In order to fully understand the complexity and urgencies of the social, economical and political background of the city of Bogotá, the research phase and site visit had been essential. After gaining an understanding about the immense differences in discipline between my western European background and working in Bogotá, it was crucial to undertake a change in the approach to the project and necessary to take a strong position operating as an architect.

Intervening in the neighbourhood of La Perseverancia, I am dealing with a neighbourhood with a very strong identity in terms of political orientation and history as the first working-class area in Bogotá and their strong bonds among each other through shared poverty and their outsider condition. Throughout the process of my project development, I had to ask myself what I was aiming for, who my project is made for and about possible (unintended) consequences of my intervention. Especially combined with me coming from a completely different background and operating in Colombia for the first time, it was very challenging to position myself within this context and to become clear about what my intervention must provide in order to justify it.

After having spent some time to become clear about the goal of the intervention - giving residences of La Perseverancia space to practice community life and the chance to up-value their perception from the city and better circumstanced neighbours, whilst at the same time giving the city a place to celebrate exchange (in terms of economics as well as conversation) - I came to the conclusion of seeing myself as a facilitator. As an architect I could identify spatial problems and react to them through a new spatial language. I am very aware of my limited influence as an architect on people’s behaviour and political action and know that I can only create possibilities of these to happen. My project is diverse in usage - it can be the place where a political debate takes places, and it functions as a marketplace at the same time. The place can give room for a concert or for art performances, it can be used for English lessons or for a lecture - the decision of usage is given to the people, and not made by me as a lecturing outsider.

I have gone through a long process of translating the intention of the project to a successful architectural language. After having had a clear site and programme from early on, it took me various trials before arriving at a satisfying formal and configurational language. Looking back I can say that in the end, the combination of site specific analysis, and research on reference projects, which have been feeding my intervention in a more abstracted way, made me able to make the right design decisions. Methodological, towards the p4, my design development has been an interrelation between these two approaches.

First, gaining a deep understanding of the marketplace in general was essential and the study of various markets throughout history and place have informed me a lot. I now realise that especially the case study of the Mercado de Girardot by German architect Leopold Rother from the 1940s has been very important. I see a parallel to my intervention in terms of cultural identity and way of intervening. The architecturally impressive and thoroughly designed yet robust structure he came up with, today is completely taken over by the people operating the market.
Realising that this a crucial aspect of designing a marketplace, relates to my own intervention, which follows the same idea of robustness and given-away ownership.

Equally important has been the thorough study of Sharoun’s work on concert halls. I have been intrigued by the principle of multifocality in Sharoun’s work and the theme of seeing and being seen has become a strong guideline for my design. The principle of overcoming the barrier between performers and viewers translates the idea of equality and togetherness. His work strongly represents liveliness and playfulness in a beautiful way by highlighting the event as the actual starting point for his design.

I introduce multiple architectural figures that represent the commons - figures that create permeability in multiple ways. The public market square, that sits along terraces on the sloped terrain of my site, frees the entire ground floor and becomes a public zone that works as an extension of the street. The theatre floats above the market square and works with the concept of multifocality - offering new and unexpected perceptions - these two layers allow for permeability also in the vertical direction. From above, the spectacle of the market can be watched, events can take place, integrated or separated from the market activity. Being a highly robust and easily accessible structure, the building itself invites people to occupy and appropriate it.

The project is also a critical response to the on-going problem-solving of the Bogotá administration, which in the past has demolished areas of poverty and criminality and left many people homeless and without prospects. In the context of this, my intervention is not only the new creation of an inclusive public sphere, but also challenges the way of thinking of existing politics by giving the marginalised a chance to up-value their self-esteem and appearance towards the outside.

The graduation lab is part of the larger investigation Constructing the Commons, which is crucial for the intention of my intervention. Generally, the city of Bogotá suffers enormously from economical inequality and social segregation that results in stigmatisation and criminality, combined with little public and equally available space within the city. My project is set within this wider social context and aims at achieving a highly permeable building that works as an oasis and thus creates an inclusive public sphere that actively works against the segregated city. The theme of the commons is readable in my aim of creating a bridge between the citizens of La Perseverancia and the city through the spectacle of selling and buying. By reproducing an agora or forum kind of program, the exchange of goods is elevated to the exchange of speech and performance.