

# INTER ACTIVE SPACE

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Master Thesis  
Architecture  
Costruction  
and city

Relator:  
Alberto Bologna

Academic Year  
2019/20



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Spontaneous use of the space in contemporary  
*Beijing context*







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INDEX

00. /

Incipit	20
Abstract	22
Preface	26



01. /

HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Chinese Historical, Social And Cultural Evolution	34
Conception of Space	40
The Evolution Of The City	46
How is the city evolving now?	52
Are the hubs the center of interaction?	62

02 /

SPACE OF PUBLIC

Space of public	70
Social space	76
How people interact?	86
Life at the side	88
Leftover space as the space of freedom	110
How to allow spontaneous uses in a design environment?	116

03. /

FREESPACE

Metodology	122
The importance of scale	124
People make space	138
Learning from playground	152
Free	166
Study case all over the world	180



# 04. /

## CONTEXT OF DESIGN

Beijing	187
Site Analysis	195
Datunlu East metro station	209
Photographic Analysis	212
Happenings in space	222
Datas	233

# 05. /

## DESIGN APPROACH

Life between objects	241
Manifesto	249
Programme	256
Elements	264
Happenings in space	233
Complexity	274

06 /

CONCLUSION

Conclusion	312
------------	-----

07. /

Aknowledgements	321
Bibliography	322
Index of images	326
References	331





00. /



Incipit. /

Architecture is the discipline able to create and modify physical space, by influencing and being influenced by both social and economic changes. Space is the theme of architecture, the concept on which architecture is based. The production of space is the action of architectural discipline, and the production of public space is the meaning that constitute the identity of a city.



## Abstract

The thesis is a path of research and evolution of a thought and an idea, a design process that represents the conclusion of a wide and complex process of studies, carried out partly in Italy, at the Politecnico di Torino and partly in Beijing, at Tsinghua University. This double experience has given me a more complete vision of architecture and its forms and role.

The project aims to answer a question:

*«Does a designed space allow spontaneous uses?»*

In the first part of my thesis I studied the urban evolution of Beijing in history; China is today the second economic power in the world where the cultural substratum has remained unchanged despite the influence of Western culture. The combination of traditional culture and modernity is the way in which China today proposes its image to the whole world. It can be seen that the underground stations are the city's new centres of social interaction.

In the second chapter, I deal with the theme of public space, first defining it and then declinating it in the Pekingese panorama. In contemporary China, the lifestyle, needs and aspirations of the population are constantly evolving and with these also the connotations and themes related to the change of public space. It is in the hidden spaces, the unplanned, the dodgy ones, where conviviality and a sense of community are best expressed. For this reason, I decided to analyze those spaces that, designed for a function, are colonized for limited periods of time by people who perform completely different activities. The spontaneous process is here the expression of society; people colonize a place, assign functions to it and then appropriate it with intrinsic values.

In the third section I wanted to redesign the architectures of some designers that I considered emblematic for their ability to produce projects that are not an end in themselves, but that put man at the center. Projects that treat space as the place where society lives, projects born from the idea that space cannot be defined by pre-assigned functions but, built according to the users who will shape it as they want.

Subsequently, ample space was dedicated to the study of the project site, the space in front of the Datunlu East underground station. These are partly abandoned areas, which the community lives in every day, colonizes and occupies spontaneously, providing them with different functions during the day.

All this then takes the form of an urban architectural project that aims to be a meeting place for all generations, an environment for lying down, relaxing, climbing, a place for events, shows, concerts and sports, a playground area equipped with alternative furnishings, all in a direct relationship with nature, where elements such as water, greenery, light and shade blend harmoniously. A place of interaction where people actively converse with each other and with natural and architectural elements, in a complex but balanced mechanism, a set of free and functional spaces, between imagination and necessity where nothing is perfectly defined but everything is in progress.

La tesi è un percorso di ricerca e di evoluzione di un pensiero e di una idea, un viaggio progettuale che rappresenta la conclusione di un iter di studi ampio e complesso, svolto in parte in Italia, al Politecnico di Torino e in parte a Pechino, alla Tsinghua University. Questa doppia esperienza ha fatto maturare in me una più completa visione rispetto all'architettura alle sue forme e al suo ruolo.

Il progetto si propone di rispondere ad una domanda:

“Uno spazio progettato permette usi spontanei?”

Nella prima parte della tesi ho studiato l'evoluzione urbana di Pechino nella storia; la Cina è oggi la seconda potenza economica mondiale dove il sostrato culturale è rimasto invariato nonostante l'influsso della cultura occidentale. Il connubio di cultura tradizionale e modernità è il modo in cui oggi la Cina propone al mondo intero la propria immagine. Si evince che le stazioni della metropolitana costituiscono i nuovi centri di interazione sociale della città.

Nel secondo capitolo affronto il tema dello spazio pubblico, prima definendolo e poi declinandolo nel panorama pechinese. Nella Cina contemporanea, lo stile di vita, i bisogni e le aspirazioni della popolazione sono in continua evoluzione e con questi anche le connotazioni e i temi relativi al cambiamento dello spazio pubblico. E' negli spazi nascosti, quelli non progettati, quelli schivati, dove si esprime al meglio la convivialità e il senso di comunità. Per questo motivo, ho deciso di analizzare quegli spazi che, progettati per una funzione, sono colonizzati per periodi di tempo limitati da persone che svolgono attività completamente diverse. Il processo spontaneo è qui l'espressione della società; le persone colonizzano un luogo, gli assegnano funzioni e poi se ne appropriano connotandolo di intrinseci valori.

Nella terza sezione ho voluto ridisegnare le architetture di alcuni designer che ho considerato emblematici per la loro capacità di produrre progetti non fini a sé stessi, ma che mettersero al centro l'uomo. Progetti che trattano lo spazio come il luogo in cui la società abita, progetti nati dall'idea che lo spazio non è definibile da funzioni pre-assegnate ma, costruito in funzione degli utenti che lo plasmeranno a loro piacimento.

Successivamente ampio spazio è stato dedicato allo studio del sito di progetto, lo spazio antistante la stazione metropolitana di Datunlu East, si tratta in parte di aree abbandonate, che comunque la comunità vive quotidianamente, colonizza e occupa spontaneamente dotandole di funzioni diverse nel corso della giornata. Il tutto si concretizza poi in un progetto architettonico urbano che vuole essere uno spazio di incontro per tutte le generazioni, un ambiente per sdraiarsi, rilassarsi, arrampicarsi, un luogo di eventi, manifestazioni, concerti e sport, un'area gioco per bambini attrezzata con arredi alternativi, il tutto in un rapporto diretto con la natura, dove elementi come acqua, verde, luci e ombre si fondono in modo armonico. Un luogo di interazione dove le persone conversino attivamente tra di loro e con gli elementi naturali e architettonici, in un meccanismo complesso ma equilibrato, un insieme di spazi liberi e spazi funzionali, tra immaginazione e necessità dove nulla è perfettamente definito ma tutto è in divenire.

## Epitome

Architecture is the art or practice of designing and building structures and especially habitable ones (Merriam Dictionary, 2019).

This short and concise definition describes the physical and practical act of architecture, but does not highlight the meaning behind the signifier. Architecture is a set of limits and perspectives, because the limit defines the environment and the perspective defines how to interpret an environment. There is a layer of connotation that is missing, it is missing the actor around which architecture must build and design: the man and the community in which he lives and relates. Architecture is the discipline that must try to improve people's lives by acting on the environment. So the shared interpretation of the environment becomes public space.

From this consideration, my particular interest focuses on the public realm as an expression of society. Public space is the domain that all residents are free to use, regardless of their income level and social characteristics (Kostof, 1992).

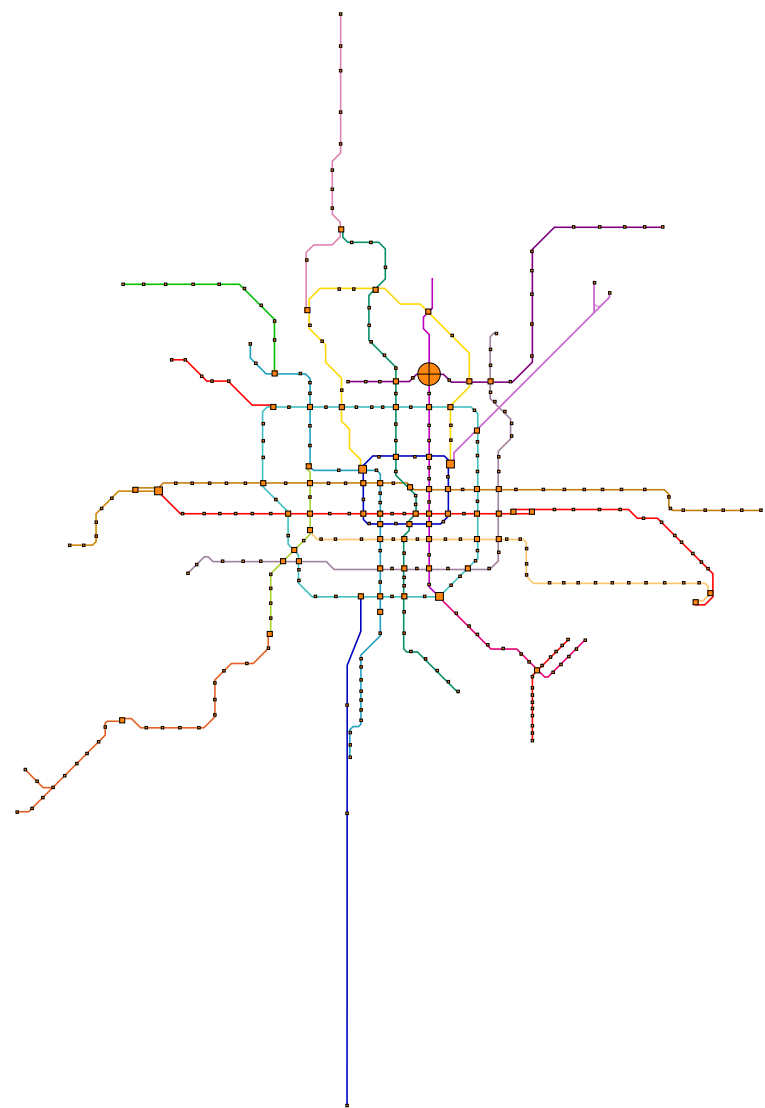
I will therefore consider public space in contemporary Chinese society by turning my attention to the case of Beijing as a representative city (archetype) for future urban developments throughout the country.

Having had the opportunity to get to know the urban reality of the Capital city more closely, since I attended Tsinghua University in Beijing for a year, I wanted to create an architectural project in the area in front of the Datunlu East subway entrances. My path takes shape starting from theoretical considerations inherent to the theme of public space and then materializing in a project that will try to define how it is possible to allow spontaneous uses in a designed space.

The thesis came to life from an extremely personal question that I asked myself while walking through the streets of the metropolis, which I saw swarming with life and spontaneous and collective activities; I asked myself what was the reason that pushed people to live the open space so intensely. This question was followed by an accurate study on the meaning of public space that I then made my own through the architectural project presented below.

## Preface





Beijing Subway System



Datunlu East Metro Station 大屯路东站

01 /

HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND  
CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Zhang Kaiyv, Beijing, 2019



## Chinese Historical, Social And Cultural Evolution

China is now the second largest economic in the world, and has reached this level in a very short period of time. Even though the economy is growing at a surprising rate , the cultural substratum has remained unchanged despite the influence of Western culture (Lippiello, 2013). Chinese society is still predominantly Confucian, and is based on some fundamental cornerstones: respect for hierarchies, harmony, sense of belonging, modesty, loyalty, sense of humanity or benevolence, filial love, empathy, solidarity and a sense of sharing.

Today the re-evaluation of Confucius and traditional culture is not only made evident by the solemn declarations of political leaders, but also by the current political strategies. The reference to traditional values, such as harmony and social hierarchies, reflects the concern to keep the people cohesive; on the other hand, in foreign policy, it responds to the ambition to promote the Chinese model as an alternative to the Western one, where individual interest has prevailed and taken over the collective good (Lippiello, 2013).







## Society and culture. /

Today those who visit Beijing find the capital of the Celestial Empire immersed in an unstoppable industriousness, a mass consumerism, a western lifestyle that seems to leave no room for Chinese tradition. Yet, behind this frenzy, this race towards freedom and modernity, it is perceivable a culture based on the observance of an ethical code handed down through generations, a tradition that has never waned. The combination of traditional culture and modernity is the way in which China today proposes its image to the entire world.

According to Tu Weiming (1993), thanks to the beneficial influence of Confucian moral principles on the individual and society, it will be possible to avoid the main evils of Western civilization, such as the decay of family relations, the consequent loss of the sense of humanity and exasperated individualism.

In the 1980s, the Open Door policy promoted by Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) pointed out the abyssal gap between Western's economic development and Chinese's backwardness.

As it had already happened in the past, political leaders had to face the age-old dilemma: to pursue modernization and thus also accept Western culture or safeguard their millenary traditions in the search for compromise. Not even the Cultural Revolution, although announced as an attempt to destroy the ancient world and create a new one, had managed to find a definitive and satisfactory solution.

One of the traditional values highlighted by Hu Jintao, in his speech on July 1, 2011 for the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, was that the power enjoyed by the ruling class comes directly from the people. He took up an ancient concept of Mencius, which urged that the people should always be regarded as the foundation of party and government policy (*yi ren*

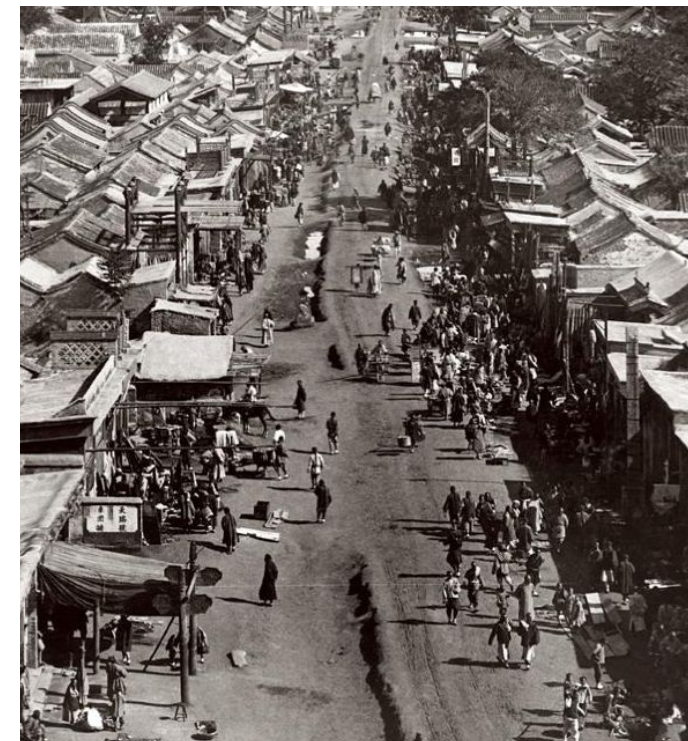
*wei ben or yi min wei ben*). In essence, the principles of solidarity, sharing and selection according to meritocratic criteria are essential to ensure social cohesion and an individual and family life characterized by well-being and harmony (Scarpari, 2013).

Xi Jinping's current slogan, "*The Chinese Dream*" also responds, although in a vague and unspecified manner, to such mission: it includes, among many themes, better education, more job opportunities and a better environment, as well as a democratic and harmonious society. In reality, the indefinite character of "*The Chinese Dream*" allows everyone to imagine and live their aspirations.

In his essays, Wang Hui (2011), a Tsinghua University professor, emphasizes the role of humanistic culture in the process of growth and innovation of Chinese civilization, pointing out that Chinese modernity is the result of an evolutionary process, that is not rooted in scientific and technological de-

velopment, in which he recognizes the superiority of the West, but in a millenary culture, that over time, has forged a thought, a spirituality and an ethics that today are revealed both in China and in international relations.

Unknown,  
old Beijing, 1920.





## Conception of Space

In Chinese culture, the concept of space accounts for a very complex phenomenon that has been the subject of analysis by philosophers and intellectuals since ancient times, as a matter of facts, the idea of space has its roots in the ancestral concepts of Taoist and Buddhist philosophies and, already in the 6th century B.C., it was well defined by the words of Laozi, the father of Taoism.

«The door and windows are cut out [from the walls] to form an apartment; but it is on the empty space [within], that its use depends. Therefore, what has a [positive] existence serves for profitable adaptation, and what has not for [actual] usefulness»<sup>1</sup>.

Walls and holes, solid spaces and empty spaces alternate to define and complete each other and to achieve harmony; the shapeless space is delimited and defined by the wall, that has the task of preserving and guarding the energy space (气). In fact, space, in Chinese culture, is considered as two-dimensional and the wall is the architectural element that contains the *qi* inside.

## Conception of Space. /

Thus, through history, the wall becomes an essential element of Chinese architecture present in every area of the city, from urban planning to residential compounds, from temple enclosures to individual homes. (Li Xiaodong, 2002) Even the new housing complexes, although adopting a western model, maintain a marked boundary, made clear by the presence of a fence that, according to tradition and culture, must preserve order, harmony and energy. In China, the wall as a metaphor, virtual and material space (a solid that delimits the void) and its various applications, still present in social and architectural practices, represents in an exemplary way the return of the stigmatized tradition:

«This examination of the persistence of the wall as a building typology in China emphasizes 'tradition' in a fast-changing society as constantly constructed and deconstructed in a perpetual flux of historical practices (...) in this ongoing process ... the same tradition may be

appropriated, rehistoricized and transplanted. With a capacity to renew itself, tradition may be held back temporarily during periods of political and social change, but rarely does it die off completely. Instead, it tends to reappear in new guises in new contexts»<sup>2</sup>.

The hole has a much more complex and dense meaning than the wall; it is the meaning of the signifier. The importance of empty space is also underlined by Buddhist philosophy:

«Oh, Sariputra. Form does not differ from the void. And the void does not differ from form. Form is void and void is form. The same is true for feelings, perceptions, volitions and consciousness»<sup>3</sup>.

Emptiness, in fact, has the same value of the form; solid and empty spaces complete themselves in order to reach perfection. The Indian Stuppa fully exemplifies this concept; in the architectural conception it is an empty dome that contains the spiritual space inside.

«Space is formless, immeasurable,

untouchable, vast and contiguous, yet at the same time perceivable and having an objective existence»<sup>4</sup>.

The space is not completely shapeless and at the same time not completely defined. In fact, there is an imperceptible energy, that fills everything, called energetic space. According to the Chinese cultural system, especially in Taoism, nothing is strictly defined. Instead, there is a constant duality and coexistence of elements, that relate to each other.

Yin and Yang (阴阳), two complementary forces that make up all aspects and phenomena of life; seemingly opposite, they are actually complementary and interrelated to one another. In this perspective, Chinese architecture perceives everything as derived from this Taoist conception, where qi (energy) generates the one, the one produces the two and the two produces the three and, finally, the three produces all things.

«All things submit to Yin and embrace Yang. They soften their energy to achieve harmony»<sup>5</sup>.

Duality must be preserved in order to achieve harmony; through the continuous interaction of these two elements a constant balance is maintained. The concept of Yin-Yang is found in both architecture and urban planning in the Chinese context. (Liu Xu, 10C)

This shows that the most valuable space for people is the empty space:

«The eternal void is filled with infinite possibilities»<sup>6</sup>.

The void is indeterminate, and this indeterminacy encloses and releases infinite possibilities. The wall defines the room of emptiness, which thus becomes the room of infinite possibilities. The empty space thus becomes a space adaptable to the needs of its users, it is defined as the stage on which life take place.

1 Laozi (6th C B.C.), *Daodejing (The Way Of The Dao)*, China

2 Dunfang L. (2006), *Remaking Chinese Urban Form : Modernity, Scarcity And Space, 1949-2005*, Routledge, London

3 Gautama Buddha, *The Heart Sutra*

4 Xiaodong L., (2002) *The Aesthetic Of The Absent, The Chinese Conception Of Space*, *The Journal Of Architecture*.

5 Laozi (6Th C Bce), *Daodejing (The Way Of The Dao)*, China.

6 Ibid.

Public space is the domain that all residents are free to use, regardless of their income levels and social characteristics

*(Kostof, 1992)*



# City Evolution

For over two thousand years, in China, the emperor has taken on an indispensable role, becoming the only intermediary between heaven and earth, the only one able to bring harmony and balance. (Steinhardt, 1990)

«The Chinese ruler was more than an absolute authority, he was considered the Son of Heaven, the intermediary between human labor and heavenly favour. His virtue and proper performance ensured the stability of the state and guaranteed a pacified world»<sup>7</sup>.

Chinese philosophy and culture have always permeated political life and the capital or the imperial city has become the material representation of temporal and spiritual power.

The city, in fact, is born and grows according to precise standardized rules derived from the strong cultural background. Some elements, such as the conformation of the urban space, some buildings and even some details have always remained unchanged thanks to the strong philosophical background. These rules and dictates can be found in the geomancy and *fengshui*, prescribed since ancient times in the *Ideal plan of an imperial city* (Cheng, 13th C.).

In China, the imperial city is more than the ruler's capital, it's an institution, it's an articulated concept for which a design is drawn and about which ideology has been written, accepted and transmitted through the ages. (Skinner, 1977)

The spatial order of the ideal imperial city, made the cosmos and earthly society coexist in a perfect geometric plan and all this has been implemented since ancient times through the work of the emperor, the only mediator among all entities. The capital has always been a complex system of meanings, people and buildings governed by ancient cultural principles. Today, although the political context has profoundly changed, these characteristics are still present in many cities as elements of an ancient cultural heritage.

Beijing, which is still today the capital, is perhaps one of the cities where the contrast between traditional and modern urban planning becomes more evident. The city has been the capital for over 500 years, since the Ming dynasty, and now it represents the result of a long architectural evolution, that shows a significant historical stratification. Until the last century, the city respected the characteristic rules of the imperial city, but now perhaps we cannot say the same. Nowadays, the legacy of the past is still well legible in the characteristic structure of the ancient city, in the outer and inner city and in the forbidden city, that still shows its ancient splendour, whereas the new expansions do not show the same principles. The reason for all this divergence is that in Beijing, society and the anthropological basin are completely different from the past and now, there are new needs and desires. For centuries it has been a gigantic city, but nothing compared to the present days. China has been facing the complex problem

of mass migration from the countryside to the city for 40 years, which entails problems of urban development, growth and contrasts. In the last century, Beijing has grown from a population of about one million inhabitants to over 20 million in 2016 and with 40 million mobile phones active every day. This huge expansion has blown up and lost most of the building and design principles in the planning and maintenance of the capital. But some intrinsic features in Chinese culture remain legible. Today Beijing is a city fortified by urban highways, in which the wall has taken on a new spatial conformation, this element has undergone a transposition and transformation; the ancient wall has become the motorway ring. In the centre of Beijing remains the imperial city as a symbol of a culture from which to start and build a new future.

«Ideally the Chinese imperial city was planned in entirety from its inception and was constructed beginning with the outer wall. At times building inside the outer wall occurred before the enclosure was complete, but the size and shape of the wall, and thus the enormous size of imperial city in China, were rarely accidental»<sup>8</sup>.

This means that all the principles of the capital are enclosed within the wall, the expansion outside is something different but indisputable. After the fall of the Imperial society

and later with the Communist Party, the city changed according to the growing needs of society and the subsequent Beijing Masterplans represent all these changes from 1949 until now.

There is a legible relationship between the Presidents of the People's Republic of China and the evolution of the city and the masterplans fully represent their political ideas of development and they become manifestos of their program.

According to Gu Chaolin, Yuan Xiaohui and Guo Jing (2015) it is possible to highlight four different stages of the city's development.

In the first (1949 -1978) the Capital was thought as a Productive City, an idea that comes from Soviet urban planning. The main focuses were the construction of medium and large industries and the division of the city in urban functional areas connected by a massive urban transport infrastructure.

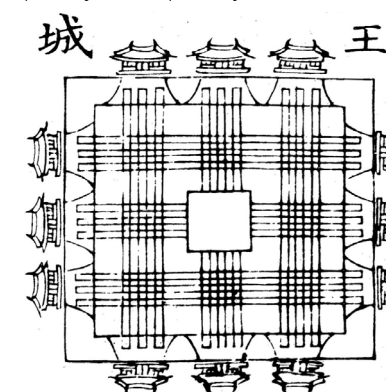
The second phase can be contextualized from 1978 to the end of the '80s; this period was characterized by a political transition after Mao Tse Tung's death. Under the influence of Deng Xiaping started the process of opening up. The city lived a short period of Planned Anarchy that laid the foundations for a great economic and urban growth.

During the third phase (late 1980s -2000), the city's project was reflecting the great economic and social expansion, with a special

focus on environmental and sustainable issues.

The fourth period instead laid the foundations to make Beijing the global capital, increasingly interconnected with the rest of the world, a representation of a new form of megalopolis. Emblematic of this great idea are the 2008 Summer Olympics Games, with their infrastructures, airports, skyscrapers and buildings, designed by world-wide-known designers, which have contributed to the process of definition of the contemporary city's identity. Beijing is thought of as a great centre of material and immaterial flows, of global exchanges of goods, ideas and people.

In recent years, the project, which aims to create the most important megalopolis in the world, has been accompanied by greater attention to detail, quality of life and respect for nature. Man is once again the centre around which urban development revolves. We are facing a phase in which quality becomes priority over quantity.



Wangcheng,  
Plan of an ideal city,  
Song dynasty.

7 Steinhardt N. (1990), *Chinese Imperial City Planning*, University Of Hawaii Press, Honolulu.

8 Ibid.

## Beijing Master Plans

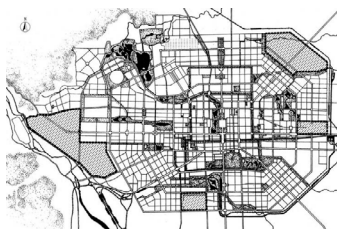
1950-2016

## President of the People's Republic of China

1949-2020

1953-1954./  
Discrete zones

Center of the whole country, communal living; socialist city; strong industrial, technological, science center.



Mao Tse-tung

1957-1958./  
Satellite pattern

Political, cultural and education center eliminating the three contradictions; increasingly socialist city serving industrial and agricultural production; rapidly developing into a modern industrial base.



Mao Tse-tung

Mao Tse-tung

Mao Tse-tung

1982-2000./  
Dispersed costellation

Renowned, historical, cultural city with hi-tech industry and functioning as the capital of the nation.



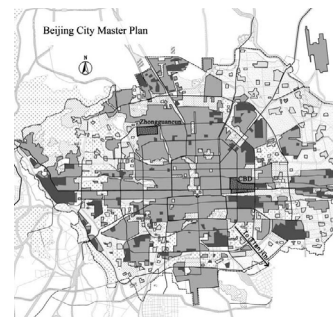
Liu Shaoqi

Li Xiannian

Yang Shangkun

1991-2010./  
Transportation

Modernized international city of the first rank; hi-tech, tertiary industries the degree norm experience involves the degree.



Yang Shangkun

Jiang Zemin

Jiang Zemin

2004-2020./  
Two axis - Two belt

Green city, ecological city, humanistic city, habitable city.

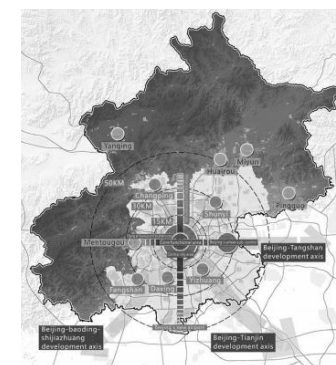


Hu Jintao

Hu Jintao

2016-2035./  
World-class city

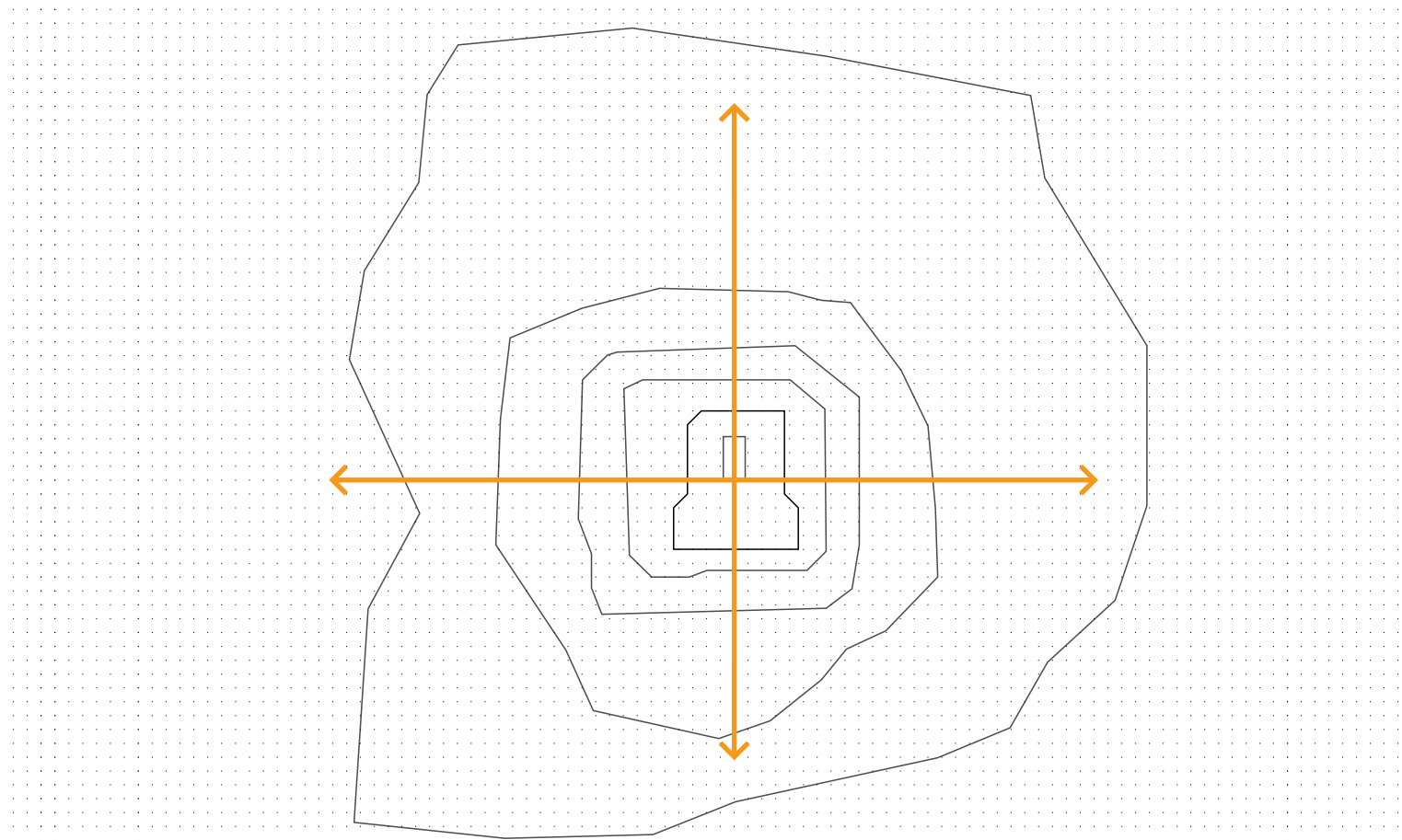
one core, one centre, one sub-centre, two axes, multiple new towns and one area.



Xi Jinping

Xi Jinping

How is the City  
evolving now?



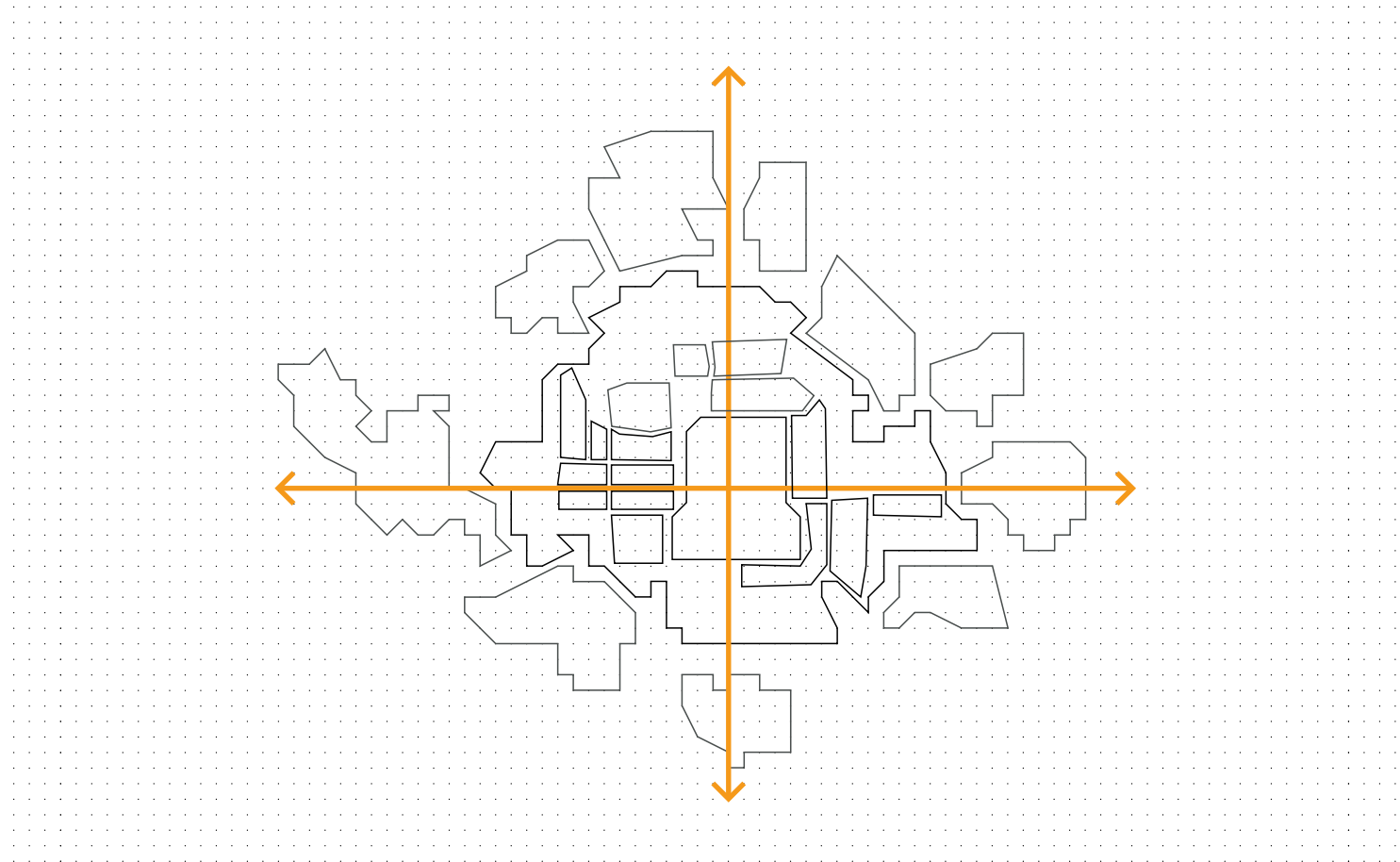
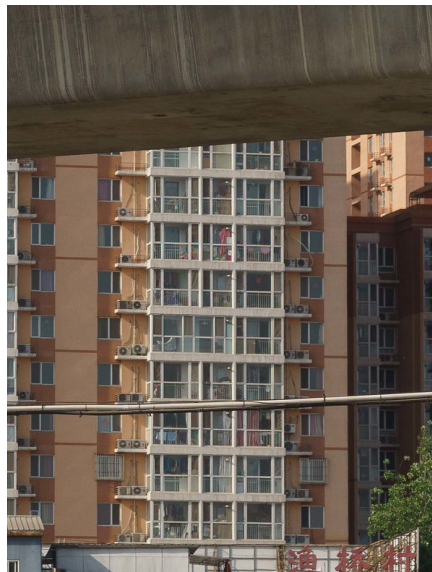
Highway system. /

■

The highway system represents the contemporary concept of the wall, an infrastructure that enclose the city in separated rings.

