

# JUST SPACES

A study of a public space in Mexico City to apply the  
just city research in designing public spaces



Master Thesis  
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**CHALMERS**  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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Gothenburg, Spring 2019

Only engage in things you enjoy and truly believe in. Don't invest your time and hard effort in things that doesn't matter to you.

Nevertheless, rest assure that there are no shortcuts. Hard work is what it will take to reach your goals.

Anna König Jerlmyr, 2019  
Stockholm Major



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Chalmers,  
for being a great place to learn, for providing with such a friendly  
environment to grow, for opening a new world of possibilities;

To my teachers,  
especially Emilio Brandao, Kia Bengtsson, Joaquim Tarraso and Marco  
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the best attitude, and for pushing me to do a better work;

To my friends,  
those in Mexico who kept me on their minds, who made it easy to forget  
we're thousands of kilometers away, and those here in Sweden, for  
becoming that new family to share all these moments and always be there;

To my family,  
because you make it easy to be away and still feel that we're close, for  
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unconditional support;

and to you,  
the person who has been there all along the process, who has walked with  
me even if thousands of kilometers away, for teaching me more about love  
and support, for always wanting me to go one step further, and because  
you taught me that distance can really mean nothing.

This is for you.



**Yours,**

**Jorge**

# AGRADECIMIENTOS

A Chalmers,  
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para desarrollarme, por abrirme un nuevo mundo de posibilidades;

A mis maestros,  
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trabajo;

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compartí todas estas experiencias y por estar siempre ahí;

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y a tí,  
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que vaya más allá, y por enseñarme que la distancia realmente es lo de  
menos.

Esto es para ustedes.

**Suyo,**

**Jorge**

# ABSTRACT

This project is built upon the idea of finding a way to apply a theory (The Just City) into designing public spaces. One existing public space in Mexico City will be used to analyze, criticize, reflect and propose matters of justice in designing public space.

“The Just City” is a research first consolidated by Susan S. Fainstein (2010), in which democracy, equity, and diversity are the pillars below it. Such theories and research express the existing concern in modern cities’ relations between government and society, especially the lower strata, which is normally unheard, unseen and forgotten in city planning; these theories, however, have often little application in architecture design other than criticizing it. The Mistra Urban Futures center has taken these theories in producing its own framework “Realising Just Cities” and they have applied their principles and beliefs in studying diverse cities, promoting collaborations and policy making. But how could the research be used to design specific places?

The selection of Mexico City as the study place is fundamentally based in the following: Mexico City is the largest city in the world when it comes to native Spanish speakers, the second most spoken language in the world, with around 20 million inhabitants (a bigger population than most countries in Europe\*) which makes it a relevant place in analyzing megacities and the Latin American context which is different from that of Europe, U.S.A. and Africa where the research has been applied and studied mostly.

Public spaces and their design process will be the main focus in this document, as it is in these places where just city features are the most important to exist. The goal is to understand and propose how the Just City research can help to design public spaces that promote justice in a local context such as Mexico City with its specific opportunities and challenges, with the intention to consolidate a Just Spaces concept in theory and design that could be applied to study and design for other contexts.

Research question:  
How can a just-centered approach be used  
to design public spaces?

\*Only eight of the 44 European countries have a population bigger than 20 million inhabitants  
(<http://www.worldometers.info/population/countries-in-europe-by-population>)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Some information at the time of writing:

Mexican  
28 y/o

Bachelor in Architecture at UNAM, Mexico City  
Erasmus in Sustainable Architecture/Urban Ecology at NTNU, Norway  
Currently part of MPDSD at Chalmers

Interested in:

Social sustainability, Public Space, Design through Research.

# WHY IS THIS RELEVANT

This is not only relevant, but it is relevant now.

In the specifically selected context of Mexico City there are currently transitions happening in many senses, three reasons will be listed to be the main triggering agents for this thesis.

During 2018, elections were held in Mexico for national and local positions, including presidential elections. A new government normally, specially when a change in political parties occur, tries to start new projects, set the goals and directions for the following years. A time for changes in the political scene is the first reason for this document.

During October 2016, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) was held in Ecuador, the NUA or New Urban Agenda (HABITAT III, 2017) was adopted, become a world-wide compromise in trying to achieve a more sustainable future setting goals to be achieved by 2030. This document needs to be taken and adapted by every country to its own specific settings, creating a new series of sub-agendas. In Mexico such documents have been on development since the end of 2016, setting the tone for Mexico's future in urban development. A time for changes in the urban planning scene is the second reason for this document.

The third reason is that although we're living in a time that some, including the author, consider the best time humanity has ever experienced, we're still far from the best that we can ever get to live. This view is standing on the idea that we've never been more worried about (and studying, discussing and willing to change) the unfairness, the injustice, the unsustainable, the unequal, and the overall problems that humanity is facing, specially in the urban settings. In a time like this it feels appropriated to keep this conversation, this efforts in this path to a better society, to more just cities.

# CONCEPT BREAKDOWN

## STAKEHOLDERS

Human Rights Office  
Planning National and Local Office  
Research Institutes  
Universities  
Public Space Offices  
Public and Private Urban Offices  
Sustainability and Resiliency NGO's  
Urbanist Association  
Minority groups NGO's  
Citizens  
Sustainability Leaders  
International Organizations  
Consultancy Offices  
Other relevant stakeholders

## POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

Urban Strategies  
Urban Policies  
Calls for Action  
Design Guide  
Just City Agenda  
Assessment

## PARAMETERS

Long time change  
Short time change  
Urban scale  
Local scale  
High level impact  
Low level impact  
Theoretical  
Practical

**The  
Just  
City**

Pedestrian streets  
Bike infrastructure  
Street infrastructure  
Parks  
Squares  
Gathering areas  
Pocket parks  
Multifunction areas  
Shared spaces  
Pavement  
Light  
Urban furniture  
Weather shelter  
Pavilions

## URBAN/BUILDING ELEMENTS

# DELIMITATIONS DIAGRAM

WILL BE PART OF THIS THESIS

WILL NOT BE PART OF THIS THESIS



# METHODOLOGY

## INDUCTION

Understanding a phenomenon from a local or social perspective, through observation and interviews. The information you obtain is usually a deeper understanding of certain nuances of a phenomenon (Kalpokaite, 2017)

## QUALITATIVE SPHERE

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005)

### Interviews (Semi-structured)

To obtain information about current strategies and discuss the important topics with the relevant\* stakeholders.

