
Site and users generate new public spaces

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Abstract

What are really the qualities of an architectural space that contribute the most to become so welcoming to the users and the general public in order to claim such a title? Is there any sort of recipe for that? Can the strategy to achieve this quality be easily applied to all sorts of different public spaces, by all types of users, in all disparate kinds of sites? The paper will examine three different cases of realized works that present the qualities that enhance identity as a public and user friendly space, through a systemic architectural approach.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2008 the Kallinikeio Town Hall and the archaeological and byzantine museums of Athienou received the prize for the most public, friendly and accessible building by the UIA, WP AFA REGION II.

This acknowledgement, together with other possible consequences, triggered a series of self-questioning: What are really the qualities of an architectural space that contribute the most to become so welcoming to the users (and not only) in order to claim such a title? Is there any sort of recipe for that? What really makes a space convivial? Will that be friendly for all the group of people? How is a public space defined? How do you develop public spaces in a country where for many years they were banned? Can and shall be a public space accessible to everyone? Can the strategy to achieve this quality of public, friendly, accessible buildings be easily applied to all sorts of different public spaces?

As an attempt to answer these questions we have carefully investigated the features of public space within our own work that evoke at the same time material and immaterial qualities that a 'successful' public space confines. The first case engages with the idea of the movements inspired by its location: the plot is situated on the borders of the town of *Athienou*, a remote settlement along the 'green' line, which is in fact an unfriendly separating strip of land that divides the island in two parts. The second example is an interior space of the restaurant *Sushi la*, located in the centre of Nicosia in an unwelcoming building and focuses on the flows and the busy character of this vibrant part of the town that are reflected and interweaved in the design. The last case deals with a project of a park in the village *Psimolofou* where its dominant, central feature is an amphitheatre. The amphitheatre adapts the proposed network of the various movements and pauses of the park by its physical presence. The resulted 'components' of the amphitheatre are integrated into the human scale.

The three projects evidently resulted in three diverse and delicate proposals. However the three projects have adopted a similar approach in the production of public space. In our realised and ongoing projects we have approached the creation of public space as the main direction since the conception phase of the project. A restaurant, a park and a town hall are in their nature public spaces¹. Their main purpose is to accommodate people that can perform within a given spatial boundary various activities and enhance sociability. We have identified the most important ingredients in conceptualising and designing public spaces, which we will go in

¹ Even though there is a lot of debate amongst scholars regarding the private use of public spaces, such as a restaurant, we will consider such a space as public because of the possibilities it gives architects to create a common place for the people that contains all those characteristics that define a public space.

depth to explore the utilization of these ingredients for each particular case. Throughout the paper we will discuss the tactical process that we have utilize in order to highlight the importance of the site and the users in the making of public spaces.

In the second part of the paper we will define public spaces and directly investigate the projects in question within the structure of our proposed methodology.

In the third and final part of the paper we will draw some conclusions that have resulted by the analysis of our projects in attempting to answer the above questions and open up a dialogue for further research, since this is considered as an ever on-going process.

2. CASE STUDIES

2.1 Definition of Public Spaces

Through an analytical framework we have adopted a 'recipe' that we have exploited in our projects that have guided us in the making of public space. A series of literature reviews have guided us in the exploration of those qualities and definitions that a public space encompass. Public space is traced back to the Greek notion of agora as a function of: "*the place of citizenship, an open space where public affairs and legal disputes were conducted [...] a marketplace, a place of pleasurable jostling, where citizens' bodies, words, actions and produce were all literally on mutual display and where judgements, decisions and bargains were made*" (Hartley, 1992 p.29-30). In other words, public space is the place where all activities relate to civic life can be manifested in a common ground shared amongst citizens in terms of freedom and equality. The public space echoes stories of daily life and conviviality, or simply in Carr's (1992) words: "*Public space is the stage upon which the drama of communal life unfolds*" (p.3).

