NEGOTIATED SPACES
BETWEEN CONTROL AND USE



In the shadow of concrete, a back yard endures

PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY







In many contemporary housing estates, the public spaces located behind residential blocks have acquired a residual character. Although these areas hold significant potential for a variety of social and communal uses, their current design often fails to respond to the actual needs and expectations of the residents living in these dense urban neighborhoods. Large portions of these spaces appear underused or are entirely occupied by parking lots, revealing a car-centric and car-oriented approach that prioritizes vehicles over pedestrians and limits the possibility of these "backyards" functioning as inclusive and active public spaces. As a result, these environments often convey the impression of spaces in constant movement, spaces meant to be crossed rather than inhabited, encouraging circulation instead of pause, contemplation, or rest. Consequently, they fail to become desirable places for everyday social interaction and urban life.

INACCESSIBILITY AND RESTRAINTS







What should function as open communal ground instead becomes a controlled landscape, where access is limited by fear, ownership, or habit. Green public spaces intended to remain open and freely accessible spaces meant to accommodate curious children, young people seeking rest on the grass, and both domestic and stray animals are increasingly enclosed and rendered inaccessible. These areas are frequently defined by a dual system of boundaries: first, a sometimes necessary demarcation of property, whether natural or constructed, and second, an additional layer of fencing that restricts any passerby, human and non-human alike, from experiencing a sense of spatial freedom, movement, or direct proximity to vegetation. Within these green spaces, benches are enclosed and displayed almost as exhibits, while playgrounds are absorbed into parking infrastructures, isolated by tall metal fences and displaced from larger, continuous green areas. Together, these spatial constraints transform places of potential encounter and openness into controlled environments that undermine the very idea of public space and collective use.

COMMUNITY AND HABITUAL BEHAVIOUR







A semi-private yet communal space, shaped by collective personal interventions, reveals a process of informal privatization within a broader shared environment, reflecting a persistent desire to occupy, control, and actively use space. Whether manifested through an improvised bench placed in a quiet corner or a small garden where residents introduce personal meaning into shared green space, these minor interventions represent everyday practices through which underused or difficult spaces are reoriented toward human and non-human presence. Such informal acts of spatial modification observable across neighborhoods of Bucharest reveal how inhabitants negotiate their relationship with the built environment beyond formal planning frameworks. A shrub adorned with Christmas decorations or a small shelter constructed for cats that have appropriated these areas as habitat, sustained by the care of local residents, exemplify forms of grassroots spatial appropriation. Together, these practices articulate a latent desire for use, care, and spatial agency, highlighting how community and habitual behaviour actively shape and reclaim collective space.

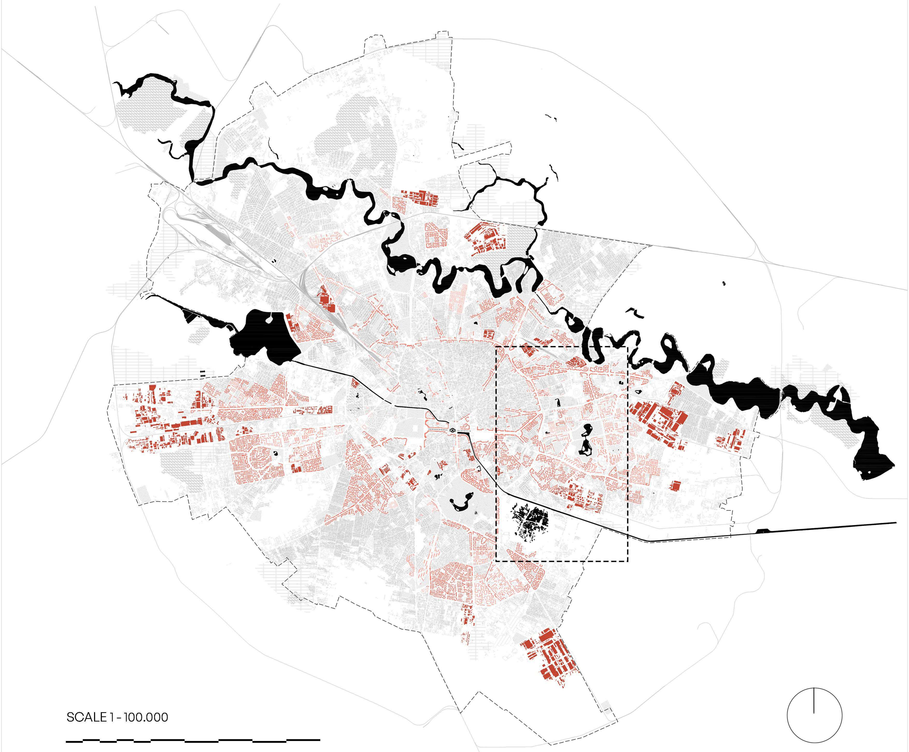
NEGOTIATED SPACES - BETWEEN CONTROL AND USE

Sebastian Sgaroiu

UCLouvain - Université catholique de Louvai Faculté d'architecture, d'ingénierie architecturale, d'urbanisme (Site de Bruxelles) - IMA
territory atelier

university year 2025 - 2026

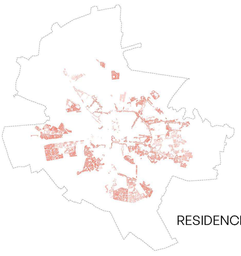
MAP OF INDUSTRIAL PLATFORMS AND ASSOCIATED LIVING QUARTERS



SCALE 1 - 100.000

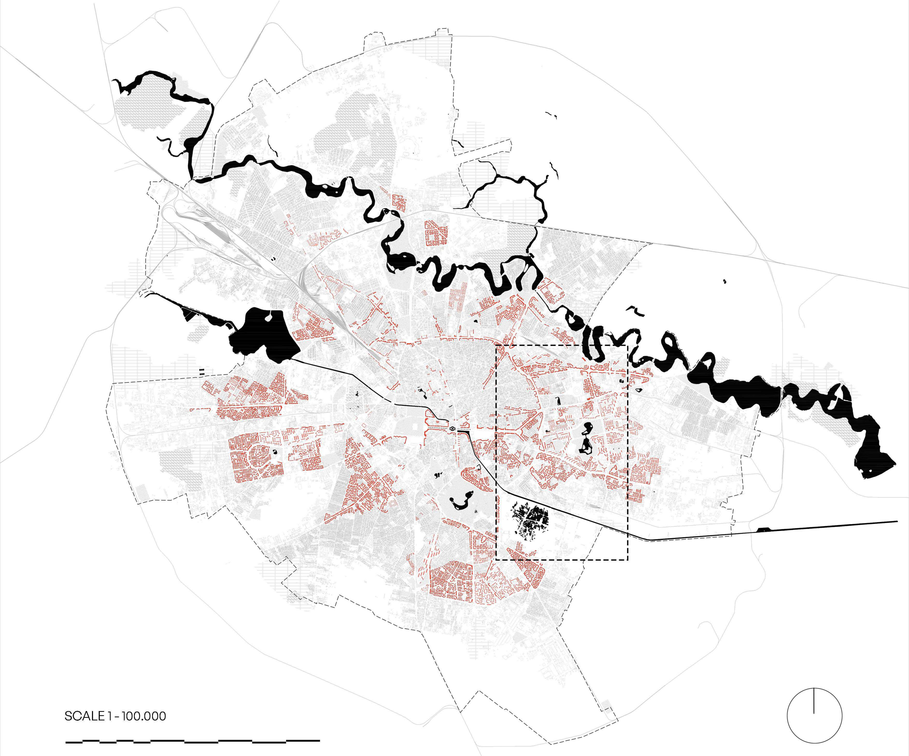


INDUSTRY

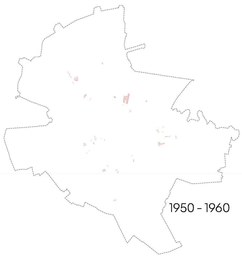


RESIDENCE

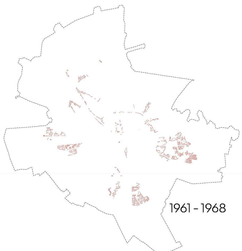
MAP OF EVOLUTION IN THE 3 MAIN CONSTRUCTIVE PERIODS



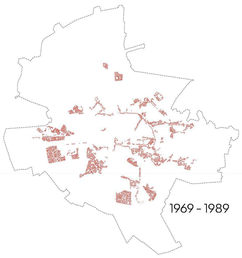
SCALE 1 - 100.000



1950 - 1960



1961 - 1968



1969 - 1989

NEGOTIATED SPACES - BETWEEN CONTROL AND USE

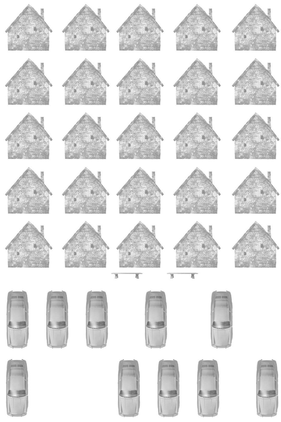
Sebastian Sgaroiu

UCLouvain - Université catholique de Louvai Faculté d'architecture, d'ingénierie architecturale, d'urbanisme (Site de Bruxelles) - IMA
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university year 2025 - 2026

THE STORY OF BUCHAREST AND IT'S PEOPLE





THE TRANSITION AND TRAUMA OF PROPERTY



In Bucharest, a profound shift took place from a rural way of life to an urban one: from a close-knit, community-oriented culture of socializing on benches along the village street to the anonymity of apartment blocks, marked by a loss of identity, ownership, and belonging; and although physical proximity increased, the regime fostered a climate of hesitation and mistrust among neighbors.

DEMOGRAPHIC

Titan is one of the largest and most densely populated neighborhoods in Sectorul 3, in eastern Bucharest. Although there are no official statistics published exclusively for the neighborhood, estimates suggest it has around 90,000–120,000 residents. Based on sector-level data, the average age is around 40–43 years, reflecting a mix of working-age adults, elderly residents, and families. At the same time, the presence of many schools, kindergartens, and high schools highlights its strong multigenerational and youthful character.



estimated age distribution



misused public space satisfaction 15 - 29



misused public space satisfaction 30 - 44



misused public space satisfaction 65 +



misused public space satisfaction 0 - 14



misused public space satisfaction 45- 64

THE USERS, THEIR NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Seniors



slow pace
rest - oriented
community
surveillance
observational
time - rich
sceptical
shade
quiet
controlled visibility
accesibility
elective participation
comfortable seats
activities

Juniors



loud
energic
exploratory
curious
physical
imaginative
safe play areas
softness
clear boundaries
water access
supervision
stimulation

Young Adults



social clustering
mobile
spontaneous
connected
expressive
active
sports - oriented
event - oriented
informal seating
gathering spaces
night lighting
safety
affordability
flexbility
sport areas

Homeless



resting
survival - oriented
hyper - aware
social microcomunities
night active
safe sleeping
safe water
storrage options
friendly seating
dignity
no harrassment
sence of privacy

Disabled



varied mobility
adaptive
assistive
barrier - aware
slower
diverse
wide paths
step free
resting points
inclusive play
predictability

Adults



routine oriented
selectively social
craving activity
need of rest and respite
hobbies
areas for sports
selective seatings
safety for family
proximity
convinience
time efficient

