أحيا باب البحر
Revitalizing Bab al Bhar
Exploring the Impact of Urban and Social Changes in Tunis and its Waterfront Connection

197 TUNIS - Porte de France

This research will explore the relation between urban and social changes and the identity change of the city Tunis and it explores how to reimagine the waterfront connection with the citizens of Tunis. In this research the hypothesis is that Tunis has lost it's port-city identity due to urban and social changes, because of that there is a lack of cohesion and sense of belongingness. To validate this hypothesis the following research question is formulated.
What is the relation between urban & social changes and the loss of the Port-city identity in Tunis?

CONTENT

Abstract

This research delves into the multifaceted identity of Tunis, exploring how its rich history, cultural diversity, and urban dynamics intersect to shape its sense of place and belonging. The main research question guiding this study is: What is the relation between urban & social changes and the loss of "the Port-city Identity" in Tunis?

Through a multidisciplinary approach that combines urban anthropology, cultural geography, architectural analysis, the study examines various neighborhoods and public spaces in Tunis, including Lac1, Lac2, Rades, La Goulette, and Carthage.

Using fieldwork, interviews, observations, and mental maps from participants, the research uncovers layers of meaning embedded within the city's built environment and collective memory. From the bustling port of Rades to the historic ruins of Carthage, each neighbourhood offers unique insights into Tunisian identity, reflecting a blend of ancient traditions, colonial legacies, and contemporary challenges. The study also explores how Tunisians interact with public spaces, navigate historical sites, and negotiate their sense of belonging, shedding light on the complex interplay between physical landscapes and social practices.

A significant finding, revealed through field research, is the endangered situation of local fishermen. The research discovered that these fishermen, who are vital to the region's maritime culture and identity, are being pushed out due to urban development. Their informal docking spots, crucial for their livelihood, are at risk of disappearing, which could lead to their displacement and the loss of an essential element of the port city's identity.

The findings underscore the importance of preserving cultural heritage, fostering dialogue, and promoting inclusive urban development in Tunis. By embracing diversity and its port city heritage, Tunis has the potential to emerge as a vibrant and resilient hub of creativity, innovation, and cultural exchange. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of Tunisian identity and offers insights for policymakers, urban planners, and researchers seeking to navigate the complexities of identity and urban space in the 21st century.

رحيل

DEPARTURE

Figure 1. Lac Tunis [Picture] (Own work. 2023).

Fascination

Having roots in Tunisia inspired me to do a project related to my heritage. Regularly visits to Tunis gave me different perspectives of the cities urban fabric, these different neighbourhood patched with different sub identities made me question what this city actually was, after a course Adaptive strategies I learned that a lot of port cities where losing this unique identity due to harbour areas leaving the city. I started thinking this also was the case for Tunis.

As I return to Tunisia, each year, whether by boat or plane, a wave of nostalgia washes over me as I anticipate the feeling of coming home. As I journey through the city, I often encounter serene water bodies usually Lac Tunis, where the distant ports appears as if it is sleeping, with only a handful of container ships dotting the horizon. In those moments, I can't help but ponder the what if, what if this lake is easy accessible to the citizens? Then I wonder if this connection might rekindle the essence of being a vibrant port-city once more like it was under multiple empires, from Carthage (figure 2) to the Islamic empires that ruled these lands (figure 3).
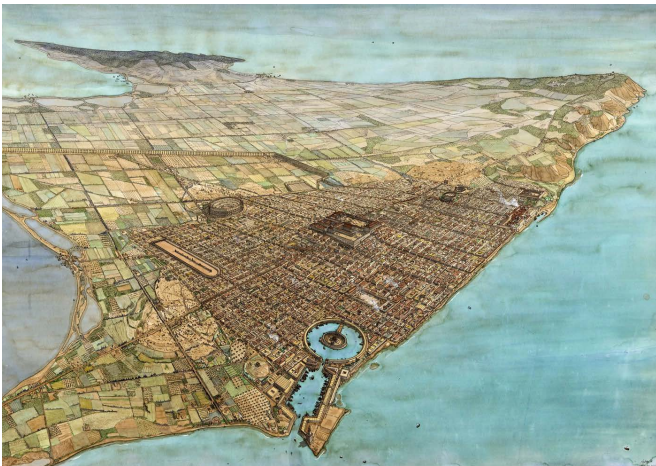

Figure 2. Tunisia- Carthage overview, antiquity [Drawing] (Jean-Claude Golvin. 2021).

Figure 3. Tunisia, Medieval Tunis [Drawing] (Jean-Claude Golvin. 2018).

The Port-city Identity is a concept which is intertwined with its maritime history. The port-cities around the world cannot be seen as one entity. Quite the opposite, port-cities have differences in geography, economy, history and authority. These elements shape the different port-city identity around the world. This diversity in identity is highlighted by Carola Hein, Professor of History of Architecture and Urban Planning, in her work (Hein & Schubert, 2020), revealing that while port-cities often went through similar phases, their responses to these phases differ. For example, the case of Hamburg showed that a port and city run by local government institutions can have mutual benefits, while the case of Philadelphia shows that the declining support of the government resulted in the city leaving its longtime maritime path.

Problem statement

The lasting impact of French colonization in Tunis has resulted in significant consequences shaping the city's identity and socio-cultural landscape. One of these consequences is the division of space and worldviews, leading to a fragmented urban environment and disparate societal perspectives. This division has fostered the development of a dual identity among Tunisians, where traditional, local and rooted values coexist with global, mainly European, and new influences, often causing tension.

Moreover, the erosion of Tunis's Port-city identity is evident in the changing perception of the sea. In the past, Tunisians viewed the sea as a symbol of freedom and trade, despite its inherent dangers. However, contemporary perspectives have shifted, and the sea is now often regarded as a perilous entity that transports danger rather than value. This transformation reflects broader societal changes and challenges the traditional relationship between Tunis and its maritime heritage. While the hybrid identity of Tunis is a testament to its rich cultural diversity as a port city, there is a danger in overlooking this complexity. The risk lies in prioritizing elements introduced by Frenchcolonialism, which may not resonate with Tunisians' authentic way of using public space. The imposition of a modernistic way of living does not align with the city's true identity, as these elements could be replicated anywhere and fail to capture the essence of Tunis's spirit. In essence, the challenge lies in preserving Tunis's intricate identity while navigating the complexities of its past and present. It is crucial to celebrate the city's diverse heritage and traditions while safeguarding its authentic cultural identity. By embracing its hybridity and resisting the imposition of generic elements, Tunis can chart a course towards a more inclusive and genuine future, one that honours its unique identity as a vibrant and diverse port city.
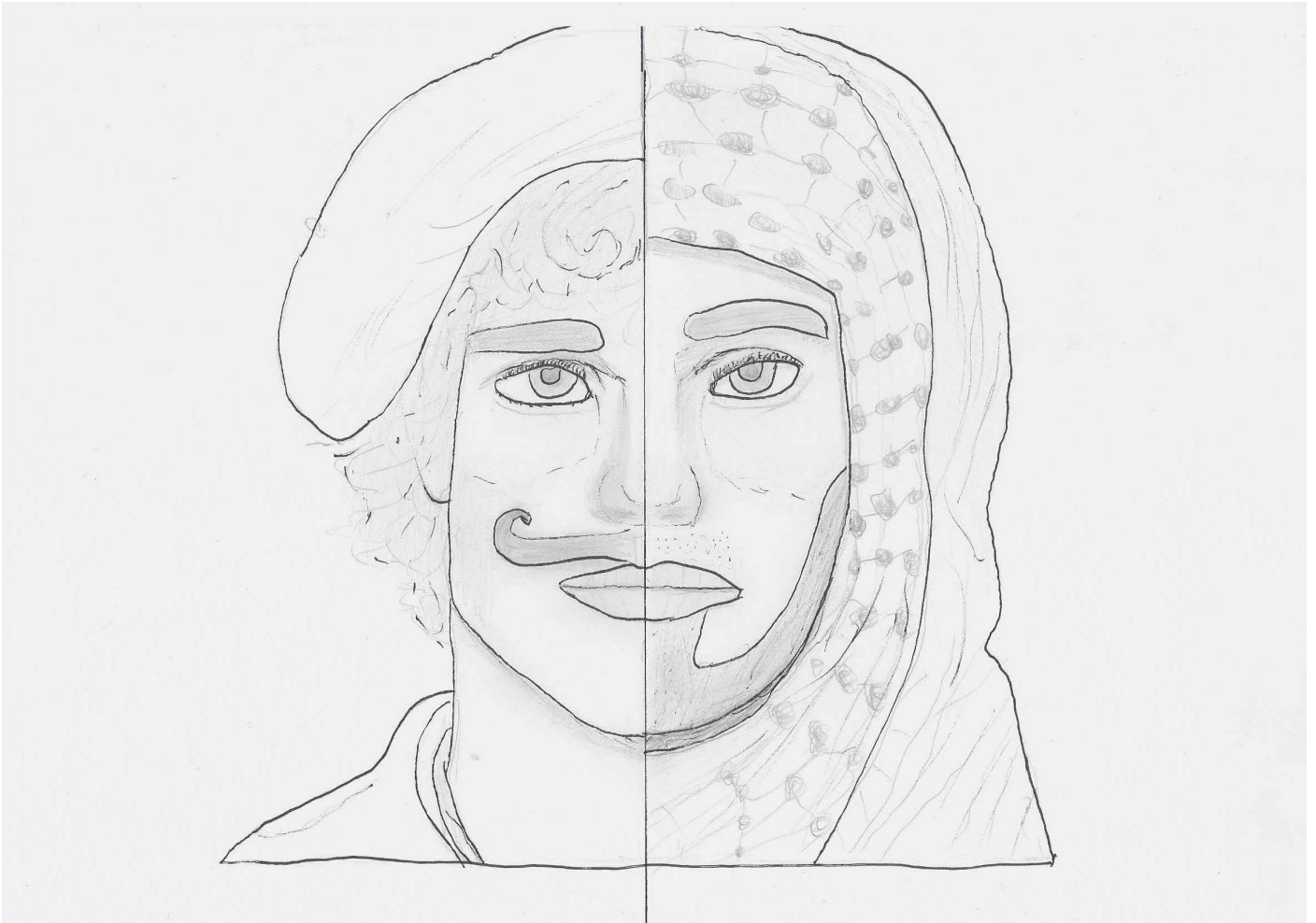
Figure 4. Dual-identity of Tunis, [Drawing] (Own work, 2023)

Even though the colonial era ended, the influence of the colonial period continues to show in the city's identity. The consequences of this colonial history reach beyond the physical transformation of the urban environment. The consequences even extend to socio-cultural aspects, such as the erosion of the Port-city Identity, which had been integral to Tunis's cultural fabric from the Carthaginians to the Arabs.

The city now is set up in a way which divides people as can be seen in figure 5, representing a big contrast with its cohesive and vibrant port-city identity of the past. The diverse identities of port-cities around the world, as highlighted by Carola Hein's extensive research, contribute to the unique challenges that each of these cities faces. In Tunis, this erosion has been intensified by urban and social changes, particularly those triggered by the legacy of French colonialism.
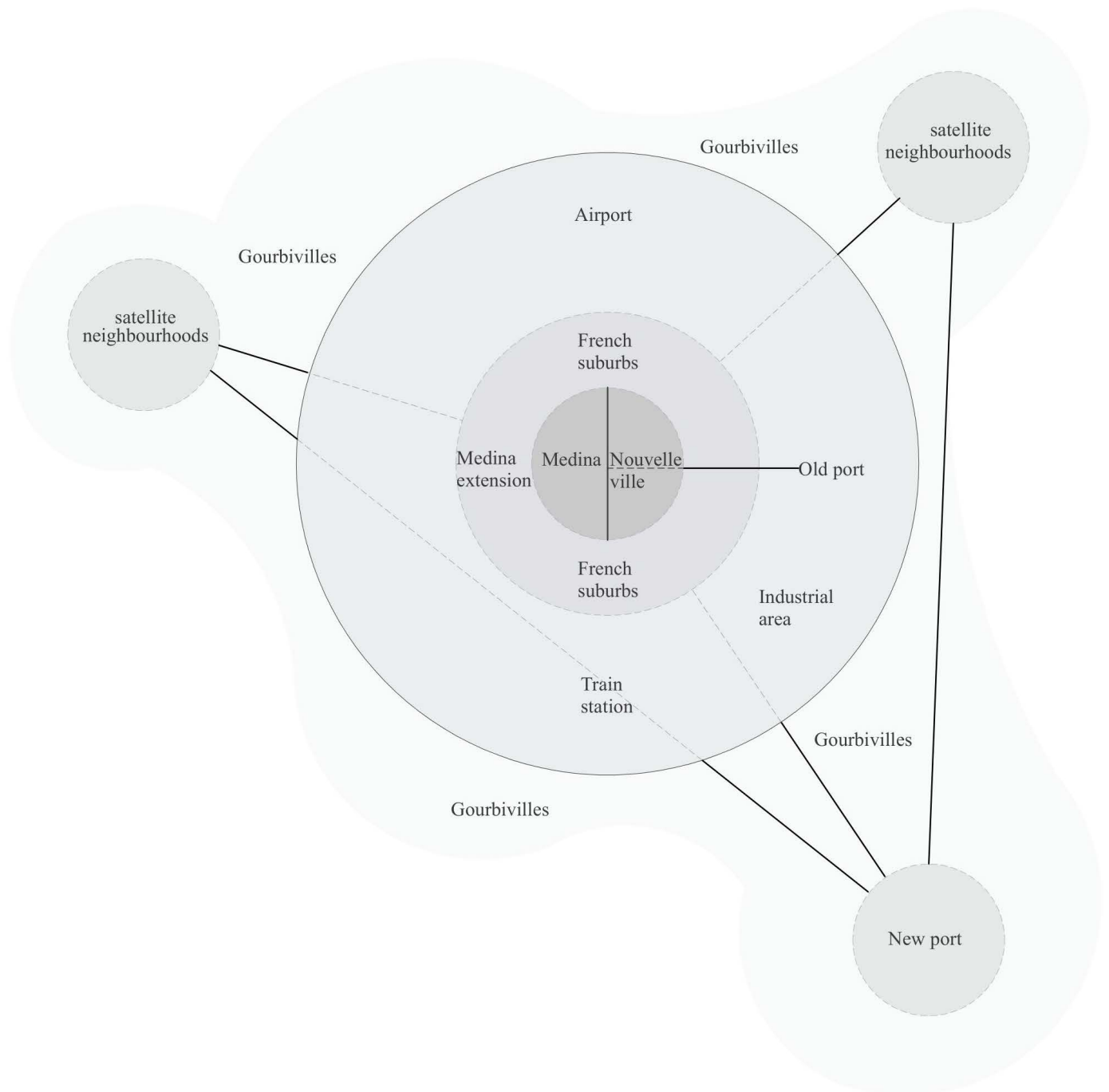

Figure 5. Urban division of Tunis [Diagram] (Own work, 2023)

Relevance

The significance of addressing this research problem has two main reasons. Firstly, it is essential to preserve and revive Tunis's unique Port-city Identity, as it carries a rich cultural heritage and historical significance. Failure to do so could result in the continued loss of culture, which would have lasting consequences for the city and its inhabitants. Also, the erosion of the Port-city Identity impacts the cohesion and sense of belonging among Tunisians, making it crucial to restore this identity to foster a stronger community.

Secondly, the case of Tunis is not isolated, it resonates with urbanization trends and challenges faced by cities worldwide. Understanding how urban and economic changes have affected Tunis's Port-city Identity can offer valuable insights for other cities dealing with similar problems. This research is not just about Tunis but also about gaining more knowledge and providing a better understanding about urban challenges in port-cities on a global scale.

The results gain a better understanding of port-cities in general and how this could affect a cities identity. I gained knowledge by talking to locals and hearing their ideas. My view of Tunis has changed. And just like the identity of the city, my opinion will never be the same.

Goals, objectives

The goal of this study has been to investigate the relationship between urban and social changes and the loss of the Port-city Identity in Tunis. This will help recognizing the complex aspects of Tunis's identity, its historical and cultural features, and the impact of the French-built new city centre on this identity. It might also show how Tunis could be read. Ultimately, this research aims to provide a comprehensive framework for reimagining the waterfront connection in Tunis to help reclaim its Port-city Identity.

The research objectives are:
- To examine and define the current identity of Tunis as a city, understanding its historical and cultural context.
- To discover the cultural aspects and traditions associated with being a Port-city, identifying any remaining traces of this identity in Tunis.

Hypothesis

Tunis has lost its port-city identity due to urban and social changes.

This hypothesis stands as a foundation for exploration, offering a lens through which the different layers of change and continuity that shaped Tunis over time could be unravelled.

Research questions

What is the relation between urban & social changes and the loss of "the Port-city Identity" in Tunis?

1. What historcial layers in the urban and architectural fabric of Tunis can be interpreted through the lens of its Port-city Identity?
2. What cultural traditions and practices historically characterized Tunis as a Port-city, and to what extent are these aspects still evident in the city?
3. How do the people of Tunis perceive their city's identity with the complex tapestry of its history?
4. How does the concept of Hybrid identity manifest in Tunis, and what role does it play in shaping the city's cultural landscape and socio-political dynamics, particularly in the context of diverse influences from colonial legacies and contemporary global trends?
5. What factors have led to a reduced interaction with Lac Tunis, and how does this reflect broader shifts in the city's relationship with its maritime heritage?
6. What factors have contributed to the shift in perspective regarding the sea in Tunisian society, from a symbol of freedom and trade to a perceived source of danger and insecurity, and how has this transformation impacted the city's identity and its inhabitants' sense of place?

Definition of Theoretical framework

This research has its roots under the episteme of praxeology and typology, it has some interfaces with phenomenology and semiology.

Praxeology is the study of human actions and conduct, and a typology is formed by grouping cases or participants into types on the basis of their common features.

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach that focuses on the study of structures of experience and consciousness. Phenomenology seeks to explore how individuals perceive and make sense of the world around them, emphasizing subjective experiences and the meanings things have in our experience (Smith, 2018). In the context of urban studies, phenomenology examines the lived experience of people within a city.

Semiology, or semiotics, is the study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation. Semiology investigates how meaning is created and communicated through signs, which can include anything that conveys meaning, such as words, images, sounds, and objects.
(Semiotics | Definition, Theory, Examples, & Facts | Britannica, n.d.)
In urban studies, semiology analyzes how various elements of the urban environment function as signs that communicate cultural and social meanings. For instance, the design of buildings, public spaces, and city layouts can be seen as a language that conveys messages about a city's identity, values, and history. This involves interpreting how different aspects of the urban fabric—such as architecture, signage, public art, and street layouts—act as symbols that influence and reflect the social and spatial practices of its inhabitants.

This research deals with the identity of a city, which links to social/spatial practices and the perspective of the user. To understand the context it is needed to research the urban fabric. The research on the identity of a city under the frameworks of phenomenology and semiology involves exploring both the subjective experiences of individuals (phenomenology) and the symbolic meanings embedded in the urban environment (semiology).

The genius loci or the sense of place falls under phenomenology, Norberg-Schulz (1991), architectural theorist, has mentioned in his book genius loci, that the genius loci is a vital characteristic for the identity of a place. The genius loci can be seen as the spirit of a place. The embodied experience of places are within this theory very important. The theoretical concepts that form the research to get a deeper understanding are divided into three sub themes. Identity of the city, Port-city and decolonization, these three sub themes are the framework where the research is conducted.

Identity of cities
The Identity of a city represents the unique cultural, historical, and economic attributes associated with cities. Urban and economic changes refer to the transformations in urban structure and economic activities that impact the identity of a city. The effects of colonialism specifically is seen where the changes were made during the French colonization, including the construction of the new city centre in Tunis.

Cities have their own identity, the identity of a city it is viewed as the identity of indiscernibles which is, according to Blackburn (2008), oxford philosophy dictionary, a principle associated with Wilhelm Gottfried Leibniz in his Discourse on Metaphysics, the theory that if A and B have exactly the same properties that they are identical and therefor have an common identity.

Another relevant and local view on the identity of a group is the view from Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Khaldun is considered as the first (and still the greatest) historian of Arabic logic born in Tunis, maybe the most outstanding figure in the social sciences besides Aristotle an Machiavelli (Blackburn, 2008). From a sociological perspective he focused his research on groups rather than individuals.
From a historical perspective he viewed that man has a nature of domineering and being and war. He regarded humans savage and ignorant. Given these facts he questioned what holds society together. The answer to this was عصبيّة "asabiyya", the literal meaning was blood ties but he gave it a new meaning. He saw this tie as a form of cohesiveness and cooperation shared among people, even without family ties. Such cohesiveness emphasizes the understanding or awareness of commonality. The word "public" in Arabic is عامة (pronounced: 'aamah), derived from the root عام (pronounced: 'aam), which means "common" or "general." This term signifies something that is accessible or open to everyone in the community. This shared identity can be formed through mutual dependence or cooperation, fostering a sense of commonality and belonging.

Port-city theory
The concept of cohesiveness and cooperation within a community emphasizes an understanding or awareness of commonality. This sense of commonality is not only evident in public spaces but also extends to shared borders such as water. As highlighted by Wagner (2012) in "Water and the Commons Imaginary," water is a fundamental common resource that plays a critical role in fostering a sense of shared identity and collective responsibility. Water, beyond being a transporter of value, acts as a creator of value by shaping the cultural, economic, and social fabric of communities.

Building on this notion of commons, the theory of port-city dynamics, as explored by Carola Hein, underscores the vital role of port cities in shaping global connections, trade, and culture. Port cities, through their unique relationship with maritime activities, serve as hubs of economic, cultural, and social exchange. They facilitate the flow of goods, ideas, and people, thereby creating value that transforms urban environments. This interaction influences urban planning, architecture, infrastructure, and cultural identity, making port cities crucial actors in the global network of exchange and connectivity. The shared use of these commons are essential for the identity and functionality of port cities, highlighting their role in accommodating and shaping global connections, trade, and cultural interactions.

Decolonization theory
The way of conducting research is an element that also needs to be decolonized In the search on the identity Tunis, I integrate decolonized methodologies by drawing on the frameworks provided by Baker, Eichhorn, and Griffiths (2019) and Thambinathan and Kinsella (2021). This involves critically examining the historical and cultural narratives that have traditionally dominated urban studies and incorporating perspectives that have been marginalized or overlooked.
To really understand the impact of colonization it was important to find local sources like the book Tunis Métropole Arabe Mediterranéenne (Daoulatli, 2019). This book is written by local researchers giving a real perspective of the city. This method ensures that the historical context of colonialism and its impact on the city's
development are thoroughly examined. Additionally, photographic research serves as a tool to document and visualize the ongoing changes in the urban landscape, capturing the interplay between the city's maritime heritage and contemporary transformations.

Furthermore, the ethnographic site study component of my research is grounded in participatory and inclusive practices. I engage local communities in the research process through Mental mapping and observational fieldwork, ensuring their voices and experiences are central to the analysis. This approach aligns with the decolonized methodologies advocated by Thambinathan and Kinsella (2021), emphasizing the importance of reflexivity and collaboration in qualitative research.
By documenting the current use and life around Lac Tunis through visual ethnography, I capture the lived experiences and cultural practices of residents, providing a nuanced understanding of the city's identity. This integration of decolonized methodologies not only enriches the research findings but also contributes to more equitable and transformative urban planning and policy-making, addressing the needs and perspectives of local communities in Tunis.

Decolonization theories in architecture focuses on the impact of colonialism on the built environment and urban planning, as well as strategies for reclaiming cultural and architectural identities. There are several prominent decolonization theories that have been discussed and explored in the context of architecture.
Such as Critical regionalism which is a response to the standardisation effects of globalization (Lefaivre & Tzonis, 2005), architectural theorists. It values local identity, culture, and context, seeking to create buildings and spaces that are modern yet deeply rooted in their regional and cultural heritage. The work of architectural theorist Frampton (1993), "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," is a foundational source for this theory but also the work of Lefaivre & Tzonis (2005) Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World
By following this theoretical framework, the study aims to unravel the complex relationship between urban and economic changes and the loss of the Port-city Identity in Tunis. Through the critical evaluation of existing theories and their application in a unique context, this research will shed light on the complexities of identity formation in postcolonial, rapidly urbanizing cities.

Ultimately, the findings of this study hopefully provides valuable insights for urban planners, policymakers, and researchers striving to preserve and revitalize the cultural heritage of port cities facing similar challenges globally.

For this research two primary categories of methods have been used, which are:
1. Historical-interpretive narratives
    - Literature analysis: a thorough review of existing literature, including works on the history of port cities, and the impact of urban changes on their identity
    - Legal documents and media review: this will give a understanding of the context and the views at a specific point in time.
    - Photographic research: searching and get a better sense of context, documented changes.
2. Ethnographic site study
    - Site mapping: a qualitative site mapping and analysis of the current elements still visible from the maritime past would be done. This will give a better understanding of the context and sheds light on the opportunities.
    - Observational fieldwork: to document the current use and life on and around the lake
    - Photographic research: visual ethnography, documenting use and life around the Lac Tunis

The work of Carola Hein "Adaptive Strategies for Water Heritage: Past, Present and Future" have been used to get a better understanding of the identity of port-cities. Additionally, a site visit helped identifying traces of the port-city identity in the present day.

To understand the effect of the urban changes a historical research helped interpretate the effect it had on the city as a whole and It's identity.
To get more insight on the economic effect of changing the location of the harbour out of the city centre case studies will support the literature found by Carola Hein and give a better understanding on the specific situation. This research is essential for either confirming or challenging the initial hypothesis and, ultimately, providing answers to the research questions about the identity of Tunis as a port city, how it has evolved, and the impact of changing economic and urban dynamics on its identity.

Emphasis on Methods

This research delves into the complex identity of Tunis through three primary methods: collective memory exploration, mental mapping, and embedded/emerged observations in public spaces. Each method provides unique insights into the spatial and cultural dimensions of the city, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of its identity.

Embedded/Emerged Observations in Public Space

To determine the characteristics of both the port-city and public spaces, the research closely examined elements such as colour, tiles, stucco, and the ways people use these spaces. Observations included:

- Informal Seating: Use of chairs and makeshift seating arrangements.
- Trade and Commerce: Street vendors and local markets that are central to public space activity.
- Shading/Shelter: The use of trees, canopies, and covered areas to provide relief from the sun, reflecting the local climate's influence on urban design.
- Courtyards: The presence of woust a dar (courtyards) in homes and public buildings, functioning as social hubs.
- Boats/Fishery: Fishermen's informal docking spots around the lake and Mediterranean coast, highlighting the maritime heritage.
- Urban Elements: Features like the Bab al Bhar (the Sea Gate) and fountains (nafura) that signify the historical and cultural layers of the city and the relationship with water.

These observations highlight the adaptability and resourcefulness of Tunisian society in utilizing public spaces. The study documented the characteristics of the port-city and its public spaces through:

- Physical Characteristics:
o Colour and Materials: The use of vibrant colours, specific tile patterns, and stucco finishes typical of Mediterranean architecture.
o Architectural Elements: The presence of informal seating arrangements, shading structures, and courtyards which serve as social gathering points.
o Historical Structures: Notable landmarks like Bab al Bahr, fountains (nafura), and facilities for ritual ablution (wudu).
- Social Characteristics:
o Usage Patterns: How people use spaces informally for seating, trade, and shelter.
o Economic Activities: The role of boats and fisheries in commerce and trade, reflecting the city's maritime heritage.
o Cultural Practices: The exchange of goods, ideas, and the presence of migrants and short-stay visitors.

