AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

ONE SPACE AT A TIME: A MULTI-SCALAR TACTICAL URBANISM STRATEGY

by
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ABSTRACT
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In the aftermath of the civil war, Beirut experienced a surge in real estate dominance, with little emphasis on urban planning for essential public amenities, exacerbating the city's deficiency in open spaces. This oversight has particularly affected vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, intensifying the urgent need for accessible public spaces in Beirut. The lack of such spaces in Beirut has led to creative attempts at tactical urbanism (TU), with temporary urbanism (TPU) being utilized as a tool to create temporary insertions into the urban fabric ranging from art installations to public performances and placemaking initiatives, demonstrating a need for outdoor spaces for gathering and leisure. Although these interventions are often short-lived and site-specific, they serve as learning tools that can guide us toward a more inclusive and holistic vision of the city. This evident need for more accessible public spaces in Beirut, supported by the prevalence of vacant spaces in the city, presents an opportunity for more strategic TPUs and to develop long-term, formalized strategies for Beirut's neighborhoods to enhance their quality of life. I explore the potential of TU as an incremental process of city building. This thesis shifts the focus on TPU from the plot scale to the neighborhood scale to bridge the gap in knowledge on long-term programs of temporary uses. The aim is to create a system of adaptable hybrid TPUs in Beirut's vacant spaces to support disadvantaged communities informed by a comprehensive analysis of a specific neighborhood. To illustrate this approach, I conducted an in-depth case study focusing on the nuances of everyday life in the neighborhood of Qobayat. This led to the formulation of a neighborhood strategy that combines fixed and spontaneous interventions to the available vacant spaces of Qobayat that contribute to the quality of life, complimented with an activation toolkit of TPU ideas inspired by the existing outdoor activities observed in the neighborhood. The deployment of the strategy will be demonstrated in detail at the plot scale on sections of the old railway forest and three pre-selected streets in Qobayat. Ultimately, this neighborhood will serve as a prototype with the potential for replication in other Beirut neighborhoods.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to explore the potential of tactical urbanism (TU) as an incremental process of city building in the context of Beirut, Lebanon. Lydon and Garcia (2010) define TU as a strategy for community activation and social resilience that materializes in short-term, low-cost, and flexible urban design/landscape interventions and policies referred to as temporary urbanism (TPU). Furthermore, TU encourages, through the deployment of TPU, gradual and self-directed activity aimed at boosting social life, economic opportunity, food access, security, and overall livability (Andres and Zhang, 2020). It enables the quick reclamation, redesign, or reconfiguration of public and private vacant spaces. Because cities are always changing, TU interventions are "deliberate and adaptable responses to the needs of the public", as opposed to the rigid top-down supply of static urban amenities (Lydon & Garcia, 2010, p.3). This brings forward the question as to how TU could assist cities and their residents in exploring a more nuanced and flexible approach to city-making, one that can anticipate long-term transformation while also adapting when conditions and needs eventually change.

TU is criticized by researchers mainly for its lack of planning and long-term vision (Andres, 2013). The impression is that temporary implies cheap and undesired while permanent spaces have a sense of quality and finality and represent stability in cities. Nevertheless, the funding and approval process for urban design projects can take over 10 years to be built, thus, permanent projects could be outdated before they open to the public (Andres, 2013).

In Beirut, TPU is a tool utilized by different actors ranging from local residents, artists, local organizations, and institutions to create temporary insertions into the urban fabric that range from art installations and outdoor exhibitions to temporary parks and guerrilla gardens. It is a reaction to the lack of public amenities and the exclusivity of public spaces to some neighborhoods over others. A series of post-civil war reconstruction projects and policies that incentivized heavy investment into the housing market led to increased financialization of land and a boom in housing prices affecting housing affordability (Krijnen and Fawaz, 2010; Fawaz and Zaatari, 2020; Fawaz and Salame, 2019). The high cost of land not only hinders residents' access to housing, workplaces, and public parks but also impedes local authorities from developing essential social infrastructure, including public spaces, libraries, hospitals, and sidewalks (Fawaz and Salame, 2019).

Tactical/Temporary Urbanism (T/TPU) is an already prevalent approach to producing, managing, and appropriating urban space in the global south, particularly addressing the needs of disadvantaged communities that lack access to public amenities (Devlin, 2017). This is present in regions characterized by informal settlements, street vending, and reliance on public transport as predominant ways of appropriating urban spaces (Stevens and Dovey, 2023). Moreover, the scarcity of accessible public spaces in Beirut has led to creative attempts at tactical urbanism, responding to the ongoing privatization of public spaces and emphasizing the importance of public space as a shared resource.

Although these initiatives are often short-lived and site-specific, they serve as learning tools that can guide us toward a more inclusive and holistic vision of the city. This evident need for more accessible public spaces in Beirut, supported by the

prevalence of vacant spaces in the city (Harb and Mazraani, 2020), presents an opportunity for more strategic TPU and to develop long-term, formalized strategies for Beirut's neighborhoods to enhance their quality of life.

The thesis explores the potential of tactical interventions in contributing to neighborhood scale strategies. By utilizing tactical and temporary interventions to test, measure, and refine ideas in response to urban challenges, rather than being fixed elements that die out shortly after deployment, we gain valuable insights into real community needs and effective solutions to street-level issues. With neighborhoods evolving rapidly, it is crucial to view urban interventions as dynamic processes that adapt to changing user needs and physical surroundings. Tactical urbanism emerges not only as a catalyst for short-term change but also as a strategic tool for orchestrating long-term transformations in urban environments. This approach diverts from current TU literature and projects by introducing a permanent dimension at the neighborhood scale that allow for temporary and spontaneous interventions by the local community to occur freely.

A. Thesis Question

This thesis is a response to the general state of decline in Beirut’s spatial and social components, specifically the lack of functional public open spaces. It presents the scarcity and underuse of private/public vacant spaces as an opportunity to create more outdoor spaces. It shifts the focus on TPU from the plot scale to the neighborhood scale to bridge the gap in knowledge on long-term programs of temporary uses. It also responds to the claim that tactical urbanism is characterized by weak planning. It attempts to create a neighborhood-scale program of mixed temporary interventions

based on an in-depth neighborhood analysis. I therefore mainly ask: How can a system of adaptable hybrid TPUs in Beirut's vacant spaces support disadvantaged neighborhoods on the long term?

B. Objectives

- The objective of this thesis is to develop a city-wide framework for multi-scalar TU interventions in Beirut that respond to the lack of public social and ecological infrastructure, specifically, green and open functional public spaces.
- Develop a TU strategy at the neighborhood scale complimented with space for spontaneous appropriations of space.
- To design a kit of tools that respond to the needs derived from observing the existing social fabric of a neighborhood.

C. Significance

The significance of this research lies in its potential to address the challenges of public spaces in Beirut through the strategic use of temporary and tactical urbanism. The existing literature on TU highlights the effectiveness of temporary uses and projects in activating dormant spaces for short periods. However, limited research has questioned their potential contribution to long-term transformation in global south contexts. This thesis aims to bridge this gap by exploring the potential of temporary uses in the long-term development of public spaces in Beirut through a hybrid neighborhood-scale strategy. The research also responds to the claim that tactical urbanism is characterized by weak planning and proposes a neighborhood-scale program of mixed temporary interventions based on an in-depth analysis of the

neighborhood that adapts with the evolving needs of its residents. In summary, the proposed research's significance lies in its exploration of alternative city-building tools in the context of Lebanon.

D. Methodology and thesis structure

1. Literature review

The literature review serves the purpose of establishing a theoretical framework for tactical and temporary urbanism. By linking practical examples of tactical urbanism with the existing body of knowledge in planning and design theory we can understand the scale of T/TPU and its impact. Moreover, it addresses a gap in the literature by questioning the potential contribution of temporary urbanism in creating sustainable transformation, where temporary uses are not just seen as short-term solutions but as a part of a long-lasting urban development strategy. I present a narrative describing the use of TPU in Beirut and its future in the city. Finally, it uses secondary data, specifically on vacant spaces, to synthesize vacant space typologies in Beirut. The purpose of this review is to synthesize guidelines for the deployment of the neighborhood strategy later on.

2. Case studies

To familiarize myself with more practical examples of TU and TPU, I looked into several case studies of a general context encompassing projects both in the global north and south to get a rich understanding of the different keys to the success of a TPU or TU project. Analyzing these case studies resulted in the formulation of principles that will guide the neighborhood strategy later on. The case studies chosen include bottom-up, top-down, and hybrid TPUs that range from temporary parks, parklets, and mobile

parks, to social experiments that aim at directing future development (see Appendix A for a full list of case studies).

3. Selecting The Case Study Neighborhood

While the lack of public spaces in Beirut is widely acknowledged, it is worth noting that access to the few publicly used green open spaces in the city is unevenly distributed across Beirut's neighborhoods. For instance, coastal neighborhoods tend to have better access to some of the city's prominent public spaces, such as Corniche, Dalieh, and Ramlet Bayda. Similarly, neighborhoods like Hamra and Zarif benefit from the presence of Sanayeh Garden. However, other neighborhoods such as Karantina face challenges in accessing public spaces, with the sole public park remaining closed for most of the time. Meanwhile, an analysis of aerial maps reveals that neighborhoods like Burj Abi Haidar or Bourj Hammoud suffer from a notable shortage of green public spaces. This highlights the need for a more equitable distribution of social and ecological public amenities and the importance of understanding the existing availability and distribution of public spaces across the city.

To adopt an incremental approach to city-making it is crucial to categorize the city's neighborhoods and understand their varying access to green and open public spaces. This categorization serves to evaluate and rank the city's neighborhoods based on the availability of such spaces, determining which ones merit higher priority and immediate attention. The term "publicly used spaces" is employed, as opposed to "public spaces," to encompass not just officially designated areas, as many of the city's public spaces are inaccessible and many private vacant lots are used publicly. The stages of work for this framework are as follows:

- To understand the city in terms of opportunity vs need.
- To understand the distribution of vacant lots in the city using existing secondary data.
- To select the neighborhood scale case study for the thesis.
- To lay the groundwork for a strategic city-scale approach to TU deployment for space activation.

This framework was heavily inspired by works on social and ecological equity and the spatial distribution of parks in cities. Equity mapping is a tool used by planners to grasp the distribution of green spaces in the city based on different variables (Talen, 1998). This can be based on different criteria such as population, income, access to parks (Macedo et.al, 2016), traveling distance, comfort in parks, and household density (Zhu et.al, 2022) using tools such as remote sensing and spatial statistics to create scores and ratings that guide future development of green open spaces. Equity mapping is simplified here due to the expansive scale of the work and the framework's supportive, rather than central role in the thesis.

This framework, as diagrammed in Figure 1, is based on opportunity vs need. Where opportunity is present through the different typologies of vacant lots, and need is determined by the current number of publicly used spaces, vegetation cover, and socio-economic profile of its inhabitants. Rating these criteria of opportunity and need will lead us to a few neighborhoods with a higher need for green/open public spaces than others in the city. The case study used for this thesis will be the neighborhood with the highest need for public open spaces, and the most opportunity to respond to that need. This rating will be applied to the four criteria and will be based on a point system out of three. The highest need is a score of three and the same goes for opportunity.

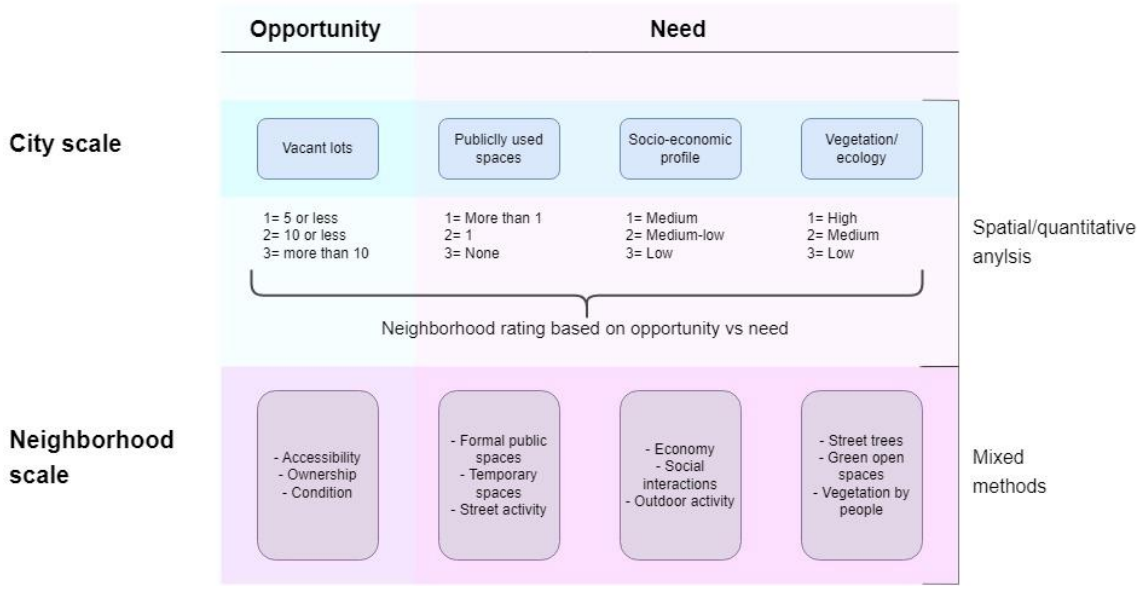


Figure 1 City-scale neighborhood rating criteria (by author, 2023)

- **Opportunity:** Vacant lots:

This includes different typologies of spaces of opportunity including public vacant abandoned lots, leftover lots, and unbuildable lots. The rating is based on the number of these in a neighborhood. Because the city has an abundance of vacancies as opportunities it is important to consider all possible spaces of intervention as part of the rating. As will be discussed in more detail later on, all available typologies of avacnt space represent opportunities for intervention.

- **Need:** Publicly used spaces

This includes different typologies of spaces of opportunity including public vacant abandoned lots, leftover lots, and unbuildable lots. The rating is based on the number of these in the neighborhood. As will be discussed in the literature review, all vacant spaces represent opportunities for activation, therefore it is important to consider all of these typologies in the rating.

- **Need:** Socio-economic profile:

The purpose of this section is mainly to exclude the neighborhoods that are dominated by affluent residents that have more access to public services or a bigger safety net to make up for the lack of them. Main neighborhoods include Saifi, Verdun, downtown, and Manara.

- **Need:** Vegetation/ecology:

This covers vegetation in neighborhoods as a whole, it looks at the quantity of greenery in its different forms whether it was street trees, green open spaces, or spontaneous vegetation. The purpose of this rating is to determine which neighborhoods have the least spontaneous and planned greenery.

These four quantitative elements serve as the criteria for selecting the case study neighborhood for the thesis. This assessment is based on Beirut's administrative boundaries and its neighborhoods defined by the administrative sectors. I use the following sources to generate the rating:

- Walking through the neighborhoods
- Unbuildable public and private lots map (Fig 6)
- Vacant public lots in Beirut map (Fig 1)
- Socio-economic vulnerability (UNHabitat, 2020)
- Google Maps top and street views
- Green open spaces map

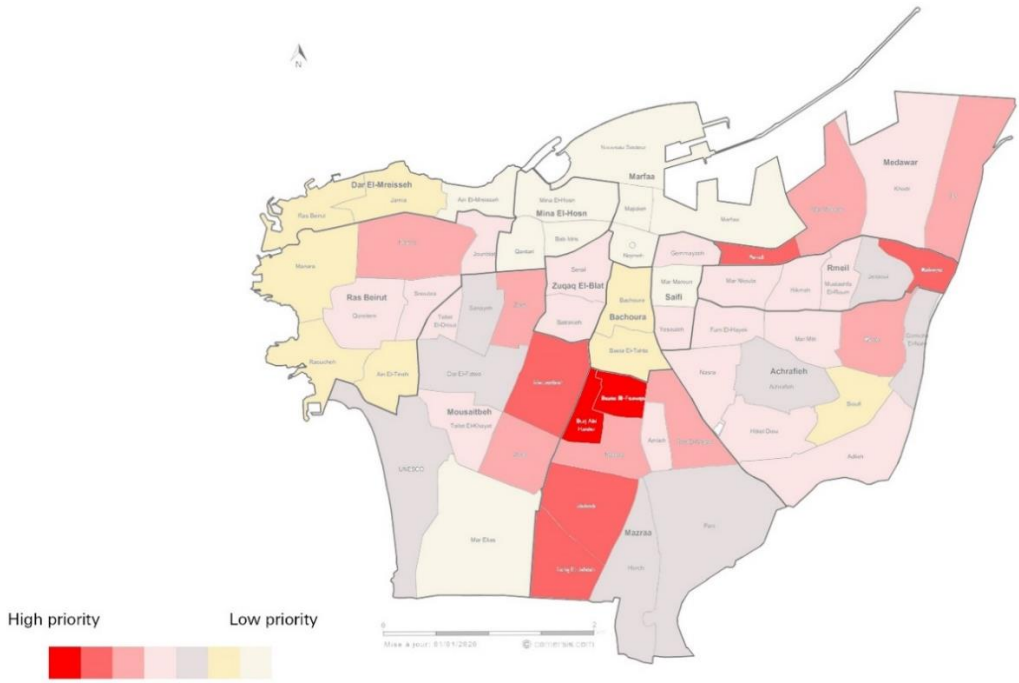


Figure 2 Beirut neighborhood rating (by author, 2023)

A preliminary analysis of the city scale indicates that Basta El-Faoua and Burj Abi-Haidar had the highest rate of need, with a high rate of opportunity in the city. Malaab, Tarik Jdide, Qobayat, Rmeil, and Mousaitbeh were identified as the second most in need. As the main focus of the thesis is on the neighborhood scale, it should be noted that these results are preliminary, and further validation and exploration will need to be conducted to confirm these findings. Because I would need to able to move freely and document existing appropriations in a neighborhood, security concerns in Basta El-Faoua and Burj Abi-Haidar would not be a good choice for the case study. Instead, I opted to choose one of the neighborhoods that have been identified as second in rating. Therefore, the case study for this thesis will focus on the neighborhood of Qobayat.

4. Neighborhood Profile and Analysis

At the neighborhood scale, a matrix of analysis will be applied in order to understand the specificities of each neighborhood and people's different needs. This analysis provides a detailed analysis of the four elements used on the city scale. It results in a series of maps, pictures, and information that guide the deployment of TU in the neighborhood of Qobayat. Base maps and data on vacant spaces in the neighborhood were collected from BUL's database. The rest of the information was collected through field mapping and observation. The main tool used to understand the needs of the residents is observation.

Briede-Westermeyer et al. (2018) suggest that observation can spark creative thinking by helping us grasp the connections between people, objects, and the environment. Instead of just trying to understand the context, observation encourages us to explore and generate new relationships. It involves creatively renaming and reinterpreting scenarios and spaces in design exploration. Moreover, according to Bertram (2014), observation and analysis are forms of invention. They reveal things that might have been unnoticed, making the previously invisible visible. When we observe, draw, and name something, we essentially bring it into existence. Conversely, the acts of building and making can be seen as analytical observations, highlighting aspects that were not previously clear and unveiling the potential for future actions.

Observation here is crucial as it forms the cornerstone for comprehending the utilization of outdoor spaces in the neighborhood. These observations aim to gain insights into people's utilization of the neighborhood's available spaces with the ultimate goal of identifying their needs and generating new ideas for the neighborhood. The observations were conducted through walks in the neighborhood, engaging with

residents, and spending dedicated periods observing specific locations. This process was done over some time from May to December with a focus on daily observations in August and September.

5. Neighborhood Strategy and The Activation Toolkit

After an in-depth analysis of the neighborhood, a strategy consisting of both fixed and spontaneous elements are formulated in order to demonstrate a way of deploying temporary interventions as part of a long-term neighborhood-level strategy. Available spaces will work as part of a program consisting of permanent and temporary open spaces responding to the neighborhood's specific needs. The program will work like a puzzle, with each function responding to the different needs identified in the analysis. The strategy adopts the action-oriented planning cycle as a guiding principle in order to keep the strategy in a feedback loop and tailored to the needs of its users.

Furthermore, using observation as a design tool, the appropriations observed, and needs derived from the neighborhood analysis will act as the foundation for the design of small temporary interventions to be deployed as part of the neighborhood strategy. The tools are small adaptable elements that when configured and deployed on the neighborhood's vacant spaces, transform a space and assign functions to it. Additionally, their flexibility and mobility maintain the spontaneous nature of the existing appropriations. The TPU tools will be used to activate three sites in accordance to the overall neighborhood strategy.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of this review is to derive theoretical and practical guidelines for the creation of a TU strategy. This review is divided into five sections, the first section presents an overview and history of tactical urbanism in addition to positioning TU within the literature on urban studies. The second section delves deeper into temporary urbanism (TPU) as a subset of tactical urbanism and explores the different types of TPUs. To better illustrate the theory on TU and TPU, several international case studies will be demonstrated throughout the review. The third looks at the current state of T/TPU in Beirut in order to synthesize context-specific guidelines for the neighborhood strategy, and the fourth is an overview of vacant spaces in Beirut and their different types, and the different ways they could be appropriated for temporary use.

A. Tactical Urbanism

Tactical Urbanism (TU) is a nimble approach to city-building that employs short-term, cost-effective, and adaptable interventions and policies. It represents a departure from traditional, slow-moving city-building processes and is often motivated by unmet needs in urban areas (Lydon and Garcia, 2010). The term was popularized by Mike Lydon and Anthony Garcia, who published a guide for designers using tactical urbanism in 2010. This approach is used by a variety of stakeholders, including governments, businesses, advocacy groups, and individuals, and is characterized by an open and transparent development process, efficient resource management, and a focus

on creative potential brought by social interactions (Bishop and Williams, 2012; Lydon and Garcia, 2010; Dovey and Stevens, 2016).

- For citizens, it provides a means to reclaim, redesign, or repurpose public space.
- For developers and entrepreneurs, it offers an opportunity to gather design insights from their target market.
- For advocacy organizations, it serves as a demonstration of what is possible, mobilizing public and political support.
- For governments, it provides a means to test and implement best practices quickly and effectively.

TU involves deliberate and organized processes, which is what makes it 'tactical' and it assigns uses to spaces which makes it a form of 'urbanism' (Angelidou, 2018). Decades of advocacy by artists, scholars, designers, and individuals have urged for increased flexibility and adaptability in urban planning and design to cater to evolving needs (Andres and Zhang, 2020). This led to a shift in the way urban scholars and practitioners think about the production of the city and how urban spaces are thought through, shaped, and reshaped (Fabian and Samson, 2014; Bishop and Williams, 2012).

At the forefront of this movement, artists and creators boldly engaged in informal and at times, illegal, temporary occupations of buildings and spaces (Andres and Zhang, 2020). TU, as perceived by Stevens and Dovey (2023), emerges as a subversive act that exists in a grey area and redefines legality and illegality in the urban landscape. This involves the strategic use of tactics to infiltrate the organized systems of a city. Subsequently, architects and urban designers delved into the exploration of temporary uses in city-making, focusing on structures, installations, and features

(Andres and Zhang, 2020). Beyond its subversive nature, TU represents a creative and productive approach, aiming to uncover and develop the latent potential and possibilities within a city's capacities (Stevens and Dovey, 2023).

Furthermore, TU serves as a vital tool to bridge the gaps created by uneven development, enabling cities to become more resilient and fill the voids left by the state's shortcomings (Stevens and Dovey, 2023). It seeks to redress existing disparities in public spaces and services and organically introduces additional facilities, such as bike lanes, pedestrian crossings, and street furniture, to fulfill underutilized and ignored demands (Fabian and Samson, 2014).

Vacant and abandoned spaces and buildings serve as venues for experimental and exploratory activity. By expanding the roles of public spaces, TU promotes greater social equity by serving a wider range of individuals (Tonkiss, 2013; Lydon and Garcia, 2010; Fabian and Samson, 2015). While innovation and creativity in large-scale, long-term urban design projects can be risky due to their finality and financial burden (Stevens and Dovey, 2023), TU reduces risks and costs while stimulating innovation and creativity to issues in the urban fabric (Bishop and Williams 2012). Because TU is mostly low-tech and low-cost, it allows for the quick invention, testing, and improvement of creative open-space concepts. Through co-design, TU actively engages designers and end users, converting the city into a dynamic laboratory for urban innovation (Stevens and Dovey, 2023).

Furthermore, by expanding the scope of public spaces, TU aims to realize the city's untapped potential. It seeks to reactivate previously inaccessible or privately held unoccupied and underutilized locations, such as empty parking lots, roofs, infrastructural easements, abandoned buildings, landfills, and natural landscapes

(Fabian and Samson, 2014). TU increases the intensity of open space usage which Stevens and Dovey (2023) define as an increase in the number and diversity of users and activities.

In order to create settings that support a wider range of people, activities, and experiences, tactical urbanism employs an opportunistic approach to locate and activate underutilized public places (Lydon and Garcia, 2010). It brings new uses to already-existing public places, creating previously unnoticed public activity in overlooked spaces. Temporary urbanism is a more effective use of scarce space, infrastructure, and resources by making the most of already existing public areas (Tonkiss, 2013). As noted by Oswalt et al. (2013), this strategy becomes more pertinent when tackling the issues brought about by growing population densities, the requirement for economic efficiency, and the necessity for environmental sustainability.

Overall, TU is an important tool to incrementally start improving the quality of life in cities. Insurgent and monitored temporary initiatives deployed in vacant lots on the city scale can help us start to understand the needs of different neighborhoods and act as a build-measure-learn approach (Lydon and Garcia, 2010) to reach a large-scale strategy.

B. Temporary Urbanism

While tactical urbanism refers to a set of urban design and planning practices that are used to transform public spaces quickly and inexpensively (Lydon and Garcia, 2010), temporary urbanism refers to the creation of temporary structures or spaces in urban areas for a specific purpose, such as a festival, exhibition, or pop-up park (Andres and Zhang, 2020). Practitioners use various terms like temporary (Bishop and Williams,

2012), tactical, (Lydon and Garcia, 2010), pop-up (Stevens and Dovey, 2023), DIY (Fabian and Samson, 2014), and more to describe temporary appropriations of the urban realm. These words might mean slightly different things in different situations but often refer to similar activities. Temporary urbanism comes in different forms. The one common factor is that these activities are not meant to stick around forever, they are temporary (Stevens and Dovey, 2023).

Using two main axes, Dovey (2016) presents a range of urban design methods to help understand the scope of temporary/tactical urbanism. The horizontal axis spans between the temporary/tactical, and permanent impact. The vertical axis, on the other hand, separates practices according to whether they only modify the two-dimensional depiction of public space, like wall projections, signage, and graffiti, or whether they also involve the appropriation of three-dimensional public spaces, like parks, beaches, containers, and gardens, and how they are used. While all tactical and temporary urbanism begins on the left side of the figure, many practices are moving in the direction of greater permanency and strategic importance. Meanwhile, Dovey notes that this progression is still limited to North America and Australia, where long-term policies controlling public space management, design, and utilization are entwined with tactical measures, while in the global south, these activities usually operate outside the scope of the government and have not been subjected to attempts at more formalized visions for TU (Dovey, 2016).

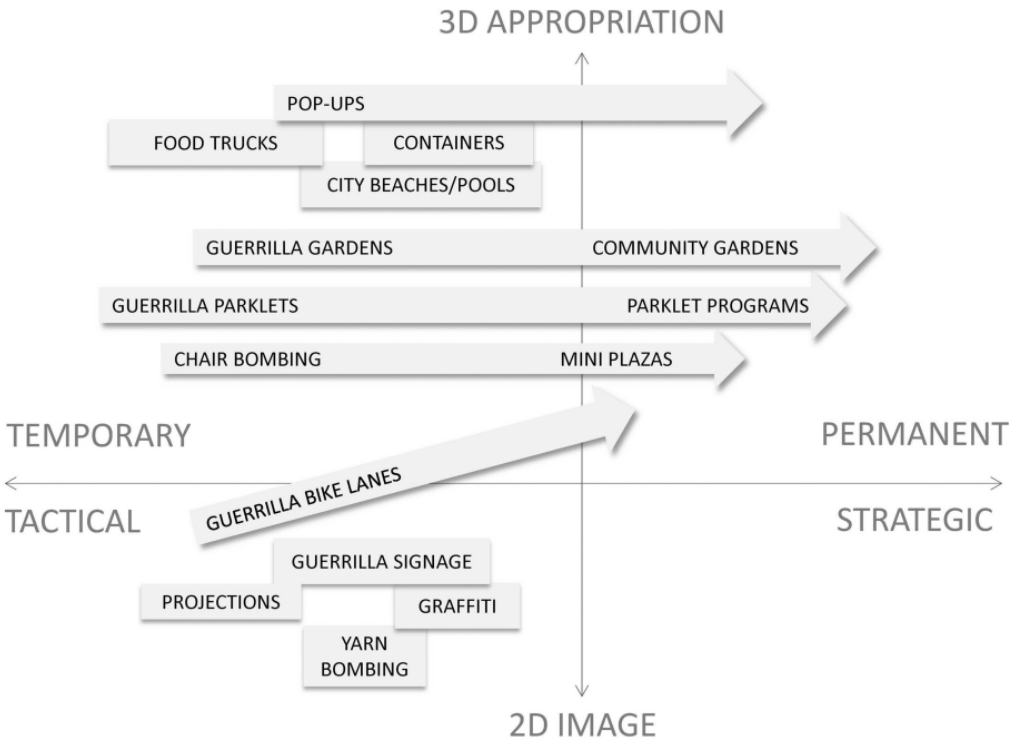


Figure 3 Tactical/temporary spectrum (Dovey, 2016)

According to Tonkiss (2013), the ambiguity around temporary urbanism is evident in the various terms used to describe it and the different ways it can be implemented. The choice of terms often depends on the nature of the surroundings. For instance, if citizens are actively involved in planning, it might be called DIY. If it appears suddenly and disappears just as quickly, it could be labeled as pop-up. When it exists between past and future plans, it may be termed in-between. Defining temporary urbanism can be challenging due to its diverse forms of urban planning. However, this diversity allows projects to be tailored to specific locations and current needs. Consequently, success in one city doesn't guarantee success in another, especially if the project is designed to address specific local challenges (Tonkiss, 2013).

Therefore, tactical urbanism is the general framework while temporary urbanism is a tool it uses to enact change. Andres and Kraftl (2021) further explore it as a subset of tactical urbanism and describe it as a set of processes, practices, and policies of and for spatial adaptability, that allow for the transformation of a dormant space in need of activation, consequentially impacting the surrounding socio-economic urban environments. Temporary urbanism is an important feature of place-making and has been a longstanding design and tool led by various stakeholders, from artists to community groups, in a bottom-up way, and more recently local authorities in a top-down way (Oswalt et al., 2013). Thus, temporary uses and projects are not merely seen as informal or organic responses to urban challenges but could contribute to testing a more formal reimagining of spaces in cities.

Turning to temporary uses and emergency solutions has been a response to specific needs either for expression, experimentation, creating alternatives to top-down city projects, and responding to urban gaps in the urban environment. As a result, a significant number of temporary uses, and projects, of various scales and lengths, have spread in cities (Andres and Zhang, 2020). This includes indoor temporary uses such as temporary art spaces, workshops, and pop-up shops, to larger projects including temporary theatres and cultural spaces, mixed-use facilities, often in containers and temporary housing, in addition to outdoor temporary uses such as temporary gardens, playgrounds, and gyms, cafes, and events (Andres and Kraftl 2021).

The Italian architect Bernardo Secchi (2000, as cited in Andres and Zhang, 2020) argues that cities are recycled They are exposed to abandonment, then new ones are built on/from the remnants of the old ones. This cycle of abandon, reuse, and substitute has always marked the transition between the key eras of urban history

(Andres and Zhang, 2020; Madanipour, 2017). Madanipour (2018) further reflects on the history of urban development and describes temporary urbanism as a tool for sequencing changes in periods of uncertainty. Temporary urbanism is associated with such transitions whether economic, social, or political changes. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, these transitions have been closely associated with the uneven scales of urban development (Andres and Zhang, 2020; Oswalt, et al 2013; Bishop and Williams, 2012).

While TPU has proven to be an effective tool in activating dormant spaces short-term, only limited research has questioned the potential contribution of temporary uses to long-term strategies of urban development (Andres, 2013). Tapuzofski and Andres (2020) argue that temporary uses mostly spread themselves out within a context of weak planning. Andres characterizes weak planning by its lack of coordination, strategic guidelines, clear objectives, and most importantly, control by any higher authority (Andres, 2013).

Further critiques of T/TPU link it to broader theories on urban informality in contexts of the Global South. Devlin (2018) offers a critical perspective on much of the literature on TU/TPU urbanisms, suggesting it is too influenced by thinking from the Global North. He distinguishes between informality driven by 'need' and 'desire', associated respectively with the urban poor and the middle classes. Devlin criticizes how TU/TPU urbanism in the Global North often favors desire-based informality while overlooking the importance of need-based informality in public spaces. He argues that TU/TPU urbanism has become aligned with politically neutral attitudes and neoliberal policies, prioritizing deregulation over social justice and equity.

He further contends that scholars of the Global North have neglected to critically evaluate the varied purposes and consequences of diverse informal practices, as well as the distinct political subjectivities of different informal actors. Conversely, Stevens and Dovey argue that looking at the city as a space of opportunity dissolves the dichotomy between informalities of need and desire as a need can be understood as a strong form of desire.

Oswalt (2013) emphasizes the divide between top-down or planned temporary interventions and bottom-up temporary interventions, which may be 'unplanned', activist- or community-led. Thus, there is a need to distinguish between the types of TPU. Andres and Zhang (2020) propose that there are three categories of temporary urbanism: top-down, bottom-up, and hybrid. This section of the review uses practical examples of TU from international case studies to better illustrate the difference between these types of TPU:

1. ***Bottom-up TPU***

This is usually led by artists, activists, or community members and exists in a context where no formal and planned transformation can occur due to many financial and planning difficulties. Bottom-up TU is a direct response to everyday needs or urban gaps (Oswalt et al. 2017). It can include a wide range of temporary uses from squatting to informal economy, to community-led projects, hence promoting out-of-the-box thinking which challenges formal planning arrangements in contexts of transition (Tonkiss, 2013).