### Observation

To obtain information in a more natural way, appealing to pure broad perceptions and compare with the data obtained through the interviews.

### Stakeholder Mapping

To identify the relevant stakeholders on public space strategies in Mexico City.

## QUANTITATIVE SPHERE

Quantitative research, is defined as a the systematic investigation of phenomena by gathering quantifiable data and performing statistical, mathematical or computational techniques. (Adi Bhat, 2008)

### Mapping and Statistics

To identify the relevant stakeholders on public space strategies in Mexico City.

# METHODOLOGY



**Idea definition**



Concept breakdown



Context Mapping



**Concept consolidation**



Stakeholder involvement method formulation



**Mexico City study trip**



**Midterm**



Map and design



**Final product development**



Shaping and detailing



**Final seminar**



**Open seminar**

Place for the Unknown or the Unexpected



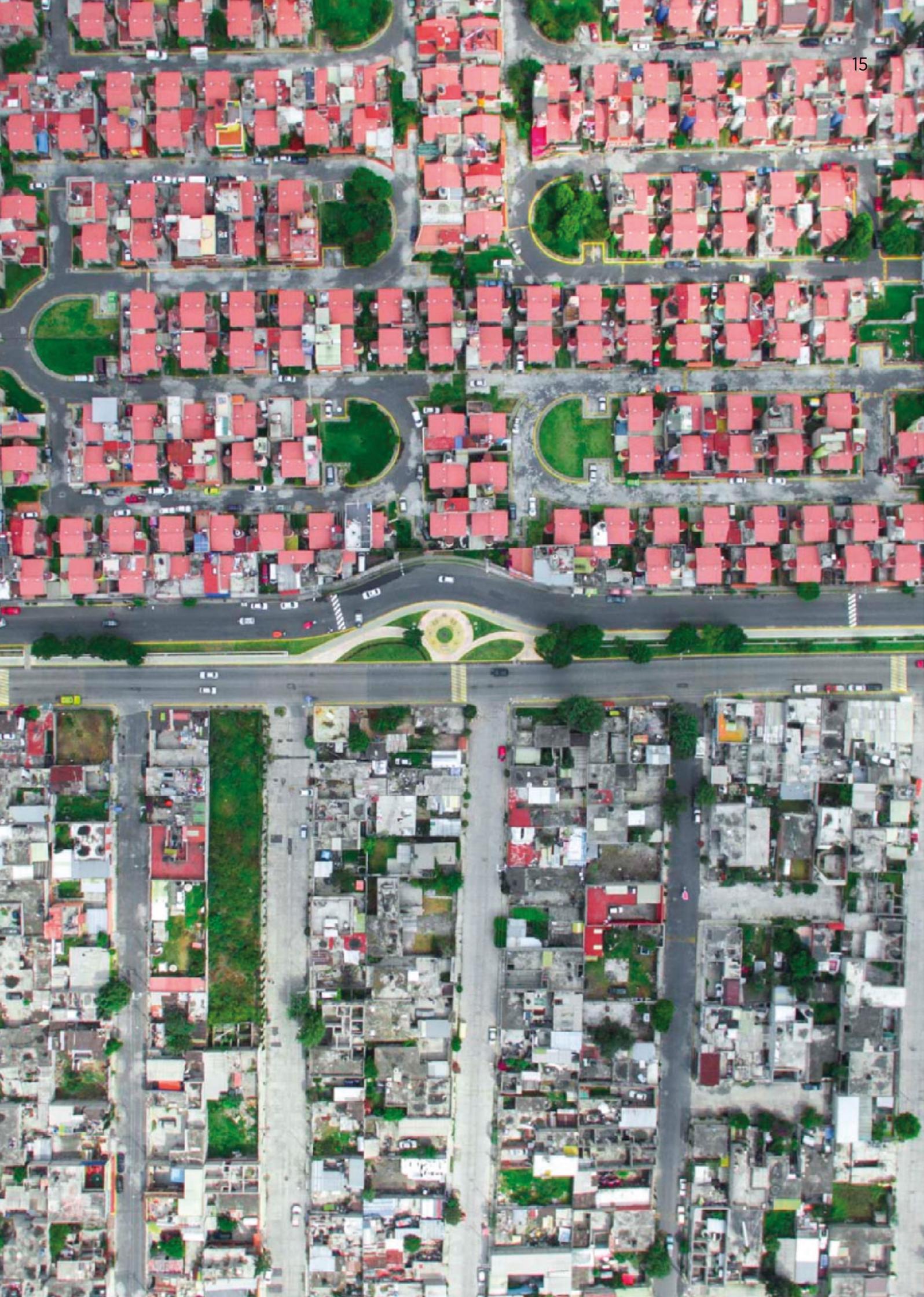
# DEAR READER

“Being human is itself difficult, and therefore all kinds of settlements (except dream cities) have problems. Big cities have difficulties in abundance, because they have people in abundance.” (Jacobs, 1961)