NEGOTIATED SPACES - BETWEEN CONTROL AND USE

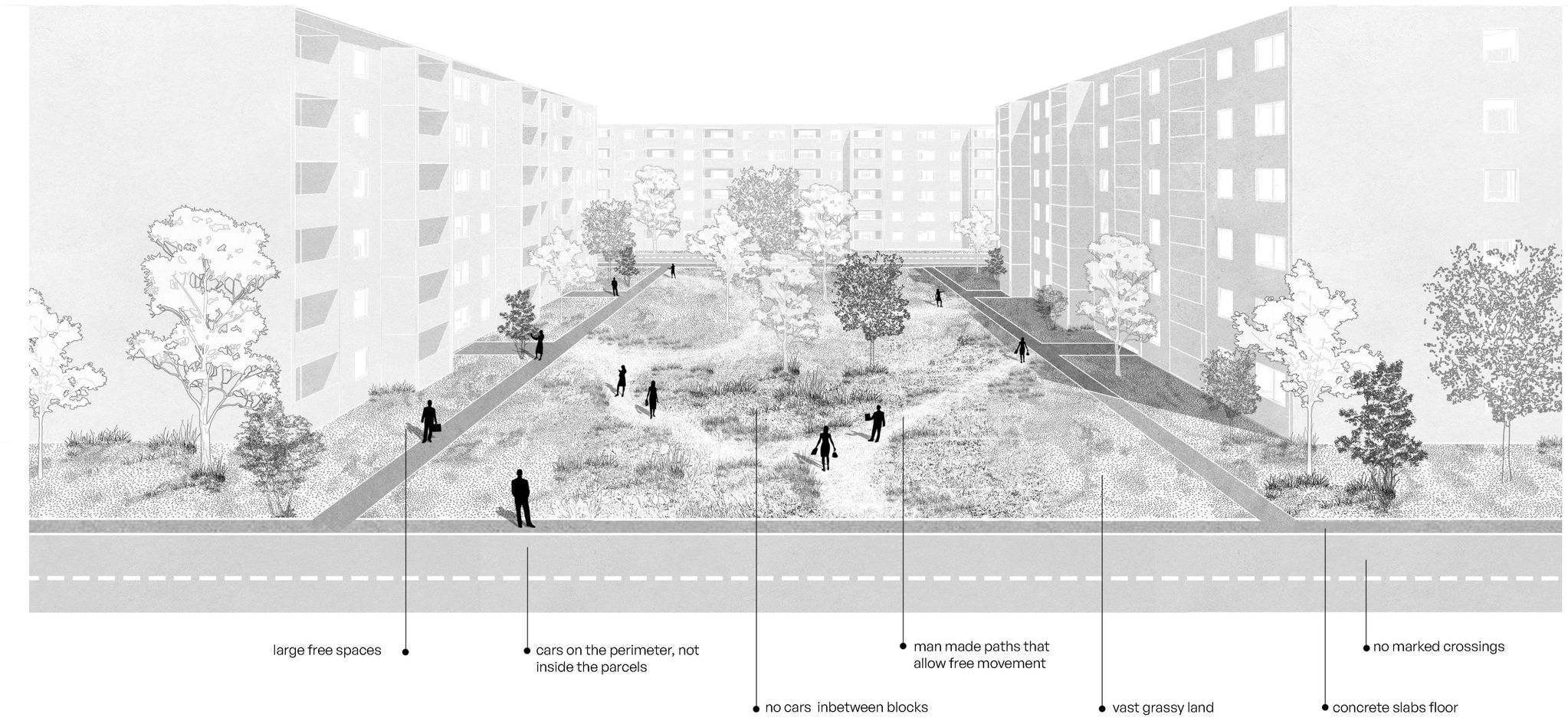
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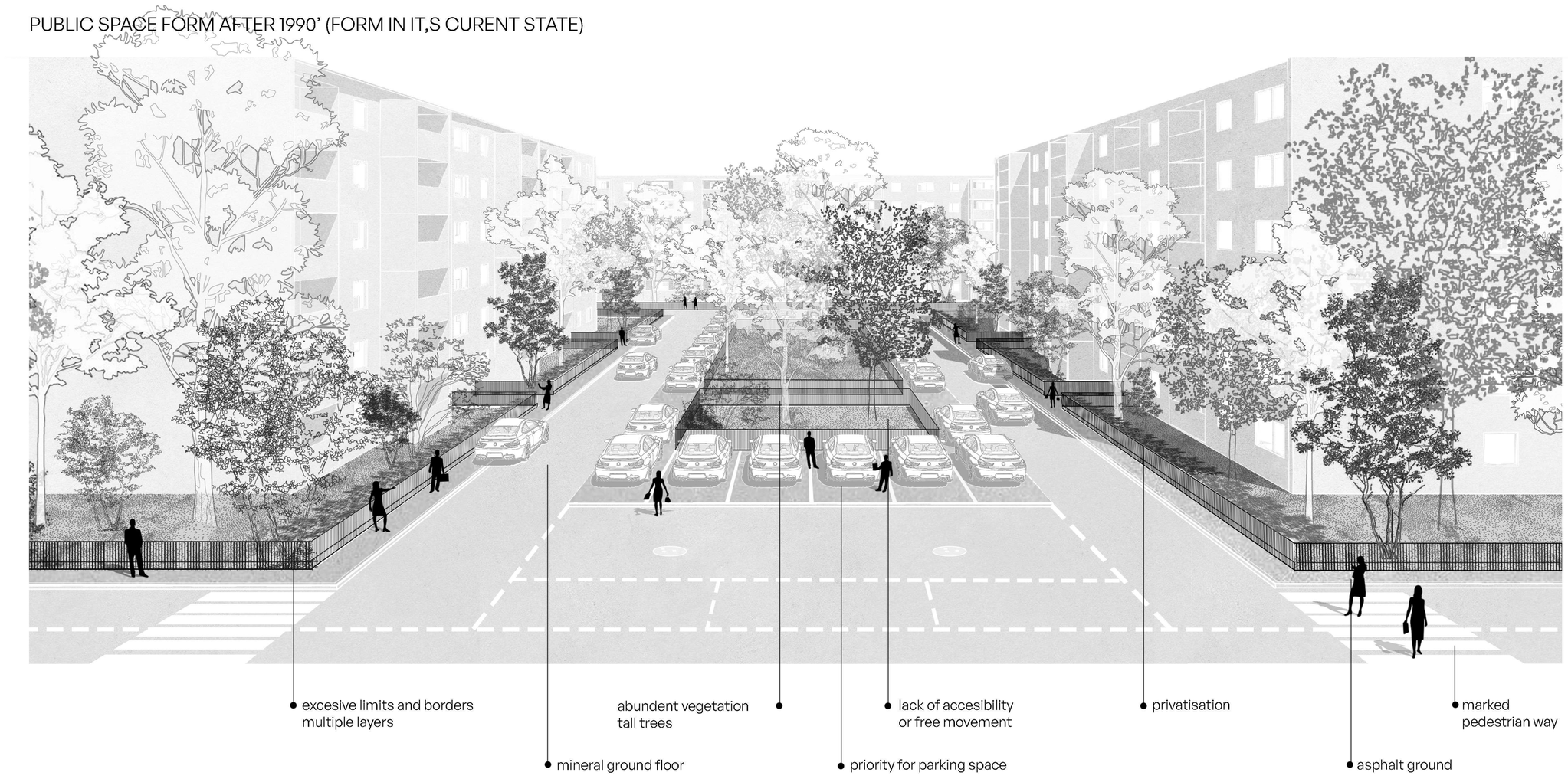
university year 2025 - 2026

HOW THIS PHENOMENON MANIFESTED

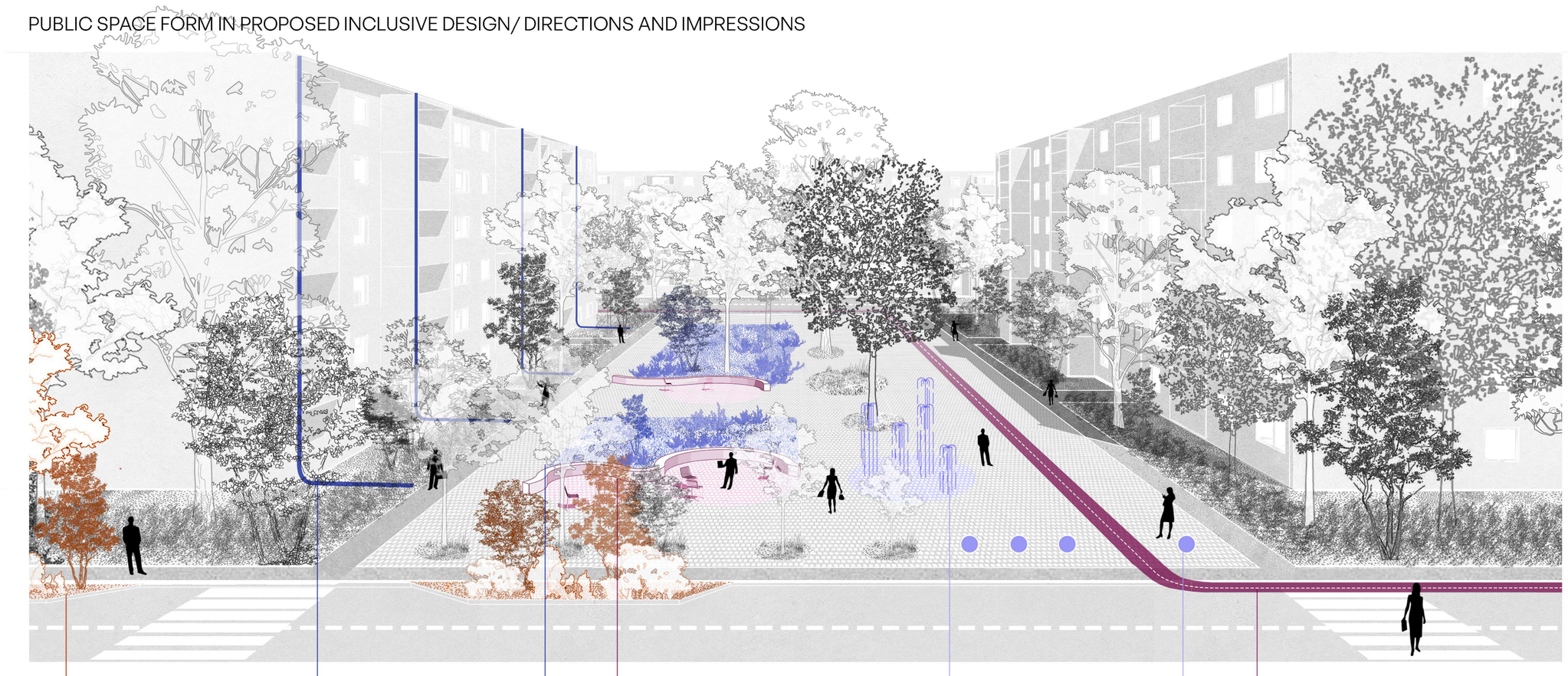
PUBLIC SPACE FORM IN IT'S INITIAL SHAPE



PUBLIC SPACE FORM AFTER 1990' (FORM IN IT,S CURENT STATE)



PUBLIC SPACE FORM IN PROPOSED INCLUSIVE DESIGN/ DIRECTIONS AND IMPRESSIONS



NEGOTIATED SPACES - BETWEEN CONTROL AND USE

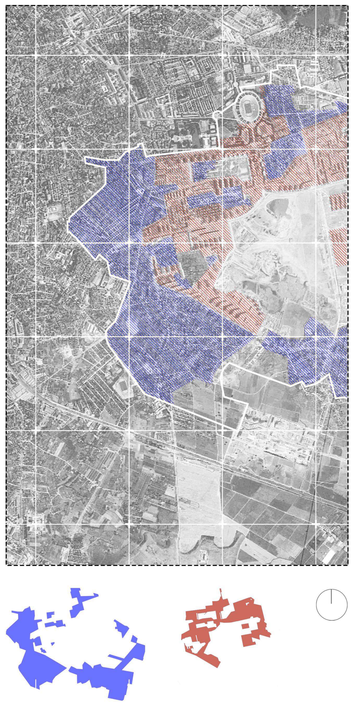
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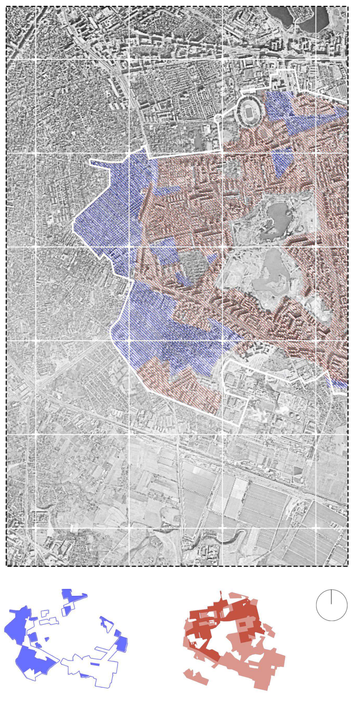
university year 2025 - 2026

URBAN–RURAL TISSUE EVOLUTION

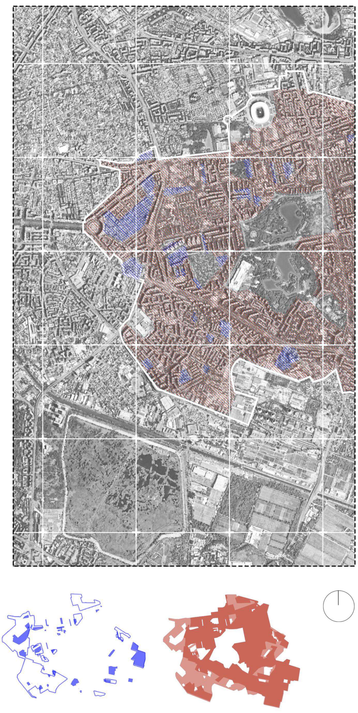
MAP BUCHAREST - TITAN - 1960 (beginning of development)