Temporary parks created through bottom-up initiatives have demonstrated their capacity to shape the long-term urban landscape. A notable example is the Build a

Better Block project in Dallas, Texas, which stemmed from the abundance of and underutilization of vacant spaces, with an aim to address the demand for necessary amenities in the neighborhood. The initiative emerged as a spontaneous and collaborative block transformation led by Robert, an artist, who enlisted friends from diverse disciplines to quickly create plug-ins for urban amenities (Lydon and Garcia, 2010). Each friend contributed unique resources, such as a truck, a collection of potted plants, antique furniture, and urban planning expertise.

The transformed block featured on-street parking, sidewalk dining, flowers, parking-protected bike lanes, and pop-up shops. This project served as a catalyst for permanent changes adopted by the city, including the incorporation of a permanent public space and bike lane in the city plan. Its success also inspired similar activations on different blocks in varied contexts. Additionally, the organization's website now serves as an open-source platform, showcasing reflections on different applications of this model in diverse settings and addressing various challenges.

On the other hand, some bottom-up temporary initiatives lack a long-term vision and instead highlight the state’s shortcomings in utilizing its spaces to address community needs. This is exemplified by Granby Park in Dublin. The failure of a social housing project by the city led to the formation of an organization to direct the creation of a temporary park on the vacant lot. Crafted by the collective effort of more than 500 volunteers, the park took shape using recycled, up-cycled, reclaimed, borrowed, donated and found materials. Its purpose was to create a place of creativity, nature, imagination, play, and beauty for everyone. After two years of planning, the park opened its doors to the public for one month before closing (Barry, 2013).

While the aspiration of the organizers is that upon its removal, there will be increased enthusiasm to witness its occurrence, potentially paving the way for more similar projects. Furthermore, there needs to be questioning of the reasons why our cities are so unwilling to provide public spaces for its residents and instead prefer to speculate real estate property to give away even more public land to private development. The city council has opted to open the space for a one-month duration instead of fulfilling its earlier commitment to offer housing for individuals marginalized by the debt-driven private property market (Thoughts on Granby, 2013).

The common thread among these projects is a shared skepticism toward the state's reliability in structuring urban space in desirable ways. However, even within this skepticism, there are different reasons for a state's shortcomings. Moreover, Stevens and Dovey (2016) argue that TU may introduce uncertainties, potentially undermining confidence in larger, longer-term investment decisions and challenging established planning norms. Nonetheless, Tonkiss (2013) asserts that if authorities are unable to develop vacant land or buildings, temporary urbanism is still a better option than leaving it undeveloped.

Ultimately, bottom-up TPU offers an alternative to traditional planning tools, fostering innovation, inclusivity, and community empowerment. By harnessing local knowledge and collective action, these initiatives have the potential to catalyze meaningful change and create more vibrant and inclusive urban environments. However, to fully realize this potential, there must be a concerted effort to address the structural barriers and institutional shortcomings that hinder the sustainability and scalability of bottom-up approaches.

2. Top-down TPU

Top-down TPU is a byproduct of neoliberal planning and development practices as well as globalization. Here, temporary urbanism is planned and built by people in positions of power, such as governments or businesses, in order to achieve strategic goals (Bishop and Williams, 2012; Oswalt et al, 2013). Top-down TU here, is part of more formal visions of cities and neighborhoods, within larger plans and visions of urban changes with a focus on capital growth and are not just perceived as informal reactions to urban difficulties (Andres and Kraftl 2021).

A perfect example of Top-Down deployed temporary initiatives is a social experiment conducted in the city of Milwaukee. Postman Square has existed for a long time, but due to its underutilization, many locals are not aware it exists. The city of Milwaukee had planned permanent improvements to the square and the streets passing by it. Then obtained permission to implement a temporary urbanism experiment that guides the city's plans. The goal was to encourage community engagement in this public space and track if people use or do not use certain features of the park before its upgrade. The installations were assembled and painted by one hundred volunteers. The installations comprised of social furniture, consisting of movable chairs, stools, and tables. in addition to a letterbox for people to leave comments on what should be added to the park.

Reactions to Postman Square varied. Positive responses praised the space's flexibility, anticipating a permanent project. Some, unaware of the social experiment, saw the blue furniture as art and disapproved. Despite mixed reactions, officials saw the experiment as low-risk due to its temporary and low-cost nature. According to McCarthy (2020), officials pledged that future efforts would involve more

communication to clarify the temporary and non-permanent nature of such installations. Several other examples of parks being used as testing grounds by governments have been noted such as Fosnavag temporary park in Norway and Antwerp temporary park in Belgium, both of which have also lead to permanent public spaces (Appendix I).

As demonstrated, top-down temporary initiatives aim to gauge community engagement and preferences before implementing permanent changes. While the reactions to such projects may vary, their temporary and low-cost nature makes them appealing to officials as low-risk ventures. Moreover, lessons learned from these experiments emphasize the importance of clear communication and community involvement in future stages.

3. Hybrid TPU

When temporary uses are combined with traditional tools of city planning and real estate development, both are transformed, and different aspects arise from both of them. This fusion initially has a contradictory character because it attempts to combine two opposites where the former is small immediate steps that lack a long-term vision and try to enable development without capital, while the latter is more concerned with a final large-scale vision, normally, with capital growth as a main priority (Oswalt et.al, 2013). Hybrid TPU highlights the variable nature of temporary urbanism and its complexity.

A significant amount of small-scale temporary projects highly relies on networking and creating dialogue improvisation amongst key stakeholders, both those holding power in the decision-making process and those able to envision and deliver such initiatives. This means that the boundaries between top-down and bottom-up are

blurred. It is about local empowerment and adaptability in the process of making spaces, and making those spaces viable and livable, within a win–win situation for all (Andres and Zhang, 2020). Oswalt argues, that while this will not be able to fully represent the anarchist character of “the informal” nor will it be able to achieve the sustenance and security of “the planned”, it will allow for different hybrid TPUs: “short-term and long-lasting ones, goal-oriented and open-ended ones, spatially compact and fragmented ones” (Oswalt et.al, 2013, p.222).

Inspired by the need for more open space in low-income neighborhoods and the excess of parking spaces in Miami, one of the most prominent and replicated temporary initiatives emerged: parklets. In 2005 two of the leaders of the design firm Rebar in Miami went outside around lunchtime, crossed the street, and began installing a minipark in a metered parking space. They set out a bench, added fake grass, and dropped in a shade tree. A single metered parking space was now a temporary park (Lydon and Garcia, 2010).

The designers had found a loophole in the system, as long as the parking meter is paid, there is nothing stopping them legally from creating a parklet there. Large-scale open space plans are now difficult due to the city’s budgetary limitations and lack of undeveloped land. For that reason, parklets started popping up more on the streets of the city. Parklets range in type and quality, from temporary grass-covered miniparks to moveable wood decks with bike parking, public art, benches, tables, chairs, and exercise equipment. They are typically characterized by their adjacency to the sidewalk and ability to extend the social life of the sidewalk (Lydon and Garcia, 2010).

This initiative sparked the inception of Parking Day, a global art project in which individuals worldwide temporarily transform street parking spaces into small

parks for art, play, and activism. The firm responsible not only created a parklet but also developed a website featuring a how-to guide, enabling others in diverse contexts to learn and apply similar concepts. In San Francisco, the success of temporary projects prompted city-wide policy approval, streamlining the process of obtaining permits for short-term spaces and events (City & County of San Francisco, 2023). The government's website is also rich in resources and manuals for designing and deploying such initiatives on streets and vacant spaces. In São Paulo, the introduction of parklets aims to enhance active urban use, contributing to the city's attractiveness, security, and overall hospitable environment. As of 2019, there were 131 parklets in operation across the city (Rodrigues et al., 2020). These projects foster an international dialogue on urban design by sharing ideas, methodologies, and outcomes, encouraging collaboration and the exchange of best practices.

According to Oswalt (2013), temporary use should not exclude long-term planning goals. Direct space appropriation and the built vision are still frequently perceived and treated as two mutually exclusive extremes. However, a city that strives for continuous reinvention and revitalization requires both, open spaces for unanticipated uses from the bottom up and, spatial-programmatic specifications and designs from the top down. Development strategies that integrate both approaches must be complemented by innovative tools alongside conventional planning methods.

Based on this section of the review, several guidelines for TU will be taken into consideration moving forward. The following sections of the review will look at temporary uses in the specific context of Beirut to synthesize more localized guidelines. The main principles of T/TPU from the theoretical part of the review are the following:

- **Low-cost and fast action:** TPU projects' power lies in their ability to create vibrant spaces quickly and inexpensively using simple objects like painted bike lanes or upcycled materials for urban furniture.
- **Incrementality and experimentation:** Rooted in the tactical nature of TU, this principle allows for experimentation with different loopholes and design decisions, leading to creative solutions to recurring issues in the urban fabric.
- **Collaboration and participation**: Successful TPU projects often involve collaboration and participation from various actors, including municipal officials, businesses, activists, and residents. By engaging stakeholders in the co-creation of these spaces, bottom-up and top-down initiatives can intersect and lead to more equitable and sustainable outcomes.
- **Replicability**: TPU, viewed as a simple, cheap, and straightforward response to vacancy, allows for solutions that can be replicated in different contexts.

C. Tactical and Temporary Urbanism in Beirut

Beirut is a city plagued by depleted business activities, high unemployment rates, food insecurity, and a significant increase in poverty levels. According to Beirut City Profile by UN-Habitat (2021), Beirut is characterized by significant socioeconomic inequalities, and the economic growth pattern has led to stark inequalities, as insufficient service provision affects everyone, particularly vulnerable segments of Beirut's population. These people experience systemic inequities in accessing services and have fewer financial resources and social safety nets to make up for these gaps. As a result, unreliable and inadequate provision of water, energy, education, and health services has led to increased reliance on private suppliers for those who can afford it.

Adding to the challenge is the deteriorating state of service provision due to the collapsing economy, COVID-19, and the August 4, 2020 blast, with people's purchasing power and ability to withdraw money from their bank accounts severely limited, and acute needs intensifying. When discussing urban issues in Beirut, it is essential to recognize these vulnerabilities (UN-Habitat, 2021).

Before looking at T/TPU attempts in Beirut, it is important to provide an overview of public spaces in the city. The situation is marked by a struggle for power, with real estate development and private interests prioritizing profit over communal areas for residents (Karizat, 2019). As a result, public spaces are being privatized, limiting opportunities for interaction among people. When real estate developments encroach on and damage public spaces, chances for interaction decrease. Urban development policies that emerged after the civil war made it easier for real estate to construct resorts and high-end malls, reducing the availability of public spaces (Krijnen and Fawaz, 2010).

Speculative investments and practices by banks, financial institutions, and developers have driven housing prices to unsustainable levels, undermining affordability and exacerbating the financialization of Lebanese public land (Fawaz and Zaatari, 2020; Fawaz & Salamé, 2019). The high cost of land makes it impossible for many city residents to access housing, workplaces, and even public parks (Fawaz and Salame, 2019). This prohibitive cost has also prevented local authorities from implementing necessary social infrastructure such as public parks, libraries, hospitals, and sidewalks, as even the expropriation of small plots of land is not feasible (Fawaz and Salame, 2019).

Fawaz (2023) holds planners in Lebanon complicit with the commodification of land and its increased financialization, both of which are powerful triggers of Lebanon's contemporary financial crisis. This financialization has also eroded the publicness of Beirut by shifting it towards the interests of elites, making it increasingly difficult to sustain the notion of a shared public realm (Fawaz and Zaatari, 2020). Consequently, public spaces are increasingly viewed in terms of their exchange and consumption value rather than their potential for social interaction (Fawaz et.al, 2020; Karizat 2019). The direct consequences of the above are evident in the scarcity, inaccessibility, and privatization of public spaces. In Beirut, only a few designated public spaces remain, and they are scarce, inaccessible, or privatized. These consist of 22 public gardens and squares and a fragmented waterfront claimed by private interests. Unfortunately, the Municipality of Beirut has not prioritized providing the city with much-needed public space, which lead many of the parks to be inaccessible or abandoned.

Due to the lack of accessible open and green public spaces in the Beirut, many appropriations of the public and private realm that aim towards a different definition of public space in the city have emerged. These appropriations have been abundant and diverse, especially in a context like Beirut where there is an evident need in the city for collective spaces. These appropriations manifest in many ways including art installations, outdoor exhibitions, moving festivals, temporary green spaces, communal spaces, and many more. In Beirut's recent history, the public was in an active state of reclaiming their right to the city through place-making, with many pop-up spaces of different functions emerging between 2019 and 2020 (Sinno, 2020). Sinno (2020) argues that while short-lived, these spaces have proved to have a big impact on the city socially, economically, and politically.

By looking at some of the instances of tactical and temporary urbanism in Beirut, we can begin to understand that much like public open spaces, T/TPU in the city is fragmented, scarce, disconnected, and unequal. Most of these projects are very site-specific and die out after short periods. Therefore, it is important to understand these appropriations as processes that guide us toward a more inclusive and holistic vision of the city rather than a finished project that erupts in the urban fabric. Moreover, such grassroots spaces should be considered on a large scale to serve the neighborhoods of Beirut equally.

One of the most prevalent ways of T/TPU in a city is through art installations and performances. Art installations can serve as powerful tools to engage communities and promote social interaction. They can also be used to challenge prevailing notions of public space and raise awareness about urban issues. An installation titled Fractions of Memory by Nada Sehnaoui occupied Martyr Square during July and August of 2003. Martyrs' Square was destroyed twice, first by the war, then by the reconstruction project. Sehnaoui appealed to the public to participate in the making of the installation by asking in the press and on the internet about their memory of life in downtown before the war. 360 structures were constructed using 20 tons of newspaper. Many structures carried the public's responses to the appeal while other structures carried blank pages for missing texts and lost memories. Although this project was temporary, it makes you question the state of downtown now as opposed to before the civil war and it starts a conversation about the future of downtown and the rest of the city.

Figure 4 Fractions of memory (Sehnaoui, 2003)

Figure 5 Fractions of memory (Sehnaoui, 2003)

Additionally, many artists take over public and private spaces, to display their work, and leave an impact on the city's spaces, such as Le Souffleur by District D, MK3D Vendome by Christian Zahr, and The Sioufi Garden Project by Marwan Rechmaoui. These installations and many more T/TPU represent creative attempts of artists/designers in reclaiming public space in Beirut.

Figure 6 MK3D Vendom – Zahr (Zahr, 2012)

Figure 7 Sioufi garden project – Rechmaoui (Ashkal Alwan, 2015)

Figure 8 Le Souffleur – District D (Neighborhood initiative, 2019)

Furthermore, art as a form of political protest is a common practice in the urban landscape, displayed in various actions, from squatting, to street art, to the reclamation of spaces (Tapuzofski and Andres, 2020). These interventions create spaces of

resistance that transform public space into political arenas (Amoore and Hall, 2010). Protesters are therefore space producers, changing sites of oppression into spaces for expression. While such actions can be seen as a form of TU, it is important to note that the role of protesters as space producers is distinct from the typical understanding of TU. Rather than creating temporary or low-cost interventions to address urban issues, protesters are producing spaces for political expression and challenging sites of oppression. However, Protests are emotionally intense and can contribute to constructing the "sense of place" and can also change its symbolic meaning (Piazza, 2018).

During the 2019 Lebanese uprising, the act of placemaking and reclamation of public spaces has been substantial. It has transformed public spaces into places of solidarity, bringing people of all ages, races, genders, and backgrounds together. Lebanese protesters set up a living room with an area rug, a couch, and a refrigerator (Fig 9 & 10). On another, they held a morning yoga class. And on a third road, a band with an accordion player sang one of the newest slogans of Lebanon's protests. This demonstrated the collective power of people to undertake and deliver services and actions that the Government has struggled to undertake (Sinno, 2020).

Figure 9 Protest in Beirut (Malla, 2019)

Figure 10 Protest in Beirut (Seikaly, 2019)

Moreover, Harb (2013) reflects on the utilization of spaces that are not typically designated as public and asserts that these spatial experiences can manifest in diverse ways within the urban fabric:

> Empty parking lots mostly used on Sundays by kids and teenagers playing football, skating or biking. Numerous sidewalks and street corners occupied by table and chairs, where guys smoke arguileh and watch the street during the day. Many street chunks taken over by youth groups smoking, eating, drinking, and hanging out during late hours. Large sidewalks circling middle-class residential blocks used by middle-aged people exercising during early evening times. (Harb, 2013, para. 7)

These appropriations are particularly significant in Beirut, as they demonstrate a need for outdoor spaces for gathering and leisure in an urban environment where such spaces and access to them are limited. The temporary utilization of vacant spaces is driven by several factors. According to Mady (2012), there are three drivers of the temporary use of private vacant lots in Beirut.

- The period of vacancy: The longer a space is vacant, the more probable a temporary activity will be held there.
- Property rights: The more complicated the site's property rights are, the lower its rent value. As a result, many vacant lots are cheap and are easier to acquire for temporary activation.
- Shape: if a space is too small or oddly shaped to allow for more profitable activities, it could be available for temporary use.

Figure 11 Kids playing, Karantina (by author, 2019)

Figure 12 Upcycled seating, Karantina (by author, 2019)

Figure 13 Informal gathering, Bourj Hammoud (by author, 2019)

Additionally, organizations and institutions have further contributed to the making of temporary public spaces such as the neighborhood initiative at AUB that invests in TPU as a tool to enhance livability in Hamra and Ain Mraise, UN-Habitat that finances the recovery of public spaces, and the TheOtherDada that aims to incrementally reach the full reforestation of Beirut riverbanks. These initiatives and the appropriations Harb mentions, act as interim functional green/open spaces that fill in the gaps created by the lack of municipal gardens and parks and further confirm the need for public open spaces.

Figure 14 Laziza park, Geitaoui (Salame, 2022)

Figure 15 The chain effect, Hamra (Neighborhood initiative, 2018)

Figure 16 RiverLess, Beirut river (theOtherDada, 2020)

The aforementioned TPUs and appropriations around the city highlight a need for spaces of gathering, expression, and collective living that are not being met by the state. Nevertheless, there needs to be a critical view of the current state of TPU in Beirut. While TPUs have proven their impact on a small scale, they are still limited when it comes to long-term visions of public space provision. Additionally, instead of TPU being used as a process that adapts to the changing needs of its users and provides lessons to guide similar projects, TPUs in Beirut rather seem like fixed final objects that serve a purpose for a short period of time and gradually deteriorate in the city such as Le Souffleur, MK3D, The chain effect, and Laziza park. These initiatives, if measured, tested, and refined (Gehl Architects, 2016) can present inclusive guidelines for future development of public spaces in Beirut's neighborhoods.

Gehl Architect's Action-oriented planning tools (Figure 17) could be a useful tool to fill the gaps. The action-oriented planning tools were developed by the firm as a manual for the City and County in Denver in 2016. It relies on collaboration between

the city and its citizens where both of them contribute to the success of a project. The city being the facilitator and the citizens being the decision-makers. Whereas the traditional planning process is a linear process that ends with a final product. Action-oriented planning relies on a feedback loop and an open line of communication between cities and residents to inform design decisions.

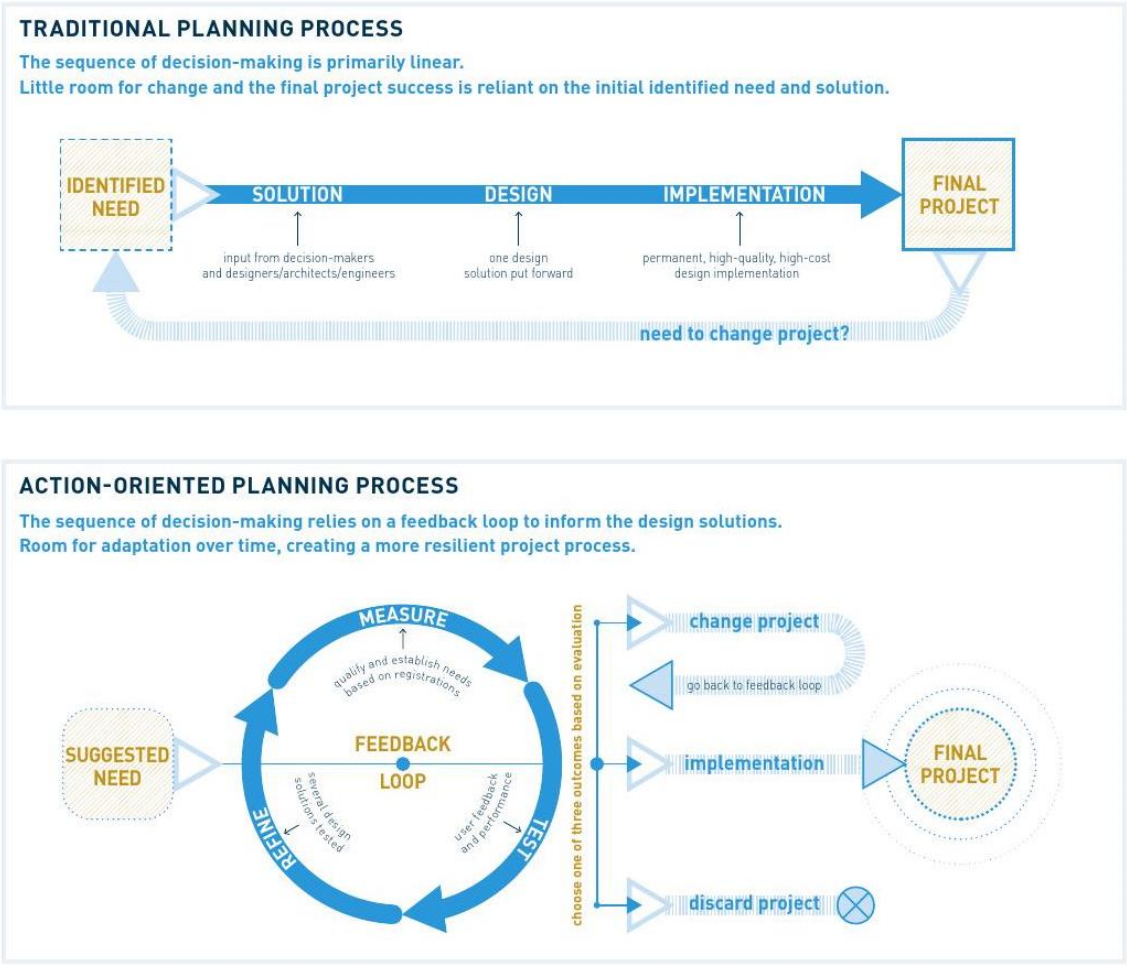


Figure 17 Action-oriented planning cycle (Gehl Architects, 2016)

- Measure: mainly involving observational studies to understand public life and user's experiences and needs which was covered in the analysis chapter.

- Test: Implementing a project that responds to some of the needs established in the earlier phase and evaluates the changes of public space utilization and monitors the new patterns of usage and users. Additionally, this step entails investigating the new needs that arise based on the impact of the new project. Evaluating a project could include a number of questions such as: how successful was the prototype in inviting people for lingering and walking? Were the elderly engaged with the spaces created for them? Do parents feel safer letting their kids play outside? Is there less traffic and enhanced pedestrian mobility? Did people want to exercise outside more?
- Refine: This phase learns from the first two phases and refines the projects next steps in order for it to have more success. If a project does not meet its goals more tests are done until the right needs are met.

The architects distance this cycle from TU with an increased focus on monitoring and evaluation. While in TU, temporary projects are final, the action-oriented planning starts with a pilot project and ends up with a refined and personalized end result tailored to the specific needs of its users. This tool can be employed to guarantee the sustainability of TU initiatives, ensuring their continued viability and adaptability to changes when necessary (Gehl Architects, 2016).

Moreover, the work of Sandra Frem on creative collectives for the Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism 2019, presents an interesting take on the bottom-up production of the city which aligns with the direction of this thesis. After the port blast in Beirut, the reconstruction process in destroyed neighborhoods showed first

and foremost the potential of people, activists, collectives, and civil society groups in the bottom-up production of the city in response to people's needs.

After the Beirut port blast, the need for open spaces for relief initiatives pushed people to take the streets and the Neighboring vacant lots, mostly utilizing open space for communal good. Which included relief efforts, personal initiatives, gatherings, and refuge (Sinno, 2020). Based on this potential, Frem speculates on different ways of inhabiting and reclaiming Beirut that are inspired by such collective energies. Vacant lots, structures, and existing open spaces become available for collective appropriation. By creating committees at different scales (building, plot, neighborhood, city), planners and designers can start to formalize these outlets and manage them as ongoing processes that adapt with the changing needs of the community. Such outlets can be customized, relocated, and adjusted as needed to fit the needs of their users.

In conclusion, the scarcity of accessible and green public spaces in Beirut has prompted many creative attempts at tactical and temporary urbanism. These interventions, ranging from art installations to public performances and placemaking initiatives, highlight the ongoing privatization of public spaces and the need to reclaim the city for the public. Moreover, they serve as a reminder that public space is not a commodity to be bought and sold, but a shared resource that belongs to everyone. Although the temporary appropriations in Beirut are often short-lived and site-specific, they serve as learning tools that can guide us toward a more inclusive and holistic vision of the city. In order to explore a long-term framework for tactical urbanism, we need to look at temporary urbanism at the block, neighborhood, and city scale, to develop formalized strategies of tactical urbanism for Beirut's neighborhoods that address their specific needs and enhance the quality of life in them.

D. Vacant spaces in Beirut

In Beirut, vacant spaces could be typologized into three main categories.

1. Unbuildable Lots

Public and private unbuildable lots present a great opportunity for tactical urbanism. They are parcels that cannot be developed due to various reasons, such as zoning regulations, environmental restrictions, topography, or size. Because of these conditions, these lots can be a space for more permanent TU initiatives. Or can act as spaces assigned only for TU that benefits the community. Beirut Urban Lab at AUB generated a map based on the minimum allowable constructible plots per Beirut's zoning regulations. Their vacancy was determined from aerial photos but fieldwork to confirm is still necessary. Based on this map, there are 492 public ULs and 1192 private ULs in municipal Beirut. (Harb and Mazraani, 2020)

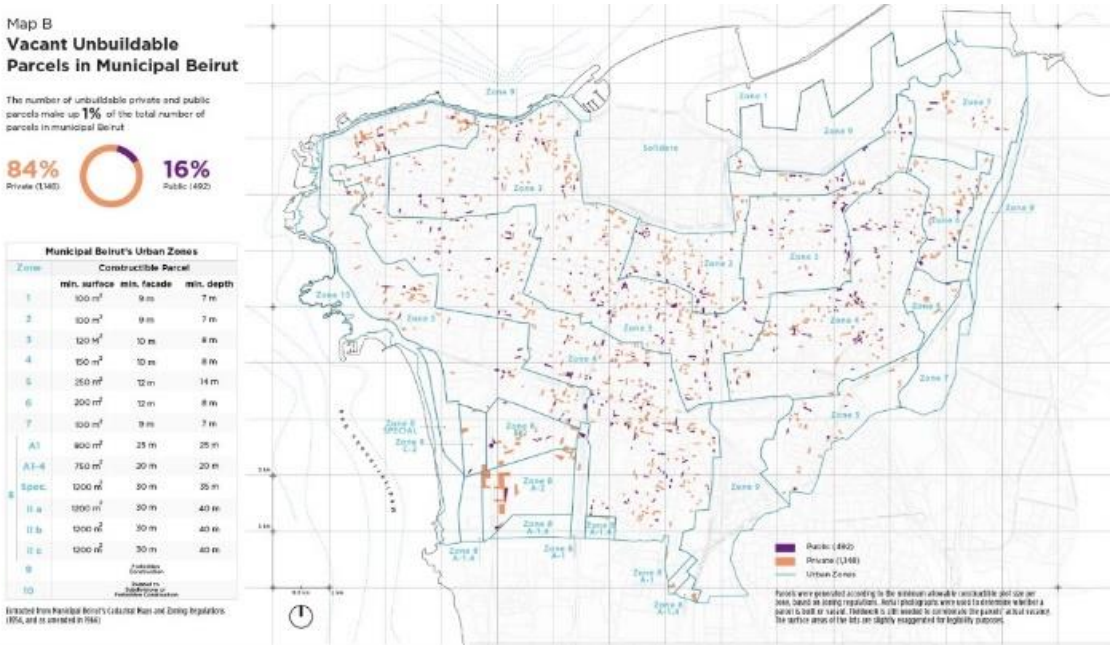


Figure 18 Unbuildable lots in Beirut (Harb and Mazraani, 2020)

2. Vacant Lots

Although this typology includes both vacant land and buildings, for this thesis the focus will be on available vacant land since the final result will lean towards urban landscape design. These lots are larger than unbuildable ones since they have not been built on and could still be developed in the future.

- Abandoned lots: Some are fenced, and their conditions vary from paved lots to lots that have been taken over by garbage or spontaneous vegetation.

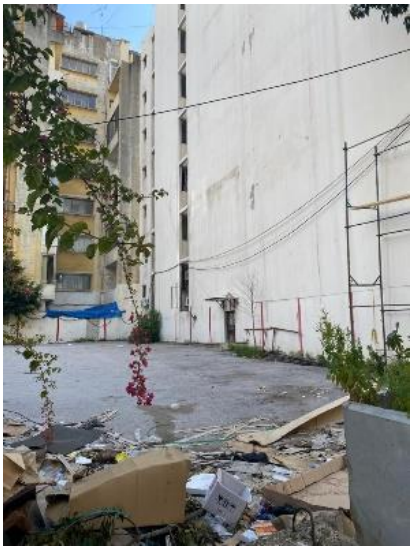


Figure 19 Abandoned lot, Geitaoui (by author, 2023)

Figure 20 Abandoned lot, Mar Mikhael (by author, 2021)

Figure 21 Abandoned lot, Badaro (by author, 2021)

- Parking lots: Although not “vacant” since it has a function and is operated by landowners, parking lots present great opportunities for TU deployment because of their size, location, and availability. Because of the dominance of cars in Beirut, many vacant lots are operating as private parking lots. They usually exist in busy areas where people live/work and are easily accessible and located. These could be temporarily rented and turned into a space for the community. Although it would be more difficult to negotiate with a parking lot owner than an abandoned lot owner about temporarily using the space, the parklet strategy could be a sensible option. Parklets are extensions of the sidewalk that create a small open space where cars are parked. These spaces operate by paying for the parking meter as if a car is parked but using the space to create a temporary function. This could allow for different uses throughout the week.

Temporary art platform (TAP) created a guide for artists who wish to implement a permanent or temporary project in public spaces. They analyzed different types of interventions from graffiti and art installations to performances and events in addition to the legal processes they had to go through. According to the guide, public spaces are permitted for temporary activation/use through filing permits to the municipality of Beirut where the governor of Beirut has the authority to issue authorizations for the execution of such work.

As Solidere is managed separately, therefore an additional permit would be needed from Solidere for temporary projects in downtown (Temporary art platform, 2015). In private lots, however, an agreement with the landowner to use that land until it was to be developed could be made. An example of this would be the work of GroBeirut with Laziza Park in Geitaouwi. The park started forming in 2020 and still stands. The agreement with the landowners was that no permanent changes could be made to the land and could be taken back by the owners whenever plans of development occur. This prompted the NGO to equip the park with removable planters and seating that could be taken to another lot if the land was taken back (Salame, 2022).

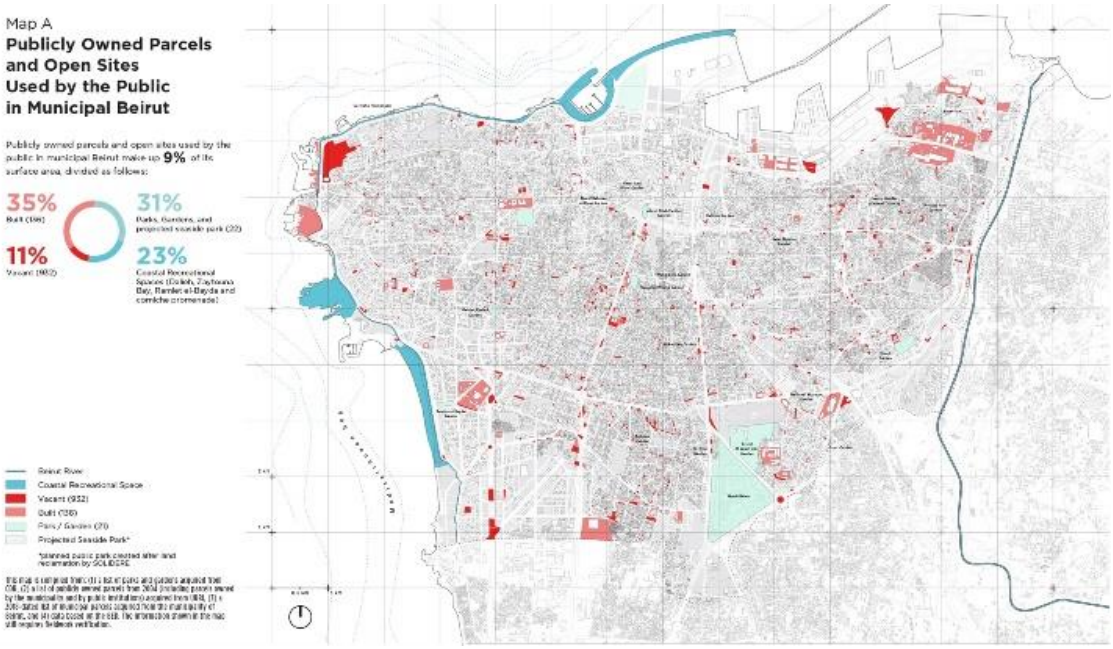


Figure 22 Public vacant lots in Beirut (Harb and Mazraani, 2020)

3. Streets

Streets are public property and are the most used for TPU by the community ranging from informal economies such as markets and food stands to spaces for events such as farmers' markets and festivals, to an extension of the indoors by cafes and businesses. This typology can be grouped with abandoned lots in terms of the scale of its reach but is much more temporary and short-term.

These typologies of available vacant space of different ownership statuses present opportunities for both temporary and long-term appropriations of TPU. It is important to think of these spaces in relation to the future TU program and typologize them in terms of their capacity.

