

# Reflection Paper

## UN Environmental Council

Materialisation and Design development Graduation Studio – SADD



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June 2013

## **Introduction**

As times goes, the world becomes more conscious of the adverse effects of its interventions in the environment and the necessity of new approaches in producing, designing and applying new methods becomes unquestioned. SADD studio is an architectural design proposal for The 'UN headquarters of sustainability' organization which aims to accelerate and internationally organize this process of becoming more environmental friendly. In this sense, while an architectural design proposal responds to the functional and spatial requirements of the complex, this question arises that how the Building - as a formal entity – manifests, reflects and responds to the intentions and messages of the UN headquarters for sustainability.

## **Design Related Research Objective**

The architectural design manifests as a statement itself and through its spatial and formal attributes conveys certain impressions and has influence on environment and human. This comes from the specific way of manifestation of that architecture (formal, conceptual, exterior and interior, facade and construction, etc); autonomously and relative to the surroundings (urban issues). There are limitless possibilities of these formal and spatial attributes which architecture can possess, each with certain characteristics. Furthermore, a variety of items, factors, inputs, etc are involved in emergence of the form and geometry of a building. While taking a decision we may lose something for gaining another quality and reach a design which responds and meets the demands and intentions of the design in the most possible, efficient and brilliant way. Through our studies and conductive analyses we recognize these demands and intentions and value them in each specific project. Therefore the final result will be the culmination of every single decision made in the process of design and our specific reaction to those demands and intentions. This is the responsibility of the architect to make these decisions in all the steps, and same importantly, manage the order of the steps which he/she goes through in the design.

The purpose of the materialization and design Development studio, as it name implies, is to discover the endless architectural design possibilities and be able to choose the very right one at the right moment in the process of design. In SADD studio, My goal is to reach a design for the 'UN headquarters for sustainable' that while functionally and programmatically answers to the buildings demands, formally and geometrically has its own identity and also revalue the existing UN buildings and regenerate the involved public area. Further in the design process, all range of involved practical and sustainable aspects are studied, explored and implemented in the design proposal

In this sense, the conducted research methods- to achieve the design- involve recognition of essence of the design, demands and intentions and reaching the relevant responds in sequences of decisions

and design processes. These methods embody different research frameworks which play their own role in every part of the design. In following lines it has been attempted to capture these frameworks and studies which form the design of my graduation design project.

## **UNEC and UN**

In the case of 'UN Environmental council', it is frequently heard that the UN headquarters of sustainability must be the icon for sustainability. First thing one may think of this is that what architectural formal, geometrical, structural, constructional etc specifications might be considered to make a building as an icon for sustainability? And if we come up with a design, does it mean that any other design cannot be as an icon? And finally, would it not be like a recipe for a sustainable architectural design or a superficial (visual) interpretation of that?

These questions acquired investigation of different forms and geometries. Since the 'sustainability' term is related to the way of living, manufacturing, building, etc, it does not seem that any specific formal characteristic can exactly evoke the recognition of this term in the minds of the people who experience the building. Furthermore, in many cases architectural icons are more recognized because in people's mind they are associated to a meaning or feeling rather than be a true representation of that definition.

In addition to visual associativity of the UNEC, the placement and intention of the building and its relation to its context possess no less importance. In case of UN headquarters for sustainability, crucial issues happen in the way it is positioned and connected to the existing UN buildings, Connected in the functional and programmatic terms and more importantly formal and proportional. For this specific design, the architecture should have the least formal complexity and ambiguity; and the least dependence to any special type or style of architecture. As another council of the United Nations organization, which belongs and is for all the nations, this building is not suggested to carry any specific architectural style and form. Additionally, this building is not desired to compete with the existing buildings in dimensions, particularly in height; rather to try to express itself as an equilibrium and extension of them. So while keeping its identity, also revaluing the existing buildings. Adequate simplicity and low ambiguity in the architectural form and geometry of the building, along with proper positioning and proportions will result in a design which satisfies the mentioned intentions.