MAP BUCHAREST - TITAN - 1985 (final stage of development)



MAP BUCHAREST - TITAN -2025 (present form)



Sebastian Sgaroiu

UCLouvain - Université catholique de Louvai Faculté d'architecture, d'ingénierie architecturale, d'urbanisme (Site de Bruxelles) - IMA
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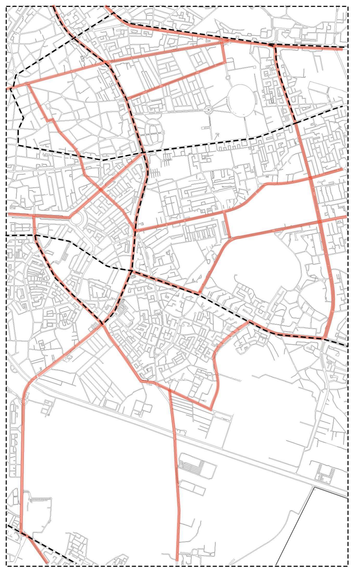
CURRENT SPATIAL STRUCTURE

BUILDINGS ON AREA OF INTERVENTION



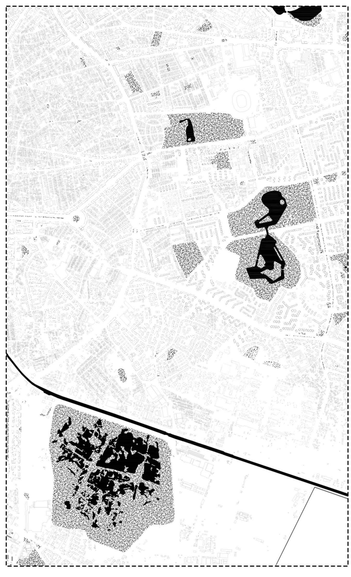
industry | 1950-1960 | 1960-1968 | 1969-1989

STREETS AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



tram line | busses

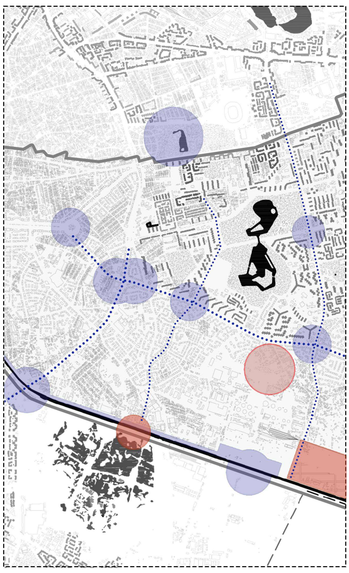
GREEN SPACES AND WATER BODIES



green spaces | water bodies

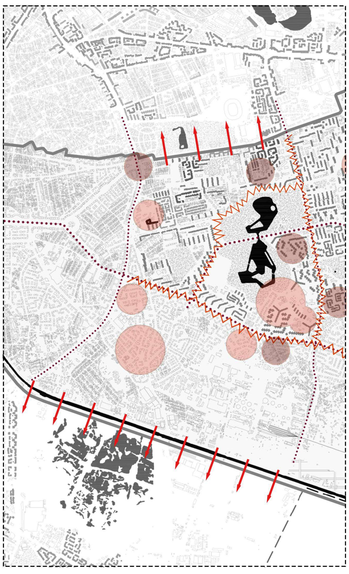
MUNICIPALITY ANALYSIS

NETWORK STRATEGY AND INTERVENTIONS



district limits
green corridors
green nodes
proposed intervention
pilot project

CIRCULATION AND PRIORITY IN INTERVENTION



district limits
axes
priority intervention
green intervention
continuity of space
disolving fencing

PLOTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE/LOGISTIC BORDERS



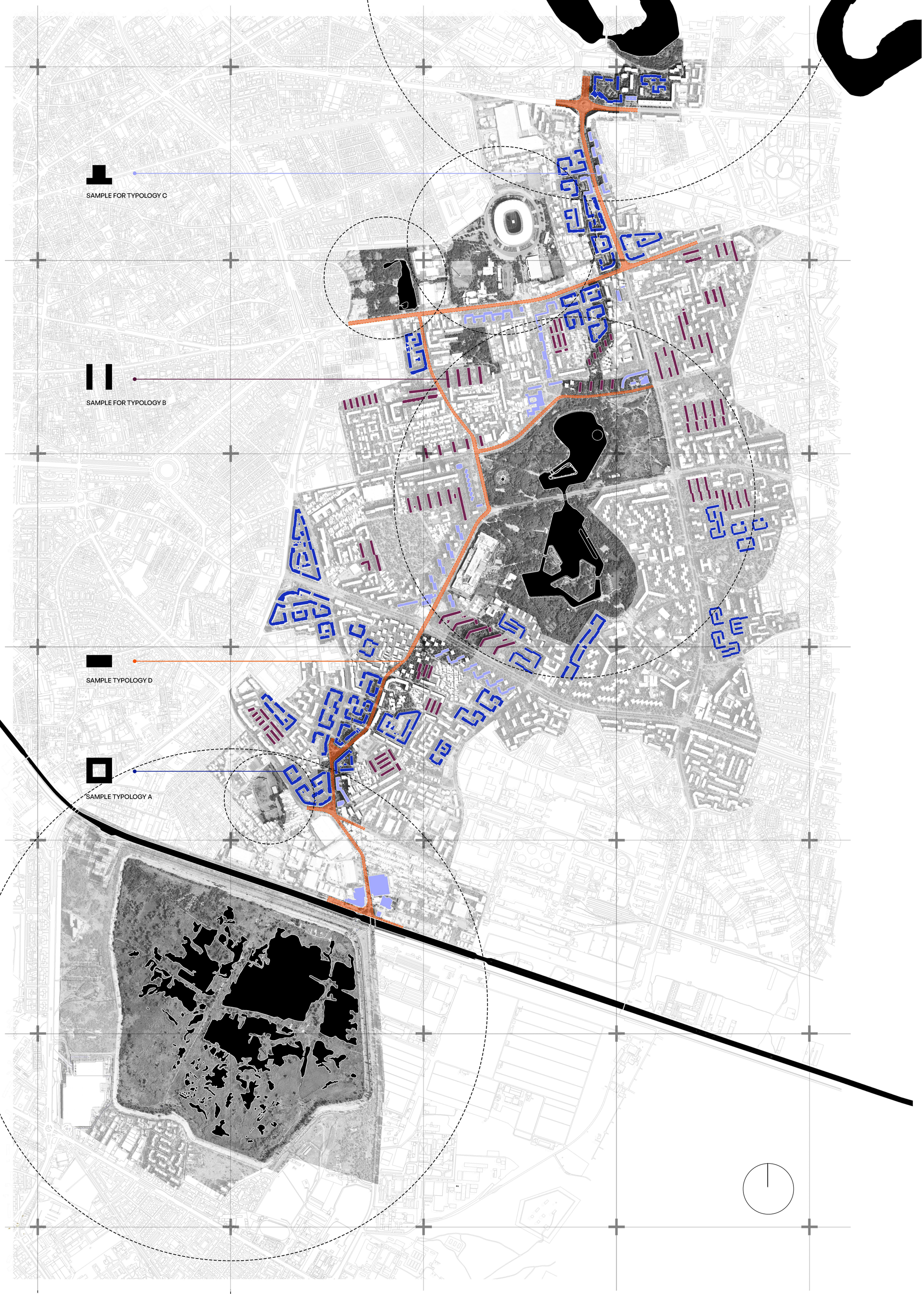
district limits
ovartal
nucleus
important fabric

Sebastian Sgaroiu

UCLouvain - Université catholique de Louvai Faculté d'architecture, d'ingénierie architecturale, d'urbanisme (Site de Bruxelles) - IMA
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PLAN OF STRATEGY AND INTEGRATION



SCALE 1 - 10.000 1000m

MAJOUR PUBLIC - GREEN SPACES

BODIES OF WATER

NEGOTIATED SPACES - BETWEEN CONTROL AND USE

Sebastian Sgaroiu

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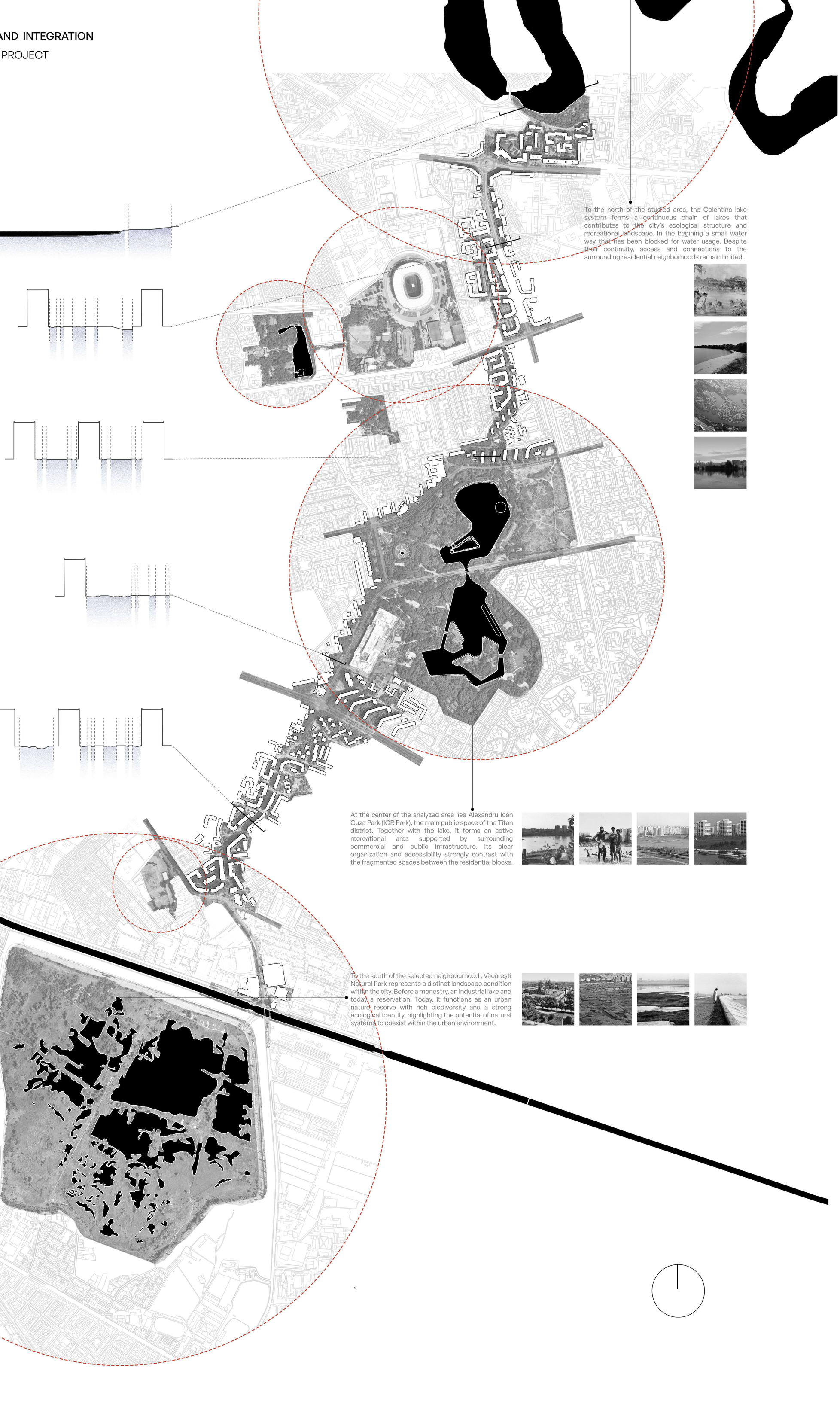
university year 2025 - 2026

ARCHICAD

PLAN OF STRATEGY AND INTEGRATION

THE MAIN AXIS OF THE PROJECT





To the north of the studied area, the Colentina lake system forms a continuous chain of lakes that contributes to the city's ecological structure and recreational landscape. In the begining a small water way that has been blocked for water usage. Despite their continuity, access and connections to the surrounding residential neighborhoods remain limited.

At the center of the analyzed area lies Alexandru Ioan Cuza Park (IOR Park), the main public space of the Titan district. Together with the lake, it forms an active recreational area supported by surrounding commercial and public infrastructure. Its clear organization and accessibility strongly contrast with the fragmented spaces between the residential blocks.

To the south of the selected neighbourhood , Văcărești Natural Park represents a distinct landscape condition within the city. Before a monestry, an industrial lake and today, a reservation. Today, it functions as an urban nature reserve with rich biodiversity and a strong ecological identity, highlighting the potential of natural systems to coexist within the urban environment.

