

An aerial photograph of a railway track cutting through a valley. The track is flanked by steep, rocky slopes. Two people are walking on the track, their shadows cast long and dark on the ground. The overall color palette is muted, with greys, browns, and greens.

Master of Landscape Architecture Thesis
Enjoy your moments of joy.

MOMENTS

YUNING ZHANG



MOMENTS

Yuning Zhang

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Last but not least, to my parents, although they are far away from me, they still give me many spiritual support and deep suggestions. Thank you for your encouragement and support.

I will always remember these stories.

A thousand words merged into one sentence:

Thanks for all of you and wish you guys all the best in the future!

! John Lennon !

"Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans."

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! Homer, a man with Alzheimer's!

"Our value lies in what we are and what we have been, not in our ability to recite the recent past."

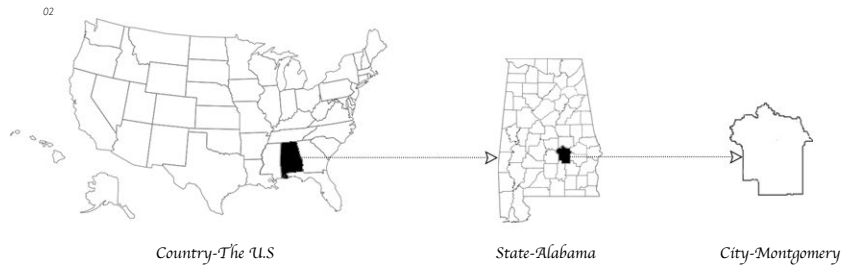


Figure 01, first page, the wind texture, photo by luisa Rodrigues.

Figure 02, page 06, situating the location of the site.

RESEARCH QUESTION

A significant social problem will embody the city is lack of some proprieties that could not make up for people's life. We are losing a kind of balance between life and work in the 21st century. This thesis questions how the quality of slowness meet with different user groups or different functions of land to shape a moment of joy and a slow lifestyle in the contem-

porary society. As the development of technology, people are gradually ignoring the meaning of real life and consuming with the speed in their daily lives. How the the moment of joy which keep people in the slow pace some time can be influenced or perceived by the local people and begin to slow down their life trace?

ABSTRACT

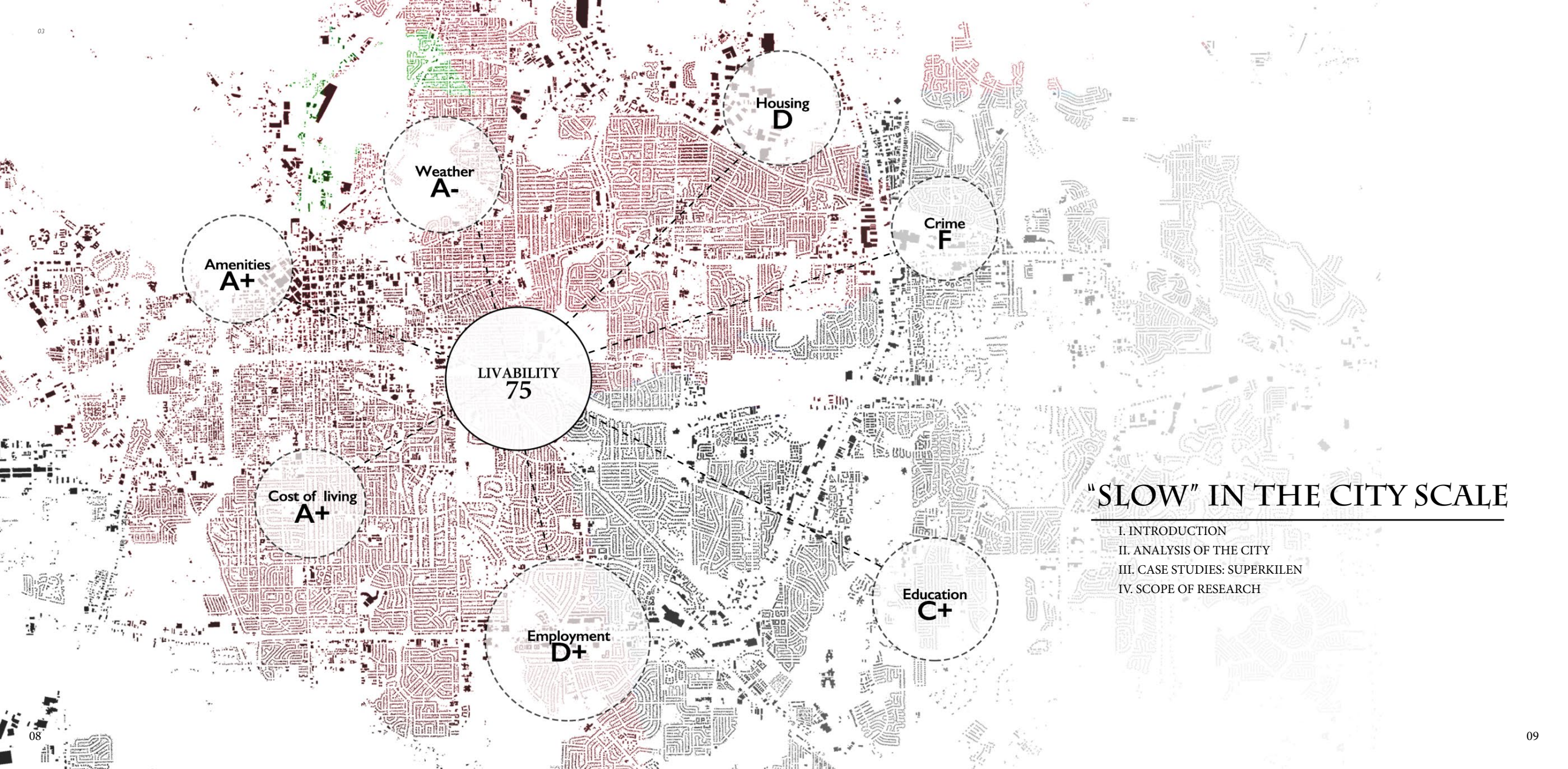
People are consumed with speed: work quickly, play quickly, love quickly. Something we do want to do quickly, but not everything. Apparently, many people are misleading by the pursuit of quality of life that they suffer from the overloaded work and try to become wealthy. They are disoriented, distracted by the siren call of the marketers' myths. People sacrifice adequate sleep or a healthy diet since they're putting more demand on their bodies. Indeed, more often than not, we stray too far to places unknown in search of what we need, what we want and what we would die for just to have.

The most visible way for landscape architecture to make a slow landscape is to slow down the people's speed which means landscape architecture are more focus on adjusting the transportation system in the city. By providing a better quality of streetscape and send an image of green transportation by bicycle or on foot to improve the slow movement. However, we are not only pursue the speed but a spirit of life.

The life you gather with your friends and family and laugh, cry, hug, cheer. The life you can notice the time passes and remember a phase of valuable moment. A slow life restores balance.

The proposed site for this thesis design research project is an abandoned railroad area in Montgomery, the capital of the state of Alabama in the United States. It is a site left by the city and have fallen into a state of neglect with the trace of old railroad. It is a site that should be important to functioning the city, but it was forgotten by people as it is covered by free growing plants.

The principal objective of this research thesis is trying to capture the moment of joy for different people and help them reunderstand the meaning of slow lifestyle. In addition to deal with the space in a way to help people shape a behavior by themselves and enjoy the happiness and keep memories in the design.



Amenities
A+

Weather
A-

Housing
D

Crime
F

LIVABILITY
75

Cost of living
A+

Employment
D+

Education
C+

“SLOW” IN THE CITY SCALE

- I. INTRODUCTION
- II. ANALYSIS OF THE CITY
- III. CASE STUDIES: SUPERKILEN
- IV. SCOPE OF RESEARCH

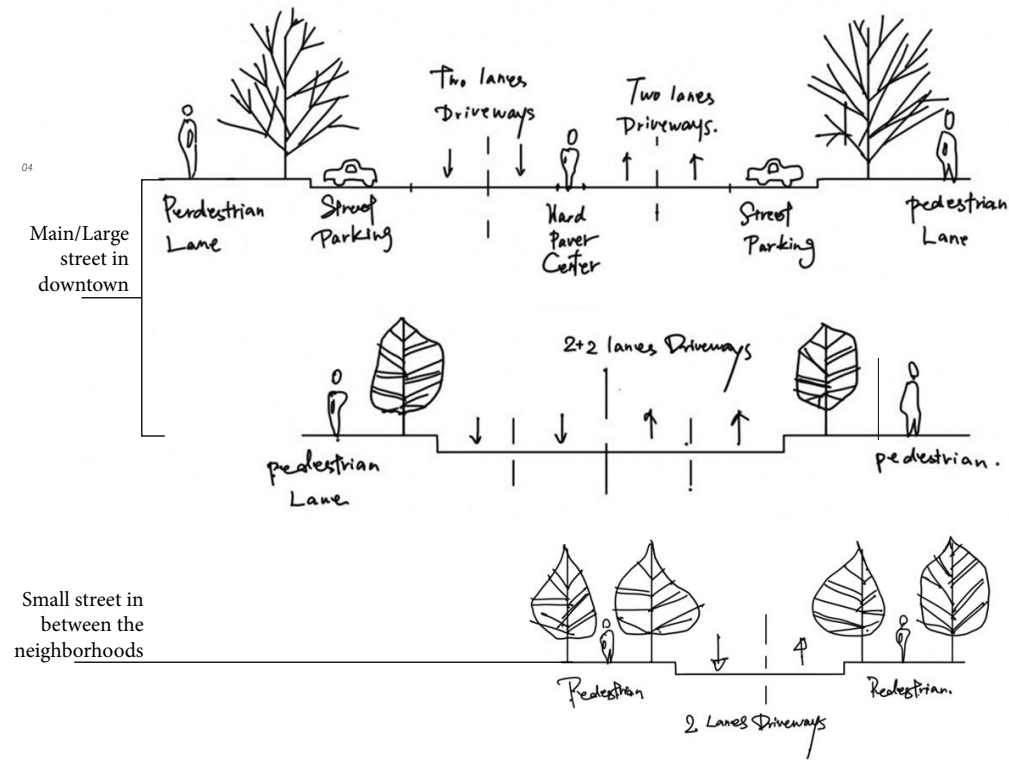


Figure03, page8-9,Alabama montgomery amenities on site "AreaVibes"; Crime rate data on site "NeighborhoodScout".
 Figure04, page10, sketches after the field work, analysis the different levels of roads in Montgomery city.

I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis discover some social behavior in contemporary Montgomery city and make several designs facilitate with the solution. Firstly, I study with the Montgomery city scale of the transportation systems and different landscapes in the city. Try to imagine and find out different user groups' living routes in a day and what kind

of landscape they will meet that facilitates slowness. After that, the design process is trying to deal with quality of slowness and how the slowness is affected by different land uses in the city.

II. ANALYSIS OF THE CITY

Montgomery is the capital of Alabama and it is a livable city with many different attributes. However, it is also a city with a high occurrence of crimes. (site "AreaVibes")

TRAFFIC

Downtown area has the most comprehensive transportation system, which included driveways, bicycle ways, street trees and pedestrian sidewalks. Most main road in the downtown area have at least two lanes of driveways along with pedestrian sidewalks. The pedestrian sidewalk is quite wide for people walking or even biking but most areas on the main streets in the downtown are open and with a large amount of hard paving surface.

The small roads are majority in a relatively narrow condition. There are only two driveways and pedestrian sidewalk beside the driveways. The road condition is not plain and uncomfortable to drive on. These roads are always between different neighborhoods and shaded with high canopy trees. The surface is much more permeable than the surface in downtown area.

The express way plays an important role in letting people who are driving get to their destination quickly. It connects with all the driving systems in Montgomery which make people easier driving in the city but not on foot.

