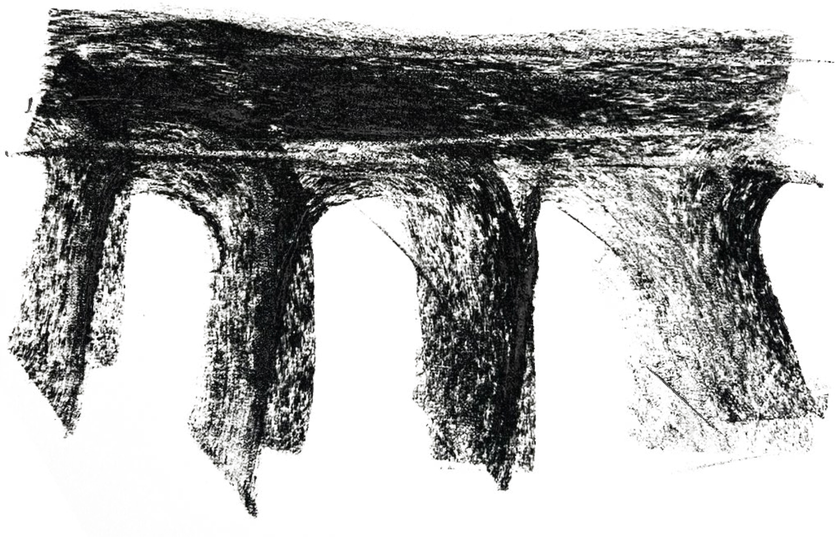
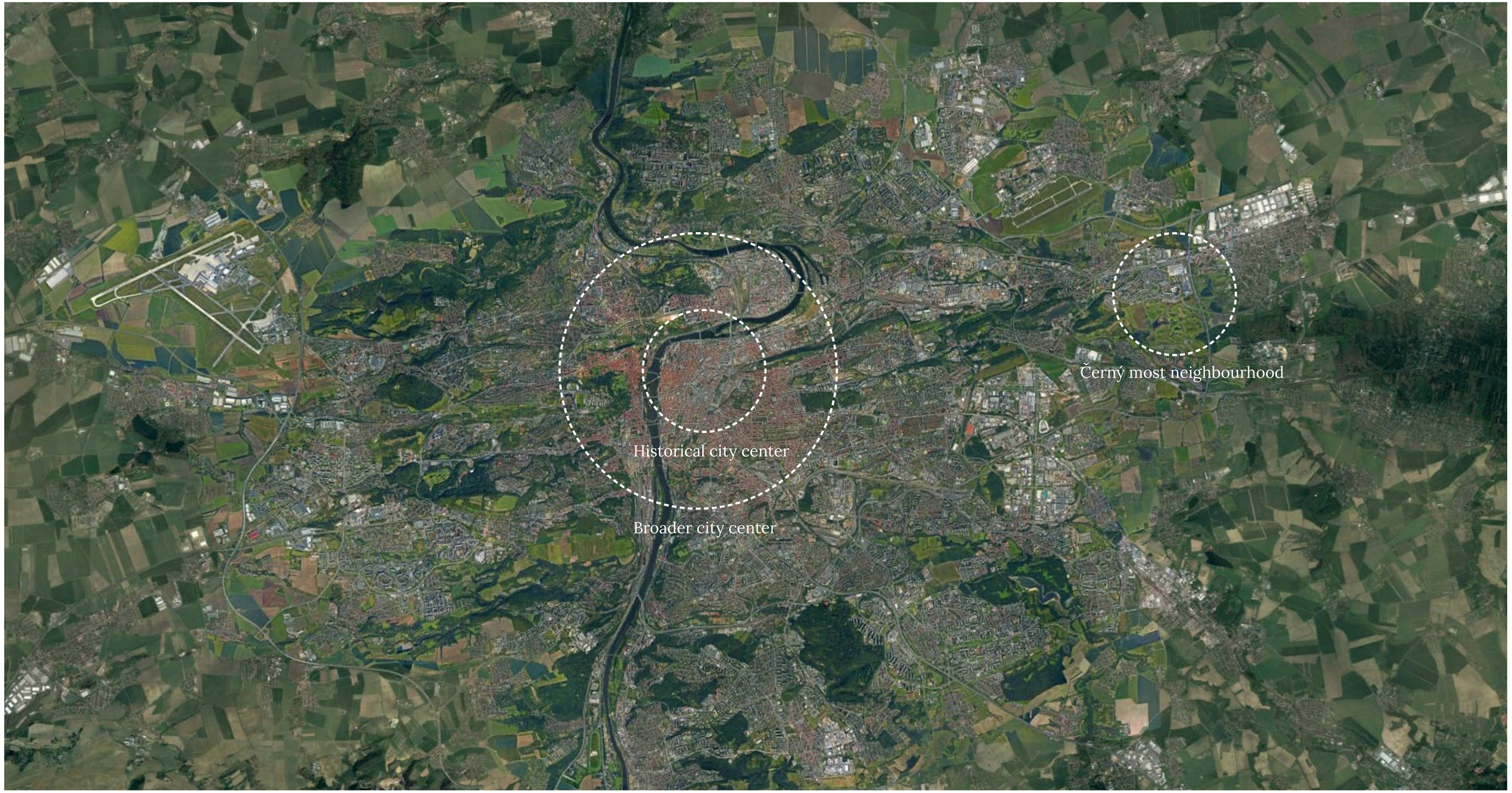


Across two worlds

Participatory Designing for Urban Adaptation Justice
in the public spaces of Černý Most, Prague

This is a story of exclusion. A battle over public space.



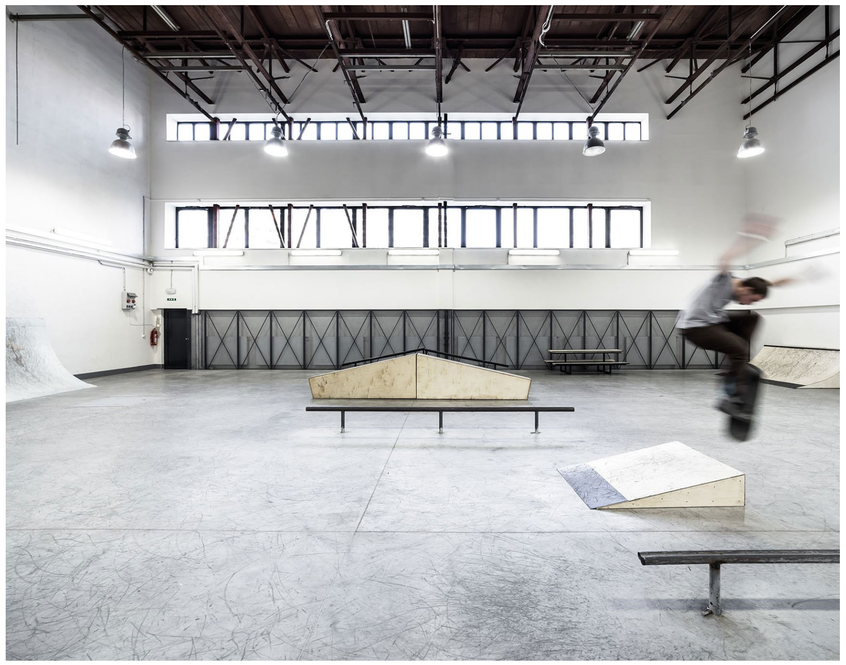
This story takes place in Prague

Source: Google Earth

Černý Most

Source: Author

ZDE NESTOUPAT



History of development

Source: Linka č.141, IPR Praha, Google Earth, Cčm, Plechárna

Black Bridge as Bronx. Occupying apartments by the municipality is also a crime

December 11, 2022 10:29 am

In November alone, two serious incidents - a murder in Bryksova Street on November 22, a schoolboy shot with an air rifle on November 1. And on September 27, the arrest of a man who supplied drug dealers with meth and marijuana. After looking at the newspaper headlines, it seems that something is not right on Prague's Černý Most. Comparisons are made with New York's Bronx, which has become synonymous with a high-crime neighborhood, and it also has to do with the anonymity of the environment.

Černý Most, the most stigmatized place in Prague, is not to blame for our middle-class fears

Sever iDnes.cz published an article Černý Most as the Bronx, in which the author concludes that "something is not right" at Černý Most. Why are similar stickers so popular?

Michal Lehečka 16/12/2022

Lukas Vltavsky
Expres.cz
August 7, 2022 1:15 p.m

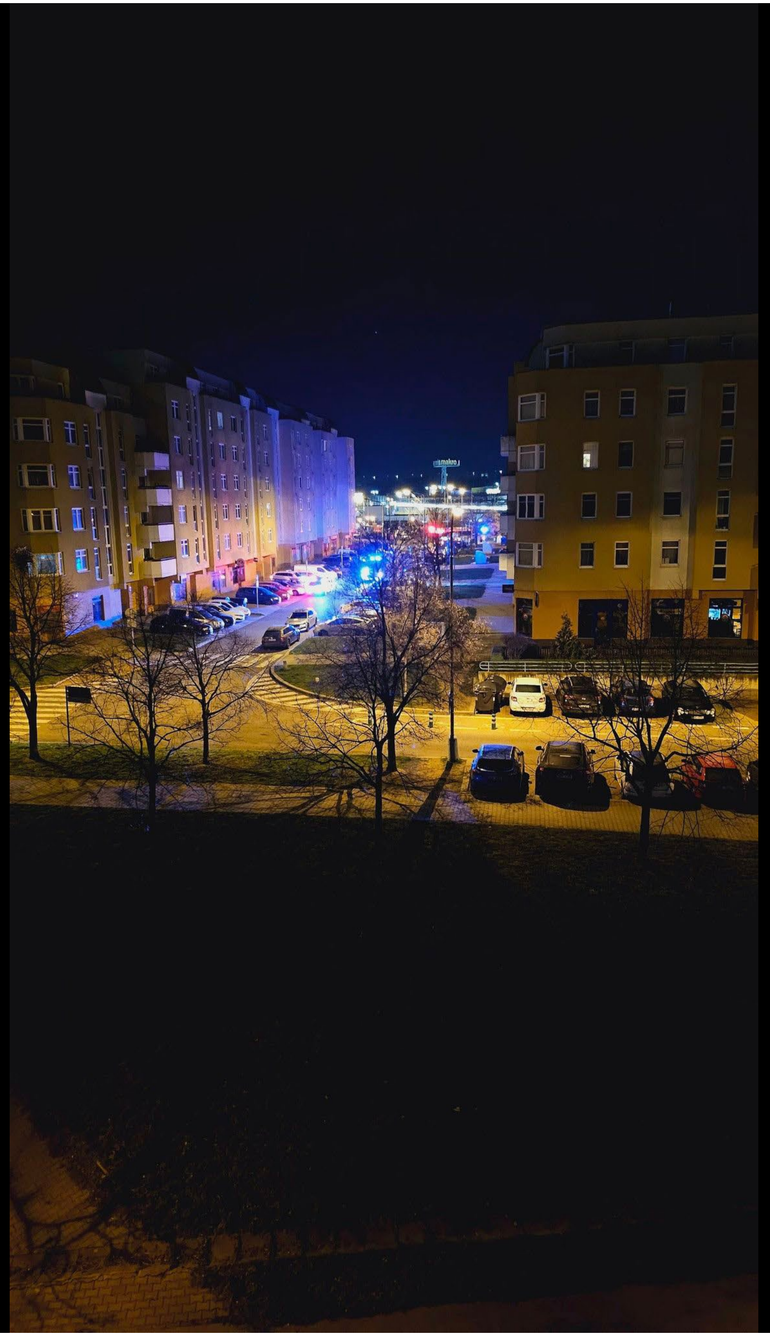
Stigmatisaton

Source: idnes.cz, alarm.cz, expres.cz

*I**t is the fear of crime rather than the actual levels of crime** that are the driver of privatization of the public realm. She argues that while the bad reputation of neighbourhoods created by the media has undoubtedly driven a lot of the fear, **processes of polarization of communities also cause fear of strangers.***

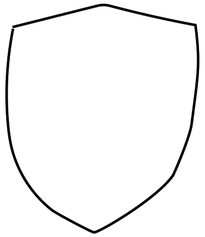
Under-management

Source: Carmona 2010a



Fear of crime rather than actual levels of crime

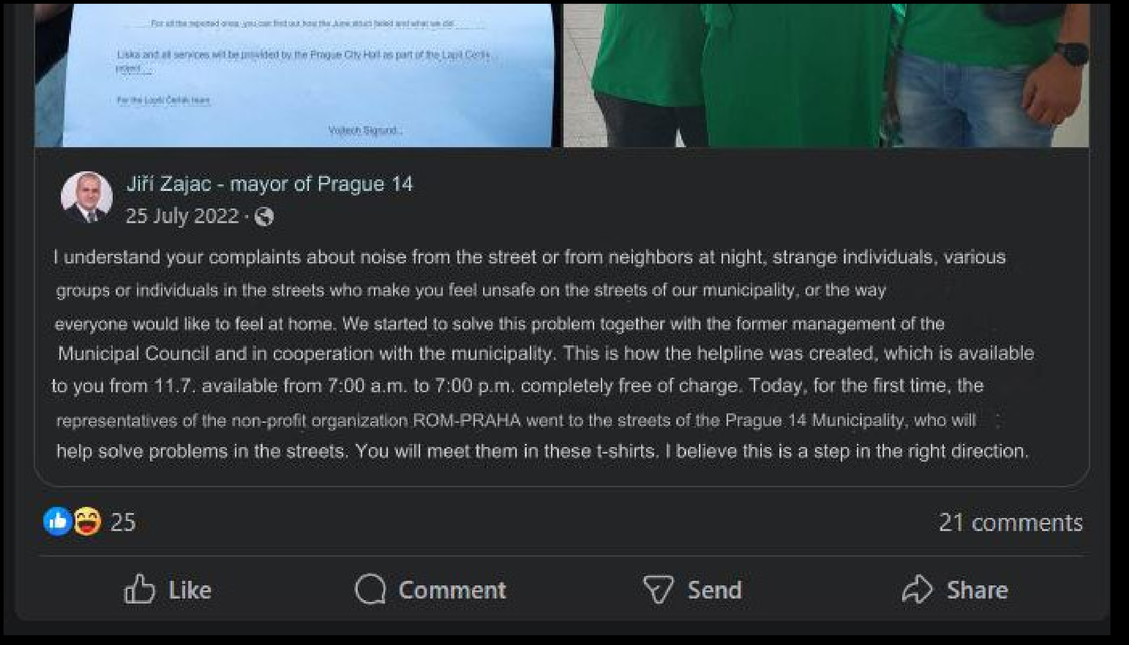
Source: facebook



The fragmentation and social segregation ... lead to the ***arguments that public space can be made safer through various combinations of defensive design, surveillance or control.***

Over-management

Source: Carmona 2010a



Mayor promising to solve the problems with “strange individuals who make you feel unsafe”

Source: facebook

“ *Are you repeatedly* ***bothered by noisy neighbours*** *at night?*
Are your fellow citizens threatening someone’s property or health?
Are there ***violations of good manners and order****?*
Are neighbourly relations ***escalating into a potential conflict****?*

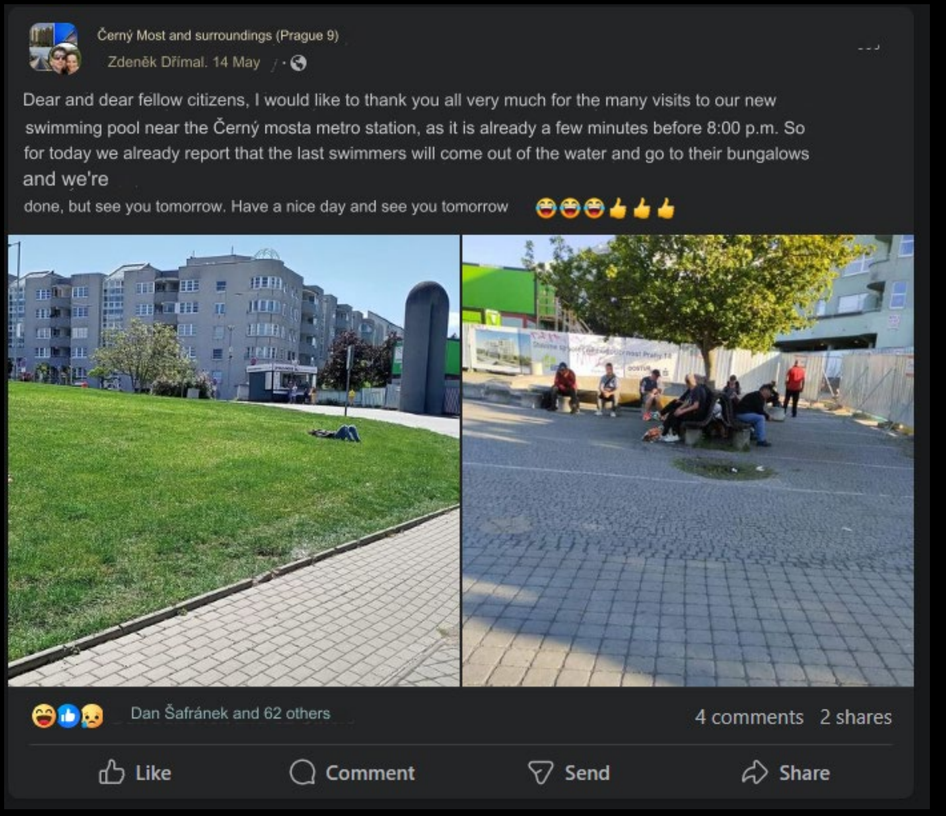
Call us and we will help you. ”

Surveillance, control, removal of social spaces
Source: lepsicernak.cz

René Boer in his book Smooth City comments on a concept of development happening in cities globally, an ongoing ***push for perfection, optimization, control, and comfort*** *that is increasingly dominating urban landscapes worldwide,* ***excluding certain groups of people*** *by wealthy upper-middle class.*

