

8.1 REFLECTION

The chosen studio VCA: Korea 2012 is divided in two parts; the Vertical Cities Asia competition and the graduation studio. For the competition a masterplan is made for 100.000 people in the center of Seoul, Korea. In the second part of the studio an area is chosen to develop further, in my case an urban area of roughly 300 by 600 meters. For this area an urban strategy is developed and one building is chosen to design in detail. At the end a design is made from scale 1:10.000 to 1:5.

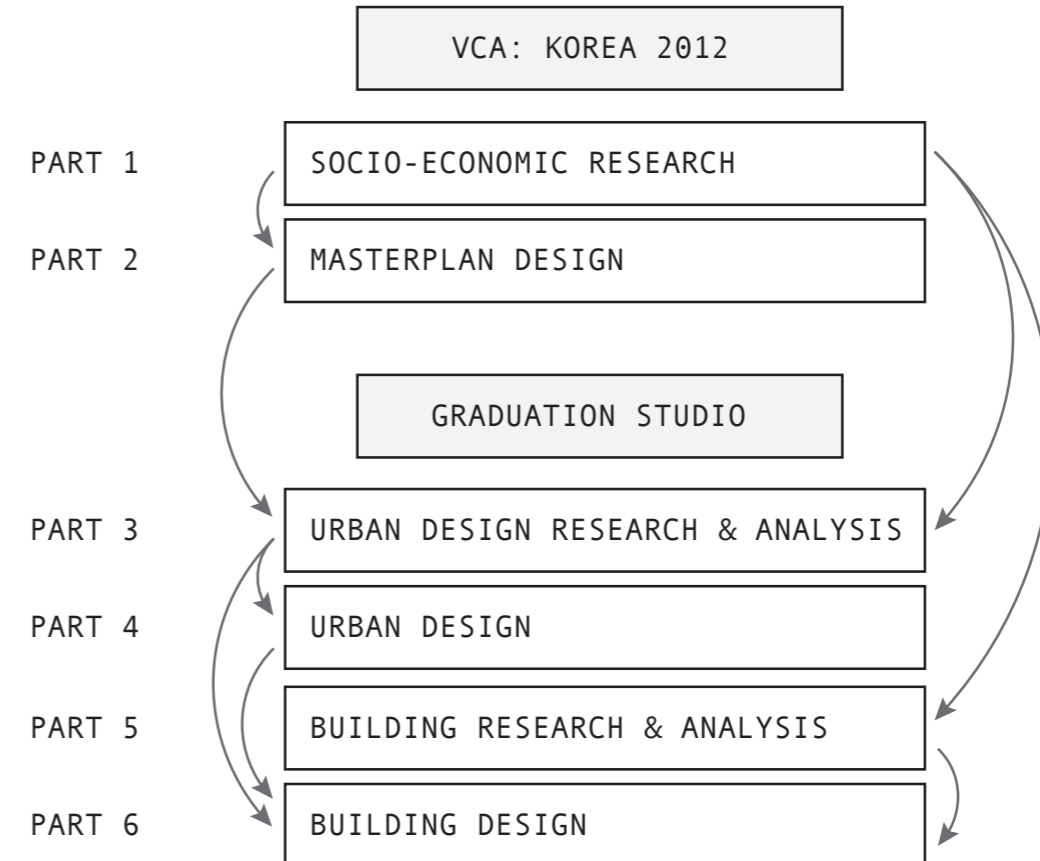


Diagram showing studio structure and adjacent relationships

Choice of method

For every step made in the design process research has been done. I started with a general socio-economic research to get familiar with Korea and its population. In subsequent fieldtrip, knowledge is gained about Seoul and the site. On the basis of these data information, extensive analysis took place to formulate an argument for the masterplan design. The argument was the start for the masterplan design. This general method of collection of information, extensive analysis, formulating the argument and design was repeated for both the urban design as the architecture design. Of course this was not a fluent process, but one of going back and forth.

Argument

Seoul has transformed super-fast. In 30 years it has gone from a medium sized city of low-rise building to a metropolis with many contrasts. Low-rise/high rise, young/old, Korean/International and so on. In addition to this, my building is placed on the border of a former military base that symbolizes a contrast, that of war and freedom. This military base has been occupied by military troops of several countries. The existing masterplan ignores this important history of Korea and the Korean people. By perforating new artworks into the new urban fabric, that are inspired by this history, we will create a remembrance of what happened here in the past but also allow the area to get a new destination. These perforations form together a route of artwork around the former military base. The building is a starting point for this route; it gives extra information on this matter and has indoor exhibition space to contribute to the artwork along this route.

Seoul primarily knows two forms of public space; streets and parks. In the city the street is used for many different functions; markets, meetings, gardens, etc. Everything is focused on the street, the western idea of front and back gardens is unknown in Korea. This knowledge is used to focus on the street in the urban design. The streets are strongly defined, but wide enough to allow for public interaction. Parks and mountains in Korea are considered as very important and used to exercise and spent holidays. By choosing an area next to the park, an interesting contrast between urban spaces appears that asks for strategic positioning of building shapes that both define streets but also gradually disappear the park in the urban context, something that is requested by the masterplan. This contrast between public spaces continues into my building. The roof of the building shape continues the park, but at the same time it defines the streets at a lower level.

At a neighborhood level, the building is a place to come together and reunite. Due to the rapid transformation the difference in Korean culture between generations has never been greater. In addition to this, the internationalization of the world will bring more and

more foreigners to settle in South Korea. Yongsan, as a neighborhood with the highest percentage of foreigners throughout Korea (also caused by the history of the place as a military base), will have an enormous attractive force on foreigners. Because South Korea is highly homogenous and not used to foreigners, this may cause tensions within the neighborhood and its inhabitants. To bring all of these different cultures and populations closer to each other, a structure is chosen that exits out of a circuit of spaces. Because visitors have to move from one space to another to reach their destination, they are confronted with other visitors and their occupations. The free choice of route will arouse the curiosity of the visitor to fully discover the building and its program

Despite of the non-compromising grid of the building, all rooms in the building are unique in size, light and atmosphere. This does not mean that the rooms are only suitable for one function. The placement of sliding and openable window panels and flexible elements in the ceiling make it possible for visitors to decide how they occupy the space.