■





Separated island. /

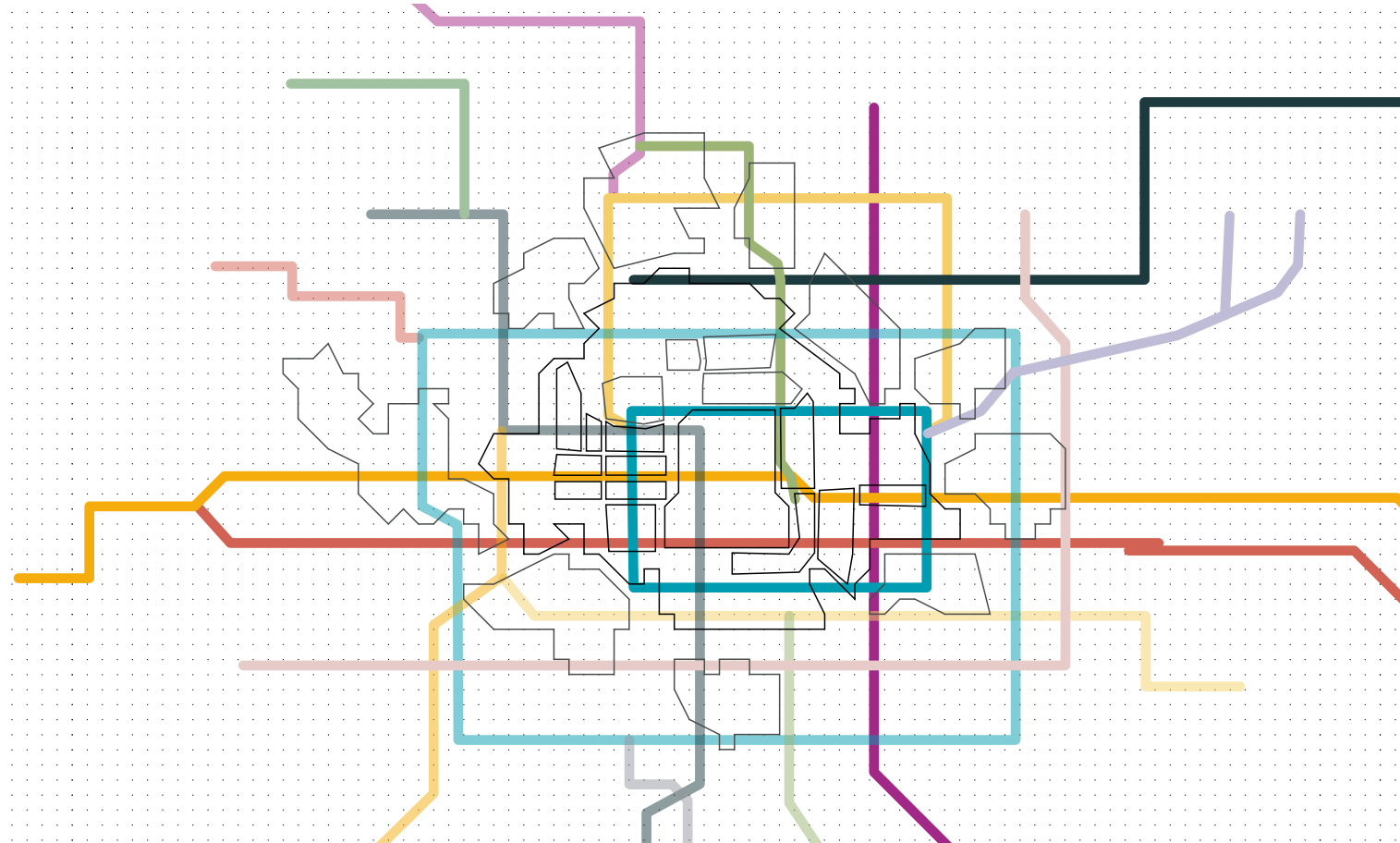


Inside the rings an other layer of wall divide the city in smaller island, each one mainly autonomous from the others





The Floating Piers, Christo e Jeanne-Claude, 2016

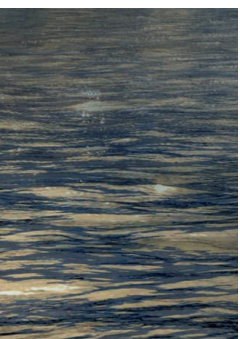
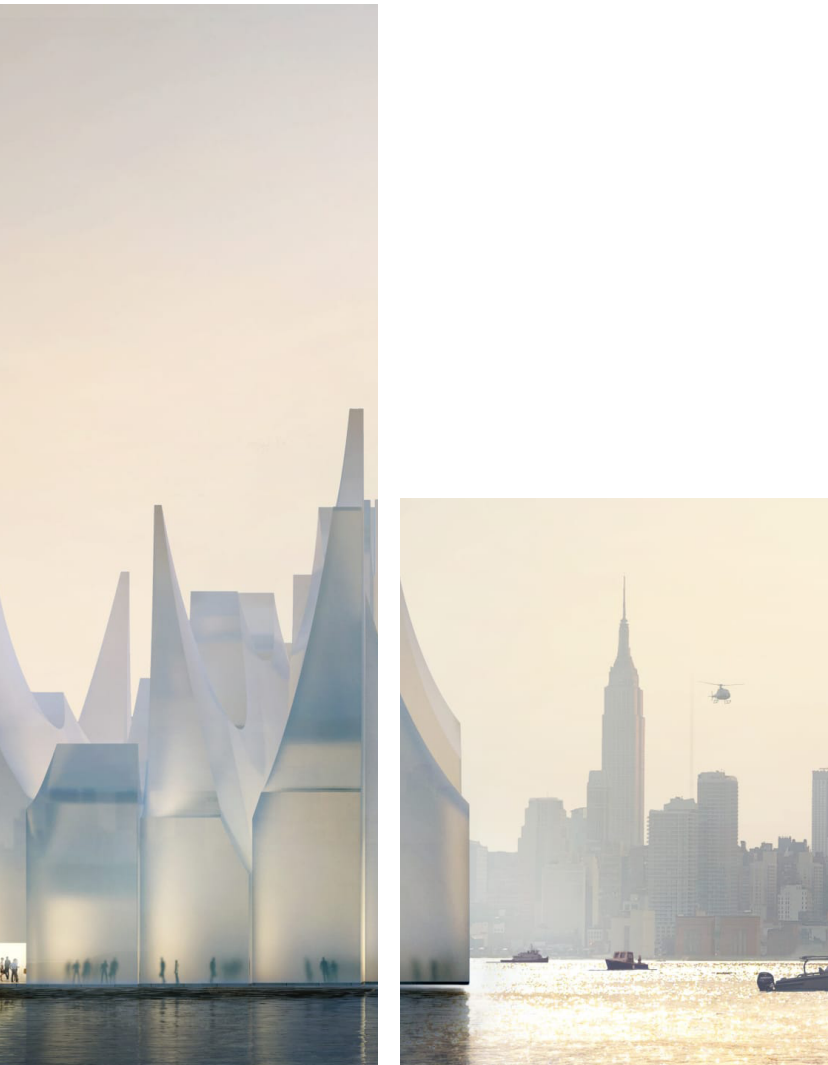


### Connecting layer. /

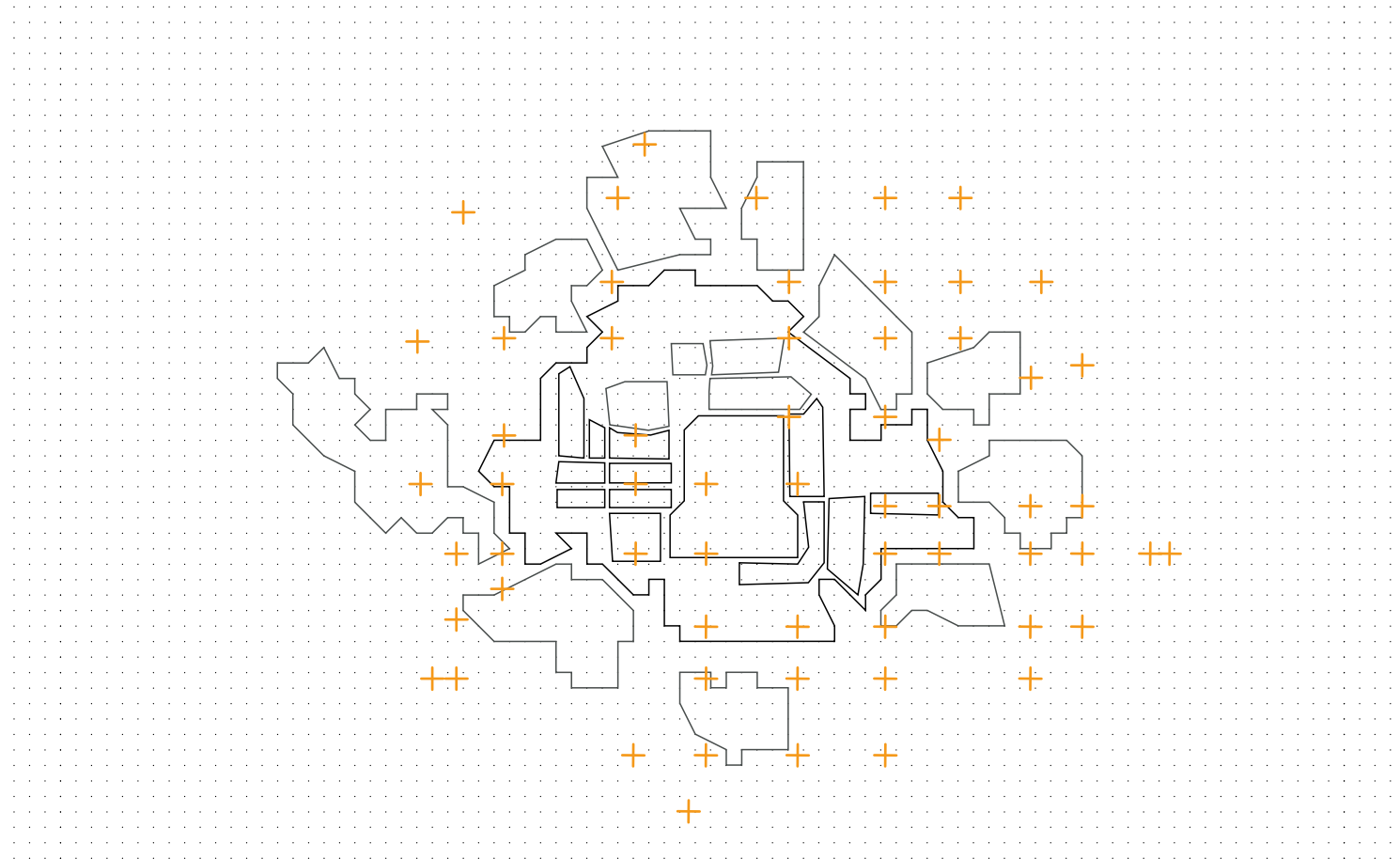


All the island are hold together through the subway infrastructure. The metro layer works as a network of people and places.  
The daily passengers is 10.544 million (2018 daily avg.)





Earth Station, Michele De Lucchi, 2018



## Hubs. /



The final focus is represented by the metro hubs, places able to catch a lot of people's attention. Spaces that connects different users and where life can take place.



Hubs:  
are they the centre of  
interaction?

■

Mass train station are the new  
public space in gloabal cities.  
Functioning as a modern urban  
*agorà*.

*(Lewis, 2003)*





SPACE OF PUBLIC

Daniel Campo,  
The Accidental Playground,  
2013



## Space of Public

**A**t an encyclopaedic level, the expression public space means, first of all, «the set of streets, open spaces, squares, parking lots, parks, gardens that separate buildings or groups of buildings at the same time as they relate to each other».<sup>1</sup>

It is a physical place characterized by a collective social use where everyone has the right to move or dialogue, the space of the society or community that differs from the private space reserved for personal life.

According to Gian Battista Nolli in *Nuova Pianta di Roma* published in 1748, public space is a system of urban voids and solid forms of different dimensions that represent, so to speak, the negative of the built environment.

The concept of public space is a product of Western civilization derived from the notion of *agorà*, the place of citizens's interaction in ancient Greece. Habermas argued that it was the *agorà*, the space-time and mental construct with all the ongoing socio-political interactions taking place that led to the birth of the public realm and of phenomena such as civil society and democracy (Habermas, 1989). The *agorà* is the concretization of man's need: to use the space in order to share with others. The concept of public space involves different aspects of physical and social life.

Space means an area or an environment in which activities or interactions can take place; the term public turns the attention to the shared nature of things and thoughts.

Public therefore includes streets, squares, parks, beaches, government and privately owned buildings, religious places and all areas and buildings characterized by free access and also all structures accessible to all or some members of society (Zygaldo, 2017). A crucial feature to define public space is its relationship with the public realm described by Lofland (1973).



## Definition. /

«Realms are not geographically or physically rooted pieces of space. They are social, not physical, territories»<sup>2</sup>, intended as a public discussion forum (Habermas, 1998). Professionals and academics have begun to «conceive spaces that are at once accessible to everyone and which also foster a sense of shared concern, the emergence of a local public sphere»<sup>3</sup>.

Public space can therefore be defined as any form of space that fully or partially promotes a sense of sharing. The accessibility is a focal theme; it can be free, moderate or negotiated. The latter peculiarities, especially in relation to the continuous growing of private property or the increasing physical control of space, are the ones that are most prevalent in a large number of public areas. We can say that what makes space public is more a shared image rather than a physical here and now (Zygaldo, 2017).

Accessible areas, but delimited by well-defined boundaries and with limited capacity to accommodate people, such as schools, hospitals and even buses are clear examples of public spaces; public spa-

ce is a place accessible in some way.

The French philosopher Henry Lefebvre went even further, by arguing that public space is *the right to the city*: the right of the inhabitants to have better control on the production of space for their daily lives. In Lefebvre's thought, public space is an object of creative transformation that remains in a dialectical relationship with the notions of power and control (Lefebvre, 1991).

*The right to the city* offers the inhabitants the possibility to use urban spaces, to adapt them to their needs and to transform them by following an idea of sharing and accessibility.

The urban public space thus becomes the theatre in which life takes place and in which public life becomes active and creative.

Cities need libraries, parks, schools, playgrounds, streets, sidewalks, swimming pools, religious places, community spaces, markets, squares that generate a social infrastructure (Latham, Layton, 2019).

Social infrastructure refers to the network of spaces, structures, institutions and groups that create affordance for social connections (Cavan 1966, Gans 1962, Jacobs 1961, Liebow 1967).

These places are not only useful for the function they perform, but because they allow people to socialize and connect with others

(Latham, Layton 2019).

They are spaces that create affordance for people to be among other people, endorsing the intrinsic nature of man as social animal (Aristotle, 4th century B.C.).

The public space is therefore an arena of social interactions for which it is necessary, or at least very desirable, the presence in a real physical space in which ideas and thought can also be shared, so that a mental landscape will manifest, thus allowing the active or consensual participation of bystanders.

The public space is always perceived in different ways according to cultures, traditions, environment, social and economic conformations, so that in every time and in every part of the world it is possible to find out the birth and development of public realms, that have unique and distinct peculiarities. In the specific case of the Chinese context, for example, theoretical discussions on what public space is, are relatively recent, due to the rapid evolution of the city and the society in the past seventy years. Nevertheless, the evolution is not just a great urban growth, but also of an essential change in the social and economic structure (Hassentpflug, 2010).

In recent decades, we have witnessed a delocalisation of public realm, which has lost its physicality form to acquire a new virtual

image; this new space has made it possible to connect people, times and spaces in a single place and makes the different cultures interact with each other to reach a global heritage; in this way people become citizen of the world of a cosmopolitan society, where, however, there is no direct contact with the other (Mehta, 2013).

Digital space has become the place where values and ideas are shared, but it has also caused physical isolation (Wellman, 2001) by connecting people who are physically alone and no longer aware of their role and task in society. Some physical and mental aspects, that have always characterized human nature, such as tolerance, sensitivity to others, instinct and imprinting, are unconsciously lost. The physical presence in public allows people to get to know each other and to have a more critical view of the context in which they are living.

«Urban public space is the single most important element in establishing a city's livability»<sup>5</sup>.

3 Tonnelat, S. (2010). *The sociology of urban public space*. In H. Wang, M. Savy, & G. F. Zhai (Eds.), *Territorial evolution and planning solution: Experiences from China and France*, (pp. 1–10). Paris: Atlantis Press.

4 Lennard, Suzanne H. Crowhurst (1995), *Liveable cities observed : a source book of images and ideas for city officials, community leaders, architects, planners and all others committed to making their cities liveable*, Gondolier, Carmel Calif

1 Public space (2020), <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/public%20space>, accessed: 03/06/2020

2 Lofland, L. H. (1973). *A world of strangers: Order and action in urban public space*, Basic Books, New York.

■

The public space is important because this is where we come into active or passive contact with strangers and “others”, people unlike ourselves who may have a different view of the world, who may be more or less fortunate, even those who are down on their luck. Sharing the space with strangers is important. This is how we become tolerant, how we learn about new viewpoints and new ways of perceiving the world around us, and become innovative. This is how society in general becomes more complex but richer, and how it advances culture.

*(Mehta, 2013)*



## Social Space

### (Social)

*space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: instead, it subsumes things produced and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity - their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object. At the same time, there is nothing imagined, unreal or 'ideal' about it as compared, for example, with science, representations, ideas, or dreams. Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others. Among these actions, some serve production, others consumption (i.e., the enjoyment of the fruits of production). Social space implies a great diversity of knowledge. What then is its exact status?*

*(Lefebvre, 1991)*

### A story. /

The concepts of public space, community space and social space, which in most Western countries have been defined and established over the centuries, in China, due to its recent and rapid development, are still evolving. In contemporary China, the lifestyle, needs and aspirations of the population are constantly changing and with these also the connotations and themes related to public space. The public realm (Habermas, 1989) has been constantly mutating since the beginning of modernity and is transforming according to the experiences of the Chinese people (Gaubatz, 2008).

The historical structure of the city is the spatial reflection of the traditional social structure based on the family and the community. In fact, the introverted organization of the city is the physically representation of the enclosure of society in small communities. After China's opening up to the market economy, which led to a Capitalism with

Chinese Characteristics, the idea of community has gradually faded into the larger of society and Chinese city has experienced a consistent extroversion of its space.

In Imperial China, space was divided and defined efficiently and rigorously according to the concept of society which was precisely divided into classes (Gaubatz, 2008). Most of the activities took place in introverted spaces. The whole city was surrounded by walls, the neighbourhoods, the traditional courtyard houses, the walls enclosed almost every urban space, even parks and squares were accessible only through gates.

The spaces for public life were introverted, such as temples, where people gathered for fairs and religious events, or markets, theaters and even tea houses. These places were fundamental for public relations, and they assumed the role of public realms.

After the cultural revolution in 1949, the socialist power introduced a new concept of *res publica* and public space: masses became the main protagonist for which new

spaces were specially designed. Many introverted and tangled parts of the cities were demolished to make room for large streets, squares, huge monuments to proudly and majestically represent the new image of society.

These places were designed for the representation of power, aimed to allow mass gatherings and were not intended for everyday recreational activities or spontaneous and casual social relations.

Just think of the striking example of Tiananmen Square, designed as an expression of the New China, the representative place of the new course of history (Lee, 2009).

«In some ways public space was even more restrictive in the New China than it had been during the imperial age»<sup>6</sup>.

Due to its majesty, formality and opulence, public space paradoxically becomes extremely restrictive and inaccessible to active social life. Moreover, during the Maoist period, self-sufficient compounds inspired by the Soviet Union, the

*danwei*, were introduced (Bonino/Depieri, 2015). These parts of the city were closed structures that included housing, work units and recreational functions and as a result, public spaces in the socialist city were relatively empty: streets and boulevards were free from the diurnal commuter throngs of capitalist cities, where social life took place in squares, shopping centre and parks (Campanella, 2008).

A new spatial concept was introduced with the era of post-1978 reforms: a process that consisted in a considerable opening towards the West which ensured strong economic development. According to Bin and Qinfan (2008), the development of urban space in post-reformist China followed three phases. In the first phase (1978-1991) the strength and political value of space have relatively vanished in favor of a new attention to the landscape and to new spatial standards focused on the new needs of men; a first opening to capitalism took place and were introduced American-style shopping malls.

6 Gaubatz, P. (2008). "New public space in urban China: Fewer walls, more malls in Beijing, Shanghai and Xining". *China Perspectives*, 4(1), 72-83.

During the 1990s, the process of globalization strongly involved China and the design of public spaces was essentially inspired by Western models. Squares, promenades, western-style commercial spaces were introduced throughout China. Finally, from 2000 onwards, more and more importance was given to environmental and qualitative aspects of life, in pursuance of a growing and conscious respect for nature, there was an increase in green areas as places of aggregation.

The public space in contemporary China reflects all its complex history, from its extreme introversion to its sought-after internationalisation, where traditional walls have been replaced by fences and restrictive and access control measures; an example is Tiananmen Square, which is great in size but absolutely not suitable for life due also to restrictive control measures. Tiananmen Square is therefore a space full of symbolic meanings but, in its width, empty, unusable and unused (Lee, 2009).

It is a representative but not sui-

table space for life, in the sense that it is strongly politically connoted but not as a social entity. The square is home to very important events, which, are loved by the population, but do not arise spontaneously from their creativity, in fact Tiananmen Square was born as a place of political propaganda and not as a place dedicated to active socialization.

So it is not so simple for an urban space in China to be perceived and recognized as significant unless it has a strong symbolic or commercial value.

Hassenpflug in *The Urban Code of China* argues that the space enclosed by the walls has a greater meaning because it is characterized by a function, whereas the open space is perceived as vague, lacking in content, thus becoming an indefinite area.

«The space that fills the expanse between meaningful space with nothing»<sup>7</sup>.

We can say that, vague space is a place of possibilities, ideas, and unexpected manifestations; it is



the place of freedom that, time to time, people define and model by attributing different functions and meanings.

«Public urban spaces with a welcoming character, purposely designed for encounter, meeting, communication, scheduled and spontaneous gathering, for playing or simply for seeing and being seen, are still scarce in China. [...] However, due to lack of suitable places, we see people exercising, playing, or dancing beneath

highway bridges, on abandoned parking lots, or noisy traffic island»<sup>8</sup>. Public space, in order to be really publicly used, does not have to be binding, the unplanned spaces are completely free from constraints and therefore free to be colonized. Spaces free from values, previously assigned by others, can become everything people want, from the dining room to the open-air cinema, from the place for business meetings to the bedroom.

The perfectly structured and total-



<sup>7</sup> Hassenpflug D., (2010). *The Urban Code of China*. Birkhauser Basel.

Unknown, City of Ordos, 2017

Unknown, Wangfujing Shopping street in Beijing, 2017





### Three problems. /

These three factors, combined with the lack of attention to quality and real needs of citizens, are causing the abandonment of canonical public space, the one that is set, delimited, controlled, characterized by precise functions.

The space characterized by monumentality is a representation of the power and wealth, that a city holds as an attractive element for tourists and investors, who are struck by the importance and magnificence of the space itself, but where the interventions offer very little to the citizens as places for everyday life.

«The reason is to impress some passing spectators without a real improvement for the whole city, planners have to concentrate resources on a limited number of places and the size of each project must be huge to create a captivating effect»<sup>10</sup>.

Unknown,  
People playing  
Pokemon Go, 2016

8 Hassenplug D.,  
(2010). *The Urban  
Code of China*.  
Birkhauser Basel.

9 Miao P. (2011)  
*Brave New City:  
Three Problems in  
Chinese Urban Public  
Space since  
the 1980s*, *Journal  
of Urban Design*,  
179-207.

ly defined public space does not attract people, as Pu Miao pointed out, who defined three major issues: *Window-dressing*, *Privatization* and *Gentrification* (Miao, 2011).

«Window-dressing prevails in government-developed squares and parks. Their locations and monumentality have made residents less willing to use these spaces. Privatization describes how private developers maximize profits at the

cost of public life in the urban environment surrounding their projects. Gentrification, different from its meaning in the West, refers to the tendency to ignore the needs of mid- and low-income residents in public facilities. Not entirely a repetition of the 1950s Western urban renewal, the Chinese cases reflect a society changing from a socialist system to a capitalist one»<sup>9</sup>.

«Capital creates environmental forms against the interests of most residents to applaud the irrational demands of a minority (commercial tenants / property buyers), in order to maximize its short-term profits at the expense of the wider environment. Although the local government often partners with the private developer, the goal of these projects is mainly profit»<sup>11</sup>.

Commercial public space is an increasingly common situation in Chinese cities and particularly in Beijing, where areas such as Qianmen and Wangfujing are the representation of an increasing privatization, where open space is a rip-off to satisfy commercial uses. The uncontrolled privatization is due to the inability of the public sector to find agreements with private developers; Rowe (1999) in *Civic Realism*, highlights how the limited experience, not more than thirty years, of public-private partnerships, leaves a lot of freedom of intervention to the investors, without therefore the possibility of control by the public sector. The third idea that Pu Miao pointed out is the lack of attention to

the needs of low-income society: public space in China is something that excludes the poorer social classes, which thus take possession of this vague space and bring it to life, making it a place where synergies meet.

In fact, the Chinese love to stay outdoors and enjoy collective activities. Just walking through the cities it is possible to meet people who practice Thai qi near the flowerbeds, old people playing cards on the sidewalks, young people exercising on the roadside or in any other available space, people playing mahjong in the most unlikely places, even under urban highways (Fang 2017).

The way people live outdoors reflects the traditional centrality of the community: the streets and avenues become alive with people chatting and playing on street corners carrying tables, chairs and sofas, women hanging laundry outside, children playing under the watchful eye of their grandparents. It is also very common to meet people who carry out small work activities in the public space: barbers, dentists, masseurs and knife sharpeners, or even people who impro-

vise restaurants on the sidewalks, bringing everything they need, from barbecues to chairs and tables.

All these images show how open urban space is often used as an extension of the house, commercial activity and laboratory and how it is full of meanings: people take possession of the common space by exporting their intimacy on the street and involving others in the most personal practices. This mechanism of informal appropriation gives these spaces an extraordinary vitality and, in my opinion, a comforting sense of place.

It is fascinating to come across noises, smells, voices, which trigger emotions and involve every sensorial sphere.

These spontaneous activities are the central theme of public space and it is interesting to study them in order to understand what connotations and values are attributed to them.

For this reason I decided to analyze some places and some informal activities that almost by chance sprout in the city of Beijing, in order to try to understand what are the dictates that make people live the public space so intensely.

10 Miao P. (2011) *Brave New City: Three Problems in Chinese Urban Public Space since the 1980s*, *Journal of Urban Design*, 179-207.

11 Ibid.

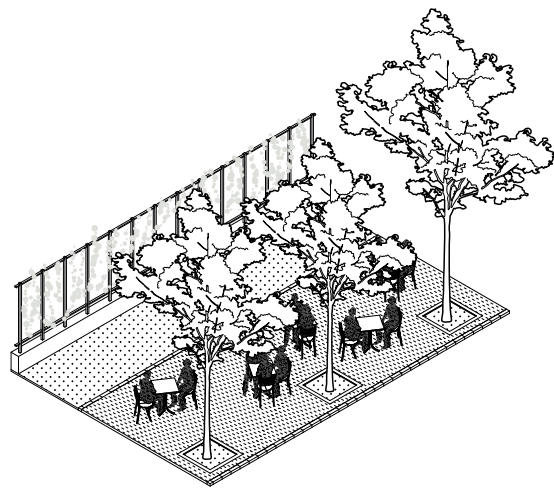
How people interact?



## Life At The Side

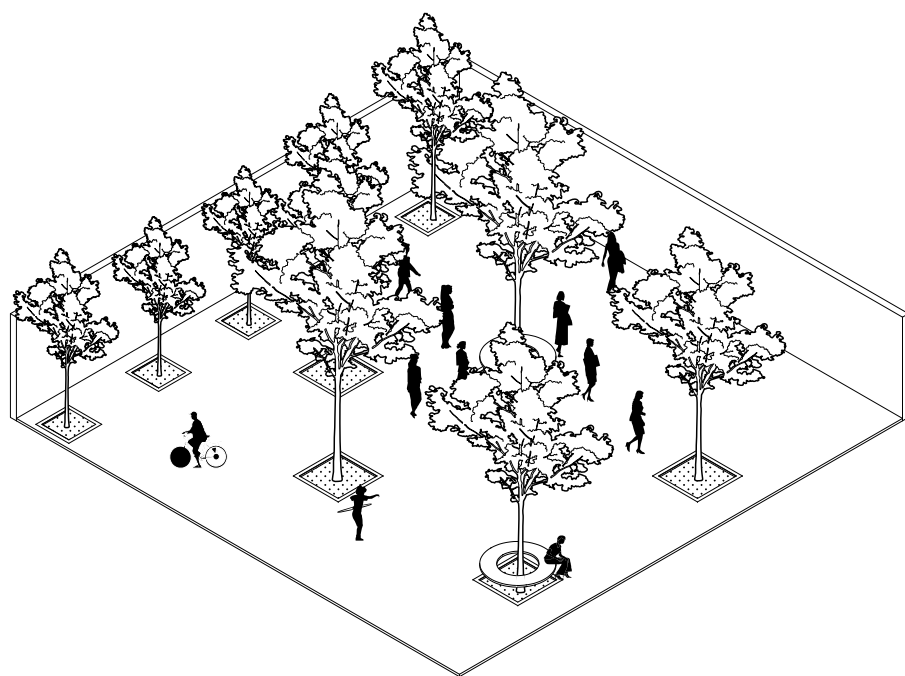
*Decomporre è quindi uno actu comporre. Ri-comporre. Ri-determinare altri contesti topologici. Se si vuole: produrre altre ipertrofie. O altri frammenti. Frammenti di un tempo che non ha percorsi obbligati – ma la libertà dello spazio aperto a ogni cammino. Questa la libertà della topologia: la libertà dello spazio.*

*(Vitiello, 1994)*



Domino player

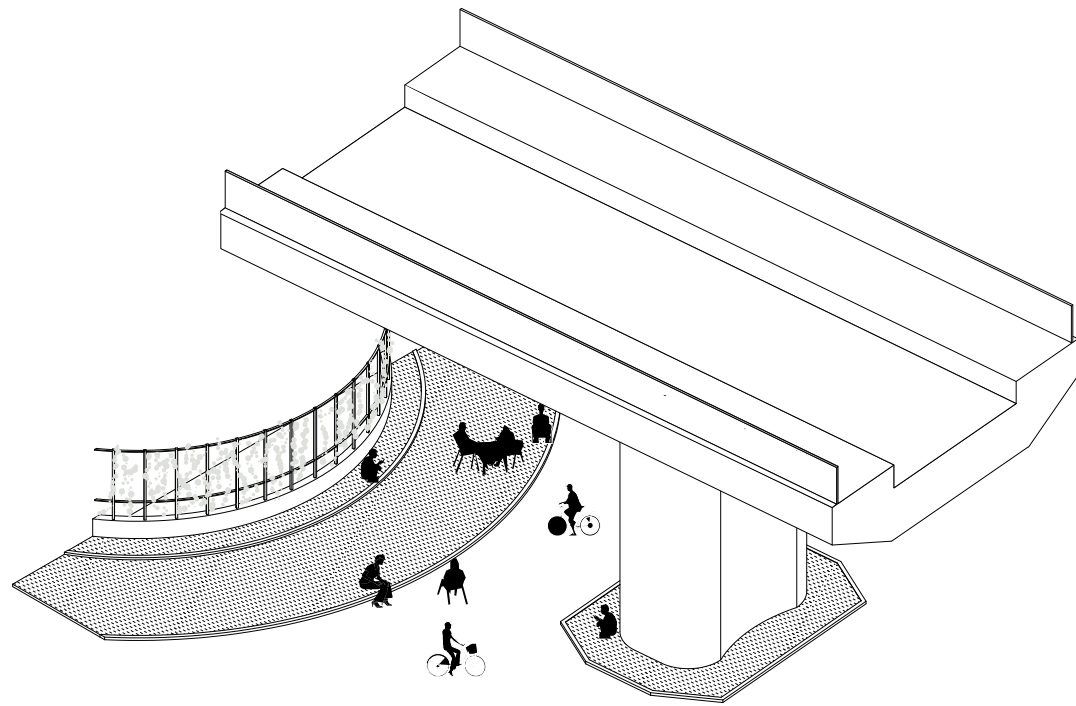




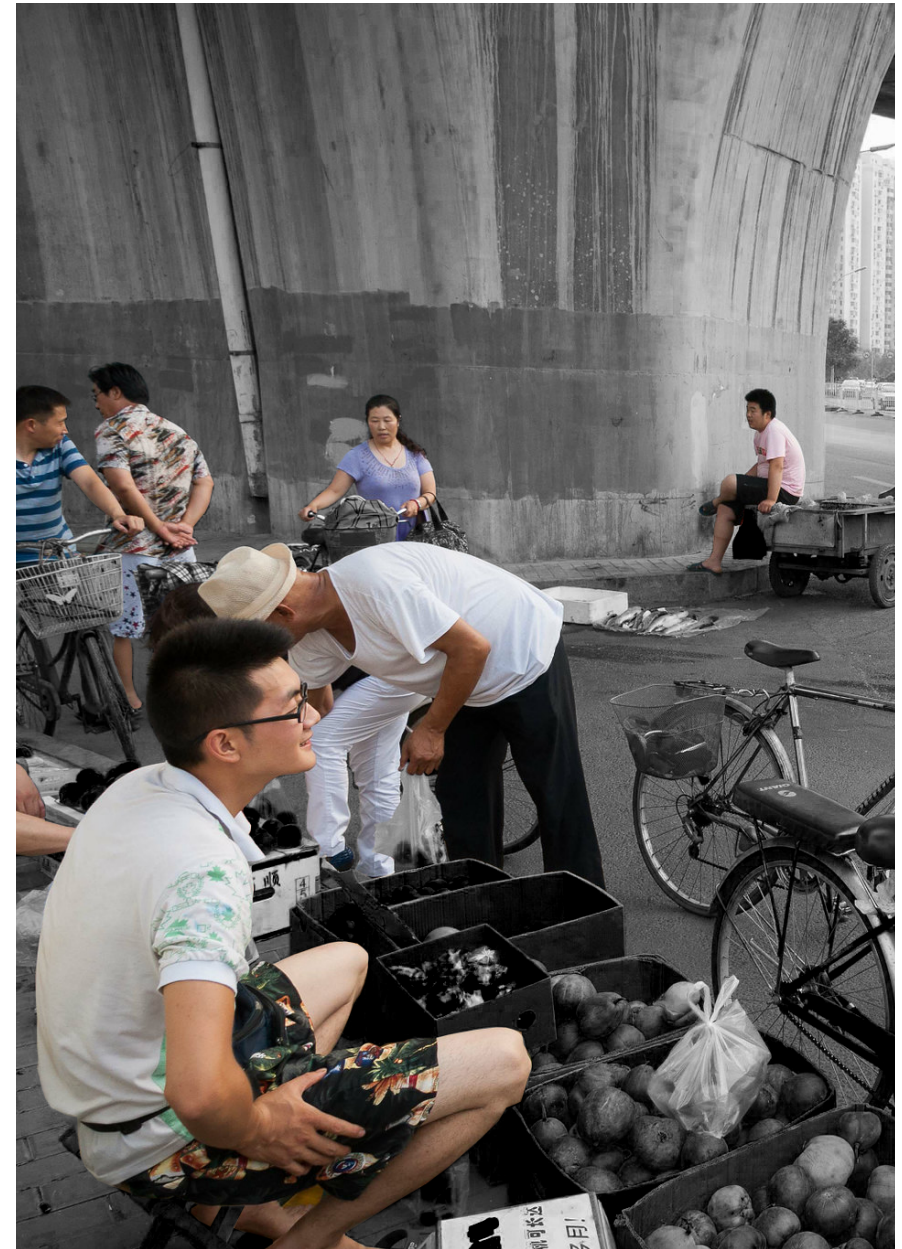
Dancer and thai qi

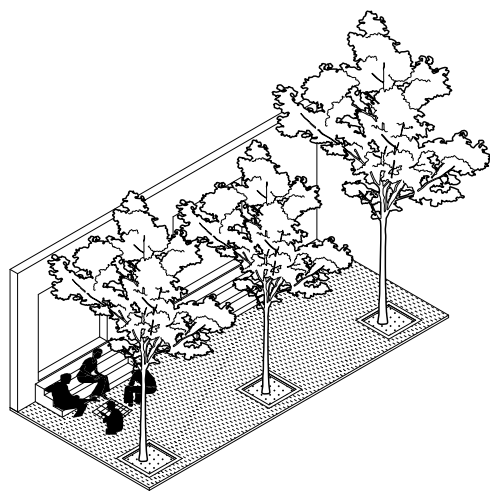






Food Market

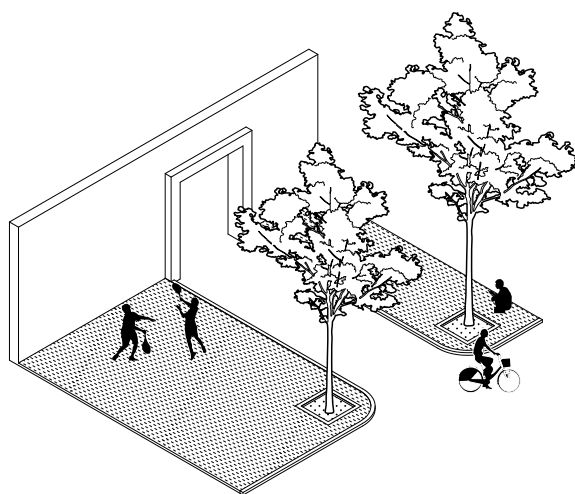




Mahjong player

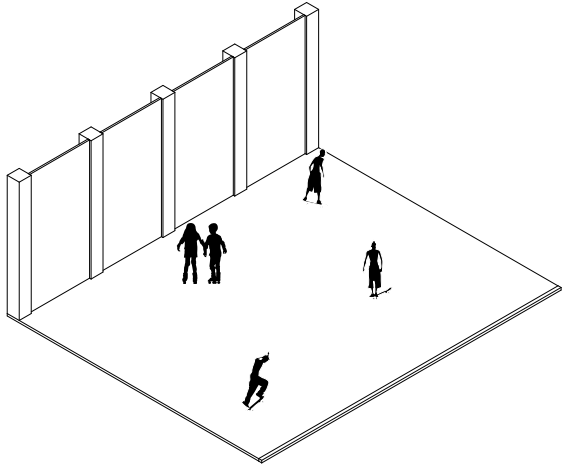






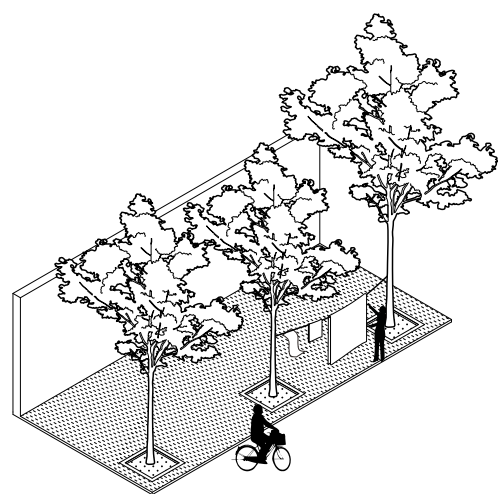
Street football





Rollerblader

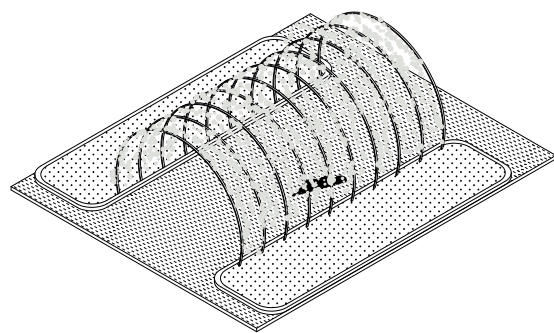




Drying rack







Sleeping area



—

### Life at the side. /

**A**lthough the Chinese city is becoming more and more dehumanizing and a negative place for social interactions and cultural growth (Carmona, 2002; Friedmann, 2007; Campanella, 2008), it is in the hidden spaces, the unplanned ones, the dodgy ones, where conviviality and a sense of community are best expressed. For this reason, I decided to study and analyze those spaces that, designed for a function, are colonized for limited periods of time by people who perform completely different activities. The spontaneous process is here the expression of society; people colonize a place, assign functions to it, and then define them with values. The chosen cases do not want to create an abacus of possible acti-

vities to be carried out in the public space; they want to investigate the spatial relations that exist between elements in order to understand if and which relations there are between spontaneous occupation and spatial qualities of the occupied place. The examples show people dancing in the streets, playing cards on the steps of a sidewalk, practicing on the corners and, time to time, describing their interpretation of place. The case studies show that what people are looking for is an intimate, almost private environment, a place where they can express their vision and idea of community. The role of trees, which limit the view or even the protection offered by the urban highway bridge, but also the walls and fences are elements that delimit the space (Ghel, 1987) and make it intimate, suitable to be lived in a new and unexpected perspective. The fundamental character that emerges from this analysis is that the functions do not define space, but are the people who define it through their uses. Space changes with its occupants: they make it

public, intimate, open, private, stage, reflecting on it their own image, almost an external appendage of their home to be shared with the rest of the community. In this way a shared intimacy is created, in which public space truly assumes its ancestral and primitive role, the place of exchanging ideas, thoughts and goods (Habermas, 1989). Public space is ephemeral and this is the fundamental characteristic that distinguishes it from the generic open space. Public space exists when it is defined by people, when user assign a concrete and symbolic value, full of meaning and signifier, through their occupation; people are the architects and they give form to public space. The distortion of Ugo la Pietra's objects is the emblematic realization of this concept: the artist selects objects, extrapolates them from their context, releases them from their previously assigned values and functions, thus making the objects free to become what the artist desires. Everyone can be Ugo la Pietra, free to reinterpret the extrinsic nature of things and to become the creator of a continuous rebirth of pre-existing objects.

