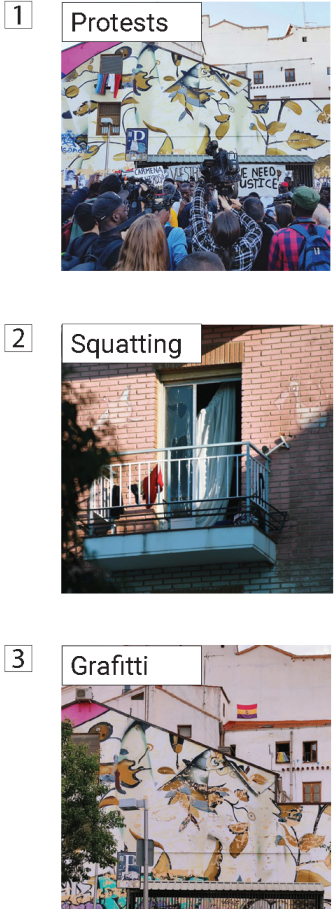
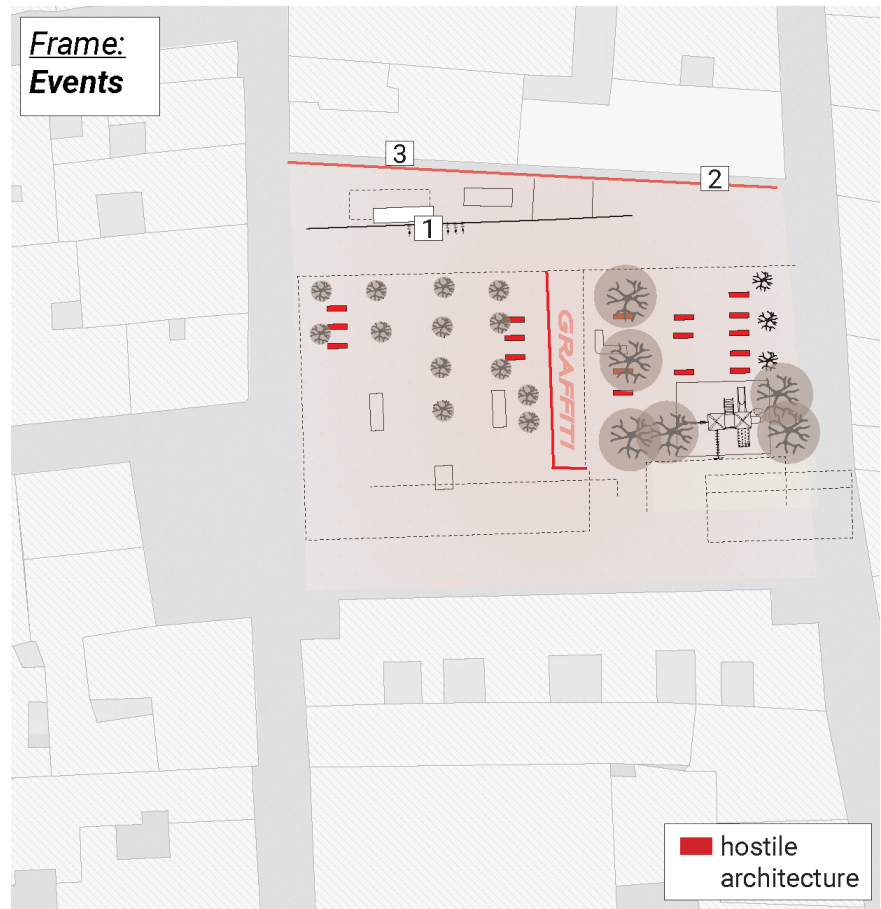


Scene 1: Plaza Nelson Mandela



Visitor: This square and its surroundings seem vibrant and full of activity. What makes this square so special?

Host: Plaza Nelson Mandela is one of the most politically charged squares in the area.

Visitor: Could you elaborate on that?

