

Reflection. 2. 0.

Transitional Territories 2018-2019:
Landscapes of Coexistence. Altered
Natures and the Architecture of
Extremes

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Prologue

My graduation project could be framed under one of the four themes of the studio, 'Infrastructure form: Where architecture, city and territory meet'.

As mentioned in the title, this updated reflection contains some new thoughts of mine developed during the design progress, and it is more explicitly written according to the five aspects from the graduation manual, which will be easier to follow by any reader. As I've changed my design proposal largely, part of this essay will describe why the shift has happened and how it is progressed. The core idea, the focus and intention of the project stays the same, which is to depict a coexistence of two seemingly controversial themes, 'logic of logistic' and 'culture of congestion', or in more general terms, 'non-place' and 'place-making'. The possibility and feasibility of this is grounded by premises and situated context of risks, contingency planning and transitional management in the North Sea, or even, the wide world.

I. A reasonable mind and an intellectual game: the relationship between research and design

Except from a general understanding of reciprocal relationship between research and design (research by design and design by research), a more specific explanation for the two can be made within the Transitional Territories Studio (TT studio).

In the studio, I really found that (at the very beginning) design projects act as a testing ground for research, which means everyone of us is doing a theoretical thesis. Design proposals are projections made to the future, guided by theoretical framework. This

"Aristotle was right," says Gadamer, "when he detected the essence of mimetic representation and arrived at the famous distinction between poetry and history, according to which poetry is 'more philosophical' than history because the latter only knows things as they really were, while poetry describes things the way they might have been, in other words, corresponding exactly to their universal, permanent essence." (12)

Mariano Bayón, *Lights in Force*, in *Konstantin Melnikov : Aparcamiento para 1000 autos. 2a variante. parís 1925.*

implies the speculative nature of the outcome – the poetic feature to be described as ‘what might have been’, which I find rather interesting when it is compared to the practical field, as in reality it seems that theories about a project are generated during the recession period, or after being built, acting as a reflection of empirical studies. **The theoretical, or rather, research process, primarily lies in the problem-field definition process.** I recalled what Taneha instructed in last October, about three ways to conduct a theoretical thesis: a. you do literature review and find the gap; b. you make case studies; c. you construct a total new theory. We were also having research methodology lectures, so my mindset was really immersed in the literal world which I was actually just about to familiarize after having done a theory thesis. And I was pondering the meaning of a theoretical project within the research by design process. Hereunder are my thoughts:

Reflecting on the established orthodoxy or dogma: A theoretical project, research by design, helps to examine the design process itself and pose provocative design contents. Researching the known facts and established notions, terms, phenomena, precedents and interpretations not only expands the knowledge field of a designer, but also build up one’s objectivity and role as a ‘neutral’, non-arbitrary outsider. It creates a discussion pool and lingua franca among people, towards which we are able to react, challenge.

Clarifying the intention of the designer: The research starts with intuition and personal fascinations with paradoxes, and the contingency in connection. It is by the first way of looking for gaps from literature review that I narrow down my focus

(Arquitecturas ausentes del siglo xx, 15).

A problem-space is a representation of a problem in the form of all possible states and operations from the most elemental to the most complex and all-encompassing.
(23)

Peter G. Rowe, *Design Thinking in the Digital Age*. Published by the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and Sternberg Press in 2017.

on two design logics regarding to spatial limits, 'logic of logistics' (creating smooth flows and avoiding unwanted chances) and 'culture of congestion' (creating unexpected chances), which are both about movements and connections, but in two opposite stands. I initially summarised the two as one horizontally developing and one vertically, which should be discussed within a certain scale (the mechanism, not the formal): the former intends to create a network and the latter an agglomerated focus. It is the condition of contingency that creates an opportunity for merging the gap. **To be more specific, it is the congestion moment occurring to a smooth flow merges two previously separated focal points: the goods and the self.**

II. Amor fati: The relationship between my graduation topic, studio topic and master programme

Memories flashing back again - while looking back to my whole master programme, I can pick some unforgettable experiences and one may sense there is an implicit thread that connects them:

MSc 1: Stepping into engineering was not my intention (was my curiosity).

