

Oda of Memories

Heritage in Motion

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Disclaimer on Use of AI Assistance

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Abstract

Peja Culture Pavilion

This thesis investigates the role of architecture in mediating cultural memory and shaping contemporary public space through the design of a pavilion in Peja, Kosovo. Centered around the historical Shadërvan a 15th-century fountain and emblem of urban life the project emerges from the international architectural competition for a Cultural Pavilion in Peja. Positioned within a historically rich yet underutilized urban landscape, the proposed intervention seeks to reinterpret heritage as an evolving narrative, embedded in both spatial memory and social experience.

Drawing inspiration from the Oda, a traditional Kosovar space of hospitality and communal discourse, the design reframes heritage not as a static object of preservation but as a platform for living culture adaptable, inclusive, and participatory. The pavilion, titled Oda of Memories – Heritage in Motion, becomes a spatial translation of collective memory, fostering dialogue between past and present, tradition and innovation, permanence and temporality.

The research combines literature-based study with qualitative fieldwork, including interviews with local residents and direct site observations. These sources illuminate the symbolic and functional roles of fountains and public spaces in Islamic and Balkan urban life, revealing their potential as catalysts for social cohesion. Through comparative case studies, design exploration, and contextual analysis, the project examines how architecture can activate memory, support civic engagement, and contribute to urban regeneration.

Ultimately, the pavilion proposes a contemporary civic landmark rooted in local narratives an architecture that listens to its site, resonates with its community, and stimulates cultural continuity. The work contributes to broader architectural discourses on memory, identity, and the transformation of public space in historically layered urban environments.

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The Question

One of the few civic features that has survived the chaos of time, war, and urban change is the 15th-century Shadërvan fountain in Peja, Kosovo's historic center. Despite being a cultural monument with official protection, the public area around it is in poor condition and serves more as a symbol than an active landmark. The site, which was a meeting place, is now out of sync with the beat of modern life, underscoring a larger problem that the region's post-conflict cities face: how can heritage be not only preserved but also revitalized?

This thesis emerges in response to that question. At its core lies an architectural inquiry: **How can architecture be used to revitalize culturally significant spaces in Kosovo, specifically integrating historical elements like the 15th-century water fountain in Peja, to promote modern cultural and social activities?**

The challenge is not merely one of form or function, but of interpretation, how to honor a site's layered past while making room for new uses, meanings, and futures.

Prompted by the 2024 international competition for the Peja Culture Pavilion by Buildner, the project explores architecture's potential to bridge memory and modernity. The competition's brief called for a temporary yet symbolically powerful intervention one that would preserve the fountain while activating the square as a site of contemporary culture, gathering, and expression. It also asked architects to consider ethical imperatives: sustainability, community engagement, accessibility, and material sensitivity, without compromising historical integrity.

This is not a question of restoring what was, but of imagining what could be through an architecture that listens, adapts, and ultimately allows history to remain in motion.

Chapter 1

Competition Framework and Site Requirements

More than just design challenges, architecture contests have developed into forums for discussion, identity formation, and public creativity in recent years. These events provide an opportunity to revisit and reimagine public landscapes, particularly in places like Kosovo that have been impacted by complex histories. Today's competitions reflect cultural narratives, institutional ideals, and social goals in addition to aesthetic choices (Larson, 1994). From this perspective, the Peja Culture Pavilion competition becomes a symbolic and significant invitation to contemplate architecture. It encouraged designers to work with memory, location, and daily routines rather than just building a pavilion.

The competition centers around a small but important plaza in the heart of Peja that is home to a 15th-century shatërvan (fountain), which was previously an important part of communal life. Despite being under Ministry of Culture protection, the fountain no longer seems to be a part of the everyday life of the city. Architects faced a clear and significant challenge: how can we revitalize a place so full of memories without overpowering or erasing its past?

In post-conflict cities, where memory may be both powerful and fragile, this question is particularly pertinent. The competition urged designers to see site limitations and historical laws as possibilities to ground modern building in the unique cultural and emotional milieu of its context, rather than as obstacles. As the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape reminds us, heritage interventions are most successful when they safeguard not just physical elements, but also the intangible values and meanings people associate with them (UNESCO, 2011).

This chapter unpacks the competition framework and the site's specific conditions, offering a deeper look into the ideas, limitations, and opportunities that shaped the design. It begins with the objectives and design criteria outlined in the brief, followed by an analysis of the site's historical, spatial, and sensory context. Finally, it explores the regulatory and environmental guidelines that any viable proposal must respond to grounding creativity in responsibility, and vision in place.

1.1 Competition Brief: Objectives and Design Requirements

The Peja Culture Pavilion emerged from an international architecture competition with a deeply rooted goal: to reactivate a forgotten but historically rich space in the heart of Peja (Figs. 01). Organized by Collective Action for Culture (C.A.C.), in collaboration with the Municipality of Peja and the Ministry of Culture, the competition invited architects to imagine a pavilion that would give new life to a neglected urban site while respecting its deeply symbolic past (Buildner, 2024). At the core of the site lies the Shadërvan—an uncovered public fountain dating back to the 15th century, once a social node for the community and now a protected cultural monument. The competition brief positioned this fountain not simply as a heritage object to preserve, but as a meaningful anchor for collective memory and civic engagement.



Fig 01. City of Peja

What made this competition unique was its dual ambition: to honor Peja's architectural and cultural legacy while creating a space that serves the needs of today's public life. The brief called for designs that could bridge history and modernity not through replication or nostalgia, but through reinterpretation and reactivation. As a result, designs were intended to incorporate innovation, tradition, and everyday experience into a pavilion that felt both grounded and forward-thinking.

The brief's emphasis on the fountain's integration was among its most persuasive features. The Shadërvan was supposed to be the focal point of the pavilion's space and symbolism, not a supporting element. In order to increase its visibility, integrate it into the movement, and give it a new lease on life in the city's social fabric, participants were invited to approach it as a living component of the design. This reflects a larger architectural philosophy that views heritage as an active means of cultural expression rather than a static object (UNESCO, 2011).

The objective was to restore the fountain as a place for people to congregate and ponder, not to protect it behind walls. In addition to the central indoor pavilion space (approx. 50–70 m²), the competition brief outlined several specific design components that reflected both symbolic and functional priorities as Buildner cites :

Central pavilion space :



Purpose:

Serve as the main area for cultural events, exhibitions, and community gatherings.

Approximate size:

50-70 square meters.

Features:

Flexible open floor plan, high ceilings, natural lighting, integrated seating, and multimedia capabilities (e.g., sound and projection systems). This multifunctional indoor area should be adaptable for various uses, such as art exhibitions, cultural performances, and community meetings. The design should allow for easy reconfiguration of the space to accommodate different events, ensuring flexibility and utility.

Outdoor amphitheater :



Purpose:

Provide a space for performances, presentations, and public speaking events.

Features:

Tiered seating, stage area, and acoustic design considerations. An amphitheater with tiered seating will provide an outdoor venue for live performances, lectures, and community events. It should be designed with acoustics in mind to ensure sound quality and equipped with basic stage facilities.

Historical fountain integration :



Purpose:

Highlight and preserve the 15th-century water fountain as a central feature.

Features:

Protective structures, enhanced visibility, interpretive signage, and seating around the fountain.

The ancient water fountain should be prominently featured and integrated into the overall design. This area should be both a place of contemplation and a focal point that draws visitors. Protective measures should ensure its preservation while making it accessible and appreciated by the public.

Green spaces and gardens :



Purpose:

Offer relaxation areas and enhance the aesthetic appeal of the site.

Features:

Native plants, walking paths, benches, and shaded areas. These areas should offer natural beauty and tranquility, enhancing the site's appeal and providing a relaxing environment. The design should incorporate local flora and create inviting pathways and seating areas.

Pathways and accessibility :



Purpose:

Ensure easy and inclusive access throughout the site.

Features:

Paved walkways, ramps, signage, and lighting.

Well-designed pathways will ensure that all areas of the site are easily accessible to all visitors, including those with disabilities. Clear signage and lighting will enhance navigation and safety.

Artistic installation areas :



Purpose:

Display public art, sculptures, and installations.

Features:

Pedestals, lighting for nighttime viewing, and interactive elements.

Dedicated spaces for art installations will add a dynamic and creative element to the site. These should be strategically placed to complement the overall design and encourage interaction from visitors.

Together, these elements (Figs. 02) required to form a coherent architectural language. A “multifaceted cultural venue” that blurred the lines between memory, landscape, and built structure was required by the competition. The architecture was expected to respond not just to form and function, but to atmosphere to how people would feel and behave in the space (Norberg-Schulz, 1980).

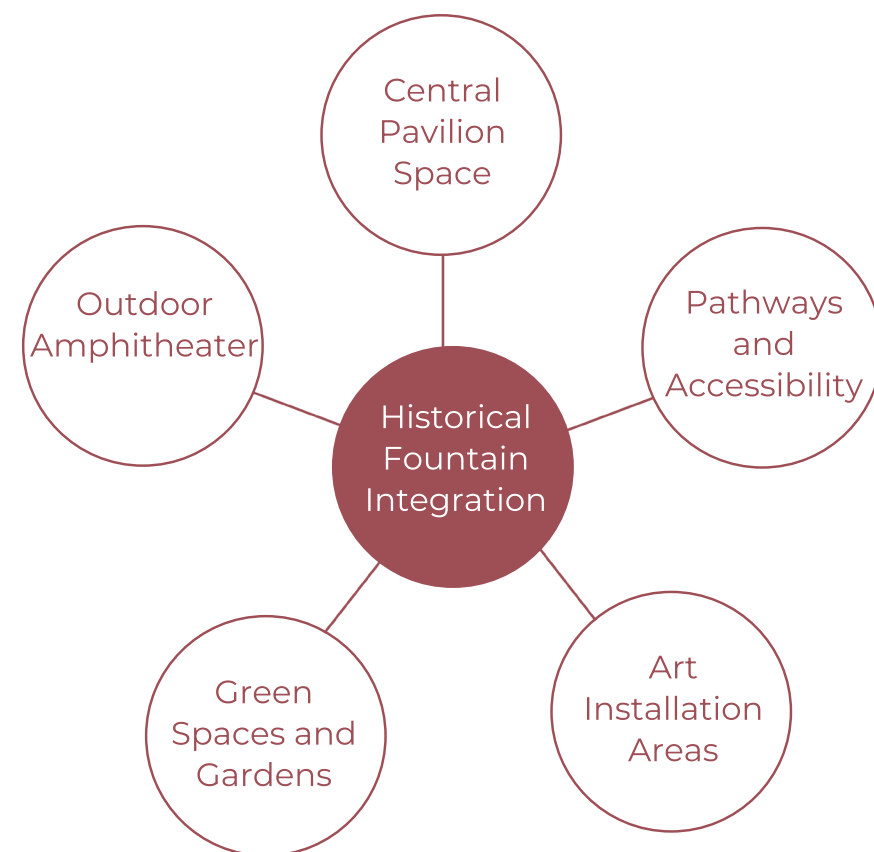


Fig 02. Program Diagram

Site restrictions

The location of the water fountain from the 15th century (Figs. 03) must be respected, but there are no site restrictions for the Peja Culture Pavilion competition. As long as the design is maintained and incorporated into the overall scheme, participants are free to suggest any design for the fountain.



Fig 03. Existing Site

Another central theme of this competition was sustainability. The Peja Culture Pavilion competition placed a strong emphasis on designing with the environment in mind, calling on participants to consider ecological responsibility not as an optional component but as a fundamental aspect of architectural thinking. The call explicitly encouraged the use of eco-friendly materials and construction methods to ensure that any proposed intervention would maintain a minimal environmental footprint while offering long-term resilience. This encompassed a wide range of design strategies, such as passive lighting and ventilation systems, the integration of locally sourced and recyclable materials, and climate-responsive approaches tailored to the specific environmental conditions of Peja. These requirements were not framed as technical restrictions but rather as ethical commitments—closely aligned with Kosovo’s broader ambition to foster sustainable and future-oriented urban development.

The competition sought not just technical proficiency but cultural and social sensitivity. In this sense, environmental goals were inseparable from civic ones. The emphasis on sustainability operated in parallel with a deep commitment to community engagement. The organizing body, Collective Action for Culture (C.A.C.), is known for its long-standing work with local artists and communities to reclaim and redefine public spaces through creative practices. This ethos informed every aspect of the competition, from its programmatic expectations to its participatory spirit. Rather than delivering a finished, closed form, designers were invited to propose a pavilion that would serve as an open, democratic platform—one that welcomed multiple voices and encouraged evolving narratives.

In summary, the Peja Culture Pavilion competition offered a rare opportunity to reimagine a culturally significant site at the crossroads of history and daily life. The brief called for a design that was humble but powerful—capable of holding memory while sparking imagination. It proposed that architecture could listen, rather than speak too loudly. That it could create spaces not just to see, but to gather, pause, and remember. The Oda of Memories was born within this framework—an architectural response to a brief that asked not only for a pavilion, but for a place to belong.

1.2 Collecting data regarding the site’s context, limitations, and opportunities

A meaningful design begins by listening to its place. For the Peja Culture Pavilion, this means tuning into the stories, textures, and silences embedded in a small plaza in the heart of the city.

Located along a main boulevard near the river and the central square, the competition site occupies a historically important civic space anchored by the Shadërvan, a 15th-century uncovered public fountain (Buildner, 2024). For generations, this fountain was more than just a supply of water; it was a social gathering place where people could halt, share stories, and refresh themselves.

Unlike the walled fountains in ecclesiastical courtyards, this one was open to the sky and the rhythms of ordinary life.

Today, however, the Shadërvan sits quietly protected by law (Figs. 04), yet detached from public memory. Its stone basin has become a kind of urban artifact, surrounded by a plaza that feels suspended in time. Despite its strategic location, the area has become unusable, as seen by layers of incomplete interventions, crumbling pavement, and overgrown plants that tell a tale of neglect. And yet, the site still hums with potential. Locals recall its past role with nostalgia; children pass by unaware of its significance; tourists pause, curious but unsure. In its current state, the plaza feels like a stage awaiting a new performance an “urban void” ready to be reawakened.

Spring at the House of Culture

In the center of the city near the House of Culture, respectively on the Square of the city, on the left of the stream “Jazi” is located the water source that was used by the citizens of Peja and beyond, which is also known as “Kajnak”.

Kajnak at the beginning had a modest construction made of stone. But at the end of the seventh decade it was adapted and changed. The ground floor plan is in ellipse form with dimensions 15.00 m x 8.00 m. Nearby there are two beautiful parks and two circular corners. Spring is located in the middle of the combined space with a bridge that passes over the water canal.

Its level is lower than the level of the road, and the fall is made by stairs. As a whole, kajnak is with levels. At the first level, through three levels, we climb to the level of two holiday angles, while at other levels we climb to the level of the road, while on the other side to the park level.

The construction of Kajnak’s walls is of hewn and rounded stones, colored with different colors of black and with lime mortar. Kajnak’s construction is made of stone combining partly with concrete. Its walls are of hewn and rounded stones, with lime mortar, with different reddish colors. The monument is considerably damaged and there is a need for restoration.

Fig 04. Excerpt from “Spring at the House of Culture” – Internal Documentation on the Kajnak Fountain Provided by the Ministry of Culture of Peja(2024)

The location exhibits a fine mix between containment and openness from a spatial standpoint. Although it is still surrounded by the urban structure of Peja's old core, it provides unobstructed views of the far-off Rugova Mountains. The call to prayer from a neighboring minaret, soft footsteps, and sporadic street noises make up the soundtrack. It is situated in the center of Peja (Figs. 05), close to the river, near to the parks, at the end of a boulevard, and is available to everyone for an amazing perspective and potential.

Despite this poetic context, the site faces a number of real and tangible constraints. Based on site visits, historical documents, and interviews with local residents, several key issues were identified:

Physical Neglect and Drainage

Because of the sunken position of the plaza, a shallow basin has developed around the fountain. Over time, poor drainage has led to water pooling after rain, stagnating during warmer months, and releasing unpleasant aromas. Overgrown weeds further diminish the area's usefulness. Once known for its social function, the area is now often avoided due to its wet and run-down condition, according to locals. In order to restore the site as a functional public area, any new intervention must address plant overgrowth, grading, and stormwater management.

Underutilization and Urban Disconnection

Pedestrian traffic naturally flows around the site rather than into it, despite its prime location. Interaction is discouraged by the fountain's low level and the absence of welcoming access points. The plaza has "fallen into disrepair and disuse" (Buildner, 2024), according to the competition brief itself. Reconnecting this urban fragment with the rest of the city is therefore a significant design challenge, both physically through better circulation and psychologically through programming that encourages people to return. Reintegrating the site with Peja's regular foot traffic may be facilitated by a raised surface or a slight leveling of the terrain.

Re-design of Public Spaces - Pejë/Pec City centre Draft concept

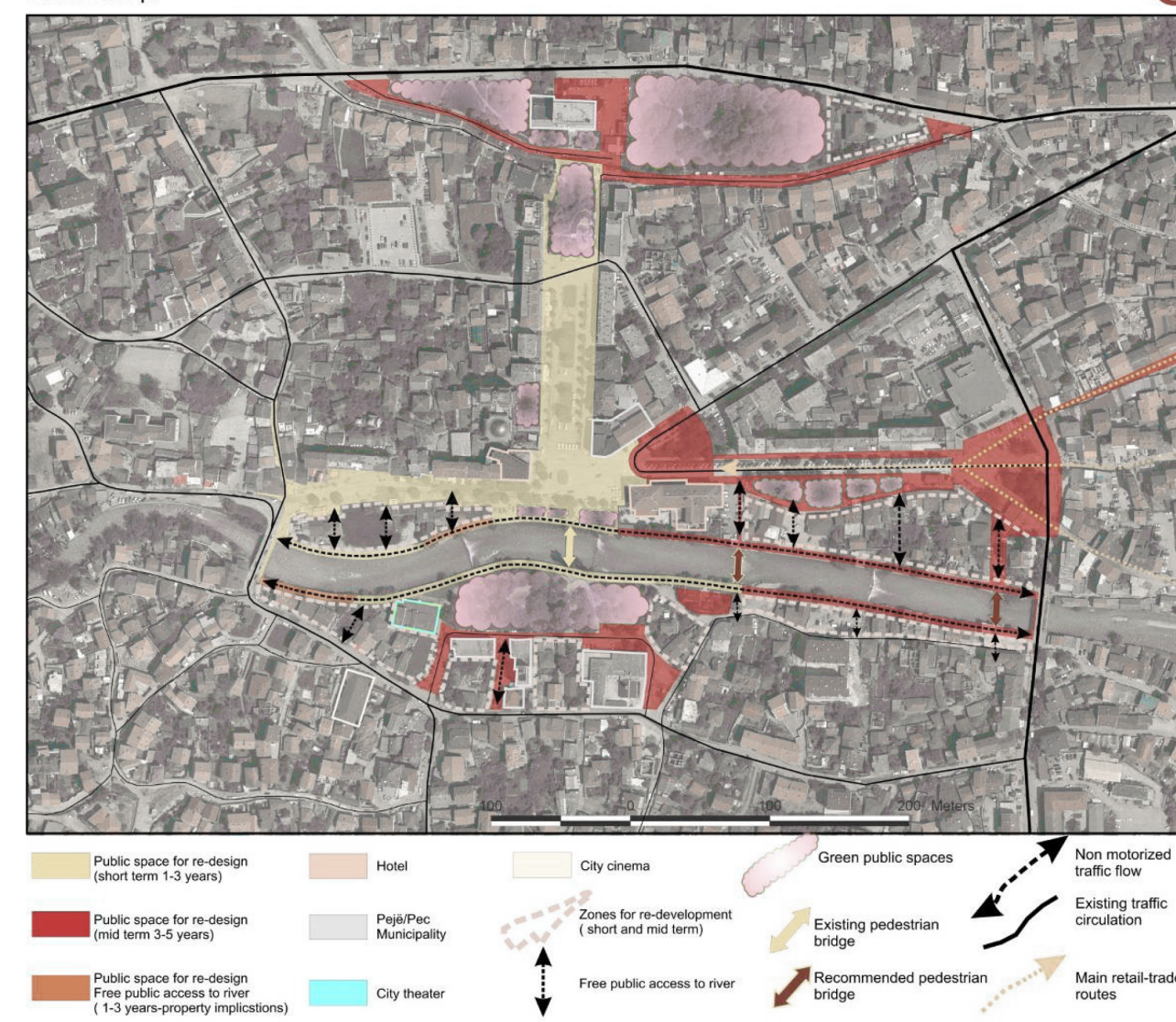


Fig 05. Re-design of Public Spaces – Peja City Centre Draft Concept. Source: Municipality of Peja, from ATELIER 2: Mobility and Urban Design Presentation, 25 March – 3 April 2014.

With yellow color are identified implemented public spaces or known as car restrict area.

Projects are implemented in two phases: first phase is financed by Peja Municipality and second is Implemented – co financing by Peja Municipality and UN-HABITAT.

(Municipality of Peja, 2014)

With red color are ongoing projects and Municipality produce some of projects ideas in cooperation with international programs. It is our objective to link center with old market. This means that we are going to close also a street Tony Blair, Haxhi Zeka square and link with old market. (Municipality of Peja, 2014)

Site Size and Context

The area available for intervention is modest. Bounded by roads and adjacent buildings, the plaza occupies a tight footprint within a dense city grid. This means that any structure must be appropriately scaled not visually overpowering, nor functionally congested. Sightlines, solar exposure, and wind conditions all become critical. Additionally, construction logistics must be considered: how will materials be delivered? What routes will remain open for pedestrians? These are not just technical issues they shape how the pavilion will feel and function during and after its creation.

As the Peja Culture Pavilion competition made clear, the power of architectural intervention lies not only in form but in context in how a site's physical, cultural, and symbolic layers inform the design response (Buildner, 2024). The competition did not merely provide a plot of land and a program; it offered a dense field of meanings, conditions, and tensions. In this sense, the site was not passive terrain but a protagonist in the design narrative. The designated site for the pavilion sits between layers of lived history and potential futures: adjacent to civic infrastructure, historically shaped by the rhythms of public gathering, and anchored by the enduring presence of a 15th-century shatërvan (Buildner, 2024).

The very qualities that make the site so potent—the fountain's protected status, the community's deep memory of the space, and the intersection of formal and informal urban flows also constrain how it can be activated. The fountain itself, while modest in scale, is monumental in meaning. As noted in traditional Balkan and Islamic urban design, public fountains such as the shadërvan have long served as civic anchors, performing both utilitarian and symbolic roles: they offer refreshment, signal generosity, and invite informal gathering (Necipoğlu, 2005). The competition brief understood this heritage and encouraged architects to engage with the fountain not as a relic to preserve behind glass, but as a living element to be reframed through spatial attention (Buildner, 2024). Yet this invitation came with limitations. Proposals were required to preserve the integrity and visibility of the fountain, respecting its legal and cultural protections while weaving it meaningfully into new spatial narratives.

Beyond physical parameters, the site's socio-cultural significance also shaped the scope of design possibilities. According to the competition organizers, the pavilion was to be “not only for the people of Peja, but with them in mind” (Buildner, 2024). This phrasing subtly repositions the designer's role: no longer the sole author, but a facilitator of shared space. In a city like Peja where collective memory is vivid, yet public spaces often feel fragmented or underused the act of design must respond not only to infrastructure and history, but to emotion, participation, and trust. Interviews conducted during fieldwork revealed a prevailing sense of spatial nostalgia; many older residents recalled the fountain plaza as a gathering spot, while younger people viewed it as a vague landmark with little current utility. Bridging this generational gap through design is not a technical task, but a cultural one: the pavilion must speak to past rituals while inviting new forms of use.

This dual function honoring memory while enabling future encounters is especially vital in a context like Kosovo, where post-conflict rebuilding has sometimes privileged rapid development over thoughtful place-making. The competition challenged this trajectory, insisting that architecture need not overwhelm to be impactful. In fact, the brief called for a structure that was “humble but powerful,” capable of framing gathering without prescribing it, and resonating with local narratives without reducing them to fixed symbolism (Buildner, 2024). This ethos profoundly shaped the conceptual underpinnings of the Oda of Memories proposal, which treats the pavilion not as a monument, but as a vessel open, relational, and flexible.

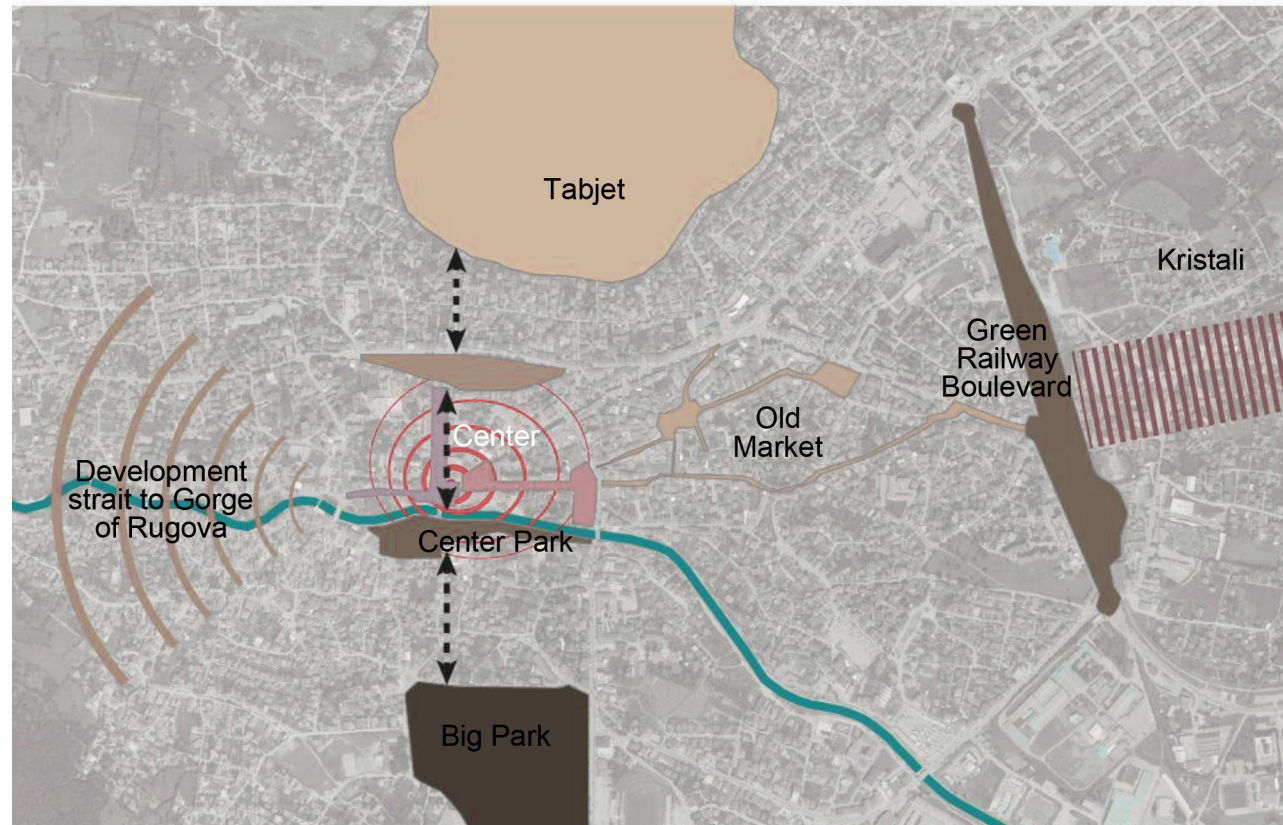
Even if it isn't stated in the law, the existing trees are nonetheless a matter of contention. The city of Peja has a wealth of natural resources. In addition to the Rugova Mountains' natural splendor, the city itself has many parks, and there are trees on the project site. and considering the relationship between Peja and its greenery, it is crucial to preserve the ancient trees that can be found there (Figs. 06).



Fig 06. Existing condition

Urban Regulations and Zoning Realities

The competition site exists within a broader legal and planning ecosystem governed by the Municipality of Peja's Urban Development Plan (UDP). As outlined in the municipality's vision documents, the site is located in a strategic urban corridor that connects key civic, economic, and green spaces via a series of "soft spines" or pedestrian and ecological routes (Municipality of Peja, 2014) (Figs. 07). This corridor-based logic is designed to reorient the city toward public mobility, sustainability, and inclusivity, especially in the central zone historically dominated by traffic and fragmented ownership.



-Intersection of two corridors. Phase investment.

Fig 07. Strategic Urban Corridors Connecting Civic, Market, and Green Spaces in Peja – Extract from the Municipality of Peja's Atelier 2 Urban Development Presentation (2014)

Let's wrap up this chapter with a few crucial points to remember:

- Institutional Roles and Stakeholder Dynamics

Any architectural intervention in this location would pass through several layers of institutional review. The Municipality of Peja oversees spatial and technical feasibility; the Ministry of Culture holds authority over heritage conservation; and environmental impact assessments are typically required by national planning bodies.

Beyond the administrative layers, however, lies a web of informal and semi-formal influences. As noted in the brief, the organizing body Collective Action for Culture (C.A.C.) has historically collaborated with local and international actors to co-create public space through artistic means. This pattern of participation complicates traditional top-down approval hierarchies. While formal permits are essential, the cultural legitimacy of a design often depends more on community perception and institutional trust than on legal compliance alone.

- Environmental Responsiveness as a Design Imperative

In this perspective, environmental design is a prerequisite for public success and goes beyond simply having "green credentials." Because of the site's weak slopes, compacted soil, and antiquated stormwater infrastructure, surface water flooding occurs occasionally. These problems were acknowledged in the competition criteria, which encouraged designers to use them as design components.

In addition, climate-responsive architecture was framed as a civic responsibility. Proposals were asked to reduce carbon footprints, prioritize passive systems, and use renewable or low-embodied energy materials wherever possible. This logic aligns with global climate goals but takes on special urgency in a context like Peja, where resource limitations and ecological precarity intersect with social vulnerability.

- Locally Sourced and Recyclable Materials

Participants were encouraged to prioritize locally sourced and renewable materials both to reduce the environmental footprint and to engage local economies (Buildner, 2024). This includes timber from nearby forests, stone from regional quarries, and reused steel from industrial leftovers. Such choices do not merely optimize logistics they root the project in its context, extending its identity into the material itself.

- Passive Comfort Strategies

Given the region's hot summers and cold winters, passive environmental control is not optional but it is essential. The brief emphasized strategies such as orientation-based shading, thermal massing, natural ventilation, and evaporative cooling from integrated water features (Buildner, 2024).

Designing with these tools not only reduces energy use it enhances human experience. The use of soft light, tactile materials, and temperature-responsive surfaces aligns with a vision of architecture that is felt as much as seen. This is particularly relevant in a public pavilion, where prolonged comfort, accessibility, and sensory engagement can determine whether a space becomes meaningful or merely decorative.

- Constructability and Maintenance

Finally, the technical logic of the competition urged realism. The pavilion had to be buildable, maintainable, and adaptable especially given municipal resource constraints. This meant modularity, prefabrication, and simplicity of joints and systems were all highly recommended.

