

# STEP ON STEP/

BCN  
FES  
XAU  
19 -20

---

International  
Laboratory  
of  
Collaborative  
Architecture



# International Laboratory of Collaborative Architecture

## STEP ON STEP / BCN+FES+XAU 2019



General Coordination: Xavier Barreda  
Technical Coordination: Victoria Tous & Andrea Martín

Educational Team: Karin Hofert & Judit Taberna  
Supporting Team: Ouassim Bensouda & Khalil Morad  
Acknowledgement: Mr. Abdelali El Bakali, Head of the Environment of the Chefchaouen Municipal Council  
Mr. Ben Yakoub, Architect of the Chefchaouen Municipal Council  
Mr Mohamed Sefiani, Mayor of the Municipal Council of Chefchaouen  
and the National School of Architecture of Fez

Photographer: Virginia Ruana, Jordi Prat, Antonio Gual de Torrella, Monica Zamora, Marta Serrano, Ana Tafur, Meryem Baksys, Judit Taberna.

Printing: Victoria Tous, Eric Cruz, Ana Tafur

CCD Centre for Development Cooperation  
Pl. Eusebi Güell, 6.  
08034 Barcelona  
Tel. 93 401 59 61  
info.ccd@upc.edu

ISBN: 978-84-9880-850-6

Organised by:



AlKaria



Base-A



ETSAB-UPC

With the support of:



Ajuntament de L'Hospitalet



UNIVERSITAT POLITÈCNICA DE CATALUNYA  
BARCELONATECH

Centre de Cooperació per al Desenvolupament

# INDEX

Introduction/	Preliminary.....Pg. 09
	Why those spaces?.....Pg. 10
	The participants and the workshop.....Pg. 11
	The project values.....Pg. 12
The Methodology/	Learning by doing.....Pg. 15
Medina of Chefchaouen/	Territory: Situation.....Pg. 25
	Territory: Population.....Pg. 27
The Projects/	Bab El Mahrouk.....Pg. 32
	Sidi Belhassen.....Pg. 52
	Sebbanine.....Pg. 74
	Dbendiben.....Pg. 92
Conclusion/	.....Pg. 128
Workshop Participants/	.....Pg. 133



# **Introduction**

---



Photograph taken by Antonio Gual de Torrella. Medina of Chefchaouen 2019

## Preliminary

Since 2017 the NGO Al Karia and the cooperative entity Base A, supported by the town council of L'Hospitalet and the Centre de Cooperació per al Desenvolupament (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya), are collaborating with the town of Chaouen. From 2018 onwards the collaboration gets the shape of a workshop: the Step on Step laboratory, organized by Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona ETSAB.

In two batches, 2018 and 2019, a total amount of 53 students, 5 teachers and 2 assistants, from Morocco and from Spain, have been working on the Medina (old town) of Chefchauen. This document compiles the outcome of the summer 2019 workshop.

Currently the city of Chaouen is in full economic development based mainly on the service sector. It is positioning itself as a national and international tourist reference, and projecting itself as a traditional city to attract cultural and heritage tourism. In this context, many of the heritage buildings (kasbah, etc.) and the collective buildings (mosques, ovens, etc.) in the old Medina are under rehabilitation. The historic centre of Chaouen is starting the process of becoming a World Heritage Site.

It is well known how difficult it is to balance the population needs and the economic development of a city. A city economy depending on tourism often focuses the investment on the cityscape aesthetics instead of undertaking a global conservation program in order to improve the life quality of its inhabitants.

The aim of this workshop is to support the local administration in its rehabilitation initiatives and at the same time to empower the user by providing a sense of belonging. We try to achieve it by detecting vulnerable town spaces, analysing them in depth, and giving them a fresh approach.



## Why those spaces?

Based on the requirements and proposals of the mayor and the technical team of Chefchaouen, four working sites were chosen. Visiting the places was crucial to delimitate and name problems and objectives, as well as to fix the working groups in charge of every site.

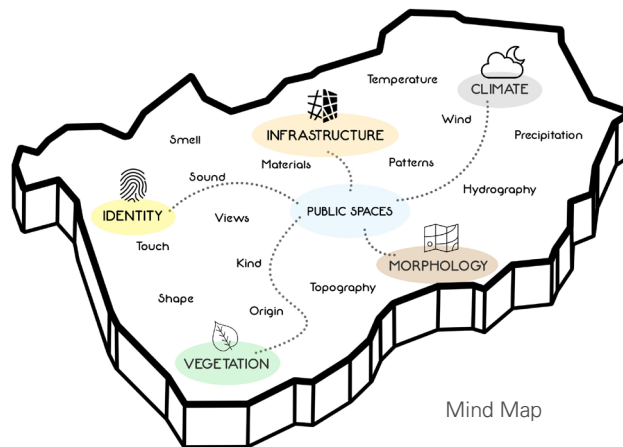
On one hand the spaces chosen to develop in this workshop were Bab Mahrouk, Sebbanine square and Sidi Belhssen in the Medina of Chefchaouen. On the other the council and its technical team claimed to go deeper into the Dbendiben square project developed in 2018; due to its architectural value and strategic location in the Medina this square shall be the first to be built.

# The Participants & The Workshop

In order to clear up the municipal requirements, a Moroccan teacher specialized in built heritage and urbanism was consulted. Technical, but also social and cultural aspects of a tight community with characteristic living spaces were discussed, contributing to define the methodology of the workshop.

Based on the work that had to be developed by the 24 participating students from Fez and Barcelona, the duration of the workshop was established in seven days and the students were divided into 4 mixed transversal groups integrated by 6 students regarding their age, university of origin and site preferences.

Tangible and intangible features such as infrastructure, vegetation, morphology, climate, character, identity, etc. (shown in the graphic below) were studied, and together with the requirements formulated by the city council, set up the starting point for the projects development. The students developed their rehabilitation and improvement proposals in two phases. First they had two days to make up a presentation pointing out strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis). Then they had three days to come up with a proposal, discussed by all the participants and improved with assessment of the teachers. The last day all teams and several technicians of the city council participated in an open session: Chefchaouen's municipality had a very positive response and showed interest in carrying out the Dbendiben project.



## Project Value

The main aims of the project are:

- To foster cooperation, both international -between students and teachers in Barcelona and Morocco- and local -cooperating with the community by implementing participatory processes in the project design-.
- To increase life quality and preserve daily activity by rehabilitating and improving public space and architecture in the historical town (Medina).
- To enhance sustainable local economic development, understanding that tourism and its sectorial interests do not have to conflict with life and daily activities nor contribute to gentrification.
- To work according to principles of environmental sustainability and bio-construction, by using healthy proximity materials with low environmental impact.
- To collaborate with local construction agents in order to exchange knowledge and improve existing architecture, respecting traditional construction techniques, thus avoiding the use of erroneous rehabilitation processes.





## **Methodology**

---



## Learning by doing

ETSAB has a long and intensive tradition in organizing and taking part in international workshops. It forms part of our international policy. At ETSAB we are convinced that working together with people from varied cultural, social and geographic backgrounds is an excellent training for students and teachers. That is why ETSAB welcomed the idea of the NGOs Base A and Al Karia to hold a workshop in Morocco with students from our school and a local Architecture school. The proposal was made even more appealing by suggesting an exciting working site: the old medina of Chefchaouen and its public space.

A workshop activity is usually a fulltime job for most of the participants, including the teachers, all focusing the same issue. It always opens the minds, enabling to analyse and discuss matters from all kind of viewpoints. It obliges to think precisely and to explain clearly. It enhances establishing compromises: both referring to the work contents and the way to carry them out. It is an opportunity to work in a transversal or even interdisciplinary way. It widens the social and professional network of all the participants. That is, international workshops have a very high performance that justifies all the effort needed to organize them.

In Chefchaouen we all had the opportunity to get into know another culture, share different background educations and knowledges, even customs, and the experience of searching for common places and working together has been absolutely positive.

Working in a diverse architectural environment spurs your reflection. It might have to do with cultural and historical aspects, the climatic conditions and the building tradition. All these factors get different responses, so you have to be very awake and permeable, in order to be able to integrate them in the design process. Becoming aware of the magnificent urban space of Chefchaouen and its people by proposing a sequence of related interventions in its ancient Medina has been a highly enriching experience.

An international workshop includes also all kind of knowledges, some not directly related to the academic commitment, but not therefore less valuable. Our future contribution to improve the sites where life takes place will rest also in our capacity to observe and reflect upon reality, as diverse as this might be. The shortage introduces intensity. It makes you introduce priorities, getting rid of all what is not essential or does not contribute to the development of the project. Limited time enhances you to come to clear conclusions and enables you to present a synthetic result.

The design workshop is clearly different in shape from the current studio, but shares the main feature: a specific way of “learning by doing” common to all architectural schools in the world. It is our own pedagogy, where we try to rehearse the way architectural studios work. But if, in addition, the workshop works on a real site and commitment, with real users with whom one can talk to and converse –which was the case-, the result of it might be a unique formative experience. In this sense, the workshop constitutes an extraordinary means of knowledge transfer and, as in this case, international cooperation.

It is then when the workshop becomes a real trial of a professional office: students and tutors working in a team, as colleagues or collaborators for real clients and real users. All members of the studio are –nearly- on equal terms. The tutor, who is not required to give any rates, convinces only with reasons. And as she is the most interested of all in carrying out the work, she has to put in practice a constructive criticism. That also makes the workshop such a valuable pedagogical means.



Photograph taken by Virginia Ruana. Sidi Belhassen, Medina of Chefchaouen 2019



Photograph taken by Virginia Ruana. Sidi Belhassen, Medina of Chefchaouen 2019

## Testimony

Meryem and Yassine students from Fes:

“COMMUNICATION. This experience taught me that Architecture give us the opportunity to cooperate and be open-minded. I hope we can meet in the square we worked together again and workshops like this keep going on for the next few years”

Khalil Morad teacher from Fes:

“THANKFUL. Experiencing the interaction for the first time makes me feel proud. I take with me good memories”

Marta, Carla and Maroua students from Spain:

“CONNECTION. This was an opportunity to let aside our comfortable and stressful lives and work together here in Morocco to improve others lives”

Laia and Jordi students from Spain:

“TEAMWORK. I came here knowing nothing about design programs but at the end I learnt a lot not only in the architecture field but also in personal experience. Intense time”

Eric and Ana students from Spain:

“WORKING METHODS” Thanks to this workshop, we learnt working in a cooperative way as Base A organisation implements, whose vision goes beyond the architecture plans, highlighting social and historical aspects, trying to think as users, and pursuing the interaction between volunteers, local people and professionals”



Photograph taken by Judit Taberna. Medina of Chefchaouen 2019



Photograph taken by Sebbanine's group. Medina of Chefchaouen 2019



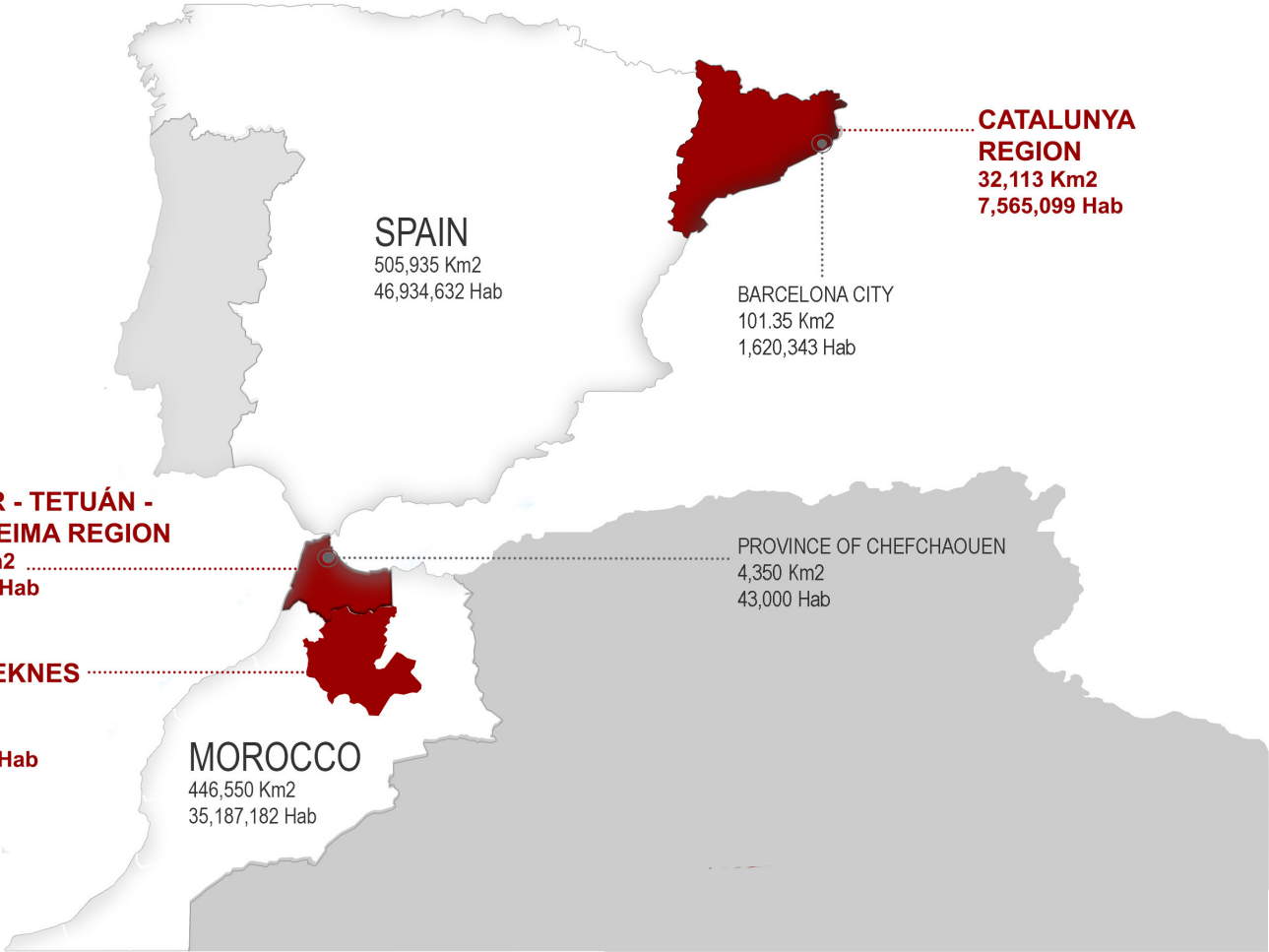
Photograph taken by Dbendiben's group. Medina of Chefchaouen 2019



## **Medina of Chefchaouen**

---

# Territory: Situation

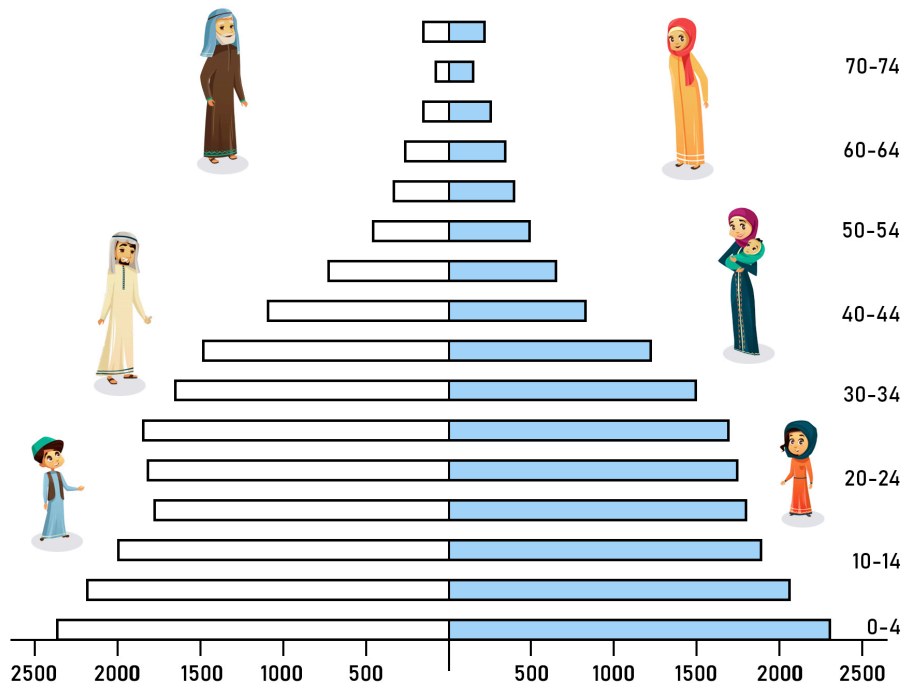


# Territory: Population

The population of Chaouen results from a mixture of people of diverse origins, who have come to the city throughout its history. The first Chauenies were descendants of Berbers, while 50% of the original population was formed by the thousands of Andalusian families, both Muslim and Jewish, who arrived from the south of Spain between the 15th and 17th centuries. Currently, the original population of Chaouen is joined by foreign residents who have acquired a home in the city.

The first estimate of the population of Chefchaouen, made by C. de Foucauld in July 1883, suggested a population of between 3,000 and 4,000 inhabitants.

On the eve of Spanish colonization in 1920, the population was 10,000 inhabitants. The rise of the birth rate along with the immigration of neighbouring populations, increase the number of inhabitants of Chaouen to 23,563 in 1982, or 42,914 in 1994 (19,567 of which in the medina), a number that is maintained approximately in the present.



Population Pyramid

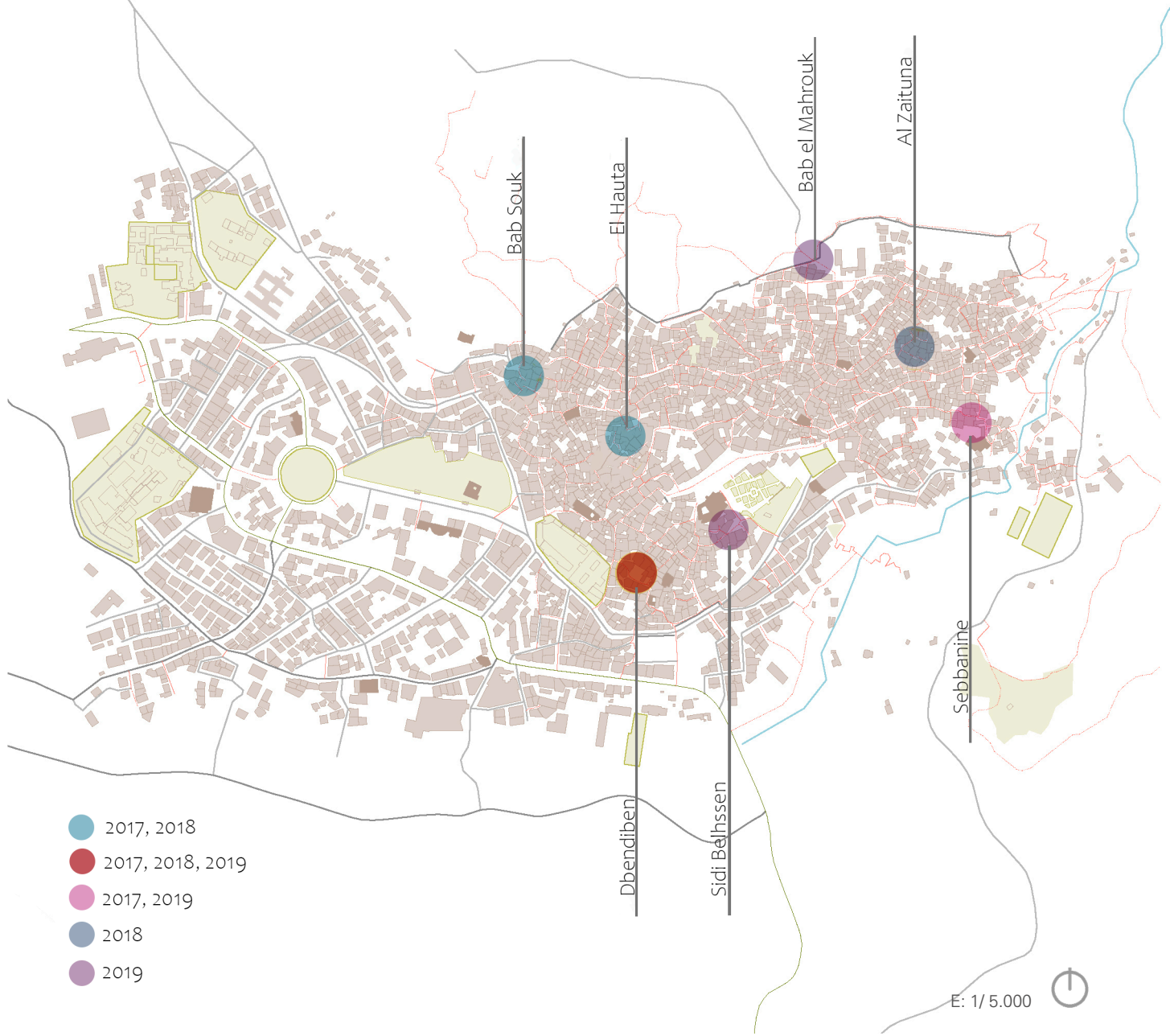


## **The projects**

---



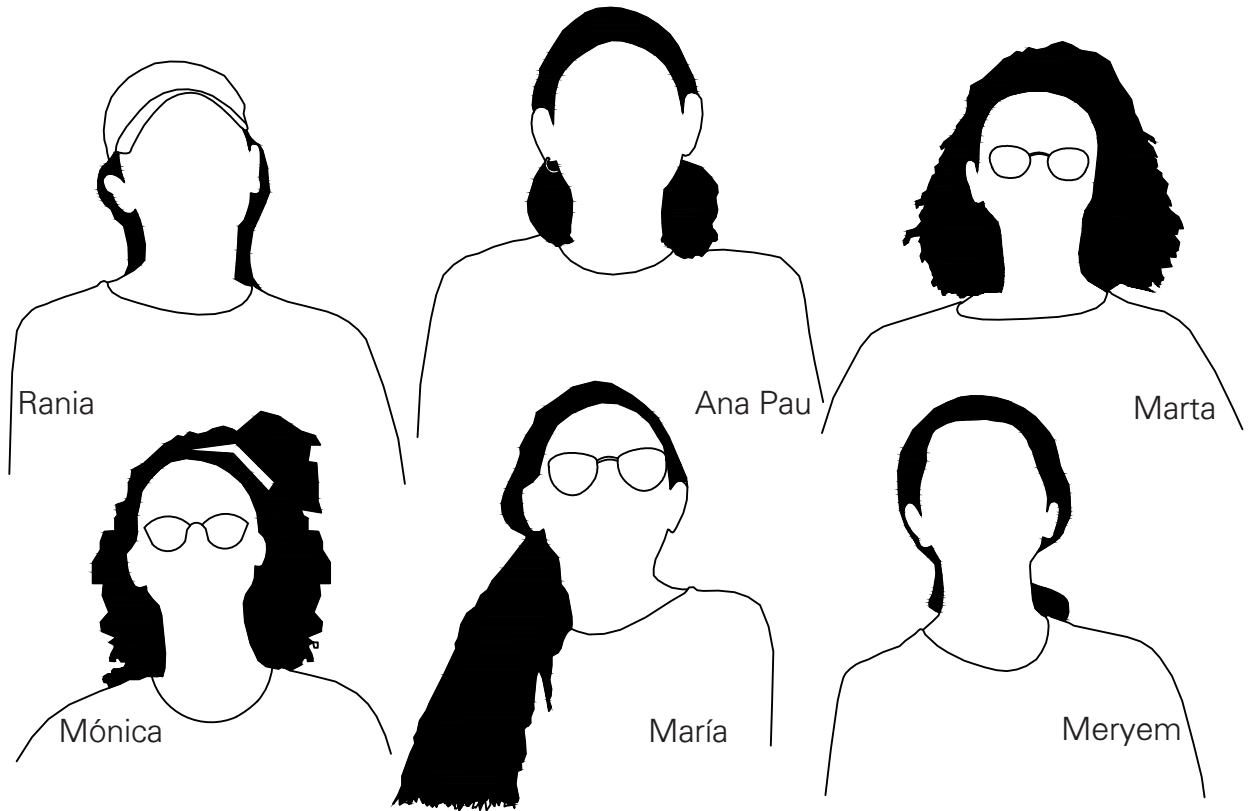
Photograph taken by Judit Taberna. Mosque bouzzafer, Medina of Chefchaouen 2019



- 2017, 2018
- 2017, 2018, 2019
- 2017, 2019
- 2018
- 2019

E: 1/5.000





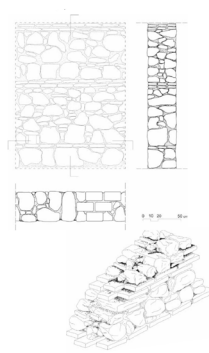


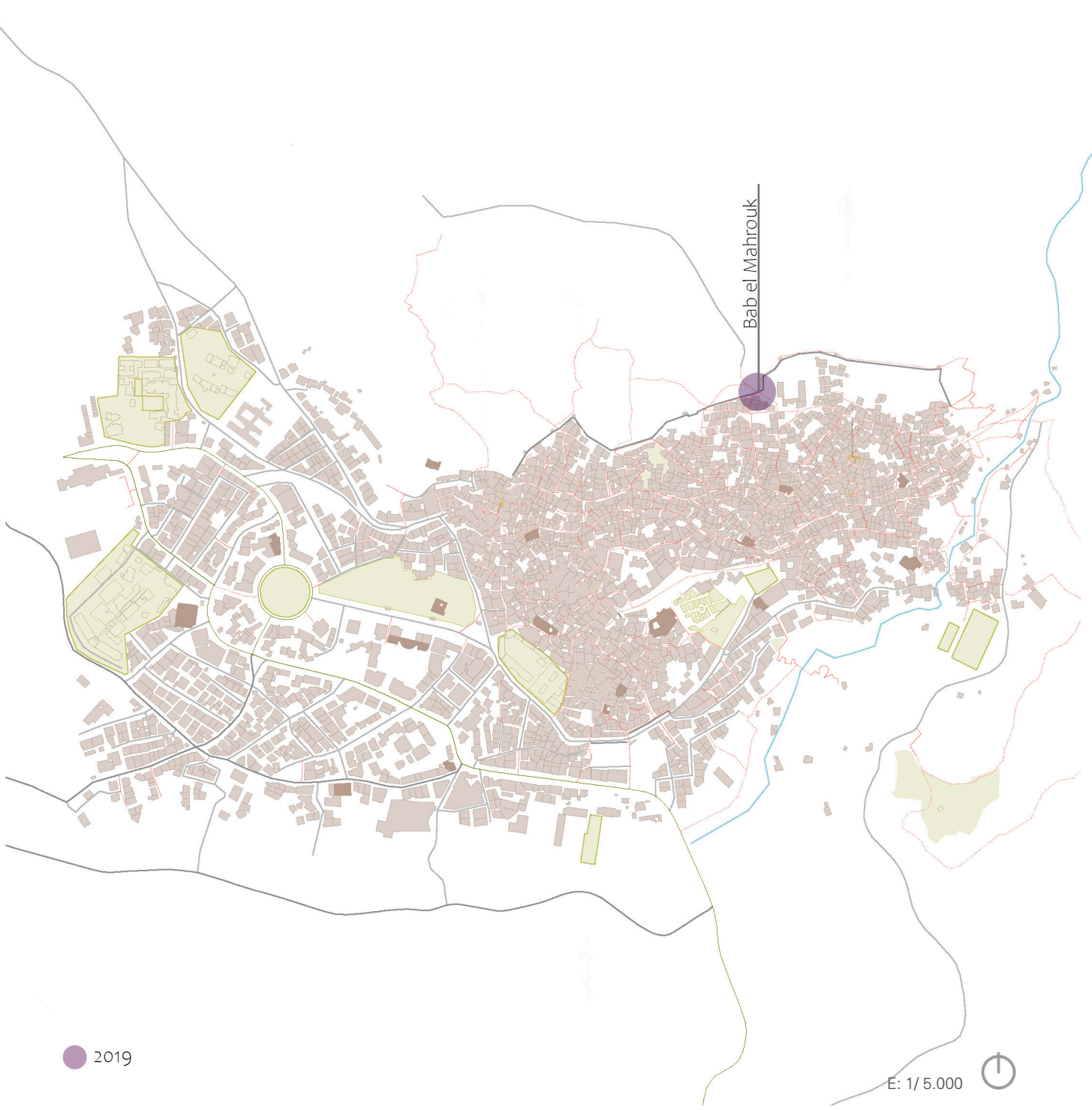
## Bab El Mahrouk

The original wall was 1.028 m long, built along XV-XVI, and is located at 690 m above the sea. Nowadays four towers remain and its length is 560 m. "The Mahrouk" gate was built between 1483 and 1493. Mahrouk is an arabic word that literally means burnt; so there are some stories about the origin of the gate's name, for instance that the door was burnt in order to enter the city and steal. Another says that the gate was built by an important man called Abdul whose nickname was Mahrouk, who also built another gate in Nador. The third story speaks about burning to death a tribe in that place.