Table 1 Space ownership and temporary scope

Typology/ownership	*Public*	*Private*	*Temporary*	*Permanent*
Unbuildable/leftover	✓	✓	✓	✓
Abandoned	✓	✓	✓	✓
Parking lots	✓	✓	✓	
Streets	✓		✓	

Based on this comprehensive review of the state of current T/TPUs and the opportunities for more T/TPUs represented in the vacant space typologies in Beirut. A few context-specific principles for future TU could be named as follows.

- **Collaboration and participation:** The significance of collaboration and creating networks of stakeholders to make richer and more inclusive temporary initiatives is highlighted in the context of Beirut. By engaging stakeholders in the co-creation of these spaces, bottom-up and top-down initiatives can intersect and lead to more equitable and sustainable outcomes.
- **Maintenance**: Because these projects are not necessarily built for permanence, it is important to ensure their quality and maintenance to prevent temporary TPU projects from deteriorating into unusable urban features. This requires ongoing efforts to keep the space clean, safe, and functional.
- **Monitoring and evaluation**: Because these projects are low-cost, they are easily adjustable. Therefore, there is value in monitoring and evaluating them in order to understand people's preferences and to change them accordingly.
- **Long-term timeline/effect**: In order to explore more strategic and long-term utilization of TU as a tool for meeting local needs, TU is paired with action-oriented planning tools to help keep temporary initiatives in a continuous cycle of change, measuring, and adaptation.

- **Temporary occupation of vacant lots:** Due to private vacant lots being the most desirable for TPU in the city and the agreement with the landowner to use the land until they decide to develop the land, these initiatives should be made to consider easy future removal or changes.
- **Accessibility**: The usage of whatever TPU project highly depends on people's access to it. Creating a temporary park that is hidden and not visually and physically accessible by the users it is designed for, defeats the purpose of TU.

In a nutshell, there is an abundance of opportunity in Beirut to reactivate spatial practices and public life. These spaces are at the intersection of public and private. As the situation in Lebanon further unfolds, any vision of public and equitable development in the urban fabric seems to be in the distant future. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate short-term and low-cost alternatives to public spaces in the city. Based on the neighborhood selection process detailed in the introduction, Qobayat will be used as a case study for a TU neighborhood-scale strategy in the thesis. The analysis entails understanding the different facets of the neighborhood and determining the drivers of outdoor activity. It focuses on identifying needs and gaps in the urban fabric by assessing the way people appropriate its available spaces.

CHAPTER III

CASE STUDY PROFILE AND ANALYSIS

The analysis and inventory phase serves as the bedrock for formulating strategic decisions tailored to the unique characteristics of the selected neighborhood. This stage is designed to meticulously observe and comprehend the dynamics of Qobayat, aiming to construct a comprehensive portrait of the community and gain insights into the residents' needs. Throughout this process, a neighborhood analysis matrix was developed, laying the groundwork for evaluating and understanding other Beirut neighborhoods concerning their temporary use of outdoor spaces. This matrix involves understanding all aspects of public life in a neighborhood, what people already do, what happens the most/least, how it affects its surroundings, and how it is affected by its context. In order to craft a Temporary urbanism strategy (TPU) strategy that harmonizes with the current spatial usage, this neighborhood analysis focuses on the nuances of everyday life.

The picture below captures the view from my first-floor balcony at a bustling intersection in Qobayat represents the starting point of my observations for the thesis. Spending considerable time at home, my balcony served as a portal to the outside environment, fostering a sense of involvement through observation. Notably, an orange tree near a parking lot stood out, offering passersby a rare connection with nature in the urban setting. Adjacent to a shop, a lady arranged chairs and a table on the sidewalk, facilitating interactions with neighboring business owners and residents. I witnessed workers transporting art pieces and canvases from a framing store to a wood workshop across the street. Additionally, individuals with distinctive fashions frequently crossed

the street to model and document their work. This prompted me to take these observations outdoors in order to document the different ways people utilize available spaces in Qobayat and how the physical, social, and economic fabric of Qobayat impacts people's activities.

Figure 23 View from Balcony in Qobayat.

Regular walks and observation sessions across Qobayat have yielded profound insights into the nuanced ways in which residents appropriate outdoor spaces. Overlapping these observations with the physical context allows for an understanding of the catalysts behind outdoor activities, including ground-floor functions, spatial availability, and the adequacy of spaces to facilitate various activities, such as the presence of benches or shaded areas. Furthermore, this strategic analysis establishes a foundation for design guidelines for the tools that will be used to fulfill the TPU neighborhood strategy.

A. Neighborhood Profile

Qobayat is a small neighborhood with an area of 0.19 km2 that epitomizes the serene stretch of Armenia Street, characterized by a subdued nightlife and a vibrant tapestry of daily life. It is bordered by Armenia Street to the north, the Beirut River and its highway to the east, and Jeitaoui to the south and west.

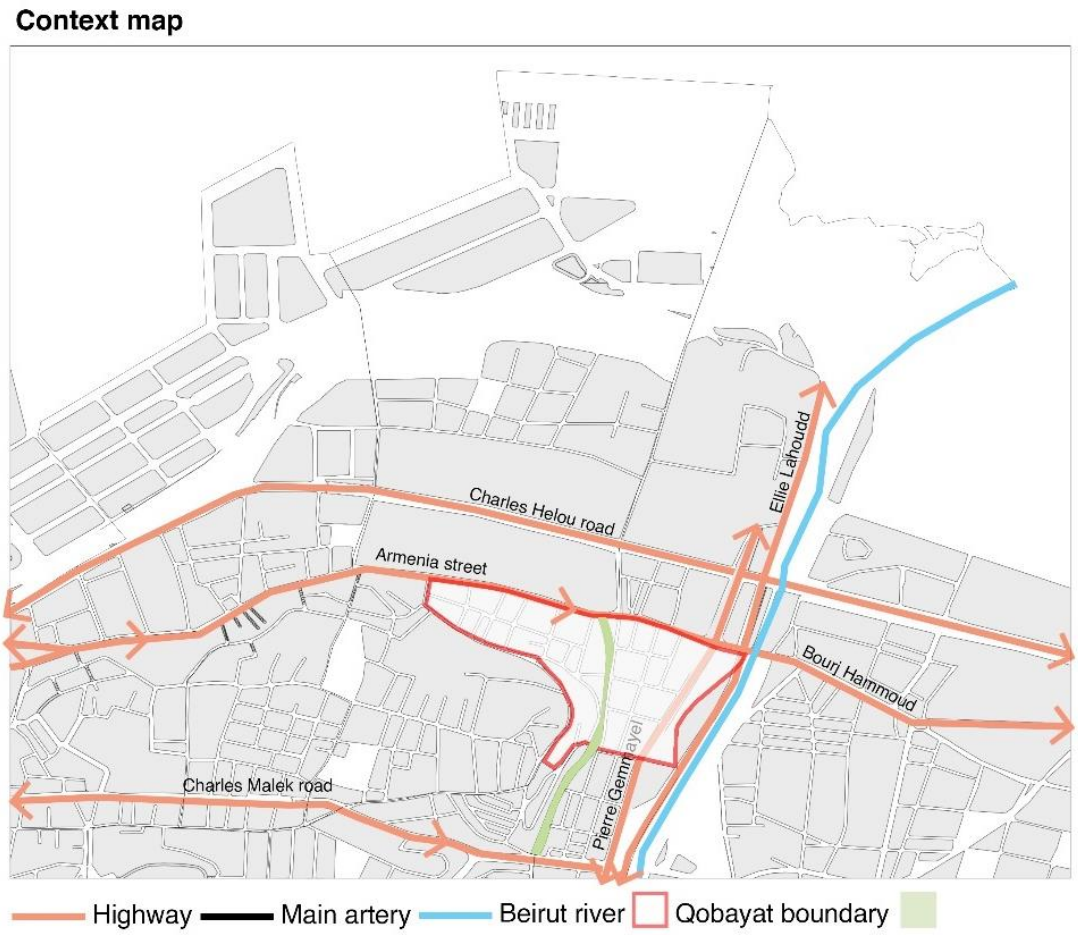


Figure 24 Qobayat context map (by author, 2023)

1. Roads

The limits of Qobayat consist of one main artery (Armenia Street) linking Bourj Hammoud and Charles Hilou highway to Gemmayze and several one-way secondary roads connecting the neighborhood (figure 25). Pierre Gemayel highway, a busy intersection that cuts through the neighborhood, allows people from outside of Beirut to access the neighborhood through Armenia street. Furthermore, the neighborhood has a number of parking lots operated privately accommodating to the residents and visitors. This is in addition to the on-street parking which is fully occupied throughout the day.

The old railway forest is also used as a parking space by some residents living adjacent to the strip.

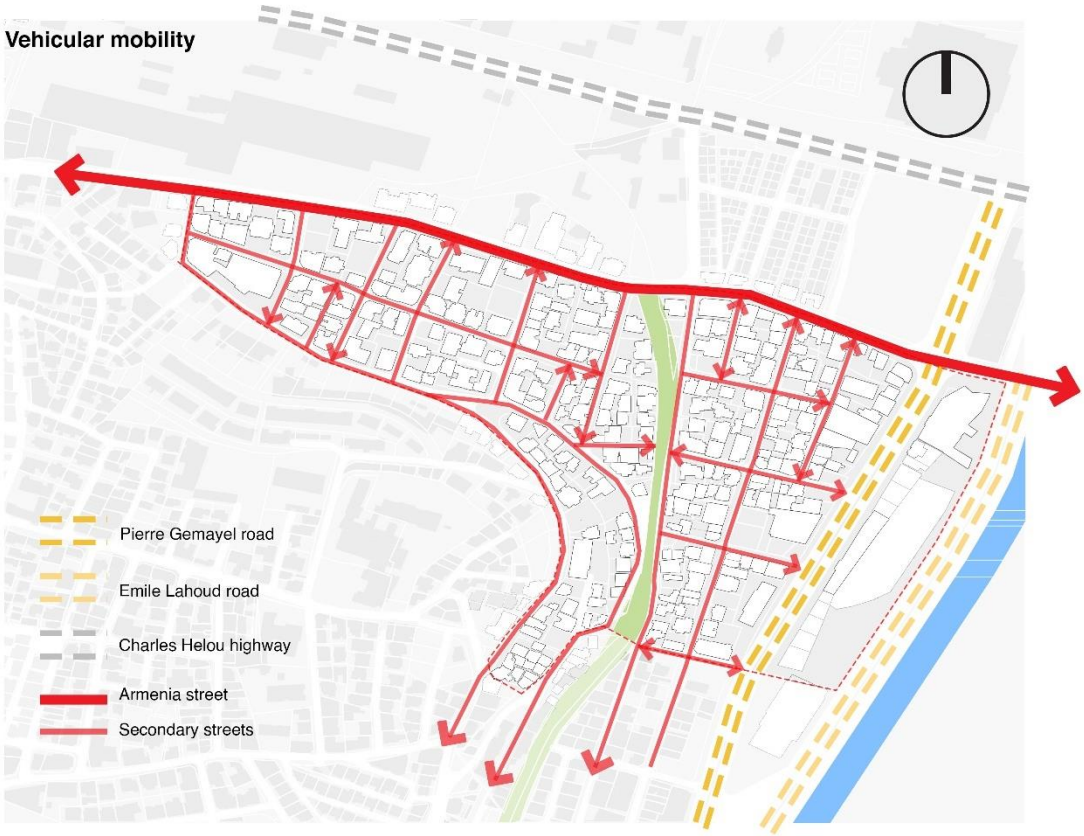


Figure 25 Vehicular mobility map.

Figure 26 Secondary street. (by author, 2024)

Figure 27 Parking lot (by author, 2023)

Figure 28 Residents parking in old railway forest (by author, 2023)

Traffic in the neighborhood is mainly caused by on-street parking in both street typologies:

- In Armenia street: The lack of parking fees and laws allowed for double parking, consequentially causing unnecessary traffic jams.
- In secondary streets:
    1. Roads are very narrow and with parked cars on both sides of the street, making it difficult for cars to pass through certain roads and sometimes could force them to go back through another road.
    2. The lack of government water in the neighborhood which leads to the purchase of private water trucks also creates blockages in the road. This

proved to be a consistent issue since trucks are needed for water every day in the neighborhood.

Figure 29 Traffic caused by irregular parking (by author, 2023)

Figure 30 Water truck blocking road (by author, 2023)

Figure 31 Double parking on secondary street (by author, 2023)

A traffic analysis of the roads in the neighborhood demonstrates a clear difference in the vertical and horizontal roads (figure 32). While vertical roads are the

most congested, inner neighborhood horizontal roads have a relatively clear vehicular flow This can be attributed to the connections the vertical roads have from other neighborhoods such as Geitawi and Ghabi to Armenia Street.

Figure 32 Typical traffic analysis on weekends and weekdays (by author, 2024)

2. Building Use

Qobayyat, primarily characterized as a residential neighborhood, exhibits a diverse range of ground-floor commercial activities. Initial mapping of ground-floor functions reveals a notable concentration of commercial and service uses, coexisting with the predominant residential fabric (figure 33). The neighborhood's boundaries contain one private high school (Jesus the Savior School) alongside three governmental

buildings housing the municipal health department, traffic control center, and the Ministry of Energy and Water. Additionally, the neighborhood includes three churches and a union of churches. A few buildings are either completely vacant, or the ground floor's function has been abandoned or closed. Furthermore, the upper floors predominantly serve residential purposes, with exceptions represented by a limited number of commercial and office buildings (figure 34). with only a few buildings consisting of only one floor.

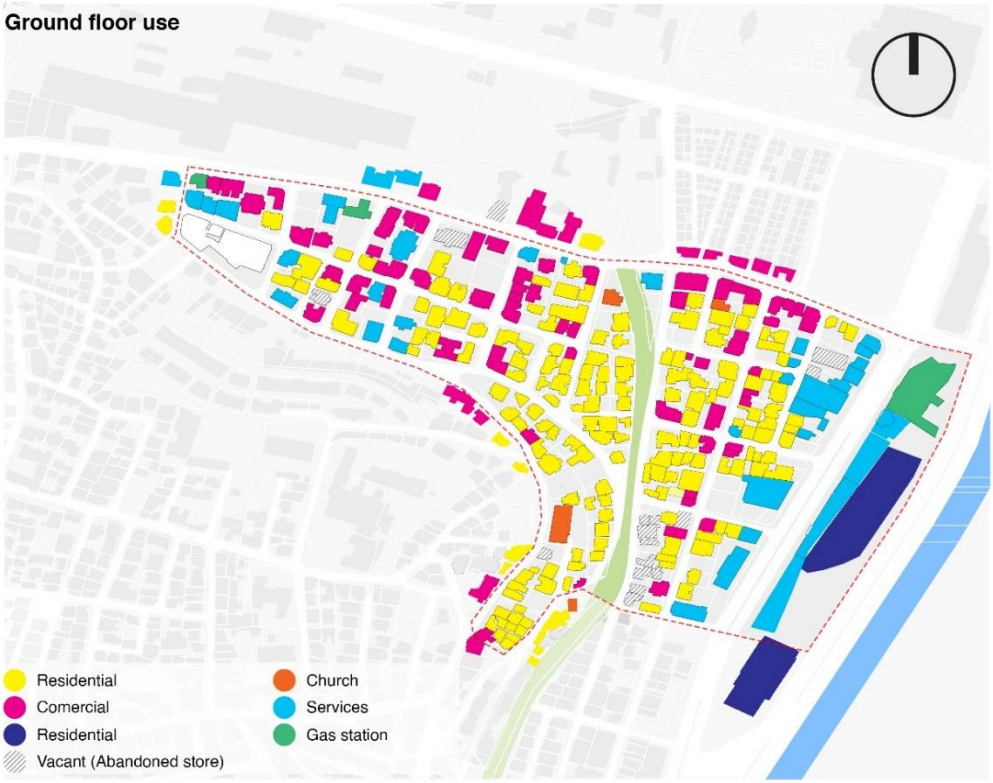


Figure 33 General ground floor functions (by author, 2023)

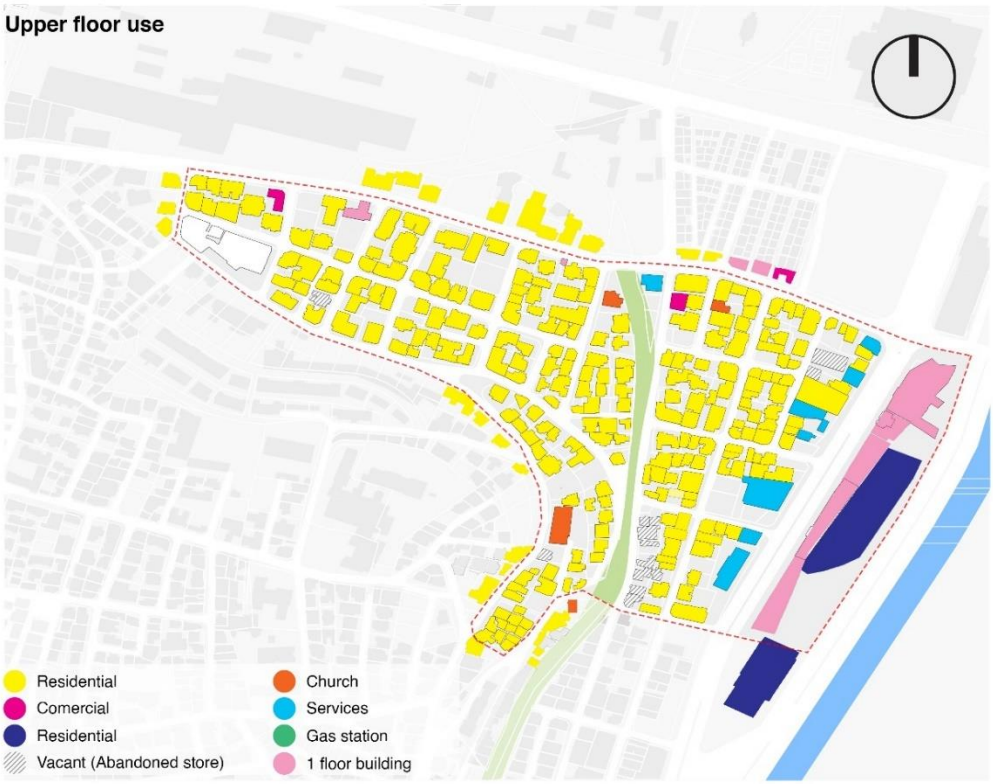


Figure 34 Upper floor functions (by author, 2023)

Furthermore, the ground-floor activities within Qobayyat are unequivocally perceived as catalysts for outdoor activities as they influence the nature of communal engagement within the vicinity. Therefore, it is important to delve deeper into the types of commercial and service uses available. A detailed mapping of ground-floor functions reveals a diverse landscape that defies facile categorization (Figure 35). Qobayyat hosts a plethora of retail establishments, encompassing small supermarkets, clothing boutiques, hardware stores, and furniture outlets.

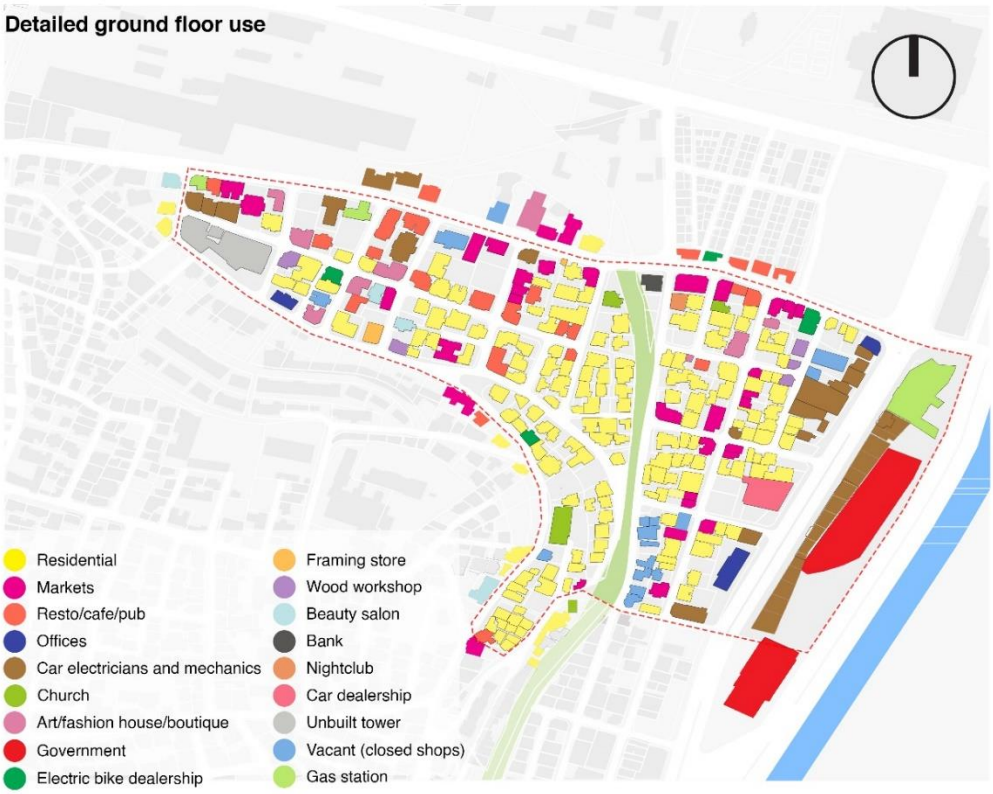


Figure 35 Detailed ground floor functions (by author, 2023)

Diverse services, including salons, framing and art printing establishments, tailors, wood workshops, and car electricians, further contribute to the local economic and social milieu. Notably, a substantial concentration of car and wood workshops exists, with many clustering on specific streets, characterized by a harmonious coexistence interspersed with occasional tensions with neighboring residents arising from the early-morning noises that start as early as 6 a.m.

Many cafes, bars, and restaurants operate in the neighborhood ranging from small bakeries to high-end restaurants. Certain bars and cafes such as Riwaq, Tota, and The Slow, emerge as significant cultural hubs, hosting daily events such as open mic nights, musical performances, comedy shows, and pop-up markets dedicated to

promoting and showcasing the talents of local artists and standing as spaces of free expression.

Qobayat is also home to many local fashion houses, art boutiques, and thrift stores making it a unique hotspot for art and fashion. These boutiques often transcend their commercial roles, functioning as communal spaces where creative individuals congregate, such as Depot Vente, a thrift store and clothing upcycling establishment that consistently provides spaces for artistic exploration and networking between local creatives. Some of these venues altruistically extend their hospitality in times of global significance, exemplified by Overworked Beirut's invitation on their Instagram page after the attack on Gaza, encouraging people to seek solace and community within their space.

Figure 36 Cultural event posters from the neighborhood (Instagram, 2023)

Figure 37 Overworked inviting people to their space on Instagram (Instagram, 2023)

As we explore the vibrant ground-floor activities within Qobayyat that serve as catalysts for outdoor engagements, the focus now shifts to the pedestrian movement and how these ground floor functions affect movement in the neighborhood.

3. Pedestrian Movement

Sidewalks act as a much-needed public space when there is a lack of open public spaces in the city. However, this basic need to comfortably walk from one place to another is often hindered by many obstructions in Beirut. Obstructions to sidewalks in the case of Qobayyat are:

- Parked cars and motorcycles block the entire sidewalk (Figure 41).
- Extremely narrow sidewalks that starting from 80 cm in width (Figure 38).

- Untrimmed street trees (Figure 38)
- Car workshops in the neighborhood extend their workspace to the sidewalk (Figure 40).
- Chairs and tables are set up by shop owners for sitting outside when there are no customers and in-store and to socialize with their neighbors (Figure 39).

Figure 38 Narrow sidewalk and obstructing vegetation (by author, 2023)

Figure 39 Tables and chairs obstructing the sidewalk (by author, 2023)

Figure 40 Car electrician extending workspace to sidewalk.

Figure 41 Cars parking on sidewalks (by author, 2023)

In analyzing pedestrian mobility in the neighborhood, it was important to delve deeper than just the widths of sidewalks and their accessibility. Using observations as an analytical tool is important to understand the way pedestrians naturally move and where they felt a need to stop and why. This understanding was taken in order to map out places where people felt the need to naturally stop while on their journey for whatever reason in order to map important pedestrian nodes in the neighborhood. This led to the mapping of “stopping places” where people stopped to interact with others, sit and wait, or pick up something from a bakery or fast-food place. Mapping these stopping places and understanding their function and the reasons people stop is crucial to design spaces influenced by people’s natural movement in the neighborhoods.

The observations here are illustrated on two maps to emphasize the locations in the neighborhood where people felt the need to naturally stop day (Figure 43) and night

(Figure 44), in addition to the pedestrian entrances and exits of the neighborhood. The most common reasons for stopping during the day are for small gatherings, sitting and waiting places, and for food. Although no public open spaces exist in the area, two spaces have been consistently used as public spaces in the neighborhood. These two spaces are additionally the most frequently stopped at spaces (1 & 2). The spaces are stairs that are shaded, creating a comfortable seating place, and a large vacant lot on Armenia street that although privately owned, because of its easy accessibility, is often publicly used for different activities. Other stopping places during the day are mostly seen on sidewalks either because of the availability of seating or a gathering.

Figure 42 Gathering stopping places (by author, 2023)

Figure 43 Sitting and waiting stopping places (by author, 2023)

Figure 44 Sitting and gathering stopping places on stairs (by author, 2023)

Figure 45 Stopping place at bakery (by author, 2023)

Figure 46 Day pedestrian linkages and stopping places (by author, 2023)

Stopping places decrease significantly at night and the reasons for stopping are more limited to sitting and waiting, and for food. The large lot is not used at night except for food trucks. Furthermore, two bars in the neighborhood create gatherings that extend to the sidewalk and road and is used for congregation also creating places where people could stop.

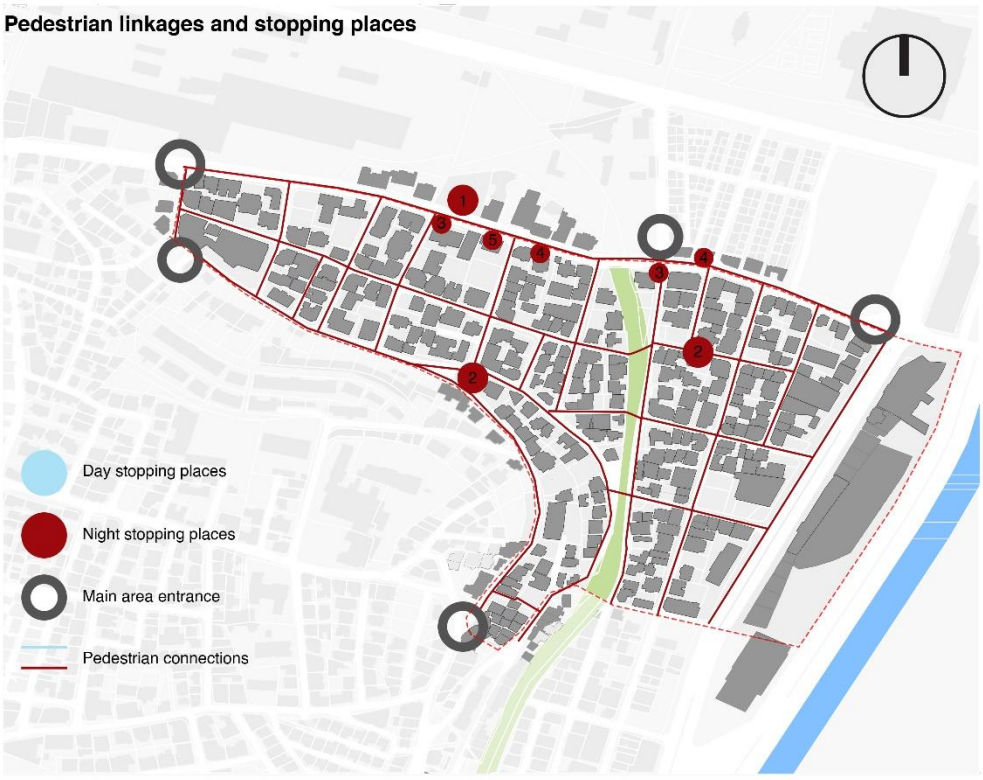


Figure 47 Day pedestrian linkages and stopping places (by author, 2023)

Figure 48 Food trucks night stopping places (by author, 2023)

Figure 49 Sitting and waiting night stopping places (by author, 2023)

Figure 50 Gathering outside Tota bar stopping place (by author, 2023)

Furthermore, a few parked electric vehicles were spotted parked on the sidewalks either parked to trees or poles. A clear increase in the use of electric vehicles such as scooters and bikes has also been observed. In this neighborhood alone there are three electric vehicle dealerships. Therefore, proper infrastructure to support and encourage the use of greener mobility is crucial for the growth of the neighborhood.

4. Vegetation

Qobayat is a relatively green neighborhood boasting a considerable abundance of lush street trees and charming private gardens. The architectural style prevalent in many buildings accommodates the creation of private gardens, although physically inaccessible, they contribute to the distinct character of the neighborhood. The landscape of Qobayat is characterized by its diversity, showcasing an array of palms, desert plants, flowering shrubs, fruit trees, and even a small forest. These trees not only create shaded areas where people congregate but also add an aesthetic charm, enhancing

the overall visual character of Qobayat. The residents of the neighborhood further contribute to the greenery of the neighborhood by planting outside their homes, on their balconies, and in front of their stores. Fruit trees are strategically positioned at street intersections, providing an enjoyable treat for passers-by.

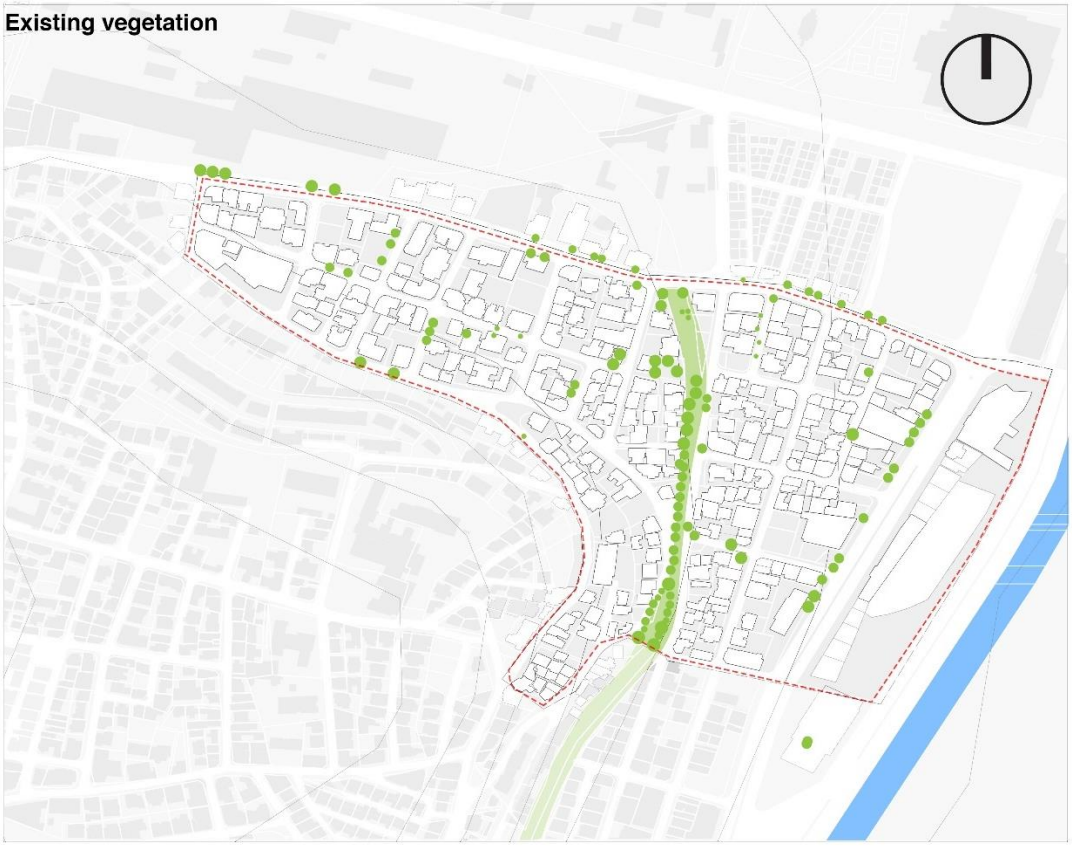


Figure 51 Vegetation map.

Figure 52 Orange tree on a street intersection (by author, 2023)

Figure 53 Planting in balconies (by author, 2023)

Moreover, within the neighborhood, lies a unique enclave, the small forest surrounding remnants of the old railway, the sole soft space in the midst of the urban fabric. Access to this forest is discreet, requiring specific knowledge for one to navigate through its concealed pathways. For those residing in close proximity to the forest, a special connection is cultivated. The forest serves as a retreat, particularly for children who can be frequently observed engaged in outdoor play. Additionally, the forest features a small three-by-eight-meter fenced-off urban farming lot, presenting a rare encounter with sustainable agricultural practices.

Figure 54 Private gardens (by author, 2023)

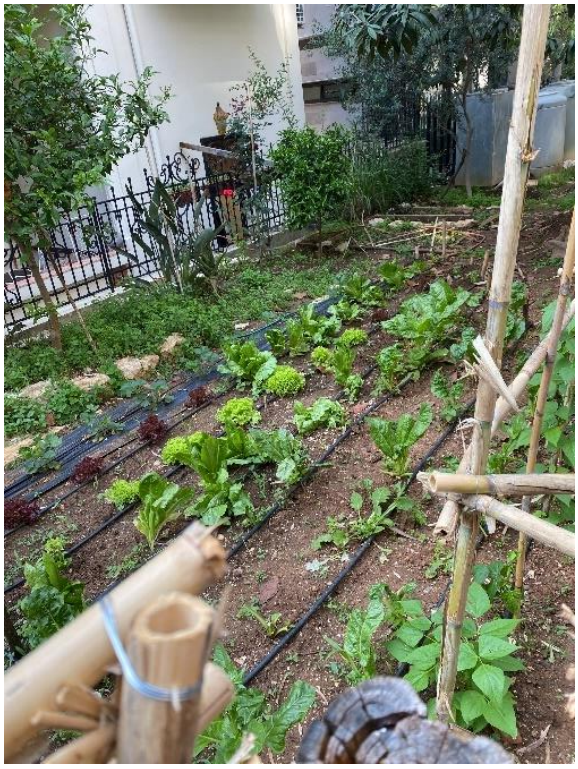


Figure 55 Urban farming in the old railway forest (by author, 2023)

5. Vacant spaces

Secondary data and field mapping reveal a total of twenty nine vacant spaces in the neighborhood. The secondary data included public and private unbuildable lots and public vacant lots in the neighborhood. Through field observations I mapped parking lots and private vacant lots. In addition to the typologies previously mentioned, my field observations revealed a few other strategically placed space typologies that should be considered. This includes:

- Public stairs and a small parking space attached to it: This is a space frequently used as a public plaza. In order to build on this, a publicly used parking space adjacent to it will be added to the selection.