Chapter 2

Site and Local Context Analysis

Architecture that draws from memory must also be deeply rooted in place. For the Oda of Memories project, the design is not just about shaping form or organizing function it's about listening. Listening to the landscape, the rhythms of daily life, and the cultural traces that linger in space. To design meaningfully in a city like Peja means engaging with more than physical surroundings; it means understanding the stories, layers, and lived experiences that have shaped the site over time. As Aldo Rossi (1982) notes, the city itself can be read as a collective memory, made up of structures that embody far more than utility they embody meaning.

This chapter approaches the site not as a fixed backdrop but as a living context, shaped by history, memory, and community. It begins by exploring Peja's regional identity its cultural and historical position within Kosovo and the wider Balkans. From there, it narrows in on the specific site of the pavilion, examining its urban character, material conditions, and evolving role in public life. These readings of the site go beyond physical observation. They involve understanding the *genius loci* - the spirit of the place, as defined by Norberg-Schulz (1980) which emerges from atmosphere, memory, and cultural presence. Samson also notes, The pavilion, hut, and shrine exist not only as architectural forms but as psychological and archetypal symbols that define our relationship with space, memory, and ritual (Samson, 2015). This interpretation enriches the reading of pavilions as spatial narratives embedded in cultural memory.

The analysis also includes local voices gathered through conversations and informal encounters to better understand how people perceive and relate to this space. These insights help uncover both the challenges and the possibilities embedded in the site. What is missing? What memories are still present? How do people feel when they pass through or pause here?

In answering these questions, the chapter lays the foundation for a design that is not imposed, but emerged - a space born from context, shaped by culture, and animated by memory.

2.1 Regional Context: Historical and Cultural Overview of Peja, Kosovo

Peja (Albanian: Pejë), situated in western Kosovo (*Fig .08*) at the entrance to the Rugova Canyon along the Drini i Bardhë river plain, has historically served as a significant cultural and administrative center. The city's strategic location has made it a nexus of various civilizations, each leaving indelible marks on its urban fabric and cultural landscape.

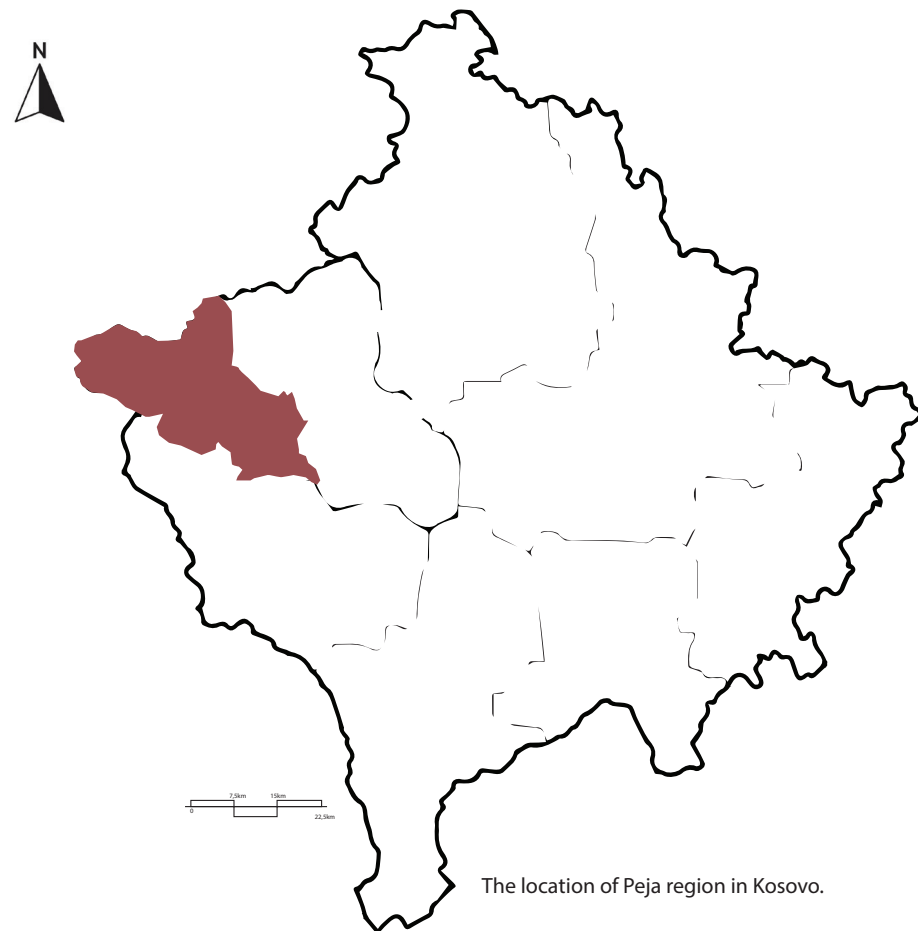


Fig 08. Peja

Historical Layers and Architectural Heritage

The region's history dates back to antiquity, with archaeological findings indicating continuous habitation. However, Peja's most prominent historical and architectural heritage stems from the medieval and Ottoman periods. In the 14th century, Peja became the seat of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate, with the Patriarchate of Peć Monastery now recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site. This complex is notable for its fusion of Byzantine and Romanesque architectural elements, reflecting the ecclesiastical significance of the era (UNESCO, 2006).

Under Ottoman rule, the city, known as İpek, evolved into a vibrant administrative and commercial hub.

The Ottomans introduced Islamic public architecture, including mosques, baths (hamams), and a bustling bazaar. Notable structures from this period include the Bajrakli Mosque (1471) and the city's hamam, which remain critical markers of cultural memory and urban morphology (Kiel, 1990).

The Yugoslav era introduced socialist urban planning, characterized by utilitarian architecture and a focus on communal spaces. This period saw the construction of residential blocks and public buildings that contrasted with the city's historical aesthetic. Post-1999, following the Kosovo War, Peja underwent significant reconstruction, balancing restoration of historical sites with contemporary development needs (Herscher, 2010).

Cultural Practices and Social Customs

Peja's varied historical influences have created a tapestry that is its cultural life. Oral traditions are crucial for maintaining communal memory, as demonstrated by customs like the oda, a forum for male gatherings to exchange stories and discuss local issues. The city's social cohesion is still greatly influenced by religious festivals, market days, and group rituals that combine secular, Orthodox Christian, and Islamic customs.

The city's demographic composition is predominantly Albanian Muslim, with smaller Bosniak, Roma, and Serb communities. This diversity is mirrored in Peja's cultural expressions, from culinary traditions to music and dance, underscoring the city's role as a cultural crossroads.

Architectural Typologies and Urban Morphology

Peja's architectural landscape is a testament to its layered history. The city's urban morphology features a mix of medieval ecclesiastical structures, Ottoman-era public buildings, and socialist-era residential complexes. The old bazaar area, with its narrow alleys and traditional shops, exemplifies the Ottoman influence on urban design. The presence of kullas—traditional Albanian stone tower houses—further enriches the architectural diversity, offering insights into vernacular building practices and social organization (Necipoğlu, 2005).

Relevance to the Oda of Memories Pavilion

Understanding Peja's historical and cultural context is essential for the conceptualization of the Oda of Memories pavilion. The pavilion aims to serve as a contemporary space that resonates with the city's rich heritage. By integrating elements reminiscent of traditional odas and drawing inspiration from Kosovo's layered history of communal life and cultural resilience, the pavilion seeks to create a space that fosters reflection, dialogue, and community engagement.

Incorporating water features, akin to the historical shadërvan fountains, the pavilion not only pays homage to Islamic traditions of purification and hospitality but also reactivates the communal role of water in public spaces. This design approach ensures that the pavilion is not merely an architectural addition but a living extension of Peja's collective memory, bridging the past and present in a meaningful dialogue.

2.2 Site Description: Spatial Realities and Latent Memory

Situated at the threshold between Peja's historic core and its newer civic institutions, the project site occupies a modest but symbolically charged urban pocket. As illustrated in the urban zoning and pedestrian circulation maps of Peja (Figs. 09, 10 & 11), the location lies at a pivotal intersection between heritage landmarks, administrative infrastructure, and open green space.

Although the cadastral map outlines parcel divisions and regulatory boundaries, it is the zoning and pathway diagrams that reveal the site's connective potential—bridging pedestrian flows from the old bazaar to municipal offices, the Lumbardhi River, and nearby residential zones. This spatial positioning renders the site not just central, but strategically layered, with access to both the historical and contemporary dimensions of the city.



Fig 09. Cadastral map of Peja

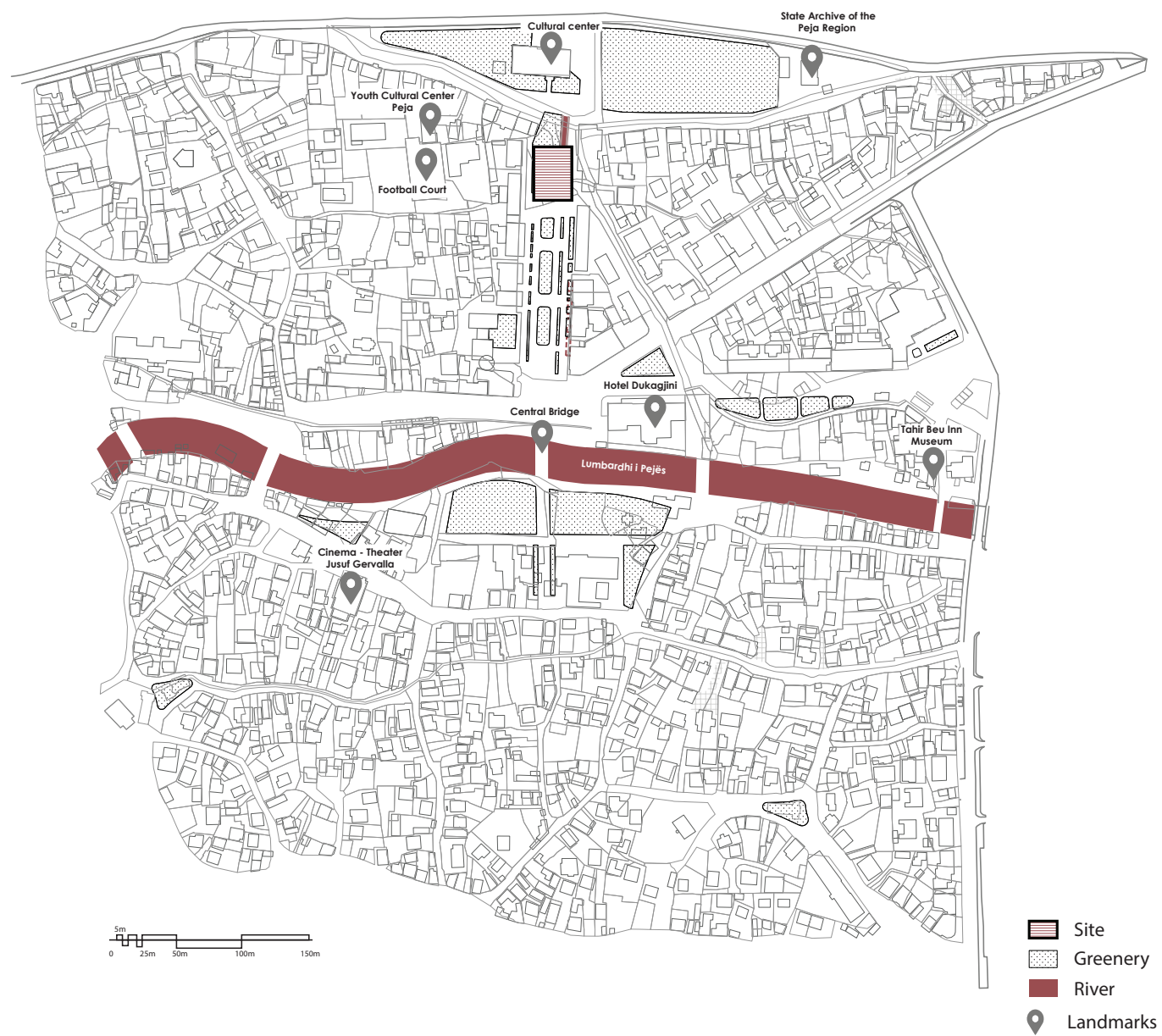


Fig 10. Zoning

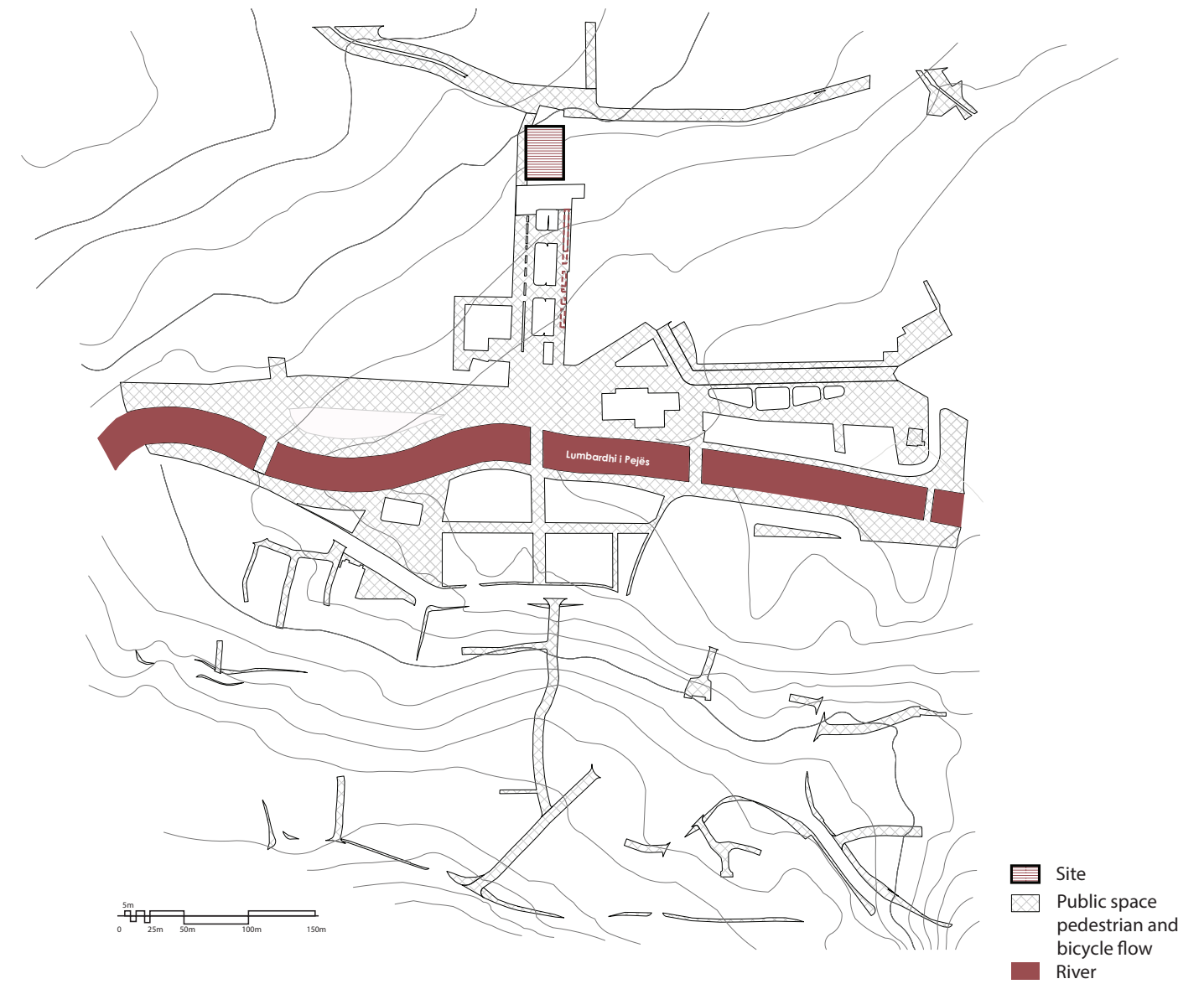


Fig 11. Pathway

Flanked by a mix of commercial storefronts, housing blocks, and informal gathering areas, the space is framed but not formally enclosed. Its atmosphere is shaped more by flow and habit than by architecture (*Figs. 12*). A modest stone fountain once used for communal refreshment sits quietly at the center, dry and poorly maintained. Conversations with local residents recall the space as a casual meeting point, especially in summer months, when the fountain served as a source of water and shade. Today, its visual and functional degradation has rendered the site more transitional than intentional. Yet, this detachment is not due to irrelevance, but rather to unrealized potential.



Fig 12. Existing condition

Environmentally, the site presents both opportunities and challenges. Positioned within the Drin River basin, it sits on generally stable terrain but is vulnerable to seasonal flooding especially when the nearby Qokolica River overflows during heavy rainfall. Although surface water does not directly obstruct pedestrian circulation, the fountain zone is set notably lower than the surrounding pavement, forming a shallow depression where rainwater tends to collect. As a result, this area has effectively become a stagnant basin, making the space unusable and unpleasant due to accumulated water, overgrown vegetation, and foul odor especially during the warmer months.

On a more positive note, the site benefits from its existing greenery especially the presence of large, mature deciduous trees. These trees naturally offer shade, create wind buffers, and play a role in lowering local temperatures, enhancing thermal comfort during warmer seasons. If carefully incorporated into a renewed spatial design, these elements could greatly improve environmental conditions and help reestablish the space as an inviting and accessible place for public use.

From a sensory and spatial perspective, the site presents a subtle richness. The auditory environment is soft defined by footsteps, distant minaret calls, the hum of street activity, and the rustle of tree canopies. Visually, the plaza opens toward long vistas of the Rugova mountains while remaining enclosed enough to feel protected. Materials underfoot range from stone and concrete to exposed earth, narrating the wear of time and the incomplete attention of public maintenance. This material and acoustic blend gives the space a feeling of latent memory familiar but paused, ready to be reawakened.

Of particular importance is the fountain itself. Unlike the covered fountains found in mosque courtyards designed for ritual ablution, this fountain reflects the second typology often mentioned in community discussions: uncovered, public-use fountains that once served entire neighborhoods. These were not religious elements, but civic ones—places where people refilled jugs, cooled off, and exchanged greetings. Such fountains functioned as social infrastructure, where water was not only a resource but a medium of connection. The current state of disrepair, then, is not merely physical it represents a disconnection between past patterns of care and present neglect (*Figs. 13*).



Fig 13. The current state of the fountain

As part of my site analysis, I conducted an on-site survey in the area where my project is located, situated in the city center of Peja. I documented the existing conditions through photographs and direct observation in order to better understand the context and current state of the site.

While the site holds historical and cultural significance, its present condition reflects a clear lack of maintenance. Litter was found scattered throughout the area including on the protected fountain itself despite signage indicating its preservation under municipal care. The fountain was not operational, and unpleasant odors were noticeable, further underscoring the need for revitalization. However, the site also presents positive qualities. The presence of mature trees contributes to a serene atmosphere and offers essential shade, particularly valuable during the summer months. Moreover, its central location and spatial openness suggest potential for transformation into a meaningful public space.

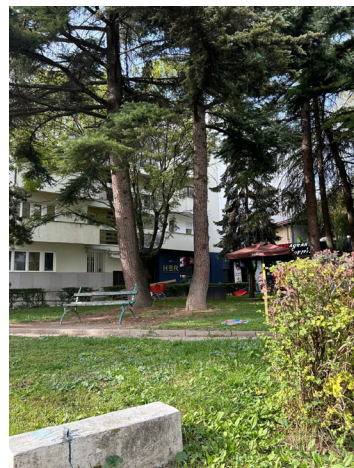


Fig 14. Visual Documentation of Existing Site



2.3 Local Heritage and Collective Memory

In Kosovo, architecture conveys memory in addition to physical form. In a time of political upheaval, cultural resiliency, and reconstruction, the built environment actively shapes history rather than just reflecting it. From small family homes and local fountains to famous national monuments, places serve as conduits for the generational transmission of identities, values, and life experiences.

Memory in this context is not passive. It is constructed, contested, and continually renegotiated. As Pierre Nora (1989) explains, memory can crystallize in places "lieux de mémoire" where events, meanings, and identities intersect. In Kosovo, these "places of memory" are especially layered: a mosque may recall a multi-cultural Ottoman past, while a socialist-era school evokes both modernization and marginalization. Even structures that no longer serve their original function continue to exert presence as landmarks of belonging or absence.

Crucially, memory is not limited to edifices. It is equally present in commonplace structures, customs, and social behaviors. Formal memorials may not always have the same emotional impact as a temporary pavilion in a city plaza, a fountain in a public square, or a house transformed into a museum. These are the kinds of places where gatherings, storytelling, and shared gestures are ways that memory is embodied in daily life. As this chapter will examine, Kosovo's architecture has long served as a vehicle for remembrance—not through overt declarations, but through subdued adaptability, resilience, and meaning conveyed through space, stone, and wood.

2.3.1 Kosovo Memory – Heritage

Kosovo's built heritage serves as a living archive of collective memory, encapsulating the layers of the country's complex history and identity. From medieval sacred sites and Ottoman-era townscapes to vernacular dwellings and modern monuments, each layer of architecture contributes to a shared narrative of continuity. Historic structures are not merely old buildings; they are vessels of cultural memory that connect present-day communities with their past. As one cultural heritage advocate observes, "memory is what we are... Without memory, we have no identity, and if we preserve our cultural heritage, then we preserve our memory" (Avdyli, 2017). This intimate link between memory and heritage imbues Kosovo's architectural landmarks with significance far beyond their aesthetic or utilitarian value, making them expressions of identity.

Many of Kosovo's emblematic buildings carry deep meaning and memory sites, in the national consciousness. For example, the Emin Gjiku complex in Prishtina – an 18th-century Ottoman-era residence converted into the Ethnographic Museum – offers a tangible window into urban life of the past. Its preserved rooms, traditional furnishings, and artifacts allow Kosovars today to literally walk into the domestic world of their ancestors, keeping alive the customs and stories of pre-modern life. Among its most symbolic interior settings is the traditional Oda, carefully reconstructed to reflect its original layout and function. Through such embodied settings, the museum communicates not only material culture but also the intangible values and rituals embedded in traditional Albanian homes.

Likewise, the country's konaks (historic mansions or compounds) and other old town buildings remain as anchors of local identity. In Prizren's historic core, ensembles of houses, mosques, tekkes, hamams, and bazaars testify to centuries of layered cultures. These physical settings nurture a "memory culture" in which everyday architecture becomes a carrier of collective narratives – whether the legacy of an old trading town or the familial lineage of those who built and inhabited these structures. The continuing use or musealization of such buildings ensures that community memories are not lost; the places themselves act as storytellers.

Among the most potent symbols of Kosovo's heritage are the kulla houses – the fortified stone tower-houses typical of the Dukagjini region. These vernacular structures, often dating to the 17th–19th centuries, embody a way of life and values (such as hospitality and resistance) that form an essential part of Albanian cultural identity. Many kullas were home to prominent families and figure in oral histories and epics, making them touchstones of local pride. Notably, the kulla's role in collective memory was tragically highlighted during the 1998–99 conflict, when numerous historic kullas were deliberately targeted and destroyed as an attack on Kosovo's cultural identity (Morel, 2013). One emblematic case was the Kulla of Jashar Pasha in Peja, an early 19th-century tower house where the Albanian League of Peja had convened in 1899; this important landmark was razed to the ground during the war in a deliberate attempt to erase a piece of Albanian national memory (Morel, 2013). Such acts underscore how deeply architecture is intertwined with identity – heritage sites were seen as "a legacy belonging to the past of 'the other'" and thus became targets for destruction in ethnic conflict (Morel, 2013). In the war's aftermath, the restoration of several kullas (for instance, in Junik and elsewhere) has been a priority, not only to conserve historical architecture but to affirm the resilience of cultural memory. Restored kullas now serve new functions – as museums, guesthouses, or community centers – ensuring that these symbols of continuity remain actively woven into Kosovo's social fabric.



Fig 15.1. Ethnological Museum (Emin Gjiku Complex, Pristina)



Fig 15.2. Ethnological Museum (Emin Gjiku Complex, Pristina) Interior

Equally significant to Kosovo's contemporary memory landscape are public monuments and memorials that connect past struggles to present identity. The iconic NEWBORN (Figs. 16) monument in central Prishtina, unveiled on February 17, 2008 – the day of Kosovo's independence declaration – exemplifies a new kind of heritage symbol: one that is dynamic, participatory, and forward-looking. The monument consists of large steel letters spelling “NEWBORN,” originally painted bright yellow to signal the birth of a new nation. Designed in a neutral modern typeface and in English, it carries universal overtones – intentionally devoid of ethnic or sectarian symbolism – projecting an image of a fresh start and hope (Cosentino, 2020). As a piece of design, “NEWBORN” declares Kosovo's statehood and aspirations in a globally accessible language, embodying a collective triumph and “another chance” at life (Cosentino, 2020). Yet what truly sets this monument apart as a living repository of memory is its ever-evolving surface.

Each year on Kosovo's Independence Day, the letters are repainted or altered by local artists and volunteers to reflect current social or political themes, effectively turning the monument into an annual time-capsule of the nation's consciousness (Cosentino, 2020). For example, in different years the monument's facade has featured the flags of countries that recognized Kosovo, camouflage patterns highlighting unresolved issues, and other motifs chosen to spark public reflection. This ritualized re-surfacing of NEWBORN means that the monument is never static – it engages the public in dialogue, inviting people to physically interact (writing messages, taking photographs) and to see their own contemporary stories mirrored in it. In this sense, architecture and public art merge to carry cultural memory: the NEWBORN letters have accrued layers of meaning over time, from the euphoria of independence to the sober commentary on ongoing challenges. The monument's continued relevance illustrates how heritage in Kosovo is not only about preserving the distant past, but also about recording living history and sustaining a sense of collective identity through time.

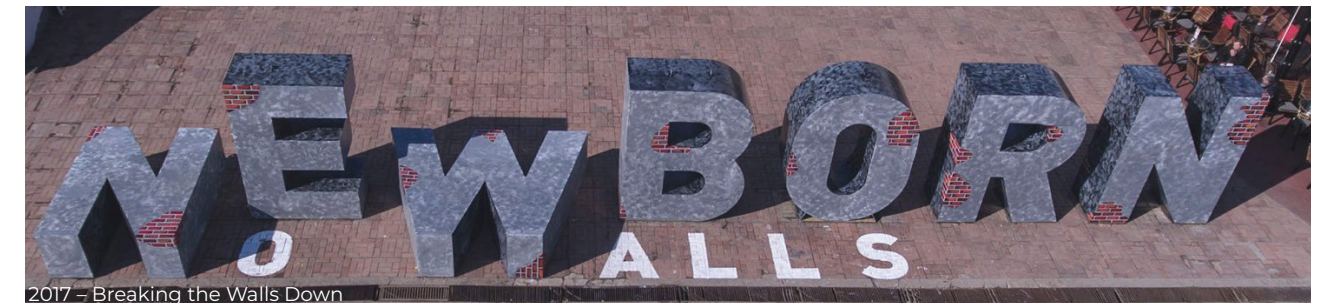


Fig 16. NEWBORN

Oda – A Room of Gathering and Hospitality

The Oda is a unique room in traditional Kosovar homes that embodies both privacy and hospitality. Originally a private chamber, it evolved into a semi-public space where people would gather to discuss community matters or welcome guests. The Oda also served as a shelter for travelers to rest overnight if needed, with the homeowner (landlord) staying in the room as a host. Typically situated in the courtyard and separate from the main house, the Oda often had its own bathroom for convenience.

One corner of the Oda usually featured a built-in shelf where the housewife stored extra blankets and clothes, ensuring visitors had everything they might need for comfort. The floor was always adorned with thick tepi (handwoven carpets) that added warmth and coziness to the space. Guests in the Oda would share meals at a *sofra*, a low round table symbolizing unity and generosity. Altogether, the Oda reflects the deep-rooted hospitality of Kosovar culture, offering a warm and welcoming environment for all who enter.

In some cases, such as the *oda sajbi*, this hospitality extended to unknown travelers caught on the road after dark. These rooms, maintained by generous families, provided not just food and shelter but also safety and social dignity. As Nazmi Beqiri writes, the *oda sajbi* was not only a shelter but a humanist and social act; through it, trust, knowledge, and even friendship were exchanged (Beqiri, 2023). This tradition elevated the act of hosting to a societal duty an unwritten civic law practiced for generations.

More than a living room, in regions like northern Albania and Kosovo (Figs. 17,1), odas - especially in stone towers such as Binak Ali's in Bujan - took on a civic role. Known as “*oda e besës*”, these rooms hosted village councils, where leaders convened to make vital decisions for their communities in times without formal institutions. (Prointegra 2021)

This blend of intimate homespace and public assembly hall inspired my pavilion's concept: a place that is welcoming yet civic, personal yet open, and built to host culture, conversation, and community life.

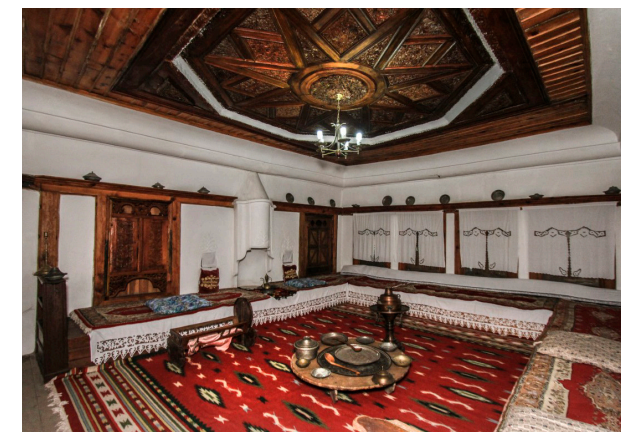


Fig 17.1 Odas in Albanian Lands

Architectural Analysis of the Traditional Oda

The traditional Oda is not just a room but a carefully arranged architectural space where every element supports its role as a place of gathering, hospitality, and cultural exchange. Its spatial composition is modest yet rich in meaning, rooted in centuries of Albanian domestic tradition.

At the center of the Oda stands the *oxhaku* (hearth or fireplace) (Figs. 17.2.a), the symbolic and physical heart of the room. It is more than a heat source - it is the axis around which conversation, hospitality, and storytelling take place. The *oxhaku* anchors the space in warmth, visibility, and community, much like the altar of a home.

Encircling the perimeter of the room are *shiltet* (Figs. 17.2.a)- soft cushions or mattresses arranged directly against the walls. This perimeter seating strategy not only maximizes space but also orients everyone toward the *oxhaku*, reinforcing a sense of inclusion and equality. It eliminates hierarchy, placing all visitors on the same level, literally and socially.

Covering the floor is the *tepi* (Figs. 17.2.b), a thick, woven carpet that adds warmth, softness, and insulation. Walking barefoot or sitting on it evokes a feeling of comfort and domestic care. It transforms the room into a tactile, lived-in environment and reflects local craftsmanship and tradition.

Tucked into a corner is the *dollapi* (Figs. 17.2.b), a built-in shelf or cupboard where essentials like pillows and quilts are stored. This feature reflects the generosity of Albanian households: anyone who entered the Oda could sleep there if needed. The *dollapi* ensured guests had access to all necessities, underlining the room's dual role as a guest room and communal hall.