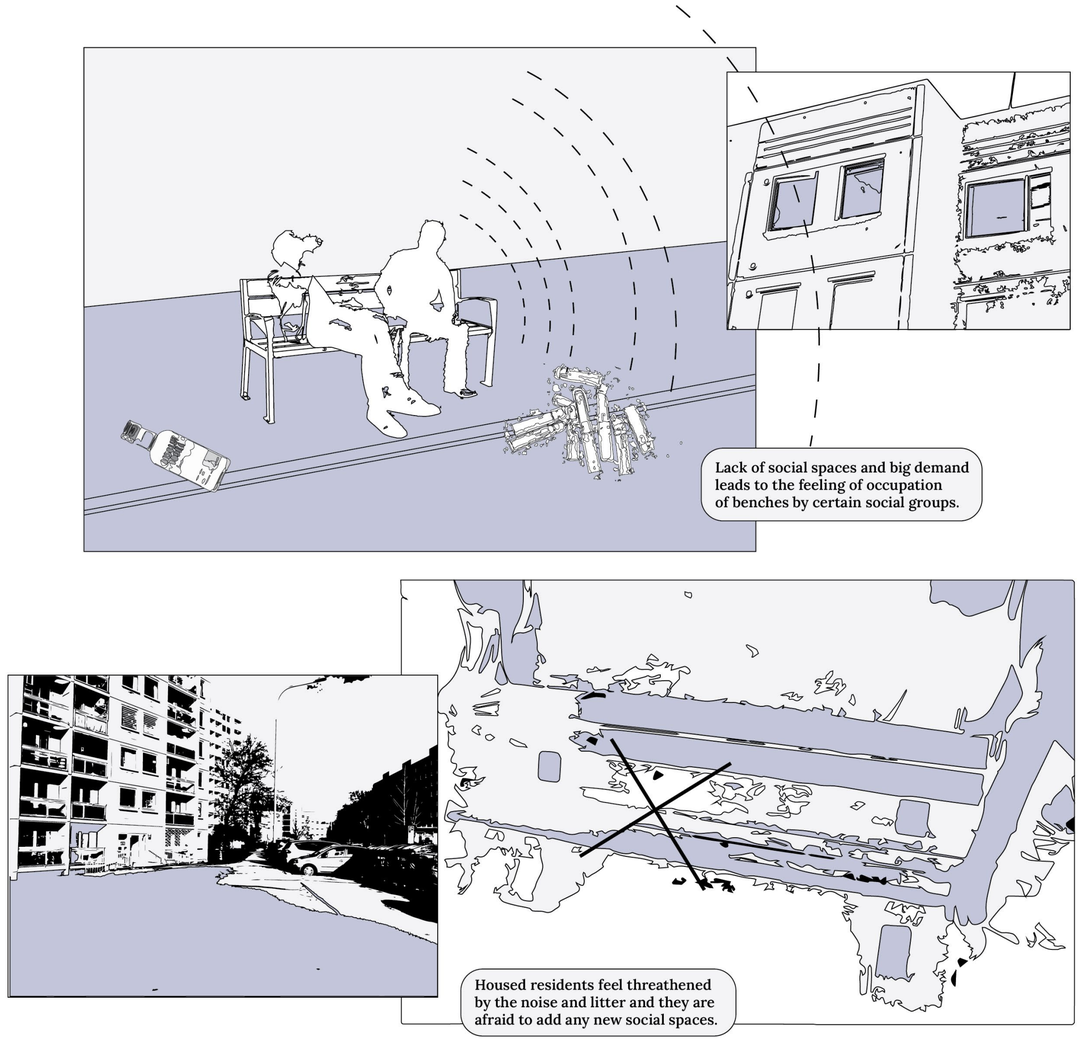
Smoothening

Source: Boer 2023



Lack of public spaces leads to overexposure of the conflict

Source: facebook

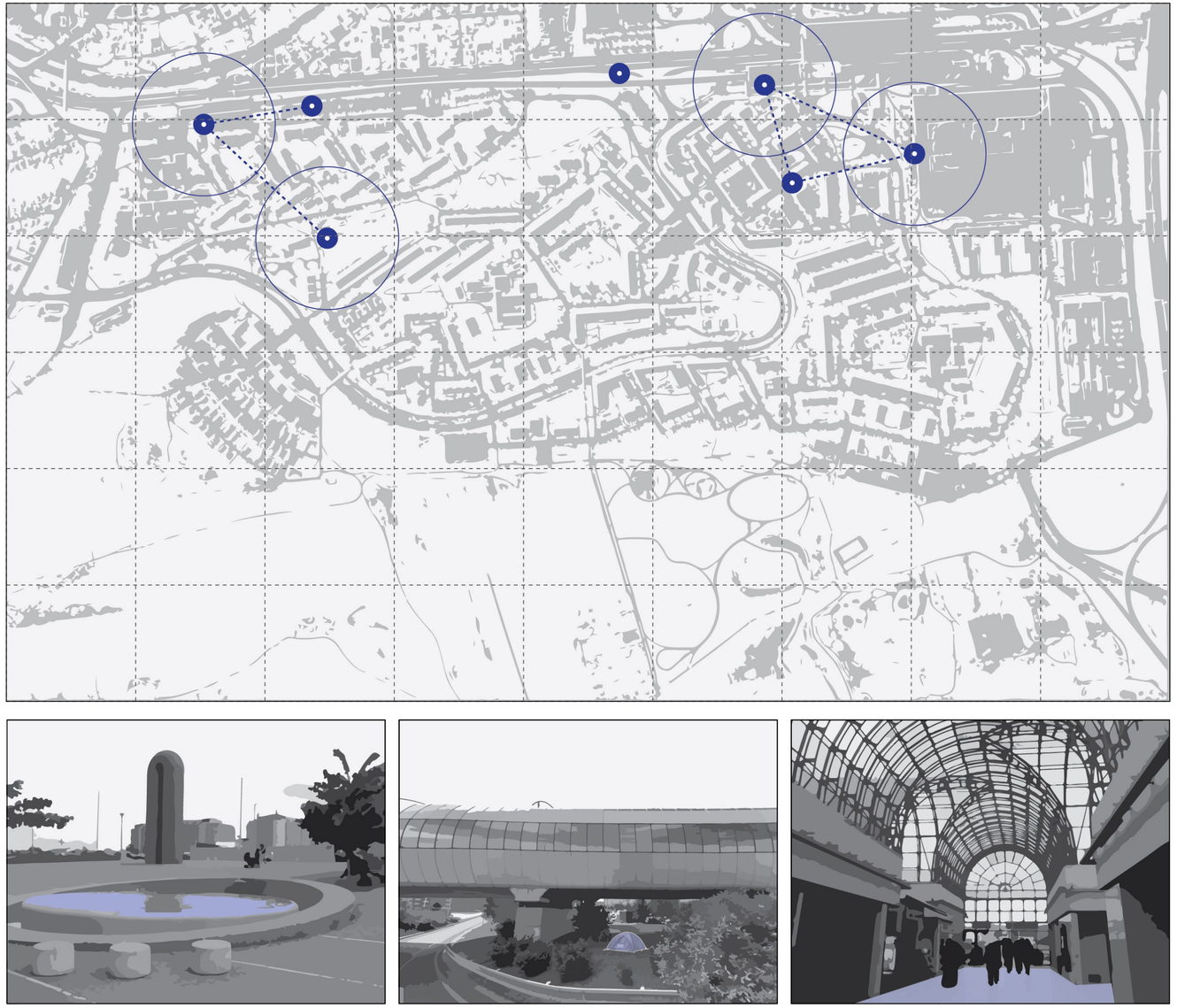


Smoothening of public space, making it vulnerable

Source: Author

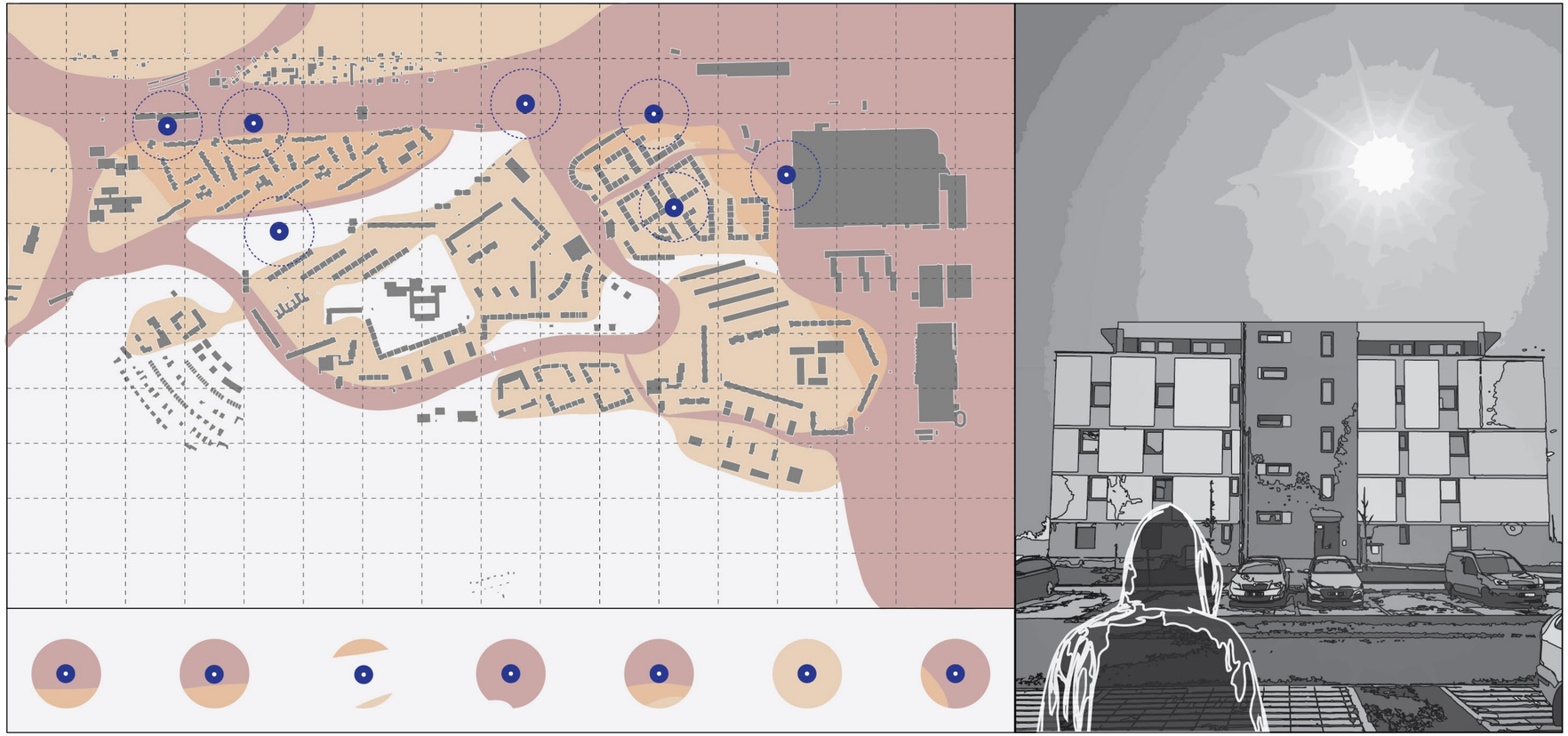
Spatial inequality

Source: Prague 14, IPR



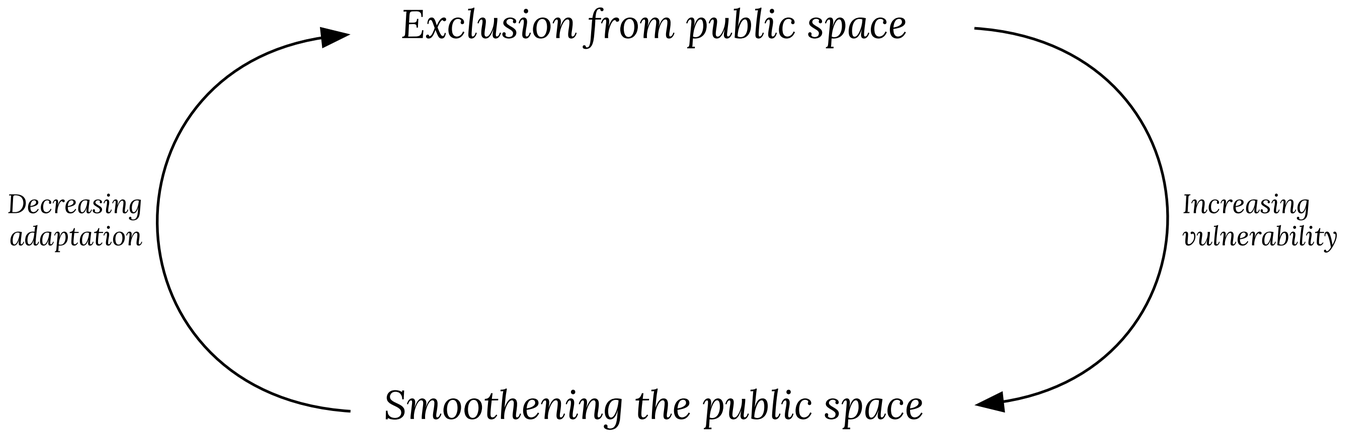
Places of exposure in the neighbourhood

Source: Author mapping

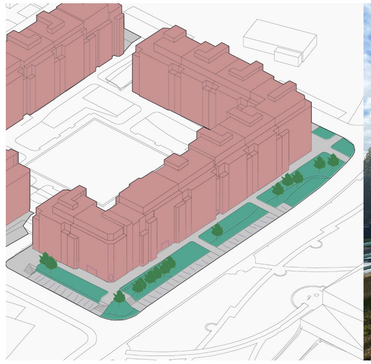


Climate vulnerablity and injustice

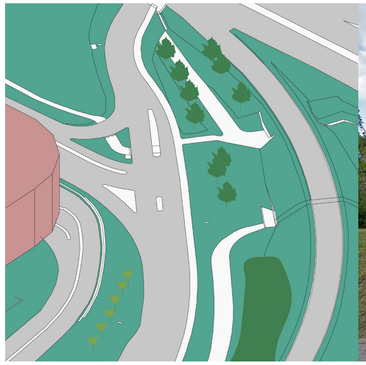
Source: Author



Cycle
Source: Author

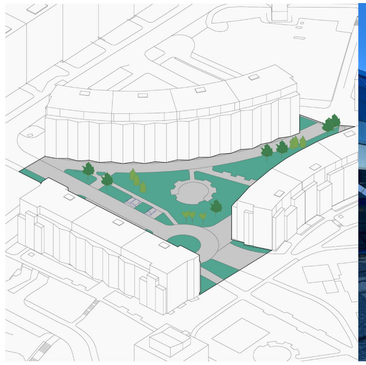


Buildings and parter



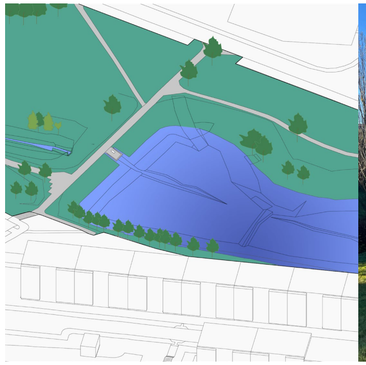
Vague terrains and peripheries

Main road



Small public spaces

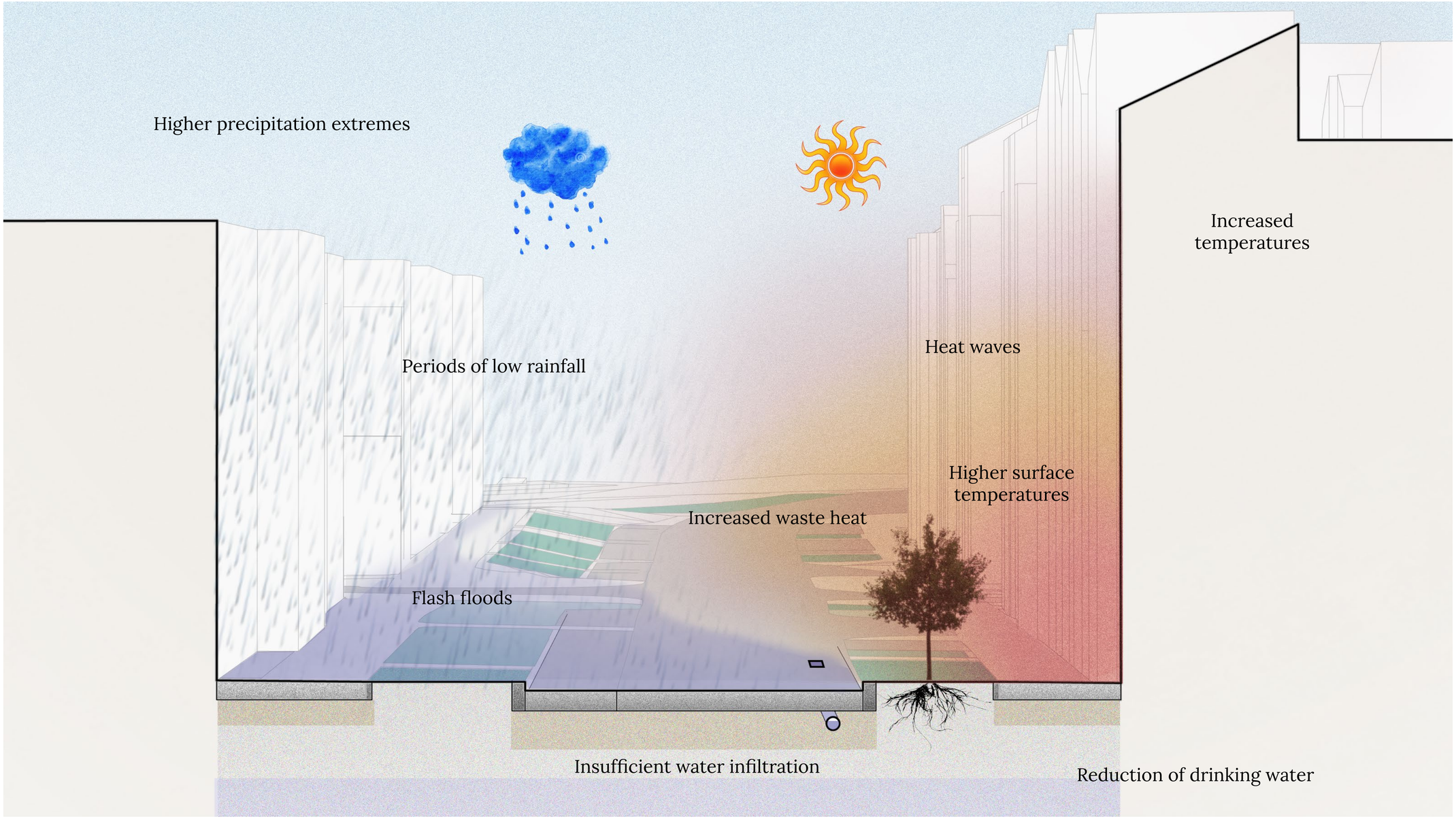
Public courtyard



Landscapes, parks and river

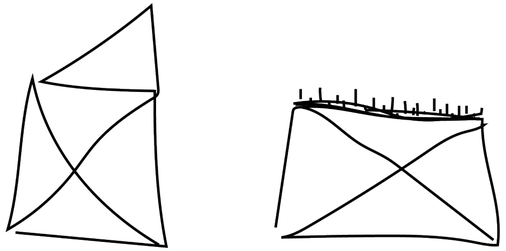
State of the public space

Source: Author



Climate change impacts

Source: IPCC 2022

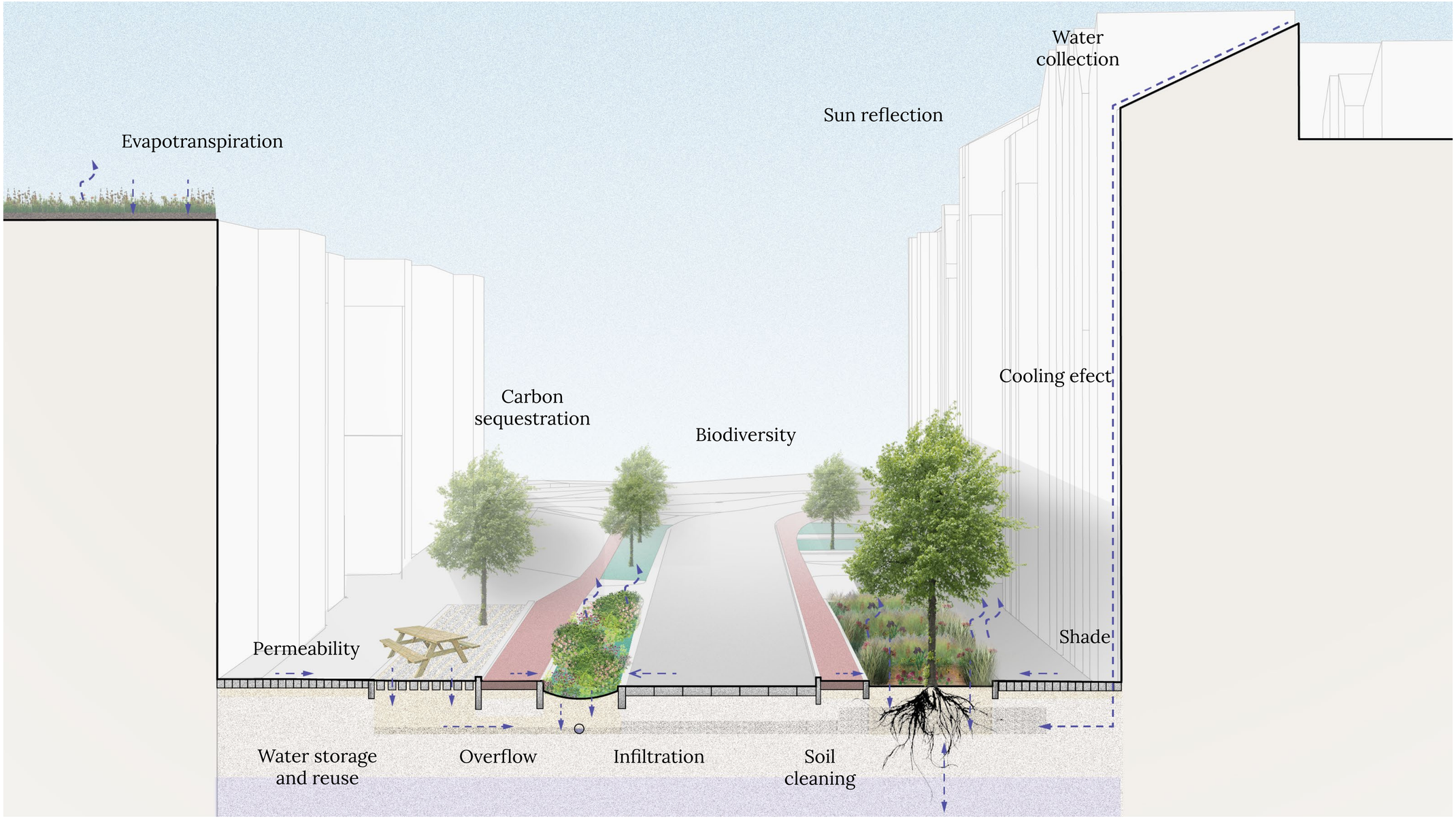


Technical measures usually provide only one function
- e.g. light surfaces on roofs reduce surface temperature.

The advantage of nature-based adaptation measures is the combination of different functions within one measure *- e.g. roof garden - water retention, lower surface temperature, biodiversity enhancement or evapotranspiration.*

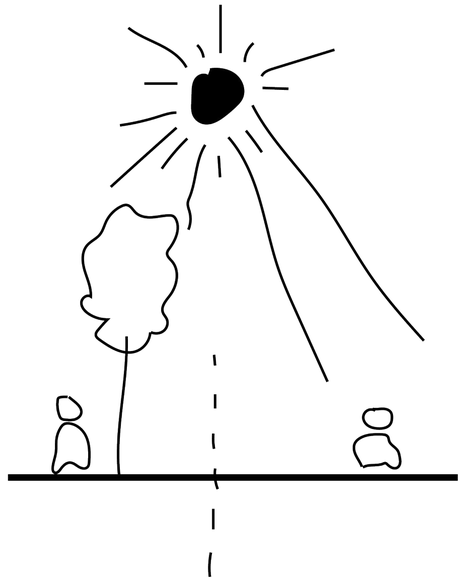
Nature-based solutions

Source: Global Change Research Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences. 2017



Nature-based solutions

Source: World Bank 2021



The problem with nature-based solutions is that benefits of projects are rarely evenly distributed, as political processes often fail to consider spatial injustices.

Inequality

Source: Long and Rice 2019

Environmental distribution

Source: IPR

SECOND
& OUTLET

1. …***(i) insufficient understanding of contextual vulnerability by interventions planners and implementers,*** *including socio-political relations of gender, race, age (dis)ability and class;*

2. ***(ii) inequitable participation by vulnerable and affected groups in planning and implementation,*** *leading to top-down processes and poor representation of marginalised groups' perspectives*

Key mechanisms

Source: Eriksen et al. 2021

A framework for empathy in design

A designer steps into the life of the user, wanders around for a while and then steps out of the life of the user with a deeper understanding of this user.

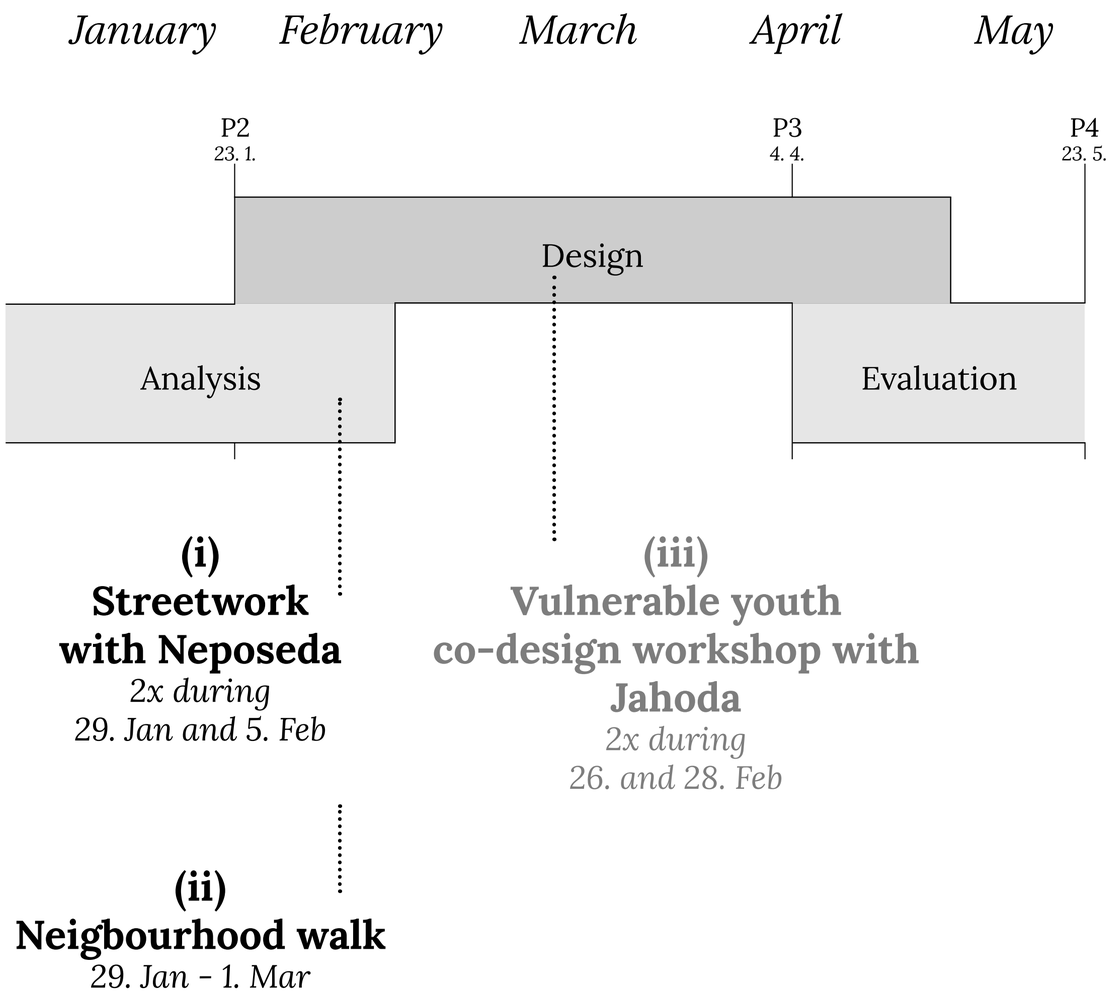
(1) discovery (2) immersion (3) connection (4) detachment

