

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
UNDERGRADUATE CAPSTONE PROJECT
IN
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

SUBMITTAL FORM

BAABDAT / PROGRESSIVE SPACES

by

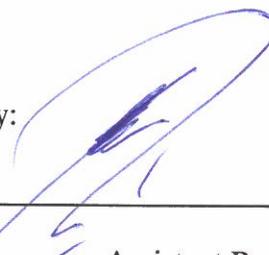
LÉA ZAYTOUN

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Capstone Project Coordinator: Yaser Abunnasr

Primary Advisor:
Mehran Madani
Secondary Advisors
Yaser Abunnasr, Imad Gemayel

Approved by:



Dr. Yaser Abunnasr, Assistant Professor
Department of Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management

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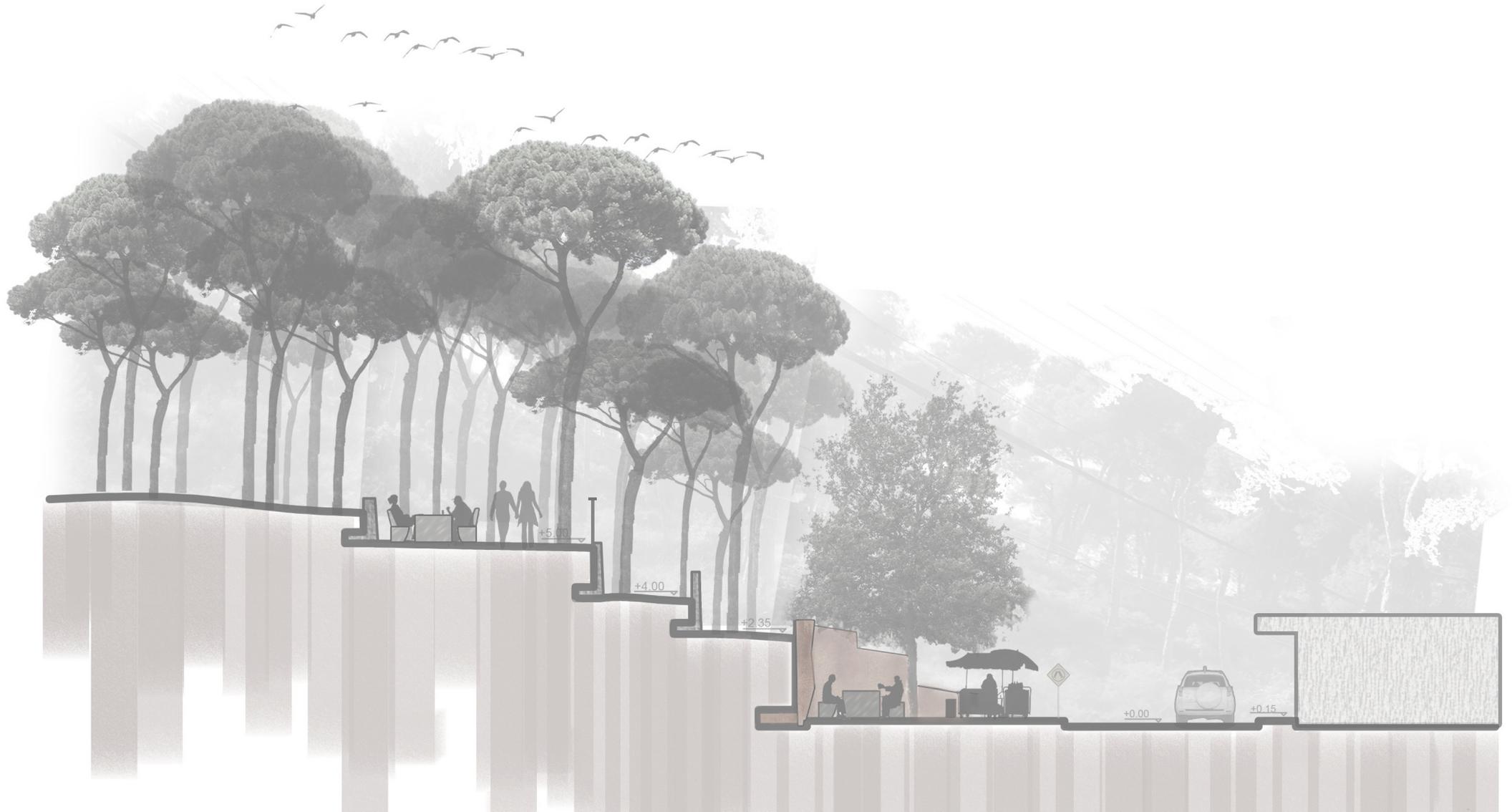
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BAABDAT / Progressive Spaces

LÉA ZAYTOUN / Final Research Project



BAABDAT / PROGRESSIVE SPACES
BY LÉA ZAYTOUN

LDEM 242 : FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT / SPRING 2016 / AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

INSTRUCTORS : YASER ABU NASR, IMAD GEMAYEL & MEHRAN MADANI

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THE CONTEXT

BAABDAT is a rural town located in Mount Lebanon, more precisely in the Northern section of the Metn region. It is 800 m above sea level and approximately 22 km away from the city of Beirut.

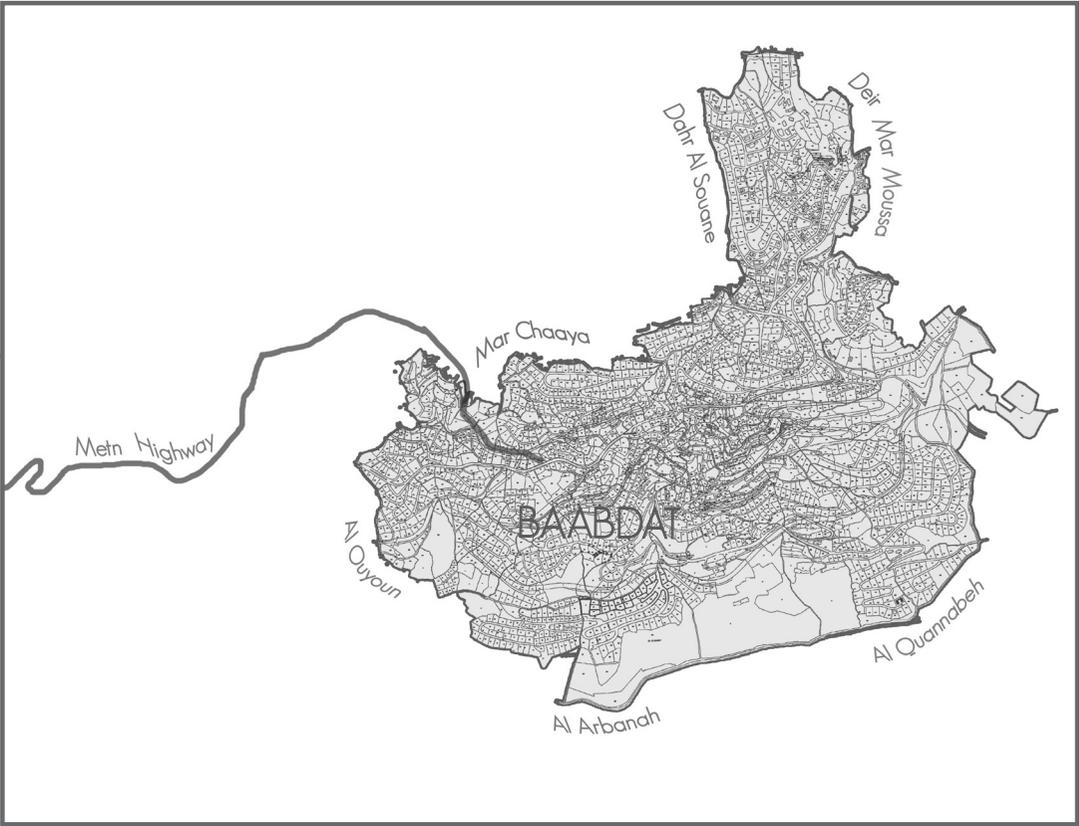


FIG. 1 General Context / 1:500,000

FIG. 2 Immediate Context / 1:50,000

HISTORY / CHRISTIAN ERA

The word Baabdat is thought to have derived from one of three possible terms: بيت عبدتو (Beit Abdeto or House of worship), بيت العبيدات (Beit Al Abidat or House of servants) and اب العبيدات (Ab al Abidat or Father of worksippers).

Indeed, Cananeans and Arameans were supposedly among the first settlers in Baabdat because ruins of their prehistoric temples of worship were found in the gallery of the main Spring of Baabdat - the Aarar.

Centuries after occupation by different civilizations, the town of Baabdat witnessed a **significant revival** following the defeat of the Memluks in 1516. Early Christians began settling in the town and as of 1893, the majority of Baabdat's were from the Latin Eastern and Maronite Eastern confessions.

Following the settlement of the first Christians families in the 16th century, **economic and demographic booms** have been witnessed. The "place of worship" became the "place of development".

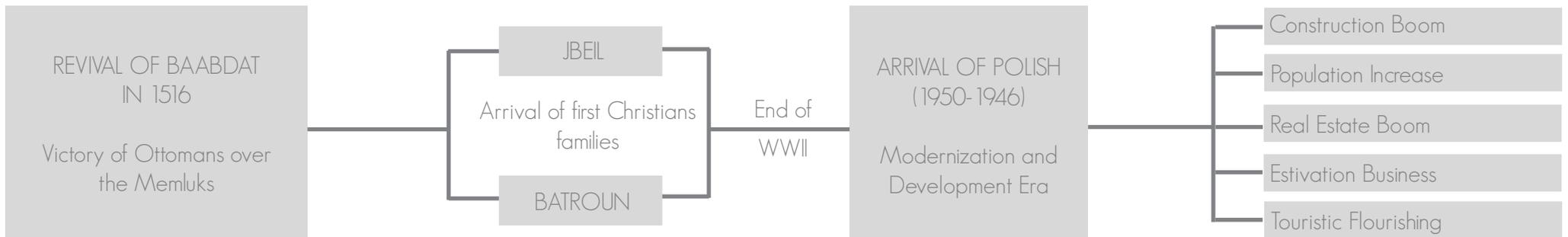


FIG. 3 Christian Era Evolution

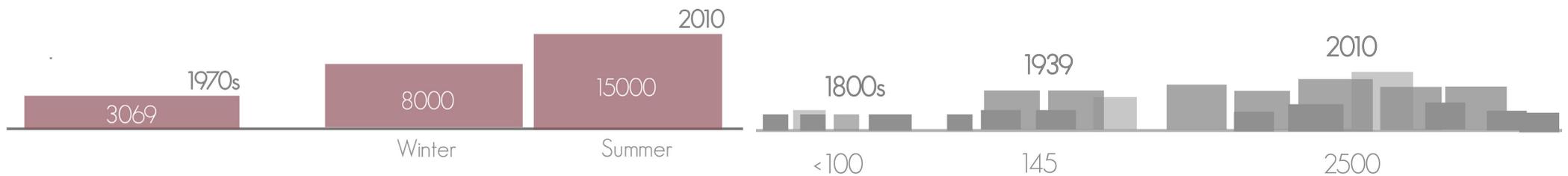


FIG. 4 Demographic & Real-Estate Boom

HISTORY / ECONOMIC EVOLUTION

The economy of Baabdat has witnessed one **major transition** in the 1950s, moving from an agricultural background to the freelance and service sector. This resulted from the **post-Christian settlements**, at a time when Baabdat was flourishing as an estivation town with skyrocketing real-estate development and demographic upsurge.

Thus, as a response to the evident modernization and development, local Baabdatis have resorted to a more suitable form of economic activities that is still applied presently .

Nowadays, the agricultural sector doesn't constitute more than 3% of the local economy in Baabdat.

AGRICULTURE & INDUSTRY

Silk factories & production (exported to France) , production of grape molasses, wine & arak. Working in the pine and oak forests.

FREELANCE & SERVICES

Tourism, real estate development, house rental, commercial services, banking, freelance jobs (lawyers, doctors, hair-dressers...)

1950s

FIG. 5 Transition of Sector



FIG. 6 Baabdat from 1920s to 1990s

02 PROJECT BRIEF

THE ISSUE

Ever since the construction of the **Metn Highway in 2005**, the **central region of Baabdat** has witnessed a series of **disruptive events** which have impacted the **local economy and quality of life**.

The highway passing through Baabdat has created an effective shortcut for people heading towards Eastern towns of Lebanon (Zahle, Bekaa, Tarshish...). As a result, the local main road of Baabdat witnesses severe traffic congestion, noise pollution and critical road safety. This situation is predominant in the months of May to October (during estivation period).

The infrastructure of the rural town is unadapted to heavy performances and cannot accomodate for different forms of mobility. Thus, the main road - once a pedestrian street linking people to the Square - has lost its **socio-spatial dynamics, walkability and local value** that were once predominant during the booming period of the 1950s. **Nowadays, this infrastructure caters strictly for one activity: Vehicular Transportation.**



THE IMPACT

- **The absence of a streetscape scheme** along the busy main road has rendered it dangerous for residents to circulate in neighbouring areas when practicing their everyday rituals.

- **The distortion of the Town Square** due to its transformation into a chaotic roundabout, with no possibility of socio-spatial happenings and safe pedestrian circulation.

- **An extensive disconnection to the central region of Baabdat** is witnessed on either side of the neighboring residencies.

- **The absence of a defined cultural and social lifestyle.** Activities are restricted to mundane happenings (grocery shopping, running errands, working etc.).

- **The absence of adequate recreational, accessible and open spaces** is due to the increasing real-estate development - resulting from the urbanization of Baabdat.

- **A Loss of character and distortion of rural quality** due to the introduction of urban patterns.



PROJECT STATEMENT

Based on the previous points discussed, regarding the existing issue and conditions of the site, the infrastructure of the town will be used as a tool to progressively introduce new pedestrian and social motions along a significant section of the main road.

This will be achieved by :

- Creating a pedestrian friendly environment through a proper streetscape scheme.
- Providing flexible and accessible open spaces along the main road to accommodate the new lifestyle.
- Reconfiguring the town Square to reclaim its local value.
- Provide a public transportation system to reduce the use of cars within the Town.
- Re-direct the highway (Bypass) to decrease vehicular congestion and restrict the main road mostly to locals.





SITE LOCATION

For this research project, the chosen site within Baabdat consists -more or less- of a linear segment along the central strip of the main road.

This strip includes a variety of significant spaces such as: The town square (SEHA), strips of commercial shops and markets, a public garden, and the entrance to / exit from Baabdat at the level of the highway.

The main road can lead to the town of Broumana (left) on one hand, and to the town of Bikfaya (right) on the other hand.

On the other hand, given the presence of such spaces within that specific strip, human activity is relatively predominant. Yet, gradually with the years, the existing activities have become a burden and challenge to most of the local community.

