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Loose space lexicon

Design tactics for facilitating appropriation in urban gaps

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Abstract

Wellington has an underlying network of ‘leftover’ (Cupers and Miessen) spaces awaiting activation. Their potential is masked by the deterministic view cast upon them by the wider architectural discipline. However, there has been a recent shift in thinking from a ‘top-down’ approach to one that realises the potential of what exists already – ‘from the ground up’ (Kahn). This thesis explores a tactical application of ‘Loose Space’ qualities in an effort to engage in and increase the appropriability of the individual gap. Ultimately, a set of tactics will be developed that have the potential to be applied to gaps within various contexts.

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1 Introduction

This thesis examines the production and potential of gaps within the city, their ability to afford appropriation, and the role of design as a facilitator of this affordance. Taking Wellington as a platform for experimentation, the theory of loose space is explored, deriving a lexicon of tactics as a way of activating gaps and re-integrating them within the urban context.

A Brief Context

Historically, architectural practices and ideologies have been applied to sites in ways that try to determine use or predict behaviour. However, there has been a recent shift in thinking from a ‘top-down’ approach to one that realises the potential of what exists already – ‘from the ground up’ (Kahn). This approach highlights the importance of the relations between things, between the physical, social and environmental realms, as ways in and drivers of design. The following research considers loose space as a framework for both analysis and design of gaps individually and as a collective.

Loose Space

Loose space is, by definition, ‘space that has been appropriated by citizens to pursue activities not set by a predetermined program’ (Franck and Stevens 29). Often the banalities of everyday appropriations go unnoticed, leading gaps to be cast as meaningless-leftover spaces (Cupers and Miessen). Loose space brings meaning to banality by focusing on how and where the gap sits in relation to its context.

Loose Space and Urban Density

Looseness is closely associated with urban density where most examples focus on sprawling Asian cities such as Bangkok. Where populations are high and available space for everyday functions is limited, finding ways to exploit a site is essential to meet the needs and desires of the given population. In efforts to contain sprawl, master plans and large scale

developments look at the big picture, away from what is happening on the ground and often resulting in the conception of gaps. The resolution of developments at these scales are being driven by economic gains, ignoring context, leaving gaps isolated from their surroundings.

Resilience

Through activating these spaces in terms of appropriation and not the predefined they will have the ability to react, adapt and evolve to changes in contextual influences and disturbances, helping to ensure their relevance within the city structure. Furthermore, when thinking as a collective they ‘facilitate connectivity across the fragmented landscape’ (Czerniak 244)

Problem Statement

Currently, the under utilised network of gaps takes up 10% of the study area within the core of Wellington City. Many of these spaces are overlooked and undervalued as important spaces for the everyday life of Wellingtonians. Often poorly connected and homogeneous in use these sites suffer from a lack of articulation, offering little connection between the public and private realm. Falling victim to the deterministic gaze of planners (Anderson) these spaces are disjointed and disengaged from the context that surrounds them.

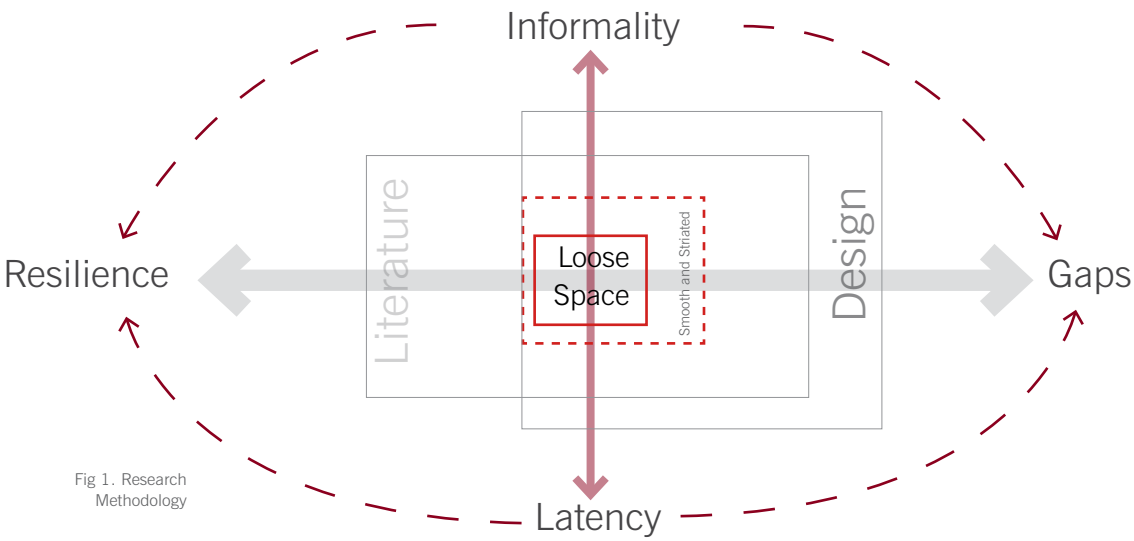


Fig 1. Research Methodology

In spite of this negative depiction, each gap has an inherent latent potential, waiting to be activated through ground-up interventions. As they make up a large portion of the urban form they would play a key role in the future image of the city.

Research Questions

This thesis asks the questions: How can design facilitate the appropriation of gaps? And, how can the concept of loose space be applied to a setting of low density?

Research Intention + Scope

The intention of this research is to establish a language of loose space tactics that can be used as a framework for activating gaps within urban spaces. The tactics shall be derived from

a broad range of literature and case studies that deal with gaps. To test their effectiveness, the tactics will be enacted in two sites in Wellington, however this thesis aims to be applicable both nationally and internationally.

Research Methodology

Conducting relevant literature reviews and case studies around the concept of loose space and its link to the city’s resilience has been the core driver of this thesis. This research provided guidance and boundaries for the site analyses and experimentation phases. As appropriation is relational, no precedence was given to qualitative, quantitative, objective or subjective analyses. Rather they were conducted in parallel with each other to provide holistic accounts of the given situation.

2 Determinism + Potential + Resilience

Globalisation and urbanisation have been the catalytic driving forces of urban change. They have transformed the ideals of what an urban space is, what we do in it, and how we think of their future states. With a projected urban population increase of 2.3 billion people by 2050 (United Nations 3) the pressure to infill and densify will continue to increase. With this constant pressure, the efficiency of gaps and their role within urban life will be questioned. In this section I will investigate the current state of play – How do designers tend to view gaps, what do gaps offer users of the city at the human scale, and how do they build on the resilience of the city?

Determinism vs Complex Shifting Relationships

The significance of gaps often goes under appreciated because of the way designers view them. ‘Drawn and programmed from above’ (Kahn 68) the ‘deterministic gaze’ (Anderson 5) of architects, developers and planners impose order and specificity in an effort to align gaps with typical urban models (Cupers and Miessen 110). From this vantage point gaps appear ‘empty and meaningless as they do not provide for traditional public life’ (Cupers and Miessen 110). Function, required area, and quantifiable aspects are the tools of this top-down approach, and lead to the over simplification and categorisation of gaps as leftover spaces (Cupers and Miessen 106).

Kahn and Duminy argue that the ‘obsession of imposing an ordered and regulated vision of urban space’ (Duminy 5) onto gaps is unrealistic, as they ‘rarely conform to the ideal conceptions adopted to describe and shape them’ (Kahn 54). They are complex place-bound interactions of ‘historical, social, political and economic forces’ (Duminy 3) and, as space and time cannot be separated, are constantly under pressure from fluctuations in these influences. Determinism disregards the complex relationships between the user, the site and the temporal framework in which they sit, and leads to urban sites being cast as ‘boundable, and free of perplexing situations’ (Kahn 54).

In order to liberate the static-ness and oversimplification of gaps, the vantage point needs to be shifted. Instead of implying “ideals” from above, more focus needs to be given to the singular nature of each site – programming ‘from the ground up’ (Kahn 54). To programme the urban site you must first construct it, piece by piece, taking precedence from the complex characteristics and relationships that exist, leaving behind pre-conceived ideas of what it should look like or be. Breaking free from the generalised distinctions of standard site analyses (that tend to register the already known) ‘site construction’ utilises relational analyses, noting the links between the objective and the subjective. It weaves both qualities and quantities together to ‘develop site-driven design strategies’ that account for ‘practices of urban inhabitation that transgress categorical organisation’ (Kahn 57).

Appropriation + Informality

Looking closer at gaps, the transgressions can be seen through appropriations by the public. Eating lunch on a step, selling food out of a truck in an empty car park, and chalking up the pavement as a temporary exhibit space, are all common place. While these acts seem banal, they show what people are engaging with and why they seek these spaces out in the first place (Franck and Stevens 36).

However, as previously mentioned, the tendency to view gaps as ‘empty and meaningless’ (Cupers and Miessen 110) undermines the role of the site, and its contents, in appropriation. It

Potential + Resilience

Anderson argues that there are two types of potential – realised and unrealised (Anderson 6). Realised potential – the influential environment – is the ‘environment implicitly adopted by users’ and is closely tied to their discretions and perceptions (Anderson 7). Whereas unrealised potential tends more to the qualities of the site and its uncharted potential – the latent environment. Taking clues from acts within the influential environment (appropriations), designers can start to engage with the site’s latency, creating physical changes, adapting the environment to increase (or decrease) the potential of that site (Anderson 7). Thinking in this way, latency can also be expressed as the capacity of a site to accommodate change, which means that latency is synonymous with resilience.

This view of potential, latency and resilience is not confined to the boundary of the gap; it can also be translated to the city scale by thinking of their collective potential. For example utilising a gap’s ability to blur the boundaries between spaces (individual), helps to ‘facilitate connectivity across the fragmented landscape’ (collective) (Czerniak 244). Or, by embracing a gap’s irregularities (individual), they can be aligned with the ecological concept of patch dynamics (Forman and Godron), helping to facilitate species distribution by providing niche environments (Czerniak 220).

is thought that ‘unlike designed spaces, it is the users themselves who locate and program space (Rivlin 36), and that it is by no means added later (Aceska 412). I agree that you cannot design appropriation, but, as people actively seek out environments that support it (Anderson 1), then there is surely a way to design *for* appropriation.

Using the ‘site construction’ (Kahn 57) method to observe and analyse appropriation, makes these ‘banal’ acts digestible for designers, and gives them a bearing for intervention. It produces highly detailed accounts of people engaging with a site, accentuating characteristics that would otherwise go unnoticed. These accounts ‘provide the material to programme a site’s urban potential’, proceeding towards traces of the new (Kahn 56).

All of this considered, there is still the question of why some spaces, particularly gaps, are more appropriable than others. They seem to be ‘open-ended rather than established or closed’, and embrace temporality as opposed to being static or fixed (Ramirez-Lovering and Ugarte 7). They buffer the edges of the defined, overlapping and intermingling with the intended, ‘creating congestion, tension and conflict, which help to generate density, diversity and vitality’ (Franck and Stevens 36). What it comes down to is that gaps provide something to users that homogenous urban spaces cannot. They have an informal quality that invites users to engage with them on an everyday level. Away from prejudices and conforming uses, informality provides a platform for appropriation and, in turn, opens up the site’s potential for designers.

By engaging in the informal or irregular nature of a gap you are also engaging in the latency of the network – increasing the capacity of the city to accommodate change on an everyday level. If designers and planners can realise the potential of this reciprocation then ‘Informality can be strategically used to mitigate the vulnerabilities of formal urban order’ (Roy 147-148), making for a more resilient city.

3 Smooth + Striated

To further understand the relationship between gaps, informality and appropriation, a stronger reasoning behind the conception of gaps is needed. In this section I will explore the potential of ‘The Smooth and the Striated’ (Deleuze and Guattari 474) as a framework to reveal the productive nature of the city and the complex relationships that exist in order for gaps to form and be appropriated.

Cities are not static places. At times they may seem relatively stagnant, but they are constantly evolving from one state to another, reacting to contextual influences. Social, economic, historical, political, cultural, aesthetic and environmental forces are just some of the factors that can be influential in adapting and creating new ‘practices and meanings of public space’ (Dovey and Polakit 114) and spaces such as gaps, ride the wave of these fluctuating factors. In other words, change is cyclic process, it fluctuates ‘between practices of everyday life and systems of spatial control’ (Dovey and Polakit 113). I found the notion of ‘the Smooth and the Striated’ (Deleuze and Guattari 474) useful as a framework to understand this cyclic nature, specifically when it comes to accessing how we think about gaps and their potential to accommodate change.

In ‘A Thousand Plateaus’, Deleuze and Guattari notion towards striated space as sedentary, and smooth space as nomadic

Fig 2. Smooth and Striated.

Pg.	SMOOTH	Slippage	STRIATED
474	Nomadic	B E C O M G	Sedentary
477	Informal		Formal
482	Rhizome		Tree
475	Matted Fibres		Gridded Strands
474	Traversed to Striated		Reversed to Smooth
	Chaotic		Ordered
478	Space of Affects		Space of Properties
478	Horizontal		Vertical
	Loose		Tight
488	Heterogeneous		Homogeneous
498	Free Action		Work Space
484	Qualitative		Numerical

(Deleuze and Guattari 474). It seems that these concepts are set up in opposition to each other, on different trajectories. But their relationship is much more complex: ‘smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space’ (Deleuze and Guattari 474). There is a cyclic productive-deconstructive nature to the smooth and the striated, where they are subject to local and global flows over time. To understand this relationship further, we must grasp a tighter definition on what smooth is and what striated is. I have adapted a table from Mark Bonta’s outline of The Smooth and the Striated (Bonta 1-8), simplifying it and adding terms that relate. It represents indicative qualities of these two contrasting concepts and notions towards a productive middle ground. Reference is given to Deleuze and Guattari ‘The Smooth and the Striated’ by page citations, where no page number is stated it is my addition.

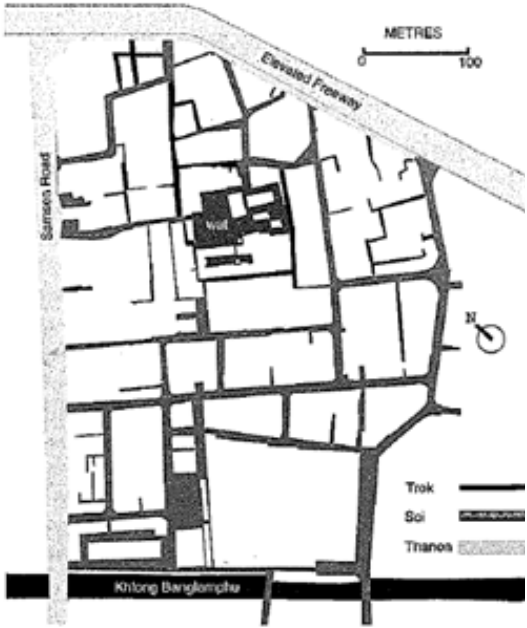


Fig 3. Folding

There are two key aspects of this table. The first: rhizome and tree, denotes the structure or arrangement of smooth and striated respectively. The rhizome is matted. It is a place of entangled connection and heterogeneity, ‘open and unlimited in every direction...with no centre’. The tree is dichotomised, each point identifiable, traceable, referenced back through the hierarchical order (Deleuze and Guattari 475). The second: the notion of ‘slippage’ (Dovey and Polakit 113) relates back to the complex relationship between smooth and striated. Slippage stems from Deleuze and Guattari’s view that these concepts are not separate, that ‘nothing is ever done with; smooth space allows itself to be striated, and striated space reimparts a smooth space’ (Deleuze and Guattari 486). It notions towards some kind of middle ground of becoming. So these spaces are reciprocal, constantly ‘folding’ (Deleuze and Guattari 486) into each other; ‘striations become weaker, and space becomes smoother’ (Dovey and Polakit 128), smooth fibres strengthen, and space becomes striated. This may all seem very theoretical, but these concepts give meaning to the productive nature of the city, of space and appropriation over time.

To give concrete expression to the notion of slippage, Dovey and Polakit give the example of Ban Panthom, an old inner city neighbourhood of Bangkok. They look closely into how the ambiguous network of side streets and laneways are appropriated, and how they are in constant motion, slipping between smooth and striated (Dovey and Polakit 113).

Fig 4. Ban Panthom.



The seemingly chaotic nature of the settlement stems from it once being an intricate network of klongs – canals. Over time this network infilled, converting to the hierarchical system of thanon – streets, soi – side streets, and trok – laneways, which we see today (Askew 54). At first glance it seems categorically striated, but as you move deeper into the neighbourhood ‘these striations are transgressed’ (Dovey and Polakit 120), smoothness becomes apparent, leading way to a rhythmic appropriation of the network.

There seems to be an interesting relationship between how space is appropriated relative to the proximity of the main road. Close to Samsen Road, sois have painted yellow lines on the pavement to ‘indicate the extent to which shops are permitted to appropriate’ (Dovey and Polakit 120). As you move further away from the road the lines disappear, giving way to a more local control. This ambiguous space, roughly 2m wide, is used for an array of domestic and retail activities that fluctuate throughout the day; ‘drying clothes, cooking, and watching television’ slip into ‘dining, product displays and car repairs’ (Dovey and Polakit 120).

Moving further away from the main road the Trok tend to cater to the darker aspects of dense urban living. Sex trade, drug use, and gambling are rife, especially in the deepest part of the trok network, which are ‘often avoided by members of the public’ (Dovey and Polakit 125). These areas have an ambiguous enforcement where multiple police authorities are paid off so that the ‘transgressive activities can slip through smooth urban spaces between jurisdictions’ (Dovey and Polakit 125). The folding and becoming of appropriations is evident in their rhythmic appearances. They can be seen on an everyday level where the range and cycle of uses is directly related to their proximity of organisational features and ambiguity of governance.

On a larger time scale this smoothness can revert to striation - much like the evolution from canals to streets - individual appropriations can become permanent. Hawker trolleys often setup on a regular schedule, ‘in some cases they remain permanently and even become extensions to the architecture’ (Dovey and Polakit 121). So the notion of rhythmic appropriations can be applied to both the everyday time scale and the productive scale of the settlement.

Ban Panthom’s identity is firmly rooted in the appropriations on rhythmic scales, an identity sourced through the cyclic ‘folding’ of the smooth and the striated into each other. It is folding that produces slippages—of ecologies and economies, between day and night, public and private, legal and illegal, formal and informal – that enable the settlement to adapt and react to local and global disturbances. Observing these transitions through the framework of the smooth and the striated reveals the complex relationship between space, governance, proximity and appropriation. It recognises that the ‘urban site is not a stable place but a transitory and multivalent space... an aggregation of ever shifting scales, programs, and actors all set within a temporal framework’ (Kahn 54). The smooth and the striated provide the ‘tools for rethinking urban space, for prizing open the phenomenon of loose space’ (Dovey and Polakit 113).

4 Case Studies

The following case studies aim at providing scope for how gaps are treated within the wider architectural discipline (Landscape Architecture, Architecture and Planning). Taking in a diverse range of applications, scales and conceptual threads I aim to study the projects in terms of their design tactics to later make use in design experimentation.

Fig 5. Maidan



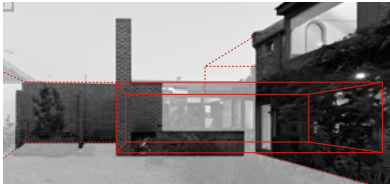
Open Programme:
Maidan, Schowburgplein Plaza

Fig 6. Gap Filler



Temporary/Infill
Greening the Rubble, Gap Filler, Park(ing) Day

Fig 7. Brunswick House



Stability and Informality
Bertram - Hinge and Core

Open Programme

To provide an open and largely unprogrammed space within a city has been a common solution for dense urban environments for centuries. Projects such as The Boston Common (1634, 20ha), Central Park (1857, 341ha), and Freshkills Park (2008, 892ha) have undertaken by Planners, Urban Designers and Landscape Architects alike, vastly range in scale and effectiveness of providing a reprieve from urban life. In this section I will analyse the Gandhi Maidan, Patna, India, and Schouwburgplein, Rotterdam, Netherlands, critiquing the successes, failures, and ultimately, the tactics used in their conception.



Fig 8. Patna, India

GANDHI MAIDAN
PATNA INDIA
1824

Project Description

More commonly expressed as a large plain or open field, these spaces are planned gaps within the urban fabric, providing a reprieve for citizens from their dense urban surroundings. Their open and unprogrammed centre accommodates various appropriations on different scales. From playing cricket (image) to hosting large festivals or protests (image), these spaces offer citizens ‘individual freedom and collective engagement in the city’ (Mathur 206). However, they are constantly under threat of urbanisation as buildings, monuments and formalised parks encroach on their boundaries.



Fig 9. Maidan Open Field



Fig 10. Maidan Protest

The Gandhi Maidan is situated at the northern border of Patna – the largest city in the state of Bihar, home to over 1.5 million people. The park – measuring over 25ha – consists of three grassed plains separated by the main and secondary axes (north-south and east west). The only static elements are shrines, fountains or focal points, close to the main entrances or where the axes converge, acting as locators within the vast space.

Separation Buffer

The perimeter of the Maidan is strung with a vegetated buffer – creating separation from its urban surroundings, and instilling a more natural feel internally. The small number of entrances through this buffer helps to maintain the image. Where there are entrance points they are generally small in width (8-10m) and lack adornment – consisting mainly of small avenues of trees to enforce the axes.

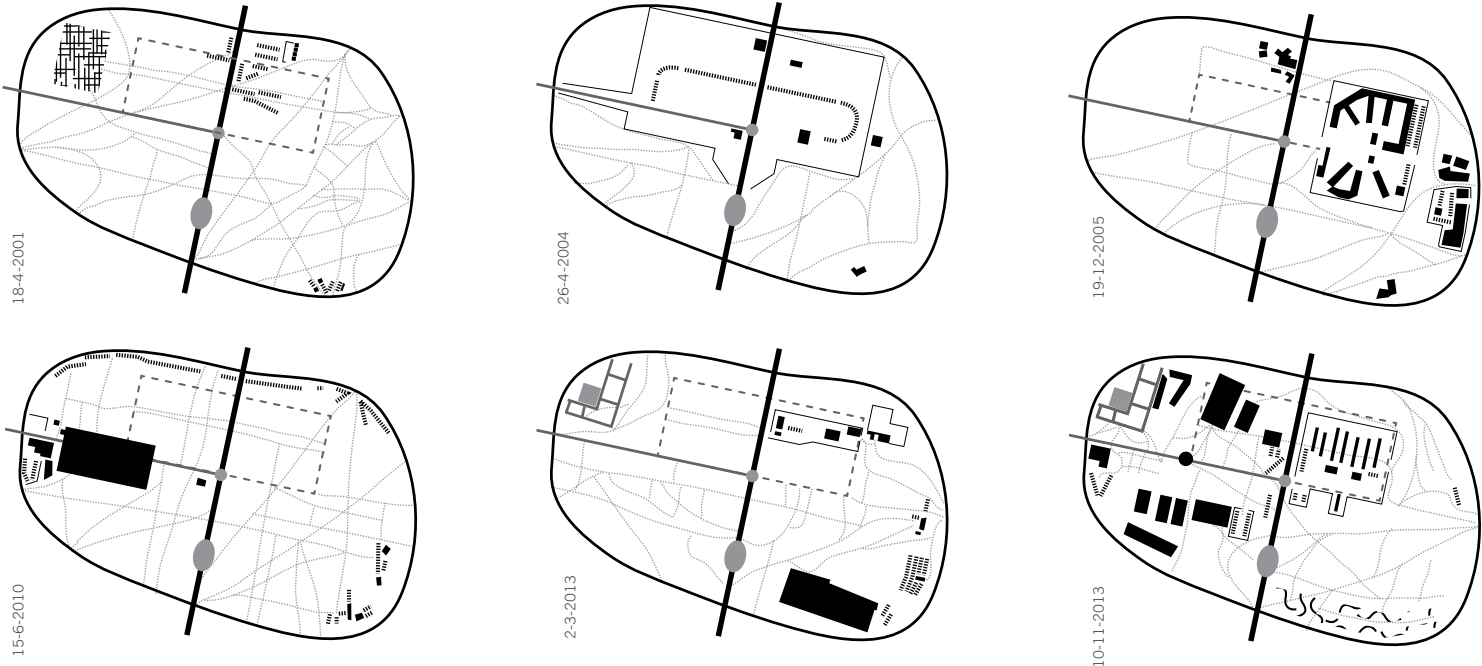


Fig 11. Gandhi Maidan over time

- KEY
- Static Feature
 - Temporary Building
 - Stalls
 - Desire Lines
 - Primary Path
 - Secondary Path
 - Tertiary Path

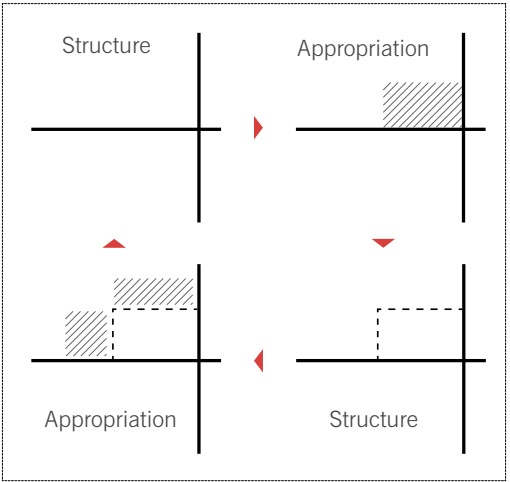


Fig 12. Structure and Appropriation

Appropriations

The temporary programmes range in scale and frequency, having distinct patterns of occupation. The more frequent appropriations – playing cricket or small markets – tend to be closer to the perimeter and utilise small areas. Infrequent appropriations tend to be much larger in scale – festivals or protests. These functions occupy vast spaces and are much more aligned to the main axes, tending toward the centre of the space. Their extents remain as a residue, informing the evolution of the path network and, in turn, future appropriations. Stemming from these functions, various desire lines weave through the site, and adapt to events over time. However the desire lines remain consistent in the SW-NE direction, given there is no obstruction.

