

Msc4 Positions in Practice

Reflection

A Playground for Skopje

A Tension between Freedom and Constraints

In this reflection I will elaborate on different topics rather than directly answering the different aspects (1-5). Nevertheless, I will consider the following aspects:

- (1) the relationship between research and design.
- (2) the relationship between my graduation project, the studio topic (if applicable), the Architecture track, and the overall master programme Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences.
- (3) Elaboration on research method and approach chosen by me in relation to the graduation studio methodical line of inquiry, reflecting thereby upon the scientific relevance of the work.
- (4) Elaboration on the relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional, and scientific framework, touching upon the transferability of the project results.
- (5) Discussion of the ethical issues and dilemmas I have encountered in (i) doing the research, (ii, if applicable) elaborating the design and (iii) potential applications of the results in practice

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The graduation project is a playground in and around the former Post Office of Skopje which is composed of three main elements. Firstly, the terrain of the complex is divided into *four main fields*, which vary from their immediate surroundings towards the city. Furthermore, the *element of the bridge*, which grows with its tentacles into these different zones, is located on the axis from the city to the river and thus decentralises the existing building. Lastly, the circular Post Office plays the role of *the cohesive host* of all the elements, bringing with it the factor of time.

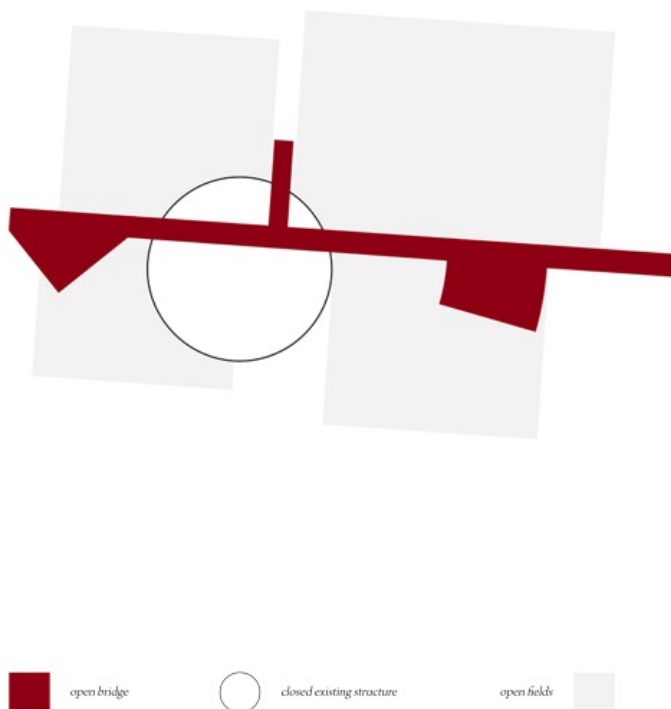


Figure 1

Liminality

The starting point of the research before we visited Skopje was our observation that the city finds itself in a state of liminality which we defined as an in-between state of transition.

But how did this definition develop? Skopje is a divided city, along ethnic, religious, political, and cultural lines. There is a contradiction at every corner, between image and reality, between utopian ideals of socialism and nationalism. Each utopia is expressed in the architecture of the city and physically manifests the conflicts and confusion of the people in Skopje. What happens where these differences meet and how can we negotiate these limits? By further investigating the space where different ideologies collide. The physical junctions between territories are explicit in materiality, levels, and obstacles when passing through space. Edges and transitions are important for defining the sense of place. For certain people, these boundaries are permeable and open, for others they are difficult to pass through, due to the personal perception and connotations associated with the territorialized space.

We were interested in understanding how these different ideals and realities affect the lives of people living in Skopje. Through the research of different rituals, protests, and transgressive acts, we learned that the city is a multitude complex of diversity, overlapped, and woven together. But everyday life continues amongst the complexity of the divides. Life goes on amongst these stresses, they take a background role in the everyday life of individuals, they are always there but easy to ignore, due to the divisions that are not so evident in reality, they are subliminal, hidden.

We hypothesized that by transition, liminality emphasizes the sense of place.

“Liminality – from the Latin *limen*, literally threshold – understands the transitory stages through time that any society experiences and that helps shape its identities and communal structures. In this way, overly simplified, “liminality is about how human beings, in their various social and cultural contexts, deal with change.”¹ Furthermore, liminality “captures in-between situations and conditions characterized by the **dislocation of established structures**, the **reversal of hierarchies**, and **uncertainty about the continuity of tradition and future outcomes**.”²³

The Post Office

During our excursion to Skopje we studied different in-between spaces. Many times, we came across abandoned places and by further research on some of those locations I became especially interested in the area of the Post Office. As a space between one of the most frequented roads of Skopje, the Boulevard VMRO, and the River Vardar, the Post Office and Telecommunications Centre (built from 1974 to 1982) is situated at a prominent location in the city centre of Skopje. Built based on Kenzo Tange's master plan, together with the railway station it represents the connection to the outside world, to all the progressive countries that helped to rebuild the city after the earthquake. They form the axis of the “new centre nucleus”.

