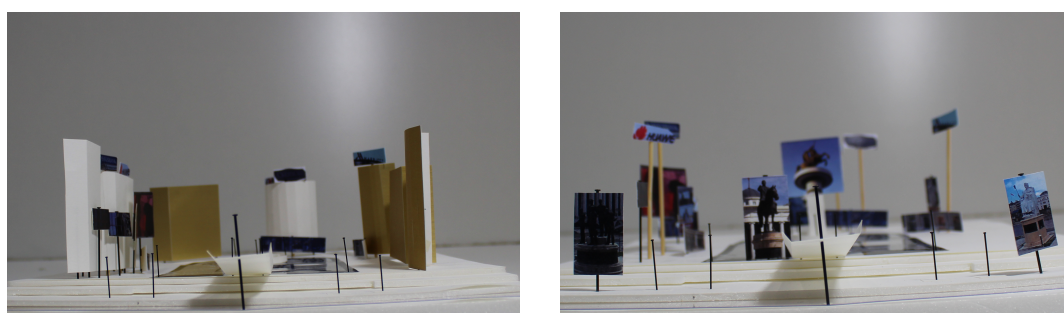
Cycle of knowledge and generosity

Relationship between research and design



Images: Skopje 1963, Aftermath of earthquake ¹, Tange masterplan for Skopje, 1965², Skopje 2014 under construction ³

The research project began by analysing Skopje's context through exploring the imagery of the city. The City of Skopje has had many contradictory images over the last century: an image of destruction after an earthquake in 1963, a modernist metabolic masterplan in 1965, and the latest image, Skopje 2014: a government plan to rebrand the city through neo-classical facades and monuments. Through an analysis of the intangible emotional impact of imagery in the city, the research was able to focus on understanding the physical joints between images.



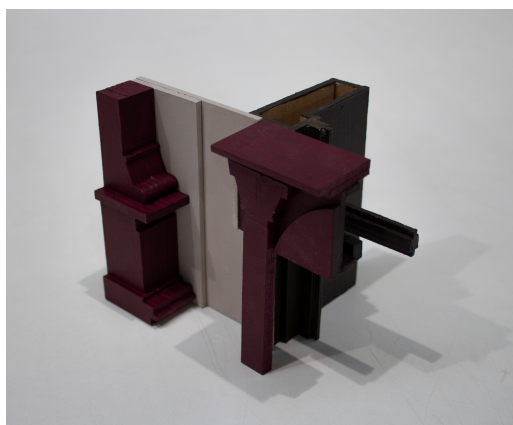
Model: Power of the Plane

Focussing on the visible images, we abstracted the city into planes and used this to evaluate the effect of images on space in the city; the models above attempted to view the city through planes. We could interchange the variables we used to depict the spaces in the city, capturing this through photographs to understand which images had a larger effect on space. This method allowed our research to specifically explore the image and its relationship to space and use.

¹ "Skopje Earthquake - 1963 | Devastating Disasters". 2020. *Devastatingdisasters.Com*. <https://devastatingdisasters.com/skopje-earthquake-1963/>.

² Kokalevski, Damjan. 2020. "Debalkanize Skopje!". *Akademie Schloss Solitude: Schlosspost*. <https://schloss-post.com/debalkanize-skopje/>.

³ Kjuka, Deana. 2020. "Urban Renewal Or Nationalist Kitsch? Skopje 2014 Stirs Controversy". *Radiofreeeurope/Radioliberty*. <https://www.rferl.org/a/skopje-kitsch-renewal-statues/25187521.html>.



Model: The Joint

Exploring the joint allowed us to see the spatial depth between images but more importantly look so closely we could compare and contrast the correlation between variables of image and appropriation. We came to understand that the variables of ornamentation, appropriation and light, could change throughout time due to events. Events became crucial to the image of a space, the more a space is used, the more a space is used⁴.

The contextual research utilised interdisciplinary theories and applied them through architectural techniques, such as drawing, photography and analytic models. From the initial research, I understood that Skopje is full of tension; those who do not align themselves with the city's image struggle to find a sense of place. Alongside influential organisations, individuals try to implant their image within the built environment to establish a sense of place. From monumental facades to small everyday appropriation within the public space, interventions with opposing images and scale sit side by side. The city is a collection of narratives, translated through form, claiming authorship over space.