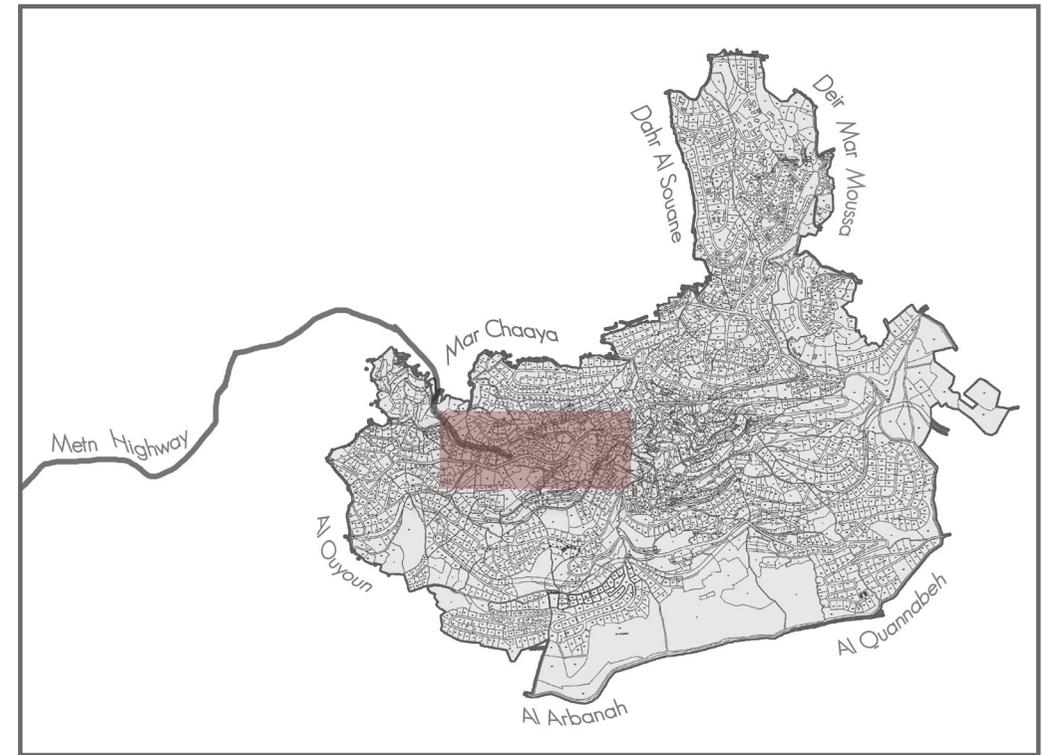


FIG. 7 Site Location / 1:20,000



FIG. 8 Site Full Elevation

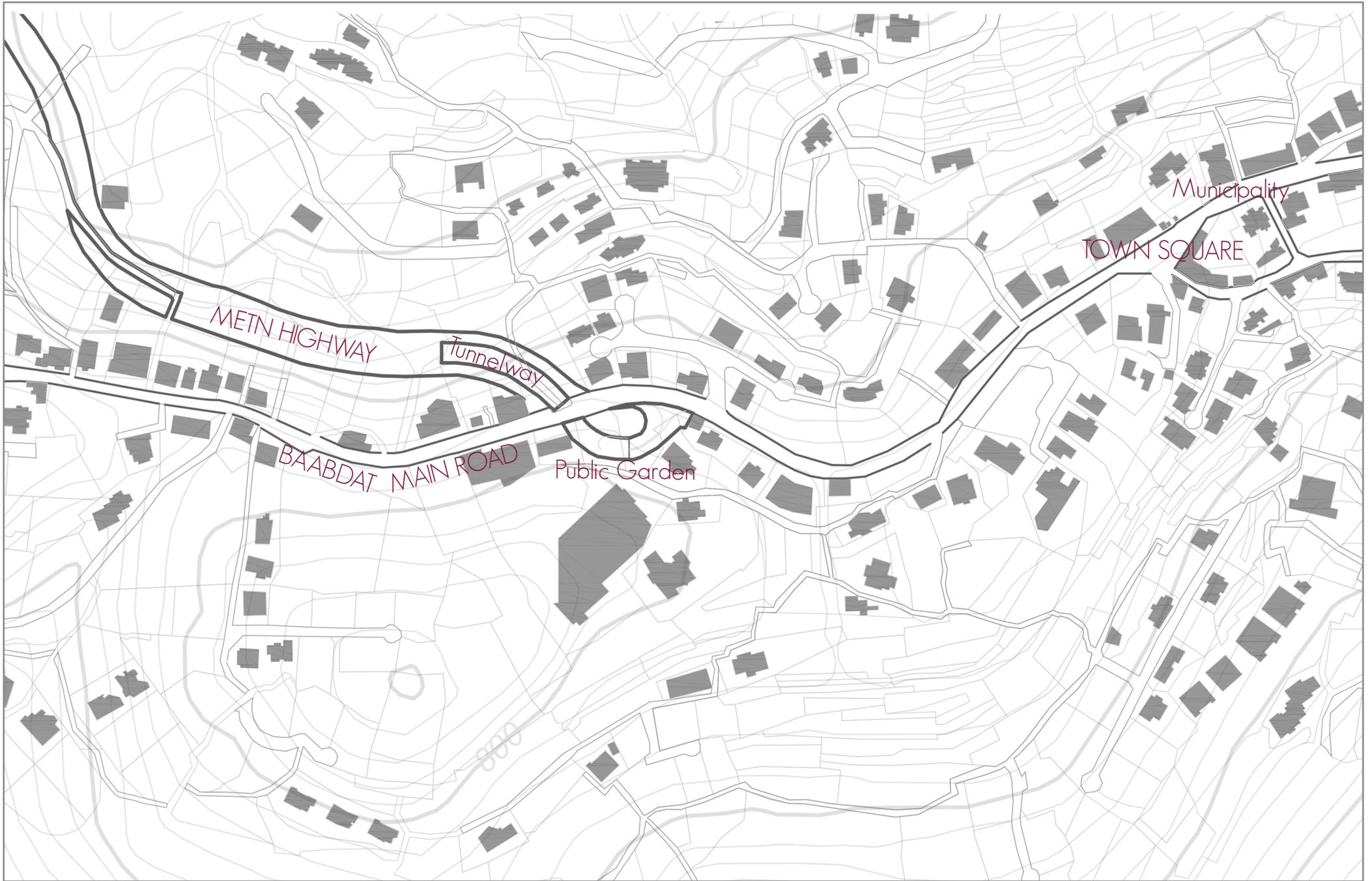


FIG. 9 Site Plan / 1:3000

03 SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENT FEATURES

The study of the chosen site began by **inventorying the different functions or features** which characterize the main road; these will eventually serve as a support for the original project statement and future concept.

In parallel, those specific features were **analyzed** to assess their impact on the local community and existing spatial configuration. Given that the road can be assessed from different perspectives, we can - for future purposes - consider the theoretical concept of transforming this infrastructure into a **hybrid public landscape**. Therefore, after many site visits and documentations, three main features were extracted for the study of the site:

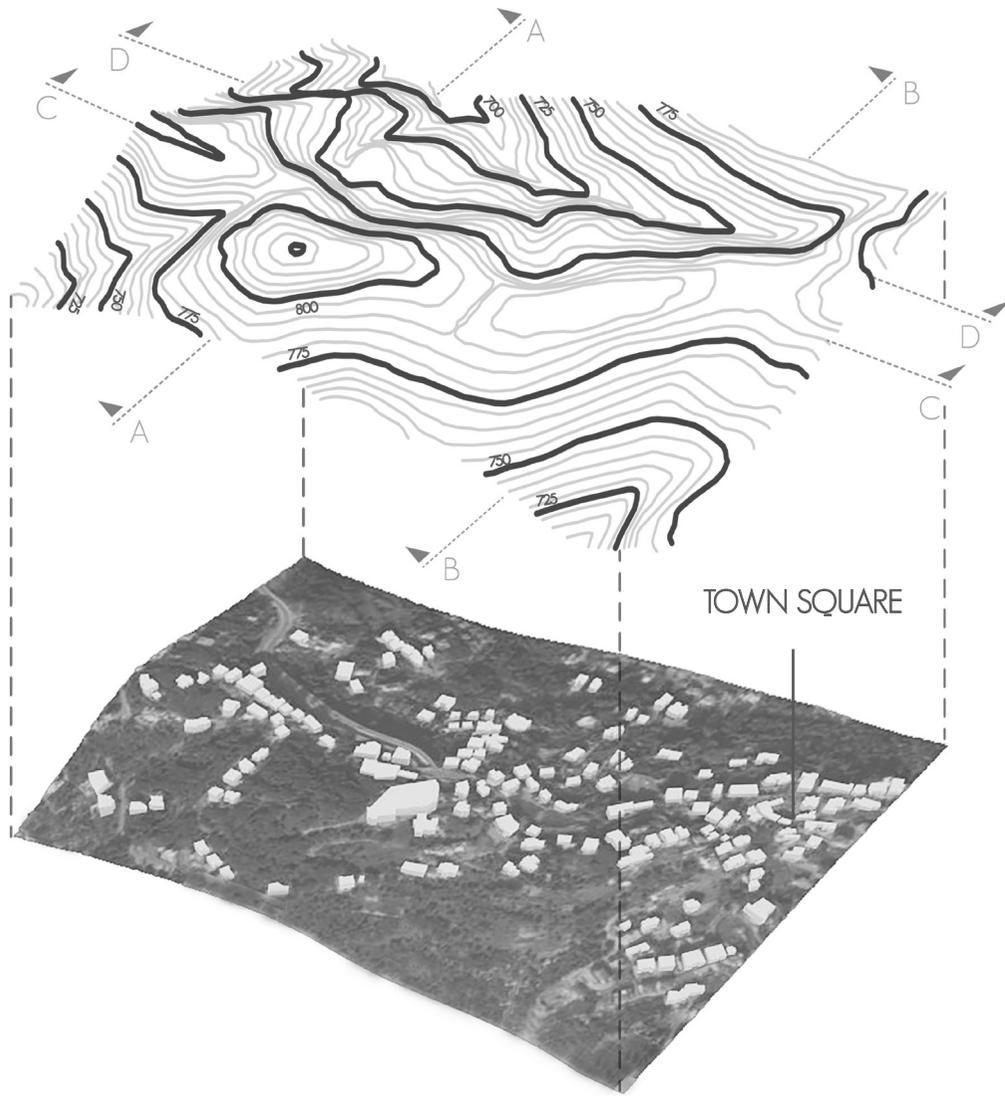
- Topographic features
- Automotive features
- Pedestrian features
- Land use features

Each feature serves a specific function and has a certain level of importance within the hierarchy of the infrastructure. In the following pages, the site inventory and analysis will allow a better understanding of the following points:

- What is prioritized within the infrastructure
- The relationship between the different modes of circulation
- The existing use of the space and its impact on locals
- The private/ public features of the infrastructure



FIG. 10 Public Plaza Above Highway Tunnel



Baabdat is characterized by a **hilly landscape**, with a gradual sloping down - from South to North. The road, going from East to West, is more or less flat with an elevation that I will consider as 0.00 for practical purposes.

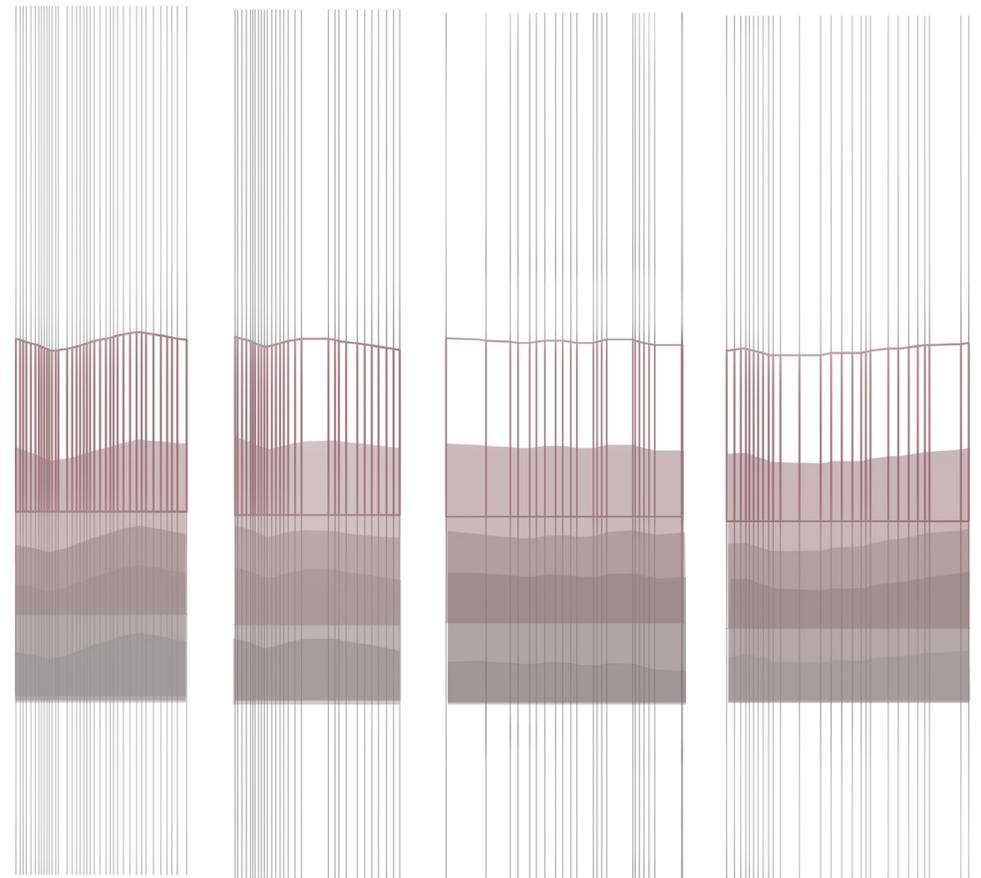
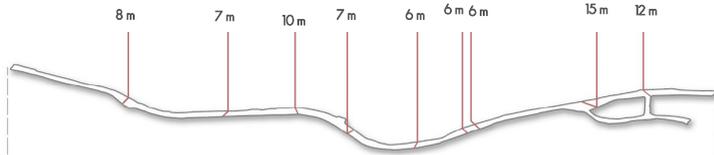


