

P4_Reflection



Seed Of Resilience

Redesigning the table of comPANionship

Reflection on Context: A Catastrophic Turning Point

The project is situated at Lake Karla in Greece's Thessalian Plain, the country's second-largest agricultural area, marked by its unique city-territory dynamics, cultural heritage, and urban-rural interplay. Recent floods have caused widespread damage, underscoring the region's vulnerabilities. The project responds to the devastating floods of recent years, recognizing them not just as isolated events, but as symptoms of broader global phenomena. Biodiversity in nature and human systems just as natural ecosystems thrive on diversity, so too must our approaches to problem-solving incorporate a range of voices and expertise.

Through interventions like the Thessalian Table, the project provides a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and education, addressing the fragile relationship between human activity and natural ecosystems while offering a replicable model for regions facing similar challenges globally. It appears as a moment to question practices and foster resilience.

The proposal centers on the Thessalian Table, a conceptual and physical intervention designed to address the region's unique vulnerabilities while speaking to universal challenges. The treatment of the surrounding nature through several scales, zooming in and out of the boundaries, is an architectural move that only allows for the careful interaction with the physical environment planted in places where unofficial meetings happen, guiding the visitor's gaze but is also a philosophical move that complements the different perspectives that ones have over the same problem.

The Thessalian table is a microcosm of larger issues offering a replicable model for emphasizing the need to shift perspectives, re-negotiate boundaries, reflect on our relation to nature and our habits, re-read moments of catastrophe, strengthen community networks, and engage diverse voices. The floods in Thessaly serve as a stark reminder of how personal choices—our consumption habits, agricultural practices, and attitudes toward nature contribute to larger crises. These moments demand reflection by engaging diverse perspectives in addressing shared challenges.

Reflection on Site: Lake Karla as a Case Study

The lake was drained in 1962 to make land available for farming, and later, it was rebuilt due to the erosion of the ecosystem and the changes in the microclimate of the wider area. Aside from the fact that the land was unsuitable for cultivation due to its saline soils, as it was the former lakebed, the drainage caused significant problems for the area's ecosystem, as part of the ecological chain disappeared. This tragedy cannot be seen in isolation. It is the direct result of unsustainable practices: Over-extraction of resources. Restriction and artificial redirection of rivers. Unchecked interventions in sensitive ecosystems. Lake Karla becomes a focal point of architectural intervention. Its location—at the junction of Volos and Larisa—situates it as a bridge between urban and rural systems. It also embodies the region's ecological and cultural tensions, making it a natural laboratory for experimentation.

During my visit to Magnesia, I encountered a diverse architectural landscape that included the industrial city of Volos, the traditional stone-built Pelion Mountain with its cobblestones, and the lake architecture of "planted" shepherds' rooms. Architecturally, I was particularly drawn to the small "offices" of the farmers positioned under the trees. These spaces, equipped with a chair and a roof, created a microcosm that integrated the triptych of the room, roof, and courtyard, using the land itself as a natural courtyard. Architecturally, this spontaneous search for familiar structures, reminiscent of the childhood constructions we used to create while playing in the village, was quite compelling. These structures have the potential to accommodate various functions.

"What is the new micro-scale of architecture? Can a tiny intervention bring about a large-scale change? Thom's theory of catastrophes to redefine the relationship of the mountain to the city in terms of geological space and time, from the background it becomes a figure, it becomes animated. Through the flow, we perceive the relationship between water and the city on the one hand as geology - as a bed and matter running through a geographical unity from the slopes of Pelion to Pagasetikos, but also as a supply, as a network, as an economy and politics - forming a community"

-Zisis Kotionis, PhD architect, writer and artist. He is a Professor in the Department of Architecture, University of Thessaly



VOLOS WITH PELION IN THE BACKGROUND

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

The graduation topic, "The Seeds of Resilience: Redesigning the 'Table' of Companionship" closely aligns with the studio topic of Interior Building Cities/Independent Group. Both explore various scales and the intricate relationships between spaces, scales, and social interactions. The project is mirroring the studio's exploration of social and material culture with political sensitivities. It delves into self-organization, rural identity, and community spaces, particularly in the context of post-disaster recovery, offering a fresh perspective on these topics. The practical application of theories through the development of new assemblages of production and knowledge spaces.