Bab Mahrouk is built with self-supporting walls done with stones of different sizes interspersed with solids bricks. It has two facade claddings: covered by cement/clay or without it. Its main characteristic is that the wall is not really homogeneous along the road and the differences between the rehabilitated parts and original ones are clearly visible. Additionally, the towers are made of load-bearing walls with different claddings.





● 2019

E: 1/5.000



**Sair:**

**"Before time the gates were closed at 10 p.m. Fifteen years ago there wasn't a built road, for that reason cars weren't able to enter into the city".**

**A Local woman:**

**"I live in the old Medina since I was a little girl, and I have passed by BAB MAHROUK many times a day feeling secure. I feel that there is no need to have another view".**

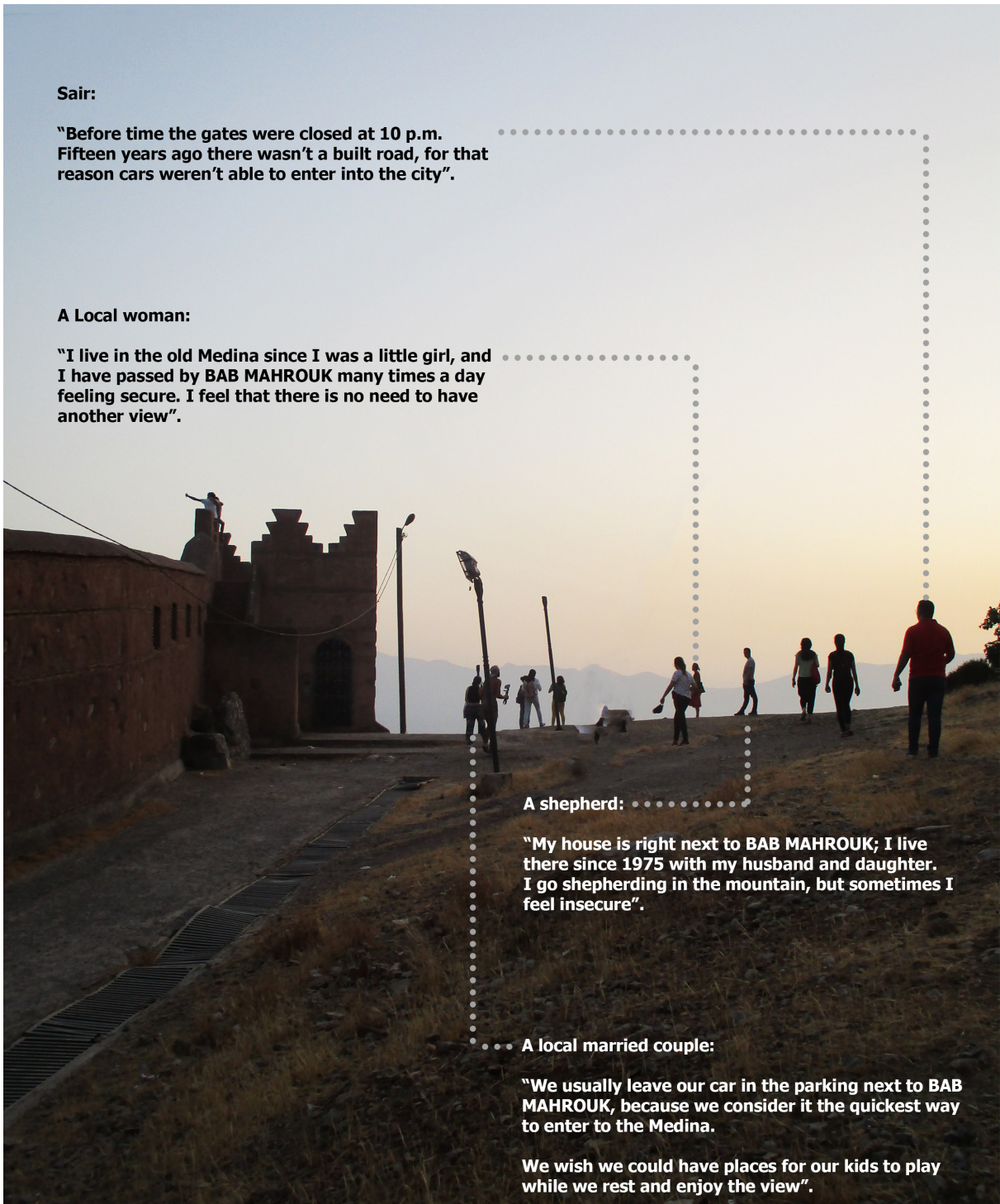
**A shepherd:**

**"My house is right next to BAB MAHROUK; I live there since 1975 with my husband and daughter. I go shepherding in the mountain, but sometimes I feel insecure".**

**A local married couple:**

**"We usually leave our car in the parking next to BAB MAHROUK, because we consider it the quickest way to enter to the Medina.**

**We wish we could have places for our kids to play while we rest and enjoy the view".**





Photograph taken by Marta Serrano. Bab El Mahrouk, Medina of Chefchaouen 2019

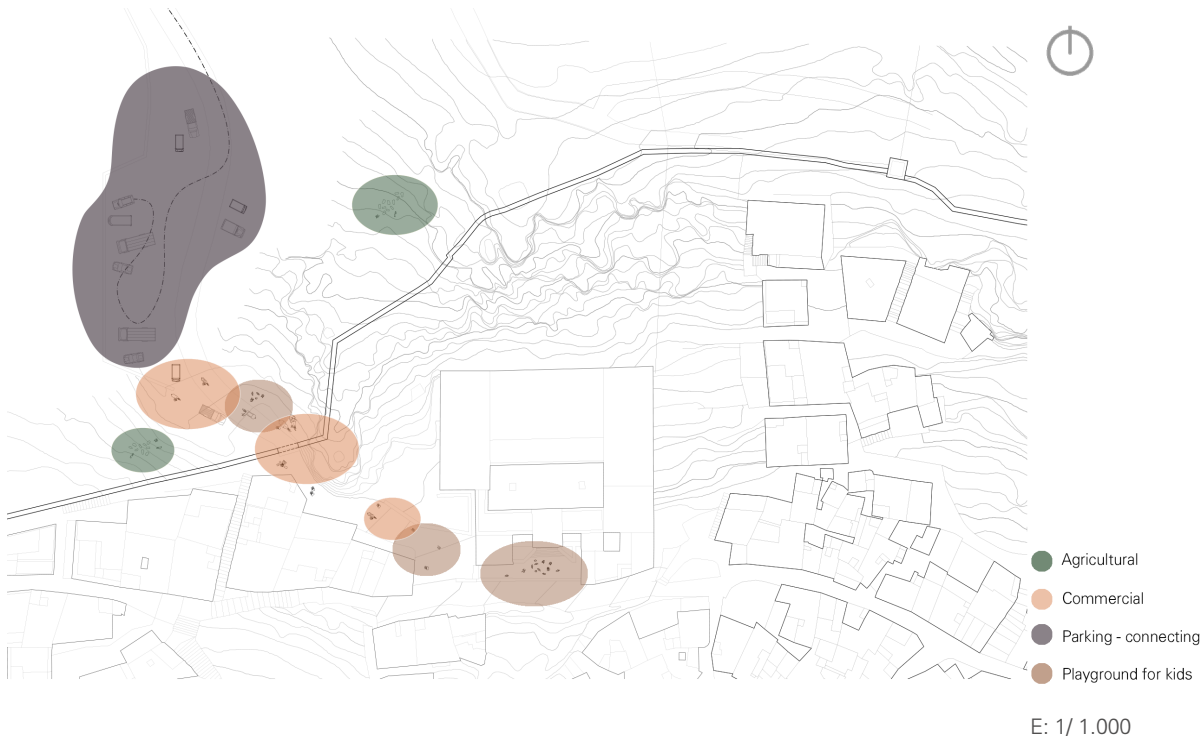
# Context Analysis

## Views & Buildings



The project is located along the wall that surrounds the old Medina, at the “Bab Mahrouk” gate in the north of Che-fchauen. This area has been influenced by the activities from inside and outside the Medina over time.

## Uses for the space



Different activities take place in the area: on one hand, inside the Medina we find a school and residential buildings, on the other hand, outside the Medina there is a parking, a path that is used by flocks of sheeps/goats and a road that connects Chaouen with other municipalities, the Atlas Chaouen Hotel, the Sidi Abdel Hamid Cemetery and the Natural Park Project.

## Transitions



Fotograph taken by Ana Tafur. Medina of Chefchaouen 2019



Aquarelle made by Meryem Abkari & Rania Farid. Medina of Chefchaouen 2019

Transition throughout the arches on walls is one of the aspects that highlights the identity of Chefchaouen and makes possible the integration between spaces.

## Views



Fotograph taken by Mónica Zamora. Medina of Chefchaouen 2019



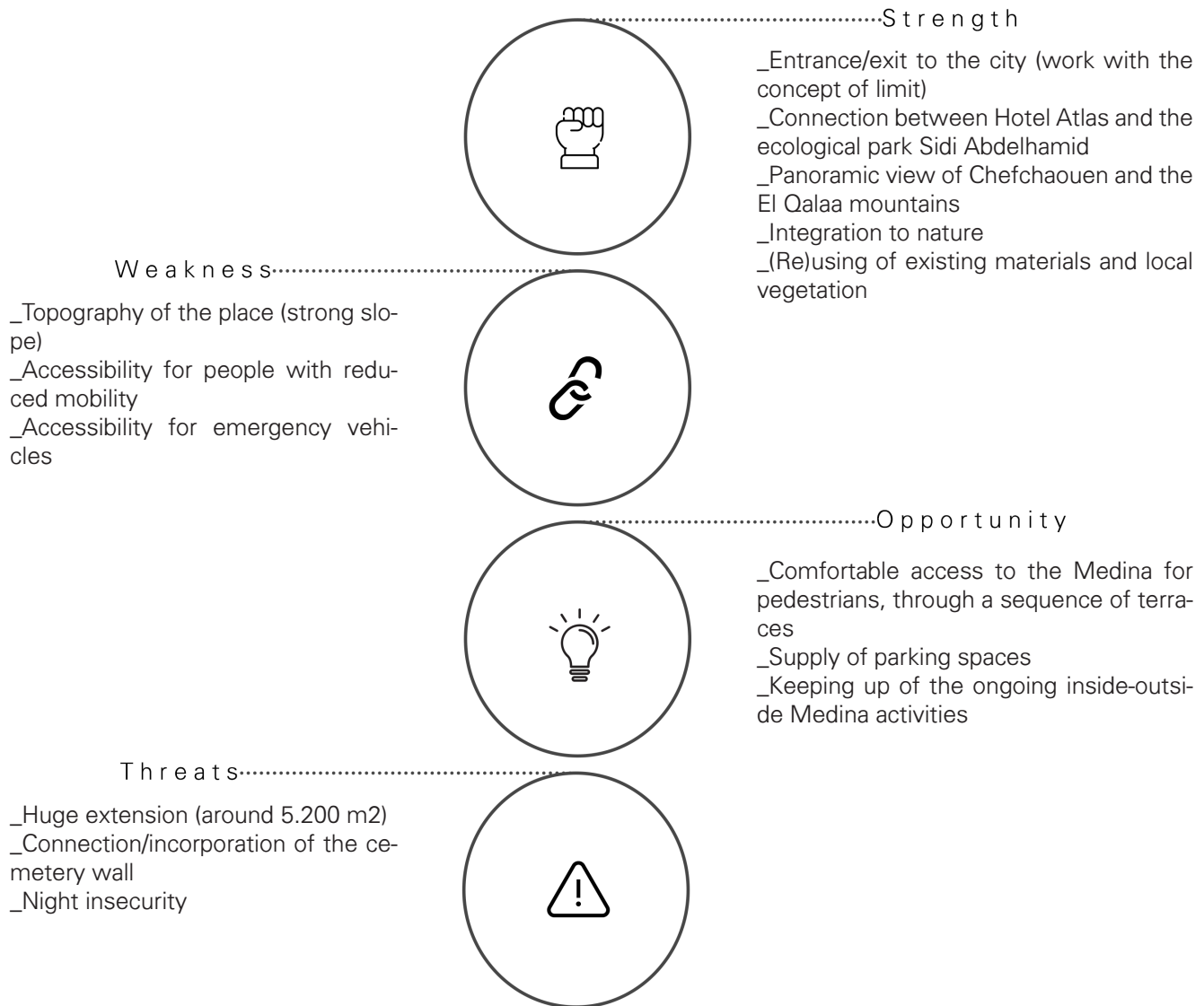
Aquarelle made by Meryem Abkari & Rania Farid. Medina of Chefchaouen 2019

Holes on walls work like viewports showing the spectacular landscape of the Medina. Watching closely they are focusing mosques.



Fotographies taken by Mónica Zamora & Ana Tafur. Medina of Chefchaouen 2019





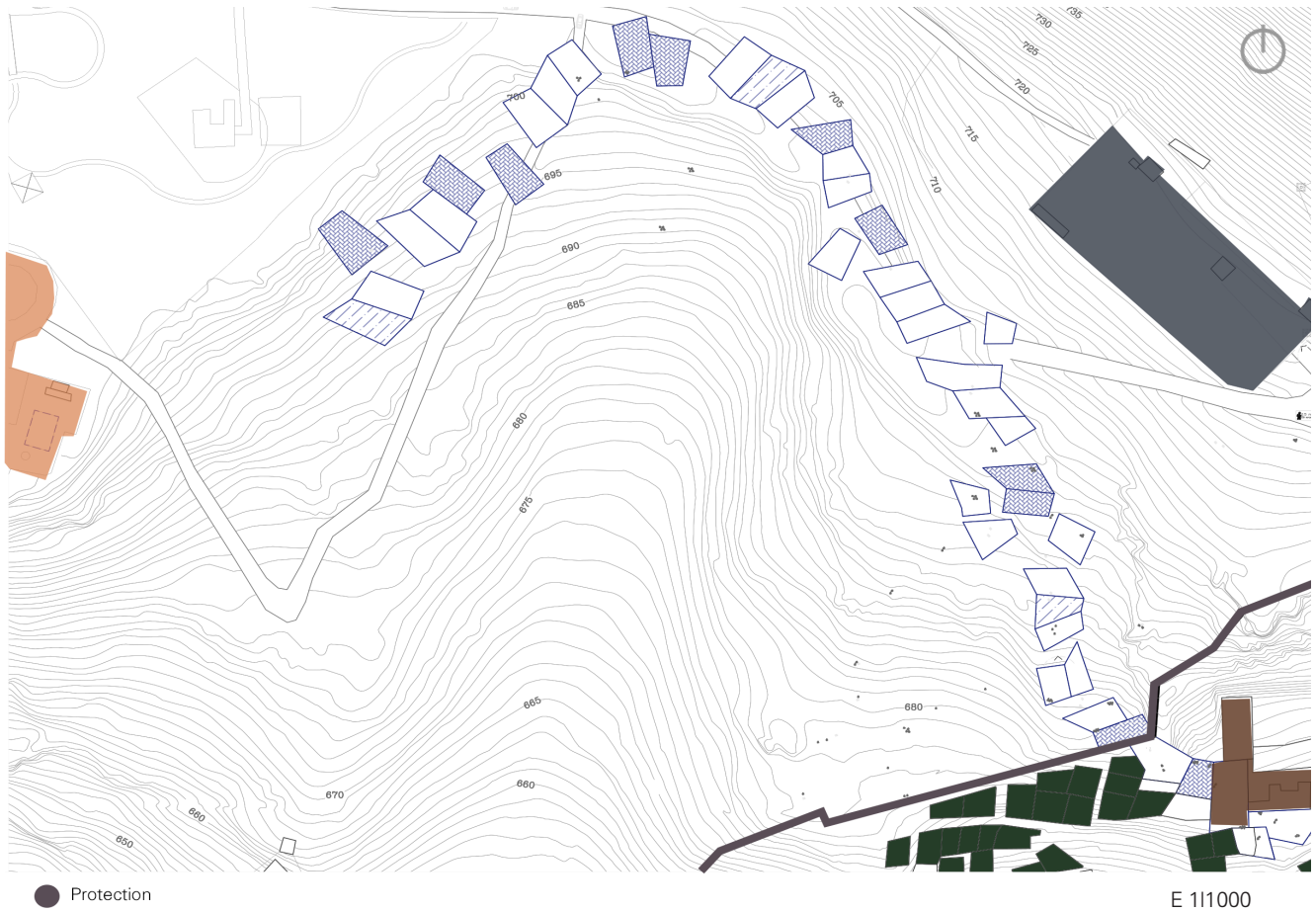


Fotograph taken by Ana Tafur. Medina of Chefchaouen 2019



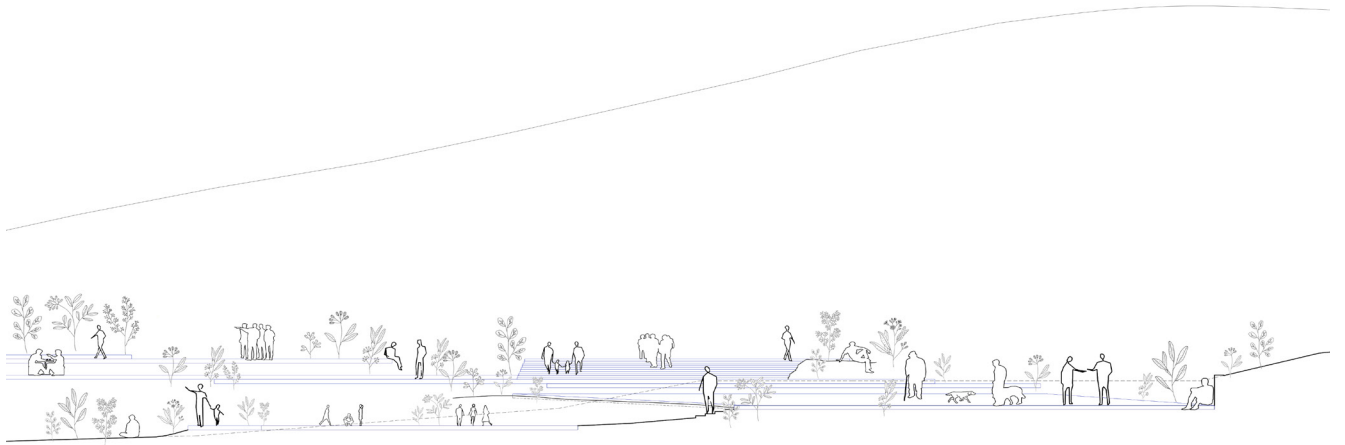
Fotograph taken by Ana Tafur. Medina of Chefchaouen 2019

# The Proposal



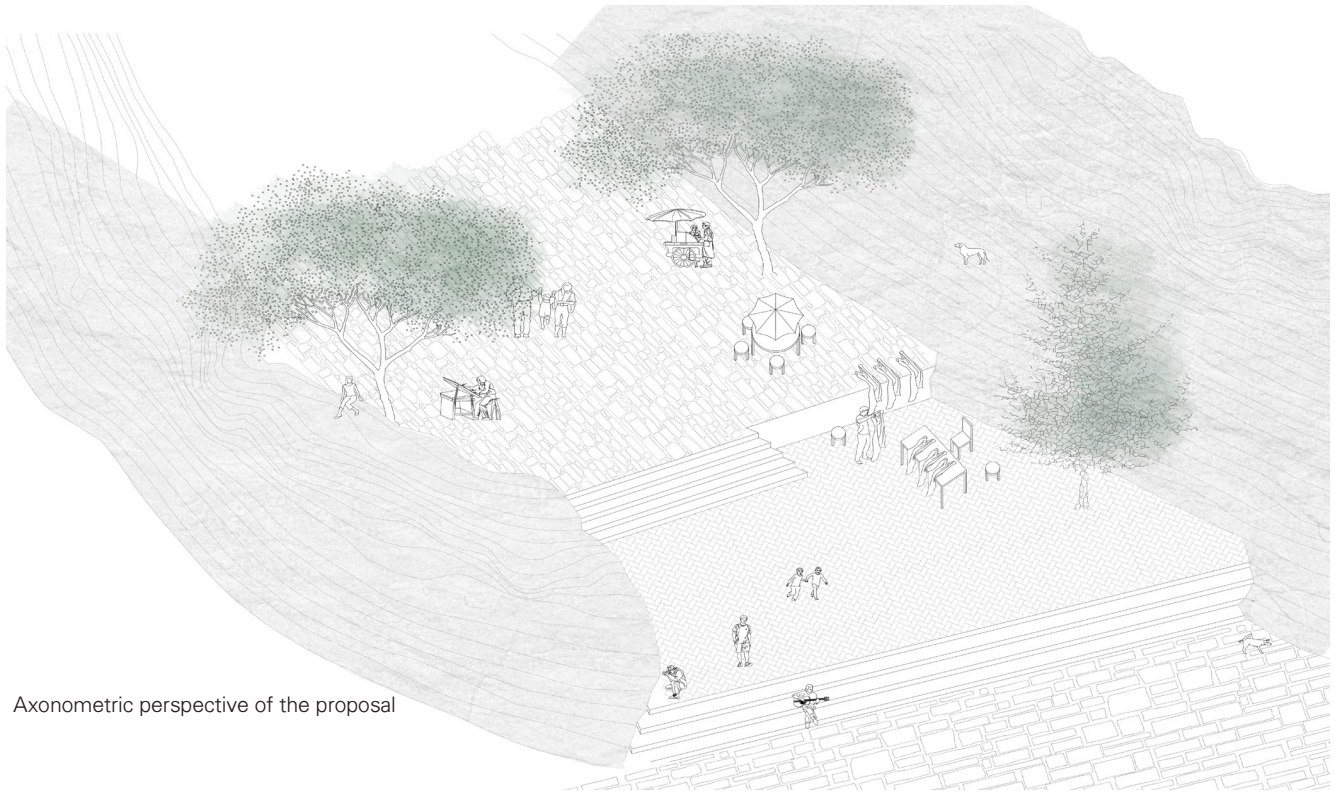
Nowadays, several uses coexist in this location and as a result of the previous analysis, the proposal suggests an inclusive, comfortable and easy path design for local and foreign pedestrian and vehicles to get to Chefchaouen, mainly to the popular hotspot Ras el Maa 450 m from Bab Mahrouk.





Illustrative section of the proposal

The proposal is based on five aspects that highlight the identity of Chefchaouen: Terraces, Integration, Transition, Collective space and Frames. Those aspects lead us to create interconnected terraces, taking into account the steep slope of the place and developing a scale transition between the built interior of the Medina and the nature at the outside, and vice versa.



Axonometric perspective of the proposal

These terraces aim to establish a continuity with the squares of the Medina and extend the activities that take place inside town to the outskirts.



Aquarelle made by Meryem Abkari & Rania Farid. Medina of Chefchaouen 2019

The proposal takes into account where it is getting to be developed; therefore these platforms are made by natural and local materials in order to be more integrated, more ecological and part of the location. The proposal also takes advantage of the splendid view from the top that simultaneously shows the inside of the Medina and the natural landscape behind it.

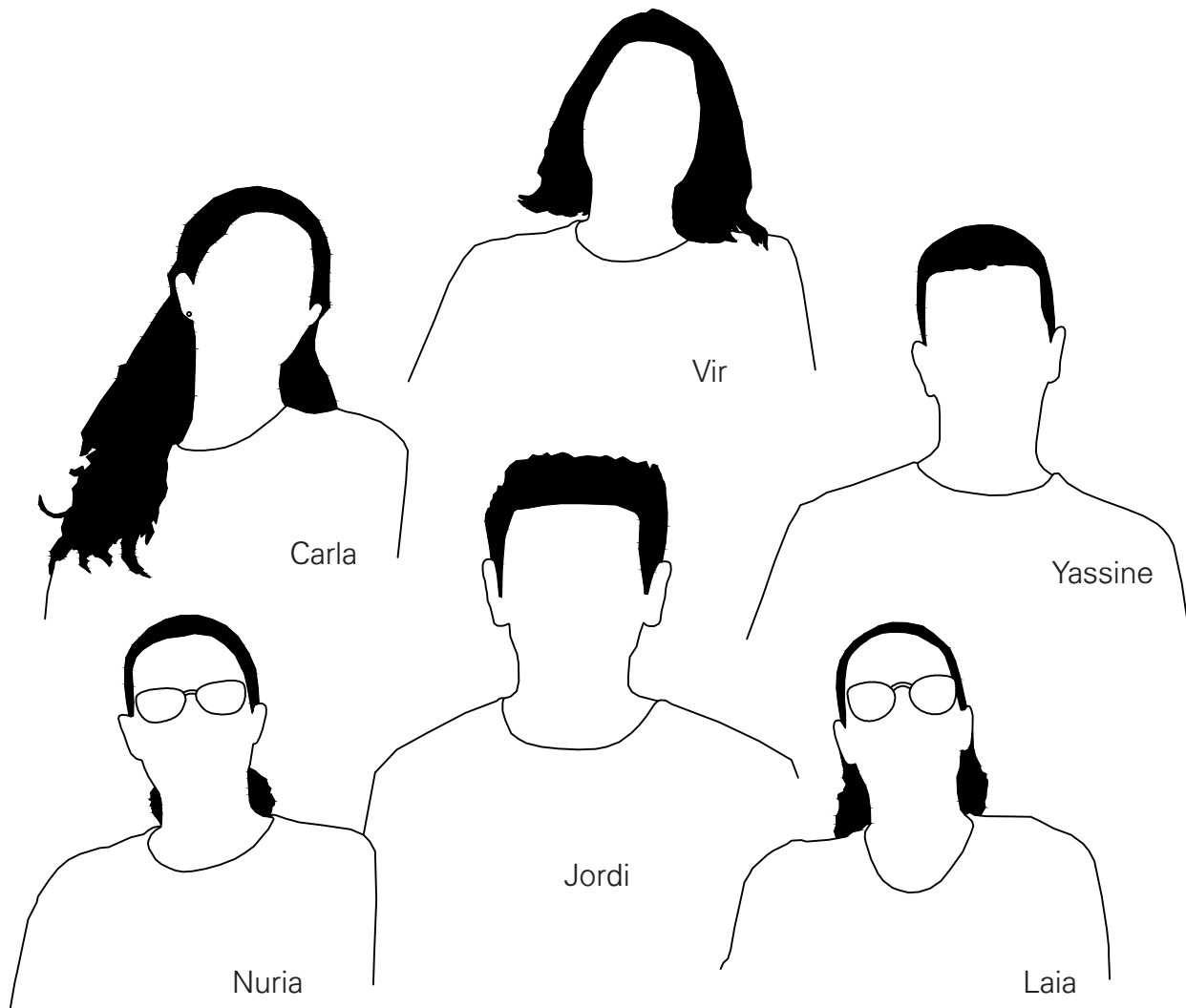


Aquarelle made by Meryem Abkari & Rania Farid. Medina of Chefchaouen 2019



Aquarelle made by Meryem Abkari & Rania Farid. Medina of Chefchaouen, 2019

The different sizes, levels and materials of the platforms will enhance people to use the space widely according to their needs. These terraces are meant to be as multi-functional as the collective spaces inside the Medina.



