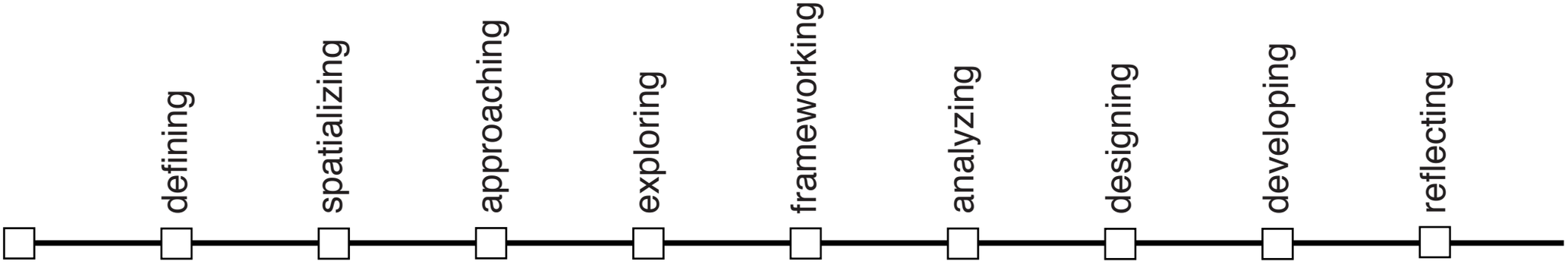
FORUM ROMANUM IN VARNA

a landscape-based strategy for the integration of marginalized Roma settlements through a sequence of public spaces

> Robin de Louw



Introducing

^ fascination

^ the contemporary city dialogue

“When I was a little boy, I knew I wanted to become an architect.
Not just an architect, but a ‘good’ architect.
I dreamt of designing gorgeous spaces in the most beautifull places of the world.
I imagined these spaces still being there, long after I died, and my name had became well known.”

However, growing up and learning about the differences between my Western world and the other 90 percent, made me realize I wanted to leave more than just beautiful things.

Fig. 1-1_ Ana, Tinko

“I met a nice couple in Guinea Bissau [...] They showed me how they live in a 16 m2 room in one of the compounds of the village.
I went to all the IKEA stores in The Netherlands [...] I found a fabulous 16 m2 showroom of which I was sure it would fit perfectly in their room“

“I flew to Africa to be able to help unpacking the boxes I had sent them to refurnish their room. Ana and Tinko were happy, they invited all their friends and family to come and see.
I felt I had saved them.”

^ Katinka Simonse on her world saving intervention #2

Fig. 1-2_ Their 16 m2 multipurpose bed room

Fig. 1-3_ A 16 m2 multipurpose bed room in Ikea

Fig. 1-4_ Villagers and family helped Ana and Tinko with the delivered boxes with modular furniture

Fig. 1-5_ Their new16 m2 multipurpose bed room according to Western standards

Introducing > the contemporary city dialogue

The city is a fine example of a complex system. The fragments of the city can only be understood through the whole, and the whole is more than a simple sum of the fragments. (Pickett, 2013).

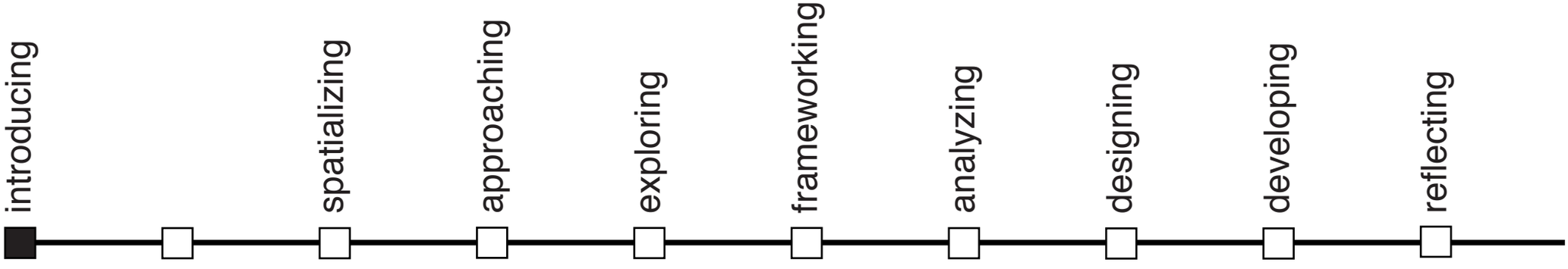
“The city” is a cultural object. Every city is characterized by centralities and marginalities

Many places in the city that had been defined as ‘others’ have gradually become subjected to a process of radical segregation that is likely to climax in the ethnical stigmatization of communities and places (Auyero, 2007).

Fragmentation and segregation

“The new urban question”

Fig. 1-6_ “we“, “you“ and “the Roma“ - forced evictions in Varna (Bulgaria), summer 2014



Defining

> Spatial planning under Communism in Bulgaria
> The political landscape and it’s consequences for the Roma

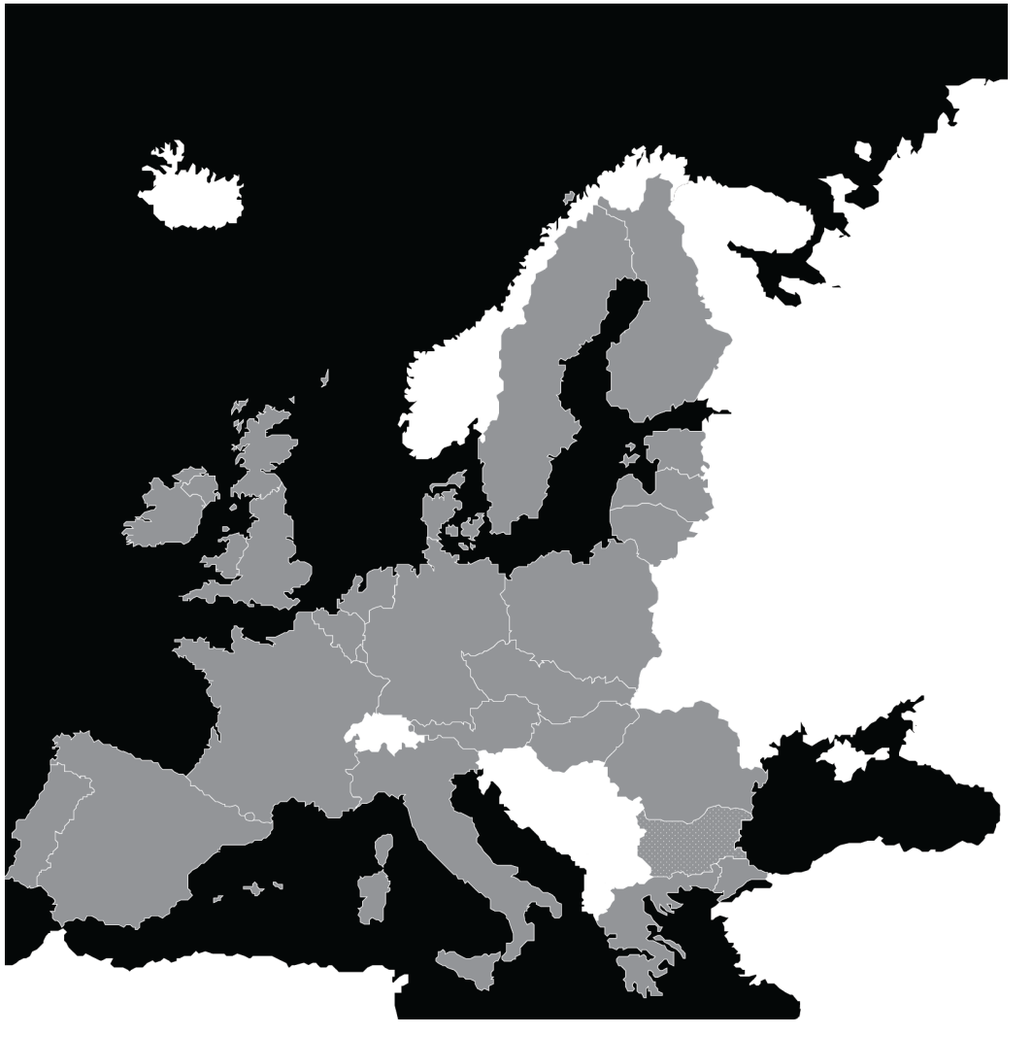


Fig. 1-7_ Europe: European Union Member States are visualized in grey

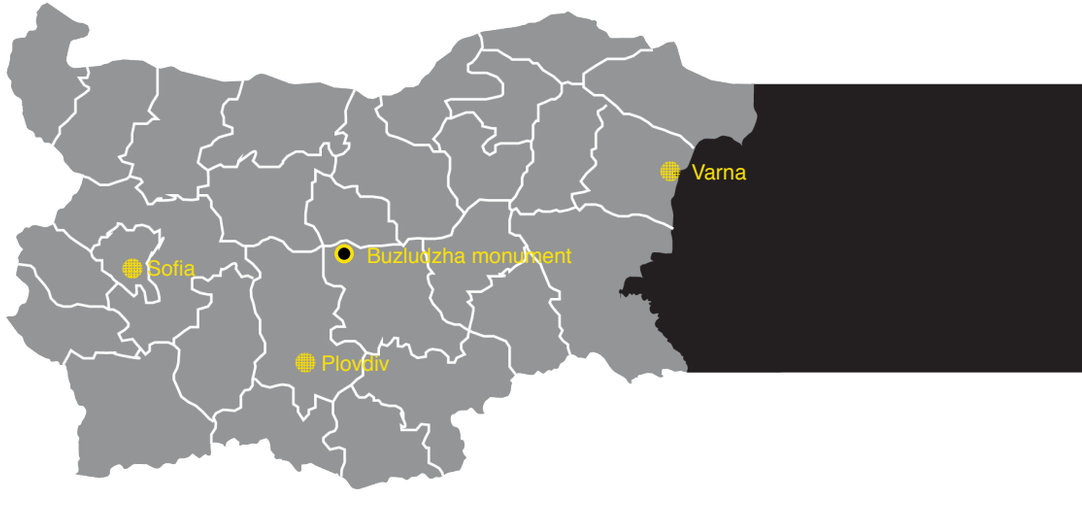


Fig. 1-8_ Bulgaria: Varna is the largest city and seaside resort on the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast and the third city of the Republic of Bulgaria

“Throughout its history, communism was modernity’s most devout, vigorous and gallant champion – pious to the point of simplicity. It is also claimed to be its only true champion... it was under communist, not capitalist, auspices that the audacious dream of modernity, freed from obstacles by the merciless and omnipotent state, was pushed to its radical limits: grand design, unlimited social engineering, huge and bulky technology, total transformation of nature.”

Zygmunt Bauman, 1991

The spatial planning system was centralized, technocratic and subordinated to national economic interests (Hirt, 2005).

Spatial plans were just the local translation of state economic plans. Urban planners therefore were mainly ‘technical executors’ of state goals at the local level.

Systematization: social engineering

Contemporary urban challenges are rooted in the technocratic traces of the communist spatial planning system

The collapse of communism has put a theoretical end to the programmatic governmental efforts to 'integrate' the Roma in Bulgarian society without acknowledging cultural characteristics of Roma culture.

Eastern-European Roma culture: Roma have been a dispersed ethnic population which was spread all over Europe since their arrival in Europe in the thirteenth century (Gropper, 1975).
Its internal economy has been build around self-employment, preserving old expertise while achieving new skills to adapt

The Roma in Communist Bulgaria: forced socio-cultural processes have put an end to their culture, sedentarisation process. Gradually losing the defening characteristics of an ethnic group.

^ Pre-communist Roma culture

Fig. 1-9_Since the beginning of Romani studies the nomadic lifestyleis considered to be the structural and defining characteristic of their culture

Fig. 1-10_Dancing bears had been a part of Balkan Roma culture with roots going back to the first millennium AD by the migration of the Roma towards Europe from India.

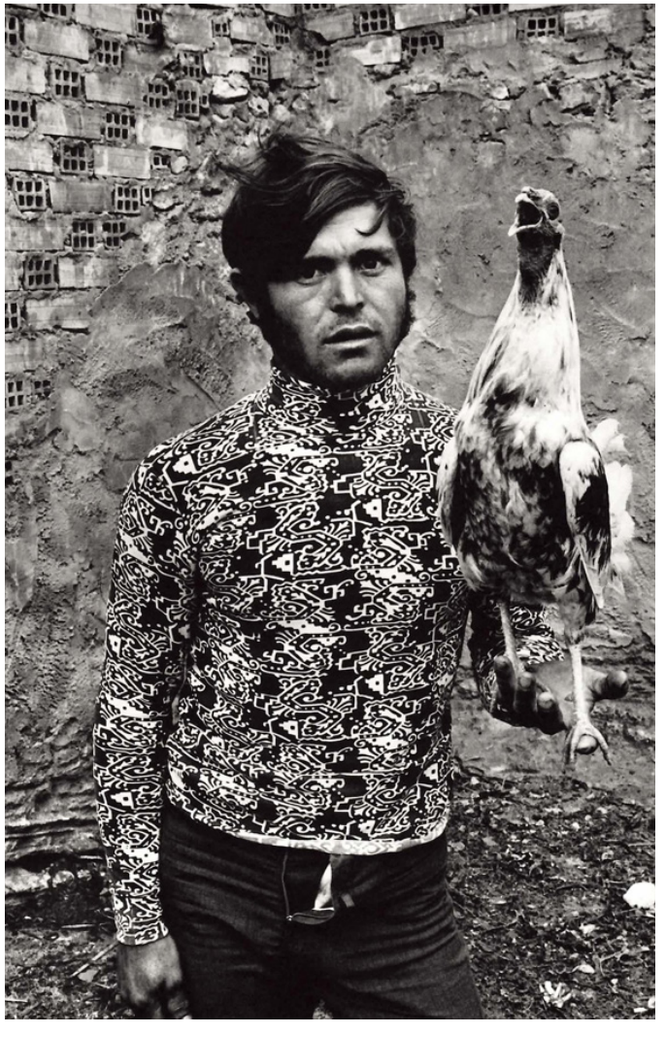


Fig. 1-11_Domestic animals are part of the family. This can be traced back their Indian roots, where cows are considered sacred.

Fig. 1-12_The Romani people have long acted as entertainers and tradesmen. Most Romani music is based on the folk music of the countries where the Romani went through. It is an important cultural expression providing income.

^ Roma culture during communism

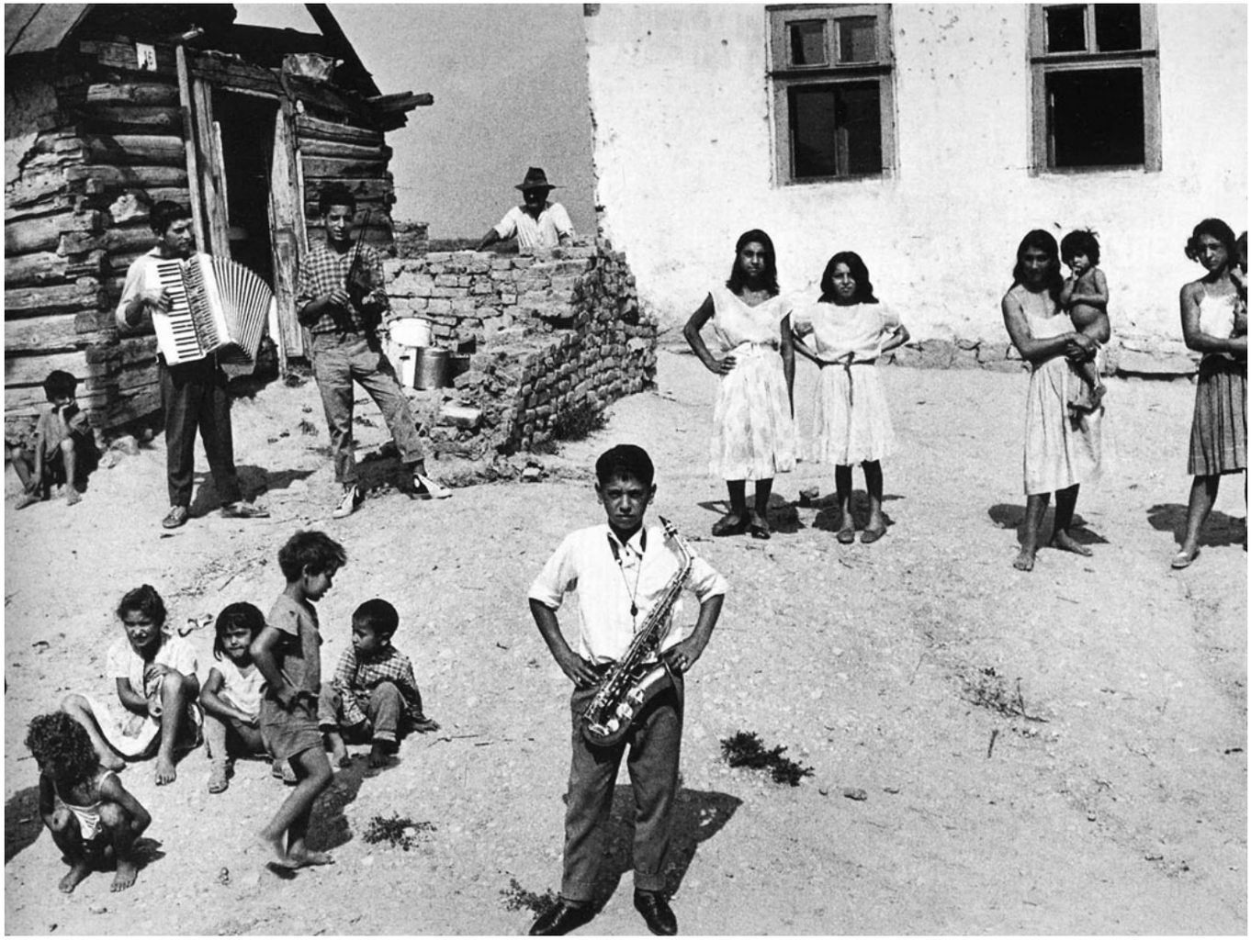


Fig. 1-13_At the beginning of the 1960s, the communist authorities started with settling the nomadic Gypsies in fixed settlements Even if they were provided with houses, the Gypsies continued to live for a time in a tent pitched in the yard, with the house used as a stable for the horses.

Fig. 1-14_Roma worked in agriculture to a greater extent than in the pre-communist era. Romani were employed particularly as day or seasonal workers at state farms, leading to seasonal work migration. This enabled them to earn a living.

