

MSC3 BORDERS & TERRITORIES  
AR3B0100  
INDIVIDURAL WORK

# URBAN IMPROVISATION

Research and Design  
about Residents' Spontaneous  
Architectural and Urban Practice in  
Marseille

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# I. URBAN IMPROVISATION

## RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

'Our society does not consist only of human beings. Various animals come into our lives as 'Pets', and they are given spaces to live... If decent buildings standing in decent spaces are considered 'human beings', small buildings standing with all their might in odd spaces would seem to be like pets in urban spaces.'

—— "Pet Architecture" Atelier Bow-Wow

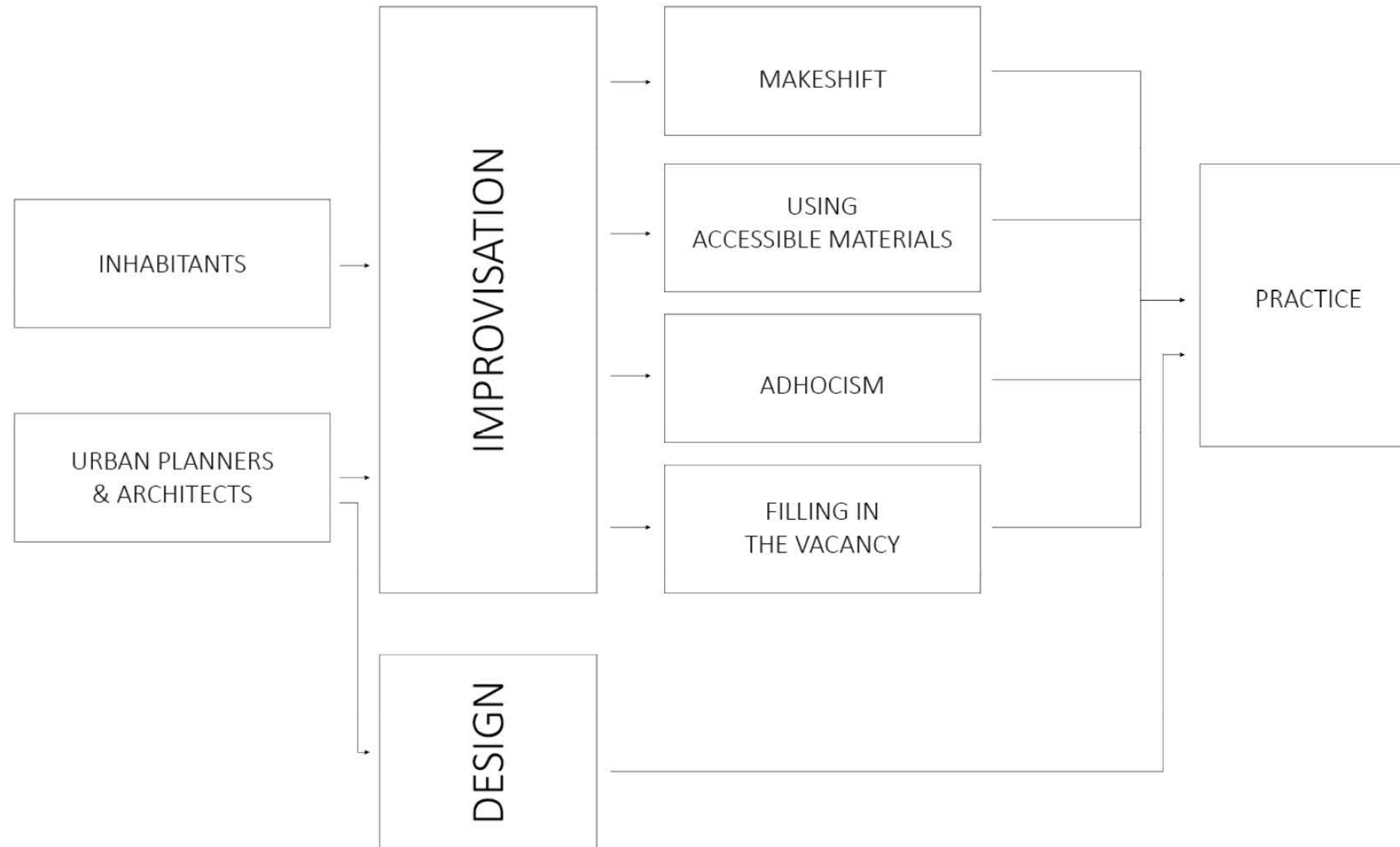
Starting from a port, Marseille was born as the result of improvisation and spontaneous architectures rather than urban planning. Same things happened in the architecture scale. architects are not the only doers of architecture. Long after the building has been made the non-architects continuously do architecture. When non-architects occupy space, they start to 'do-it-themselves'. In most cases, they do this in an already occupied territory, where the activity of doing architecture has been classified and claimed by architects - the rules have already been established. But there are also some space occupations that are out of the rules, such as squatting, vendors, graffiti, protest. They, like "pet architecture", do not necessarily create appealing spaces, and some are even illegal, but they can highlight people's demands and show people's bottom-up determination to shape the city.

When people do the practice, they mainly based on their own current needs and what material they have instead of considering the building or city as a whole. These practices are spontaneous, unplanned makeshift and ad hoc. They can be seen as improvisational practice. Seen architecture as paintings, in these cases, their improvisational activities are more like a collage rather than fully considered composition. But as Jencks explains, it involves using an available system in a new way to solve a problem quickly and efficiently. By doing so, it offers a way for everyone to shape and discuss the city they live in. And for the public, there should be nothing preventing them, in an agonistic and participatory manner, from devising and debating forms of their shelter and space for daily life. The improvisational practice has itself taken inspiration: Another world is possible.





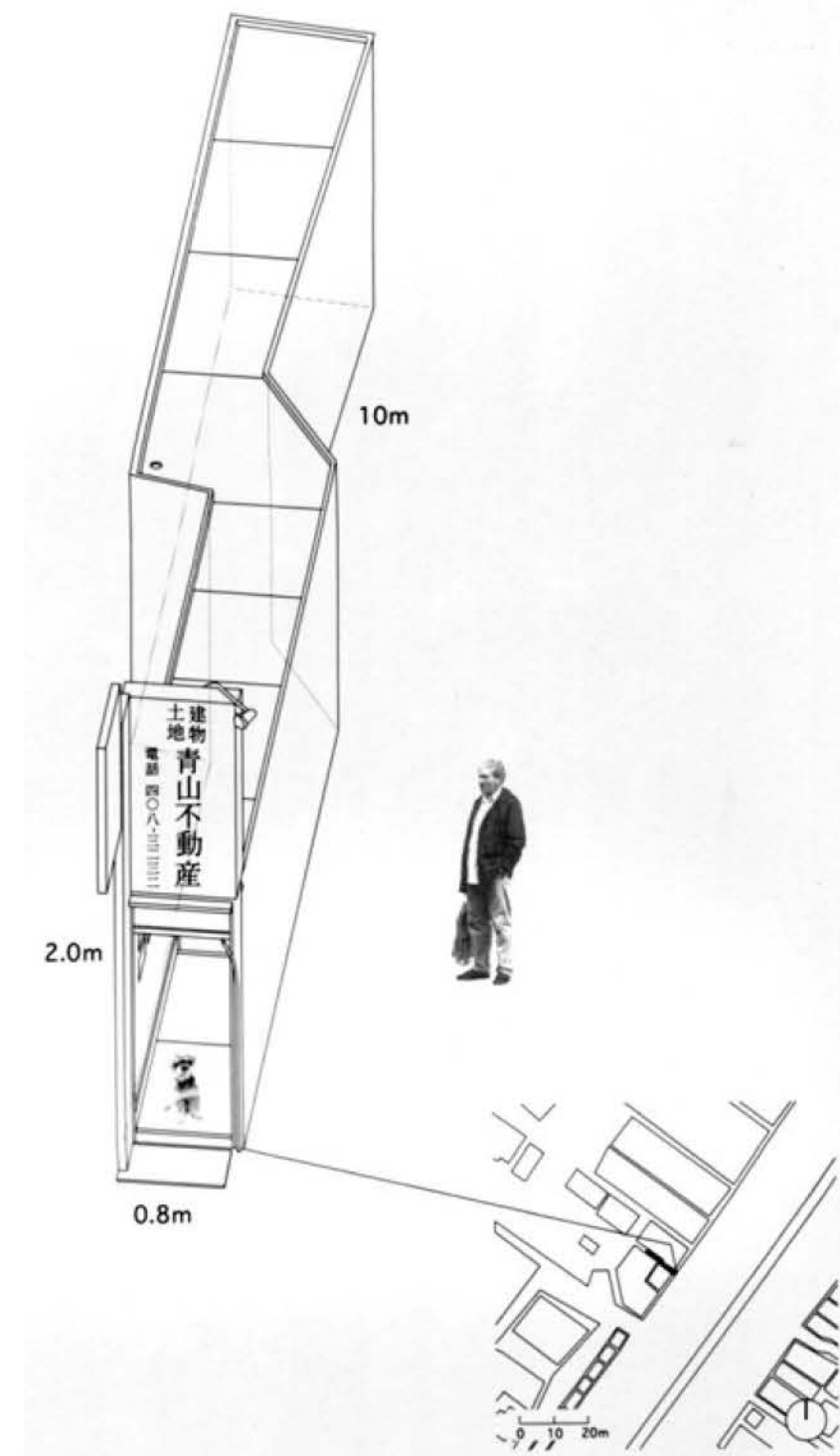
# URBAN IMPROVISATION





## FILLING IN THE VACANCY

City contains many forgotten pieces of the urban fabric – the dead-end alley, the vacant corner lot, infrastructure's leftovers. Utilizing leftover space or squeezing in normal space for improvisation is cheaper and easier for people.



# MAKESHIFT

Improvisational practice is makeshift.  
It's focus on solving current problems by doing  
some efficiently and quickly makeshift changes  
based on current useful structure.



## USING ACCESSIBLE MATERIALS

Improvisational practice mainly focusing on meeting people's current needs, which are often unpredictable or urgent. So most of the times the improvisational practice is under the situation that normal construction materials are not easy to get or not enough. People have to use whatever material they can find for the improvisational practice.





## ADHOCISM

Improvisational practice is ad hoc. People bring together various, immediately-to-hand components and create something that is uncommon in the typical design works, like a collage rather than a fully composed work.



## II. MARSEILLE CITY



## FRANCE - MARSEILLE

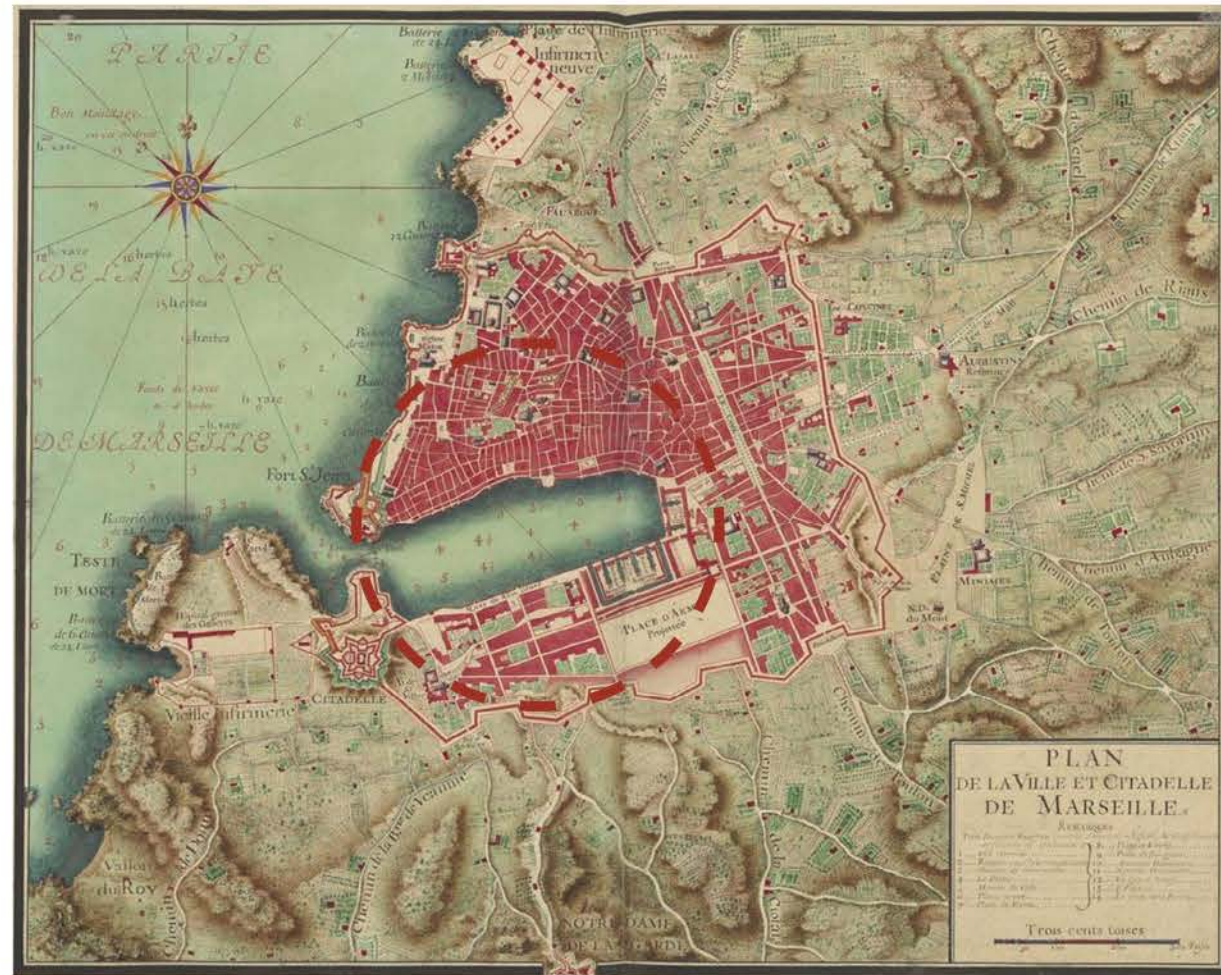
Founded around 600 BC by Greek settlers, Marseille is the oldest city in France, as well as one of Europe's oldest continuously inhabited settlements. And Marseille is the second most populous city in France. But because of the climate, location, culture, people... Marseille is far away from a typical French city like Paris or Lyon.



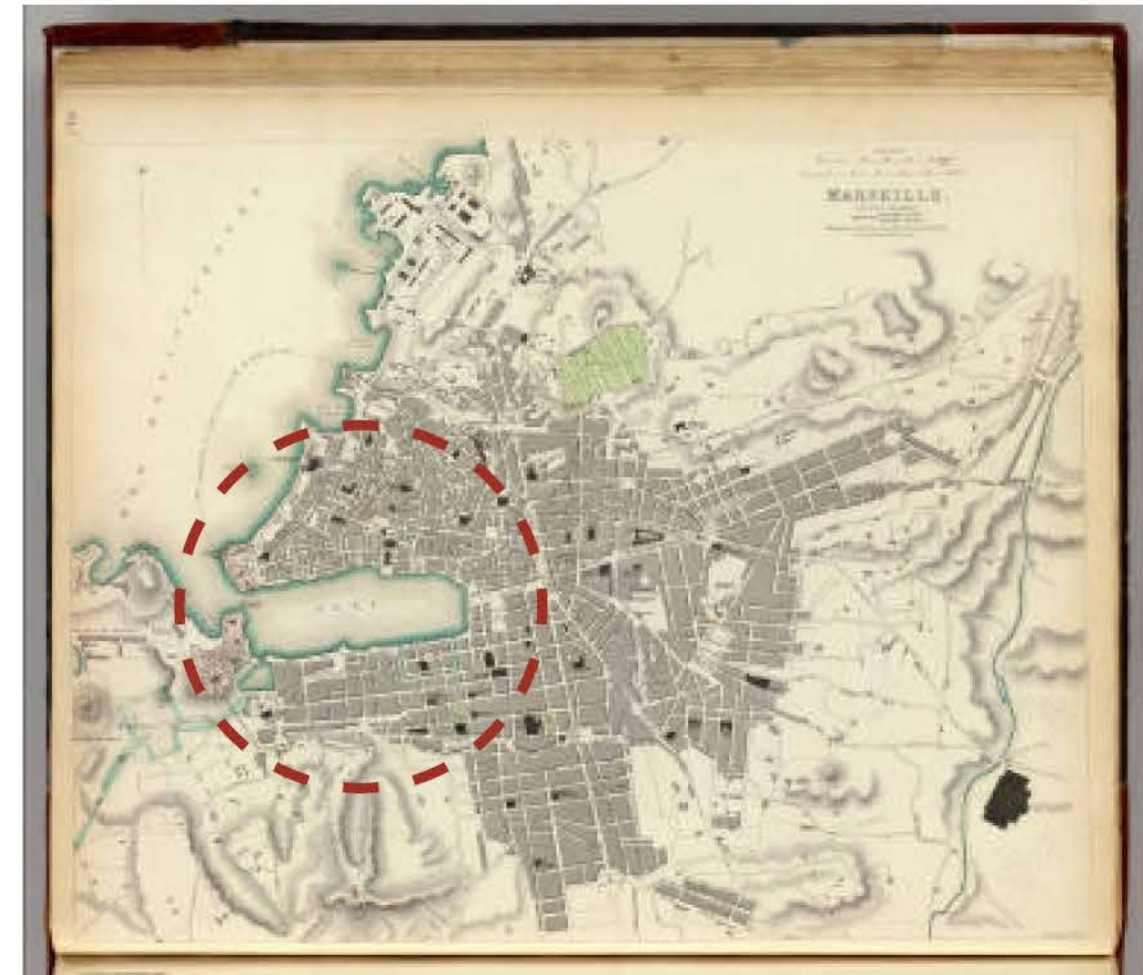


## MEDITERRANEAN - MARSEILLE

Because of the location, Marseille is one of the most important commercial ports in Europe. It is the first French port, the second Mediterranean port and the fifth European port.



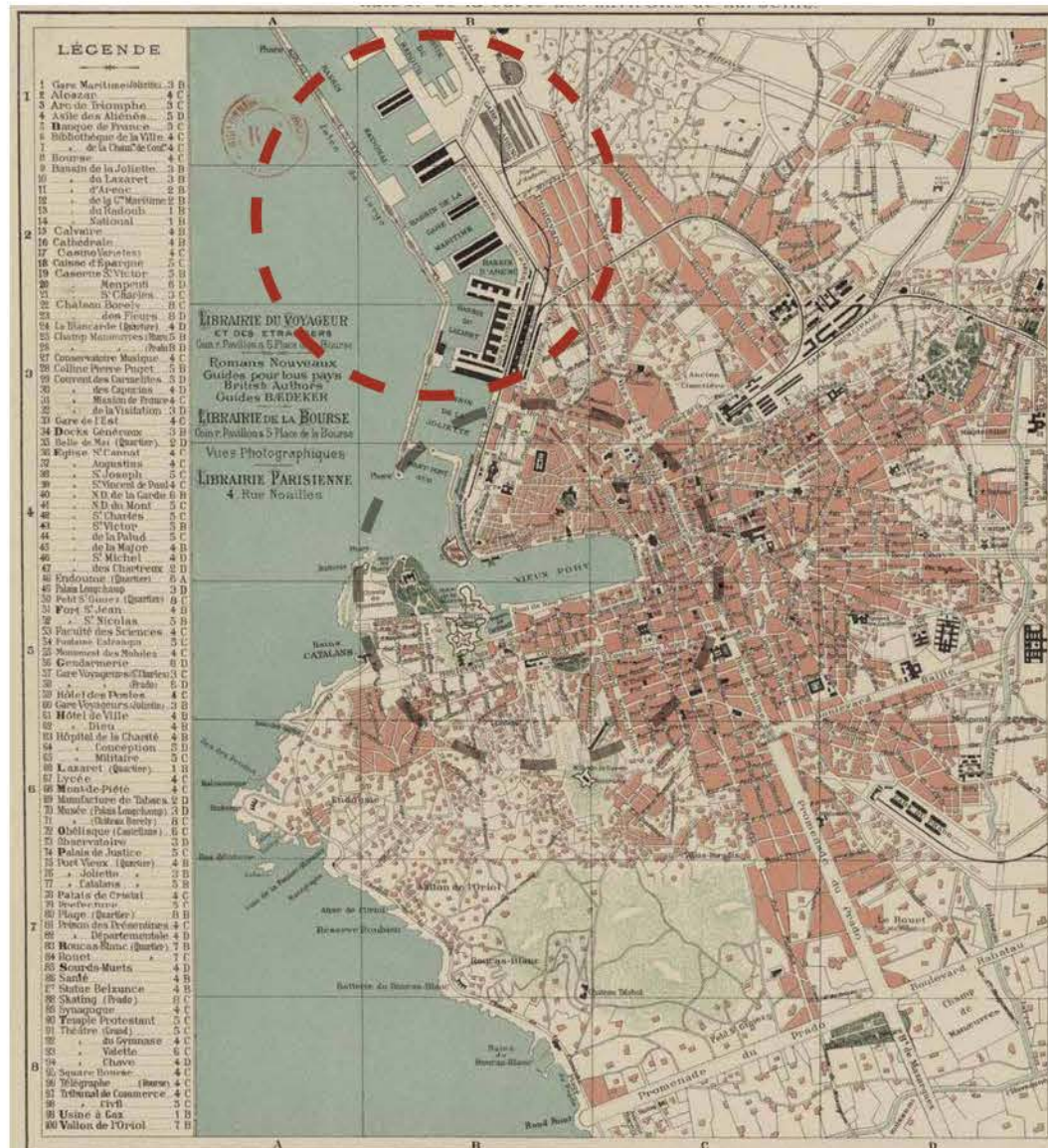
1700



1840

Marseille has been a trading port since ancient times. In particular, it experienced a considerable commercial boom during the colonial period and especially during the 19th century, becoming a prosperous industrial and trading city.





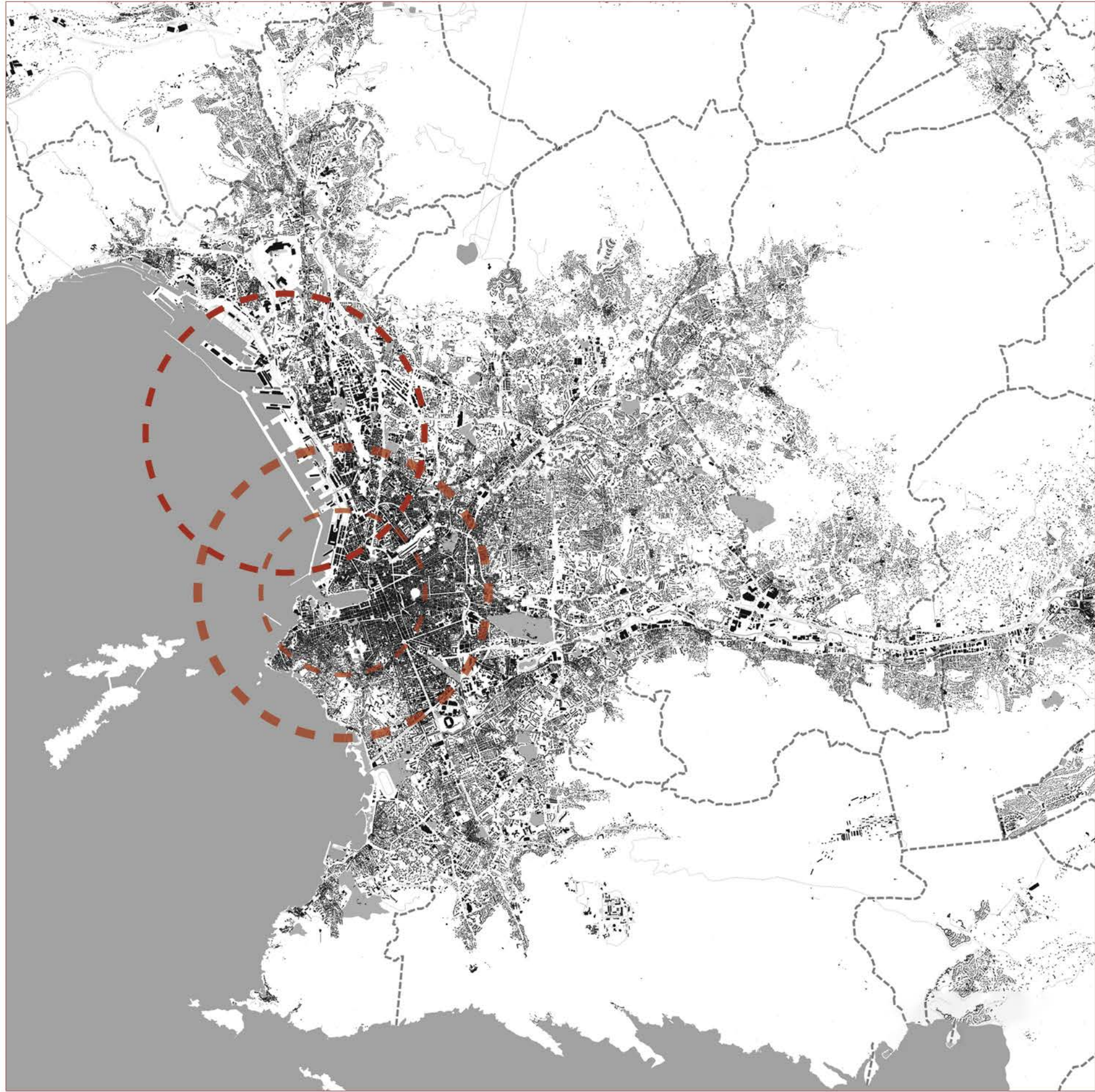
1890



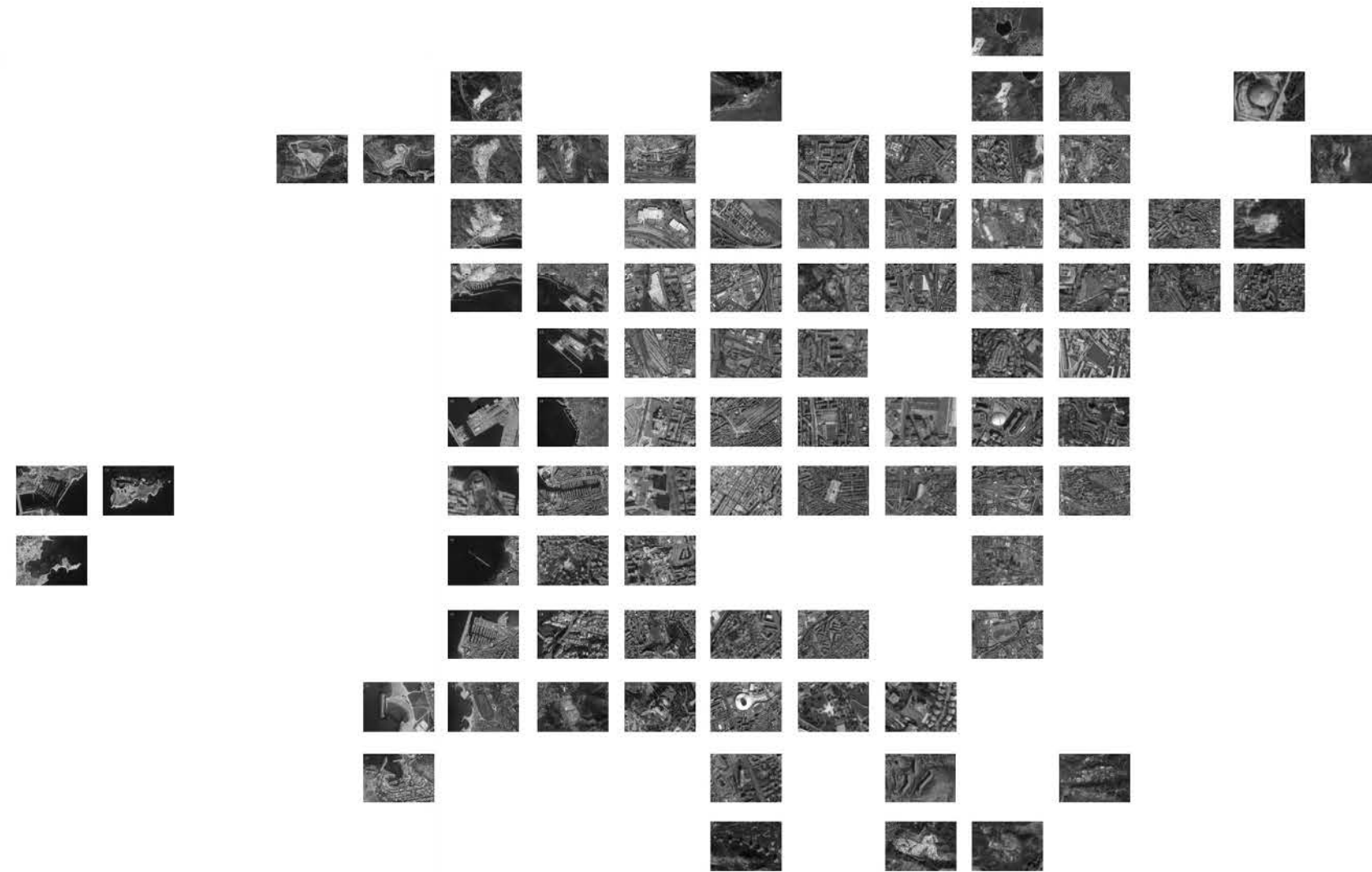
1916

In the 1840s, maritime traffic becomes too intense for the Old Port capacities and an extension seemed necessary. The Joliette infrastructures began to be used in 1847. The pool was fully completed in 1853.



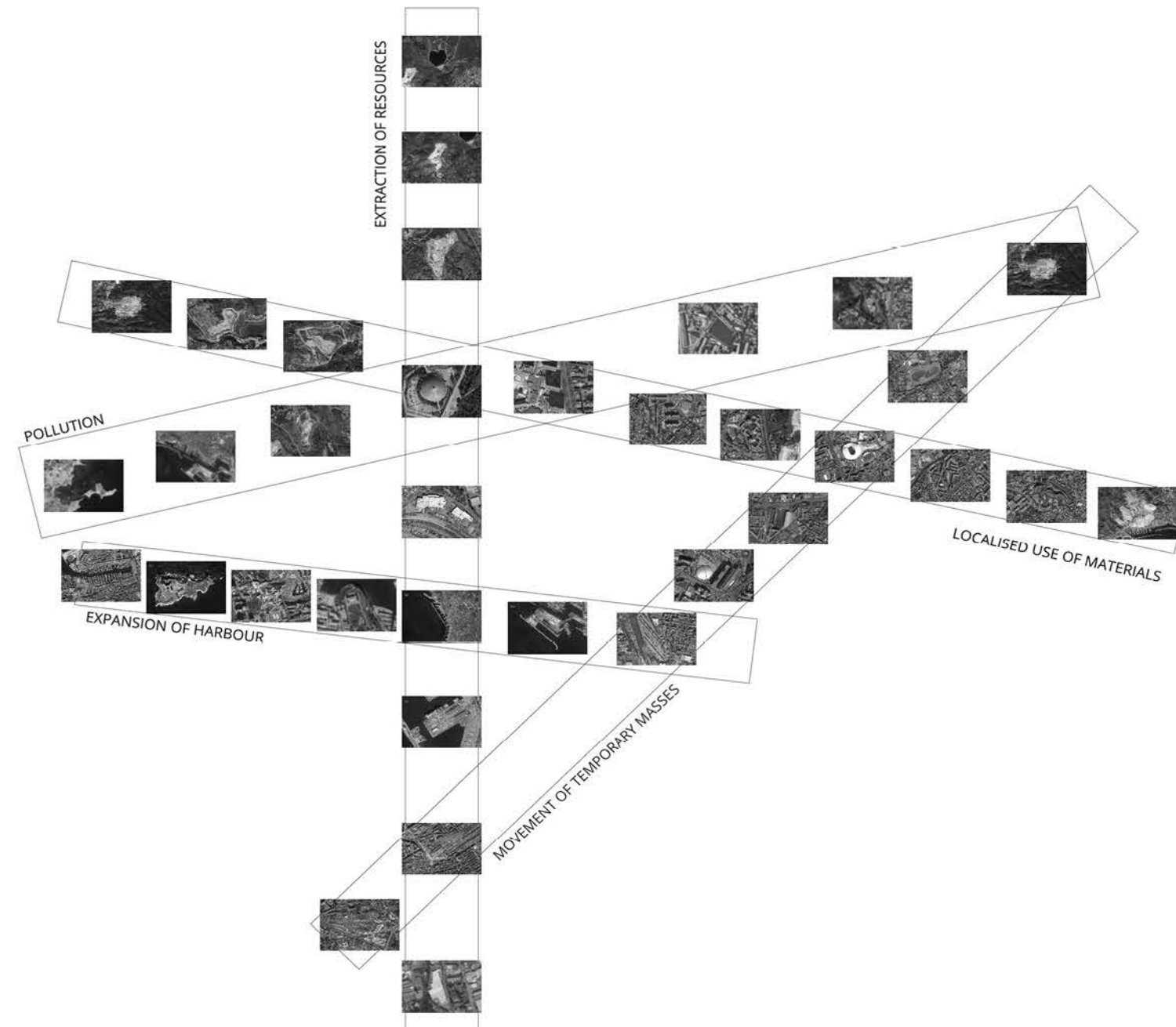






## RECONSTRUCTING MARSEILLE

We noticed the presence of certain anomalies, or the 'other spaces' in Marseille, which essentially are spaces that somehow stand out and mark their presence in the setting. This observation was made on the basis of satellite images. We put all the observed heterotopias into the same 2-dimensional space and then experimented with their positioning, relating one to another.