This thesis is about people, groups of human beings, and their relation with public space in cities, more specifically Mexico City. This is an introduction to how the next pages will develop as a method to build this document:

1. A public space will be selected, introduced to the reader, described and analyzed through first notions of justice. Questions will be raised, but don't expect to understand everything in this step.
2. The Just City research will be introduced, explained and will be connected with the Mistra Urban Futures centre work in order to show the applicability of the theory.
3. The term “justice” and the interpretations around such concept will be played and displayed in this chapter.
4. We will go back to the selected space, the “SS”. A reflection about what a public space under the Just City concept could mean is to be expected and an analysis of the physical features.
5. At this point we will reach Mexico City and the importance of the local context. A deeper look into the specific context of the SS will also be part of the chapter.
6. People's voice and views about justice in the local context.
7. People deciding for other people: interviews with stakeholders around public space making in Mexico City, the problems, the benefits and the opportunities.
8. Designing for justice. An exploration of design on the SS, the start of a proposal of improvement and the reasons behind it.
9. Reflecting on results and composing a way of approaching just cities by designing just public spaces.

Along this project there will be questions raised, some of them will be answered but hopefully there will be others that will bring the need of more research, of more design, of more trying to achieve just cities.





## IMPORTANT

The following pages contain colors in different intensities that you might feel uncomfortable with, especially if you're a black and white oriented person. After a few pages you might find yourself wondering: why so much color?

This project will be working with a public space located in Mexico, which is also the author of this thesis' country of origin. As a tribute to Mexico and its diversity in color in landscapes, culture and architecture, some of this joy will be used along the pages to come.

Here is a taste of Mexico



Nevertheless, the color that will be preferred in this document is one that has Mexico even on its name, the "rosa mexicano" or mexican pink will be the protagonist of this work, as a tribute to not only Mexico but Luis Barragán, one of Mexico's grandest architects and a personal inspiration.

This is "rosa mexicano"





# THE SS

## (AKA DEPORTIVO DURANGO)

Although the topic will be discussed and developed later in this thesis, it is important to state from this very first lines that public space has a very relevant connection with justice in cities, not only the amount but the quality, the responsiveness, the accessibility, the distribution and so many more features, for this reason it is relevant the selection of a specific public space in Mexico City, the context, to understand how “realising just cities” could use public space design as a weapon against injustice.

It is for practical purposes the choice of having The SS as well, to build the research around it, to look at the place and formulate the questions and find the answers along the process. Theoretical questions will be risen, design and practical questions as well, context will need research of its own at the same time. Deportivo Durango, as it is called now as in 2019, will be the subject for experimentation.

### DEPORTIVO DURANGO

The SS is a 9,000 sq.m. area that used to be a park and in 2016 was turned mainly into a sports center, located in a low income neighborhood.



← This is Deportivo Durango

Why this place?

The reasons will be linked with the overall development of this thesis, so a few statements in this paragraph might sound “unsustained” or “unexplored” for now. The reasons to select this specific area will be stated starting from a wide perspective down to a and local perspective.

Mexico (1) is the selected country due to the lack of research around “the just city” in the latinamerican context and more specifically due to being the country of origin from the author, giving previous knowledge about the situation. Mexico City (2) is the chosen city due to its interesting complexity and also previous knowledge from the author, having lived around 25 years there. Coyoacan (3) district was chosen due to high inequality among its neighborhoods. The neighborhood cluster (4) is a low income area in Coyoacan densely populated with almost no public spaces and green areas. Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (5) is the central neighborhood.

Deportivo Durango (6) is one of the few public spaces in the area.

1



2



3



4



5



6



This is Deportivo Durango

## THE ROLE AND THE CONTEXT

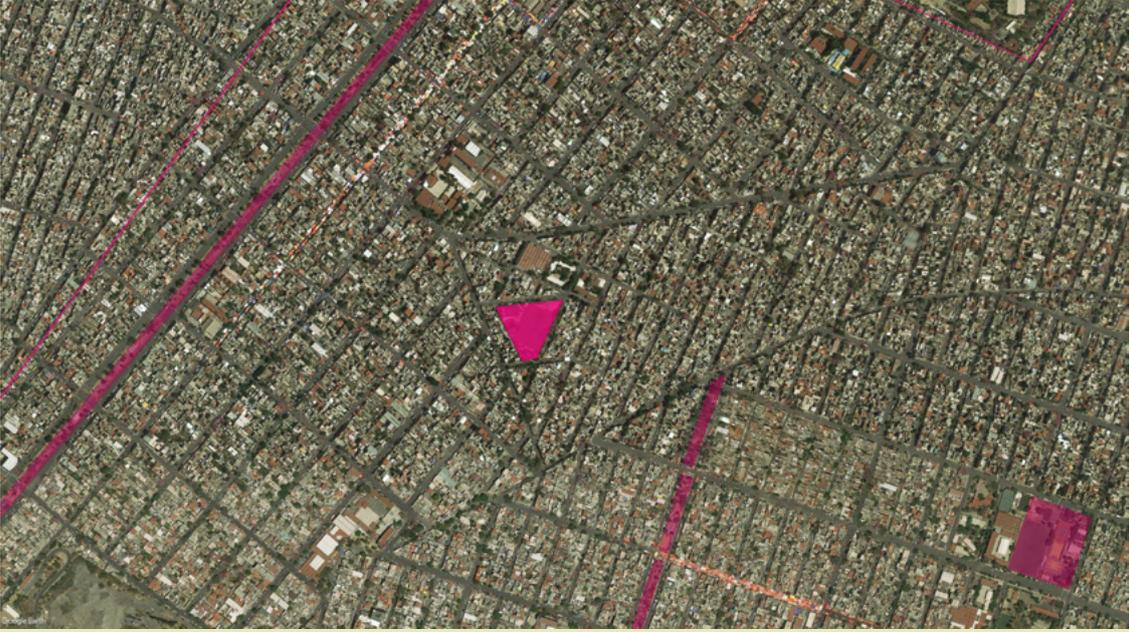
Deportivo Durango is one of the biggest public spaces available with 9,000 sq. m. in a densely populated area with a lack of green areas, accessible sidewalks, and public spaces overall. Ajusco, Adolfo Ruíz Cortínez, Huayamilpa and Pedregal de Santa Úrula neighborhoods altogether have a combined area of 4,505,000 sq.m., of which only 108,500 sq.m. (2.4%) is used for parks and squares, with poor and small sidewalks, most area is given to cars and private property. The World Health Organization recommends 16 sq.m. of green areas per inhabitant, which would mean a total area of 1,566,448 sq.m. for the 97,903 (SIDESO, 2010) residents of these neighborhoods; the 108,500 sq.m. fall short by far.