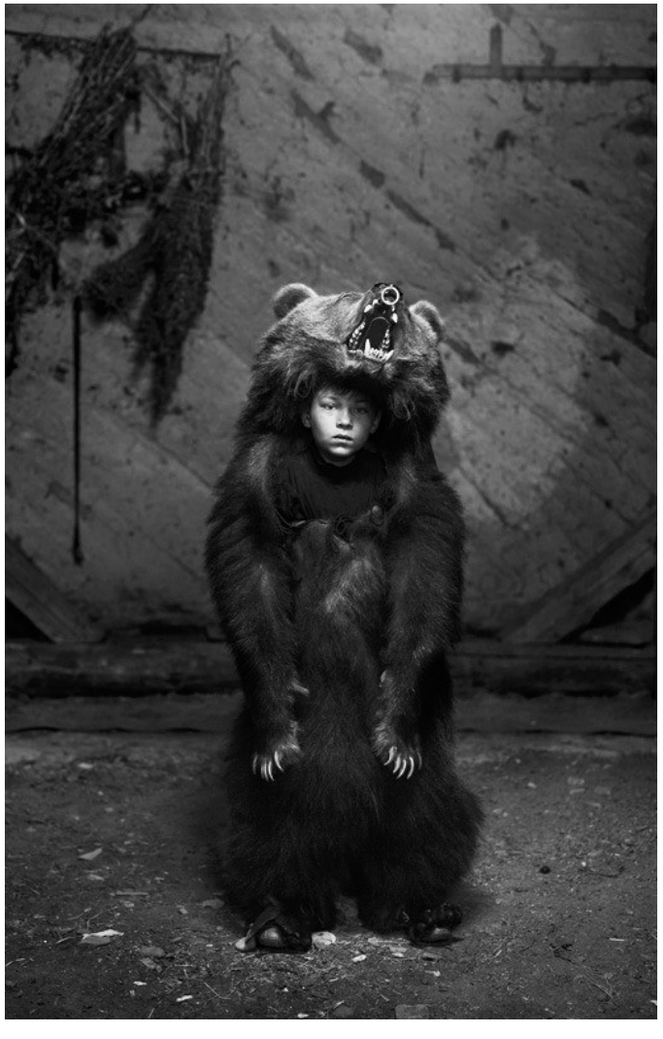


Fig. 1-15_Especially urban Roma lost their ethnic identity. They were forced to completely abandon their traditional occupations, social behaviour and cultural expressions in order to technocratically align themselves with common Bulgarian culture

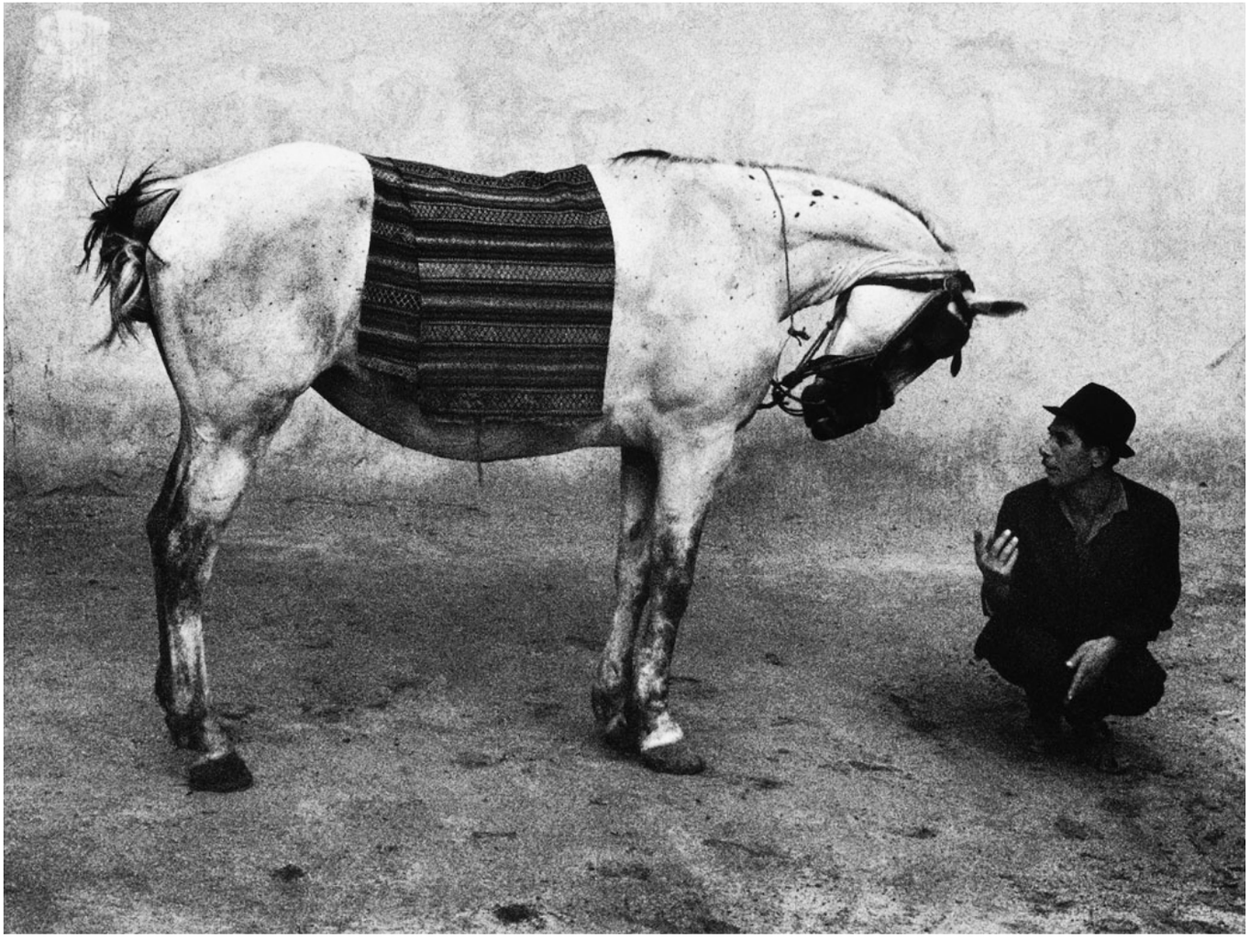


Fig. 1-16_In the new economic and social context, Roma who still practised their old crafts were forced to take up modern professions and occupations. Blacksmiths found a new role in heavy industry and construction

^ Post-communist Roma culture

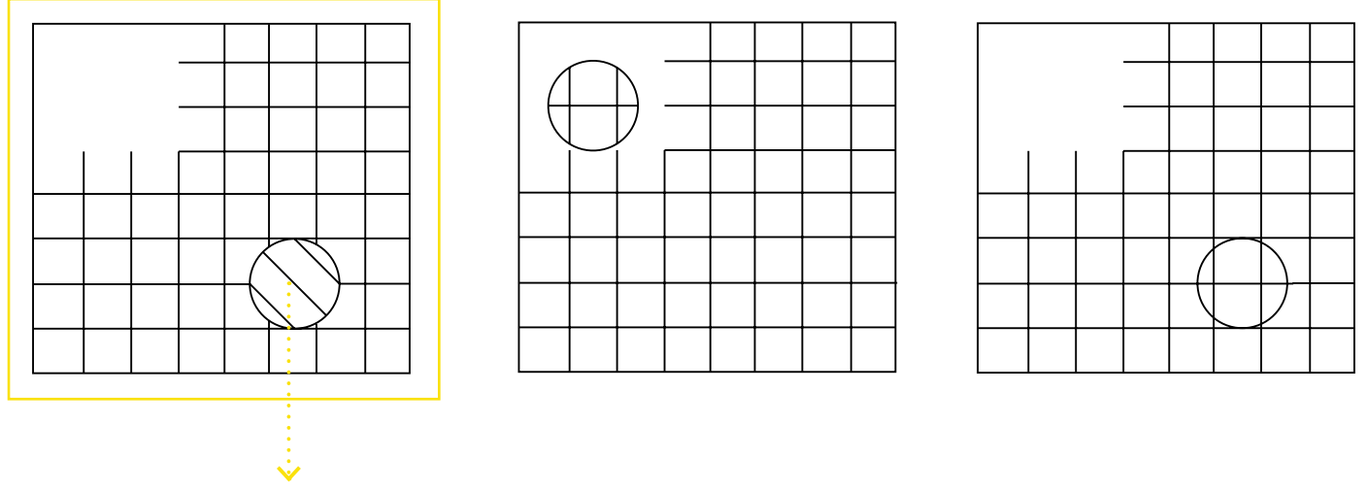
Fig. 1-17_Although the ban on a nomadic lifestyle ended with the fall of the Communist regime, there are few traditional Roma communities with preserved old trades, language and ethnic and cultural characteristics.

Fig. 1-18_Relocation to resettlement sites has been a model for the integration of Roma under communism, as aspect of the systematization program, meanwhile it appears to be a still applied policy model even in post-communist Bulgaria

Fig. 1-19_The urban landscape in Eastern Europe is characterized by clusters of Roma communities living under primitive housing conditions with heavy seasonal exposure and natural hazard.

Fig. 1-20_Clearance and redevelopment of Roma settlements to meet modern, western housing standards lacks acknowledging the specific characteristics of the Roma culture

But to what extent is the 'systematisation' program under Communism actually different from contemporary integration models?

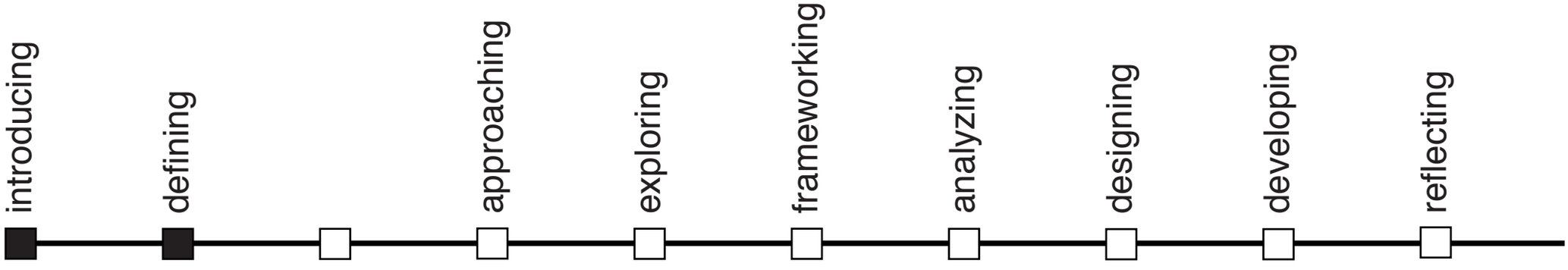


socio-spatially marginalized community

relocation to resettlement sites

clearance and redevelopment

Fig. 1-21_ conceptual models for the integration of marginalized communities



Spatializing

^ The contemporary urban landscape of Varna
^ The historical development of Varna (model)
^ The challenges of the contemporary urban landscape of Varna

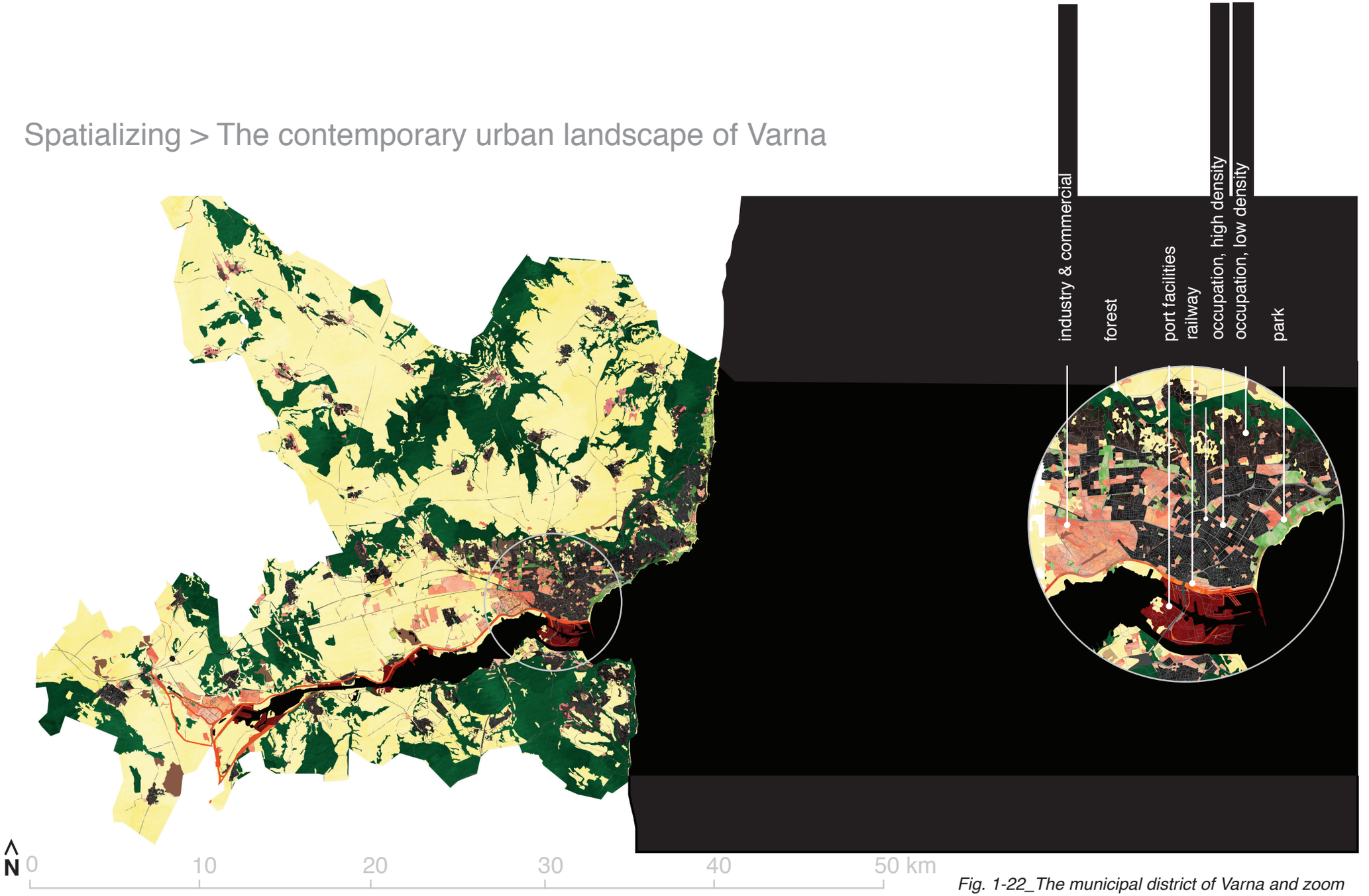


Fig. 1-22_The municipal district of Varna and zoom showing the urban structure of Varna.

^ The contemporary urban landscape of Varna

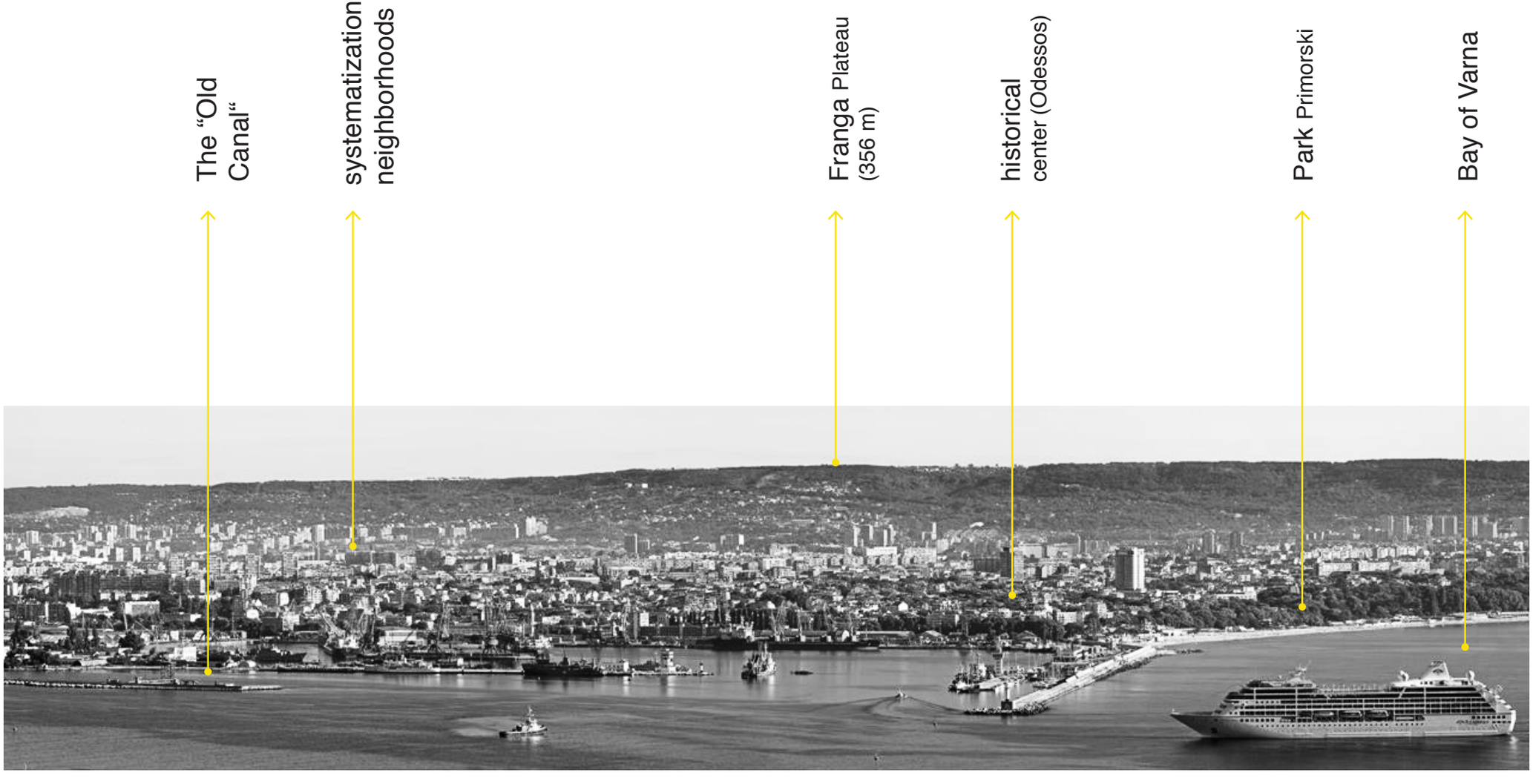


Fig. 1-23_ panorama view towards the northern part of Varna, around 1990

^ The contemporary urban landscape of Varna

Fig. 1-24_ Aerial view over the urban landscape of Varna around 1980

Spatializing > The historical development of Varna

Spatial fragmentation is in co-existence with social segregation. This conceptualizes that urban fragmentation can work as accentuated segregation that is matarialized in space through barriers.

(Thullier, 2005)

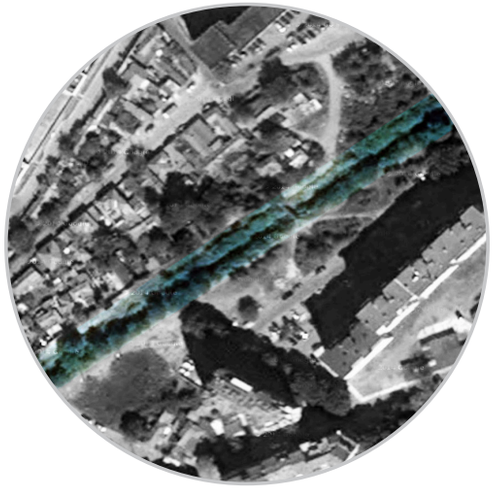


Fig. 1-25_The urban landscape of Varna is highly fragmented, communities are accentuated segregated as the drainage system is a dividing barrier.The city is divided by law into five boroughs, which adds a political challenge to integratively reconnect all fragments.