## RECONSTRUCTING MARSEILLE

Our study therefore shifted to depicting the 'othernesses' of Marseille with which its spirit and (city)sphere is dominant, and distinguish their individual relevance and interdependence within the various processes of the city. The image of the city is subsequently restructured, precipitating five dominant workings and systems of the city.





Those relations not only define the extent of the space or territory but also highlight its open and infinite character. Anomalies and the set of relations which defines and extends them beyond themselves present potential for describing the territory and its underlying functioning, because anomalies function fundamentally as mirrors, reflections and inversions of processes within the city.



## EXCURSION IN MARSEILLE

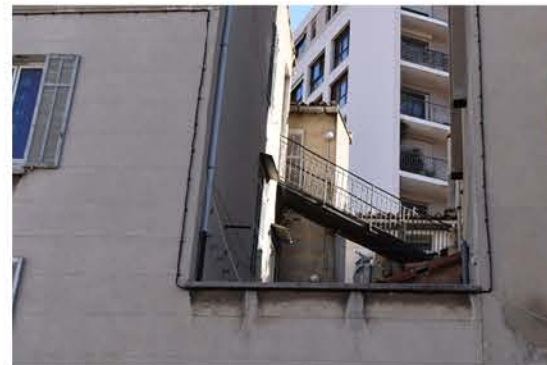




Urban Fragment



Buildings



Objects



People shape the city spontaneously. They used their own methods to occupy or reuse buildings and public spaces. There are many examples in Marseille: vendors, graffiti, protest... By practice, people change the environment to meet their current needs better. And as their situation changes, the practice is constantly happening and changing.



WHAT IMPROVISATIONAL PRACTICE DO PEOPLE DO IN MARSEILLE?

WHERE DID THEY DO THE PRACTICE?

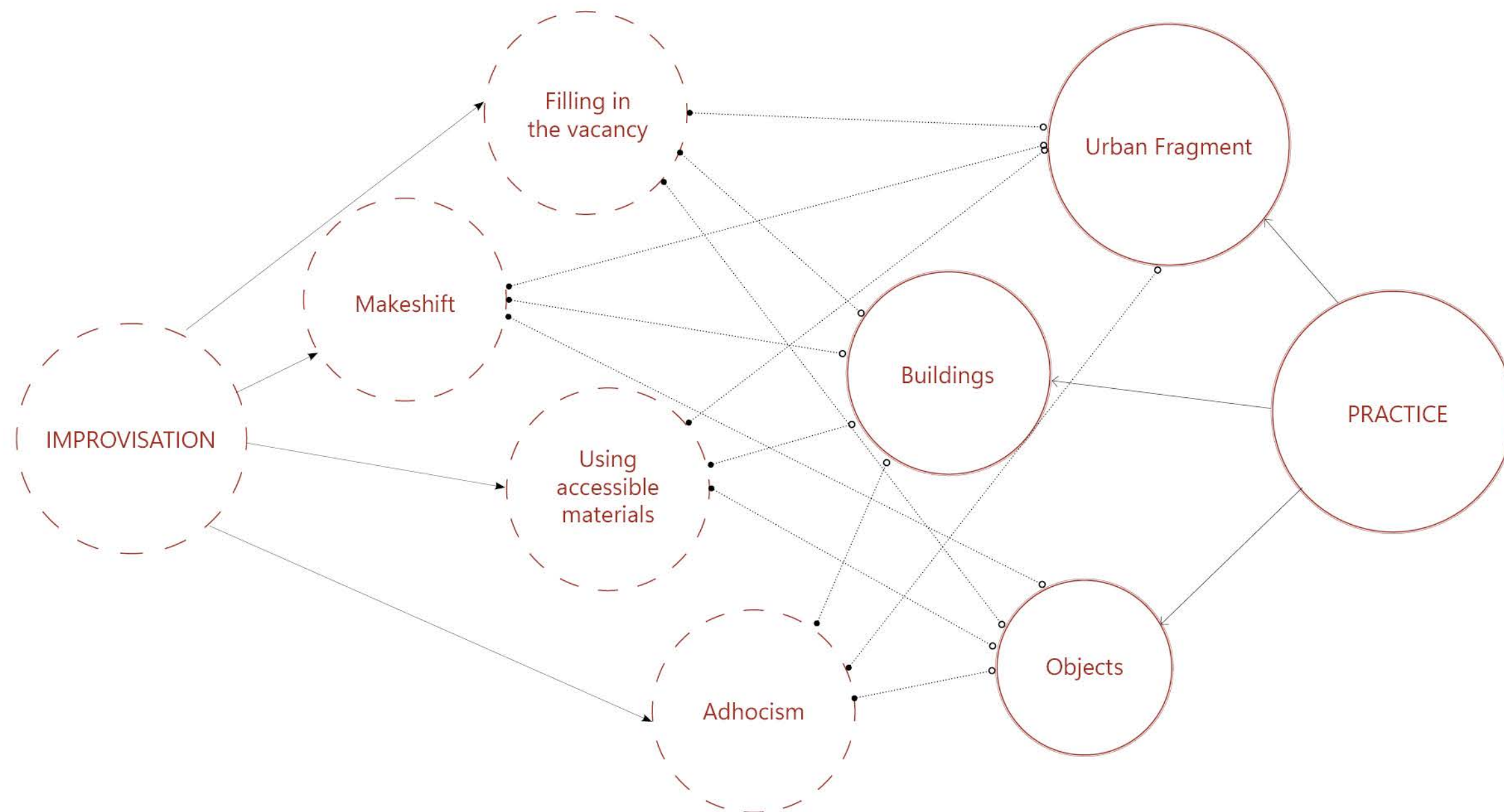
WHAT MATERIALS CAN THEY USE?

HOW LONG DID THE PRACTICE LAST?

WHAT KIND OF DEMANDS AND RESISTANCE WERE THEY EXPRESSING TO  
THEIR LIFE OR MARSEILLE?

HOW DOES THE IMPROVISATIONAL PRACTICE SHAPE MARSEILLE?



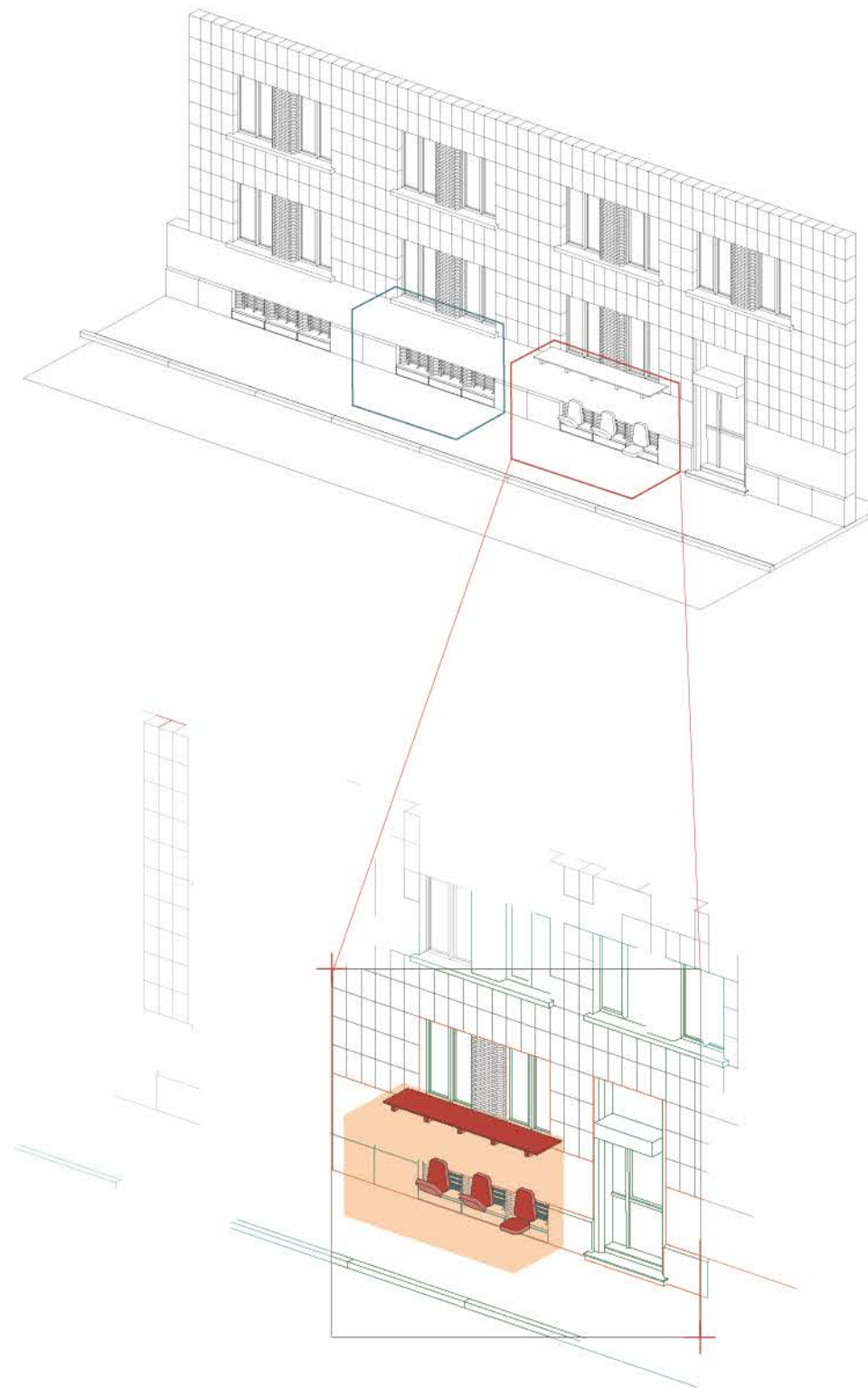




## OBJECTS

Fill in vacancy:	sidewalk
Makeshift:	windowsill, windowframe
Material:	chair;wood;plastic board
Ad-hoc:	create a tempary outdoor waiting room

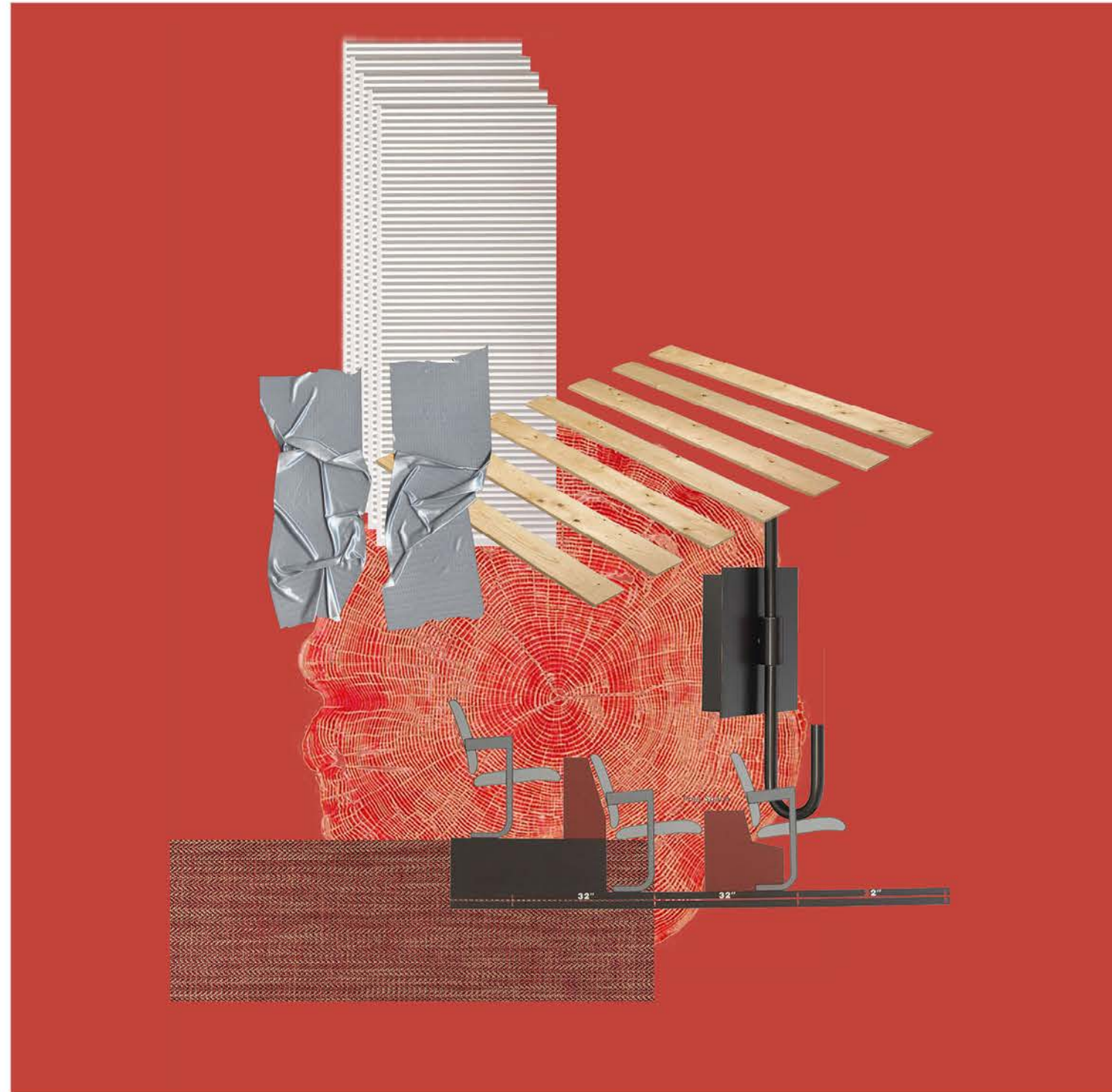




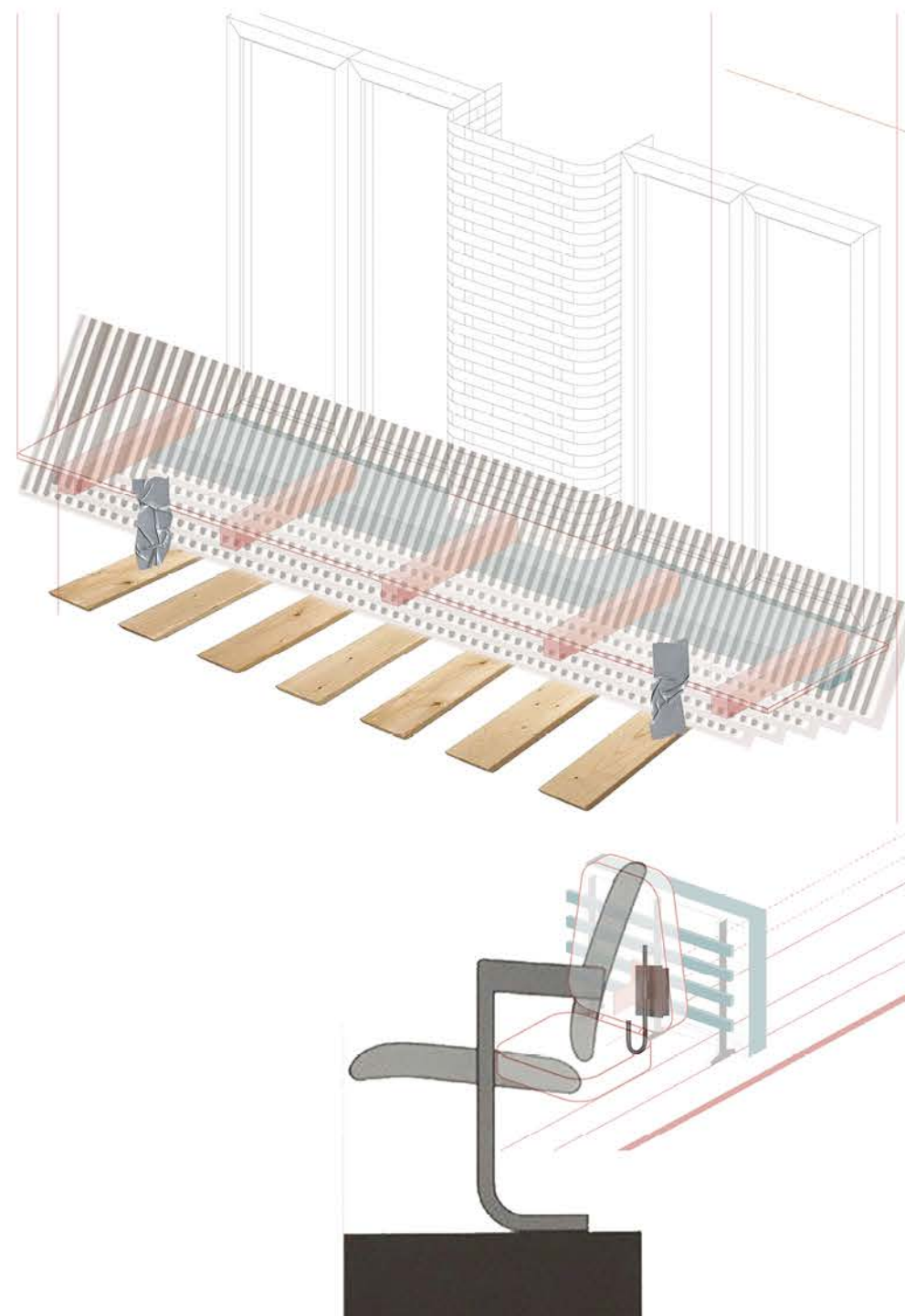
**FILLING IN THE VACANCY**







USING ACCESSIBLE MATERIALS



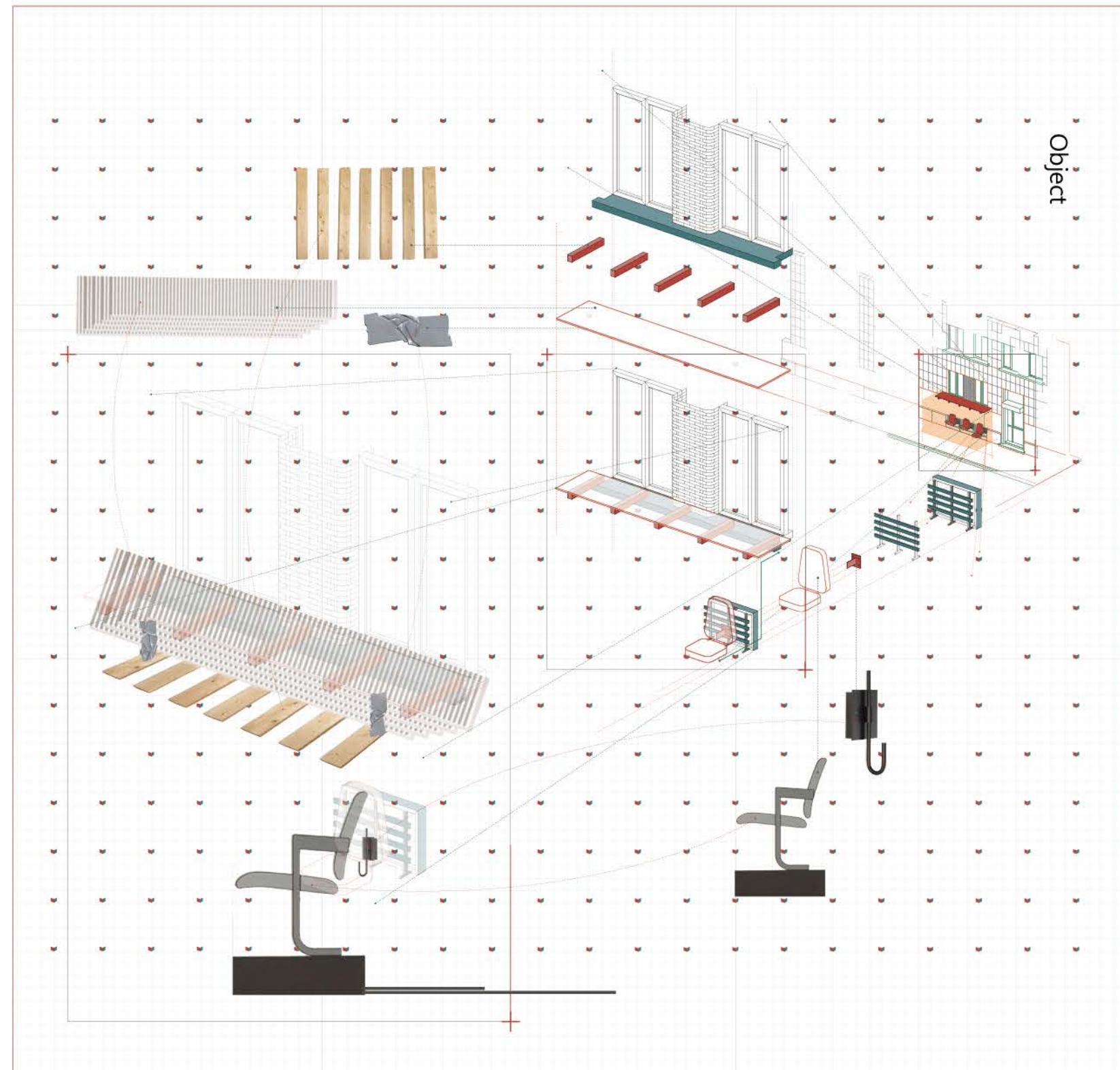
ADHOCISIM





## OBJECTS

Fill in vacancy: sidewalk  
 Makeshift: windowsill, windowframe  
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 Ad-hoc: create a tempary outdoor waiting room



# OBJECTS



Fill in vacancy: sidewalk  
 Makeshift: windowsill, windowframe  
 Material: chair;wood;plastic board  
 Ad-hoc: create a tempary outdoor waiting room



Fill in vacancy: balcony  
 Makeshift: fence  
 Material: beer box; bucket  
 Ad-hoc: create flowerpots for balcony

Fill in vacancy: sidewalk  
 Makeshift: height difference  
 Material: wood  
 Ad-hoc: create a temporary outdoor bench



Fill in vacancy: sidewalk  
 Makeshift: railing  
 Material: wooden box; flowerpot  
 Ad-hoc: create a temporary plant fence









# BUILDINGS



**Fill in vacancy:** garage, threshold  
**Makeshift:** column, garage  
**Material:** wood; straw curtain; glass brick  
**Ad-hoc:** create a temporary outdoor eating space



**Fill in vacancy:** gap between buildings  
**Makeshift:** facade  
**Material:** bricks; metal  
**Ad-hoc:** create a temporary shelter

**Fill in vacancy:** sidewalk  
**Makeshift:** parking lot  
**Material:** wood, branches  
**Ad-hoc:** create an outdoor eating space



**Fill in vacancy:** roof  
**Makeshift:** windowsill  
**Material:** rope; metal  
**Ad-hoc:** create a temporary space for drying clothes

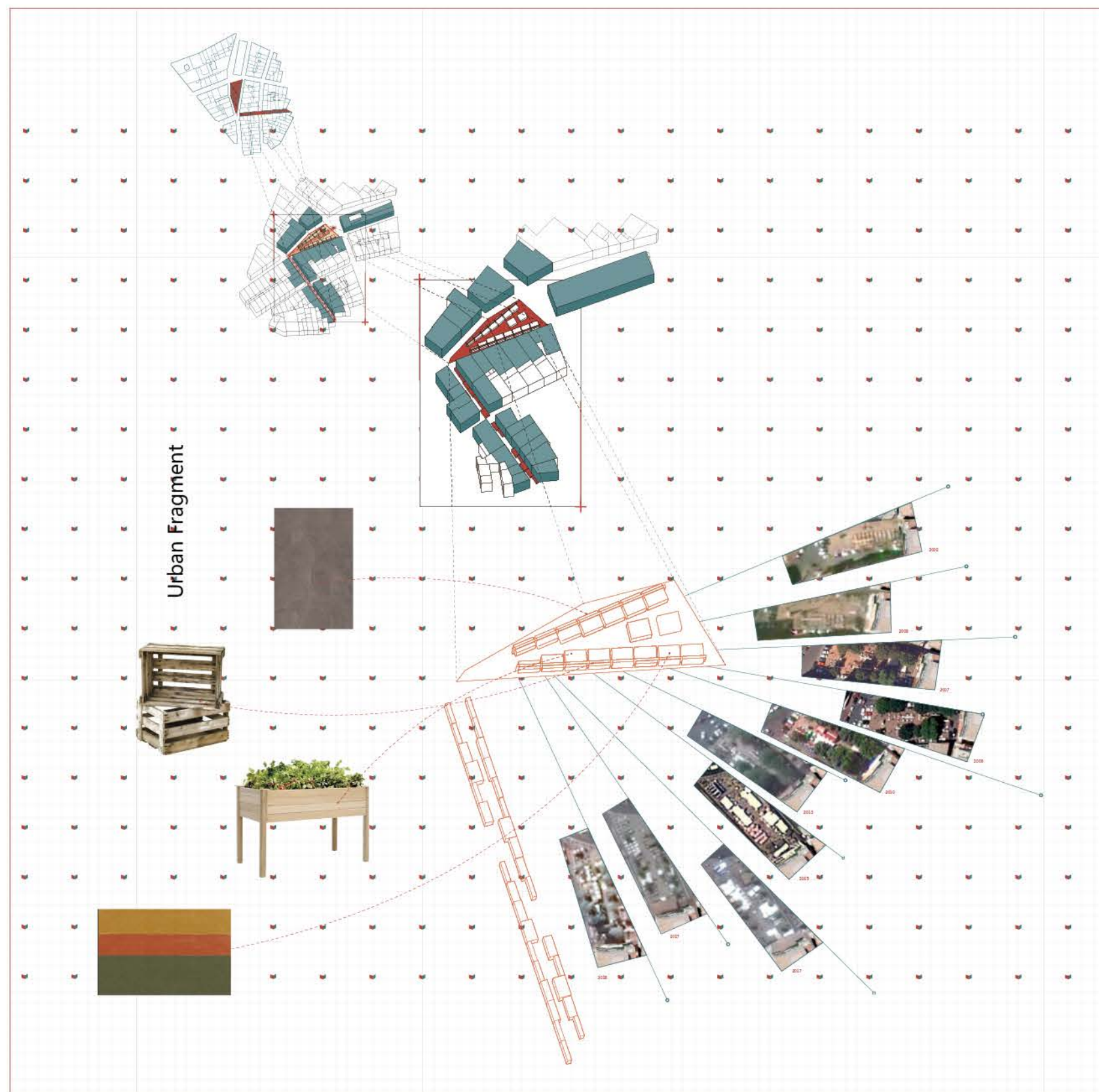






## URBAN FRAGMENT

Fill in vacancy: street  
 Makeshift: facade  
 Material: concrete, wood  
 Ad-hoc: expand the market





# URBAN FRAGMENT



Fill in vacancy: street  
 Makeshift: column, garage  
 Material: wood; straw curtain; glass brick  
 Ad-hoc: create a temporary outdoor eating space



Fill in vacancy: street  
 Makeshift: facade  
 Material: bricks, metal  
 Ad-hoc: expand the market

Fill in vacancy: piece of vacant space  
 Makeshift: time, road, surrounding restaurant  
 Material: wood, chair, table, umbrella  
 Ad-hoc: create a temporary outdoor eating space



Fill in vacancy: piece of vacant space  
 Makeshift: time, road, surrounding shops  
 Material: vendors staff  
 Ad-hoc: expand the market



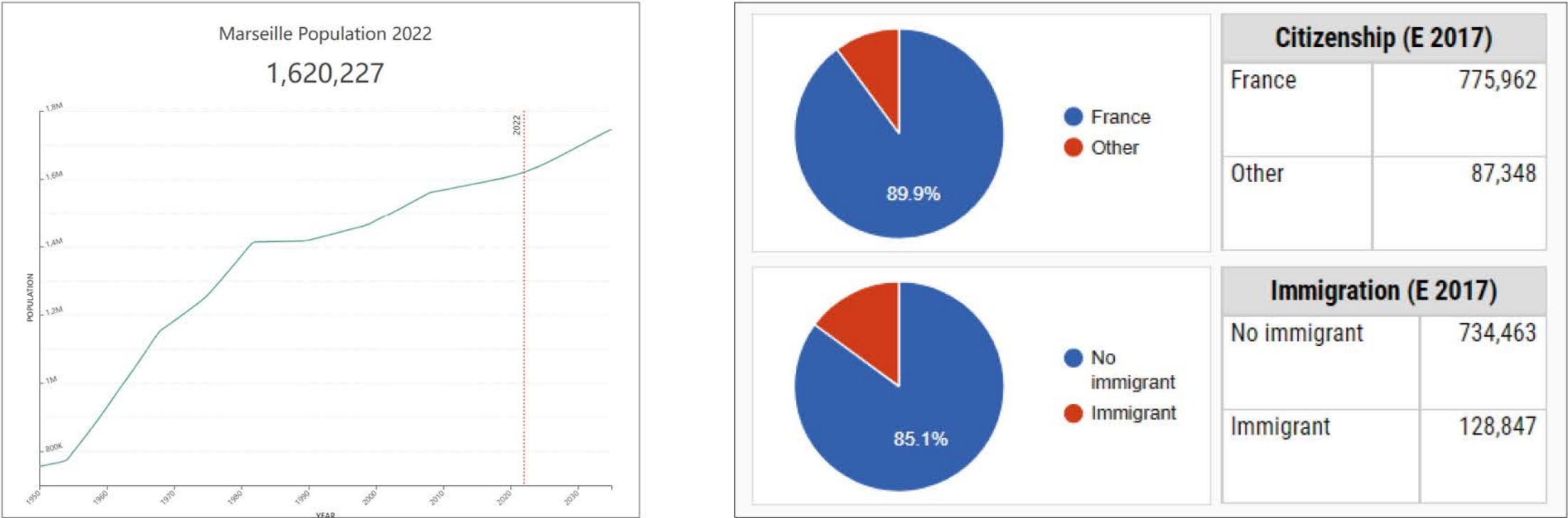
### III. DESIGN PROPOSAL



DESIGN PROPOSAL | *Excursion*







Because of its pre-eminence as a Mediterranean port, Marseille has always been one of the main gateways into France. This has attracted many immigrants and made Marseille a cosmopolitan melting pot. The 20th century in particular saw many large waves of immigration due to political unrest and poor economic conditions in Europe and globally.





DESIGN

+

IMPROVISATION





DESIGN

IMPROVISATION

EXHIBITION

LIBRARY

CAFE

THEATER

...

(TEMPORARY EXHIBITION)

(GRAFFITI)

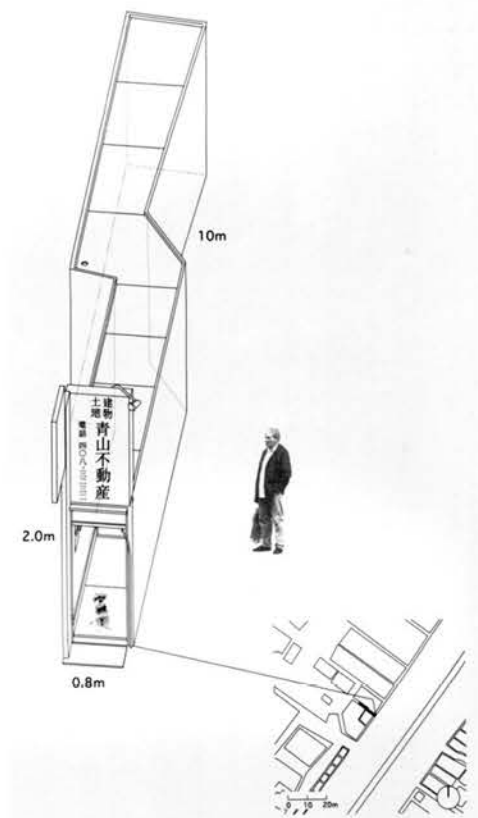
(VENDORS)

(SHELTER)

???