NEGOTIATED SPACES - BETWEEN CONTROL AND USE

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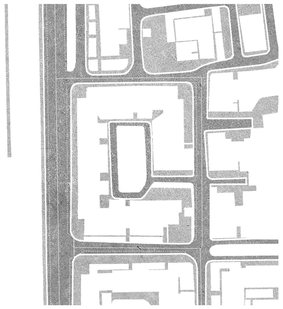
university year 2025 - 2026

URBAN FABRIC ANALYSIS

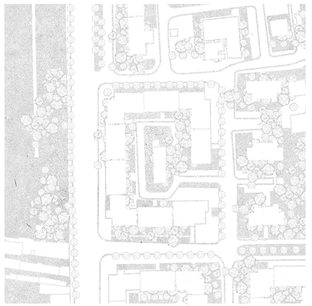
URBAN BLOCK



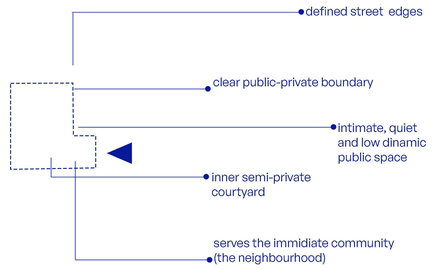
PUBLIC SPACE
MINERAL SPACE/STREET



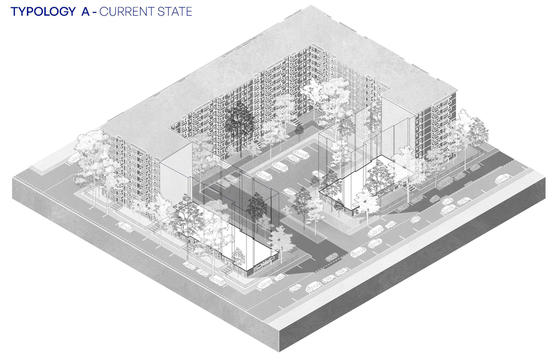
PUBLIC SPACE
GREEN AREAS



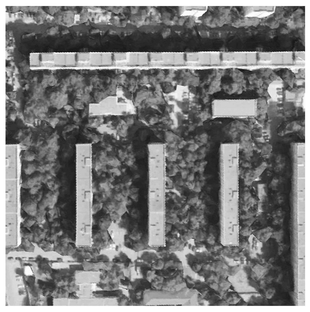
PUBLIC SPACE
INTERVENTION AREA DEFINED

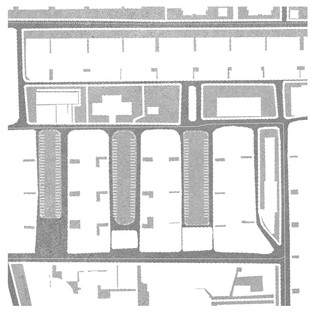


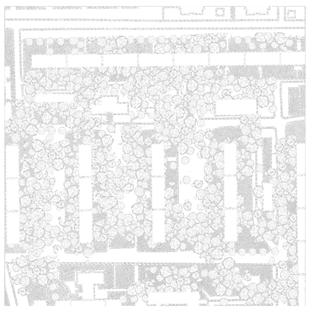
TYPOLOGY A - CURRENT STATE

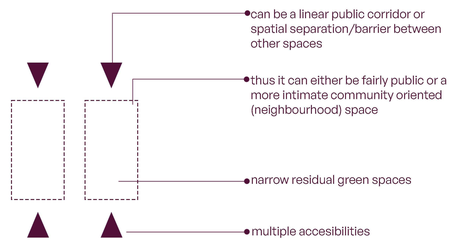


SLAB BLOCK

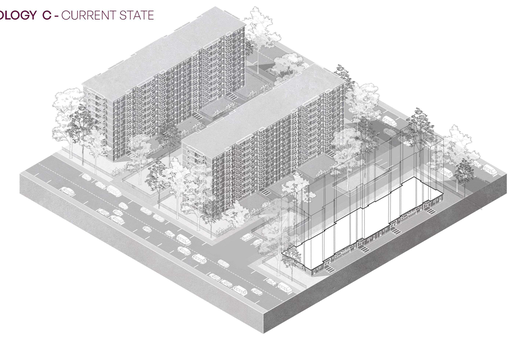






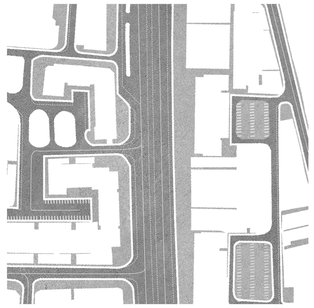


TYPOLOGY C - CURRENT STATE

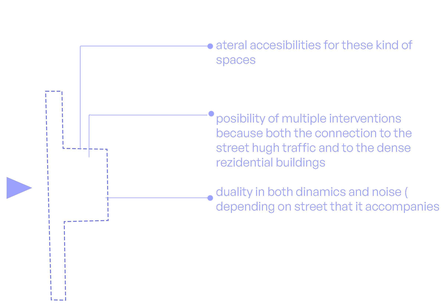


URBAN POCKET

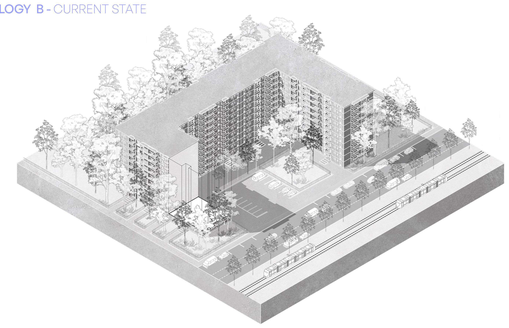






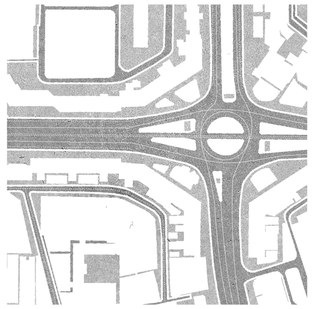


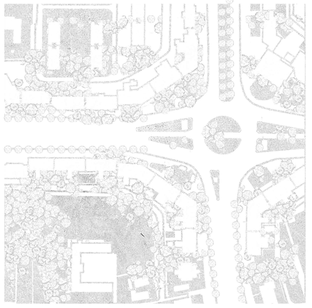
TYPOLOGY B - CURRENT STATE

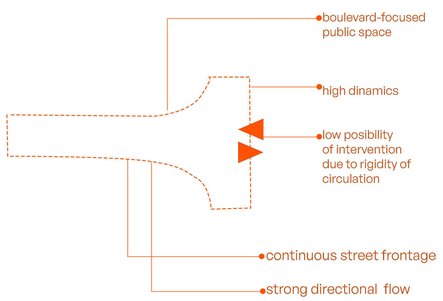


AXIAL COMPOSITION

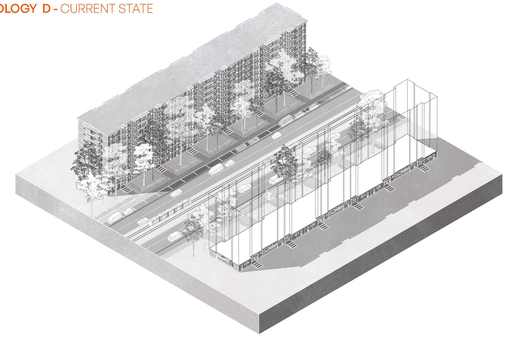








TYPOLOGY D - CURRENT STATE



NEGOTIATED SPACES - BETWEEN CONTROL AND USE

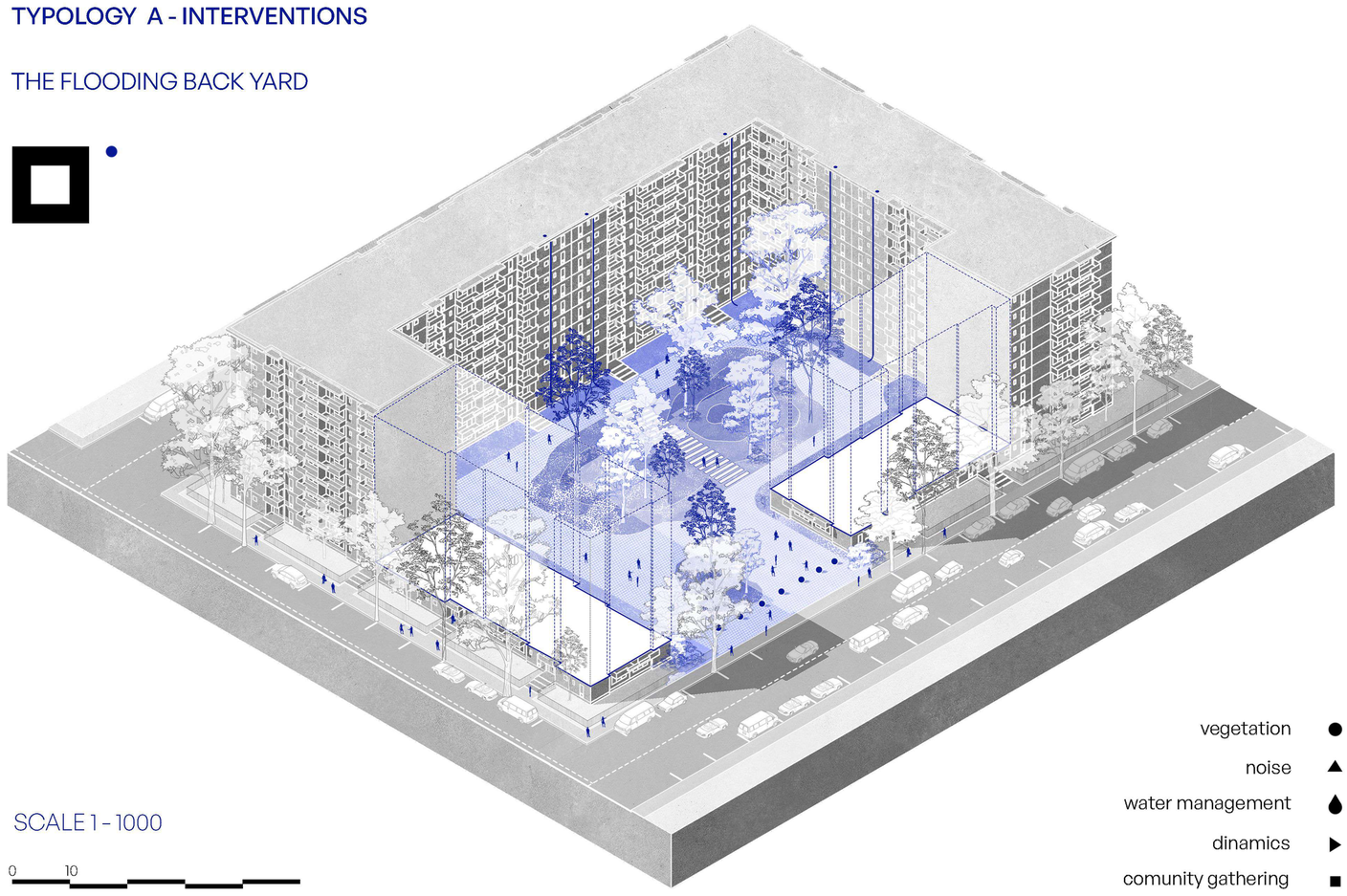
Sebastian Sganzu

UCLouvain - Université catholique de Louvai Faculté d'architecture, d'ingénierie architecturale, d'urbanisme (Site de Bruxelles) - IMA
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TYPOLOGY A - INTERVENTIONS