Urban Narratives / Port-City Narratives

Urban narratives were constructed through stories gathered both in-situ and from academic consultations, including texts by Ibn Khaldun. The process involved:

▪ Finding Stories: Engaging with local residents, historians, and literature to collect diverse narratives.
▪ Selecting Stories: Prioritizing tales that highlighted significant cultural and historical aspects of Tunis's port-city identity.
▪ Interpreting Stories: Analysing the collected stories to understand their relevance and impact on contemporary urban life.
▪ Constructing the Narrative: Weaving these stories into a cohesive narrative that captures the essence of Tunis as a port city, blending historical significance with present-day realities.

This narrative construction helped reveal the synergetic relationship between the city's past and present.

Mental Mapping
Mental mapping exercises were conducted with young adults to retrieve collective memories of Tunis. This method involved:

▪ Prompting Participants: Asking them to draw maps of Tunis and its port areas from memory.
▪ Drawing from Memory: Ensuring the maps reflected personal experiences and perceptions without external references.
▪ Analysis of Maps: Identifying common themes, significant landmarks, and the spatial organization emphasized by participants.
These maps revealed a clear mental distinction between the port and the inner city, underscoring the port's significant role in the participants' perception of Tunis.

Collective Memory Exploration
Collective memory exploration focused on how historical structures and their transformations over time are remembered and represented by the community. This was exemplified by the journey through Halq al Wad, where the discovery of the old arsenal gate integrated into a modern road highlighted how collective memory preserves the city's past within its evolving landscape.

Conclusion
In conclusion, this research employed a blend of collective memory exploration, mental mapping, and embedded/emerged observations to understand the multifaceted identity of Tunis. The findings highlight the city's rich tapestry of historical elements, the community's adaptive use of public spaces, and the critical role of its maritime heritage.
The research illustrated the dynamic interplay between past and present in Tunis's urban landscape. By employing a combination of methods —collective memory exploration, mental mapping, and embedded observations—this study provided a comprehensive understanding of the city's identity it showcases its hybridity through different lenses which where needed to capture the overall identity. The proposed design concept emphasizes preserving the port-city identity through inclusive and adaptive urban spaces, ensuring that Tunis's rich cultural heritage continues to resonate with its inhabitants. Integrating these historical and cultural dimensions into urban development can preserve Tunis's unique character while fostering a sense of community and belonging among its inhabitants.

In this contemporary context, Tunis, the capital city of Tunisia, grapples with the challenges caused by rapid urbanization. Historically, Tunis was a city deeply tangled with its maritime heritage and the port, over time this unique identity has eroded. The city's cultural heritage is influenced by various historical periods and colonial era's.

Fast forward to the old Medina as we know it today the city during the Hafsid dynasty is still visible. The way the city was placed in between two waterbodies on top of a slope. The city was build by the early Arabic dynasties in Tunisia, when they started this settlement they where not yet the maritime power they came to be, and therefor the city was located a bit distend from the shore to make it easy defensible from naval attacks. They started to build port related buildings between the city and the lake. The serene lake was a save haven for barbary pirates to roam the Mediterranean. Algiers Tunis and Tripoli profited from piracy trade and more. In the 12th century an Arabic traveller called al-Bakri wrote about Tunis saying there was a canal dug connection the port to the lake, and the lake to the sea. He also reports that the Zaytouna mosque opened onto the closed port by a chain, that it was surrounded by castles and parks. (Daoulatli, 2019, p.60) Which in contemporary times are patches in the urban fabric of Tunis. He also mentions the numerous souks and its fondouks, multiple hammams and its beautiful houses with decorated door frames. The city was known for knowledge and revolts, for its pottery but also food such as olives, fruits and fish.

Figure 6. Tunisia, Medieval Tunis [Drawing] (Jean-Claude Golvin. 2018).

Figure 7. Map of Tunis during Hafsid dynasty, [Drawing] (Own work, 2024)

In the days of the Hafsid dynasty, Tunis stood proud with its multiple walled areas and grand gates, like the impressive Bab al Bahr, connecting the city to its lively port and arsenal. Between the city and the serene lake, buildings were sparse, reserved mostly for port-related functions, while the vibrant Medina l'arabi, the Arabic city, buzzed with trade and activity. Despite expansions, Tunis retained its historical charm, with public spaces still preserving (Daoulatli, 2019, p.87)

Figure 8. Map of Tunis during early 19th century, [Drawing] (Own work, 2024)

Mid-19th century, Tunisia's ruler forged lucrative trade ties with the French and Italians, laying the groundwork for what would later become a chapter of colonization. Before that era dawned, the first French quarter sprang up near the bustling Medina, while the Italian enclave nestled near the lake's opening. The Mediterranean, once a bustling hub of two-way trade, began to morph into a channel for one-sided wealth distribution.
As trade flourished, the European quarters took shape beside the ports, a strategic choice that placed harbour workers at the heart of their livelihoods. Initially, the development unfolded in an informal manner, bridging the gap between city and harbour with a burgeoning network of trade and industry. (Daoulatli, 2019, p.135)

Figure 9. Map of Tunis during first expansion 1893, [Drawing] (Own work, 2024)

This map, dating back to 1893, offers a glimpse into the evolving landscape of Tunis. Here, we see the emergence of the main avenue stretching from the Bab al Bhar, already renamed port du France, toward the bustling port, marking the creation of the Nouvelle ville. Along this avenue, the first buildings began to take shape, a trend that endures to this day with the French embassy standing as a testament to this historical artery.
As the cityscape transformed, the French quarter took root, its foundations laid atop the ancient Christian cemetery of Tunis. This juxtaposition speaks volumes about the lasting imprint of colonization, as new structures emerged on the foundations of old, forever altering the city's physical and cultural landscape.

Figure 10. Map of Tunis during French colonisation, [Drawing] (Own work, 2024)

Within a span of two to three decades, the Nouvelle ville began to take shape, marking a new era of urban development and city planning. During this transformation, plans were drawn, envisioning a cityscape characterized by an orthogonal grid and modern infrastructure.
One of these plans involved reclaiming land along the lake's edge to create a grand boulevard. However, as construction progressed, priorities shifted, and logistical needs took priority over aesthetic desires. Consequently, the envisioned boulevard remained but a dream, overshadowed by the construction of vital logistic buildings.
This shift in focus not only highlights the contrast between architectural ambitions and practical necessities but also mirrored deeper division within the city's social fabric. As the physical landscape evolved, so too did the socio-cultural dynamics, laying bare the juxtaposition between two segments of the population.

Historically one of the most significant changes was the French colonization. This period, left a lasting mark on Tunis. The construction of the new city centre, by the French referred to as "ville nouvelle" or "ville européenne", translated as the new city or European city, (Escher & Schepers, 2008) professor Escher A. is an expert in social and architectural development of historic cities of the Mediterranean region, by the French colonial rulers removed the physical connection between the port and the old medina as seen in figure 11. This transformation of the city was not merely architectural; it symbolize the broader socio-political changes brought by the colonial rule. The "Halq al wad": throat of the river, was once the opening for trade, a connection between the Mediterranean and Lac Tunis, it became the opening for the French colonists to subdue the Tunisians to their rule.

During this period the historical landscape of Tunis was significantly redefined. The old medina, referred to derogatorily as the "ghetto musulman" by the French, (Escher & Schepers, 2008) coexisted with the ville européenne. The tensions between these two different parts of the city which had distinct demographic and cultural spheres continued to alter the city's character. According to Amodei, M. (1985), urbanist, The cityscape that emerged from the French rule caused informal neighbourhoods known as "gourbivilles" to sprout. This urban arrangement reflects the enduring tensions between the historical and the contemporary, the local and the colonial, and the cultural and the foreign within the city's fabric.
The Old Medina, seen on the left, was an organic grown city centre where the circulation space became the common, "public" space. Whereas the Nouvelle ville, seen on the right, was an orthagonal urban patern where the public space was designed. Until today this impacts the way people use the space, the Nouvelle ville reflects a French way of living which does not align with the way the locals use the public space, therefor the livelyhood which can be experienced in the Old Medina disappears the moment the small streets opens up to the big avenues.
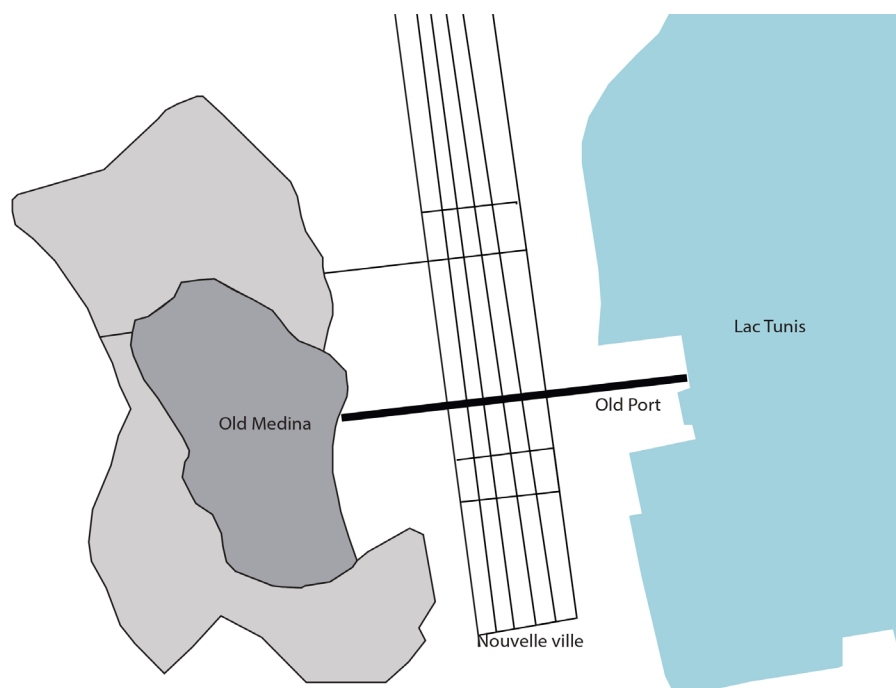
Figure 11. Nouvelle ville dividing medina and port, [Drawing] (Own work, 2023)

طر يق
ROUTE

The journey home, a new perspective.

Embarking on a journey to Tunis, I sought to unravel the city's identity by exploring its diverse areas—the historic city centre, the old harbour, the attempt of a new city centre lac1 and 2, the new harbour in Rades, La Goulette, and Carthage. This quest was more than a physical exploration; it was a poetic return to a port city, a voyage into the city's essence.
Once, the Mediterranean bound lands together, fostering trade and travel. Now, it stands as a border, dividing nations. As I disembarked in Palermo, I travelled through lands historically linked to Tunisia. Sicily embraced me with a sense of familiarity, echoing the Norman-Arab era. My journey, inspired by those before me, echoed in the words of renowned travelers Al-Ya'qubi, Ibn Hawqal, and al-Bakri (Daoulatli, 2019, pp.60-67). Tunis with its numerous souks, its fondouks, its fifteen hammams and its beautiful houses. It was also the city of knowledge and insurrections. In addition, it was renowned for the quality of its fine, transparent pottery, as well as its fruits and fish.
As the sea connected the past, the present's حراقة "Harragas", meaning burning borders, in Tunisia revealed the struggle. Street art depicted faces lost at sea, a emotional reminder of those who burned their identities. The sea, once a symbol of richness and freedom, now a connotation of a boundary containing its inhabitants.

Figure 12. Mural in about Harragas Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Approaching Tunis, the islands Zembre and Zimbrette emerged, and the landscape unfolded—the mountains, surrounding the Gulf embracing the people entering, Carthage's remnants, and the distant inner city on the slope. Finally, I glimpsed Tunis as seafarers did centuries ago—a moment of connection with history. Travelers from various periods, wrote about this city. In 1732 Jean Ernest Hebenstreit describes the location of Tunis by connecting it to the port and the two fortresses of La Goulette and Sidi 'Alt al-Ra'is, which protect the city and its canal, al-Bakri and Leo the African, spoke of Tunis's grandeur, souks, and insurrections, forming a vivid tapestry of the city's past. (Daoulatli, 2019, pp.60-67)
The echoes of these travellers resonated as I stood on the shores, capturing the timeless essence of Tunis—the city that once flourished as a beacon of trade, now telling stories through its streets, souks, and the whispers of those who sailed its waters.

Figure 13. View of Bab al bahr Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Figure 14. My perception of Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Old Medina (Tunis City Centre - Old Harbor Area):

1. **Prominent Natural Features:** Nestled on a slope facing Lake Tunis, the old Medina distinctly separated from the Nouvelle Ville. An avenue bustling with traffic leading towards the lake, creating a unique space between the city centre and the waterfront.

Figure 15. View of the main Avenue Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

2. **Influence of Environment on Atmosphere:** Starting at the top of the slope with the Kasbah, a fortified region of the medina, the ambiance transforms from serene, narrow streets to a vibrant souk. The atmosphere evolves with growing crowds, vendors' calls, and enticing aromas near the Zaytouna mosque. Exiting the Medina reveals an expansive area with Bab al Bhar, linking to the French-built avenue extending to Lake Tunis.

Figure 16. Hustle and bustle old Medina Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

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3.   **Cultural/Social Activities:** The old medina is lively with diverse cultural events, markets, and renowned restaurants. It metamorphoses throughout the day, serving as a marketplace, a site for prayer, and a place to have lunch. During the evening the markets close and the old medina empties, everybody is getting behind their +enclosed living spaces.

4.   **Emotions Elicited:** Creating nostalgia and a connection to Tunis's history, the old Medina, overlooking the sea and historic structures, strikes a balance between reflection and vibrant social scenes. Walking through the old medina gives me a feeling of belonging to this group of people all their with different task but we fulfil them simultaneously.

Figure 17. The roofs of the old Medina Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

5.   **Interaction with Space/Public Space:** People engage in relaxed strolls in the city, engage in conversations at cafes, and prayer in one of many mosques. The public space is dynamic, accommodating various activities from exploration to socializing.

6.   **Sense of Community/Solitude:** The Medina emanates a sense of community, where interactions occur harmoniously. Residents ready to engage with outsiders, fostering a welcoming atmosphere.

Figure 18. Narrow streets of the old Medina Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Old Medina (Tunis City Centre - Old Harbor Area):

7. **Sensory Experiences:** The old Medina provokes the senses with its vibrant markets, charming herbal scents, and the flavours of local cuisine. The sensory journey shifts from bustling souks to more open urban designs.

8. **Architectural/Artistic Elements:** Historic structures showcase maritime influences, displaying architectural elements from all over the Mediterranean. The Nouvelle Ville in contrast with the old medina also contributes a historic maritime identity to the city.

9. **Visual Cues to the Port:** Maritime symbols visually tie the area to its port history, featuring architectural styles distinct from neighbouring cities. Also the usage of white and blue colours in their buildings is very unique to the Mediterranean coastal regions.
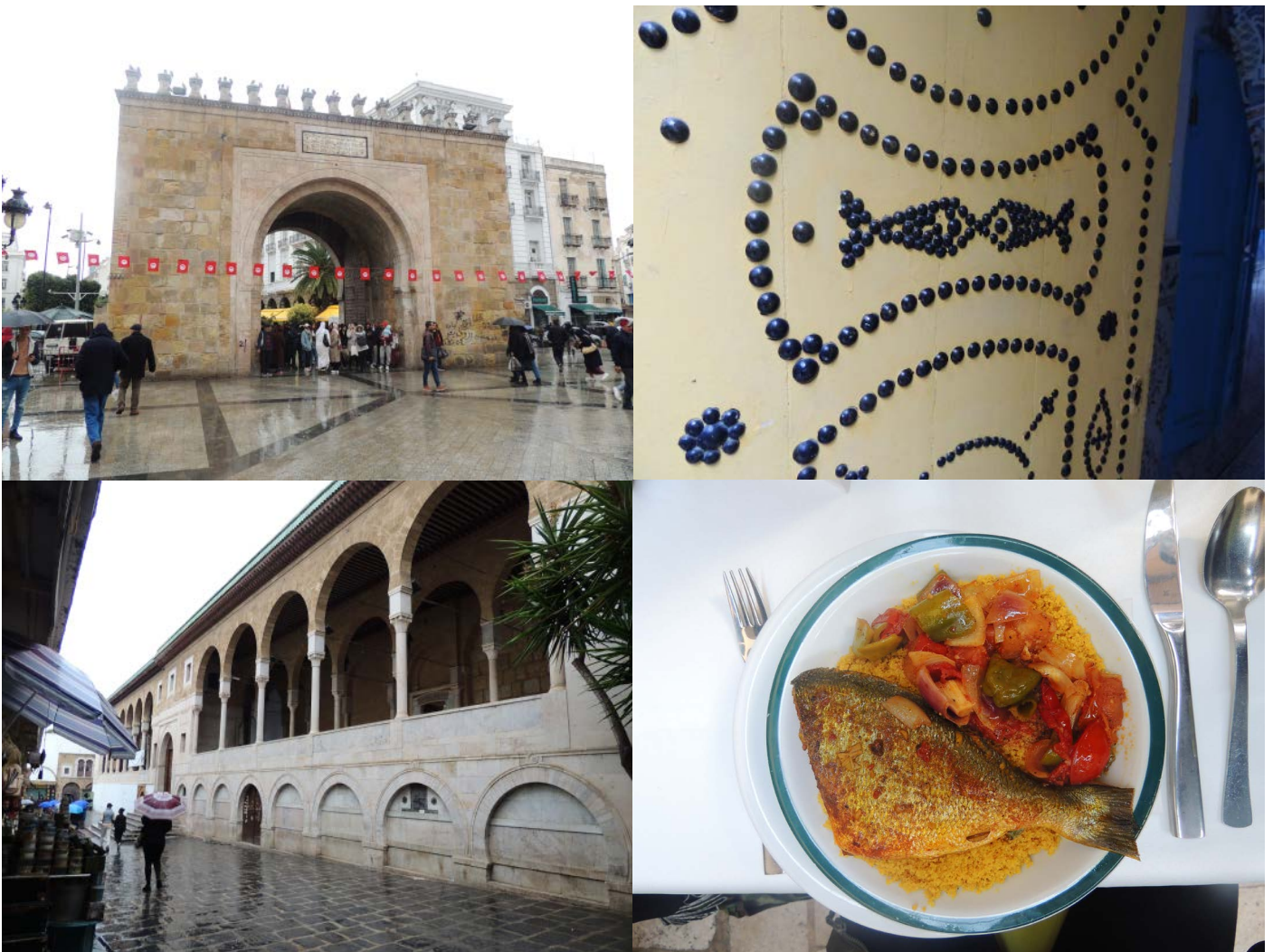
Figure 19. Maritime hints of the old Medina Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

10. **Cultural Exchange/Diversity:** The port's historical significance fosters cultural diversity evident in architecture and cuisine. Religious structures, refugee districts, and areas representing various nationalities contribute to this vibrant diversity. An example of this is couscous with fish. Which is not a usual combination and is eaten in Tunisia and Sicily.

11. **Sounds/Activities of the Port:** The harbour area's are far from the city centre the only thing being a link is the different products being sold on the market such as fish but also fragrences and fabrics from foreign countries.

12. **Contribution to Natural Landscape:** The port alters the natural landscape, blending historical structures with the seascape, creating a charming connection of man-made and natural elements.

13. **Little Narrative:** 1724 A century and a half after Ruffino, Jean André Peyssonnel (m. 1759), visited Tunisia in 1724 as part of a sort of archaeological and social expedition. Leaving from Tunis, he crossed the Moorish villages in the company of a Spanish priest called Francisco Ximenez. The capital seems vast with its suburbs, but modest if we consider its fortifications, its towers and its forts. However, his most important descriptions are devoted to houses and mosques (according to Brahimi, Voyageurs dans la Régence de Tunis, p. 61-62). 1732 Jean Ernest Hebenstreit describes the location of Tunis by connecting it to the port and the two fortresses of La Goulette and Sidi 'Alt al-Ra'is, which protect the city and its canal. It relates the aqueducts by means of which Tunis is supplied, after Carthage of yesteryear, with water from Zaghouan and provides a more precise description of the houses, their sumptuous interiors and their flat terraces which collect the rainwater supplying the cisterns.

This German scholar and traveller writes: As for the city of Tunis, it is considered, after Cairo and Alexandria, as one of the largest cities in Africa and as one of the best built. Located on a pretty plain, it has a softer and more pleasant appearance.
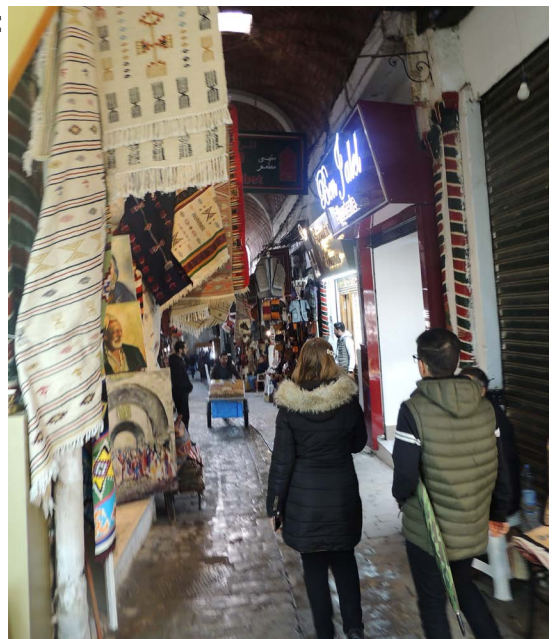
Figure 20. Common space in the old Medina Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Nouvelle Ville (Tunis City Centre - Old Harbor Area):

1.   **Prominent Natural Features:** The Nouvelle Ville unveils an open urban design with sidewalks, tree-lined avenues, and a transition in sensory experiences from crowded markets to spacious surroundings.

2.   **Influence of Environment on Atmosphere:** Sensory experiences shift from crowded souks to an open urban design, accompanied by the sounds of cars and the scents of exhaust engines. The view extends into tree-lined avenues.

3.   **Cultural/Social Activities:** The Nouvelle Ville preserves historical remnants of its maritime identity, with diverse cultural elements evident in architecture, cuisine, and distinct neighbourhoods.

Figure 21. Public space in the Nouvelle ville Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

4.   **Emotions Elicited:** The Nouvelle Ville stimulates a different set of emotions, showcasing a modern and open urban design while preserving elements of its maritime history. This feeling of seeing remnants of an old colonizer brings up a feeling that these neighbourhoods do not fit the lifestyle of the people of Tunis.

5.   **Interaction with Space/Public Space:** People cross sidewalks, and the sounds of cars blend with voices, creating a dynamic public space with a distinct pace compared to the old Medina.

Figure 22. Protests in front of French theatre Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

6. **Sense of Community/Solitude:** While retaining a sense of community, the Nouvelle Ville reflects a more modern and open approach to urban living.
7. **Sensory Experiences:** The sensory journey in the Nouvelle Ville contrasts with the crowded Medina, offering a more open design, diverse culinary options, and a mix of urban sounds. Long view lines and a oversized public space instantly catches your eye.
8. **Architectural/Artistic Elements:** Reflecting historical maritime influences, the Nouvelle Ville maintains its connection to France and Tunis with the French ambassy in the middle of it.
9. **Visual Cues to the Port:** Architectural styles and visual cues in the Nouvelle Ville reflect its maritime history, distinct from the old Medina and surrounding areas. But also different from mainland France, trying to find a mixture of orientalism and European building styles.

Figure 23. Different types of architecture Nouvelle ville Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Nouvelle Ville (Tunis City Centre - Old Harbor Area):

10. **Cultural Exchange/Diversity:** The port's historical influence continues to shape cultural diversity seen in architecture, cuisine, and various neighbourhoods within the Nouvelle Ville.

11. **Sounds/Activities of the Port:** While less directly involved with port activities since the port of Rades was build, the Nouvelle Ville echoes maritime influences through its urban design and architectural elements.

12. **Contribution to Natural Landscape:** The Nouvelle Ville contributes to the natural landscape by blending modern structures with the urban environment, maintaining a balance between man-made and natural elements.

Figure 24. Different types of Public space Nouvelle ville Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

13. **Little Narrative:** 1942-1943 Finally, it is with his poet's pen that the writer André Gide (1869-1951) describes the city of Tunis, its lights and its colours which vary according to the times and the seasons. There he discovers an oriental soul that he fears will disappear under the weight of a soulless Western civilization. He also describes the streets, souks and cafes intoxicated with their perfumes, before evoking popular legends and recounting the amusing shows of the famous "Karakouz" with the lively presence of children.

In the heart of downtown Tunis, I see the walls transformed into a canvas for the voices of the people. Vibrant graffiti splashes across buildings and alleyways, more than mere art—it's a powerful assertion of public space and a vivid testament to the city's dynamic identity. As I walk through the streets, colorful murals and bold messages grab my attention, demanding to be seen and heard.

In this city shaped by various historical periods and colonial influences, these writings on the walls symbolize a reclaiming of space and narrative. The public spaces of downtown Tunis, once dominated by external powers, are now being retaken by the residents. The graffiti transforms these areas into vibrant expressions of Tunisian culture and political discourse, underscoring our right to the city and our future.

Figure 25. Different uses of Public space Nouvelle ville Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Lac1 and Lac2 (Redevelopment Projects on the Lac of Tunis):

1. **Prominent Natural Features:** The lakeside setting, offering expansive water views, stands out as a key natural feature.

2. **Influence of Environment on Atmosphere:** The lakeside environment creates a serene ambiance, attracting residents and visitors seeking leisure activities. However, the contrast between the lively corniche of Lac2 and the somewhat soulless local centre is evident. In Lac1, the waterfront public space is often enclosed by makeshift fences and road blockades.

3. **Cultural/Social Activities:** Activities around Lac2 include lakeside strolls, fishing, and culinary opportunities. Day and night dynamics vary, with daytime featuring waterfront restaurant lunches and nighttime bringing out small vendors.

Figure 26. A cold relationship with the water Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

4. **Emotions Elicited:** Initially evoking tranquillity and relaxation, enhanced by the lakeside beauty, the experience took a turn to confusion. Observing the lack of people around the waterfront raised questions about the disconnect from such a scenic area.

5. **Interaction with Space/Public Space:** Unfortunately, there's a scarcity of people around the waterfront, and interaction with the water is hindered by rigid borders and limited seating options.

6. **Sense of Community/Solitude:** The lakeside setting leans more towards personal solitude than community events. Gathering spots are often limited to the more exclusive restaurants at the corniche of Lac2.

Figure 27. Empty developments and promises Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

7. **Sensory Experiences:** Sounds of water, birds, and the visual beauty of the lake contribute to a sensory-rich experience. The water, though calm, offers a contemplative atmosphere.

8. **Architectural/Artistic Elements:** Lakeside developments feature contemporary architecture inspired by the countries of origin, like a German-inspired hotel. However, these lakeside developments are mere facades of what this place actually is.