HUMAN BEHAVIORS

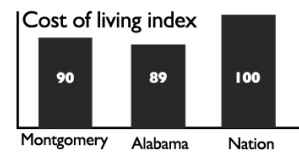
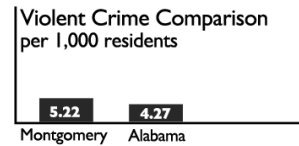
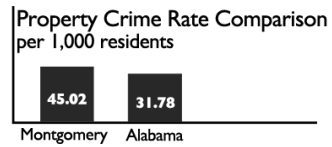
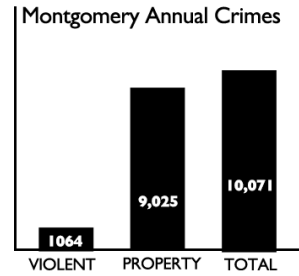
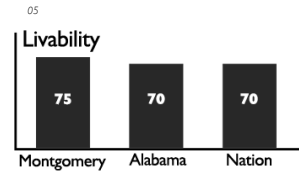
The car volume and velocity is not high on the main street. People like walking and crossing the street quickly because the lack of shady areas on the street or on the road. Apart from these, people do not want to stop or have any eye contact with others when they are walking. It looks like everyone have their destinations to go and they are all in their own pace.

There is undeniable that a few people like sitting in the shady areas. And most of these shady places are all near a relatively attractive point. Different spaces may give people different emotions and let them act independently.

GREEN SPACES

The green spaces in Montgomery are not inconsiderable. But few of them with a good quality for people to spend time in. These spaces do not provide enough functions(like sitting areas, infrastructures, plants diversity, etc)and have a strong connections with people's lives.

These kind of green space will not attract people to pay much attention on them unless they have some valuable characters.





III. CASE STUDIES: SUPERKILEN

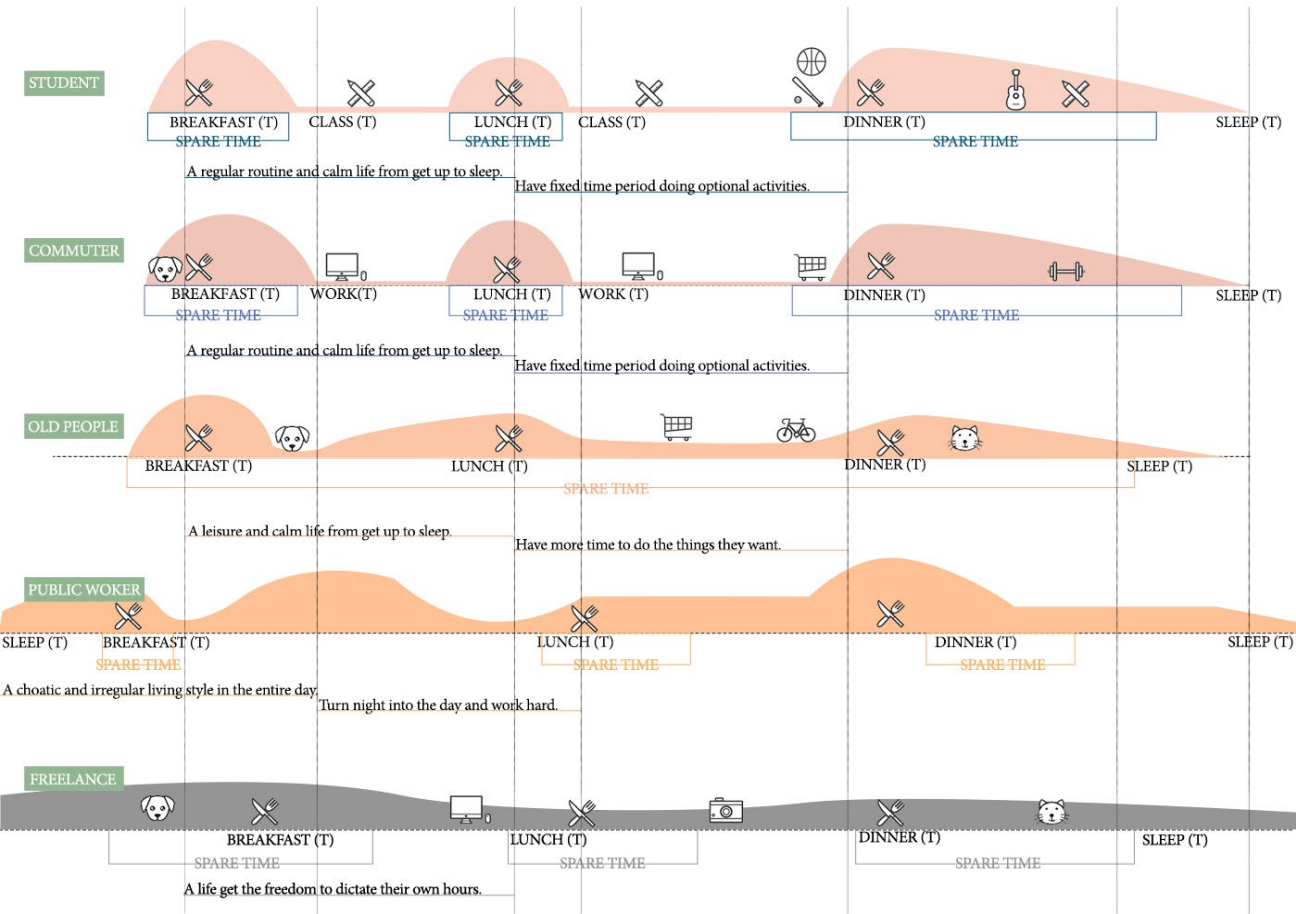
Nørrebro, Copenhagen

As a livable city, Copenhagen has many urban small public spaces and each public space designs as a human scale which will improve the intention and desire of the citizens to make a fully use of these spaces and bicycles. The goal is to build more miniature park, rather than a large space. Such small spaces brings sense of intimacy that people are willing to stop at any time to use these mini spaces, enjoy the city life or ride a bike to other places.

Superkilen is a half a mile long urban space wedging through one of the most ethnically diverse and socially challenged neighborhoods in Denmark. It is an important connection of the city public transportation, especially for pedestrian and bicycles. It has one overarching idea that it is conceived as a giant exhibition of urban best practice – a sort of collection of global found objects that come from 60 different nationalities of the people inhabiting the area surrounding it.

The park is divided into red, black and green zones and each zone has its unique functions. The red area is providing a cultural exercise space for people. People in Copenhagen mostly gather and meet at the black area. And the green area is a space for large sports activities. These three areas are connected with an uninterrupted bicycle lane which relates to the city. If you ride a bike pass through this park, almost no traffic lights on the road. You can pay more attention to appreciating the landscape with different colors and pay less attention with safety. Or some people may want to stop and experience on their own. This park is a surreal concentrated 5 body of global urban diversity and a creative public space for people. It reminds us of the preservation and activation, and it seems like telling us a feeling of attribution and memory. This park obviously creates an urban public space with better accessibility of bicycles and pedestrians. It creates a sense of safety by inducing people's thinking and attention.

Obviously, a good city public space is not a green wash in the city, but a place which can guide people to have a better point view of life. You do not need to guide people relax or slow deliberately in city public spaces, but let people feel about the space and do the things the would like to do in the space. This is how the public space leads different behaviours happen and makes a diverse and stronger social connections between people and the space.



IV. SCOPE OF RESEARCH

IMAGINATION OF ROUTES

By choosing five different user groups in the city, imagine their daily activities and routes based on the time period. From get up to sleep, find out the gap between work and life. In order to understand some similarities and differences between different routes of people. How these different user groups meet up with different landscape and how they facilitate the landscape with slowness? People have different tasks to do and most people will have more spare time during eating period. It is a time for people gathering and eating together, or going out and find a place to eat.

Majority of people would not stop or spend too much time on the landscape during their spare

time mainly because they are busy with working and they cannot pay too much attention on the landscape. Another reason is some of the landscape can not satisfied people's demands and can be easily ignored.

These activities can be concluded by the necessary activities, optional activities, and social activities. Basically, people who have a regular work and rest timetable is hard to have too much social activities in the daily lives. Since their life has been scheduled and organized well, the time they divided for optional activities and social activities is based on the efficiency of working/studying. On the contrary, people who has retired or with free occupations may have more free time for them to deal with.

- green space
- roads
- parking lots

This is an analysis showing a space of Montgomery's downtown area in the Alabama state, which is the space that i imagined with people's daily activities. It is a fundamental research during the preliminary field work.



Dexter Rd is a four lanes road with on street parking lots along the pedestrian street.
No bicycle lanes but wide , well-paved pedestrian street. The street trees does not create too much shady area.

The pedestrian sidewalk on the Madison Ave is suitable and shady.
However, no bike lanes provide on the street.

Good quality of pedestrian crossing but people still cross the road optional on the street.
The public space does not make into use in some reasons.
A center buffer which isolate each side cars but it seems like provide a standing or waiting area for people who cross the road optional.

parks at intersection

open spaces| fountain

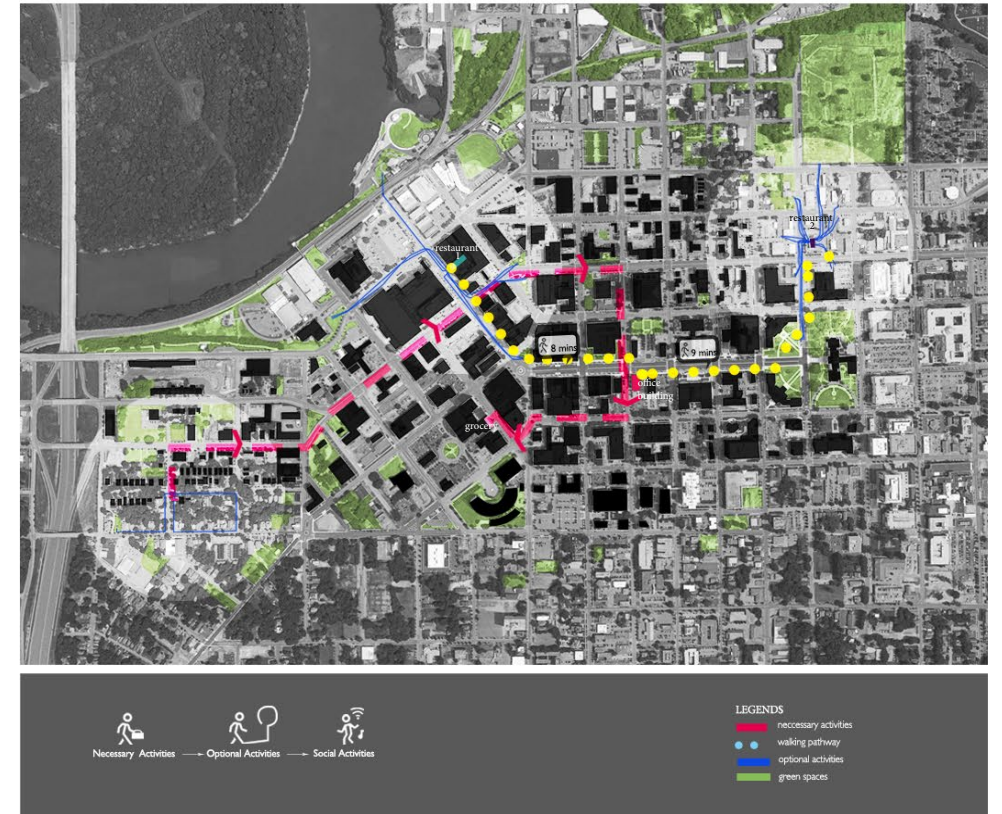
lawn

abandoned open space



Just imagine one day of a commuter's regular routes. If there is a commuter living in the neighborhood which is close to his/her office. He/She may drive or walk through the routes (Aubergine dashline) and arrive his/her office everyday. All the landscape he/she may encounter with are mostly neighborhoods green spaces,

street landscapes and parks at the intersection. The roads in the downtown area is wide and always have street trees, but also because the the road is too wide to covered by the shade of street trees. Accordingly, when the weather get hot, downtown area seems like quite glow.