This process of abstraction and reinterpretation is clear in the city of Beijing, where users release space from previous values and make it, for a limited period of time, what they want. In the *The Savage Mind* (1962) Claude Lévi-Strauss writes: «The bricoleur is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks; but, unlike the engineer, he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project. His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with "whatever is at hand", that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relations to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasion there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or distractions»<sup>12</sup>. According to Lévi-Strauss, humanity does not univocally manifest its own thought, even though it is a common attribute; it is the contingent necessity which allows different ideas to flow from time to time. The philosopher says that there is no distinction between the thought of primitive and modern man; the former is an original, instinctive, spontaneous thought, dictated by

12 Lévi-Strauss C. (1962), *La pensée sauvage*, The Garden City Press Limited Letchworth, Hertfordshire, pp.30-31.



Alberto Burri,  
Sacco rosso, 1954

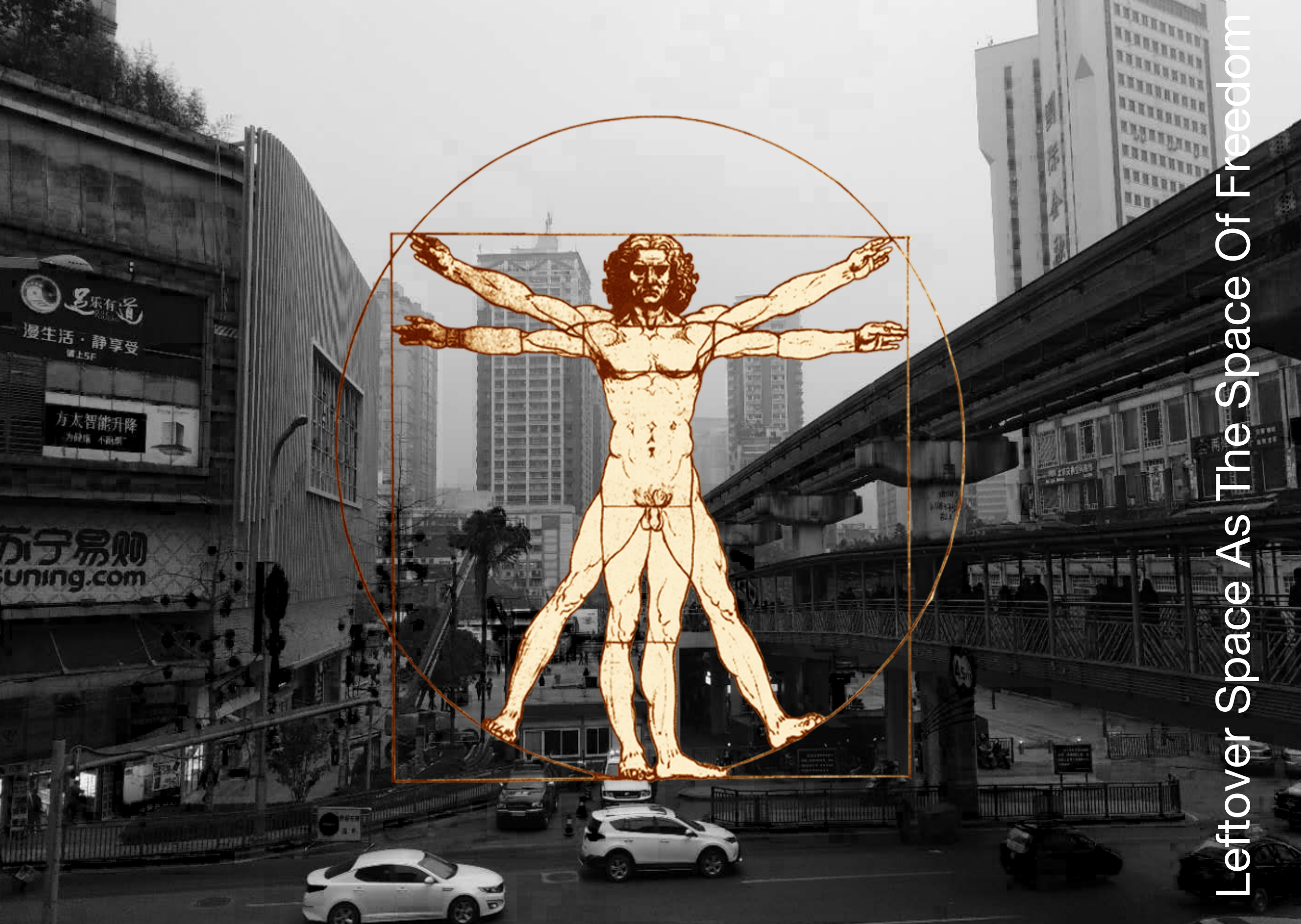
a momentary necessity, the other is structured, rationally defined and cultivated. But wild thought is as complex and rich as scientific rational thought, their diversity can be found in the way they approach the world of things; the former faces complexity without seeking theories, looks at the world in a concrete way, while the latter faces it in a more abstract way. In practice, Lévi-Strauss distinguishes

between the savant (scientist) and the bricoleur for the inverse functions that they assign to the event and structure, in the final instrumental order. One, in fact, brings to light events through structures, the other, the bricoleur, structures through events. This thought is extremely topical and can be deduced from the creation and use of space.

The designer, therefore, defines the space through structures equipping it with functions, the user then structures it through the expression of needs or contingent necessities. A staircase, for example, is designed to allow vertical circulation but can become a seat, a reading corner, a parkour gym, an auditorium for theatrical or cinematographic show, a place to rest, or who knows what other function it

can have to satisfy someone's needs. There are, however, structural, architectural or urban elements that contain such deeply rooted meanings and values that it becomes almost impossible and almost sacrilegious to give them a new image. For example, in the Western Catholic Christian world, it is almost inconceivable to distort buildings such as churches; these sacred places will not be able to accommodate spontaneous functions as long as history and society attribute such deeply rooted values to them.





Leftover Space As The Space Of Freedom

Ugo La Pietra,  
Barriera antiterrorismo / Poltrona,  
2017



Ugo La Pietra - Lelli Masotti Silvia  
Paletti e catene,  
1980



How to allow  
spontaneous uses in  
a design environment?



# 03. /

## FREESPACE







I prefer drawing to talking.  
Drawing is faster, and leaves less  
room for lies.

*(Le Corbusier)*

## Methodology. /

The tool that has been used to deal with issues concerning space and its uses is Research by Design, a research method in which design plays an essential role. It constitutes a path through which new knowledge, thoughts and processes take shape, a critical act that allows to read architecture by directly comparing it with its spatial, distributive, formal and compositional characteristics. All the projects are organized in chapters that, from time to time, express and research different themes. These redesigns create the toolbox, each chapter represents a tool; the first chapter focuses on the importance of scale in architectural project, the second draws the attention on the idea that people make their own space, the third chapter investigates the archetype of playground and the fourth one focuses on the idea of freedom. The toolbox is therefore the theoretical-graphical basis from which the architectural project takes shape. This album becomes the basis from which the project is born.

I wanted to re-draw the architecture of designers that I considered emblematic for their ability to produce projects that are not an end in themselves, but rather put people at the center. Projects that treat space as the place where society lives, projects born from the idea that space cannot be defined by pre-assigned functions, but built for the users who will shape it as they want. This concept is already evident in Iñigo Bujedo Aguirre's pictures in which the subjects are not the buildings but the people who inhabit them.

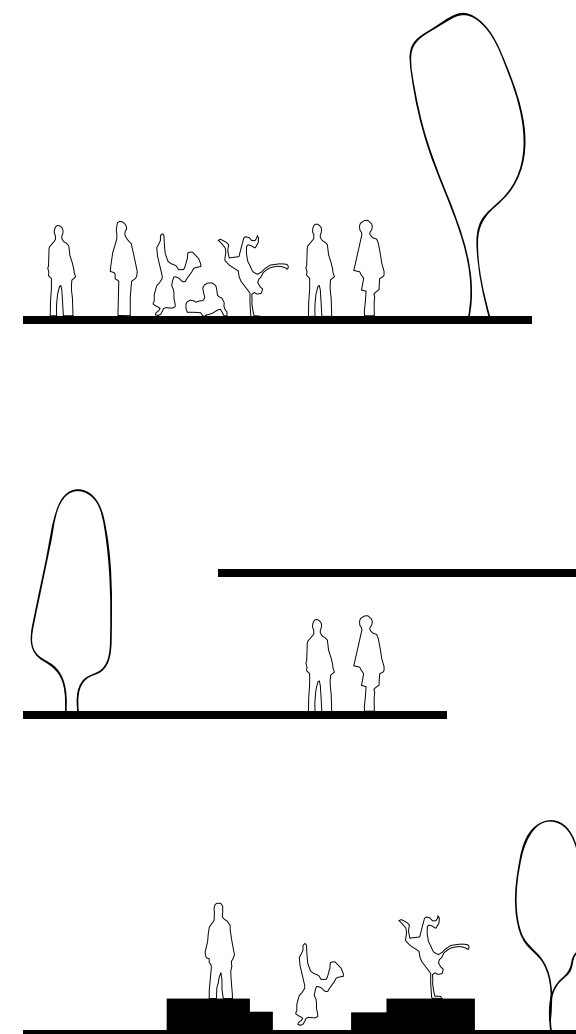
The goal is to do research through the architect's pragmatic language. In this way, it is possible to read architecture by directly comparing it with its spatial, distributive, formal, compositional and often emotional characteristics.

The decision to propose a drawn thesis stems from the conviction that drawing is a communicative act of an idea, a project, a thought, which can be the architect's communication tool, and Mies Van der Rohe's words fully represent this

concept: «Draw, don't talk»<sup>1</sup>.

Architects are able to communicate directly with drawing and for this reason I decided to use this language to communicate my thesis. The collection of re-drawings does not pretend to create a *modus operandi*, but is the product of a real research process, a critical act that allows to read architecture by directly comparing it with its spatial characters. It would not have been possible to create an objective album of architecture, and this was not the purpose either, the aim was to be able to dialogue with architecture and interpret it subjectively without conditioning.

Therefore, I wanted to offer a personal reading of architectural works, I tried to express myself through a perceptive language related to visual experience, preferring it to a more technical or objective reading.



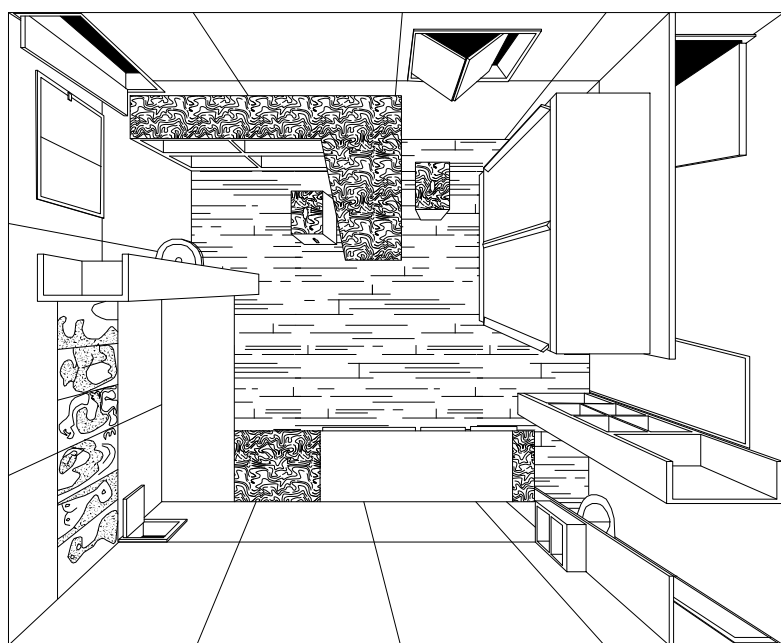
1 Mies van der Rohe

# The Importance Of Scale

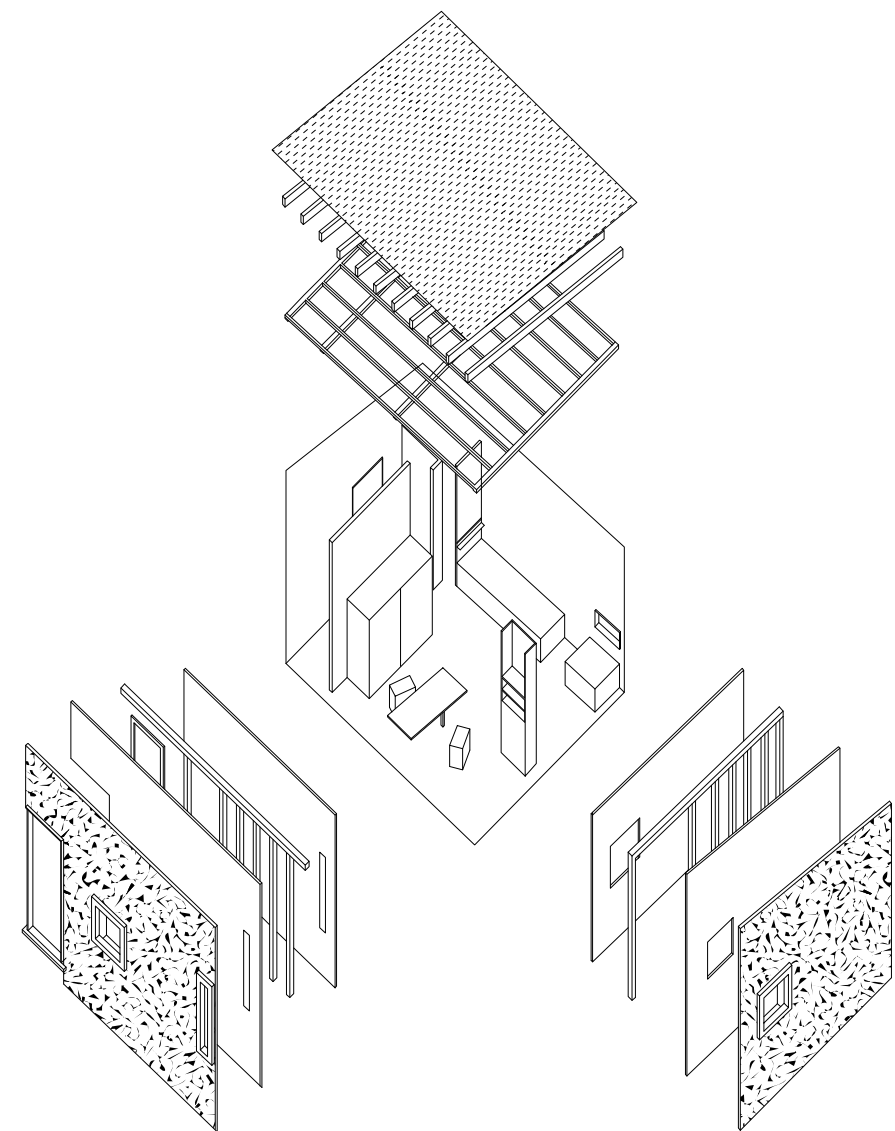
*My conclusion about those years is that the modern movement put an end to the concern of people in cities. Instead, it was concerned with the modern man, where form followed function. The modern movement also put an end to the human scale, where suddenly instead of making places, we decided to make individual buildings and then the buildings got bigger and bigger.*

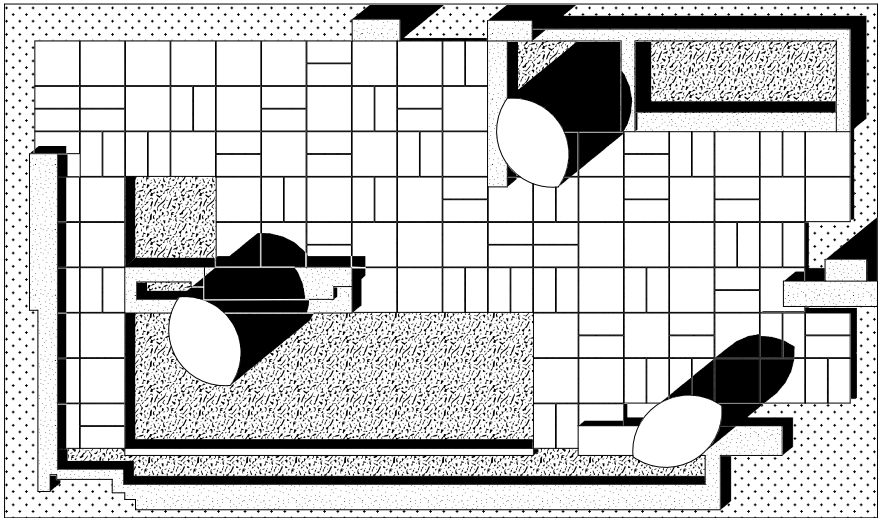
*We used to make places, now we make places with the space that is left over in between buildings and the notion of human scale is closer to disappearing in its entirety. In reality I would say that the architects and planners of the modern movement were completely confused with what was a good scale.*

(Gehl, 2017)

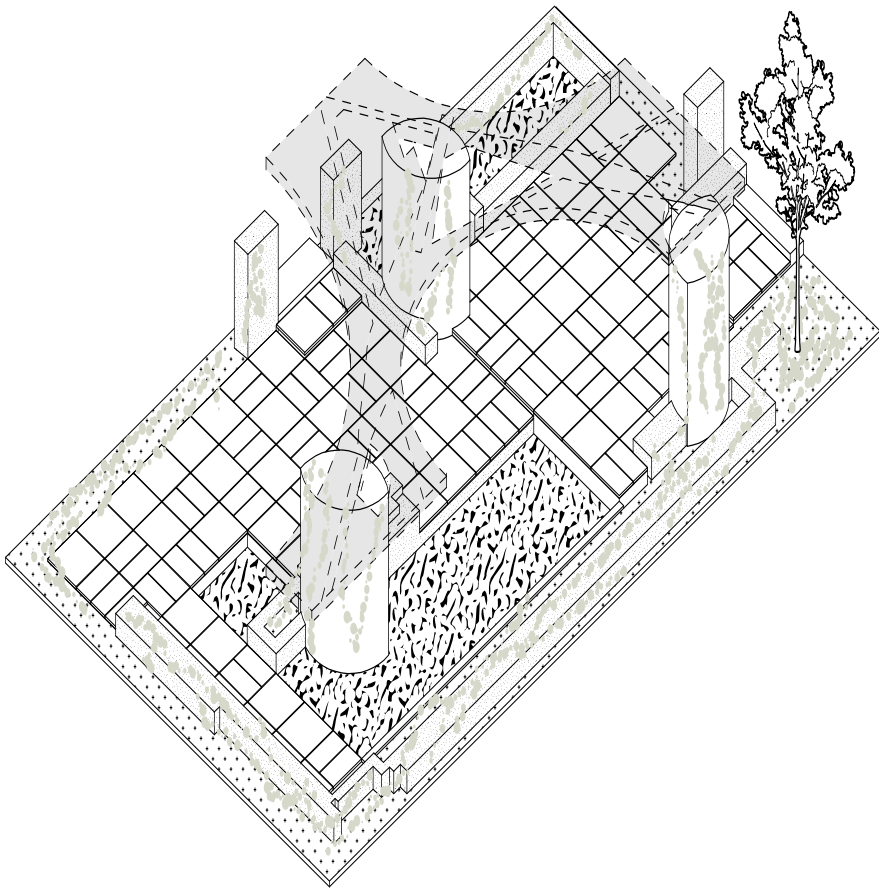


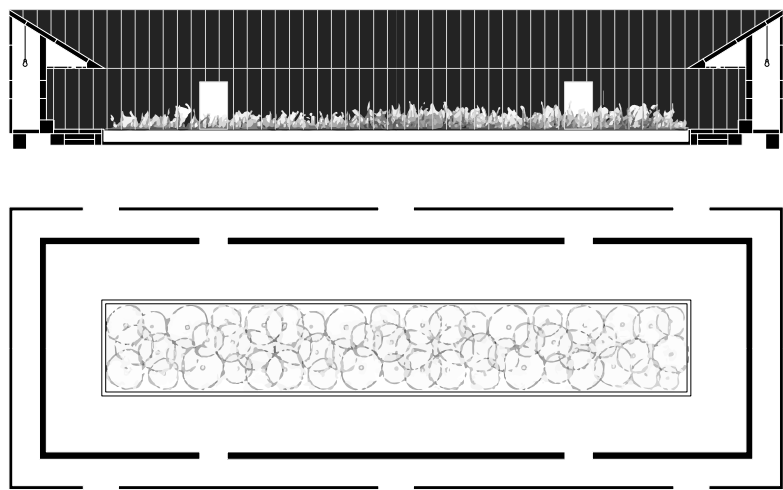
Le Corbusier  
Le Cabanon, France - Roquebrune - Cap - Martin,  
1951



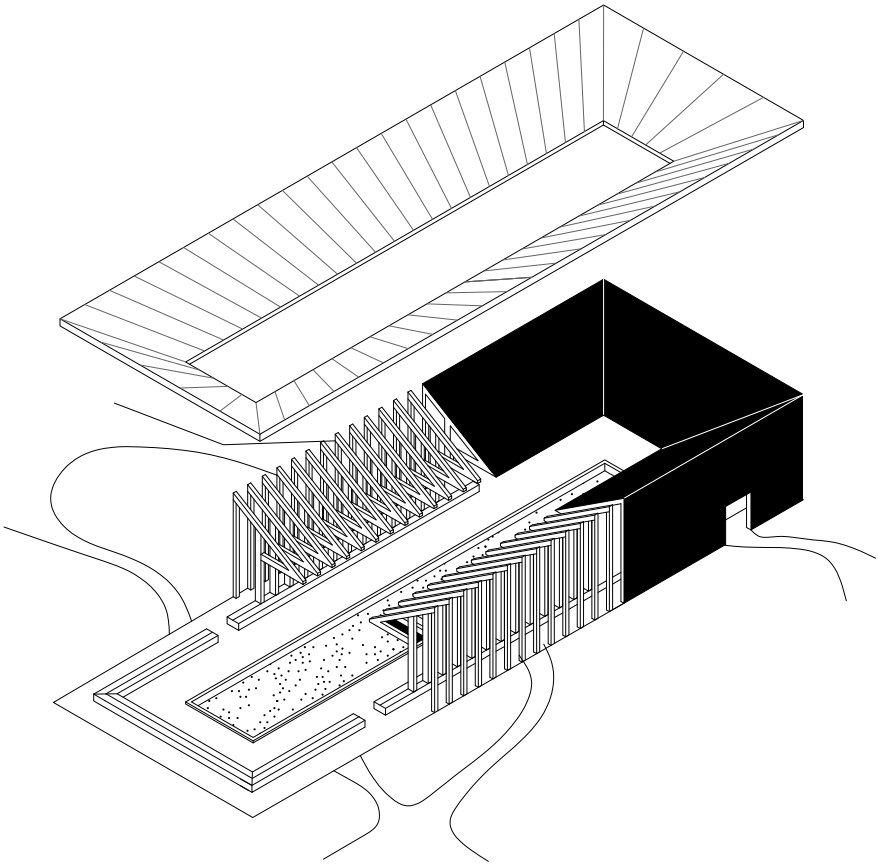


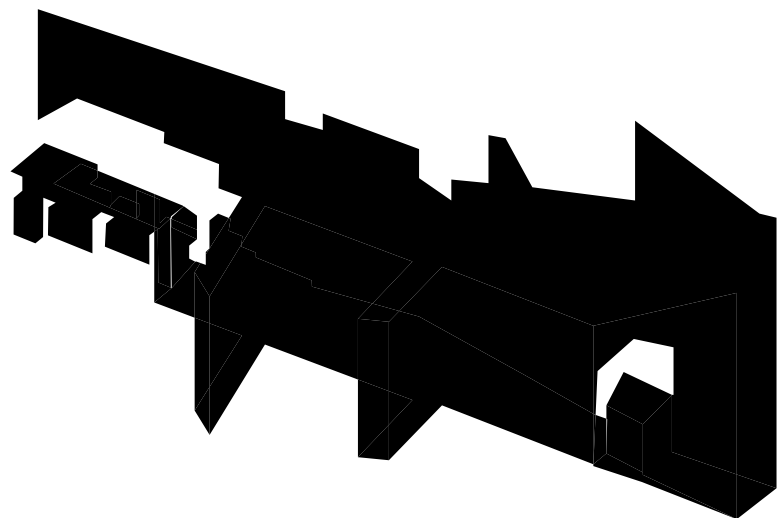
Carlo Scarpa,  
Giardino delle Sculture, Venice, Italy,  
1952



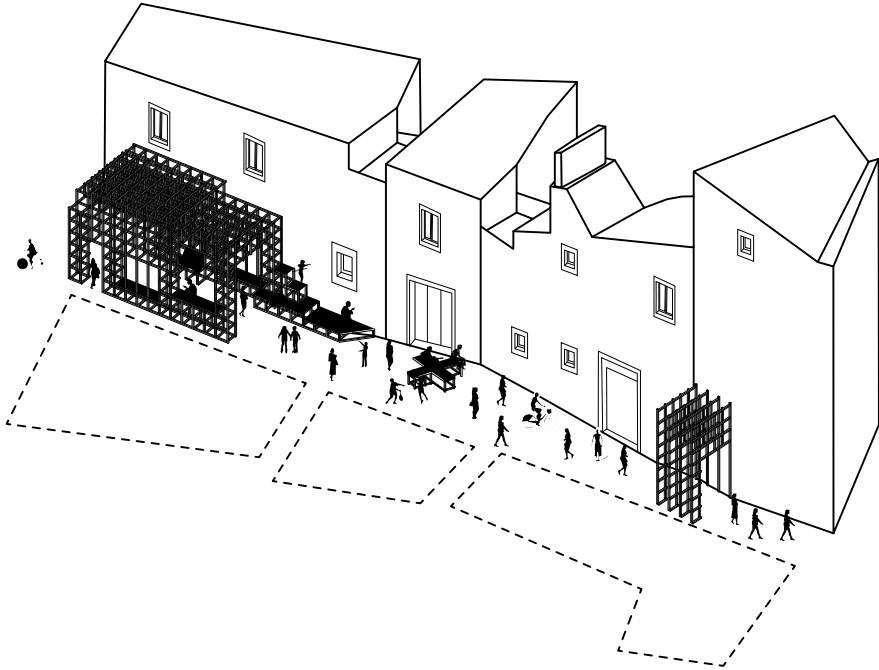


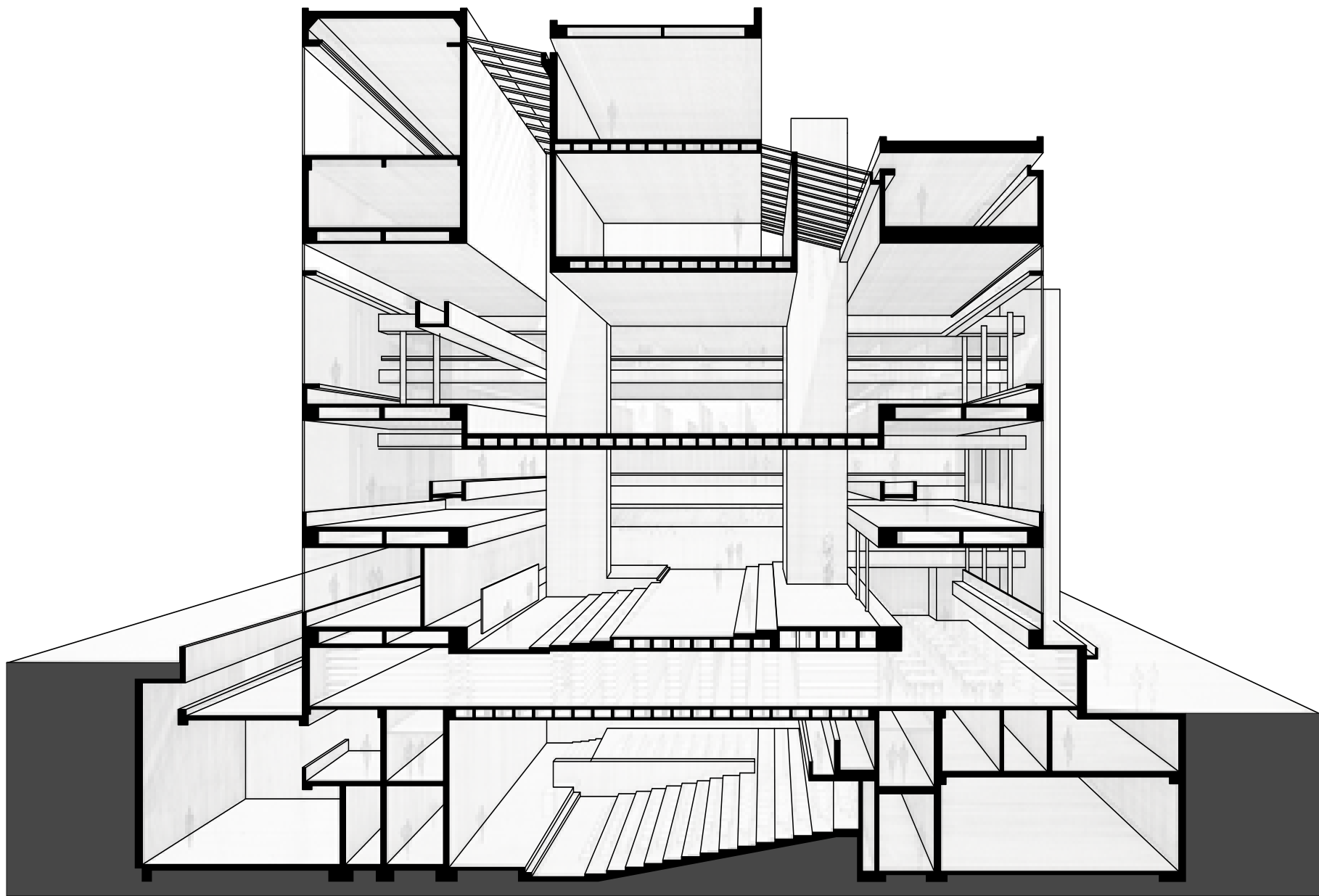
Peter Zumthor,  
Serpentine Pavilion, United Kingdom - London  
2011





Orizzontale,  
Casa Do Quarteirão, Portugal - Ponta Delgada,  
2016





Paul Rudolph,  
Yale Art and Architecture building,  
USA - New Haven, 1963



## Connectivity. /

The topic of scale, of relationships, between animated and inanimate bodies has always been one of the central issue in architecture thoughts, already defined in Vitruvius' texts, with subsequent studies in the Renaissance up to the twentieth-century debate on the *existence minimum*. In this chapter I do not pretend to deal with the history of dimensional relationships, to discuss their importance or to develop a rule, but simply to highlight the relationship between solid and empty space. In other words, to study, analyse and redesign those projects whose dimensional relations are, in my opinion, suitable for people and their needs.

Emblematic is Le Corbusier's project for his own maritime hut, which is the practical manifestation of his ideas regarding space and *existence minimum*, the expression of his Modulor, in which the project

aims to be a tailor-made suit designed by the client.

Scarpa in the Giardino delle Sculture at the Venice Biennale, designed a garden, a courtyard, a landscape that is not only physical but also mental, in which elements such as light, shadows and water play a central role. Three heavy elliptical columns support a canopy roof that has been shaped by the subtraction of three circles from a rectangle: games of simple geometric shapes create the point from which to start a journey in search of the origins, where natural elements, considered the essence of things by ancient philosophers, tell the story of the path and evolution of man on Earth.

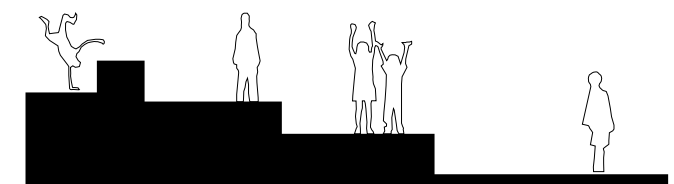
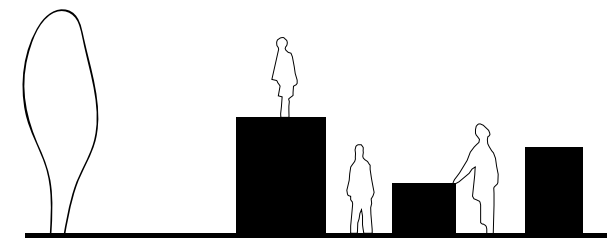
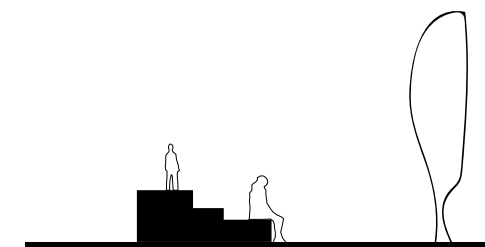
The Serpentine Pavilion by Peter Zumthor, where the author wanted to create a place for relax and calm within chaotic London, is a well designed place to allow moments of quiet and intimate introspection. Outside it appears like a black box, in itself already full of meaning. Inside, after crossing the narrow corridor, which, like a filter, limits relations with the outside world, it reveals itself as an intimate place, whose proportions between the projecting roof, the seats and the

flowerbed create a personal, intimate and comforting space.

Casa do Quarteirão was born from the inhabitants' desire to have a public space for everyday moments of conviviality. It takes shape from the close relationship between the flooring, the limits of existing buildings and the new wooden structures that make up the rooms for community living. Also in this case nature plays an important role, in fact the wooden structure recalls a greenhouse where it is possible to cultivate thoughts and ideas.

The structures become even more complex in Paul Rudolph's building, where with the perspective section I wanted to emphasize the dimensions of the different rooms that intersect around the main hall. Yale's school of architecture becomes a place for the exchange of ideas, people, disciplines and all thanks to the design of the building that allows these material and immaterial flows.

All the interventions focus on people, their dimensions and needs, everything is held together by a calibrated project, that has, as its fulcrum, spatial and interpersonal relationships.



# People Make Space

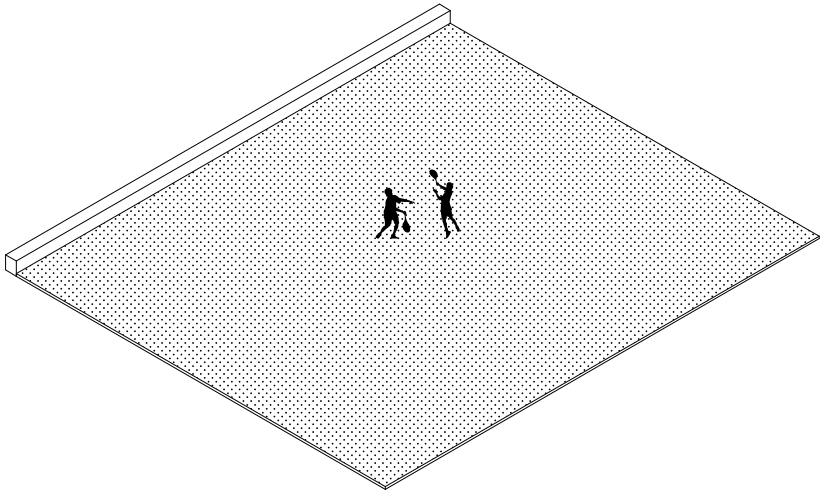
*The space is not defined by the function  
but people can define it through their uses.*

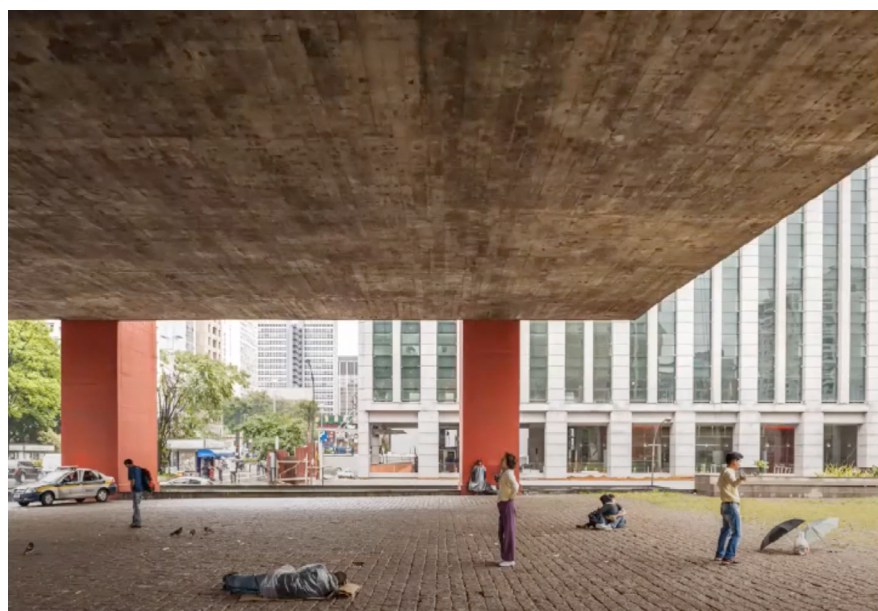
Investigation of space through the lens of  
Iñigo Bujedo Aguirre



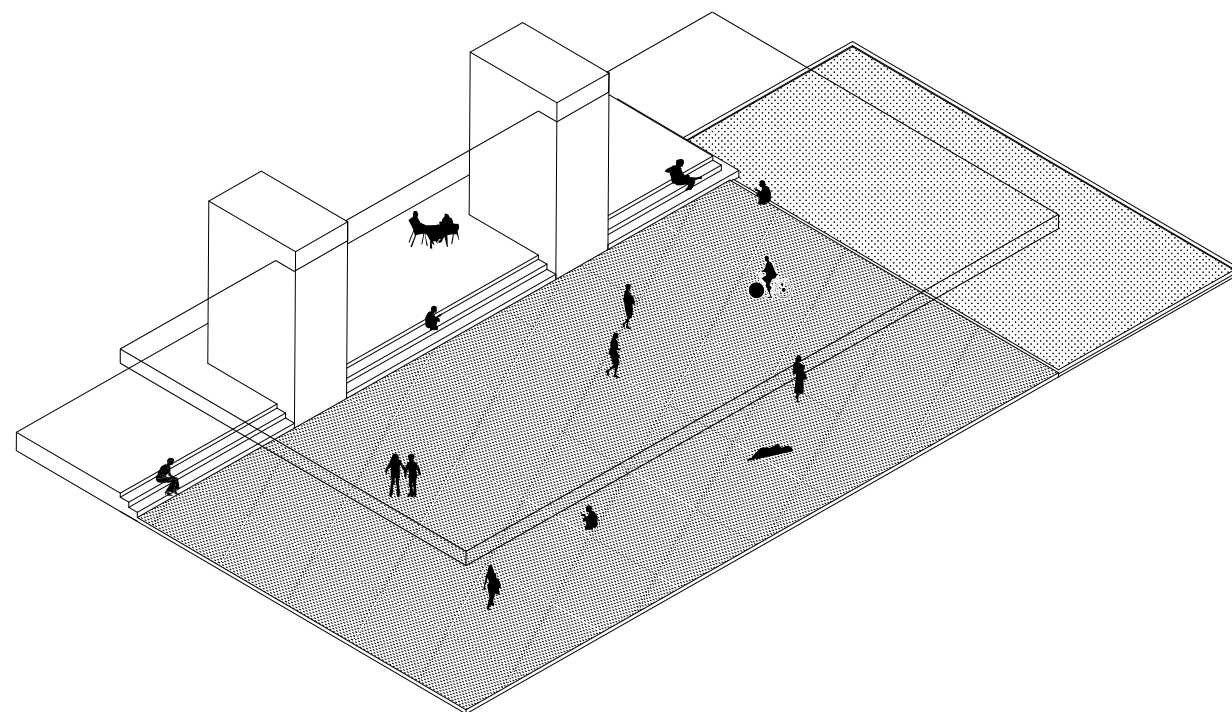


Jean Nouvel,  
Agbar Tower, Spain - Barcelona,  
2005



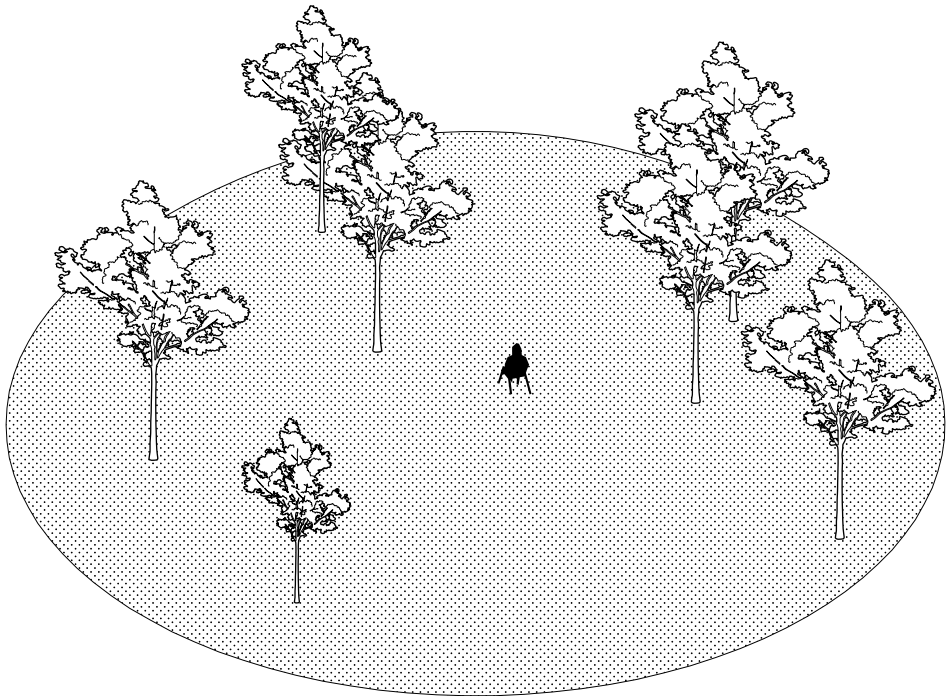


Lina Bo Bardi,  
MASP, Brazil - San Paulo,  
1947





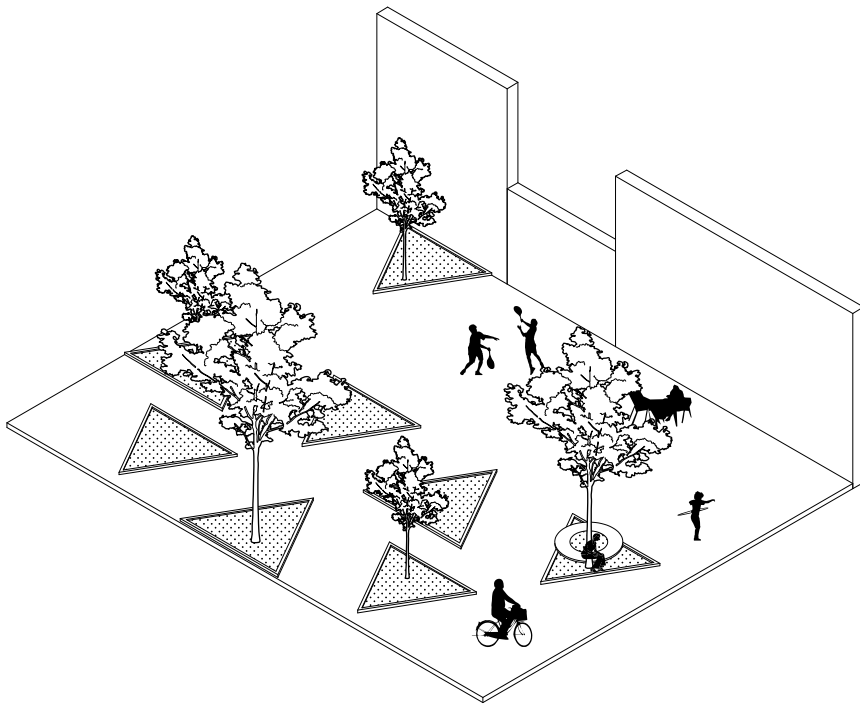
Javier Gastón Ortiz,  
Basque Ball Court, Spain - Bilbao,  
2011

