

EUROPEAN SLUMS

THE IMPROVEMENT OF SUBSTANDARD HOUSING
FOR VULNERABLE URBAN DWELLERS IN MARSEILLE



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Introduction

AN UNEXPECTED PLACE

Gypsies and Roma issue has been receiving a specific social attention in our century. During history, their existence has always raised distrust and hostility, resulting in stereotypes which undermine a real knowledge about them and cause rejection by every other societies. They are hardly accepted even in Romania and Bulgaria, the main countries that give them a nationality. In this last decade medias have started to talk about their ethnic status, finally recognizing that they are European citizens who have rights, even if they are placed out of the wage society. In 2012 Europe Union have ordered political/social actions against their discrimination by all its members, asking to respect their basic human rights and preserve their culture.

However, assuming Roma community as an isolated scenario does not help to solve the problem of their marginalization, because a strict view between included/excluded causes that the different faces of their poorness, with their underground mechanisms and places, are concealed to the governmental apparatus. This provokes the hiding of the indecent conditions of living of Roma, seen as autonomous in their extreme poverty, without considering the processes that lead to its manifestation and its relationship with the society around.

Achitectes Sans Frontières gave me the opportunity to live an immersive experience within the field of Roma slums in Marseille. I was close to local communities of Roma not just by being a critical observer, but also exchanging part of their everyday life, acquiring a local informal knowledge about them, usually missed in the common statistics made at national level. Facing such environment, I discovered a profoundly contemporary complexity of the city, that is today is a patchwork of different flows of cultures. Marseille cosmopolitan dimension is reflected by networks, movements and ephemeral architectures, which deals with problems of social and spatial justice. It is an intangible reality until you are not inside of it, in which spontaneous refuges of Roma “homeless” take shape, intertwining in a marginal way with the official city.

France policy toward Roma “illegal settlements” is considered the harshest in Europe. Due to repeated attacks of expulsion, these immigrants are in a continuous situation of mobility and housing instability, with all the involved consequences affecting their basic human needs. In terms of time, their life is undefined and precarious, swinging from few days until many years in the same occupied site: period in which they create links with the surrounding environment, radically attacked by the standard political procedure without any possibility of escape. The common think is that it is normal for them to be nomads, but it is not true: they are forced to move, and they need to move

to survive in a “stifling” environment. Roma communities got to redefine the way in which “home” takes form and develops. Through samples of photos and interviews, I would like to share how these people reinvent and adapt themselves in pre-established spaces, demonstrating brilliant ability in reviving not used old buildings and remarkable ability to feel chez soi, anywhere and nowhere.

In this analysis, I take up the need for a critical reflection on the instruments of ASF project within the “bidonvilles” of Marseille. Started in 2016, together with many other grass-roots organizations pledging for an inclusive project of Roma, their aim is to improve living conditions in the bad environment of the informal settlements. The dimension of actions which they implement follows a general conservative scheme, sometimes static in relation to the dynamic conditions of Roma communities. Nevertheless, their approach is coherent, because still dealing with the hard institutional arrangements, which sometimes give hints of prospect, but regret just after. Unfortunately, the official city is going through a time of troubles in the housing provision and the governmental apparatus are demanded of big financial requests.

ASF action system has already been partially experimented: since January 2018 they have obtained an agreement with the local Prefecture to experiment a temporary stabilisation of two main Roma settlements, asking for two years of continuity to apply the inclusive path-

way made up with the other partner associations. Starting from the analysis of their work, I want to argue the possibility of rediscovering «a vision that privileges the indeterminacy of processes, heterogeneity, difference», giving one chance to Roma skills in surviving through their improvisation, including them since the design process.

As an architect, the challenge I feel called by Roma people is to respond to their demand to be driven in their complex dwelling “in the intersection between mobility, home and belonging from a perspective of no return”. Until now, they try to be “invisible”: it is their only way to save their few stuffs owned. The awareness I growth in my expertise of them, push me in wanting to make visible the immaterial characteristics of their social dimension: a fascinating sustainable network, that recycles and reuses spaces and objects kept from the waste of French society.

In these conditions of uncertainty, I cannot do forecast and consequently, I can only suggest a version of what could be an answer of designing, wishing a policy that will not imply forced expulsion forever.

Now, I propose a progressive project that involves existing actors, experimenting scenarios that could work within the action of its implementation and its development in this referred context. For this envision, I chose the laboratory of “Saint Antoine”: this squat has been designated by local organizations, in agreement with the Prefecture, as suitable to experiment the inclusive pathway

project, already started with most of the families in the settlement since 2017.

It is necessary to make it more dignified and functional in terms of habitability. The problem is that the fluctuating institutional provisions, despite the agreement and the financial grants invested for the project, do not allow a fixed and "stable" design response. Last one, an afterthought that concerns the guarantee of non-expulsion on the specific site of Saint Antoine, due to new planning intentions for the nearby train station. Nevertheless, it is the custom approach by the local Prefecture, that is why the coordination of the global inclusive project suffers from the beginning continuous modifications and arrangements to follow the institutional uncertainties, forcing ASF to continue in pledging for the stabilisation of slums.

Actual conditions led me to consider variable conditions of response, searching for a compromise between the basic housing needs of Roma communities and the governmental pretensions in Marseille. In Saint Antoine squat I tried to strengthen the mechanisms of connection with a pre-existing spatial structure, in which the human adaptation struggles to fit. Bearing in mind its temporal transience, within the juridical limits of tolerance, because certainly not destined to take root forever.

The reasoning starts from the assumption that the spatial appropriation by Roma families is already itself a first exercise of agency: giving a shape to one's space of existence, allows them to develop their own identity in the host

context. Therefore, it is fundamental to not deprive them of this possibility and do not impose their pre-established habitats on them: examples proposal of shelter modules, as well as expensive, were unsuccessful answers because designed by professional following standards of living, in which the "guests", of different culture and habits, could not adapt to.

For this reason, it seems sufficient to provide them with an easy-assembling structure which guides in a conscious spatial appropriation, enhancing the connections for a maximum profitability of the environment, continuing to leave them adapting freely as they already do. A parallel rehabilitation of habitats and people, capable of creating a dynamic internal cycle of self-help, which can make these people autonomous in their poverty. We must accept that we cannot make them all rich in an apartment: only some of them manage to really fit into the mechanisms of the wage society.

Equally, in relation to the socio-political situation, trudging solutions only by expelling informal settlements each time that they are recreated, the concepts of "stability" and "temporariness" cannot here be taken strictly as antipodes of meaning. This consideration reflects in part the changing dynamics of Roma lifestyle, which by cultural choice admits a primitive survival tactic, recovering, reusing and adapting to the no-Gypsy surrounding environment. An approach not shared by conventions of the "host" society, that for this reason

considers them "parasites".

I propose an accompanying project that starts from the assumptions of ASF strategy, responding to the basic human needs and repairing the harmful factors of the habitat. Reinforced because it aims to form a dynamic cycle of flows, between people and the environment, that makes these people capable of responding autonomously to situations of stall in poverty.

Concretely, it is the insertion of an easy assembling structure, based on non-univocal functions and not pre-determined, that guides the inhabitants to profit properly of the habitat, whit the opportunities that it can offer. It goes to one side to approach the existing building, increasing its connective tissue with more comfortable space and shaped thinking of programmatic elements to allow water collection and food cultivation; on the other hand, it is internally inserted in its big unused spaces, giving it shapes and revitalizing their usage by the community. These two levels of transformation, are fostered by new functional rooms, chosen between the contingent private spaces in order to become shared rooms for their daily activities.

The interior modules are mainly given to the community to be new private family units, trying to avoid further unconscious damages to the building provoked by Roma in searching more space for moving and hosting new families within the site.

Along with the self-promoted skin by the inhabitants, it is necessary to medi-

ate by a professional advice the coating for the external modules. Any longer it works as visual barrier which can make the community less exposed towards the adjacent train station: the plan of redevelopment of this railway area is stalling the concessions of stabilisation toward Saint Antoine site, despite the promise of non-expulsion by the Prefecture. As usual, the institutional arrangement is to eradicate the squat, without seeing or searching for any resolute profit for the city.

If we keep this skin as an opportunity of cultural expression, it could become a declaration of appropriation by the official city. Its beauty can be reached through reused materials, overcoming the stereotypes of slums bad appearance and being an experimentation as it happens in the occasionally events of the city, such as expo, made by temporary light constructions.

As well, the future evacuation of the site and its deconstruction will be then considered as a reinsert in the circular economy network of materials, popular pulled in France. Marseille offers many possibilities of collaborative processes which can led to beautiful products.

For these reasons, here it is just one of many possibilities. It could be a possible future scenario of a never definitive plan, because it is opened to the change by its inhabitants and it is linked to different possibilities of development by various actors.

As Yona Friedman says, these poor communities are already used to improvise every day, demonstrating "from the

bottom” performance of design much more appropriate than those elaborated “from above” by professionals. Then, architects should give to the community concrete tools for understanding dynamics, raise new awareness about their living environment and support community strengthening personal skills empowerment.

Lastly, I want to thank Architectes Sans Frontières for let me access to their findings, precious to be reflective and critical on my personal practice.

Most of the photos are my personal report, taken during my engagement with ASF delegation of Marseille started in October 2018; some images and data come from their collaborative drive folder; external references are equally mentioned in the captions.

The diptychs I propose are flashes of opposite statement that emerges in the same place in the same time, placing the multi-faceted dimension of Roma reality in the void between them.

This thesis is the product of a circular process between my situated experience and its theoretical elaboration, without claiming to be an exhaustive documentary, but trying to highlight questions emerged from the field, which lead me to my architectural response.



▲
“VIEUX PORT” OF MARSEILLE

The Roma Paradigm

1

A EUROPEAN PROFILE

Roma and Gypsies represent many different communities with different names. All of them descend from a first group of elders, that in the fourteenth century moved from India to reach Europe. At that time, it was a nomadic population, also called Bohemians, Gypsies, Saracens, Sinti, Manouches or Traveller. Each one travelled to different regions and continents for centuries, sometimes stopping to settle and putting roots. This led to a diversification of cultural practice between them. In all this, they met astonishment, incomprehension and fear in the European boundaries, attracting attitudes of rejection and extermination. This policy of denial was born from ignorance, promoting bad stereotypes crystallized over the centuries. They were reduced to slavery by the Romanian principalities until the end of the nineteenth century; they were victims of the Nazis in the twentieth. After the collapse of the Soviet System in 1989 they lost the protections they had before. It was not surprising that many of them have searched their fortune in other European countries. They went to Germany, Italy and France, where they are between 15,000 and 20,000, and the half are children. Their number counts the same since 1999.

Today Roma represents the largest European minority, counting 12 million

people. Many are Romanians (between 500,000 and 2.5 million Roma) and Bulgarians (about 700,000). In Romania they represent more than the 10% of the national population. But they are considered “stateless” people, because they are known as Gypsies that are settled in the Eastern countries and, so, the most precarious and rejected part of the population: almost half of them live below the poverty line; they suffer physical and moral violence, racist discrimination and limited access to education and public services, even for working; they are subject to a transitional regime that defines a list of 291 trades they can access for employment, which were only 150 before 2012. However, this regime is much less favourable for them than to the other EU citizens who can work freely in each member state, without specific administrative procedures.

Then, these Roma are not travellers or nomads. They are a sedentary population with Romanian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Serbian or Croatian nationality. Basically, they are economic migrants like many others, like Italians were in the past. The proof is that the emigration rate is the same for Roma and Romanian (about 10%). The Roma are not detached people.

Roma and Gypsies communities have developed their culture throughout European lands even before Europe existed. They are “European citizens par excellence”, expressing an international dimension as a population of minority living in many member states of the

Union. They are un mosaic of different communities that needs to be considered together to be understood. It was the First World Congress in 1971, when representative people of each community of Roma, Gypsies, Manush, the eastern branches of Doms and Loms, etc., met together and introduced themselves as Roma group, to Europe and worldwide, for political and practical reasons. It was created the International Romani Union and the term Roma was legitimized from a political point of view, without forgetting their internal diversity. The whole ensemble can be called Gypsy in English, Tsiganes in French, Zingari in Italian. In the Romani language there is not a term to call all them together. So, there is a sociologic legitimisation in using the term Gypsy respecting the group diversity. In this text I will use the terms Roma and Gypsies, respecting their social diversity and their politic decision.



▲
MARIE
IS THE 9TH OF 11 SONS,
"HERMITAGE" SLUM,
MARSEILLE



▲
NOEL
DOES NOT TRUST IN THE GAGÉ (NON-ROMA),
"HERMITAGE" SLUM,
MARSEILLE

MORE EFFORTS FROM EU

Roma international dimension is the starting point for all considerations and actions that are carried out by governmental bodies, in order to promote an international perspective in the effort for their integration.

It was the 1989 when there was the first resolution supporting Roma and Gypsy culture: it pleads the school provision for Roma and Gypsy children and recognizes their language and culture as part of the European heritage, with its presence since more than 500 years ago.

On April 5, 2011 the EU communicated the European Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, asking to all the members to improve the situation of the 12 million of people facing intolerance, discrimination and exclusion in their everyday life. This measure aims to ensure their access to the four key fields of education, employment, health and housing, with an adequate answer to their exclusion up to 2020.

The European Commission has highlighted in its report on the "Evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020" the importance to engage Roma communities in the issues affecting themselves, with the development of processes of social inclusion. Their participation since the early decisional stages of the projects can help to better identify

financial priorities. Furthermore, the interaction created at the community level can help fostering relations within the community members and ease tensions between Roma and not-Roma; then, contributing in eliminating discriminatory behavior.

Moreover, the EU encourages each member state to add actions in the field of culture, following the objectives to protect the widely culture of Roma on the way to disappear, promoting knowledge and changing attitude towards them.

Anyway, efficient actions for Roma integration are not yet systematically in place, neither they are key national priorities. Eurocities in 2017 published a study about the situation of Roma in Europe, based on 23 sampling cities. What seems most striking is their spatial manifestation through the urban areas. It does not exist an official European map of Roma informal settlements, but different situated sources construct a united portrait of reference.

Recent years gather grim chronicles from FINLAND where the police dismantled illegal camps of Roma almost daily, to DENMARK, where persists an ever-growing preoccupation by the government for the increasing illegal settlements near Copenhagen. In SWEDEN and UKRAINE dramatic attack by neofascists groups leaves dead Roma people in their own settlement.

In ITALY, according to the 2017 Annual Report by "Association 21 July", Roma are counted between 120.000 and 180.000 persone, whose the half has

the Italian citizenship. «Italy has the appellation "the Country of Roma camp" because in the last twenty years it is the nation most committed in the design, construction and management of outdoor areas where ethnic communities can be segregated». 26000 people live in formal and informal settlements, micro-level sites and refugee centers: "a perverse system of camps".

In the UNITED KINGDOM there are several Roma camps not all illegals: some are authorized by local governmental apparatus and supplied with water, electricity, waste collection services and so on. For example, in Essex County, there are 12 legal permanent settlements against 75 illegals, since 2016 until today.

FRANCE policy is judged by BBC the harshest within the European countries: its systematic eradications of Roma illegal settlements only moves the localisation of temporary sites within the national boundary, without reducing the amount of Roma people in the territory despite their continuous deportation.



