

RECONNECTING SOCIAL FRAGMENTS INTO AN URBAN HUB

FINAL REFLECTION

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Starting the studio I was extremely motivated to get going and work on the project. During the initial research phase I found my interest with the social cohesion being extremely low and was immediately triggered to get going on my personal research. After some issues translating my thoughts onto paper, I found my way to get acquainted to the topic and take position with my design.

The design concept that resulted from this individual research and making diagrams was a series of pavilions that was found by comparing pros and cons. In my approach I continued with this idea and worked from there, yet the feedback from the tutors was not so much about the content but more about the vision. Therefore I completely missed a few vital issues with the pavilions that eventually resulted in a retake for the P2. The feedback that I received at P2 was well aimed at the content, and I completely agreed with the key points that were mentioned. Taking a step back towards the vision and diagrams, I restarted with the new feedback in mind and started a new approach from an urban perspective. I used references and made programmatic diagrams that helped me put together the program and the site. This finally resulted in a spatial concept that ticked all the boxes that needed to be ticked. The P2 retake went well with positive feedback and a few points of attention. After a rough start, I was finally at a point where the approach resulted in a proper design concept.

From the P2 onwards the next step was to fit the program into the mass and create facades and sections that inherit the earlier laid out vision. This is where my approach messed up. I spent countless hours and weeks of work by attempting to create a mass and fit the program inside the mass (whilst complying with the urban- and programmatic findings). The result was countless of versions of the same and the same, until I realized that there was a problem somewhere, which wasn't going to be solved by making a different iteration of the same thing. By once again taking a big step back, back towards the P2 and re-evaluating my steps I found the issue was mainly in my order of doing things. Whilst the tutors were pushing for developing a mass and then fitting the program inside, I found that I would rather have to do it the other way around and making a spatial layout for the program and then shaping the mass around it, to later shift and adjust the mass to fit the site layout. Doing this finally resulted in a concept design that works extremely well (in my opinion). One issue: there was only two weeks left for P3.

Unfortunately, at this point the corona-crisis started. A small blessing in disguise for me was that the P3 presentation was moved one week further, which gave me the time to further develop my concept. By working 12 hours a day, every single day since developing the concept that I was happy with, and after a few Skype video-calls with tutors that gave me good

feedback, I could finish almost all the P3 products to my likings. During this process I realized that most of the feedback that is given by the tutors is not always content-specific but rather is supposed to make you think about your decisions and look at it from different perspectives. In the process I made so many variants of the same thing, that the feedback only steered me in the wrong direction since I misinterpreted it, only to realize what it meant days or weeks later. For this reason my initial thought about the designing of the project was that it was extremely difficult, but now that I have a good concept going and know what I am doing it has become much easier and more fun to do.

The time that it takes varies a lot for me. Especially in the week before P1/P2/P3/P4 it takes a lot of time to get things presented on a professional level that you are happy with. During the tutoring weeks maybe one week I will only spend 30 hours working on the project and be happy with my decisions, yet other weeks I can spend as much as 80 hours during the week and still not be happy with the outcome. A big issue that I found with this is how the tutoring moments require you to have something to show. It forces you to make decisions and continue with them, otherwise you end up being behind on your schedule. Forcing these decisions doesn't always result in the best decision, which results in even more time that needs to be spent on changing essential parts of the design. Due to this there were definitely times that I was not satisfied with my project yet still had to continue, at which point I lost almost all the fun I had doing it. On the other hand, by continuing and to keep working on it I found my way and ended up with something that I was satisfied with; returning the fun and joy I have.

One of the main aspects that should be included in the Public Condenser has its regards to multiplicity in architecture. Together with sustainability, these are two topics that I have had extremely difficulty with to incorporate into my design. However, I acknowledge its importance in public buildings and explored its meaning through research, to eventually experiment with possibilities and the design; resulting into it being incorporated in my design proposal. It opened a bigger perspective for me, showing me how architecture and design can have a leading role on global issues. Not only on a local scale, by designing a social catalyst for a community, but also on a societal and environmental scale. Context has always been one of the most important aspects to architectural design, yet I found that context has a lot more variety to it rather than just the sites location. This project incorporates these different contexts throughout different scales, illustrating a design that hopefully becomes an inspiration for future designs to come.

In conclusion, the list of things that I've learned by doing this project seems to have no end to it. The most important aspect, that is applicable to any of these things, is that by doing research on relevant topics (no matter how small they may seem at first) you are provided with a theoretical background that you keep in mind during the experimental phase of your design. Together with practical knowledge, a design will come together and start becoming an inclusive whole. Even though I had issues finding my way with the studio's approach at first, my way of approaching the project has completely changed from the start of the first semester. I have found how to take my position, use the provided feedback and tools, and evaluate my decisions, resulting in a design that fits the studio assignment.