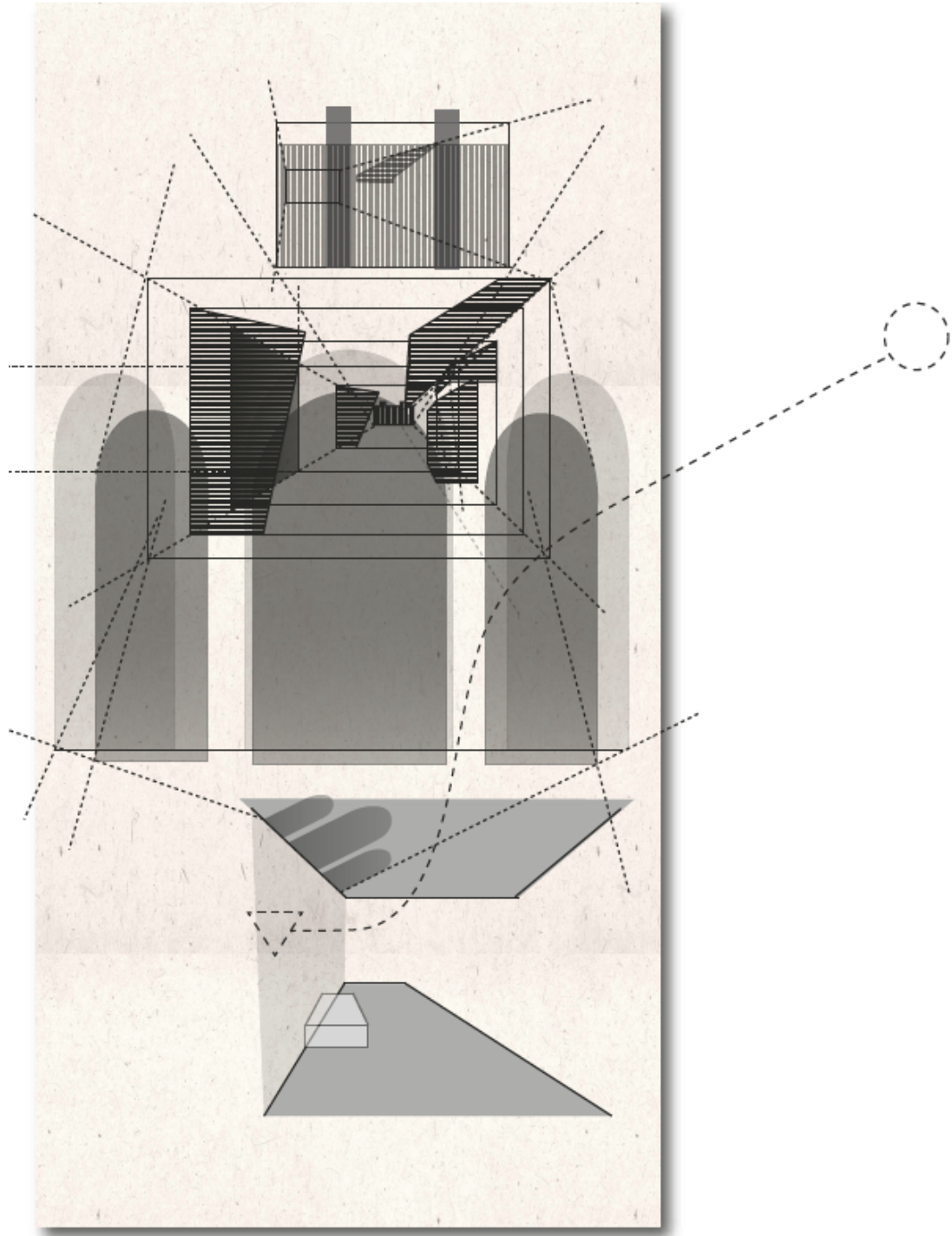


SHARED SPACES OF ISTANBUL

By Helen Zhang | 1503901 | Graduation Studio Public Building | 12-02-2014



Own Illustration | Representing Shared spaces of Istanbul | Discovering thematic elaboration of the shared spaces
Spaces of transition | Spaces of encounters | Spaces of otherness