Figure 56 Stairs plaza (by author, 2023)

Figure 57 Parking space attached to the plaza (by author, 2023)

- Parking space of abandoned storefront: This space used to be used as a parking space for two stores which have been closed since the beginning of 2023. It

exists on Armenia street with open pedestrian access to it and is constantly used as a stopping place.

Figure 58 Abandoned store parking (by author, 2023)

- Unmonitored parking space: This space was documented because it was heavily shaded with greenery and easily accessible for pedestrians.

Figure 59 Unmonitored parking (by author, 2023)

- Private garden lots: two private gardens were selected because they are easily accessible and well shaded spaces. Although there are many more private gardens in the neighborhood, these spaces were chosen because of their openness to the urban fabric and ease of accessibility to them.

Figure 60 Private gardens (by author, 2023)

Furthermore, since the vacancy of spaces collected by BUL still needed to be validated and to further understand each of these spaces and whether or not they will be included in the neighborhood strategy later on, it was important to compare and analyze them in terms of their ownership, physical characteristics, accessibility, current use/vacancy, and size.

My understanding of the rate of vacant spaces changed before and after I visited the spaces generated by BUL from Beirut's zoning. Most unbuildable spaces were not vacant and were already in use. Private (UL) are used either by residents creating private courtyards and gardens, or restaurants using them as an outdoor extension. Public (UL) that has been mapped corresponds in real life to a sidewalk or road. Therefore, unbuildable lots have been eliminated from the selection. Vacant lots on the other hand are clearly defined and are easily reachable by pedestrians. Most vacant lots are fenced off and left vacant by their owners. These vacant lots are mostly paved with the exception of one lot that has been taken over by vegetation.

The largest typology of spaces in the neighborhood is parking lots (8), followed by vacant lots (7). It is also worth noting that the majority of spaces documented are not currently being used by anyone except for one vacant lot, the old railway forest, two parking spaces, and the stairs plaza. This is mainly due to inaccessibility of a majority of the spaces. Furthermore, the spaces range in sizes the biggest being the railway forest at 5500 square meters and the smallest is a private garden of 15 square meters.

Figure 61 Paved private vacant lot (by author, 2023)

Figure 62 Vegetated private vacant lot (by author, 2023)

Table 2 Vacant space analysis

NB	Type	Ownership	Current use	Access	Availability (Vacancy)	Area (m2)
1	Unbuildable	Public	Sidewalk	✓	X	475
2	Vacant lot	Private	None	X	✓	950
3	Parking lot	Private	Parking	✓	✓	820
4	Vacant lot	Private	Food trucks, walking, gatherings	✓	✓	1920
5	Abandoned store parking	Private	sitting, small talk	✓	✓	185
6	Parking lot	Private	Parking, picking oranges	✓	✓	500
7	Private garden	Private	Garden	X	✓	15
8	Private garden	Private	Garden	✓	✓	115
9	Unbuildable lot	Private	Outdoor extension of a restaurant	X	X	
10	Parking lot	Private	Parking	✓	✓	875
11	Private garden	Private	Garden	X	✓	45
12	Vacant lot	Private	None	X	✓	830

13	Unmonitored parking	Private	Parking	✓	✓	500
14	Old railway forest	Public	Gatherings, urban farming, children playing, picnics	✓	✓	5500
15	Parking lot	Private	Parking	✓	✓	450
16	Unbuildable lot	Private	Private courtyard	X	X	
17	Unbuildable lot	Private	Private courtyard	X	X	
18	Unbuildable lot	Private	Private courtyard	X	X	
19	Vacant lot	Private	None	X	✓	280
20	Vacant lot	Private	None	X	✓	320
21	Parking lot	Private	Parking	✓	✓	1120
22	Parking lot	Private	Parking	✓	✓	570
23	Vacant lot	Private	None	✓	✓	400
24	Vacant lot	Private	None	✓	✓	180
25	Unbuildable lot	Private	Alley	X	X	
26	Unbuildable lot	Private	Parking	X	X	
27	Unbuildable lot	Private	Resident gathering	✓	✓	30
28	Unbuildable lot	Private	None	✓	✓	130
29	Stair's plaza	Public	Gathering, picnic, event extension	✓	✓	380

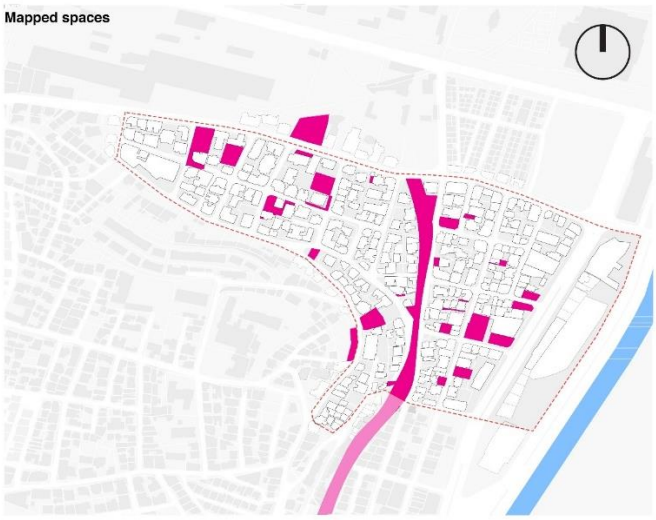


Figure 63 All mapped spaces (by author, 2023)

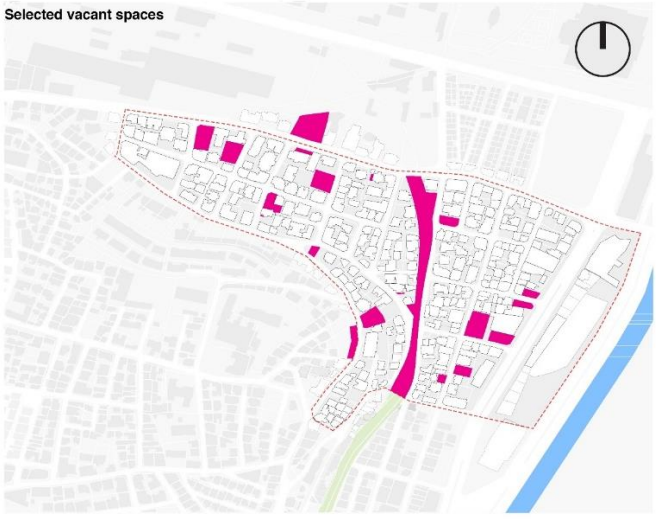


Figure 64 Selected vacant spaces (by author, 2023)

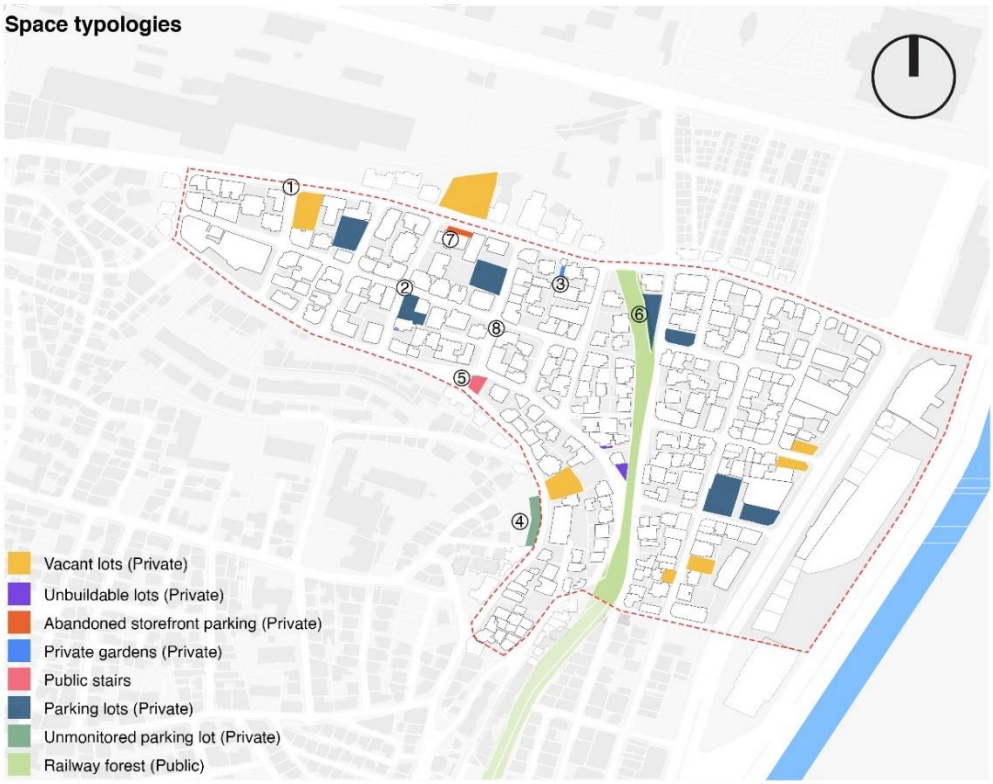


Figure 65 Vacant space typologies (by author, 2023)

Figure 66 Unbuildable occupied by outdoor extension of a restaurant (by author, 2023)

The criteria for selecting the spaces for the neighborhood strategy is mainly vacancy and easy access meaning they could be easily accessible from the sidewalk. Based on this analysis, twenty vacant and accessible spaces have been selected to be part of the TPU neighborhood strategy. With different typologies and ownerships, it is important to distinguish how these spaces will be dealt with vis=a=vis the neighborhood strategy. Specifically understanding the vacant spaces in terms of temporality and understanding the nature and duration of the takeover. The following categorization of the spaces is based on how long the space will be occupied for. The few publicly owned spaces will be fixed elements of the neighborhood strategy. By acquiring permits to occupy the land as long as possible.

The process of Privately owned vacant lots will have a different approach. Based on the explained in the literature review, an agreement with the landowners to temporarily use the vacant lot for public use until the owner decided to develop the lot. This would allow for a long-term temporary takeover of the land. Private gardens might be harder to acquire for long amounts of time therefore they will be used for short term temporary use. Parking lots are not vacant of function which means that not the entire lot will be used. As explained earlier in the literature review, a few car spots could be rented as if normally parking a car but would offer grounds for insertion of a TPU element. Finally, streets and sidewalks provide opportunities for long-term occupancy as they are publicly owned.

Figure 67 Vacant space strategy (by author, 2023)

B. Site-Level Activity Analysis

Mapping and observing the way people use outdoor spaces in the neighborhood was crucial to understanding the needs of the residents. An initial mapping in July 2023 revealed numerous gatherings in front of shops and markets on the sidewalk. In addition to various activities, including picnics, children playing, and senior gatherings in private outdoor spaces, this initial mapping serves as the starting point for a more detailed exploration of people's utilization of available spaces in Qobayat.

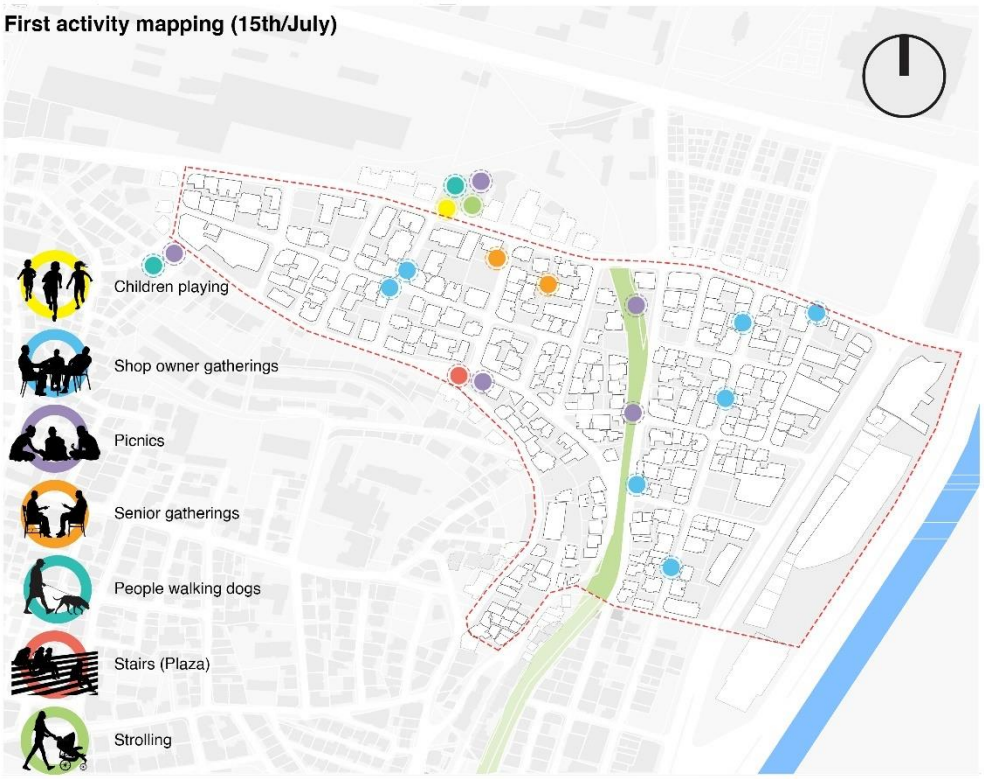


Figure 68 Initial activity mapping taken 15th of July (by author, 2023)

As time progressed and observations continued, the neighborhood exhibited a diverse array of outdoor space uses. To delve deeper into these activities, specific sections of the neighborhood, where these uses were prominent, are analyzed on a smaller scale in relation to their surroundings and nearby vacant spaces. This section is further divided into four subsections, examining sidewalks and roads as a distinct space, a vacant lot on Armenia Street, the previously mentioned stairs plaza, and segments of the old railway forest.

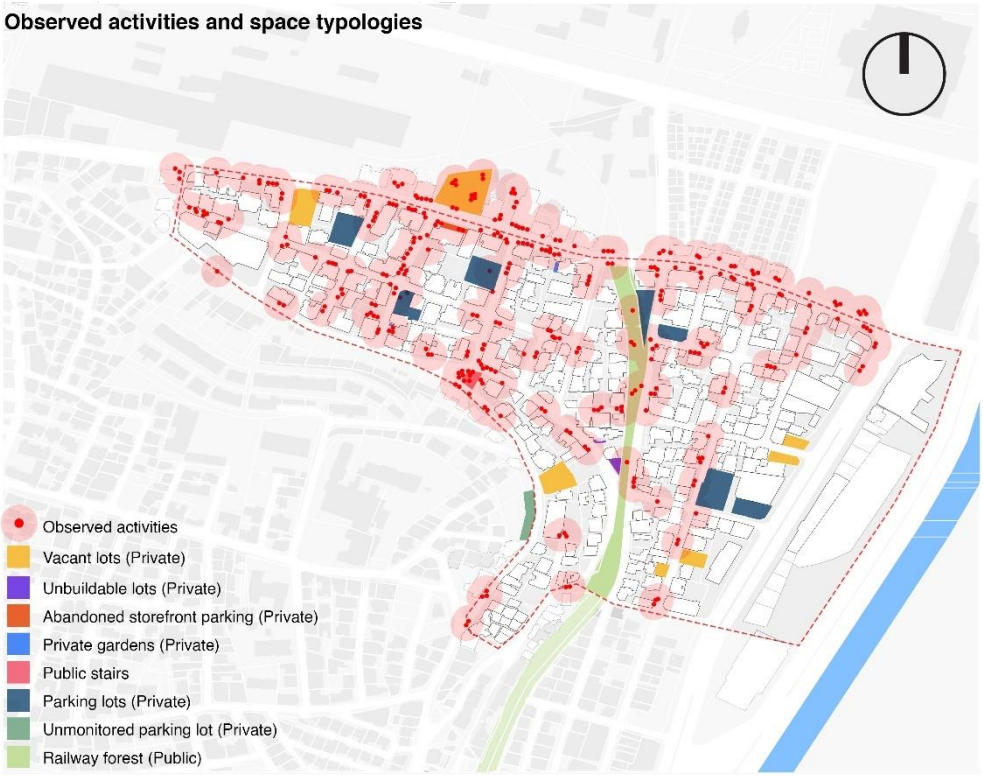


Figure 69 All observed activities and vacant space typologies.

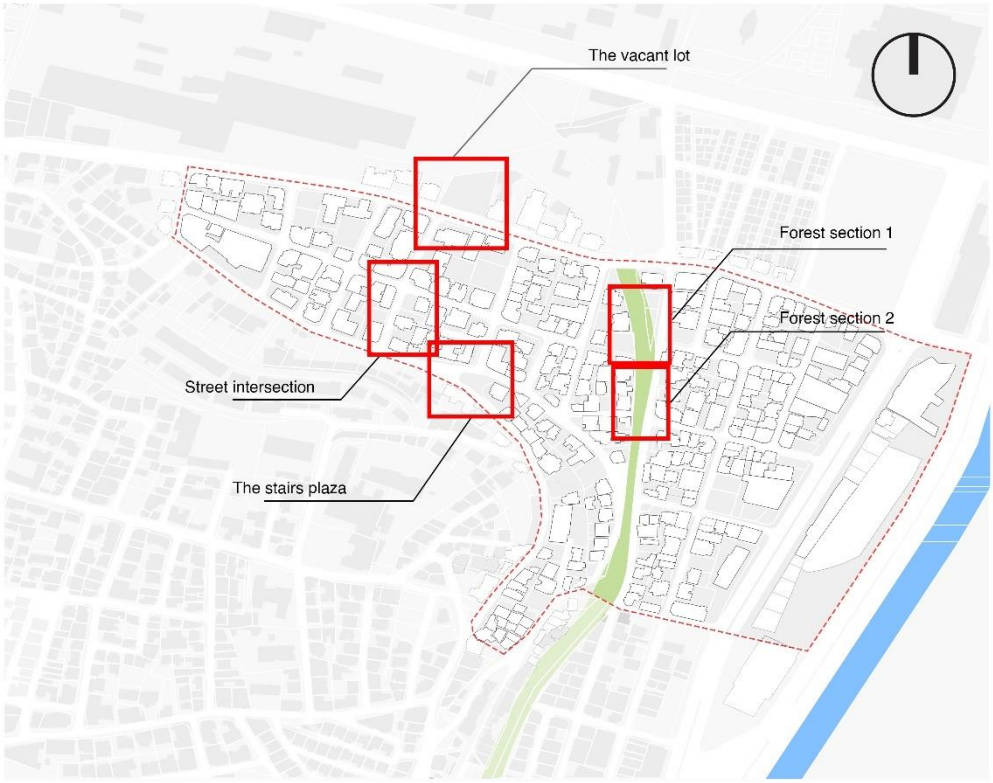


Figure 70 Site-level analysis selection (by author, 2023)

1. Sidewalks

Despite the challenges of navigating through obstructed and often narrow sidewalks, these pedestrian pathways play an indispensable role as vital social spaces within the fabric of Qobayyat. Store operators strategically arrange chairs and tables, often with coffee or tea, creating impromptu gathering spots along the sidewalks facing their establishments. These informal hubs serve as meeting points for store owners, local workers including delivery drivers, carpenters, kitchen staff from nearby restaurants, and residents, fostering a sense of community throughout the day. These spaces are consistent in the sense that they exist in front of almost every store in the neighborhood. These outdoor gathering spaces are predominantly associated with small markets, bakeries, fast-food establishments, and service providers such as car

electricians and workshops which additionally extend their workspace to the sidewalk as well as for gathering. However, the inner sidewalks, primarily aligned with residential ground floor uses, exhibit a distinct treatment, often remaining unoccupied.

Figure 71 Workshop space on sidewalk (by author, 2023)

Figure 72 Gathering on sidewalk (by author, 2023)

Figure 73 Delivery driver gathering on sidewalk (by author, 2023)

Figure 74 Store front gatherings in the neighborhood (by author, 2023)

Sidewalks were a great place for observation because they revealed a variety of activities not exclusive to social gatherings. The first zoom-in analysis highlights the intersection between Khatchadourian Street and Patriarch Arida Street, unveiling the

myriad of activities that characterize Qobayat's streets. Here there are three stores with tables and chairs outside including a small market, a bakery, and a hardware store creating a lively ambiance. Adjacent to the sidewalk, orange trees in a parking lot invite passersby to pick their fruit, contributing to the ecological aspect of the neighborhood. On this intersection throughout the day, you would often see workers carrying canvases and art usually transported on foot to and from the production house and wood workshop. Furthermore, it doubles as a locale for photoshoots conducted by local fashion boutiques, spotlighting the a focus fashion industry and Lebanese design in the neighborhood.

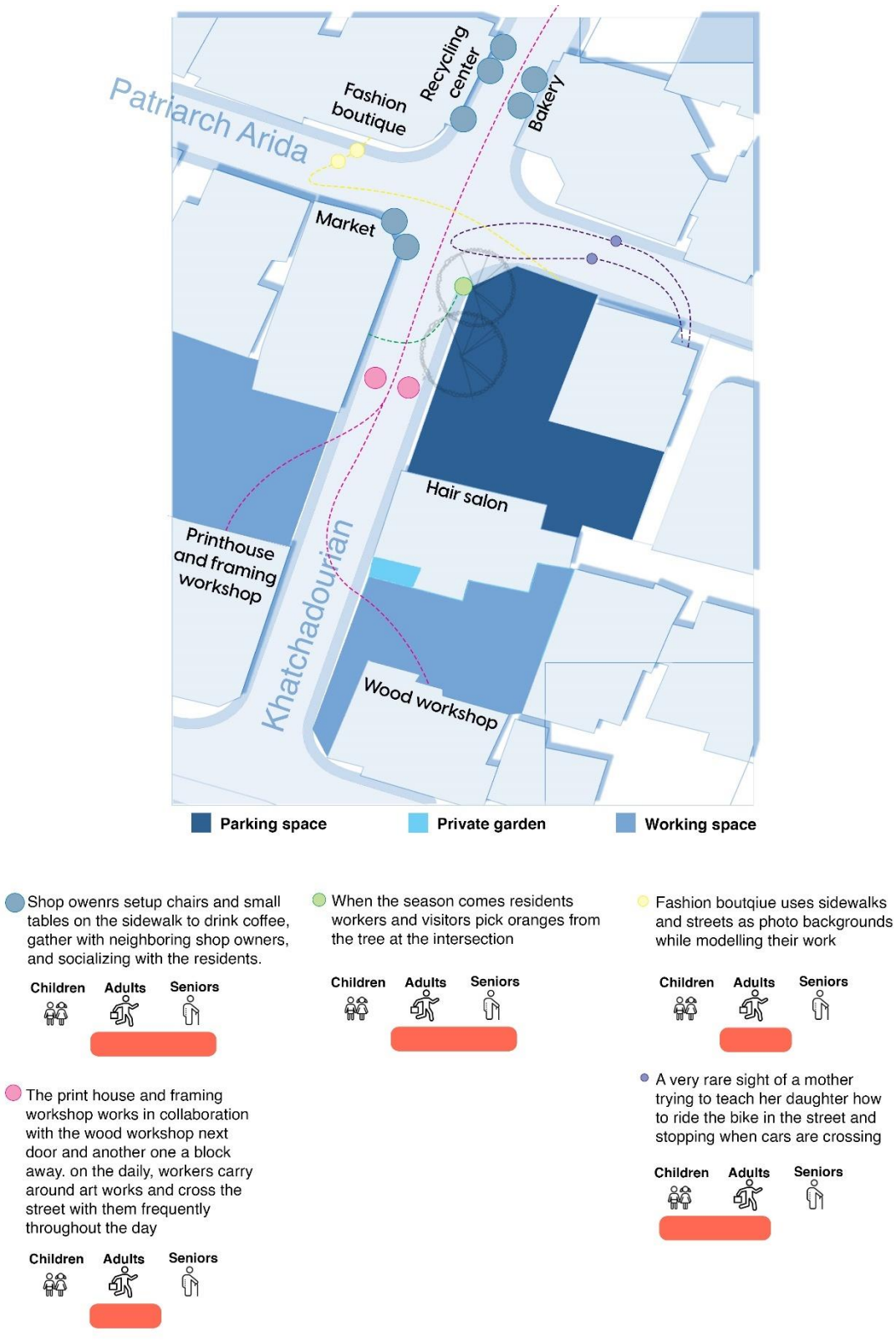


Figure 75 Sidewalks analysis (by author, 2023)

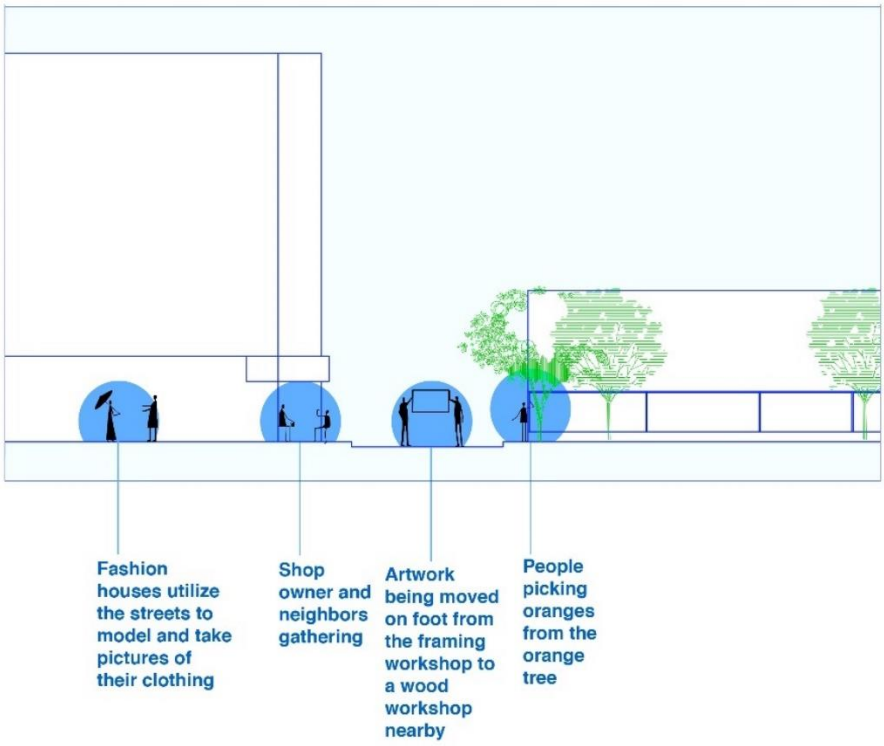


Figure 76 Sidewalk activity section (by author, 2023)

Figure 77 Activities happening in the intersection (by author, 2023)

Furthermore, during my observations, I consistently noticed a significant population of elderly individuals in the neighborhood, frequently navigating the streets as part of their daily routine. However, their engagement in the various activities and communal spaces previously discussed appeared limited. This led me to recognize the importance of studying the elderly as a distinct demographic within the community.

On a typical day, the elderly can be observed taking strolls, visiting local markets, or rarely, connecting with friends and neighbors. Notably, they seem less inclined to utilize outdoor spaces for group gatherings or social interactions. Upon

closer examination, I discovered that the elderly often engage in social activities within private outdoor settings, such as balconies, terraces, and gardens. These spaces are characterized by comfortable seating, ample shade, and lush greenery and are typically situated in quiet and secluded areas. An illustration of this is a private garden located next to the residence of an elderly woman. Her days typically consist of sitting outside her store, adjacent to her residence, usually accompanied by her sister. Additionally, she utilizes her outdoor garden as a space for hosting gatherings with neighbors. The garden is fenced and heavily vegetated acting as a buffer from the noise of the adjacent road.

Additionally, some elderly residents have been utilizing parking lots as spaces for strolls. When I asked an older woman what attracted her to this lot in particular, she responded by saying that she likes it because it is a quiet break from her house situated over a car mechanic. To enhance their outdoor experiences and promote a sense of community, it is crucial to encourage more outdoor gatherings tailored to their preferences. This may involve creating dedicated spaces that provide comfort and tranquility, facilitating a more inclusive and enjoyable environment for the elderly of the neighborhood.

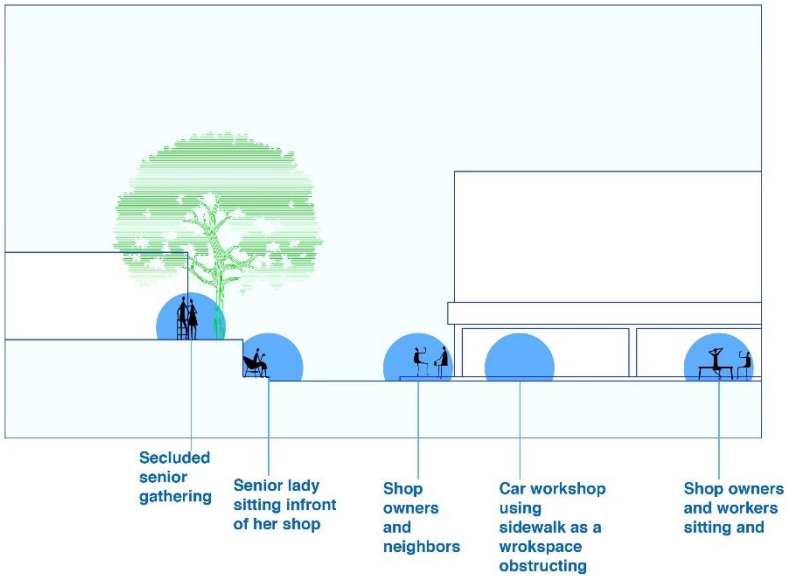


Figure 78 Sidewalk section showing senior spaces in private gardens (by author, 2023)

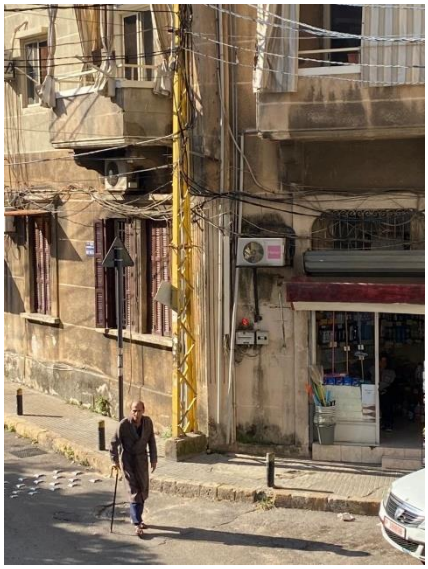


Figure 79 Senior man walking (by author, 2023)

Figure 80 Senior gathering in concealed private garden (by author, 2023)

As demonstrated, sidewalks and roads in Qobayyat hold immense social, ecological, economic, and cultural significance, each facet contributing to the neighborhood's distinct character. While acknowledging their value, it becomes imperative to strike a balance, ensuring the preservation of pedestrian movement without compromising the vibrant social activities that define this neighborhood.

2. The vacant lot

The majority of vacant lots in Qobayyat are typically fenced off and inaccessible to the public, with one notable exception being a sizable lot situated on Armenia Street. Bounded by Armenia Street to the south and the Mar Mikhael train station to the north, this particular lot has undergone various transformations in the past two years. Initially serving as a parking space and intermittently hosting markets, the lot was also occasionally shared by gym-goers utilizing the outdoor area as an extension to in the indoor private gym. However, in the last year, the lot's owner opted to discontinue its use as a parking area, restrict access from the adjacent gym, and transform it into a

completely vacant space, albeit with generators and a small office situated at its periphery.

Figure 81 The vacant lot (by author, 2023)

The strategic plan involved converting the lot into a venue for food trucks, and thus far, two such trucks have been established, leaving ample vacant space within the lot. The lot's high accessibility has resulted in frequent public utilization during the period of my observations. The food trucks actively engage pedestrians on the sidewalks, inviting them to pause and enjoy their offerings. Individuals typically consume their meals standing at the trucks, occasionally fortunate enough to secure one of the two available pieces of furniture. The lot sees a diverse range of activities, including casual strolls, dog walks, parents with young children, observers of group

classes at the nearby gym, occasional picnics by young adults, children engaging in soccer and cycling, and even unexpected occurrences such as motorcycle driving lessons. Moreover, the lot serves as an active space, with individuals running laps in the early morning, and on one occasion, two men engaged in a boxing practice at night. Children were also observed playing and cycling in the lot but only three times alone, otherwise they would be with their parents.

Figure 82 Activities happening in the vacant lot (by author, 2023)

Additionally, the abandoned store parking mentioned earlier is facing the lot on the other side of the street. The parking is used as a stopping and waiting place frequently by different users in the neighborhood including visitors of the neighborhood, kitchen staff of nearby restaurants, and residents of the area of all ages from elderly to children. It is used either for sitting and using the phone, waiting for a taxi, or talking to others. A small planter on the edge of the parking is used as a seating throughout the day, marking the space a pedestrian node in the neighborhood. In essence, the lot hosts a myriad of activities at various times throughout the day, devoid of any infrastructure or clear indication of its public nature. Recognizing the potential, temporary urbanism initiatives could bridge existing gaps and facilitate improved conditions for diverse activities. For instance, creating a designated picnic space with comfortable shading, nearby waste disposal facilities, and an area for children to play would enhance the overall usability of the space.