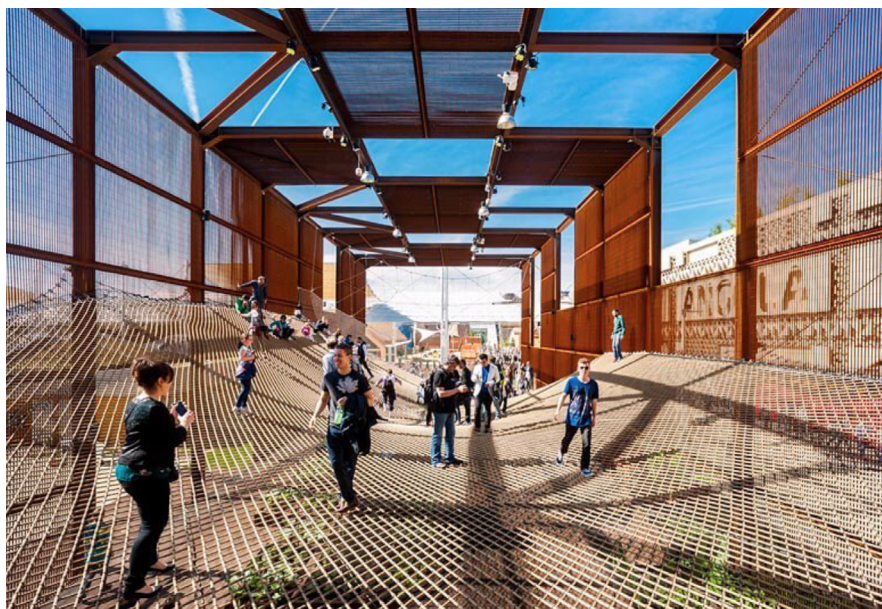




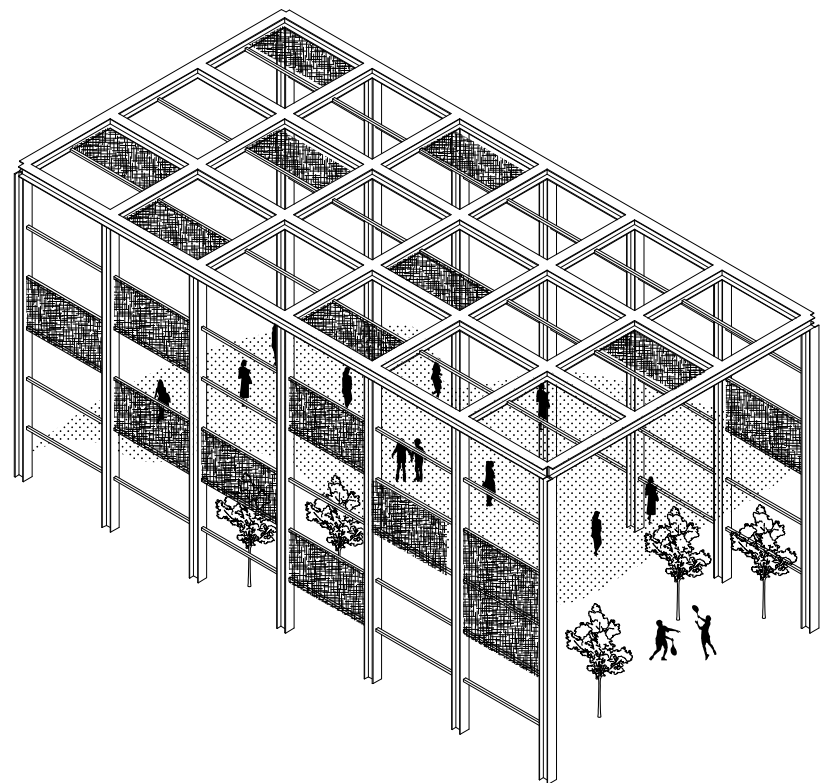


Jürgen Sawade,  
Hockbuncher, Germany - Berlin,  
1977





Studio Arthur Casas + Atelier Marko Brajovic,  
Brazil Pavilion At Milan Expo 2015, Italy - Milan,  
2015







Iñigo Bujedo Aguirre  
Díastole Sístole.  
Playa de la  
Barceloneta.  
Barcelona  
2003-2004.

The third chapter in *Freespace*, investigates the active anthropological role in architectural design, through the lens of the photographer Iñigo Bujedo Aguirre, who represents people and their activities as the subjects of his works, leaving buildings in the background. This work is one of the many interpretations given to the question of the relationship between men and architecture: the architect designs

for people and not for the building itself.

The series of photographs shows that people, regardless of the importance of the architectural project, take possession of the space by distorting it, playing with it and attributing to it absolutely unexpected values. It is interesting to note what is more important in the picture of the Agbar Tower in Barcelona: the tower or the burnt

grass field in front of it where the boys freely play football? The redesign, I made, emphasizes as more valuable the uncultivated field, a free space, without rules, without formalisms and without constraints, in which temporary appropriation becomes the most interesting feature.

In the other photographs and projects, I looked for spaces that would allow the user to make them

## Freedom. /

their own extension of their internal space in the place of the community. The people resting under the MASP in San Paulo by Lina Bo Bardi fully represents the essence of the chapter, as does the lady sunbathing on the hill in front of the Basque Ball Court in Bilbao.

The main concept that emerges from the design investigation is that the space is not defined by the function assigned by the designer, but people, through their uses, define the space.

The space can become bigger, narrower, it shapes itself through the uses of the people, like the Brazilian Pavilion's Net at the Milan's Expo in 2015, which according to the amount of people who use it and according to their movements, shapes and changes, from time to time, creating new and moving spaces.

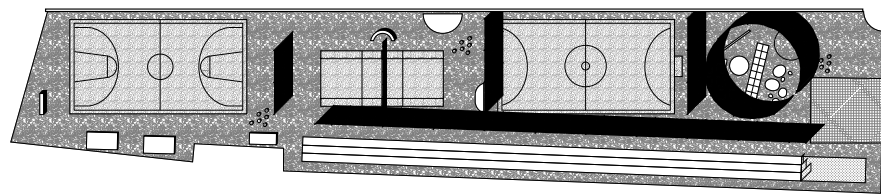
The common people are the architects of public space who shape it according to their temporary needs, architecture is the background that allows and encourages user to be free.

# Learning From Playgrounds

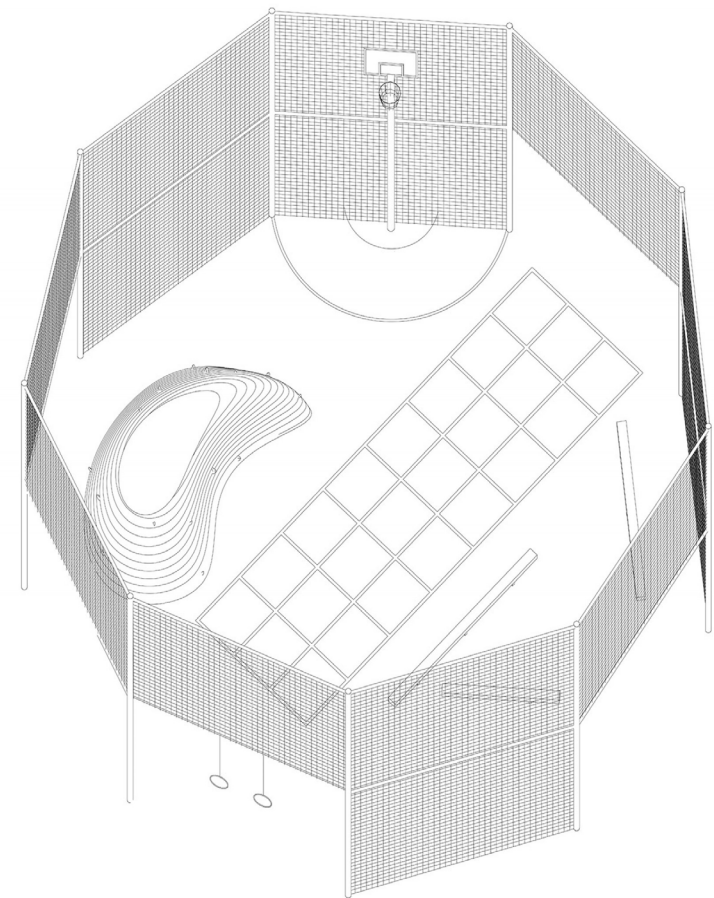
Learning from playgrounds wants to investigate the freedom that spaces design for children allows to stimulate and express their creativity.

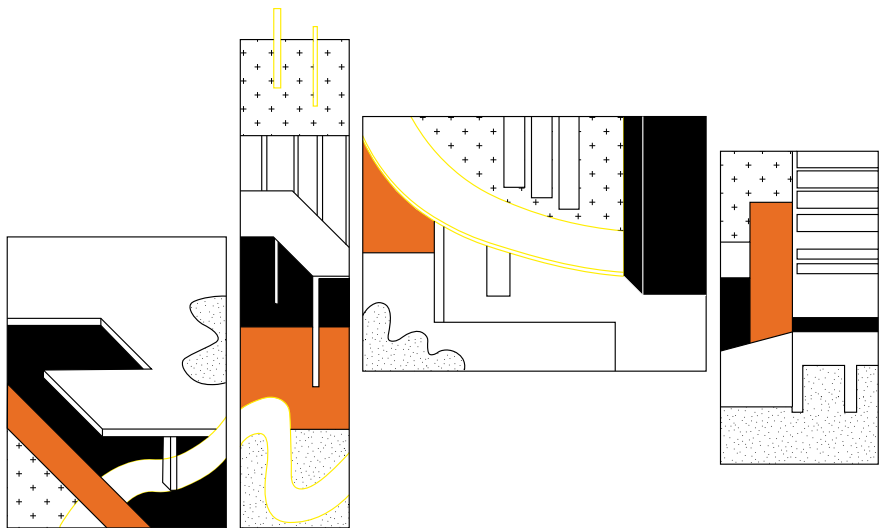
*«People need places within the city to experience, experiment with, and push against risk and apparent danger»*

*(Campo, 2013)*

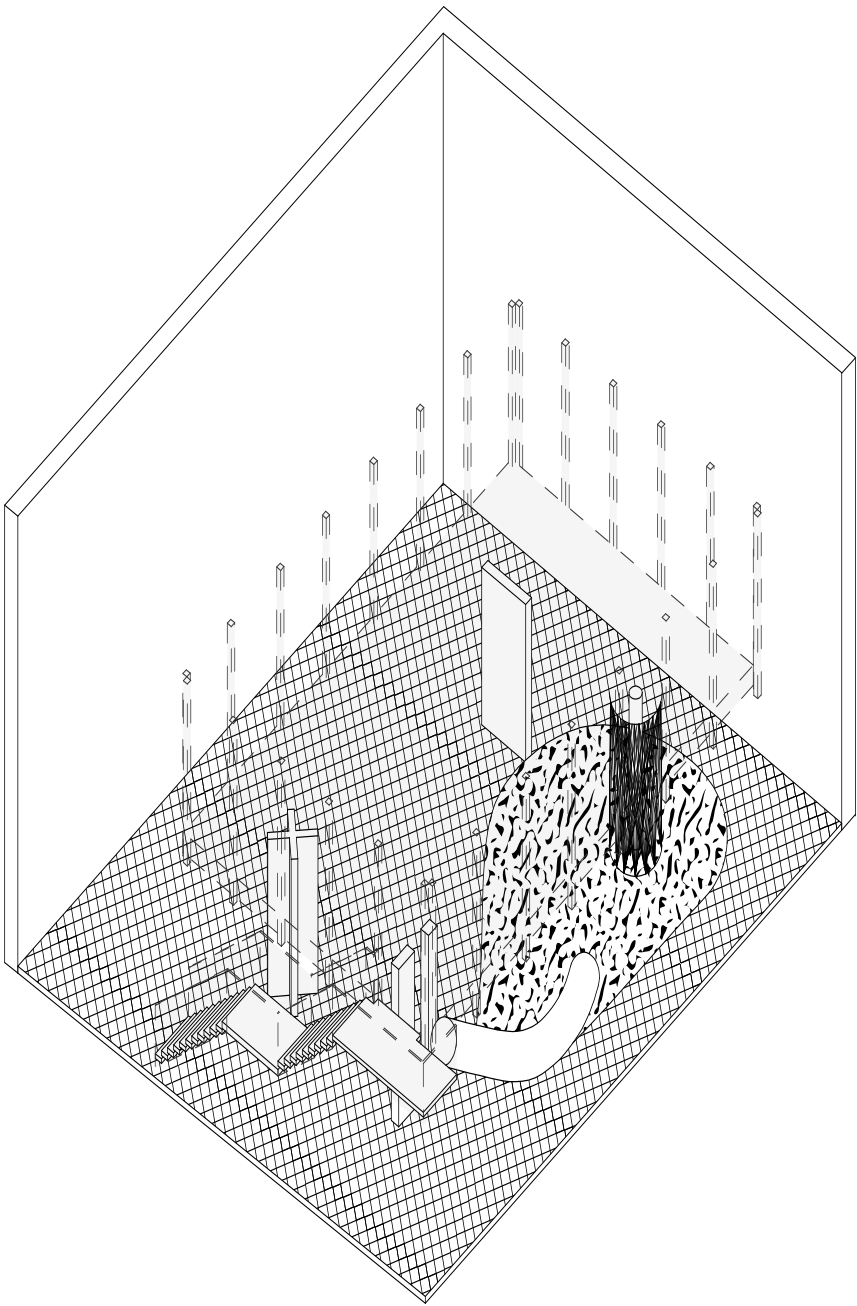


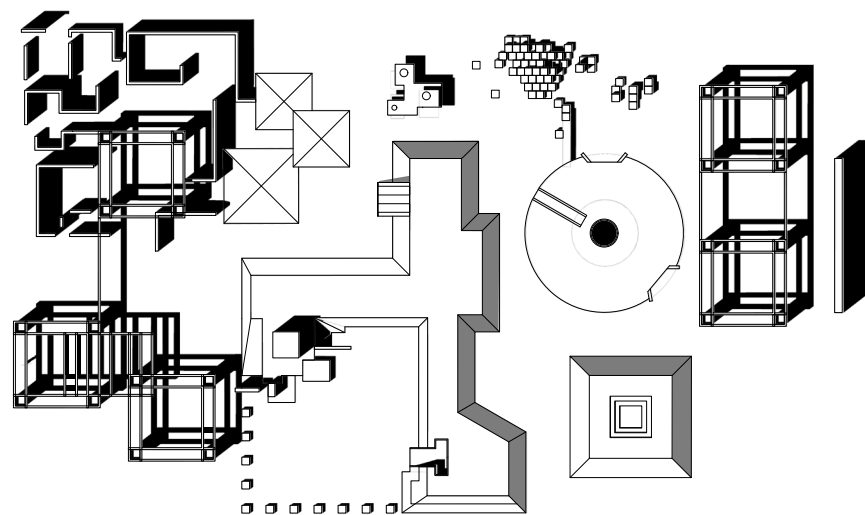
NP2F Architects,  
Stadium Charlemagne, France - Paris,  
2016



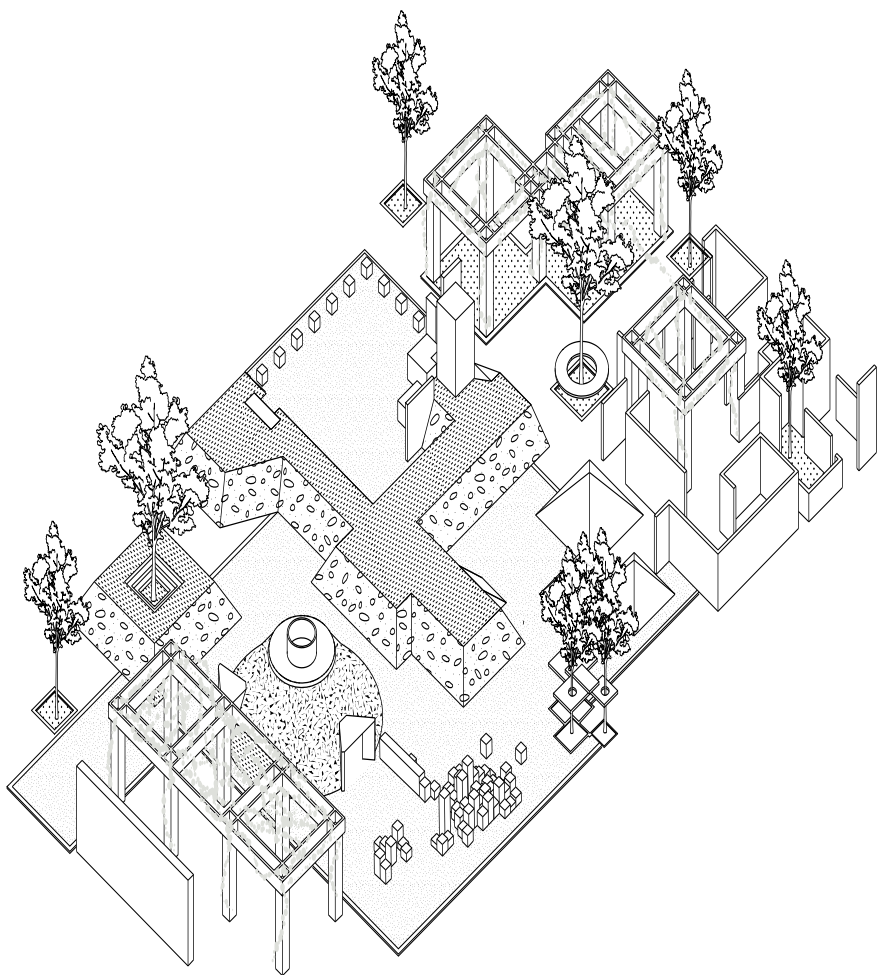


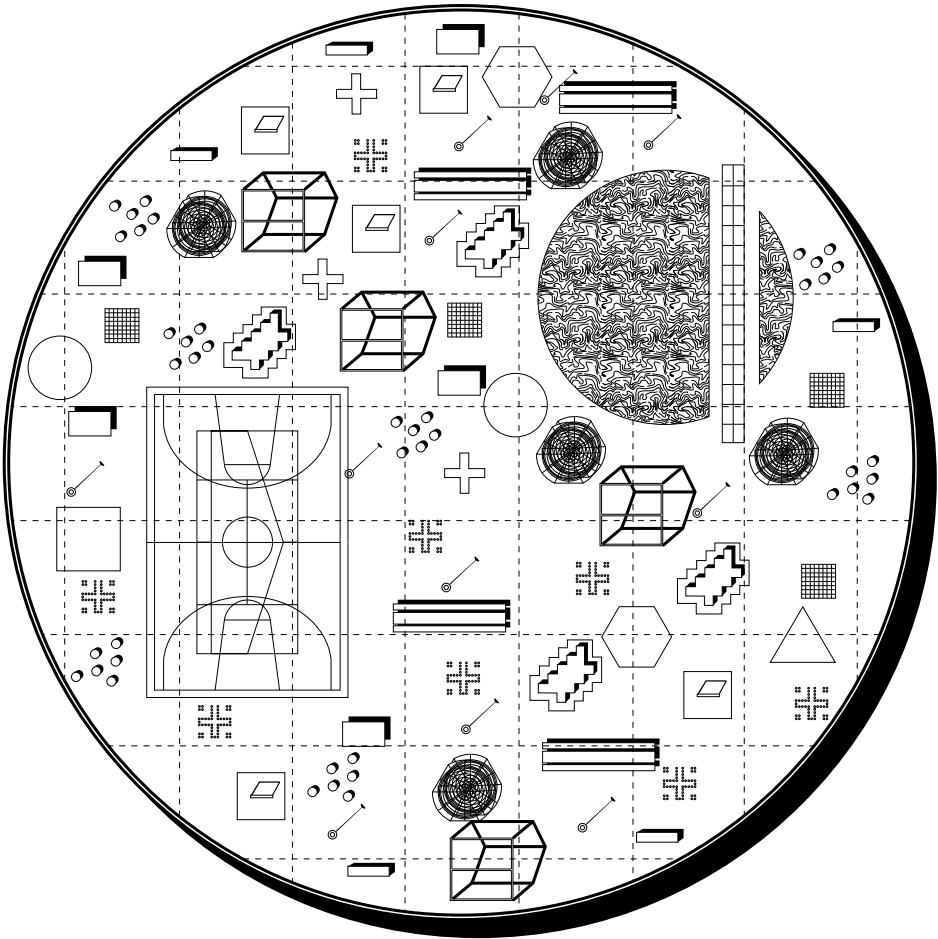
Label Architecture  
Arc-En-Ciel, Belgium - Saint-Josse-Ten-Noode,  
2019



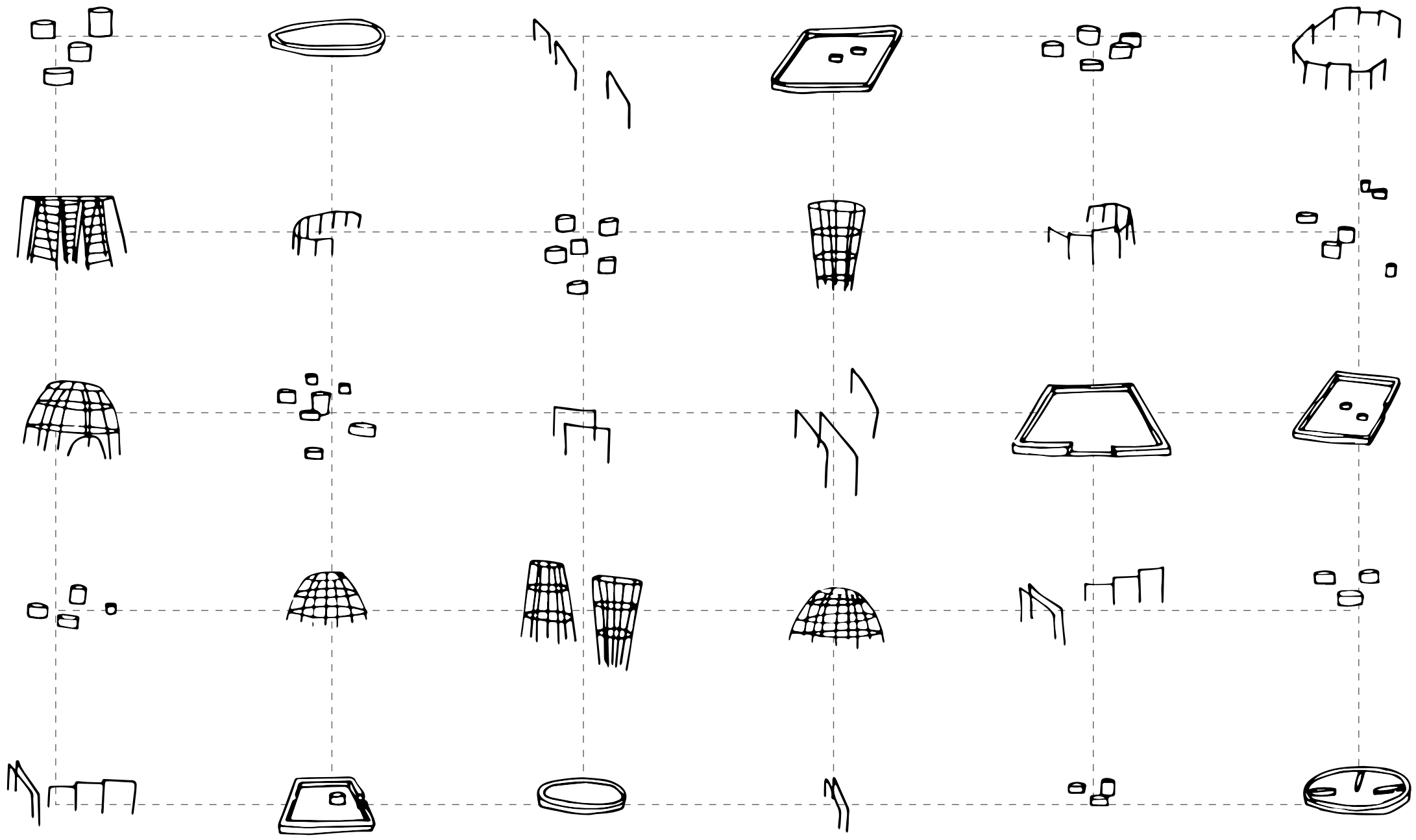


Paul Fredberg  
Riis Park Plaza, USA - New York,  
1966





Dmau, Openfabric,  
Gridgrounds, Netherlands - Amsterdam,  
2017



Aldo Van Eyck  
Elements, Netherlands - Amsterdam



## Creativity. /

The world of playgrounds is an exceptional world in the field of architecture, because it confirms the theory that space is defined by users.

The playgrounds, that I have selected and redesigned, are fitting examples of this statement. In fact, they are designed and studied spaces, but at the same time they allow children's creativity to reshape them thus become something else: a castle, a pirate ship, or any other element that can be imagined from the fervent imagination of children, as they have a similar thought of the primitive man as described by Levi-Strauss (1962).

The children's playground, with its architectural elements, that can be adapted from time to time to different uses, aims at providing a design vision that can also be transferred to the adult world and stimulate their creativity.

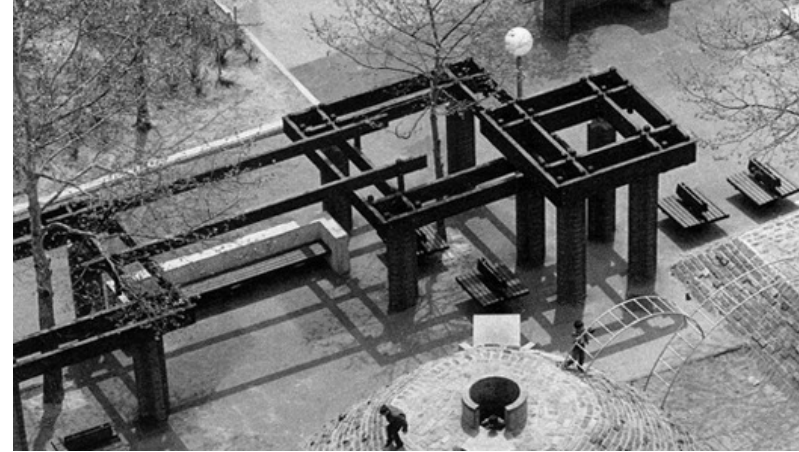
Playgrounds are spaces defined

by rules, but at the same time allow users to occupy them, as it is pointed out by Daniel Campo in *The Accidental Playground*, where he wrote about the anarchic fabulousness of BEDT, a seven-acre abandoned rail yard on the East River waterfront in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The uses of the space were nothing but legal and at the same time the writer calls it playground. A free space in which adult can be free, he found there was the urban human in its natural habitat: talking, contemplating, getting drunk, having sex, swimming, playing music and he compare this freedom to the one that children have in playground (Campo, 2013).

The first project draws the space through very light limits, walls made with nets that allow to create different rooms enclosed in a single large complex; in this web, people can use the spaces according to the functions for which they were designed, or, play with them without being bound by the thought that they are just a football or basketball court.

The limits divide the spaces but at the same time allow users to freely develop their games by deciding where to end a room and build another one.

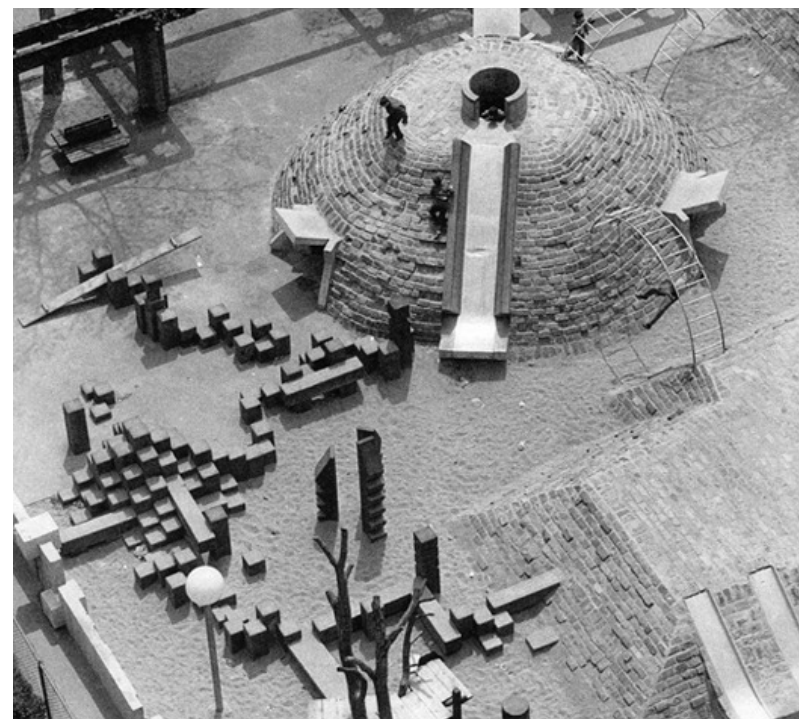
The idea of space as a theatre of stories is told by Lable Architecture's project, which, designing a simple platform, creates instead a real microcosm, an open air creative laboratory, where sport, game and fantasy intersect.



Emblematic is also the project of the Riis Park Plaza in New York, where the designer Paul Fredberg, wanted to develop a space that was the magic castle for children. The various objects, positioned with extreme care, delimit rooms and create infinite others that open and close according to the frenetic movement of the children. The objects, begin to assume value in themselves, these street furniture can become in the minds of children everything they want.

In the projects of DMAU and Openfabric studios and Aldo Van Eyck, street furniture is the protagonist, it is the element that combi-

ned with other elements allows to create something new and then, when used, always generates new spaces and perspectives. Children, being free from preconceptions and social constraints, can easily abstract an object, release it from its function and reshape or redesign it in order to adapt it to their imagination and needs; adults forget their childhood and they can hardly imagine to be able to use spaces and elements characterized by well-defined functions. They cannot overcome the limit imposed by the function itself, so the projects should be dressed in a veiled ambiguity, not totally free nor absolutely binding.



Paul Fredberg,  
Riis Park Plaza in  
New York, 1966

# Free

**FREESPACE** describes a generosity of spirit and a sense of humanity at the core of architecture's agenda, focusing on the quality of space itself.

**FREESPACE** focuses on architecture's ability to provide free and additional spatial gifts to those who use it and on its ability to address the unspoken wishes of strangers.

**FREESPACE** celebrates architecture's capacity to find additional and unexpected generosity in each project - even within the most private, defensive, exclusive or commercially restricted conditions.

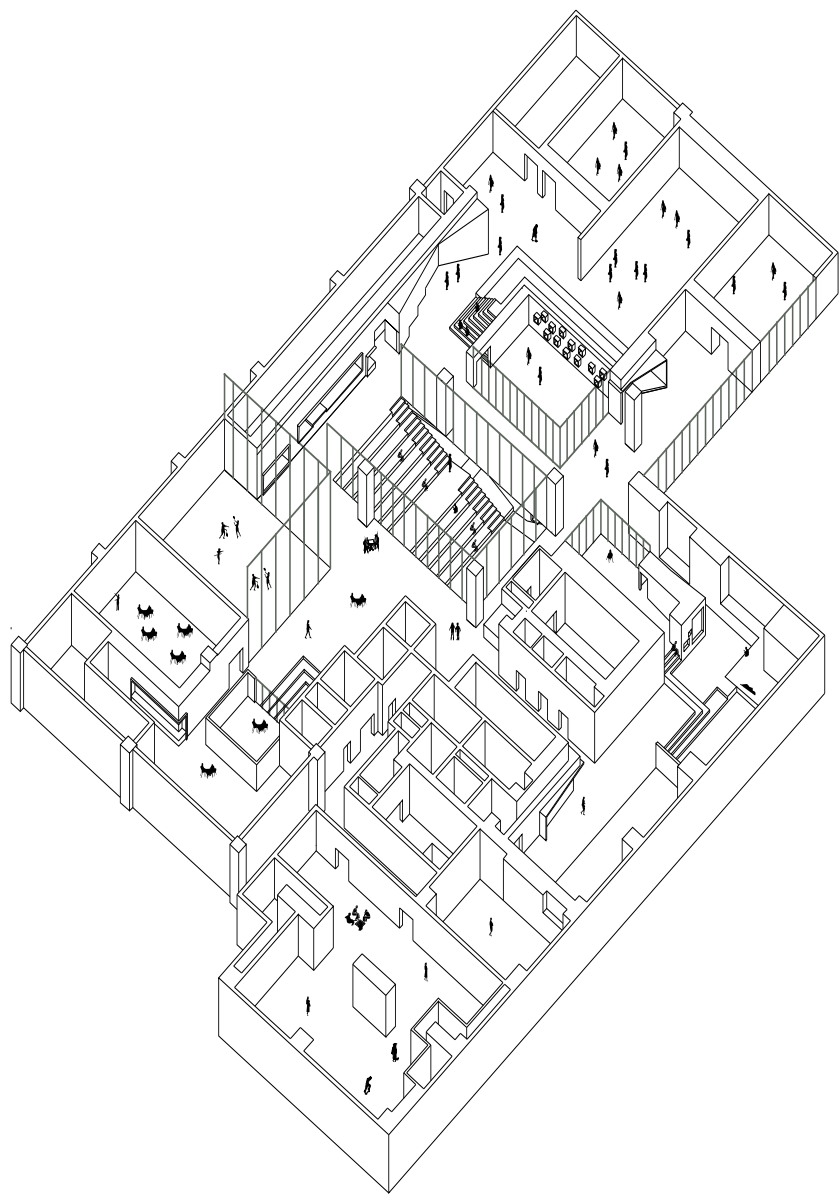
**FREESPACE** provides the opportunity to emphasise nature's free gifts of light - sunlight and moonlight, air, gravity, materials - natural and man-made resources.

**FREESPACE** encourages reviewing ways of thinking, new ways of seeing the world, of inventing solutions where architecture provides for the well being and dignity of each citizen of this fragile planet.

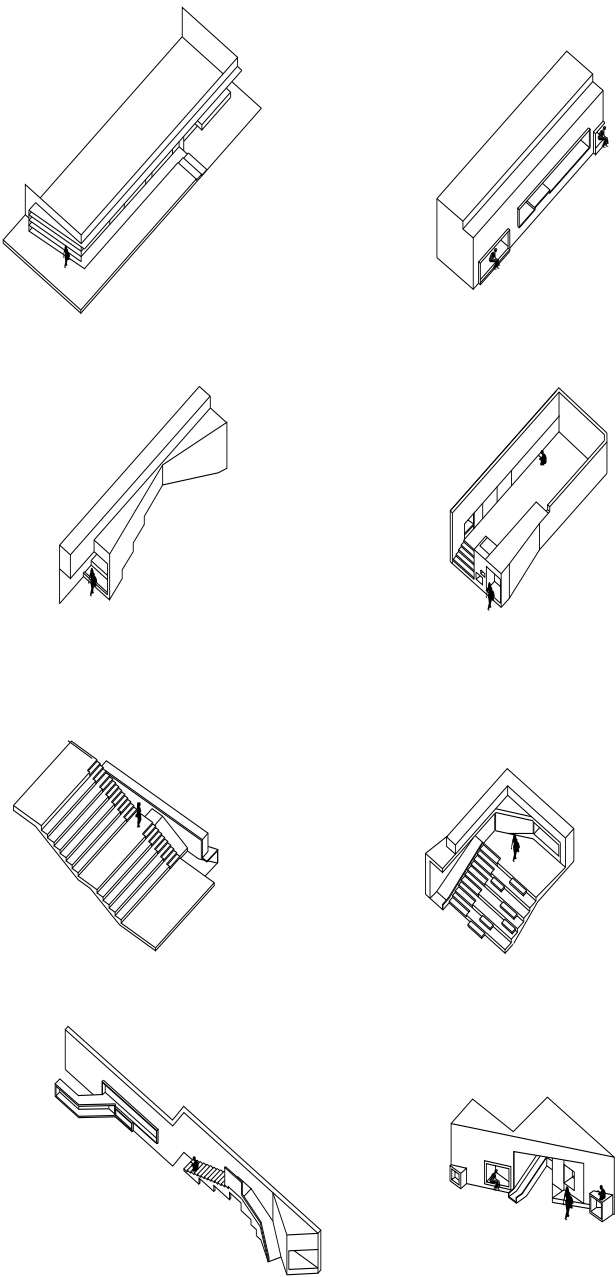
**FREESPACE** can be a space for opportunity, a democratic space, un-programmed and free for uses not yet conceived. There is an exchange between people and buildings that happens, even if not intended or designed, so buildings themselves find ways of sharing and engaging with people over time, long after the architect has left the scene. Architecture has an active as well as a passive life.