FIG. 11 Site Plan / Hilly Landscape

FIG. 12 Extracted Sections / Consistent Forms

INVENTORY / AUTOMOTIVE FEATURES

Road Dimensions

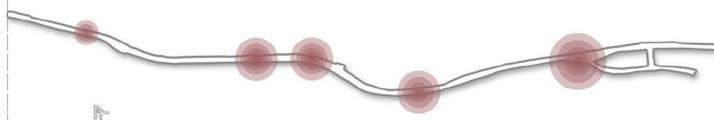


Parking Spaces

- Formal
- Informal

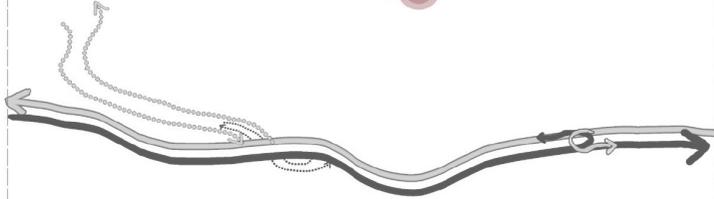


Congestion Zones



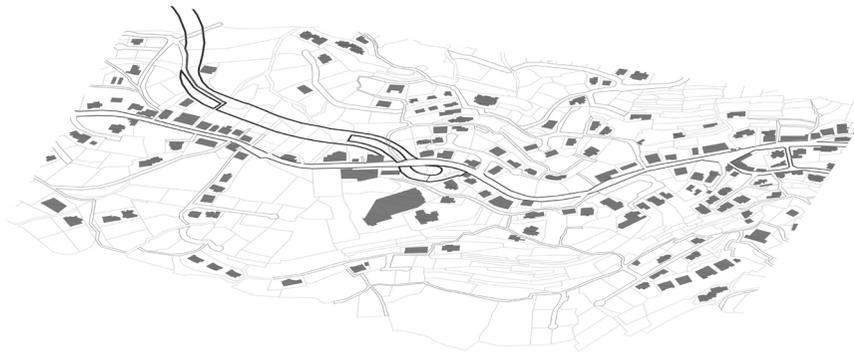
Car Circulation

- To Broumana
- To Bikfaya
- Roundabout
- Highway In/Out
- Tunnel In/Out



Road Typologies

- Secondary
- Primary
- Highway



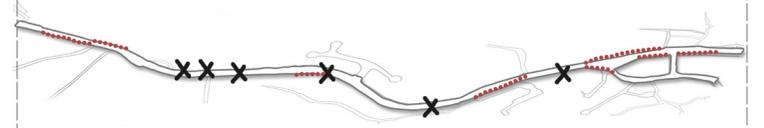
INVENTORY / PEDESTRIAN FEATURES

Sidewalks

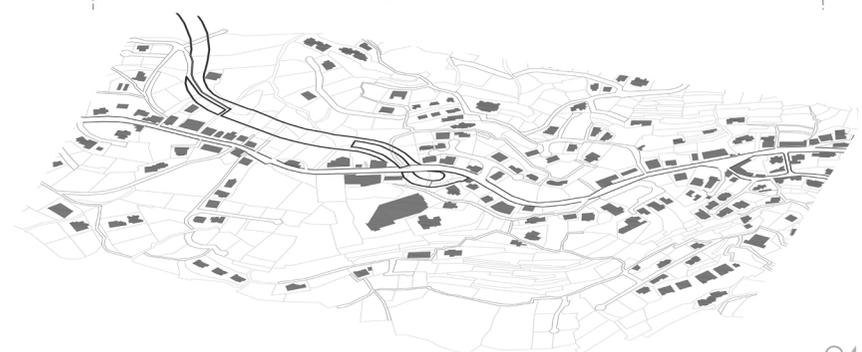


Obstacles

- ✕ Punctuations
- ⋯ Car Lanes



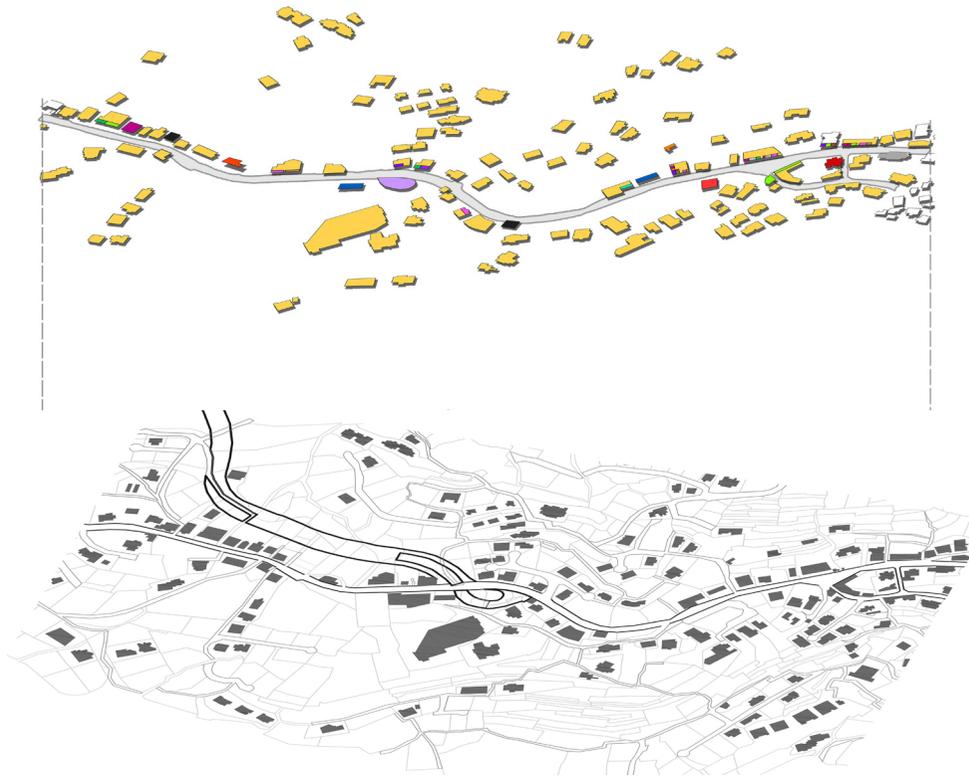
Human Activities



INVENTORY / LAND USE FEATURES



FIG. 13 Mixed Use hub



Commercial

- Clothes & Accessories
- Hair & Beauty Salons
- Laundry
- Grocery Store & Markets
- Home Supplies
- Pharmacy
- Restaurants
- Stationary, Digital services
- Gaz Station
- Bank & Money Transfer
- Construction Supplies

Residential

- Households

Recreational

- Public Garden

Municipal

- Baabdat Municipality

Public Utility

- Telecom Center

Offices

- Real Estate
- Translator

Others

-

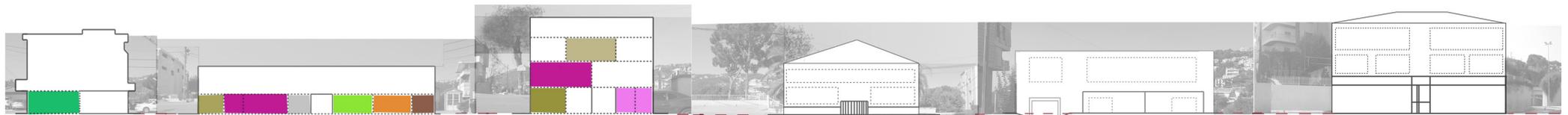
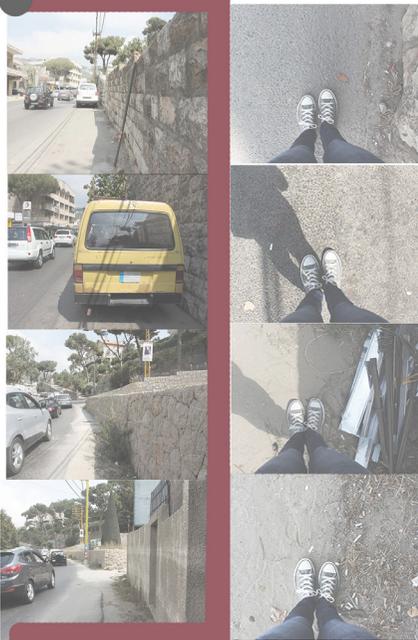
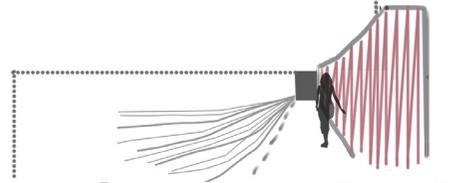


FIG. 14 Mixed Use / Diagrammatic Overview

Towards Square



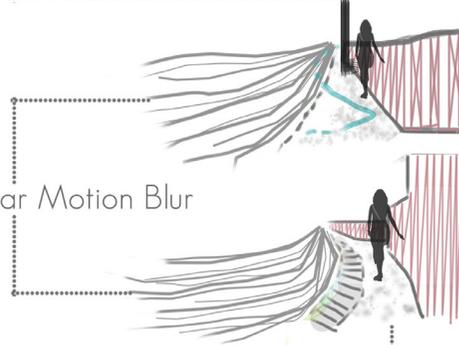
Spatial Constriction



Disruptive Patterns



Vehicular Motion Blur



Improvised Edges

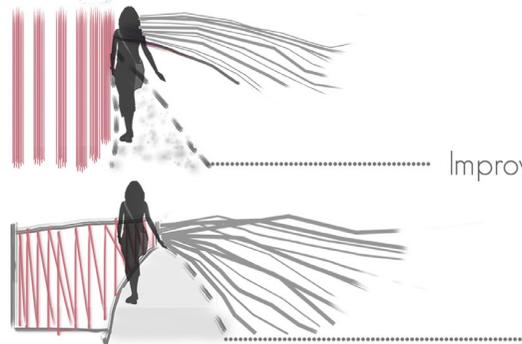


FIG. 16 Vehicular Privilege

Next to Tunnel Entrance

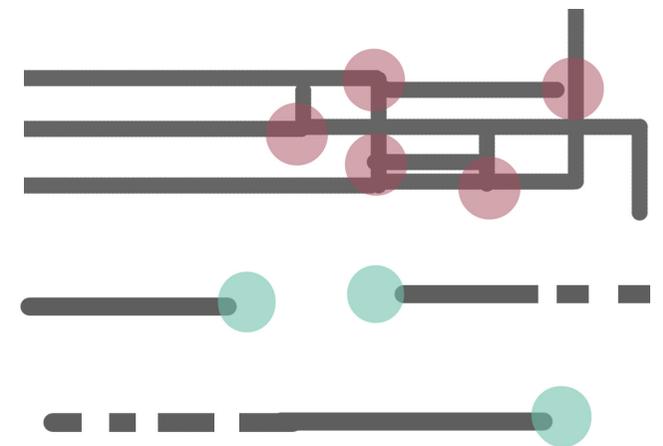


FIG. 15 The Walking Experience

FIG. 17 Contradicting Patterns

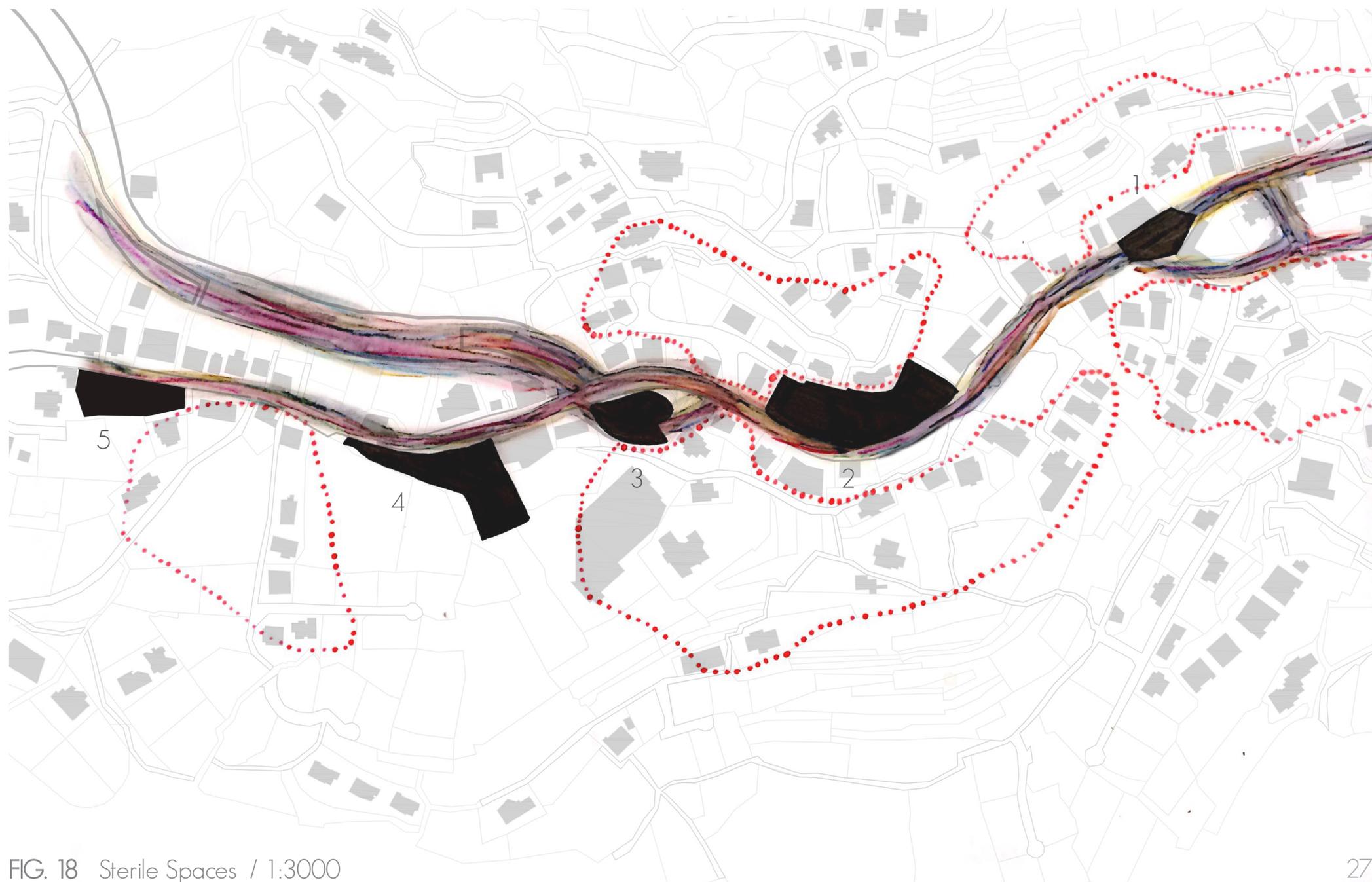


FIG. 18 Sterile Spaces / 1:3000



1



4



2



5



3

- 1 Town Square: Loss of character
- 2 Pending Construction Site
- 3 Public Plaza Above Highway Tunnel
- 4 Woodland: Informal Parking
- 5 Semi-Woodland: Informal Parking