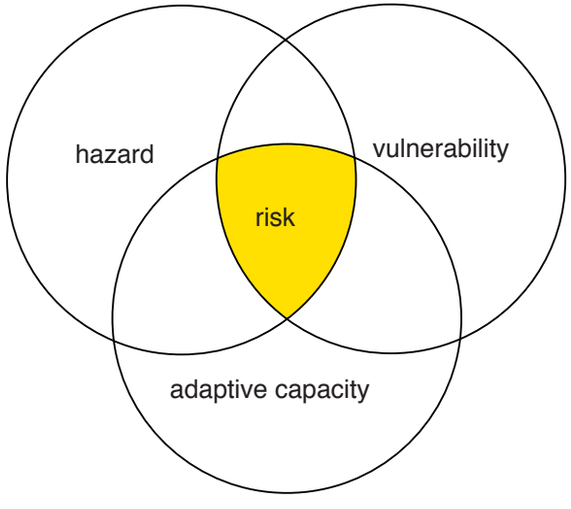


Fig. 1-26_The Roma are a community at risk

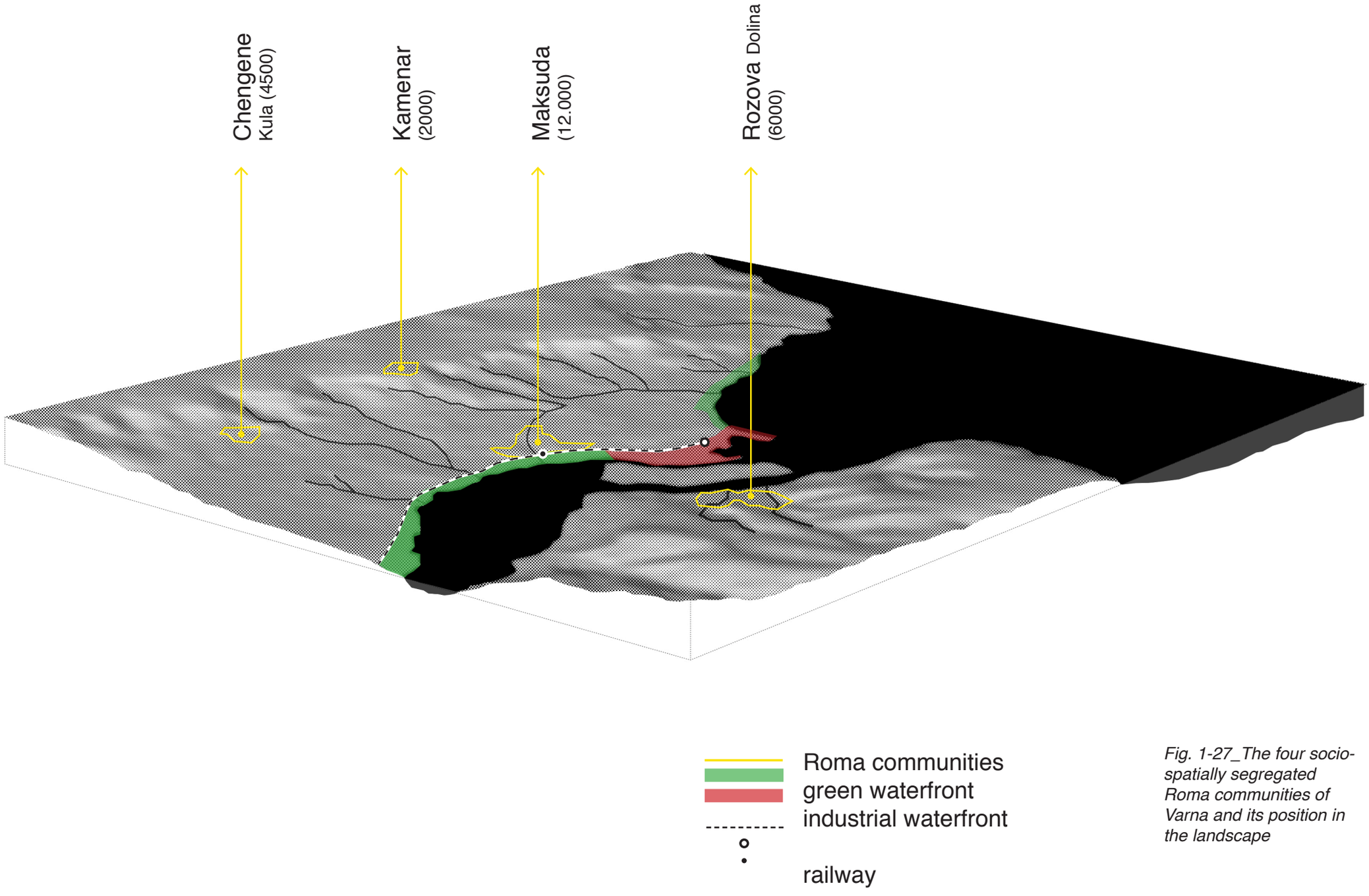


Fig. 1-27_The four socio-spatially segregated Roma communities of Varna and its position in the landscape

^ The Roma communities and its position in the landscape

Fig. 1-28_The Roma community of Kamenar, located on the Franga Plateau (resettlement community)
Fig. 1-29_The Roma community of Maksuda, located in the Franga Dere (original community)

Fig. 1-30_The Roma community of Chengene Kula, located on the descending terraces of the Franga Plateau (resettlement community)
Fig. 1-31_The Roma community of Rozova Dolina, located in the Avren Dere (original community)

^ The contemporary relation of the city with its landscape

Fig. 1-32_The inaccessible, industrial waterfront of the port of Varna
Fig. 1-33_the Primorski Park adds a high value to the social life of Varna's citizens, at the same time it's dense structure limits the connection of the city with the Black Sea

Fig. 1-34_ The waterfront along Lake Varna carries potential as metropolitan park structure, but the railway is making it inaccessible for citizens.
Fig. 1-35_The inner-city relation with the natural landscape is highly artificial.

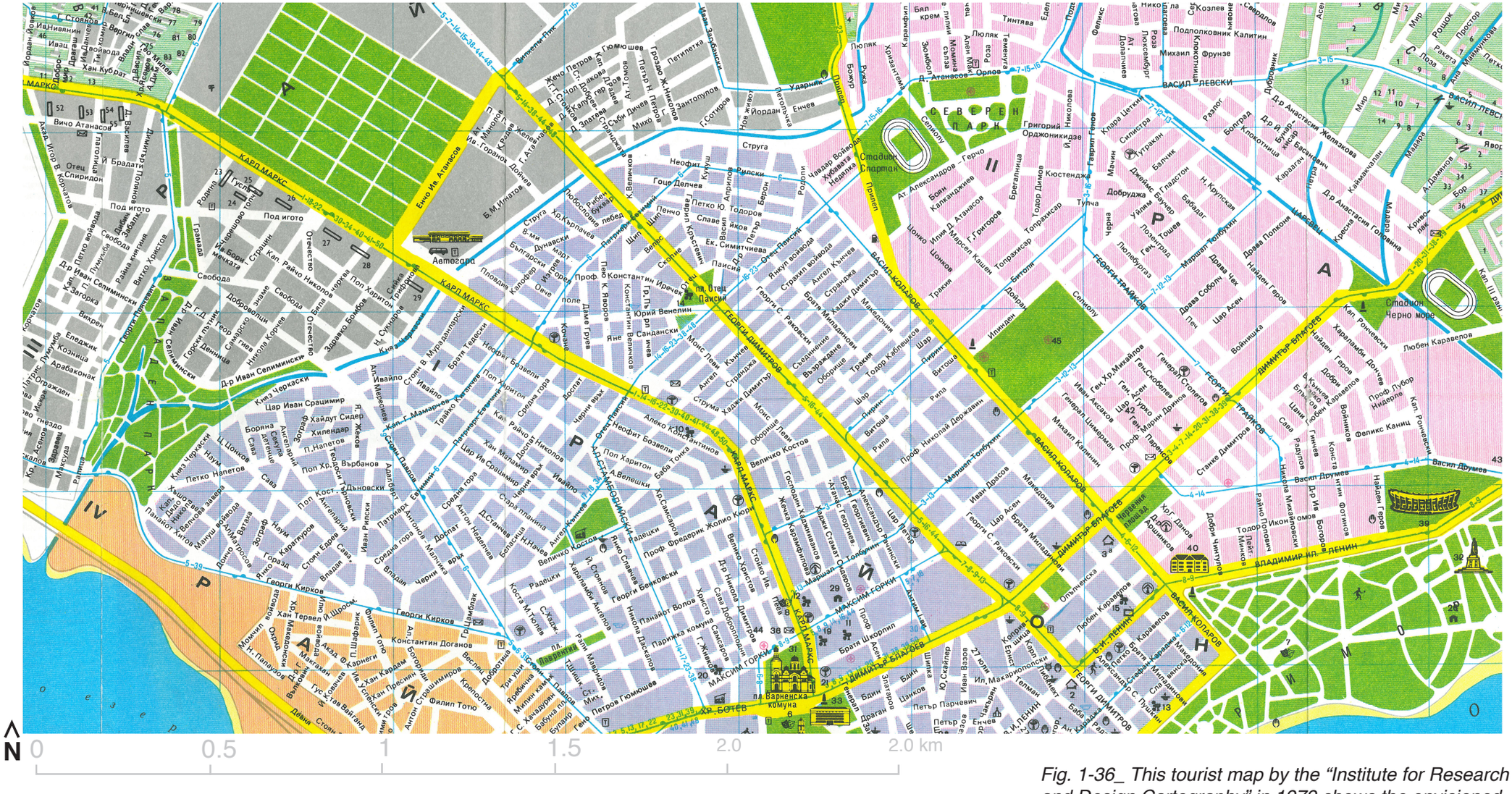
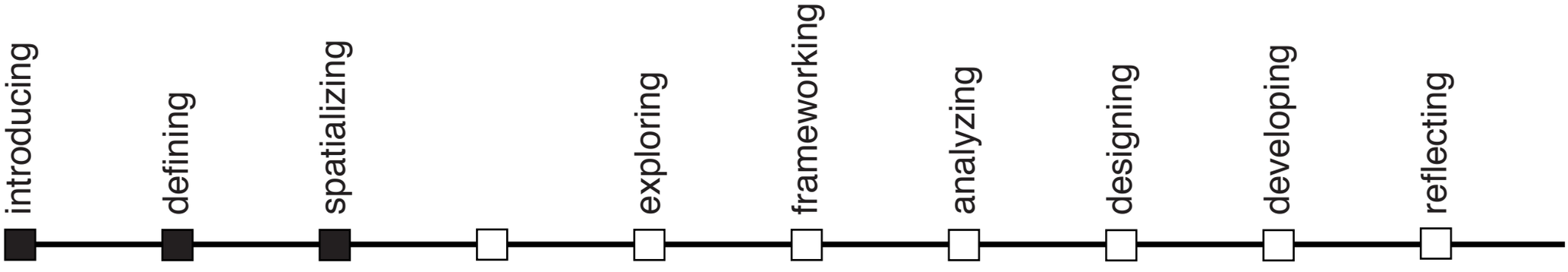


Fig. 1-36_ This tourist map by the “Institute for Research and Design Cartography” in 1979 shows the envisioned ‘Western‘ park on the location of Maksuda. It has never been realized.



Approaching

^ Europeanization of the Bulgarian Spatial Planning system
^ EU framework for National Roma Integration Strategies
^ The significance of public space in the fragmented city
^ The Operative Landscape Approach
^ The Cultural Enclave and The Corridor

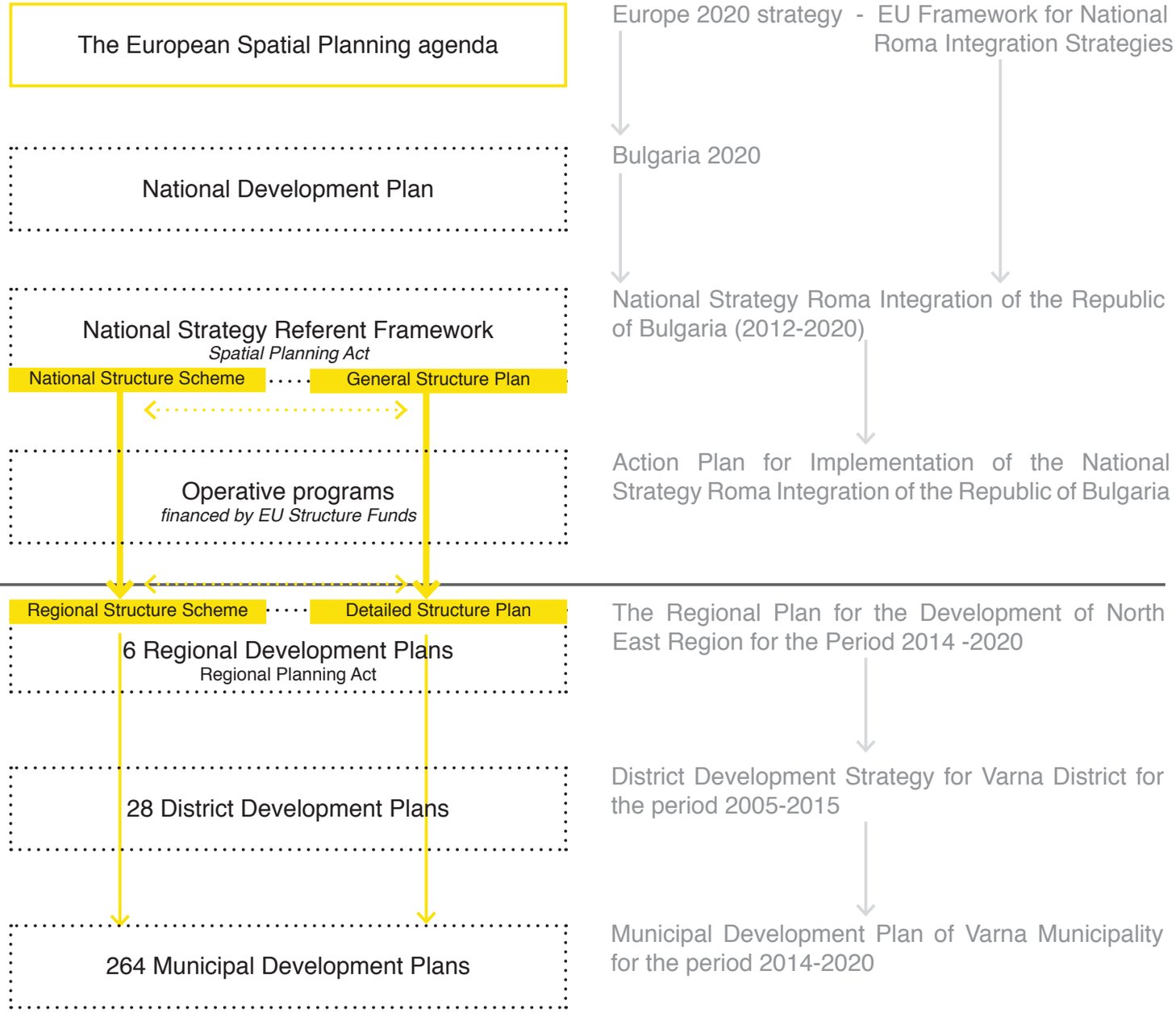


Fig. 1-37_ Hierarchy of planning structures in Bulgaria. Europeanisation has added a new layer above the national planning system of Bulgaria.

Fig. 1-38_The EU framework for National Roma Integration Strategies defines four essential topics to promote social-economic integration of Roma within an overall process of non-discrimination of minorities in the society.

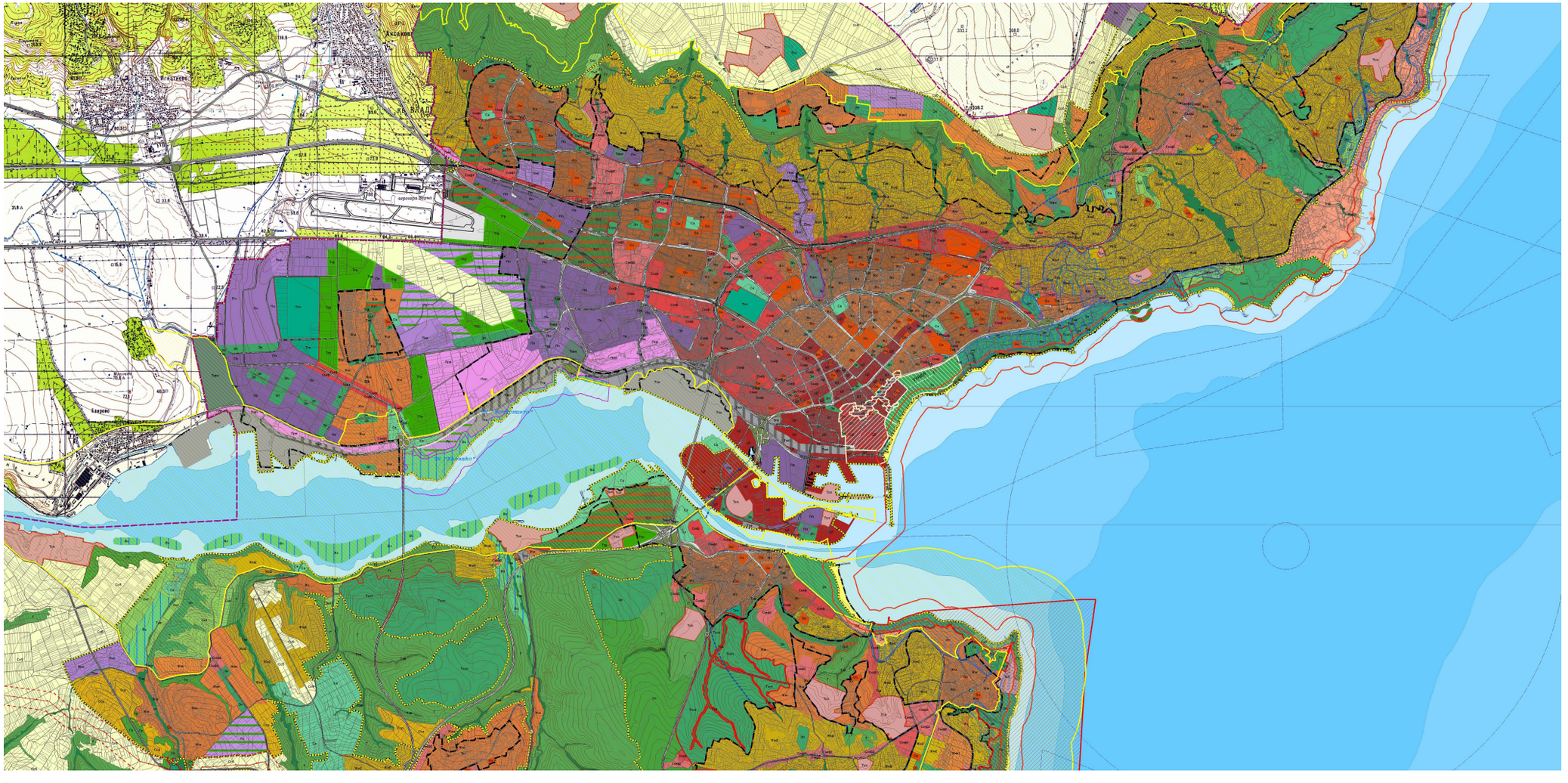


Fig. 1-40_ The Development Strategy for Varna published by the Municipality of Varna in 2013 has not been published together with a specific strategy on Roma

Fig. 1-41_The demolition of illegal Roma settlements with bulldozers
Fig. 1-42_Relocation of Roma in modular housing concepts

Fig. 1-43_ Interior of an illegally constructed house which will be demolished
Fig. 1-44_Interior of a new modular house

The idea of the city as a cultural object argues a specific human dimension on the concept of public space, thus public space is more than just physical state-owned space.

From a cultural point of view, public space is the core of the symbolic life of a city as this is where the experiences and daily activities of its inhabitants converge. Public space is the physical representation of community life and the community expression of contact among individuals (Janches, 2010).

Fig. 1-45_Public space as the forum for integration

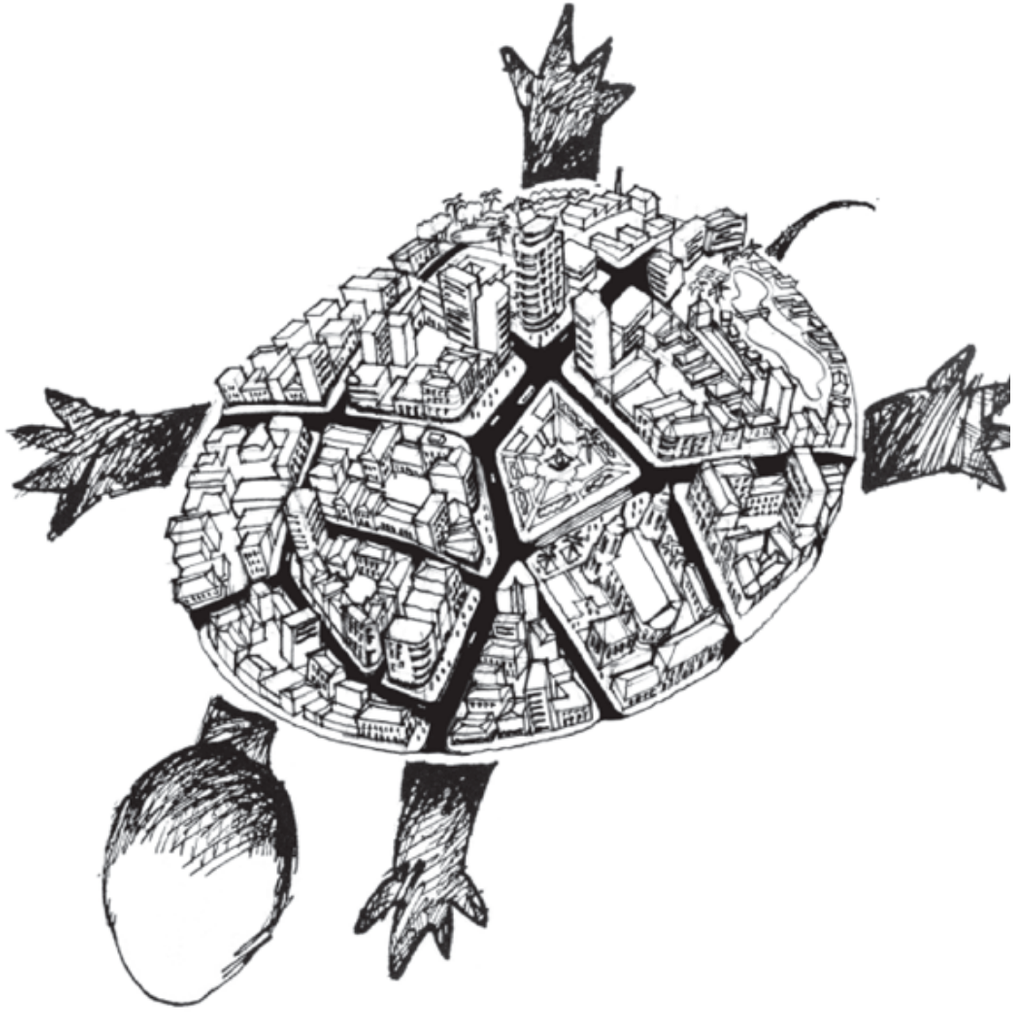


Fig. 1-46_The methaphorical turtle: the city is an integrated structure of life, work and mobility together

If public space is the medium for integration, then the landscape is our canvas...