The square, the street, the walkways, and parks are the common types that represent classically the idea of public space. These spaces embody conditions that at the first glimpse appear to be sufficient to represent them: they are open, allowing sun and wind to penetrate through, they often have a Cartesian geometry, they accommodate the movement of people, they offer pauses for the citizens. Bordas (2011) argues that "*these vital functions ensure that archetypical public spaces are open, that they take shape at ground level, that they are universally accessible and that the ownership is unquestionably public*". However this view is quite redundant. Bordas (2011) continues to argue that it impossible to frame public spaces into specific typologies. Public spaces are subjective places loaded with political and market driving forces, and the same way a parliament does not evoke democracy, the square and the park is not necessarily a public space. We can thus conclude that the contemporary public place is urging to be freed from canonical typologies, specified forms or functions and remain open to accommodate in its boundaries (and beyond) the absolute essential: the users and their needs. To satisfy this need the variable constant in each case is the site.

Another reason that ascertains the nature of public space as an ambivalent space is the continuous and fragmented new functions that a public space acquires. Besides political connotations, such as place of conflict, place of freedom and free speech that traditionally public spaces bring forward, there is another concept of public life that is urgent to address. This is derived from people's desire for relaxation, to socially interact with one another, to be entertained or simply to have a good time (Banerjee, 2001). This genre of public life has resulted in new contrived settings in the public realm, mainly driven by our consumer culture and experience economy. Sociologist Oldenburg (1989) in his book *The great, Good Place*, has coined the term 'third places'² to address to those places that are recently so successful in drawing public such as cafes, pubs, beauty salons and the like. The rise of these places in the public sphere has raised a series of questions amongst scholars about the future of public spaces.

² Oldenburg refers to the home as the first place, and work or school as the second place.

“We worry these days that public space, indeed the public realm is shrinking” pronounced Banerjee (2001). The future of public spaces is a widely discussed issue as: *firstly*, population is increasing but the stock of public spaces is not; *secondly* as the popularity of Internet and cyberspace expands; *and* as public spaces become more commercialised in a globalised world. As social conditions are changing and we cannot avoid the new notions of public space, such as third places but definitely as architects we can reinvent notions of public space within the buildings we design. While the attention of the future of public spaces targets usually urban planners and local governments and relevant financial investors, we argue that a lot of these tensions could be resolved by raising the awareness of architects. What is our responsibility for design as public spaces diminish in the cities? How can we make public life better in a pluralistic society? Can architects begin to envision how public life can begin to invade their buildings? How do we design public spaces for raising the sense of belonging that is diminishing in the phase of a globalised world? Urbanists and architects should be engaged to represent those physical and social dynamics of public space fulfilling the crucial role of public space towards the formation of public culture.

2.2 Methodology

The physical and social dynamics of a public space are translated in our projects into two basic ingredients: site and users that blend in our architectural approach by thorough analysis, testing and experimentation. Site and Users, along with the architectural design and programme are the tools we use to address the four key qualities of a successful public space outlined by Madden et al. (2005). The first is *accessibility* that refers to the convenience of transport, such as proximity and connectivity but includes also aspects of a ‘readable’ access and walkability. The second important quality is *activities* which suggest the introduction of fun, special or indigenous activities, the third is *comfort and image* referring to aesthetic or historical matters but as well as to safety, cleanliness, or ‘green’ virtues of a place. Finally, *sociability* is a quality that outlines aspects of friendliness and cooperation along with a welcoming, diverse and interactive network. Besides a positive image that is engendered by an aesthetically beautiful architectural design, an important implication of these four qualities is the inclusion of User and site as factors for the development of a public project. All the three projects to be examined consider the site parameters such as location, accessibility, topography, natural movements, as predominant factors for the creation of not only architectural spaces but for the generation of user-friendly public spaces. In our work we investigate how the site is used as a guiding instrument to inspire the movement of the user and create architectural spaces that either reflect these movements (Case studies: Sushi la, Psimolofou) or reject these movements (Case study: Athienou-In this case the site provokes feelings of fear and segregation due to its position near the green line and generates a general detachment from the place. In this project we deal with the paradox that the site evokes, as a site that recalls unpleasant memories, and try to transcend the notion of segregation into integration by the production of public space).

