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P4 and P5 reflection

United Nations Headquarters of Sustainability

SADD, Materialisation

May 2013
As it is highlighted on the first paragraph of the reader of the SADD studio: ‘The making of any architectural work starts with an idea.’

Designing a building consists on a large part of conducting analysis and research on the conditions in which the building has to function, how it responds to its surroundings and what the building should demonstrate, express and experience.

The idea which was a starting point for this project was the intention to create a unity which will connect all the existing UN buildings of our site. In the middle of this unity, open public space will be created which will be the site in which we are invited to design the United Nations Headquarters of Sustainability: the missing part of the organisation and the connection point between all the existing parts of the organisation.

After analysing the site and working as a group we started forming our own ideas and concepts concerning the project. First of all, each one of us had to position himself and his ideas towards the aspect of sustainability and the meaning of his or her design in the urban concept. The formation of a green platform which will connect the existing buildings will be a guiding line for all of us.

Integration of sustainability in a building is 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.

As long as I am concerned, sustainability means creating spaces of the best living environment by using the natural sources and by harming the existing environment as less as possible. This idea guided me in using multiple diagrams and concept models in order to find the best form of the project in order to achieve this goal and to create the best working and living circumstances of each one of the different functions of the program of requirements. The central part of my idea was to create a central courtyard and organise the different functions around it. The courtyard will be the part which will connect, supply and divide the different functions and the different users through its different qualities and through its materiality. It will be the meeting point of the project. Within this courtyard all the meanings and the functions will be connected and divided at the same time. The fact that the space of the courtyard is completely open and exposed to the weather conditions is one of its special characteristics because as a result of this will be the different forms of the courtyard in the different periods of time and the different experiences that the users of the building will have in it and around it, as long as all the spaces are connected in different ways with it.
The goal of the SADD studio, as it is highlighted through its name, is the Strategic Architectural Design Development. This means that after developing the general form of the project, specific frames are chosen and analysed in detail. In my opinion the detailing of a project is the way to make the design happen. When it was the time to find the critical points of my project, it was very clear for me that three were the most important aspects which would give character and form to the ideas of the project.

The first one was the structure, the methods that I would use in order to achieve the goal of causing the less possible harm on the environment and creating a frame to accommodate the functions of the program and give the best living quality to its users. Part of this and the first critical point is how the different structures are connected and in which points, in order to emphasize the initial ideas and make clear the purpose of their use.

Secondly, the facades and their relation in terms of materiality and detailing to the structure used was another big chapter to which I paid special attention and extended research was done in order to find the best methods and materials to emphasize once more the starting ideas of my concept. The materials used are steel, concrete, wood and glass and each one has its special meaning. The categorization of the different types of facades in three groups helped me in the detailing of the building and in maintaining the clarity of the construction which was one of the initial goals.

Last but not least, a big chapter of my analysis and of my final design is the courtyard in the center of my complex. The relationship of the courtyard to the structure and the façade in terms of materiality and detailing was one of the main issues that I had to face. The consistency of the project as a whole in terms of materials and detailing was one of my main goals in this project and all these ideas that were born in the process are expressed and connected through these three special characteristics of my project: structure, façade and courtyard. The courtyard is the part of the building where the users can experience, feel and touch all the materials that are used in the construction and they can understand their spatial meaning which is translated from the façade to the different ground floors and express the different functions and meanings.
As a conclusion, the goal of the SADD studio in the track of materialisation is to show us the way, through the deep research and the detailing of our design, of how to materialise our ideas and find the ways to make them happen. This can only be done through the detailing. Of course, the program of requirements that we had to face is huge and the aspects on which we could focus are unlimited.

However, by choosing the most important features of our projects and through making a detailed analysis of them, we achieved to realise the importance of the detailing and the materiality of our ideas. The starting point of my project was to use the natural sources and create an environment where people would like to live and work. The materials used and the relation between the three critical aspects that I decided to focus on (structure, façade and courtyard), the interaction between them and the development of those three together helped me to become familiar and realise the importance of the critical detailing in the quality of each project.