

POSTGRADUATE PROGRAM IN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Department of Architecture, University of Thessaly
Pedion Areos,
38334, Volos

T +30 24210 74242
F: +30 24210 74244

www.arch.uth.gr

STÄDELSCHULE ARCHITECTURE CLASS

Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste-Städelschule
Dürerstrasse 10
60596 Frankfurt am Main

T +49 69 6050 0869
F +49 69 6050 0878

www.staedelschule.de/architecture

Saturated Urban Spaces

Towards an Economies of Space in Architecture

Workshop Brief - Volos, Greece - Monday 21 to Friday 25 November

Tutors: Johan Bettum, Sophia Vyzoviti and faculty at the Department of Architecture, University of Thessaly
Contact: johan.bettum@staedelschule.de svizovit@arch.uth.gr

INTRODUCTION

Saturated Urban Spaces is the brief for the workshop collaboration between the Master Thesis Group in *Advanced Architectural Design*, Städelschule, and the Postgraduate Master Programme in Architectural Design 'symbiosis' at the Department of Architecture, the University of Thessaly. For the workshop groups of students from both institutions will team up and work together to map select parts of Volos according to a materialist-physicalist idea of space. This emergent spatial paradigm in architecture sees inhabitable space as sensuous product resulting from how designed structure interacts with flows of matter and information. The idea of an 'economies of space' captures this complex without conflating one dimension of the spatial paradigm with another, yet integrating all to form a powerful and holistic architectural idea.

The approach asks for the mapping of urban spaces assuming that they form dense, saturated media for the formulation of design strategies where the idea of a building must be understood in an extended and open context. Architecture in the form of built structure is quintessential and the ultimate 'product' of the paradigm, yet it never is more than one part of a multi-faceted story. The other parts contribute to render a fuller and more comprehensible 'life of the building.'

The workshop aims to explore how select urban spaces and their surrounding built fabric can be understood and modelled in terms of the flow and transformation of select forms of matter, energy and information. It asks its participants to use contemporary mapping and modelling techniques to gauge and reconstruct select spaces in Volos, rendering them as saturated with designed structure, flows of information, temporal trajectories of matter in continuous transformation, and their intercourse in the temporal stream of a day.

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

The workshop will consist of short introductory sessions where the background and overall idea of a 'The Life of Buildings - Towards an Economies of Space in Architecture', which is the current research project in SAC's AAD, is explained. Faculty members at the University of Thessaly will give an introduction to Volos and select sites that will be analysed and modelled.

The workshop will include daily meetings that comprise seminars, discussions and review of work in progress. Select readings will be included in the seminar programme, and these include texts by Sanford Kwinter, Manuel de Landa and Whitney Davies.

The workshop will conclude with a review for the final production and submission of a comprehensible portfolio of maps and models as well as a written report.

The work to be executed in the workshop will be executed by the use of various techniques - including: hand drawing, photographic techniques (including time-lapse to arrest temporal patterns), basic 2D and 3D drawing and modelling, as well as parametric modelling in Rhino, Rhino with Grasshopper and Processing.

The following topics are suggested thematic foci for the research to be undertaken:

ELECTRONIC ENERGY - ZONES OF MANIFESTATION

Large parts of our lives and the life of buildings are enabled by electric energy. Most obviously, there include light switches, visible and invisible other types of switches, and personal electronic devices that flood our daily lives with information.

However, a more subtle understanding of these flows of electronic energy, their visible and non-visible impact on our lives, addresses their zones of manifestation. These are partly made up of the aforementioned light switches, interactive or non-interactive screens - in short, the interfaces. But more importantly, particular spaces are formed around each point and zone of interaction. These spaces can be unfolded along various axes: material, form, social-behavioural pattern and more. Yet, in an urban setting, these zones are more diffuse than in a building or in relation to an individual.