Participation

Participation with unhoused people

Neposeda

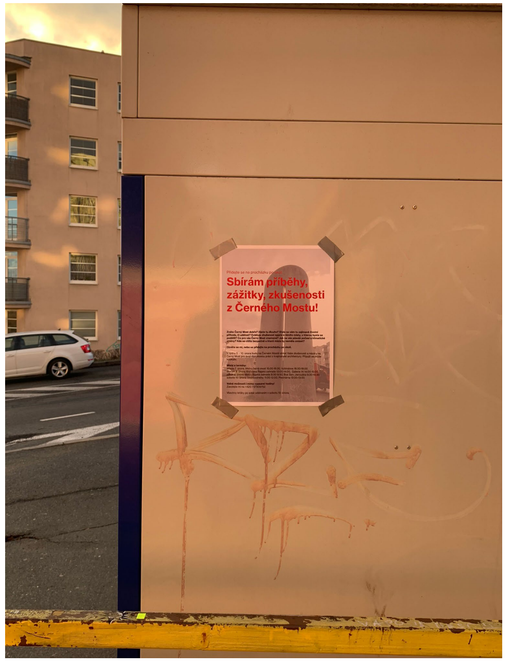
Neposeda z.ú.
Streetwork Crossroad

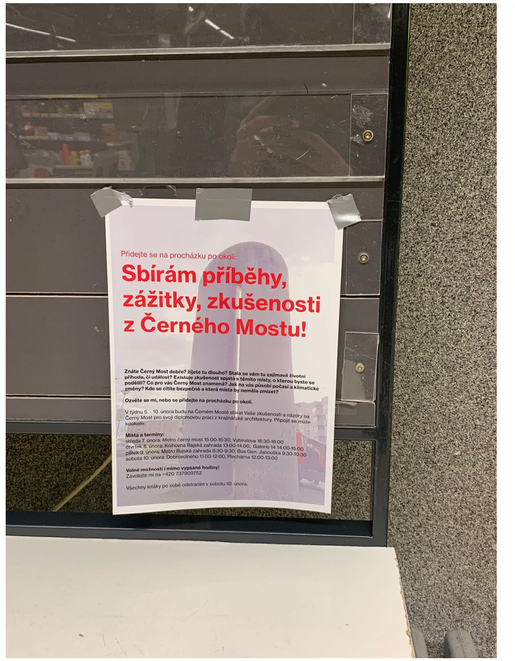


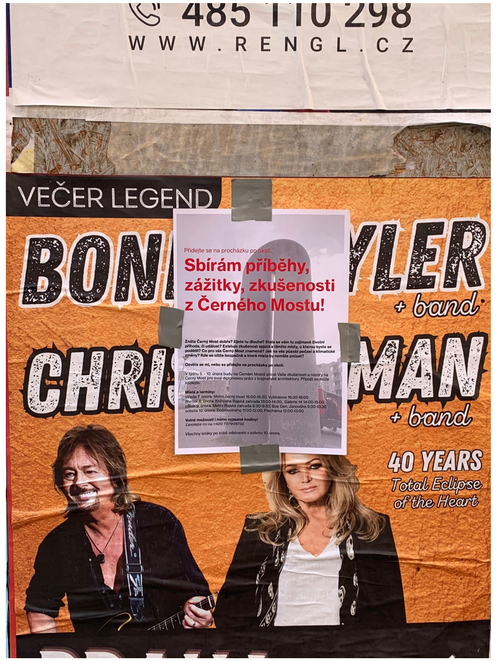
Timeline

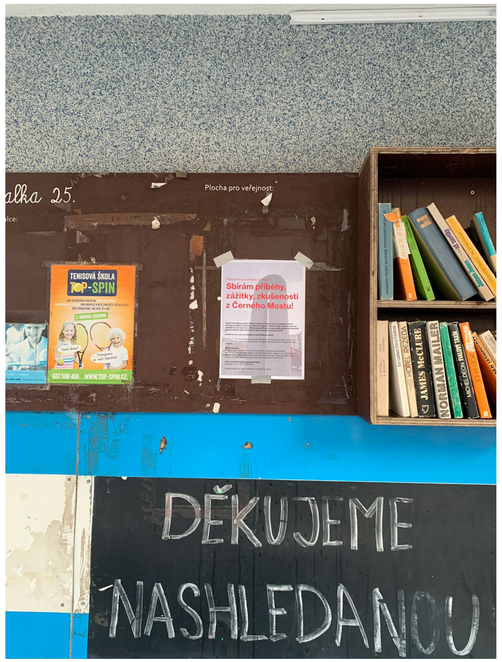
Neighbourhood walks with housed residents

29. Jan - 9. Feb



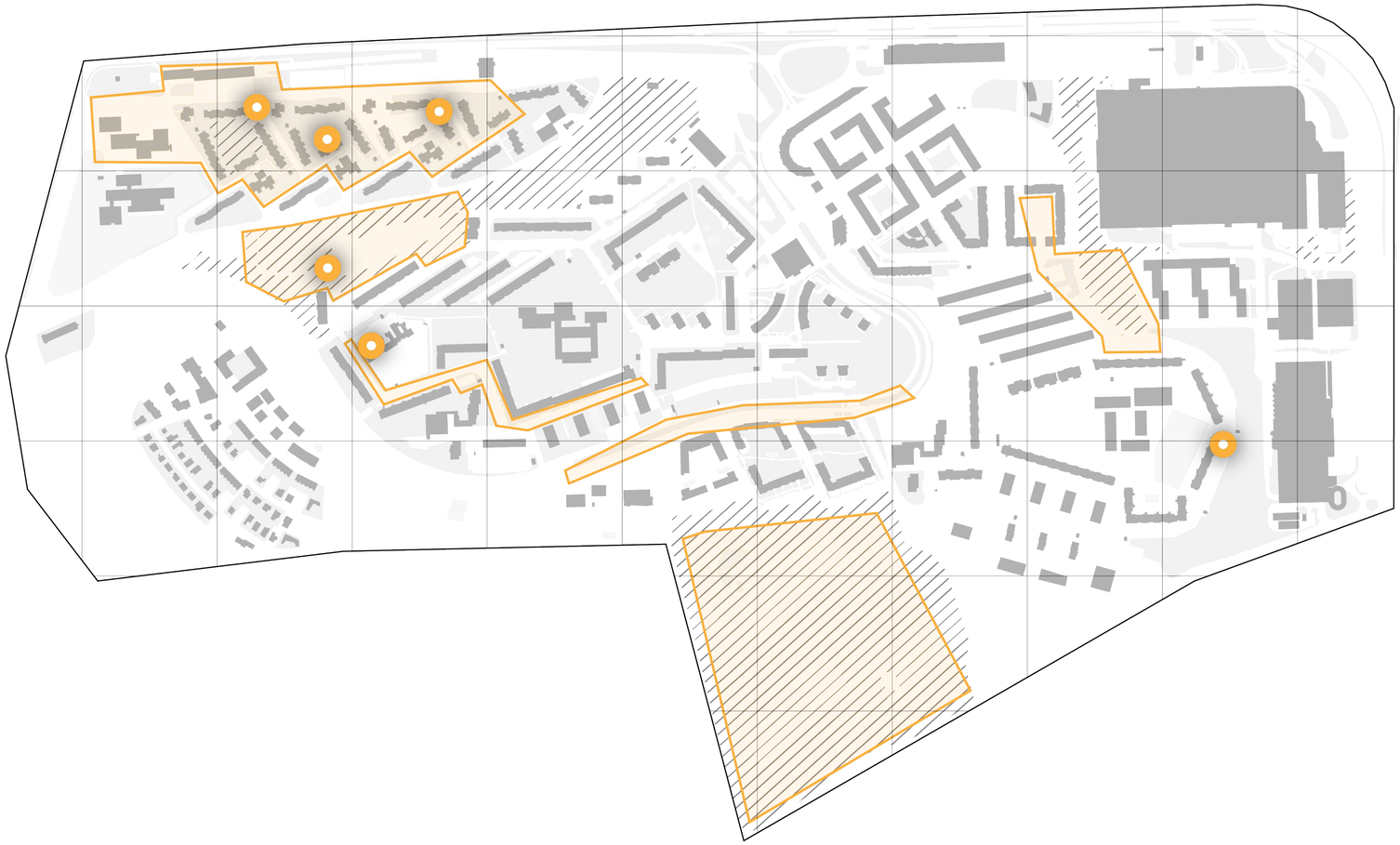






Process

Source: Author



Location
Source: Author

Affection to the neighbourhood

Safety, feeling of danger

Conflict and stigma

Maintenance is an issue

Green is great

Noise complaints, fear of new social spaces

Big parks are crowded

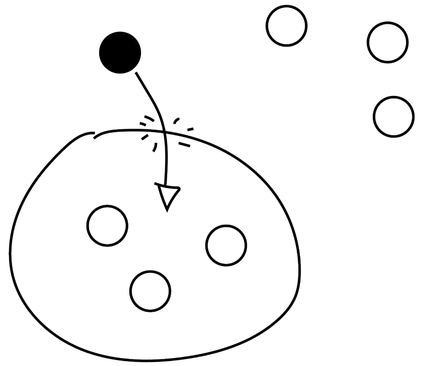
Smaller public spaces are missing

Unused water areas

Wrong species of trees are used

General outcomes

Source: Author



Different social contexts may require different approaches, *especially in order to* ***attract and sustain dialogue with 'hard to reach' stakeholders*** *who may be reluctant to contribute their time or knowledge to the process.*

Different approaches

Source: Few, Brown, and Tompkins 2007

“COME TO US” APPROACH

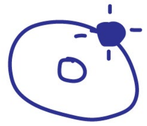
Streetwork with unhoused residents in collaboration with local NGO

29. Jan and 5. Feb

Streetwork

Source: Author

Location
Source: Author



Periphery is good

Affachment to the neighbourhood

Dissapearing benches and void spaces

Seasonality

Public and private

Noise and socializing

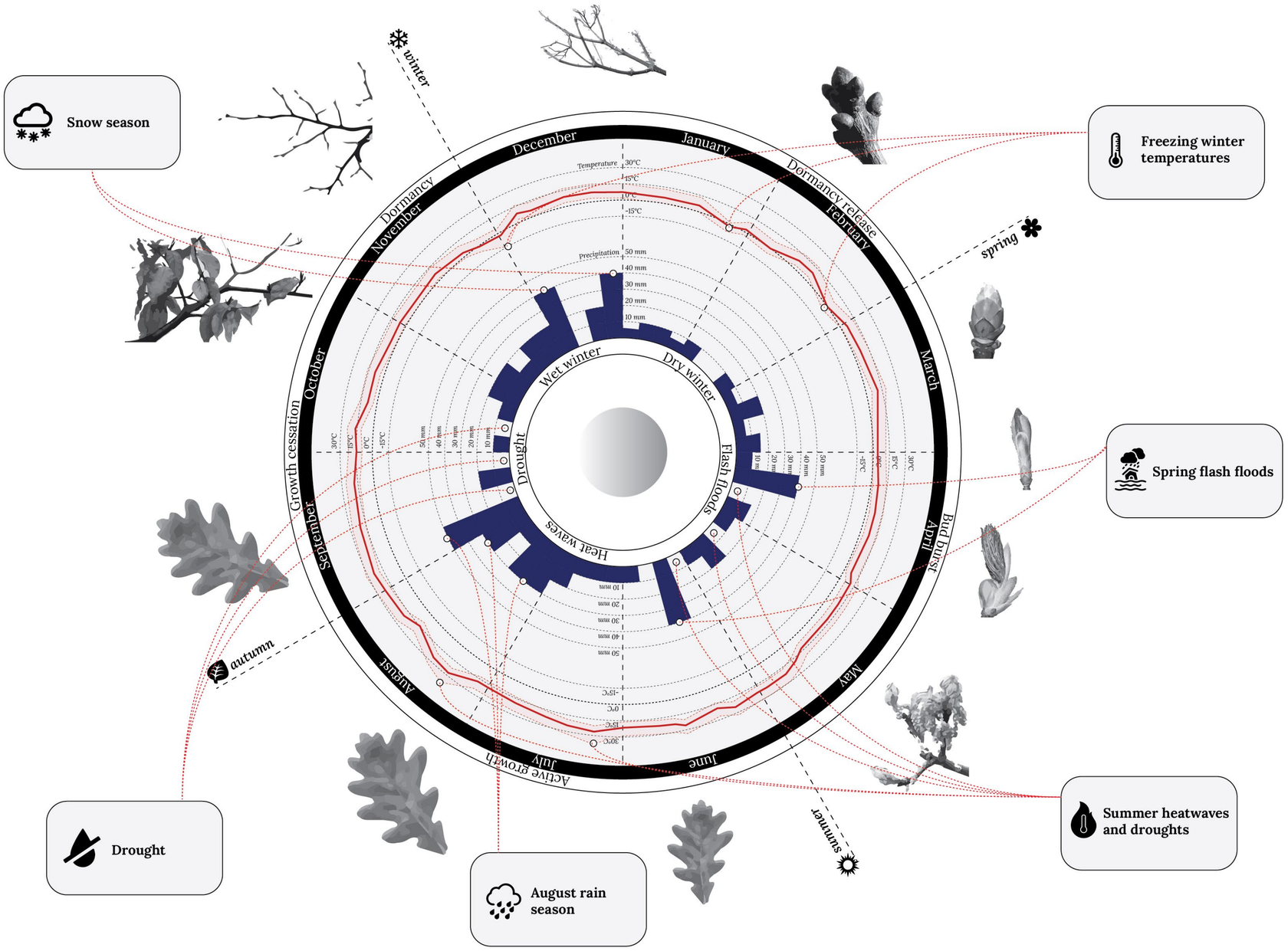
Pets and nature

Spending time at busy places

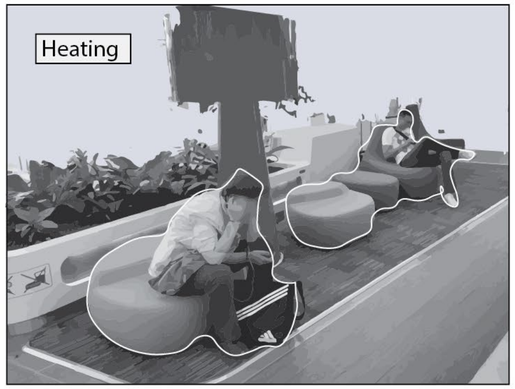
Engagement and community

Conflict and territoriality

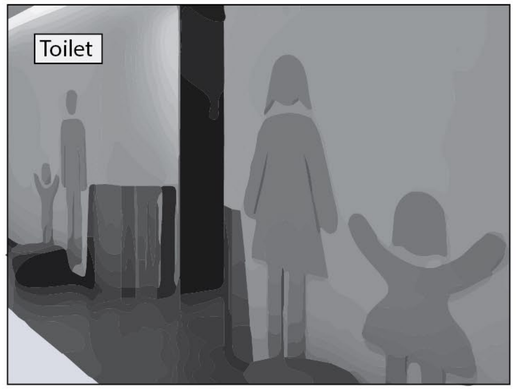
General outcomes

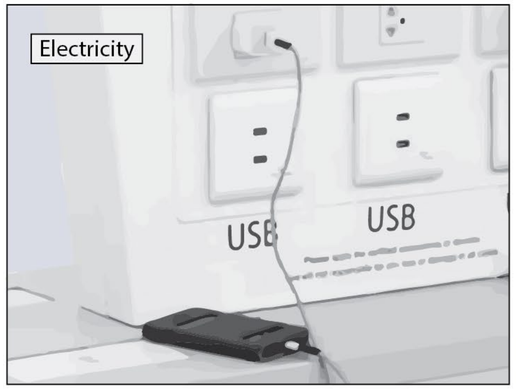


Climate vulnerabilities

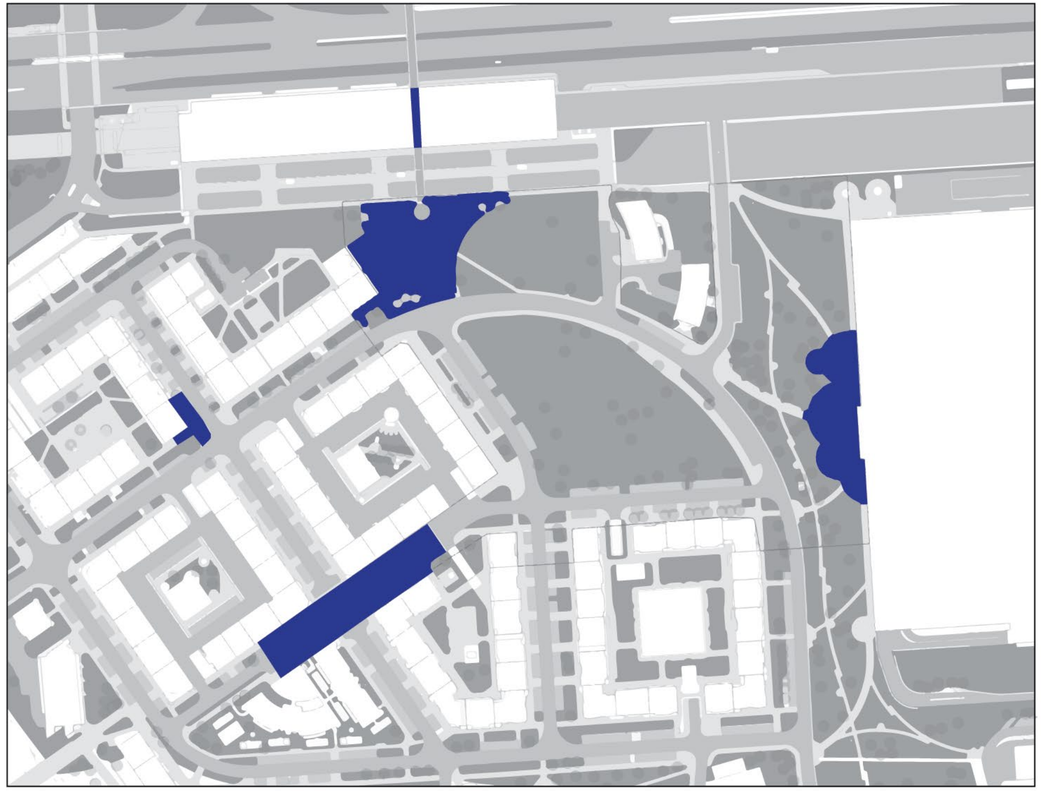

Heating

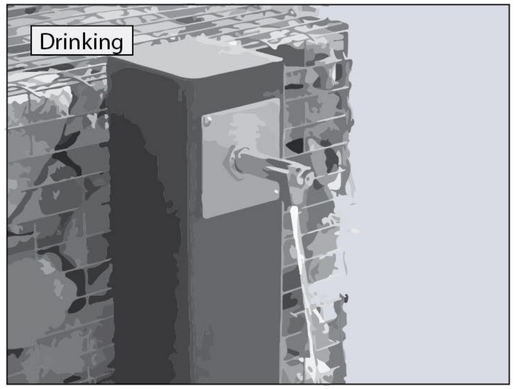
Shelter
PIZZA

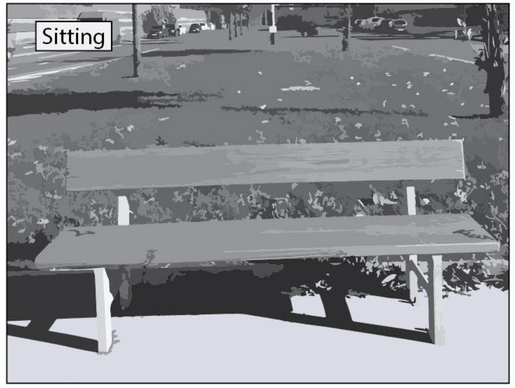

Toilet


Electricity
USB
USB

Water

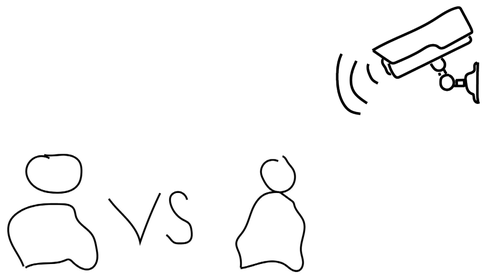



Drinking


Sitting

Social service

Basic needs



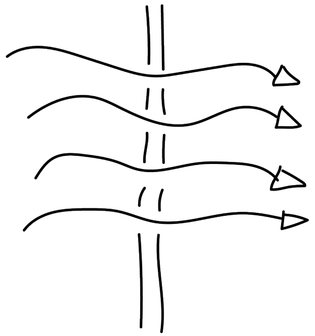
There is an on-going conflict.
One solution would be to exclude,
to control, to smoothen the public space.

„Perhaps true safety has very little to do with discrimination and isolation."

Jess Myers, Here There Be Dragons podcast

...people's lives should be knitted together through necessity by making different people engage with each other in order to survive, and that this can't occur without friction and conflict.

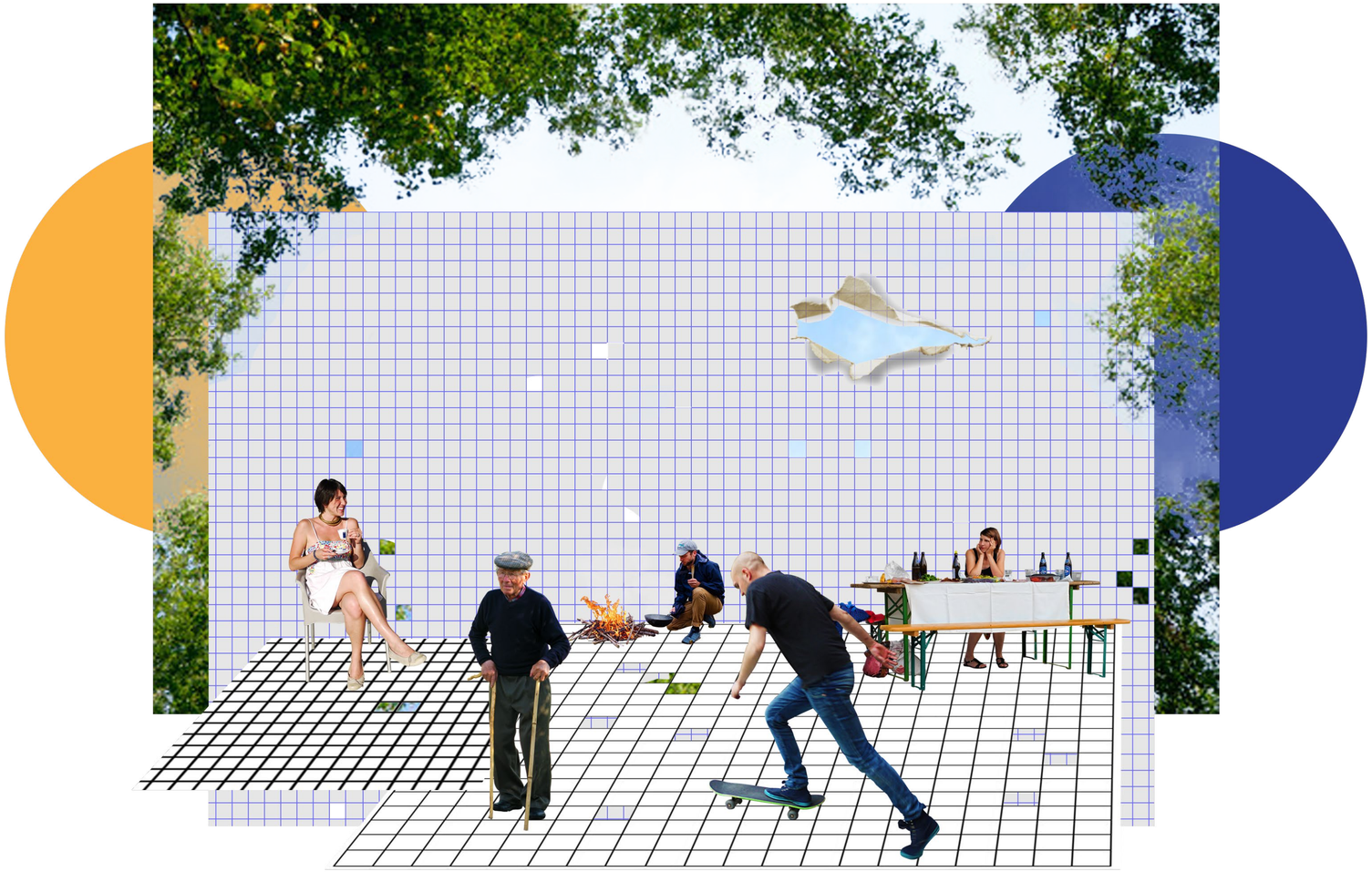
Richard Sennett The Uses of Disorder



Boer does not advocate for the opposite of smoothness, but instead wants to move to a porous public spaces. ***Porosity in his view is a way of connecting across, or making punctures in the flat surface of the smooth city.***