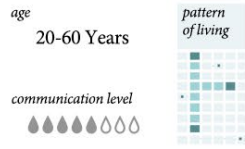
This map is imagining this commuter's optional activities and social activities in the downtown area. He/She may have about an hour free time to get out and eat lunch around the center of his/her office building. He/She may walk cross several streets and eat in the restaurant or take the food back to his/her office. There

are several options for he/she choosing to eat. But most people like to find a comfortable space to eat and enjoy their lunch. However, most of the street green spaces are hard to satisfy the demand of people or draw people's attention on.



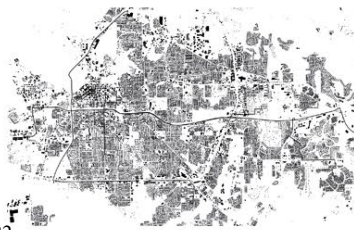
usergroups

Commuter



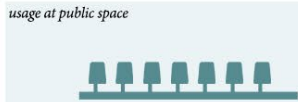
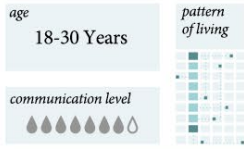
imaginative routes

commuters routes



usergroups

Student



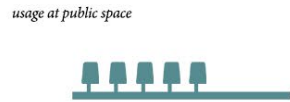
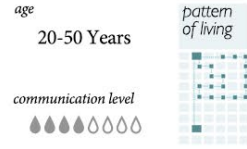
imaginative routes

students routes



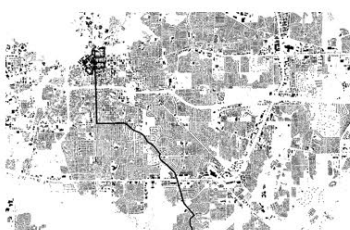
usergroups

Public Worker



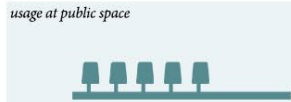
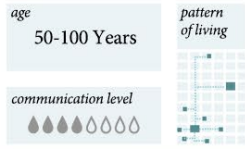
imaginative routes

public workers routes



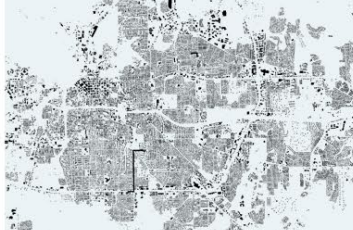
usergroups

Old People



imaginative routes

old people routes



usergroups

Freelance



imaginative routes

old people routes



Commuters have their daily working routine and majority of them working from 9am to 5pm. The most efficient way for them travelling to office is driving. If they live close to their office, they may use bicycle or on foot to go to work. Most of the time, their daily life is a kind of home-and-office style. Sometimes they will also go to stores or markets. Basically, they do not spend too much time enjoy the public space since they are living in a disciplinary and high speed life during working days. The spare time they have mostly concentrate on the breakfast time, lunch time and the period after they end their one day's works.

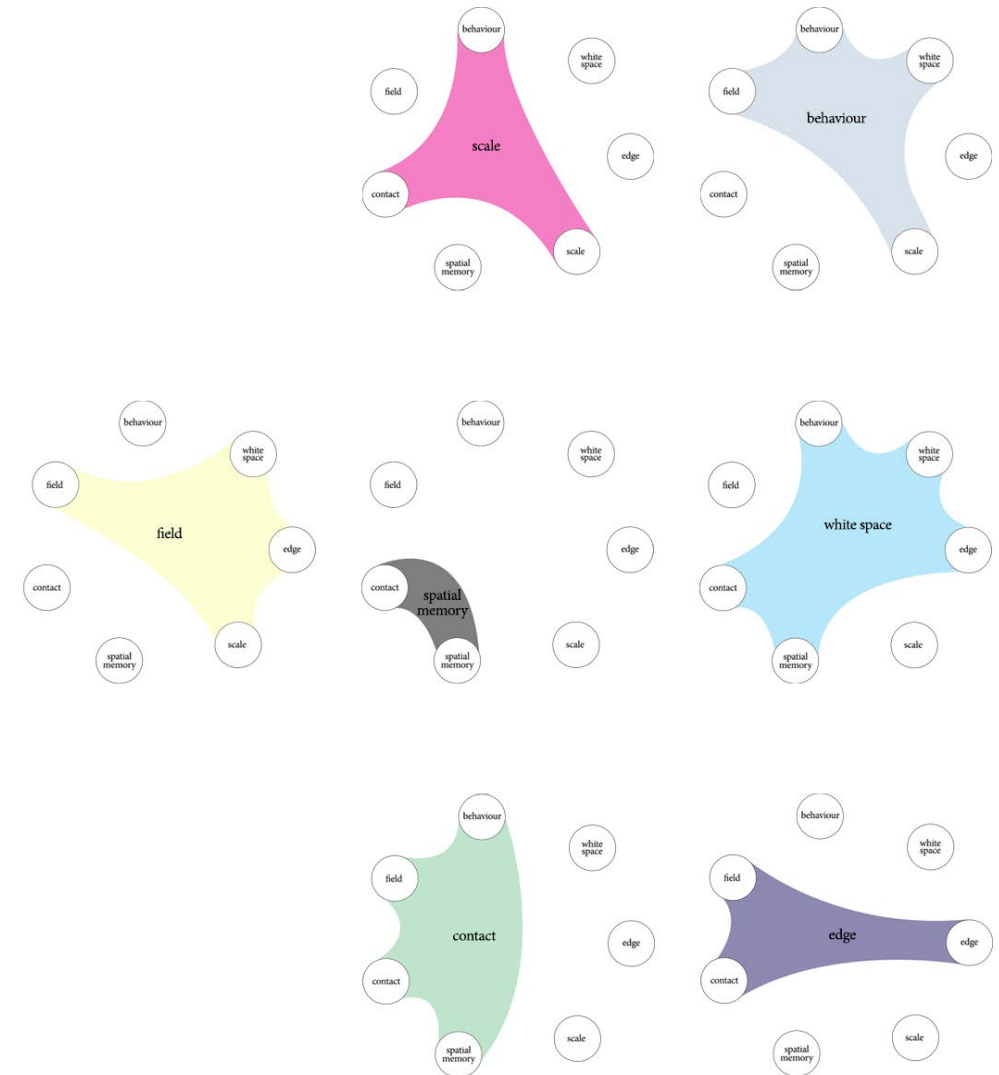
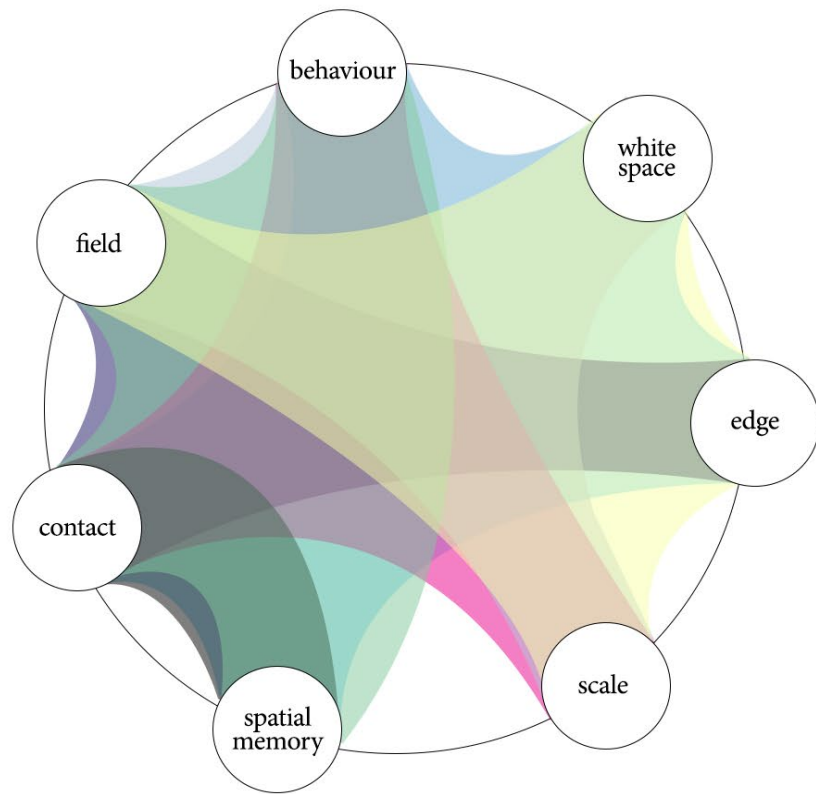
Students can be divided into several levels. Primary school students will go to school by taking a school bus, riding a bicycle or their parents will pick up them to school. Parts of the high school students and college students will drive to school. Their daily routine is fixed by different learning schedules. A student have more activities and free time a day than a commuter and they are more exposure to the public space to have some after school activities.

Public workers have a different schedule in their daily life. They may have a settled schedule of their working time and get ready to face some emergency conditions. Sometimes, they may not need to work on the entire week.

For examples, Many firemen will go on patrols and be ready at all times. They may pass many public spaces during their patrols but cannot stop. They also have a regulated routine like patrols, but they also need to response to many emergency conditions.

Old people refer to the people who have retired and have much spare time in a day. Mostly, they do not like to go far away from their houses, which means they would like to do more quiet activities, like walking, reading, etc. So their routes can be mainly around their neighborhoods. Sometimes, they go to grocery stores to get living goods. In addition, they would like to go to some rest homes to meet more people since their sons and daughters are busy with their own lives.

Freelance is people doing leisure jobs. They like doing things as they wishes and have a freedom spirit. Most of them would stay at home or stroll on the streets. Because they do not have fixed schedules to arrange their daily lives, they may have more free time arranged by themselves. The travel method of this kind of people can be on foot. They may not have enough money to buy a vehicle, or they even do not need a private vehicle.



Behaviour: some environments may affect people's moods and guide people's behaviours in a predictable or positive way.

White space: a white space will increase the adaptability of various kinds of activities. Leave the white spaces become attractive and people would like to use it.

Edge: The edge of the site is vague and should present a status of nature. It is a "soft" connection with the urban environment.

Scale: There will always be a considerable cohesion in a small scale space, and an open and modest distance in a

large scale space.

Spatial memory: The essence of the spatial memory is people's lifestyle. It always relates to the context of the site itself.

Contact: People's eye contact, close contact and repeated contact are always the prerequisite condition of social interaction. How to improve the opportunities for people contacting to each other is very important.

Field: Different field should have different qualities to avoid space homogeneous and produce different perceptions.



SLOW LIFESTYLE

I. PHILOSOPHY

II. CASE STUDY: What It Takes To Capture And Create A Moment Of Joy?

III. BASIC CONTEXT

IV. CASE STUDY: YELLOW MUD GARDEN

V. DETAILED DESIGN SECTION

01. INTUITION

02. WIND BELL

03. OUTSIDE STUDIO

04. SLOW FOOD

05. FILM IN THE MEMORY

PHILOSOPHY

We seem to have forget what life is all about. When we have too much, a life with less become a life of more. We forgot our satisfaction, our time, our balance and security.

Slow movement is people in cities all over the world who have found all sorts of ways to bring a sense of relaxation to places, to relief the stress from the daily overloaded work. (*Footprint Choices*)

The main concept of “slowness” is to enjoy the things you are doing. The godfather of the Slow movement, Carl Honorel, mentioned that the Slow philosophy is doing everything at a proper speed rather than doing things at a nail’s pace(*Carl Honorel, online site*). Savoring the hours and minutes rather than just counting

the time. It emphasizes the quality than the quantity in daily work and life. Sometimes, the process is much more important than the destination.