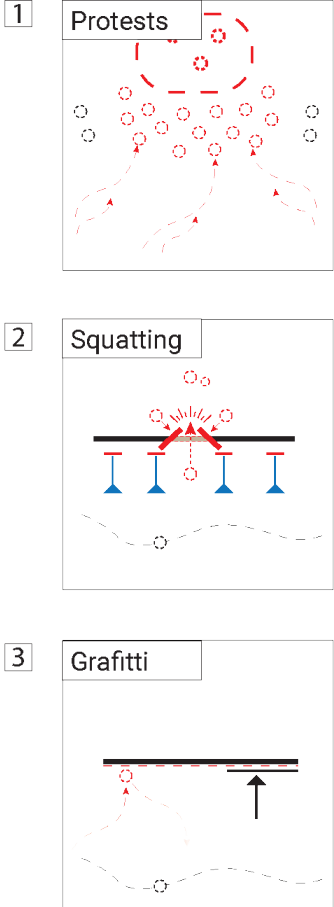
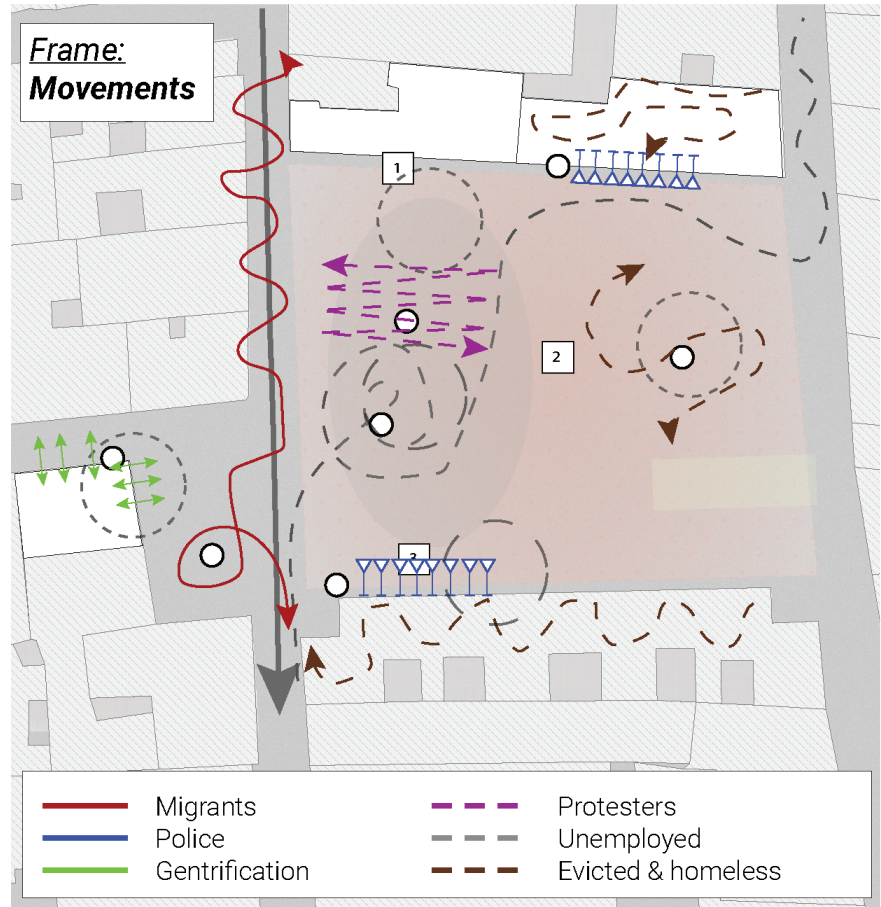
Host: Over the years, the square has been the epicenter of numerous uprisings and moments of opposition.

Visitor: Can you provide some examples?

Host: Certainly. The two buildings adjacent to the square have been occupied multiple times and have faced repeated evictions. The square itself has been a hub for raising awareness and hosting large gatherings addressing societal issues such as anti-eviction protests, anti-racism movements, police violence, gender and racial equality, affordable housing, and gentrification.

Visitor: Are there any other notable aspects of this square?