THE FLOODING BACK YARD

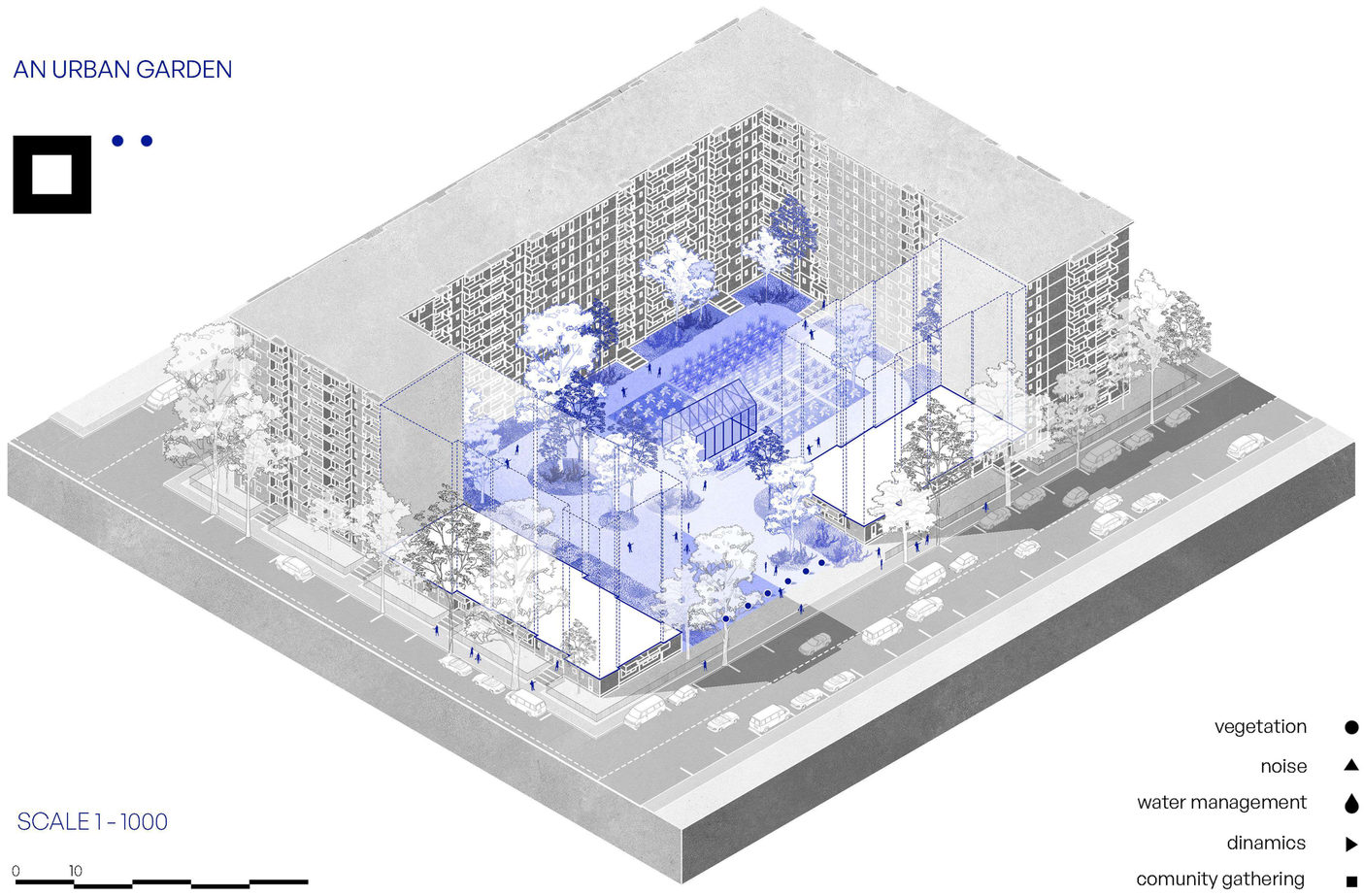


SCALE 1 - 1000

0 10

vegetation
noise
water management
dinamics
comunity gathering

AN URBAN GARDEN

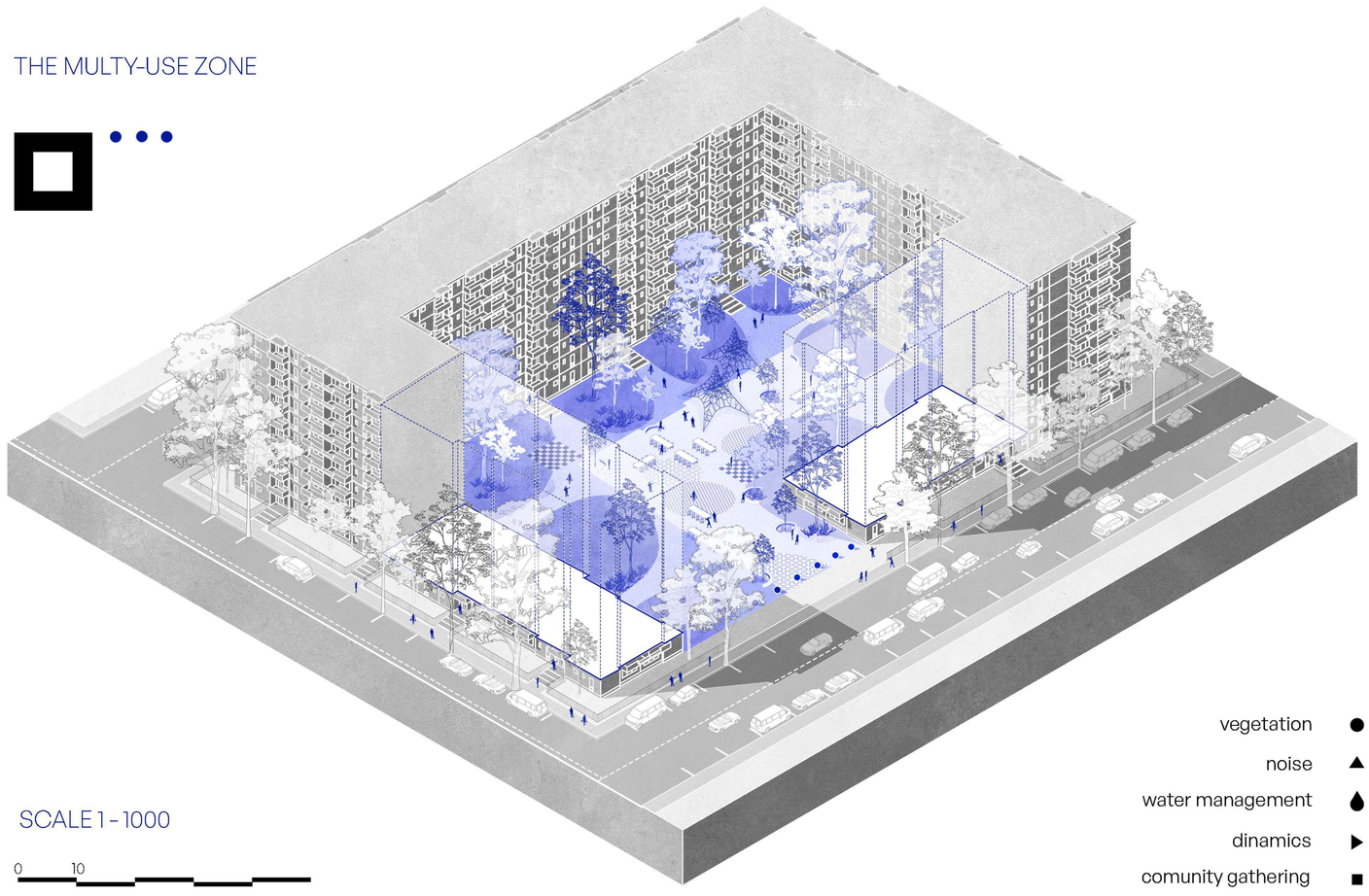


SCALE 1 - 1000

0 10

vegetation
noise
water management
dinamics
comunity gathering

THE MULTY-USE ZONE



SCALE 1 - 1000

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vegetation
noise
water management
dinamics
comunity gathering

NEGOTIATED SPACES - BETWEEN CONTROL AND USE

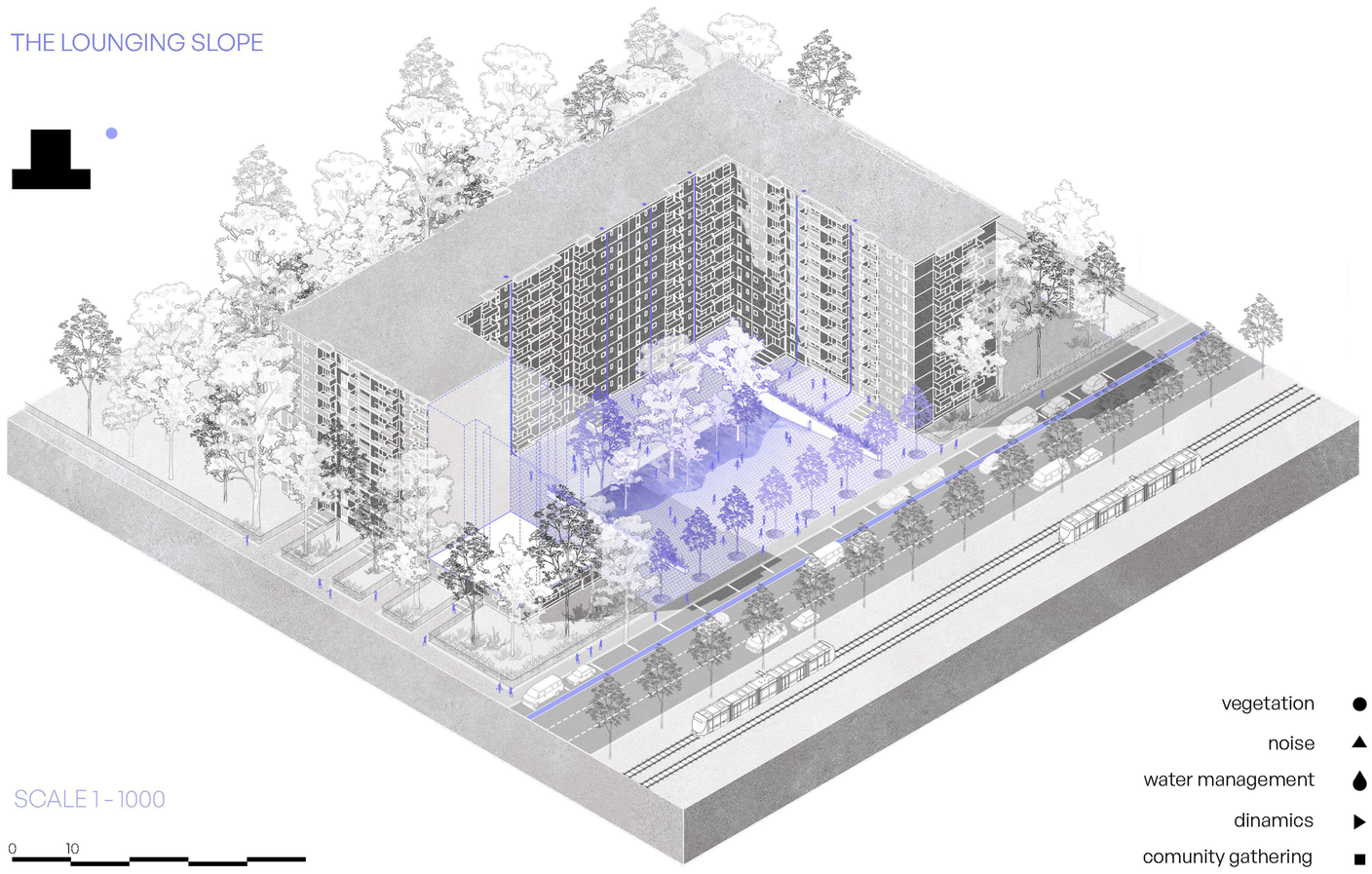
Sebastian Sgaroiu

UCLouvain - Université catholique de Louvai Faculté d'architecture, d'ingénierie architecturale, d'urbanisme (Site de Bruxelles) - IMA
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TYPOLOGY B - INTERVENTIONS

