Cuts as Pieces of Architecture
Reflection

Studio Public Building - Border Conditions in Bucharest
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• The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)

Studio Border Conditions is interested in usually neglected and unforeseen spatial phenomena and anomalies found and/or appearing in the contemporary city conditions, therefore my investigation on abandoned gaps in the urban and architectural patterns, and the following conceptualisation of ‘cuts’ as pieces of architecture is relevant to the studio’s spectre of investigations. Moreover, the changes happening in the rapidly growing city of Bucharest are leaving new layers on top of the already existing ones which often get ‘trapped’ in these ‘cuts’, becoming an urban sediment and making it in itself a border condition. The investigation is about unravelling these layers specifically found in Bucharest, and constructing this into a way of designing architectural quality.

• The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework

The studio’s methodology is a process and experimentation oriented, focusing on a development of new architectural tools derived from the research. My investigation is based on the documentation (collection of photographs) of the phenomena of the ‘cuts’ in the city of Bucharest which is later on analysed through mapping. During the next stage, emerging understanding of spatial conditions is being translated and reinterpreted in experimental drawings which are used to produce models. The aim of this methodology is to gradually move away from the context in order to achieve new insights and develop new tools for architectural design. This process is also supported by substantial literature studies on the issues of spatial perception and architecture being cut, that are concluded as an essay providing a theoretical framework. The results of overall research suggest a program and necessary conditions for the choice of a site where the newly developed tools constitute an architectural design.

• The relationship between research and design

By developing the mappings, drawings and models into a new interpretation of the context and also taking the fascinations of each transformation, a design can be created. The emerging spatial understanding of the ‘cuts’ through experimental drawings was translated to a 2.5 D and an assemblage model. The spatial and constructive qualities of the models became the starting design tools for the architectural proposal. The investigation and reinterpretation on theories of control, resistance and blind spots in the modern city resulted in a choice of a site – a fascinating ‘cut’ in the centre of Bucharest between the streets of Strada Coltei and Strada General Emanoil Ion Floreasca, surrounded by ‘blind’ walls and internal ‘cuts’. The research on the relation between space, object, movement and body inspired a proposal for the program of the architectural
intervention – a structure for a parkour academy. All of the noted aspects became the new domains for the design, infusing the process with certain meanings which were investigated in the further models and drawings gradually moving from the abstract to the detail. However, the process was not completely linear and remained rather experimental, providing new unforeseen spatial qualities that were taking into account and added new layers for the project.

• The relationship between the project and the wider social context

Recognizing and investigating the spatial qualities of the ‘cuts’ in the city can be used as a tool for further interpretation, gradually moving away from the context into something different. This process will lead to unforeseen insights and conditions. A new way of architecturally perceiving a city will be established, suggesting a gaze that searches for qualities which can offer tools within the research.

• Personal reflection

The graduation studio Border Conditions has resulted in one of the most vivid and challenging period of the whole Master’s degree program. The research part provided a completely new reading of the contemporary city and helped to formulate a personal fascination within it. Supplemented by the substantial literature studies, the research also built up an interest and a more profound understanding of the architectural (and philosophical) theory. The process oriented design has led to an awareness of unforeseen insights and unconventional approaches, simultaneously becoming a challenge for personal constrains in the architectural practice. Overcoming these constrains and opening up for much broader possibilities and understandings of architecture is personally the most significant lesson achieved during the graduation project.