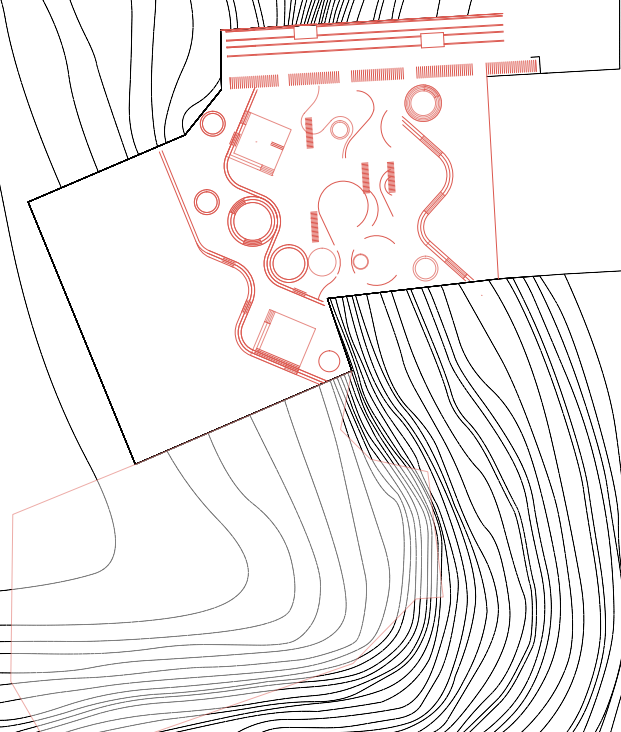


# Borderscapes in Valparaíso

*between urban metabolisms  
and social entanglements*



*Valparaíso, Chile. 2025-2026*

**Sophia Voelskow Vallespir**

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PART I

PART II

PART III

4

PART IV

PART V

## Acknowledgements

*/Borderscapes in Valparaíso,  
between urban metabolisms and social entanglements*

This thesis emerged through conversations, encounters, travels, and moments of uncertainty. Shaped across borders, languages, and lived realities, it was formed not only through research and design, but through movement between places, disciplines, people, and perspectives.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my professors, Manuela Triggianese and Stavros Kousoulas, whose encouragement, patience, and critical reflections guided this thesis throughout a time filled with questions and uncertainties.

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Special thanks to Mares Sandor, Álvaro Mercado, Miguel, Mia, Carmen, Fernando, Daniel Rudoff, Angelica, Miguel, and many others who offered their generosity, networks, and support throughout this process. I would also like to thank FAST fund, whose support made a significant part of this field research possible, as well as Universidad Católica, whose openness greatly enriched this journey.

To my family in Chile, thank you for your warmth, generosity, and constant support, for helping me navigate unfamiliar territories

while making them feel like home. And finally, to my family and friends. Thank you for your patience, encouragement, and love throughout this intense and meaningful period. A special thank you to my mother, my brother, my father, and Oskar. To Klara, Camilla, Sinja, Tim, Fenna, Ferdi, Enrica, Vici, Ajit, Anna, Max, Alexandra and many others who accompanied me along the way big thank you.

Ultimately, this thesis became not only an exploration of borderscapes, but also a journey across borders, of geography, language, culture, and understanding.

¡Muchas gracias!

## In Between

Because as children,  
we are all entangled.  
Curious. Open. Unafraid.  
And then society produces  
friction.  
More distance. More fear.  
More polarization.  
We begin to build  
borderscapes.  
Invisible at first. Then  
everywhere.  
Spaces where assumptions  
arrive before encounters do.  
Is there room for spaces  
within this polarized field?  
Spaces to mediate. Slowing

the metabolism.  
Where entanglements  
through commoning find  
space.  
The bougainvillea. The  
eucalyptus.  
The cordillera in the  
distance. The vastness.  
It all feels like home.  
Chile is home. Germany is  
home too.  
And I remain somewhere in  
between.

Fig. 1: Limache, the author's childhood base, embraced by the cordillera and a red wall offering both protection and a sense of enclosure. Photograph by author, 2025.

Between languages.  
Between territories.  
Between inherited stories  
and lived realities.  
Between cultural codes.  
Between belonging and  
distance.

As a child, borders were not  
visible.  
Difference had not yet been  
named.  
Segregation had not yet  
become legible.  
Only later are we taught  
distinction.  
Who belongs.  
Who remains above.  
Who remains below.  
Who enters.  
Who waits outside.  
Who is seen.  
Who becomes invisible.

So how can we unlearn?  
When will we unlearn?  
And are we open enough?  
Which constructs and  
systems  
trap our possibilities to break  
the homophilic state?  
So I remain in between.  
In between polarization.  
In between the question  
and the answer.



## Positionality

*/Between proximity and distance*

This research emerges from a position of in-betweenness. Shaped by experiences across Chilean and German cultural contexts, my relationship to Chile has long been characterized by both familiarity and distance; between languages, territories, memories, and different ways of perceiving and inhabiting space. This condition does not position me as either a complete insider or outsider, but rather within a shifting relational position shaped through movement, observation, and negotiation.

Questions of belonging have accompanied this research from the outset. What constitutes belonging to a place? Is it rooted in geography, language, memory, social relations, or lived experience? While these questions remain deeply personal and unresolved, they also informed a broader architectural curiosity about how cities produce inclusion and exclusion, how difference is spatialized, and how coexistence is negotiated through the built environment.

This thesis does not claim neutrality or objective distance. Knowledge production is understood here as situated, embodied, and relational. The research was shaped through immersion in Valparaíso's everyday life; through walking its hills, using public transport, sharing meals, participating in workshops, and engaging in conversations across social, institutional, and spatial boundaries. These encounters informed not only an understanding of the city, but fundamentally the questions asked of it.

At the same time, proximity does not guarantee understanding. Familiarity can obscure as much as it reveals. This research therefore remains attentive to its own positionality, particularly regarding

privilege, representation, and the risk of imposing external interpretations onto complex local realities. As someone educated within European architectural institutions, this includes a critical awareness of the epistemological frameworks through which cities are often read, categorized, and designed. Rather than reproducing extractive or universalizing perspectives historically associated with Western knowledge production, this thesis seeks to remain open to situated, local, and plural ways of knowing and inhabiting the city.

Architecture is therefore not approached as an external solution imposed upon Valparaíso, but as a practice of listening, mediation, and exchange. The intention is not to speak for the city, but to engage with its layered social and spatial realities through an architectural lens shaped precisely by this position between proximity and distance.

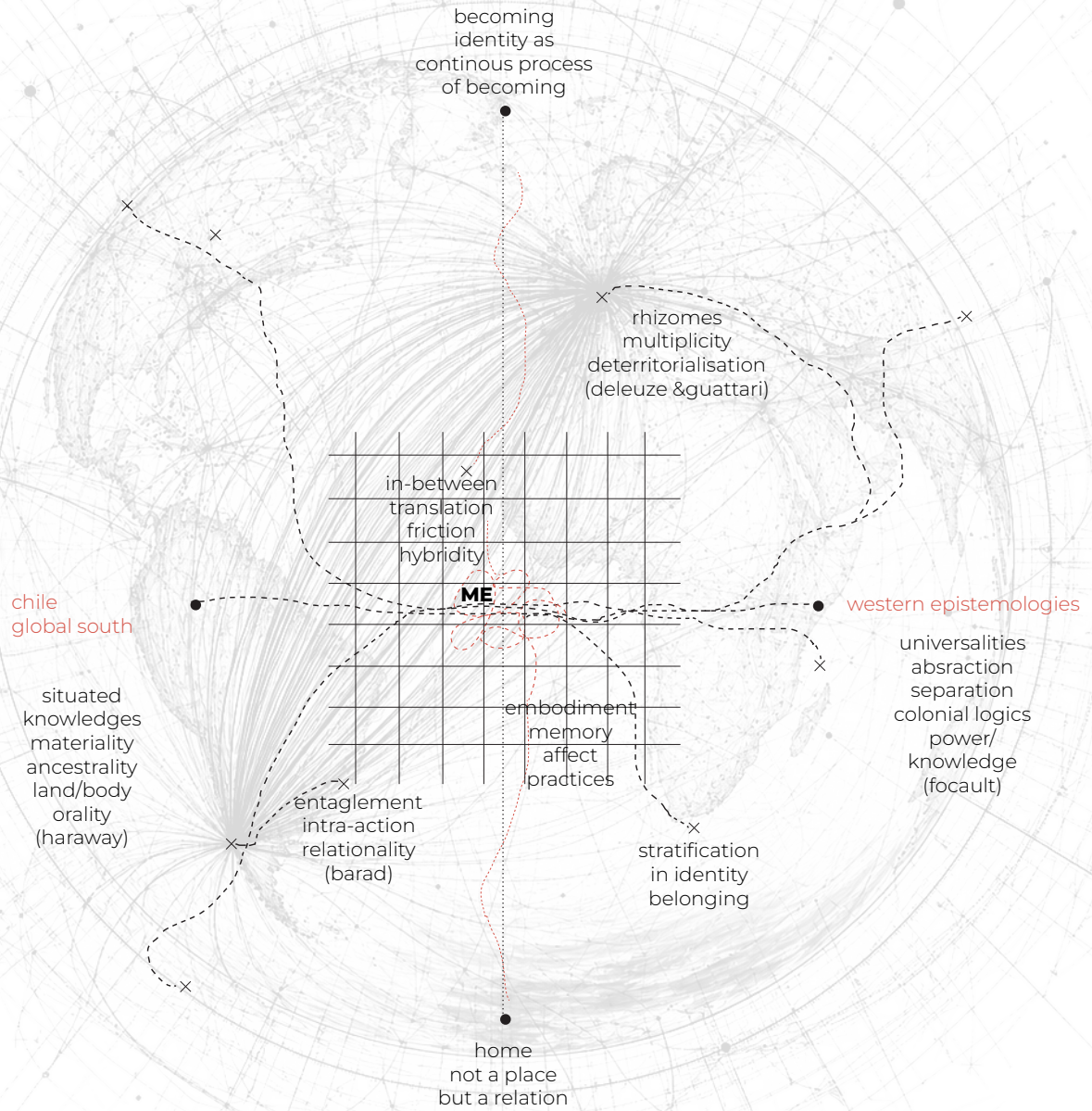


Fig. 2: Mapping the author's origins, tracing the inbetween feeling of belonging to two cultures and the distance from both. Map by author, 2025.

## Manifesto

*/Between Ascent and Descent*

*"The stairs start out from the bottom and from the top, winding as they climb. They taper off like strands of hair, give you a slight respite, and then go straight up. They become dizzy. Plunge down. Drag out. Turn back. They never end. How many stairs? How many steps to the stairs? How many feet on the steps? How many centuries of footsteps, of going down and back up with a book, tomatoes, fish, bottles, bread? Stairways! No other city has spilled them, shed them like petals into its history, down its own face, fanned them into the air and put them together again, as Valparaíso has. No city has had on its face these furrows where lives come and go, as if they were always going up to heaven or down into the earth. If we walk up and down all of Valparaíso's stairs, we will have made a trip around the world."*

*~ Pablo Neruda (Neruda, in Larraín 1991)*

Valparaíso resists orientation. It refuses the certainty of the map. Distance is deceptive here. If you go up, you move away. If you go down, you get closer (Edwards Bello 1963) Proximity is vertical. To move through Valparaíso is to negotiate gravity. And yet, within this physical difficulty lies an extraordinary intimacy. Laundry stretches between facades, moving in the Pacific wind like soft territorial markers. Open windows turn domestic life outward. Music escapes into stairwells. Conversations

drift across terraces. Someone cooks nearby. Someone repairs something in public view. A child moves between thresholds that are neither fully private nor entirely public. In Valparaíso, one learns the rhythms of neighbours without necessarily knowing their names.

The city is porous in this way. Its rhythms are collective, though not always intentional. What is domestic becomes urban. What is infrastructural becomes social. A stair becomes a meeting place. A landing becomes a pause. A threshold becomes a commons.

And yet, proximity does not automatically produce connection.

Cities increasingly organize themselves through separation, through invisible borders of class, familiarity, ideology, and belonging. Despite density, urban life can become a landscape of parallel worlds.

Valparaíso suggests another condition. Here, friction is unavoidable. Boundaries blur. Formal and informal are not opposites, but continuously negotiated realities. Domestic life spills outward. Infrastructure becomes social space. The city is constantly mediated through everyday coexistence.

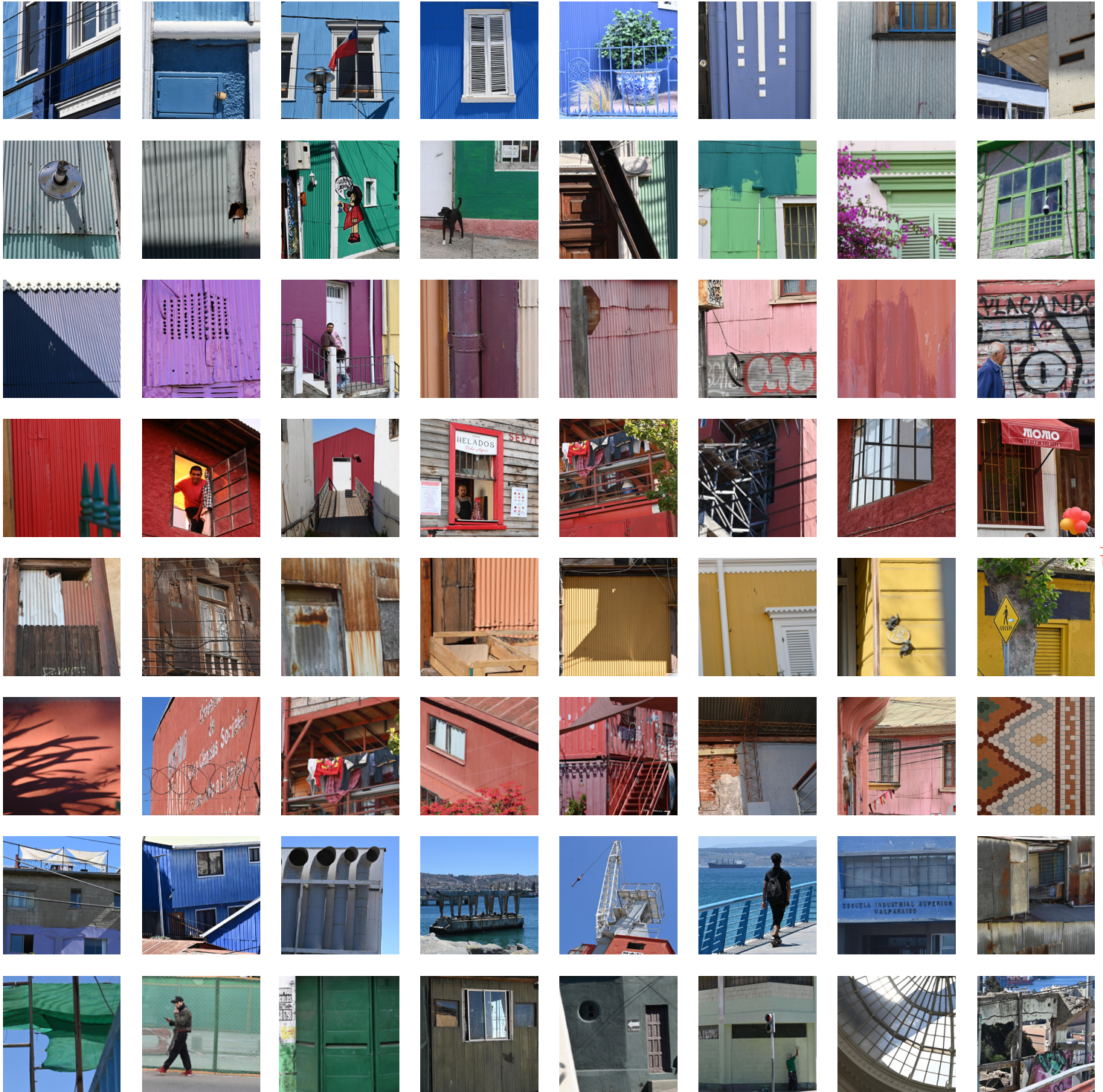
This thesis begins from that condition. If architecture is to respond to polarization, it must create spaces of mediation. Spaces where difference remains present without becoming division. Spaces where commoning becomes possible. Between ascent and descent. Between distance and proximity. Between strangers and neighbours.



Fig. 3: Imaginaries of Valparaíso: colour, topography, and the negotiation between formal and informal urban conditions. Based on: Asawla, Devant, 2024; and Pérez de Arce Antoncic, Rodrigo. Valparaíso: Un balcón urbano. Santiago: Ediciones UC, 2019. Adapted by author, 2025.



Fig. 4: Photographs of port containers and the cityscape mirroring the containers as a whole, a study of colour and the city's entry point for further exploration. Photograph by author, 2025.



## Content

*/Borderscapes in Valparaíso,  
between urban metabolisms and social entanglements*

*Acknowledgements  
In Between  
Positioning, Between  
Proximity and Distance  
Manifesto, Between  
Ascent and Descent*

### PART I TERRITORY

1. Introduction
- 1.1 Problem statement
- 1.2 Relevance
- 1.3 Objective and motivation
- 1.4 Research question
- 1.5 Scope

### PART II METABOLISM

2. Approach
- 2.1 Methodological Approach
- 2.1.1 Spatial Analysis
- 2.1.2 Embodied Immersion
- 2.1.3 Visual Documentation
- 2.1.4 Situated Exchange
- 2.1.5 Participatory Workshops
- 2.2. Theoretical Framework
- 2.2.1 Verticality and Spatial Mediation
- 2.2.2 Formal, Informal, and In-Between
- 2.2.3 Commons, Commoning & Co-Production
- 2.2.4 Situated and Tacit Knowledge

**PART III** *ENTANGLEMENTS*

- 3.1 Reading Valparaíso
  - 3.1.1 Fragmented Metabolisms, Collective Capacity
  - 3.1.2 Vertical Terrain, Uneven Access
  - 3.1.3 Cerro Cordillera: Urban Hinge
- 3.2 Programme: Toward a Co-Productive Commons
  - 3.2.1 Arts and Crafts: Making as Infrastructure
  - 3.2.2 Education: Learning as Empowerment
  - 3.2.3 Foodscapes: Gathering as Practice
  - 3.2.4 Synergies: The Co-Productive Commons
- 3.3 Architectural Translation
  - 3.3.1 Spatial Strategy
  - 3.3.2 Activating the Slope
  - 3.3.3 Six Terraces: A Collective Ecology
  - 3.3.4 Material Logic and Collective Construction
  - 3.3.5 Architecture as Civic Framework

**PART IV** *CONCLUSION*

- 4.1 Conclusion
- 4.2 Architectural Implications
- 4.3 Reflection

**PART V** *BACK MATTER*

- 5.1 Bibliography
- 5.2 List of Figures
- 5.4 Appendices

# **PART I** *TERRITORY*

PART I

PART II

PART III

6

PART IV

PART V

**PART I** *TERRITORY*

- 1. Introduction
- 1.1 Problem statement
- 1.2 Relevance
- 1.3 Objective and motivation
- 1.4 Research question
- 1.5 Scope

## Context

/Valparaíso, Chile

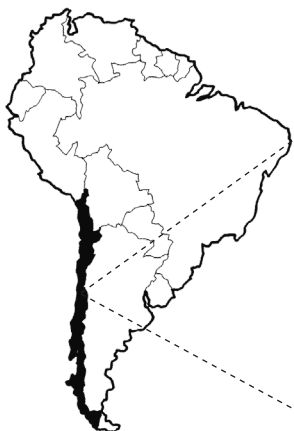
PART I

PART II

PART III

PART IV

PART V



7%  
of chileans  
inhabitants

ZONA 1  
arica parinacota-  
antofagasta

ZONA 2  
atacama-coquimbo

91%  
of chileans  
inhabitants

**ZONA 3  
Valparaíso  
-maule**

2%  
of chileans  
inhabitants

ZONA 4  
biobio-los lagos

ZONA 5  
aysen-Imagallanes



Valparaíso's amphitheater geography acts as a physical barrier to integration.  
A narrow strip of flat land (the Plan) surrounded by a wall of hills (Cerros).

The region, covering **2.17%** of Chile's area, but home to **1.8 million** people is split between two rigid systems

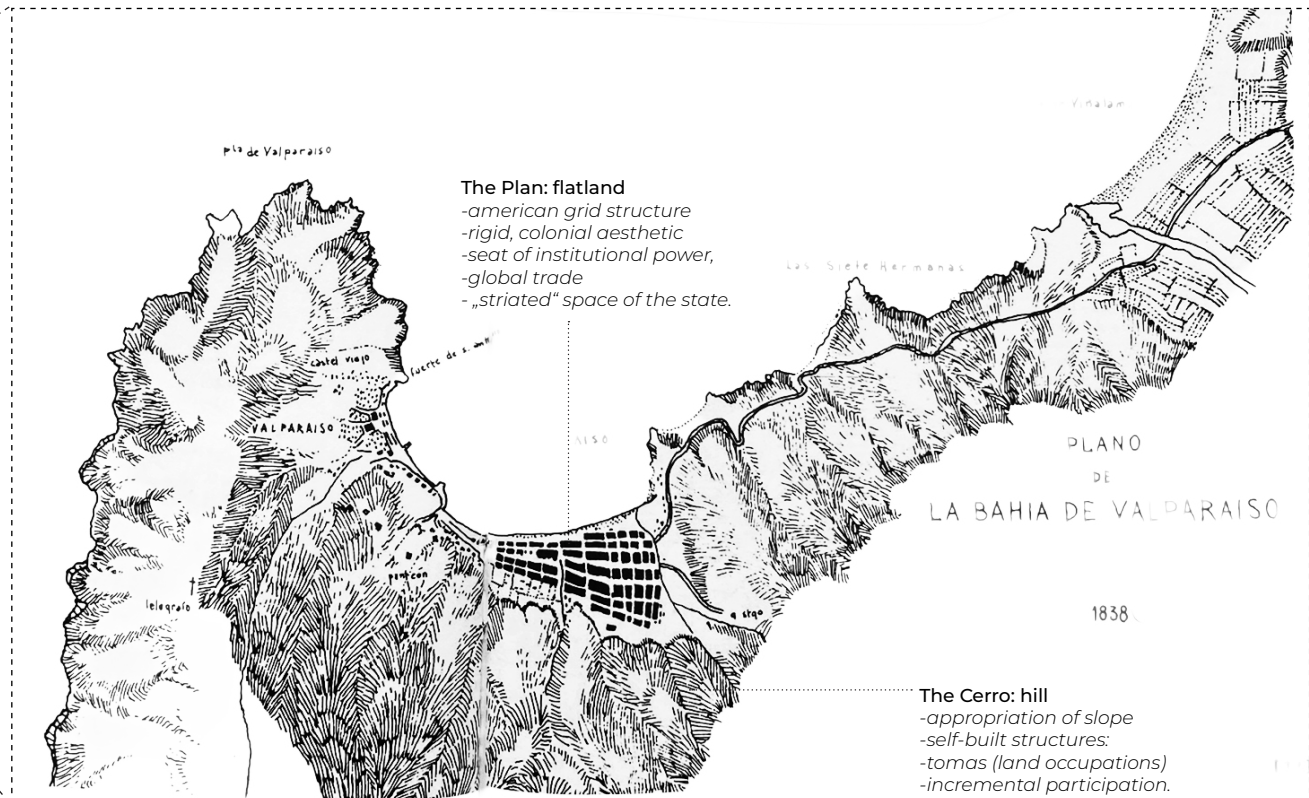


Fig. 5: Valparaíso: urban grid and topographic context. Based on: Pérez de Arce Antoncic, Rodrigo. Valparaíso: Un balcón urbano. Santiago: Ediciones UC, 2019. Adapted by author, 2025.

## PART I TERRITORY

### 1. Introduction

Contemporary cities are increasingly shaped by socio-spatial fragmentation. Despite physical proximity, urban life often unfolds through parallel realities in which access to infrastructure, education, public space, and opportunity remains unevenly distributed. Polarization is therefore not only political or ideological, but spatially embedded, materially visible, and reproduced through the environments cities produce (Lefebvre 1991; Harvey 2008).

These conditions are particularly visible across Latin America, where rapid urbanization, neoliberal restructuring, and persistent inequality have generated highly differentiated urban landscapes (CEPAL 2023; OECD 2024). Chile presents a particularly revealing case. Despite relative economic stability within the region, access to housing, mobility, education, and shared civic resources remains profoundly unequal, conditions that became especially visible during the 2019 Estallido Social (Sabatini and Brain 2008).

Valparaíso makes these tensions spatially tangible. Built across a steep amphitheatrical topography facing the Pacific, the city is structured through pronounced vertical stratification in which geography, inequality, and everyday urban life are inseparably entangled. Yet Valparaíso cannot be understood through fragmentation alone. Alongside structural inequalities, the city reveals strong cultures of adaptation, collective production, and informal urban intelligence, conditions through which its inhabitants continuously renegotiate shared urban space. Informality here is not peripheral, but constitutive of how the city operates (Roy 2005).





This thesis begins from the proposition that architecture can engage these conditions not by imposing singular order, but by mediating between differentiated urban systems. Using Valparaíso as a situated case, the research investigates how architecture might create shared civic infrastructures capable of fostering encounter, collective production, and broader access across vertically stratified urban conditions.

Fig. 6: City vibrancy on sloped terrain. Photograph by author, 2025.

## 1.1 Problem Statement

Valparaíso's vertical geography structures access unevenly. The city is organized across two fundamentally different urban conditions. El Plan is the flat lower city concentrated along the bay, where institutional, commercial, and port infrastructures are located. The Cerros are the steep hillside neighborhoods that rise behind it, where the majority of the residential population lives, often with limited access to public services, mobility infrastructure, and civic resources. This distinction is not merely geographical but socio-spatial, reinforcing differentiated experiences of visibility, mobility, and belonging (Sabatini and Brain 2008). At the same time, formal institutional systems coexist with adaptive informal practices that sustain everyday urban life through appropriation, improvisation, and collective resilience. These systems frequently emerge where institutional support remains absent or insufficient (Roy 2005). This coexistence produces both tension and opportunity. The architectural challenge lies not simply in designing within a complex urban context, but in addressing how architecture might spatially mediate between differentiated systems of access, governance, and everyday urban life.

## 1.2 Relevance

Globally, many cities are confronted with polarization, unequal access to shared resources, weakened public infrastructures, and fragmented civic life. Architecture is increasingly challenged to move beyond autonomous object-making toward more socially engaged spatial practices (Klinenberg 2018; Stavrides 2016). Valparaíso offers a particularly significant case through which to investigate these questions. Its UNESCO heritage status, socio-economic inequalities, changing port conditions, informal urban adaptations, and pronounced topographic stratification make it a highly specific yet globally relevant urban condition. Within architecture, the thesis contributes to ongoing discussions around social infrastructure, commoning (Stavrides 2016), and the role of design in mediating between formal institutional frameworks and adaptive urban practices.

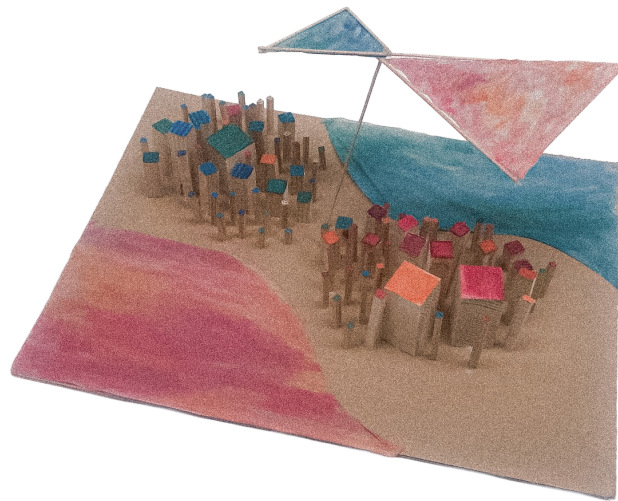


Fig. 7: Vedute Workshop, Explore Lab, TU Delft, 2025. First impressions revealing Valparaíso's (Chile) layered urban condition: the spatial and chromatic binaries between formal and informal, flatland and hill, stability and transformation. Photograph by author, 2025.

### 1.3 Objective and Motivation

The objective of this thesis is to develop an architectural proposal that operates as a mediating civic framework within Valparaíso's vertically stratified urban fabric. Rather than treating architecture as isolated intervention, the project explores its capacity to create shared infrastructures through which encounter, collective production, and broader access become possible across differentiated urban conditions.

The motivation emerges from a concern about how inequality is not only measurable in economic terms but spatially reproduced through the environments cities produce. In Latin America, the wealthiest 10% hold over 55% of total income (CEPAL 2023), and in Chile spatial segregation continues to reinforce this inequality across generations (OECD 2024). Cities increasingly produce homophilic bubbles where social groups move through shared urban space without truly encountering one another, where opportunity remains concentrated, and where difference is filtered out rather than engaged.

The spaces in between hold another possibility. Thresholds, stairs, and shared everyday infrastructures are where encounter becomes unavoidable and collective life has historically been negotiated. In Valparaíso, where poverty and cultural richness coexist within meters of each other across a steep vertical terrain, this question becomes spatially urgent. The project seeks to activate precisely those in-between spaces, not as solution, but as invitation, mediating between proximity and distance, between separation and collective potential.

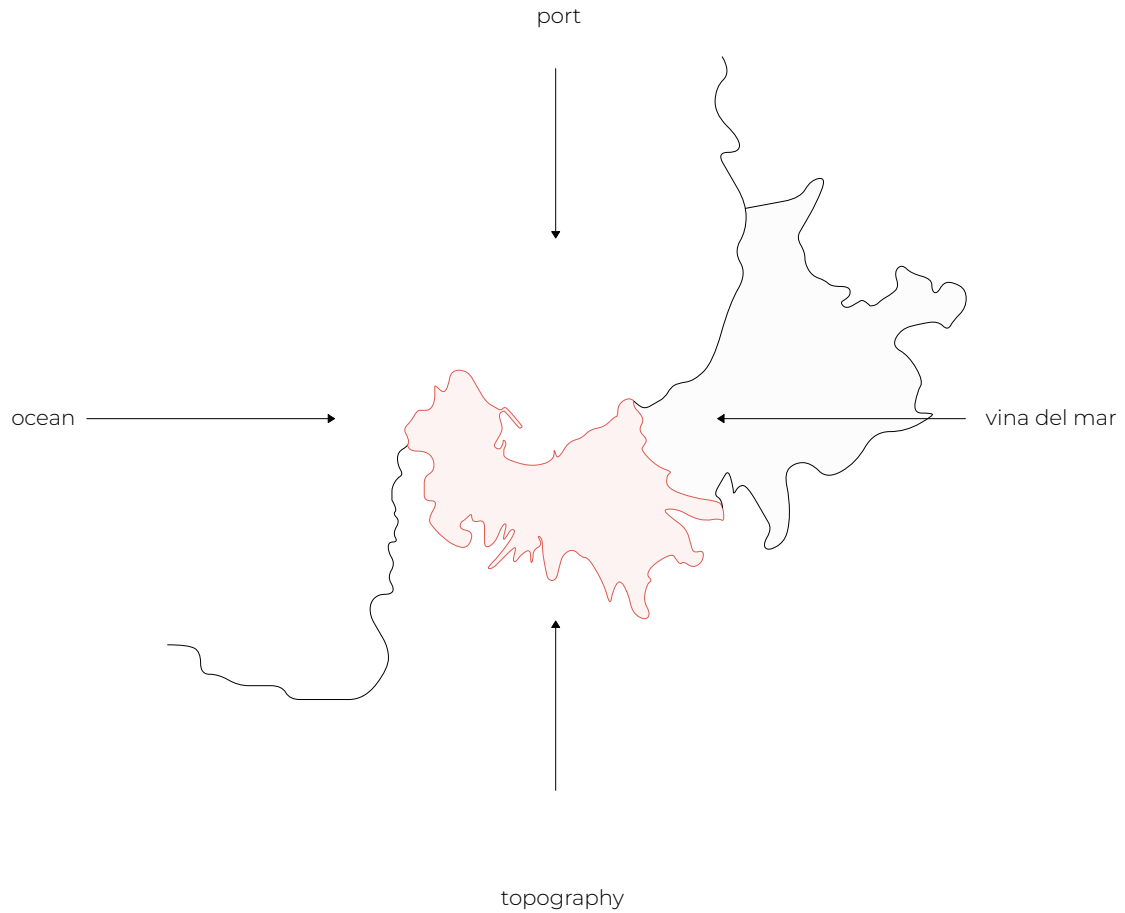


Fig. 8: Urban framework: Valparaíso in context, topography, port, and relationship to Viña del Mar and the Pacific Ocean. Map by author, 2025.

#### 1.4 Research Question

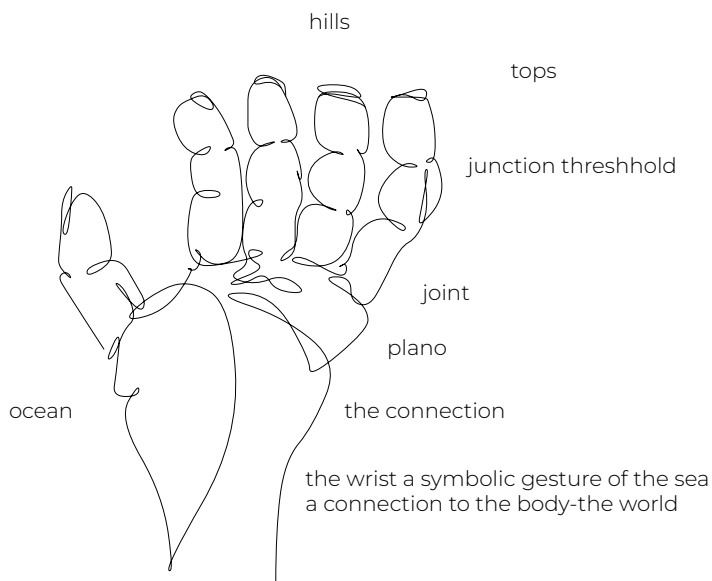
To what extent can architecture act as a **mediator** between **formal institutions and informal practices** to produce a **co-productive commons** in Valparaíso's **vertically stratified** fabric?

**Supporting sub-questions:**

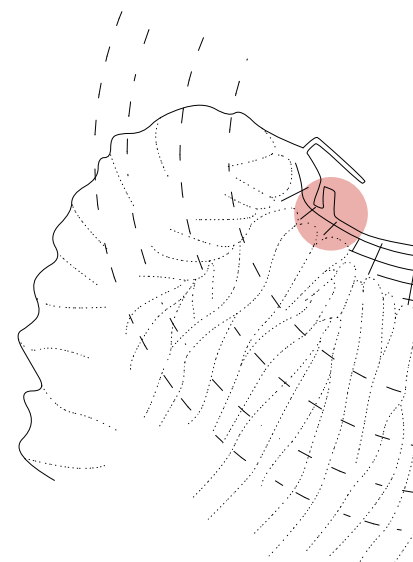
How do informal practices such as **craft, trade, and spatial appropriation** operate as alternative urban systems within Valparaíso?

Whose spatial practices define the city, and how are **informal systems marginalized or legitimized** within dominant **institutional and heritage** frameworks?

Who has **access to shared urban resources** in Valparaíso, and how can architecture **redistribute** opportunities for **encounter and collective participation** across its vertical terrain?



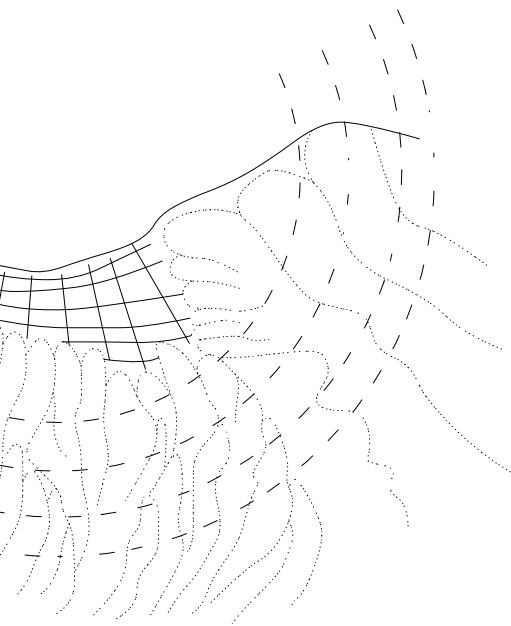
the city is a hand



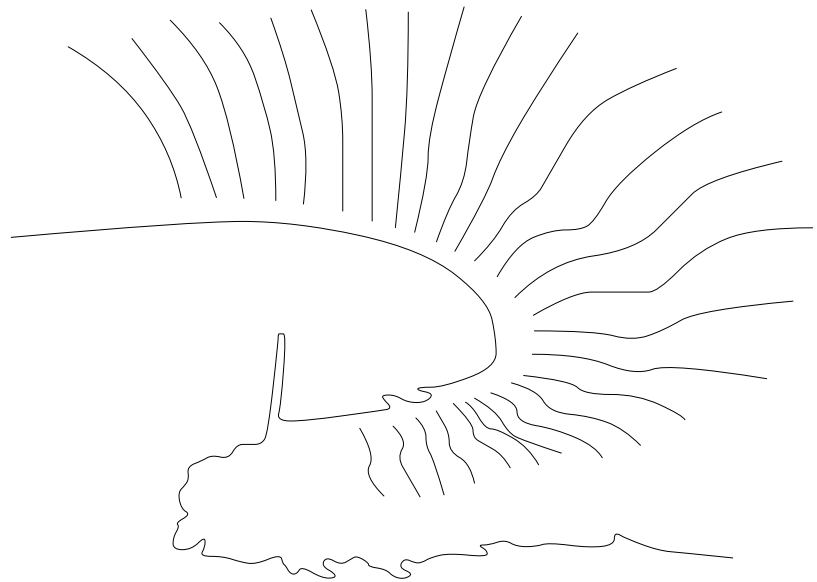
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Fig. 9: „The city is a hand“: conceptual sketch mapping the spatial structure of Valparaíso through bodily analogy, hills as fingers, El Plan as palm, the port as wrist connecting city to sea and world. Based on: De Beer, Michael, Understanding the City, n.d. Adapted by author, 2025.

Fig. 10: The hills of Valparaíso, highlighting different zones of topographic transformation. Map by author, inspired by unknown source, 2025.



entangled hills



the metabolic amphitheatre

Fig. 11: Topographic drawing of Valparaíso, reading the city in section through its amphitheatrical hill structure. Based on: ARQ 73. Adapted by author, 2025.



## 1.5 Scope

This research focuses on Valparaíso, Chile, with particular emphasis on the threshold condition between El Plan (the flatland) and the surrounding Cerros (the hills). The investigation operates across three interconnected spatial scales: macro, the territory, Valparaíso examined within its broader historical, socio-political, and urban context; meso, the metabolism, tracing the flows, infrastructures, and institutional conditions of Cerro Cordillera, one of the hills situated within the UNESCO heritage zone; and micro, the entanglements, reading the everyday borderscapes, social frictions, and coexistences between social groups, classes, and spatial practices that inhabit the threshold between hill and flatland. The thesis does not aim to resolve the structural socio-economic inequalities embedded within Valparaíso through architecture alone. Rather, it positions architecture as a situated spatial mediator capable of creating conditions for broader participation, collective production, and shared civic life.

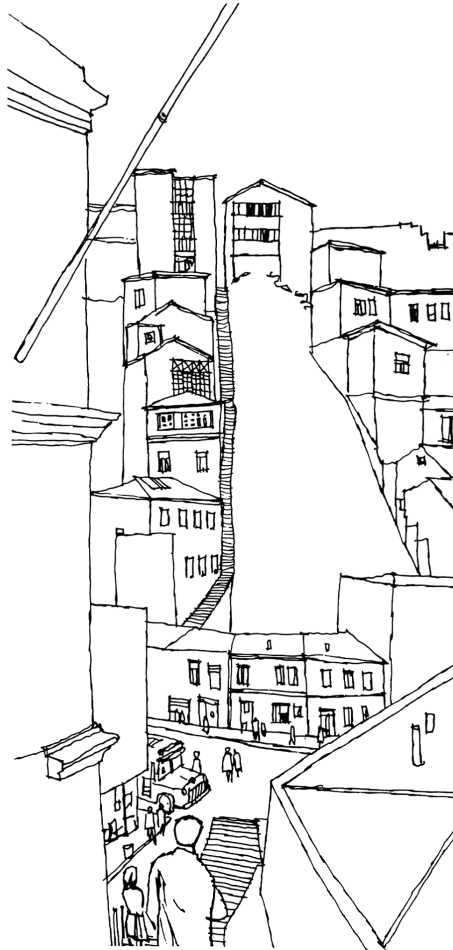


Fig. 12: Verticality and everyday urban life in Valparaíso. Pecchenino Raggi, Renzo (Lukas). Apuntes Porteños. Valparaíso: Fundación Renzo Pecchenino, 1978.

**PART II** *METABOLISM*

PART I

PART II

PART III

32

PART IV

PART V

## **PART II** *METABOLISM*

### 2. Approach

#### 2.1 Methodological Approach

2.1.1 Spatial Analysis

2.1.2 Embodied Immersion

2.1.3 Visual Documentation

2.1.4 Situated Exchange

2.1.5 Participatory Workshops

#### 2.2. Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Verticality and Spatial Mediation

2.2.2 Formal, Informal, and In-Between

2.2.3 Commons, Commoning & Co-Production

2.2.4 Situated and Tacit Knowledge

## PART II METABOLISM

### 2. Approach

#### 2.1 Methodological Approach

This thesis adopts a qualitative and situated research approach to investigate how architecture might mediate between formal institutional structures and adaptive everyday urban practices in Valparaíso. Because many of the city's defining conditions emerge through lived experience rather than formal representation alone, the research combines spatial analysis, embodied immersion, situated exchange, participatory engagement, and visual documentation.

#### Spatial Analysis

The research began through territorial mapping, sectional studies, and urban analysis across macro, meso, and micro scales. Particular attention was given to topography, circulation systems, institutional infrastructures, ecological vulnerability, socio-spatial inequality, and the historical relationship between city and port.

#### Embodied Immersion

Direct immersion in the city formed a central methodological component. Repeated movement through Valparaíso by foot, elevators, public transport, and colectivos allowed its verticality, rhythms, thresholds, interruptions, and everyday negotiations to be experienced physically rather than abstractly. Walking became a method of spatial inquiry.

#### Visual Documentation

Photography, sketching, drawing, note-taking, and videography formed an additional analytical layer. These methods were used not merely for documentation, but to observe atmospheres, movement patterns, thresholds, informal occupation, encounters, and changing spatial conditions.

#### Situated Exchange

Informal conversations and situated exchanges with residents, architects, urban designers, artists, students, municipal representatives, and community organizations provided locally grounded perspectives often absent from conventional spatial analysis. Encounters with NGOs working in vulnerable neighborhoods were particularly significant, revealing recurring questions of accessibility, resilience, education, collective support, and unequal urban opportunity.

## Participatory Workshops

Participatory workshops introduced a collective research dimension. These took place across different contexts, including academic environments, educational settings, and engagements with younger participants, including kindergarten workshops.

Shared making, discussion, observation, and collaborative reflection functioned as alternative modes of inquiry, revealing local perceptions, collective priorities, and the social significance of learning through participation (Blundell Jones, Petrescu, and Till 2005).

Together, these methods approach Valparaíso not as a fixed urban object, but as a lived, adaptive, and continuously negotiated urban condition, aligning with situated understandings of knowledge production (Haraway 1988).



Fig. 13: Photographs of participatory workshops, excursions, and NGO engagement. Photograph by author, 2025.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

This thesis is grounded in three primary theoretical lenses: vertical stratification and spatial mediation, the relationship between formal and informal urban systems, and commoning through social infrastructure. Supporting concepts of situated knowledge, tacit knowledge, and weak ties provide additional grounding.

