Memory and Reminiscence: traces in Fener

Karolos Michailidis
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PROLOGUE

We live in a world of images and stimuli that have trained and drilled our own eyes that have played with our anxieties to produce dreams and fantasies hidden in the unconscious of our soul. These images extracted from our memory, “musee imaginaire” as described by Hertzberger which act subconsciously, defining our thoughts, desires and needs to obtain today in front of our eyes meaning and importance and become the medium of reading and scanning our world. Images that reveal truths which we were previously unable to grasp.
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THEORETICAL BACKGROUND
“The city, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.”

Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities
memory: remembrance - recollection - mind - reminiscence. The power or process of reproducing or recalling what has been learned and retained especially through associative mechanisms.
Material Traces

Setting the trace through its tangible, material status, we observe the physical footprints and follow the way in which nature fuelled the thought of the primitive man to encode its principles, in shapes and spatial arrangements.
Theoretical Background
Immaterial Traces

The intangible footprint of a human act, or even human thought and memory in a place, can make this space a vessel of experiences, biomes, a space of collective memory and a narrator of the history of human societies.
Immaterial Traces

Theoretical Background
Research Question

How can you collect the traces of memory in Fener, one of Istanbul’s historical neighbourhoods/mahale, in order to form a commentary and have an impact on the social life of the inhabitants in this instance of time but also cultivate a new ‘memory’ for the future?
Research Question

How can these memories re-enforce the existence and prominence of the Greek population in Fener through a public building that acts both as a symbol but also as a reminder?
Methodology

Lynch’s Five Elements

Guy Debord, Guide Psychogeographique de Paris

Site Interviews

Archives and Documents and Online Sources
One of the main proposals of this individual project is that ‘memory (autobiographical and collective, each integral to the other) exists as the foundation upon which meaning is built’. The city resident collects in his house traces of memories and experiences, giving the residential character of an alternating accumulation. His needs have created and given shape to the shell (the building, the settlement, the city), but in a dynamic and not in a static and rigid way. Even if residents are gone, seasons and years pass, the shell stays there to remind of the people that once "lived" in it. Memory is the thread that links the present and the lived-now to the past and what will we do in the future.
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The Soul Of The City

“When you love a city and have explored it frequently on foot, your body, not to mention your soul, gets to know the streets so well after a number of years that in a fit of melancholy, perhaps stirred by a light snow falling ever so sorrowfully, you’ll discover your legs carrying you of their own accord toward one of your favorite promontories.”

— Orhan Pamuk, My Name is Red
A City Within a City

It is located within the district of Fatih, on the western side of the Golden Horn. Balat, the neighborhood adjacent to Fener, is as old as Istanbul’s history itself. The area was first known as Fanarion after the most important lighthouse in the Golden Horn.
Surrounded by Byzantine city walls from the 5th century AD to the west, the Golden Horn to the north, Fener and Balat districts are located on the historic peninsula of Istanbul. Once a focal point of the social and cultural lives of Greeks, Armenians and Jews, the Fener and Balat districts are presently inhabited by a mostly Muslim population that immigrated from other cities and rural areas. Today, Fener and Balat districts look like dilapidated areas and face the danger of total ruin. Some buildings are already in ruins and about 20% of the construction is in poor condition. Because of the location of the Greek Patriarchate and the Orthodox Church, Fener was dominantly a Greek neighbourhood since the Byzantine period. In the 17th century, Fener became the residence of upper classes and the bourgeoisie.

(http://www.fenerbalat.org/content.php?ct=District%20History)
FENER/ ΦΑΝΑΠΙ

The area’s name is a Turkish transliteration of the original Greek φανάριον
(a lighting lantern, a streetlight, a light post with a light lantern - from φανός: Light-
torch, φάρος: beacon, lighthouse)

(Classical: phanárion, modern: fanári, “lantern”).

It was so called for a column topped with a lantern which stood there in the
Byzantine period - used as a public light or marine and/or other purpose locator.