Public spaces and main green areas (in color) inside the neighborhood cluster

Deportivo Durango has historically been a public space, a place of gathering and recreation. Due to being located in an area with high crime levels and drug consumption among the youth, the space was subjected to “improvement works” in 2016, where an indoors pool, toilets, a soccer field with synthetic grass, a playground and gym equipment, all surrounded by a wall and a gate for one entrance with security.

At this moment it is relevant to take a dive in the theory behind “the just city”, to be able to understand how the theory relates with this specific area. Are a wall and gate promoting justice? Maybe, or maybe not.

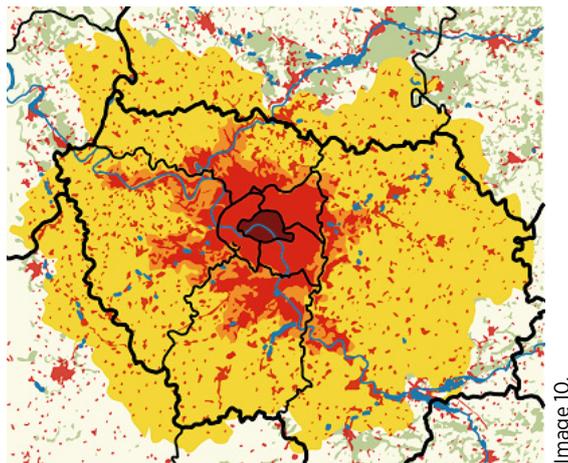


# THE JUST CITY

“When applying justice to an urban condition, different local interpretations of the concept will surface with different desired objectives for its realisation” (Palmer, 2016)

Henrietta Palmer here gives us a heads up about the conflictive and complex nature of addressing a topic like this: when there is room for interpretation, there is room for conflict; and although there will be no quoting here about this, that’s the stand from where this book departs.

But first probably is also important to define not only the “just” part, but also the “city” part. What is a city? It might sound like a simple question, however, it is not. If you look in a dictionary you will find the following definitions (among many others): “an inhabited place of greater size, population, or importance than a town or village” (Merriam-Webster), “any town in the UK that has a cathedral” (Cambridge), or “A large town” (Oxford Dictionary). From these definitions you could bring questions like: is a town the same in a chinese or a jamaican context, with probably any chinese “town” being bigger than most cities in Jamaica?; How is a cathedral and a church diferent?; Is a city just a large town?; and a never ending list of questions. When it comes to measuring a city’s statistics, is a city only its core, or can the built continuous sprawl be considered for this purpose, or can it be the metropolitan area?



Paris. Surrounding it you have the larger built up area (red), the official urban area (orange) and the metropolitan area (yellow).

Cities have other definitions, which have a deeper and more complex approach, more suitable for the purpose of this thesis, such as: “Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.” (Calvino, 1972). Jane Jacobs (1961) argues “[Cities] are not like suburbs, only denser. They differ from towns and

suburbs in basic ways, and one of these is that cities are, by definition, full of strangers.”

All the previous, as complex and intricated as it might look, has been written as an introduction to the complexity ahead of us, to make visible the importance of understanding cities and the phenomena within them. To establish a definition of a city is not the intention here, however, what has to be clear is that a city’s population, within both broader or narrower definitions, will be considered “urban population” in this document.

We’re living at times when the impact of cities is being recognized and prioritized in most sustainability agendas, the New Urban Agenda (2017), writes that “we have reached a critical point in understanding that cities can be the source of solutions to, rather than the cause of, the challenges that our world is facing today”. It is expected that the global urban population will grow up to 68% of the total population, being for job opportunities, for climate change, for political or humanitarian conflict reasons, among many others, what is a fact is that more people is going to come together, the previously unknown will become home of millions all around the world, more people will turn themselves into these “strangers” that Jacobs describe.

