Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences
Graduation Plan: Complex Projects

Personal information:

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Studio

Name / Theme: Complex Projects/ Caribbean Studio - Cuba  
Teachers / tutors: Paul Cournet/Tanner Merkeley

Argumentation of choice of the studio: I chose the Complex Projects studio because of the theme of my Master Theory thesis. My hypothesis evolved around relational space, intra-actions and emergentism in architecture. After I read the course description and talked with a few of the student representatives, during the master market event at the faculty, I decided that Complex Projects would be the perfect studio choice, in which I could apply the acquired theoretical knowledge.

Graduation project

Title of the graduation project: A Gateway to CUBA

Goal

Location: Havana – Jose Marti International Airport

The posed problem: Besides the obvious infrastructure issues such as outdated terminals operating at overcapacity, poor connection to the city and future plans for people and cargo traffic expansion, the airport also poses the capability of influencing the capitalist-socialist dichotomy. Through the airport and the certain traffic and functions that surround it, Cuba could start and integrate new forms of capitalism under the idea of Common Privatization.

Research questions: The airport should be more integrated into to the city; its function is seen as a mere station. Its presence transcends beyond that. With the help of the airport, a person could pass through from a certain social normativity to another. Why is the airport not expressing that function?

How can Cuba prepare its population to traverse towards a global economy, without resigning its fundamental social values?

Which are the best import/export commodities that could catalyze such a development?
Design assignment: Improve/Redesign the current airport in such a way that it accommodates the future cargo/people flow.

Design an economic Hub that operates within a new economic bubble under the form of Privatized Common; which could bring the Cuban economy within the global one.

Process

Method description:

Information Gathering:

- Global site analysis:
  - Country
  - People
  - Climatic Conditions

- Specific site analysis:
  - Airport Location, surroundings (buildings and functions)
  - Current Airport situation (buildings and functions)

- Economical analysis:
  - Import
  - Export
  - People flow (tourists and country citizens)
  - Future planned project within the country
  - Existing projects of similar economic special conditions

- Precedents Analysis:
  - Other comparable world airports
  - Surrounding Cargo/Passengers Hubs
  - Other Free ports or special economic zones in the world, which are owned by the state.

Theoretical reflection:

- Periodical project reflection
- Reflect on prior accumulated knowledge from the theory Thesis
- Further develop the theoretical knowledge with the help of the theoretical courses based in the package of the graduation studio:
  - New Urban Questions (reflect upon societal rationalism)
  - Water Seminars (research the common privatized water contract in Havana)
  - Research Methods (reflect upon the theory of Decay and Reformation of the urban fabric, case study Centro Havana)

Design:

- Start by creating an all-round conceptual plan
- Develop a master plan for the airport and the region around
- Focus on a specific architectural product of the masterplan and through weekly iteration of design and theoretical knowledge structure it into the final product.
Relevance

Cuba is the best example of future economic development. Not only they have started practicing notions such as AirBnB and Uber at the beginning of the 90’s (albeit out of necessity), but during the final period of the last century they have developed different social/economic constructions that accommodate state and people needs. Such a construct is their Common Privatized water system in Havana, or their Special Economic Zone in Mariel. Nevertheless, due to the fact that their building tradition was faced with material scarcity, they did not have the necessary means of fully portraying their visionary ways of existence. This is why I believe that through architecture they will be able to fully embody their socialistic notions. Thus, it would be very interesting to research how a socio-economic issue can be translated into architectural terms and by doing so, solidifying its theoretical position.

My expectation is that researching this possibility, new typological frameworks would appear, that could only surface out of these special conditions.

Literature and general practical preference

Airport:


Theoretical knowledge:


