Reflection
Graduation Project of the
„Borders and Territories: Transient Liquidities" - Studio
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Goal

The research that initiated my confrontation of the site of Istanbul was born from an observation of multiple construction sites within the city. They are examples of an ongoing destruction and subsequent denser reconstruction of neighbourhoods within Istanbul branded "Urban Renewal" that lead to the eviction and displacement of most former inhabitants. The essay after the excursion to Istanbul outlined the following observation: As a consequence of the seemingly sudden physical disruption of the urban space its connection to not only its past versions, but also subjective memories of those past versions became apparent.

The stated goal for the design was to address the complex interdependencies between the "material" and "non-material" of an urban place and how the rigorous alteration of only one of the two creates disrupted, disconnected urban places on the scale of both sides. My analysis of the interdependencies throughout the essay, mapping exercises and modelling efforts made apparent the necessity to view said urban places as reflections of processes throughout time. Therefore, some sort of productive, or destructive process should be inherent to the proposed design in program or architectural production.

Chosen Site

The Istanbul neighbourhood of Kirazlitepe on the eastern side of the Bosporus was chosen as a blueprint for countless neighbourhoods in Istanbul that are facing complete "Urban Renewal," as it went through dynamics of resistance and intimidation typical for many of them.

Summary of research

My approach towards the abovementioned stated goal was a qualitative research based on attempts to express the ambiguity and attachment to memory of urban places. The results

were maps and conceptual models which helped to translate the initial conclusions into visual and physical representations. The results were satisfactory in the sense that they were able to express the sensitive and abstract nature of the considerations of sites subject to urban renewal as described in the essay. They did not enable me to produce a position in the sense of an argumentative angle for a potential design.

The timeline-map which shows the intricate relations of actors and actions that took place throughout Kirazlitepes transformation initiated more quantitative research, in which I precisely tried to analyse the system of transformation for the case study Kirazlitepe. It led to two outcomes:

Framing the process of transformation as a process of acts of intimidation (from sides of the municipality and government) and resistance (from sides of the inhabitants) which manifest within the built and natural environment (material) and actions and underlying values (non-material)

Locating and categorizing intimidation and resistance within the neighbourhood. This helped me define the role of building material as a carrier of identity.

These conclusions resulted in the

Design Task:
Create an urban place that pairs the non-material qualities of the disrupted Kirazlitepe and its former inhabitants with a new material counterpart.

Design

The design is a column and beam structure that enables people to appropriate it by filling it in with different building materials mined from its surrounding, creating public spaces within it. The architecture serves as the new material counterpart to the non-material qualities of destroyed Kirazlitepe, as they have lost their original material counterpart. It acts as a collector of materials and associated memories, as a place of resistan-

ce, and as a generator of new memories. It can be regarded as a neighbourhood centre for the displaced as well as the new inhabitants. Materiality, process of production, choice of site within Kirazlitepe, proposed program, the underlying architectural grids, as well as heights and dimensions are the defining topics of the building. They are extracted and translated from the site of Kirazlitepe itself. They are translated in such a way that they try to emphasize my framing of the site as being subject to disruptions between the material and non-material.

Reflection of Research and Design Process

The process of my research was incremental and experimental until P2 and shifted into a more empirical way of analysis of the site of Kirazlitepe to lead to a definitive design.

The benefit of the first phase is that a very personal way of evaluating the otherwise more impersonal topic of urban renewal could be achieved. Simultaneously, the products of the modelling and mapping exercises tapped into new ways of expressing the process of Urban Renewal rather than deepening one specific perspective on it. In the larger discourse of Urban transformation of large cities in Europe and Asia, this can add a sensitive perspective to the understanding of affected places and their relation to its inhabitants.

At the same time, the research can not be described as being solution oriented in a direct sense. The detriment to people affected globally by the powerful dynamics of Urban Renewal cannot be alleviated with the conclusions of this research. The intention is, however, that this project can be placed in line with other attempts of creating an awareness for the fact that the physical elements of urban places are much more sensitive and intricate in relation to time, their inhabitants and memory than possibly assumed by many, and especially future decision makers in that field. In a broader sense, it would be a desirable outcome if my project could stimulate the observer to gain a new awareness and appreciation for the dynamics of even seemingly irrelevant Urban Niches – like it did for me.

The quantitative second part of my research lead to my design. A stronger focus on strictly architectural design as opposed to conceptual considerations could have helped the translation of the theoretical considerations into a building earlier on. At the same time, however, the time spent on the theoretical research was necessary to define my point of view towards urban places facing transformation. The concepts of urban mining and assemblage implemented in my design are chosen, because they can be used to emphasize the ability of materials to hold memory as well as create new memories when rearranged. The literal interpretation and use of material enables my design to be a carrier of memory beyond a symbolic gesture.