AE - EXTREME architecture - the Maldives

I designed a waste management centre which was in the form of local mosque complex. I started to be aware of material flows, circular economy and logistics, at the same time be confused about the issue of culture appropriation.

MSc 2: Stepping into nature was not my intention (stepping into exhibition was).

CP - Palermo Studio - Manifesta 12:
Radical Gardening

With my colleague we designed an exhibition under the sub-theme of 'politics of water', titled 'Gardens of Hydro-holism'. Parts of our work include: a set of 3-D printed hydraulic objects of an irrigation system which was developed before XII century, interviews with local farmers, and tracing of historical development and political intention of a garden built by Roger II.

Theory Thesis - 'Corridor as vector space: Between a passageway in buildings and a metaphor in words'

Fascinated by various 'malleable interpretations' of metaphorical corridors, I reflected on connotations, flexibility and uncertainty of 'corridoricity' depicted in literature and drawings. What I realized is the intriguing fact that **the barren sustains the ever-changing 'lines of becoming'**.

MSc 3&4

Transitional Territories Studio

The project is to portray changes and potential reactions of spatial agencies related to daily logistical flows – namely lorries, lorry drivers – suggesting an architectural proposal confronted with contingencies, the 'force majeure', the congested situation and its derived issues (for instance, state of ennui). It depicts a transitional process from congestion to decongestion, merges the gap spatially and in experience between goods and human bodies. Thus, time frames are implied in the narration of the design proposal. A public-private partnership is formed in the

'Lines of becoming' or 'lines of flight', from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The barren creates a bearing ground for movement, the ambiguity it implies fulfils variations of traces we leave.

project, causing a hybridity and complex framework of the design.

Aspects of Water Related Design

I produce a booklet named 'Learning from Punta della Dogana'. Looking into the history of this renovated project and its changing programs led by the changed context, I try to imagine the future of my own graduation project (supposing it were built on site).

Some keywords are noted here: **flows, logistics, flexibility, holistic view.** They are jointed in my graduation project: the protagonist, lorries and lorry drivers, move in a direction that can form vector space; the research methodology, systemic inquiry, leads me to combine the system logic of controlling lorries flows with another system logic of creating encountering space of people; the large scale, the mechanical and emptiness that lorries and goods conquer in the project indicate an overwrite of autonomy and shifting experiences within a hybrid place that are mixture of infrastructural elements, architectural displacement and constructed nature.

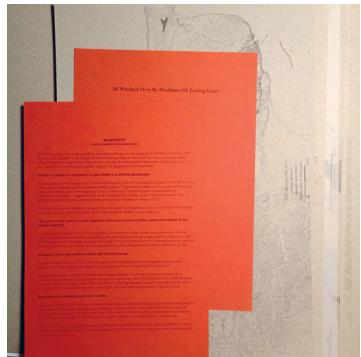
III. Traversing territories and disciplinary boundaries: elaboration on research methods and reflection of their scientific relevance

As revealed above, the TT studio is highly theory-based and the primitive project phase is built up from collective mapping in territorial scale of the North Sea, which is accompanied by an intense literature review relating to Landscape Urbanism, Landscape Ecology, and lecture series on issues from biotopes, renewable energy, culture, spatial planning to policy. This helps to set the tone for my graduation project with a mindset of a long

during perspective on the spatial-time (the temporality and eternity of a project) and echoes the holistic inquiry. It is deeply related to the notion of 'the land as palimpsest' which was expounded thoroughly by André Corboz in 1983, among other concepts nowadays such as 'thick infrastructure'. Besides, the holistic inquiry, or in another name, systemic inquiry, denotes the cross-disciplinary learning and research process, through which I particularly look at system failures. This mainly due to my opinion that glitches trigger someone to become an outsider to investigate the original system, which naturally generates a gaze, a reflection, a reaction. The process actually links 'transitive and intransitive senses of production' (my role as a designer and explorer). All these contribute to the legibility of my design proposal and my intention to construct such a legibility.