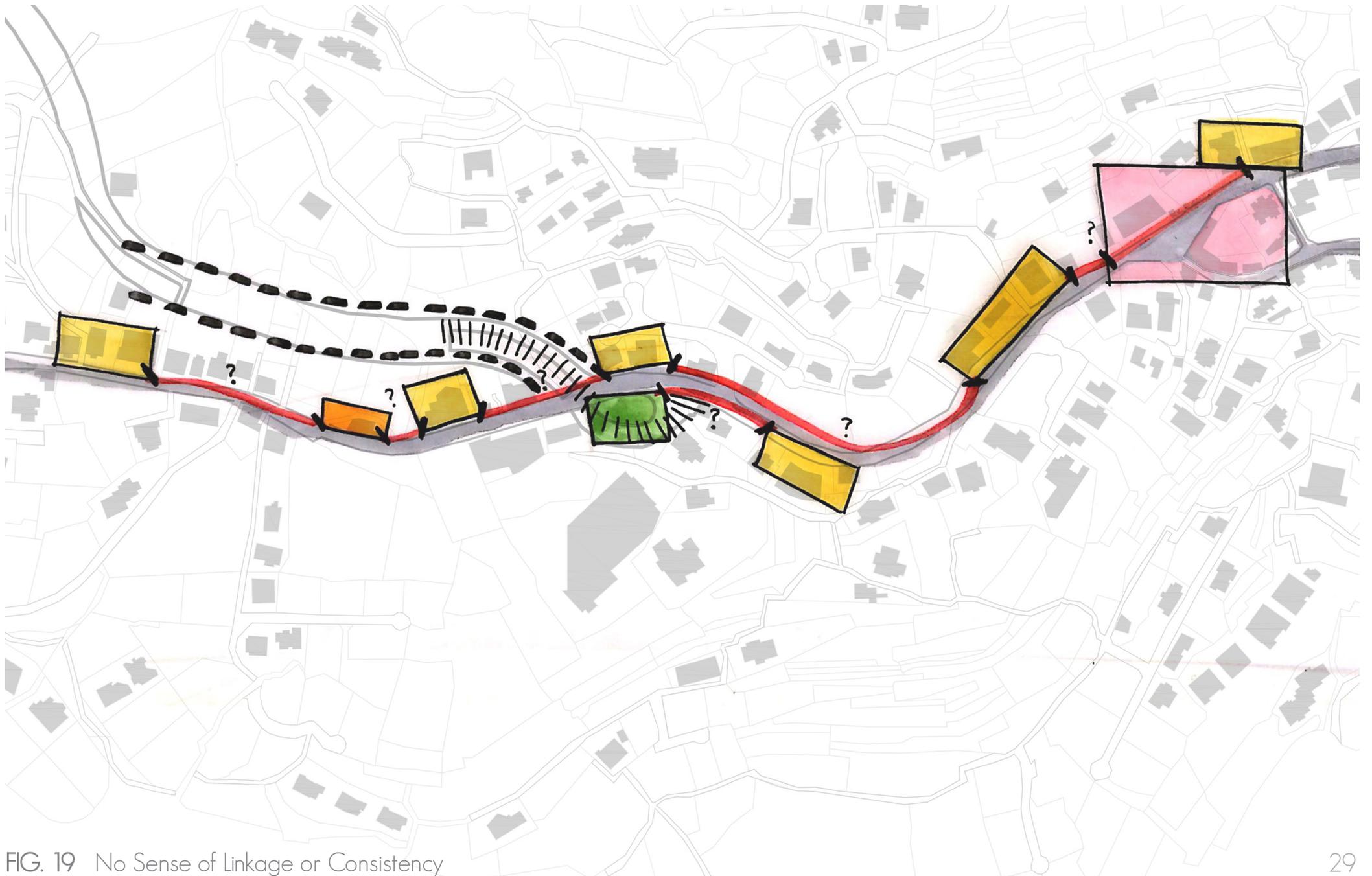
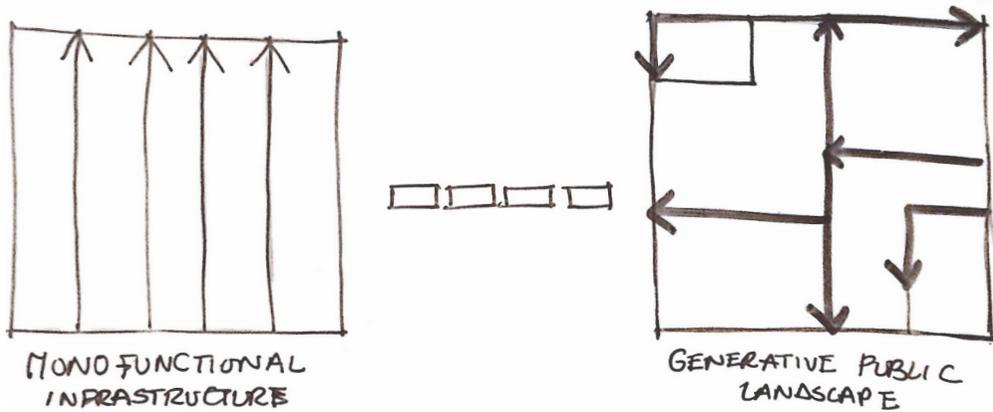


FIG. 19 No Sense of Linkage or Consistency

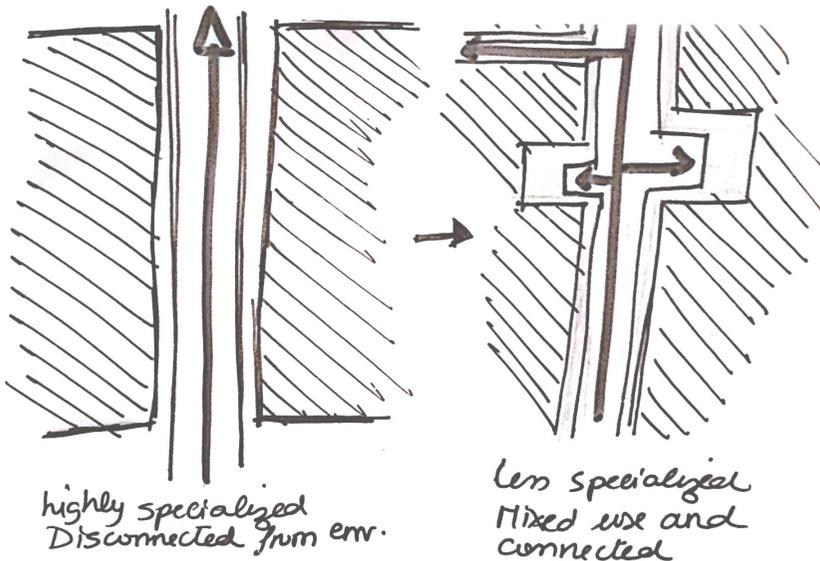
04 THEORETICAL MODELS

INFRASTRUCTURE OF MOVEMENT / FORMULATING THE GUIDELINES

After creating the different matrices, the theoretical model had to be narrowed down further by extracting the most relevant points that will serve as a foundation to the Infrastructure of Movement.



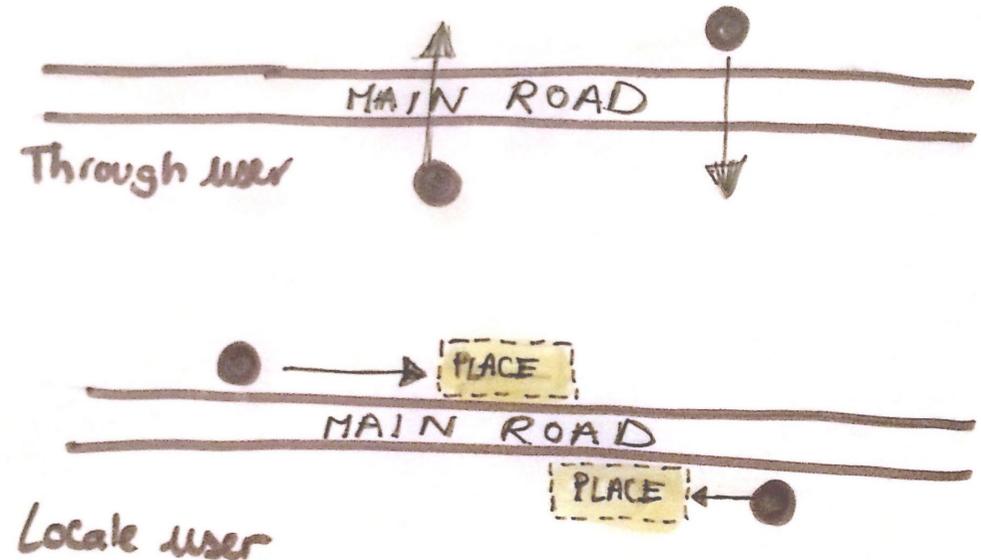
(1)



(2)

Each extracted idea was illustrated with a diagram that stimulated the thinking process, allowing a better understanding of relations and configurations. Therefore, the three main points can be defined as the following:

- Rethinking mundane landscapes of infrastructure (1)
- A shift in P.O.V : Pedestrian perspective (2)
- The relationship between the infrastructure and surrounding (3)



(3)

PERFORMATIVE URBANISM / EXTRACTING THE APPROACH

This concept is pioneered by James Corner, who defines performative urbanism as a tool to design spaces which are “prepared grounds”. In other words, creating spaces that are **flexible for programmed and unprogrammed activities**. Performative Urbanism looks at the way in which people will colonize the spaces offered to them.

The idea of creating prepared grounds that invite unexpected activities is relevant to the case of Baabdat, since the **social dynamics have been completely wiped out in recent years**. On another hand, the rapid urbanization of the central region is destabilizing the local character and quality of life. We can say that the site has acquired a sort of **dual identity: Urban and Rural**.

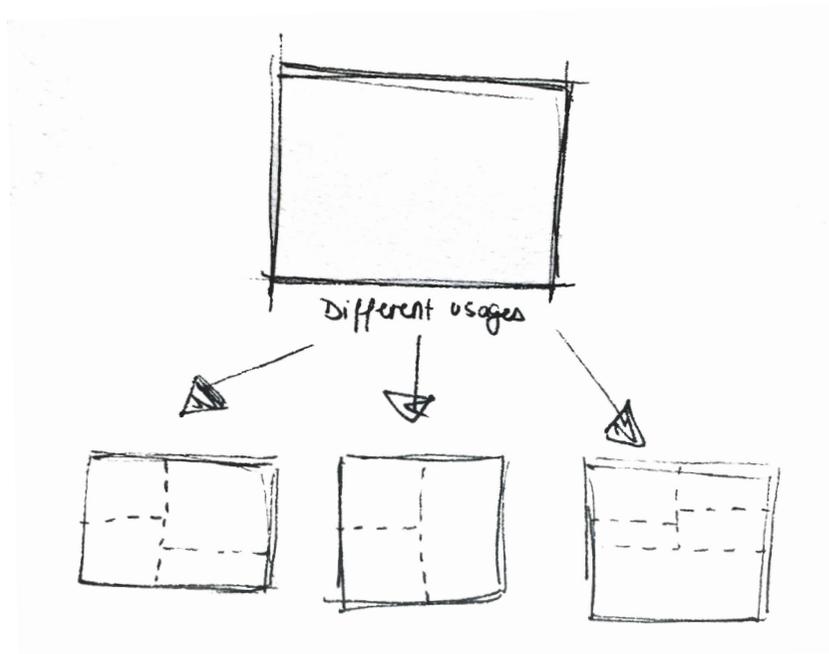


FIG. 21 Interpreting the Use of Space

Therefore, a common ground should be met when designing the function, configuration and theme of the different spaces.

The concept of performative urbanism is also a reflection of trial and error, whereby activities are tested and improvised by the users in order to give them the liberty to define the spaces in their own way - **to allow them to introduce new social patterns from their own interpretation of space**.

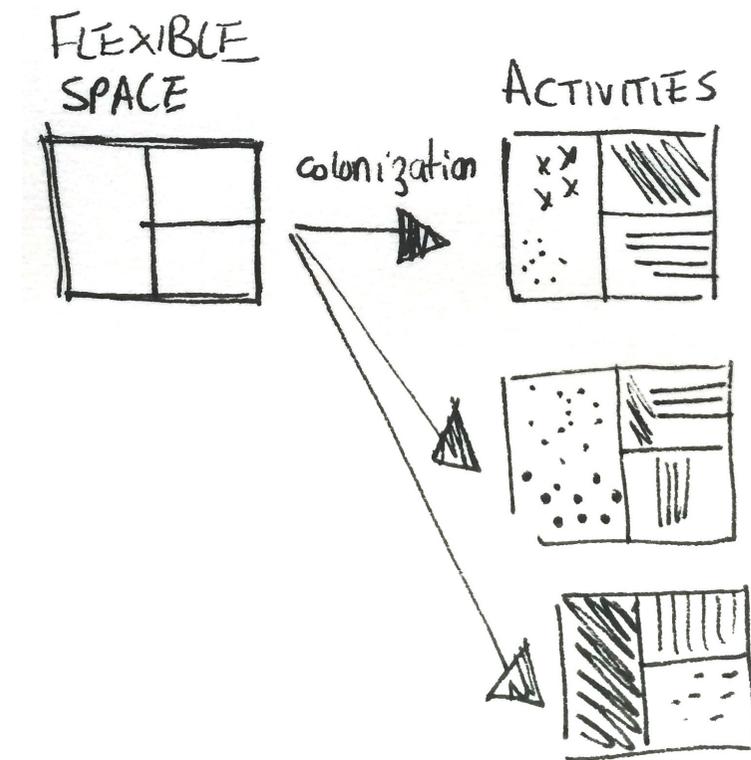


FIG. 22 Tactical Approach: Unpredictable Usages

05 CASE STUDIES RESEARCH

QUEENS PLAZA (US, 2012) / INFRASTRUCTURE AS PUBLIC LANDSCAPES

Location

Queens, New York

Designers

WRT (Philadelphia), Marguy Ruddik (Design Lead)

Size

0.6 hectar plaza/ 2km streetscape

Problematic

Queens Plaza was a hostile industrial area. Traffic congestion, screeching noise from the elevated railway, and chaotic vehicular circulation made it a critical destination for pedestrians and cyclists.

Aim

Create a hybrid urban infrastructure that integrates transportation, ecology, recreation and art for a better quality of life.



Design approach and guidelines:

- Storm water management: Half acre urban wetland and a 2km streetscape along the roads with trees and swales.
- Reduce traffic load and danger: Defined path for each mode of transportation and proper traffic signals.
- Social cohesion: Invite people to linger in the wetland area and 1.5 acre park through walkways and benches.
- Economic sustainability: Reusing demolished 73 000 sq.ft of concrete as part of the design of the wetland and streetscape.
- Overall safety: Designated cycling lanes and pedestrian paths, as well as proper lighting for the night.
- Aesthetical quality: Integrating creative patterns and use of concrete along the streetscape.
- Improved everyday life: Cooler setting, clean air and water integrated in the design for safety and well-being.