The operative landscape approach defines the landscape as a constantly evolving medium that takes notion of programmatic and ecological dynamics and uses landscape to direct communities to an inclusive whole by incorporating change over time and maintaining an active project agenda (North, 2012).

...so this approach can provide the clues to a landscape-based reorganisation of the socio-spatial fragmentation of the city of Varna

Approaching > The Cultural Enclave and The Corridor

approach during communism:
supposed exclusion > inclusion

current approach:
acknowledged segregation > inclusion

proposed future approach:
acknowledged segregation > integration

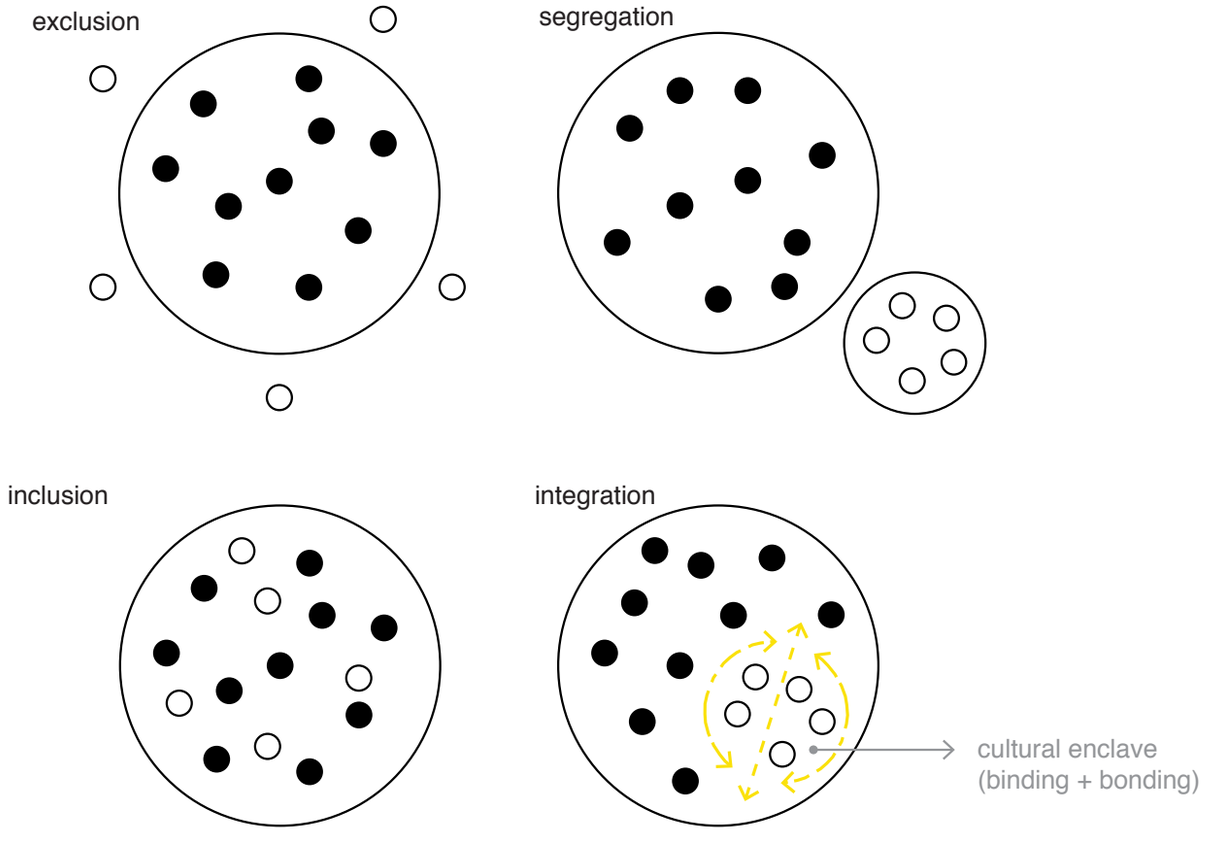
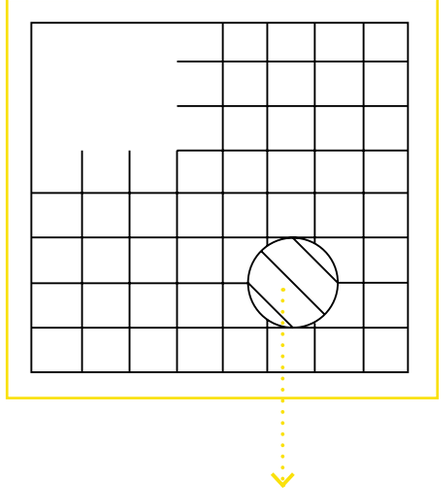
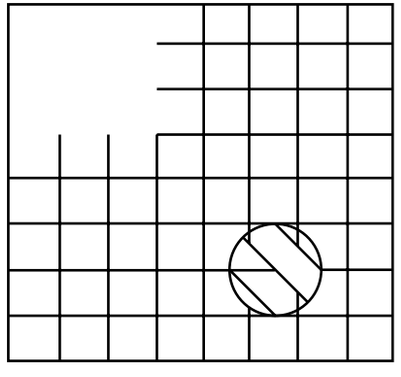


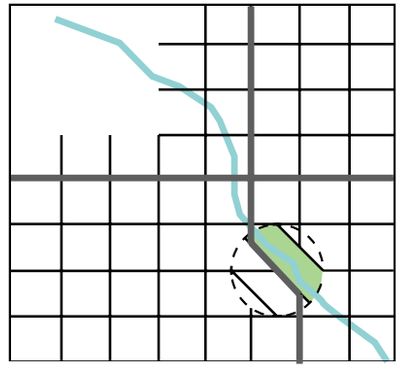
Fig. 1-47_ Graphical representation of terms considering the 'integration' of minority in a majority



socio-spatially marginalized community

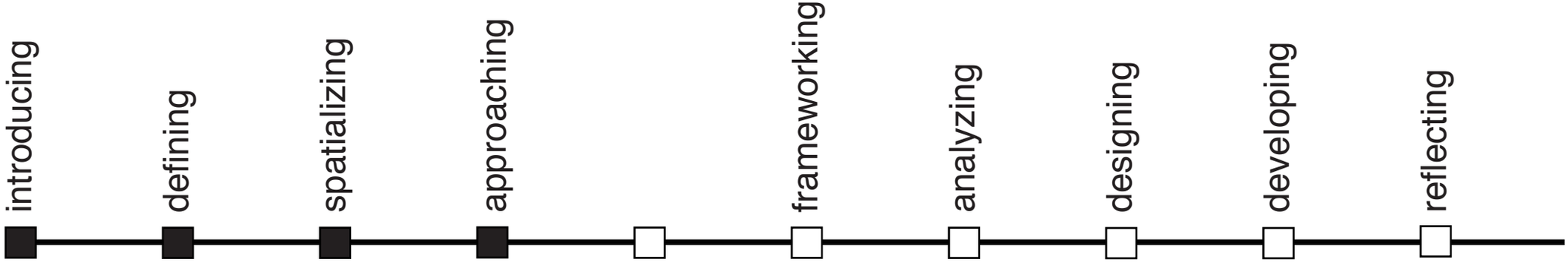


conventional in-situ upgrading



landscape-based in-situ upgrading

Fig. 1-48_ From conventional in-situ upgrading towards a landscape-based approach in which the formalized neighbhorhood is a Cultural Enclave with urban significance using landscape features as binding element



Exploring

^ Maksuda as Cultural Enclave (model)

^ The urban drainage system as Corridor

Exploring > Maksuda as Cultural Enclave

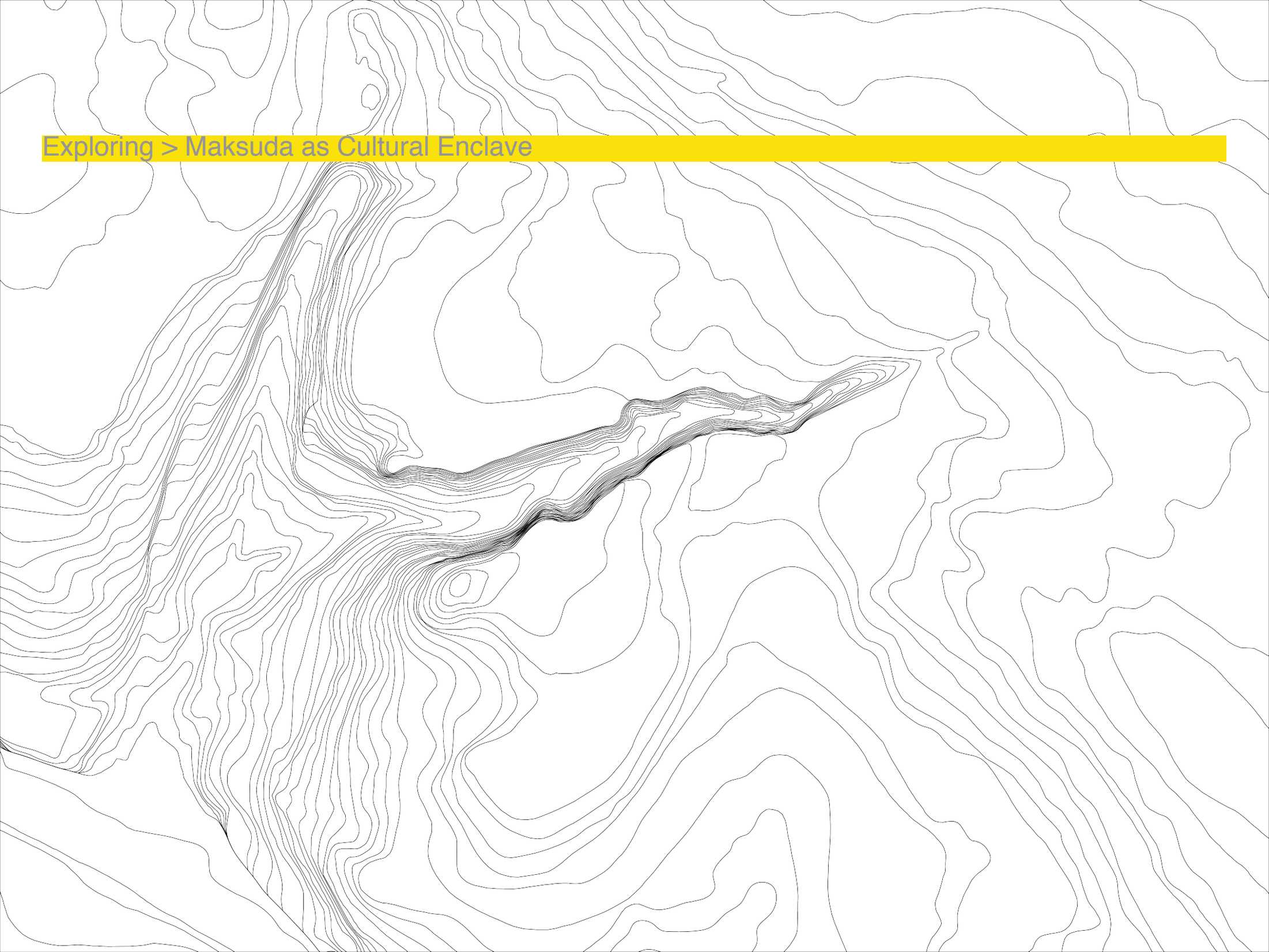


Fig. 1-49_Stages within the development of Roma settlements in Maksuda

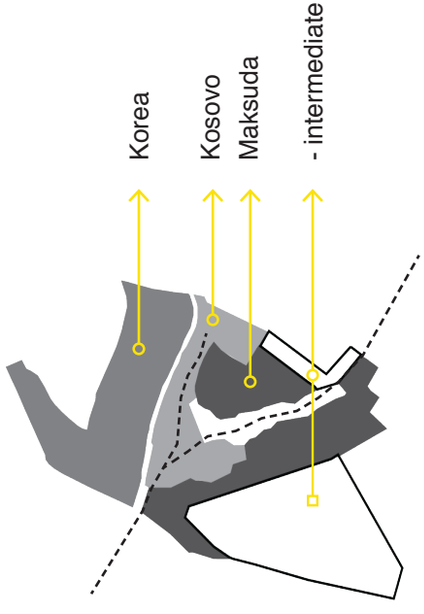


Fig. 1-50_The city within the city

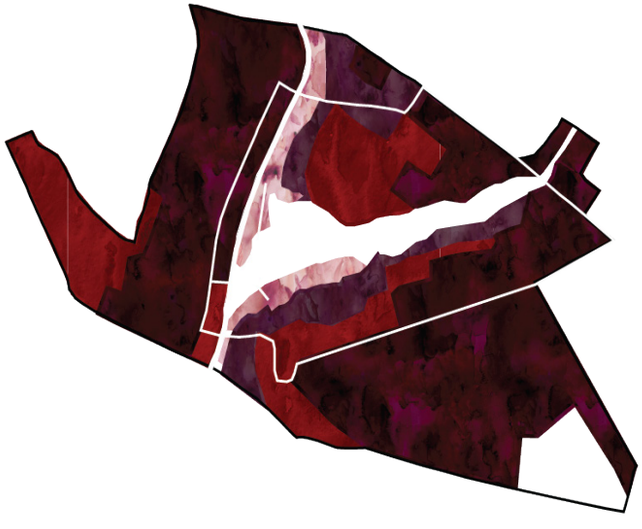


Fig. 1-51_ Graphical representation of Maksuda based on the settlement distribution

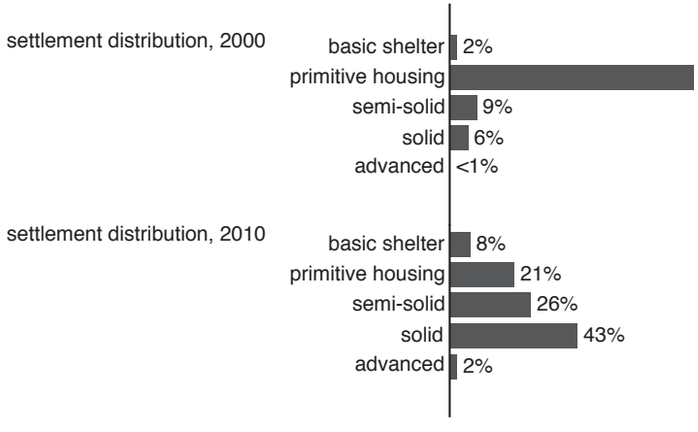


Fig. 1-52_ The most important consideration is that the community is able to develop its structures themselves (Llieva, 2003).

Fig. 1-53_ Aerial view over Maksuda

Fig. 1-54_The northern part of the Franga Dere crossing maksuda is relatively small and forested
Fig. 1-55_The gully gradually widens towards the valley, the descending hills become steeper and less stable

Fig. 1-56_Instable and polluted edges mark the landscape just before the drainage system becomes canalized
Fig. 1-57_The last part of the gully is canalized and used as an open sewer leading to Lake Varna

The socio-spatial structure of Maksuda

Fig. 1-58_The local economy starts to mix with the urban economy on strategic locations

Fig. 1-59_The local economy is often not directly visible...

Fig. 1-60_ ... for non-locals

Fig. 1-61_ More traditional Roma crafts are still being practiced and have the potential to define a strong ethnic identity in the Cultural Enclave

Fig. 1-62_ A small shop in the valley

Fig. 1-63_Small horse fields have been created in the valley

Fig. 1-64_The valley provides public space to meet and connect with others. This man is collecting valueable scrap in the city center with this trolley

Fig. 1-65_Asphalt is limited in the neighborhood, this dead-end road in the valley is used as playfield

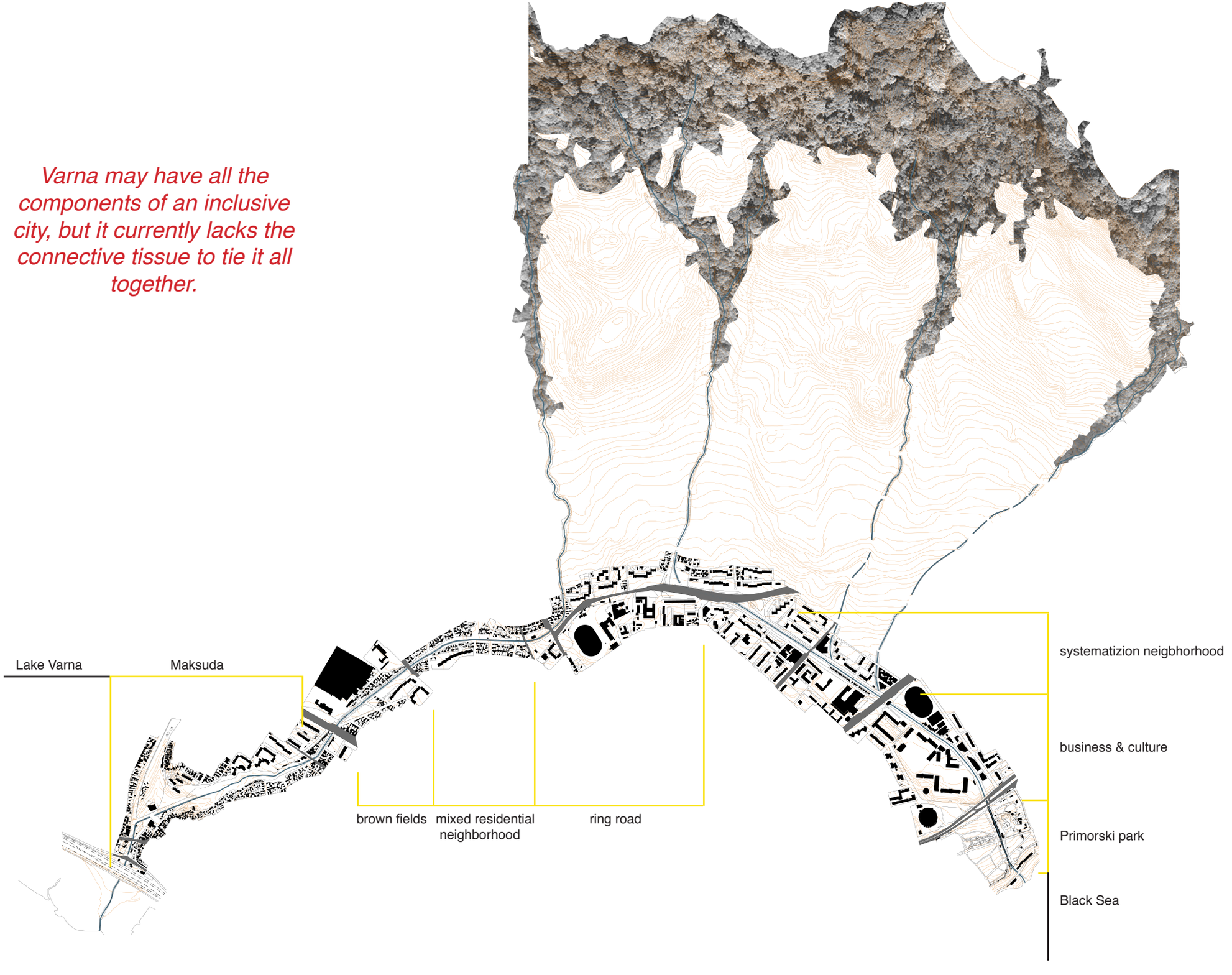
Fig. 1-66_ The connection between inside and outside is strong. Streets function as living room and every space is used, so are the roofs which are used as balconies

Fig. 1-67_ There is a big range in streets, but most are unpaved and lack trees.