▲
ROMA FAMILIES IN THE SACILE-BONFADINI TEMPORARY RECEPTION
CENTRE (CAT),
MILANO,
PHOTOS OF THE PROJECT «MIGRAZIONI PER ERSILIA»,
BY ASF ITALIA



▲
ROMA FAMILIES IN THE SACILE-BONFADINI TEMPORARY
RECEPTION CENTRE (CAT),
MILANO,
PHOTOS OF THE PROJECT «MIGRAZIONI PER ERSILIA»,
BY ASF ITALIA

DEALING WITH CLICHÉS

In order to achieve Roma integration, it is necessary to break down the imagery around them, based on fixed representations and stereotypes. These prejudices have an instrumental impact in their life: it has created the primary vector of knowledge about them, that prompts all the other people, everywhere, to already categorize Roma with general opinions about their community. There are two mainly caricatures that summarize their idealisation: one is the threatening immigrant, the steady repulsive attitude toward them; the other is the ambiguous figure of the folkloristic Gypsy, that is sometimes attractive for its mythical vision. The Gypsy is the free artist, whose freedom is appreciated because related to the arts of their folklore, between music, dance and cirque. But this one is the good one because he doesn't exist, it is a myth.

The reality of Roma population is made by social and personal difficulties, facing every day a stranger context, an environment constructed by a policy that never defines who they are, but says how they should be. Stereotypes create rejection and fallback of their identity, radicalising differences and social division.

Here an extract from the Circular of the 2012 by the Departmental Council of Bouches-du-Rhône, with three of the most common clichés labelled to the

Roma:

1: THEY ARE NOMADS BY THEIR NATURE

The anthropologist Martin Olivera, member of the European Observatory Urba-rom, tells the story behind this myth:

"There are not nomadic Roma or Gypsies. There is only a small minority of groups who have a tradition of seasonal mobility, over small distances and always from a point of attachment, linked to their work: collecting iron, music... But most of them are sedentary."

The Roma sociologist Nicolae Gheorghe said that just recently the Roma are defined "nomads":

"In the 1930s, the Soviet Union started a prohibition to Roma artisans and their families that used to travel across the country searching for work. The Soviet authorities used the term "nomads" to justify their repression. In the 1950s, this label was adopted throughout Central and Eastern Europe."

Martin Olivera continues:

"The eternal wandering Roma is a pure political construction. This image was shaped by the elites of the XIX century, when was born the concept of national identity: linked to the idea of autochthony and national descent. In opposition, the Roma, called Gypsies at the time, were designated as foreigners, those "who are not like us". It did not matter if they were settled in France since the fifteenth century.

Concerning the idea related to their population, many Roma defined them-

selves first by their belonging to a country or the place of origin place rather than to a supranational minority that is not well defined. "A Roma from Transylvania will not feel particularly close to 'a gypsy from Perpignan'"

2: THEY PILE UP IN THE SLUMS

The ideal of life for Roma is not to pile up all the people in a slum. Neither for tradition they camp in urban spots. It is not different in Romania or Bulgaria than in France. Slums are the result of their precariousness. Malik Salemkour, Vice President of the League of Human Rights and co-founder of Romeurope said: "Roma are in slum because they have no other place to go. Their ideal of life is not to build Roma buildings: they aspire to disperse, settle down and get out of stigmatization." Grouping is a reflex of mutual research for aid and security: "There is a strong family culture among the Roma, but no more than in the case of Chinese or African migrants, without the latter mentioning clanism".

3. THEY ARE ALL CHICKEN THIEVES

Or stealers of copper cables. Glaring example was in 2010 by Nicola Sarkozy, who erected as national priority the "problems posed by the behaviour of some Gypsies and Roma"; or the French Ministry of the Interior that notified impressive statistics about the "delinquency involving Romanian citizens", meaning the Roma.

Only the associations answer to their precariousness and stigmatisation.

Therefore, migrant slum dwellers develop a parallel economy made by begging, undeclared work, but also resale of scraps of metal, theft and trafficking. Malik Salemkour says that: "A policy of ethnic profile has been built. Obviously, when you create a crime of begging and arrest a family that looks like Roma, the figure is created."

Unorganized, it is a delinquency of survival and which "concerns material goods, almost never actions against people" (Prosecutor Dallest participating in the round table with the Prefecture of Marseille in July, 2012). It has nothing to do with organized networks. Roma are not a mafia.



DAVID, ALIN, LUISA
ARE PROUD OF THEIR HAND-CRAFTED LANTERN
"CAZEMAJOU I" SQUAT,
MARSEILLE



RECOVERING OF METAL SCRAPS,
"CAZEMAJOU I" SQUAT,
MARSEILLE

Marseille
Flipside

2

MIGRANTS PATH

Owing to its crossroads location, Marseille is known as a gateway city. The obsessive foreigner presence has deeply remarked the local culture with different extraordinary weaves. In French imagery, it holds a special place, thanks to its fast ability to absorb the continuous migrant attendance.

Meanwhile it is seen as a migrant city, Marseille is perceived as an unsafe place. "Port-city, open to all races, arrival and transit area, from the novels to the cinema, it is the city "du milieu", of drugs and prostitution". In the collective subconscious, the two phenomena of danger and immigration seem naturally associated, like a superposition of representations matching further different realities.

In the early 1900s Marseille was Italian, with a portrait of the city unvalued by the "bully boys" on strike on the port, or the thugs who had the power of the city center between the two world wars. Today, the stereotypes are replaced by Arabic people, with an estimation of the 40% of Marseille population that is now Muslim. Mostly, they are victim of some distorting reinterpretation of the reality, following the increasing fear which comes from the terroristic attacks happened throughout France.

Anyway, the portrait is not so simple, because it is forgotten the central role of the port of Marseille, the hub of the

Mediterranean migration as a transit zone. Visible remains are left by millions of migrants that passed fast through the territory: the city has been affected by many immigrants that had not the purpose to stay. There are settlements of foreigners that want to stop in a long-term perspective contributing in developing the city; but the major wave of temporary immigrants is only searching for a refuge. Both in one and in the other cases, they are communities pushed to emigrate for the degradation of the economic situation in their countries of origin. We must compare them, because they share the same spaces, same reception areas, same streets, same buildings.

Most of migrants that cross the city are elusive, because they are mainly on the move. Then, statistics can have only a marginal value concerning them, but we cannot avoid taking in consideration these people because even their presence suggest part of the evolution of the city, enabling us to define their trails broadly.

We cannot talk about all them in the same way, neither knowing them from the same sources.

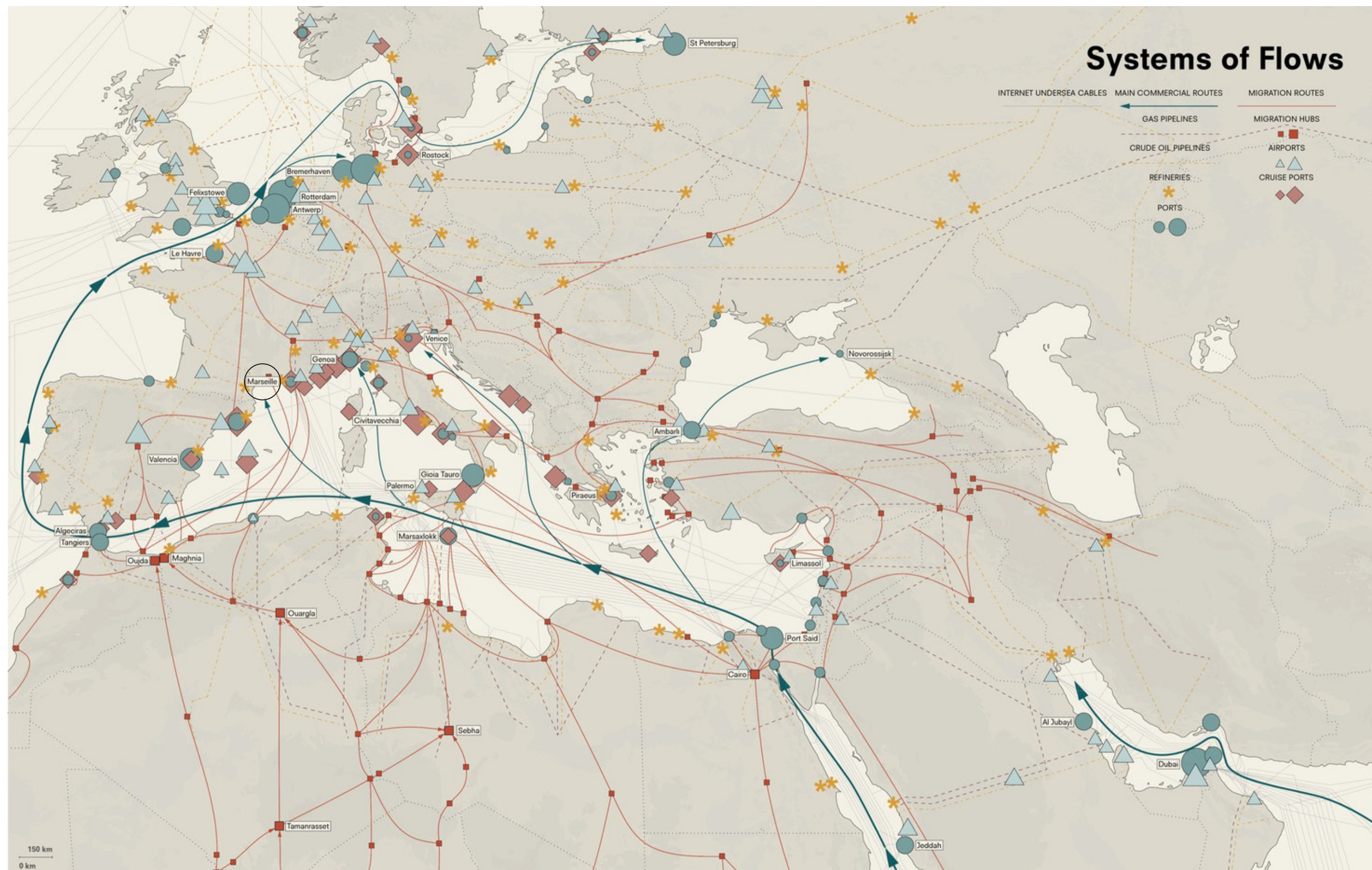
As it happens for many cities, Roma and Gypsies passage is more about their journey than leaving traces. Like their music, their dance, their lifestyle, Gypsies have a culture of movement, totally different from the other communities: they do not build cities or monuments; they are a kind of providers of services for the other people around them. They do not leave products that can clearly

tell their history: they base their culture on the oral transmission, not having any tangible archive containing information even for themselves. Their culture appears through their social relations, language and other practice that are exposed to what the other people perceive from outside.

A first group of Roma was spotted in Marseille in the 1996, in Bellevue Park. These new families settled where they could build makeshift shelters. People called them "Yougos", presuming their origin, as the result of displacement of the ex-Yugoslavia. They had often aggressive behavior, they had a weird dress style, they did not know French language. They were immediately classified as delinquents. Mothers holding children asking for charity in the corners of streets contributed to fulfil a general feeling of hostility and mistrust for them. Before the 2007, French governance managed the situation ordering their expulsion when founded in illegally situations. They were regularly brought to the detention center of Marseille and released after a few days. Minors without family head could not be detained or abandoned: it was not legally allowed to expel them, so the police increased checks and intimidations. No one country from the former Yugoslavia recognized and accepted them.

On 1 January 2007, Bulgaria and Romania joined the European Union. Then, the Roma, mainly of Romanian or Bulgarian nationality, acquired the principle of free movement and are no longer expelled after three months. For their

transitional regime, it is forbidden to Roma to work without authorization, but the allowed operations are very limiting. These families are neither expelled nor regularizable, so the management of their situation becomes impossible. Roma "squat" empty buildings, occupy abandoned areas, marshes, settled in makeshift huts made from materials recovered from streets, that are called "bidonville" in French, "slum" in English. They are expelled without any alternative solution, over and over again.



▲
MEDITERRANEAN SYSTEM OF FLOWS
IN "PALERMO ATLAS" BY OMA,
source: www.oma.eu



▲
LIGHTED,
VIEW OF "FRAIS VALLON" SLUM,
MARSEILLE



▲
HIDED,
VIEW OF "FRAIS VALLON" SLUM,
MARSEILLE



▲
SETTLED,
VIEW FROM THE BIDONVILLE "FRAIS VALLON",
MARSEILLE



▲
HOSTED
VIEW FROM THE BIDONVILLE "FRAIS VALLON",
MARSEILLE

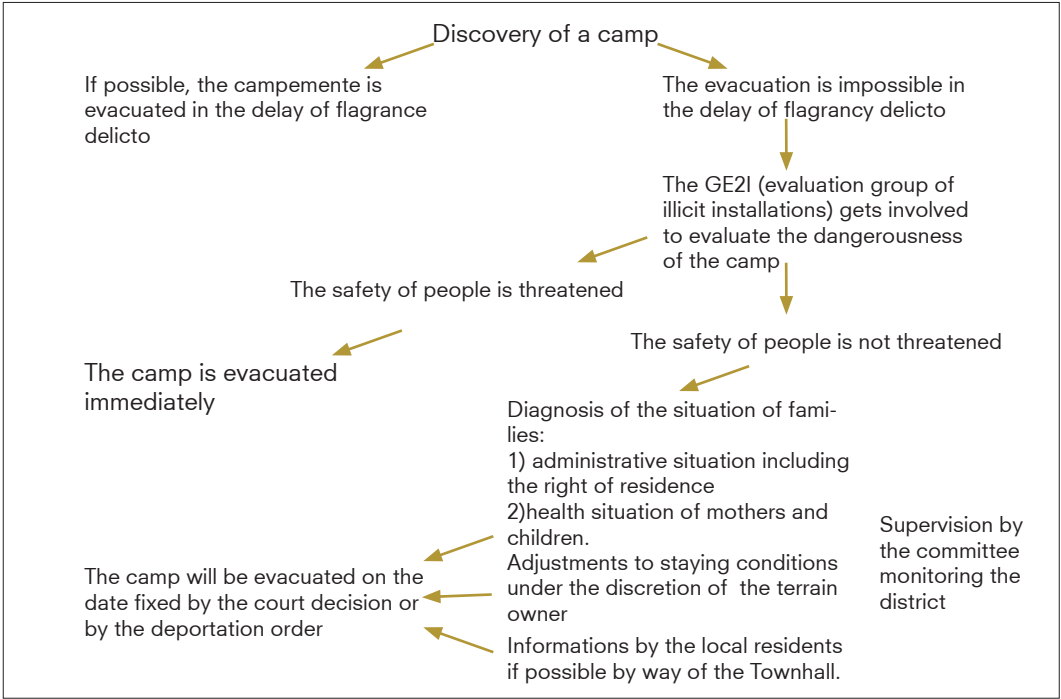
A DWELLING ARENA

The city calls the Roma as much as it rejects them. In 2012 the strategy adopted under the request of the Prefecture is completely repressive with repetitive expulsions, often applied with physical violence despite the same document requires a soften approach of anticipation and support for the people involved.

