Commute with Life
A library and markets hub of the border

Reflection for P4
Complex Projects graduation studio
Tutors_Tanner Merkeley / Sebastian Janusz / karel Vollers
Ziqi Jiang 4393481
The theme of Complex projects graduation studio this year is “Border”, and the site is one of the largest twin cities on U.S.-MEX. border, El Paso-Ciudad Juarez. During my research, I found that there are over about 10 thousands students and workers cross the border for school and work every day, which occupied a large percentage of 43 of the daily commuters on border. By this way, they obtain more job opportunities and better education resources. However, also because of it, they are caught in a dilemma. On one hand, they want to learn more, a survey shows that the situation of lacking basic skills like English and basic science is very serious in Mexico. An interview of student and worker commuters also reveals their great demands of learning basic skills. Students need these basic knowledge to catch up with their class, and for workers, they want to know what they are doing so that they can help themselves. However on another hand, they actually don’t have time for this self-developing learning. Every day they have to spend averagely 6 hours on bus and crossing the border, which means a terrible five-to-nine routine. Especially on the border crossing, they have to join the lines to cross the border and in maximum they could have a 2 hours delay here. This lost of time is directly linked to the lost of life quality. Commuters are too exhausted by the long-time transportation and have no time to join the basic life activities such as going to the active markets in Juarez, let alone developing themselves. So this lead to my design assignment that I want to build an efficient system that can turn their terrible routine into a time-saving one along with quality educational and social services. So that the time lost situation of them can be converted to a time investment system. For my perspective, this subject is very closely linked to
the “Border” topic. First, it reveals the two sides of a border city. On one side, it gives more opportunities and resources for the locals, on another side, the imbalance situation does not improved a lot by this and locals still have to “pay” a lot for these advantages. Second, by combining programs of education (library) and social service (markets), my project is not only aimed at the student and worker commuters, but also for the other locals. The whole project gives opportunities in both substantial and spiritual ways. Furthermore, in a broader view, “efficiency” is becoming a very important word in the modern world, especially in some specific area like Juarez. Study and tests on improving people’s routine in an architectural way then become worthy, and it would be more interesting and have more potentials when linked with quality public space and functions. By this way, it would contribute better social and culture environment for the whole area.

To achieve the ambition, the first thing I looked into is the transport system of the border. My research shows that near the border there is a mirroring of two transport centers in the two cities respectively. The current commuting mode of commuters is that they drive or take buses from home to these transport centers and then transfer to another bus to border crossing. By this way every time they have to transfer 4 times plus the delay on border crossing. Based on this, the strategy I come up with is to build a dedicated commuter bus system with free access on border, so that they don’t have to join the lines or take another transfer on the border crossing. Then my project would locate in the ends of the system with a library-market program, which provides social functions and educational opportunities they are demanding.

To define the architecture design, the main methods I take are mass studies by models, plan and section diagram analysis and case studies. As in this graduation studio, projects are always combined with more than one program, doing mass studies and diagram drawings are helpful to simplify the complicated situation and catch the most important elements, and then by mass studies and modeling tests, different types of space organization are compared and
tested, which will lead to the basic concepts of plan and section. Moreover, analyzing references is the most important method of developing the project. Not only the quality of space but also the quantity of each program can be learned from cases. Based on the accumulation, the features of my project would be clearly defined. For example, by looking at cases of modern library, I detail my program on that besides giving more space for learning and children’s care, my library would use more e-book resources to reduce the budget compared to physical book resources, which also can be seen as a new thinking of modern library.

For further development, I am going to make both digital models and physical models to see the space I have designed and created. By this, I can experience and modify the space easily and effectively. Also, Going deeper in detail would definitely very helpful for me to develop my project and make all aspects work in a whole system.