

**Reflection**

**To Revive Through Finding the Potential of City Interim Space**

Re- imagine the use of Bezistan Passage in Belgrade, Serbia

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AR3MET105 Methods and Analysis Graduation Studio

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2021 - 05 - 14



## Introduction

The location of my graduation project takes place within the complex neighborhoods of downtown Belgrade, the capital city of Serbia. It sits at the beginning of Trg Nikole Pasica street, and lies at the intersection of two monumental squares (Nikola Pasic Square and Terazije Square and Terrace). It is an urban passage called the Bezistan (means market hall in Persian) that has fountain covered by skylight and a square under the roof. Designed as a city third space, it was found with experience of everyday life, an idea of a new society that is build up by all actors and activities.

Yet, due to the social and economic degradation in the last decade of the twentieth century of the former Yugoslavia, the public space of the Bezistan Passage has slowly lost the elements of its original features, such as its pleasantness and spatial hierarchy. This has mainly caused by the transformation of surrounding curriculum and the rapid economic growth, leading to the re-planning and renovation process of the public spaces being overlooked and neglected by the government. Therefore, the main purpose of this thesis is to research and discover a new potential for the Bezistan Passage and methods to revive and regenerate existing public spaces.

Through the process of research, trial and error, the project has landed on a conventional library program as the means to revitalize the Bezistan Passage. The new proposal aims to use the interim period of the Bezistan Passage as an opportunity to introduce a new public library facilities. Further allowing its programs to flow into the passage to continue hosting the current activities and maintain the existing value on site. Furthermore, by treasuring and appreciating the existing architecture and history of the site, the project intends to adopt existing architectural qualities and invite people to wonder, explore in realizing details to learn about past and the previous life of Bezistan.

Overall, in this reflection paper, it will further explain and elaborate my research and design process through answering the relationship of the thesis in different aspects.

## **Aspect 1.**

### **The relationship between research and design**

The graduation studio of Method and Analysis: Position in Practice has launched in parallel with the Coronavirus pandemic. As travelling was not permitted at the time, we were unable proceed with the research of Belgrade through traditional methods such as field trip and site visit. Therefore, the research was landed from afar, using internet, media, and literature as the major resources and tool to uncover the spatial potential of Belgrade and the possible future of the city.

### ***Collective research***

The Journal of Architecture and Literature #3: Reading(s) and Writing(s) by Klaske Havi mentioned that architecture is a culture that shifts depending on the context. It must be recognized as a lens for investigating the built environment and a means of reflection that is able to address "building" as both verb and noun (Gabrielsson, Frichot, Havik, & Jobst, 2019). This has led to an investigation of the kiosk, by using kiosk as a lens and a process that shape the city of Belgrade.

The research of the kiosk focuses on understanding and defining the typology of the kiosk that are commonly found in the city of Belgrade. Using writing and linguistic as a concept, the kiosks are viewed as a sentence within the large text called Belgrade. And linguistic became a way for us to dissect the sentence kiosk into verb, noun, and adverb. If we read kiosk as a verb, and "to kiosk" is to qualify the recognized spatial potential within the built environment. In this subchapter of the study, we use the research methods such as mapping and gaming to understand the process of establishing and running a kiosk in the city of Belgrade. Through this research, we realize that a kiosk is where different actors are meet and negotiate. To kiosk requires the context to offer the spatial potential and needs for the kiosk to function.

We also questioned what if: what if the kiosk were just an object – an identification of things? What elements should it be composed of? And how are these elements embody different meanings to different individuals? In this subchapter, we look into the types of kiosks in Belgrade, remodel them, and deconstructing them into various components. We also simulate the use of these elements that are encouraging human interaction. According to the affordances theory of James Gibson, our daily life is about engaging and accepting different actions which environment offers. And kiosk as a noun which is a collection of material existences can provide affordances for individuals and enable the kiosk to function.