The municipal, prefectural or departmental administration are still reluctant to adopt the legal European measures to protect discriminated marginalised people, which includes Roma community. The custom is outdated and refuse to adopt supportive solutions, with a neutral verdict which does not consider the point of view from Roma families. The governmental representatives do not know what it means being poor and not having a home. They avoid the problem without ever achieving a real solution. Then, it is nothing more than common sense that people who do not know where to go will settle elsewhere at some point. The pretext of the municipality is that it does not want to see the develop of a Gypsy Town of Marseille. Partly, this due to Roma acts of appropriation of spaces and buildings that do not belong to them. The concept is that "squatting is living a dwelling without the consent of the owner", then in the political ideology these situations are seen as "illegal settlements". This

definition does not consider the nature of squatting itself, that is to occupy spaces during a time in which there are no plan by official architectural projects. Than, like Doron said, this places of "transgression are not created by act of destruction, but by suspension of new plans". Roma communities fill spaces that in architectural speech we call "non-places", "urban voids", "derelict areas", referring to the empty unused zones of the urban environment. As other categories of homeless and squatters, they take private or public "dead" places revitalizing them with new social configurations, assuming both moral and practical value. In some way, it can be considered already as a beginning of integration in the territory, born spontaneously despite it is not legalized: by their collective action of appropriation, they transform an element of the host country with themes of their migratory experience, creating a reinterpreted mixed product of nowadays. These zones were crack in the city; now, with an informal semi-permanent arrangement, they establish links with the surrounding social context. Regularly broken by a story of evacuation. The continuous threat of being dismantled is the key to understand the intrinsic feature of Roma settlement and their situated identity. Roma families leave their misery refuges to settle in another marginalised space, waiting for being expelled again. Then, what does it mean for Roma to dwell in this forced movement? Each time it can be a different history, but surely it persists

►
STITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS,
SCHEME N.1 P.6 IN "PROBLÉMATIQUE ROM
DANS LES BOUCHES-DU-RHONE: L'ÉTAT PRÉCISE
SA POSITION À L'OCCASION DE LA 2ÈME TABLE
RONDE SUR LE SUJET"
26 AUGUST 2012



▲
MADAME AND MONSIEUR M. AND THEIR 4 KIDS
2012-2016
SCHEME IN WWW.ASFFRANCE.ORG: "PLAIDOYER
POUR LA STABILISATION DES BIDONVILLES"



◀
CARRYING-STUFF,
“CAZEMAJOU I” SQUAT,
MARSEILLE

a continuous effort in getting grounded around local possibilities. “Being grounded is not necessarily about being fixed; being mobile is not necessarily about being detached” said Ahmed about homemaking in situated specific contexts related to migration. Then, when the bulldozer attacks their refuge, it also breaks their attachments, their habits in the present, including their bonds with schooling, working, helping organizations and so on. Even if they do not have in this French territory neither roots nor a childhood home, all the “acts of habitability” they have created around their refuge make them “feeling at home”. With this last sentence I do not want to stress on the immaterial abstraction of the concept of home, because its materiality is even more important in a migrant’s life, with spaces and objects supporting his well-being in the foreign context. In the report by Giorgi and Fasulo about a Moroccan household in Rome, they illustrate how their squatted home affords actions which give a socio-psychological aide in achieving “a sense of stability and the possibility of being active in the host society”. Homemaking means achieving an ontological security in developing an identity in the new context, transforming the appropriated environment in a familiar habitation where could exercise a “process of cultural dynamism and renovation”.



▲
OUT OF THE CITY,
VIEW FROM "HEINEKEN" SLUM,
MARSEILLE



▲
IN THE CITY,
VIEW FROM "HEINEKEN" SLUM,
MARSEILLE

INTO THE BIDONVILLES

At this point, the portrait is full of lessons about the imagery made by external authors, but nothing really teaches about these people who are their object.

What is the situation in the field?

My vision is based on the places I personally attended in the ground of Roma communities in Marseille. The area gathers almost 800 people living in about 30 slums. These settlements spread through the city center and in the outlying districts, profiting from warehouses, industrial wastelands, old hangars... They have created a parallel stratification of the city which results from their movements of construction/deconstruction within the official one. Key points of an invisible net, they share a collective effort in finding and transforming places through adverse conditions. Mostly they squat abandoned buildings; others chose the street, constructing their own shack under highway bridges or next to rail tracks. Someone is "richer" and settle with his caravan. Roma use to build with resources they found in the waste of the territory. They show smart skills in reusing thrown materials, knowing how to combine them with an existing structure and how to adapt under various conditions. Many of them have a self-expertise in construction field.

More than simply migrant territories,

they are carny spaces which work as proper little villages.

In their system, family is the base of the community, the cell unit ensuring help and protection to the single person. It is linked to more family units by their bloodline and it is therefore possible to extend it by the married family.

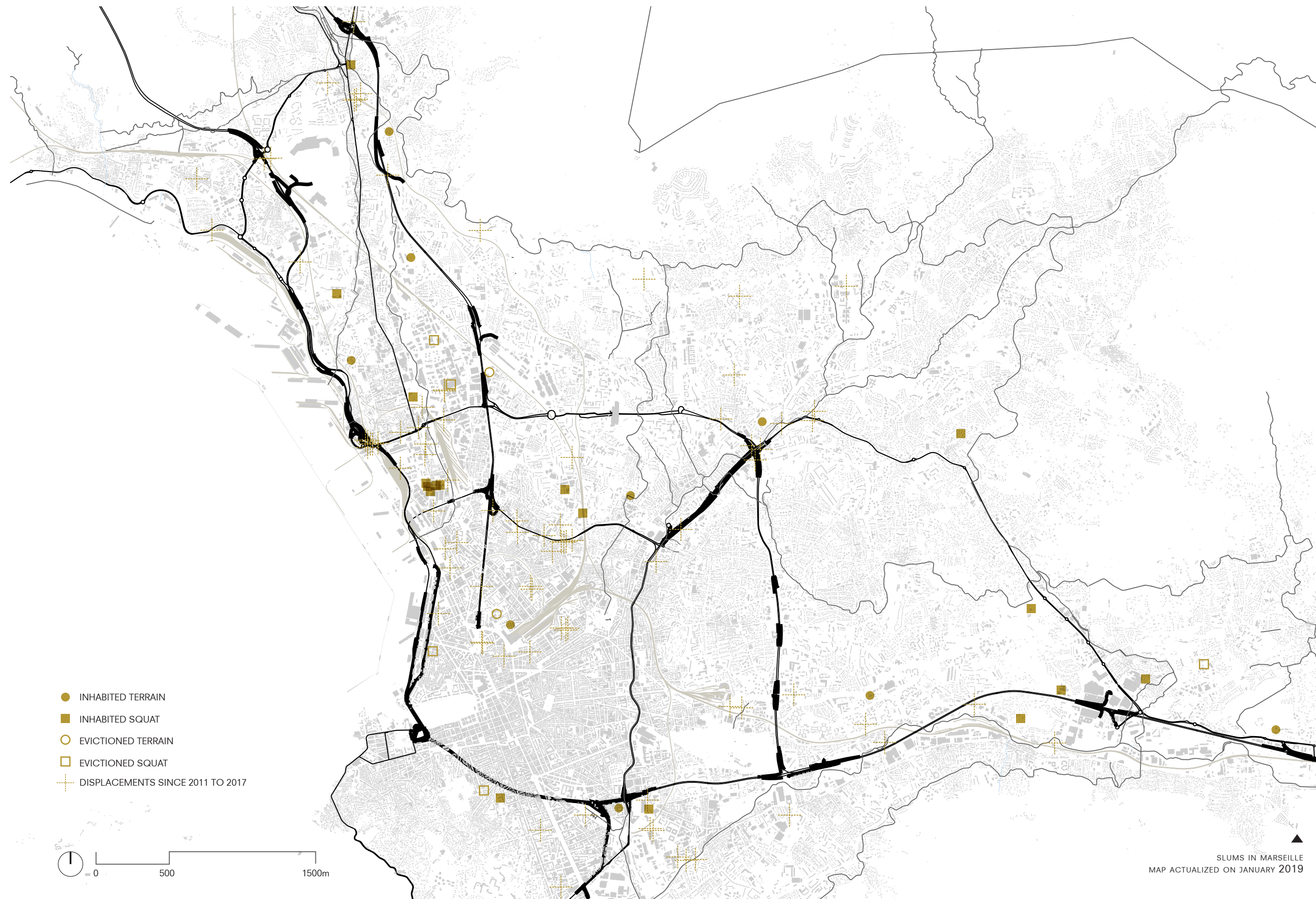
Then, the occupation of one site is shared between private family use and collective use. In the common area families cook, put their clothes to dry, store furniture and different kind of objects. They sit together, watching their children playing and sharing their collective identity. Under the sight of the community there are their family rooms, or better their "home".

Stepping into one of the huts, you are surrounded by decoration made by any kind of textile which can work as cushion: tapestry and curtains on the walls, carpets on the floor. They are easily movable, knowing that the expulsion will arrive one day: then the decoration could simply be transported and placed in the next camp, following Roma punctuated temporality.

Each time their home takes place through squatting a space and furnishing that space: the Roma create their familiar, domestic environment aiming to "facilitate" its actual life. The home-making process consists in composing recovered objects that remind personal imagery, as a connection between their old life and the new context, with objects that can support them in applying routine and practices embodied in themselves.