### 2.2.1 Vertical Stratification, Thresholds, and Spatial Mediation

Chile, and Valparaíso in particular, can be read in section. It is experienced in section. Its topography is not simply a physical given but a layered surface upon which social, economic, and political differences have accumulated over time. Vertical stratification does not just act as a condition of terrain but as a mechanism through which access, visibility, and opportunity are distributed unevenly across the urban fabric. Space is not a neutral backdrop but actively produced through social relations, reproducing inequality through its very organization (Lefebvre 1991). Where elevation rises, civic resources thin. Where the slope steepens, institutional presence weakens. Boundaries between differentiated urban territories are approached here not as fixed edges but as active interfaces of negotiation. The concept of borderscapes shifts the understanding of boundaries away from rigid divisions toward spaces of interaction, overlap, conflict, and transformation. Thresholds

therefore emerge as spaces of potential mediation, where otherwise disconnected urban realities may intersect (Stavrvides 2016). Verticality thus operates as the spatial mechanism through which both inequality and encounter are organized.

### 2.2.2 Formal and Informal Urban Systems

Urban informality is not a condition of exception or failure but a constitutive mode of urban production, particularly within Latin American contexts where formal and informal systems overlap, interact, and depend upon one another (Roy 2005; 2009). Rather than representing disorder or illegality, informal practices reveal adaptive urban intelligence emerging precisely where institutional systems remain incomplete or insufficient. In Valparaíso these dynamics extend beyond settlement conditions into street economies, muralism, tactical repair, adaptive occupations of public space, and the subtle negotiations through which urban life sustains itself daily. At the same time, contemporary urban life is increasingly shaped by homophilic tendencies, where social interaction remains confined within familiar economic, cultural, or social groups (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). Physical proximity alone does not generate encounter. The architectural question is therefore not how informal systems can be replaced through formal order, but how spatial conditions might support more productive intersections between differentiated urban realities.

### 2.2.3 Commons, Commoning, and Co-Production

Commoning is understood here as an active social process of collective use, negotiation, and shared agency rather than the simple provision of publicly accessible space (Stavrides 2016). Commons require not only spatial form but ongoing governance, stewardship, and participation, conditions essential to the sustainable management of shared resources (Ostrom 1990).

Social infrastructure provides the spatial frameworks that support everyday interaction, weak social ties, and collective resilience (Klinenberg 2018). Weak ties, connections across otherwise separate social groups, emerge through repeated proximity, shared routines, and overlapping everyday use of common spaces. They are critical to social cohesion and the circulation of resources and opportunity within cities precisely because they create bridges across otherwise closed social worlds (Granovetter 1973). Architecture can support the conditions through which these ties form, not by engineering social outcomes, but by creating spaces where encounter across difference becomes possible.

Within this thesis, architecture is approached as enabling civic infrastructure. Co-production positions users not as passive occupants but as active participants in shaping shared environments, knowledge, and social relations.

### 2.2.4 Situated Knowledge, Tacit Knowledge, and Learning Through Making

Knowledge is approached as situated, embodied, and relational rather than detached or universal (Haraway 1988). Learning emerges through immersion, observation, exchange, and making. Tacit knowledge, craft, and collective production therefore become not only thematic interests but integral architectural principles informing the programme and spatial strategy (Sennett 2008).

This understanding also shaped the research methodology itself. Fieldwork, participatory workshops, and embodied immersion in Valparaíso are understood as legitimate and necessary modes of knowledge production, not supplementary to but constitutive of the architectural argument.





Fig. 14: Workshop documentation, Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, December 2025. Photograph by author, 2025.

PART I

PART II

PART III

40

PART IV

PART V

## summary

WHY?

WHAT?

WHAT?

HOW?

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Contemporary cities increasingly organize themselves into separate worlds. In Valparaíso, this condition is made spatially explicit through topography. The vertical distance between El Plan and the Cerros is not only a matter of elevation but of accumulated disadvantage, where altitude correlates directly with reduced access to mobility infrastructure, education, public institutions, and civic resources. At the same time, the city contains extraordinary cultures of informal adaptation, collective production, and cultural resilience that persist despite structural neglect. The problem is therefore not an absence of collective capacity but an absence of shared spatial frameworks through which that capacity can be activated across social difference.



## GOAL

To develop an architectural proposal on Cerro Cordillera that operates as a mediating civic framework, transforming an existing urban bottleneck into a co-productive commons through shared infrastructures of arts and crafts, education, and food. The project works with the existing ruins, vernacular building traditions, and the vertical logic of the slope to create a spatial framework capable of fostering encounter, collective production, and broader civic access across Valparaíso's vertically stratified urban fabric.



## RESEARCH QUESTION

To what extent can architecture act as a mediator between formal institutions and informal practices to produce a co-productive commons in Valparaíso's vertically stratified fabric?



How do informal practices such as craft, trade, and spatial appropriation operate as alternative urban systems within Valparaíso?



Whose spatial practices define the city, and how are informal systems marginalized or legitimized within dominant institutional and heritage frameworks?



Who has access to shared urban resources in Valparaíso, and how can architecture redistribute opportunities for encounter and collective participation across its vertical terrain?

## SUBQUESTION



**Spatial Analysis**  
Territorial mapping, sectional studies, and urban analysis conducted across macro, meso, and micro scales, with particular attention to topography, circulation systems, institutional infrastructures, socio-spatial inequality, and the historical relationship between city and port.



**Embodied Immersion and Visual Documentation**  
Repeated movement through Valparaíso by foot, public transport, funiculars, and colectivos, combined with photography, sketching, drawing, and note-taking. Walking as spatial inquiry. The city experienced as a lived, adaptive, and continuously negotiated condition rather than a fixed urban object.



**Situated Exchange and Participatory Workshops**  
Informal conversations and interviews with residents, architects, artists, NGO representatives, students, and community organizations. Participatory workshops including the Vedute workshop and a kindergarten workshop, using shared making and collective observation as alternative modes of knowledge production.

## METHODOLOGY

**PART III** *ENTANGLEMENTS*

PART I

PART II

PART III

PART IV

PART V

### **PART III** *ENTANGLEMENTS*

#### 3.1 Reading Valparaíso

- 3.1.1 Fragmented Metabolisms, Collective Capacity
- 3.1.2 Vertical Terrain, Uneven Access
- 3.1.3 Cerro Cordillera: Urban Hinge

#### 3.2 Programme: Toward a Co-Productive Commons

- 3.2.1 Arts and Crafts: Making as Infrastructure
- 3.2.2 Education: Learning as Empowerment
- 3.2.3 Foodscapes: Gathering as Practice
- 3.2.4 Synergies: The Co-Productive Commons

#### 3.3 Architectural Translation

- 3.3.1 Spatial Strategy
- 3.3.2 Activating the Slope
- 3.3.3 Six Terraces: A Collective Ecology
- 3.3.4 Material Logic and Collective Construction
- 3.3.5 Architecture as Civic Framework

## PART III ENTANGLEMENTS

### 3.1 Reading Valparaíso: Research Findings

#### 3.1.1 Fragmented Metabolisms and Collective Capacity

Valparaíso's contemporary urban condition is inseparable from its historical relationship to the port. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the city functioned as one of the Pacific's principal maritime gateways, shaped by trade, migration, labour, and exchange. The opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 fundamentally disrupted this role, redirecting global shipping routes and initiating a prolonged economic decline.

„The boom was before the Panama Canal, everything passed through here“ (Interview, Valparaíso, 2025). The port, once the city's productive core, gradually became an increasingly restricted infrastructural edge. This shift remains spatially visible. Barrio Puerto, the historic port neighbourhood at the foot of the hills, carries traces of former economic intensity, yet much of the district today is marked by abandonment, underinvestment, and discontinuity. The 2007 explosion further destabilized an already fragile urban fabric, accelerating the withdrawal of investment and institutional presence from the area.<sup>1</sup> What emerges is not the image of sudden collapse, but of prolonged urban withdrawal: „always promising what it could become, but with this nostalgic condition attached to it“ (Interview, Valparaíso, 2025).

UNESCO heritage designation introduced an additional paradox. International recognition increased visibility, yet preservation has often remained selective. Cerro Alegre and Cerro Concepción increasingly function as concentrated zones of tourism and cultural consumption, while adjacent territories

continue to deteriorate. Heritage therefore operates simultaneously as protection, branding mechanism, and constraint, producing an uneven urban metabolism in which resources, visibility, and investment circulate selectively rather than collectively. Against this condition of fragmentation, everyday urban life reveals strong adaptive capacities. Appropriation is deeply embedded in Valparaíso's spatial culture, not simply as occupation, but as a form of urban custodianship through which collective life is maintained. Graffiti becomes territorial dialogue. Street economies transform circulation routes into social infrastructures. Informal occupations reveal latent spatial opportunities overlooked by formal planning. These conditions should not be romanticized. Informality frequently emerges through structural absence, inaccessible bureaucracy, and economic precarity. „There are many abandoned houses. That's why they get occupied. I was born here and I am still renting because I got tired of the bureaucracy“ (Interview, Valparaíso, 2025). Informality here reflects both vulnerability and agency.

Yet within these constraints, Valparaíso demonstrates remarkable cultural resilience. Arts, crafts, muralism, independent workshops, printmaking, music, and informal cultural production are not peripheral

<sup>1</sup> On March 22, 2007, a gas explosion in Barrio Puerto destroyed several historic buildings and killed two people. The blast accelerated the area's already ongoing decline, displacing residents and businesses and leaving significant gaps in the urban fabric that remain unresolved today.

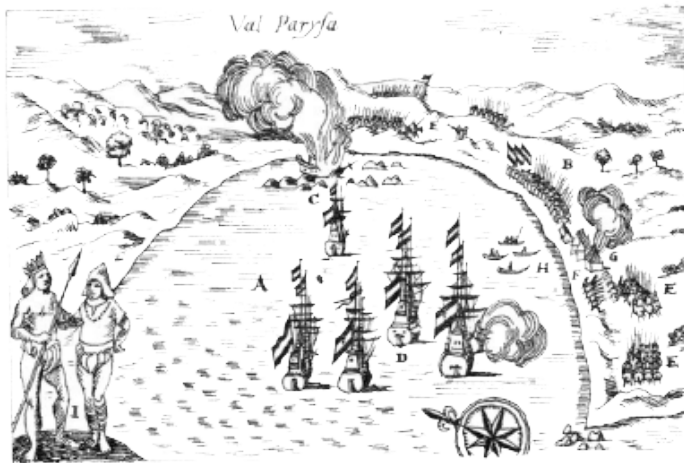


Fig. 15: Valparaíso, battle plan, 1621. The relationship between port and city already legible in early cartographic representation. Source: Planos Históricos, n.d.



Fig. 16: Pianta di alcuna Isola, o Porto della Costa di Cile: Porto di Valparadiso, 1646. The inseparable bond between port, hill, and settlement visible from the city's earliest representations. Source: Planos Históricos, n.d.

activities, but active urban stabilizers. „One can be free here“ (Interview, Valparaíso, 2025). In a city marked by economic decline and institutional fragmentation, cultural production continues to generate exchange, identity, and collective presence. Participatory workshops reinforced this reading across two distinct registers. The Vedute workshop shifted perception toward a disciplined analytical eye, revealing Valparaíso not as fixed urban image but as a city in continuous transformation. Participants observed how surfaces accumulate histories rather than erasing them, how materials carry traces of former occupation, and how movement through the city constantly altered what was visible and legible. Turning around revealed something else entirely. The workshop confirmed that Valparaíso operates as an urban palimpsest, where layers of informal adaptation, weathering, and everyday negotiation are written and rewritten continuously onto the same surface without fully erasing what came before. Instability here is not disorder but condition, a city that cannot be read from a fixed point but only through immersion and movement. A second workshop took place within a kindergarten. Working with three colors and exploring when and how to shift between them, children revealed how learning emerges not through instruction but through experimentation, bodily engagement, and collective discovery. Social boundaries that rigidly structure adult urban life appeared entirely secondary to the act of participation. In a city where educational opportunity remains deeply unequal across hills and flatland, this became significant. The child's unfiltered perspective, not yet shaped

by homophilic tendencies, emerged as a form of urban intelligence in its own right. Participation itself was the organizer. Valparaíso does not lack collective capacity. It lacks spatial frameworks through which these capacities can intersect more equitably. Architecture's role is therefore not to replace adaptive informal practices with institutional order, but to create conditions in which these practices can intersect with broader public infrastructures.

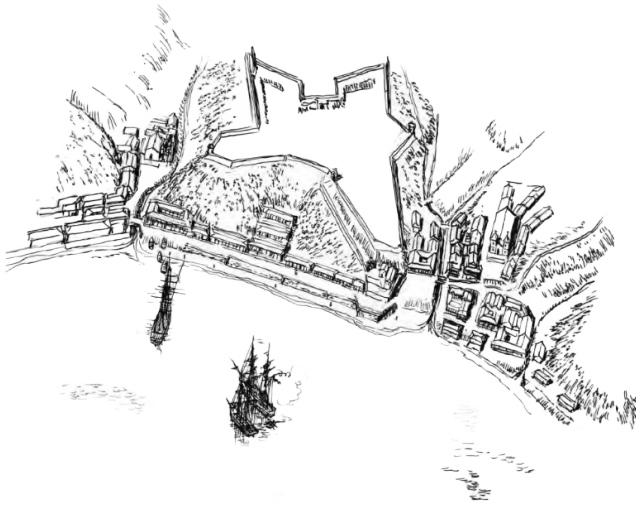


Fig. 17: Valparaíso port sector, 17th century: hill, fort, and bay as inseparable urban condition. Source unknown.

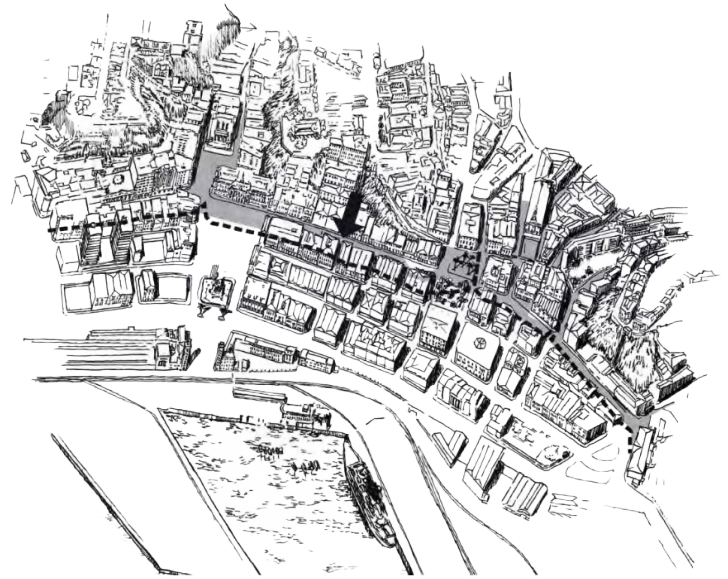


Fig. 18: Valparaíso port sector, present condition: the port-city relationship persisting across centuries of urban transformation. Source unknown.

### 3.1.2 Vertical Terrain, Uneven Access

Topography in Valparaíso is a political surface, where altitude correlates directly with accumulated disadvantage. The city's hills are territories of unequal citizenship.

Yet to move between flatland and hill is also to move through one of the most spatially intense urban landscapes. Stairs cascade between facades. Funiculars creak upward through dense hillside fabric. From the upper terraces, the Pacific opens wide below. There is an undeniable tension in this verticality, between the barriers it produces and the encounters it makes unavoidable.

This tension is where the thesis operates. The same verticality that produces exclusion generates extraordinary intimacy, domestic life spilling outward, music through stairwells, cooking smells across terraces, neighbours known by rhythm rather than name. The most significant spaces are neither fully above nor fully below, neither entirely public nor entirely private. They are the thresholds in between, the landings, the stairs, the slopes where lives cross without necessarily meeting. It is precisely these in-between conditions that hold the greatest spatial and civic potential.

### 3.1.3 Cerro Cordillera: Urban Hinge

Cerro Cordillera emerged as the precise spatial condition through which the research questions could be tested architecturally. Its terraced topography reflects, in condensed form, the broader urban logic of Valparaíso: a city experienced in section, structured through elevation, interruption, and uneven access.

Historically, Cerro Cordillera occupies a foundational position within Valparaíso's development. As one of the city's earliest settled hills, linked to Castillo San José and the Governor's House, it formed part of the city's original colonial structure. Today this layered history remains visible through fragmented remnants, retaining walls, abandoned structures, and traces of former occupation embedded within the slope. The site sits between two distinctly different public conditions. Plaza Sotomayor to the south operates as an institutional and administrative space, formal, ordered, and oriented toward state representation. Plaza Echaurren to the north is the opposite: dense with everyday exchange, informal vendors, and adaptive public life. Though separated by only a few hundred meters, the lived transition between them is abrupt, unmediated, and spatially unresolved. Located alongside Ascensor Cordillera, constructed in 1887, and adjacent to the metropolitan train terminal, the site already functions as a key connector between the lower city and the hills. Yet this movement remains purely transitional. Narrow stairs and retaining walls compress circulation into a bottleneck. The slope is crossed, but not inhabited.

This is precisely why it was chosen. Cerro Cordillera concentrates the central conditions of the research in one place: fragmentation and connection, formal and informal urban life, movement and interruption, heritage and abandonment. A strategic urban hinge.

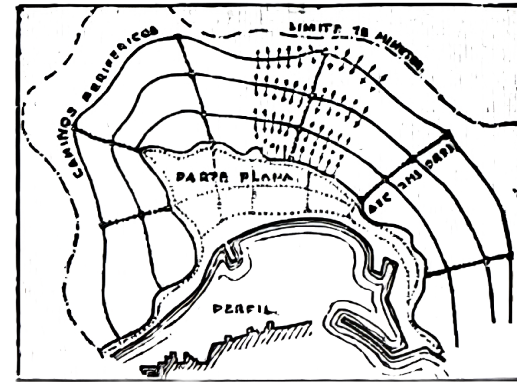
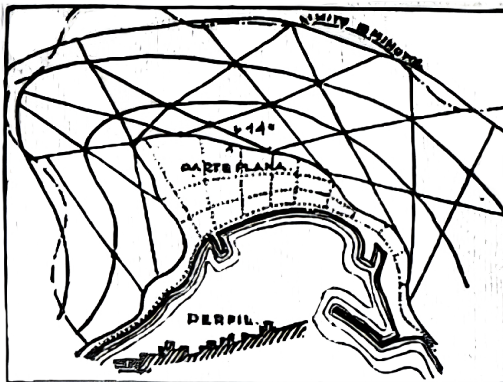
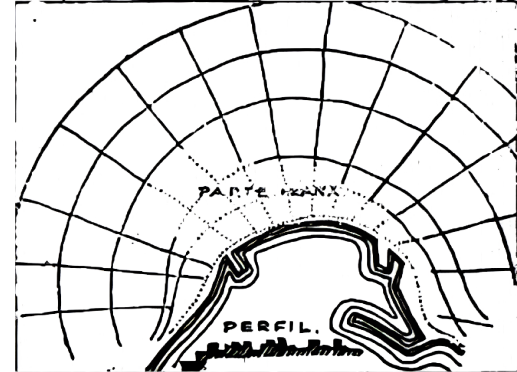
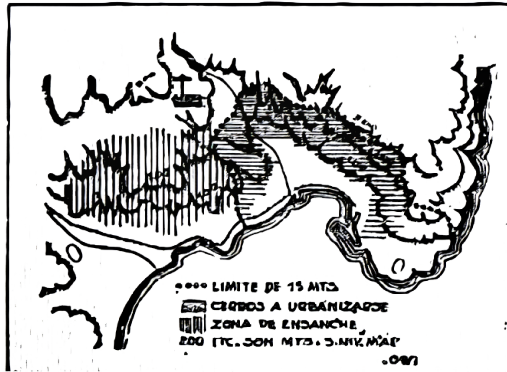


Fig. 19: Orographic and road conditions in Valparaíso, studied by the Instituto de Urbanismo de Valparaíso in 1936. Within the modernist framework, housing was to become integral to the rationalization of street layout across the cerros and quebradas. Source unknown.

## ENTANGLEMENTS

*The Grid and The Hills*

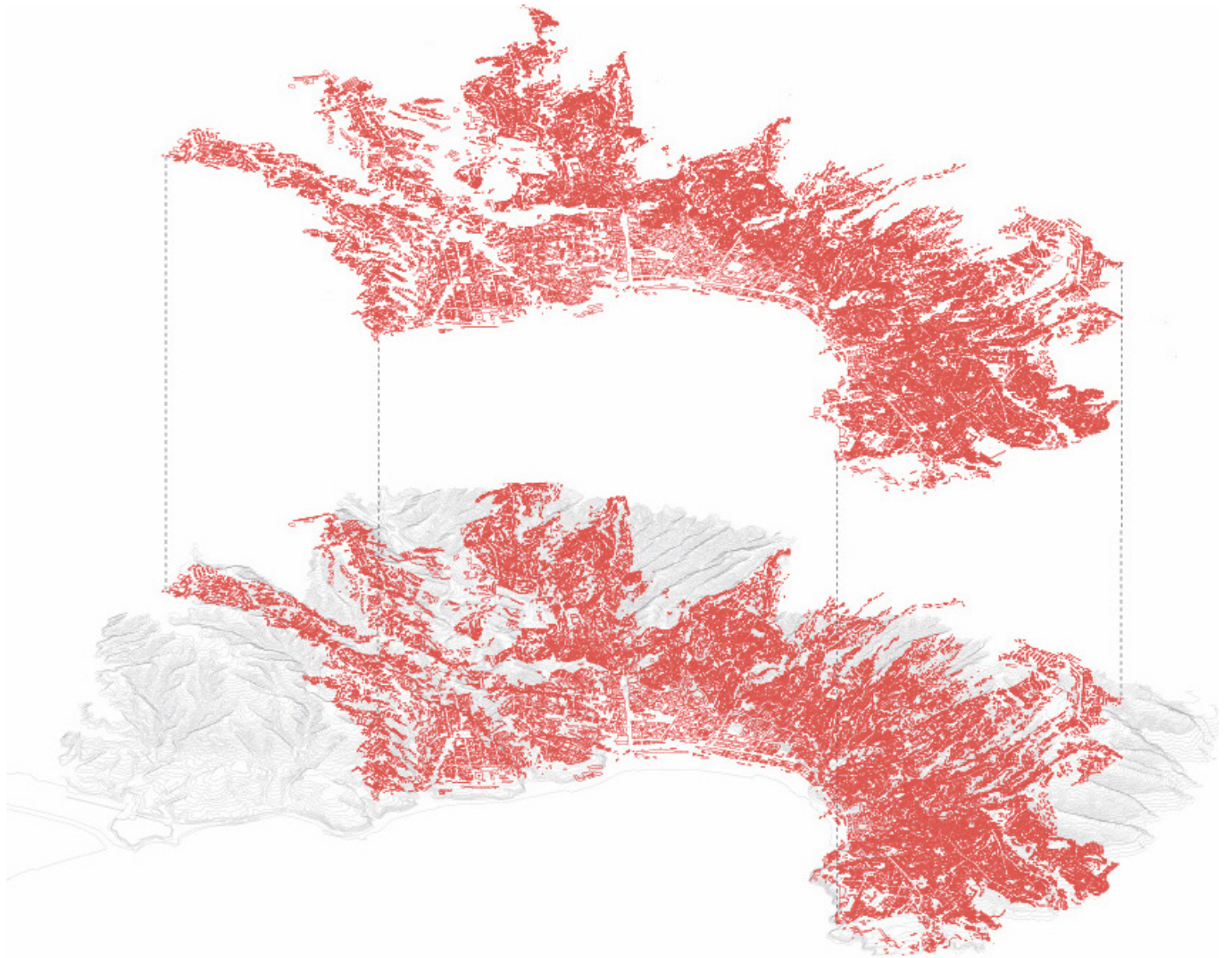


Fig. 20: Valparaíso: urban grid mapped against topographic landscape, revealing the tension between formal street pattern and irregular hill terrain. Map by author, 2025.

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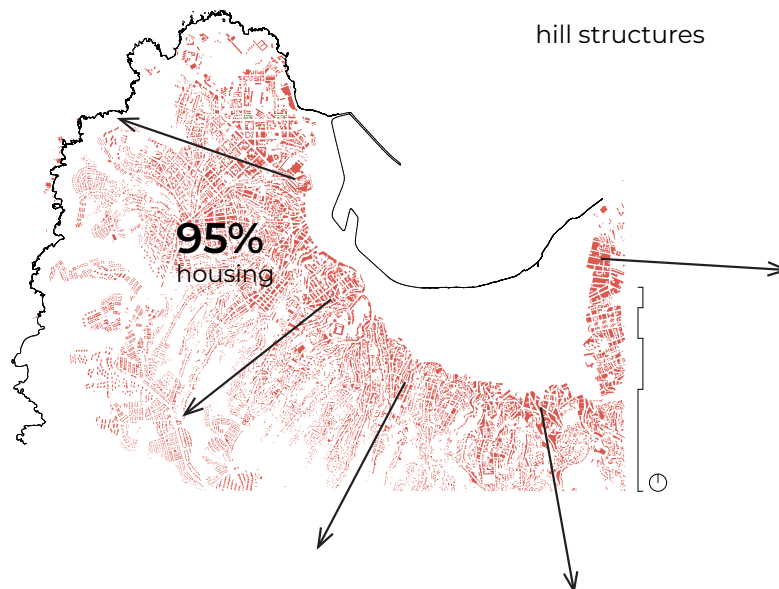
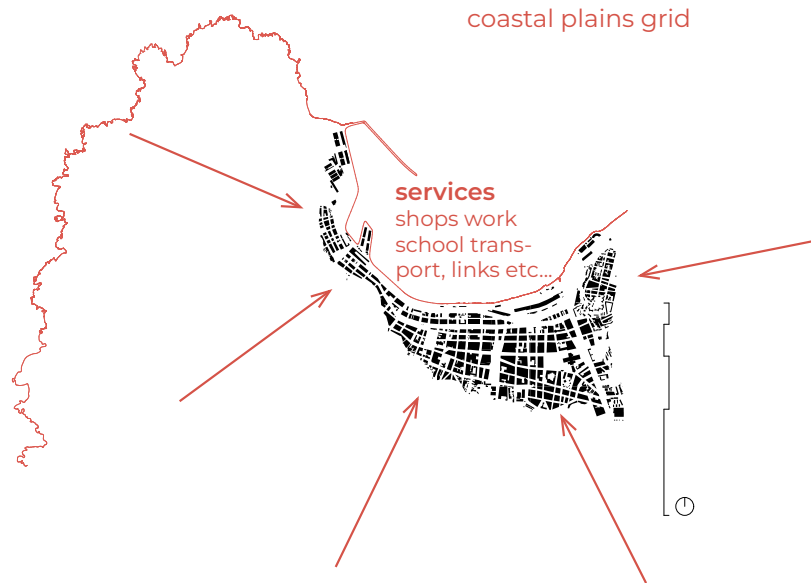
PART II

PART III

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PART IV

PART V



## ENTANGLEMENTS

*The Logic of the Section*

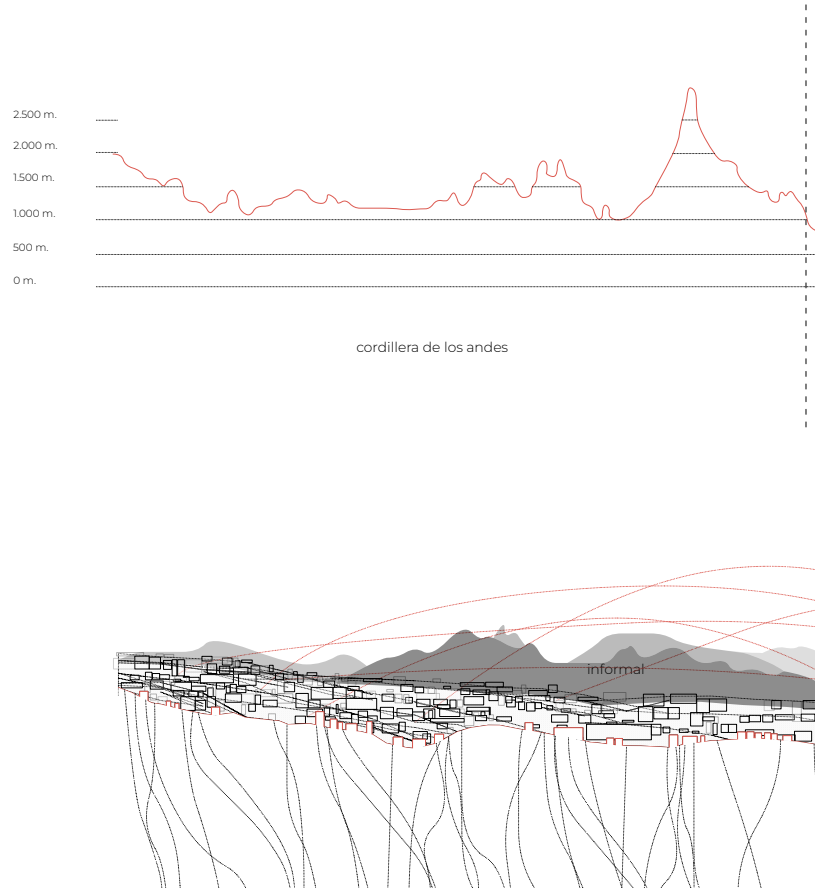


Fig. 21: Chile and Valparaíso read in section: from territorial topography to urban stratification. Drawing by author, inspired by various sources, 2025.

PART I

PART II

PART III

PART IV

PART V

# MACRO

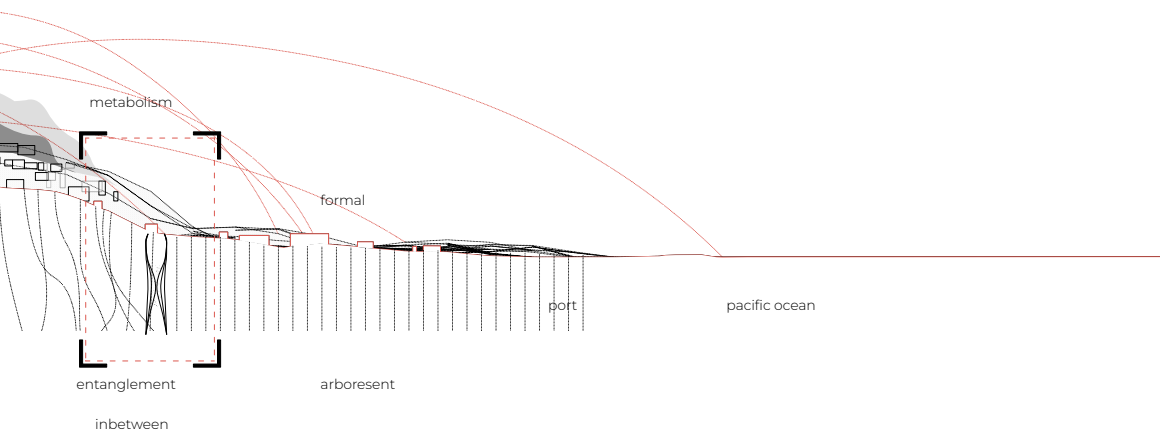
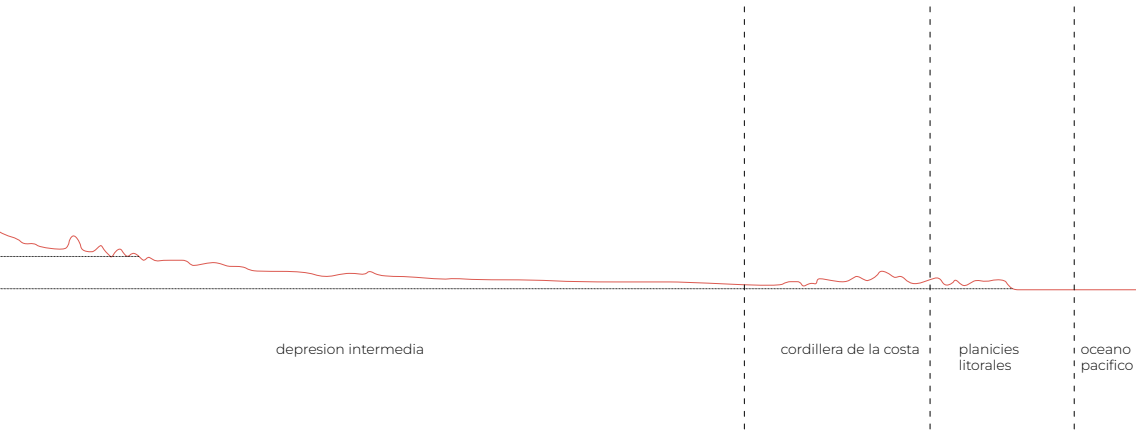




Fig. 22: Adapting the slope: between appropriation and precarity. Informal occupation of public circulation space, Valparaíso. Photograph by author, 2025.

MESO

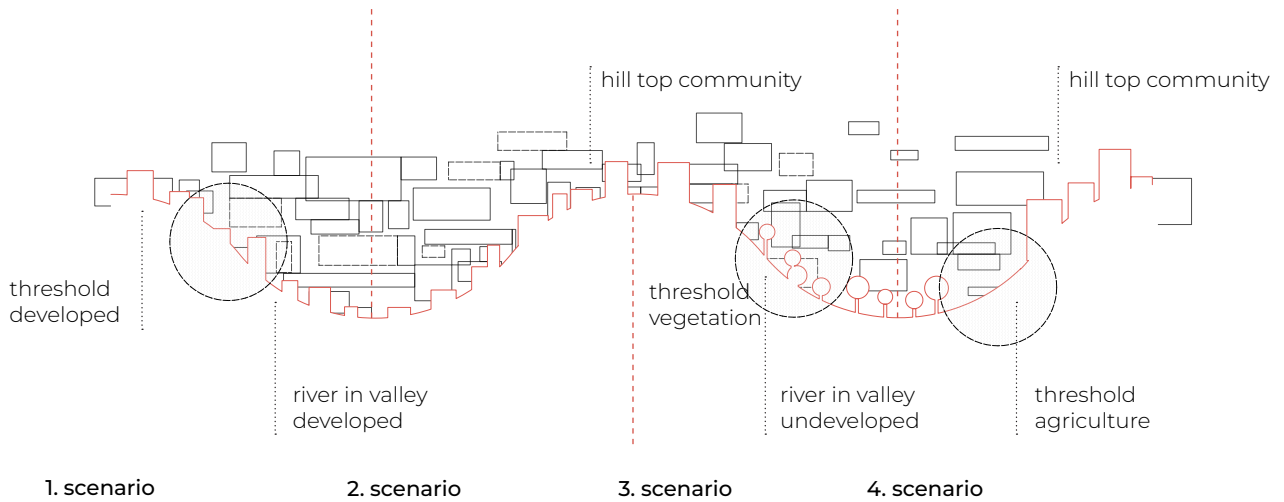
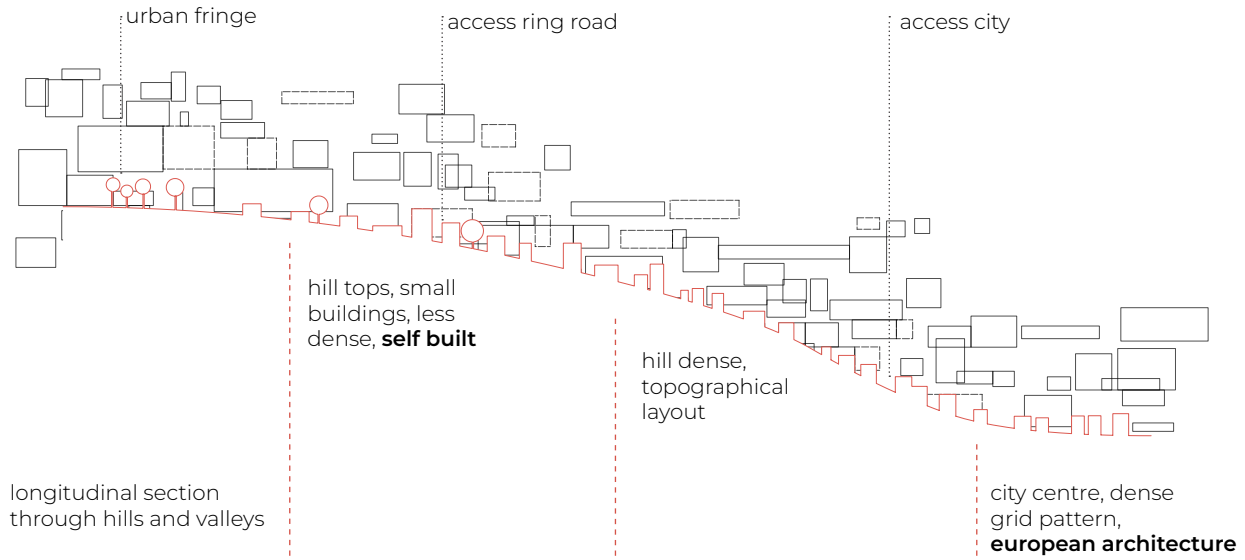
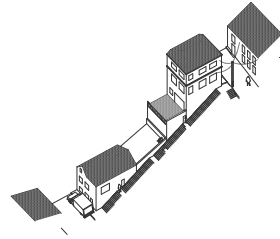
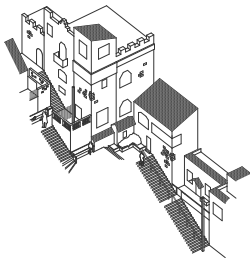
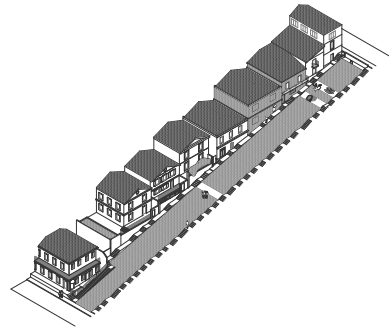


Fig. 23: Sectional studies, Valparaíso: formal and informal conditions, typological adaptation, and vegetation across the urban slope. Based on field observations and prior sectional studies. Source partially unknown. Adapted by author, 2025.

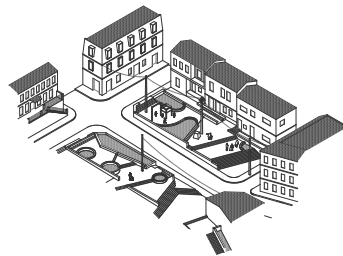
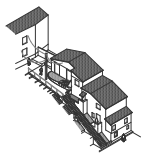
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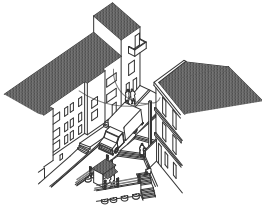
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PART III



PART IV



PART V

## MICRO

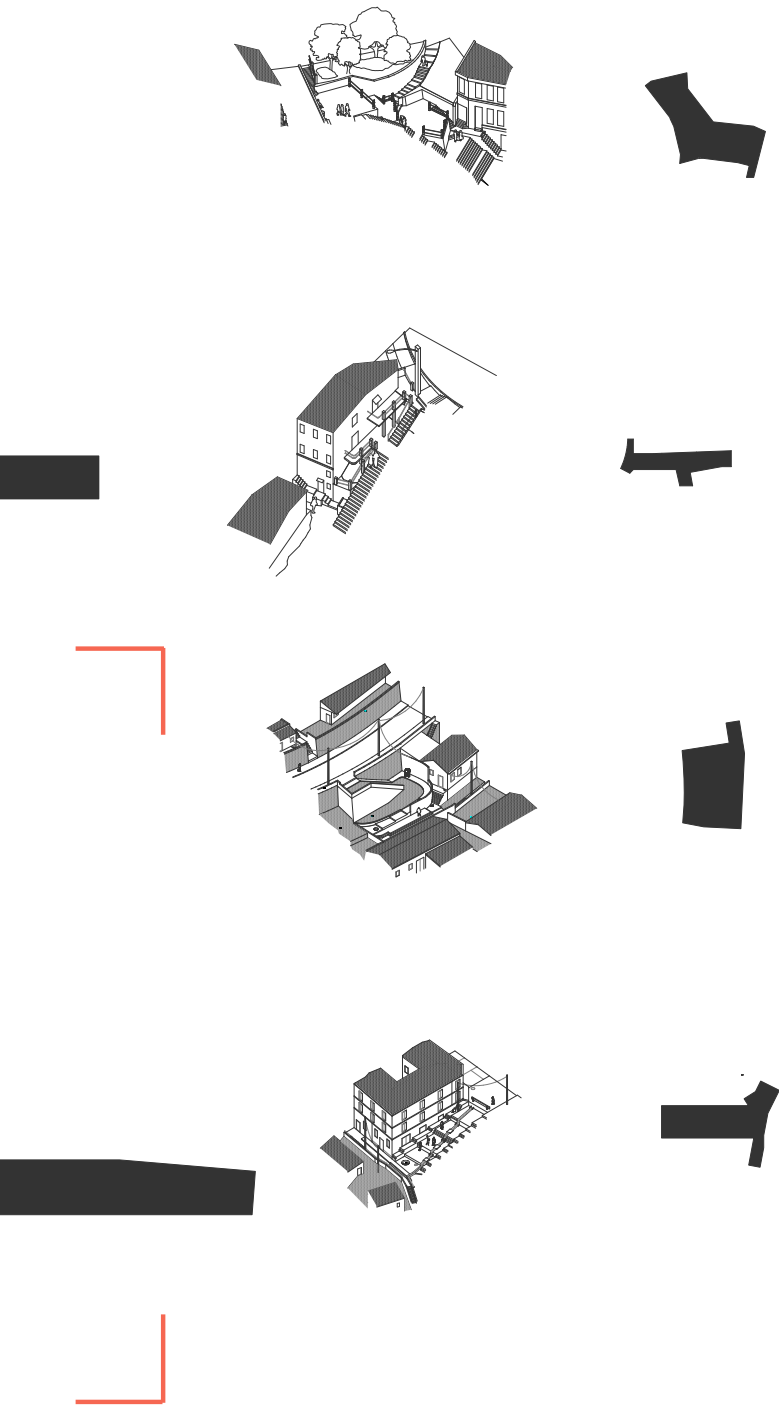


Fig. 24: Micro-sectional analysis of Valparaíso's urban fabric. Combette, Marie, Thomas Batzenschlager, and Clémence Pybaro. Valparaíso Público, 2013–2017. Received directly from the authors.

## ENTANGLEMENTS

### The Urban and the Rural

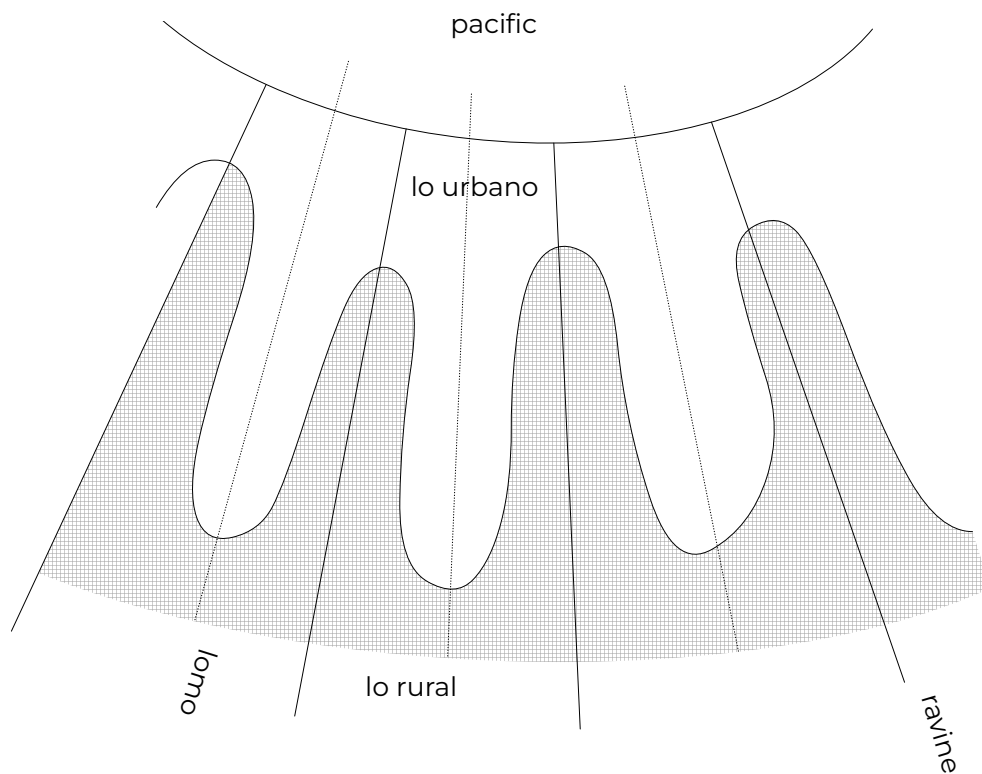


Fig. 25: The rural and the urban: a comparison and contradiction of these two extremes. Drawing, adapted by author, source unknown, 2025.