Reflecting on Methodology: Metaphor & Reality

The Table as a Nexus

In Greek culture, the table is far more than a utilitarian object—it is a cultural artifact. It preserves recipes, aromas, and memories, while also serving as a platform for discussion and decision-making. In this case, the table is presented in the solution both design-wise and metaphorically. It functions as a space that will incorporate the knowledge and experience of each user, inform, educate, and share resources. The Thessalian Table builds on this tradition, proposing a network of interconnected spaces that brings actors together. These tables represent nodes of expertise: Farmers share practical knowledge and adaptive techniques, Biologists contribute ecological data and predictive models, Local leaders facilitate discussions about land and water management. Together, these nodes form a collaborative network, fostering dialogue across disciplines and perspectives.

Just like organic farming uses collaboration and mutual nutrition to improve and regenerate the soil, which is different from the isolated and non-collaborative methods of modern crop production, this approach should guide the planning of programs and meetings with people from diverse backgrounds.

Network of interactions

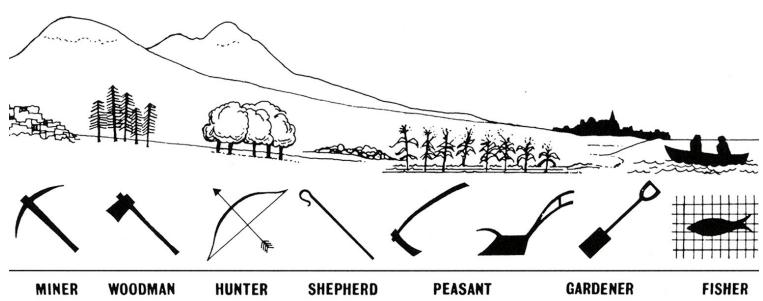
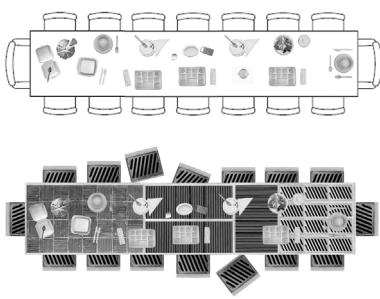
The project proposes a network of significant nodes along an axis to enhance meaningful interactions. These interventions connect lowland communities, mountains, seasonal farmers and explorers under common sheds for learning, sharing resources, moments for thought and reflection or parking. Various elements, such as churches that serve as guardians and protectors of the area, fountains, historical trails, ovens, and other meeting points form the design mosaic. An educational and meeting zone is envisioned near the edge of the new water boundary, serving as a platform that connects past and future structures. Churches scattered across the landscape, traditionally protectors of the region, gain new roles as spaces for preserving, reflecting on, and reimagining identities. These spaces aim to restore values and qualities for present and future generations. By reimagining Lake Karla, the project redefines its relationship with rigid boundaries, such as dykes, exploring the potential of permeable thresholds that adapt to seasonal changes. It introduces elements and small structures that monitor these shifts and establish a more fluid interaction with the landscape.

Timeframes

The project unfolds across multiple timeframes, beginning with the introduction of new platforms, and sheds strategically placed within the landscape to establish viewpoints and scales for dialogue. These interventions invite diverse perspectives, offering intimate ground-level views, the trunk of an orchard tree as a focal point, or expansive vistas across the lake and mountains.

In the short term, the project emphasizes education and community programs aimed at fostering adaptive practices and building local resilience. In the medium term, the focus is on redefining the relationship with the dyke, creating adaptable, permeable thresholds that respond to environmental shifts. In the long term, the vision extends to implementing structural changes in agriculture, water management, and ecological restoration, paving the way for sustainable, interconnected growth within the landscape.