The users become equally an important ingredient, and through a profound understanding of their nature, their role for the site and their intentions for the planned space, they become one the directive axis in the groundwork for the project, through early conception stages. The way that a space is going to be ‘inhabited’ by the users should express notions of public space and sociability. Furthermore, the questioning of how users can become dynamically engaged in space and socially interactive amongst themselves becomes a central issue for each project.

Site (movements, topography, location, history, surroundings) and Users are the triggering factors for the development of a public space. In each of our projects, we explore these two elements and then relate directly to the specific space and programmatic functions to generate an architectural proposal for the destined functions. Thereafter our architectural approach consists

of the evaluation of the two variables of site and users into a tactical preparation of integration in the programme and spatial design.

2.3 Case studies

2.3.1 Athienou

The first case is the above mentioned project: a result of an architectural competition to accommodate the town hall, the archaeological museum from the local, significant excavations and the byzantine icons' collection of the local monk Kallinikos. In parallel to the main permanent functions, it also hosts the archaeological expedition during summer season and an underground shelter in case of emergency. It is true that from the first day of the research for the project, the authors³ got seriously engaged with the study of the Athienou settlement, focussing on the idea of its movements and inspired by its location: the plot is situated on the borders of the town of Athienou, a remote settlement along the 'green' line, which is in fact an unfriendly separating strip of land that divides the island in two parts. It is in fact an unfriendly non-public space quite inaccessible!

The challenge of this project was a contradicting understanding of the public history amongst the different stakeholders. A few interesting moments took place during and after the realisation of the project that contradict one another, but all of them deal with the understanding of what a public friendly building can be.

The first incident took place during the announcement and the presentation of the results of the competition. A group of people from the settlement of Athienou, under the umbrella of a public organisation protested to the results of the competition, wanting to have a more conventional, 'Neoclassical Greek oriented' design, therefore a 'friendly building to its users'. This minority group of people defined a friendly public space as a building having features, materials and architectural style, familiar to them. Through a series of public presentations, the authors of the project have endeavoured to clarify the strategy adopted to create a friendly public building through reinterpretation of the identity and the main characteristics of the settlement and its people. Due to the opposition of this group of people and some more obstacles, it took ten years to realise the project, which raised many more discussions about the issue of being friendly or not.

A few years after its completion, the project was sent to the call for an international competition⁴ for the most friendly, accessible public building. It was finally awarded with the first price in this category by a group of specialists from different parts of the world. This international distinction, as well as series of other national ones were generally ignored, this time not by a minority group, but by the local, state authorities: they assigned some interventions to other architects for making the building as friendly as possible by their standards- or to violate the building as much as possible in relation to what the architects have created. These series of incidents provide the authors of this paper with a heavy load of questions of what are finally the ingredients of a convivial space. The answers may not be clear and definite, and may radically change depending on who is examining the question and for whom the 'friendliness' is offered.

Next, the elements that were considered as generators of the public, friendly identity of the building will be examined.

³ Yiorgos Hadjichristou, Skevi farazi, and Maria Hadjisoteriou at the stage of the competition.

⁴ The primarily phase was through a selection by the Cyprus Association of Architects and Civil Engineers



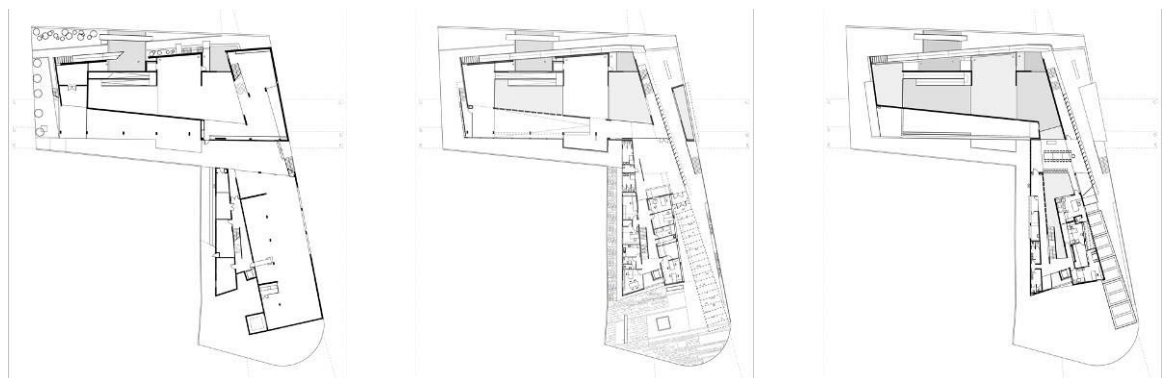
Fig. 1: Town hall and museums of Athienou. capturing the flows of the settlement.