Porosity

Source: Boer 2023



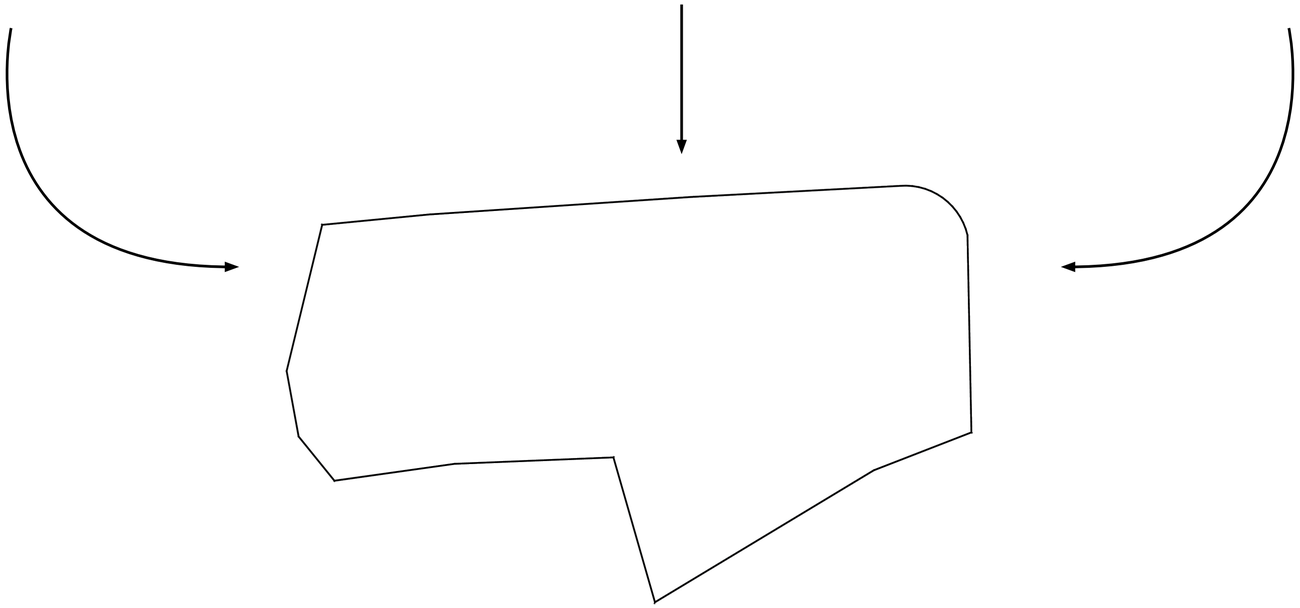
Approach

Neighbourhood design principles

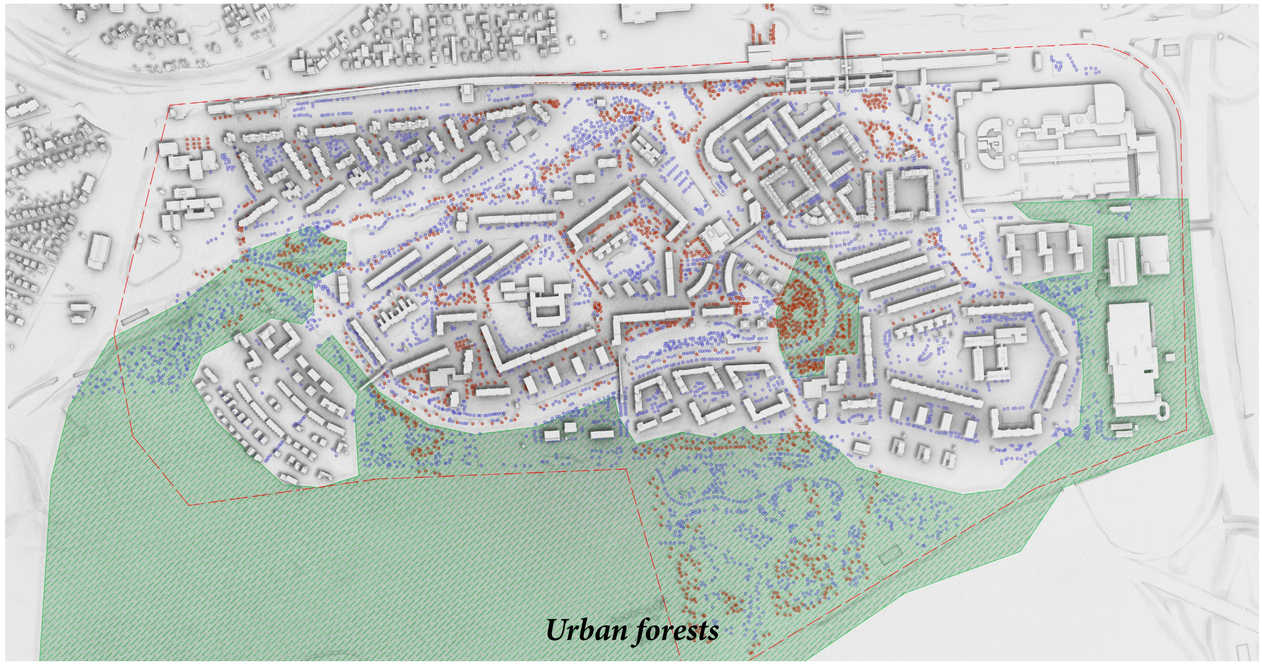
Nature-based solutions

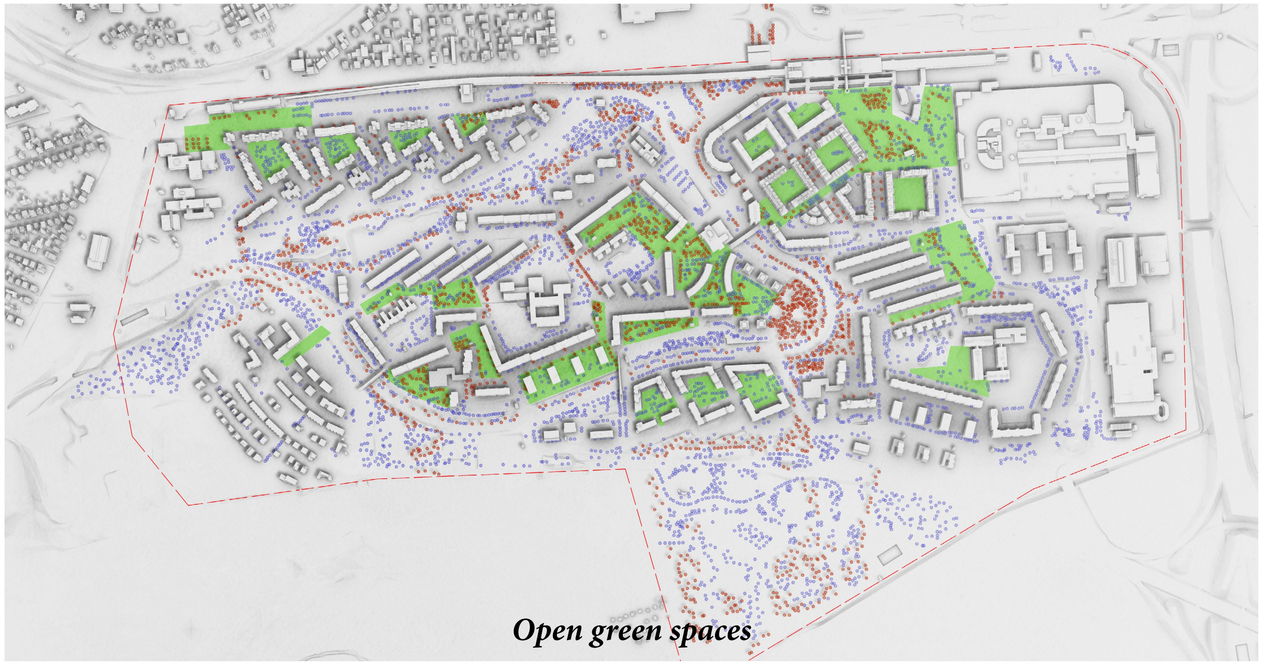
Design toolbox

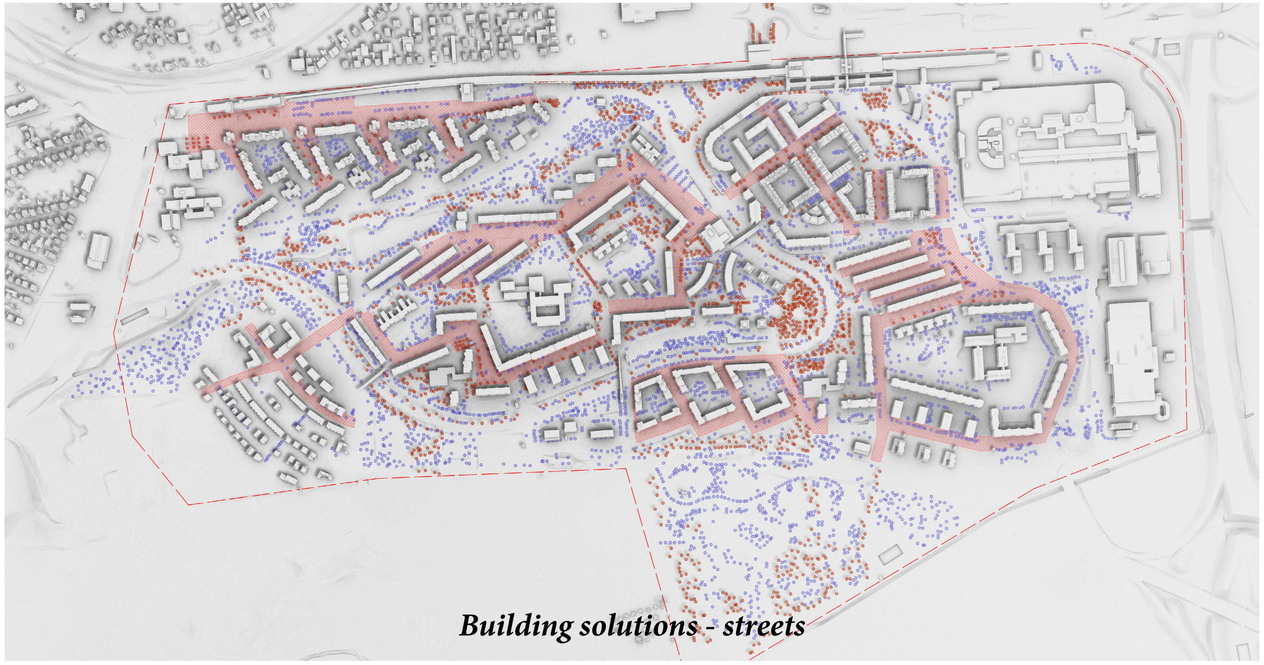
Identity



Three parts



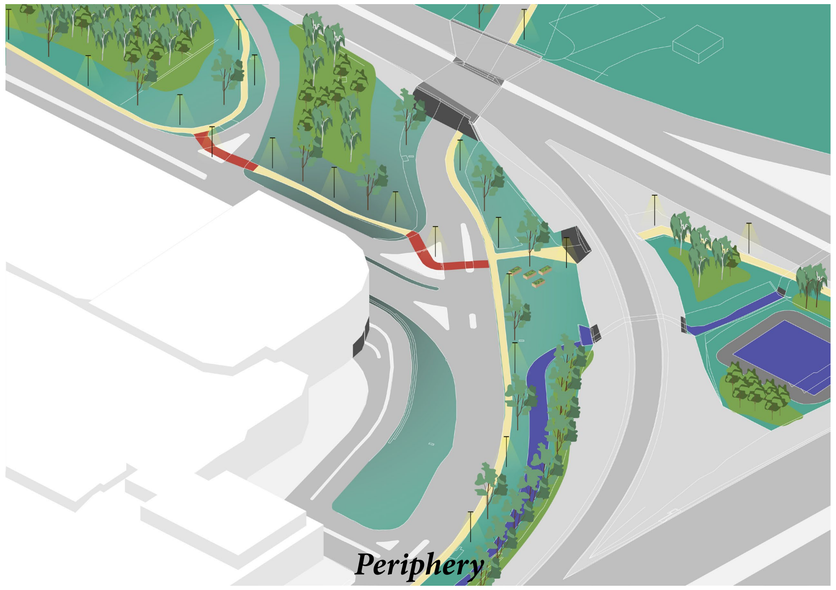




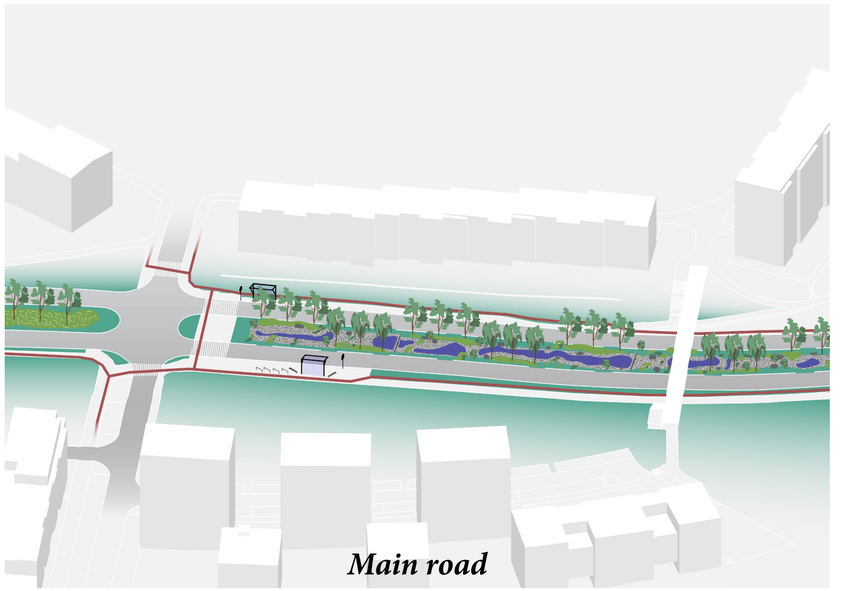
Nature-based solutions distribution

Nature-based solutions distribution

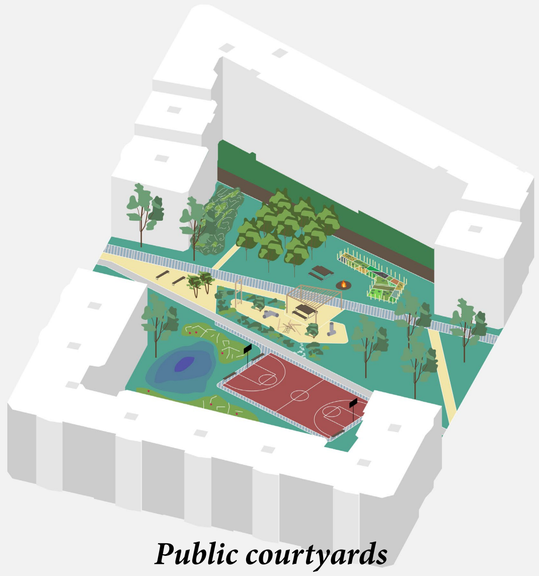
Buildings and parter



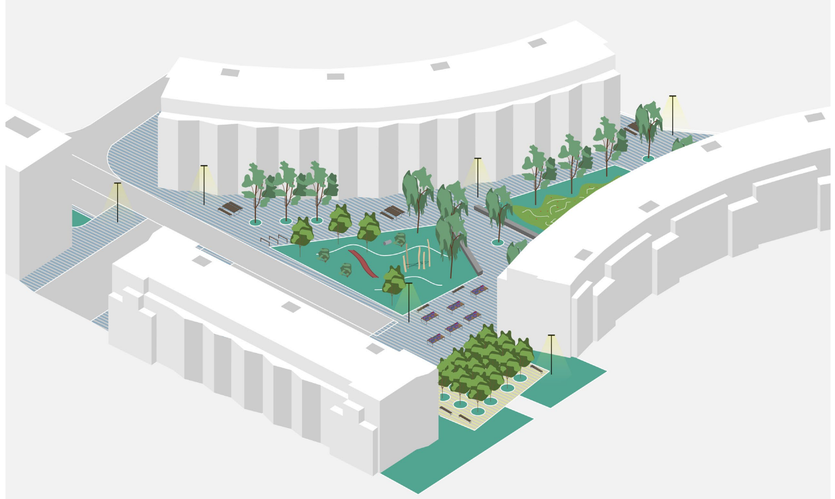
Periphery



Main road



Public courtyards

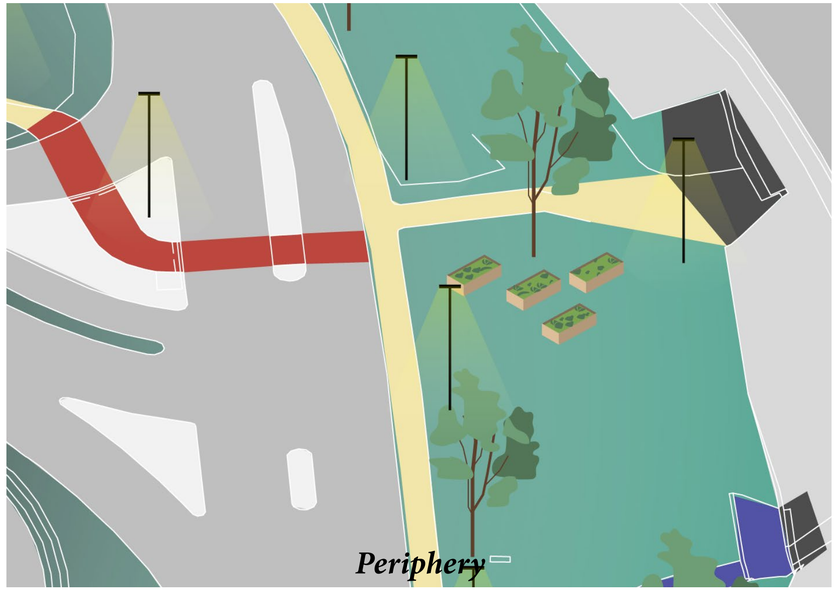


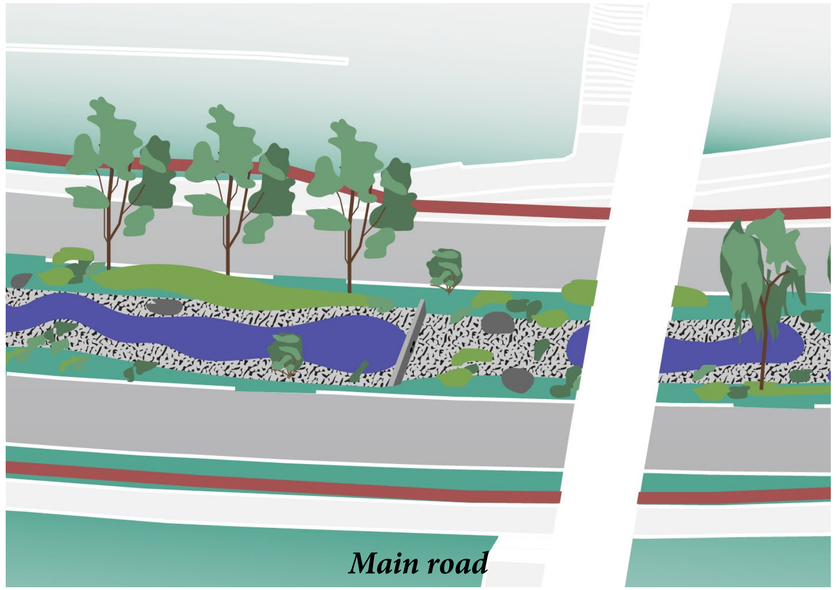
Small public spaces

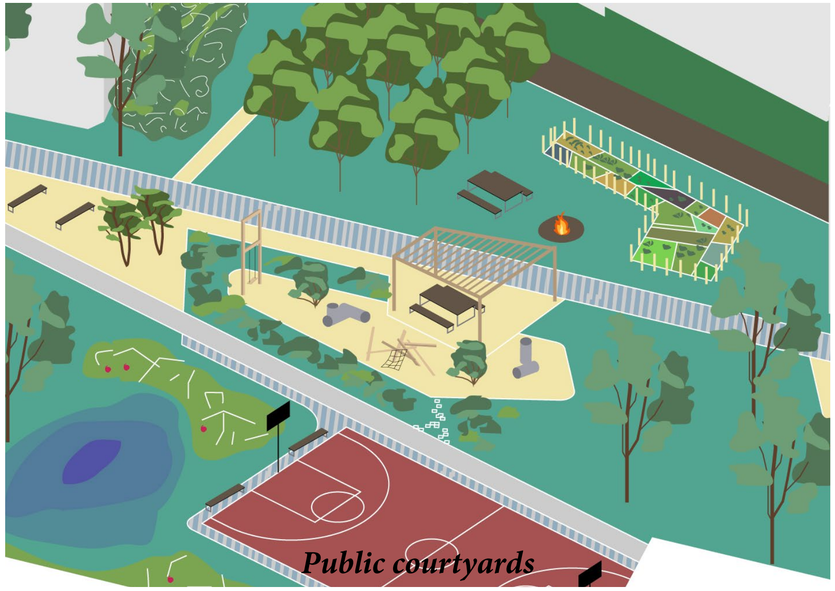
Landscapes and parks

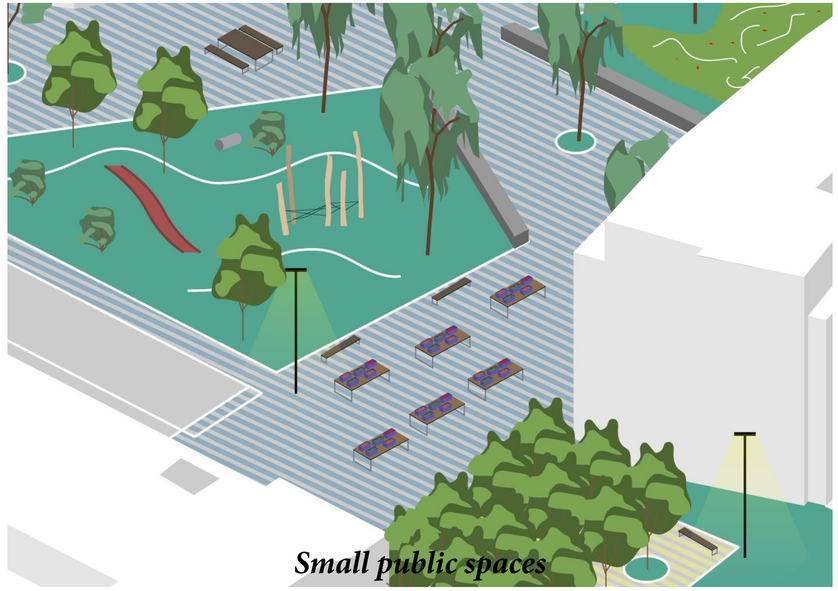
Design toolbox

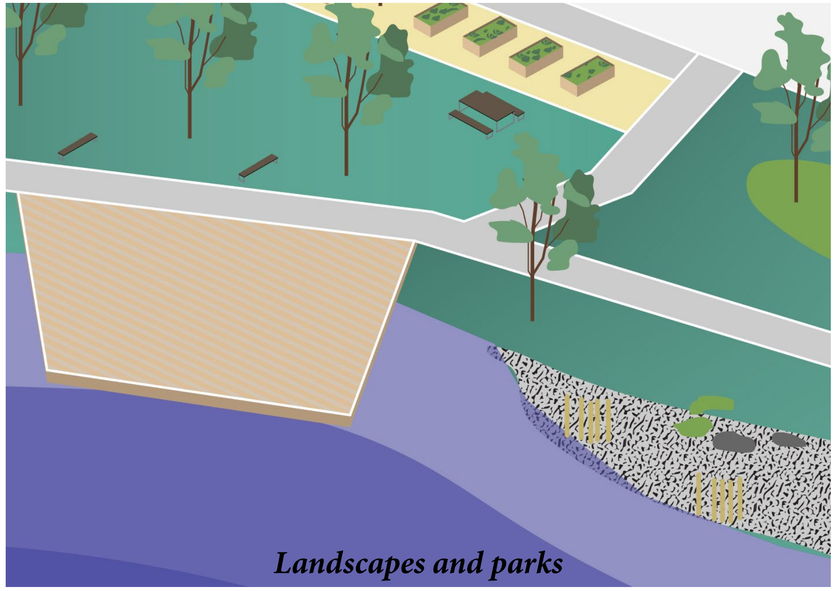
Source: Author





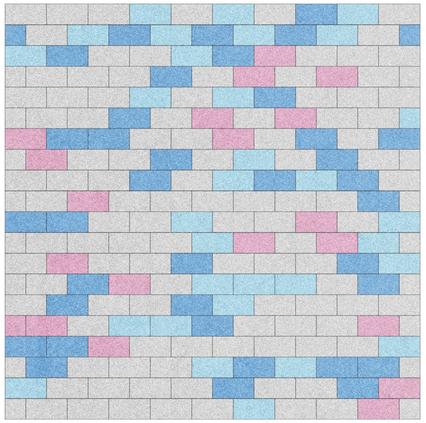


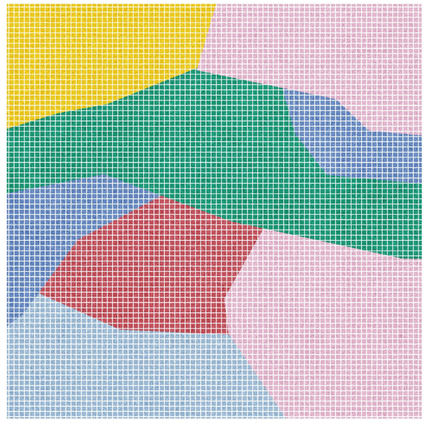




Closeups

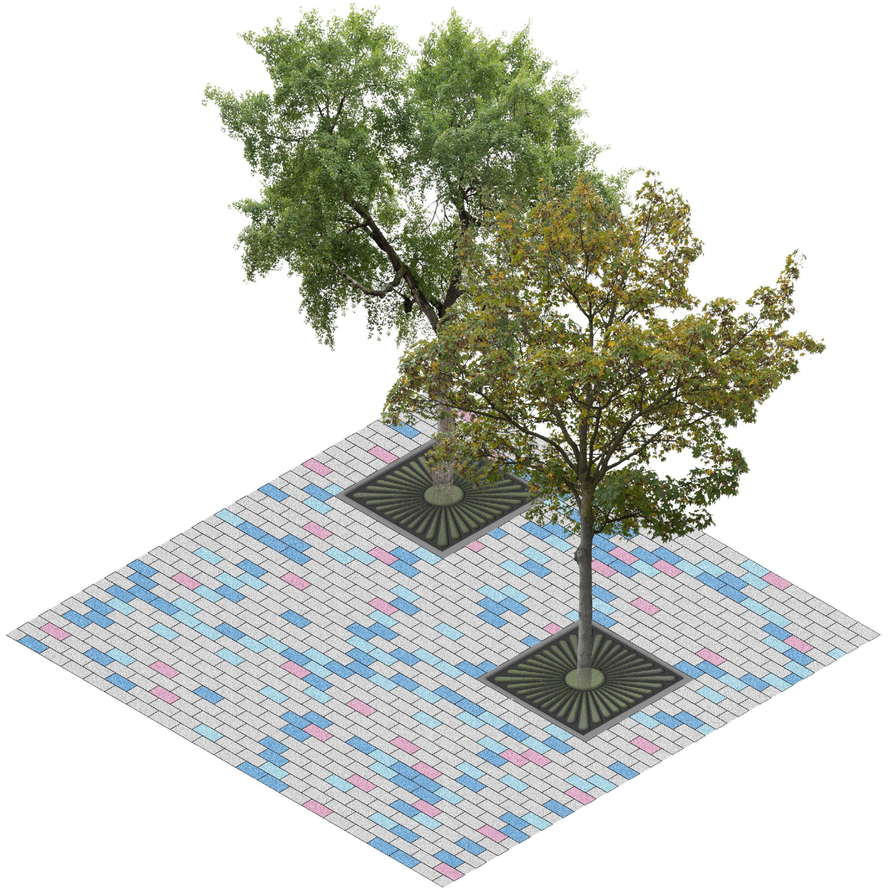
Source: Author





Identity for the neighbourhood

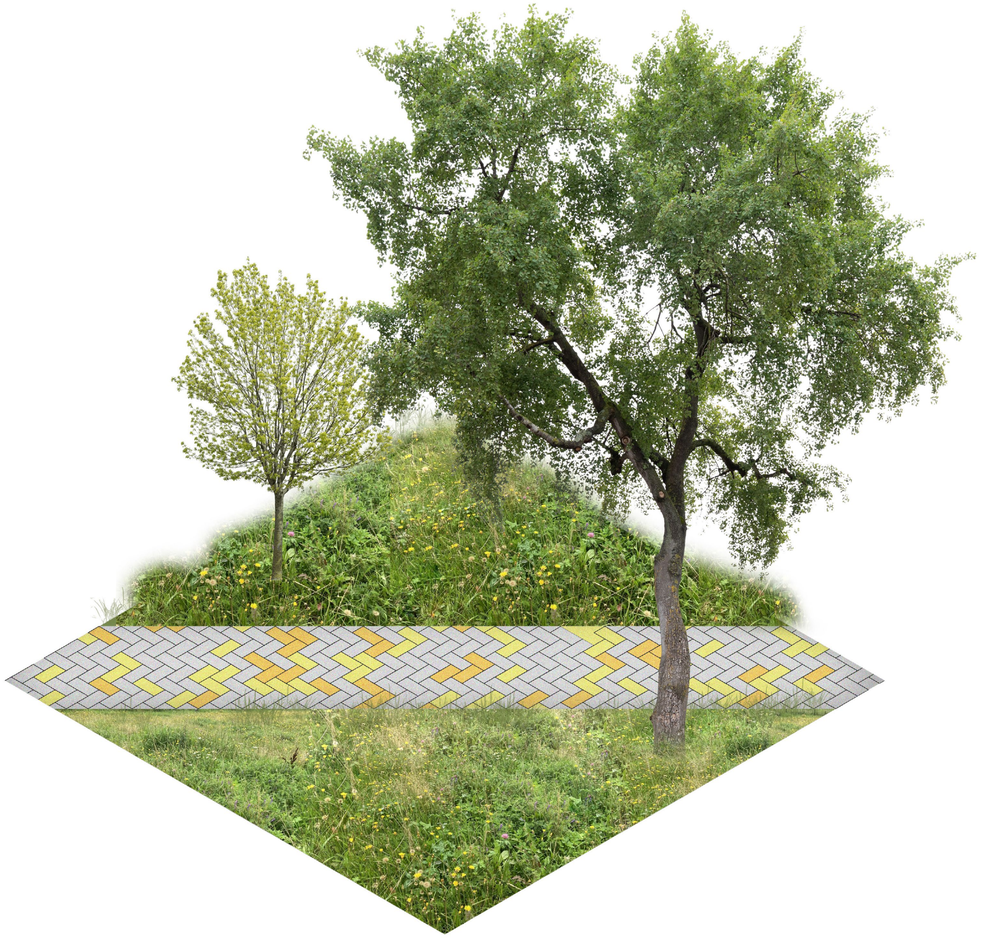
Initial stage



Over time

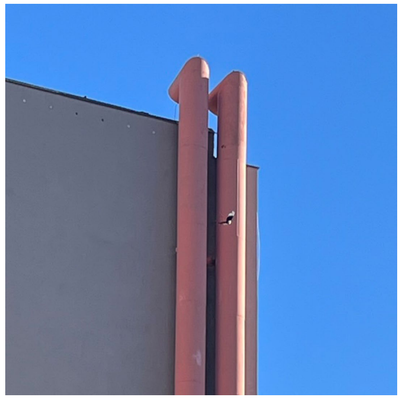
Paved areas

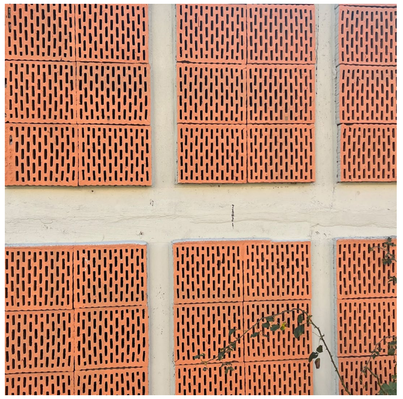
Initial stage



Over time

Unpaved areas

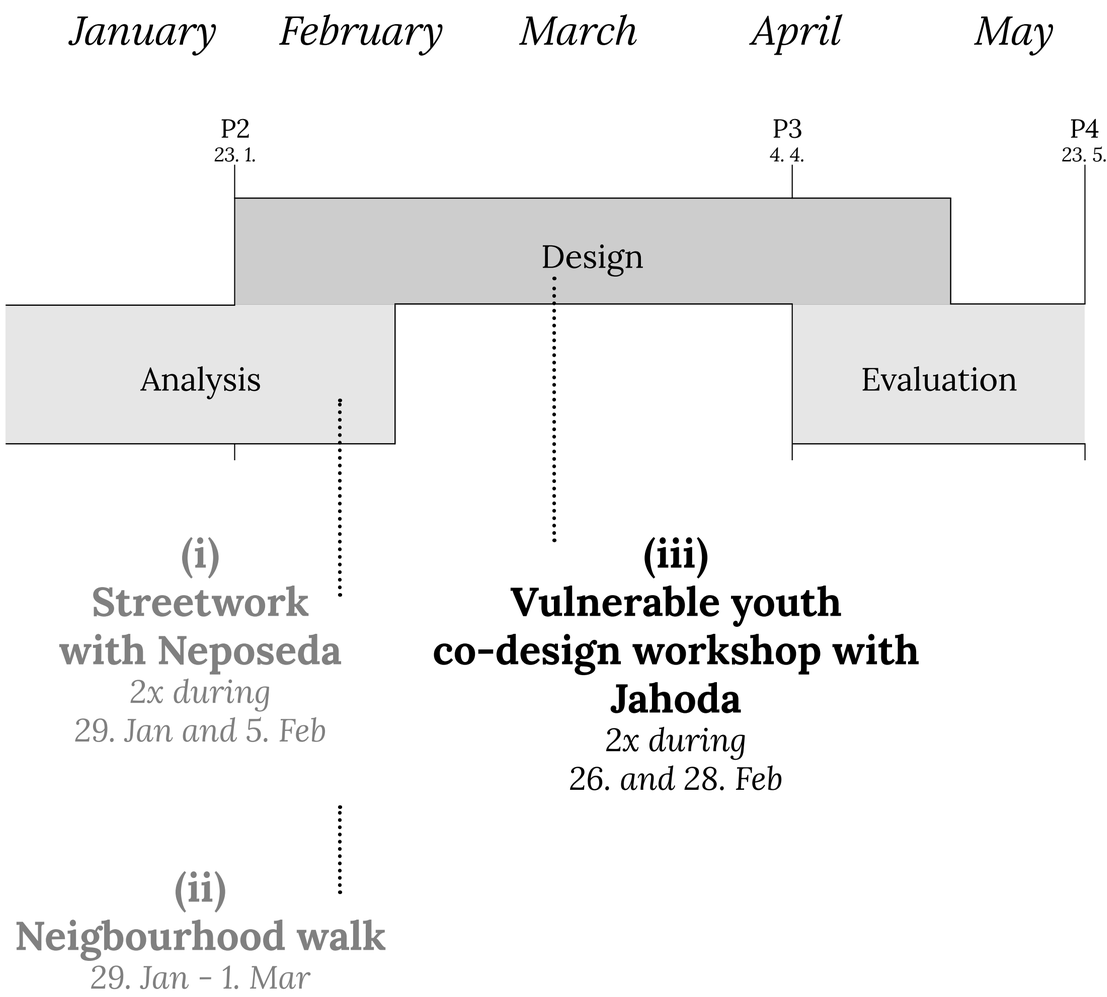




Elements, inspiration

Identity for the neighbourhood

Co-design

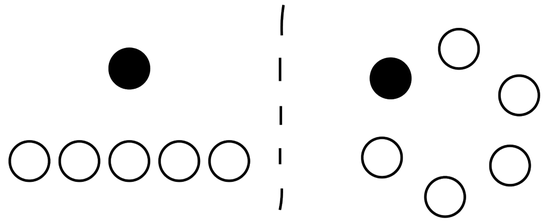


Participation with teenagers at risk