Figure 83 Abandoned storefront parking (by author, 2023)

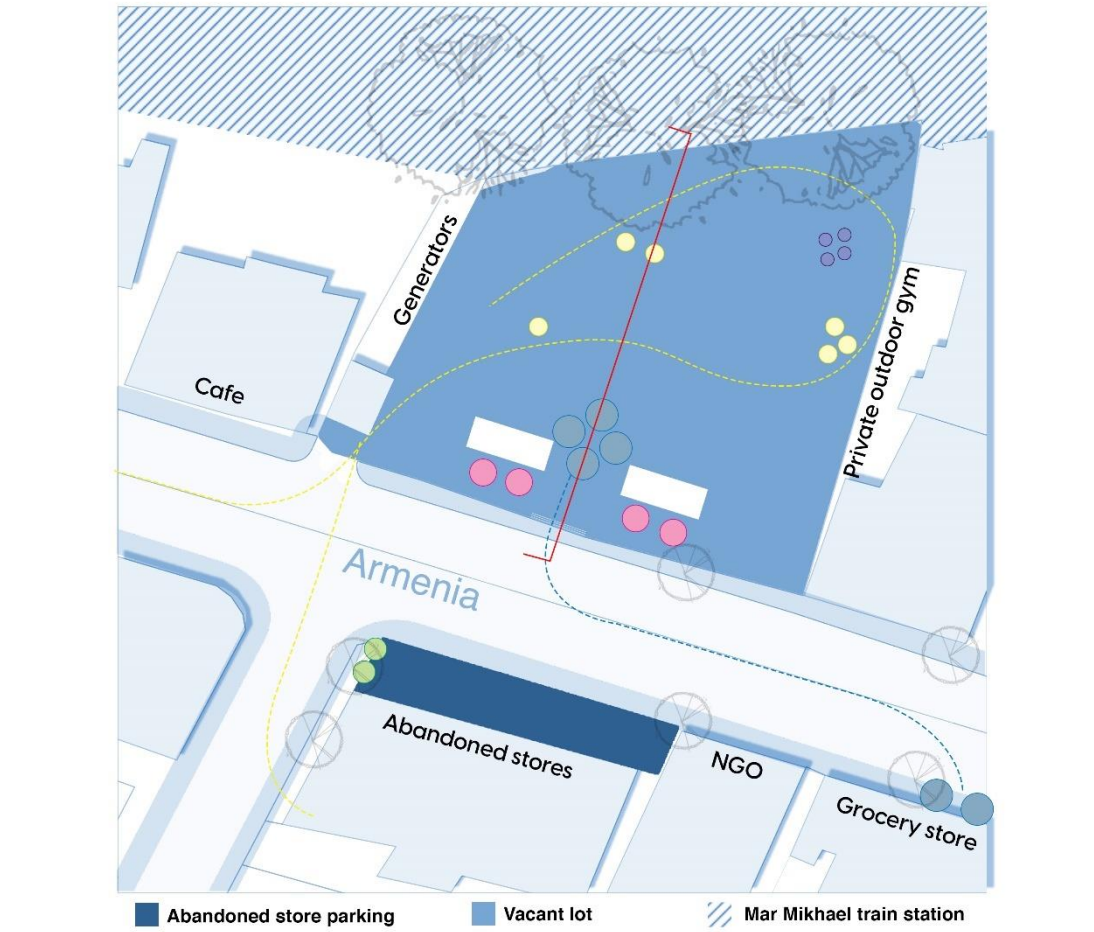


Figure 84 Vacant lot analysis (by author, 2023)

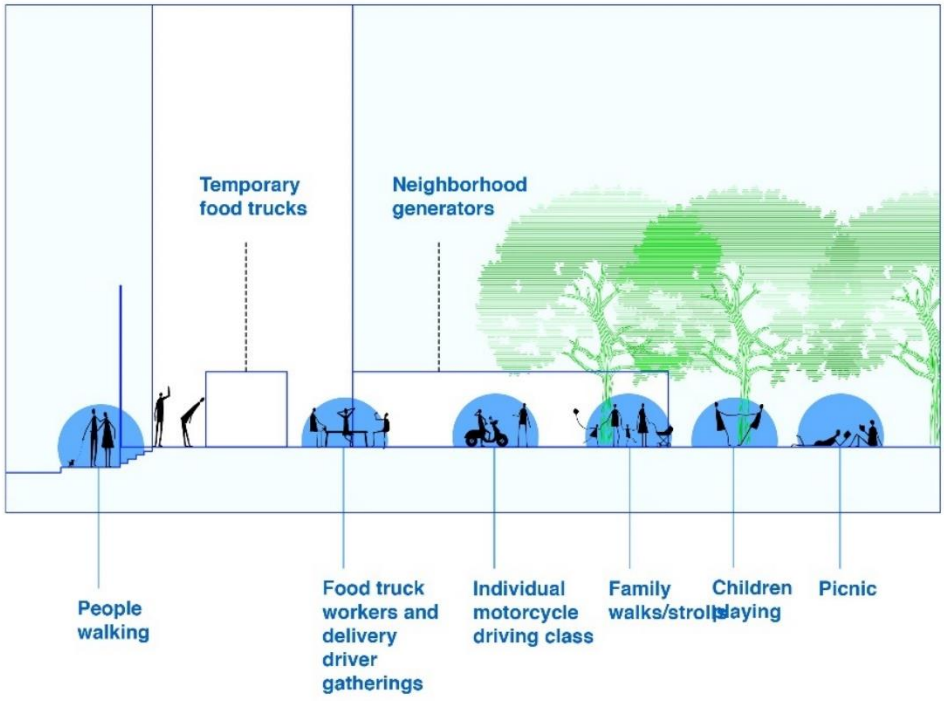


Figure 85 Vacant lot activity section (by author, 2023)

3. The stairs plaza

These stairs mark a distinctive intersection bridging the higher and lower elevations of Qobayyat, surrounded by a mix of commercial establishments, including bars and cafes, alongside residential buildings. Notably, it stands out as the most visibly utilized public space within the neighborhood. Throughout the day, people utilize the stairs for solitary relaxation, social gatherings, and picnics. This could be attributed to the shading cast by buildings that make it a comfortable place to relax in even in the hottest days.

Throughout my observations, the stairs consistently attracted occupants, demonstrating a high level of usage. During nighttime, the focus shifts, with users gravitating towards the nearby Riwaq bar and a small market. Young adults often purchase beverages from the store and gather with friends on the stairs. The bar, hosting

daily events, draws a substantial crowd. Given the limited space in the underground event area of the bar, individuals spill onto the adjacent sidewalk and stairs to take breaks and discuss ongoing events.

This activity, however, creates disturbances for residents residing above the bar due to the loud noises generated by the stairs' users. Nevertheless, the simple nature of the space allows for diverse and flexible uses day and night. Recognizing the strategic location of the stairs, I decided to explore the adjoining parking spaces to make one large plaza. These are not reserved for anyone’s specific use and are used publicly so I will consider them publicly owned.

Figure 86 The parking spaces attached to the stairs (by author, 2023)

Figure 87 Activities happening on the stairs (by author, 2023)

Figure 88 activities happening on the stairs (by author, 2023)

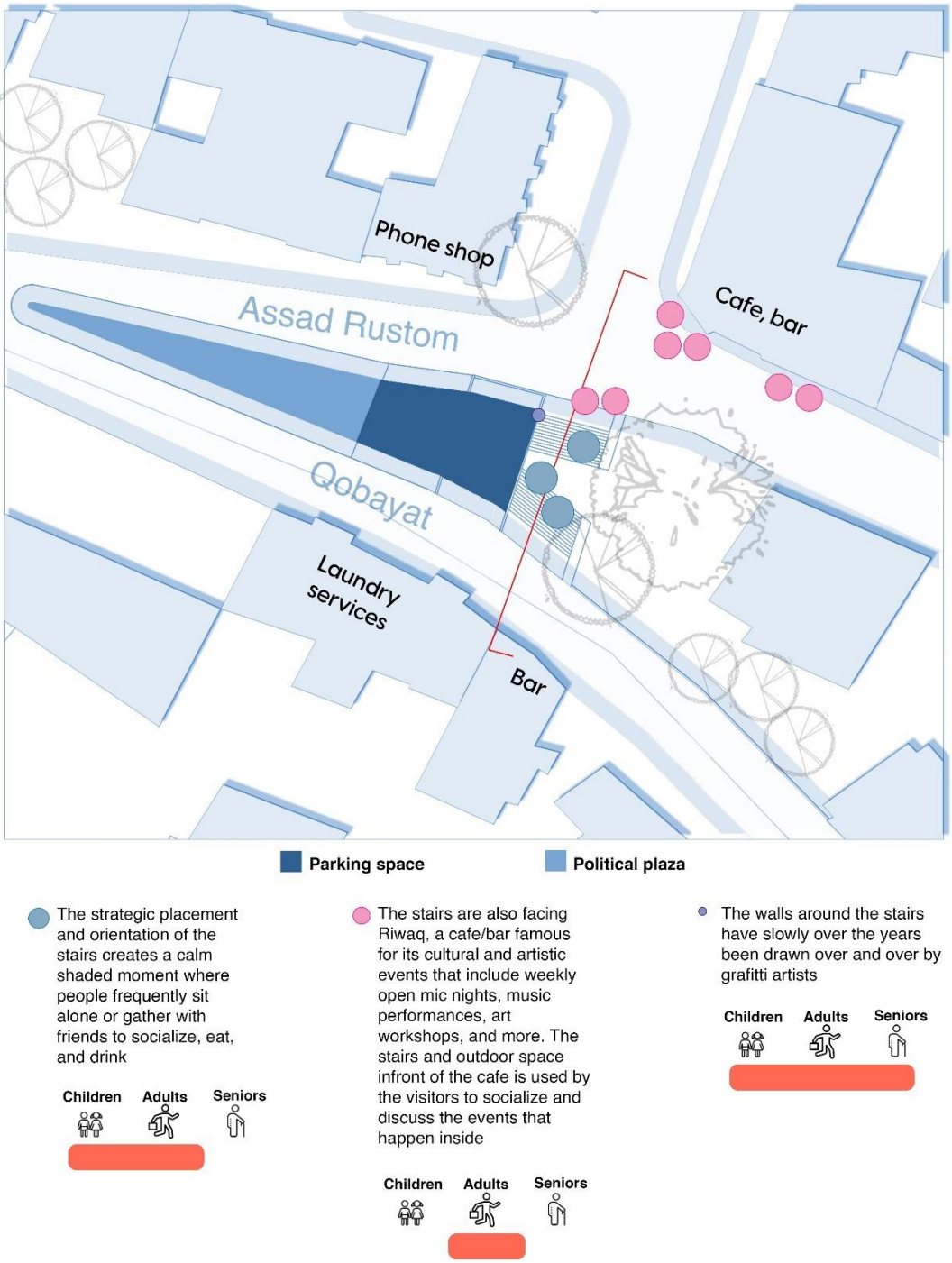


Figure 89 The stairs plaza analysis (by author, 2023)

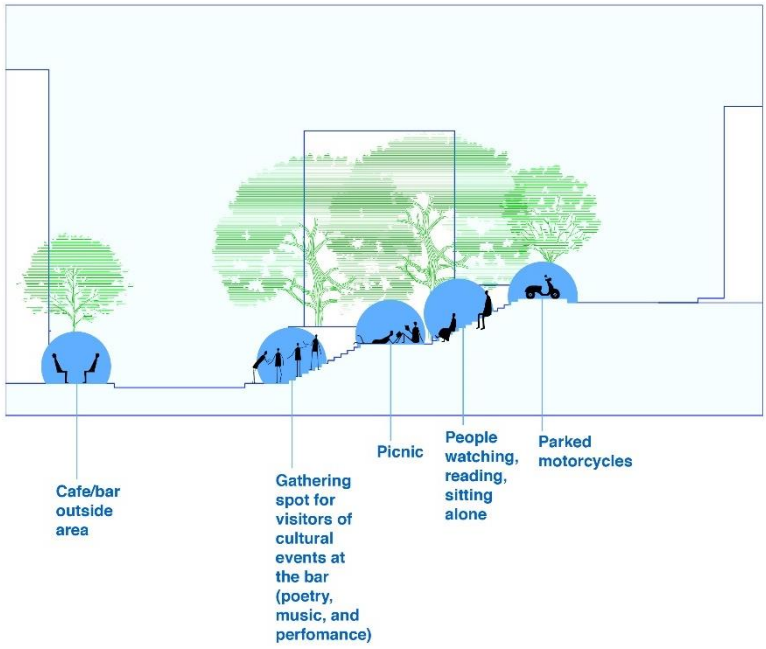


Figure 90 Activities happening on the stairs (by author, 2023)

4. The forest

The forest stands as a pivotal space within the neighborhood, holding unique importance as the only publicly owned lot in the neighborhood. Residents in direct proximity to the forest naturally forge a more intimate relationship with the space than others in the neighborhood. Notably, residents living adjacent to the forest feel at ease allowing their children to play unsupervised within it, a rarity in the neighborhood. The forest is also home to the only urban farming plot, a small fenced-off area accessible solely from a residential building's entrance.

This plot, with its potential for cultivation, underscores the prospect of expanding urban agriculture practices within the neighborhood. Harnessing the land's porosity could bring forth benefits in terms of sustainability, community engagement, and local food production. The forest carries social value, especially with remnants of old train tracks, attracting those aware of its existence and prompting those stumbling

upon it for the first time to take pictures. Accessible at three different points on both sides of the strip, the forests access points are most familiar to nearby residents.

One of the access points has been renovated and planted by the personal efforts of the owner of the house situated at the entrance, making it the clearest access point of the forest. Improving access to the strip therefore becomes essential to enhance the public nature of the space and encourage more widespread usage. Store operators adjacent to the strip benefit from the forest's shade on the sidewalk, creating a communal gathering space similar to other sidewalks in the neighborhood. Occasionally, coffee and Kaak carts serve local workers and residents in the street adjacent to the strip. In summary, the primary users of the forest are residents and businesses situated nearby.

Figure 91 Pictures from section 1 of the forest (by author, 2023)

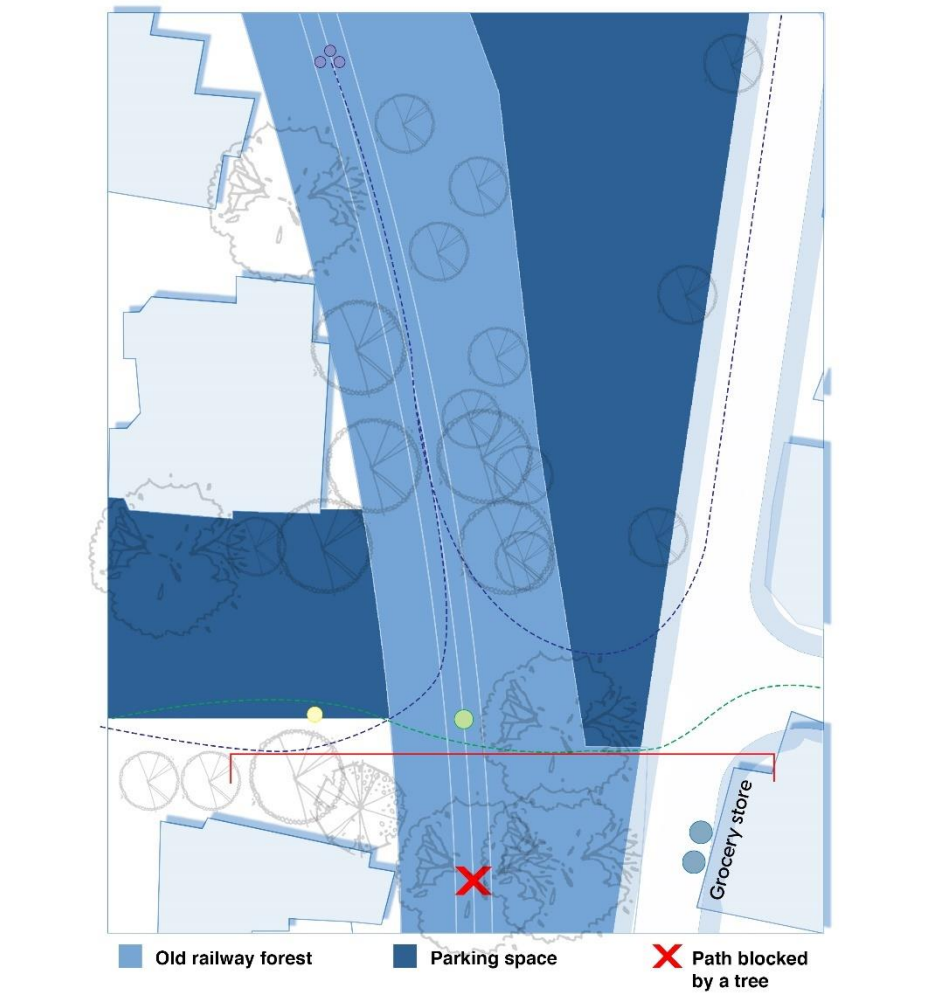


Figure 92 Forest analysis 1 (by author, 2023)

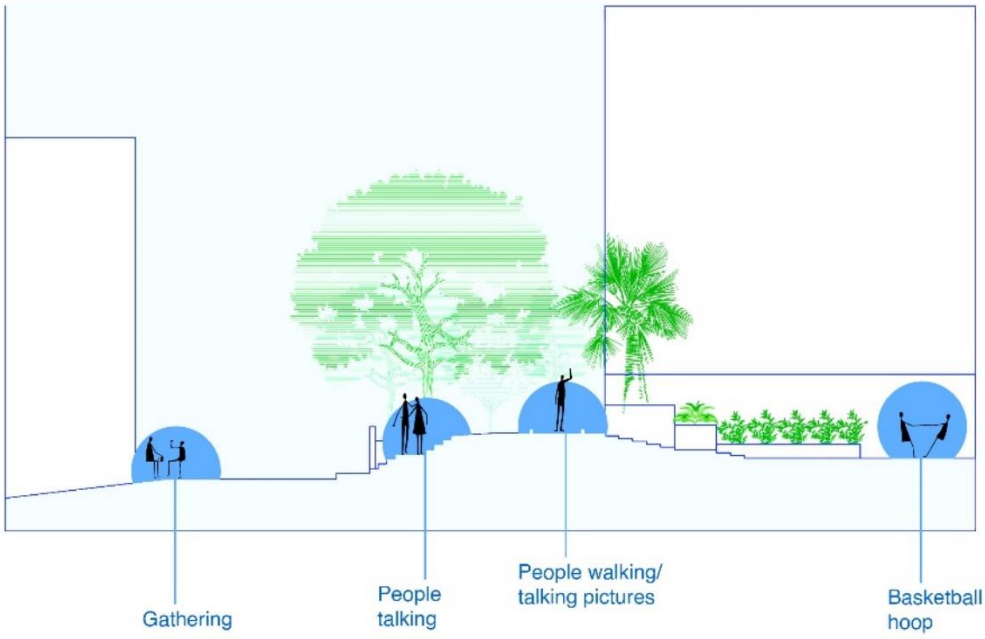


Figure 93 Forest section1 activity section (by author, 2023)

Figure 94 Activities happening in section 2 of the forest (by author, 2023)

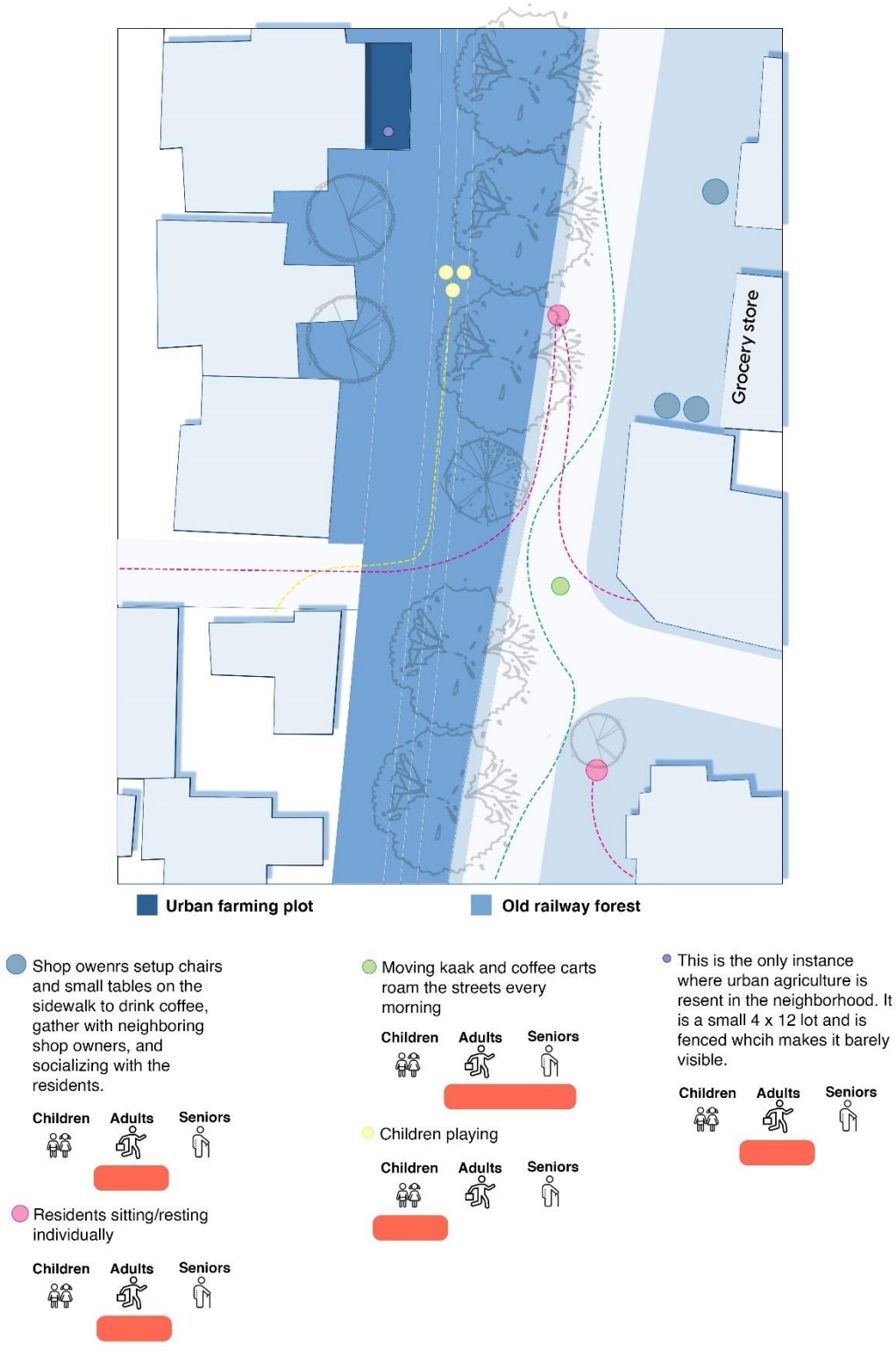


Figure 95 Forest analysis 2 (by author, 2023)

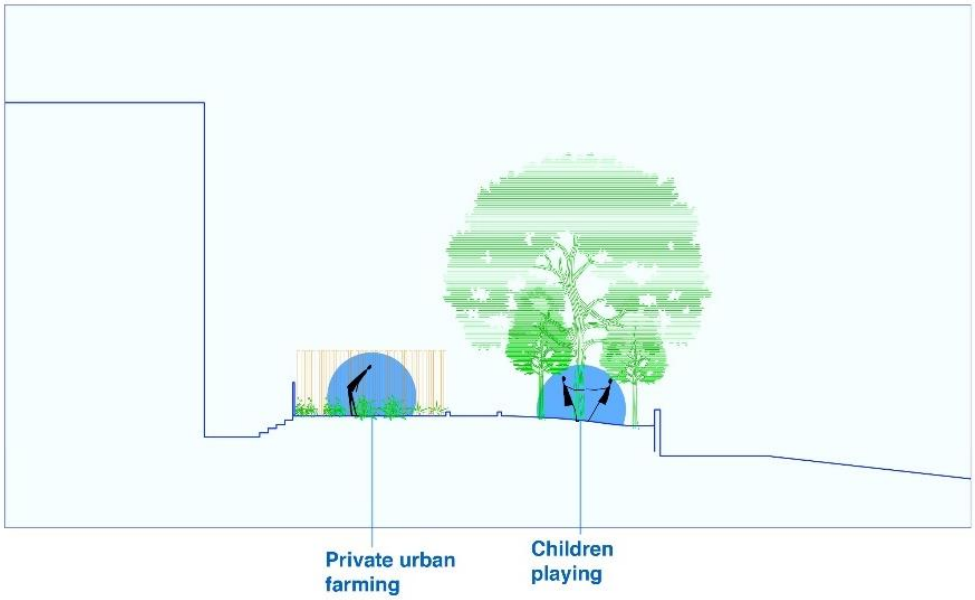


Figure 96 Forest urban farming section (by author, 2023)

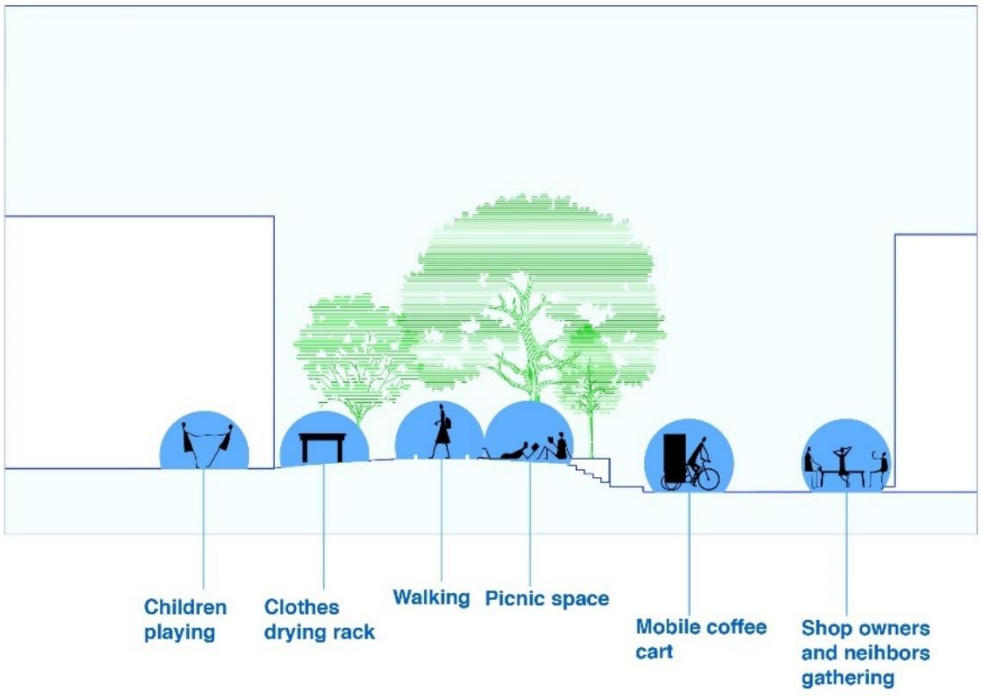


Figure 97 Forest section 2 activity section (by author, 2023)

The analysis of existing activities in focal points in the neighborhood creates a richer understanding of the users and their practices in Qobayat's available spaces. It further sheds light on the role of the physical components of a neighborhood as catalysts for outdoor activities. The findings highlight a variety of outdoor activities that serve as the foundation for ideas that bring forth more inclusive, sustainable, and community well-being, offering valuable insights for the development of Qobayat's outdoor spaces.

Moreover, the documented observations help construct a general image of the neighborhood. The neighborhood could be spatially categorized into a few character zones. The purpose of this step is to evaluate these small-scale observations and understand what it makes of the neighborhood as a whole. Armenia street represents a diverse and active area with heavy foot traffic and different activities being observed there. Additionally, some streets are significantly characterized by workshops for either car electricians, mechanics, or carpenters. Some streets are characterized by slow traffic and general calmness. The areas adjacent to the forest could also be associated mainly with it because of the relationship explained earlier. And finally, the stairs plaza is what felt most like a public space in the neighborhood as proven by its easy access and unrestricted uses.

Figure 98 Neighborhood zones (by author, 2023)

C. Limitations

The study encountered several limitations that influenced the depth and specificity of the findings. One significant constraint was the limited results from discussions with the residents. Despite conducting semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of participants, ranging from elderly residents to store owners, responses remained generalized, often revolving around broader national concerns such as political unrest and economic challenges.

The informal nature of the interviews, often conducted in familiar settings like a local bakery or the street, lead the conversations to stray towards overarching issues, diverting attention from the specifics of residents' perceptions and needs related to their neighborhood's public spaces. While diverse outdoor activities have been observed, I was not able to compel residents to actively reflect on or articulate their specific

requirements or desires concerning public spaces in the neighborhood. The dominant influence of the national context, particularly prevalent issues like the ongoing war in Southern Lebanon and economic hardships, overshadowed the local focus of the interviews. This resulted in a lack of detailed insights into residents' perceptions of their immediate surroundings.

Additionally, the absence of a formalized setting for interviews limited the depth of responses. A more structured approach, such as formal interviews or surveys, might have provided a more comprehensive understanding of residents' perspectives on urban issues and public spaces. In light of these limitations, it is crucial to interpret the study findings with nuance and recognize the potential for future research to employ more formalized methodologies, enabling a deeper exploration of residents' viewpoints and experiences about their neighborhood's public spaces.

D. Observation as an analytical tool

A diagram showing the types of appropriated spaces and activities observed in them paint a clear picture of which space typologies are utilized the most (figure 98). Sidewalks as previously stated are the heart of the neighborhood with most activities happening there, ranging from social gatherings to working spaces. The second most utilized space was vacant lots. While the diagram captures a range of activities observed, these instances were exclusively documented in the previously discussed vacant lot. This highlights not only the potential of vacant lots in meeting public needs but also suggests the possibility of diverse activities in other inaccessible vacant lots throughout the neighborhood if made available. The old railway forest, although

publicly owned, is not utilized as much as it could be as not a high frequency of activities have been observed there.

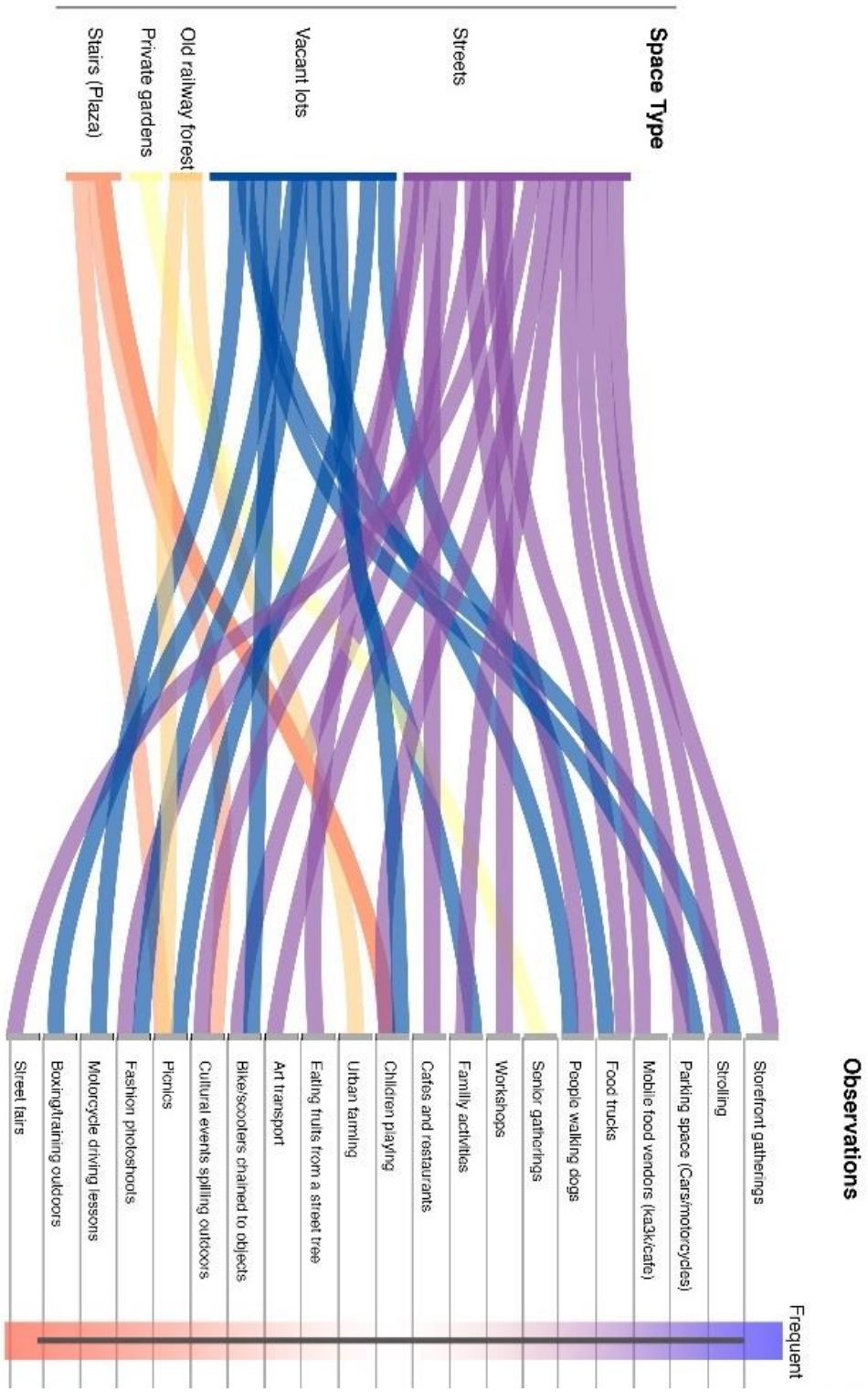


Figure 99 Space typology and observations analysis (by author, 2023)

Furthermore, in understanding the needs of the residents of the neighborhood in their outdoor spaces, what was most informative was observing activities that were observed less frequently. These occurrences shed light on activities that lack adequate infrastructure within the urban environment to facilitate their regularity. Examples of this include families spending time doing physical activities with their children. Therefore, to further understand the frequency in which these activities happen, I rated all activities from most to least observed. Mapping activities in terms of their frequency creates an understanding of what needs to be supported by tactical urbanism. For example, a mother struggling to teach her daughter how to ride a bike in the middle of the road while avoiding passing cars, and the fact that I only saw this kind of activity once, is a clear sign of the absence of a safe public open space for children. Furthermore, this analysis is helpful because it helps set up a starting point for how the neighborhood strategy will respond to each observation.

E. Observation as a Design Tool

Following thorough observations, each observation is assessed along with its potential implications to identify possible courses of action. For instance, rare observations like individuals picking fruit from trees or establishing small agricultural plots suggest the need for replication across various parts of the neighborhood to benefit a larger population. Conversely, addressing sidewalk obstructions and nurturing the vibrant social dynamics of sidewalks within the neighborhood leverages these observations of existing activities to foster inclusivity and accessibility for a broader range of users.