Looking into the definition of an adverb, we see that an adverb is something that modifies the verb. With parallels to viewing kiosk as an adverb, this shows the spatial potential within the built environment. And how well it modifies the built environment is dependent on how kiosk as a noun being afford. Therefore, for the kiosk, to kiosk, kioskly, is to recognized the right amount unrealized potential and provide proper affordances for the objects that needed to be aligned.

### ***Individual Research***

The individual research was initiated from my interest in analyzing, renewal and revitalize existing architecture. While noticing the growing city are busy accommodating the rapid economic growth and transformation, the re-planning and renovation of the public spaces are often overlooked, neglected, and set on a low priority (Gehl, 2010). Using Belgrade as a testing ground, with the ideas of renewal and revitalization for public spaces, this project will focus on exploring the methods and techniques to restore, maintain, and reinforce the social/cultural value of the public space in Belgrade.

Bezistan Passage is one of the prime examples in Belgrade which faces the risk of disappearing in its value and meaning under the post-socialist development. The main reasons is due to the reconstruction process being continuously delayed and postponed.

Therefore the main question during my earlier study is to question the methods in restoring and maintaining the existing social and culture value of the existing public space in between the stages of redevelopment begins.

Learning from the linguistic approach of the kiosk in developing a different narrative for Belgrade, we need to study the verb (potential environment). Re-imagining the current potential of a location can be done through re-designing or improving a noun. This method helps us to advance from reading Belgrade to the ultimate goal of rewriting Belgrade.

In the case of the Bezistan passage, the public space is slowly losing its original qualities in comfort, usages, and flexibility due to the reconstruction process being continuously delayed and postponed. Interim uses may be a solution to restore, maintain, and reinforce the social and cultural value of Bezistan. The term “interim use”, and “temporary use” were being seen as an approach to ensure diversity and alternative space provision – rather than leaving development to government and the economy alone, they explore an a simple appropriation of the existing public (Lehtovuori & Ruoppila, 2012). It often happens in a place where having a gap in the cycle of utilization, which can be used temporarily for other purposes(Arlt, 2006).

Even though it seems like a short-term measure rather than a permanent solution, this can be a way to demonstrate success of a concept and became a transition and process to support the long-term renovation process and permanent solution. This is similar to how kiosks act as a temporal solution that emerged under the pressure of political instability, economic, and social crisis. It responded directly to the devastation of economic production and helped to decrease the unemployment rate during the 90s. With its temporality and flexibility, it re-appropriated the street corner and provided shelters for the pedestrians and goods for the communities. It was a quick solution and a bandage for the refurbishment of the city's economy and made up for the inefficiencies of the city's system.

The research has allow me to notice the value of temporal change and temporary use of urban space. It can advocate opportunity and discover new potential for the city.

## **Aspect 2.**

### **The relationship between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic, your master track, and your master programme**

The graduation studio of “Positions in Practice” offered by the chair of Methods & Analysis has challenged the project from a conceptual framework, the early fascination of the kiosk, research in Stanford Anderson's theory - On Street, and exploring the urban condition of Belgrade in different methodology, to critically evaluating the research results, and finding my position in purposing new implantation for the city of Belgrade.

During the final year of my Architecture Master study, the graduation studio encourages me to find my interest in architecture design to a testable prediction and hypothesis. In formulating graduation topic in this approach, it connected my background to the larger context of the built environment, brings myself and my experiences as a reflection into what I can do to change or improve the current state of Bezistan Passage.

My graduation topic is focusing on reviving and regenerating the existing public space in Belgrade. Choosing Bezistan Passage as a testing ground offers the project an opportunity to explore the potential of interim and temporary urban development. Interim in Urban development term is a period open for unconventional use, offers time and space for multi- initiatives. Indeed, an opportunity to utilize our urban neglected space and given it a brand-new future status to stimulate its contribution to the city (Dzokic, Neelen, & Kievith, 2010).