Block Morphology

The presence of the Maidan extends past its boundaries, affecting the block morphology of the surrounding areas. There seems to be a falloff of gentrification relative to the proximity of the Maidan. Fronting the Maidan are large buildings surrounded by lush open spaces. Further back, smaller, more informal settlements can be seen (similar to the structure of Ban Panthom).

Density

The Maidan’s relevance relies on its dense surroundings and social needs. Without such density these spaces would become derelict and void of occupation. This presents a challenge in translation – how can the notion of the Maidan be translated to a situation of low urban density? Perhaps the answer lies within its ‘design’. The ‘design’ of the Maidan is one of thresholds, between the city and open space, determinate and indeterminate. By engaging only at the edge, the internal structure maintains its indeterminacy – ensuring the reflectivity of the space and the ‘collective aspirations of people’ (Mathur 215).

Fig 14. Maidan Gentrification Section

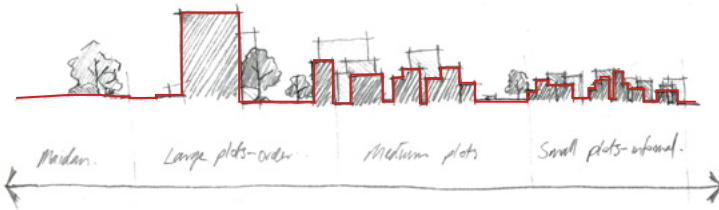


Fig 15. Maidan Gentrification

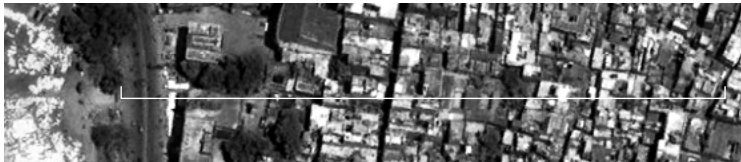


Fig 13. Maidan Density

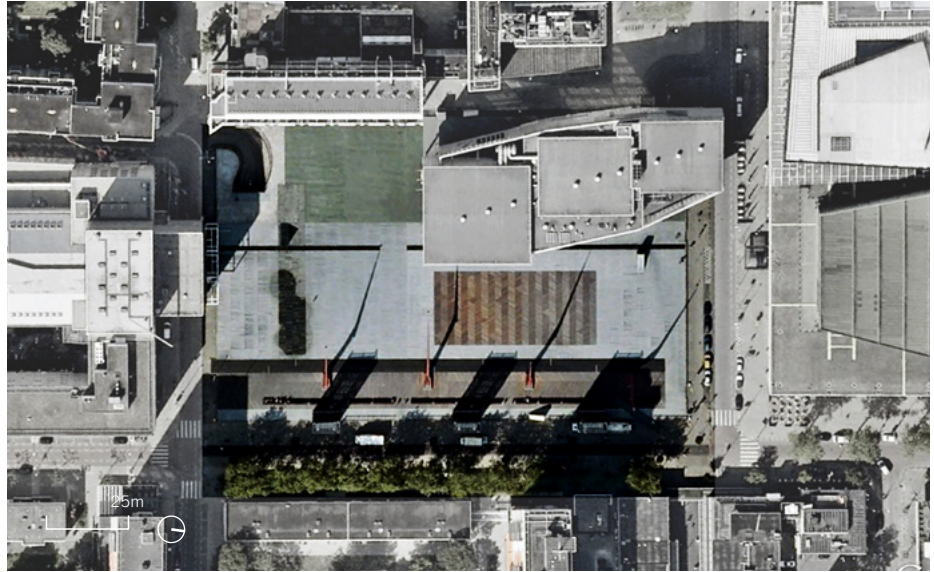
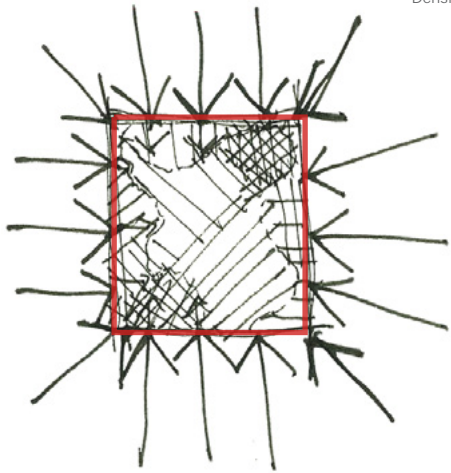


Fig 16. Schouwburgplein Plan

SCHOUWBURGPLEIN
ROTTERDAM NETHERLANDS
WEST 8 + GEUZE
1996

Fig 17. Schouwburgplein Gathering



Fig 18. Schouwburgplein Camping



Project Description

Schouwburgplein, or Theatre square, was designed by West 8 and Adriaan Geuze to be the ‘city’s stage’ (West 8). Surrounded by theatres, cinemas, concert halls and restaurants, the 1.2ha square was designed to cater to multiple uses throughout the day. The designers achieved this through creating a raised platform (35cm) with various surface treatments of wood, concrete, and perforated steel.

Similarly to that of the Maidan, the objective was to engage mainly at the edge, leaving the centre unprogrammed to cater for large performances and exhibitions. However the various surface treatments suggest boundaries for uses (the epoxy surface to the west is popular with inline skaters) and help to break up the monotony of a single surface. In this way Shouwburgplein is much more of a ‘designed’ square. Other features that contribute to the squares stage-ness consist of: large hydraulic spot lights that can be moved to highlight zones throughout the square, perimeter seats that focus toward the centre, and three tall ventilation towers that ventilate the car park below. All of these elements exist along the eastern boundary, making it an important threshold of the design.

Integration

With the initiation of the stage, the intention was to integrate it with the surrounding area especially the shared space on the eastern boundary that hosts a concentration of restaurants and cafes. To achieve this the designers used similar materials at the interface, blending the spaces together through materiality, yet still maintaining the effect of the stage through the step up. However, this intention was not pulled off successfully. The layout of vertical design elements – trees, ventilation towers, lights and bench seats – in conjunction with the food carts that occupy the boundary, create visual barriers affecting the square’s permeability.

Featureless Void

The square works well in times of performance, hosting large markets, cultural events and exhibitions, but lacks the visual stimulation and diversity during the lulls of these sporadic events. Also because of the way the bench seats are laid out – in a linear fashion with an internal focus – there is almost no interaction between users. It gives the casual-everyday user the view of a featureless void, making it an undesirable place to be.

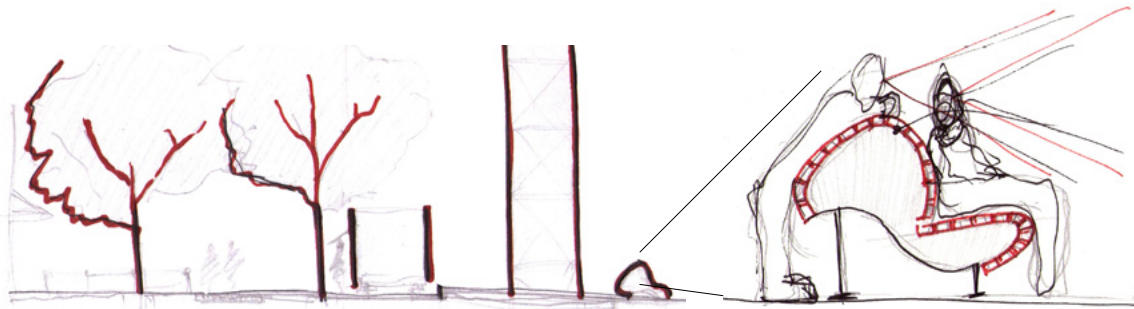


Fig 19. Schouwburgplein
Visual Barriers

Infill

Future additions to the square have been made over the years to counteract this problem and provide more visual interest. Colourful street furniture, raised platforms, and more recently a permanent building in the southern section, now adorn the square in efforts to try and bring diversity of programme and interest to the centre. While they may provide some relief, the additions still shy away from the real problem: the orientation and virtually impermeable threshold of elements along the eastern boundary. This is an example where design statements and sporadic use do not necessarily make a good square. Good squares need to work on an everyday level, drawing regular people to sit, eat lunch and interact with each other (Project for Public Spaces) – even when there is no performance. Still, given the projects downfalls, there is still much we can learn from it.

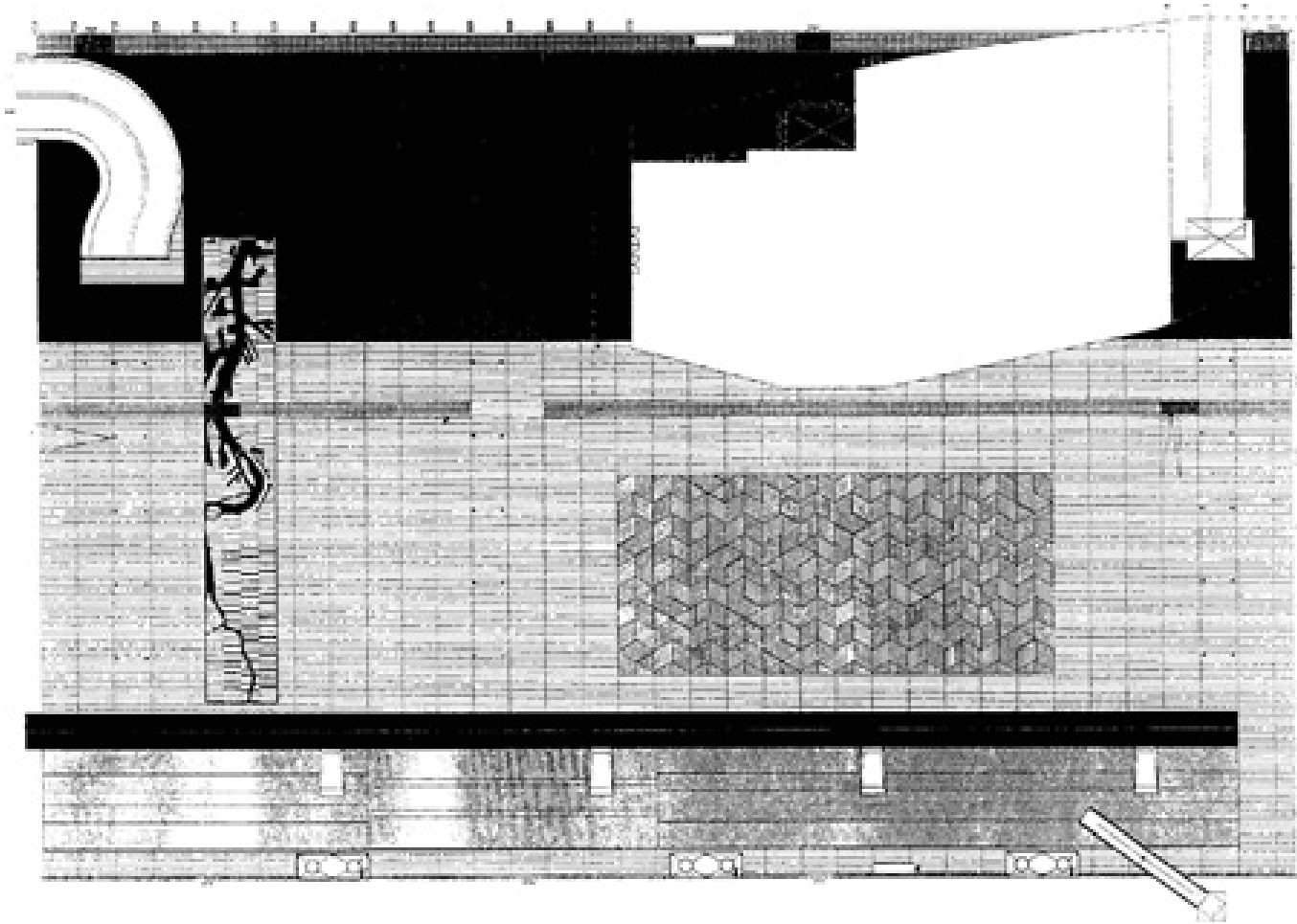


Fig 20. Schouwburgplein
Concept Plan

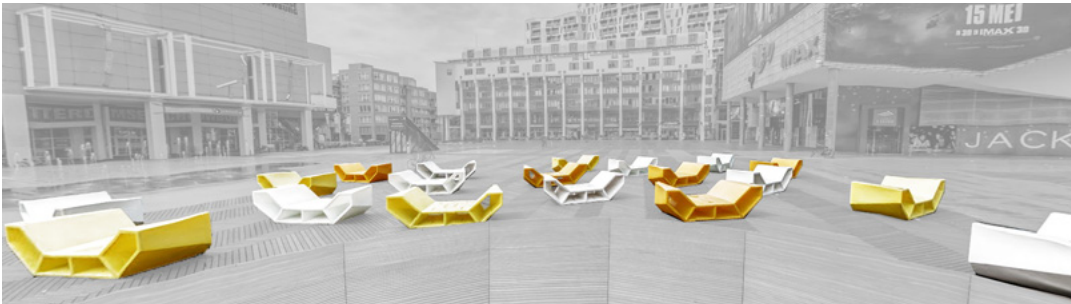


Fig 21. Schouwburgplein
Infill

Tactics - Open Programme

1) Edge condition – In both cases the edge condition not only sets up how the user transitions into the site, but also helps to create the overall quality of it. Furthermore, it is a critical point in relating the site to its context.

a) Separation Buffer: Utilising a buffer to separate spaces, controlling entry points to ensure certain experiences, giving each zone a distinct identity.

b) Integration: Using consistent materials to make seamless transitions between spaces, thus integrating the space with its context.

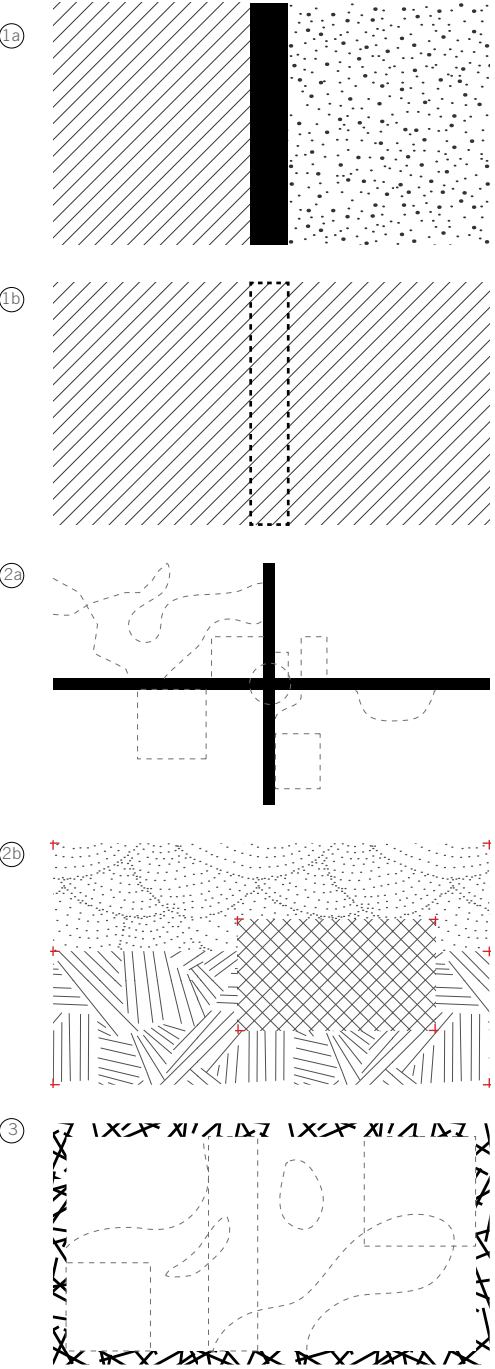
2) Structure - Both case studies provide some formal structure to provide main connections or to suggest uses.

a) Formal Paths: Creating main connections through axial pathways that then become the catalyst for appropriations. At junction points there tends to be a concentration of activity

b) Material Boundaries: By shifting material throughout the plane it suggests boundaries of activities. In having an array of materials and textures it provides for a larger scope of uses and visual interest.

3) Programming at the Edge: Engaging at the edge is the defining factor of an openly programmed space. It ensures the centre remains indeterminate.

Fig 22. Open Programme Tactics



Temporary Infill

This set of case studies aims to understand gaps in relation to temporary programming. Greening the Rubble, Gap Filler and Park(ing) Day are all pop-up initiatives that engage in the temporary scale of place. Whether finding potential in what exists or making a statement, these examples show that design does not need to be fixed in programme or site. As the context changes so do they.



Fig 23. Gap Filler



Fig 24. Greening the Rubble



Fig 25. Park(ing) Day



Fig 26. Palette Pavilion



Fig 27. GTR site



Fig 28. Park In Progress

Gap Filler and Greening the Rubble are independent initiatives set up to activate gaps within Christchurch, New Zealand. Following the disastrous earthquake on the 22nd of February 2011, much of the city was left in rubble, opening up a new network of gaps. Whilst many saw only destruction, Gap Filler and Greening the Rubble saw potential – the potential to bring life back into these spaces through small, community driven projects. Gap Filler experiment with their interventions, taking in a broad range of activities and installations such as graffiti art, outdoor movie theatres and fridge libraries. Greening the rubble have a similar trajectory but tend to focus more on re-vegetating the gaps with interventions such as community gardens and coffee hubs. The initiatives give Christchurch people an opportunity to contribute to their city’s regeneration.

Park(ing) Day takes a similar approach to Gap Filler and Greening the Rubble, but instead of appropriating gaps post-disaster, this initiative finds the potential in gaps that already exist. On the 19th of September every year (since 1290) community groups, students and designers head out to take back the streets, replacing asphalt with parklets. Unlike the other initiatives Park(ing) Day is a global event where in 2011 35 countries too part and had close to 1000 installations.

DIY + Community

As these projects are temporary – ranging from 1 day to 1 year – they are often made from cheap (or free) found materials. Pallets, crates and construction off cuts are very common throughout the interventions and bring a certain make-shift aesthetic, showing that good design does not have to be expensive. Like the locally sourced materials, so too is the workforce. Local volunteers and community groups dedicate hours of labour to help build and maintain the projects. So these interventions don’t just activate gaps, they activate communities too.

Potential + Contextual Dislocation

These interventions make people question what a space can be. By installing temporary, and very contemporary programmes into spaces, they highlight the potential of space. Not limited by fixations on whether or not it works, being temporary allows the function to be tested. However it can be seen as if these programmes are applied to the site, not born from it – creating problems of contextual dislocation. Given the application of programme, with the materials being found it does engrain the site – at least visually – into the surroundings.



Fig 29. Community



Fig 30. Gap Filler Fridge Library

Potential + Contextual Dislocation

Perhaps the most important feature of these initiatives is not one single thing, but all things. The strength of these types of projects is in the sheer number of possibilities that exist within a network of gaps. They highlight the collective potential of the city. Take for example Gap Filler, in just over three years that have activated over 35 sites within the CBD of Christchurch, reigniting its cultural heart.

Tactics - Temporary Infill

- 1) By utilising or copying materials found on or around a site to construct interventions, they can then blend into a site - integrating with their surroundings.
- 2) Collective Potential - By taking a systems approach to the individual sites, collectively, the potential of the city can be seen. As one gap is revealed, so too is the potential of another; constantly unfolding new space to appropriate.