Carla

Vir

Yassine

Nuria

Jordi

Laia



# Sidi Belhassen

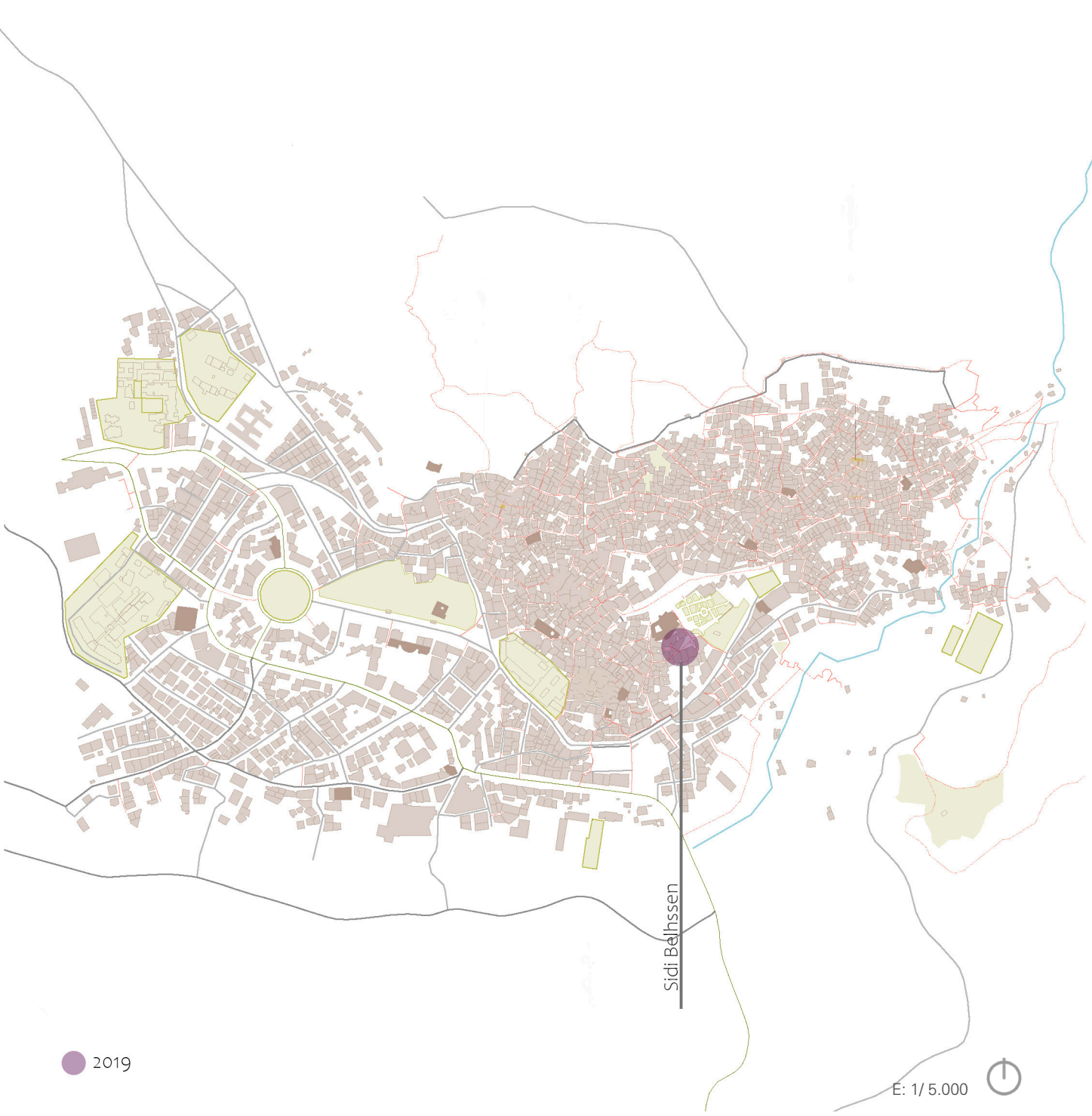
Sidi Belhassen square is situated in the medina of Chefchaouen next to the Kasbah, where Sidi Bellehcn street, el Mellah and the Kasbah street meet.



Sketch of Sidi Belhassen Square

Sidi Belhassen's characteristic shape is due to the use it had in the past: the Muslim culture event of the sheep slaughter. When it was carried out, the blood that leaked from the animal slid through the sloping ground to the sewer.

Nowadays, this square is the junction of different urban situations. Sidi Belhassen is connected with the main square Outa el Hammam through a narrow and irregular passage along the Kasbah wall, where we find one of the entrances to the Grand Mosque surrounded by a heap of second-hand items.



● 2019

Sidi Belhssen

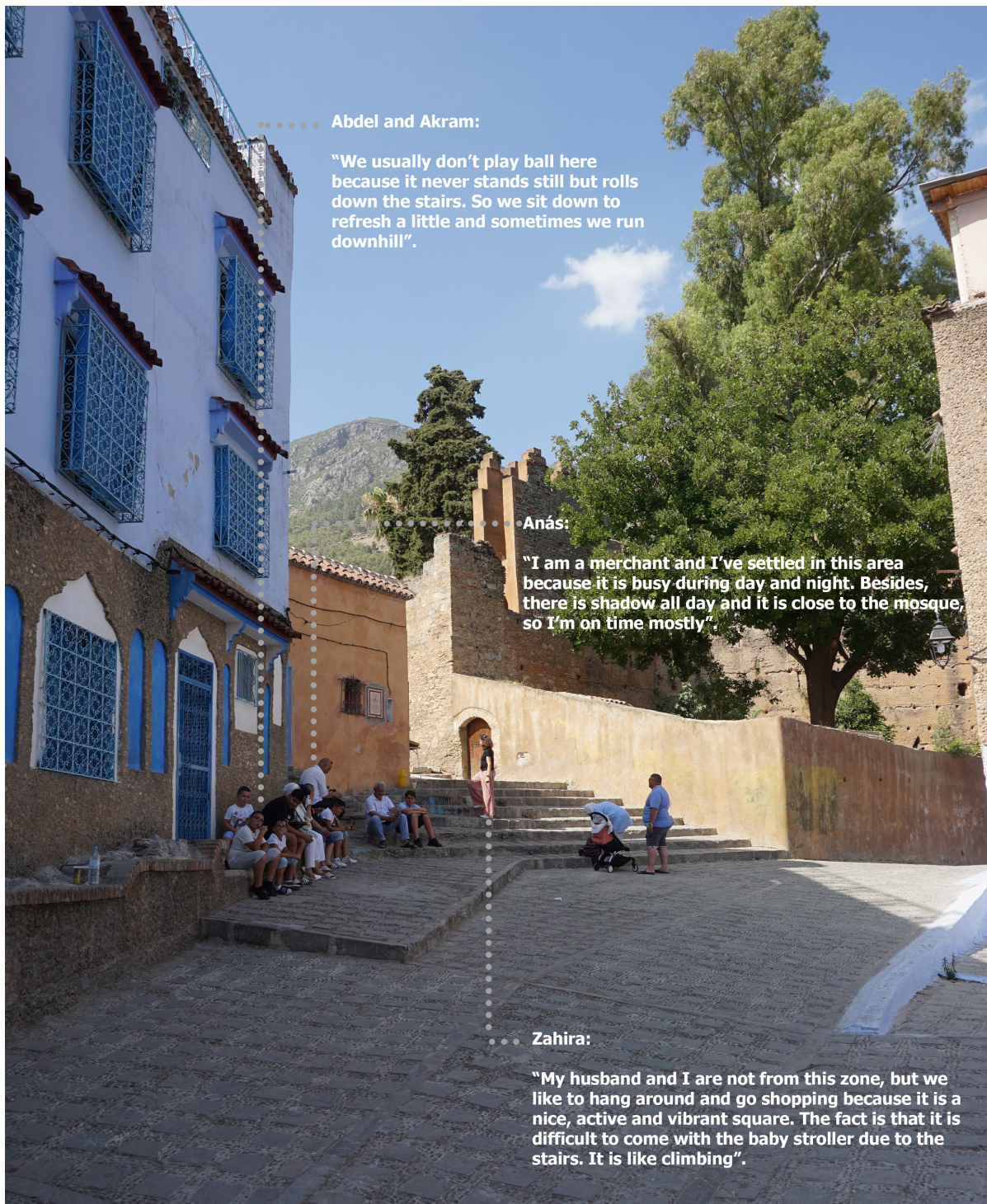
E: 1/5.000





Panoramic collage made by Sidi Belhassen's group. Medina of Chefchaouen 2019





Abdel and Akram:

"We usually don't play ball here because it never stands still but rolls down the stairs. So we sit down to refresh a little and sometimes we run downhill".

Anás:

"I am a merchant and I've settled in this area because it is busy during day and night. Besides, there is shadow all day and it is close to the mosque, so I'm on time mostly".

Zahira:

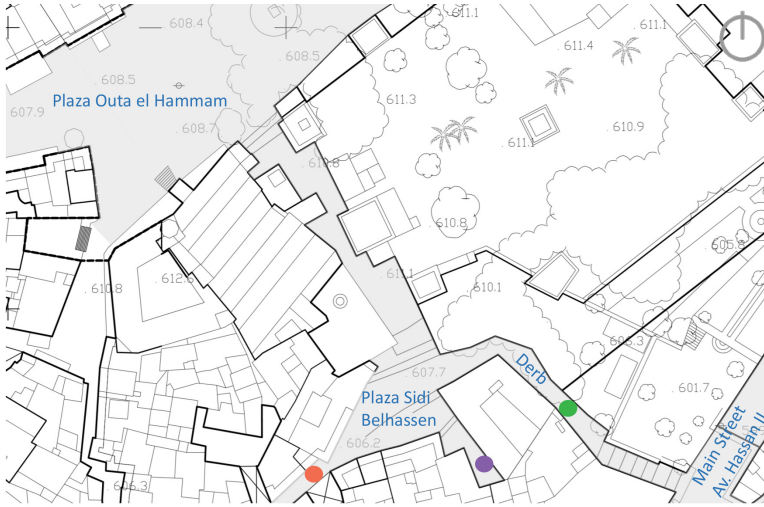
"My husband and I are not from this zone, but we like to hang around and go shopping because it is a nice, active and vibrant square. The fact is that it is difficult to come with the baby stroller due to the stairs. It is like climbing".



Photograph made by Virginia Ruana. "Oven" in Sidi Belhassen Square, Medina of Chefchaouen 2019

# Context Analysis

## Situation & Views



Photographies taken by Jordi Prat & Virginia Ruana. Sidi Belhassen Square, Medina of Chefchaouen 2019

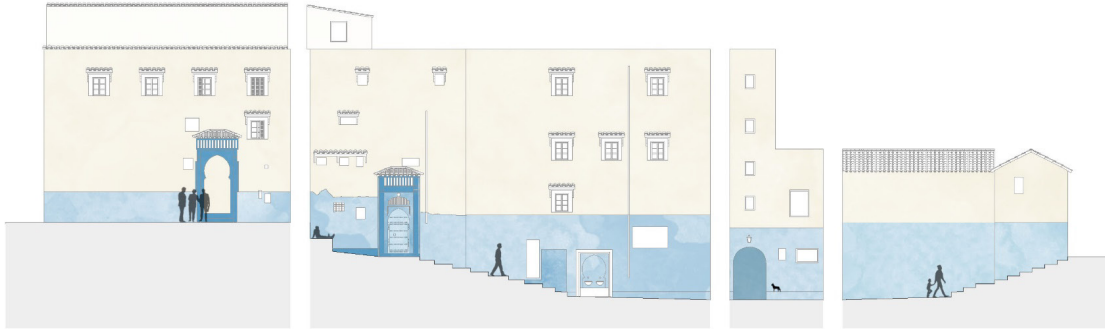
## Buildings



Photograph taken by Virginia Ruana. "The Kasbah", Medina of Chefchaouen 2019

The square stands out for its historical value. Its location, next to the Kasbah, reveals that it was the first square built in the Medina of Chefchaouen. There we find one of the first buildings in town, recognizable by the bomb attack cracks on its wall.

## Accessibility and Topography



The Sidi Bellehcn Street meets the main street Avenue Hassan II through a steep slope, causing accessibility problems.



Photograph taken by Jordi Prat. Sidi Belhassen Square, Medina of Chefchaouen 2019

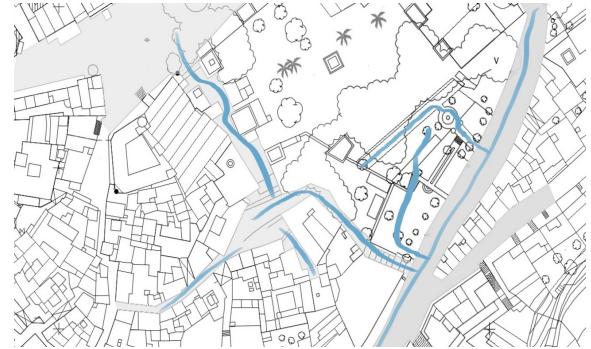


The local commerce not only invades Sidi Bellehcn Street blocking its public space, but also the dead end (painted blue) that leads to private housing.

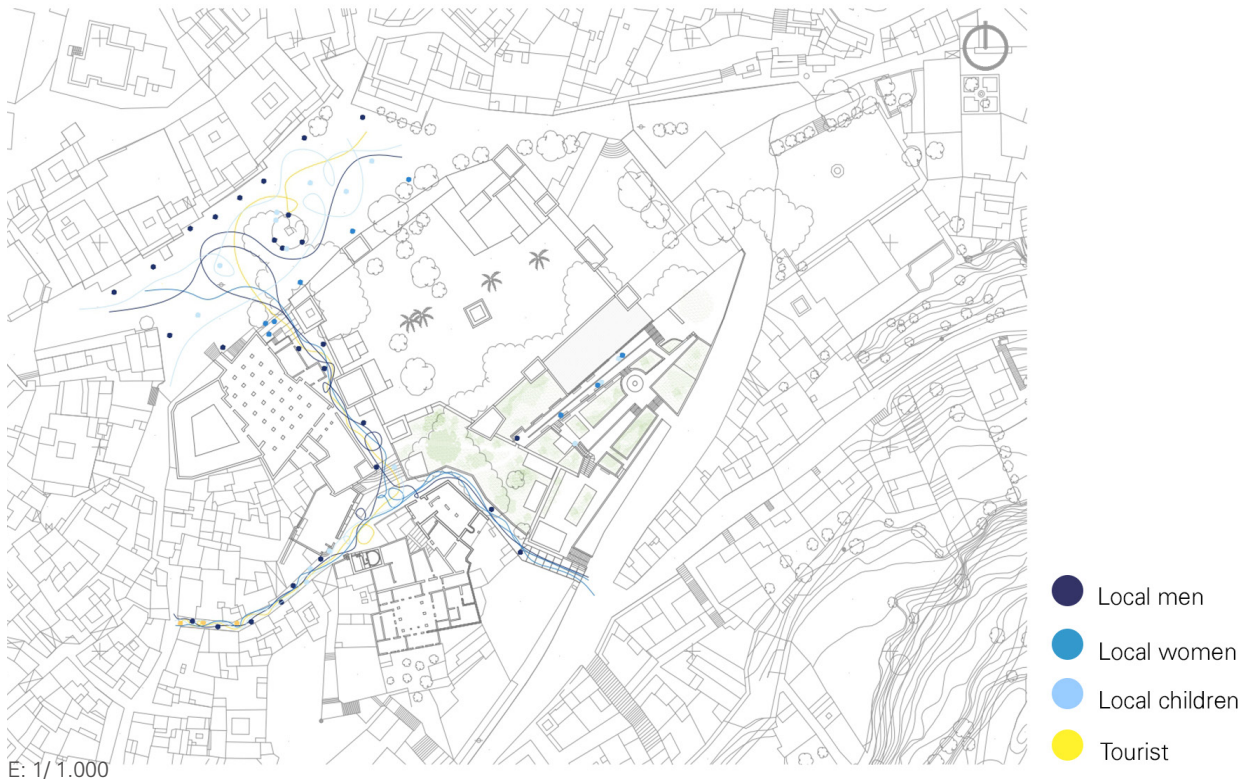


Photograph taken by Jordi Pray, Sidi Belhassen Square, Medina of Cherchaouen 2019

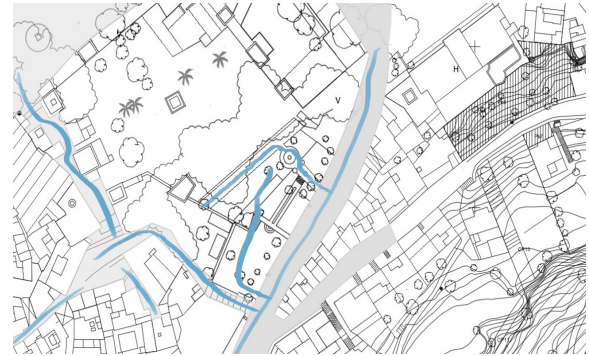
## Circulation During morning



As the map below shows, in the morning several and spontaneous routes are done by locals and tourist. However, tourists mostly frequent Outa El Hamman square and from there they reach Sidi Belhassen.



Circulation  
Before praying time



Praying time provokes a permanent activity done by local women and men. It is a repetitive route leading people to the mosque along the day.



E: 1/ 1.000

Activities  
At daytime



Photographies taken by Jordi Prat & Virginia Ruana. Sidi Belhassen Square. 2019



The mixture of uses in the surrounding buildings, helped by the oven and the fountain, increases the sense of dynamism. Squares in Chefchaouen may not be planned but are strategically located from a commercial viewpoint.

Activities  
At night

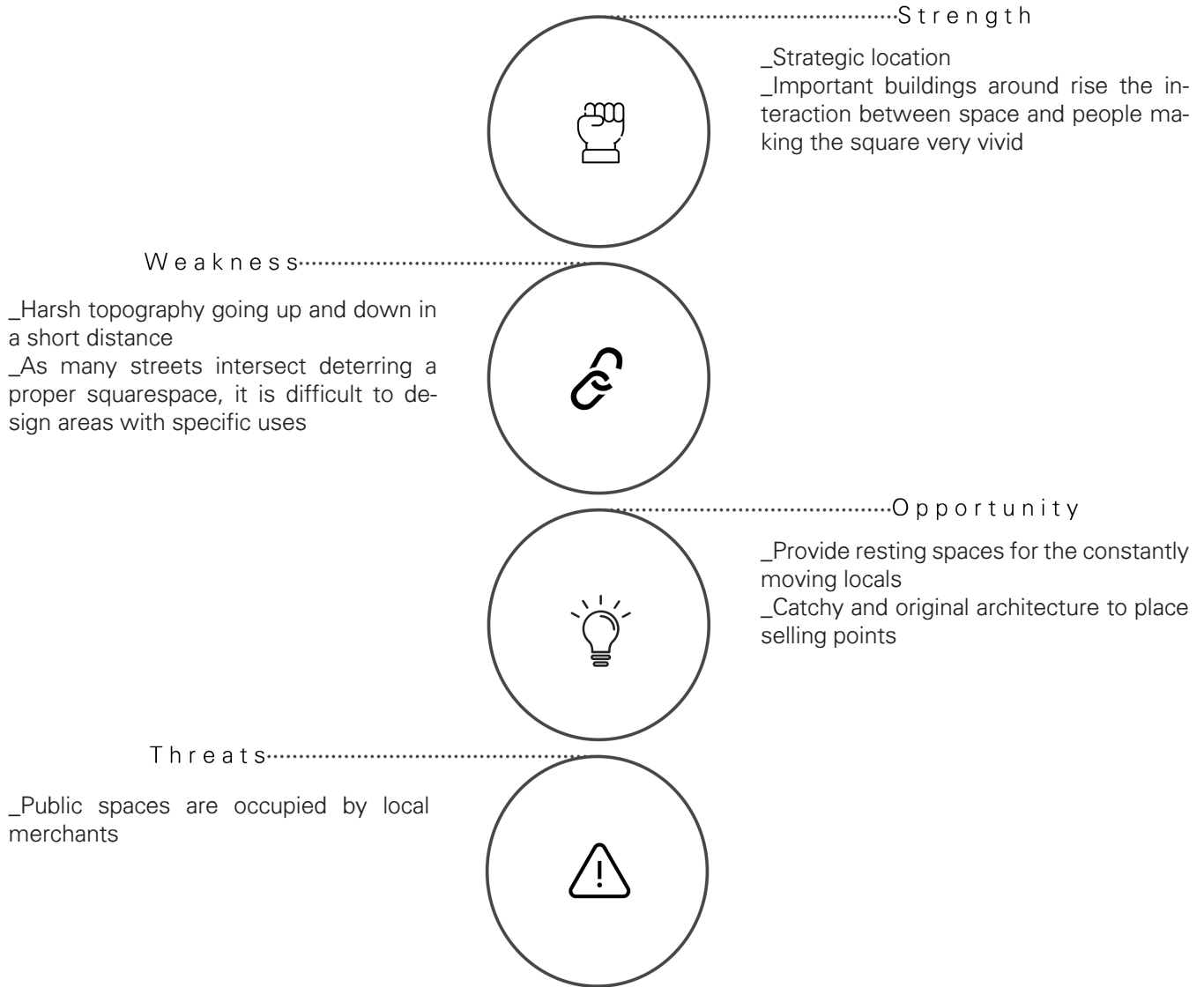


Photographies taken by Jordi Prat & Virginia Ruana. Sidi Belhassen Square. 2019

The square testifies that spaces where residential and commercial is mixed are much longer occupied.



Sketch made by Virginia Ruana. Sidi Belhassen Square. 2019



# Proposal

Our proposal wants to diminish the exposed weaknesses and to adapt the space to the current needs, preserving the heritage of the place and respecting its memory and identity. Therefore, understanding it as a transition site, we work on the improvement of its accessibility: suggesting an alternative path to save the slope taking into account the visuals; adapting the different areas where people can stay; redesigning a multifunctional stair and homogenising the height of the bench, adding a sidewalk and smoothing its surface. Our proposal also takes into account the lightning design to provide security when there is lack of natural light and suggests the reorganisation of the second-hand items. These little changes will encourage and improve quality and use of the square.



OPENING THE WALL



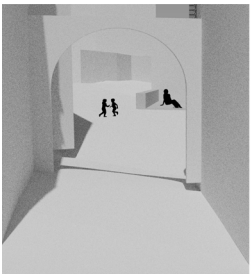
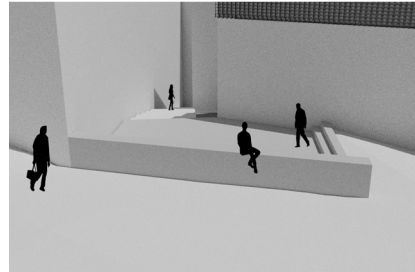
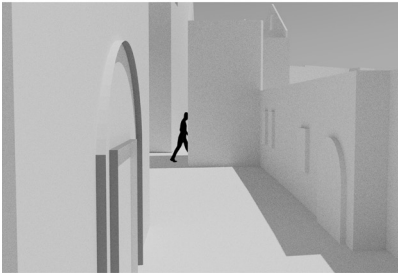
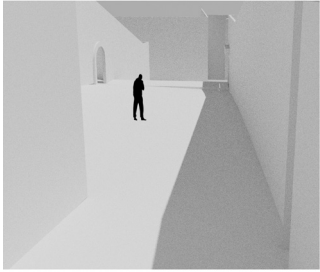
ADDING THE BENCH