It should also be noted that before the Skopje 2014 project, the surroundings of the Post Office had a significantly higher impact on the leisure activities of the inhabitants. The project of 2014 was intended to give Skopje a new identity, but the effect of imposing this was that habits were left behind.

¹ Wydra, H., Thomassen, Bjørn, & Horváth, Ágnes. (2015). *Breaking Boundaries : Varieties of Liminality*. New York: Berghahn Books p. 40

² *ibid* p.2

³ Silva, Enrique Aureng. *The Liminality of Earthquakes, Fragments and Palimpsests as Alternatives to Preservation*, p.2

Today those urban spaces are rather unnoticed since the surroundings are no longer inviting towards them. The Post Office itself is not accessible due to buildings that enclose the complex, the busy Boulevard VMRO, but also the river which does not block but depicts kind of a barrier towards the plot. To make the former public building again visible and accessible to the public, sightlines have to be opened up to overcome issues like accessibility and visibility.

How can this central urban point of departure be turned back into a place of encounter for the inhabitants? By reactivating an architecture that was of enormous importance for communication of the past and therefore creating a platform for exchange and expression.

As I have noticed, there is a problem in the ground level zone of this area, which has obstacles such as thresholds, fences, and other barriers in addition to the dense development on the plot. Therefore, we can define that the intervention has to take place at the eye level. Regarding the need for an intervention on the human scale, I did the following investigations:

- Identifying the types of access through detailed drawings of the entrance situations.
- Light, shadow, and material studies of the in-between spaces as an approach to the study of the perception of visitors.
- Furthermore, a disassembly of the buildings of the complex for a better understanding of their structure and to be capable of analysing the value of certain elements.
- Additionally, I was trying to imitate the first part of the Manhattan Transcripts of Bernard Tschumi, which studies the relationships between places (on an architectural plan), the movements of the big street and the pedestrian zone (shown as dotted lines and arrows) and the events that take place (represented by photographs) I took these steps to analyse the terrain from the perspective of an inhabitant of Skopje and the different levels of movement associated with it.

Here I could conclude that the building constitutes a visual and a tactile part that would have to be made accessible in different ways.

My first proposal was to remove the envelop of the former Post Office, an intervention where the impressive concrete elements remain. Herewith, the building would be more accessible on a visual level due to the removal of the façade and on a tactile level the identification of the building could still take place. However, in order to be able to use the building in different seasons, but also to maintain the possibility of making certain areas inaccessible at different times of the day, I will add a construction that connects the existing impressive concrete elements with the new elements inside the former Post Office. A round steel skeleton with inserted floors offers the possibility to install a facade element on the outer edge. Depending on the area, this can be a transparent or translucent element. In other places an impermeable element can offer the possibility of an enclosed space on the inside. Again, in other places, omitting a facade element can still help to support the actual permeability on the site.

The Playground

Subsequently, the site should not only be made more permeable, but the existing architecture should also be reactivated for the public.

The affinity between a public space for expression and the playground is obvious. Both “demonstrate potential as clearly defined open-use spaces, as public places and sites of experimentation for aesthetics.”⁴

With his playgrounds in Amsterdam, Aldo van Eyck created spaces that guide users through their urban environment. Children in particular are led by the playgrounds’ architectural formulation

⁴ Burkhalter, Gabriela. The Playground Project p.7

and learn to interact with their surroundings. He sees the child “as the paragon of fresh human potential, as the perpetual and always new return of elementary human faculties, primarily imagination and creativity.”⁵ In a city like Skopje I can imagine the child as a mediator between the diversities. Which leads me back to the question: **What happens where these differences meet and how can we negotiate these limits?**

“Is there a public urban space where peaceful chaos and unpredictability are still possible?”⁶

Playgrounds are public spaces where children should have the possibility to develop. My personal goal is to create a playscape that offers children the opportunity to unfold themselves freely. I was convinced that little should be predetermined, since the children, such as Aldo van Eyck but also Isamu Noguchi describes, carry creativity within them that gives them the possibility to create their world out of a small incentive or just a subtle architecture. Now I am working on a concept where a specific **tension between freedom and constraints** should determine the architecture.

The playground that I am introducing is articulated based on three main elements. Firstly, the terrain of the former Post Office and Telecommunications Centre will be divided into four main fields, which vary from their immediate surroundings towards the city. Furthermore, the element of the bridge, which grows with its tentacles into these different zones, is located on the axis from the city to the river. Lastly, the post office plays the role of *the cohesive host* of all the elements, bringing with it the factor of being cultural heritage.

The topic of the terrain connected to the city brings me back to my research on liminal spaces and the question of how to negotiate the limits where these differences meet. These four fields have the important task to mediate through their details towards the urban surrounding. I defined different approaches for the various characteristics of bordering streets, buildings, and the river and tried to focus on the passengers' approach onto the site. While studying architectural elements and material to draw attention to these spatial transitions I came across a crucial topic when connecting two surfaces. The skirting is the main connector between floor and the wall. Through various qualities of the different design of those joints the site can be connected to the surrounding surfaces for example adjacent buildings that differ in their façade formulation oriented towards the terrain.