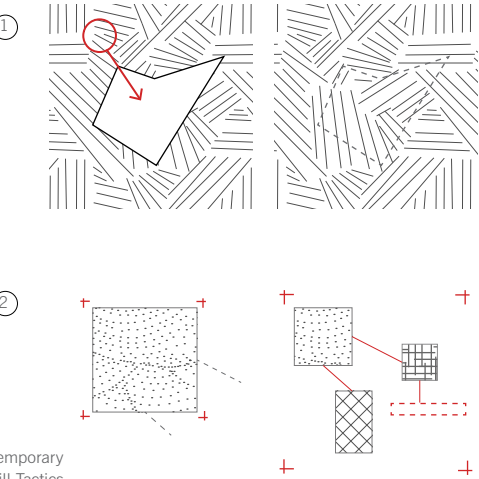


Fig 31. Temporary Infill Tactics

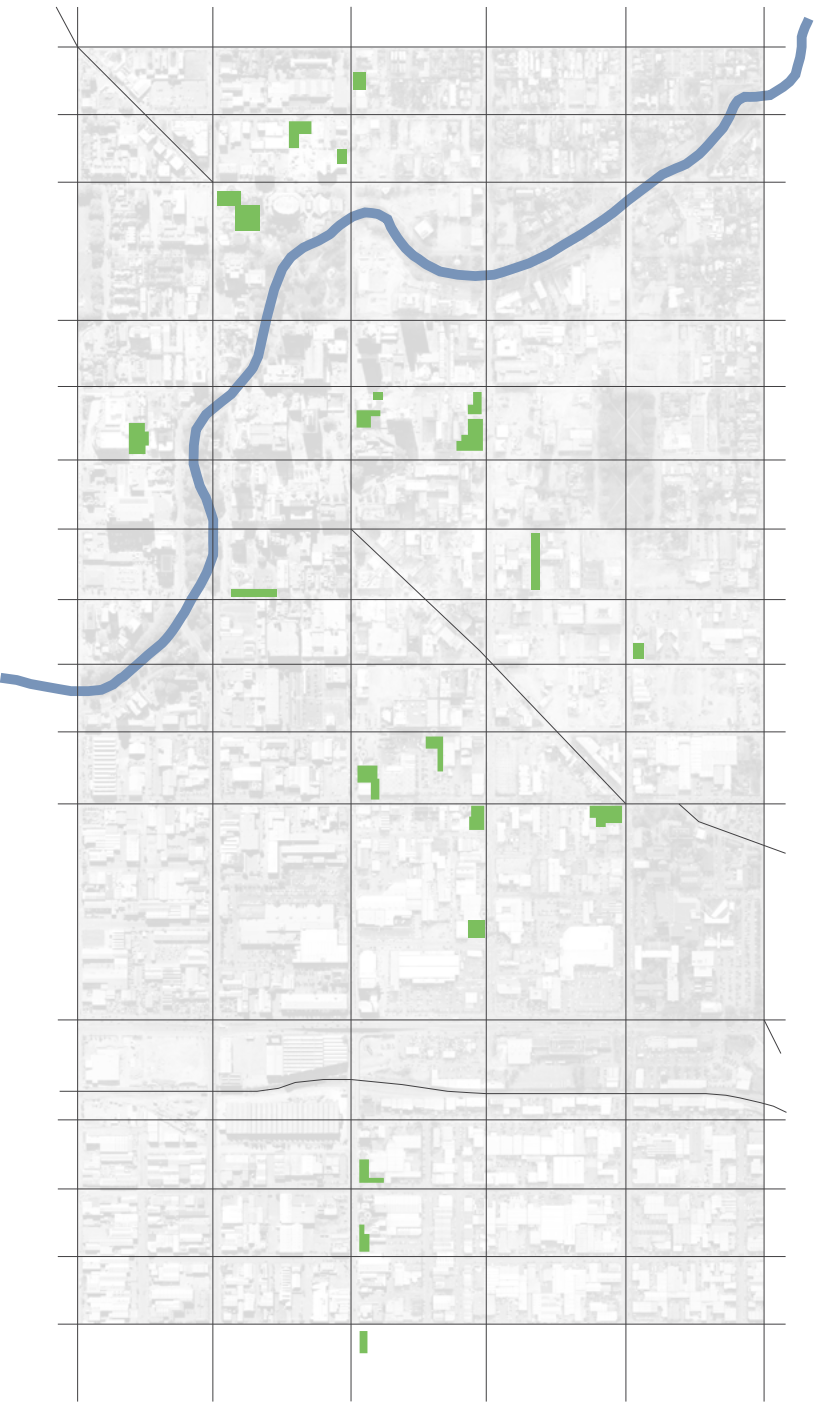


Fig 32. Gap Filler Collective Potential

Stability+ Informality

Nigel Bertram, In his teaching at Monash and his practice NMBW looks at ways in which he can design, catalytically, within systems that are under constant pressures from external influences. 'Different time scales and different economic scales operate simultaneously in the city, we need to work with the provisional quality, doing small touches that have just enough stability to hold their place but still understanding that they are very fragile' (Bertram, Lines of Thinking). Taking note of this fragility of economic and environmental conditions that are constantly slipping into one another means that we have to make spaces that can react to such shifts.

In his lecture 'Lines of Thinking' (Bertram, Lines of Thinking) there were two clear conceptual threads that catered to such provisional qualities, they were Hinge and Core. These principles have strong similarities in concept, but also subtle differences in their application.

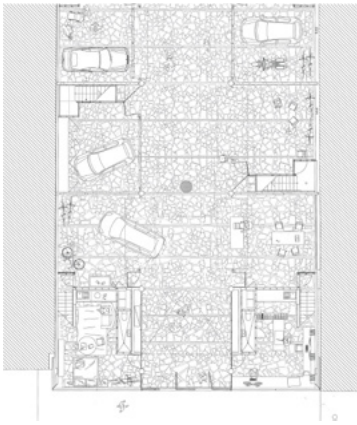


Fig 33. Fitzroy Plan

Project Description

In the Fitzroy apartment development Bertram was tasked to create seven dwellings that responded to the site’s inherent industrial-lane way character with each of the dwellings having a double garage. Because of predicted fluctuations in future car usage he thought how the garages could be for more than just parking cars. The final solution was to create a structure (an arcade) that did not signify any one use, and that created a communal shared space through the use of an arcade. The recognition of the ability of these spaces was instantly noticeable through the range of occupations as-found in 2012 (left).

The arcade is non-determinant overall; it slips between various functions throughout the day. It acts as both an internal interface – between internal functions – and as an external interface

– creating an ambiguous relationship between public and private territories. It acts as a hinge between the internal private territories and their interaction with the public interface. It achieves this through the interplay of threshold spaces by providing the right amount of structure to create a stable environment whilst not being overly determinant on programme.



Fig 34. Fitzroy Use Over Time

HINGE: FITZROY APARTMENTS
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA
NMBW
2010

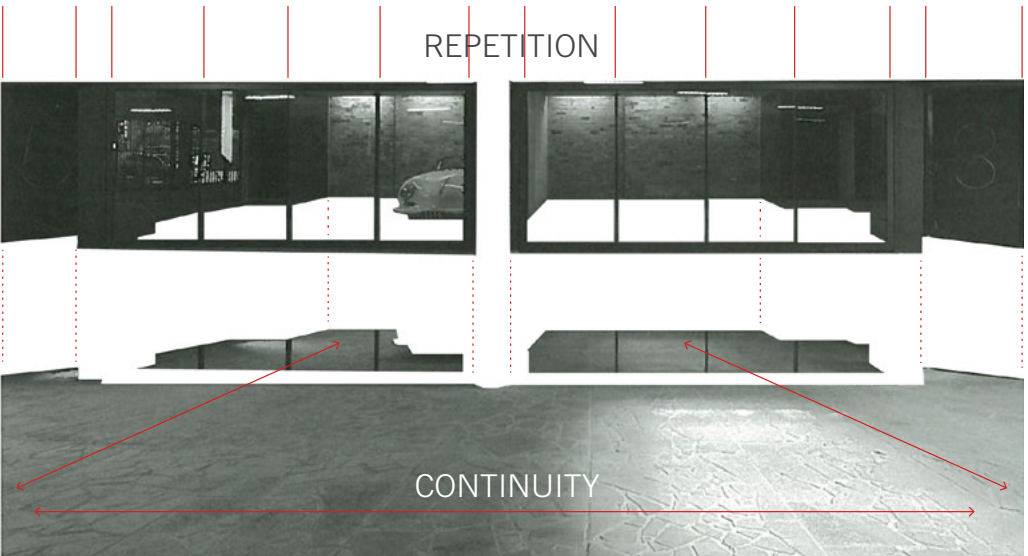


Fig 35. Fitzroy Continuity and Repetition

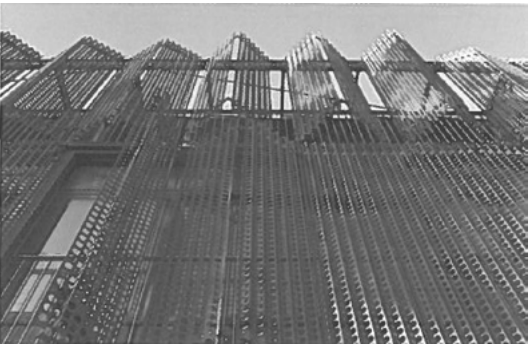


Fig 36. Fitzroy Transparency

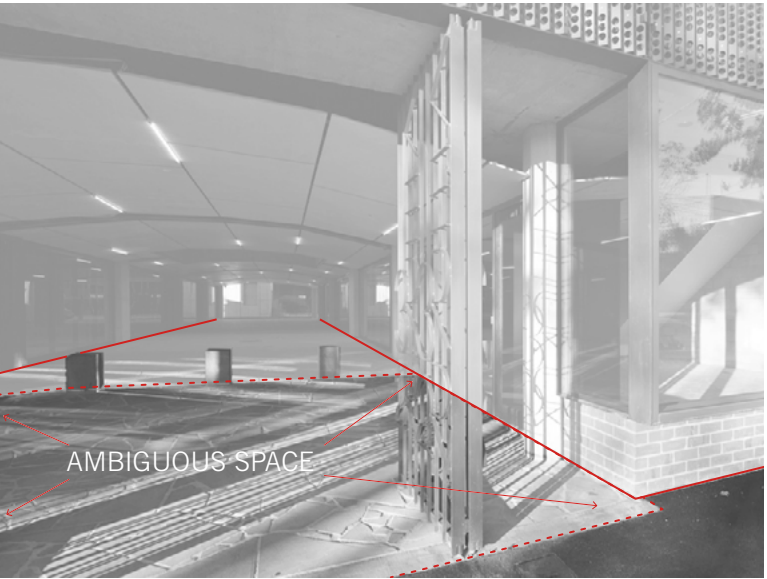


Fig 37. Fitzroy Ambiguity

Continuity + Ambiguity

Internally, the continuous form of the glazing and pavement notions towards a flexible communal shared space, where, functions such as reading the paper, children playing and parking the car co-exist. The repetitive form of the private ‘garages’ does not prescribe use. There is no difference between garage, office space, living space or communal space; it is a space of negotiation and slippages of function at both the temporary and formal time scales.

Transparency

Externally, the building negotiates between public and private realms. The facade ‘conceals the internal workings of the buildings. The screening opens up at the front entrance creating an opportunity for engagement and intrigue by the public through the open slat iron gates. They provide a transparent threshold into the internal shared space, giving ‘something back to the street and provide a type of semi-public scale to the building’ (Bertram, Furniture, Structure, Infrastructure: Making and Using the Urban Environment).

The use of repetition and continuity of material, in conjunction with the provision of ambiguous space, allows the development to react and shift over time. And, the interplay of threshold spaces provides the right amount of structure to create a stable environment whilst not being overly determinant on programme.

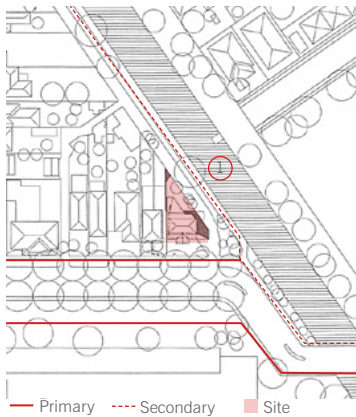


Fig 38. Elwood Plan



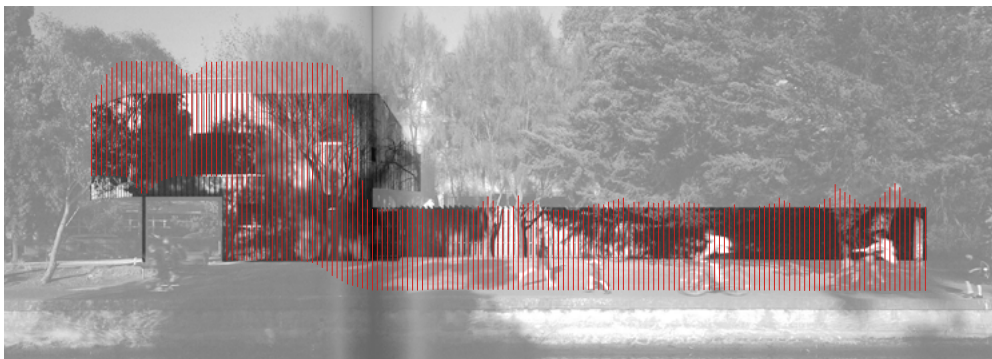
Fig 39. Elwood House

HINGE: ELWOOD HOUSE
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA
NMBW
2008

Project Description

In the Elwood retrofit Bertram was asked to re-configure a house so that it could utilise leftover spaces and create a greater sense of connection with the site and the community. The property is bound on the eastern side by part of the Elwood Canal which was once thought of as an unhealthy ditch (1), but more recently, has become an important public thoroughfare. This thoroughfare made the abrupt edge of this larger transitional network visible. Bertram looks for the potential presented by these small interactions; searching for the interfaces between the macro and the micro, 'and the opportunistic use of small edges of larger urban systems' (Bertram, Lines of Thinking). To help to contextually re-integrate the house, Bertram focused on manipulating the thresholds at the canal edge to create links between the house and the larger transitional network. To help to contextually re-integrate the house, Bertram focused on manipulating the thresholds at the canal edge, the edge which links back into the larger secondary transitional network.

Fig 40. Elwood Mimicry



Mimicry

Noticing the consistent fence, straddling the easement across multiple properties, he decided to extend the fences' patterning and material to the cladding of the house. This created a seamless transition which not only allowed the house to extend right to the boundary, but also allowed the house to read as the threshold between public and private realms, instead of being mediated by another fence. 'Overtime the fence will turn the same silvery grey as the neighbours' (Bertram, Furniture, Structure, Infrastructure: Making and Using the Urban Environment) and the surrounding tree trunks and foliage. Such mimicry of contextual elements allows the house to blend back into the site.

Blurring Territories

The house and cladding extends to create an undercroft, which was another important feature in creating the integrated public-private territory. This strategy presents an 'opportunity for kids to cut the corner', on their way home or en-route to the neighbouring sports fields; and



Fig 41. Elwood Undercroft

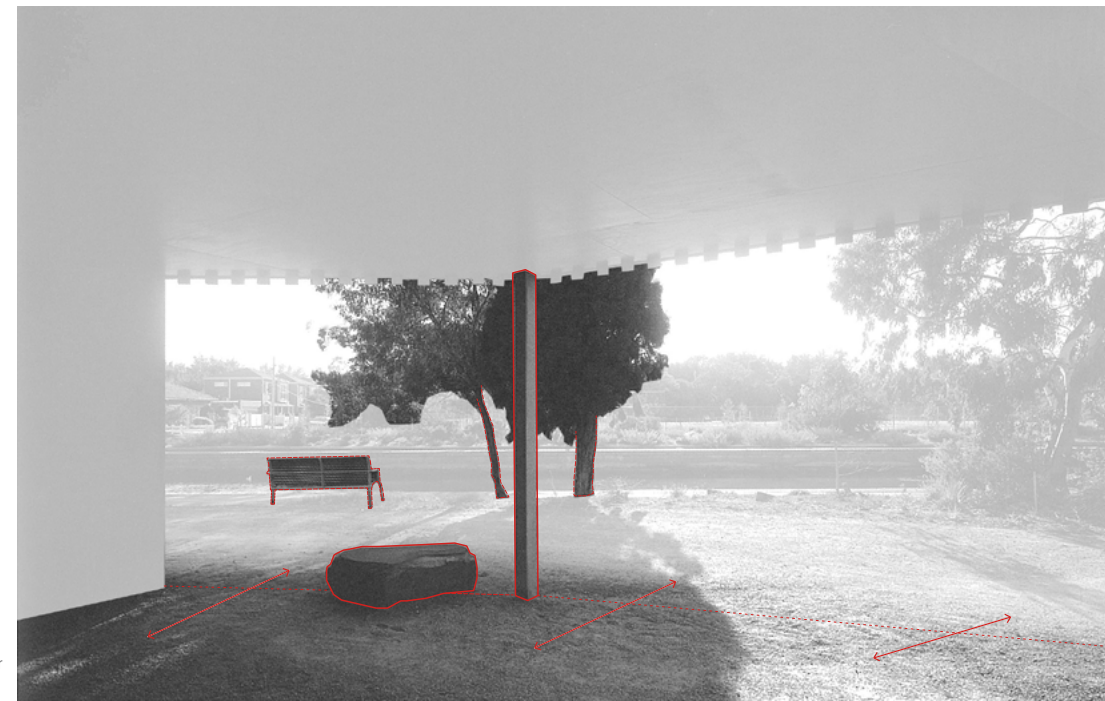


Fig 42. Elwood Blur

conversely allows 'residents to scatter chairs into the public domain' (Bertram, Furniture, Structure, Infrastructure: Making and Using the Urban Environment). The blurry demarcation of space was achieved by a simple extension of gravel out into the public area. This act stitched the two areas together, allowing the inhabitants of one space to occupy the other. The post and stone reflect the tree trunks and seating of the public realm which create visual cues to denote that there is an open relationship between these spaces.

This project highlights the effectiveness of small gestures that can have a catalytic effect on larger scale systems. Through mimicking contextual elements and extending materials, the house slips into the site and opens up in places, creating a reciprocity of space between the public and private realms. These actions go against the conventional demarcation of ownership and in turn provide greater potential for social interactions between the residents and their community.

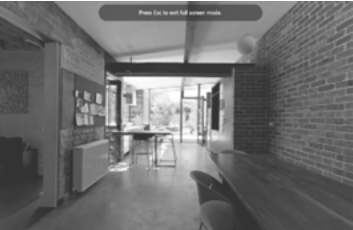
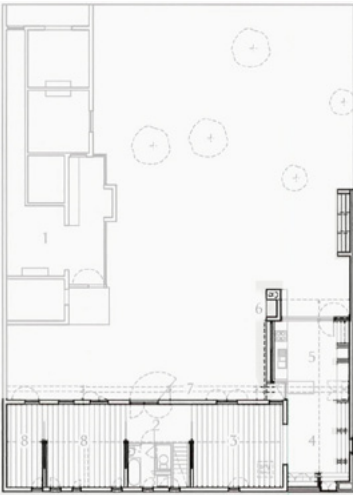


Fig 43. Brunswick Plan
Fig 44. Brunswick Inside

CORE: BRUNSWICK HOUSE
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA
NMBW
2012

Project Description

In Brunswick, Bertram was asked to retrofit an old stable and townhouse into a coherent home for the clients. The brickwork of the stable and perimeter fence had such a presence within the site that he developed the new structures around and within what was existing. ‘This is a direct manifestation of the importance... on working with “specificity”, whereby found conditions are not only preserved, but also celebrated’ (Ward).

The boundary fence was degraded and needed to be completely rebuilt. ‘Because it had to be rebuilt, it needed to meet new [building] codes, so it had a series of buttresses and piers to stabilise it’ (Bertram, Lines of Thinking). This provided an opportunity to integrate the functional aspects of the house into a type of core structure. The buttresses became alcoves for the kitchen and seating, and the spacing between the boundary wall and the chimney provided living space.

Patch Stability

What these structures provided was the ability to contain vital, formal functions within the core. The space between the two edges of the core had no permanent structure to signify a single use. It was rather a communal space, shared between the stable house and the town house. It gave the development variety in structure, where patches of stability are produced within the core, and spaces around it could be appropriated in various ways over time.

This idea prompted further exploration where Bertram would use the idea of the core – representing stability and permanence, and the shed – representing informality, looseness and appropriability. In thinking this way, inspiration can be taken from what exists – incorporating and celebrating it as critical structure for development.

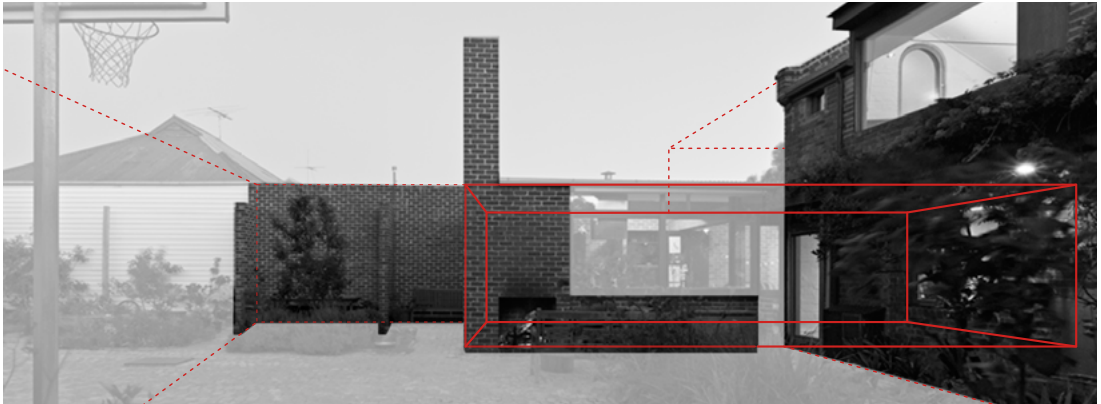


Fig 45. Brunswick Core

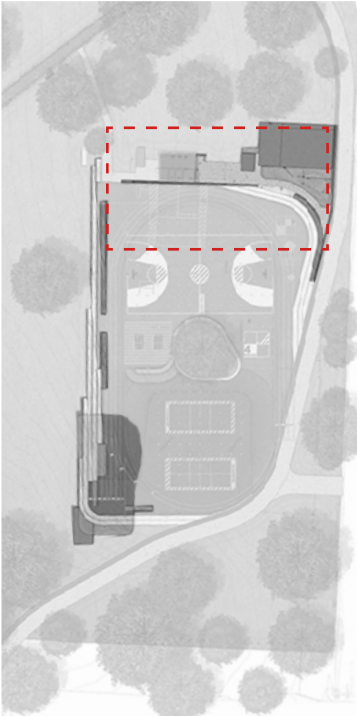


Fig 46. Box Hill Plan

Project Description

The line of thinking was continued in the joint venture development of Box Hill Park by NMBW + Aspect studio. The park sits within a suburb which is undergoing large scale gentrification. As a result, the old and dilapidated tennis club needed an update. The proposal transformed the site into an ‘everything kind of space’ (Bertram, Lines of Thinking) where various sports and performances could take place, making it a contemporary activity space for the suburb.

Facilitating Core

The core-shed relationship was critical in achieving this ‘everything space’, where the site’s core aspects facilitated the fluctuating sport activities throughout the day. The building footprint of the old tennis club was used as the structure to set up play walls, performance plinths and seating. The height of the play wall provided the ability to attach a lean-to toilet block. So the core elements can be seen for their elemental form, not prescribing a single use, rather, they instigate a set of boundary conditions which activities can utilise.

This relationship of core-shed differs from that of Brunswick house because the core is the facilitator of all acts within the space – not just the vital functions. And, by using the core as the facilitator it allows the design to cater to three interlinking time scales: permanence – wall (1), semi-permanent – toilet block (2), temporary – sporting activities (3), enabling the design to react to various scales of change and disturbances.

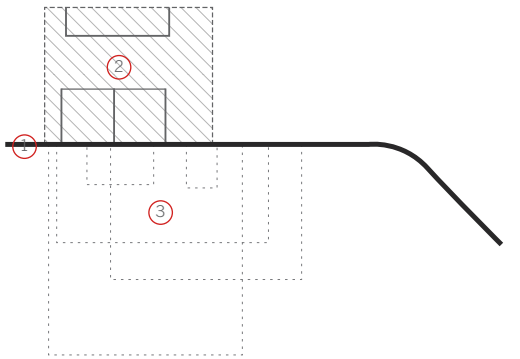


Fig 47. Box Hill Facilitating Core

CORE: BOX HILL PARK
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA
NMBW+ASPECT
2013

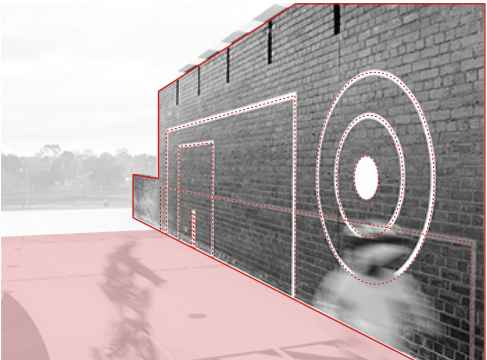


Fig 48. Box Hill Play Wall

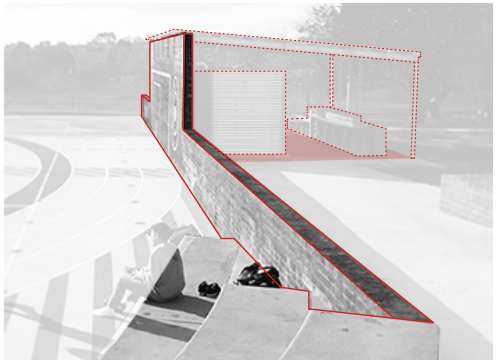


Fig 49. Box Hill Toilet Block

Tactics - Stability + Informality

Hinge (1) : The concept of the hinge is one of thresholds that set up relationships at the interface of territories. It touches all aspects of the situation, and by using variations of threshold it can both mitigate + blend, and define + amplify actions within the context of the site. The tools used here to create such relationships were: repetition + continuity – to give structure that does not imply use – and rigidity + transparency/blurring – to relate internal functions and external conditions.

