

**ZOURNATZIDOU SOFIA**

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United Nations Environmental Council

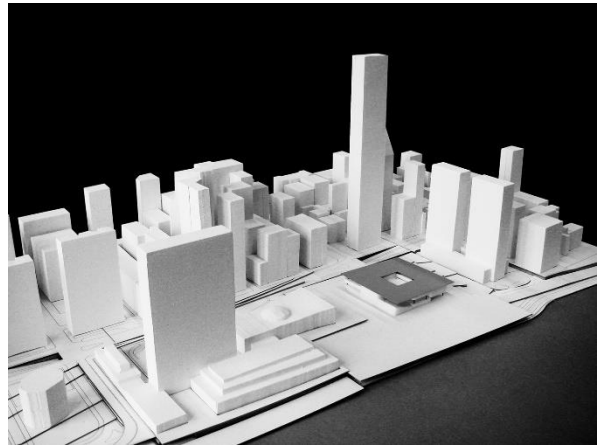
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Designing a building and producing a high quality architecture is a process which consists of a large part of analysis and research considering the conditions in which the building has to function, how it responds to the environment where it is built and what the building should demonstrate, express and experience as an architectural image but also as "a vessel for life; a receptacle that shelters and allows one to experience the realities of a life-time" (1), like Aris Konstantinidis used to say. The relationship between research and design, between theory and action, should be taken under consideration throughout all stages of composition.

The United Nations Environmental Council (UNEC) will be the sixth UN Council and will deal with all the global issues concerning sustainability, searching at the same time all the political, economical and technological information that can be connected with sustainability development. It will be a central organization that consists of four entities: collect, produce, propagate and exchange information on sustainability worldwide.

These four entities included in the design as well as its global importance make us realize its icon status worldwide. Its existence and appearance should persuade people that sustainable design and behavior towards the environment can improve our quality of life.

Architecture is for people, buildings are designed for people, that is why I wanted to design a building that could be accessible for public and that could reveal an icon image but at the same time would welcome people to experience it. From the beginning I intended to design a low rise building, reducing the energy consumption for the vertical circulation to minimum and giving the opportunity to visitors to have an overall view of the building and its functions.



The project is of course not an isolated punctual intervention on the River bank of Manhattan. Prior to the proposal of an architectural building, a master plan for Manhattan Midtown East was to be developed, consolidating the area and integrating the existing UN Headquarters, at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive, East Hudson River Side.

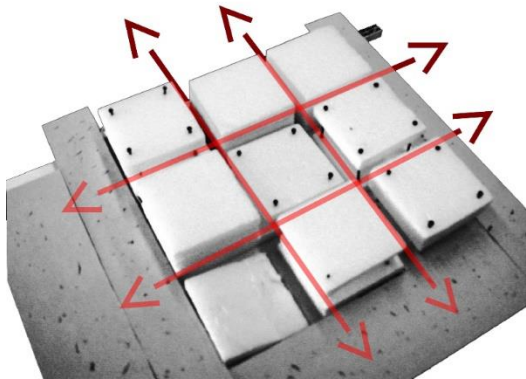
Before designing a masterplan for the UN area it was necessary to analyze the built environment and the open space along the East River Bank. A typological and morphological analysis was executed to establish the way the highway forms a boundary between city and water. A careful review was given not only to the physical form of the urban settlement and its

density, but also to aspects like land use, ownership, building typologies and especially to patterns of movement and accessibility. By making schematic (simplified) sectional drawings, a quick analysis was done concerning the built and the green environment and the different morphology existing in the area.

However, in order to make urban design, we analyzed Manhattan on a larger scale as well. Unfortunately we didn't have the chance to visit the area which would have been very helpful for this stage of the research, instead we tried to explore it by means of virtual tools i.e. Google earth street views, a relatively new and very interesting way of recreating streets from a pedestrian point of view. The software offered a fairly accurate visual impression of the area, however there was mainly perception to static images which couldn't transfer the overall view and atmosphere of the location.

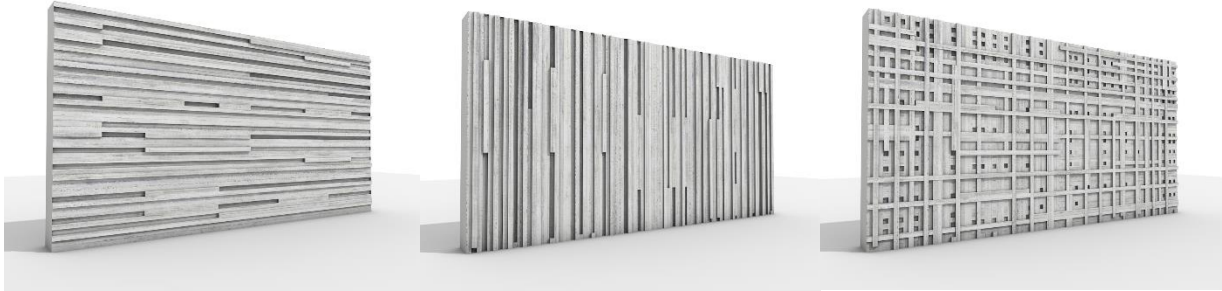
For the design of the building for the UNEC, the building's program, with exact number of square meters for each function was already defined and presented in a very detailed way. The building would host users of many different types and interests: employees, researchers, visiting public, delegates, business men, so the design, the appearance and the functionality of it should satisfy the needs of all them.

Having many programmatic affinities, the existing UN building was taken as an important reference to analyze spatial structure and relations between the different areas required. Schemes of traffic flow and organigrams were used to map these relations and form a better understanding on how the building operates.



I envision the building to be accessible to the public from the small plaza which we have created at the masterplan so as to enhance the circulation and the use of this part of the site. Circulation is used to structure the relation of the building and the immediate surroundings, and simultaneously to organize the interior space. By this way four circulation axes are created, which define also the nine different blocks of the same building rectangular building.

In this design process, implementing sustainable building solutions is an important aspect. In my opinion, the phenomenon of sustainability has a specific relation to architecture. On the one hand, sustainability can be communicated to the public with clear signs that a lot of people immediately link to the word sustainability. Integration of sustainability in a building is also a matter of letting people experience it, for instance by materialization and spatial sequence. The visitors can experience, touch the material of the building and understand its functional characteristics.



## References

(1) Aris Konstantinidis, *Projects and buildings*, Agra publications, 1981, pp.261

(2) *Materialisation And Design Development (Reader)*, Delft: TU Delft, 2012.