Fig. 26: The rural and the urban: European architectural typologies and the gradual emergence of informal traces, graffiti, and appropriation within the formal city fabric, Valparaíso. Photograph by author, 2025.



## ENTANGLEMENTS

What even is Formal and Informal?

PART I  
PART II  
PART III  
60  
PART IV  
PART V

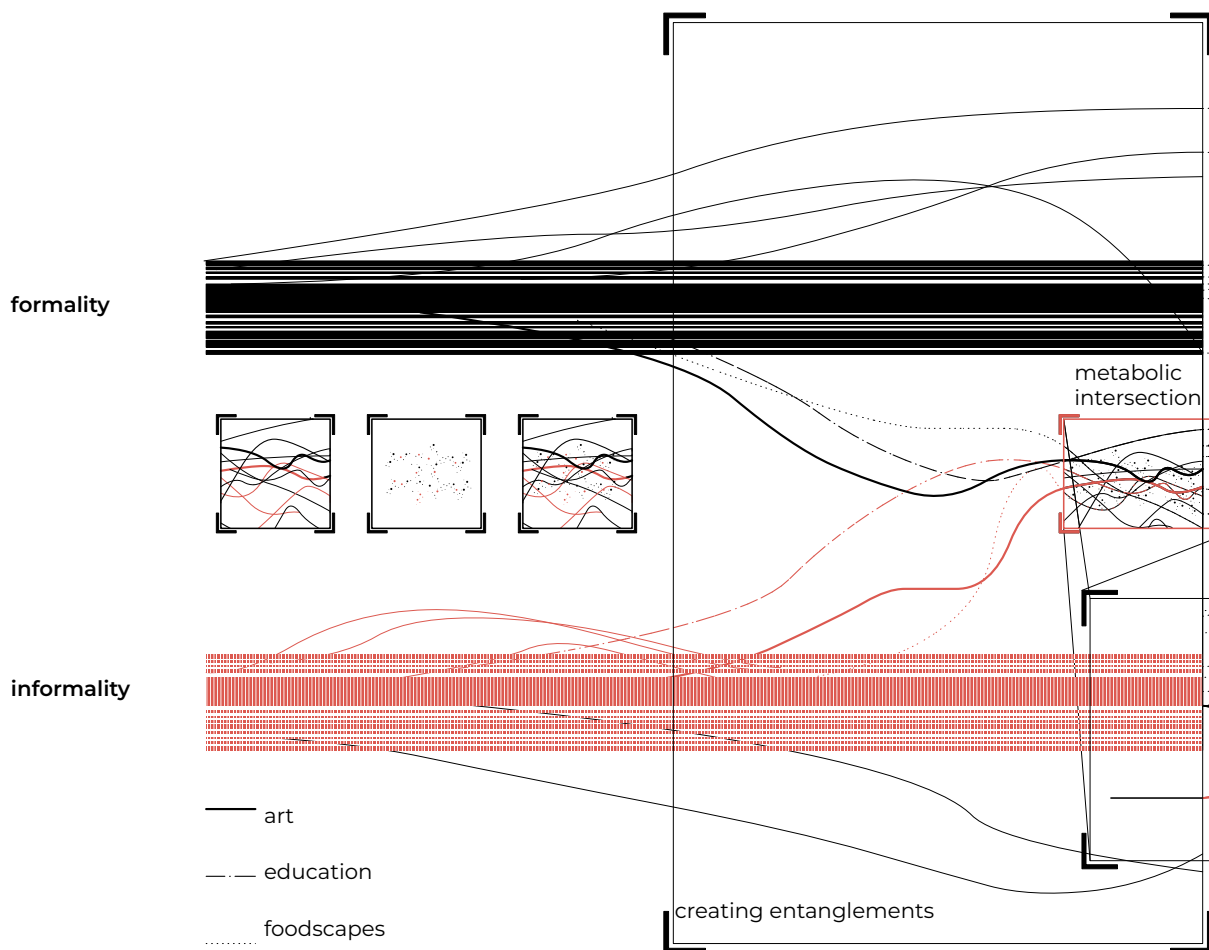
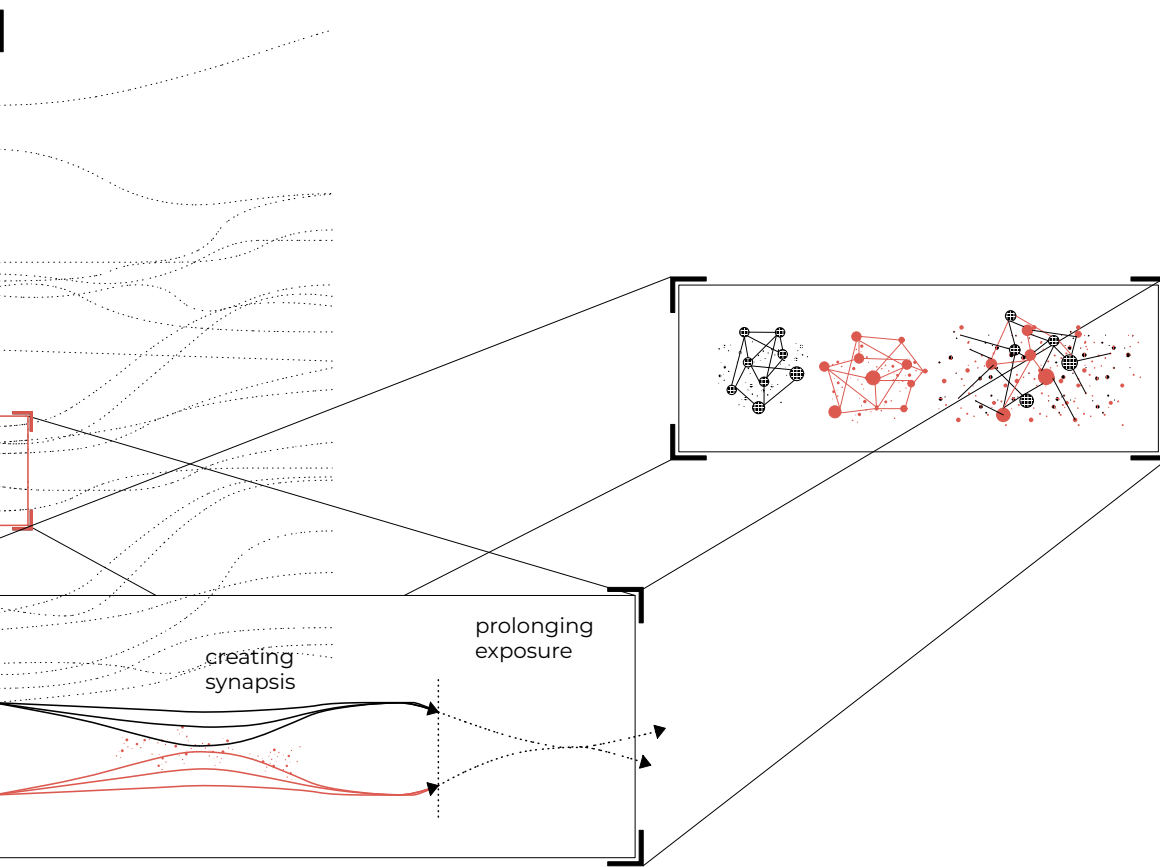


Fig. 27: Defining the formal and the informal, the hill and the flatland, and the points of intersection where homophily breaks, exchange occurs, and stay is prolonged through making. Drawing, adapted by author, source unknown, 2025.



## INFORMALITY AND FORMALITY

*Informality in some numbers*

**~1 billion people**  
live in informal settlements

**~25% of Latin America's**  
urban population

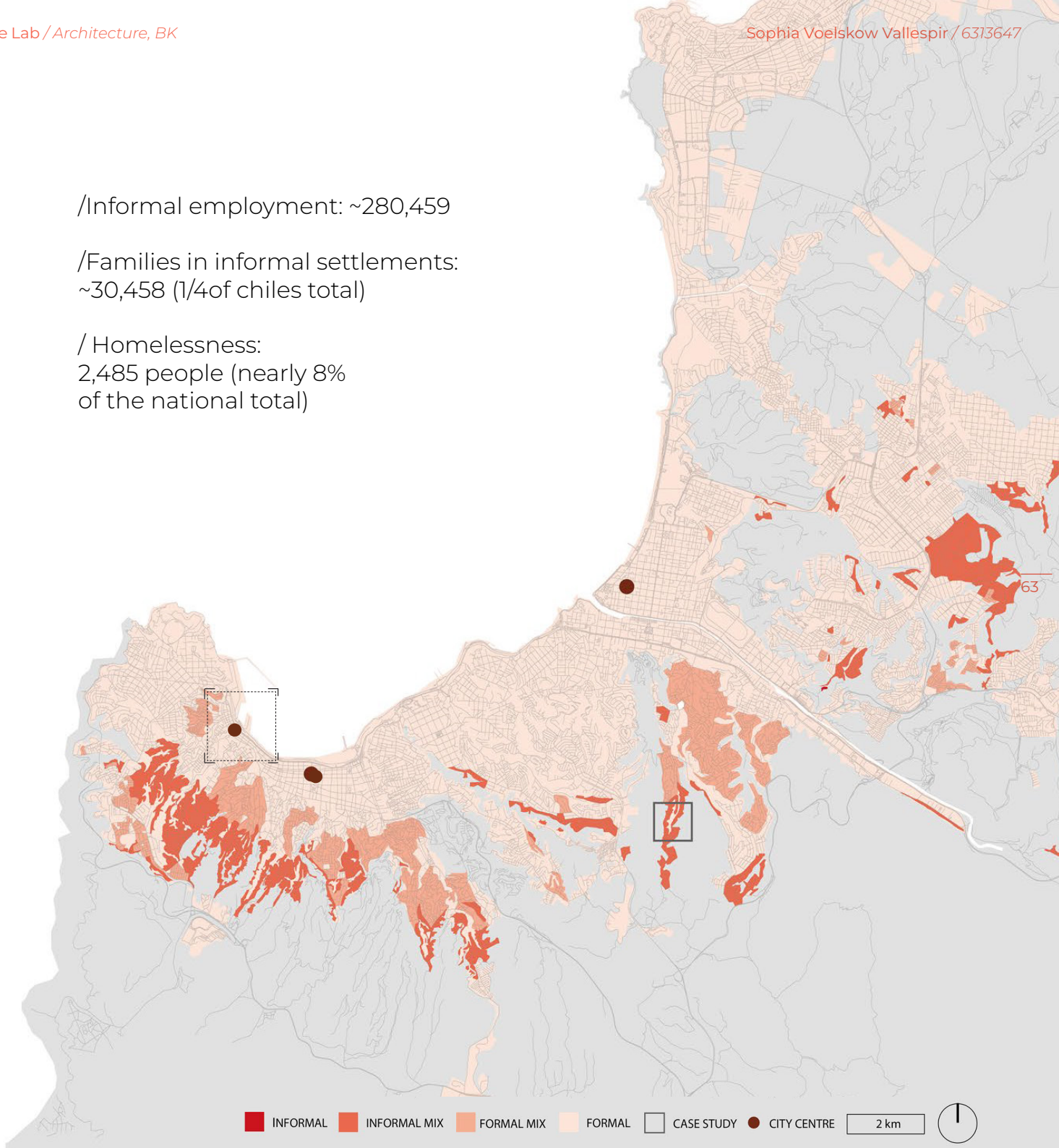
**72% increase Chile**  
2011–2019 in informal settlements

Fig. 28: Informal settlements in Greater Valparaíso. Aerial photographs: Google Earth. Source: Alegría, Víctor, and Kim Dovey. „Morphogenesis of contemporary informal settlement in Chile.“ Urban Design International

/ Informal employment: ~280,459

/ Families in informal settlements:  
~30,458 (1/4 of chiles total)

/ Homelessness:  
2,485 people (nearly 8%  
of the national total)



/borderscapes in valparaiso, between urban metabolism and

PART I  
PART II  
PART III

PART III

64

PART V

**ABANDONEMENT**  
APPROPRIATION OF THE SLOPE





Fig. 29: Contrasting urban conditions across Valparaíso's vertical topography: appropriation and informal consolidation on the cerros (above) alongside abandonment and vacancy in the port area below. Photograph by author, 2025.

## ABANDONEMENT

*UNESCO and the Barrio Puerto (Port)*

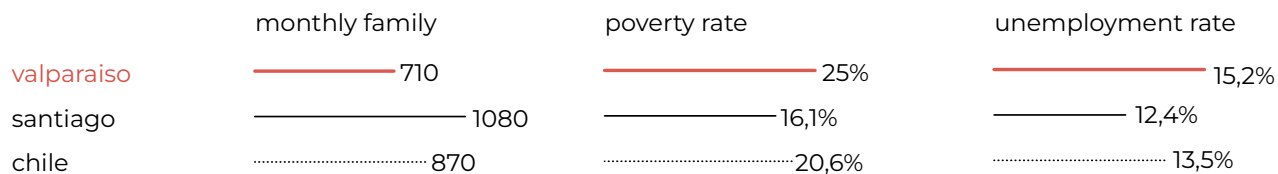


Fig. 30: Barrio Puerto: urban withdrawal, structural decay, and the spatial traces of prolonged abandonment following the decline of the port. Photograph by author, 2025.



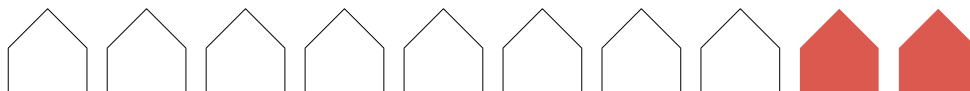
Fig. 31: Mapped vacancies and absolute decay and abandonment within the flatland of Barrio Puerto. Map by author, based on Google Earth satellite imagery, 2025.





of houses vacant in valparaiso

20%



PART I

PART II

PART III

8

PART IV

PART V



*Fig. 32. The amphitheatrical city: every hill a balcony, every threshold a view toward the port and the Pacific. Valparaíso's vertical terrain as poetic urban condition. Photograph by author, 2025.*



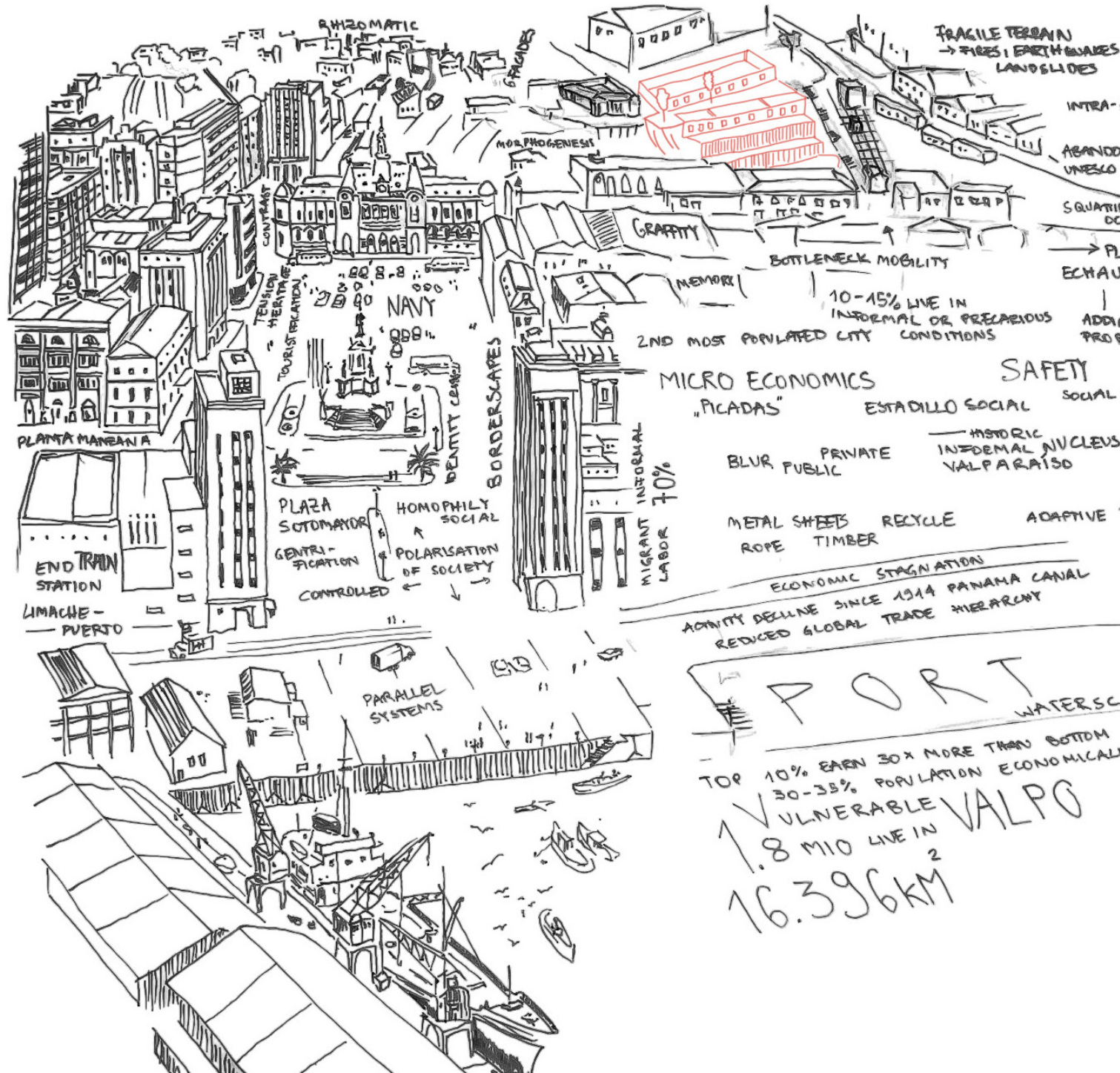
PART I

PART II

PART III

PART IV

PART V



RHIZOMATIC

GRADIENTS  
MORPHOGENESIS

FRAGILE TERRAIN  
→ FIRES | EARTHQUAKES  
LANDSLIDES

INTRA-

ABANDONED  
UNESCO

SQUATTING  
OCUPACION

→ PLANE  
ECHA

ADDITIONAL  
PROBLEMS

GRAFFITI

BOTTLENECK MOBILITY

10-15% LIVE IN  
INFORMAL OR PRECARIOUS  
CONDITIONS

2ND MOST POLLUTED CITY

MICRO ECONOMICS  
"PICADAS"

SAFETY

ESTADILLO SOCIAL

SOCIAL

BLUR PUBLIC PRIVATE

HISTORIC  
INFORMAL NUCLEUS  
VALPARAISO

70%  
INFORMAL  
MIGRANT  
LABOR

METAL SHEETS RECYCLE  
ROPE TIMBER

ADAPTIVE

ECONOMIC STAGNATION

ACTIVITY DECLINE SINCE 1914 PANAMA CANAL  
REDUCED GLOBAL TRADE HIERARCHY

PORT WATERSIDE

TOP 10% EARN 30x MORE THAN BOTTOM  
30-35% POPULATION ECONOMICALLY

↑ VULNERABLE VALPO  
1.8 MIO LIVE IN  
16.396KM<sup>2</sup>

TELEVISION  
HERITAGE  
TOURIST REPLICATION

NAVY

IDENTITY CENTERS

BORDERSCAPES

PLAZA  
SOTOMAYOR  
GENTRI-  
FICATION  
CONTROLLED

HOMOPHILY  
SOCIAL

POLARISATION  
OF SOCIETY

PLAZA MARCANIA

END TRAIN  
STATION

LIMACHE -  
PUERTO

PARALLEL  
SYSTEMS

ACTION  
 INHERITANCE OF  
 HERITAGE  
 BIG  
 COPTING  
 PLAZA  
 GREEN  
 ACTION  
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 FRAGMENTATION  
 OF  
 APRES  
 10% (OELB)  
 Y

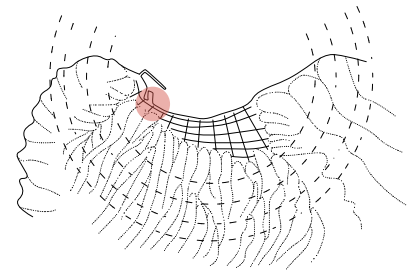
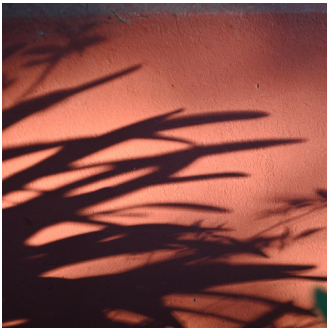


Fig. 33: Barrio Puerto: meso-scale mapping of urban decay, fragmented micro-economies, and metabolic rupture, tracing the layered conditions of abandonment, informal trade, and weak social ties across the port threshold. Based on: Pecchenino Raggi, Renzo (Lukas). *Apuntes Porteños*. Valparaíso: Fundación Renzo Pecchenino, 1978. Adapted by author, 2025.

PART I

PART II

PART III



72

PART IV



PART V

Fig. 34: Field observations, Barrio Puerto: maritime infrastructure and local craft, material texture and chromatic contrast, the binaries between industrial port condition and everyday urban life. Photograph by author, 2025.



## PROGRAMME

### 3.2 Programme Formation: Toward a Co-Productive Commons

#### 3.2.1 Arts and Crafts: Making as Infrastructure

Cultural production in Valparaíso has never been merely aesthetic. Muralism in Chile carries deep political roots, used since the late 1960s by groups such as the Brigada Ramona Parra to communicate across social divides through walls rather than institutions. When Pinochet seized control in 1973, murals were systematically painted over as acts of suppression. After the return of democracy, Valparaíso became the only city in Chile to legalize street art, making the wall a medium of resistance, communication, and civic identity (Latorre 2008). This history is still spatially present. Layers of paint accumulate on facades, each generation of images written over the last, the city itself operating as a living palimpsest of collective expression. In a city still marked by economic decline and spatial fragmentation, arts, crafts, print workshops, independent makers, and informal creative production continue to sustain identity, exchange, and everyday urban vitality. This extends far beyond curated cultural districts. Production here becomes both expression and maintenance, preserving collective identity while continuously reactivating urban life.

Making is significant because it produces more than objects. Craft carries tacit knowledge, intergenerational exchange, and embodied forms of learning (Sennett 2008). Shared making creates opportunities for collaboration, visibility, and participation across otherwise separated social groups. Within the programme, arts and crafts therefore function not as isolated cultural consumption but as active collective

production, a form of infrastructure as vital to the city as its stairs and funiculars.

#### 3.2.2 Education: Learning as Empowerment

In Valparaíso, educational inequality maps directly onto the city's vertical terrain. Schools in the Cerros operate with fewer resources and weaker institutional support than those concentrated in El Plan (OECD 2024). Access to quality education is not simply an institutional question but a spatial one, shaped by topography, mobility, and socio-economic distance.

Learning is understood here not as the transmission of fixed knowledge but as a reciprocal process produced collectively through encounter, making, and dialogue (Haraway 1988; Freire 1970). Three small educational spaces emerge from the existing ruins on the slope, embedded within the broader collective ecology. A playground extends the learning environment outward, dissolving the boundary between education, play, and everyday collective life. Children here are not isolated in an institution but positioned at the heart of the commons.

### 3.2.3 Foodscapes: Gathering as Practice

Of the three programmes, food is the most universally accessible. It operates through everyday necessity rather than cultural capital or institutional affiliation, gathering people across difference without requiring prior knowledge, expertise, or belonging. In Valparaíso, markets, informal vendors, shared meals, and street food production already form part of the city's social fabric, connecting formal and informal economies while generating spontaneous spaces of encounter (Klinenberg 2018).

This low-threshold quality is precisely what makes food politically significant within the programme. Where arts and crafts require a degree of participation and education requires a degree of commitment, food simply requires hunger. It is the most democratic of the three programmes, the one most likely to draw in those who would not otherwise enter.

Within the proposal, foodscapes extend from an informal market at the lower threshold of the slope through collective cooking spaces, a community kitchen, and productive urban cultivation terraces above. Together they create shared routines of use, strengthen local economies, and generate the kind of repeated everyday encounter through which weak ties across social groups can form (Granovetter 1973).

Food gathers.

### 3.2.4 Synergies: The Co-Productive Commons

The programme does not propose three parallel functions but a collective ecosystem. Arts and crafts, education, and food are not isolated interventions. They are interdependent systems that reinforce one another spatially, socially, and temporally. Making teaches. Learning empowers. Food gathers.

Arts and crafts create opportunities for tacit exchange and informal learning. Education introduces longer-term structures of support and empowerment. Food bridges everyday informal economies with shared collective infrastructure. As people move through the slope, between market and workshop, kitchen and classroom, new social metabolisms become possible, everyday entanglements through which weak ties form across otherwise separated social groups (Granovetter 1973), enabling encounters that remain unlikely within more socially homogeneous urban environments. This is what the co-productive commons means in practice. Not passive public space but space continuously produced through collective participation, shared use, and contribution (Stavrides 2016; Ostrom 1990). The programme translates the research question into a collective framework through which architecture mediates between differentiated urban systems and supports the emergence of shared urban life.



Fig. 35: The poetic city, the playful, vibrant city. Photograph by author, 2025.



**Location:** Valparaíso (the specific site is open)  
**Abstract objects,** not based on a predetermined design  
**Process guided by intuition and hands-on work**  
**Fixed format:** each object touches the boundaries of 44 × 32 × 7 cm

## WORKSHOPS



### GRUPO 1: COLOR + PERCEPCIÓN

Cómo el color se lee a través de la distancia, la escala, la superposición y el movimiento.

### GRUPO 2: COLOR + LUZ

Cómo la luz, la sombra y el tiempo modifican la percepción del color.

### GRUPO 3: COLOR + AGUA

Cómo el agua (lluvia, humedad, aire marino) transforma el color.



**Location:** Valparaíso kindergarten  
rhythm, yellow, red, blue, observing decision making  
**Process guided by intuition hand on**  
**Fixed format:** A3



## RED|BLUE|YELLOW

following given instructions: choose one color

## POSSIBLE CHANGE OF COLOR

when given the opportunity to change color, everybody chose to change the palette.

## RHYTHM

trying rhythms through clapping and brushing seeing coordination versus intuition

Fig. 36: Workshops in Valparaíso: the city and the Vedute Workshop at Universidad Católica, and the kindergarten workshop. Photograph by author, 2025.



## Vedute Workshop

[perception]

Universidad Católica de Valparaíso



The Vedute Workshop shifted the lens from the child's primordial intuition to a disciplined, analytical eye. It revealed that color in Valparaíso is not a fixed aesthetic attribute, but a relational and

transformative condition. By framing the landscape, the workshop became an investigation into the processes of instability and adaptation that mirror the city's own urban condition.

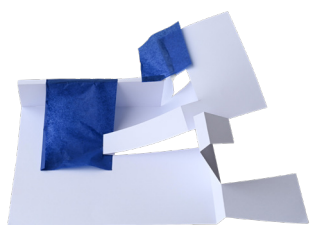
I. Chromatic Contingency and Environmental Forces

Color is fundamentally shaped by external

pressures. Participants observed how water, depth, and transparency caused hues to drift, "how the colors were transforming... when one tries to look at the background, how the colors change." Experiments with light proved that color is contingent on orientation and time: "if the light is projected from one side, the color changes."

Fig. 37: Vedute Workshop outcomes and analysis. Photograph by author, 2025.

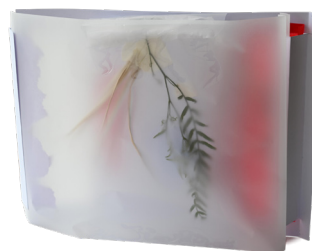
[water]



This positions color as an unstable, temporal force rather than a static application.

## II. Material Negotiation and the Palimpsest

Materiality actively conditions visual manifestation. Surfaces with varied textures retained pigments differently, showing that



matter itself participates in the production of space. Furthermore, the inability to erase underlying traces, “it does not manage to disappear completely”, demonstrates how surfaces accumulate histories. This reinforces the concept of the city as a lithic palimpsest, where weathering and informal repainting produce a continuously evolving

[luz]



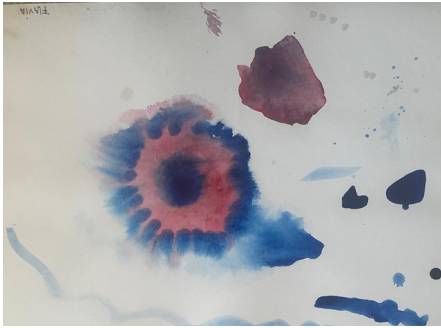
urban skin.  
III. Perception as an Embodied Process

The workshop highlighted a tension between structure and spontaneity. Movement fundamentally altered the experience—“if you turn around, you see something else”, proving that spatial perception is dynamic and embodied.

This mirrors Valparaíso's own negotiation between formal order and informal growth, where constructed systems eventually give way to intuitive, adaptive formations.

## The Kindergarten Workshop

*Rhythm, Perception, Community*



## workshop

the four realms of an experience

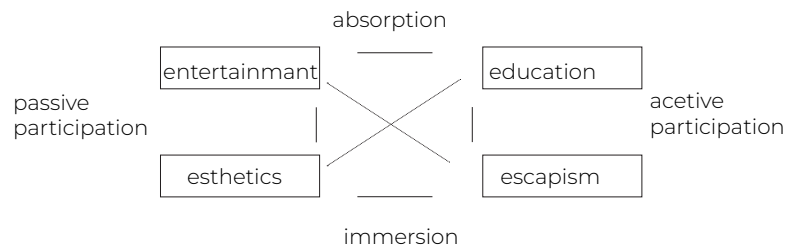


Fig. 38: Kindergarten workshop outcomes and analysis. Photograph by author, 2025.

PART I

PART II

PART III

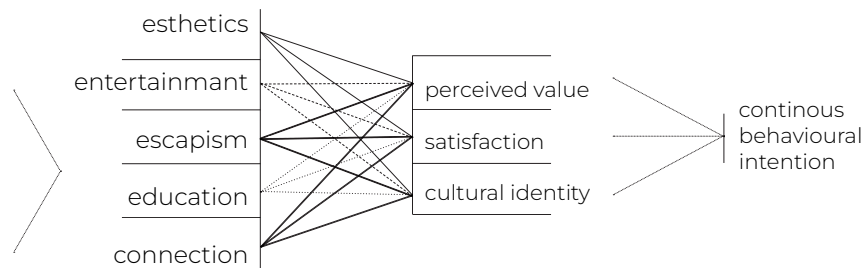
PART IV

PART V



# SOR

STIMULUS ORGANISM RESPONSE



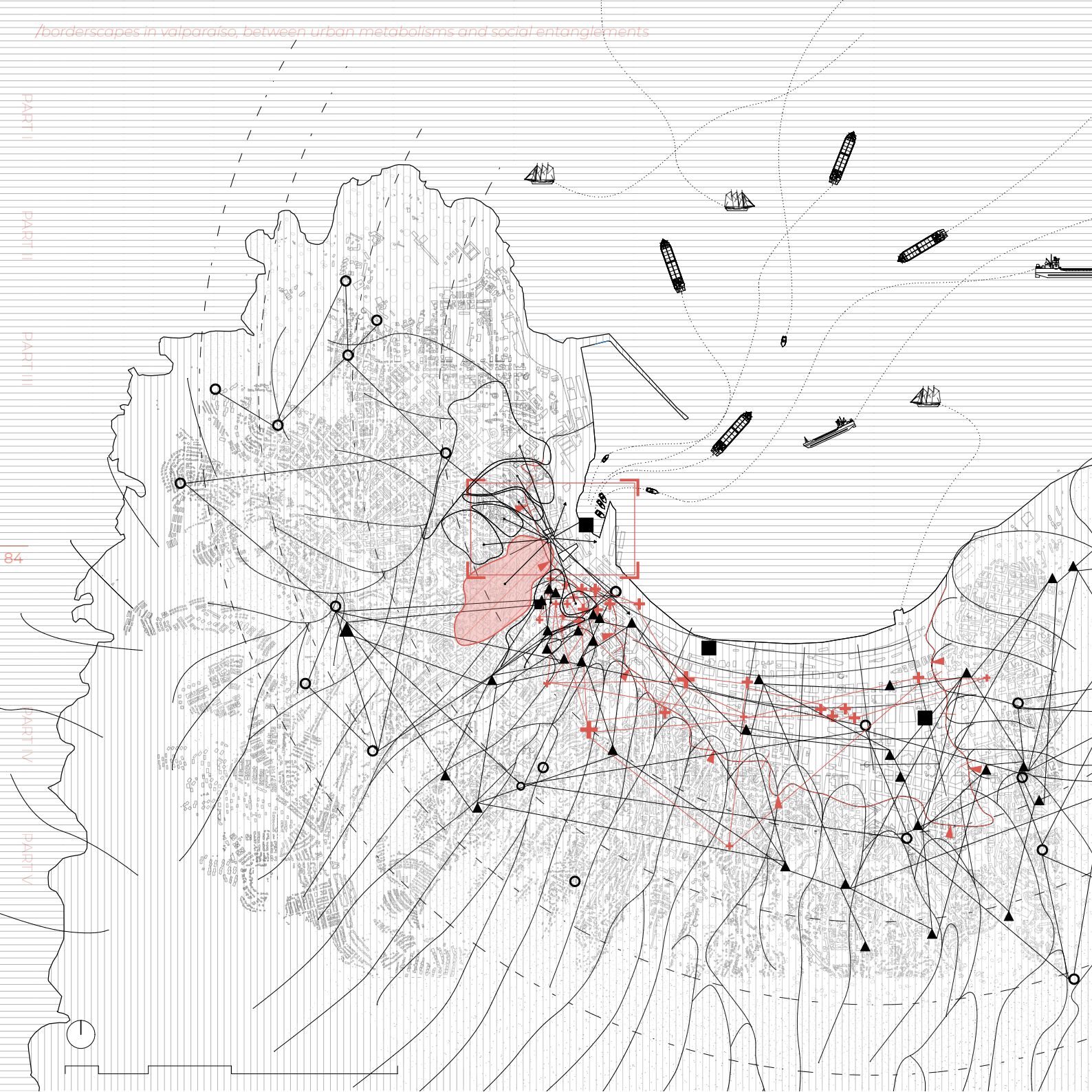
PART I

PART II

PART III

PART IV

PART V



## What weaves together the urban fabric?

*Education, Arts & Crafts, and Foodscapes*

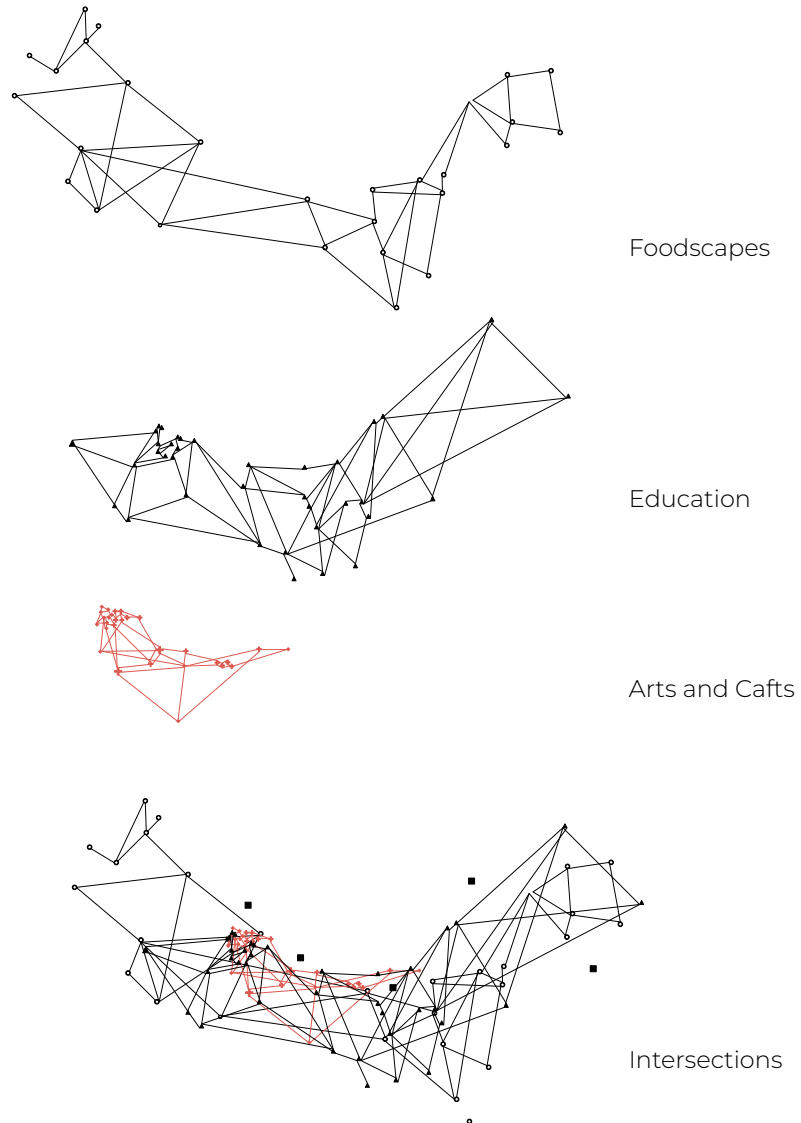


Fig. 39: Mapping foodscapes, education, and arts and crafts, and analysing where these intersect. These remaining programmes, drawn from both formal and informal practices, are what still hold the city together and resist its decay. Map by author, 2025.

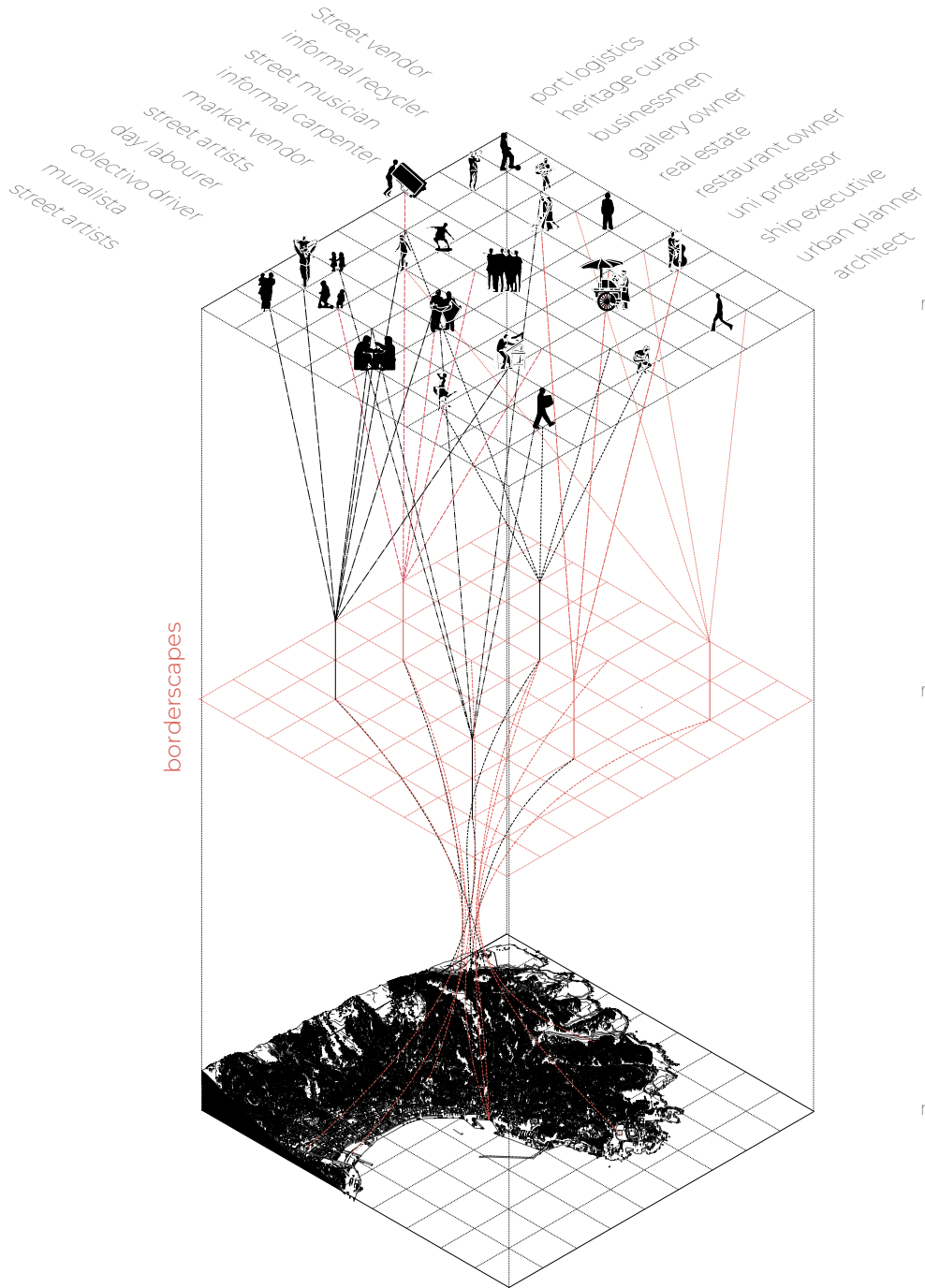
PART I

PART II

PART III

PART IV

PART V



entanglements

micro

metabolism

meso

stratification

macro

## MACRO - MESO - MICRO

*Flows, Intersections*

Fig. 40: Multi-scale mapping of formal and informal systems, from territorial overview to urban metabolism. Tracing the distribution of food, education, and arts and crafts infrastructures across Valparaíso's vertical terrain, from macro concentration in El Plan to meso fragmentation across the cerros, toward the micro scale where these systems have the potential to intersect at human scale and produce everyday entanglements. Map by author, 2025.

## Flows

*Narratives, Faces, People of the City*

PART I

PART II

PART III





Fig. 41: Narratives, stories, and traces: situated knowledge gathered through conversations, encounters, and photographic observation across Valparaíso. Photograph by author, 2025.



Fig. 41 (continued)



## Flows

### Narratives, Faces, People of the City

PART I

PART II

PART III

#### Barrio Puerto



Age: 67  
District: Caleta Portales  
Occupation: Fisherman

*"I remember going with my grandmother to shop. There were warehouses for fish, for vegetables... meat from the south, produce from inland. That was the connection."*

#### Arts and Crafts



Age: 28  
District: Cerro Cordillera  
Occupation: Street Artist / Muralist

*"Now they want to ban murals, saying they damage the city. But we tell what others keep silent."*

92

PART IV

PART V

Age: 58  
District: Barrio Puerto  
Occupation: Lifelong resident



*"The port area is extremely abandoned. A city that is always promising what it could become."*

Age: 35  
District: Cerro Alegre  
Occupation: Designer / Café owner



*"People buy the hill for its authenticity and then everything becomes business."*

Age: 45  
District: Cerro Cordillera / Barrio Puerto  
Occupation: Informal worker / recycler



*"Everything here has been left behind. But it's the only place I can stay."*

Age: 39  
District: Cerro Concepción  
Occupation: Printmaker / Artisan



*"I make a living teaching workshops and selling prints. It's difficult, but you can still create here."*

Fig. 42: Portrait drawings of the people interviewed during fieldwork. Drawing by author, 2025.