The project and the research topic are in the relationship with the studio in its three based instruments. These instruments are mention at the beginning of the semester, which is **meaningfulness, appropriation, and**

**integration.** To revive is to recognize the current condition of the site, and valuing the existing architectural qualities. And from that, the research continues to evolve in taking the three instruments (meaningfulness, appropriation, and integration) into consideration to find new potential for the Bezistan Passage. These considerations then turned into design decisions and methodology. And forms strategies in bringing back the original values of roles of Bezistan Passage, empowering the general public by discovering programs and approaches to improve the original appropriation on site. Lastly, is to explore tools and methods to integrate both meaningfulness and appropriation into a real constructable project for the city and every individual who passed by Bezistan Passage.

### Aspect 3.

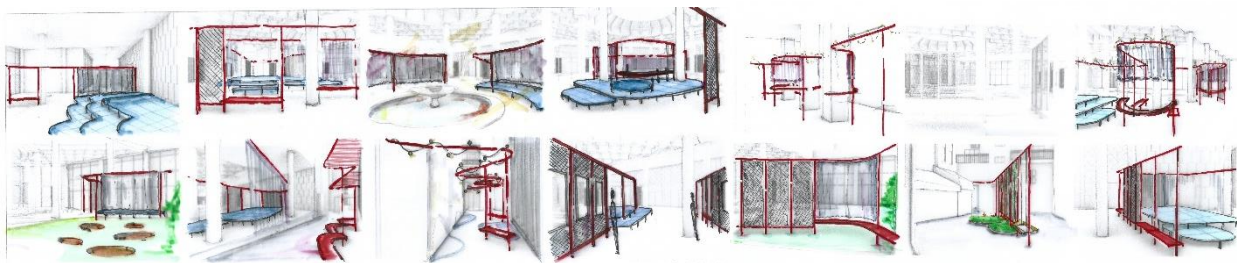
#### **Elaboration on research method and approach chosen by the student in relation to the graduation studio methodical line of inquiry, reflecting thereby upon the scientific relevance of the work**

The interim condition of the Bezistan passage has led me into a cycle of trials in research methods and making design decisions or approaches.

#### ***An Event Ground***

Initial research of the project aims to explore the potential in refurbishing the Bezistan Passage with temporal elements. Use temporal structure as a methodology to construct and transform spaces into event ground. Provide platforms to encourage interconnectedness to happened and embrace the existing activities such as small performances, movie night, concert, gathering, buying, and selling.

The research has led the project at the time offering proposal to enhance the community through structured social and cultural events (Fig. 1). It was believed by strengthening the sense of ownership and memories in public space can help reduce vandalism and increase safety (Kamvasinou & Roberts, 2014). However, through different trials and errors, the results have implied the design methods and approach through street furniture and modular systems has neglected the connection and relationship with the existing context, as a result, the design objects occurred in accidental, random, and out of place. Therefore, the project has taken a step backward to rediscover the potential and programs that can support the revitalization of the Bezistan Passage.



( Fig. 1 Initial research aims to explore the potential of temporal structure and modular construction. The design scheme shown above is based on the concept of line, object and surfaces to accommodate movement, events and situations. )

#### ***Library***

A conventional public library has come to my mind. In many countries, library buildings are often a vital part of urban regeneration. It can contribute towards both economical and cultural regeneration and encouragement to support city tourism (Dewe, 2006). There are also examples of libraries being housed in converted buildings such as the LocHal in Tiburg, Netherlands, and Public Library Het Predikheren in Mechelen, Belgium are both great examples of adaptive reuse of the existing architecture. And by adding new

intervention in respect to the existing structure will allow the historic areas to continue to evolve – layering, producing a “collage of time”.

Today, the libraries in central Belgrade are facing the issues such as a lack of spaces for collaboration, spaces to showcase arts, films, and recreational space to hang out, interact, and other leisurely activities. Thus, the project wishes to conserve the old Bezistan Passage by replacing the existing bank and restaurant facility with the conventional library program, to further allowing the programs to continue maintaining the value on site. Subsequently, revitalize the site is giving a new purpose for Bezistan Passage during its interim period.