Which effect does the design of the **transition between wall and floor** have on these two layers? When walking through a city you are always confronted with the transition in this case between street and building. Its formulation plays an important role in the urban context due to for example plinths that on an eye-level, guide passengers through the roads. In interior spaces this fugue where wall and floor meet, reflects the shape of the floorplan and is therefore important for orientation in space.

⁵ van Eyck, Aldo. *The Child, The City and the Artist*, 1947-1998

⁶ Burkhalter, Gabriela. *The Playground Project*



Figure 2

The element “The Bridge”, which consists of basic geometric forms attached to a long strip, is the infrastructural part of an accumulation of fundamental architectural elements that found their composition scattered over the site, following subdivisions regarding the programme of the playground. It developed into something that overarches from the city to the recreational area of Skopje and reached out to several spaces with its tentacles. Its Structure follows a similar approach since it is a solid construction that is lifted and branches out with smaller bodies that differ in shape and programme content.

My goal was to make the former Post Office again visible and accessible to the public, therefore the bridge functions as a kind of sightline that shifts the existing geometry and changes the initial hierarchy to overcome issues like accessibility and visibility. In this context, I also dealt with the daily accessibility of the building and was able to clearly define that it should fundamentally be a building that is accessible to everyone. However, there is the exception that some areas that have special opening hours should be lockable from the main structure. Advantage lies in the two floors of the existing building. On the upper floor, rooms can be arranged so that access can only be guaranteed at certain times. The infrastructure of the bridge itself should ensure that visitors can cross the terrain at night. Attached bodies leaving the bridge can then be closed individually. The bridge furthermore neutralises the centrality of the Post Office which as a heritage structure hosts all these new interventions. With its position on top it peacefully plays the role of the observer and will give shelter to all the playful moments that will take place under its roof.

Positions in Practice

In the graduation studio you introduced us to the term Heuristic which originates from Eureka, being defined as “involving or serving as an aid to learning, discovery, or problem-solving by experimental and especially trial-and-error methods”⁷. There are three major procedures in Heuristics: exploration, evaluation, and discovery. The three processes are part of a never-ending cycle, clearly represented by John Creswell’s Data Analysis Spiral⁸. The exploration is related to information

⁷ “Heuristic.” Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster. Accessed April 06, 2020. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heuristic>.

⁸ Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks London New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2007), p. 151

gathering, the evaluation with its process methodology, and the discovery, which is the conclusion of the content of the assessment.

Exploring, evaluating, and discovering is nothing other than the natural course of action when children learn but this circuit can also be used when designing space.

When I started to deal with the word 'play' and consequently with children, the two most conspicuous adjectives I could think of were curious and unbiased. Now, when I establish guidelines for a design, I can draw on these terms and question my design according to them. How do I design a space that arouses curiosity? What is even more difficult for me as an adult to understand is: What kind of neutral element do I have to design to bring the impartiality of children to the fore? On which neutral ground can they develop themselves independently? How to design an interplay between freedom and constraint to enable play?

It is advisable to conduct research parallel to the development of a design so that the spiral of data analysis continues until we have completed a project. Using various methods, we constantly question the new findings on our way and can thus argue in which direction we have taken action. What I have learned is to take a look back at each step of my approach while navigating towards my architectural intervention and try to look at the step more abstractly in a larger context. First, I question why I made this decision. Next, I look for a method to challenge this decision, and only once the outcome proves successful do, I pursue this approach.

The Play and the Manual

The Manual

To play can be defined as "to move or function freely within prescribed limits"⁹.

It can be stated that the play and the limit are interdependent or at least related to each other. But how do we pose constraints in a place that is supposed to serve the free development? Concerning the topic of freedom, we need to determine contrast. We have to 'set the rules of the game' by posing constraints. Translating this into architecture means for instance to design selective thresholds or even more abstract, creating special situations that lead to a flow being delayed or changed. With the invention of a system, which can be carried out as a manual, certain instructions can be conveyed. As a non-predeterminable factor, the aspect of chance is added here.

My approach to the development of the playground has evolved into a system in which I provide manuals on various topics.

I Element

There are a few **basic geometrical shapes** that we get to know in childhood and then can recognize them. The interesting aspect is how these elementary shapes work as built space. We can recognize a semicircle on paper but how do the visitors of the playground perceive such shapes in architecture? The semicircle is an example, which can perhaps even be identified as a geometric figure in space, but it becomes more difficult with a triangle. We are used to rectangular rooms and therefore corners and edges in a 90-degree relation to each other, but do we notice when we find ourselves in a room when only one corner is missing, like in the case of the triangle?

Returning to the basics by putting a magnifying glass to the elements that make buildings great.¹⁰ The work by Rem Koolhaas "elements of architecture" for the Architecture Biennale in 2014 is

⁹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/play>

¹⁰ <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/rem-koolhaas-elements-of-architecture>

well-founded fundamental research to understand essential architectural elements. This precise analysis particularly appealed to me when I had already dealt with the element of stairs at the end of the P2 presentation. In addition to the investigation of the staircase's rise/run ratio for the residents of Skopje, which I wanted to take up again for the aspect of habitual use of the urban space, the way children handle steps according to Friedrich Mielke, who conducted intensive research on stairs, was also of interest. Concerning the fundamental elements of architecture, I asked myself whether my design is considered architecture only when it contains all these basic elements. In the end I would most likely answer this question with no, but, interestingly, all elements are indeed represented in a certain way.

