

Site of Re (-) pair

Rethinking our ways of being, producing, consuming and designing during a time of mass production and consumerism



When I came to ExploreLab I had a fairly vague idea of what I wanted to investigate. I knew that the topic of modern consumption, mass production and "retailisation" of the built environment is something that interested me. However, at that time, I did not yet realise to what extent I could make this topic "my own". To narrow it down I tried to dig into existing research and view this topic from various angles and issues. Week after week I was collecting multiple potential research questions, but I could not decide which one I want to focus on. Looking back now, I know that it wasn't because the topics were "not good enough", they were just not produced by me, with my own experiences, memories and intentions. After attending the lecture Problematization by Stavros Kousoulas as part of AR3A010 Research Plan course, I received that necessary guidance and help to approach the search through "me", me as a filter that encounters everyday life and distills it into a set of personal beliefs and values. The answer was to look for my own pressing problem within this field. Stepping back from my previous weeks of work was essential, and soon enough, I found an entry point through a craft that I very much treasure in my life - pottery. This is when the topic of consumption began to be viewed not as a distant problem

caused by actions of people, but when I acknowledged my own embedment within this problem. The retrospection of my life as a consumer and my life as a creator "potter" formed the foundation of my speculations in research. Pottery guided me to the topic of care which became central in my research.

However from there on the process was not so smooth (as I imagine it shouldn't be anyways). When you start to research your own problem, it requires profound introspection, consistent communication with yourself, and genuine trust in your own beliefs. "I know the right way" is the vector towards successful exploration of your own problem. However, this is what sometimes lacked, which led me towards destructive work that ultimately exhausted me and stole time I could have spent pursuing "my right way." This was especially evident during my design process. Speaking more explicitly, I was often inclined towards "the right way" I was taught during my bachelor's degree. Again and again, I found myself asking, "How do I do it?" and seeking answers in what was standard. I do not mean to criticise the ways I was taught to design during my bachelor's, but I want to highlight the importance of not following those methods blindly. By the end of my graduation, I learned to

view those skills and methods as tools to use in my own way, twisting, modifying, and adjusting them to express my own intentions. This is especially relevant in a project of such a personal character founded on my speculations.

The research process had its own challenges. Initially, I planned to include not only general speculations but also speculative scenarios. From where I stand now, I must admit that this method could have worked if implemented on its own. In addition, it would have set my project in an almost fictional context, which I did not desire. After attempting to create a few scenarios upon the already completed framework of my research, I could no longer see value in this method. Therefore, I excluded it at the final stage, allowing the research to flow naturally and lead me to speculative conclusions. These conclusions ultimately became the most important output of my research toward design.

While I relied primarily on speculation as my main method, literature studies were a supplementary tool that provided the basis for my speculations. In the very first stage, I planned to structure my research as a timeline. Starting from historical investigation of the evolution of consumer culture and evolution of retail

architecture, to researching notions of care and repair through philosophical theories and social studies. This structure has proven to be beneficial to my outputs and the process. The historical part of the research contributed to my overall understanding of the dependencies and influences of culture, lifestyles, and behaviours through the lens of historical events. After learning about the evolution of architecture, I gained understanding of how spaces are shaped and how they shape our everyday life. These conclusions were relevant to guide me in my design process, in which I intended to create environment able to shape and cultivate care in consumption.

When I moved to analysis of social studies and ethics of care, my research shifted towards the future. And naturally I began to speculate about alternative ways of living and designing. Overall, I am convinced that speculation as a method is suitable for addressing your own problem and capturing it in a design later on. The use of literature studies to support these speculations allowed me to expand the problem and emphasise its relevance and complexity.

Towards my P2 presentation my research had given me the basis to make initial design proposals. Because of overarching objective and output of my research to cultivate care among bigger masses, I envisioned my design as a network of intervention across the city centre of my chosen location. My plan was to develop an overall vision first and then focus on a single building at a later stage. As a result, I have spent a significant part of my second semester developing a «Masterplan». After presenting it to my mentors at P3 presentation and receiving combined feedback, I realised that I had to step back. This is a good example of how I failed to ask myself, 'What is my own right way to do it?' as I heavily relied on methods and principles of traditional ways to design an urban plan. As a result, my plan conveyed a top-down approach with rigid interventions. This realisation was crucial for reconsidering my approach to design a building later on. Overall, I observed a desire to structure and distinguish my research conclusions in 'black and white', which was visible in my urban plan. After working on my feedback and reevaluating my research findings, I learnt to embrace the complexities of my problem and reflect it in my building design.

My building design was a renovation. The process of designing or redesigning an existing structure, is a process of learning from and participating in a dialogue with the building. This process represents a balance between understanding the building itself and embracing its constraints or imperfections, while embodying a new value and life into it deriving from my research. Making a transformation project, means to modify your architectural vision and ambition and find new unexpected and unique solutions. My meetings with Rufus helped through this process of twisting and adjusting, as he would highlight some technical challenges that I had sometimes overseen. I believe that because of those preexisting constraints of working with, repairing and caring for the existing structure, the potential of my project was only reinforced.

My graduation process has taught me about 'care'. I learnt to trust myself, my intuition and my capabilities. I learnt to embrace the complexities without enforced systematisation and rationalisation. I learnt to work with, continue and repair what is already present, layering over, knitting on and contributing to 'the intricate web of care and its worldmaking'.