The latest urban development, Skopje 2014, has isolated individuals and communities, by imposing a singular narrative on the city through form. Architectural historians and theorists such as Stanford Anderson⁵ and Maurice Mitchell⁶ would describe this as 'closed design' or 'tight fit city'. Mitchell discusses the cycle of waste in absolute design strategies in his publication, 'Loose Fit City',

"A loose fit building will fit to other different buildings or strategic ideas within a wide range of both predictable and unpredictable circumstances [...] a tight fit proposal, is designed for a very singular set of circumstances and may work well and elegantly within those circumstances but breaks down rapidly once that singular condition changes [...] Often tight fit components are built as 'black boxes' [...] These are not designed to fit our weird and wonderful individual eccentricities [...] There is no individual negotiation or engagement. Once

⁴ Ahmed, Sara. 2019. *What's The Use ?*. Durham, Duke University Press.

⁵ Anderson, Stanford. 1991. *On Streets*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

⁶ Mitchell, Maurice, and Bo Tang. 2018. *Loose Fit City*. 1st ed. New York: Routledge.

broken, black boxes must be discarded and replaced with brand-new but equally function-specific clones which have a similar lack of resilience to changing circumstances.”⁷

This research project aims to challenge the idea of finished and absolute design interventions found within ‘closed architecture’ and ‘tight fit cities’. Through an exploration of ‘open architecture’ and ‘loose fit’, the research investigates social and physical processes which allow for architectural interventions to be envisioned in a more democratic way.

Relationship between graduation topic and studio

Having chosen the graduation studio ‘Positions in Practice’, my understanding of the role of the architect has been challenged. The research discards the common aim in architectural practice of creating a finished product and focuses instead on embracing the un-finished, ‘loose fit’ and ‘open architecture’. The research is carried out through architectural interventions, exploring social and cultural ideas embedded in public and private thresholds and in habit and inhabitation.

The contextual research began by investigating appropriation within public and private thresholds within Skopje, which subsequently led to the exploration of Lars Spuybroek’s theories of habit and inhabitation (as discussed in ‘The Grace Machine’). According to Spuybroek, habit and inhabitation is “nothing but an exchange of generosity... and must be constantly analysed as part of the gift cycle”⁸. The jump between habit and inhabitation involves an engagement with context; through this, repetitive acts (‘habits’) make the jump into inhabitation. When we interact with our context our habits may not fit perfectly; through the restriction of context, we are challenged and become aware of our social and physical environment, creating knowledge, a gift. This research places domestic rituals (bathing and dining) outside the home and into the public realm. Moving private habits into a public context, creating an awareness of the current social and physical environment in the city. The knowledge gained from this awareness can reveal social and physical latency to the inhabitants of Skopje, providing a path to mediating the tensions within the city. The research is an experiment which acknowledges form as a social commitment.

Through the exploration of public and private thresholds and of habit and inhabitation, I have been able to investigate and reveal both social and physical latency. This has allowed me to understand that it is possible for architects to engage fully and to impact not only the built environment but also the social, cultural and political environment. I believe architects can and should interact with the social and physical environment to envision more democratic architectural interventions.

⁷ Ibid p.g. 6

⁸ Spuybroek, Lars. *The Grace Machine: Of Turns, Wheels and Limbs*. FOOTPRINT, [S.l.], p. 7-32, apr. 2018. ISSN 1875-1490. Available at: <<https://journals.open.tudelft.nl/index.php/footprint/article/view/1971>>. Date accessed: 06 November, 2019. doi: <https://doi.org/10.7480/footprint.12.1.1971>. pg 22

Relationship between studio and project method and approach

The research is being conducted within the studio, Methods and Analysis. The aim of the studio is to “foster and protect processes of meaningfulness, appropriation and integration between the built environment and those who use and produce it”⁹. Within the initial contextual research, a focus was placed on “meaningfulness, appropriation and integration”; through architectural techniques I attempted to interpret forms in the built environment and look for meaning. Learning from the work of Eco, in his text ‘The Open Work’¹⁰, it is understood that we can never be absolute when interpreting the intentions of forms in the built environment. Therefore, the focus of the research shifted from “meaningfulness, appropriation and integration” and instead to “foster and protect processes”, investigating how architectural /urban intervention can be envisioned through more democratic processes.

With the aim of exploring democratic processes, the research utilises ‘open architecture’ techniques to address form as a social commitment, and acknowledges that there is no absolute. Open architecture techniques invite a plurality of ideas, through communication, interpretation, interaction, and collaboration, in order to meaningfully integrate forms into the city for appropriation. ‘Open architecture’ ideas can be seen within the design of modernist works of architecture, including those of Herman Hertzberger¹¹; who placed minimal interventions within public space to be interpreted freely (e.g. a level change could be used as a stage, table or chair) allowing people to individually and meaningfully appropriate them in accordance with their individual social and cultural needs.