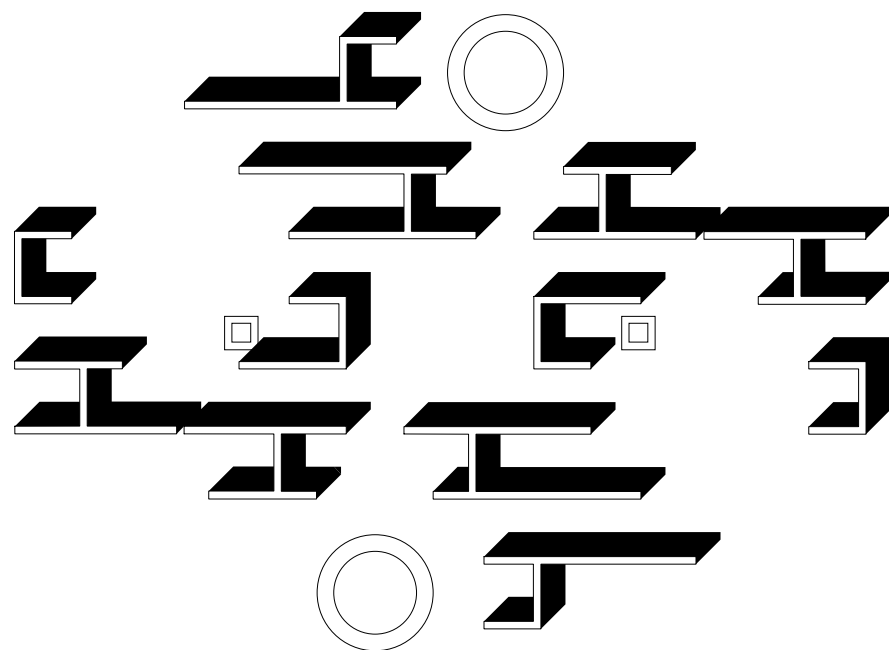
**FREESPACE** encompasses freedom to imagine, the free space of time and memory, binding past, present and future together, building on inherited cultural layers, weaving the archaic with the contemporary.

(Farrell, McNamara, 2017)

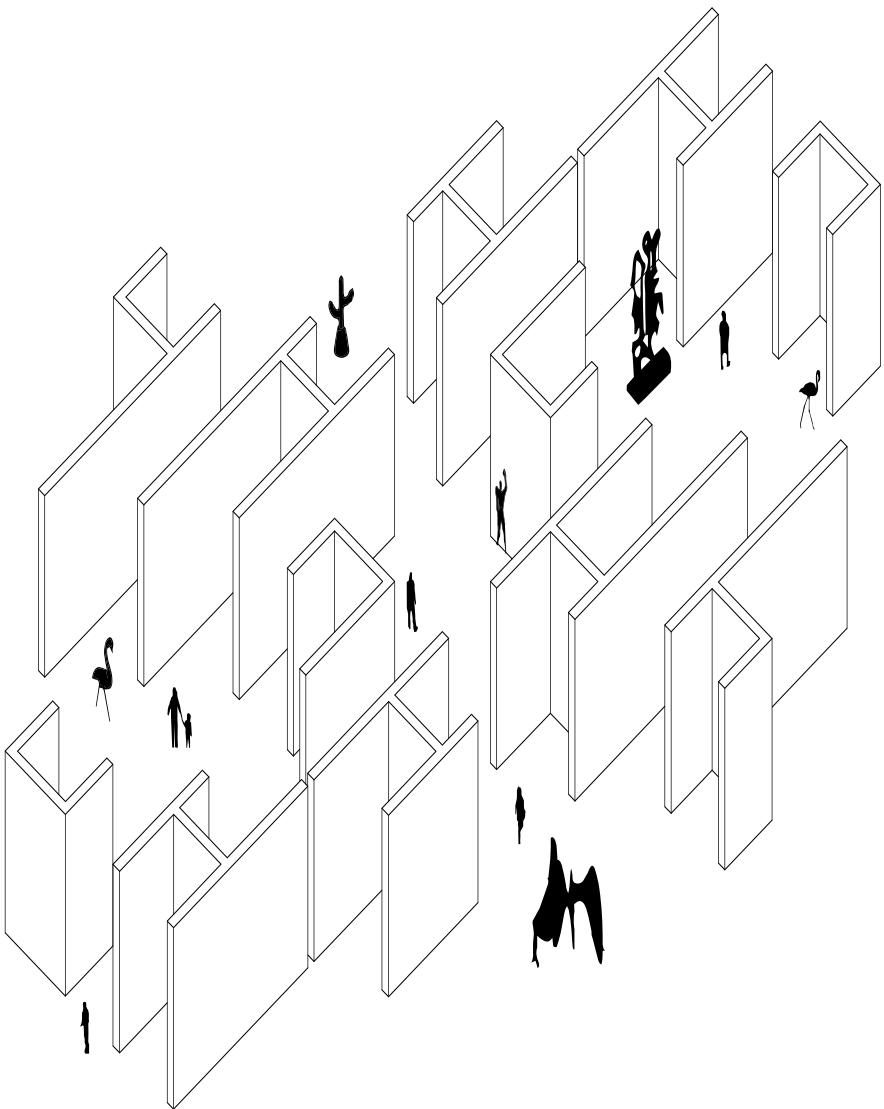


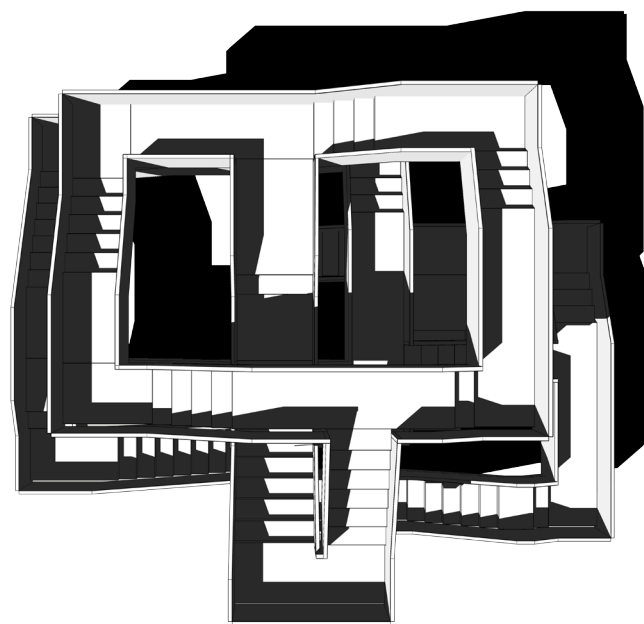
Crossboundaries,  
Qingdao Family Box, China - Beijing,  
2017



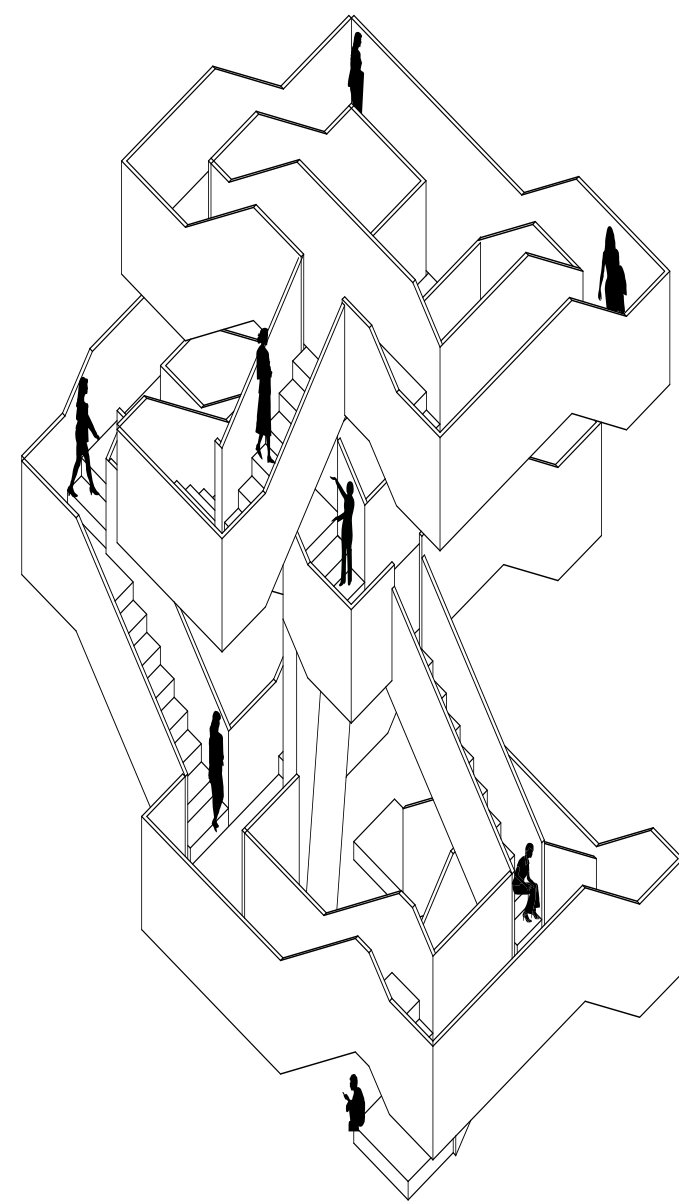


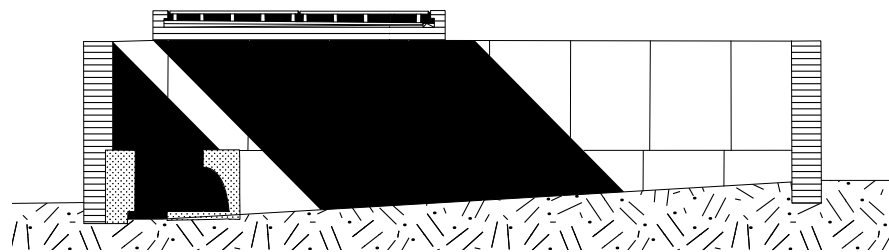
Berger Berger  
No Tears For The Creatures Of The Night, France - Lyon,  
2017



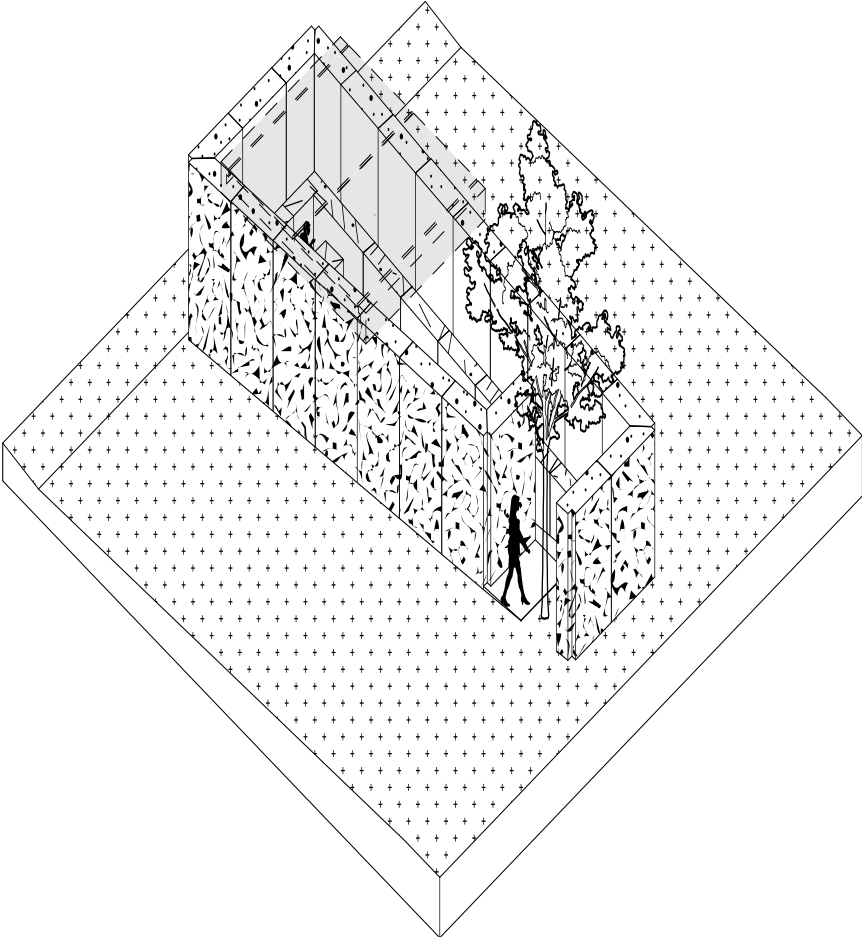


Supermachine Studio  
10 Cal Tower, The Labyrinth, Thailand - Bangsaen,  
2014





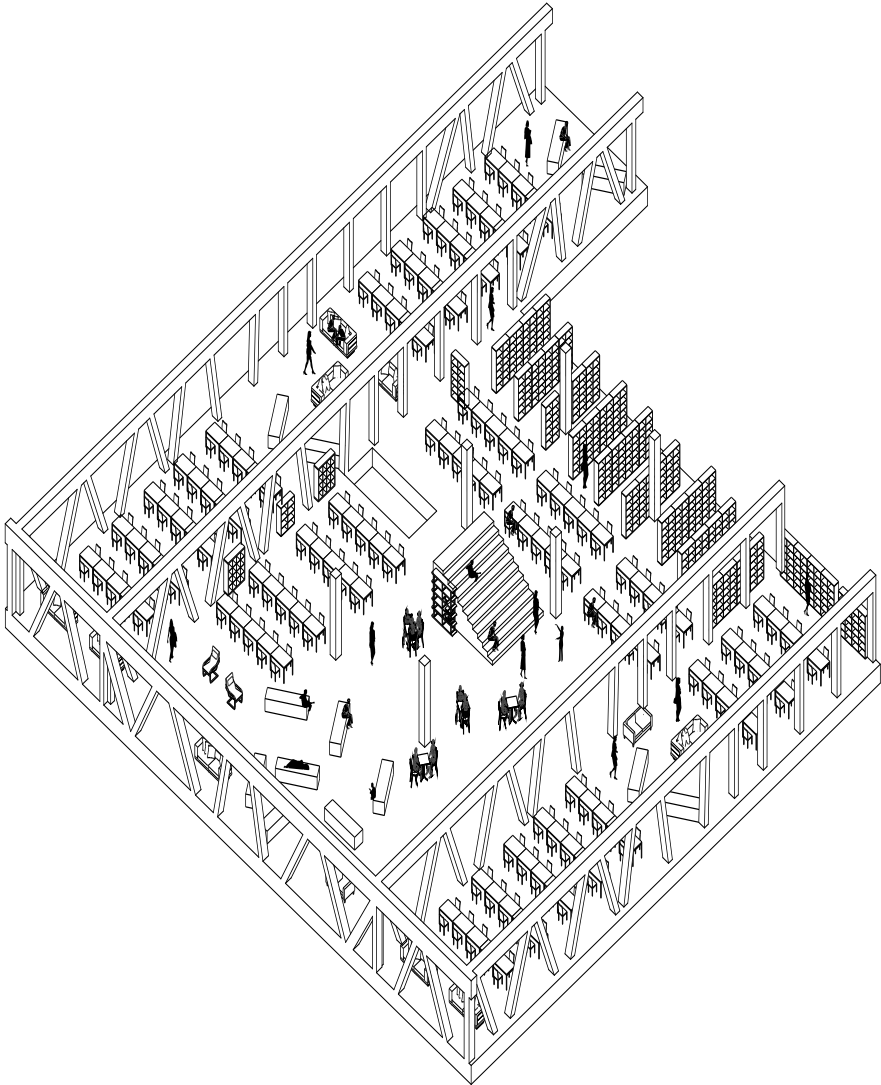
Eduardo Souto De Moura  
Vatican Chapel, Italy - Venice,  
2018







Oma  
Milstein Hall, United States - Ithaca,  
2016



## Complexity. /

The last tool of the chapter is the section dedicated to the spatial relationships between object and people that enable free use of space. The physical space is finely designed but leaves users free interpretation and free uses. The user fully becomes the protagonist of the architecture who directly dialogues with it.

The kindergarten, Qingdao Family Box, keeps in itself the idea of playground as a place for recreation and creativity, but it is amplified by the careful design of equipped walls and objects that become the background for never-repeated stories.

Berger Berger's project is a representation of freedom: the installation becomes a gallery, a maze, a piece of architecture, a furniture, a landscape of light, and makes the visitor experience emotions and sensations that are always different. The architecture here is intended as an open and interpretable device, starting from simple sha-

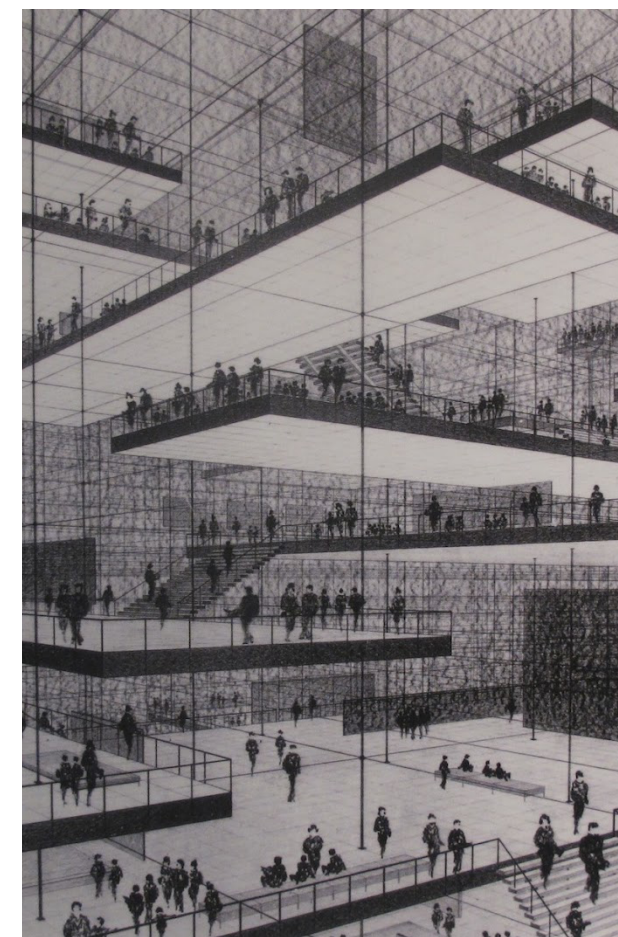
pes the whole becomes a complex mechanism that stratifies over time.

10 Cal Tower, The Labyrinth, by Supermachine Studio, deconstructs the concept of stairs, by eliminating its functional meaning in order to realise an installation to admire the landscape. The user is free to choose his own path to discover what surrounds him, a range of possibilities opens up in front of the active visitor that puts him, from time to time, in front of multiple choices; this staircase thus becomes a metaphor of life, reminiscent of the Sophist thought of Prodicus described in the myth of Hercules at the crossroads.

The idea of freedom of interpretation and movement also takes on a more intimate and introspective vision in Souto de Mura's project, the Vatican Chapel, with which the architect wants to create a space of prayer and spirituality, which, in its realization, appears as a box of a strong material impact. Souto

de Mura's great ability consists in creating a place of inner dialogue, where spirituality transcends the physicality of the heavy walls.

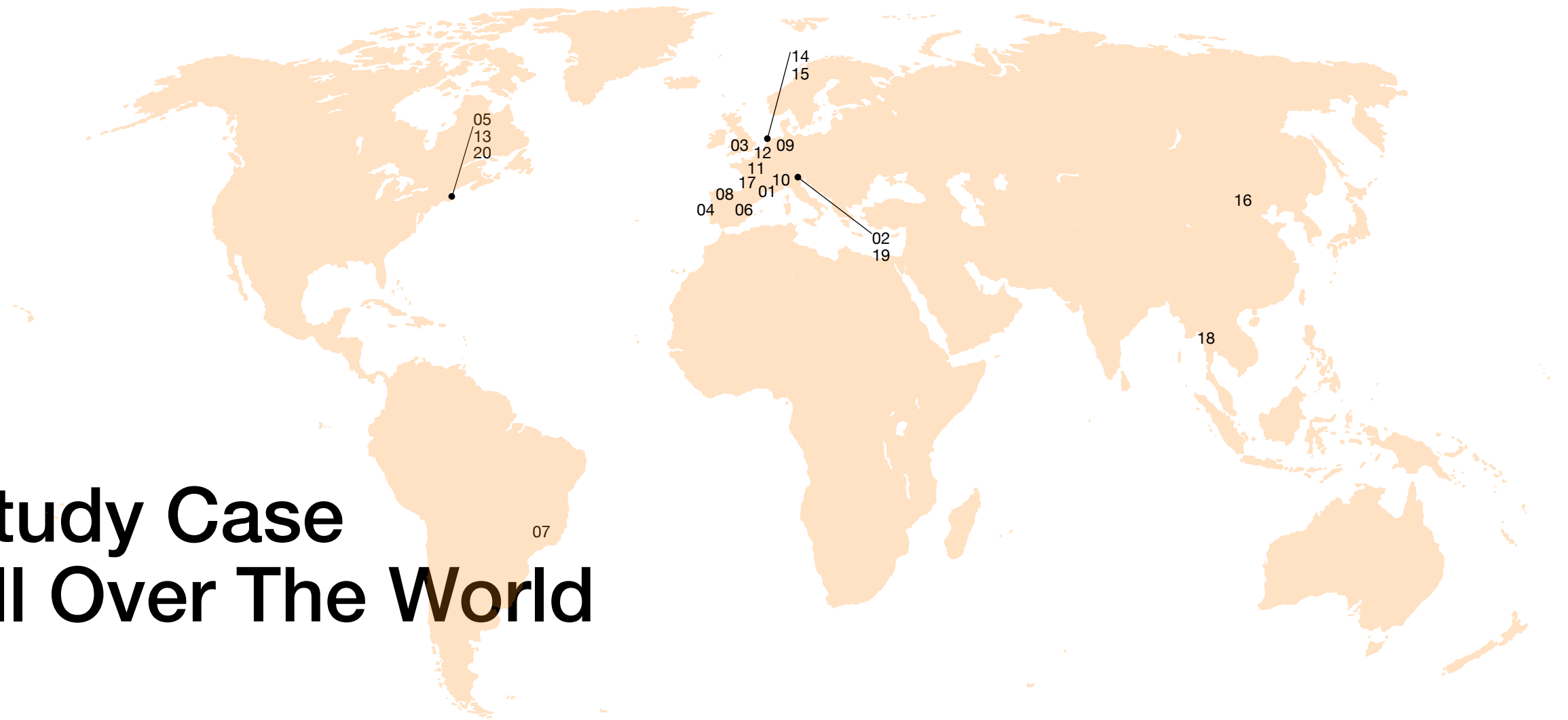
The last studied and analysed project is the extension of the Faculty of Architecture at Cornell University in Ithaca designed by OMA. The project is a flat surface without constraints, a concept of extreme freedom, that guarantees the possibility of possibilities, that will be able to collect the significant traces of passing time.



Conrad Roland,  
Drawing of an  
exhibition hall with  
floating levels, 1963

- |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| 01 Le Corbusier<br>Le Cabanon                         | 06 Jean Nouvel<br>Agbar Tower  | 11 NP2F architects<br>Stadium Charlemagne | 16 Crossboundaries<br>Qingdao Family Box                    |
| 02 Carlo Scarpa<br>Giardino delle Sculture            | 07 Lina Bo Bardi<br>Giardino delle Sculture                            | 12 Label Architecture<br>Arc-En-Ciel      | 17 Berger Berger<br>No Tears For The Creatures Of The Night |
| 03 Peter Zumthor<br>Serpentine Pavilion 2011          | 08 Javier Gastón Ortiz<br>Basque Ball Court                            | 13 Paul Fredberg<br>Riis Park Plaza       | 18 Supermachine Studio<br>10 Cal Tower, The Labyrinth       |
| 04 Orizzontale<br>Casa Do Quarteirão                  | 09 Jürgen Sawade<br>Hockbuncher  | 14 Dmau + Openfabric<br>Gridgrounds       | 19 Eduardo Souto De Moura<br>Vatican Chapel                 |
| 05 Paul Rudolph<br>Yale Art and Architecture Building | 10 Arthur Casas + Marko Brajovic<br>Brazil Pavilion At Milan Expo 2015 | 15 Aldo Van Eyck<br>Elements              | 20 OMA<br>Milstein Hall                                     |

# Study Case All Over The World









# 04. /

CONTEXT OF DESIGN

## Beijing

Beijing (北京), the capital city of China (中国), is the chosen location for the design experimentation, a fascinating city, rich in history, but in continuous evolution, which is the perfect landscape to realize my conception of open space.

China is currently the most populated country in the world with about 1.5 billion inhabitants, whose percentage of urban inhabitants has exceeded the percentage of rural ones in 2018. The city of Beijing alone has a population of around 23 million inhabitants divided into 16 counties, which makes it the second most populated city in the world. An agglomeration of millions of stories, ideas, thoughts and flows, and it was indeed the flows of people that attracted my attention. For this reason I developed my project in the immediate surroundings of the metro infrastructure, as the place that most allows continuous exchanges of people, glances and short stories. From Jan Gehl's (1987) words it is clear that the more people go through a place, the greater the chance that something surprising will happen. He brings the example of playgrounds, the more children play in a park, the more they will attract others and the more stories will cross each other and, statistically the more spontaneous uses can take place. This is the underlying concept that prompted me to choose the project site in the unused area in front of the Datunlu East metro station.



- ✚ site
- railway
- streets
- airports

Beijing. /

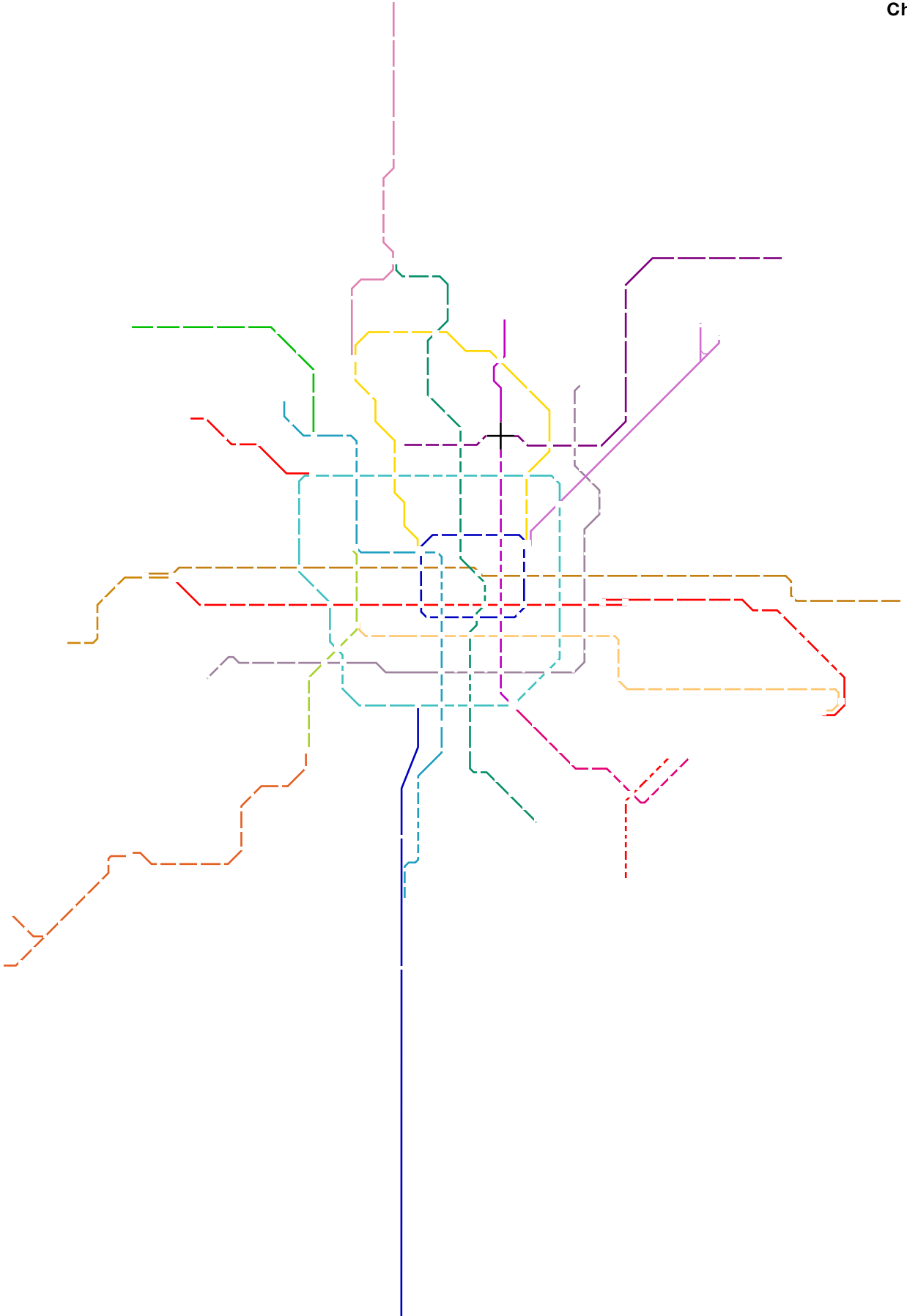
50km



- |      |         |       |                  |
|------|---------|-------|------------------|
| 1号线  | line 1  | 八通线   | Batong line      |
| 2号线  | line 2  | 大兴线   | Daxing line      |
| 4号线  | line 4  | 亦庄线   | Yizhuang line    |
| 5号线  | line 5  | 房山线   | Fangshan line    |
| 6号线  | line 6  | 燕房线   | Yanfang line     |
| 7号线  | line 7  | S1线   | Maglev line      |
| 8号线  | line 8  | 昌平线   | Changping Line   |
| 9号线  | line 9  | 西郊线   | West Suburb Line |
| 10号线 | line 10 | 首都机场线 | Capital Airport  |
| 13号线 | line 13 | 大兴机场线 | Daxing Airport   |
| 14号线 | line 14 |       |                  |
| 15号线 | line 15 |       |                  |
| 16号线 | line 16 |       |                  |

Beijing Subway System. /

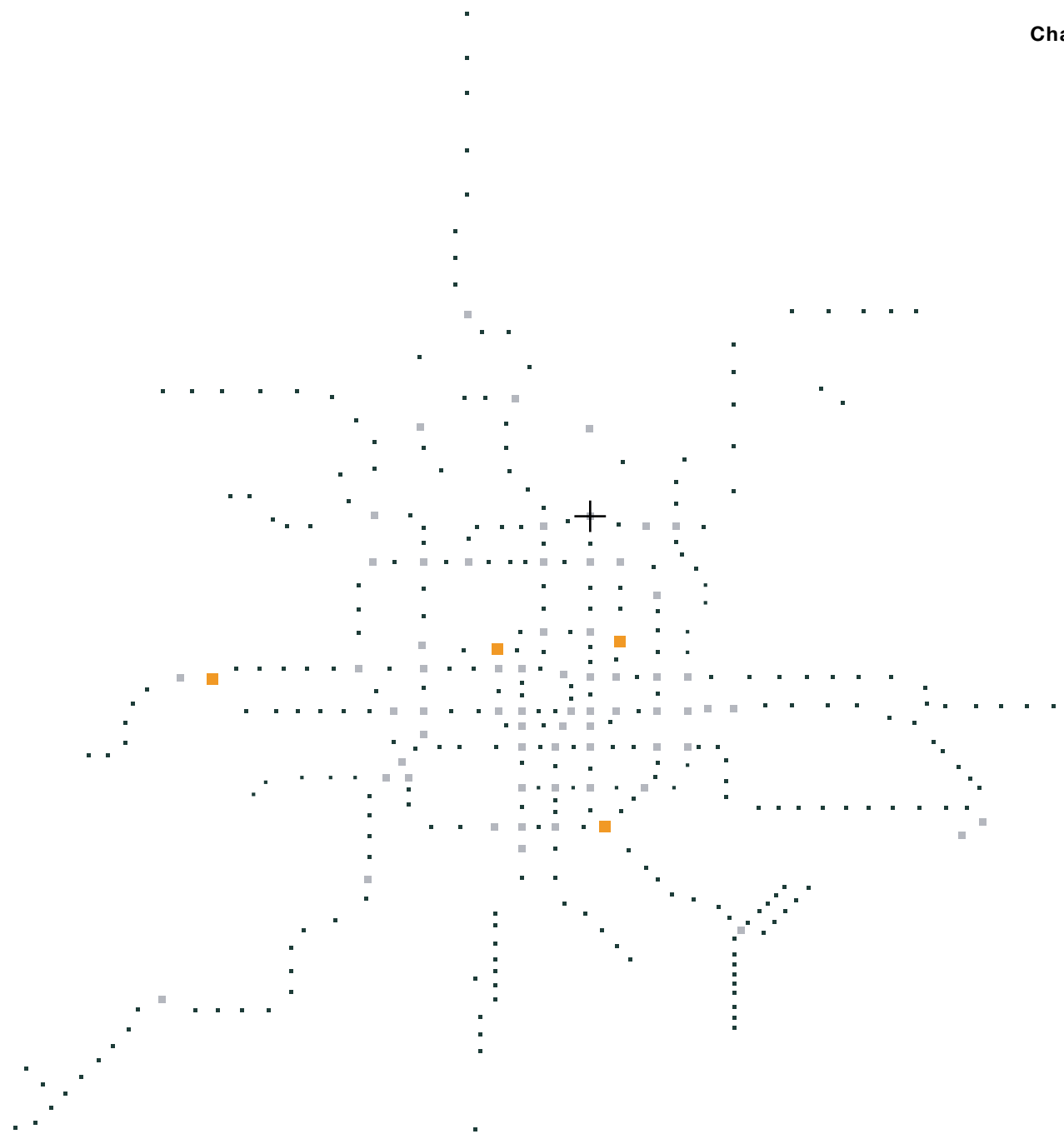
50km



- + Datunlu East
- single line metro station
- double lines metro station
- triple lines metro station

Beijing Metro Stations. /

50km



## Site Analysis

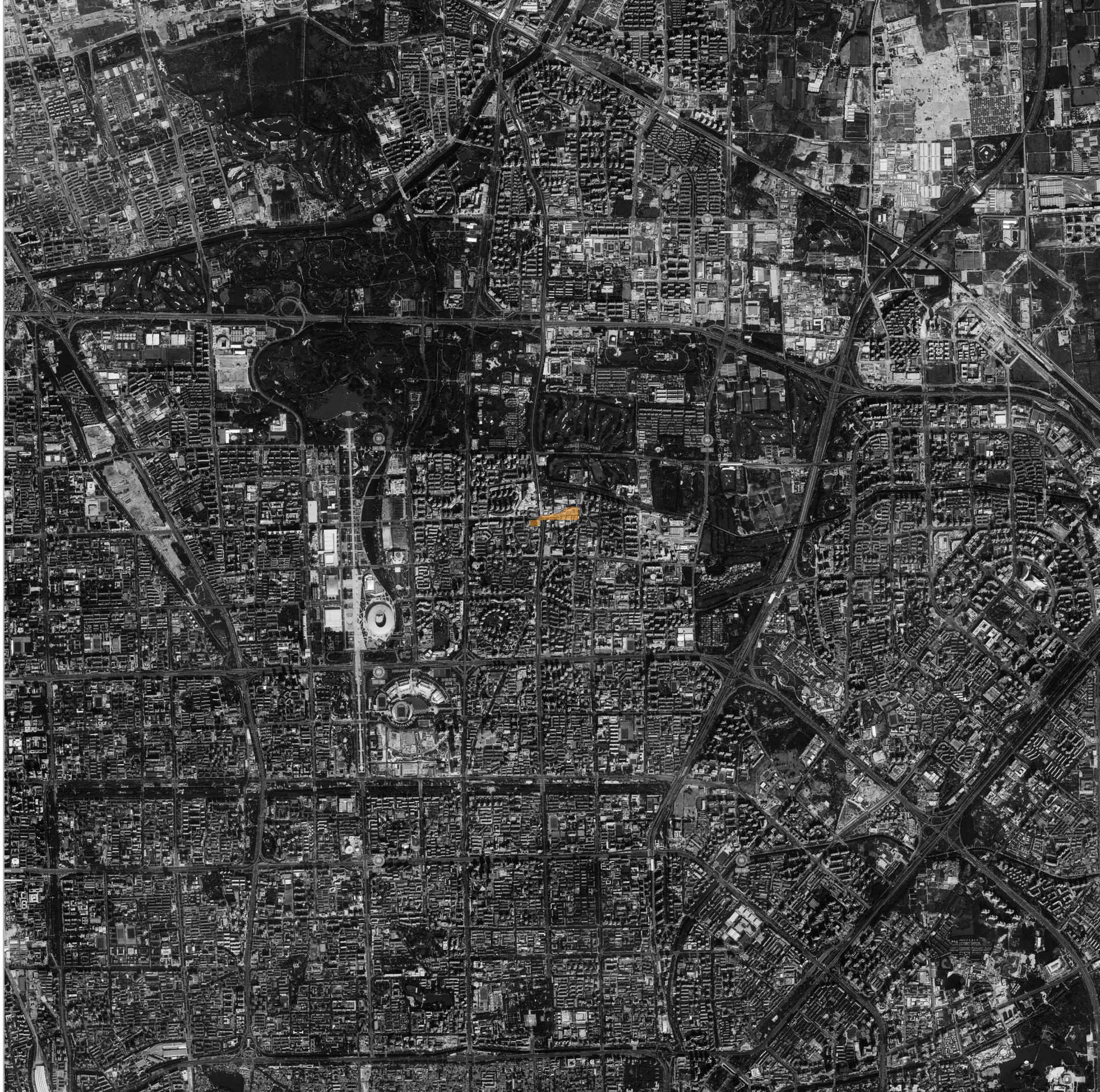
The project site is located in Chaoyang District (朝阳区) (Wikipedia, 2020), more precisely in the northwest Datun Subdistrict (大屯街道), between North Fourth Ring Middle Road and North Five Ring Middle Road. Its borders are: the Laiguangying area (来广营) to the east, the Olympic Village headquarters to the northwest and the Asian Games Village area and Xiaoguan (小关街道) to the south. It covers an area of 10 square kilometers and has a population of about 180,000 inhabitants (Wikipedia, 2016).

The area is characterized by a population with a strong spirit and sense of community and help for the others, in fact there are many activities that, spontaneously or with the help of the local government, are born and developed everyday. Examples are Happy Fitness Classes (快乐健身班), 1136 project of mutual support and friendship for the community (1136社区邻里互助友好基石工程), Sunset Red Community Care Activity (夕阳红社区关爱活动), and the flea market (跳蚤市场), all of which are activities for the inhabitants who want to improve neighborhood life ( Baidu, 2019). Still to be emphasized are, Warm Heart Project (暖心工程), Shuangfu Project (双扶工程) and Jiuyang policy (九养政策), services designed to help families in economic or social distress, to offer monetary, and psychological support and to develop recreational activities.

This area, at the beginning partly rural, has taken on its current features since the 1950s and is a manifestation of the urban growth of that period; initially it was a peripheral area, while today it can be considered part of the central areas of the city. This underlines the enormous urban growth that has marked Beijing over the last seventy years.

Datun, being one of the first urbanized areas of the city after 1949, boasts a strong and rooted community spirit, where traditions coexist with modernity in perfect harmony. Walking through the streets of the district, largely vertically developed and characterized by modern buildings, it is easy to come across unexpected scenes of everyday life. On the corners of the large avenues, and in the inner streets you will meet, above all, elderly people and children who spend their time dancing, playing board games and chatting. The street is experienced in an intense way, far from the prying eyes of tourists, as a microcosm far from the idea of megalopolis, where you can breathe a comforting sense of place.