Site:

The settlement's circulations and views penetrate and sculpt the building: The concept of the proposal derives from the labyrinthine structure of circulations of the traditional settlement of Athienou. The routes that define the settlement have various qualities that were examined and transferred into the organisation of the building: A main passage runs through the religious courtyard between the two churches, routes that offer unexpected and magic experiences embedded with the surprise element, directions that crisscross until they target to the magnificent views of the surrounding landscape and the far away mountain range, paths with the creative ability to sculpt the houses and the structures, walls that define and direct the flows but hide an abundance of urban voids/ courtyards.

A major response to the site was to integrate the building with the town. The building itself tends to continue the movements of the old and new streets and it is finally completely integrated with this network of movements. The exterior and the interior of the building are defined through a system of looped flows based on fluid routes through ramps and slanted surfaces. It eventually manages to become a unified entity with the town, making the users and the visitors feeling that are still strolling in Athienou while still being in the building.

Fig. 2: Town hall and museums of Athienou. Flows and voids



User:

A narrative dialogue between the user and the surroundings was established. A main slanted surface serves as the connection towards the traditional core of Athienou and at the same time creates the main access towards the entrance. Another important tool for establishing the dialogue is the recreation space for gazing towards the views of the mountains and the link between two neighbourhoods of the settlement. Other paths which follow existing streets run through the building to link the flows of people around and within the settlement, creating thus friendlier attitude to the citizens. It eventually manages to bring them closer, in fact inside the building in order to accompany them to the surrounding neighborhoods. Thus, the passer by has the chance to be in contact with the building and look into its activities, exhibits and interact with the people that use the interior spaces. The continuous redirection of the views in the small town is adopted in this project, enhancing the element of surprise. Each choice of circulation rewards the user with an abundance of different internal and external views that they reveal diverse spatial qualities. Ultimately the integration of the building to the settlement's structure enables it to respond not only conceptually but as well practically to its original programme as the town hall – 'the house of the citizens' of Athienou. The culmination of this 'democratic' approach is achieved by the privileged position and organisation of the main civic hall: been completely transparent, it enjoys the internal and the external views located in the 'heart' of the project, accessed both from outside and within the building.

Architectural approach

-Site, Users and programme in the Architectural approach

The programme is merged in our architectural approach combining the users and site functions. The organisation of the movement attains a different entity as it serves not only for the circulations and directions of the flows of people, but as well it is transformed into the functional, programmatic requirements: the entrance areas, the exhibition spaces, the municipality council's meeting room, congregation spaces etc. The formal and the informal functions blend together, resulting to the blurring boundaries of what is the programmatic requirement and what are its reinterpretation and the circulation routes. This resilient relationship offers the choice to the users to decide by themselves how to use the spaces and the building accordingly to their needs each time, in both its internal and external parts. Through the above concerns and decisions, a new site is generated within the specific programme. The presence of the users activates the conspicuous and the hidden qualities of the spaces, depending on their choice of how they decide to use them. While the building may be used as a core for a bigger event of the settlement with activities originating from its interior and sprawling to the various parts of Athienou, it may also accommodate the participants of the archaeological expeditions by offering them a shelter for contemporary living.

Creating the spatial aesthetics was also important for the users. The indirect penetration of the light recreates magic atmospheres, similar to the ones that the inhabitants of Athienou enjoy while strolling around their dense continuous urban fabric. The ambience of the spaces is enhanced by the materiality. The surfaces are rendered with greyish discreet textures animated as they are caressed by the touch of light, echoing the simplicity of the traditional materiality and craftsmanship.