SYMBOL: knowledge, education, orientation
There are two ways to access Fener: one is by a highway that rings the Golden Horn and provides access along the waterfront. The street has been widened since the 1980s into a 4 lane road, but it does little to alleviate traffic congestion, and must often separate to accommodate historic buildings. An under utilized, but perhaps more indigenous resource is that of the Golden Horn itself. The Iskelesi, or Ferry Station, is a staple in many of these waterfront neighborhoods and could provide an alternate highway of sorts, providing access to the neighborhood.

Much of Fener, like the rest of Istanbul, is experienced from the vantage point of the water. Since its clean up in the 1980s, the water provides a valuable recreation amenity.
PHANAR SCHOOL

DEMOCRACY

The Greek population of Turkey declined from 119,822 persons in 1927, to about 70,000 in 1976. In Istanbul alone, the Greek population decreased from 65,108 to 49,058 between 1955 and 1960. The 2008 figures released by the Turkish Foreign Ministry place the current number of Turkish citizens of Greek descent at 3,000–4,000; however, according to Human Rights Watch, the Greek population in Turkey was estimated at 2,500 in 2006.

Inspirations

The Architect when designing the school he imagined a huge eagle. That is why the school has its prominent position and overlooks the neighborhood as a symbol and a sign of knowledge.

Site Research & Analysis

The large dome at the top of the building is used as an observatory for astronomy classes and has a large antique telescope.

The total cost of the building was 17,210 Ottoman gold pounds, an enormous sum for that period.

Ecumenical Patriarchate
of Constantinople

Founder: Apostle Andrew

Independence: 330 AD from the Metropolis of Heraclea

Recognition: Orthodox

Primate: Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I

Headquarters: Istanbul

Adherents: ~3,800,000 in Greece, ~1,500,000 in diaspora

Bishops: 125 (73 acting, 52 titular)

Website: http://www.ec-patr.org/

ArchiTeCTure

The exterior of the Patriarchal Basilica of St. George located in the Fener district of Istanbul. The facade dates from the mid-19th century and shows a neoclassical influence.
After the original wooden structure suffered from a fire, the larger at its place an iron frame was preferred to concrete reinforcement due to the weak ground conditions. The construction plans were prepared by Hovsep Azevour, an Armenian of Istanbul origin.

An international competition was conducted to produce the prefabricated parts of the church, won by an Austrian company, R. Ph. Waagner. The prefabricated parts, weighing 500 tons, were produced in Vienna in 1893-1896 and transported to Istanbul by ship through the Danube and the Black Sea.
"A man who was fearful of being beaten, lynched or cut into pieces would imply and try to prove that he was both a Turk and a Muslim. 'Pull it out and let us see,' they would reply. The poor man would pull off his trousers and show his 'Muslimness' and 'Turkishness'. And what was the proof? That he had been circumcised. If the man was circumcised, he was saved. If not, he was doomed. Indeed, having lied, he could not be saved from a beating. For one of those aggressive young men would draw his knife and circumcise him in the middle of the street and amid the chaos. A difference of two or three centimeters does not justify such a commotion. That night, many men shouting and screaming were Islamized forcefully by the cruel knife. Among those circumcised there was also a priest."
The Istanbul pogrom, also known as the Istanbul riots or September events was organized mob attacks directed primarily at Istanbul’s Greek minority on 6-7 September 1955. These events diminished the Greek population of Fener leading today to a neighbourhood mainly inhabited by other poor minorities who ignore the existence and history of Greeks who once lived there. However the Greek presence is still really strong, through the architecture of the remaining buildings, the monumental Phanar Greek Orthodox College and the Ecumenical Patriarchy. Thus, the traces that have remained in the neighbourhood have to be collected and the link between past and future needs to be re-enforced.
Balat was declared as a “historical urban site” according to 1973 and 1974 national laws describing historic protection process. It was listed as a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1990. Therefore legal authorities had to be included in the urban transformation process. The main impulse for an urban transformation in the 1990’s was the special Rehabilitation Programme for Fener and Balat (IBB, 1998).
PAST
PRESENT
FUTURE
The map shows the urban voids in the studied area and how these relate to the building block. A lot of them are enclosed inside a block, and many voids are also parts of a block, where a building has been demolished or decayed.
The three sections cut through the three iconic and symbolic buildings of Fener, related to the Greeks: the Greek school, the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Orthodox Church of St. Stephen.