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INTRODUCTION | THE ORGANIZATION OF SHARED SPACES

During my investigation about Istanbul in the Graduation Studio of the Chair of Public Building, the first findings show that the urban life of Istanbul is based on collectively shaped public spaces. Istanbul is as much a city of pocket spaces and surprise nooks as it is of impressive major works of architecture. "The great structures of Istanbul give a face seen from a distance; the little spots fill in the details of the portrait stroke by stroke, providing the marks of a life fully lived (Tapinar, 1983)." The urban spaces, where people stay, gather, pass by and interact, are relatively unique in Istanbul and other Islamic cities. Traditionally, those spaces are mainly based on sacred purposes. The mosque bears the meaning of all urban spaces and is considered as religious, political and cultural centre at the same time. Therefore, the backbone of Istanbul's social life and urban structure is based on the mosque complexes, also known as the *kulliyes*. Those building complexes, as typical Islamic architectural compositions, are self-sustaining, philanthropic developments, established and endowed with the waqf-system (Jenkins, 2008). The vibrant urban life is perceptible in the outdoor and indoor spaces, which are produced by those *kulliyes*.

The traditional urban structures in Istanbul and other Islamic cities have been influenced dominantly by the system of charity endowments, which are called *waqfs*. 'Waqf' is an Arabic word to define a foundation system by donating any property for a religious or charitable purpose. Apart from the government in Islamic cities, waqf was the most dominant economic actor and owned one-third of the productive land during the Ottoman period (Babacan, 2011). The system of waqfs played an important role in the shaping of public space, urban developments and the socio-economic nature of neighbourhoods of Islamic cities. Mostly these were buildings or plots of land, donated by individual owners, which became a social-economical cornerstone for the society. Personal wealth became a wide range of contributions to the social welfare, and was transformed into social institutions to serve the public. Therefore, the waqf system results in a unique form of ownership of properties, whereby the society is engaged in the shaping and developing of urban spaces. The collectively shaped public facilities were based on self-sustaining, non-profit collective initiatives. The self-sustaining system is linked to a Han (market) or a Bostan (market garden). The system of waqfs uses the rent and revenue of the productive facilities to maintain the certain facilities. The productive facilities were not necessarily spatially connected with the social facilities of the common good. It always started with the mosque as centre and within decades, it was expanded with other social facilities, such as hospitals, schools and accommodation and public kitchen for the poor. However, by managing the donated properties, a conscious responsibility among individuals in a larger society enlarged the aim to serve the community and the buildings became multifunctional complexes, reflecting the social change and the needs of people involved with it. The complexes became urban spaces, which were defined as shared spaces among the individuals of the society. The spatial outcome of this system of waqf foundations became entities, which were the *kulliyes* as mentioned before, which were continuously modified and adapted according to the needs of the society (Pirbabaei, 2008, p. 1).

The *kulliye* can be described as a traditional principle in the use of urban space in Istanbul and other Islamic cities, and created a different reality between the public and the privately owned spaces, because of its unique form of organization and ownership due to the system of waqfs. It has proven itself by fulfilling the shared interest of communities and created collectively organised urban spaces, which are still embedded in the urban fabric of Istanbul. As common good of the society, the *kulliye* can also be defined as an autonomous space, whereby individuals who are using it and appropriating it and the public, which is always able to have access to and make use of the shared spaces within the rules and the framework of the system of waqfs, are constantly involved in its forming and development. The public and the private needs encounter in the shared spaces, which displays a

certain engagement and commitment of the society in the shared spaces, but also the integration of the shared spaces into the urban life and the everyday usage of the society. This paper examines the nature of shared spaces and their role embedded in the urban life and everyday usage.

THEMATIC ELABORATION | THE NATURE OF SHARED SPACES

SPACE OF TRANSITIONS

The kulliyeh complexes in the context of Istanbul bear the meaning of shared spaces, because of the unavoidable encounter of the communal and the individual needs, the public and the private usage of urban spaces. The shared spaces are spaces, where the conventional borders between the public and the private, the individual and the community, the indoor and the outdoor blur and become loose in meaning and usage. When a space loosens up in the borders between different domains, a wide range of perceptions, movements and social encounters become possible and combinable (Stevens, 2006). The passage between the different domains offers a transition area, which is the intermediate stage between being the one and becoming the other. In the case of the kulliyehs of Istanbul, there is a certain sequence of public spaces in a structured order ones should pass through to reach the most private. Furthermore, during the transition and intermediate stages, the conventional social order cannot be defined anymore by categories and rules. The shared spaces create, like rituals, conditions of transformation, which describe the liminal moments in everyday life, associated with everyday leisure (Lefebvre, 1991). Within the kulliyehs, the social facilities, provided for the society, are encouraging social interactions and avoiding stratification. The borderline between the one and the other in the shared space becomes blurred and offers a porous membrane, which opens up for maximum interaction.

