The relationship between research and design

Within my graduation project I am addressing the topic of the gating of the city and the separation of built environment and the nature. In my research I draw attention towards the town of Gokturk, which emerges as a new space of urban wealth and a new order in the context of neoliberalizing Istanbul. The reason why I choose to study Gokturk is that phenomena of gated communities are the most represented and thriving there. It is the most complete enclave or built utopia, severing almost all relations and connections to the city of Istanbul.

The project which was developed, deals with very same questions that I was raising during the research phase. It is seen as an experiment, knowledge which was gathered during research put to practice. The design is inserted into natural setting, which is on one side confronted by the uncontrolled sprawl of gated communities and the water basin on the other. What makes the space so particular and the choice of preference is its direct link to nature and water resources as the research area, and it's being the fringe of the city. It is located at the periphery of Istanbul being the crucial element of the city. The site itself, acts as a buffer flood zone for Alibey river basin. This area was constructed as part of Alibey Rivers Dam. It was built in late 1960’s in order to fulfill the demands for water in Istanbul. Area is quite neglected, surrounded by faceless gated communities and barbed wire fences.

As I have mentioned before, I find this site being a fringe, or a space in between, where city clashes into nature, as if the one side tries to take over the other and exactly at the line where water meets land the dike is placed. A very harsh and rational cut off, which serves the only purpose to keep the water, gathered in the basin, out from the city. On one hand, the area is completely artificial, made to serve the needs of the constantly increasing Istanbul population, but at the very same time is has the potential to become the space which rises the awareness towards nature, and creates the subtle dialog between the natural resources, which are depleting constantly and the built environment.

I believe the qualities and potentials that site possesses makes the link between my research and the design. The design works as an extension of the existing water lock walls placed in the dike. Though at first glance, the walls should increase the separation between the two sides, but as my research showed, wall creates the precedent, firm and stable border. This allows space to be created in between where people could go and experience the worlds of nature and the built environment. By
adding the openings, the walls become middle place composed of interactions and inter-views sort of void, a place of exchanges and encounters for the public.

2. The relationship between the theme of the studio and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)

In my research referring to the topic of interest I choose to embrace the enclosure, instead of negating it by comparing these highly capsular closed-off agglomerations with classical typologies of public spaces. I acknowledge these spaces the way they are and look for architectural qualities they possess if any. The decisions made and processes behind this so called “gating of the city”, I believe is beyond the architects’ reach, in other words there is no way, how we as architects, can influence this on-going gentrification or “gating of the city” as such.

Another reason why I choose to embrace the enclosure is well articulated by Michel De Certeu, he writes “<…>the primary and the literally “fundamental” question: it is the partition of space that structures it. Everything refers in fact to this differentiation which makes possible the isolation and interplay of distinct spaces. From the distinctions that localize objects, from the home (constituted on the basis of the wall) to the journey (constituted on the basis of geographical “elsewhere” or a cosmological “beyond”), from the functioning of the urban network to that of the rural landscape, there is no spatiality that is not organized by the determination of frontiers. So, the frontier or the border is the most important parameter, where I draw my attention to. It actually allows diversity, the borders to which the inhabitants of Gokturk praise, establishes differences between the gated compounds instead on unifying them.

Every compound, bordered intricately, forms a fortified network, revealing interesting spatial configuration. Though at first glance, the urban arrangement of the gated communities does not form a perfect Hippodamian scheme but it shows the necessity of grid and network which calls for order within the town. The differences from any other typical town or small village lay in the way the streets are appropriated by the inhabitants. Pavements which are the mediating elements between the public and private become obsolete. Cars take over. Vehicles are one and only means of transport and commuting between parts of town. Pedestrian zones, pavements and street crossings are only the remnants on the town planning code, which are only used by the security personnel guarding the compounds. In this sense, car parking along the side of the streets become the mediator between public and private.

Looking back at the broader picture, streets and the crossings become the space where public interacts. Street crossings become agoras. Only monuments and sculptures that indicate and validate the nods as being a space of exchange and encounter are substituted with street lights and posts that regulate the traffic.
3. The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework

In order to answer the formulated research questions the typological research was done. The method of mapping was applied. The reason why this method is embraced by border conditions studio and chosen by me, is because the particulate way of condensing the experiences of spaces and territories in the research area can be accessed immanently, while at the same time remaining faithful to the complexity and multiplicity of the phenomena and properties at hand. The drawing of the map articulates spatializing practices, becoming the pool of knowledge for future use.

Scrutinous built fabrics’ examination though mapping revealed tree main types of enclosing elements, which are as follows: 1. Human height stone wall with a superimposed barbed wire fence on the top of it, surrounding the enclave of villas; 2. Multiple-layer border (fence, green space, fence, foliage and the stone wall) surrounding the enclave of villas; 3. The Plinth building, enclosing element becomes part of the building acquiring the public functions. This typological analysis was executed to establish the way the wall or the fence forms a border between the public and private domains within the Gokturk. A careful review is given not only to physical form of the fence, but also to parameter of accessibility in terms of visual perception. By making schematic sectional and perspective drawings of gated communities in relation to the street, which is perceived as public domain, a gradient of “enclosure” is defined. Yet revealing the complexities within the border and posing questions of relevance and necessity of the border.

4. The relationship between the project and the wider social context

I believe my project addresses nowadays very delicate subject a gating of the city which shape the society and built environment in Istanbul. The topic that was chosen for the research and later examined during the design phase is partially the reason why social gaps between people are that apparent in Istanbul.

Within my design these issues are tackled. In no way I am trying to solve the problems that are deeply rooted in society, but instead considering my design, I try to provide a tool to create dialog between the sides.