The role of modern libraries can be described as a “living room in the city” where people can visit for the day, meet for lunch, coffee, or breaks (Worpole, 2013). It was similar to the original design intention of the Bezistan Passage, as a city third space, functioned as a breaking point between the busy workday and home. Hence, the new proposal would like to reimagine the two typologies (urban passage and public library) that can coexist. Using the conventional library components such as **learning, meeting, inspiration, and performative** to generate programs that can continue the life of Bezistan passage as an active and productive space. Moreover, a pleasant city corner can temporarily break us away from reality and bring us into fantasy through text.

### ***Flexibility and Temporality***

Although the current Bezistan Passage is still vibrant, it is no longer performing in its original coherences and unable to provide a hierarchy for the activities, actions, and users. The site today is overly exploited and slowly losing in its original qualities. Therefore, the research and design have evolved into an investigation in methods and tools to bring conventional library qualities into the passage. As libraries as an architectural typology usually designed in the hierarchy for collecting books and comfortable atmospheres for people to read. The designed wish to extended some of these characteristics into the passage to help to improve the current condition. And this decision subsequently led to the research of flexible façade and temporal construction.

In expanding the library qualities into the Bezistan Passage and Nikola Pasica Square, the design proceed demolition of the existing south side façade, and the two façade facing towards the courtyard. The new purposed facade will be extended to align with the courtyard and the face of existing retail. Thus, enlarge the indoor use of the space also appropriates the spatial organization of the Bezistan Passage.

The first flexible facade intervention is located at the south elevation facing Nikola Pasica Square. The new construction of the façade is purposed to rethink the ideas of door and entryway. The new design converts the conventional entry into a wall of city bookshelves. Encourage interaction with the pedestrian and market square. It also opens up the use of lobby within ground levels, allows café and seating to flow into the city square in good summer weather.

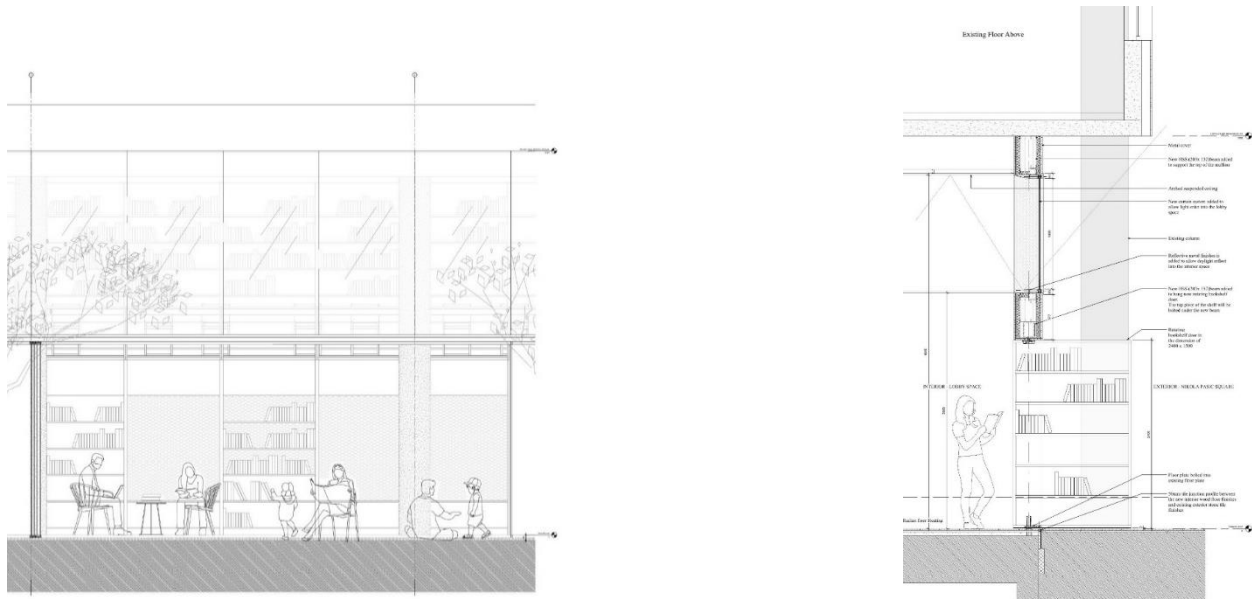
In detail, the bookshelf doors are designed to be prefabricated and made with BauBuche panel in standard 35mm thickness for its framework, and 20mm thickness for its shelving units. As BauBuche (laminated veneer lumber) can provide high strength in structures compare to softwood materials. It is selected to be the best materials to support the loads from books and given stiffness to its function as a door. Moreover, the bookshelf will be enclosed on the exterior side with 10mm plexiglass to prevent the weather and installed on-site with pivoted hardware bolted into the new HSS structure and existing ground.

