

Galaxie Háje

Emma Wald

Studio Rehwaldt
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Analysis

Panelák - is a colloquial term in Czech and Slovak for a panel building constructed of pre-fabricated, pre-stressed concrete

1

1 Location

Jižní Město

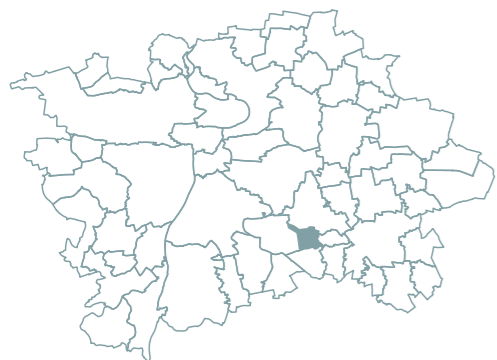
Jižní Město (here translated and referred to also as South Town, also known as Jižák or Jižňák), located southeast of centre Prague in a close distance to Chodov, Kunratice, Šeberov, is a panel housing estate developed in the 1970s. Planned in an open area of approximately 1200 ha South Town meant to become an independent district that accommodates 73 360 citizens in 22 111 flats.¹

History

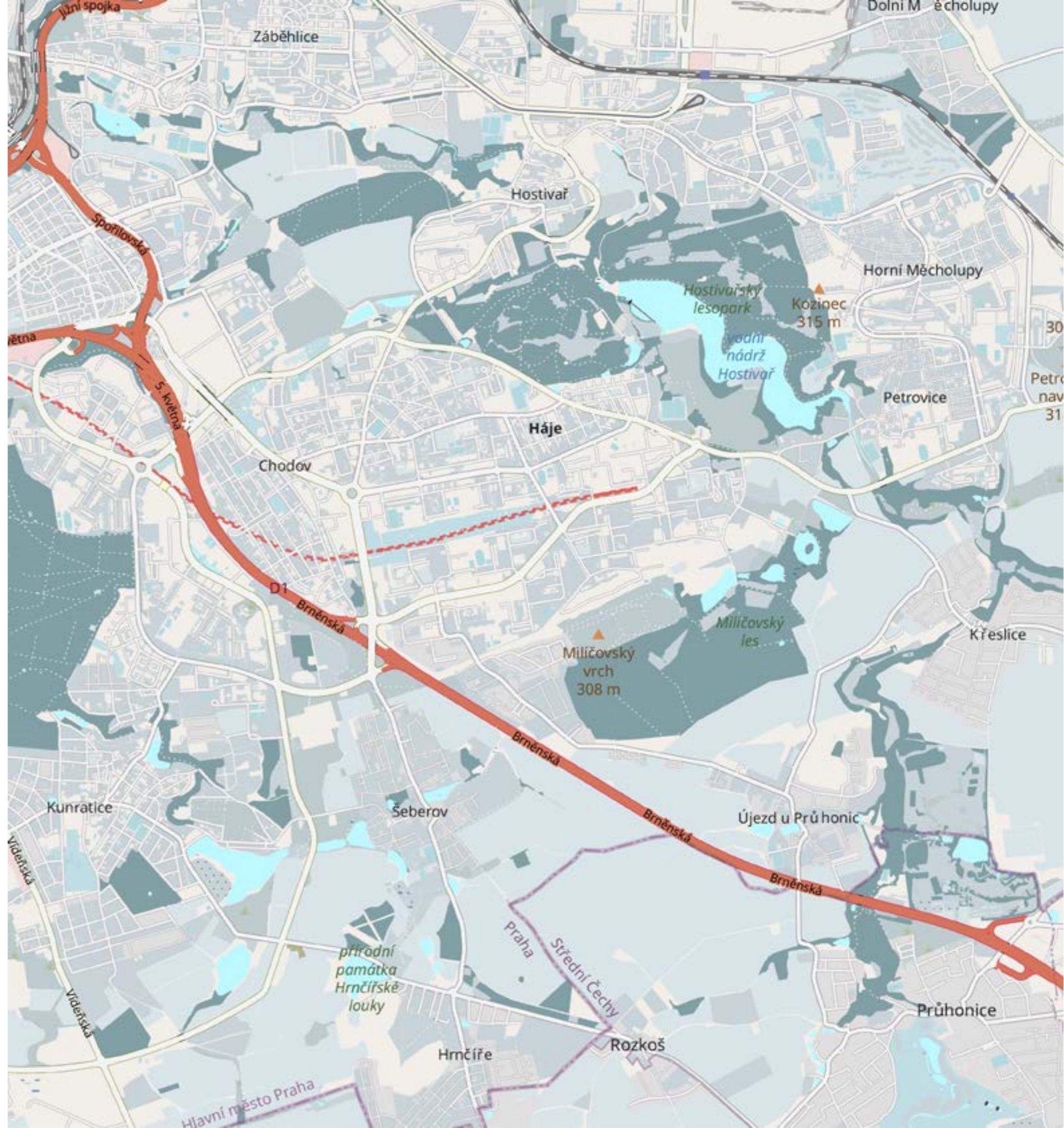
South Town grew at a site of a village Háj that had been torn down to clear the area for the new development. Compared to other Czech panel housing estates, South Town didn't preserve a single structure of the previous settlement.

The village Háj, presumably established later in the 18th century, was one of the younger settlements in the country. It first clearly appears in the military mapping from years 1836 to 1852². In 1967, Háj joined Chodov municipality that shortly after became part of Prague.

¹ VÍTEK, Jaroslav; &collective. Výstavba Prahy ve druhé polovině 20. století: Pražské panel-story. Prague: IROP, 2007, pp. 56
² II. vojenské mapování - Františkovo. Laboratoř geoinformatiky. [online: http://oldmaps.geolab.cz/map_root.pl?lang=cs&map_root=2vm]



1 km



1

2 People

Demography

The first inhabitants started to arrive in 1976 before the housing estate was finished due to a housing crisis in the country. Flats were allocated across social classes. Because of the overall lack of housing, South Town was not perceived as a “bad address”.

After the Velvet revolution in 1989, some predicted that richer inhabitants would flee for better accommodation condemning South Town to become a ghetto. This prediction hasn't been fulfilled assumably because the first inhabitants were young families with ranging incomes that in 1989 had not saved enough money to move.¹

Currently, the demographic of the housing estate is fairly diverse. The original inhabitants aged, some families left, some left their dwellings for the next generation, and with the rents in Prague skyrocketing, citizens living in South Town spans from elders to young single professionals.

