

Bridging Waters.

Reflection

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The Thesis

The thesis proposes the transformation of two of Madrid's decorative fountains into functional public pools, addressing the city's residents' needs for leisure through physical activity and cooling in a hot city like Madrid. Additionally, the project seeks to enable public access to the Manzanares River—an element currently missing within the city centre and the river's urban planning. The intervention reclaims water as a shared urban resource for people to experience, while offering accessibility and public space next to the city's forgotten river. Additionally, it programmatically and volumetrically enhances the surroundings of the Puente de Segovia site. This is done by adding a water management and sanitation research centre and a wastewater treatment plant next to the CEDEX (centre of hydraulic works of Spain). In this way, the water that is being treated and studied is later used for the public pools and the irrigation of the whole intervention. Hence, the hidden mechanisms of water regeneration, from hydraulic engineering to water regeneration are made visible to the public.

Research Correlation

The starting point of the research, seen in the Research Plan, was the water cycle of Madrid and its utilitarian and essential properties. Water was studied through the lens of shaping the morphology of the city, and how its management affects the city's territories and functions. This lens clashed with the other leg of my interests which is public life in a dense urban environment, like the centre of Madrid. After visiting the city and the water regeneration territories where

water is either collected, treated or disposed, I understood that I would have to move away from the city in one of these productive territories. Consequently, I shifted the research focus to include the social aspects of water in the city, with the aspiration to find the intersection between functionality and leisure in the urban fabric through the lens of water.

The research enhances the architectural themes explored in the design proposal. These themes are waterways as public space and the interdependency of public and productive spaces within the city. These qualities are examined from a 'hard and soft' perspective, soft being the social and hard the productive and physical. Case studies of such spaces in Europe helped to identify spatial qualities that successfully merge these functions. A similar analysis in the context of Madrid, through drawing is being conducted to firstly identify a site for the design proposal and secondly to grasp the missing elements for this intersection in Madrid.

Design Process

The main challenge of the design process has been the programmatic dualism of the proposal and how this translates aesthetically and in physical form. The site itself is fragmented and in need of a coherent language to bridge functions and activities in the area. My approach to create coherence is to manipulate the volumes of the proposals to create public space pockets and guide people's movements either to or away from the busy areas. The element of the universal canopy is used to visually signal the connections of the two programmes but to also utilize the significant level differences of the site's topography. This challenge of dualism is also dealt with materiality and visual coherence.

One of the most consistent points of discussion with my mentors has been the attention to coherence in how the dual programmes are integrated spatially and aesthetically. Clear diagrammatic drawings and collages of the proposal's potential help bring together all the points addressed and simplify the complexity of the project. This complexity is what makes the design intriguing. The need for such complex and synthetical approaches to urban interventions is essential in order to achieve vibrant and functional public spaces for a plethora of users, highlighting the diversity of the contemporary city life.

Because of Madrid's unique characteristics and the condition of having a highly controlled river in terms of flow, the design approach calls for more than the standard 'waterfront architecture, landscape'. Water is not observed as this vast, blue, liquid body, but rather as a catalyst and a bridge between people and functions in the city.

This condition raises questions like:

'How can we design for a river waterfront without a river?'

'How can we use dualism as a design technique to create vibrant public spaces which bridge leisure and function?'

Relevance

This overall concept aligns with the Architectural Design Crossovers Studio, which explores the theme of city flows, one of which is water, alongside the notion of urban commons. By focusing on water flows and their management in Madrid, the project ties in with the studio's broader study into how infrastructure and the urban commons can converge to create meaningful public spaces. The project engages with key architectural challenges related to infrastructure and productive programmes' integration into the urban fabric and its effect on public space. It contributes to contemporary architectural discourse by demonstrating how technical infrastructure can be transformed into social infrastructure, fostering civic interaction.