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## Reflection P4

*WITHIN the threshold – connecting elements as complex liminal spaces.*

1. *What is the relation between your graduation project topic, your master track (A, U, BT, LA, MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?*

This graduation project is situated within the framework of the 'Transient Liquidities along the New Silk Road III' studio, which systematically explores transient and fluid contemporary border conditions on an expansive territorial scale. The historical Silk Road, an intricate trade network bridging the East and West, has had a crucial role in establishing global connections and facilitating trade, both symbolically and tangibly constructing bridges across diverse cultures. Metaphorically and physically, the Silk Road operated as a bridge, simultaneously relying on actual bridges as crucial points along its course. These bridges not only interconnected distinct regions but also left a profound global impact on local communities. The location of our graduation project, The Panama Canal, is a contemporary illustration of such spatial conditions. Acting as a global link connecting two oceans and, consequently, the entire world, the canal has caused multiple disturbances and disconnections on a local scale. In the capital, Panama City, we encounter a bridge that beautifully encapsulates the current situation, both in its physical form and its symbolic meaning. The Cinta Costera 3 viaduct serves as a link between the residential hub of the city's working population and their workplaces, skillfully navigating around impoverished neighborhoods and the historic Casco Viejo district. It is a bridge over water but also one around the city. This bridge both connects and divides, gradually transforming into the very horizon of the city. Experienced from the intertidal zone in between it and the city, the viaduct is a space, not just a mere line of the horizon.

Within a site full of conflicting and excessive connections, yet lacking vital ones, my role as an architect allows me to actively engage and to create spaces that bridge and separate everything necessary, and provide infrastructure needed for the realization of certain possibilities, while I am aware that the provision of some possibilities disables the possibility of realizing others.

With this project, the aim is to address these issues from all the architecturally relevant scales: The territorial scale, global socio-political and economic phenomena, the urban scale.

- liberation/connection and separation of the city, viaduct, and ocean by providing necessary and missing content: a beach.

The architectural level

- the beach is an expanded field consisting of the sensations of the act of bathing – spending time in and around water. These sensations, interventions and moments are designed and addressed as something permanent or impermanent and take on different meanings and functions in a fluctuating environment.

The building technology level

- each intervention is developed according to the material properties and how individual materials react and function with the specific conditions of the location, depending on their durability, weathering tendencies, stability, fixity, or fluidity. By solving specific details, the problems of all major scales are resolved and addressed.

The design process constantly went back and forth between scales to ensure that the scales communicate and inform each other, and that the design responds to the initial research questions.

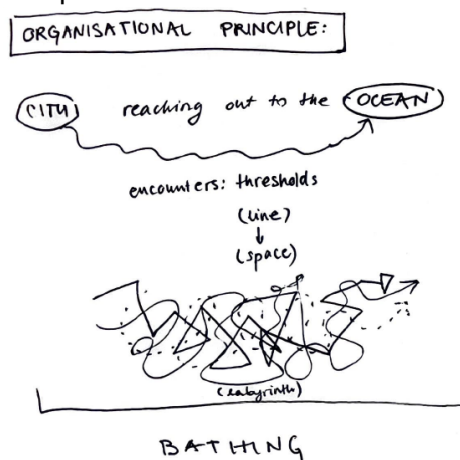
2. How did your research influence your design/recommendations and how did the design/recommendations influence your research?

The initial interest, simultaneous oppositions, through extensive research, got narrowed down to the duality of connecting elements, their ability to simultaneously hold opposite meanings. A significant moment was the realization that these elements are a constant while everything around them is in constant flux, altering their meaning. Finding a concrete example in the Cinta Costera 3 viaduct, where a physical representation of the initial phenomenon could be observed, further narrowed/deepened the research into the following topics: the connections and divisions caused by this bridge, approaches and barriers to the bridge and their effects, and lastly: linearity, fragmentation, and framing. Which were investigated in the mapping process.

The mention of linearity awoke a new significant theme, namely that connecting elements should be seen as spaces, not as lines, as initially thought. And as spaces that consist of all the territories they separate/connect. This fact greatly shaped the design and focus on the threshold space, which consists of transitional zones from the city, fortress, intertidal space, viaduct, all the way to the open ocean. Experience and conditions of the intertidal zone between the city and the viaduct were then mapped.

The ocean further expands within and across its own limits/thresholds, and the crossing of the final threshold is just an illusion.

At this moment, the design aim was clear, to 'dissolve' the city into a beach as an attempt to cross the threshold (viaduct) and achieve freedom (bathing), which Panama City and Casco Viejo lack. The beach and bathing instead take place in the space in between and consist of all the elements that separate that space.