Together, these features form a harmonious spatial ecosystem: the *oxhaku* as center, *shiltet* as social interface, *tepi* as ground plane of comfort, and *dollapi* as host infrastructure. The Oda's architecture, though simple, is deeply functional, symbolic, and human-centered - making it a powerful precedent for contemporary design seeking to balance memory, identity, and public use.

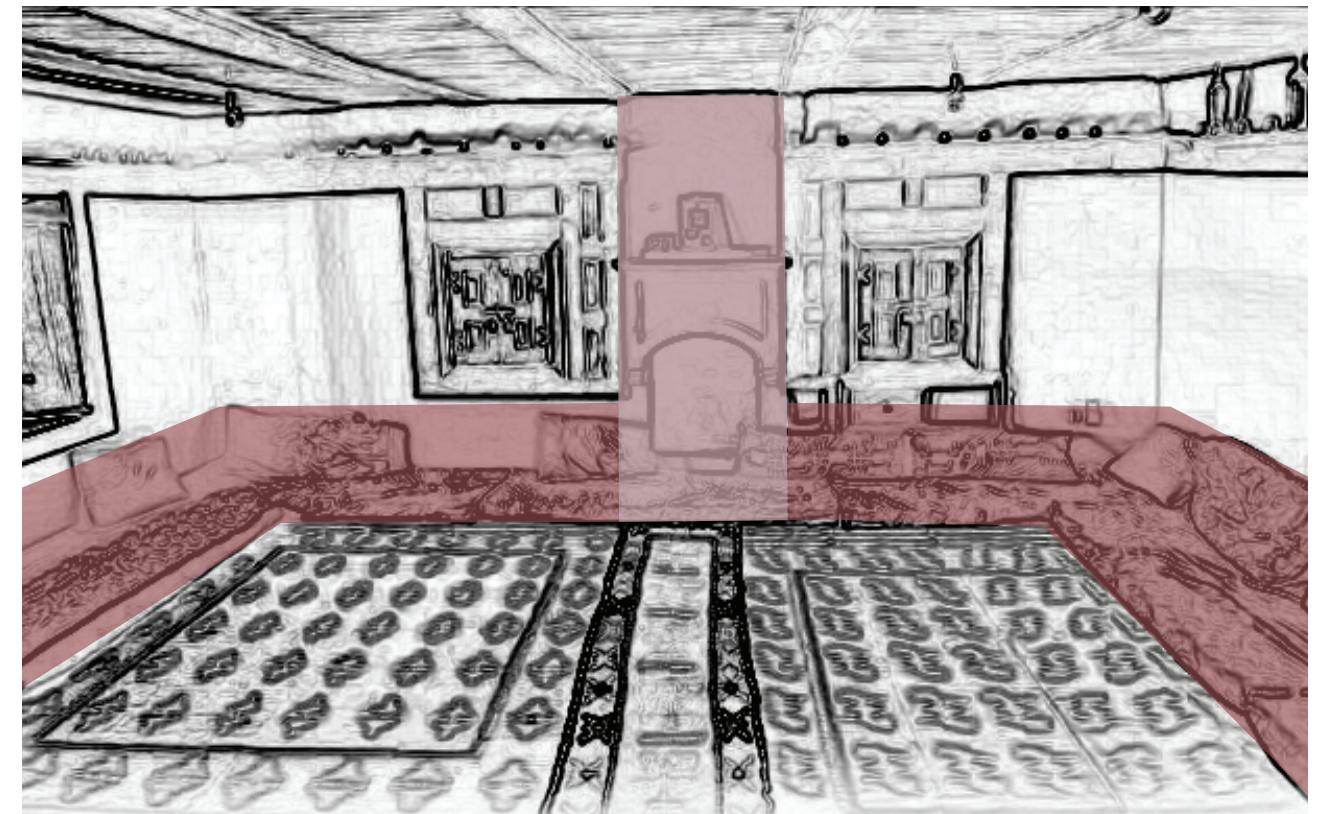


Fig 17.2.a Key Features of the Traditional Oda: Fireplace and Cushions

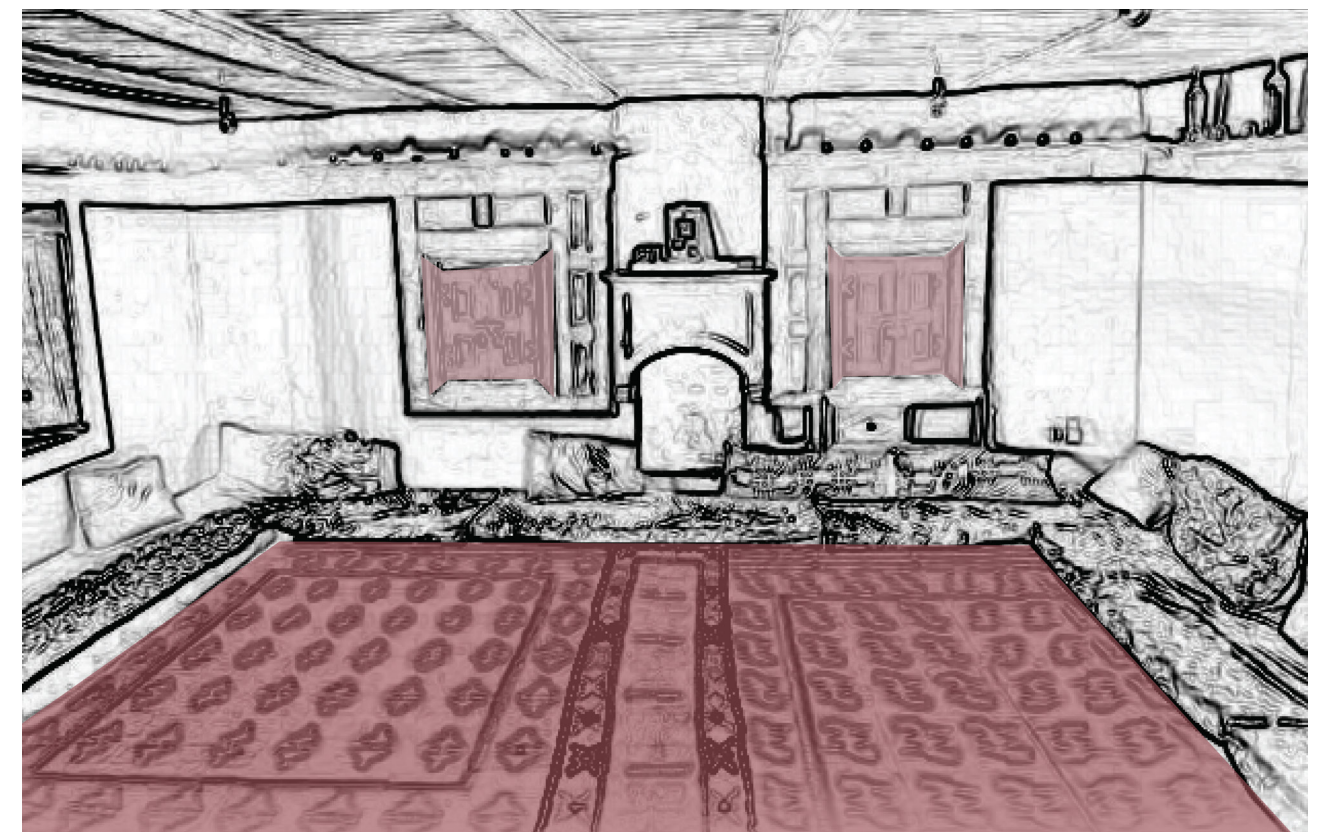


Fig 17.2.b Key Features of the Traditional Oda: Carpet and Shelf

2.3.2 Contemporary Pavilions from/in Kosovo

Contemporary pavilions have emerged as a new form of memory and identity expression in Kosovo in recent years, marking a move away from static monuments and toward more dynamic, interactive spatial expressions. These pavilions, which are frequently movable or temporary constructions, act as cultural installations or experimental memorials that interact with the public in novel ways. The pavilion typology provides a versatile, interactive platform, in contrast to traditional memorials (a statue, an obelisk, or a plaque), which typically have fixed forms and meanings. It can be put together for particular occasions or displays and is usually intended to encourage introspection, discussion, or even hands-on involvement. Such pavilions serve as an inventive “heritage in motion” that permits the reinterpretation of historical narratives within the framework of Kosovo’s developing memory culture.

Several noteworthy examples from Kosovo illustrate how pavilions are being used to encapsulate collective memory and identity symbolically and adaptively. One example is the Prizren Pavilion (2013) (Figs. 18) - an installation conceived by architect Senat Haliti as part of an EU-funded public art competition. Often referred to as the “EU Pavilion,” this temporary structure was erected in Prizren’s historic city square with the explicit aim of transforming public space and encouraging community contemplation. Rather than a monument one simply looks at, it was conceived as a space one can enter and inhabit – essentially a house-like pavilion that people could walk into and be surrounded by. Haliti’s design concept deliberately intertwined local heritage with future aspirations: the pavilion was “comprised of three elements: ground, space and structure,” where “roots and heritage are represented by the traditional carpet” pattern on the ground plane, and “European aspirations are represented by the structure itself” a house-shaped wooden frame whose form and colors were inspired by the EU flag barcode motif (McManus, 2013). Notably, Haliti nicknamed the installation an “EU home” for Kosovars giving the public a chance to physically step “into” the idea of Europe every day, at a time when Kosovo’s population overwhelmingly aspired to EU integration (McManus, 2013). The pavilion’s shaded interior offered a quiet gathering spot, inviting people of different communities to enter, sit informally on its built-in base, and even meet each other thus using spatial design to encourage trust and dialogue. This Prizren Pavilion, though temporary, became a participatory monument: it translated an abstract political sentiment (European integration and the blend of identities that entails) into a tangible, human-scale experience rooted in local cultural imagery. By doing so, it demonstrated the power of ephemeral architecture to carry memory (of heritage, of hopes for the future) in a way that is engaging and open-ended.



Fig 18. Prizren Pavilion

Another example of reimagined memorial architecture is the UÇK Memorial Pavilion in Drenas (Figs. 19). Instead of commemorating Kosovo's 1998–99 war through a conventional bronze statue or stone memorial, this project employs a pavilion-like design to honor the legacy of the Kosovo Liberation Army (Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës, or UÇK) in a more interactive manner. Inaugurated near Drenas in the Drenica heartland – a region central to the armed resistance – the memorial pavilion marks a site of historical significance (associated with KLA fighters and martyrs) by creating a space for people to gather and remember. Its form moves away from rigid monumentality; early descriptions suggest an open architectural composition that frames the memory of the conflict through spatial experience rather than didactic symbolism. For instance, the pavilion can host commemorative ceremonies, shelter exhibits or storytelling events, and allow visitors to literally step into the narrative of the war's first public moments. In effect, the UÇK Memorial Pavilion creates an environment where memory is lived: the design likely incorporates elements of local identity (perhaps traditional motifs or the vernacular language of stone and wood) alongside contemporary forms that signal a forward gaze. The chairman of the local municipality, at the pavilion's opening, emphasized that such memorial sites “preserve the legacy” of the last war and should be treated as “sacred places” that keep alive the sacrifice of those who fought (Telegrafi, 2023). This underscores a key aspect of the pavilion ethos – it serves as a framework for collective memory, one that is not static but activated by people's presence and participation. In comparison to older memorials, which often conveyed a one-way message (heroism, mourning, victory) through figurative sculpture, the pavilion in Drenas embodies a shift toward creating a milieu for remembrance. It is less about imposing a singular narrative and more about providing an adaptable stage where personal and collective reflections on the war can unfold over time.

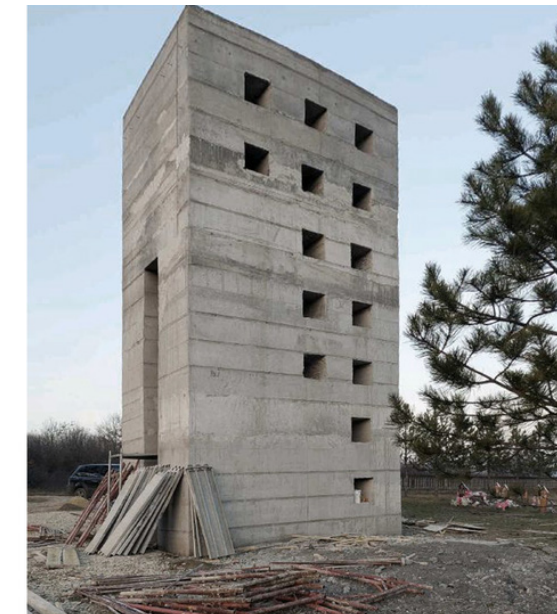
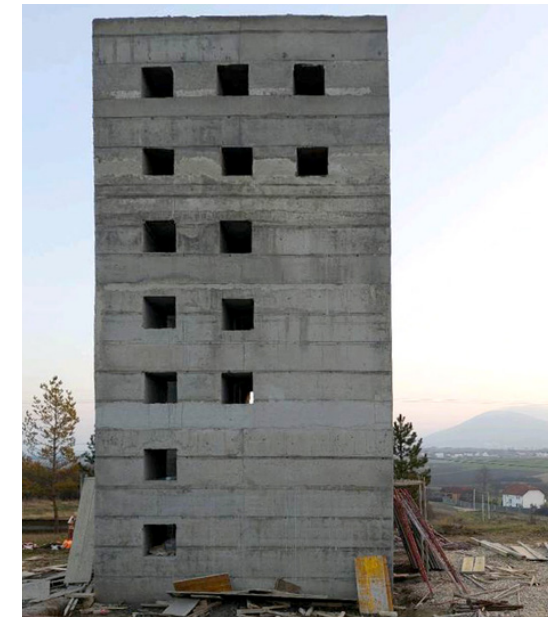


Fig 19. UÇK Memorial Pavilion

A further compelling case of a contemporary pavilion as a memory device is the Kosovo Pavilion at the 2018 Venice Biennale of Architecture (Figs. 20). Titled “The City is Everywhere,” this temporary installation curated by architect Eliza Hoxha presented Kosovo’s recent history on the prestigious international stage in a powerfully symbolic way. Rather than displaying static panels or images, Hoxha chose to recreate the essence of a Kosovar house from the 1990s inside the pavilion, thereby translating a crucial collective memory into spatial form. The concept was rooted in a specific episode of Kosovo’s past: during the 1990s, under the repressive Serbian regime, Kosovo Albanians were expelled from public institutions and forced to conduct their everyday life – schools, healthcare, culture, governance – in the private realm of homes.

In response to this exclusion from public space, the ordinary house became a substitute city, as living rooms classrooms and kitchens into clinics (Hoxha, 2018). The pavilion in Venice metaphorically “relocated the Kosovo house of the ’90s” into an exhibition setting (Maxharraj, 2025). It was designed as an unfinished house structure, “always in the making; unfinished because it always acquires new public functions” (Hoxha, 2018). Visitors to the Biennale could walk through this skeletal house-like space, which blurred the lines between private and public, personal and collective.

The pavilion functioned as a laboratory of memory, where an architectural narrative (the fragmented house) conveyed both the trauma of exclusion and the ingenuity of creating “freespace” under oppression. Importantly, this installation was not permanent – it existed for the duration of the Biennale – yet its impact as a narrative tool was significant. It signaled a move away from monumentalizing history in stone, and toward storytelling through space. The success of “The City is Everywhere” (which was Kosovo’s return to the Biennale after a hiatus) demonstrated how temporary pavilions can encapsulate and broadcast a nation’s collective memory in a creative, adaptive form that resonates widely.

In conclusion, the emergence of modern pavilions in Kosovo’s cultural landscape signifies a creative fusion of modern architecture and legacy. By reducing historical and cultural themes to spatial experiences that encourage interpretation and involvement, these structures act as memory-catalysts. Examples of pavilions from Prizren, Drenas, and Venice demonstrate how architecture in Kosovo still bears the burden of memory, albeit in the form of living, moving spaces that travel, change, and unite people in remembrance rather than as permanent monuments. By doing this, they support the notion that collective memory is continuously rebuilt rather than passively passed down.

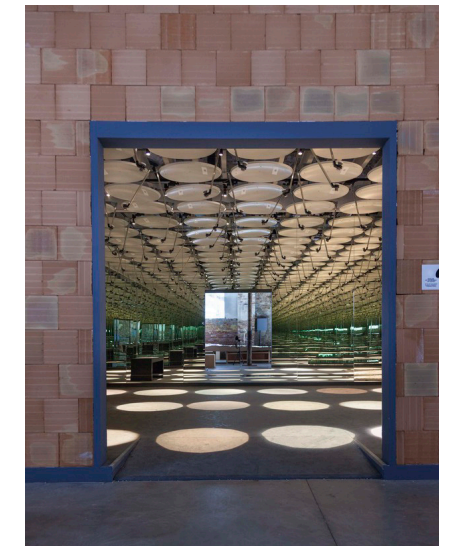
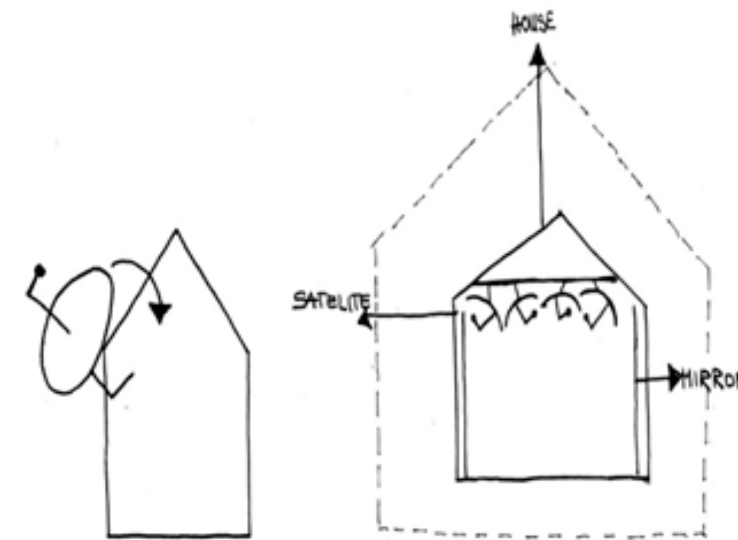


Fig 20. Kosovo Pavilion – Venice Biennale (2018): “The City is Everywhere”

Interview Approach

To understand the site's perception and history, I conducted informal interviews with residents of Peja, selecting people from diverse age groups and professions.

Elderly individuals shared memories and historical context.

Working-age adults discussed changes, usage, and practical needs.

Youth and children expressed their experiences with the space's condition and usability.

I also interviewed local experts and institutions (Municipality of Peja, QRTK Pejë, and Yunus Emre Institute), who provided historical references and documentation (where available).

| Group | Main Observations |
|---------------|---|
| Elderly 60 + | Used to be a communal water source. Later became a meeting place. |
| Adults 20-59 | Attempts to repurpose the space failed due to flooding and disrepair. |
| Youth 13 - 20 | Poor maintenance, smells, broken furniture. No inviting use. |
| Children 0-12 | Lack of play equipment or safe, usable space. |
| Experts | The fountain dates back to the 15th century, while the surrounding stone walls were added during the 1970s–1980s. Documentation is limited. |

Historical Use



The fountain was once the only water source for locals.

Became a social spot over time.

Environmental Challenges



Flooding makes the space unusable during heavy rain.

No proper drainage system.

Physical Condition



Broken benches, non-functioning fountain, smells.

No accessibility for wheelchairs or strollers.

Attempts to Revive the Space



Seasonal café extensions, graffiti art—all failed to make the space active long-term.

Expert Input

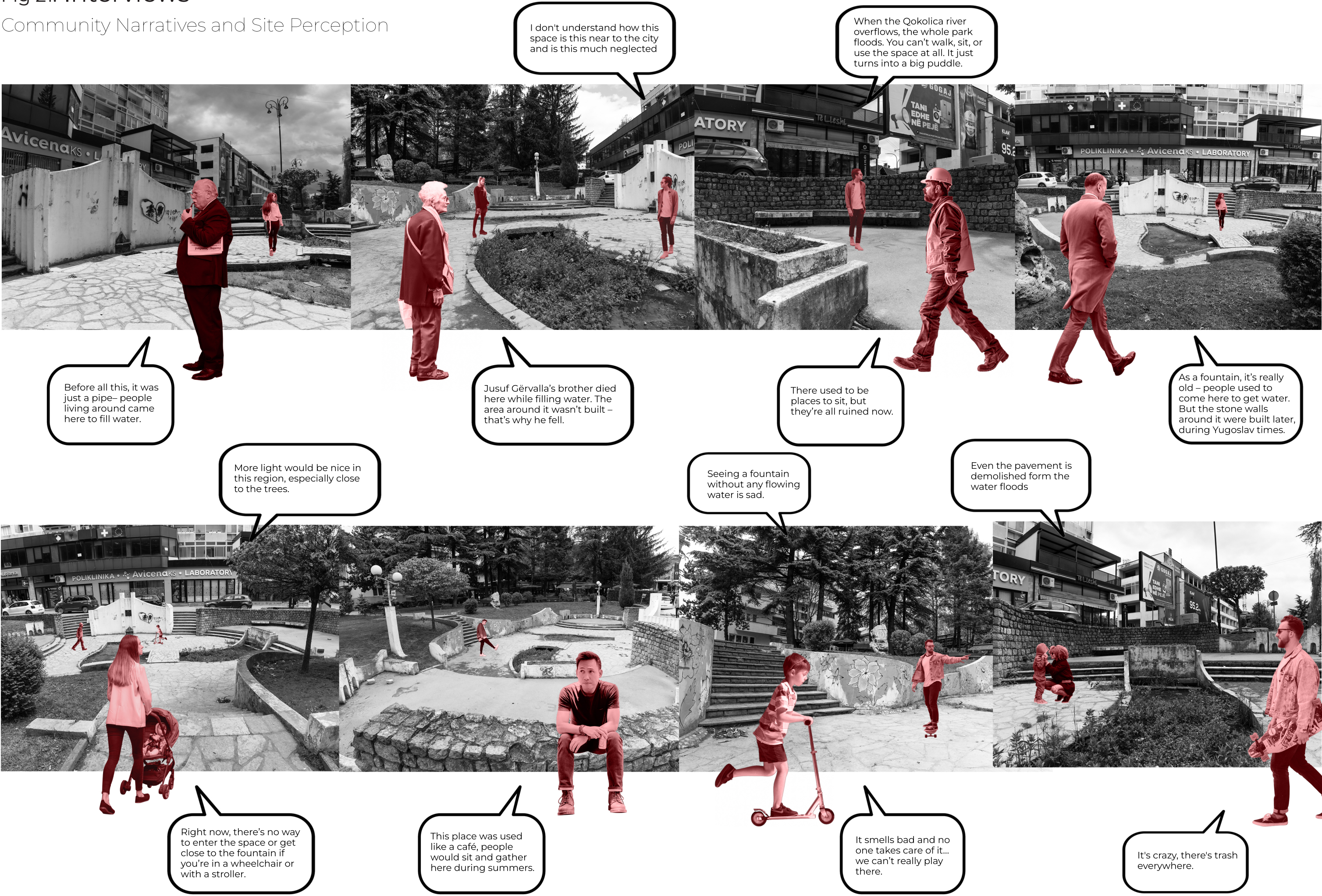


Limited records due to war.

Fountain is old 15th centry; surrounding walls are from Yugoslav era.

Fig 21. Interviews

Community Narratives and Site Perception



Chapter 3

Theoretical and Contextual Foundations

In recent architectural discourse, there is growing recognition that design is not solely about function it is also about how people connect to memory, identity, and place. Especially in places with layered histories, like Peja, Kosovo, architecture carries the responsibility of both honoring the past and shaping possibilities for the future. In this context, temporary structures such as pavilions offer more than just physical presence; they act as symbolic and adaptable tools that can spark memory and social interaction without the permanence of conventional buildings (Rossi, 1982; Norberg-Schulz, 1980). Architecture, then, becomes a bridge a way to negotiate between what was and what could be.

The relationship between architecture and memory has long been explored in theory. Aldo Rossi (1982) described the city as a “repository of collective memory,” suggesting that buildings do more than house activity they preserve cultural identity. Similarly, Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980) introduced the concept of *genius loci*, or the spirit of a place, highlighting the emotional and experiential dimensions of architecture. Henri Lefebvre (1991) added a further layer to this conversation by describing space as something socially produced shaped not only by physical structures but also by history, power dynamics, and everyday life. In post-conflict environments like Kosovo, these perspectives highlight the importance of designing with care: respecting the narratives rooted in place while creating room for new forms of collective experience.

In cities recovering from disruption or neglect, pavilions and other lightweight installations can also help restore life to forgotten spaces. Their reversible nature means they don't impose on the site permanently, allowing communities to reengage with their surroundings gradually and with flexibility. Jan Gehl (2010) has emphasized how such interventions can support vibrant public life, encouraging interaction and a renewed sense of place. In this way, temporary architecture becomes a practical and poetic means of revitalizing the city an invitation to remember, gather, and imagine anew.

3.1 Architectural Typologies of Pavilions

“The design of the pavilions can be interpreted as an appropriate medium for experimenting, investigating the borders and boundaries of architecture, testing grounds, exploring new architectural concepts, methods, and materials without the limitations of the established functions and their economics.”
— Tuncbilek (2020)

Pavilions have long held a unique place in architectural history not only as objects of design but as opportunities for reflection, experimentation, and public engagement. Originally associated with leisure and aesthetics, they appeared in Renaissance and Enlightenment gardens as small, often ornamental structures, gazebos, kiosks, and follies that framed views of the landscape, offered shelter, or served as intimate social spaces (Fig 21). Their purpose was not purely functional but expressive: to highlight nature, host conversation, or create a symbolic presence in the garden.



Fig 22. Italian Renaissance garden architecture at Villa Lante, Bagnaia (Italy, 1566–1587).

As architecture modernized, the role of the pavilion evolved. In the age of world expositions, they became public platforms for national identity and architectural innovation. No longer just decorative, pavilions were transformed into built statements, miniature worlds showcasing cutting-edge technology, cultural values, or artistic ambition. A pivotal moment in this transformation came with Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion (1929) (Fig 23), designed for the International Exposition in Spain. Though temporary, its flowing spatial composition, refined material palette, and minimalist structure expressed a new architectural language one that emphasized openness, continuity, and the aesthetics of modernism. It has since become a canonical reference for architects around the world.



Fig 23. Barcelona Pavilion / Mies Van der Rohe

In today's architectural practice, the pavilion has re-emerged as a dynamic format for creative exploration and public engagement. Across urban landscapes worldwide, architects are increasingly using this typology to test ideas, respond to social needs, and create adaptable, symbolic spaces within the city. These temporary structures often serve as catalysts for interaction, conversation, and cultural visibility.

Contemporary pavilions differ significantly from their historical predecessors, which were largely ornamental and associated with gardens or leisure grounds. Today, they are more likely to be found in city squares, courtyards, or transitional urban zones, spaces where their presence can activate underused areas and invite public participation. Through their design, they offer a dialogue with the surrounding context, using materials, form, and openness to connect with people and place. Their temporary nature allows for design freedom, enabling experimentation that might not be feasible within the constraints of permanent architecture.

Urban pavilions, in this sense, function less as static objects and more as active interfaces bridging the gap between architecture and the public realm. Some integrate subtly into their surroundings, while others stand out as intentional interventions. Yet, both approaches contribute to shaping the identity and rhythm of the city.

In contrast, pavilions situated in natural settings tend to prioritize stillness, immersion, and material sensitivity. Whether nestled in forests, gardens, or rural landscapes, these structures often operate at a smaller scale, inviting quiet reflection rather than collective gathering. Their purpose is not to direct attention but to frame it, highlighting the landscape, the passage of light, or the sensory qualities of materials.

To better understand how context influences the design and function of pavilions, this thesis presents a comparative analysis of selected case studies. These are examined in terms of their use, setting, and spatial strategies, offering insight into the diverse ways in which pavilions adapt to environmental and cultural conditions. The findings help identify patterns and design principles that can guide future interventions, whether in urban contexts or within nature.

Fig 24. **Comparative Analysis of Pavilion Typologies in Urban Civic Contexts**

Pavilion Case Studies



Pavilion Overview and Environment

Pavilion Name: Ágora Valencia Pavilion

Location: Valencia, Spain

Function: Cultural exhibition and gathering space

Material: Wood and ceramic

Environmental Approach: Modular, dismountable.

Pavilion Name: Pavilion for the Culture Fair

Location: Mexico City, Mexico

Function: Cultural fair pavilion and exhibition space

Material: Wood

Environmental Approach: Prefabricated

Pavilion Name: Chinese Bamboo Eight Pavilion

Location: Chengdu, China

Function: Temporary installation and event space

Material: Bamboo and steel

Environmental Approach: Foundationless, recyclable.

Shared Design Principles

1. Human-Scale & Accessibility



2. High Intensity of Use



3. Urban Connectivity



4. Cultural Programming



5. Temporal Adaptability



6. Visual Porosity



7. Lightweight Construction



8. Contextual Dialogue



Fig 25. **Comparative Analysis of Pavilion Typologies in Landscape-Based Contexts**

Pavilion Case Studies



Pavilion Overview and Environment

Pavilion Name: Forest Pavilion

Location: Da Nong Da Fu Forest, Hualien, Taiwan

Function: Shaded meeting and performance space

Material: Bamboo

Environmental Approach: Minimal Footprint

Pavilion Name: Xylem Pavilion

Location: Tippet Rise Art Center, Montana, USA

Function: Contemplative shelter and gathering space

Material: Pine Wood

Environmental Approach: Local Materials

Pavilion Name: Pavilion Let's Play!

Location: Villa Medici Gardens, Rome, Italy

Function: Playful, sensory, and performance space

Material: French Pine

Environmental Approach: Reusable Structure

Shared Design Principles

1. Small Human-Scale Architecture



2. Modest Intensity of Use



3. Nature Integration



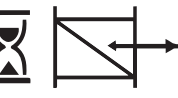
4. Cultural and Sensory Expression



5. Temporary or Lightweight Permanence



6. Architecturally Open Structures



7. Visual and Psychological Transparency



8. Flexibility and Adaptability



3.2 Contemporary Case Studies

Among the most recognized and culturally impactful pavilion initiatives in recent decades is the Serpentine Pavilion series in London. Since it began in 2000, this annual commission has offered architects from around the world the opportunity to design a temporary structure in Kensington Gardens, adjacent to the Serpentine South Gallery. What makes the project unique is that it often marks the first time the invited architect has built in the UK—turning the pavilion into both a debut and a creative playground.

As Tuncbilek observes, “Pavilion design can be interpreted as a laboratory for experimentation in architecture” (Tuncbilek, 2020). This framing supports the argument that the pavilion is an ideal format for testing new spatial concepts, construction techniques, and architectural expression precisely because of its temporary, non-programmatic nature and this can be seen in Serpentine Pavilions.