9. **Visual Cues to the Port:** Visual cues include the visible port across the lake, fishermen along the edges, fishing nets, and the presence of boats at the edges.
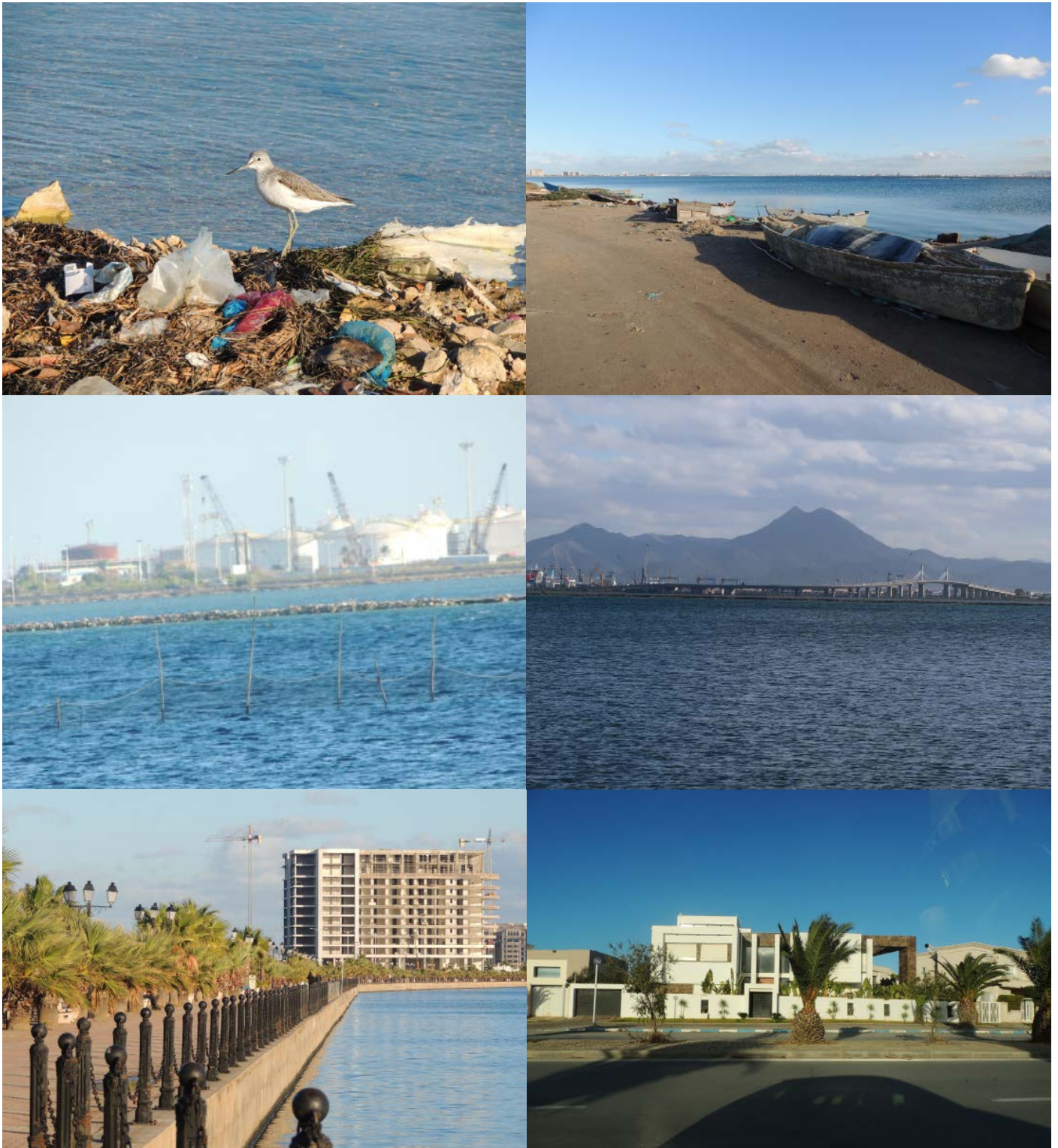
Figure 28. Fishermen being pushed out Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Lac1 and Lac2 (Redevelopment Projects on the Lac of Tunis):

10. **Cultural Exchange/Diversity:** Despite hosting embassies and being home to higher-income individuals, the area reflects a diversity that is either extremely visible or entirely absent.

11. **Sounds/Activities of the Port:** The distant port is visible but often unheard, with occasional glimpses into port-related activities such as the departing sound of bigger ships.

12. **Contribution to Natural Landscape:** Lakeside developments contribute to a connection of urban and coastal elements. Unfortunately, the edge between the lake and the urban fabric lacks the elevation differences necessary for closer interaction with the water.

Figure 29. Could be anywhere else then Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

13. **Little Narrative:** A local resident who works in the area was sitting at the edge of the lake, he mentioned the perceived soullessness of the area, emphasizing a lack of community connection. According to him, life is concentrated at the corniche of Lac2 and the entertainment parks adjacent to Lac1.

    The ideology is that this region would become The Venice of Tunis The development of this quarter aims to enhance residents' health by prioritizing walkability and minimizing the impact of road traffic and car dependency. according to Al Buhaira Invest (La Perle Du Lac 1, n.d.) wishes to instill a new lifestyle reinventing, hence, a mindset associated with promenading. But they forget that this region is not well conected with the city and mostly accesable for the rich nearby.

Rades (New Harbor Location):

1. **Prominent Natural Features:** The new harbour, situated along the Mediterranean Sea, defines its coastal setting. Rades encompasses diverse natural features, including a forest, plateau, plain, valley, and the sea.

2. **Influence of Environment on Atmosphere:** The new harbour demonstrates a vibrant port identity, evident in the industrial part with containers, large ships, and cranes. Surprisingly, authentic fishermen are visible alongside the walled area of the port, creating a unique contrast. The central area reflects French and Arabic influences, characterized by the distinctive white and blue colour scheme.

3. **Cultural/Social Activities:** Renowned for its harbour workers, Rades also hosts the intense football rivalry between Club Africain and Esperance Sportive de Tunis. Beyond football, Rades is a sports hub, featuring handball, boxing, volleyball, swimming, and water polo. The sporting culture intertwines with political expressions through groups like the Zapatistas, known for their graffiti songs and political views.

4. **Emotions Elicited:** The new harbour evokes feelings of commerce, industry, and curiosity about the activities behind the gated areas. The atmosphere around the harbour entrance is bustling, with the presence of visible fishermen contributing to a sense of living with the water.

Figure 30. A stronger relationship with the water Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

5. **Interaction with Space/Public Space:** People utilize the waterfront for fishing, making the most of public spaces for walks along the seaside or through the central area of Rades.
6. **Sense of Community/Solitude:** The area fosters a sense of community among those reliant on port activities and the sea, in contrast to lac1 and lac2.
7. **Sensory Experiences:** The sounds of ship horns, machinery, and the scent of the sea create a sensory-rich environment. Visual elements include the bustling harbour with cargo and ships, along with the smell of fish near the waterfront.
8. **Architectural/Artistic Elements:** The harbour infrastructure, cranes, and shipping containers become architectural elements. Even the stadium reflects maritime themes with a structure resembling a sail mast.
9. **Visual Cues to the Port:** Ships, cranes, and maritime infrastructure serve as visual cues, emphasizing the area's connection to the port. Additionally, the white and blue colour scheme in the architecture hints at waterfront living.
10. **Cultural Exchange/Diversity:** Port activities attract a diverse workforce, fostering cultural exchange seen in the blend of international ships and cultural influences on local activities.

Figure 31. Glimpses of the bigger harbour Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Rades (New Harbor Location):

11. **Sounds/Activities of the Port:** The sounds of loading and unloading, ship engines, and maritime activities significantly contribute to the overall ambiance. As one moves away from the port toward neighbourhoods, the sounds of freight transport become more noticeable.

12. **Contribution to Natural Landscape:** The new harbour alters the natural landscape by introducing port infrastructure, creating a blend of urban and coastal elements. The larger ships visible from across the lake dominate the skyline.

13. **Little Narrative:** Locals shared that during Ben Ali's era, the former autarchic president, the area was carefully maintained, but after the Arab Spring, the struggle to keep streets clean started. While the harbour brings prosperity, unemployment remains a challenge, emphasizing the reliance on fishing for sustenance and cost reduction.

Figure 32. A strong border Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Figure 33. Rades from above, Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

La Goulette/Halq al Wad:

1. **Prominent Natural Features:** Situated along the coastline, La Goulette lies between the Gulf of Tunis and the Lake of Tunis, with canals running connecting the lake and the sea.

2. **Influence of Environment on Atmosphere:** The coastal environment contributes to a relaxed and maritime atmosphere, blending historic and modern elements. The distinct feeling of walking through a harbour area is heightened by the constant presence of water around La Goulette.

3. **Cultural/Social Activities:** Activities range from seaside strolls and fishing to catering to tourists departing from the harbour. The area showcases a harmonious blend of historical significance and daily life.

Figure 34. Halq al wad, Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

4. **Emotions Elicited:** La Goulette evokes a sense of relaxation, history, and maritime charm. The arrival by boat offers a view of the city that has endured for over a thousand years. Closed roads and predominantly pedestrian zones convey a sense of belonging to the locals.

5. **Interaction with Space/Public Space:** People engage in seaside activities, dine at waterfront restaurants, and explore historical structures like old fortresses. Specific areas along the canal provide spots for solitude and reflection.

Figure 35. Living with water, Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

6. **Sense of Community/Solitude:** La Goulette reflects a sense of community during events like the fish market or local school activities. During quieter times along the coastline or riverside, a sense of solitude prevails.

7. **Sensory Experiences:** Sounds of waves, seagulls, harbour activity, and maritime scents define the location. Visual elements include historic structures, ships, and the dynamic seascape with glimpses of the lake and the distant inner city of Tunis.

Figure 36. The distant port, Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

8. **Architectural/Artistic Elements:** Historic buildings, maritime-themed art, and unique blue and white balustrades contribute to the area's uniqueness. Roundabouts ornamented with artwork reflecting maritime life add to the distinctive character.

9. **Visual Cues to the Port:** Ships, port facilities, and maritime-themed architecture serve as visual cues, underlining the area's connection to the harbour.

Figure 37. Celebrating maritime heritage, Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

La Goulette/Halq al Wad:

10. **Cultural Exchange/Diversity:** As a port area, La Goulette attracts a diverse mix of visitors, fostering cultural exchange. Historically, it housed neighbourhoods like Little Sicily, reflecting a vibrant Italian community.

11. **Sounds/Activities of the Port:** Maritime activities, ship sounds, and the arrival of tourists affect the ambiance, showcasing the ongoing vitality of the harbour.

Figure 38. Arriving as a traveller, Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

12. **Contribution to Natural Landscape:** La Goulette, with its blend of historic architecture and coastal setting, enhances the natural landscape, setting Tunis apart from other coastal cities in North Africa.

13. **Little Narrative:** 1732 Jean Ernest Hebenstreit says the following about Tunis, it is located on the edge of a lake connected to the sea by a canal: an asset which facilitates commercial activity and which allows both for travellers and goods, to access it by means of boats while the large ships, designed to navigate in deep waters, stop further away, so that the city is spared from the cannons of European ships. Algiers and Tripoli, on the other hand, he adds, are exposed to these attacks, since the two cities are located on the seaside. The construction of the La Goulette fort, he says, made disappear what remained of the remains of Carthage, thus destroying its most beautiful columns, its triumphal arches and many other monuments. The houses are clean and their walls are lined with colourful tiles. Floors covered with carpets, through their harmonious shapes and the beauty of their colours, provide a feeling of relaxation and well-being" [Hebenstreit, Voyage..., p.113-115].

Figure 39. Local fishermen, Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Carthage

1. **Prominent Natural Features:** Carthage, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea and Lake Tunis, occupies a hillside, providing an amazing view of the Phoenician port and the rest of Tunis city.
2. **Influence of Environment on Atmosphere:** The coastal and historical environment contributes to a nostalgic and culturally rich atmosphere, fostering a contemplative mood.
3. **Cultural/Social Activities:** Visitors explore archaeological sites, museums, and attend cultural events such as music and theatre performances in ancient amphitheatres. Public spaces near the coast offer opportunities for lunch or dinner.
4. **Emotions Elicited:** Carthage invokes a sense of awe, historical reflection, and a connection to ancient civilizations. The ruins prompt both admiration and a touch of envy for the architectural wonders of the past.
5. **Interaction with Space/Public Space:** Visitors predominantly explore historic sites while enjoying coastal views. Public spaces cater to cultural events and moments of peaceful contemplation.
6. **Sense of Community/Solitude:** While tourists visit historical sites during the day, a sense of community is less prominent. The presence of guards, police, and the residential nature of the area creates a quieter atmosphere. Community events, like music festivals, briefly bring a sense of togetherness.
7. **Sensory Experiences:** The sounds of the sea, the scent of history, and visual richness define the location. Archaeological remnants contribute to a sensory-rich experience.

Figure 40. Ruins of Carthage, Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

8.   **Architectural/Artistic Elements:** Ancient ruins, museums, and modern interpretations of historical themes contribute to the area's uniqueness. Plans for a new museum reflect an international architectural competition to preserve various eras of historical remains on the hill.

9.   **Visual Cues to the Port:** While not directly associated with a modern port, ancient port structures and coastal views serve as visual cues, emphasizing its historical maritime connection.

10. **Cultural Exchange/Diversity:** As an archaeological site, Carthage attracts diverse visitors interested in cultural and historical exploration. The neighbourhood, however, is less diverse, mainly occupied by wealthy politicians.

11. **Sounds/Activities of the Port:** Although not a contemporary port, the sounds of the sea and occasional fishers' boats contribute to the overall ambiance, connecting the modern observer with ancient maritime activities.

12. **Contribution to Natural Landscape:** Carthage, with its ancient ruins overlooking the sea, enhances the natural landscape, merging historical remnants with coastal elements.
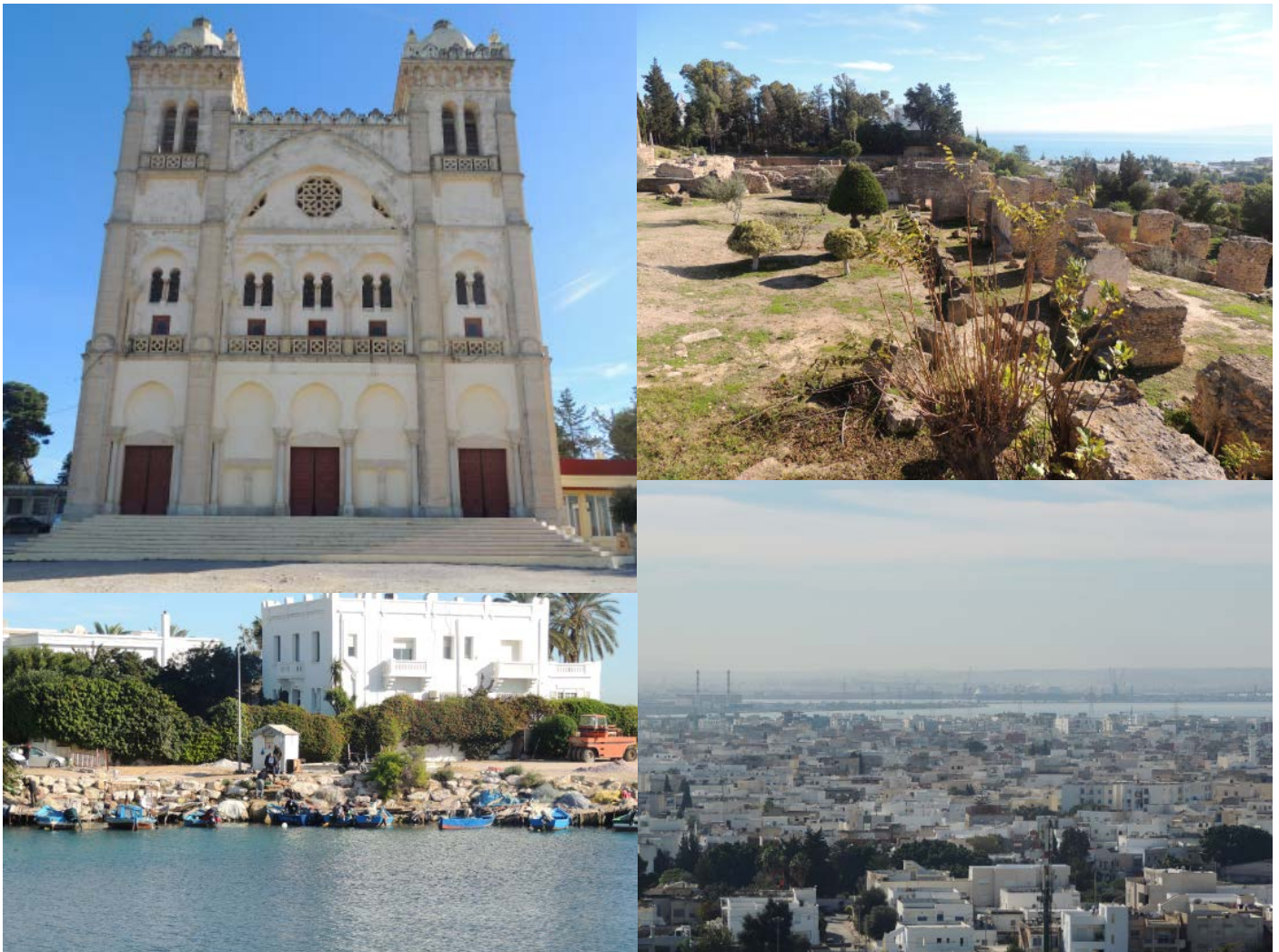
Figure 41. The diveristy of Carthage, Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Carthage

13. **Local Stories/Anecdotes:** Local stories focus on Carthage's historical significance, its role as a maritime centre in antiquity, and ongoing preservation efforts to showcase its importance.

   During my journey to Carthage i visited the Carthage museum at the hill top once a place where the wealthiest of Carthage lived. This became the grave for the crusading French king Louis. There are plans to expand the museum through a tender. This shows that the Tunisian government sees a great importance to teach about the history of this region.
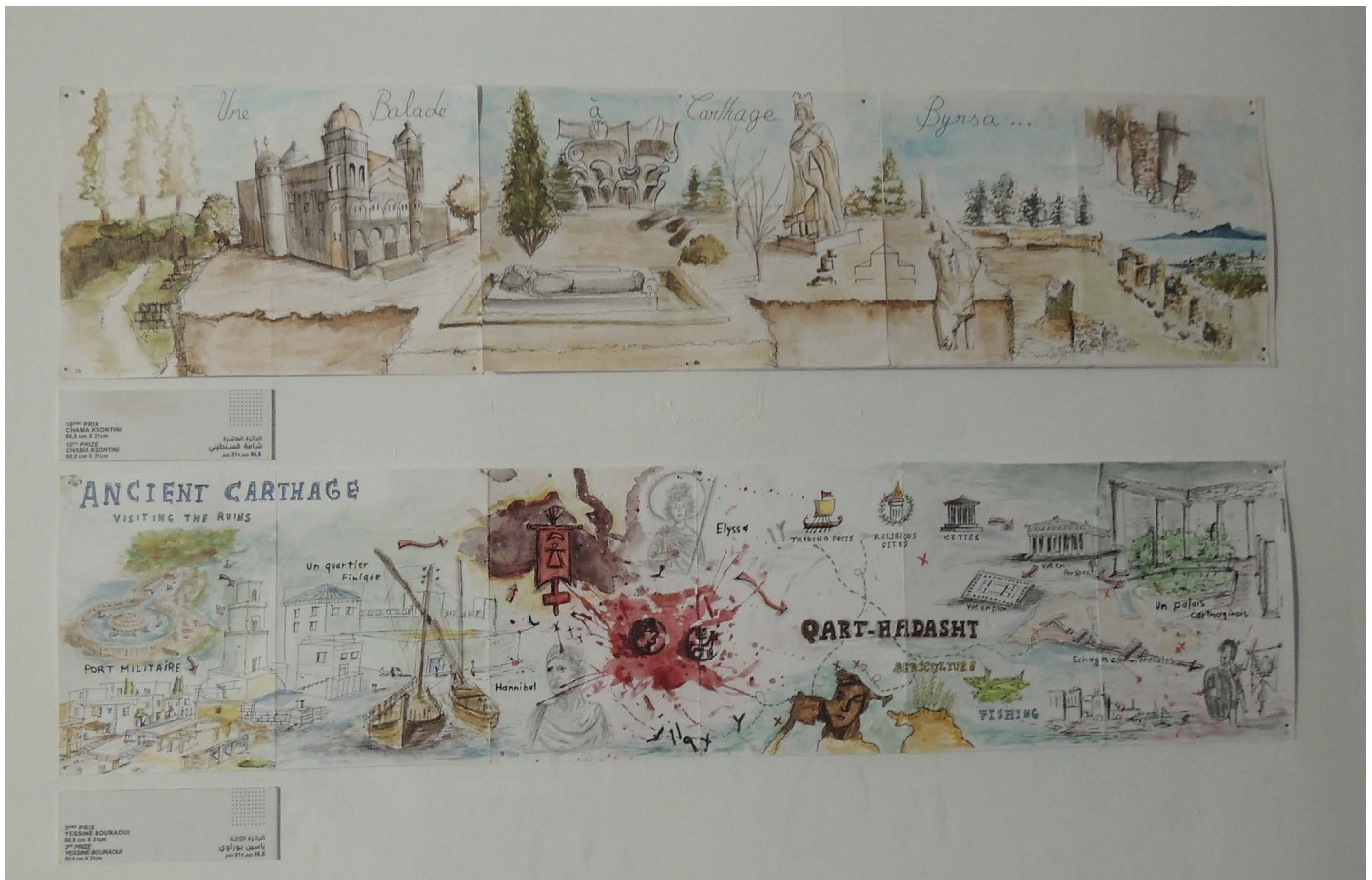
Figure 42. Display museum of Carthage, Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Figure 43. Carthage from the sea and reversed, Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Collective memory

Strolling through the neighborhood known as Halq al Wad, or "Throat of the River," one stumbles upon a painting depicting a familiar building situated along what appeared to be a canal. Once intrigued, people could embark on a search to uncover the origins of this structure. They will find out that this structure was once the gate of an old arsenal located beyond the city limits, at the entrance to the lake. However, today, it stands as part of a road. This discovery is a reminder that the collective memory of this neighborhood retains a profound sense of what this road once was in the past. If searched hard enough there could be found traces of the port city identity scattered around the city.

Figure 44. Collective memory Halq al wad, Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)
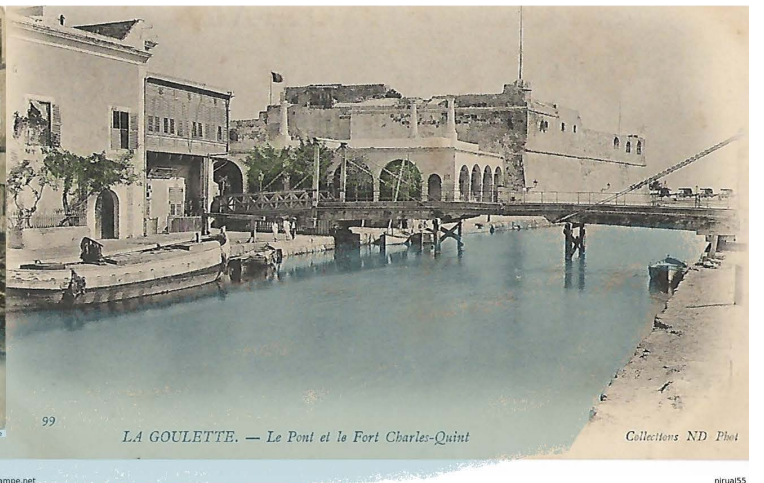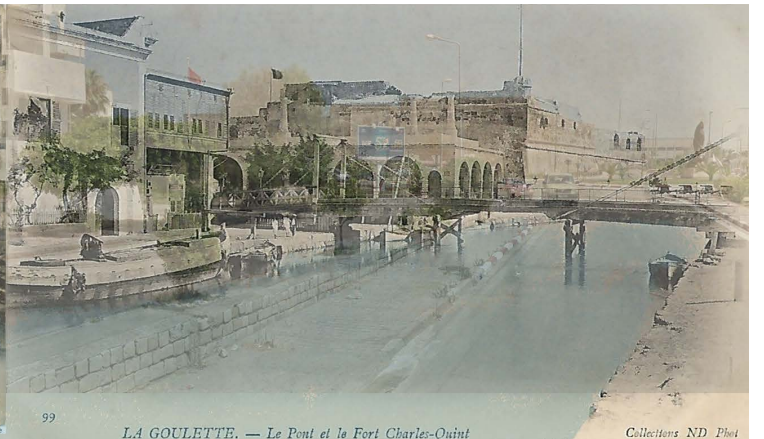
Figure 45. Early 19th century versus today, Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Mental mapping in Tunis

During my exploration of Tunis, I engaged young adults in an exercise to visually represent the city through mental maps. The method of mental mapping involves asking participants to draw a map from memory, highlighting the elements they find most significant. This approach does not rely on external references or consultations; instead, it captures the participants' personal, subjective understanding of the area based on their memories and perceptions. (Harteveld, 2021)

I used mental mapping to understand how people perceive and remember spatial environments. These maps often reveal the cognitive and emotional connections people have with different parts of the city. The process included the following steps:

Prompting the Participants: Participants are asked to draw a map of a specific area, in this case, the city Tunis, and the port city Tunis.
Drawing from Memory: Participants rely solely on their memory to create these maps, ensuring that the results reflect their personal experiences and perceptions.
Analysis of Maps: The collected maps are analyzed to identify common themes, significant landmarks, and the spatial organization that participants emphasize.
This method helped understanding the mental images people have of their environments, which can be significantly different from official or cartographic maps.

