

THE CUL-DE-SAC AS AN EVENT
THE MANIFESTATION OF AN INTERRUPTION

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- 1 a. Downtown Brooklyn - New York
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INTRODUCTION

The cul-de-sac is an omnipresent urban morphology encompassing an array of very different situations, whose specificity however is overshadowed by its functional definition. The research confronts the functional conception and challenges its appropriateness. Furthermore, when addressing the concept, there is a tendency to focus only on one configuration, as if it is the one cul-de-sac, when actually they all are. The question for me was how to understand these spaces under a definition, which tells little to nothing about the space, how to understand the forgotten back alley (figure 1.a) in the same logic as the cul-de-sac where I grew up, which carries pleasant memories from my childhood (figure 1.e)?

The analysis attempts to provide an alternative understanding of the cul-de-sacs, by approaching them as a change in event. Changing the focus of observation has the potential to highlight relations and elements which otherwise remain invisible. This methodology is used both in the paper, which tackles a number of both general and specific cases, and in the research on the city of Almaty.

In relation to the studio topic of borders and territories, the project deals with a morphology caused by an interruption, a border between two conditions. The way it approaches the phenomenon is by defining the interruption not as a linear confinement, but as a threshold that is manifested through different relations and spatial configurations.

In the case of Almaty, the topic of internal urban borders is a redundant phenomenon creating unprecedented interruptions, which affect the way in which the city operates and define the urban atmosphere. During the collective research, in attempts to identify the most prominent borders that define the city of Almaty, we were unable to do so by viewing the city as a whole. It was only after analyzing the city from within, by taking virtual walks, that we distinguished the fragmentation of the city, both on the level of the street, and that of the urban fabric. Cul-de-sacs are one manifestation of the city's fragmentation.

THE CUL-DE-SAC AS AN EVENT

Redefining a Functional Term

There is no one definition of the cul-de-sac.

As an urban morphology, it does refer to an interrupted street, where the only way out, is the way back. This definition though lies in its functional aspect, considering it solely as a string of the urban network, marking the point where the connecting function ends. In those terms follows the terminative tone attached to it and associations with life instances of predicament and adversity. However, when one starts thinking of the cul-de-sac as a spatial occurrence, which in different circumstances is manifested in the most diverse ways, that is when the aforementioned definition of the term becomes scarce.

The functional definition of the cul-de-sac refers to a static condition, and by that, overlooks the movement through the street in accordance to which the perception of the space can change. It is precisely the possibility of change in the perception, whether it occurs at all, or it states static, and to what degree a transformation happens, that defines a cul-de-sac more profoundly than its role in the urban network of the streets. This functional account, which is taken for granted, and almost never questioned, encompasses an array of very different spatial occurrences and shadows their more meaningful qualities.

There is a tendency to address the cul-de-sac specifically for one of its configurations, and acknowledge it as the only type there is. This mostly happens in literature on residential neighborhoods which either address the cul-de-sac in a positive tone, highlighting the lack of traffic and the security for children that it brings, or in books about new urbanism which condemn its lack of connectivity placing it in the lowest rank of the “street hierarchy”, as a condition which would ruin the connectivity of a fluid vibrant neighborhood.¹ On other occasions, the cul-de-sacs are often labelled as the filthy spots of the urban fabric, when referring to the back alleys of big cities. In each case however, the condition of an interruption is seen in a closed context, detached from other realities of cul-de-sacs, and more often highlighting the most obvious parameters. This essay looks at the notion of the cul-de-sac as one that covers a wide spectrum of occurrences,

2. A cave as a naturally enclosed habitat

by dismissing the functional state of the street in relation to the rest of the city as its defining characteristic, and instead, analyzing the street itself through an empirical approach. Perceiving how the nature of the interruption affects the experience of the street from the moment one notices it, and proceeding to how the impression changes once one engages with the space. The analysis will reveal the parameters which shape this event and consequently give the cul-de-sac its character. Additionally, by analyzing the different manifestations of a cul-de-sac in the same paper, the possibility arises to highlight the recurring parameters and their transformation through the cases.

Acknowledging the closure which the cul-de-sac creates, as an inevitable consequence of an interruption, the first chapter addresses this characteristic as a state that humans are predisposed to look for in their environment. Ergo, it focuses on the cave, which as one of the earliest natural inhabitations of humans, is an indicator of humans' genetical inclination to feel at ease in enclosed spaces. Tackling the notion of security, this chapter looks into the types of cul-de-sacs which were designed because of its inherent protective shape. The closure as a key parameter of the cul-de-sac, is analyzed in all the subsequent types, how it appears and in which forms it occurs, but also moments when it disappears, and what that implies for the character of the space.

The Cave

The cave, as a naturally occurring enclosure, is known to be one of the most common human dwellings of the prehistoric times, and still continues to serve that purpose in different places around the world. The simple reason why these natural spaces were ideal for inhabitation lies in their protective character. The enclosure from all sides offered security as there is only one way in and out, making it possible to have control over the surrounding, and reduce the possibility of unforeseen danger. Nevertheless, what made these enclosures favourable was also heavily dependent on the unique configuration of caves, which adds to the feeling of protection and ease. Such are the undulating surfaces of the walls, the roof and even the floor, creating smaller niches which are discovered through movement. A possible debris of rocks or random vegetation, would also close off the open access of the front. The unique manifestation of each of these parameters, made caves



ideal spaces for appropriation.

Throughout history, humans have strived in creating closures, not only for personal dwellings, but also in public contexts, even when the chance of actual danger was close to null. This tendency can be seen as an inherent disposition, dating from the prehistoric times. In the urban level, a common manifestation of a closure is the cul-de-sac, which has been present as an urban morphology at least from the time of Ancient Egypt. Alberti makes note in *Ten Books on Architecture* of the existence of cul-de-sacs from the ancient times, as streets where the enemy would be trapped.² Additionally, from the 20th century on, in some European countries they started becoming an answer for suburban neighbourhoods as an artificial tool that guaranteed security. It was considered a model where the interruption of a street would decrease the traffic substantially, avoiding random drive-throughs completely, and thus providing a safe space for kids to play.³ In the book *Ladders*, Albert Pope identifies the developments in the 20th century, which include the urban planning of suburban cul-de-sacs, as attempts to truncate the universal spatial field established by the 19th century industrial grid city. He addresses it as “the phobia of space inherent in these reforms that laid the groundwork for the modern “implosion” of urban form in the 20th century and the post-war emergence of closed urban development.”⁴

The Closed Tunnel

A recurring configuration of the suburban cul-de-sacs in the European and American context, is that of very structured design. The housing units have repetitive parameters creating continuous and monotonous edges, with usually a significant distance from the actual street, reducing (or making impossible) a chance for interaction with a passerby. The streets have functional dimensions with a 2-lane width for cars including pavements on the side. These parameters make it a typical modern suburban street, with a very functional setting. The ending itself is boringly the continuation of the same design. The only change that occurs is the broadening of the street working as a roundabout. The strict delineation is often emphasized by a green patch in the middle, defining further the order of events and the movement of the actors involved. Due to the functional character, the street is wide

enough to exclude the feeling of a bodily closure, and the widening of the ending only adds to the excess of space. These parameters create a very flat experience, with no significant change along the way, except perhaps that of disappointment when reaching the end, as the interruption is not acknowledged in any way. It seems that the stoppage is “resolved” through a thoroughly functional design, but when seen as an experience, one almost feels as if the interruption, this inherent change in state, isn’t done just. When thinking about this perhaps subjective feeling, the question arises, as to whether an interruption should be solved at all? Or instead, there should be some apparent manifestation of it that embodies this change?