With this design goal in mind, the research was diverted to three themes: ground conditions of the intertidal landscape, elements of bordering spaces which that space then consists of, and the form and program that should arise from those conditions and elements, as a new and added value within the site.

The final product then becomes the result of constant shifting from research to design and back, architectural design becomes an inventory of existing elements of relationships and conditions that are understood, interpreted, and placed in new relationships and meanings, always supported by research. The space between the city and the ocean becomes a beach, becomes the end goal itself. The city is broken down by its grid, and that grid, in contact with the fluctuating and dangerous tidal area, deforms according to the properties of architectural interventions that are a new type of sediments and rocks and as such act in the area. The third grid superimposed over it is the viaduct grid, which at certain focal points serves as a superimposed artificial communication in 'dangerous' situations of high tide, and at points where it crosses the bridge, it offers a leap into freedom, the false idyll of passing the final threshold where surveillance (lifeguard and police) points are also located.

*A. Additional question: How does the materialization and specificity of the interventions react to the materialization and specificity of the site? And how does it connect to the program?*

The beach area offers a spectrum of sensations that can be felt in and around water, ranging from natural to artificial. The sensations emerge from and become a part of the intertidal landscape and its diverse ground conditions: rocks, gravel, and sand/mud. The city grid intersects with these conditions, influencing the placement of sensations, while the viaduct adds an artificial layer. Sensations blend with the landscape, manifesting as new rocks or sediments depending on the ground type. Concrete interventions mimicking rocks anchor in place, while sediment-based sensations shift with the tide. Sand and mud host life forms and the sensations located there frame experiences and are made from natural light weight materials prone to weathering. They can hold sediments themselves and invite the user to engage with the soil condition. While gravel, the most unstable and unreliable ground, hosts synthetic sensations on floating platforms, prioritizing specific activities with maximum comfort and safety.

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

As anticipated and as previously outlined in the Graduation plan, the studio method provided ample space for research, mapping, experimentation, and abstraction. The dedication of time and effort to research, its specificity, and the diverse range of methods employed, ranging from reading, and writing theory paper to conducting site visits and creating models, equipped me with a solid foundation for the design process. Following P2, when the research phase officially concluded and the design phase started, the two aspects were never truly isolated; instead, they continually informed each other in a dynamic exchange, guiding me to experiment until the very end. This approach has exerted both positive and negative influences on the pace of project development. On one hand, it allowed thorough investigation and experimentation with every conceivable option, from master planning to detailing, ensuring confidence in the final outcome's suitability. On the other hand, it impacted the speed of production and the volume

of drawings and designs I've generated thus far, as well as my ability to effectively communicate my ideas throughout the process to others involved. Nevertheless, having now solidified my strategy, master plan, and design direction, I believe significant progress has been made, and I am prepared to present my project accordingly.

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

This graduation project delves into the issue of social segregation and explores how architectural practice can respond to it within its own realm of capabilities. Even within the seemingly naive theme of bathing or a beach, one can touch upon, reveal, and deal with the hidden disconnections masked within the false connections. The thorough theoretical foundation culminated in a tangible architectural proposal offering a practical function as a response to a deeply rooted social problem.

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

The project is the reaction to the simultaneous oppositions present in the connecting elements, and their essence as liminal spaces of the threshold rather than mere lines, and how they, precisely thanks to these features form a network (labyrinth) of such spaces that then organizes our world's chaos into meaning. These topics, dualities, bridges, connections, and disconnections are found all around us, and can be addressed and further investigated in the same process as applied here. Furthermore, the approach to the project and the design is to design a principle. A principle on how to deal with this phenomenon on each scale, it can be further developed on other locations and topics. The result is site specific but in a way that gives instructions on how to deal with specificities of the site conditions. For example, the way that each sensation was designed according to its ground condition (small scale) and was elaborated by the elements of the spaces it merged (larger scale) and provided connection to the disconnected (territorial and theoretical scale).

*B. Look ahead and describe how the final part of the graduation period will be filled in.*

Following the P4 presentation I would like to further develop the principles of how the 'sensations' are designed, how they act within the changes and how their use is adapted. (In physical models as well as drawings). As well as working on how to properly communicate the project and all the work that went into it. The ingredients are mostly all here, it's now a matter of presenting it in the most suitable way possible.

- In the first week post P4 I plan to reflect on the critique and, if necessary, make corrections accordingly. Improvements to the design and presentation of the 'sensations'. (until 31.05.)
- A week to finish up all the 2d drawings, with presentable graphics. (until 06.06.)
- A week for models and presentation draft. (until 13.06.)
- A week for renders, axonometries and any conceptual drawings that are needed to present the idea. (until 20.06.)
- Prints and final preparations. (until 26.06.) P5