Identity

Since citizens living in Jižní Město had nothing in common except their home neighbourhood, they found themselves without a sense of community. From the earliest moments of panel housing estates until today, people refer to them as uninspiring or even depressing living environments alienating one in grey simplicity.

Věra Chytilová, a female director, caught the social phenomenon and essence of despair of early Jižní Město through a camera lens in her film *Panelstory* from 1979. The film is set in the actual unfinished Jižní Město.²

Jaromír Čejka photographed Jižní Město for months in 1980s. We can understand his work in Jižní město as Camus' existential drama with the traumatizing theme of searching for meaning in the unstructured hostile environment of a panel housing estate.³

Jižní město is also considered as where Czech hip hop originated. The first Czech hip hop album *Kamufláž* recorded in one flat unit by Manželé (a group consisting of two young families living in Jižní Město) contains a famous track *Jižák*, a strong depiction of struggles of the neighbourhood.⁴

“Hej ty tam, co seš zač sem tady a co ty tu děláš.
Přijel sem sem a radši bych zas ven, sem tu jenom host.
Tak koukej zmizet rychle dost, abych nenarazil svojí
rukou na tvůj nos.
Jo a honem taky naval prachy, kolik máš?
Neslyšel si co tak čumiš, BUM, tumáš, no vidíš že to de,
no vidíš, že to de.
Hej Jendo pojď se mrknout sem ten kůň má ve šrajtofli
pětku jen a leze sem, jó leze sem.
My tu žijem na Jižáku kluci co spolu držej páku,
Lojza, Venca, Jenda a taky kápo Čenda kterej už brzo
přijde z lapáku
Jó Jižák Jižák město snů my žijem tu už spoustu dnů

beton je tady a beton je i tam, všechno je na beton
každěj fandí nám.
Holky co známe sou samí kusy, samošku udeláme - jíst
se musí
Tak hele vole hod' sem žváro, mám jen jedno to je málo
- mám jedno
beton je tady a beton je i tam, všechno je na beton a
každěj fandí nám.
Holky co známe sou vážně dobrý, maj na hlavě vlasy a
uměj to prý,
dělají to od malička je to prýma náladička.
Nachlastat se a pak nákou buchtu zbalit.
Vzít jí k mámě do baráku na kanape svalit.
My tu žijem na Jižáku kluci co spolu držej páku
Franta, Bohouš, Zdenka a taky kápo Čenda, co už brzo
přijde z lapáku
Posloucháme správnou hudbu máme všechny kazety
Olympiky, Vávru známe, Zagorku i tyhlety.
Na burze sme vždycky každou neděli, chceš bony, máry
li bony.
Minule tam Láďa koupil pěkný ricle - chachá, ty byly šik.

Béďa zase nesl něco domů v pixle - tak teda dík.
To zas byl mejdan jako víno, vypili sme asi dvacet litrů
vína.
Venca zas vyváděl, Madla byla hotová,
Lojza se předváděl že jich deset vodrovná,
ať mu radši žádný holky do bytu už nevoděj,
Lojza je prej hroznej kanec, nebylo by žádný hej.
To co se stalo už předminulou sobotu, všechny nás to
vzalo, že nestihli sme tuhletu
sobotu tam vůbec zajít musíme se asi sejít až zas příští
sobotu.
Všichni žijem na Jižáku, každěj z nás má dobrou fachu
Franta v metru uklízí a Bohouš dělá v buřtárně
a pivo tam všem nabízí, flašky vykupuje Zdenka
ale nejlíp se má Čenda, ten už brzo přijde z lapáku.
Jó Jižák Jižák město snů my žijem tu už spoustu dnů
beton je tady a beton je i tam, všechno je na beton a
každěj fandí nám.”

Hip Hop Track Jižák by Manželé. 1984



1 HROMÁDKOVÁ, Tereza. Jižní Město 40 let. eGol. 2016-09-23, no. 38, pp. 16-25
2 PILÁT, Tomáš; CHYTILOVÁ, Věra. Věra Chytilová zblízka. Prague: XYZ, 2010, pp. 245
3 DUFEK, Antonín; ČEJKA, Jaromír. Jižní Město: fotografický projekt z pražského sídliště z počátku osmdesátých let 20. století. Praha: Positif, 2014, pp. 36
4 Lesík Hajdovský & Manželé vydali své klasiky z 80. let, pokřtí je ve čtvrtek na Jižáku. Muzikus.cz. [online: <http://www.muzikus.cz/novinky/Lesik-Hajdovsky-Manzele-vydali-sve-klasiky-z-80-let-pokrti-je-ve-ctvrtek-na-Jizaku--06-rijen-2009/>]

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3 Site

General

The site is located right by the terminal station of the metro C line and its shopping mall in 307 m asl. Currently, it consists of a square-like piazzetta, a playground, a paved rectangular area, a dark unused corner. There are grown lime, acer and birch trees.

Access

The site is accessible from the shopping area connected to the metro station from the south. Through former cinema complex Galaxie from the west. From a residential area of the housing estate in the north, northeast and southeast.

The site is accessible by foot and by bike since no road runs through the space. Only emergency and supply vehicles are allowed.