When asked to illustrate the city Tunis, the majority of students depicted the main avenue of the French quarter. This avenue, reminiscent of similar urban elements in Paris and other cities, seems to represent Tunis for them highlighting a focus on more modern or Westernized parts of the city over the traditional and historical areas.. Remarkably, only one student chose to draw the iconic Bab al Bhar from the old medina.
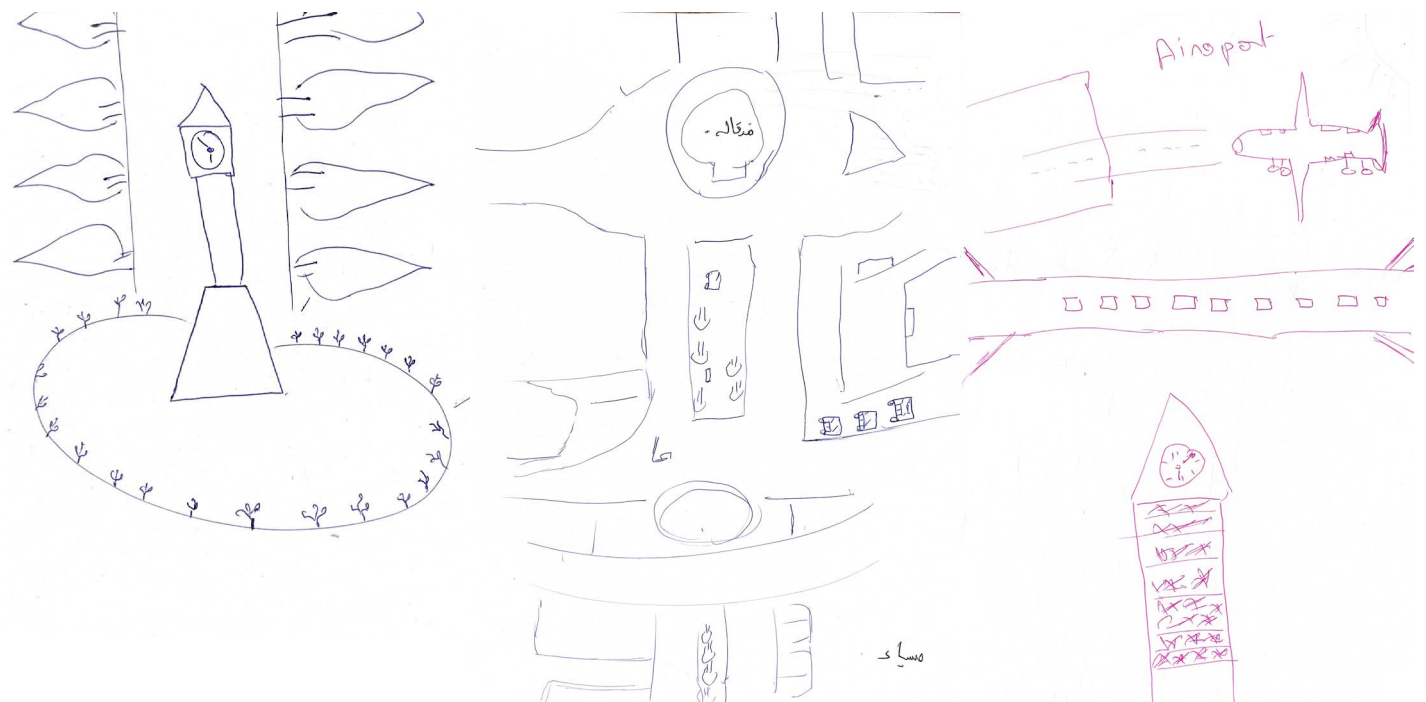
Figure 46. Mindmapping in Tunis, [Drawing] (Citizens of Tunis, 2023)

Mohe

Hotel

BING

فطور

Call~

مسجد

شارع الحبيب

بورقيبة

stop

عمران

باب

بحر

55

When I asked the young adults to draw the port city of Tunis, some students struggled to visualize it, while others depicted logistic routes, despite the physical distance between the harbor and the inner city. This demonstrated their retained awareness of the region's geographical features, indicating that elements of the harbor were ingrained in their memory. But what stood out was that most of them focused exclusively on the port. This reveals a clear mental distinction between the port and the inner city. Their emphasis on the port in these drawings suggests that the port area holds significant importance for the participants and is perceived as a separate entity from the rest of the city.

This method effectively highlights the subjective spatial perceptions and cultural biases present in the minds of the participants, providing valuable insights for urban planning and design
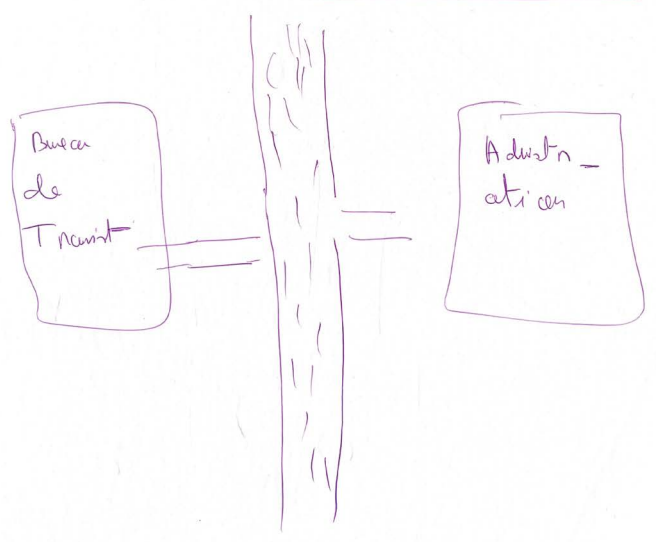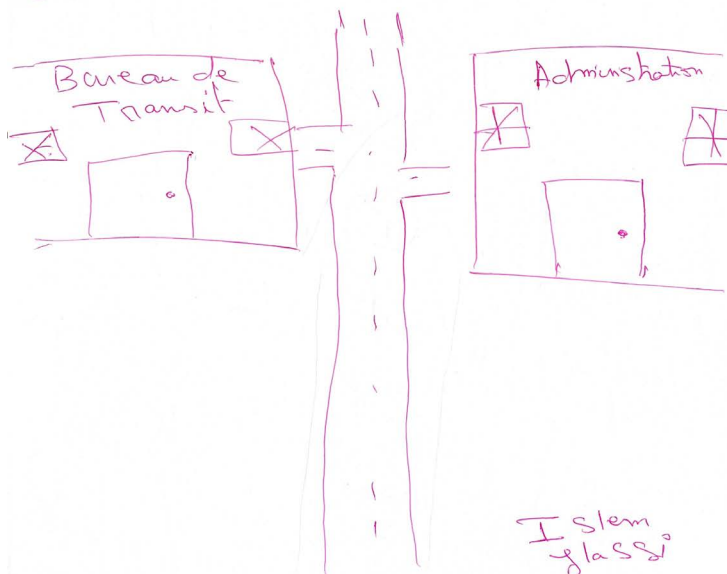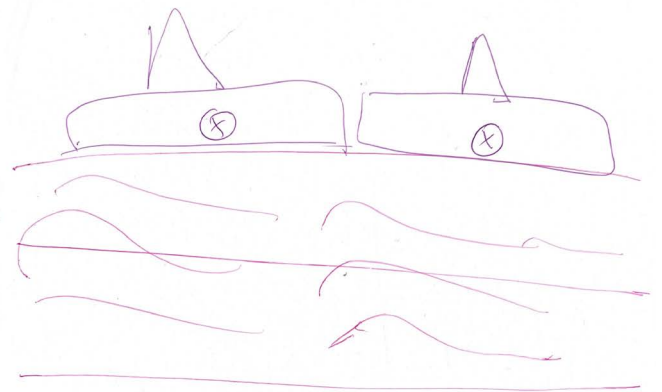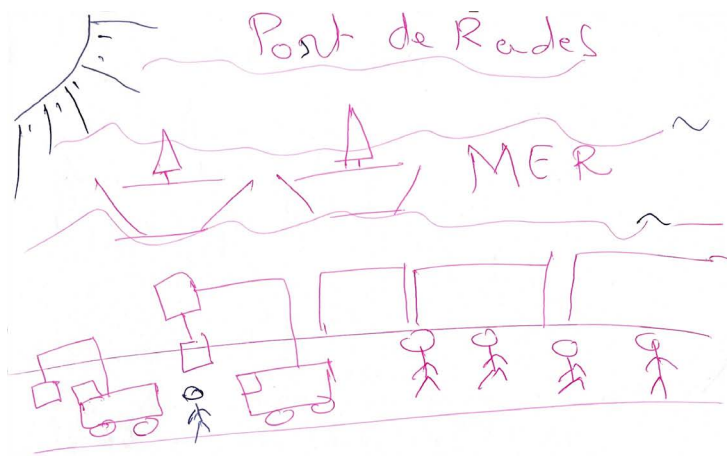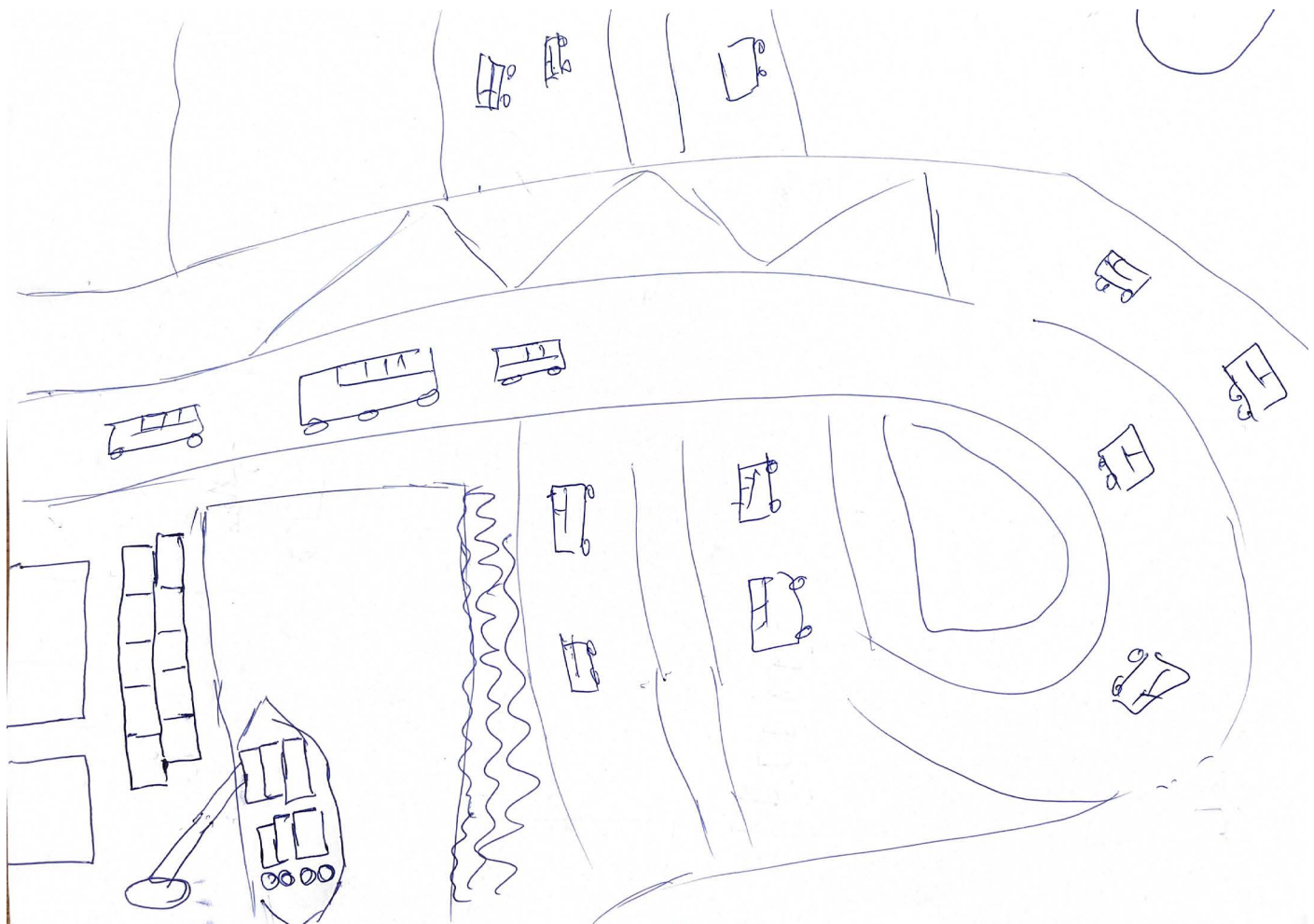
Port de Rades

MER ~

Bureau de Transit

Administration

Bureau de Transit

Administration

Islem glassi

Figure 47. Ibn Khaldun about change of identity, Tunis, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Exploring Tunis: Navigating the Hybrid Identity of a Divided City

In the vibrant tapestry of Tunisian culture, the city of Tunis reflects the complex layers of its diverse identity. It is visible in its architecture through the different styled neighbourhoods. Here, within the bustling streets and historic alleyways, the concept of hybridity takes centre stage, offering a nuanced understanding of the city's rich cultural fabric.

Drawing upon diverse scholarly perspectives, including studies such as "Confused or multicultural: Third culture individuals' cultural identity" by Battesti and Puig (2017), we delve into the complexities of Tunisian identity. One might say Tunisian identity is a "third culture," reflecting the blending of multiple cultural worlds, where ancestral traditions intertwine with contemporary urban influences (Battesti & Puig, 2017).

The turmoil of recent times, notably the Arab Spring, has sparked a profound re-evaluation of urban space in Tunis. Scholarly works like "Turning a city inside-out: on the re-appropriation of urban space in Tunisia in times of revolt" by Ben Yakoub (2022), shed light on the transformative power of grassroots movements in reclaiming public spaces.

These movements have not only reshaped the physical landscape of the city but have also catalysed a renewed sense of civil engagement and social cohesion (Ben Yakoub, 2022).

A new forms of public spaces are emerging In Middle Eastern and North African cities and replacing the old. These spaces welcome the interaction of different socio-economic categories, and are progressing towards a certain diversity, in gender and age" (Navez-Bouchanine, 2005, as cited in Battesti, 2006). Among these new configurations are new forms of commercial spaces, such as malls (Abaza, 2006, as cited in Battesti, 2006). The reclaiming and redesign of downtown public spaces and parks in Cairo by the lower class also mark the invention of a unique urban, recreational ambiance (Battesti, 2006)

Within Tunis you would encounter a mosaic of identities, each contributing to the city's vibrant tapestry. Tunis embodies a harmonious blend of past and present, tradition and innovation, whilst still carrying the burden of these changes some for the better and some for the worst. These changes makes people question themselves, in the 1990s as the country grappled with conflicting urban styles and architectural approaches the quest for identity was part of civil discussions.

"

Tunisia was undergoing a process of searching for a renewed identity,
"

Overcoming spatial divisions became a central theme, emphasizing the need for the city's various structural components such as the medina, colonial city, emerging lakeside developments, and expanding suburbs to seamlessly merge, fostering a sense of unity. Stambouli (1996), Professor of Sociology at the University of Tunis, says that the development of a renewed and distinctive identity is important, there needs to be a balance between modernity's compliance to the global system and the opportunity for a progressive reinterpretation of self-identity.

Over two decades later, Tunisia's transition to democracy brought forth complex identity issues.
"

Being a Tunisian currently is marked by two conflicting narratives:
"

one of semi-Westernization linked to French colonialism and another rooted in the Islamic Arabic past (Fetouri M., 2021), Dr. Fetouri M. is a Libyan academic focused on Political Science, Media Studies, and Middle East Studies. This identity division also influenced urban planning and city architecture. Scholars like Kenzari, B. (2006) highlighted the challenge of preserving Tunis's architectural identity while adapting to modernization. Research by Pegorin, E., & Eula, L.(2018) underscored the importance of thoughtful urban planning to navigate the delicate balance between historical preservation and contemporary development in Tunis.

The effect of change, change of view

Not only is the Identity of the population constantly changing but there is also a shift in perspective which goes beyond mere economic exchanges; even in literature this transformation in societal views is visible. In antiquity, "Africa", was used when talking about modern day Tunisia, it was known as a place of refuge rather than flight, a wealthy region whose trade flourished. Salvian, in his work "On the Government of God" (5th century), states the following, "Africa was once so rich that it seems to me the a bundance of her commerce filled not only her own treasuries but those of the whole world as well."

Contemporary perceptions, however, paint a contrasting picture. A growing desire among artists to journey towards Italy symbolizes a longing for escape. In the realm of street art, particularly among the youth, Italy represents a beacon of hope amidst the despair of unemployment. Balti, a renowned figure in the Arabic-speaking world, captures the sentiment through his lyrics portraying the plight of the Harragas (passport burners). He mentions them waking up to the bells of the church but missing the sound of the adhan, which is the call to prayer in Islam heard 5 times a day in Tunisia. He also emphasises on his view of the sea singing "hello my darling, what made young people flee to Italy ? , the sea and its high waves , drowning and sinkings , its pigeons are cramped I lost my ability to distinguish between my right and left, and my mind only thinks of my loved ones. "

While their ancestors reintroduced to Europe Greek philosophy, brought with them irrigation systems mathematics and astronomy, symbolically the irony of this horror is that they are the ones who are now lost at sea searching educations and job opportunities. The people harbour a deeply rooted affection for their homeland, yet it has failed to fulfil their desires. The potential synergy between Tunisia and Europe remains untapped, leaving a void where prosperity could have blossomed. This altered perspective, compounded by a fear of the sea, takes a toll not only on individuals but also on the urban fabric as a whole.

During the journey, it became clear that within the complicated layers of the city, traces of the port city identity still linger if one searches hard enough. What struck me most was the continuity of certain behaviours, preserved over millennia since the time of Carthage. The presence of fishermen, fundamental to this region and characteristic of the port city identity, was notable in the urban voids adjacent to major developments. Fishermen, essential to Tunisian culture renowned for its couscous and fish, serve as a tangible symbol of the port city identity. In a region where couscous is a staple, Tunisia stands alongside southern Italy as one of the few places where this dish is paired with fish or calamari, underscoring the maritime heritage ingrained in the local culinary tradition and its connection to other regions connected by the Mediterranean.

Figure 48. The view of the Mediterr
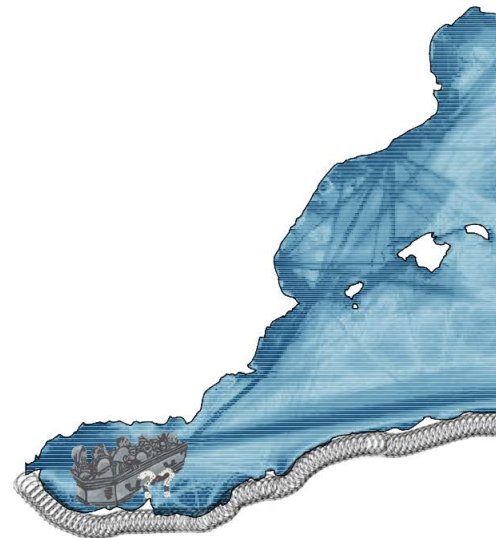
Figure 49. The view of the Mediterr
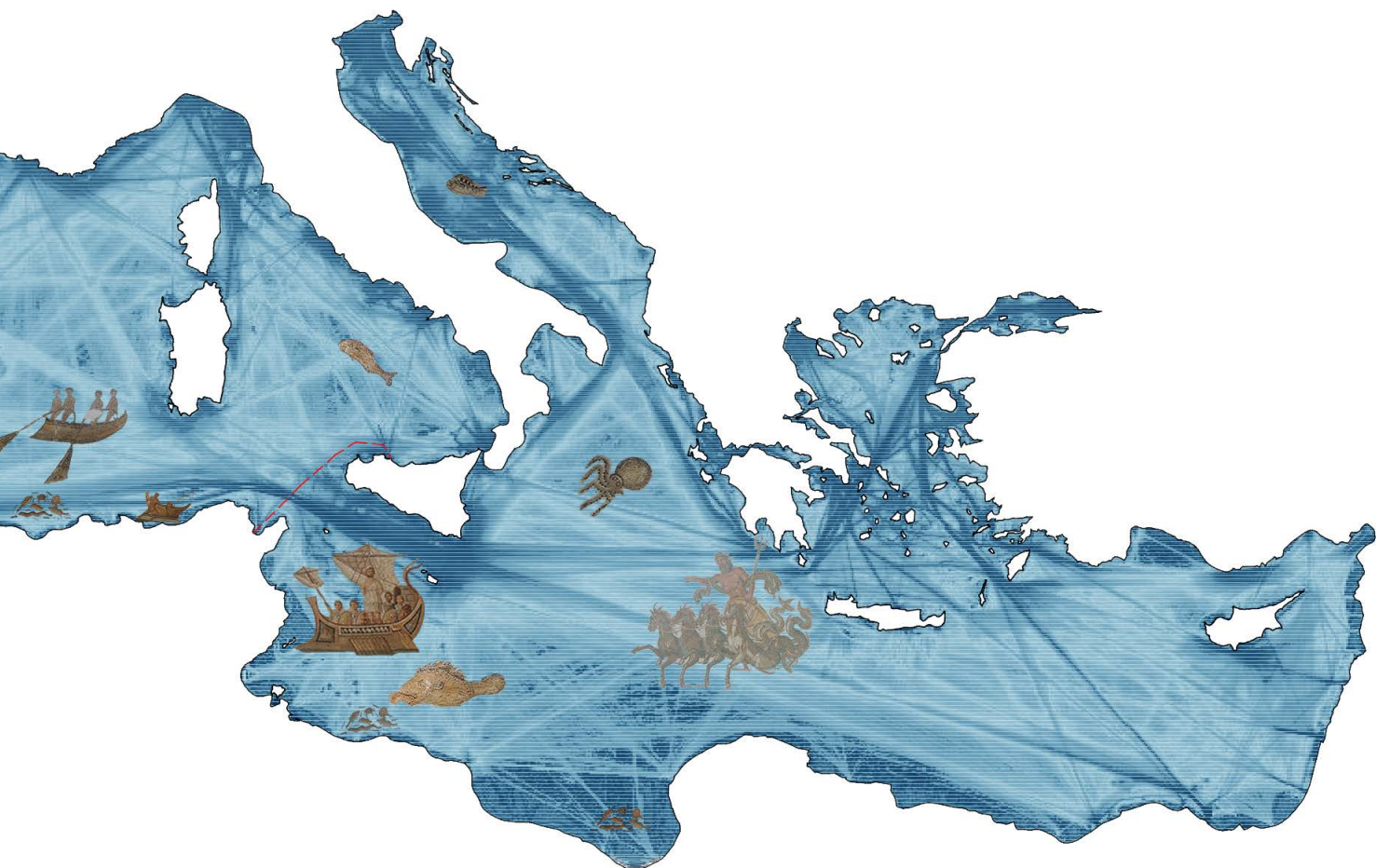
...anean before, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)
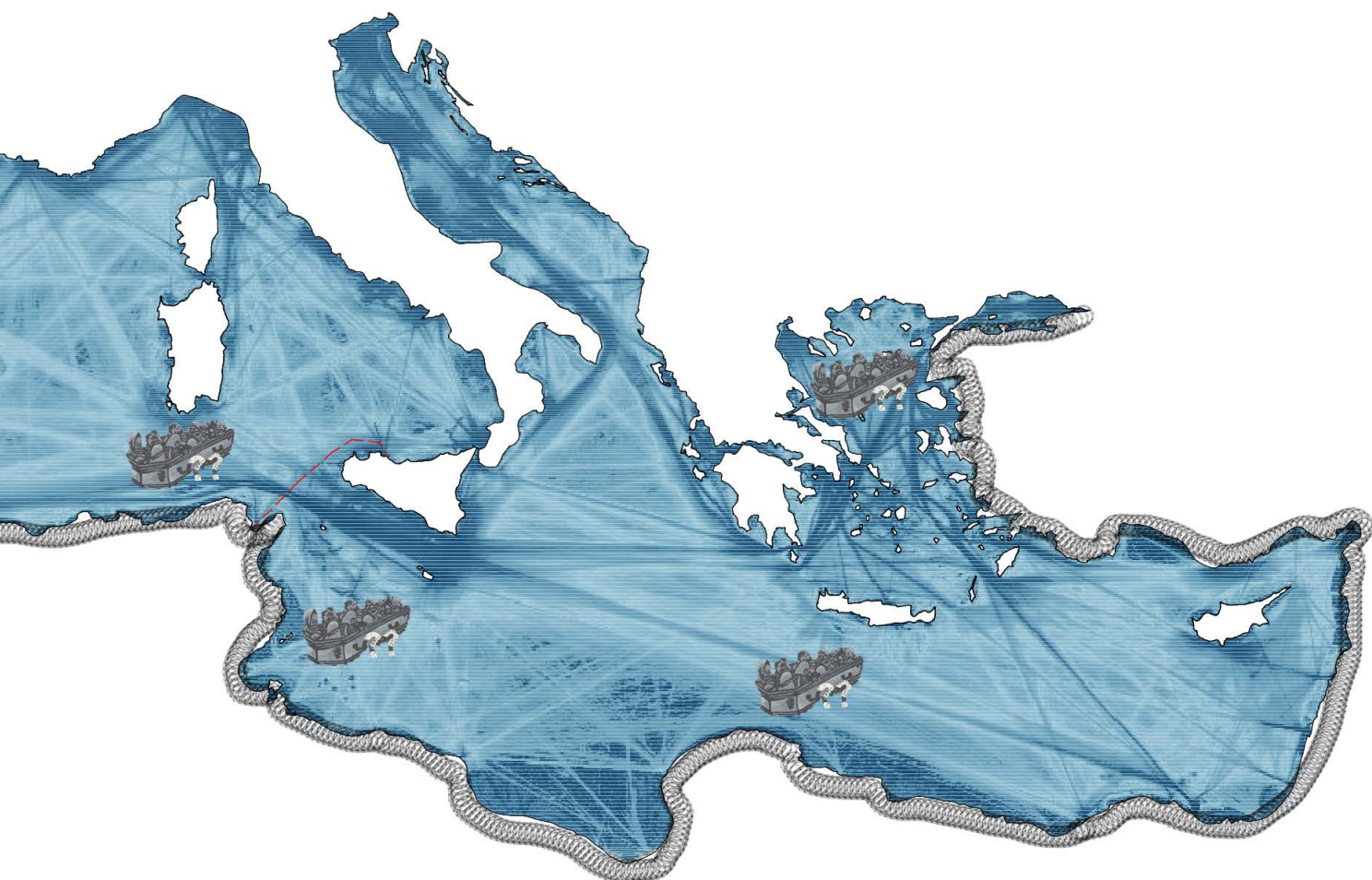
...anean now, [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Figure 50. Fishing today, Tunis [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Figure 51. Fishing centuries ago, Tunis [Picture] (Own work, 2024)

Figure 52. Fishing centuries ago, Beni khiar [Picture] (Own work, 2023)

Figure 53. Fishing centuries ago, Beni khiar [Picture] (Own work, 2024)

In the hybrid tapestry of Tunisian culture, the way the citizens interact with public spaces offers profound insights into the city's identity. Designers should focus on enhancing these interactions by acknowledging and incorporating the informal uses of public areas. Observations show that Tunisians frequently utilize various spots not originally designed for seating, reflecting a cultural adaptability and resourcefulness to places which are designed for a different kind of usage. Not giving in to a space which is designed for them to use in a different way, trying to alter their way of living. As noted by Harteveld (2021), public spaces in port cities often bear the marks of historical and social dynamics, which influence how these areas are perceived and used by the local population .

Designers should aim to create flexible and inclusive public spaces that reflect the communal and adaptable nature of Tunisian society. This involves recognizing and preserving the informal seating and gathering spots that are integrated into the city's fabric. By doing so, designers can support the continuation of social behaviors that have persisted through time, as highlighted by Baker, Eichhorn, and Griffiths (2019), who emphasize the importance of decolonizing methodologies in research to ensure that diverse cultural practices are respected and maintained .

Additionally, considering the rich maritime heritage of Tunis, designers should incorporate elements that celebrate this legacy. Public spaces could feature thematics hinting to a maritime history or interactive exhibits that highlight the city's historical connection to the sea, thus fostering a sense of shared identity and pride among citizens. This approach aligns with Wagner's (2012) discussion on the significance of water as a common resource that shapes cultural and social cohesion.

In conclusion, by integrating these elements into urban planning, designers can create public spaces that not only serve practical purposes but also resonate deeply with the cultural and historical identity of Tunis. This strategy will help maintain the city's unique character while fostering a sense of community and belonging among its inhabitants.

وصول
ARRIVAL

The journey home, discovering Tunis current identity

In the quest to locate the fishermen, this map marks the areas where local fishermen store their boats and equipment informally, leading to pollution and potentially tarnishing their reputation as contributors to pollution. These makeshift docking spots are scattered across various shores around the lake, with approximately 100 boats positioned around the lake's shoreline and 200 along the Mediterranean coast, mostly in remote areas. The fishermen employ two primary methods to sell their catch: roadside vending near their fishing grounds or through local markets and fishmongers. Subsequently, the fish is purchased for personal consumption or by restaurants and culinary establishments.