The super-designed suburban cul-de-sac as an evolved model of the secure habitat has the character of a purely functional closure, devoid of any other qualities.

The Back Alley

The almost opposite example of a cul-de-sac are the back alleys of urban blocks, as the most saturated version of a dead-end. Unlike the super-designed streets, they are the places where the tension of an interruption is manifested in an array of elements and potential events. In urban blocks of western cities, the streets unto which the back of the buildings face are a common contingency. They bare the necessities of buildings which no-one wants to see, such as garbage containers, supply vans, fire exits and huge ventilation outlets.

A contradicting event of these spaces is that their residual character and lack of maintenance makes them available for appropriation by social groups who don’t find security anywhere else. By becoming a shelter for the homeless, the enclosure returns to some extent its original protective function. The summation of these elements and events makes interrupted back alleys seem as the accumulation of the chaos, that otherwise cannot be surmounted by the city. It’s the unwanted consequence of urban design, the counterpart of precision and planning. Elizabeth Grosz explains how human inhabitations are frames, cut out of the chaotic nature, “the laying down of a grid or order that entraps chaotic shards, chaotic states to arrest or slow them into a space and a time”.⁵ In that logic, perhaps these cul-de-sacs can be seen as the outlet of the entrapped chaos that humans try to keep under control.

This chaotic character is also spatially recognizable, accounting for a very intense experience. The layered state is noticeable without even entering the street. When being inside however, the bodily containment is intensified due to the dense closure in width. The height of the buildings is another important parameter that can accordingly magnify the experience of the closure even further.

The Verge

Rivers and mountains draw borders for human settlements as they present an anomaly of the agreeable flat terrain which is comfortable for inhabitation. The urban fabric needs to consequently adapt to this anomaly, and a common answer when meeting such a border is the sudden interruption of the streets, leading to a sequence of cul-de-sacs. These borders create a striking contrast especially to the urban grid, being a very ordered and repetitive system. The river as a boundary bares an intrinsic contradiction, since it physically confines but at the same time provides a vast openness which is the opposite of what grid cities offer. Except for this phenomenon, the configuration of these dead-ends is further determined by their context.

To be more accurate in the analysis, the case of river cul-de-sacs in Manhattan, as one of the most prominent urban grids, will be addressed. More precisely, on its east side streets around Sutton Place, there is an array of cul-de-sacs facing the river, aligned with upper scale apartment buildings. The streets lie 10 meters higher than the shore of the river and are separated from it by a highway on the level of the shore, which remains invisible while walking through the street. When reaching the ending, there is a definitive interruption of movement, highlighted by the detachment in elevation. Nonetheless, the termination dissolves through the wide and deep openness, with views reaching the shore on the other side of the river.

It is crucial to acknowledge the importance of the social aspect in defining the character of a space. The cul-de-sacs in question are currently residential areas of rich New Yorkers and this fact has shaped many of the spatial characteristics which make them very different from other dead-ends of the city. It is interesting to know that these actual streets had also a completely different character in the 1900s, before the rich had started yearning for a residence by the picturesque shoreline.

2. excerpts from the movie *Dead*
End by William Wyler - 1937



Its reconfiguration over the years is solidified in the movie *Dead End* by William Wyler,⁶ filmed on East 53rd Street, which shows a period before, or at the genesis of the area's gentrification. In the movie, the character of the cul-de-sac and its relationship with the river are depicted quite vividly. The openness of the river was contrasted more intensely by the chaos of the street at that time, full of small local shops, lack of cleanliness, hybrid buildings, with fire escapes layering the facades and hanged laundry creating a net over the street. Furthermore, a crucial effect on the nature of the closure had the immediate closeness to the shore, as the separating highway wasn't built at the time. The river itself provides an additional form of transcendence made apparent by the kids of the neighbourhood who occasionally jump for a swim. As the movie depicts the dead-end street as a space of decadence, which all the residents try to escape in one way or another, the kids as the immature residents, challenge the confinements of the street through play.

The current and historical state of the riverside Manhattan cul-de-sacs, makes apparent a certain fluidity in the closure, and not only in the unmistakable material aspect, but conceptual as well. When looking out at the view, the closure disappears completely; when wanting to escape the space, the river turns into a very strong confinement; while an intermediary option emerges when one challenges the boundary by moving in it.

The Maze

The movie presents insights into a space which can be discovered only through a longer observation of the residents' behaviour. This points at the social layers of spaces that enrichen its character, which nonetheless remain unknown when analyzing the space through a passerby's perspective. In order to bring forward an analysis of a space, not limited to the eyes of a passerby, I will now address a personal case. For analyzing the deeper implications of the social aspect, I chose to analyze the cul-de-sac of my childhood, as an example for which I have first-hand knowledge of its social dynamics, and their consequential spatial manifestations.

Mara Mezhdurecka, can be categorized as a typical heterogeneous suburban street of Skopje. An atypical trait, which adds to the visual closure, as it becomes apparent a few steps past the start of the street, is the hill behind the cul-de-sac,

whose verticality is emphasized further by a residential tower on it. Once you start walking through the street, an array of traits, quite opposing the characteristics of the “closed tunnel” discussed above, start to reveal themselves. The width of the street is only wide enough to barely allow opposite cars to pass through, which creates a contrast with the widened area of the street ending. The sudden disappearance of the pavements (contrasting to the “closed tunnel”), is another way in which the interruption is manifested. The extended space in the end refuses the defined division of functions, allowing for unplanned events to happen on the street area, which in that configuration works both as a street and a pavement. This led to us, the kids of the street, to use the space as a common playground. It consequently thinned the borders between our gardens and the street zone, as at moments both of these areas served the same function, and worked as a continuous space to play. In that sense, the cul-de-sac achieves a unity, having a stronger character as a space which works together with its edges.

An interesting parameter which isn't inscribed on the space, but was crucial to my perception of it, were the routes breaking through the cul-de-sac, to come to the hill behind the ending, or the open field behind the western row of houses. These routes took place through the gardens of the kids who had the most favourable access to the back spaces. In our experience of the space, they represented moments of transgression, events that happened from time to time outside our personal playground, and away from the possible surveillance of our parents.

