P4 REFLECTION
COMPLEX PROJECTS GRADUATION STUDIO
(Chicago Studio)

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As in every research process, it is important to reflect the work and the research in order to make a proper conclusion of what is good and what can be better done in future researches. In this paper, I will reflect on the process that has led to the design of an urban strategy and a socially responsible urban building. Because of the large scale, this graduation studio is divided into three parts: research, urban strategy, and the building. In order to intervene with the social context of the research, each of these parts had their own approach and own scale. In this case, it is more convenient to approach each part separately and begin with the reflection of the research itself.

Research

The most important element in researching an urban strategy is the location itself and everything that is related to this location. In order to make a quality research it is important to focus and get familiar with the location and understanding how this location is operating within the system where it stands. In this case, the location or site is situated in the city of Chicago. The research of the studio is split into three different scales. The scales are also known as S, M, L scale or in the right order: Large (Illinois), Medium (Chicago) and Small (the site, South Works). When zooming in on the research itself, there can be spoken of a broad scope. This means there is research done on political, economic, social, and spatial facts. With these scales, the graduation studio was divided into three groups and each group had their scale of research. Together with my colleagues, we researched the scale of Illinois (L) and the position of the city of Chicago within. In this matter, we as a group tried to procure information and that would help to comprehend and understand the size of the city within the state of Illinois. Using different examples and cases around the world and compare them to the city and state, we have achieved an understanding of issues that this scale has to deal with. The main issues on a smaller scale involve social and spatial. The outcomes have led to the conclusion that Chicago was separated into two parts, both in economic, social, spatial, and political. Between the north and the south of the city, we have become to the conclusion that there are significant differences. The north of the city can be seen as economically healthy and has a large diversity of ethnic and housing in this area. Also, educational and cultural facilities are there in abundance. In the south of Chicago, we find the opposite; low-educated citizens and increased rates of crime. Also, the lack of cultural society and the mono-ethnic and mono-typological housing.

Position

The facts that we have summarized have led us to the conclusion that the empty areas in the city, especially in the South Chicago, need to be developed in a way that the neighbourhood (South Works) can make progression and benefit from the new development and need to function as one. Therefore, the social context is the starting point to create the development. The building that is designed acts as an engine for a social responsible plan and a key element within the framework of the urban strategy.

Approach

In order to achieve the creation of a social responsible plan and create a key element, different case studies had to be researched. All the outcomes of these studies where summarized in the research and used to make a comparison with the location itself. Also, these outcomes gave us information and understanding how urban development and key elements perform in the same sort conditions as we know now. In this matter, research is done by researching recycling manufacturers and what contribution these factories can deliver to a similar neighbourhood. Also, we have looked at the locations of the factories and where they are situated, and what they mean for the environment and society around. Programmatic opportunities are the results of the outcomes which the studies and depth studies of these recycle factories brought with them. In that matter, a proposal is the outcome which is based on our theme Green Loop. Within this Green Loop (urban plan) we differentiate two layers, the Recycle Industry and the Green Stream. The Recycle Industry is the catalyst for the neighbourhood and the Green Stream is a park that connects the green of the South Works with the neighbourhood and contribute to the restitution of rainwater to the Lake Michigan.

Urban Strategy - Recycle Industry

All the research together was the start of the design of the project in relation to the theme. A master plan with the Recycle Industry as a catalyst of South Works. We have started by collecting conditions which we used to form the positions and the approach we used. Along the way research details came by to feed the design and the process. The approach that we used (Recycle Industry) helped us to form the right program into the South Works which we knew that this would contribute to the economic and social aspects in the neighbourhood as well as social responsibility. Recycle Industry can contribute by preventing further pollution of the Lake Michigan and the pollution of the South Chicago. This industry creates jobs and a healthy environment for all citizens in this neighbourhood. Not only would these facts benefit the city itself as in a bigger scale as well. Adding educational and transportation essentials will help the neighbourhood grow. Within our minds the city mission of this neighbourhood we have created an urban strategy which connects these political ideas. Also, there are different scales which we had to work with, in order to create a stronger connection between social, political, economic and cultural influences and the design of the building itself.
Building

By knowing all aspects to increase the aspects written above, I have translated them into the design of the building. This is a combination of program, combining with the neighbourhood ambitions and the aspects towards a new development. One of the most important things of this building is that it should integrate the neighbourhood like an engine fits the car.

The chosen design in this matter is a vocational school combining every discipline needed to help unemployed citizens getting a job and young people there education. The building is a link between the Recycle Industry, Green Stream and the neighbourhood. One of the important goals is to create easy accessibility for the citizens. Therefore the building is built up in three parts. In the middle a large open plan (the engine), this particular space is the heart of the school, and this is where it happens. Learning, socialize and gathering. Also in the heart of this engine, the cylinders are situated. The four outside cylinders provide their own theme of education, it is also where the practice areas are situated. The middle cylinder is used to provide the information that students need to enrich their knowledge (a sort of multimedia library). In this room students can find their examples, samples, media, etc. Also additional functions are added to the building in order to increase the social, economic and political aspect within the building. Around the engine we find volumes that provide lecture rooms, library, café and recycle-shop. These volumes also offer offices to entrepreneurs, who form a connecting between the school and industry. The materialization is used to integrate with the neighbourhood and create recognition, materials like wood and steel. The wood reflects to the neighbourhood and the steel to the former steel industry. Materials like glass are used to reduce the barriers. Green surfaces in the engine make the smooth transition between Green Stream and the indoor space. This green surfaces create pleasant indoor climate. Integrating climate systems that help the environment and at the other hand can deal with extreme weather conditions in that part of the United States.

I believe that the urban strategy have been a subsequent matter in order to make a design on a scale like this. The process combining the approach of the studio has made a great influence on the design of my building.