Immediate surroundings

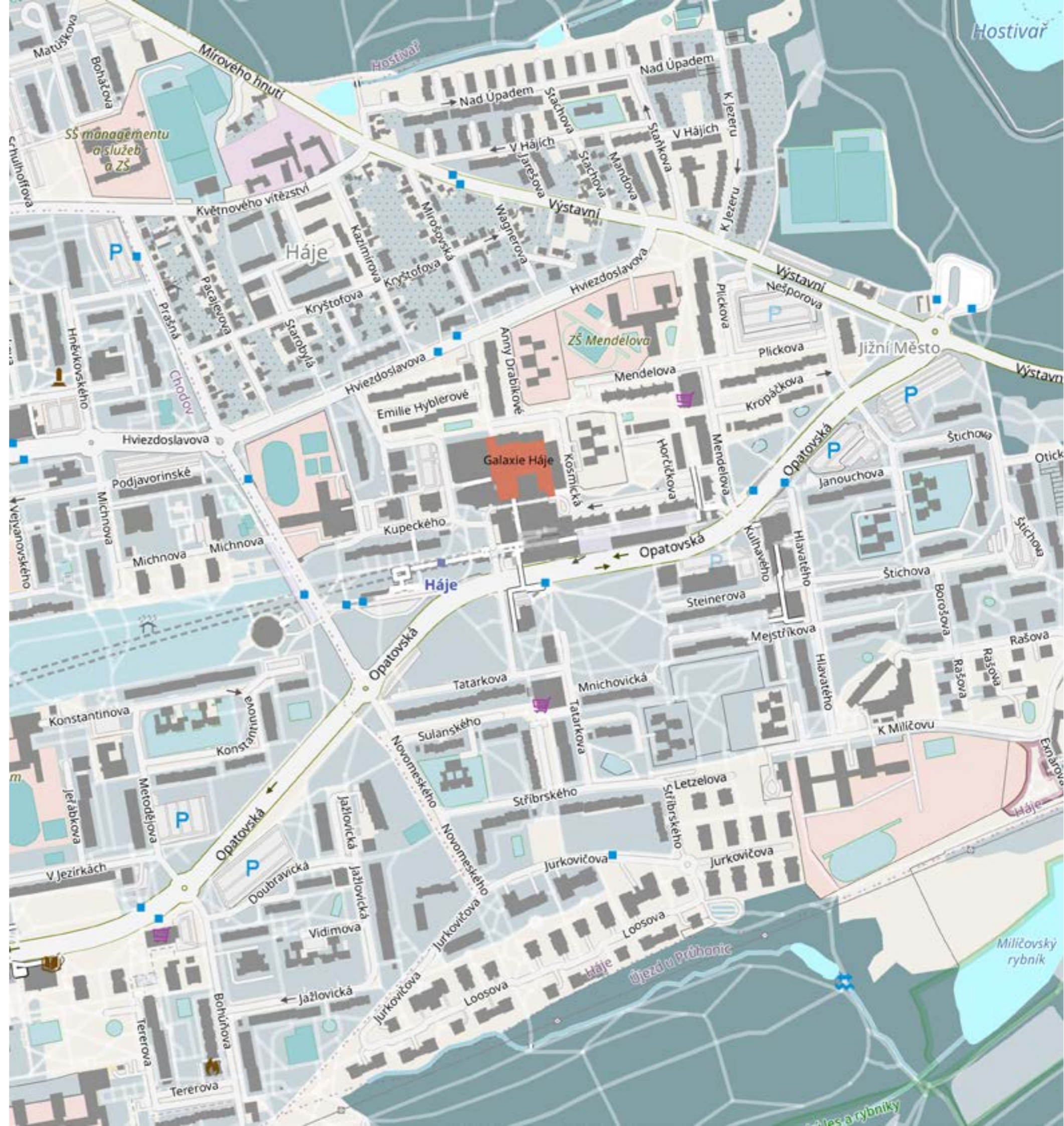
The site is an enclosed space. From the north and the east, prefabricated panel houses with seven floors create the border. From the south, a shopping mall that is connected to the metro station makes the border. There is a former cinema theatre, a grocery store and an underground parking lot enclosing the space from the west.

Character

The courtyard has many characters. As its users are diverse, there are diverse characters and functions to it. It is busy with bypassers and with people who stay to work or hang around. The public space is moderately to weakly maintained. Materials are steel, concrete, asphalt concrete and sand.



300 m



1

3 Site-related data and schemes Amenities



30 m



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3 Site-related data and schemes



