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RECONFIGURING PUBLIC SPACE IN ISTANBUL

Istanbul has been going through major changes in the recent years. Throughout history, Istanbul's strategical and geopolitical condition has led the city to be occupied by various different empires creating a melting pot of cultures. The rich historical culture and the exotic natural beauty of the city has always attracted many visitors around the world. Today, with the growing economy the city has become one of biggest metropolises around the world. The city is constantly growing and changing with the booming construction industry and improving transportation. At the same time it is also going through urban renewal projects in the old parts of the town. As the city is growing the greenery and the public spaces that once identified the city has been vanishing.

The construction industry is mainly focused on building large scale mixed-use complexes that are introverted. They include all of the amenities within, therefore confining people. These islands are being erected side by side throughout the city without any public connections except highways and roads. The result is a disintegrated urban fabric that lacks connectivity. So what is public space in Istanbul? And how can the public spaces be more connected to these island mixed-use complexes so that the spaces are not that confined within? How can we still create these complexes but integrate them to public space more thorough? How can we increase the greenery in these public spaces integrating the landscape to the infrastructure?

These questions urge me to do a thesis on reconfiguring public spaces in Istanbul that integrate landscape and infrastructure. I want to start my thesis first by analyzing the city and urban planning. Parallely, I want to study Rem Koolhaas' ideas on hybrid programming to understand

these complexes and how I can start to integrate them to urban fabric without creating enclosed islands.

After I finish my research and analysis I want to pick a site and design an urban public park that would be integrated with the transportation system and possibly a mixed-use complex. The aim would be creating a continuous urban fabric rather than creating islands within.

Last semester at the AA, I was doing a project on the relationship of infrastructure and landscape so the thesis would be a continuation of these ideas on a larger urban scale. Other interests would be integrating motifs of Ottoman and Seljuk Empire and incorporate them into the design. These motifs could be further realized in parametric software. That is why, I would like to take the computational design studio in the second semester.

Recently the Istanbul Municipality has announced a site for Istanbul's Central Park project, a huge park project that is desperately needed in the city. Also recently there has been a lot of protests that arised when the government wanted to demolish a park in the middle of the city. So this subject is a very contemporary subject in Istanbul and the chosen site could be an opportunity for me to do a real project.