A starting point for the urban proposal is the identification of the crossroads as a point of intersection and as the link between the public and private domain. The map shows the different crossroads that one can find in the neighborhood and a proposal will be made on how each one can become again active by transforming them and applying to all of them a strategy that will evolve them into functioning public domains.
URBAN INVESTIGATION

The crossroad, and the street in general has played a very important role in trade and social interaction for both Greece and Turkey, since historically Greece had been a crossroad of knowledge, history and trade to Anatolia. Today the streetscape has lost its liveliness and importance. In addition, the project will manifestate the Greek presence in Fener, as a monument, as a symbol and as a material presence of memory.

The project can have a strong impact on the wider context by introducing a way to organize and structure the city and act as points of orientation – not only due to the physical presence of the interventions but also because of their important social, cultural, economic, political and symbolic role creating and re-structuring the identity of the place.
Locals/ Residents

Locals move mainly internally in the neighbourhood using the main axis roots. During the day Fener becomes activated by all the actions and functions of the nearby areas and the high street on the waterside. During the day movements of locals and tourists often get condensed in nodes of commercial, occupational, and touristic interest.

Akçin Sk. becomes an active street that cuts through the toography and brings closer the highest point of the hill to the level of the water and the new developed park. Acting as a link, it fills the voids and aids the neighbourhood to act as a whole and not as fragments. The movement of local people is fed by the neighbourhood itself and is diffused mainly transversely but without excluding longitudinal paths.
International Visitors

International visitors and tourists mainly move based on the attractions of the area, similar to scholars, and take main roots, but also are diffused in the neighbourhood, around main poles of markets and historical interests. Fundamental are the 2 main roots that move along the waterside and link the neighbourhood to the rest of Fatih.

Movement grows in both axis and the neighbourhood is penetrated through several 'entrances' from the main street. A linear root leads visitors to the top of the hill and towards the center of the historical peninsula. Along that street visitors can find some uses of leisure, and the reconstruction of vertical roads create stimulus and activate the area.

Scholars

Scholars circulation occurs mainly during daytime and has 3 main attractor points: the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and its church St. George, the Bulgarian iron church 'St. Stephen' and the Phanar Greek Orthodox College. All three have a rich heritage and numerous books and sources that are a legacy and of great importance for the existence of Greeks in Istanbul but also about the history of Phanar.
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Textures of Fener

Collecting the textures or traces from a neighbourhood one can understand many things by studying the grains and the patterns. In a way the surface carries and entails the memories of the people and the city.

Materials

The common construction material, used in the area is brick of which four different types can be noticed in area. Apart from bricks, these resident buildings are also valuable that first industrial cast iron were used as girders and arch joists. Finally a material of timber was used for flooring and the lightweight partition walls; wooden struts are set up and between these pillars wooden laths are nailed on which plasters are covered; this system is called Bağdadi.
IDENTITY-MEMORY ABSTRACTION
INTERSECTION BETWEEN PAST & PRESENT
CONCEPT SECTION THROUGH EXISTING FABRIC
Using a set of old pictures, as a physical existence of memory, and analysing them I came to a translation of memories into physical spaces, forms, and compositions: a set of fragments and layers. By defining this analysis as my personal way of mapping memory I distinguished different levels of complexities and interpretations of this technique. Another major aspect occurring from the analysis is the reading of memory as a network, which together with the fragments and surfaces compose the composition of each one of the buildings, and the project as a whole.
The set of selected fragments from the decomposed pictures will be the starting point and the foundation on which the project will be based on. The four fragments will be used as an architectural mechanism or tool.
The city is regarded as the place where the human species’ collective memory is recorded. It is a place full of memories layered upon each other and presently discernible through their correlation with a specific instance. The city is imbued with traces left by people. Aldo Rossi says that a city is a collective memory of its people and, like memory, it is associated with objects and places. The city is the locus of collective memory. For Rossi the meaning of time continuity is also essential: “Memory is what resists time”. “Through senses memory is created, and through memory comes experience”. According to Aristotle’s view, memory is nothing but the process of revocation of the past, using as a medium the senses. It is recorded, as the ability of empirical perception through the senses of a stimulus. More broadly, one could argue, that memory is the experiential relationship of a person with his environment.
The ‘Archive’ is only a notion, an impression associated with a word and for which we have no concept. The word derives from the ancient Greek word ‘arkhe’ and the Latin word ‘archivum’ (or ‘archium’). ‘Arkhe’ means the ‘site of beginning’ containing two principles: in its ontological sense it is the site of ‘commencement’ (“where things commence”), while in nomological sense it is the site of ‘commandment’ (“where men and gods command”).

