

## INTERBETWEEN

Design for a scuba diving complex in-between the port and city of Genoa

*Reflection*

### The research and design topic

Genoa is positioned on a very narrow piece of land, squeezed in between the mountains and the sea. This provides a topography in which the port and the city are forced to live very close to each other. Whereas in other port cities the port recedes itself from the city center, this is not possible in Genoa due to the mountainous hinterland. Thus the large-scale port is directly adjacent to the medieval city.

On the dividing line between port and city is an elevated road located, the Sopraelevata, a transborder that has somehow also become a boundary, but an unclear boundary that is sometimes easy, but sometimes impossible to cross. The area of the Sopraelevata, the interweaving of the two worlds is what creates the interscalarity: The intermediary between two scales. What are the consequences of a wrangle between port and city, between large port objects and small residential buildings, for Genoa? What happens on this division line and how can architecture be implemented?

Reprogramming this line in order to enhance new public functions might be a solution to make the bridge between the different scales. The public building as an interscalar program in-between industrial and residential buildings.

### Process: from research to design

It was relatively hard for me to make the step from research to design. The research provided an analytical framework to understand the urban fabric and the relations between city and port. Yet, the design proposal should not only depart from this framework but it also must project a new scenario by problematizing the findings of the research.

The location for the design was the only clear aspect since the beginning of the design. With the object of my research, the Sopraelevata, I thought it would be quite easy to create a design by literally using this object. However after a few weeks I noticed that this wasn't the case. The Sopraelevata is a very dominant, linear urban element, parallel between port and city. By making this element more compact, by providing closures instead of openings, would increase the split between the port and the city. Reclaiming the port for the city wasn't possible by working parallel between these two surfaces. Therefore, I decided to articulate my project that stands perpendicular to the port and city and to consider the Sopraelevata as a released space where urban renewal is possible.

In order to enhance the direct relationship between the sea and the urban fabric, I will focus on the theme of water. The way in which the river reaches the sea, is a way in which I want to make a relation between port and city. Of course, water is an important element in a port area, but especially in Genoa, where fresh water is scarce during summer, but where also a lot of flooding takes place. The theme of water can be used for the program as well as the concept, the sustainability and climate control of the building.

The next challenge was defining the program for the location. The program has to be a connection between the port and the residential area, but also between the old medieval center and the business district. Different programs have passed: a cultural center, a secondhand shop and workshop, and a water museum. All of these programs had some elements which didn't reflect my ambitions with the focus on the public realm and civic sphere.

Finally, by analysing Roman baths I found out that the atmosphere of the water not only provides space for the baths, but also forms space for sports and knowledge construing a shared cultural framework for the civic sphere. By translating this program to the contemporary urban condition, I synthesised a building program that reflects the diverse needs of the city: A diving institute with pools and a library as the most important parts of the building. Also public functions will be implemented like a bar/shop, a restaurant and an open air theater. These programmatic elements will be activated by different time intervals and used by a diverse group of audience.

The first challenge for me was finding the right volume. Next, I considered the connections between the three different levels on the site: the sea, the port and the city. I had to work on a series of iterations as a response to the complexity of those: the project's positioning, the presence/absence of the sea/water and finding the right the volume.



1. Concept for the volume and materials of the building

Because the translation from research to design took me some time, I wasn't happy yet with my design for the first P4. This is why I decided to take some more time for improving the building. I want to make something to be proud of: A design with a clear plan and high aesthetical qualities.

The final result is a public building that connects to the city by its form and materials, but it is also a transition/connection/passage from the port to the city and vice versa. The Public Building studio puts emphasis on position, composition and actualization. I think that all these aspects are considered in my design: My position as a designer and the project's positioning in the city, the composition in relation to the surroundings and the theme/program of water to actualise the regeneration of the public realm, not only as an infrastructural entity but also as a culturally signified element in my design, which has been essential in Genoa's history.

#### Research method and relevance

The method I used for the research could be divided in three stages: mapping, abstracting and constructing an architectural theory. From the beginning I was fascinated by the big scale differences in the city and I started with mapping these objects and their relations. The Sopraelevata turned out to be an important object in-between the scale of the port and the

scale of the city. Therefore, by abstracting the Sopraelevata I tried to understand and search for its intermediary relation with its urban context. The constructing of a theory was mainly about overviewing the results and relations and understand the role of the Sopraelevata in the city of Genoa. More than about the elevated highway, my project is about bridging the industrial and urban scales and raises questions how the regeneration of the civic sphere can be achieved through architectural and urban reprogramming. Hence, it becomes a hybrid program with a unique, expressive formal appearance.

Due to the advancing technologies, buildings, but also machines, boats, trucks etc. will become larger. The old architecture will remain and stay in the same size. A clash of scale will be more common so it is important to research what happens in the civic sphere and how to deal with these scale differences. A lot of the port cities in the world deal with these problems.

At last I think the subject of water can also be integrally approached by addressing sustainability on many levels. Collecting and reusing the water for the baths, toilets etc. Using the seawater for cooling and heating, but also show the relevance of water as an element of play to revitalize the waterfront: Hence, social and spatial sustainability.

#### How to continue

I believe that besides a good design the presentation of a design is very important in the daily architectural practice. This is why I want to take enough time to work on a model, drawings and the presentation itself. I will immediately start making a plan on how to make these after P4. This is also an important reason why I'm doing my P4 again; to have enough time to focus on the representation of the design.

Of course I realize that my design isn't perfect yet during P4. The basic ideas are there and more or less present in the shown results, but I know that especially the details (1:50, 1:5) need some extra attention after P4. Further I hope that I will only need to make some small changes to the rest of the drawings.