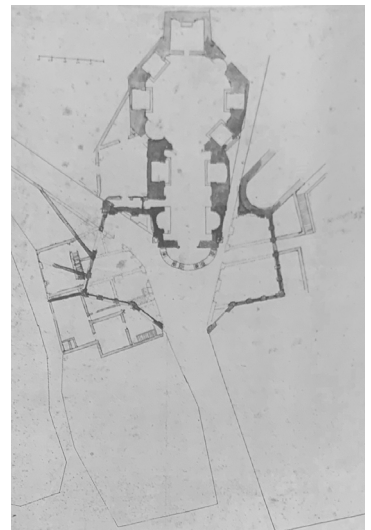
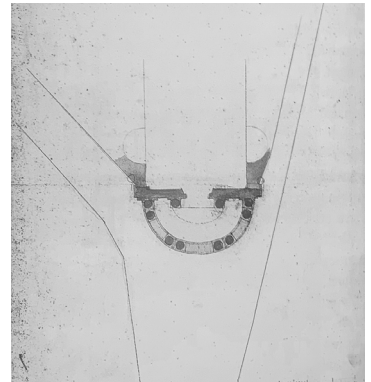
The Urban Room

The escape routes of the previous example present a case of breaching the enclosure of the cul-de-sac in a suburban setting, which isn't achieved through an actual spatial intervention, but rather through the internal affairs of the residents. Nonetheless, it portrays the unavoidable necessity of people to at least have the option to move through a closure, and their tendency to create the way to do so, when possible. The internal affairs solution wouldn't work in an urban setting as it would involve most probably a much higher number of passersby, exceeding that of the actual residents. Therefore, the urban parallel would have to contain actual spatial passages breaking the enclosed cul-de-sac. This configuration would combine the closure that is inherent to the dead-end

4. Mara Mezdurecka Street - Skopje

5. design for the porch of S.Maria della Pace, Rome, 1656

6. design for Piazza S.Maria della Pace, Rome, 1656



with a passage which presents no obstacle for moving through, a passage that solidifies the transgression of the limit in a cul-de-sac. Such a setting can be paralleled to the idea of an urban room, for which Camillo Sitte advocates strongly in his book, *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen*.⁷ A city famous for an urban fabric with recurrent urban rooms is Rome which is, as Norberg-Schulz puts it, made out of spaces that “have an ‘interiority’ that give us a strong sense of protection and belonging”.⁸ An important parameter in the creation of these urban closures in Rome are the baroque facades (play between concave and convex) whose shapes delineate unconventional perimeters, while their complexities, intensify and give the sense of interior space. An example of an urban room, which bares the impression of a cul-de-sac, is the square in front of Santa Maria della Pace, where the impression of an enclosed plaza is given through the unified scheme of the adjacent facades looking as a continuation of the church facade.⁹ This unification of the architectural wall of the piazza achieves to conceal the passages on both sides of the church, by making them appear as openings of the facade. The ambiguity of the facade both creates and releases a tension, by firstly creating an illusion of an interrupted space, and then revealing the possibility to break through the facade, to transgress the borders of the space.



Another case of an urban room with obscure passages, this time of a residential block, in a completely different setting however, is to be found in the Justus van Effencomplex in Rotterdam, designed by Michiel Brinkman. The courtyards within the block invoke the feeling of an enclosed and secure space being walled on three sides, but at the same time have the elevated streets in the first-floor piercing through the front wall. Through this configuration in a residential setting, the architect plays with the limits between the public and private sphere. A passerby can enjoy the closure of the courtyard, and at the same time be intrigued by the elevated passages to which he has no access to. While a resident, gains a level of privacy and security in a quite open public space.

Conclusion

This paper attempts to bring forward an analysis beyond the limitations posed by the functional conception of a cul-de-sac. More precisely, through a selection of very different cases of

cul-de-sacs, the research makes apparent how detrimental the role of their functional aspect is in defining the configuration and character of their space. That instead, it is by thinking of a change of event, and not a change in function that one can more accurately comprehend the nature of a dead-end.

The last chapter presents cases which are not per se cul-de-sacs, since they don't represent an interrupted street, but rather the impression of one. Nonetheless, when perceiving the cul-de-sac as an event, the moments of passing beyond the enclosed space, of transgressing, become just a part in the sequence of events, which is preceded by a strong impression of a closure. This interpretation portrays transgression as a requisite of a limit, being always present even if in a very idle form. Revisiting the previously analyzed cases, it becomes clear that in most of them the idea of transgression is present, the least as a desire.

Even though at a first impression, the notion of transgression, of passing through a limit, goes against the essence of a limitation, in actuality, the existence of the two is mutually dependent.¹⁰ Foucault expresses in his essay *A Preface to Transgression* how the coexistence of a limit and a transgression, intensifies their presence and strength:

*But can the limit have a life of its own outside of the act that gloriously passes through it and negates it? What becomes of it after this act and what might it have been before? For its part, does transgression not exhaust its nature when it crosses the limit, knowing no other life beyond this point in time? And this point, this curious intersection of beings that have no other life beyond this moment where they totally exchange their beings, is it not also everything which overflows from it on all sides? It serves as a glorification of the nature it excludes: the limit opens violently onto the limitless, finds itself suddenly carried away by the content it had rejected and fulfilled by this alien plenitude which invades it to the core of its being.*¹¹

In terms of a cul-de-sac, the closure produced as a contingency of the interruption, is what creates a tension, intensifies the experience, and naturally brings forth the question of surmounting the interruption. It is this play with the possibilities of events which has the potential to give the space a complexity and character, and is consequently determined by the configuration of the edges of the cul-de-sac, as made apparent through the analyzed types. The only addressed example where the transgression

is not in question is that of the western suburban streets, which I associate with a closed tunnel. In these functionally designed streets, the interruption is handled by negating it, as its design resembles very closely that of a continuous street, allowing it to work within its own logic, albeit in dull frequencies that can hardly produce any spontaneous events. All the following cases however, deal with the idea of a transgression, the idea of moving beyond the limit of the interruption. And if there is no chance of passing through, then the interruption is manifested in the street itself, like it is the case of the back alley, where the inability to transgress backlashes through a potpourri of elements creating a chaotic and intense space.

The case of the cul-de-sacs by the river, analyzed through the movie by Wyler, depicts a play with the border, tackling the possibility of transgressing it, through the grown-up characters who want to escape from the confines of the dead-end, and the children who swim in the waters of the river, questioning the rigidity of the interruption. Moreover, the cul-de-sac of my childhood presents a step further into the transgression of the interruption, as its limits are actually surpassed, in a quest for playgrounds that lie beyond the edges of the street-end. Lastly, the case of the urban rooms brings forth the highest step of surmounting the interruption, by actually formalizing the transgression in permanent passages. This enrooting of the breach perhaps decreases the intensity of the interruption quite rapidly, nonetheless, doesn't erase the inherent dynamic of the relationship between a limit and a transgression.