**Filling in  
the vacancy**

City contains many forgotten pieces of the urban fabric – the dead-end alley, the vacant corner lot, infrastructure's leftovers. Utilizing leftover space or squeezing in normal space for improvisation is cheaper and easier for people.

**Makeshift**

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**Adhocism**

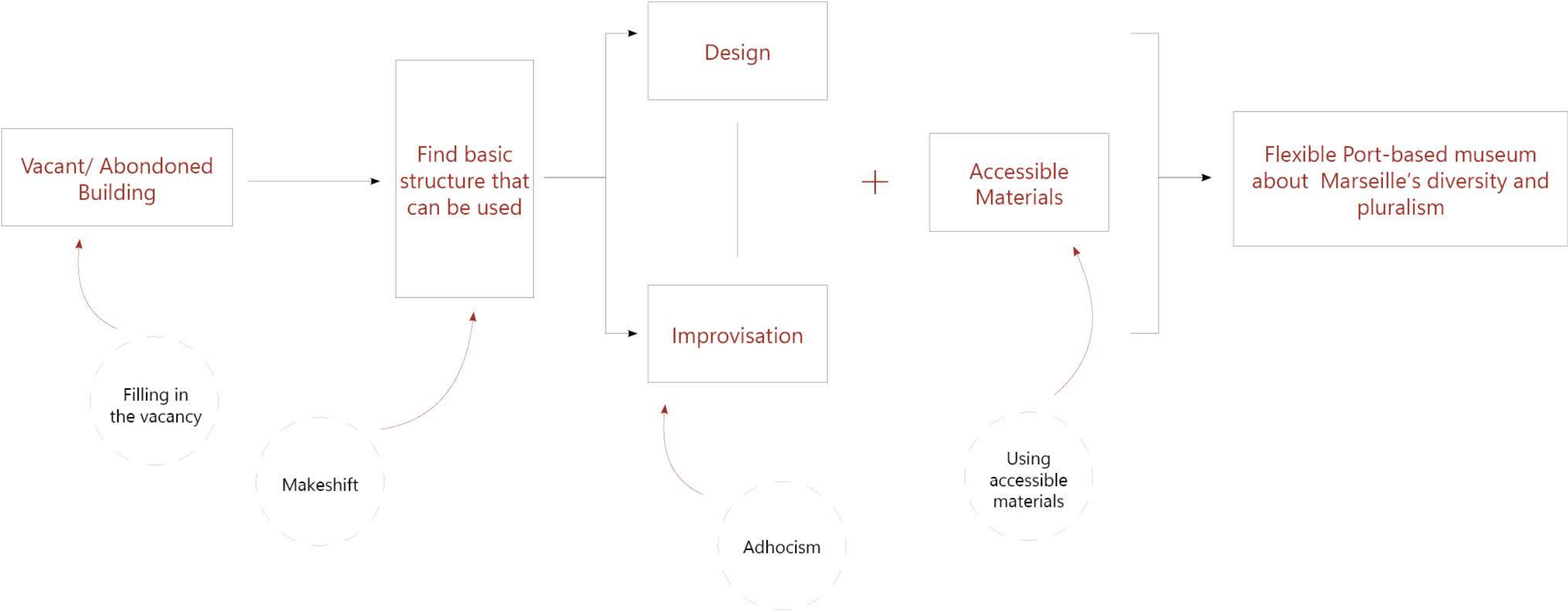
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**Using  
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Improvisational practice mainly focusing on meeting people's current needs, which are often unpredictable or urgent. So most of the times the improvisational practice is under the situation that normal construction materials are not easy to get or not enough. People have to use whatever material they can find for the improvisational practice.

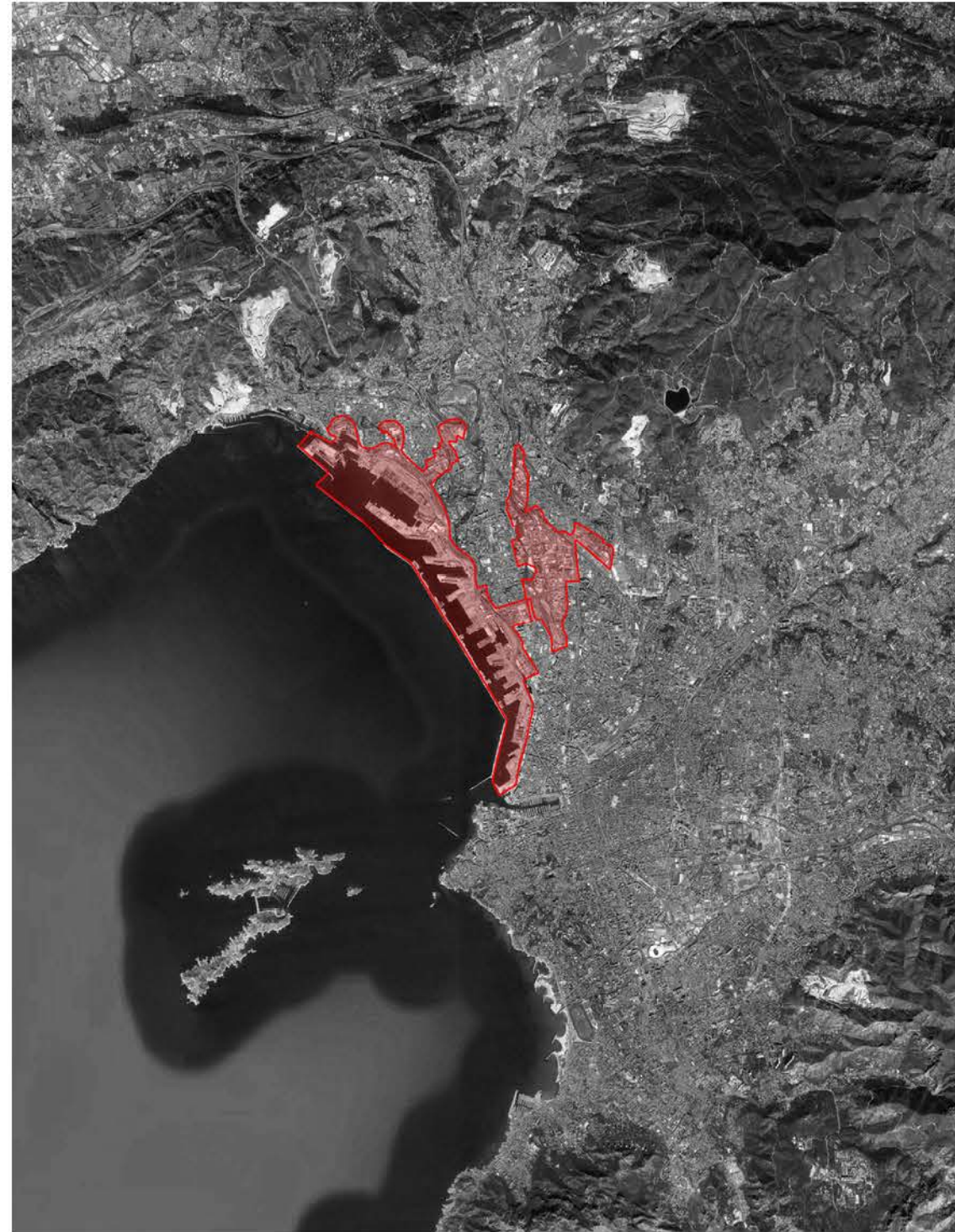






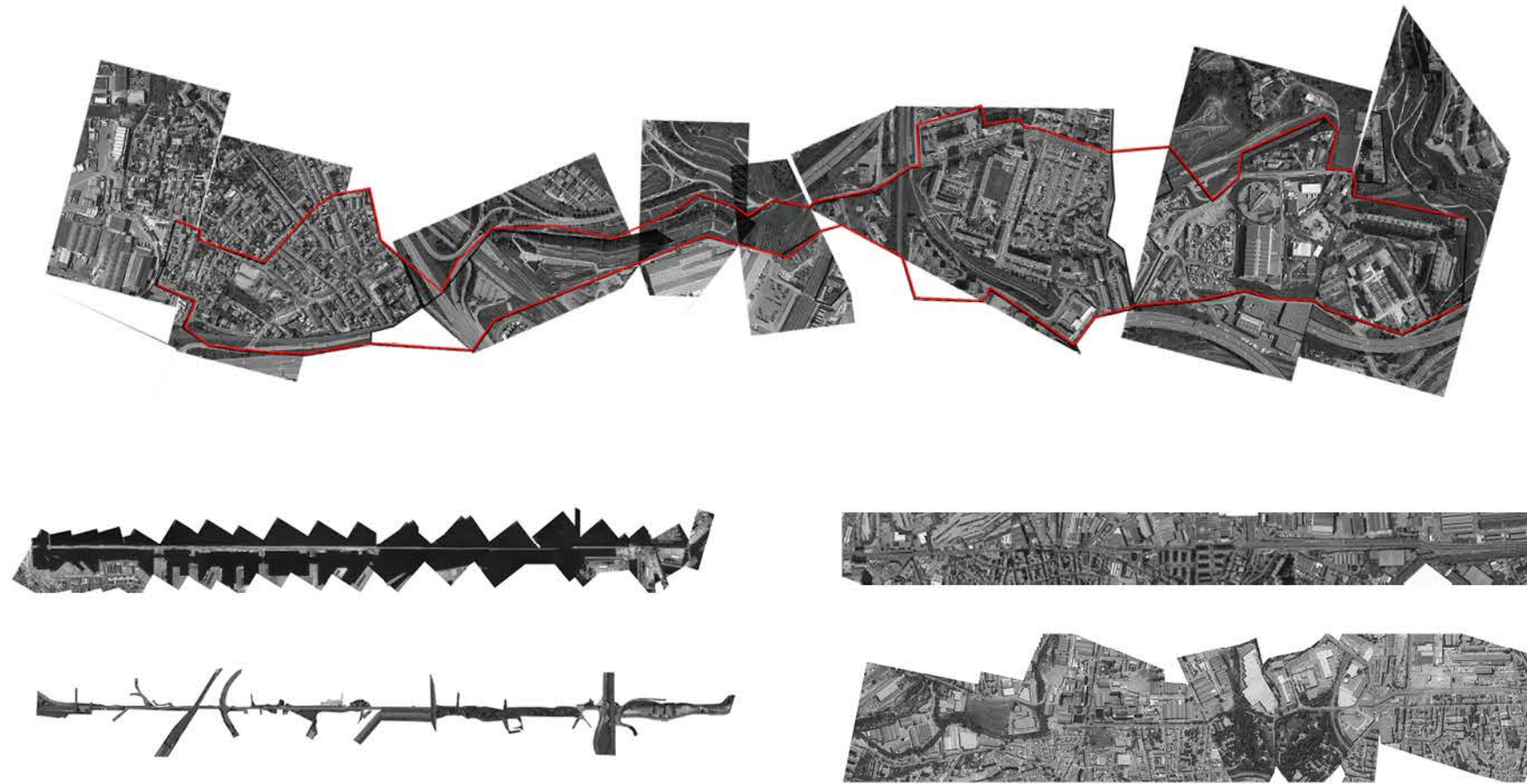
## IV. FILL IN THE VACANCY





## PORT - CITY

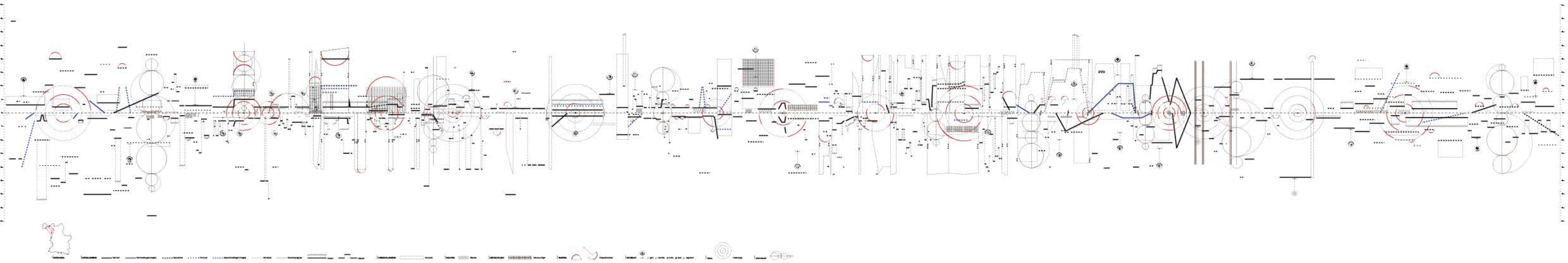
Port and industrial premises have a strong presence in Marseille, no doubt they are some of the crucial organs sustaining the city. Yet they took the form of a rather restricted zone, and although Marseille and its Industrial part are mutually dependent, they seem to be two distinct cities.



## UNFOLDING THE BOEDER

Following the previous demarcation of the border between the zones, we decided our map would take the form of a straight line enhanced with a notation system enabling us to record our findings from the border zone. We thus proceeded to the unfolding of the path.



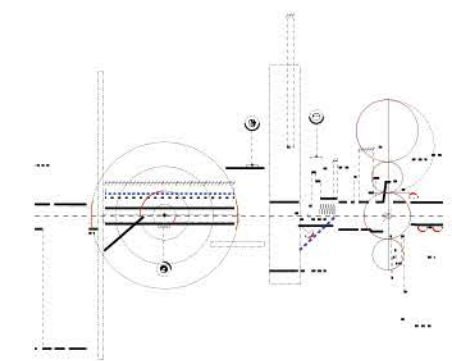
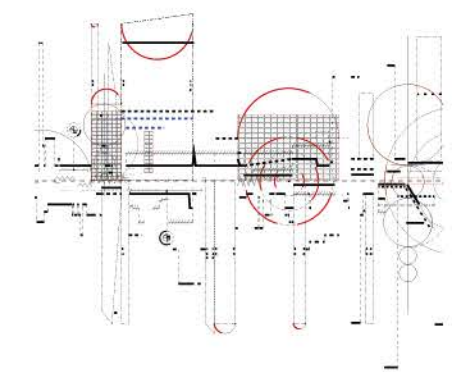
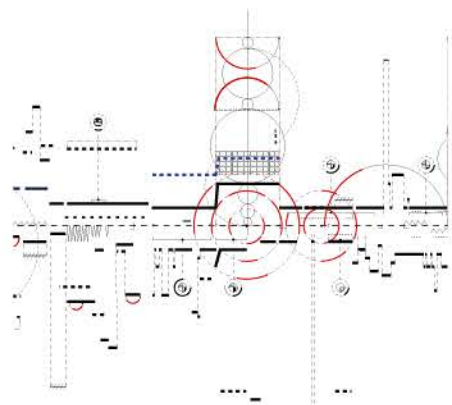
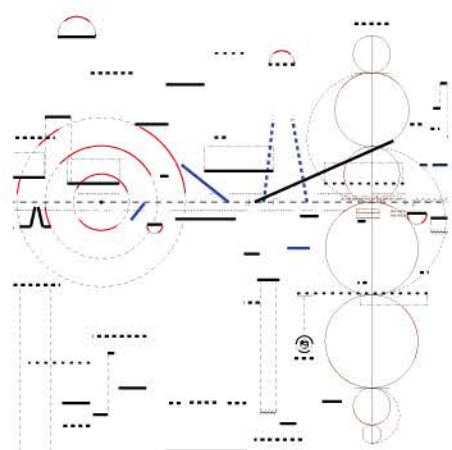


## BORDER MAP

The final map trying to analyse the difference between the industrial part and the city. On one side, large scale rowdy machines are surrounded by tall fences, impenetrable, uncrossable. The other side is mainly dominated human presence, it sustains fundamental aspects of human existence in the urban environment.

FILL IN THE VACANCY

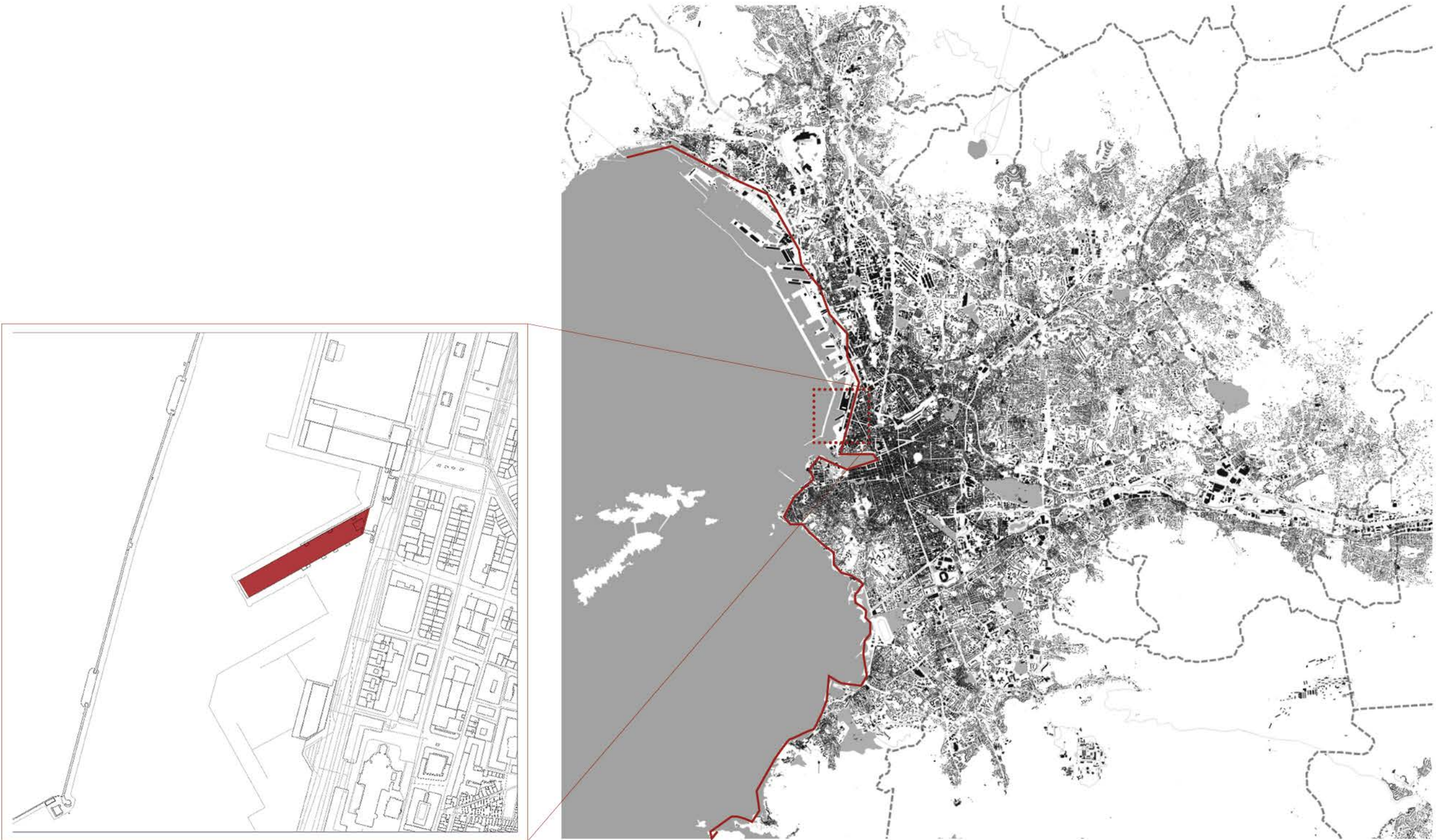
Border Map



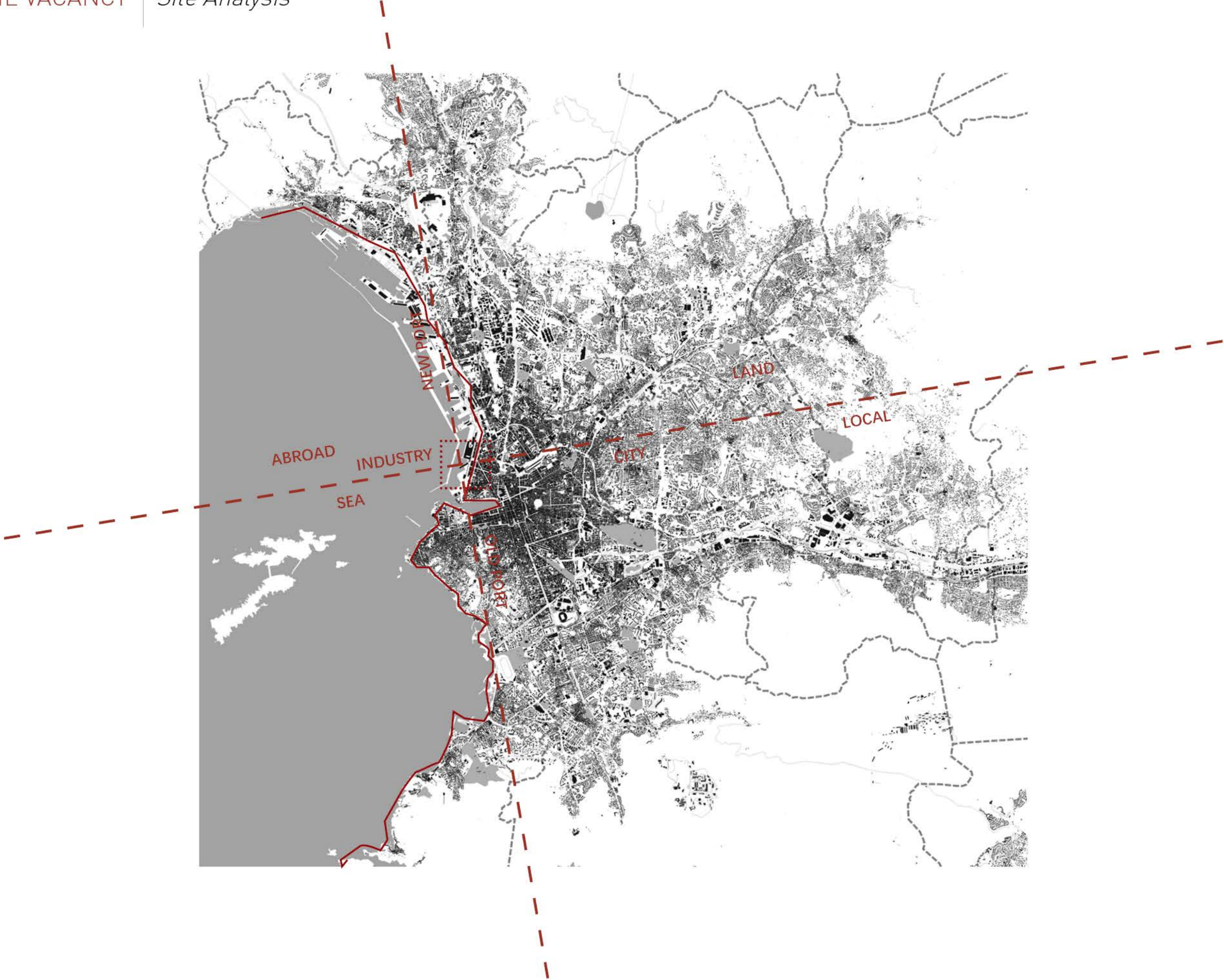












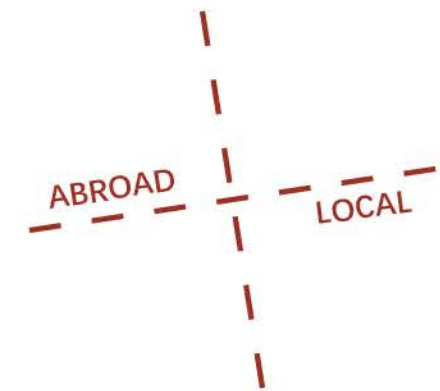




ABROAD



LOCAL







INDUSTRY



CITY



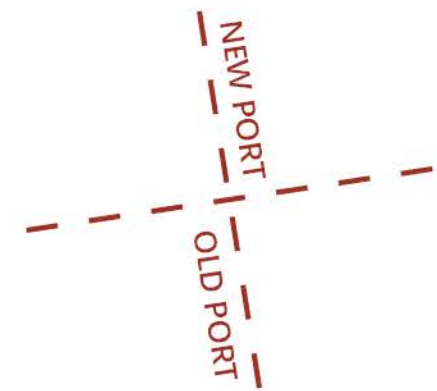




NEW PORT



OLD PORT







## BUILDING J1

J1 building work as a huge hangar from the 1930s but as the new port come into use, it lost its industrial vocation and become vacant for many years. It is the only remaining part of the old port of Marseille that has not been transformed and still vacant.



## BUILDING J4

The warehouse area formerly known as the J4 now become the museum of the European and Mediterranean civilizations and the Ville Méditerranée, an International Centre for Dialogue and Discussion in the Mediterranean.



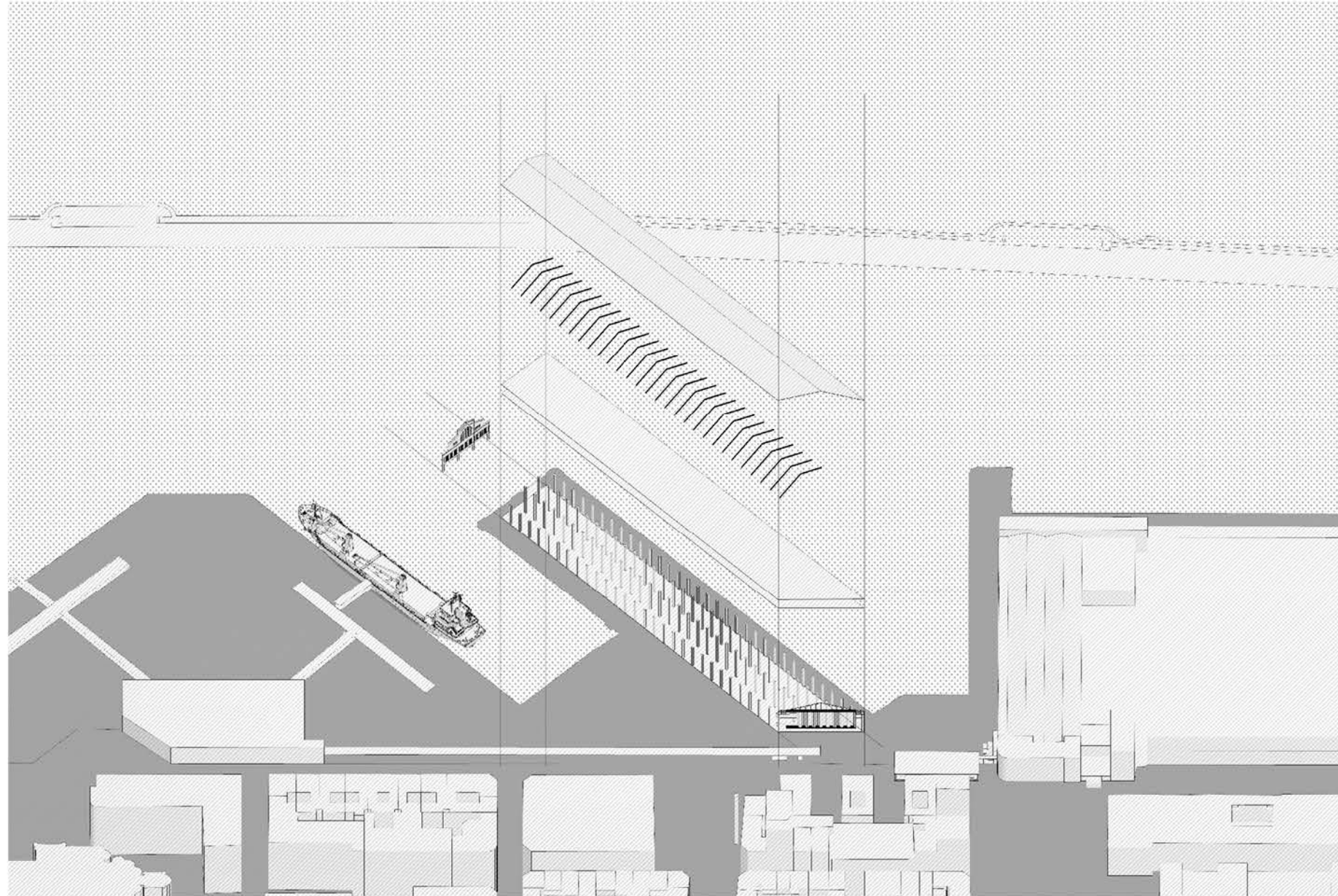


## SILO D'ARENC

This industrial building was reconverted into a concert hall with 2000 places and office area. In the ground floor the port activities continue to work, mainly allowing the cross traffic in the area. It has become one of the main concert venues in the city.





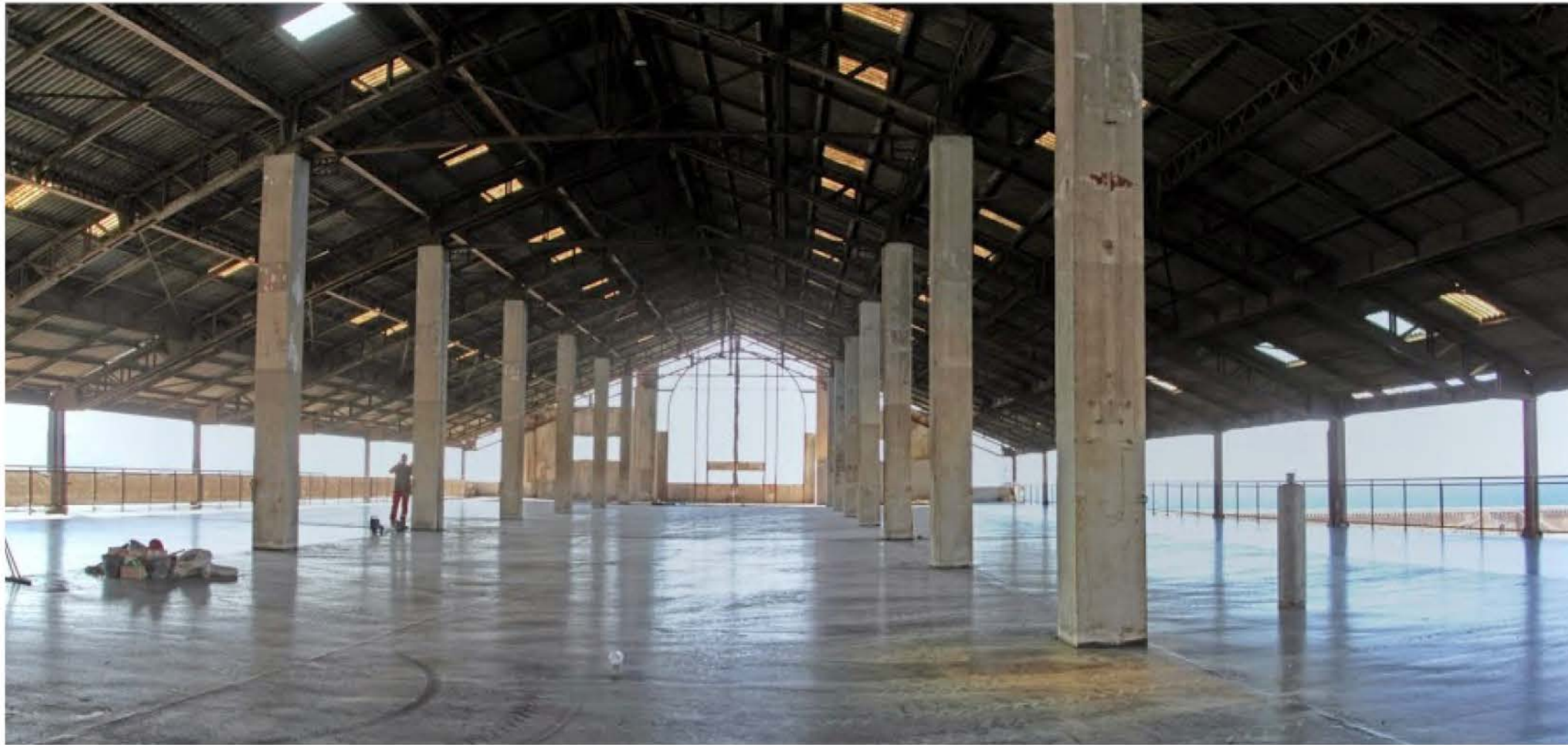


J1 consists today of a post and beam structure of reinforced concrete on the ground floor and first floor, and metal studs on the second floor supporting large steel trusses. And the old facade is one of it's symbol.