The second intervention is the new façade wrapping on the two sides of the Bezistan courtyard. The foldable glass system that encloses the two elevations faced into the courtyard are with miner mullion details and hidden-based mullion to adopted the “transparency” principle from SANAA. The design of the new curtain system would also like to achieve the details designed for the Kanazawa Museum of Contemporary Art. The envelope of the building was detailed with transparent skin wrapped to protect the interior spaces and

courtyard. They were subtle and beautifully blurred the boundaries between the interior space and the landscape (Fernandez-Galiano, 2006).

In details, the bottom mullion of the folding façade are designed to align with the top of the interior finish floor. The top mullion of the façade will be hidden behind the new roof flashing that is extended out by an additional steel beam.

Besides, the project was predominantly inspired by the book kiosk located on Kaplara Street in the Kneza Mihaila district. It was a street comprised of series of small book carts, with second-hand books, posters, and vinyl records (West, 2016). Therefore, the earlier vision of the project was picturing Bezistan as a common ground with portable bookshelves that is free for book share and knowledge exchange. In the later stage, the project has evolved into a design of a temporary bookshelf facing towards the fountain, creating seating in “L” shaped and use the existing platform that leveled the fountain for hosting possible events or performances. The outdoor bookshelves and the indoor bookshelves are mirrored and framed the center fountain as a stage.



( Fig. 2 The design of the flexible façade systems are for the intentioned to extend library atmosphere into the passage and inviting people into the library spaces )

### ***Wonder through details and the potential of existing architecture***

The research and design approach towards a close examination and exploration of existing architecture and the surrounding context in its material use, colors, textures, and its facade rhythm. By treasuring and valuing existing architecture, the research and design focusing on enhancing the existing details and promoting a new experience for the users. Encourage visitors to wander and discover the fountain located within the Bezistan Passage.

### ***The Transition between the New and Old***

A predominant part of this research is finding the potential of Bezistan passage, in its new status, yet its original architectural details. As a historical landmark, the Bezistan Passage has its character in many ways. This project would like to embrace these elements, such as its original paving and circular openings on the existing façade. The design aims to maintain and protect these details and provide a journey for visitors to

explore the new and old, from keeping the existing materials and bridging them with new materials to create new experiences for pedestrians who would pass through Beristain Passage.