Endnotes

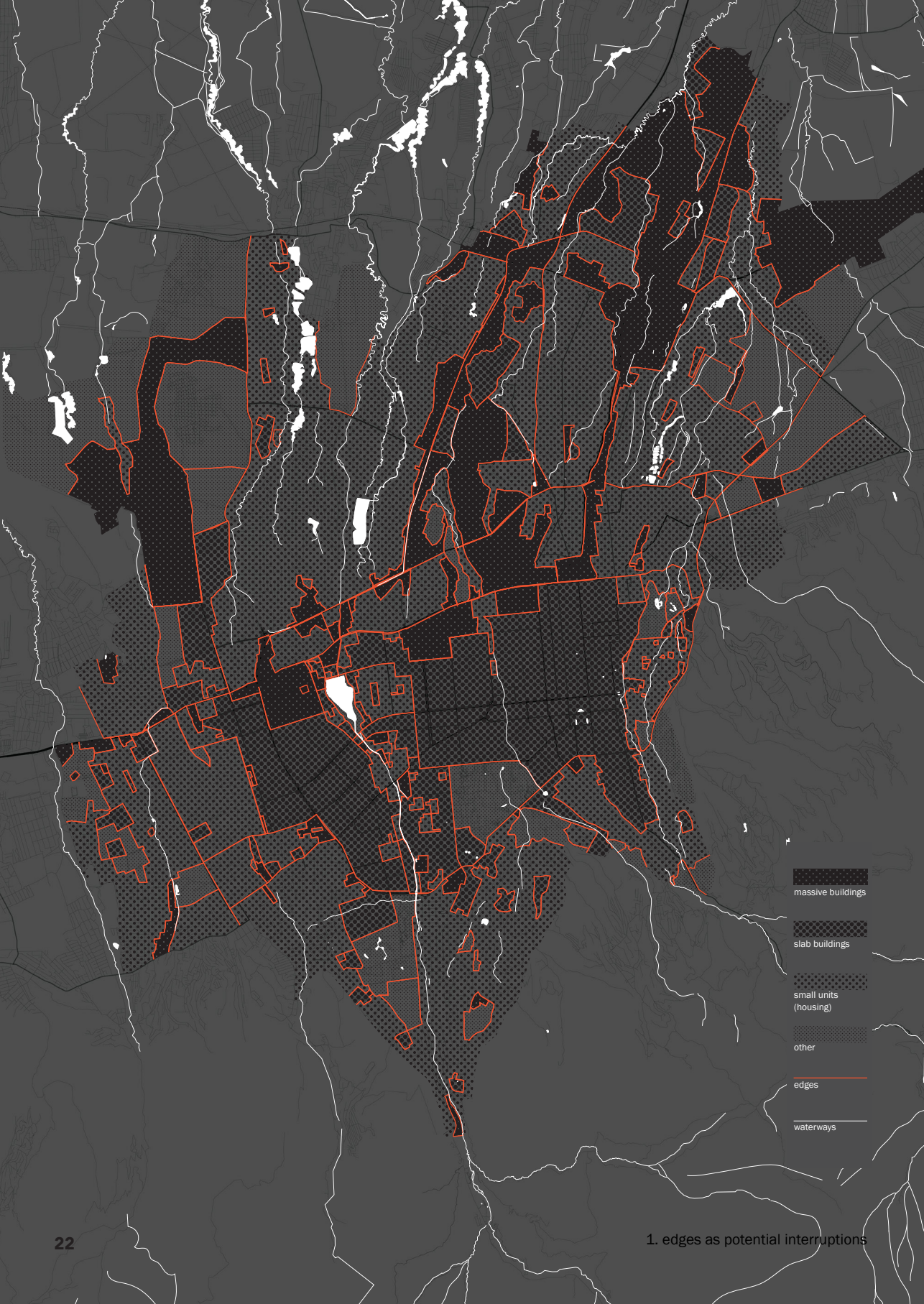
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5. Elizabeth Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 13
6. *Dead End*, directed by William Wyler (United Artists Corp., 1937).
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8. Christian Norberg Schulz, "The Genius Loci of Rome," in *Roma Interrotta: Twelve Interventions on the Nolli's Plan of Rome* (Monza: Johan & Levi, 2014).
9. Jörg Martin. Merz and Pietro, *Pietro Da Cortona and Roman Baroque Architecture* (New Haven Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), 170-174.
10. In *A Preface to Transgression* M.Foucault explains the interdependence of a limit and a transgression, by pointing out that " a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows."
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 - c. <https://www.google.com/maps>
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 - e. Ibid



THE CUL-DE-SAC AS AN EVENT IN ALMATY



massive buildings

slab buildings

small units
(housing)

other

edges

waterways

FRAGMENTED CITY

Almaty, as the former capital of Kazakhstan, except for the change in its position as the center of the country, has undergone an array of perpetual changes over its history, with almost each one, fluctuating the intensity and direction of its development, and becoming engraved in its urban fabric (figure 1). After the laying of the grid system by the Russians, during the first half of the 20th century, that mainly consisted of slab buildings, taking a central position in the city, the later developments, that predominantly spread on the northern flat side, show a clear inconsistency that results in a patchwork. The post-grid area doesn't have a discernible unifying logic. It consists of developments of industrial zones along highways, a few separate industries stemming from the soviet 'kombinati' (the conglomerates) and a few microdistricts of residential buildings, a few of which were built during Almaty's biggest urban sprawl of the Soviet period, known as the Kunaev Boom (1964-1986). ¹ The remaining fabric is a sea of housing, filling every gap between the other tissues and leading to a high number of emerging edges

as a consequence. A further fragmentation in the city occurs due to its position on the foothill of a high mountain range, resulting in an array of rivers and creeks running through the territory. Putting together these edges portrays the potential for the emergence of interruptions, and consequently the emergence of cul-de-sacs as well.

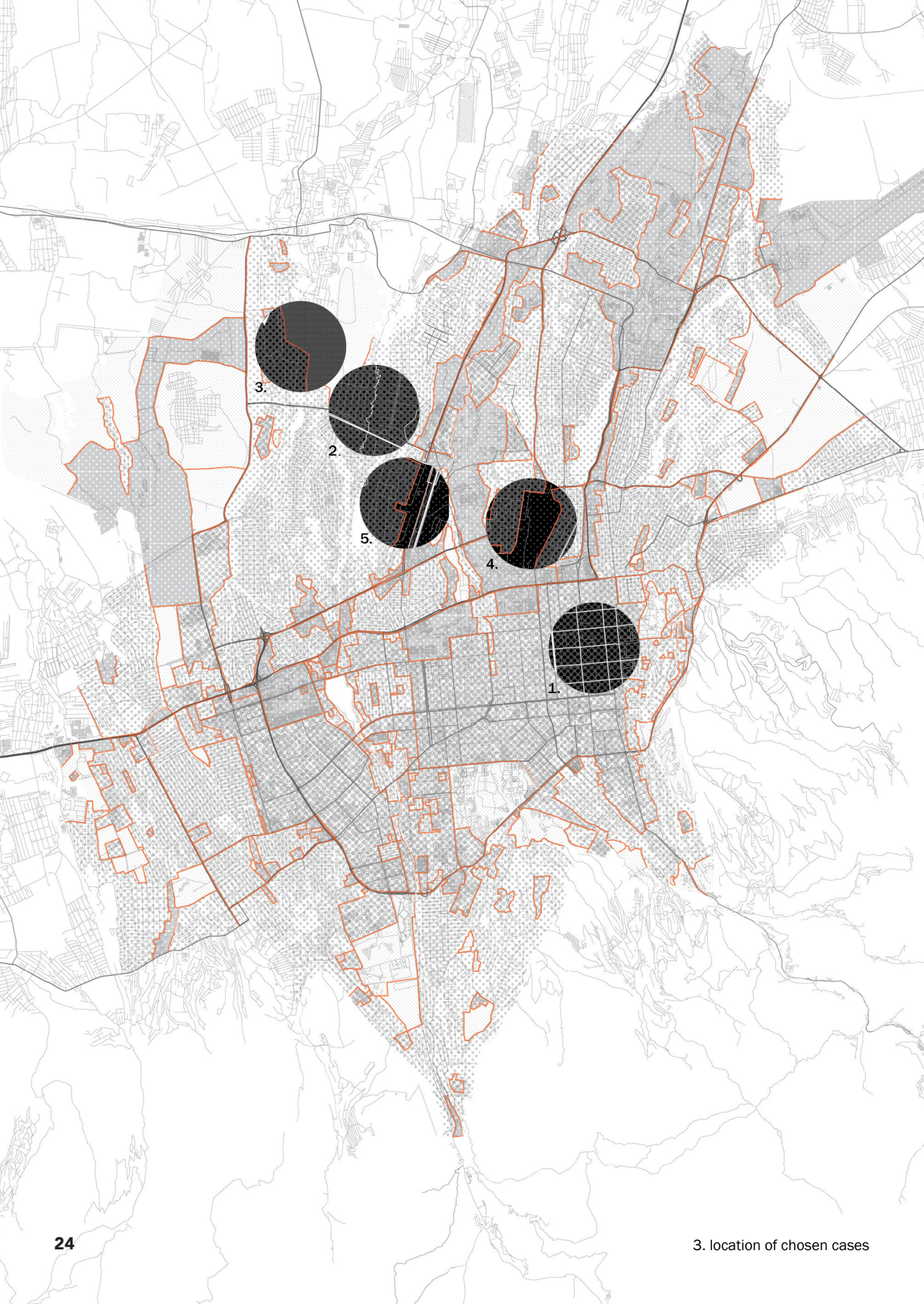
The last contributor to the fragmented nature of the city, as an aftermath of the Soviet Union, are the omnipresent high fences. The deprivation of private ownership during the Soviet times is still being manifested as an excessive need to mark one's territory, creating an excessive amount of interruptions within the tissues as well. According to journalist Maxim Trudolyubov, the fences remain monuments to the incompletely fulfilled dream of privacy"².