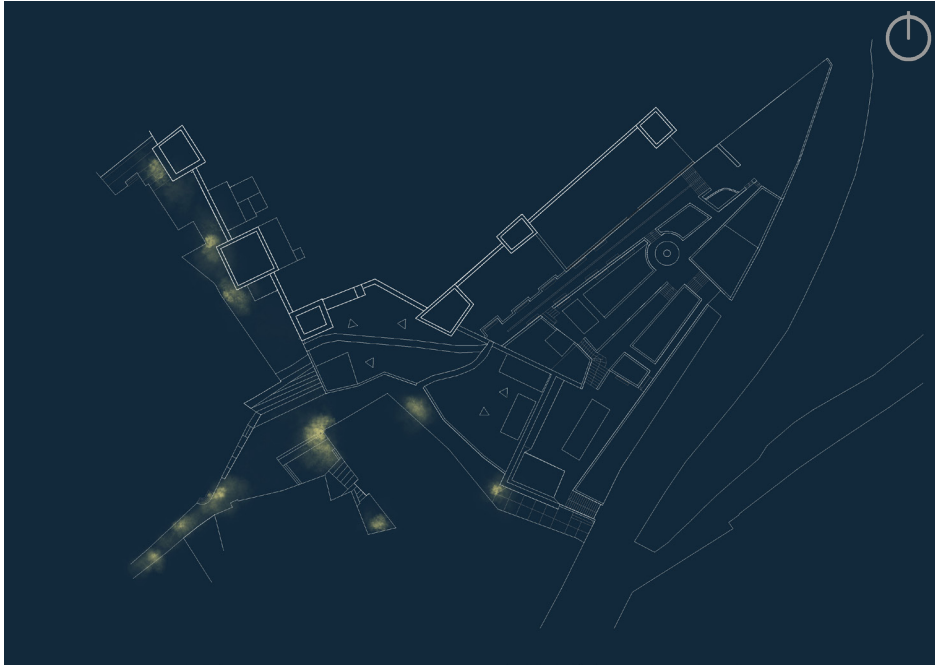
OPENING THE WALL



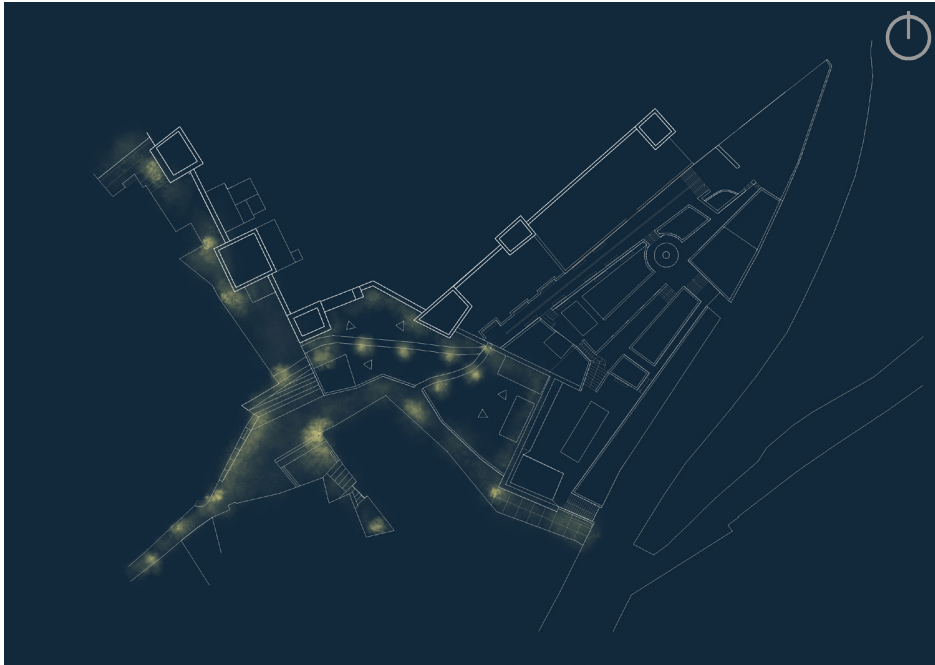
ADDING SIDEWALK + REMOVING THE ROCKS

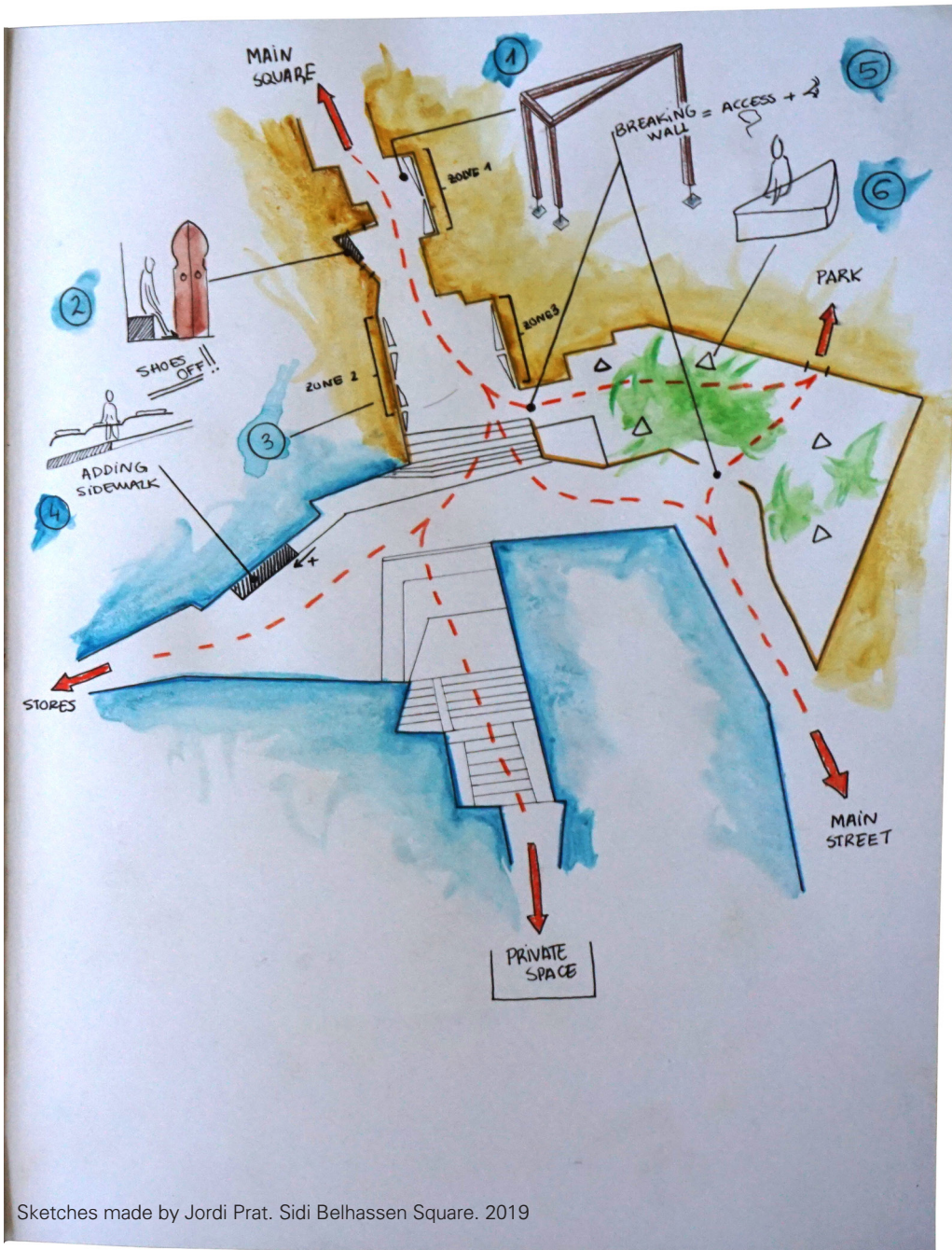


Illumination: Currently

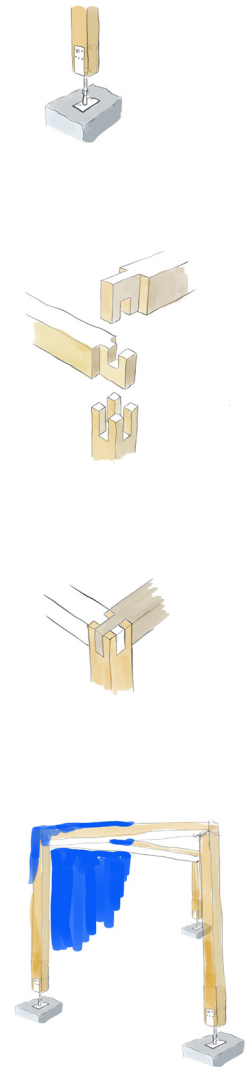


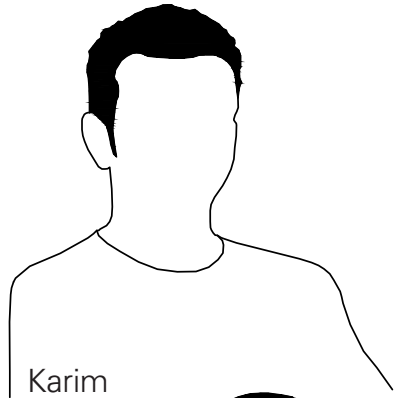
Illumination: Proposed





Sketches made by Jordi Prat. Sidi Belhassen Square. 2019





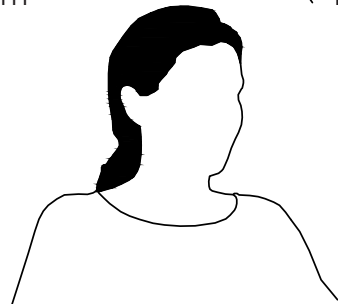
Karim



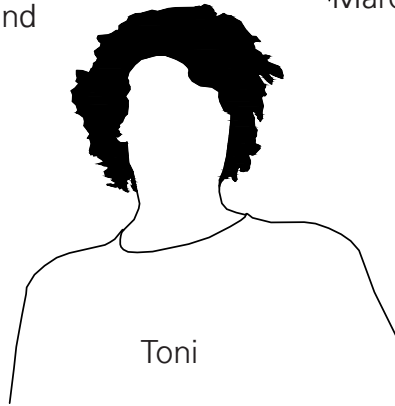
Hind



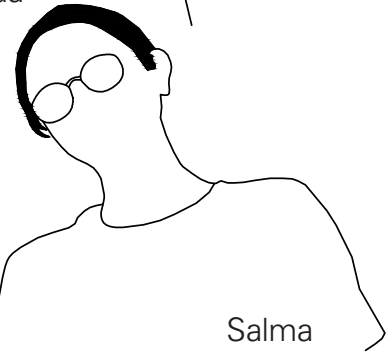
Maroua



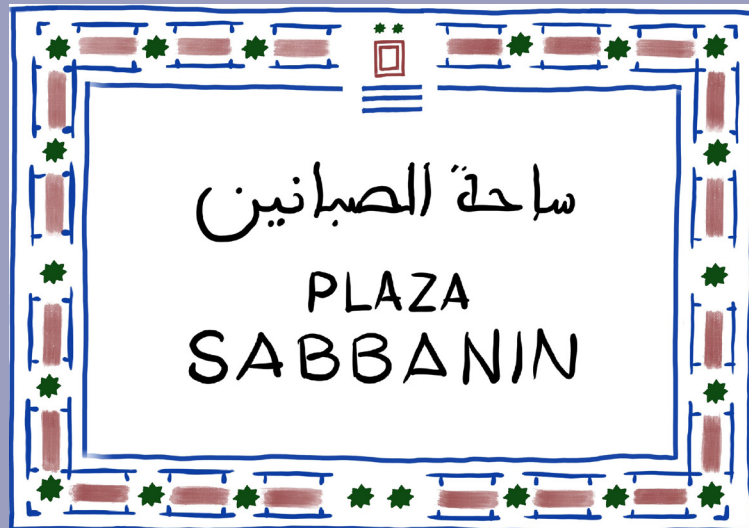
Mar



Toni



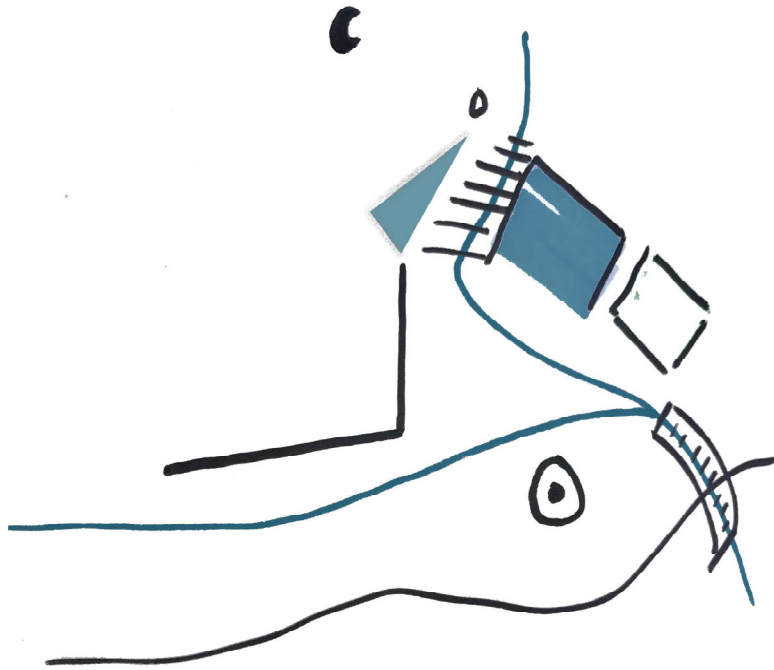
Salma



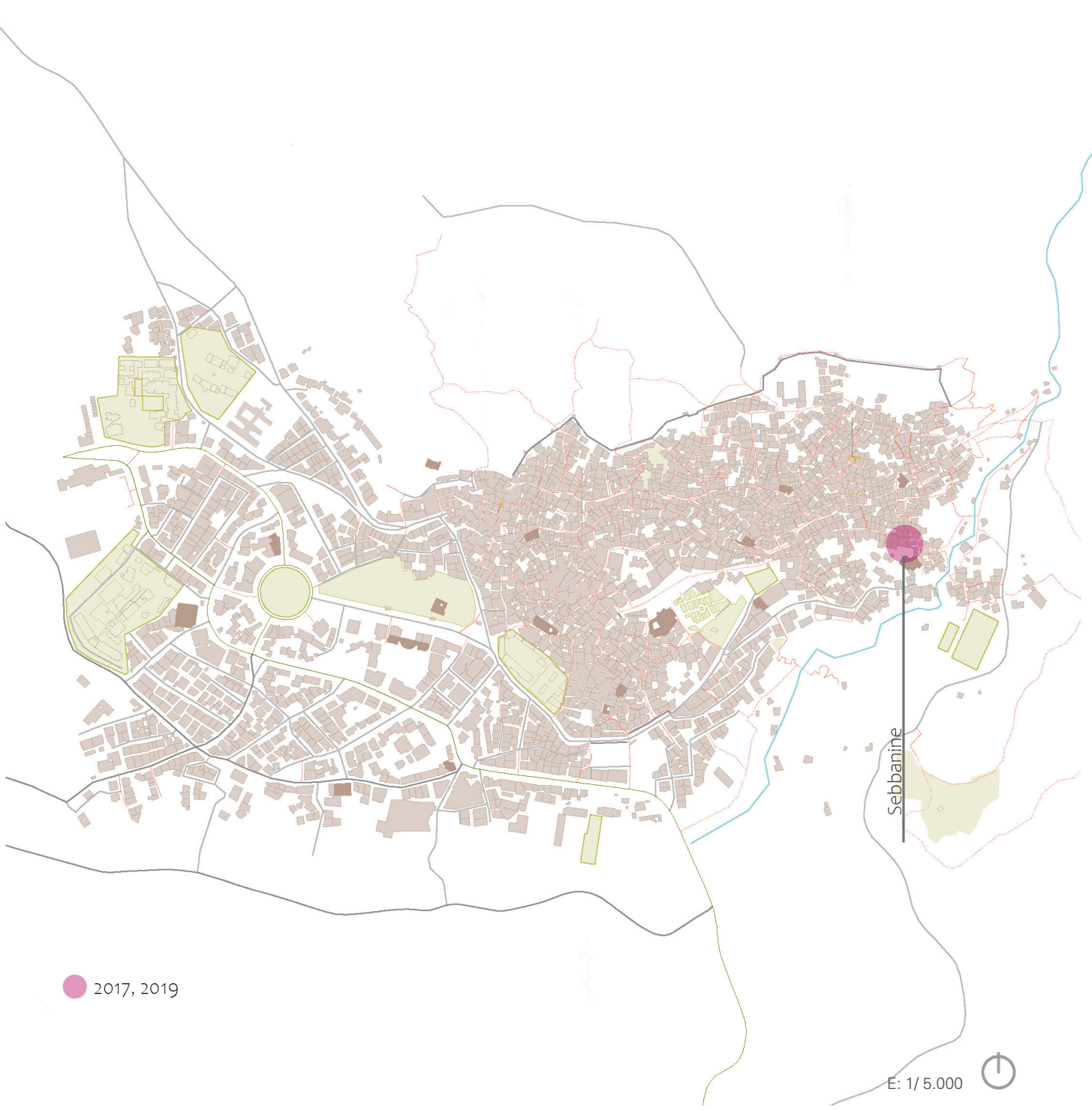
## Sebbanine

Sebbanine Square is located in Onsar and is connected to the Ras el Maa path by a bridge built in the 16th-17th centuries. The square results from the intersection of Rue Bab MkaDEM, Rue Abderahim and Sidi Ahmed El Oua avenue, where vehicular and pedestrian flows constantly converge, because it is a space where tourists and locals can park while enjoying Ras el Maa.

Close to it we find items of great architectural value such as the Sebbanine Mosque or the public oven coating. Unlike other squares, due to its location it is characterized by its great tourist use reflected in the aparthotels, hostels and cafes around it. This increases the problems related to solid waste collection and speeds up the loss of identity of the square.



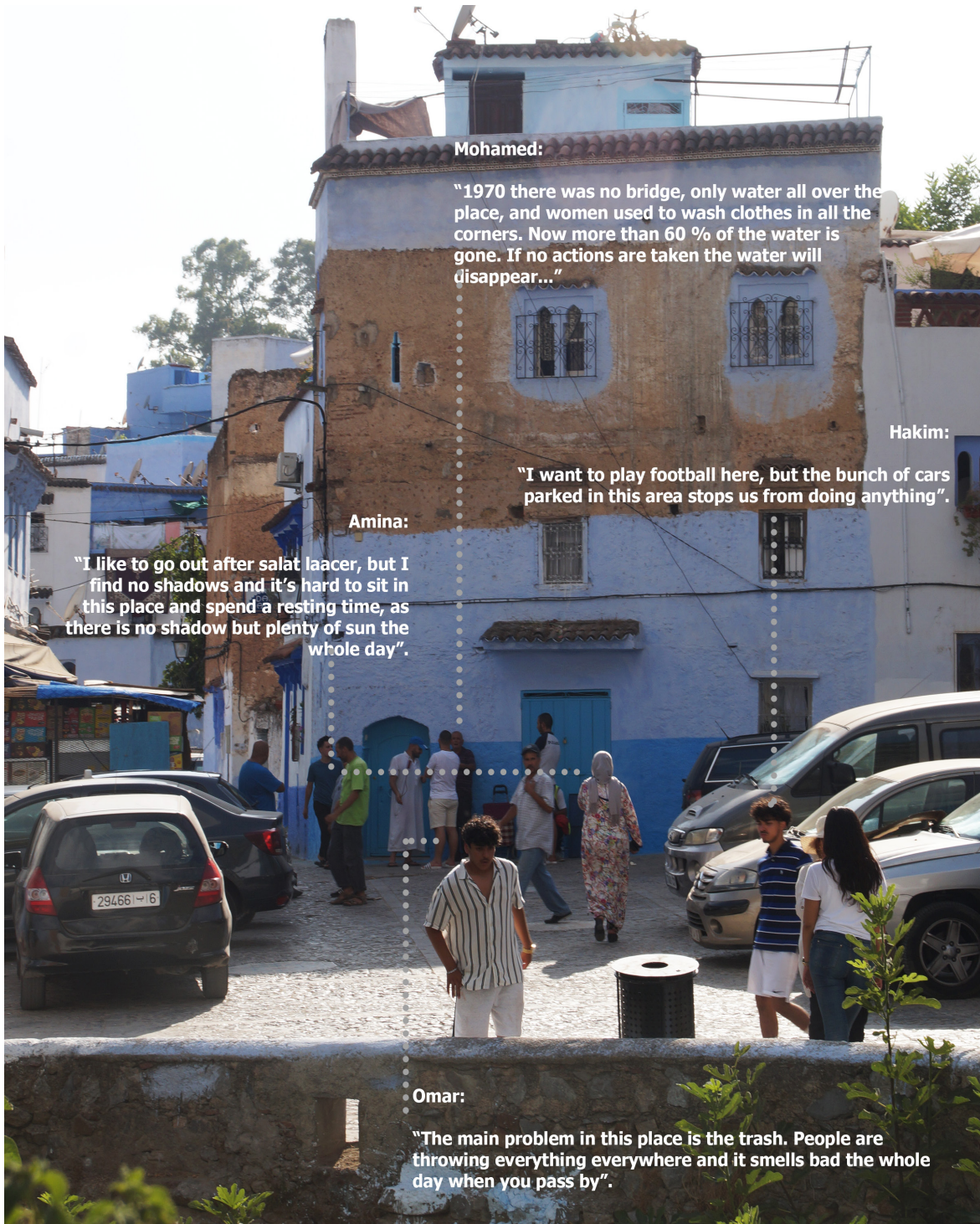
Sketch of Sebbanine Square



● 2017, 2019

E: 1/5.000





**Mohamed:**

"1970 there was no bridge, only water all over the place, and women used to wash clothes in all the corners. Now more than 60 % of the water is gone. If no actions are taken the water will disappear..."

**Hakim:**

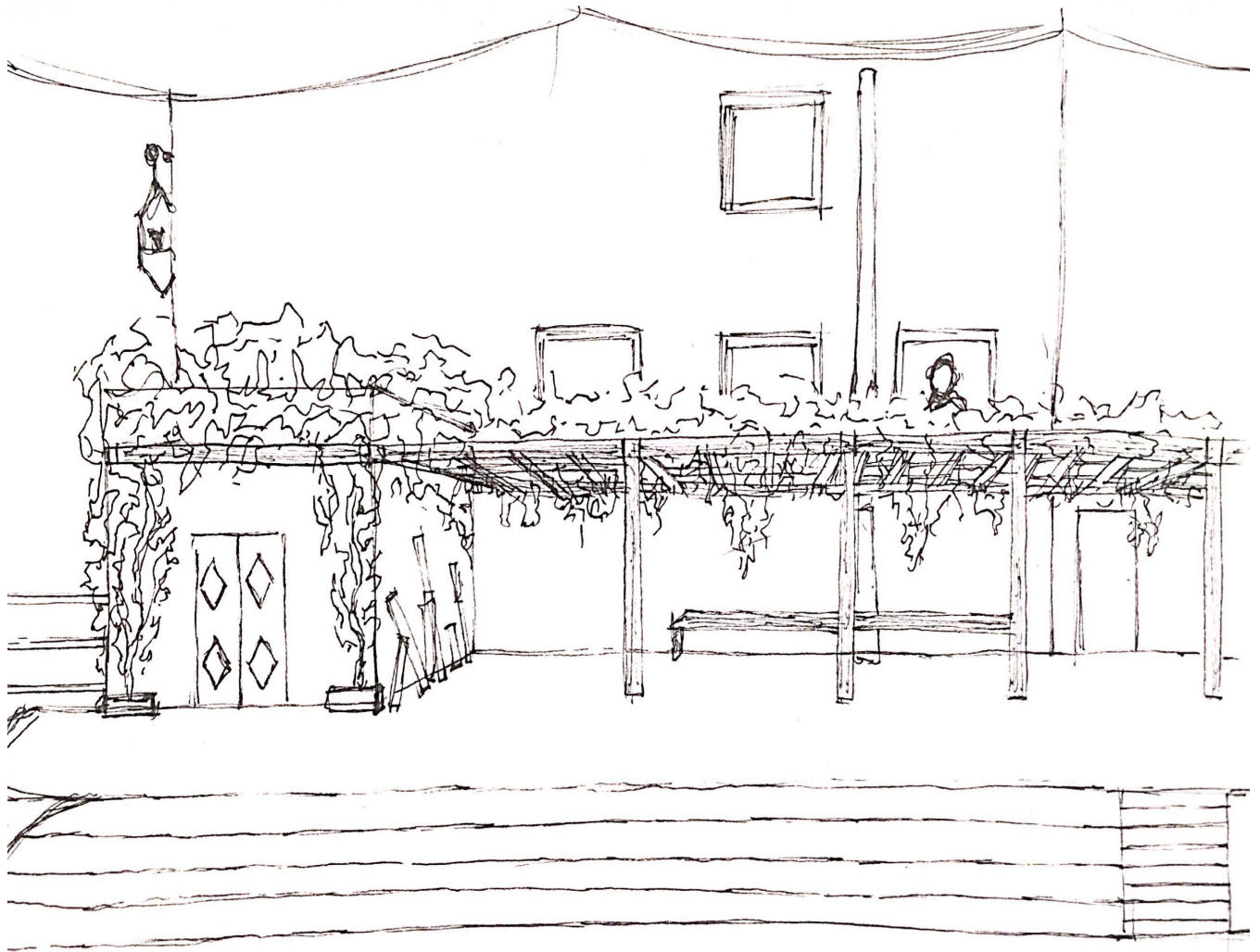
"I want to play football here, but the bunch of cars parked in this area stops us from doing anything".

**Amina:**

"I like to go out after salat laacer, but I find no shadows and it's hard to sit in this place and spend a resting time, as there is no shadow but plenty of sun the whole day".

**Omar:**

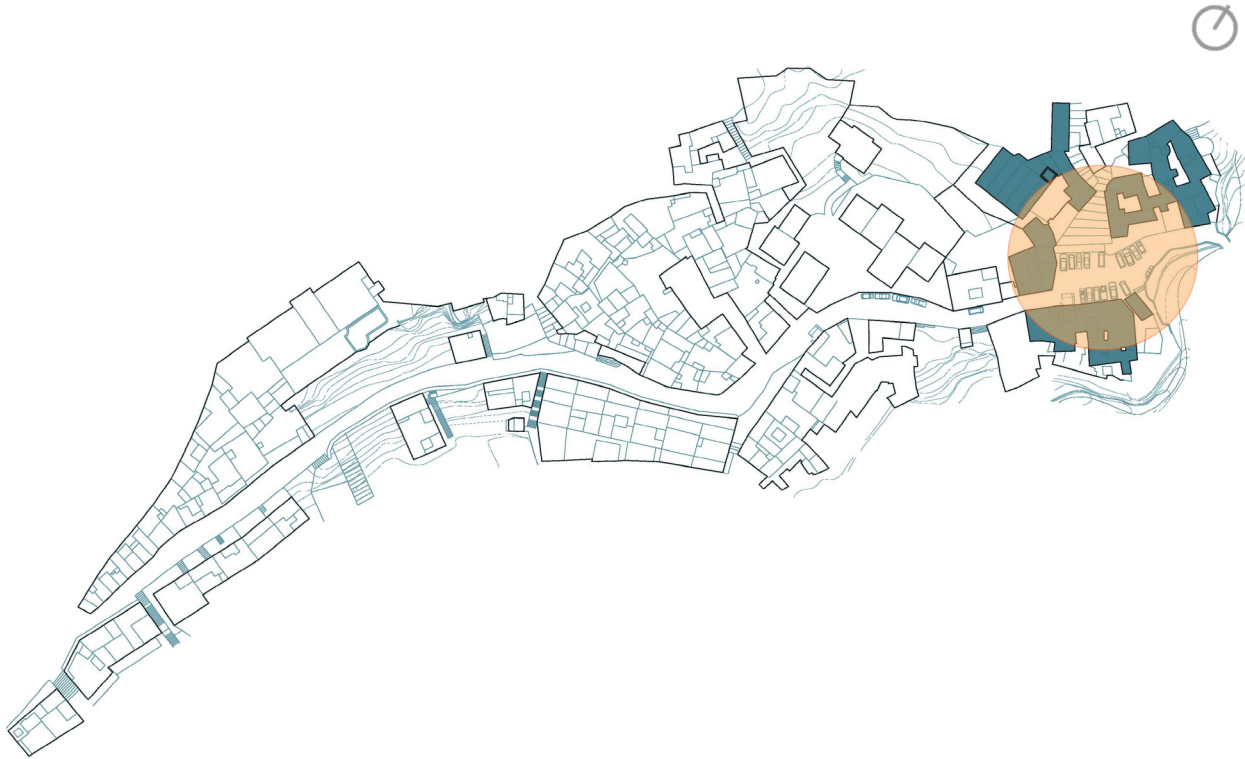
"The main problem in this place is the trash. People are throwing everything everywhere and it smells bad the whole day when you pass by".



Sketch of Sebbanine Square, Medina of Chefchaouen. 2019

# Context Analysis

Situation & Buildings



E: 1/2.000



1. Oven



2. Carpenter



3. Mosque



4. Kiosk



5. Cafe

## Circulation



The importance of the buildings around the square becomes clear when studying the circulation along the day. As shown in the above map, there is a large flow from Sidi Ahmed El Oua avenue to Ras el Maa road.

Activities  
At daytime



Photograph taken by Antonio Gual. Sebbanine Square, Medina of Chefchaouen 2019

People claim cars are the reason they cannot let their children play in the square. Currently, the square is used as a parking for tourist and visitors. Additionally, trash is thrown into the river instead of using the containers, and the situation affects the neighbours' health.

Activities  
At night



Photograph taken by Antonio Gual. Sebbanine Square, Medina of Chfchouen 2019

There is nightlife besides the car parking but too little space for gathering.