The Serpentine Pavilions are more than just seasonal structures; they represent a moment of experimentation, where bold spatial ideas are brought to life without the typical limitations of long-term construction. With no strict functional brief, architects are free to explore material innovation, formal expression, and public engagement. The results are often as varied as they are striking—ranging from sculptural statements to more subtle, context-driven designs.

Over the years, the pavilion has been shaped by a diverse roster of voices in architecture, each bringing a distinct vision. Zaha Hadid inaugurated the series with a fluid, futuristic form; Francis Kéré later introduced a vibrant wooden canopy inspired by communal spaces in his native Burkina Faso; and Lina Ghotmeh’s 2023 design evoked a shared table, weaving together themes of ritual, nature, and memory. These examples underscore the series’ commitment not only to design excellence, but to fostering dialogue between architecture and the public.

In this sense, the Serpentine Pavilion is not just a space it’s a yearly gesture toward rethinking how architecture can interact with the city, the landscape, and the people who inhabit them. It stands as a powerful case study for the pavilion typology, embodying the temporary, the experimental, and the socially engaged all at once. Each pavilion becomes a temporary landmark in the city a place where people gather, reflect, and engage with space in new ways. Whether through programmed events, spontaneous visits, or simple moments of rest, these structures foster interaction not just between people and design, but among communities themselves. In many ways, they become social condensers, compact in form yet expansive in the kinds of encounters they encourage.

Unlike monuments that yearn for permanence, the pavilion is rooted in temporality and experience. As Jung and Park write, The pavilion is a tent built for a short time on a field where certain valid experiences are held during specific moments (Jung and Park, 2023). This view underscores the pavilion’s unique status as both event-space and architectural expression a form grounded in transience, yet rich in cultural and spatial meaning.

Fig 26. **Serpentine Pavilion**
Through the Years



2000



2001



2002



2003



2005



2006



2007



2008



2009



2010



2011

Case Studies



Fig 27. Serpentine Pavilion 2013 - Sou Fujimoto



Fig 28. Serpentine Pavilion 2015- SelgasCano

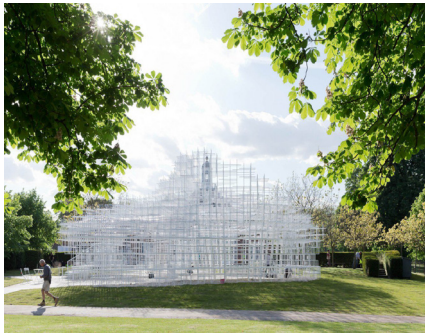


Fig 29. Serpentine Pavilion 2019- Junya Ishigami

Temporary architecture—especially in the form of pavilions—offers more than a physical space. It becomes a way to tell stories, provoke thought, and engage with the public in open and imaginative ways. In this section, we examine three compelling examples from the Serpentine Pavilion series in London: the 2013 pavilion by Sou Fujimoto, the 2015 pavilion by SelgasCano, and the 2019 pavilion by Junya Ishigami (Fig 23, 24, 25). Each of these structures interprets the pavilion not simply as a shelter, but as a spatial narrative—one that connects architecture to atmosphere, memory, and community.



2012



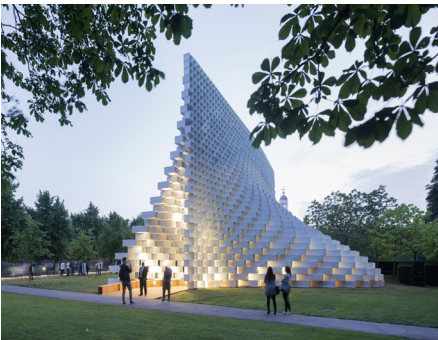
2013



2014



2015



2016



2017



2018



2019



2021



68 2022



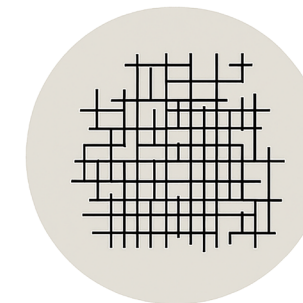
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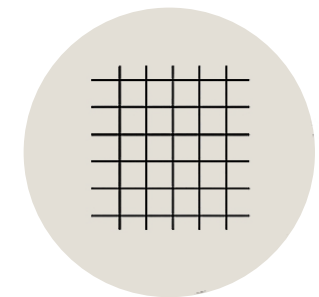
2024



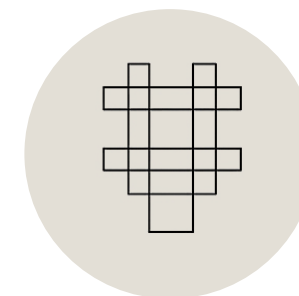
Fig 30. Serpentine Pavilion 2013 - Sou Fujimoto



Top
View

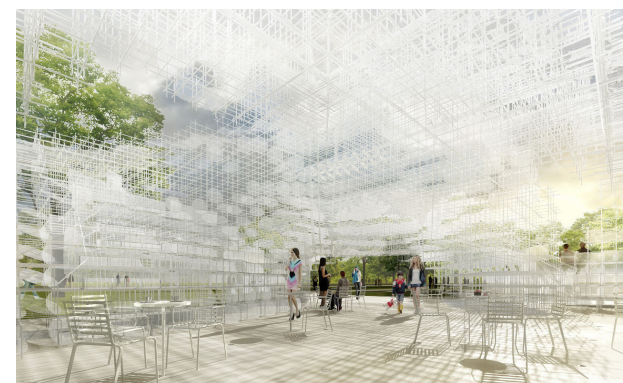
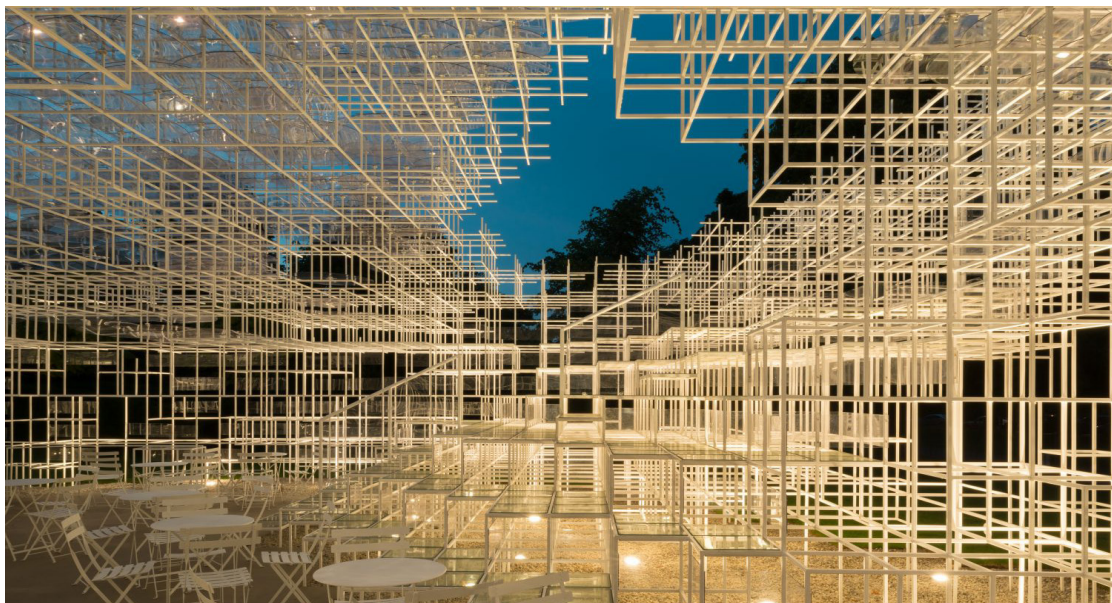
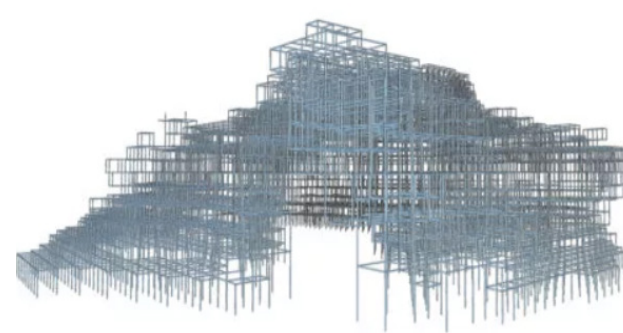
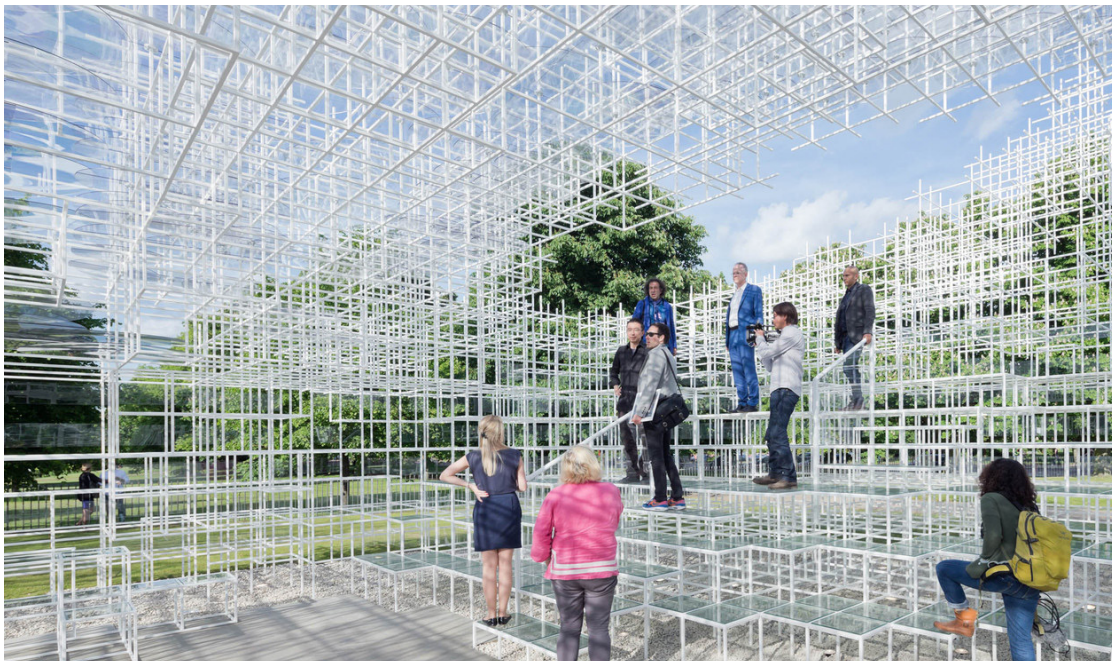
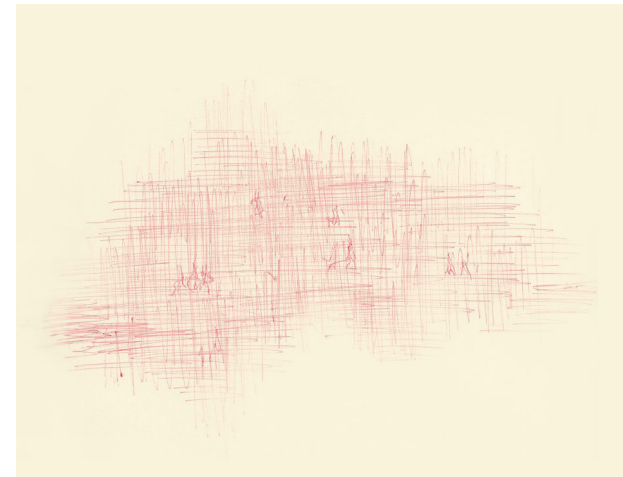
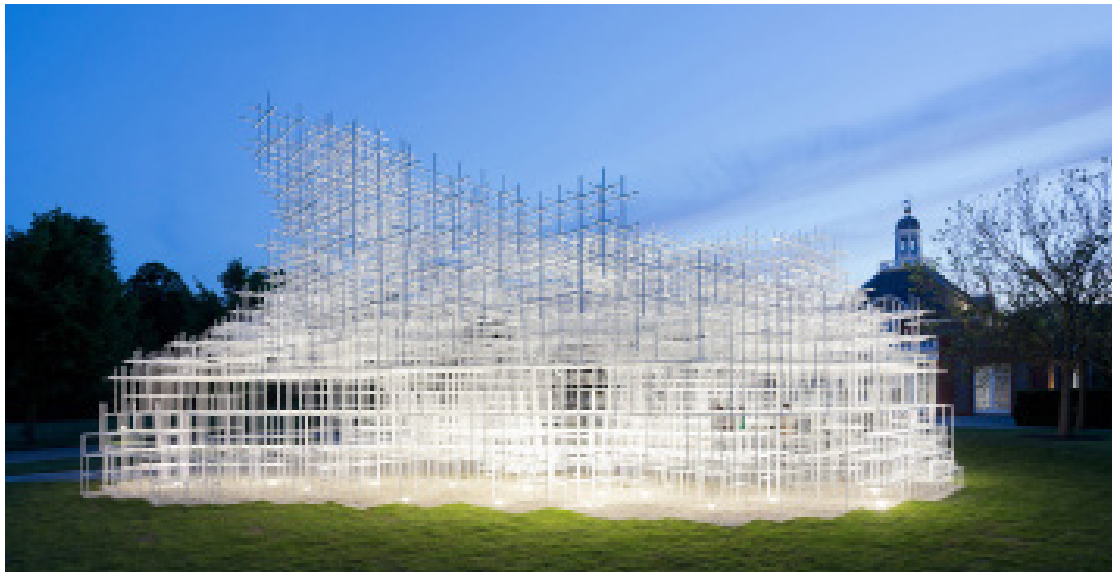


Rectilinear
Grid



Internal
Courtyard

Serpentine Pavilion 2013 - Sou Fujimoto



The 2013 Serpentine Pavilion, designed by Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto, marked a striking departure from conventional architectural form. Located on the grounds of London's Kensington Gardens, the pavilion was envisioned not as a traditional enclosed structure, but as a light, porous cloud hovering just above the landscape and inviting visitors to engage with it in open, intuitive ways. Fujimoto's design, composed of a delicate matrix of white steel poles, created a spatial environment where nature, structure, and human presence merged seamlessly (Serpentine Galleries, 2013).

The structure was defined by its semi-transparent three-dimensional grid, which measured approximately 350 square meters and rose to a height of 5 meters. Within this grid, layers of architectural ambiguity emerged there was no fixed entrance or pathway, no prescribed way to occupy the space. Instead, Fujimoto allowed the experience to unfold organically. People wandered freely through the mesh, finding their own paths and moments of pause. Some climbed onto the integrated steps and platforms, while others simply sat beneath the floating roof of polycarbonate discs that filtered rain and sunlight. In this sense, the pavilion became more than just a structure it became a field of possibility (Serpentine Galleries, 2013).

Fujimoto described his aim as creating a space "that allows people to experience architecture as a part of the landscape" (Serpentine Galleries, 2013). Rather than competing with the natural setting, the pavilion gently extended it mirroring the openness of the park and blending into the tree-filled surroundings. The steel frame offered a soft visual presence, shimmering in the light and constantly shifting in appearance based on one's perspective. The integration of natural light, filtered views, and shifting weather conditions made the pavilion feel alive and constantly changing.

Fig 31. Serpentine Pavilion 2013 – Conceptual Sketches, Diagrams, and Photographs.

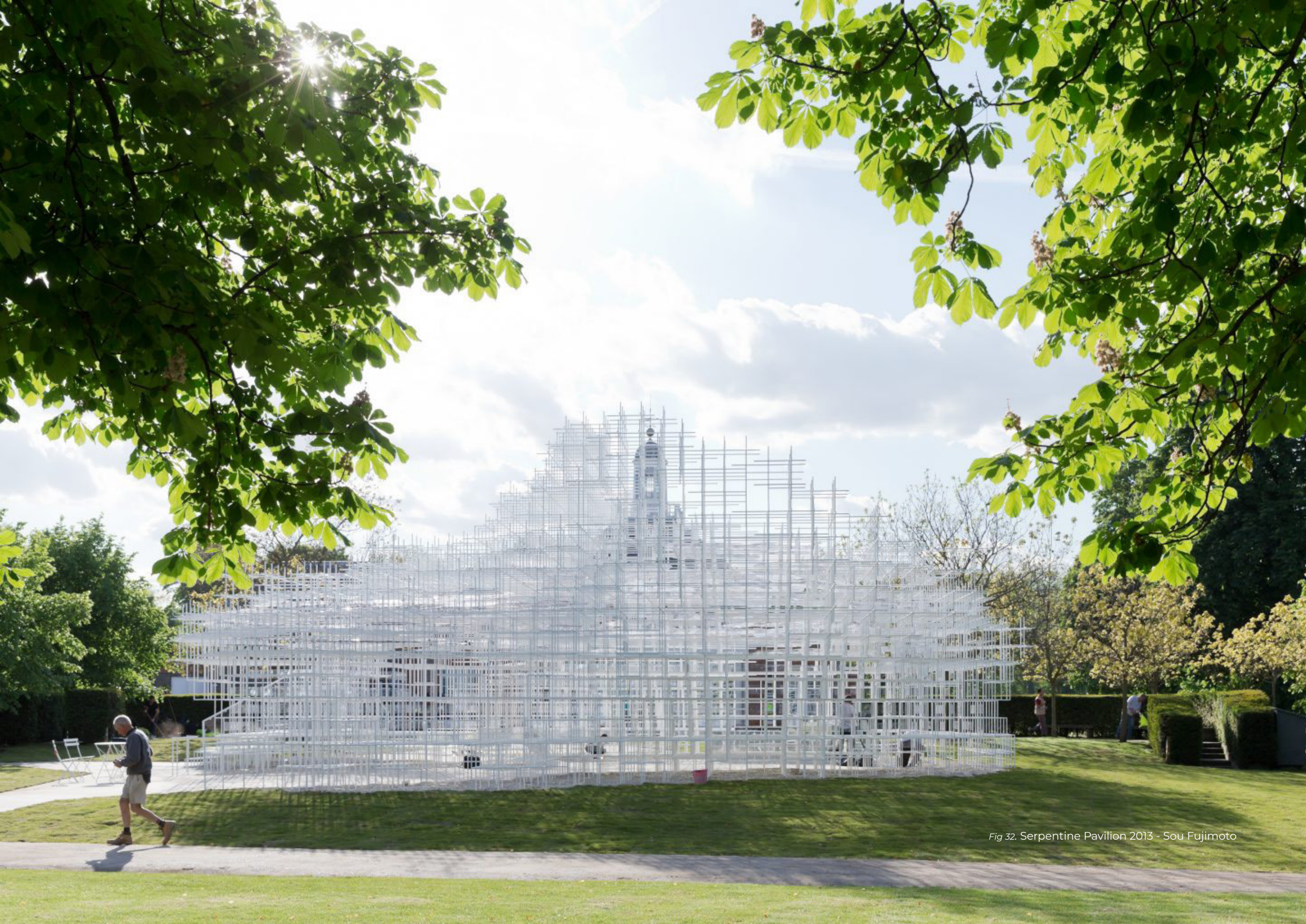


Fig 32. Serpentine Pavilion 2013 - Sou Fujimoto

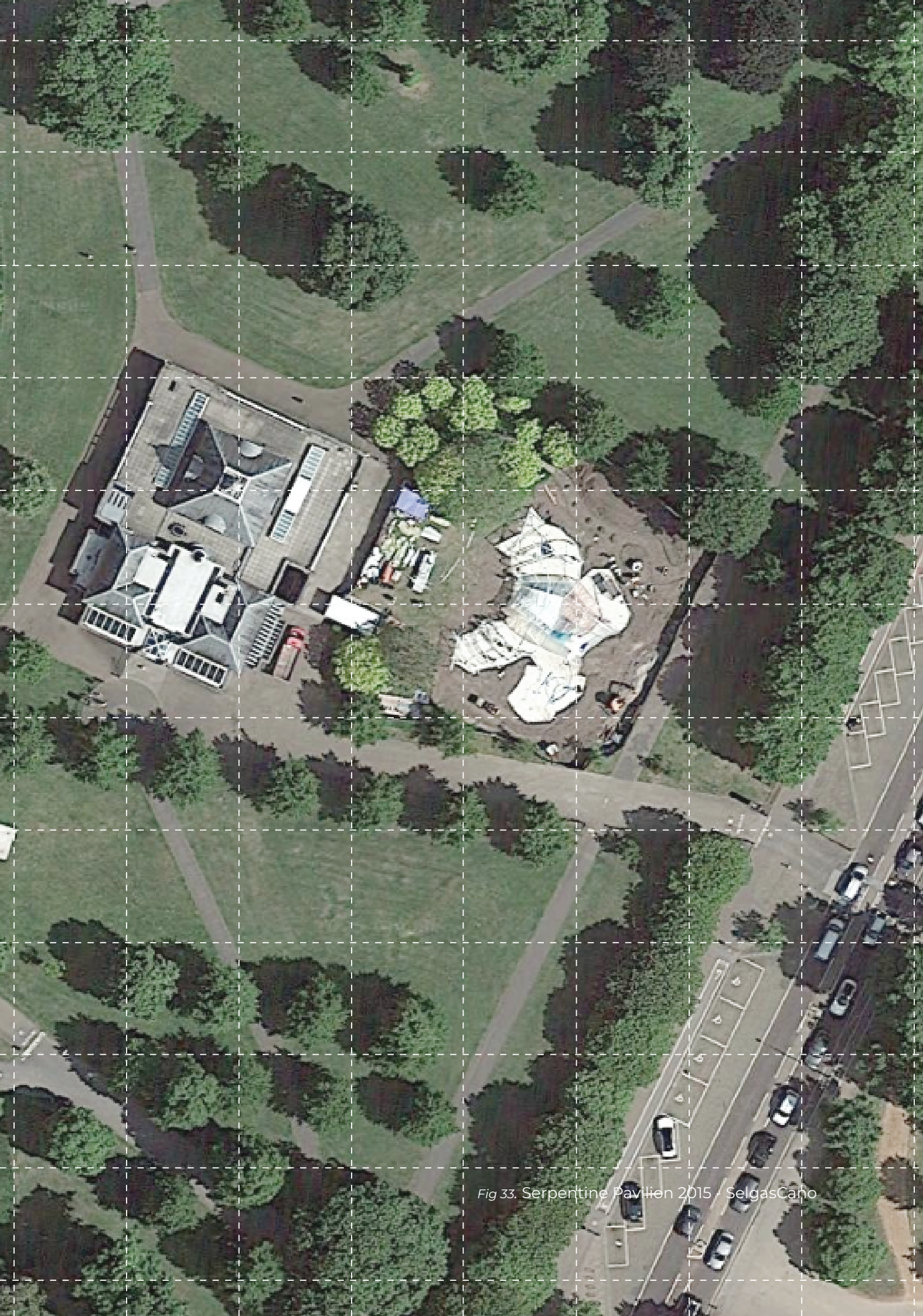
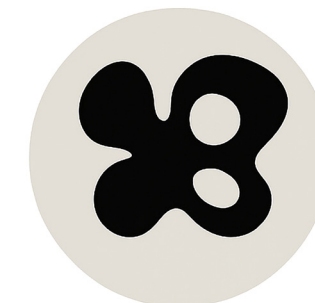
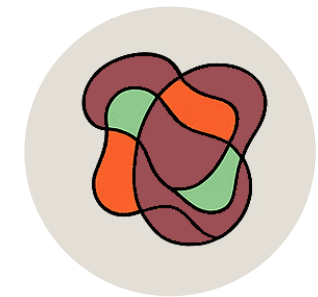


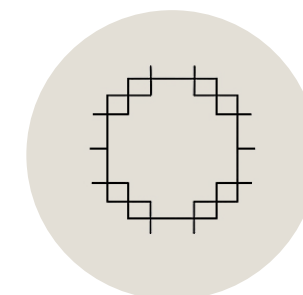
Fig 33. Serpentine Pavilion 2015- SelgasCano



Top
View



Colorful



Labyrinth

Serpentine Pavilion 2015- SelgasCano



The 2015 Serpentine Pavilion, designed by Madrid-based studio SelgasCano (José Selgas and Lucía Cano), marked a milestone. Tasked with creating the fifteenth edition of this renowned architectural commission and their first UK project the duo responded with a vibrant, labyrinthine structure that diverged dramatically from previous pavilions in both form and experience (Serpentine Galleries 2015).

Set on the lawn behind the Serpentine South Gallery, the pavilion was constructed from a lightweight steel frame and clad with multi-colored, translucent ETFE plastic panels woven together by web-like straps. The result resembled a lively chrysalis or kaleidoscopic cocoon rather than a conventional building. SelgasCano intentionally blurred interior and exterior boundaries with a double-shell design: visitors could navigate through a “secret corridor” that meandered between an outer screen and an inner chamber, revealing new glimpses of color and form at every turn (Serpentine Galleries 2015; Stott 2015).

Their primary inspiration came from two sources: the organic geometry of the surrounding gardens and the sprawling, often chaotic structure of London’s Underground system. SelgasCano aimed to translate this duality into architecture melding natural integration with a playfully complex layout that invited movement, discovery, and surprise from multiple directions (Serpentine Galleries 2015).



The pavilion’s bold use of ETFE a lightweight, recyclable fluoropolymer allowed for remarkable structural flexibility. The semi-rigid panels responded subtly to movement and wind, giving the enclosure a living, breathing quality. This distinctive material strategy exemplified SelgasCano’s larger architectural ethos: the interplay of color, light, environmental sensitivity, and structural agility (Serpentine Galleries 2015; Stott 2015).

Navigational errors and access issues did not deter visitors; instead, they became part of the experience. SelgasCano later admitted that adjusting to the programmatic requirement for a functional café took time, but this unexpected learning moment reinforced the relationship between architectural experimentation and real-world use (Serpentine Galleries 2015).

More than a colorful installation, the 2015 Pavilion played with the tension between wanderlust and spatial clarity. It offered a vibrant mise-en-scène for architectural and communal interaction. In doing so, it extended the Serpentine Pavilion’s role from a creative statement to a living experiment in how public spaces can stage architecture, event, and community in a single, ephemeral summer experience.

Fig 34. Images of Serpentine Pavilion 2015 - SelgasCano

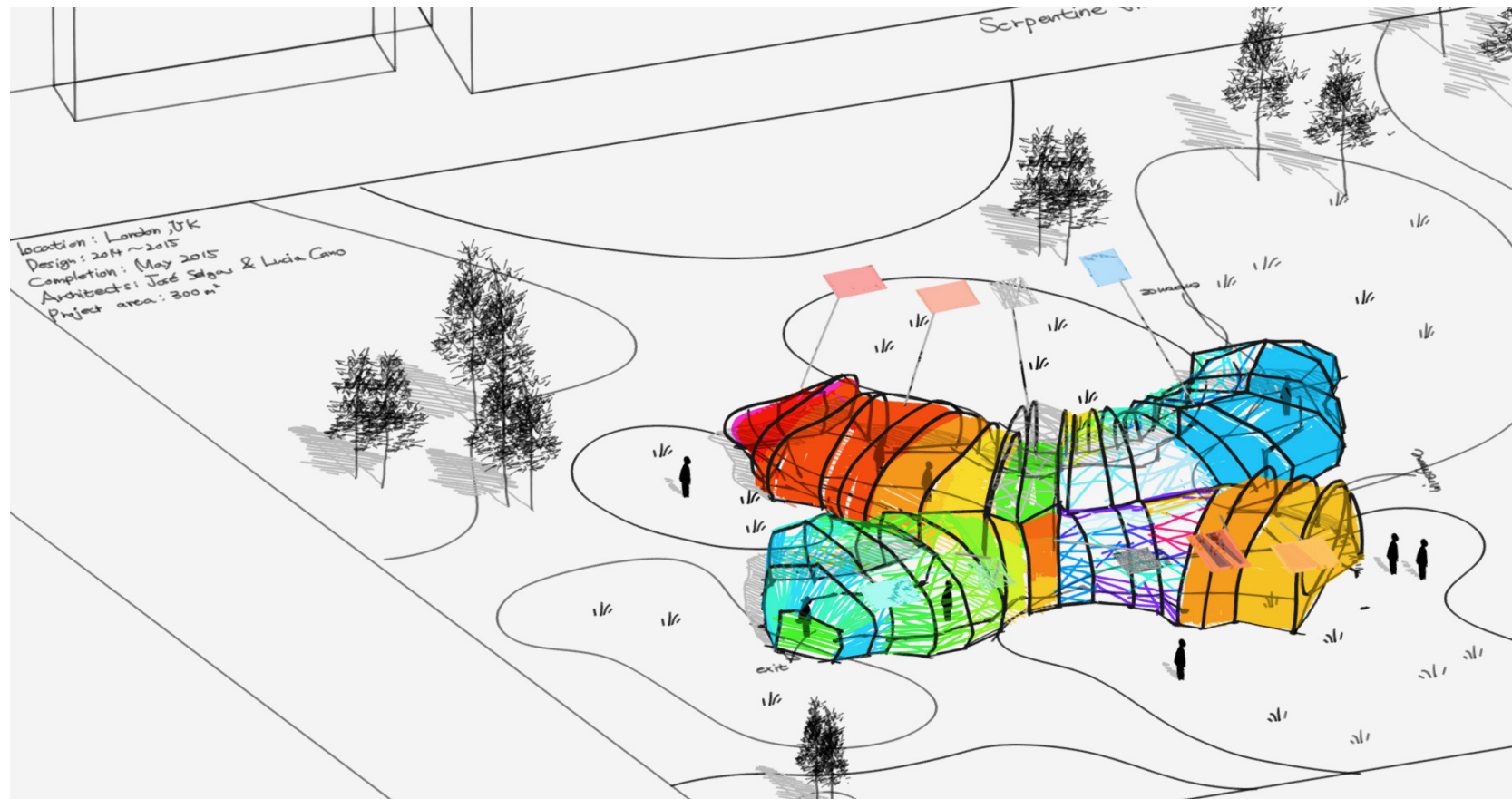


Fig 35. Conceptual Sketches, Diagrams, and Photographs of Serpentine Pavilion 2015 - SelgasCano