Schemes

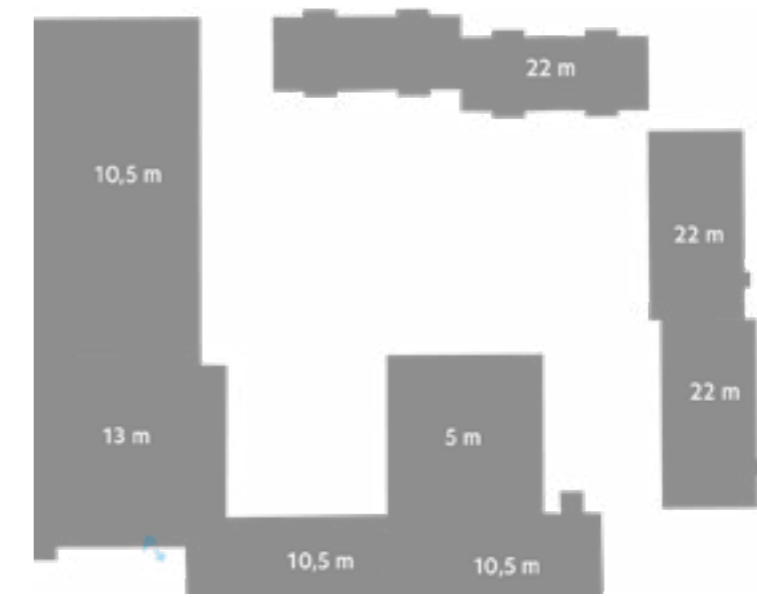
Surfaces



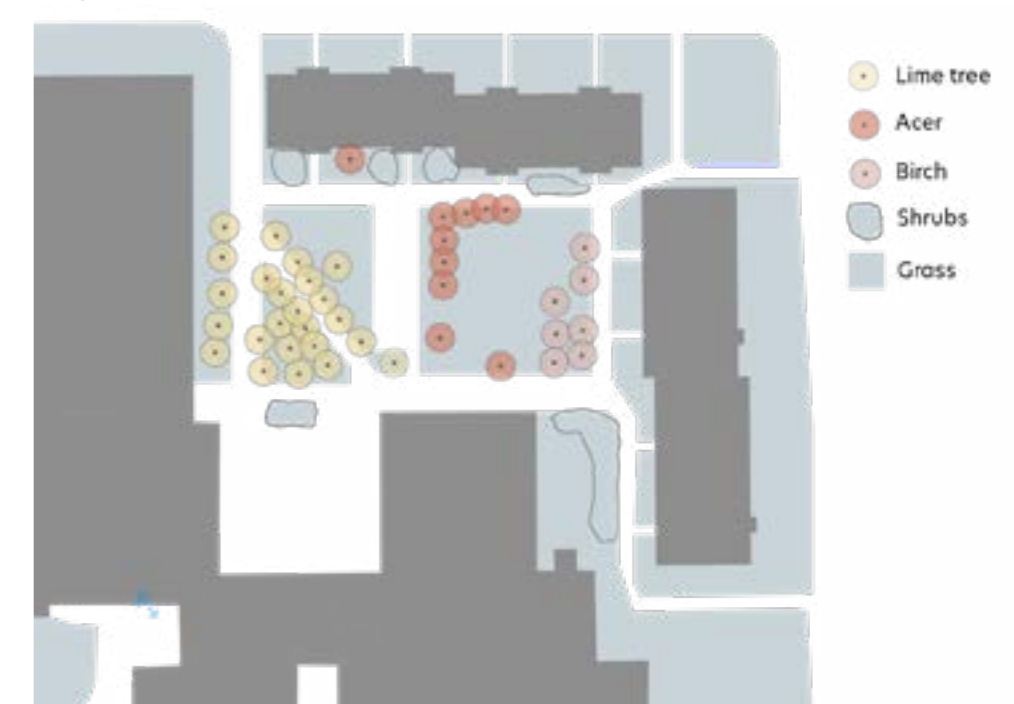
Mobility



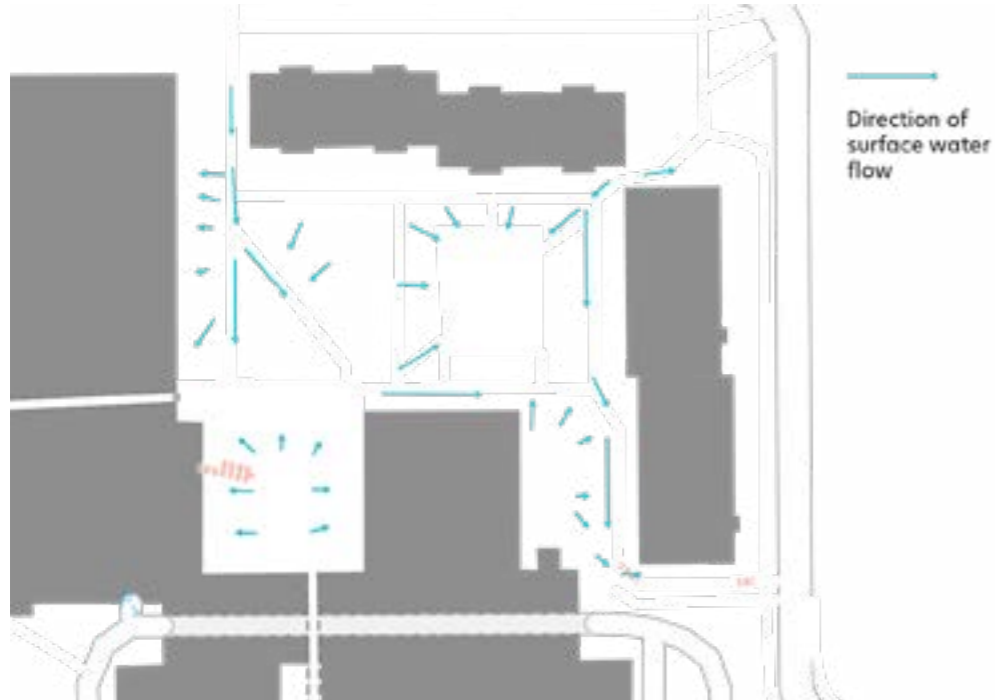
Building heights



Vegetation



Surface water flow



Pedestrian routes



Current mobilier



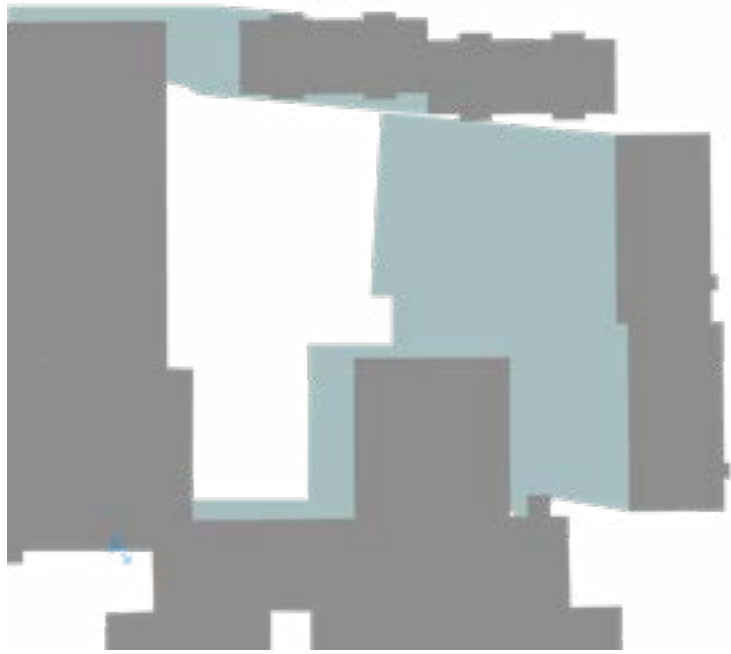
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3 Site-related data and schemes



Sunshine and shadows

21st June at 8.00 am



21st June at noon



21st June at 6 pm



21st December at 10 am



21st December at noon



21st December at 4 pm



1

4 Observations

Notes from Galaxie

Policemen said they have to intervene quite often. Primarily because of alcohol consumption in public (it is forbidden in this courtyard), homeless people staying the night (I'm not sure on what legal bases it isn't allowed) and noise. One policeman thinks that removing benches and adding concrete bins that cannot catch fire would be an improvement. There is a lot of trash, he noted.

A mother and a child told me that they are from Milíčov and they come here because of the shops, a cash machine and a post office. When asked if they sometimes come for the playground, she responds, "no, it's not at all fun". "There are better playgrounds," I noted. She agreed. When I ask the mother if she would come here for a drink in the local restaurant, she says she wouldn't.

A hairdresser from a local studio on a ciggy break told me off with the word "no" while I was approaching her with my notepad and drawings in hand. She didn't expect me not to try to offer her anything. She's mostly angry about the delivery vans coming and going, disturbing people walking along the paths. I agree with her. She's also very annoyed about dog poos and doggy owners not cleaning after their loved pets. She also notes that there is a lot of homeless people around, and if she were me, she would do something about it.

An old man, whom I've met multiple times, started to greet me and nod when he sees me. I think he lives here, but I haven't asked yet. I think we'll be friends.

People know each other. They greet each other. They stop. They chat. A woman shouts from the other side of the "square" at the woman who works in a tobacco and newspaper shop. She asks if they have the new issue of a cross puzzle magazine. They do.