All the listed activities observed are evaluated in terms of their current state in the urban fabric, their context, and a decision is made about how they affect the future of the neighborhood. The strategy for these activities will be based on one or more of the following four steps:

- Support: To support current activities where they already exist.
- Expand: To use activity and multiply in different areas of the neighborhood.
- Limit: To minimize the impact of an activity on the experience of the outdoors.
- Move: To relocate an activity to a different place than where it has been observed.

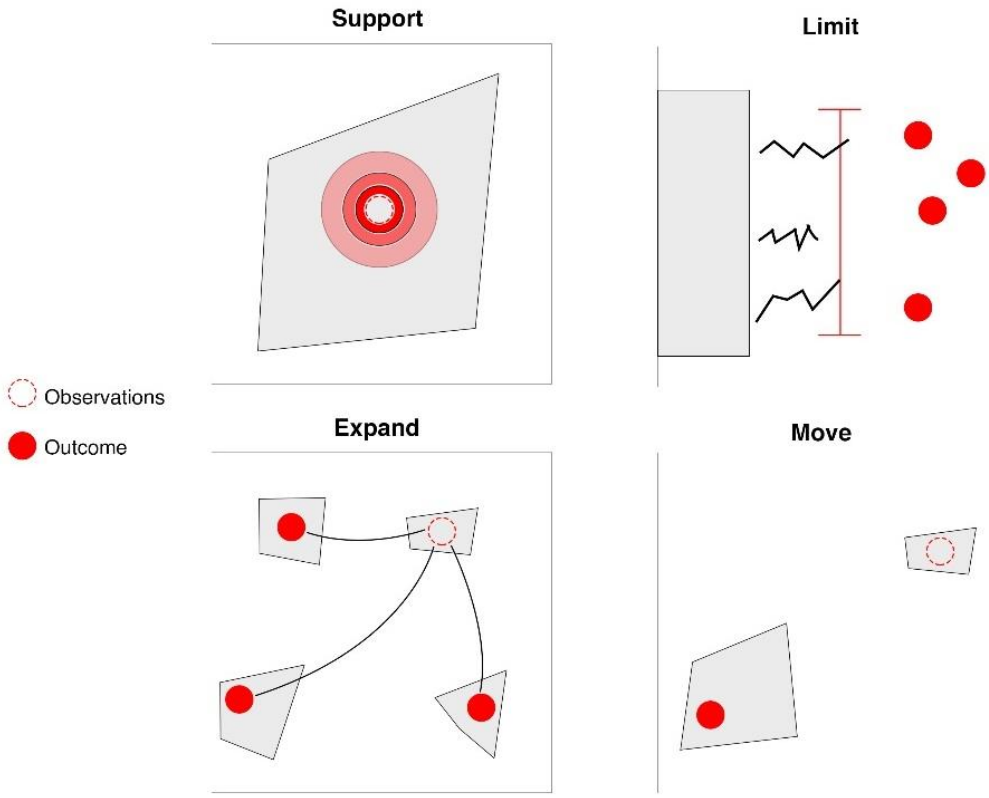


Figure 100 Observation strategy (by author, 2023)

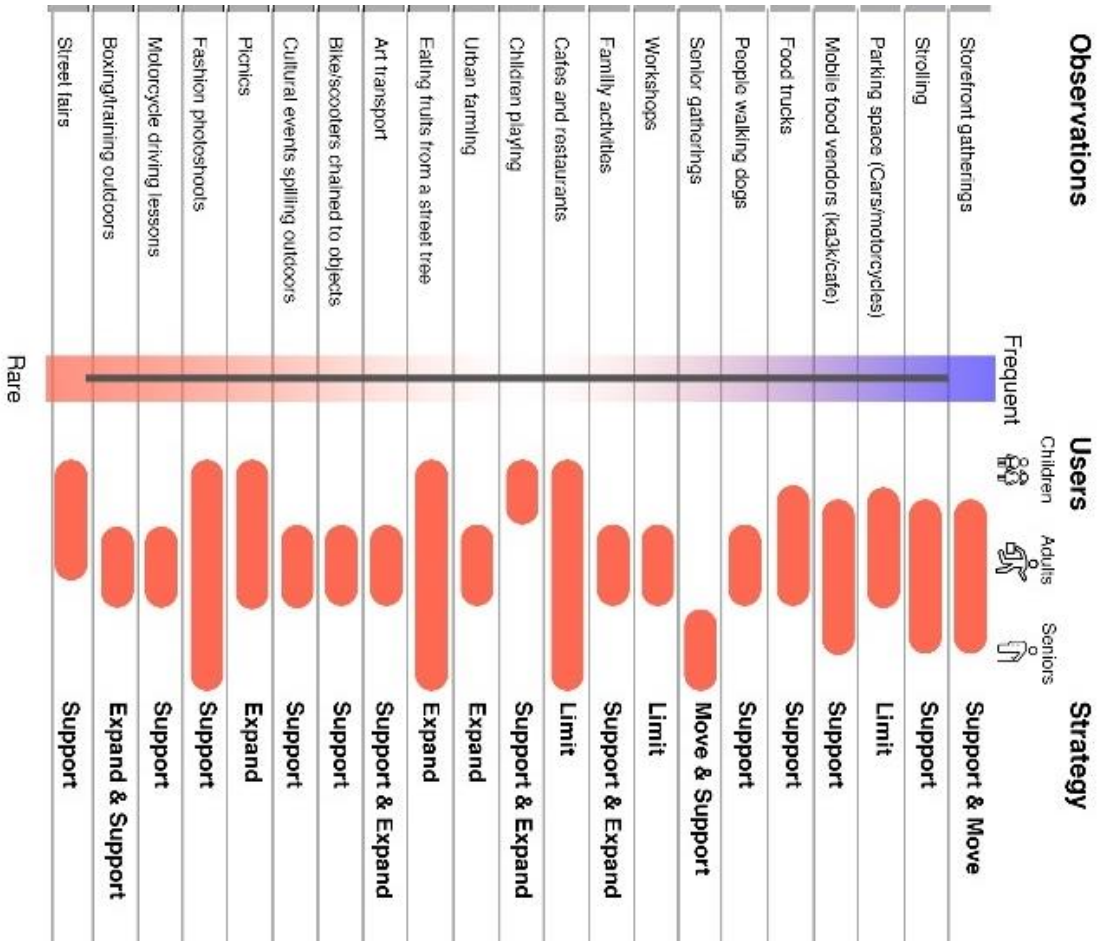


Figure 101 Observation strategy.

The logical framework underlying this strategy is rooted in attributing significance to each observation and deciding their desirability for the neighborhood strategy. The subsequent ideas that follow these observations (The neighborhood strategy and activation tool kit) then rearrange neighborhood activities, creating more inclusive and accessible spaces for residents.

Conclusions

Following this extensive analysis, a few conclusions could be made about the current state of publicly used spaces in Qobayyat. Gathering activities tend to cluster around vibrant and diverse commercial areas, with food, shelter, and easy access acting as primary catalysts, however, there is a clear need for non-commercial activities to better serve the residents and infuse more diversity into the neighborhood's dynamics. Creating an approach tailored to the resident's needs in the Temporary Urbanism (TU) strategy involves creating opportunities for local congregation spaces that extend beyond commercial contexts, fostering a more inclusive and diverse neighborhood dynamic. The extensive occupation of sidewalks by extensions of commercial ground floor functions restricts pedestrian movement, making walking in the neighborhood challenging. Therefore, there is a critical need to shift the focus on outdoor spaces from sidewalks to lots in order to keep pedestrian pathways clear.

The absence of safe spaces for both children and seniors is evident, prompting seniors to confine outdoor activities to private and secluded areas, while children are observed outdoors only in limited circumstances. Moreover, the concentration of art and fashion houses within the neighborhood presents an opportunity to celebrate and enhance their visibility through outdoor spaces, making it imperative to explore avenues for showcasing local talents via TPU initiatives. Furthermore, observations reveal a spectrum of less common activities, including picnics, urban farming, outdoor workout spaces, shaded seating areas, and families doing activities with their children, shedding light on unmet needs. The infrequency of these activities is attributed to the limitations of public infrastructure in the urban fabric, further highlighting the significance of such observations in shaping a kit of tools to fulfill the disparities in the neighborhood.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGY AND ACTIVATION TOOLKIT

Based on the neighborhood analysis, the vision for Qobayat is to build upon the existing community activities, fostering greater diversity and generating opportunities for activities that currently lack consistent space and accessibility. By integrating the existing social, economic, and ecological facets of the neighborhood into the neighborhood’s available spaces, the aim is to strengthen the neighborhood's identity and enhance the overall quality of life. The ultimate goal of the strategy to follow is to cultivate a more diverse range of activities within the community. This involves creating safe spaces tailored for seniors and children, implementing a blend of temporary and permanent interventions to invigorate different parts of the neighborhood, and expanding urban farming initiatives. Additionally, it explores the potential of the old railway forest for community use and creates innovative approaches to ensure clear and safe pedestrian paths throughout the neighborhood. Finally, Gehl Architect’s action-oriented planning loop is used as a reference for how the strategy will be deployed.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first covers the neighborhood level strategy and explains the way the project will work. The second goes into detail about the tools that have been ideated to respond to the observations discussed earlier. Finally, the last section tests the neighborhood strategy and the toolkit by prototyping the old railway forest and selected streets.

A. Neighborhood strategy

Based on the neighborhood analysis, there are three key neighborhood-level spatial issues to be addressed in the neighborhood strategy.

- The old railway forest and its disconnect from the rest of the neighborhood.
- Heavy vehicular traffic and obstructed pedestrian flow.
- A lack of designated public spaces for the different outdoor uses of the community.

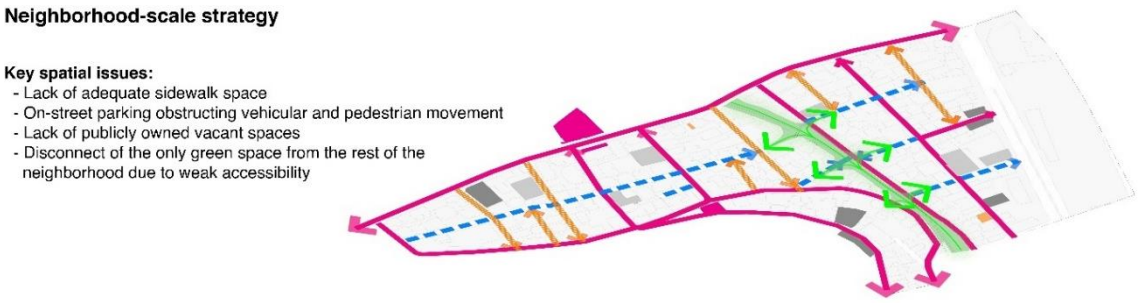


Figure 102 Key spatial issues.

These spatial issues are addressed in the neighborhood strategy as follows:

1. Public railway forest

The main issue with the forest is the disconnect it creates between the eastern and western parts of the neighborhood. The goal here is to encourage more users in the forest by diversifying the uses there, improving access to it, and creating more awareness with neighborhood residents about the existence of the public space, as the only current users are people living and working close to the forest. It is also important to take advantage of the public ownership of the space, making it much easier to acquire than private lots for public uses. Additionally, being the only porous landscape in the

neighborhood, it is also important to look into different green infrastructure that benefit the entire neighborhood to be deployed.

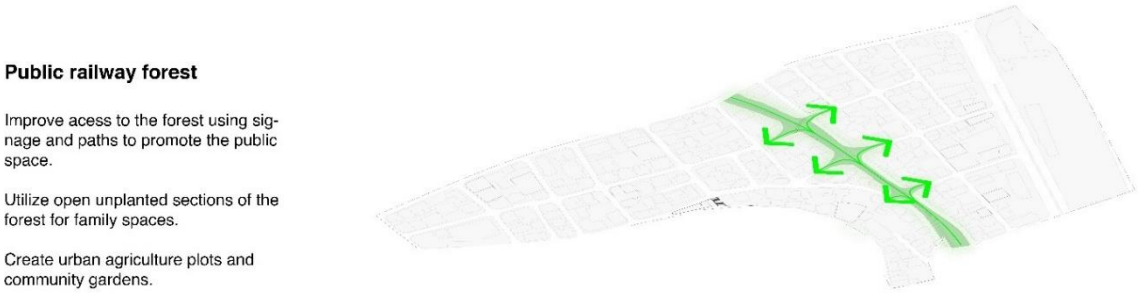


Figure 103 Old railway forest strategy.

The forest becomes the sole public park of the neighborhood and becomes a fixed part of the neighborhood level strategy. It is divided into sections that provide different functions.

2. Streets and sidewalks

The neighborhood analysis shows most outdoor activities happening on the streets close to people's homes and their stores. Following the existing activity of neighborhood space users is essential in creating an inclusive strategy that compliments the social fabric of the neighborhood and strengthens it without disrupting existing activities. Removing on-street parking and limiting vehicular traffic could allow enough space for more public activities to happen on the streets where people already feel most comfortable. Utilizing the private vacant lots as parking lots to compensate for the loss of on-street parking would allow for space in the streets for temporary and permanent interventions. As streets are public domain it would legitimize the strategy as long-lasting as opposed to typical short-term TU interventions. Furthermore, it would be far

easier to convince vacant landowners to get compensated through the parking lots for renting their land, than borrowing their land for public use.

A traffic analysis of different times in Qobayat shows the vertical roads being the most congested, while vehicular flow in horizontal roads is much smoother, mainly because vertical roads lead from neighborhood to another, while horizontal roads connect the neighborhood blocks with each other and therefore are less prone to traffic.

Therefore, a superblock is created based on the existing vehicular flow and pedestrian utility of sidewalks in order to add more emphasis on the priority of pedestrians in using the available public spaces of the neighborhood, in this case, streets. Based on the vehicular traffic analysis conducted earlier, horizontal roads are the least congested roads, while vertical roads are the most congested because they link other neighborhoods with Armenia street. Based on this, horizontal roads will have priority for pedestrian activity while vertical roads are reserved for heavy vehicular flow. Additionally, considering Armenia and Qobayat street are the only two-way streets in the neighborhood, they will also prioritize clear vehicular flow. Furthermore, additional sidewalk spaces and street trees are added at to the streets to fulfill the neighborhood strategy.

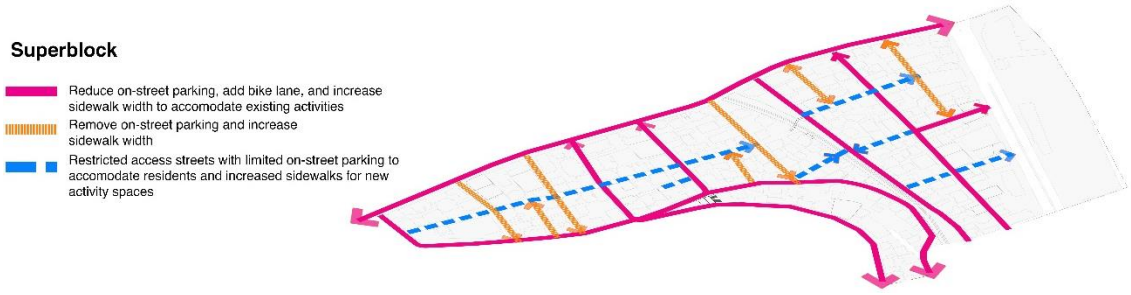


Figure 104 Street network strategy.

There are only two two-way streets in the neighborhood, Armenia and Qobayat street. Here, on-street parking will be eliminated from one side of the road in order to make space for an extended sidewalk to accommodate all the existing activities and possible new ones to the neighborhood.

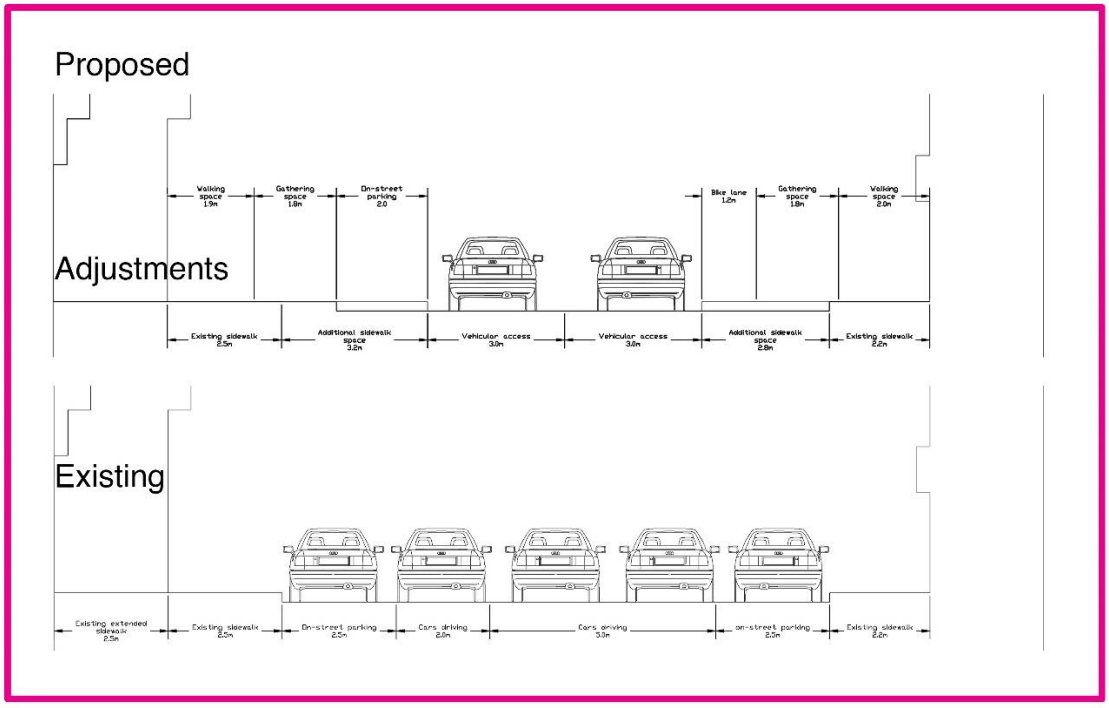


Figure 105 Armenia Street existing and proposed street sections.

In horizontal interconnector streets, on-street parking is completely eliminated and will have restricted vehicular access except for emergencies, access to building parking, or access for water trucks. In these streets, three meters of width is added to each street, adding ample space for activation and extension of activity for residents from indoor to outdoor. These streets experiment something new in the neighborhood, in the sense that they provide spaces for activity on residential streets not commercial ones. The additional sidewalk spaces will host a variety of activities catering to the

different users and uses of the neighborhood. They support different opportunities for outdoor interaction either through gathering spaces, food courts and picnic spaces, urban farming practices, and active play spaces.

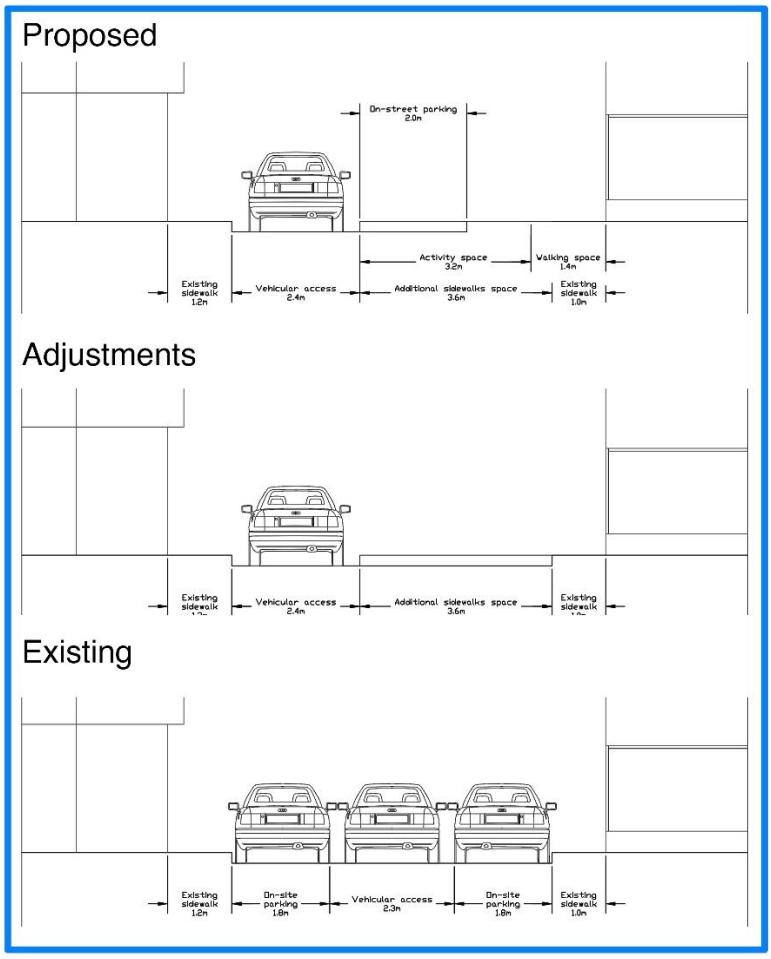


Figure 106 Horizontal streets existing and proposed street sections.

Finally, vehicular vertical streets have a main priority for smooth vehicular flow, while ensuring that pedestrians have more comfortable sidewalks. For this reason, chicanes are added on the vertical streets in order to create an s-shaped road that slows down traffic. These chicanes are equipped with tools that serve pedestrians and

residents of the neighborhood and could include benches, garbage bins, vegetation, bike racks, and more depending on the adjacent ground floor functions.

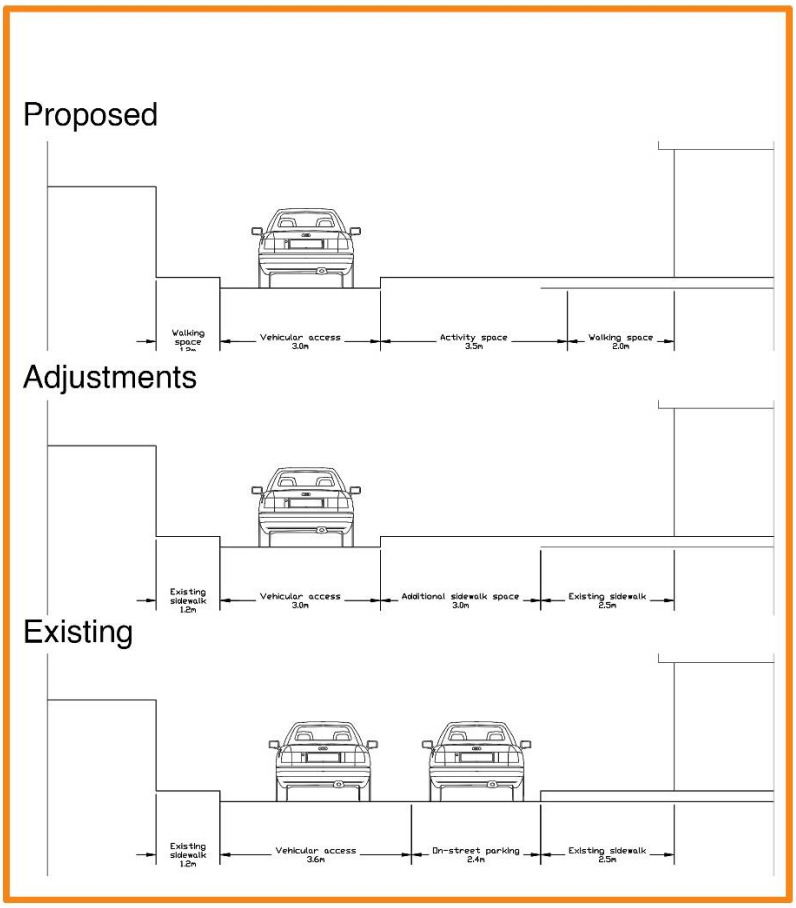


Figure 107 Vertical streets existing and proposed street sections.

3. Vacant space management

The congestion caused by vehicular traffic and the impediment to pedestrian flow significantly detract from the neighborhood's overall appeal and outdoor experience. With most buildings without a garage for parking, most of the parking is on the streets which are too narrow to accommodate comfortable pedestrian movement. Therefore, it is important to look into ways to eliminate on-street parking and increase

sidewalk width. This would provide spaces for current sidewalks activities to exist without impeding pedestrian flow throughout the neighborhood. Since all vacant lots selected are privately owned and based on the logic explained earlier, an agreement would be struck with the landowner to utilize the space for public functions until they decide to develop it, these lots could be utilized as public parking lots serving the residents and visitors of the neighborhood, instead of using these as public spaces when there is no record of them being successfully used by neighborhood residents. Additionally, two small spaces that exist on more quiet streets are reserved for secluded gathering spaces more desired by the elderly.

The two spaces with the most existing foot traffic will have minimal intervention as they already work well on their own. The stair plaza will be used as a cultural space since cultural events usually extend here and to take advantage of the centrality of its location in the neighborhood as a whole. Additionally, it will be used as event spaces, outdoor exhibitions, and markets that highlight local produce and talent. The vacant lot will be left as is with the exception of a few urban furniture to support the existing activities.

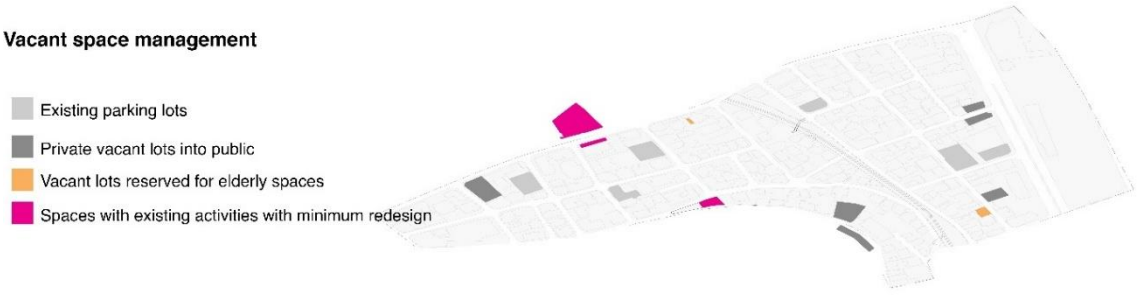


Figure 108 Vacant space management plan.

4. Overall neighborhood strategy

When overlapping the different facets of the neighborhood strategy, a comprehensive and flexible masterplan reveals itself. Creating a fixed base for spontaneous activities to occur on by providing flexible and low-cost tools of intervention leads to a more formalized and inclusive vision of the neighborhood. A vision with the ability to change based on the changing dynamics and needs of the neighborhood. The main principles of the overall neighborhood strategy are as follows.

- A dynamic system that adapts to the changing needs of the residents.
- Building on the existing outdoor activities documented in the neighborhood.
- Finding opportunities for temporary activation by expanding the available space on streets and prioritizing pedestrian movement and activities to be close to the existing patterns of outdoor activity previously documented.

Figure 109 Neighborhood comprehensive strategy.

Figure 110 Landscape strategy.

5. Implementation scenario

Implementing a dynamic and community-driven neighborhood strategy is the basis for a vibrant and inclusive future in Qobayat's open spaces. This starts with the establishment of "One Space at a Time," a non-profit organization comprised of urban designers, planners, architects, and ethnographic researchers committed to community-driven urban interventions tailored to the unique needs of Beirut's neighborhoods.

Serving as a primary facilitator, the organization champions increased temporary use of the city's vacant spaces. Through proactive engagement with various stakeholders including landowners, government officials, residents of all ages, local businesses, designers, and planners, it acts as a bridge to facilitate the implementation of temporary initiatives. Think of the non-profit as a collection of park committees each dedicated to serving the unique contexts of each neighborhood in Beirut by facilitating temporary uses in available vacant spaces throughout the year.

To ensure the initiatives align with the community's needs, the organization conducts extensive observations of existing outdoor activities, in addition to focus group meetings and workshops with residents, seeking insights into their needs. This prompts the designers at the non-profit to curate a toolkit of innovative ideas that directly address the identified issues. Subsequently, lease agreements are drawn up with vacant landowners in preparation for temporary space deployment. Local manufacturers are then enlisted to produce the toolkit elements, which are then used to design temporary outdoor spaces tailored to the specific needs of the residents. The philosophy adopted on the neighborhood scale is heavily inspired by Gehl Architect's Action-oriented planning (2016). However, while in Gehl's cycle, the city is the facilitator, the non-profit organization instead will facilitate the deployment of the neighborhood strategy. The state in Beirut has historically shown little interest in creating public spaces in the city, therefore their role in the project will be reduced to coordinating legal matters such as acquiring permits for certain structures and events.

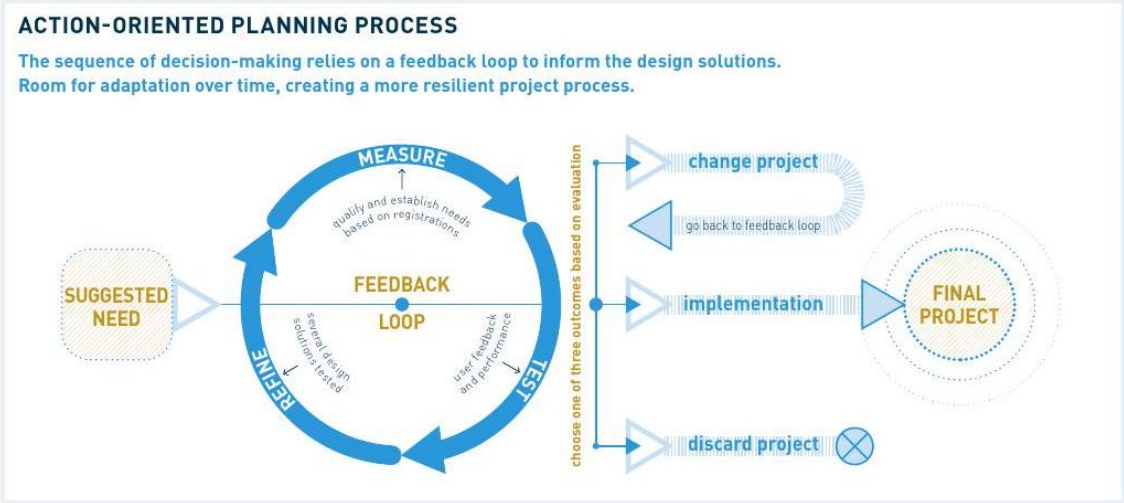


Figure 111 Action oriented planning process (Gehl Architects, 2016)

6. Fixed/permanent vs spontaneous/temporary strategy

While this strategy so far reads as a traditional urban design strategy that seems permanent, there are two aspects to the strategy, fixed or permanent, and temporary or spontaneous. While the design of the old railway forest and the reorganization of roads and parking are fixed, they act as the base for temporary and spontaneous uses done by residents and visitors. In order to allow this spontaneity and freedom of use and design, a collection of activation tools is designed to be deployed on these bases. The activation toolkit is the physical manifestation of the existing social activities in the neighborhood and will be explained in further detail in the next section.

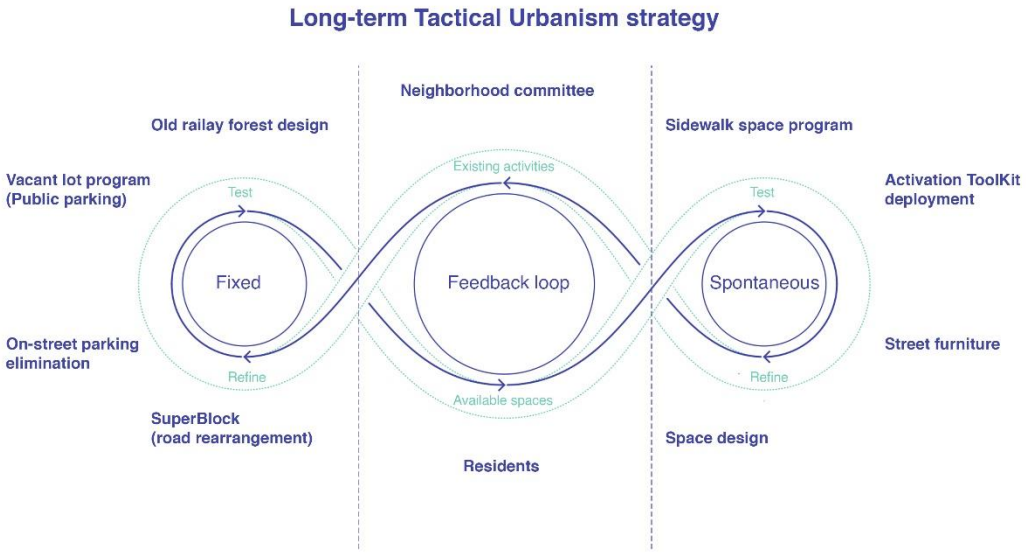


Figure 112 Fixed and spontaneous aspects of the long-term tactical strategy.

The fixed and spontaneous aspects of the strategy are placed in a constant feedback loop using observations collected by the neighborhood committee and the appropriations and feedback of the users of these spaces. Creating a strategy of temporary and permanent aspects that constantly change with the changing needs and patterns of the users of the neighborhood, can help ensure a long-term vision of tactical urbanism in the neighborhood.

B. The Activation Tool Kit

The previous chapter delves into the specificities of Qobayat's neighborhood, providing a comprehensive foundation for observations that guide the design of Temporary Urbanism (TPU) tools. As emphasized earlier, observation acts as both an

analytical lens and a design catalyst. Once the decision on whether to support, expand, relocate, or limit an observed activity is made, a stream of ideas begins to emerge. These ideas, referred to here as Temporary Urbanism Tools (TUT), form the neighborhood toolkit. The toolkit is a collection of interventions designed to incrementally address the diverse needs of the neighborhood's users.