Host: Yes, the square has been redesigned with hostile architectural elements, like concrete benches, which seem aimed at discouraging protests and public gatherings.



Frame: Materiality

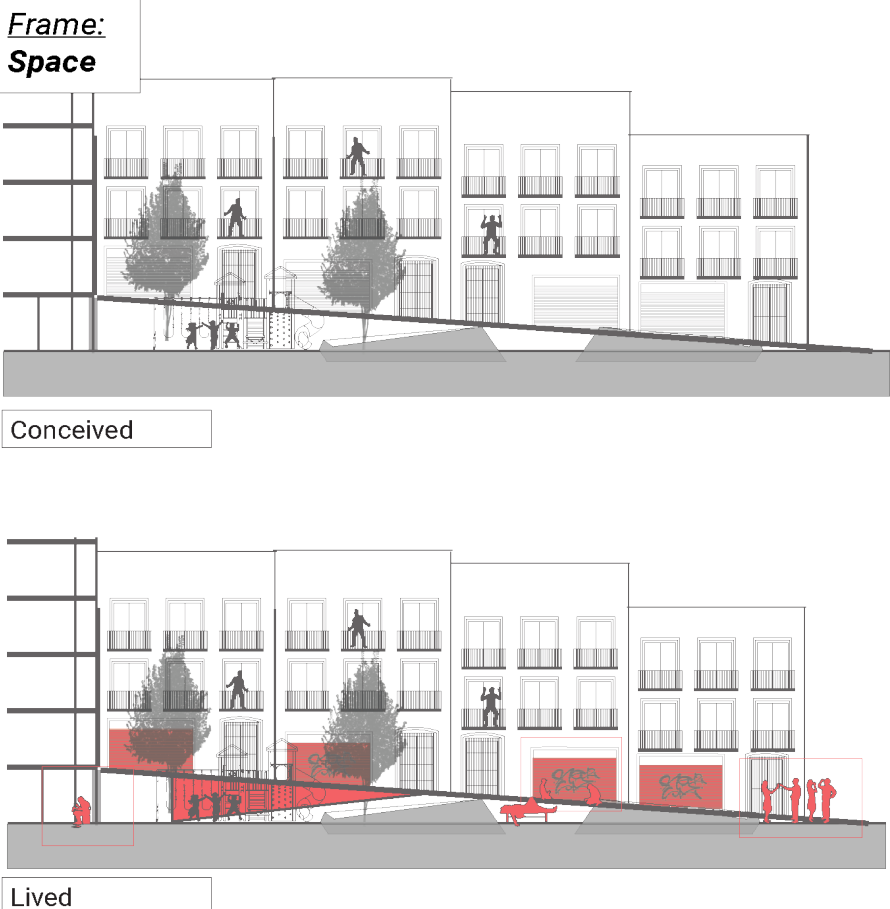
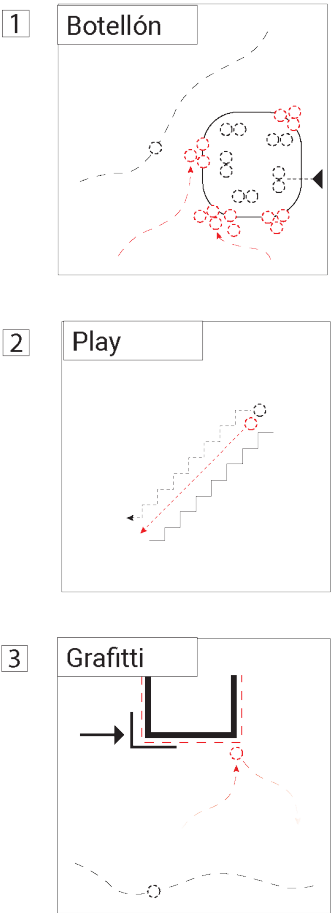
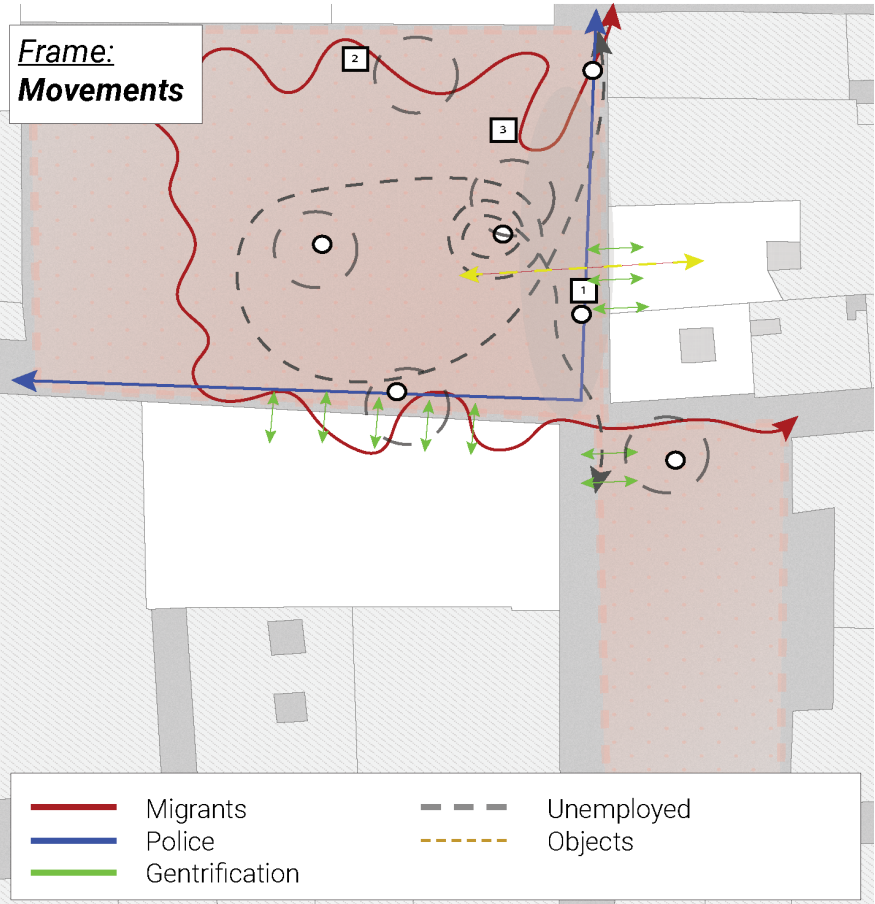
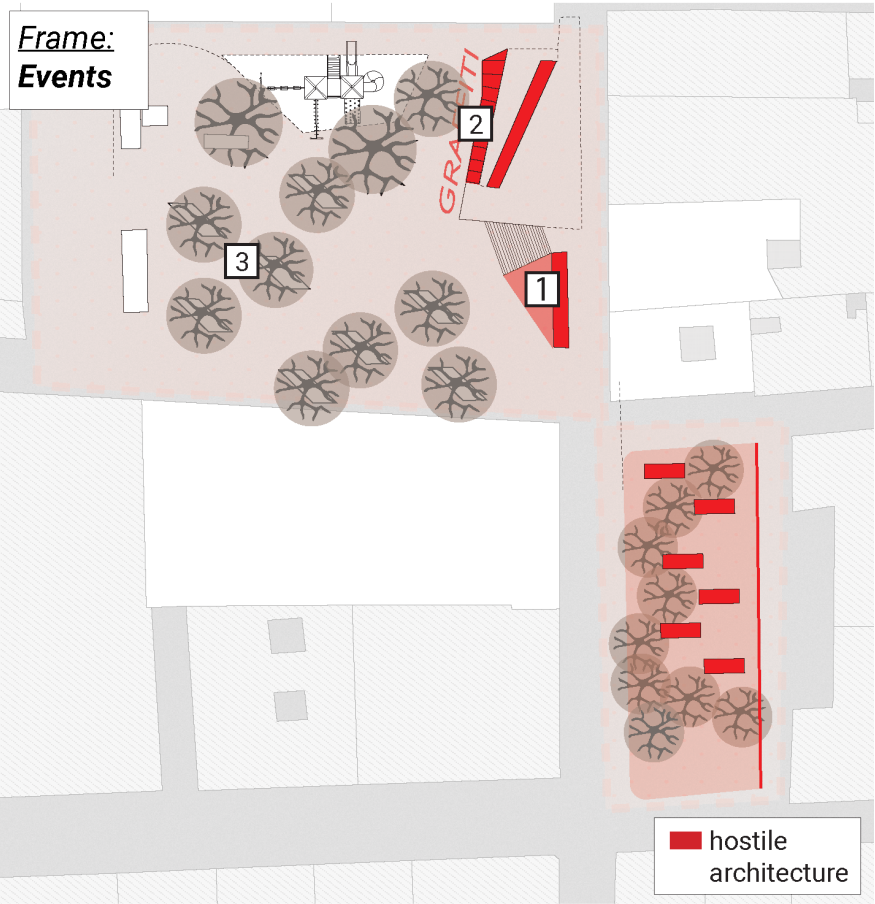