Core (2): The concept of the core is about utilising the integral structures of a site in order to bring stability to permanent functions whilst allowing for variation around or between. The case studies show how these existing structures can be highlighted and engaged with in two ways: to contain vital functions and allow temporal acts around it, or to facilitate the temporal directly.

Given the difference in application of the hinge + core, their key principles and tactics are well aligned. The aim of both strategies is to create levels of formality + informality, and varied relationships between both the internal functions of the sites and their context. They achieve this through providing patches of stability and informality that allow the projects to evolve and adapt to shifting relationships and conditions.

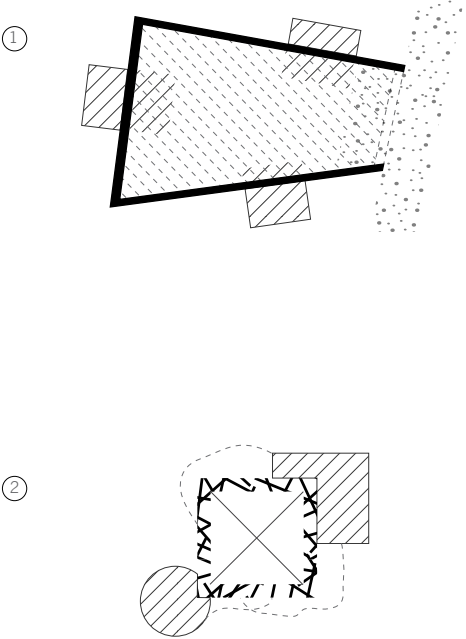


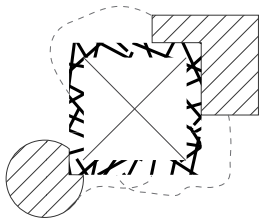
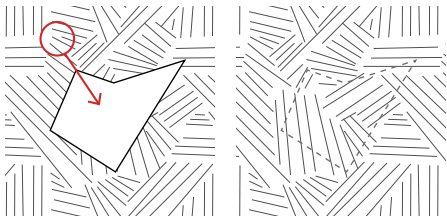
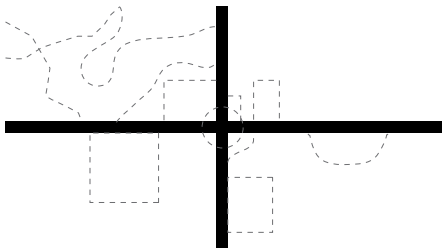
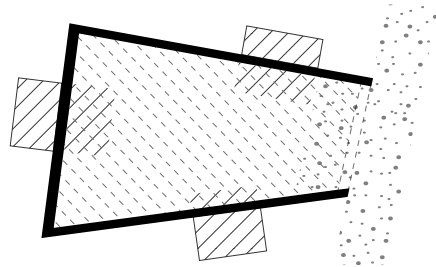
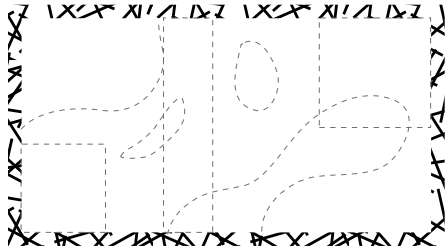
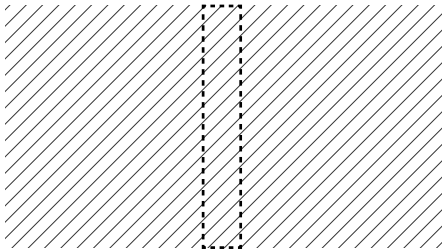
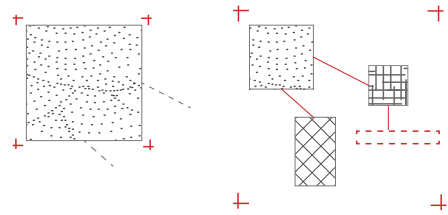
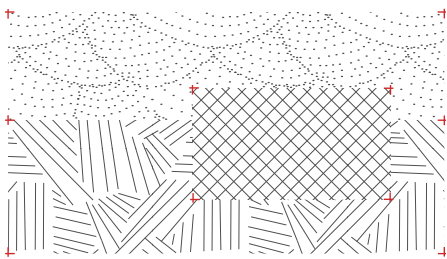
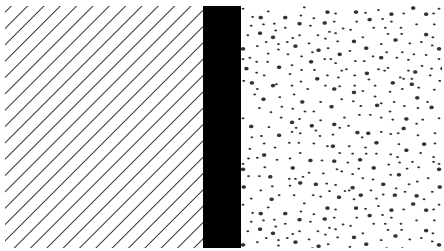
Fig 50. Stability + Informality Tactics

Case Studies Conclusion

What these case studies have highlighted is the diversity of gaps, not only in size and location but also in how that engage with their surroundings. The tactics they implore are as diverse as the situations themselves; however, there are key threads and principles that run through all examples.

The importance of relating to their surroundings: whether segregating (Maidan) or integrating the design with its context, is that the relationships set up provide key interactions between the users and the site. Often the projects have a varied approach allowing integration/ segregation to occur in catalytic points of the intervention. This leads to the second commonality – the edge: As the relationship with the context is vital then consideration of the edge condition(s) presented by the intervention is paramount. In all examples these thresholds have been the make or break point of the project’s success. Finally, and perhaps the most important principle, is the provision of stability and looseness. In providing structure and letting patches be more informal, the project has both certainty and the ability to evolve. It is a method that builds latency into the system, ensuring the site’s performance over time.

I believe the concept of looseness or loose space is the connection to all of the aforementioned principles. It ties together stability and informality, appropriation, latency; it is the foundation for the link between gaps and resilience, and as such is the impetus for this thesis. The following chapter will explore the concept of loose space and its relevance to designing within gaps.



5 Loose Space

Loose spaces are places that enable people to exercise their freedom of choice (Proshansky), allowing them to be active pursuers of their own interests. Rather than being captive audiences or passive consumers in a designed world that mandates what happens in a site (Rivlin 40), freedom of choice offers a different kind of opportunity, it allows people to engage in the potential of space.

Fig 51. Overall
Tactics



Fig 52. A Light Read

Introduction

To define what constitutes loose space, it is perhaps easier to describe what it is not. Loose space is set up in opposition to ‘tight’ space. These are spaces that are heavily programmed, with extensive rules and prescribed ways of being used (Sommers, 1974). Loose space can be defined as ‘space that has been appropriated by citizens to pursue activities not set by a predetermined programme’ (Franck, Stevens and Rivlin 29).

From this definition, it could be said that the user is the instigator of loose space, appropriating it to fit his/her needs. Yet the activities must still respond to the site’s inherent rules: social norms of the given society, and the physical make-up of that particular site (although this is debatable in the case of illegal activities). For example on a motorway, you could sit on the side rail and read the newspaper or eat an ice cream, but you wouldn’t. A space can be appropriated in an infinite amount of ways, but set within a context of existing structure and programmes, the uses become more finite. The distinction between loose and tight space is blurred; all space sits on a scale of looseness ranging from monofunctional (tight) to multivalent (loose).

Fig 53. Loose - Tight Scale



Studies of Loose Space

Studies within Loose Space: Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life (Franck, Stevens and Rivlin) tend to focus on the dense urban environments of eastern countries such as Bangkok, Hong Kong and South Korea, whilst mentioning Central Park, Leicester Square, and other western parks as equivalents. The studies have a focus on the social structure of the sites and their surroundings.

Other examples such as By-Product Tokyo (Bertram, Murray and Neustupny) and Opportunistic Urbanism (Ramirez-Lovering and Ugarte), which study Tokyo and Guadalajara respectively, undertake similar studies. Whilst both do not specifically refer to loose space, they study the affordances of gaps within the city, and tend to focus more on the physical make-up of sites that contribute to their appropriation.

These studies highlight certain attributes of loose space; however they all have a common lack – the application of the discovered principles through design. In order to translate these analyses to designs, I have developed a method that synthesises the relevant points of the physical environment, the social context in which it sits, and their influence on uses and appropriations.



Fig 54. Loose Space Cover



Fig 55. By Product Tokyo Cover



Fig 56. Opportunistic Urbanism Cover

The concepts of affordance and assemblage expand on Kahn’s ‘ground-up’ concept. They help to strengthen the understanding of loose space and the application of its principles as a design method.

Affordances take away the flattening of things caused by categorisation and arbitrary naming. It looks less into what the thing is and more about what the thing does – its ability. Gibson gives the example:

‘The fact that a stone is a missile does not imply that it cannot be other things as well. It can be a paperweight, a bookend, a hammer or a pendulum bob. It can be piled on another rock to make a cairn or a stone wall. These affordances are all consistent with one another. The differences between them are not clear-cut. If you know what can be done with a graspable detached object, you can call it whatever you please.’ (Gibson 134)

To make such observations you must view the object in relation to who is using it. The physical properties must be measured ‘relative to the posture and behaviour of the animal being considered’ (Gibson 127). Furthermore the use is also in response to the social norms, as Anderson describes: ‘even the conforming use of a coffin is not determined by its physical form alone. Humour and horror movies remind us that one may sleep or lurk or eavesdrop or be smuggled in a coffin’. So its use of an object is restricted by how we culturally view accepted behaviour relative to the shape and symbolic meaning behind it (Anderson 2).

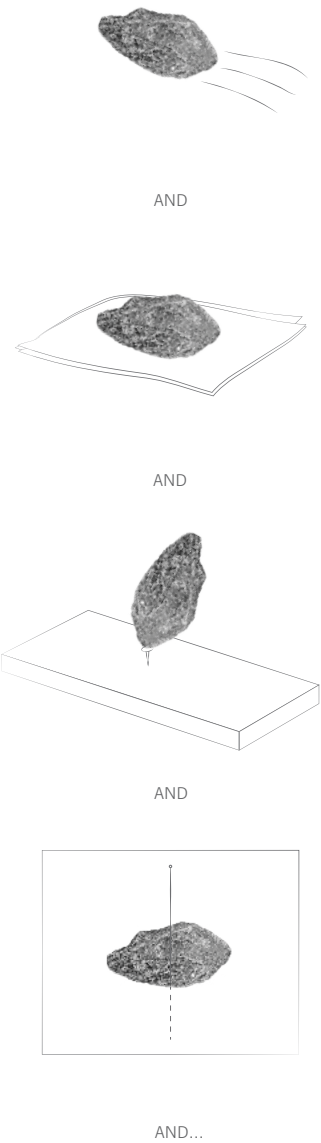


Fig 57. The Andness of Things

To further the understanding of the affordance, it must be placed in relation to all other things of contextual relevance. Assemblage thinking is an effective way to enable such observations. An assemblage can be thought of as a sum of parts that come together to create various abilities (IMAGE), it is the constant unfolding of relations between user and space, animal and habitat, organism and environment. Deleuze and Guattari describe it as ‘a multiplicity which is made up of heterogeneous terms which establishes relationships between things’ (Deleuze and Guattari). These relationships are not bound by scale and therefore the assemblage takes into consideration elements and influences at multiple scales.

Conclusion

What these two concepts suggest is an ecological understanding of how acts unfold within, and in response to, space. Through mapping the affordances and assemblages of ecologies that exist, we can start to tinker with them, tweaking, adding, subtracting, and manipulating elements within the existing assemblage to create new affordances. For loose space, this method provides the bridge between observation and design, turning the analysis of appropriations into design solutions that engage in and build upon the latency of the site.

Smoking Culture



+

Friends



+

Physical Setting



=

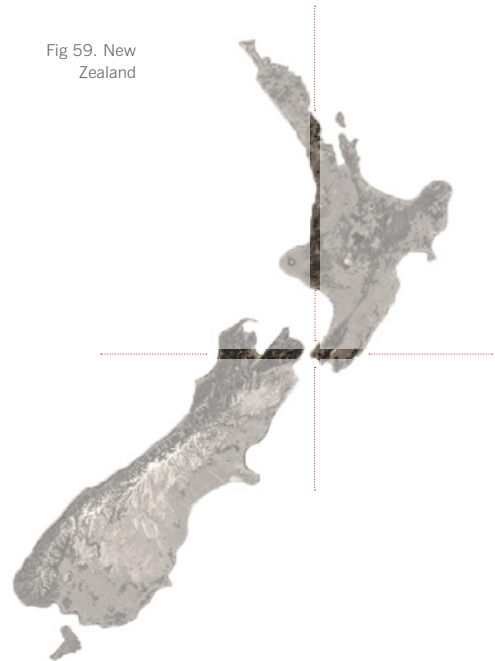
Social Smoking Outside



Fig 58. Social Smoking Outside

6 Establishing Context

Fig 59. New Zealand



Site Introduction

Wellington City is situated on the Southern tip of the North Island, NZ. The city rests between two major ridge lines (east and west) which frame the city, separating the urban from the residential. The area can be broken down into four distinct zones: 1) Port (trade) - industry and shipping. 2) CBD (work) - Office buildings 5-10+ storeys. 3) Entertainment (play) - Cafes, theatres, galleries, shopping. 4) Residential (live). A green belt follows the ridge lines around the city, ensuring that nature is only a short walk away. The compact nature of Wellington densifies all aspects of urban living making it a cultural hub of New Zealand.

In this section I will break down the various layers that are contributing to the treatment and creation of gaps within Wellington focusing in on the suburb of Te Aro. This area was chosen because it presents diverse challenges, tensions and opportunities with the thresholds between zones and their inherent makeup.

Fig 60. Wellington
City Zoning Map

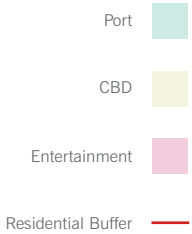


Fig 61. Kumutoto

A Brief Historical Context

The original plan by the New Zealand Company (Wilson) was a typical gridded set of one acre plots, and was intended to be laid out at what is now Petone (north of where Wellington is today). However once they arrived the site shifted to its current location and a detailed plan was drawn up. The local Māori, who had several Pa (settlements/blockades) within the area, welcomed the visitors believing it would bring stability and progression to their people (Wilson).

Trade firmly took root following the first influx of colonisers, but there was not enough accessible waterfront to cater for the expansion. Several large scale reclamations took place between 1862 and 1975 (Wellington City Council) providing land for storage and shipping and also expanding the public space network.

Over time the formalised and expansive port has been reclaimed for public use. Areas such as Kumototo (left) have been stripped of their sedentary-homogeneous nature, reimparted to free space.

Fig 62. Wellington
Reclamation

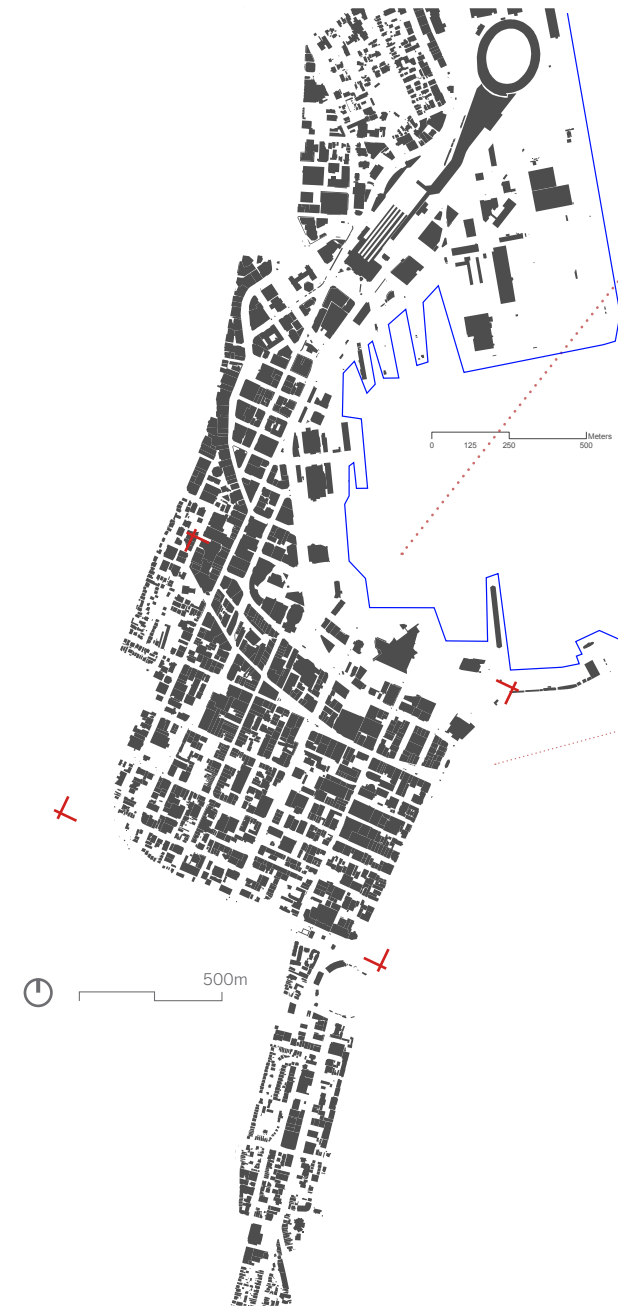
Fig 63. Wellington
Historical Plan 1865





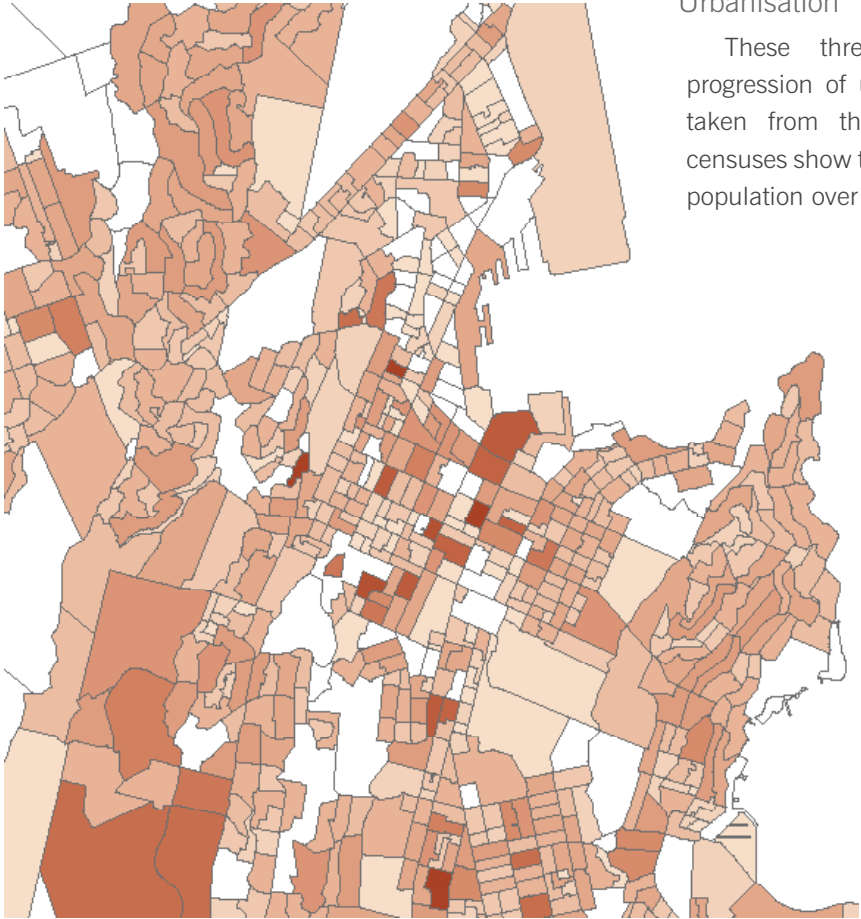
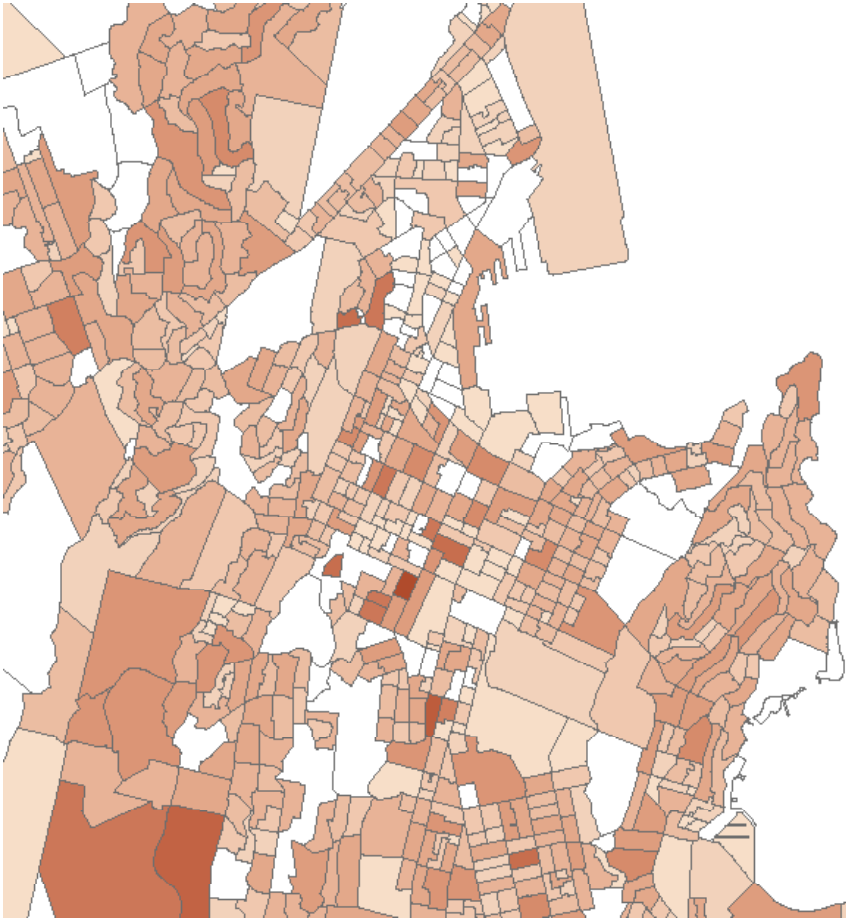
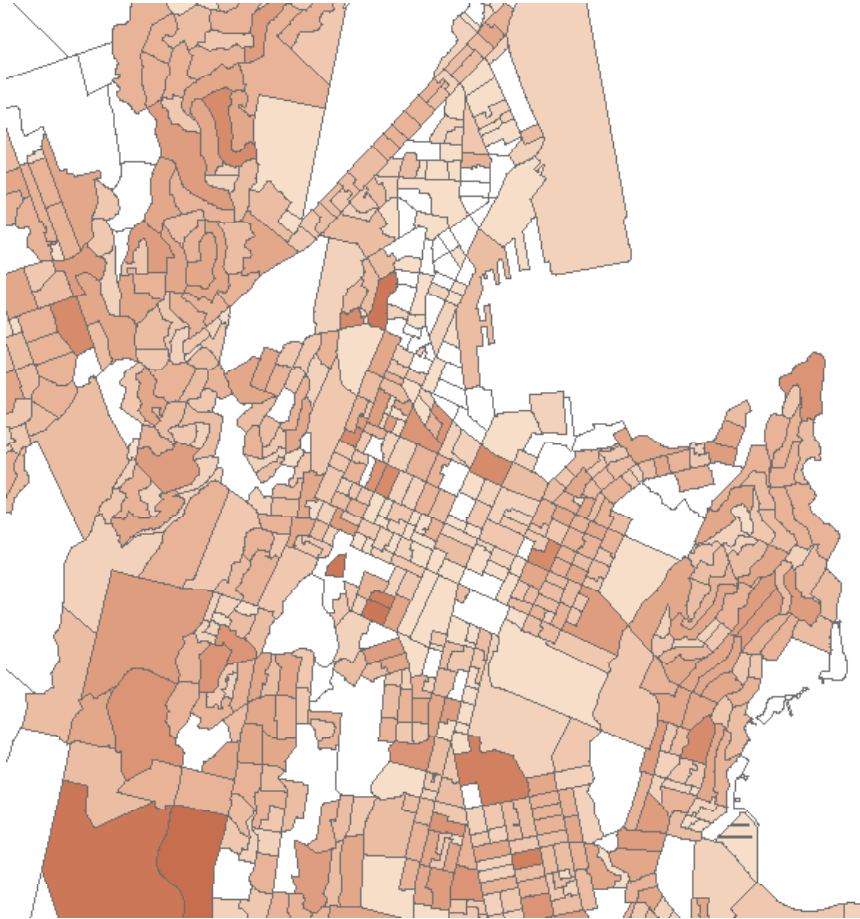
Fig 64. Topographic sections

Fig 65. Figure Ground



Intersecting Morphologies

The block morphology of the CBD dissolves into Te Aro, becoming more irregular. This transition can be seen in both the built form and the open space (ground). As the order dissipates to the south, the urban grain becomes finer and more intricate.