This research experiments with using ‘open architecture’ techniques in the design process, as well as the proposed intervention. This allows for a more democratic [design] process, given that the research is continually interpreted and never absolute. To encourage communication, interpretation, interaction, and collaboration, the research hosts an interdisciplinary design competition, ‘Dining in the Urban’, alongside an initial intervention proposed by myself, a public bath house and community centre. The competition ‘Dining in the Urban’ invites others to collaborate in the research process. After the competition is judged, the shortlisted entrants are invited to collaborate on integrating both proposed interventions, the bath house, community centre and dining in the urban, in order to create a single meaningful intervention to be integrated into Skopje’s urban landscape.

⁹ “Methods and Analysis.” TU Delft. Accessed December 9, 2019. <https://www.tudelft.nl/en/education/programmes/masters/architecture-urbanism-and-building-sciences/msc-architecture-urbanism-and-building-sciences/master-tracks/architecture/programme/studios/methods-and-analysis/>.

¹⁰ Eco, Umberto. 1989. *The Open Work*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Pg xxi

¹¹ Herman Hertzberger, *Architecture and Structuralism* (NAI010 publishers, 2015)

Relationship between project and wider world

With the aim of creating a more democratic process of design, the design competition, 'Dining in the Urban', invites international interdisciplinary entries. The three shortlisted designs will be integrated within the wider research intervention in Skopje, through collaboration and collective design. Thus, the competition creates an interaction between the research project and the wider world.

The design competition invites interdisciplinary collaboration to integrate a wider system of values within the project. Through Anderson's work 'On Streets', we can learn the value in communication and collaboration with others from outside the discipline of architecture, and how collaboration creates a wider understanding of factors which influence the built environment.

"The concern of these studies is not to salvage either functionalism or determinism but to move toward a situation where one can better understand the interactions of factors - cognitive, cultural, social, physiological, environmental factors - that are involved with people and their environment"¹².

Inviting entries from an international audience, both students and practitioners, allows for a broader range of intergenerational collaborations. The competition aims to explore and reveal the range of social and cultural nuances through the everyday ritual of cooking. The brief sets out no definition for 'dining' with an aim to see how entrants interpret the brief. Each entry will reveal individual nuances (i.e. what aspect of 'dining' does the entrant focus on: ingredients, preparing food, cooking, gathering to eat, communal eating etc), collectively the entries will allow a better understanding of people and their environment.

Acknowledging the historic role of design competitions in architectural practices, this project explores competitions as a form of 'open architecture'; investigating how such processes can be used within research and education, in order to produce cycles of continued collaboration and education. The competition places knowledge and generosity in the design process and in the public realm, creating a continual cycle of 'knowledge, generosity, knowledge...'. Through the competition, the research facilitates conversations within the public realm, inviting others to interact and to collaborate in creating a democratic, meaningful intervention within Skopje's urban environment.

¹² Anderson, Stanford. 1991. *On Streets*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. pg. 2

Ethical dilemmas in research and design

This research project acknowledges the ethical dilemma in absolute design and therefore has shifted the focus from a final design to rethinking the process of design. Absolute design does not acknowledge time - how the physical environment can cater to the ever changing social environment.

The research has focussed on the process of collective design, hosting a design competition based on theories of 'open architecture' and 'loose fit', celebrating the unfinished - an intervention which is adaptable with time. The role of designing, managing, and judging the design competition, has allowed me to critique my own initial proposal for the project, a public bath and community centre. Reflecting upon the aspects of: use, form, technique and communication and how they interact with time. In order to celebrate the unfinished, time became a key factor in the design, focusing on how the design lends itself to: maintenance, reuse, recycling and decay. Materiality became key to integrate the bath house and community centre into the current environment, whilst ensuring it was fully circular and always unfinished. The design will be tested through collective critique when the competition entrants are invited to collaborate on the collective integration of the bath house, community centre and 'Dining in the Urban'.

Through a constant collaboration within the research and design process, the project has invited critique and integrated values from a range of sources. The research project is a collective investigation and has so far collaborated through: group research within the studio of Method and Analysis; continual collaboration between TU Delft staff and peers; research workshops with students from Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje; and international collaboration in the design competition, 'Dining in the Urban'. The process of collaboration will continue throughout subsequent phases, namely in the judging of the competition, by inviting competition entrants to collaborate on the wider research project, and by presenting a collective intervention. Through collaboration, the city of Skopje serves as a laboratory for research by design - experimenting with techniques to create democratic architectural interventions.

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