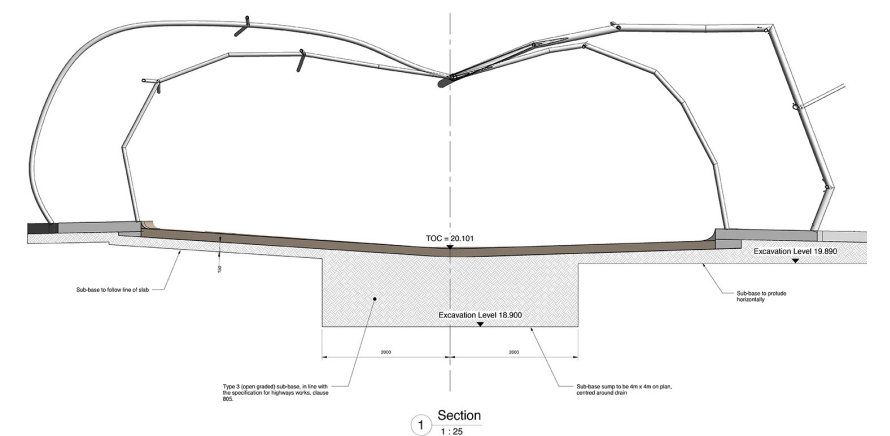
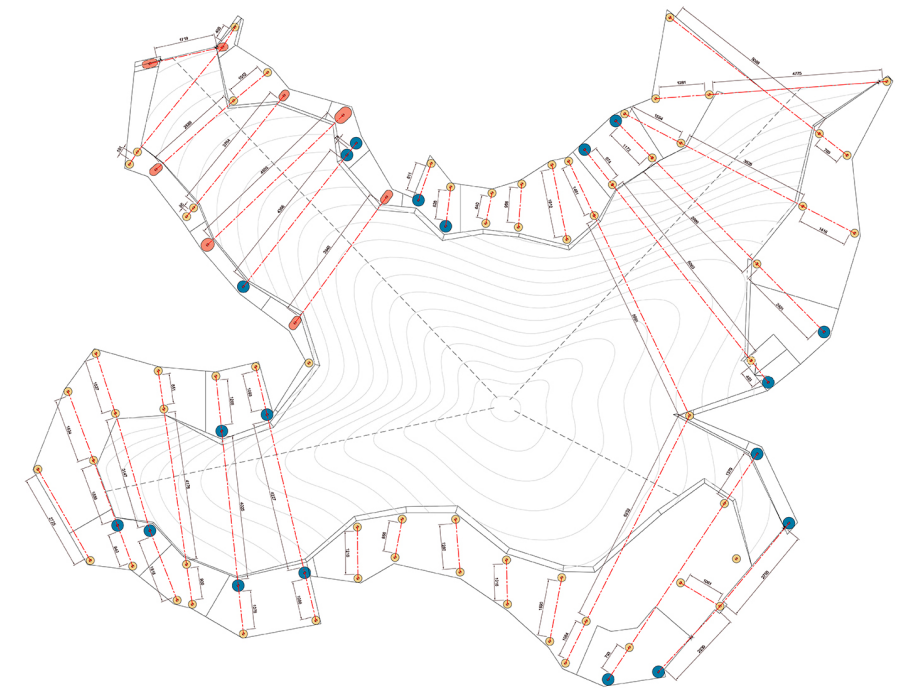
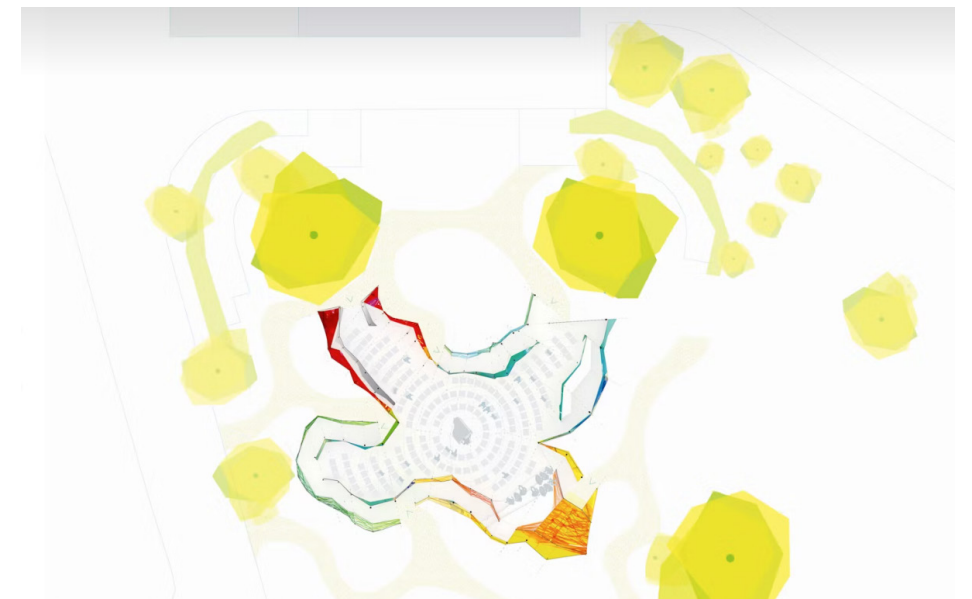
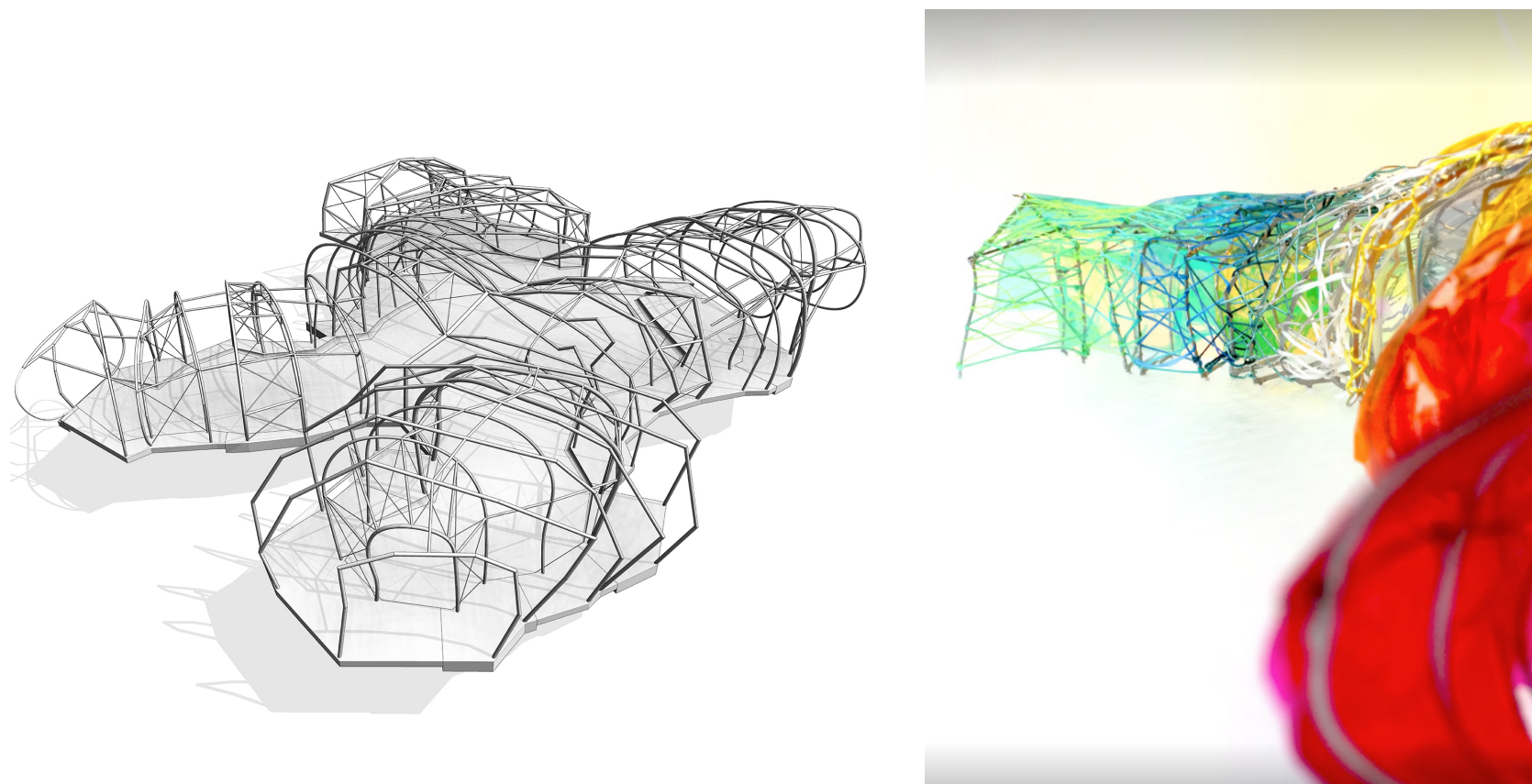




Fig 36. Serpentine Pavilion 2015 - SelgasCano

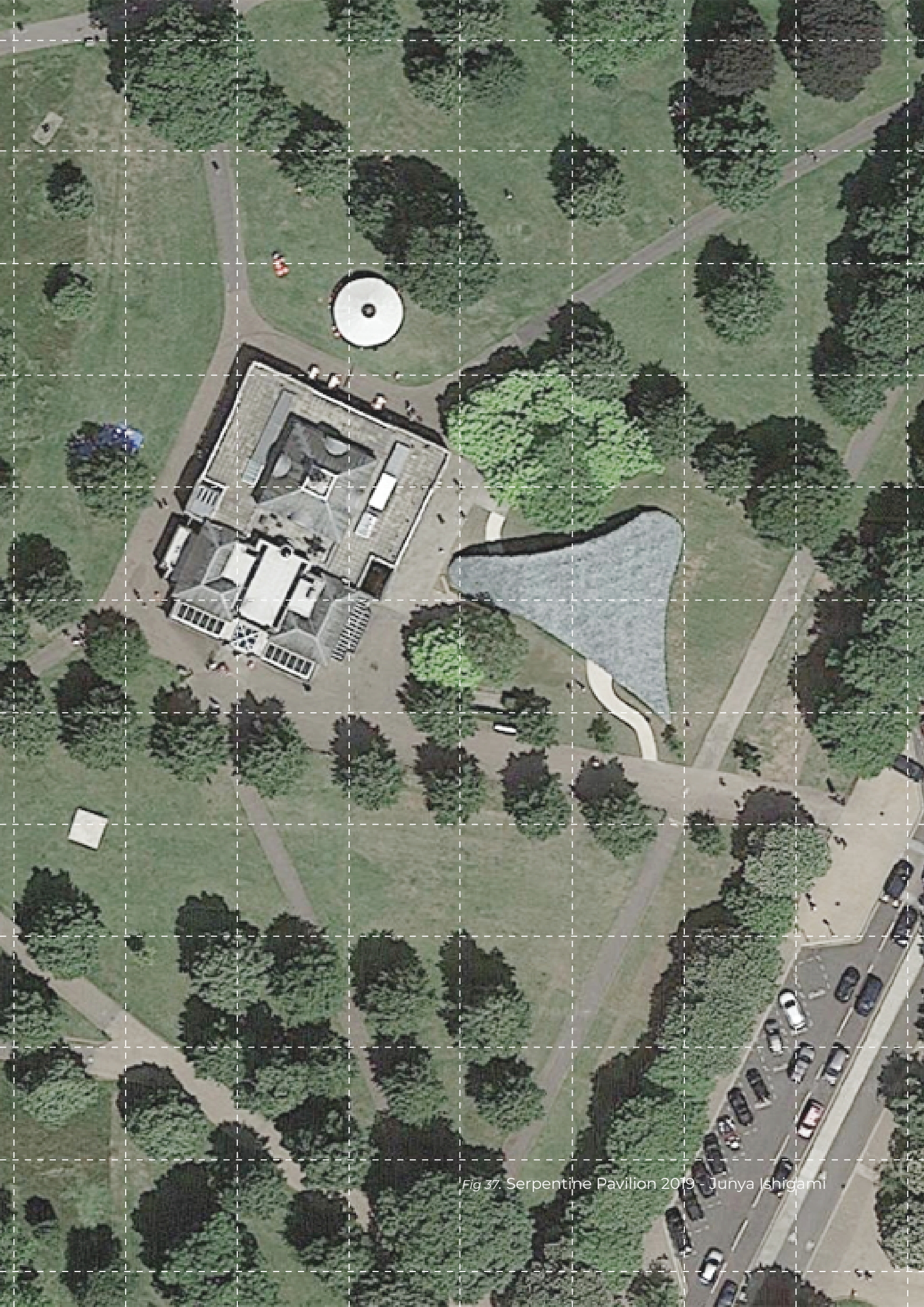
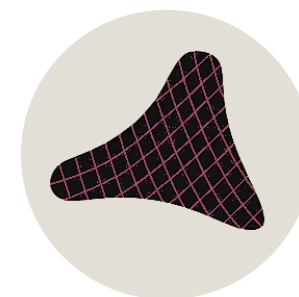


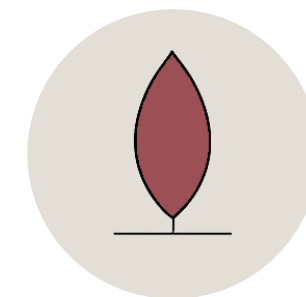
Fig 37. Serpentine Pavilion 2019 - Junya Ishigami



Top
View



Organic Slate
Canopy



Distinct
Perimeter

Serpentine Pavilion 2019- Junya Ishigami



Fig 38. Images of Serpentine Pavilion 2019 - Junya Ishigami



In 2019, the Serpentine Pavilion commission took a strikingly sculptural and meditative turn under the direction of Junya Ishigami, a Japanese architect known for his exploration of lightness, nature, and gravity in architecture. His design was at once monumental and humble—a low, expansive canopy of natural slate tiles that seemed to emerge organically from the landscape of Kensington Gardens. Unlike previous pavilions that reached upward or played with enclosure, Ishigami's concept rested close to the earth, inviting reflection and pause beneath its stone skin (Serpentine Galleries 2019).

The structure was composed of 61 tonnes of Cumbrian slate, laid in a shallow, curving canopy that gently sloped across the lawn. From above, it resembled a piece of fragmented terrain, blending into the surrounding greenery with geological subtlety. The slate roof, supported by a discreet grid of 106 slender steel columns, appeared to float above the ground—challenging perceptions of weight and material solidity (Serpentine Galleries 2019). This illusion of lightness was a central theme in Ishigami's work, echoing earlier projects like his Kanagawa Institute of Technology Workshop, where transparency and delicacy defined space.

Ishigami's stated aim was to create a structure that reflected "a natural and organic architecture that blends into the surroundings." He described the pavilion as a landscape itself—neither building nor sculpture, but something in between. In doing so, he pushed the boundaries of what a temporary architectural intervention could be. The project questioned the relationship between architecture and nature, offering a pavilion that did not stand apart from its context but appeared as though it had always been there (Serpentine Galleries 2019).

As a public space, the 2019 pavilion hosted a café and programming, continuing the tradition of positioning the Serpentine Pavilion as both a work of architecture and a civic environment. Yet Ishigami's version emphasized retreat over spectacle. It was a pavilion for lingering rather than moving, for shade rather than shelter, and for presence rather than performance.

In a broader sense, the 2019 Serpentine Pavilion served as a quiet manifesto for architecture's relationship with the landscape. It suggested that architecture does not always need to dominate or celebrate—it can withdraw, camouflage, and still be deeply present. In doing so, Ishigami offered a pavilion that stood not as a monument to design, but as a subtle interruption in the rhythm of daily life—an opportunity to experience space as a form of gentle resistance to urgency.

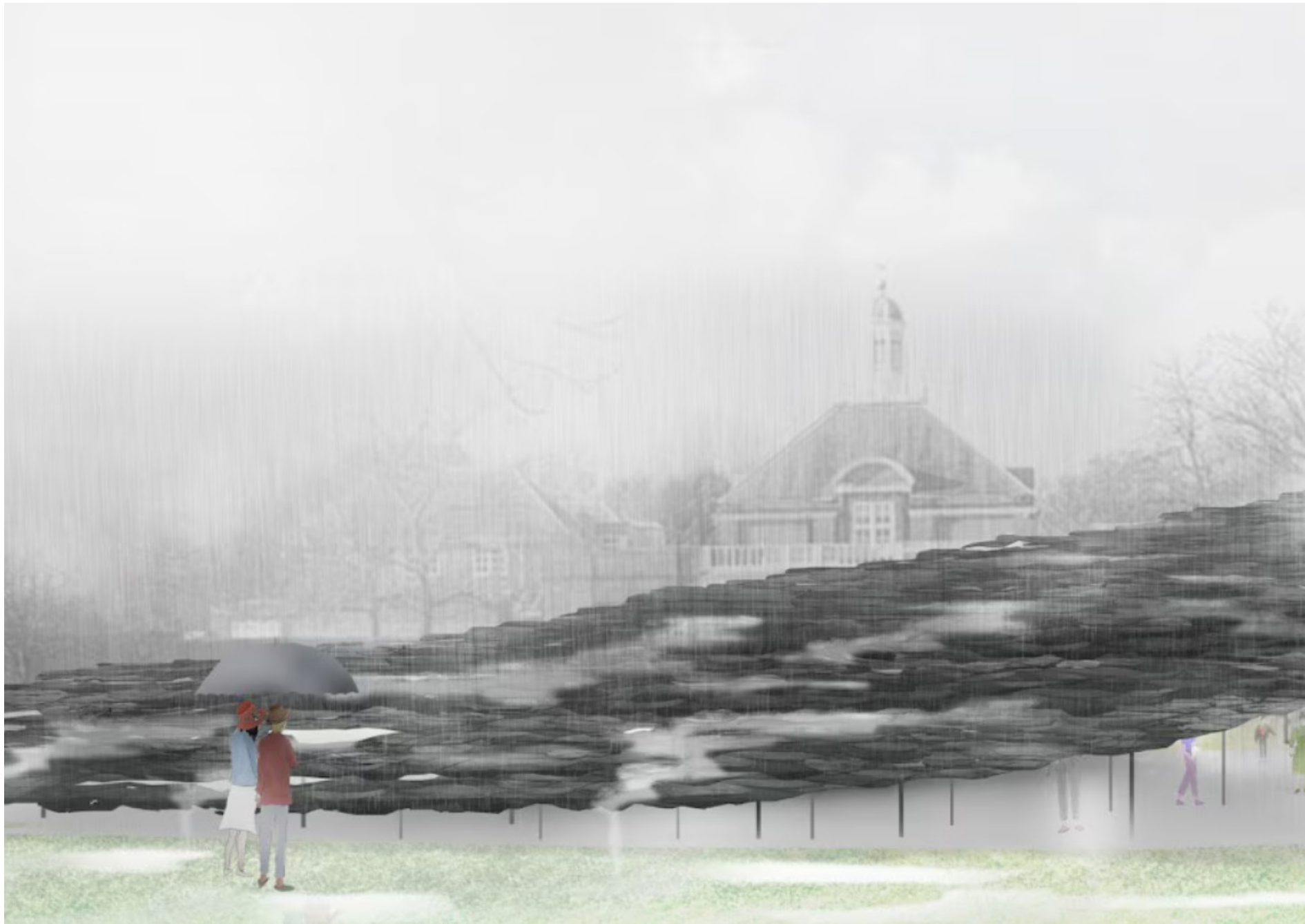


Fig 39. Conceptual Sketches and Photographs of Serpentine Pavilion 2019 - Junya Ishigami

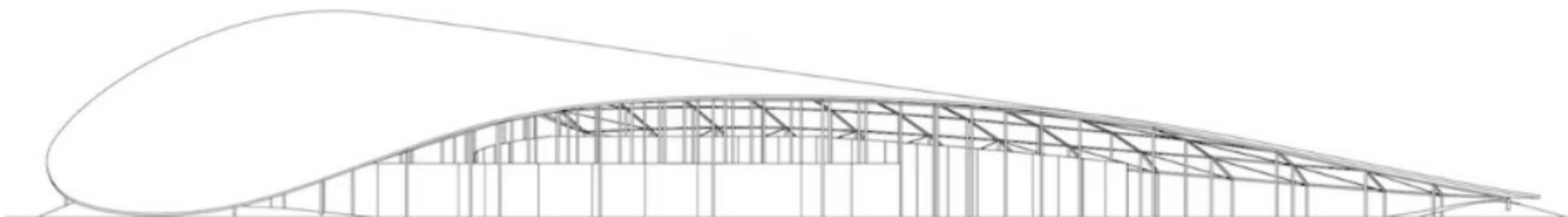




Fig 40. Serpentine Pavilion 2019 - Junya Ishigami

3.3 Historical Evolution of Public Spaces

Public spaces are where collective memory is made and remade. They host the informal rhythms of daily life the morning coffee, the afternoon stroll, the protest, the prayer. In Kosovo, these meeting places have shifted dramatically through time, shaped by empire, ideology, and reconstruction. From the shaded bazaars (Fig 36) of the Ottoman period to the monumental plazas of Yugoslav modernism, and finally to the improvised public life of postwar cities, each era reflects not only a different kind of city-making, but also a different sense of what it means to gather.

These spaces were designed for encounter. In cities like Prizren and Peja, people met around the mosque courtyard or in shaded corners of the market, often with the sound of water in the background. The shadërvan was not just functional, used for ritual ablutions before prayer, but deeply social a place where people shared news, drank water, and watched the life of the city unfold. As Lefebvre (1991) reminds us, space is never neutral; it reflects the practices and values of those who use it. In this context, water itself was sacred a symbol of purity and generosity and fountains were built as waqf, charitable endowments that gave water freely to all.

Beyond the dense center, Ottoman towns also maintained green peripheries called mesire, riverbanks or gardens where families would gather for leisure. These places, too, were centered around water. was both infrastructure and identity.



Fig 41. Bazaar of Peja

Socialist Kosovo: From Bazaar to Boulevard

After World War II, Kosovo became part of socialist Yugoslavia, and with it came a radical transformation of public space. In Prishtina, for instance, the Ottoman bazaar was largely demolished in the 1950s and '60s to make room for wide boulevards (Fig 37), grand cultural institutions, and a new central square dedicated to "Brotherhood and Unity." Modernist planning emphasized formal civic spaces places designed for parades, state celebrations, and monumental architecture.

But these new meeting places often lacked the intimacy of the older fabric. As Tsenkova (2006) notes, Yugoslav cities were planned as expressions of ideology, where form followed politics more than daily life. The mosque and the fountain were no longer central. Instead, people were meant to gather at cultural palaces, youth centers, or around monumental sculptures. The role of water as a gathering device faded, replaced by concrete plazas and austere facades. Yet even here, everyday life found a way people gathered at kiosks, strolled down pedestrianized streets, or met informally outside state institutions.

In many ways, this period created a tension between designed public space and lived public space what de Certeau (1984) might call the difference between "strategies" (planned by institutions) and "tactics" (invented by ordinary people). The state may have cleared the old fountain squares, but social rituals of gathering endured, simply finding new locations.



Fig 42. Boulevard of Prishtina

The war of 1998–99 marked another rupture in Kosovo’s urban story. Entire neighborhoods were destroyed, while new ones emerged almost overnight. In the postwar period, Kosovo’s cities were rapidly rebuilt but often in fragmented, improvised ways. International organizations and diaspora-funded developers filled gaps left by conflict, sometimes without coherent planning or public consultation.

Public spaces in this era became more symbolic than functional. In Prishtina, the newly built Newborn Monument quickly became a gathering spot, especially for the young generation. Statues of Bill Clinton and other international figures became makeshift landmarks. Meanwhile, informal cafes, street corners, and parking lots took on the role of meeting places. As Lefebvre (1991) would argue, these were moments where space was “produced” again not by architects or planners, but by use.

Water, by now, had all but disappeared from the symbolic center. Many historical fountains were dry or neglected. Yet their memory lingered, especially in places like Prizren, where the Shadërvan Fountain still marks the cultural heart of the city hosting concerts, protests, weddings, and casual conversations alike.

Across these three periods Ottoman, Yugoslav, and postwar we see not just changes in architecture, but changes in how people relate to each other in space. Meeting places have moved from shaded fountains to state-built plazas to semi-legal cafes on busy corners. And yet, the fundamental human need to gather remains unchanged.

In the next chapter, we return to the fountain not just as an architectural feature, but as a cultural and spiritual symbol. For in Kosovo, as in many parts of the Islamic world, water has always been more than water. It is heritage, ritual, and an invitation to community.

3.4 Heritage Preservation and Collective Memory in Architecture

Architecture, especially in historically layered regions like the Balkans, is more than a backdrop to everyday life it is a vessel of memory. It carries the marks of collective experiences, past traumas, and cultural traditions, often doing so quietly, through materials, forms, and spaces that are lived in but rarely questioned. As Aldo Rossi (1982) writes, the city is a “collective memory,” shaped by monuments and typologies that endure even as the functions around them shift.

Pierre Nora’s (1984) concept of lieux de mémoire, or “sites of memory,” reinforces the idea that memory anchors itself in place. These spaces serve as cultural touchstones in societies where history is as much oral and experiential as it is written. In Kosovo, where conflict and migration have repeatedly interrupted the physical and social fabric of cities, this anchoring role becomes vital.

Jerliu and Thaçi (2024) delve deeply into this spatial heritage through their study of the kulla, a fortified stone house found across Kosovo, Albania, and Montenegro. Within the kulla, the “oda e burrave” a large room traditionally reserved for men, occupies the top floor. More than a typological feature, this room is a cultural institution. It is where stories were told, guests were received, and social order was negotiated. Its architecture reflects and reinforces the values of hospitality, honor, and intergenerational continuity. As the authors note, “the oda is not only a functional room, but a symbolic stage for cultural performance” (Jerliu & Thaçi, 2024).

Their analysis reveals how the kulla evolved in response to both geographic conditions and social structures. From its heavy stone construction and protective layout to its ritualized internal order, the kulla embodies a form of vernacular architecture that is inseparable from the cultural memory of the region. Even its decay or abandonment today becomes a kind of narrative of loss, resilience, and the challenges of preservation in a rapidly modernizing world.

Temporary architecture, emerges not as a lesser alternative to permanence, but as a potent strategy for reactivating memory. Unlike monuments, which can risk fossilizing the past, temporary structures create space for living memory flexible, dialogical, and inclusive. The Oda of Memories project draws from this logic. Its design is not a literal recreation of a traditional oda, but a contemporary translation of its values openness, exchange, presence. It recalls the physical and symbolic role of the oda in the kulla, especially as analyzed by Jerliu and Thaçi (2024), yet it does so in a way that invites new users and meanings.

3.5 Cultural Significance of Water and Fountains in Islamic and Local Traditions

At the heart of Peja's old town, the Shadërvan fountain quietly tells a story of how a simple element "water" can bind a community. In the Islamic world, water has always been more than water; it is heritage, ritual, and an invitation to community. One can imagine generations of town residents gathering by this fountain: performing ablutions before prayer, exchanging daily news, or simply finding respite on a hot afternoon. The gentle murmur of the fountain isn't just ambient sound – it's the soundtrack of social life and collective memory in the bazaar. In Islamic tradition, flowing water symbolizes purity and life. The Qur'an envisions paradise as a garden beneath which rivers flow, underscoring water's spiritual dimension. This reverence translated directly into architecture. Ottoman city planners and patrons often centered public life around fountains as acts of piety and civic generosity. For example, many mosque complexes were designed with a şadırvan (ablution fountain) in their courtyards, so that worshippers could perform ritual washing in a beautiful, communal setting (Necipoğlu, 2005). These fountains were not merely functional; they were social magnets. The act of sharing water whether through an ornate public fountain (sebil) or a simple stone well embodied the value of waqf (charitable endowment) in Islam, offering refreshment to both body and soul. In nearby Prizren's historic center, for instance, the Shadërvan fountain (Fig 38) still marks the cultural heart of the city, anchoring festivals, impromptu concerts, and evening promenades. People instinctively gather where there is water a pattern of behavior passed down like an unwritten story. In Peja, too, the fountain has persisted in memory as a symbol of continuity.

One can sense it in how locals give directions by "Shadërvan," or reminisce about meeting a friend "by the water." The cultural significance of these fountains is thus twofold: they are at once sacred, linked to purification and prayer, and profoundly social, tied to hospitality and daily interaction. Here, water is not an ornament added for effect, but a narrative device and an architectural medium of memory. The design of the pavilion deliberately integrates a modern water feature a contemporary echo of the Shadërvan to invoke the sensory and symbolic experience that people have long cherished.



Fig 43. The Fountain of Prizren

While speaking with people in Kosovo during the research process, it became evident that fountains are remembered and understood through two distinct categories. This local classification reflects not only physical differences but also deeper layers of cultural meaning and daily use. On one hand, there are the covered fountains located within mosque courtyards (Fig 39). These are used for Islamic ablution rituals (wudu) and are typically defined by symmetrical layouts, shaded domes, and multiple water spouts (qeshme). Their design serves both functional and spiritual purposes marking the transition from the secular to the sacred, and creating a calm, dignified space for purification.

On the other hand, people recall a second, more familiar type: the public neighborhood fountains uncovered (Fig 40), open-air structures integrated into urban settings. These fountains once served as communal water sources, particularly in times when private plumbing was rare or nonexistent. Simple in form often a single spout over a stone basin they were placed strategically in markets, near homes, or along paths. Yet despite their modest appearance, they held deep social importance: they were places of encounter, pause, and mutual care. Children fetched water here, elders rested nearby, and neighbors shared conversation in passing.

It is this second typology - the communal, uncovered fountain that directly inspires the design of the Oda of Memories pavilion in Peja. The pavilion does not seek to reproduce the mosque courtyard model, but rather to reinterpret the spirit of the public shadërvan accessible, inviting, and woven into the rhythms of everyday life. Its open structure allows for spontaneous gathering. The quiet presence of water is not ritualistic but relational a gesture of welcome, a reason to slow down, a space to share time. Just as old fountains once offered more than water, the pavilion aims to offer more than space: it offers a return to shared memory and quiet community in the heart of the city.