## Light &amp; Shadows

During daylight



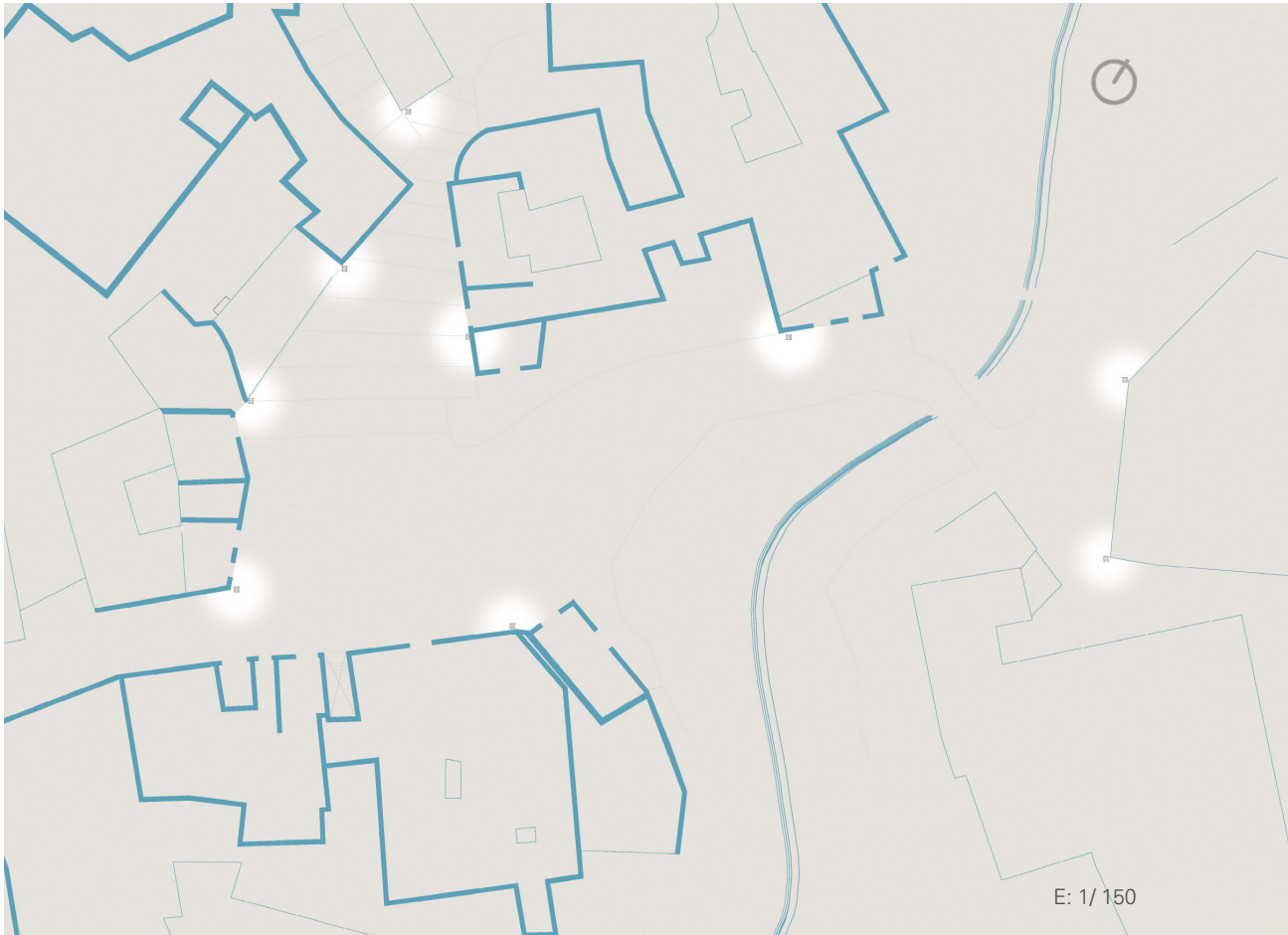
During afternoon



Originally, the plaza is exposed to high temperatures during the day as it has no shady spaces, green areas or high rise buildings. Only a few areas are covered, as we see at the previous images.

## Light & Shadows

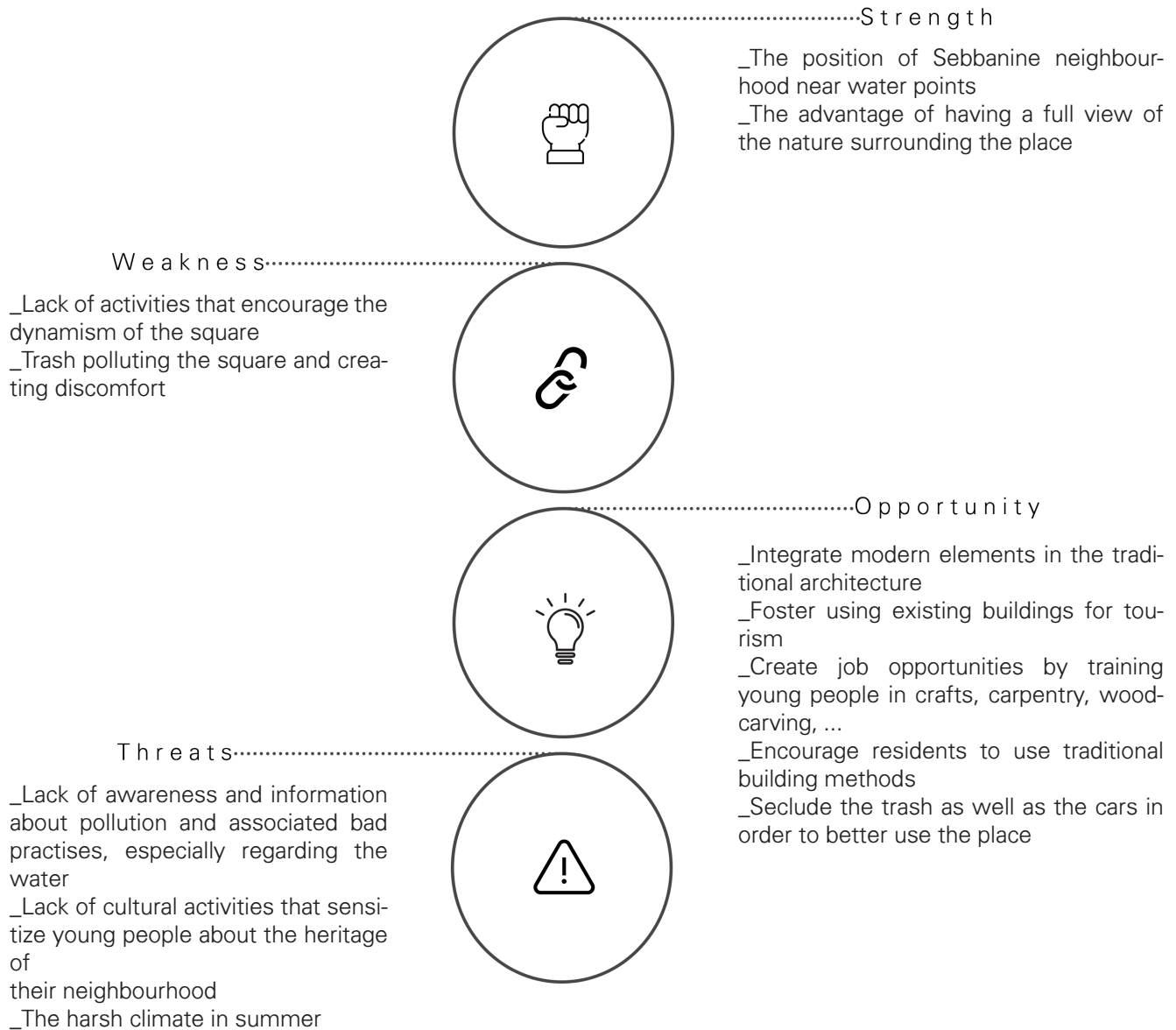
During nightligh



At night the plaza is lit, allowing a longer habitability and a feeling of security. The nearby cafes and hostels positively boost the dynamism of the area at night.



Photograph taken by Jordi Prat. Medina of Chefchaouen. 2019

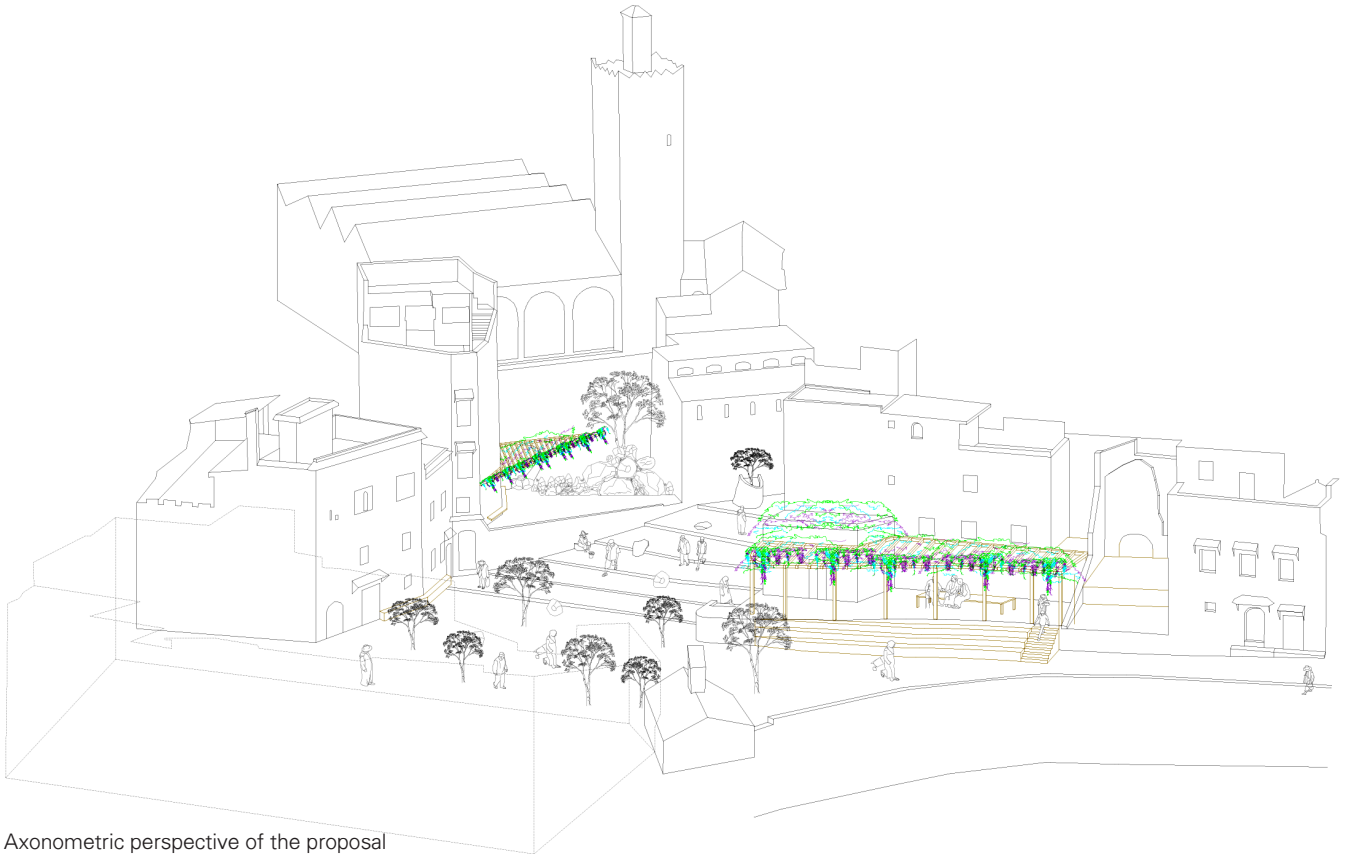


SWOT Analysis

# The Proposal

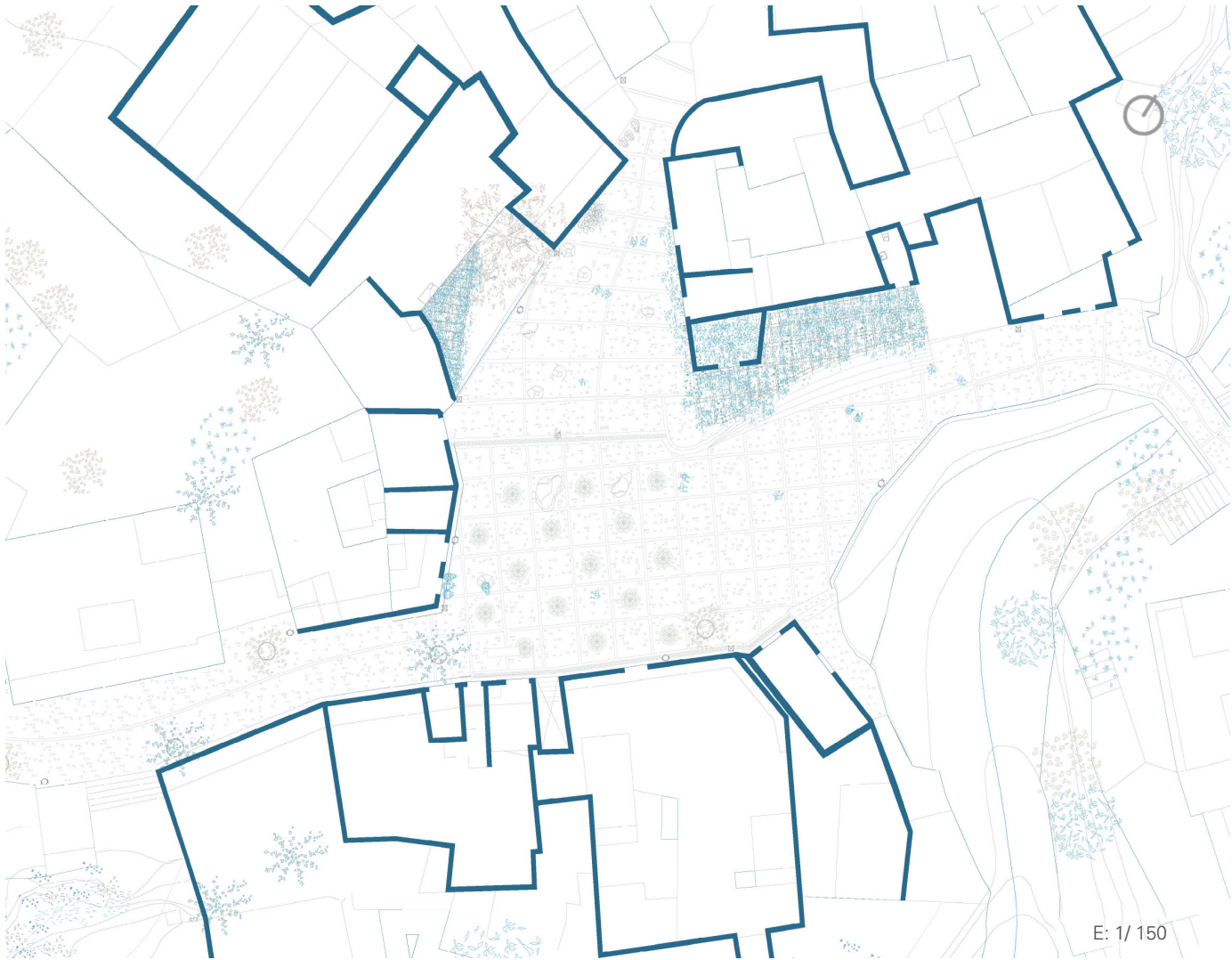
One of the main drawbacks of the square is the inadequate collection of solid waste, along with the invasion of cars. To deal with the first problem we need more than an architectural solution: it is necessary to promote civic education and provide containers in good condition.

As for the accumulation of cars that block the public space, we propose to restrict the passage of vehicle by means of large elements located along the plaza. These blocking elements can be also used for sitting. In addition, in order to mitigate the problem of direct sunlight on the square, we have provided pergolas in areas near to existing water sources to create quiet spaces.



Axonometric perspective of the proposal

Ground floor Plan



As we plan to locate plants and elements, we make sure to relocate the parking zone in a way that it does not disturb the public space. This proposal wants to enhance passive activities like sitting and sharing time while enjoying the spectacular view.



Restricting car circulation will provide a cleaner and greener area where children can play safely and where the connection to Ras el Maa is well traced.



The section shows that the location of pergolas and vegetation around the square is based upon the water sources.



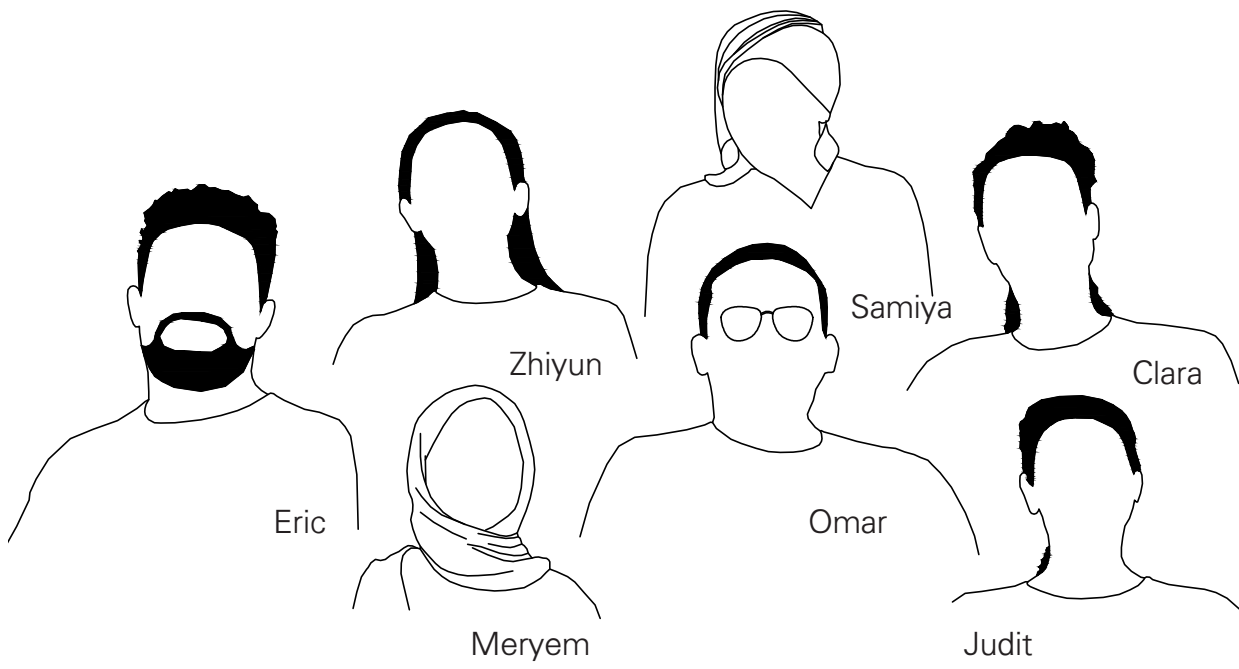
Illustrative sections of the proposal



Aquarelle made by Salma Annas & Hind El Cohen. Medina of Chefchaouen 2019



Photograph taken by Antonio Gual. Medina of Chefchaouen. 2019



ساخته د بند بیان

DBENDIBEN

## Dbendiben

Chefchaouen had a fairly significant commercial activity in leather for a long time, and the Dbendiben tannery was one of the many tanneries in the city.

The raw material, particularly the ruminants' skin, was available in the Chefchaouen region, encouraging artisans to become interested in this trade and even to export their leather products to Fez and its Kharrazin district, known as the place where shoe and leather manufacturing trade takes place.

The Dbendiben tannery did not stop operating until the mid-seventies of the 20th century.



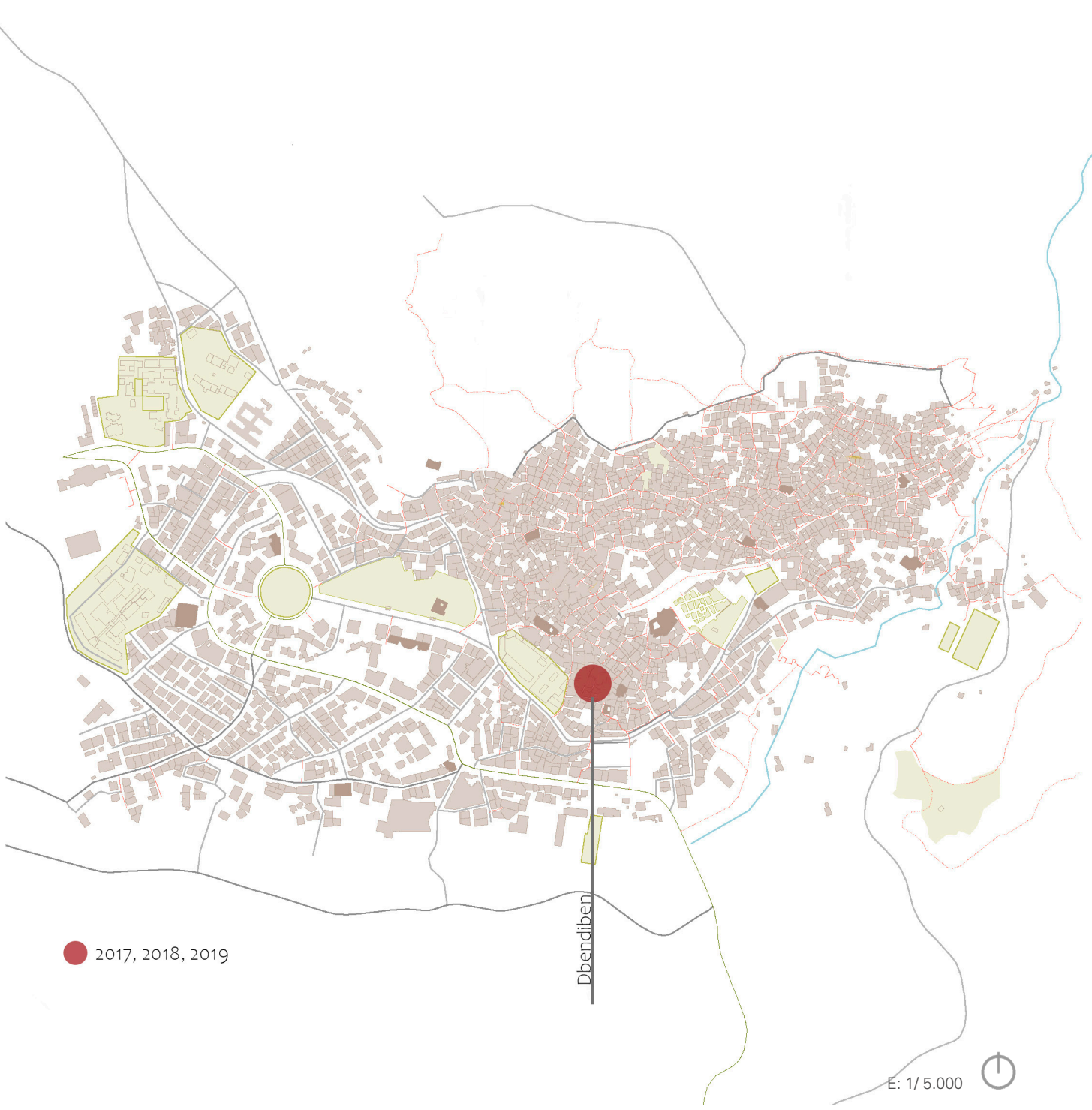
Photograph taken by Meryem Baksys. Dbendiben Square, Medina of Chefchaouen 2019



Ancient tannery in the Medina of Chefchaouen. Taken from Step on Step dossier 2018-2019

The authorities decided to transform it into a public square, since the accumulation of waste in the unused ponds caused hygiene and discomfort problems for the neighbours.

The process of dyeing leather in tanneries produces unpleasant odors, as well as a very large quantity of waste, what explains why they are generally built next to the Medina wall -to get rid of residues easily- and the fact that near houses rarely have windows or doors to the tannery. But after the shutdown of the tannery, the adjoining buildings adapted opening the facades overlooking the old tannery.



● 2017, 2018, 2019

Dbendiben

E: 1/5.000



Girls from Souika: .....

"No one would let his children play here, especially girls. It's dirty, unsafe and of little use. If there was any sort of entertainment for kids it could really be helpful for moms, since they have to go pretty far to find some playgrounds for kids".

Ayman/Zakaria, kids from the neighbourhood: .....

"The only football field we have is in Ain Haouzi, and it's really far away. We can't go there all the time, so we end up playing here in the square".  
"I would love to have a swimming pool there, we have nowhere to go in the summer".

.....  
Neighbourhood women:

"It's been more than 6 years that I live in Chaouen, and I myself go to the square to sit there sometimes".  
"As you may have seen, the place is very degraded and only used by kids mainly for football. Other than that, it's just an empty unused space, that some neighbours make sure to clean up from time to time, especially Si Ahmed; he's always keeping an eye on everything that's going on in here".



Mohammed: .....

"I remember that when I was small here was a round old fountain in the center where I used to sit with my friends. I also heard that the arch in the front wall was a fountain".  
"After I finished school I worked as a carpenter for a long time. Then I decided to start selling those souvenirs made out of plaster that I do myself. I also participated in many artisanal competitions and had the chance to win a prize here in Chaouen. The only problem is finding a place to sell my art works, so I decided to hang them on that wall".  
"Usually I leave them here all night long and no one touches them. And honestly I would love that the square provided us a little space where I and other artists of the neighbourhood could expose our works".

..... Member in the association of Merchants of Souika:

"The square often hosts social and educational activities. We also use the square for the closing ceremony of our annual event called Week of Souika neighbourhood Traders, and I've heard that some young men took the initiative to project some movies, years ago".

« We used to use the square 2 times for the closure ceremony of our annual event of The week of the Souika artisans that our association organises every year »

« We used to use the square 2 times for the closure ceremony of our annual event of The week of the Souika artisans that our association organises every year »

« They have organized many events in the square, I guess 3 in total. »

« Me and my friends used to sit in a circle in the center of the square, that I reckon was a fountain, since it had a weird element in the middle made of rock »

« I heard that there was a fountain in that wall that used to recieve the water from Souika »

« We dont have a terrasse, that is why we use that space as a patio to dry our laundry »

« It is not safe for our kids in there, I cant let them go. Otherwise I have to keep an eye on them »

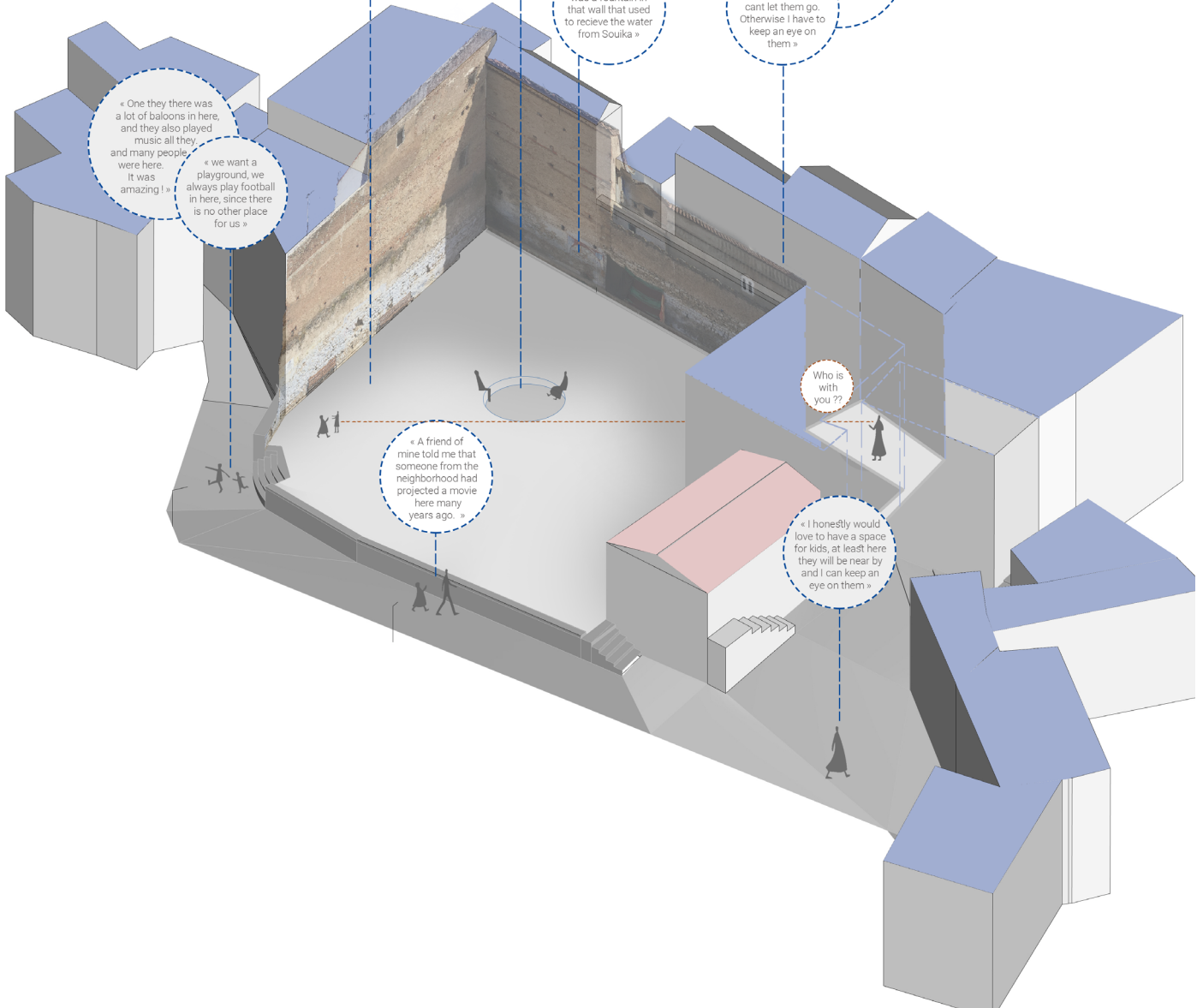
« One they there was a lot of balloons in here, and they also played music all they and many people were here. It was amazing ! »

« we want a playground, we always play football in here, since there is no other place for us »

« A friend of mine told me that someone from the neighborhood had projected a movie here many years ago. »

Who is with you ??

