

Reflection

Transitional architecture for intellectually disabled youth.

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The subject that I chose for the graduation project relates to the problem of interrupted learning routes of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To approach this subject I performed a study of spatial requirements of my selected demographic. The spaces served as the base to an architectural proposal that is intended to promote independence, wellbeing and social participation for the young adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities (YAIDD).

My research consisted of gathering data regarding the chosen target group through interviews (with YAIDD, caretakers and parents), literature research and site visits to schools and learning centers for YAIDD. The conclusions took shape in design recommendations that were applied to my architectural and urban proposal. For instance, a common need within educational and public buildings was found to be installation of alcoves and niches. These semi-private zones located within or next-to socially-active public spaces allows YAIDD to retreat in case of over-stimulation. Ability to preview the spaces before entering was also found to reduce stress for YAIDD. Hence, in my design proposal, the linear corridor became an engaging street with windows, allowing the visitors to move through the space and observe before entering.

The method that shapes the design of the building relies on the design guidelines gathered in the research phase, as well as the input from site analysis. By combining the two inputs my aim is to provide a relevant solution applicable to the selected context. Design methodology started from identifying zoning and routing of the building(s), and moving into each individual zone (i.e., educational, communal, medical). Later on, materialization and textures for exterior and interior are explored. Throughout the whole process, the media chosen for the products are 2D drawings, hand sketches (perspectives), details (hand-drawn and digital) and physical models. The use of models was the primary tool to understand the spatial quality and make decisions regarding facade expression and spatial organization.

This master thesis is intended to enhance the quality of life of YAIDD by proposing an option to integrate continued learning into the transitional phase of the demographics. The content provides a framework that could be challenged or further developed by the services related to the education and personal development of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.