JAHODA NEZISKOVÁ ORGANIZACE

Jahoda z.ú.
Low-threshold club

Timeline

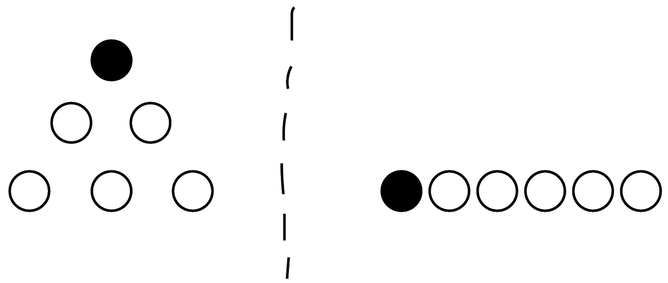


There is a difference ***between executing participation*** *and* ***having the real power and agency*** *needed to influence the outcome of the project.*

Much of what is presented as participatory ***is closer to educating and informing people and securing their support for plans*** *rather than giving them a* ***genuine voice to change things.***

Real power and genuine voice

Source: Few, Brown, and Tompkins 2007



Pre-existing ***power relations have a tendency to persist*** *in participation despite the claims that they promote bottom-up decision-making.*

That is why ***power is of fundamental importance*** *and has to be very explicitly taken into account when considering the objective of participation.*

Power

Source: Few, Brown, and Tompkins 2007

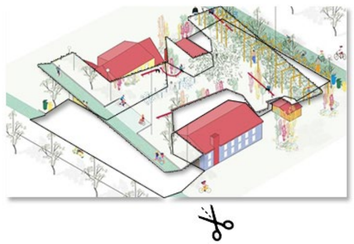
Vulnerable youth co-design workshop in collaboration with local NGO

26. and 28. Febraury

Analysis

1) *Locating positives and negatives, brainstorming things we miss in the location*

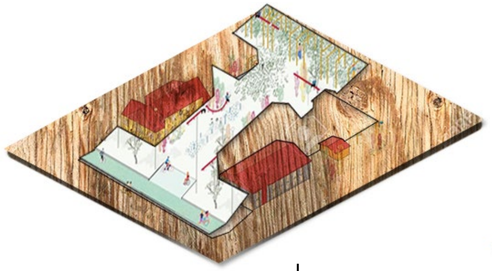
Design

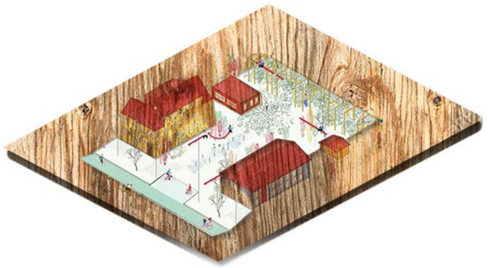


2) *Drawing ideas into a simple axonometry*

3) *Cut out the plan*

Evaluation



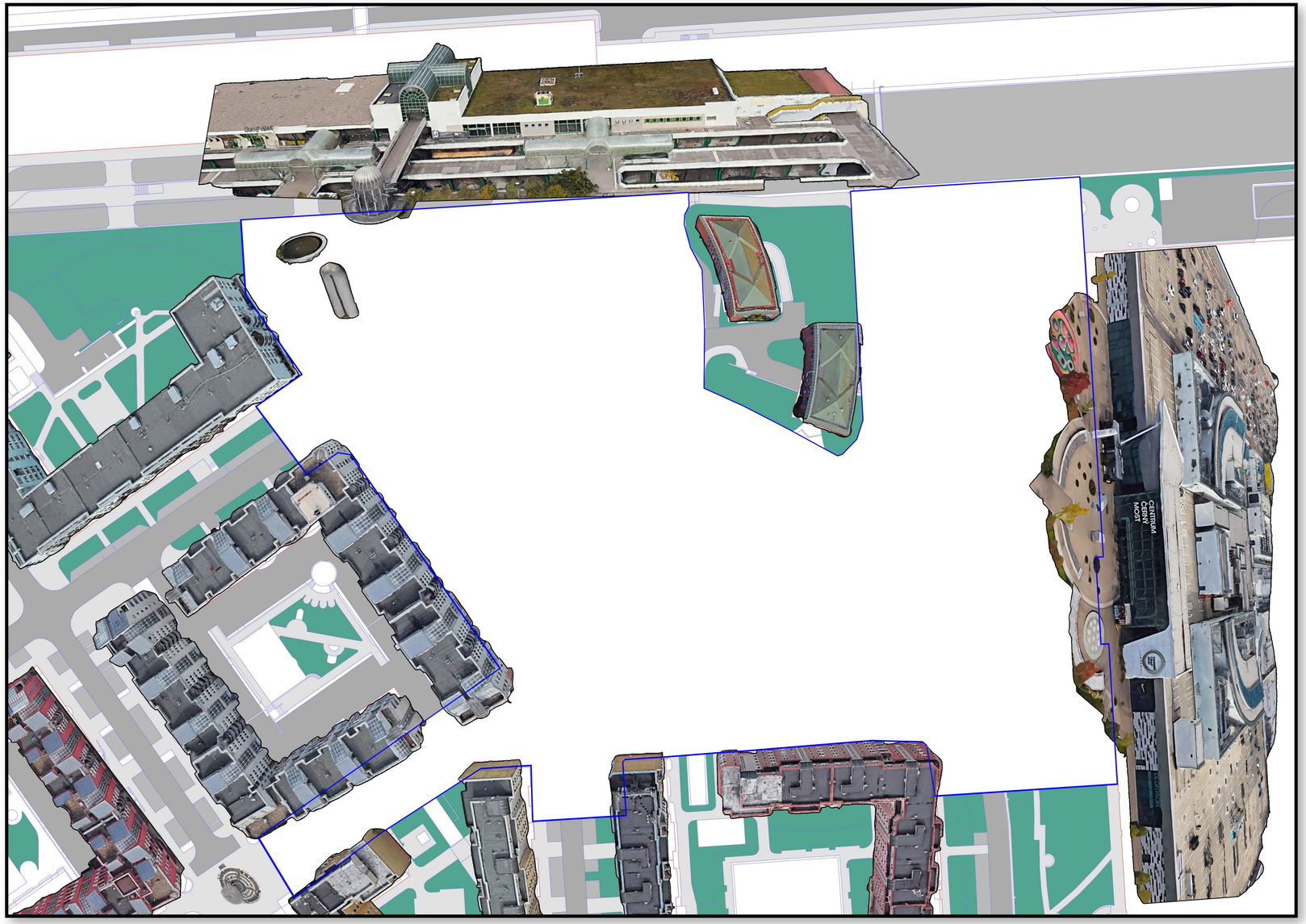


4) *Add it into physical model*

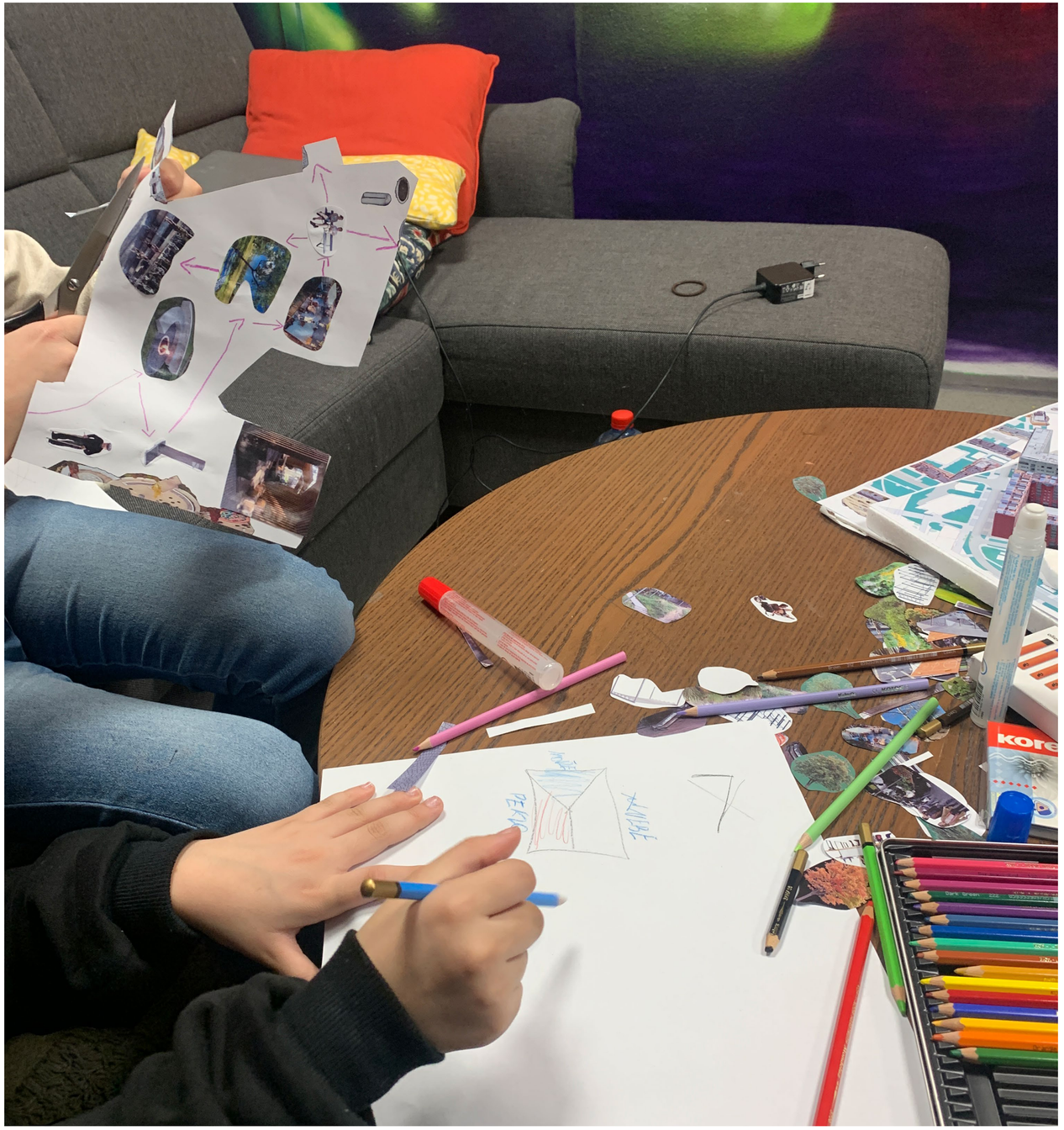
5) *Comparing how the context changes, adding other things, adding 3D trees*

