Reflection

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In this paper I will briefly reflect on how my graduation project has proceeded throughout the last year; It reviews the research preceding P2, the project program proposed during the P2 presentation and the feedback it received. I will reflect on the way I've tried to translate the feedback into the project, the program analysis which followed and the lessons I took from it. At last I'll consider how the research and design have informed each other and what work is yet to be done towards P5.

In retrospect, all themes I explored in my research preceding the P2 presentation, were sparked by the conception of the Heterotopos in one way or the other. This conception was put forward by our tutors in the syllabus, as an initial research topic intended to extend our understanding of the site; Heterotopia – 'other spaces' – stem from a duality. This duality returned in all follow-up research topics, such as my research into the 'dichotomy of city and nature' – which informed our masterplan, and my research into 'how we live with *the other*' – which sparked the first ideas for the architectural program which I presented at the P2 presentation: amenities for psychological support for newcomers in Brussels, inspired by the peaceful character of La Friche Josaphat.

The proposed program was well-received. However, my tutors questioned whether the location and form were adequate; the chosen site was somewhat tucked away and the impressions of my intended project expressed a garden-city feel and grain size, with a mere focus on 'contemplative gardens' and 'ateliers for expression'. The professor of the Urban Architecture chair reminded me that there's no use is in 'sugar without coffee': no poetry without prose; I had to develop an adequate response to a real and urgent issue.

Consequently my site changed – from a 'back space' to a site more visible and integrated – and so did the focus of my program; rather than putting the emphasis merely on amenities for stress relief, I shifted my focus towards in fact the greatest source of stress for newcomers: the lack of sustainable access to qualitative and affordable housing.

As I was now designing housing for people with various life styles, and thus different housing needs and wishes, I had to do a program analysis: What does 'home' mean to newcomers, and how does this translate to housing needs and wishes?

This analysis took the form of a workshop, for which I invited many people I met at Buddy to Buddy; an organization which introduces newcomers to locals. I had thorough discussions with the mentors on how to reach out to these people, rewrote my invitation multiple times and prepared a lunch all night long as a thank-you for participating. Eventually, very few 'buddies' showed up; it proved extremely difficult to reach these people in the first place. The language barrier may have restrained them from

participating, or maybe they'd still wondered 'what's in it for me?'. This was a great lesson for me.

Nonetheless, the discussions I had with the 15 participants that showed up were extremely fruitful. I learned how for example that in Anatolian culture the kitchen should be out of sight from visitors, as this is 'serving space' – contrary to the 'American model' where kitchen, dining and living room make up one continuous space. Or how Islamic women wish for outdoor spaces with sufficient privacy ánd daylight, to take of their scarf while out of sight of their neighbors.

With these rather refreshing and surprisingly practical takes on what defines 'home', I started working out the design of my project. Along the way, the research which had once informed my masterplan, now proved valuable for my architecture too; theories on 'how to live together' (required from e.g. readings by Richard Sennet as well as literature on cooperative housing) informed design choices on privacy, choice of interaction and surveillance in collective space. Similarly, theories on the urban/rural dichotomy informed design choices on the architectural expression towards La Friche and the defining of the limitations of the built environment versus the 'unbuilt'. The notes I took throughout the first semester served as a reference book.

In the last phase of my graduation I'd like to put more effort in visualizing these links between research and design, illustrating the coherency of my project through all scales. After my deep-dive into the technical and pragmatic aspects of my project, I'd like to go back once more to the poetry, to close the circle. I believe the chosen program of my graduation project was extremely complicated: 'Housing for newcomers' is both ambiguous (what does 'home' mean to you?) and political (who do we provide shelter for, and at what cost?). Still (or for this reason), I believe this project was relevant, and so are the last lessons I take from it.