Research / Reflection Report

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Studio
Theme: Vertical Studio Istanbul
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Introduction

This paper is being conceived as a reflection on the process of development of the graduation project in Public Building, Graduation Studio Istanbul up to date. Structurally it is firstly elaborating on the initial research part of project, secondly it is discussing on the crucial aspect of transition from the research phase into design phase, than it discloses the design process of the final architectural proposal, and finally it tries to round up on the whole process from the critical point of view.

Research Process

The major point of departure of the studio according to the studio brief was the city of Istanbul and the topic of traditional food production cycle and it components described in short by three key terms of mahalle, bostan and market. Nevertheless during the initial weeks of the studio, we were repeatedly encouraged to take the city of Istanbul as such as a starting point and find our own fascination within it, that would form basis of our own project. This evident lack of clear aim made it for me as well as many of my colleagues hard to find initial starting point for the project. For me this fascination became apparent during the field trip to Istanbul itself, where I have for the first time came in contact with the actual state of the city at first hand, and was literally fascinated by its apparent contradictory nature on the level of the urban environment. I have therefore embarked on thorough typo-morphologic analysis of the urban tissue, which resulted in isolating abstracted elements of the typological transformations done repeatedly within the urban fabric of the city. To give sense to the findings I have commenced heuristic research of written sources connected with the history of the city and its development alongside the initial research. This double methodology research lead me into extraordinary findings on the urban environment creation processes and its apparent duality, based on the premise of dichotomy in between the formal conduct of the governing institutions of the city and the informal one of the community inhabiting it. Each of which drawing its potential from its own socio-contextual background,
imported profit induced western one and traditional islamic one respectively. This finding not only provided me with substantial basis for further design process, since its being based on understanding the processes behind the creation of actual physical realities within urban realm of the city, but it also became a crucial link that connects my project with the larger social context.

**Transition**

Since the research phase took place throughout the time of whole first semester up until the P2 examination, certain issue became apparent. That of major trouble of translating the researched realities in the physical project. The reason for this was twofold. On one hand was the immense stress on relevance and depth of the research as such, demanded from the studio tutors, and on the other hand the already stressed length of the research phase. This resulted in absolute immersion in the theoretical realm of the project which in fact posed an obstacle in any further development of the project. In that sense after the successful passing of P2 I took considerable break from the project, to be able to get out of “tunnel vision” imposed by the theory and be able to approach the next stage with certain distance, which was absolutely critical, for the design process to commence at all. Considering the methodology of the studio, stressing the research part in such an extent, I found it as a drawback the necessity of having a actual building proposal as a part of P2 examination, since after the aforementioned break I disregarded all the design done for the purposes of the P2 and began again from the site research. This, even though gave me possibility to test one certain approach, did not have any extra input and I perceived it more as a waste of time than a progress. Through second process of site research, additional informations surfaced which helped me to tie the outcomes of the research to the site and create basis for the design proposal. It enabled me to understand and relate my theory of duality of creation of urban environment to the actual site situation where redevelopment, enforced by the municipality is imminent, resulting in complete eradication of local community and it’s informal environment and it’s replacement with profit aimed touristic enterprises.

**Design**

My design proposition began on the idea of circumventing this forced process and as an architect acting as mediator, between these two sides which claims the right on the location. By carefully evaluating qualities and disadvantages of proposals that both sides posed for the site in question for the purpose of pinpointing and knowledgeably combining the qualities from both realms in the aim of creating an extra value for both sides. There the idea of proposition of incubators for local craftsmen as an addition of historical han typology came to be. This proposition would in fact enable me to save part of the site for local community, conforming for their specific needs, which are coming from their traditional ways of creation of built environment, and by doing so creating a point of interest for incoming visitors and tourists imposed on the site by municipality. This approach, created on the basis of combination of the on site situation and the theory that I have developed as a conclusion of the research phase lead to creation of set of tools that were used in governing the creation of the actual architectural intervention which is about to be presented during the P4 presentation.

**Conclusion**
Critically speaking the whole process from the beginning of the initial fascination until the final product to be presented at P4 rather than having linear progression curve, had curve that could be described as upward sloping sinusoid. There were episodes of great leaps of progress, usually based on discovery of some crucial information or confirmation of proposed hypothesis, followed by period of search for direction to move toward. This can be accounted to the topic I would like to discuss a bit further.

In this respect I would like to reflect upon an issue of apparent dichotomy in between the intended studio theme presented at the beginning of the year and in the studio brief and the resulting outcome. As had been disclosed at the very beginning of the paper, the studio began with not clear aim towards its outcome. This could be partially accounted to the fact that the organization structure of the studio had been brand new, based on students interaction with many tutors at the same time, which resulted in nonaligned methodology of the studio as whole since each tutor had slightly different approach and vision toward its direction. This resulted that almost none of the students, me including, did not follow the studio theme proposed by the brief. But maybe exactly because of the unclarity and inconsistent methodology of the initial stage of the studio, it made me create my own methodology that would fit perfectly the requirements that the realities presenting themselves from the realm of the city would pose. Thus resulting in project that in my opinion introduced greater complexity and reached much deeper into the complexity of the city of Istanbul than the initially proposed brief.