Activities

Source: Author



Location
Source: Author



Process

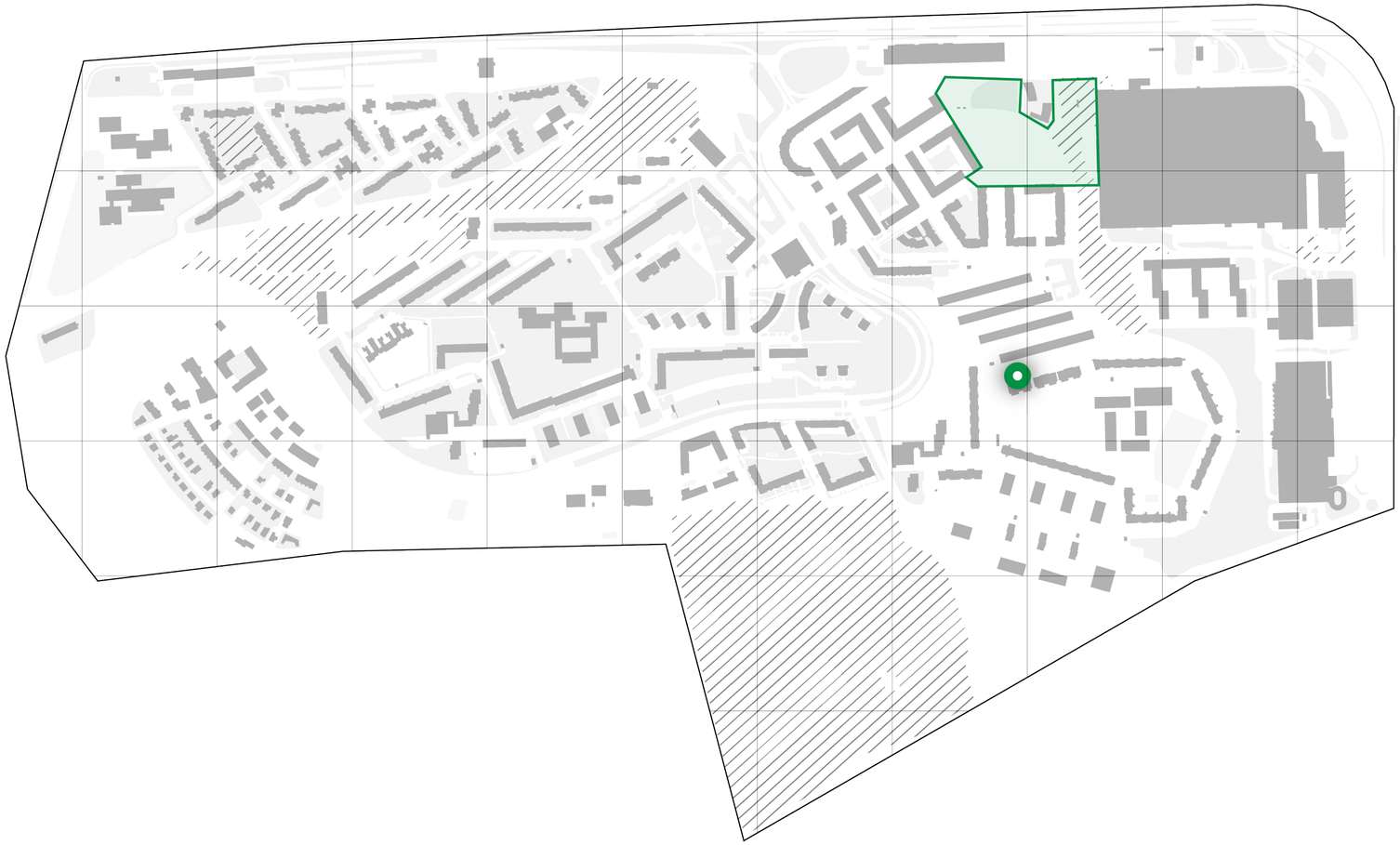
Source: participation

Process

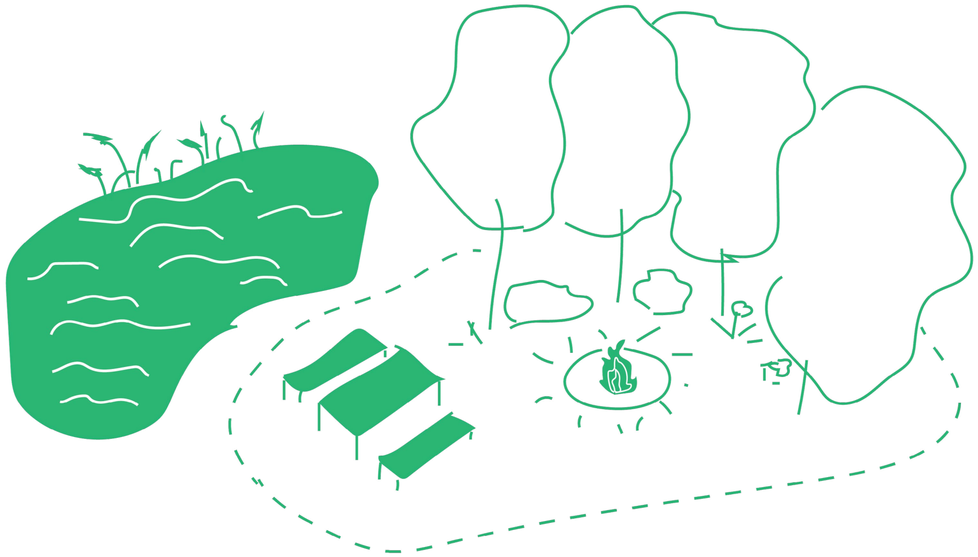
Source: participation

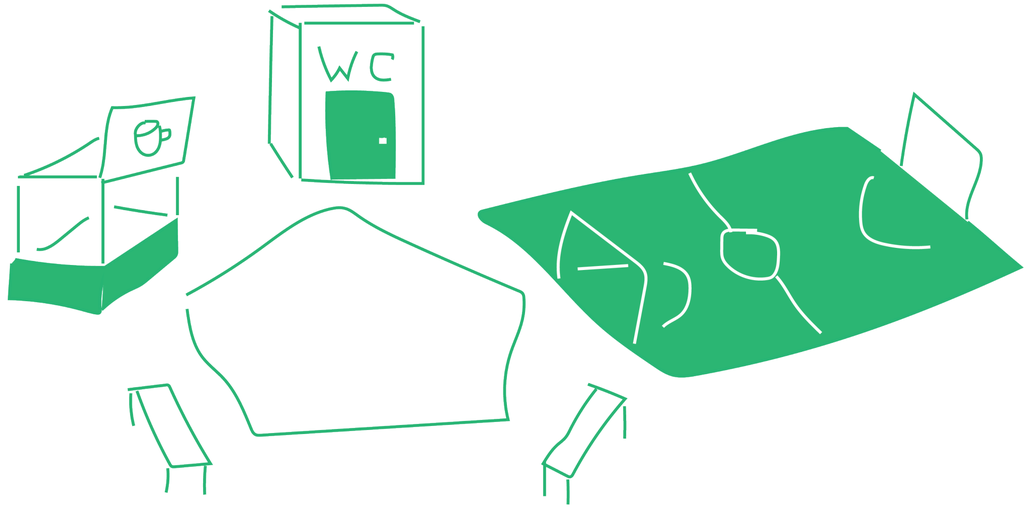
Desings

Source: participation



Location
Source: Author





The most important thing is adding trees, various types of greenery and shade.

One of the first reaction was bringing water, biotopes, fountains and drinking fountains to the area.

The whole site has no energy and happiness. It is grey and is missing colours and optimism. Opportunity.

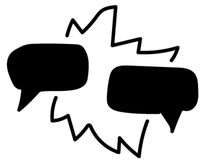
There is very little to do. Places for culture, for dates, BBQ, picnics, Cafés, seating, gyms...

Perception of a wide range of actors, such as animals and unhoused people. Recognition of conflict. The need for safety. Public toilets, maintenance, drugs.

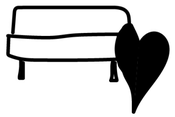
General outcomes

Source: Author

Location design

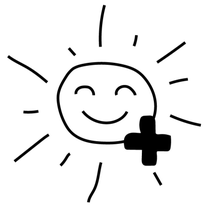


1. | *Dispersing the exposure of the social conflict.*

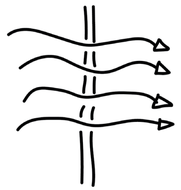


2. | *Creating open, inviting and accessible spaces.*

3. | *Meeting the basic needs of the most vulnerable.*



4. | *Using the wishes of the teenagers.*



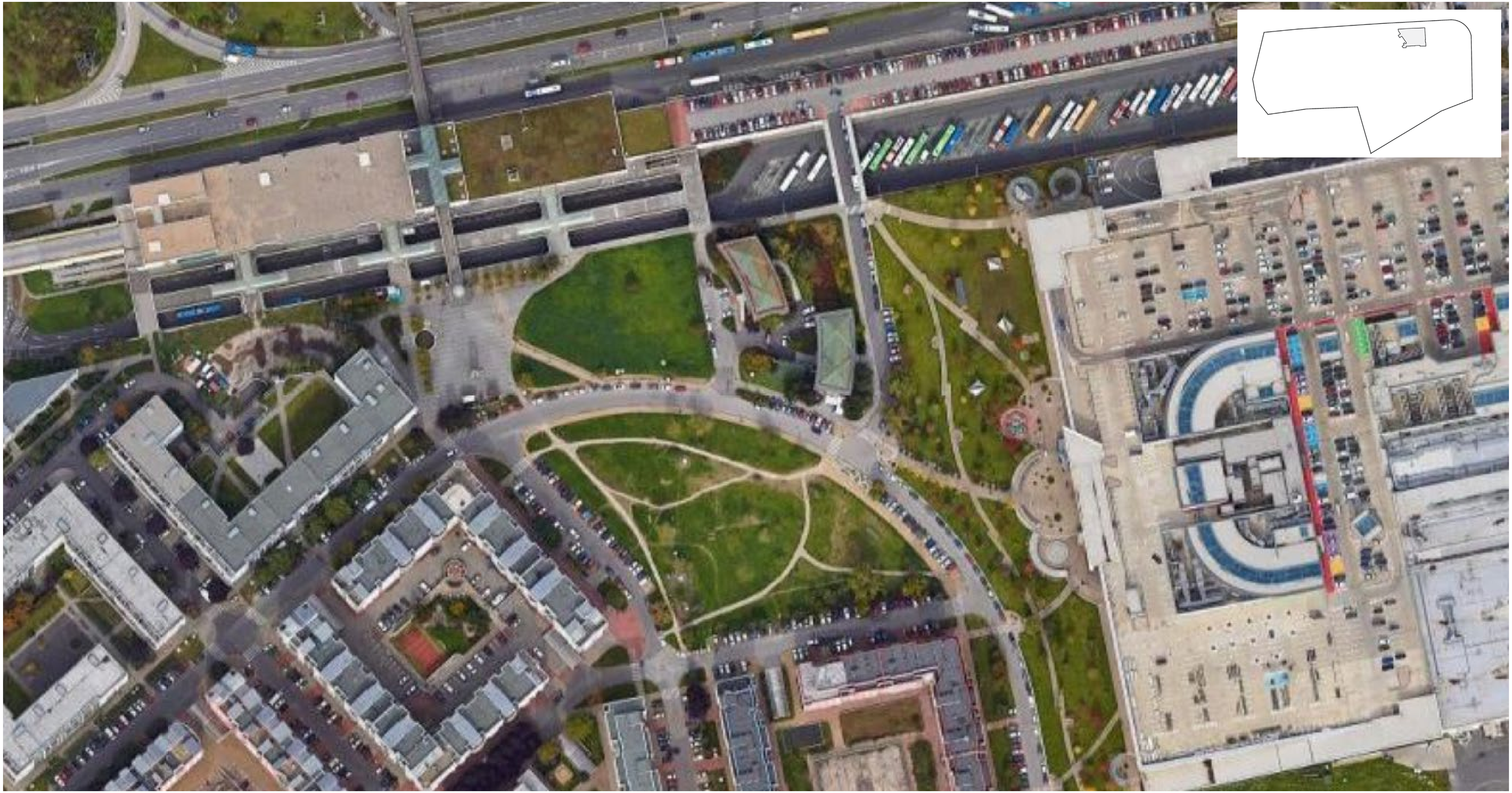
5. | *Allowing difference, usage, porosity.*

6. | *Protecting everyone from the climate change.*

The goals for the design

Source: Author

DECATHLON

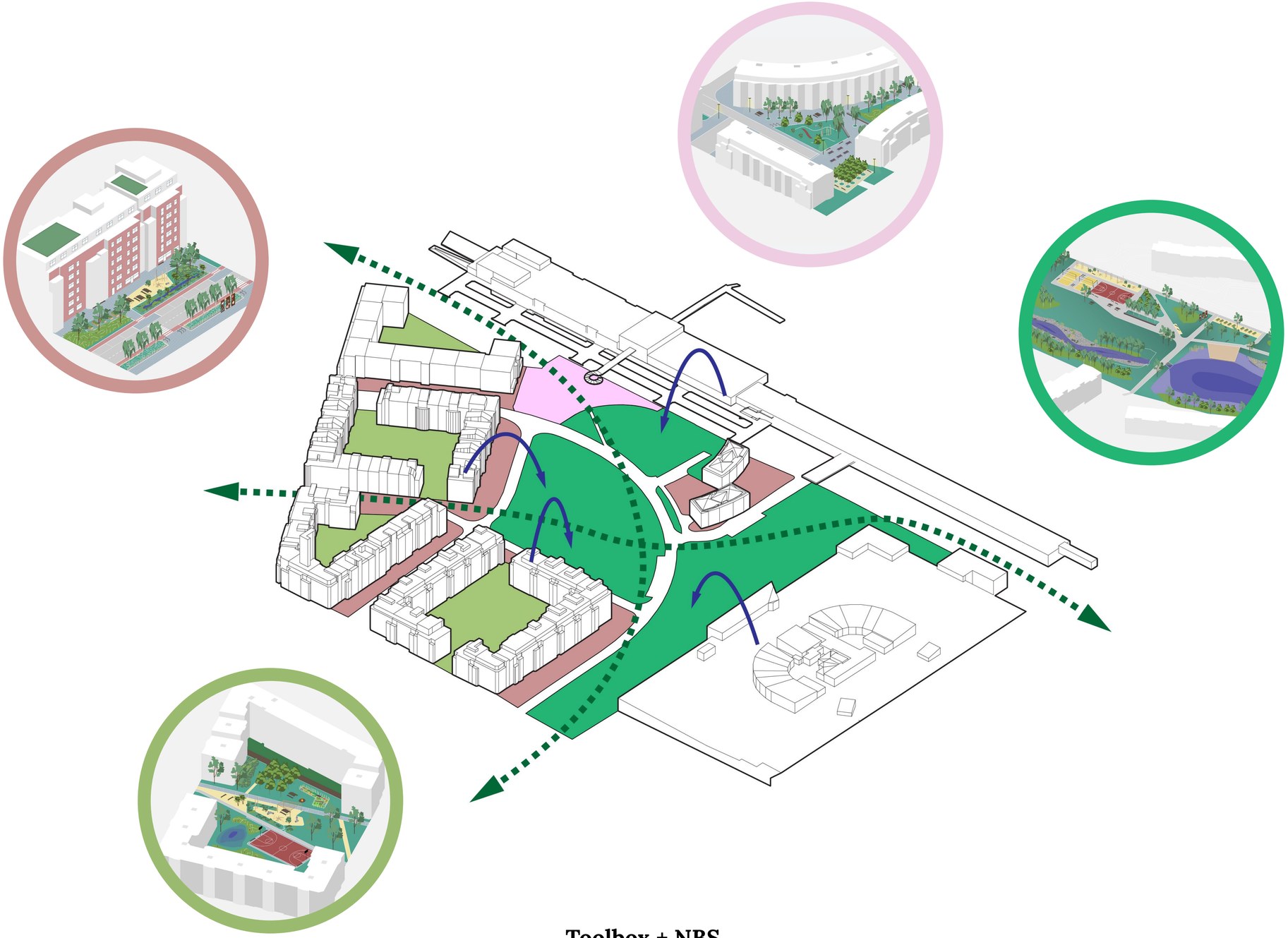


Location

Source: Google Earth

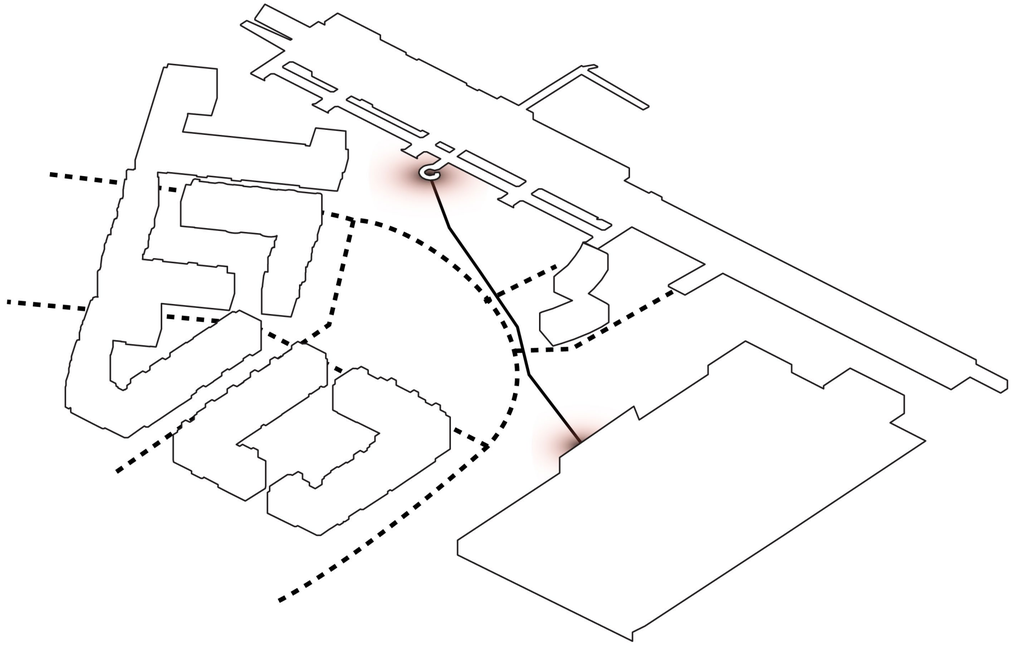
Location

Source: Author, Google Earth

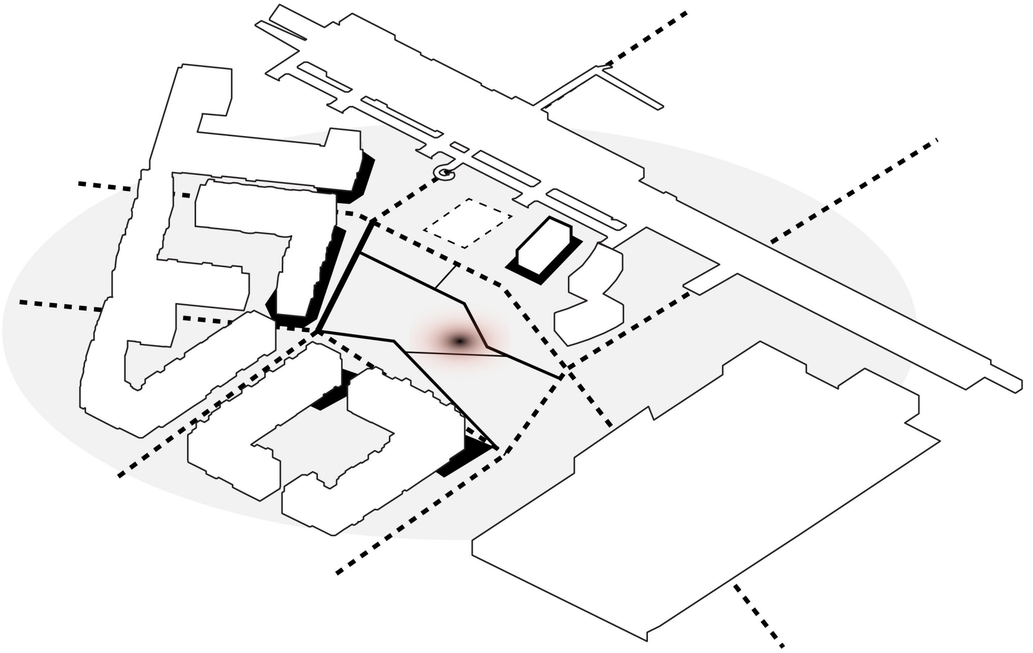


Toolbox + NBS

Source: Author



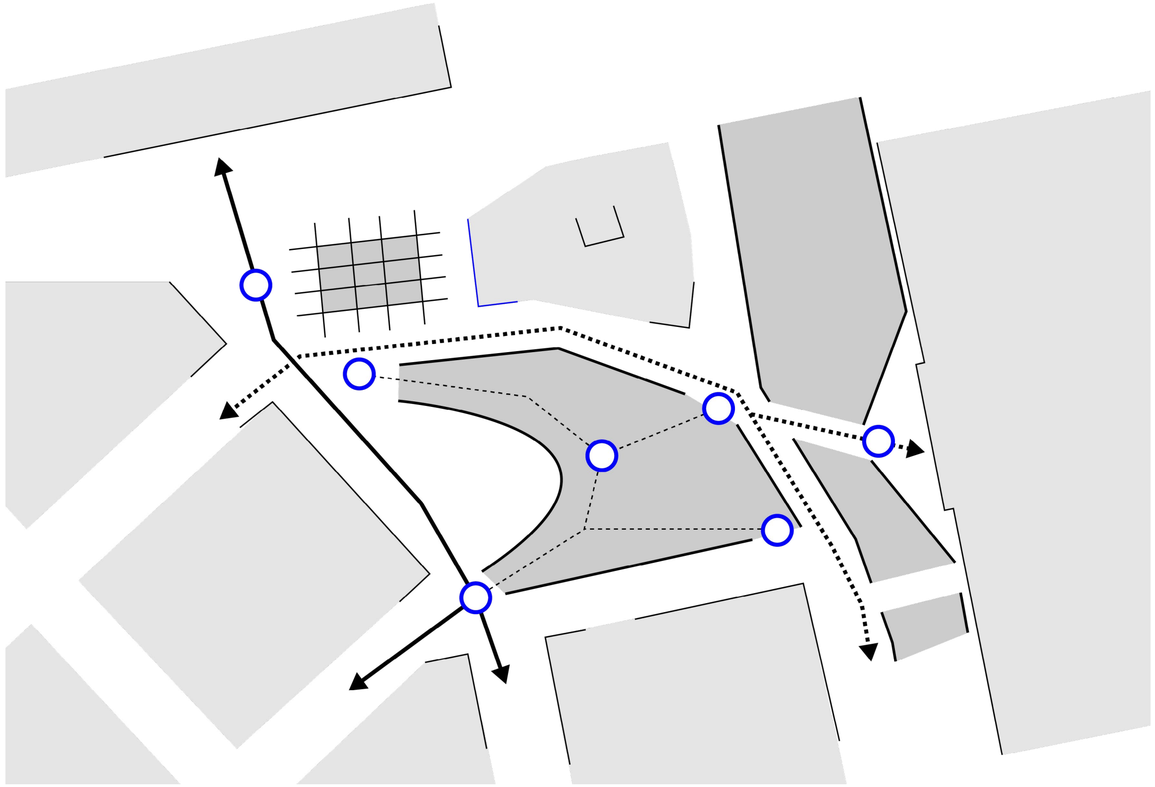
Present situation



Concept

Concept

Source: Author



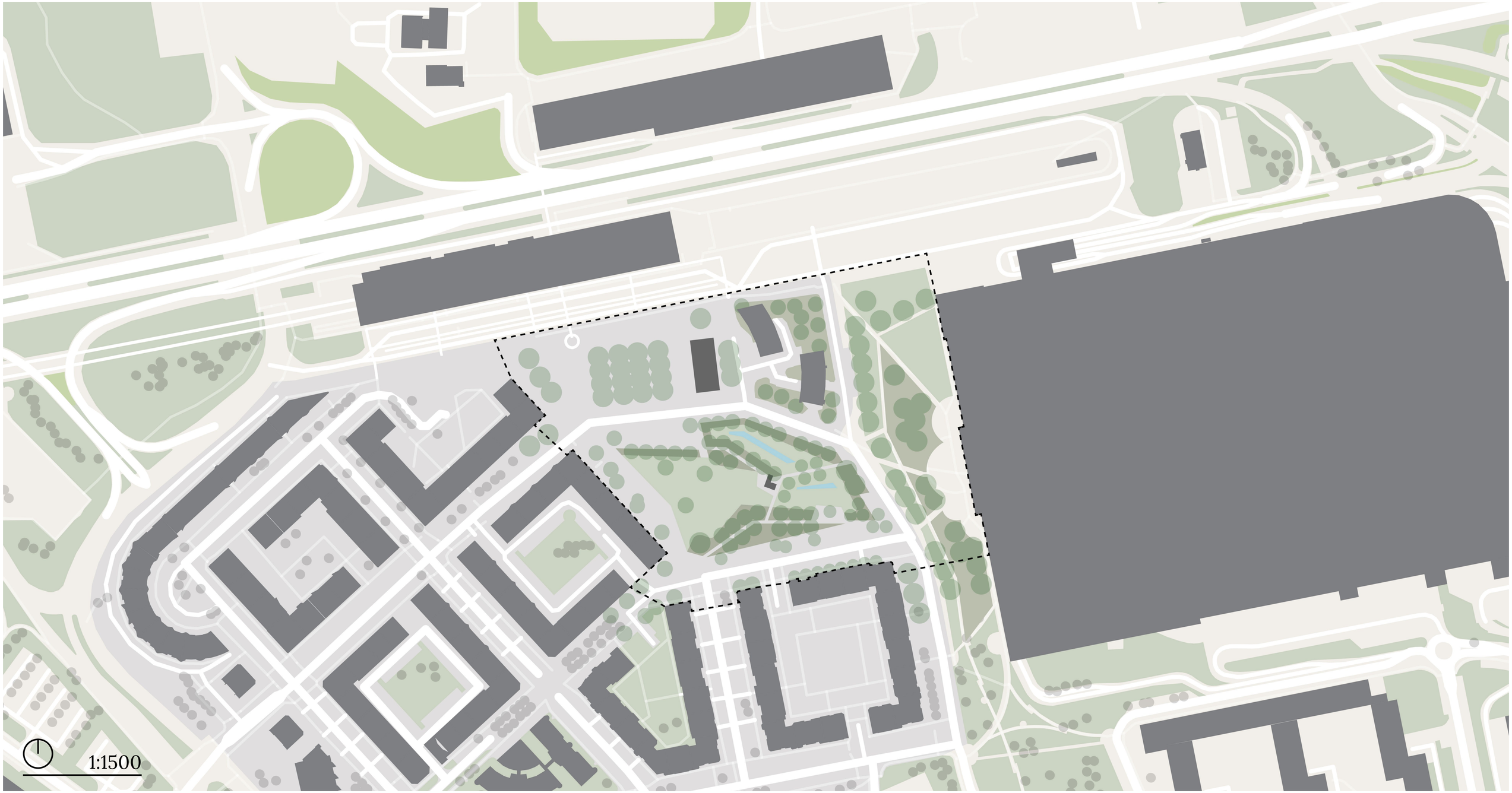
- Active parts (playground, skatepark, sport)
- Passive parts (calmer areas for sitting)
- Public spaces with higher importance
- Community garden