Figure 54. The route of the fishermen, Tunis [Picture] (Own work, 2024)

With the fishermen locating in urban voids lays a major concern is that these urban voids will disappear once the future urban plans are build. Once this will happen this will most likely force fishermen to relocate, potentially into nature reserves. In such scenarios, they may persist in their fishing practices in an informal way, thereby continuing polluting, or they might be entirely displaced. This would signify the loss of an integral element that has shaped the region's identity for millennia. Not only would a tangible aspect of the port city identity vanish, but it would also convey a message that this layer of identity is not deemed crucial for the city's continuity. These developmental strategies exhibit a futuristic vision for the region that does not align with the needs of its inhabitants, similar to the disregard exhibited by the Nouvelle Ville.
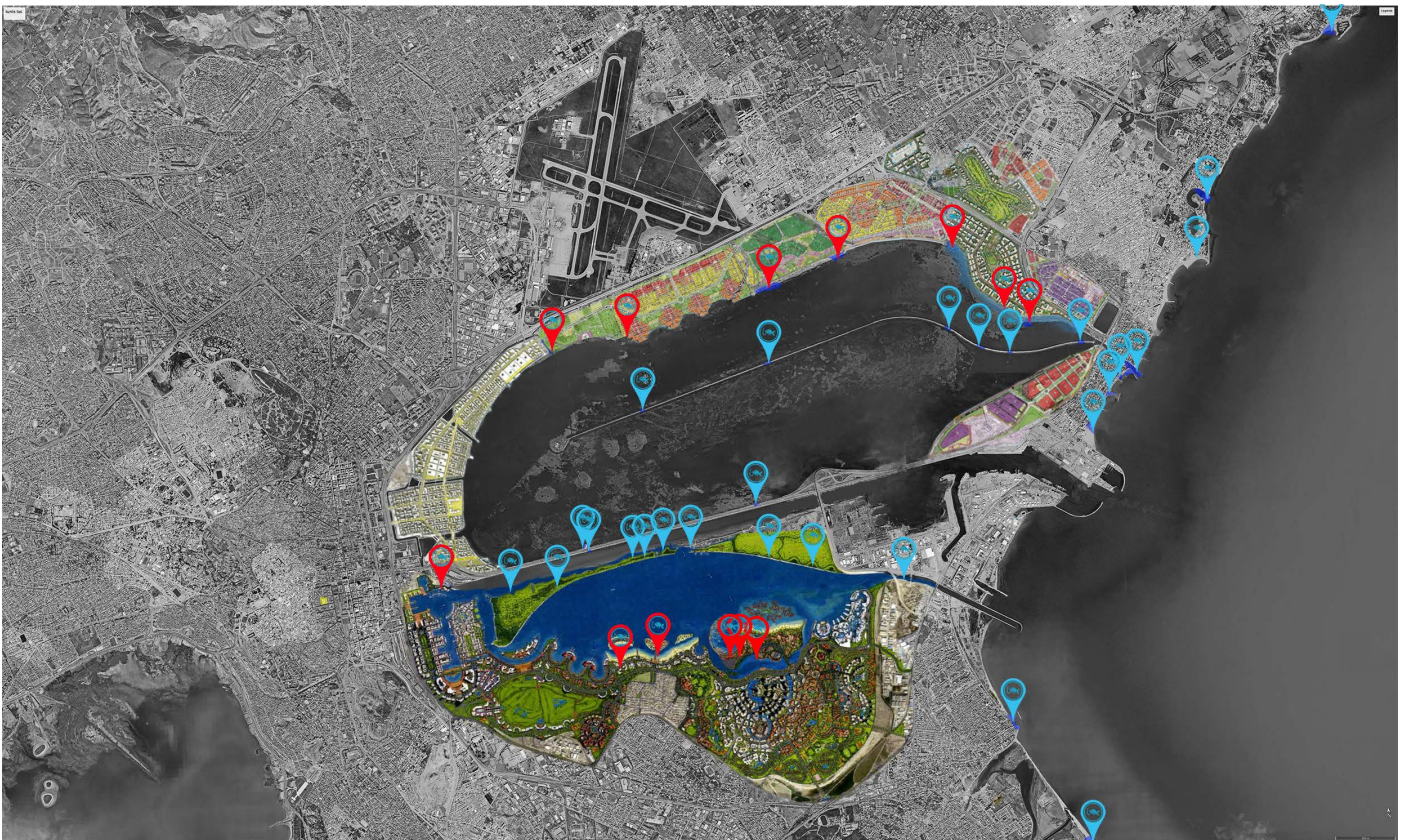
Figure 55. The displacement of the fishermen, Tunis [Picture] (Own work, 2024)

Public space or common space

Like the Nouvelle Ville the new urban plans demonstrate a lack of an understanding regarding the use of public space. In Tunis, public spaces are not typically designed with formal squares or plazas. Instead, Tunisians utilize circulation spaces as communal areas. The concept of public and private spaces differs significantly from other Mediterranean countries like Italy and France. In Tunis a woust a dar, courtyard, is used for social gatherings, nearly all houses would have a courtyard in tunisia as can be seen in a map of the old medina, there is no big park but rather a lot of small patches connected by common space. The streets themselves serve as meeting points for individuals who may not necessarily meet at their homes there is no public square where people gather. This social interaction occurs within the narrow streets of the medina or in more open areas shaded by trees. The climate in this region discourages the creation of open public squares; thus, many medina streets are covered, blurring the distinction between indoor and outdoor spaces. Furthermore, there exists a hybridity in Tunisian street design, where streets can transition between covered, semi-covered, and open sections. To effectively design for the needs of Tunisian citizens, it is necessary to understand the organic evolution and usage of public spaces within the city.
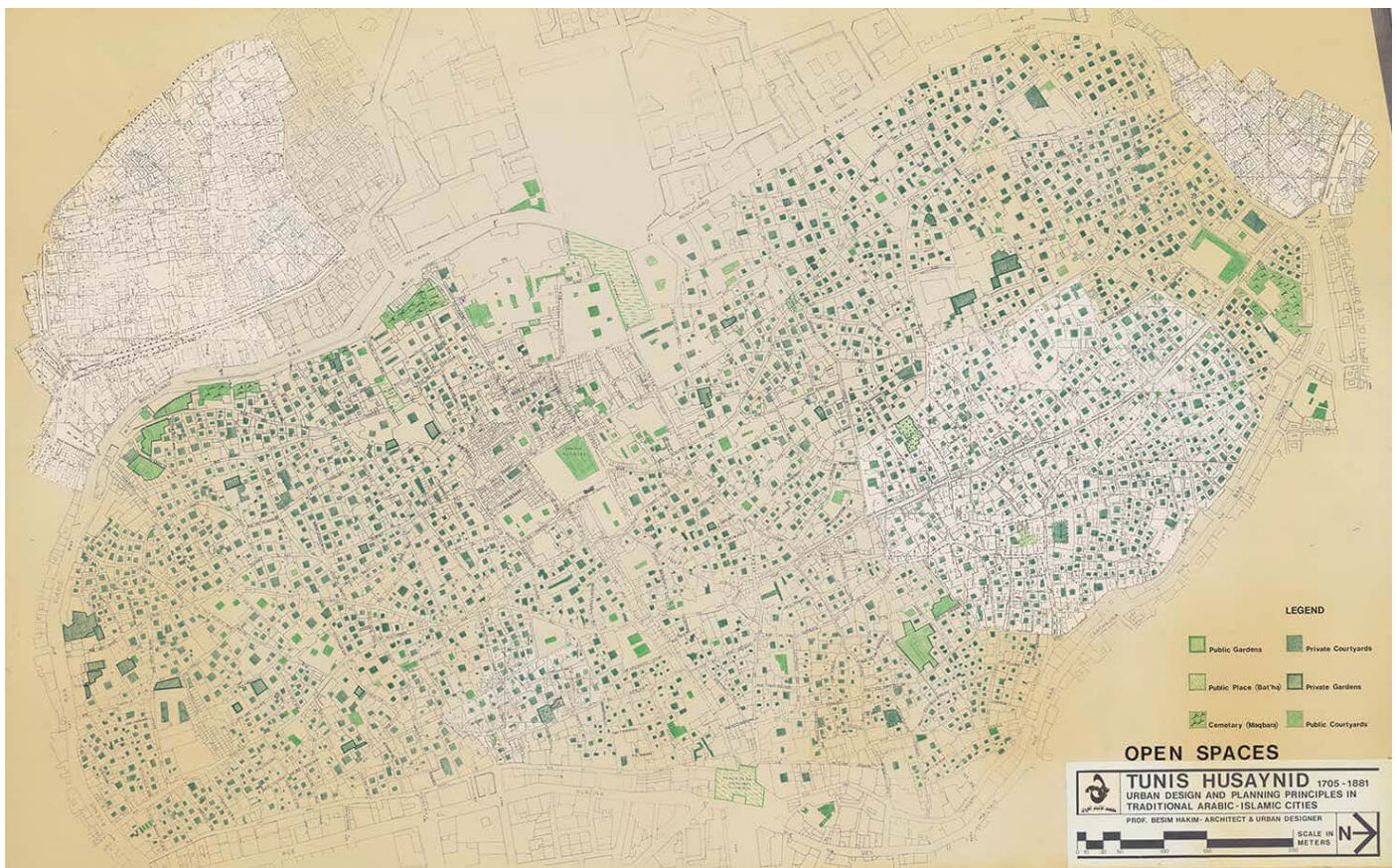
Figure 56. The green spaces old Medina, Tunis [Drawing](Atlas for the Medina of Tunis, n.d.)

Figure 57. The common space in the old Medina, Tunis [Picture] (Own work, 2024)

Figure 58. The common space created by shadein the old Medina, Tunis [Picture] (Own work, 2024)

Figure 59. Market underneath a tree Old medina, Tunis (Limited, n.d.)

During lunchtime it became clear that the women which are working usualy would grab a sandwich and claim the sidewalk and stairs as seating space highligting the adaptability of these common spaces.

Figure 60. Claiming the public space, Tunis (Own work, 2024)
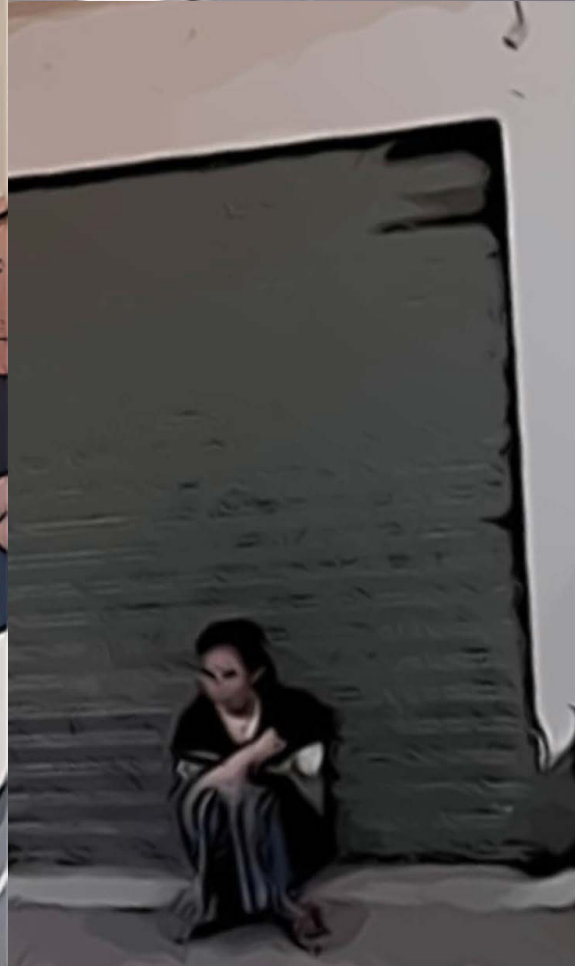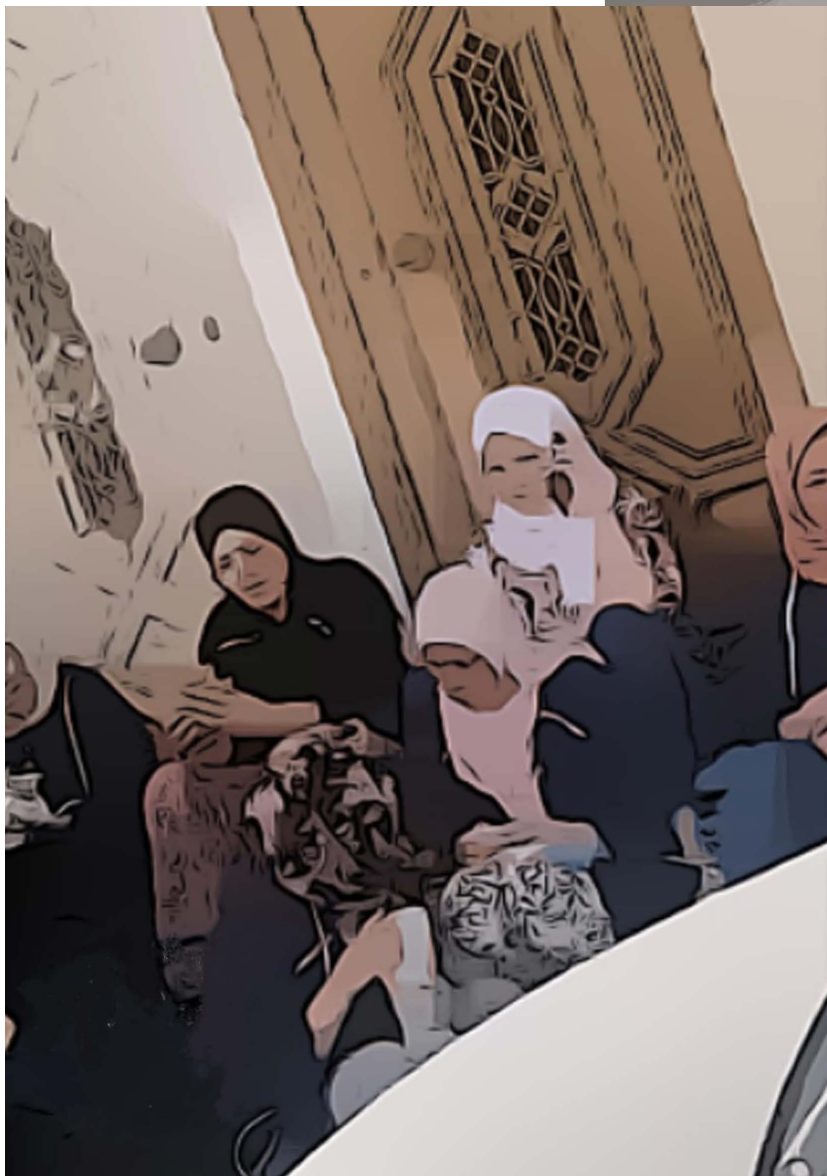
During the journey through Tunis, it became evident that traces of the port city identity persist within the city's intricate layers. Notably, the presence of fishermen, fundamental to Tunisian culture, serves as a tangible symbol of the city's maritime heritage. Through informal interactions in public spaces, Tunisians demonstrate a cultural adaptability and resourcefulness, utilizing various spots not originally designed for seating.

It became clear that there are potential threats to the preservation of Tunis's port identity. The informal docking spots used by fishermen may disappear due to future urban development, potentially displacing this integral aspect of the city's identity. Similarly, the lack of understanding regarding the use of public space in urban planning demonstrates a disconnect between development strategies and the needs of Tunisian citizens.

It is also important to acknowledge and incorporate these informal uses of public areas into urban planning. By recognizing and preserving these elements, designers can create flexible and inclusive public spaces that reflect the communal and adaptable nature of Tunisian society. Combining public space with the waterfront and the integration of thematic elements celebrating the city's maritime heritage can foster a sense of shared identity and pride among citizens. Which might result in a change of perspective towards the sea.

In response to these findings, the proposed design concept aims to preserve port city identity through inclusive urban spaces. By creating shading and retaining informal seating and gathering spots, integrating thematic elements the public space can be created using a symbol of Tunis the olive tree which also celebrates maritime heritage being the most traded product with Italy. Creating a fish market near the waterfront and a docking area prioritizes the needs of local fishermen, the design seeks to create a vibrant and inclusive urban environment that honors Tunis's past while embracing its future.
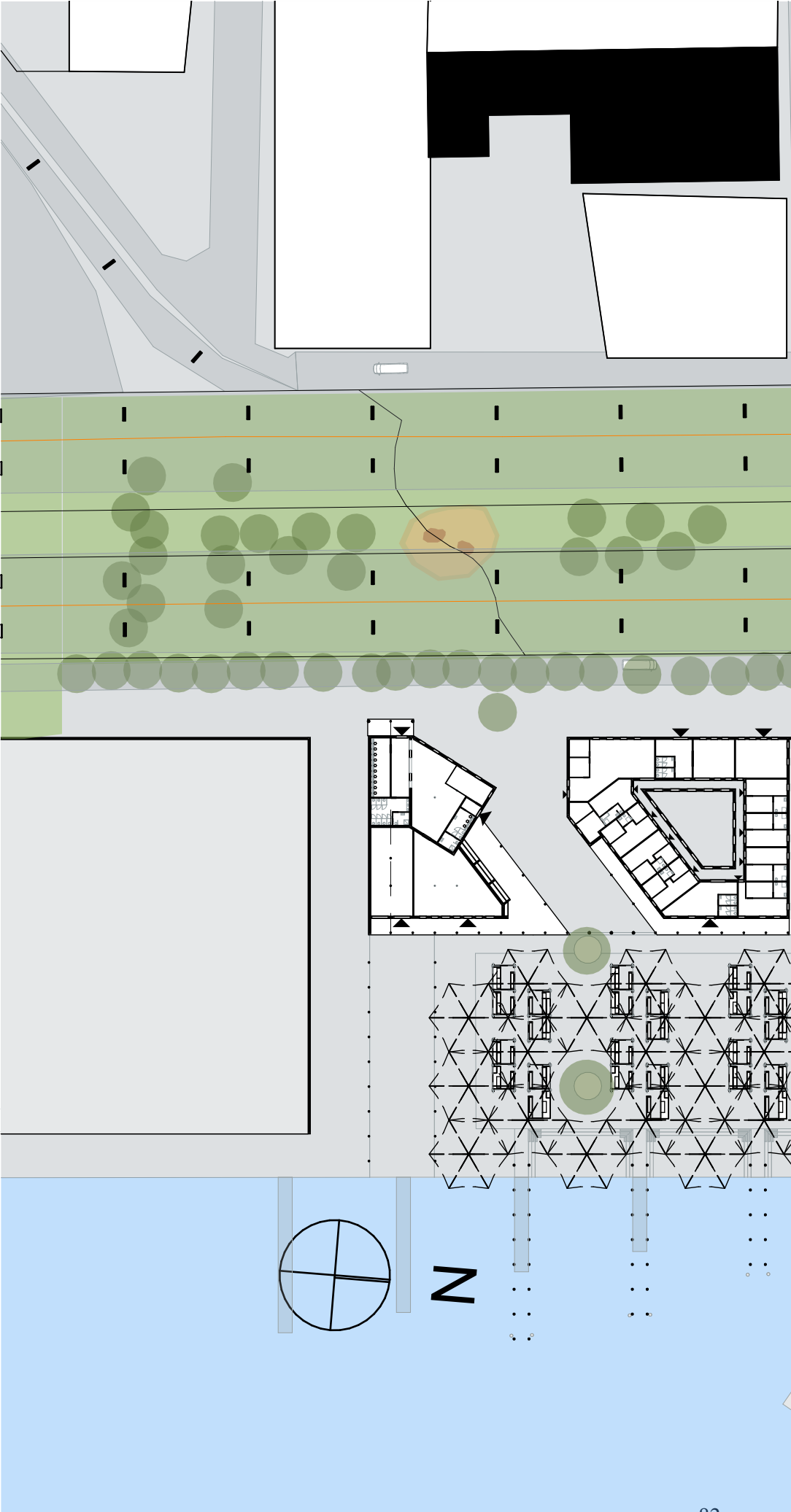

Figure 61. The forming of common space, Tunis (Own work, 2024)
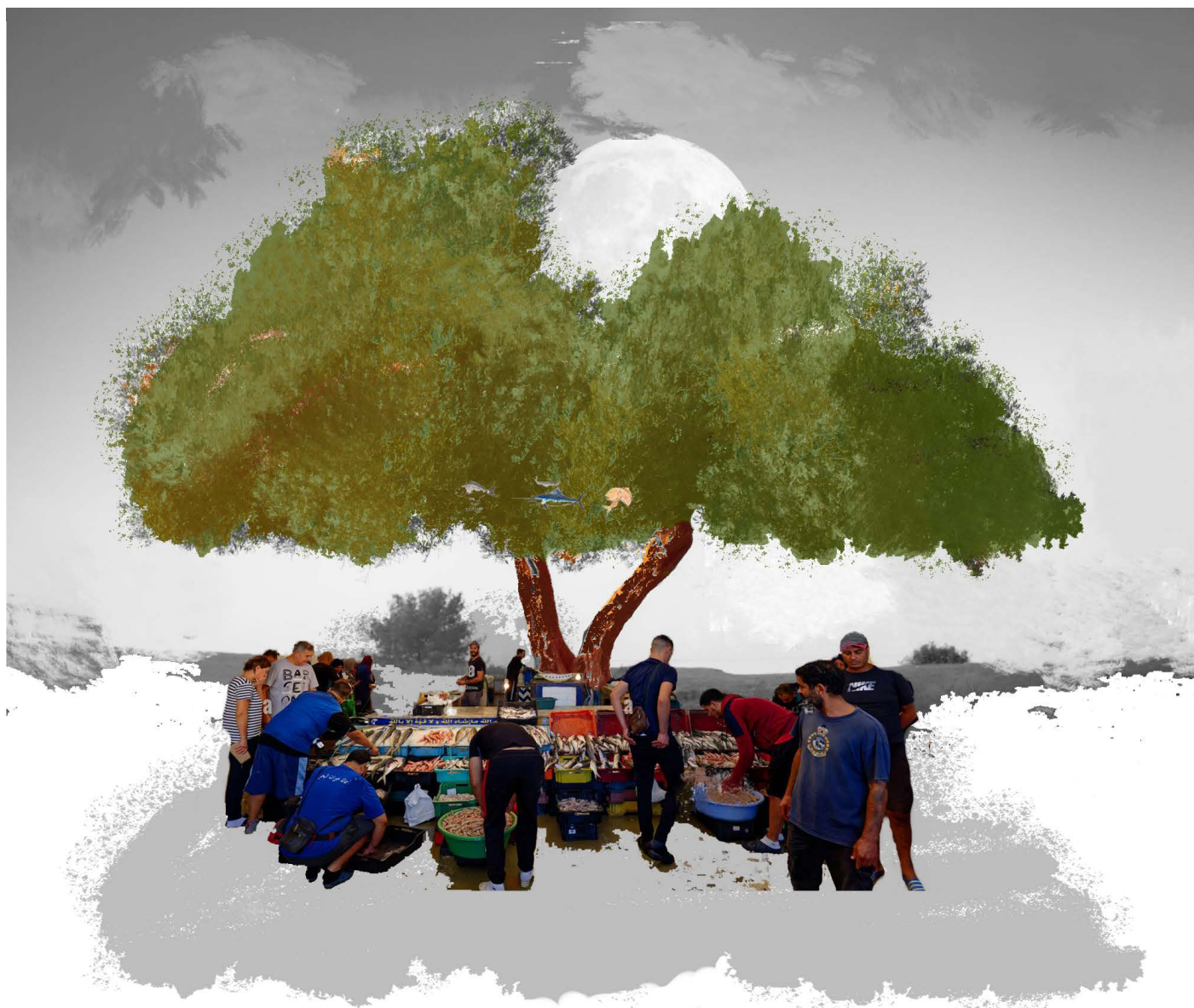
Figure 62. Creating a common space for the Fishermen, Tunis (Own work, 2024)

Conclusion

The exploration of Tunis's urban landscape and identity reveals a rich tapestry woven with historical, cultural, and socio-economic threads. Through various lenses from collective memory, mental mapping, scholarly research, to contemporary observations we gain insights into how Tunisians perceive and interact with their city.

Beginning with a reflection on collective memory, the journey through Halq al Wad unveils remnants of the past that still resonate within the present. The painting depicting an old arsenal gate now integrated into a modern road serves as a tangible reminder of the city's evolution over time. Similarly, the exercise of mental mapping reveals subjective spatial perceptions, with participants predominantly focusing on modern, Westernized elements of the city rather than its traditional and historical areas and clearly dividing the port area and the city as two different entity's.

Informed by scholarly perspectives, including discussions on Tunisian identity and the impact of grassroots movements on urban space, it became clear that there is a nuanced understanding of the city's hybrid identity. The complexities of Tunisian identity, shaped by a blend of ancestral traditions and contemporary influences, underscore the importance of balancing modernization with the preservation of historical and cultural heritage.

Furthermore, observations during the field research highlight the adaptive nature of Tunisian society, particularly in the use of public spaces. Rather then formal squares or plazas, the public spaces are the circulation spaces and courtyards for social gatherings, which reflects a unique approach to urban design influenced by climate and cultural practices.

The presence of fishermen, symbolic of the city's maritime heritage, faces threats from future urban plans that may displace informal docking spots. The disconnect between development strategies and the needs of citizens underscores the importance of acknowledging and incorporating informal uses of public areas into urban planning.

In response to these findings, a proposed design concept aims to preserve port city identity through inclusive urban spaces. By integrating thematic elements celebrating maritime heritage and prioritizing the needs of local fishermen, the design seeks to create a vibrant and inclusive urban environment that honours Tunis's past while embracing its future.

In conclusion, the exploration of Tunis's urban landscape and identity reveals a dynamic interplay between past and present, tradition and innovation. By recognizing and preserving the diverse layers of Tunisian culture embedded within the city's fabric, we can create urban spaces that resonate deeply with the collective memory and lived experiences of its inhabitants, fostering a sense of community and belonging, and even might change the perception of the sea.

