

REFLECTION REPORT

CHICAGO
COMPLEX PROJECTS

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4.3.2016

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Aspect 1 The relationship between research and design

Architecture is getting more complex as the society evolves, it relates to various aspects of the society. In the studio 'complex projects', we got an approach which not only strengthen the complexity of the existing urban condition, but also frame the local condition in a global scale and extend to the dimension of time, looking into the past and react to the future.

To be simple, the research in the studio followed a line from larger scales (regional, global) down to a specific spot the students choose, and not limited within the current facts, but also take history and future developments into consideration. Following the line, the students get a clear and complete overview of the situation and problems. From all the materials at hand, the problem and trend emerge, your design can benefit from the research at this point.

For instance, the first step of the graduation project are collective research books with themes of "living-manufacturing", "education-manufacturing", and "Industry", concerned with the fact that Pilsen has a tradition of manufacturing for a long time. With these books, we look at various aspects of the urban condition in US cities and especially Chicago and gain holistic knowledge of the city. Then after the excursion to the site and we made another collective book "Pilsen Atlas", it gave us an understanding of the local culture and urban fabric, in the 4 chapters of "Infrastructure, Typology, Program, and Public" of the book, we look at Pilsen in depth and form a mental map of the neighborhood.

During the research course, we collect information, analyze and conclude, we know a lot and write a lot. But when we began to design, I think the story is turning to another track. We have to choose, choose from the sea of research, and tell a story articulated by a specific part of the research, and just leave out most information we gain from the research. We benefit from the research, but we can't say the design derives from the research.

Aspect 2

The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject/ case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)

The shrinking of industrial region in the city limit is happening on a worldwide scale, the studio focuses on Pilsen of Chicago, an industry corridor located in inner city of Chicago, leading research and design about the local development in the future.

At the beginning of the studio, We investigated (1) working living relationships, (2) the link between education and manufacturing and (3) future industrial perspectives. The themes focused on the Industrial Corridors in the region of Chicago and sometimes even to a global frame.

In our master plan design phase, we propose a bottom-up urban strategy to redevelop the industrial corridor, to make use of local potentials, together with architectural interventions, firstly break through the border between residence and industry, and then each hotspots will develop more to become bigger clusters with higher density. On the other side, the river and green also grow, integrated with the clusters organically.

In this context, we each design a building in the first phase, which should be capable to become a 'central place' in the future, and bring more developments. In my own condition, I choose to design a new library as a hub for people, providing them platforms to meet, to perform, to create, to learn. And every time I take architectural choices, I try to keep myself in the frame, to be important in the context, to connects the green, to break the border directly, to be accessible, to be transparent, and to be communicative. By creating an important place locally, I hope I make a strong connection to bridge the two sides and become a center.

Aspect 3

The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework

The methodical line approach of the studio is much about research on different scales, national, regional, and specific spot; in different times, the history, the present and the future; from different perspectives, sociological, economical, physical. During my own approach, I also tried to apply the methodical to my own approach. But I think the most import thing is always you own story, if you don't keep a story in mind, sometimes it's easy to get lost into the sea of information and waste a lot of time. But from the method of the studio, I learn how to gather useful information and support my own story.

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

Typology

The typology of library is experiencing changes, the library is far more than a place where people read books, it's becoming more and more multi-functional and digital. During the design phase of my project, I take references of new libraries all over the world including the ones in the US, make a quite challenging scheme which provides more space for people than books. I think it's the trend public libraries will follow. And beyond a place for neighborhood, the library have potentials for other peoples, for example, I introduce the co-working space into the library, which can bring new chances for the locals.

Technology and flexibility

By designing quite generic structure and facades, to some extent, my building is quite flexible, I learn from this studio that architects should think at a time dimension, because everything is changing, the peoples, the technologies and the urban contexts. In 21st century, more architectural typologies have to be redefined, the architects have to be more aware about that. So trying to make use of existing technology to response possible changes is always an important issue in Architecture.