My first dining experience was at Fu Man Lou restaurant in the Galaxie cinema building overlooking most of the "square". From the outside, the restaurant looks ordinary, but to my surprise, it is pleasant and welcoming rather than ordinary. From the inside, I can see the yellow leaves colouring the courtyard these days. The only pity is that the view is partially blocked by an outside seating. I warmed up with a soup.

1

5 Photos

Then



View of Jižní Město from the D1 motorway, unknown author ↑



Director Věra Chytilová and actor Antonín Vaňha during filming Panelstory, 1981, unknown author ↑



The site in construction, Photo: ČEJKA, Jaromír, from photo essay Jižní Město, 1980s →

1

5 Photos

2021



1

6 Summary

Summary

In short, the results showed us that this public space, enclosed by surrounding buildings and without car traffic, serves mainly as a pedestrian transitional area for those passing to the metro station and services of the shopping centre. The public space holds many functions and consists of diverse characters, such as front gardens, a restaurant outside seating, a square-like area and park greenery. This courtyard also offers a playground for children of the youngest age but is not very frequented due to more attractive playgrounds within walking distance. The existing path structure doesn't comply with the needs of pedestrians and cuts through the paved area currently mainly used as an improvised football pitch. There is a value in the lime trees and acers as they are relatively healthy, and there is no obvious threat to their growth. The water management is ineffective and drains most of the water which could be collected to underground pipes and then away. The negative effect of the lime trees shade and insufficient lightning creates spots without efficient supervision and makes the northwest corner a risk zone drawing alcohol consumers and people experiencing homelessness. The southeast corner is also considered a risk zone due to lack of neighbour supervision blocked by bushes and due to a pedestrian route that is not frequently used.

After talking to the police, a dog walker, a stranger, a mother with a kid, a local hairdresser and her client I concluded that homelessness, alcohol consumption, and service vehicles driving through frequently are the issues that trouble the locals.

In conclusion, the space divides into bubbles, little areas claimed by different groups with different interests. Passersby claim the pavement, dog walkers claim the lawn, a hairdresser claims one entrance to a building, inhabitants of the others claim the front gardens, restaurants claim the concrete piazzetta, people without homes make one out of a bench while on the next bench a worker waiting for his commute releases stress with beer, all of them then urinating in an unsupervised corner. All this still leaves a large number of people living in surrounding buildings without a sense of belonging, and instead of using the space, they go straight home or leave to somewhere else.

2

Proposal

2

1 Concept

Galaxie Háje

Hundreds of elders, mothers, children, consumers, dwellers, locals, commuters, drinkers, youngsters, friends, neighbours, gangsters, smokers, dogwalkers, strangers, workers pass by every day. Everyone with different interests.

Galaxie Háje proposal intends to unite users of this public space by creating opportunities for communal activities and by giving the courtyard a sense of identity.

The design implies a conceptual gradient. Functions, elements, materials, activity disperse in the area saturating in epicentres with a clear purpose. Nevertheless, there is no end nor edge to these hotspots as they flow one into another.

Used principles



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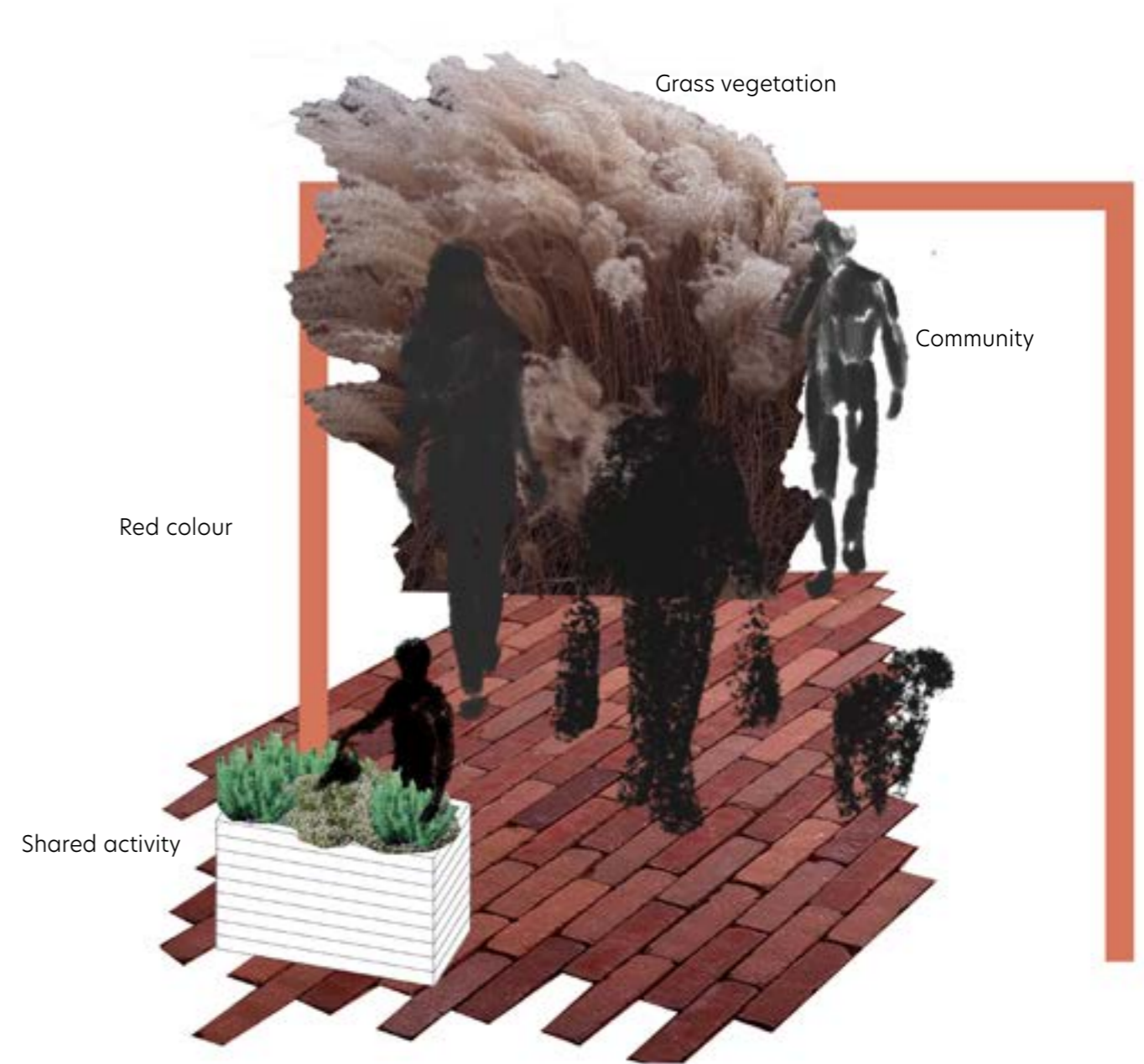
1 Concept

Creating Identity

This project tries to create an identity for the courtyard for the people to identify with it, like it, use it, find it easily.