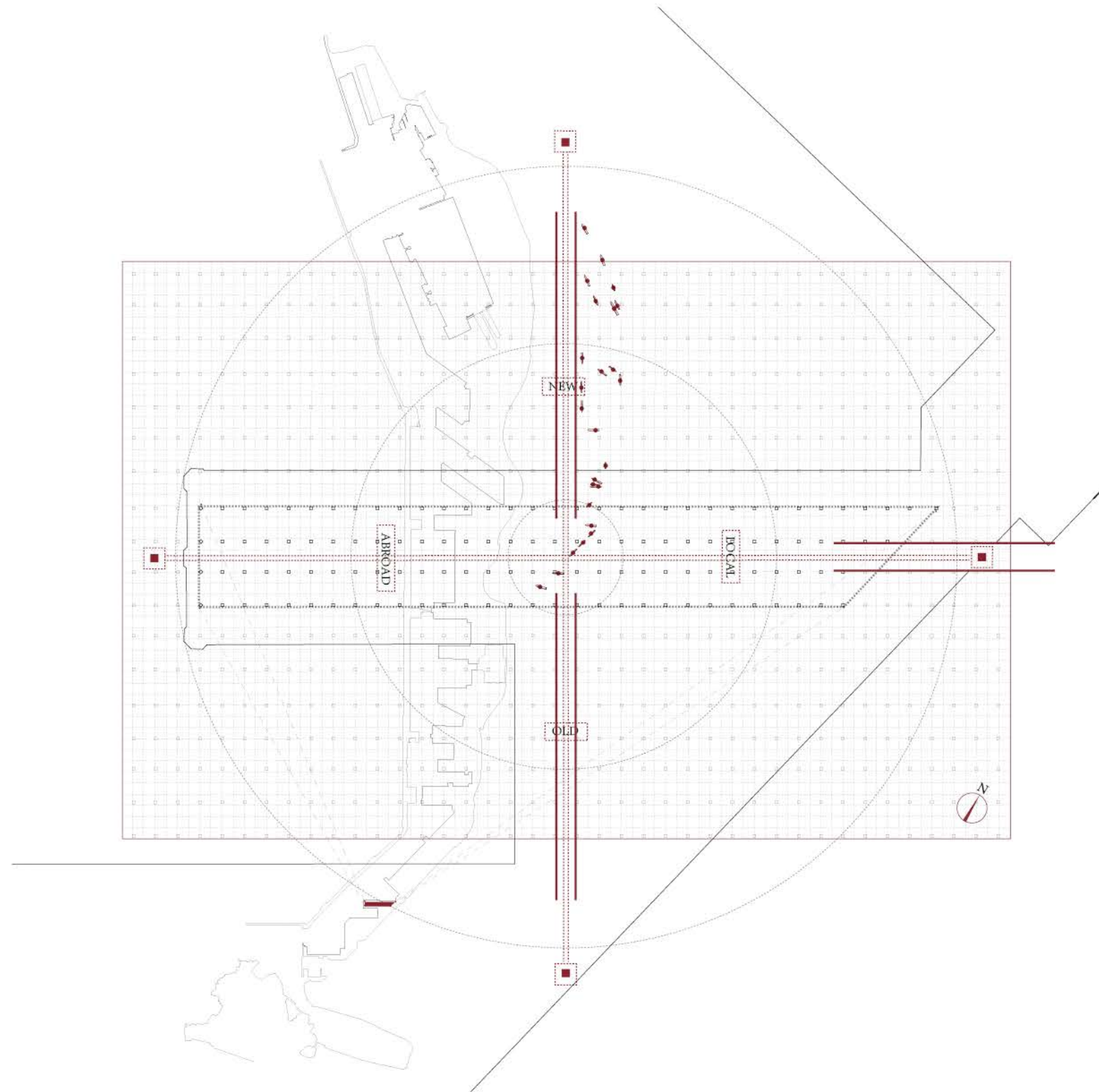


V. MAKESHIFT

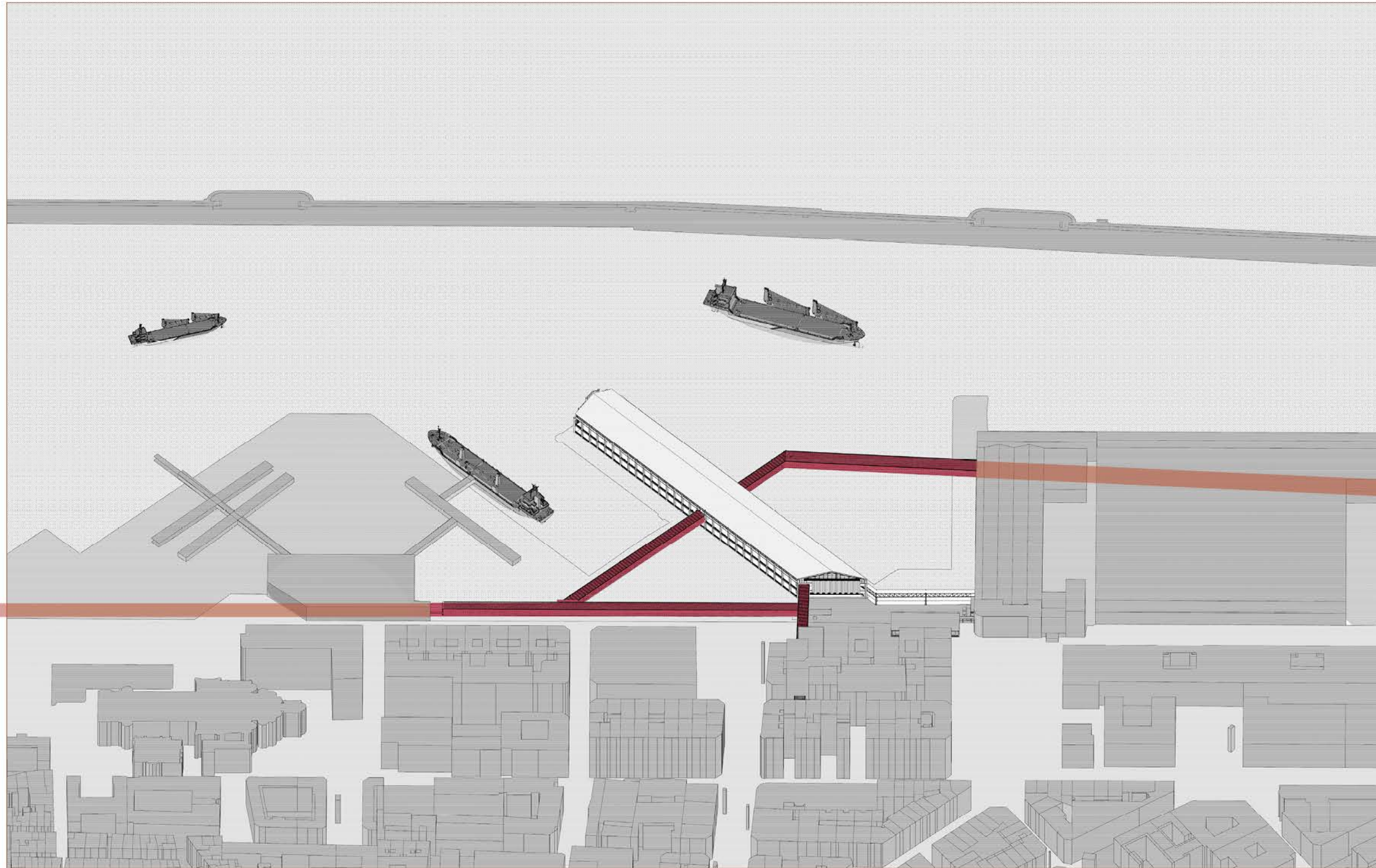




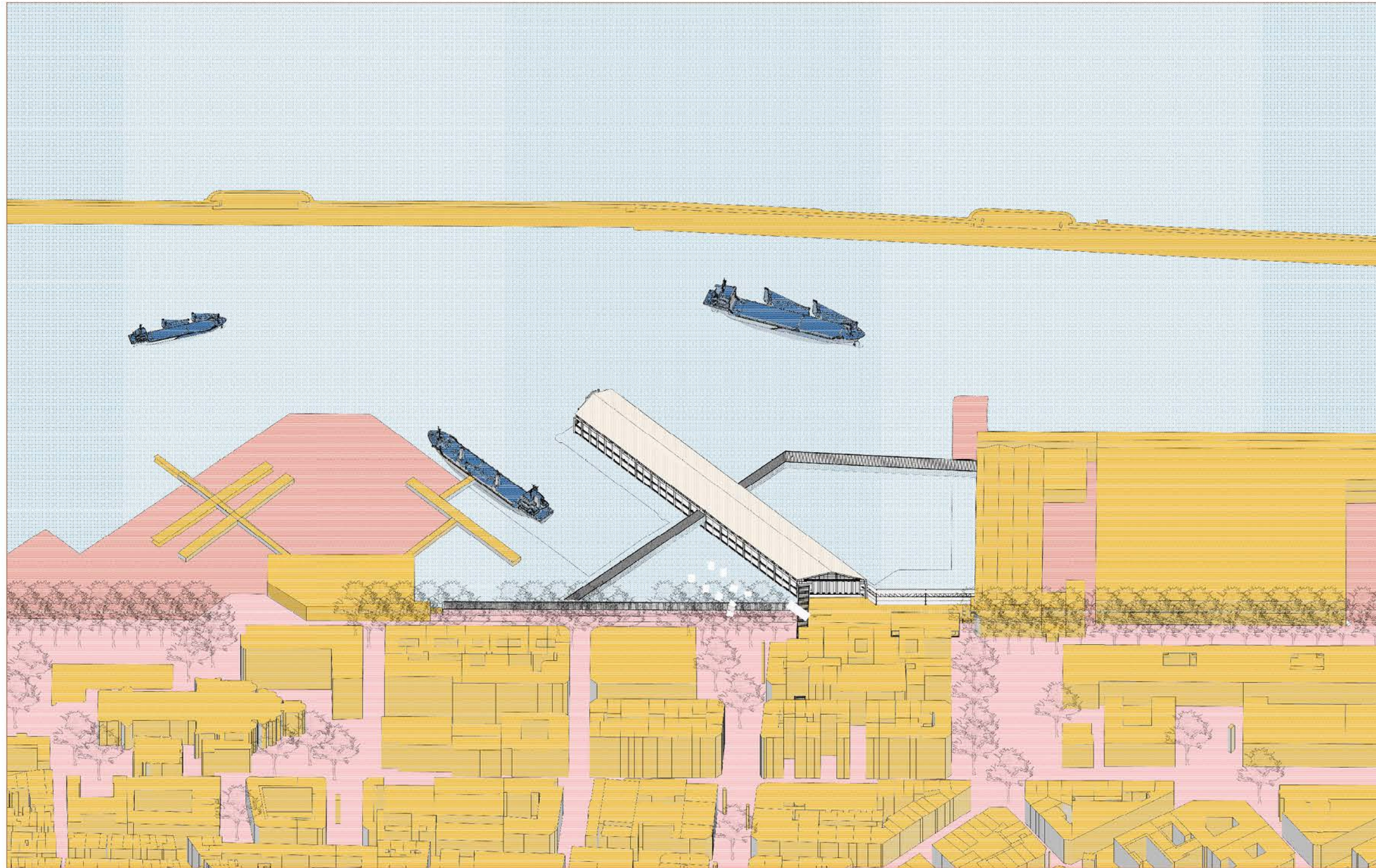








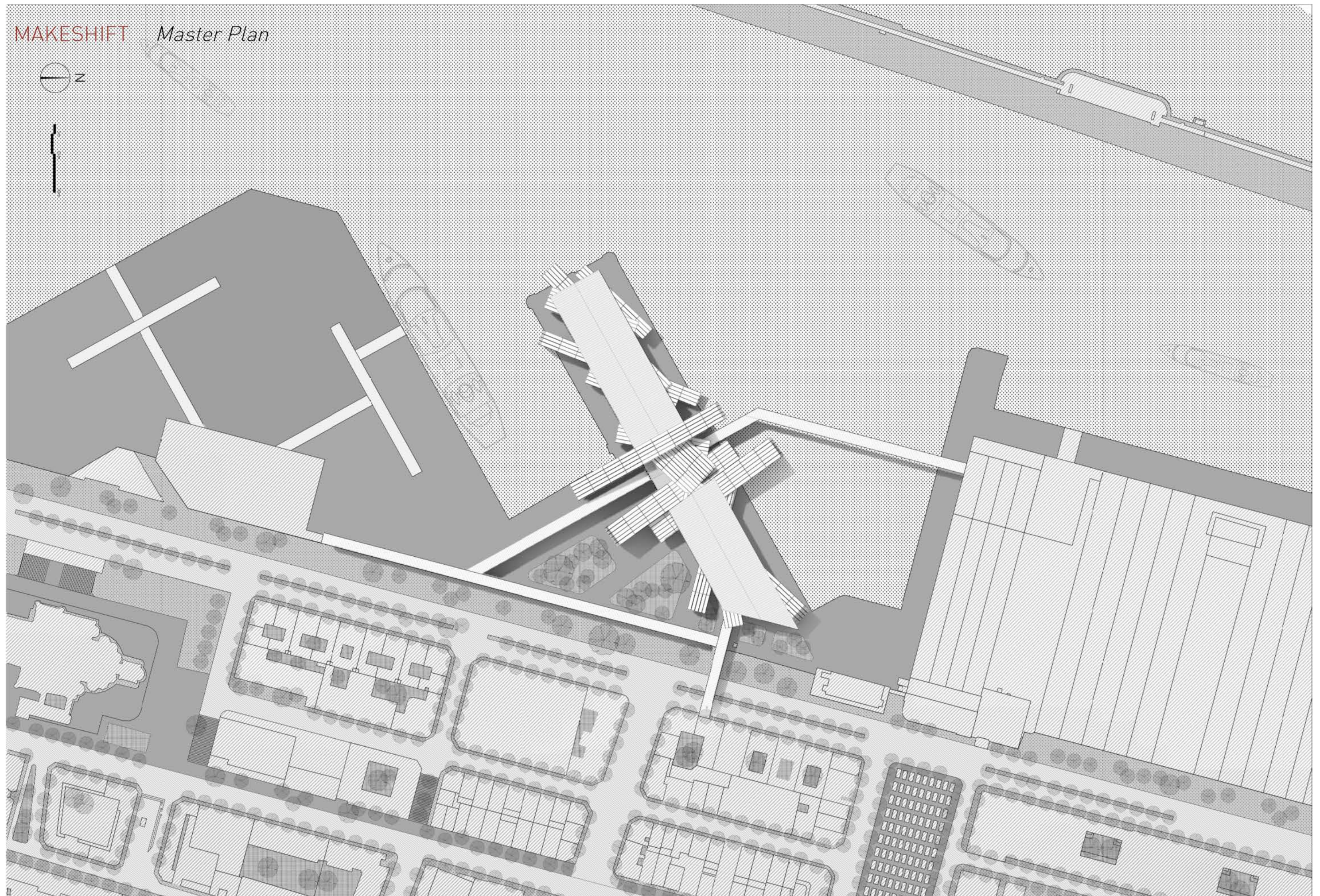
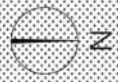




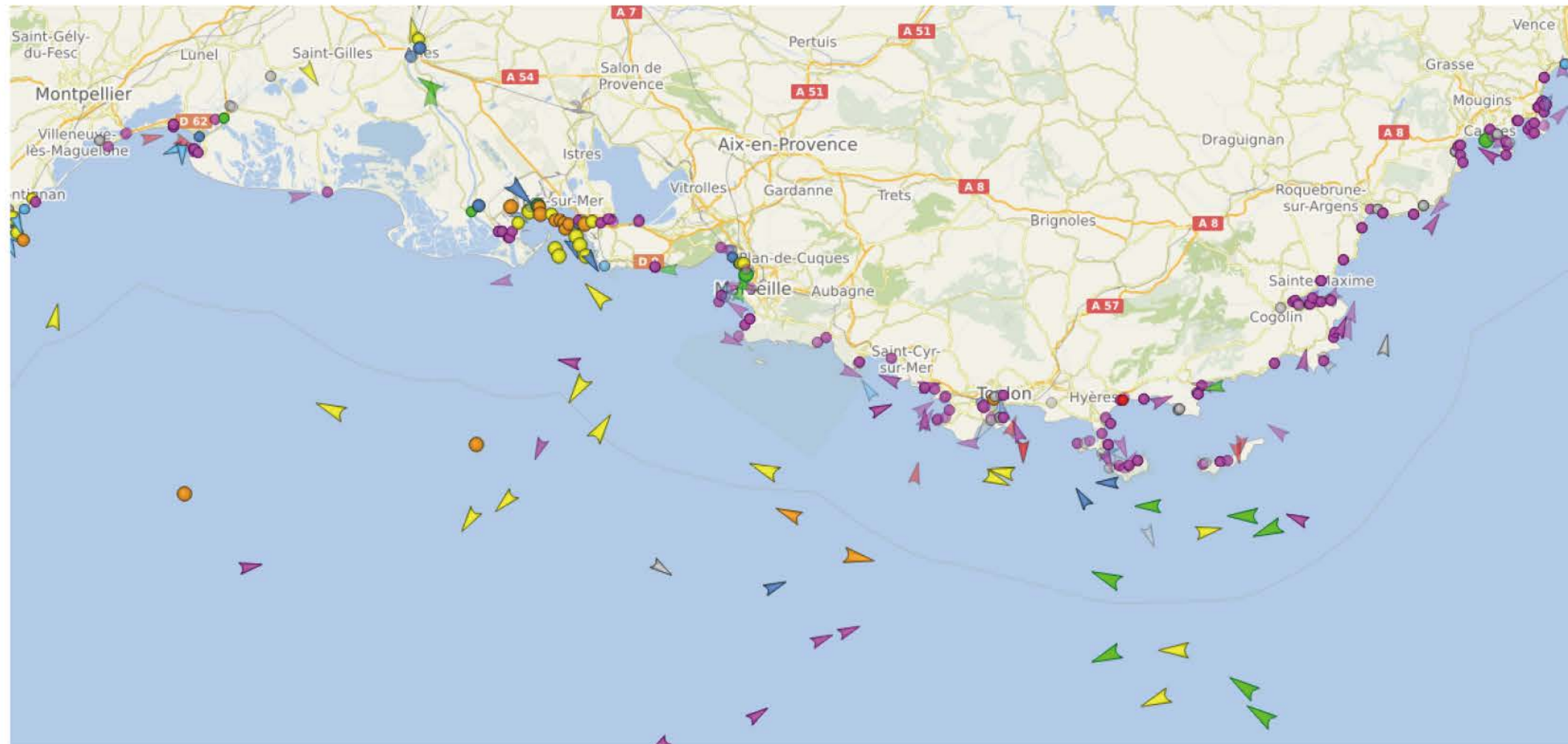


MAKESHIFT

Master Plan







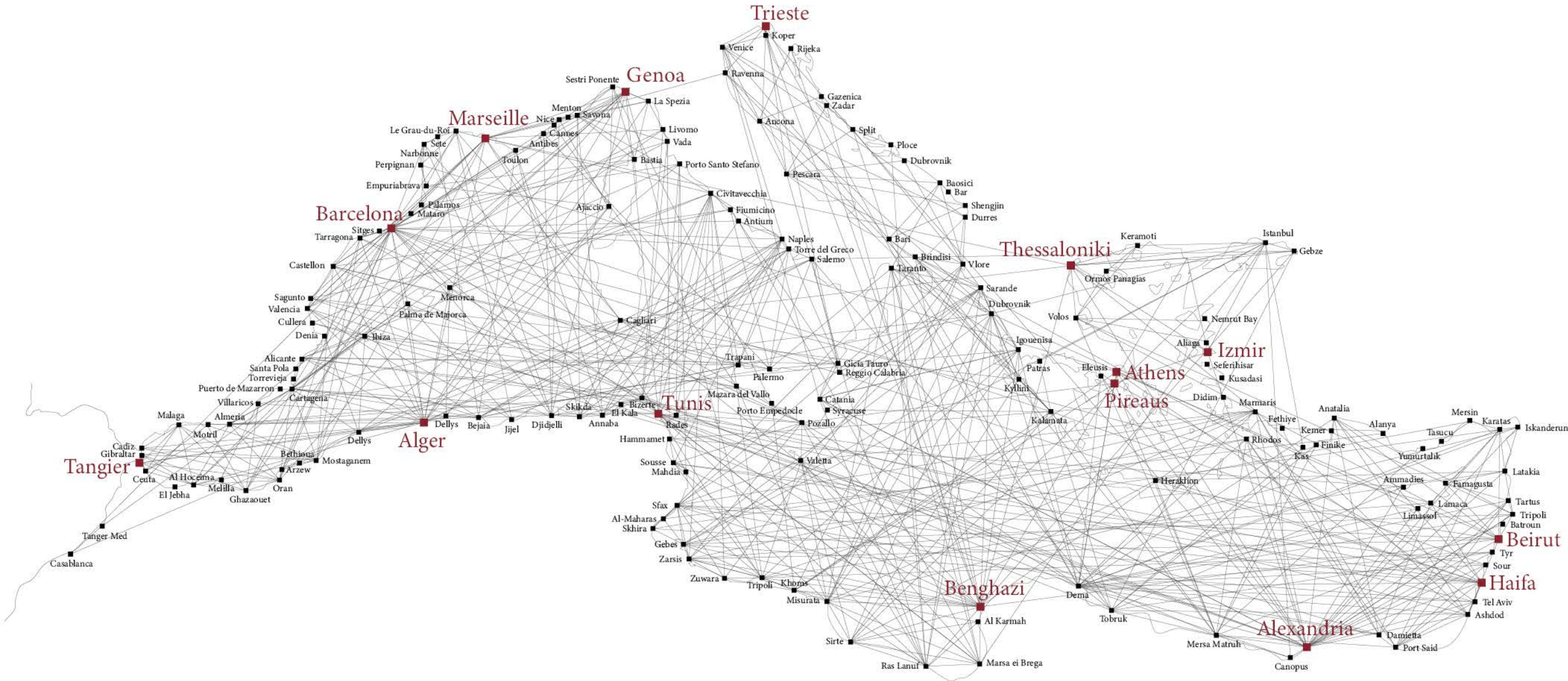




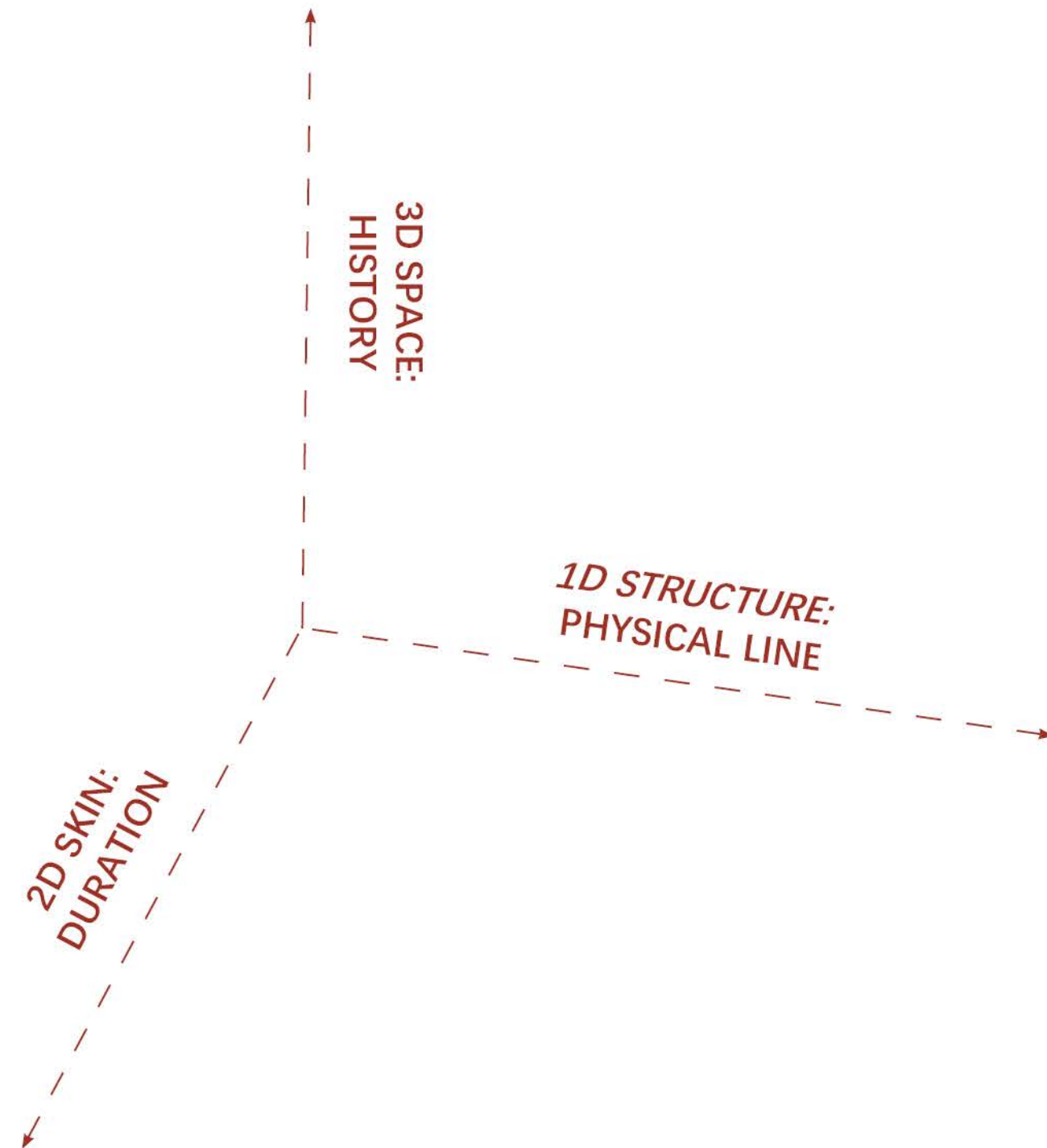
**PEOPLE**

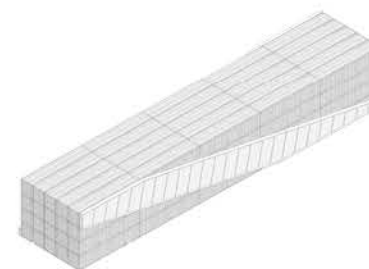
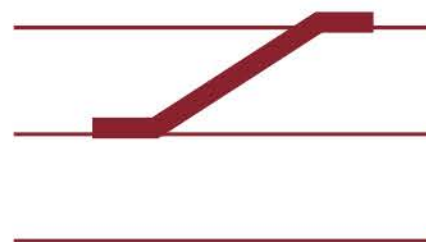
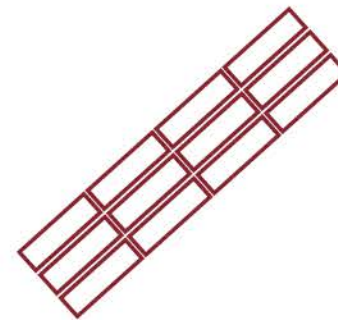
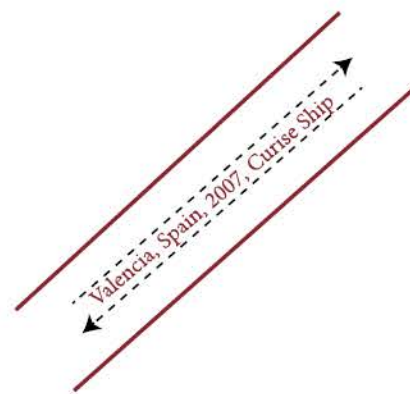
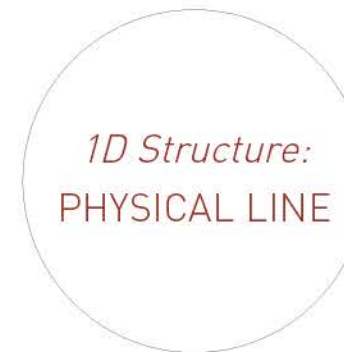
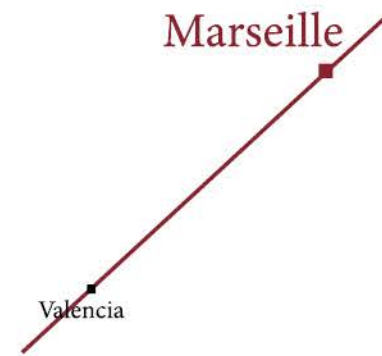
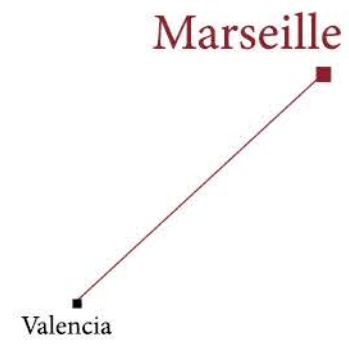