We are not only have the external rhythms and cycles, there are also rhythms and cycles in our own lives. We are affected by the daily and monthly moods and sleep. Time flows quickly when we are in our own rhythms that we can have more energy and willings to do things efficiently. Slow life considers that all the nature rhythms and cycles are in harmony with our culture.

It is so-called that the body is the capital of revolution. Slowness is meaningful because it makes people’s life more “happy” than before. As opposed to a simple unit of measurement, make people notice the things that they missed before and feel the connections to the larger context. Living with an awareness of the ecology, economy and culture of the place where you live, and making decisions about how to enhance these features. If you need to be connected to the surroundings, you should spend more time on them to get familiar to them and experience the different lifestyle rather than repeating in one life.

A slow life is a simple lifestyle. The quality of the “things” in your life will come to mean so much more than the quantity. According to the survey revealed, the patients who can see

through their besides windows heal faster than those who only see brick walls(*Science American*). Thus it can be seen that, the emotional effects of spaces and systems of the environment play an essential role on the environment.

What It Takes To Capture And Create A Moment Of Joy?



All the things we have seen in the past, and which are no longer visible, are filled away in the memory like microfilms, some near the surface, some buried so deeply that we have forgotten them.

Eyoálha Baker thinks that “images impact the way we think, feel and interact.” She thinks jumping for joy is a “metaphor for life. It represents overcoming fear and being fully committed to a choice and trust as in taking a leap of faith.” (George Bradt, online article)



She put a six foot tall wall with jumping people photos. The wall is not only a photo collections but also a unifying of different experience of involving so many people from different walks of life, to create art that expresses joy.

The moment of happiness become to the photos is a silence, and also a moment of joy.

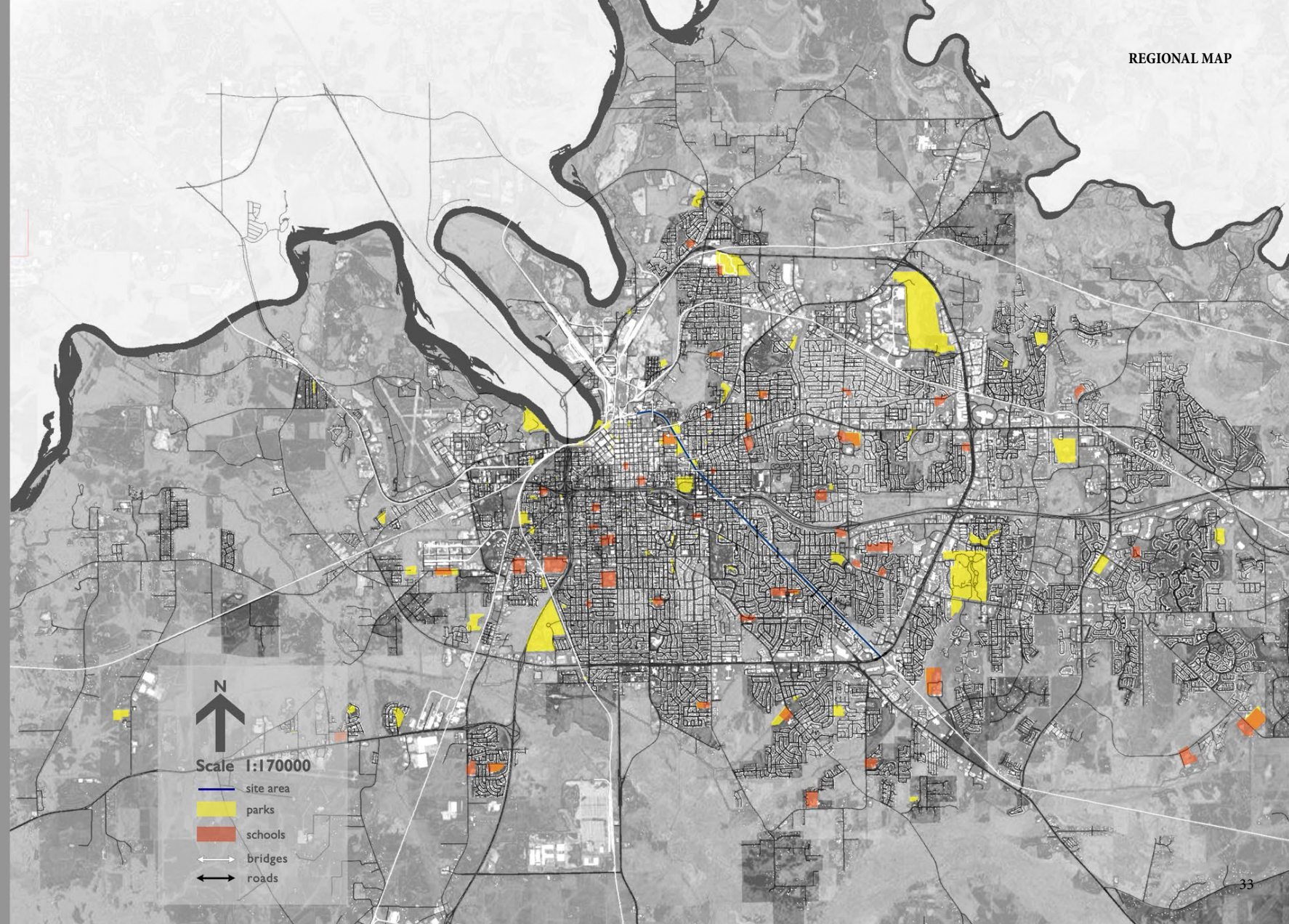
Figure 10, page30, the picture of people jumping to capture the moment of joy, photo by Eyoálha Baker.

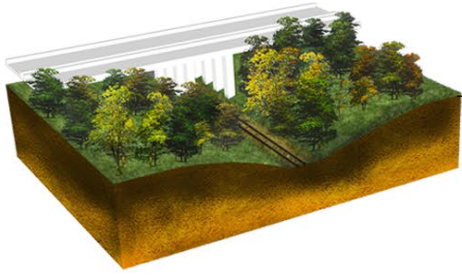
Figure 11, page31, a six foot photo wall, photo by Eyoálha Baker.

BASIC CONTEXT

Regional map shows the large context of the Montgomery city. The existing railroad system has three kind of typologies. As the topography changes, the railroad exists in the different height and conditions. Most of the railroad is hard to discover since native plants has grown uncontrolled on the railroad. People hardly can see through the mussy shrubs when they are driving, walking or running.

Local map describes a small context of the site area about the surrounding land use, topography and connectivity. This abandoned railroad passes beneath about 5 bridges and then appears on the road. The whole lane of site will go through several different land use, and a large part of the land use is neighborhoods, combine with some educational, commercial, greening and recreational lands. Partial segments of the railroad have been removed or cutted by the concrete driveways. The blue dots on the map is the detailed design site areas.

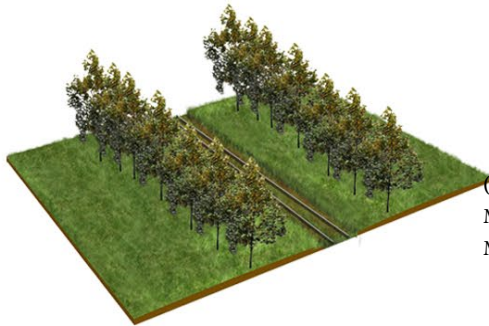




(a). Trail under bridge:
 Composite species:
 tree density is high with a low topography.
 Railroad is under bridges with high value of shady experience.

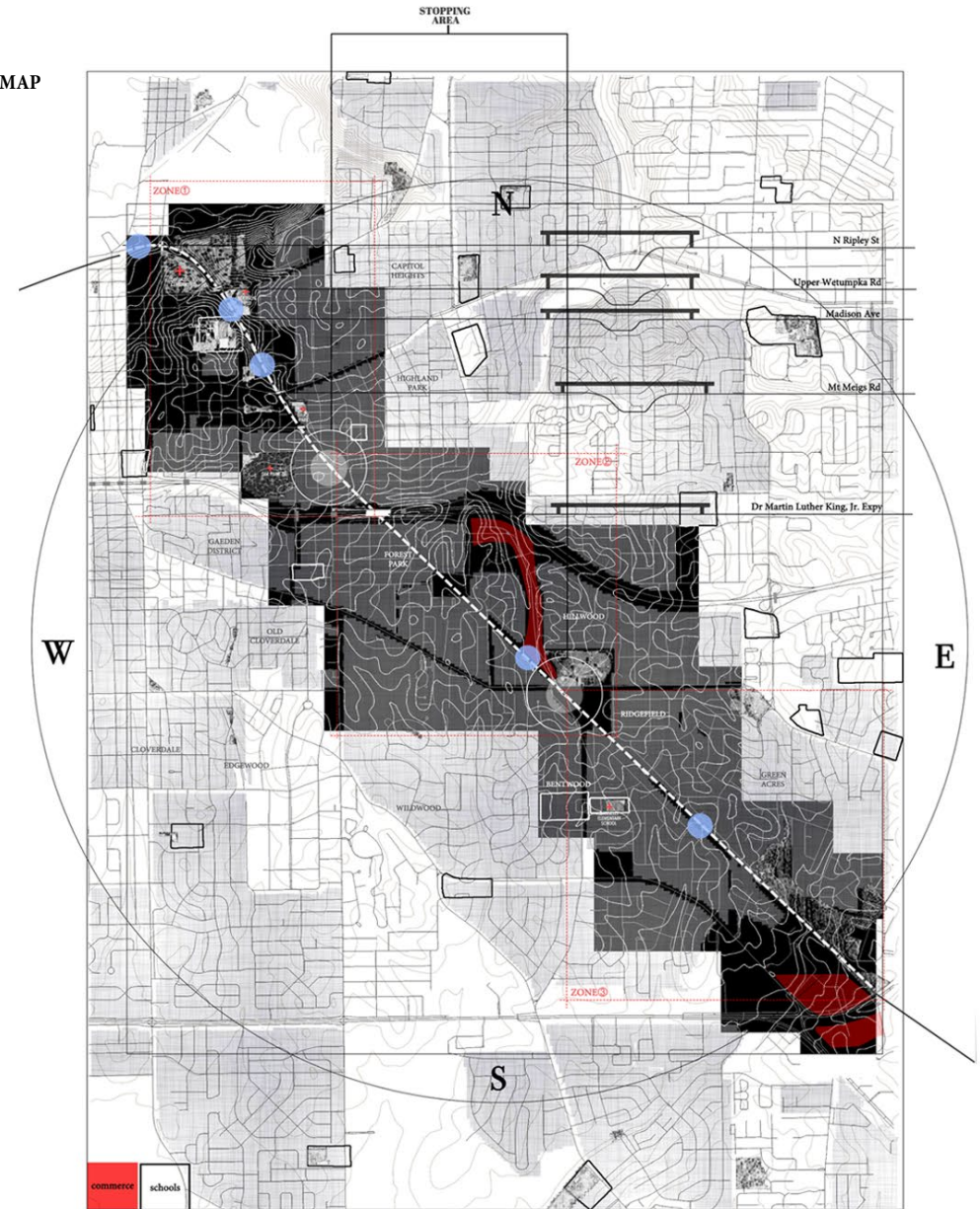


(b). Road separate the railways:
 Moderate tree canopy and shrub enclosure along the railroad.
 The railway is separated by the vehicle traffic road in the city.



(c). Continue trail channel:
 Moderate tree canopy along with railroads.
 Mostly near the residential areas.