Education

Foodscaapes



Age: 25  
District: Playa Ancha  
Occupation: Architecture Student

*"I came here from the south on a scholarship. For me, studying here is an opportunity my family never had."*



Age: 63  
District: Barrio Puerto  
Occupation: Street Food Vendor

*"Everyone comes together here: students, workers, tourists, friends. We all eat the same thing."*



Age: 20  
District: Cerro Monjas  
Occupation: Sociology Student

*"Valparaíso is chaotic, but it has this quality of allowing you to be."*



Age: 37  
District: Barrio Puerto  
Occupation: Restaurant Owner

*"My place is small, but here it feels like family. People come back."*



Name: Felipe  
Age: 49  
District: Playa Ancha  
Occupation: Architecture Professor

*"This city creates space. There are architects, artists... it has this quality of allowing you to be."*



Age: 41  
District: Vega Central / Barrio Puerto connection  
Occupation: Market Vendor

*"This market has always been a meeting point. Everything from the south came here."*

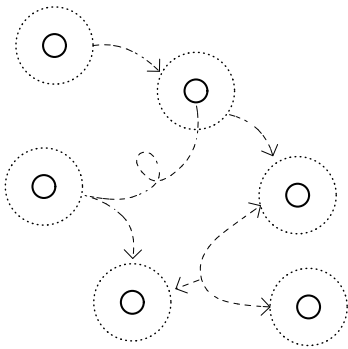
## Confluence

Forming the Programme

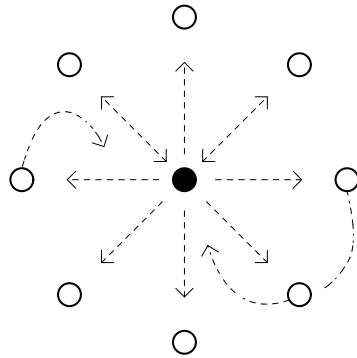
art/craft

education

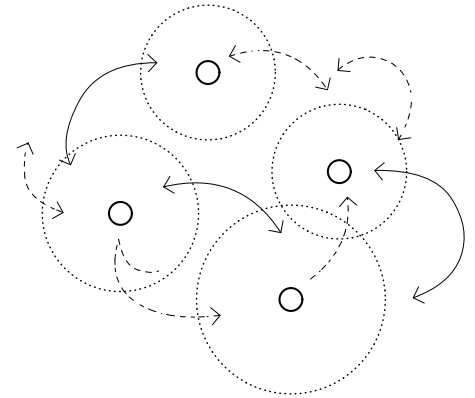
foodscapes



[ to make ]



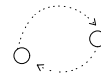
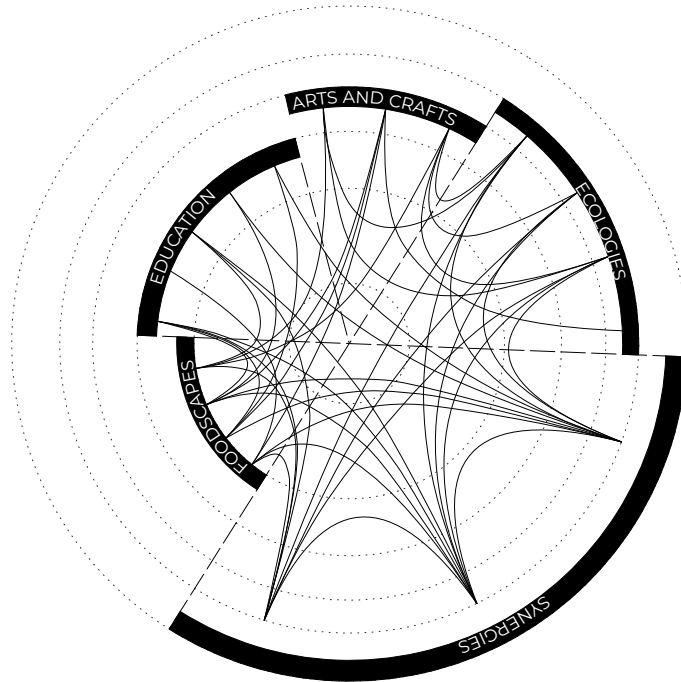
[ to exchange ]



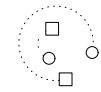
[ to connect ]

Fig. 43: Diagram tracing how the programme emerged through interviews, workshops, and urban analysis, and the synergies between them. Diagram by author, 2025.

# synergies



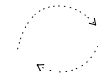
**sharing knowledge.**  
skills, traditions, local knowledge,  
exchange and co-created



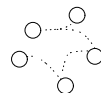
**learning by doing.**  
teaching and mentoring across  
disciplines  
skills, traditions, local knowledge,  
exchange and co-created



**shared resources.**  
space, tools, materials and  
infrastructure are used together



**local economy**  
local production and knowledge  
create livelihoods and resilience

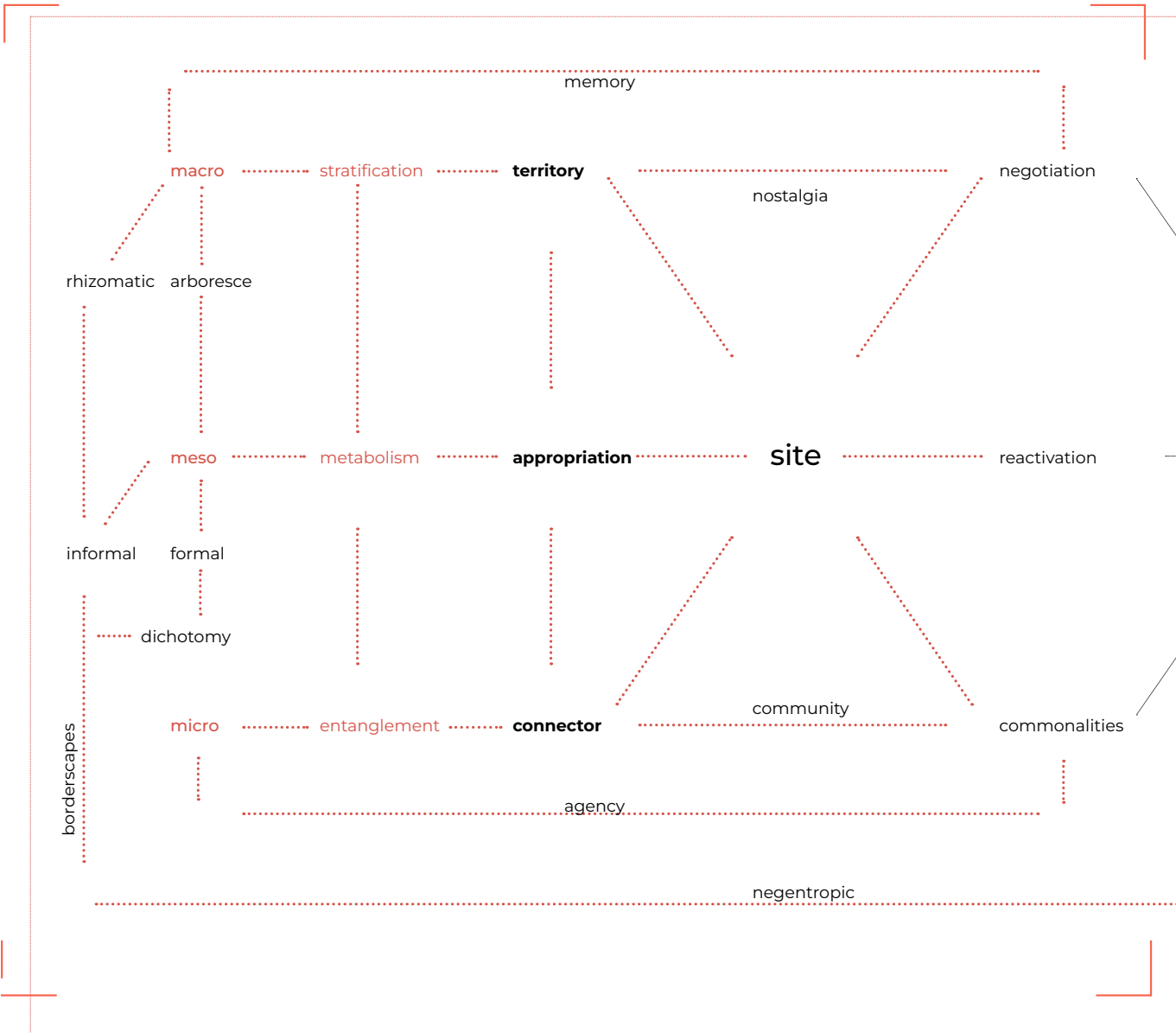


**community connection.**  
collaboration strengthens social  
bonds and local identity

# programme

strategies

To what extent can architecture act as a mediator between formal institutions and informal practices to produce a co-productive commons in Valparaiso's vertically stratified fabric?



time — displacement — network/rhizomes? — making

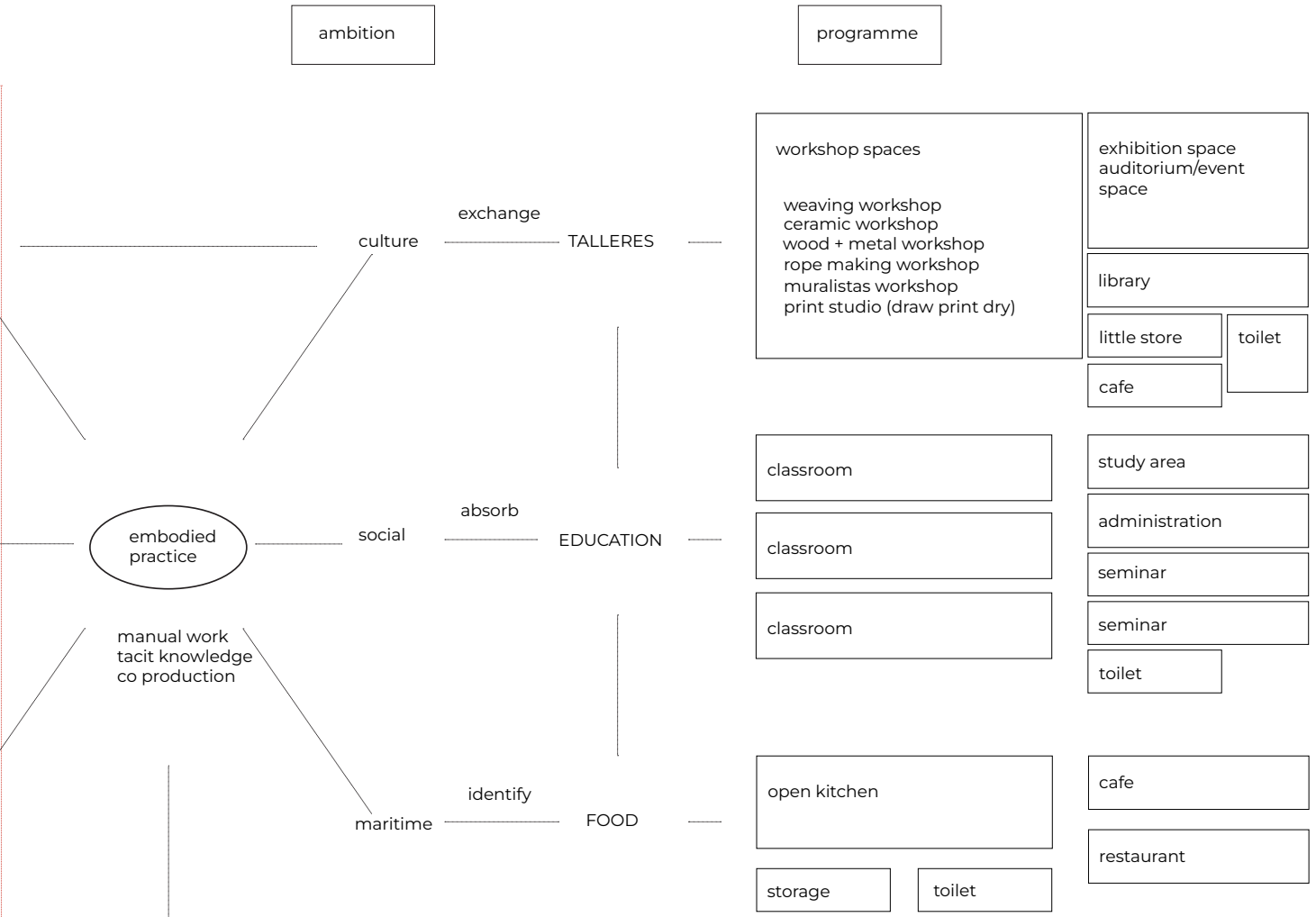
PART I

PART II

PART III

PART IV

PART V



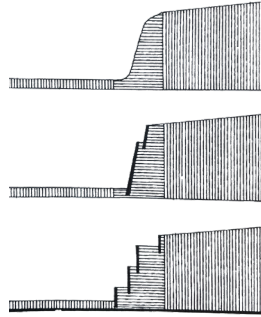
# Barrio Puerto

## The Urban Framework

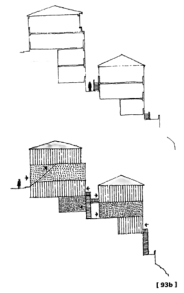
PART I

PART II

PART III



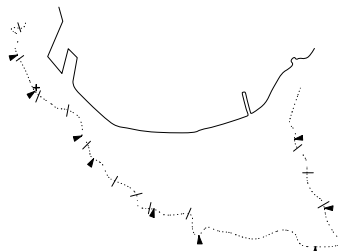
territory



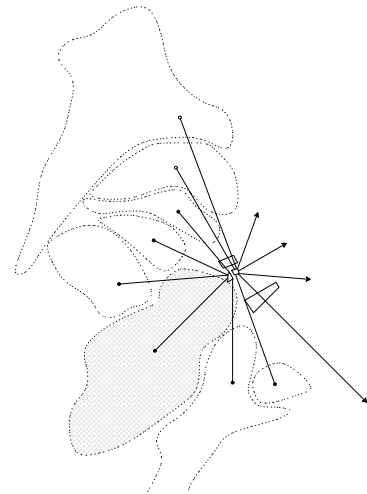
appropriation

PART IV

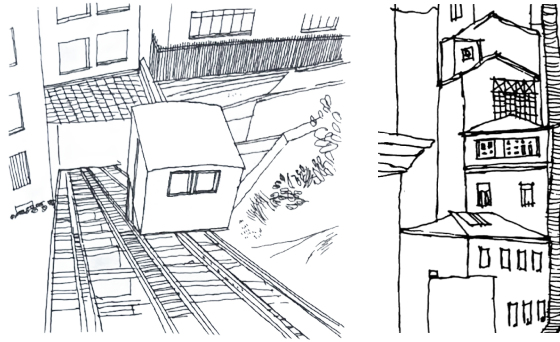
PART V



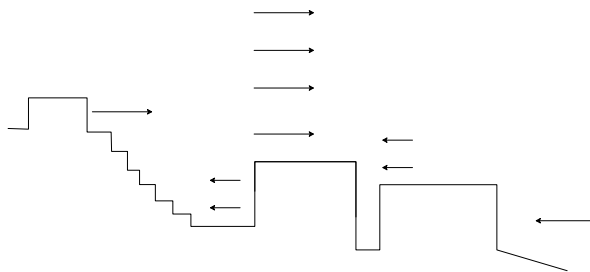
commonalities



reactivation



connector



negotiation

micro

Fig. 44: Outcomes of the barrio and city's territorial analysis: appropriation of the slope, and the funicular and stairs as connectors of this verticality. Finding commonalities and reactivating space while negotiating between the flatland and the hills. Various sources, adapted by author, 2025.



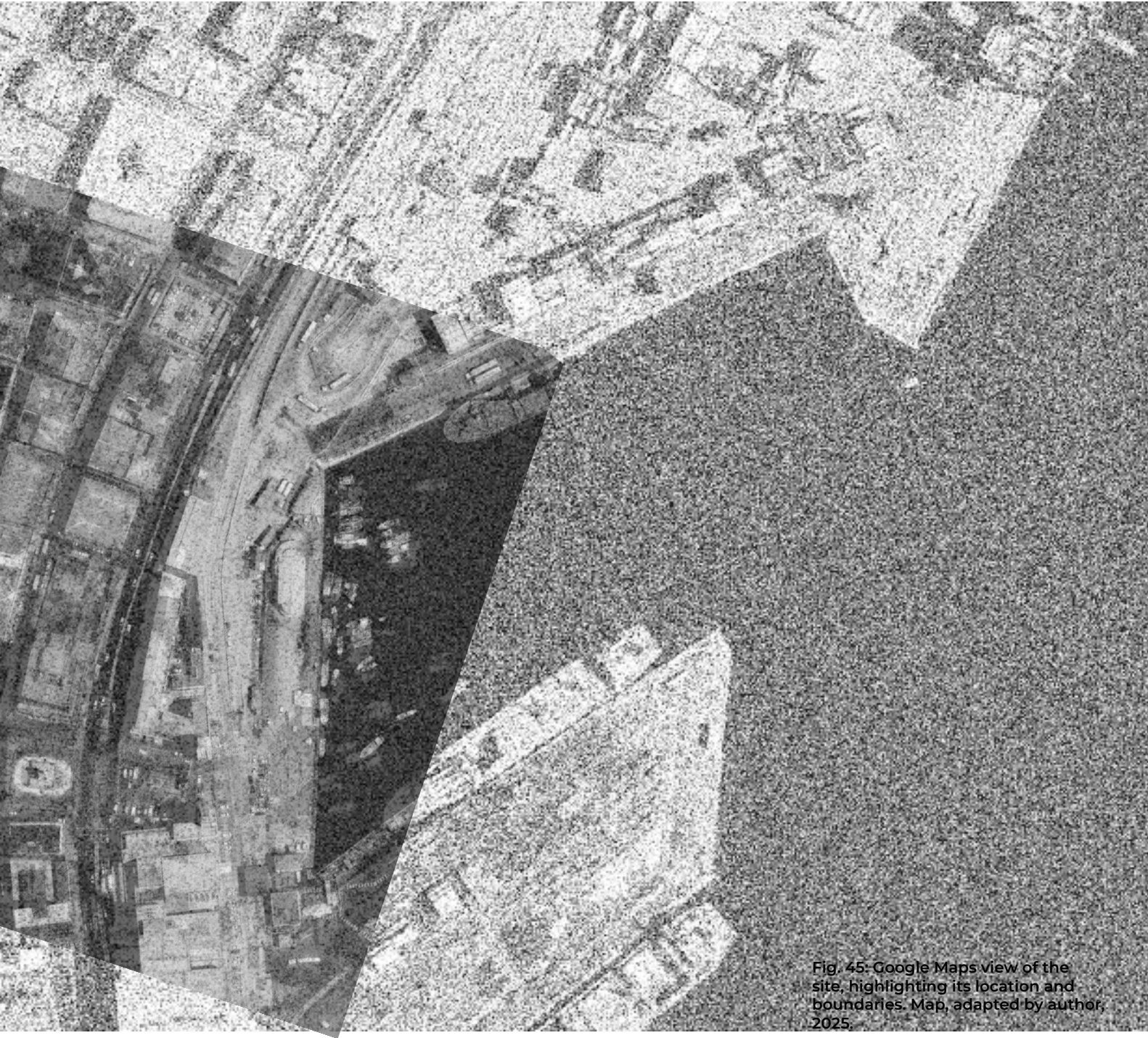
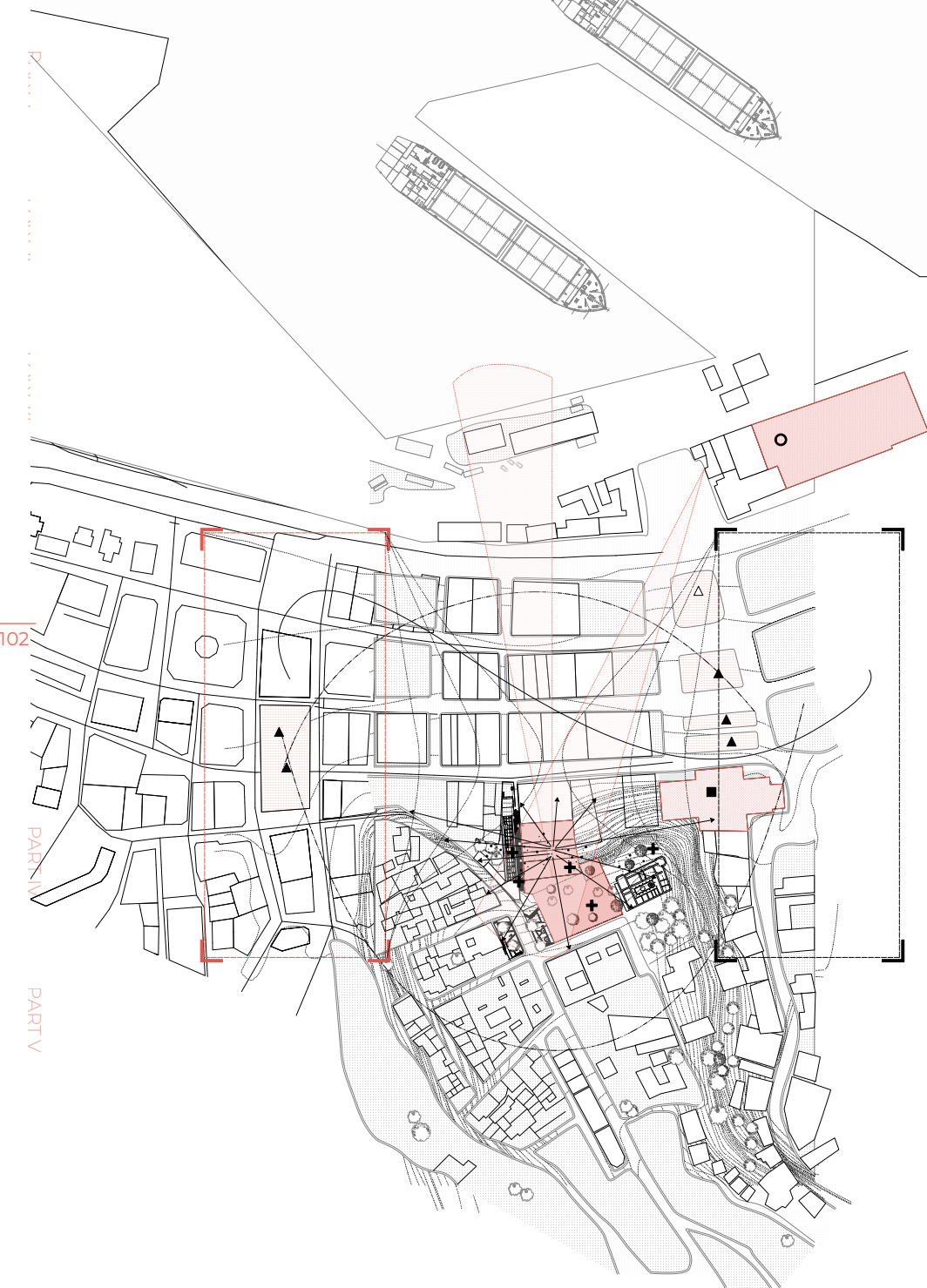


Fig. 45: Google Maps view of the site, highlighting its location and boundaries. Map, adapted by author, 2025.



- connect
- reactivation
- create intersections
- in between space
- financial district
- port area
- navy headquarters
- plaza
- end train station
- site: cerro cordillera
- view relationships

102

PART I

PART II

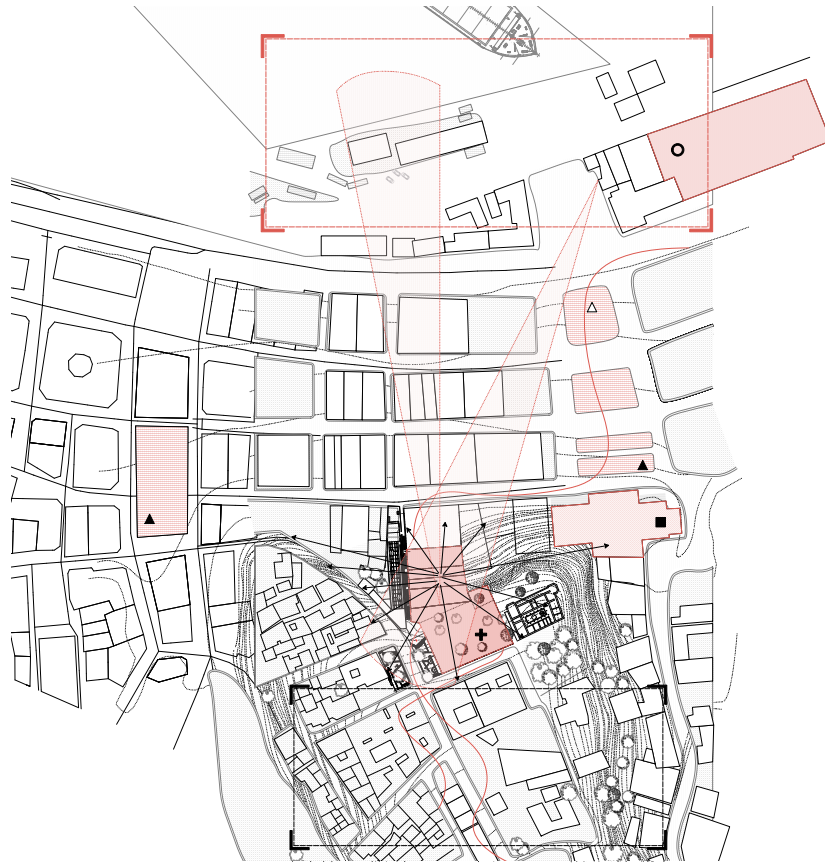
PART III

PART IV

PART V

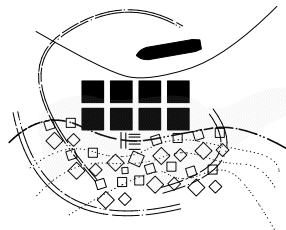
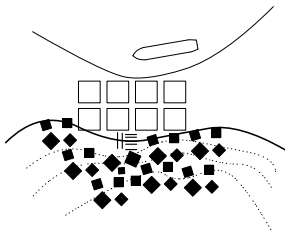
## Map Barrio Puerto

*Conditions, Transportation, Main Institutional Buildings  
Education, Arts and Crafts and Foodscapes*



exchange

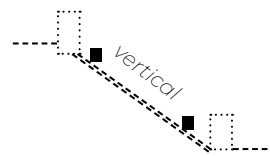
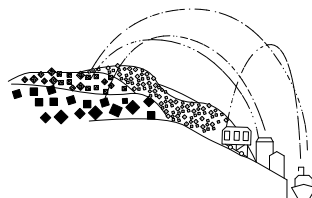
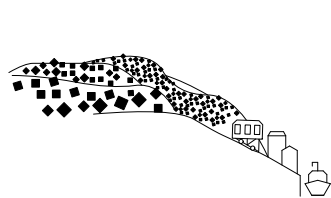
Fig. 47: Diagram and map showing the intended horizontal exchange within the flatland. Diagram and map by author, 2025.





connect

Fig. 48: Diagram and map showing the intended vertical connection between hill and flatland. Diagram and map by author, 2025.



## Urban Conditions

*Mapping the Territory*

PART I

PART II

PART III

106

PART IV

PART V

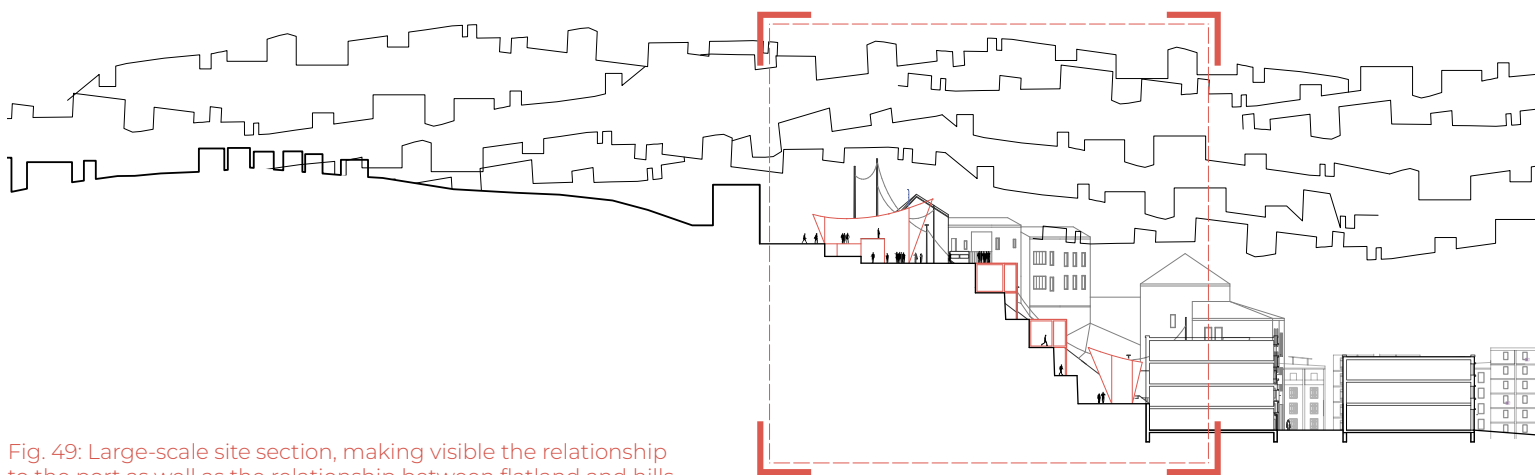
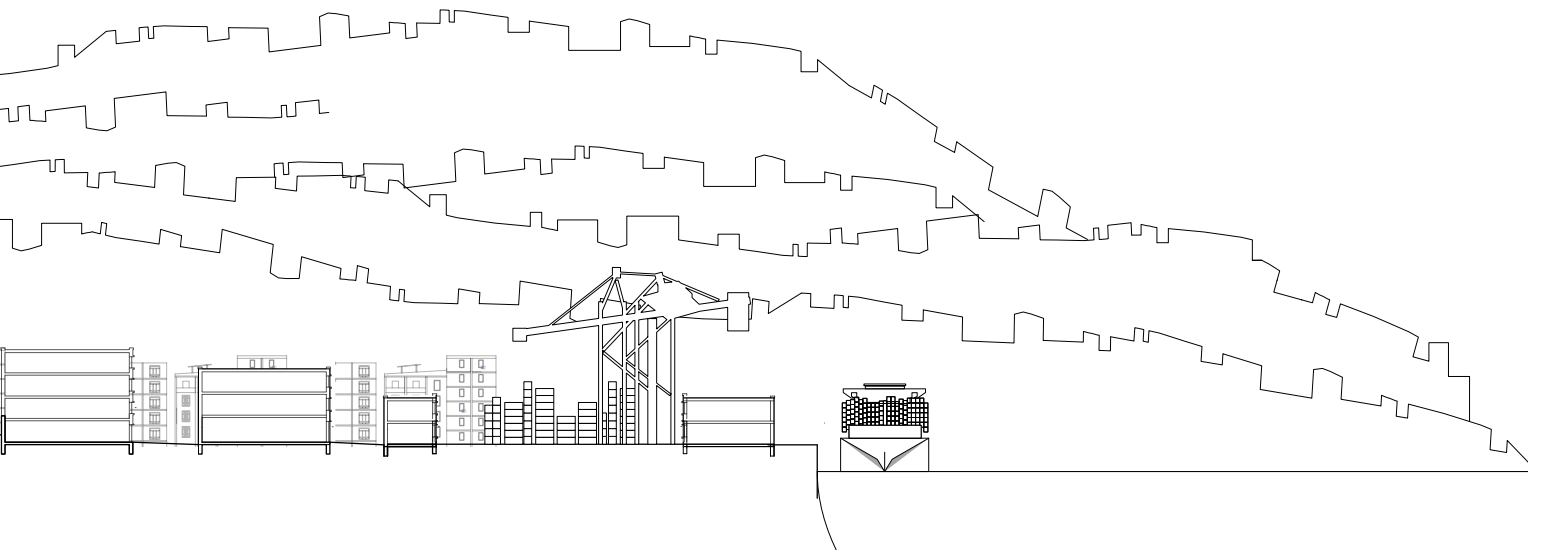


Fig. 49: Large-scale site section, making visible the relationship to the port as well as the relationship between flatland and hills, situating the project within this inbetween space. Drawing by author, 2025.



3.3 Architectural Translation

### 3.3.1 Spatial Strategy

The architectural proposal is guided by seven spatial principles that together define its approach to the site, the programme, and the city.

#### Palimpsest.

The site is treated as a layered surface to be added to rather than overwritten. Existing ruins, retaining walls, and traces of former occupation are preserved as spatial anchors, maintaining historical continuity while allowing new interventions to emerge from what is already there.

#### Porosity.

Thresholds are designed to invite rather than exclude. Rather than rigid boundaries between programme, circulation, and public space, the project creates porous edges where inside and outside, formal and informal, private and collective continuously negotiate.

#### Port orientation.

The intervention reclaims visual and physical connections between Cerro Cordillera and the waterfront below, reorienting the slope toward the bay and strengthening the relationship between hill and port that has defined Valparaíso since its foundation.

## Proximity.

The project is designed for social, economic, and cultural mixing. Spaces of low-threshold participation, shared production, and everyday gathering create conditions through which people who would not otherwise meet can occupy common ground.

## Prolonged movement.

Circulation is not treated as mere transit but as social infrastructure. Movement through the slope is slowed, extended, and opened into occupation, transforming passage into pause, arrival into encounter.

## Patina.

The intervention is grounded in regional and vernacular building traditions. Stone carries the memory of the site. Timber establishes structural coherence. Adobillo reconnects to local craft knowledge. Materials are not imported abstractions but situated responses to place.

## Process.

The project does not propose a singular fixed building but an open spatial framework capable of adaptation, appropriation, and collective production over time. Architecture here is not a final answer but an enabling condition.

### 3.3.2 Activating the Slope

The architectural proposal begins with the recognition that Valparaíso's vertical terrain should not be treated as obstacle but as civic infrastructure. Rather than neutralizing the city's sectional condition, the project works with its topography, transforming the slope into an inhabitable collective framework. The existing site operates as a bottleneck within a larger circulation network connecting the lower city, Ascensor Cordillera, and the hillside fabric. Movement is compressed into narrow stairs and transitional passage, reducing the slope to infrastructural transit. The intervention reinterprets this condition by extending circulation into occupation. Movement becomes spatially prolonged. Arrival is slowed. Passage transforms into encounter. Through a sequence of terraces, the project creates opportunities for pause, exchange, observation, and collective use along the vertical transition. The slope becomes a connector and shared social infrastructure.

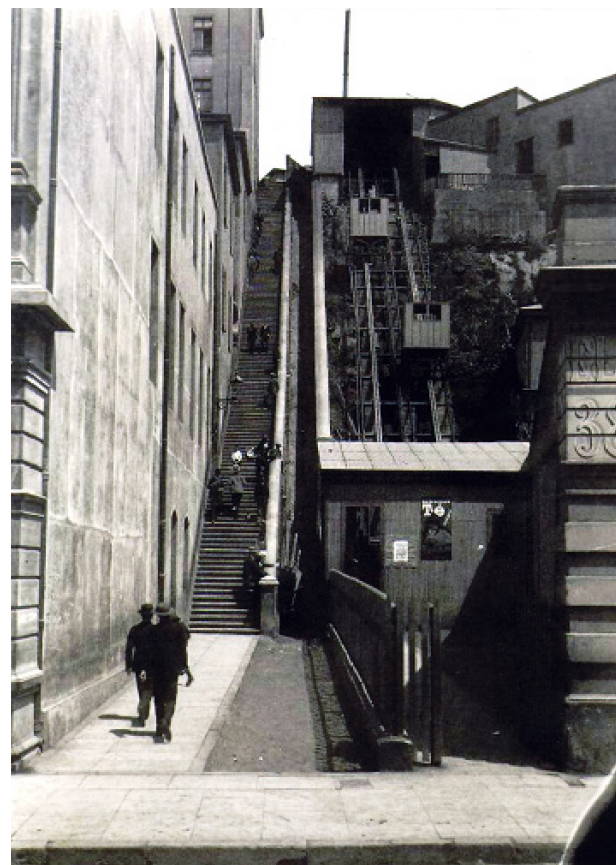
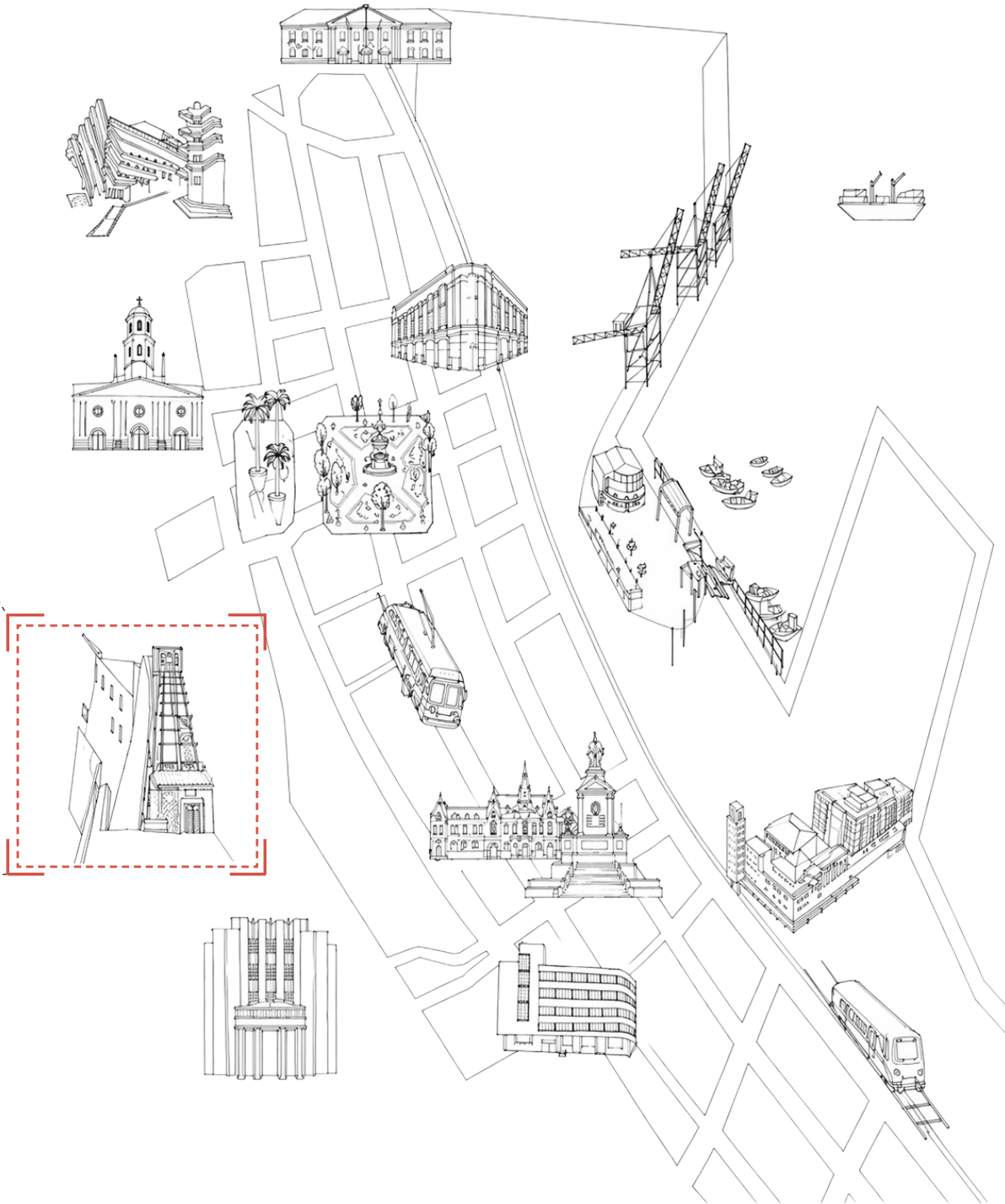


Fig. 50: Escalera Cienfuegos and Ascensor Cordillera, Barrio Puerto, c. 1900. Source: Museo Histórico Nacional.

Fig. 51: Map of Barrio Puerto, Valparaíso. Based on: Pérez Hellec, Constanza. Ilustración Barrio Puerto Valparaíso. Adapted by author, 2025.





## SITE CERRO CORDILLERA

*The vertical city: site in section*

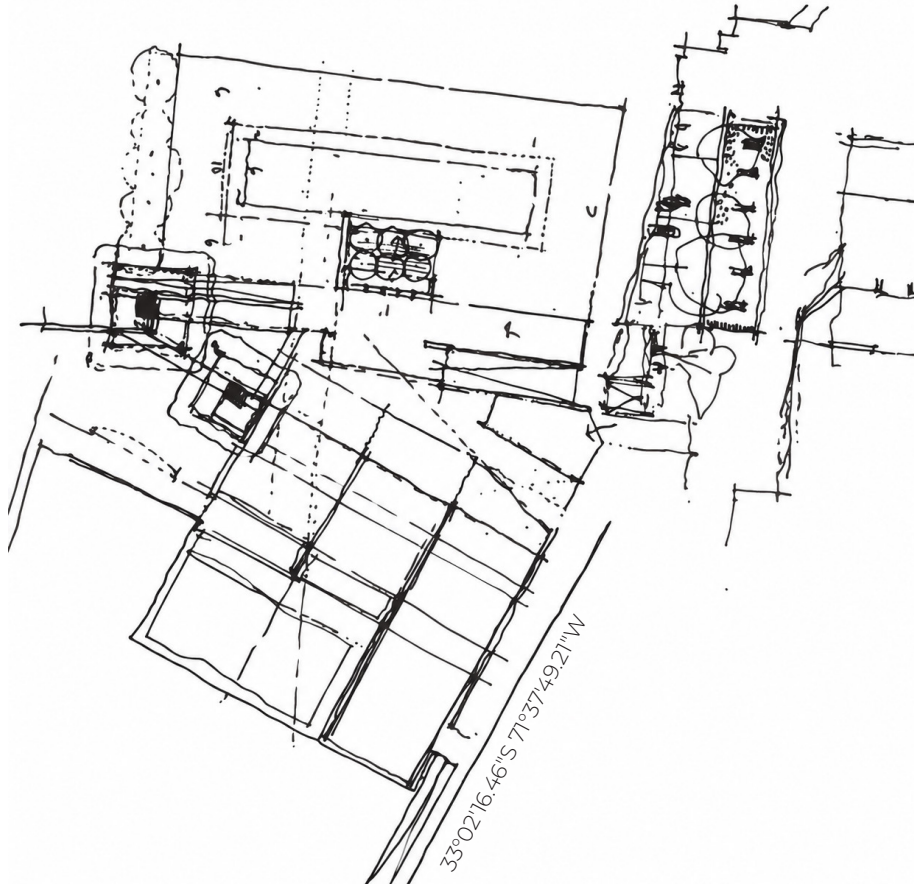


Fig. 52: Photograph of the site and its current conditions. Source unknown.

Fig. 53: Drawing of the site and its conditions, alongside an analysis of the terraced site developed in reference to Michael Beer. Drawing by author, 2025.

PART I

PART II

PART III

114

PART IV

PART V



Fig. 54: Cut-out of the photograph showing the site conditions: ruins, fragments, remnants, a palimpsest of what was and what is yet to become. Photograph: Source unknown.

### 3.3.3 Six Terraces: A Collective Ecology

The project is organized as a sequence of six interconnected terraces, establishing a vertical ecosystem of shared use rather than a singular institutional object.

This terraced organization creates a gradual spatial progression between public exposure and more focused activity. Functions are distributed across the slope, allowing occupation to unfold through movement, encounter, and layered use.

Two moments within this sequence operate as intensified civic anchors. At the lower threshold, the market creates an active point of arrival, embedding food exchange, informal vending, and everyday public interaction within the urban fabric. At the upper threshold, workshops, exhibition space, library, and café establish a second concentration oriented toward making, exchange, and cultural production.

Between these moments, educational spaces, shared terraces, productive landscapes, food infrastructures, and intermediate zones create gradients of interaction. The slope does not organize itself around a single centre but across multiple overlapping conditions of use, each reinforcing the others.

Urban life here is not concentrated within singular institutional authority but distributed across the full vertical section of the site, emerging through participation, appropriation, and shared everyday practice.