THE LOUNGING SLOPE

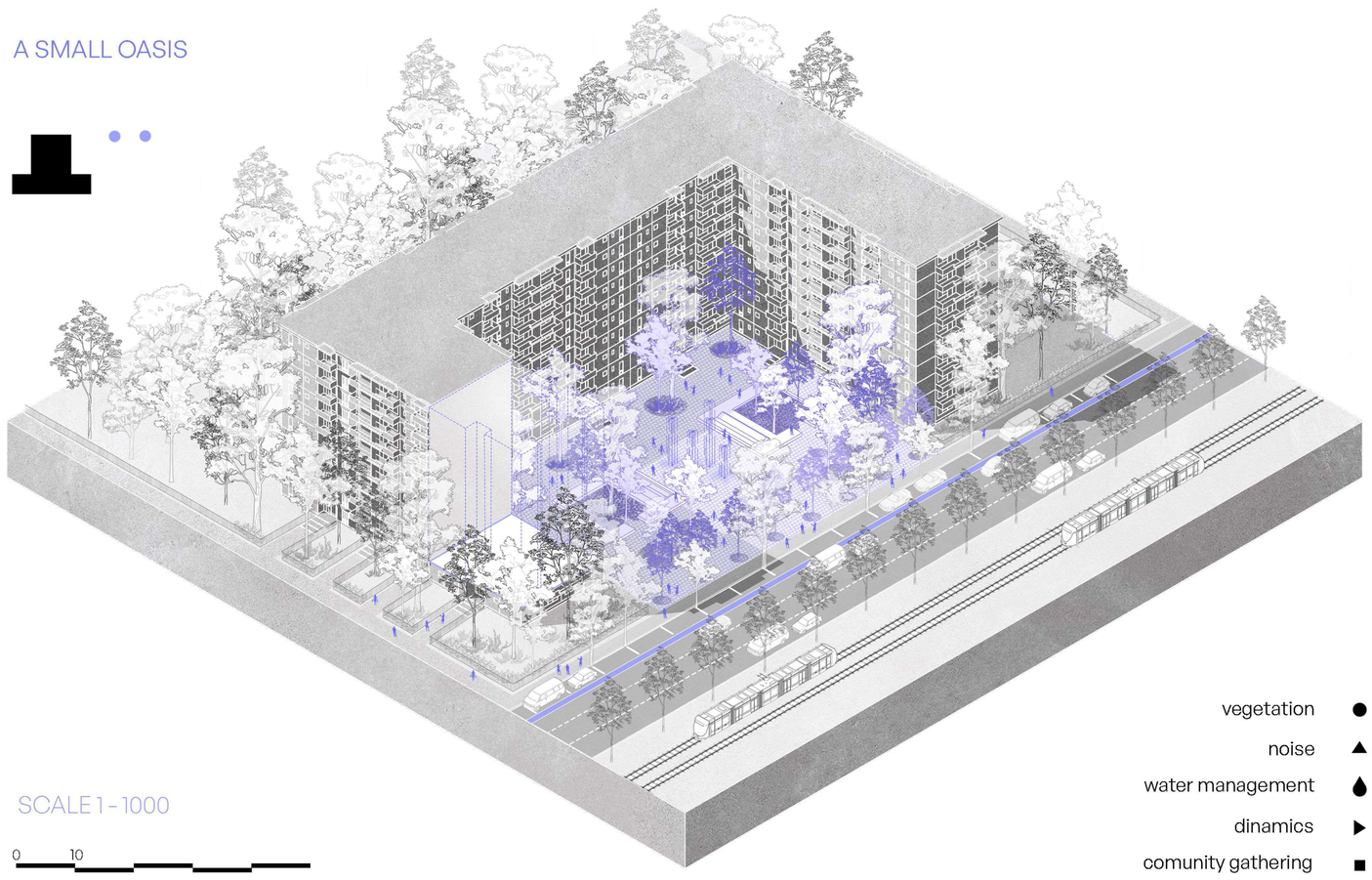


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vegetation
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water management
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comunity gathering

A SMALL OASIS

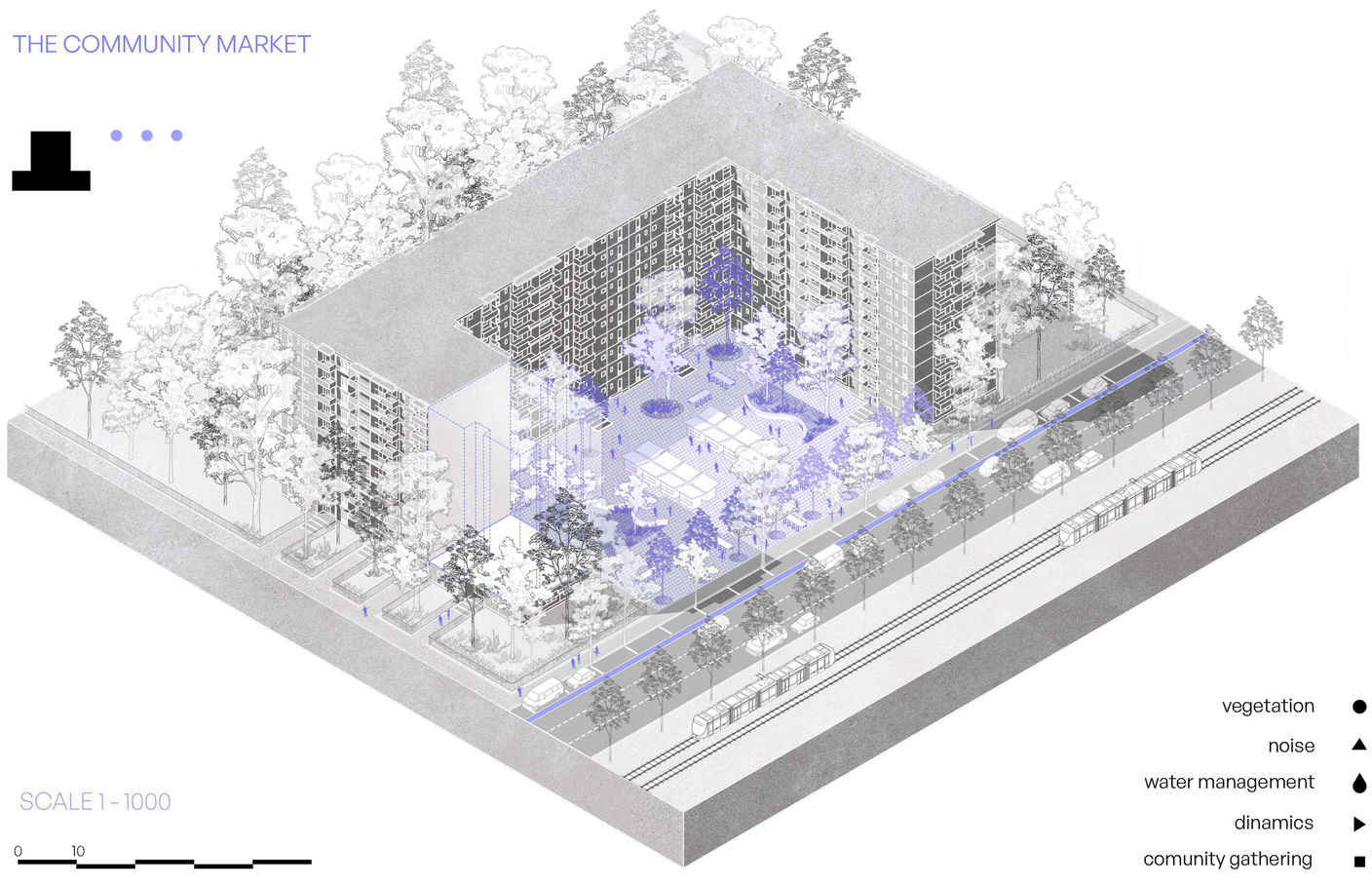


SCALE 1 - 1000

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vegetation
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water management
dinamics
comunity gathering

THE COMMUNITY MARKET



SCALE 1 - 1000

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vegetation
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water management
dinamics
comunity gathering

NEGOTIATED SPACES - BETWEEN CONTROL AND USE

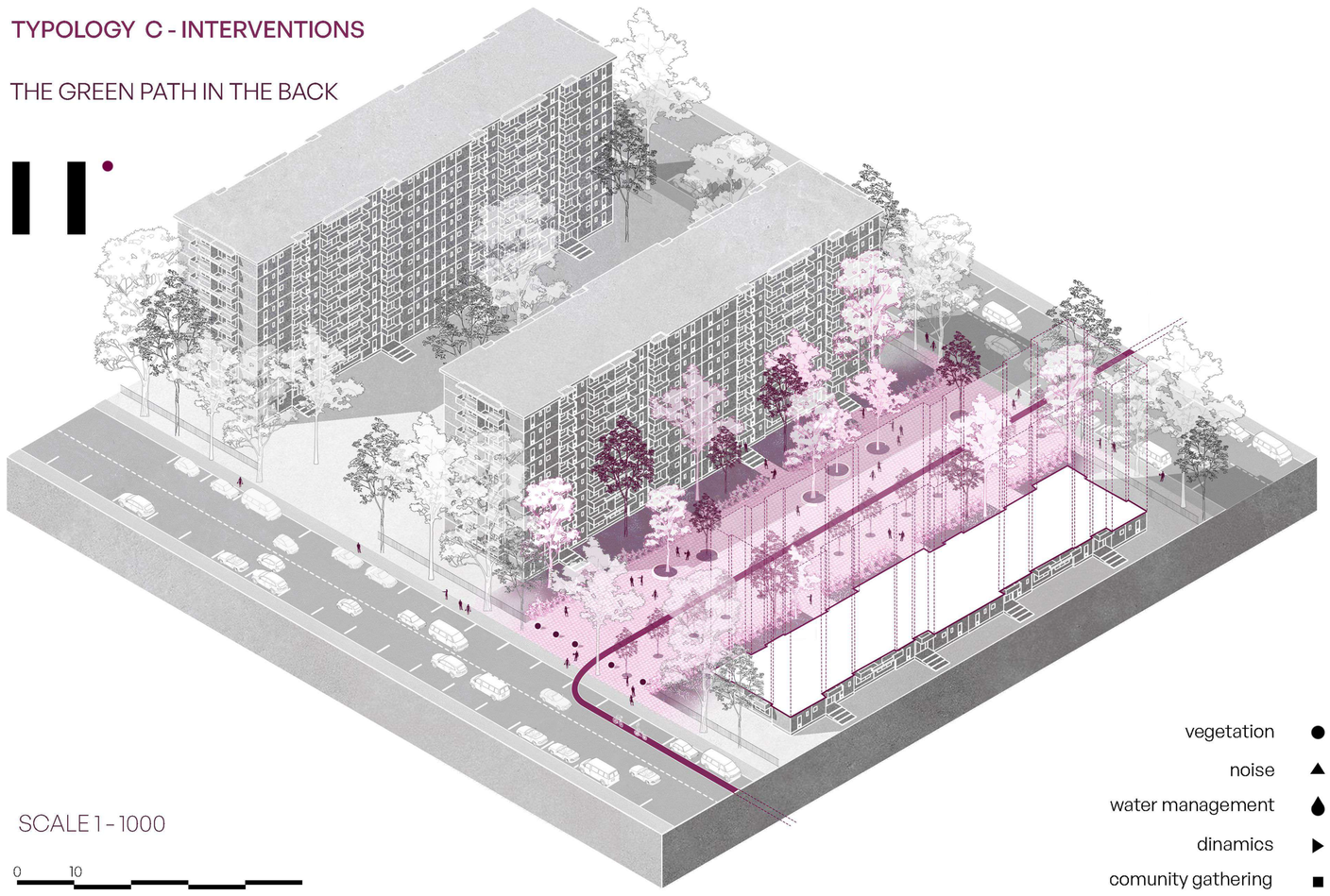
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TYPOLOGY C - INTERVENTIONS