Fig. 3: Blurring boundaries/ flows + functions

2.3.2 SUSHILA

The second example, smaller in scale but with a big impact in the urban level is a project from a private sector: the interior space of the Japanese-Asian fusion restaurant *Sushi la*. It is located in an unwelcoming building in the centre of Nicosia. The flows and the busy character of this vibrant part of the town are the prevailing features of its urban conditions. The area is replete with restaurants, bars, cafeterias, shops etc. Our biggest challenge in this project was to create a public space in the private sector. Seemingly the term of ‘privatised’ public space is an oxymoron, we argue that privately owned spaces are increasingly used by public therefore they should be created in such a way to encourage and promote social life and interaction, as well as the other qualities of a public space. This has been as well one our clients’ main program requirements: to understand the user, to create a playful environment and social interactions. Play is indeed a very important aspect-though largely neglected-of the people’s experience within a given space that we try to reinvent though the programme and architectural approach.

Site:

The unfriendly building reveals moments of friendliness. The interior design of the restaurant is accommodated in a bulky, in many ways unfriendly building with a scaring in scale huge atrium in the middle. The unwelcoming identity of the actual building pleasantly surprises the client of the restaurant with its conviviality and the scaling down to the human size spatial conditions, which respond and intimately interact with the corporeal and sensory qualities of the human being. The incorporation of the human scale is important for the user to escape the busy, lively and high congested city of Nicosia: It the homogenous environment of the commercial centre and its customary buildings without identity, *Sushi la* suggests to take a pause and identify in a unique and imaginative space.

Users:

An important part of the programme requisite *Sushi la*, address clients of a specific genre: it attracts a crowd of diverse ages, social status and interests for the common reason that these people seek a place with a strong character to socialize that consecutively enhances their own individuality. So the space becomes friendly for a specific group of people: Thus, the interior of the restaurant attains a public, friendly character for the specific group of people who can identify their likes with the atmosphere of the space. It may alienate other groups of people and

be extremely inaccessible for them if their needs or interests do not coincide with the specific ones in this project. This approach is culminated in both directions, depending on who the user is, in the more private areas of the resting rooms.

Architectural Approach:

One stroke follows a sinuous route to unfold the spaces: Its ribbon like surface following one stroke's movement organises the inside flows and the pauses, the various and diverse sitting spaces arranged in different heights- including reinterpretation of the Japanese kotatsu-, the serving and eating surfaces, the receptions areas, the music stand, the wardrobe for the coats etc. It starts and ends at the entrance, thus receiving like a riley game the flows of the people, accompanies them into the atmospheric environment, entertains and finally leads them back to the urban flow: the users never sensed that they left the urban convivial routes. The fact that all the functions and spatial organization is orchestrated by one flow, with the means of one surface also suggests our intentions of creating one common ground for all people. The single gesture though does not prohibit us in creating a playful environment with distinct variation of uses. At the same time, the white continuous surface that carves the space sets a kind of different spatial logic: the activities performed in the limits of the surface like eating and drinking or the food and drink preparation bars become a private 'segment' of the moment while the spaces in between become the ground for circulation and interaction between people. Adopting a central feature in the heart of the spatial organization has also been an aspect that enhanced the 'publicness' of the space. In the centre of the space we carefully positioned the two bars: one confines the food preparation, accommodating bar eating and the second the drinks preparation welcoming the clients to take a drink-pause. The drinks-bar encourages social interaction, inviting the client to leave their 'table' and take a drink at the bar, where contact with other clients is facilitated. These two central elements become a point of reference within the boundaries where unobstructed views between users are made possible, offering the users what they have been probing in their night out: to see and be seen.