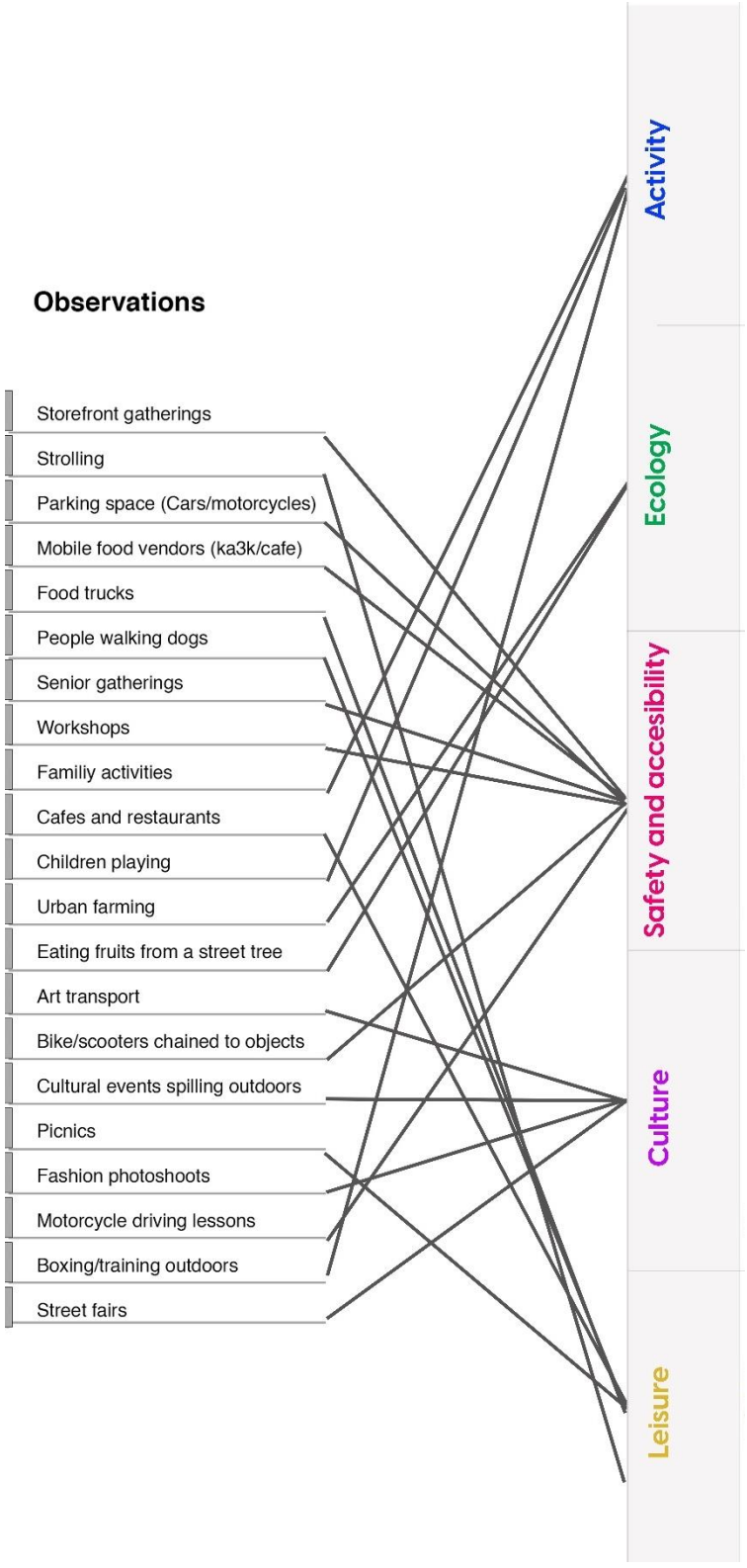


Figure 113 Observations to toolkit elements.

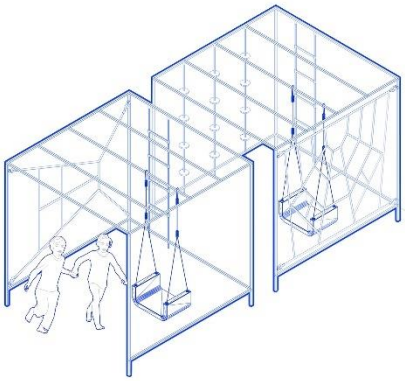
Synthesized from an understanding of the community's dynamics, these tools offer a nuanced approach to reimagining observed activities. The term 'tools' underscores their pragmatic and adaptable nature, presenting solutions that can be, similar to the neighborhood level strategy, flexibly deployed to enhance the urban experience. These tools embody a responsive strategy, where the design process is grounded in real-time observations and evolves to meet the evolving dynamics of Qobayyat. Moreover, they are not static solutions but rather dynamic instruments that align with the ever-changing urban fabric. This introduction sets the stage for a detailed exploration of these TU tools, showcasing how each one contributes to the envisioned transformation of the neighborhood and how collectively, they could make spaces that respond to a larger neighborhood strategy.

Given the predominantly private nature of lots in the neighborhood, and the decision to create flexible spaces on streets, the Temporary Urbanism Tools (TUTs) are conceived with a design approach that allows for easy relocation if necessary. This ability to transport the tools or spaces allows for more flexibility in changing the functions of a space in case changes needed to be made. More importantly, this flexibility could be used as a tool to observe user behavior within the space and gauge their response to the deployed tools and how they customize them to fit their current needs. Once an initial program is deployed on a lot, people’s experiences in the new space are observed. The portability of the tools would allow for changes according to the needs of the users to happen on the spot, observing and documenting such customizations provide insight into future programs and tools that need to be deployed.

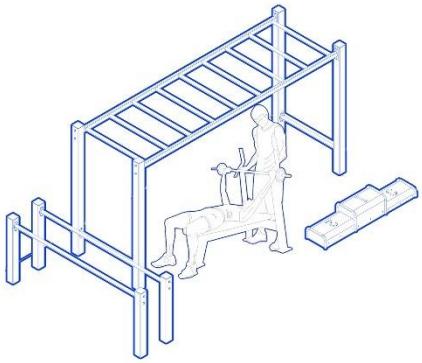
Finally, the design approach for the tools was to create simple spaces that cater to the neighborhood's needs while seamlessly integrating into the existing urban

landscape. All tools, with the exception of any electrical components, are predominantly constructed from wood and metal. This choice was motivated by a commitment to local production, aiming to bolster the numerous carpenters present in the neighborhood. These tools are distinguished by their lightweight nature and straightforward assembly, facilitating easy setup and disassembly allowing the designated spaces to remain open to reinterpretation. Furthermore, they are categorized by function and comprise five categories, activity, leisure, ecology, safety and accessibility, and culture.

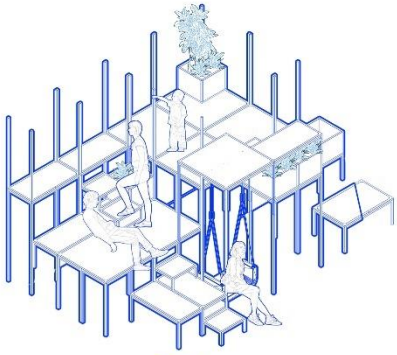
- The Activity Tools are designed to offer secure spaces catering to children, adults, and seniors, fostering opportunities for play and exercise. This mainly addresses the absence of outdoor spaces for children and aims to support individuals engaged in exercise activities within the neighborhood. Simultaneously, it encourages more residents to utilize outdoor spaces for physical activities. The jungle playground features swings and diverse rope climbing configurations, providing a dynamic play environment. The structural playground offers a unique experience for both children and adults, allowing them to view the neighborhood from an elevated perspective or engage with the maze beneath it. Finally, a running track marked by paint is incorporated to promote a safe and obstacle-free space for individuals pursuing exercise routines.



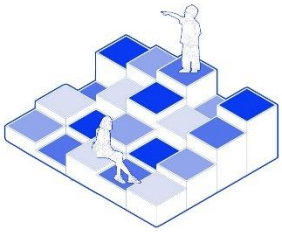
Tool: **Jungle playground**
Aim: To provide safe and playful spaces for children



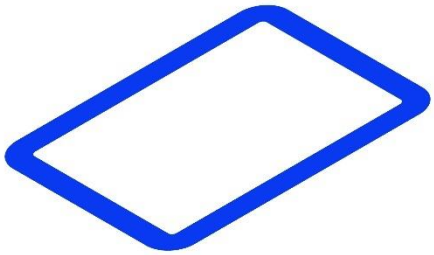
Tool: **Outdoor gym**
Aim: To promote exercise and health in the neighborhood and build on the observed activities of people working out



Tool:
Aim: To promote exercise and health in the neighborhood and build on the observed activities of people working out



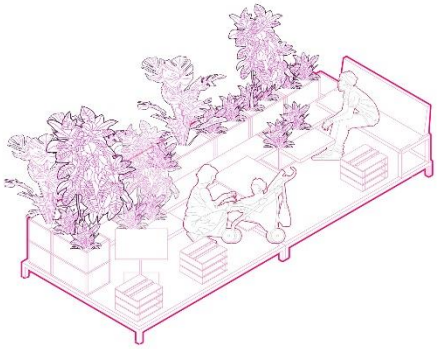
Tool: **Stepping blocks**
Aim: Colorful wooden steps for seating and to add playfulness to children spaces.



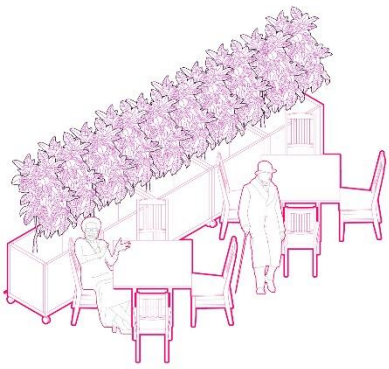
Tool: **Running track**
Aim: To provide comfortable and obstacle free tracks that suppot the atheletes running in the neighborhood and encourage more to join.

Figure 114 Activity tools (by author, 2023)

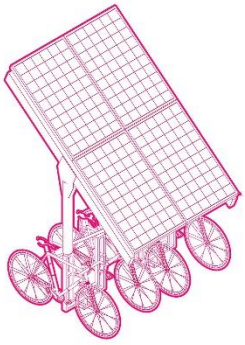
- Safety and accessibility tools encompass a range of plug-ins that improve walkability, overall accessibility, and vehicular mobility in the neighborhood. This involves the implementation of parklets, serving as sidewalk extensions to create communal gathering spots for residents and store owners. The aim is to encourage store owners to relocate their chairs and tables indoors, facilitating smoother pedestrian movement for the community. Additionally, designated senior spaces feature comfortable seating and plant boxes with hedges, acting as sound barriers to mitigate noise from the neighborhood. It further introduces policy suggestions for stricter parking regulations in addition to physical barriers that obstruct vehicles from double parking and sidewalk parking.



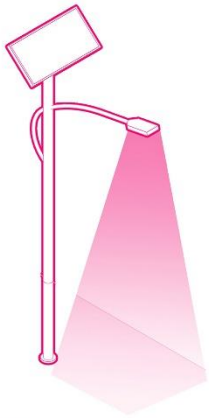
Tool: **Parklet**
Aim: To provide gathering spaces adjacent to sidewalks where walking becomes restricted from sidewalk gatherings



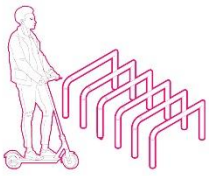
Tool: **Senior spaces**
Aim: To create quiet spaces using vegetation and space selection and comfortabke spaces for the elderly and encourage more seniors to use outdoor spaces



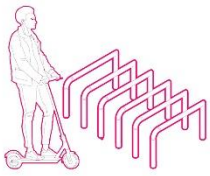
Tool: **Solar powered charging spot**
Aim: To promote the usage of electric vehicles



Tool: **Solar powered lights**
Aim: To provide lighting for the spaces without having to connect to a grid or local generator



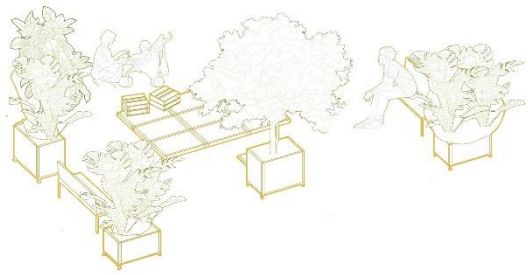
Tool: **Bike racks**
Aim: To provide lighting for the spaces without having to connect to a grid or local generator



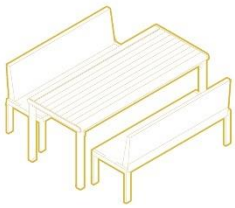
Tool: **Parking blockers**
Aim: Blocks in the road to ensure cars stop double parking and on the sidewalk to fight sidewalk parking

Figure 115 Safety and accessibility tools (by author, 2023)

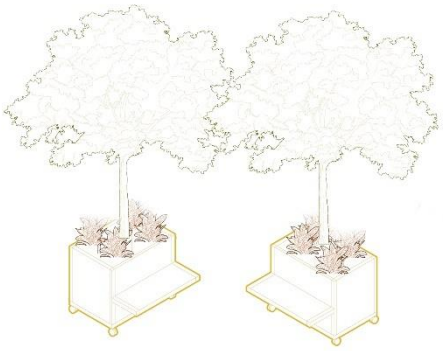
- Leisure tools are mainly for creating different park and garden spaces in the neighborhood. These tools encompass various seating arrangements and a wide array of vegetation, including aesthetically pleasing shade trees, ground cover, and fruit trees. The plant boxes are designed with wheels on the bottom for easy mobility when needed. Complementing these natural elements are modular blocks designed as playful furniture, emphasizing the personalized nature of outdoor space appropriations. These tools aim to enhance the leisure experience, offering residents versatile and inviting outdoor areas for relaxation and social engagement.



Tool: **Park/garden**
Aim: A fully equipped park to support the neighborhood solitary and group activities

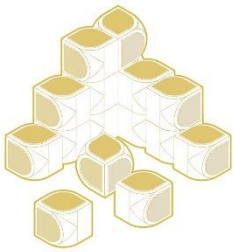


Tool: **Picnic table**
Aim: To provide spaces where people can eat in comfortabke outdoors



Tool: **Planting boxes with seating**
Aim: To provide seating complimented with natural shade

Tool: **Small planters**
Aim: To plant smaller ground cover and bushes to compliment the spaces



Tool: **Planting boxes with seating**
Aim: To outdoor plazas and working areas

Figure 116 Leisure tools (by author, 2023)

- Ecology tools promote sustainable agricultural practices and foster community well-being while nurturing a closer relationship with nature in the neighborhood. The toolkit primarily focuses on urban farming tools, mainly deployed within the old railway forest and some residential streets. This includes the design of planting boxes that will be embedded in the ground to create community gardens for residents to cultivate a variety of fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Vertical gardens are designed to introduce urban farming into other spaces in the neighborhood and encourage wider community involvement. Furthermore, it includes planters featuring fruit trees designed to complement spaces and streets. Finally, recycling bins are strategically positioned and linked with a local recycling NGO, ensuring efficient collection and reinforcing the neighborhood's commitment to sustainable practices.

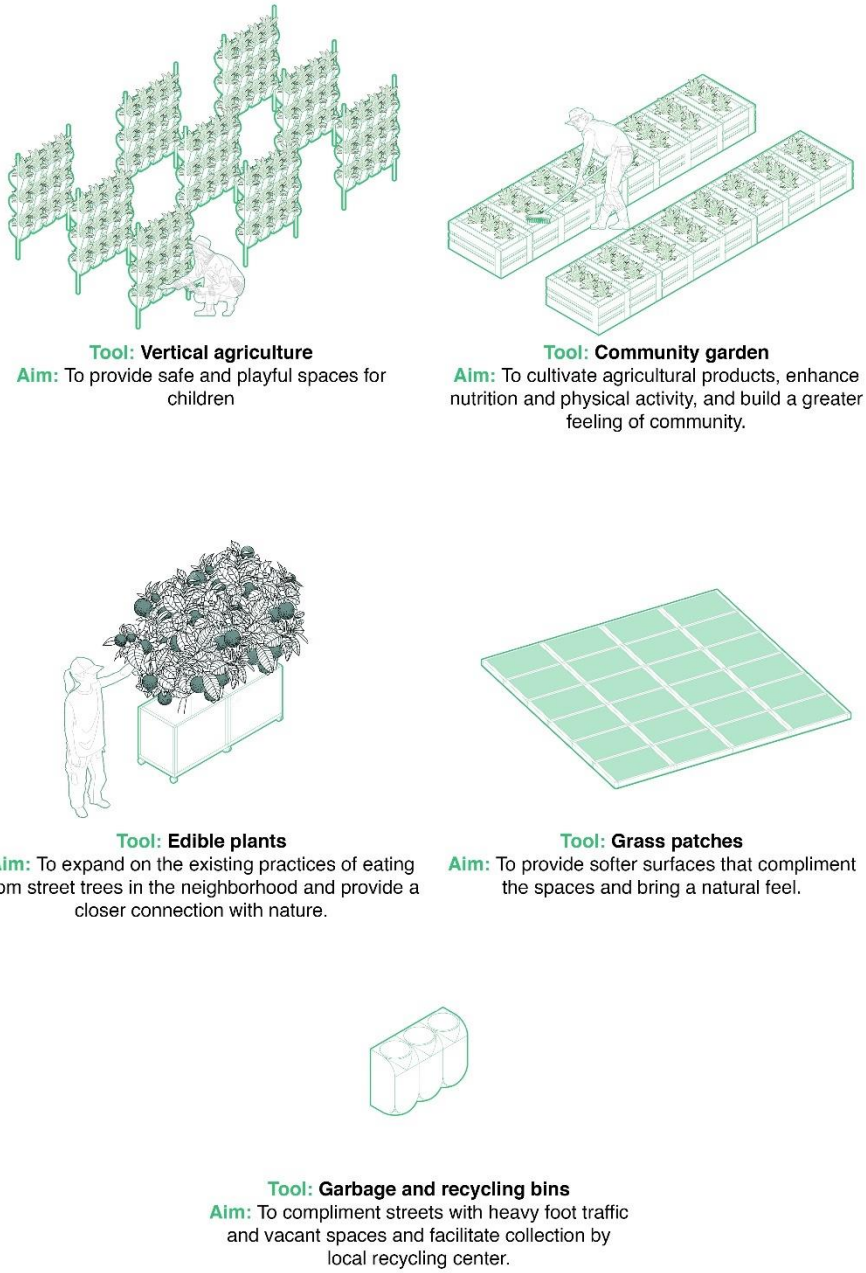
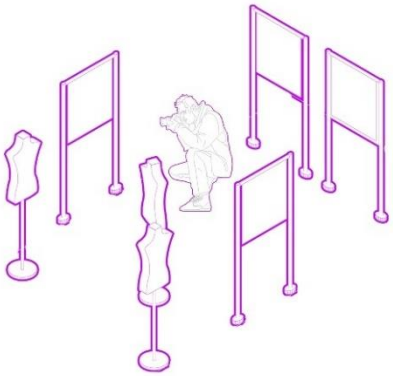


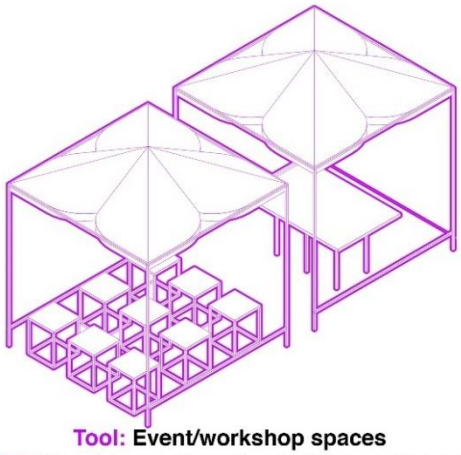
Figure 117 Ecology tools (by author, 2023)

- Cultural Tools highlight the artistic side of Qobayat that often goes unnoticed in outdoor spaces, presenting a range of ideas to bring this creativity to the street-

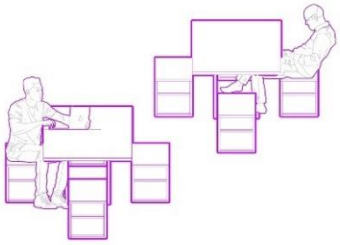
level. The concept of "Artist Takeover" envisions a monthly residency, providing artists and designers with the opportunity to design their own temporary spaces whether it be an interactive installation or an exhibition. Furthermore, it includes versatile event spaces that allow for various functions such as performances, outdoor markets, and workshops. Ground murals serve a dual purpose by enhancing pedestrian mobility and contributing to the aesthetic charm of the streets. Lastly, an idea board is introduced, empowering users to articulate their needs and create new tools for the neighborhood toolkit.



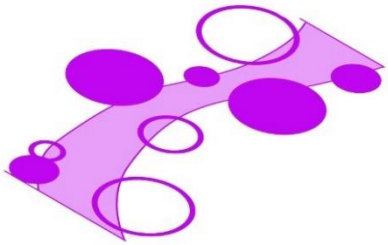
Tool: Artist takeover
Aim: The idea here is to support local artists and privde spaces where they can promote their work. Every month, artists and designers will apply to re-design a space an occupy it for 30 days before packing up for the next artist to set-up



Tool: Event/workshop spaces
Aim: To act as an alternative to indoor paid event spaces and create public spaces for cultural events and artistic expression



Tool: Working space
Aim: Public plazas and working areas



Tool: Ground murals
Aim: These murals are the cheapest and most hastle free way to fully transform a space. They could be used to create paths for circulation in addition to providing opportunities to local artists to showcase their art

Tool: Idea board
Aim: To provide means of conveying needs or adjustments in the space by the public.

Figure 118 Culture tools (by author, 2023)

Furthermore, it is crucial to clarify the scale variations among these tools. While some function as standalone plug-ins, others come together as a collective set of plugins with the aim of creating a space with a specific purpose. The tools in the toolkit are versatile puzzle pieces that seamlessly interlock regardless of the configuration. The strength of these tools is users' ability to choose which tools are deployed and they are responsible for configuring them based on their needs. This maintains the value of tactical urbanism as a tool concerned with people's preferences. Finally, these tools can be rescaled and reconfigured to fit the desired space.

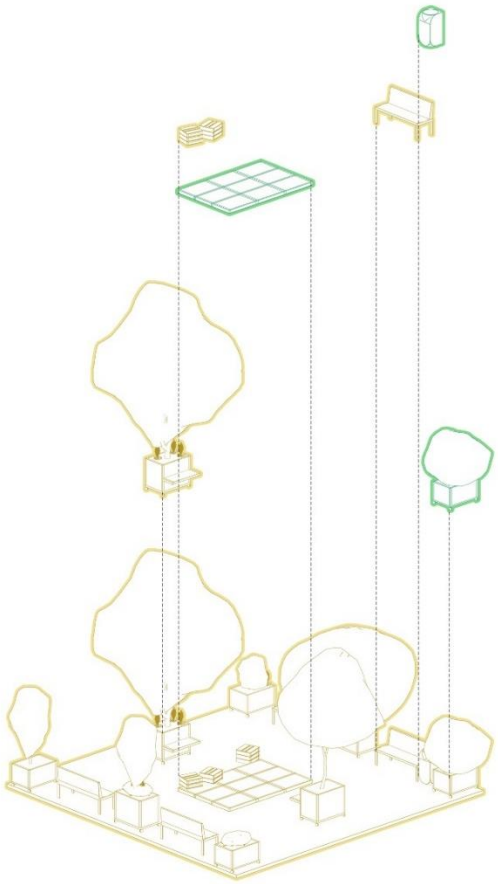


Figure 119 Space configuration using the toolkit.

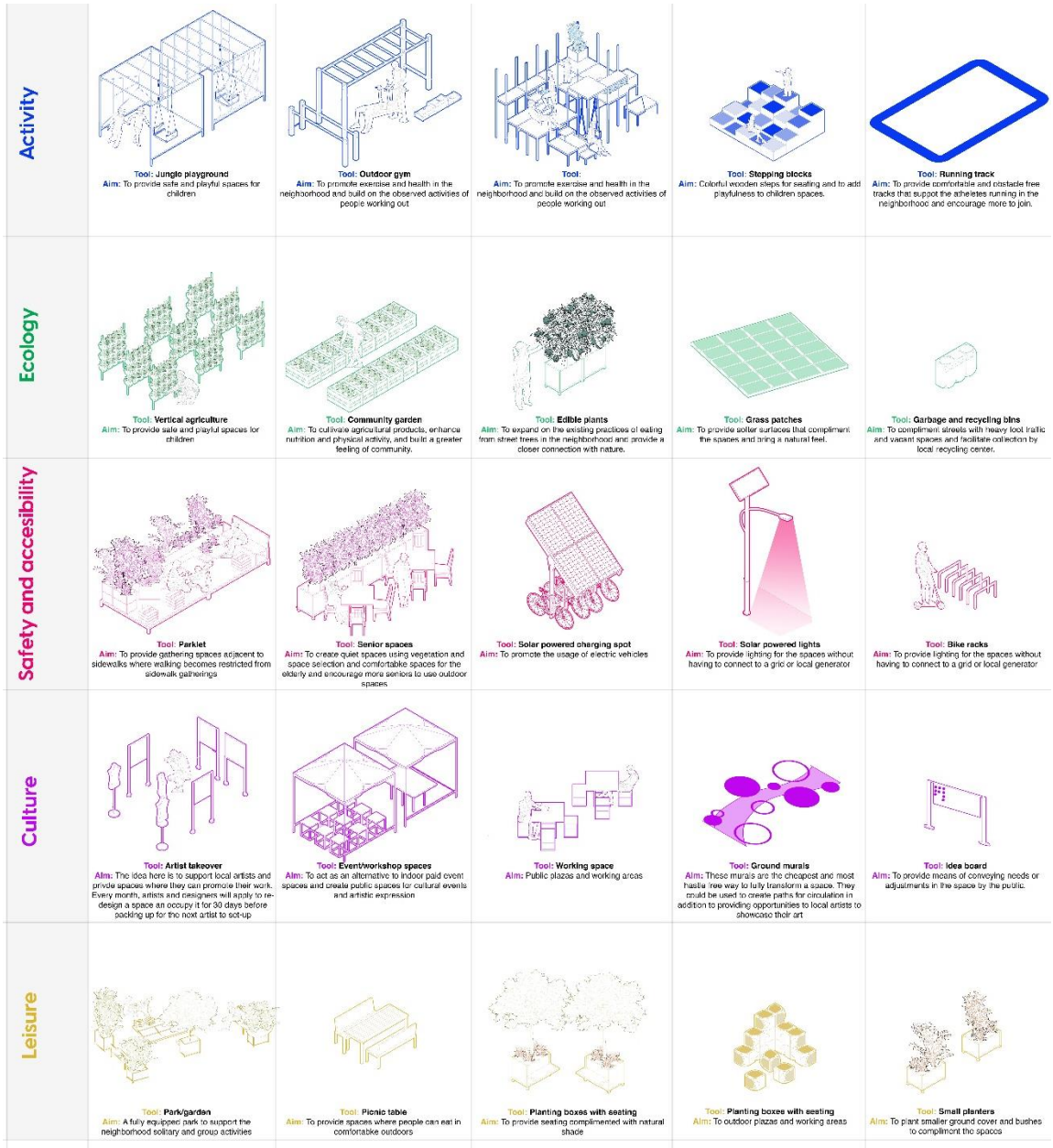


Figure 120 The Activation Tool Kit (by author, 2023)

These tools will mainly be used to facilitate activities occurring on streets and in the forest. When all intended spaces are designed and tools are deployed, the spaces of the neighborhood should host a variety of activities based on different combinations of the tools that will be created by future users. One neighborhood level scenario could be

illustrated using figure 119. It is important to note however, that this program should not be imposed by a designer, rather users of these spaces should have a say in which tools they would like to use.

Figure 121 Possible neighborhood-level scenario for tools deployed.

C. Qobayat: The walking neighborhood

In order to demonstrate how the neighborhood level strategy and the activation toolkit will work together, parts of the new forest design and sections of the three new street typologies are detailed.

1. Public Railway Forest

a. Community garden

The first section of the forest is designed to accommodate agricultural practices in the neighborhood. This was selected because it is a part of the forest that has recently been cleared of most of the dense vegetation that previously rendered the site inaccessible. The site hosts a variety of urban farming techniques to create a communal garden that is both productive and leisurely. Additionally, the connections with the rest of the neighborhood are strengthened through vegetation, clearer pedestrian walkways, and signage that indicate the publicness of the space and its function.

A linear gravel promenade framed by the existing railway in the forest was created to allow for easy access throughout the forest. This promenade connects with different paths throughout the forest that lead to the different available sections of the community garden such as the agricultural plots, fruit orchards, and public plaza. Urban farming is the main idea here following an observation of a small private agricultural plot found in the forest. The aim here is to expand on such practices and making the more widely available to different users in the neighborhood, while creating a public community space.

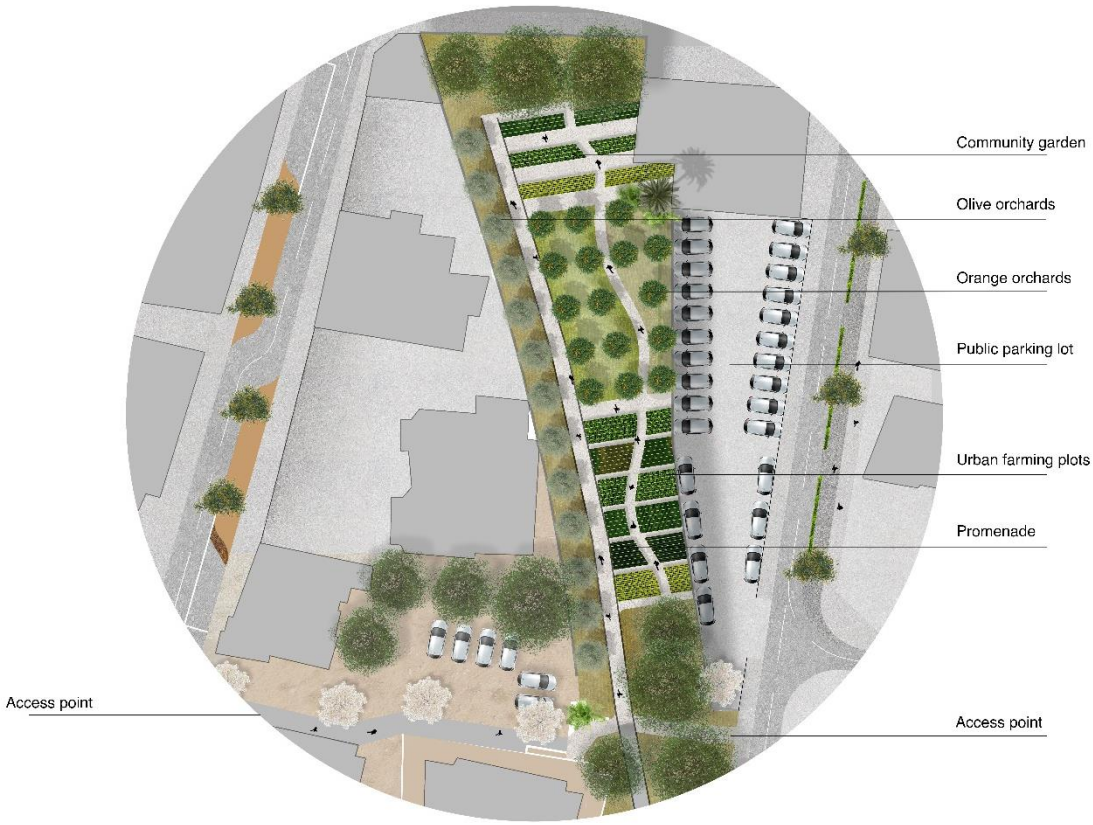


Figure 122 Community garden plan.

b. Family plaza

The promenade from the first section of the forest connects to the second part of the forest which mainly consists of family spaces and small green infrastructure tools such as bioswales and rain gardens. Based on previous observations of activities in this section, tools from the activation toolkit will probably used by residents to create spaces for gathering, leisure, and play spaces for children. While the basic elements of the forest such as planting and the promenade are fixed, the design and deployment of tools from the activation toolkit allow for spontaneous activities to occur, preserving some freedoms for users to design their own spaces.

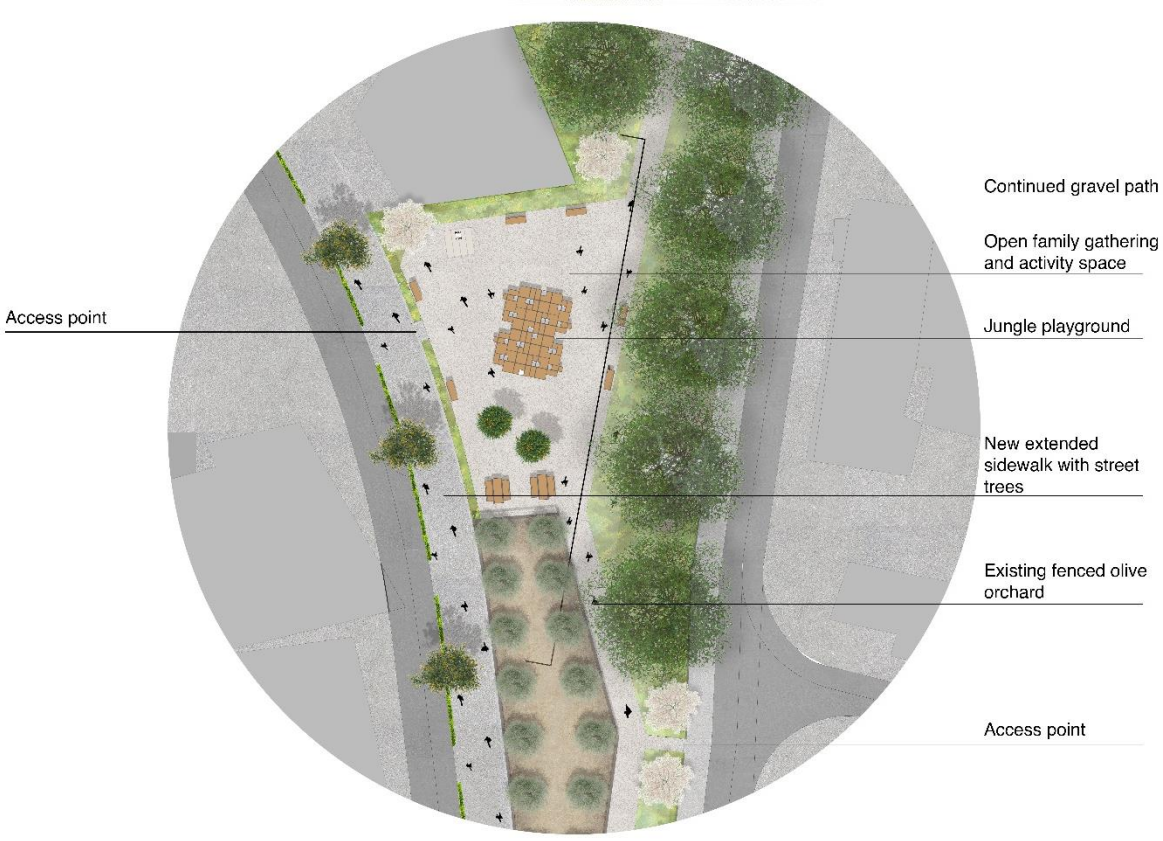


Figure 123 Family plaza plan.