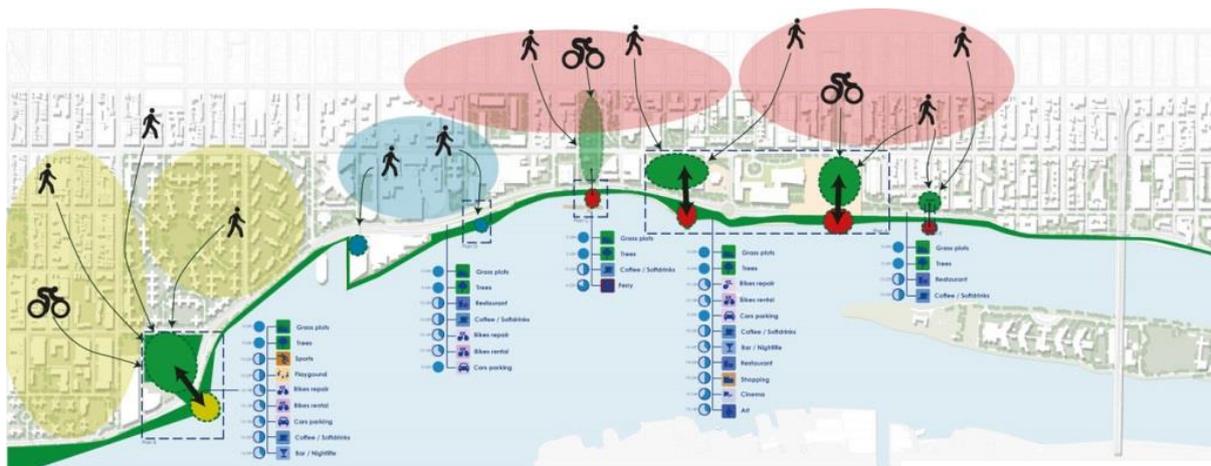
Adequate simplicity and low ambiguity means that although the morphology of building should be simple and perceivable, this simplicity should not go too far that destroys the attractiveness of the form and makes the building boring and ignored. In addition, this gives the building the possibility to express the new generations' achievements and developments in the field of architecture. The new extension to the UN buildings is not desired to be a mere imitation of the old ones or a neutral geometry towards them. Only in this way the 'UN Headquarters for sustainability' can both has its identity and revalue the existing buildings.

## Starting Point and key principles

Initial studies shape the starting point of the design, key principles and processes needed to be done. Here the evaluation, reassessment and valuing the demands and intentions become important. Various items, tools and inputs are inserted in this equation of which the principles are the starting point, theoretical and conceptual disciplines, and design studies. The result of the equation will become the actual design and the building. These items consist of a large range of factors, reactions and solutions all along the design process.