►
TROUGH,
"FRAIS VALLON" SLUM,
MARSEILLE





Shacks, Caravans

1/4



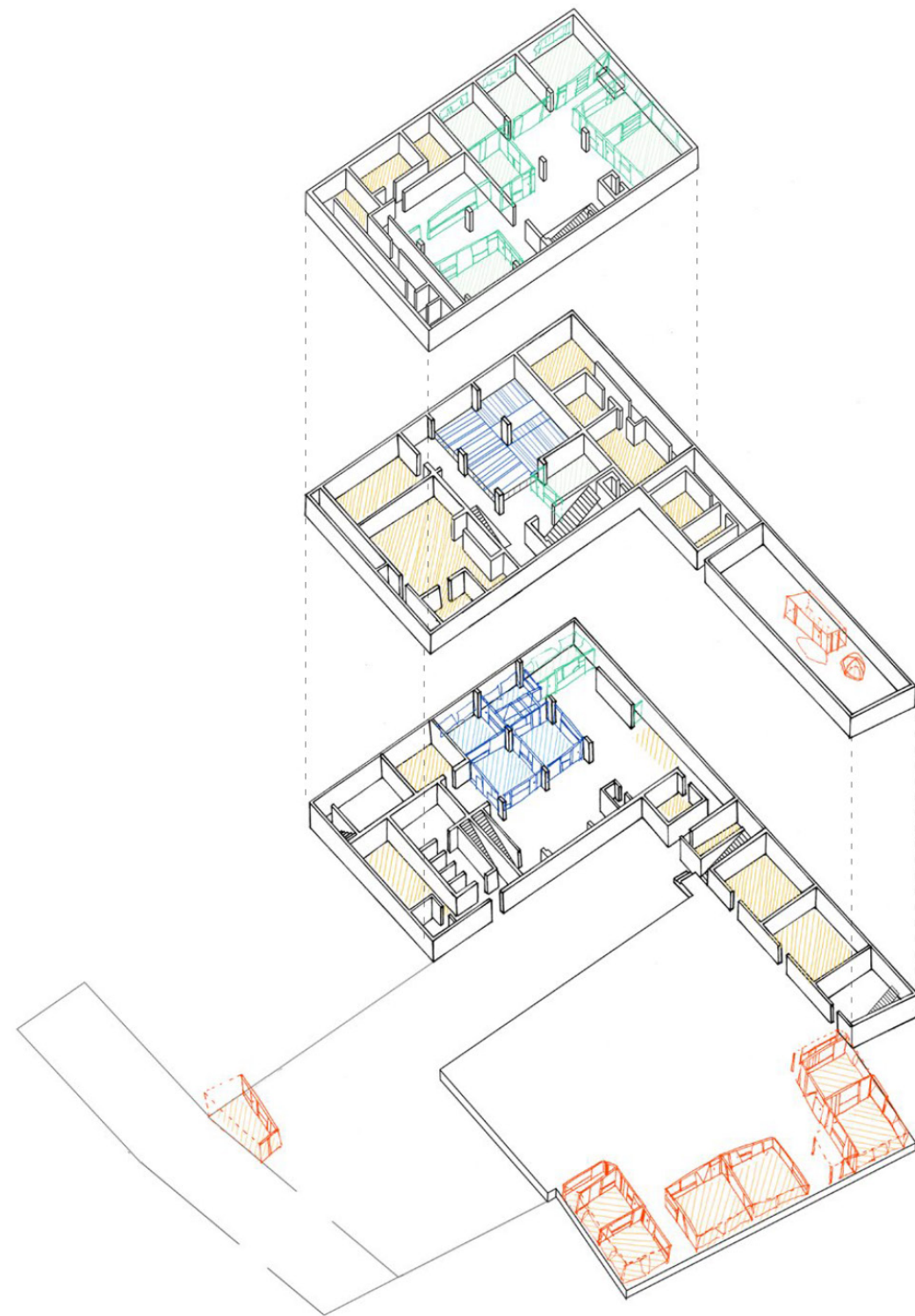
Squats

3/4

SLUMS PROFILES,
MARSEILLE

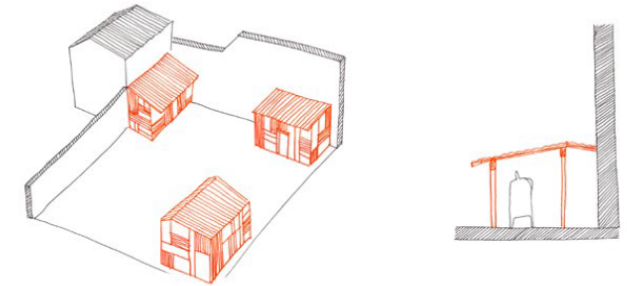


MIXTURES OF SHAPES,
MARSEILLE

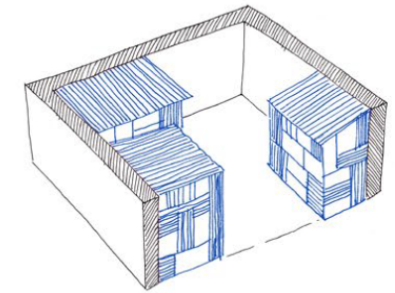


IMPLANTATION IN AN EXISTING BUILDING BY ROMA,
"CAZEMAJOU I",
MARSEILLE,
DRAWING BY ENSA PARIS BELLEVILLE STUDENTS

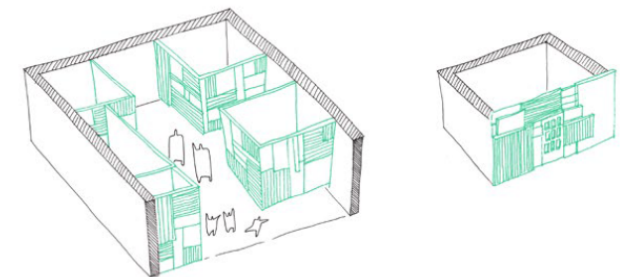
TYPE 1
Outdoor shack self-built



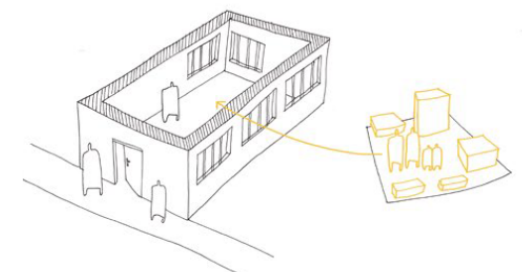
TYPE 2
Indoor shack self-built



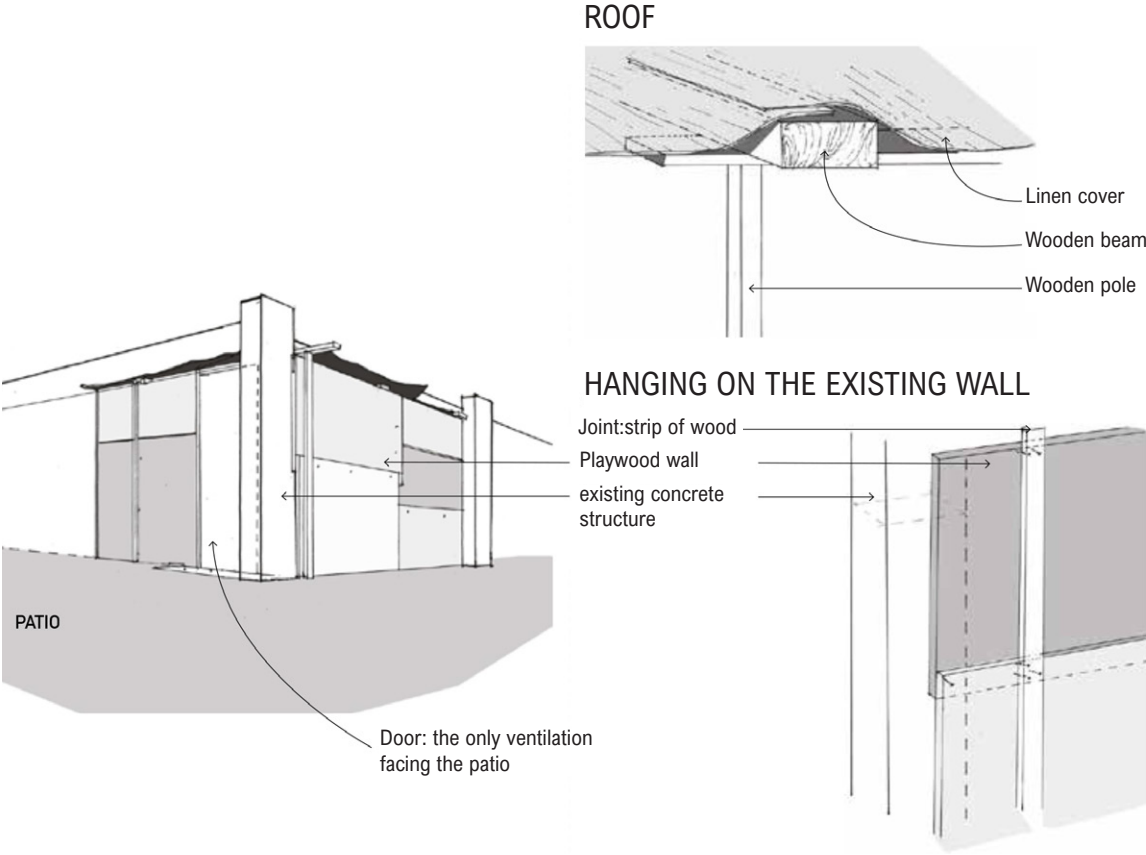
TYPE 3
Enclosures added to the
existing building



TYPE 3
Pre-existing room



TYPOLOGIES OF IMPLANTATION,
"CAZEMAJOU I",
MARSEILLE,
DRAWING BY ENSA PARIS BELLEVILLE STUDENTS



▲
CONSTRUCTION DETAILS,
"CAZEMAJOU I",
MARSEILLE,
DRAWING BY ENSA PARIS BELLEVILLE STUDENTS



▲
SHARED COURTYARD
WITH SHACKS SELF-BUILT,
"CAZEMAJOU I",
MARSEILLE



▲
FAMILY UNIT,
"CAZEMAJOU I",
MARSEILLE,
DRAWING BY ENSA PARIS BELLEVILLE STUDENTS



▲
PRIVATE FAMILY ROOMS,
"CAZEMAJOU I"



▲
MARIANA COOCS FOR HER NIECES,
COURTYARD OF
"CAZEMAJOU I",
MARSEILLE



▲
ORDINARY LIFE,
COURTYARD OF
"CAZEMAJOU I",
MARSEILLE

I faced Roma places for long time, following personal histories like in a daily promenade, in which each person, each group, has lightened their common destiny.

Crossed the beautiful renovated urban area called “Euroméditerranée”, in the same street of “Cazemajou” there are three different sites squatted by Roma, one propping up the other. The smallest one is inhabited by only one extended family, internally split in two factions as a consequence of disputes in the appropriation of that space. I met one group of them, welcomed by Loredana and her two children. She called her husband, Valer, and we went to sit in their little family room, under a roofed open space. Some minutes after, granddad joined us. We talked together in Rumanian, thanks to the intermediary from Medecins du Monde organizations. Otherwise it would be difficult to communicate. Language is the main obstacle they find in France, that blocks them keeping each kind of facility. But they still prefer to stay in Marseille, finding easier here to put money aside although their little daily margin [photo and interview pp.64,65].

After less than one hundred meters, I reached the biggest squat of the street. I passed through a tiny passage among some vans parked in the entrance, used by men to carry the iron scratches collected on the common ground. It seems a little factory floor, particularly well-organized. Straight after, the concrete wall was delighted by colourful clothes hanging to dry, marking the pathway

to reach the raised central floor. Even here is full of recovered materials. Not only iron, but any kind of furniture, assembled together in the open air. Some men enjoy a beer together; some women keep clean the floor taking the water from the common water point; children run around the patio, happy of their liveable place [photos p.66].

The hostility by French citizens around Roma encampments sometimes grew. It is a normal condition of life for Roma living as Gypsies in a no-gypsy context. But when their neighbours, which feel more legitimate to dwell in a place because paying a rent or being owner of their home, do not feel comfortable or “safe” facing Roma settlements, it became a problem. When I went to the site of “la pomme” I could feel a troubled atmosphere. There were few little families in shacks and caravans sharing the same space around a ruined house, only for necessity because they were not united at all: fighting between them with loud screaming; bad smell from excrements; garbage spread all over the ground. After some time, they will have been expelled [photos p.67].

The same fate suffered the squat of Boulevard Capitaine Gèze. The building is very big, good maintained, and the community life is vivid. Some days before the expulsion would happen, rumors have already started to arrive; the association Rencontres Tsiganes tried to negotiate with the courthouse by appealing the law for equal opportunity, but it did not work. The prefecture did not provide any evidence that it would

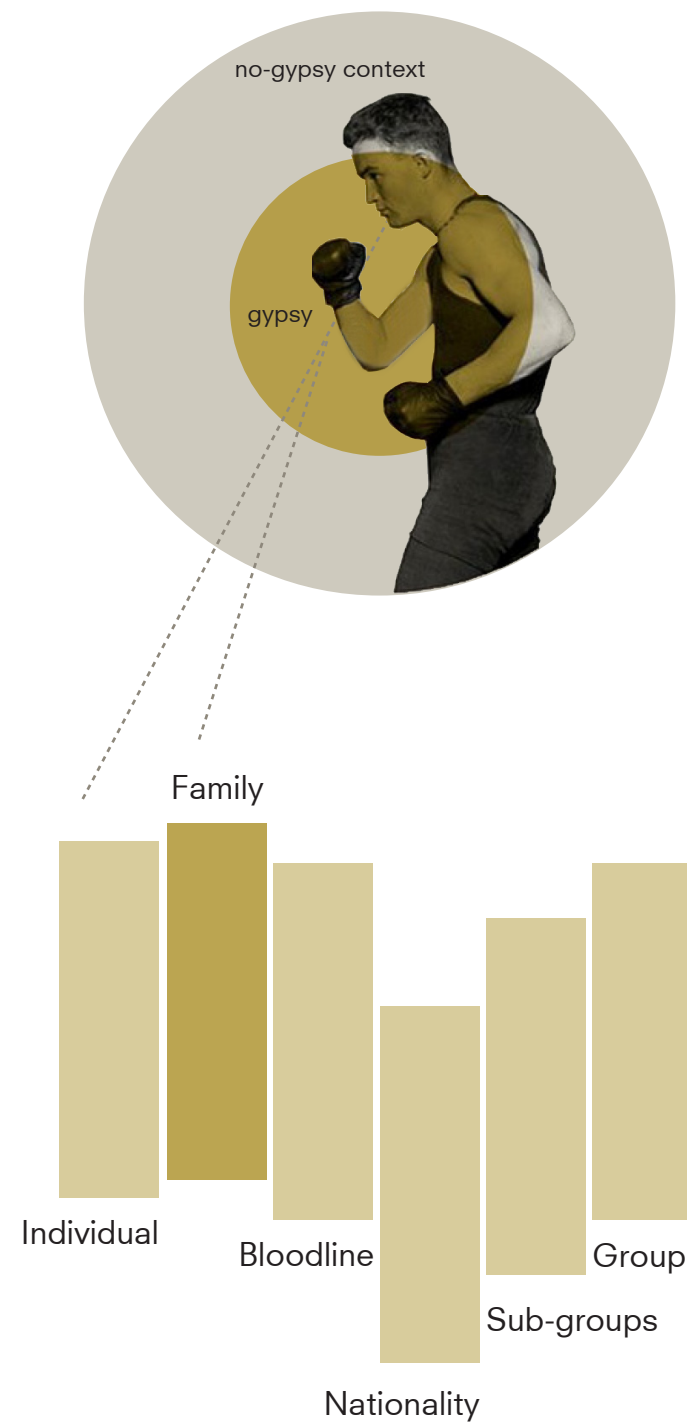
happen by its silence. The 27th October sixty people, living there since more than one year, were expelled by the police in early morning. The building belongs to the City of Marseille, which plans to build the House of Justice and Law [photos p.68].

Another day, after their latest expulsion from different installations in five consecutive days, twenty people of which five children have settle on a field next to the western boundary of Aubagne province. They have been deprived of all their few affairs by the police seizure, landing in this empty ground and literally staying within earth and wild vegetation, nothing else. Asked how it feels to see the huts they build razed to the ground, Daniela shrugs: <<Nothing. I’ve been through this many times>>. Medecins Du Monde provided them with camping tents. They tried to occupy other empty building in the city, but they lost hope considering that each time they were found before could staying 48 hours: the minimum timing range ensured by the law that allows to not be expelled immediately. It was the 17th October. In that moment they were trying to resist few days in this site, waiting to reach the period of the “winter break”, in which the prefecture stops the hunt of the illegal settlements for an act of humanity during the hard winter weather [photos p.69].

Actually, bad weather affects almost always Roma settlements. The first time I stepped the “Hermitage” campsite, I get through a big pool of standing water caused by rain, mixed with mug and

garbage. I could not believe that I was still in France. I could not either believe that they live like these for eight years; They do not change place because they are worried to be expelled and to lose their few stuffs. They do not leave, having nothing rooted in other places. Only sometimes some relatives come to visit them for a while [photos and interview pp.70,71].

After having collected Roma point of view, I understood that what they show outside is only the reflection of the look that is already in the eyes of the beholder. Down through history their profile is constantly built in opposition to the “official” group, as the outsiders, a kind of negative duplicate. Roma are not insensitive to this image, but they are conscious that is easier to comply with it instead of fighting it. <<No photographs!>> was the most common reaction to my attempt in collecting traces of them. Their strategy in being invisible is a choice to survive.



ROMA ETHNIC STATUS
AND GERARCHY



ROMA INVISIBLE NET,
MARSEILLE



▲
THEY SEARCH FOR A BETTER FUTURE,
LOREDANA AND HIS SON,
"CAZEMAJOU II" SQUAT,
MARSEILLE

Interview
to Loredana's family on 08.11.18;
Valer (Loredana's husband) was the
main interlocutor;
translator: Claudia Marchetti of Mediciens
du Monde.

When did you arrive in France?

We are in France since 10 years, have lived on 5 different sites. The first time I did not know under what conditions I was going to turn. My cousin had told him "we are doing well" and that "it was good in France". When we arrived here, I wanted to leave the next day. Then, I found a better place to live and we settled.

How your life in Romania was?

In Romania we lived in a village, in the countryside, in a red brick house, built by Loredana's dad, who is a good handyman. We worked as farmers by cultivating vegetables for us and selling something to the market. But it was not sufficient to live properly. Here, hopefully, we manage to earn about 600 euros a month, against 300 in Romania. Having no expenses to pay here, like taxes or bills, we manage to save money.

What are you missing to live better?

A better hygiene condition with one toilet, better two because one for women and one for men; no rain anymore inside through the roof; and kick the rats.

What is the main obstacle in improving your life?

The language, because not speaking

French I cannot find a job, and no job means no money.

What is your life-goal?

I want to find a job and to live in an apartment here in Marseille with my family. If I could have a job in Romania I would live there normally (eating, improving my housing and living conditions). I would like to go back to Romania, but since there is no job we prefer to stay here. Loredana's older sister lives in an apartment since 4 years. Today she works, not anymore collecting trash and she has good hygiene and living conditions. She told us what we have to do to obtain this: then, claim the rights, register at the employment center and find a job.

What can we help you with?

Making a toilet and a gate to lock the site. The other family next to us has its door, but our door is broken, then other people come inside during the night.



▲
THEY PROFIT FROM WASTED MATERIALS,
"CAZEMAJOU I" SQUAT,
MARSEILLE



▲
THEY PROVOKE INTOLERANCE BY NEIGHBORS,
"LA POMME" SQUAT,
MARSEILLE



▲
THEY CANNOT AVOID EVICTION BY THEIR OWN,
"CAPITAIN GEZE" SQUAT,
MARSEILLE



▲
THEY CAN RESTART FROM SCRATCH,
"AUBAGNE" SLUM,
MARSEILLE



▲
THEY CAN SURVIVE BY INERTIA,
"HERMITAGE" SLUM,
MARSEILLE

Interview
to Christ's family on 15.11.18
Simona (Christ's wife) was the main in-
terlocutor;
translator: Zidonia Rostas (daughter of
one of the inhabitants, living in an apart-
ment)

When did you arrive in France?
We are in France since 7 years. In the beginning we were in a squat, but we were expelled. Then, we moved in this already built settlement, buying it from a bulgarian community which was moving to another site. My family has 10 children; we occupy 3 different shacks.

Do you often go to Romania?
We do not feel necessary going back to Romania because we have nothing there, neither a house. Only last month I went there for my father's death.

What is your life goal?
I want to stay in Marseille, it is better for my family and for my childrens' future, expecially. I would like to live in an apartment, in order to feel more protected,too. A job for my husband and my children going to school.

What is the main obstacle to improve your life?
My children do not go to school now, even if we tried to contact many associations asking for help. I do not go the school directly because I cannot understand french. For the same reason, I don't go to the hospital, but my younger child of 3 months needs vaccinations.

A Wide Partneship

3

HOUSING ENVISION

In recent years, housing provision for newcomers, refugees and displaced people, is one of the most compelling challenge for Marseille. As Abderrahim Khairi by Housing Europe tells, it is a common situation for most European countries, which are dealing with the same problem, effectively recognized since the “refugee crisis” of 2015. Local administrations are not organized to face the ever-growing demand for a more inclusive city. Their budget is not enough to host and assist low- or no-income group, either in terms of emergency housing, either in medium-term solutions.