This project is a transformative exploration of architecture as a medium for ecological and cultural resilience. Architecturally, it weaves together physical interventions and adaptive structures that engage with the landscape's natural rhythms, creating a network of spaces that foster connection, dialogue, and shared learning. By integrating cultural heritage with innovative, sustainable strategies, the project serves as both a practical framework for rebuilding after environmental crises and a profound reflection on our shared responsibility to nurture interdependent systems.



What is the relevance of your graduation work in the larger social, professional and scientific framework?

The environmental crisis, city-territory relations, and social participation in public matters regarding their natural habitat have sparked a growing interest within the design community. This research project is about more than just addressing the immediate challenges of climate change or management deficiencies. It explores our connection to our origins and aspirations for change and exchange. Despite the seemingly small scale of this project, it is within this scale that the fundamental questions of 'beginning' and 'evolution' can be most effectively explored. The design of flexible soft infrastructures to address local issues is a tangible demonstration of an approach that not only counts on a general strategy but carefully crafts interventions tailored to the place, time, and culture of the place. In order to reintroduce nature and cultural practices, as well as to understand the relationship between us and the materials we surround ourselves with, lakes, mountains, and water typologies are being put back into the architectural frame rather than being seen as separate pieces of land that exist to facilitate city development.

Reflecting on Barriers

Through this project, I deepened my understanding of both the tangible and intangible aspects of architectural elements. I approached the role of the architect as a storyteller, viewing the project not as a finished product but as a fluid puzzle of interconnected elements that together form a larger system. Particularly in how unexpected moments, whether born from catastrophe or the ordinariness of everyday life—can inspire a rethinking of architecture's place and purpose in diverse settings.

One of the most significant challenges I faced was determining where to situate the project within the landscape. The floods had caused damage across the city, the mountains, and the lake, and each area required tailored solutions. Ultimately, I decided to focus on the lake, where the problem was most visible, shifting the perspective toward rural reality. I realized that this setting, often overlooked, could serve as the solution-giver—not only for its own benefit but also for the nearby urban centers. This decision was driven by the region's unique qualities, where the proximity of cities, mountains, and the lake creates a rich interplay of opportunities for architectural intervention.

Placing the project within the vast landscape of the lake presented another challenge, as the absence of predefined design "restrictions" left me searching for the ideal location. This freedom was both daunting and liberating, requiring me to ground my decisions in careful observation and thoughtful consideration of the site's specific needs.

The interdisciplinary nature of the project, working across various scales—from 1:10,000 to 1:20—led me to carefully choose which parts of the narrative to present and in what sequence. This multi-scalar approach allowed me to explore the project's broader context while also addressing the finer details, ensuring that each decision contributed meaningfully to the overall story.

As Suzana Antonakaki describes in her text regarding symbioses, Aldo van Eyck's diagram reciprocity sits opposite the earth's cavity and sees its interior, the relationship of seeing and being seen, emphasizing inwardness. While on the hill and the curved surfaces, they sit with their gaze toward the open horizon, stressing the need for distance from things for a clear and accessible look. A fertile relationship with the outside world. Two types of centralities, two types for whether they are together or alone. This duality reflects the project's focus on social elements and the synergy between community members and nature. Focusing on the social elements already exist in the area, the need for synergy between the members and coexistence with nature is suggested.

Reflecting on Conclusions

This research project is about more than just addressing the immediate challenges of climate change or management deficiencies.

The flooded lake becomes a moment to call for action. It challenges us to recognize how our relationships with each other and with the environment shift under the weight of crisis. While rooted in Thessaly, it addresses a challenge that is profoundly global. Climate change has brought extreme weather to every corner of the world. The mismanagement of land and water resources, as seen in Thessaly, is mirrored in countless other contexts.

It is about exploring our connection to our origins and aspirations for change. Despite the seemingly small scale of this project, it is within this scale that the fundamental questions of 'beginning' and 'evolution' can be most effectively explored. The project argues that designing 'flexible soft infrastructures' to address local issues is a tangible demonstration of an approach that not only relies on a general strategy but carefully crafts interventions tailored to the place, time, and culture of the place.



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