Plant beds are specific for this courtyard as well as red colour. Community is important and brought together by shared garden and new Teahouse corner, which provides refreshment, education and other activities.

Tools



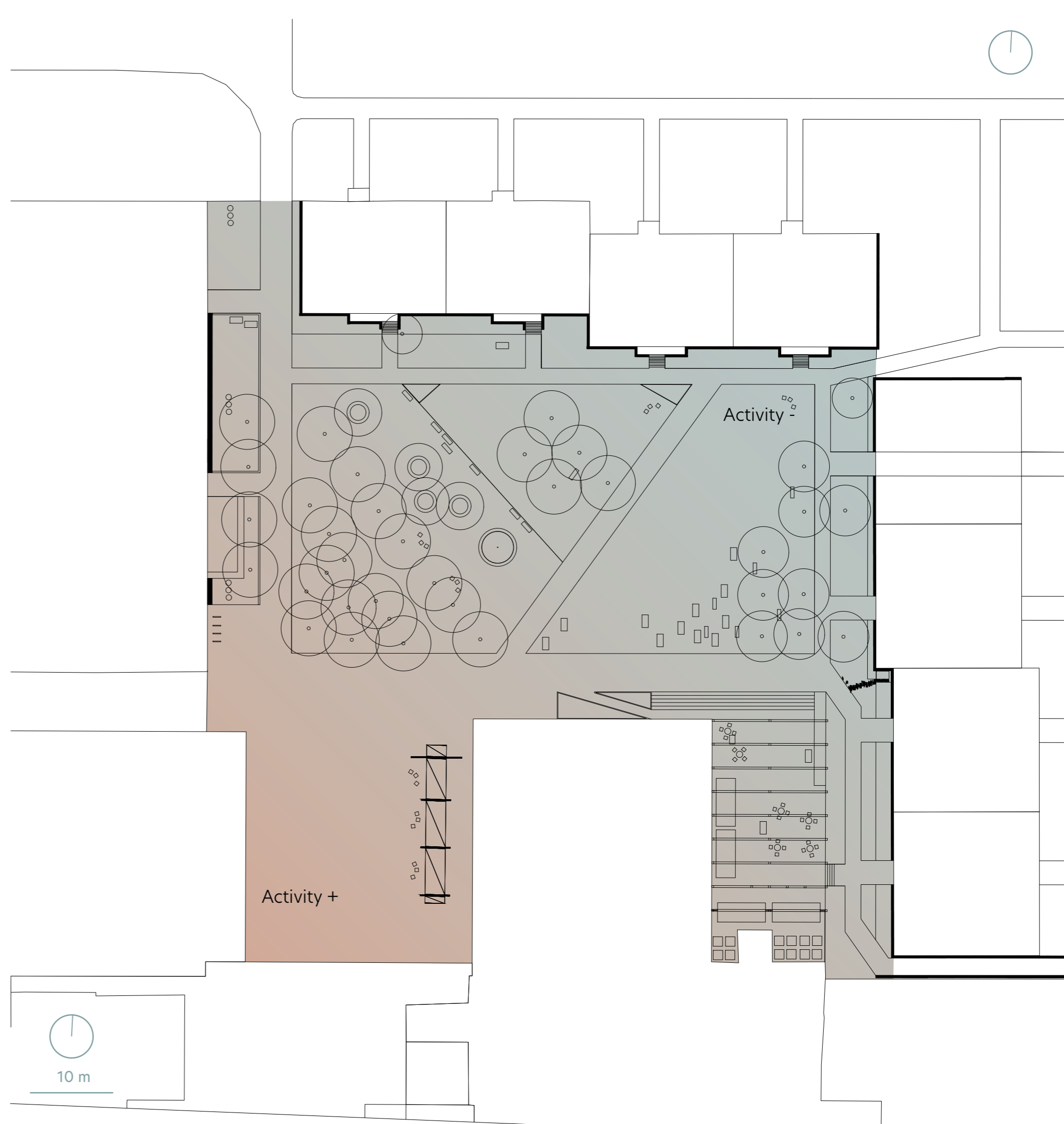
2

2 Masterplan



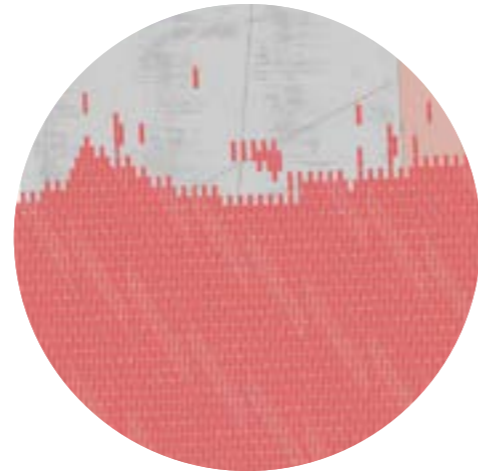
2

3 Activity gradient



2

4 Surfaces



brick paving

Red bricks are used for their long-lasting colour matching designated colour of metro C line. Laid lengthwise, they support the sense of direction towards lime tree passage. Gaps between each of them allow storm water infiltration.



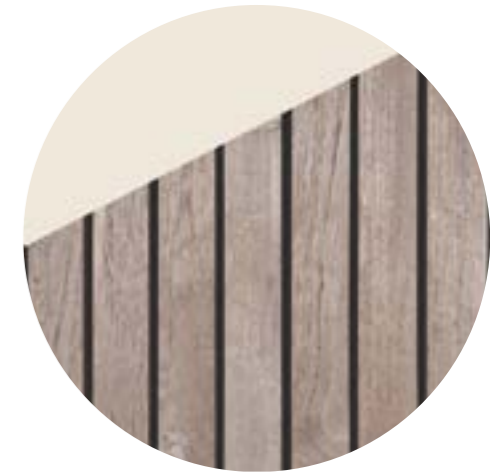
poured concrete paving

Concrete poured to a cast in place creates made-to-measure concrete tiles. The surface is ridged and slightly inclined to a lawn or an infiltration gap to draw water off the top. Gaps between the tiles follow the angles of the design.



hoggin

Natural material supporting the idea of "town in nature".