Therefore it refers of both the natural and artificial orders of the world.

An archives is an accumulation of historical records, or the physical place they are located. Archives contain primary source documents that have accumulated over the course of an individual or organization’s lifetime, and are kept to show the function of that person or organization.
‘The experience and memory of humankind are laid down in layers in the physical environment, concretely and graphically. Every new part exploits ancient forms, materials and ways of making. Building is, at base, a sign of hope, a sign of society’s belief in future, a gesture forward in time.


‘Fener could have a manuscript museum, the memory of the neighbourhood put together in one place.’
Green areas & Important buildings

The map shows the triangulation between the 3 important buildings related to the Greek presence in Fener. Green areas are evenly distributed, mainly along the waterfront.

Urban Void

A highlight of the ‘empty’ uninhabited space. This can be streets, parks, and any other void that is not built. The highlighted area shows the density and relationship between what is built and the space that is left around it still available.
Allotment Sizes
A study and comparison of the different urban blocks and their distribution. It is interesting to see how the smaller blocks are concentrated together into smaller clusters.

Street Junctions
A study of the number of streets and their direction and orientation. The map shows the junctions where there are at least three directions. This shows the flow and movement in the neighborhood and the ways that it is penetrated by the streets and roads.
The project is highly informed and interacting with the wide social context of Istanbul. The choice of using four empty lots and dividing a building into four parts proposes a way of dealing with the public building and the role of the person as an entity in the public domain. Instead of dealing with the project as an object, it is replaced by the processes the interventions propose and the way they interact with the public space.
There are 4 main groups that will constitute the users of the proposed design. These users are linked with the program of the building and also to the impact it will have in the wider neighborhood and the people of Fener.
Comparing the two adjacent crossroads it is clear that the studied one needs to be re-defined and re-composed.

Defining the Core

By defining the core of the streets it can create a strong force that people can gather and create a center of interest.
Filling the Voids
The urban voids need to be filled like a puzzle in order to activate the crossroad again.

Rotating the Axis
The rotation of the crossroad can lead to interesting relationships between the movement of the street and the adjacent buildings.
urban solid + crossroad + empty lots = urban void
SITE COMPOSITION_ EXPLODED AXONOMETRIC
CROSSROAD SEMIOLOGY

The crossroad as a typology is chosen as the ultimate relationship between public and private and my aim is to introduce a new way of circulating and moving between the streets and through/under/above the buildings. In my proposal I see the crossroad as a hub, both linking the 4 fragments but also penetrating them. The (re) use of the empty lots acts towards a regeneration and reinvention of the streets and neighbourhoods. I believe that crossroads can become centres of interest all around the city and my project acts as a starting point, which could extend, like tentacles, or scattered fragments.
Overview, vantage point

Individual intimate rooms

Connection between in and out

Overview, vantage point
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Adolf Loos writes for his childhood:

"Here is the table, a piece of furniture completely crazy and dirty, a table that used to close using an astonishing mechanism. And yet it was our table, our table! And there is also the office desk with a stain that my sister Ermina made, when she was very young, by spilling the inkwell. These are the portraits of my parents! Such terrible frames! However, they were marriage gifts by the employees of my father. And an embroidered slipper where you could hang your watch, childhood work of my sister Irma. Every piece of furniture, everything, every object tells a story, the story of the family. The apartment was never finished, it was growing with us and we were growing with it."
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The city resident collects in his house traces of memories and experiences, giving the residential character of an alternating accumulation. His needs have created and given shape to the shell (the building, the settlement, the city), but in a dynamic and not in a static and rigid way. Even if people are lost, seasons and years pass, the shell stays there to remind the people that once "lived" in it.
-1 KEY PLAN