**CARGO**

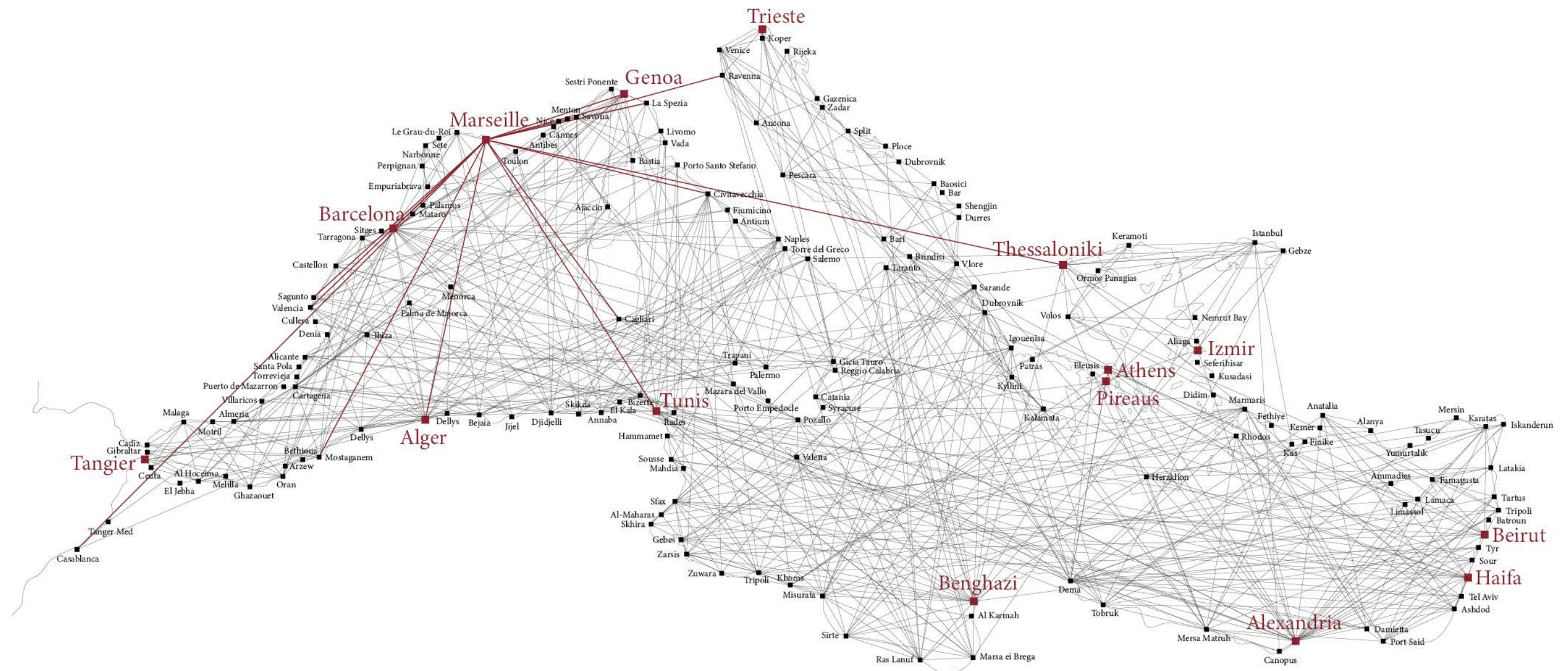


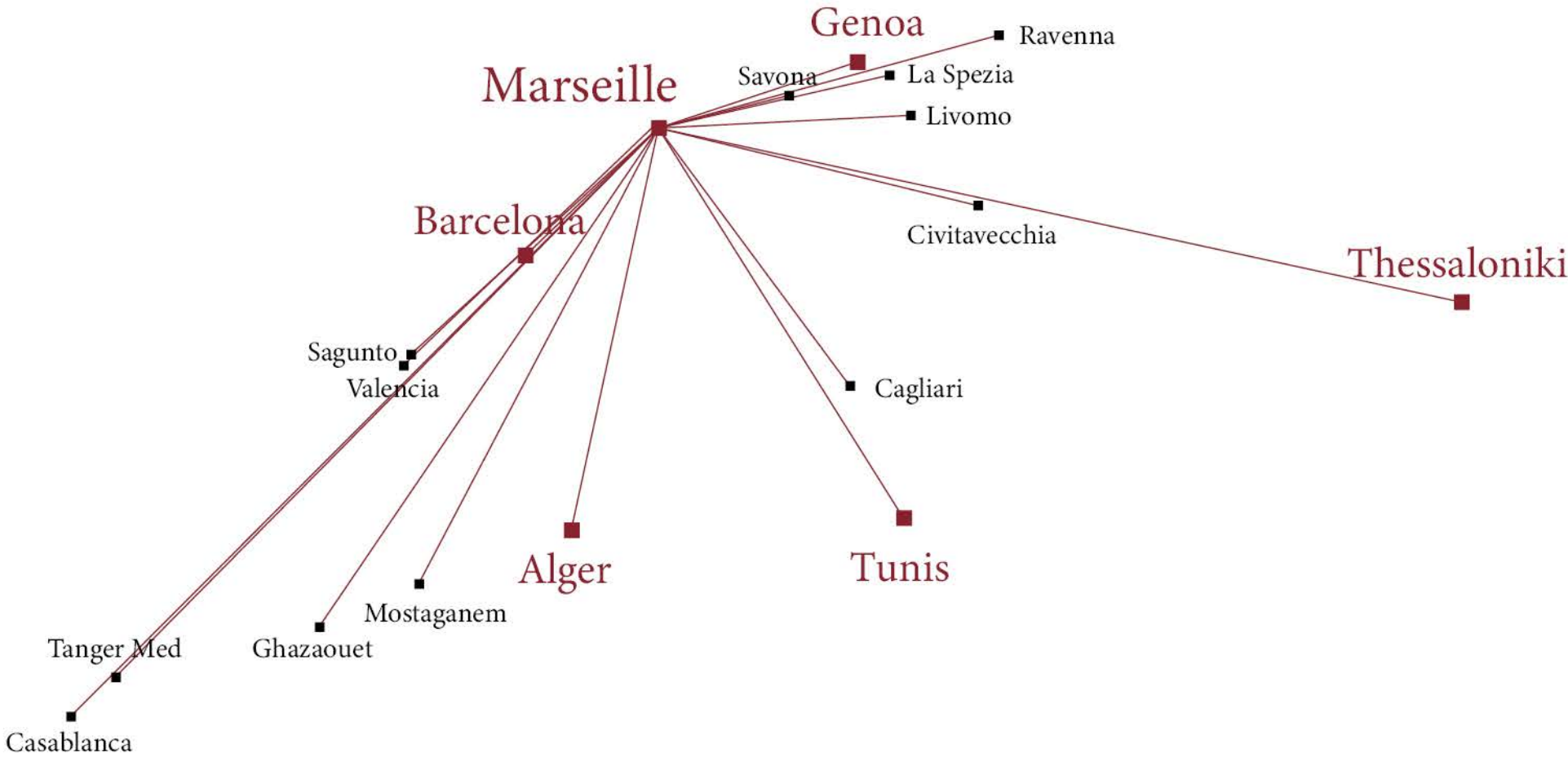




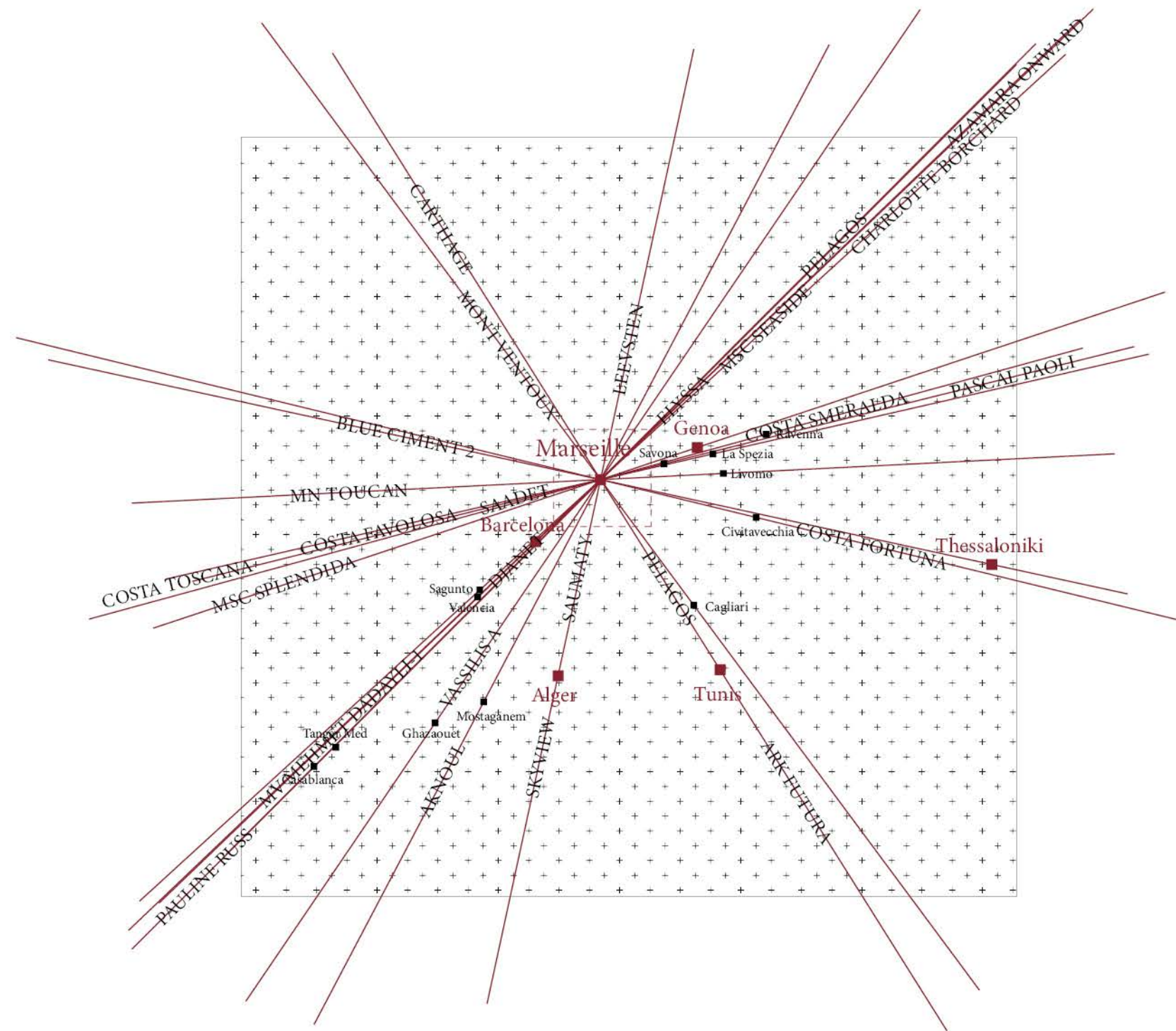




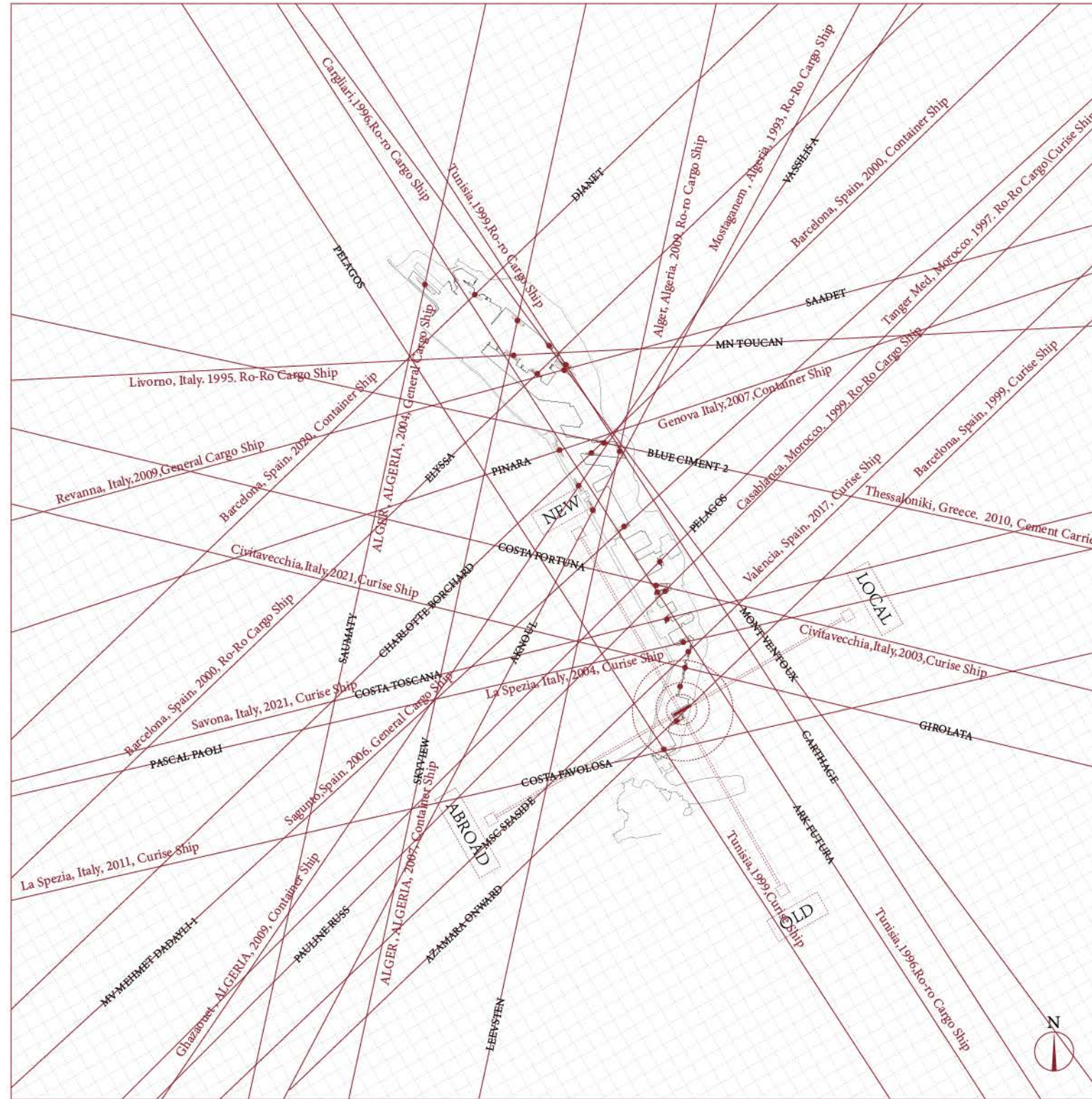




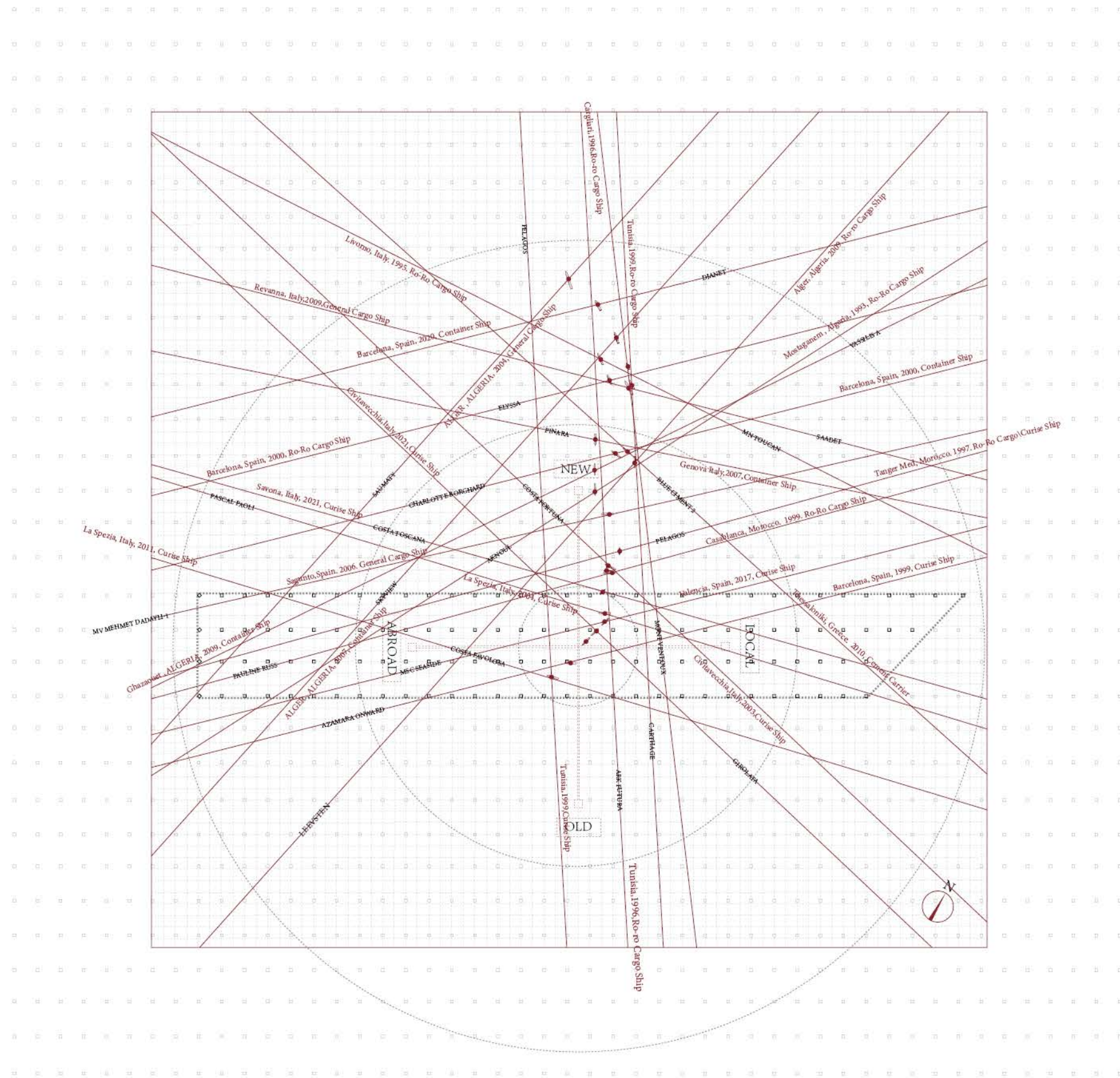




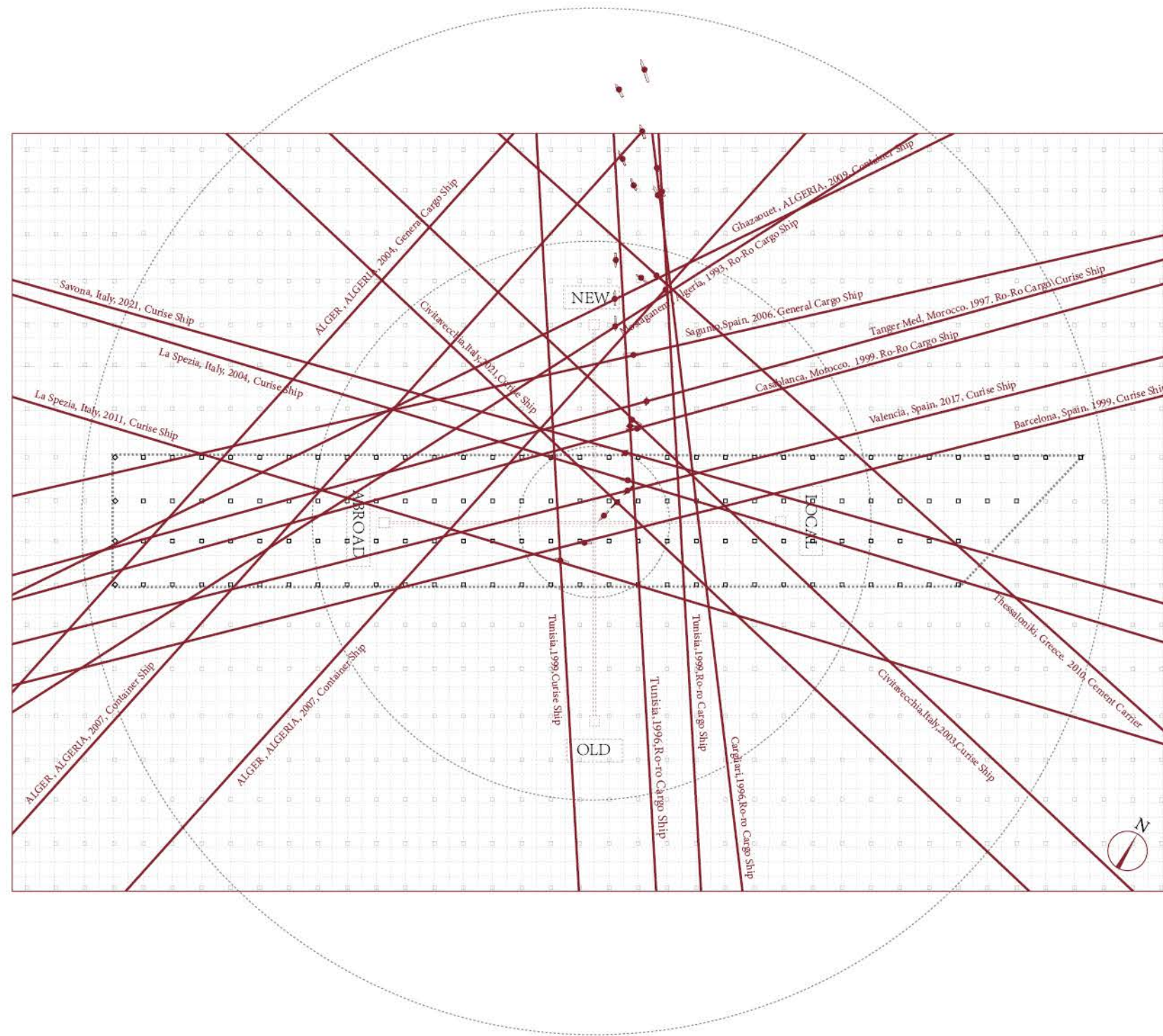




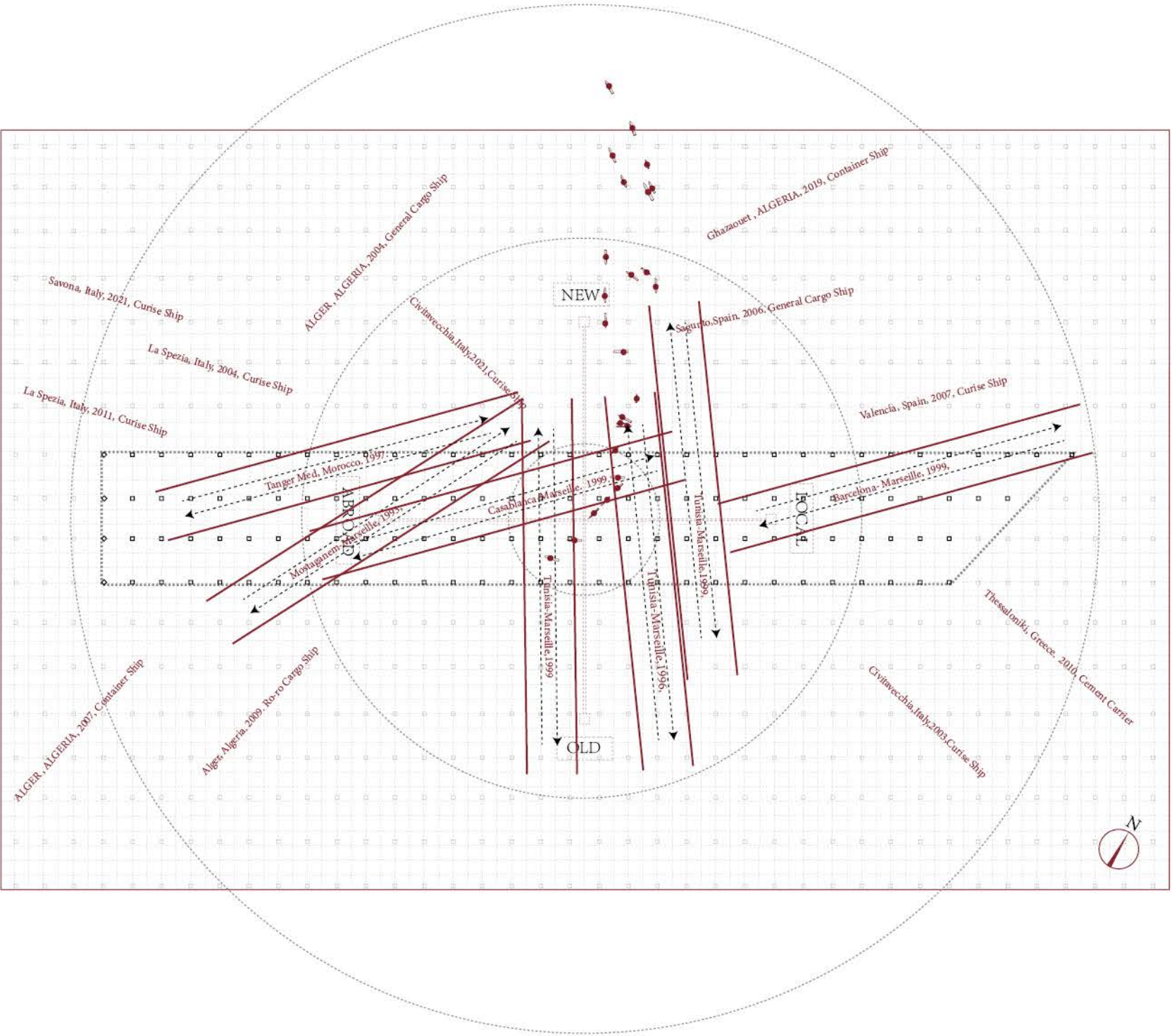








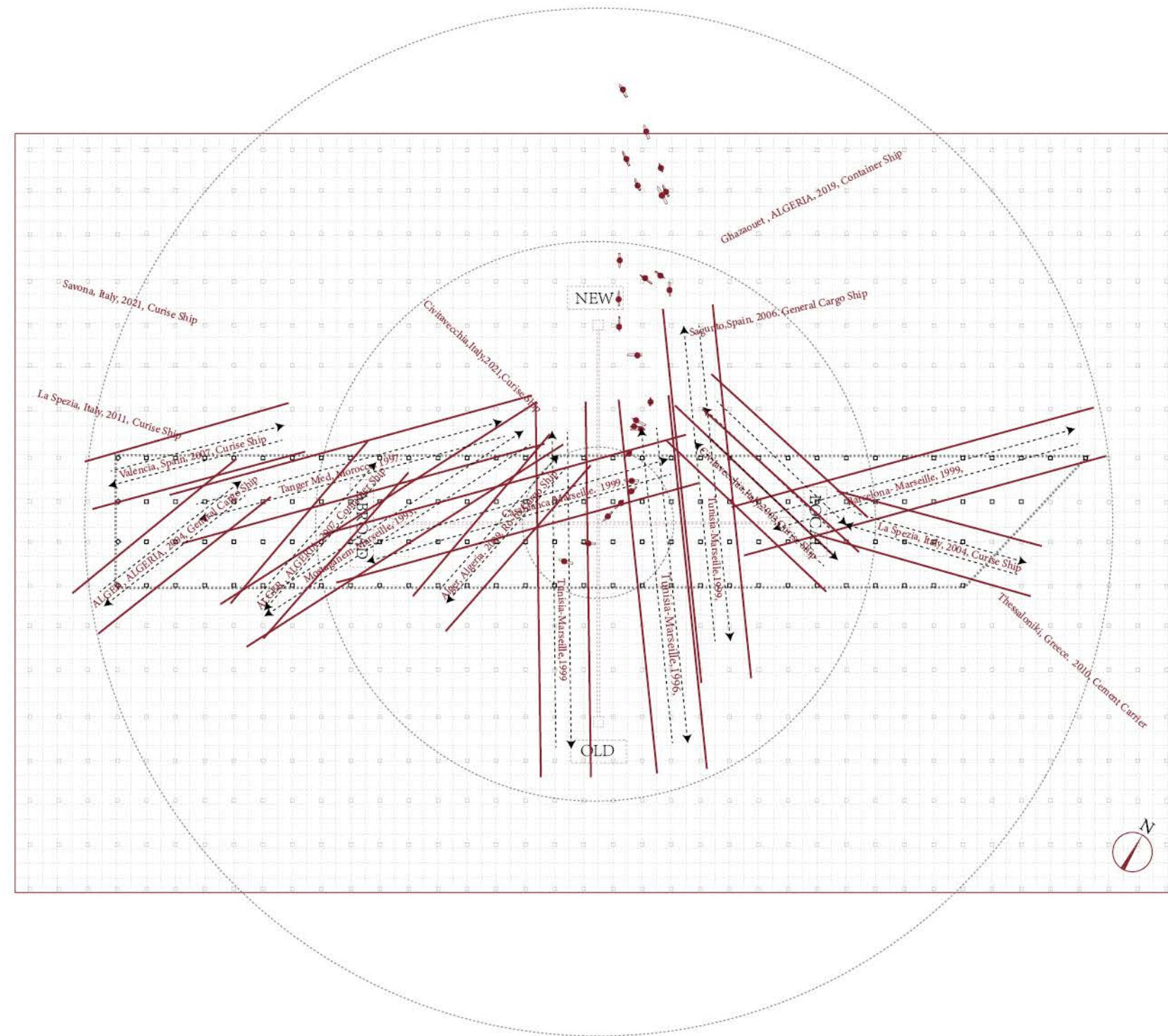




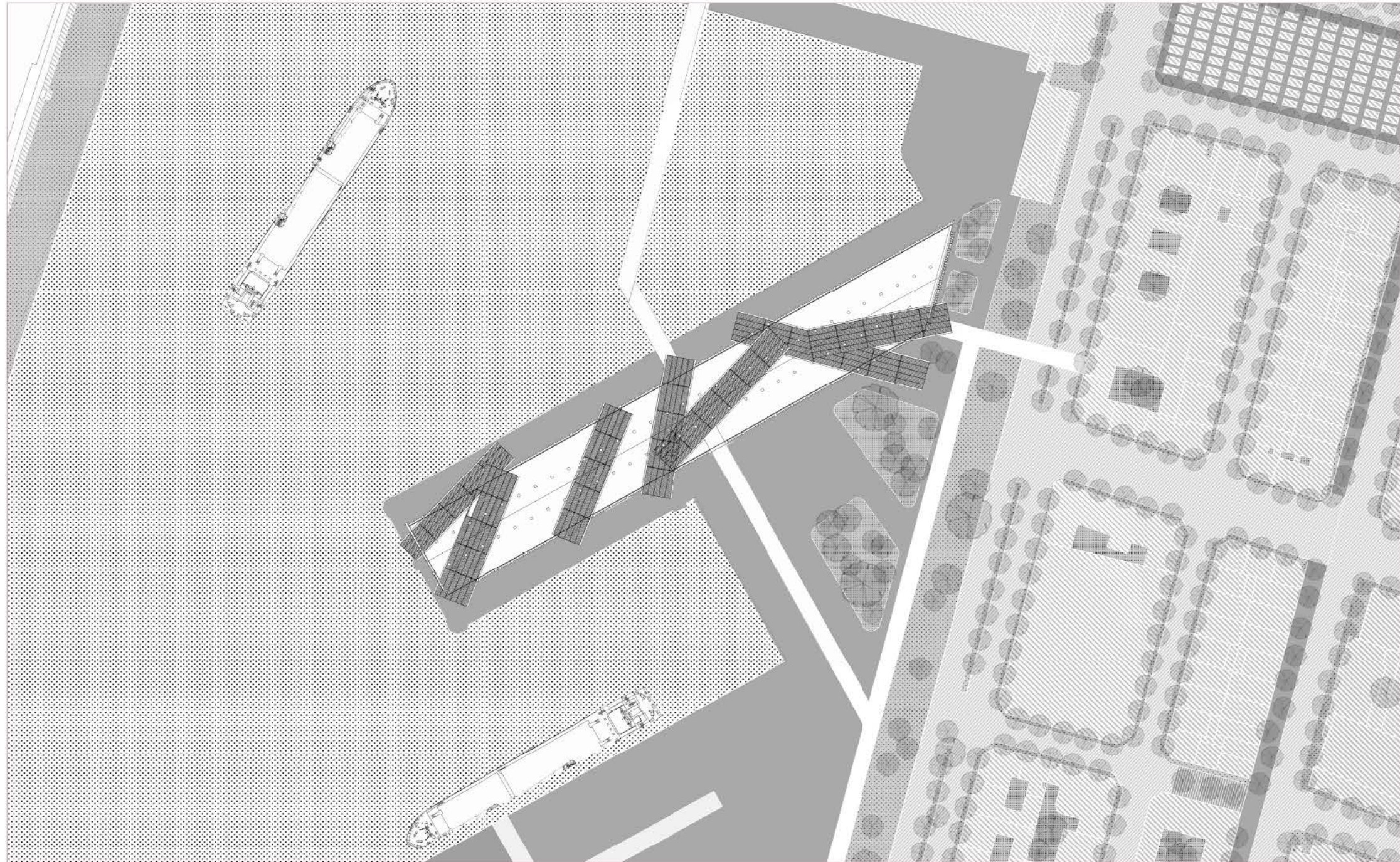