Urbanisation

These three diagrams highlight the progression of urban densification. The data taken from the 2001, 2006 and 2013 censuses show the core of Te Aro accumulating population over time.

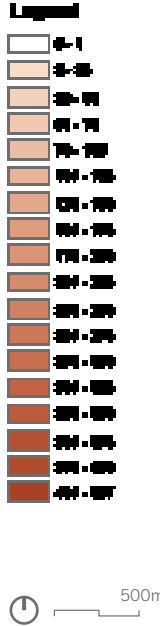


Fig 66. Urbanisation



Fig 67. Cultural Axes

Cultural Axes

There are two key streets that stand out in the city in terms of public life and character. Courtenay Place (east-west) and Cuba St (north-south). These two streets act as the cultural axes of Wellington, each having its own distinctive identity. Courtenay Place embodies Wellington's night-life; clubs, restaurants, movie theatres and strip clubs meet the sidewalk. Whereas Cuba St has more of a laid back-grungy feel to it. As they have many attractions along them, they are also key transitional routes to and from either side and through to the waterfront.

Fig 68. Cultural Axes
- Courtenay PlFig 69. Cultural Axes
- Cuba St

Te Aro 'Slum'

In the early 1900s the Te Aro flat, that encompassed Cuba St and Courtenay Pl, was densely populated with small make-shift homes (top left). The housing area catered to the working poor who sourced materials from wherever they could, slowly building up the structures over time. By the 1920s civic leaders painted the view of the area as a 'slum and an eyesore' (The Wellingtonian) in efforts to turn the area into a commercial and industrial precinct. By the 1950s the majority of the 'slum' had been demolished leading way to what exists today (Menzies).

Today, the urbanisation of Wellington has reinstated Te Aro as a popular residential area where many of the latest developments pay homage to the sites buried culture – re-projecting the historical aesthetic.

Fig 70. Te Aro
'Slums'

Fig 71. Havana Bar

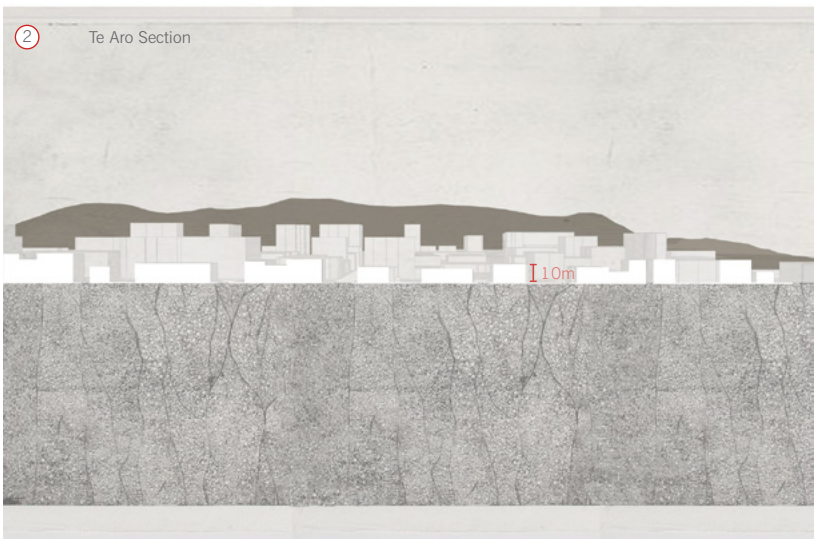
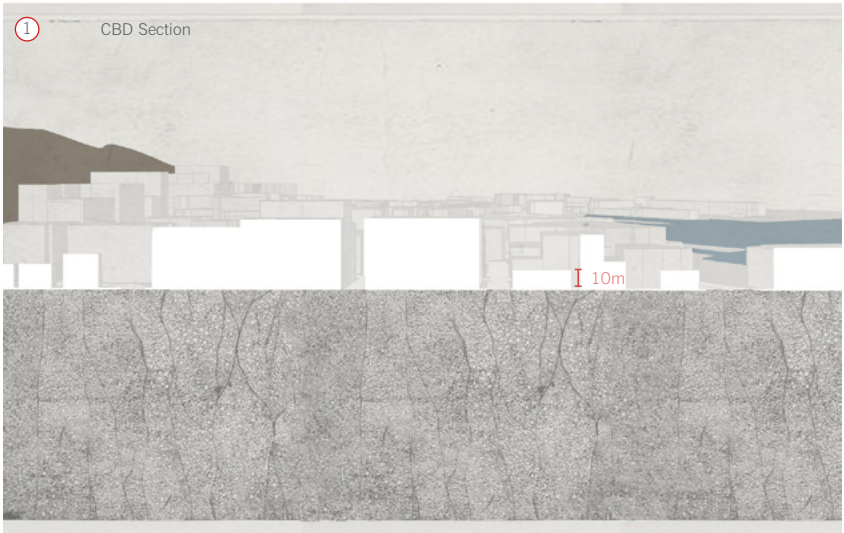
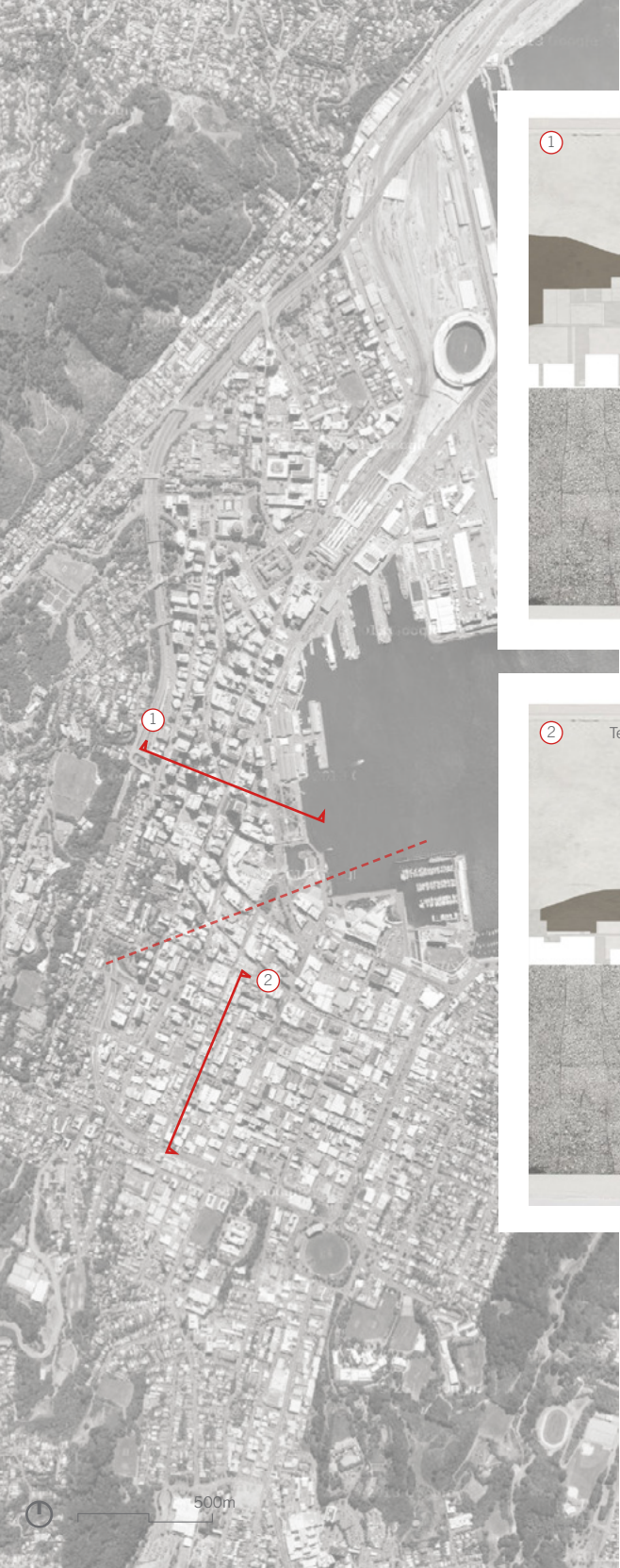


Fig 72. Typical Sections



Fig 73. Cuba St Gentrification

Gentrification

The typological threshold between the CBD and Cuba St is not static but nomadic. Over the course of 3-4 years Cuba St is slowly becoming gentrified. More and more high-end clothing and design shops are moving into the northern end, forcing the smaller boutique shops (which Cuba St is famous for) through to the southern end and out into Webb St.

Gentrification can be seen here as both a positive and a negative. As a positive it is seen as progress, making the space aesthetically pleasing or more efficient - also generating revenue from higher rent prices. From a negative point of view it applies a new image or identity to the site, blanketing over or erasing the existing culture completely. This presents the problem of maintaining the existing language, culture and identity of a place whilst trying to visually or structurally re-think it.

The recently completed shared space in 'Lower Cuba' (top right) exemplifies this situation where shops such as Cash Converters, and the Local Pub have been replaced by designer clothing shops and cafes. So while improving the aesthetic value and pedestrian orientation, the space has been 'given' a new identity.



Fig 74. North End of Cuba St 2014

Fig 75. North End of Cuba St 2012

With the constantly evolving states of urban development, applied identities, and nomadic gentrification, Te Aro has been left with gaps in the urban fabric. The gaps highlighted (right) are a network of open car park lots, catering to the car oriented society of today.

Although the blanket programming of car parks is heavy-handed, the sites are not as monofunctional as they first appear. They host a range of uses that vary in terms of significance, time, and formality. They often go overlooked because the majority of these other uses are cast as banal. But these acts – tying your shoe, sitting in the sun, eating lunch – are a vital part of everyday life and need more consideration if we are to recognise the potential of each of these sites. Furthermore, due to their shifting influences and irregular context no two are alike; each site is unique and needs to be treated as such.



Fig 76. Te Aro Gap Map

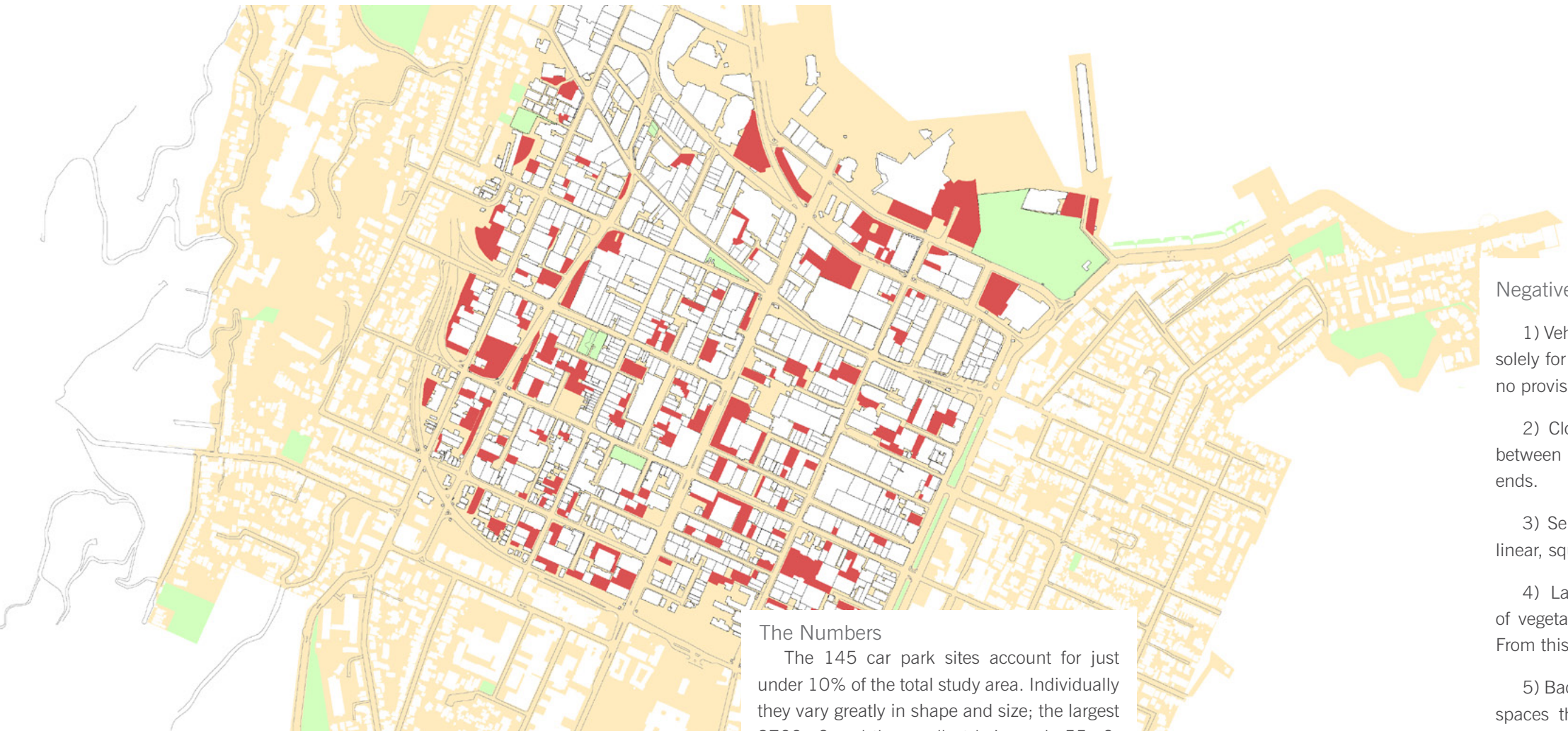


Fig 77. Te Aro Gap
Map Zoom

The Numbers

The 145 car park sites account for just under 10% of the total study area. Individually they vary greatly in shape and size; the largest 9700m2 and the smallest being only 55m2. They tend to number greater in the southern part of the site due to the finer grained built form. Although each is unique, there are some common threads that run through all, both positive and negative.

Fig 78. Gap
Negative Tendencies

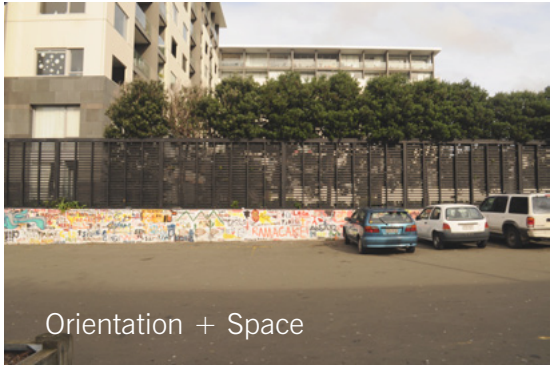
Negative tendencies

- 1) Vehicle Priority - the spaces are designed solely for the storage of vehicles, often having no provision for pedestrians.
- 2) Closed - given that they fill the voids between the buildings, they are often dead ends.
- 3) Service Space - some spaces are very linear, squeezed in between large buildings.
- 4) Lack adornment - only sporadic use of vegetation or range in surface treatments. From this the solar access is very limited.
- 5) Back of House - as they are often service spaces the side and back facades lack the attention of the street edge.





Pedestrian Shortcuts



Orientation + Space



Diverse Surroundings

Positive Tendencies

1) Pedestrian Shortcuts – some of the sites have multiple access points providing pedestrian permeability through the block creating shortcuts between major thoroughfares.

2) Orientation – the larger sites present well to the sun as they have wider gaps between buildings.

3) Space – as car parks have a ridged size and shape; trying to fit them into sites of irregularity means there will often be leftover space. Their layouts also vary in efficiency, some try to pack as many spaces in as possible whereas others have a lot more tolerance for easy parking.

4) Diverse Surroundings – the sites are bordered by cafes, thrift shops, apartments and offices. Whilst the sites tend not to actively engage with them, some programmes spill out into the sites – highlighting the potential to activate this threshold.

Fig 79. Gap Positive
Tendencies

7 Exploring Site

In order to grasp the qualities of what is happening on the ground I conducted a three day expedition, visiting each of the 145 sites, building a database of human scale notations and imagery.

Exploring Site - Day One



Fig 80. Site Visits
Day One

Exploring Site - Day Two



Fig 81. Site Visits
Day Two

Exploring Site - Day Three



Fig 82. Site Visits
Day Three



⌚ Not to scale

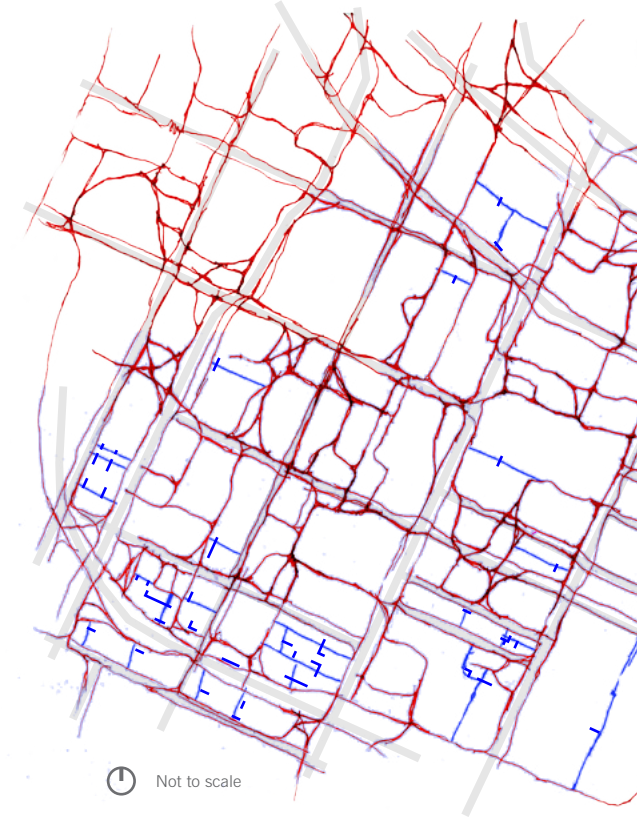
Fig 83. Secondary Pedestrian Network

Secondary Pedestrian Network

During the site visits it became apparent that collectively, the transitions through the gaps was providing for a secondary pedestrian network (above). This enabled shorter routes across the city through gaps. In some sites there were barriers that prevented access between some sites (blue dashes above).



Fig 84. Pedestrian Barrier



⌚ Not to scale

Fig 85. Secondary Pedestrian Network With new Cuts

To increase the porosity of the city the simple solution would be to take down these walls, providing access across relevant sites. If all the barriers were removed a further 30 links could be established.



Fig 86. Pedestrian Barrier Removed

Potential Pixel Map

To make sense of the potential discovered over the three day site visit I created a pixel map. Each cluster of pixels represents my intuitive response to the sites potential and reflect the locality of where the image was taken in the site. Some sites and areas have a higher density of pixels which suggests more potential for the design to engage in.

Fig 87. Potential Pixel Map

⌚ Not to scale

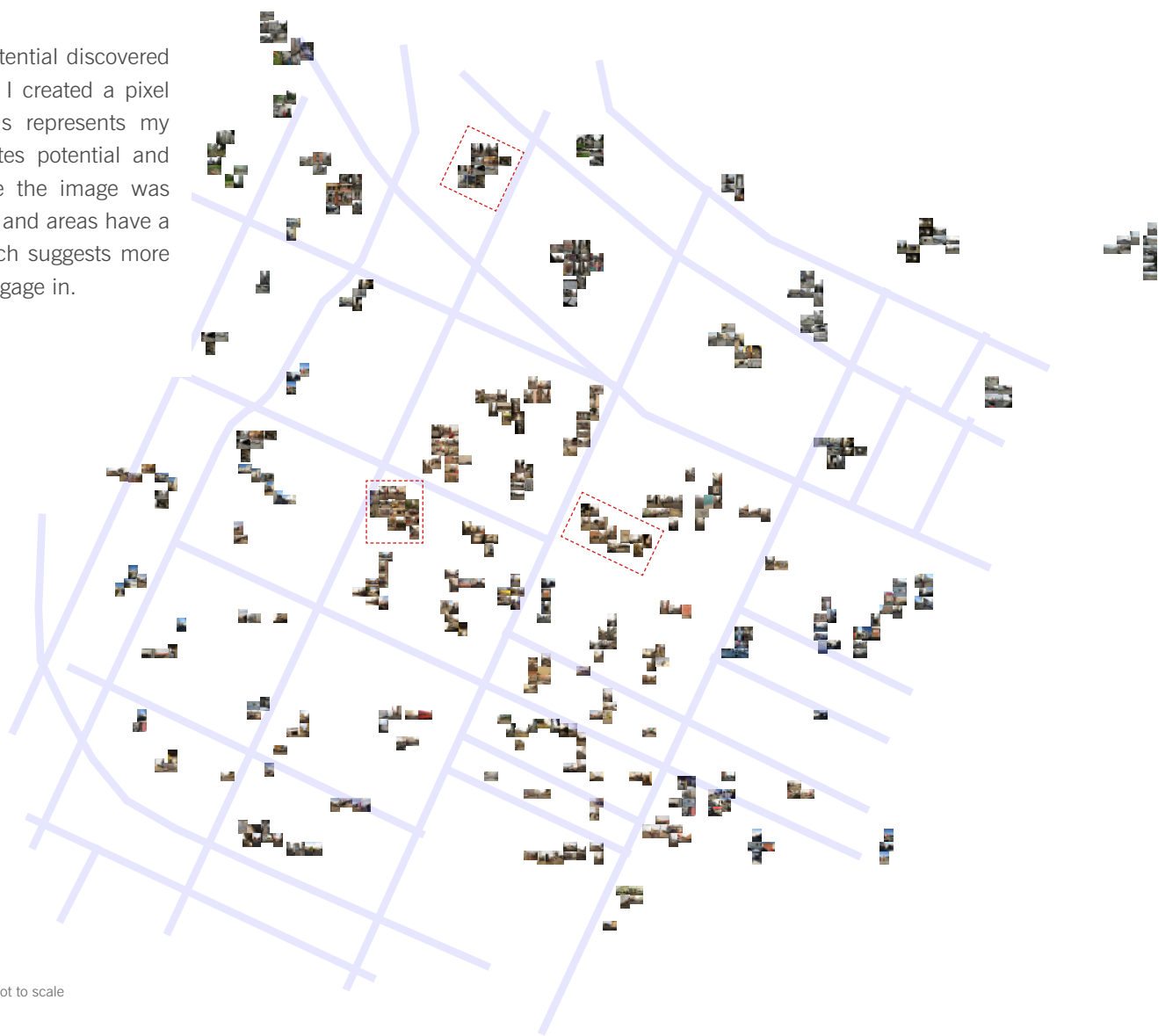


Fig 88. Pixels Bond St



Bond Street Car Park

This site is situated at the northern end of Cuba St, providing cut throughs between Cuba St, Courtenay PI and Victoria St. The site hosts a large car park building, coffee shops and service access to shops that front onto Courtenay PI.