## Current Site Conditions

PART I

PART II

PART III

PART IV

PART V

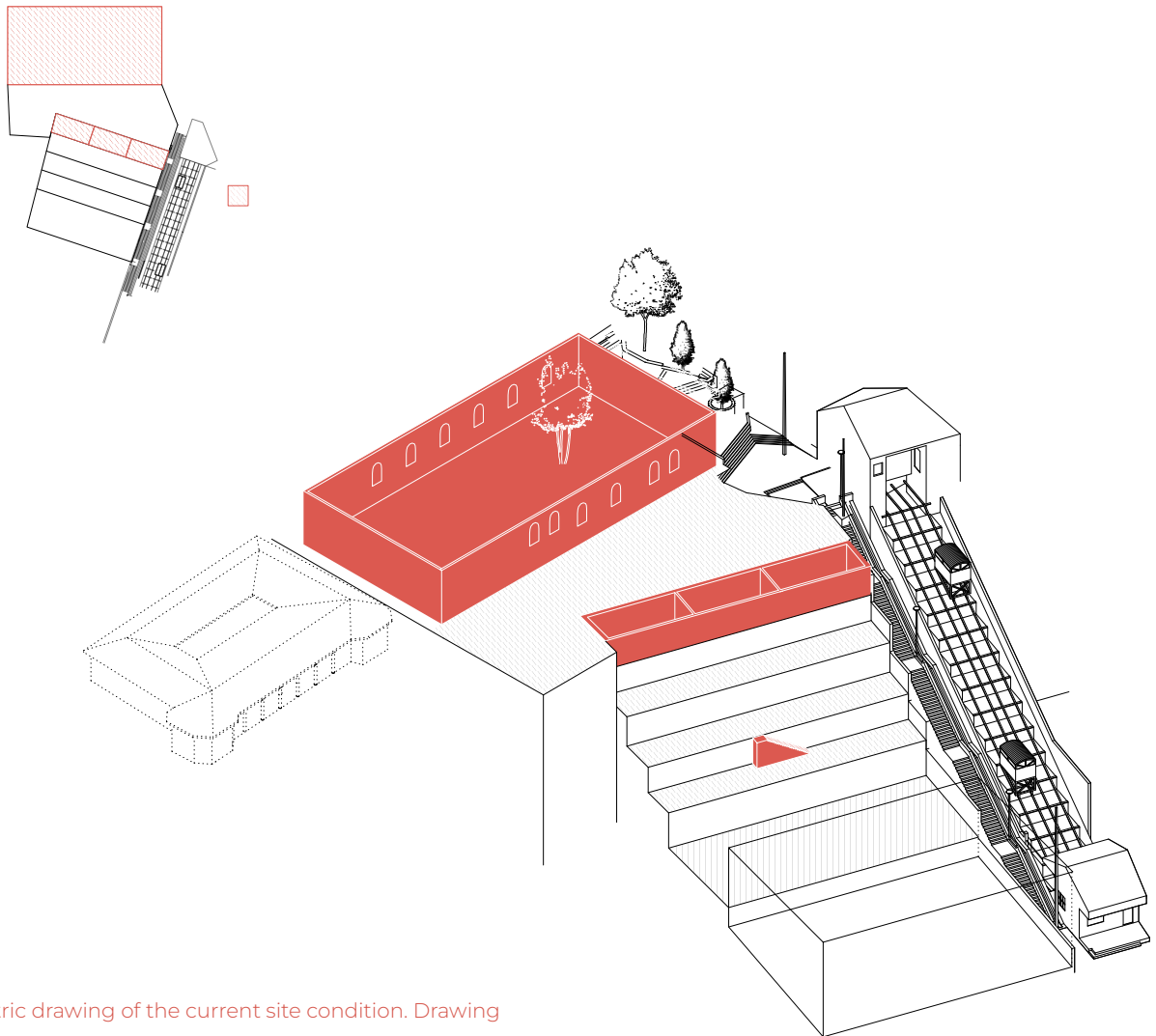


Fig. 55: Axonometric drawing of the current site condition. Drawing by author, 2026.

## Current Site Flows

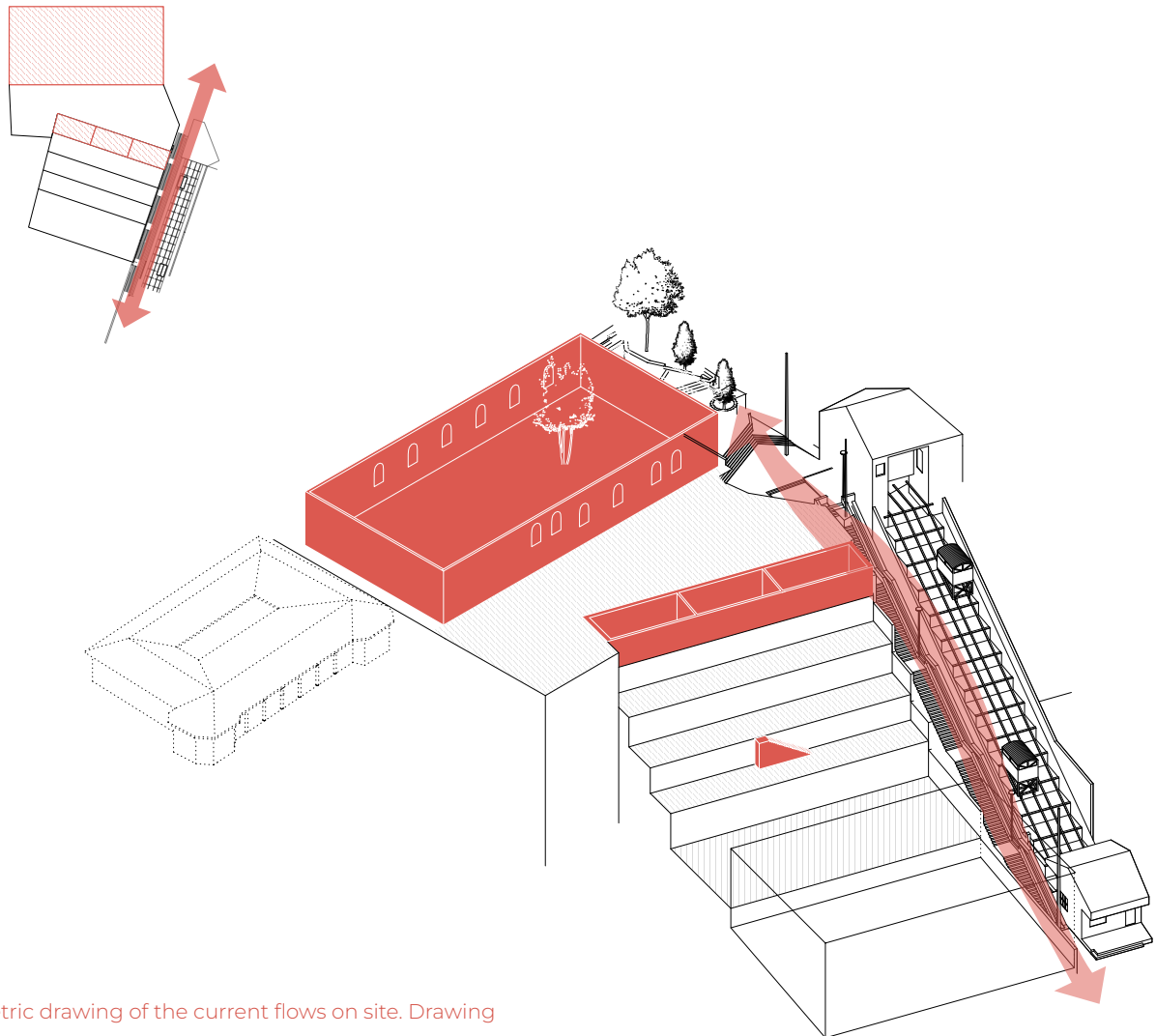


Fig. 56: Axonometric drawing of the current flows on site. Drawing by author, 2026.

PART I

PART II

PART III

tools

urban

workshop

stratification

118

PART IV

PART V

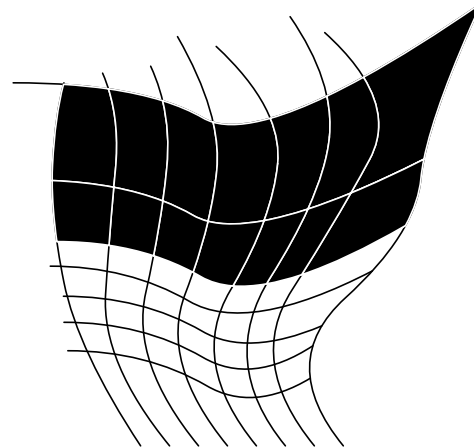
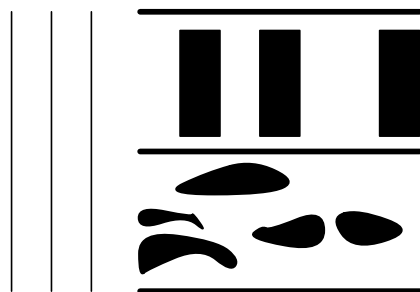


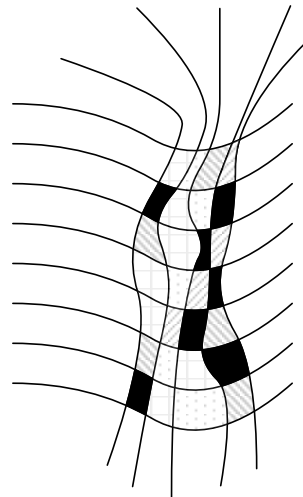
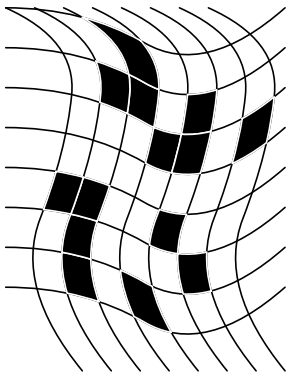
Fig. 57: The study reveals the project's layered interventions: through the workshops, the proposal seeks to overcome the borderscape by interlinking the stratified slope within the most metabolic flows of everyday life, enabling weak ties to form, and stitching and weaving together the city's two fragmented parts. Drawing by author, 2026.

metabolism

entanglement

interlinking

weaving



PART I

PART II

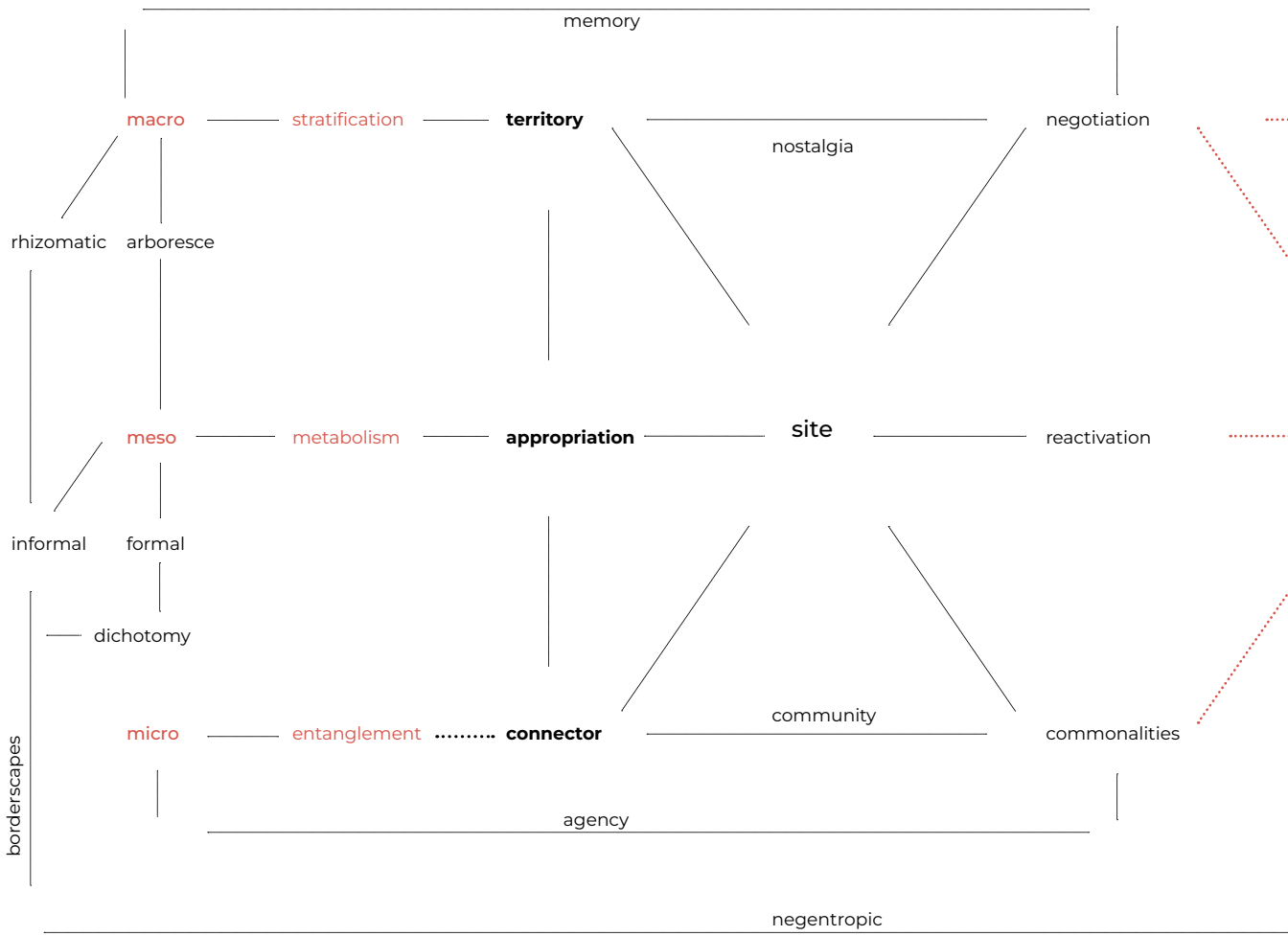
PART III

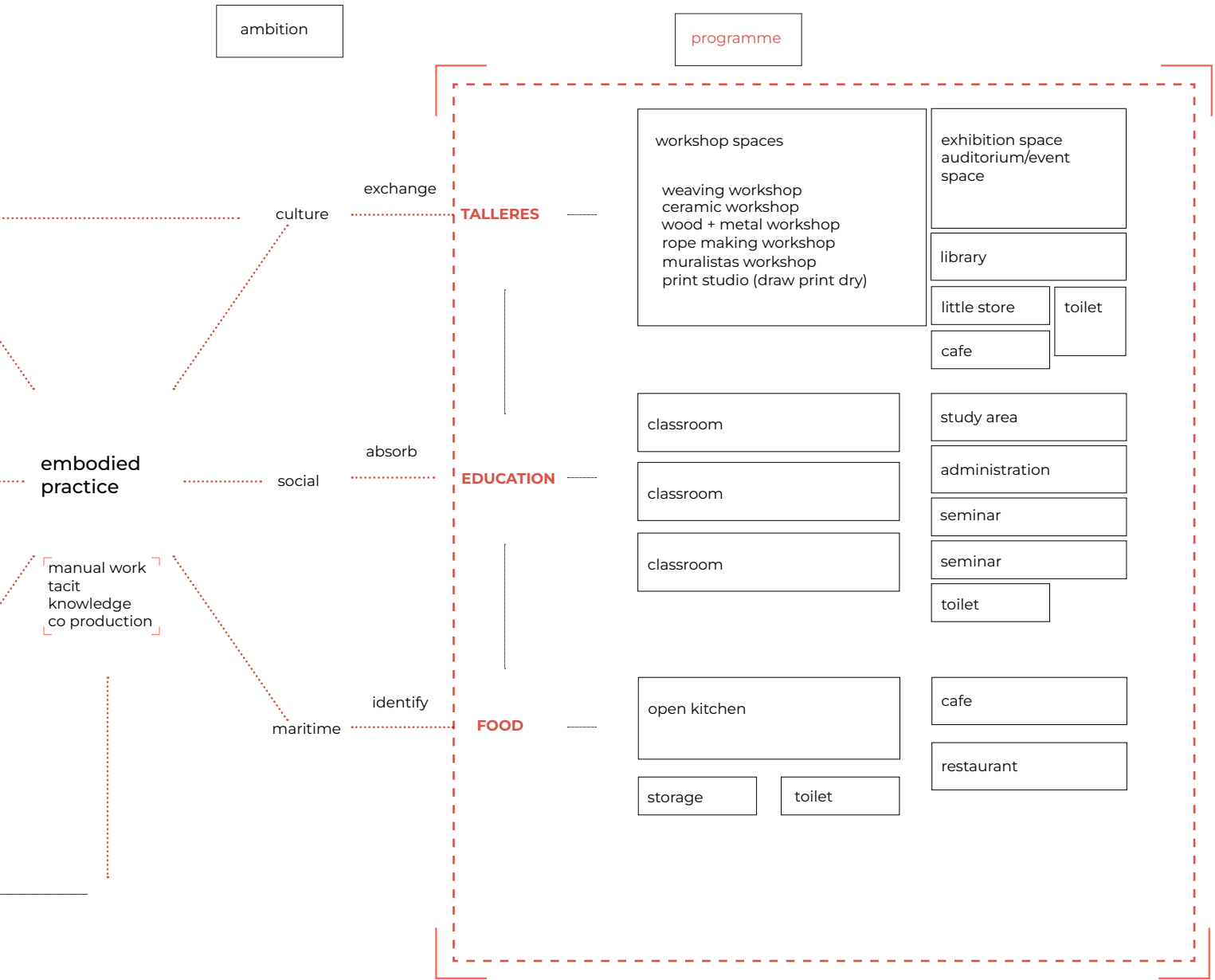
PART IV

PART V

strategies

To what extent can architecture act as a mediator between formal institutions and informal practices to produce a co-productive commons in Valparaiso's vertically stratified fabric?





PART I

PART II

PART III

122

PART IV

PART V

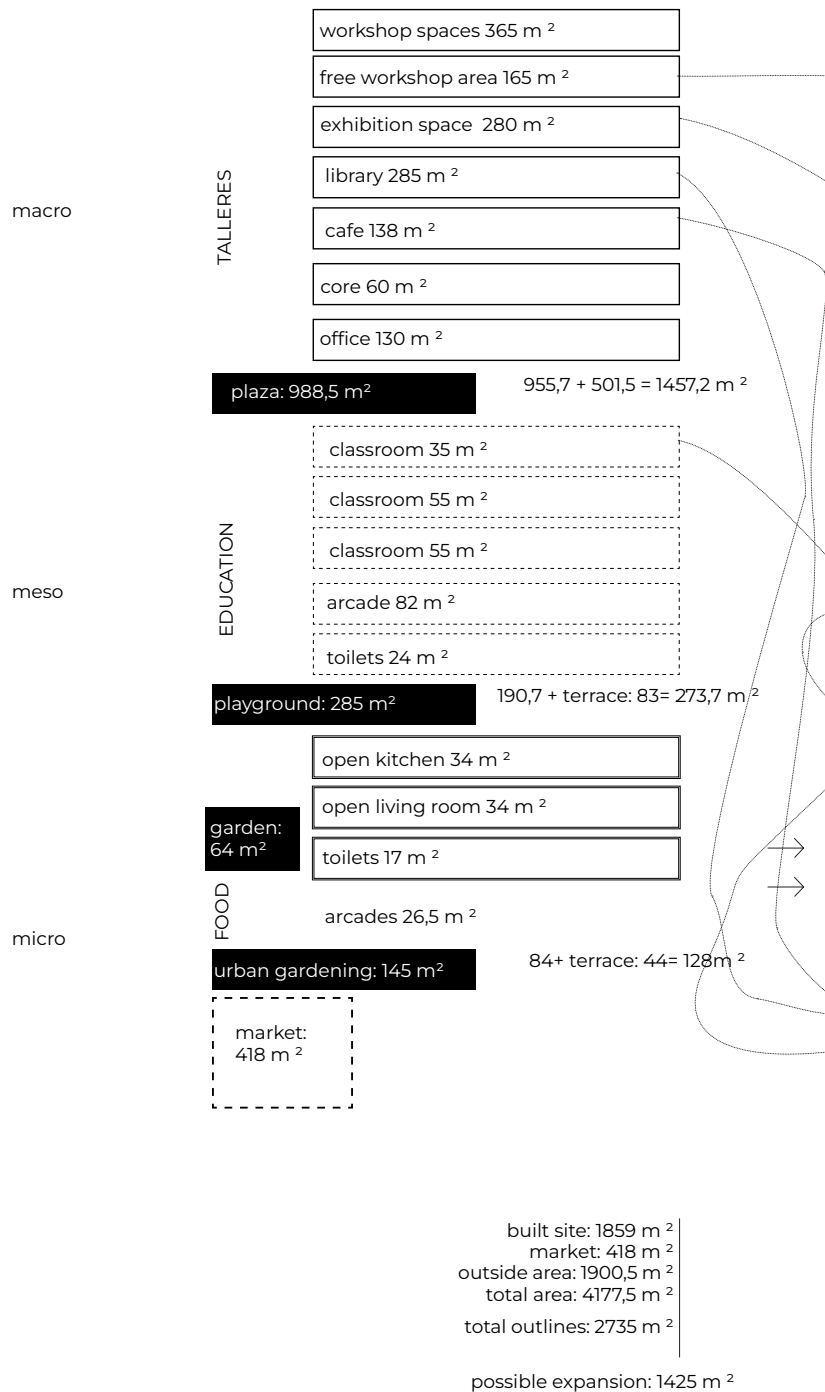
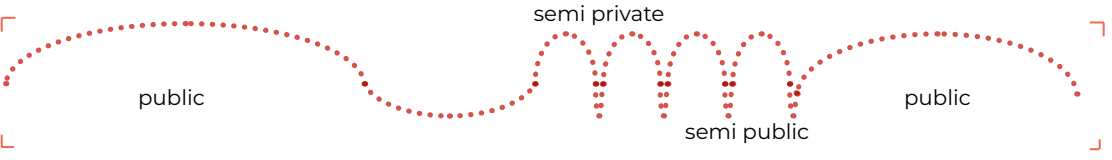
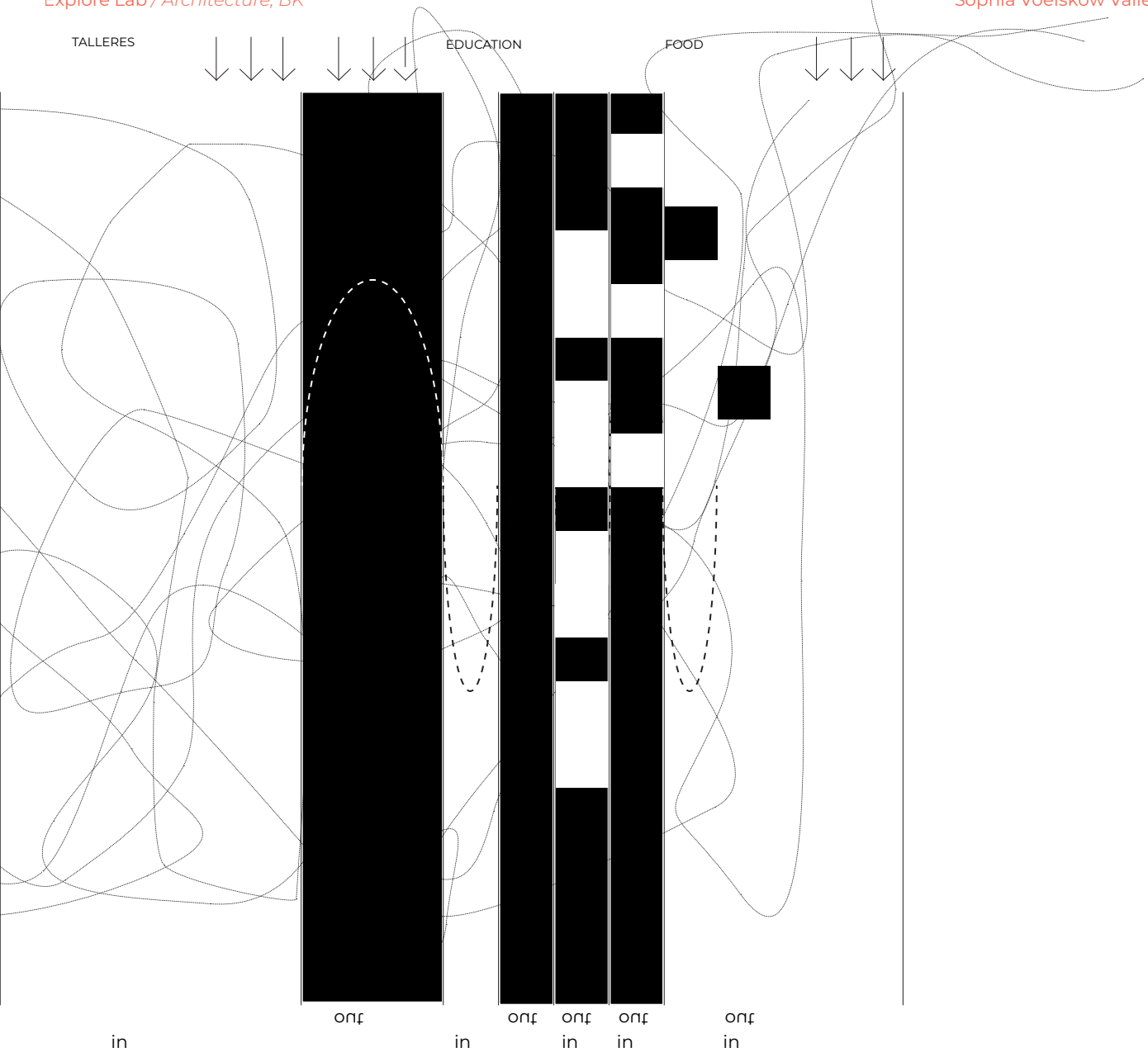


Fig. 58: First attempt at reading the site's metabolism: flows mapped against programme. Drawing by author, 2026.



PART I

PART II

PART III

124

PART IV

PART V

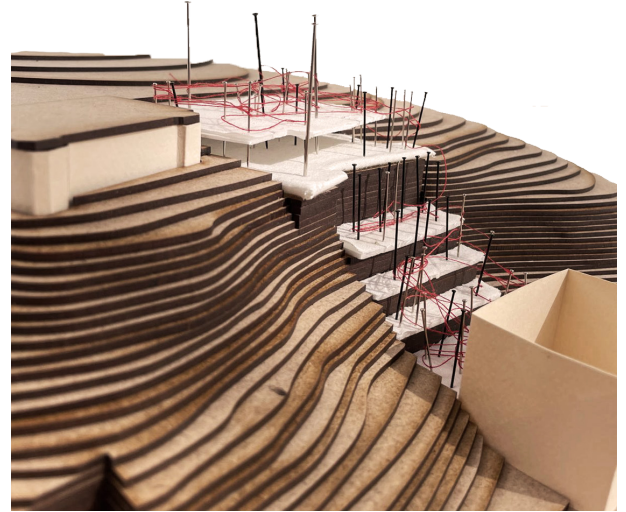
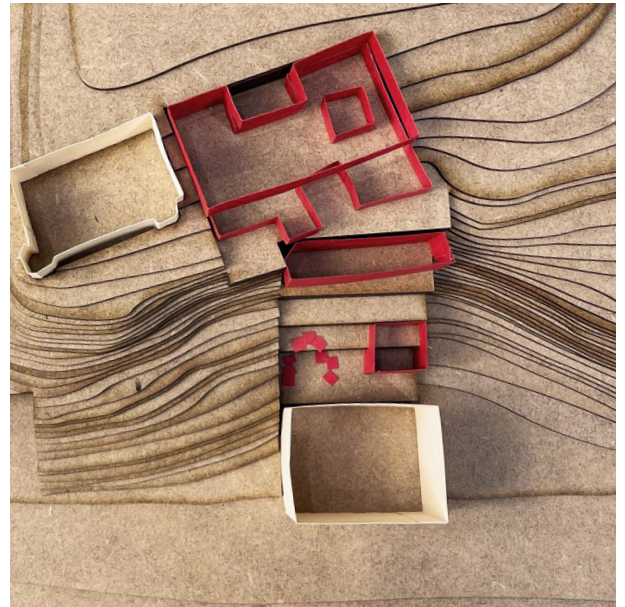
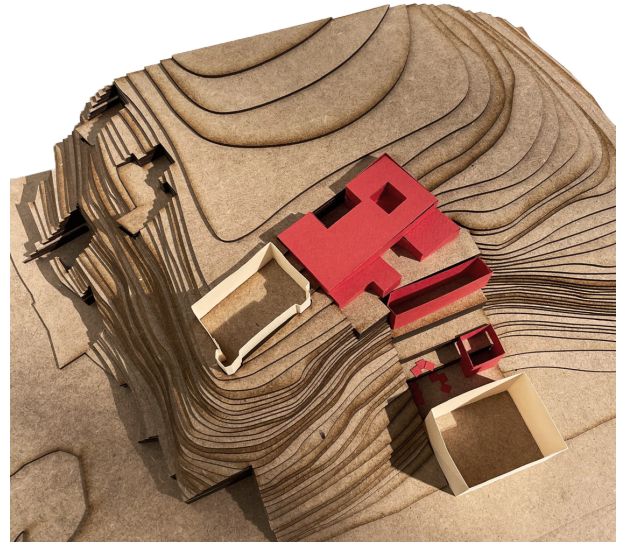
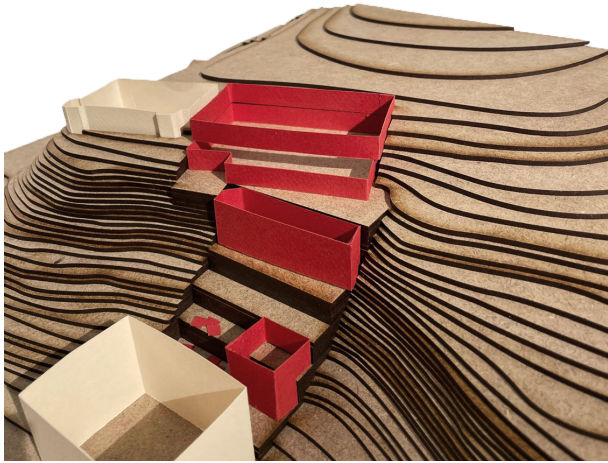


Fig. 59: Study model: understanding circulation flows and spatial occupation across the slope, Cerro Cordillera. Photograph by author, 2025.



PART I

PROGRAMME DISTRIBUTION

WORKSHOPS		1457 m <sup>2</sup>
MARKET		418 m <sup>2</sup>
EDUCATION		274 m <sup>2</sup>
FOODSCAPES		128 m <sup>2</sup>

OPEN SPACE

PLAZA		989 m <sup>2</sup>
PLAYGROUND		285 m <sup>2</sup>
URBAN GARDEN		145 m <sup>2</sup>
GARDEN		64 m <sup>2</sup>

PART II

PART III

126

PART IV

PART V

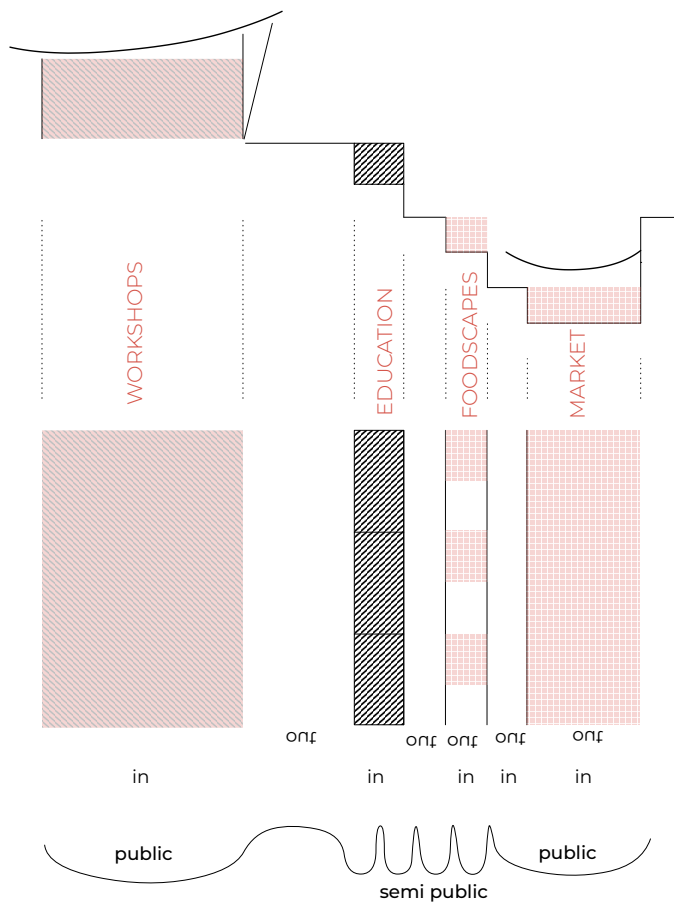


Fig. 60: Programme analysis, alongside public, private, and semi-public flows that become an important consideration later on. Diagram by author, 2026.

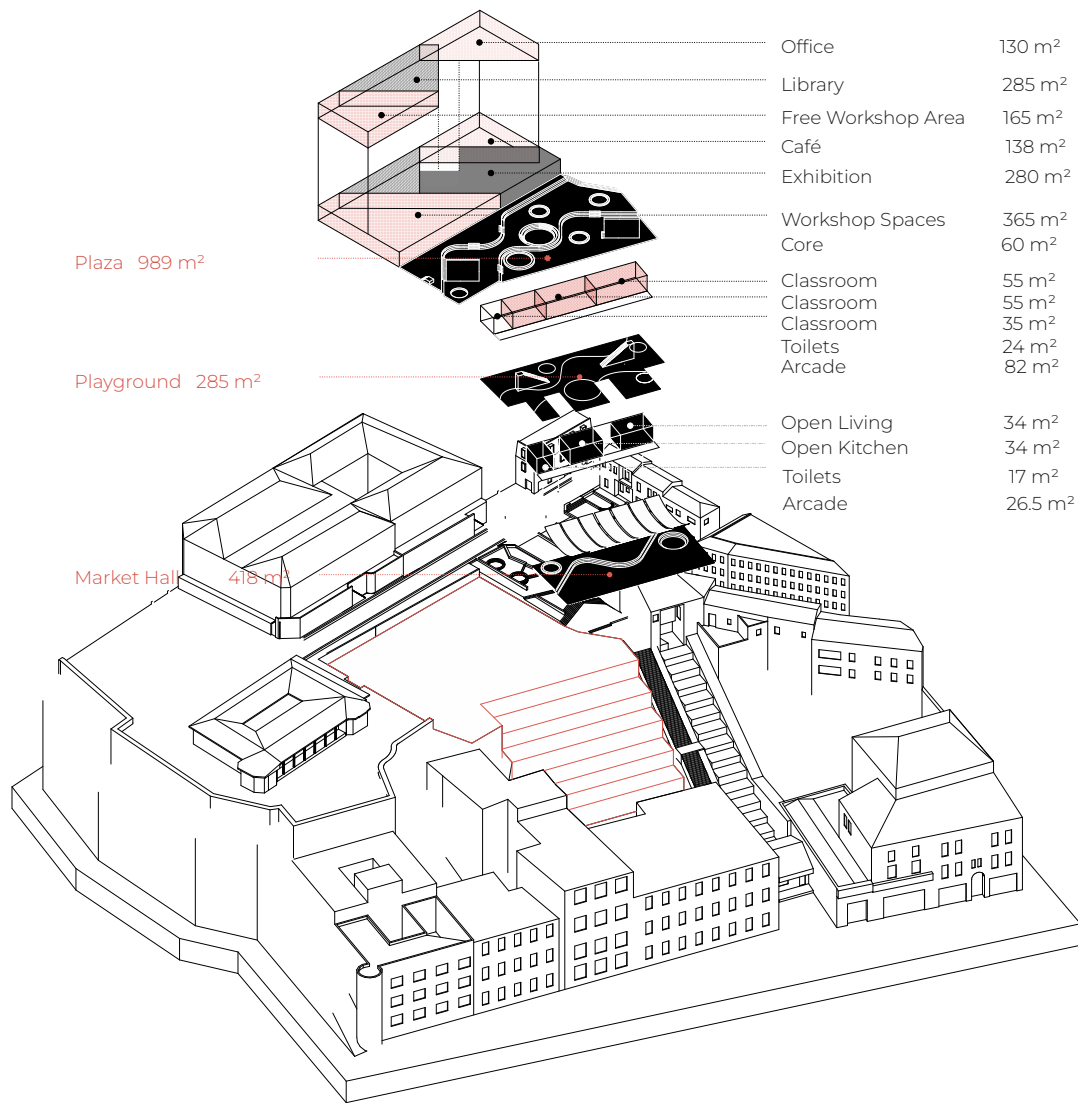


Fig. 61: Exploded axonometric diagram showing the spatial distribution of programme across the building. Drawing by author, 2026.

## Porosity:

*Adding Structure*

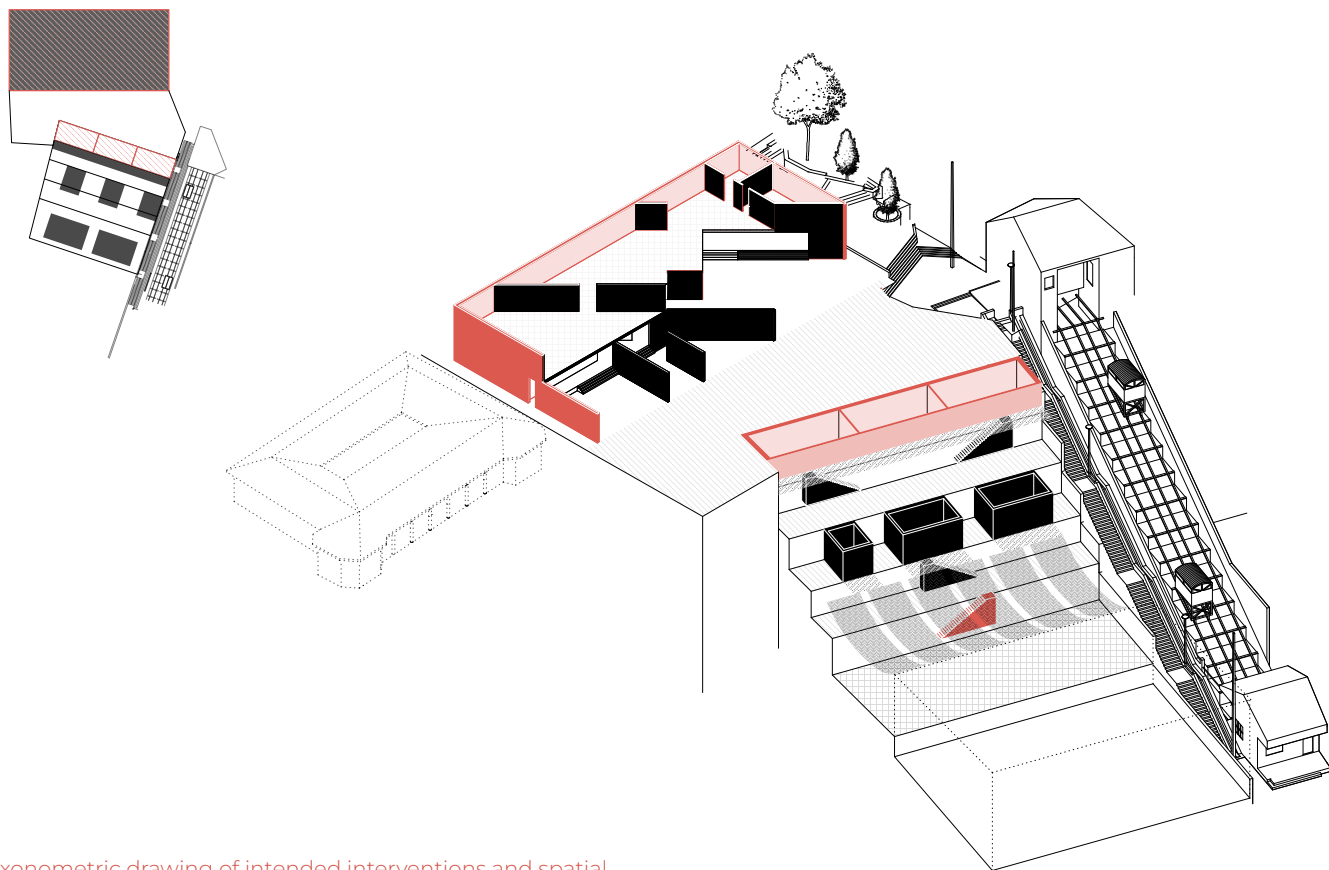


Fig. 62: Axonometric drawing of intended interventions and spatial strategies on site: porosity, creating an open structure that allows more contact to happen inbetween, space to linger, and movement in and out of spaces. Drawing by author, 2026.

PART I

PART II

PART III

128

PART IV

PART V

## Proximity:

*New Circulation*

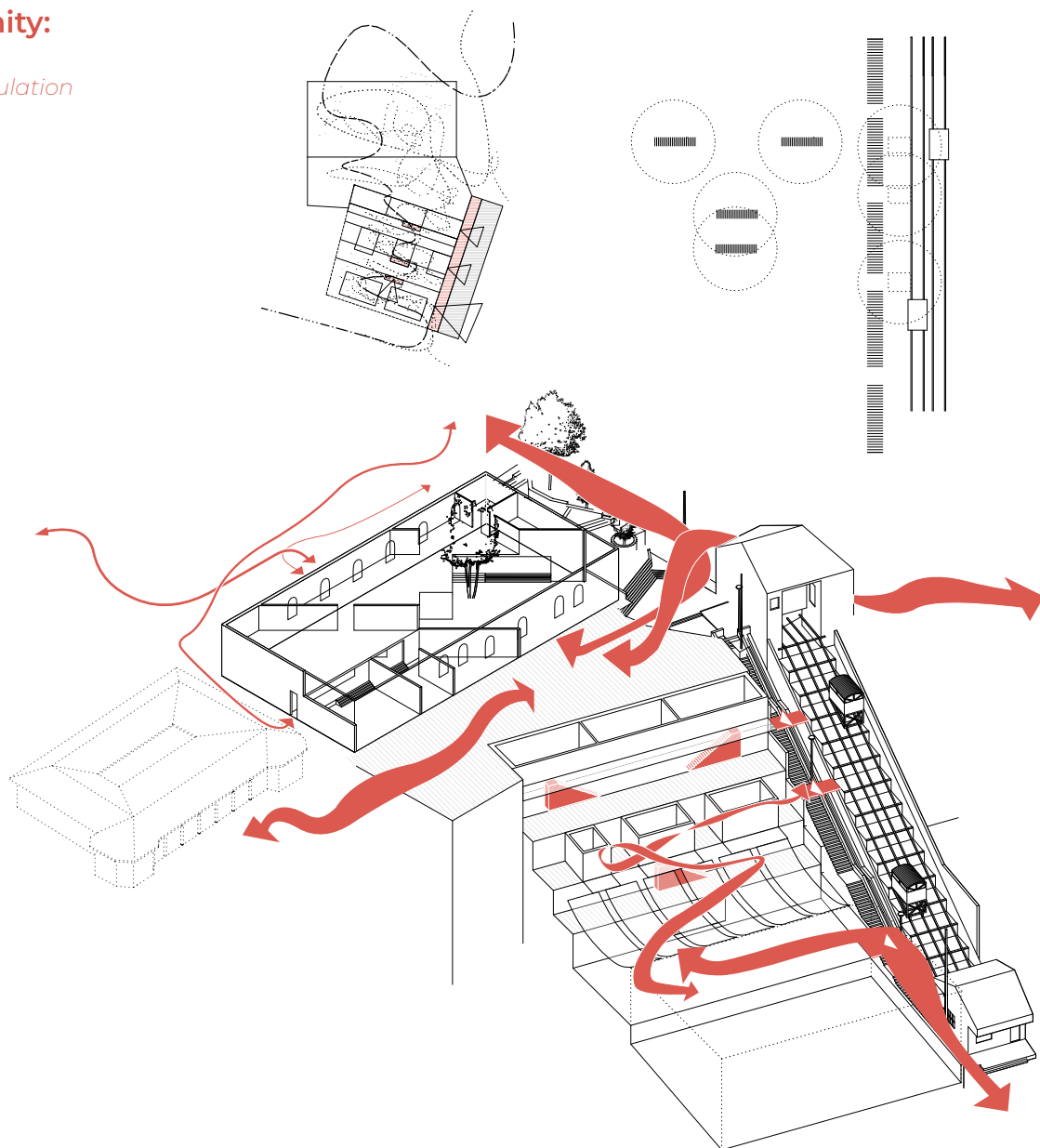


Fig. 63: Axonometric drawing of intended interventions and spatial strategies on site: proximity, where the open structure and increased inbetween flows allow more encounters across difference to occur, and where the given functions of the programme create moments of both more private and more public encounter. Drawing by author, 2026.