II Transition

“Liminality is said to be a ‘transitional’ stage in the (...) human developmental process moving between a limit (a known marker) then into the boundless – the unknown.”¹¹ How can I explore this transitional phase, moving towards a moment of suspended reality and altered perceptions, in space?¹²

On the subject of liminality in space, I have set up various instructions for different transition moments or joints. On the one hand it is defining a series of rules for the point where **horizontal surface meets vertical surface** (left). Furthermore, setting up rules for the meeting points between my architecture and the existing building led me to the idea of the **gap** or the **materialized joint** (middle) that take over the responsibility of the special respect to the existing architecture. The third approach of transition is based on the different scales in which the project is elaborated. The bridge, which extends over a length of 150 meters, can quickly become a repetitive pattern for the visitor when used. Introducing the **transformation of the norm** (right) will punctually interrupt the monotony. Not only the decentralization that the former post office experiences through the implementation of the bridge, but also unexpected changes that become exceptions to the rule, represent the aspect of chance. In detail, for example, recognizable by the railing, whose shape changes unexpectedly at some transition points.

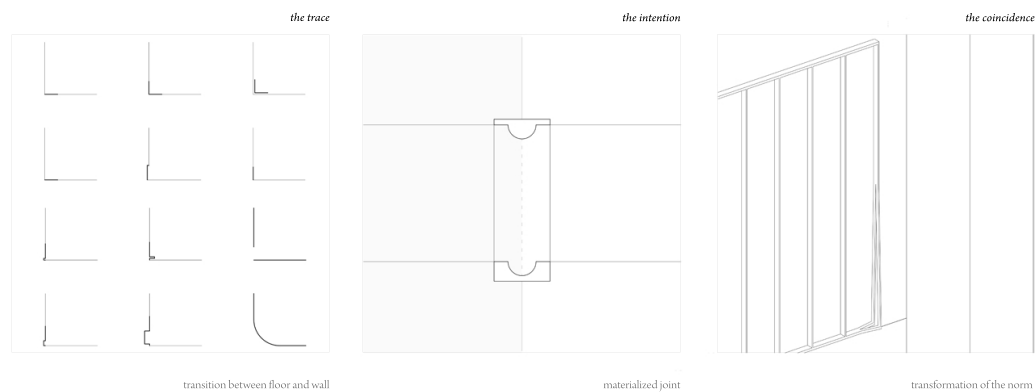


Figure 3

Liminality as a transitional stage contains on the one hand the component of the local, but also that of the temporal.

¹¹ <https://fadmagazine.com/2019/07/01/liminality-temporal-impressions-the-fourth-in-the-series-of-exhibitions-featuring-cross-disciplinary-works/>

¹² <https://fadmagazine.com/2019/07/01/liminality-temporal-impressions-the-fourth-in-the-series-of-exhibitions-featuring-cross-disciplinary-works/>

III Locality

On the level of the local I work with **materials, colours, and textures**. Looking at what is available or already present in Skopje, brings me back to the procedure of exploration, evaluation, and discovery.



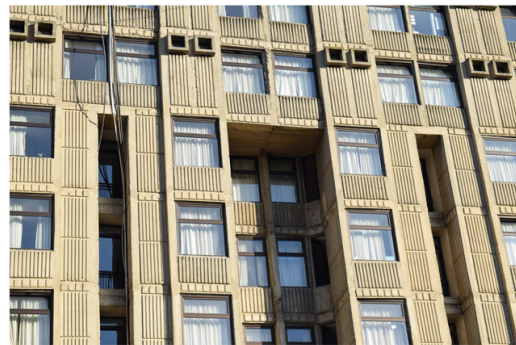
The Wall



The GTC



National Library



Goce Delčev

Figure 4

These buildings were in front of our eyes, all of us were looking at them (exploration) and when I started dealing with materials and allowed myself to study specific aspects of these places (evaluation), I brought it forth and therefore discover(y)ed it.

With an instruction manual we can translate this procedure into practice. I differentiate, for which architectural elements local materials in form or colour can be used, and that when introducing a new texture, an old existing one must first be carefully preserved. In parallel, an investigation on the work of artists or architects who have already investigated on this type of forms and textures can be beneficial. Light and shadow play an important role when hitting materials, colours, and textures, as they allow the spatial qualities to be perceived even more intensely. To a certain extent, the transformation of the norm can also be achieved through light conditions.

What happens with the play when you set up all these strict rules? Maybe it is the play itself which consists of a **system of rules** on elements, transitions, and the manual for materials, colours, and textures. I impose rules on myself as a designer to explain every step. On the other hand, it is about posing constraints in order to be able to find solutions. Besides, there are those moments when these very expressive concrete elements of the Post Office appear next to my interventions and therefore lead to **chance encounters**. My rules suddenly meet a certain condition that asks me to playfully deal with my rules, to make exceptions, and to create moments in this game that become special junctures.