The task is to analyze one or two very specific sites in Volos and attempt to map various patterns of electronic 'manifestation' or 'flow'. These maps should focus on spatial and temporal patterns, track the influence of the larger-scale 'interface' of the surrounding buildings and more. If energy is transmitted, how is that accomplished, across what interface and against what material texture? Is the energy merely transmitted and transformed, or is it stored, transferred into new forms of computing and latent action?

MATERIALLY MANIFEST MOVEMENT

'Movement' spells out its own 'economy of space.' By movement is here meant 'the act or an instance of moving; a change in place or position be it physical or virtual' with respect to objects, material, matter and energy.

The study of movement as a spatial economy aims to capture the flow of material, matter and energy that revolves around objects that makes the everyday environment and completes the space and thereby the buildings in urban settings. This includes the idea of buildings in the following ways: objects (tangible and visible entity) in motion, objects that necessitate motion and objects that catalyse (activate) movement.

The workshop study will attempt to unfold urban spaces in maps that chart this intricate and sensuous relation between the seemingly static (objects) and the blatantly dynamic (human movement). However,

movement can also be registered as affect (the movement of the 'soul'), and the mapping will not be limited to merely the physical movement of individuals or groups of people.

COGNITION AND KNOWLEDGE CAPACITATION

Our inhabitation of space is based a wide range of assumed and tacit knowledge. Signs (including 'road' signs), advertisement, books and more contribute to code our daily space. In a market economy, this is sometimes known as branding; in a library it is translated as education. It includes signs, symbols, language and many more forms that contribute to communication and the navigation of space and to the formation of socio-cultural values on an individual and collective level.

This task involves the careful examination of an urban setting with its surrounding buildings in terms of this notion of cultural knowledge sharing, learning and navigation. The call is for a detailed unfolding of the space in terms of a series of variables that may include social, cultural, material and formal analyses. What are the qualitative and quantitative measures of this space? And what are the relations between individuals and groups of them and the numerous informational localities that they encounter? The task frames the question of a 'knowledge economy' in the widest sense of the phrase. It includes the politics and culture of signs and signage, language and linguistics.

THE ECONOMY AND SOCIAL-MATERIAL SPACE OF WATER

The economy of water in architecture - rainwater and flood water, outside and inside drains, drinking water, sweat, water to swim in, water in bodies ... - is highly disregarded. Water is equivalent to life and death. It forms personal and collective landscapes and leaves traces of personal and social economies and landscapes in built structure. Yet, to map the economy of water (or should one say 'waters'), its various flows, the forms of guidance and resistance to this flow that is given by built form, is an complex task.

This complexity is particularly poignant the moment one begins to observe the pattern of movement and social behaviour of individuals and groups in relationship to the endless flow of waters. In an urban setting, this is influenced by the forms of roofs and drainage, the facade articulation of buildings, the climate, the form and marketing of bottled water, and so much more.

How does one begin to map this complex of hydraulics? What are the techniques for mapping the endless of the liquid against the material composition and articulation of designed form - not to speak about the social composure of affected individuals and social groups of people?

THE URBAN THEATRE OF LIGHT

Light is mostly taken for granted in architecture. Yet, whether within a diurnal rhythm or to highlight a spontaneous or planned event (a dance performance, a product in a competitive market setting or in a funeral procedure), light is perhaps one of the most important sources for staging architectural space.

'Light' can be unfolded in material, economical, energetic and many other terms. In a funeral, it is an orchestration of various elements that results in the staging of something that is but a vestige of what once was living, not the least through shadows, the relative absence of light expressed on a opaque surface. In this instance, the 'theatre' shadows cannot be understood without its corresponding light; in other words, it is impossible without the immediate comparison with a "non-shadow" area.

At night, lighted urban areas have to do personal and collective security and - by extension - gender politics. During the second world-war, England turned off its lights for the same reason, to provide defense and security. Yet, all of these obvious and not-so-obvious economies of light and shadow can also be unfolded on another scale, the scale of an urban setting partly defined by the surrounding buildings and the patterns of occupation.