FIG. 23 Diagrammatic Section: Road/ Streetscape

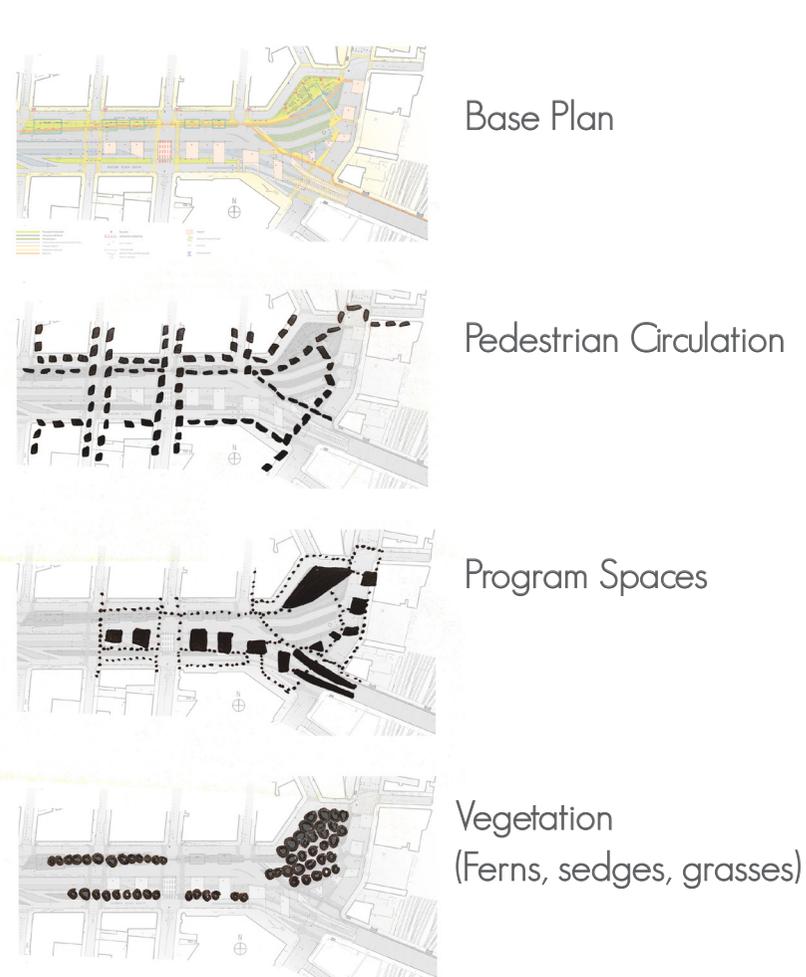


FIG. 24 Main Design Layers

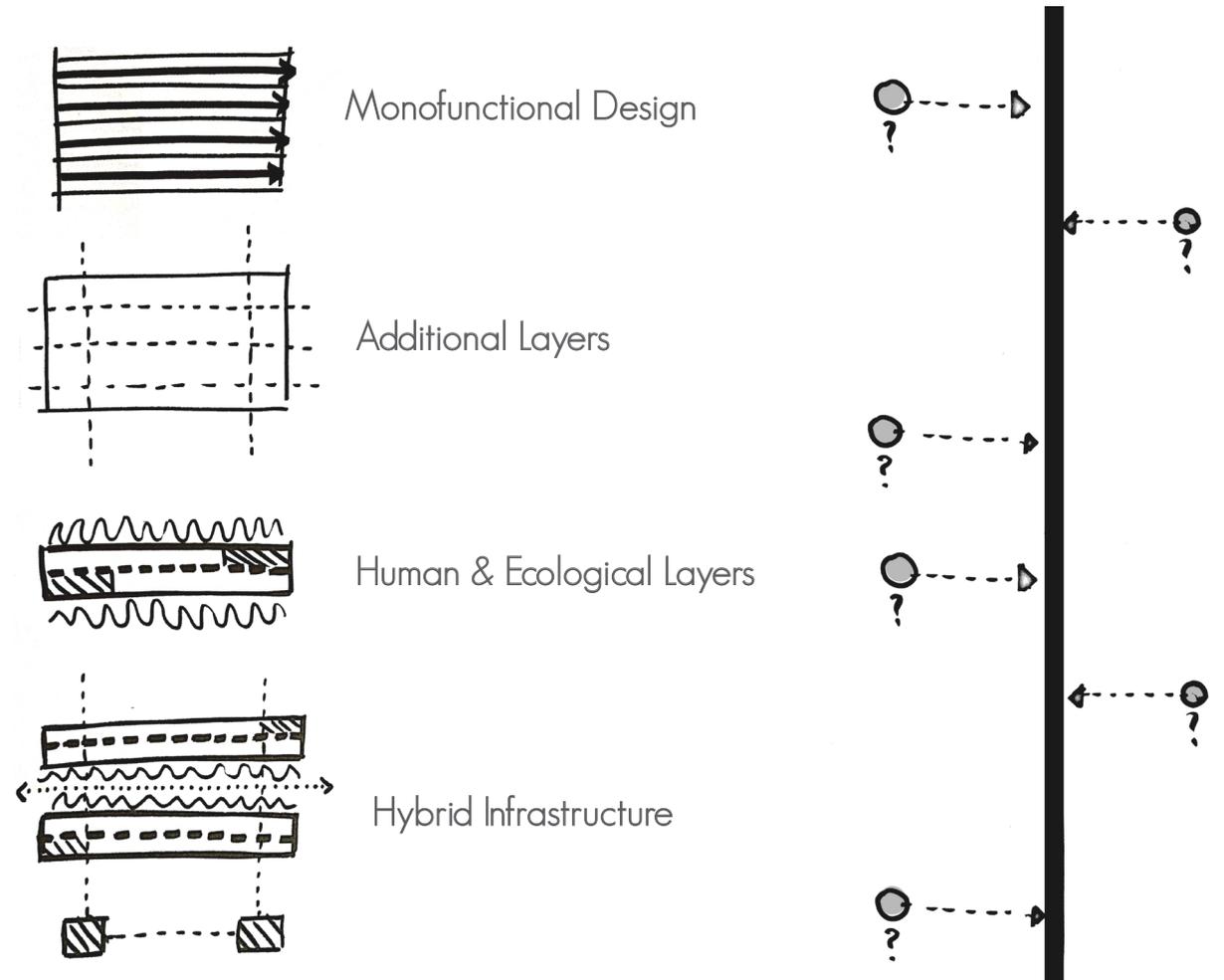


FIG. 25 Interpretive Diagrams: The Process

KIKUCHI POCKET PARKS (JAPAN, 2012) / REDEFINING THE TOWN CHARACTER

Location

Kikuchi - City, Kumamoto

Architects

Takao Shiotsuka Atelier

Aim

Revitalizing the character of the town through an innovative journey along the three different spaces, each with its own spatial experience and activities. Creating new “squares” each time.

Design approach and guidelines:

Creating three distinct pocket parks that vary in terms of spatial configuration and use.

- Site A (Kiriake): Creation of three basins which symbolize the puddles of water that used to form naturally in the ground. The use of white stone and minimalist outdoor furniture suggests a primitive scenery, a reminder of the traditional zen garden.

- Site B (Yokomachi): A park of flow and exchange. The benches bend and warp along the site, ultimately representing the pedestrian movement and guide of the activity.

- Site C (Kamimachi): Pending state. Located in the historic preservation district.



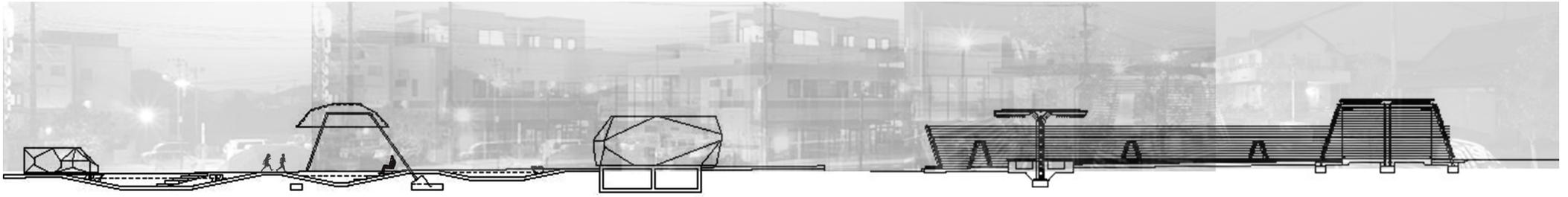
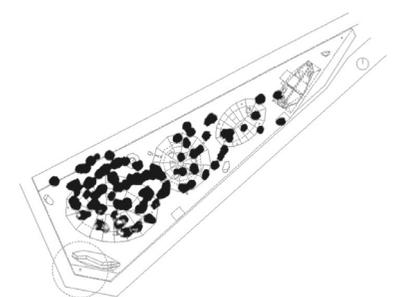
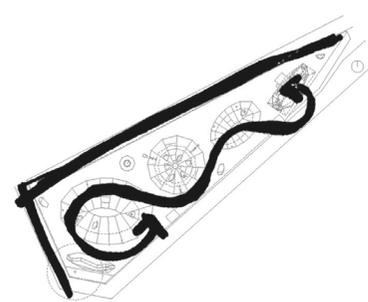
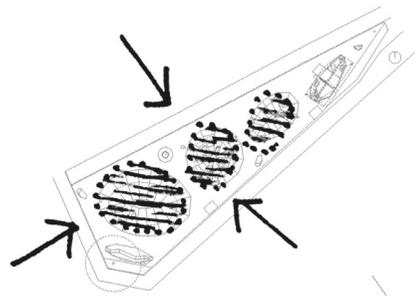
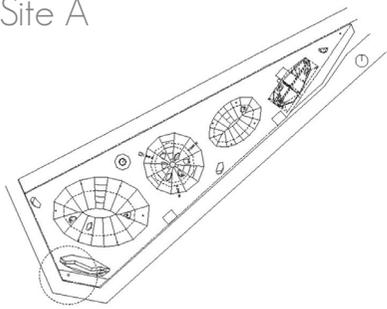


FIG. 26 Diagrammatic Section: Connections

Base Plans

Site Analysis

Site A



Site B

Stillness vs. Motion

Multi-Spatial Configuration

Concentration Points

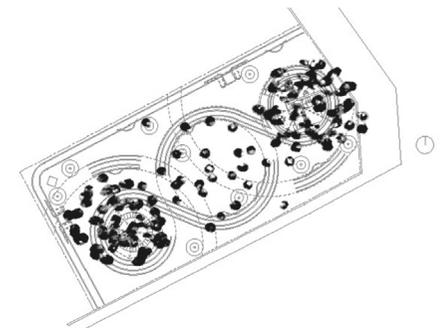
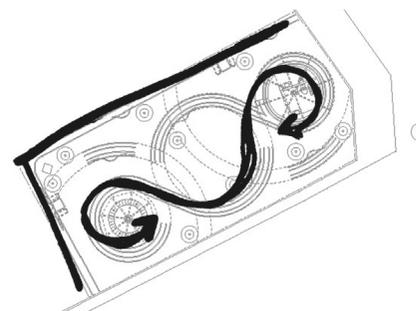
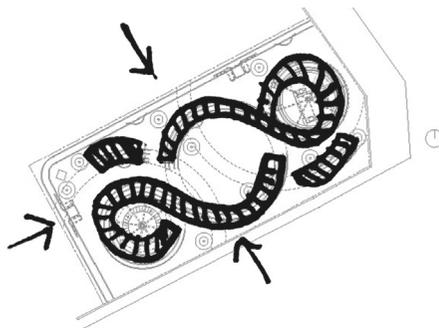
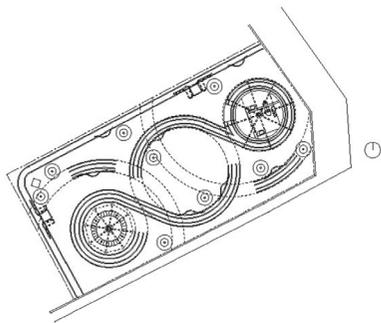


FIG. 27 Interpretive Diagrams : The Experience

NEW ROAD BRIGHTON (UK, 2007) / RECLAIMING THE STREETS

Location

Brighton, United Kingdom

Designer

Landscape Projects

Cost

1.75 million pounds

Client

Brighton & Hove City Council

Problematic

Parts of the city which are sandwiched between buildings are inaccessible, neglected, or suffer from vehicular congestion.

Aim

Reclaiming the street as a people-centric space, dominated by different pedestrian activities and programs where vehicles are also allowed access in moderation.

Design approach and guidelines

-Hierarchy: Pedestrian and bikers priority is reinforced; vehicles are allowed access at low speed and numbers.

- Visual quality: Bringing awareness to users regarding their surroundings by using distinct paving textures for pedestrian/drivers.

Providing an extra layer of information with the changes in tones, colors and finishes of paving alongside the street furniture.

-Night activity: The street has a vibrant night use, thus lighting design was a crucial element within the proposal.





FIG. 28 Diagrammatic Section

Rendered Plan

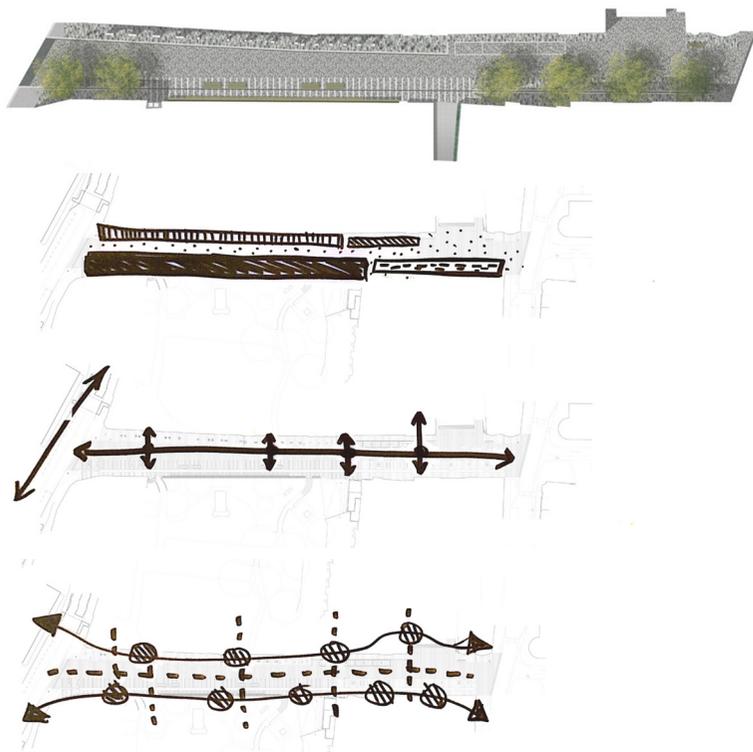
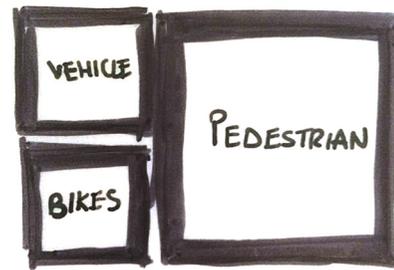


FIG. 29 Important Layers

New Hierarchies



Hierarchies within hierarchies?