APPROACH

For a closer analysis, I have chosen several cases of cul-de-sacs, resulting from different edge conditions in the city. For each one, the most prominent friction between the conditions is chosen as a focus for the manifestation of the interruption (figure 4).



2. the omnipresent fences in Almaty



1. BACK SIDE

- > conditions ::
gov.b : public b. : residential b
- > frictions:
accessibility, exclusiveness, use
- > focus::
accessibility



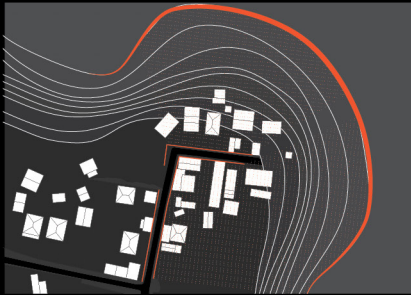
2. VERGE

- > conditions ::
river valley : housing
- > frictions:
elevation, sturdiness, urbanization
- > focus::
sturdiness



3. CANYON

- > conditions ::
plateau : housing
- > frictions:
elevation, closure, materiality
- > focus::
closure



4. BACKSTAGE

- > conditions ::
heating plant : city grid
- > frictions:
scale, use
- > focus::
use



5. GRID

- > conditions ::
market : housing
- > frictions:
scale, use
- > focus::
scale

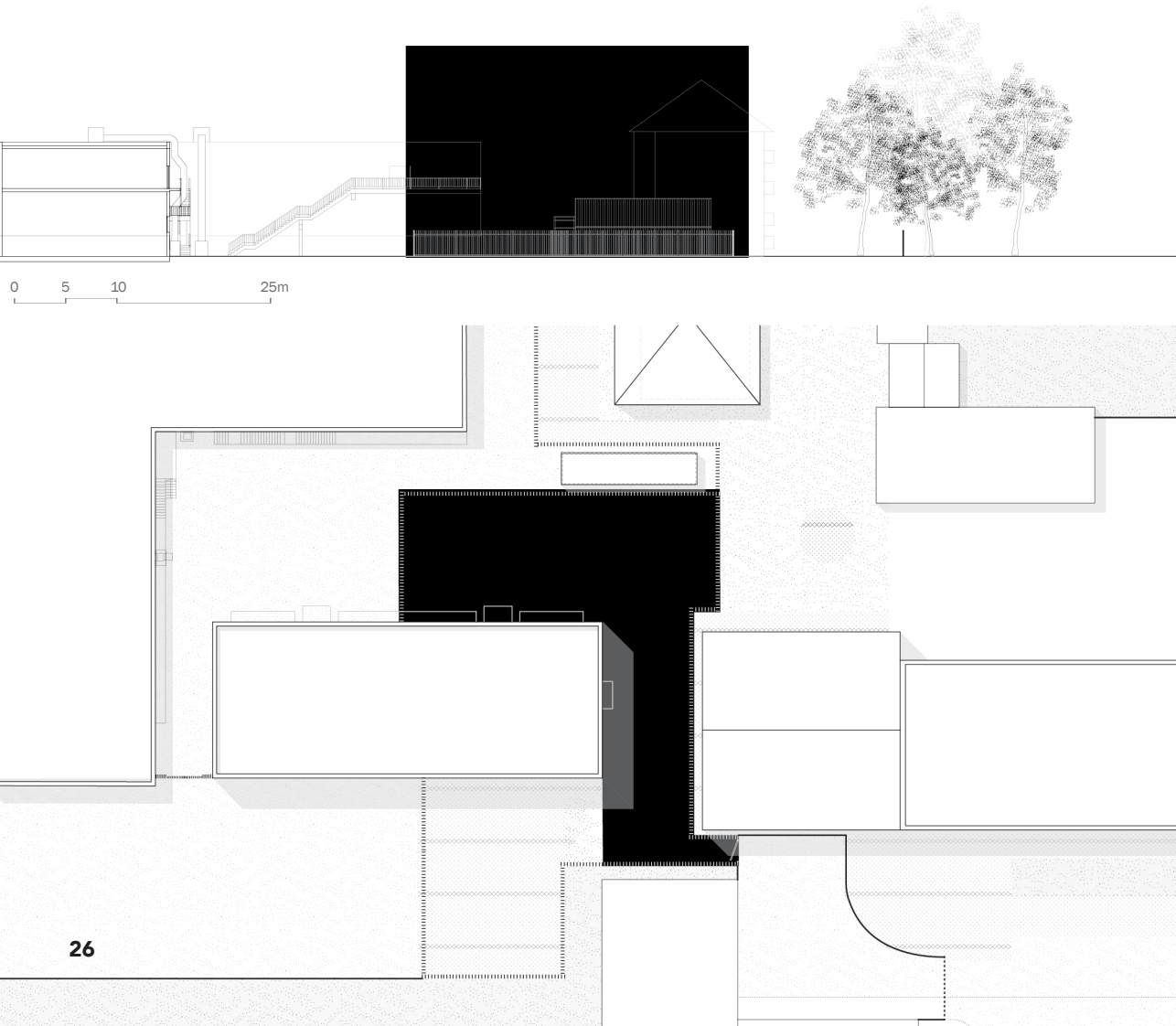


THE BACKSIDE

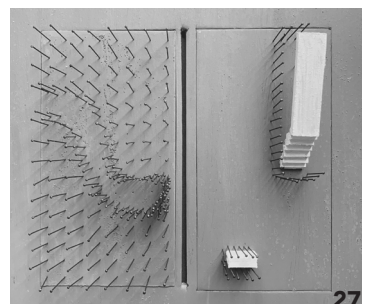
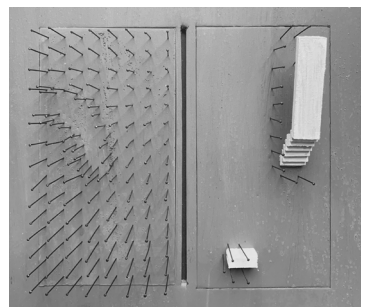
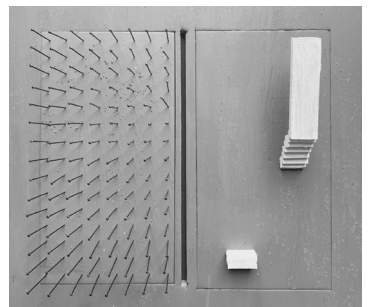
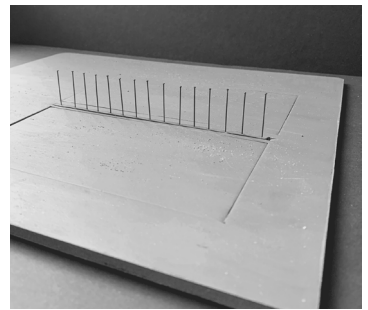