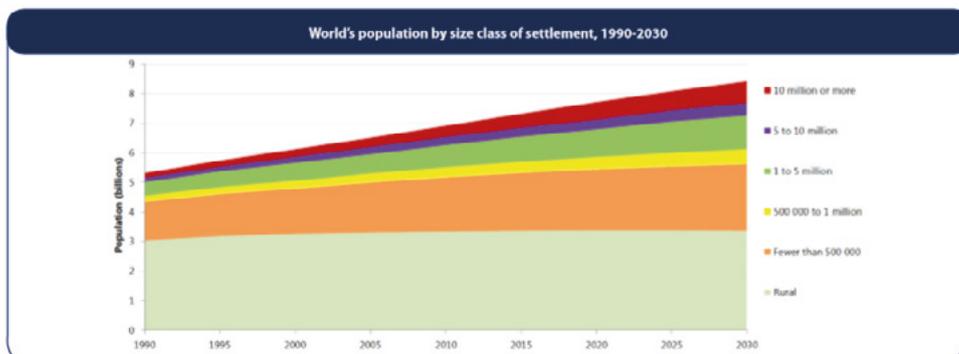


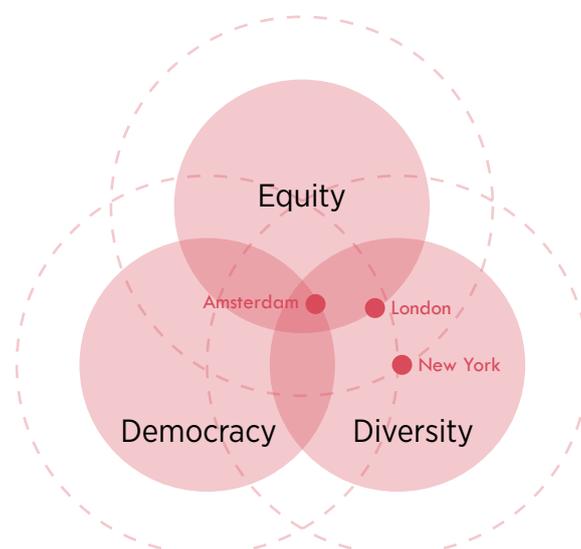
Image 11.

Urban population, depending on the reasons why they in first place moved to an urban context, will find itself in the search of the basic city right: a housing unit. In several cases, specially in low resources conditions or high vulnerability, people will end up in informal settlements in peripheral areas or underdeveloped areas throughout the city, which might compromise the person’s development. Underdeveloped and segregated communities within urban settlements have it difficult in many ways, but particularly through representation with the highest powers in the city they inhabit, which most of the times tend to ignore or underestimate the needs of these communities, giving them the status of second-class citizens. “Such uneven development creates a new social tension between different communities and authorities” (Palmer and Walasek, 2016). And here is when the Just City conversation gains relevance.

Susan Fainstein (2010) defines the just city as “a city in which public investment regulation would produce equitable outcomes rather than support those already well-off.” When talking about a global trend of urbanisation, of people moving to cities searching for improvement for their quality of life, it is important that cities are provide and look after them, after all what makes a city thrive if not the energy and quality of its citizens? And for this it is important that cities have a just approach in delivering for its people, promoting equal oportunities.

Traditionally, authorities, chosen or imposed, have made the decisions that have shaped the cities that we live on. These decisions have been influenced by several different reasons depending on the context, being historical, cultural, economical, social or environmental situations (or even aspirations) the main factors involved in creating the plans that have developed the urban environment. Segregation and inequality, which are part of the injustice sphere, are the result of the lack of vision and/or the lack of concern towards the lower social strata that inhabits any given city. In modern times, economy is what drives urban development in most parts of the world: profit-based development. But when people doesn't equal profit they are often left behind.

There are several bits in which the Just City can be split, concepts that give meaning to the theory, such as people give meaning to cities. The Just City involves the following and more: social justice, environmental justice, spatial justice, distibutive justice, the distribution and recognition dilemma, the right to appropriation and the right to participate. All of these have been developed by several authors, and some have even created a way to assess how just a city is or not. Taking Susan Fainstein as the main reference, it's clearly important to mention her approach to this through the democracy, equity and diversity pillars:



Fainstein's evaluation of New York, London and Amsterdam

According to this diagram, New York ranks good in diversity, however it barely touches the equity and the democracy spheres; London ranks strong in diversity as well, low on equity and very poorly in democracy. Amsterdam is Fainstein’s ideal (or the closest) of the Just City in the Global North, being strong in all pillars with a recent trend in equity to slightly decreasing, but ranking high anyway in comparison with anything else.

But what made Amsterdam rank so high in all three categories? Fainstein (2010) found that “Amsterdam’s development never faced pressure from economic forces which allowed the city to keep social approaches in planning.” This was the case in both New York and London, with competition for land development based on profit-making put in risk the social equal, democratic and diverse characteristics in the Just City development, New York through the Battery Park, Times Square and Yankee Stadium developments searched for profit to thrive, increasing land and real state value, producing wealthy bubbles and few benefitted users. London’s Canary Wharf development meant a similar situation. Amsterdam’s lack of a push for economy-based development due to the diversity of its economy allowed for more participation (democracy), more social housing (equity) and more even development looking for the benefit of the most rather than the few (diversity) gave it its Fainstein’s gold medal.



Image 13. New York.



Image 14. Amsterdam.

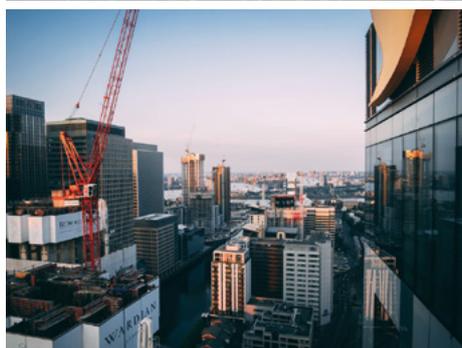
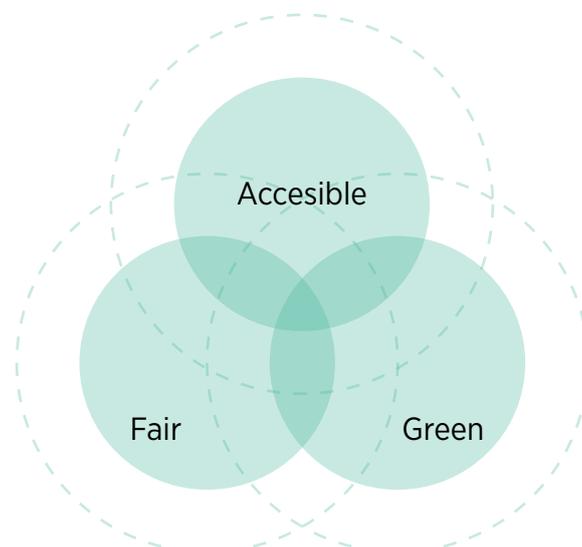


Image 15. London.