Fig 44. Mosque Courtyard Fountains



Fig 45. Public Fountains in Kosovo



Name: Great Mosque fountain
Location: Prishtina, Kosovo
Function: Ritual washing (wudu)
Year Built: 1461 Commissioned by Sultan Mehmet II the Conqueror



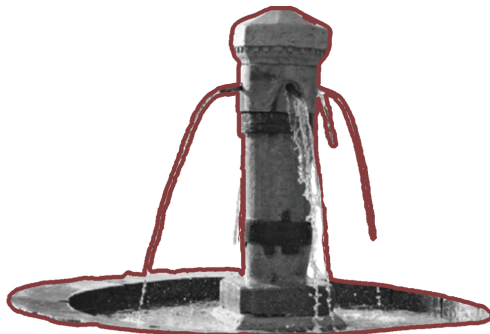
Name: Fountain at Bayraklı Camii
Location: Prizren, Kosovo
Function: Ritual washing (wudu)
Year Built: 16th century



Name: Bajram Pasha Mosque fountain
Location: Mitrovica, Kosovo
Function: Ritual washing (wudu)
Year Built: Early 2000s



Name: Bajrakli Mosque fountain
Location: Peja, Kosovo
Function: Ritual washing (wudu)
Year Built: 15th century



Name: Fountain of Prizren
Location: Prizren, Kosovo
Function: Serves as a public drinking fountain
Year Built: 16th-17th century



Name: The fountain in front of Bajrakli Mosque
Location: Peja, Kosovo
Function: Serves as a public drinking fountain



Name: Fountain in front of The Department Store in Peja
Location: Peja, Kosovo
Function: Serves as a public drinking fountain



Name: Water Fountain
Location: City Center of Peja, Kosovo
Function: Originally built as a public water source
Year Built: 15th century



Name: Halveti Tekke Fountain
Location: Prizren, Kosovo
Function: Originally built for wudu, over time, public drinking fountain as well.
Year Built: 17th–18th century

Chapter 4

Design Proposal

“Oda of Memories: Heritage in Motion”

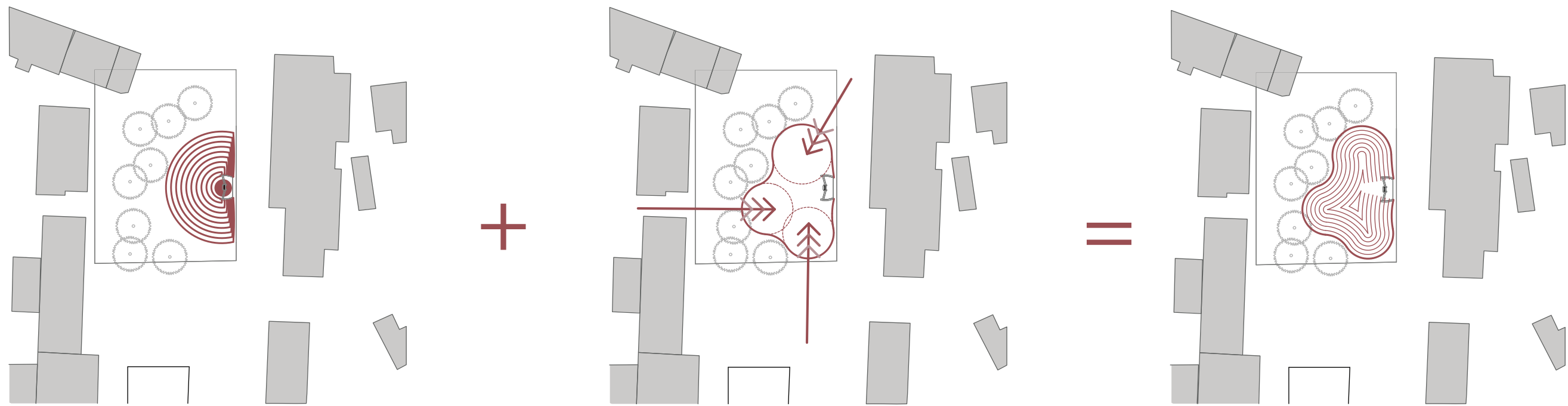
Our comprehension of Peja’s history and the competition’s call to combine innovation and memory directly inform the design concept that follows. In “Oda of Memories: Heritage in Motion,” the traditional Kosovar oda - a vaulted, hearth-centered space for group conversation is reimagined as a porous pavilion encircling the fountain from the 15th century. This proposal pays close attention to the site’s existing layers, including the quiet murmur of water, the shade provided by mature trees, and the flow of everyday pedestrian life. This is in line with the competition brief’s insistence that heritage be activated rather than preserved behind glass (Buildner, 2024).

By combining these components into a logical spatial plan, the pavilion serves as a stage and backdrop for changing stories. Its terraces and walkways direct movement in a way that respects historical patterns while promoting new kinds of gathering, and its soft geometry frames the fountain as a living centerpiece. The design is rooted in Peja’s material culture through the use of local stone, warm timber, and rhythmic perforations in the facades that echo vernacular textures and the latticework of şadırvan fountains. In the meantime, the pavilion is as accessible and sustainable as it is evocative thanks to integrated water channels, seamless ramps, and passive shading. In the following sections, we break down the concept and interpretive approach, unveil the spatial organization and program, investigate form, materials, and cultural references, illustrate the dual function of water as a symbol and a utility, and finally look at how environmental performance and inclusivity influence every detail before showcasing our main visualizations. These components work together to form an architecture that is intended to both store and activate memory.



Fig 47. Oda of Memory Pavilion – Exterior

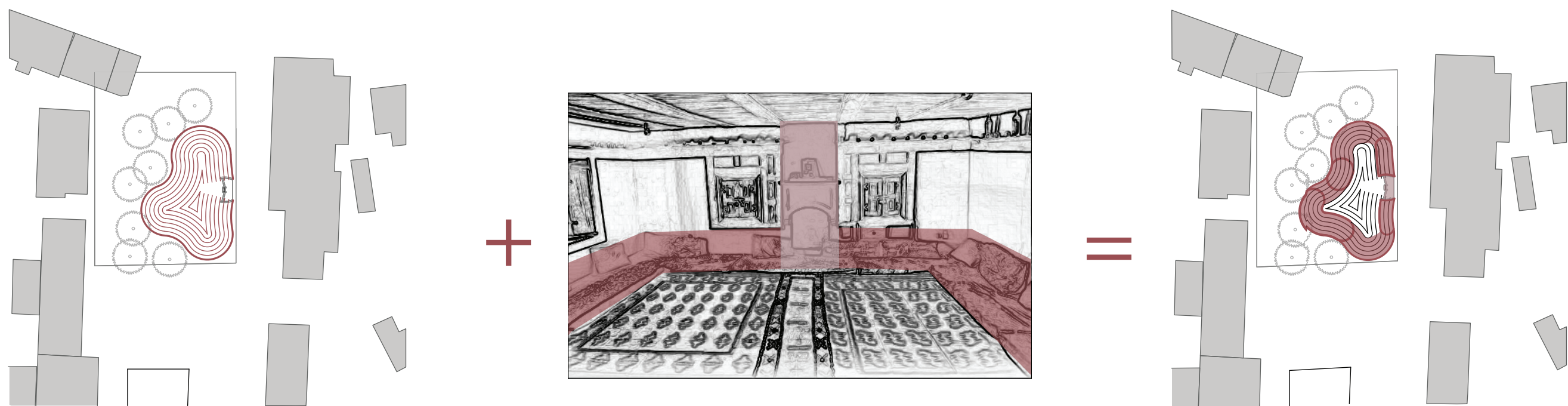
4.1 Design Concept and Interpretive Strategy



1. Offsetting the focal point to bring the fountain into clear focus.

2. Connecting the access of the routes while preserving the existing trees.

3. Merging point 1 and 2 in order to create a harmonious balance between the design and the natural landscape.

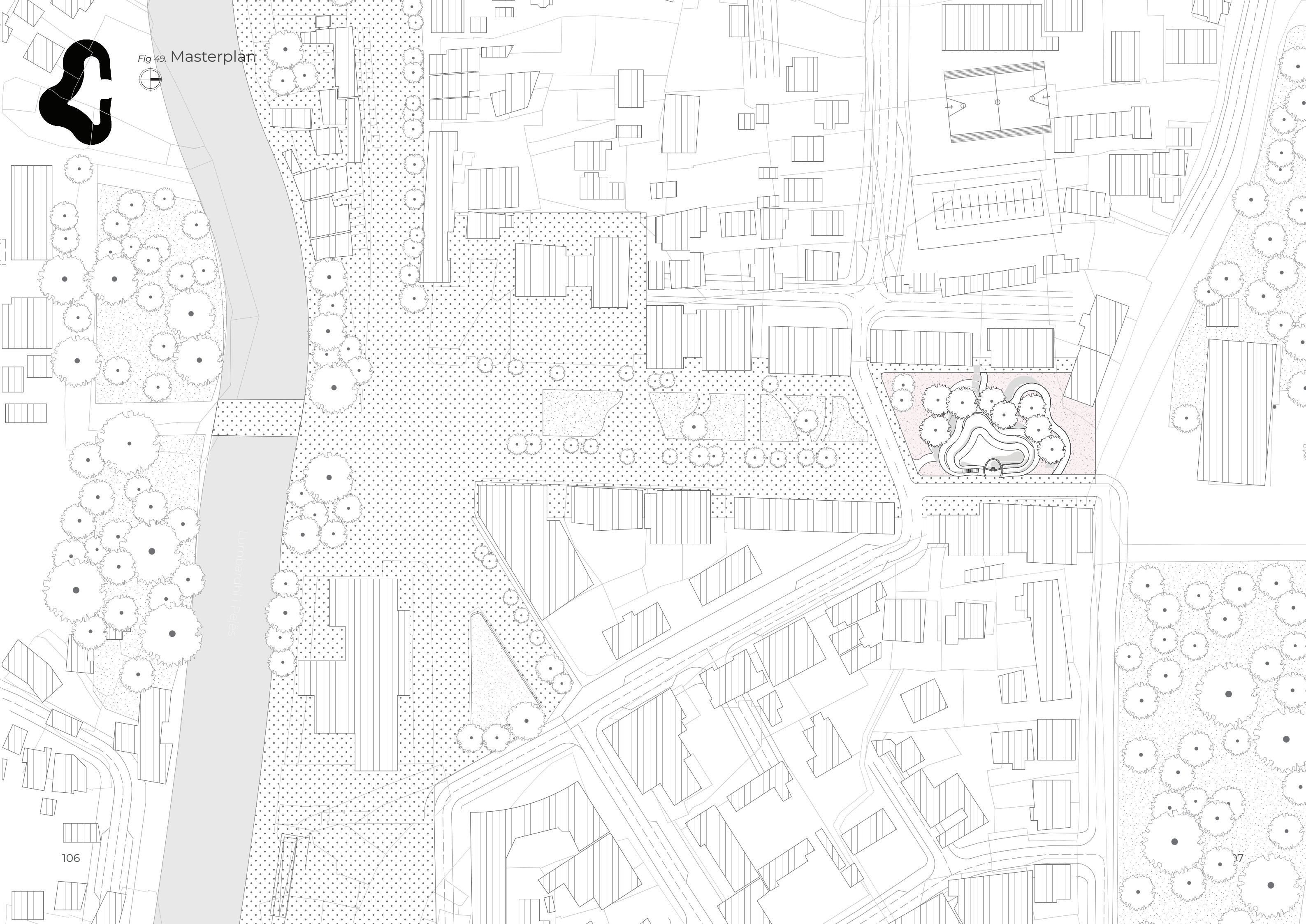


3. Create a harmonious balance between the design and the natural landscape.

4. Collective memories of how meeting places were traditionally, Albanian Oda.

5. Merging 3 and 4 to form the buildings footprint.

Fig 49. Masterplan



4.2 Spatial Organization and Functional Program

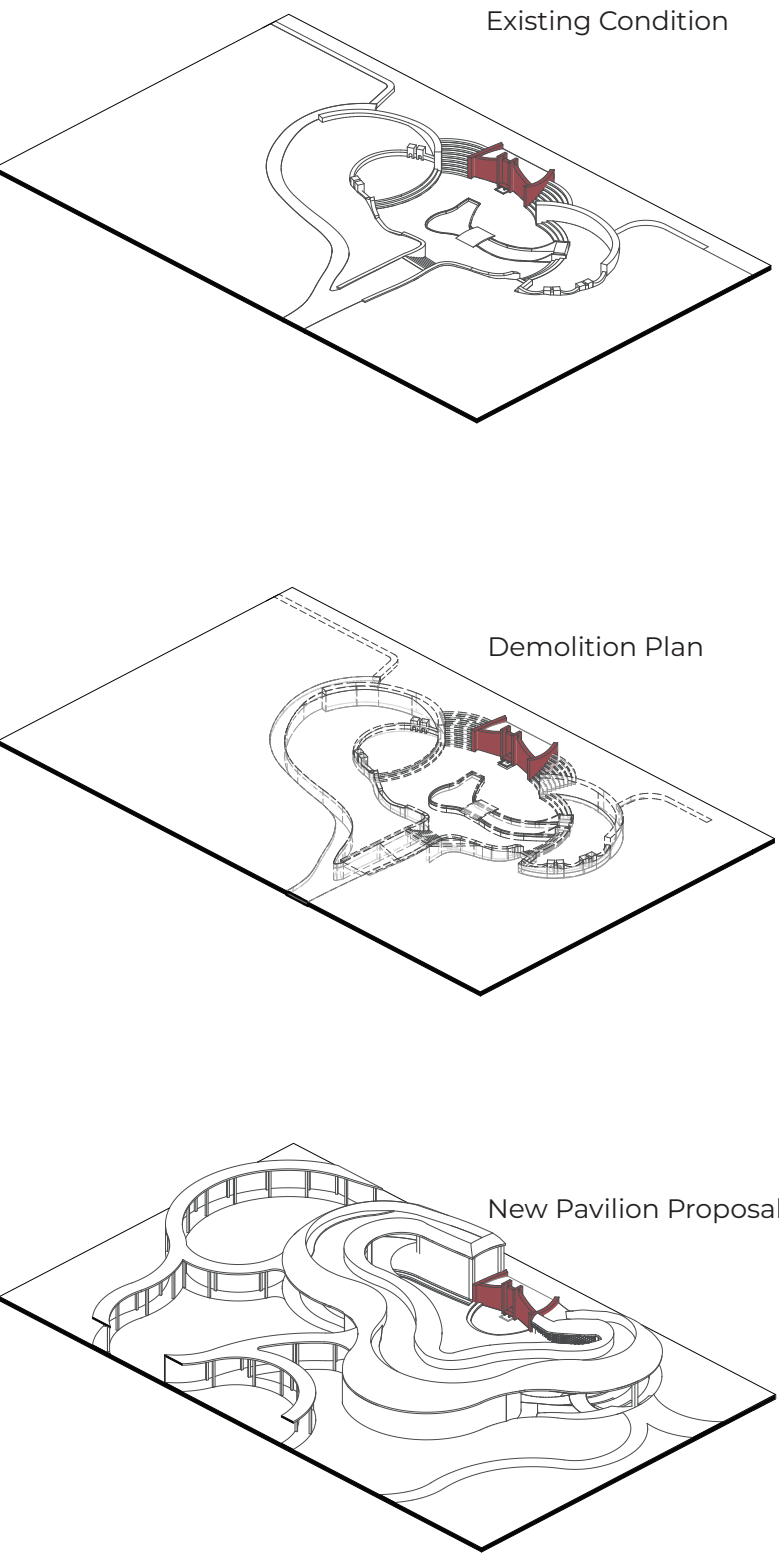


Fig 50. Site Transformation Process

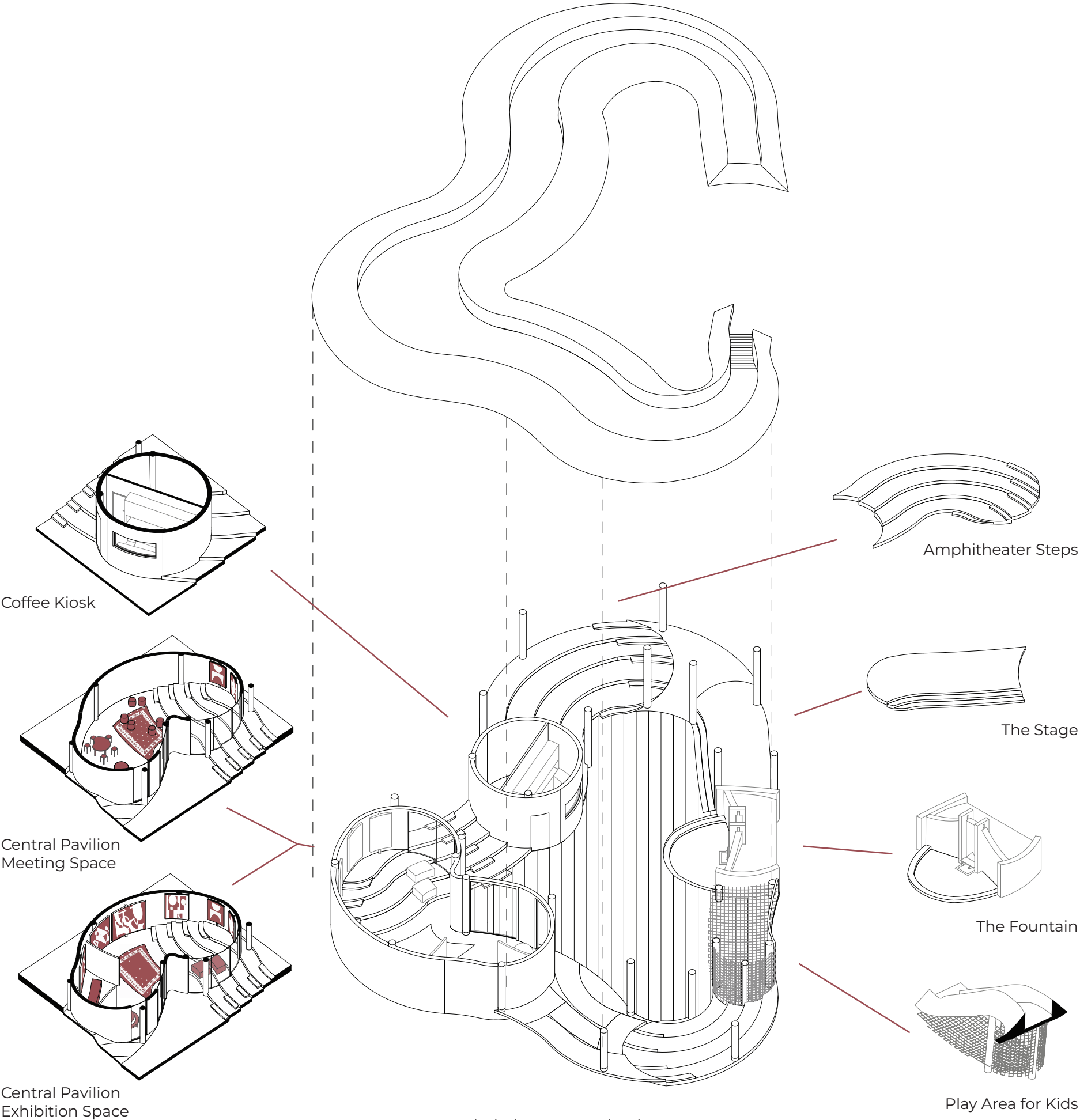
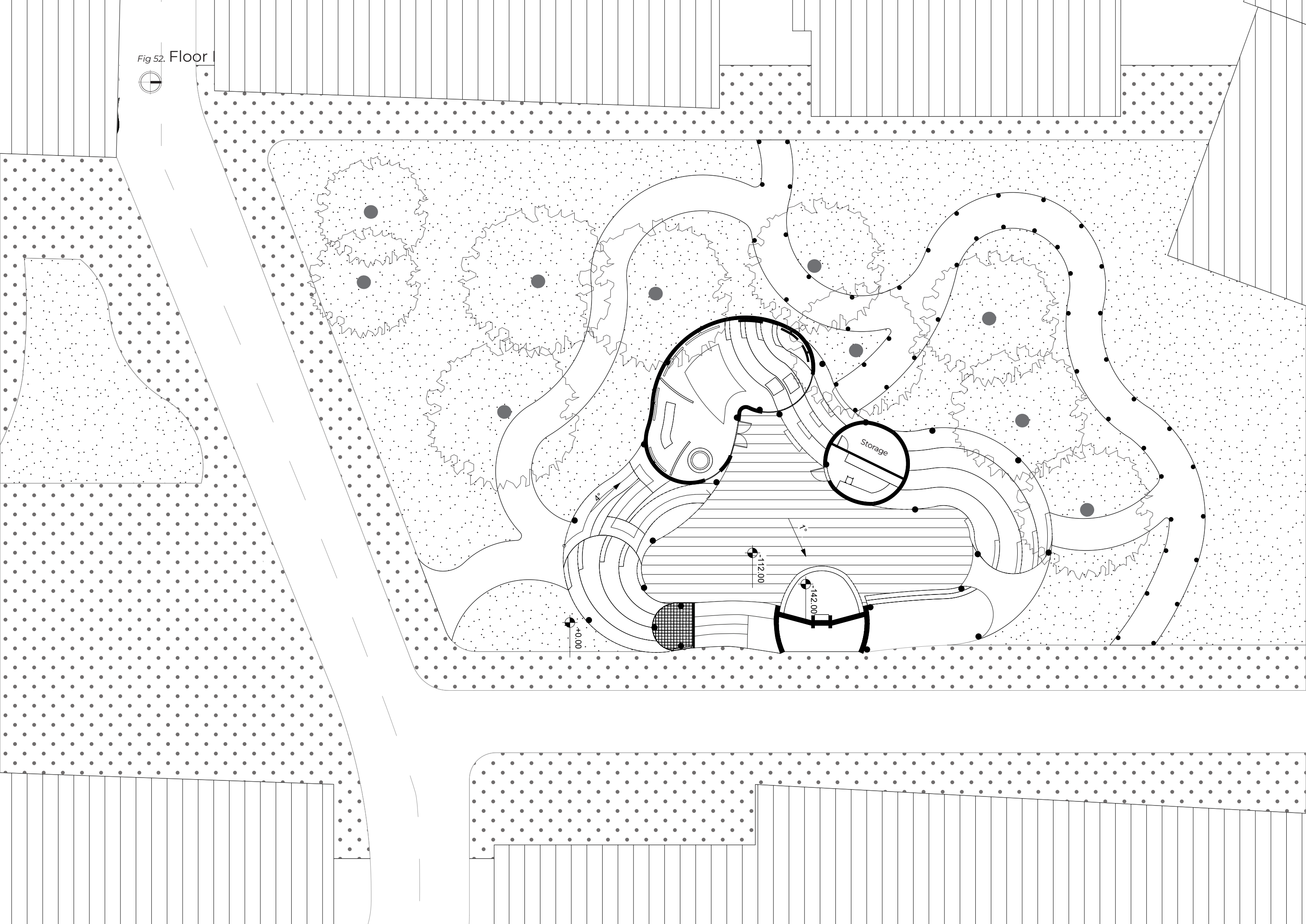


Fig 51. Exploded Axonometric Diagram

Fig 52. Floor I



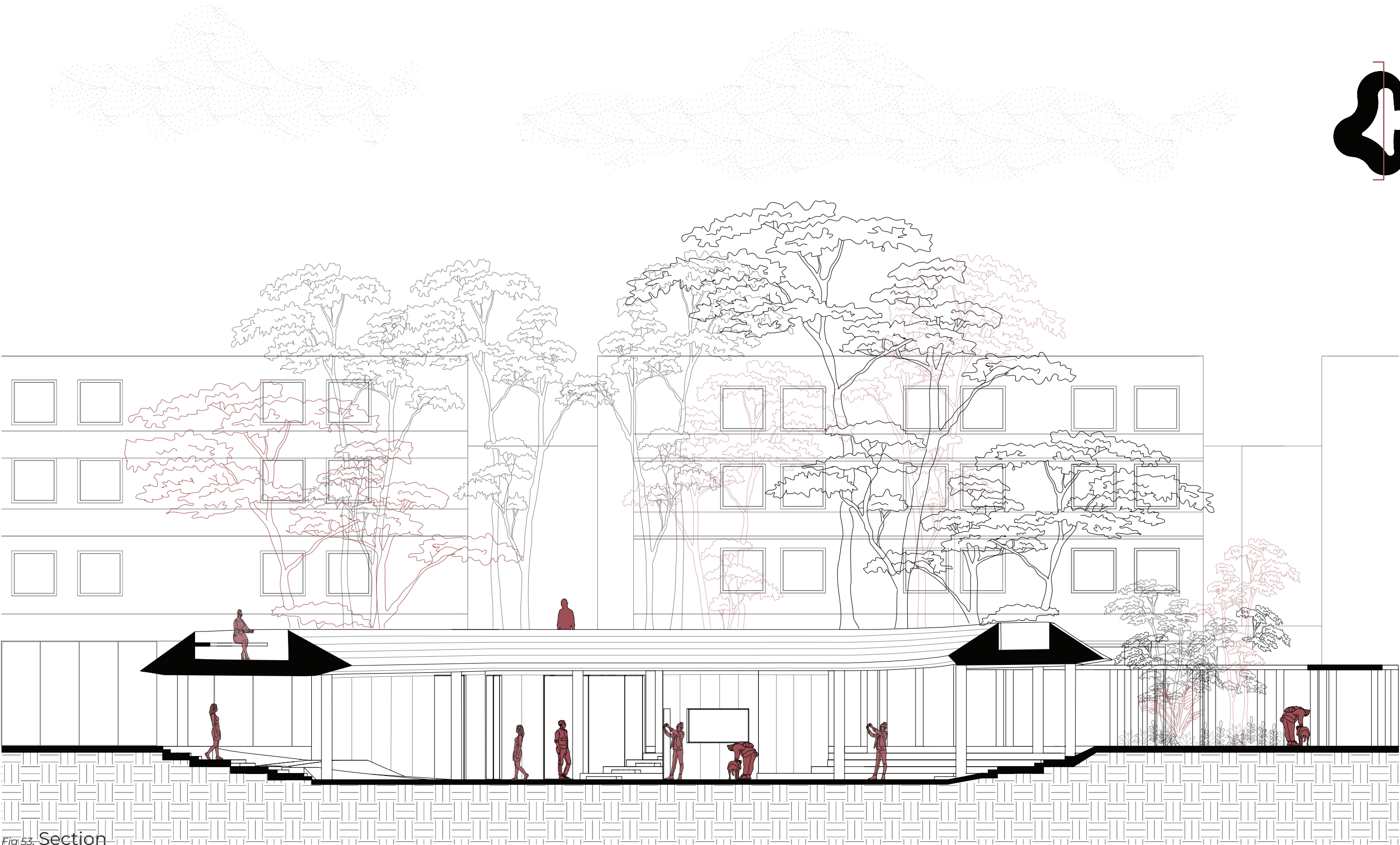
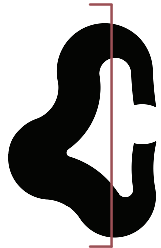


Fig 53. Section

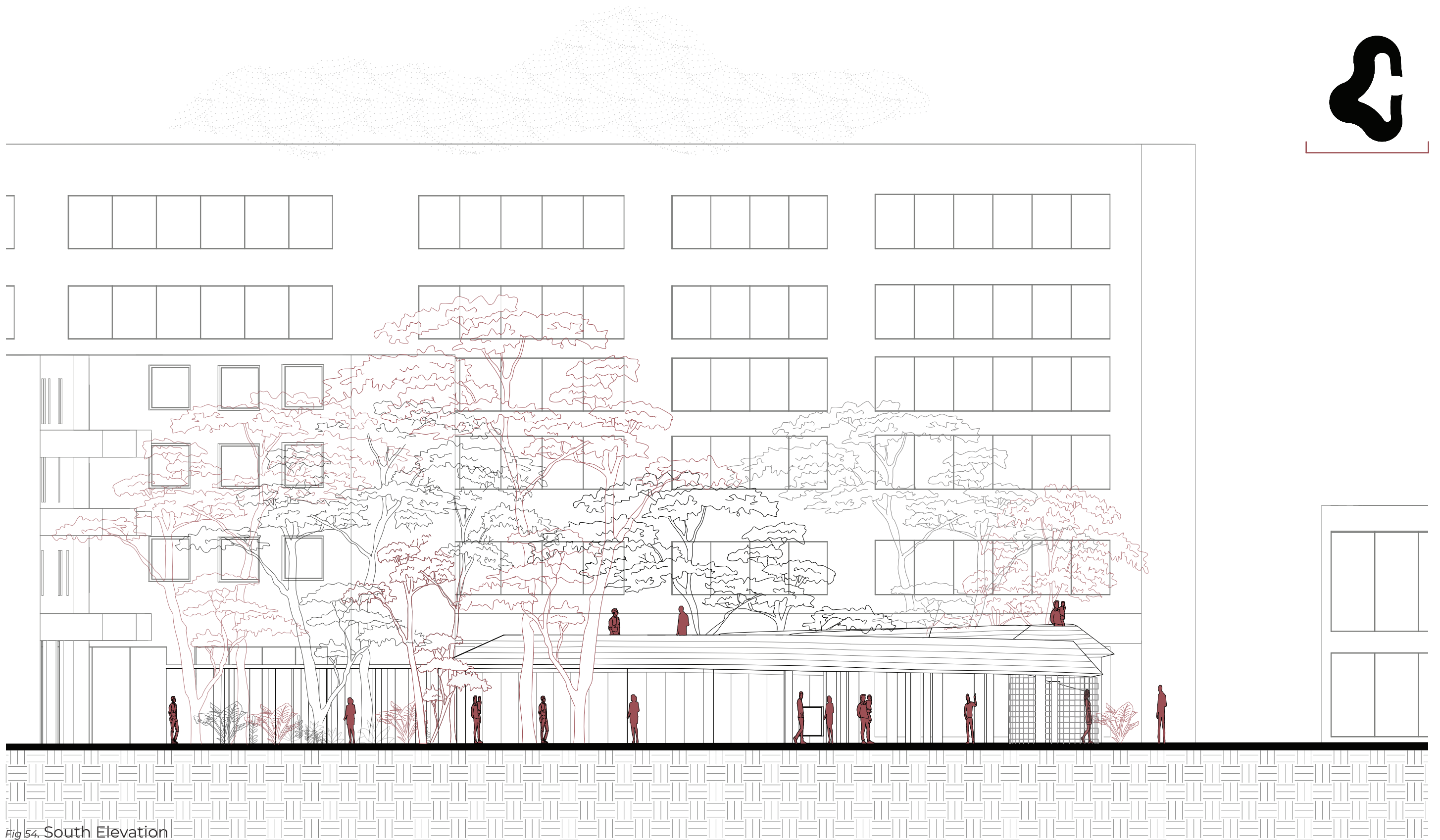
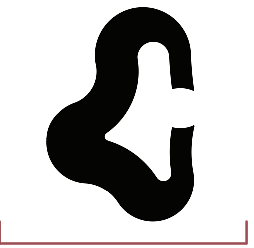


