

Reflection

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What is the relation between your graduation project topic, your master track (Ar, Ur, BT, LA, MBE), and your master program (MSc AUBS)?

To establish the terms under which the project has been operating, the main topic of the project is taboos and transgressions, the way that they establish forms of social control and how can this be represented in the built environment. Following the track of architecture, the studio of Borders & Territories, the intervention aims to materialize a heterotopia.

The main aim of the studio is to understand architecture and spatial intervention in a larger socio-political context. With a particular focus on the in-between area/transition/border space of the Marmara Sea, the architectural design emerging from this can only be deeply rooted in the current realities of this space: an everchanging, growing, testing ground for speculation. Taking this into consideration, my proposal aims to situate itself within the "organism" of Istanbul, understand its growth patterns, and attempt to intervene in a moment and in a space where the edge of the city still has not touched the edge of the shipyard.

The buffer between the two entities is important for the industry's preservation, which otherwise would be pushed outside to a different area, possibly having a negative environmental and social impact on the new zone it would move to. In addition to its protective qualities, the in-between zone can be used as a pressure valve that releases tensions formed under the stress and pressure present in daily life.

How did your research influence your design/recommendations and how did the design/recommendations influence your research?

As a starting point for this project, a collective mapping exercise was used in order to establish the qualities of the land and landscape. Defined by sitting on top of a fault line, Istanbul is always prone to seismic activity. This kind of pressure that keeps on building underground can only be released through an earthquake. Therefore, what is generally understood as a destructive event, in this instance will be seen as a release that sets off a ripple effect.

A theoretical framework was established to outline the relationship between power and sex based on Foucault and Beatrice Colomina's work. Throughout the history of humanity, sex became a tool of societal control. To spatialize the concept, sex is studied and understood through the space of the brothel. In the context of Istanbul, these establishments used to be located between the port and the urban fabric. This juxtaposition of this pleasure space generated tensions socially, morally, and religiously. Within Turkish society, sex was and still is in great part a taboo subject that shall be concealed by closed doors. The existence of the brothel is acknowledged in silence. Interesting qualities of these establishments are the ability to inscribe themselves within the urban fabric and the resilience of practice despite attempts to stop them.

Finally, analyzing the site area and the systems surrounding and governing it through multiple site visits and drawings provided a clearer image of the reality of the space and the condition that the proposal should work with. The site is understood as an interstitial space between a shipyard and the city, next to a recently regenerated saltwater lagoon, bordering the edge of a concrete factory and a water treatment plant, in the vicinity of a residential area.

In the case of this project, the research influenced the design in the bigger part. It created the cultural and social framework that helps understand the extent of the taboos, their inner workings in the city of Istanbul, and the way that they can be transgressed. It has been clear since the beginning that in Turkish culture taboos are neurotic and pathological and eroticism and violence are seen by the “objective intelligence as something monstrous” as George Bataille also describes in his work “Eroticism.” Moreover, the initial research of the collective map on soil, fault lines, and earthquakes, established a clear need to design consciously for future disasters in the area. These requirements have been woven into the logic of the structure of the building.

On the other hand, the design process forced me to research ways that water behaves in the area, and how can it be reintroduced on-site to clean up and revitalized the land I am acting on, healing not only the patient of the sanatorium but the long run, the site and the lagoon.

How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)?

I find the way that this project was approached to be transdisciplinary, ranging from social and cultural studies to geological and historical, and finally to structural and architectural details. This kind of multifaced approach was a time confusing and hard to follow. For the first part of the research phase, I worked with a multitude of pieces that seemingly do not belong together. In the end, they cohesively formed a strong foundation for the sanatorium proposal that has ramifications in more than one direction. This kind of approach, if ordered in a better manner, can be used for further projects, to generate a new lens that architecture and the built environment can be viewed. Therefore, I would go as far as to say, that despite the multi-disciplinarity and ambiguity of my approach to work, it proved beneficial in formulating a well-thought-through program for my proposal and a strong argumentation for the implications of the design, leaving me with enough room to work on all scales to comprehend the implications.

How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope, and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?

My graduation proposal project focuses mostly on understanding the extent of social control that a designed space can exercise on the user. It aims to take full control over the visitor and change their behavioural patterns by unleashing the underlying violence that is engraved in each individual and suppressed under the laws of society. It becomes a testing ground for how can space accommodate and transform the rapport between humans.

Since the project has been introduced as a testing ground for certain behavioral patterns, the social and ethical components have large implications for the way that the brief ought to be approached.

The proposal aims to take full control over the user, both through well-established schedules and rules as well as the way that the building is structured. This kind of approach could potentially be seen as cruel. This kind of violence and cruelty becomes part of what the intervention is trying to understand.

The sanatorium invites the users to commit themselves to the space where transgression is allowed, accepted, and even encouraged. The user willingly and consensually agrees to participate in the events that take place in the perimeter of the intervention. The occasional excess from certain users has been accounted for. All these transgressions are to be carefully controlled and stopped if participants find themselves in danger.

Additionally, from the point of view of the sex workers working in the sanatorium, they are provided with a space environment where they practice the trade. It can be argued that these workers were forced into this kind of trade based on economic and ethnic considerations, but this exceeds the scope of my intervention. I am working under the assumption that their participation was consensual.

To conclude, if all parties involved are doing so willingly, aware of the implications and the risks, the potentially damaging aspects can be avoided.

How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?

From the organizational point of view, the project is extremely site-specific and cannot be located in a different context than the one of Tuzla because of its links to the land, lagoon, the history of the shipyard, and the five existing buildings.

From an ideological standpoint, taboos, violence, and transgression exist everywhere on various levels. This allows for a better transferability of the main principles of the project. Its flexibility allows it to inhabit any marginal space that can be found at the border of forces acting upon it, morphing in structure to fit the context and develop a new shape that creates the same protective enclosure.

We also expect you to develop 2 reflection question yourself which relate to the content of your work.