

"The fate of an epoch that has eaten the tree of knowledge is that it must ... recognise that general views of life and the universe can never be the products of increasing empirical knowledge, and that the highest ideals, which move us most forcefully, are always formed only in the struggle with other ideals which are just as sacred to others as ours are to us." (Max Weber, 1949)<sup>1</sup>

### PROJECT:

Master Plan of a new Satellite City of Hanoi - Hoa Lac (Msc3)
Master plan of Vietnam National University campus (Msc3/4)
Design of an educational facility - VNU Postgraduate Design Hub (Msc4)

# **INTRO**

In one years time during my thesis I have gone through the process of designing from Urban scale (city MP) to neighbourhood scale (campus MP) to an architectural scale (VNU Design Hub).

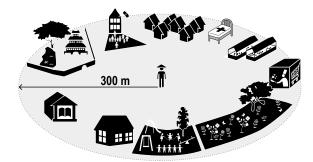
While it has been an incredibly intense and full year, in retrospect, I do not feel disadvantaged by having only a semester to focus on the actual project - the building, because it allowed me to followed through with the same approach to design throughout all scales of this process - namely the clustering force within the city, the neighbourhood and the building.

In my P5 reflection I will refer to two research papers that I have written for my thesis - The Position Paper that was a product of the Research Methods course AR3A160 (explaining my approach to design) and the actual research relevant for the project - Architectural Education in Space and Time. A Tradition of Change.

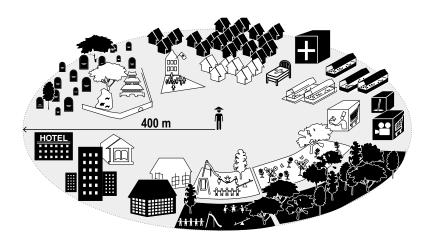
<sup>1</sup> Max Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy," in Methodology of the Social Sciences, ed. Edward A. Shils et al. (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1949), 57.



THE IDEAL CLUSTER



Program within 300 m radius: health clinic, market, retail, playground, flower garden, daycare, primary school, playground, pagoda, community center, library.



Additional program within 500 m radius: hospital, park, secondary school, office, cemetery, hotel

Based on the standards of the Ministry of Construction of Vietnam

#### REFLECTION

When a decision to build a new city or a new building is made, there is always an underlying economic or social agenda, mostly both. Every year The Economist releases a chart of 'World's Most Livable Cities 20XX', that probably include both social and economic considerations. But what does 'livable' really mean?

While the making of this chart may include complex formulas, there are underlying 'rules' of 'livability' that give meaning to us as architects in spatial terms and that many of contemporary writers have written about, starting from Clarence Perry's Neighbourhood schemes, to Jane Jacobs 'Economy of Cities' and Richard Florida's 'Creative Class'. Overall, they all talk about the diversity within physical size of a neighbourhood that enables walkability and the clustering force that enables economic growth.

In my Position Paper I refer to the previously mentioned ideas and state that on all scales of design they are beneficial and can be explored:

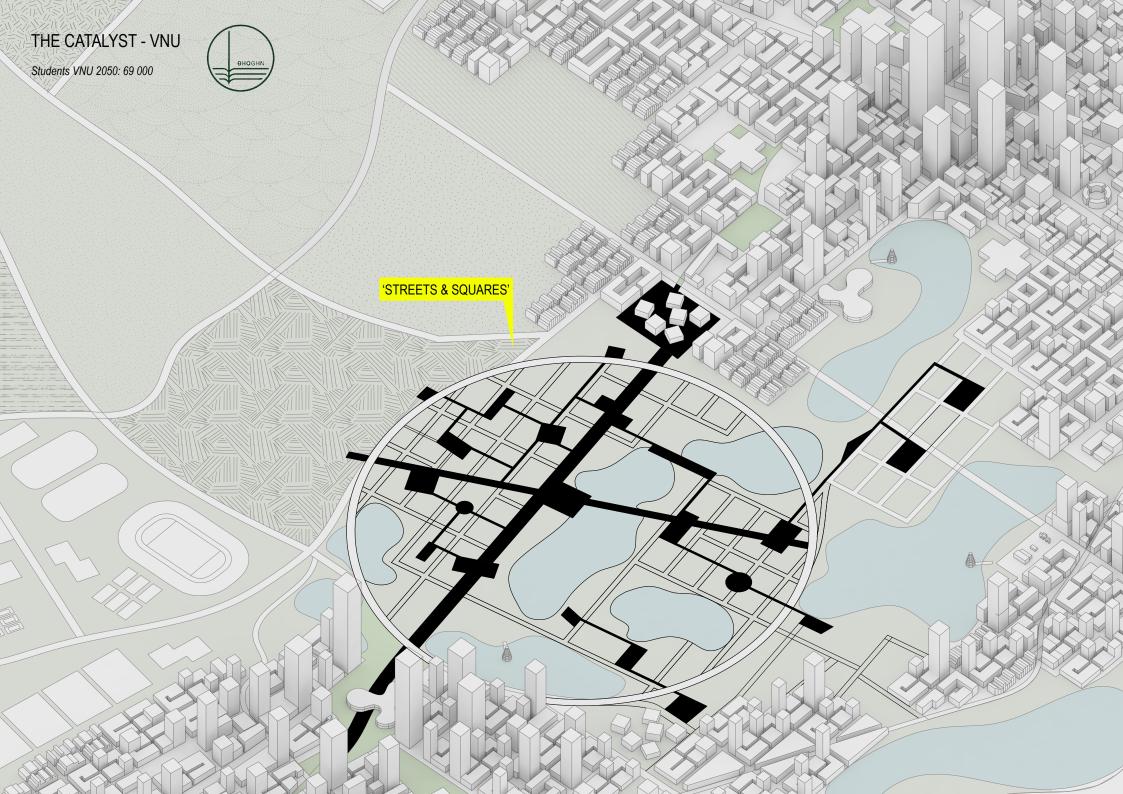
On the city scale - we designed the city of Hoa Lac using neighbourhood 'stamps' or clusters that were within 400m walkability radius and contained all the necessary functions needed - from healthcare to leisure.

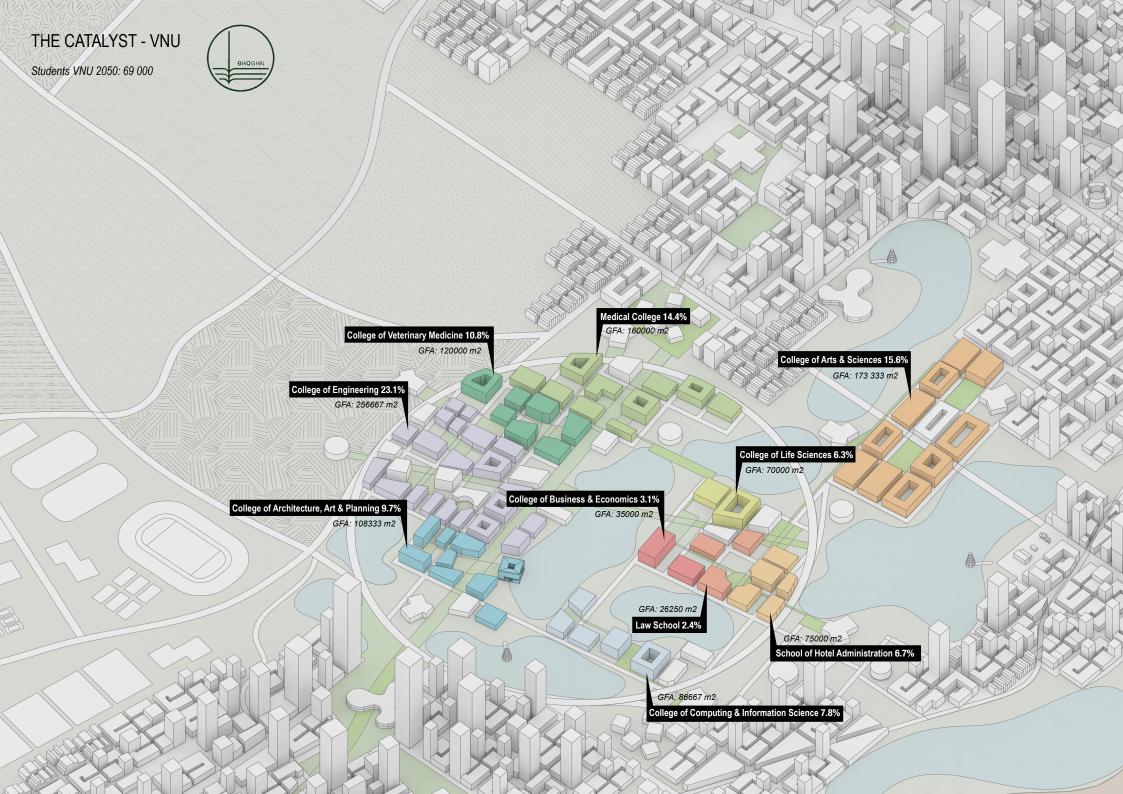
On campus scale - the different faculties are clustered around 'squares' and connected by pedestrian 'streets'. This way there is a clear structure to the campus and also direct connections from faculty to faculty. Furthermore, my research on education concluded the importance of universities being closely related and open to the urban fabric, therefore the whole campus is designed as a very compact unity, and is surrounded by the city. This way there is an opportunity for the academic world to interact with the professional world, and is imposed just through the physical proximity.