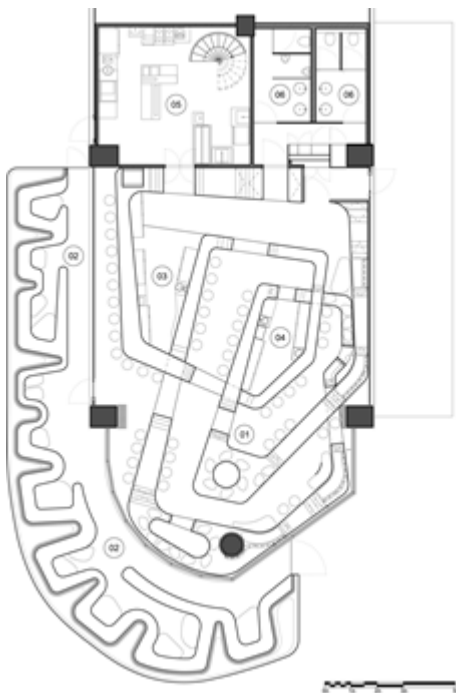


Fig. 4: Continuous flow

Site and users in the architectural approach

The movements in the city are interpreted in peoples' flow to generate fluid spaces: The pulsating vitality of the presence of the people is reflected in the generation of the spatial proposal. The space of the restaurant accommodates and extends the flows of the people of the lively neighbourhood, in a way that itself becomes a sequence of fluid spaces: one single element is animatedly treated in a unified gestured to form the needed programmatic requirements. A meticulous juxtaposition of different scales was important to merge the parameters of site and users in the architectural approach. The site that reflects the big scale of city centre of Nicosia is reinterpreted in this relatively small in dimensions space, urges its users, to feel as been completely integrated from the big scale of the town down to the small one of the interior space. The leap in scales passes through the intermediate scale of the bulky building itself, by introducing another level of intimacy between outdoor and indoor space and transferring the continuing internal fluidity. The absolute transparency between the indoor and the outdoor spaces generates once more a strong flux ambience in a bigger level, doubling the dialogue between the two entities. The outdoors presents people performing for, or in a way flirting with the internally placed people and vice versa, multiplying once more the intimacy, sensuality, fluidity of the spaces. The users keep constantly identifying themselves with the created milieu, enhancing further their sensing of a friendly public space. Once inside, the mirror backdrop of the restaurant multiplies the interior qualities regenerating endless flows and encounters as if magnifying the major urban characteristics of the area.



Fig. 5: Fluid spaces

-Creating a programme as part of the architectural approach

In order to intrigue our users in a playful mood we generate intimacy in the space. This dynamic gesture manages to maintain a constant, sensual perception of movement and transition, as a continuation of the urban flows, while it offers enclosures for smaller and bigger groups of people, all of them combined in an intimate relationship. This intensified proximity of the people provocatively generating a flirting attitude of the space, similar to the flirting mood of its customers.

Furthermore a prerequisite for a successful public space is the quality and comfort that the space provides. This is achieved by creating a sensual atmosphere: The intention of the fluidity tendency of the spaces is further enhanced by the materiality of the 'ribbon' like material, the acrylic surface that shines and reflects the people's presence either in movement or pause. The mesmerising and illusionary effect of the reflections is elevated even more during the night by the employment of the led light which renders even more the presence of the ribbon like surface, representing the magic night life of this vibrant urban part of Nicosia. The sensuality of the space reaches its zenith through the introduction of a false ceiling out of one continuous sinuous linear arrangement of a hanging fabric. Like a seducing veil manages to hide the upper conspicuous unsuccessful architectural elements, acts as an efficient acoustical element, while it contributes to the mystic, sensual ambience of the space. The fabric as a dominant architectural element and

material adds as well to the main characteristic of the external urban and the internal environment, its fluidity.

The surge for a sensual place extends to include the most private spaces of the restaurant: the toilets. These ultimately private spaces are also turned into provocative public atmosphere: Mirror and other reflecting surfaces combined with perforated surfaces on the roof multiply endlessly the presence of the users in an absolute flux and sensuality. Although the area is quite small, the intimacy even of a single person is once more, but much stronger, provocatively explored, while the sensed boundaries are dissolved and the tiny space is multiplied to infinity. The same way the user's presence becomes more intense by the multiple awareness of the self through the mirrored surfaces. Even this ultimate private space is transformed to a public quality space with tints of 'friendliness' for the specific group of people.

Music and food was also part of the program and a departure point for the concept and design: The beat of the for ever sounding music, meticulously selected by the owner of the restaurant and the fusion cuisine of Japanese and Asian tastes have been the given parameters in the very first stage of the design by the client. They are translated through the above mentioned design strategies into the fluidity and sensuality of the space for specifically addressing to a big group of young but already established people, reflecting in a way their social status.