In Marseille, the continuous flux of migration contributes to increase the request of housing in already tight areas of the city. The Fondation Abbé Pierre counts about 1300000 people forced to live in dangerous and inadequate housing conditions, from the centre to the farthest suburbs. This phenomenon is the result of a lack of affordable housing for poor families and the explosion of rents in the real estate market.

On November 5th, 2018, the drama of two collapsing buildings in Rue D'Aubagne was the extreme consequence of this crisis. Actually, we can be sad, but pretending surprise because it was a preannounced tragedy, since in May 2015 the governmental inspector for the sustainable development Nicol

highlighted the unhealthy and unsafe conditions of 40000 habitation, largely settled in Noailles neighbourhood, that is the area where the collapse happened. Since that day, in which eight people dead, the municipality started a check house-to-house in the city and more than 1300 people have been dislodged from buildings considered dangerous. The decree of an imminent order of insecurity have been resulted in evacuations, in this case searching for solutions of accommodation.

Then, the reality of Marseille is complex and uncertain. The administrative capacity is weak to allocate house, dipped in a situation facing a structural housing shortage.

Nevertheless, mobilizing resources for the inclusion of newcomers is a more complex challenge. Abderrahim Khairi keep affirming that “this requires a holistic approach in partnership with local stakeholders: local authorities, services providers, associations and residents”, engaging a range of different actors working together. Working for a more inclusive city is a wide concept, which means that the only housing provision is not enough, even if it is a basic need in “building, or re-building, someone’s life”. A coordinated measure to help people in accessing employment, training, language classes, healthcare, education is needed in order to reach a successfully architectural response working with housing issues for marginalized communities such as Roma.



▲
COLLAPSED BUILDING IN RUE D'AUBAGNE ON
5TH NOVEMBER 2018. AFTER, CITIZENS MANI-
FEST THEIR ANGER AGAINST THE TOWNHALL,
MARSEILLE

THE INCLUSIVE PATHWAY

Slums issue in Marseille is pushing up a powerful work in changing the customized framework. Since 2016, Architectes Sans Frontières pledge together with local grass-root organizations in a strong associative mobilization. The aim is to convince the Prefecture in understanding the failure of the existing system, which has only invented a “slum mobile”. What partners have suggested is a coordinated action which aim to experiment an integrative pathway in the French society, made up by a simultaneous work in different fields, from health, wellness, education and so on. In order to implement this project, their request is a guarantee of no-expulsion on the chosen sites, for a period of two years since they start the participative process with its inhabitants until they will finish with it. It is a kind of temporary stabilization of the informal settlements, in which the improvement of living conditions is fundamental to afford the purpose.

A methodology built with Médecins du Monde, joining their “Mission Bidonville”, searching for an exchange of knowledge and findings to empower cooperative actions toward the inhabitants of the slums in Marseille. In the running of this process, each organization helps cataloguing data in a shared table, mainly handled by Rencontres Tsiganes association, which defend the

political interests of Gypsies and, today, is the most ingrained in the Roma communities network.

ASF contribution takes hold through technical survey of slums, assessing structural and environmental risks, checking the operativity of sanitary facilities and electrical connection, preventing potential fires related to heating or cooking systems and identifying emergency exits. Along the technical approach, the survey is used as method of socio-spatial enquiry, supplying an actualized knowledge of the contingent situation and allowing critical approaches oriented for future actions.

The good intention is to share information that allows all the organizations involved in the project to foster a collective response to the most relevant needs. Effectively, among a general atmosphere of rejection and mistrust in Roma communities by governmental institutions, the tense atmosphere blocks any impulse which can look forward a real changing of the current situation.

On January 2018, an official agreement between the collective of associations and the Prefecture has led to a principle of hope: the inclusive pathway has been approved and supported by a government grant, with its immediate implementation for the two following years. The program planned a deeper experiment of stabilisation on two marked squats: “Les Aciéries” and “Saint Antoine”, judged suitable for their potential features, which are: public owner of the site; no project planned

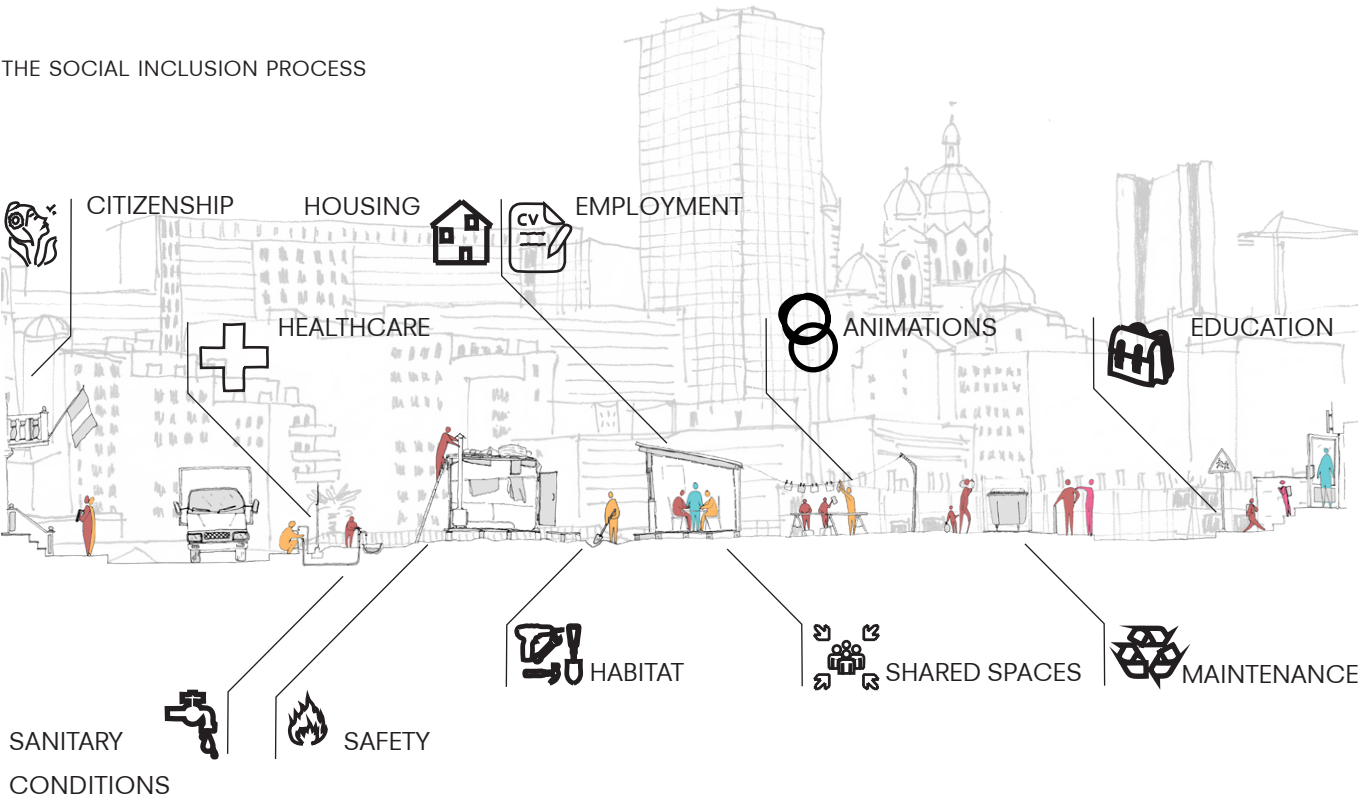
in short-term (two years); no structural risks for the occupants by the environment; need of simple adjustments for the improvement of living conditions; occupants collaborative in enhancing their own space; number of the installed families under control (around 50); accepted by the neighbourhood. It is an important bet by the organizations; an experiment needed to prove that it can work for other sites in future.

However, since the day of the official deal with the Prefecture, the perspective is changed and is still changing. The authorities handle the progress of the work, but are struggled in accepting not traditional solutions, proposing each time to find alternative adaptations. The compromise by the involved organizations is a modernist perspective which follows a program more than a style, manipulated by what they can and cannot do “from above”.



▲
PARTECIPATORY MEETING BETWEEN HELPING
ORGANIZATIONS AND ROMA INHABITANTS,
JANUARY 2019,
“LES ACIÉRIES” SQUAT,
MARSEILLE

THE SOCIAL INCLUSION PROCESS

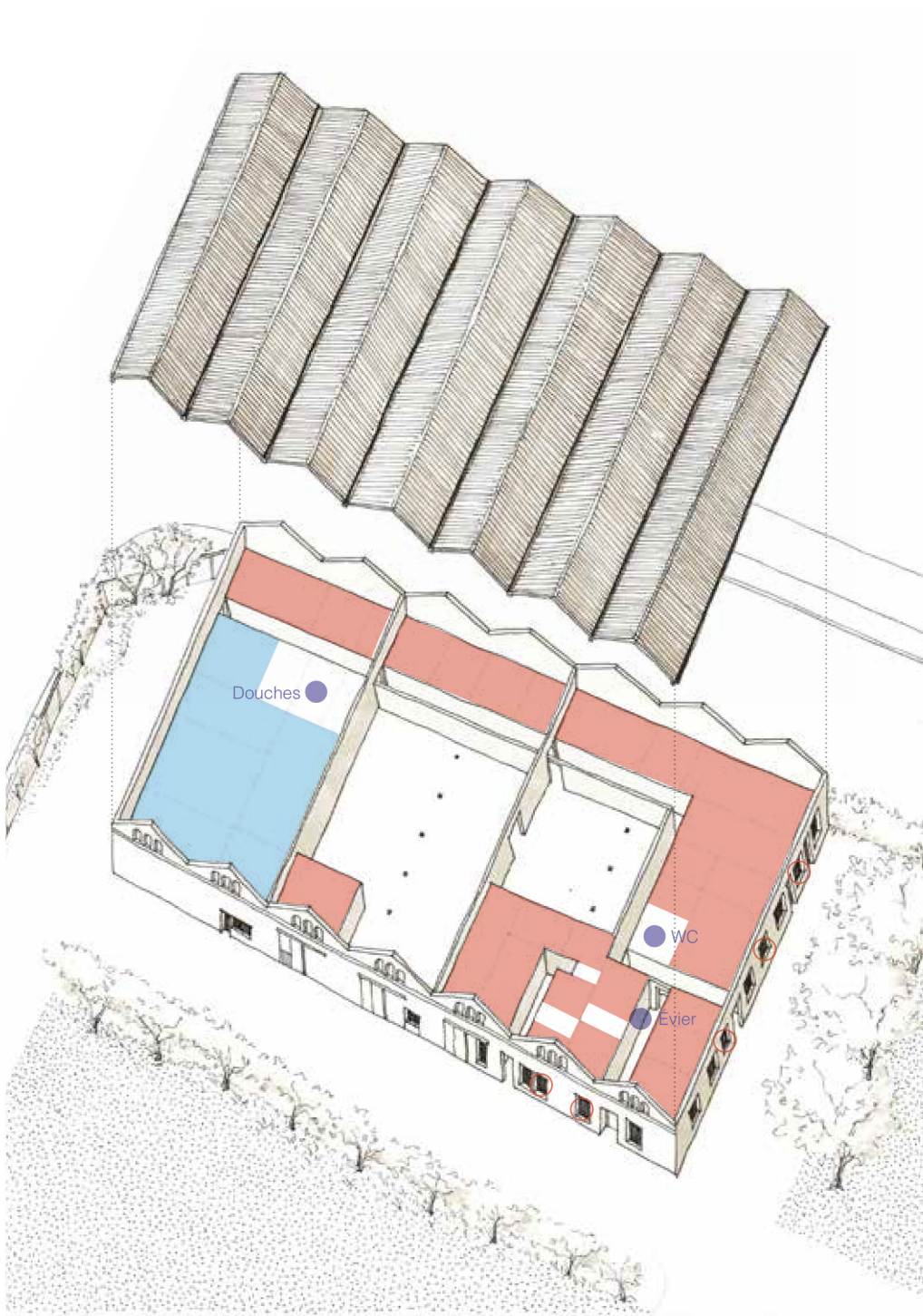


THE IMPROVEMENT OF LIVING CONDITIONS

▲
THE INCLUSIVE PATHWAY MADE UP BY ASF WITH
THE OTHER PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS,
FULL SCHEME IN ASFFRANCE.ORG: “PLAIDOYER
POUR LA STABILISATION DES BIDONVILLES”



▲
1ST OF THE TWO SITES TO STABILISE
AND WORKS OF REPARATION OF ITS ROOF,
FEBRUARY 2019,
“LES ACIÈRES” SQUAT,
MARSEILLE



- ROOMS INHABITED BY ROMA FAMILIES
- ROOMS INHABITED BY HOMELESS
- IMPROVEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES BY ASF
- REPARATIONS BY ASF

▲
INVESTIGATION OF THE SITE IN 2018,
“LES ACIÈRES” SQUAT,
MARSEILLE,
DRAWING BY ENSA PARIS BELLEVILLE STUDENTS

IMPACT BY DESIGN

The output by Architectes Sans Frontières is a program of intervention which answer to primary human needs and wellness of Roma communities. Their aim is to minimize the harmful factors on the informal settlements, providing structural safety, acceptable sanitary conditions, enhancing the standard of living, and moreover furnishing the habitat with collective spaces which will accommodate the interaction with the partners organizations and working as domiciliation, whose missing does not enable Roma accessing to civic facilities.

Furthermore, their function is not just about dealing with the “micro” issues, because considering their recent engagement in the slum field of Marseille, they are still in a research operation, collecting data and observing the phenomena in the local scale. Gradually, they are investing in design tests, which produce tangible products that, moreover, are really perceived as transformative gestures, that lead both the Prefecture and Roma communities in having trust in the inclusive pathway. In this way they engage new actors which foster the network inside and outside the local context, implying students of design and architecture in the situated context. The hard work is to provide students a realistic representation of the actual dynamics, which is the only

way to deal effectively with boiling issues.

Some laboratories are being performed on the site of “Les Aciéries”: pearl of ASF, one of the two sites defined to be stabilized by the Prefecture, it presents a good self-organization thanks to the management by his “chef” Trandafir. The chef has created a supervision system of the site, by selecting the Roma joining the group by their financial admission in the site, around 300 euro. He has created his personal financial gain, adding an internal commerce of snacks and soda that he buys for cheap in Romania and sell to the inhabitants of his settlement. Even if he has a bad reputation within Roma network in Marseille, principally pushed by jealousy and Roma attitude in suffering a boss, his capacity of management ensures a respectful wellness among the community and profitable bridges toward the external world.

In 2018, a first experiment was carried out by architecture students of Paris Belleville in Les Aciéries. Their projects of micro-architecture led to two nice structures of benches, one outside and one inside, in a big open space, whose aim was to foster conviviality. After some months, what I saw, was their substantial non-use: what I perceived is that students did not answer to a real necessity of the community, but focused only to do an exercise of beautiful “sustainable” construction. The result is their completely uselessness and its consequential abandonment by Roma.