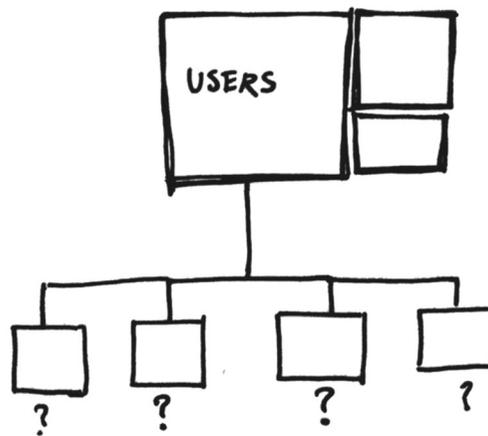
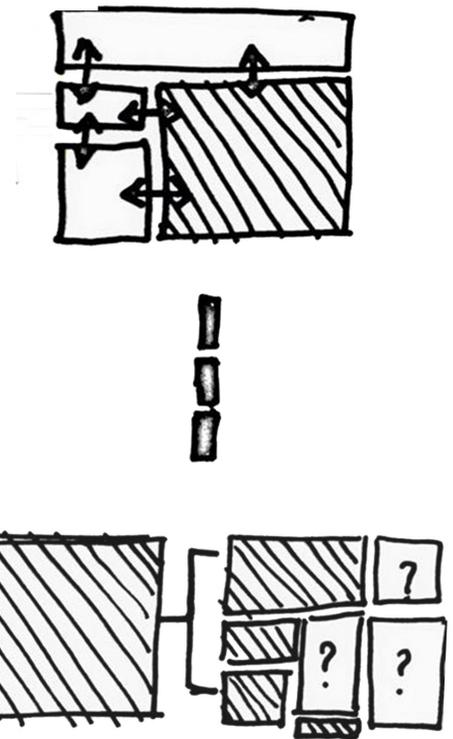


FIG. 30 Interpretive Diagrams: The Missing Links

ST CHARLES SQUARE (FRANCE, 2009) / SQUARE REVIVAL

Location

Marseilles, France

Landscape Firm

Ilex Paysages & Urbanisme

Area

1.8 ha

Client

Euroméditerranée

Problematic

Revitalize the character of the square station

Aim

Introducing dynamism and aesthetical qualities into an area that was considered an arid, and monotonous cityscape.

Design Approach and Guidelines

- Vegetation: Creating cool areas for respite and visual framing
- Levels: Recreate the fluidity and movement of the square
- Neatness: White limestone was used in a homogenous manner to confer sobriety, distinctiveness and elegance.

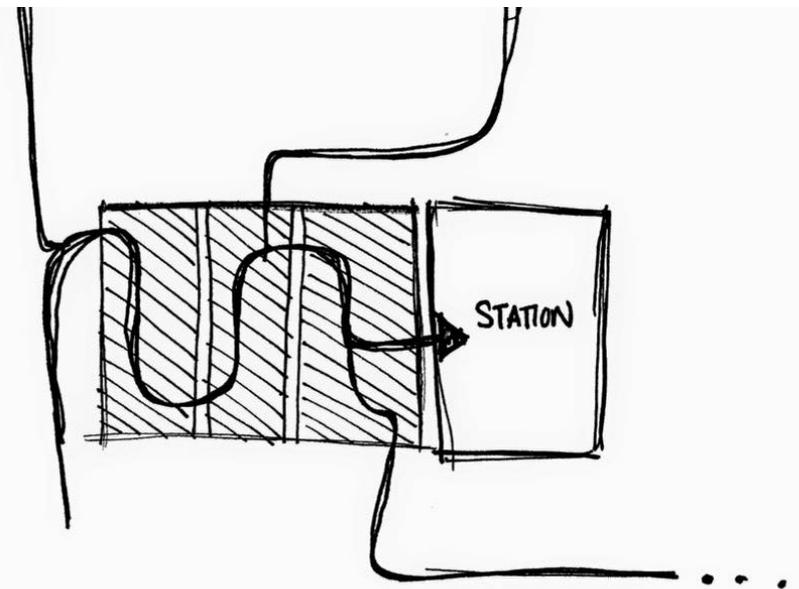


FIG. 31 Full Pedestrian Access

06 CONCEPT: PROGRESSIVE SPACES

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT / TRANSITION & GRADATION

The concept was developed on the basis of **initiation and decentralization**, which was later on translated into **transition and gradation**. The process began by dividing the site into its **horizontal and vertical features**: The linear road and the spaces across. Then, each division was assigned one of the two concepts: The horizontal layer became the gradation, and the vertical layer became the transition.

On this basis, the concept was formulated as follows:

The site, a patched and sterile landscape, will be stitched again through a progressive design that will link all spaces and activities in two fundamental ways:

- Gradation along the streetscape.** Users will observe a play on intensity when they start their journey from either point of the site borders (Town square or entrance from Broumana).
- Transition from the streets to the open spaces.** The configuration of the streetscape will begin melting into the open space, creating new lines and functions that the user will discover step by step.

In other words, locals will be able to rediscover the central region of the Town.



FIG. 32 Transition / Across the Spaces

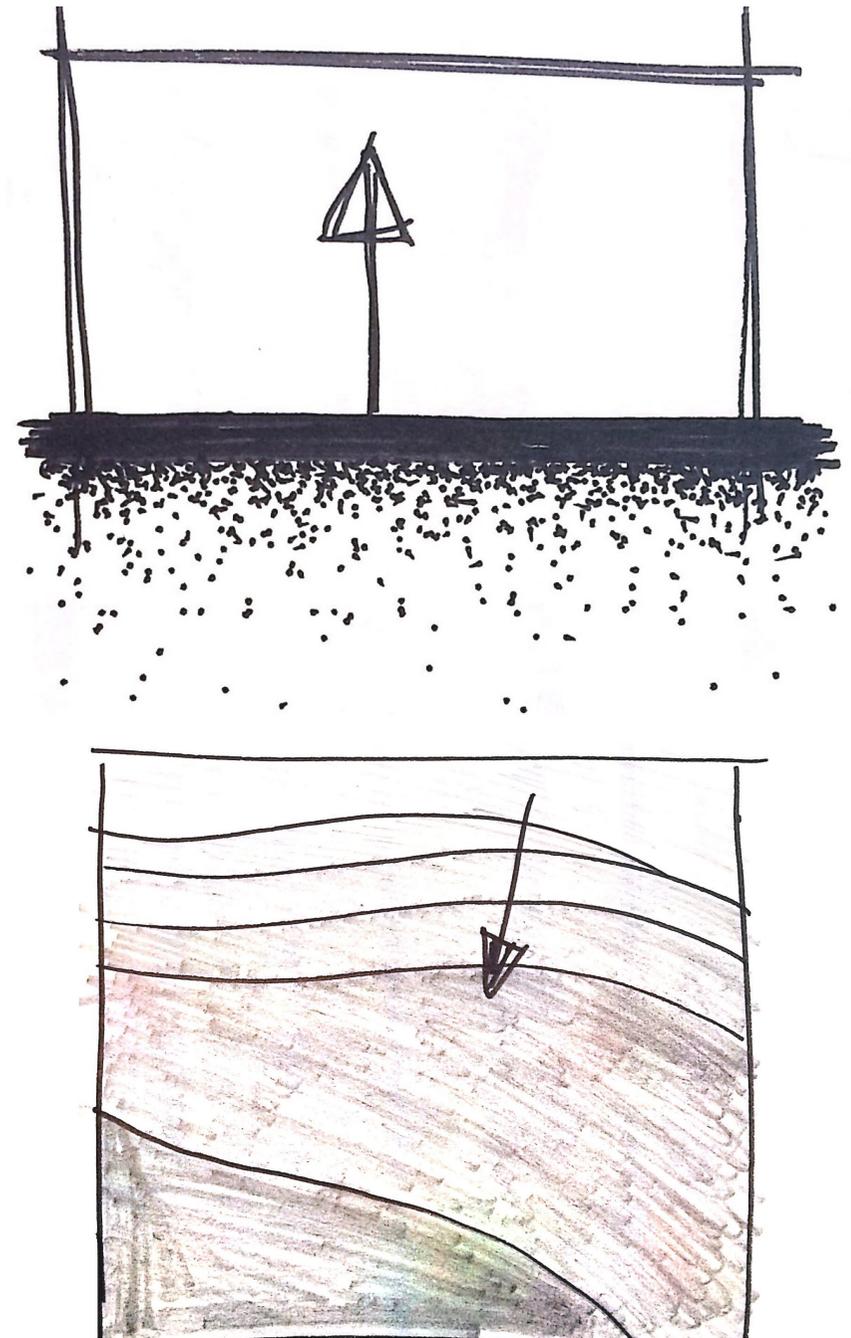


FIG. 33 Transition / Diagrams

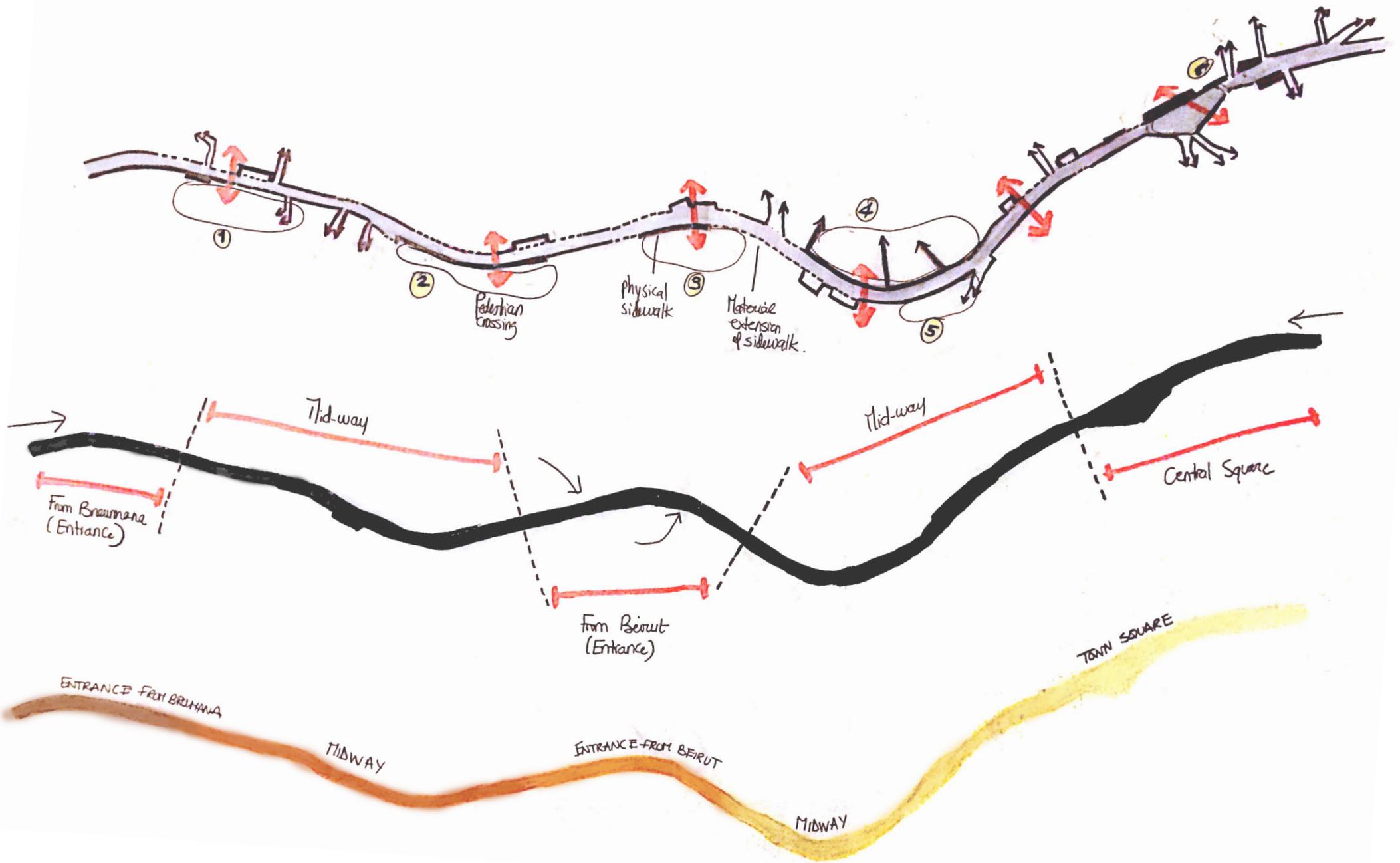


FIG. 34 Process / Segmentation & Dispersion

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT / SCENARIOS

During an interview with Mr. William at the municipality, we were discussing the current traffic conditions that Baabdat endures during weekends and summer. He mentioned that the municipality is planning on extending the highway as well as an additional road which will eventually link the highway to the main road at one node (Fig.66). The extended highway will allow for a more effective circulation route towards the eastern towns (Bekaa, Tarshish, Zahle).

The vehicular load is expected to decrease significantly at the level of the main road :

- The new segment of the highway will be able to carry a heavy load of cars , thus alleviating the main road from unnecessary congestion.
- The vehicular load will, in turn, decrease in local towns on the way to Eastern Lebanon.
- The trip taken at the level of the highway will be an easier and less time-consuming experience.

The proposed extensions constitute an **effective scenario for the concept of upgrading the infrastructure and mobilizing pedestrian activity**. By diverting the traffic, several opportunities arise for the design strategy. In the next page, a comparison will be made to explain the impact of a bypass on the community.

It is important to note that the scenario of a bypass will not eradicate the traffic but it will be much more tolerable and mostly restricted to local vehicles.

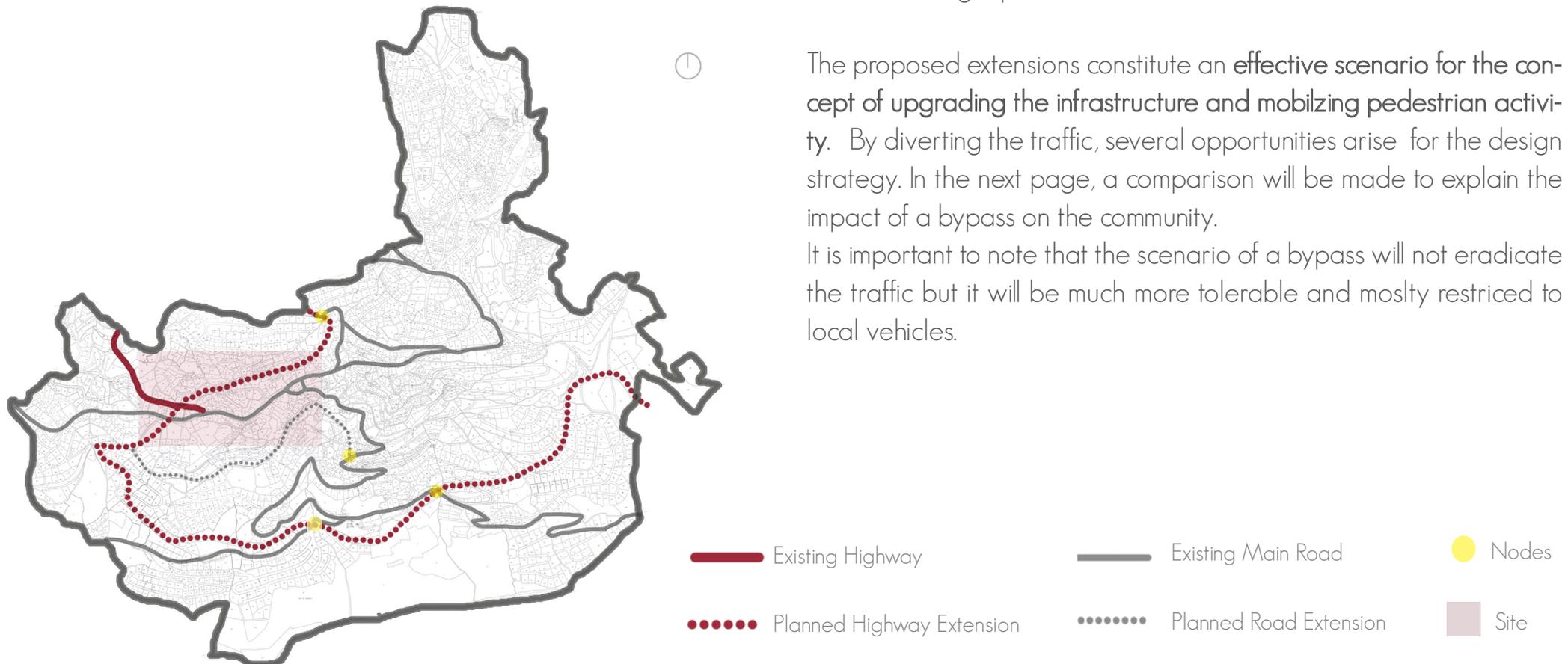


FIG.35 Proposed Extension of Roads in Baabdat

NO BYPASS

In such a case, the design could be feasible, however many limitations will start surfacing :

- Walkability and safety will moderately increase.
- Little control over vehicular activity.
- Little possibility for a horizontal expansion.
- The possibility of relocating the square to a nearby residential zone with a safer environment (character and effectiveness?).
- Connectivity limited to certain nodes ; regular interruptions.
- Moderate increase in communal bonds and everyday interaction.
- Limited flexibility regarding new programs/activities.
- Vehicular dominance will remain as is.