## Palimpsest

Port orientation

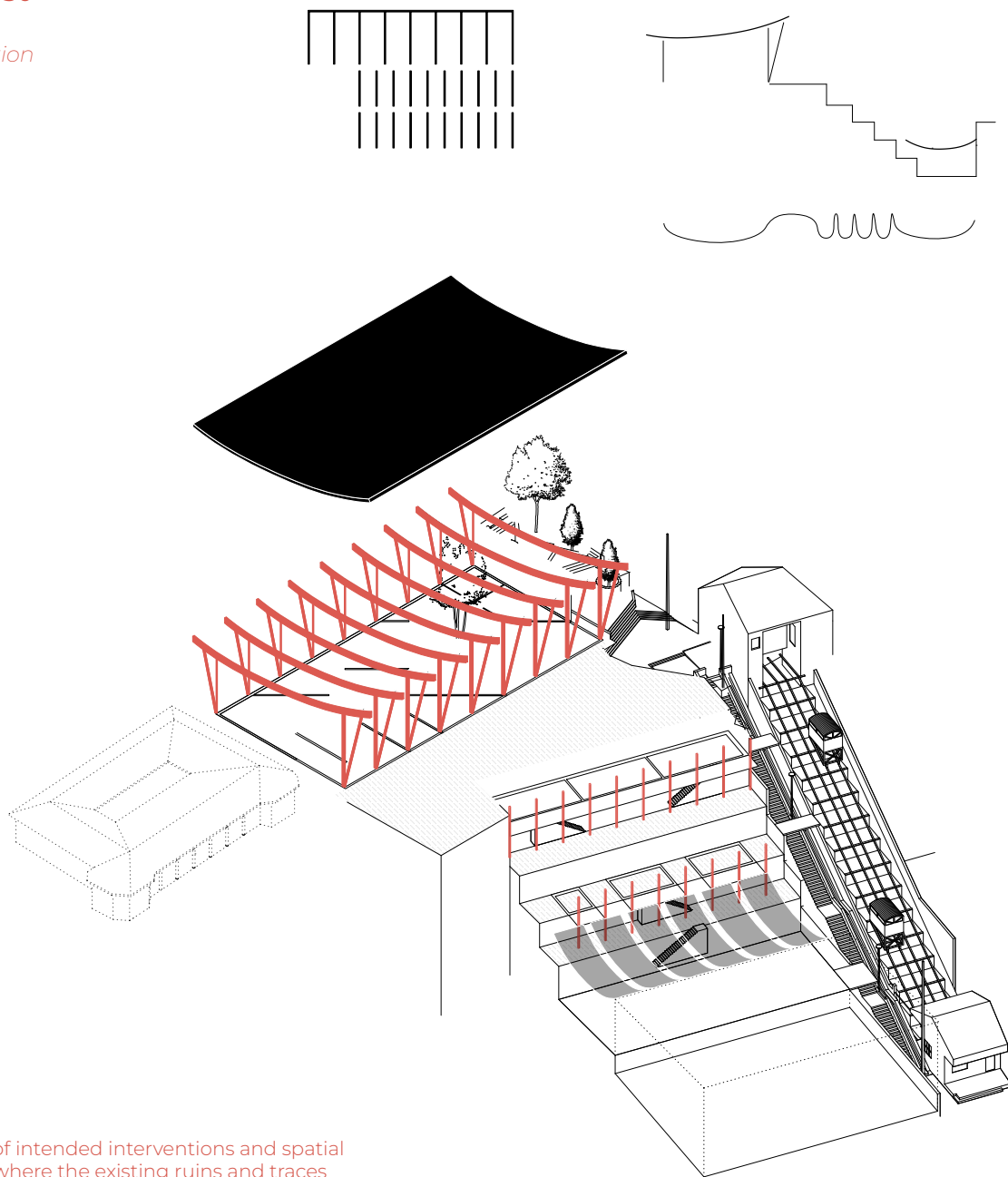


Fig. 64: Axonometric drawing of intended interventions and spatial strategies on site: palimpsest, where the existing ruins and traces on the site allow history to resurface within the new intervention. Drawing by author, 2026.

PART I

PART II

PART III

130

PART IV

PART V

## Plazas

*Activating the outdoor space*

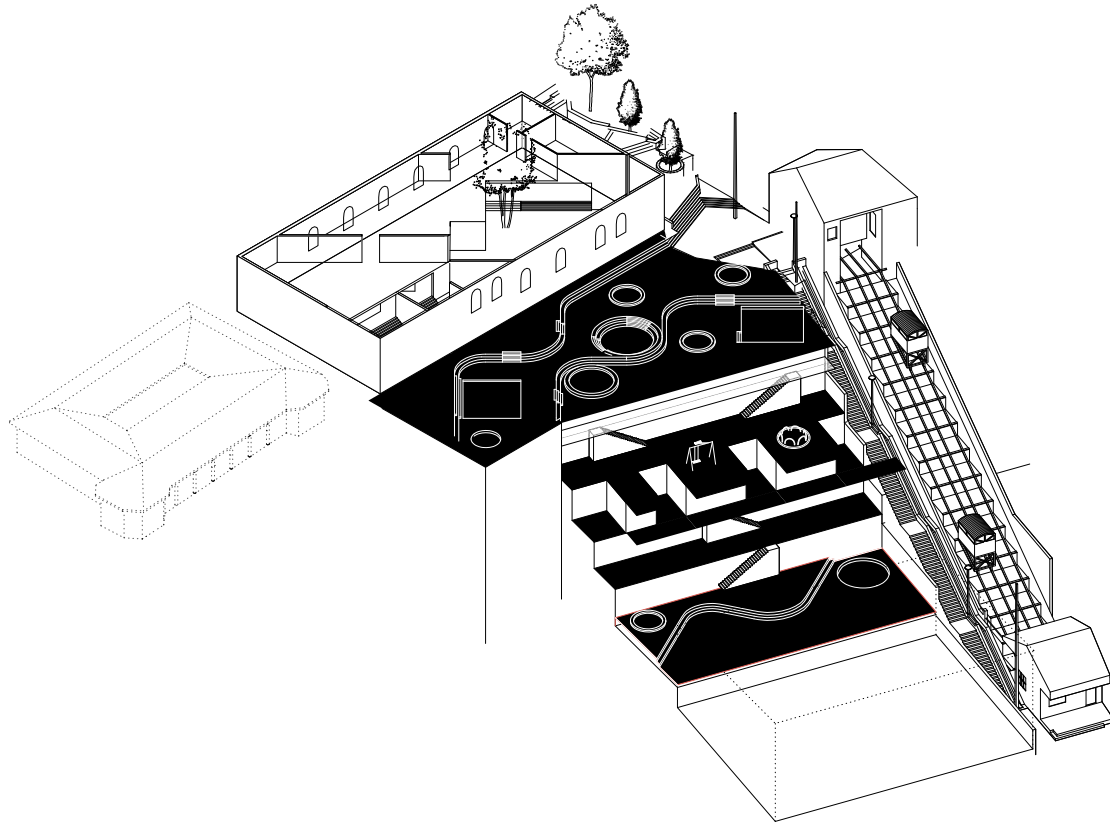


Fig. 65: Axonometric drawing of intended interventions and spatial strategies on site: plazas, addressing the scarcity of outdoor and green space by reactivating and creating room for it, always in relation to the adjoining programme so that each building generates its own plaza. Drawing by author, 2026.

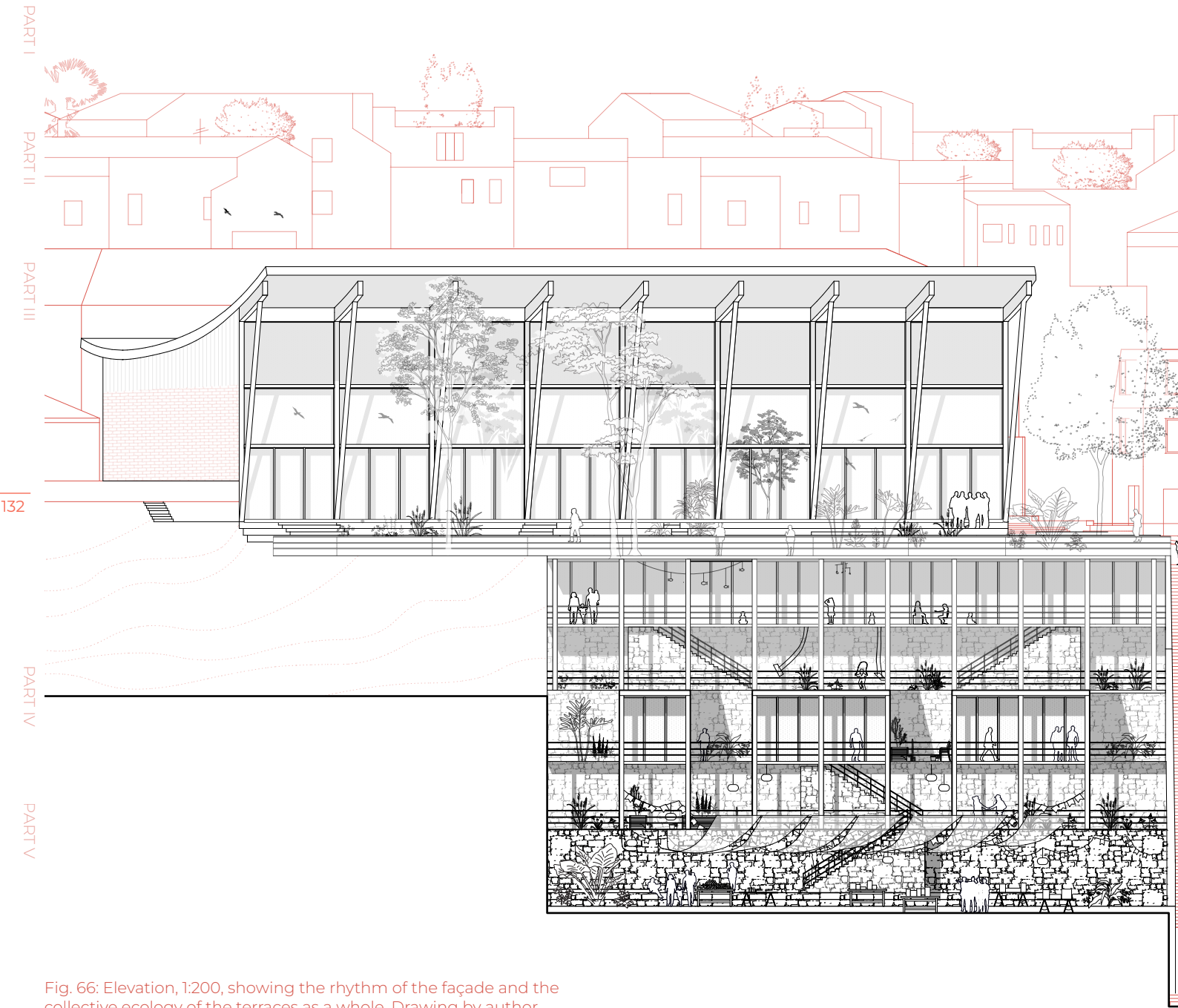
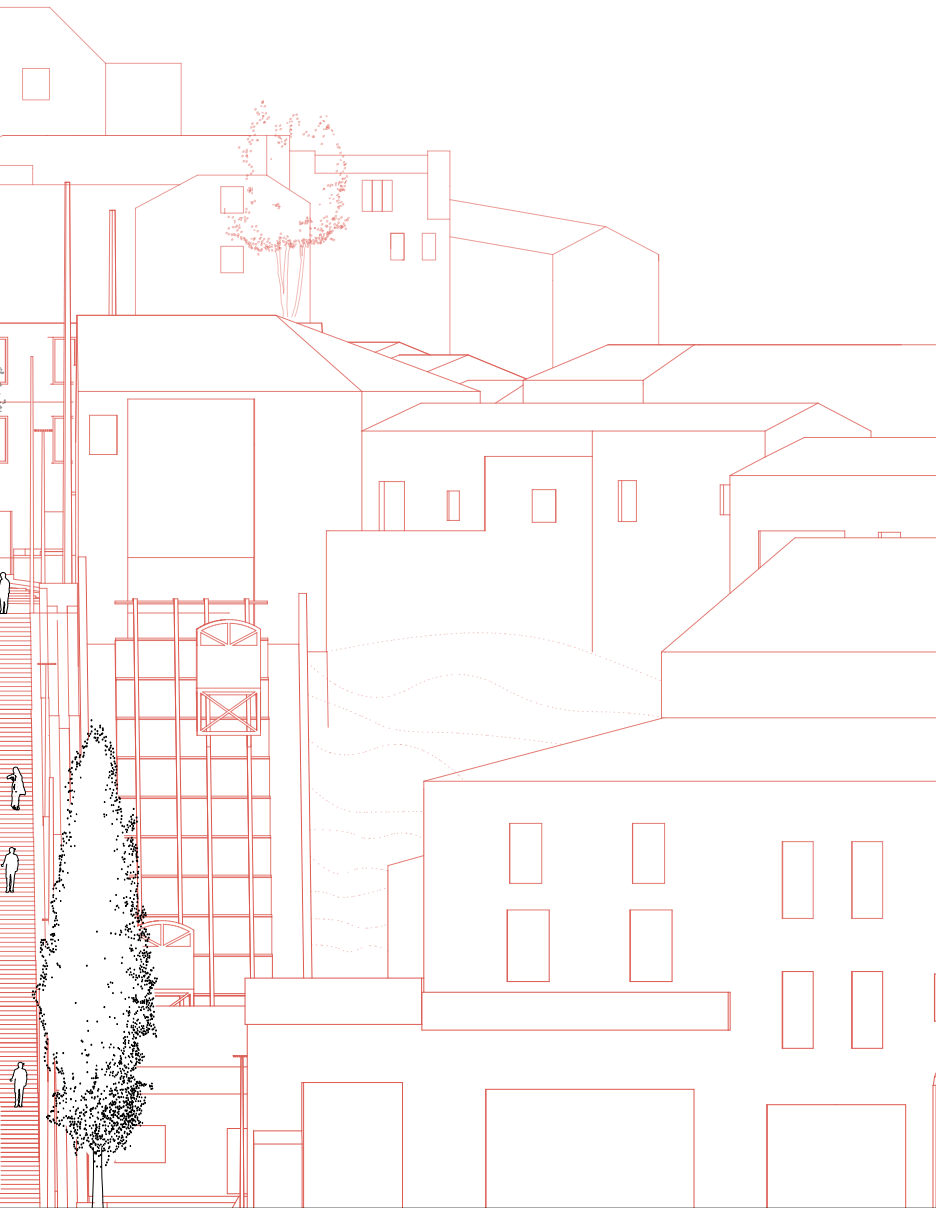


Fig. 66: Elevation, 1:200, showing the rhythm of the façade and the collective ecology of the terraces as a whole. Drawing by author, 2026.



### 3.3.4 Material Logic and Collective Construction

The material strategy extends the project's social and spatial ambitions. Rather than introducing an autonomous architectural language detached from local context, the intervention works through continuity, adaptation, and collective construction. Existing stone retaining walls and built remnants are preserved and integrated as spatial anchors, maintaining the site's historical continuity while reinforcing its territorial logic. The ruins are treated as active participants within the new intervention. Timber forms the primary new structural language. Locally sourced Chilean radiata pine provides a renewable, lightweight, and regionally accessible construction system capable of spanning across the terraced topography while supporting local material economies. This vertical timber rhythm establishes coherence across the intervention, creating visual continuity along the slope while reinforcing the project's sectional reading.

Textile roofing elements introduce a lighter secondary layer, particularly at the upper and lower civic anchors. These structures provide climatic protection, spatial softness, and visual continuity, while their curved geometry echoes both the rhythm of the terraces and the broader topographic metabolism of the city.

Interior partition systems draw from adobillo construction, a vernacular Valparaíso building tradition combining timber framing and earthen infill. This reintroduces local material knowledge while grounding the project in regional architectural practices. Selected components, particularly within the food infrastructure and community kitchen, are imagined as collaboratively constructed

spaces, where making becomes both architectural production and social exchange. Stone carries continuity. Timber establishes coherence. Textile introduces adaptability. Earth reconnects to vernacular knowledge. Together the material logic reinforces the project's broader ambition: architecture as collective infrastructure embedded within place, memory, and shared making.



### Facade Workshop

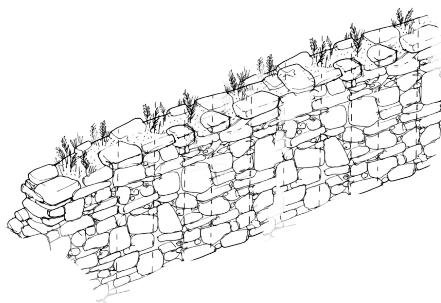
Fig. 67: Atmospheric perspective of the facade and workshop space opening toward the sea, establishing a new connection to the port. Visible here are the hybrid steel and timber V columns, the curved roof, and the relationship to the plazas and surrounding greenery. Render by author, 2026.

## Materiality

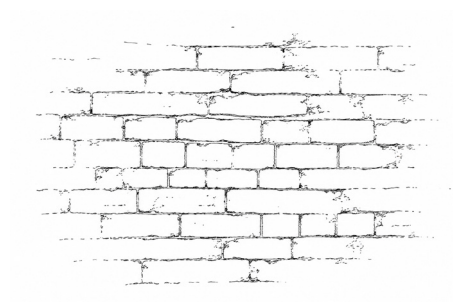
*Logic of the Patina and local economies*



[ timber: pino radiata ]



[ natural stone retaining wall ]



[ existing red brick wall ]

PART I

PART II

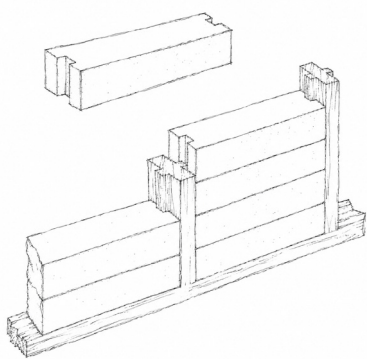
PART III

136

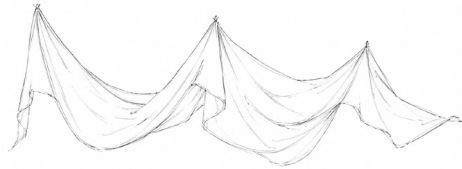
PART IV

PART V

Stone carries continuity.  
Brick preserves the memory of the existing urban fabric.  
Timber establishes collective coherence.  
Textile reconnects the project to Valparaíso's maritime heritage.  
Earth reconnects to vernacular knowledge.



[ adobillo construction ]



[ natural cotton sailcloth canopy ]

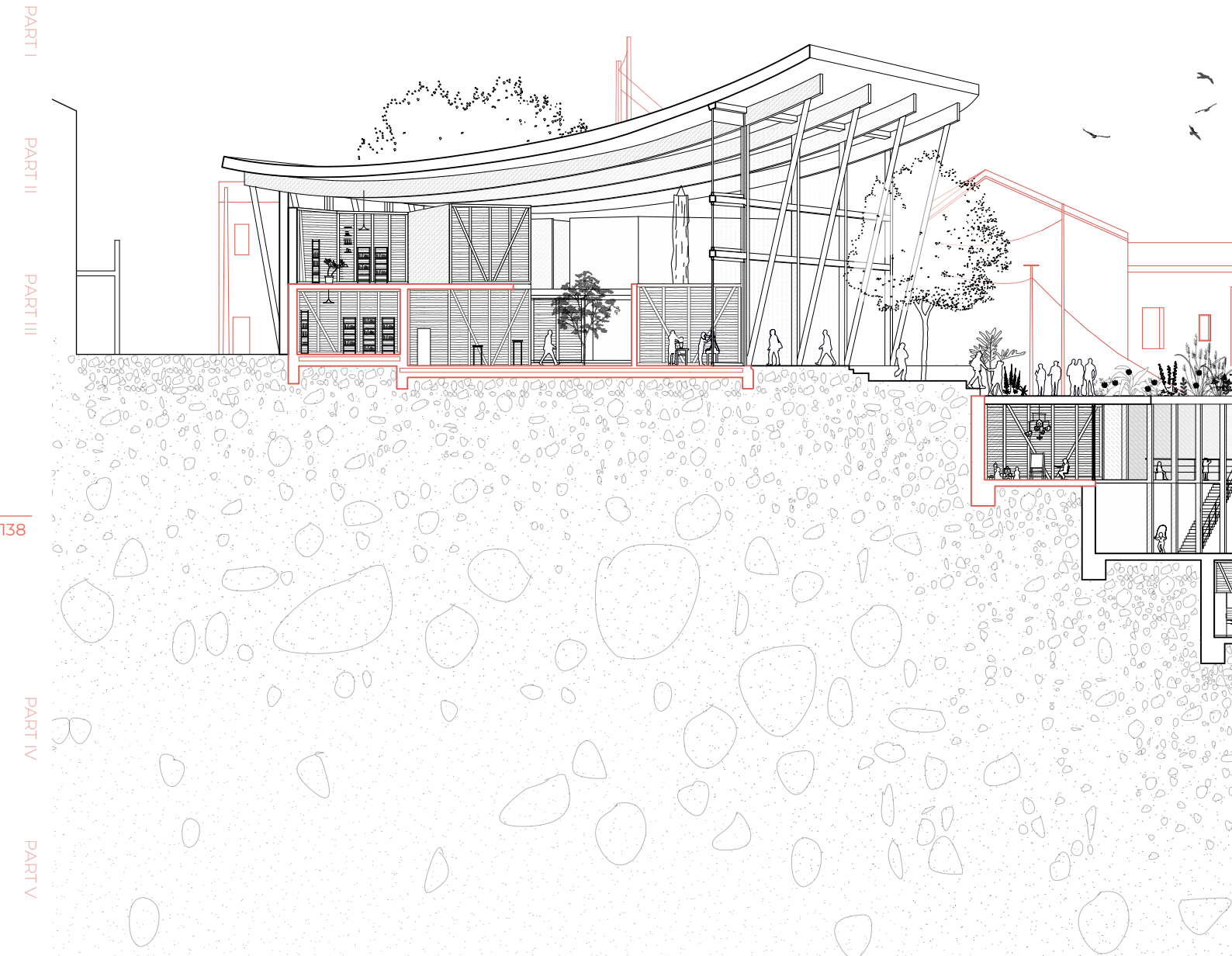
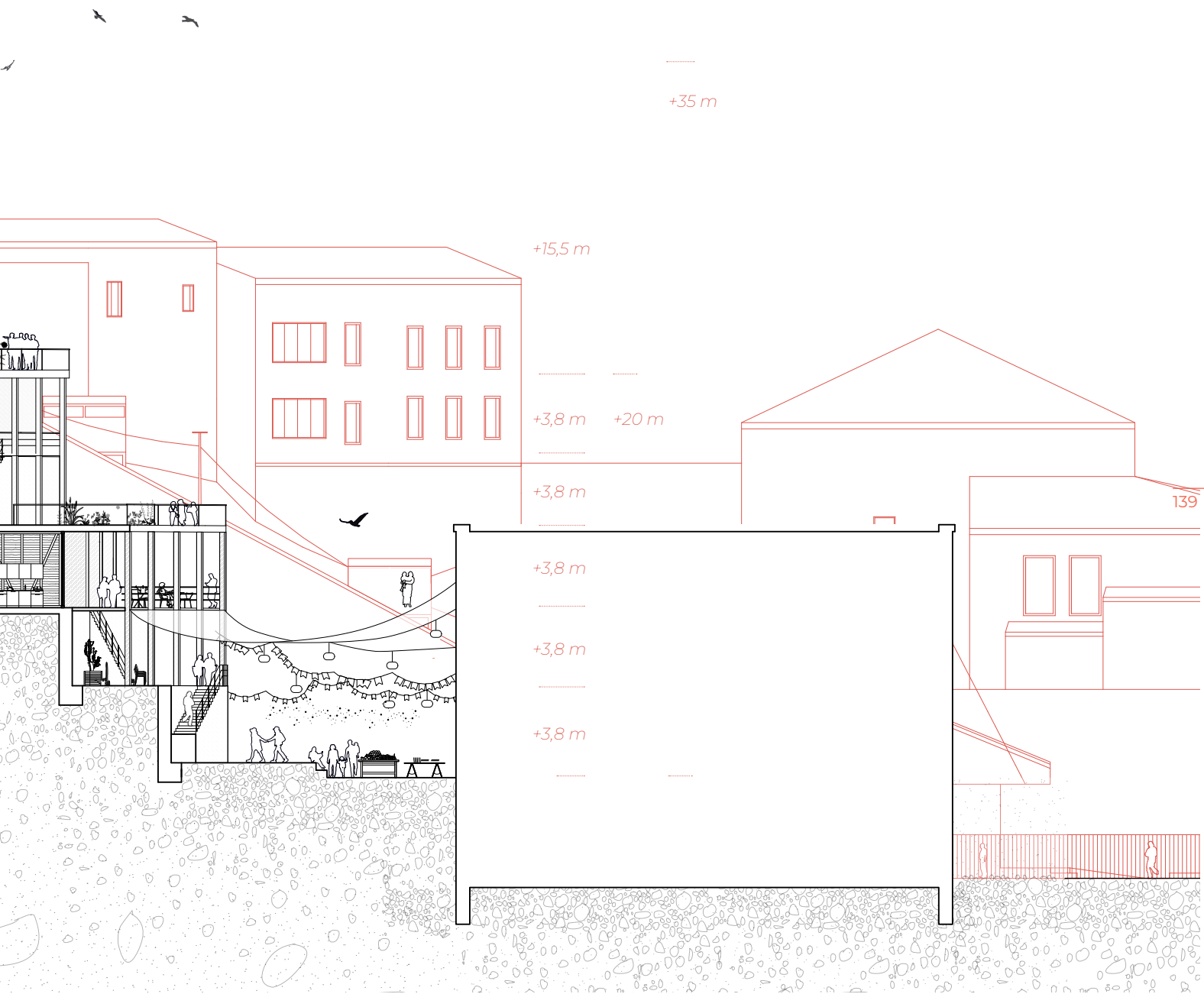


Fig. 69: Section, 1:200, reading the site in section just as the city and country itself are read. Drawing by author, 2026.



## Workshop Building

### Design Strategies

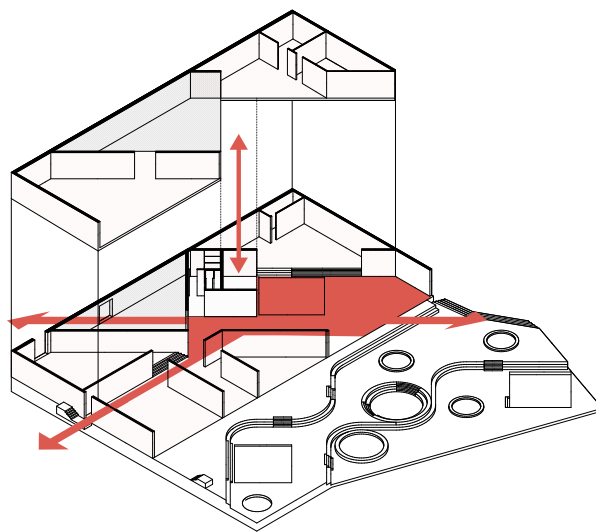
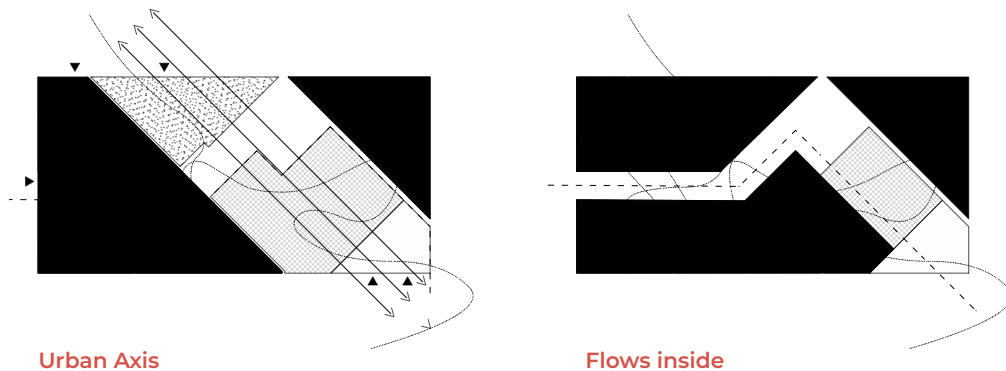


Fig. 70: Diagrams tracing the design decisions behind the workshop building, taking up the urban axis, opening toward the funicular's exit, retaining the existing rear wall while opening the front entirely to bring porosity and accessibility to the making spaces, extending certain areas outward for good weather and larger groups, and the V columns. Drawing by author, 2026.

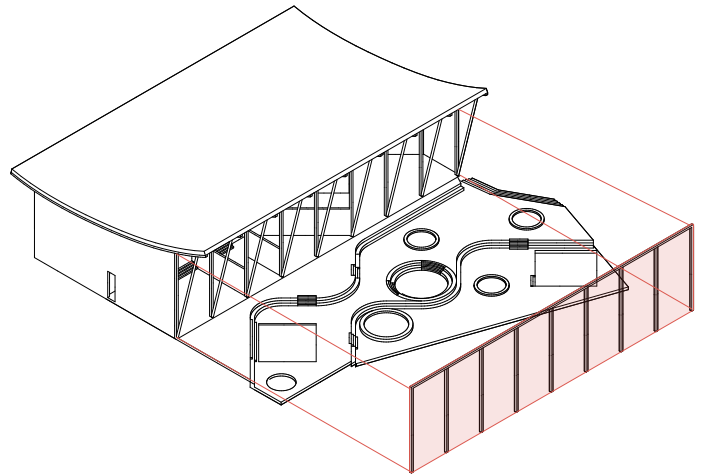
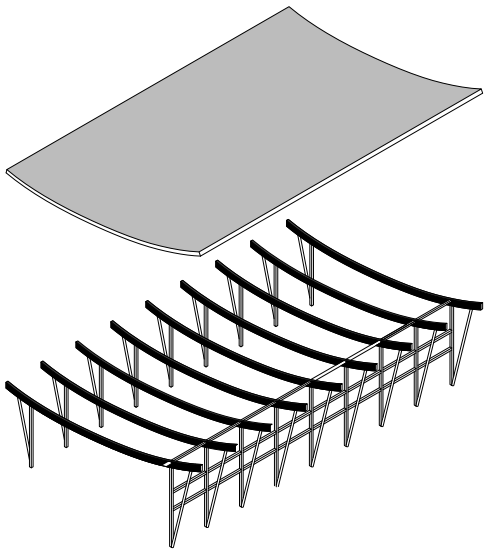
PART I

PART II

PART III

PART IV

PART V



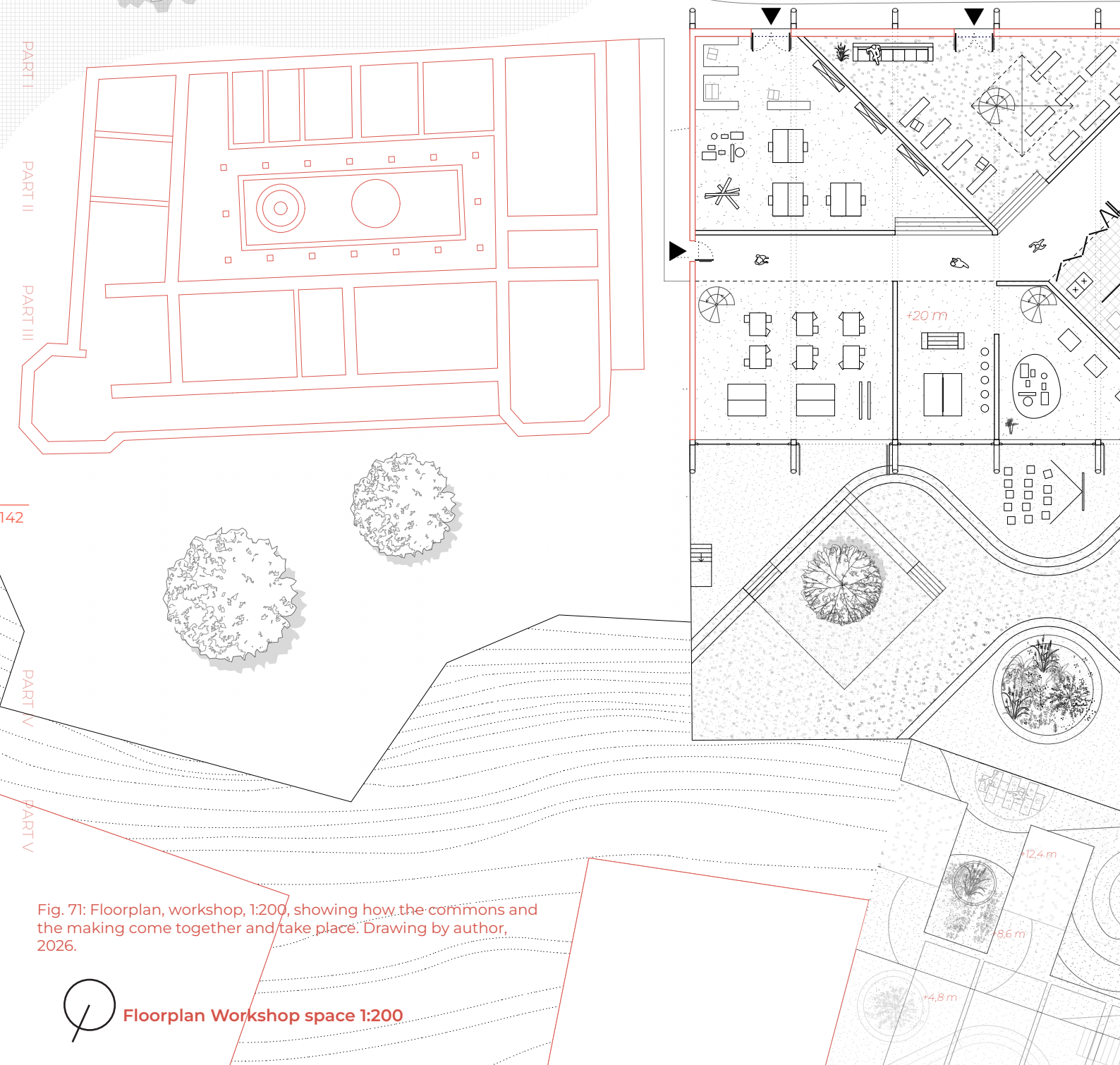
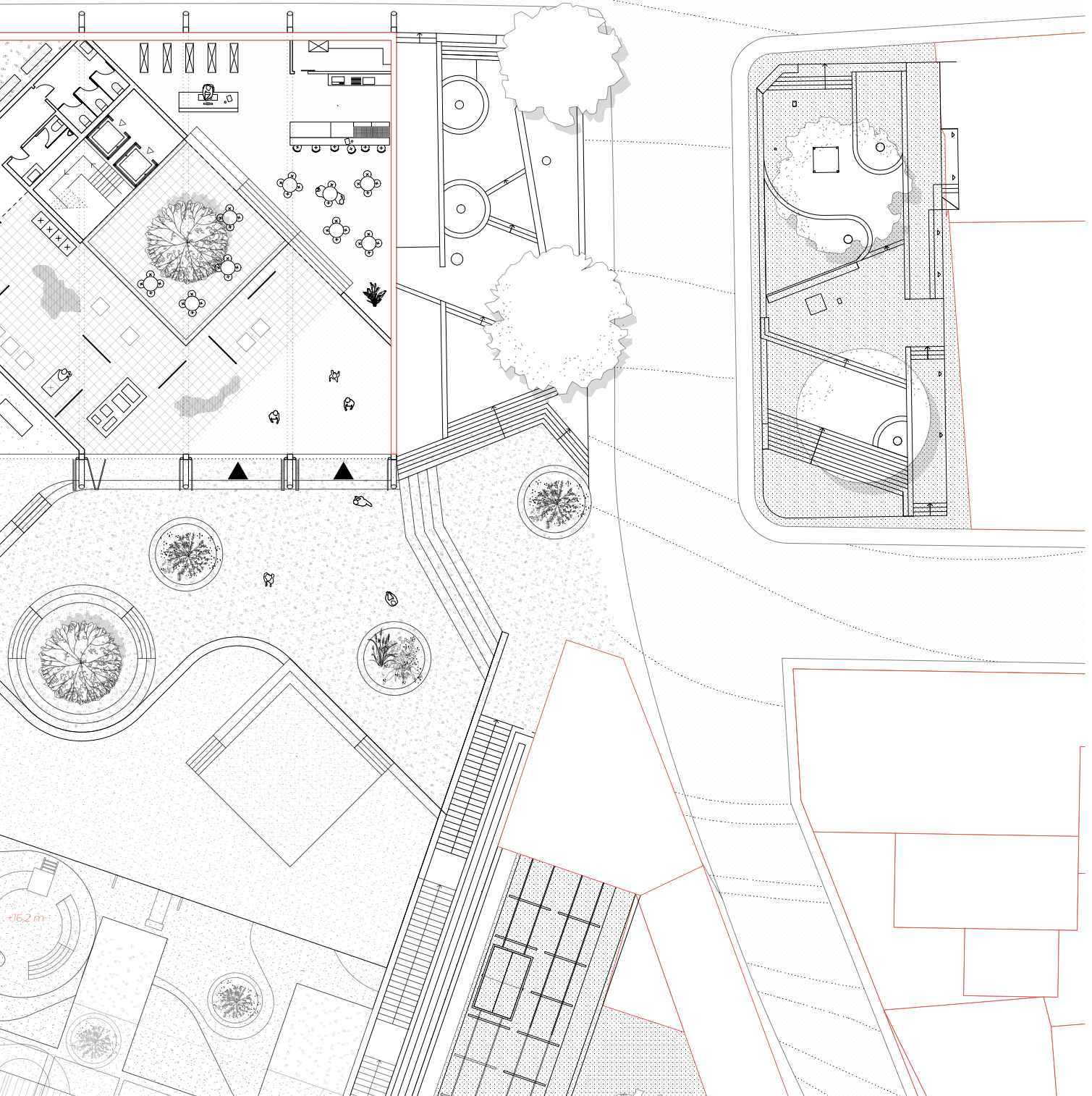


Fig. 71: Floorplan, workshop, 1:200, showing how the commons and the making come together and take place. Drawing by author, 2026.



Floorplan Workshop space 1:200



PART I

PART II

PART III

144

PART IV

PART V

### **Entrance + Cafe Area and Exhibition Space**

Fig. 72: Atmospheric perspective of the exhibition space, café, and entrance area, opening outward toward the port and drawing the harbour's presence directly into the everyday life of the building. Render by author, 2026.



PART I

PART II

PART III

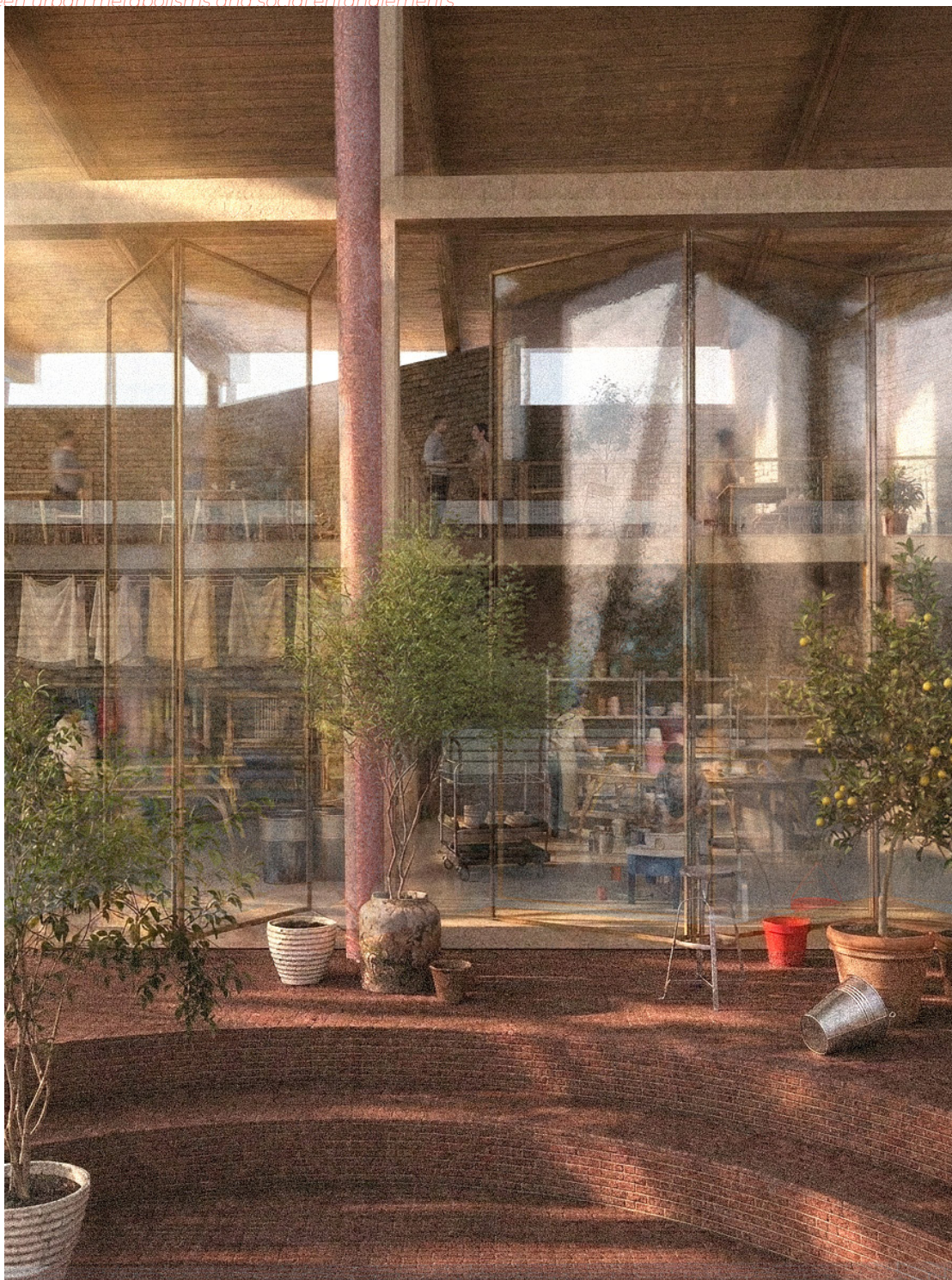
146

PART IV

PART V

### Relation to Making

Fig. 73: Atmospheric perspective of the workshop space, viewed from the outside looking into the making, an inviting and open gesture that sparks curiosity, brings the commons together, and reads as a deeply public space. Render by author, 2026.





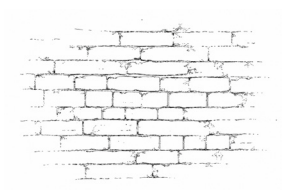
### Relation to the Port

Fig. 74: Atmospheric perspective of the workshop space, from inside looking outward toward the plaza and strongly toward the port, whose presence has shaped the programme and plays a central role in the workshop activities, from rope making tied to sailing and weaving cloth for sails and ships, to crafts more broadly rooted in Chilean culture. Render by author, 2026.