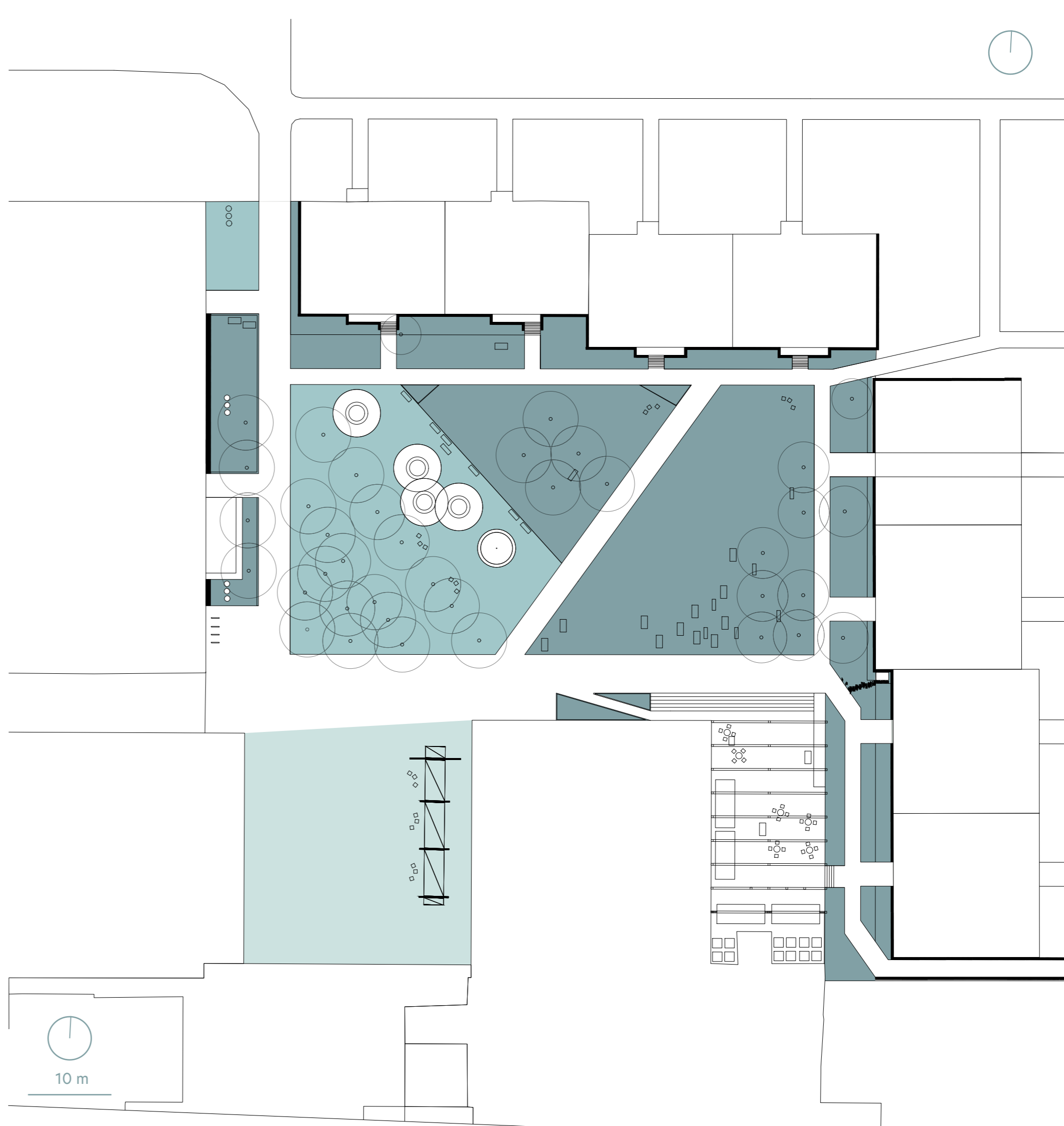


wood

Wood used on platform seating in the teahouse corner and by the local restaurant.

2

5 Stormwater infiltration



2

6 Mobiliar

Species



2

7 Vegetation

Plan

Planted trees follow a simple concept. Newly planted trees complete the old remaining trees into triangle shape or linear diagonal.

Newly planted trees are the same species as currently on the site.



2

7 Vegetation

Species



Tilia



Acer



Betula



meadow grass

Grass cut only a couple of times during the season retains more water and attracts insect such as bees.



high grass

High grass intends to make the effect of panelaks growing out of the grass.



herbs

Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme.
Remember me to one who lives there.
Are you going to Scarborough Fair?