3.3.3 PSIMOLOFOU

The last case study deals with a project of a park at the edge of the village *Psimolofou*. The village has a history traced back to the C12th AD, where we encounter various old houses constructed with local soil techniques, as well as a few historical monuments such as the village church. The village is home to about 2000 residents, though constantly expanding due to its proximity to the capital. It addresses to completely different groups of people, the residents of the village or the neighbouring settlements and the visitors to the village. The immediate related subgroup of potential users is the young ones that attend the adjacent primary school which inevitably predisposes the creation of a playful environment. The site becomes a strong starting point due to its natural beauty and the amazing views it offers, while the broader scale of the village urges us to rethink notions of 'locality'. Furthermore, due to it is cooler climate than the capital, the park is envisioned to accommodate visitors that want to escape the summer heat.

USERS

A park is the absolute public place. Conditions for all the users' needs should be presented: The ambition to incorporate all the possible subgroups of the village, (including pensioners, housewives, young families with infants, farmers, young people, handicapped people, joggers, spectacle seekers or pure nature lovers) shows the direction to a more proliferate typology of the offered spatial conditions: a moderate in scale intervention, a lively- fun like environment, a surprising network of a big variation of routes- gentle of steeper ones, spaces for diverse ways of activities and meeting places, the vegetation, the pauses and movements, the viewing and the been viewed, become the necessary constituent of architectural elements to achieve a friendly, public accessible space for disparate groups of people.

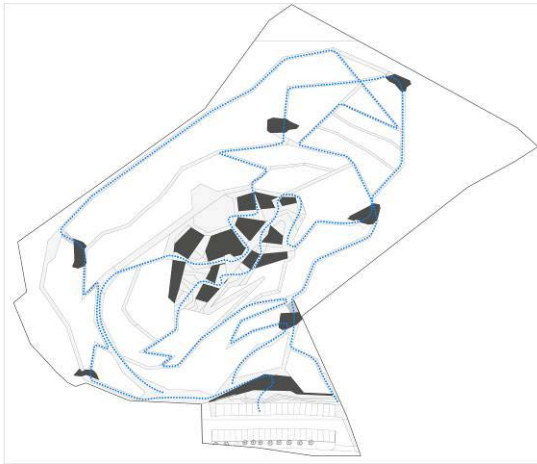


Fig. 6: Site integration / weaving flows

SITE

The site is found at the East edge of the village, in this way it offers fine views of the village on the north and west sides. On the south and east sides we are presented with splendid sights of perpetually unrolling meadows and valleys that vanish eventually inside a mountain. The site itself is beautifully and naturally composed of a particular wild morphology and biodiversity. The site is home to a big variety of trees, such as pine, almond and carob trees, bush vegetation and wild flowers and is fascinating in spring.. The land naturally steps up to create a hilly spot in the middle of the site having a level difference of about 10 meters from the site boundaries. The preservation of the site was an objective from the beginning as a strategy to maintain the locality of the place. Thus the approach has been minimal. The particular morphology of the site has guided us all the way through to the conception and design. The paths that we have created in the area follow strictly the existing morphological levels, limiting the need for soil excavation on one side, and comply with the natural paths that the site offers us.

Architectural approach

-Site, Users and programme in the Architectural approach

The hilly, magnificent landscape of the actual site represents part of the general, fantastically undulating landscape of the surrounding areas. The wish for an exploitation of the site by the council of the village came along with some programmatic requirements. Its dominant, central feature is expected to be an amphitheatre of a capacity of four to five hundreds people. The amphitheatre is positioned in the centre of the site, turning it into the central component of the park. Networks of organic paths lead the way to the central feature of the site where accessibility is possible and evident from various points along the multiple paths. While strolling alongside the path we have created various intended pauses, where the user can meditate on nature's beauty or contemplate flowers and the proposed gardens of succulent and cactus plants.