The backside arises due to the close proximity of buildings with differing accessibility levels, and results in a space loosely hanging on to a public street, surrounded by privatized zones and their imposed fences. Thus, the manifestation of this interruption lies on the effect of the fences on this sur-

rounded zone, almost annexed from the public realm. The mapping of the interruption references one of the exercises from the Modus Operandi Workshop, that takes the fence as an element of inquiry (figure 6). Through the making of a three dimensional model, I analyzed the agency the

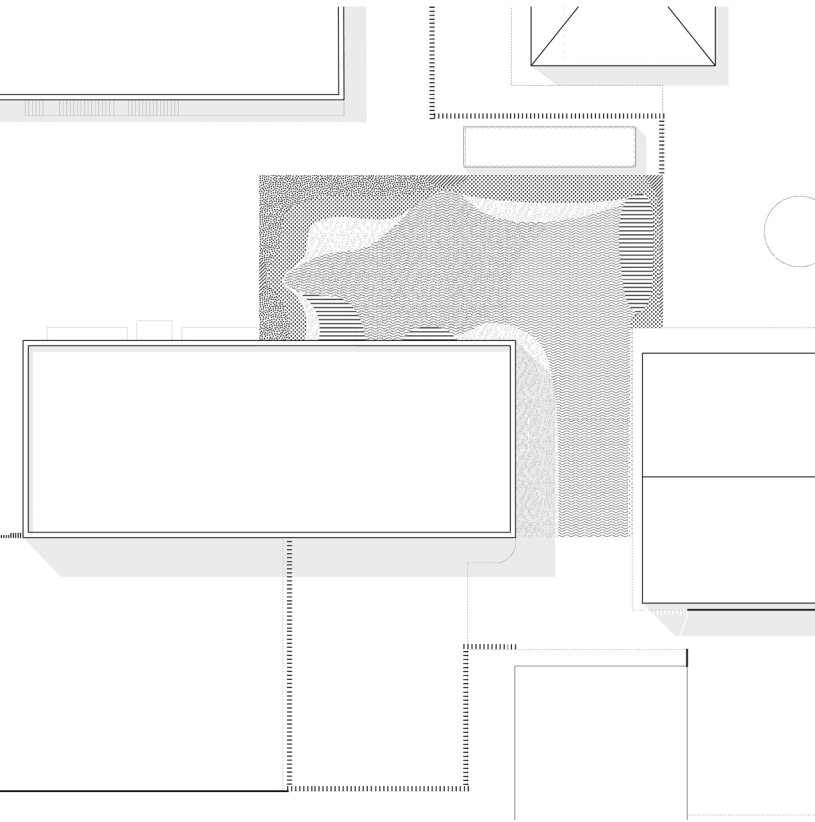


fence has on the area around it, and how the strength of its obstruction changes according to one's position in the field. The more one approaches the fences, the higher the feeling of obstruction, and the unattainability of the elements on the other side, visible through the pickets.