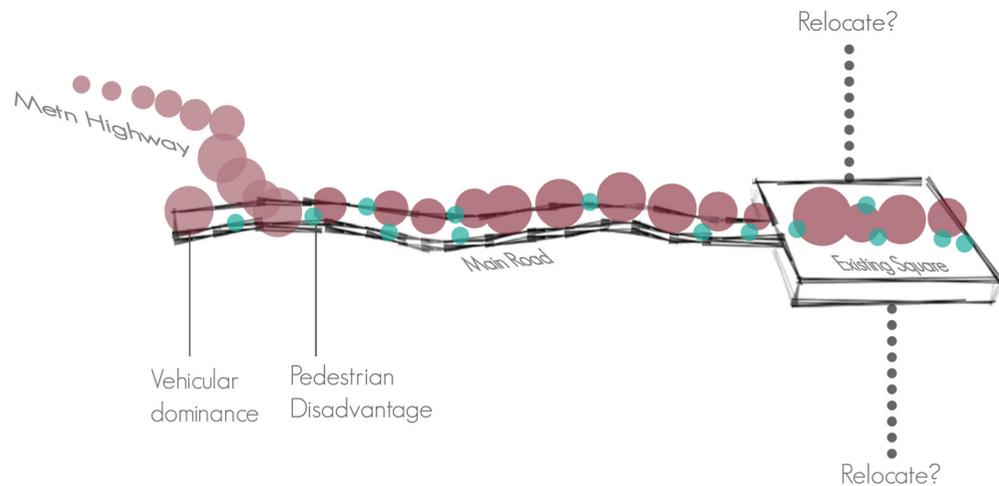


FIG.36 Scenario of No Bypass

BYPASS

For this scenario, the design will be provided with -that require positive and less drastic changes :

- Significant increase in walkability and safety (higher control).
- Possibility of horizontal expansion.
- Flexibility and multiplicity of programs/ activities.
- Connectivity and continuity ensured.
- Preservation the integrity and location of town square and provide shifting spaces within.
- Increased economic advantage (markets, events, local shops etc.).

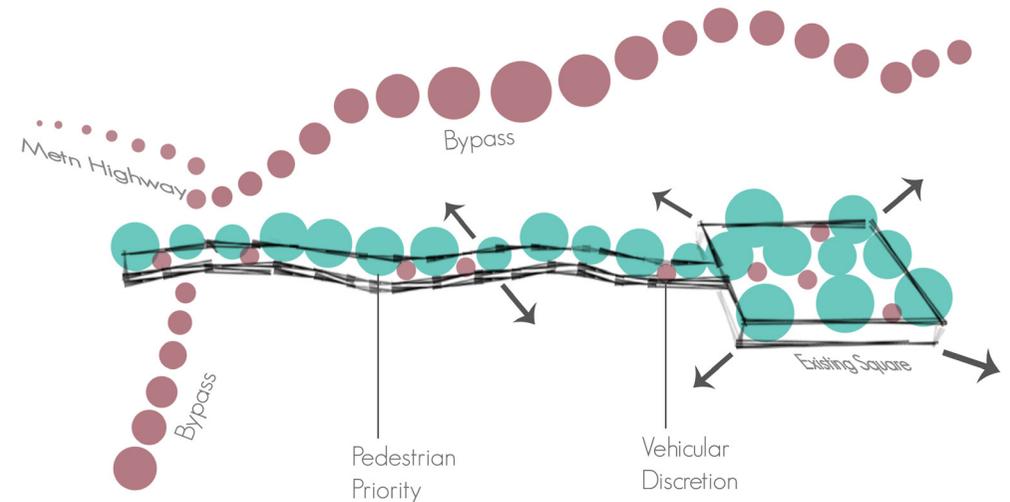


FIG.37 Scenario of a Bypass

07 DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

THE DESIGN / FIVE PILLARS

The aim behind this design is to **create a cohesive series of layers along the main road.**

Currently, there seems to be a problem of clustered activities within inconvenient areas. One example is the Town Square.

Given how the Town Square is - more or less - still active, it has to sustain all needs and dynamics that the locals seek out for. However, with the intrusive roundabout and lack of proper pedestrian infrastructure, the Square became a chaotic hub with no proper character and pedestrian accessibility. **Therefore, a decentralization of activities and layers was necessary to alleviate the current issues.**

THE DESIGN / FIVE ELEMENTS

Even though each site is designed around a specific theme, all five chosen spaces are created using the **five basic elements** that will unify the site and provide it with a consistent foundational character.

- **The pine tree**, a characteristic plant of the rural area, will be present at each space -at different quantities- to emphasize the effect of gradation.

- **The flagstone**, a common material in private Baabdati households, will be used as a paving pattern all along the streetscape with different shades of grey to emphasize the gradation of activities along the road.

The five pillars of the Town were spread along the main road (Core, family, entertainment, food and transportation) and connected to each other through a continuous streetscape scheme that gradually changes in color intensity. This change of color is a visual guide that informs the users of the next space they will reach.

Five areas along the main road were selected to represent one pillar and the theme of each area was chosen according to its immediate context and usage. On the other hand, each space is designed in a way to invite a performative dynamic to the site: **The main theme will act as a foundation for future activities.**

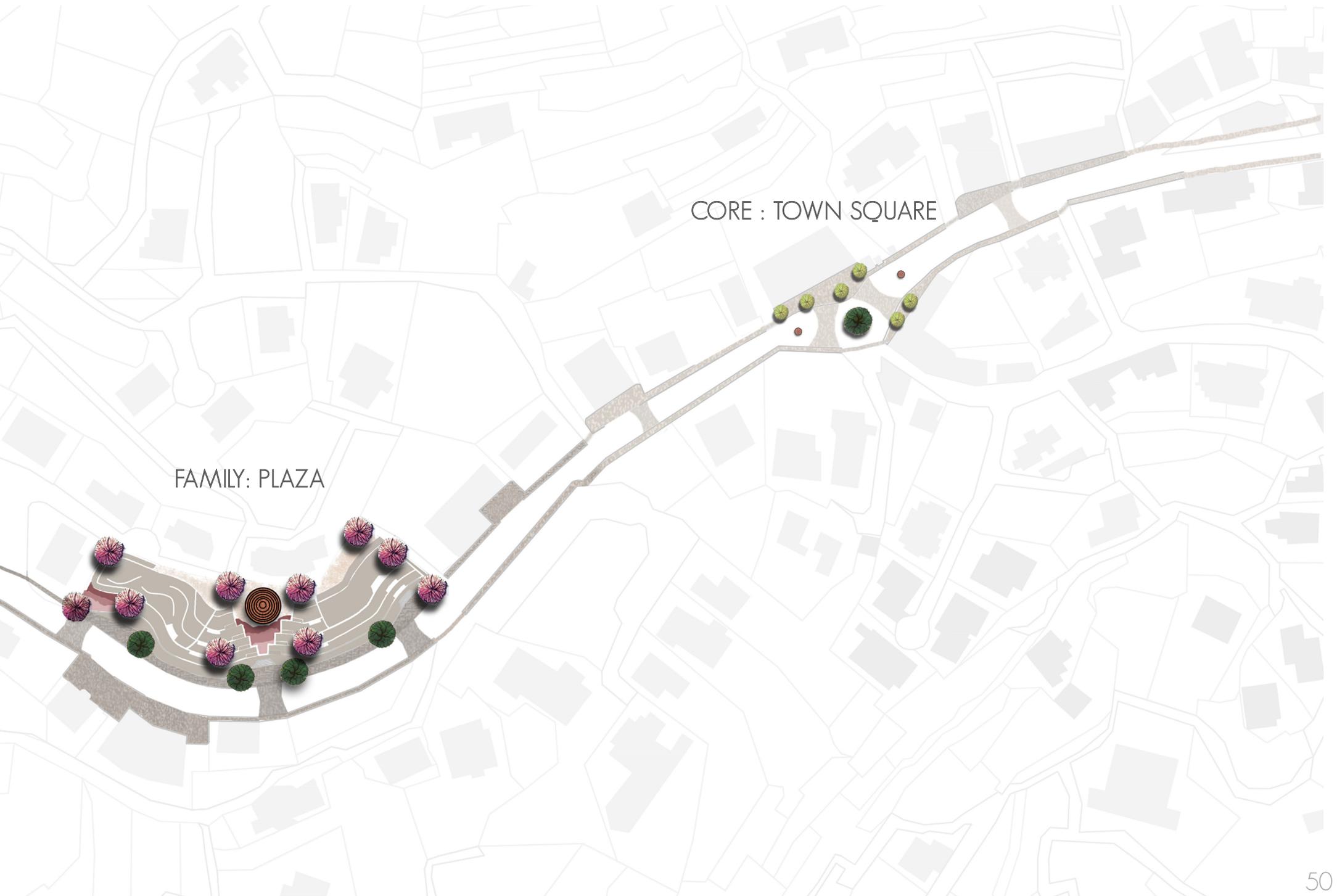
- **Concrete** will be used as a transitional material, from the streets to the open spaces or from one side of the road to the other.

- **Corten steel** will be used in each area to emphasize a focal point or element of interest. In addition, it will contrast with the traditional use of flagstone to highlight the duality between the urban and rural layers found on site.

- **Seasonal vegetation** will be used as an ornamental factor for several spaces to contrast the basic materials, as well as define the transitional effects from the streets to the open spaces.



FIG. 38 Masterplan / 1:2000



FAMILY: PLAZA

CORE : TOWN SQUARE

CORE / PROGRAM

The town square was designed to extend the accessibility in front of shops and markets in order to invite more social and pedestrian interactions.

Therefore, the parking spaces at the building entrances were completely removed and replaced by micro-plazas with shading trees. The plazas were designed for multi-functional use - for the locals to use in one of the many possible ways below:

- Gathering for morning coffee
- Lunch and coffee breaks
- Garage sales for shops
- Kiosk stands etc..

The roundabout in the middle was completely re-designed, taking less space and having a more interesting quality to it. The pine tree was chosen as a focal point - an important symbol of the rural landscape - and ornated by a light installation made of corten steel, symbolizing the modern character acquired by the town in the last couple of years.



FIG. 39 Section square (AA) / 1:250



FIG. 40 Rendered Plan / 1:250

FAMILY / PROGRAM

This space was designed as a family setting - for the children, elderly and parents. It was divided into **three zones: The Playground, Chapel and Outdoor Venue.**

The space is set to accommodate several local, traditional and recreational activities such as:

- Birthday parties
- Baptism / Funeral/ Engagements
- Church mass and Sunday prayers
- Everyday use for praying, playing, gathering etc...