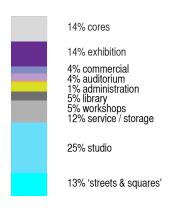
# On the building scale -

To sum up, my research on education concludes that the importance of interdisciplinary approach, and sort of a 'proto-practice' in education, especially architectural education, is growing. The paper lists advantages of continuous, networked learning spaces that are shared with community and industry, maximised informal learning spaces with blurred boundaries and diversity in program. These findings are reactions to the changing role of our profession and the uncertainty of where its heading towards, and the needs of the new NET generation of learners.

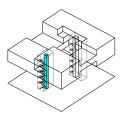




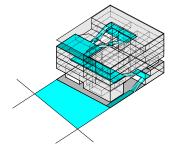


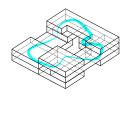


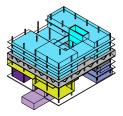
## Program clustering

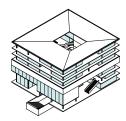














Layers: structure, operable glazed walls, louvers

Consequently, the main conceptual idea that is translated into a physical form for the VNU Design Hub is clustering of program (part of which is shared with the community) and implementation of different types of circulation.

The main circulation route goes throughout the whole building and is a continuation of one of the 'streets and squares' of the campus. Vietnamese social space lies within the street culture and this route directly and and also poetically impersonates this idea. This is a continuous walkable public route that visits all the public functions that are clustered on the first few levels of the building and eventually leads to the three-level studio space ring on the top floors of the building. It also connects some of the outdoor learning spaces or the 'squares'.

There is also an elevator on the ground floor that goes only directly to the studio levels. Within the studio levels more horizontal circulation is allowed through multiple sets of stairs going up and down and creating a networked, continuous space. Another elevator in the rare core of the building allows for disabled access on all levels.

Materialisation of the project directly responds to the climate conditions and local building techniques of Vietnam.

It is an in-situ cast concrete two way slab and beam structure. With infills of operable glazed walls and shading systems, and a blurred inside/outside notion, it becomes a very porous building, allowing for stack effect to take place for a better natural ventilation.

Materials such as different finish concrete, terrazzo and timber are used for both interior and exterior, as these are locally available and work well with the climate.

While there is a more complex conceptual idea behind the project that comes from the research, the building itself relatively is not complex and exploits the local construction methods and responds to the climate considerations, thus creating diverse yet simple project.

Through clustering a diversity of program on all the different scales and allowing for accessibility, I believe I have explored the potential of 'livability' in its both social and consequently economic aspects.

In my opinion, this chosen method of approaching design and planning has helped to structure the design process, and set some rules that make this process more tangible.

