Space of seam: straddling architecture

The architecture of Suspension

Bucharest, the Romanian capital, is growing faster and sporadically forming surplus urban fabrics, the void, within the city. Socio-political tension emerged from the conflict between different degrees of the speed of developing urban fabrics will be projected differently in-between the void and neighborhood as border conditions as the graduation studio theme. Morarilor in Bucharest reveals its emergent spatial conditions as huge urban void resulted from the city changing and expanding, also similar to other areas in Bucharest.

In the investigation, the graduation studio explores Bucharest with a design strategy incorporating intuitive decision-making, the mapping technique, and theory (assemblage theory given by the studio). The theoretical implementation in preliminary research, by which assemblage theory provided the outcome with basic spatial comprehension and logic, had still expanded the understanding of the social context and the project since last semester.

As design methodology, the architecture of suspension will arise out of the experimentation during the preliminary research based on the understanding of the clash of rapidity in Morarlior. The manifestation of the possibilities arising in the re-reading and re-mapping of the site as departing from an understanding of suspension from the root word 'suspense.' The deliberate re-composition of the site allows for a study of notions of continuity and discontinuity, fragmentation and the expansion of site outside locality, registering time and place beyond and before.

The Range Suspension mapping in the research becomes a particular urban analysis that is free from conventional point of view of cartography. Rather than merely representing and re-tracing the phenomena of Morarlior with common drawing technique, the mapping exploring fields of Morarlior is opening up possibilities, having constellations of elements, and having the openness to different types of spatial depth as voids as spatial characteristics. The cartography of range suspension has done via a series of an improvisational act of drawing: folding the canvas, spreading graphite on the folded canvas, tapping the canvas randomly to break certain forms of the cloud of graphite that were organized by the direction of spreading. Focusing on the initial inspiration from the drawing, as intensity or density, the mapping hovers between imagination and consideration of the real at the same time: 1) detaching particular value from the locality, 2) implementing uncontrolled approach into designing a political apparatus against the post–communist city of Bucharest. A bundle of terms derived from mapping comprise the thematic framework of the project that directionality, force, field, intensity, density, the void, slowness, complexity, and ambiguity induce the idea of perforation as design methodology in the project.

The exploration of the site via understandings of the Architecture of Suspension as the Chemical Suspension allows for the exploration of the site via notions of colloidal shifting boundaries, where complex interactions occur, revealing flow, field, and superimposition.

The redrawing of the physical effects arising from the elements that creates the Architecture of Suspension, choosing to manifest the performative actions and descriptions arising from them. Physical suspension allowed for the exploration of the operations that materiality and composition provide, without a fixation on the form on which they take, allowing for possible reconfigurations that increase their complexity, irregularity,

and fragmentation. Together the four drawings register the opportunity to begin an exploratory design approach, allowing the basis for a shift into spatialized explorations that will eventually take the form of the design.

Being in the middle of the preliminary research, 2.5 D model shifted the dimension of the cartographic technique to a different level and helped to expand the knowledge of direction, concentration, and a constellation of elements. Accidentally the idea of perforating was emerging through a certain degree of intuitive and improvisational design exercises, making coherent sound with mappings in terms of the void (field), in terms of concentration (force), and in terms of the heterogeneity (constellation of elements). The act of perforating was an opportunity to aware of a registration of random spatial depth and spatial configuration of repetition, as every single decision-making upon the perforations was not predetermined.

The methodology, suspending, played a significant role in implementing assemblage theory to comprise an assemblage model, which is a virtual existence containing several aspects of design inspirations and architectural equivalent. Physical for materiality and architectonic description, mental suspension for spatial technique, range suspension for the act of increasing the heterogeneity of the voids, and chemical for distributing the heterogeneity of the voids and spatial components throughout architecture and public domain in the city.

The architecture of suspension, the strategy from urban analysis by mapping technique, 2.5D model, and assemblage theory, intended to register the urban condition that is complex and fragmented. Furthermore, suspending aimed to increase the heterogeneity of the perforation during last semester, which was representing the rhythmic atmosphere of slowness in the urban void that is ambiguous in one's imagine. Morarilor, as vast terrain vague in Bucharest, became the part of the design methodology, the architecture of suspension that an in-between space such as Morarlior bordering on its developing neighboring areas opens up anomalous thought images of the public domain in the city, incorporating with spatial quality in the architecture project.

The urban analysis and mappings of Morarlior in Bucharest show subtle suspense that emerged from the conflict between different speeds: rapidity outside of nonvoid and the slowness arising from elements within nonvoid suspending the rapidity outside. So, characteristics of slowness, which is comparable with the velocity from the outside, can be found inside the emergent spatial conditions of nonvoid.

Reading an elaborate novel, which is named Slowness by a Czech writer Milan Kundera, gave a depth in understanding of Slowness, which is an essential characteristic of the void. An intuitive choice of a phrase from the reading suggested a coherent line for intensity (concentration) from mapping, 2.5D, and assemblage model, which are done by the act of perforating as adjusting the size of perforation by different intensity.

"In existential mathematics, that experience takes the form of two basic equations: the degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting."[1]

Also, the sentence from the reading provided the design project with a programmatic background as a clinic for dementia regarding memory and different types of speed. As an institution, the design project can be seen as a political apparatus projecting it changed role on the site. The similarity between the urban condition of the void in Morarlior and people with cognitive impairments is that both are losing their personality and identity, not belonging to any societal domain as an ambiguous part of urban tissues as well as an ego not aware of the existence of themselves and any others. The similarity between border condition (society, the whole) and the project (part) represents the outside of locality and detached reality, accentuated in the studio theme.

