

Reflection

In my research paper, I conducted an analysis of three council housing estates dating back to the 1960s, all situated within the Greater London area. The analytical framework was informed by the book "Paris Haussmann: A Model's Relevance," which extensively examines the Haussmann plan in Paris, employing various mediums such as writing, drawing, and photography to explain its characteristics across different dimensions.

Drawing upon the research, my study concludes in several recommendations that form the foundational basis of my research-based design. These principles have been derived from a qualitative analysis of the estates, incorporating insights from two books that cover various factors that are crucial in establishing architectural and urban spatial quality. The principles are: facilitating interaction and vegetation, the incorporation of pedways and walkways, densification, mixed typologies, a multifunctional plinth, and the inclusion of courtyards.

Consequently, the design process I have undertaken centers around these guiding principles, using them as primary elements to create architectural and spatial quality within the redevelopment of a council estate.

By doing this I try to complete my design objective, which is to demonstrate the value present in the social housing stock of 1960s London, emphasizing the importance of preserving or redeveloping these buildings rather than resorting to demolition.

Personal reflection

In retrospect, I think my research approach worked quite well. However, the integration of two different goals posed challenges in presenting a cohesive and comprehensive research narrative. The primary objective is an exploration of the social well-being of residents in social housing, while the secondary objective aims to develop a practical understanding of the architectural characteristics prevalent in 1960s social housing. In hindsight, I feel that by focusing exclusively on either of these goals, my essay could have achieved greater clarity and conciseness.

This also becomes apparent when looking back at the feedback I received at my second presentation. One of the comments was, that it becomes apparent from my presentation that I have an interest in the managerial and economical aspects, but that this is not yet represented through the architecture. In the end I recognize that my focus seemed to be directed towards revitalizing and enhancing the quality of the existing estate, thereby diverting my attention from considering managerial and economical aspects.

Additionally, another point of feedback highlighted instances where the design choices lacked logical support based on the analysis and research conducted. To address this concern, I endeavored to construct a structured qualitative assessment, using the works of David Sim and Alain de Botton. Subsequently, I revised my principles to align more harmoniously with the outcomes derived from this assessment.

With the writing of this research paper I seem to have learned first and foremost that taking inspiration from a book like "Paris Haussmann: A Model's Relevance" makes you appreciate the book and its authors even more.

The amount of work it must have taken the authors to clearly and logically represent their subject turned out to be the hardest part while writing the research. Secondary to this I think that translating my research into my designs has never been a strong suit of mine. This element felt like something I should work on and was partly the reason for me to choose the architectural cross-over design studio. During the course of the design process within the studio, I consistently struggled with the challenge of effectively translating my research into cohesive design elements. However, following the second presentation, a shift occurred as the majority of the design components gradually fell into place. I began to realize that the process of integrating my research into my design went beyond literary knowledge; it encompassed the selection of references and choices rooted in a understanding of the underlying processes, particularly within the urban fabric. This realization created a greater sense of confidence in my decision-making, as my knowledge of London's social housing had substantially expanded over the past year.

Relevance

From a societal standpoint, the preservation and reuse of 1960's social housing addresses issues such as affordable housing, urban regeneration, and sustainability. As cities deal with housing shortages and rising costs, finding logical solutions becomes very important. By considering the potential of existing social housing stock, we can reduce the strain on resources and minimize the need for new construction. Moreover, repurposing these buildings not only preserves the potential architectural heritage but also keeps a sense of community continuity and social cohesion. It allows for the revitalization of neighborhoods and the creation of inclusive and livable spaces, benefitting residents and the wider society.

In terms of academic research, studying the preservation and reuse of 1960's social housing contributes to architectural and urban studies. It provides an opportunity to delve into the historical context, design principles, and socio-cultural aspects that shaped these housing developments. By analyzing reference projects that demonstrate elements of quality, researchers can identify successful strategies and approaches for adaptation and revitalization. This research can inform future design practices, policy-making, and urban planning, promoting sustainable and socially responsible approaches to housing.