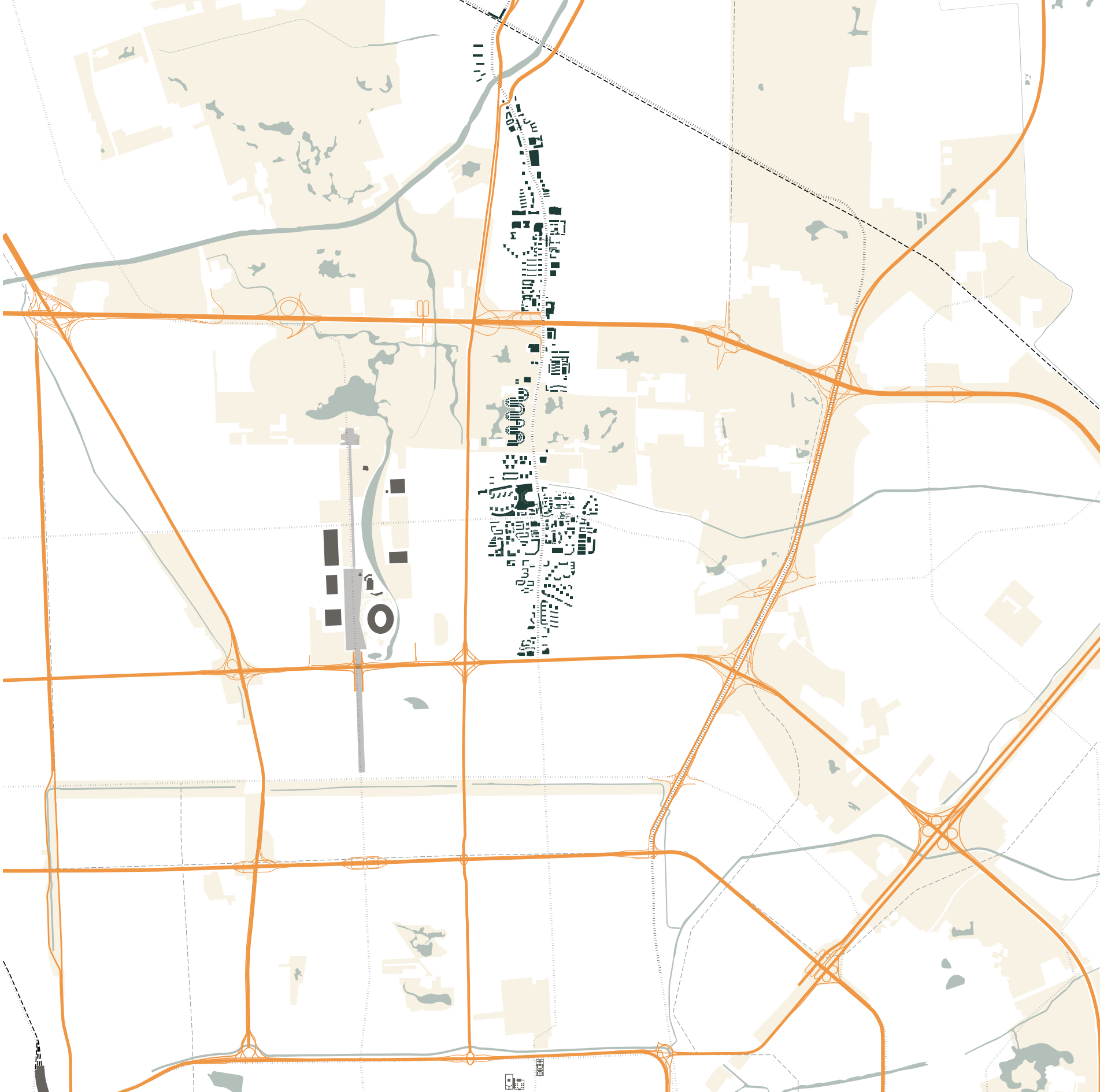
Datun Subdistrict. /



- green areas
- water system
- mobility
- symbols
- buildings
- metro

Datun Subdistrict. /

3000m





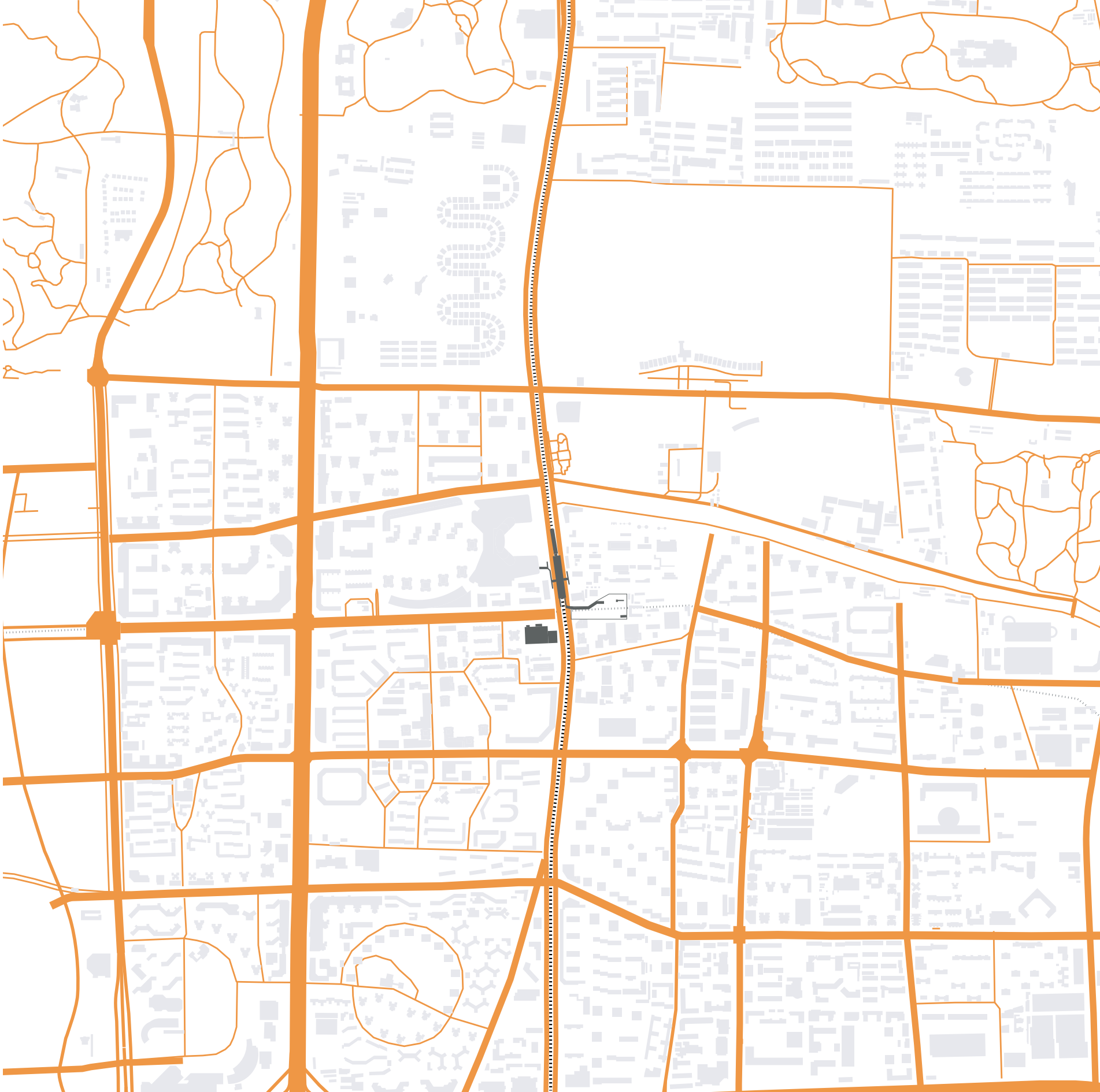
Datun Road -  
Beiyuan Road. /





Mobility. /

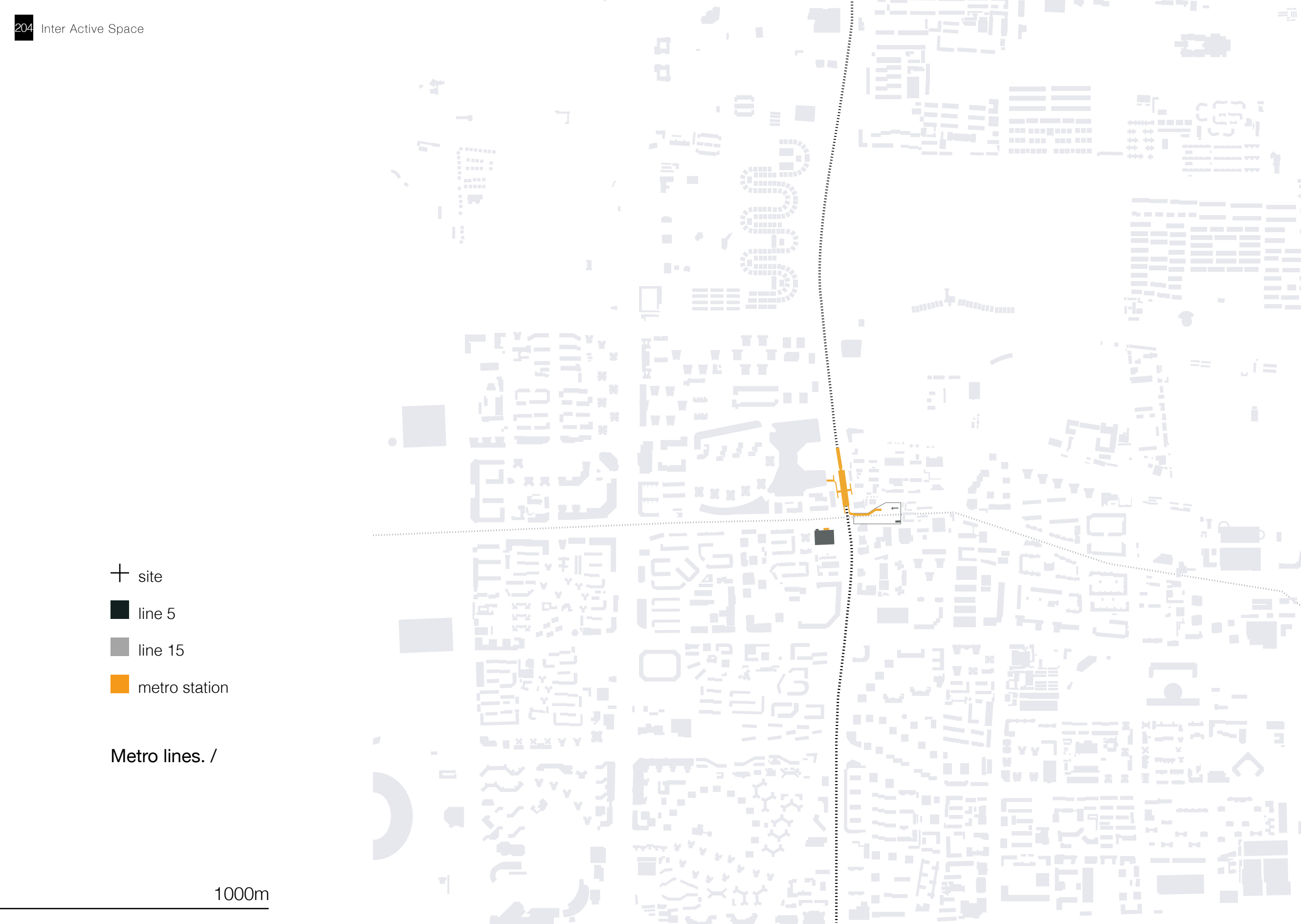
1000m



- ✚ site
- line 5
- line 15
- metro station

Metro lines. /

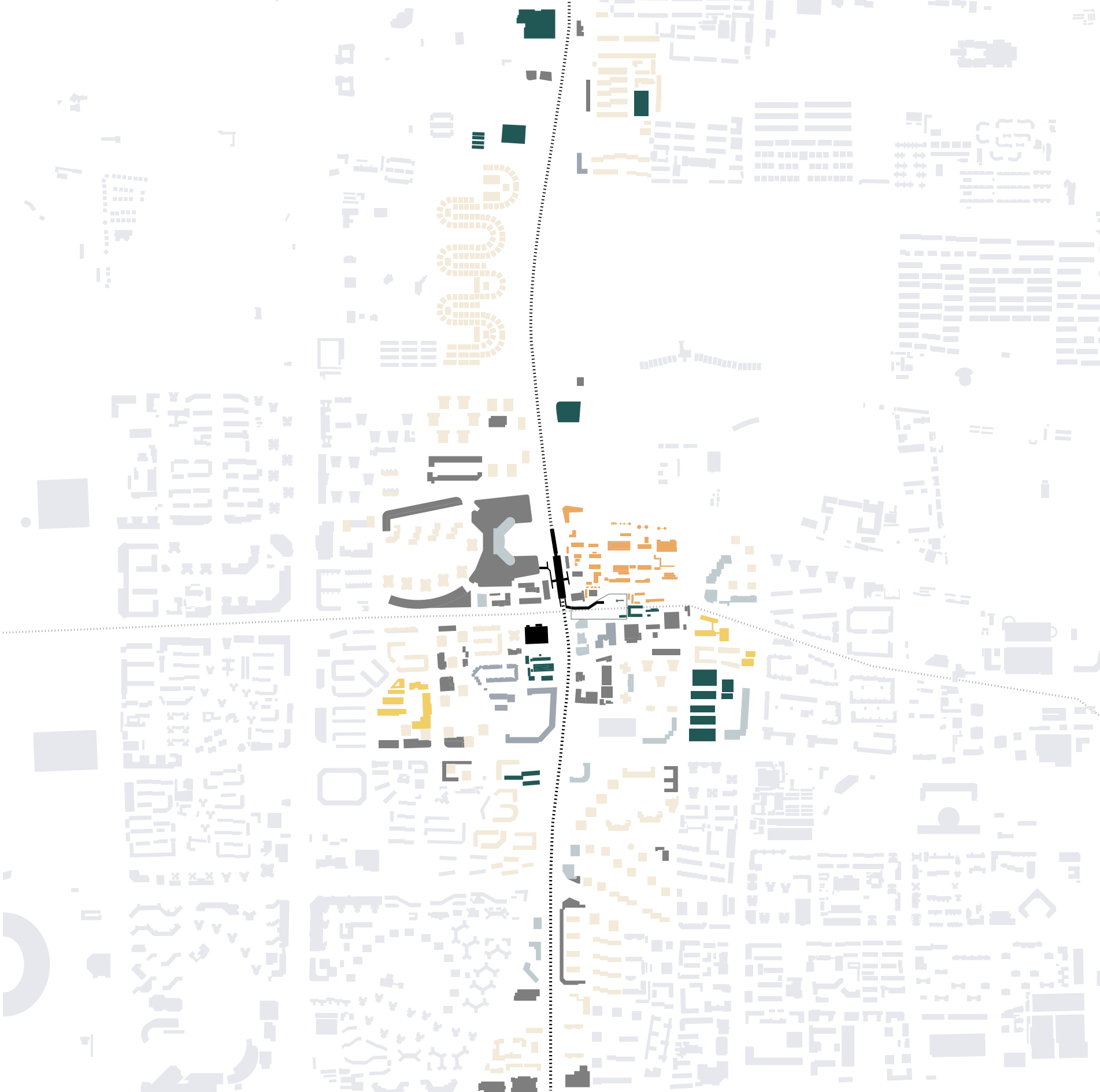
1000m



- schools
- residence
- offices
- firefighter
- commercial
- factories
- hospitals

Functions. /

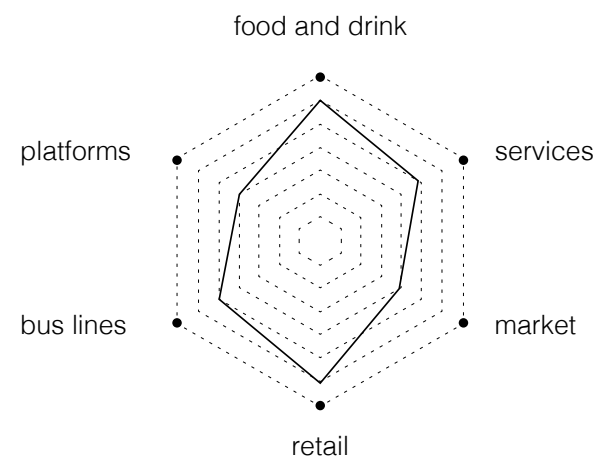
1000m



## Datunlu East metro station 大屯路东站

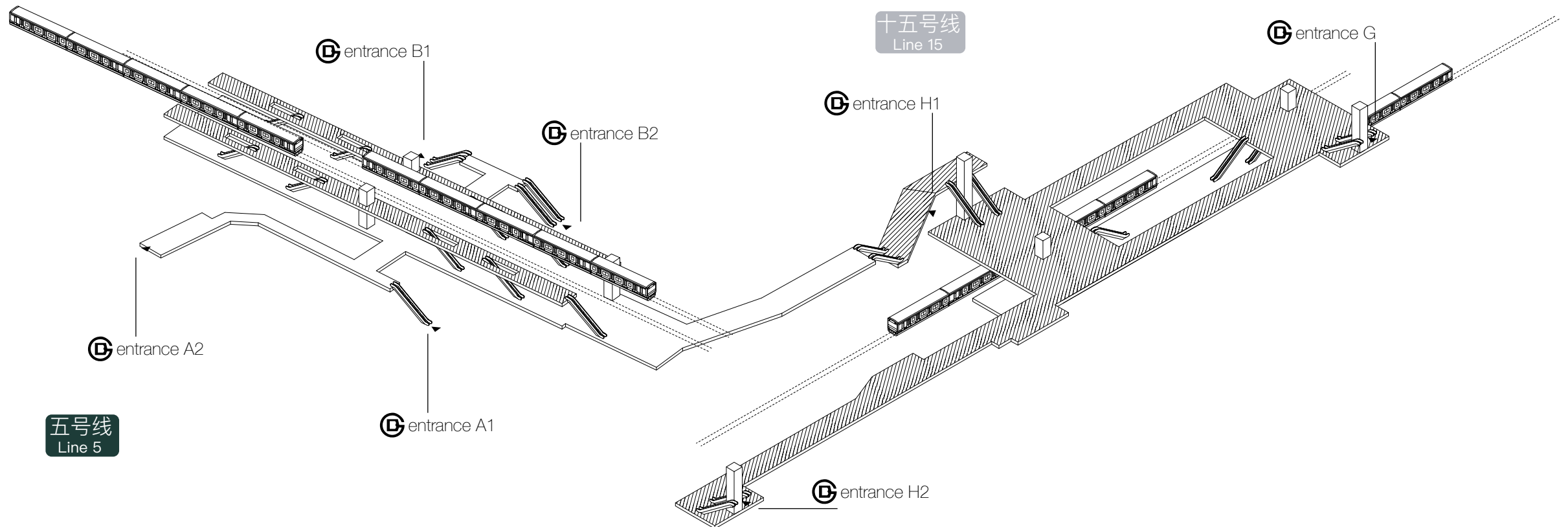
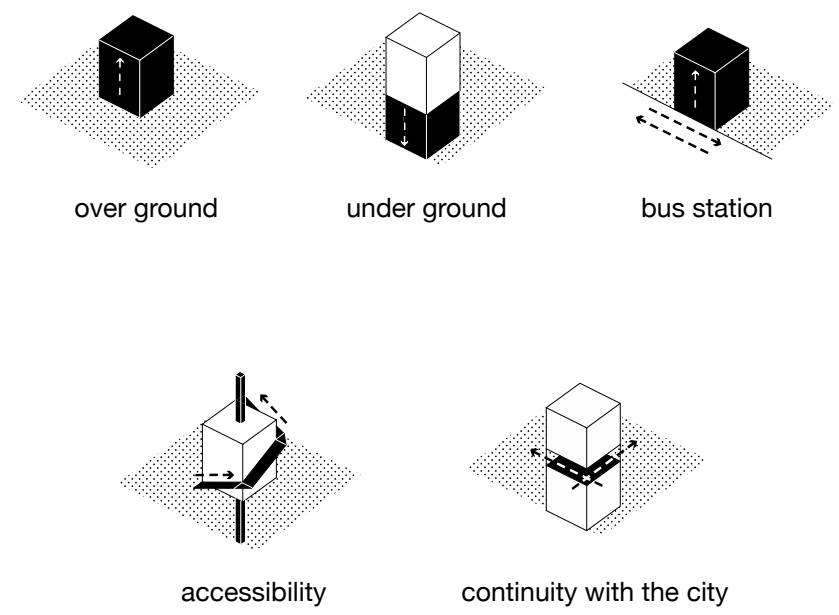
The subway interchange station is located at the intersection of Beiyuan Road (北苑路) (south-north) and Datun Road (大屯路) (east-west). Line 5 station is located on the north side of the intersection, in the middle of Beiyuan Road; line 15 station is located on the east side of the intersection on Datun Road. Line 5 station was opened on 7 October 2007 and line 15 was fully activated on 26 December 2015 (Baidu, 2020). Line 5 station is elevated and designed with side platforms. The colour shade of the station is white. Line 15 station is a subway station with island's platform design and it is the largest station of the Beijing subway (Wikipedia, 2020). The station is immersed in the urban context, around the important intersection of Beiyuan Road and Datun Road, in fact, one of its entrances leads directly into the shopping center. The number of passengers that daily pass through the station is estimated at around sixty thousand (Xiang, 2016).





~ 60.000  
passengers per day

5 levels  
2 lines  
7 exits



P h o t o -  
g r a p h i c  
A n a l y s i s



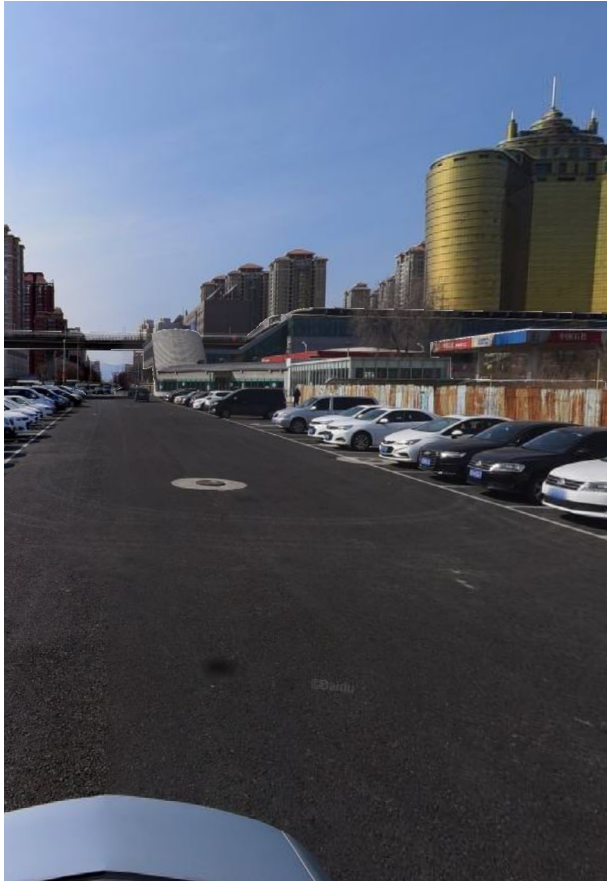


1



2





3



4



5



6





7



8



Happenings in space without space



needs



pick up point



dance



food

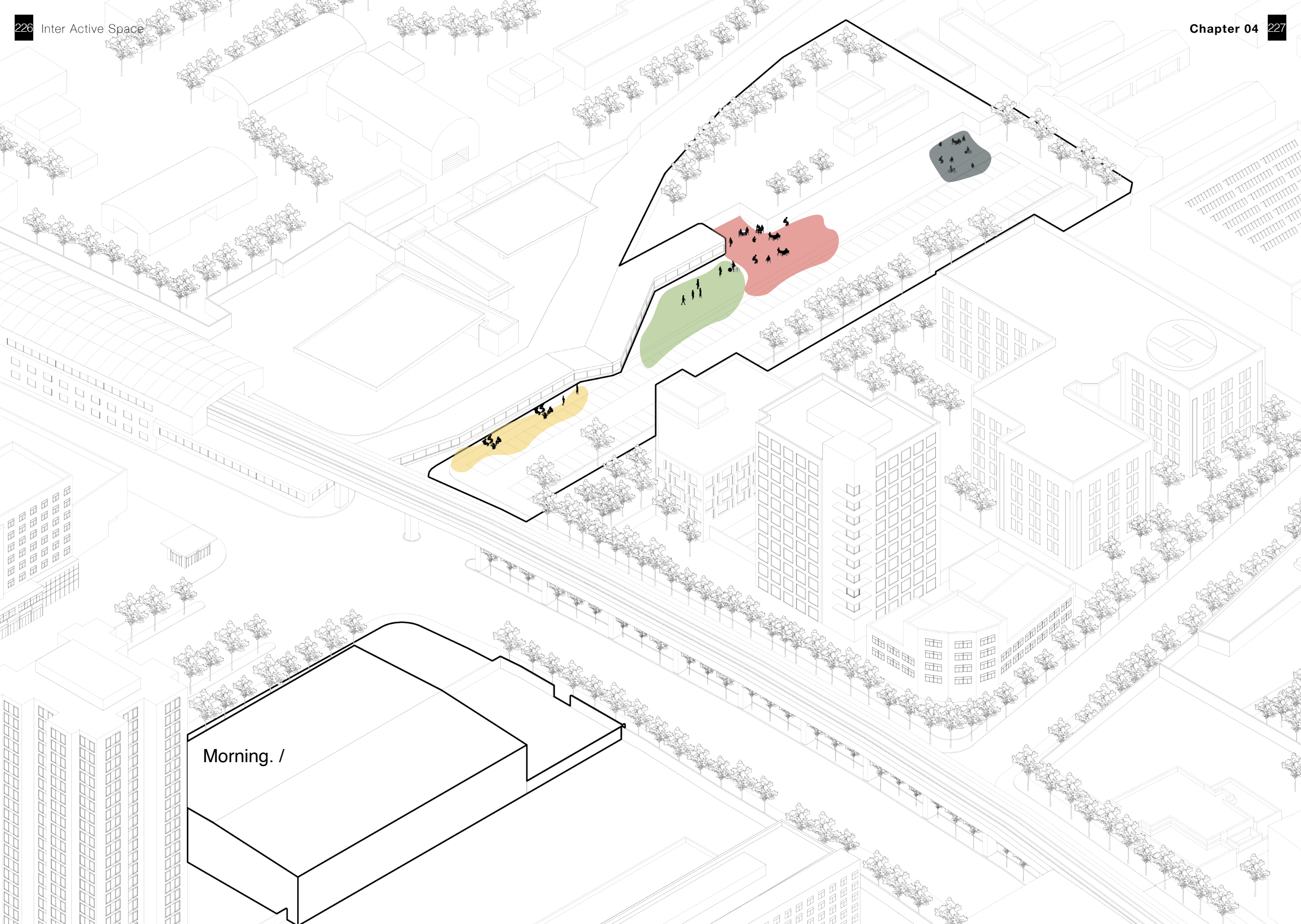


sport

relaxing

Happenings. /





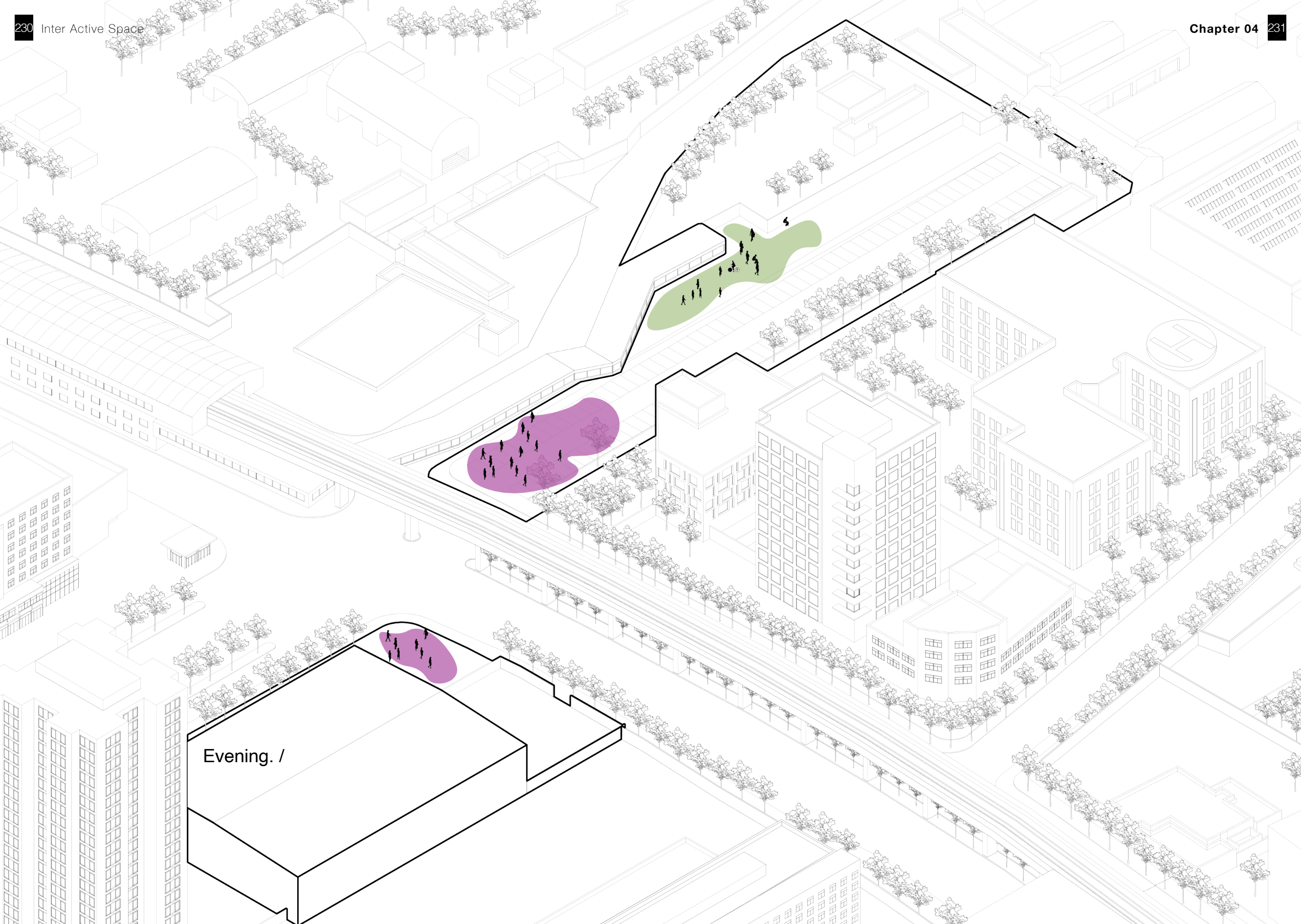
Morning. /





Afternoon. /



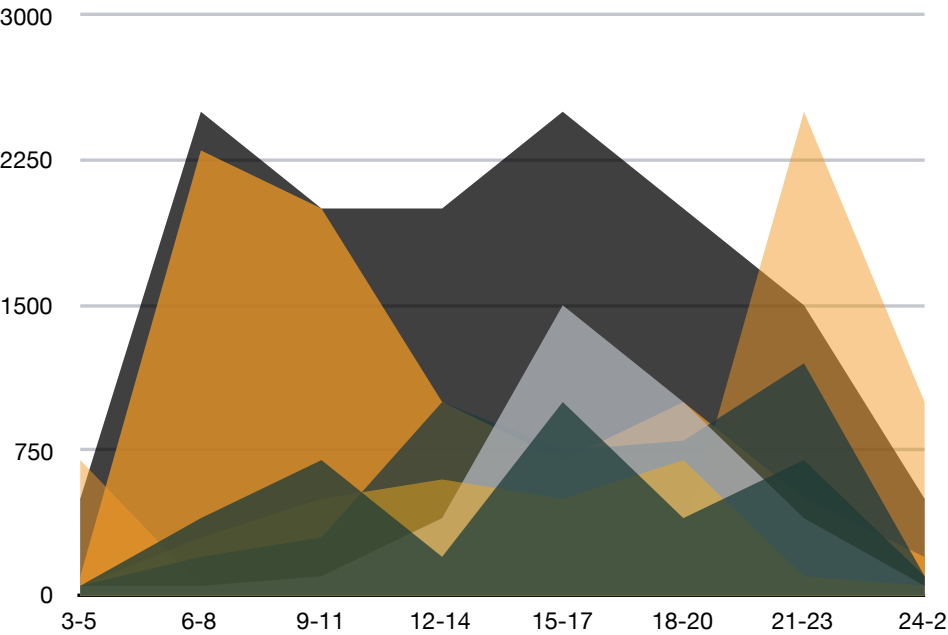


Evening. /

## Datas

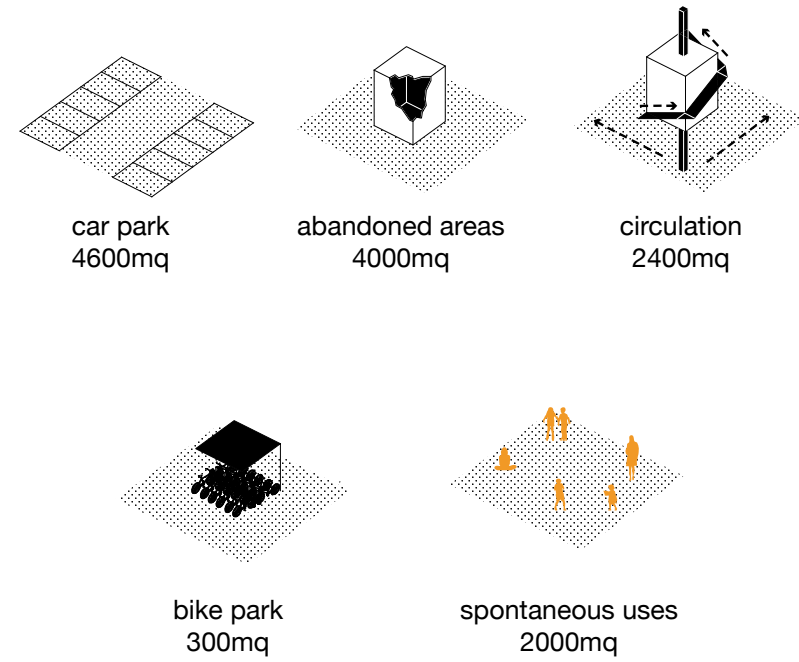
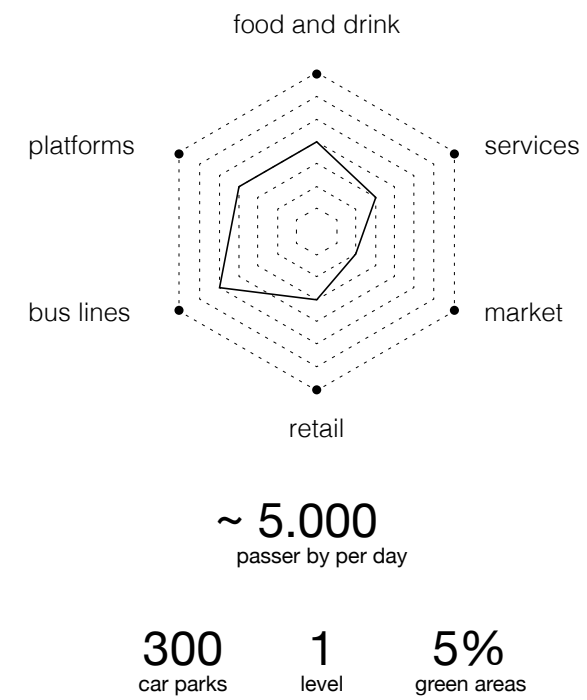
The project area around the Datunlu East metro station, occupies an area of about 12,000 square meters, used as a parking lot for cars (4600 square meters); the remaining space is partly abandoned and currently occupied by light structures (4000 square meters), an area of 2700 square meters is used for the flow of light mobility, of which 300 square meters are occupied by a small parking lot for bicycles and electric scooters. The entire area is almost devoid of vegetation, which in fact corresponds to about 5% of the total.

Although the area is largely abandoned and used as a car park, during the day it is teeming with life and spontaneous recreational activities. The graph shows what functions are attributed to the area during the day, the X axis represents the time while the Y axis represents the occupied square meters by spontaneous uses; I spent several days at Datunlu East to study and analyze which functions are attributed to the place by the people who utilize the place every day. We can talk about real colonization because the people who occupy the area daily are always largely the same, who have appropriated some spaces making them their own. I am referring in particular to the elderly who use a portion of shade area in the morning to spend time playing checkers or mahjong. A large section of the parking lot is occupied by Aliexpress or Taobao pick up points, which always occupy the same position from morning to evening.

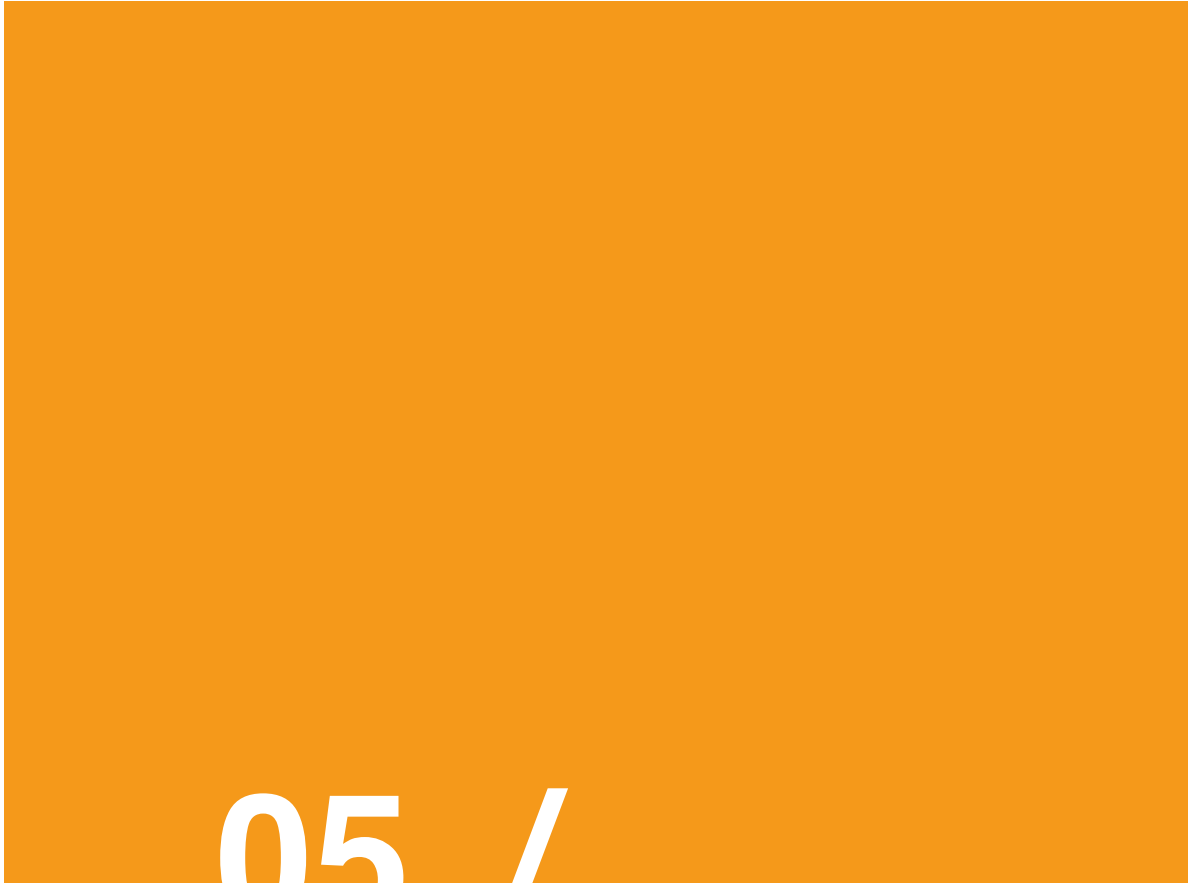


- sport
- pick up point
- leisure
- relax
- dance
- food
- circulation

uses of the space. /



Complexity:  
is the right answer?