2

8 Sections

Section A



Section B



10 m

2

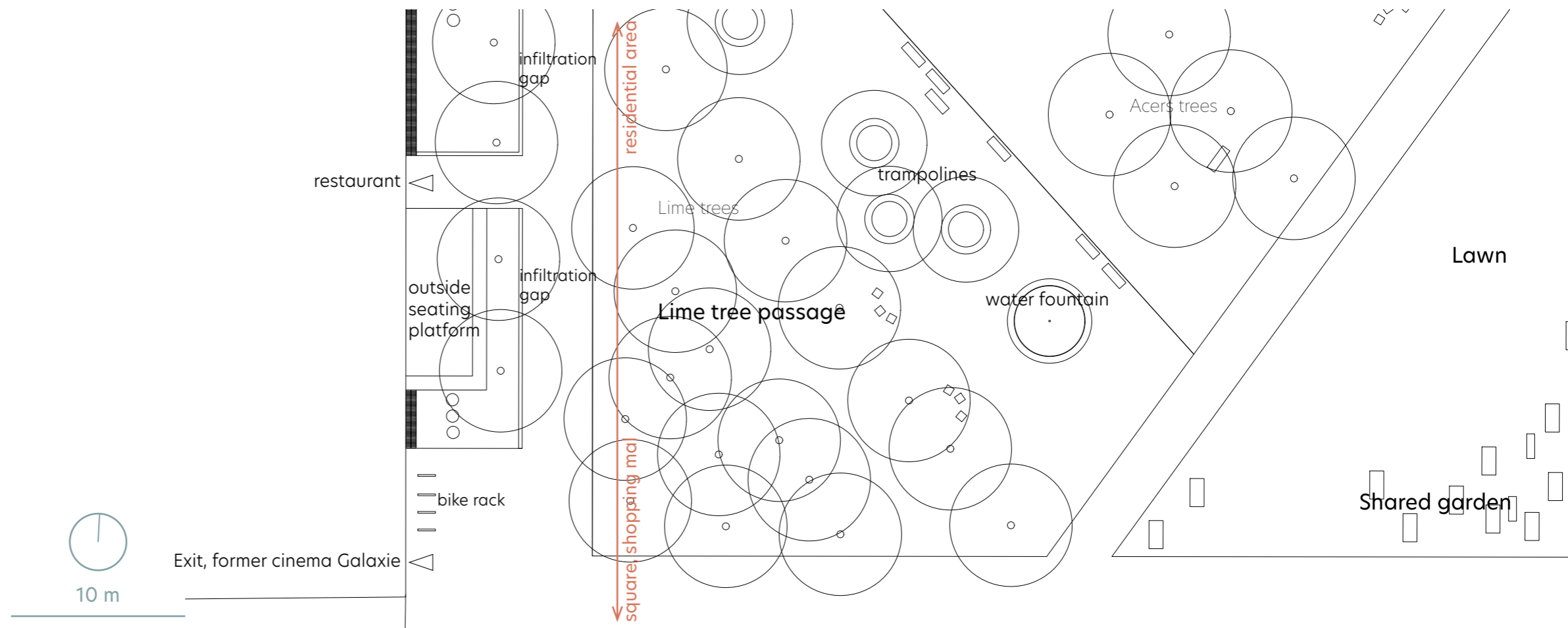
9 Lime tree passage

Lime tree passage takes visitors through the courtyard in its busiest direction connecting the square with the residential area. Lime trees provide shade and shelter and add an intimate feeling to otherwise pretty much antisocial activity of "just passing by."

The lime tree passage slowly transforms into a small playground with trampolines and a water fountain. The space slowly changes its character to a different zone of the design.

A part of the Lime tree passage is also a platform for outside seating to a restaurant.

Concrete paving is equipped with an infiltration gap on a side to which the paving is tilted to collect, filter and absorb stormwater.



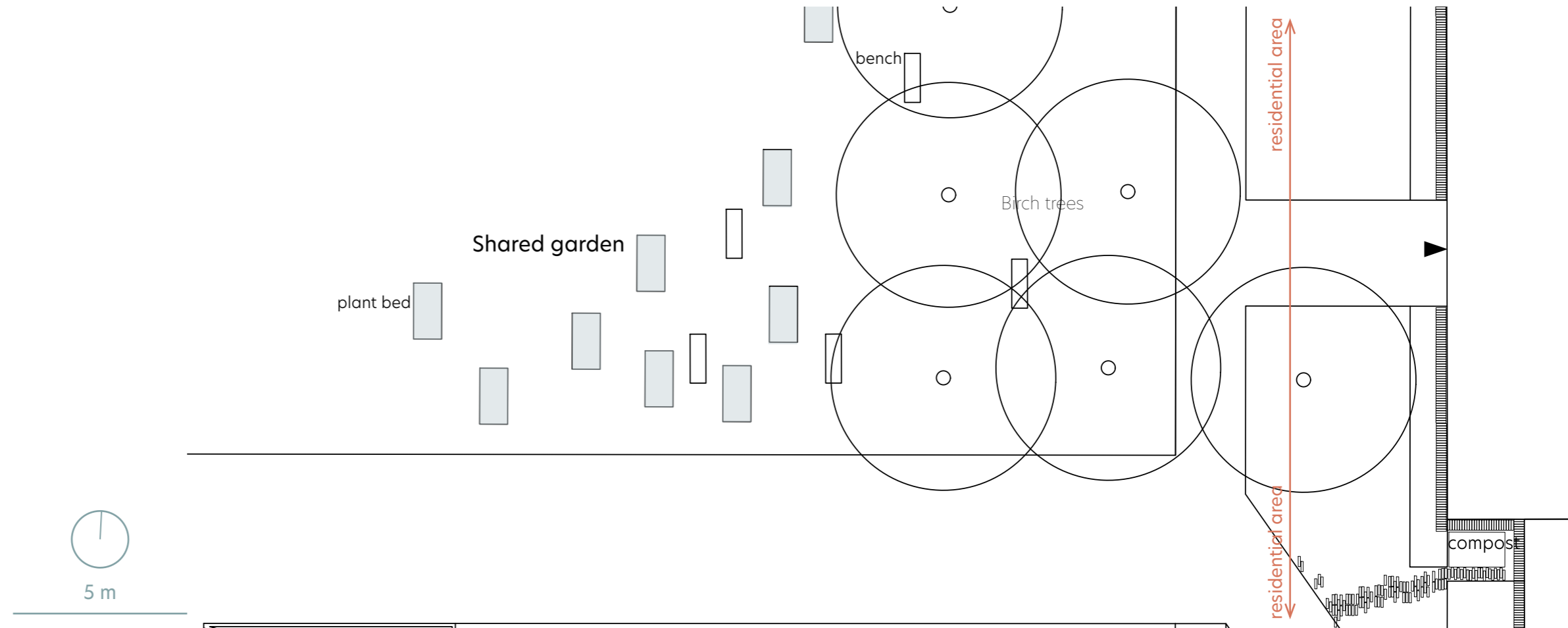
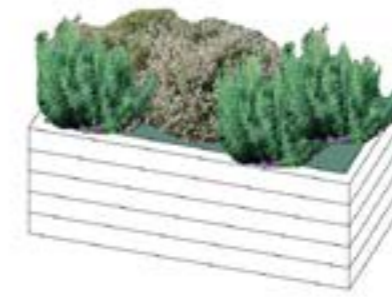
2

10 Shared garden

In the shared garden, open to everyone, there are plant beds of multiple heights. Beds are positioned at random mixed with benches to take a rest from gardening or just to come and sit and enjoy the pleasant smells of herbs.

Some of the beds are planted with decorative grass. Some of them can be occupied by weed if no one takes care of the bed. And that's alright too.

The plant bed is a uniting element that can be found throughout the site.



2

11 Teahouse corner

Teahouse corner is an area featuring containers that provide refreshment and toilet facilities, and seating. Both are supplied by collected stormwater from the surrounding rooftops stored in water tanks at the back. Containers should be managed by an organisation that focuses on communities, water, sustainability and educational activities.

Wooden structure, in shape inspired by the shelter in the square, complete the volume of the building.

The solution is temporary but perhaps long term. Because of a central heating infrastructure underneath, the intervention must be reversible.