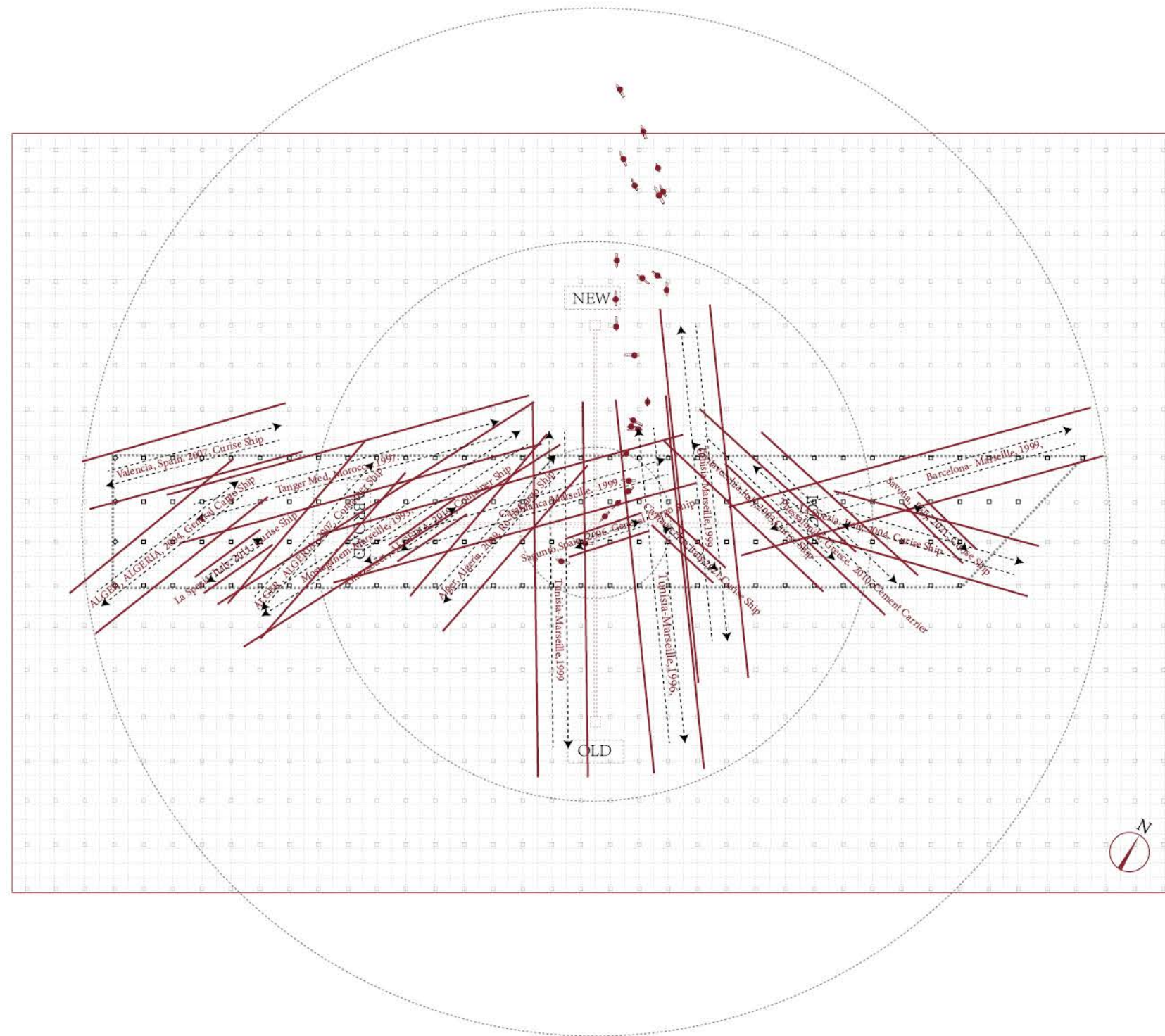




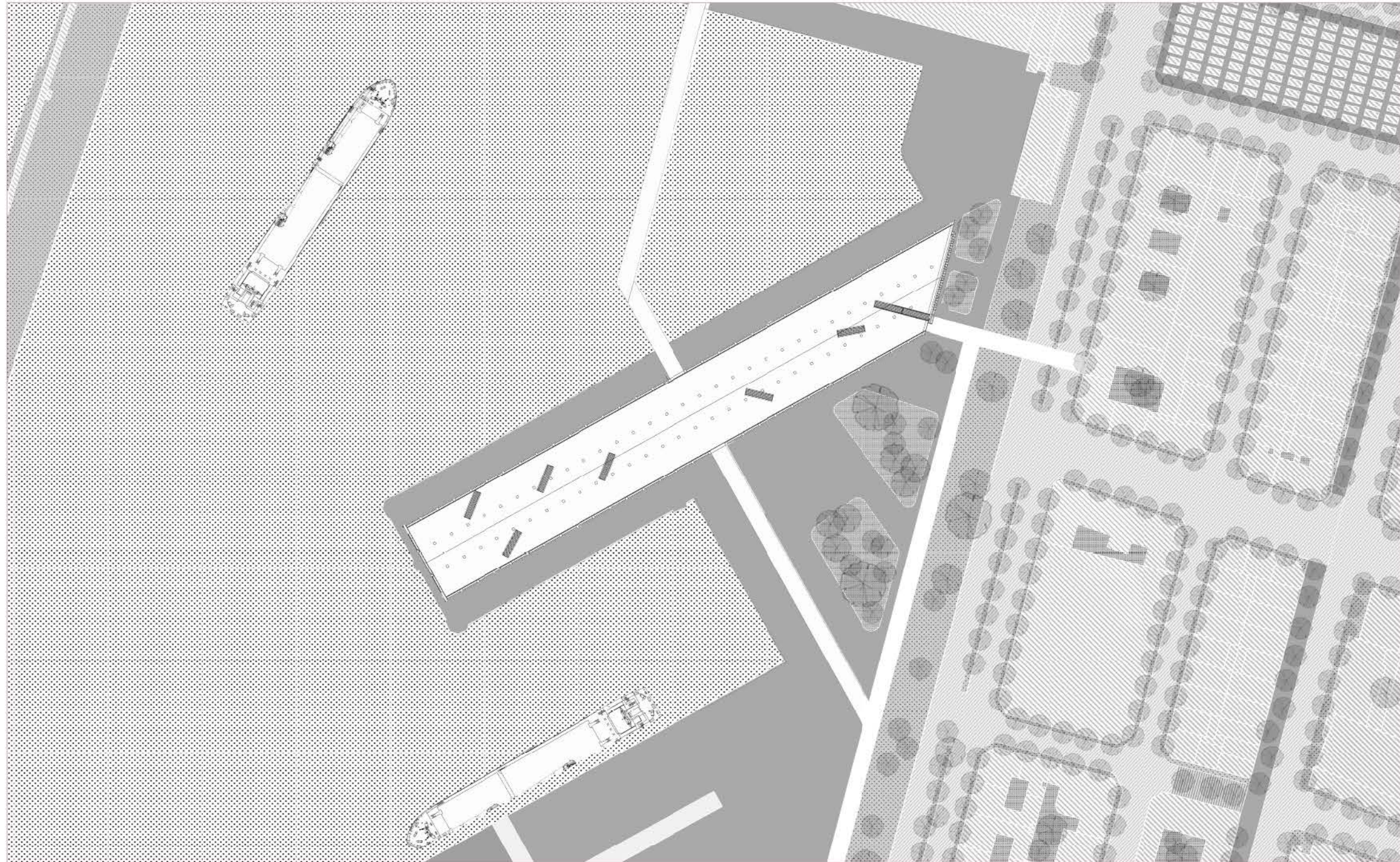




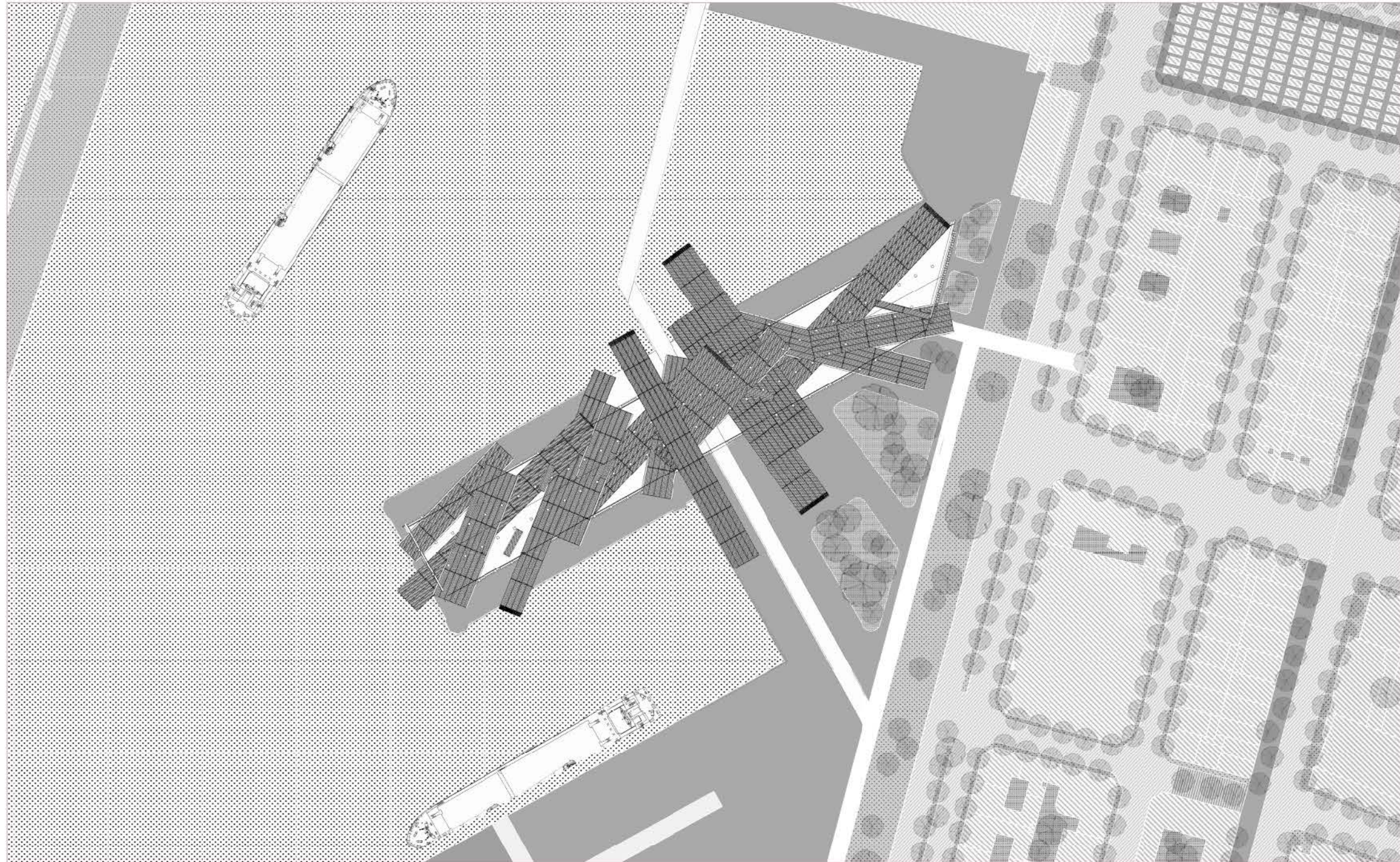




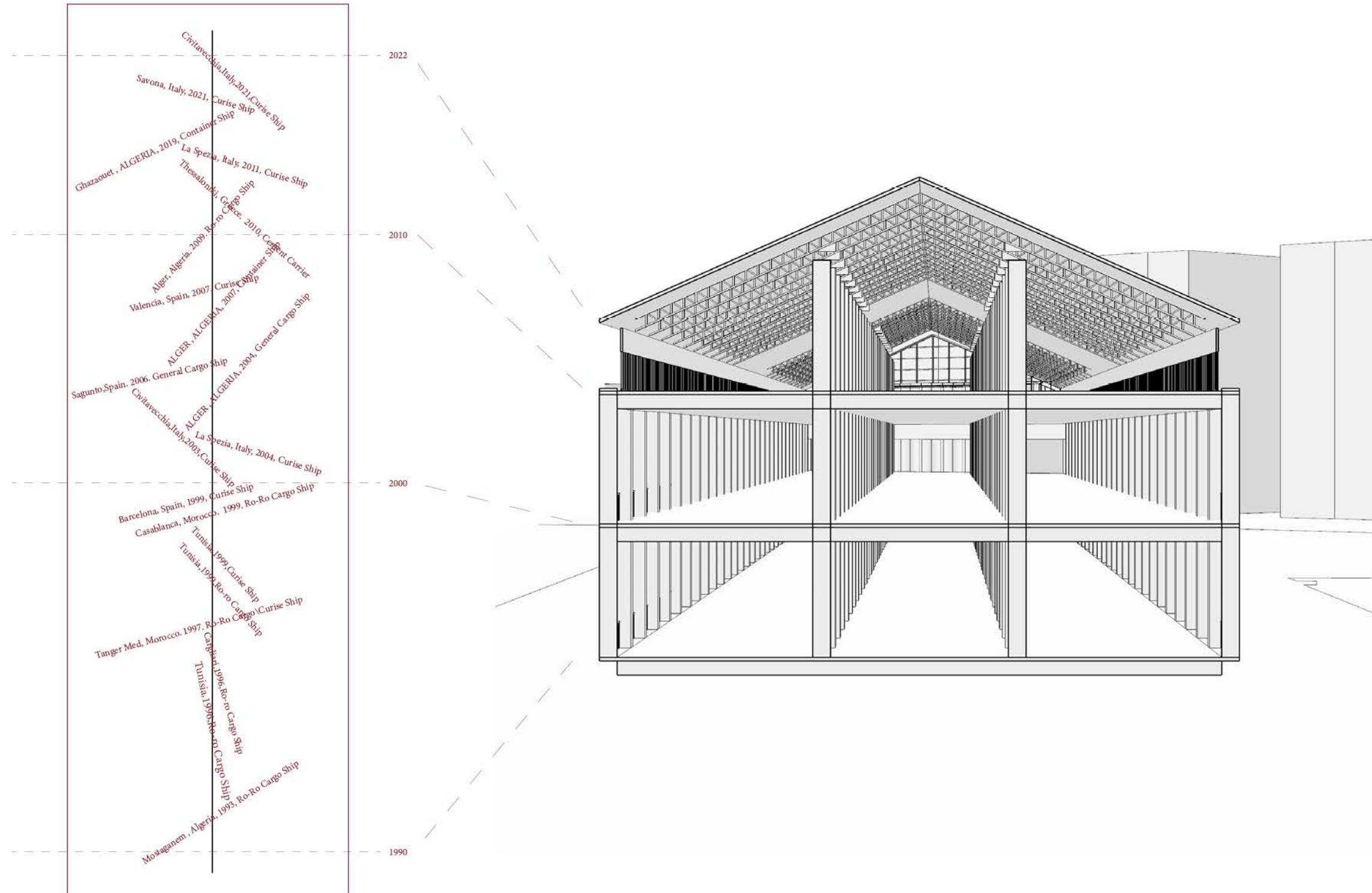






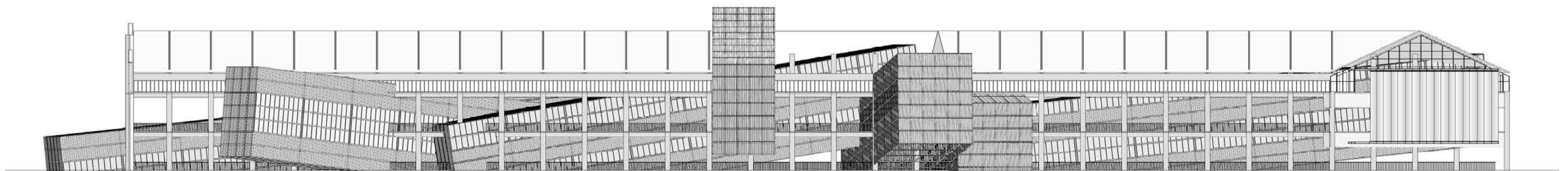
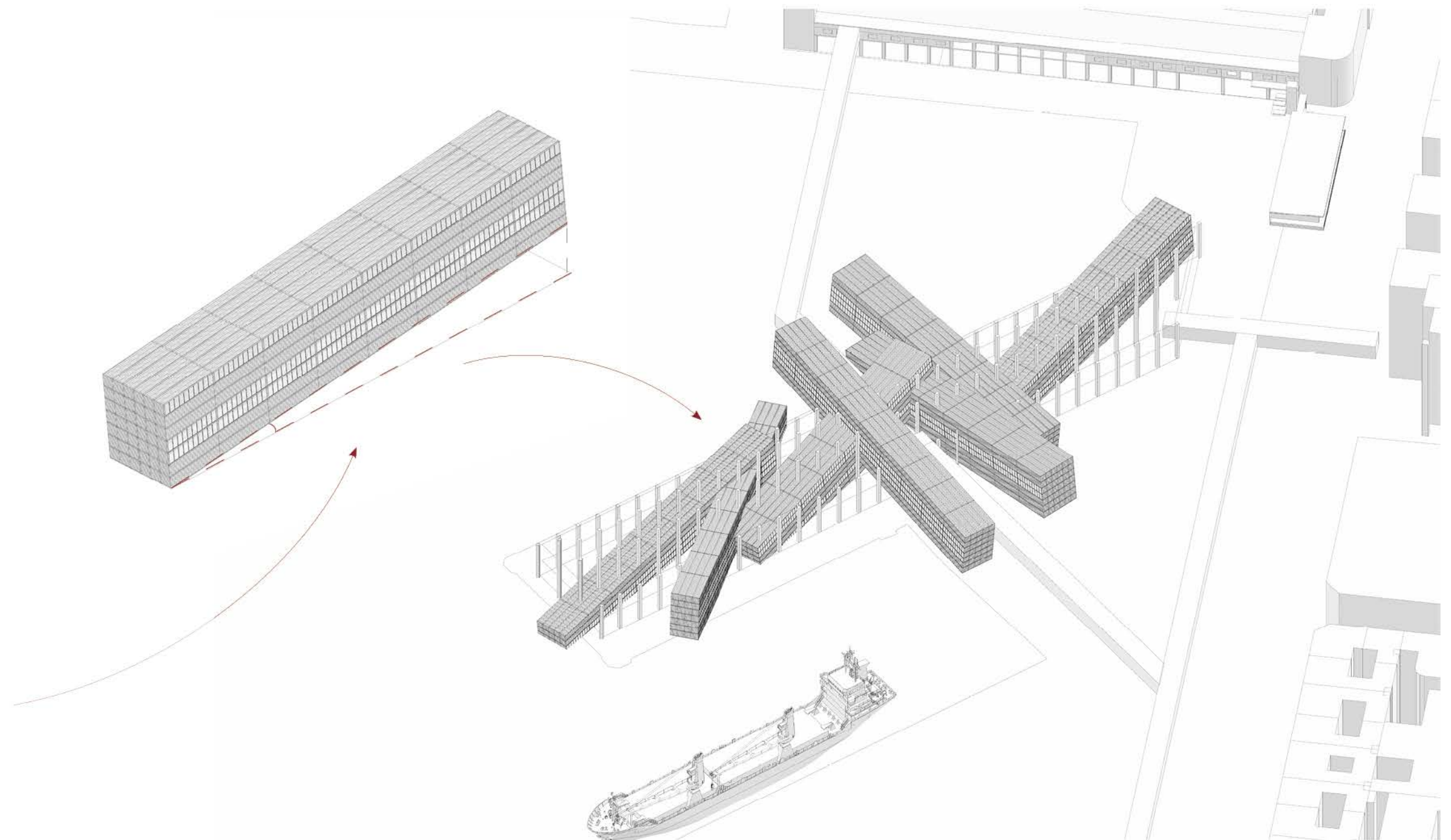
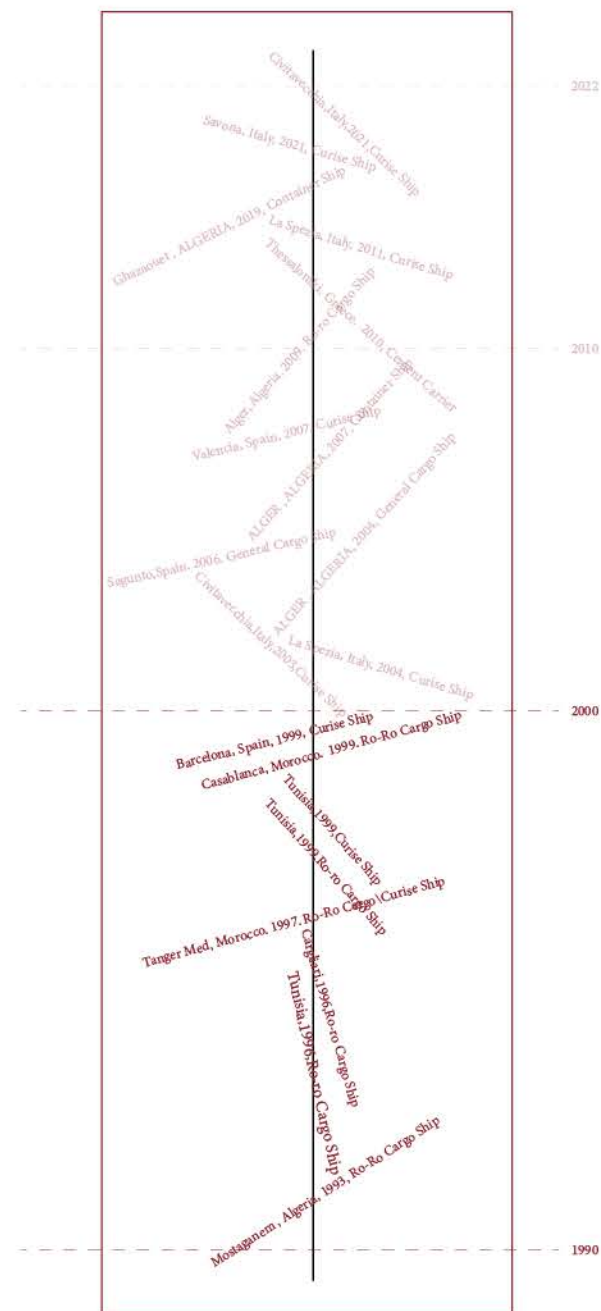


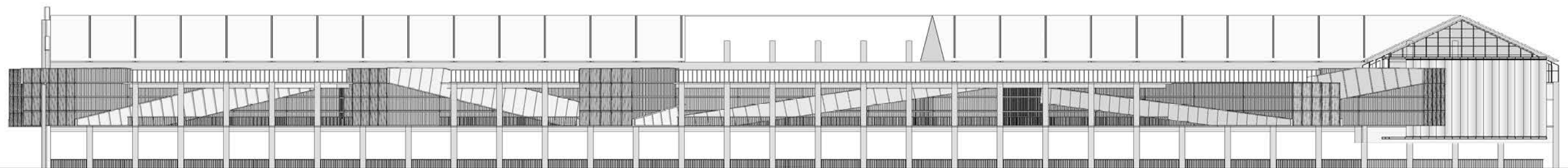
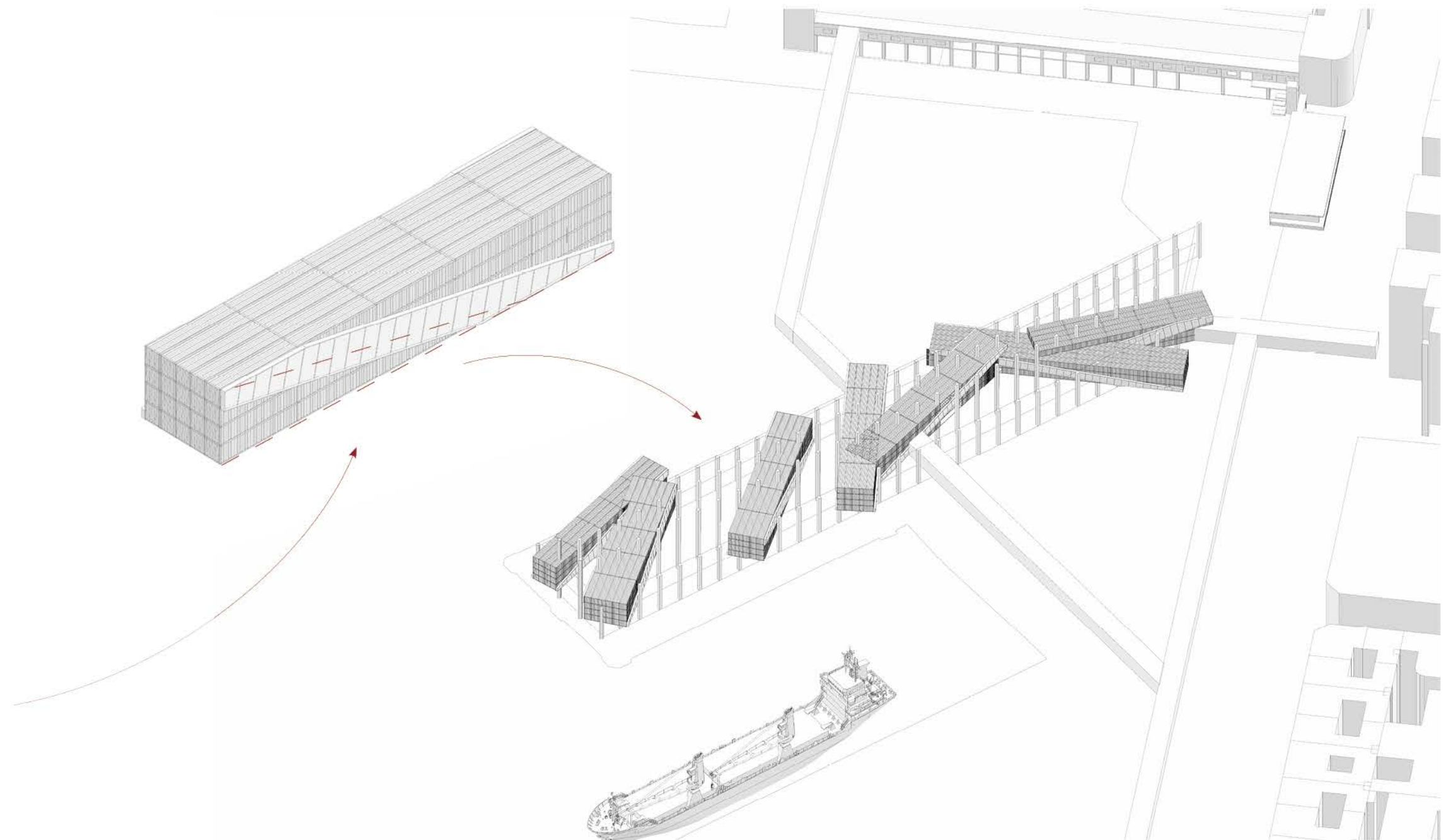
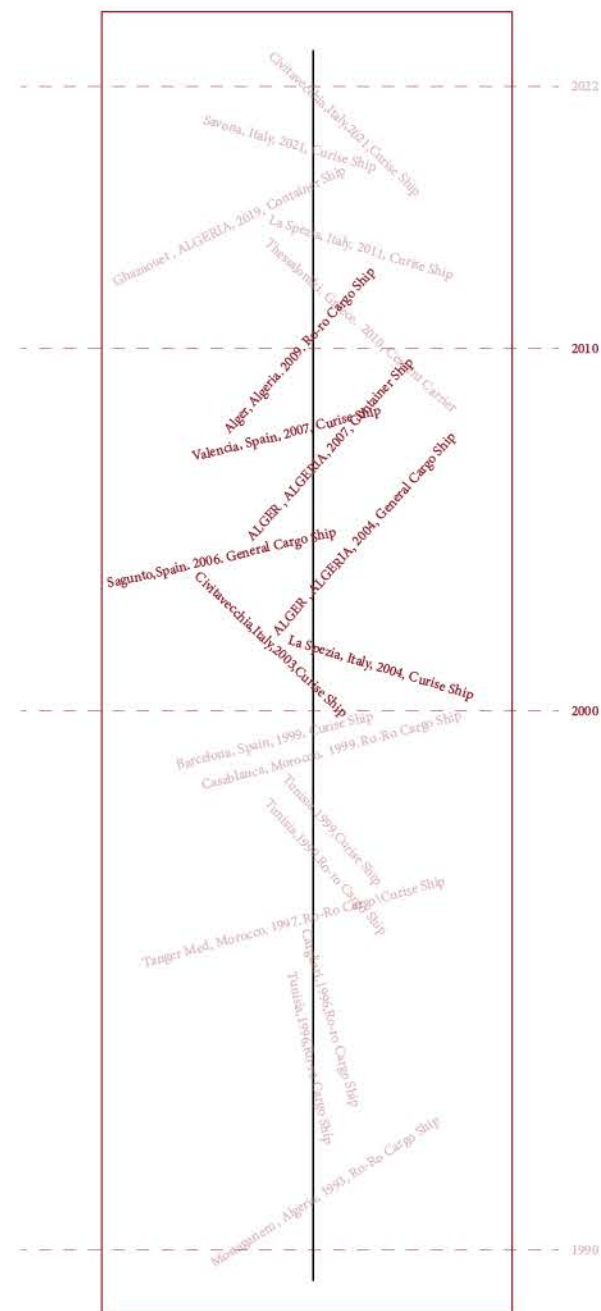