Fig 54. South Elevation

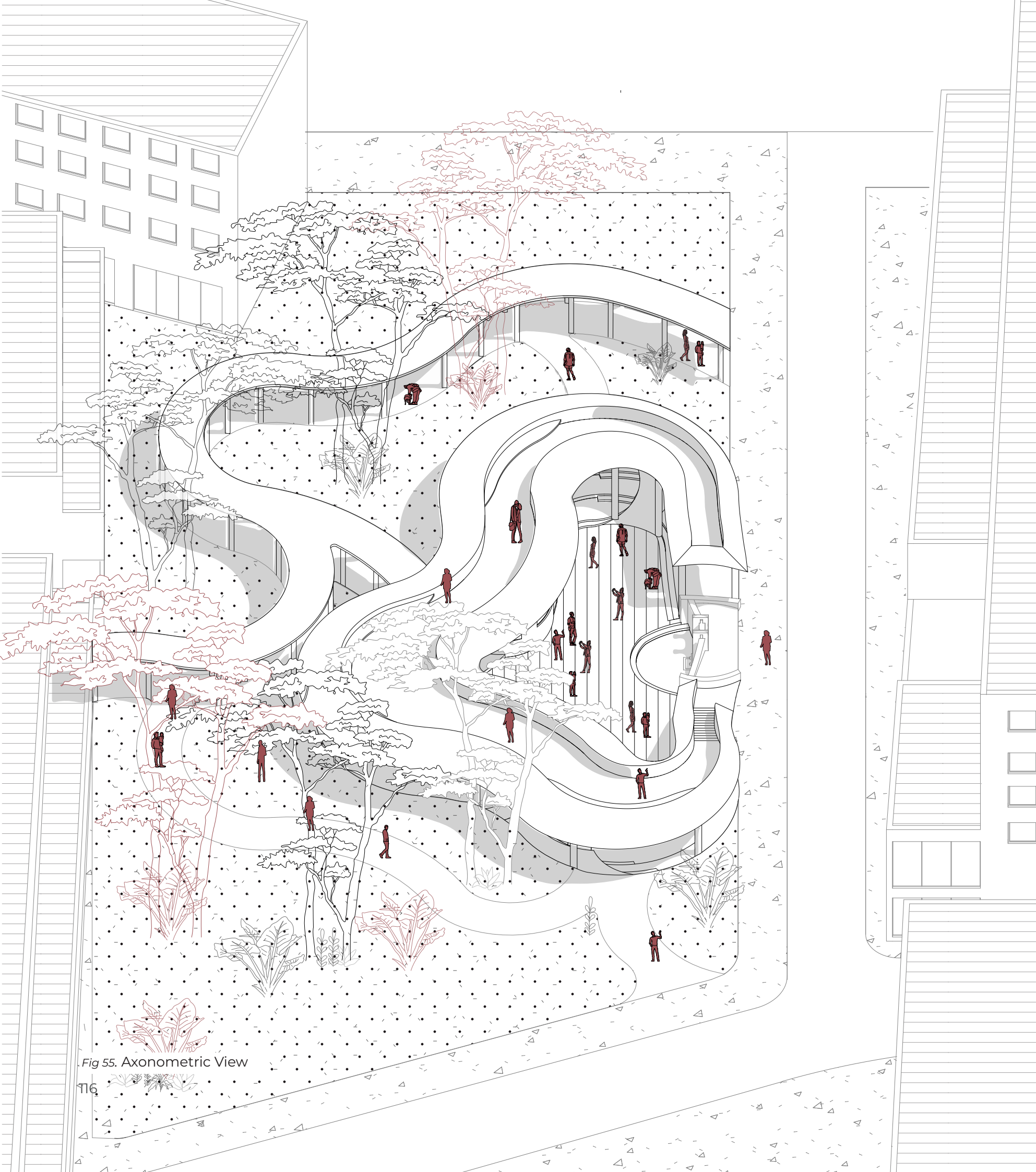


Fig 55. Axonometric View

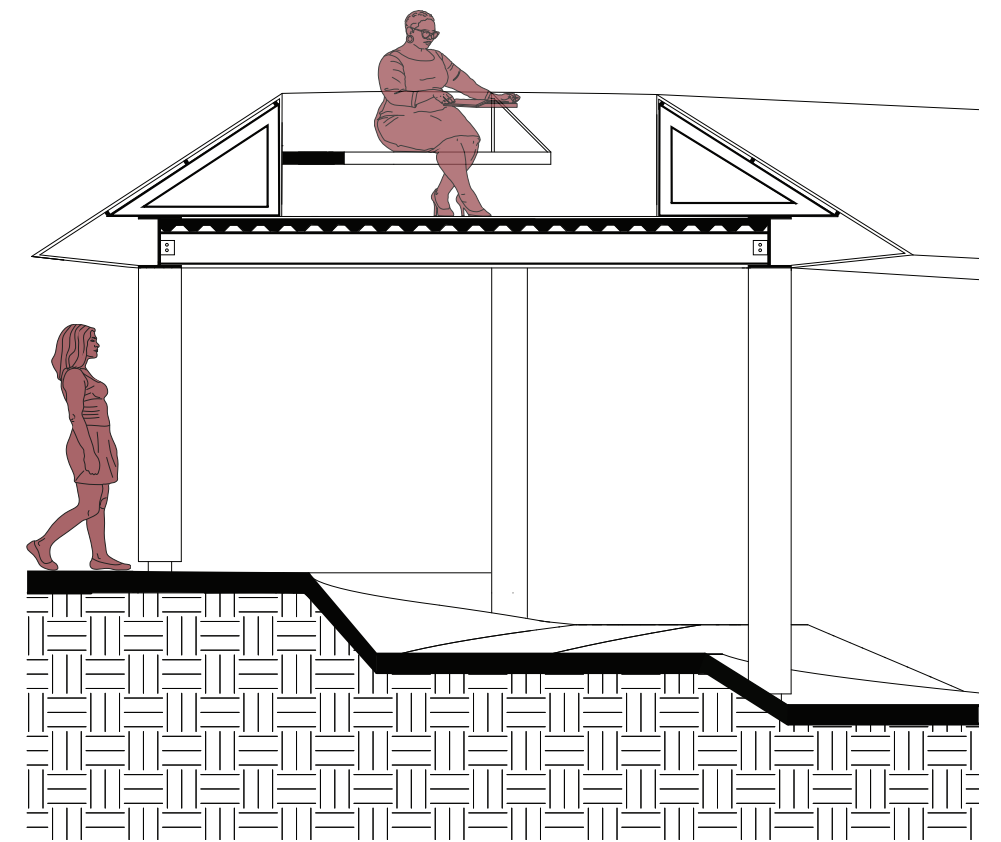


Fig 56. Roof detail

The pavilion's form emerges through a careful negotiation between context and concept. Its flowing geometry responds directly to the existing trees, preserving their positions while shaping circulation around them. This gesture, rooted in the interpretive strategy of the oda a space for layered encounters and shared presence extends beyond symbolic reference. It creates a dynamic, porous public area that remains grounded in its surroundings yet asserts its identity within the city. Positioned at a key visual axis from the beginning of Peja's Shesh, the pavilion becomes both a civic hotspot and a spatial marker visible, accessible, and engaged with the everyday life of the square.

Alongside its spatial sensibility, the pavilion incorporates an off-site construction strategy to reduce disruption in the dense city center. The design relies on a lightweight metal frame and prefabricated sandwich panels, allowing the entire structure to be assembled quickly with minimal environmental or logistical impact. This method minimizes time on site and supports future disassembly, maintenance, or even relocation. As shown in the section detail, the pavilion's roof structure employs the same logic metal profiles topped with a thin, curved metal sheet that combines durability, ease of assembly, and aesthetic clarity. Together, these decisions reflect a sustainable and adaptable approach to building in a historic, high-use public context.



Fig 57. Adaptive Pavilion Section: Flood-Responsive Design

The pavilion's subtle topographic approach, which was created in response to community feedback regarding recurring flooding brought on by the rising river level, is depicted in this sectional diagram. Instead of using barriers to keep water out, the design incorporates a controlled depression underneath the fountain, which is meant to serve as a makeshift pond in the event of heavy rain or seasonal overflow. Because of the surrounding platforms' gentle slope, surface water is directed into this recessed basin, keeping the rest of the plaza open and usable even during floods.



Fig58. Seasonal Pond Formation: Memory Through Water

Under the 15th-century fountain, the recessed area becomes a reflective pond in this visual simulation of the pavilion plaza during high water conditions. In addition to reducing localized flooding, this dynamic water feature also serves as a symbolic reminder of the site's longstanding connection to water. The pavilion provides a robust and poetic solution by transforming a climate risk into a design opportunity, embracing nature's ebb and flow while guaranteeing year-round public use and engagement.



Fig 59. Oda of Memory Pavilion Views

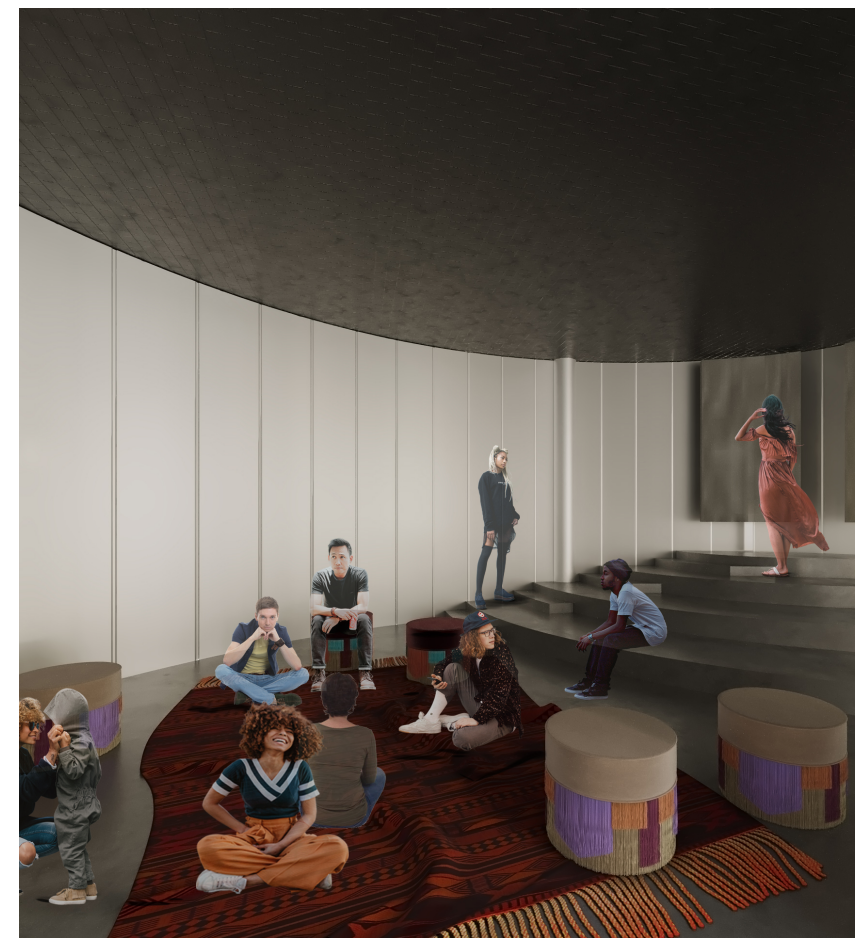




Fig 60. Oda of Memory Pavilion – Exterior

Chapter 5

Critical Reflection and Conclusions

The design process, the Peja Culture Pavilion international competition results, and the larger heritage architectural discussion that influenced this thesis are all summarized in this chapter. It considers the central queries raised by this study and the competition: In what ways may architecture honor cultural memory? What part do flexibility, symbolism, and temporality play in bringing abandoned or underutilized urban areas back to life? This chapter presents architectural architecture as a cultural deed that may both honor history and invite modern civic life, drawing on the project Oda of Memories – Heritage in Motion, the jury remark, and the winning proposal Trace.

Architecture is more than just the construction of form and function; it is also a storytelling tool, a channel for shared memory, and an emotional resonance, as one discovers when negotiating the design difficulties and thematic undercurrents of this competition. Participants in the Peja Culture Pavilion competition were urged to listen, not just construct a shelter or design a plaza. To hear the soft echoes of a fountain from the fifteenth century, to hear the ceremonies that were previously performed beneath its water, to hear the empty space created by a neglected public area, and to hear the hopes of a community that wants to reconnect. Therefore, this chapter is more than just a commentary on two design ideas; it is a more profound contemplation of the ways in which memory, culture, and urban life can all meaningfully intertwine.

Peja Culture Pavilion competition jury:



Winka Dubbeldam

Archi-Tectonics

USA



Sandra Baggerman

Trahan Architects

USA



Daniela Holt Voith

Principal and director of design, Voith & Mactavish Architects

United States



Hildur Isdal

Ísdal Arkitektúr

Iceland



Florina Jerliu

University of Prishtina

Kosovo



Luise Marter

KWY studio

Portugal



Gazmend Muhaxheri

Peja Municipality

Kosovo



Harrison Stallan

OMA

Netherlands



Blake T. Smith

BIG – Bjarke Ingels Group

United States

5.1 Evaluation of Design Outcomes and Competition Results

Buildner and the Municipality of Peja launched the Peja Culture Pavilion competition, which presented a daring task: converting a historically significant but underutilized public area into an interesting civic and cultural center. More than just an urban artifact, the competition site, which is based on an uncovered fountain from the 15th century, symbolizes the long-standing customs of water, gathering, and spiritual life in Islamic and Balkan culture. The competition brief emphasized the need to honor the fountain not as a relic but as a living cultural anchor (Buildner, 2024).

Project title: Trace

Authors: Alexandra Ilinca Domnescu, Daria-Alexandra Pirvu, Mario Eduard Peiciu

Country: Romania

Trace explores the relationship between historical and contemporary urban elements by integrating an oval amphitheater and a cultural pavilion within the existing public space. The design adapts the former fountain site into a multi-functional gathering area, utilizing a mirror element to create visual continuity and reflect the surrounding context. The amphitheater serves as a social hub, offering a quiet, meditative space during the day and an illuminated venue for performances at night, with tiered seating designed for optimal visibility and acoustic performance. The pavilion is conceived as a flexible structure, incorporating movable panels and adaptable stage elements to accommodate exhibitions, performances, and community events. Architectural strategies focus on enhancing spatial fluidity, passive cooling through shaded areas, and material choices that harmonize with the urban environment. The intervention aims to reconnect historical layers of the city while providing a contemporary space for public interaction and cultural activities (ArchDaily, 2024)

TRACE

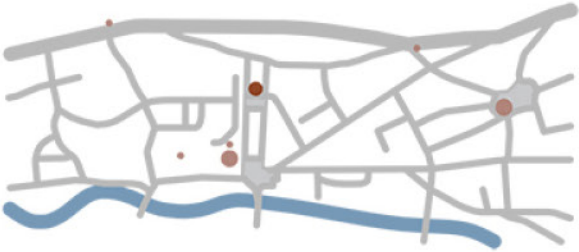
Trace, the concept of our project, encapsulates the connection between old and new, between the existing and the projected. While choosing this concept as the basis of our proposal, we found many interpretations relating to the site: traces left on the ground by the flowing water of the fountain, traces left on the image of the city by the various civilizations that make up the history of Kosovo, traces left by the people, the accidental evidence of use.

The aim is to create a new ensemble of architectural objects within the historical tradition of the city centre of Peja. The objects within this ensemble should not only relate to the surrounding buildings, but to the public, the paths, the sight lines, the trees, the water, creating an architectural scenic entity.

Therefore, the proposal is made out of three elements: the oval amphitheater that integrates the fountain, the rectangular culture pavilion and the long mirror, which acts both as a connecting line and a divider of spaces. The use of simple geometry rewrites the characteristics of the public space: no longer a closed and misshaped place, a remnant of a historic landscape, but an open and contemporary place, a space of encounter and exchange.

The historic fountain remains as an iconic and ordering presence, establishing the character of the proposal and incorporating the water element in the overall design. The starting point of the project was to transform the fountain area by excavating the entire section down to its lowest existing level, where water would flow in a circular pattern along the perimeter through a deepened groove. The resulting oval-shaped piece serves as the main feature and it is divided into two sections by the very long mirror.

This mirror essentially makes you see the scenes behind you as if looking at the traces of the past. Additionally, the mirror would be slightly suspended so that as you look into it, you'd also catch glimpses of the feet of people looking in from the other side.



The diagram shows the relationship between the historic city of Peja, its natural features, and the proposed design, emphasizing the position of important historic buildings and the river. It positions the proposal as a thoughtful intervention that bridges history and modernity, nature and architecture, people and place.

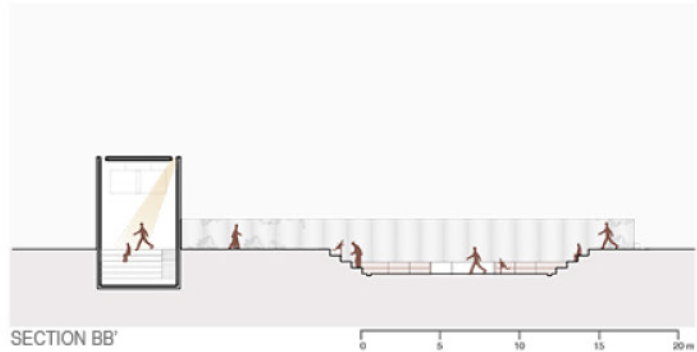
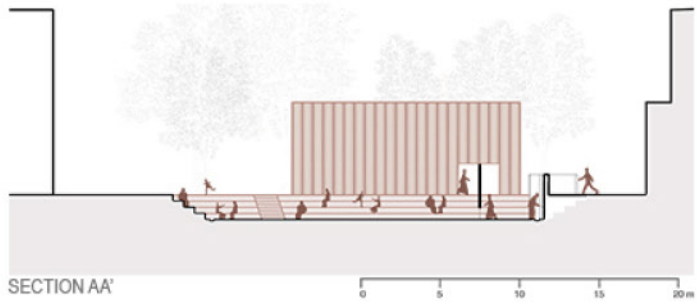
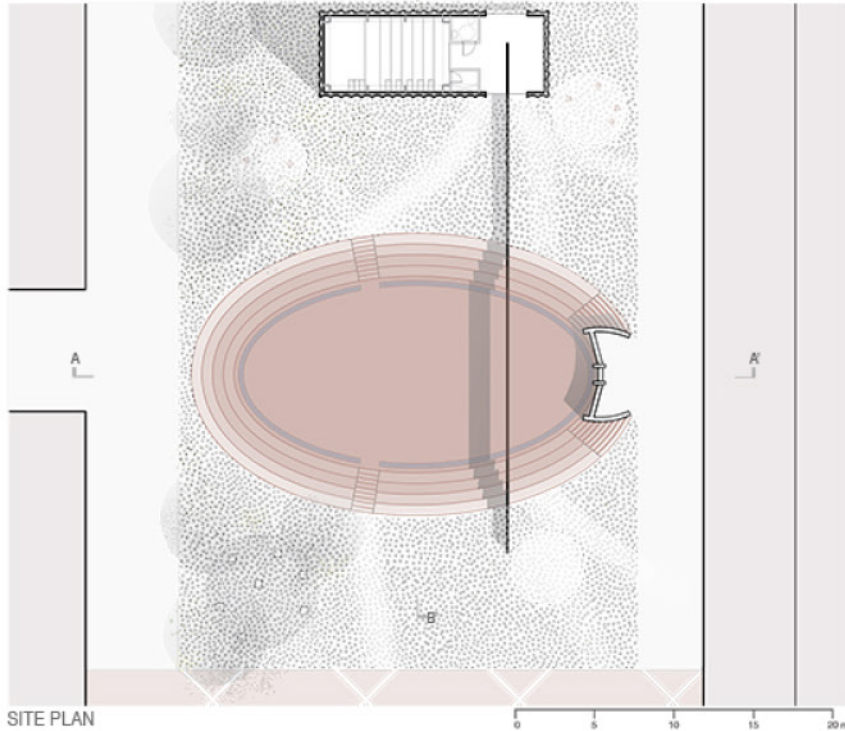


Fig 61. 1st Prize Winner, 1st board

CULTURE PAVILION

The proposal for the culture pavilion focuses on optimizing the space's flexibility, making the most out of the building's compact dimensions and ensuring that the space can be used at different times of the day.

The modular stage inside the pavilion is conceptualized as a dynamic element, designed to accommodate a wide range of activities through an innovative system of stacked, versatile, and interchangeable scenarios. It can be adapted to different functions, whether it be presentations, exhibitions, community gatherings during the day or cultural performances during the night. Utilizing theatrical technologies, the space can be altered through movable panels, adjustable flooring, and lowering objects or curtains, allowing the space to shift from one setup to another.

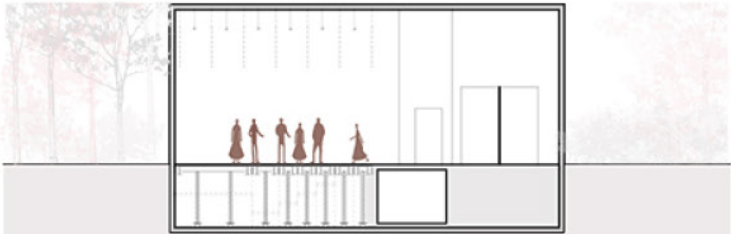
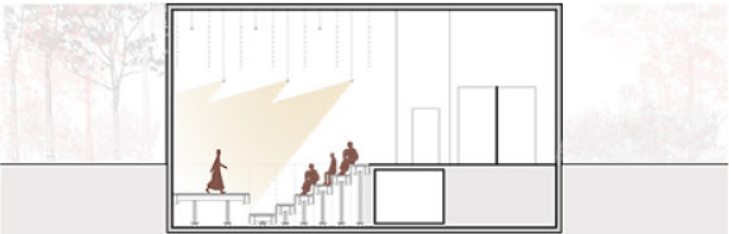
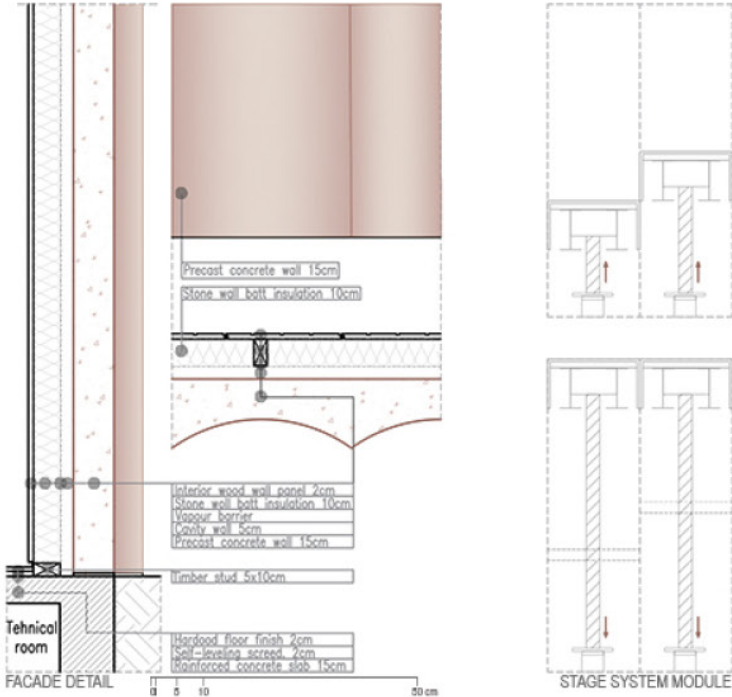
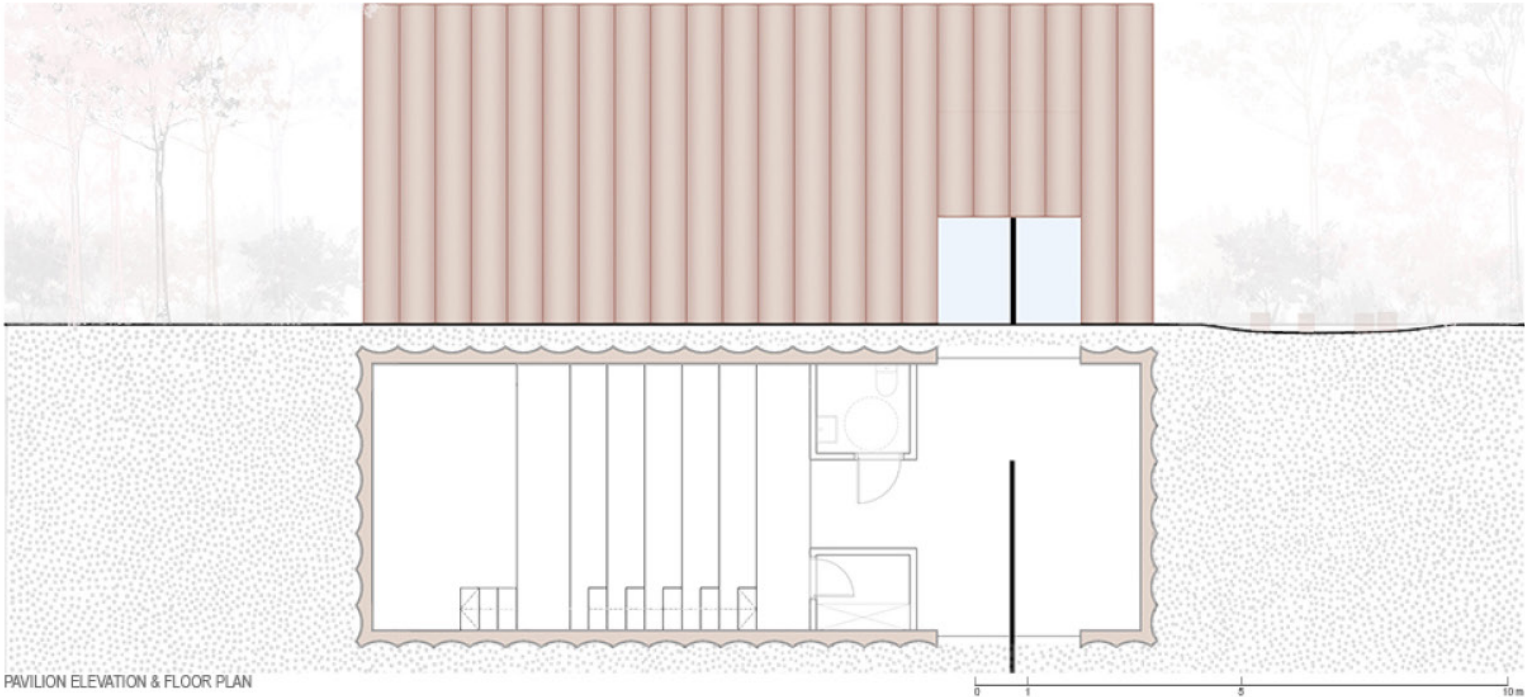


Fig 62. 1st Prize Winner, 2nd board

The project beautifully encapsulates the competition's goals of blending historical preservation with contemporary design. The use of mirrored surfaces to reflect both the community and the historical contex creates a layered and immersive experience. The amphitheater's flexibility and the pavilion's modular designr demonstrate a clear understanding of functional adaptability, making this proposal a strong contender for creating a vibrant and engaging cultural hub in Peja (Harrison Stallan, 2024).

A beautifully layered design that thoughtfully accommodates diverse uses and considers how people engage with the space throughout the day. The propos-al elevates the square in multiple ways, enhancing both its program and user experience in a captivating manner. While the graphic representation could be further refined the concept shines in its ability to bring new life to the square and its surroundings.
(Sandra Baggerman, 2024).

This proposal uses simple geometries, materials, and textures elegantly com-posed to create a variety of useful and poetic spaces. The reflective dividing wall bisects the elliptical bowl showing reverence to the historical fountain by creating intimacy while the other side is generously scaled for gathering. Inside the pavilion, technology is used to create a transformable space that rises to the ambition of the brief and would surely be a prized cultural space for the city.
(Blake T. Smith, 2024).

The project elegantly resolves complex programmatic demands within a small space through a bold geometr in gesture, making for a clever and convincing solution. By submerging the programme with the amphitheater, th design cre-ates the sensation of entering an urban void, offering a surprising sense of open-ness and space.
(Luise Marter, 2024).











Project title: A Calling Card for PEJA's Tomorrow

Authors: Jiongyuan Chen

Country: China

The project envisions the transformation of the historic urban site into a mul-tifunctional public space integrating cultural, ecological, and social elements. Centered around the existing water fountain, the design includes an outdoor amphitheater, a central pavilion, and a landscaped park, creating a dynamic en-vironment for community interaction, exhibitions, and performances. The am-phitheater features modular seating and an adaptable stage, allowing for vari-ous event formats, while the pavilion provides a flexible indoor space for cultural activities. A rainwater harvesting and purification system supports sustainable water management, reinforcing the ecological approach. Circulation pathways are designed to connect different functional zones while preserving the histori-cal and natural character of the site. Construction materials, including weather-ing steel and expanded metal mesh, are selected for durability and contextual integration. The proposal emphasizes revitalization through landscape interven-tions, shaded gathering areas, and interactive public installations, positioning the space as a key cultural and social hub within the city.(ArchDaily, 2024)

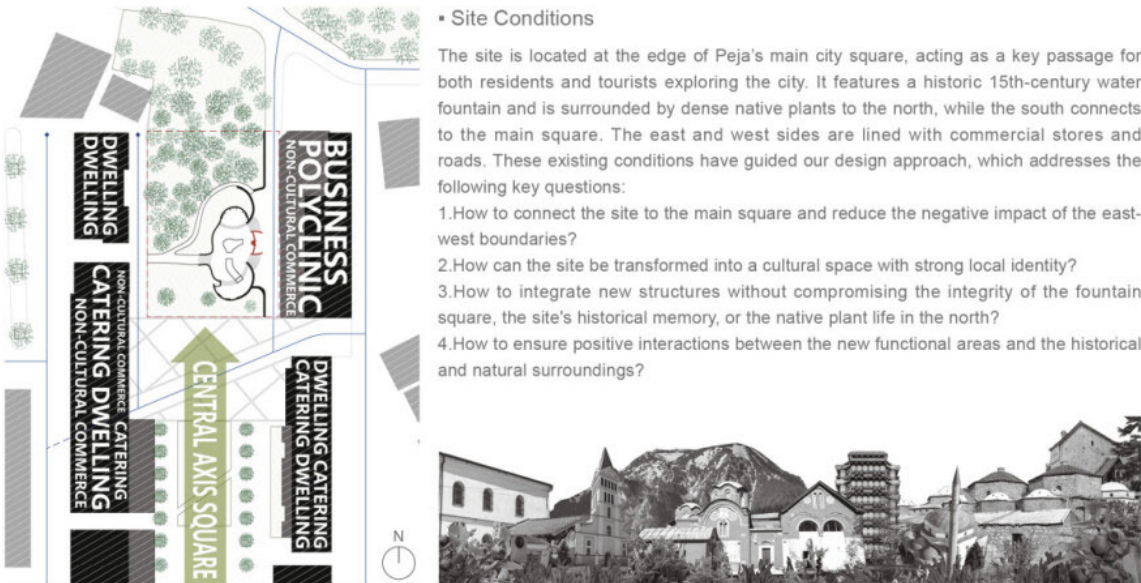
Buildner's commentary, recommendations and techniques review

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8/10 | 10/10 | 10/10 | 9/10 | 10/10 | 9/10 | 8/10 | 10/10 | 10/10 | 9/10 |
| Linework | Quality of drawings | Balance of color | Layout | Hierarchy | Annotation | Text | Clarity of story | Clarity of diagrams | Quality of overall presentation |

A CALLING CARD FOR PEJA'S TOMORROW



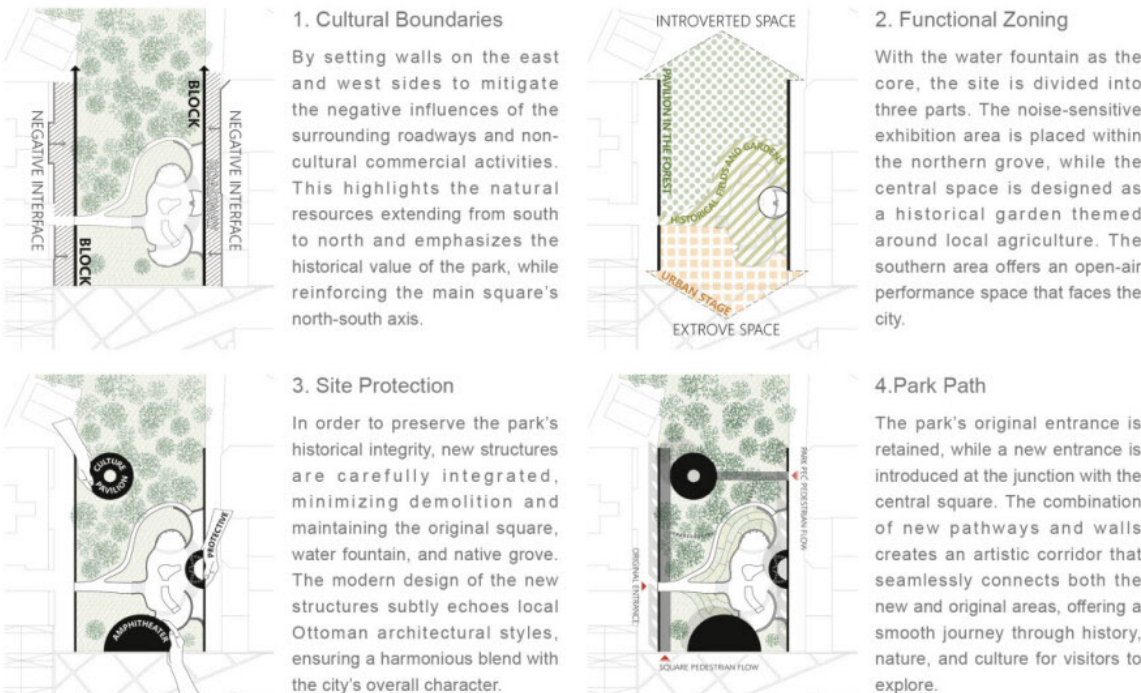
Peja thrives on agriculture and cultural tourism. With its rich agricultural resources, stunning natural landscapes, and diverse historical and cultural heritage, Peja stands as a captivating destination for visitors worldwide. Through this redesign, we aim to transform the site into a calling card for Peja's tomorrow, further supporting the city's revitalization efforts.