Fig 89. Pixels Cuba St



Cuba Street Car Park

This site is located in the heart of Cuba St. It provides a key transitional crossing between Cuba St and Marion St with off shoots into Swan Ln. It is bordered by various cafes, restaurants, apartments and offices.



Fig 90. Pixels Holland St



Holland Street Car Park

This site provides links between Taranaki St, Tory St and York St (that leads to Courtenay PI). It hosts various community oriented services that relate to the sites defining feature - the Wesley Methodist Church. It neighbours a theatre and links to various cafes on Holland St.



Cuba St



Holland St

Fig 91. Cuba St

Fig 92. Holland St

Sites for Experimentation

Working ‘from the ground up’ and applying design tactics I aim to test the effectiveness of my method in uncovering the potential of gaps in facilitating appropriation. For these experiments I will focus in on two main sites: Cuba St and Holland St. As a sample, these sites represent the collective of gaps in their range of uses, qualities, structure and relation to their context.



Holland St Experimentation

Fig 93. Holland St Plan

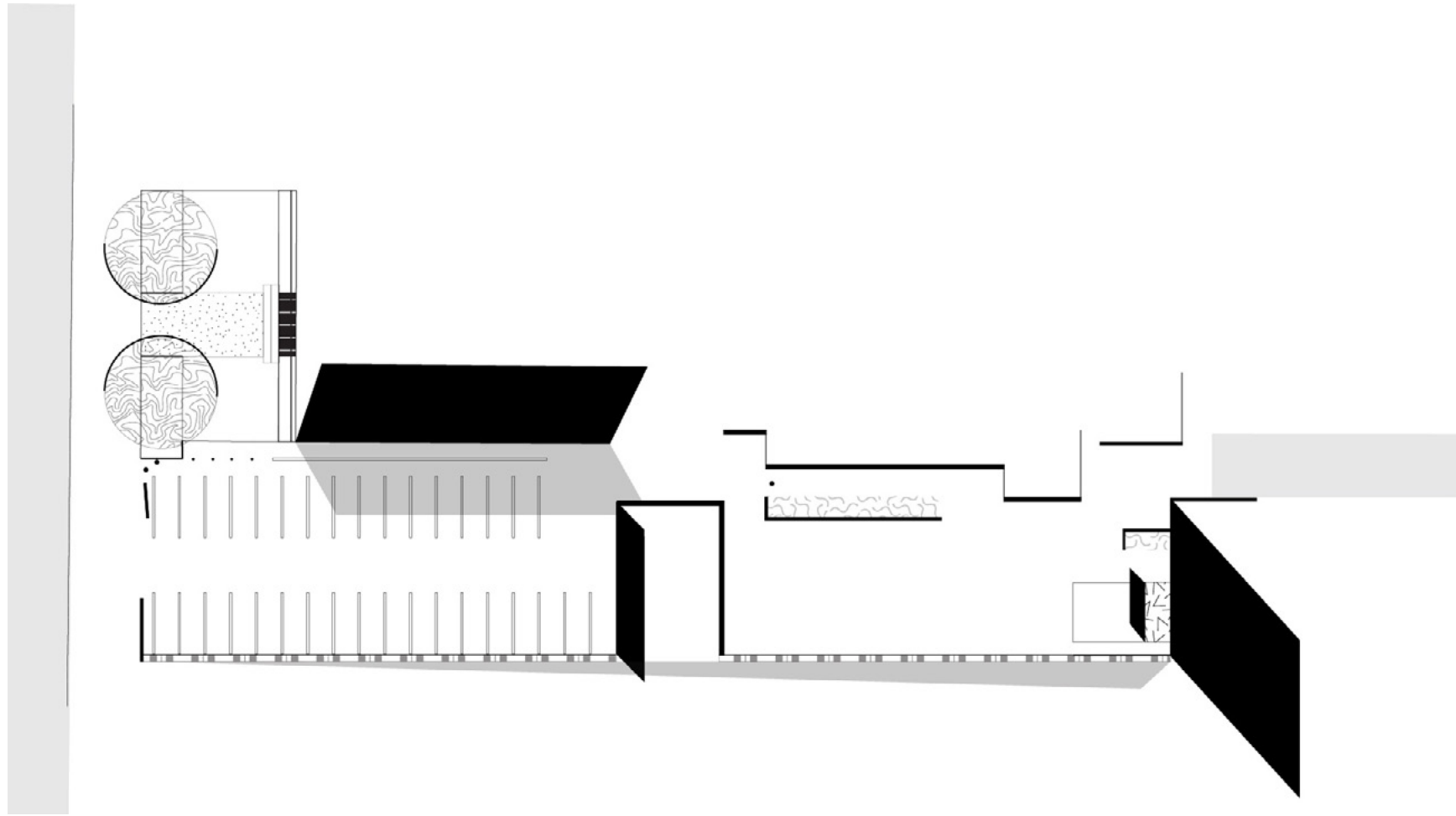


Fig 94. Holland St
Existing Site Plan

Holland St Solar Access

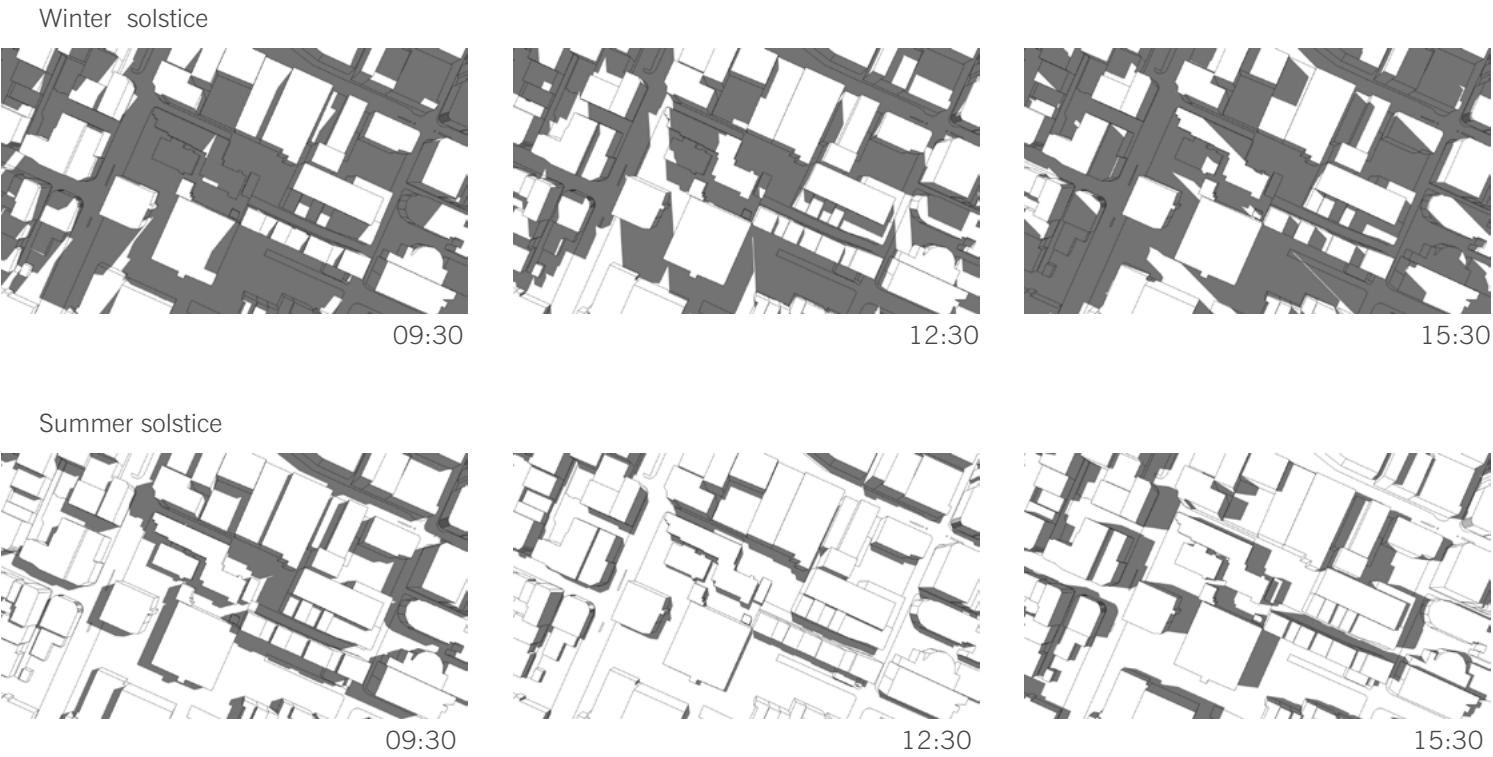


Fig 95. Holland St
Solar Access

Pedestrian Flow

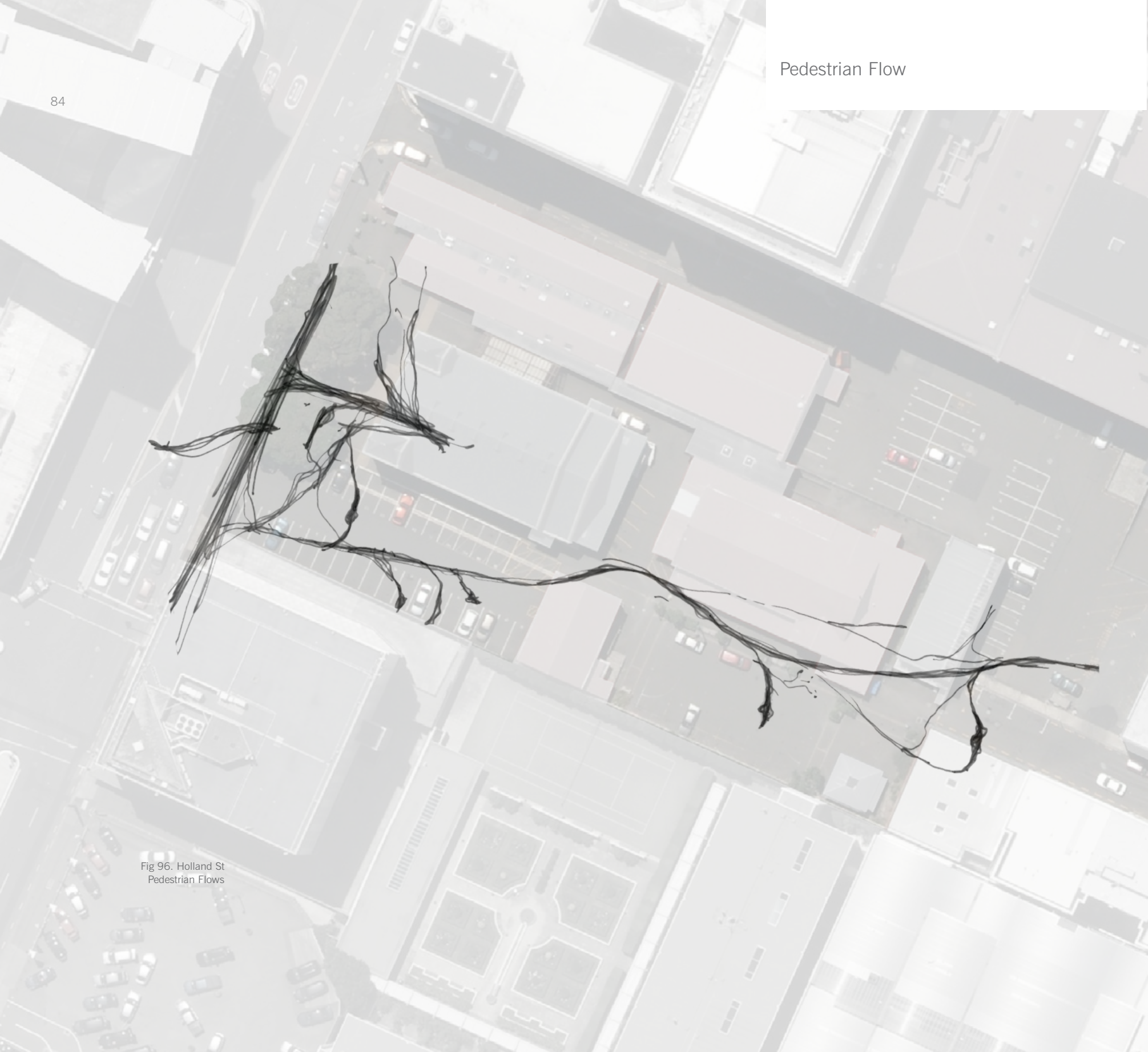


Fig 96. Holland St
Pedestrian Flows

Power of the Church

The Wesley Methodist Church dominates the site on Holland st. Its presence is felt in varying amounts throughout the site, going from very formal fronting the church to informal at the Tory St end of the site. This affect not only denotes the feeling but also the use.

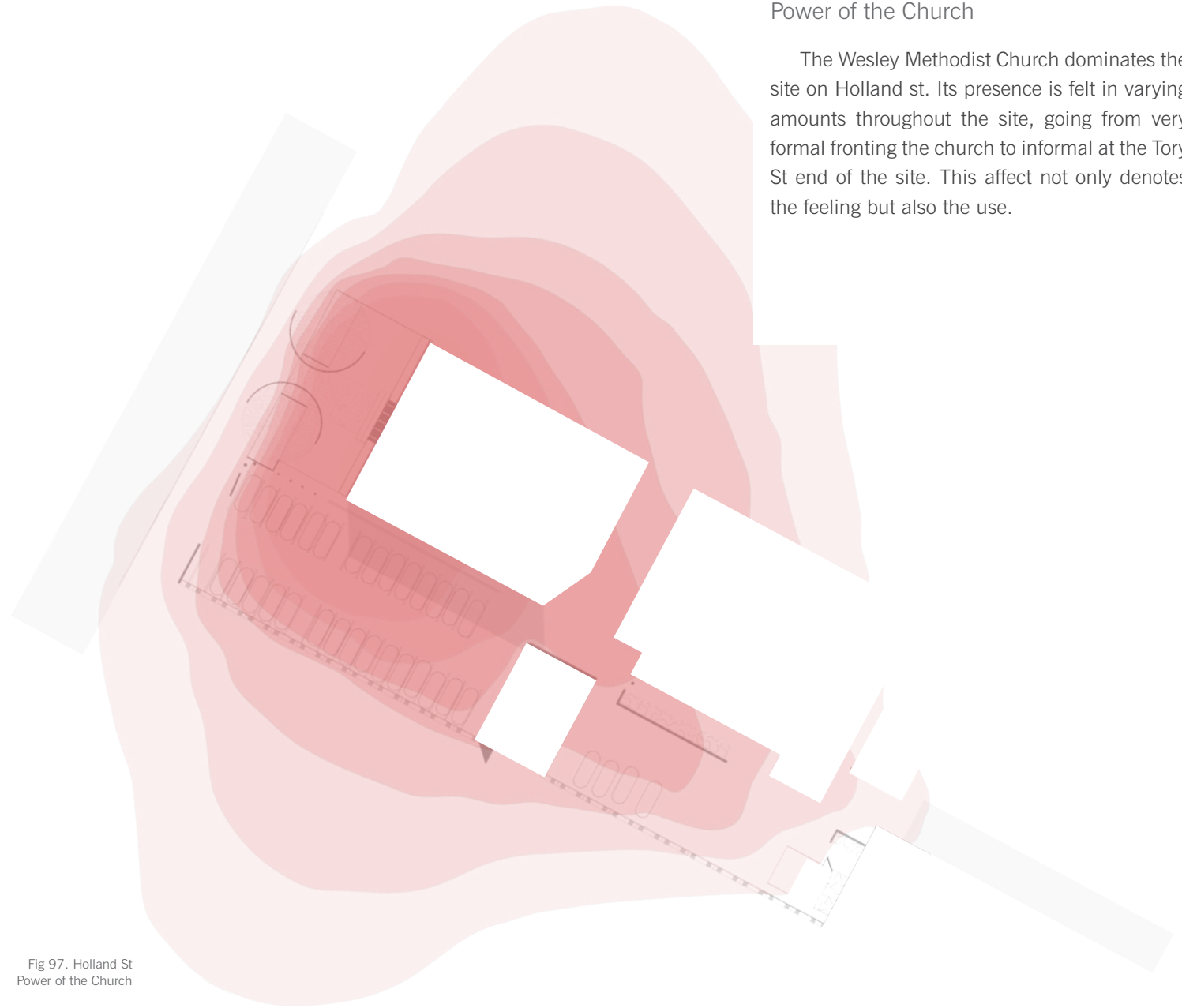


Fig 97. Holland St
Power of the Church

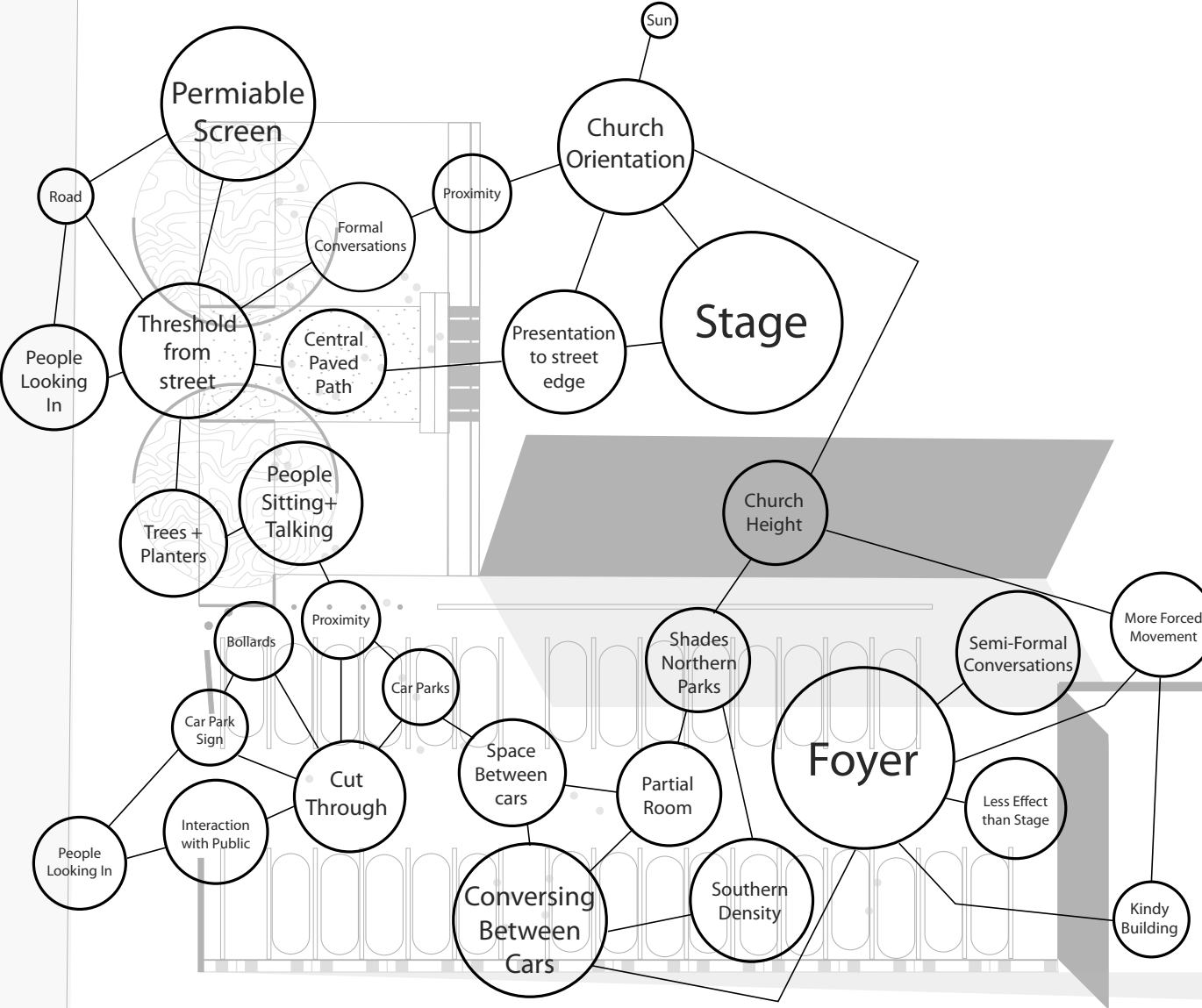
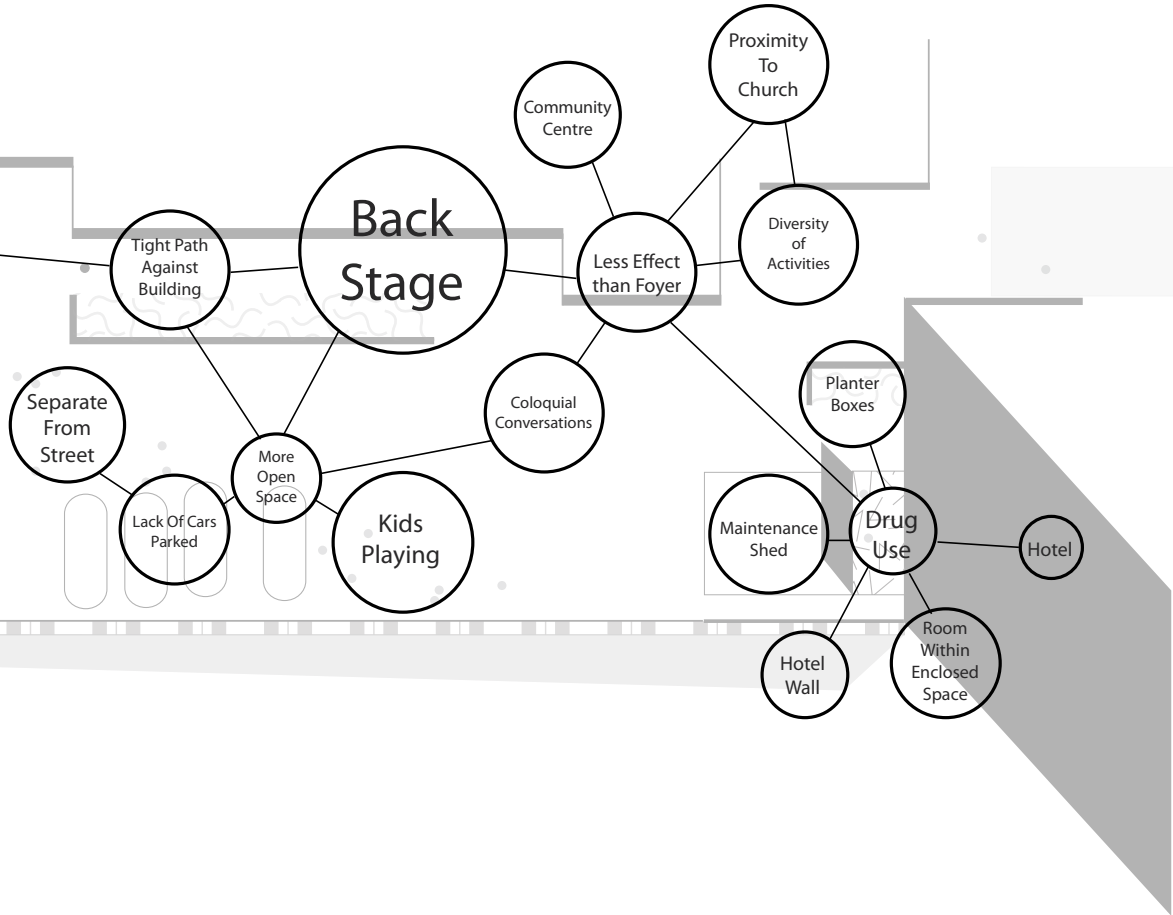


Fig 98. Holland St Assemblage



The Church as a Stage

Given the church effect, the overall site can be thought of as a theatre, having a stage, foyer and back stage.