5. exercise on the agency
of an iron cast
spaced picket fence

6. the field of agency created by the fences



lingering

movement

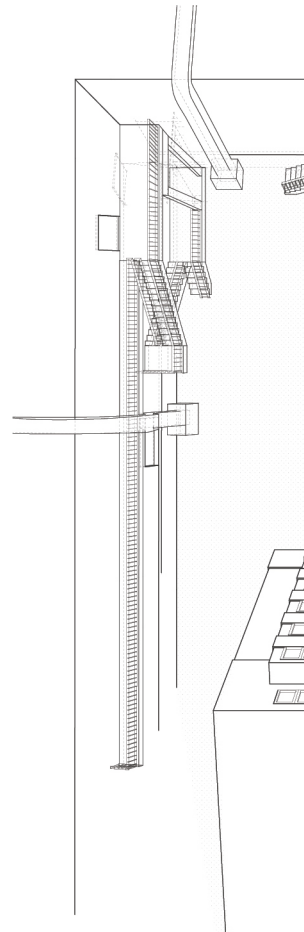
interruption - light

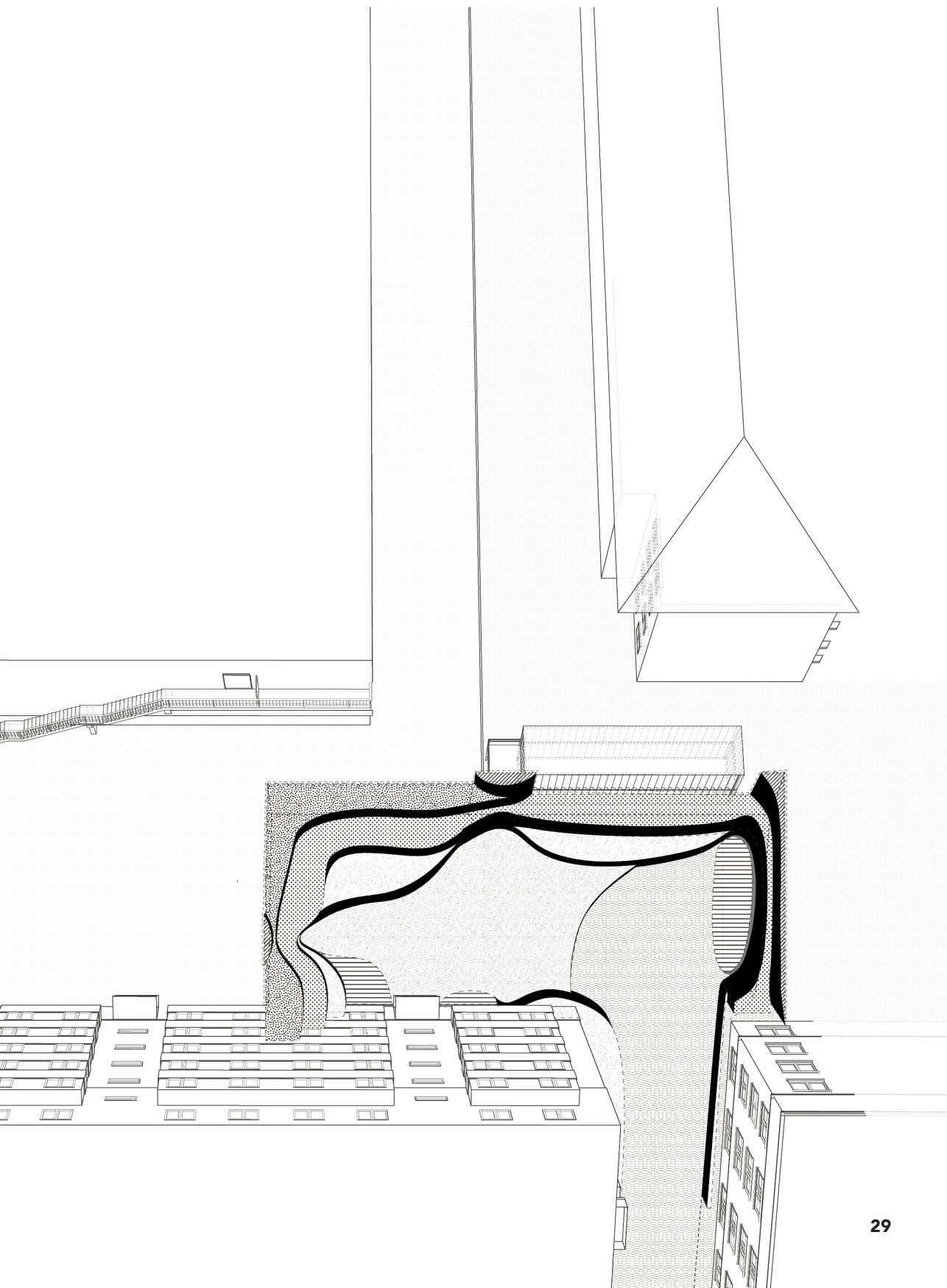
interruption - severe

interruption - strong

interruption - medium

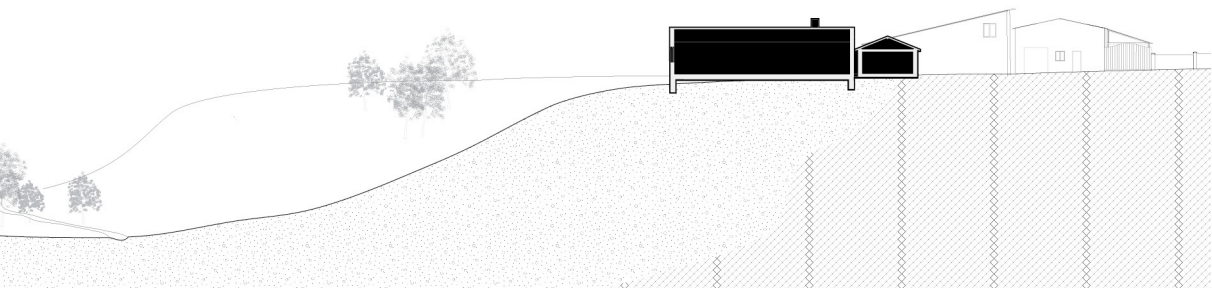
In line with the observations from the exercise, the agency that the fences have on the surrounded backside are mapped as a dynamic field of tension. The field is shaped in accordance with one's proximity to the fence, and changed depending on the elements behind it. I lastly visualize the field three dimensionally: elevating the area the higher the obstruction becomes, and descending it in areas that invite one to linger.

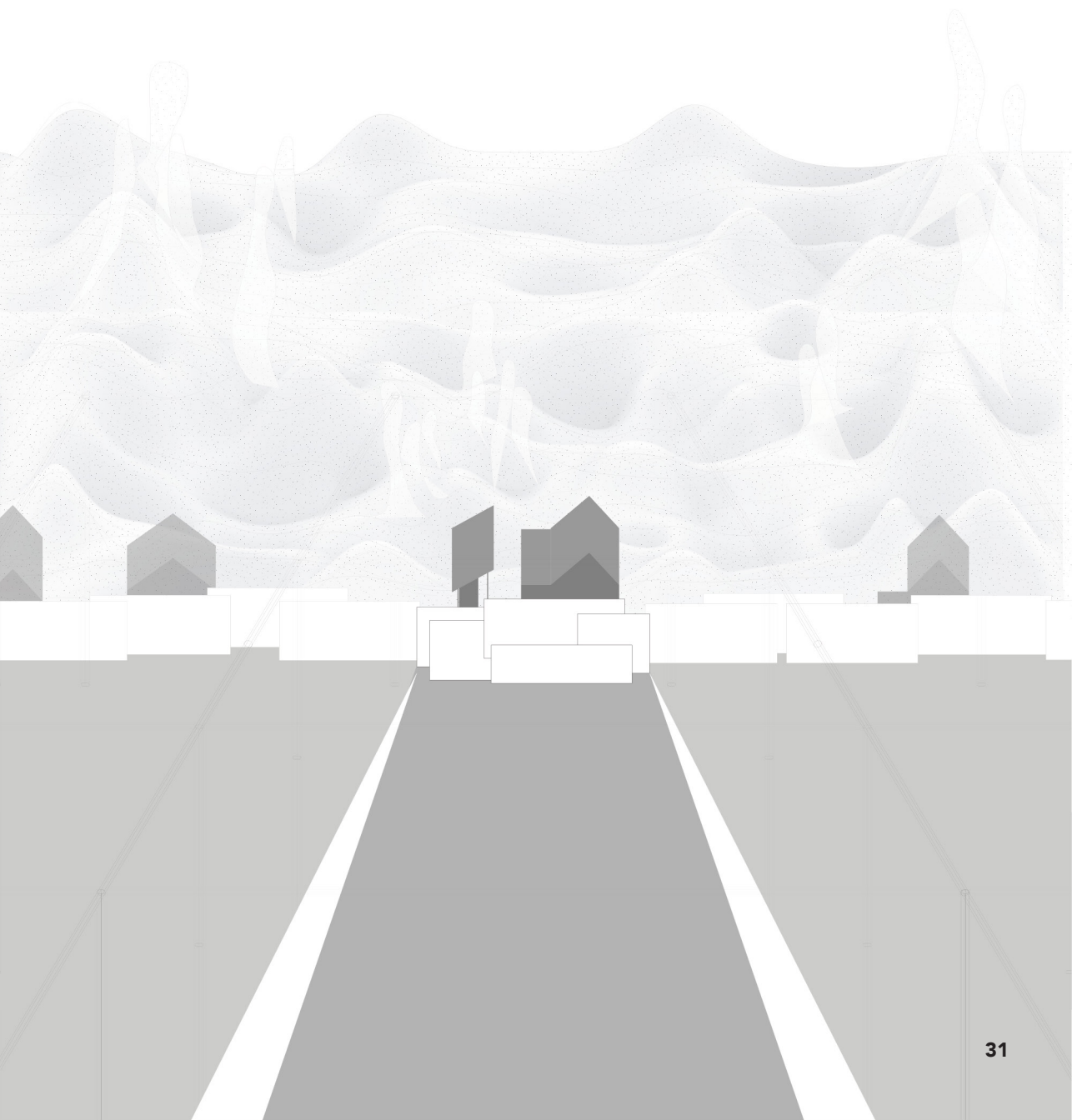




THE VERGE

In the case of the verge, the friction that I concentrate on is the change in the sturdiness of materiality, from the street to the river valley. The houses are the elements that manifest this difference through their relation to both spaces. On the side of the inhabited ground, a recurring theme are the solid metal fences that force a very linear movement, but at the same time, very quickly lose their rigidity as they become part of the background of the perceived space. On the other hand, in the valley, the earth is constantly changing and unstable, as represented through the undulating ground as shown in the drawing to the right. One has to carve one's way through it, and in that sense, always be aware of the ground. The house manifests the relation between the two conditions as with the street it has a very strict separation, while towards the field there are no fences, but an open, undefined border.