Mistra Urban Futures has developed its own approach to the just city, making green, fair and accesible their own three pillar concepts. Fairness “plays out in the intersection of welfare support, local management, institutional capacity, land control, public infrastructure, resources, distribution as well as macro-economics flows and geographical conditions” (Parnell in Simon, 2016); Green, according to Simon (2016) refers to resource conservation and utilization, consumption patterns, environmental degradation, public transport and pedestrianisation schemes; Accesible, on the other hand, means “the ability of people to reach goods or services as measured by their availability in terms of physical space, affordability and appropriateness. But accessibility also refers to the provision of services and facilities, job opportunities, education and housing, as well as the means of reaching them” as explained by James Waters in the same book of 2016, *Rethinking Sustainable Cities*.

MUF (Simon, 2016) see an interdependency of its pillars when they write that by “reading ‘accessibility’ as a relational activity, ‘green’ as a qualitative physical presence, and ‘fair’ as the unconditional value of a better world, we can escape any effort to balance the three, and rather see them as mutually defined and constituted.” MUF’s approach, then, take broader concepts as to evaluate a Just City and embraces the economical context by incorporating the economical boost, job creation and value increase that their parameters can improve as well, this without meaning that its their ultimate goal, but understanding that is something to consider in the complexity of achieving a more just city.



MUF concepts for a just city

## DEFINING THE JUST CITY

The closest to an existing definition of The Just City is written by Fainstein (2010) as: “a city in which public investment regulation would produce Equitable outcomes rather than support those already well-off.” This is, however, to the eyes of the author of this thesis, not meant to be used as a dictionary definition but rather a part of it. Mistra Urban Futures does not add or create an own definition.

Although there might or not exist a definition of what a just city is, a personal definition will be established and will be used along this document, to take a stand and play with and around it. This definition might be challenged through the process and in the conclusions of this thesis work.

There are concepts used in the creation and use of the theory: on the Fainstein side we have Equality, Democracy and Diversity; on the MUF side we have Green, Fair and Accesible. Could a definition be found in a relation between these six concepts and their goals?

DEMOCRACY	EQUITY	DIVERSITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen participation</li> <li>• Distribution of decisional power</li> <li>• Distribution of benefits</li> <li>• Equal opportunity</li> <li>• Open communication</li> <li>• Recognition of groups</li> <li>• Consultation for affected areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing for everyone</li> <li>• Affordable housing</li> <li>• Availability of public services and facilities for all neighborhoods</li> <li>• Favour local business</li> <li>• No unfair relocation</li> <li>• No benefitting those already well-off</li> <li>• Public transport reaching the poor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid segregation</li> <li>• Zoning used for inclusion</li> <li>• Porous boundaries among districts</li> <li>• Accessible and varied public space</li> <li>• Mixed land uses</li> <li>• Assist the discriminated</li> <li>• Physical environment and social relations</li> <li>• Recognition</li> </ul>
GREEN	FAIR	ACCESSIBLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource conservation and proper utilization</li> <li>• Promote good consumption patterns</li> <li>• Take care of environmental degradation</li> <li>• Promote public transport utilization</li> <li>• Support pedestrianisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welfare support</li> <li>• Local management of resources</li> <li>• Institutional capacity</li> <li>• Land control</li> <li>• Provide public infrastructure por everyone</li> <li>• Distribution</li> <li>• Economic flows and geographical conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability of people to reach goods or services</li> <li>• Physical space</li> <li>• Affordability</li> <li>• Right to appropriation</li> <li>• Provision of services and facilities</li> <li>• Access to job opportunities, housing and education</li> <li>• Adequate infrastructure for access</li> </ul>

From the creation of this table some of the main ideas of each concept are extracted and can be compared and put together. As the main goal of this thesis is not the full development of a new Just City theory, which would require a much deeper analysis on many more existing research documents, the definition will be extracted from a personal perspective regarding the read literature. The definition will be as follows:

A just city is one that creates, promotes and allows equal opportunities for development for all of its citizens, benefitting no one above others, through policies, public space design and participation, recognizing the need of top-bottom and bottom-up approaches.



# WHAT IS JUSTICE?

A google images search with the word “justice” was made in different languages, the first result to come up is shown below.

Spanish	German	Arabic	Hebrew
English	Swedish	Russian	Indonesian
French	Chinese	Greek	Persian
Italian	Japanese	Finnish	Turkish





# WHAT WOULD A JUST SPACE BE?

Theories about the Just City have been developed and shaped to be used in policy-making proposals, assessment reports, surveys and other materials that have mostly been used for city scale approaches, sometimes even approaching the local scale and studying public spaces by a set of parameters; one example is the Public Life & Urban Justice in NYC's Plazas report, where Gehl Studio and J. Max Bond Center collaborated in 2015, where the authors elaborated a comprehensive evaluation about the NYC's Plazas program, setting parameters for assessing and giving advice on how to get the program to evolve and improve through the next years. To develop this research and evaluation the project used four different methods of data collection: Desktop Research, Observational Surveys, Intercept Surveys and Interviews with Plaza Managers; this provided with information. The criteria involved was a combination of JMBC and Gehl parameters, shown in the next page.



Area analysis and delimitation for surveys.

Image 32.