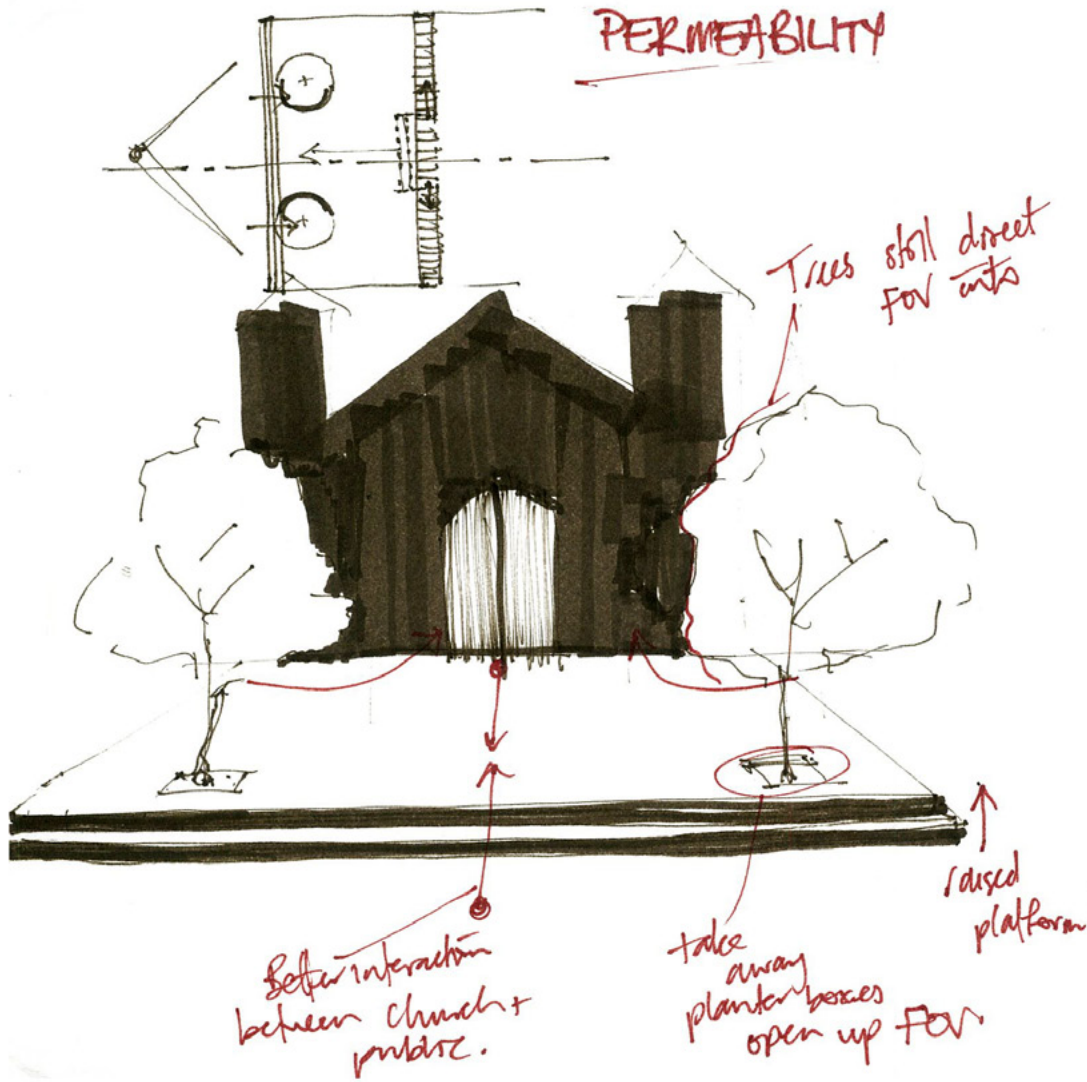
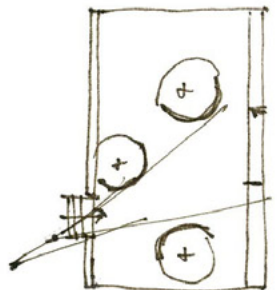
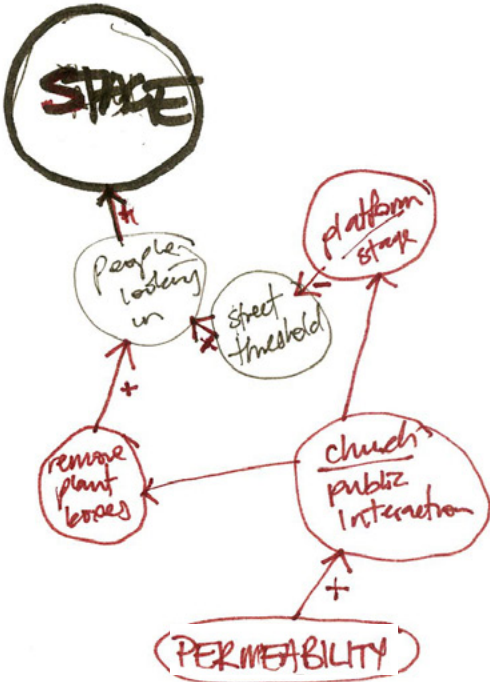


Fig 99. Holland St
Permeability



SECLUSION

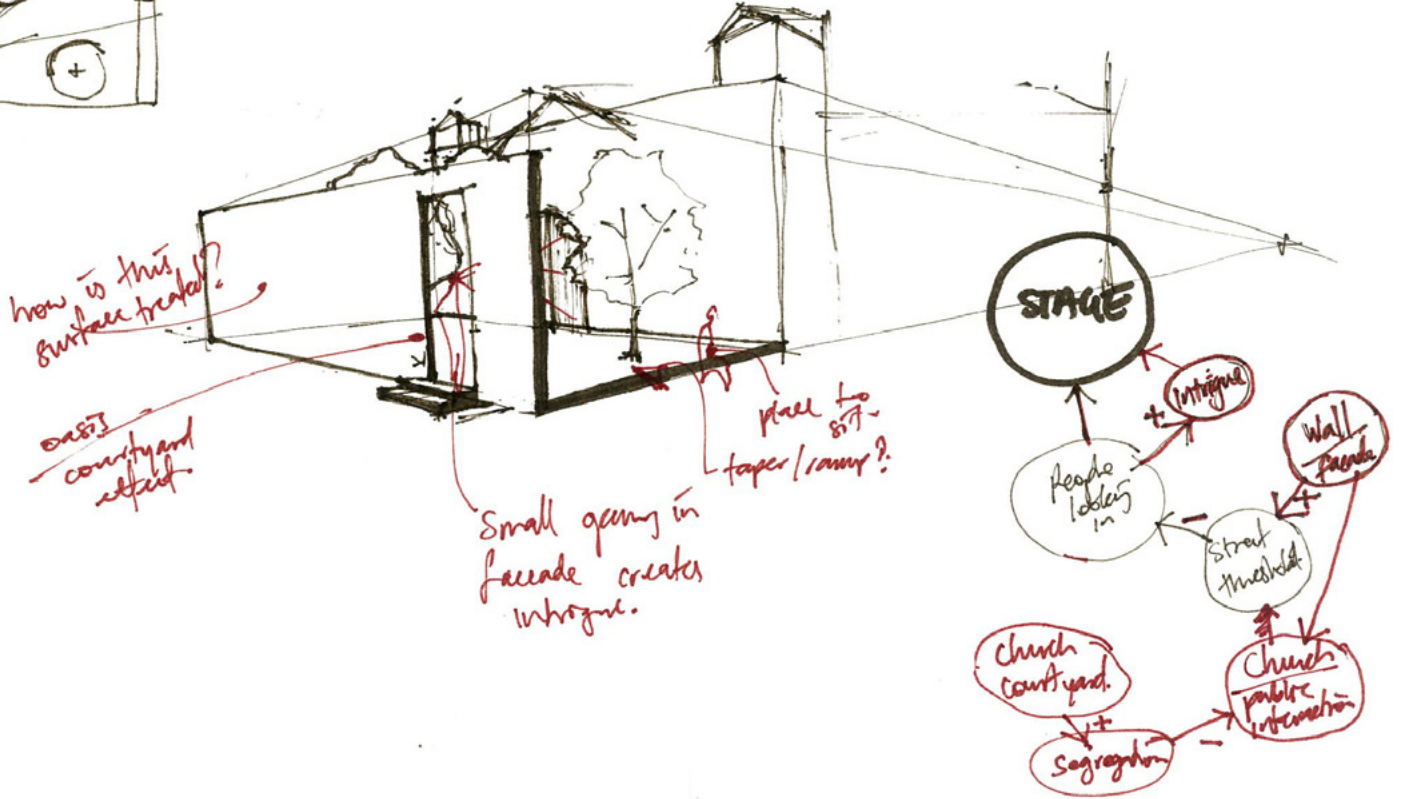


Fig 100. Holland St
Seclusion

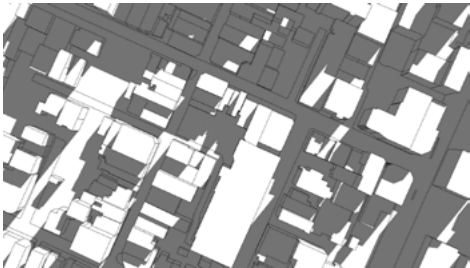
Cuba St Experimentation



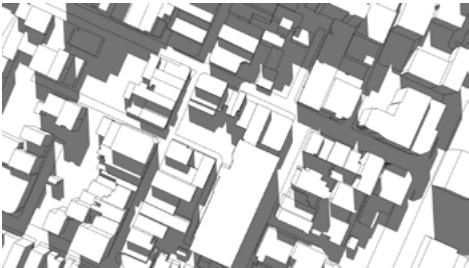
Fig 101. Cuba St
Plan

Cuba St Solar Access

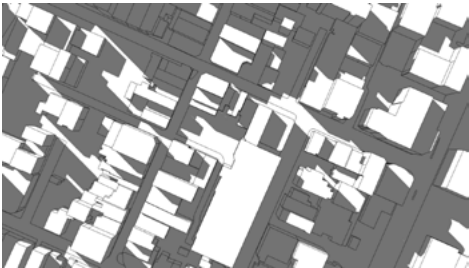
Winter solstice



09:30

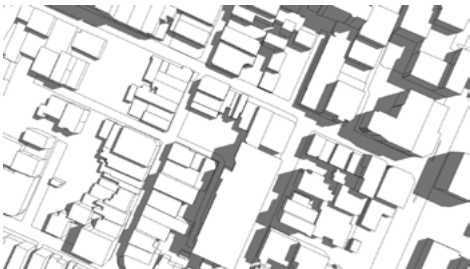


12:30



15:30

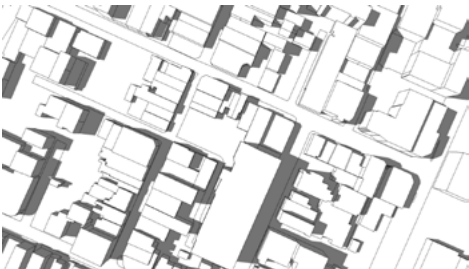
Summer solstice



09:30



12:30



15:30

Fig 102. Cuba St Solar Access

Surrounding Programmes

The Cuba St site is surrounded by a diverse range of cafes, restaurants, apartments and other shops (right). Significant programmes are Duke Carvell's, Floriditas and Kaffee Eis as they will be lingering points of pedestrians.

Fig 103. Cuba St Surrounding Programmes



Fig 104. Cuba Street design intervention.



Fig 105. Cuba St
existing plan

Existing Structure

The site consists of 56 carparks, scattered vegetation and an ambiguous 'shared' space (red). Car parking is very tight having minimal spacings of 5 x 2.5m per car at spacings of 5m.

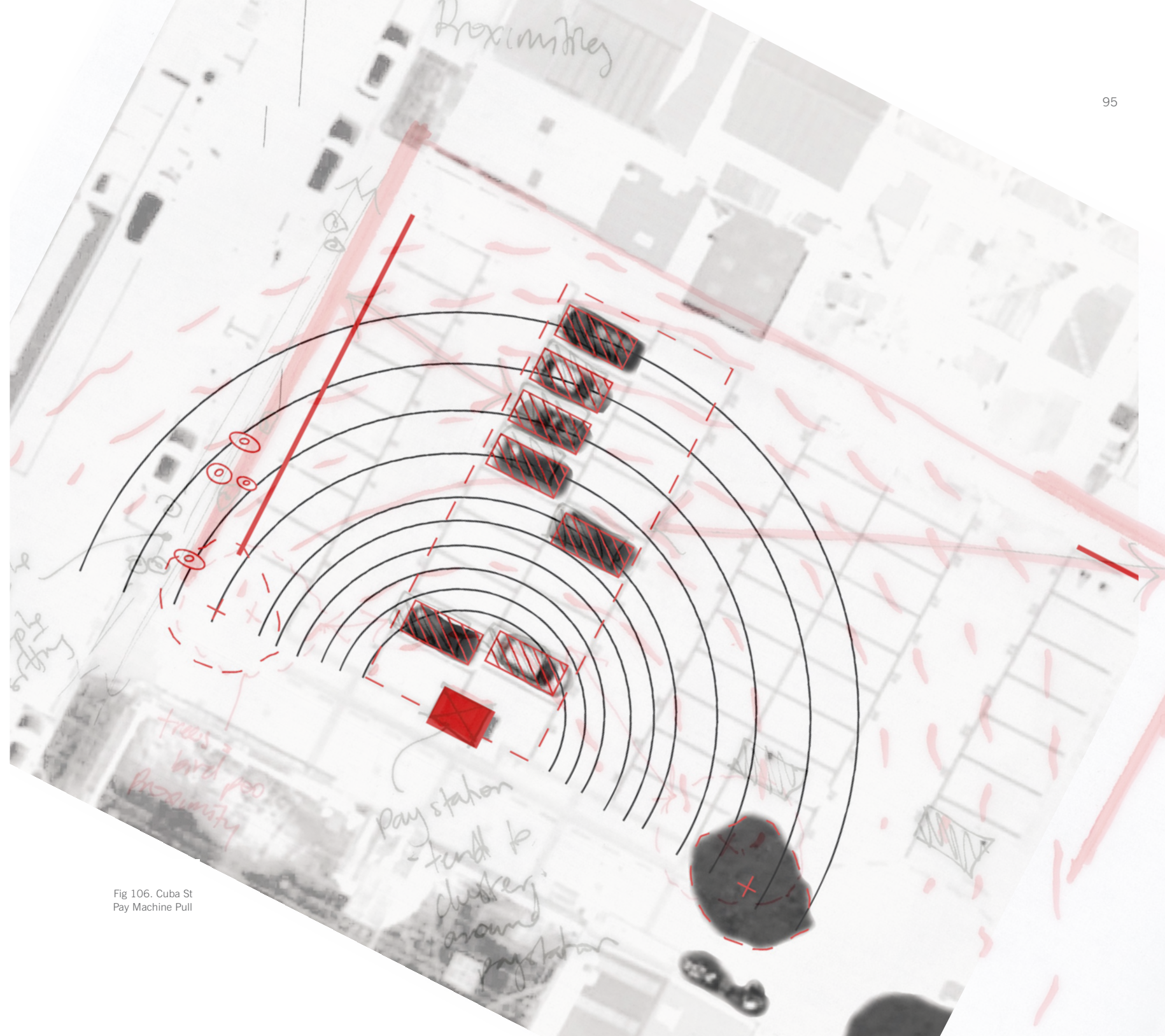


Fig 106. Cuba St
Pay Machine Pull



Fig 107. Lamp
Appropriation

Phone Call, Pause, Continue

The lamp post beckons the user to pause, talk and continue through to his destination. This set of singular actions requires the above assemblage yet the assemblage also reveals a new affordance - the cut through allowing the user to continue through to his destination

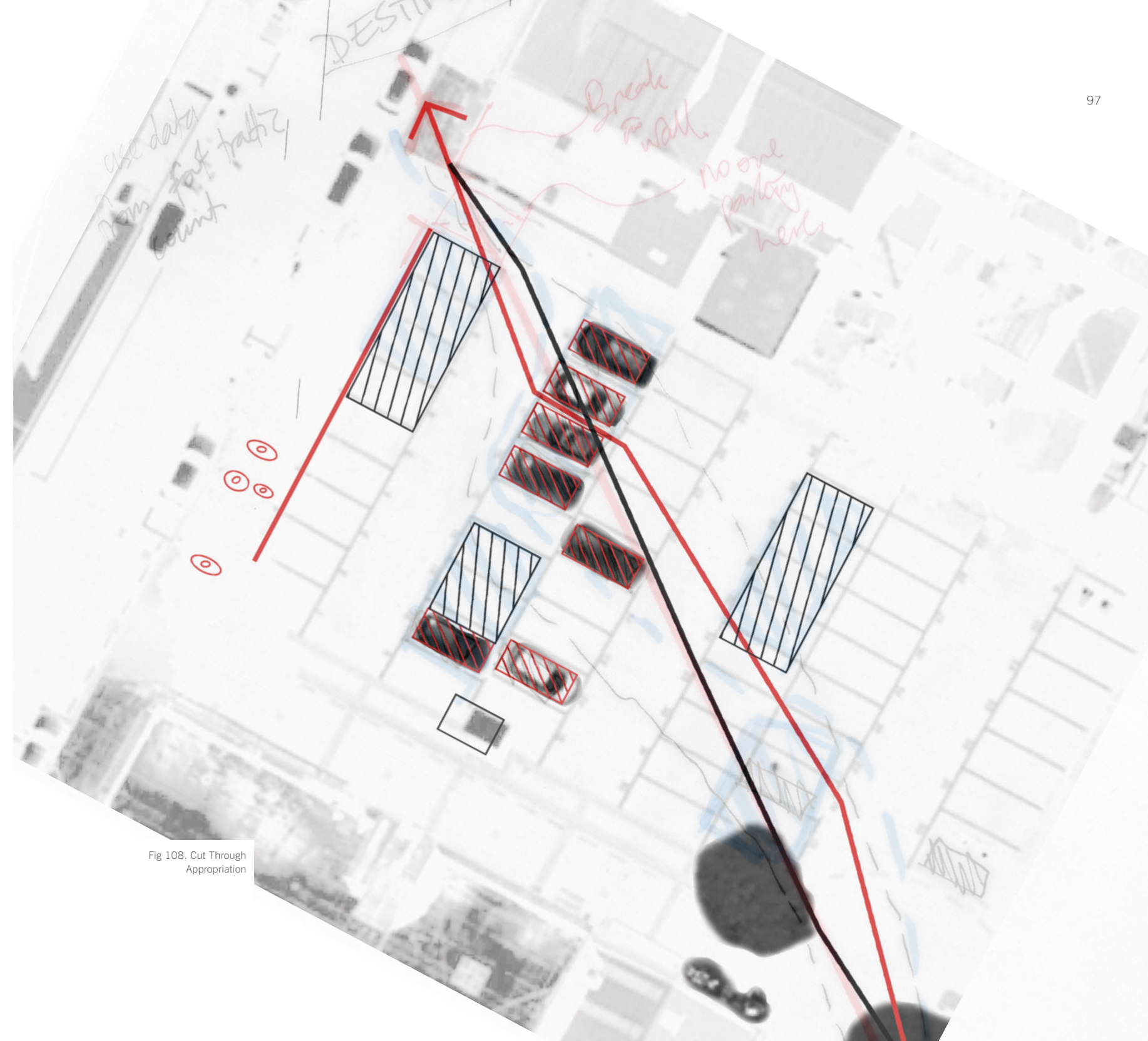


Fig 108. Cut Through
Appropriation



Fig 109. Outdoor Eating Appropriation

Outdoor Eating

Outdoor eating on Cuba St is enabled through the above assemblage. The surfacing and appropriation of the influential environment (affordance) by the restaurant Duke Carvell's has enabled subsequent functions such as people watching. This social aspect also is a key part in the formation of the primary activity.



Fig 110. Outdoor Eating Plan

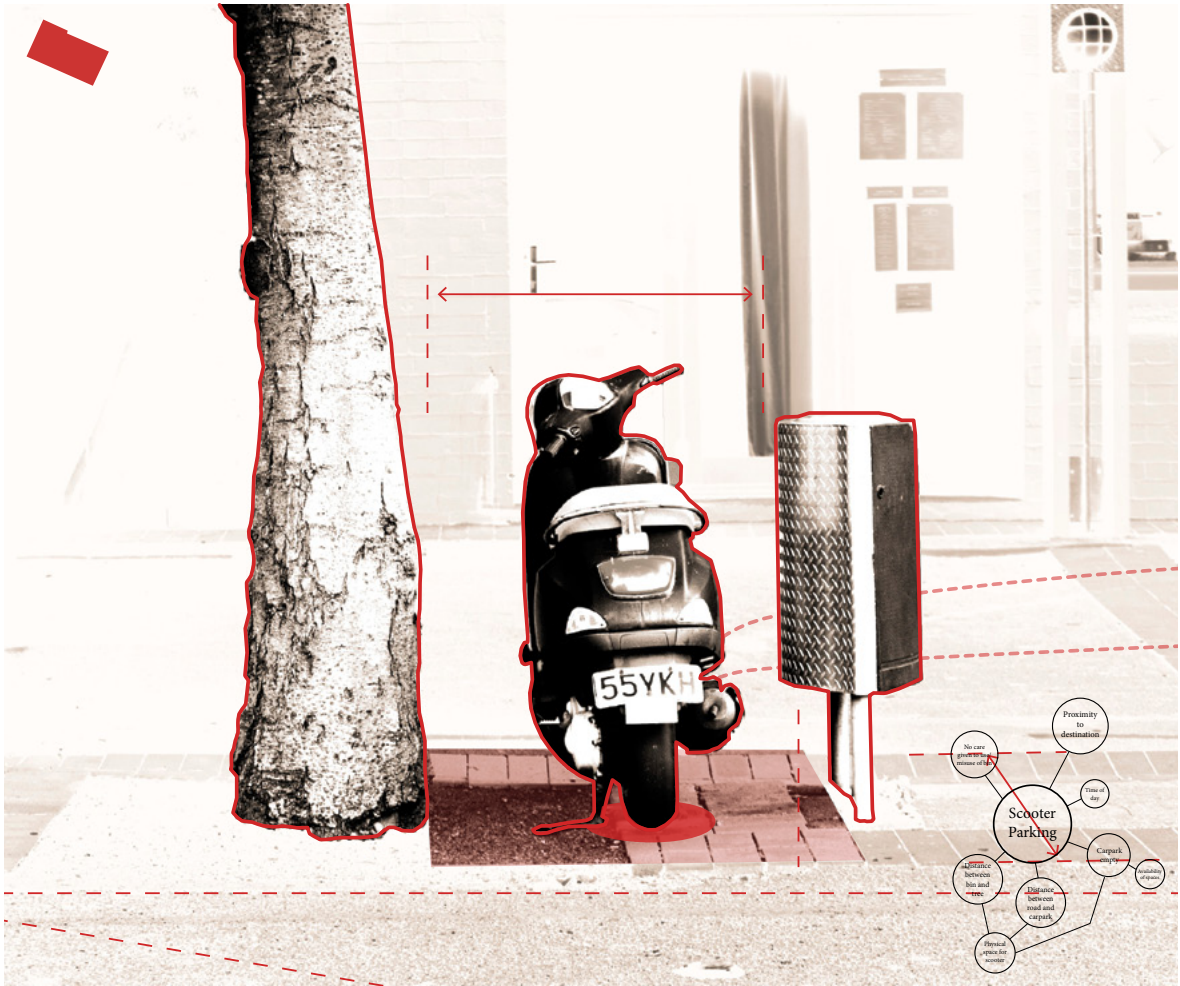


Fig 111. Scooter
Parking
Appropriation

Scooter Parking

The appropriation of the space as a scooter park is due to the relationship between both the social and physical affordances. To park the scooter here there needed to be a balance between physical space and social acceptance of the use/misuse of the rubbish bin.



