

The theme of the graduation lab

This project aims to take advantage of the leftover space in the city and create a new type of public space in the high-density low rise residential area. It contains three parts: firstly, renovating the existing infrastructure---the funicular on the site, which is an important feature of Valparaiso. However, as the development of other modern transportation, the funiculars have been gradually abandoned in recent years. To reserve this unique icon, it is essential to apply a new function and social role to it. This project combined funicular with a community center and create different activities along the funicular track. Secondly, renovating four abandon housings and creating several different projects, which are supposed to be "bookshop" ," sharing kitchen" ," day care center" , and" bakery " to meet the need of locals. Together with the design of the vertical parks, this site will become a community center with its own characteristics.

This project can be explained in different scales. In terms of the city scale, it is a new type of vertical park combined with novel infrastructure, dwelling, collective space, and community center. This project, based on the transforming of the funicular is also an urban strategy which can apply to other parts of the city to solve the problem of public space shortage on the hill. In terms of the community, it substitutes the role of the funicular station in the past, provides series of gathering points for the neighbors. And creates some "sharing space" to supply the shortage of kitchen, dining room and study room in domestic space functionally. In terms of people, this community center becomes an important transitional space in

between the working place and domestic space. It also amplifies the variation of activities in residents' resting time and fills the vacancy of individual's daily routine. In this transitional space, people do not need to squeeze themselves into crowded, stuck into the traffic jam, or cook in their own small kitchen. They are able to enjoy the larger sharing space with their neighbors, where they can cook, party, barbecue, have a cozy breakfast with families, and reading while waiting for the funicular.

This project focuses on the interaction and transforming qualities between city and people, public and private, stillness and dynamic. For example, the existing stairs on the site create a fantastic landscape sequence, the rising slope, different scales of passage. Together with the facade of dwelling create a series of interaction between individual and city space. However, as the lacking of facilities and proper design of landscape, the residents can hardly set up the emotional relationship with their living environment. Hence, these interventions in my project aim to visualize the special value of the existing elements on the site.

Methodology

In the first phase, my research about Valparaiso focuses on these bottlenecks which are able to mirror the most aspects of the city. The methodology I choose depends on my research interest of the city. Due to the expanding of the city and the intervening of the transportation system, individual's mental picture of the exterior physical has been reshaped. They are motivated to structuring and identifying the

city space in their range of daily routine, and unable to draw the image of other parts of the city by ether language or image. Transportation network, street scale, ground pavement, monument etc, every element in the city will promote or block the interaction between people and city. In order to present ambiguity, complexity and other characteristics of the relation between people and city space, I introduce mental mapping as a novel and hybrid research methodology for examining the spatial perceptions of local citizens. The mental mapping contains two research parts: large quantity sketch of the city and reflection of the city. The first one documents the existing events and phenomenon in physical space, while the reflection writing captures the fleeting feeling in the specific moment. The mental map is synthesis which successfully collects quantity information in different fields into one drawing board. What is more, the mental map is open to edit, with the in-depth investigation, the researcher is able to delete or add new information to it. To sum up, in this phase, I use mind mapping to visualize different kinds of information about the city and interpret the city in different scales.

In the next phase, my tools for design is drawing which includes sketches, isometric drawing, explosion view, perspective section and etc. These different types drawing assist me to think about the presentation and representation of the project from different perspectives. During the site analysis, I draw a series of perspectives to imitate the view sequence of people moving through the site. These ten sketches not only define the view control points in the site but also represent the interaction between housing, exterior environment, and people ' s activity. Then in the

conceptual design phase, I mapped different elements on the site, such as furniture, door, collective space, and etc. These mappings aim to represent the tension between different elements in several levels. What' s more, because this project consists of several interventions in different points of the site, the isometric drawing and explosion view to emphasize the dynamic relationships within these volumes. Last but not least, to clearly present how people use the space and the integrity of structure and space, I adopt 1/50 perspective section to show these four buildings.

The relationship between research and design

The main mission of research phase is analyzing the all sort of information of city and site, and visualizing the result and conclusion through drawing. While the aim of design, on the one hand, is to deal with the problematic situation in an architectural way, on the other hand, is to dig out the possibilities of better life hidden under the surface. In terms of my project, the research started from the study of transportation and several important bottlenecks in the city, through which I got a general idea about the life pattern of locals. Different means of transportation create different speeds in the city. For local residents, from home to workplace, from home to school, the two points- one line daily route contains the changes of transportation and speed, which also means the waves of emotion and events.

Hence, in the conceptual design phase, the project continued the idea about the

transportation and speed and based on the renovation of the funicular in the site, gradually rebuild the community center around the transportation station, which also redraws the neighborhood relations. In terms of the tools of design, sketches play an important role in these two phases. In the research, I draw a lot of sketches to analyze the scale of space and the activities. During the design process, sketch also gave me lots of inspirations. Sketch is a useful tool which allows the designer document their ideas in a fast way, while the ambiguity and uncertainty of it give the designer more space to think and develop.

The wider social context and relevance

This graduation project challenges us to think the relationship between people and city in a different way. We spend several months to observe, explore, question, and design in a completely unfamiliar site. This means that it is giving us a chance to apply the methods and tools we have learned here to another cultural background, it pushes us to think as a local, be aware of every detailed information which may be helpful to the design.

As mentioned above, the design starts with the research, while the research starts with the observation. The field research lets me notice that as the development of the society and the city, Valparaiso is slowly losing some parts of the city memory which strongly related to the unique lifestyle and context, such as the funicular, and the landscape on the hill. To preserve and represent this unique urban image and collective memory, it is essential to interpret the unique features of the city such as

funicular, in a novel way. This project is not only a community center in this point of the city, it is supposed to become a transitional space between traditional life and modern city, between the bustling street and domestic space. This semi-public space should be created in other parts of the city to clarify the three layers of the city: public space, semi-public space, private space.

I hope that my work will inspire future students in reflecting also on those important matters. The topic "commons" launched by the Method & Analysis studio could surely reach greater achievements if students could be able to deepen not only the theoretical aspect of the project but also the overall issues that make a project social-culture related proposal.