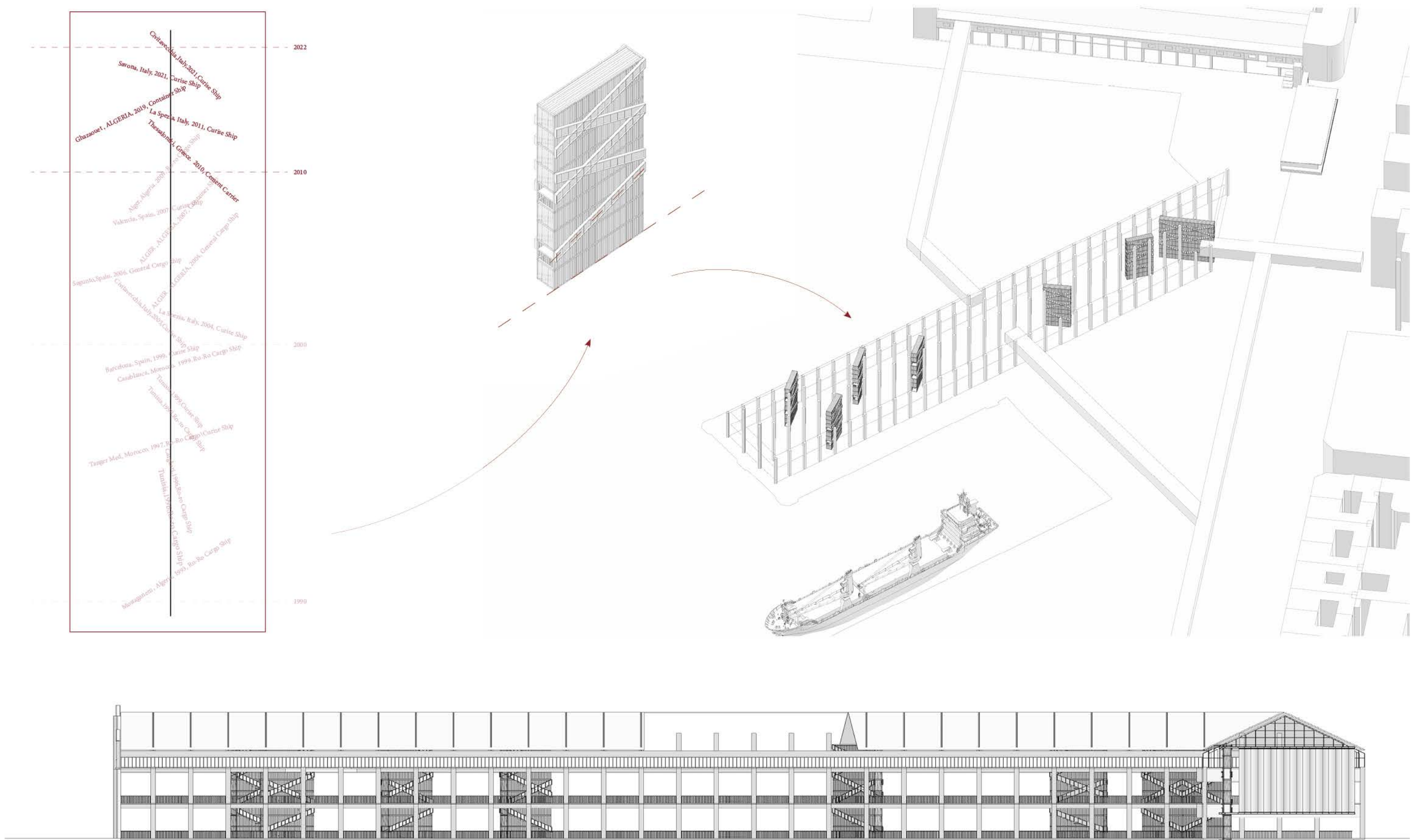


# MAKESHIFT | 3D Space: History

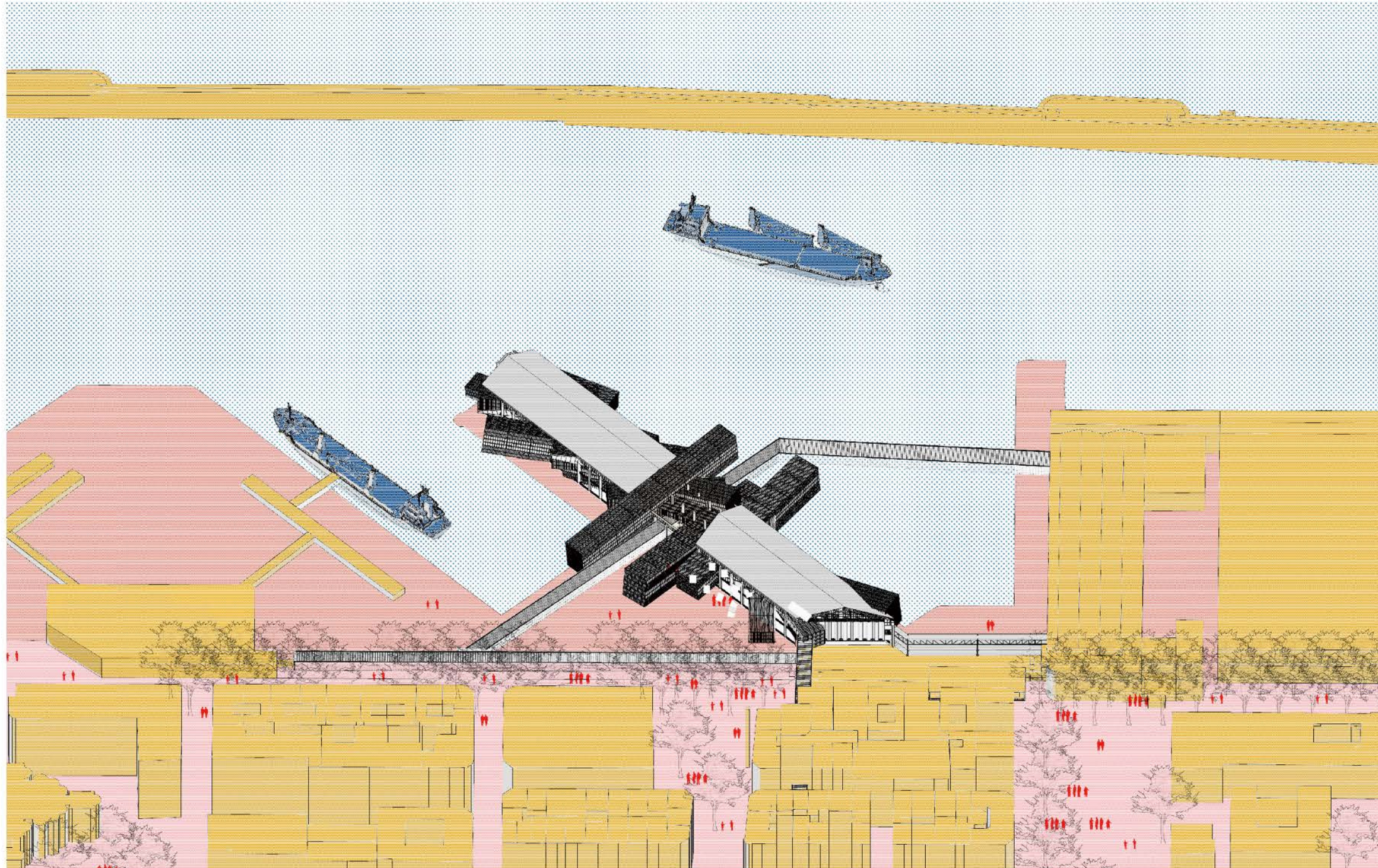












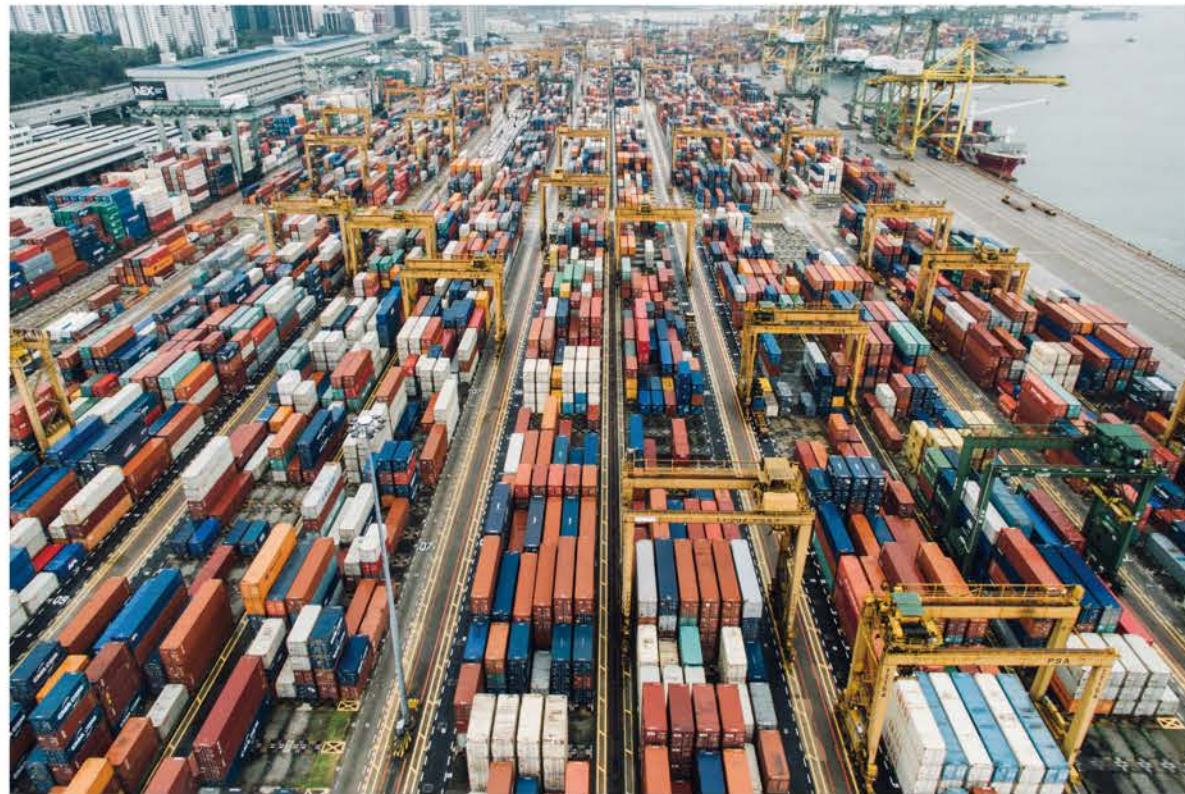


## VI. USING ACCESSIBLE MATERIALS

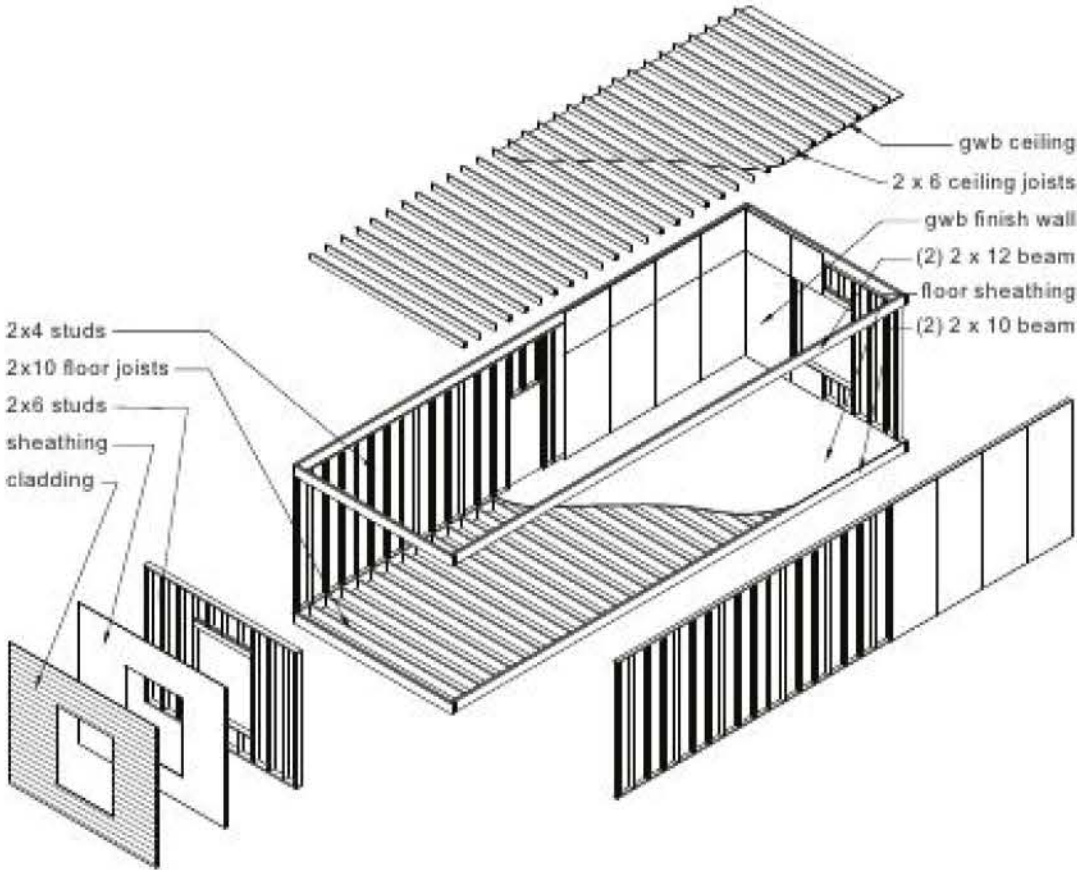




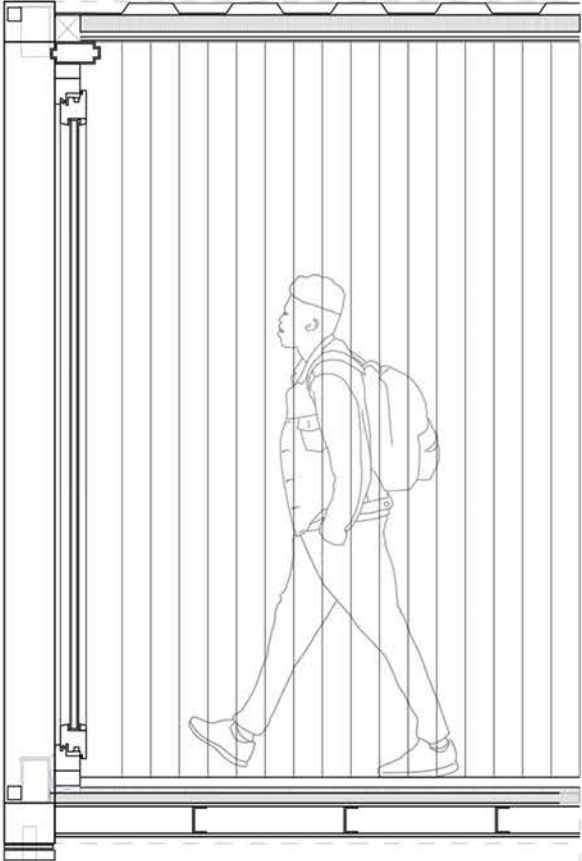
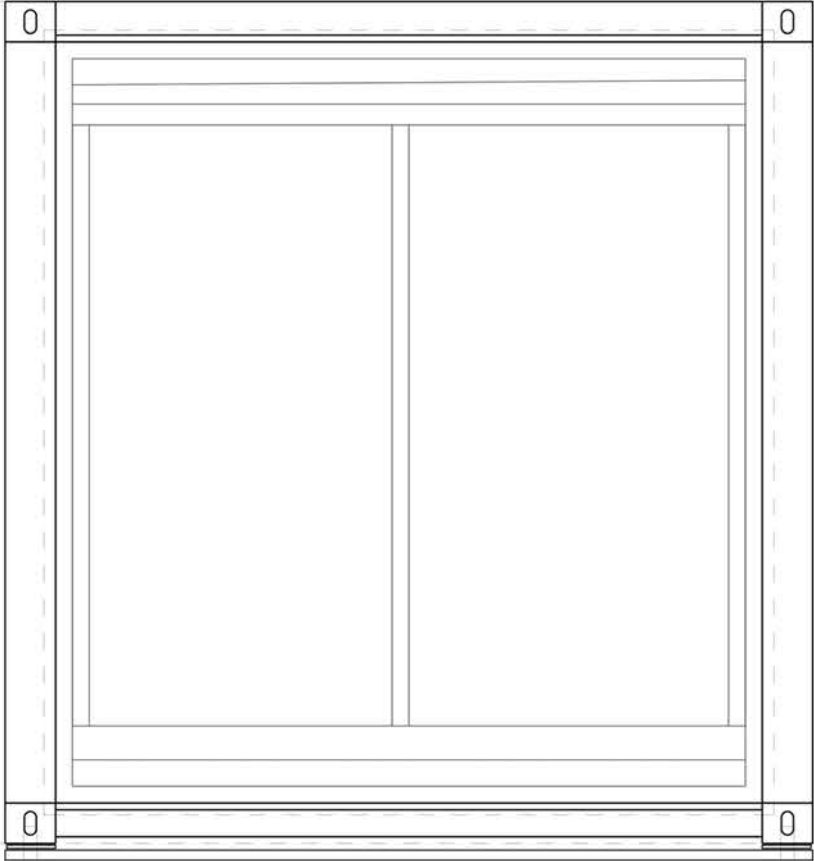










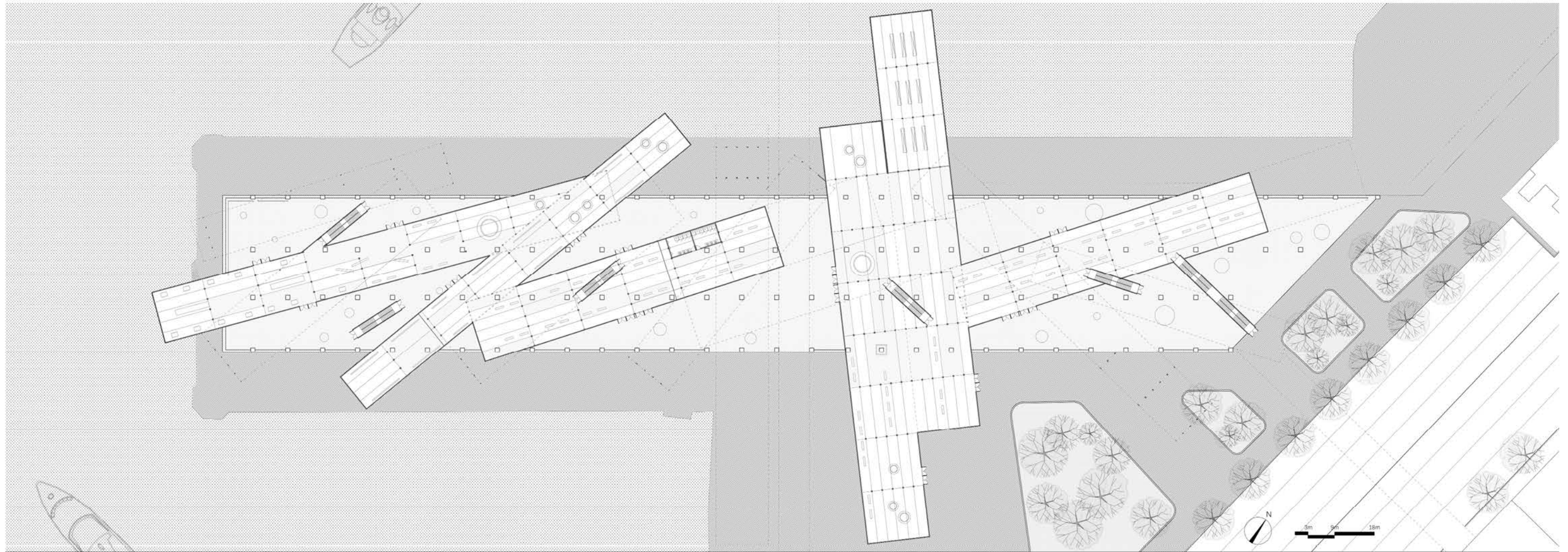






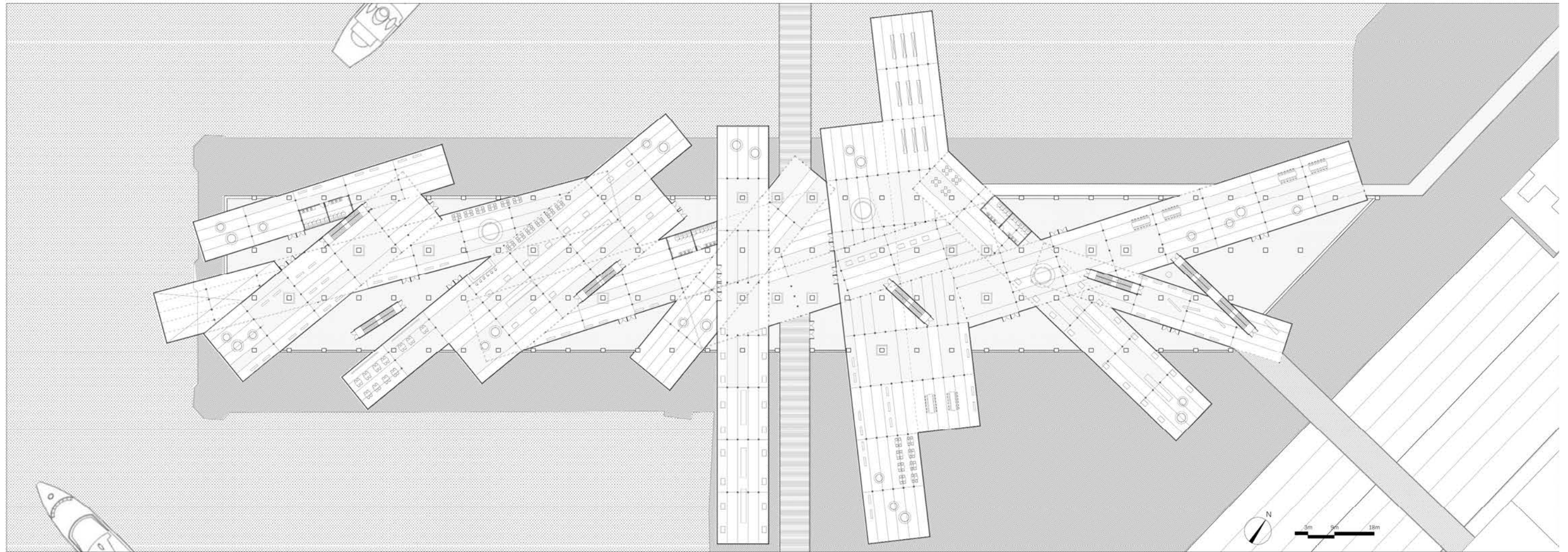
## VII. ADHOCISM





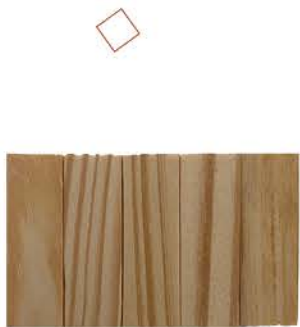
*Ground Floor Plan 1:200*



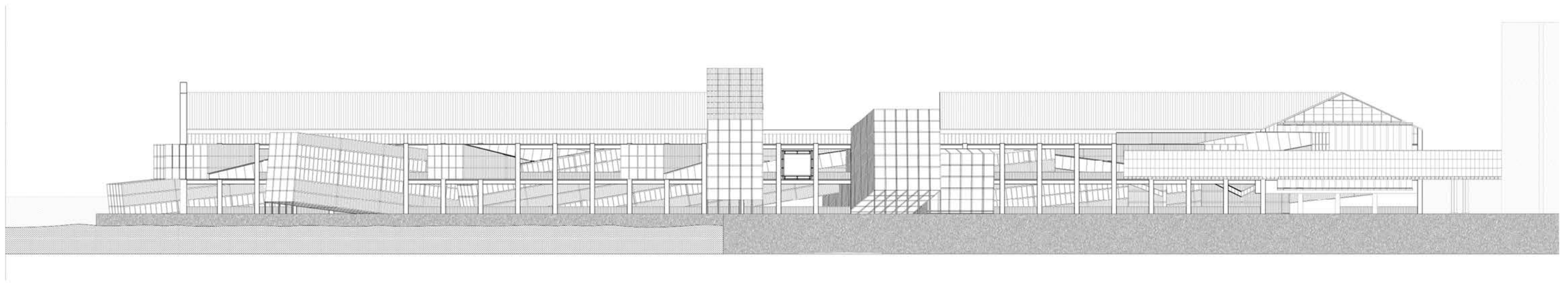


*First Floor Plan 1:200*







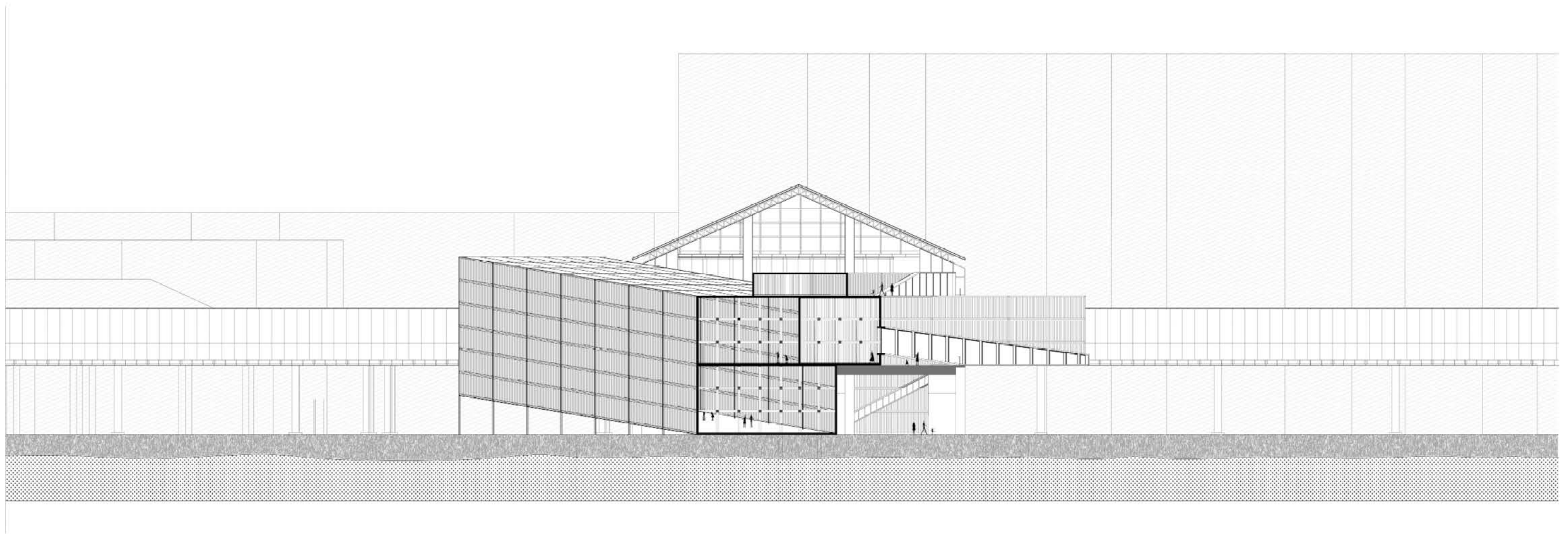
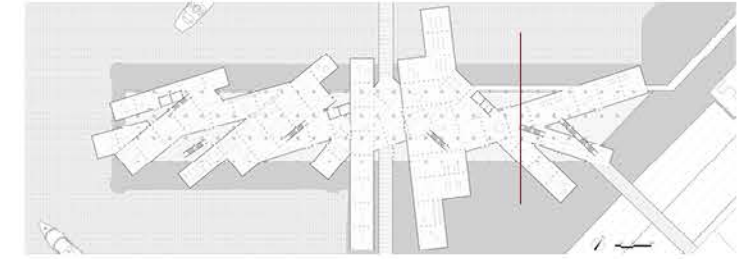


*South Facade 1:200*





*West Facade 1:200*



*West Facade 1:200*

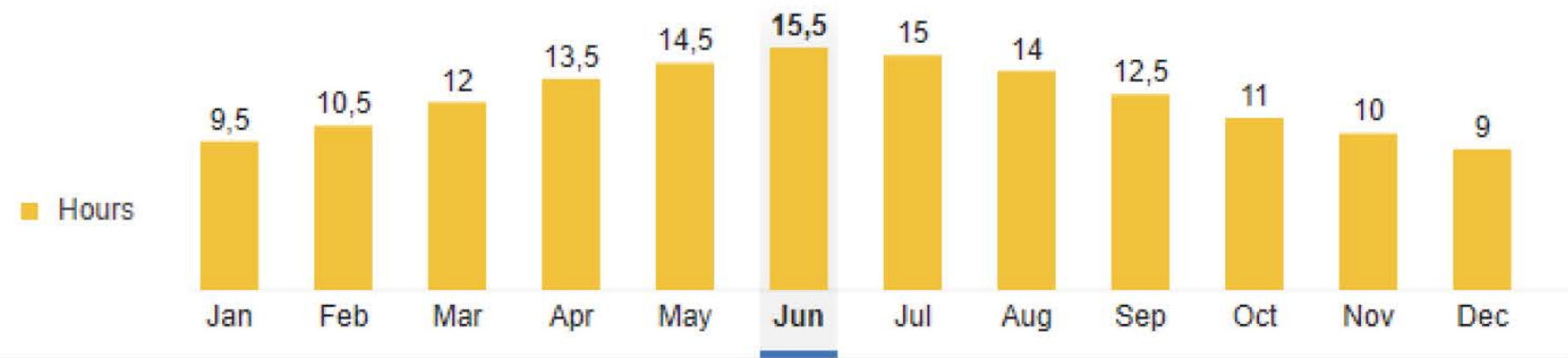


## VII. CLIMATE DESIGN

Temperatures (°C)

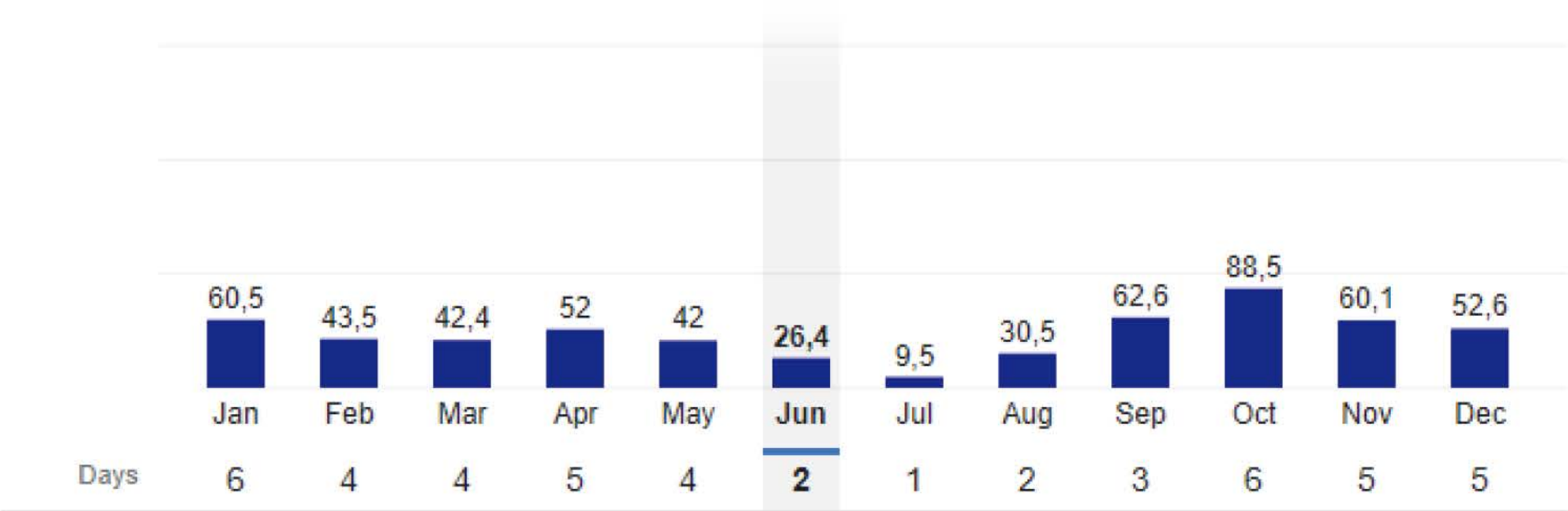


Daylight

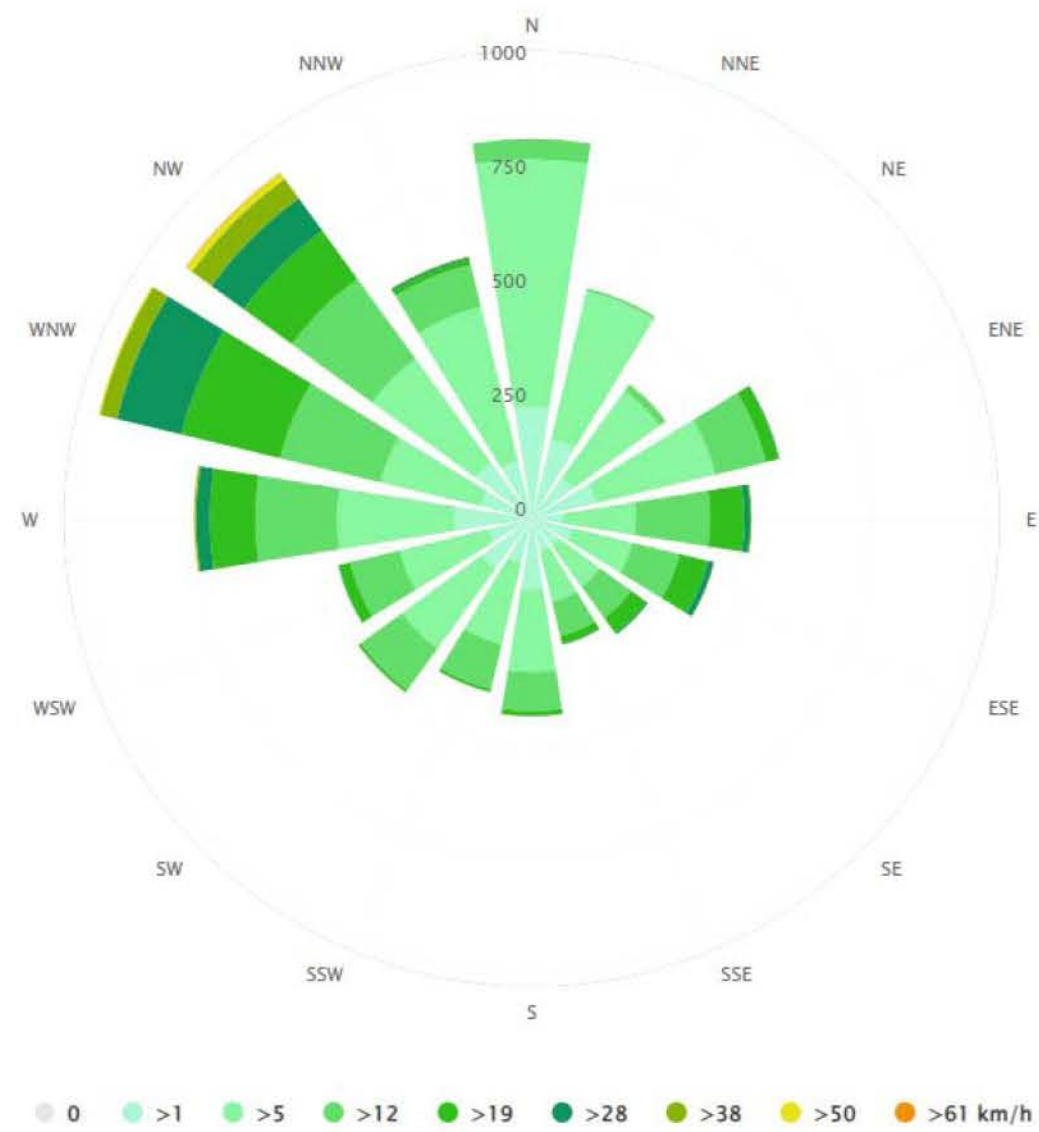




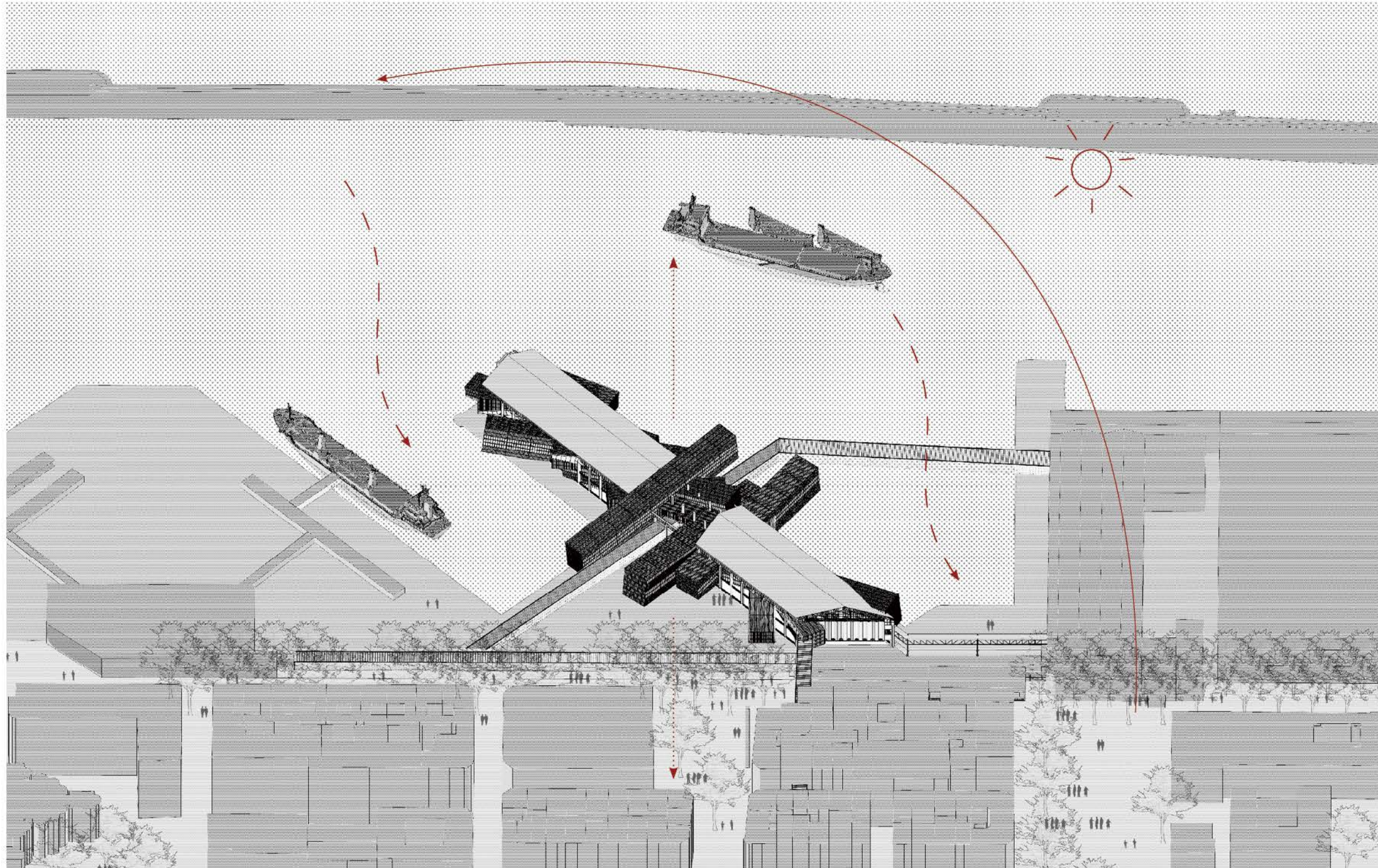
Rainfall (millimeters)