This approach has obtained an important amount of information, with a valuable data collection that they used for developing city-wide and program specific recommendations, however, as in many cases, the information created stays up at the highest level with little use in how to improve a specific site by its own characteristics and metrics; how design can promote or improve justice in a given place.

The lack of information or probably the lack of stand in saying or writing about how design, in the more site-specific scale, can promote a just space. And this point is what makes the author take a stand (and its risk) in developing, based on the analyzed work from different authors, an

# JMBC Urban Justice Indicators

**For the purpose of evaluating urban justice and the public realm, JMBC has selected the following values for this indicator framework tool**

1. **Equity.** Designing for equity in the public realm examines how the plaza increases the overall amount of accessible open space for the neighborhood and if its costs and operating budgets are structured on par with other plazas in the city

2. **Ownership.** Designing for ownership measures how the plaza promotes one's belief that the space belongs to their neighborhood and an individual sense of stewardship for the plaza's activities and upkeep.

3. **Choice.** Designing for choice examines whether users and the community have multiple options and flexibility for what they do in the plaza and how they configure the plaza for different activities.

4. **Access.** Designing for access measures whether the plaza can be easily and safely entered without physical obstruction or restrictive regulation, how people get there, and if access to amenities changed or increased.

5. **Connectivity.** Designing for connectivity measures if the plaza is sufficiently connected to varied modes of transportation and amenities. It also measures whether the plaza users feel connected to one another, forming exchanges and/or relationships between one another

6. **Diversity.** Designing for diversity measures whether the plaza offers a range of activities and program options that reflect the cultures of its neighborhood and/or users. It also measures whether the plaza attracts a diverse population of users.

7. **Participation.** Designing for participation examines how people use the plaza and frequency of use. It examines whether area residents are engaged in the plaza's design, programming, management and upkeep.

8. **Inclusion and Belonging.** Designing for inclusion & belonging looks at how the plaza improves one's sense of being accepted regardless of difference, and a feeling of safety

9. **Beauty.** Designing for beauty measures whether the plaza elevates the physical aesthetics of the neighborhood.

10. **Creative innovation.** Designing for creative innovation examines whether the plaza deploys unique and creative solutions to address the deficit of active open space in the neighborhood.

11. **Health and Wellness.** Designing for Health and Wellness measures if the plaza provides active and passive outdoor activities that help improve human health conditions.

# Gehl Public Life, Public Space Indicators

**The following are the metrics Gehl has used to study the relationship between life and form in public space.**

## Public Life

- Age
  - Children
  - Adults
  - Seniors
- Gender
  - Men
  - Women
- Movement
  - Pedestrians
  - Cyclists

## Public Space

- Activity
  - Stationary (sitting, standing)
  - Active (exercising, playing)
- Physical Conditions
  - Barriers to walking or cycling (i.e. obstacles on sidewalks)
  - Distribution of space (how wide are the sidewalks? The streets? Are there bus lanes or cycle tracks?)

## Quality of the Design

- Protection, Comfort and Delight
  - How is the space protected from traffic, crime or unpleasant sensory experiences?
  - How comfortable is it in terms of being able to hear, talk and see?
  - How much opportunity exists for delight and joy?

approach in defining a strategy for evaluating public space strategies and projects and to promote it by design features.

### WHAT COULD DEFINE A SPACE AS A JUST SPACE?

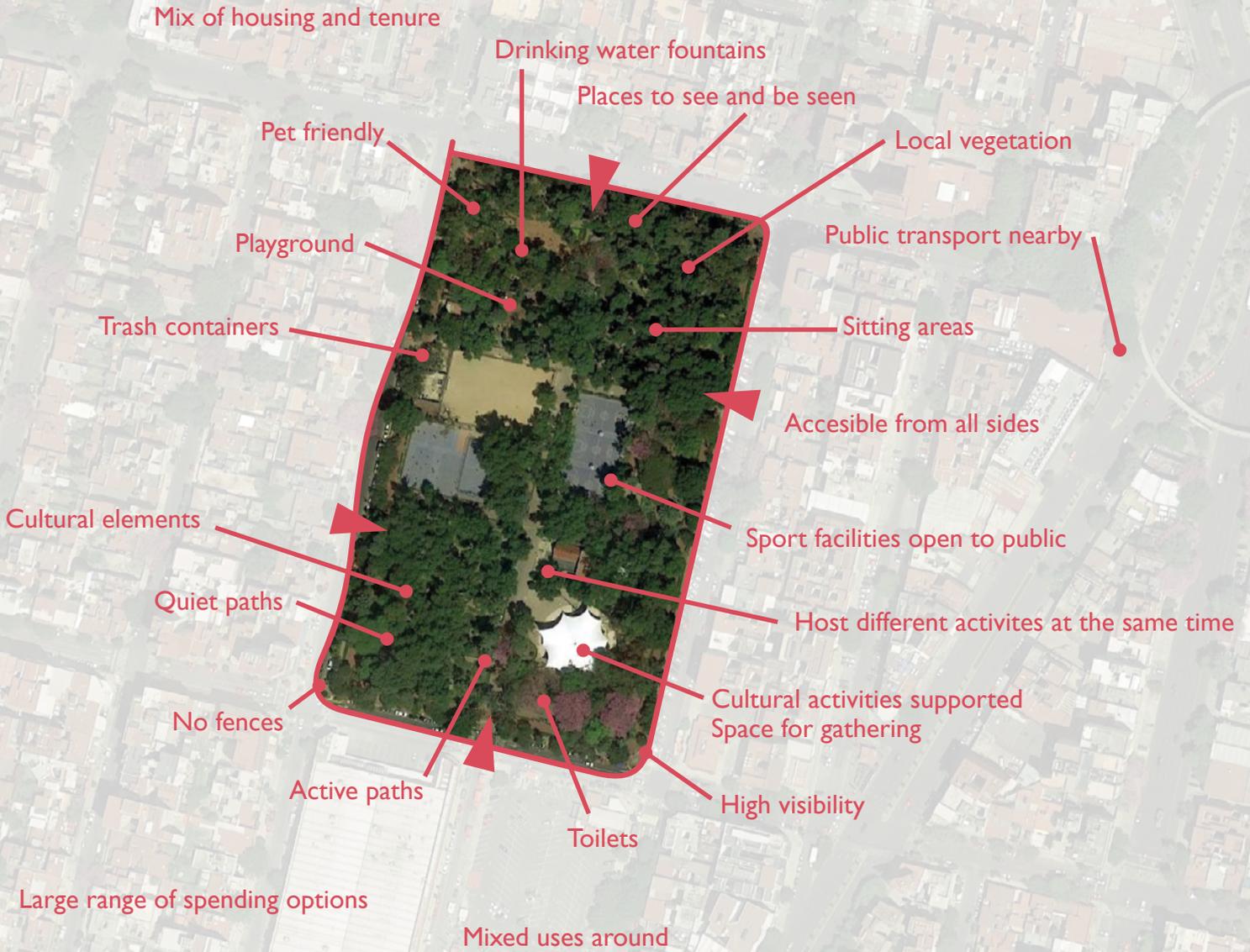
If a similar approach is taken in how to try to understand the possible features that could build a just space as in creating a just city, it is then important to set a series of fundamental concepts, or as described before, the pillars. In starting this approach it is probably best to start by analyzing the theory from the previous section: democracy, equity and diversity (Fainstein), and green, fair and accesible (MUF).