The design challenge was to integrate the amphitheatre with the landscape, minimizing its impact on the site and going as far as to make it grow from the ground. Instead of organising a 'massive' object due to the required capacity, the amphitheatre itself adapts the scale and the identity of the proposed network of the various movements and pauses of the park in its physical presence. The amphitheatre is consisting of five individual 'wings' that have as a main function the seating space during a spectacle. To avoid further construction in the site, each 'wing'

accommodates beneath it, the diversity of functions required by the programme (toilets, dressing rooms, cafeteria, and mechanical rooms). The resulted ‘components’ of the amphitheatre are integrated into the human scale approach and can be used by the everyday users of the park as all other smaller elements such as the kiosks, sitting areas, paths etc. The scattered parts of the amphitheatre have no ends as it emerges from the landscape, ready to be used by the people. They sprawl in the landscape in a way that the flows of people run through it, above it and inside it: the people use the amphitheatre throughout the whole day in diverse and various ways, alone or in small and big groups. Of course occasionally people watch the spectacles shown at the amphitheatre, and then they recognise its originally intended use.



Fig. 7: Merging with the landscape

The same network of flows and movements at the extent of the site are also evident in the spaces underneath the amphitheatre seating. The element of surprise, play, multiple routes, pausing, and viewing are also integrated in the space created underneath the amphitheatre, where the planned space acts like a piazza in the park.

The ‘artificial’ components that make the park (the paths, the kiosks and the amphitheatre) are confronted and composed from the natural movements of the site and the morphology of the grounds in particular. The choice of materials were also decided so that they relate to the site: the paths are made out of a layer of compressed soil, while the amphitheatre and kiosks are to be constructed from a colour pigment concrete that recounts the reddish-brownish tones of the landscape. The visitor at all times comes across with components scaled down to the human scale, whether this is the amphitheatre, the entrance or the kiosks; in this way these ‘artificial’ elements become more friendly and identifiable for the user.



Fig. 8: Site, Users and programme in the Architectural approach

3. CONCLUSION

We have explored in this paper our architectural approach in producing public spaces with three case studies that are quite different in regards to their programmatic requirements. The literature regarding public spaces has been serving as a constant reference for our projects. Additionally,

besides the prescribed qualities that a public space should possess we are highlighting the importance of site and users in accordance with the programme to subsequently engender the architectural proposition. Even though there is homogeneity in the approach of every project, heterogeneity of spatial aesthetics has proven to be very important in regenerating public spaces, as it articulates notions of locality and enhances their place identity. Heterogeneity and individuality of the projects have arisen because of constant references to the concerned site and users.

Site and users become not only dependent variables for the moulding of architectural spaces but they also develop an interdependent relationship between themselves. Site and users are essential parameters aside of each other but only with the integration of the user in the site we are able to interpret this relationship in a distinct architectural approach. We have examined the nature of the user as a way to involve and transform him into an active participant in the moulding of space. We want the user to be dynamically engaged in a given space and for this reason we give him the option to acquire the freedom and make choices. In his spatial movements he can decide upon his routes, his pauses, on different sitting positions, on which parts of the landscape to contemplate upon. We also give the user tools to have fun in an agreeable environment.

A public space is not just a piece of large open space where you recreate. Instead a successful public space is one where activities are invented so that people are drawn in and appropriate themselves with specific features of the programme. In this sense crafting an ad-hoc programme related to the site and users gives incentives to exploit the space, creates an appreciation towards the space, and sequentially public space becomes a part of the community. Referring through the architectural approach to features of the locality of the site (whether it maybe circulation and flows-*Sushi la* and *Athienou*- respecting the morphology of the ground-*Psimolofou*-, responding to historical and political connotations that the site evokes-*Athienou*-) increases the sense of belonging for the place.

Finally we can conclude from our hands-on related projects that public space becomes independent of specific forms or typologies, likewise it is not restricted to a specific kind or scale. Public space is a continuous evolving field of research, reflecting a ground that needs ad-hoc proposals to ever changing economic, market and political situations. The same way the nature of public space is indefinite and evolving, our approach is an on-going process, where some questions may be answered while some others may be raised, allows a continuity of investigation and avoidance of predetermined decisions. Rather it facilitates further experimentation and indulges the authors of each project with the satisfaction of unexpected, innovative results.

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