THE GREEN PATH IN THE BACK

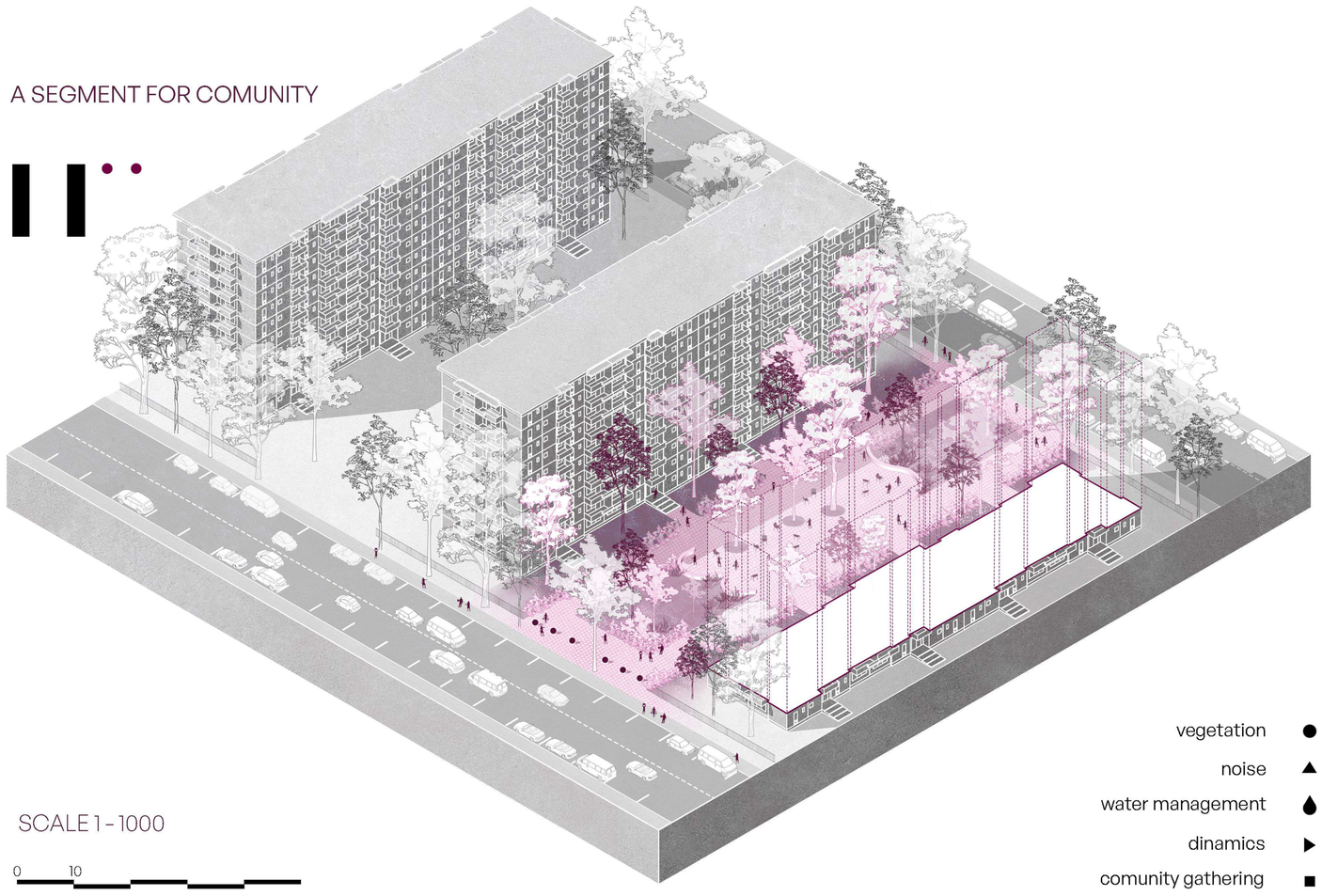


SCALE 1 - 1000

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vegetation
noise
water management
dinamics
comunity gathering

A SEGMENT FOR COMUNITY



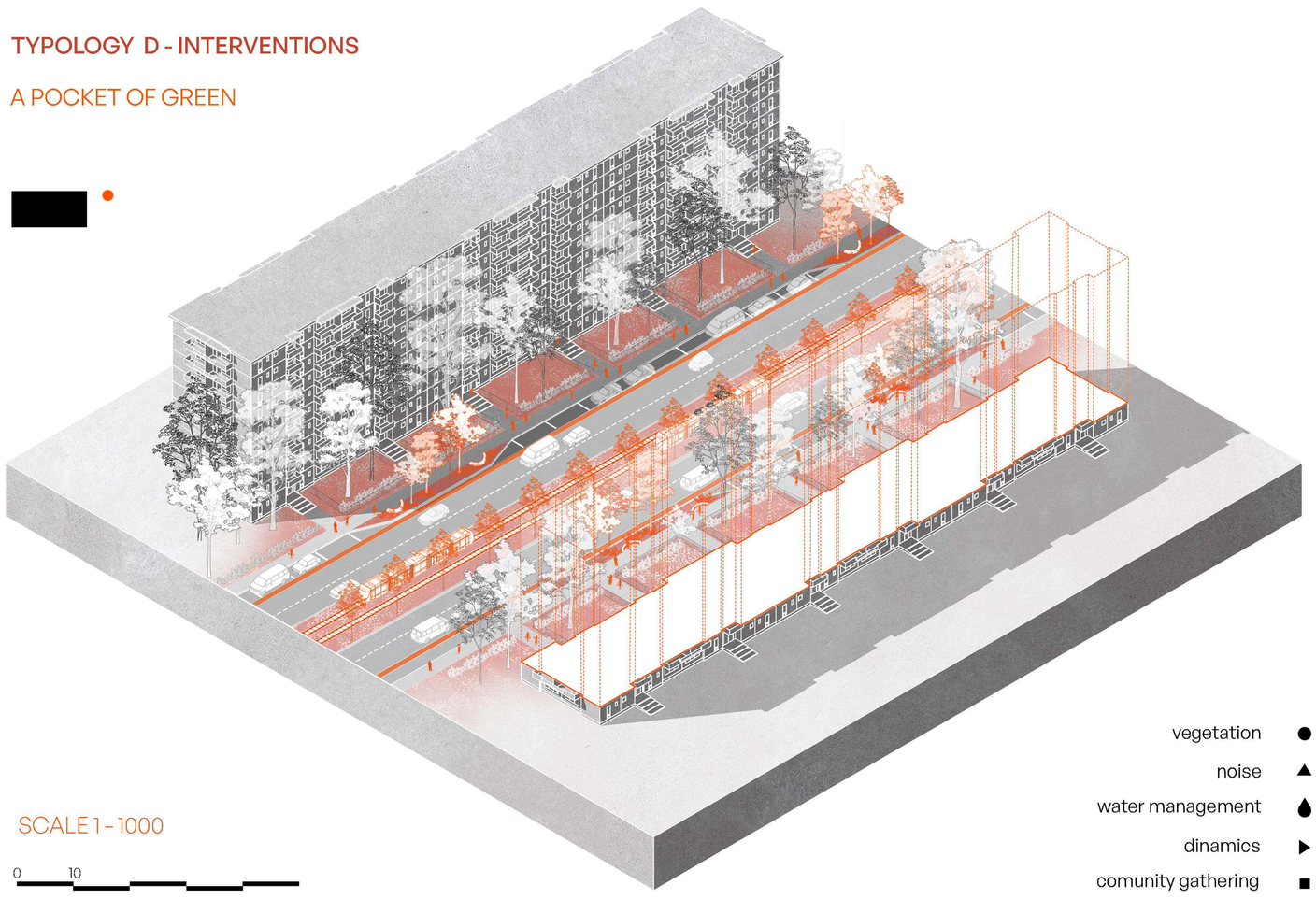
SCALE 1 - 1000

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vegetation
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water management
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comunity gathering

TYPOLOGY D - INTERVENTIONS

A POCKET OF GREEN



SCALE 1 - 1000

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vegetation
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water management
dinamics
comunity gathering

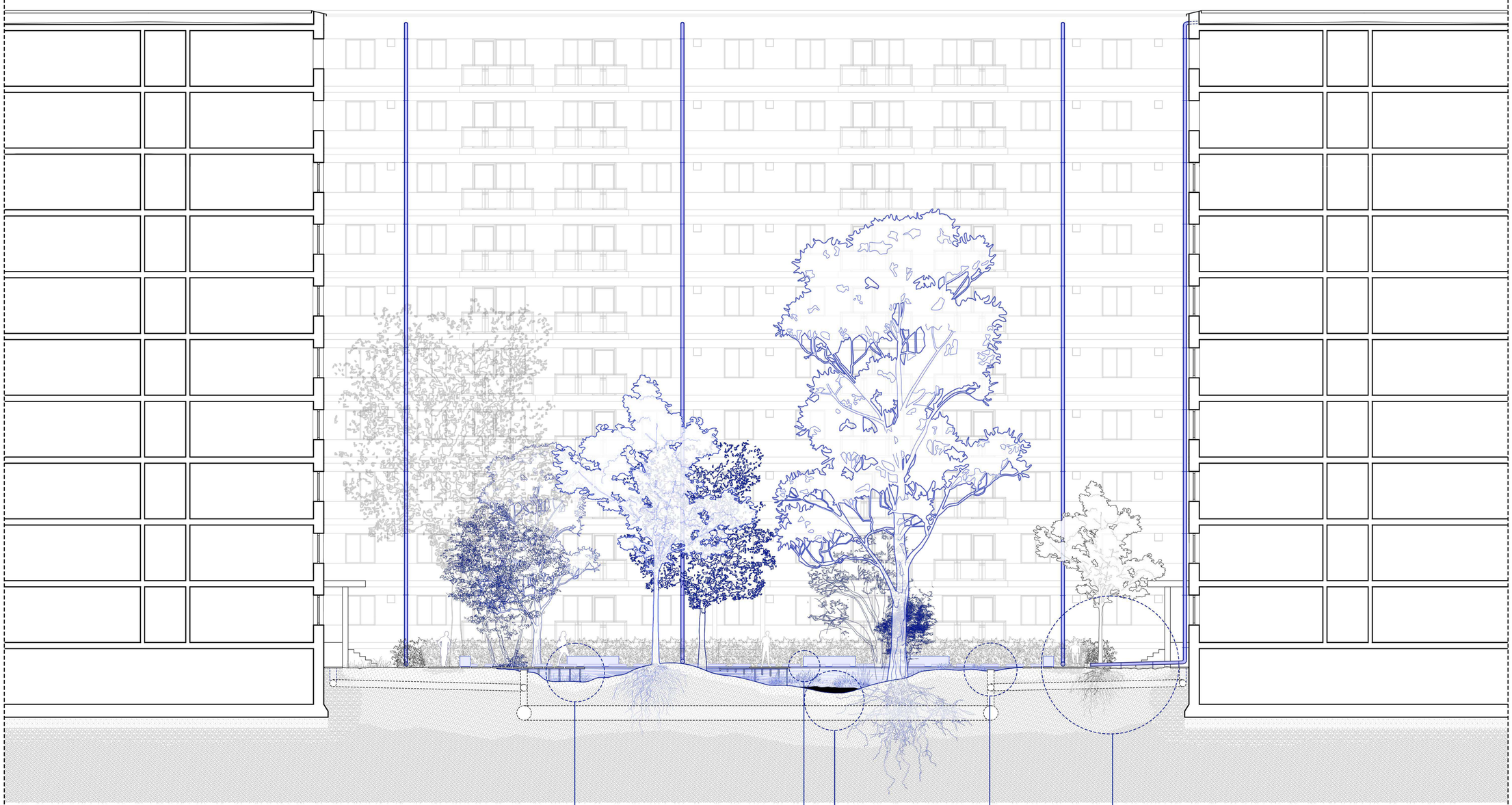
NEGOTIATED SPACES - BETWEEN CONTROL AND USE

Sebastian Sgaroiu

UCLouvain - Université catholique de Louvai Faculté d'architecture, d'ingénierie architecturale, d'urbanisme (Site de Bruxelles) - IMA
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SECTION - THE FLOODING BACK YARD - TYPOLOGY A



SCALE 1 - 150

0 1 2 3 4 5 7 9 11 13 15

PROJECT EXPLAINATION

The paths are designed to let vegetation grow and allow the structures to be occasionally flooded by rainwater. The economy of these structures is based on reusing materials found on site, such as concrete and asphalt slabs, and metal from demolished fences.

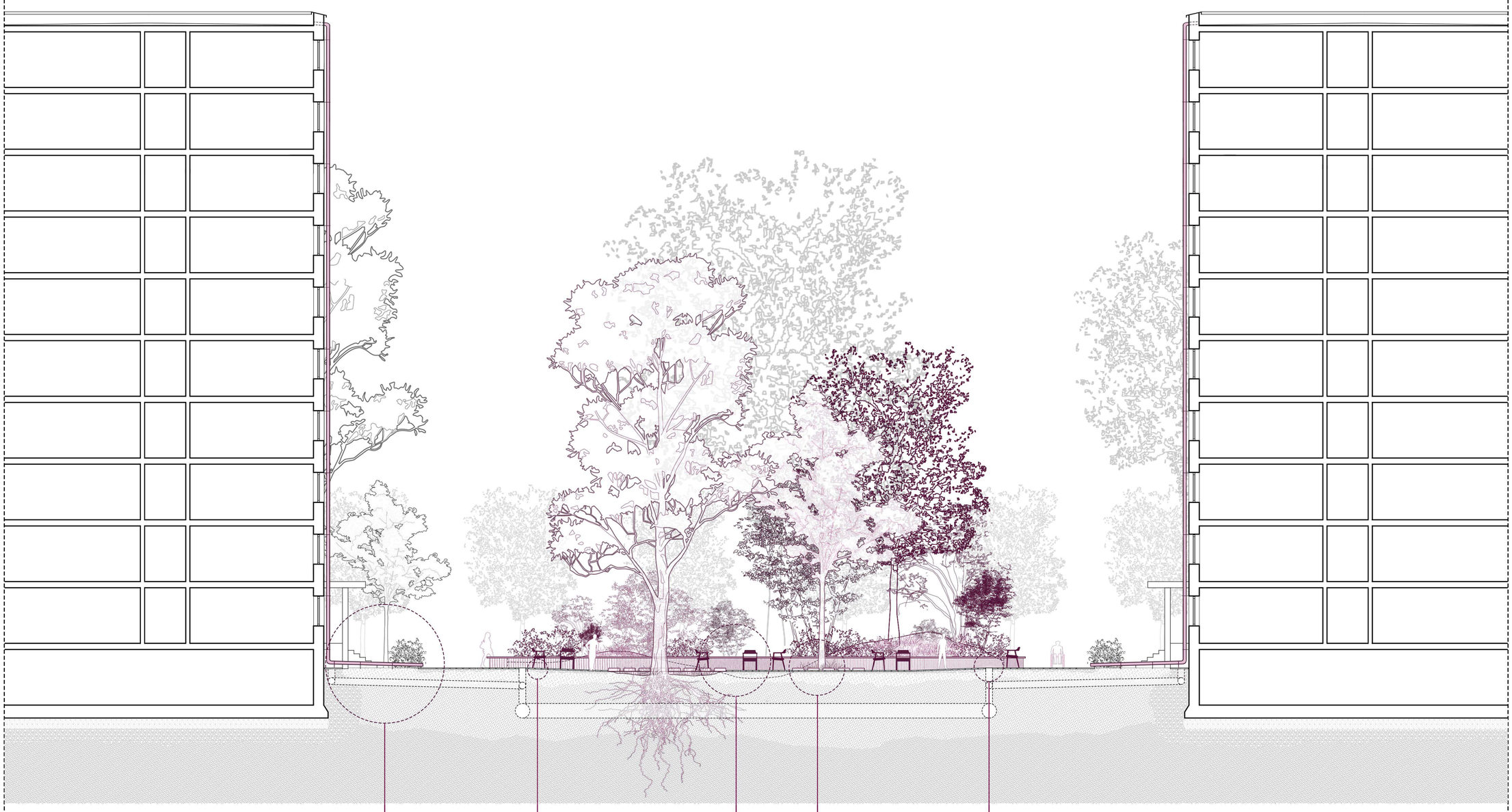
The borders surrounding the vegetated topography are segmented, creating a clear edge while allowing rainwater to permeate the site. This is achieved by preserving the existing borders and selectively removing certain sections.

