Reflection

Research and Design
The theme of the research done in the first semester came out of a strong personal fascination for the right to the public spaces as places for the practices of everyday life. In the case of Istanbul, these spaces are often sold out to private investors, turning the public land of the people of Istanbul into homogenized places of production and consumption. In this perspective, the research was initially focusing on the role of the Terrain Vague as an alternative to these dominating forces. This also put into question how architecture could be used to intervene in the Terrain vague as an instrument to establish a critique on the problematic tendencies in the urban system of Istanbul. After this initial research, the Old Galate Bridge was imagined as the ideal case study to put the findings of the research to the test. The Old Galata Bridge, which in its present state is divided into 6 floating pieces, would be redesigned and used to temporarily anchor to the shore, as a new public land to challenge the local conditions.

In the actual design process, the Old Galate Bridge proved to be not feasible for an architectural intervention in relation to the design- and research intentions, since architectural intervention would almost inherently mean loss of quality. Also the theme and approach of the graduation lab were conflicting with the choice for the Galata Bridge, since the proposed interventions obviously had too little architectural impact to be regarded as a public building. It became very clear to me that I had to make an important step by leaving the research and translate the findings into an actual design. The Galata Bridge couldn’t be the final project, but should be regarded as an historical case study instead. The chosen approach, reactivation of the Galata Bridge, didn’t work.

However, the research and the case study of the Galata Bridge made the design intentions very clear. The project had to take a position against the privatization of the shore of Istanbul. The initial idea of the reappropriation of the shore with the Galata Bridge was translated into the concept for the design intervention. A collection of floating public spaces is proposed, that could temporarily anchor to the shore, offering new public land to the people of Istanbul which challenges the way the public territory is sacrificed for the sake of consumption. Also the choice for the different programs for the floating public spaces is strongly connected to the findings in the research. For the final design, one of these floating spaces is developed into detail, in this case a youth center and playground. The playground in itself is a highly interesting kind of public building in relation to the research theme, since a playground by definition is a place were kids practice the acts of appropriation of the designed space. However, the initial research gave too little direction to the design of the playground itself. A secondary research was made in order to give an adequate answer to this specific assignment.

Social Context
The project takes a clear position against the way public land of the city is sold out. By offering a new type of temporary public space to the people of Istanbul in the form of floating islands, an attempt is made to rethink the possibilities of public space. The right to the space is given back to the people. The relevance of the project is not merely to be found in the specific conditions of Istanbul, but can be derived from a wider social context. There is a global tendency going on of people stepping up
against the dominating forces of the city and who reclaim their right to the city through reappropriation of the public land. The existing order is not taken for granted any longer and a call for rethinking public space is made. This project tries to contribute to that discussion by testing new possibilities for giving the city back to the people, which could then be translated elsewhere. In this perspective, the relevance of the project as stated in the initial graduation plan has always been an important underlying reason that gave direction to the project as a whole.