THE FOREST OF FREEDOM

RECLAIM PUBLIC LIFE - RECALL NATURE

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Public Building - Public realm studio
17 May 2013
The relationship between research and design

During Gentrification\(^1\), Istanbul is transformed from the city influenced by social and cultural structures to the metropolis driving by economic and political issues. To support the growth of the city, numerous strategies are explored for the urban development. Gentrification is one of significant urban regeneration processes taken place in some parts of neighborhoods in Istanbul. It does not cause only the change in architectural morphology through the renovation of historical decayed buildings but also the change in urban morphology through the organized systematic planning.

My graduation project is not only to examine the positive and negative effects of Gentrification in Istanbul as an analytical research but also to explore a potential design solution through a proposed new urban and architectural typology. Referring to the observation during the site visit, it is apparent that the morphological transformation of neighborhoods influences the changes in the everyday practices of local people especially children. The growth of the city caused the densification in neighborhoods; meanwhile, the urban regeneration resulted in a lack of public spaces especially children’s playgrounds. The streets, articulated with temporary intimate play areas for children, were transformed into the networks of wide and straight streets for the vehicle accessibility. Thus, streets are no longer secure places for children and street life ceases to exist. This regeneration causes not only the changes in the street network system but also the typology and capacity of schools. Schools were educational buildings articulated with social spaces and play areas for children. Today, schools seem to be privatized and controlled that are available for students (insiders), not for publics (outsiders). This causes children trapped in the artificial environment without the relationship with the world outside. Referring to my research, I investigate and analyze the architectural typology of existing schools and the relationship with urban contexts that control children’s behavior. My design intention is to explore a new urban and architectural typology which can liberate children from the systematic morphology causing by the urban regeneration and contribute to their freedom.

I intend to remove existing public schools in the neighborhood and reclaim as city public spaces for local people. The public schools will be transferred to the waterfront within the new urban and architectural typology intertwining two dual worlds of architecture and nature. My design proposal is to transformed the left-over waterfront along Golden Horn into ‘the forest of freedom’ containing educational and play programmes for children. The forest articulates with the new urban typology as a continuous natural playground with play areas and facilities along the waterfront area. The new architectural typology is explored as the scattered educational programmes hidden under the nature as ‘treasure boxes hidden in the forest’ waiting for children’s discovery. The new design proposal is not existed as architectures situated in the forest as adulterated things. On the contrary, my design intention is to dissolve the boundaries and to create a new relationship between two different realms. The sense of architecture as an enclosure would be destructed; meanwhile, the sense of nature as freedom would be intertwined with architecture.

The relationship between the theme of the studio and the subject/case study chosen within the framework

The theme of studio ‘Public Realm - Istanbul’ is to investigate and explore the situation of utopia in the spatial design relating to social, political and economic issues of the city. The notion of utopia is not only an ideal inspiration for the city but also contributes to urban strategies in some countries of the world. Istanbul is an interesting and potential case study within the complexity of contexts and city regenerations. The arrival of capitalism transforms Istanbul from the city orienting by social and cultural structures to the metropolis driving by economic and political issues. It is struggled in the way of modern development not appropriated with everyday practices of local people.

My subject emphasizes not only for investigate a new urban and architectural typology to liberate children’s freedom but also reclaim public life back for local people. The graduation project is to explore a

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1 Gentrification in this paper refers to an urban regeneration phenomenon caused by the replacement of middle-class into the inner city that leads to the change of urban and architectural morphology affecting to the way of human life.
new typology of ‘school + public programmes’ as a city playground for children and local people. I intend to redefine the left-over waterfront along Golden Horn as the new continuous forest containing public programmes and public space to liberate people from the systematic urban regeneration of the inner city. This also lead to reactivate the life back to the waterfront as same as the silhouette of the ideal city in the past.

The relationship between the methodical line of the approach of the studio and the method chosen in the framework

The research method delineates in two distinctive parts based on the different approaches: an analytical research of the situations in Istanbul and an analysis of Utopian Cities. The analysis of utopian cities is a research study of Utopian projects which delineate the variety of design approaches in different situations. The research is not only a study of design principles of ideal cities but also an exploration of interpretation of Utopia. The ideal project or case study inspiring my design is the orphanage in Amsterdam designed by Aldo van Eyck. He proposed a new architectural paradigm as the reconciliation of twin-phenomena between individual and society in the complex reality. He also established the relationship between the internal sphere (the orphanage) and external sphere (its contexts) by creating an intermediary place or an interior street system, that is similar to the public streets outside, in order to blur the boundaries and intertwine the dual polarities. This leads to my design intention that the graduation project is not an architecture containing public programmes in the separated location for freedom but is a medium to improve the connection between the existing waterfront and the city fabric.

The design method for the new typology is neither to recall the nostalgia evocation as the arbitrary irregular urban morphology nor to adopt the organized urban morphology causing by the urban regeneration as a voluntary prison. My design strategy is to dissolve the organized systematic morphology and to create the experience of ‘in-between’ space where children are challenged with their free movement within the new context. The existence of architecture is dissolved and the introduction of nature is interpenetrated with the realm of architecture. The ‘in-between’ space was mentioned by Herman Hertzburger in his book as the transition space where the reconciliation between public and private domain is taken place. From my different position, I intend to investigate the ‘in-between’ space within three different aspects: the reconciliation between collective and individual spaces, the reconciliation between organized and unplanned morphologies, the reconciliation between architecture and nature.

The relationship between the project and the wider social context

The notion of the project is ‘Reclaim public life - Recall nature’ that emphasizes on the arrival of the forest or nature as the appearance of public space.

The removal of public programmes, such as schools, in the neighborhood and the transformation into the green area containing public spaces can apply to different areas to increase public spaces in the inner city. Then, public programmes would be redefined along the waterfront within the ‘in-between’ realm of nature. Consequently, the stereotype of school as a artificial public building would cease to exist and the new typology of school would become an archetype of the educational architecture for real public life.

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2 Aldo van Eyck, *The child, the city and the artist*, SUN, 2008

3 Herman Hertzburger, *Lessons for students in architecture*, Uitgeverij 010 publishers, Rotterdam, 1991