LOCAL MAP



YELLOW MUD GARDEN

Stig. L. Anderson

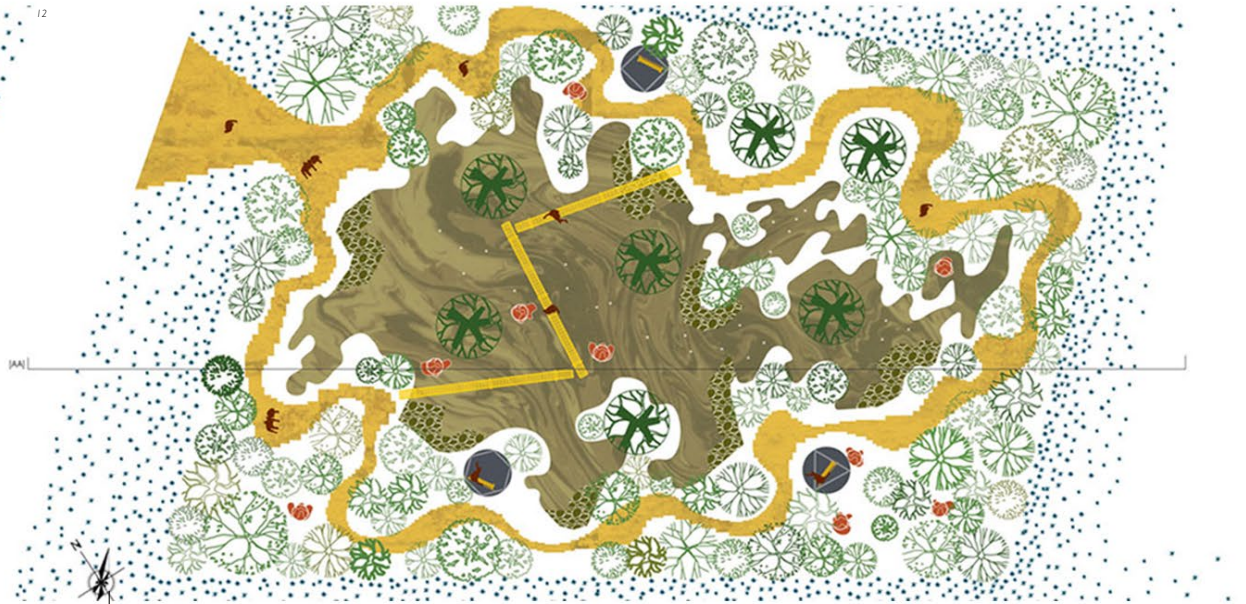


Figure 12, page36, Yellow Mud Garden site plan, site SLA.



For Andersson, a city's nature is "in the sun shining down on it, in the rain, in the puddles reflecting the sky after a storm, in birdsong, in the murmur of water, in the wind smelling of the sea." His task draws attention to common everyday smells, sights, sounds and textures of nature that are very much part of the city but that usually go unnoticed.

His Yellow Mud Garden is trying to create a sensory connectivity from people to the nature. He builds the sculptures with red mud, and paints them with fiery red color to make it clear that these are artificial construc-

tions. These sculptures delight the original sense of reddish mud that local people's uncorrupt feelings about the soil. Andersson also builds a bridge across the garden's shallow water and mud fields to miniaturise the surrounding context.

The slow elements of the landscape is enslavement of all the senses from the nature and help people capture the moments and discover the beauty of these moments. The disfavored elements can also be delighted by the proper design approaches like Andersson did.

Figure 13, page37, Yellow Mud Garden photos, site SLA.

INTUITION

01

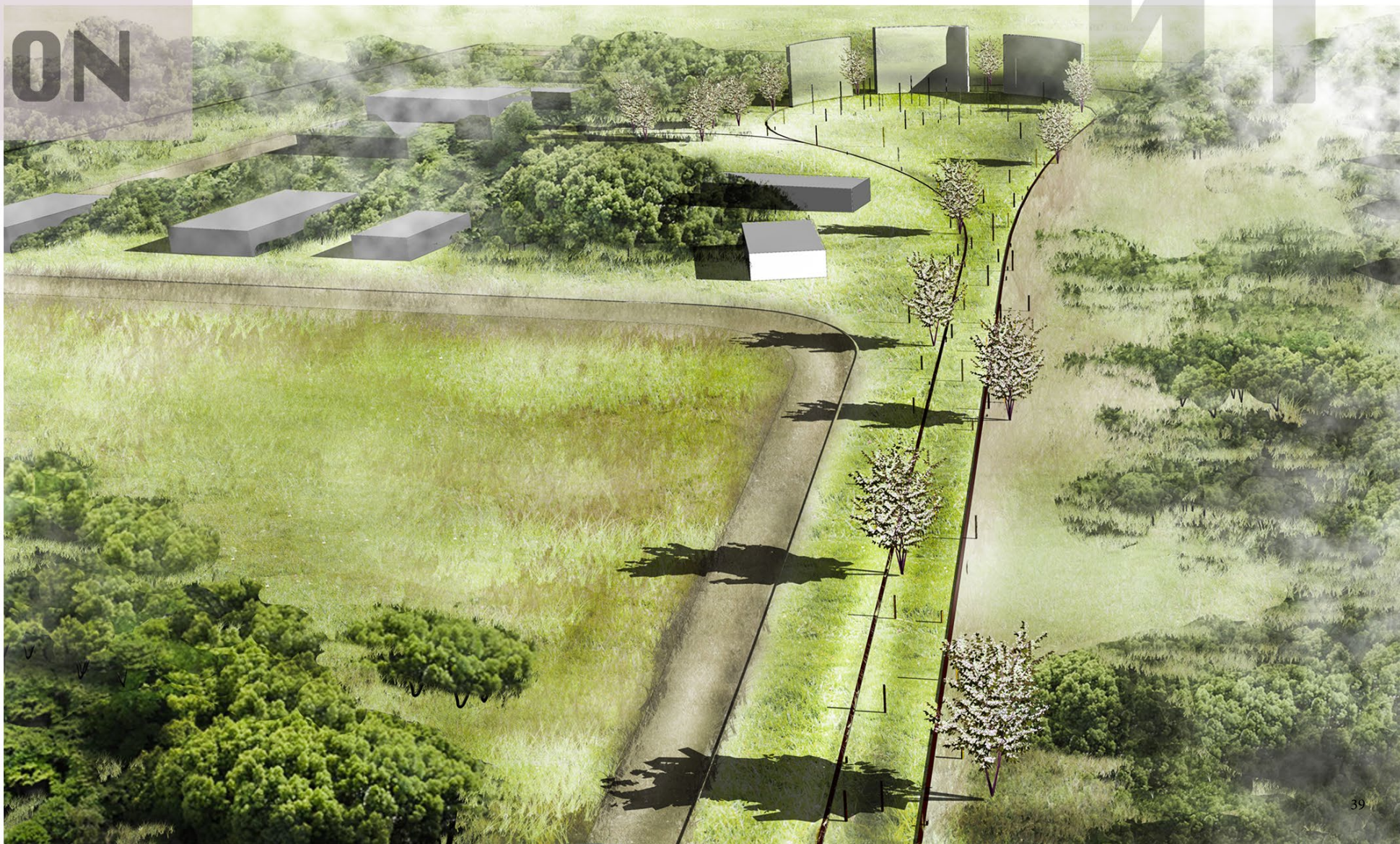
“VISUAL EMPHASIZING”

The concept of this design is trying to reveal the visual effect in the site area.

By utilizing the existing railroad in the site, I design with some vertical rails structures, which are randomly sitted in between the existing railroad.

In order to make people realize the native material and path of the rails, it is an approach to both inherit the old history and culture of the railroad and create a new sense of railroad culture in the city.

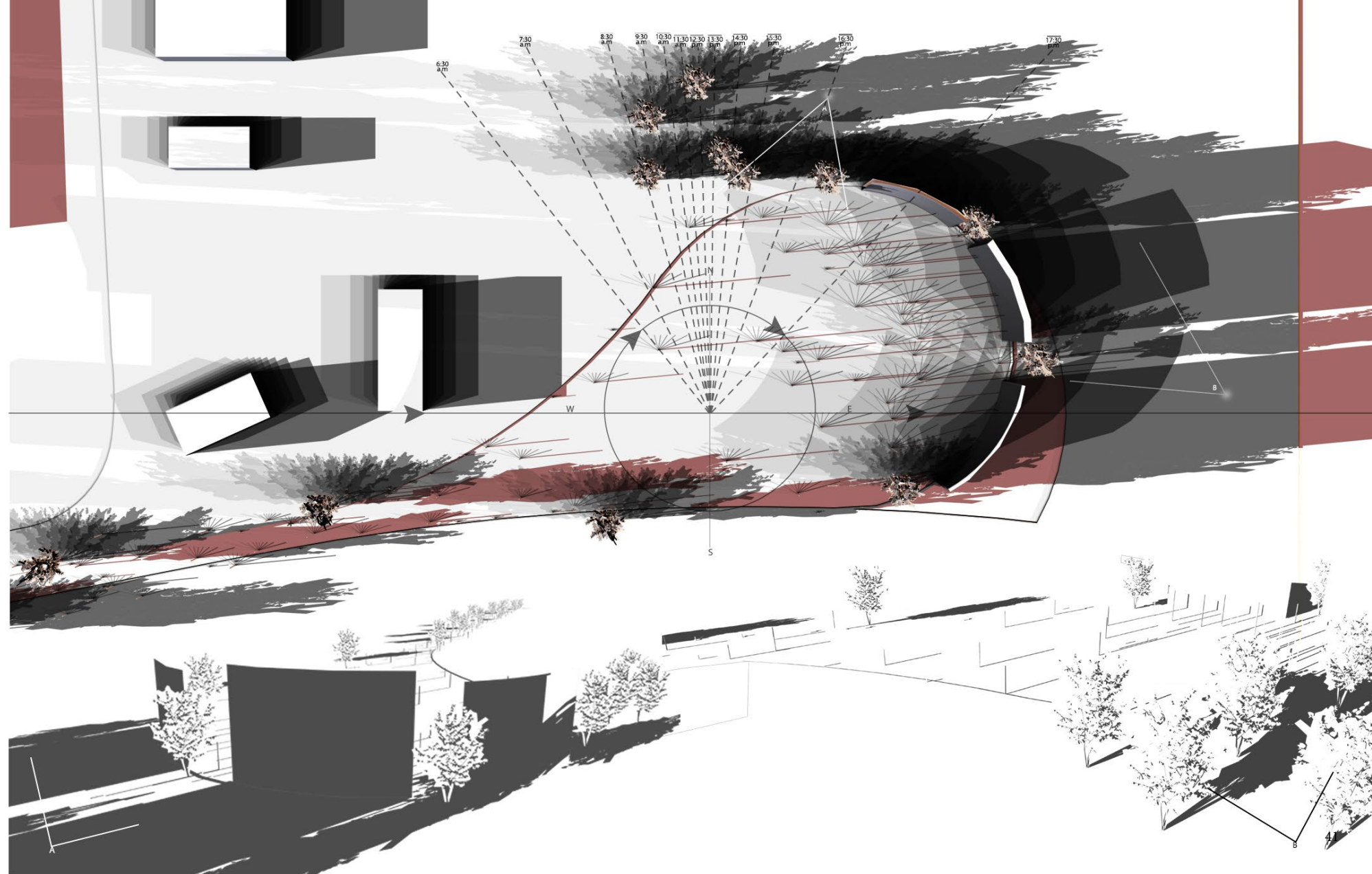
People can feel about the railroad more intuitive with seeing and touching the vertical rails. To feel the different space and scale of the site.