Fig 112. Sitting
Texting Appropriation

Sitting, Texting

Sitting, texting also requires a balance between the social and the physical. The social environment, or lack thereof, affords an intimate zone of ‘protection’. This is supplemented by the physical environment enabling the post to become a seat within a room.



Fig 113. Shoe Tying Appropriation

Shoe Tying

Although it is a simple appropriation the realisation of this affordance relies on the culmination of the above assemblage. The users ability to appropriate this affordance is due to the relationship between the physical environment - post, ground plane and van.

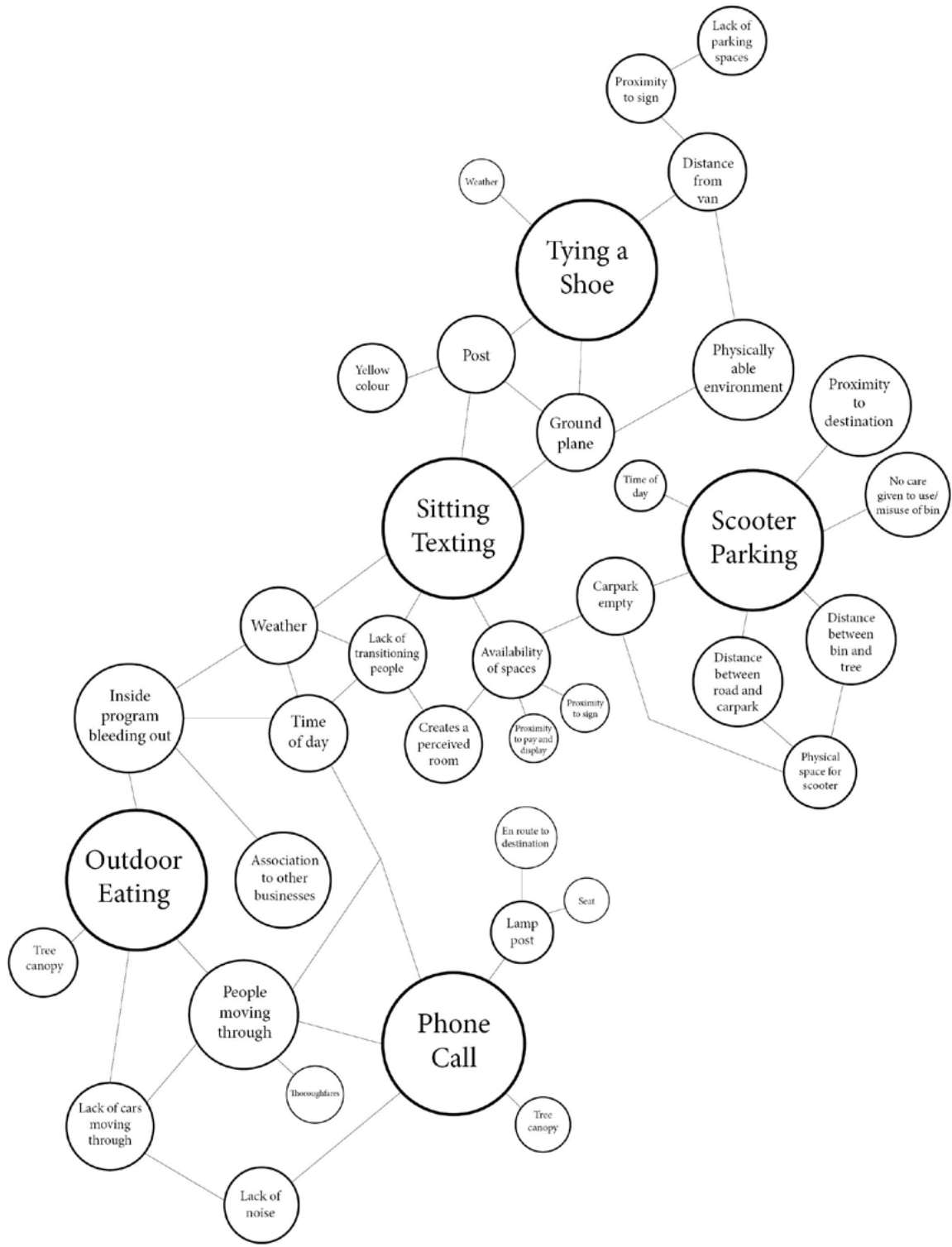


Fig 114. Appropriation Diagram

Chai Cart

Following the creation of the appropriation matrix, I noticed a Chai cart had established itself within the carpark, making use of the gap within the fence to open out and appropriate the footpath.

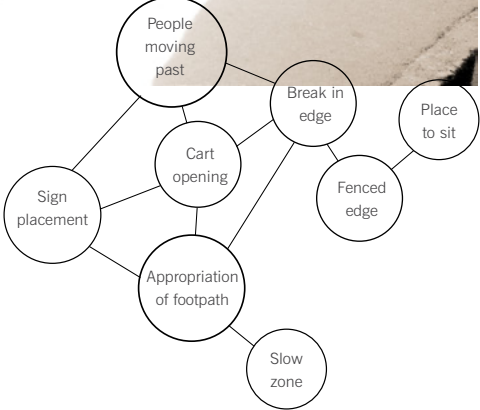
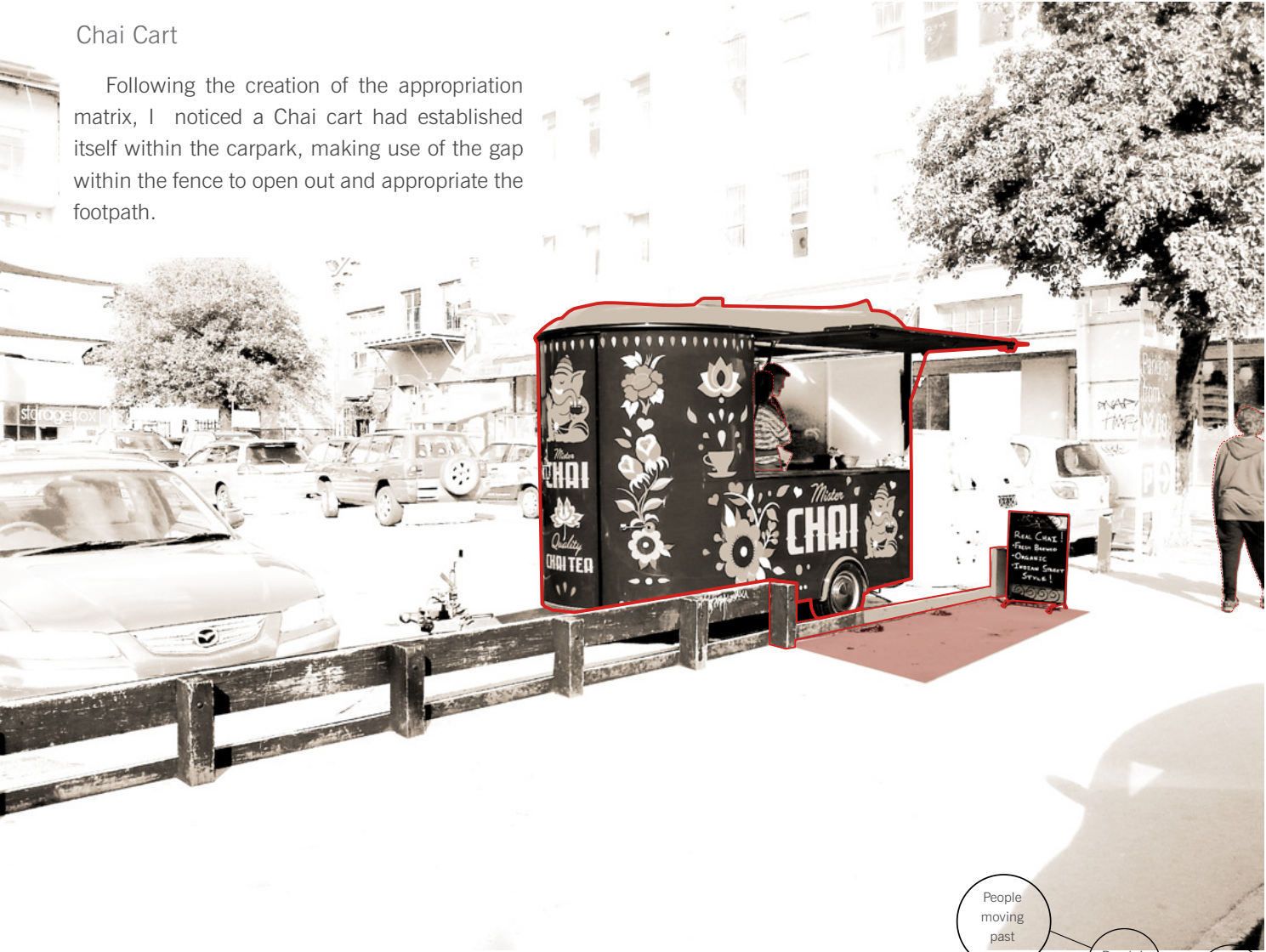


Fig 115. Chai Cart

Chai Cart - Design Suggestion

As a quick design exercise I thought how the cart could imply 'ownership' over more space (seen above). Two weeks after the design suggestion, they too had realised this potential, setting back the cart to the rear of the car park.

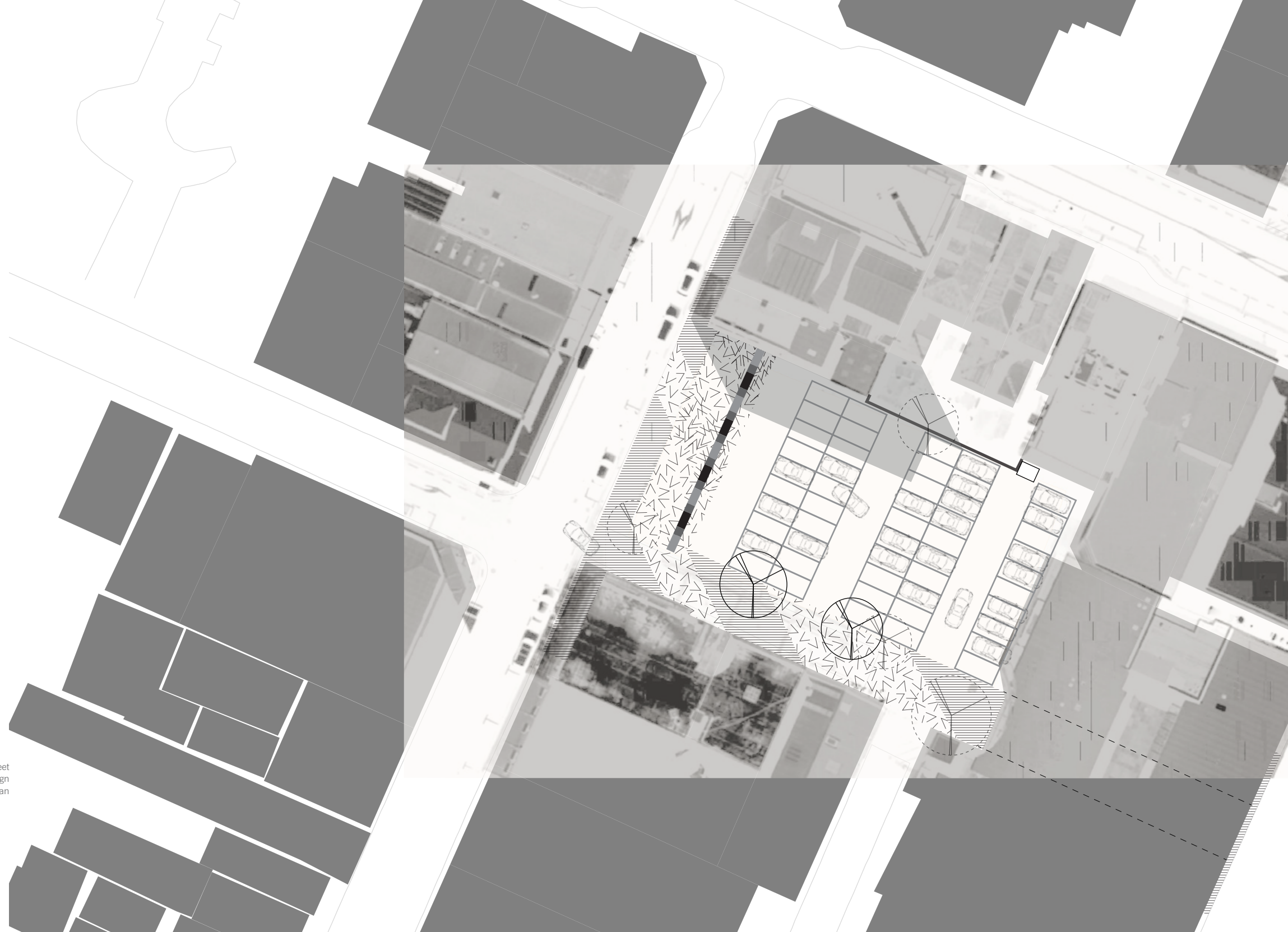


Fig 116. Chai Cart Design Suggestion

Fig 117. Chai Cart Post Design Suggestion



Fig 118. Cuba Street
Schematic Design
1 Plan



Schematic Plan 1 - Set Back

This design highlights the cut through between Cuba St and Marion St. By re-arranging the carpark - shifting the spaces as far east as they could go room for a set back was established. This space was broken into material zones that suggest appropriatable space and shared space. The design also has a bench that allows a more permeable edge than a solid fence. Also shifting the pay machine to the north eastern corner of the site to create more density of parking in that area, away from the public zone. Total car parks 50. Main tactics used:

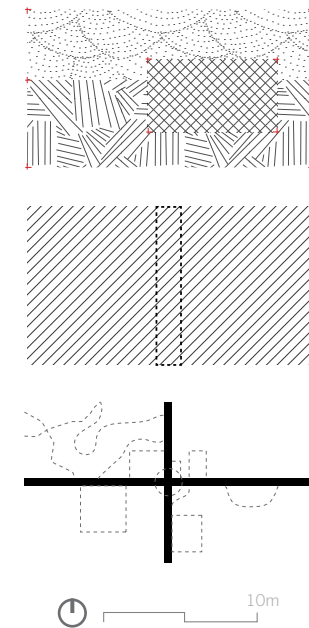


Fig 119. Cuba Street
Schematic Design 1
Tactics

Fig 120. Cuba Street
Schematic Design
2 Plan



Schematic Plan 2 - Performance

As with schematic plan 1 this design also shifts the car parks back. The main focal point here was the creation of a performance space that was laced with vegetation. This buffer provides a zone of separation between the public space and the parking space. Total car parks 53. Main tactics used:

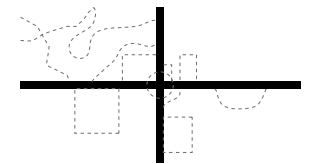
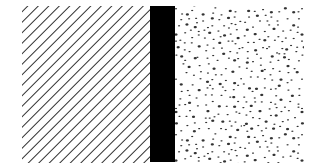
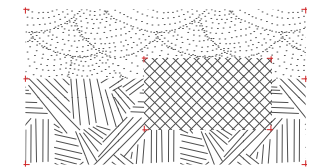


Fig 121. Cuba Street
Schematic Design 2
Tactics

Fig 122. Cuba Street
Schematic Design
3 Plan



Schematic Plan 3 - Glover Connection

The re-arrangement of this experiment shifts the entrance to the car park to the northern edge which is shaded. This leaves the southern sunny edge open and applicable for a pedestrian only zone. A connection has been established beyond the site boundary to Glover Park to the west, creating links between the two public spaces. To establish the pedestrian space a tree line has been extended along the zone between the car park, providing shade and visual engagement. Total car parks 55. Main tactics used:

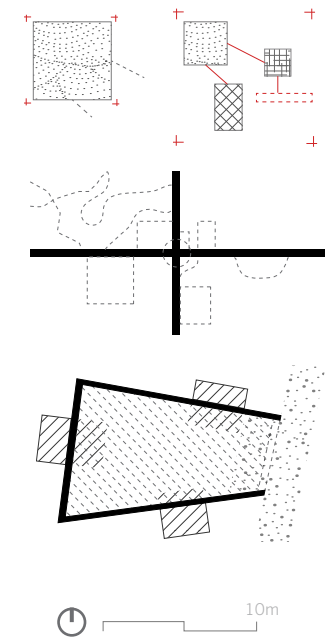
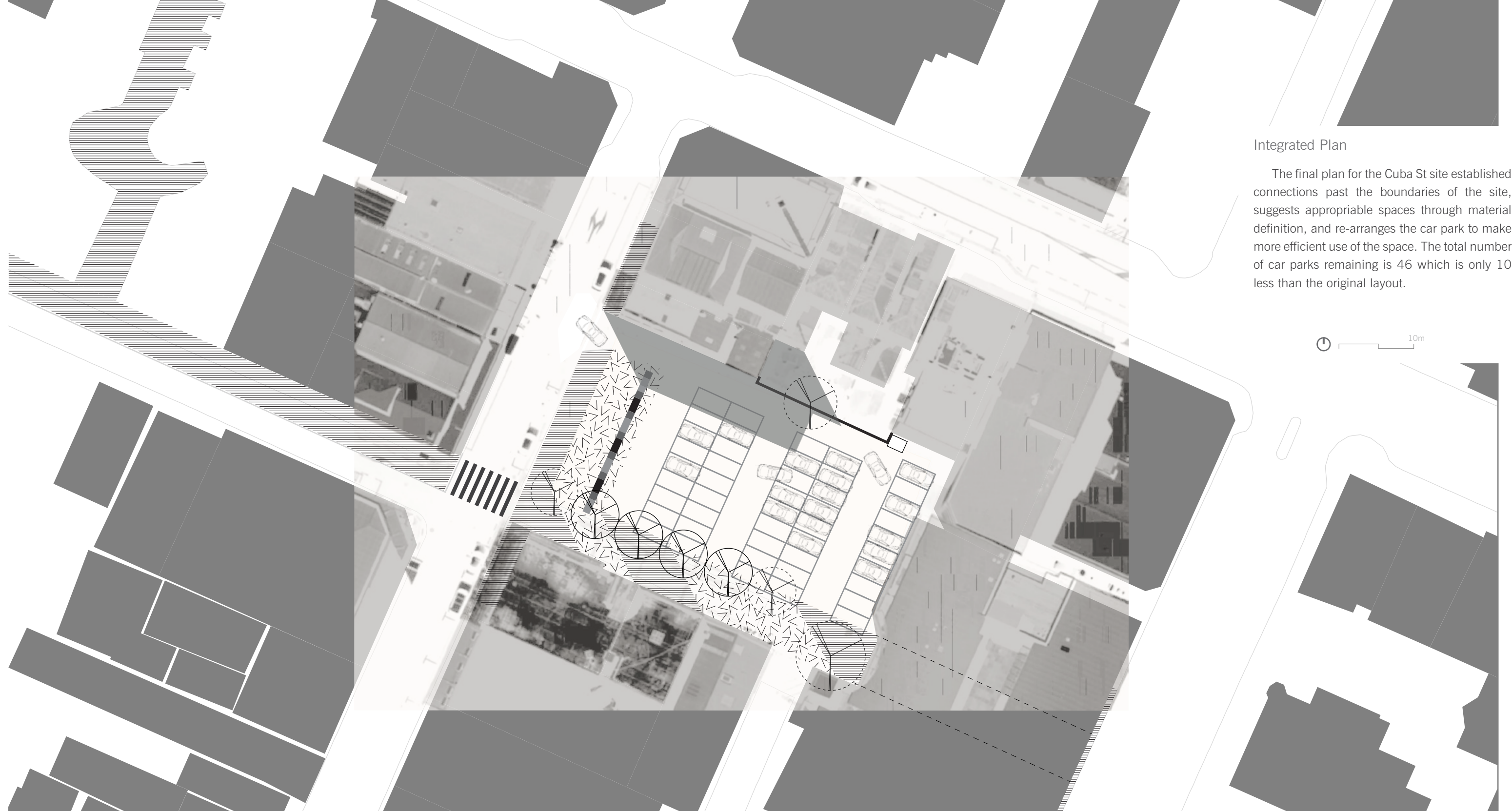


Fig 123. Cuba Street
Schematic Design 3
Tactics

Fig 124. Cuba Street
Integrated Plan

Integrated Plan

The final plan for the Cuba St site established connections past the boundaries of the site, suggests appropriable spaces through material definition, and re-arranges the car park to make more efficient use of the space. The total number of car parks remaining is 46 which is only 10 less than the original layout.



8 Discussion

The content and orientation of gaps leads them to be the most understated fragments of the urban make-up. What they can offer (and to some extent already do) users is a platform for appropriation, to enact their everyday needs and desires. This discussion analyses the successes and failures of this thesis, in regards to the tactics employed and ultimately how effective the concept of loose space is when designing for the appropriation of gaps.

Outcomes

The two designs completed in this thesis were successful examples of the tactical application of loose space relative to site qualities. Not being constrained by typical methods of analysis, each site was allowed to be drawn out naturally. Although some similarities in mapping and observing surfaced, the majority of each analysis was methodically unique. The use of relational analyses created strong connections to the site affordances and abilities, providing catalytic points of intervention.

While the outputs are visually similar, as they have been generated from the ground up they are ingrained in contextual justification. This exemplifies that the properties of loose space have been translated from tactics to site specific interventions. Therefore the language of looseness outlined can be successfully applied to various circumstances.

Appropriation Precedes Appropriation

Looseness affords appropriation. But to be able to design loose space you must first analyse appropriation or an act that engages directly in the latent potential of a gap. This has proven to be problematic and time-consuming when considering smaller, less active sites.

Tactics

Some of the tactics were more useful than others when considering the activation of gaps and designing for their appropriation. Applying them through design concepts, these tactics split into two groups - Primary: Stability + Informality, Engaging at the Edge, and Collective Potential; and secondary: Material Boundaries, Hinge, Core, Separation, and Integration. A primary tactic that surfaced throughout the design experimentations was to Re-arrange the site.

The primary tactics were noted because they came through in every design iteration. This was because of Wellington’s low density (relative to examples expressed in loose space theory), meaning that the intervention had to accommodate the existing land use. Re-arranging is a key part of the design process as it makes more efficient use of the site – giving cars just enough space. Stability + Informality and Engaging at the Edge worked conjointly. Given that the internal structure of the gap (the car park) had to remain, the interventions laced the edge of the gaps, providing structure in places and ambiguity in others. Their collective potential came through in the site analysis phase where the inter-connectedness of gaps became apparent – highlighting the secondary pedestrian network. The individual designs also boost the latency of the network.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to establish a loose space lexicon – a tactical language that can be applied to gaps in order to facilitate appropriation. The work expanded the notion that loose space only surfaces in dense urban spaces, showing that it can be applied to sites of low density through integrating looseness with existing uses. By establishing a set of tactics this work has the potential to be applied to gaps within any context and highlights the importance of designing ‘from the ground up’.

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