▲
BENCHES BUILT BY STUDENTS
OF PARIS BELLEVILLE IN JUNE 2018,
“LES ACIÉRIES” SQUAT

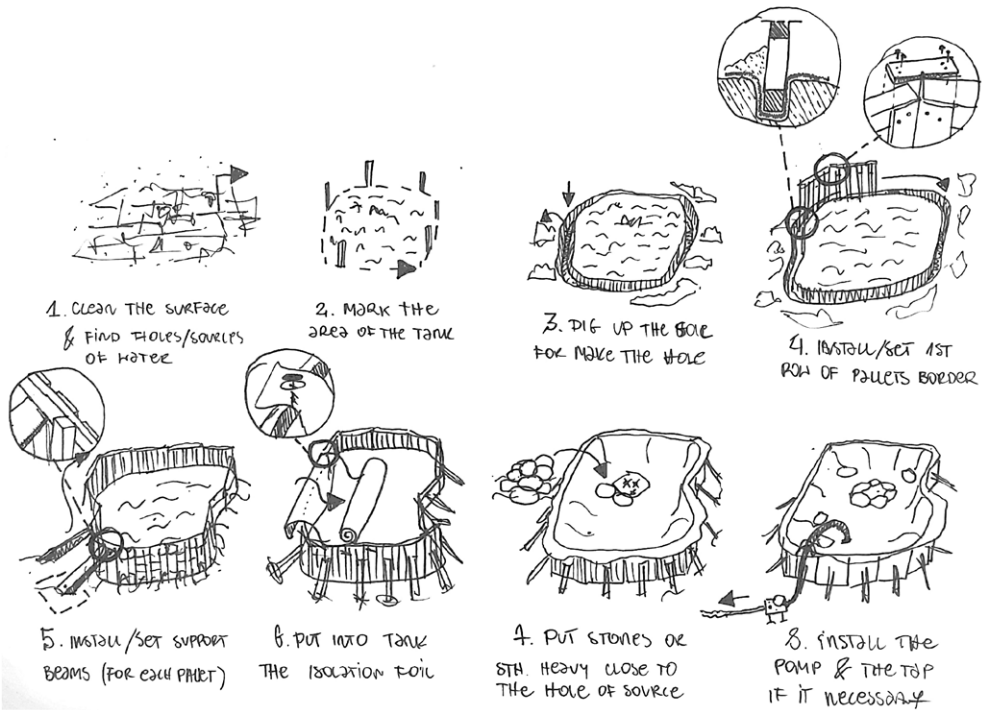
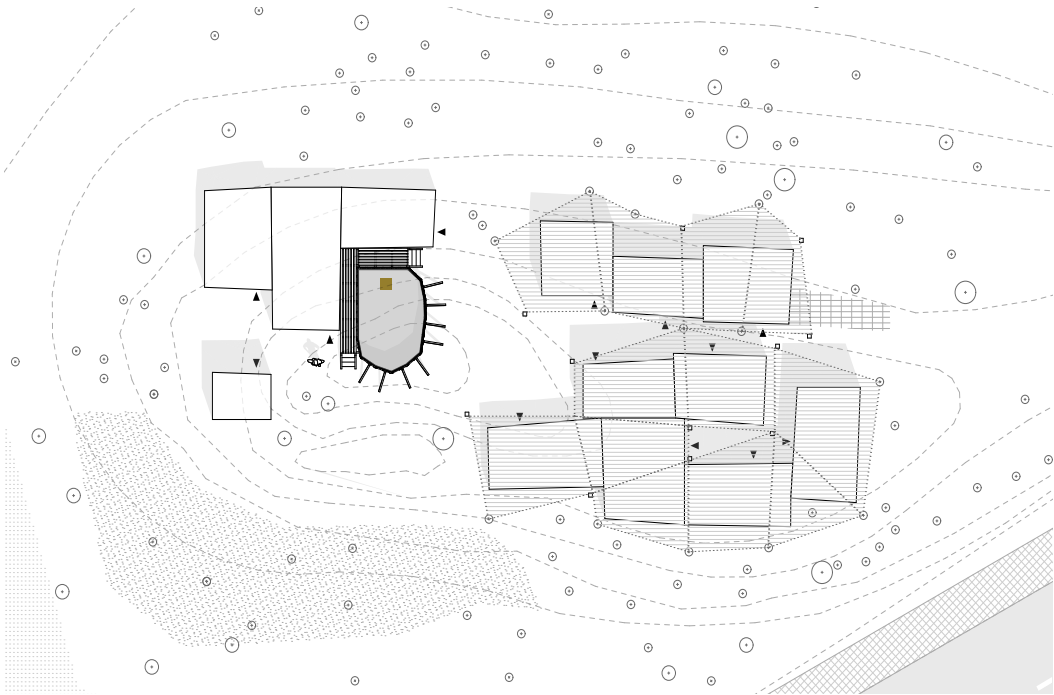
My personal commitment with ASF was about dealing with emergency issues affecting Roma slums. Many problems emerged because of winter weather such as structural failures caused by rain hitting, dangerous in terms of safety, but also incrementing health diseases.

In December 2018 ASF welcomed four international students for a further experiment, having won a financial prize by the International Finsa Award. At that time, we have recently discovered the "Hermitage" slum: that Roma community used to live in a breeding ground for diseases. The main cause was the evacuation in their ground of rainwater from the upper highway. They could indicate to us the main point from where the ground spills water, covered by any kind of garbage with whom they had already attempted to block the outflow. In the lower part of their shacks, the ruined wood indicates that the water line reached up to 80 cm, flooding inside. Then, the previous intention by the association in building dry toilets, with an already tested project, looked inconsistent. The good will by the international students and the Roma community, brought to an effort in trying something different: with few resources, mostly recovered by the scratches of the flea market, we projected a water tank which gives time to push out the water from the site with a pump and works as barrier in order to limit the flooding of people's habitat. It was intentionally a simple project that implied a system opened to change during its implemen-

tation, considering the improvisation needed in using recovered materials, timing constraint of three days for its construction and wandering a real engagement of the community without professional skills. The impact by our tangible addition to their habitat was more than finalised to the object. The further purpose was to "move" them from their discouraged, passive sense of inability to react to their actual condition, giving them a concrete tool which can raise more awareness about their living environment. During the three days of construction, someone left unaccounted for a while: they went in the city searching for the other associations which can help to register their children for school. Today, the tank is used by the inhabitants who show a responsible attitude toward their common good. It continues to have an important role in that community life, even if it is no such beautiful. It was limited to few students' obstinacy, a first experiment of international cooperation in a very short workshop. There was an interplay between different actor, with different backgrounds of maturity and experience, that wanted to come out catching elements of uncertainty. Since the implementation of one project to the reunions between partner organizations or representatives by the Prefecture, sometimes the skepticism masks a power struggle that slows down or blocks the processes: in the coordination of different profiles, oriented to opposite vision, the interaction plays a hard key role to find a common point.



FLOODING ISSUE AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE CAUSE,
DECEMBER 2018,
"HERMITAGE" SLUM



PROJECT OF A BASIN TO BLOCK THE FLOODING
AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION,
DECEMBER 2018,
"HERMITAGE" SLUM



RECOVERED PALLETS AND PRELIMINARY
CLEANING,
DECEMBER 2018,
"HERMITAGE" SLUM



▲
IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTATION ON THE SITE,
DECEMBER 2018,
“HERMITAGE” SLUM



▲
PARTICIPATORY PROCESS AND PUMP ASSIGN-
MENT TO THE CHEF,
DECEMBER 2018,
“HERMITAGE” SLUM

Usually, ASF measures in the slums field of Marseille are applied with a provisional logic, oriented to “dub” critical and risky conditions affecting the habitat. They try to lift critical issues through simple craft solutions with traditional measures of reparation. This approach follows the goal of the whole inclusive pathway, which aims to get Roma people out of slums, waiting for their access to the right of living in an apartment. However, those interventions focus only on the well-being of Roma, which imply costs to the association that mostly “give” without obtaining a further transformation of those people’s life, even if they are sustainable and restrained. A correspondent objective for Roma integration in the society should be a real engagement of those people in issues affecting themselves, which does not mean only their participation during the implementation of a project of design. If we talk in terms of empowerment, such “palliative” treatments do not let the communities in being autonomous in their poverty. We should recognize that a clearance of slums by the city could be a long-term process and meanwhile public finances cannot ensure an apartment to all of Roma. The force of habit thrusts to use the same approach that worked at the beginning of the project, motivated by all the good results obtained, but it is ineffective for a change of course. As Yona Friedman says, a conservative attitude will not lead to any breakthrough in resolving the problem: the same types of intervention are improbable in a long run; we

know in advance that we must always be ready to invent a substitute strategy in the field.

Nowadays we should profit of Roma housing condition to prompt a real exercise of agency for them during the process, without exclusively focusing on the project output. This would lead to a real stable community, stressing on their force of survival as the engine of their own strength.



▲
TEMPORARY TARPAULIN TO MINIMIZE
WATER INFILTRATION THROUGH THE ROOF,
ACTION IMPLEMENTED BY JUST AND ASF ORGANIZATIONS,
NOVEMBER 2018,
“CAZEMAJOU I” SQUAT,
MARSEILLE

An Opportunity

4

CIRCULAR SQUATTING

Each year, French construction sector produce 247 million tons of waste by the demolition of buildings, with 1.5 million tons collected only in the Paca region. In the April 2018 the government stated specific measures for the national BTP, inviting the professionals to adopt a perspective of re-use of materials, enhancing them from the label of scrap in considering "the buildings fleet as the materials bank for the future constructions".

The desire to develop innovative methods and sustainable instruments of architectural projects already belong to the collective project supervision, following principle of keeping pre-existing buildings as far as possible as the head office for most possible projects.

In order to foster communication and interaction to users, businesses, local communities and the general public, it has been developed a proactive mediation service between actors intentioned to engage projects of circular economy, in a production chain with a broadest perspective of cultural experience and innovation.

In the French scale there are already instituted collectives, project supervisors of many circular actions in the national territory, such as ETC in Marseille, Bruit du Frigo in Bordeaux, Bellastock in Paris. Still in Paris, Encore Heureux is a famous architectural office, editors of

different exhibitions for the Arsenal Pavillion, between 2014 and 2015, exploring the issue of reuse of materials and following the principles of the circular economy: they stress on the principle "to no longer consider the matter as a waste to be evacuated as far as possible, but as a capital to be valued and preserved". They were the curator of French pavilion in the Biennale of Venice in 2018, where, they conceived the scenography by reusing the wood of the Studio Venezia installation created by Xavier Veilhan for the 2017 edition of the Art Biennale, working in partnership with the collectif ETC. In that exhibition, they explored the topic of "Infinite places", referring to urban spaces that are occupied in a transitory way or by fragile existence. They showed the possibilities which "cool" architectural projects, such as Les Grands Voisins of Paris, the Hôtel Pasteur in Rennes or La Friche de la Belle de Mai in Marseille, "open" toward different possibilities of cultural experiments, considering an alternative role for architects which goes further the "structure" of an architectural project, catching human bonds and being creator of stories of that spaces. All the projects, as well as the pavilion built for their exhibition, are architectural products of transitory nature, not useful for the life routine, but conceived for specific aims of amusement and artistic expressions. Their use implies a symbolic appropriation by the city, likewise the moment of their removal wonder to profit in reusing their materials for the benefit of other light urban experiments

or propagandistic events.

By expelling and destroying Roma slums, French institutions entail the same ephemeral conception for the informal settlements. The negative resolution is that it does not search for any profit for the city because of the Gypsy phobia. They only provoke new different Gypsy expositions, set out independently by Roma through the urban environment. If the main problem for the city is the visibility of Roma camps, why not entail to a fashionable appearance which can combine a statement of assimilation of the settlement by the city: a Gypsy pavilion made by old reused materials, as a metaphor of the deconstruction of Roma stereotypes, reinterpreted in a new knowledge about them. Their settlement appearance is not an accessory as well as their cultural manifestation: this last can be a point of reference for the first, as a vector of recognition of its community.

The rule is the impermanence, then Roma cannot anticipate remaining for long and they establish only the most basic infrastructure: their home. Except for shared open spaces, no other facilities exist in the camps.

In the same way, helping organizations considered necessary only immediate response for the provision of housing and medical aid, meanwhile further activities fall into a category of improvement or upgrading. They separate the actions considered "temporary" in an emergency perspective, from the "permanent" ones when they aim to upgrade their initiatives.

A strategy to normalise their standard of life cannot consider only the antitheses of perspectives, but a coexisting of them: it is not only about establishing the minimum level of survival, but providing the maximum possible, to allow an autonomous full life from the very beginning.



▲
STUDIO VENEZIA INSTALLATION BY XAVIER VEILHAN IN 2017
AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF ITS WOOD FOR FRENCH
PAVILION IN THE BIENNALE OF VENICE IN 2018 BY ENCORE
HEUREUX ARCHITECTS,
PHOTOS BY INEXHIBIT



▲
INFORMAL SETTLEMENT OF ROMA
AND THE RESOLUTION IN ITS DESTRUCTION,
LYON,
PHOTOS BY O.PAPEGN OF MDM
AND AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE



▲
PAVILLON CIRCULAIRE,
FOR THE PAVILLON DE L'ARSENAL IN 2015,
PARIS,
BY ENCORE HEUREUX ARCHITECTS,
PHOTO BY CYRUS CORNUT



▲
TEMPORARY RECEPTION CENTRE FOR COUP DE MAIN ORGANIZATION,
BY ARCHITECTES SANS FRONTIERES PARIS,
SAINT-DENIS,
PHOTOS BY ASF

SELL-HELP REHABILITATION

Roma living environments already offer possibilities of improvement, which can be revitalized without implying forced relocation of people. Projects of stabilisation of slums in other actions, beyond the social advantage, demonstrate a convenient economic feasibility: in Paris, PEROU organization talks about 129950 euro spent by the State for the expulsion of one group of about fifteen families, against their programme of integration for a community that costs 50000 euro, the 38,4% less expensive. It is the amount taken as reference by the Prefecture of Marseille in financing the experiment of stabilisation for the two sites. Meanwhile, local organizations must continuously face emergency situations caused by the expulsions system, then their actions cannot focus exclusively on the temporary stabilisation aim.

Nevertheless, a concrete project must stress its emphasis on the actualized impact, considering an inclusive urban transformation in these conditions of uncertainty. It is not possible to forecast a technocratic model made up on mathematical statistics: it is needed a systematic method of thinking that consider existing factors and actors woven in the current dynamics, in a future oriented thinking that identifies possible outcomes.

My personal experience of Roma slums

suggests a parallel kind of experimentation that follows ASF method, but which would like to encourage a local activation in terms of change.

It is possible to find paths which do not pursue the aim of reaching the predicted standards set by the industrialized society, following the interpretation made by the western imagery. It is needed to prepare the weakest communities for their self-help, providing them with concrete tools to react to the unexpected since the beginning.

It is appropriate to establish a balance between two types of adaptation: one by environment and one by the marginalized people. Then, it is right to deal with regulatory interventions in order to minimize the critical factors, to prompt a better and conscious usage of the raw resources, which mostly starts from the squatted building. Further, promoting restrained upgrading transformations which can move Roma communities from the disadvantaged issues causing the blockage in their poverty and, moreover, including each family in self-planning what concerns them most intimately: their home.