Site Conditions

The site is located at the edge of Peja's main city square, acting as a key passage for both residents and tourists exploring the city. It features a historic 15th-century water fountain and is surrounded by dense native plants to the north, while the south connects to the main square. The east and west sides are lined with commercial stores and roads. These existing conditions have guided our design approach, which addresses the following key questions:

1. How to connect the site to the main square and reduce the negative impact of the east-west boundaries?
2. How can the site be transformed into a cultural space with strong local identity?
3. How to integrate new structures without compromising the integrity of the fountain square, the site's historical memory, or the native plant life in the north?
4. How to ensure positive interactions between the new functional areas and the historical and natural surroundings?



1. Cultural Boundaries

By setting walls on the east and west sides to mitigate the negative influences of the surrounding roadways and non-cultural commercial activities. This highlights the natural resources extending from south to north and emphasizes the historical value of the park, while reinforcing the main square's north-south axis.

2. Functional Zoning

With the water fountain as the core, the site is divided into three parts. The noise-sensitive exhibition area is placed within the northern grove, while the central space is designed as a historical garden themed around local agriculture. The southern area offers an open-air performance space that faces the city.

3. Site Protection

In order to preserve the park's historical integrity, new structures are carefully integrated, minimizing demolition and maintaining the original square, water fountain, and native grove. The modern design of the new structures subtly echoes local Ottoman architectural styles, ensuring a harmonious blend with the city's overall character.

4. Park Path

The park's original entrance is retained, while a new entrance is introduced at the junction with the central square. The combination of new pathways and walls creates an artistic corridor that seamlessly connects both the new and original areas, offering a smooth journey through history, nature, and culture for visitors to explore.

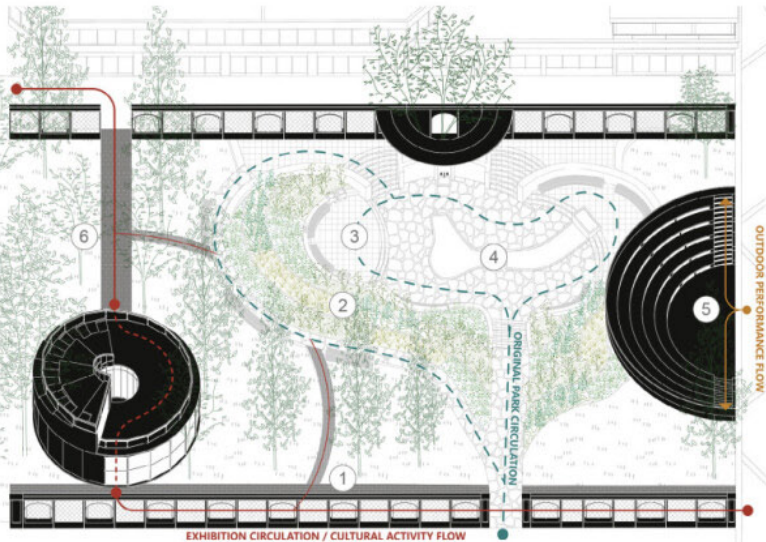


Fig 63. 2nd Prize Winner, 1st board

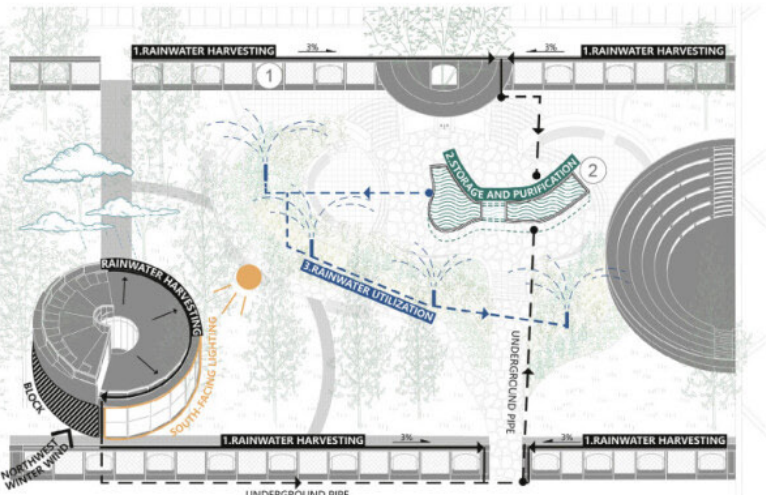
• Site Plan



- 1. Community Art Exhibition
- 2. Community Crop Cultivation
- 3. Sculpture Platform



- 1. Wall Rainwater Harvesting System
- 2. Rainwater Purification Retrofit for the Pool



• Circulation Analysis

In alignment with the overall plan, we have designed three pedestrian paths: the original park path, the exhibition/cultural path, and the outdoor performance path. Each path has its own entrance and exit, ensuring that they do not interfere with one another while maintaining a subtle connection. This allows for the possibility of hosting multiple activities simultaneously.

• Energy-Efficient Measures

The existing landscape pool is transformed into a rainwater reservoir, becoming the core of the site's energy system. By leveraging the natural slope of the landscape, the wall system, and the roofs of new structures, rainwater and snowmelt are channeled into the reservoir. An underground pump system then distributes the purified water for crop irrigation, creating an integrated rainwater garden that collects, stores, and utilizes water efficiently.

The building face south for natural light, with a central atrium to address potential shading issues caused by surrounding trees. The northern side of the buildings features solid walls to block cold winter winds from the northwest, while south-facing windows and doors welcome cool summer breezes. These measures make low-cost energy efficiency achievable.



Fig 64. 2nd Prize Winner, 2nd board

The amphitheater is particularly intriguing and fresh, opening towards the city and acting as a welcoming element within the broader urban context (inclusivity), yet, the walls enclose the space, creating an undesired sense of exclusivity. Without these two walls - which, rather than drawing inspiration from history, merely mimic historical architecture - the proposal would offer a much more open, inviting, and pleasant atmosphere in tune with its surroundings (Florina Jerliu, 2024).

While the project proposes a programmatic density it counterbalances with abundant greenery and a well-designed park. This thoughtful integration creates a welcoming and vibrant public space, poised to become a highly frequented and dynamic part of the city. -Luise Marter This project successfully integrates modular architecture with thoughtful landscape design, creating an inviting and flexible space for the community. The use of adaptable steel structures and the strategic circulation paths enhance the site's usability for diverse programs and activities (Harrisen Stallan , 2024).

This project turns the plaza into an urban oasis and takes a clear stance on in addressing the greater context which make it stand out. The architectural element, however, feel a bit disparate from the overall landscape and urban design and could be better integrated (Blake T. Smith, 2024).

The design's focus on sustainability, including rainwater harvesting and purification, aligns well with contemporary ecological goals. This entry offers a strong vision for how the Peja site could transform into a dynamic cultural and social hub, balancing modern needs with respect for the site's historical context (Harrison Stallan, 2024).

Buildner's commentary, recommendations and techniques review

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---------------------|------------------|--------|-----------|------------|------|------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | | | | | | | | |
| 9/10 | 10/10 | 10/10 | 9/10 | 10/10 | 9/10 | 8/10 | 10/10 | 10/10 | 9/10 |
| Linework | Quality of drawings | Balance of color | Layout | Hierarchy | Annotation | Text | Clarity of story | Clarity of diagrams | Quality of overall presentation |

Project title: Loom

Authors: Shpend Pashtriku, Sarah-Alexandra Agill, Kaltrina Pashtriku

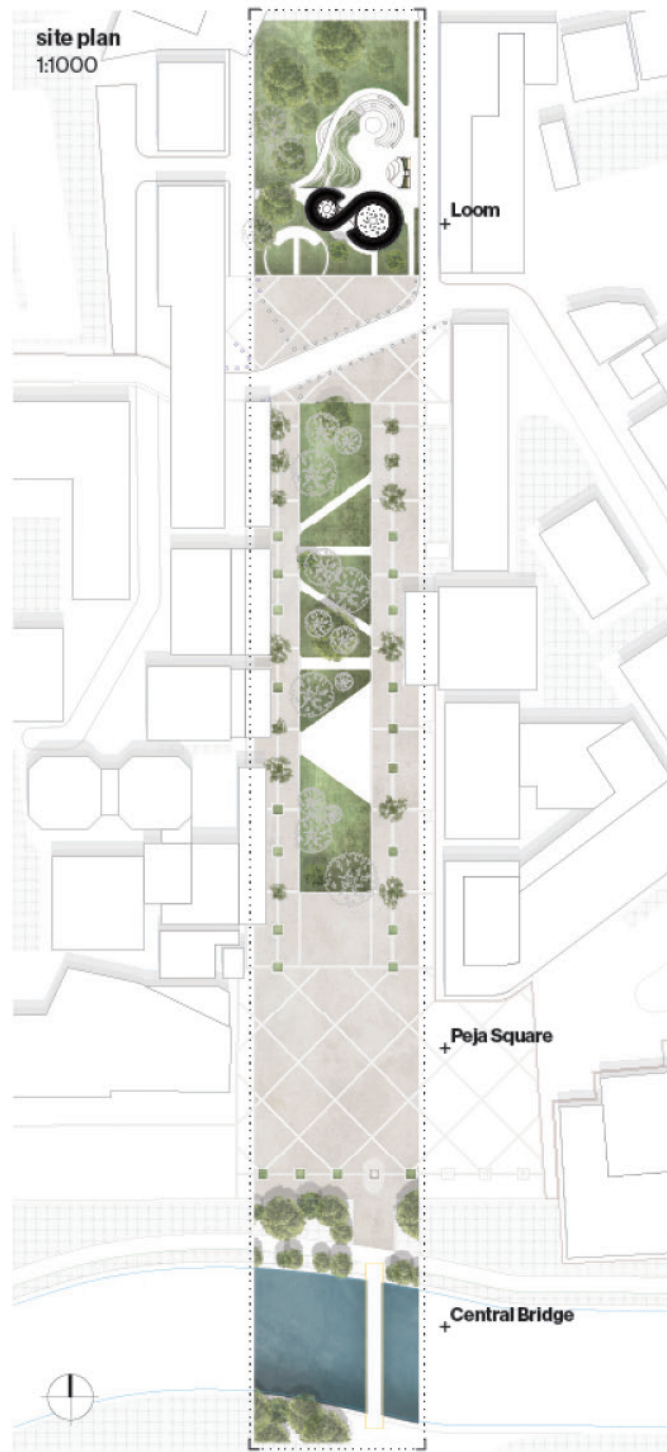
Country: United Kingdom

Loom integrates a multi-purpose pavilion, an amphitheater, and a tiered landscape into the existing urban fabric, drawing inspiration from the region's architectural heritage. The pavilion, constructed with locally sourced timber and cellular polycarbonate glazing, is designed for exhibitions, workshops, and cultural events, with flexible partitions allowing for adaptable programming. The amphitheater features organic seating arrangements that blend with the surrounding terrain, providing a venue for performances and community gatherings. A rainwater-fed fountain reconnects with the site's historical water sources, enhancing the public space while supporting sustainable water management. Circulation pathways are designed to improve accessibility and connectivity, ensuring a seamless integration with the surrounding urban environment. The project prioritizes ecological resilience, using natural shading, passive cooling strategies, and durable materials to create a sustainable and adaptable public space (ArchDaily, 2024).

Loom

Rooted in Kosovo's evolving architectural identity, Loom draws inspiration from the layered cultural influences of the region, acknowledging its resilience and growth. Its design language embodies hybridity—blending local materials and craftsmanship with contemporary approaches, with the aim of delineating a sustainable, high-performing space that can enrich Peja's cultural fabric—both visually and programmatically. At its core, the 15th-century fountain has been reimagined as a centrepiece that leverages the existing height differentiation on site, to create a link between the pavilion and the street level, maximising visibility and engagement. By splitting the historic water flow into two streams—a cascading feature within the pavilion and a street-level fresh-water drinking outlet—the design preserves the existing water flow, while enhancing its presence and utility.

Carefully positioned in relation to Peja's central square, Loom becomes a marker for the area, its orientation enhancing visibility and interaction. The proposal rebalances the site's existing spatial elements, while preserving and activating as much of the surrounding green area as possible—this is achieved by the integration of tiered seating, an expanded walking path network and a redefined streetscape. Surrounding trees are retained to maintain the park's historic ecological imprint, while new interventions improve usability and accessibility. Loom's adaptability is central to its design, supporting exhibitions, performances, and formal and informal gatherings with a flexible open-plan layout and modular furnishings. Loom aims to be a catalyst for community engagement and cultural exchange, weaving a new thread into Peja's urban fabric while honouring its cultural, historical, and environmental heritage.



1. Main Pavilion Space

Indoor Multi-Purpose Space

Positioned at the southern end of the site, facing Peja's central square, the 64 square meter pavilion anchors the proposal while staying in constant dialogue with the rest of the site. Its flexible layout and south-facing orientation create a bright, adaptable space for cultural and community activities.

2. Amphitheatre

Outdoor Formal Seating Area

With a capacity of 50-70 attendees, the amphitheatre features integrated pedestals within its tiered seating, centered around a stage. Positioned at the northern end of the site, it connects to a nearby pathway, creating a new access point and supporting exhibitions, events, and day-to-day use.

3. Tiered Landscape

Outdoor Informal Seating Area

The design reimagines an underutilized area of parkland, transforming the sloped ground into a walkable, tiered landscape with integrated, informal seating. This intervention enhances usability and redefines the space, maintaining as much of the original green space as possible.

4. Fountain Area

Dual Water Stream

The design preserves the original 15th-century water flow while reimagining the fountain structure to enhance its presence within the pavilion. Envisioned as both a decorative feature and a functional drinking water outlet at street level.



Pathway Network

The design introduces expanded pedestrian pathways enhancing connectivity across the site while integrating seamlessly with existing routes, improving accessibility and



Landscape Preservation

The proposed scheme aims to balance a significant redefinition of the site while maintaining the park's historic ecological imprint.



Redefined Street Condition

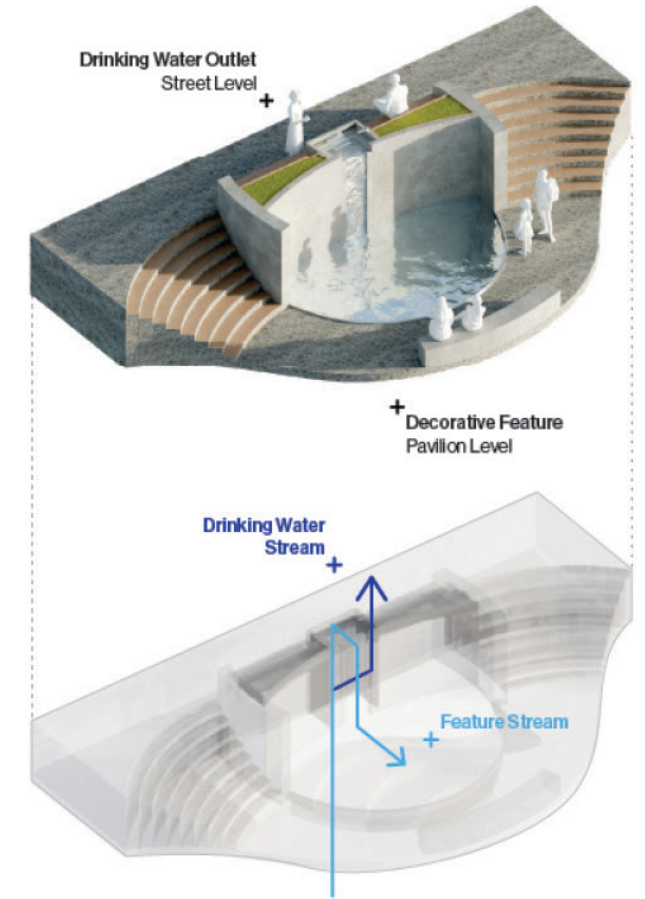
Improving the pedestrian experience by creating a defined footpath, integrating a seating area near the fountain, and allowing for the inclusion of street-side landscaping

fig 65. 3rd Prize Winner, 1st board



Retrofitted Fountain: 15th Century Water Flow Enhancing the Pavilion-Street Link

The fountain has been redesigned to preserve its historical water source, splitting the stream into two flows. One stream facilitates a fresh drinking water outlet accessible at street level, ensuring public utility, while the second creates a continuous cascade from an elevated outlet, flowing 1.35m into the redesigned fountain below. This cascading feature becomes the centerpiece of the pavilion's outdoor area, combining function with decorative elegance and celebrating the fountain's historical significance.



Accessibility Integrated Entry Points

Entrances are positioned at natural approach points, ensuring seamless transitions from surrounding pathways. Gentle gradients, integrated staircases, and intuitive spatial organization create an inclusive environment that accommodates for increased footfall as well as diverse mobility needs.

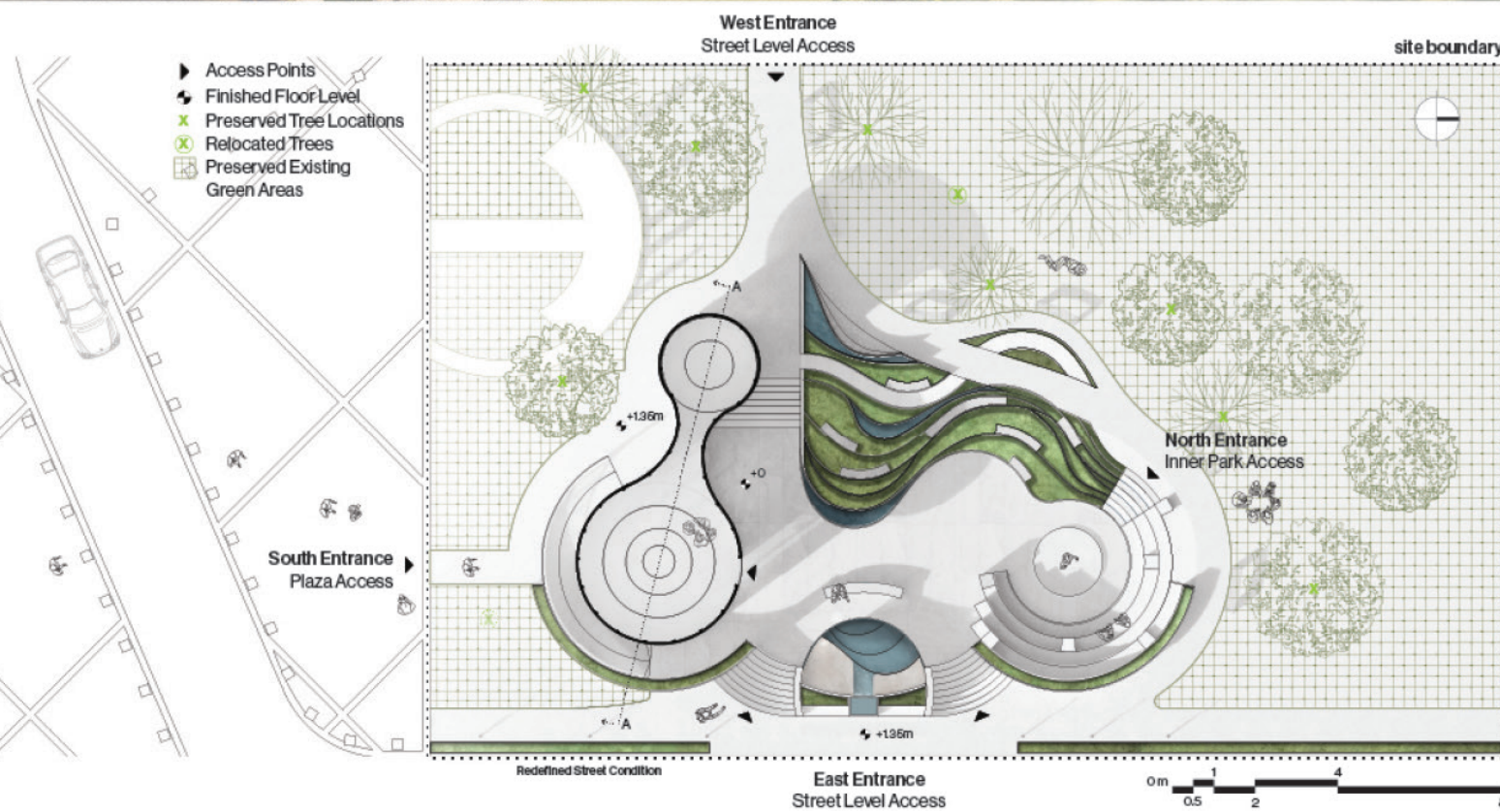
Building Orientation Visibility & Thermal Comfort

The pavilion's longitudinal elevation faces the central plaza, establishing it as a visible marker within Peja's urban fabric. Its south-facing orientation ensures ample natural light throughout the day while providing shading to the outdoor areas, enhanced by the raised peaks of its external envelope.

The placement balances visibility and comfort, creating inviting outdoor zones and concealing the pavilion's spaces from view to encourage exploration as visitors approach. The design integrates spatial flow with environmental considerations, ensuring a harmonious relationship between the pavilion and its surroundings.

Redefined Street Condition Improving the Pedestrian Experience

The existing streetscape was highly undefined, with blurred boundaries between the pedestrian walkway and vehicle road. The proposal introduces a clearly defined streetscape, prioritizing pedestrian movement and creating a more organized and accessible entry to the site.



Pavilion Usable Floor Area: 64 m²
Total Green Area on Site: 820 m²
Total Site Boundary Area: 1613 m²




fig 66. 3rd Prize Winner, 2nd board

A beautiful and creative structure with a clear vision and beautiful landscaping (Hildur Isdal, 2024).

A dynamic space that asserts itself through the vitality of lines and the innovation of forms, establishing its own character through a (somewhat high) degree of contrast with its surroundings, but which develops by harmoniously integrating the historic fountain within the axis of its composition and the distribution of site elements. The proposal to redesign the fountain requires further examination to ensure sensitivity toward the two historical layers - Ottoman and modern. The “third layer” with new attributes should be carefully adjusted to preserve the legibility of the existing layers while enhancing the monument’s significance (Florina Jerliu, 2024).

A well-thought-out and coherent design that showcases a strong understanding of program, integrating innovative strategies with a thoughtful architectural approach. The project demonstrates careful consideration space, material, and detailing, resulting in a refined and well-executed proposal. Its clear and compelling graphi representation further enhances the design’s impact and readability (Sandra Baggerman, 2024).

Buildner's commentary, recommendations and techniques review

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8/10 | 9/10 | 9/10 | 9/10 | 10/10 | 9/10 | 8/10 | 9/10 | 9/10 | 9/10 |
| Linework | Quality of drawings | Balance of color | Layout | Hierarchy | Annotation | Text | Clarity of story | Clarity of diagrams | Quality of overall presentation |

5.2 Lessons Learned and Critical Reflections

The contest acts as a real-time testing ground for architectural concepts. A fundamental tenet of the designs was that heritage shouldn’t be ossified and that memory is in motion. Rather, they embrace the concept of heritage as a relational process and living memory. However, the methods used to accomplish this vary in form and focus, providing insightful information.

Deep Contextual Integration

All three plans show that designing a pavilion successfully necessitates more than just being close to a historic feature; it also calls for active communication with it. Each team approached history as an active force rather than a static backdrop, whether that was through framing views (as in the mirrored bowl that highlights the 15th-century fountain in the 1st Prize scheme) or maintaining and subtly improving the fountain’s surroundings (as in the landscaped park and protective buffer in the 2nd Prize entry). The 3rd Prize winner “Loom” demonstrated how respectfully integrating heritage can inspire both formal gestures and spatial narratives by utilizing alignment and axes to weave new forms into the fabric of memory.

Flexibility as Civic Ethic

The winners unanimously agreed that a pavilion should not prescribe a single function but rather allow for a variety of changing uses. User agency and programmatic versatility are given top priority in the first-place project’s movable amphitheater and pavilion hall, the second-place design’s modular indoor/outdoor sequence, and the third-place scheme’s adjustable partitions. This lesson serves as a reminder that open-ended, multipurpose architecture is crucial for maintaining community involvement and making sure public areas are timeless.

Material and Environmental Synergy

Every winning entry uses environmental tactics and materials for both performance and narrative resonance. The suggestions demonstrate how material selection can serve both cultural and ecological purposes at the same time, from mirrored surfaces that reflect the surrounding life to weathering steel and ETFE that age gracefully to local stone and timber that anchor a pavilion in its regional identity. Furthermore, their use of passive shading, water management, and landscape integration shows how sustainability and heritage activation work together rather than against each other.

Spatial Storytelling Through Form

Whether it was an elliptical “bowl,” a scattered park-pavilion ensemble, or a terraced landscape, the competition showed how powerful a spatial concept can be in conveying cultural narratives. To direct movement, frame interactions, and disclose the site’s past, each plan made use of a distinct organizational gesture (subterranean seating, connected terraces, generative axes). This emphasizes how crucial it is to ground pavilion design in a readable yet poetic spatial logic that fulfills functional requirements and tells a compelling tale about the location.

Balancing Innovation with Respect

Lastly, the jury’s comments repeatedly emphasized the importance of striking a balance: daring architectural choices work best when they enhance rather than detract from the site’s inherent features. Excessively aggressive forms ran the risk of overpowering the fountain’s modest presence, while overly literal historical references (such as the reproduction of vernacular walls) ran the risk of enclosing. The best results combine creativity and respect, bringing fresh expressions that honor Peja’s urban and cultural memory layers rather than competing with them.

Presentation as Translation

The significance of narrative and visual clarity is also emphasized in the jury’s commentary. This is a reminder that effective communication is just as important as good design. The architectural illustration serves as a tool for persuasion and argumentation in addition to being a representation. Raw data is transformed into instantly readable graphics through the careful application of layout grids, color accents, and line weight. Annotations and legends appear integrated rather than appended because the text is set in one or two type sizes and flush to the grid. Each board feels both creative and meticulously clear thanks to the harmony of delicate linework and subdued color accents, which celebrates the design while making its logic instantly comprehensible.

5.3 Final Reflections on the Winning Proposals

A community’s perception of its own heritage can be significantly altered by temporary architecture, as demonstrated by the Peja Culture Pavilion competition. By framing the 15th-century fountain with a reflective amphitheater, softening its surroundings with landscaped terraces, or incorporating new pavilions into the existing urban fabric, the winning entries each found ways to position the fountain rather than imposing a uniform monument as an inspiration rather than a hindrance. In each instance, the pavilion served as a spark for revitalized public life, reminding us that even small-scale interventions can create enduring social energy. Performances, exhibits, and the mere act of congregating brought once-dormant plazas back to life.

The competition’s emphasis on flexibility was equally telling. The jury gave preference to designs that provided open circulation, modular spaces, and adjustable seating a strong indication that successful public pavilions must adapt to unforeseen uses and shifting needs. The ability to host evening concerts one week and casual conversations the next is not a luxury but rather a necessity in Peja, where memory coexists with rapid urban change. The presentation graphics reflected this fluidity, with crisp linework and tasteful color accents enabling jurors to quickly understand complicated concepts evidence that effective design communicates both form and narrative.

In the end, we learn from the Peja Culture Pavilion competition that heritage is about more than just preservation; it’s also about reimagining and revitalizing. Designers can create public areas that honor the past while embracing the future by embracing the fountain as a living source of inspiration and a historical touchstone. The genuine test of success will not be found in architectural accolades, but rather in the regular moments of joy, contemplation, and connection that the pavilion brings to Peja.

Conclusion

In the end, the Oda of Memories – Heritage in Motion proposal shows how architecture can be a culturally embedded gesture of continuity and renewal rather than just a formal response to a site. Instead of viewing Peja's 15th-century Shadërvan fountain as a static artifact, the design views it as a generative core that can serve as a hub for new life, movement, and meaning. The project ensures the fountain's relevance for both current and future generations by repositioning it within a modern civic narrative through meticulous spatial framing, material sensitivity, and participatory intent. The proposal transforms into a spatial and symbolic platform by establishing the intervention in the local typology of the oda, connecting permanence and ephemerality, memory and modernity.

Beyond its distinct form, the project serves to further a more comprehensive understanding of the function of architecture in culturally sensitive and post-conflict settings. Reviving historic public spaces in Kosovo is a challenge that involves both preservation and reinterpretation, as this thesis has examined. Here, architecture needs to listen before it speaks; it needs to recognize the many facets of trauma, identity, and aspiration and transform them into forms that are inclusive, flexible, and amenable to appropriation.

The importance of developing strategies that are both materially and socially sustainable is one of the most important lessons that come out of this. In heritage contexts, sustainability must take into account not only ecological considerations but also urban rhythms and civic tolerance, as evidenced by the choice to use off-site construction methods. Similar to this, the use of prefabricated, modular components recognizes the importance of flexibility and future adaptability, both of which are crucial in settings where needs, resources, and cultural meanings are ever-changing.

Lastly, this thesis confirms that public architecture can influence collective memory in motion when it is executed with technical intelligence and based on cultural empathy. The fountain's content is unaltered, but its meaning has changed: it is no longer a lone monument but rather the focal point of a developing public area that invites people to congregate, tell stories, play, and perform. The creation of the Oda of Memories has demonstrated that careful consideration of context, community, and continuity, rather than spectacle or nostalgia, is what brings about revitalization. By doing this, it provides an example of how minor architectural gestures can contribute significantly to the restoration, reconnection, and reimagining of the urban commons.

Ultimately, the pavilion transcends its temporary and often ornamental appearance. It becomes a medium for experimentation, a space for cultural dialogue, and a symbol of architectural intent in flux. By embracing its contradictions—light yet loaded, fleeting yet formative—we understand the pavilion not only as a design exercise but as a vessel of meaning. As Joel Robinson reminds us:

Pavilions are architectural works that may appear trifling... but which are more often than not embattled structures, bound up with claims to power, status and identity (Robinson 2013).

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