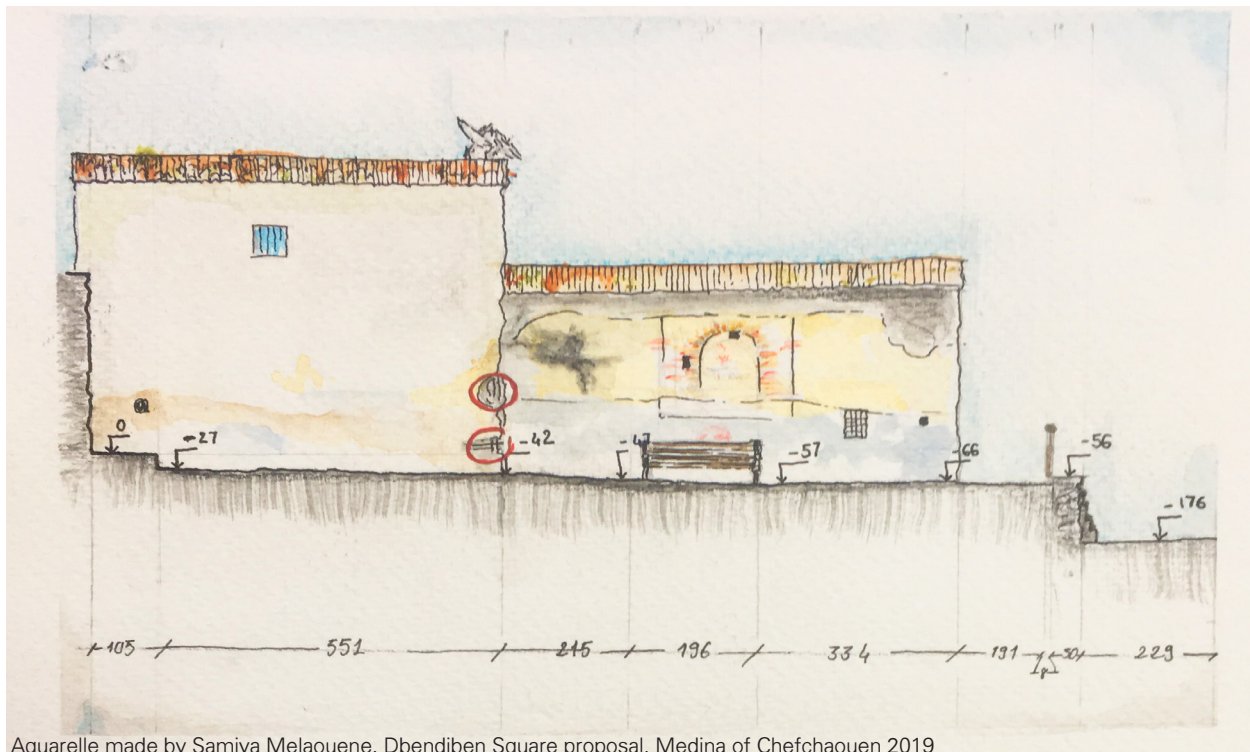
« I honestly would love to have a space for kids, at least here they will be near by and I can keep an eye on them »



# Context Analysis

The Dbendiben square has been studied the last two years 2017 and 2018, resulting a good quantity of information about its history, its heritage value and the activities associated to its basic public space. The 2019 workshop has the challenge of adjusting what was raised in previous years and of formulating a methodology to bring it to reality.

Therefore the analysis follows the main aim: the rehabilitation of Dbendiben Square in a joint effort with the municipality within the frame of a cooperation project. Thus, the specific goals that will guide the study of the place and lead to the design, are the concepts of Identity, Cultural empowerment, Economic development, Use of spaces and Comfort.



Aquarelle made by Samiya Melauouene. Dbendiben Square proposal, Medina of Chefchaouen 2019

To retrieve its identity and show the origins of the ancient tannery as an exposition of their tradition in Souika neighbourhood.

## IDENTITY

Providing the square with different multifunctional spaces so that the people in the neighborhood can use it in different ways and with different activities, so that all groups can benefit from the space.

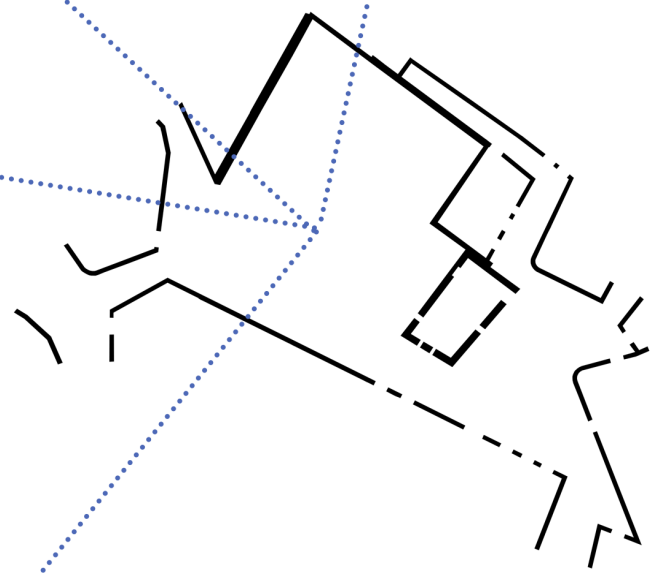
## USE OF SPACES

## COMFORT

Improve the comfort conditions of the space by generating a natural hedging that covers part of the square in the hottest time.

## CULTURAL EMPOWERMENT + ECONOMIC DEVELOPING

Use the square as a promoter of economic and cultural activity in the neighbourhood, generating spaces that can be used to exhibit the different works of traditional Chefchaouen culture and the material for sale.





View: South

View: Acces to the square

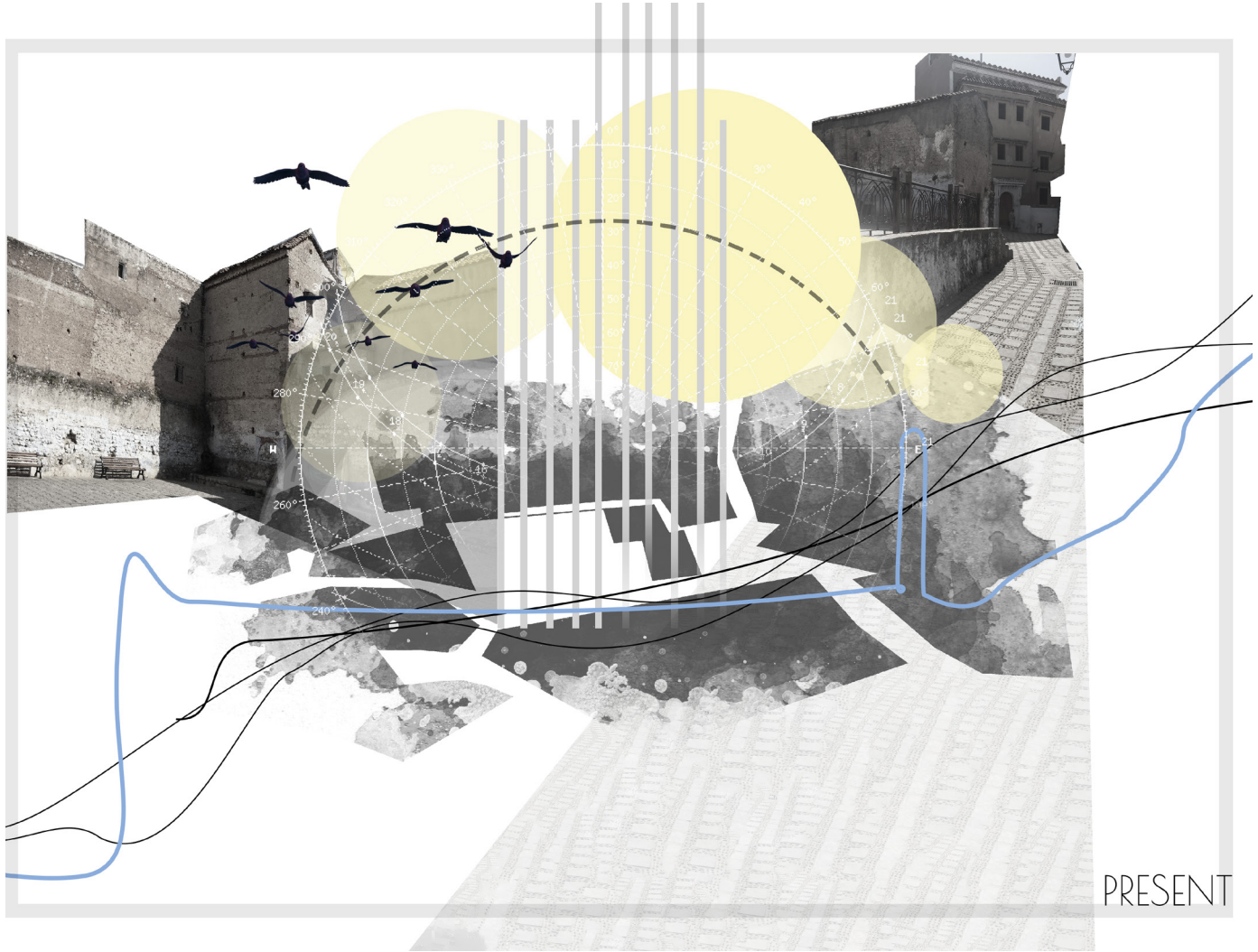




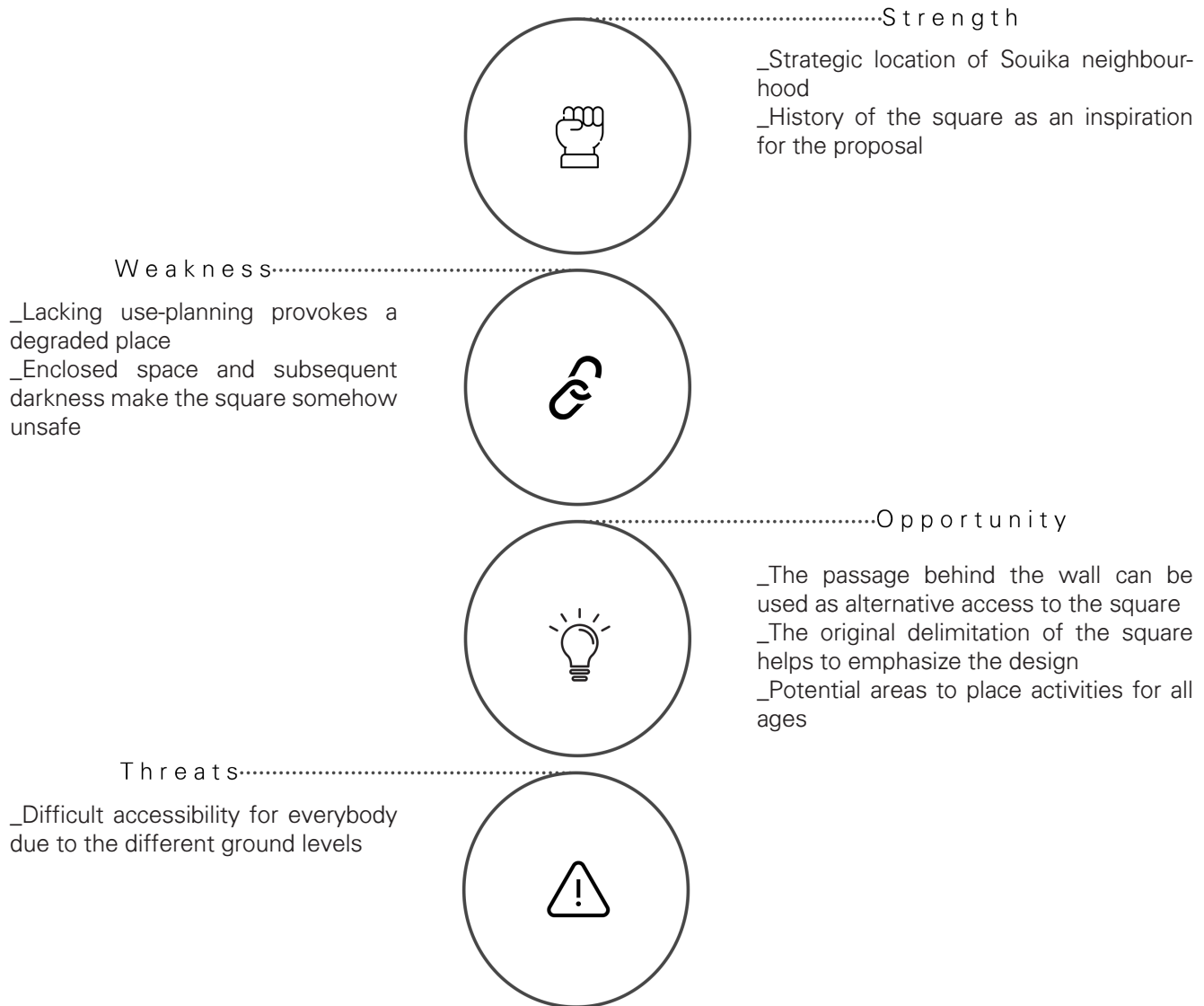
View: To the west



View: To the East

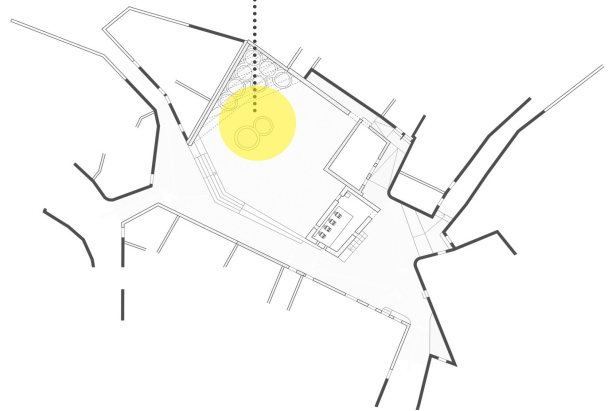
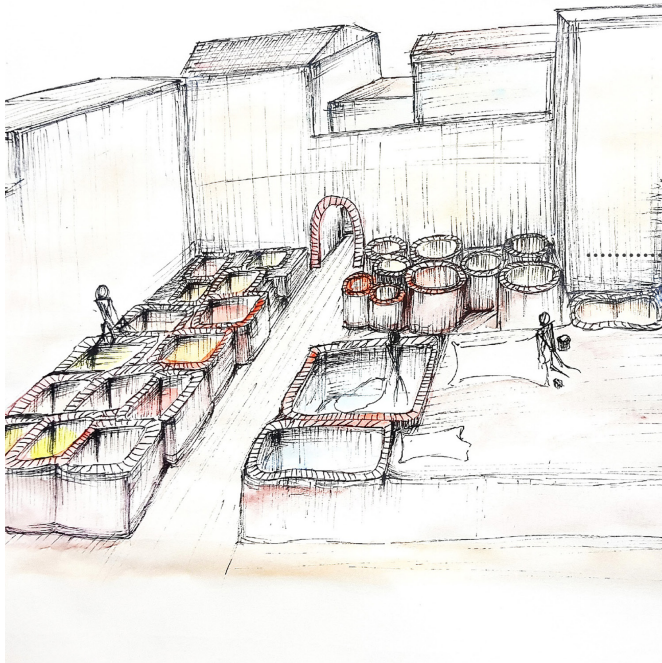


Collage made by Meryem Baksys. Dbendiben Square, Medina of Chefchaouen 2019



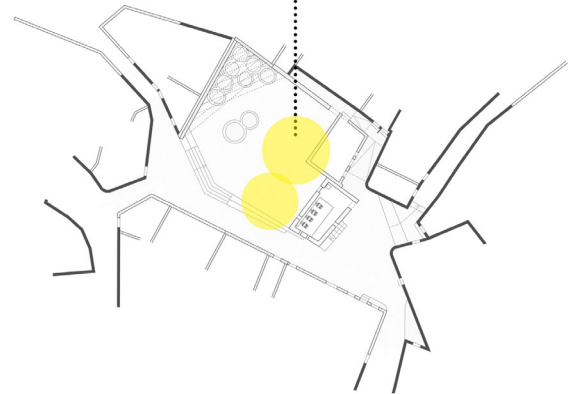
## Identity

Remembrance of the old tannery, forming benches with the shape of the dying ponds, to recover the history of the square. These elements will be built with superadobe which is an economic and multifunctional technique made with earth and cloth bags easy to install and carry.



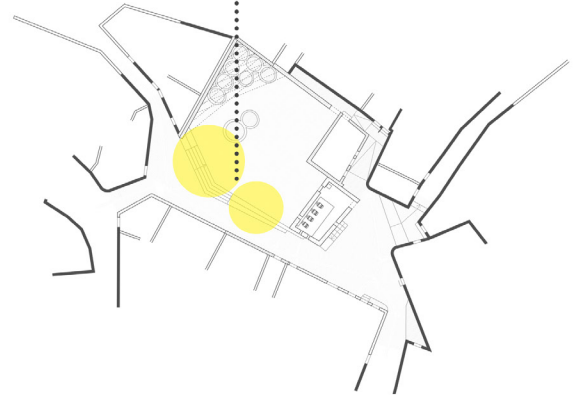
## Cultural Empowerment

To take advantage of the walls using them as exhibition place, where merchants can hang out their typical local fabrics. The result is that the surrounding walls become colourful and catch the attention of pedestrians.



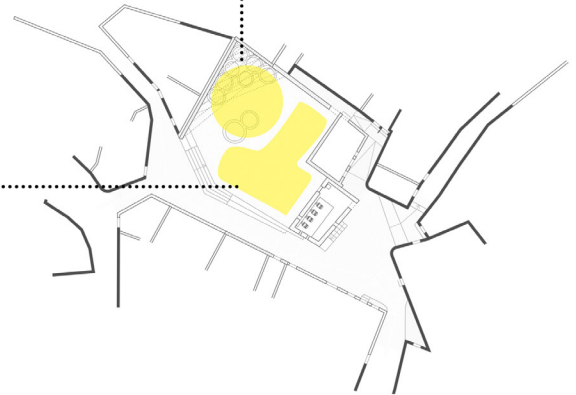
## Economic Developing

Simply but functional: to use the stairs and the facades of the buildings around the square to display products, targeting not only tourists but also inhabitants. In that way economic activity will increase in Souika. Products should have a permanent display, thus making the square alive.



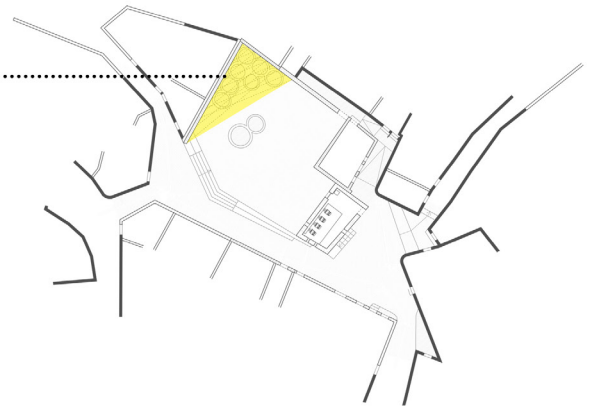
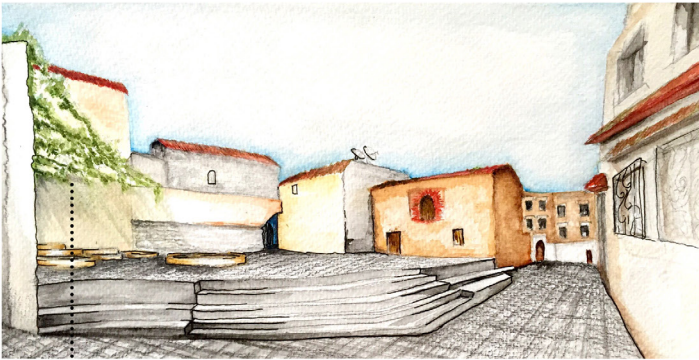
## Use of spaces

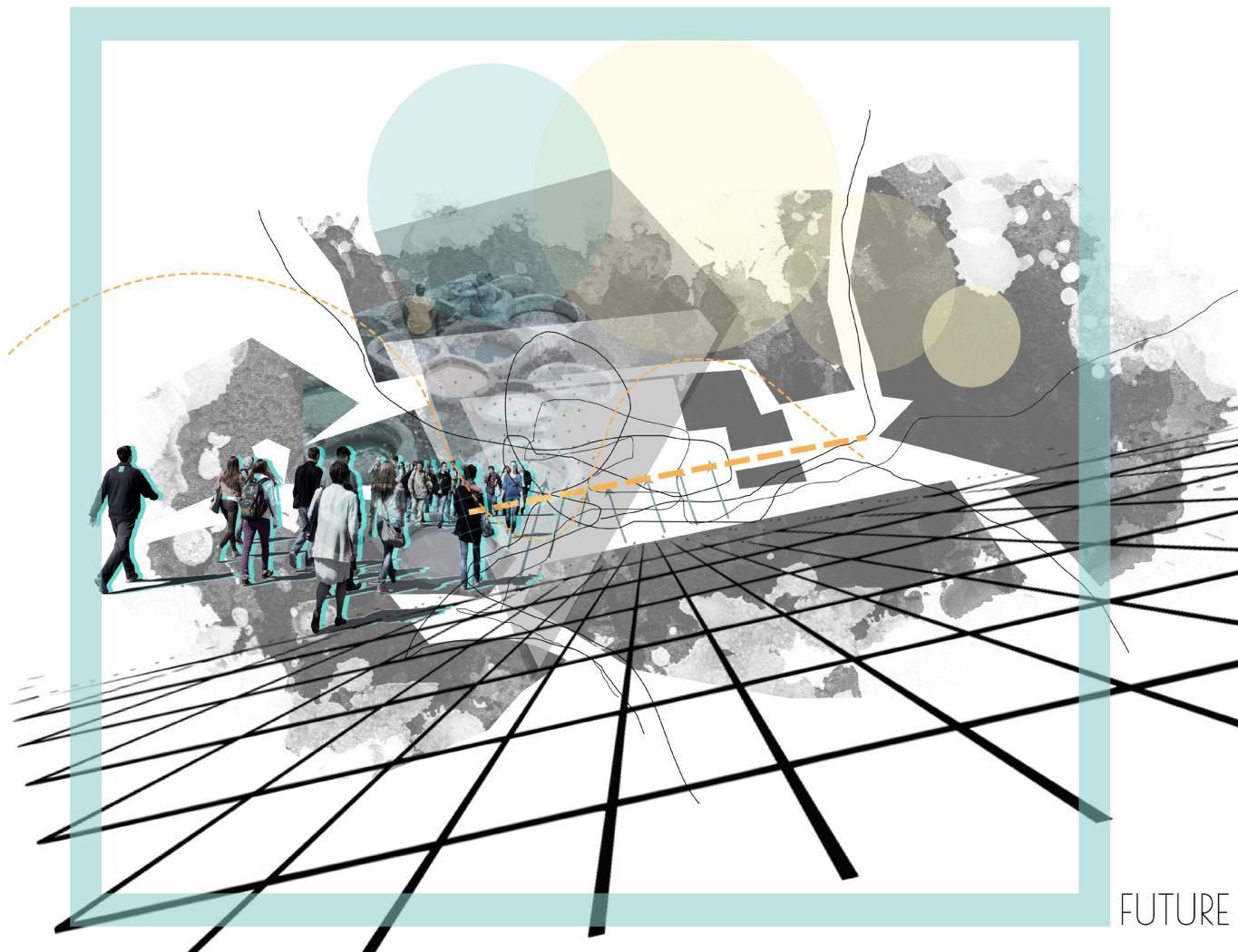
Despite the fact that the square is an open space, there are visible limits between specific areas. We keep a playground zone, a commercial area, a resting zone and a cultural space. For instance, under the green roof there are benches made of superadobe to create the perfect spot for taking a break and watching the products while keeping an eye on the kids playing in the open area.



## Comfort

Pedestrians often look for comfortable little corners to protect themselves from the midday sun; the proposal suggests installing a plant cover in form of a fine structure of stretched cables covered with vegetation: a benevolent space where people can stop to cool off before continuing their journey.



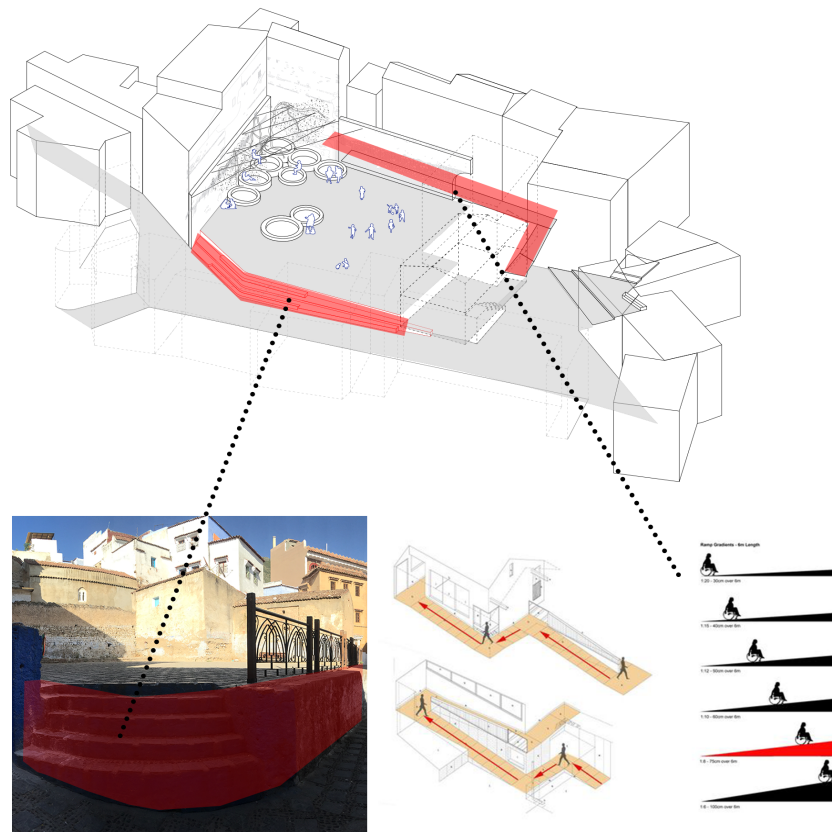


FUTURE

Collage made by Meryem Baksys. Dbendiben Square, Medina of Chefchaouen 2019

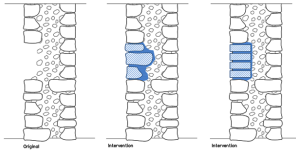
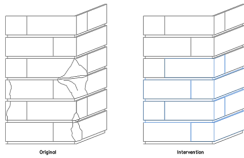
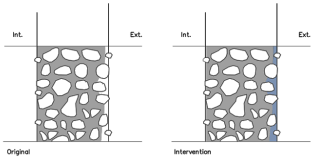
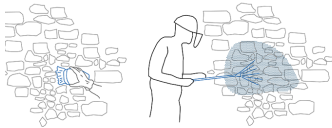
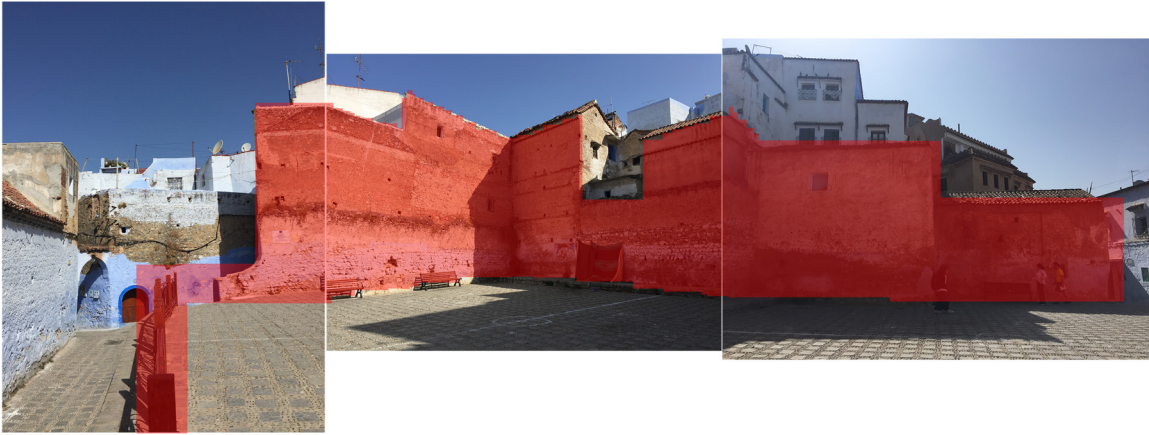
## Project improvement: Accessibility

Accessibility is one of the constant problems of the Medina due to the steep slopes. We propose two actions: adapt the entrance to the square from the back, using the longest route to project a ramp; and lower the wall that separates the front street from the square, projecting a grandstand with access stairs, improving the connection of square and street and offering users a rest and relation space.