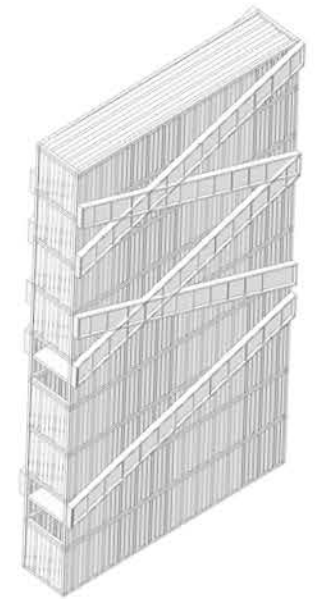
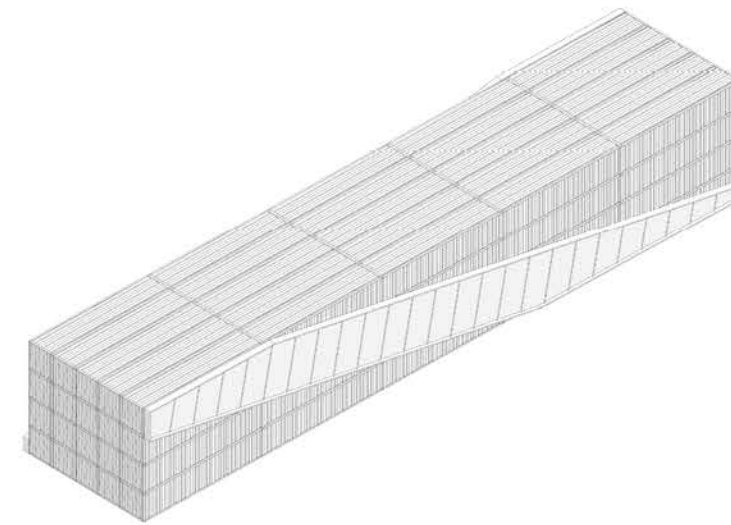
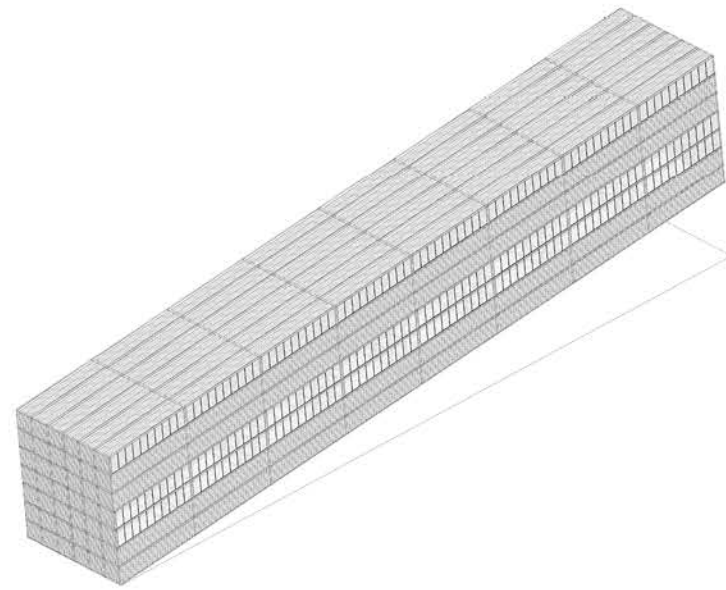
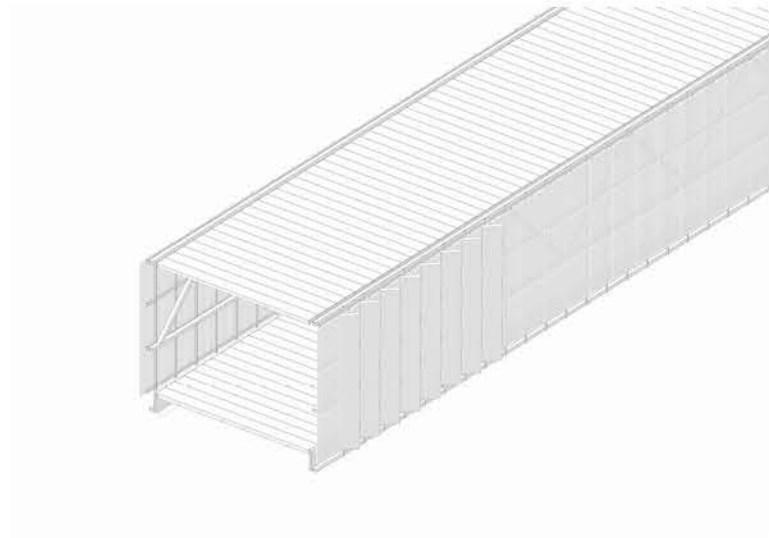
Wind rose



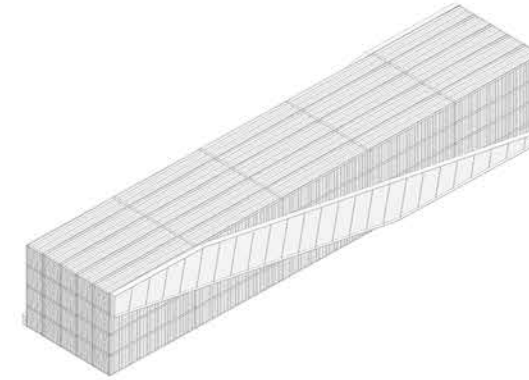
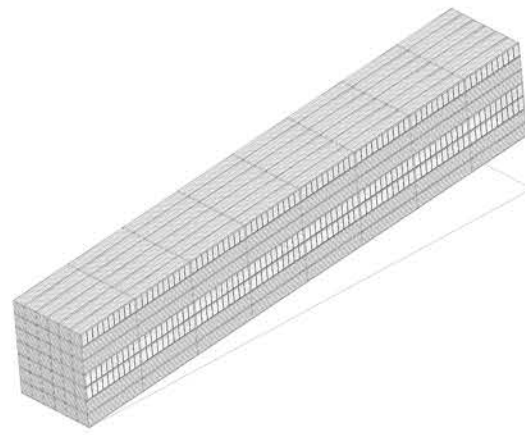
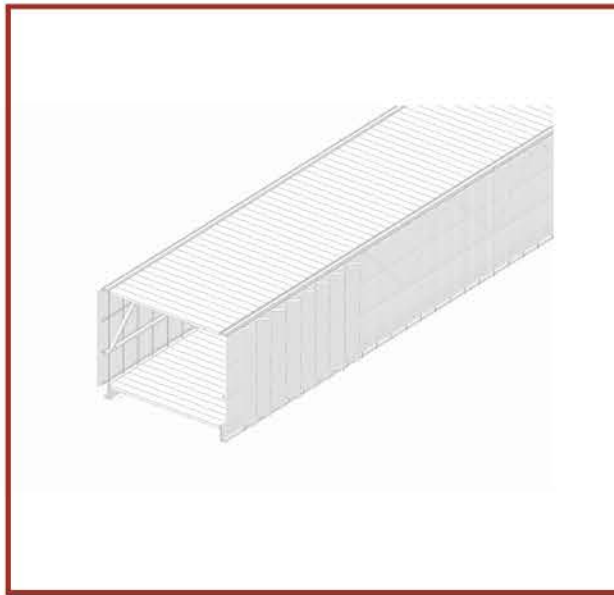


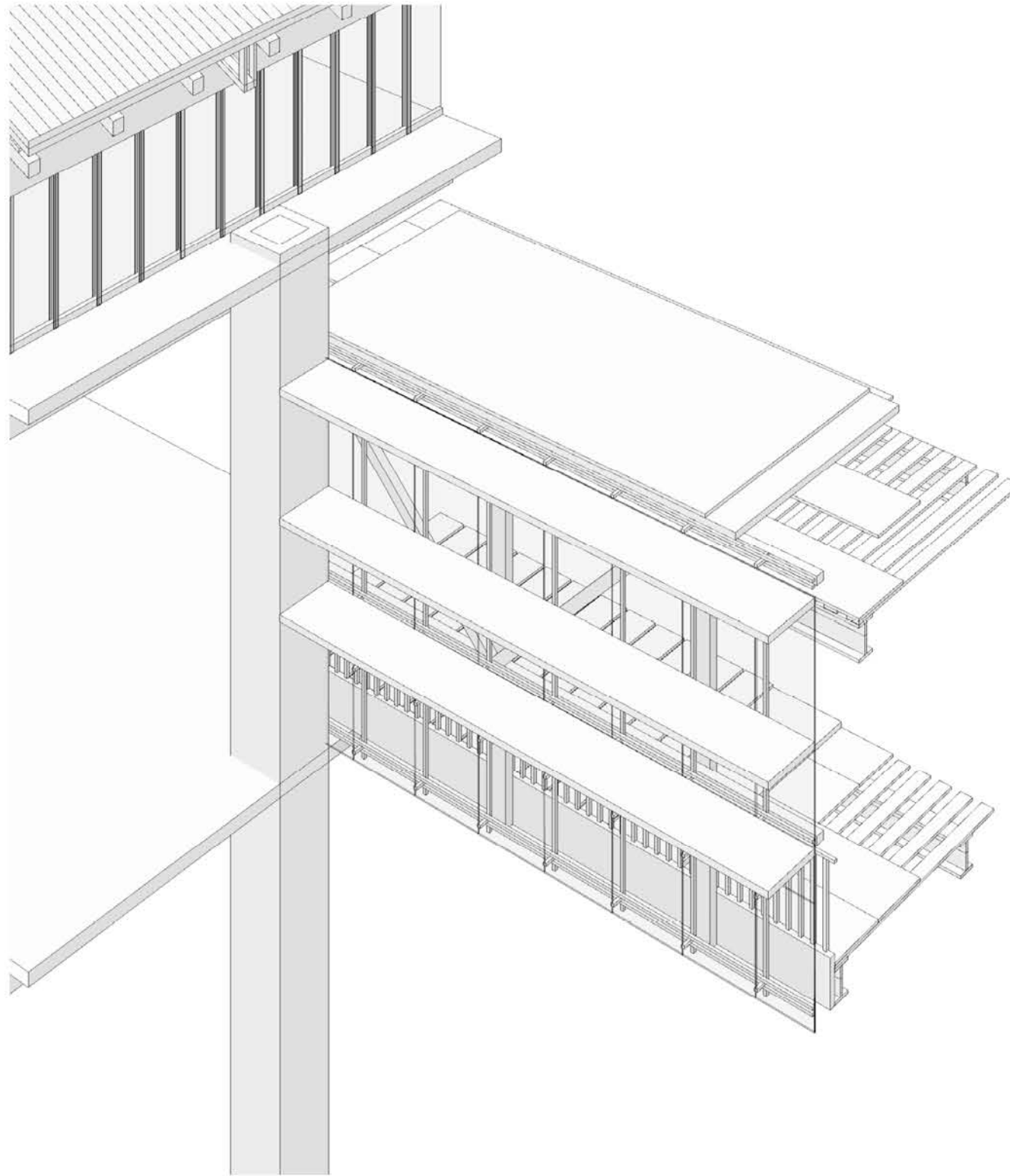




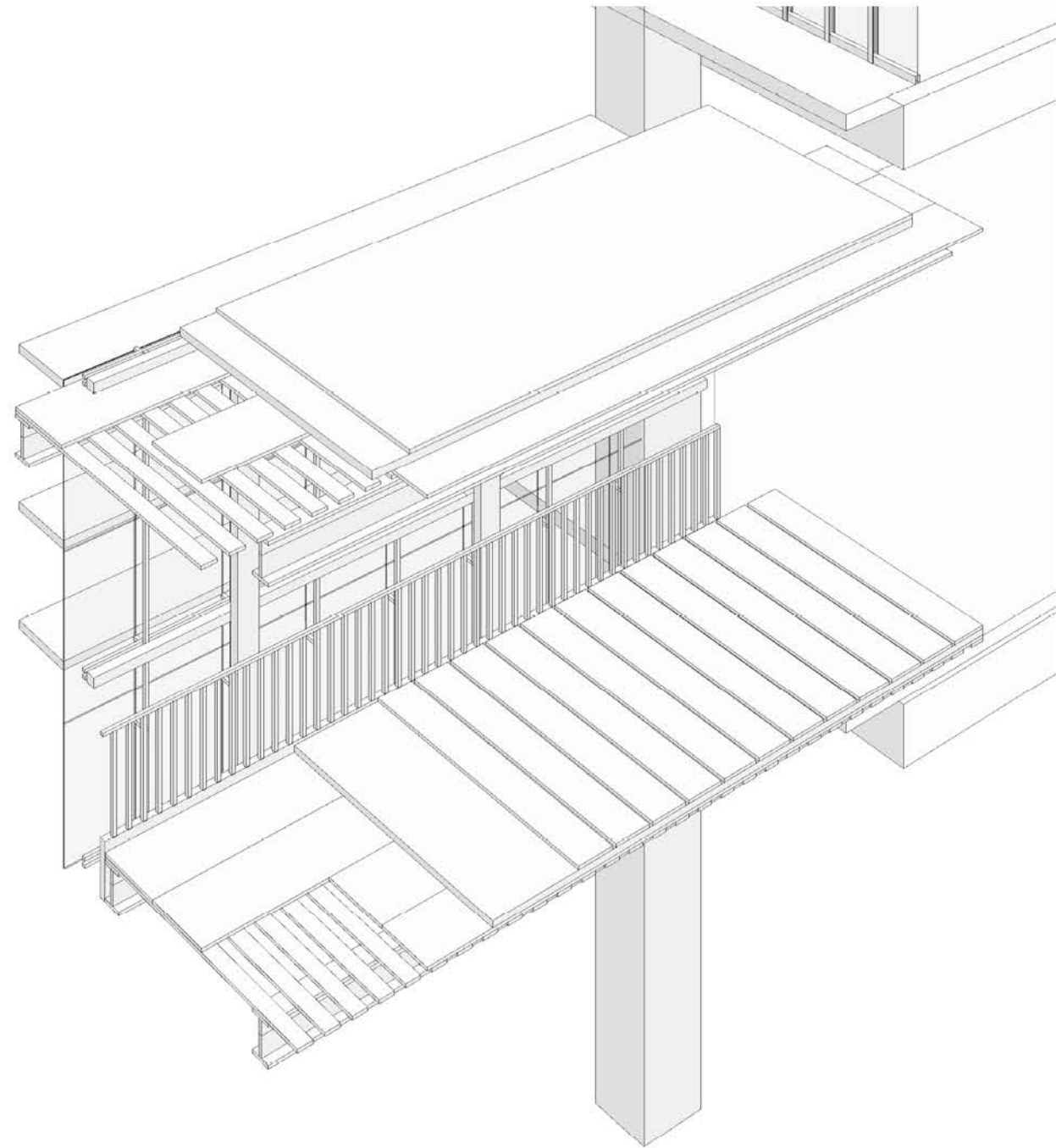
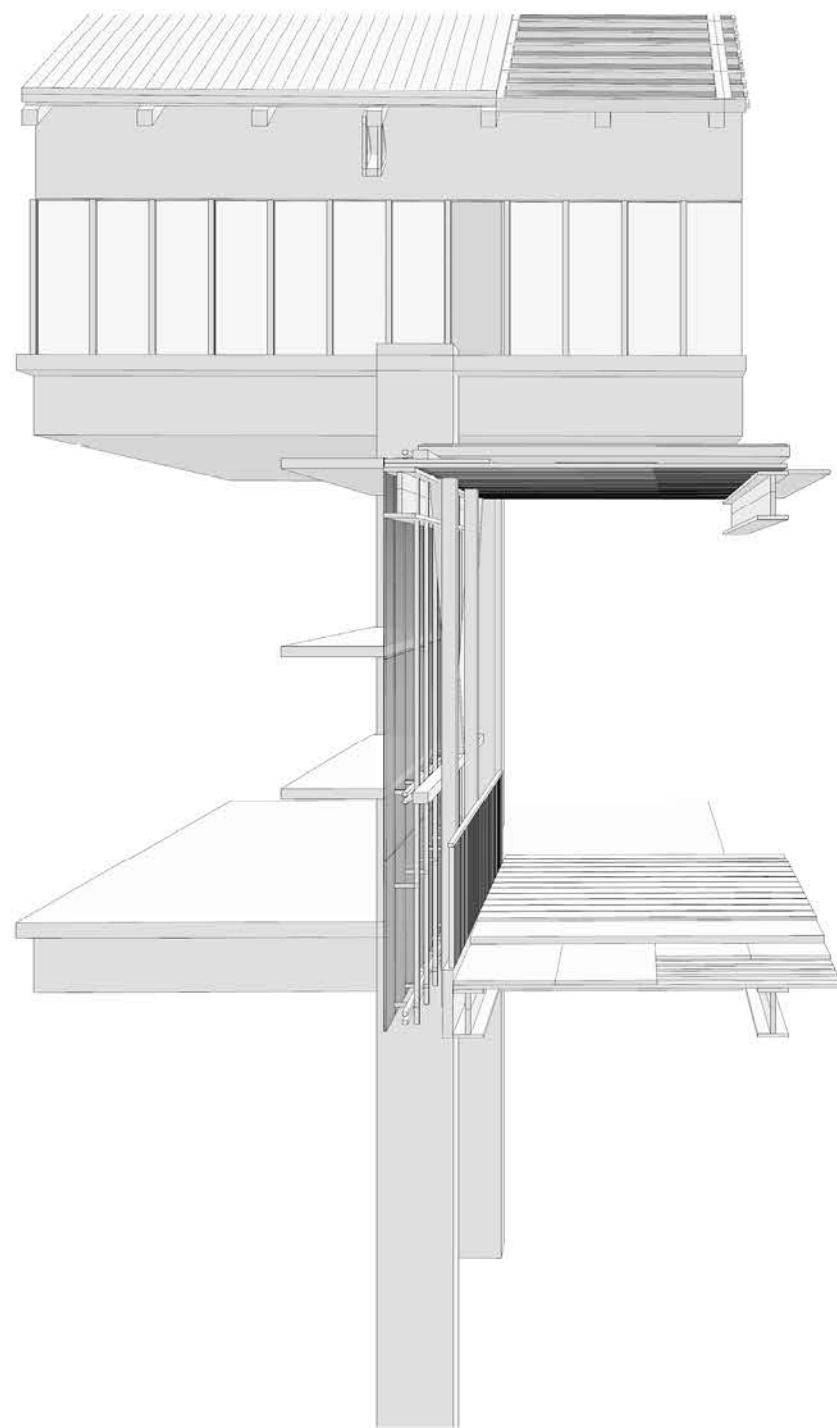


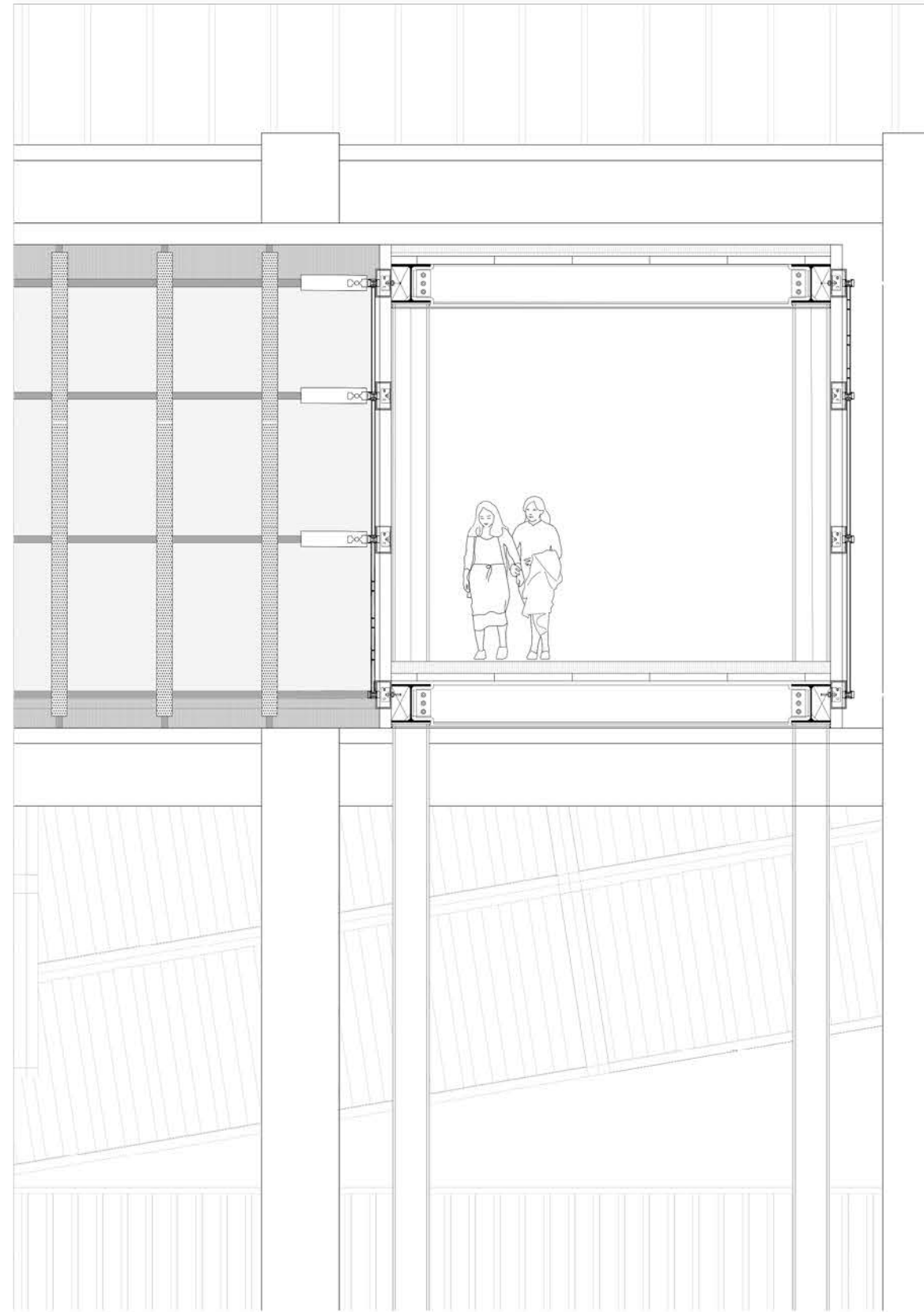








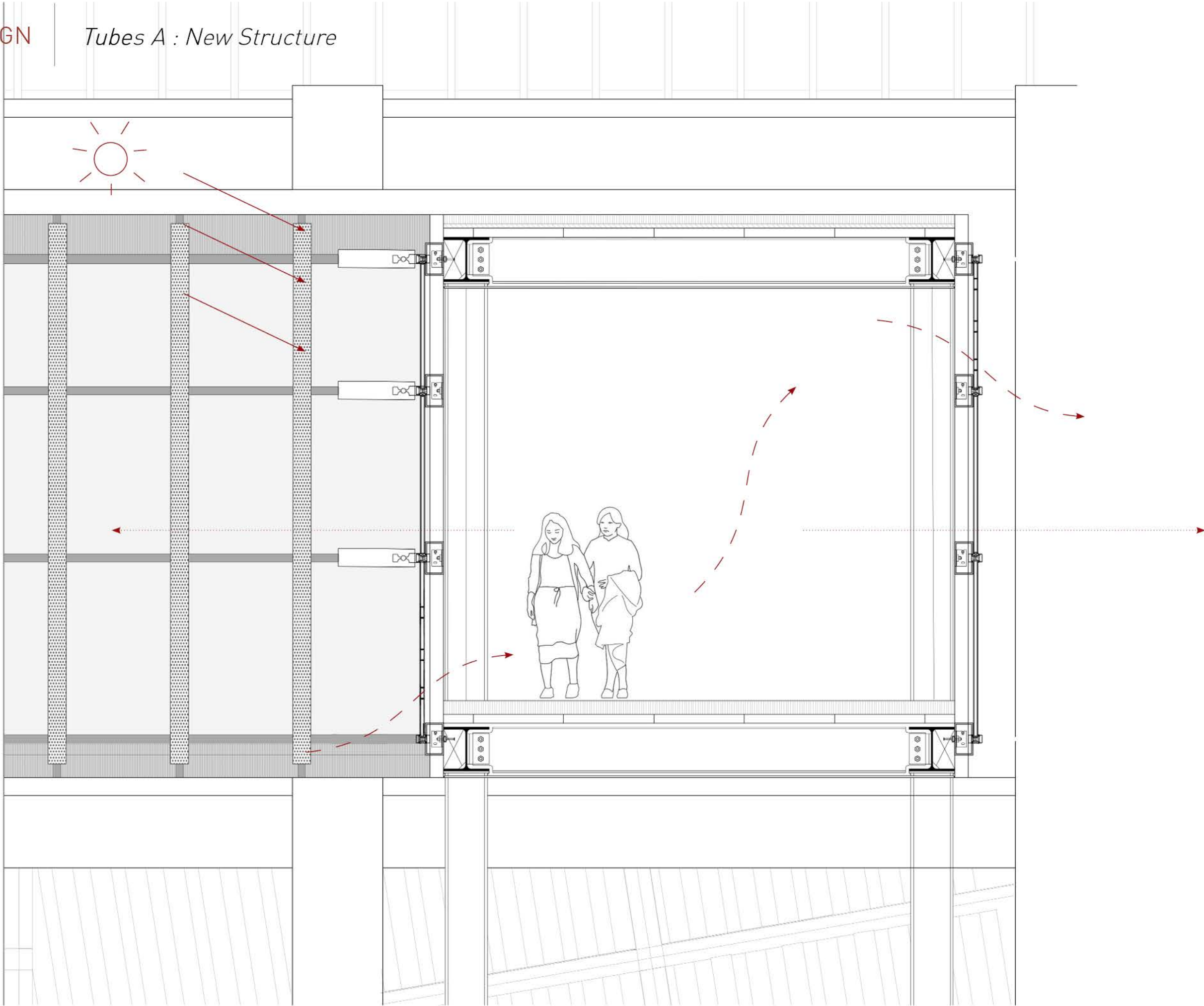


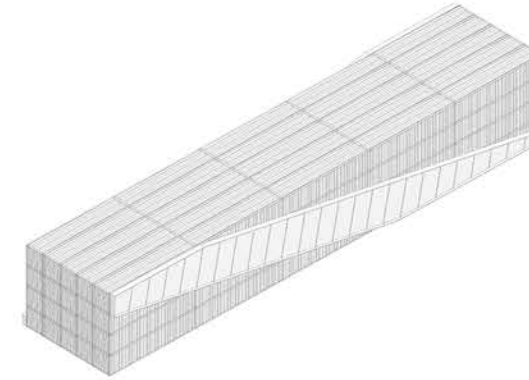
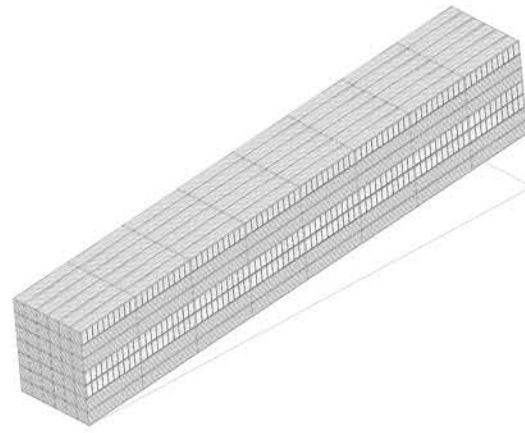
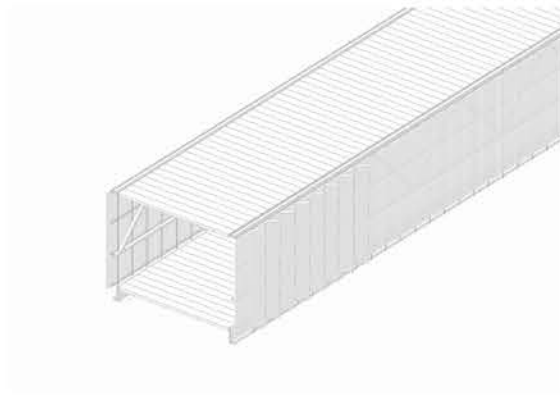




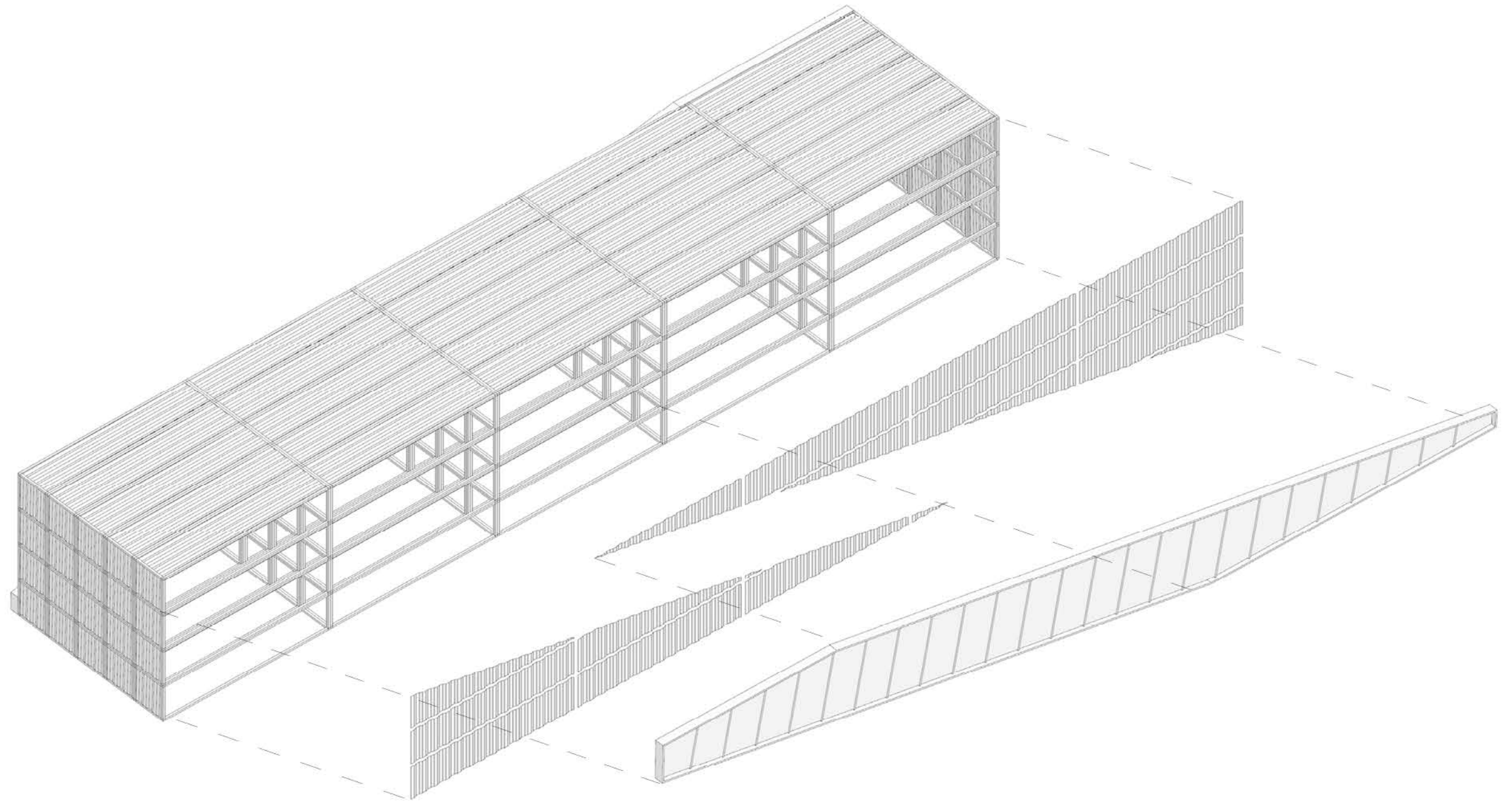
CLIMATE DESIGN

*Tubes A : New Structure*









USING ACCESSIBLE MATERIALS

*Tube B-D : Reuse Containers*