Many architectural elements also have these in-between qualities, which provide the looseness and the playful possibilities between different domains, such as doorways, galleries, terraces, colonnades, passages, and stairways (Stevens, 2006). According to Norberg-Schulz, the opening is the element that makes the place alive; because of the basis of any life is interaction (Norberg-Schulz, 1971). The overflow of interactions is characterized by porous boundaries, which connect rather than separate the one and the other. However, the shared space is also a confined zone, restricted by the activities and the interpretations of the users. The blurred space in-between, which is the bridge between binary oppositions, often defines the urban life and everyday usage of the city. Benjamin describes these interactions "just as living room reappears on the street, with chairs, hearth and altar, so, only much more loudly, the street migrates into the living room (Stavros, 2006). Shared spaces act like porous membranes, connecting and separating the public and the private realm, the indoor and the outdoor space. At the same time, it constantly adjusts the balance between the public accessibility and exposure, and the individually regulated and structured behaviour.

SPACE OF ENCOUNTERS

Kulliyehs are transitional spaces, where people stay and spend time for social gatherings. After each prayer, people gather in the forecourts and courtyards between buildings in the complexes. Unlike an open square, where people only share the moments of passing by, people are willingly to linger at shared spaces. The appearance of the convergence of people create the characteristics of a natural gathering point, bottlenecks where many people's paths and activities converge around a certain centre (Lynch, 1960). If there will be a diagram of the shared space and the people are displayed as dots, the dots will be pushed so close together that they can not be seen as dots anymore and fill up the shared spaces. The keep itself intact, this cluster of dots emerges at places when they are embodied enough to be sensed as a "place" and are clearly distinguished from the surroundings (Acconci, 1990).

In the Metapolis dictionary of advanced architecture, Manuel Gause defines such spaces as: "A collective space, optimistic and relaxed - and in many aspects changeable, mutable, precarious and

reversible - for a city ultimately more joyful and exciting than elegant." It is more than a place to pass by; it is also a place to stay, and thus a relational complicit space for the personal and shared stimulus. [source] Shared spaces are spaces, where the public and the private needs encounter, where new relations emerge with the people who share the space because of the conditions of ambiguity. While crossing the different domains, the in-between becomes space of encounter between a controlled space and a disordered space of strangers. The space of encounter is constantly placed in a condition, which the public exposure and personal control is adjustable. Also the engagement from the both domains is perceptible, when people use the spatial conditions of shared space to adjust their control over gradients of exposure and the extent to which others perceive them in public. People savour the conditions of liminality and the sensations between the private and the public domains, which make them pause, reflect and change direction, and at the time have the freedom to distinguish, control and negotiate (Stevens, 2006). Shared spaces are constantly being tested by the transitional, spatial practices about what is acceptable and what desirable for the public and the private.

SPACE OF OTHERNESS

Shared spaces also act like thresholds, which are present mentally as materially at the same time. All the spatial conditions produced by human crossings, are either materialized in constructions (as the gates, walls of inner streets, courtyards, stairs) or temporarily shaped through use (as the route towards the mosques, appropriation by vendors, a public announcement). Like in case of the kulliyes, the public space, contained in the in-betweens, is eventually separated from the rest the city and acting like the other. While describing those shared conditions, otherness became apparent in their form, their layout and their indoor facilities (Stavros, 2006). The kulliyes became orderly structured building complexes, and were considered as a shift in urban qualities, compared to urban structure of the surroundings. They are closely connected to the urban life and everyday usage of the residents. However, they also differ in meaning, form and usage from the sameness, the commonplace and become separated from which they differ. This otherness, where differences meet, bears heterotopic qualities. Foucault described in one of the characteristics of heterotopias; "heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that isolates them and makes them penetrable at one and the same time (Foucault, 1967)." In the everyday usage, users and visitors both understand that these shared spaces are used to separate and to protect, but at the same time they are also used to connect. The transitional function, the transformative potentials and its physical separateness define the heterotopian qualities of the shared spaces. Manuel de Sola-Morales describes the shared spaces as spaces where every life takes place and maybe they are more and more often spaces that are not public nor private, but both at the same time (Borret, 2001). The relational status of the binary opposition becomes a condition of both or an osmotic relation.