تصميم
DESIGN

Floor plan 1:10.000

Floor plan 1:1.000

N

N

Floor plan 1:200

5. Interaction with Space/Public Space:
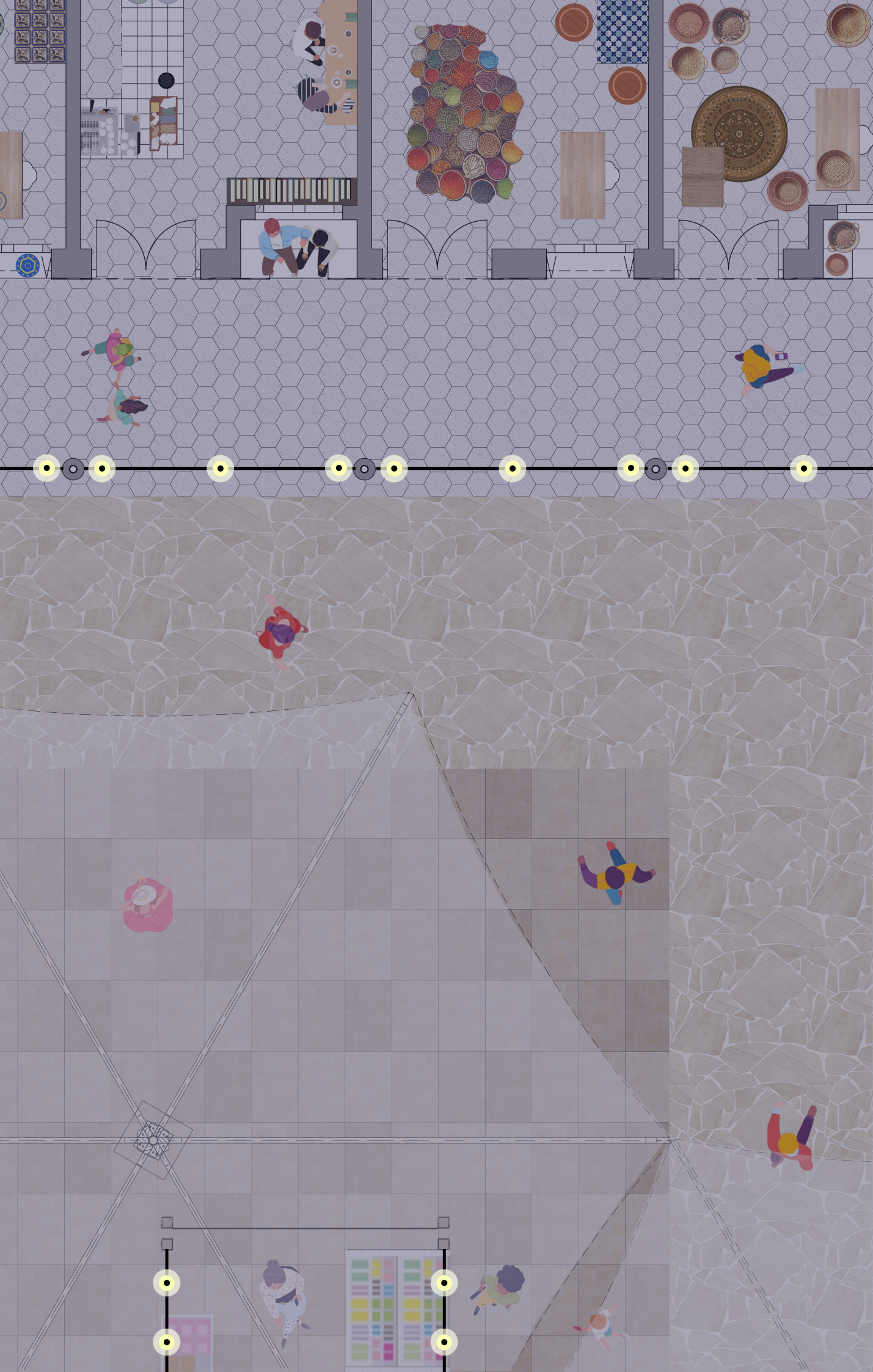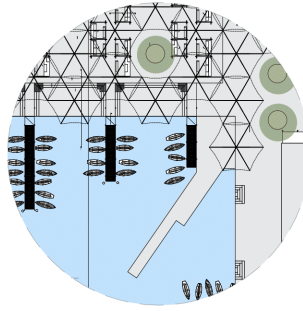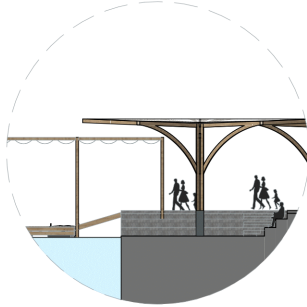- Implementation: Create dynamic public spaces that accommodate various activities, from relaxed strolls to lively markets and cafes.
- Purpose: Encourages active use of public spaces, making them vibrant and multifunctional, which is crucial for a port city with diverse daily activities.
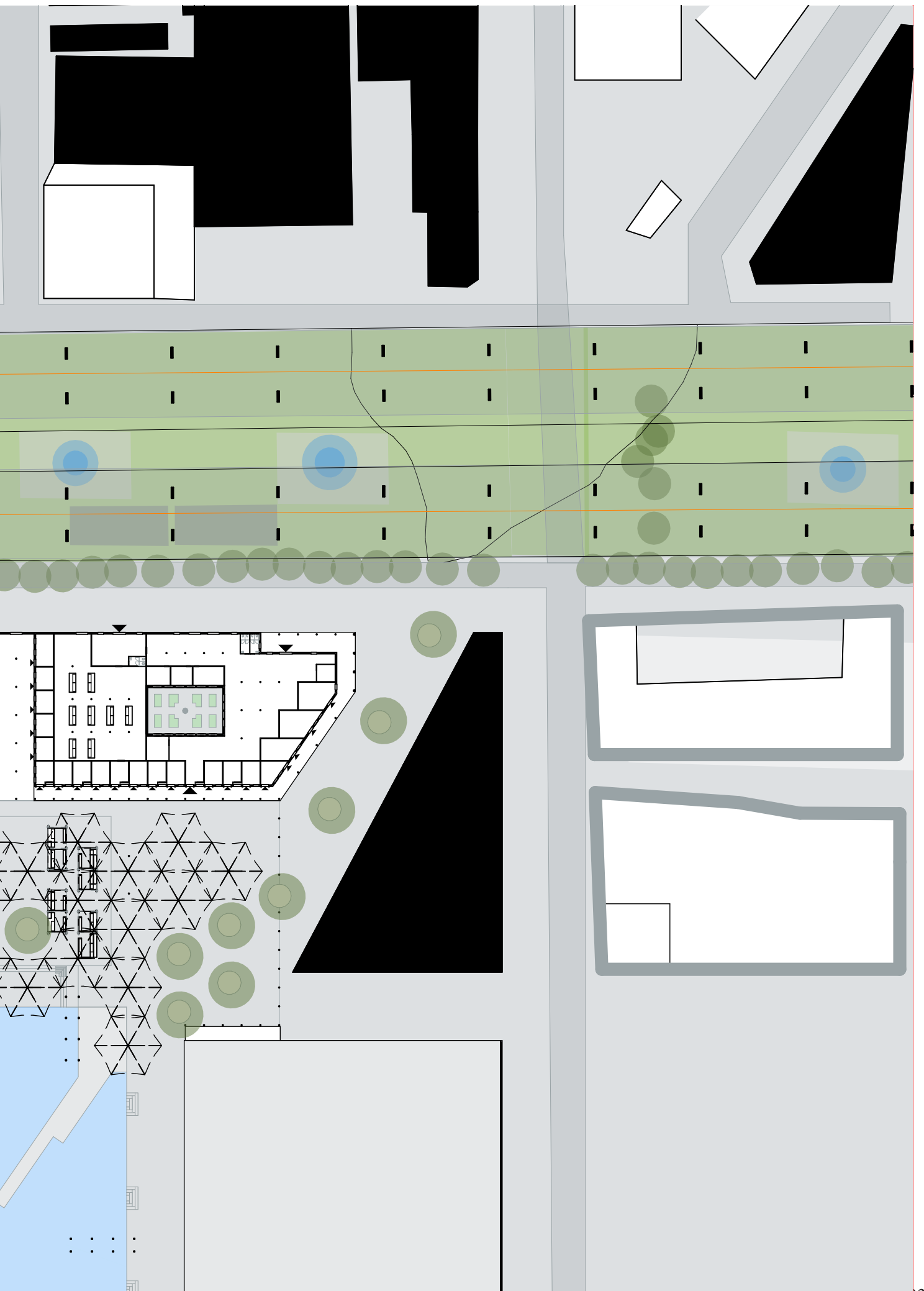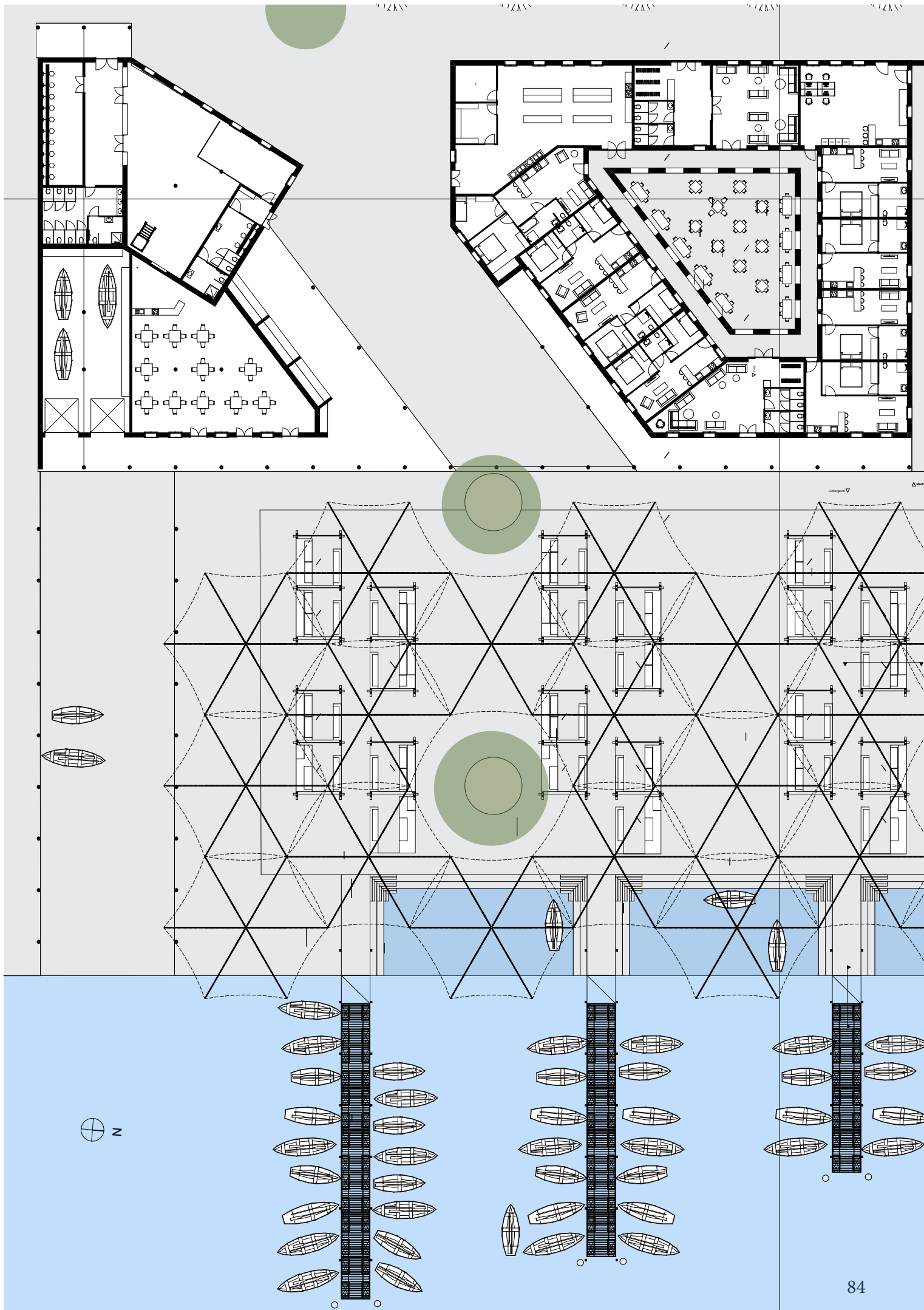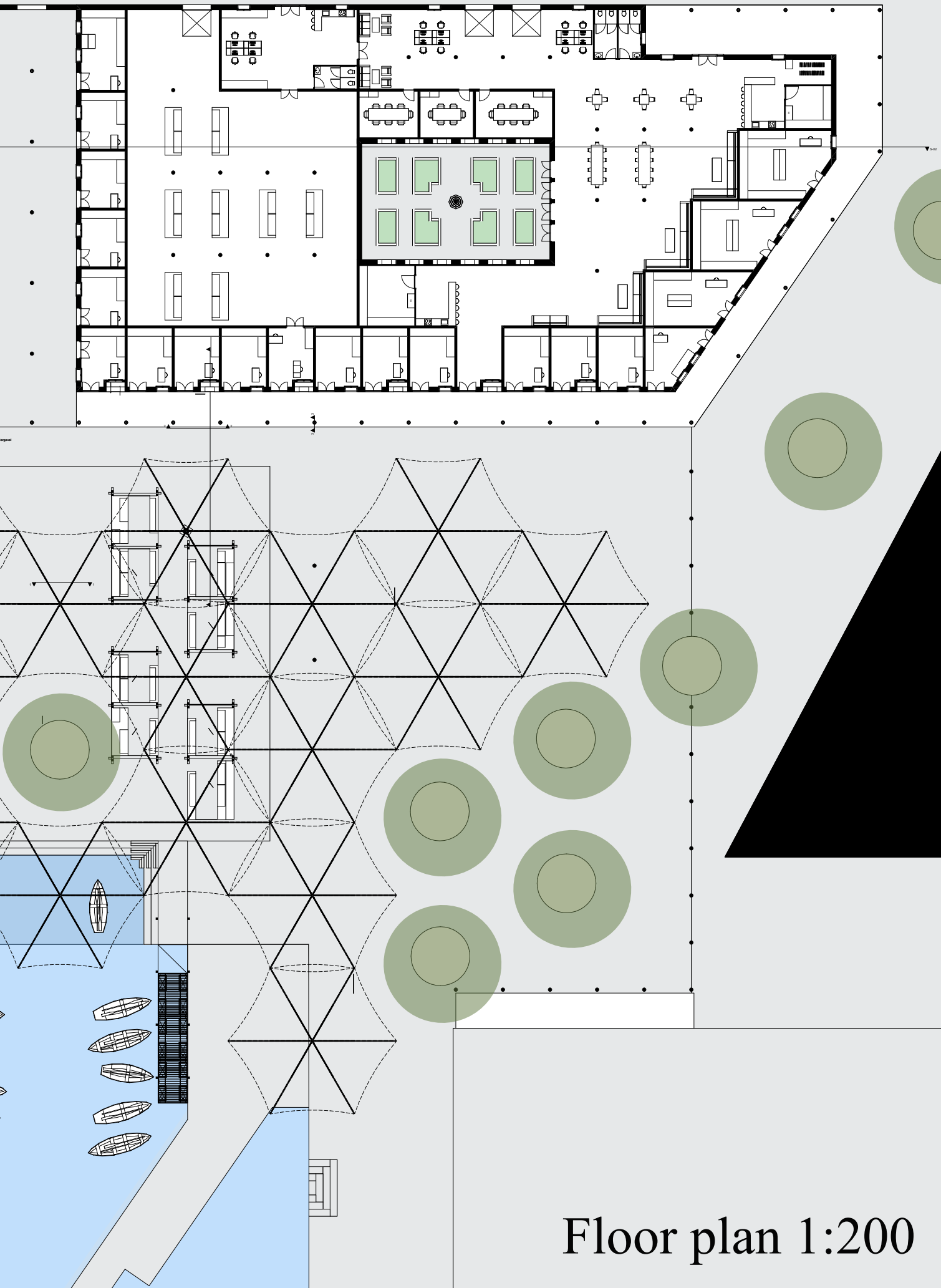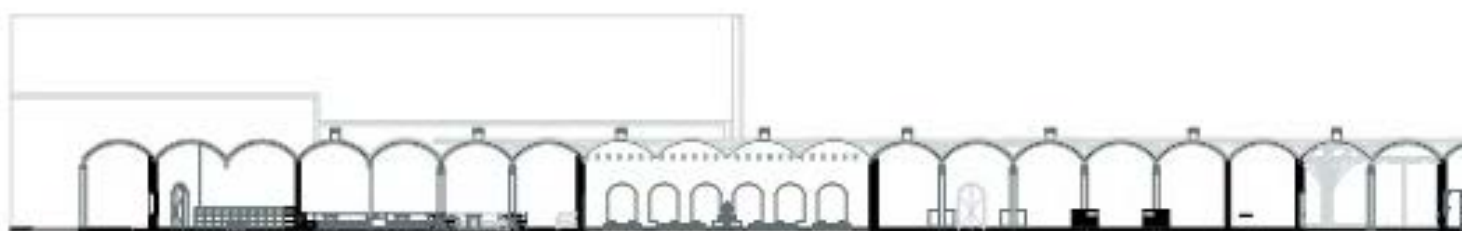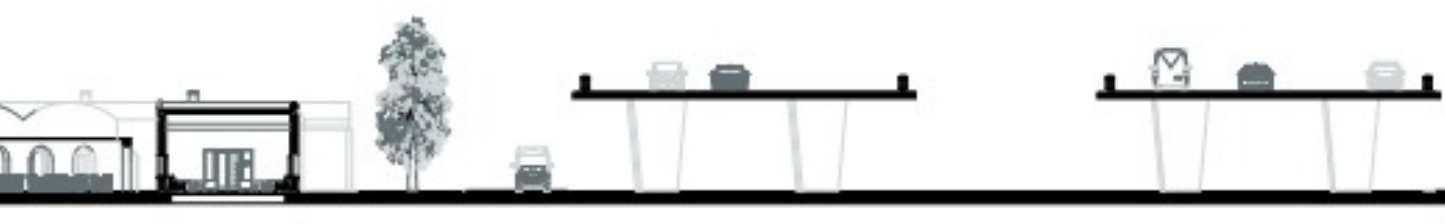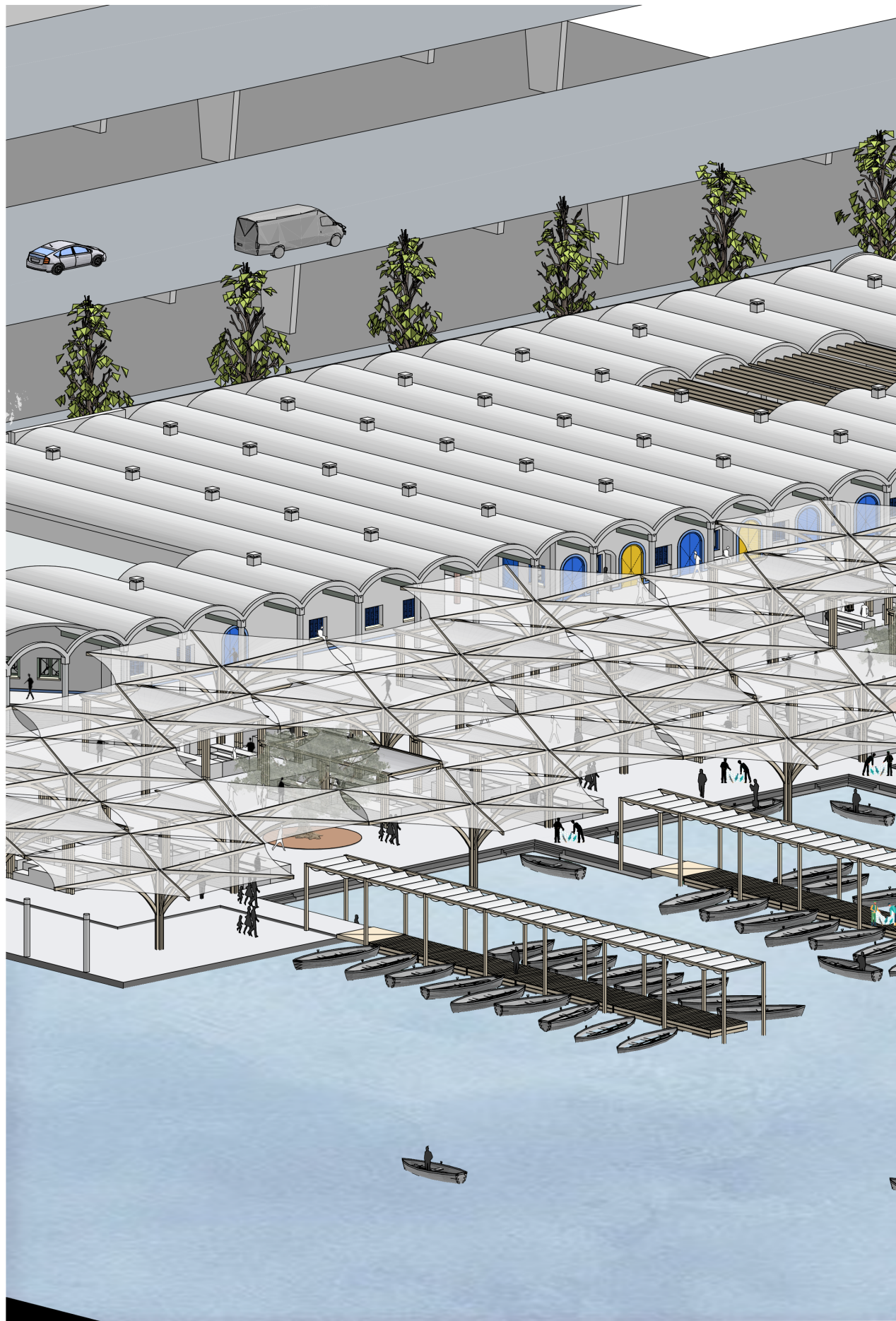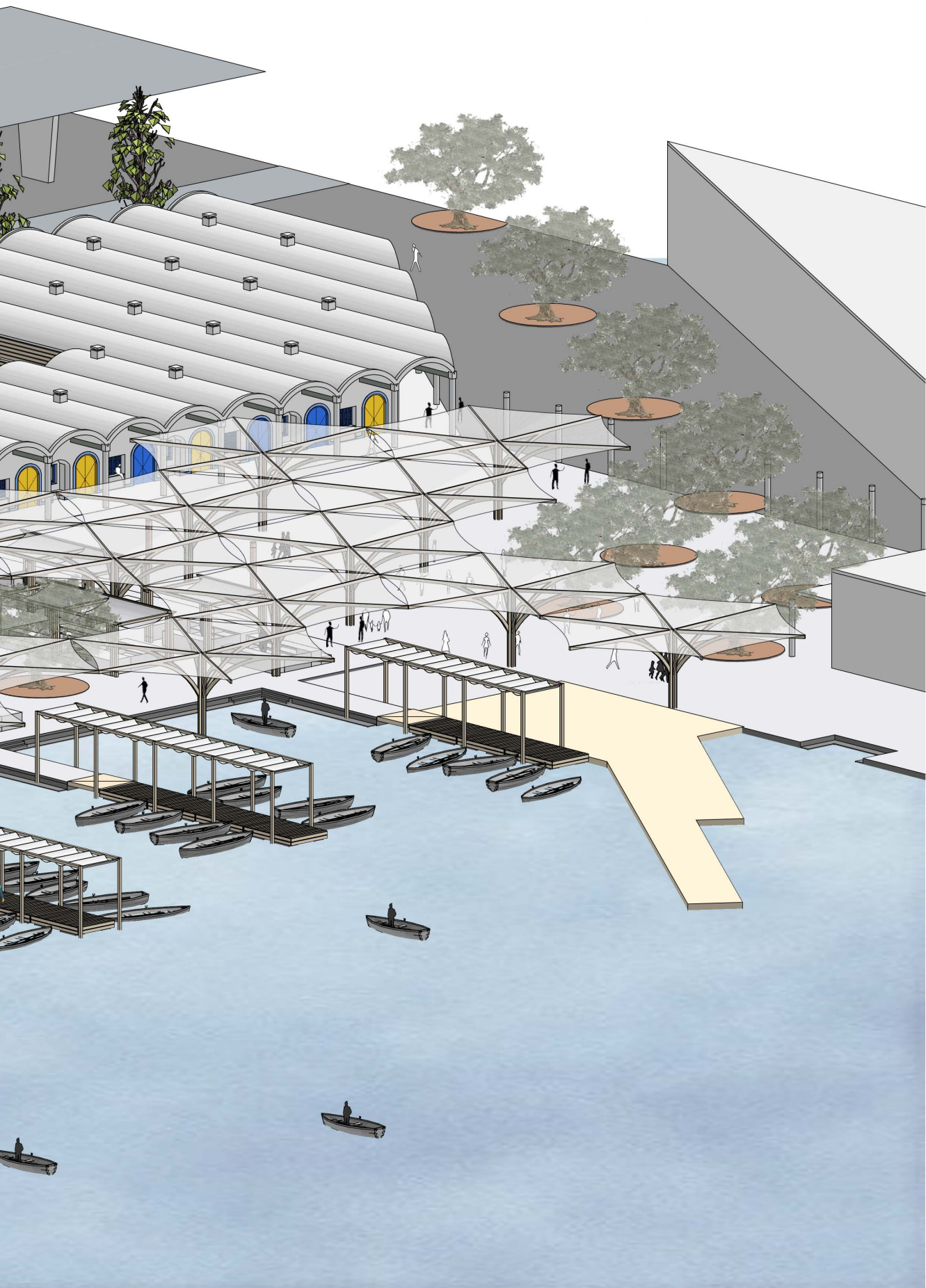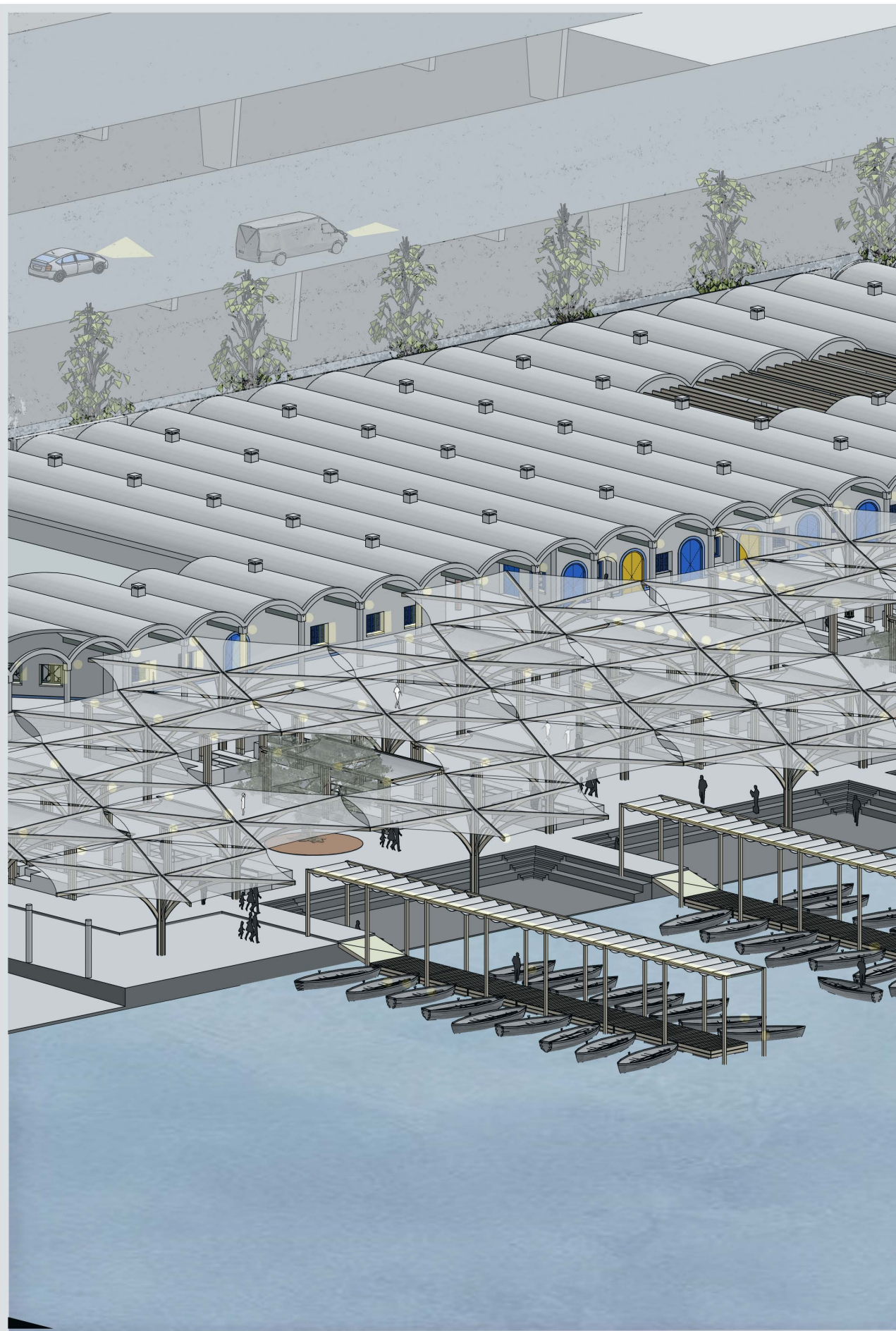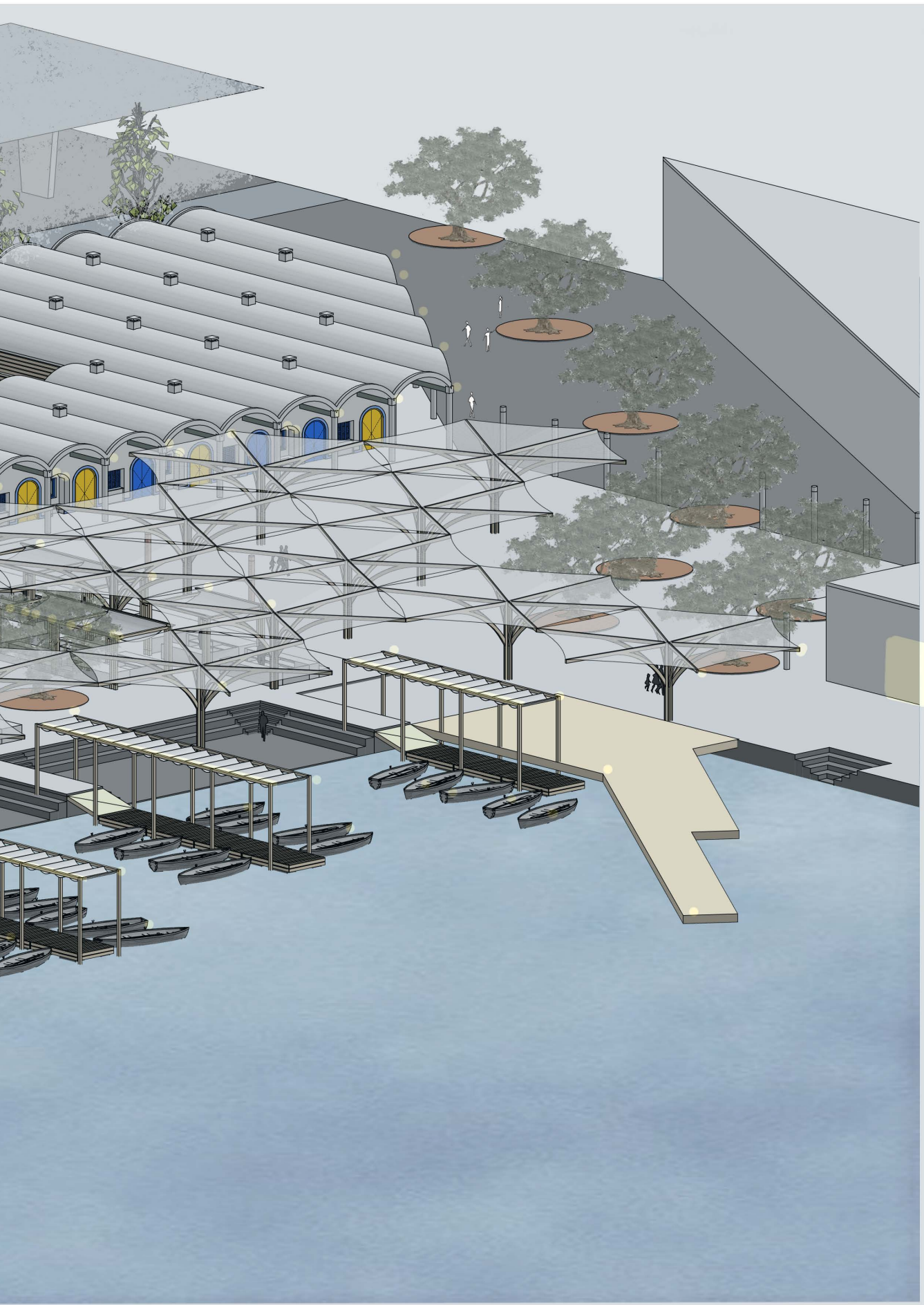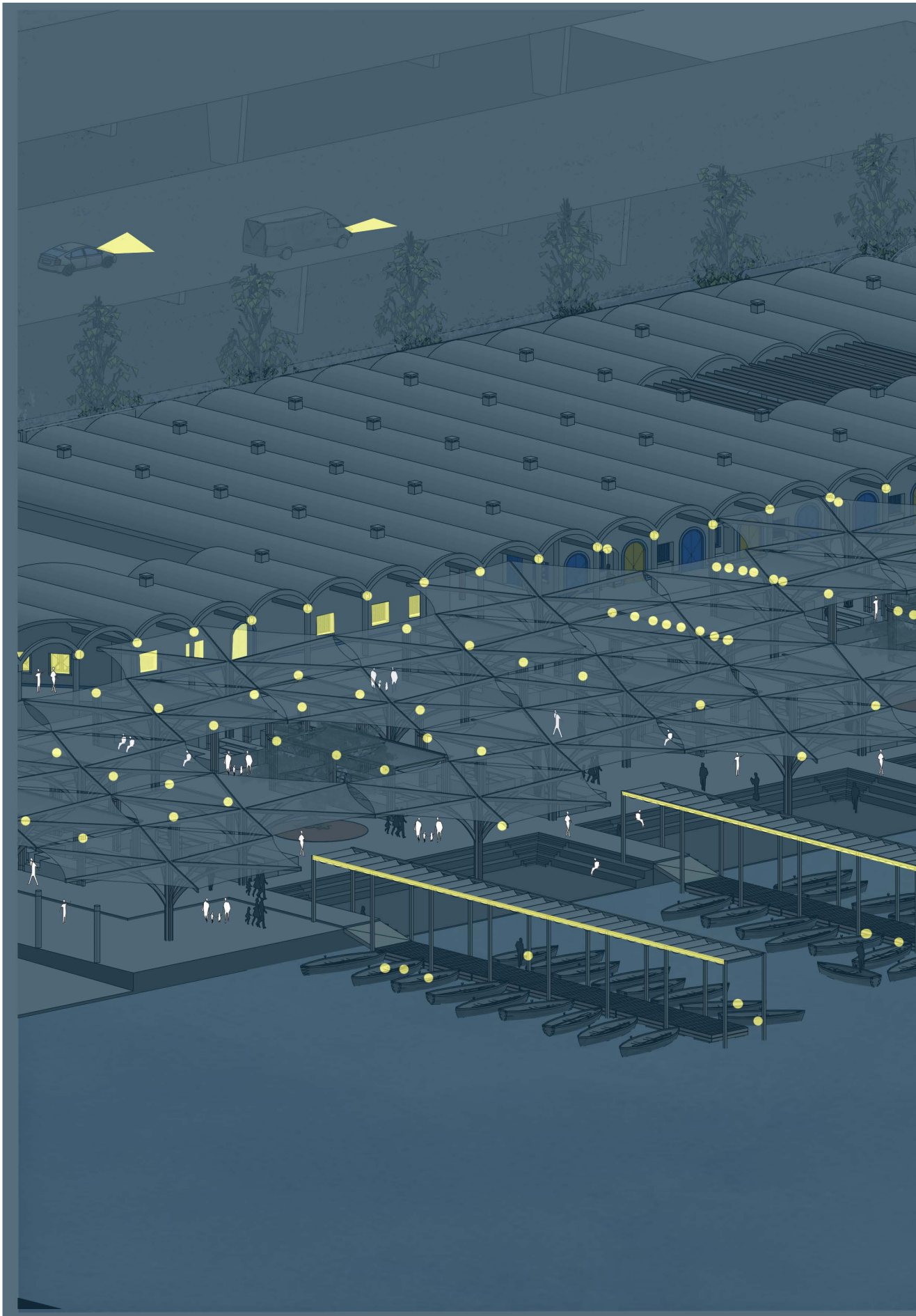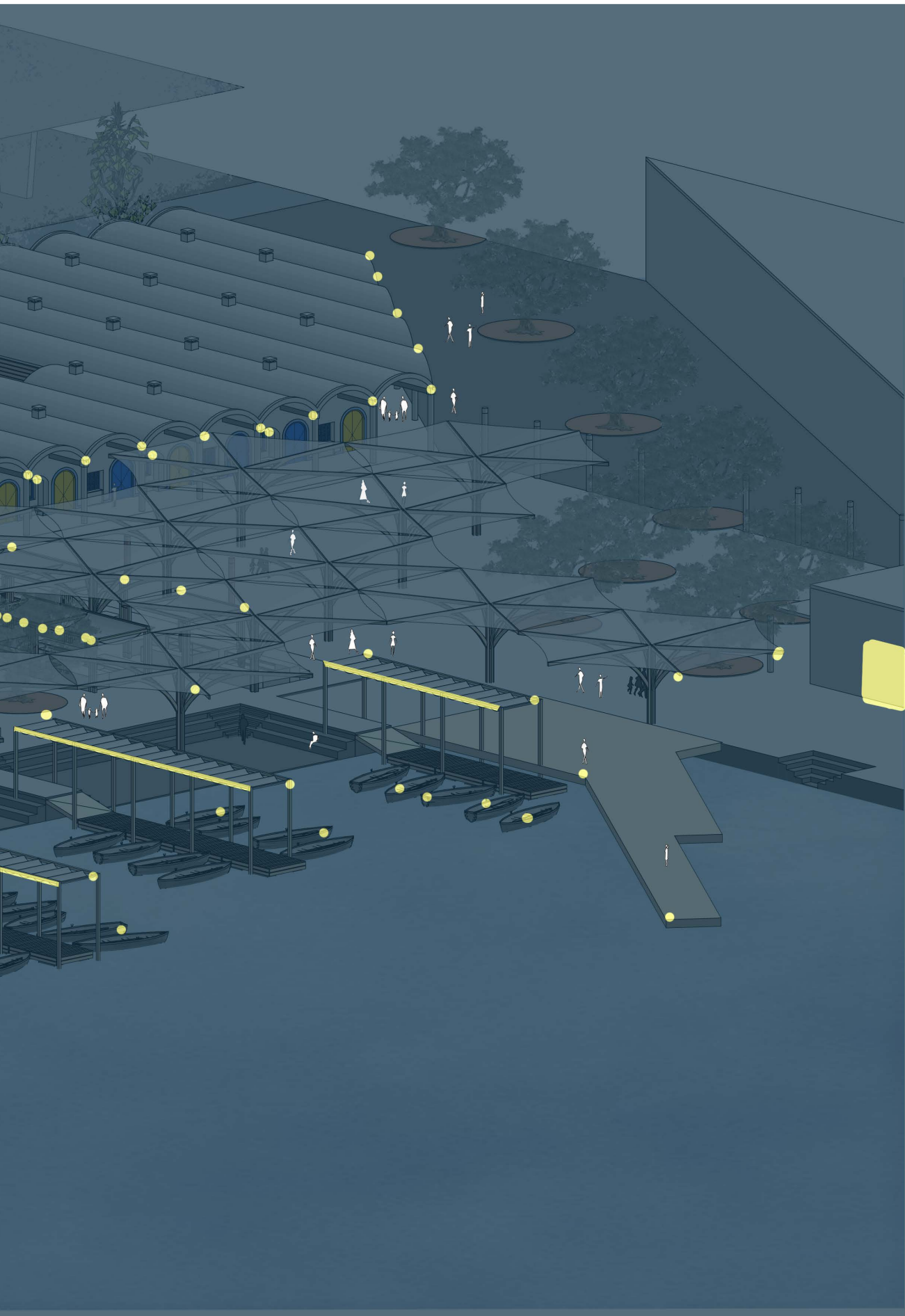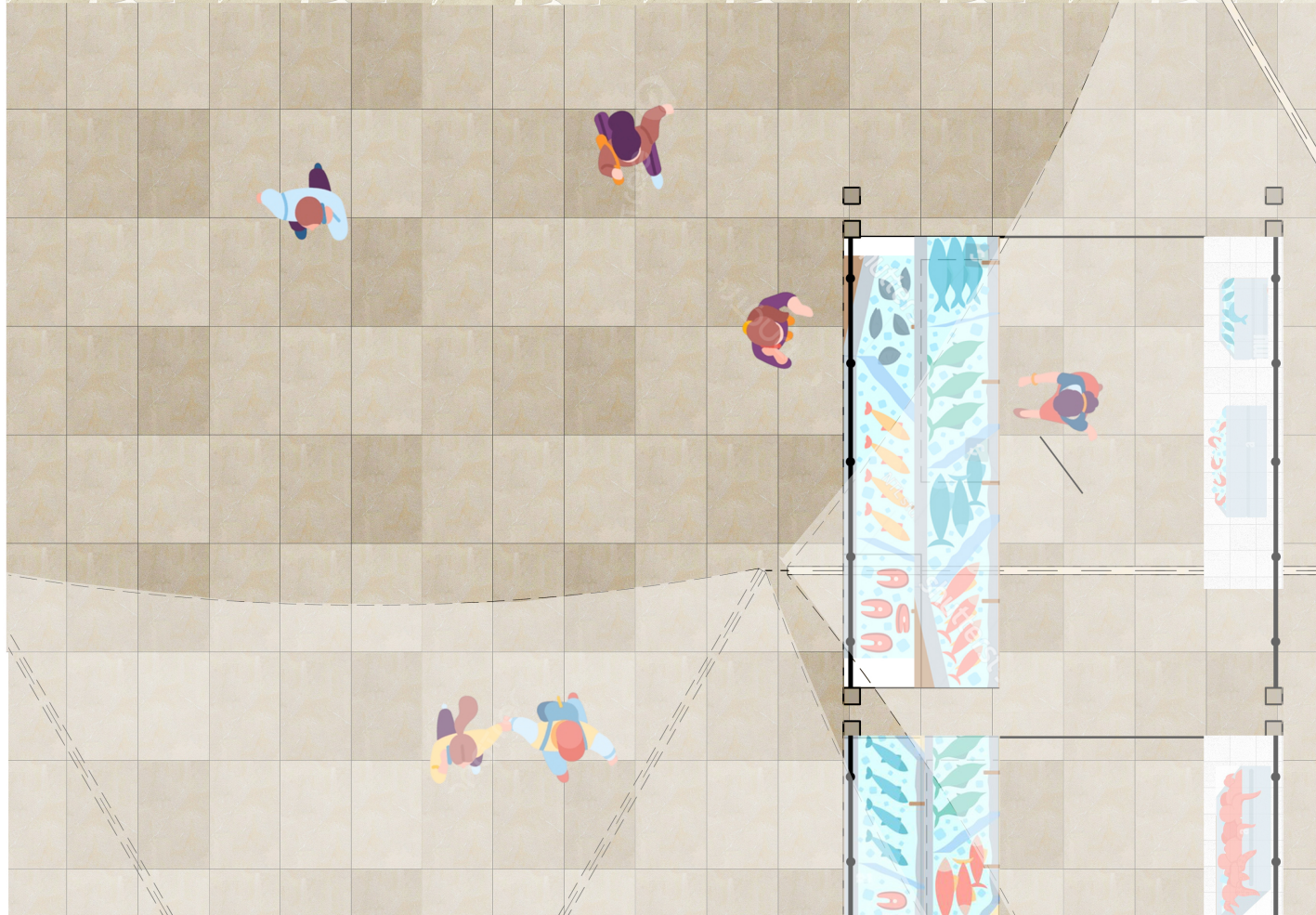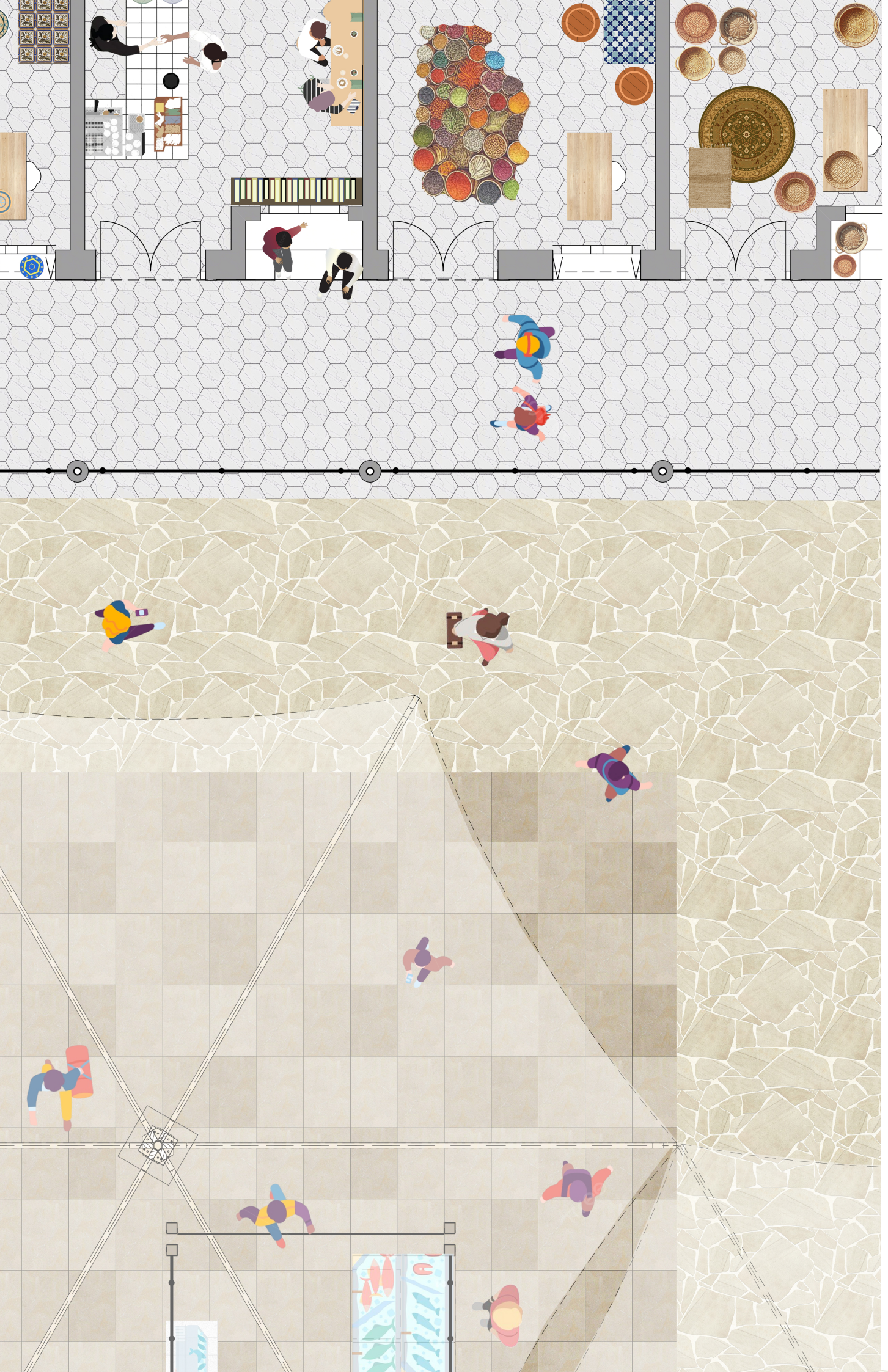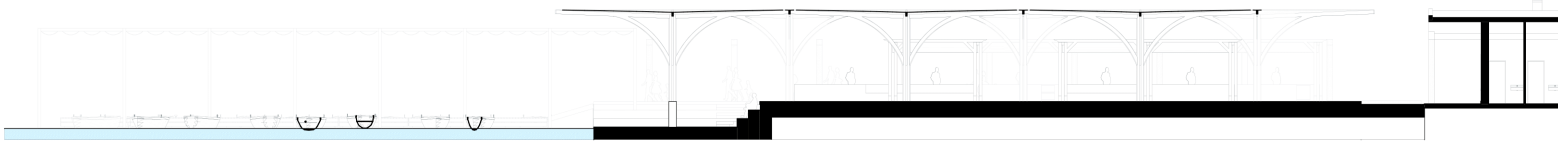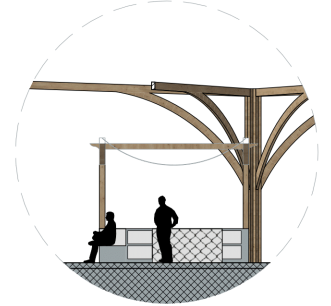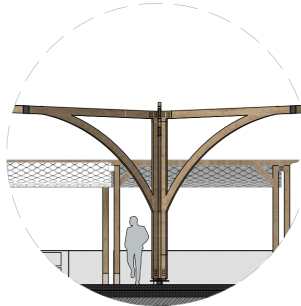
6. Sense of Community/Solitude:
- Implementation: Create dynamic public spaces that accommodate various activities, from relaxed strolls to lively markets and cafes.
- Purpose: Encourages active use of public spaces, making them vibrant and multifunctional, which is crucial for a port city with diverse daily activities.