1. Staircase Leading to museum entrance (external)
2. Museum secondary entrance
3. Reception/Tickets
4. Museum Shop
5. Call center
6. Loading Bay for Archive
7. Main Archive Entrance
8. Sanitary Facilities
9. Preservation and Curation Lab
10. Temporary Storage
11. Main Entrance
12. Downward Ramps / Public Realm
13. Exhibition space along ramps
14. Balcony overlooking the ramps
15. Crossing to the auditorium
16. Temporary Archive
17. WC
18. Foyer
19. Control Room
20. Amphitheater seats
21. Library Circulation and Individual Lockers

LEVEL - 1 1:100
GROUND FLOOR KEY PLAN

1. Projection Space
2. Entrance exhibition space with cabinets
3. Circulation (Stairs and elevator)
4. Access to Tower / Echo chamber
5. Cleansing / Purifying water
6. Light Tunnel
7. Secondary Library Entrance
8. Main access ramp leading to underground level entrance
9. Lobby and Security
10. Reception
11. Circulation
12. Glass floor overlooking level -1
13. Ramp leading to Loading bay (Level -1 of Archive)

LEVEL GF 1:100
1. Individual Gallery Space
2. Circulation
3. Temporary exhibition space
4. Ascending Experiential staircase
5. Library external piazza
6. Main library entrance
7. Reception
8. Main public reading hall
   (stepped and arranged in different levels)
9. Individual reading space
10. Bookshelves & Main repository zone of Library
11. Archive Study Area
12. Public Toilets
13. Archive Computer & Research Lab
+2 FLOOR KEY PLAN

1. Second exhibition space
2. Small Performance space
3. Circulation
4. Cabinets of curiosities and objects
5. Bookshelves & Main repository zone of Library
6. Library circulation
7. Low bookshelves / History section
8. Study space overlooking the main reading hall
9. Access to external piazza overlooking the street
10. Sorting & Labelling
11. Toilets
12. Archivist Desk
13. Circulation
14. Information screens
15. Letters and Manuscripts Permanent Collection
16. Connecting Bridge
+3 FLOOR KEY PLAN

1. Main exhibition / Object and Traces
2. Circulation
3. Screening rooms
4. Depository Cabinets of curiosities and objects
5. Individual cubicles / Thinking Zone
6. Balcony of senses
7. Computers
8. Bookshelves & Main repository zone of Library
9. Circulation
10. Individual Reading spaces
11. Observation Balcony
12. Blackboards for notes
13. External access leading to secondary staircase
14. Photocopy machines
15. Administration office & small kitchen
16. Circulation
17. Secondary Permanent Archive Collection (double height space)
1. Bridge connection with rooftop of Museum
2. Communal discussion area
3. Light tunnel
4. Memory Repository
5. Librarian Office
6. Meeting Rooms
7. Bookshelves & Main repository zone of Library
8. Circulation
9. CD & DVD
10. Computer desks
11. WC
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REFLECTIONS

The traces, expressing ideas in space, not only last for their material existence, but mainly because of the power of the meaning they contain. It is ideas that withstand and transferred from generation to generation. Each building stands, expresses and represents something. Its form, from the total shape to the smallest detail, is linked to the content and its functioning: the Life which encapsulates within it. Can we, for example, imagine an ashell without the living organism that lives, grows and stays protected inside it? The one cannot exist without the other. The shell is shaped to contain life. And the expression of this life (content) in space is the shell (form).

Even an empty shell that we see on a beach brings us unconsciously in mind the mollusc that once lived and developed with it. Similar in architecture, the space is manifested through the people who inhabit and experience it. Their needs have created and given shape to the shell (the building, the settlement, the city), in a dynamic way. Even if people are lost, seasons and years pass, the shell stays there to remind the people that once "lived" there.