If reading and the already explained literature review are more related to advancing the philosophical level of my project (whilst of course, are externalised in design), mapping (particularly, tracing), case studying, sketching and drawing communicate my thoughts, test the quality of them, help to clarify my story whilst (interestingly) the issue of judgement and taste is suspended. They can be put in a concrete way as follows, and please understand them through photos, if not, the texts:

'Transitive and intransitive senses of production' is a quote from Tim Ingold in *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, an online publication by Abingdon: Taylor & Francis e-Library in 2011. The author makes a distinction between the two using examples: the transitive production of the Marx's human architect who builds something with an envision already in his or her mind and the intransitive process of dwelling. The words provoke me, as a non-native English speaker, to think in grammar sense of the distinction between a transitive verb and an intransitive one: the demarcative meaning between 'I saw you' and 'I looked at you', 'I saw it out of something' but I cannot 'look at it out of something'.



a. Literal tools as a representational process

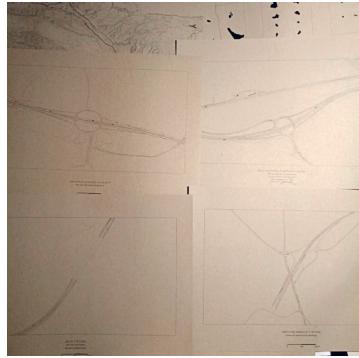
The transitive sense of production:

Writing a manifesto is an inscription act. (*This will kill that.*)

It helps me to clarify my design intentions, to discover the hidden threads, to put my thinking into a coherent way and to re-evaluate again and again about my research questions and thematic investigations. More importantly, as I know I am a very sceptical and agnostic person when confronted with anything that is in an attempt to be objective, **an inscription also acts as an eulogy for my thoughts, for the sake of restrictions of their constant changes.**

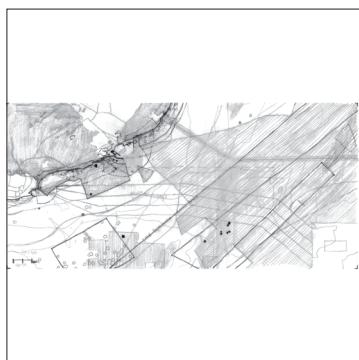
The intransitive sense of production:

Reading is a way to generate visual imagination, often in a collage way. I came across the poem 'All watched over by machines of loving grace' by Richard Brautigan one day, and the coexistence situation of machines and mammals in lines cast an image on my mind and echoes profoundly with the envisioning of my project. It evokes a vibe of Retro-futurism. The atmosphere transcends from texts, and the feeling is unutterable.



b. Tracing in the process of generating design ideas

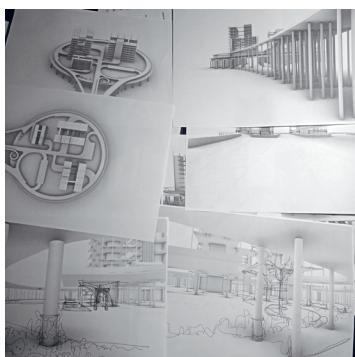
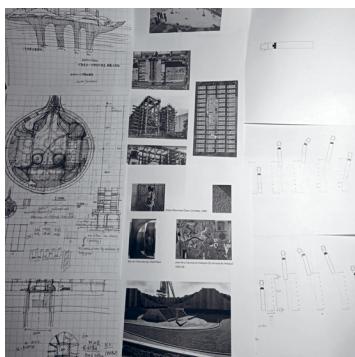
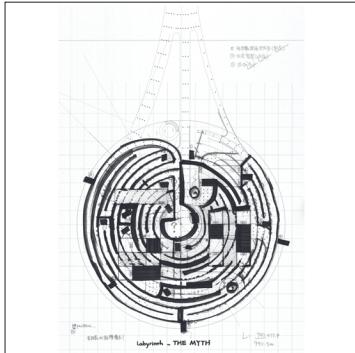
Lines of becoming: Following the studio's collective mapping legacy, the experience I acquired through tracing leads me to look at trivial things which are overlooked before in the territorial scale. For example, by tracing the transitional section of the motorway M20 into A20 lanes, the different line types, the width of lanes unveiled in this process all indicate spatial movement of vehicles: speed, capacity, turns. What appears important for me is the functional language or noting system of infrastructure, as well as the formal potential of loops. Not to mention traces of vehicles themselves.