Water can accumulate in the created ponds, allowing it to return to the ground and recharge the water table, while also reconnecting to the network of wetlands and marshes surrounding the neighborhood.

The existing gutters will be preserved and adapted to allow the collection of excess water in cases of overflow or heavy accumulation, returning it to the existing mixed sewage system.

The gutters are redirected to allow water to temporarily invade the public space while keeping it usable, guiding it into the surrounding topography. This redirection prevents clean rainwater from entering the mixed sewage system and instead returns it to the natural water cycle.

SECTION - A SEGMENT FOR COMUNITY - TYPOLOGY C



SCALE 1 - 150

0 1 2 3 4 5 7 9 11 13 15

PROJECT EXPLAINATION

The gutters are redirected to allow water to temporarily invade the public space while keeping it usable, guiding it into the surrounding topography. This redirection prevents clean rainwater from entering the mixed sewage system .

The ground surface is predominantly mineral, punctuated by green pockets. The key aspect is permeability, achieved through paving elements produced from the recycled materials of the existing ground surface.

Easily movable furniture and an elevated green space with integrated seating allow for flexible configurations and diverse forms of social

Small green patches allow existing and newly planted trees to emerge through the surface, providing shade and creating a sense of intimacy within the space.

The existing gutters will be preserved and adapted to allow the collection of excess water in cases of overflow or heavy accumulation, returning it to the existing mixed sewage system.

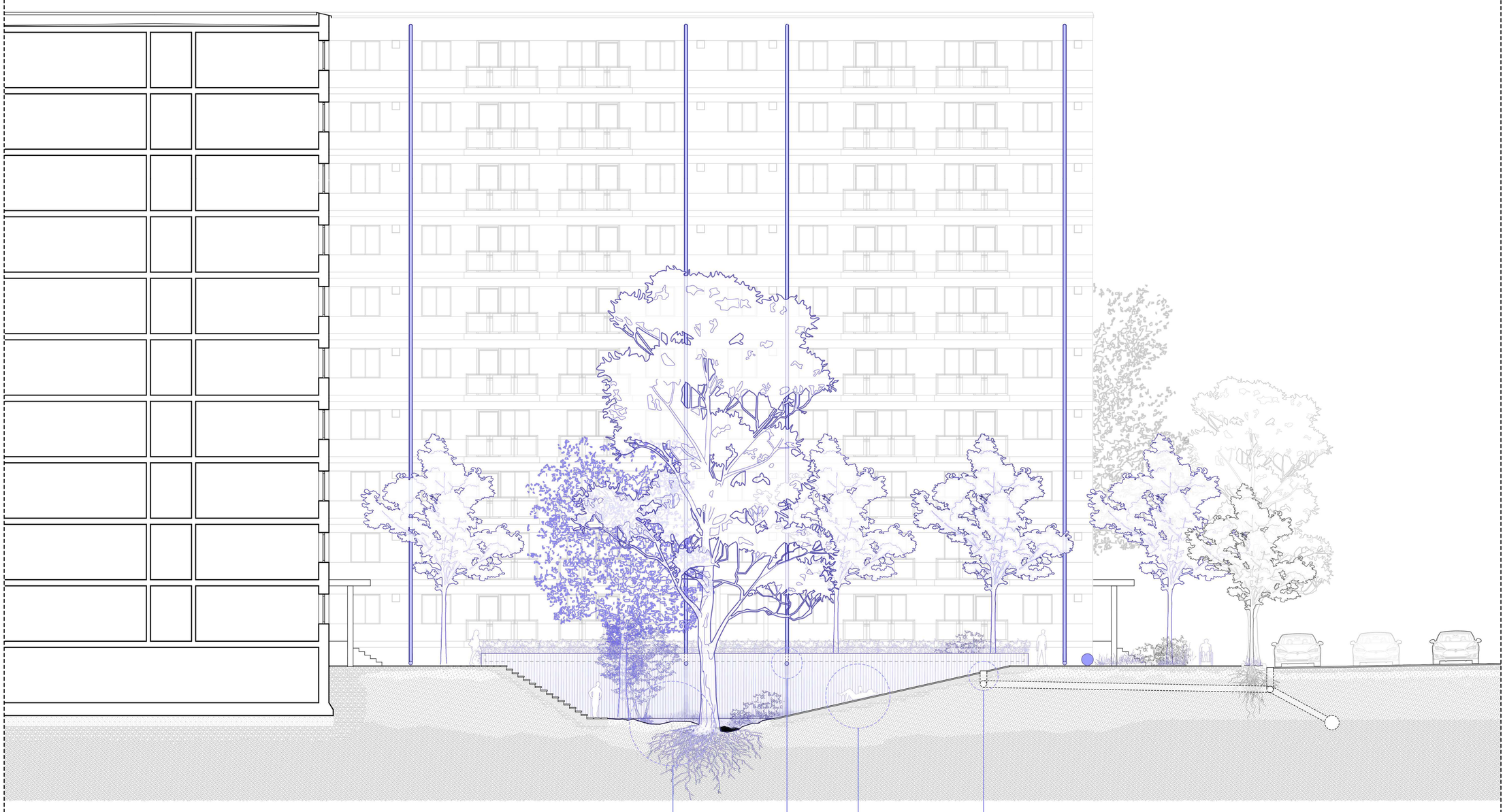
NEGOTIATED SPACES - BETWEEN CONTROL AND USE

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SECTION - THE LOUNGING SLOPE - TYPOLOGY B



SCALE 1 - 150

0 1 2 3 4 5 7 9 11 13 15

PROJECT EXPLAINATION

Water can accumulate in the created ponds, allowing it to return to the ground and recharge the water table, while also reconnecting to the network of wetlands and marshes surrounding the neighborhood.

The gutters run through the constructed planters, allowing the wall to become a temporary waterfall. The sunken garden below collects the water, temporarily transforming into a pool.

The slope becomes an outdoor installation, not only collecting water but also creating a sheltered space below the noise of the city, protected by the surrounding vegetation.

The existing sewer will be preserved and adapted to allow the collection of excess water in cases of overflow or heavy accumulation, returning it to the existing mixed sewage system.

SECTION - A POCKET OF GREEN - TYPOLOGY D



SCALE 1 - 150

0 1 2 3 4 5 7 9 11 13 15

PROJECT EXPLAINATION

The small pockets act as intermediate parking areas. By selectively removing every three or four parking spaces, particularly in front of building entrances, a more welcoming environment can be created, offering space for seating and increased biodiversity.

The existing grass and forced greening are replaced with resilient vegetation capable of absorbing traffic pollution. Native succulents and low shrubs are more resistant to drought and perform more effectively than the current grass surfaces.

Adding intermediate bike lanes where none currently exist can improve movement within the neighborhood, connecting the new green oases created from former parking spaces.

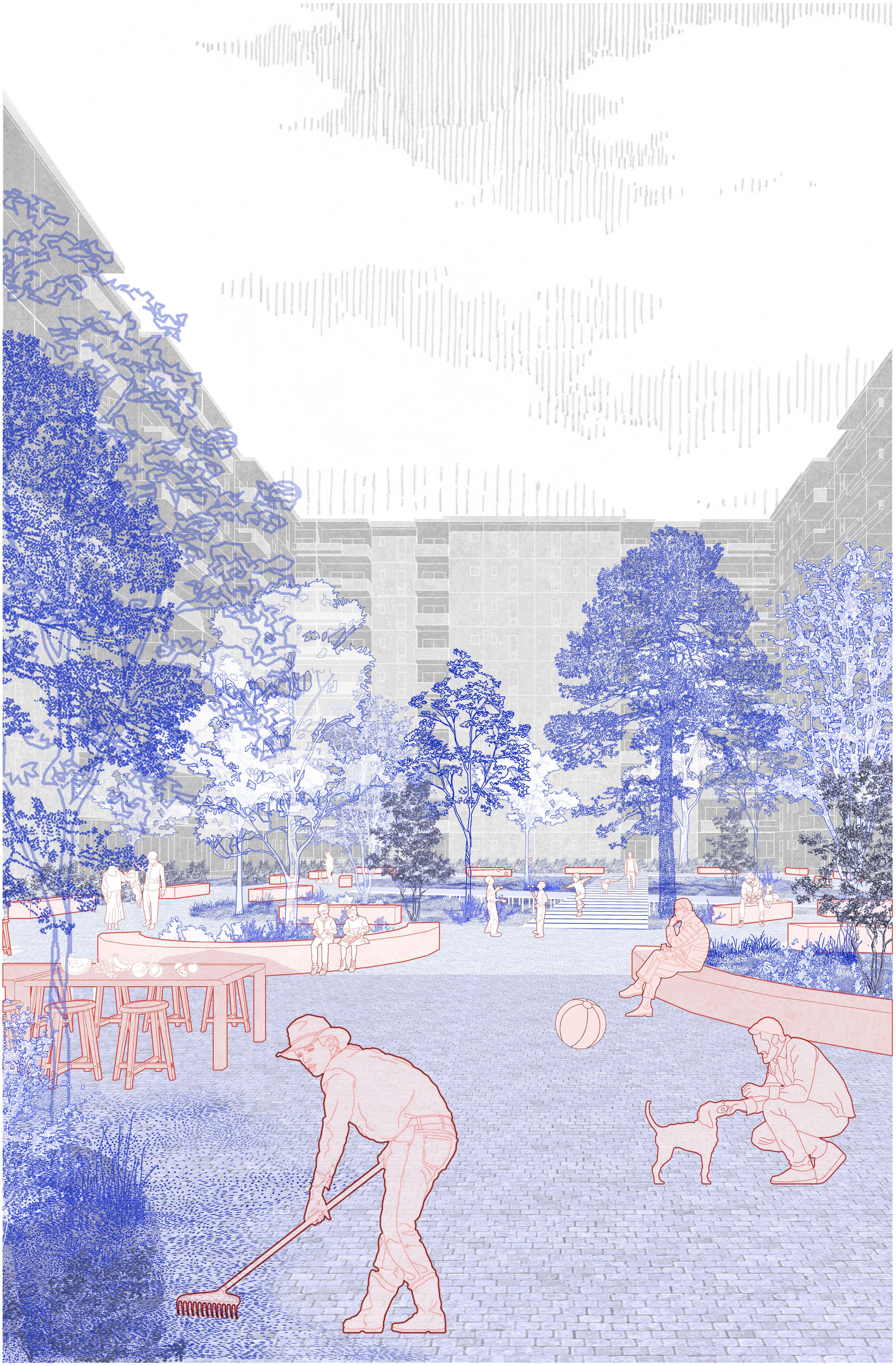
NEGOTIATED SPACES - BETWEEN CONTROL AND USE

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PERSPECTIVE



NEGOTIATED SPACES - BETWEEN CONTROL AND USE

Sebastian Sgaroiu

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