P4 Reflection

A reflection on my graduation process and project (3d Villages) for the Explorelab Studio at the Faculty of Architecture at the TU Delft.

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At the beginning of my graduation process I set myself the ambitious goal of defining the elements that make up our living environments, refitting these into a vertically organized structure, and developing a computational design approach that would allow designers to implement this in any location. Now, a year later, I am ready to propose the beginnings of a system that will allow suburban areas to (re)develop vertically as well as horizontally, which is about one and a little bit of the three goals that I set myself at the start.

As should be obvious, one of the mayor things I learned was the importance of creating a clear problem definition that accounts not only for the individual capabilities, but also for constrictions stemming from limited time and resources. The broad, buzzword loaded, problem statement from my P1 and P2 caused difficulties in defining my research questions resulting in the need for a P2 re-take, and ultimately the decision to carry the graduation project over the summer.

Defining your own project is one of the core elements of the Explorelab Graduation Studio, and I can conclude that the experience of having to do this, and the difficulties that it initially presented me with, has been a valuable learning experience.

The research method that I employed mirrored the broad approach that characterized the first half of my graduation. Rather than performing a single, in depth, study on a limited topic, I performed many small investigations on a number of topics which I knitted together in a design system. As such, the design is essentially the conclusion of the research.

This method of utilizing many small investigations rather than one large investigation (although the argument can be made that the small investigations together are one large investigation) has had both advantages and disadvantages.

The mayor disadvantage of doing many small investigations was twofold. Because of the size of the individual investigations it was sometimes difficult, or even impossible, to create a satisfying level of depth forcing a number of assumptions into the final design. The large number of investigations also made it difficult to keep focus on the larger narrative, both for myself during the process of researching, but also when conveying this narrative to others.

Looking back I am convinced that the goal that I had set (reorganizing suburbs from horizontal to vertical) merited such a diversified approach. The problems that I encountered are those problems that make it difficult to broach this type of topic effectively and convincingly, I would like to think that I at least succeeded in the latter.

The machinations which cause cities to grow, and the systems that are threatened by this growth are slow and vast, making the problems that I address difficult to grasp, or sometimes to view as problems at all.

In this regard my project is more of a thought experiment (be it a detailed one) than a concrete proposal for a building that is to be built now. Although, if the time and means were available, I believe that it would be possible to carry the ideas to full fruition.

Within a broad discourse, I believe that my project contributes towards the discussion revolving around the development of the future city, and I enjoy the fact that it therefore rises above being a simple design exercise. I hope to be able to take the ideas that I developed during the graduation process and mature them in my career after graduation.