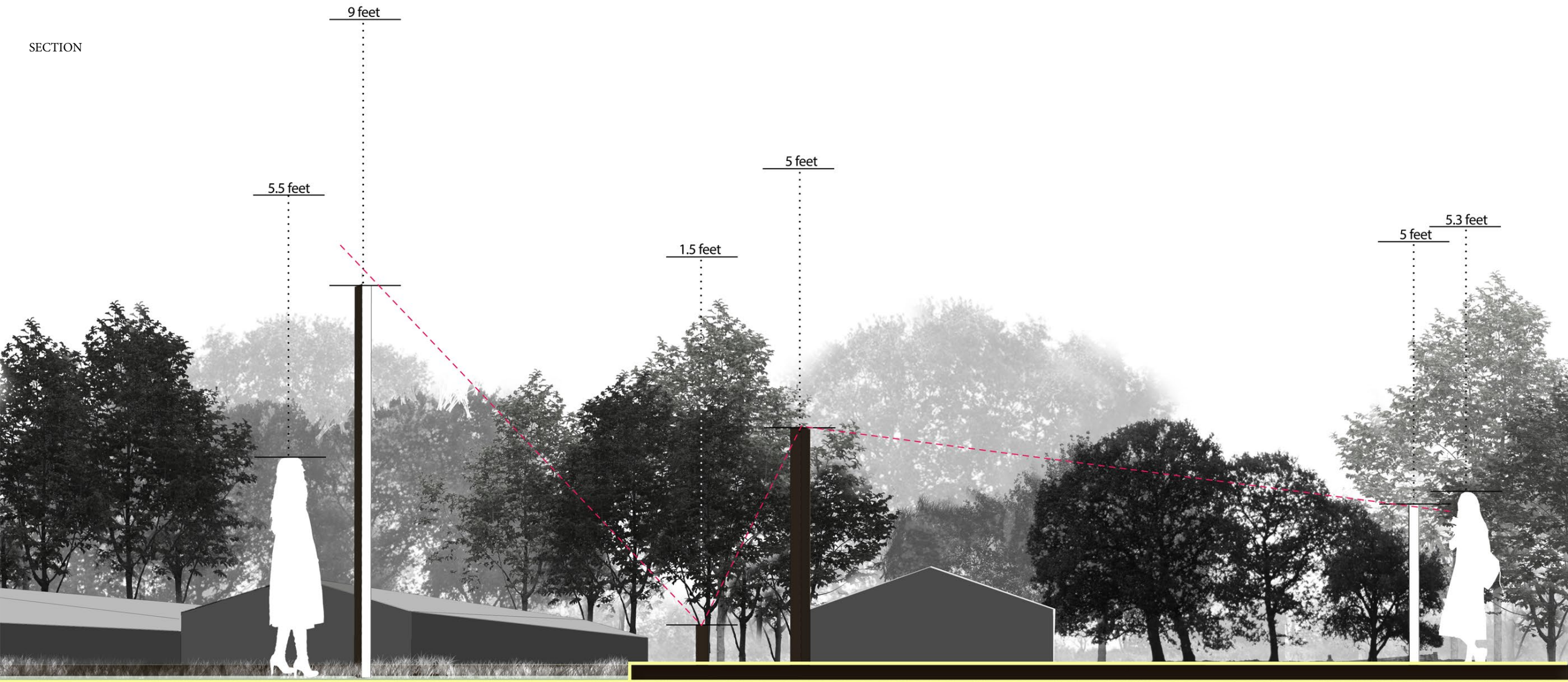
After design the verticle rail structures, the shadow patterns will become stronger than before in the site.

Shadows can measure time in the spatial environment. According to different sunshine environment, the length and the direction of the shadow will be different in different times.

These shadow patterns create a space folded with light and shadow changing, making a rich visual impression. People will pay more attention on the changes on the site throughout a day/season.



SECTION





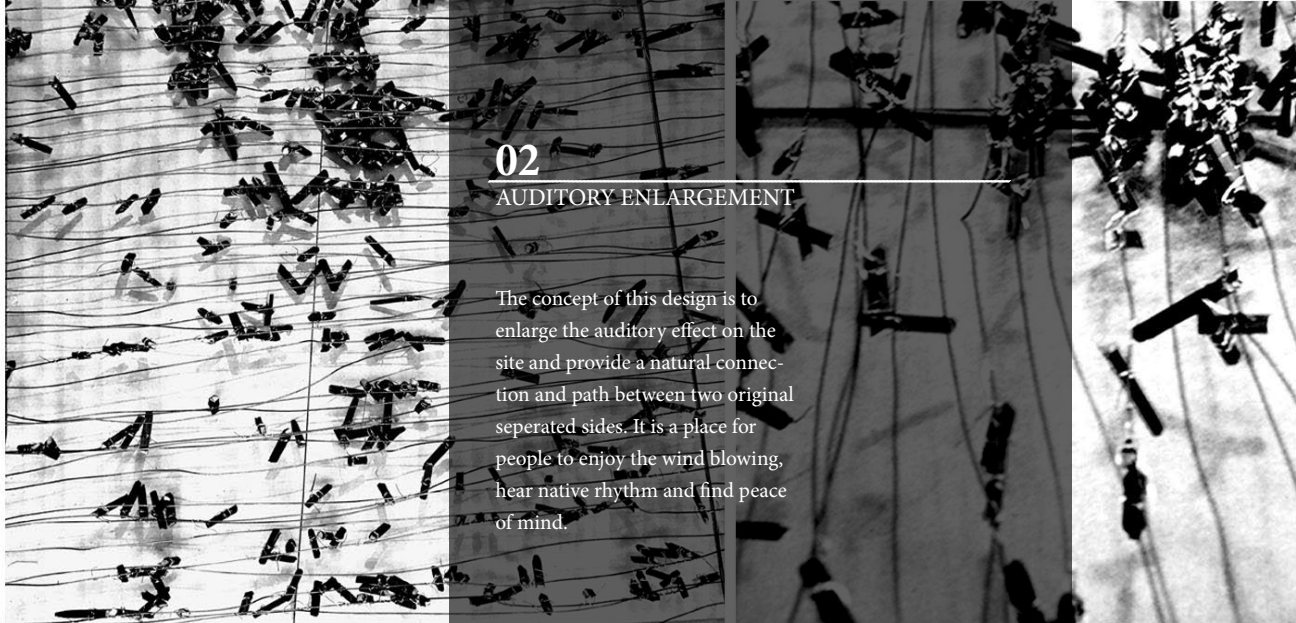
PERSPECTIVES

In the morning, the shadow of these vertical rails will shape a different view as the sun rises. One side of each vertical railroad structure is designed with light. In the night, the vertical rails will glow and provide a safe environment for people to have a night visit. People's shadow will change in different directions and opacity since the lights are coming from several directions.



WIND BELL

02



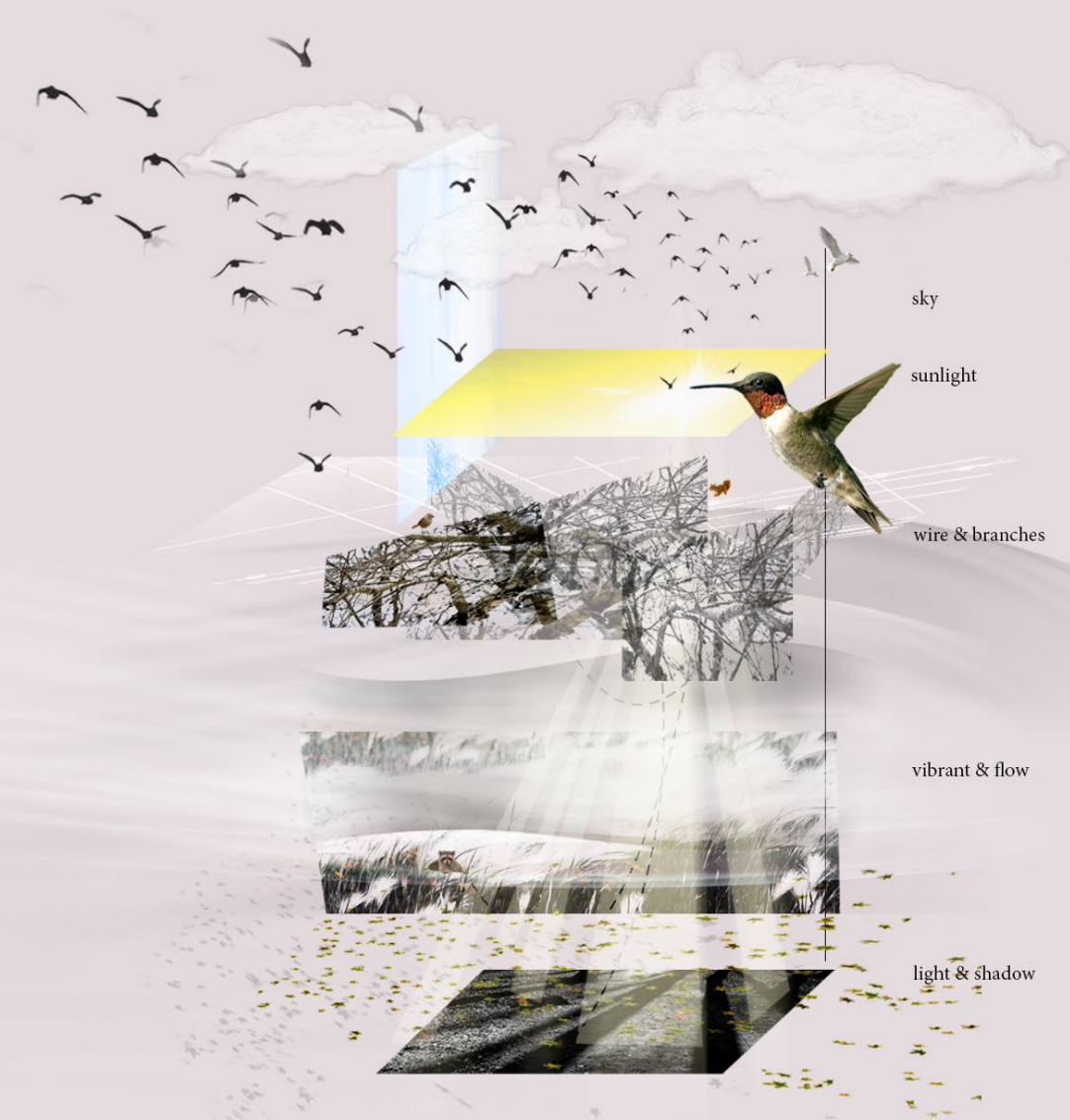
02

AUDITORY ENLARGEMENT

The concept of this design is to enlarge the auditory effect on the site and provide a natural connection and path between two original separated sides. It is a place for people to enjoy the wind blowing, hear native rhythm and find peace of mind.



The dynamic of the wood branches will hit each other and enlarge the sound in that space. People may notice the sound of woods and feel the wind changing when they are walking under the natural wind bells.