1. **Prominent Natural Features:**
   - Implementation: Incorporate the natural slope, views of Lake Tunis, and tree-lined avenues into the design.
   - Purpose: These features create a sense of place and connection to the natural landscape, enhancing the city's aesthetic and promoting outdoor activities.

11. Sounds/Activities of the Port:
- Implementation: Create soundscapes that include the sounds of ship horns, market vendors, and maritime activities.
- Purpose: Adds authenticity to the port city environment, connecting the urban space to its maritime roots through auditory experiences.

12. **Contribution to Natural Landscape:**
   - Implementation: Blend urban design with natural elements, ensuring seamless transitions between man-made and natural landscapes.
   - Purpose: Enhances the city's aesthetic appeal and environmental sustainability, promoting a harmonious coexistence of urban and natural elements.

8. **Architectural/Artistic Elements:**
   - Implementation: Use architectural styles reflecting maritime influences, blending Mediterranean and French colonial elements.
   - Purpose: Maintains historical continuity and emphasizes the port city's maritime heritage, making the design visually cohesive and culturally relevant.
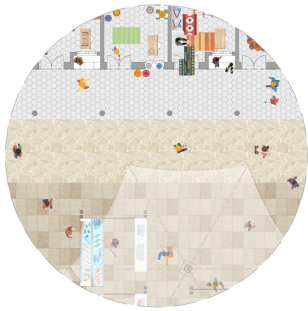

9. **Visual Cues to the** [...]
   - Implem[...] Include [...] symbols [...] color sc[...] architec[...] unique t[...] regions.
   - Purpose[...] the visu[...] port city[...] distinct [...] recogniz[...] the Med[...] maritim[...]

2. Influence of Environment on Atmosphere:
  ○ **Implementation**: Design spaces that transition from serene to vibrant, mirroring the Medina's transformation from quiet streets to bustling souks.
  ○ **Purpose**: This creates a dynamic environment that reflects the city's cultural and social diversity, making it more engaging and authentic.
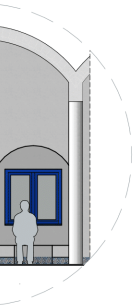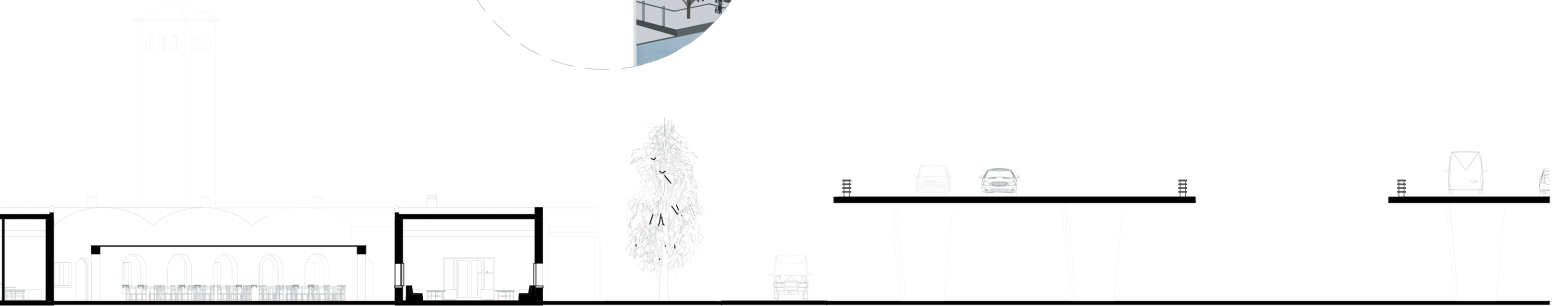
3. Cultural/Social Activities:
  ○ **Implementation**: Integrate areas for markets, cultural events, and community gatherings, drawing inspiration from the Medina's diverse activities.
  ○ **Purpose**: Promotes social interaction and cultural exchange, fostering a sense of community and continuity with the city's traditions.
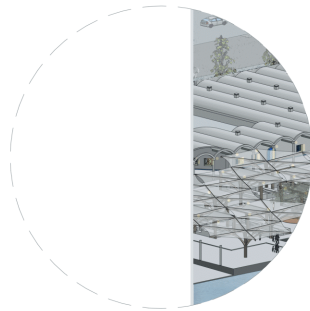
4. Emotions Elicited:
  ○ **Implementation**: create a place people could come together and sit outside make use of views of the sea evoke nostalgia and connection to Tunis's history.
  ○ **Purpose**: Enhances emotional engagement and a sense of belonging among residents and visitors, tying modern developments to historical roots.