Project improvement: Rehabilitation of the facades

The facades of the buildings show strong deterioration: detachment of the material and humidity. We propose to rehabilitate them according to the pathology they present at the time of the study, either adding material or by removing the existing humidity. Finally, we recommend generating openings in the facades to avoid future condensation problems.

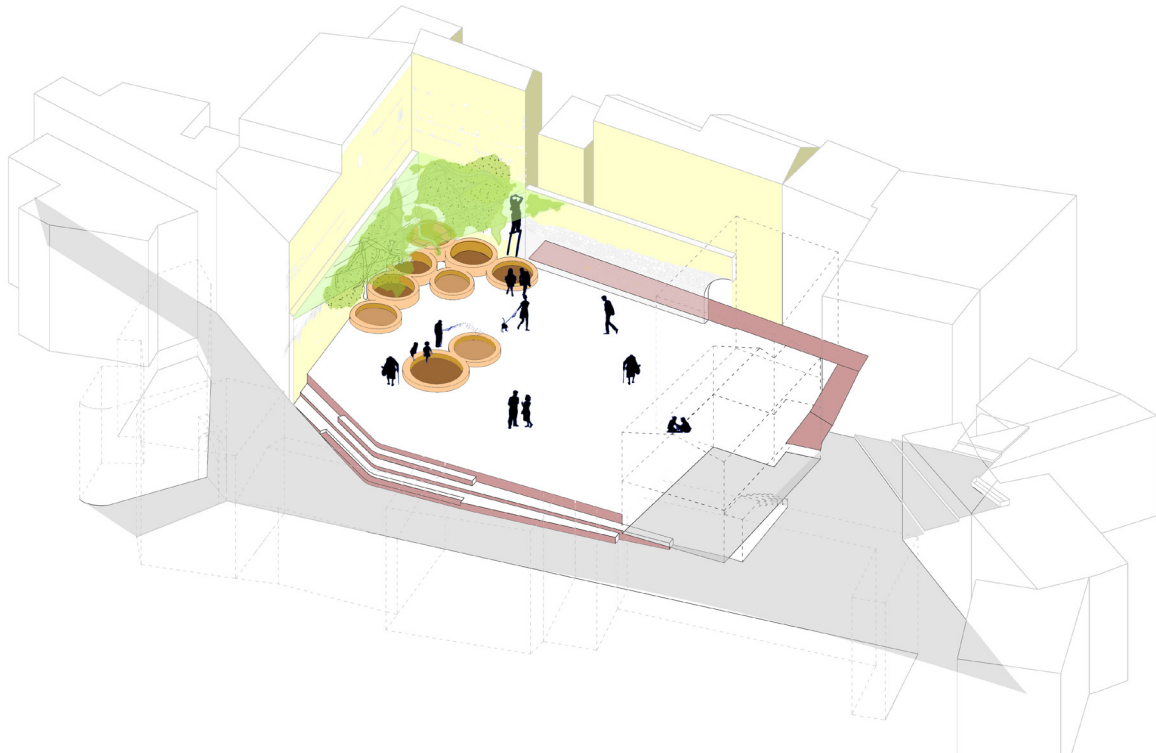


# The Proposal

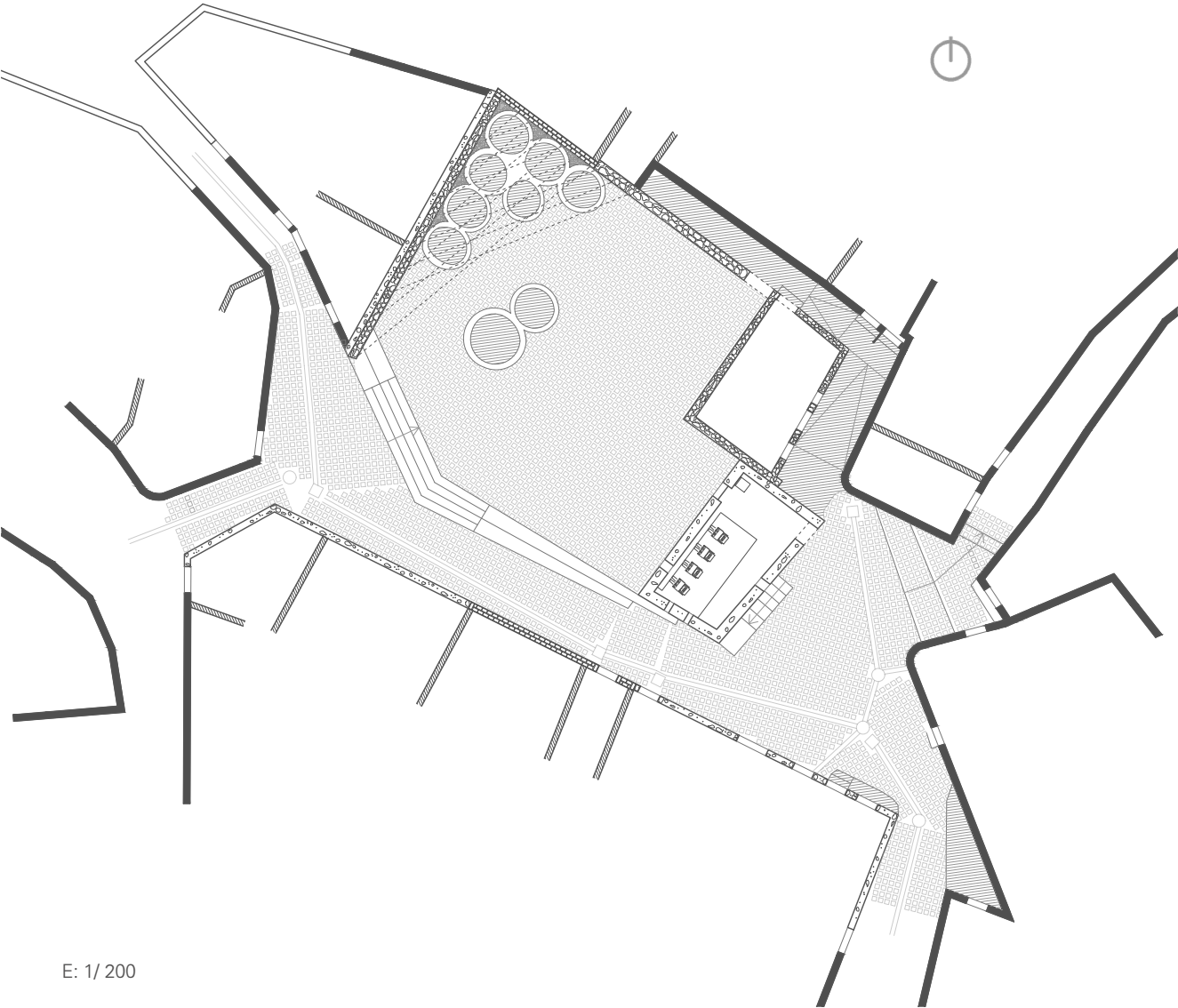
Dbendiben square is a meeting place for young people living around. Throughout the day its image is changing and shows different faces. This passing of time is present in the use as well as in the shape of the square. Former uses left their footprint: the story marked by the tradition of leather merchants that characterizes this part of Morocco.

Fussing past and present, the design proposal aims to make the past visible by bringing the materials of the past back to the present. We propose to change leather for superadobe elements that work as flower pots or as playground for children and resting spots for adults. These elements give public space character to the place making it more liveable and inclusive for the neighbours. In addition the green pergola gives shadow and freshness to the square. The pergola is built by a cable structure covered by vine, following the tradition initiated by the ancient Spanish settlers.

Finally we propose two improvement projects: facade rehabilitation and accessibility upturn.

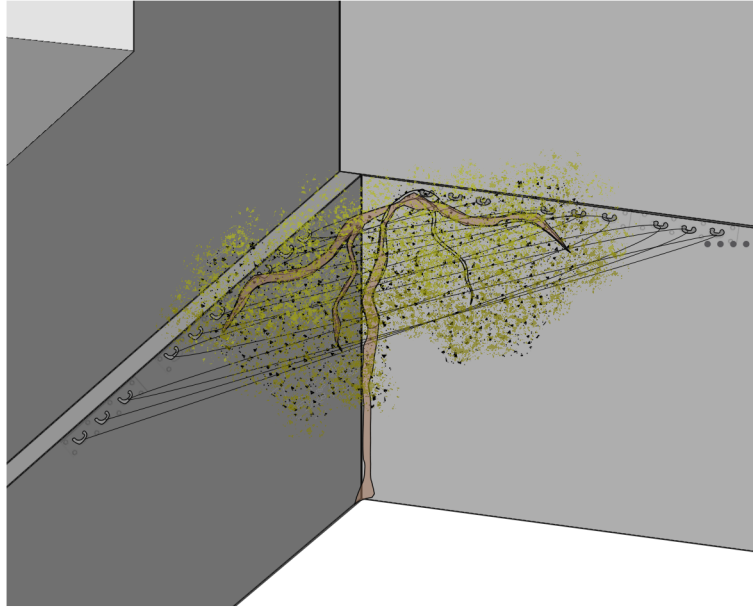


Ground floor Plan

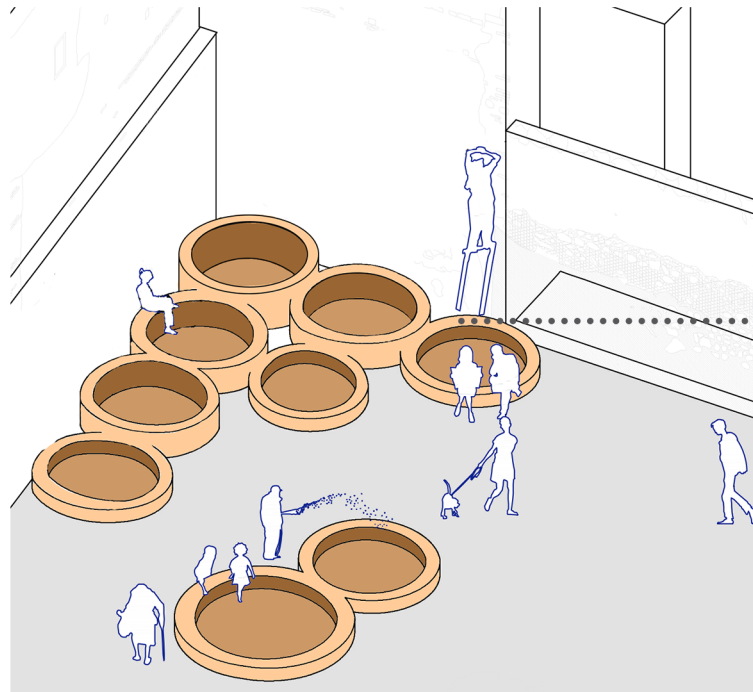


E: 1/ 200

Specification:  
Pergola structure



Specification:  
Superadobe process



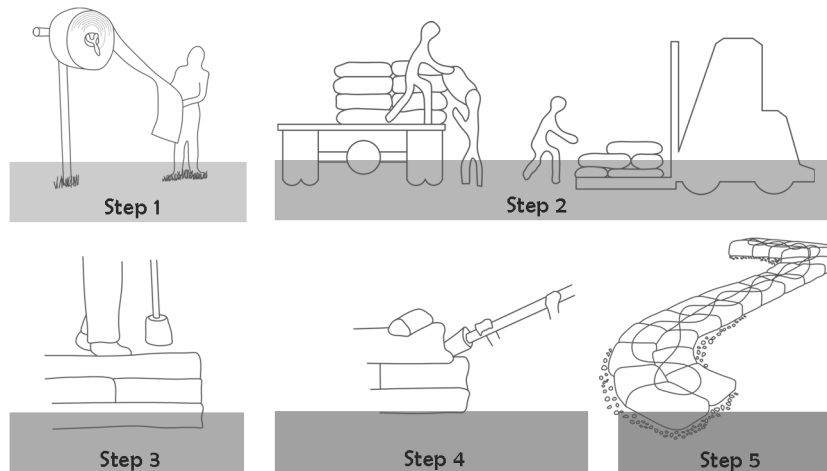
At midday pedestrians start looking for a comfortable place to stop and catch air. That is why the proposal suggest to install a green roof done with the typical Chefchaouen vine supported by cables, where people can refresh before continuing their way or just stop to admire the surroundings of Chefchaouen.

Grape plant or vine is a deciduous tree, and therefore has a different behavior in summer than in winter, adapting to the comfort needs of the square. To grow the vine we will need fertile soil and some small shoots. We will install wooden tutors and wire rings to guide the plant to the cable structure.

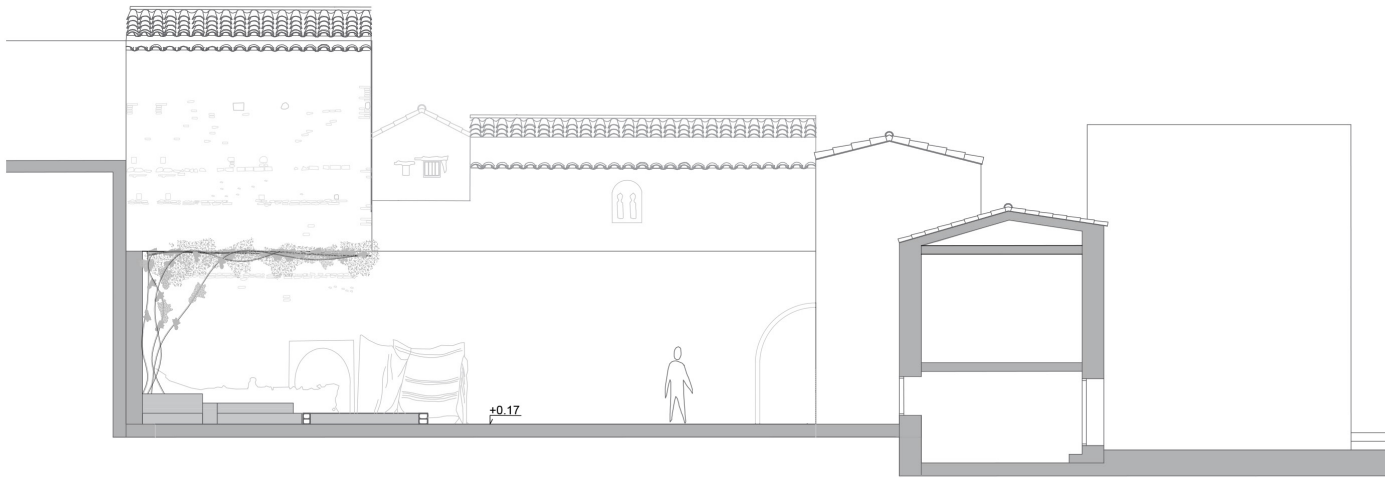
The cable structure will be fixed to the wall by hooks, as the image shows.

According with the California Institute of Earth Architecture (CalEarth), Superadobe is a form of earthbag architecture created by architect Nader Khalili using long sandbags filled with moistened earth and arranged in layers or long coils as shown in the illustration below.

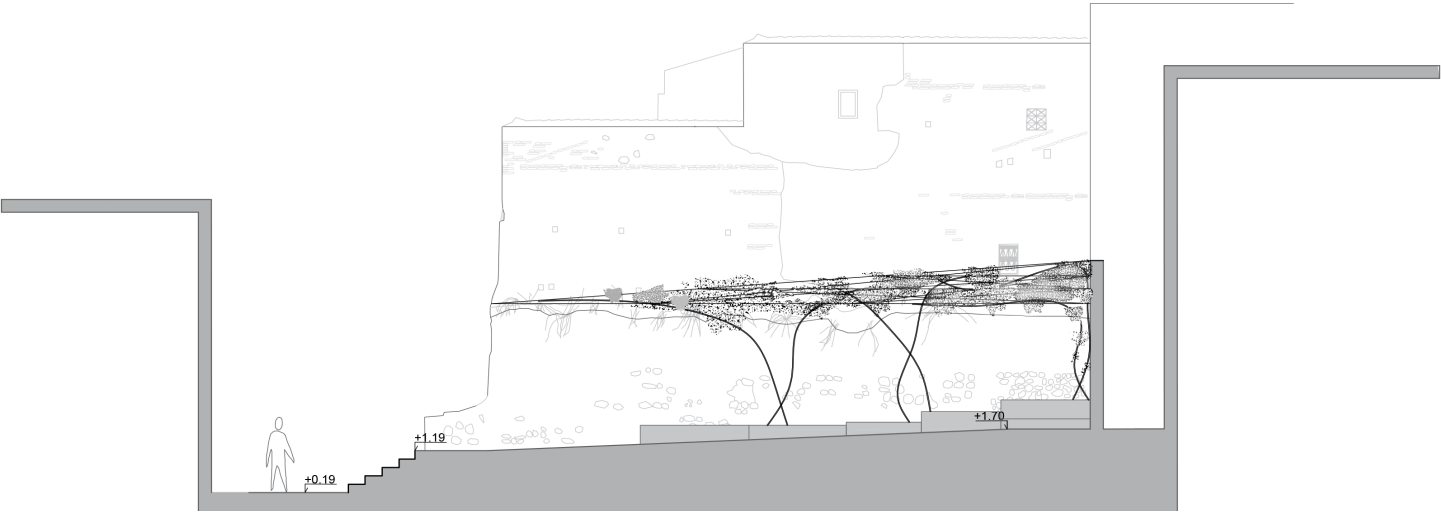
Stabilizers such as cement, lime, or asphalt emulsion may be added. Even somebody without construction knowledge (from the grandma to the youngest kid) is able to build using this technology. That is why we consider Superadobe obliged for the project: it encourages the participative process.



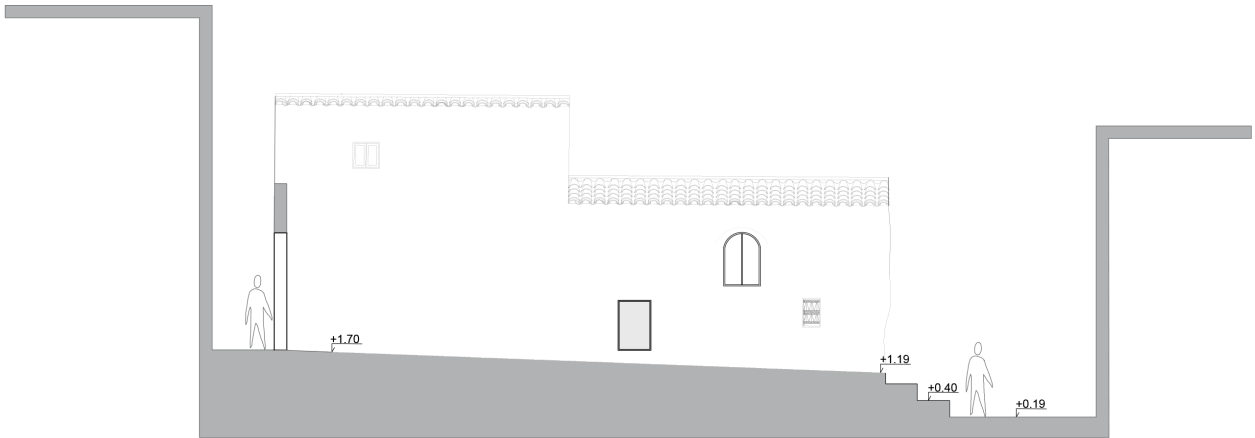
Sections: North view



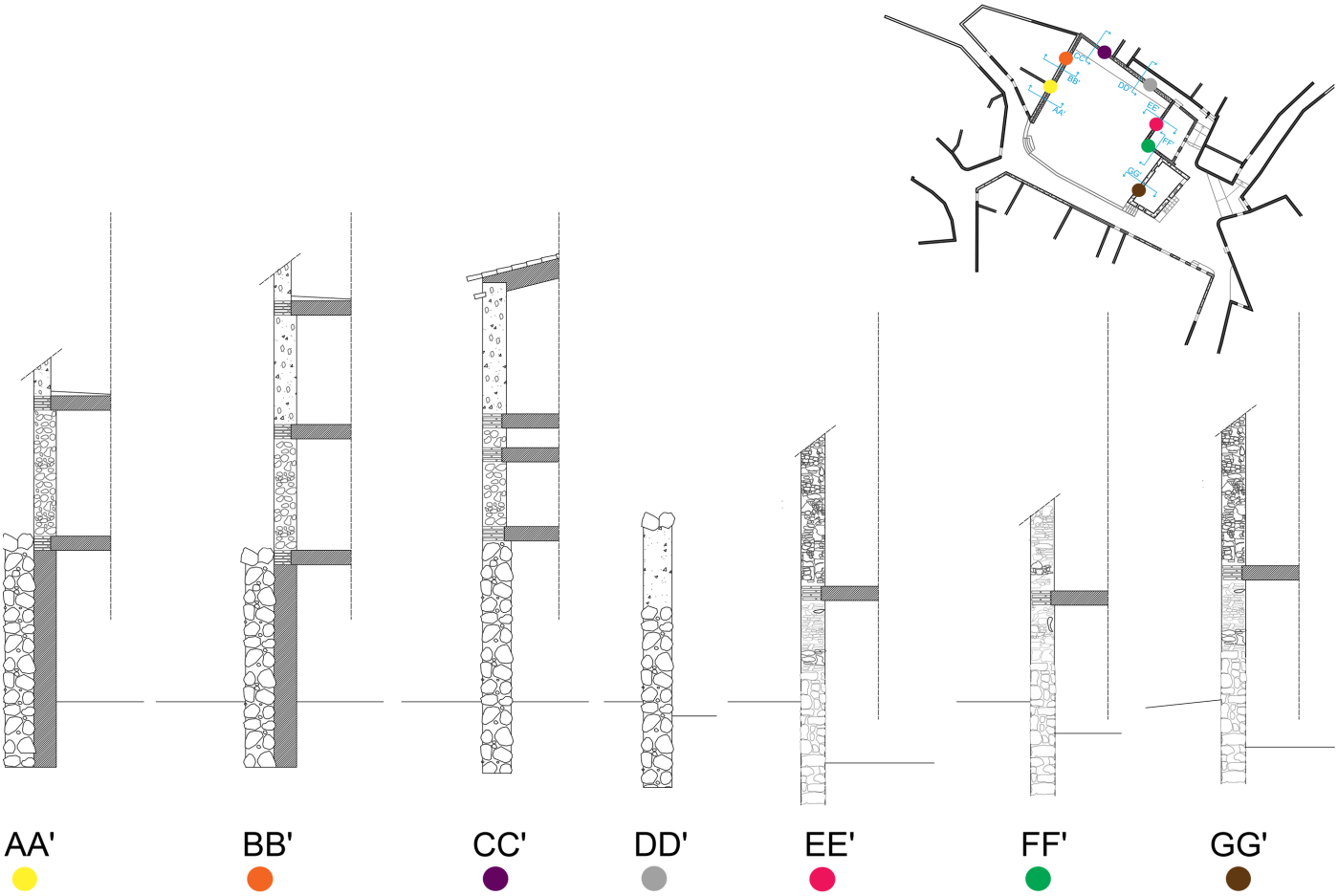
Sections: West view



Sections: East view



Study of pathology: Wall Sections



AA'

BB'

CC'

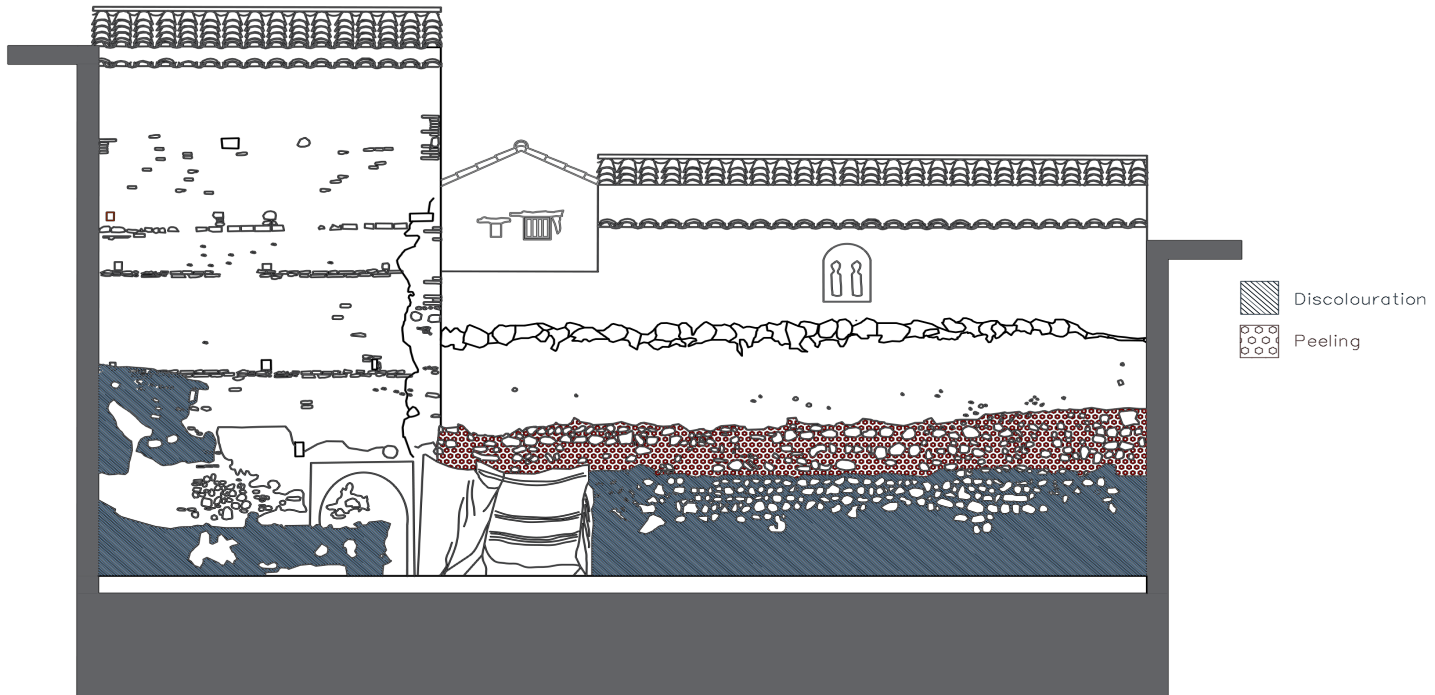
DD'

