Reflection P5

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During the graduation year a lot of methods, methodologies, techniques has been discussed for us to develop a way to structure our work. In a general way finding the appropriate method(ologie)s and techniques also implied some other method(ologie)s. In order to reflect upon the past year, we will discuss the results of the following topics that were discussed in the P2 graduation plan.

Academical project, as object for discussion.

The three fold research steps that are the 'survey, system, things' and 'site,part,difficult whole' made a certain dialectic between different research methods possible. It briges the phenomenological approach to more geographical and praexic research method. Although the research remains rather speculative, it made possible to take a position to start generating a target to aim at while researching and designing. Following those steps, a specific definition of the historical values and context of Hautepierre was possible. It informed and led the design to tackle down the important element that responds the defined design goals. Working through those steps have helped to keep working with all the different layers, scales and dimensions playing a role in the historical value of Hautepierre.

In general terms, the project aims more at generating a framework to reflect and discuss about the qualities, the esthetics and the image of the architecture of the grands ensembles marked by simple geometrical languages of shapes. It seems that my research and my design where too much merged, which resulted in some difficulties to grasp the difference between them when needed. However, methods such as the 'grounding' of the design made it possible to articulate my theoretical ideal project within the site.

Relationship between research and design:

The Relationship between my research and my design occurs on a rather pragmatic way. The 'Survey, systems, things' informed and led my research upon which the 'Site, part and Difficult whole' where the beginning of an answer. Interpreting and constructing a historical understanding of Hautepierre marked the beginning of the design fase. Taking the utopian theory of the hexagonal grid[1] as main focus for the design it shaped a rather rigid framework to design and research at the same time.

Using this methodology together with a grasshopper model aiming at parametrizing some elements such as the height and width of a structure while staying in the same hexagonal grid

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[1] The hexagonal grid theory was ment to be abe to organize the whole world through al the scales following a hexagonal grid. It was the object of lots of research and designs principles from the 60's and 70's such as 'Le Mirail – Toulouse' by Candilis, Josic, Woods or the project of Hautepierre.

tightened the relationship between design and research. Grasshopper being at the same time a model and evalution programme. Doing so, I was able to control and understand some topological and phenomenological movements of simple geometrical shapes fitting the hexagonal grid. It worked efficiently, however, it showed a lack of flexibility when it came to understand the relationship between the ground and this 'ideal' research-design.
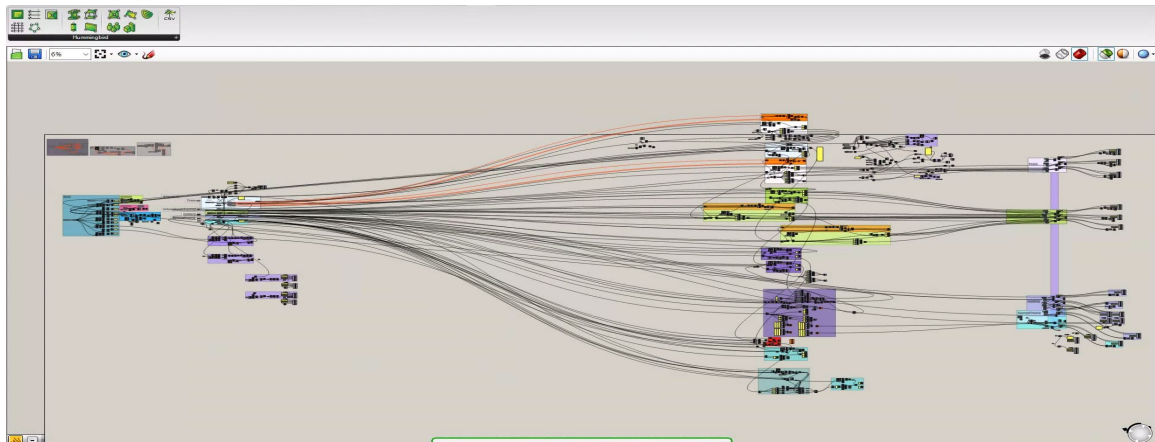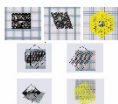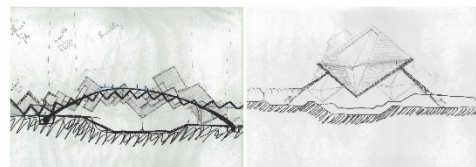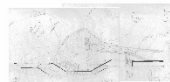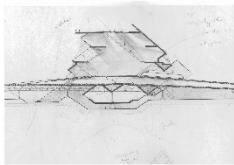