7. Sensory Experiences:
  ○ **Implementation**: Incorporate sensory elements like market sounds, herbal scents, and local cuisine flavors in the design.
  ○ **Purpose**: Creates an immersive environment that captures the essence of the city, engaging visitors' senses and making the experience memorable.
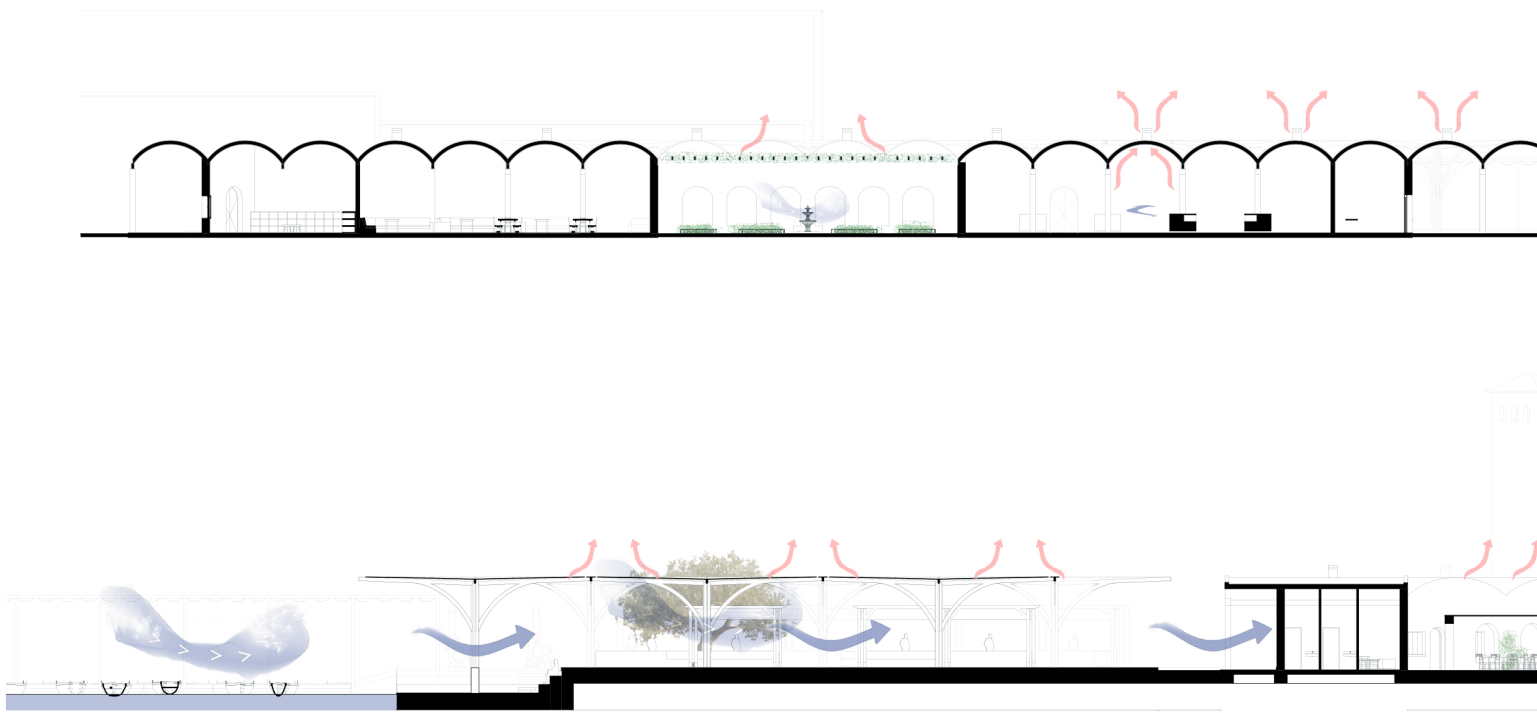
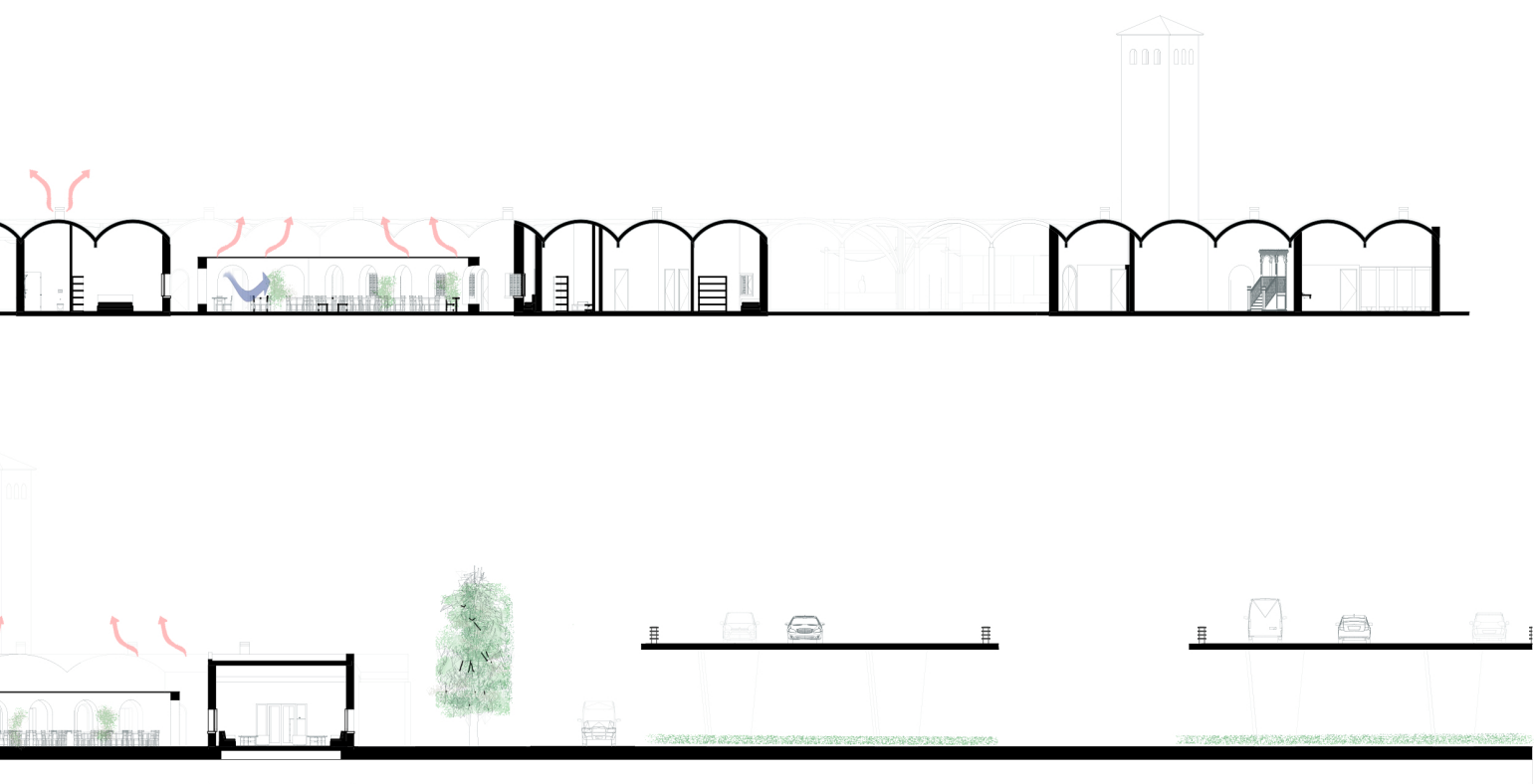**13. Local Narratives and Historical Stories**:
  ○ **Implementation**: Incorporate plaques, murals, and installations that tell historical stories and local anecdotes.
  ○ **Purpose**: Educates residents and visitors about the city's rich history, fostering a deeper connection and appreciation for the port city's heritage.
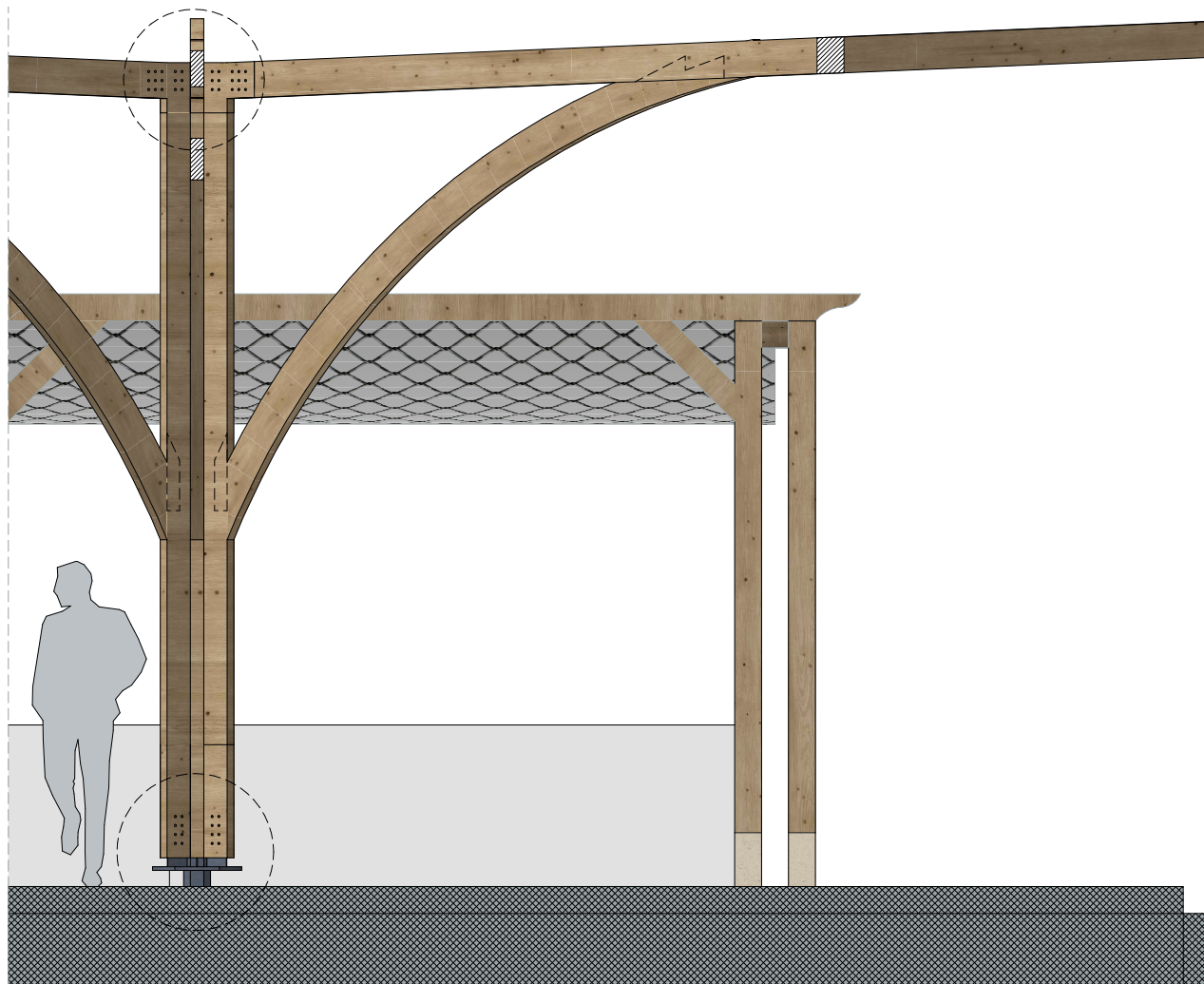
10. Cultural Exchange/Diversity:
  ○ **Implementation**: Design spaces that celebrate cultural diversity, such as areas for international cuisine and multicultural events.
  ○ **Purpose**: Reflects the historical role of the port in fostering cultural exchange, making the city more inclusive and vibrant.
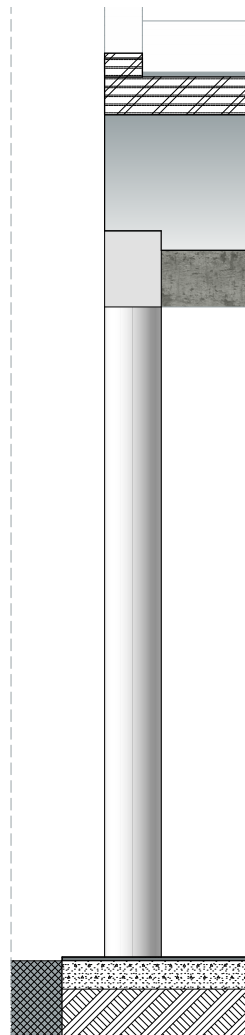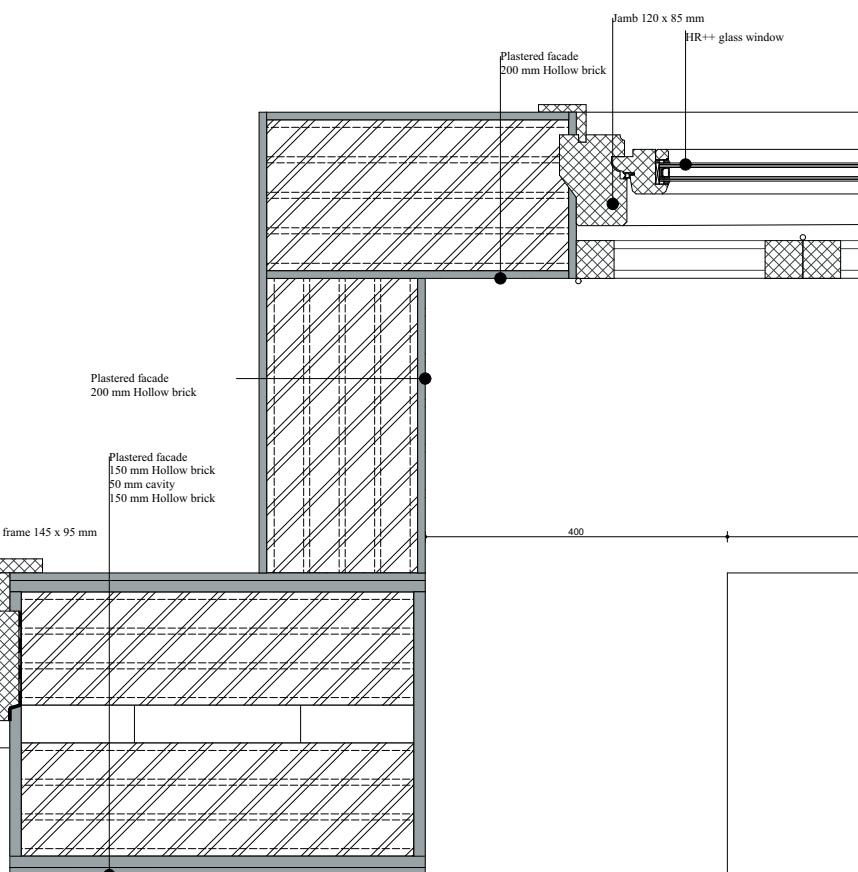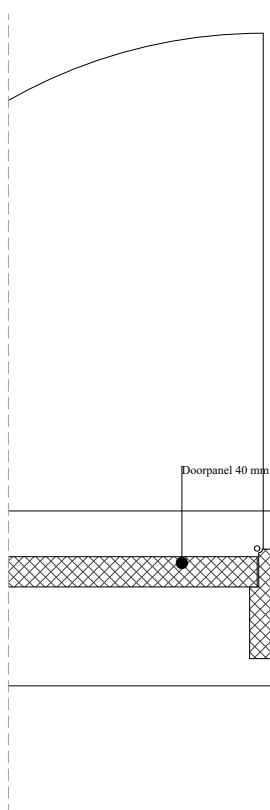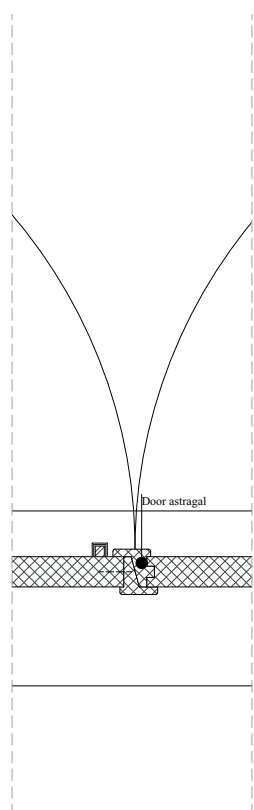
Port:
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  al identity of the
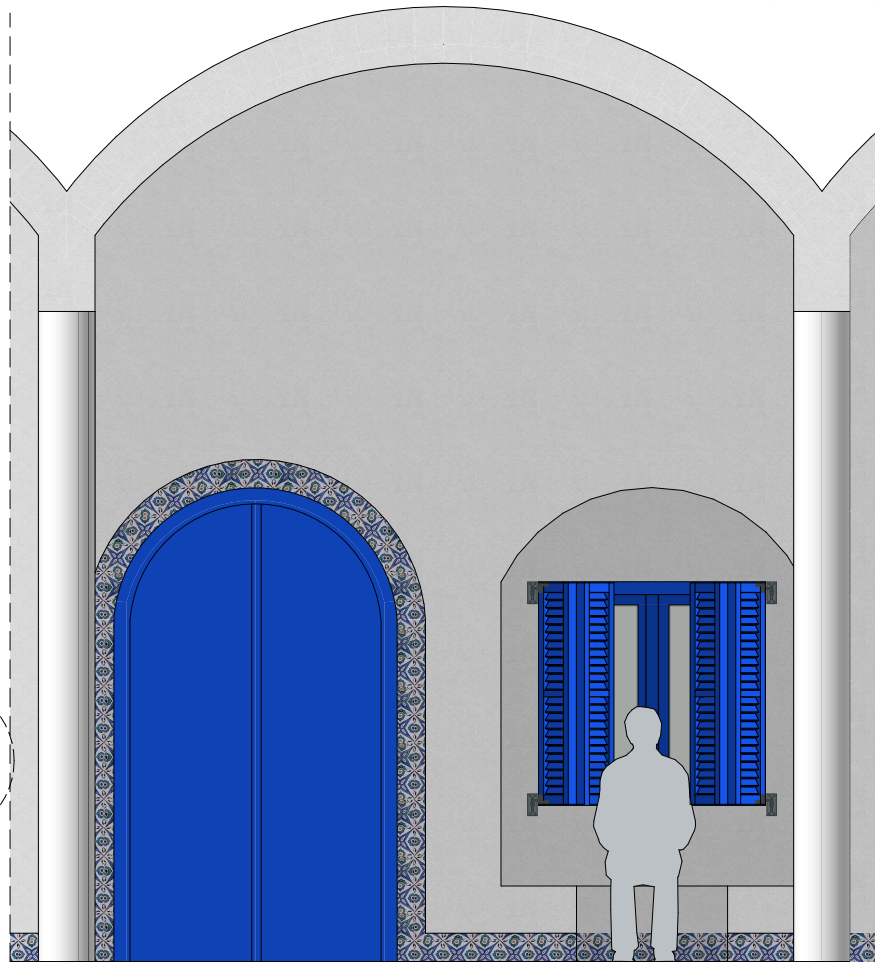 , making it
  and instantly
  zable as part of
  iterranean
  e culture.

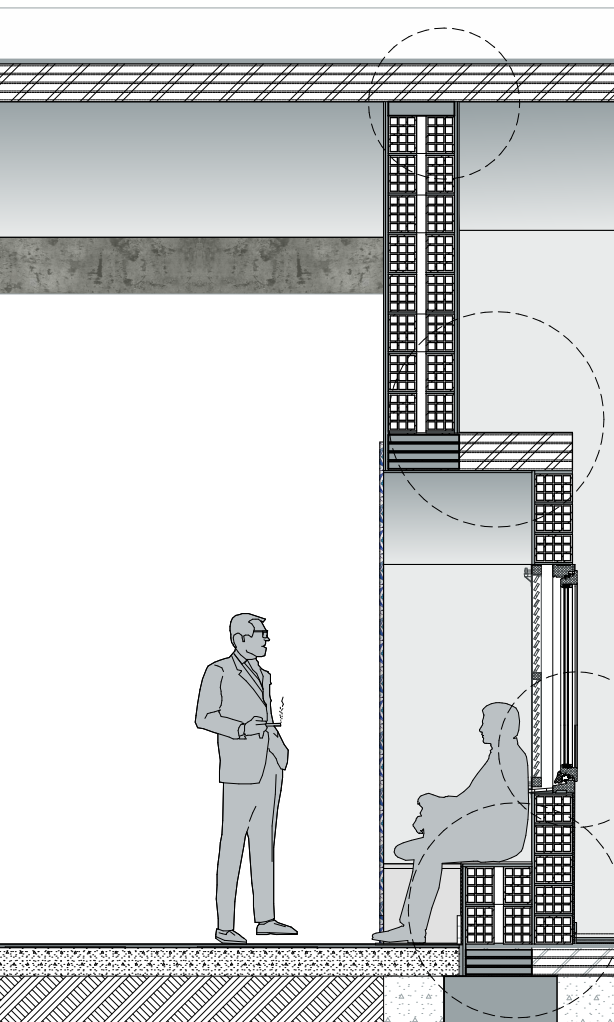# Fragment 1:20   Section

Section

Horizontal details 1:5

Jamb 120 x 85 mm

HR++ glass window

Plastered facade
200 mm Hollow brick

Plastered facade
200 mm Hollow brick

Plastered facade
150 mm Hollow brick
50 mm cavity
150 mm Hollow brick

400

Doorpanel 40 mm   Door frame 145 x 95 mm

Door astragal
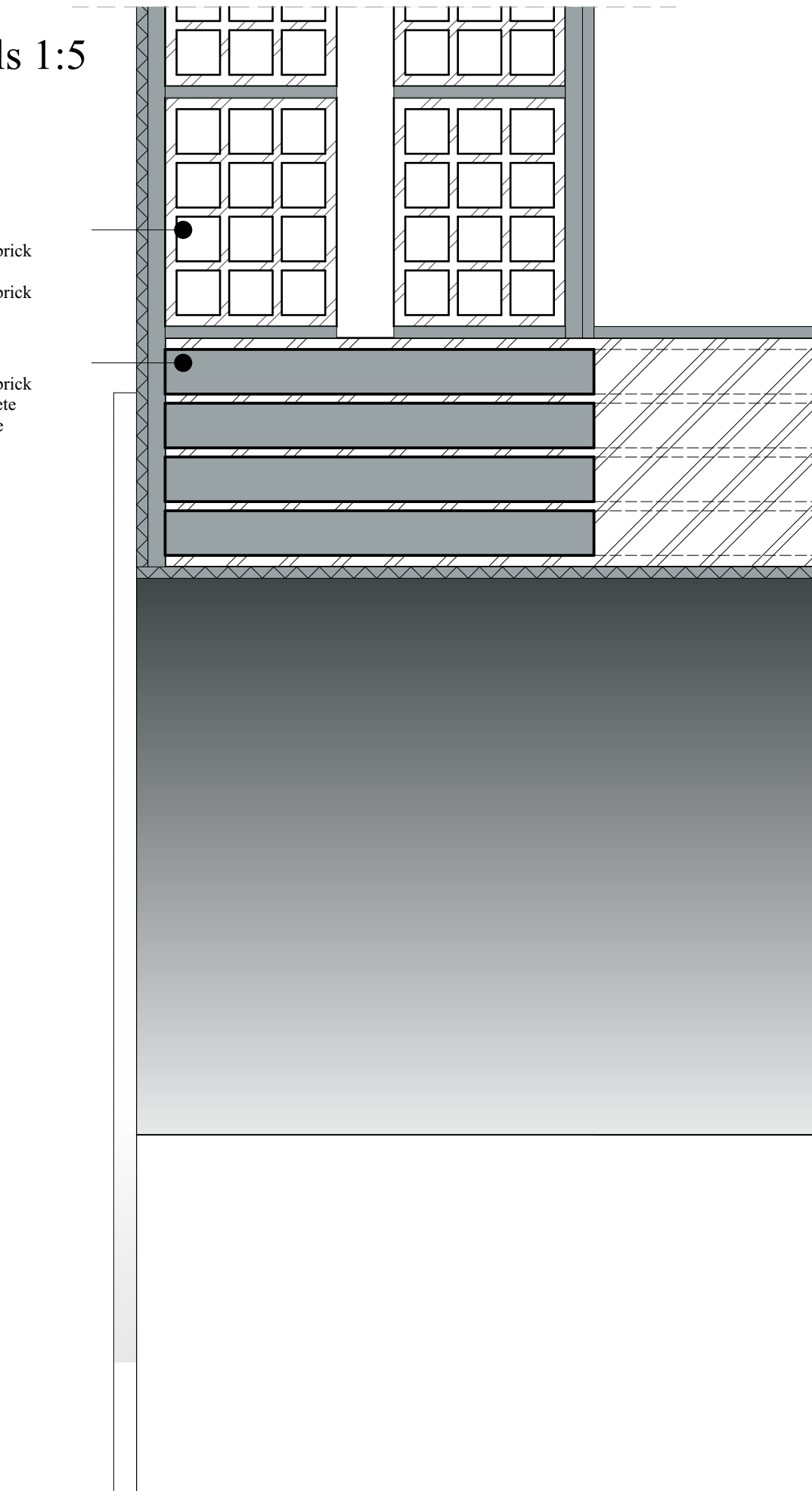
Elevation

Floor plan

800
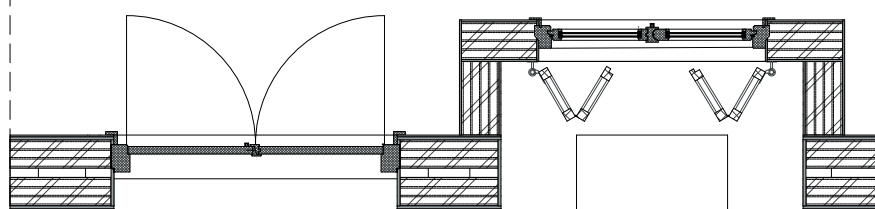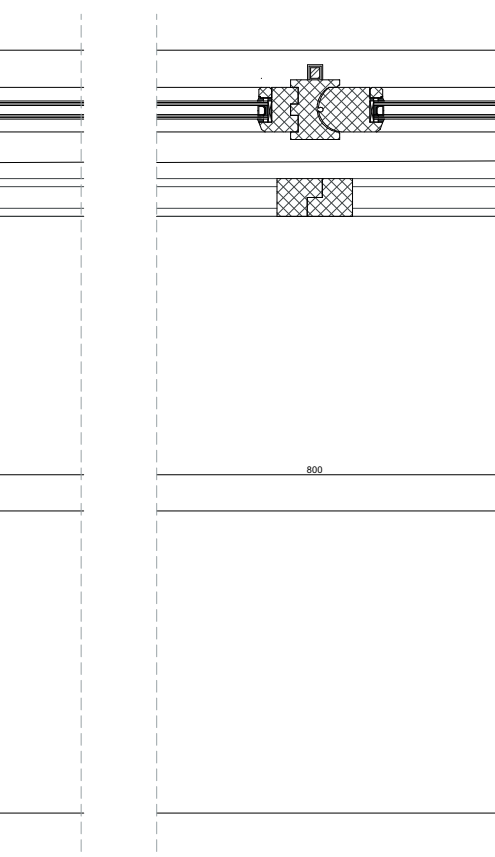
Vertical details 1:5

Plastered facade
150 mm Hollow brick
50 mm cavity
150 mm Hollow brick

Plastered facade
200 mm Hollow brick
Filled with concrete
Structural perpose

200 mm Hollow brick
Placed in an arch

Plastered facade
200 mm Hollow brick

Head 114 x 67 mm

Double gap seal

Sash

HR++ glass window

Vertical details 1:5

HR++ glass window

Bottom rail

Double gap seal

Window rail 114 x 67 mm

Sill tiles

Plastered facade
200 mm Hollow brick

Finishing tiles
Fermacell floor element
2x 12.5 mm Fermacell
9 mm felt
If needed concrete to level
the floor
150 mm Hollow brick floor

Foundation

Vertical details 1:5

150   10   120

108

50

50

50

Swish plate wood connection

150

Steel column

Anchorage of the column
to the foundation

Rain water drainage

Vertical details 1:5

Teflon fabric

Rain water drainage

Swish plate wood connection

Wooden beam 200x

Wooden column 150x150 mm

Steel column

Mortise and tennon joint

111

Horizontal details 1:5

Steel connection between
different tree like
columns

75

Wooden beam 200 x 75

50

35 35

75

75

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