The door - access, and owner rights

I am, the door, the one that allows and stops, the one that guards and the one that separates. I have a face on both sides, yet mysterious when looked at, not revealing what's on the other side, because that is my sole purpose, to keep worlds separate. My use is equal to contamination of both realms.

I sit still in the frame that was made for me, or hang... or maybe more like stuck, over time gradually warping and skewing because of the pressure around me. More so now, than when I used to fulfil my purpose. Yes, I, am not being used as often anymore, because one of my sides, the warmer one that I used to belong to, is gone. My purpose has been diminished, denied, gone a soft division to a hard one. My other face has been wiped clean, faded into the surrounding of painted bricks. I have been made subject to conflict, but whose conflict? I can't see, one side is dark and the other blindfolded.

Scene 2: Plaza de Augustín Lara



Frame: Materiality



- Creakkk: Here we go again, another day ahead of us. Oh my what happened to you?

- I must've fallen down during the night. I have never felt the surface on which we stand like this before, it feels weird. It feels very rigid to my nature. All the things around us feel rigid, maybe we are the ones out of place here?

- You've had some time to think. They will arrive soon and arrange us to our positions, every day with a different bunch of you. Maybe that's our strength, that we can move freely within this rigid realm. Maybe we soften its roughness?

- If that is the case, why this choreography of momevent, folding and unfolding every morning and every night? Do we have an impact on this roughness, do we have control? Or are we the ones being controlled? Copies of one another, stacked on top of each other. Why is our use prevented at night? or are we being protected? What is our value?

- Calm down, maybe our ambiguity offers familiarity. We might look the same but we do contrast with this rigid realm around us offering freedom.

Host: So, this is the second square in Lavapiés that has served a similar function in community agency.

Visitor: Could you explain what makes this square special? What are the events that have taken place here?

Host: Certainly. This square is another melting pot of the diverse users of Lavapiés, but it is also a site of tension, especially when we consider the reasons behind its design choices.

Visitor: So who are the users, and what specific events have actually taken place here?

Host: Lately, it has become a focal point of gentrification and increased control, partly due to the hostile architectural design elements. It's also where cafés have become trendy spots for the middle class. Meanwhile, in the background, unemployed immigrants gather here to share struggles and experiences, creating a space where culture is actively exchanged.