IV Temporality

The Trace, the Intention and the Coincidence

Chance Encounters can appear as circumstances that suddenly change a certain situation. This includes for example the temporal aspect of liminality.

On the one hand it can arise from a **trace**. I want to present an example of a piece of furniture from the Landhaus Lemke by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe which inspired me to this assumption. The shelf was rediscovered after a long time and then returned to its place of origin. Its combination, which includes a travertine plate and two chrome-plated iron consoles that act as wall anchors supporting the mirror and at the same time serve as support and mounting for the travertine plate. He develops a detail that hides his construction part in the wall which has a slight deviation from the norm. The deviation makes the detail something unique, although the modified part is hidden in the wall. This demonstrates thorough thinking that reaches up to the scale of the 1:1 construction, which cannot even be experienced by the user.



Figure 5

Furthermore, I would like to introduce the **intention** (left). Every day we experience moments in our closest surrounding. This is the bench where two materials and four elements meet each other in such a way that they fit together perfectly. I deliberately create a gap that brings all these together in a dignified way.



Figure 6+7

Daily **coincidences** (right) happen in our immediate surrounding. This is no more than an accidental activation of my camera. Nevertheless, the image has a depth and allows a view of another level further back which is brightly illuminated. On the lower side there is a small deviation in the continuity of the front element. Is also this a coincidence, or how does it relate to the transformation of the norm?

By archiving and especially naming these conditions that come together in my environment, I can now translate this chance encounters into architecture. For instance, the trace becomes a transition zone between floor and wall. The intention is reflected in the exact planning of the encounter of two materials (materialized joint) and the chance is reflected in the exception of the rule. (Figure 3)

With these rules and the exact knowledge of how the 'game' is played, I then come across these exceptions, which stem from the existing building but also from the intervention of the bridge. The last one being an influential new layer of my game, which is pushed through the whole architecture and therefore has a big impact on the architectural order. It reconfigures the whole geometry of the architecture and changes the hierarchy of the project. At first there existed a circular arrangement but with the implementation of the bridge the configuration was modified into a decentralized setting. At this level the rules of the game are completely changed. There are different rules of the game both at the level of the manual and detail and at the level of the overall plan. The play and the manual with its strictness work together. One can even argue that the manual and the rules are part of the play. The project emerges from the **tension between freedom and constraints** (*also interesting concerning initial conclusions about the tensions in the city*). You can play because there is this system of rules and I decide what is set and what is open by posing certain constraints. Play is not completely free, quite the contrary, play is very organized.

Tension Between Freedom and Constraints

In his text 'Under Constraint', Enrique Walker is describing other artists who are posing surreal or silly rules or constraints to their work to unlock creativity. Enrique's text discusses how this is productive for architecture.

One should use self-imposed constraints as a productive tool. In practice, it's mostly about problem-solving.¹³ But what if we think about how we can understand dealing with regulations as a creative endeavour. That is, not as a residual, as if creativity occurs despite the rules, but as an active force whose creativity is to be sought within the rules. The research approach should be to consider legislative systems and regulatory techniques, technologies, and phenomena not as externalities or random constraints, but as an integral and inherent part of the architecture. This contradicts the way architects usually react to such systems.¹⁴

There is an interesting tension between the systematic methods and the search for freedom and play. The constraints and the freedom are very much related but how do these constraints as manuals help me to create a playful architecture and how does it create a play for me as well?

V Circularity

With the manual on circulation I refer to two different topics. The **circulation** that is guaranteed by the staircase and on the other hand the **construction** which connects the existing brutalist concrete elements with the added fundamental elements. Between the tour of stairs and the circle-shaped construction there will also be a circulation. The coherent construction of stairs and corridors led me to the idea of the labyrinth. Not only the merging of corridors that lead you increasingly inwards from the outside but also the networking of stairs, ascents, staircases, corridors, walkways, and double walls. On one side I have the instruction manual, which tells me exactly where to use which stairs to reach a certain area. On the other hand, a game simultaneously creates itself by configurating these spaces. Not only on the level of the playful composition of the stairs and the circuit, but the circulation becomes at the same time a play that is formulated of architecture.

Constraints in Art and Architecture

„Wacław Szpakowski was a Polish architect, engineer, and artist. He developed a series of ink drawings on tracing paper which would follow very specific constraints. Each drawing was traced with a single line that would never intersect itself. The line runs continuously and keeps a constant offset.

