

FOLDING

FROM THE DESIRE OF THE CITY, TO THE CITY OF DESIRE

Focusing in the neighbourhood of Sepolia in Athens, a place where urban processes often operate in different spaces regardless of their pre-defined function, this project offers an understanding of productivity beyond the categorical divide between private and public space, interior and exterior. The neighbourhood is perceived as a stratification of publicness, a perpetual succession of transient non-hierarchical spaces, of enclosures as fields of interiorizing topologic conditions. The process of folding refers to the individuation process, the new becoming that emerges when structures and operations in the neighbourhood co-produce a new urban action. The project is thus looking for potentials that enable the urban processes, instead of reproducing themselves, to become generative. Structures that although are solid, they are abounding with undetermined potentials. Between the solid structures in the neighbourhood and the fluid future of possibilities, the process of folding describes the present, the becoming. These structures that function as an abstract diagram, enable the emergence of interiorizing forces by being able to afford relations of exteriority.

The theoretical research speculates on how the notion of desire is related to the production of the neighbourhood and how actions and structures are mutually generating territories within the city. Consequently, this led to an analysis of several territories, which emerged from the interviews with inhabitants and the observational study of the neighbourhood, as fields of energetic and material forces. The urban subjects that were analysed are related to resting, eating and

encountering as three actions that are characterised by different degrees of movement/ passivity and succeed each other in the everyday urban life. From mapping to diagramming these urban actions, the analysis led to an understanding of urban processes as assemblages of constraints. Constraints are technical ensembles that function as control points of the individuation cycle. These technical realities regulate the flows of information between the elements of these ensembles and thus also regulate the membrane, the threshold between interior and exterior conditions.

The design process aims to investigate new assemblages of technical constraints that arise from the existing ones. The interventions concern the development of a series of metastable structures that function as an abstract diagram. These structures that find themselves in between privacy and publicness can accommodate resting, eating and encountering, but also have the capacity to afford many other urban actions to emerge by enabling relations of exteriority. The static nature of architecture has to do with a predefined function that a certain structure suggests. These design experiments have the purpose to investigate how solid structures can be functionally generative by anticipating certain actions but also having the capacity to afford other ones. Towards a new urban subject, the dweller becomes, from a user of a pre-programmed space, to be part of a process wherein social and technical entities are indeterminably re-singularized. Function is thus not defined a-priori but a-praesenti. Desire as an interest motivator, becomes the driving force of the development of new operations within the neighbourhood, in the encounter with the structures. It is perceived as an energetic force that enables a shift in the understanding of the production of space in Athens: from the desire for private space to the desire for new urban actions.

Explore Lab graduation studio has provided this project with the opportunity to investigate the relationship between desire and the production of urban actions but also to study architectural practice as a process wherein actions and structures develop into being mutually generative. The choice of Athens as a case study was made as an example of how the analysis of certain cities can offer an understanding of productive urban processes. The new urban subject is the one that can generate new ones and the architectural process aims to propose spatial pre-conditions in the form of metastable structures that have the capacity to transform existing logics. The project suggests that an architect, instead of looking for optimised solutions to problems, can rather analyse the current structures of a certain ecology in order to offer a problematised thinking and speculate on how the built environment can generate conditions for the development of individuation. Someone that creates structures that can accommodate existing desires and reveal virtual ones, since ecological thinking lies in the process that not only preserves an existing ecology but also facilitates the emergence of new ones.

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