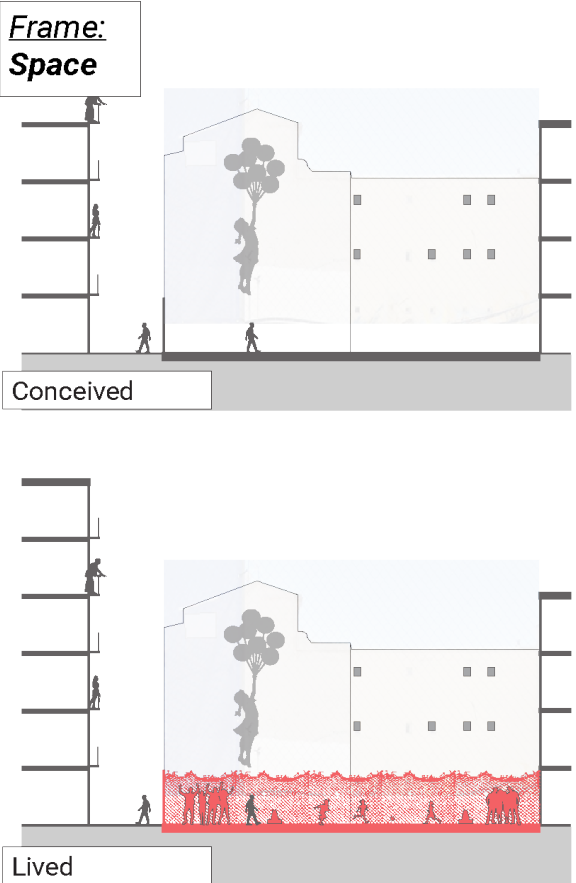
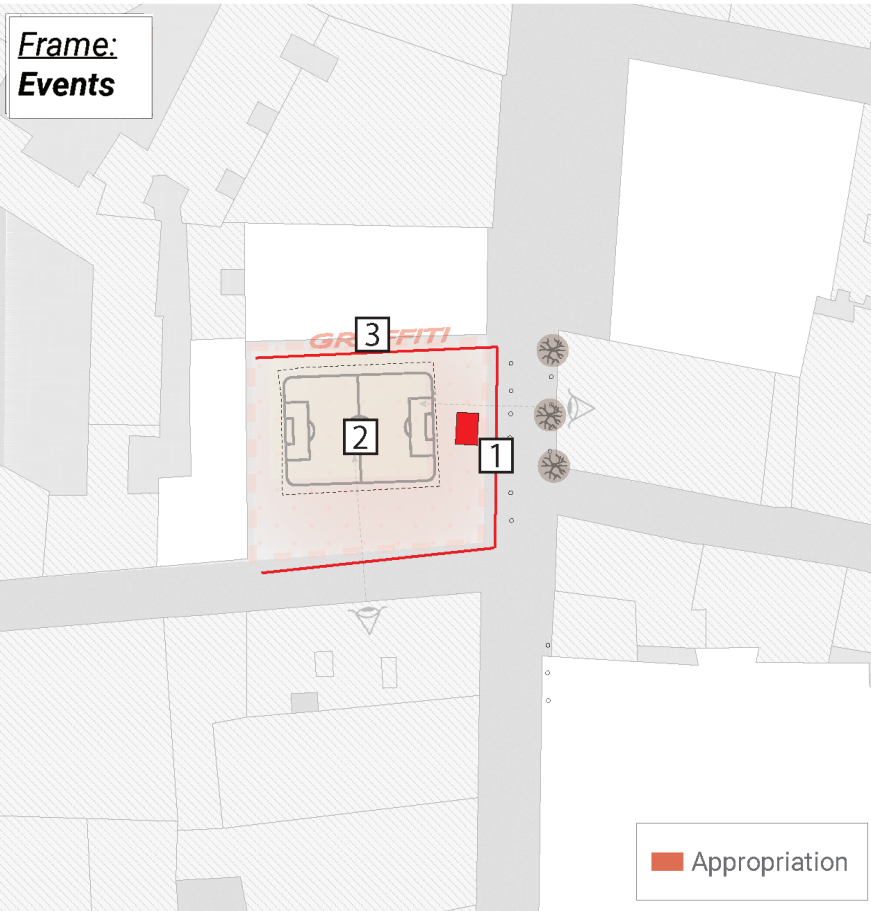
Visitor: That dichotomy is compelling. So, would you say this square is politically charged as well?

Host: Certainly. It has been used for protests, marches, carnivalesque occurrences, and even as part of the infamous 15-M movement, which spilled into the squares of Lavapiés, including this one.

Visitor: Any other crucial details about this square?

Host: Perhaps the library, which was opened in the ruins of an old building. It embodies yet another dichotomy—seen by some as controlling, while others view it as emancipatory.

