



AYUNTAMIENTO DE

08 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Reflection

This year's architectural graduation studio, Architectural Crossovers, focused on the Expanded City of Madrid, with a particular emphasis on urban commons. My graduation project, Performative Dissidence, aimed to offer empowerment and agency to vulnerable communities. The concept began with graffiti but evolved into a broader exploration of performative dissidence. This theme is highly relevant in Madrid, where vulnerable communities are found not only in the city center but also in the outskirts. The city center, a contested space, is where different perspectives collide, and many of these marginalized communities engage in dissidence as a coping mechanism. These issues, at their core, are multiscalar, and urban commons play a key role in understanding them.

Exploring these societal issues through the lens of architecture has been both challenging and insightful. It has provided me with knowledge into how contested urban areas are often the product of larger systemic/societal issues. As a graduating Master of Architecture, I have taken this complex issue, successfully dissected it down into its components, and applied my architectural knowledge to design conditions that offer empowerment and agency to these communities. Additionally, I was able to connect existing theories that supported the trajectory of the project.

The MSc programme's interdisciplinary approach has been invaluable in broadening my perspective. It allowed me to approach this complex topic from both research and design disciplines, which continuously informed and strengthened each other. This constant interplay between the two has been key to my development over the past year.

To expand further on the interplay between research and design, the research process has been crucially extensive in order to fully understand the interdisciplinary topic of dissidence, particularly from an architectural perspective. Early on in the research, I realized that dividing the topic into theoretical and practical site research was essential. This distinction arose from the gap in theoretical knowledge about dissidence, contrasted with the experiential actions that manifest in the urban environment. Gradually, I built a tapestry of theoretical knowledge from the architectural perspective, which I then tested systematically through site research. This process created the foundation for my design, offering a framework for implementing interventions from a multiscalar perspective. It allowed me to approach each urban setting, with its unique characteristics, and translate them into architectural materialization.

To address the multidisciplinary nature of the topic and its limitations, I applied a range of methods, particularly in the

experiential part of the site research. To avoid approaching the topic solely from an architectural perspective—since this would have been a top-down research method—I combined other research methods such as critical storytelling and narration. These allowed me to tap into the experiential aspect of dissidence and engage in an imagined dialogue with the voiceless, whether human or non-human. A notable limitation was the language barrier I encountered during the site visit. However, this limitation was nearly neutralized through the use of narration, combined with articles I found written in English by a journalist about the neighborhood. While I acknowledge that direct conversations and listening to specific stories would have informed my project in a different way, the articles still provided a valuable general overview of the issues within the neighborhood. This focus on broader societal issues allowed my research and design to concentrate on common challenges many face. For further research, gaining personal insight into the lives of the citizens would undoubtedly enhance the approach.

Overall, this project could serve as one of many examples that illustrate how certain societal issues emerge and manifest in urban environments. It also demonstrates how these coping mechanisms inherently contain the knowledge and expertise to inform architectural design that empowers vulnerable communities and critically challenges top-down systems.

For academia, this project can act as a pedagogical tool for addressing similar interdisciplinary and sensitive topics, promoting a more horizontal approach to design that addresses the complex issues affecting people's lives. However, it is important to recognize that these societal issues and the manifestation of dissidence are far more complex, with numerous factors influencing them depending on the context. While this project applies a multiscalar approach, the content, causes, and materialization of these issues will differ depending on the context. Therefore, the architectural materialization in this project is not meant to be directly applied to other contexts. However, the approach can serve as a valuable guideline for addressing similar topics or disciplines.

Throughout this process, the feedback I received from my tutors has been invaluable. Their knowledge of various aspects of the topic has been encouraging, and their introduction to different instances and precedents has directly informed my design interventions. Additionally, the occasional lectures over the past year have influenced both my research and design approach. As a result, this project has grown stronger, with carefully considered aspects being adjusted and combined to meet the objectives of addressing basic needs and performative dissidence as critique to systemic issues.

Over the past year and a half, despite the challenges, this journey has been transformational both professionally and personally. I have gained new insights into what I want and do not want from my career. Moving forward, I would like to approach design projects by starting with theoretical exploration, as I believe this opens doors to other disciplines and theories that can enrich architecture and create a more layered approach.

Another key realization is the importance of advocating for horizontal relationships between the actors influencing design, as this can have a broader impact. Though it took me some time, I have come to trust my ideas, as the materialization of my work is deeply informed by my personal experiences, making it unique to me. I have also learned the importance of discussing my ideas, doubts, and challenges, as approaching them from different perspectives often proves more fruitful for the project.

Throughout this process, I faced health challenges caused by multiple factors, which led to a cognitive stagnation. However, looking back, I now realize that overcoming these challenges was necessary for my personal growth, both professionally and in other aspects of my life. As I addressed these issues, the design process began to flow again.

For the final phase of the project, following the P4 presentation, my plans include incorporating the feedback received during P4, creating a model that will serve as the focal point of my presentation, and producing renders to visualize the architectural materialization of the project.

This project has also led me to reflect on my role as an architect, specifically in relation to this work. There is always an effort to redefine the significance of the architect within the design process, whether through the work of star architects or specialized practitioners. I have come to understand that the nature of the project, with all its components, can influence the approach, whether it is bottom-up or top-down.

However, I also recognize that the specific project at hand makes a significant difference. Rather than advocating for a particular specialization, I now believe that an architect can take on various roles, as long as those roles align with their own values. These values should guide their mission and the projects they pursue.

For this project, I've realized that, unlike the typical approach, the architect must maintain some level of connection with the users to offer their expertise. However, at a certain point, the architect must step back to avoid becoming a controlling force. This allows for full agency in the ongoing development of the project, giving space for the project to evolve in response to shifting societal needs.