Fig. 1-68_ The streets are used for all kinds of ceremonies

Exploring > The urban drainage system as Corridor

Varna may have all the components of an inclusive city, but it currently lacks the connective tissue to tie it all together.



Black Sea zone

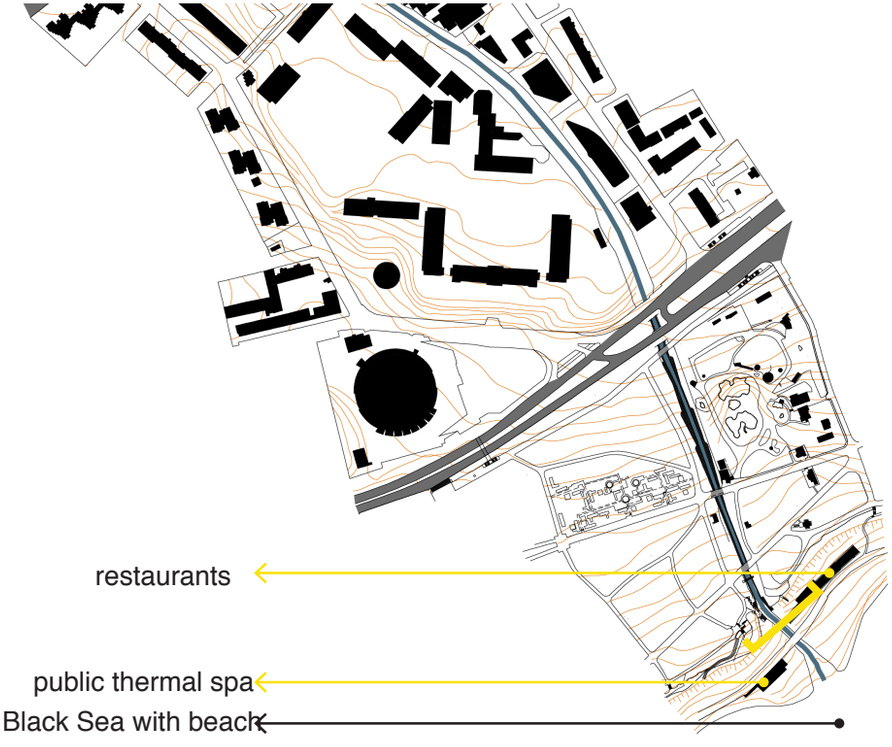


Fig. 1-69_ Section showing the urban drainage system in the “Black Sea“ zone

Fig. 1-70_Collage expressing the identity of the “Black Sea“ zone

Primorski Park zone

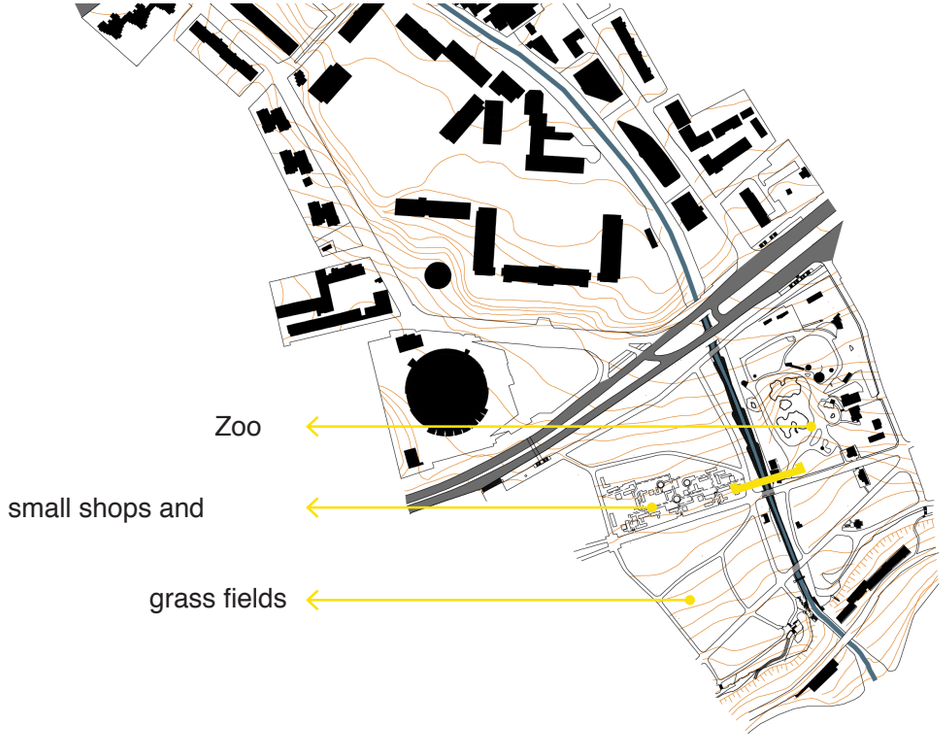
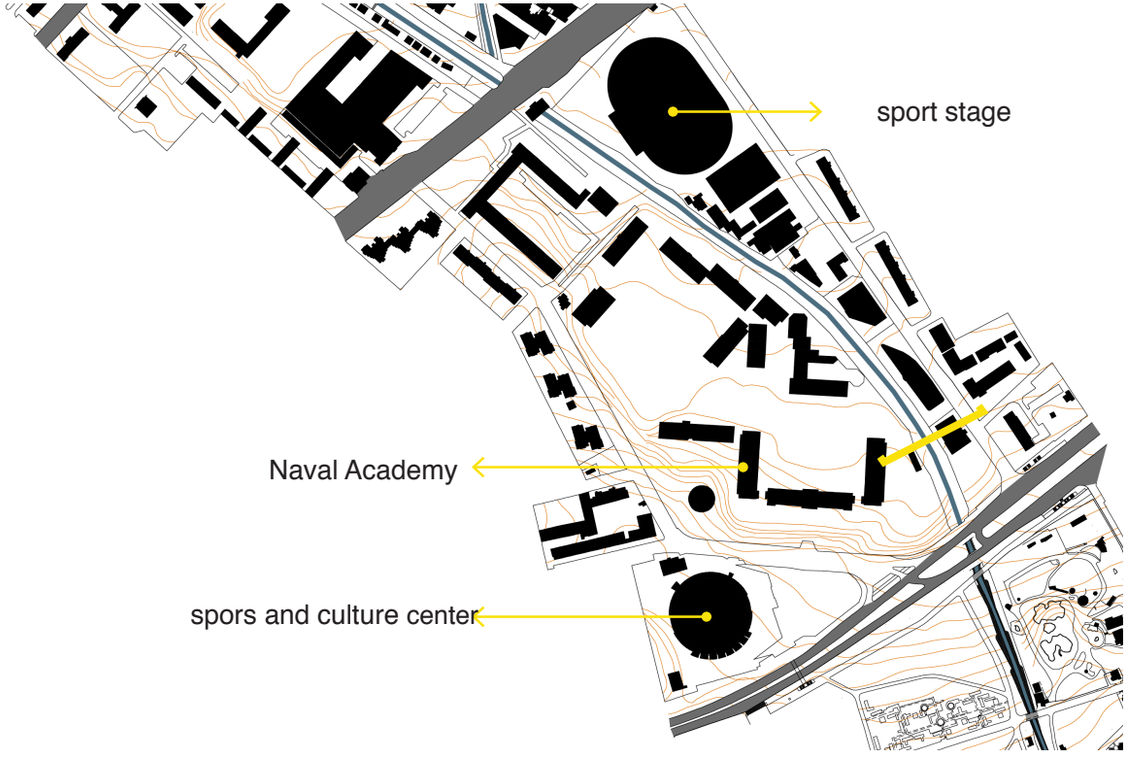


Fig. 1-71_ Section showing the urban drainage system in the “Primorski Park“ zone

Fig. 1-72_Collage expressing the identity of the "Primorski Park" zone

Business and culture zone



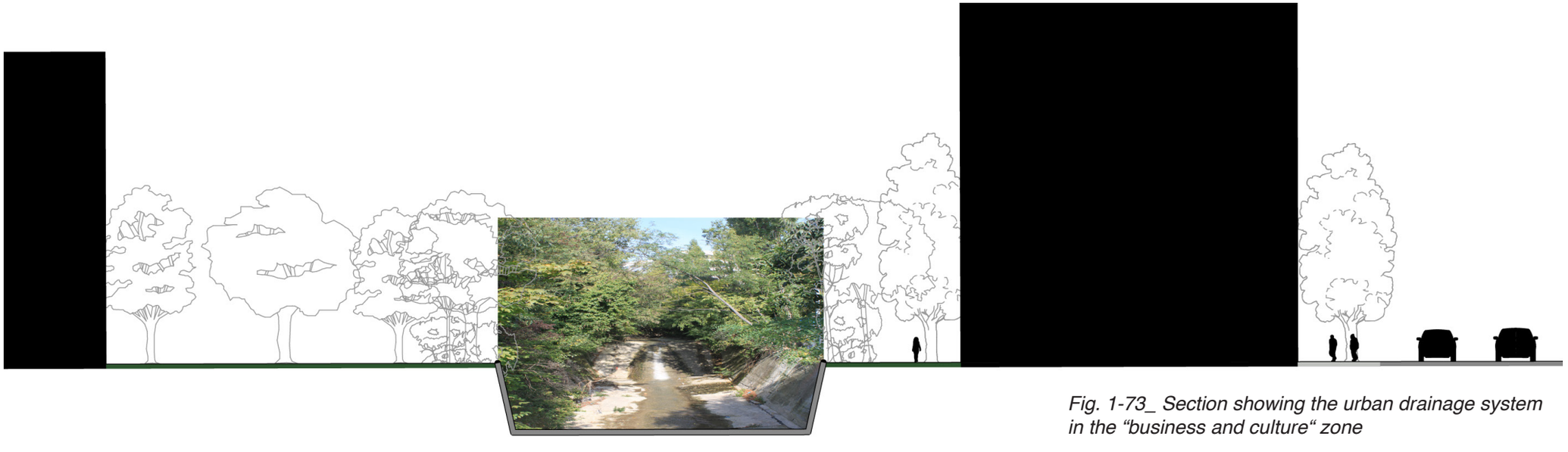


Fig. 1-73_ Section showing the urban drainage system in the “business and culture“ zone

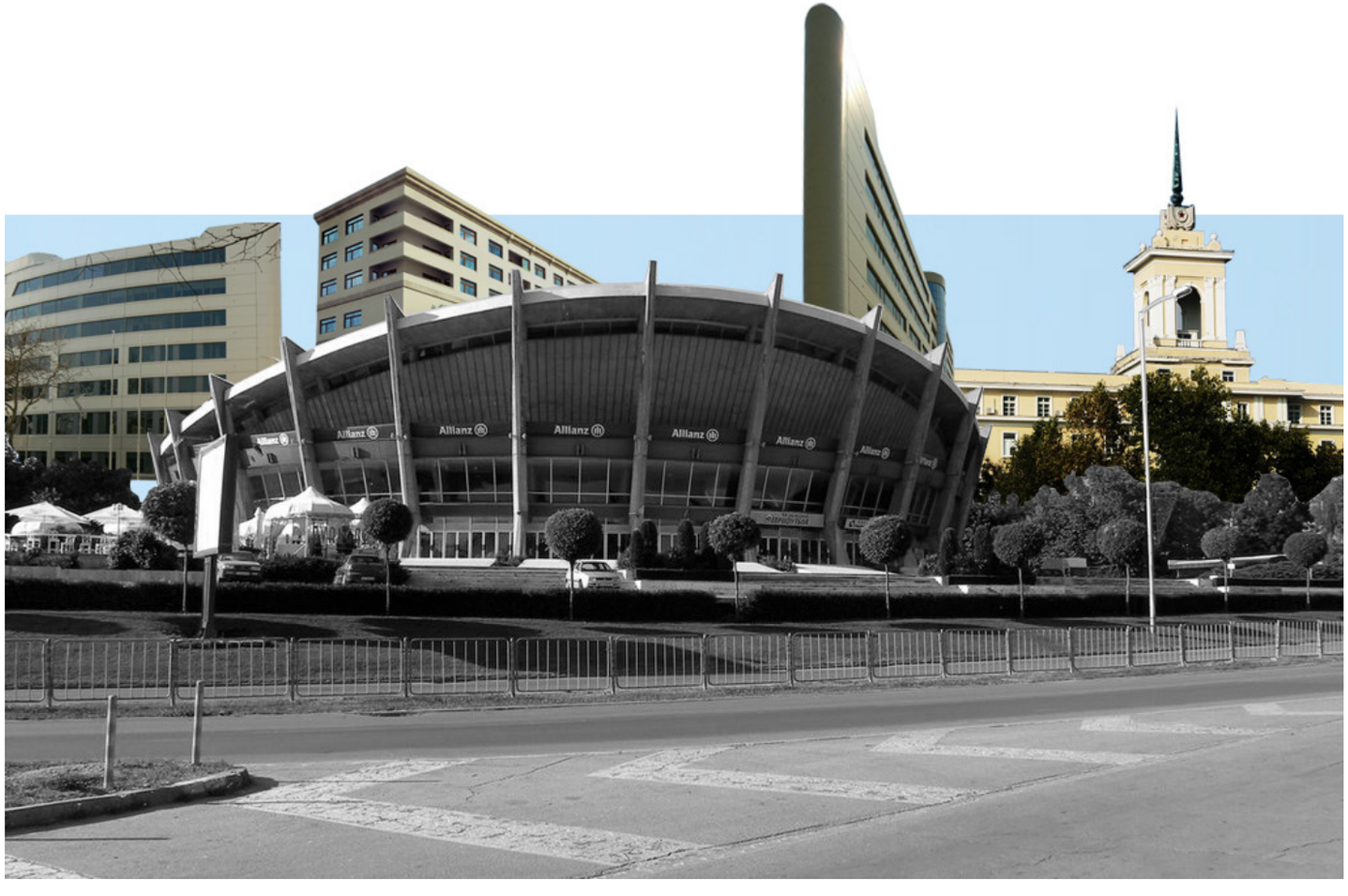
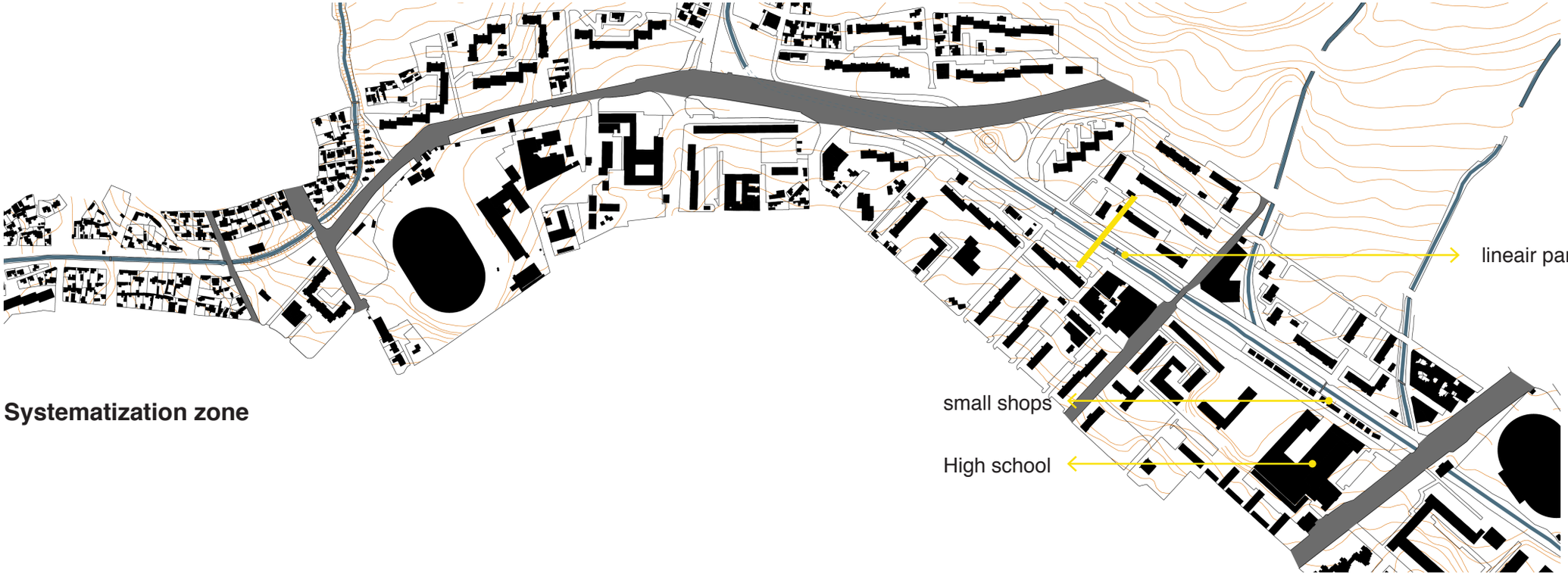


Fig. 1-74_Collage expressing the identity of the "business and culture" zone



Systematization zone

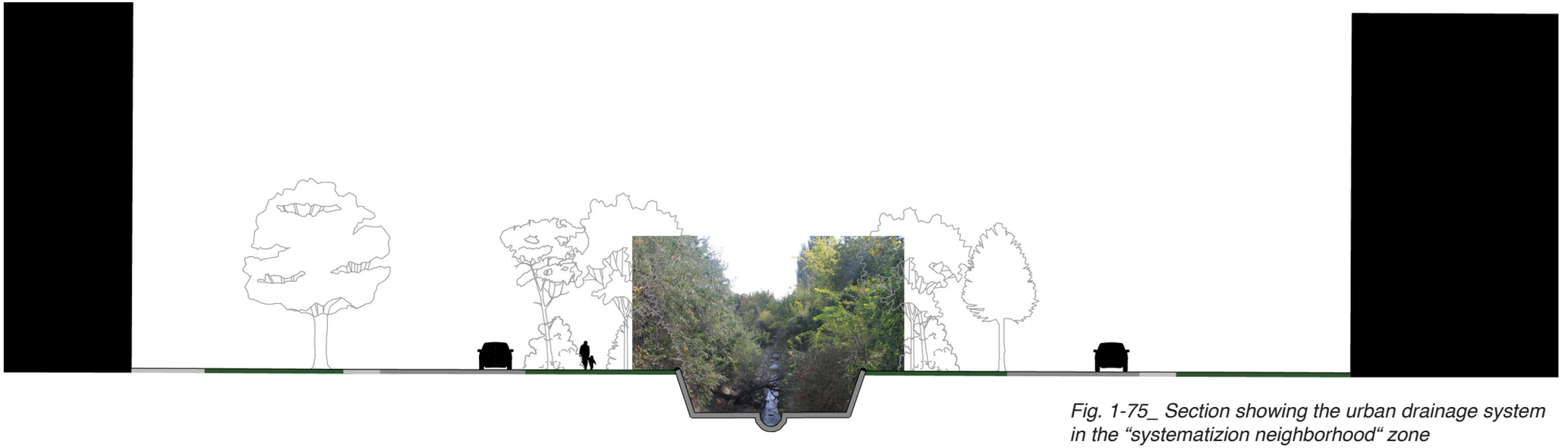


Fig. 1-75_ Section showing the urban drainage system in the “systematizion neighborhood“ zone

Fig. 1-76_Collage expressing the identity of the "systematization neighborhood" zone