Grasshopper script.
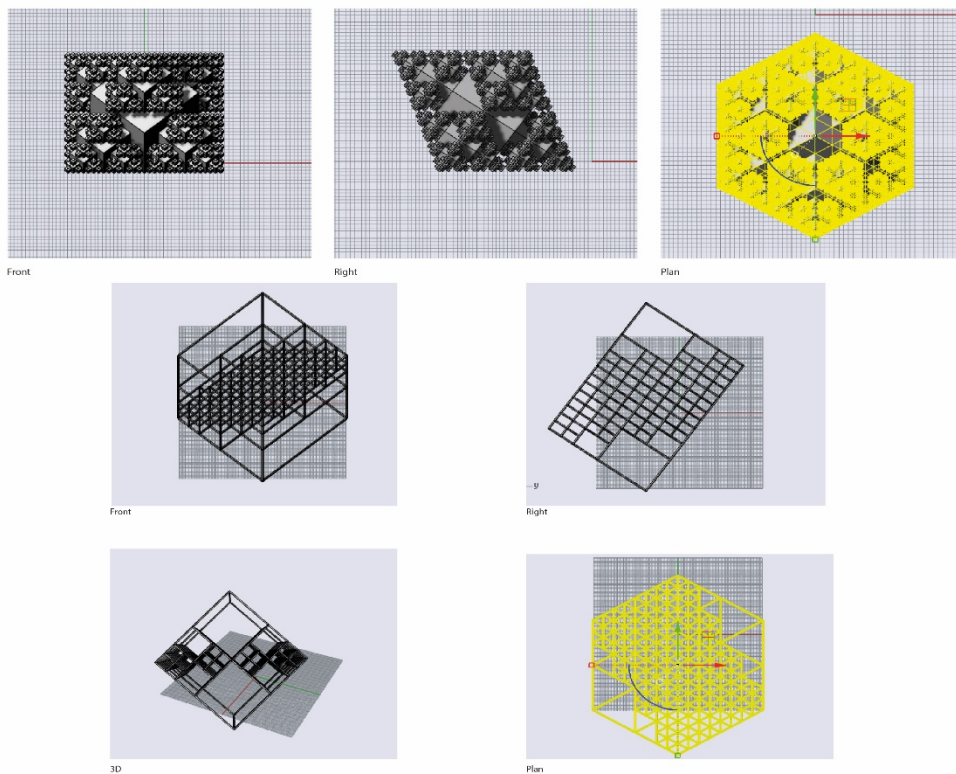
Sudy on relationship between Hexagonal 2D and 3D polygons with less than 6 sides.

Strasbourg vs. Hautepierre:

The 'Survey, system, things' resulted in three different ways to look at Hautepierre. Through those three moments, the original idea, the function of the 'Grands ensembles' as satelites of a city, and the specificity and publicness made a description of Hautepierre possible. Doing so, the 'first' historical layer and its values were defined. It depicts a very French facette of Strasbourg, as the city itself is not experienced as being a European City by their inhabitants. Those two worlds seem completely separated. The project tries, literally, to bridge those two 'worlds' while giving Hautepierre the priority and forms the object for the endless discussion about the value of the grands ensembes. In a general way, due to the omnipresent aspect of the building, a sure relationship toward the public realm is claimed.

Public realm and Architectural expression.

Using the same methods discussed during the course on architectural language provided by M. Riedijk to evaluate the expression of my design provided some structure to be able to control the expression of my building. By drawing some 'difficult wholes' as a cross section I tried to draw and research how a building could express some elements defining Hautepierre, and more generally the architecture of the grands ensembles. The project address itself to its public by using the public realm to express something. Despite being efficient and innovative (for me), the step between research and design lacked of methodological approach. It could have led to a more controlled result if done right.

Difficult whole through section in a mind map.

Ongoing process:

The big grasshopper script is applicable for other shapes and forms. It can be used for a lot of purposes as it provides a topological research tool to study how different base geometries can fit together. Therefrom, we can make all kind of studies on material use, radiation exposure etc,etc… Near that, the project provoques the mainstream tendency of architectural designs to be functional and beautiful. Instead, it tries to embrace and even communicate the relative ugliness or boringness in the existing realm. It wants to serve as experiment in the hope to demonstrate that first there is a building, and then beauty applies to it as a social construct through the understanding and thus the appreciation of built environment. It tries to give back the identity to a place where new interventions go against the historical values of the territory.

The banlieues, people's needs, and the Architect's god complex

Ethically speaking, we can ask ourselves whether it is legitimate to build such an imposing structure within a territory asking for more urban acupunctural interventions. In a broader way, it touches the question of how to design a paternalist utopia for a public that knows social difficulties, what is their culture, and how to deal with their notion of beauty when they seem to find ugly and beautiful their own environment at the same time? Am I legitimate to assume that they prefer going to Mc.Donnalds instead of Aubette? The fact that the majority of people going to the new built 'high' cultural centrum of Hautepierre are not from Hautepierre is a hint for me. Lets build a theme park.