EE'

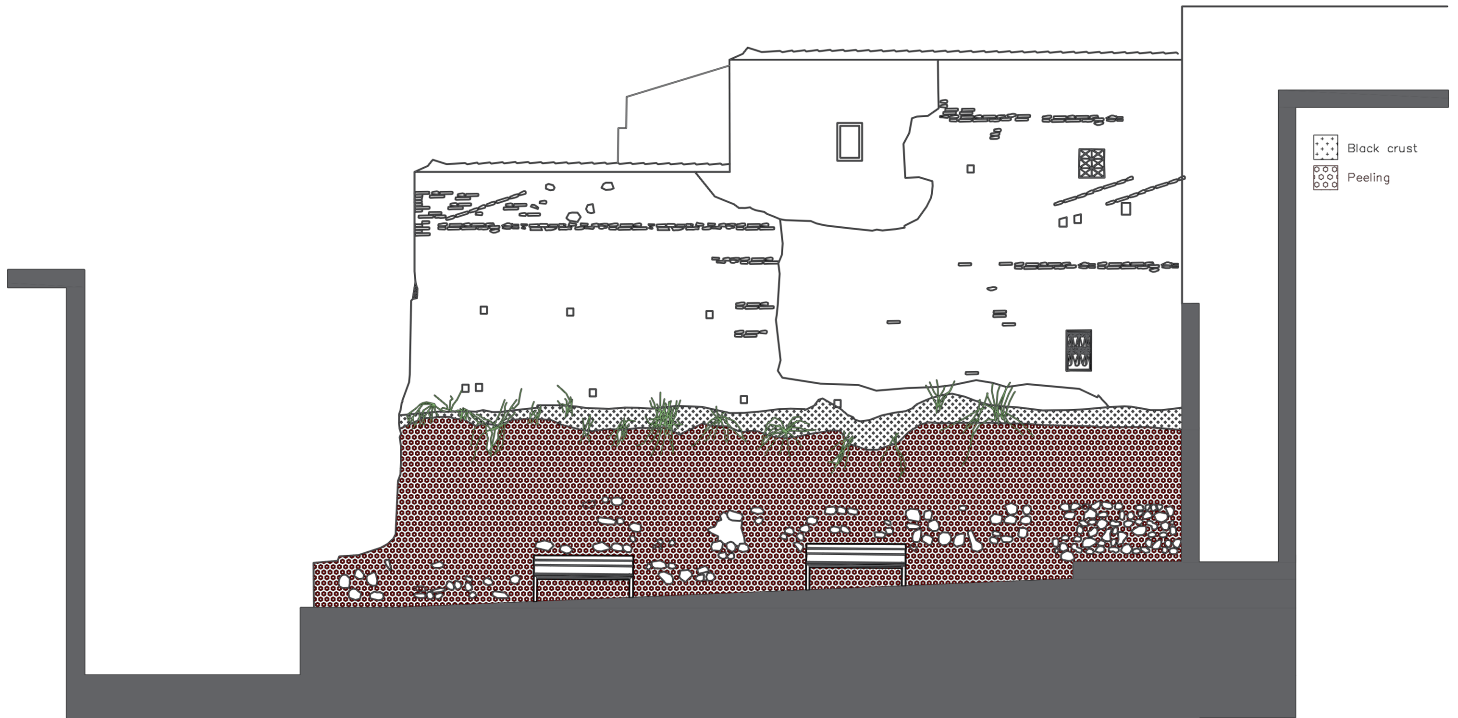
FF'

GG'

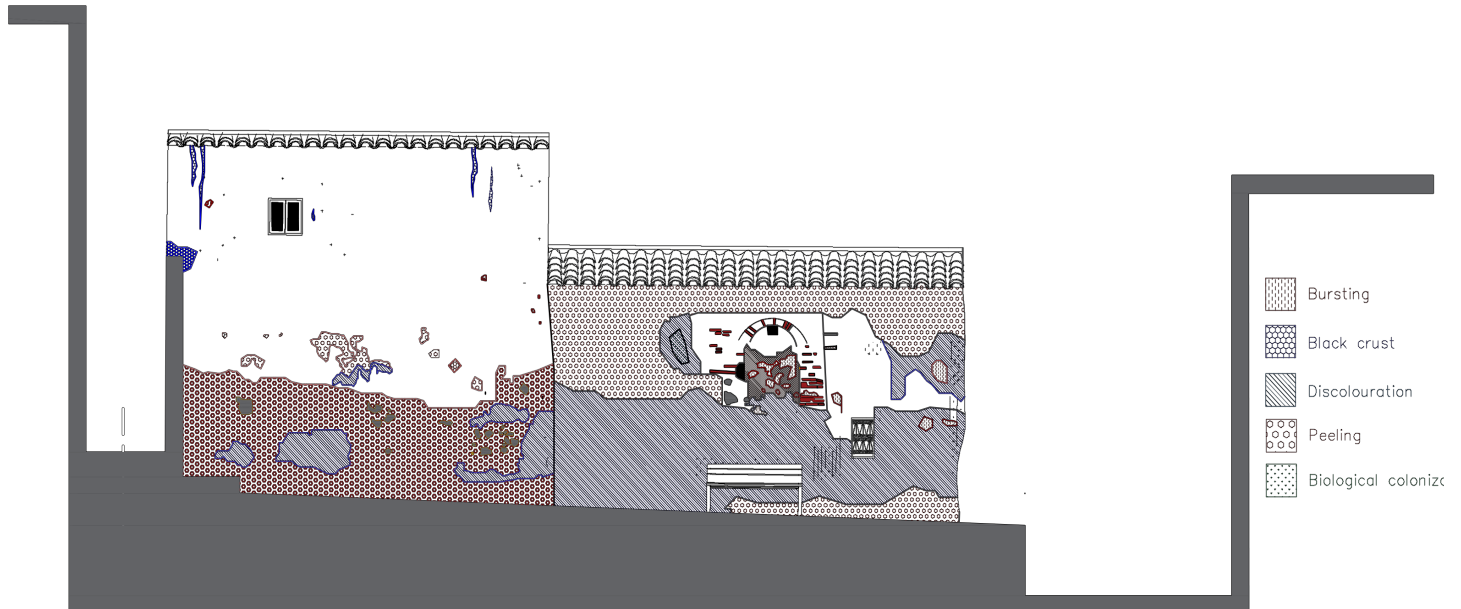
Study of pathology: North Facade



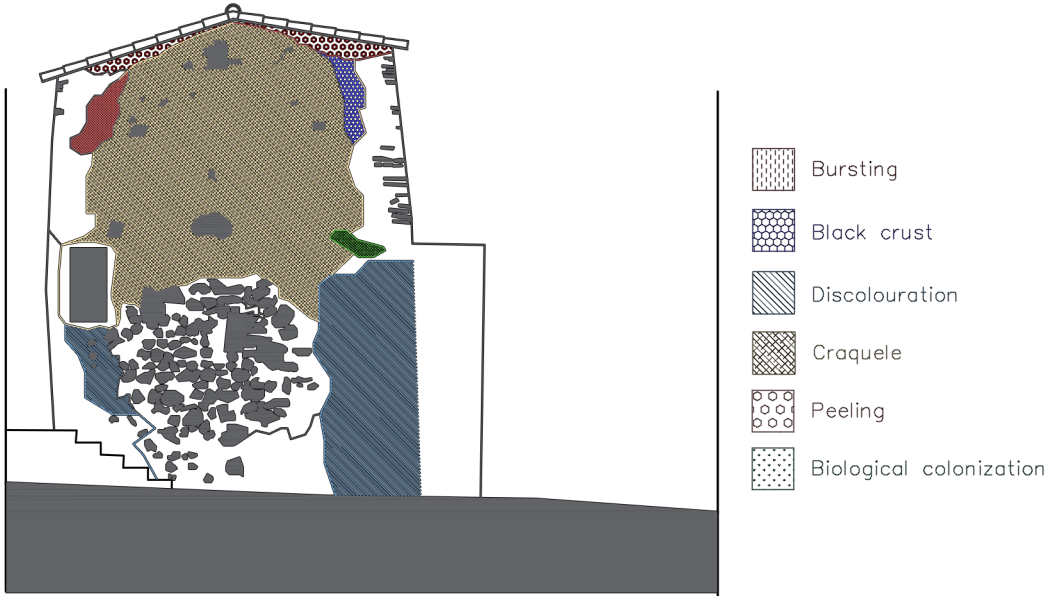
Study of pathology: West Facade

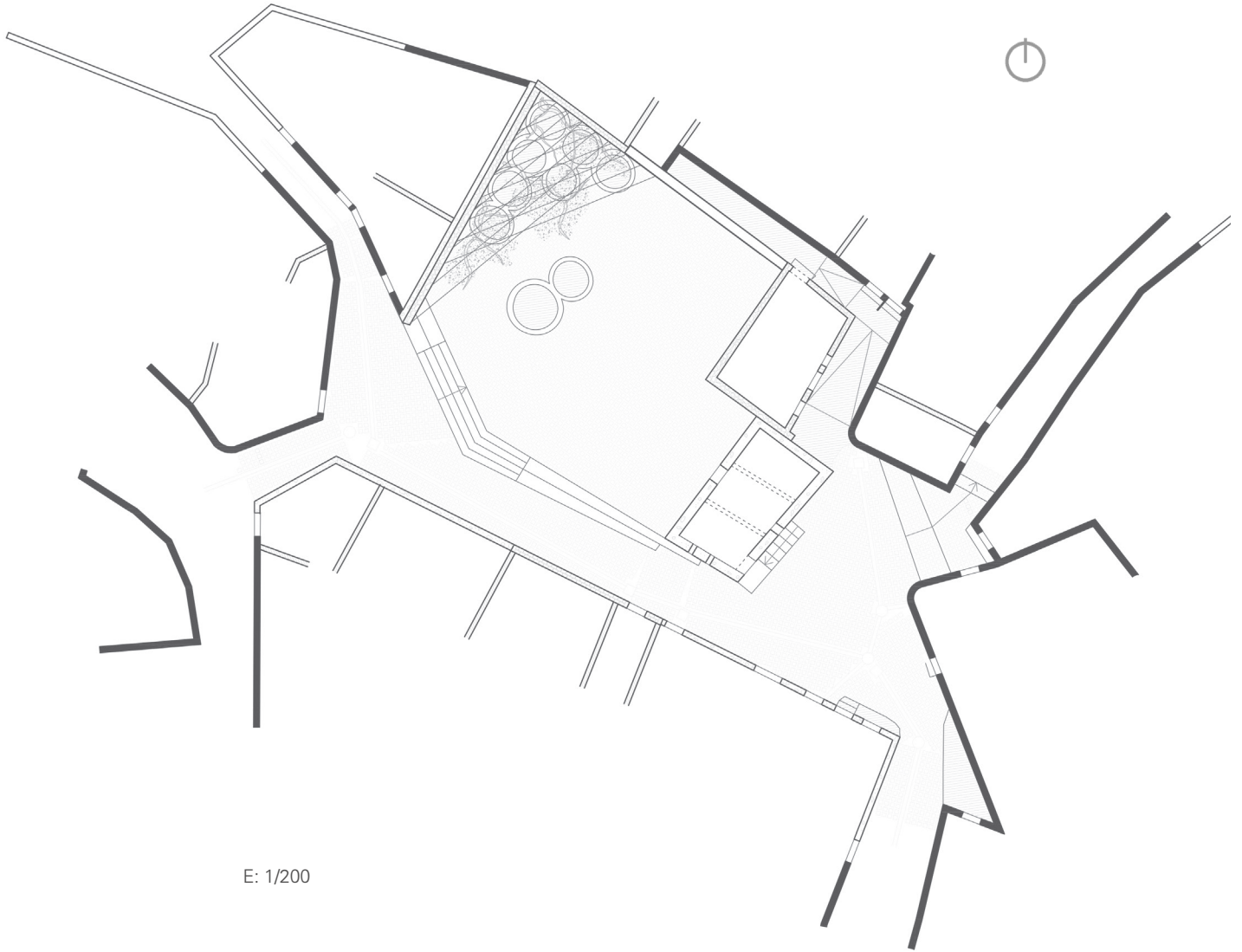


Study of pathology: East Facade

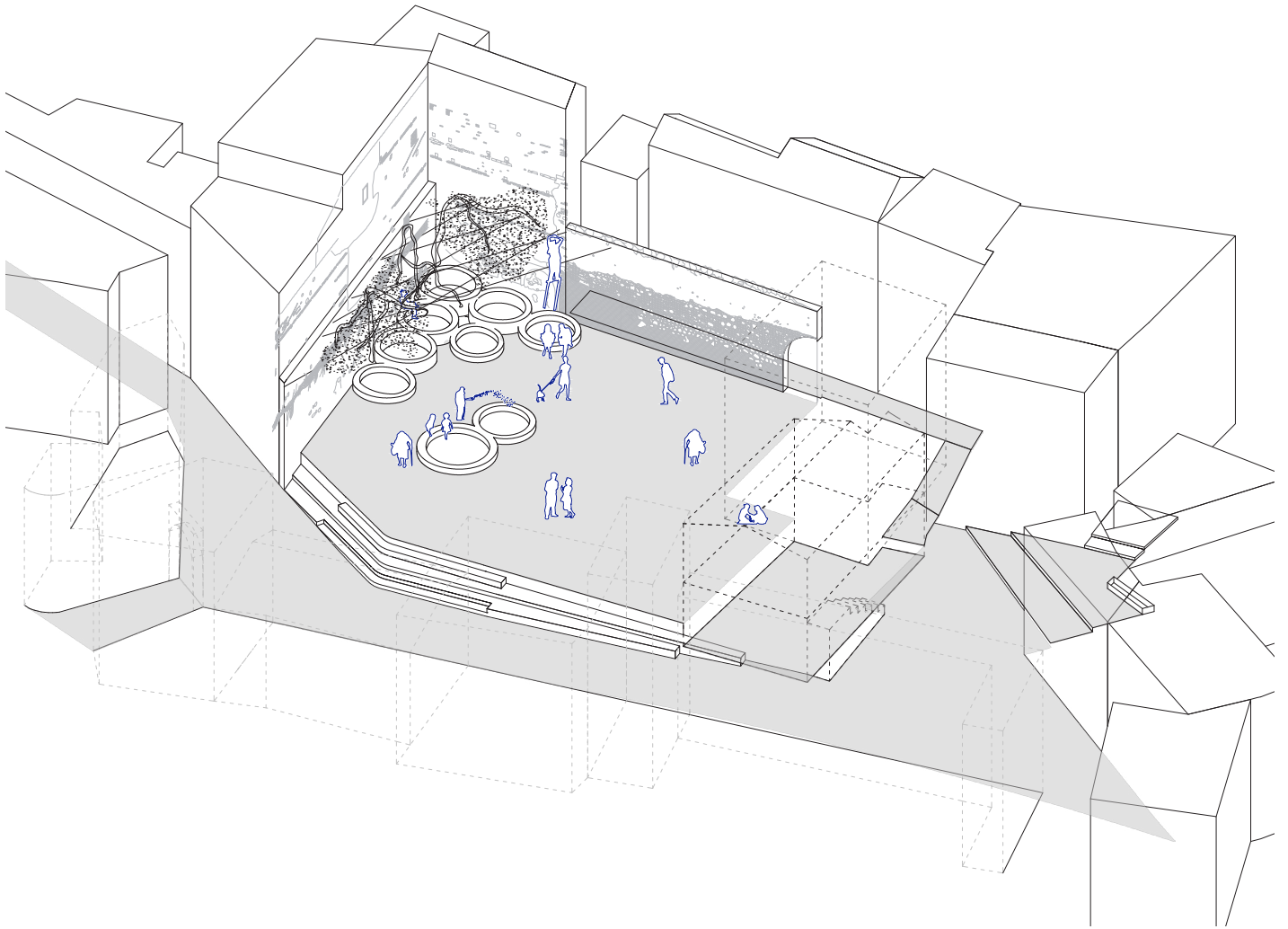


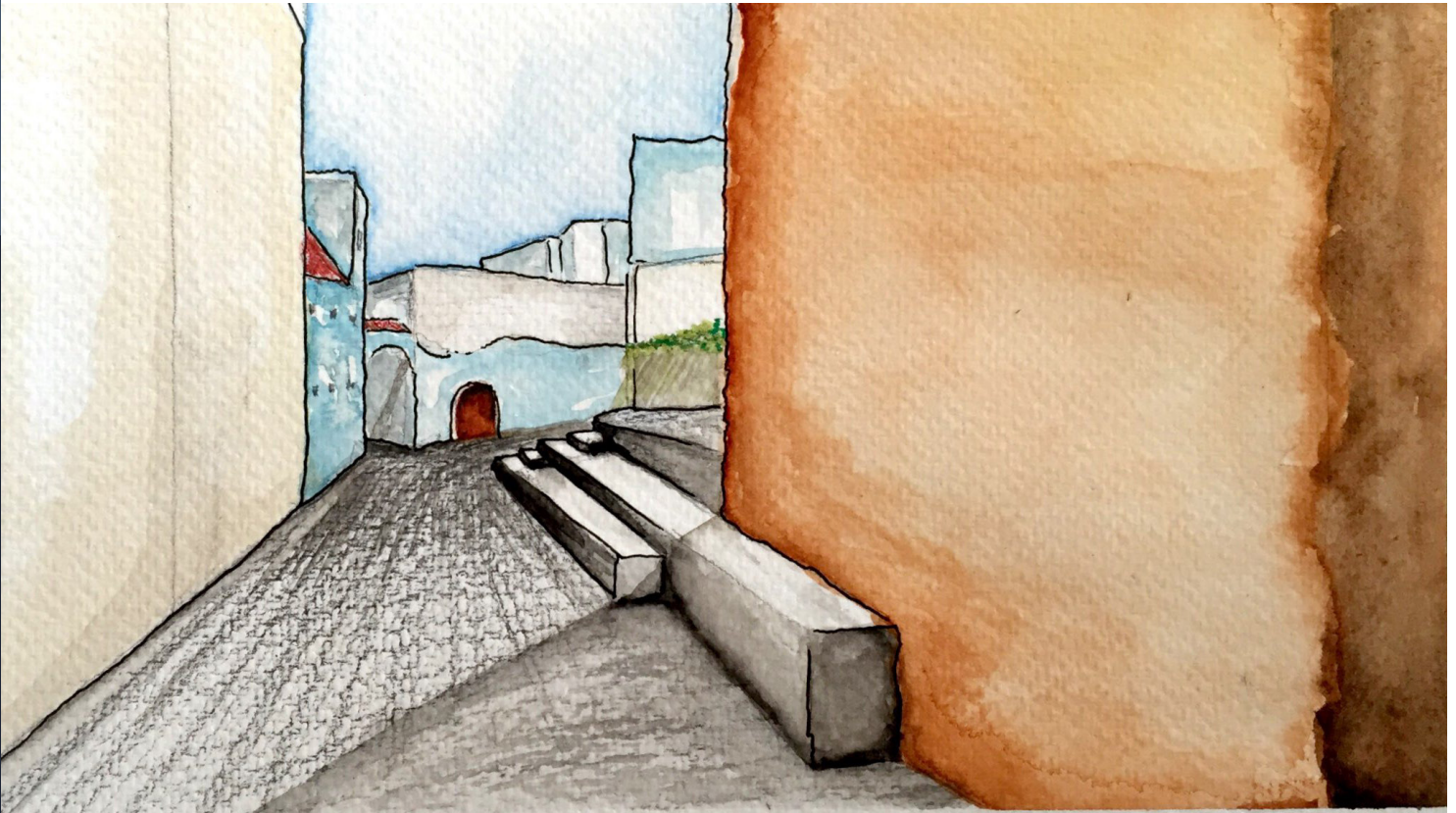
Study of pathology: South Facade



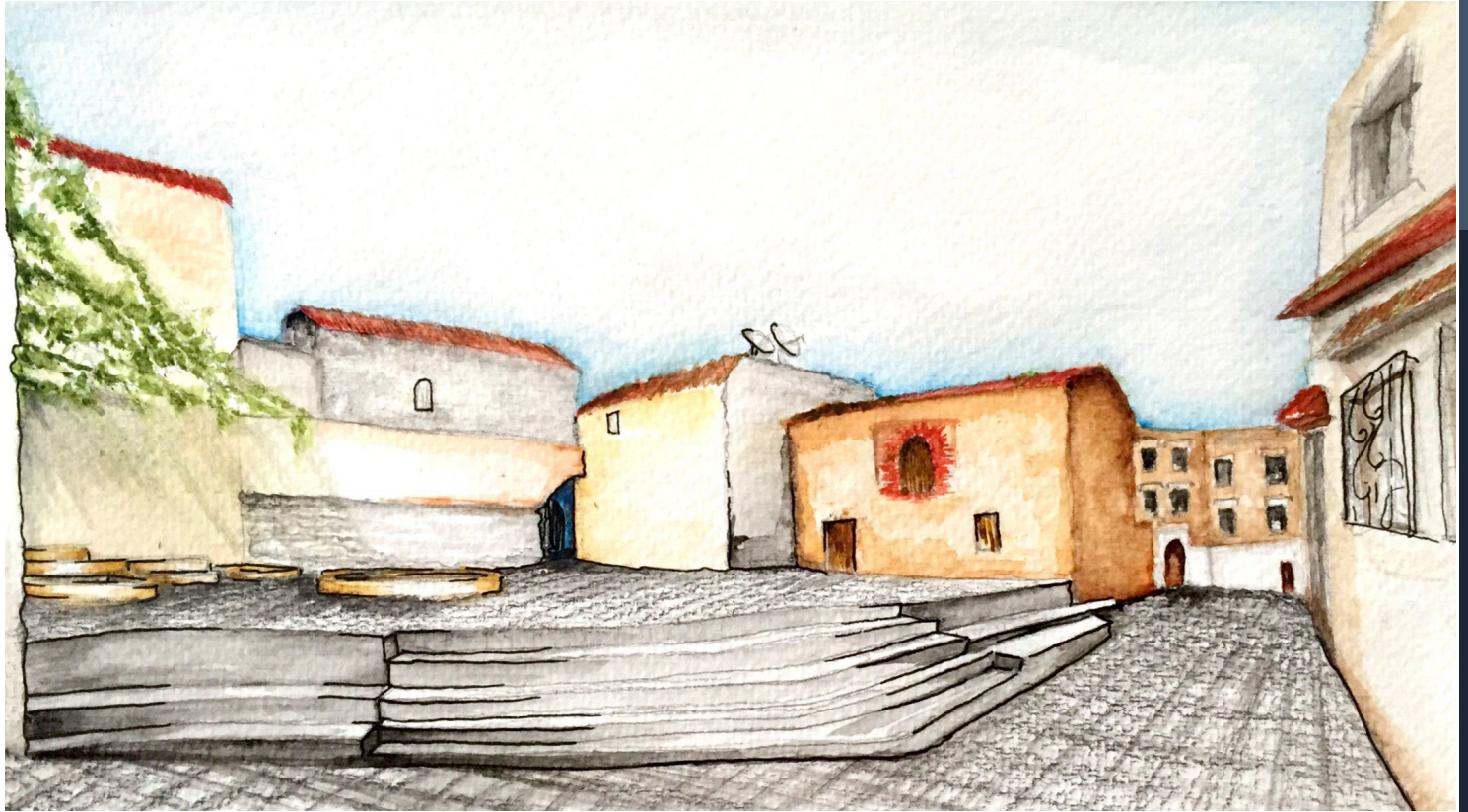


E: 1/200





Aquarelle made by Samiya Melauouene. Dbendiben Square proposal, Medina of Chefchaouen 2019



Aquarelle made by Samiya Melaouene. Dbendiben Square proposal, Medina of Chefchaouen 2019

## **Conclusion**

---



In response to the demand of the municipality of Chauen to get advise on how to improve public space in the old town Medina, during three years the Catalan entities Alkarria and Base-A, in accordance with Barcelona Architecture School ETSAB-UPC and the help of two Architecture schools of Morocco, have cooperated with the municipality of Chauen. In 2018 the Catalan Architectural Chamber COAC also was part of the team.

2017 some members of the collective Base-A did a very accurate field research on the three squares that were agreed to be studied. The analysis was based on historical and nowadays documentation, on direct observation, and on the conversations held with local technicians, historians and users. The outcome was a document with systematically redrawn groundfloors-sections-elevations, a listing of building pathologies, and some improvement suggestions. Further publications are directly based on this first booklet, a model of accuracy in the contents and elegance in the layout.

2018 the Architecture schools were involved. Students from Barcelona and Tetouan, under the guidance of ETSAB teachers, spend ten days working together in mixed groups. Every group did the reading of a prefixed public spot, following some common practices: environmental analysis, SWOT analysis, users' interviews, etc. Data were fixed mostly graphically, as the site reading demanded first (re)drawing the sites: they were largely lacking proper documentation. Based upon these analysis the workshop participants developed proposals to improve four public spaces. The main goal was to make on-going activities more comfortable, to encourage new activities, and to underline the character of the places. In parallel the students had their first immersion on a building site: a volunteer sent by COAC to instruct local workers in fixing pathologies of a typical oven building, introduced them to basic construction techniques.

2019 the shape of collaboration was the same: an intensive summer workshop mixing students and teachers, this time coming from Barcelona and Fes. Three new study cases were focused, and one of the previous was

developed to “construction detail”. They are shown in this booklet.

This first three-year cycle of fruitful collaboration has two main results: a catalogue of precise graphic descriptions of several places around the Medina, included proposals of how to improve them, in order to create a working methodology translated in a solution catalogue to promote a collaborative and sustainable urbanism, and a rich experience of transnational collaboration, especially for the students.

Chauen municipality now has to take over adapting the projects to the community demands. It is crucial to involve the neighbours-users and beneficiaries as active participants in the discussion and decision taking and construction phase to promote the citizens empowerment. For sure the weakest point in this successful collaboration programme has been the poor involvement of the final addressee. No doubt our counterpart, the municipality of Chauen, is representing the whole community. But contemporary work on public space, wherever, should be based on a participative process. Therefore any future activity should consider acting from downside-up.

Referring the academic collaboration, downside-up worked better than upside- down. While the communication between the Schools of Architecture was not always as fluid as desired, most of the students understood perfectly the chance it means to work in international groups, and took advantage of it; their amazing work is the best prove. They learned from each other, training open-mindedness, tolerance, flexibility, solidarity, and were able to share responsibilities and organize themselves in a highly professional way.

Altogether this first cycle of the “Step on Step” collaboration and development program has been absolutely successful, thanks to the generosity of all the partners and participants. Hopefully in a near future we can start the second cycle.



Photograph taken by Meryem Baksys. Dbendiben Square. Medina of Chefchaouen. 2019

## Workshop Participants:

Antonio Gual de Torrella Roca

Carla López Arnau

Clara Brujella Bueno

Eric Cruz Jara

Hind El Cohen

Jordi Prat Lanza

Judit Ferrari Camps

Karim Zougari Redondo

Laia Andrés Torres

Mar Ayala Casanovas

Maria Pino

Maroua Ben Kiran

Marta Serrano Ruiz

Meryem Abkari

Meryem Baksys

Mónica Zamora

Nuria Antón Martín

Omar Tanouini

Rania Farid

Salma Annass

Samiya Melaouene

Virginia Ruana Jornet

Yassine Benabdellah

Zhiun Chen