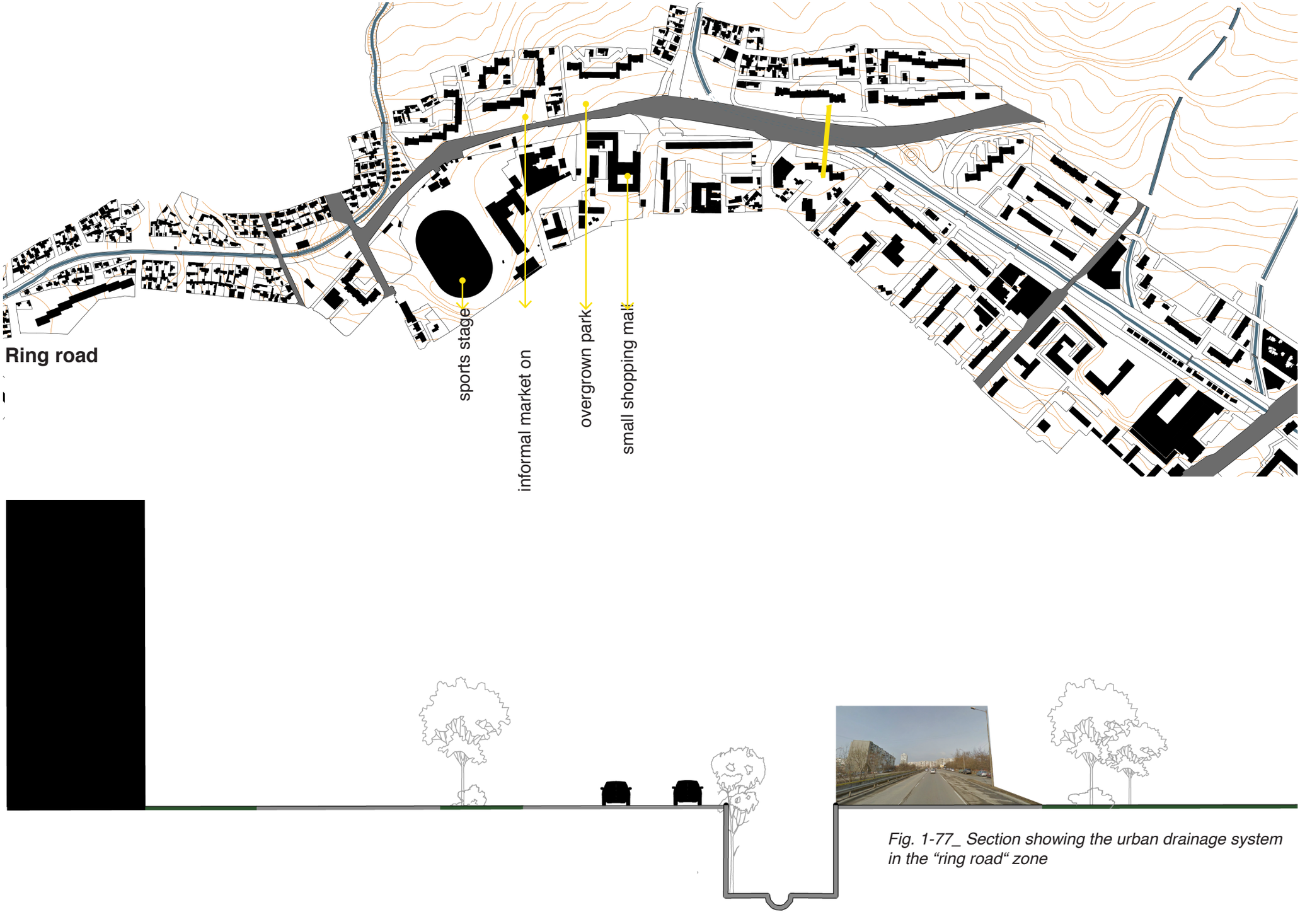


Fig. 1-77_ Section showing the urban drainage system in the “ring road“ zone

Fig. 1-78_Collage expressing the identity of the “ring road” zone

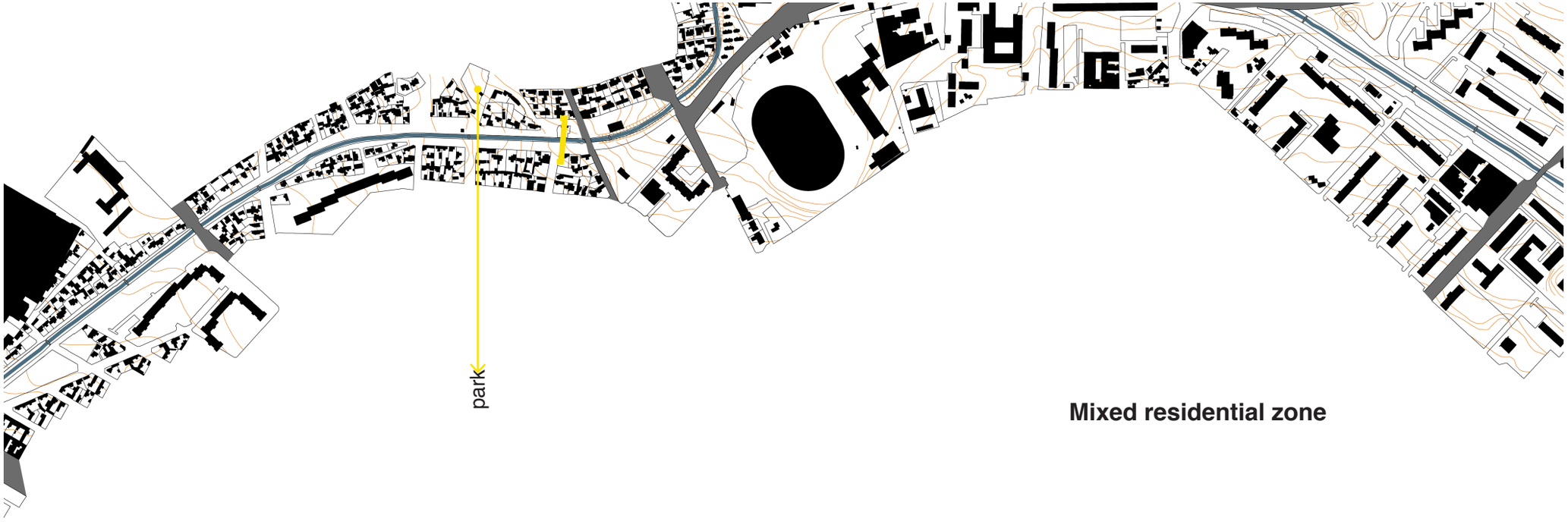


Fig. 1-79_ Section showing the urban drainage system in the “mixed residential neighborhood“ zone

Fig. 1-80_Collage expressing the identity of the “mixed residential neighborhood” zone

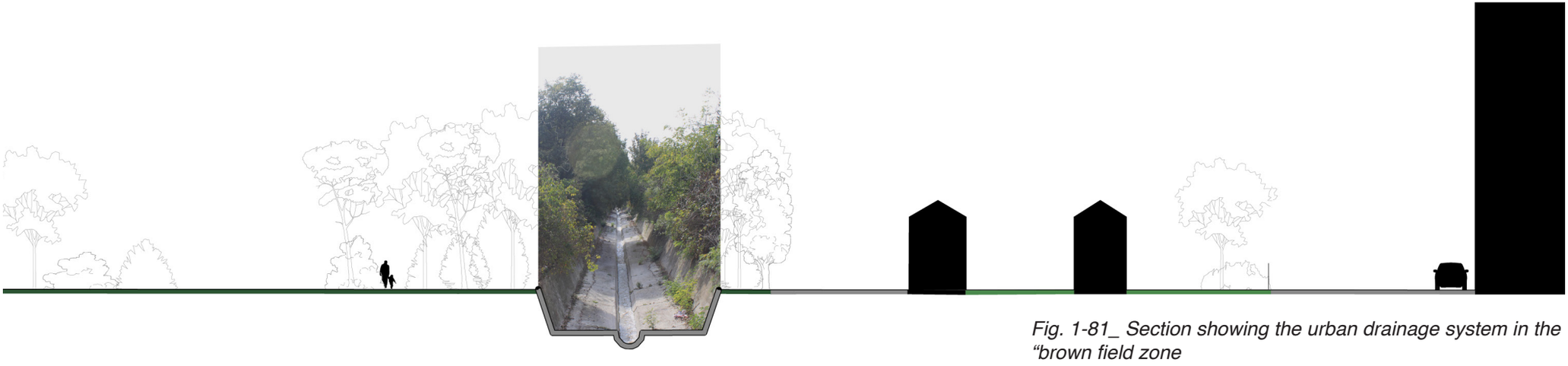


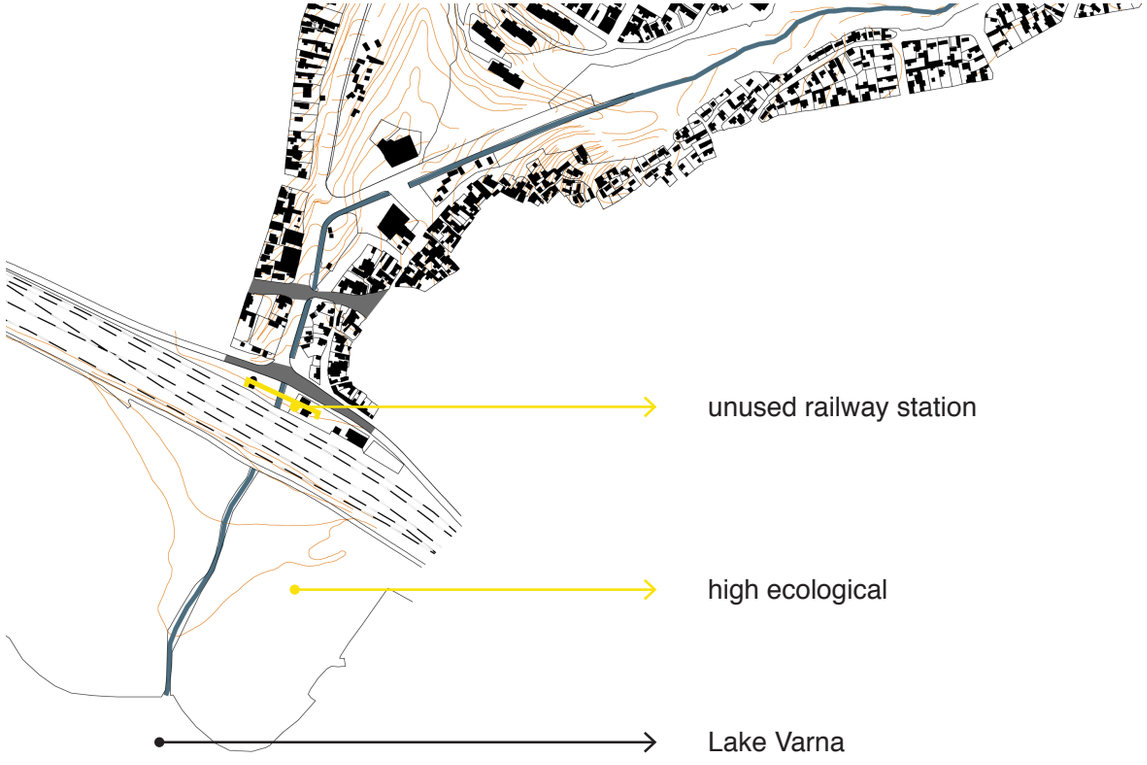
Fig. 1-81_ Section showing the urban drainage system in the "brown field zone

Fig. 1-82_Collage expressing the identity of the “brown field” zone

Maksuda zone

Fig. 1-83_ Section showing the urban drainage system in the “Maksuda“ zone

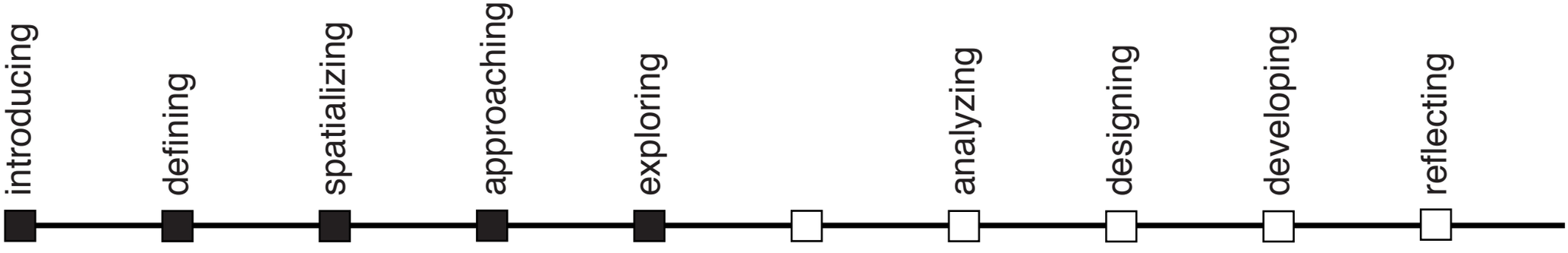
Fig. 1-84_Collage expressing the identity of the "Maksuda" zone



Lake Varna zone

Fig. 1-85_ Section showing the urban drainage system in the “Lake Varna“ zone

Fig. 1-86_Collage expressing the identity of the “Lake Varna” zone



Frameworking

^ Maksuda as Cultural Enclave

^ The urban drainage system as Corridor

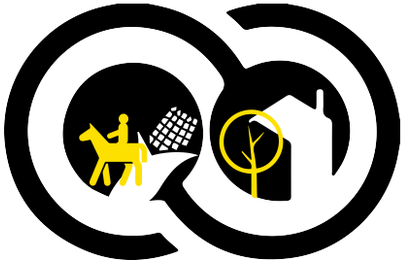
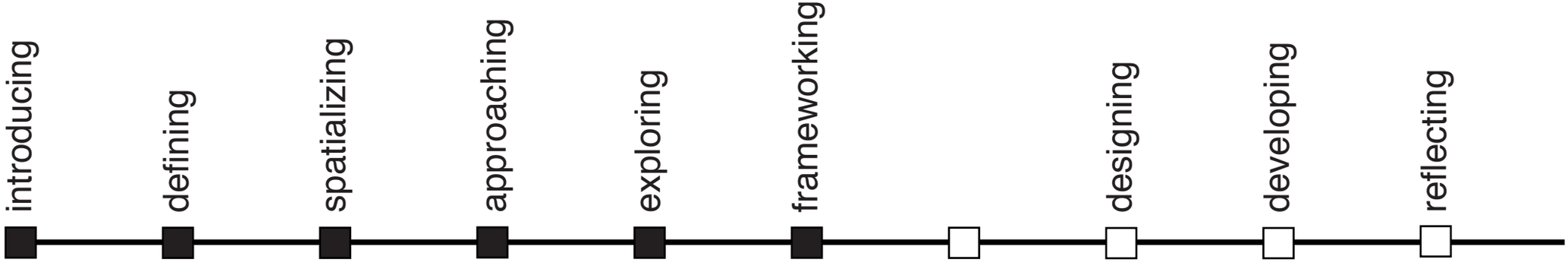


Fig. 1-87_A twofold apprach to Maksuda as Cultural Enclave: urban farming model for integration and a street-led approach to in-situ upgrading

Fig. 1-88_The local NGO HIllendarski uses a farming model for the integration of Roma in Varna.

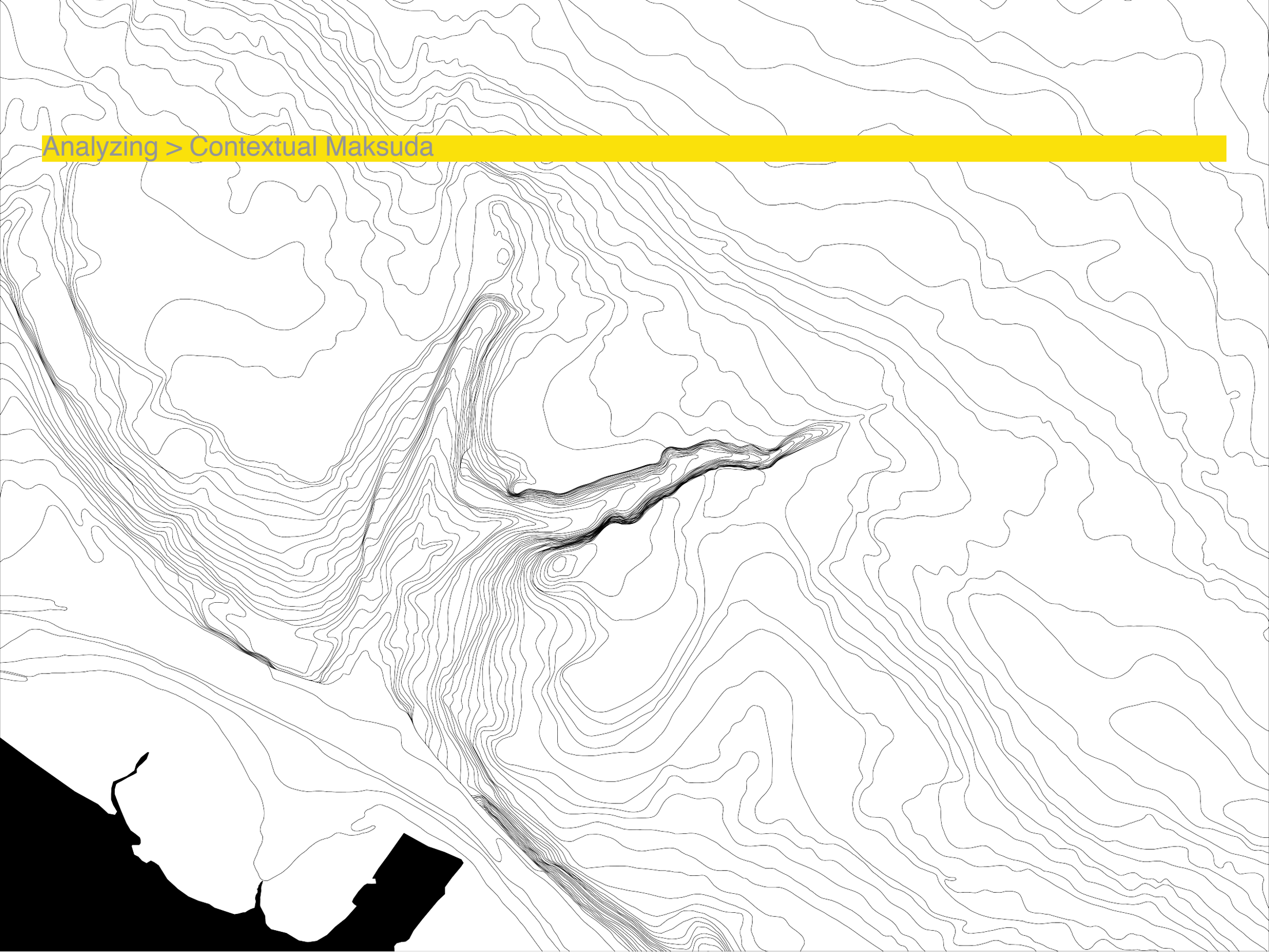
Fig. 1-89_The Corridor uses the drainage system as spatial framework to generate new urban mobility within the communities and the surrounding landscape. Maksuda is integrated as subcentrality in the socio-spatial structure of Varna. A continuous park structure connecting communities and landscape

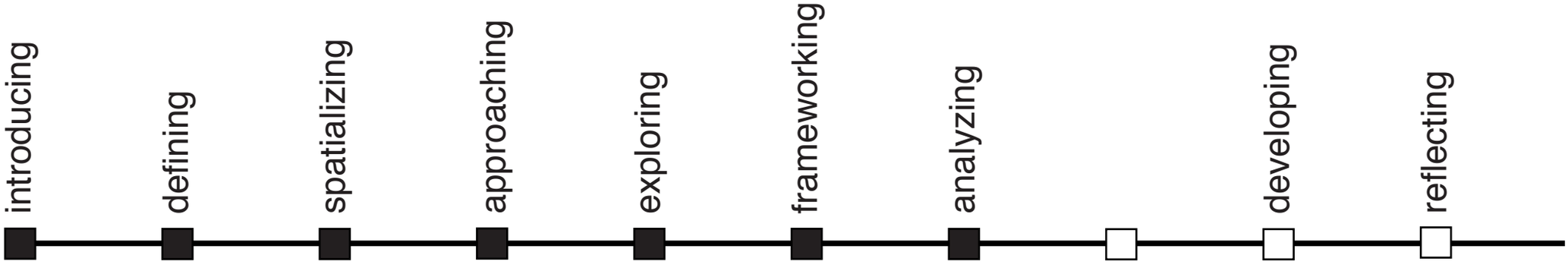


Analyzing

^ Contextual Maksuda (model)