The idea is to generate cyclic dynamics between Roma and French environment, passing from a concept of multiculturalism, that means juxtaposition, to an intercultural approach, which seek to conjugation and reciprocity. Forcing the only adaptation of Roma people to the environment means ignoring their cultural values and standardise their ambiguous portrait. Instead, behind their dynamism and the development

of their parallel economy system, there is a merit which worth to be lightened positively, not held back. Only in this way, their segregation could move to a perspective of co-existence with the non-Roma. They are part of the society and they interplay with it, sharing a sense of belonging.

The responsibility of architects and professionals engaged with social projects must considers a mutual recognition of needs, even including the historically excluded voice of Gypsies. Clearly, a co-productive method generates conflicts in making decisions, offering different imagery partially incompatible.

Bernando Secchi underlines that "choice among antagonistic images that are produced by subjects driven by the imaginary, is the only concretely practicable ground to construct a coherent urban and territorial policy". Then, building relationships with any kind of stakeholder can strength the process in helping the marginalized inhabitants going forward their current situation, suggesting versions of their visions instead of claiming strict convictions.

This method is temporally long and essentially proceeds by trials, evaluating from time to time the result. There can be no safe "recipe" for all slums: only an in-depth knowledge of each context can lead to apply a contingent solution. It will be a path made by various experiments in different laboratories, testing ideas about how people could respond to the crisis with situated practices. It could affect also the city scale, and,

looking forward, the national and international approach.



▲
THE CITY CONSTRAINS ROMA,
“CAZEMAJOU I” SQUAT,
MARSEILLE



▲
SELF-BUILT DRY TOILET
AND KITCHEN POINT,
“HEINEKEN” SLUM,
MARSEILLE

ONE POSSIBILITY

The laboratory chosen to practice my reflection is the squat of Saint Antoine. The plot is owned by the Urban Community of Marseille, in an area designated for public equipment. The building is composed by three interconnected structures: an ancient grain store exposed to the north, an old abandoned hotel in the centre and an adjacent small house on the ground floor, to the south. The hotel is made by two floors and placed back from the main street line. On the ground floor, a veranda is connected to the building, but the connection has been blocked by the inhabitants with furniture and removable textiles upon the door. Upstairs, the connectivity is based on a long hallway, serving all the family rooms on both sides. No other spaces are shared, and all the community activities are implemented in the tiny connections, with a congestion of spaces which makes worse the risk in case on fire, due to its cul de sac conformation. The big grain store is badly used as toilet: the windows of the private rooms that overlook the grain from the second floor are blockade by curtains; the adjacent big space, that is tall only one level, is not used at all and its door from the back side of the building is bricked up. Despite the bad appearance, it is perceived a good organization and management by its inhabitants: the com-

munity is made by nineteen families, with twenty-seven children. Each family has furnished its room of the hotel; one external family occupies the house on the ground floor, but does not belong to the group and the accessing door through the hotel has been blockade by the inhabitants. The energetic system is linked to the public electricity with temporary electrical panels made by Just organization: it allows the light provision and give them the possibility to warm up with electrical stoves. The water provision is scarce because the internal connection to the public network have been cut. Then, a water point with a well have been created outside, in the front court. For the same reason there are two toilets which do not work. The general structure of buildings seems in good condition, except for some failures easily fixable, as they already did for some steps of the main stairs.

Recently, the community is suffering a break from the inclusive process invested on them by the helping organizations since 2017: they have lost confidence in the method and have started to have an irresponsible attitude toward their habitat, throwing the trash from the windows and attempting self resolutions which only provoke unconscious damages to the building. The partners are now busy in pledging the guarantee of non-expulsion by the Prefecture, which has an afterthought about the commitment taken because on new plans for the railway area where there is the slum.

COSTICA AND JAGUARI IN FRONT
OF THEIR HOME,
"SAINT ANTOINE" SQUAT,
MARSEILLE





▲
FRONT OF THE BUILDING,
POLO AND HIS FRIENDS PLAYING IN THE COURTYARD,
“SAINT ANTOINE” SQUAT,
MARSEILLE



▲
BACK OF THE BUILDING,
TRAIN RAIL EXPOSITION,
“SAINT ANTOINE” SQUAT,
MARSEILLE



Scarce water provision



Inadequate energetic system



Building failures



Cul de sac and fire insecurity



Congestion of connections



Unhealthy conditions

▲
HARMFUL FACTORS,
"SAINT ANTOINE" SQUAT,
MARSEILLE



Furnish private family rooms



Lend private rooms to host profes-
sionists by helping organizations



Wash and dry clothes



Provide food

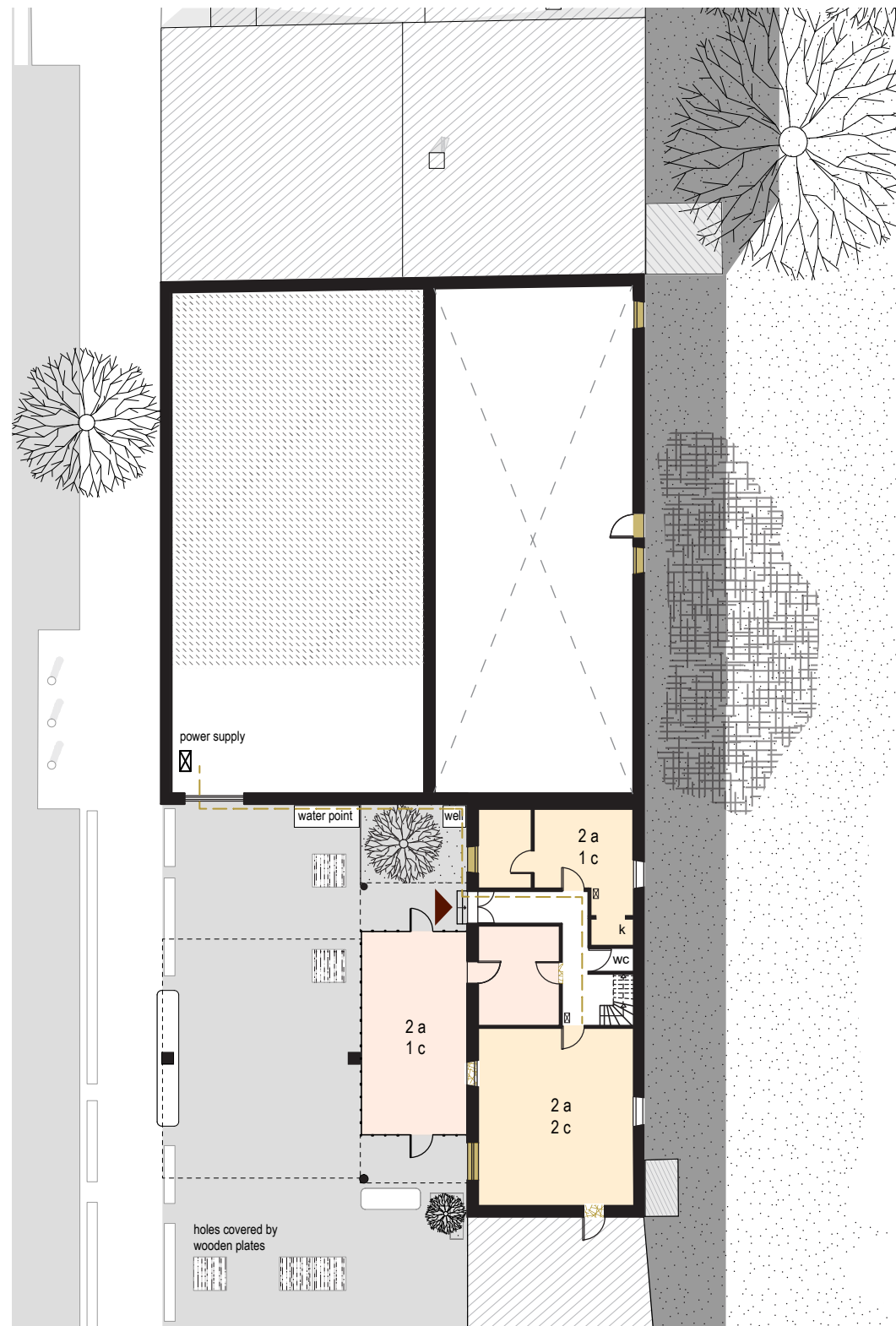


Cook and manage in the tiny
connections



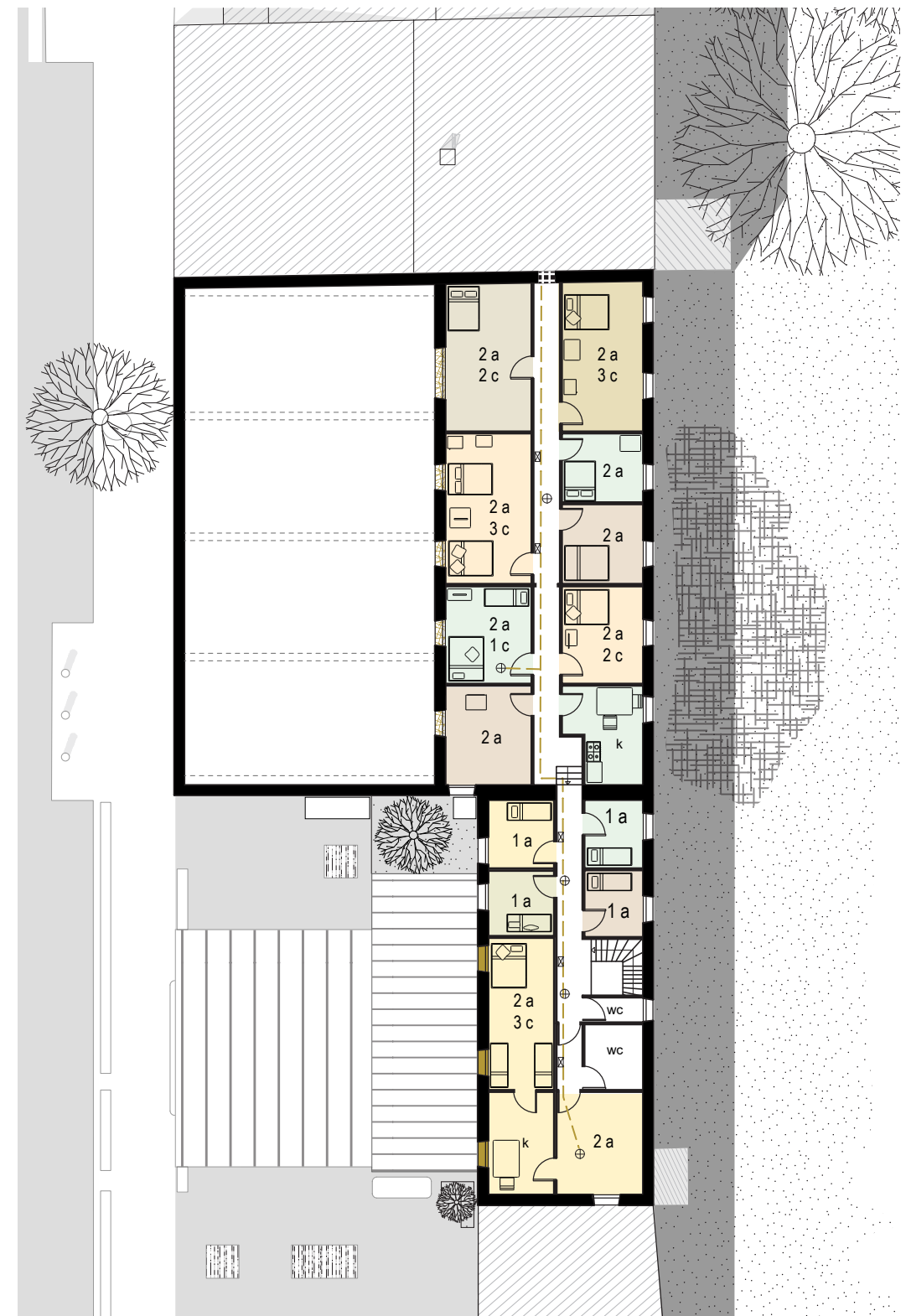
Provoke unconscious damages

▲
HUMAN OCCUPATION
AND ACTIVITIES,
"SAINT ANTOINE" SQUAT,
MARSEILLE



GROUND FLOOR,
TOPOLOGICAL MAP,
"SAINT ANTOINE" SQUAT

Number of people
adult **a**
children **c**



FIRST FLOOR,
TOPOLOGICAL MAP,
"SAINT ANTOINE" SQUAT

Placement of families
and interactions

THE PROJECT

My project wants to recognize the role of Roma in designing the definitive project shapes, beyond their participation during its implementation. It follows the line affirming that the development of their own identity is supported by the material construction of their home, as well as an exercise of agency which can raise new awareness about the living environment, strengthen individual skills and support community empowerment. My experience has shown that giving to them concrete tools for the upgrading of their material and spatial conditions, has given awareness in their abilities and confidence in the context that welcomes them.

In this possible workshop, each involved actor can share his knowledge, enriching both professionals and Roma group with owned values. Beyond the mutual learning process, the concrete architectural project aim to answer to the findings of the contingent analysis: it aims to maximise the use of all spaces, bad used and not used; to insert constraining additions to the habitat, trying to normalize a conscious fruition of spaces with guidelines, assumed for the current community conformation and operation; proposing programmatic elements which can entail new productive activities in autonomy by the community. The strategy expects the insertion of cycle dynamics for the inhabitants that will foster active processes for the water collection, food cultivation and affordable technological interventions. This system of sus-

tainable exchange considers what the inhabitants can offer and what they will gain in terms of space, time and materials, regarding what they already do in their quotidian.

The basic addition to the environment is a module designed in way which allows easy and fast assembly and transport, as well as mounting regardless of how the parts are rotated. Its composition wants to firstly implement the connective tissue with more space which will accommodate programmatic pots for water collection and food cultivation; secondly, wants to modulate the big unused spaces revitalizing their usage by the community. Two steps of a global transformative aim which is matched with new functional rooms, chosen between the contingent private spaces in order to become shared rooms for their daily activities. The chosen conformation creates a circular path that guides the inhabitants in the maximum use of space of all spaces, thanks to the addition of vertical connections. The interior modules are mainly given to the community to be new private family units, leaving Roma free to shape them with self-promoted skins made by recovered materials, as they already do: individual projects taking part in a collective strategy of home upgrading.

For political reasons, architects must mediate the coating for the external modules: it can be planned a mask that can make the community less exposed towards the adjacent train station, trying to better fit it in a possible future project of renovation of the area by the

city.

If we keep this skin as an opportunity of cultural expression, it could become a declaration of appropriation by the official city, which wonder to keep Roma importance in terms of shared heritage and improving a better understanding as an educational initiative.

Its beauty can be reached through reused materials, overcoming the stereotypes of slums bad appearance and being an experimentation as it happens in occasional programs of propaganda made by the city. As well, the future evacuation of the site and its deconstruction will be then considered as a reinsert in the circular economy network of materials, popular pulled in France. Marseille offers many possibilities of collaborative processes which can led to beautiful products.

As an autobiography by Roma, this project consists in a recognizable structure and its internal progression, where the inhabitants can evolve their lives together with the enhancing of their habitat.

For all the reasons highlight in this report from the slums of Marseille, it is just one of many possibilities.

