

P3 Draft reflection 2024-04-03

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Studio: Architectural Design Crossovers

Architectural Design Crossovers Studio

The foodscape of a city is a complex set of systems and actors that is directly linked with the city through the acts of producing and consuming food. These acts shape not only the surrounding hinterland but also the environment, infrastructure and social make-up of a city. Through an integral architectural approach it is possible to demonstrate an alternative relationship between the city and its foodscape, and between consumer and the food they consume. One wherein there is no depletion. As this requires an interplay of multiple flows and actors it fits well within the Architectural Design Crossover studio.

Research and design

Both the research and design aspects of the project where continuously influences each other in a large feedback loop. Before the P1 the research was focused on the uncovering of the complexities of the foodscape and its current trends. This led to the main research questions which focuses upon how architecture can play a central role in the creation of a sustainable foodscape in Madrid. This main question along with the sub questions formed the concept of the project, the site selection, program and how these fit in the larger context of Madrid as well as how it can connect to the systems already present.

Between P2 and P3 the process shifted to one where research is supporting the design phase. This included in depth research to the selected site (with its existing buildings, park and their state) how the sustainable food practices would manifest themselves on site, material selection and techniques, and more. The research and design went hand in hand where the research would help determine design aspects and design aspects would pose new research questions.

The depth of this research would vary between the knowledge that was required to inform the design. Sometimes quick searches on common measurements would be enough and other time larger research into complex processes that are required to create food. The input from the mentors and people from the landscape department was also used to gather more information and feedback on the project as well as feedback from fellow students both within and outside of the studio. Even when I did not necessarily agree with the given input this often led to new questions or a different way to approach something, in the end given me new insights that I found very useful.

Until now this process has worked well in pushing the design continuously forward especially with the complexity of the topic (and the processes involved) as well as expanding my knowledge and interest within the topic. However, upon reflection there have been some missed opportunities such as the lack of engagement with the people of Madrid and their attitude surrounding the topic as a consequence of insufficient planning and a language barrier.

Design process

During the design process of this project the order in which different aspects were developed was radically different compared to that of previous projects that I have worked on. Instead of starting with a large master plan and then working towards smaller products finishing with the details the process was a lot less hierarchical. This starting focus on sections which were meant to demonstrate the different design aspects of the project was upon reflection a useful method to outline the core of what the project should be about and the relationship between them. Following this up with the design of details laid materiality and climate much more at the forefront of the design process than in the previous approach, allowing that to determine the direction of the project in place of a plan diagram. However, the lack of large-scale plans until a much later stage of the project does make me sometimes question if the design is 'going to fit' within the boundaries of the site or that some aspects of the program will have to be trimmed. In the end this turned out to be less of an issue than originally feared as both the site was large enough, the program flexible enough and the designed system multifunctional enough to accommodate any required modifications.

Project value

The relationship between the city and the land that feeds it has almost completely disappeared over the last century. This has negatively impacted the way food is valued which has caused negative consequences such as environmental degradation, disappearance of relationships and knowledge, and a worsening of both human and animal welfare. The focus of this project is to reestablish this lost relationship through an architectural projection that reintroduces historical conditions and practices and combines them with contemporary flows and actors to form a program that fits the 21st century.

Currently only a few of such projects in an urban environment that involve such a multitude of actors have been established. Even though this project will not be constructed it does however start a further exploration into this topic, combining a global problem with localized actors and environmental aspects. The approach and the concluding project will demonstrate how architecture can have a central role in the reestablishing the relationship between consumer and the food they consume, and thus the creation of a sustainable foodscape.

Transferability

The value of results lies in the way the topic is approached. There is a large collection of information available about foodscapes, urban agriculture etc. But the way this more global information is gathered, combined with localized research into actors, flows and site conditions to formulate a project that is both very much adapted to the local context but still aims to solve a larger problem is much more unique. This methodology can then be transferred and applied to different scenarios.