

P4 Reflection

BERLIN'S KITCHENLAB

In what ways can a culinary university building connect with its immediate and broader surroundings?

COMPLEX PROJECTS

Bodies & Building Berlin

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INTRODUCTION

The Berlin's Kitchenlab bridges the gap between highly specialised culinary education and the community. As a school that acts like a social catalyst for its surroundings. The building is located in Otto Park in Alt Moabit, an upcoming area, surrounded by food venues at the end of a public axis. The building consists of a central street with a public program surrounded by other specialised programs, resulting in a building that is easily accessible by the public while still tailored towards the program's specific needs, like the distribution of food and support functions. All functions are situated on the façade making the building a frame that displays all contents. This makes the culinary university move past a traditional cooking school and become valuable for its immediate and broader surroundings.

ASPECT 1

The relationship between the research and design aspect

The graduation studio is split into two phases a research phase and a design phase. During the research, I focused on how the building could interact with its immediate and broader surroundings. This created a conceptual framework focused on visibility, adaptability and interaction.

These concepts helped me in the beginning to create a building that can become more than just a school, a social catalyst, a central place where people can interact, learn, meet and get inspired. This research initially had the research question: How can a culinary institute educate the public about food, health and sustainability? However, as the studio is focused on the building I tried to specify this a bit more and changed the question to: In what ways can a culinary university building connect with its immediate and broader surroundings?

The building needed to have a highly specialised program that can change with future needs whilst being accessible and visible towards its surroundings. These dilemmas lead to modular construction and a public-raised internal street. This made it possible to have a supporting function hidden while the other program was visible from the outside and inside. But the internal street served another important purpose, there needed to be a transition between the public and more private programs. Inspired by the works of Aldo van Eyck and Herman Hertzberger, the building needs to have an in-between space and create a learning landscape. The learning landscape becomes a place with multifunctional learning spaces where people can interact and work together. This led to the creation of a central street where public programs and study spaces are mixed to blur the territorial claims within the building. This acts as an in-between space between the general and highly specialised programs.

ASPECT 2

The relationship between your graduation topic and studio topic aspect

This year Complex Projects design studio is called Bodies & Building Berlin and focuses on nine typologies within Berlin. The research is conducted through the lens of the human body in this building. As schools can have important social impacts they require inviting public space with high ceilings and sufficient daylight whilst the highly specialised labs and cooking facilities require installations and specific space. This balance between the human body and the building needs forms the challenge of creating a future-proof educational building.

The internal street as the main design element tries to merge these two worlds and bridges the gap between the human needs and the building's needs. Al whilst trying to create something bigger than a standalone education building and connect it to its surroundings and Berlin as a whole.

ASPECT 3

Research method and approach chosen by the student in relation to the graduation studio aspect

The studio has a very structured design approach that divides the research into three topics: Program, Client and Site. References to interdisciplinary research and research by design are the most important aspects of these three topics. These topics helped to get a grip on the design as otherwise everything is possible.

Next to this, all the buildings are complex, hence the name complex projects, it's important to always approach the building on two different scales. The general essence of the building and the details. As the building is too complex to completely draw and design everything you have to something jump scales and abstract certain things. This is quite new to me as I normally like to engineer everything within the project and even though I'm happy with the result can I say that this is something that I struggled with the most. I normally viewed the project as one big model. If you change one thing it has to change everywhere even though this is unrealistic due to the scale. One thing that I discovered is that it's better to set up everything and then redefine it than the other way around. However, even though this is one of the challenging aspects of the studio this also makes it fun. As it helps to develop your designing skills on a more conceptual level.

ASPECT 4

Relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific relevance aspect

Until now some education buildings have been influenced by the idea that a building can be something more than just a place to learn and have real social impacts. Other architects like Herman Hertzberger and Aldo van Eyck tried to do this many times. Only in practice, most education buildings have to be designed with a minimal budget and therefore these qualities are often lost. Also, most culinary universities don't focus on their connection with the surroundings while this trend of opening up kitchens and connecting with its surroundings is something that has been happening in restaurants for a while now. Personally, I believe that this can also be the case for culinary universities. This hasn't been done and therefore the projects can be an experiment of how this could be implemented if the building has the needs of a culinary university with its highly specialised spaces whilst still trying to connect with its surroundings. Apart from the building aspects, I think that it's very important that we reimagine parts of our food system as the climate impacts it currently has are not sustainable. Therefore a centre for food innovation can positively influence this urgent problem of climate change.

ASPECT 5

Ethical issues and dilemmas you may have encountered during graduation

The biggest ethical issue of the project comes from the group's ambitions, as an economy group we wanted to sustainably develop Berlin whilst minimizing gentrification. This is in one way a contradiction as the best thing you can do to not gentrify an area and impact the environment is to build nothing. However, I think I tackled this by making a building that is beneficial for the community and is constructed out of mostly natural materials that can be reused or demounted if needed. Therefore the existing community around the plot can benefit from the building while the environmental impact stays to a minimum. Apart from that the building can also have a bigger impact on sustainability as people get inspired to eat and cook more sustainably.