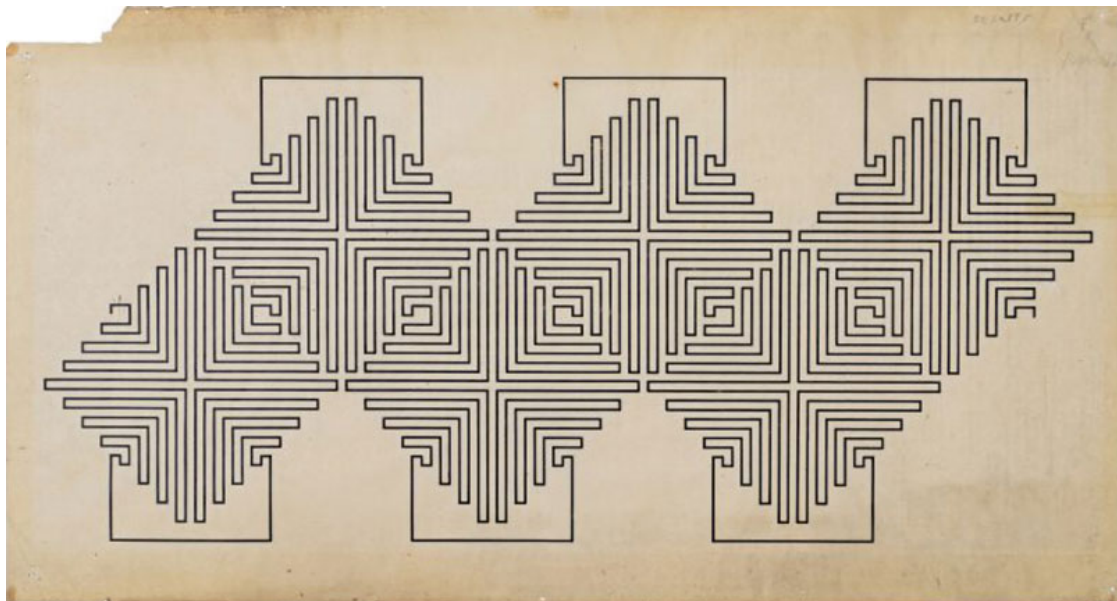


Figure 8

¹³ Walker, Enrique, Architecture as a craft, Under constraint p.31

¹⁴ Beech, Nick. ARCH+ 225: Legislating Architecture – Gesetze gestalten!, 28.09.2016 p.208-210

The final results are large variations of drawings that may recall simple patterns, schematic urban plans, or labyrinths. **The process reminds a form of automatic writing where a few choices eventually provide a large variety of results.** The appearance of the drawings and Szpakowski's experimentation with a form of automatism, recalls works of artistic movements that developed after the first half of the 20th century like Minimal Art."¹⁵

Not only the parallels to the labyrinth can be contemplated here, but also a comparison can be made to the work of Jan Schoonhoven, whose reliefs (*Figure 9*) are similar to the geometric façade patterns of Skopje. Schoonhoven's work leads us back to Minimal Art and makes it clear to me that referring to and comparing between various disciplines is essential to grasp the bigger picture of spatial formulations. Mixing different media and jumping in different eras can be profitable, once you have created an individual incentive that most likely developed out of personal curiosity. "By using common materials and overall simplification of the compositions"¹⁶ both, Waclaw Szpakowski and Jan Schoonhoven set certain limits to their art, but with their kind of artwork they leave room for free interpretation or different purposes.

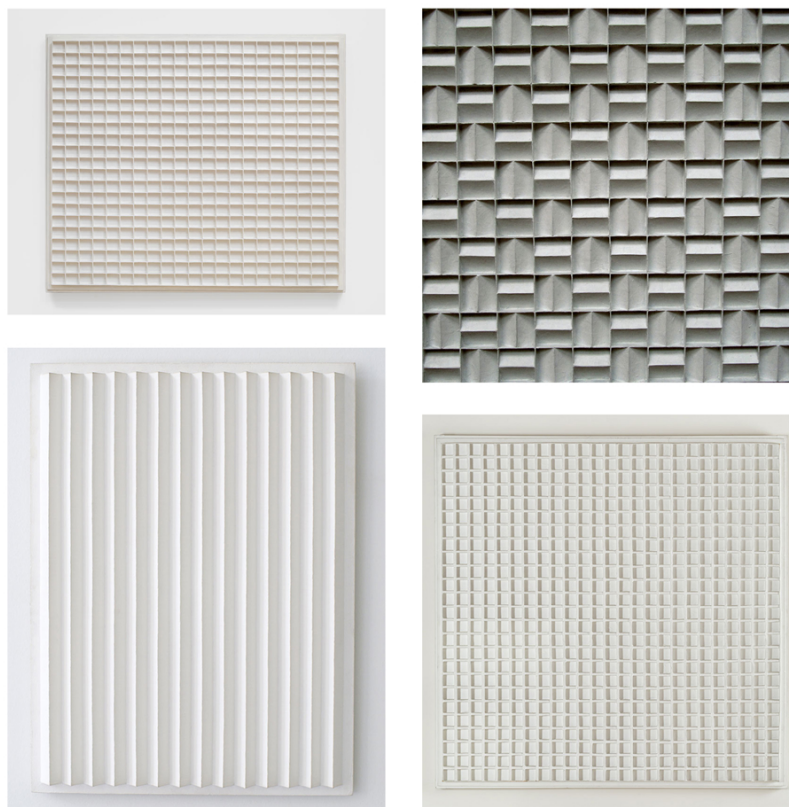


Figure 9

An Exercise in Constraints

How do I set my own rules and how do they help me in decision-making and design? Probably it is a striving for completeness that motivates me to disassemble what I have put together before. The curiosity but especially the search for substantiated explanations led me to create a collection of manuals in this project.