Analyzing > Contextual Maksuda



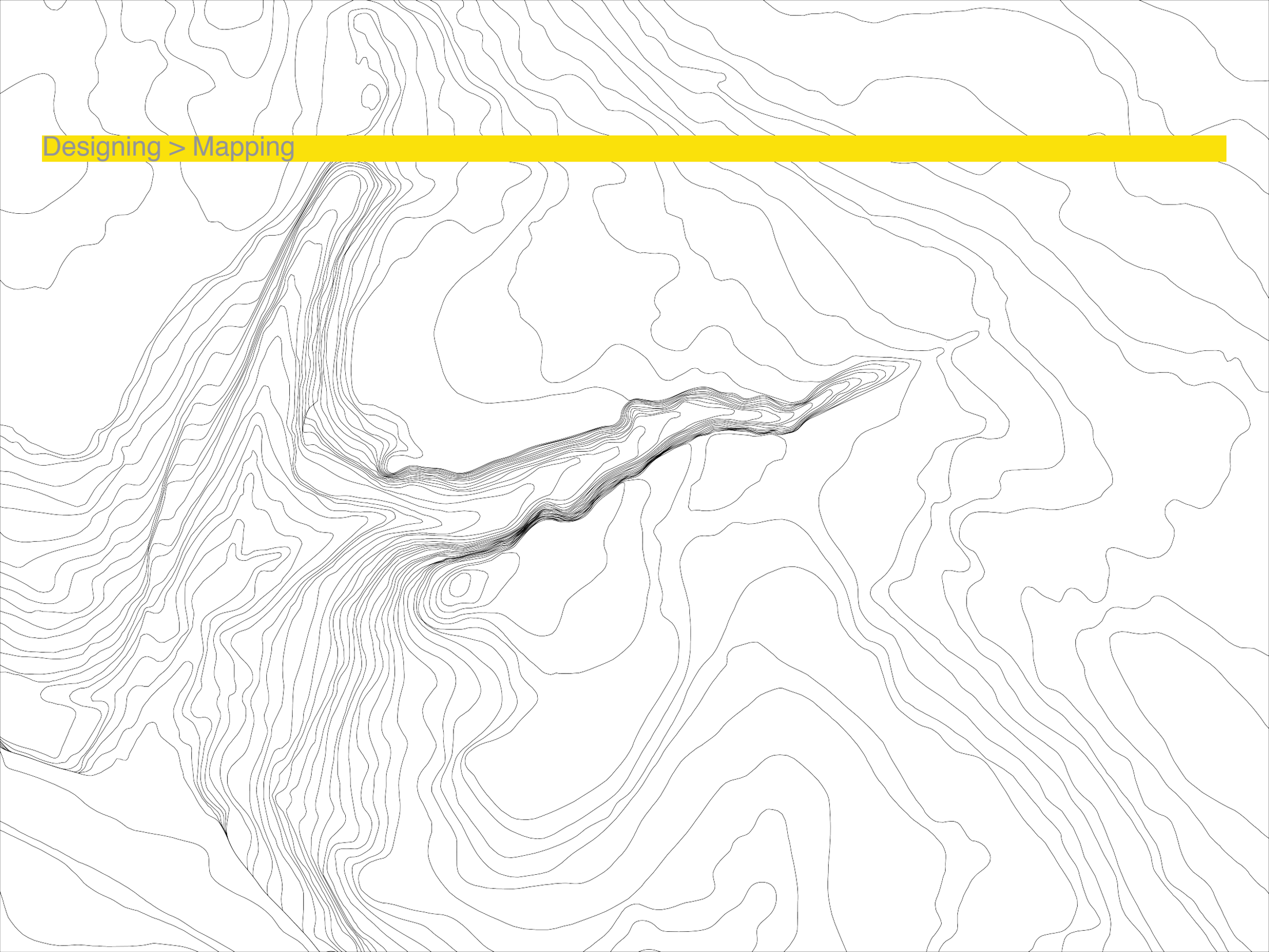


Designing

^ Mapping (model)

^ Sections

Designing > Mapping



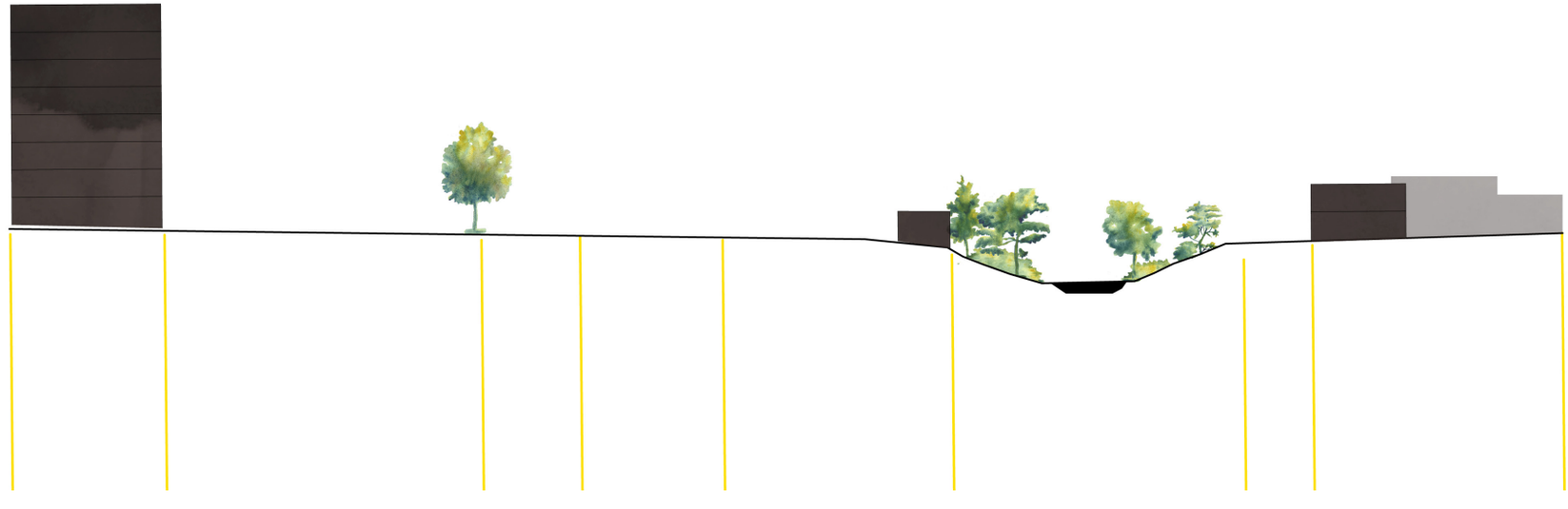


Fig. 1-90_ Section 1, existing situation

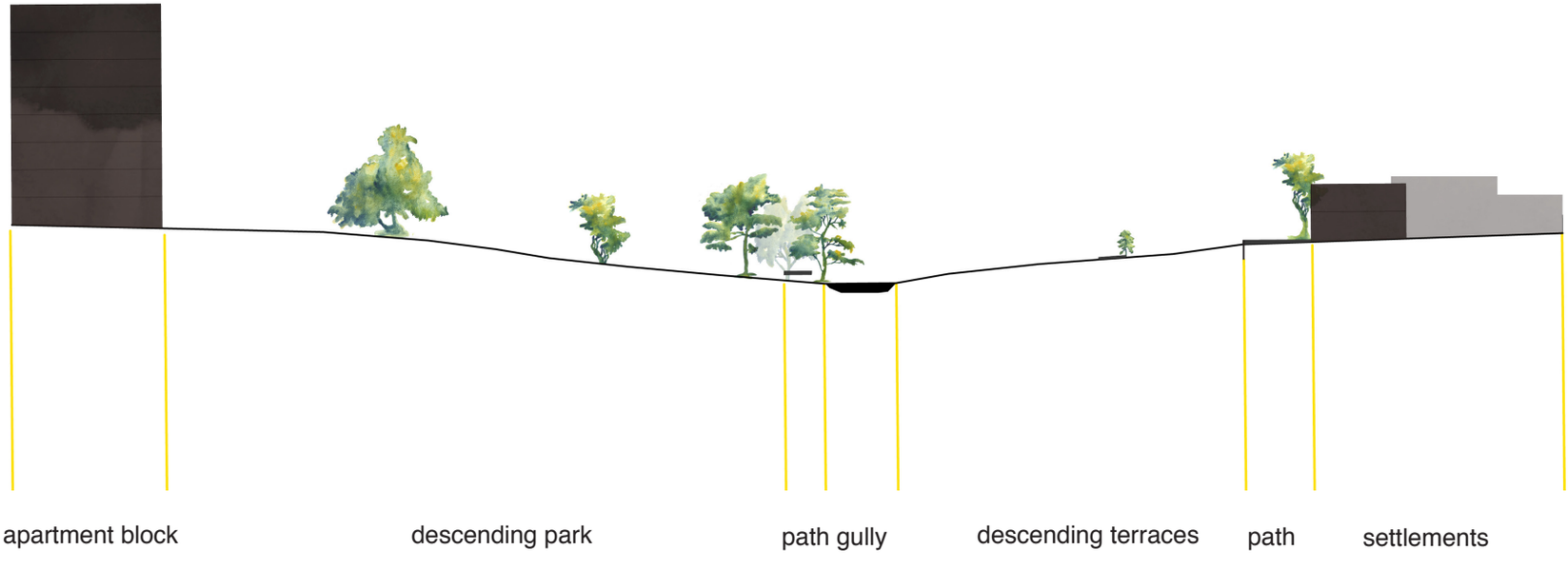


Fig. 1-91_ Section 1, proposed situation

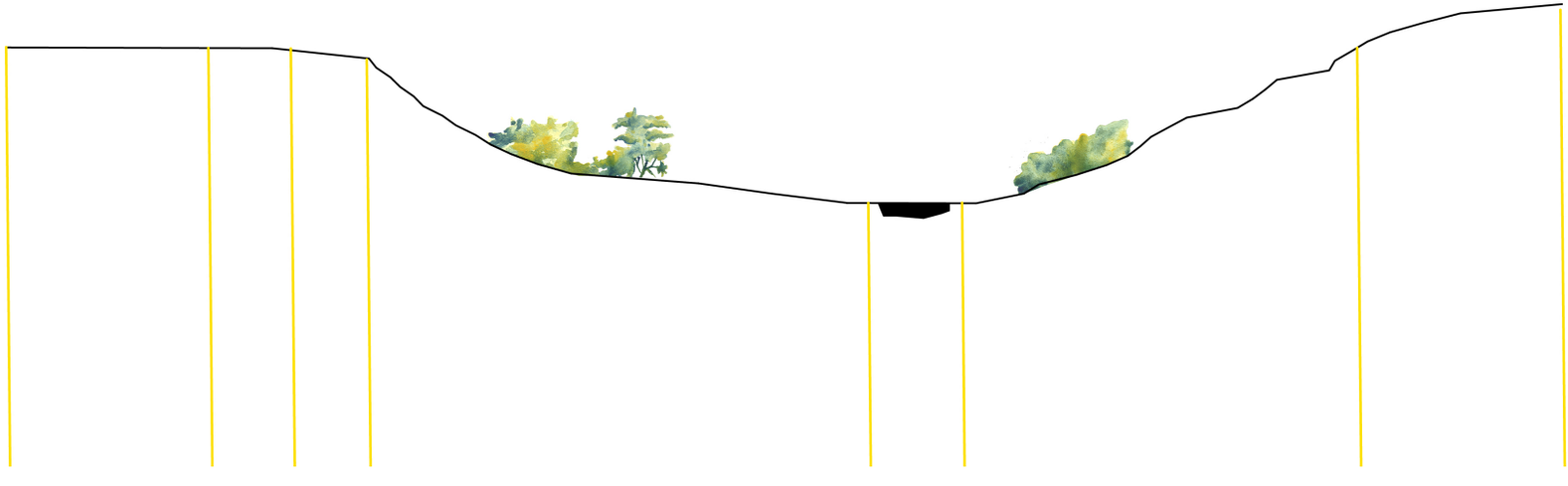


Fig. 1-92_ Section 2, existing situation

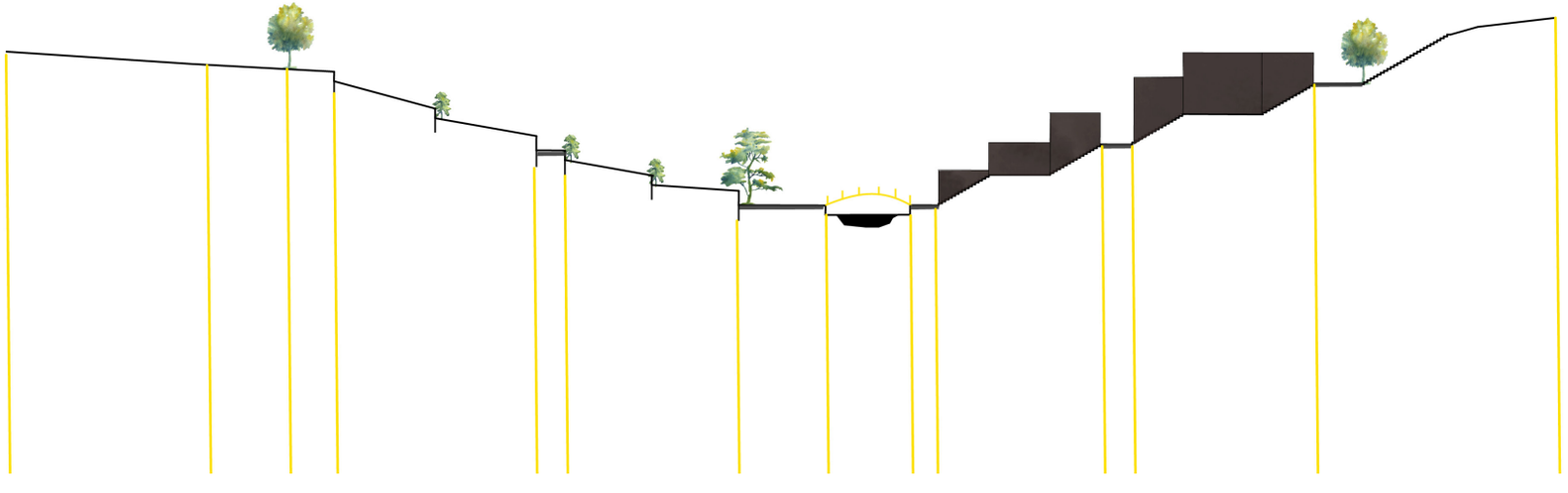
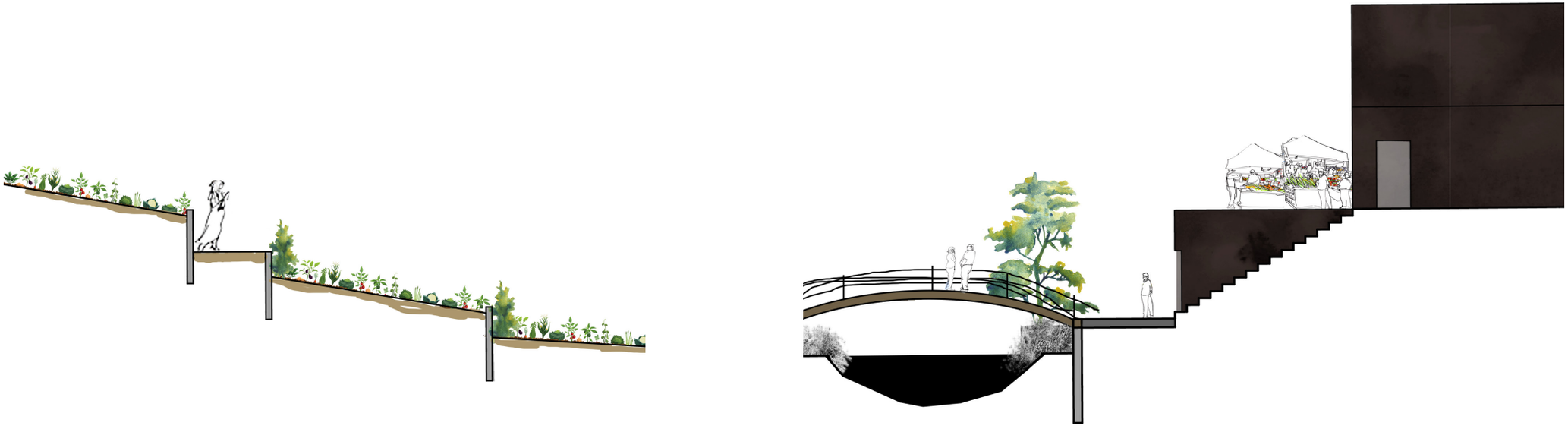


Fig. 1-93_ Section 2, proposed situation



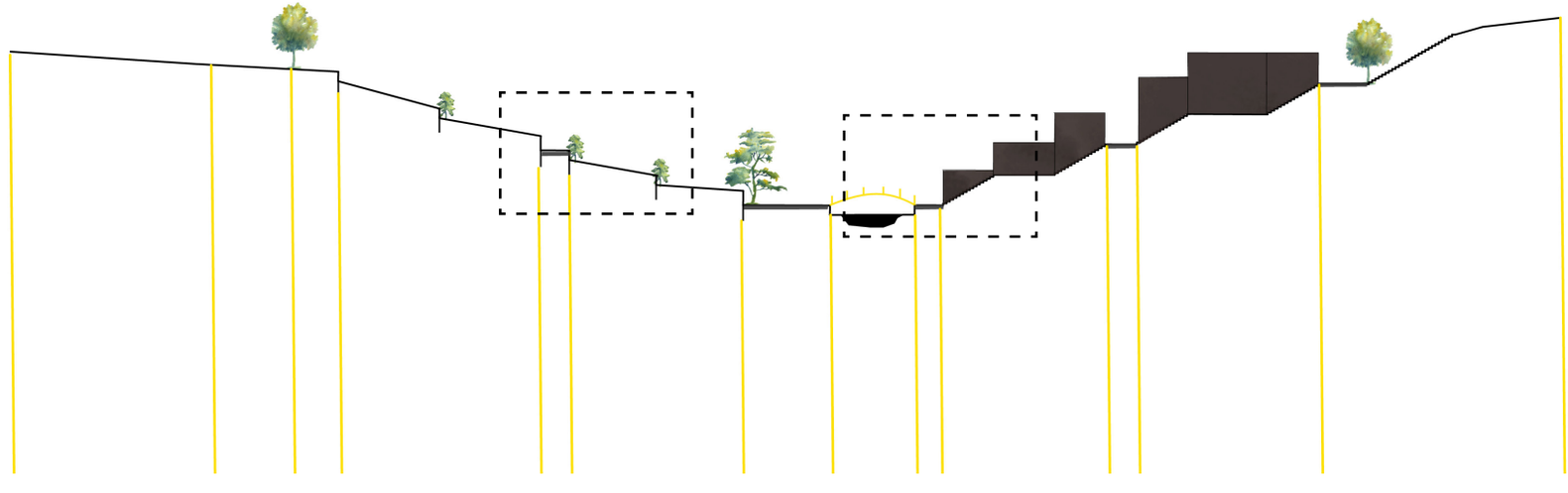


Fig. 1-94_ Section 2, zoom Agricultural terraces
Fig. 1-95_ Section 2, zoom Community Stairs