Scene 3: Espacio Dragones Lavapiés



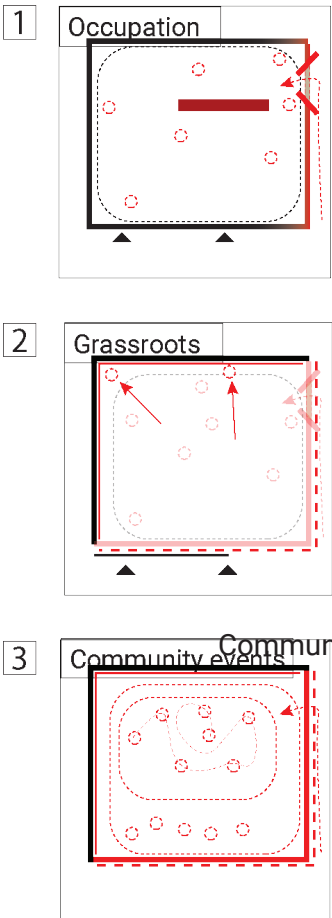
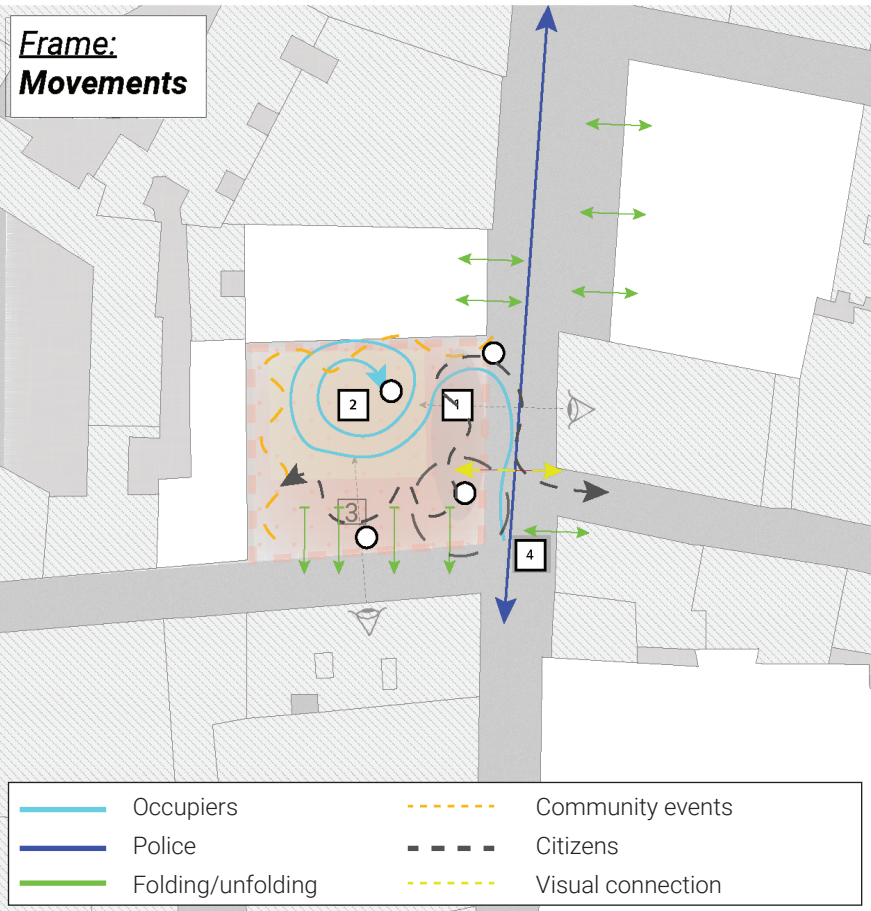
Host: This is one of the more fascinating 'squares' in the area—Dragones Lavapiés.

Visitor: What makes this square so interesting, and why is it relevant to the topic?

Host: This plot was taken over by the neighborhood's football club, Dragones Lavapiés, after the previous building was demolished.

Visitor: So, the users repurposed the plot for leisure activities?