On the other hand, heterotopian spaces are contained in the urban life, accepting the presence of the deviants. The alterity can be either defined by groups of people, which are considered as other or by the usage during a temporary period of crisis. Foucault describes these as spaces of deviation; "The main characteristic of is that these spaces are assigned to or marked by the presence of individuals and social groups who do not fit into the common social order. They are no longer spaces of passage between social roles. They are for deviants (Foucault, 1967)." A part of the indoor facilities of the kulliyes are made for the deviants. The system of waqfs used to share its everyday food supplies with the poor and provide accommodation for the homeless. The dissolution of social order in the shared space is meant to avoid stratification and becomes one of the characteristics of the heterotopian space.

CONTEXT | THE SHARED SPACES OF ISTANBUL

The kulliyes are the result of the system of waqfs and represent an architectural diagram of a type of organization, which reflects the nature of the Islamic society. The idea of an organization is translated in a reality of an architectural diagram. While establishing the waqf facilities, the main purpose was to make it as functional as possible. Certain distances between the kulliyes are considered to optimise

the usefulness of the system. Because of the enclosed character, the kulliye does not dominate or impart order to the streets in the neighbourhood. But instead it dominates the city as a whole and is always visible for the visitor from distance (Burelli, 1987). The visual connection emphasizes the kulliye as the basic unifying element of the city. From the surrounded street, there is no direct visual connection towards the mosque. Between the walls, the narrow passageways are numerous and widely dispersed without main entrances. There is a continuous and multidirectional flow of movement. The enclosing walls towards the surroundings isolate the complex from the chaotic urban life of the city and defend in this way the sacred place. These shared spaces are introduced as spaces of otherness. The kulliyes have an added value of collectively organized oases in the frenetic context of Istanbul.

Public open spaces in Istanbul were not felt required; instead the courtyards of the kulliyes were used as gathering spaces for people (Benli, 2013). The inherent structure of multi-functionality encourages people from different social order to gather and the courtyards become the activity nodes and meeting points for the everyday usage of the society. The spatial organization and the wide functional resources offer open, semi-open and enclosed public spaces, which define the spaces of encounters and convergence.

According to Flanagan, the urban structure of the city is the creator of a mode of life, but also a mirror of social needs. There is a connection between the residents and their mode of life, arisen from the urban structure of the city (Flanagan, 2010). Because of the Islamic culture and the nature of the Muslim society, the emergence of the waqf-system has resulted in the kulliyes, representing the everyday usage of Istanbul. Private activities are spilled out in the urban life, such as washing feet in the public space before every prayer. "Solidarity seems to have transformed the already osmotic relations between private and public space into mutually recognized common uses of both private and public spaces (Stavros, 2006)." Reflecting their mode of life, the shared space are considered as spaces of transitions, which create a playful, loose intermediate stages, restricted by activities and interpretations of the people involved in it.

The added values of the shared spaces, represented by the kulliye complex as an architectural evidence of the waqf system in the context of Istanbul, are referring to and introducing a new kind of space, possessing an urban vision. In the contemporary context of the metropolitan city, the increased desire and need for individualism have broken up the city in fragments. Considering the kulliye and the system of waqf as an instrument to create a unified city, which is loose in meaning and usage and connect a certain shared interest of the society, the shared space might represent an anti-thesis to the fragmented city. The awareness of shared space may reveal encounters between differing social groups and connections between separated others (Stavros, 2006). The looseness is defined by the transformative potentials and the transitional functions, which is ever changing according to the needs and demands of people involved in it. Crossing conventional boundaries and inventing the blurred in-between spaces of transitions and encounters create a new reality of osmotic relations between oppositions.

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