P4 REFLECTION
By Steven van der Woude

An important part of this planning design were the ‘green fingers’ of Amsterdam. These fingers are part of the surrounding greenery transitioning into the city and quickly christened Amsterdam as the Green-City. With this green city image in mind, the municipality now want to give the green in Amsterdam better quality and is re-examining its green policy. This lead to the plans to slowly face out the mono-functional activities in green zones and introduced more multifunctional activities so the green zones can be enjoyed by more people.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

With these new plans in mind, the project is attempting to make a new typology for one of the mono-functional activities which the municipality plans to face out (the allotment gardens). By combining the allotment with local food production, a public plinth and positioning the project on the edge of one of the green finger, the project functions as a border to protect the green zone against further development. The urban blocks gradually go up in size to compliment the urban densification towards the station and goes down towards the park.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND DESIGN

As you may have noticed, my main interest has been the greenery within the city part. The research framework of the studio guided me towards this interest. An in-depth research into parks and recreational green area’s in Amsterdam guided this interest and made a framework of problem-statements for the project. The Complex Projects studio gives you the freedom to find the proposal based on the research topic.

The project is a conclusion of the problem-statements found in the research.

With the rest of the group research in mind, and the perspective of Amsterdam in the year 2050, the following parameters were important for the design. The first parameter, to address the usage of the green spaces, would refocus the ‘green finger’ on our site to be a multifunctional park instead of a mono-functional green zone. The second parameter, to relocate the allotment, was to make room for this new city park. The third parameter, to make a project that focuses on biodiversity, was to reintroduce and stimulate the interest and knowledge of biodiversity in the city.

The initial program from P2 was to focus heavily on stimulating interest and knowledge for biodiversity by making an experience centre with an educational focus. This experience centre would focus on interactions with biodiversity by urban farming. But after P2 I looked back at the research and found that my position in regards to the allotment gardens that are currently there, was too simple. The mono-functionality of the allotment was one of the main parameters instead of just one of the hurdles to overcome.

This led to a refocus of the project from an experience centre to vertical allotment gardens which would free up the green finger for a public park and still provide gardens for the people of Amsterdam.
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROJECT, THE STUDIO TOPIC AND THE MASTER PROGRAM.

The graduation studio is divided into two blocks. First the P1&P2 block where the focus is on research. The P1 is focused on the general research with the group to get a better grip on the site. The P2 is more in depth into the personal fascination, including the conclusion of the research, location choice and preliminary program proposal. The second block, the P3&P4, is about the design including the site- and building-design. Here the proposal should be a logical conclusion of the research.

After switching the project site around a couple of times, I needed to refocus the project around allotment. After re-evaluating the research and deciding on the allotment emphasis, the location quickly followed. After the analysis of the existing environment and the group strategy, I could relate the project concept to the strategy.

LOCATION AND REASON FOR THE PROJECT

The Bretten allotment park along the Seineweg in the city part New-West is a gated community for around 200 people owning a allotment garden. Positioned in one of the green fingers of Amsterdam, the Bretten allotment community functions as a border between park and city. This blockade, the mono-functionality of the community and the scares number of people who use this 18,5 hectares plot, is one of the reasons for the municipality to decide to change the usage of this plot.

The project moves all 200 allotment gardens into 4 city blocks on the edge of the green finger. This makes room for the green finger to become a public green zone to enhance biodiversity and city life.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROJECT AND THE WIDER SOCIAL CONTEXT.

Cities grow denser and higher. Since the city of Amsterdam can’t grow in its centre, other area’s need to instead. One of these area’s is New-West.

The importance of green recreational areas in the city is however often overlooked and we can’t forget to assign spaces for this. This project provides a potential solution for the scarcity of green space by combining social and commercial gardening in a densified surrounding.

Allotment gardening is in high demand and is popular in most rural areas in Europe and America. The building type I am developing can be a solution for this high demand, the scarcity of space and the importance of greenery in the cities.

ISSUES AND DILEMMAS

As you may have noticed, in the process of switching locations and my intentions for the project not being clear, I ran into time constrains. I got stuck too long, after switching focus to allotment, on the urban plan and building type. The results of this, as you know, is the No-Go for the first P4. The extra time I needed was spend in increasing the quality of the design, building technics and restructuring the story.