THESIS REFLECTION

PERSONAL INFORMATION

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STUDIO

THEME: Border, the architecture of violence
MAIN TUTOR: Mitesh Dixit
TEACHERS: Hrvoje Smidihen, Sven Jansse, James Westcott
ARGUMENT OF CHOICE OF THE STUDIO: the interest in the theme of border condition and how this is reflected in the social and urban environment

PROJECT: poli-liturgical centre
TITLE OF THE GRADUATION PROJECT: THE PLACE OF ALL
The relationship between research and design

The design proposal for a new liturgical center in the city of Mexicali/Calexico is the result of a deep investigation, on many different aspect, on the border condition between US and Mexico. The research period allowed us to pinpoint social, economic, physical and urban aspects and investigated them both on a hard and soft data’s point of view. To understand the fine line between the actual situation instead of the general perception was the aim of the all approach. The reality originated by the border presence is a complex situation of sharing culture and costumes, where people use to live on one site of the border and have Sunday worship on the other, to work in US and then come back for dinner in Mexico. Actual differences are blurred in a buffer zone we called Third Nation and results in a national and urban strategy for many aspects. The Place of All is insert in a city context where the border is completely erased and aims for be a new magnet of functions and activities that will answer on both side needs and desires but, more important, it will try to create a complete new identity for the city and the area in which everyone and no one can reflect itself.

The relationship between the studio theme and the thesis proposal

One of the first approach we had about the studio theme was by a Noam Chomsky’s quote: “The US-Mexican border, like most borders, was established by violence, and its architecture is the architecture of violence”. This Idea of an environment, both social and physical established by force, was at the same time scarring and fascinating, first on an historical point of view and second to investigate the actual consequences on a urban and architectural context. The complexity of the border condition is related not only to the jurisdictional difference between Mexico and US but mostly to the fact that even though the two sides supposed to be divided they can be considered by use and costume a transnational region. The border itself could and has to be considered the primary cause of aggregation in this area, the sharing and mixed community is a consequence of the border fence that, even though is a strong violent and physical division, it socially works as magnet for the community. When we eliminated the boundary to administratively re-link the area, the architectural proposal approaches the theme of division and connection using it as a catalyst of relations and connection. Herman Hertzberger said “the division is a spatial condition for meeting and dialogue” and the idea to create a complex of buildings, instead a single intervention, is then related to this primary condition of co-working identities that will be forced in a condition of proximity.
The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework

The thesis is based on the research that was done in the first half of the Msc3 phase on the level of the whole studio group. Through the research relevant data was collected and organized in two different areas of interest: Data typology (Hard data and soft data), Scale of zoom (national, regional, urban, 1 kmsq). The methodical approach of unpacking the area by arguments, from landscape and resources to population and education for example, allowed us to have a strong basement of fact and information to use as a tool for our design proposal and to manage the reflection of the project in many different aspect, as the national strategy of a free trade zone or the rising growth of 50% in the next 10 years. The liturgical center is an architectural proposal based on tangible fact translated in a clear program that tries to deal with the intangible world of private and commune experiences.

The field itself was an important tool to personally experience the contrast between the general negative perception of the border cities and the actual life of that where the biggest issue is for example the timing of the border crossing for normal inhabitant.

Relevance in wider social context

The connection to wider context of investigation can be related to two different but connected thematic. First, of course, the border condition between countries and communities, which is moreover in time a quite important issue in the contemporary spec. Hong Kong and China, the Palestine’s border, the Piece line in Ireland, as the border of Mexico and US are all dealing with the theme of division and connection, sharing and exclusion, and them consequences on the surrounding social and urban reality.

Therefore, approaching liturgy not only as a religious matter but as a ritual of aggregation that create relationship and possibility for divergent entities to meet and communicate, is starting during the last few years to became an important matter of discussion, hoe it is clear for example from the choice in Berlin to create a congregation of prayer hall.

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**Percent in...**

Religious adherents

- 50%-75%
- 80%
- 16%
- 6%

Religious affiliation

- Catholic
- Evangelical
- Protestant
- Islam
- Buddhism
- Hindu
- Other
- Unaffiliated
- Doubt

Attend religious services at least once a week

- 4 in 10

Pray or read scripture with their children

- 6 in 10

Pray at least once a day outside religious services

- 6 in 10

Speak or pray in tongues at least occasionally

- 2 in 10

Age distribution

- 18-29
- 30-49
- 65+
- 50-64