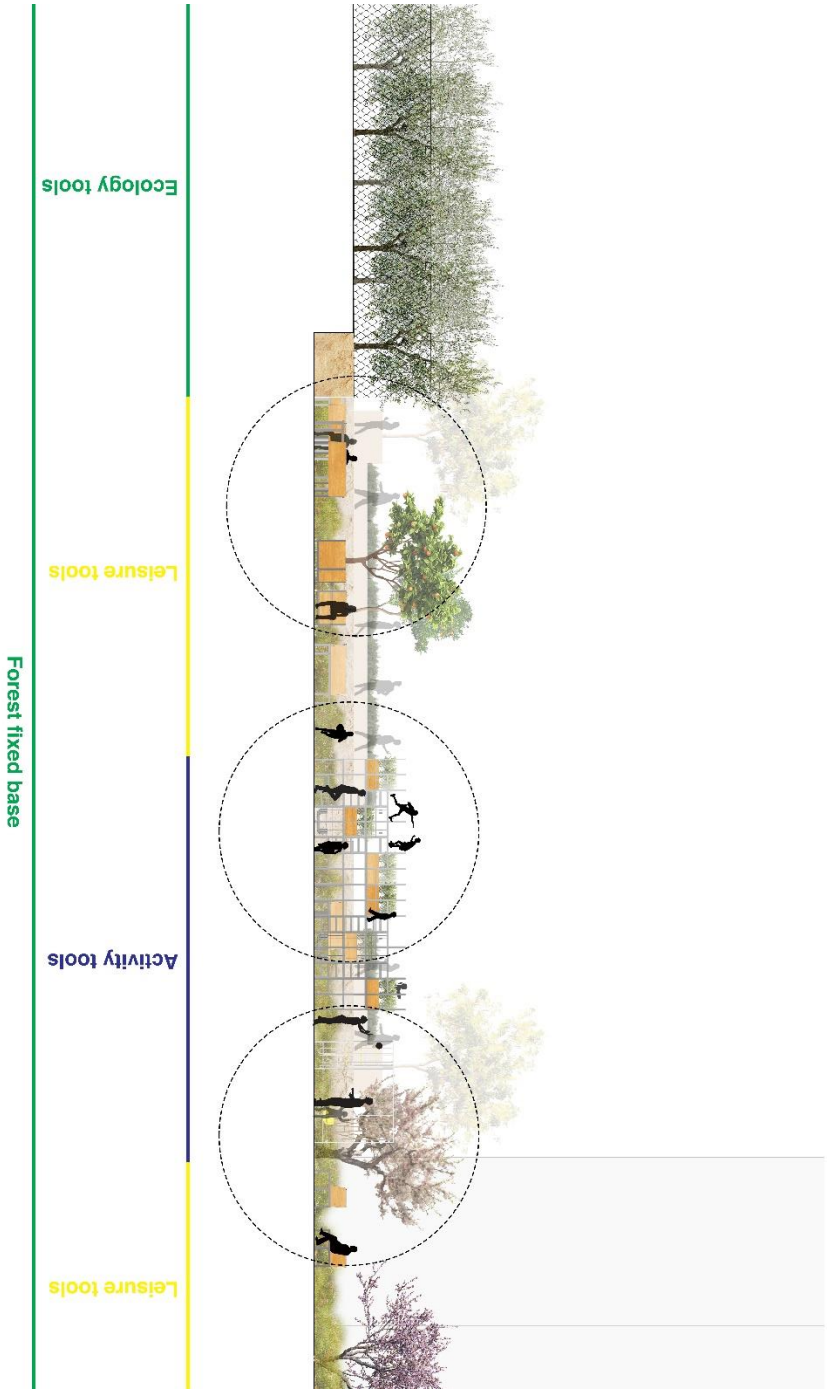


Figure 124 Family plaza section.

Figure 125 Possible appropriations in family plaza.

2. Streets and Sidewalks

To stay true to the low-cost and fast-action aspects of TU, there needs to be investigation into the ways we can rearrange streets without building new sidewalks or adding new heavy infrastructure that might take months to build and would cause disturbances to the neighborhood and its flow, and considering the expansion of sidewalks across the neighborhood, a few ideas have been created to align the project with the main principles of TU.

One of the cheapest and easiest ways to transform a space based on the case studies of TU that have been looked at for this thesis has been art murals and paint. Using paint to create lines that clearly divide the roads and distinguish pedestrian versus vehicular spaces would be a fast and cheap way of organizing things. Additionally, streets become canvases for artists who wish to share their work with the residents of the neighborhood and its visitors.

A second way to rearrange roads is using linear planters to indicate the end of the sidewalk and the beginning of the road. This not only creates a physical barrier but provides opportunity for much needed additional vegetation to the neighborhood. Finally, wooden platforms create a smooth transition with the existing sidewalk while creating a physical boundary between pedestrian and vehicular space. These methods are already used throughout the neighborhood by store owners and residents to restrict cars from parking in front of their spaces.

Finally, these methods, when combined create an adequate boundary that combines practicality, aesthetic, and ecological value. However, since all streets in the neighborhood are redesigned, there needs to be consideration for the cost of these

methods and prioritizing for which one or two methods would work best depending on the street typology. For example, on a mostly pedestrian street, there is no need for physical obstruction between vehicular and pedestrian spaces as car access will be restricted by balustrades, while on mainly vehicular streets, there needs to be a physical boundary differentiating the vehicular and pedestrian spaces.

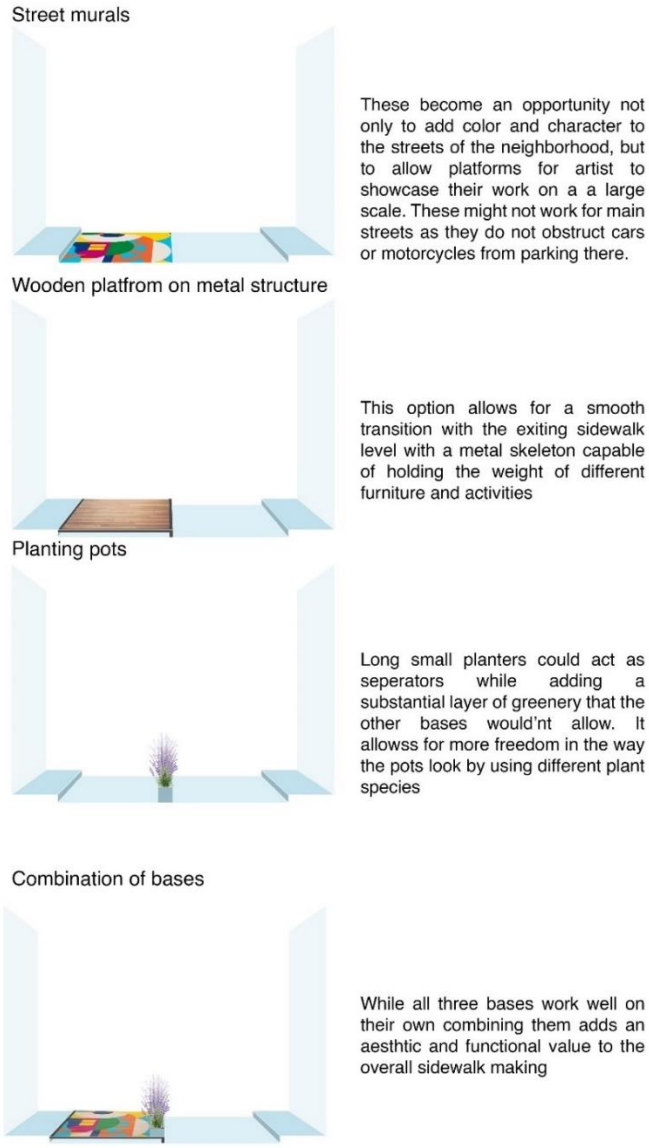


Figure 126 Defining additional sidewalk space.

a. Patriarch Arida Street

The horizontal pedestrian streets with limited vehicular access and no on-street parking, will have an additional three meters of sidewalk space. The extended sidewalk has two purposes, mainly creating a more comfortable and enjoyable walking experience in the neighborhood, while allowing space for the different activities that already exist on streets and inviting residents and visitors to introduce more activities with the extra space.

A section of Patriarch Arida street is used to demonstrate this typology. On both sides of the street are residential buildings with usually cars parked on both sides of the street. Vehicular access to these roads is restricted using the exiting balustrades found on the current sidewalk which also add to the obstruction of pedestrian flow. The intervention involves extending the sidewalk and utilizing the activation toolkit to add more life to the streets. The goal is to allow the users of this space to choose from the toolkit what they would like to be deployed on their streets. Considering the street is mainly residential, tools are chosen accordingly.

Figure 127 Patriarch Arida Street Plan

The new street design includes a variety of urban farming tools including agricultural plots for fruits and vegetables and vertical agriculture posts for herbs and leafy greens. The street can also include a variety of seating arrangements and activity tools such as small spaces for children. While the design demonstrates a specific set of tools placed in a specific way, the point of the toolkit is for people to be able to move and redesign their spaces as they please, instead of designing in a top-down way. This allows for the spontaneity which the social fabrics value lies in, while setting the stage for safer pedestrian movement through the new road rearrangement.

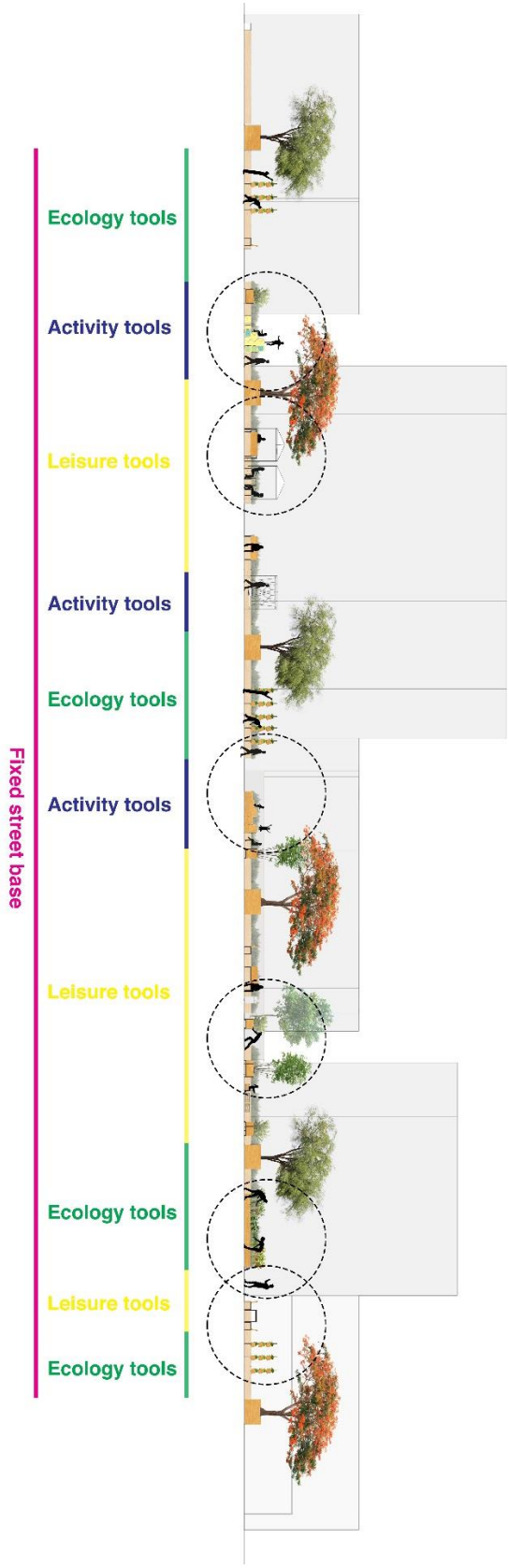


Figure 128 Patriarch Arida Street section.

Figure 129 Possible appropriations on Patriarch Arida Street.

The vehicular road, while mainly used by cars, has restricted access for emergencies, and water cisterns delivering water to the neighborhood residents. Additionally, access is granted to private parking on these streets, however, on this street, there is no need for such access as none of the buildings have private parking. The rest of the time the vehicular section of the street is clear for different activities that otherwise would not have been possible such as strolling with family, people walking their dogs, exercise, and bike lanes.

b. Khatchadourian Street

On vertical streets where vehicular flow is priority, chicanes are added to slow down traffic and to allow for more sidewalk space. As this is a vehicular road, wooden platforms are used to indicate the new sidewalks and to obstruct vehicles from parking on the additional space. The additional sidewalk space is used to add street trees and some elements from the activation toolkit. On Khatchadourian Street for example, benches, garbage and recycling bins, and bike racks are added to complement the additional space. These chicanes allow for more pedestrian activity while slowing down traffic and making it safe for pedestrians to cross, in addition to the extra space added to the sidewalk allowing for a more comfortable walking experience.

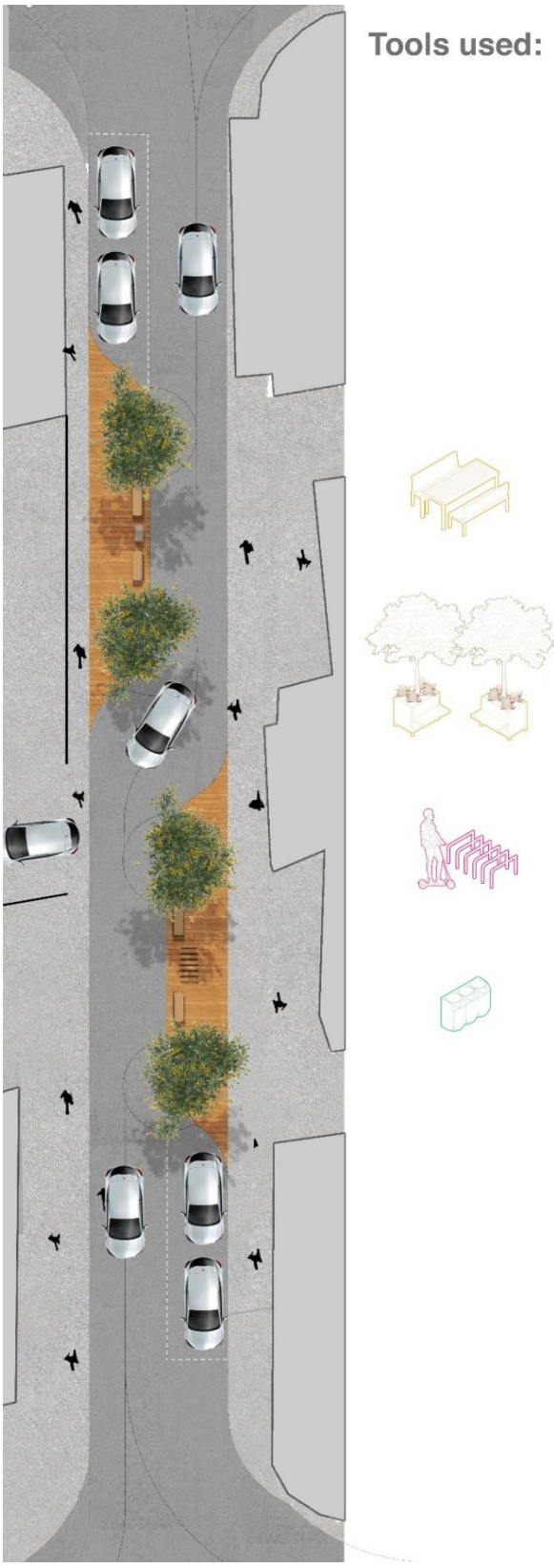


Figure 130 Khatchadourian Street plan.

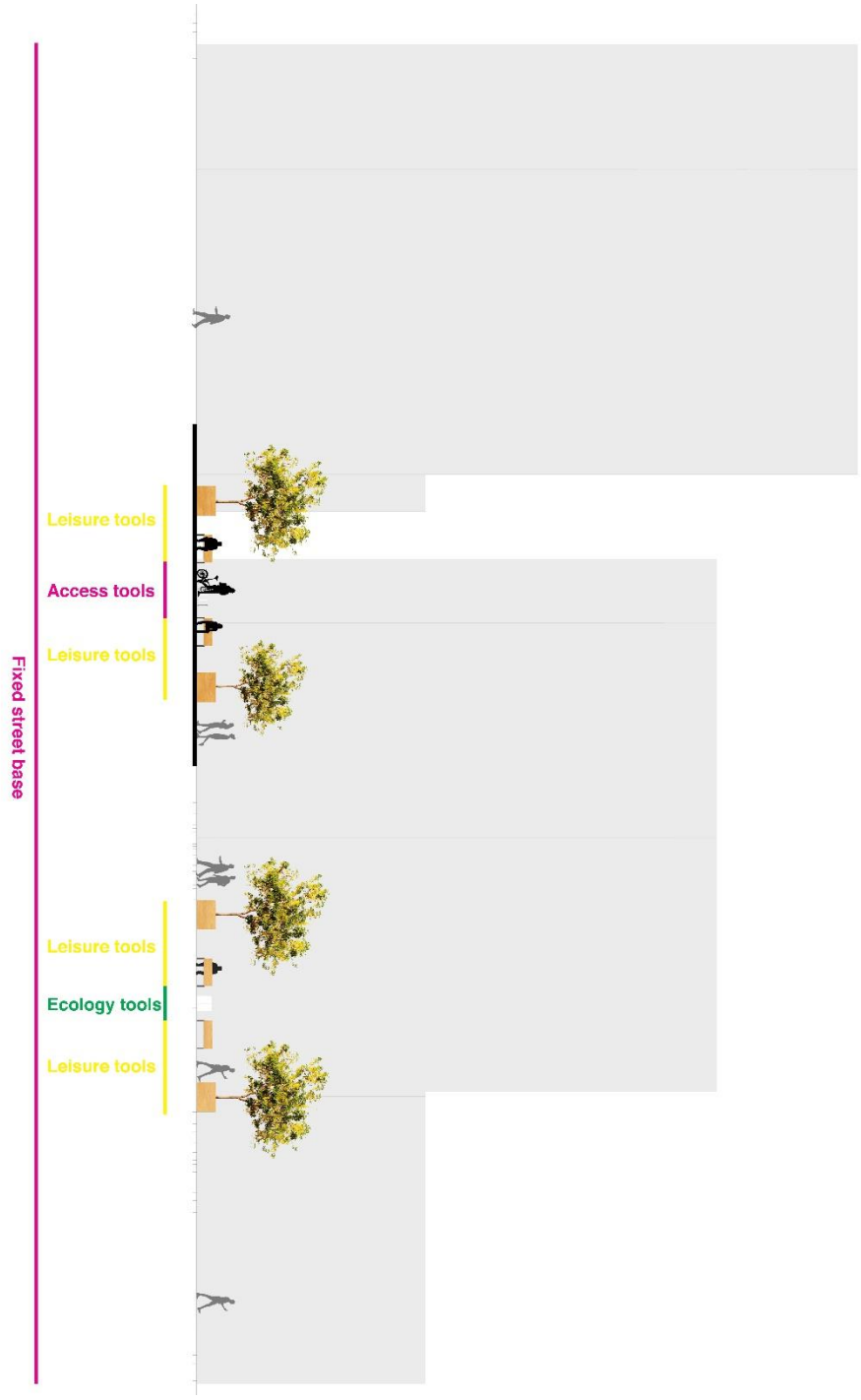


Figure 131 Khatchadourian Street section.

c. Armenia street

On Armenia street, the right side of the road has an extended sidewalk of three meters of width. For this typology, wooden platforms are used to extend the sidewalk,

as this is a heavily vehicular road, there needs to be a very clear indication of the sidewalk and clear obstructions that do not allow cars or motorcycles to park on it. This side was chosen considering most obstructions occur on this side, due to the higher concentration of commercial and service ground floor functions. On the opposite side of the road, space is reserved for on-street parking. The existing road with a twelve-meter width allowed for parking on both sides of the street while also allowing a third row of illegal parking that obstructs the vehicular flow and creates congestion.

Figure 132 Armenia Street plan.

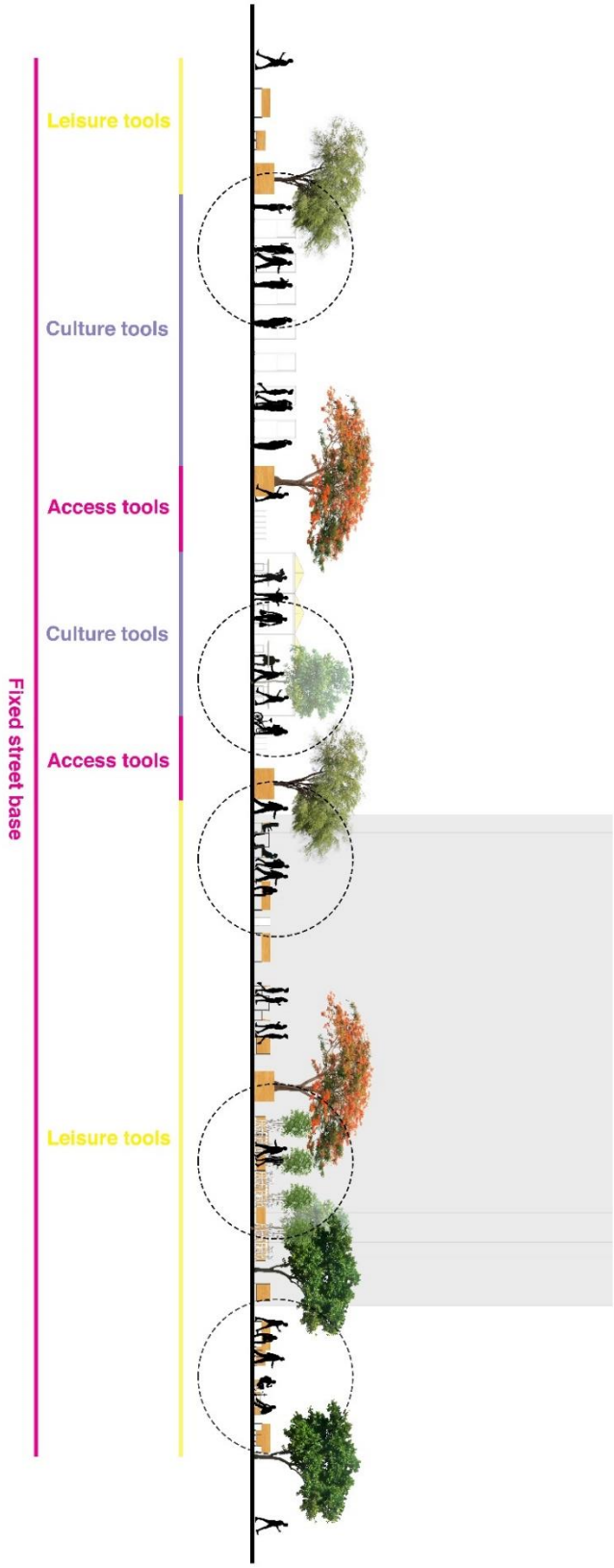


Figure 133 Armenia street section.

The new narrower road has enough space for comfortable vehicular flow without the opportunity for double parking. The extended sidewalk on the commercial side of the road accommodates different public activities. This includes the moving of on-street gatherings by shop owners and neighbors which usually obstruct movement to the additional space to allow for smoother pedestrian flow. Additionally, the extended sidewalk creates opportunity for more activities such as weekly farmers markets, seating arrangements for visitors and neighbors, outdoor exhibitions, green mobility parking and charging stations, and vegetation boxes. As stated earlier, these tools used to activate the sidewalk are chosen by the users of the space instead of being imposed by a designer.

Figure 134 Possible appropriations on Armenia Street.

This strategy combines a mix of permanent and spontaneous strategies that spontaneity of TPU while ensuring its long-term deployment by creating a base for the neighborhood. These prototypes serve as the initial testing grounds for the deployment of temporary initiatives in the neighborhood. According to the strategy explained earlier, these sites will be observed by researchers and designers from the non-profit in order to track user's reactions to these spaces. Furthermore, it is important to raise awareness on the mobile nature of the tools, for example by providing signage letting users know that they could adjust these spaces in real time to fit the immediate needs.

This chapter articulates a holistic strategy for Qobayat's Temporary Urbanism (TU), presented through the lens of a versatile toolkit and a collaborative neighborhood strategy. The temporary urbanism toolkit is presented as a dynamic set of interventions, responsive to real-time observations and adaptable to evolving community needs. Inspired by Gehl Architect's action-oriented planning, the neighborhood strategy allocates roles to spaces based on observed activities, fostering a phased, community-driven transformation. Prototyping specific spaces validates the conceptual frameworks, showcasing the toolkit's practical application. Guided by design principles from TU case studies, the strategy emphasizes adaptability, collaboration, and incremental implementation. The phased approach recognizes the project's tactical nature, allowing for continuous testing, refinement, and community engagement.

In essence, this strategy not only lays the groundwork for physical transformations but charts a course for a sustainable and positive impact on community well-being. Moreover, when implementing this model across various neighborhoods in Beirut, the non-profit facilitates the establishment of temporary space committees focused on optimizing available spaces and executing temporary initiatives within each

neighborhood. The overarching vision is to develop a comprehensive city-scale toolkit comprising a diverse array of temporary initiatives that interconnect neighborhoods across Beirut. Maintaining an ongoing dialogue among committees representing different neighborhoods fosters the exchange of best practices and insights, thereby minimizing errors and mitigating risks associated with urban interventions. This collaborative approach aims to create a shared knowledge base, promoting effective, efficient, and informed decision-making for the sustainable development and enhancement of Beirut's urban landscape.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to bridge the gap in the literature on T/TPU tools by exploring formalized visions of these tools in cities of the global south. The focus on Qobayat, a majority low-income populated neighborhood, allowed for an in-depth analysis of how T/TPU could serve as an ongoing and adaptive process, catering to the evolving needs of its diverse users.

The literature review uses theoretical and practical knowledge of T/TPU and provides principles for the future development of T/TPU. Furthermore, it includes a critique of the current state of TPU deployment in Beirut, questioning its efficacy in addressing the neglected needs within the urban fabric in a sustainable manner. The goal is to develop T/TPU beyond its short-lived impact and envision it as an integral and continuous process capable of adapting to the dynamic nature of our cities. Choosing Qobayat as the case study neighborhood was a strategic decision rooted in a preliminary rating of Beirut's neighborhoods, assessing their access to public spaces and socio-economic vulnerabilities. Qobayat, with its unique characteristics, served as a canvas for demonstrating long-term, neighborhood-scale strategies utilizing T/TPU tools.

Observation emerged as the primary research method, offering a nuanced understanding of the neighborhood's dynamics. The tactical neighborhood strategy builds on the existing appropriations, forming a foundation for fulfilling a comprehensive neighborhood-level strategy. By building on the existing appropriations, we adopt a tactical and incremental approach to activate available spaces. The toolkit,

comprising a range of low-cost, small-scale interventions tackling the five themes of activity, ecology, access, leisure, and culture, was designed to meet the needs of the residents.

Jacobs likened cities to living organisms and ecosystems, suggesting that buildings, streets, and neighborhoods change and adapt over time in response to human interactions (1961). She urges city planners and designers to observe cities with a naked eye to understand the synergies that create a neighborhood and emphasizes the importance of basic observation tools in understanding how to improve livability in cities (Jacobs, 1961). By aligning future development with existing social structures and respecting the rhythms that define a neighborhood's quality, cities can become more vibrant and sustainable. Reflecting on this methodology, the research highlights the significant impact of small observations. These seemingly insignificant details can inform the creation of spaces tailored to residents' needs, fostering meaningful change in urban environments and guiding neighborhood development based on their inherent strengths.

Although the resident component in such a project is imperative, some limitations in the way interviews were thought out and conducted limited the gathering of data that corroborates the observations documented. Nonetheless, the results paint a comprehensive image of the existing appropriations of available space in Qobayat and do not diminish the overall impact of the findings. The central question of this research "Can we create a system of adaptable hybrid TPUs in Beirut’s vacant spaces to support disadvantaged neighborhoods?" receives a positive response. The proposed steps involve strategic observation, identification of existing hotspots, redirection of observed activities into small, low-cost interventions, and recognition of the impact at both plot

and neighborhood scales. This approach emphasizes the flexibility of T/TPU tools and the neighborhood strategy and its ability to adapt to the changing needs of its users.

Dovey (2016) argues that the progression of temporary and tactical interventions towards more long-term strategic solutions is only limited to contexts of the global north, where tactical measures are intertwined with city plans. In contexts of the global south however, tactical urbanism lies outside the scope of governments. In Beirut specifically, the state has shown very little interest in improving living conditions, while several organizations and institutions have constantly called for the creation of a dialogue concerned with publicness and access to the city's spaces. This thesis recognizes the paradoxical nature of turning what is meant to be short term into permanent or long-term interventions. Instead of interventions that are deployed and celebrated by a limited number of people only to die out shortly afterwards, the value of tactical urbanism is here seen as an urban exploratory tool to test applicability of community-based solutions and response of local users. Therefore, the thesis created a fixed/permanent layer that allows for spontaneous activities to happen on the long-term.

Furthermore, the neighborhood strategy, incorporating both fixed and spontaneous elements, addresses the inherent challenge within Tactical/Temporary Urbanism (T/TU) of lacking a long-term vision. It's crucial to acknowledge the paradoxical nature of tactical urbanism, typically characterized by low-cost interventions lacking long-term foresight, being employed to implement a formalized, enduring strategy. Oswalt argues that for temporary uses to achieve long-term planning goals, space appropriations from the bottom up and spatial specifications from the top down should be combined (2013). It could be argued that the new strategy is not a tactical urbanism strategy because many of the typical limitations of TU, low cost, short

term, and site-specific are bridged by the long-term strategy. However, this bridging allows neighborhoods to adapt to continuous cycles of change while making sure that their needs are met.

Tactical urbanism here is seen less as an intervention, and more as a tool to further understand street-level issues and best practices. In order for TU to shift its impact from plot scale to neighborhood scale, tactical interventions need to be an integral part in the development of larger neighborhood plans. Furthermore, considering the inability of the Municipality of Beirut to address urban challenges in the study area, it is important to think of a facilitator (i.e. the local Non-Governmental Organization) to ensure the balance between responding to spontaneous street-level needs with a sustainable neighborhood scale plan. While long-term planning should be the scope of the state, in Beirut that proves to be difficult due to the state's inability to engage in such dialogues. Therefore, there needs to be a consideration of a different entity that connects the street level issues with a broader neighborhood strategy.

By creating a fixed foundation for spontaneous temporary initiatives to be tested, measured, and refined, tactical urbanism no longer becomes limited by the plot level and starts operating on the neighborhood level. The new strategy is a hybrid temporary urbanism approach that deploys both large-scale and long-term thinking while highlighting and encouraging the countless existing spontaneous appropriations of people. Moving forward, the vision extends to the city scale, proposing a network of park committees collaborating on the development, testing, and reconfiguration of neighborhood-specific strategies. This network, sharing resources and lessons learned, aims to culminate in a diverse and expansive toolkit at the city level. These tools, when

tested in various neighborhoods, hold the potential to introduce unfamiliar outdoor activities, fostering alternative futures for Beirut's urban spaces.

In conclusion, this thesis contributes to the evolving discourse on tactical and temporary urbanism by providing a blueprint for sustained change. It lays the foundation for a resilient and adaptive approach to city-making in Beirut and cities facing similar challenges globally. Finally, it challenges the prevailing belief in the short-lived impact of tactical interventions through a strategy that creates long-lasting transformations in neighborhoods by meticulously observing, testing ideas, and refining them, one space at a time.

APPENDIX

List of case studies

Name/location	*Type*	*Purpose*
Urban hives, Beirut	Kit of parts (prototype)	Reintroduce urban agriculture through modular design in parking lots
Park mobiles, San Francisco	parklet	Extend sidewalk and introduce more plants
Laziza park, Beirut	park	Repurpose heritage space and turn it into a park for the public It also served as a space for people during covid and after the blast
Build a better block, Texas	Deconstructed spaces	Abundance of space and lack of uses in it and city initiatives to revive them
Fosnavag temporary park, Norway	Park	The beginning of a larger plan to transform the port city into a mixed-use area
Miami parklets	parklet	In order to extend the sidewalk and take advantage of the excess of parking spaces in the city
Urbhang, Beirut/ Barcelona	Movable structures	In order to diversify the social activities happening at downtown and to provide more flexible outdoor spaces
Beirut riverless	reforestation	To reach the full reforestation of Beirut riverbanks and other lots in the city slowly and incrementally
Shared spaces program, San Francisco	Policy	The permanent version of the program will carry forward the streamlined permit process; encourage arts & culture, and better balance commercial activities with public space and transportation demands of the recovering economy.
Cesped mayor plaza, Madrid	Temporary Plaza	Celebrate 40th anniversary of the plaza with deploying a huge field of sot for 2 days
Antwerp Belgium	Temporary park	A temporary park as a first phase in the city's plan to increase public spaces
Postman square, Wisconson	Social experiment	The city of Milwaukee had planned permanent improvements to the square and the streets passing by it. Then obtained permission to

		implement a temporary urbanism experiment that guides the city's plans.
Urban flower field, Minnesota	Transitional ecology	Creating a temporary garden that can serve as a field site for urban ecology research and as an inspirational public space without complicating future development.
Granby park, Dublin	Temporary Park	Failure of social housing project by the city lead an organization to be formed to direct the creation of a temporary park on the vacant lot
Chile parklets	parklet	The failure of a top-down 15-year masterplan led various actors to collaborate on a series on temporary projects. The city's focus has been to create more livable spaces

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