## Detail: Traces and Continuations

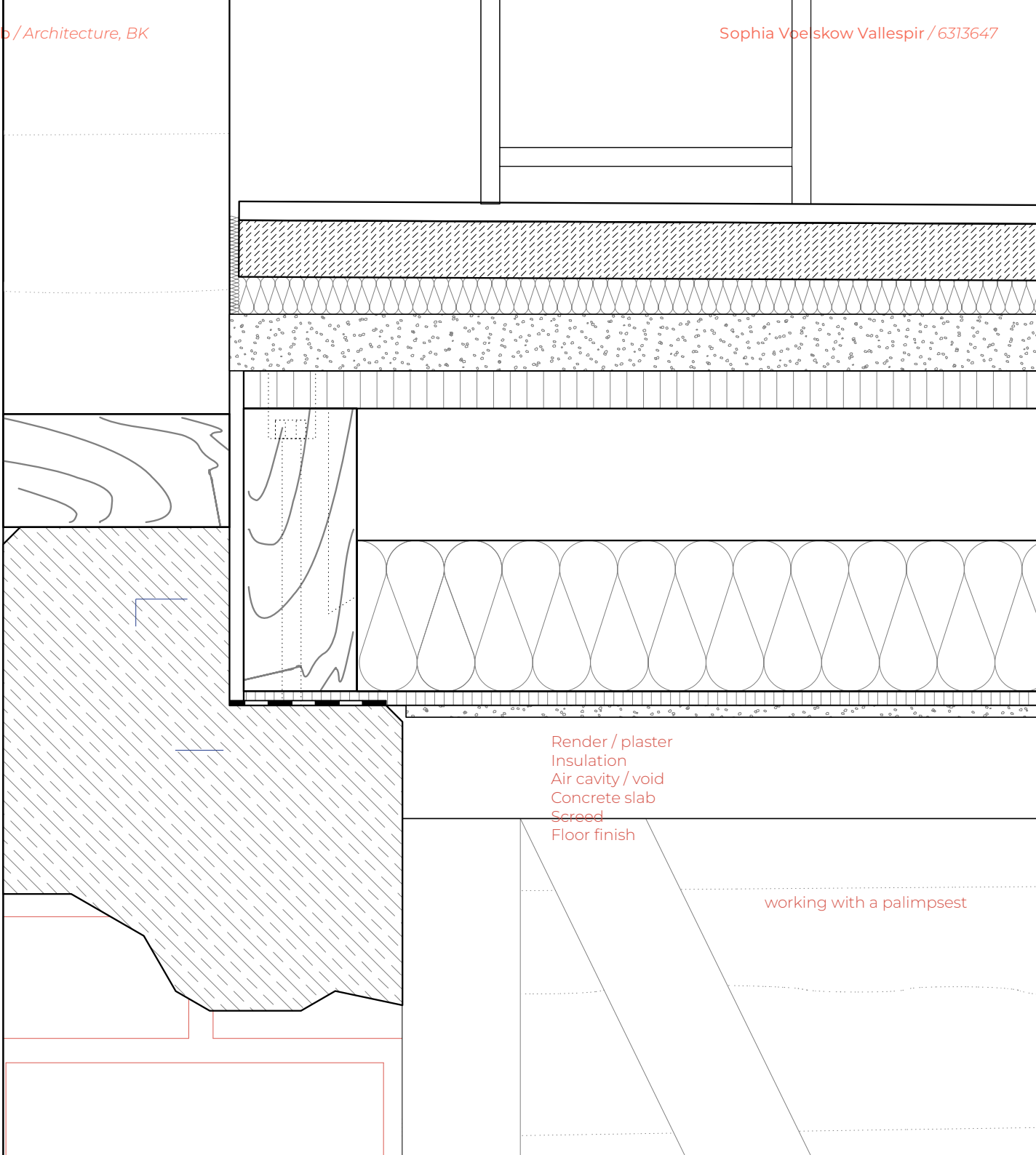
*existing ruin fragment meeting new intervention.*

Corrugated sheet: cheap, fast, weather-resistant; standard in Chilean vernacular construction  
Air gap: back-ventilated, keeps moisture out, reduces thermal bridging  
Adobillo brick: locally sourced, thermal mass, easy to repair with basic skills  
Timber V-columns: lightweight structure, earthquake-resilient when properly braced, renewable material  
Concrete leveling: compensates for irregular existing surface, clean load transfer  
Existing brick wall: retained mass reduces material waste, embeds the new build in the site's history



Existing brick fabric: material continuity, heritage conservation, and the layered history of the site. Author, 2026.

Fig. 75: Detail, 1:5, wall junction, existing ruin fragment meeting new intervention. The detail makes visible how the existing structure is engaged with, building a relationship to history and embodying the theme of palimpsest, using what is already there. Traces remain across the walls everywhere, nothing is entirely new, echoing the graffiti and the muralistas as discussed in the workshop. Drawing by author, 2026.



Render / plaster  
 Insulation  
 Air cavity / void  
 Concrete slab  
 Screed  
 Floor finish

working with a palimpsest

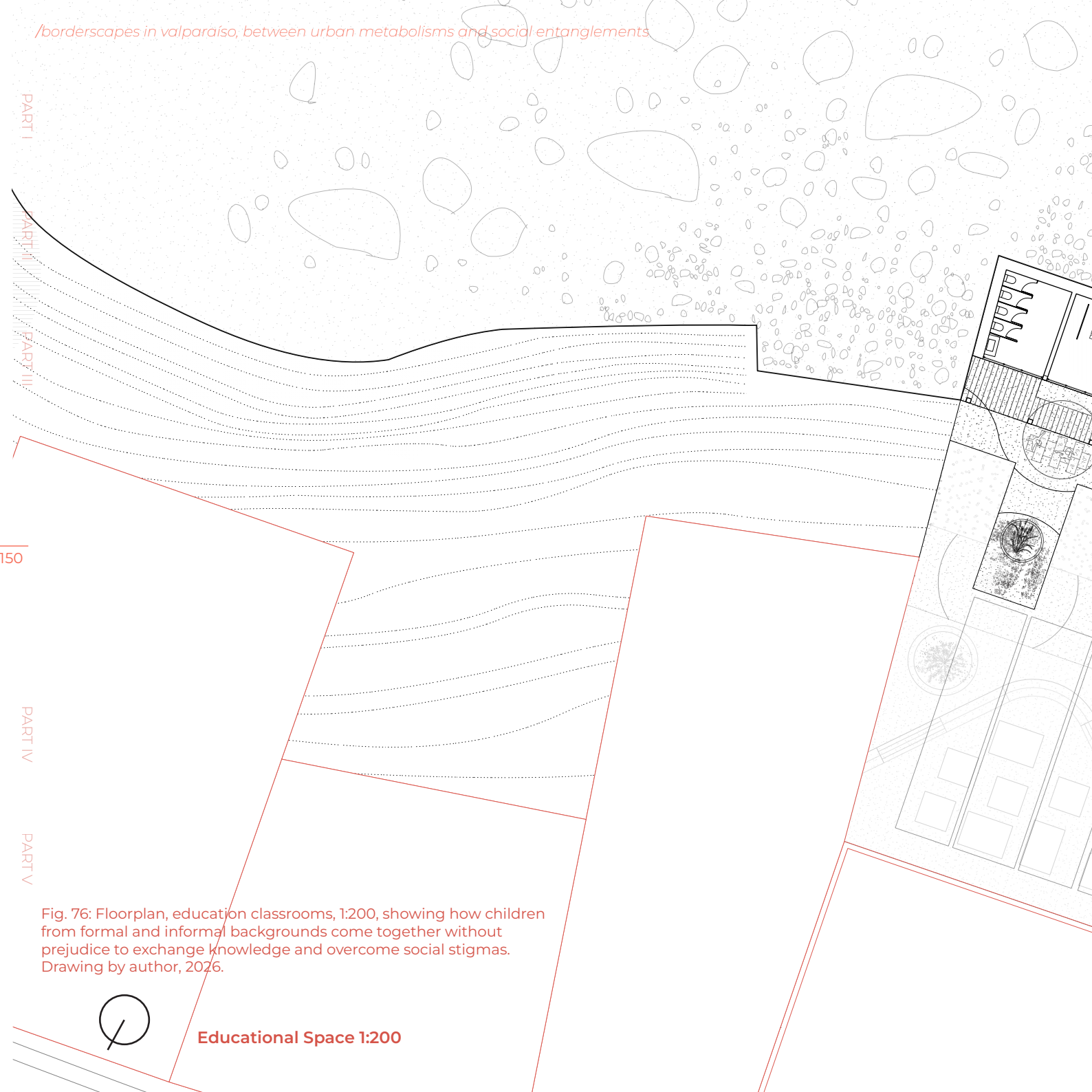
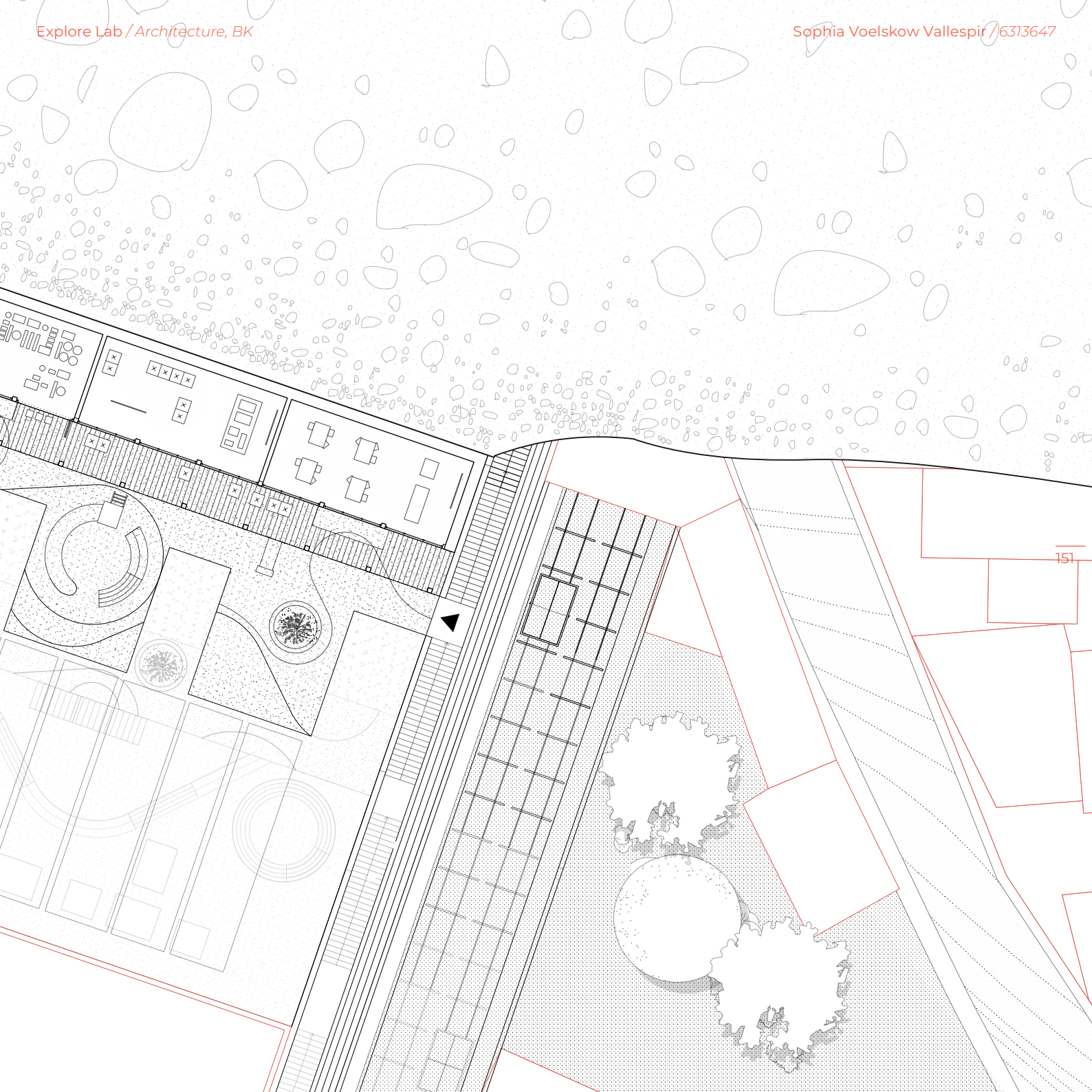


Fig. 76: Floorplan, education classrooms, 1:200, showing how children from formal and informal backgrounds come together without prejudice to exchange knowledge and overcome social stigmas. Drawing by author, 2026.



**Educational Space 1:200**

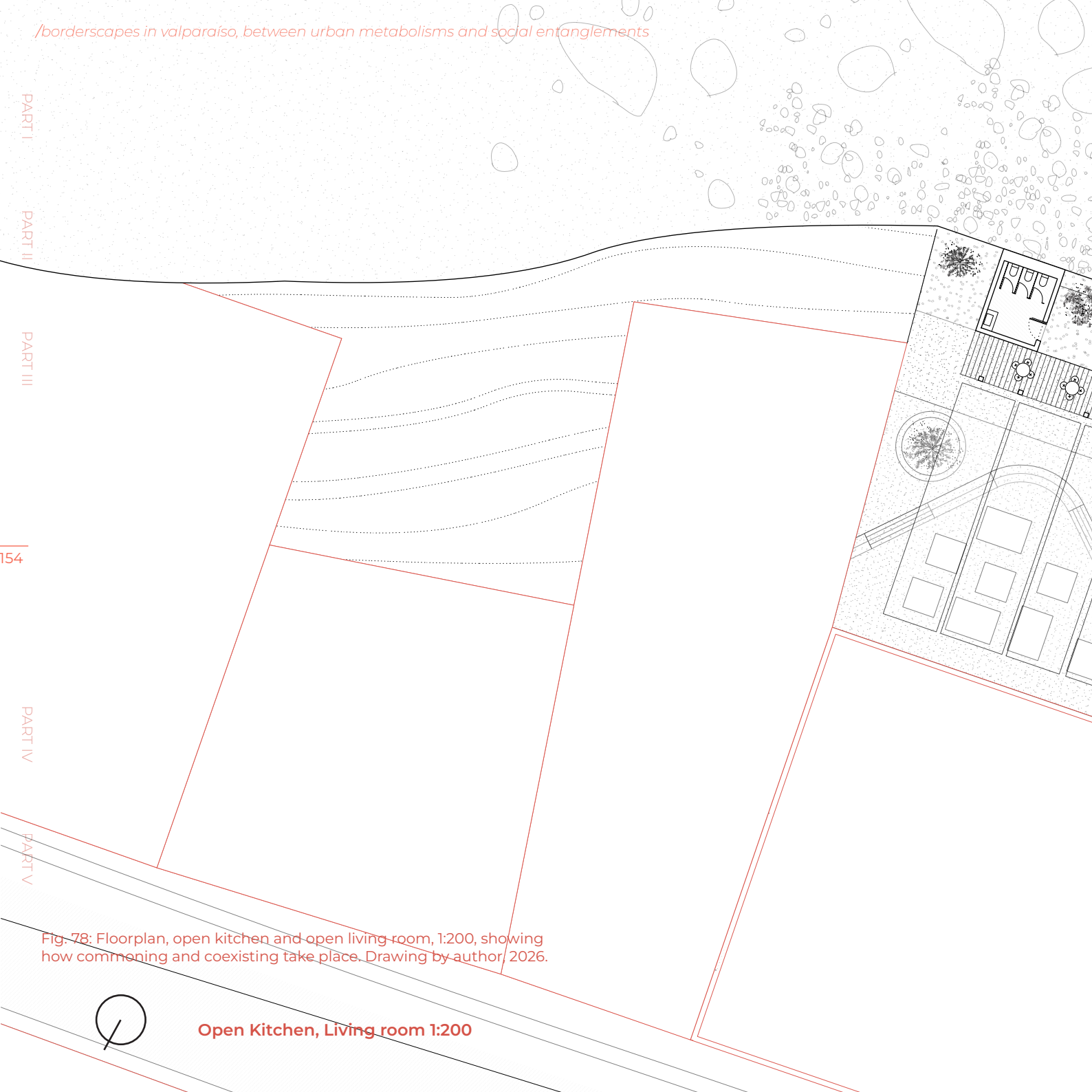




### Educational Space + playground

Fig. 77: Atmospheric perspective of the playground, looking up toward the classrooms within the existing structure, with added terraces and more private spaces for children to develop, play, and enjoy. Render by author, 2026.





PART I

PART II

PART III

PART IV

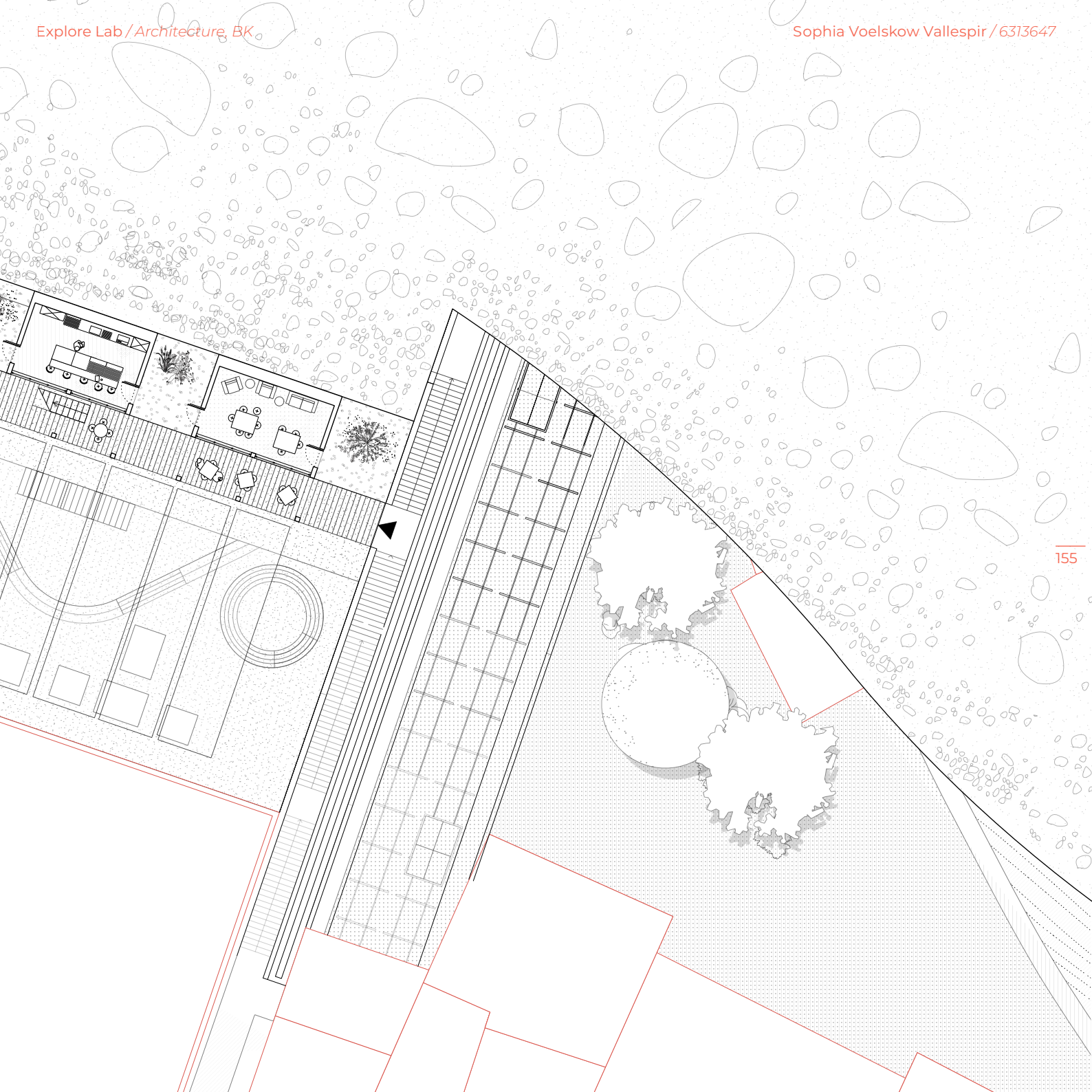
PART V

154

Fig. 78: Floorplan, open kitchen and open living room 1:200, showing how commencing and coexisting take place. Drawing by author, 2026.



**Open Kitchen, Living room 1:200**



## Self-Construction

*vernacular knowledge*

PART I

PART II

PART III

PART IV

PART V

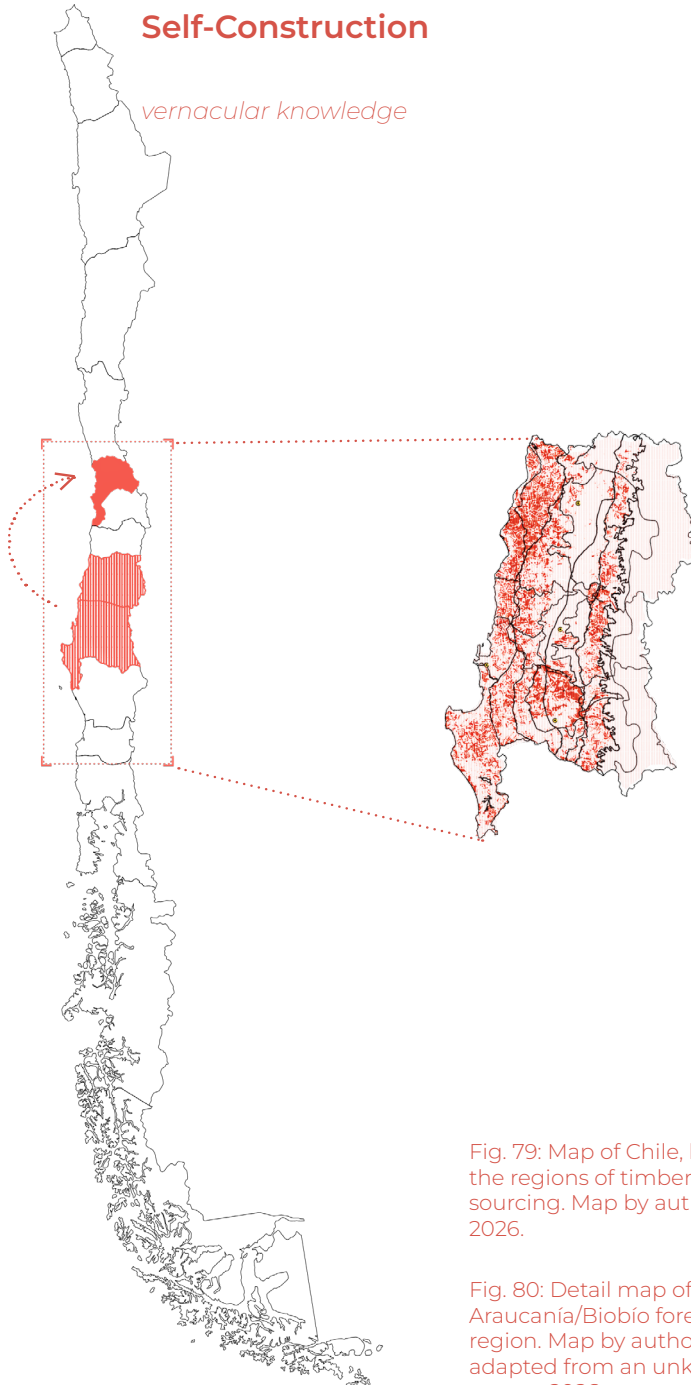


Fig. 79: Map of Chile, locating the regions of timber sourcing. Map by author, 2026.

Fig. 80: Detail map of the Araucanía/Biobío forestry region. Map by author, adapted from an unknown source, 2026.

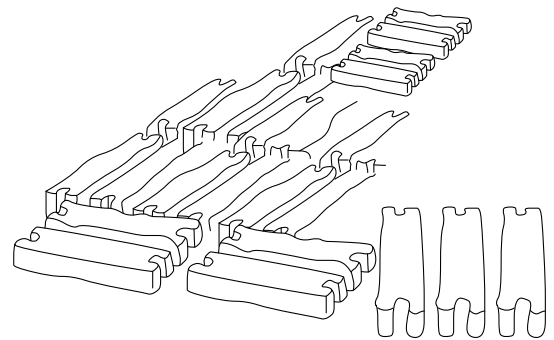
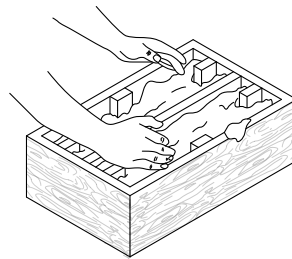
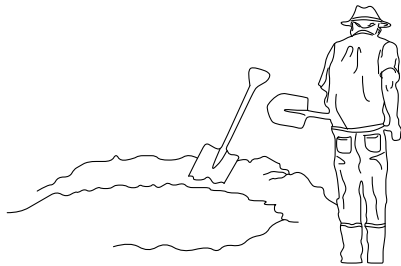
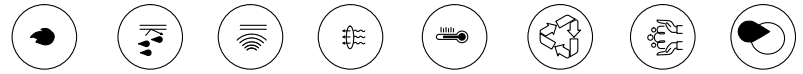
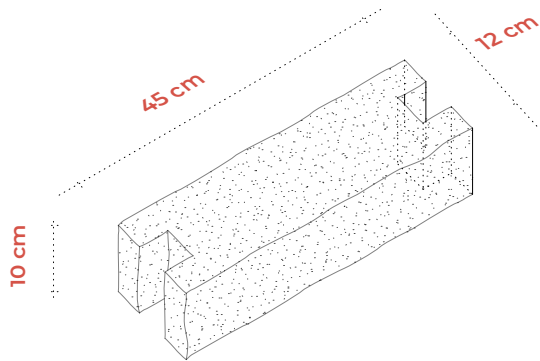


## Radiata pine (*Pinus radiata*)

The project is rooted in resources that originate from the wider region surrounding Valparaíso. The earth used for construction is sourced locally from the site's excavation and nearby soils, drawing on the long tradition of earthen architecture found throughout central Chile. This material anchors the project physically and culturally to the hillsides of Valparaíso while providing thermal mass and low embodied energy.

The timber structure relies on radiata pine (*\*Pinus radiata\**), Chile's most widely used construction timber. Large plantations are concentrated in central and southern Chile, particularly in the regions of Valparaíso, O'Higgins, Maule, Ñuble, and Biobío, making it a readily available regional resource. Its proximity to Valparaíso allows for relatively short supply chains, while its lightweight and flexible properties make it particularly suitable for construction in one of the world's most seismically active countries.

Textile elements represent a third locally embedded material layer. Inspired by the fabrics, shade cloths, fishing nets, and hanging laundry that characterize everyday life along the Chilean coast, they introduce adaptability, shade, and movement. Together, earth sourced from the site, timber from the productive forest landscapes of central Chile, and textile references from the daily culture of Valparaíso create a material system that emerges directly from its territory—linking local resources, construction traditions, and contemporary environmental challenges.



**Process: Adobillo Brick**

**Collect**

Local soil  
Water  
Straw  
fibers

**Mix**

Soil + water + straw  
Mix until  
homogeneous

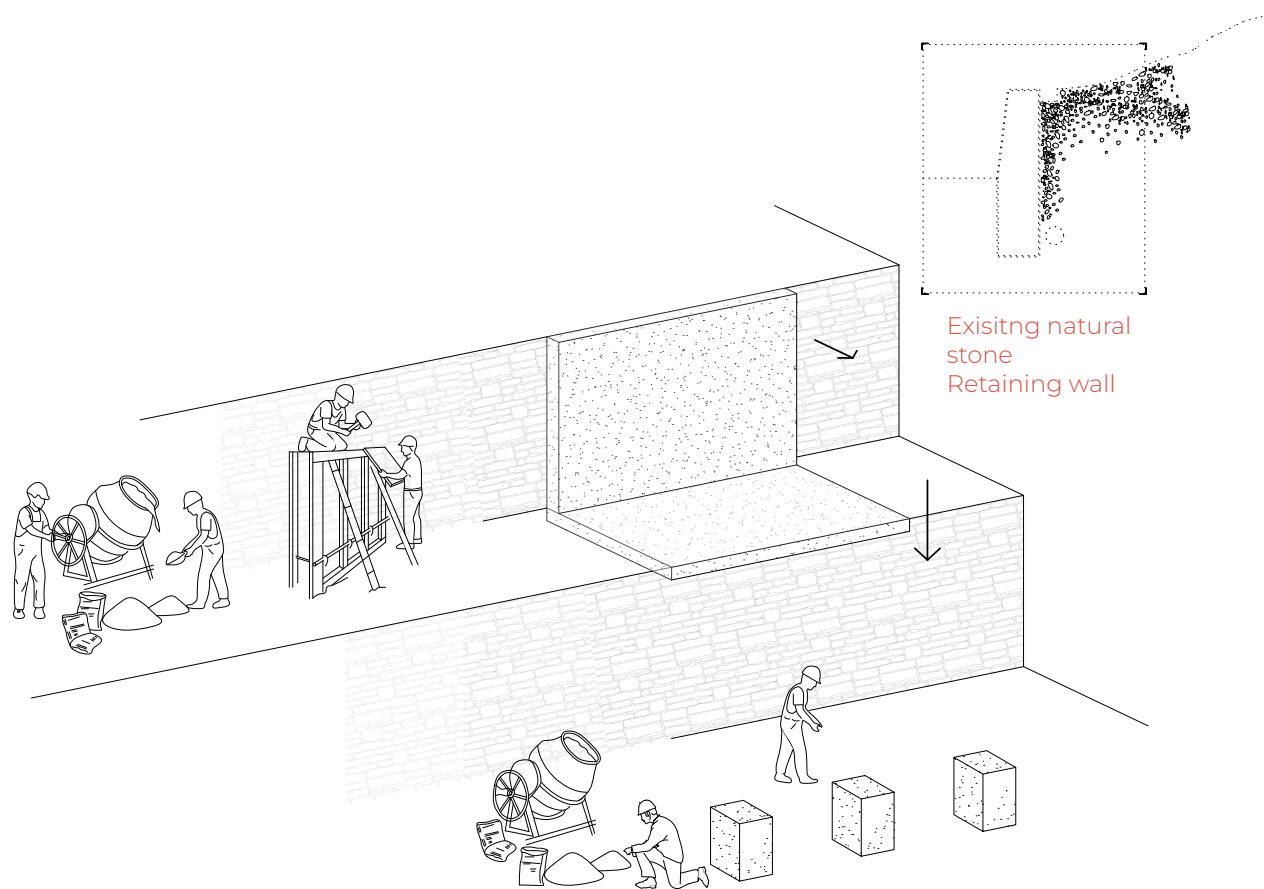
**Mould**

Fill wooden moulds  
Shape bricks by hand

**Dry**

Sun-dry for several  
days  
Turn regularly

**...start building**

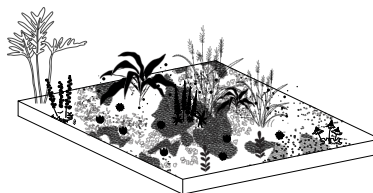


**Laying the foundations**  
(Community engagement)

Fig. 81: Laying the foundations, community engagement during the foundation-laying process. Photograph by author, 2026

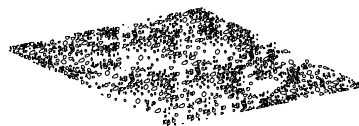
**Construction**

Adobillo brick infill  
 Pino radiata timber frame  
 Reinforced concrete foundation



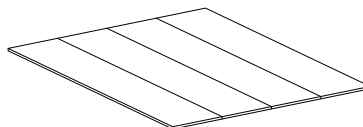
**Wall buildup**

Pino radiata structural frame  
 Adobillo brick infill  
 Air gap, ventilation  
 Corrugated sheet metal cladding  
 Corrosion resistant fixings



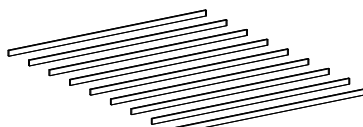
**Roof**

Timber rafters  
 Waterproof membrane  
 Growing medium, drainage layer  
 Accessible paving, plaza above



**Circulation**

Timber loggia  
 Continuous access across units



**Structure**

Varied column spacing  
 Vertical load transfer



**Openings**

Folding timber and glass panels  
 Operable facade, port and slope orientation  
 Cross terrace sightlines

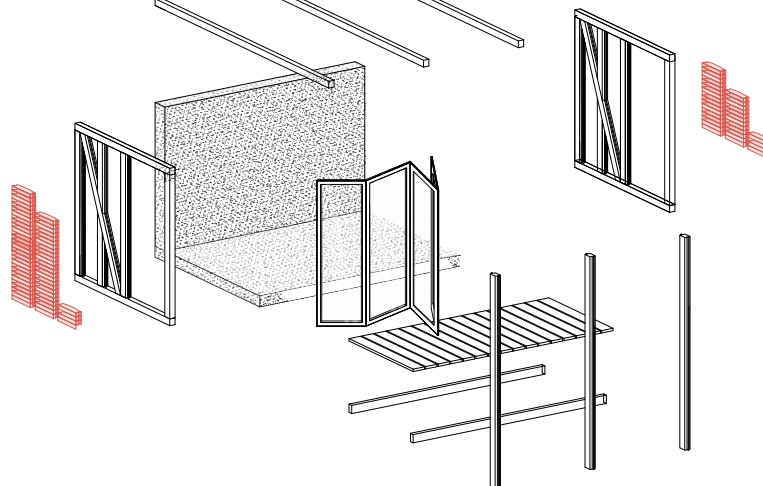
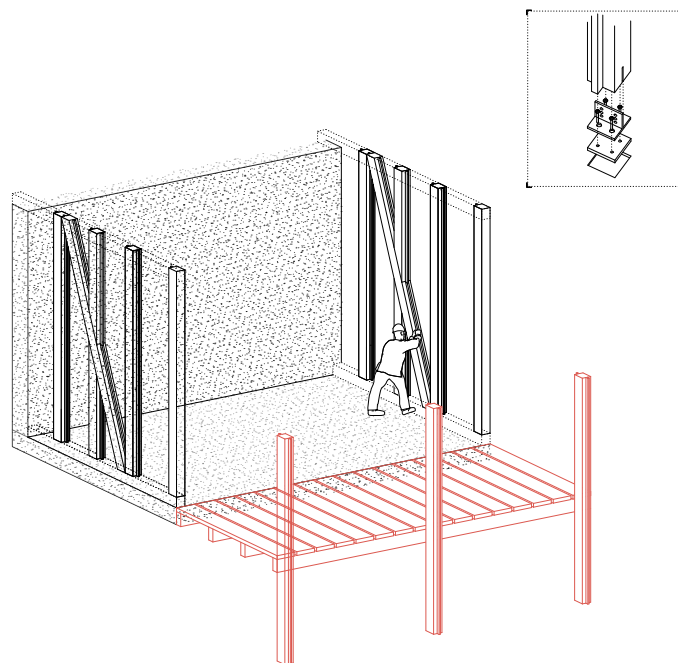
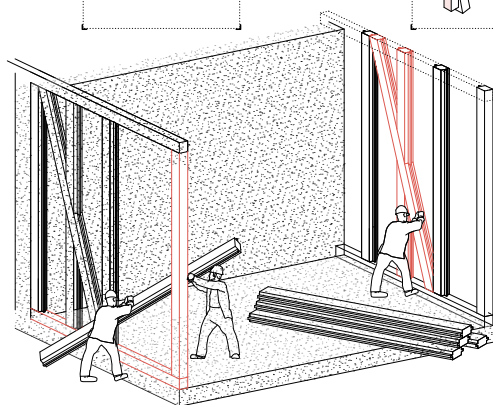
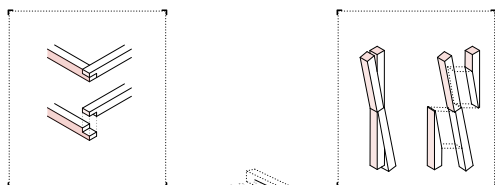


Fig. 82: Axonometric drawing of the open kitchen, a vernacular, self-built architecture. Drawing by author, 2026.

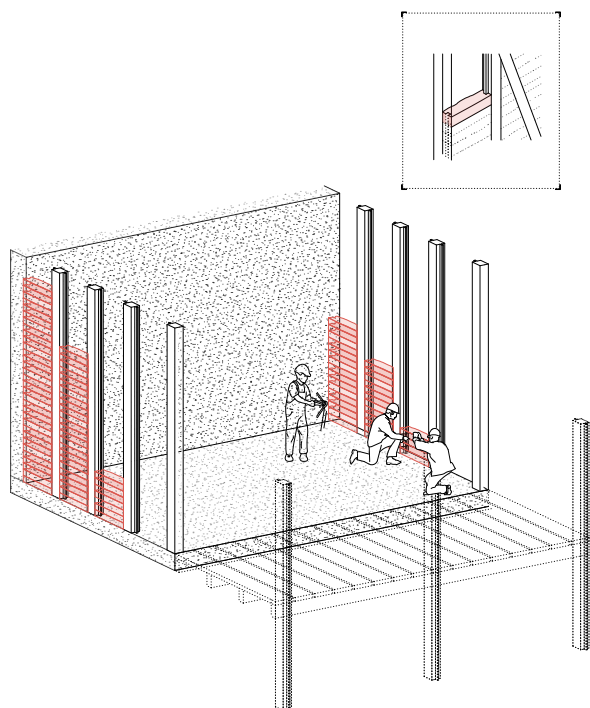


## Primary Structure

A load-bearing radiata pine frame forms the primary structure of the building. Horizontal timber members incorporate recessed pockets that receive the adobe blocks, allowing them to be inserted as non-structural infill panels. The lightweight timber frame provides seismic resistance and supports the accessible roof structure above.

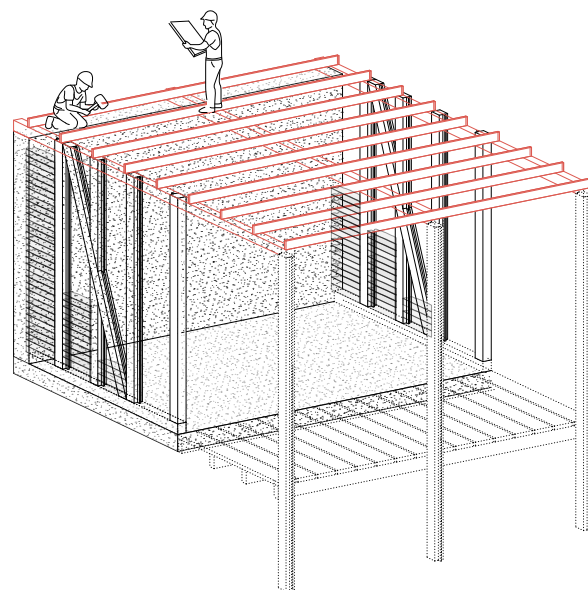
## Arcade Extension

An arcade is added to the primary timber structure, extending the usable space beyond the enclosed rooms. Acting as a transitional threshold between interior and exterior, it creates shaded circulation, informal gathering spaces, and a gradual spatial transition between the building and the public realm.



## Adobillo Infill

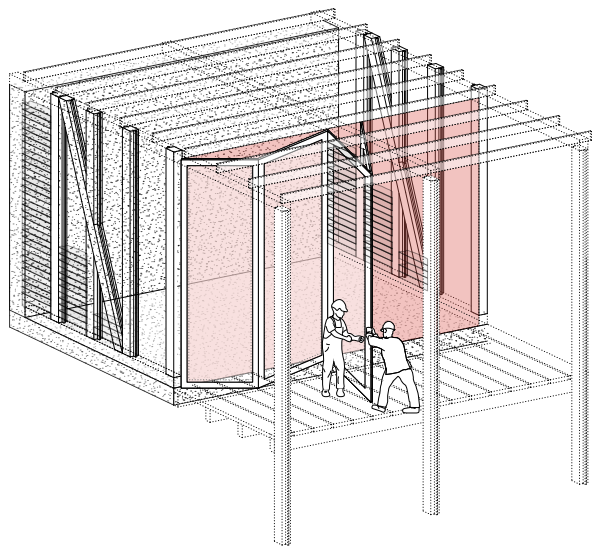
Locally produced adobe blocks are inserted into recessed timber slots, adding thermal mass and connecting the building to local earthen construction traditions.



## Secondary Beams

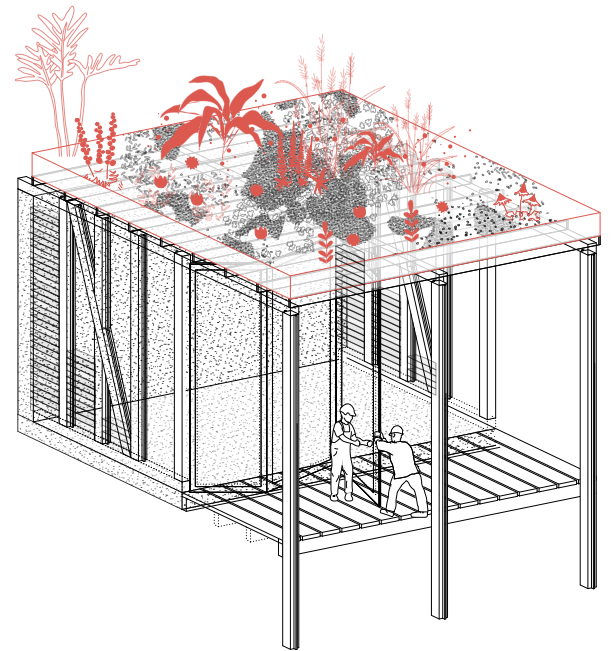
Timber joists span between the primary beams and support the roof assembly.

Fig. 83: Axonometric drawings tracing the progressive process of self-construction, community engagement, and knowledge exchange. Drawing by author, 2026.



### Adding The „Frame“ the Windows

connecting to the port and local identity, to the market, relationn to the slope.



### Vegetation Layer

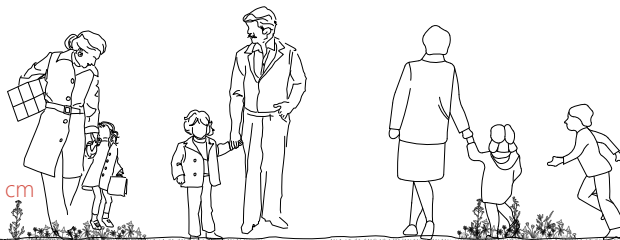
Planters and climbing vegetation transform the roof into an accessible green platform, providing shade, biodiversity, and communal outdoor space.

„Architecture gains particular social relevance when building processes themselves become acts of empowerment, participation, and knowledge exchange.“

*~ Anna Heringer (2013)*

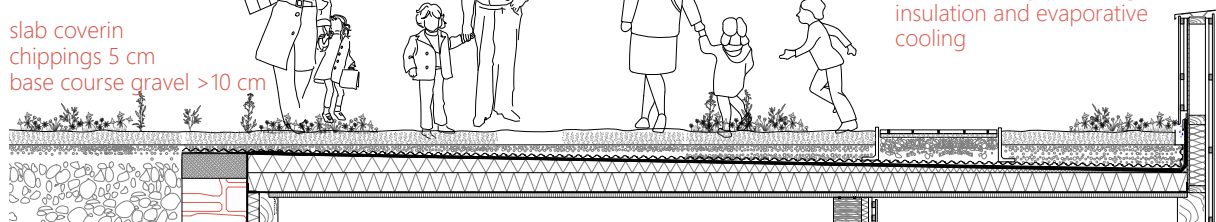
PART I

- intensive greening substrate
- slab covering
- chippings 5 cm
- base course gravel >10 cm



green roofs and green walls can help reduce the heat island effect by providing insulation and evaporative cooling

PART II



PART III

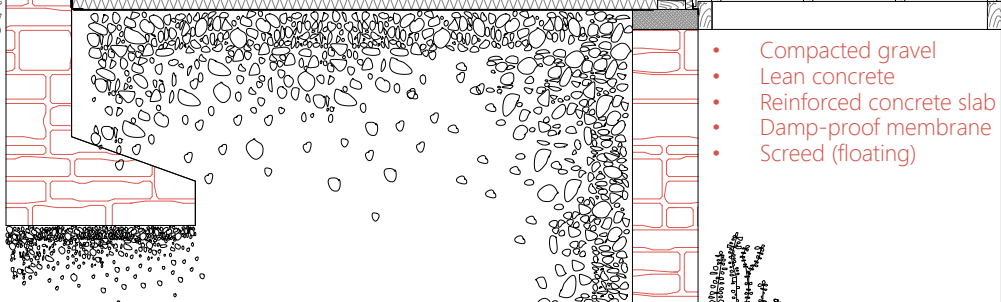
High thermal mass absorbs heat by day, releases at night stable interior temperature in Valparaiso's warm days / cool nights.