Host: Exactly. Many in the community face economic and spatial scarcity, so this plot has become a vital gathering spot. It's a place not only for football but also for community celebrations and grassroots initiatives where people come together to support one another.



Frame: Materiality



Rattling anxious wire:

Oh that was scary, I feel like I am going to fall apart with each impact from the football. But I guess I was made to withstand those...Was that my core purpose or was I meant to separate and to keep both sides divided? But I don't entirely know, you can still see through me, as opposed to the walls around me.

In fact I stand in the place of an old one that used to be here, I can still feel its presence and weight contrasting my own.

I actually surround its now empty territory. But is it really empty? Maybe it is more full than it used to be... I surround this terrain where they come together and celebrate collective communal desires. They have nothing to hide...maybe that's why I was reinstated, to protect the others outside of this territory and allow them to look through me. They too get happy when they see the celebrations, maybe my purpose is more connecting than dividing after all...

I am a witness of the orderly chaos inside and the strictly ordered outside... Am I a divider of space and rules? Does my purpose change when the games are not being played, when they are not here, do I then govern the inside? Sometimes, I question whether I am more than a physical boundary, whether they recognize me or am I just a fence?

Visitor: Does someone else technically own this plot?

Host: That's precisely the issue—it challenges traditional notions of ownership. Empty plots like this can provide temporary relief when communities take agency. Over time, the municipality recognized this and issued a legal document permitting Dragones Lavapiés to use the space for their activities, though it's unclear whether this arrangement is temporary or permanent.

Host: Additionally, the graffiti revealed on the wall after the demolition has gained landmark status, preventing further construction on the site.

Observations from the site analysis

The site analysis of the Embajadores neighborhood highlights various aspects of dissidence, using a range of methods to provide a multifaceted understanding of the topic. These methods include architectural drawings to map and analyze spatial dynamics, as well as narrative techniques that explore the experiential and less tangible qualities of urban spaces shaped by dissidence.

The analysis in plan highlights how spaces are being used and navigated within the framework of dissidence. Pavements divide, slopes create barriers, fences provoke questions, and galleries and balconies foster connection. These material elements reveal how dissent manifests spatially and how they influence movement and interactions within urban squares.

In sectional studies, the analysis compares the spatial and social characteristics of urban squares when dissident practices are present versus when these are absent. It demonstrates how dissent, as both action and reaction, transforms the spaces and how various actors engage with each other and the environment.

Narrative methods uncover the more latent and experiential aspects of these spaces. This is achieved through two perspectives: dialogues between a host and a visitor, offering insight into lived experiences and local dynamics and the second being experimental writings that reveal hidden material ecologies and coping mechanisms often overlooked by passersby.

From the site analysis, three primary categories of actors emerge, each with distinct objectives and concerns related to dissidence:

Dissidents

- **Core motivations:** Necessity, urgency, direct action, critique, reclamation, risk, and emancipation.
- **Community and culture:** Solidarity, socializing, cultural traditions, community building, and freedom of space.
- **Creative expression:** Visibility, expression, resistance, redefinition, exploration, creative freedom, and playful challenges.
- **Opposition to authority:** Rejection of control, protest against inequities, and a push for self-determination and resourcefulness.

Authority

- **Regulation and control:** Management, ownership regulations, enforcement, safety, and public order
- **Concerns and interventions:** Prevention of damage, unauthorized actions, health and safety, liability, and economic considerations.
- **Cultural and social influence:** Surveillance, policing, regulation of visual appeal, and maintaining neighborhood standards.
- **Impact management:** Dialogue, negotiations, and interventions to balance competing interests.

Users

- **Community dynamics:** Neighborhood impact, support, division, and reframing perceptions.
- **Emotional responses:** Engagement, appreciation, dislike, frustration, and tolerance.
- **Concerns:** Safety, noise disturbances, inconvenience, and changing perceptions.
- **Identity and belonging:** Interpretation, observation, and navigating shared spaces.

Design objectives can incorporate the concerns and goals of different types of actors, leading to balanced design interventions or the creation of conditions that foster a more bottom-up approach to design, with the aim of improving the everyday lives of vulnerable communities.