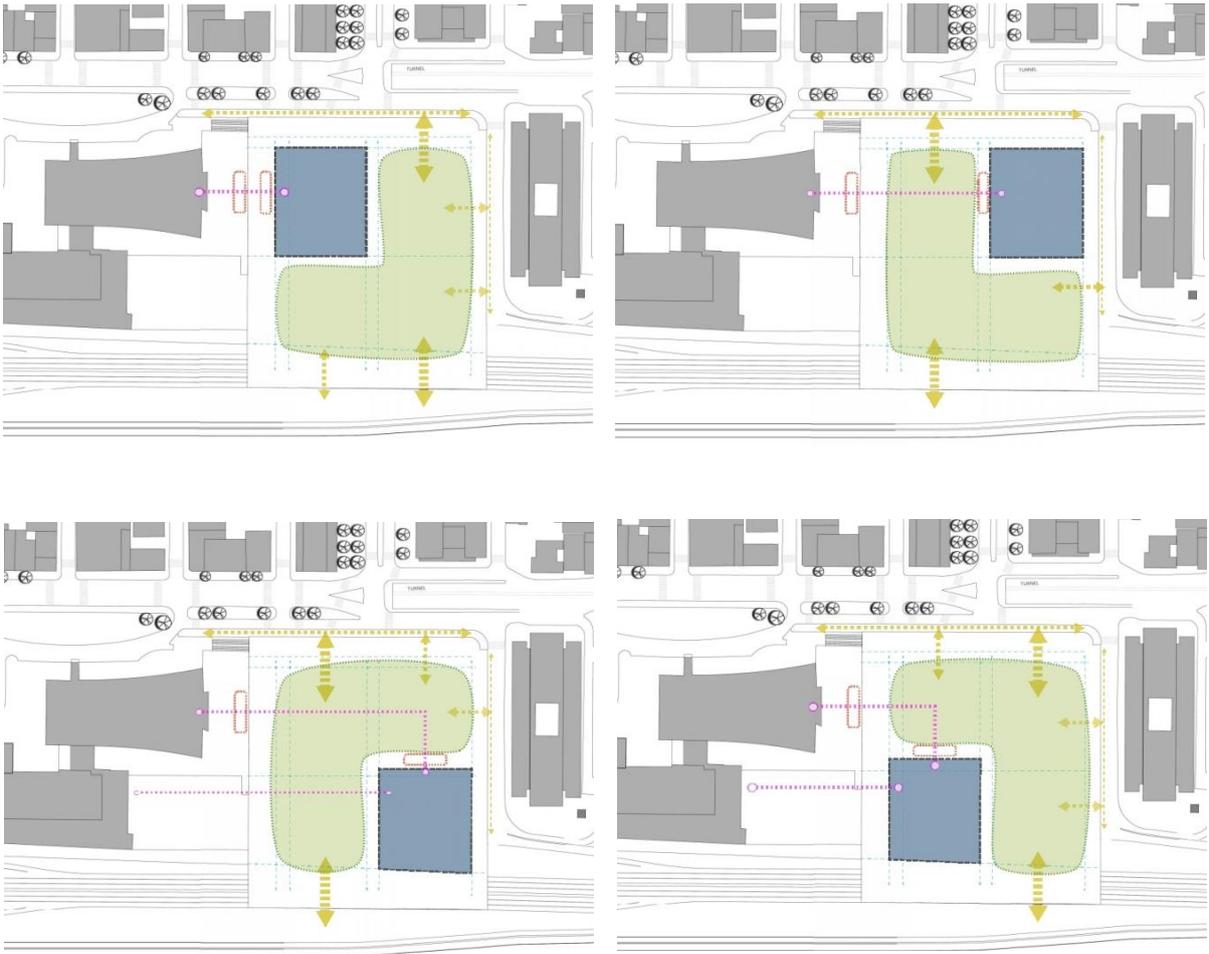
## Building and its surroundings

The design process began with the study of the facts and research about the urban planning of Manhattan (New York) and, as teamwork, proposing a master plan for the areas involved in the project. This required the knowledge about the background of the city and recognizing the problems and potentialities which at end resulted in the master plan proposal for the area. The crucial ambition of the master plan is to establish connection from the city to the proposed continuous green belt around the Manhattan waterfront. This also concerns the UN plot and the project's site as one of the major public connection spots. The Idea is to bring the public and the people to United Nations' site and make The UN more involved with the urban structure and activities.



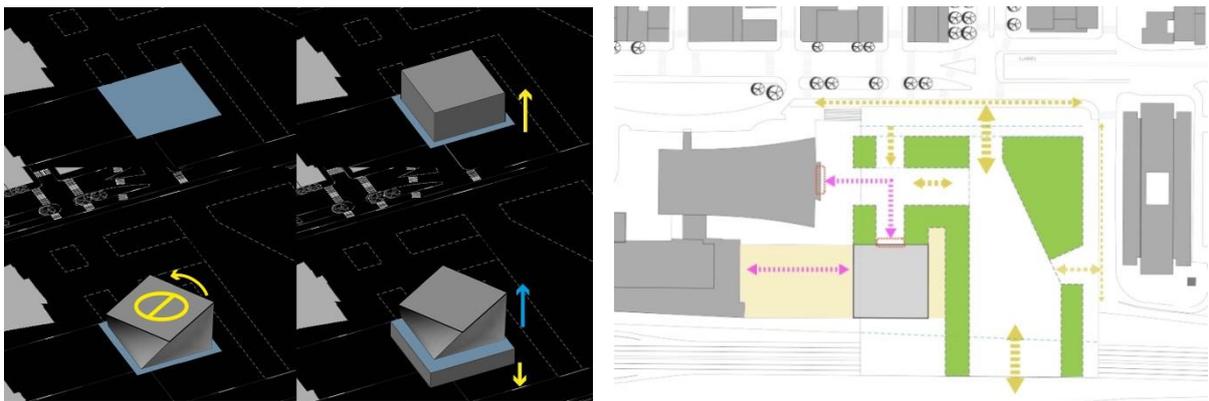
Proposed masterplan in group

In this sense two main connections must be considered in the project's site. First is the public connection to the site and to the waterfront. Next is the internal and private connections of the UN buildings (the new one and the existing). The question is that how the building's geometry and placement can manage these two connections without sacrificing one of them or any of the main design principles. On one side is the public spaces and involvement of people and public activities in the design site, on the other hand the complex functional demands and strict security issues and related regulations and considerations. Through the studies of the form typologies, the discipline of simplicity and low ambiguity of the design geometry is concluded to be also an answer for the public spaces; Simplicity in this manner that due to strict and complex issues and demands, we need to reduce the complexity, spatial ambiguities and clarify public activities. So while reaching the two mentioned connections and integration of the public with UN private area, both can be definable and having their own realms.



**Building Position, Public Sphere and user connections Analysis**

Connection from 1th avenue to the waterfront & UN buildings internal connections



**Design Concept**

## Sustainability issues

Considering all the topics discussed, as another step further into the design study and more realistic view to that, the design of the 'UN Environmental Council' should be a sustainable building and has to fulfill the sustainability design criteria. This means along with structural and constructional aspects, other aspects such as beneficial use of land, providing capacities for further developments and modifications, use of light etc should be taken into account. In different stages of design any of these items may find relevance and influence the design in different manners.

## Conclusion

This graduation project aims for an architectural design of an organization which conducts the international research and innovation sustainable solutions. As another council of the United Nations, this organization has strict social responsibilities and influence on the future life conditions. In addition, 'UN Headquarters of Sustainability' is intended to organize the systematic innovations and developments and propagate the progresses and this knowledge to all the world.

On the large scale, the studies of the project related to the urban issues and reaching a master plan is the first social impact of the project. Generating central and local connection points from the city to water front is the key point of the proposed master plan to providing citizens with more and easier access to water front and green spaces. These connections points, also called attraction points, are not only for increasing green lands but also providing variety of social activities within these points and connected green lands.

UN plot, as one the mentioned large scale attraction points, is responsible of generating social activities and urban and public functions. The design of the plot, as discussed earlier, is solution for better involvement of UN plot with urban sphere and related issues.



Riverside View of UN Headquarters of Sustainability