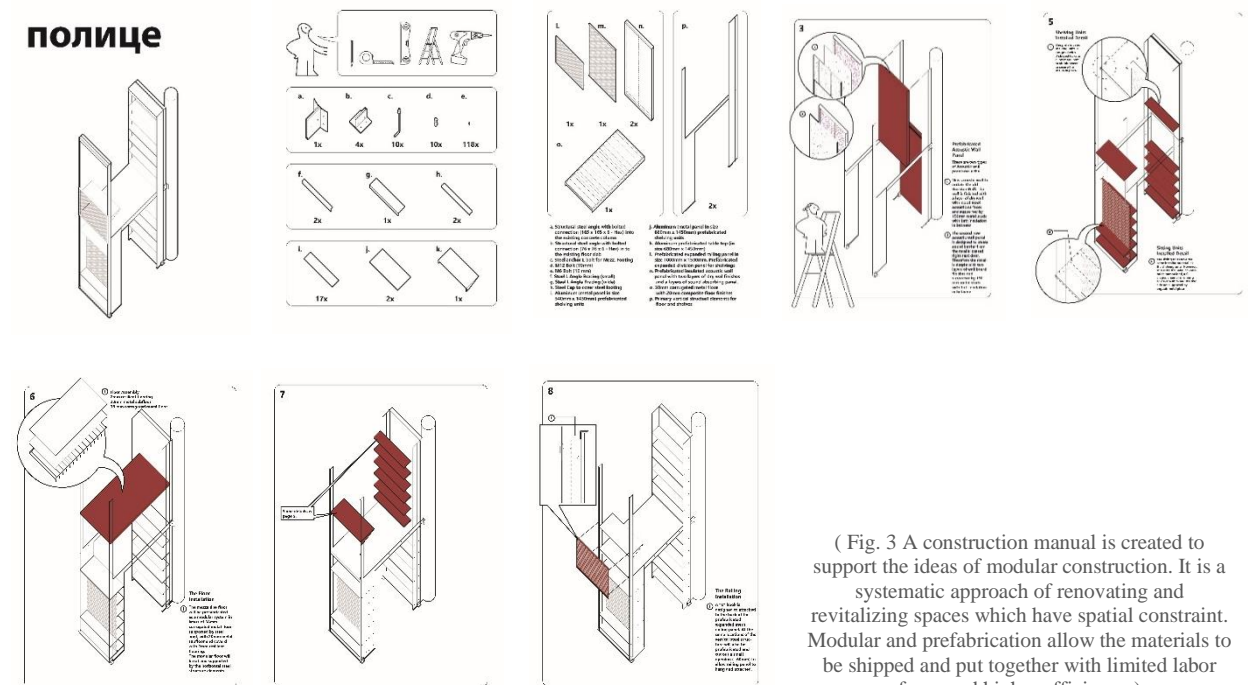
### Dialogue of culture and history

To developed a connection with the local culture and history, the project decided to look back into the history of the Bezistan Passage through news articles, documentation, social media, and archive images. One of the research and design was to find methods to restore the original values on site. From many of the archive photos and the investigation of the previous structure and current condition. It was believed that the site was changed and redeveloped throughout the time. The original elevations within the south side of the passage are no longer following the same images in the historical photo. Therefore, one of the design decisions is to bring back the image and memories of the old Bezistan Passage by reviving its previous life, installing a large acoustic feature wall, and finished with wood wool panels detailed to match the wall in the archive photo.

### Modular Construction

The research and design explore methods in building modular structures with light and durable materials. Steel, metal members, and translucent expanded mesh panels are selected to be the main construction materials. As the current site of the Bezistan Passage is constrained in its spatial organization, prefabricated build elements can provide higher efficiency and precision during the construction process. In research and design in a systematic dimension and parametric, it allows me to perceive structure as a furniture system and interior furniture can also be part of the structure. Therefore the design of the library spaces is one large mezzanine shelves that can be built and construct simply following a manual (Fig. 3).

The final project and research have come across and finished with my original ambition in reviving through the use of modular construction. The library becomes a tool that allows me to land my methods in reality and I have learned in valuing the existing architecture and our built environment may find greater potential and inspiration in architecture research and design. Even though the final proposal of the project has taken a different direction compared to my initial approach. I have come across to realized modular systems can still be beneficial in renovating the existing architecture.



( Fig. 3 A construction manual is created to support the ideas of modular construction. It is a systematic approach of renovating and revitalizing spaces which have spatial constraint. Modular and prefabrication allow the materials to be shipped and put together with limited labor force and higher efficiency.)

#### **Aspect 4.**

##### **Elaboration on the relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific framework, touching upon the transferability of the project results**

With the aims to revive Bezistan Passage, I have noticed the potential of a interim period, the treasure of adapting existing architecture, and the benefits of modular design and prefabrication in renovations project. These are all valuable research that can be touch upon in a professional framework.

The results of this project raised up the essence of approaching our urban development and it can be the revitalization of interim city space or historical landmark. By regenerating these city interim spaces, we can reappropriate the use of the site, bring back its original intention, adding new life, and further contribute meanings and values to the city.

And it is crucial to adapt and reuse the existing structure and architecture tectonics. By doing so we can continue the history and culture of the site, and in creating mindful details to bridging the new and old, it allows the history of an area to continue to evolve – layering; producing a “collage of time”.

#### **Aspect 5. (challenges)**

##### **Discuss the ethical issues and dilemmas you may have encountered in (i) doing the research, (ii) elaborating the design and (iii) potential applications of the results in practice.**

###### ***Design is Through trial and Error***

The project begins with an enormous ambition to provide a solution to not only revive Bezistan Passage but to solve problems that many other public spaces are encountering under the same condition. Therefore, the initial approach of the design was taking an investigation into the potential of temporal construction. I used the concept of “**from object to field**” and the use of modular systems to explore the possibility of temporarily reviving the Bezistan Passage. The design purposed to act like puzzles and street furniture, which can be constructed easily to accommodate different events and actions. However, through different attempts in design concepts, form study, and orientation, the outcome has shown that the methods of reviving the Bezistan space with puzzler systems are not the most ethical and effective solution.

During the design process, one of the biggest challenges is to break away from the rigidity of the grid and the edges of the modular system. As the existing design of the Bezistan Passage has been dominated by rows of concrete columns (in the grid of 6x6m), it has constrained the opportunities for new modular elements to behave freely and makes the organization of the space unbreathable.

The design has neglected the connection and relationship with the existing context, as a result, it leads to design objects that occurred accidentally and out of place.

Therefore, the research has set aside my enormous ambition and taken a step backward to rethink the ideas of Interim, re-evaluating the existing condition of the site and continuing exploring the possible potential for the Bezistan Passage. Through the design process of trial and error, I have repositioned my thoughts and design decision in every trial. This process has made me grown as a designer in exploring my strength and interest in architecture, yet further elaborating a better design through learning the mistake in every trial.

###### ***Treasuring and Valuing the Existing Architecture***

While searching for a new project during the middle of the semester, I have set aside my ambition and taking a close look at the existing architecture. Many of my early research was only focusing on the historical background and the public images of the Bezistan, yet hardly mentioned the physical qualities, architecture tectonics, and material tactile of the site.

From taking the action of exploring the existing architecture, I have noticed the Bezistan Passage and surrounding context are enveloped by rich material tactile. The walls are clad with stone panels to create patterns and are finished with circular and rectangular textile details. Although the elevations are complex in their patterns, the intended horizontal and vertical systems from the architect can still be found.

In valuing and treasuring the existing architecture, the project has come around and landed simply through renovating the surrounding details of the Bezistan passage in methods to bring new life to revitalize the passage. Adaptive reuse of the architectural qualities of the site to further embrace the existing qualities through inviting people to wonder and experiencing the architecture.

The research and design process of this thesis not only challenged me in continuously reflecting and repositioning my design decisions, but it also reveals the awareness of the existing values of our built environment is essential. As we often get driven by our desire and dreams, it is crucial to constantly cycle our thoughts in between the concrete manifestation and the concept idea. Just like Giancarlo Piretti and Antonia Pozzighi's "project machine" mentioned earlier during the studio lecture, the circular diagram describing a loop between presence and absence which explains the analytical research and the design in architecture practice should be going back and forth to benefit from each other. Likewise, it is important to constantly challenge our design decision and being critical to our design and also the future of our built environment.

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