The reappraisal of the ground and the genealogical tree: The gesture of projecting the infrastructure form on sea evokes a re-evaluation for the notion of the ground. Tracing of marine spatial planning reveals our inevitable dependence on planning on the ground. The invisible lines on ocean, drawn as invisible boundaries, delimit areas that are superimposed to each other. Vertically they form an invisible strata of multiple actors such as marine lives, vessels, scientific researchers. **The earthy ground is a reference system, which implies the connection, the transitional zone between land and sea should be viewed not only horizontally but also vertically.** I confess that in the first proposal I was somehow arbitrary in making decisions to break away from precedents on land, and I eliminated the discussion about the experience of 'wayfarers' (among whom the protagonist a lorry driver, so to say) who are able to come, go and stay, liberated from shackles of goods, protected by the 'noble' machines. Through retracing what is invisible, I improve the legibility of my design proposal by establishing



connections with precedents on land, such as the modernist approach by Toni Garnier's *Une Cité Industrielle* in 1917, Le Corbusier's plans for Voisin Car Company from 1922 to 1925, Louis I. Kahn's Traffic Study Project in 1952, Geoffery Jellicoe's Motopia in 1959, and a more recent one Leon Krier's drawing project Labyrinth City 1971. They might not all be what Stefano called my 'project friends' regarding to design intentions and stands, but share similar context relating to human relationship with technological advancement, movement and state of being.



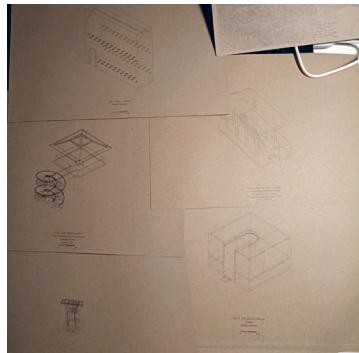
c. Drawing tools acting beyond design delivery process

A glimpse of progress of sketches, drawings, comparisons, with the distorted Chartres Labyrinth serving as a start point to think about the constructed nature which is watched over by infrastructural form.

Approaching the final part of the graduation period, the working method is mainly working through perspectives, through which there are modifications of design details in terms of materialisation and structure. The process is characterised by visually seeking for authenticity of the project, using images to achieve the legibility. To depict the changing width in columns and colonnades, the vertical movement from the viewpoint of a diver in water to that of a bird in the sky, the experience of the protagonist traveling from infrastructural form to his or her own pavilion and the imaginative path of a dweller...

[A true labyrinth...] There are no decisions to be made and no blind alleys, and, most important, you can see the path ahead. There is no reason to be vigilant – you simply follow the path. Unlike a maze, a labyrinth does not inspire fear or the stress response. It calms. (103)

Esther Sternberg, Mazes and Labyrinths, in *Healing spaces : The science of place and well-being*. Published by Belknap Press of Harvard University Press in 2009.

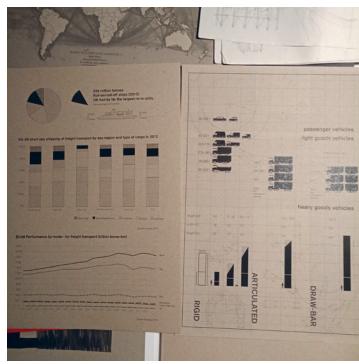


IV. Back to territory: The transferability of the project results

As a hybrid complex, the transferability of the project could be unfolded in two tracks: the normalising of risk management established by the (required) functional infrastructure, and the (desired) constructed nature pursued by individuals in the post-modern context - mirroring.