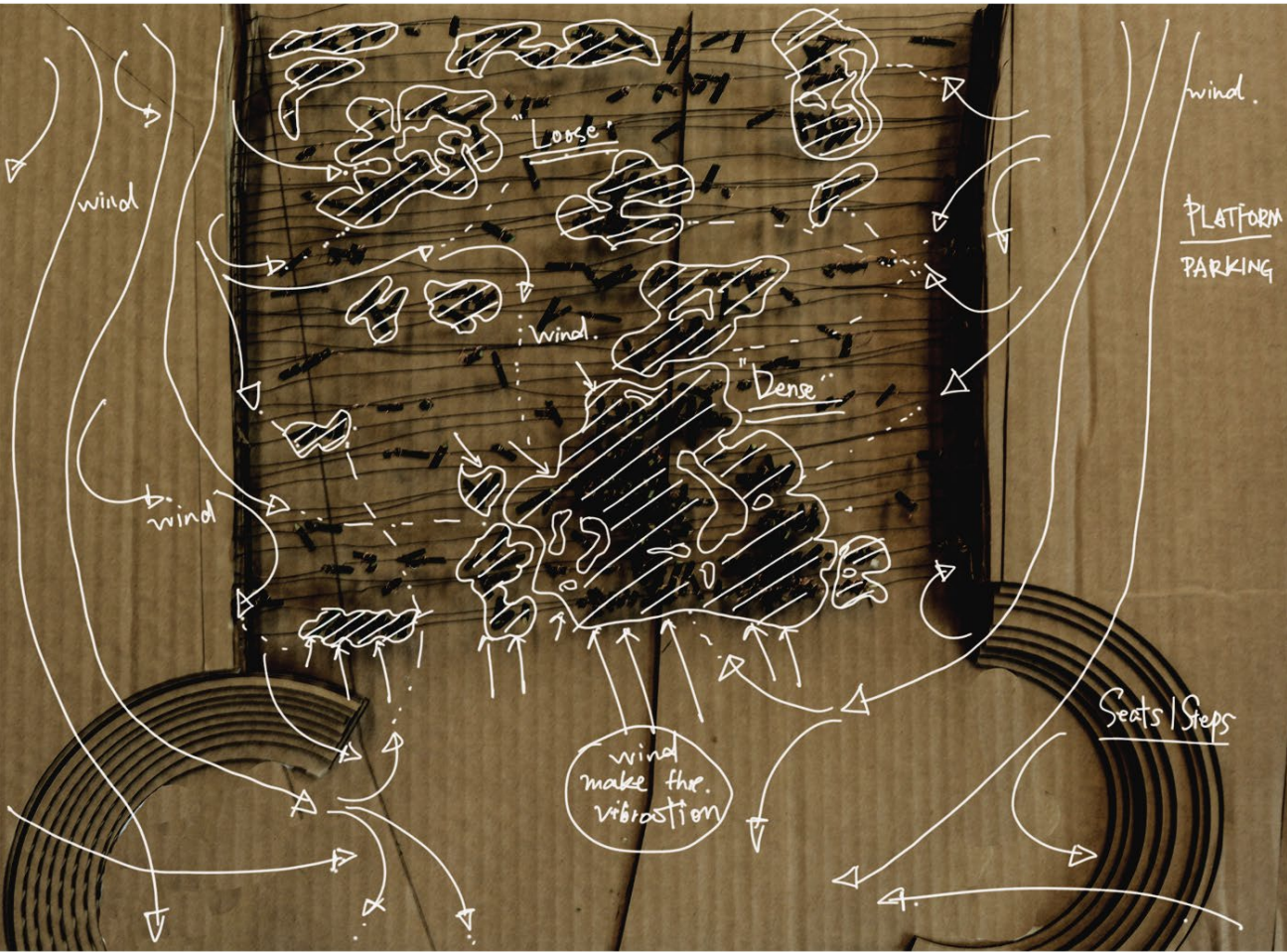
sky

sunlight

wire & branches

vibrant & flow

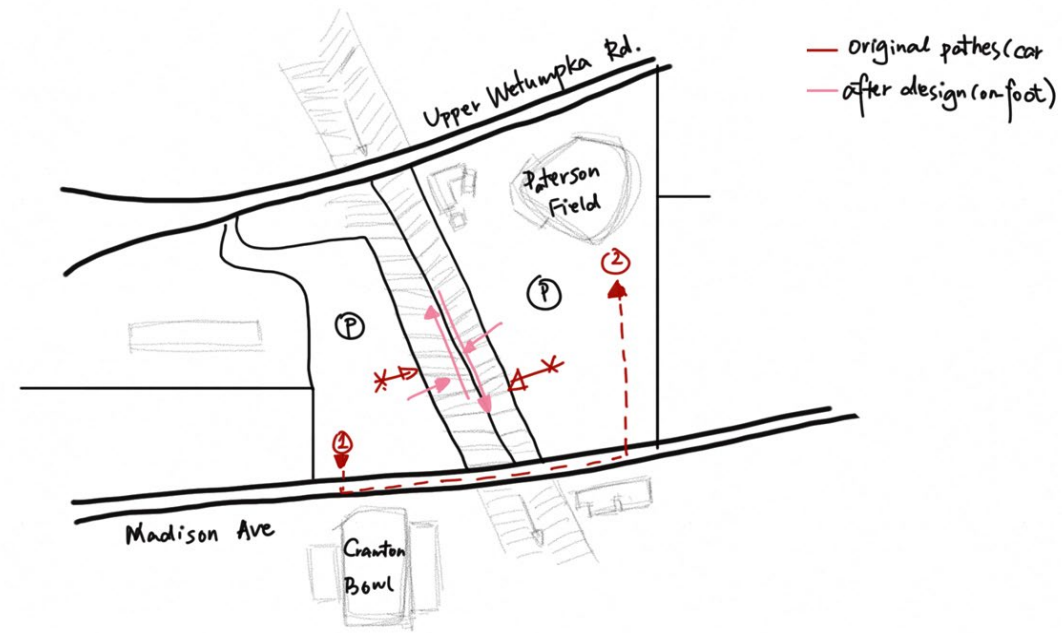
light & shadow

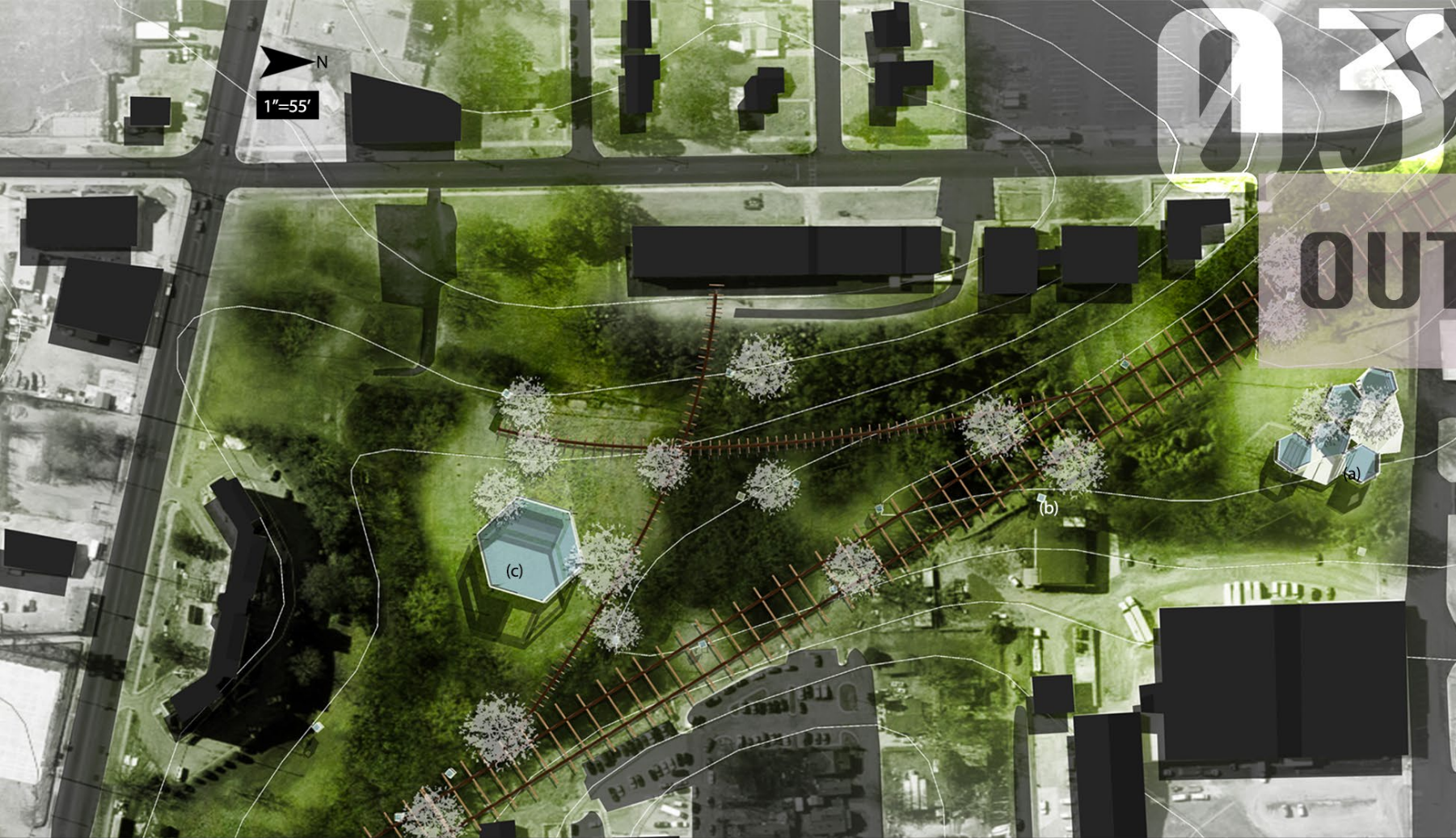


The site area is located between two large parking lots, and each side of the parking areas are adjacent to a recreational area. The abandoned railroad passes through one bridge and with a low topography than the ground parking spaces. The two recreational areas were blocked by this railroad tunnel and people cannot easily walk from one site to another site.

I changed the topography and make the native

dead branches hanging on the wires that connect to the both sides of the parking areas. All the dead branches will create a unique pattern and shady area for people relaxing and hearing the sound of nature. It is a way to emphasize the sound of wind as the form of branches hitting. In addition, the steps make people walk down or sit on to enjoy the sense of place in this part of the site.





OUTSIDE STUDIO

03 OBSERVATION PLATFORM

Observation can be an essential part when you notice something and gradually try to understand it. This design is intended for the adjacent school and I am trying to provide an outside studio with three kinds of structures.

In order to let students have an outdoor learning spaces to observe the growth and change of the native plants and animals along the abandoned railroad, I design with three different structures which can be the study areas distributed in the site. Two of them are a large group study labs and one of them is a single or small group study lab. The design of these outside labs combined with windows and different angle of views along the topography, are trying to provide a safe, clear and comfortable sitting areas for people to stop.