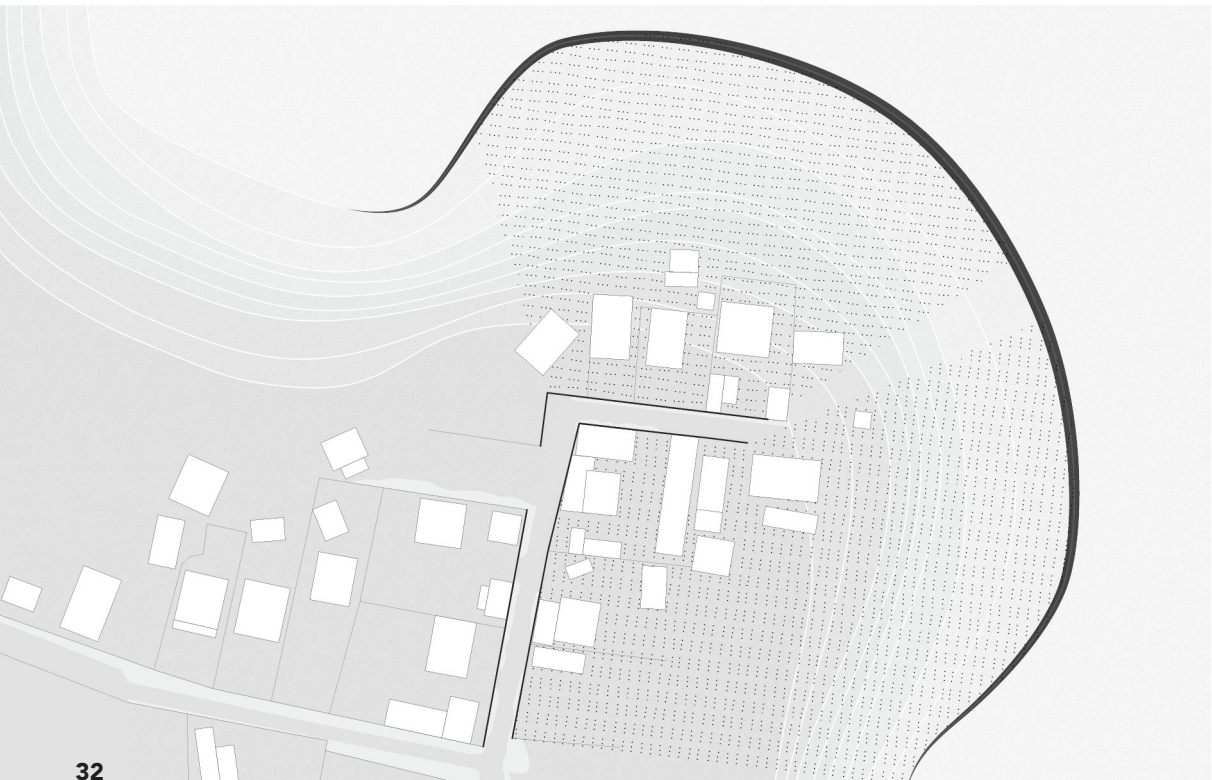


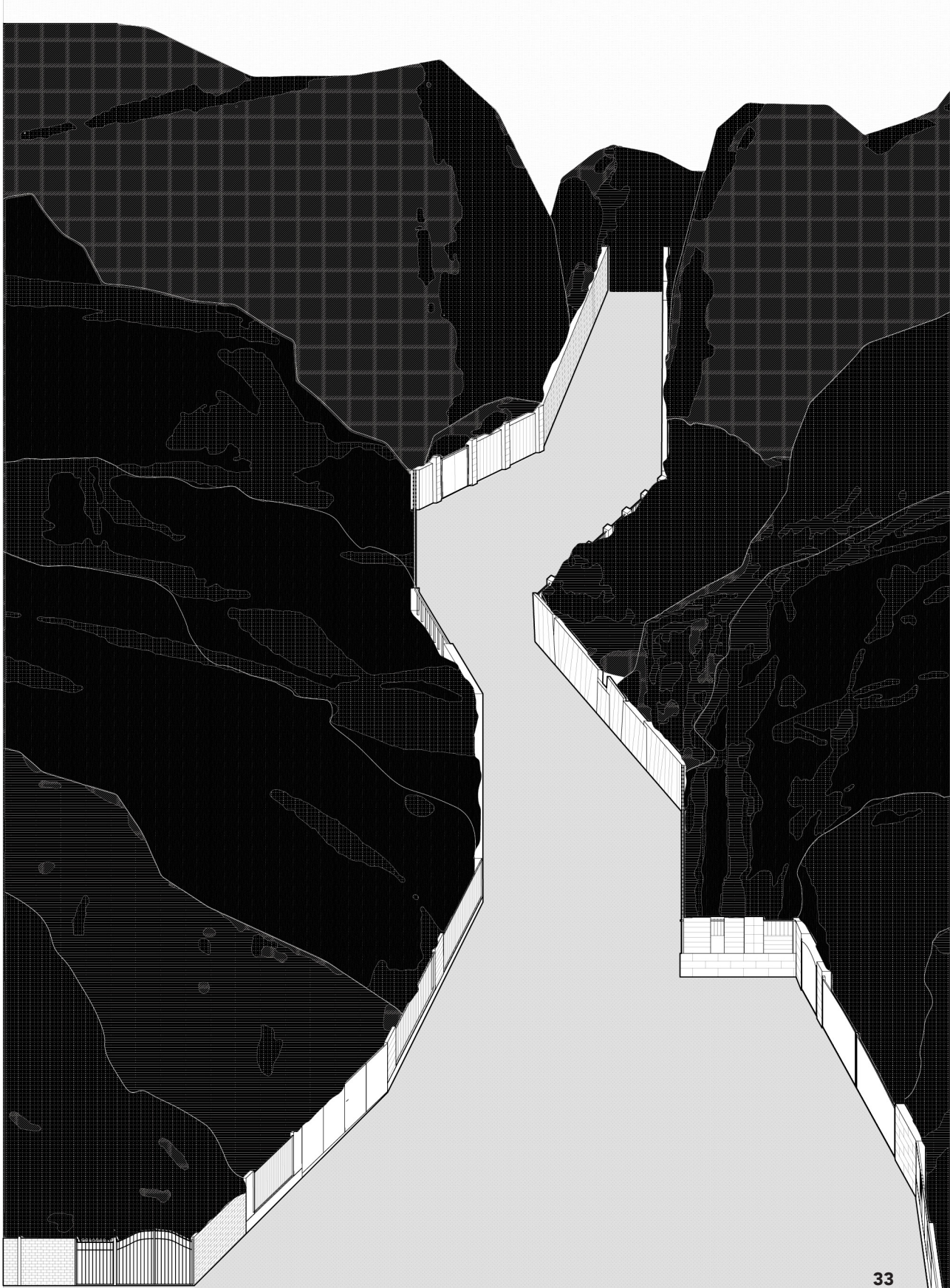


THE CANYON



The last case, between the plateau and the lower housing street, the most striking manifestation of the interruption was discerned in the closure created through the presence of both the fences and the surrounding hill. While the mountains create a sense of closure, the fences define the direction of movement, hence together acting as a canyon. This wouldn't be the case if they were acting on their own, as demonstrated in the previous case. The closure is created not between the fence and the route, but between the fence and the mountain. Here, the houses are the ephemeral parts, as they don't play a role in the perception of the space, and are therefore left out of the drawing.





Endnotes

1. Denis Keen. *13 Historic Maps of Verny, Alma-Ata, and Almaty*. <http://www.walkingalmaty.com/13-historic-maps-of-verny-almata-and-almaty.html>
2. Trudolyubov, Maxim. *The tragedy of property: Private life, ownership and the Russian state*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008

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