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[1] M. Kundera, *Slowness*, P. 34

Francis Yate's elaborate work, The Art of Memory, opened up the possibility of the void from assemblage model as containing space in architecture as loci and image.

"The word 'mnemotechnics' hardly conveys what the artificial memory of Cicero may have been like, as it moved among the buildings of ancient Rome, seeing the places, seeing the images stored on the places, with a piercing inner vision which immediately brought to his lips the thoughts and words of his speech. I prefer to use the expression 'art of memory' for this process".[2]

Different types of speed refer either to the urban meaning of mapping from preliminary research or to the various forms of learning in the project as the learning center for amnesia (short-term memory), and dementia (long-term memory). Combining both the idea of memory and the void boosted the project into a position to go beyond representing the diagrammatic atmosphere from assemblage model, and having a less direct interpretation of the idea of rapidity from the urban analysis.

Institutionalizing life and spaces could not be able to be observed in border condition, especially in Morarlior — the void. Border condition inherently becomes a field confining and projecting different types, and degrees of entities that are accidentally emerging. The project is encouraged by gazing a confrontation between different types and levels of characteristics that are amnesia and dementia, neighborhood and terrain vague, short-term and long-term memory at the same moment. Such social characteristics are conflicting with each other, and they can break the static order of convention in a tangible urban level, allowing for architecture have spaces of possibilities in an in-between space, which is resulted from the chance of encounter of the elements. Thus, thematic approach with mapping and theory upon the idea of border condition will turn the project into less institutional exploration within the social context of Morarlior.

The architecture can projects its political characteristics to the society in a different way in comparison with conventional institutions that the new proposal of political apparatus challenges the rigidity of its programmatic and pragmatic structure and organization, as combining parts as the cell, clinic, therapy, and learning space into the whole. The new contemporary learning center for people with cognitive impairments, therefore, can be imagined as loci of vitalizing terrain vague, of walking through ambiguity, and of having a sense of protection, by unleashing various societal values in architecture.

The architecture of suspension has been considered as manifesting an architectural equivalent based on heterogeneity of spatial quality, materialization, and tectonic composition during research. Dealing with spectacles of architecture come up to the surface, since drilling innumerable perforations in wooden panel randomly left behind violent and intense traces of circular spaces, which were concentrated on and dispersed in all directions. These ratios of concentration and dispersion indicate a spatial quality is slowly unfolding in a field. Increasing heterogeneity of perforations has led the architecture of suspension to the idea of complexity, density, and ambiguity. The dense layer of perforations that are repeating allows for the project imagine an in-between (or void) space containing a lot of information in the first place. Exerted by the first impression of the void or act of perforating, perforations on assemblage model have filled with cylindrical space.

Considering cognitive capacity of people with dementia that they are not capable of recognizing the reality, what is happening and where they are heading for, imposing restraints on architectural spectacles that are emerged by random perforations, become influential design intent. Such an essential question about restraints on spatial quality, which was ironically against the fixed image of the architectural suspension in the early design stage, let the design expand knowledge about a suspended moment and also open up an abstract thought image of space providing people with cognitive impairments with physical confinement and sense of protection. So, the desired appearance of architecture and levels of aesthetic value from preliminary research had to be constrained in the design of the contemporary learning center for people with dementia. These repressions on the intuitive decision-making in design rather free the project from straightforwardly reasoning

[2] F. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, P. 6

the architecture of suspension, and can open up multi-interpretations of the architecture with its peculiar spatial equivalent.

The project intends to re-read an in-between space and an in-between personality in the city. The architecture of the learning center for people with dementia can open up a discussion about its density. As the site is considered self-contained, detached from the surroundings, the architecture changes its role from cell to the clinic, to learning center on site.

A different degree of cognitive capacity also creates particular combinations of learning spaces intervening between amnesia and dementia. People with cognitive impairments digest reality in enclosed learning spaces distributed in the architecture. The enclosed learning spaces can delineate combination of the different types of the learning process by means of reading, writing, and acting. In reading and writing, people alter information (image) they access into short-term memories, and in performing the short-term memory will be transformed into long-term memories in one's mind (loci). Learning progresses slowly and transcends the limits of hierarchical digestion of information: there is no peculiar starting point of learning to an endpoint and vice versa, and learning is appearing in an infinite diverse way in one's life. Such a systematic, but non-hierarchical, image of learning can be projected in the architecture by the aimless wandering of people with dementia simultaneously.

Repeating homogeneity of spatial characteristics emerges in the learning center for people with dementia to encourage them to digest entirely new reality and new information appearing in their sight every second. In walking aimlessly as medical symptoms, people with cognitive impairments can intrude into every single learning space to access information equally from any directions. These particular routines of people with dementia ignite speculation on the idea of slowness with elongated walking spaces in the architecture, establishing spatial quality that library, class, collective housing, and clinic are restrained in cylindrical space in order to give people the mental image of protective therapeutic space. Architectural ambiguity emerged when more than two confined cylindrical spaces are overlapped with each, suggesting an open ending story about the circular spatial experience without particular prescribed directionality. These atypical ambiguities in the architecture are taking place as simultaneously considering the conflict of different programmatic compositions in the area, which is also part of the architecture of suspension as a moment chemically suspended.

Both people with cognitive impairments and the terrain vague are vulnerable to extreme changes, requiring psychological equilibrium. Slowness, the spatial characteristics of the terrain vague Morarilor, has been transformed into types of repetition of elongated corridors and enclosed spaces with its infinite sequence, allowing for the architecture challenge less institutionalized. Also, the architecture can evoke a speculative image of an endless walking field that projects spatial ambiguity in proximity to its public domain, and the neighboring areas.