Personal information:

Name: Jan Maarten Mulder
Student nr: 4075927

Studio: Vertical Cities Asia
Theme: ‘Everyone Ages’
Teachers: Mitesh Dixit (architecture)
Henco Bekkering (Urbanism till P2)
Ari Bergsma (Building technology)
Peter van Swieten (external examiner)

Location: South Korea, Yongsan
Studio: First semester: Urban master plan (competition)
Second semester: Architectonic design

Aspect 1: The relationship between research and design

South Korea has gone through a period of rapid urbanization from 1960 to 1990, and currently 82% of the population lives in cities. This increase in urbanization has been accompanied by success like the 13th largest economy and a strong technology based industry. However, it also created social problems; having one of the highest suicide rates in OECD, high rates of alcoholism, plastic surgery and addiction to computer games and pornography. Furthermore the elderly population in Korea is growing rapidly, with an estimated percentage - in 2050 - of 38% against 52% of the working class. Embracing these social-economic problems, I designed –at an urban level- a community that will allow for convenient distribution of shops, residences, amenities and prioritized walkability. This will allow for spaces where young and old get the occasion to integrate with each other and into their society.

Aspect 2: The relationship between the theme of the studio and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)

The theme of the studio is “everyone ages”, my master plan hinges on the premise that not just “everyone ages” but rather, everything ages; I addressed the ageing issue in a holistic way, understanding the needs of elderly people in Korea and catering to this need by the provisioning of easy access to program and the creation of more opportunities for interaction all within the broader framework of the fact that cities are constantly ageing and growing too.

Aspect 3: The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework.

An important method of the studio was the wide spread of gathering data. Therefore the data became a fruitful base for my design decisions, in both the urban level as in architectural point of view. The data was been transformed in diagrams and collages. The design has been explored by making maps, models - on different scales-, diagrams and drawings.

Aspect 4: The relationship between the project and the wider social context

Experiencing Seoul I found that street life is extremely important and particularly dynamic, which generates an ambiance that is typical for Korea. Due to new developments this street life, and the public space in general, are replaced by ‘locked’ open spaces, residual space of high-rise buildings. Those areas are only accessible for the people who live there and as a result the city of soul is segregated. My urban design is concerned with both the need for density due to the urbanization and growing economic and the need for public
space. By allowing areas in the community to be dens and high, but also creating an important low-rise pedestrian strip that can generate the community life that is so characteristic for this city and its culture. A predominant element in this urban design is the integration of the high-rise development, by transforming the ‘locked’ space into a public space.

“There is a saying in Korea:
If you sleep for 3 hours a day,
you will pass the exam.
Sleep for 4 hours, you will fail.”
McKinsey & Company, Korea 2020

The location of my architectural design is precisely where the pedestrian strip is penetrating the high-rise area. This not only allows the design to mediate - in a volumetric way - between the low-rise building blocks and high-rise towers, but it also continues and reunites the two different kinds of public spaces. My design embodies a new roofed public space for community activities and will accommodate the place for a ‘Community Learning Centre’. In this way the design forms a new approach to experiencing street life. Moreover, is the design focuses on the broader social problems of Korea by combining space for study, leisure – like sports and karaoke - tutoring and creativity into one design.