- hygroscopic self-regulates humidity.
- Combined with timber frame earthquake-resistant.

- Timber stud frame
- Adobillo infill thermal mass

- foldable glass doors (opening view to the port)
- connecting to other terraces

PART IV



- Compacted gravel
- Lean concrete
- Reinforced concrete slab
- Damp-proof membrane
- Screed (floating)

PART V

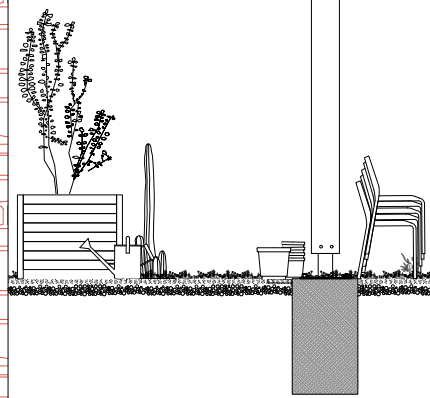
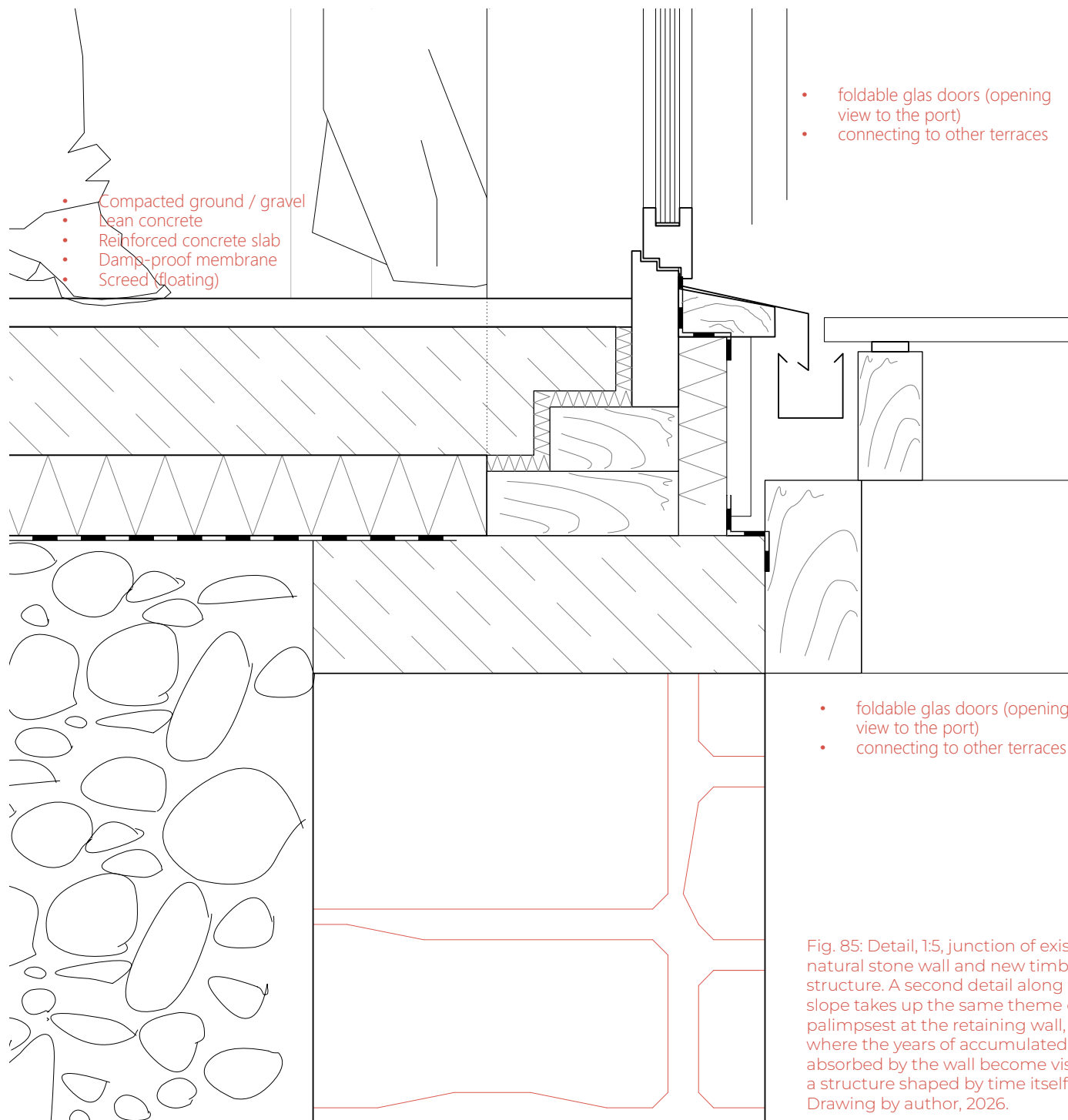


Fig. 84: Fragment, 1:20, a city in a section, where conditions of the city, vernacular architecture, community, and appropriation of the slope come together and remain in relation to one another. Drawing by author, 2026.



PART I

PART II

PART III

166

PART IV

PART V





### Open kitchen + urban gardening

Fig. 87: Atmospheric perspective of the open kitchen and urban gardening area, where cooking and cultivation overlap as a single collective practice, opening onto the terraces and inviting residents to gather, grow, and share food as part of everyday slope life. Render by author, 2026.

**Market: Weak Ties.**

Fig. 88: Atmospheric perspective of the market area, its large opening gesture inviting entry into the happening, active slope, where passersby and visitors alike are drawn into the exchange and weak ties begin to form. Atmospheric perspective by author, 2026.





### 3.3.5 Architecture as Civic Framework

Each of the seven principles operates not in isolation but as part of a unified spatial argument. The slope is not simply activated, it is transformed into a civic territory through which the central research question finds its architectural answer. To what extent can architecture mediate between formal institutions and informal practices to produce a co-productive commons? The answer lies in the spatial organization itself.

Porosity ensures that institutional spaces remain open to informal occupation.

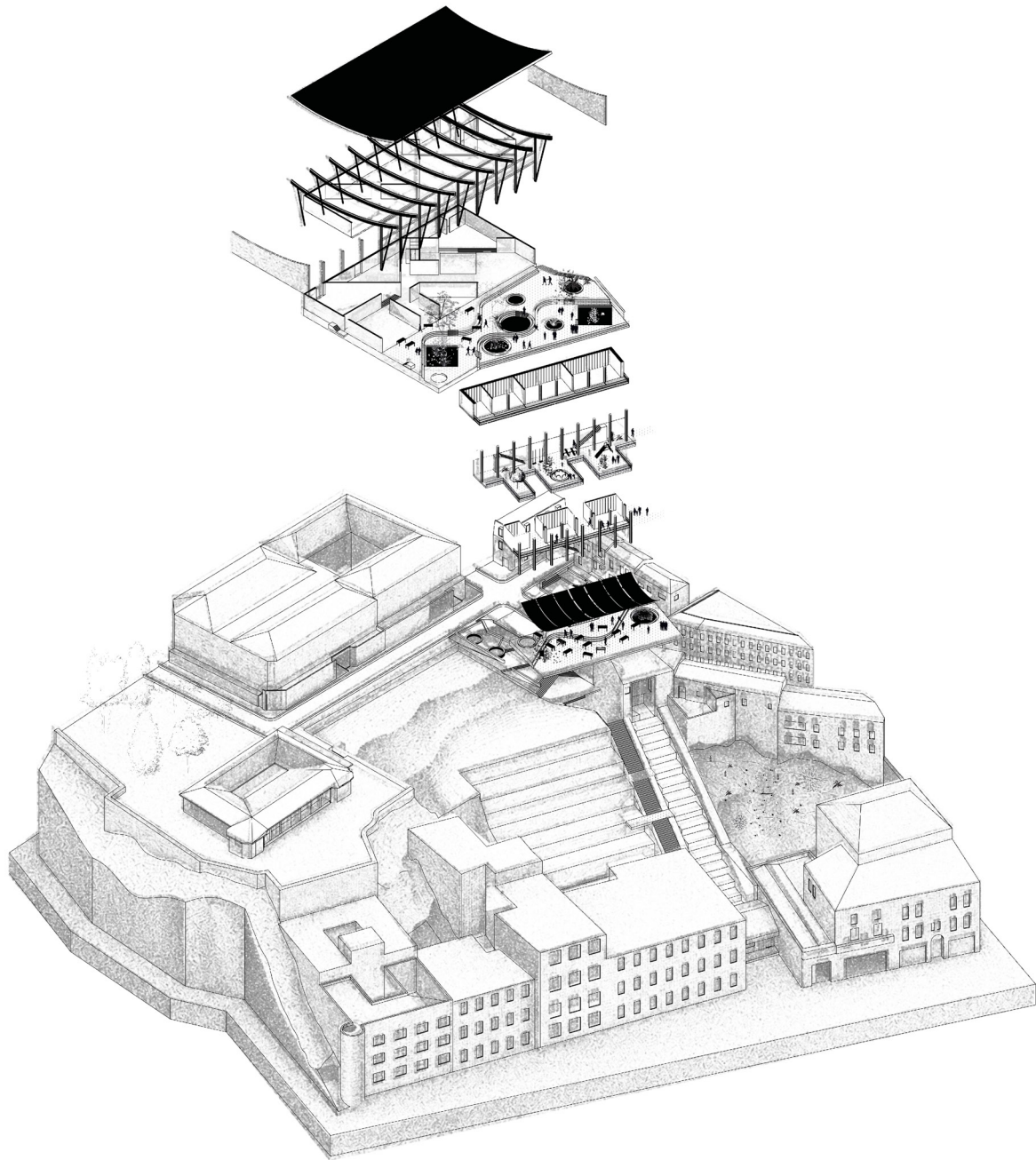
Prolonged movement creates the conditions through which encounter across difference becomes unavoidable. The palimpsest logic acknowledges that the city's informal intelligence already exists and must be built upon rather than replaced. Material rootedness grounds the intervention in local knowledge. Orientation toward the port reconnects the hill to its historical foundation.

And the framework over object principle ensures that the project remains open, adaptive, and collectively owned rather than institutionally prescribed.

Together these principles position the architectural proposal not as a solution imposed upon Valparaíso but as a spatial invitation. An invitation to participate, to encounter across difference, to produce collectively, and to inhabit the threshold between ascent and descent otherwise. Architecture here does not resolve the tensions of the city. It creates the conditions through which those tensions might become generative rather than divisive, collective rather than isolating, shared rather than separated.

The slope is crossed. Now it can also be inhabited.

Fig. 89: Exploded axonometric drawing, revealing the structure and the building as a whole, and how it settles into the landscape. Drawing by author, 2026.



PART I

PART II

PART III

172

PART IV

PART V

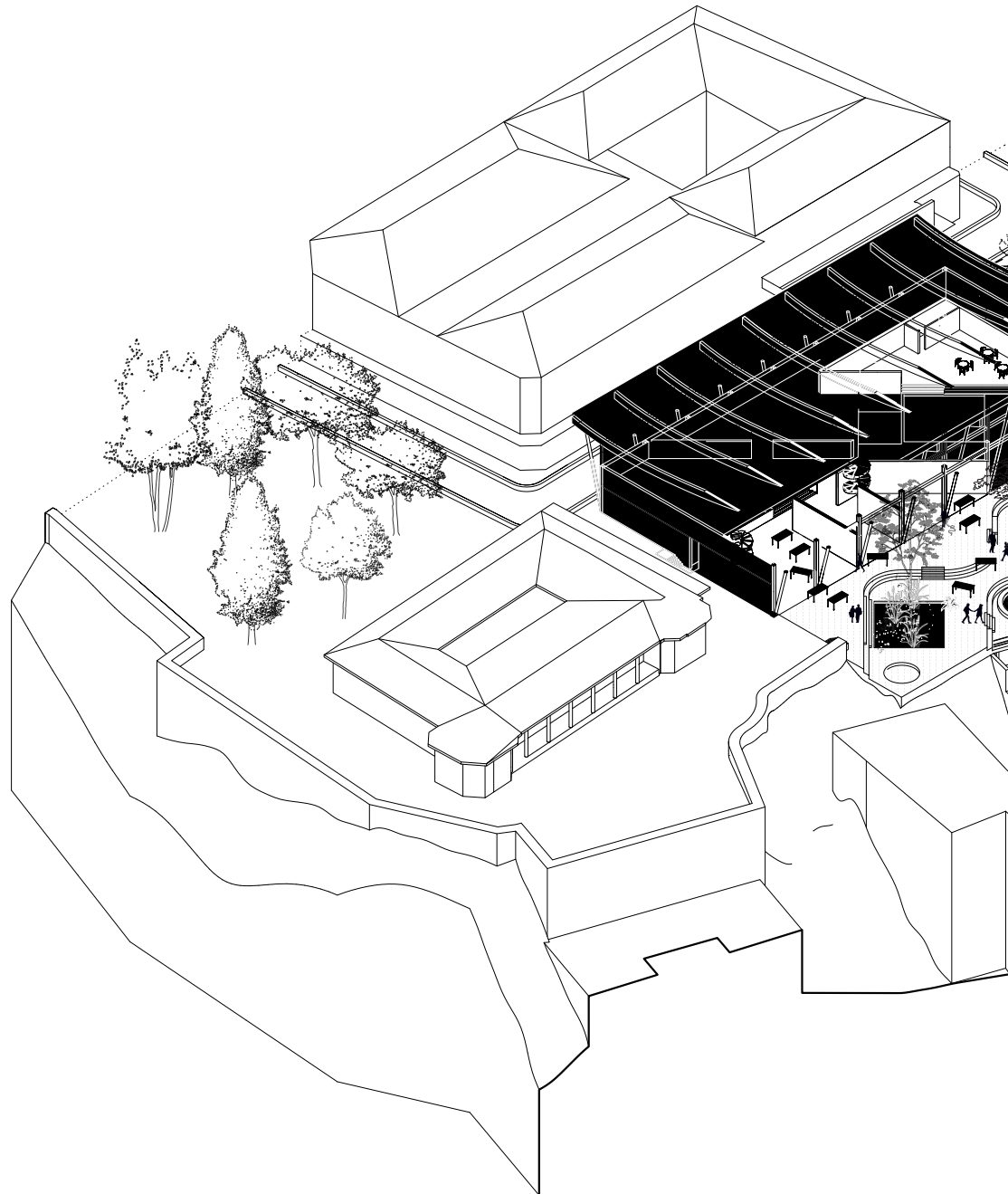
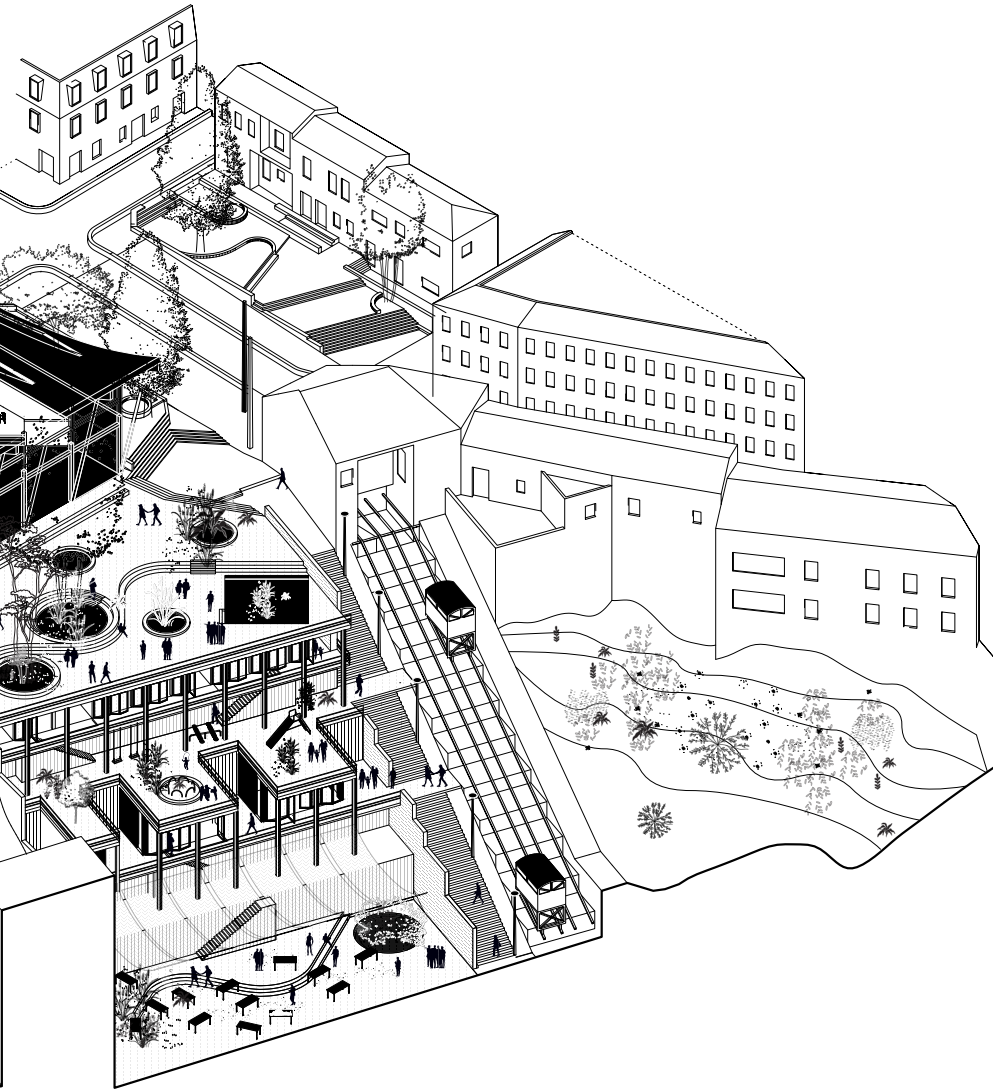


Fig. 90: Axonometric drawing, atmospheric, showing the building settled into the landscape. Drawing by author, 2026.



# PART IV

PART I

PART II

PART III

---

174

PART IV

PART V

## **PART IV** *CONCLUSION*

4.1 Conclusion

4.2 Architectural Implications

4.3 Reflection

## PART IV CONCLUSION

### 4.1 Conclusion

This thesis reframed the architectural question. Rather than asking how architecture might solve inequality, formalize informality, or impose order upon urban complexity, the investigation asked how architecture might spatially engage existing conditions, strengthening collective capacities while creating broader opportunities for encounter across difference.

The resulting architectural proposition positions architecture as mediating infrastructure. The intervention transforms an existing bottleneck condition between El Plan and Cerro Cordillera into a vertically distributed civic framework of collective production, learning, and exchange. Through the activation of the slope, the reoccupation of inherited ruins, and the introduction of shared infrastructures of arts and crafts, education, food production, and informal market exchange, the project creates spatial conditions in which formal institutional support and adaptive everyday practices can overlap productively.

The architectural proposal demonstrates that mediation does not emerge through neutrality, but through deliberate spatial organization. Thresholds become spaces of encounter. Circulation becomes social infrastructure. Section becomes a civic organizer. Shared resources become spatially visible and accessible.

Architecture's contribution lies in shaping relationships.

In this sense, the thesis argues that architecture can contribute meaningfully to fragmented urban contexts when understood less as isolated object-making and more as enabling civic framework. Its agency lies not in delivering final solutions, but in structuring

possibilities for encounter, participation, co-production, and shared urban life. Architecture, within this context, becomes an act of spatial mediation. The thesis therefore concludes that architecture can indeed act as a mediator between formal institutions and informal practices, not by erasing urban difference, but by creating shared infrastructures through which new forms of collective entanglement become possible.

## 4.2 Architectural Implications

While grounded in the specific urban condition of Valparaíso, this thesis contributes to broader architectural discussions concerning social infrastructure, commoning, urban mediation, and the role of architecture within fragmented contemporary cities.

A first implication lies in the repositioning of architecture as relational infrastructure rather than autonomous object. Many contemporary urban challenges emerge not through the absence of iconic architecture, but through fragmented access to shared civic resources and weakened public infrastructures.

Architecture gains civic relevance through its capacity to support encounter, participation, and shared collective life (Klinenberg 2018), shifting architectural attention from singular buildings toward relational systems.

A second implication concerns the role of section as social organizer. In Valparaíso, topography actively structures socio-spatial relationships, mediating access, exclusion, visibility, and civic opportunity through vertical geography. The project adopts vertical organization not merely as formal response but as civic strategy, suggesting broader relevance for cities shaped by uneven terrain, infrastructural discontinuity, or differentiated access.

A third implication concerns architecture's relationship to informality. Informal practices are understood here as constitutive urban conditions rather than exceptional anomalies (Roy 2005), adaptive systems of negotiation, appropriation, and collective intelligence.

Architecture's role is therefore not to suppress informal urban life through rigid formalization, but to create spatial interfaces

through which institutional support and adaptive flexibility can productively overlap. A fourth implication lies in commoning as architectural practice. Architecture is positioned here as a facilitator of shared civic agency, not through predefined public space, but through openness, negotiation, permeability, and access (Stavrides 2016). The project spatializes this through thresholds, shared productive infrastructures, open circulation, and overlapping programmes of making, learning, and exchange.

Finally, the thesis contributes to discussions around productive civic architecture. Rather than consumption-oriented or institutionally specialized buildings, the project proposes co-production as civic strategy, positioning users as active participants in making, learning, cultivating, and collectively shaping urban life. Architecture becomes participatory not only through consultation, but through its spatial organization.

Together, these implications position architecture as an active civic agent within socially fragmented urban contexts.

### 4.3 Reflection

This thesis proposes one situated architectural response to a complex urban condition. Its ambitions are intentionally spatial, yet its implications inevitably extend into broader political, social, and institutional questions.

A first reflection concerns the limits of architecture's agency. While the project demonstrates how architecture can redistribute access, create shared infrastructures, and support collective encounter, architecture alone cannot resolve the structural socio-economic inequalities embedded within Valparaíso. Spatial transformation can influence social possibilities, but it cannot independently restructure broader systemic conditions. This limitation is particularly relevant in the context of commoning. Commons are not produced through spatial form alone. They require governance, stewardship, negotiation, maintenance, and ongoing social participation. Collective infrastructures can enable commoning, but they do not guarantee it. Questions of who maintains and governs these shared spaces remain open and would require deeper engagement beyond the architectural scope of this research.

A second reflection concerns implementation and feasibility. Heritage regulations, structural adaptation, long-term maintenance, accessibility requirements, economic funding, and political coordination would significantly shape real-world implementation. Co-production cannot be romanticized as universally accessible or inherently equitable. Participation itself can reproduce exclusion if not carefully structured.

A third reflection concerns the situated nature of the thesis. Valparaíso is not a

generic case study. Its topography, cultural production, port history, informal practices, and socio-political context produce a highly specific urban condition. While broader theoretical implications may be transferable, the exact spatial strategy is intentionally context-specific, a strength rather than a limitation. Situated knowledge gains relevance precisely through its partiality, embodiment, and contextual grounding (Haraway 1988).

Ultimately, this thesis understands architecture as an act of opening. An opening between formal and informal systems. Between institutional infrastructures and adaptive everyday practices. Between movement and encounter. Between separated socio-economic realities. In Valparaíso, where daily life is already defined by movement through thresholds, vertical negotiation, and layered social conditions, the spaces in between hold extraordinary civic potential. The architectural project seeks to activate precisely these spaces.

Not as final resolution. But as invitation. An invitation to participate. To encounter across difference. To produce collectively. To inhabit the city otherwise.



## Model exploration

### 4.1 Conclusion

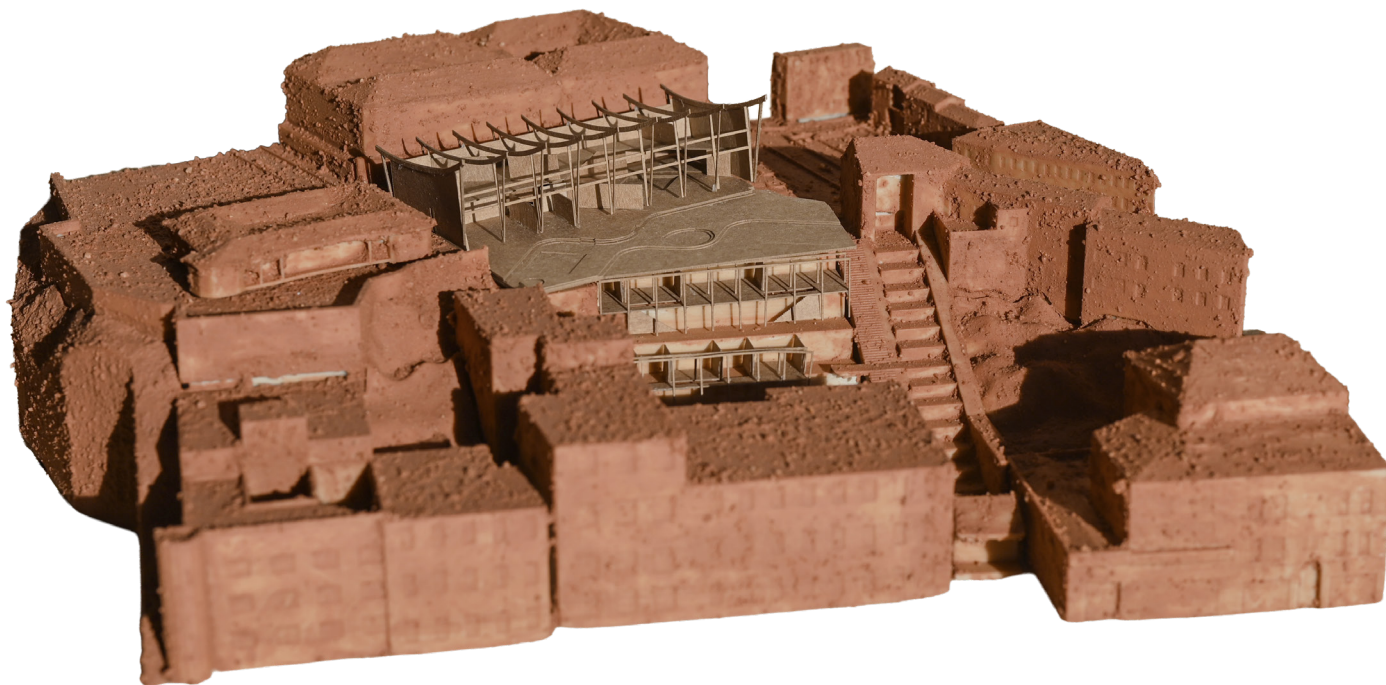


Fig. 91: Site model at scale 1:500, constructed by the author to uncover the in-between spaces of the hillside and trace how the terrain inscribes itself within the wider landscape.

PART I

PART II

PART III

180

PART IV

PART V



Fig.: 92: Model of an adobillo brick at scale 1:1, constructed by the author to explore the material and the construction process.

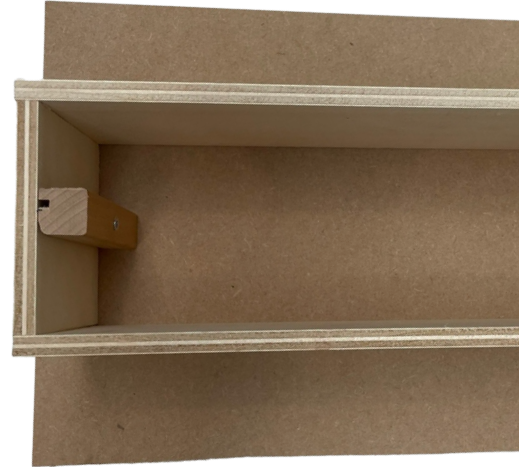


Fig. 93: Process of making the adobillo brick, documented by the author.



PART I

PART II

PART III

184

PART IV

PART V



Fig. 94: Vedute workshop, TU Delft, documenting the author's first encounter and starting point with Valparaíso.



PART I

PART II

PART III

# PART V

---

186

PART IV

PART V

**PART V** *BACK MATTER*

- 5.1 Bibliography
- 5.2 List of Figures
- 5.4 Appendices

## PART V BACK MATTER

### 5.1 Bibliography

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## 5.2 List of Figures

Fig. 1: Limache, the author's childhood base, embraced by the cordillera and a red wall offering both protection and a sense of enclosure. Photograph by author, 2025.

Fig. 2: Mapping the author's origins, tracing the inbetween feeling of belonging to two cultures and the distance from both. Map by author, 2025.

Fig. 3: Imaginaries of Valparaíso: colour, topography, and the negotiation between formal and informal urban conditions. Based on: Asawla, Devant, 2024; and Pérez de Arce Antoncic, Rodrigo. Valparaíso: Un balcón urbano. Santiago: Ediciones UC, 2019. Adapted by author, 2025.

Fig. 4: Photographs of port containers and the cityscape mirroring the containers as a whole, a study of colour and the city's entry point for further exploration. Photograph by author, 2025.

Fig. 5: Valparaíso: urban grid and topographic context. Based on: Pérez de Arce Antoncic, Rodrigo. Valparaíso: Un balcón urbano. Santiago: Ediciones UC, 2019. Adapted by author, 2025.

Fig. 6: City vibrancy and sloped terrain. Photograph by author, 2025.

Fig. 7: Vedute Workshop, Explore Lab, TU Delft, 2025. First impressions revealing Valparaíso's (Chile) layered urban condition: the spatial and chromatic binaries between formal and informal, flatland and hill, stability and transformation. Photograph by author, 2025.

Fig. 8: Urban framework: Valparaíso in context, topography, port, and relationship to Viña del Mar and the Pacific Ocean. Map by author, 2025.

Fig. 9: „The city is a hand“: conceptual sketch mapping the spatial structure of Valparaíso through bodily analogy, hills as fingers, El Plan as palm, the port as wrist connecting city to sea and world. Based on: De Beer, Michael, Understanding the City, n.d. Adapted by author, 2025.

Fig. 10: The hills of Valparaíso, highlighting different zones of topographic transformation. Map by author, inspired by unknown source, 2025.

Fig. 11: Topographic drawing of Valparaíso, reading the city in section through its amphitheatrical hill structure. Based on: ARQ 73. Adapted by author, 2025.

Fig. 12: Verticality and everyday urban life in Valparaíso. Pecchenino Raggi, Renzo (Lukas). Apuntes Porteños. Valparaíso: Fundación Renzo Pecchenino, 1978.

Fig. 13: Photographs of participatory workshops, excursions, and NGO engagement. Photograph by author, 2025.

Fig. 14: Workshop documentation, Universidad Católica de

Valparaíso, December 2025. Photograph by author, 2025.

Fig. 15: Valparaíso, battle plan, 1621. The relationship between port and city already legible in early cartographic representation. Source: Planos Históricos, n.d.

Fig. 16: Pianta di alcuna Isola, o Porto della Costa di Cile: Porto di Valparadiso, 1646. The inseparable bond between port, hill, and settlement visible from the city's earliest representations. Source: Planos Históricos, n.d.

Fig. 17: Valparaíso port sector, 17th century: hill, fort, and bay as inseparable urban condition. Source unknown.

Fig. 18: Valparaíso port sector, present condition: the port-city relationship persisting across centuries of urban transformation. Source unknown.

Fig. 19: Orographic and road conditions in Valparaíso, studied by the Instituto de Urbanismo de Valparaíso in 1936. Within the modernist framework, housing was to become integral to the rationalization of street layout across the cerros and quebradas. Source unknown.

Fig. 20: Valparaíso: urban grid mapped against topographic landscape, revealing the tension between formal street pattern and irregular hill terrain. Map by author, 2025.

Fig. 21: Chile and Valparaíso read in section: from territorial topography to urban stratification. Drawing by author, inspired by various sources, 2025.

Fig. 22: Adapting the slope: between appropriation and precarity. Informal occupation of public circulation space, Valparaíso. Photograph by author, 2025.

Fig. 23: Sectional studies, Valparaíso: formal and informal conditions, typological adaptation, and vegetation across the urban slope. Based on field observations and prior sectional studies. Source partially unknown. Adapted by author, 2025.

Fig. 24: Micro-sectional analysis of Valparaíso's urban fabric. Combette, Marie, Thomas Batzenschlager, and Clémence Pybaro. Valparaíso Público, 2013–2017. Received directly from the authors.

Fig. 25: The rural and the urban: a comparison and contradiction of these two extremes. Drawing, adapted by author, source unknown, 2025.

Fig. 26: The rural and the urban: European architectural typologies and the gradual emergence of informal traces, graffiti, and appropriation within the formal city fabric, Valparaíso. Photograph by author, 2025.

Fig. 27: Defining the formal and the informal, the hill and the flatland, and the points of intersection where homophily breaks, exchange occurs, and stay is prolonged through making. Drawing, adapted by author, source unknown, 2025.

PART I

Fig. 28: Informal settlements in Greater Valparaíso. Aerial photographs: Google Earth. Source: Alegría, Víctor, and Kim Dovey. „Morphogenesis of contemporary informal settlement in Chile.“ *Urban Design International* 29 (2024): 171–187.

PART II

Fig. 29: Contrasting urban conditions across Valparaíso's vertical topography: appropriation and informal consolidation on the cerros (above) alongside abandonment and vacancy in the port area below. Photograph by author, 2025.

PART III

Fig. 30: Barrio Puerto: urban withdrawal, structural decay, and the spatial traces of prolonged abandonment following the decline of the port. Photograph by author, 2025.

Fig. 31: Mapped vacancies and absolute decay and abandonment within the flatland of Barrio Puerto. Map by author, based on Google Earth satellite imagery, 2025.

Fig. 32: The amphitheatrical city: every hill a balcony, every threshold a view toward the port and the Pacific. Valparaíso's vertical terrain as poetic urban condition. Photograph by author, 2025.

190

Fig. 33: Barrio Puerto: meso-scale mapping of urban decay, fragmented micro-economies, and metabolic rupture, tracing the layered conditions of abandonment, informal trade, and weak social ties across the port threshold. Based on: Pecchenino Raggi, Renzo (Lukas). *Apuntes Porteños. Valparaíso: Fundación Renzo Pecchenino, 1978. Adapted by author, 2025.*

Fig. 34: Field observations, Barrio Puerto: maritime infrastructure and local craft, material texture and chromatic contrast, the binaries between industrial port condition and everyday urban life. Photograph by author, 2025.

PART IV

Fig. 35: The poetic city, the playful, vibrant city. Photograph by author, 2025.

Fig. 36: Workshops in Valparaíso: the city and the Vedute Workshop at Universidad Católica, and the kindergarten workshop. Photograph by author, 2025.

Fig. 37: Vedute Workshop outcomes and analysis. Photograph by author, 2025.

PART V

Fig. 38: Kindergarten workshop outcomes and analysis. Photograph by author, 2025.

Fig. 39: Mapping foodscapes, education, and arts and crafts, and analysing where these intersect. These remaining programmes, drawn from both formal and informal practices, are what still hold the city together and resist its decay. Map by author, 2025.

Fig. 40: Multi-scale mapping of formal and informal systems, from territorial overview to urban metabolism. Tracing the distribution of food, education, and arts and crafts

infrastructures across Valparaíso's vertical terrain, from macro concentration in El Plan to meso fragmentation across the cerros, toward the micro scale where these systems have the potential to intersect at human scale and produce everyday entanglements. Map by author, 2025.

Fig. 41: Narratives, stories, and traces: situated knowledge gathered through conversations, encounters, and photographic observation across Valparaíso. Photograph by author, 2025.

Fig. 42: Portrait drawings of the people interviewed during fieldwork. Drawing by author, 2025.

Fig. 43: Diagram tracing how the programme emerged through interviews, workshops, and urban analysis, and the synergies between them. Diagram by author, 2025.

Fig. 44: Outcomes of the barrio and city's territorial analysis: appropriation of the slope, and the funicular and stairs as connectors of this verticality. Finding commonalities and reactivating space while negotiating between the flatland and the hills. Various sources, adapted by author, 2025.

Fig. 45: Google Maps view of the site, highlighting its location and boundaries. Map, adapted by author, 2025.

Fig. 46: Site conditions overview: train station, visual connections, the navy at Plaza Sotomayor, the port area, and the flatland versus hill condition, at a broader territorial scale. Map by author, 2025.

Fig. 47: Diagram and map showing the intended horizontal exchange within the flatland. Diagram and map by author, 2025.

Fig. 48: Diagram and map showing the intended vertical connection between hill and flatland. Diagram and map by author, 2025.

Fig. 49: Large-scale site section, making visible the relationship to the port as well as the relationship between flatland and hills, situating the project within this inbetween space. Drawing by author, 2025.

Fig. 50: Escalera Cienfuegos and Ascensor Cordillera, Barrio Puerto, c. 1900. Source: Museo Histórico Nacional.

Fig. 51: Map of Barrio Puerto, Valparaíso. Based on: Pérez Hellec, Constanza. *Ilustración Barrio Puerto Valparaíso. Adapted by author, 2025.*

Fig. 52: Photograph of the site and its current conditions. Source unknown.

Fig. 53: Drawing of the site and its conditions, alongside an analysis of the terraced site developed in reference to Michael Beer. Drawing by author, 2025.

Fig. 54: Cut-out of the photograph showing the site conditions: ruins, fragments, remnants, a palimpsest of what was and what is yet to become. Source unknown.

Fig. 55: Axonometric drawing of the current site condition. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 56: Axonometric drawing of the current flows on site. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 57: The study reveals the project's layered interventions: through the workshops, the proposal seeks to overcome the borderscape by interlinking the stratified slope within the most metabolic flows of everyday life, enabling weak ties to form, and stitching and weaving together the city's two fragmented parts. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 58: First attempt at reading the site's metabolism: flows mapped against programme. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 59: Study model: understanding circulation flows and spatial occupation across the slope, Cerro Cordillera. Photograph by author, 2025.

Fig. 60: Programme analysis, alongside public, private, and semi-public flows that become an important consideration later on. Diagram by author, 2026.

Fig. 61: Exploded axonometric diagram showing the spatial distribution of programme across the building. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 62: Axonometric drawing of intended interventions and spatial strategies on site: porosity, creating an open structure that allows more contact to happen inbetween, space to linger, and movement in and out of spaces. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 63: Axonometric drawing of intended interventions and spatial strategies on site: proximity, where the open structure and increased inbetween flows allow more encounters across difference to occur, and where the given functions of the programme create moments of both more private and more public encounter. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 64: Axonometric drawing of intended interventions and spatial strategies on site: palimpsest, where the existing ruins and traces on the site allow history to resurface within the new intervention. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 65: Axonometric drawing of intended interventions and spatial strategies on site: plazas, addressing the scarcity of outdoor and green space by reactivating and creating room for it, always in relation to the adjoining programme so that each building generates its own plaza. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 66: Elevation, 1:200, showing the rhythm of the façade and the collective ecology of the terraces as a whole. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 67: Atmospheric perspective of the facade and workshop space opening toward the sea, establishing a new

connection to the port. Visible here are the hybrid steel and timber V columns, the curved roof, and the relationship to the plazas and surrounding greenery. Atmospheric perspective by author, 2026.

Fig. 68: Sketches tracing how stone, brick, timber, textile, and earth come together into a shared material logic, driving local resources and economies toward a common ground. Drawing by author, inspired by various unknown sources, 2026.

Fig. 69: Section, 1:200, reading the site in section just as the city and country itself are read. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 70: Diagrams tracing the design decisions behind the workshop building, taking up the urban axis, opening toward the funicular's exit, retaining the existing rear wall while opening the front entirely to bring porosity and accessibility to the making spaces, extending certain areas outward for good weather and larger groups, and the V columns. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 71: Floorplan, workshop, 1:200, showing how the commons and the making come together and take place. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 72: Atmospheric perspective of the exhibition space, café, and entrance area, opening outward toward the port and drawing the harbour's presence directly into the everyday life of the building. Atmospheric perspective by author, 2026.

Fig. 73: Atmospheric perspective of the workshop space, viewed from the outside looking into the making, an inviting and open gesture that sparks curiosity, brings the commons together, and reads as a deeply public space. Atmospheric perspective by author, 2026.

Fig. 74: Atmospheric perspective of the workshop space, from inside looking outward toward the plaza and strongly toward the port, whose presence has shaped the programme and plays a central role in the workshop activities, from rope making tied to sailing and weaving cloth for sails and ships, to crafts more broadly rooted in Chilean culture. Render by author, 2026.

Fig. 75: Detail, 1:5, wall junction, existing ruin fragment meeting new intervention. The detail makes visible how the existing structure is engaged with, building a relationship to history and embodying the theme of palimpsest, using what is already there. Traces remain across the walls everywhere, nothing is entirely new, echoing the graffiti and the muralistas as discussed in the workshop. Drawing by author, 2025.

Fig. 76: Floorplan, education classrooms, 1:200, showing how children from formal and informal backgrounds come

PART I

together without prejudice to exchange knowledge and overcome social stigmas. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 77: Atmospheric perspective of the playground, looking up toward the classrooms within the existing structure, with added terraces and more private spaces for children to develop, play, and enjoy. Atmospheric perspective by author, 2026.

PART II

Fig. 78: Floorplan, open kitchen and open living room, 1:200, showing how commoning and coexisting take place. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 79: Map of Chile, locating the regions of timber sourcing. Map by author, 2026.

PART III

Fig. 80: Detail map of the Araucanía/Biobío forestry region. Map by author, adapted from an unknown source, 2026.

Fig. 81: Laying the foundations, the community gathered to take part in the foundation-laying process. Photograph by author, 2026.

Fig. 82: Axonometric drawing of the open kitchen, a vernacular, self-built structure. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 83: Axonometric drawings tracing the progressive process of self-construction, community engagement, and knowledge exchange. Drawing by author, 2026. (continued on following page)

192

Fig. 84: Fragment, 1:20, a city in a section, where conditions of the city, vernacular architecture, community, and appropriation of the slope come together and remain in relation to one another. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 85: Detail, 1:5, junction of existing natural stone wall and new timber structure. A second detail along the slope takes up the same theme of palimpsest at the retaining wall, where the years of accumulated force absorbed by the wall become visible, a structure shaped by time itself. Drawing by author, 2025.

PART IV

Fig. 86: [removed, merged into Fig. 85]

Fig. 87: Atmospheric perspective of the open kitchen and urban gardening area, where cooking and cultivation overlap as a single collective practice, opening onto the terraces and inviting residents to gather, grow, and share food as part of everyday slope life. Atmospheric perspective by author, 2026.

PART V

Fig. 88: Atmospheric perspective of the market area, its large opening gesture inviting entry into the happening, active slope, where passersby and visitors alike are drawn into the exchange and weak ties begin to form. Atmospheric perspective by author, 2026.

Fig. 89: Exploded axonometric drawing, revealing the structure and the building as a whole, and how it settles into the landscape. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 90: Axonometric drawing, atmospheric, showing the building settled into the landscape. Drawing by author, 2026.

Fig. 91: Site model at scale 1:500, constructed by the author to uncover the in-between spaces of the hillside and trace how the terrain inscribes itself within the wider landscape. Fig. 92: Model of an adobillo brick at scale 1:1, constructed by the author to explore its materiality and the process of construction.

Fig. 93: Process of making the adobillo brick, documented by the author.

Fig. 94: Vedute workshop, TU Delft, documenting the author's first encounter and starting point with Valparaíso.

## 5.2 Appendices

### Appendix A: Field Interviews

The following interviews were conducted during field research in Valparaíso, Chile, in March 2025.  
Interview 01. Local architect, Valparaíso, March 2025.

Interview 02. NGO representative working in vulnerable neighbourhoods, Valparaíso, March 2025.

Interview 03. Local artist, Valparaíso, March 2025.

### Appendix B: Workshop Documentation Vedute Workshop

Location: Valparaíso, December 2025.

Participants: Architecture students and researchers.

Focus: Chromatic and perceptual analysis of Valparaíso's urban landscape through observational drawing and color experimentation.  
Kindergarten Workshop

Location: Cerro, Valparaíso, December 2025.

Participants: Kindergarten children.

Focus: Collective drawing using three colors, exploring when and how to shift between them as a method of observing collective learning and participation.

Appendix C: Field Documentation  
Field observations, photography, sketches, and audio recordings by the author, Valparaíso, December 2025, with the exception of (1), which is not by the author.

(1) Available at: <https://vimeo.com/5690624>