FIG. 41 Section Chape (BB) / 1:150



FIG. 42 Section Playground (CC) / 1:150



FIG. 43 Hardscape Plan / 1:250

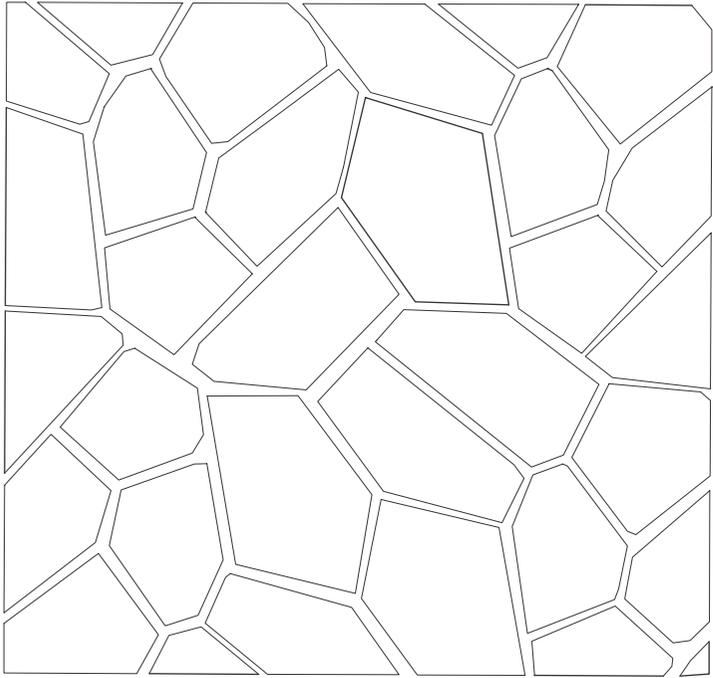


FIG. 44 Paving Pattern of Flagstone

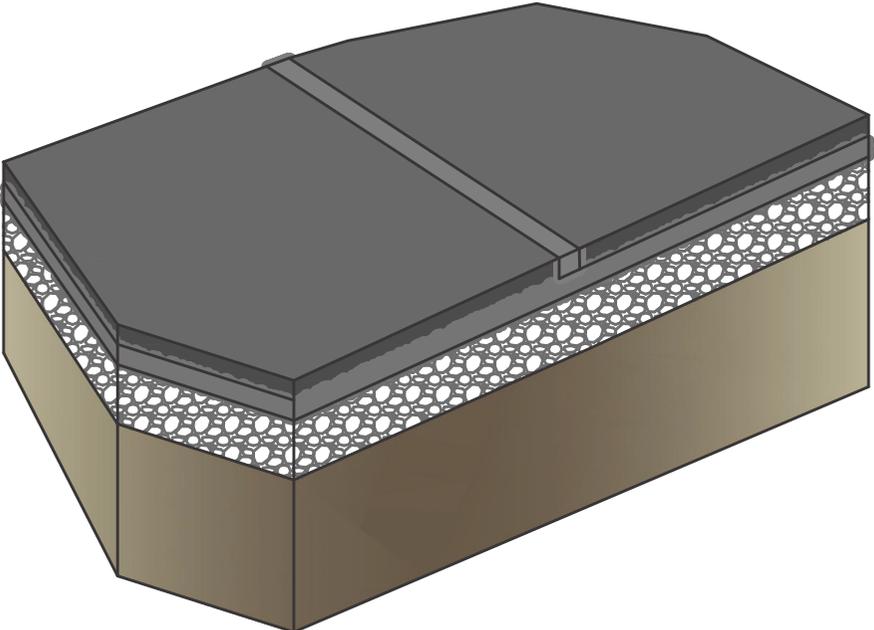


FIG. 45 Paving Pattern of Flagstone / 3D modleing

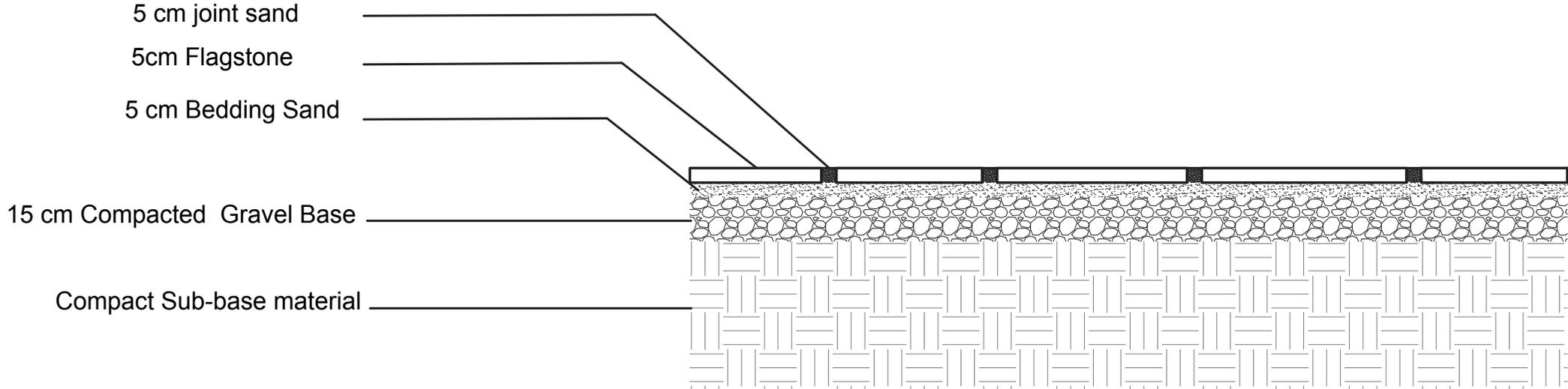


FIG. 46 Paving Pattern of Flagstone / Detailed Section



FIG. 47 Softscape Plan / 1:250

ENTERTAINMENT / PROGRAM

This plaza was reconfigured into a more flexible design that can invite a wider range of activities:

- Chess games, card games
- Street musicians
- Cultural events
- Dance performances
- Concerts
- Everyday gatherings

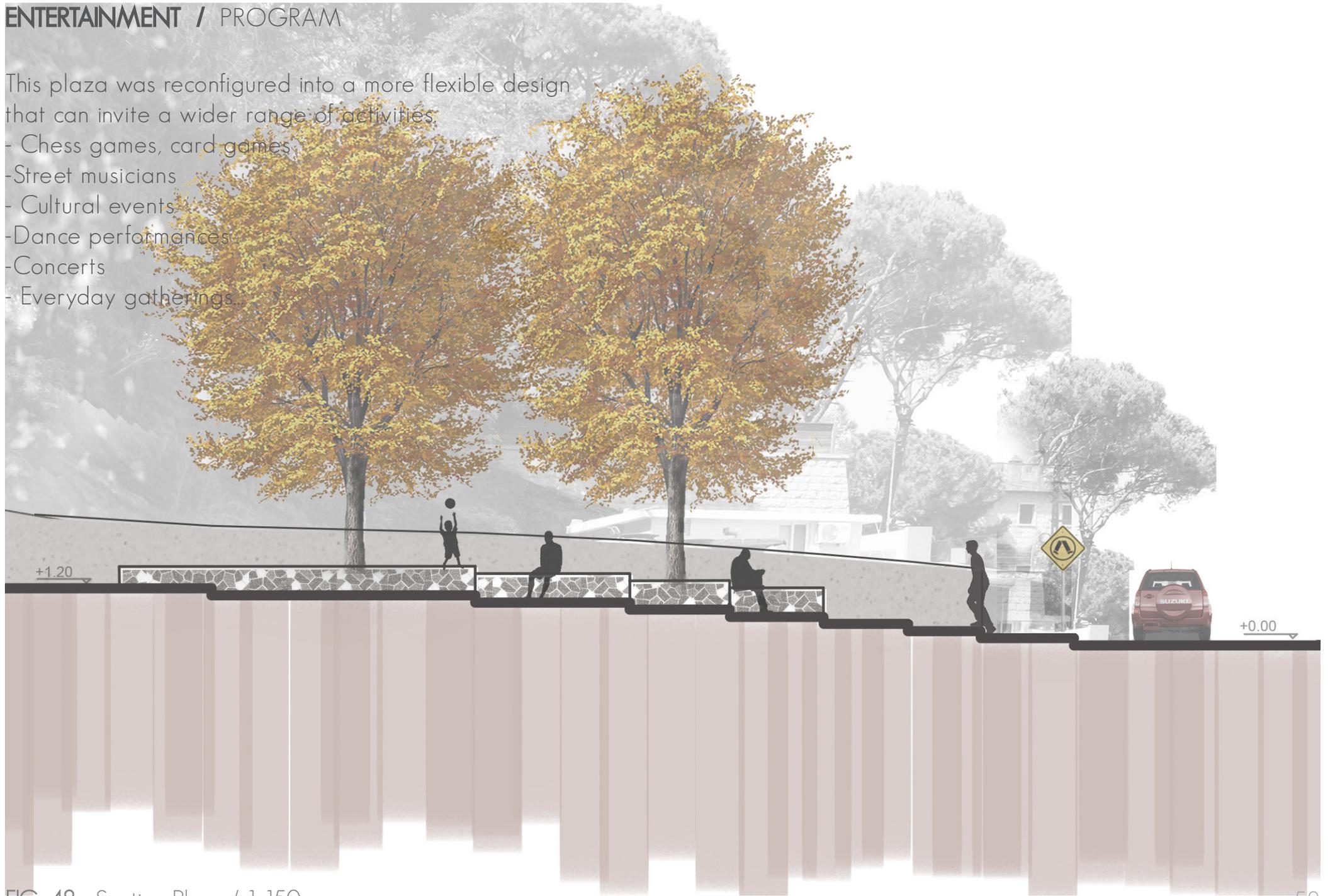
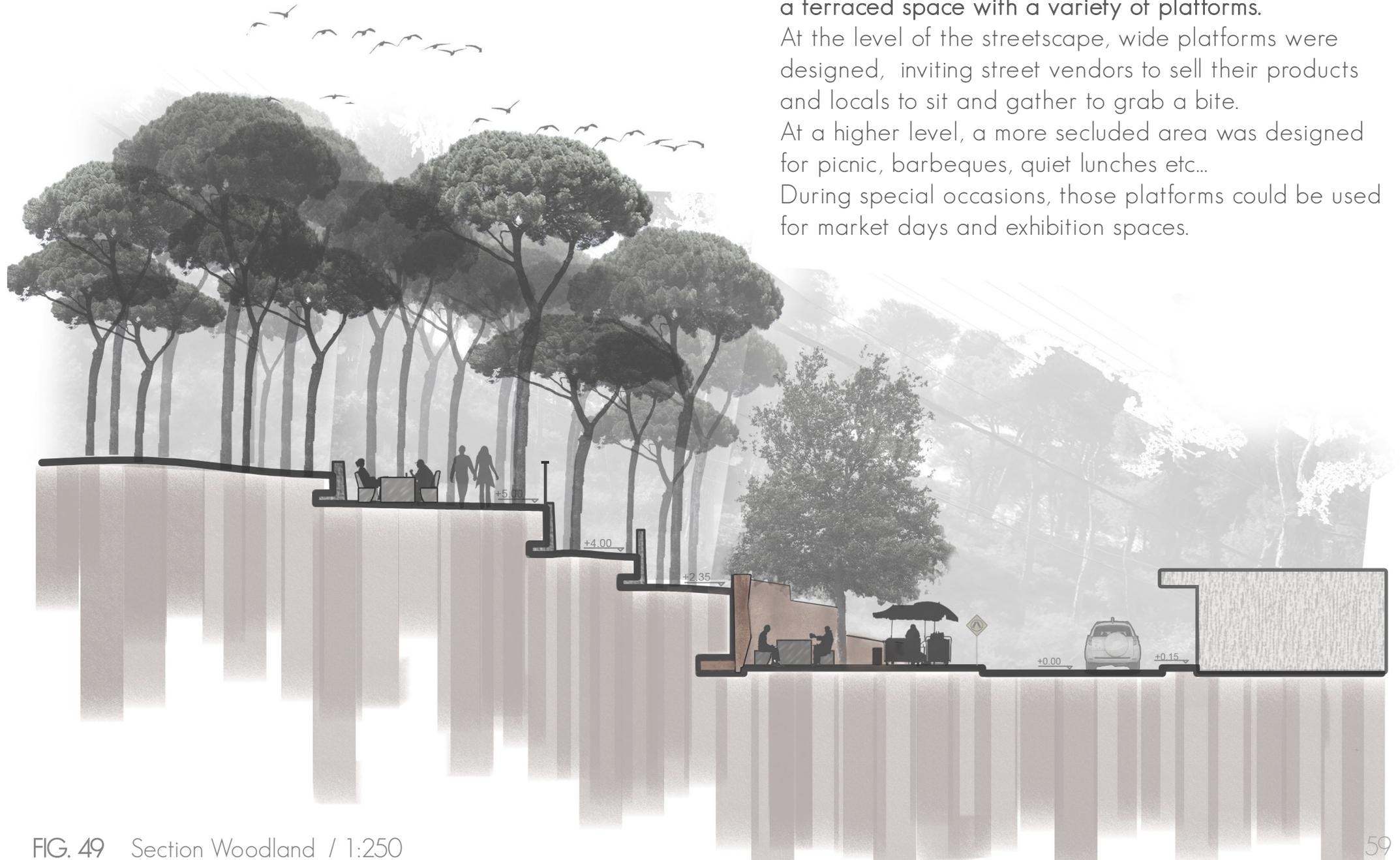


FIG. 48 Section Plaza / 1:150



The first segment of the woodland was transformed into a terraced space with a variety of platforms. At the level of the streetscape, wide platforms were designed, inviting street vendors to sell their products and locals to sit and gather to grab a bite. At a higher level, a more secluded area was designed for picnic, barbeques, quiet lunches etc... During special occasions, those platforms could be used for market days and exhibition spaces.

FIG. 49 Section Woodland / 1:250

TRANSPORTATION / PROGRAM

At the entrance / Exit from Baabdat, the semi-woodland was transformed into a bus stop that acts as a gateway to Baabdat and out of the town.

At the back of the bus stop, a seating area was designed for different usages and for longer waits. The driveway was designed for small buses that are part of a **local public transportation service**. This service can be used as shuttles during events - when residents in nearby towns and / or locals do not want to take their cars.

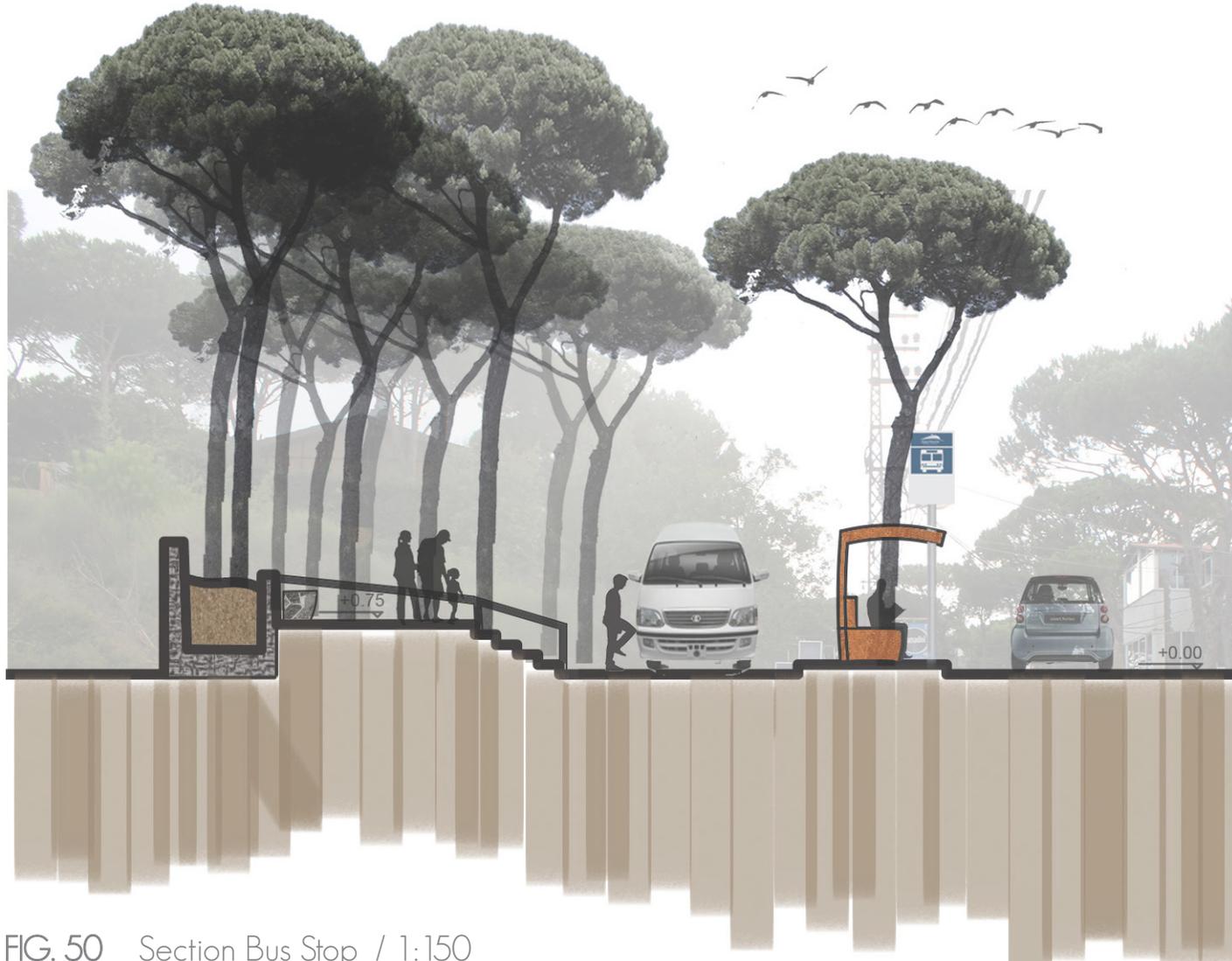


FIG. 50 Section Bus Stop / 1:150