- Grassland areas with tall, dense, biodiverse species
- Short cut grass for recreation
- Semi-permeable crushed stones areas
- Water surfaces for storing rain water

- Fraxinus excelsior
- Acer campestre
- Sorbus aucuparia
- Tilia europaea
- Betula pendula

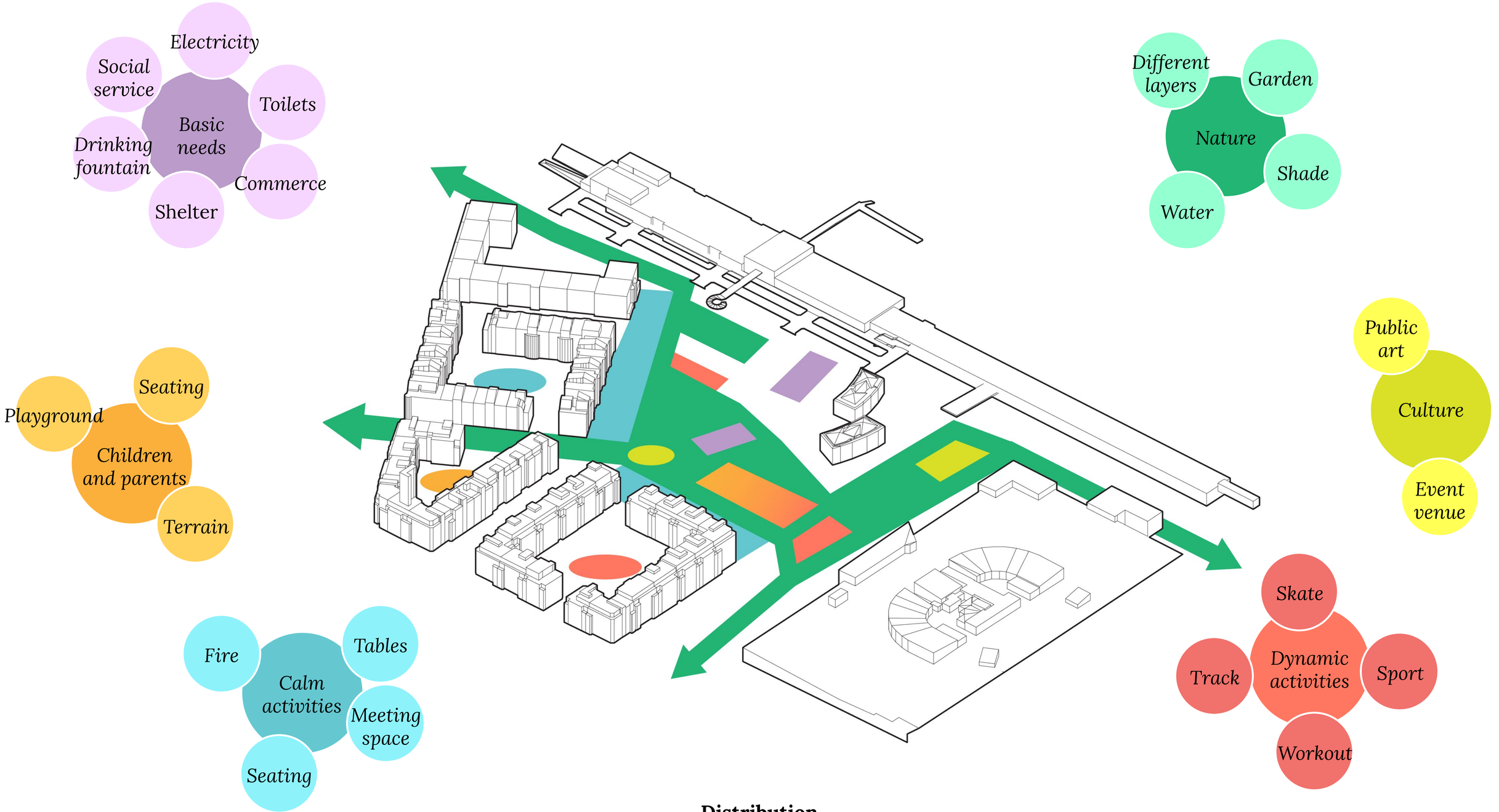
Concept

Source: Author



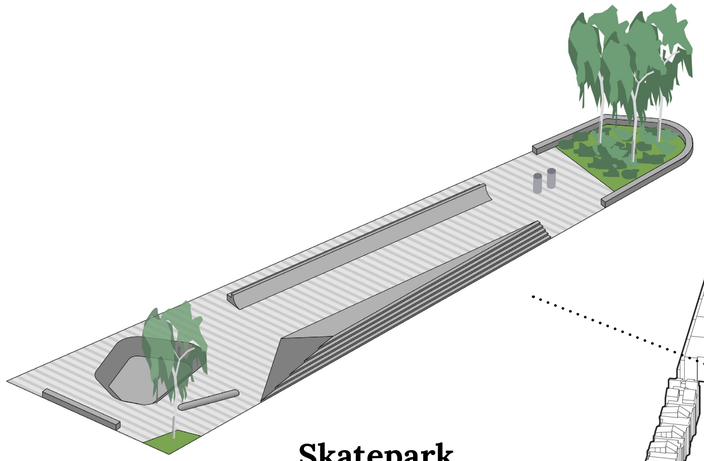
Broader relations

Source: Author

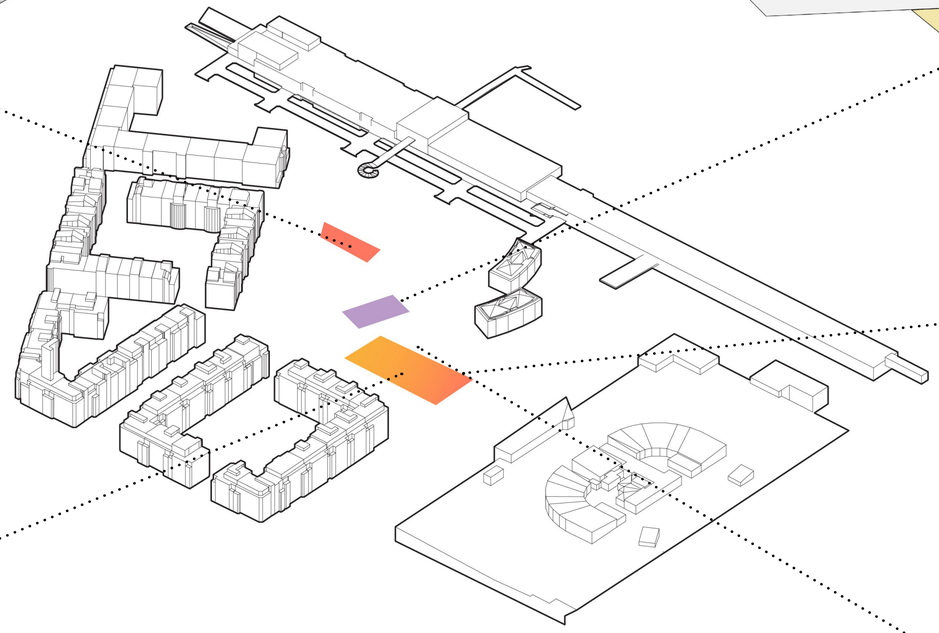


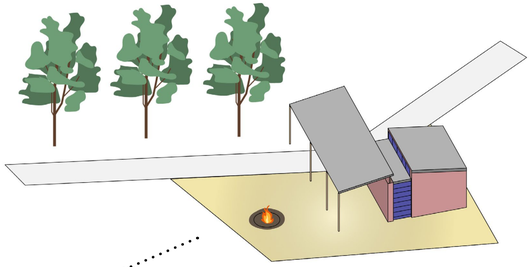
Distribution

Source: Author

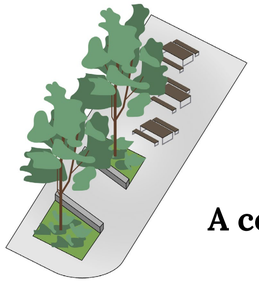


Skatepark

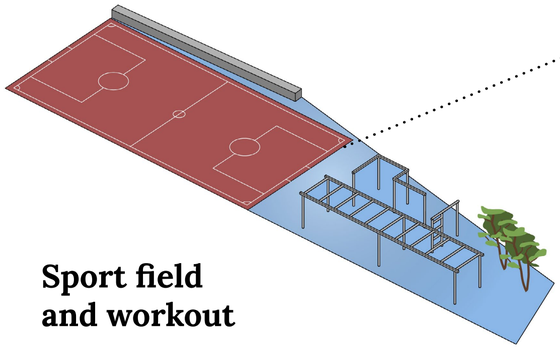




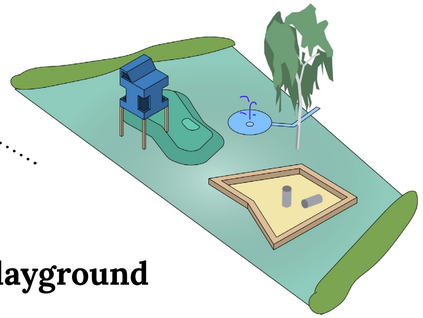
Public toilets and showers with a BBQ



A corner



Sport field and workout



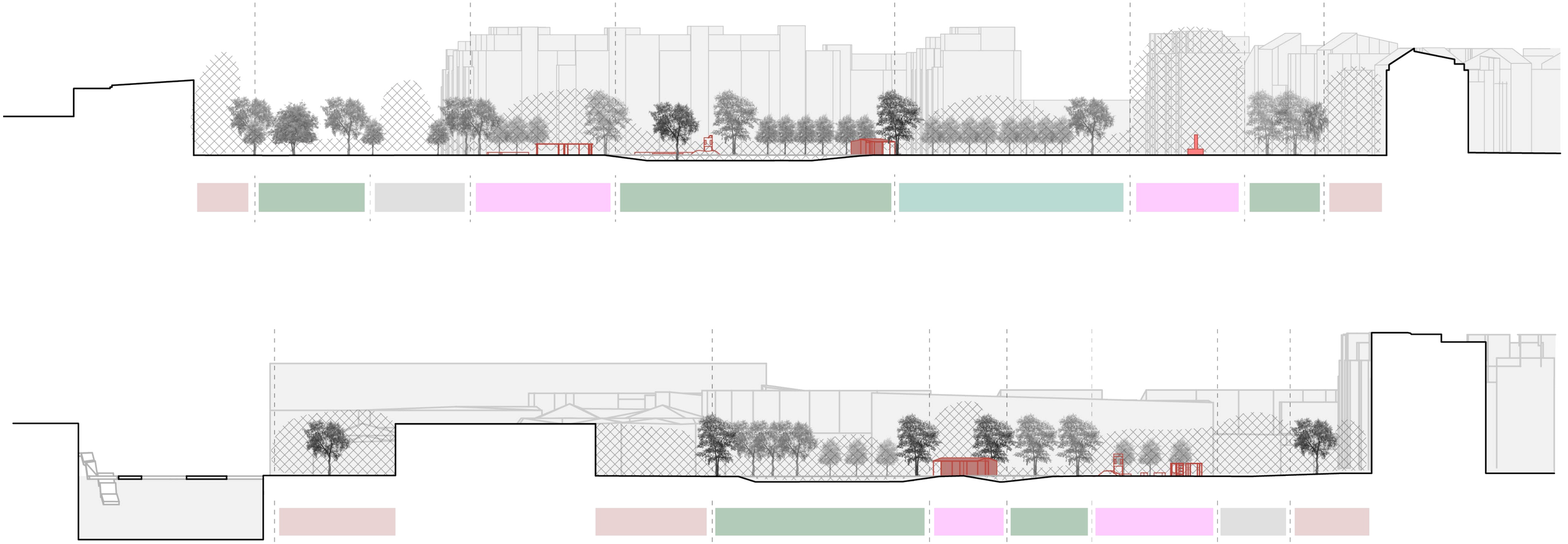
Playground

Locations

Source: Author

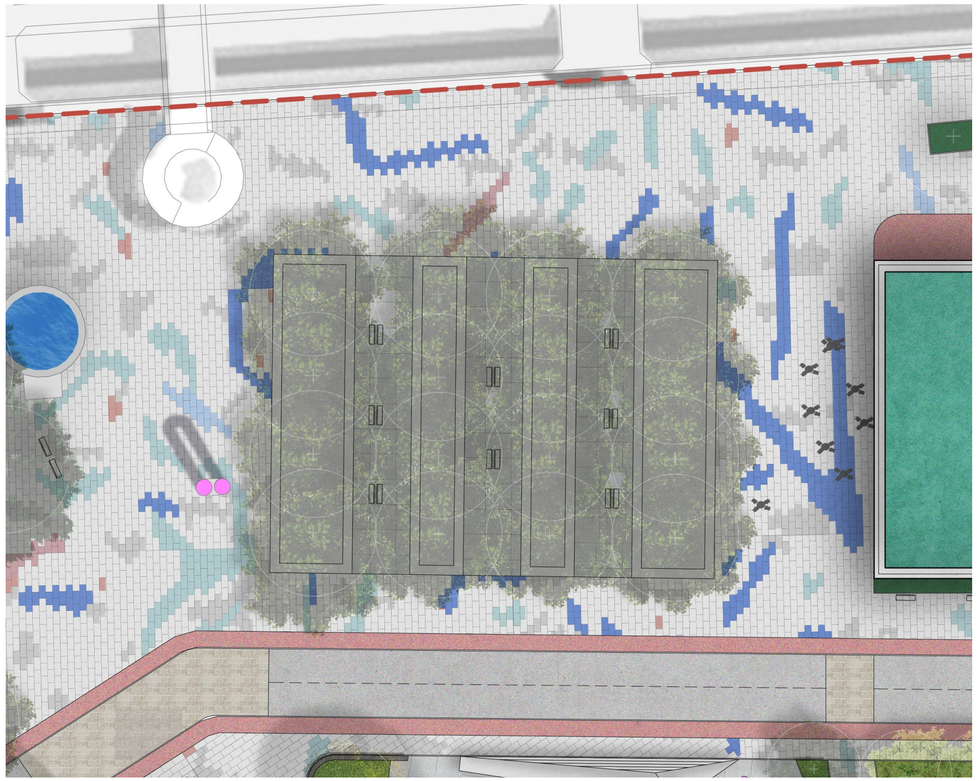
Axonometry
Source: Author

Siteplan
Source: Author

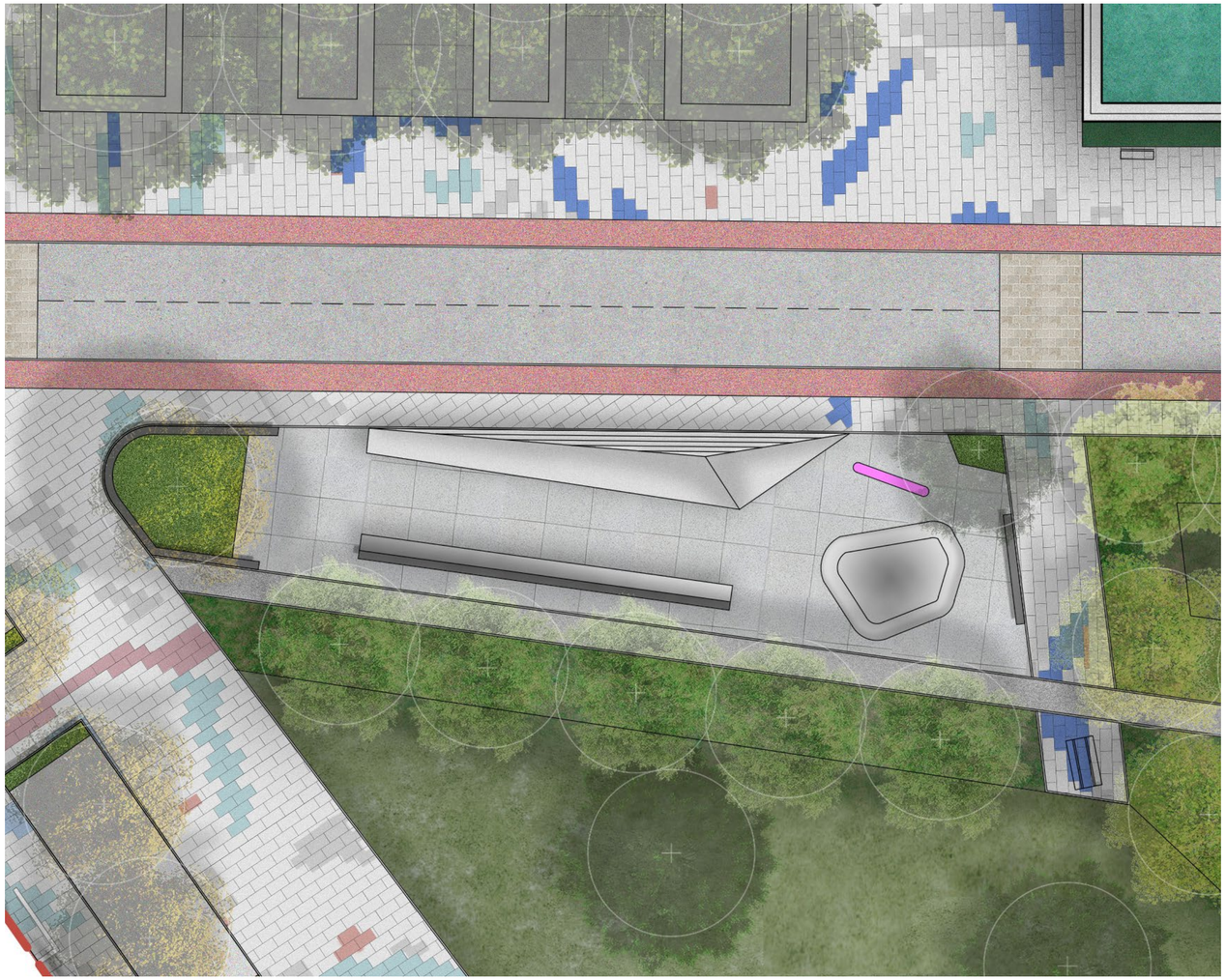


Sections

Source: Author

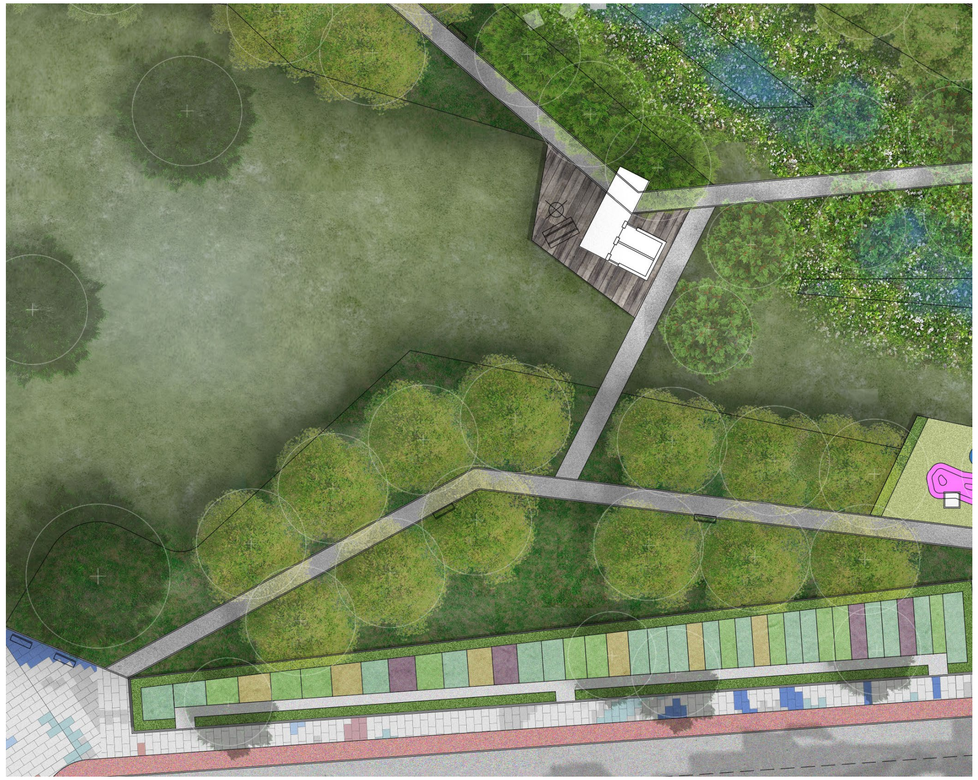


Bosquet gradient
Source: Author



Skatepark
Source: Author

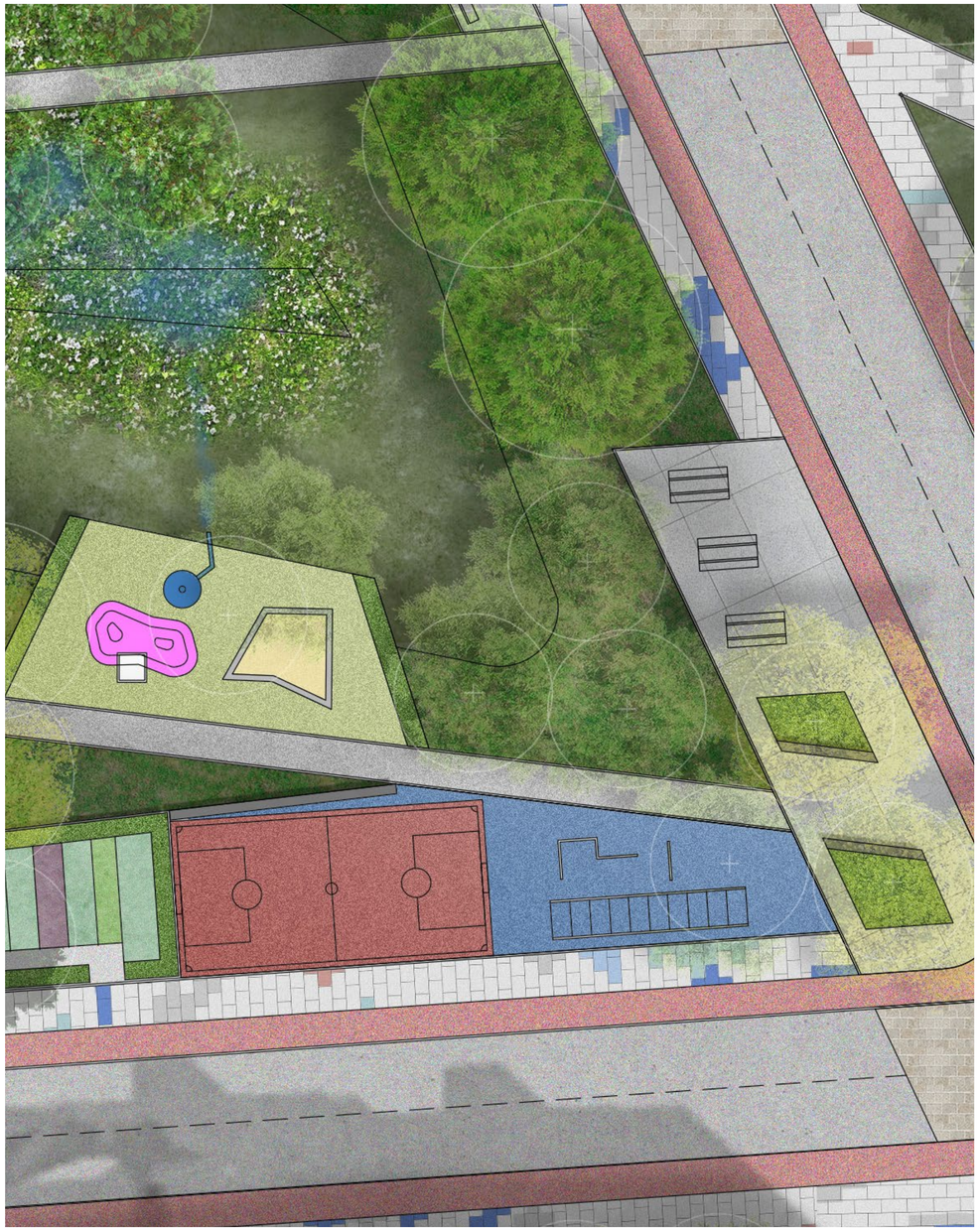
View into the park
Source: Author



Inside outside gradient

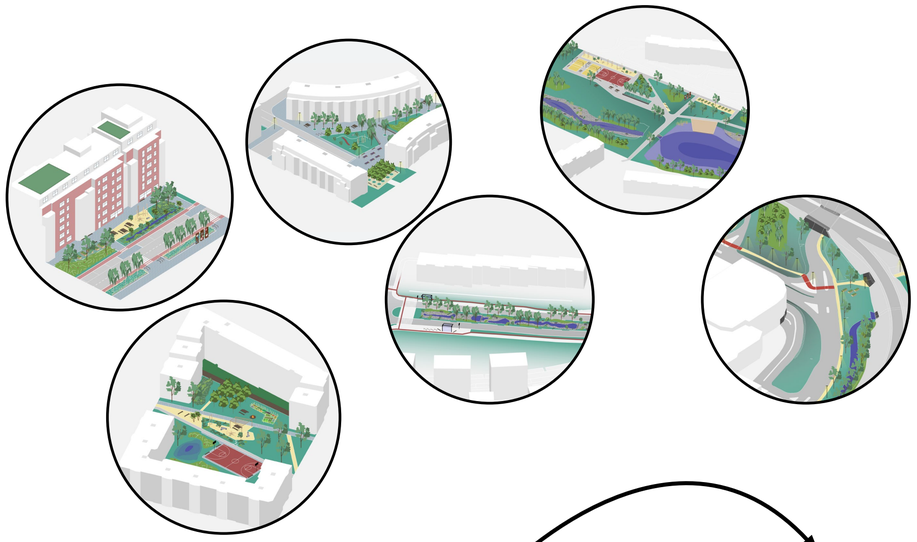
Source: Author

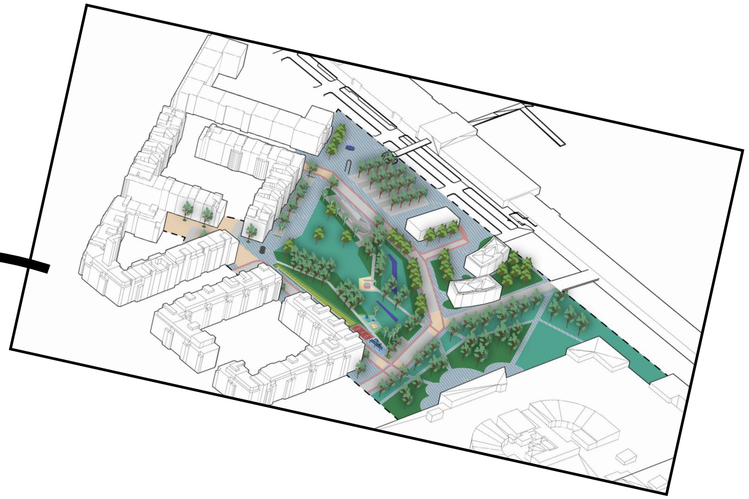
Heart of the park
Source: Author



Spaces next to each other
Source: Author

Squares on the edges
Source: Author





Future

Source: Author