Minimize the harmful factors of the habitat by traditional ASF method



OBJECTIVE

- maximize the use of all spaces
- constraining additions to their habitat
- new productive activities

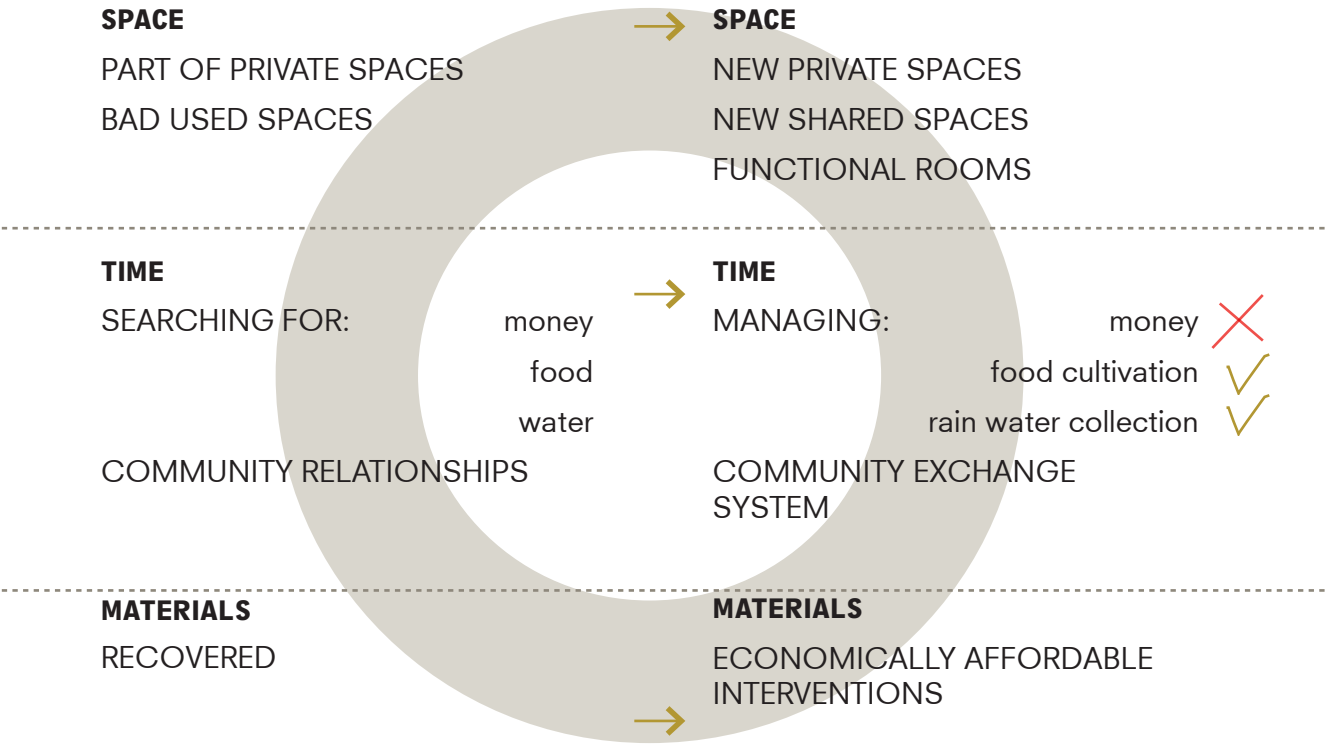
STRATEGY

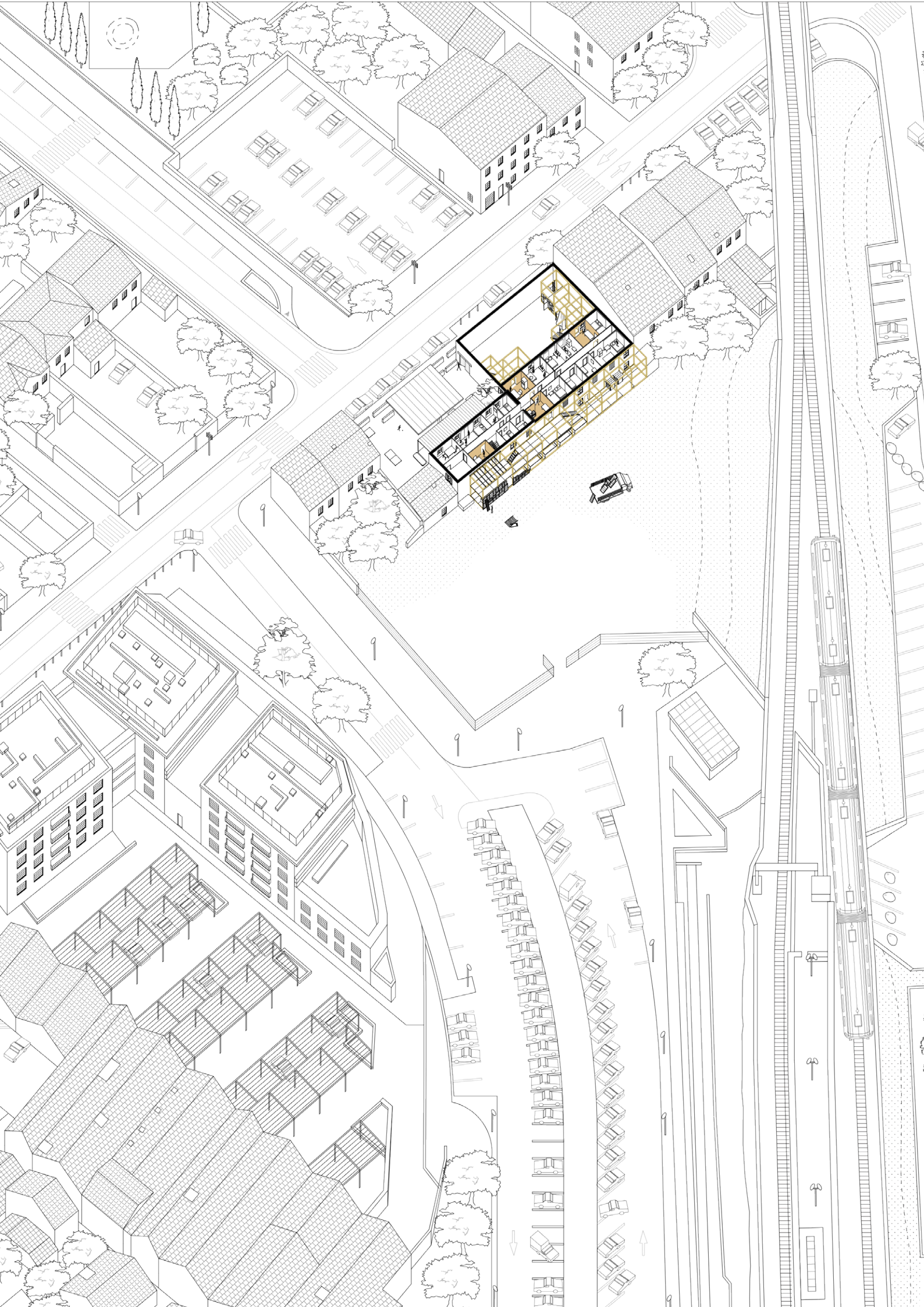
Inserting a **cycle of dynamics:**

- for the inhabitants
- for water, cultivation and materials

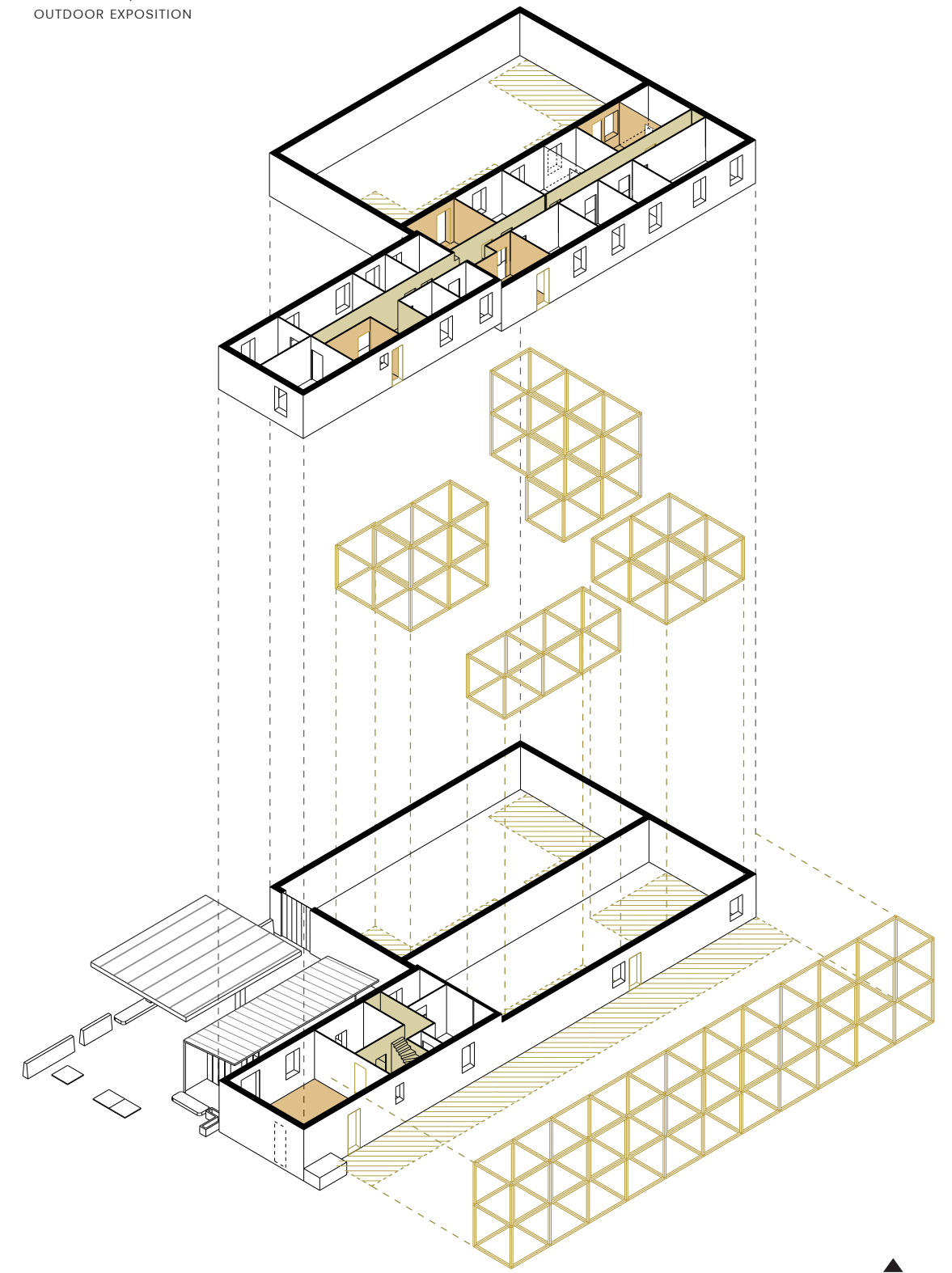
what can inhabitants offer?

what will inhabitants earn?

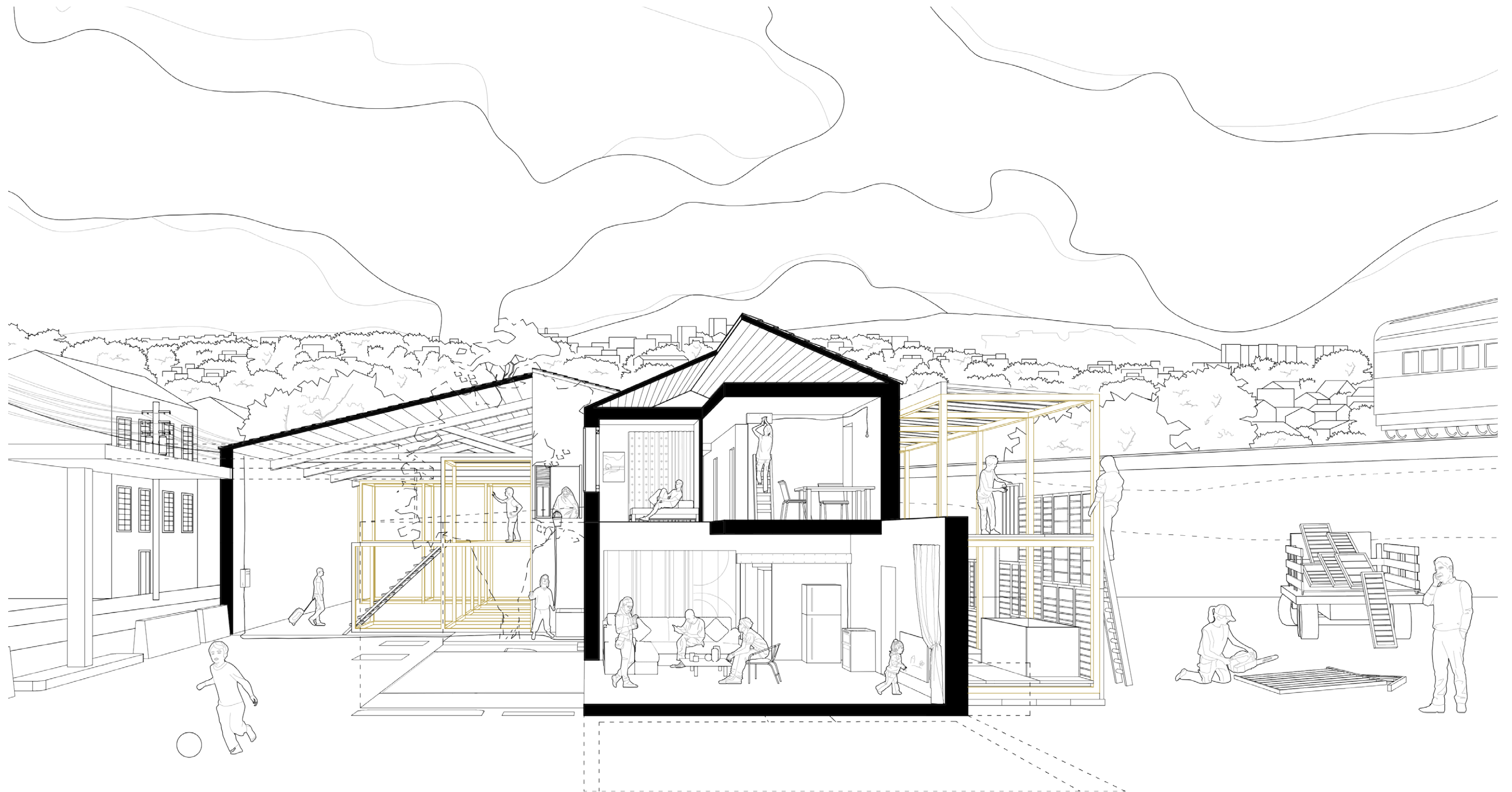




◀
LOCALISATION IN THE CONTEXT:
RAILWAY AREA,
OUTDOOR EXPOSITION



▲
TRANSFORMATIVE STRATEGY:
IMPLEMENT CONNETTIVITY,
MODULATE BIG SPACES



▲
DYNAMIC CIRCULATION
FOSTERED BY FUNCTIONAL ROOMS



GROUND FLOOR CYCLES: WATER COLLECTION



FIRST FLOOR CYCLES: POTS CULTIVATION



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