¹⁵ <http://socks-studio.com/2020/03/29/waclaw-szpakowski-1883-1973/>

¹⁶ <http://socks-studio.com/2015/03/30/serialised-reliefs-by-jan-schoonhoven-1950s-1990s/>

During the course 'Composition and Media' that I took in the second Master semester under Stefano Milani, Ola-Dele Kuku was a guest speaker and talked about his 'Opera Domestica' (right) which "is a personal archive; an architectural object that stores and disseminates information."¹⁷ He was inspired by Capitano Agostino Ramelli's Book Wheel (left). His „reinterpretation comprises different key elements: the outer wheel as the information unit is divided into twelve segments to denote the twelve months and zodiac signs of the year. It not only rotates vertically but also revolved horizontally. Inside, a second assimilating unit opens up as a reading table. The dynamic object is intended to communicate the value of knowledge and wisdom."¹⁸



Figure 10+11

To the task at the end of the course, I answered with an interpretation (right) of the Large Glass (left) also known as 'The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even' by Marcel Duchamp where I first disassembled the bachelors on different layers and then created 'playing rules' to reassemble the different features to obtain new combinations of properties. With this system it was then possible to create new compositions with the desired best characteristics.

¹⁷ <https://tlmagazine.com/ola-dele-kuku-architecture-as-critique/>

¹⁸ <https://tlmagazine.com/ola-dele-kuku-architecture-as-critique/>

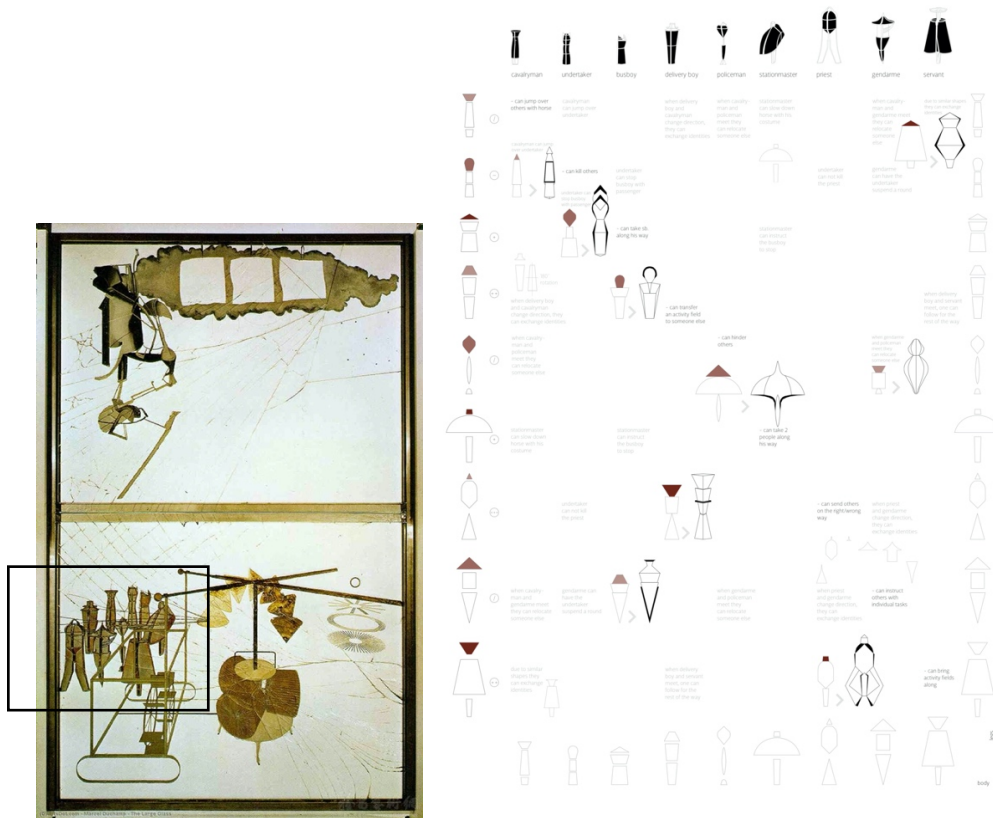


Figure 12+13

But how far can we go and document everything that we learn? Even more importantly - is there the perfect combination? Surely not, but then the question arises, does something have to fit, does it not have to be particularly well suited to a specific situation or even adapt itself?

The Shape of Knowledge

“We need new instruments to simplify, to condense” the mass of data acquired “or intelligence will never be able to overcome the difficulties imposed upon it or achieve the progress that it foresees and to which it aspires.”¹⁹

“Before the advent of information technology and of the World Wide Web, a project synthesized at once the need to concentrate all human knowledge in a single, accessible place, and the capacity of providing an efficient system to remotely and effectively retrieve all of this information. This project was the Mundaneum”²⁰ which was “conceived by two Belgian jurists, Paul Otlet (1868-1944), father of modern documentation and indexing techniques, and Henri La Fontaine (1854-1943), in 1910.”²¹

„Otlet had much bigger plans for the Mundaneum: a dedicated building whose architecture would be capable of reflecting the logic of the networked organization of information. Through Otlet’s multiple sketches and notes, we understand the basic parts of the project in the form of octagonal cells ready to be connected, including stored information linked to visual documents on each side. This choice is tied to Otlet’s long research meant to understand the ability of specific images to display complex information directly.