Conclusion and reflection

Interpretation.

The process is important.

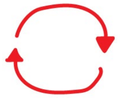
Collaboration.

It is a method, a tool, an instrument, not a checkbox.

Reaching out to people.

Planing a tailored activity, inspire, but not control.

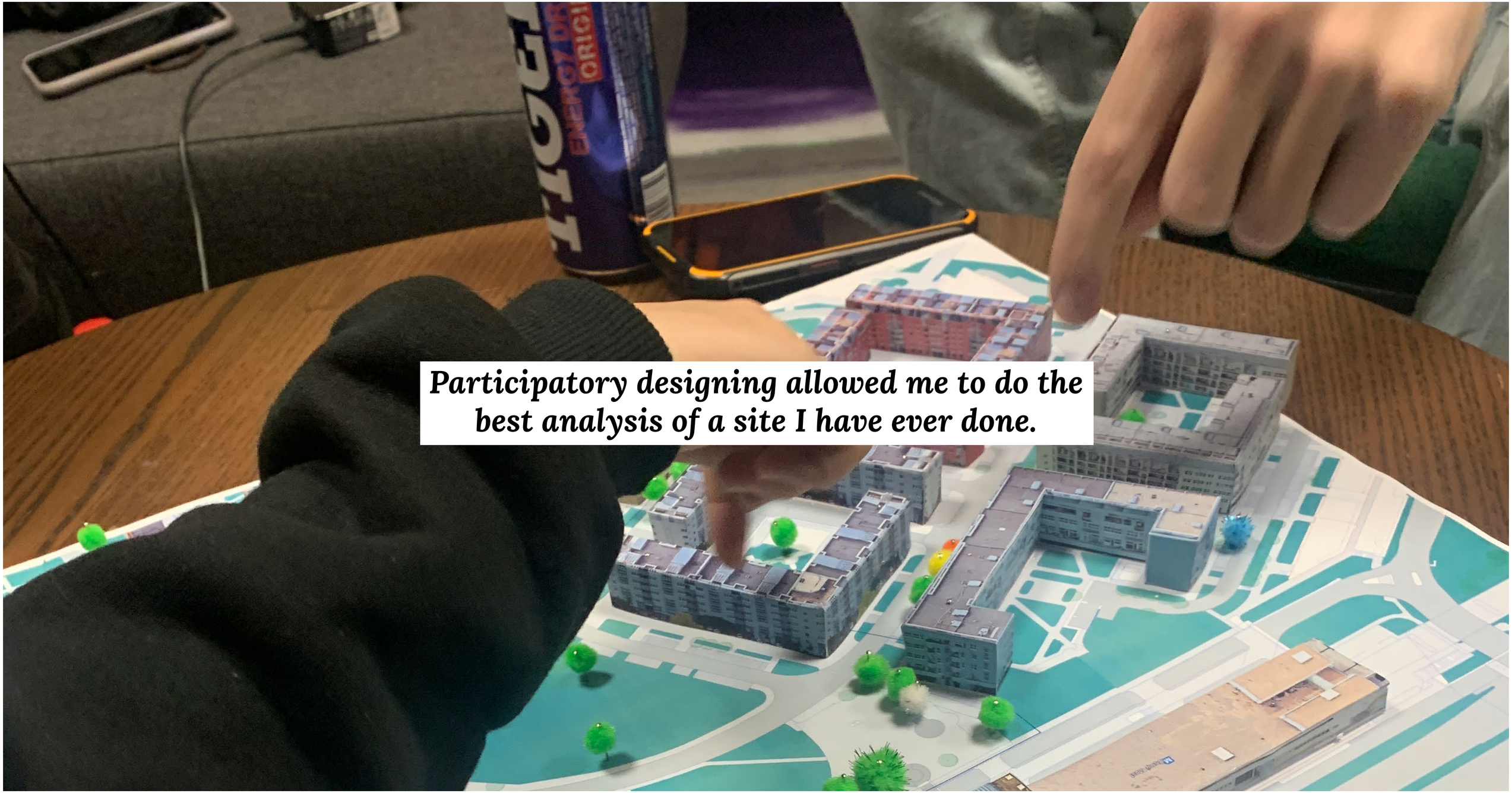
Listen and improvise.



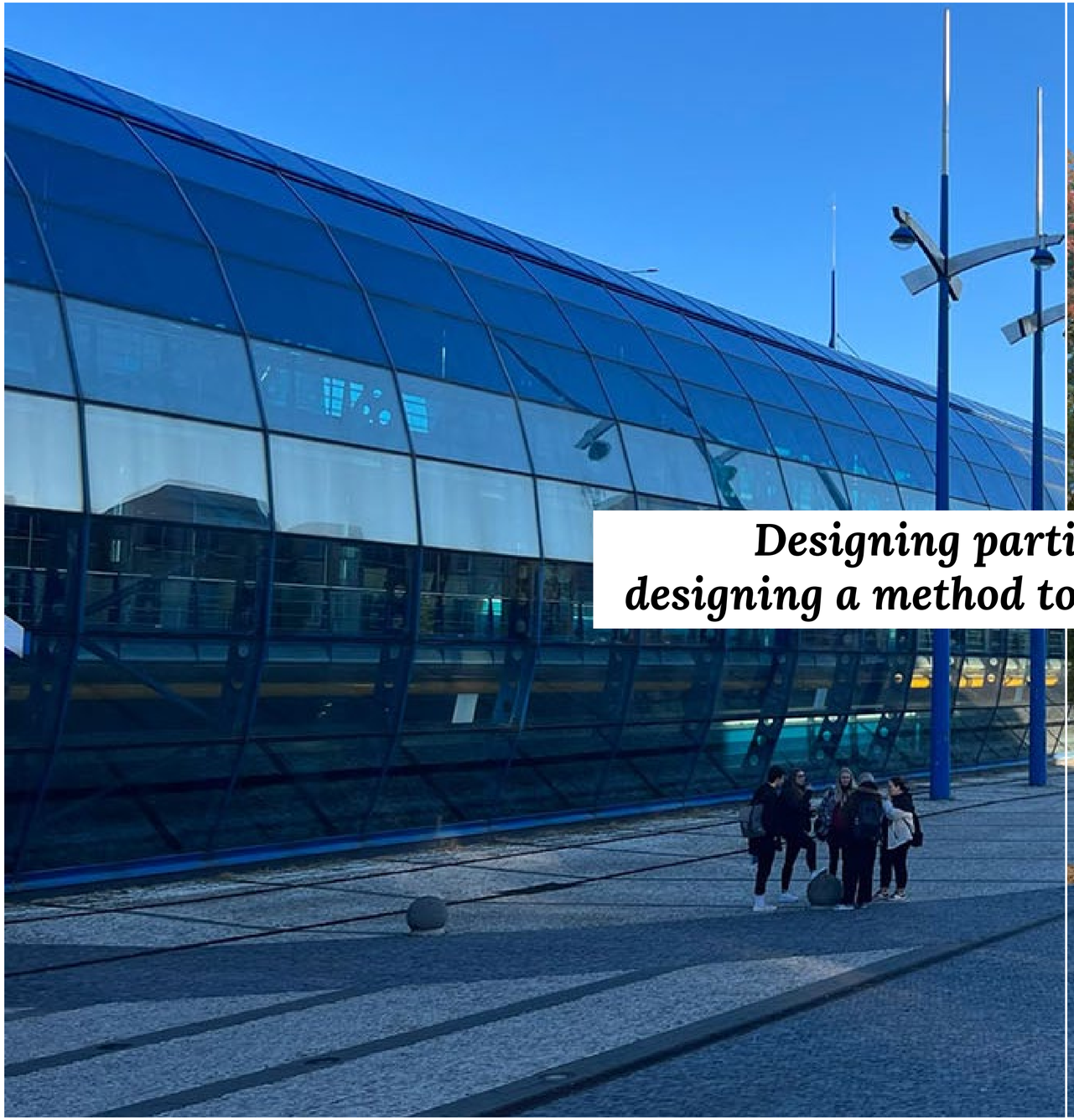
Frequency and repetition.

How to participate

Source: Author

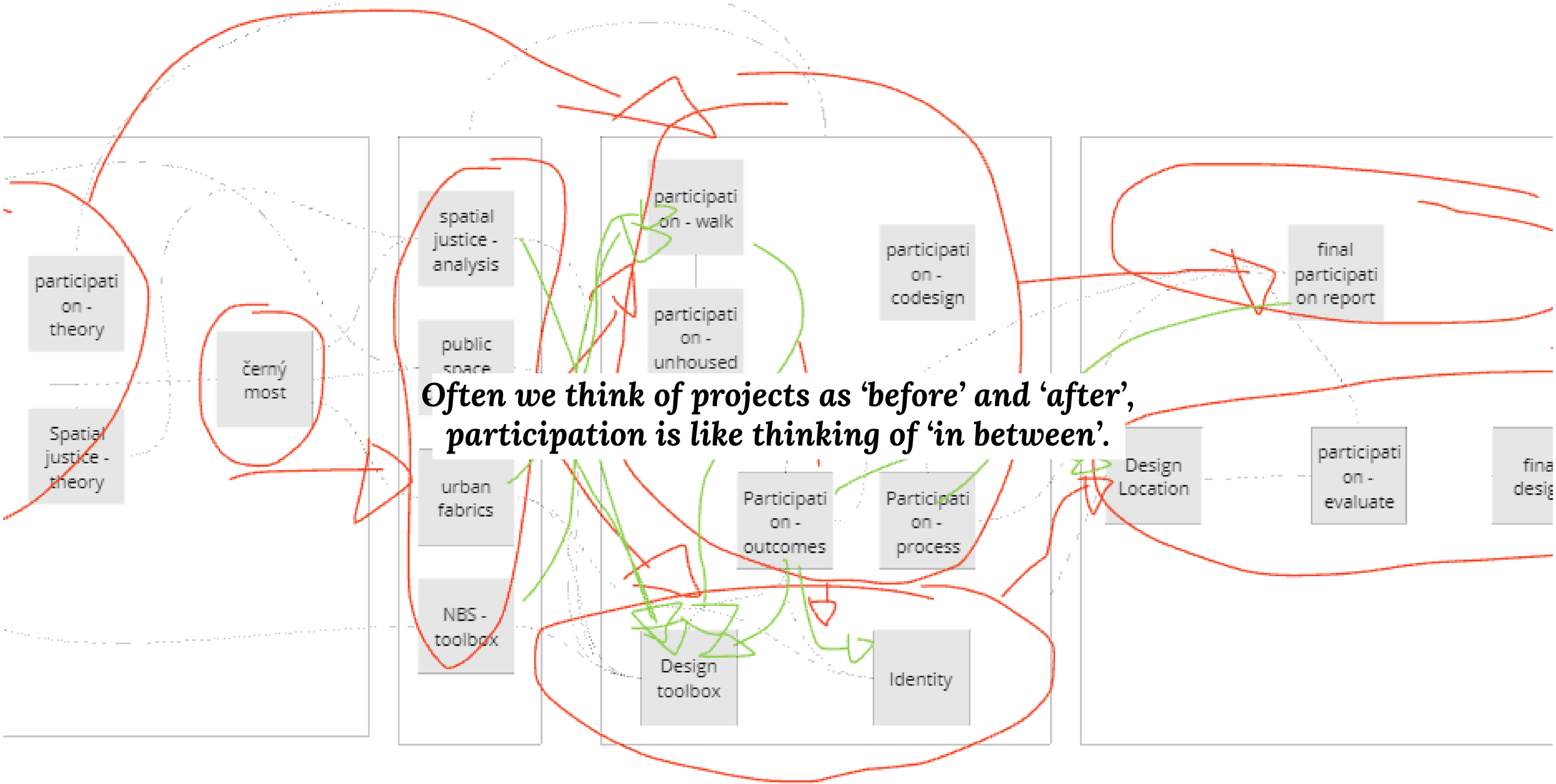

Participatory designing allowed me to do the best analysis of a site I have ever done.

Participation for me was an approach,
not a single structured checkbox.

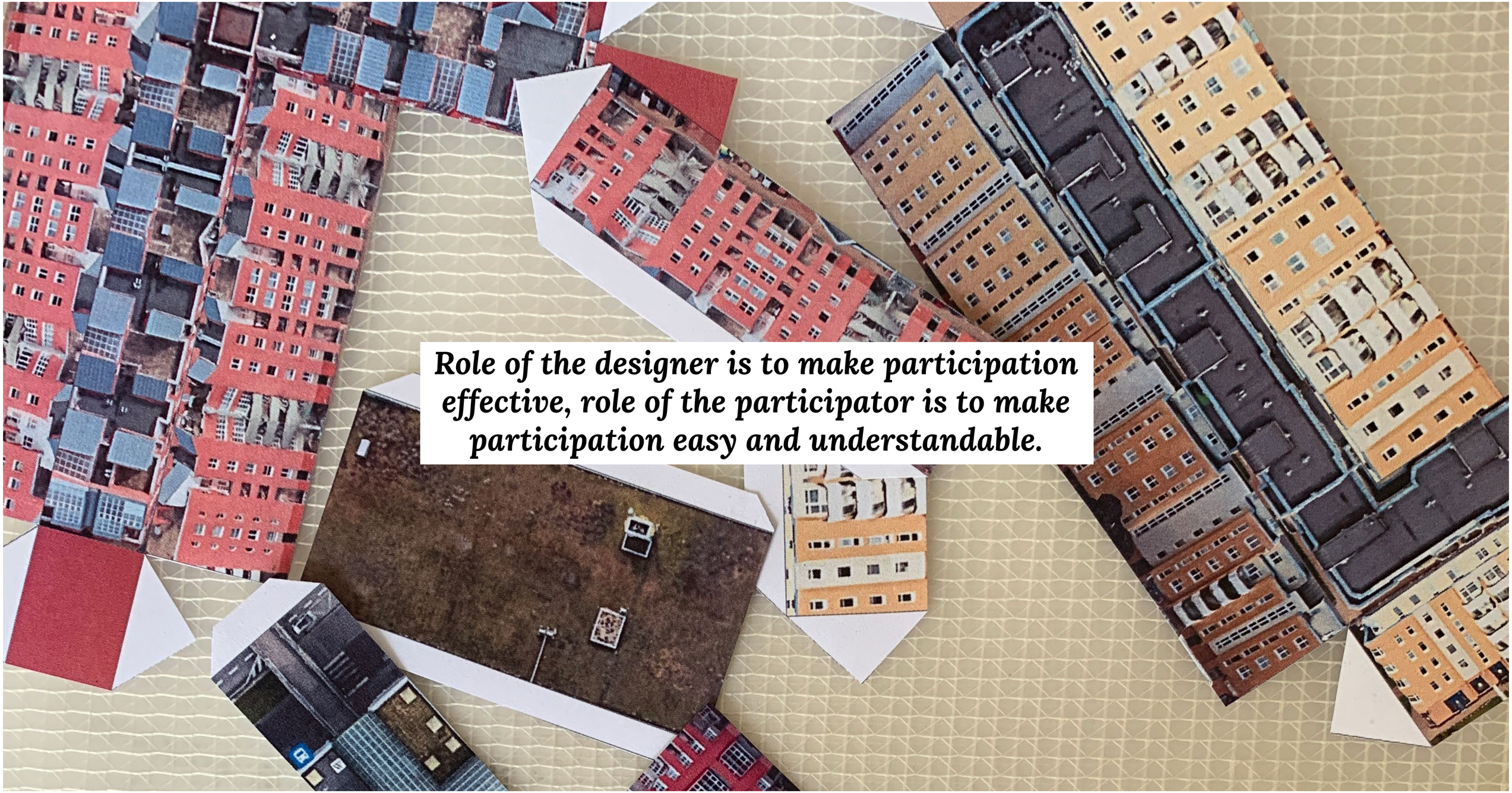


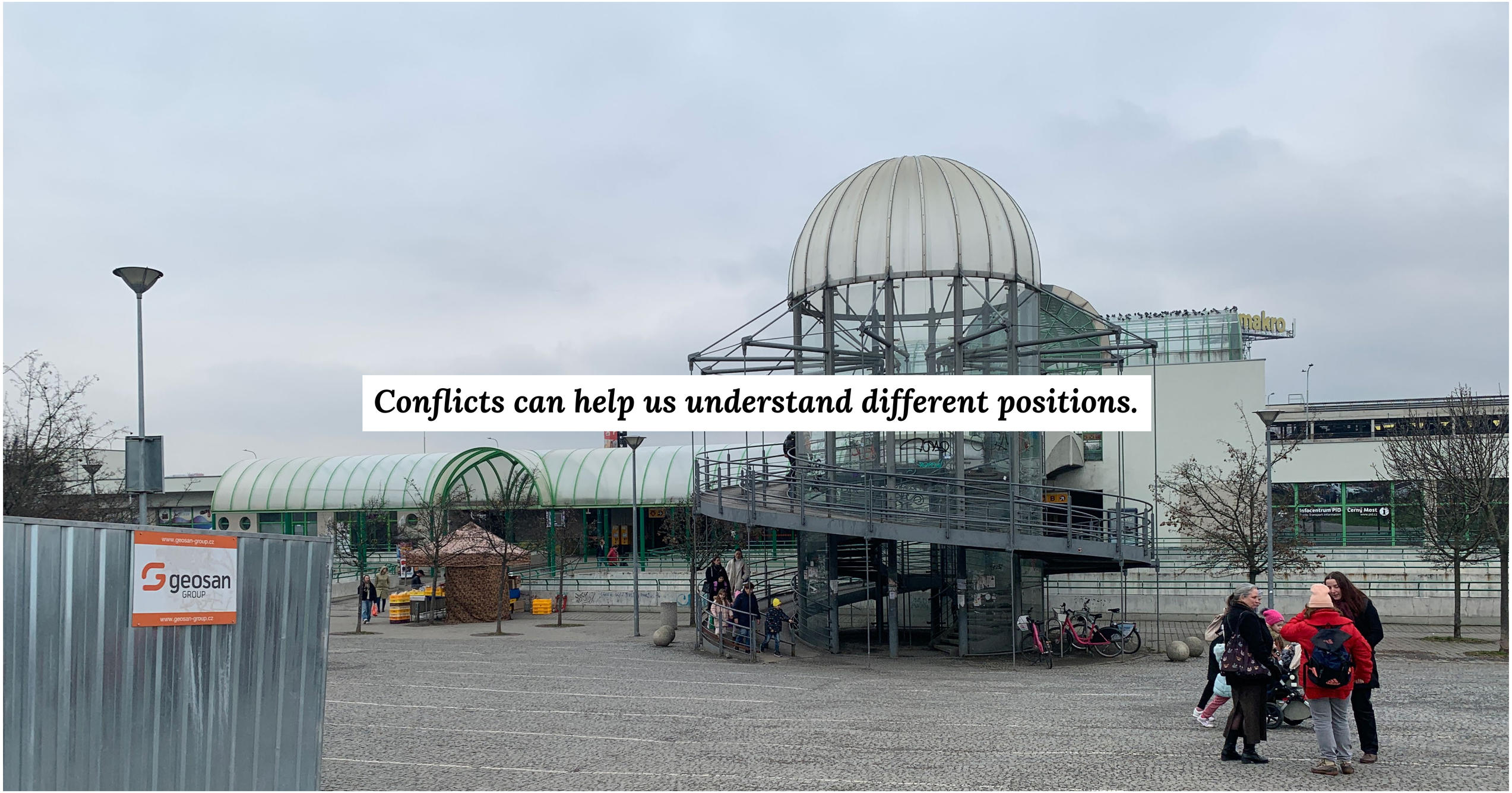
Designing participation is like designing a method to easily communicate.

Often solutions exist outside of the design, that does not mean I can overlook the issues.



Often we think of projects as 'before' and 'after', participation is like thinking of 'in between'.


Role of the designer is to make participation effective, role of the participator is to make participation easy and understandable.


Conflicts can help us understand different positions.
makro
www.geosan-group.cz
geosan
GROUP
www.geosan-group.cz
Infocentrum PID
Černý Most

Understanding and challening power is important, we need to be honest about it upfront.

Participation is empathy.

Zonder wrijving geen glans.
No shine without friction.
Thank you!