DESIGN APPROACH



# Life between objects

The project aims to answer a question:  
“How to allow spontaneous use in a designed environment?”

The intention is to demonstrate that; a public space is active if an active community is present. Architecture alone cannot create a community, but offers a place for the community by highlighting the hidden potential of an area.



—

life. /

Nowadays, information comes rapidly through the mass media, almost at the moment when the facts of which we become aware occur. We know everything that happens in the world in real time, but sometimes, we do not even know our neighbours. Direct observation of the people, places and space around us gives us the opportunity to know the more common but equally important details. We can see how people move around us, how they interact, how they dress, and what they say. These precious details can give us new ideas and can stimulate us in active actions.

Children, who do not like to be alone, know the world mainly by looking at and touching the social environment around them and, from careful observation, they receive stimuli and impulses to invent new games in which to

involve their companions. Just as children, we are inspired by seeing others in action, so we receive the impulse to participate, the experience of the individual in the public space can become a collective experience. The observation that generates action becomes a social stimulus of ideas; it is a lively and creative vital drive. A living community is when people have the ability to interact with each other, making their experiences and skills available to others. The living community continuously offers new ideas, stimuli, and transforms the spaces at its disposal.

«Experiencing other people represents a particularly colorful and attractive opportunity for stimulation. Compared with experiencing buildings and other inanimate objects, experiencing

people, who speak and move about, offers a wealth of sensual variation. No moment is like the previous or the following when people circulate among people. The number of new situations and new stimuli is limitless. Furthermore, it concerns the most important subject in life: people.»<sup>1</sup>

People have always needed to be among other people, as in a process of self-reinforcement. Every individual feels the need to involve others in their activities and thoughts, or is driven by a spirit of emulation or simple curiosity to imitate others. In this way individuals and events can influence and stimulate each other, giving rise to increasingly complex activities born from the communion of simple experiences of individuals (Jacobs, 1961). As is pointed out by Frank Van Klingeren «one plus one is three - at least».<sup>2</sup>

A living community makes the city alive, regardless of its buildings and spaces, colours and shapes. «If life between buildings is given favorable conditions through sensible planning of cities and housing areas alike, many costly and often stilted and strained attempts to make buildings "interesting" and rich by using dramatic architectural effects can be spared.

Life between buildings is both more relevant and more interesting to look at in the long run than are any combination of colored concrete and staggered building forms.»<sup>3</sup>

People who fully experience the buildings, streets, squares, parks and neighbourhoods, breathe life into the cities themselves, making them unique, fascinating, active and engaging (Whyte, 1980). The designer's task is therefore to design spaces, not as an end in themselves, but usable and colonizable, not totally defined by precise rules but not even completely free.

Spaces that are places where things can happen, where events can take place and that are a stimulus for socialization. Equipped spaces that are a stimulus for people, where people themselves become a stimulus for others and where different experiences flow into common activities.

1 Gehl, J. (1987), *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space* Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York.

2 Frank Van Klingeren

3 Gehl, J. (1987), *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space* Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York.

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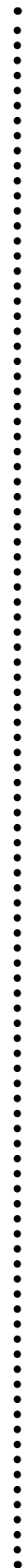
Katrin Korfmann,  
Central Station, Amsterdam,  
2001



█

Ideally architecture is not about fixing activities, fluxes or programs, or worse, about solving spatial problems. On the contrary, it is about opening up possibilities: the potential of a site, the hidden opportunity of a particular situation in time, of a programmatic conflict. It is about dealing with uncertainty, about enabling different a dun fore seen scenarios.

*(De Geyter)*



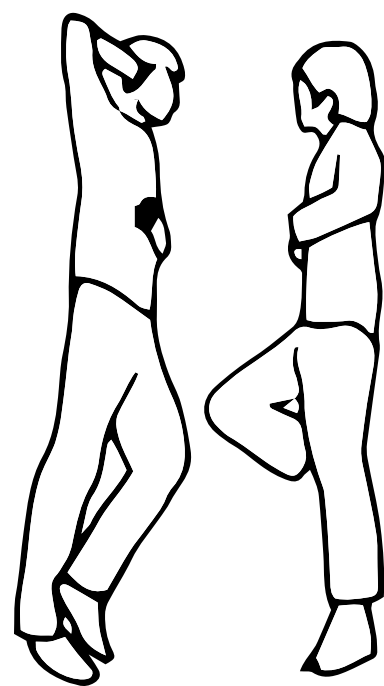
# Manifesto

The project wants to be a meeting space for all generations, a place to lie down, relax, climb, a place of events, shows, concerts and sports, a playground equipped with alternative furnishings, all in a direct relationship with nature, where elements such as water, greenery, light and shadow blend harmoniously. A place of interaction where people actively converse with each other and with natural and architectural elements, in a complex but balanced mechanism, a set of free and functional spaces, between imagination and necessity where nothing is perfectly defined but everything is in progress.

«Architecture is something always in progress,  
in a process of creativity and evolution,  
never in a final stage!»

*(Friedman, 1960)*





Learning from spontaneity....



Joel Meyerowitz, Indy 500, spectators between cars, Indianapolis, 1965

To Achive harmony. /



■■■■■

It is a city like a dream: everything imaginable can be dreamed of, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that hides a desire or its reverse, a fear. Cities like dreams are built of desires and fears.

*(Calvino, 1996)*



Programme. /

New activities start near events already underway (Ghel, 1987). The project area is currently composed of a car park and two grass and concrete areas around the entrances of the Datunlu East metro station.

These are un-equipped spaces, partly abandoned, but which, however, the community lives on a daily basis, colonizes and occupies spontaneously by providing them with different functions during the day. In the morning the area, mainly crossed by subway users, also hosts elderly people playing cards, who have equipped the place with sofas, tables and chairs, food trucks selling jianbing and sausages for breakfast and pick up points of Taobao and Aliexpress.

The situation evolves during the day, when the children, after school, occupy the area playing jianzi and football and kids use rollerblades and skateboarding taking ad-

vantage of the large space offered by the parking lot. In the evening, however, it is possible to come across traditional group dances that enliven the whole area.

I found the area extremely interesting because it is partly abandoned space, free and definitely large, with a great potential that until now has not emerged in its entirety. It's difficult to find similar areas in the extremely urbanized center of Beijing, so I thought it would be interesting to enrich it with small elements to make it more suitable for people living in the neighborhood to enjoy it, creating or expanding the idea of community already existing. The project is an experimentation, a test of purely theoretical concepts, which I learned during my studies. I would like to give substance to a thought that I have developed over the years.

The project wants to maintain the present heterogeneity, guarantee flexibility and give continuity to the already consolidated activities. It is born on the push of the current experience with the intent to implement the collective use of spaces, enriching them with objects, furniture, architectural elements that give a wealth from an aesthetic and functional point of view. The project aims to create a space that encompasses several places, offering cues and stimuli for different uses. The large area would thus become the container of multiple pieces, a

space that contains different, unique, intimate, noisy, usable, adaptable to different age groups and the needs of individuals.

The large area is divided into several zones, which are the layers of connectivity, freedom and creativity. The three single spatial entities, combined with each other and combined with the people who animate them, give life to a complex system, where places and experiences meet and interact, transforming each other. Nothing is strictly predefined, nothing is aimed at a single or univocal use, everything is and can be something else. Hence my idea of not designing anything that performs one and only one function, but I wanted to design objects, furniture and structures that are capable of many uses.

The connectivity layer function as a pedestrian connection, consisting of differentiated flooring, stairs, ramps and lighting, is the common thread that connects and communicates with the individual microcosms.

The second layer, called freedom, defines the spaces of the staying, the places to rest, the areas open to the users' imagination. They are designed as circular rooms, where the walls can be imagined and created on the basis of the flooring. Each circle is characterized by floors with different densities and materials. The circle has been cho-

sen because it allows a fluid spatial conformation, free of edges and welcoming. The circle is a primordial figure that refers to man's fundamental relationship with himself and the surrounding environment. Before being the object of imaginative thought and representation, circularity concerns the sphere of human action to our corporeity, precisely in relation to this was chosen this figure to instil harmony and positive stimuli.

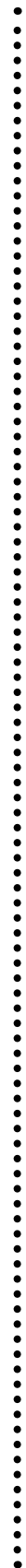
The layer creativity, made up of suspended platforms, stimulates creativity acquired from a different point of observation; a new perspective opens up in front of the spectator, a new scenario that offers infinite possibilities. On a functional level, the layer creativity increases the walking surface and provides shade and protection. The platforms follow a rectangular pattern, to define and delimit spaces that can have defined functions, such as the badminton or basketball court.

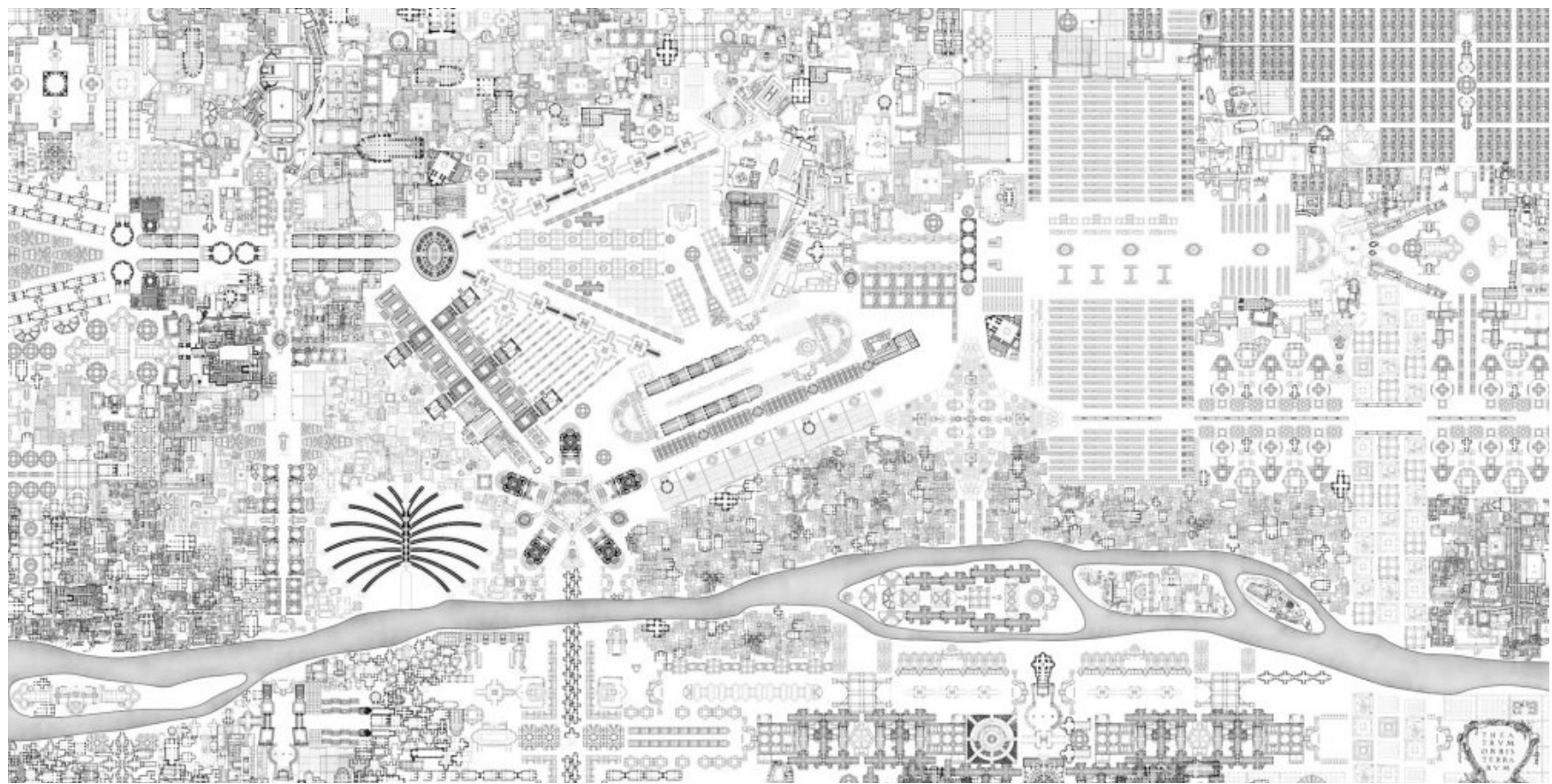
The project reflects a search for balance between free and functional spaces, between nature and architecture, between imagination and necessity. Nothing is perfectly defined, each part is understood within the overall image; the individual layers alone do not work, they acquire value in their inter-relationship, the overall harmony is outlined by the active communication of the individual parts.

Programme of spontaneity. /









Michael Hirschbichler  
Theatrum Orbis Terrarum,  
2012



Elements. /

The masterplan is structured around a main path, not delimited, which directs the flow towards the subway entrances, around which secondary paths are developed that connect all microcosms in an organic way.

The priority function of the area is to encourage the constant and continuous circulation of people to and from the subway, but at the same time it is implemented through structures, furniture, objects that create not only a space of going but also a space of staying.

The circulation is considered as a space between spaces, it has a connective function, but it can be much more, becoming an experience of three-dimensional movement in an articulated space as a reflection of a complex mental path.

The flow of people and mobility, not only towards the subway, but also towards other services, is directed not only through signage, but also and above all through architectural spatial information in which the environment becomes a generator of the flow map and invites the user to orient himself through processes of interaction. People thus find themselves moving along a path not bound by barriers, but where the constant updating of environmental information regulates the user's perception.

Spontaneous services already operating in the area such as the Taobao and Aliexpress pick up points or food trucks are maintained and find space under the suspended platforms, in order to improve their working conditions. A cafeteria and several utility services are located under the new platforms. Although they

are fixed structures, they can be modified, interpreted and adapted according to the contingent needs of the users.

The community is the fulcrum of the intervention, it is around it that the different layers are born, which are arranged and designed to continue to accommodate everything people want to bring, from sofas to tables and everything they consider useful to fully enjoy the space.

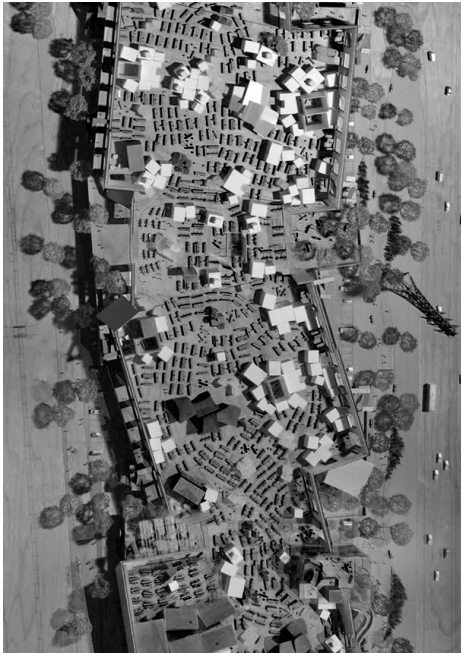
To encourage a sense of community, the space of freedom is created, which includes circular areas suitable for sandpits, football or basketball courts, playgrounds, tables and green areas.

The furnishings in these areas are partly fixed and partly mobile, in particular I did not want to tie the seats to a fixed space, so that people are free to move them as they like to create different environments for conversation and conviviality from time to time.

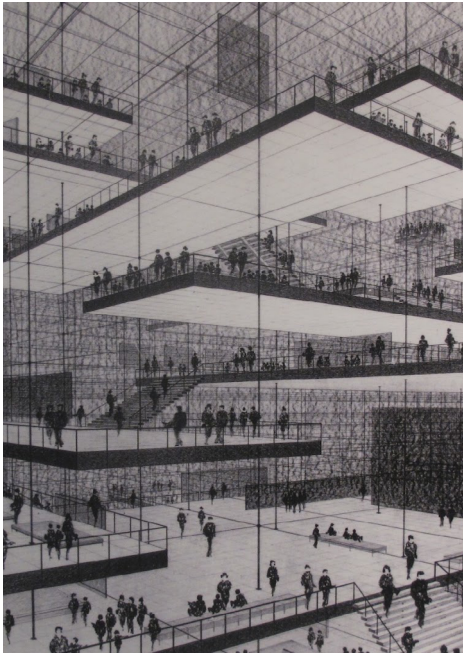
The horizontal tops, although they are fixed, can perform different

functions, and can be used as table tops, as playing spaces, where the elderly can share their passion for cards, dominoes or madjhong, as chairs or ping pong tables.

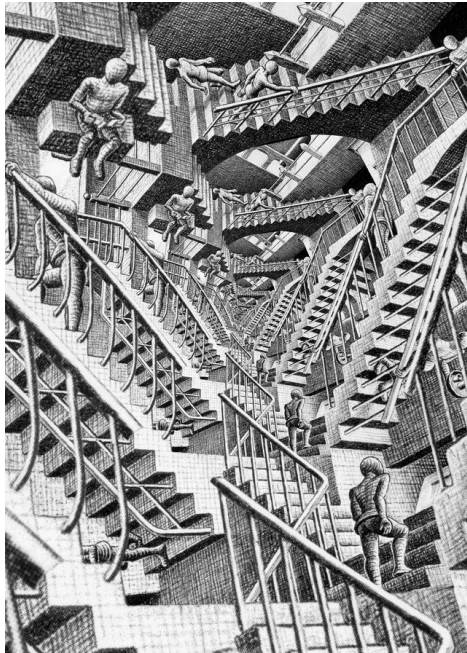
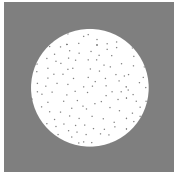
Elements such as water and greenery play a predominant role in the project, with a view to respecting the environment, aimed at creating a pleasant place for socializing, relaxing and playing. All the elements and furnishings participate together with people in the construction of complex microcosms where, through sensory functions, one can aspire to a symbiotic panism. Noises, sounds, colours, lights, shadows, densities and materials vary over time and offer ever-changing panoramas in which to set new stories. Natural elements play an important role in the project; lakes and trees with their coolness invite people to use the space that now seems almost hostile.



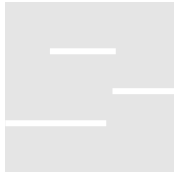
Connectivity. /

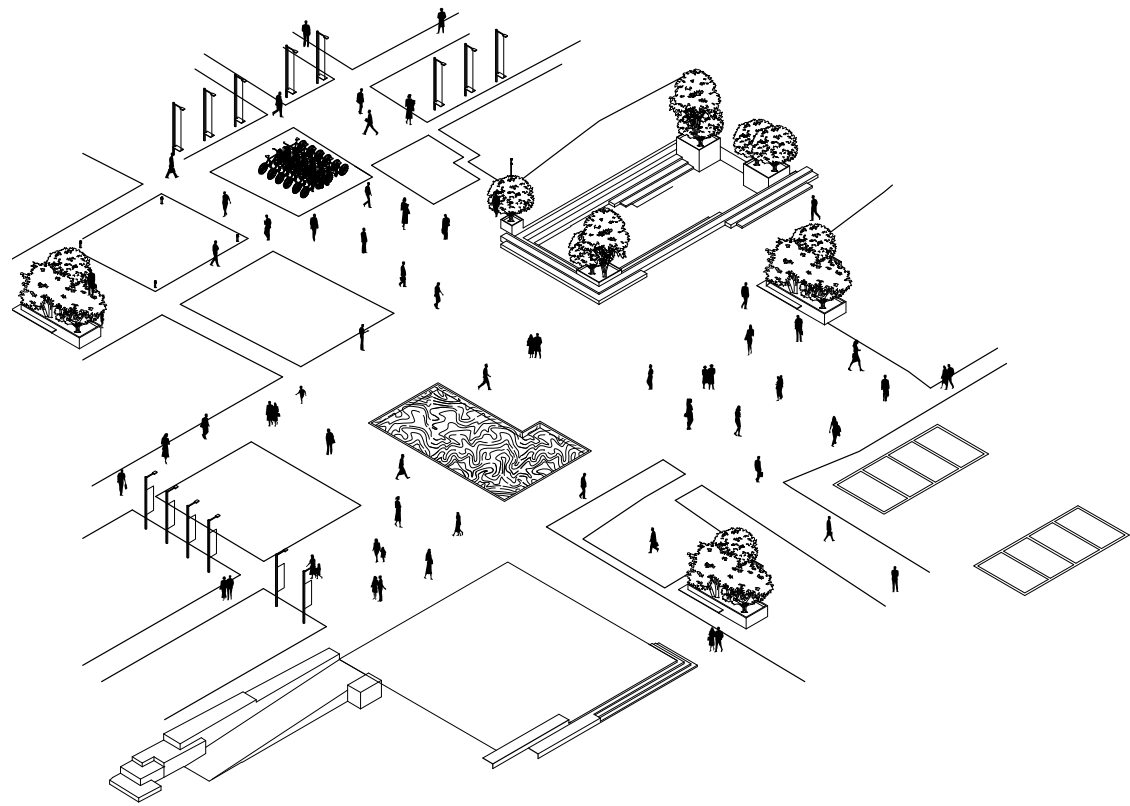
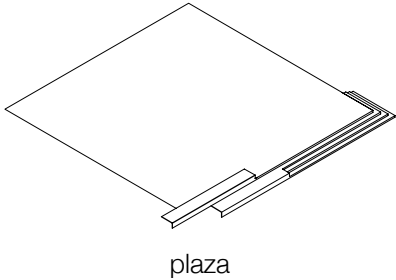
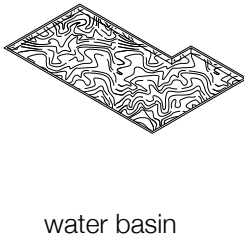
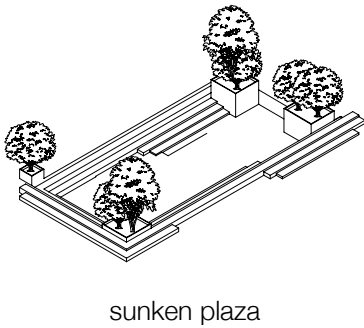
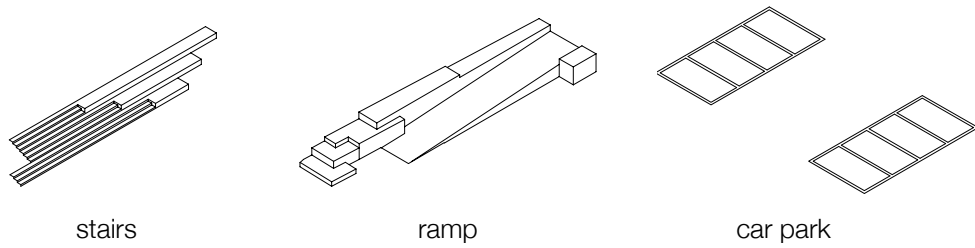


Freedom. /



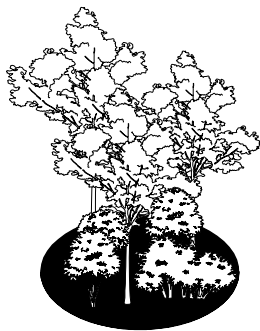
Creativity. /



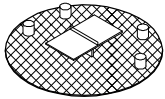


Connectivity. /

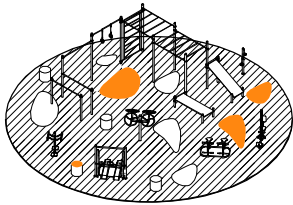




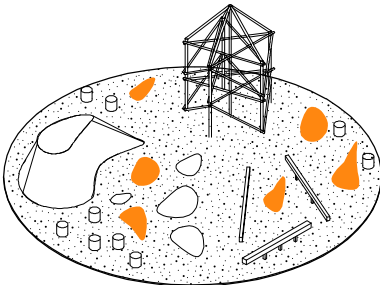
forest



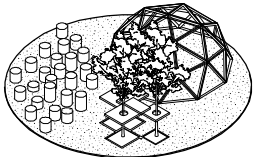
table



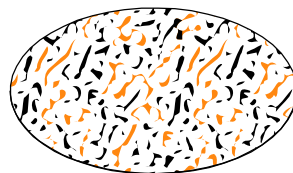
outdoor gym



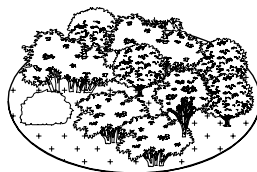
playground



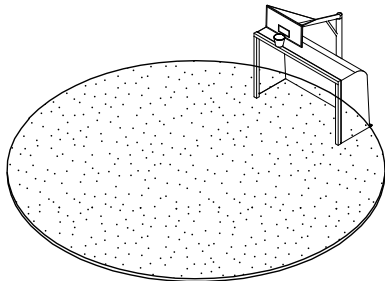
playground 2



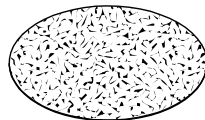
imagination



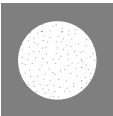
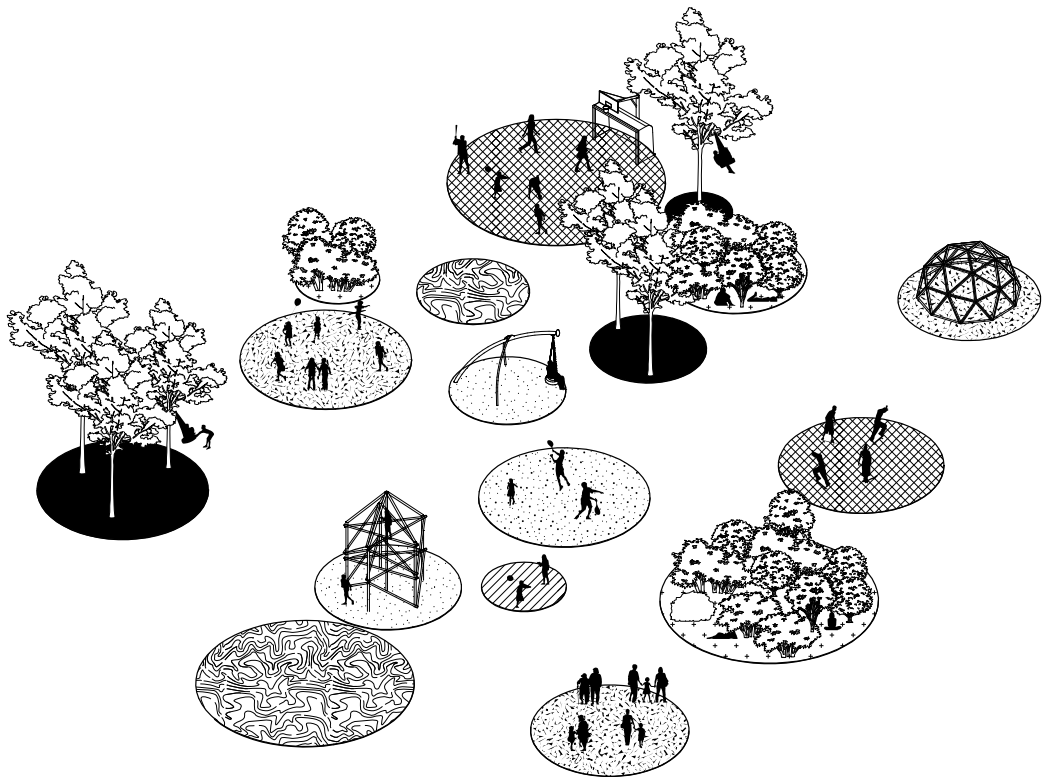
garden