The former one lies in the initial investigation of social context in broad aspects: economic statistics of transportation market share, the European transportation enhancement network 'TEN-T', the roadmap for developing intelligent transportation (in automation), the energy transition of using electric vehicles and etc. What we conceive under this social development framework is embedded in our consensus of reaching sustainability goals and combat with climate change.



However, complying to the existing scheme also requires a reflection on the situation it reveals – which leads to the latter track indicating the gesture of estrangement and detachment from land. The latter acts a reflection upon the established projection of the social framework – since we are so immersed in the separated 'culture of congestion' and 'logic of logistics', the detached island of an extreme coexistence of the two could evoke individual awareness of such an alienation.

V. Funds and ideals: ethical issues and dilemmas

Regarding the authenticity of the project:
For doing the research, I don't find much ethical issues or dilemmas. The only challenge is imagining myself driving on the road and understanding the language of traffic rules. This is because, frankly speaking, I can't drive. And I don't have the intention to drive any vehicle, never. What I can empathise is the experience of sitting inside a vehicle and observe about one's surroundings, which is comparable to the future drivers who may not need to operate physically in a lorry.

Regarding the potential applications of the design proposal in practice: It would be costly to construct a large building to achieve its architectural quality on water. With the functional aspects and precious meaning of it, my project could be better understood as an once-in-a-lifetime installation and be viewed within a long during timespan. It should be built in a monumental sense, and should last as long as possible and finally become the legacy of human beings from 21st century – this is my position towards sustainability.

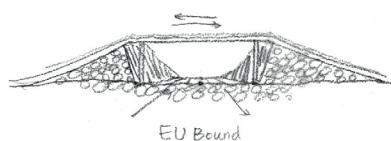
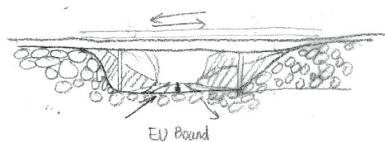
Besides the all above, in a more relaxed tone I feel that we need to reflect about the continuing consumption and development schemes under the disguise of climate change and green policy. I doubt about human reactions' practicality in 'solving problems' in issues such as congestions and sea level rise, and then the core value of the project remains as an intellectual game of narration of a closing loop, an idea, which to some extent, is rather vain in reality. **Therefore, my intention, if it were to be deeply revealed and exposed, is to beautify the unwanted and to trigger the**

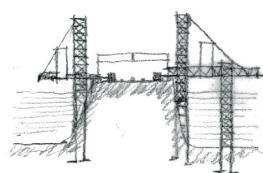
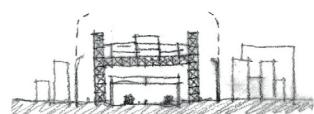
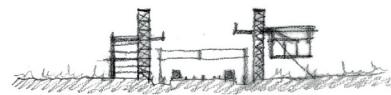
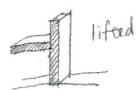
avoided system failures, to set limits on development, and to constrain in order to set free.

Once, Paul Klee mentioned movement is given priority to everything in universe. For me it's neither movement nor stasis that prioritise everything, but the potential of their collapse.

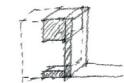
Epilogue

An island of becoming new land:
A portray of the reflection process
of making a projection.