a). elevation of group studio

b). elevation of single studio

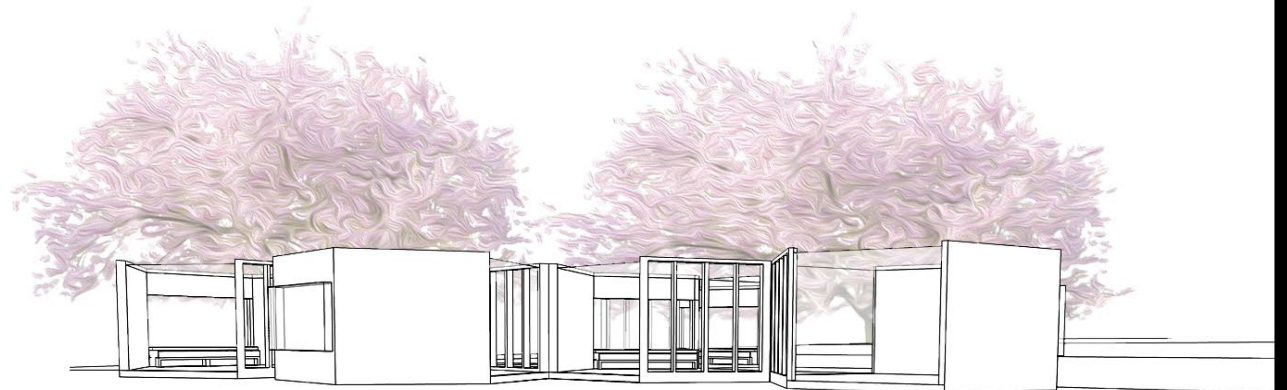
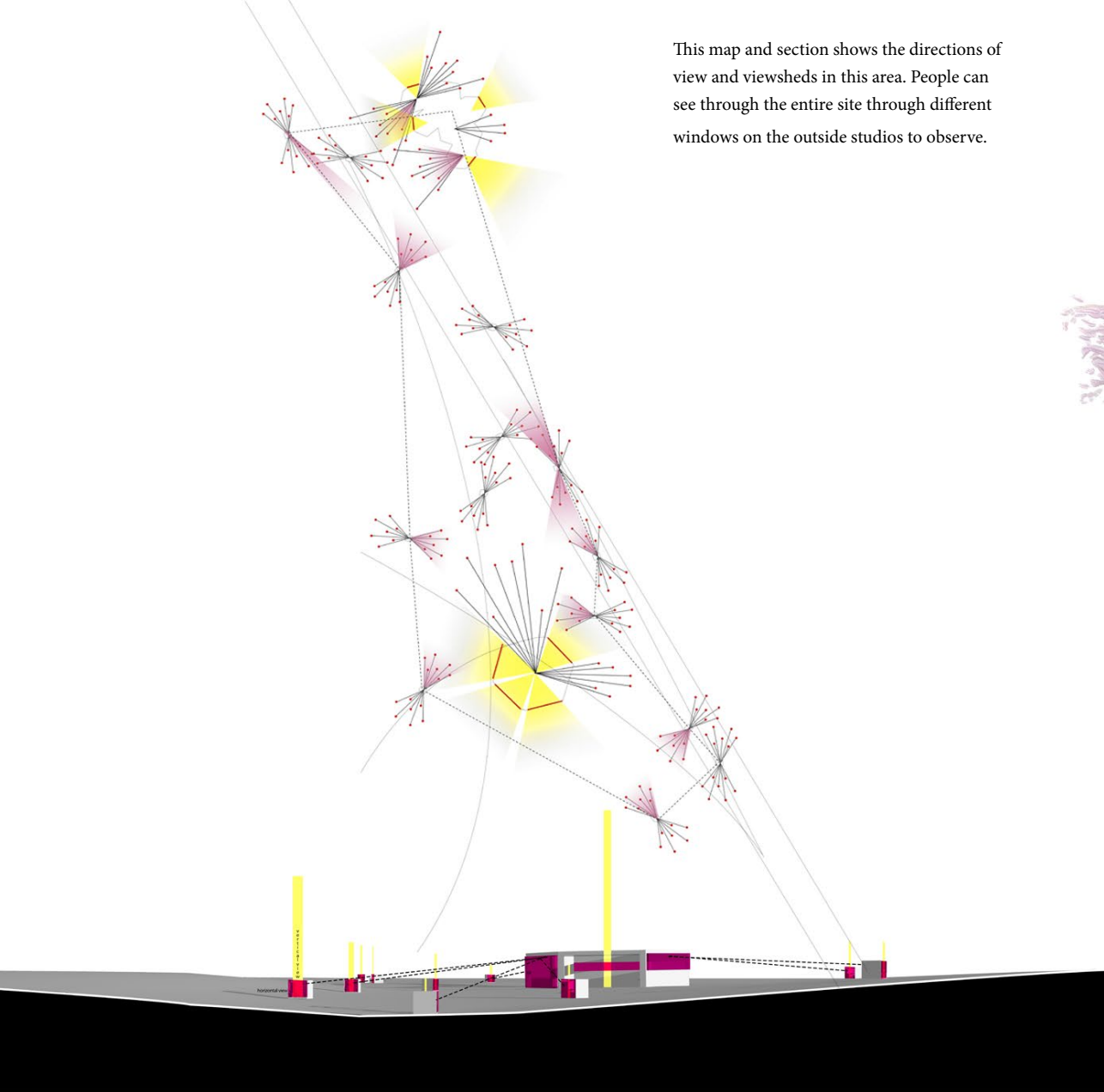
c). section of group studio



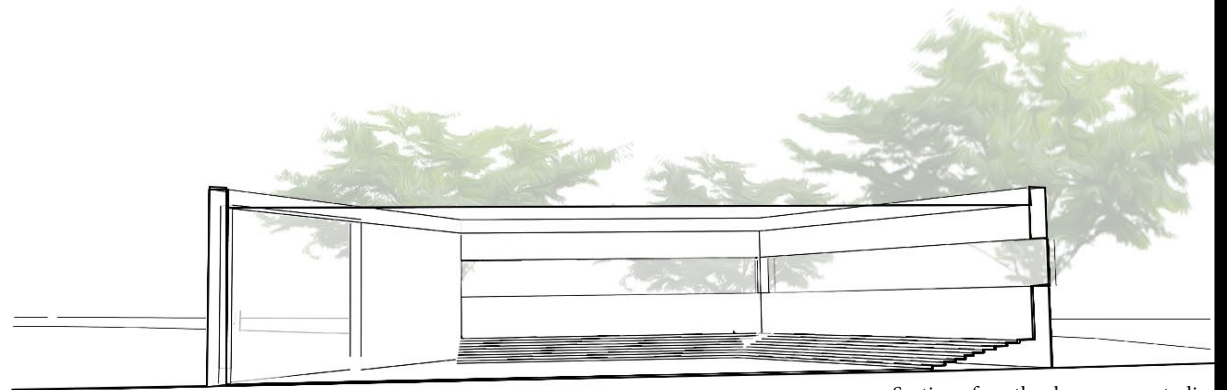
PERSPECTIVE:

This is a small group studio on the site to provide a space for students studying or let visitors sitting. People can see the scenery through the frame of the studio.

This map and section shows the directions of view and viewsheds in this area. People can see through the entire site through different windows on the outside studios to observe.



Elevation of one of the large group studio



Section of another large group studio



SLOW FOOD

04

ENJOY THE FOOD WITH NATURE

Slow food is a healthier natural eating area to propose an attitudes towards food, to enjoy the taste of food and help digestion.

04

scale 1"=30'



The core of this design is creating a comfortable natural space for the surrounding neighborhoods and passing people to sit down and enjoy the slow food movement.

This is not only a place for neighborhoods and visitors enjoying their free time. By making use of the backyard of the commercial area, I plant some marsh vegetation on the side of the drainage ditch and make some bridges for people to walk through the wetland.

In addition, providing enough eating table and seats on the both sides of the wetland. A good eating environment will improve people's social interactions with other people and also create a better eating condition to attract people enjoying the slow food activities.





SECTION PERSPECTIVE

FILM IN THE MEMORY

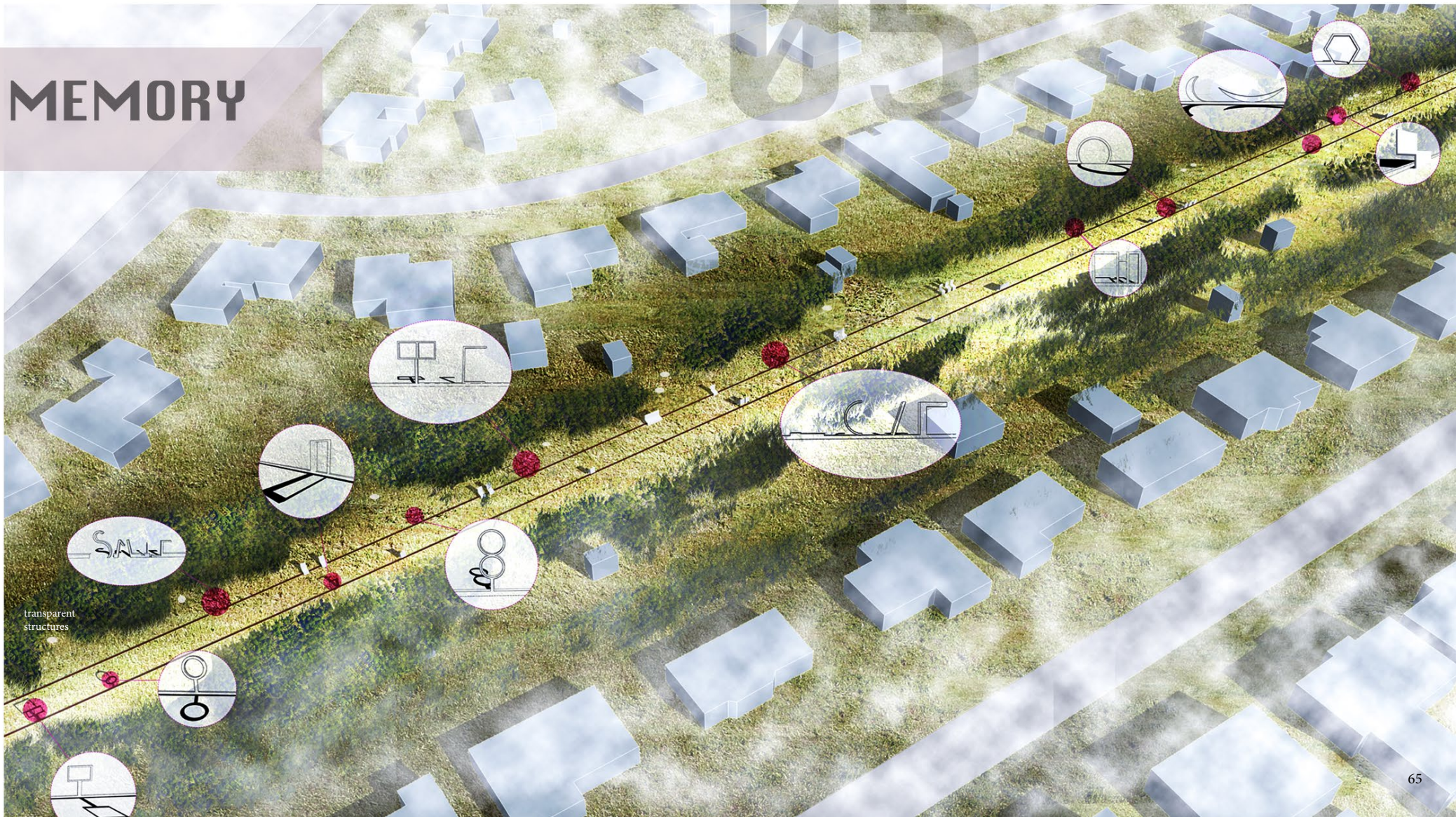
05

Human engagement

This part of the site is a linear space which surrounded by the neighborhoods. The diversity and amount of vegetation in this area is quite complex.

The design idea is making the railroad become interesting to make people want to engage with it. I create different shapes and patterns by using railroad. Each different shape will frame a different view of the scenery as the season changes, the site will have a dynamic variation. Apart from these different patterns, people can lie on the transparent structures that are hidden in the tall grasses and enjoy a moment of peace.

These different patterns will attract people engaging with, taking photographs and create an unique memory.



This serie of drawings is showing a structure on the grass for people lying and feeling the nature moving around them.

The structures are interlaced in the grasses so it looks like grasses encloses the whole structure. People will feel the higher plants moving through the wind when they are lying on these transparent structures.

It is a moment of relaxed and peaceful for people seeing the sky crossed by peaceful clouds, birds crossed in the lines and feeling the sound of the grass blows by the wind.





CONCLUSION

This thesis research project deals with an abstract concept that comes from our daily lives. The stress that everybody would have been experienced before or after in the living period. User groups and land use can become an essential part when I dealing with the design. It is hard to satisfy all the preferences since different people have different opinions.

The difficulties are the understanding of the obscure definition between quality of life and slow life, and the particularity between slow landscape and the other landscape in the same city. Because most of the landscape have the character of slowness more or less. Some slowness are defined as “slow speed”, but some slowness are defined as “attractive”.

Slow life can be a part of the quality of life, but quality of life can have both physical and mental influence on people. Compare to the people’s demand for material, slow life is more inclined to the mental feelings. Slow life is a social connection process for recognizing and reorganizing ourselves. We can

keep a healthier lifestyle, be more understand ourselves, value time and all the relations around us.

During the research process, I find out the slow landscape I designed is a mode that helping people enjoy a moment of joy. It is a lesson of abundance. We have already owned a lot of things but we didn’t realized. Health, feelings, happiness, relaxations are all depend on how you connect to your life and be yourself. My principal is trying to remind people of things happened around us. Time goes fast, but our memory are limited. The enlargement of sound, vision, touch, taste and smell are all the approaches for us to remember and connect to the basic of the world.

This research thesis inspires me about the meaning of life is not only about working and pressure. Slow life is not only about contents in this research project. But the design method and logical representation will help me understand more about the connections between human and nature which relates to Landscape Architecture designs.

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