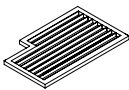


sport field

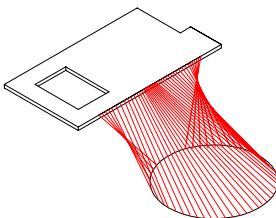


sand basin

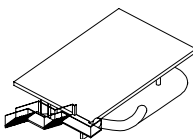




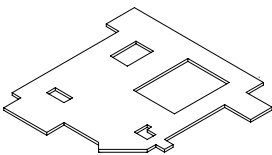
pergola



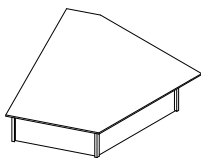
shading tent



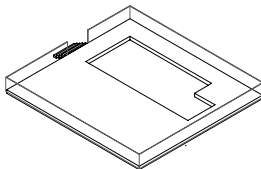
slide



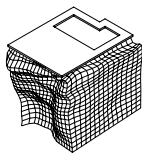
gallery



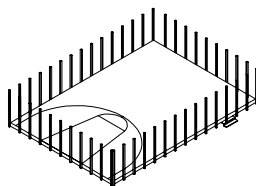
bar



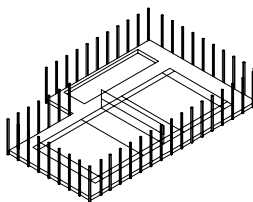
terrazza



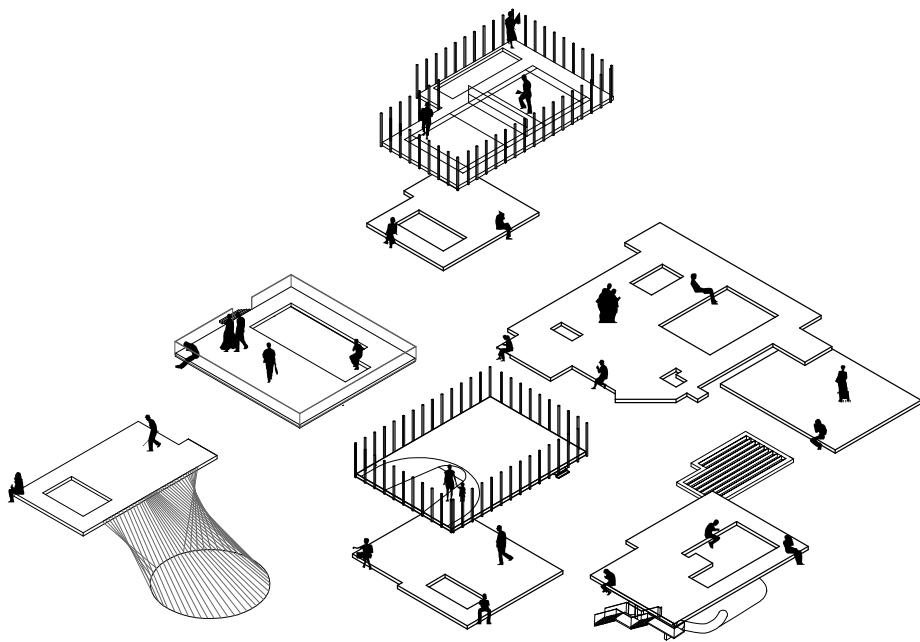
climbing wall



basketball court

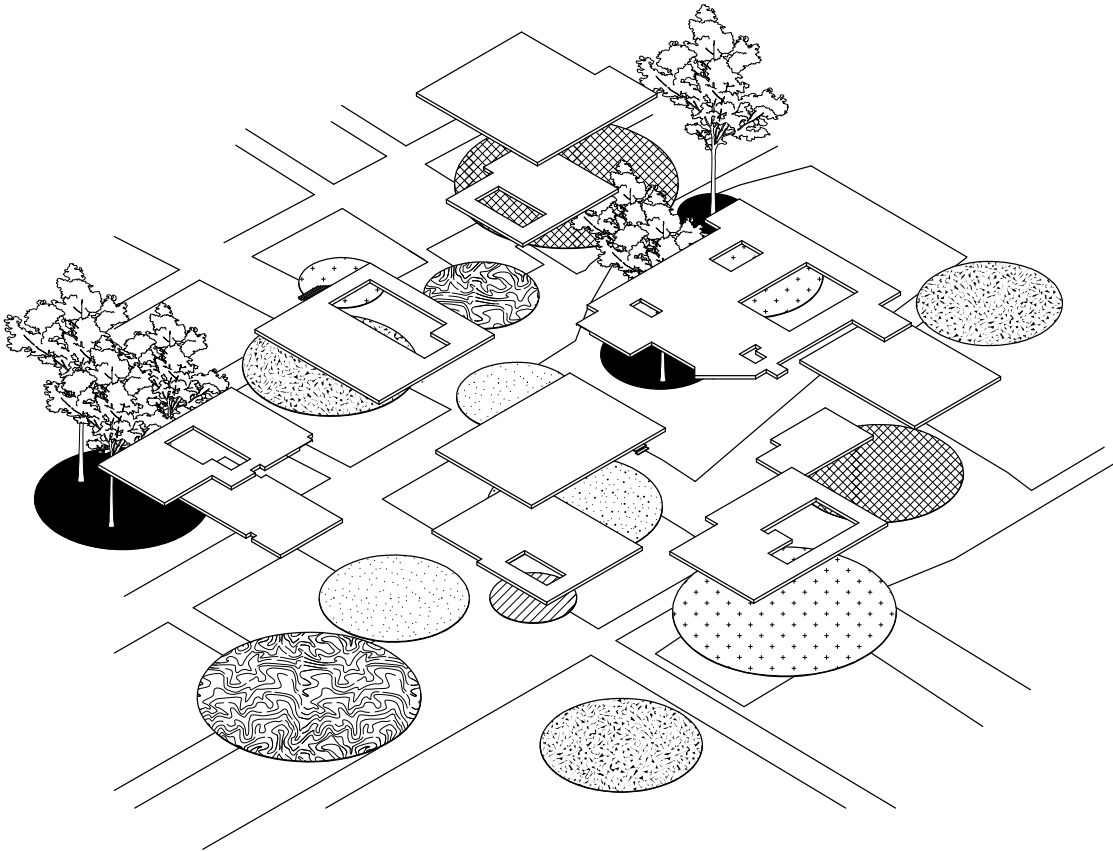


badminton court

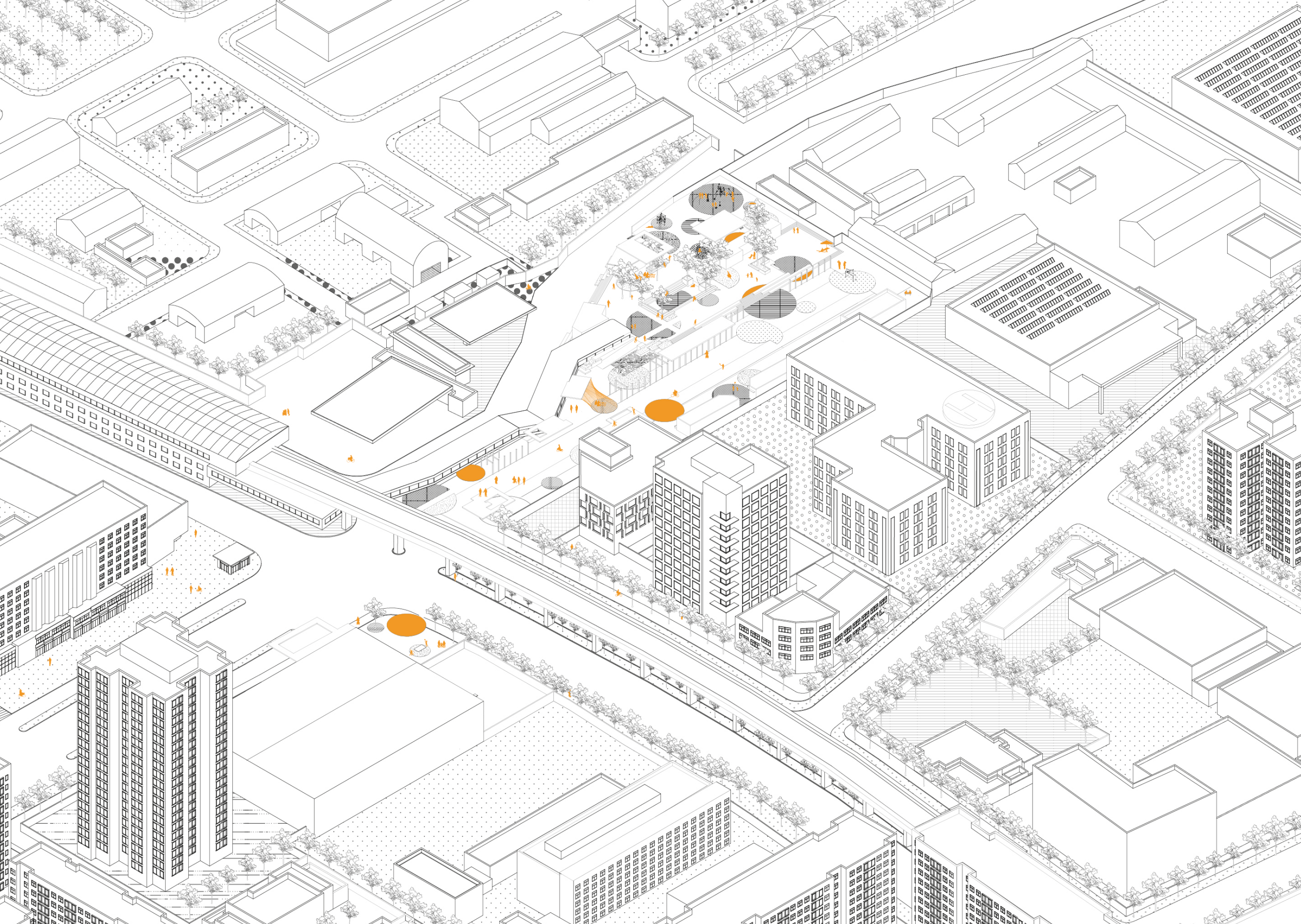


Creativity. /

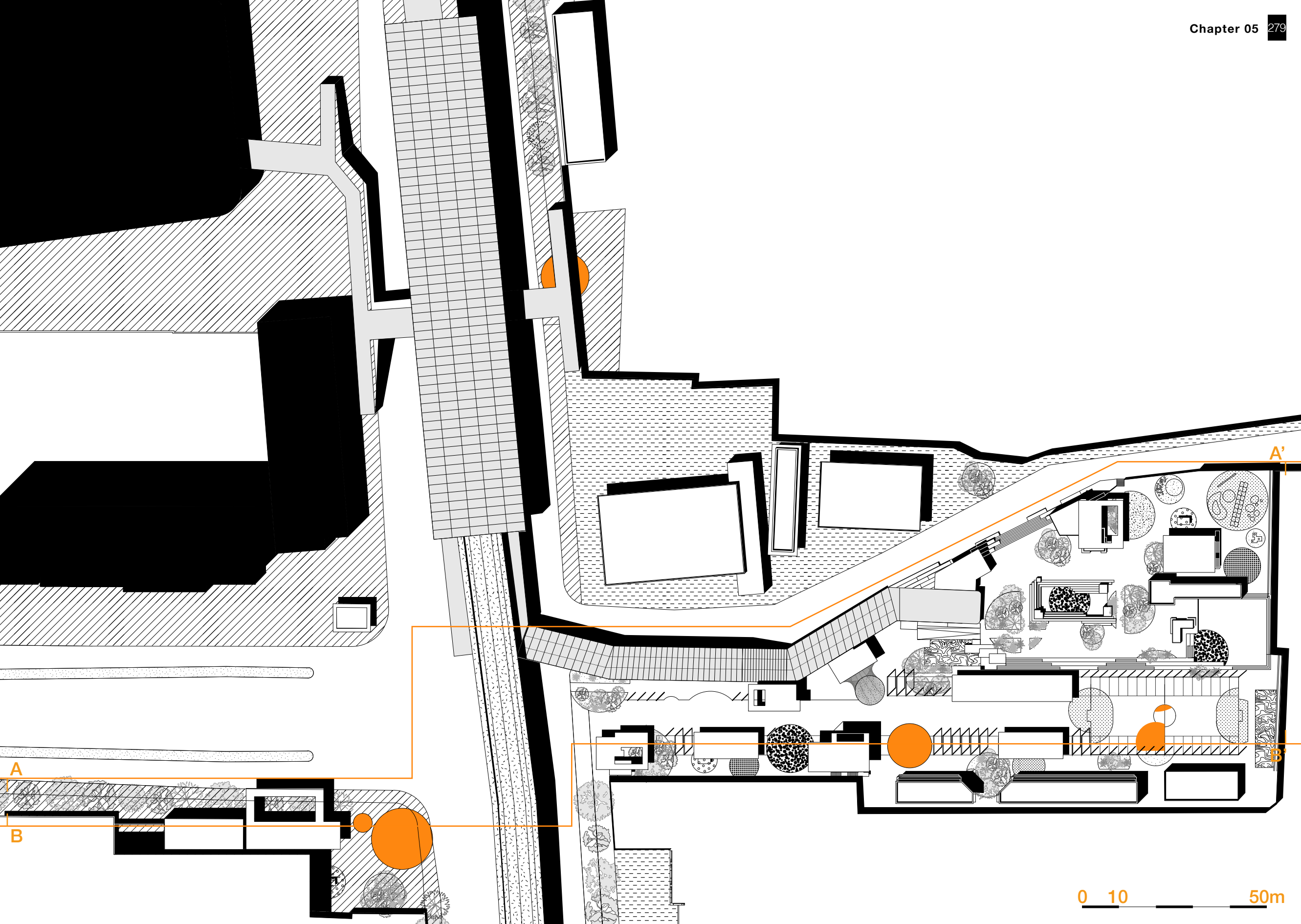
C o m -  
p l e -  
x i t y









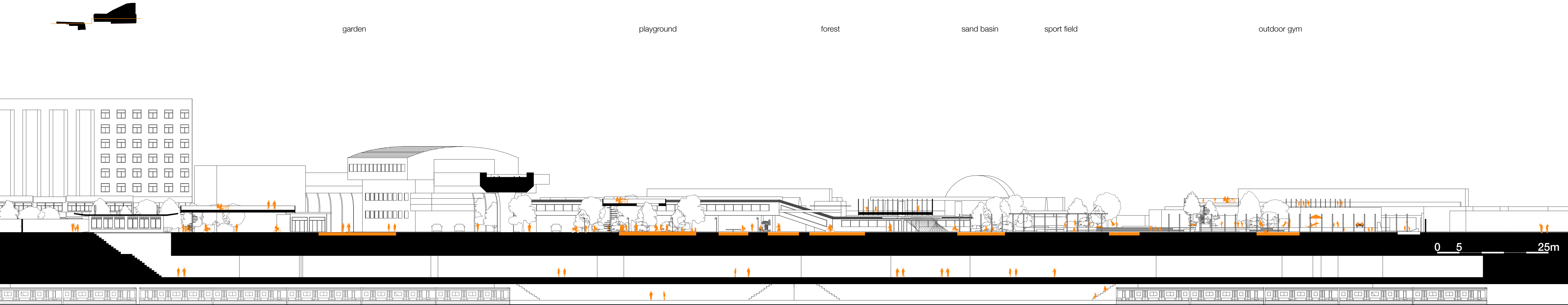


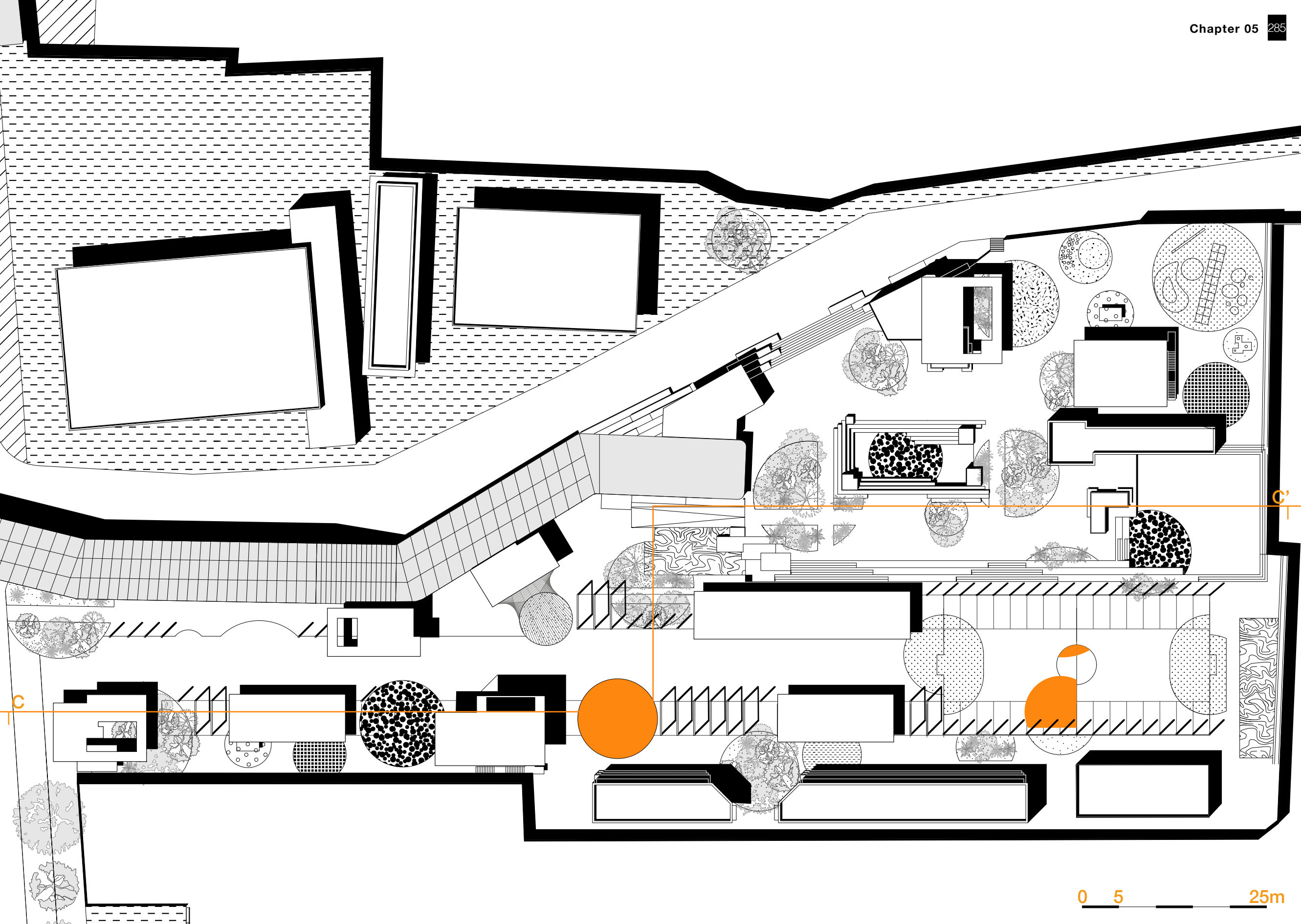


In the elevation shown here on a scale of 1:500 I wanted to highlight the relationship between the project and the existing context, the tunnel leading to the elevated station of line 5 of the metro, the road, the platforms, the steps, the circular rooms and the presence of nature. The project takes place in the lower part of the section, the place of communication and exchange, of interaction of people in the public sphere, while the context, mostly private buildings, remains separate, as an intimate place from which to observe without actively participating. The design is therefore divided into two parts, the lower part is an expression of the active community, while the upper part represents the private place of society.



The section, on a scale of 1:500, cuts longitudinally the area showing the imposing space dedicated to the underground of both line 15 and the elevated one of line 5, but above all it wants to highlight the various circular rooms that wind on the flat ground. You can see the relationship between the place of circulation and the place of stay and understand the spatial relationships with the elevated platforms. In the background, one notices a space characterized by different elevation changes and covered by vegetation, a more intimate and protected place.





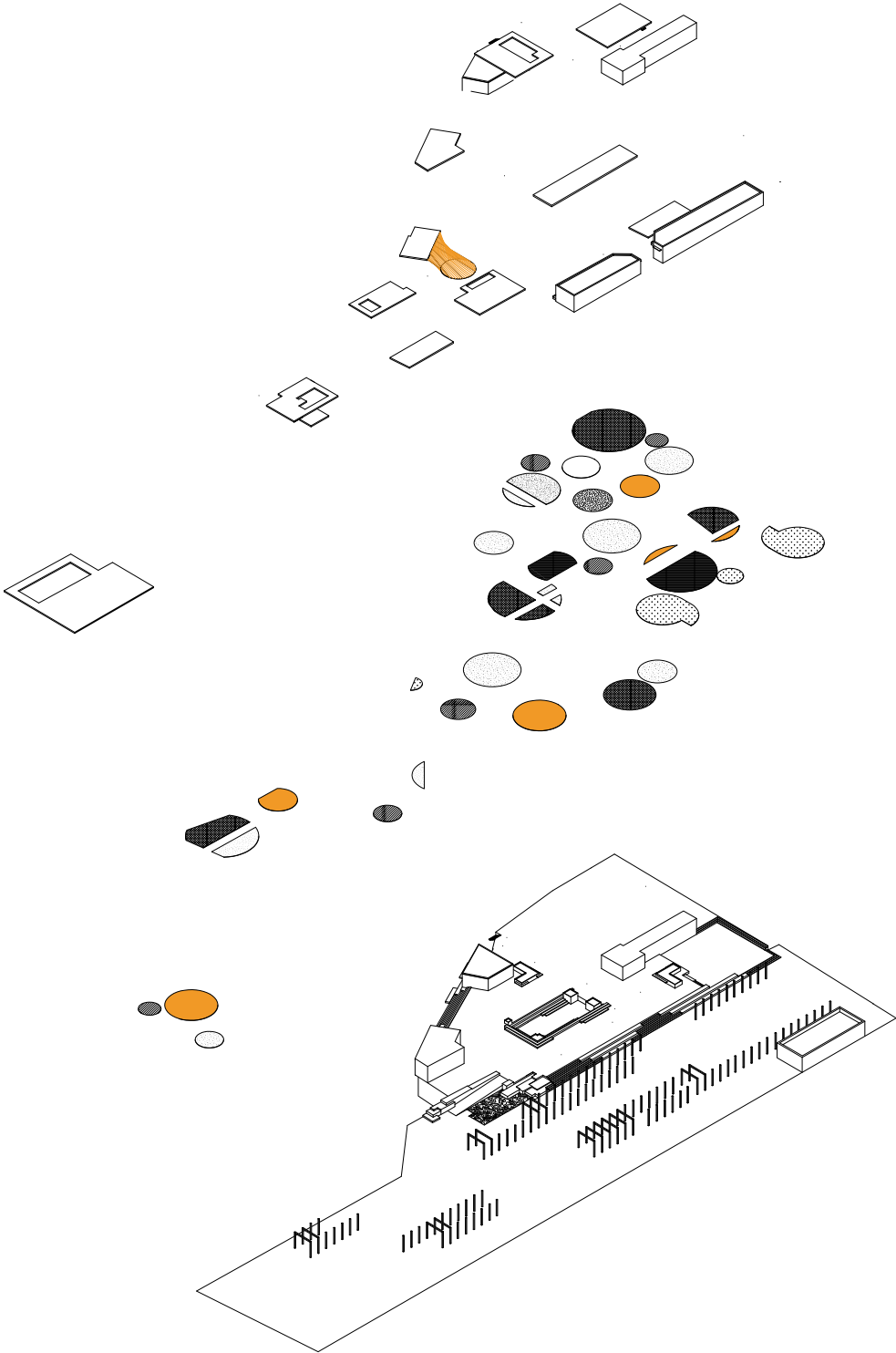


The section on a scale of 1:200 shows the different levels of the raised area with respect to the street level, which could be glimpsed in the previous section. The space characterized by minimal elevation changes wants to create different more intimate settings where more or less restricted groups of people can have their privacy.

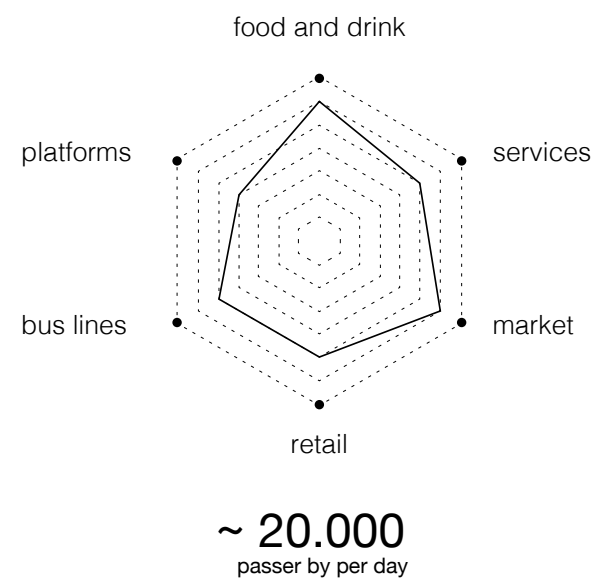
 Creativity. /

 Freedom. /

 Connectivity. /



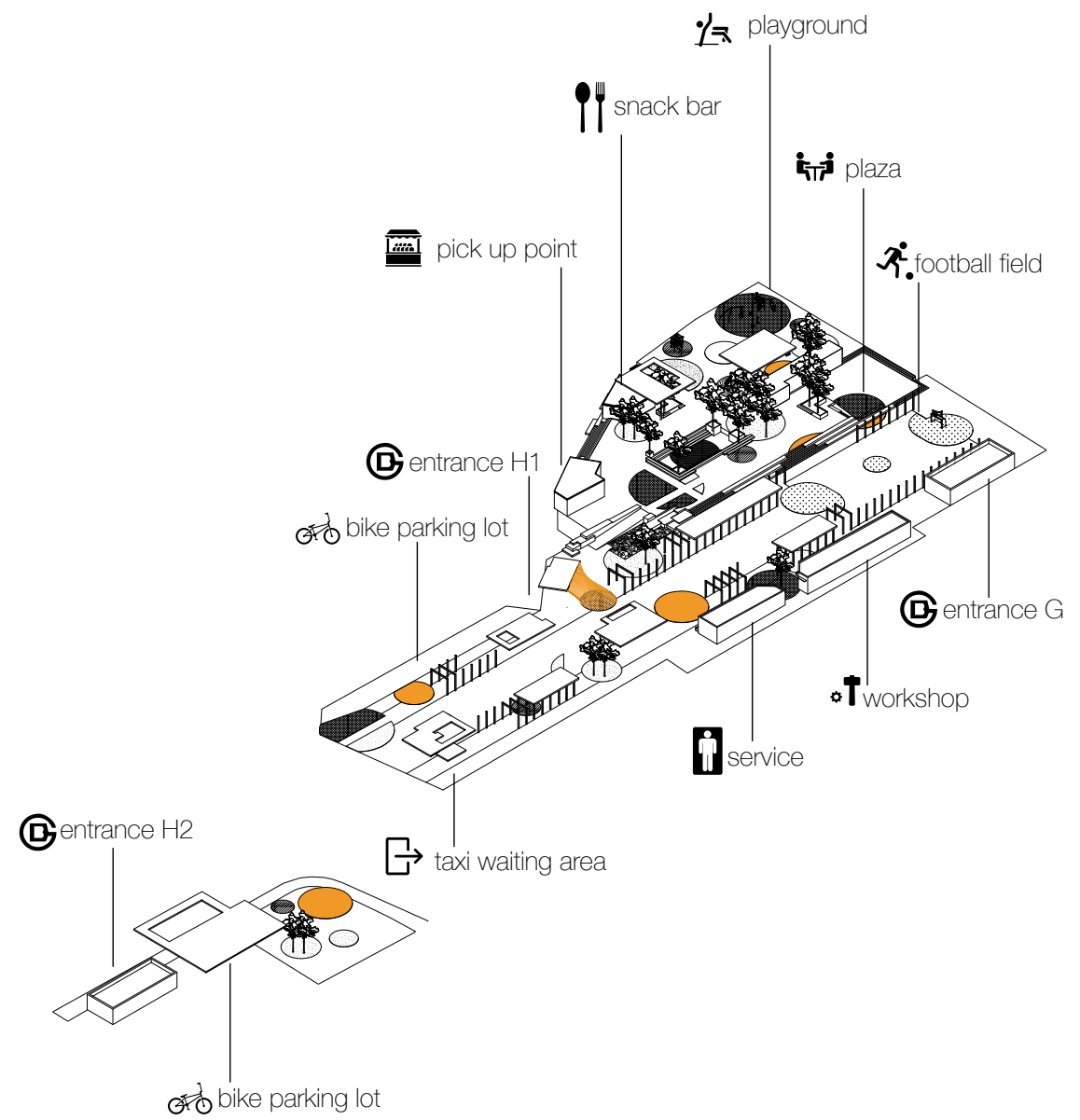
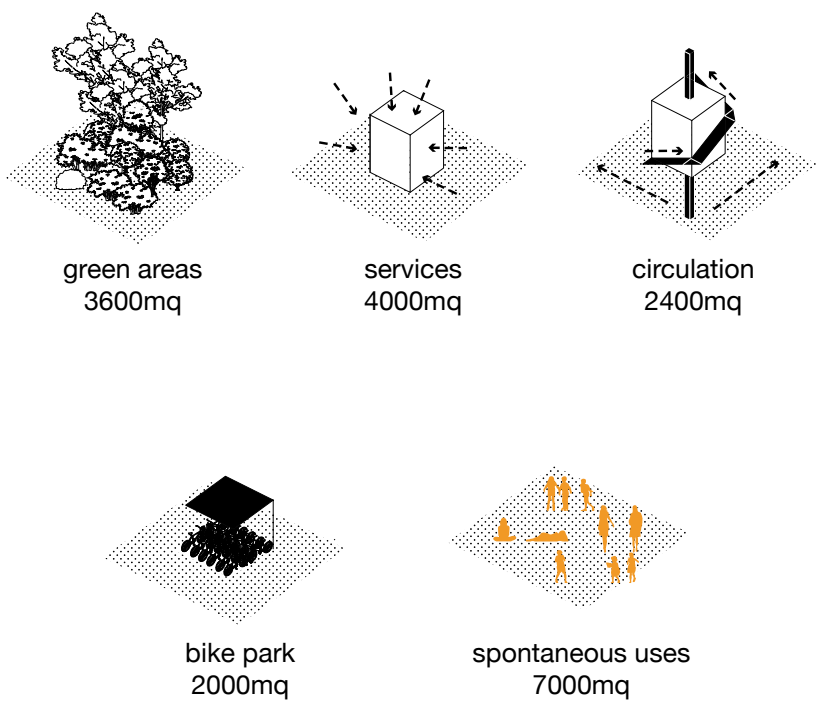




3000  
bikes

5  
levels

30%  
green areas



Sand basin. /



Forest. /



Slide Platform. /





Shading tent. /





Sunken plaza. /



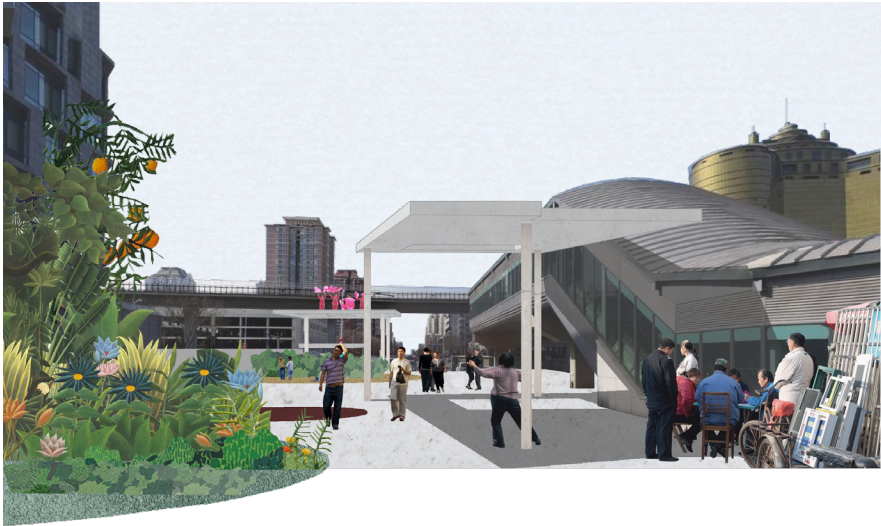
Plaza. /



Playground. /



Metro Access. /

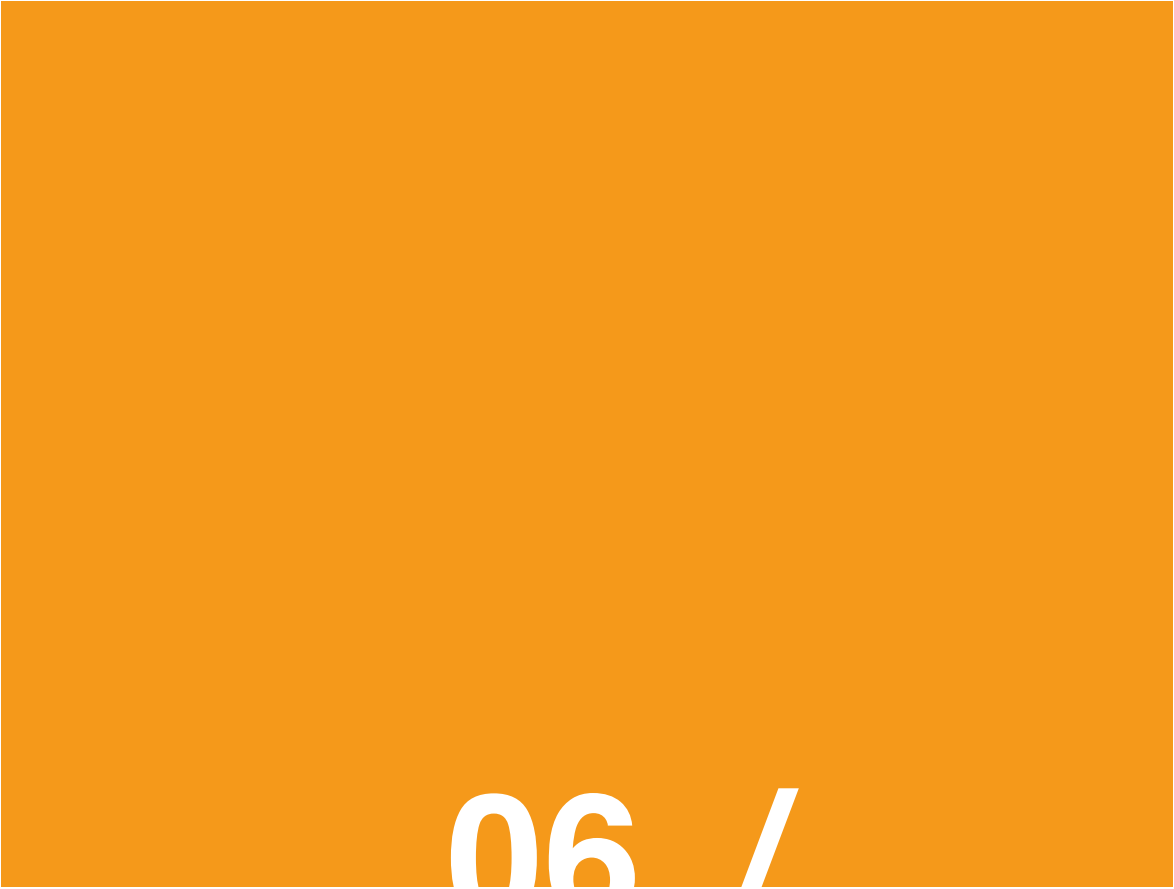


The opportunity to see and hear other people provide ideas and inspiration for action.

*“people come where people are.”*

*(Ghel, 2011)*





CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION. /

The thesis is a path of research and evolution of a thought and an idea, a design journey that represented the conclusion of a wide and complex path of studies carried out partly at the Politecnico of Turin and partly at Tsinghua University in Beijing, this double experience led me to evolve also my thought about architecture and its forms and role.

At the beginning of my design path I considered space and architecture as the only physical form and I believed that form was able to modify human relationships, to influence the economy and sociology of a city, in part this remains true, but what really makes a city such are the people who inhabit it, people are the subject of the city, everything revolves or should revolve around people.

I came to this conclusion after careful analysis of the concept of public space and the role of the architect in contemporary design; this research has led me to de-

velop an architectural vision that is shaped around the needs of the man who lives in the city. The space changes with its occupants: they make it public, intimate, open, private, or stage, reflecting on it their own image and equipping it ad hoc so that it becomes functional, almost an external appendix of their home to share with the rest of the community.

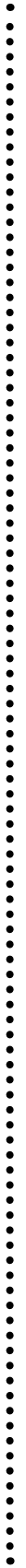
So the role of architecture and the architect is to try to bring out, to show the hidden potential of a place, so that it can become part of the inhabited city, that can be used and colonized by people. The architect is not the bearer of truth, he is not the figure who can solve urban problems but helps people to live the city, people are good, people do architecture, people create their space. Public space becomes the right to the city, the right of the inhabitants to use, modify, choose and interpret their own space.

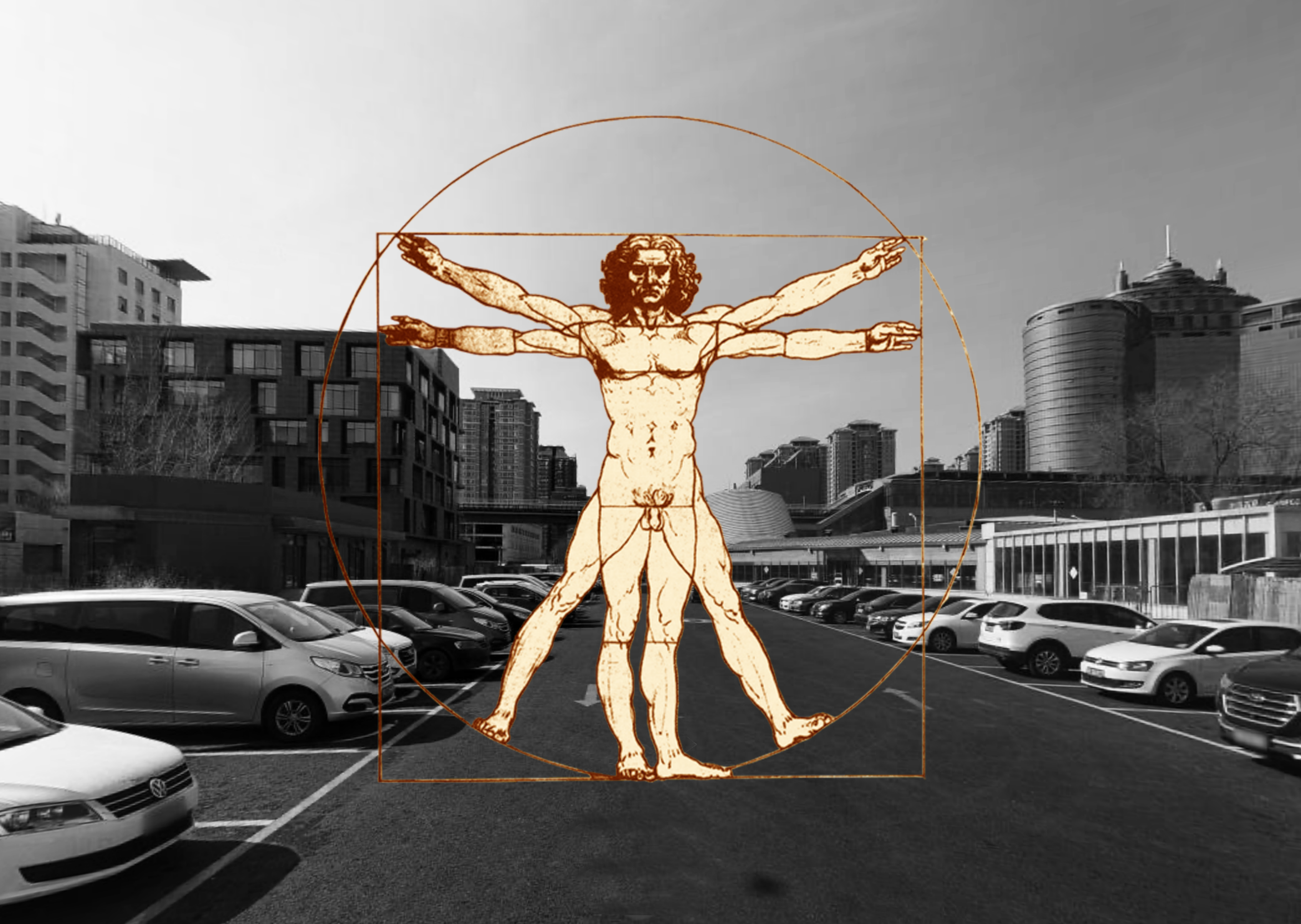
The designer must not impose de-

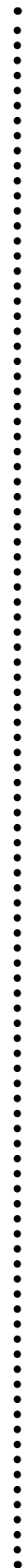
termined and absolute solutions, but provide suggestions and stimuli that actively encourage people. The projects must not provide answers but invitations that lead to the operation and spontaneous use of a space.

Public space is ephemeral and exists when it is assigned by users, through occupation, a concrete and symbolic value, full of meaning and signifier; people are the architects and give shape to public space.

All these considerations are at the basis of my architectural project, which, realized in a partially abandoned area but daily lived by the community, reflects a search for balance between free and functional spaces, between imagination and necessity.







# 07. /





# Acknowledgement

In conclusione di questo percorso vorrei dedicare un pensiero ad alcune figure che mi hanno supportato lungo questi anni ed in questo periodo di tesi. Innanzitutto desidero ringraziare il Professor Alberto Bologna, per la sua professionalità, le preziose occasioni di confronto nate durante le revisioni di progetto e la sua disponibilità nell’avermi seguito con dedizione durante questa tesi di ricerca. Tommaso, Elio e Luca, con i quali è nato e in parte è sempre esistito un rapporto di vera amicizia, persone che con me hanno condiviso gli anni di università come coinquilini o quasi e con cui e per cui farei tutto. A Marco e Silvia che mi hanno sopportato e con cui ho condiviso i migliori e peggiori momenti in Cina. A tutti i miei amici e a tutte le persone che ho conosciuto in questi anni, credo di aver passato dei momenti speciali. Alla mia famiglia che mi ha sempre supportato anche all’inizio quando era difficile credere in me, che mi aiuta ogni giorno a superare ogni difficoltà e che mi ha insegnato e mi ha fatto diventare la persona che sono oggi. E un ringraziamento speciale ai mie nonni, grazie per essere ancora al mio fianco.

Lorenzo Maritan

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### Chapter 06

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Index of images. /

Chapter 00

- 1. Collage made by the author p.3
- 2. Drawing of Beijing Subway system made by the author, p.28
- 3. Site picture made by the author, 2019, p. 29

Chapter 01

- 4. Zhang Kaiyv, Beijing, 2019, p. 33
- 5. Collage made by the author p. 36
- 6. Unknown, old Beijing, 1920, p. 39
- 7. Wangcheng, plan of an ideal city, Song dynasty, p. 49
- 8. Beijing Masterplan, 1954, p. 50
- 9. Beijing Masterplan, 1958, p. 50
- 10. Beijing Masterplan, 1982, p. 50
- 11. Beijing Masterplan, 1991, p. 50
- 12. Beijing Masterplan, 2004, p. 50
- 13. Beijing Masterplan, 2016, p. 50
- 14. Traffic Junction in Beijing, 2018, p.54
- 15. Simon Song, Changan Jie, 2019, p.54
- 16. Beijing traffic, 2018, p.54
- 17. Drawing of Beijing made by the author, p.55
- 18. Picture by the author, p.56
- 19. Drawing of Beijing made by the author, p.57
- 20. Lake Iseo The Floating Piers, 2016, p.58
- 21. Drawing of Beijing made by the author, p.59
- 22. AMDL Studio, Earth Station, 2018, p. 60
- 23. Drawing of Beijing made by the author, p.61

Chapter 02

- 24. Daniel Campo, Brooklyn Eastern District Terminal, 2013, p. 69
- 25. City of Ordos, 2017, p.81
- 26. Wangfujing Shopping street in Beijing, 2017, p.81

- 27. People playing Pokemon Go, 2016, p. 82
- 28. Drawing made by the author, p.90
- 29. Old people playing domino, 2018, p.91
- 30. Drawing made by the author, p.92
- 31. Lady dancing in a park, 2018, p.93
- 32. Drawing made by the author, p.94
- 33. Food market under the highway, 2019, p. 95
- 34. Drawing made by the author, p.96
- 35. Mahjong player, 2019, p. 97
- 36. Drawing made by the author, p.98
- 37. Jianzi player, 2019, p.99
- 38. Drawing made by the author, p.100
- 39. Rollerblader, 2019, p.101
- 40. Drawing made by the author, p.102
- 41. Dryng rack, 2019, p.103
- 42. Drawing made by the author, p.104
- 43. Sofa under the greenery, 2019, p.105
- 44. Alberto Burri, Sacco rosso, 1954, p.108
- 45. Collage made by the author p. 110
- 46. Ugo La Pietra, Barriera antiterrorismo / Poltrona, 2017, p. 113
- 47. Ugo La Pietra - Lelli Masotti Silvia, Paletti e catene,1980, p.115

Chapter 03

- 48. Drawing made by the author, p.123
- 49. Drawing of Le Cabanon made by the author, p.126
- 50. Drawing of Le Cabanon made by the author, p.127
- 51. Drawing of Giardino delle Sculture made by the author, p.128
- 52. Drawing of Giardino delle Sculture made by the author, p.129
- 53. Drawing of Serpentine Pavilion made by the author, p.130
- 54. Drawing of Serpentine Pavilion made by the author, p.131
- 55. Drawing of Casa Do Quarteirão made by the author, p.132
- 56. Drawing of Casa Do Quarteirão made by the author, p.133
- 57. Drawing of Yale Art and Architecture building made by the author, p.134
- 58. Drawing made by the author, p.137

59. Iñigo Bujedo Aguirre, Agbar Tower in Barcelona, 2007, p. 140  
60. Drawing made by the author, p.141  
61. Iñigo Bujedo Aguirre, MASP in San Paulo, 2010, p. 142  
62. Drawing made by the author, p.143  
63. Iñigo Bujedo Aguirre, Basque Ball Court in Bilbao, 2011, p. 144  
64. Drawing made by the author, p.145  
65. Iñigo Bujedo Aguirre, Hockbuncher in Berlin, 2014, p. 146  
66. Drawing made by the author, p.147  
67. Iñigo Bujedo Aguirre, Brazilian Pavilion at Milan Expo 2015 in Milan, 2015, p. 148  
68. Drawing made by the author, p.149  
69. Iñigo Bujedo Aguirre, Díastole Sístole, Playa de la Barceloneta, 2003-2004, p. 150  
70. Drawing of Stadium Charlemagne made by the author, p.154  
71. Drawing of Stadium Charlemagne made by the author, p.155  
72. Drawing of Arc-En-Ciel made by the author, p.156  
73. Drawing of Arc-En-Ciel made by the author, p.157  
74. Drawing of Riis Park Plaza made by the author, p.158  
75. Drawing of Riis Park Plaza made by the author, p.159  
76. Drawing of Gridgrounds made by the author, p.161  
77. Drawing of Aldo Van Eyck Elements made by the author, p.162  
78. Paul Fredberg, Riis Park Plaza in New York, 1966, p.165  
79. Drawing of Qingdao Family Box made by the author, p.168  
80. Drawing of Qingdao Family Box made by the author, p.169  
81. Drawing of No Tears For The Creatures Of The Night made by the author, p.170  
82. Drawing of No Tears For The Creatures Of The Night made by the author, p.171  
83. Drawing of 10 Cal Tower, The Labyrinth made by the author, p.172  
84. Drawing of 10 Cal Tower, The Labyrinth made by the author, p.173  
85. Drawing of Vatican Chapel made by the author, p.174  
86. Drawing of Vatican Chapel made by the author, p.175  
87. Drawing of Milstein Hall made by the author, p.176  
88. Drawing of Milstein Hall made by the author, p.177  
89. Conrad Roland, Drawing of an exhibition hall with floating levels, 1963, p. 179  
90. World Map, p.181  
91. Collage made by the author p.183

**Chapter 04**

92. Drawing of Beijing made by the author, p. 189  
93. Drawing of Beijing Subway system made by the author, p.191  
94. Drawing of Beijing Subway system made by the author, p.193  
95. Satellite picture of Datun Subdistrict, 2019, p. 197  
96. Drawing of Datun Subdistrict made by the author, p. 199  
97. Satellite picture of Datun Subdistrict, 2019, p. 201  
98. Drawing of Datun Subdistrict made by the author, p. 203  
99. Drawing of Datun Subdistrict made by the author, p. 205  
100. Drawing of Datun Subdistrict made by the author, p. 207  
101. Schemes of Datun Est Metro Station made by the author, p.210  
102. Satellite picture of Datun Subdistrict, 2019, p. 213  
103. Site picture made by the author, 2019, p. 214  
104. Site picture made by the author, 2019, p. 215  
105. Site picture made by the author, 2019, p. 216  
106. Site picture made by the author, 2019, p. 217  
107. Site picture made by the author, 2019, p. 218  
108. Site picture made by the author, 2019, p. 219  
109. Site picture made by the author, 2019, p. 220  
110. Site picture made by the author, 2019, p. 221  
111. Collage made by the author p.223  
112. Scheme of function made by the author, p.225  
113. Axonometric drawing made by the author, p.226  
114. Axonometric drawing made by the author, p.228  
115. Axonometric drawing made by the author, p.230

**Chapter 05**

116. Katrin Korfmann, Central Station, Amsterdam, 2001, p. 245  
117. Drawing made by the author, p. 250  
118. Joel Meyerowitz, Indy 500, spectators between cars, Indianapolis, 1965, p. 251  
119. Collage made by the author p. 253  
120. Scheme of function made by the author, p.259  
121. Michael Hirschbichler, Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 2012, p. 263



- 122. Frank Gehry, Facebook headquarters, 2018, p. 266
- 123. Conrad Roland, Drawing of an exhibition hall with floating levels, 1963, p. 267
- 124. Maurits Cornelis Escher, Relatività, 1953, p.267
- 125. Drawing made by the author, p.269
- 126. Drawing made by the author, p.271
- 127. Drawing made by the author, p.273
- 128. Drawing made by the author, p.275
- 129. Drawing made by the author, p.277
- 130. Drawing made by the author, p.279
- 131. Section drawing made by the author, p.281
- 132. Section drawing made by the author, p.273
- 133. Drawing made by the author, p.285
- 134. Section drawing made by the author, p.287
- 135. Drawing made by the author, p.289
- 136. Drawing made by the author, p.291
- 137. Collage made by the author p. 293
- 138. Collage made by the author p. 295
- 139. Collage made by the author p. 297
- 140. Collage made by the author p. 299
- 141. Collage made by the author p. 301
- 142. Collage made by the author p. 303
- 143. Collage made by the author p. 305
- 144. Collage made by the author p. 307

## Chapter 06

- 145. Collage made by the author p. 314

## Chapter 07

- 146. Collage made by the author p. 335

## References. /

- 01 Le Corbusier, Le Cabanon  
Vinci R. (2020, March 23), *Corbu, 'Le Cabanon' e l'arte di vivere in un microcosmo Cosa ci insegna oggi il modello di spazio minimo progettato da Le Corbusier*. [Blog post] Retrieved from: [https://www.archiportale.com/news/2020/03/architettura/corbu-le-cabanon-e-l-arte-di-vivere-in-un-microcosmo\\_75517\\_3.html](https://www.archiportale.com/news/2020/03/architettura/corbu-le-cabanon-e-l-arte-di-vivere-in-un-microcosmo_75517_3.html)
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Saluci O. (2016, September 15), *Carlo Scarpa, Giardino Delle Sculture*, [Blog post] Retrieved from: <https://divisare.com/projects/325897-carlo-scarpa-orazio-saluci-giardino-delle-sculture>
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## Inter Active Space

Spontaneous use of the space in contemporary Beijing context

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