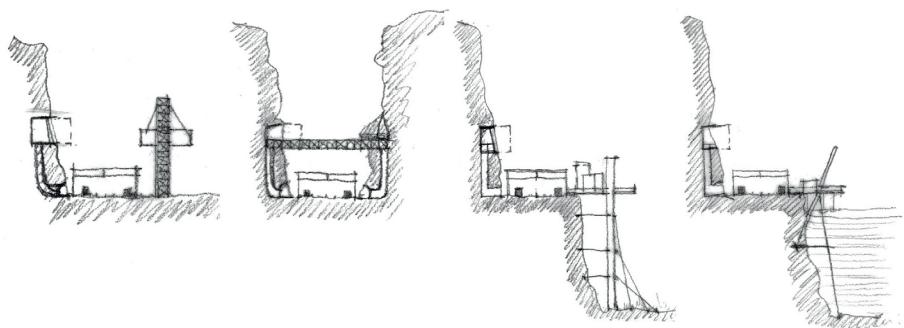




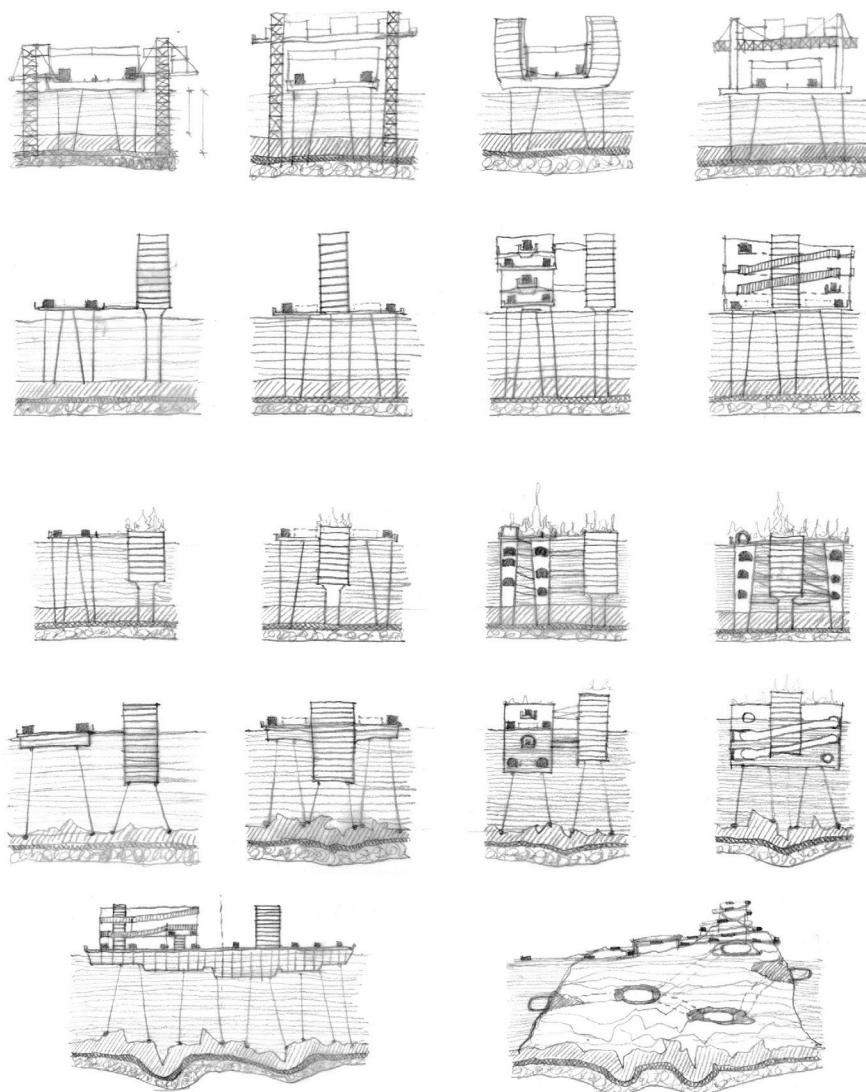
LAND & EMERGENCY GIZMOS
plain landscape
agricultural, urbanized, aquacultural zoned



carved & inserted



LAND & EMERGENCY GIZMOS
billy landscape
What else could we do to our land?



AN ISLAND OF BECOMING NEW LAND

- existing highway configuration on sea -

- set free_stilted -*
- set free_floated -*
- set free_pour -*

All images, photos, texts by the H.

21-09-2019