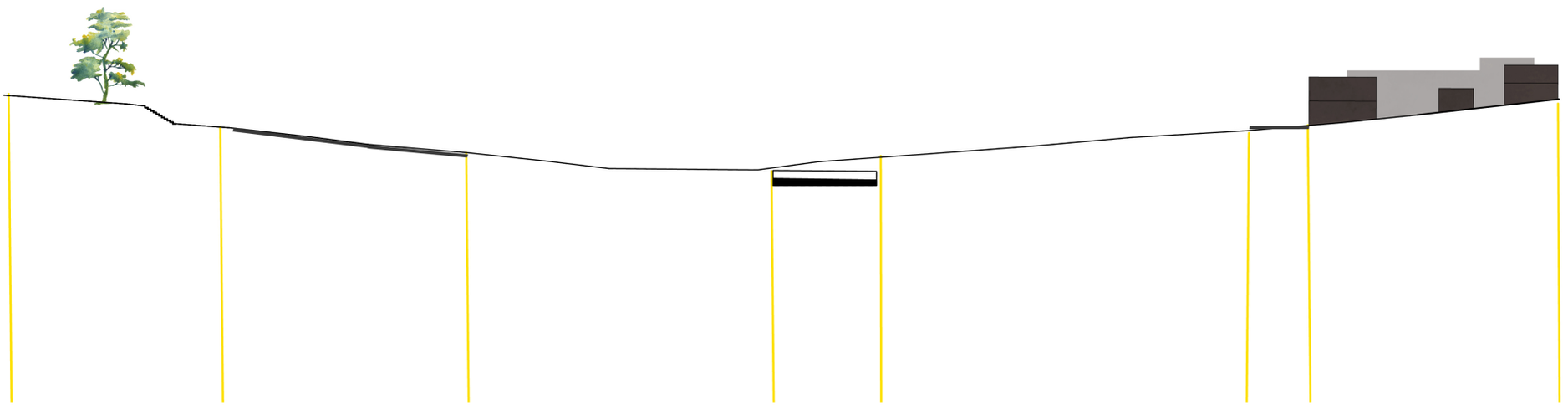


Fig. 1-96_ Section 3, existing situation

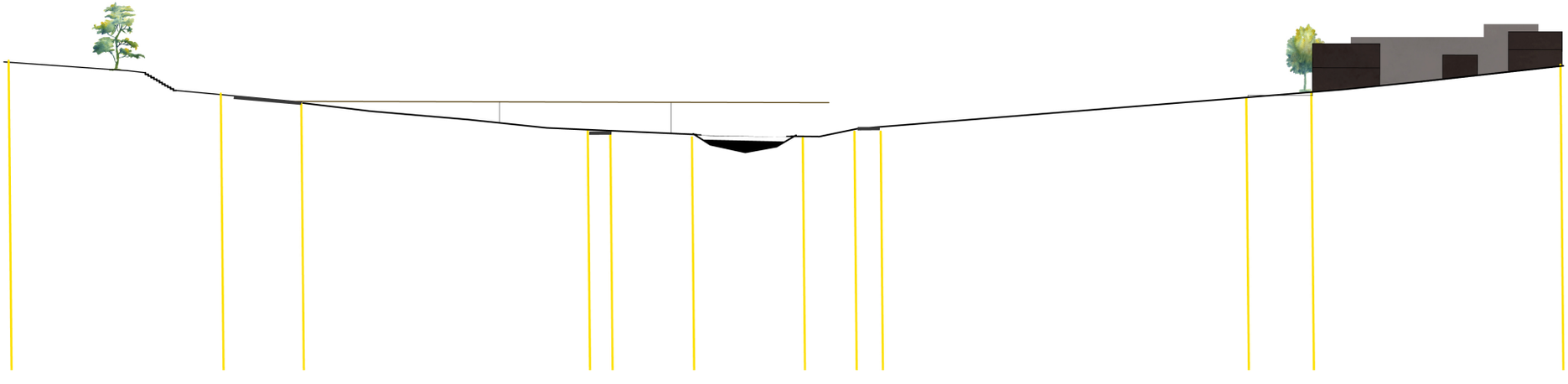


Fig. 1-97_ Section 3, new situation

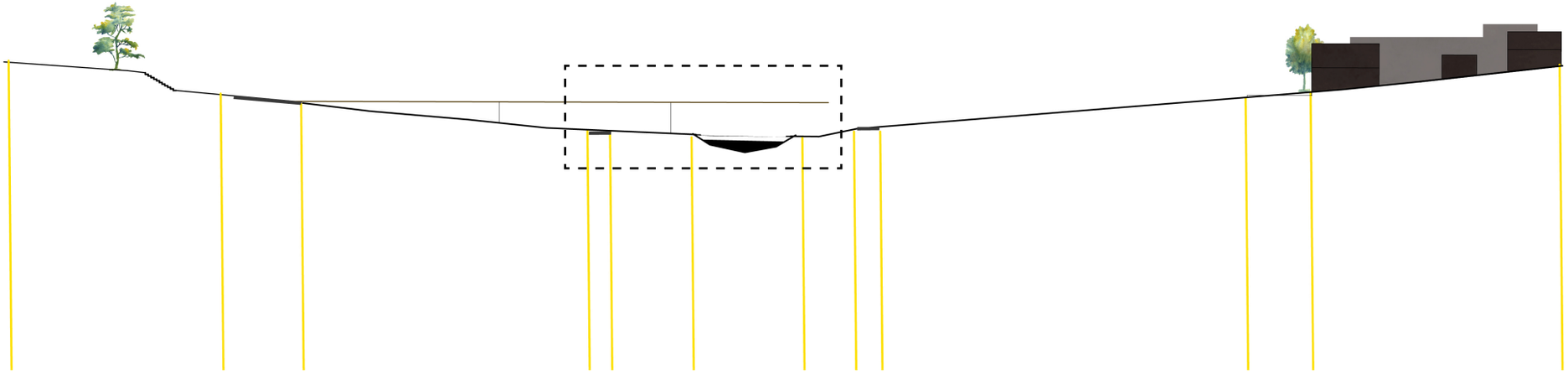


Fig. 1-98_ Section 3, zoom Community center and meadows

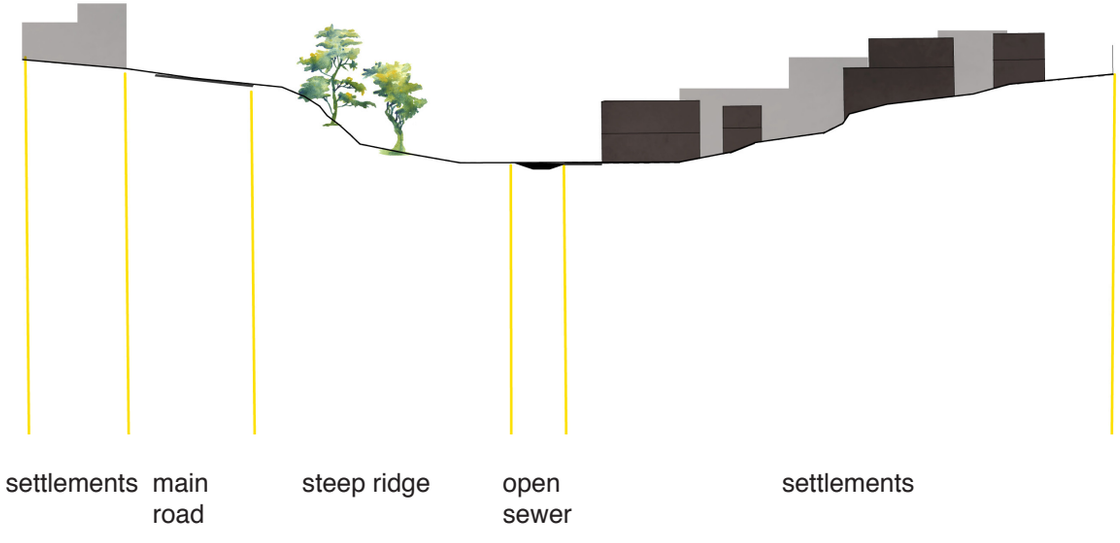


Fig. 1-99_ Section 4, existing situation

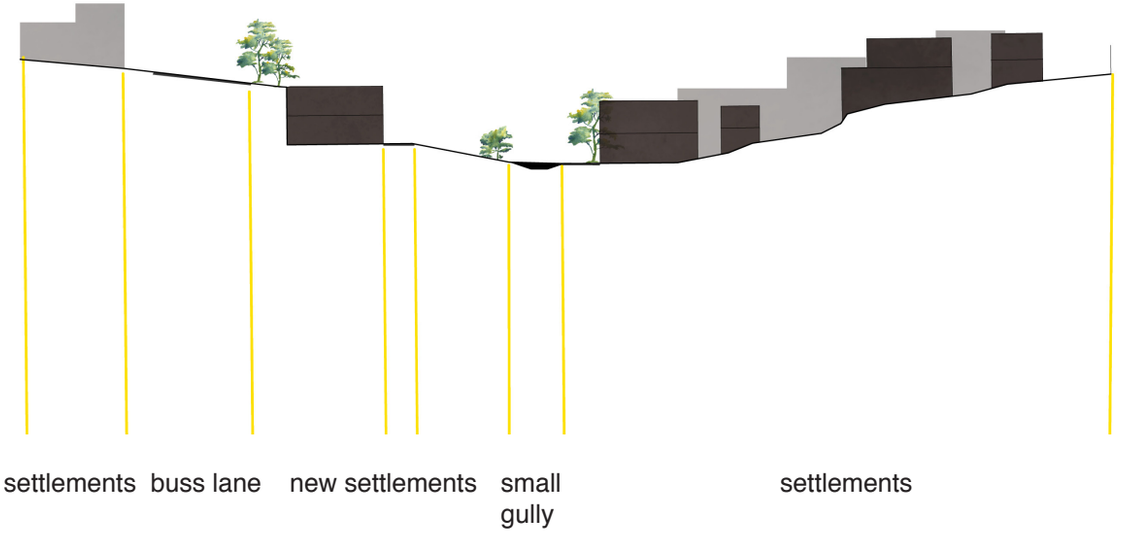
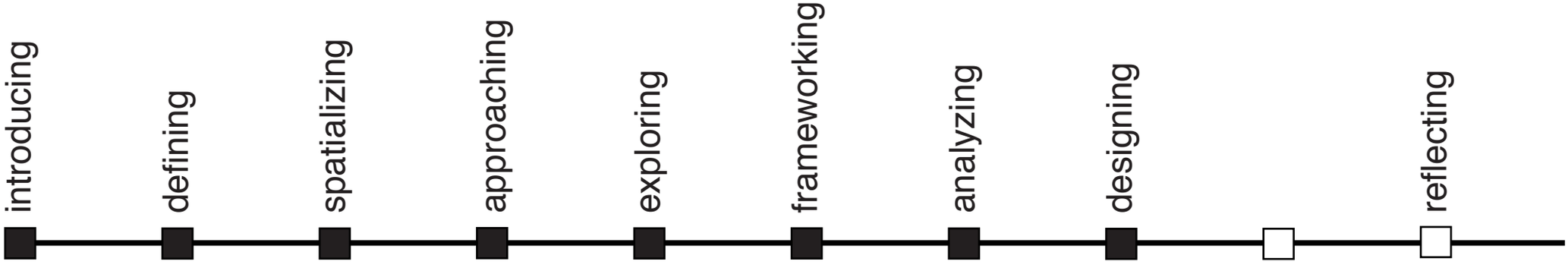


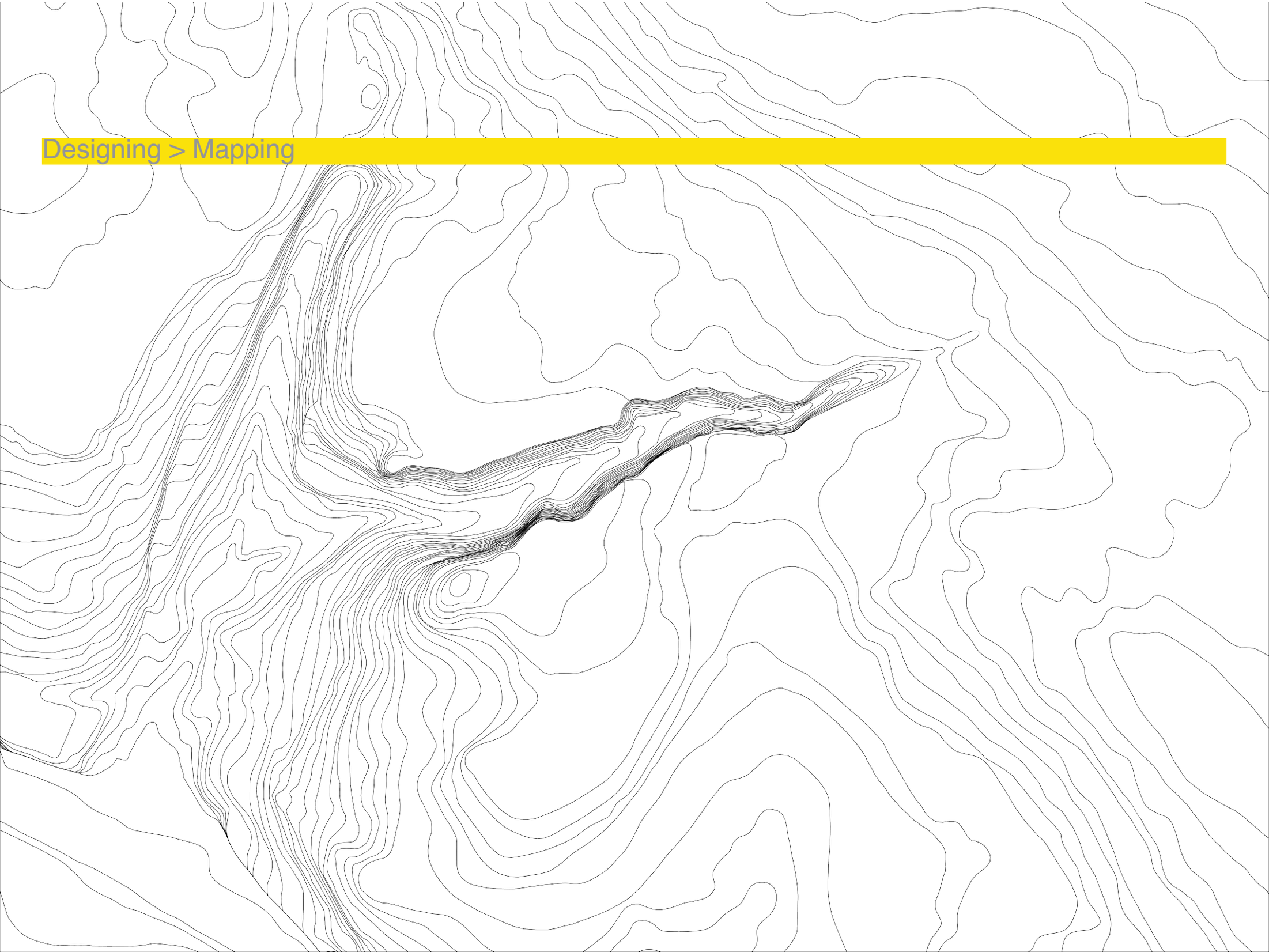
Fig. 1-100_ Section 4, new situation

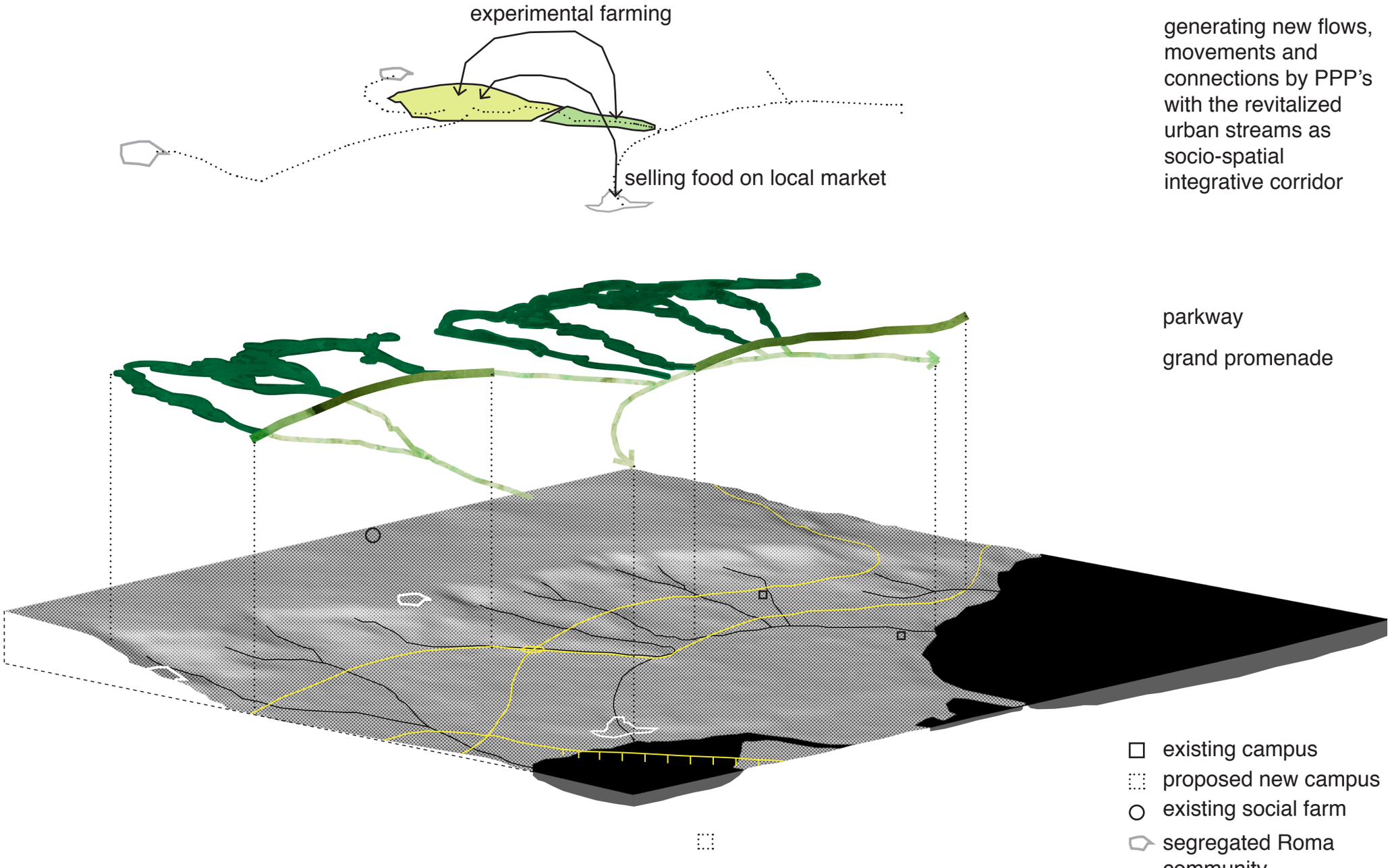


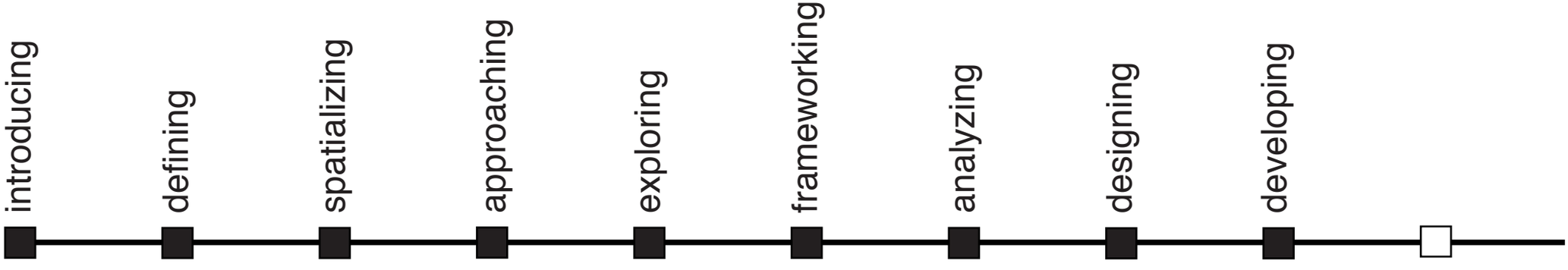
Developing

^ Strategic development plan revised (model)

Designing > Mapping




experimental farming
selling food on local market
generating new flows, movements and connections by PPP's with the revitalized urban streams as socio-spatial integrative corridor
parkway
grand promenade
existing campus
proposed new campus
existing social farm
segregated Roma community



Reflecting

^ thesis statement

Socio-spatial clustering seems to be an inevitably present element of the urban landscape, but it is not generally rejectionable. This thesis provides a strategic socio-spatial development framework within which segregation is socially acceptable and may be differentiated from that which is undesirable. The thesis makes a statement on how something different can be something equally valuable.