¹⁹ Otlet, Paul *Treatises on Documentation*, 1934 <http://socks-studio.com/2019/05/05/the-shape-of-knowledge-the-mundaneum-by-paul-otlet-and-henri-la-fontaine/>

²⁰ <http://socks-studio.com/2019/05/05/the-shape-of-knowledge-the-mundaneum-by-paul-otlet-and-henri-la-fontaine/>

²¹ <http://socks-studio.com/2019/05/05/the-shape-of-knowledge-the-mundaneum-by-paul-otlet-and-henri-la-fontaine/>

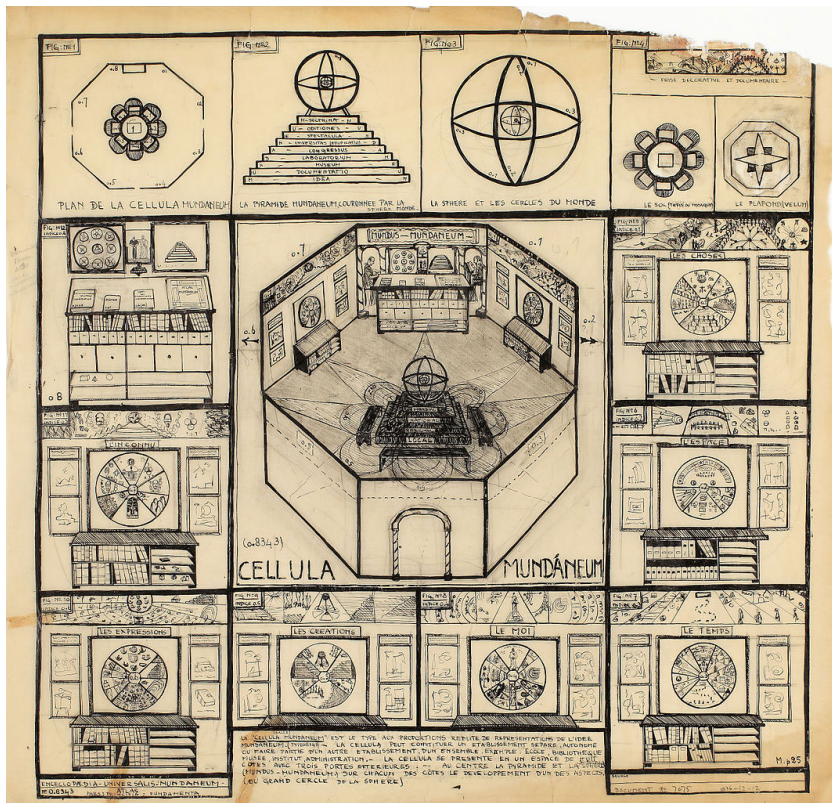


Figure 14

Otlet contacted several architects to give form to its final project, notably Le Corbusier, who imagined it as a ziggurat-shaped monument close to Geneva, and later the Belgian modernist architect Maurice Heymans. The latter developed three versions of a detailed project, from 1934 and 1938, in close collaboration with Otlet, introducing an **analogy between his ideas on the organization of knowledge and the actual organization of the architectural space** as delineated in Otlet's sketches. From the exterior, the Mundaneum would resemble a sacred monument in the shape of a platonic pyramid. Inside, it would feature a system of rooms which would become a modernist theatre of memory to visualize Otlet's cosmological and epistemological order."²²

Experiential Qualities

What is essentially the relationship between the organization of knowledge and the organization of architectural space?

In my 'Research Methods' paper "The Human Body in the Liminal" which was situated in the epistemological framework of phenomenology which is concerned with the question of how things appear to us²³ I have been dealing with the question of how certain in-between spaces are perceived and how their characteristics influence the visitor's experience. "A defining quality of this work (phenomenology), as described by John Creswell professor for educational psychology, is that researchers (using a phenomenological approach) aim to clarify the essential or underlying meaning of experience, where experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image, and meaning."²⁴

²² <http://socks-studio.com/2019/05/05/the-shape-of-knowledge-the-mundaneum-by-paul-otlet-and-henri-la-fontaine/>

²³ Havik, Klaske, Urban Literacy (Delft: TU Delft, 2012) p.56

²⁴ David Wang and Linda N. Groat, Architectural Research Methods (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2013), 227-28

To return back to the question 'What is the relationship between the organization of knowledge and the organization of architectural space?', after working on the Playground for Skopje, I can summarize, that on the one hand you need spatial experience to organize architectural space. Furthermore, I can conclude that with the development of the project, experience is added, since you are always discovering new approaches to space and thus further challenge your experience. So how space influences our perception depends on the development of the project. On the other hand, you can benefit from having organized your knowledge when you design space. In my opinion it is easier to design architectural space with an organization of knowledge. When accessing this establishment, I find the reference and comparison between different disciplines essential to understand, design and create architectural formulations. In addition, the mixture of media and changing scales was of enormous importance to me.