DEMOCRACY	EQUITY	DIVERSITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen participation</li> <li>• Distribution of decisional power</li> <li>• Distribution of benefits</li> <li>• Equal opportunity</li> <li>• Open communication</li> <li>• Recognition of groups</li> <li>• Consultation for affected areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing for everyone</li> <li>• Affordable housing</li> <li>• Availability of public services and facilities for all neighborhoods</li> <li>• Favour local business</li> <li>• No unfair relocation</li> <li>• No benefitting those already well-off</li> <li>• Public transport reaching the poor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid segregation</li> <li>• Zoning used for inclusion</li> <li>• Porous boundaries among districts</li> <li>• Accessible and varied public space</li> <li>• Mixed land uses</li> <li>• Assist the discriminated</li> <li>• Physical environment and social relations</li> <li>• Recognition</li> </ul>
GREEN	FAIR	ACCESSIBLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource conservation and proper utilization</li> <li>• Promote good consumption patterns</li> <li>• Take care of environmental degradation</li> <li>• Promote public transport utilization</li> <li>• Support pedestrianisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welfare support</li> <li>• Local management of resources</li> <li>• Institutional capacity</li> <li>• Land control</li> <li>• Provide public infrastructure por everyone</li> <li>• Distribution</li> <li>• Economic flows and geographical conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability of people to reach goods or services</li> <li>• Physical space</li> <li>• Affordability</li> <li>• Right to appropriation</li> <li>• Provision of services and facilities</li> <li>• Access to job opportunities, housing and education</li> <li>• Adequate infrastructure for access</li> </ul>

All these six groups would define the broad spectrum of what the Just City implies and might be supportive one to the other, taking both Fainstein’s and MUF’s approaches, ranging from policies, design-related solutions, society and economical concerns and many others. The next step will be to translate these into design elements.

For the following, specific public spaces in Mexico City will be analyzed by the author’s previous knowledge with such places, dissecting the design elements found in the park “Parque Arboledas”, the square “Plaza San Jacinto” and the area “Las Islas”, all highly succesful and beloved areas among the locals, to find if this success can relate to just city aspects or not, and understand possible potentials or underlying injustices from this specific site. These design elements will then try to be matched in the six categories for a just city (just space): democracy, equity, diversity, green, fair and accesible.

# PARQUE ARBOLEDAS CDMX



# PLAZA SAN JACINTO CDMX

- 
- Mix of tenure
  - Places to see and be seen
  - Connected with other public spaces
  - Local vegetation
  - Sitting areas
  - Host weekend community activities
  - Space for gathering
  - Trash containers
  - Cultural elements
  - Accessible from all sides
  - Public transport nearby
  - Quiet paths
  - Active paths
  - High visibility
  - Mixed uses around
  - Large range of spending options

# LAS ISLAS CDMX



The elements identified in the Arboledas park, San Jacinto square and Las Islas space are sorted in the following way:

### Parque Arboledas

DEMOCRACY	EQUITY	DIVERSITY
Cultural activities/demonstration Pet friendly Host different activities Community activities Gathering areas	Mix of housing in the area Drinking water fountains Host different activities Public transport nearby Toilets	Mixed uses around Cultural activities Sport facilities Pet friendly Large expense range
GREEN	FAIR	ACCESSIBLE
Sport facilities Local vegetation Green areas Trash containers Public transport nearby	Playground Sports facilities Host different activities Large expense range	Access from all sides Sitting areas Quiet paths Active paths High visibility No fences

### Plaza San Jacinto

DEMOCRACY	EQUITY	DIVERSITY
Cultural activities/demonstration Host different activities Weekend community activities Gathering areas	Mix of housing in the area Host different activities Public transport nearby	Mixed uses around Cultural activities Middle expense range
GREEN	FAIR	ACCESSIBLE
Local vegetation Green areas Trash containers Public transport nearby	Host different activities Middle expense range	Access from all sides Sitting areas Quiet paths Active paths High visibility No fences Connected to other public spaces

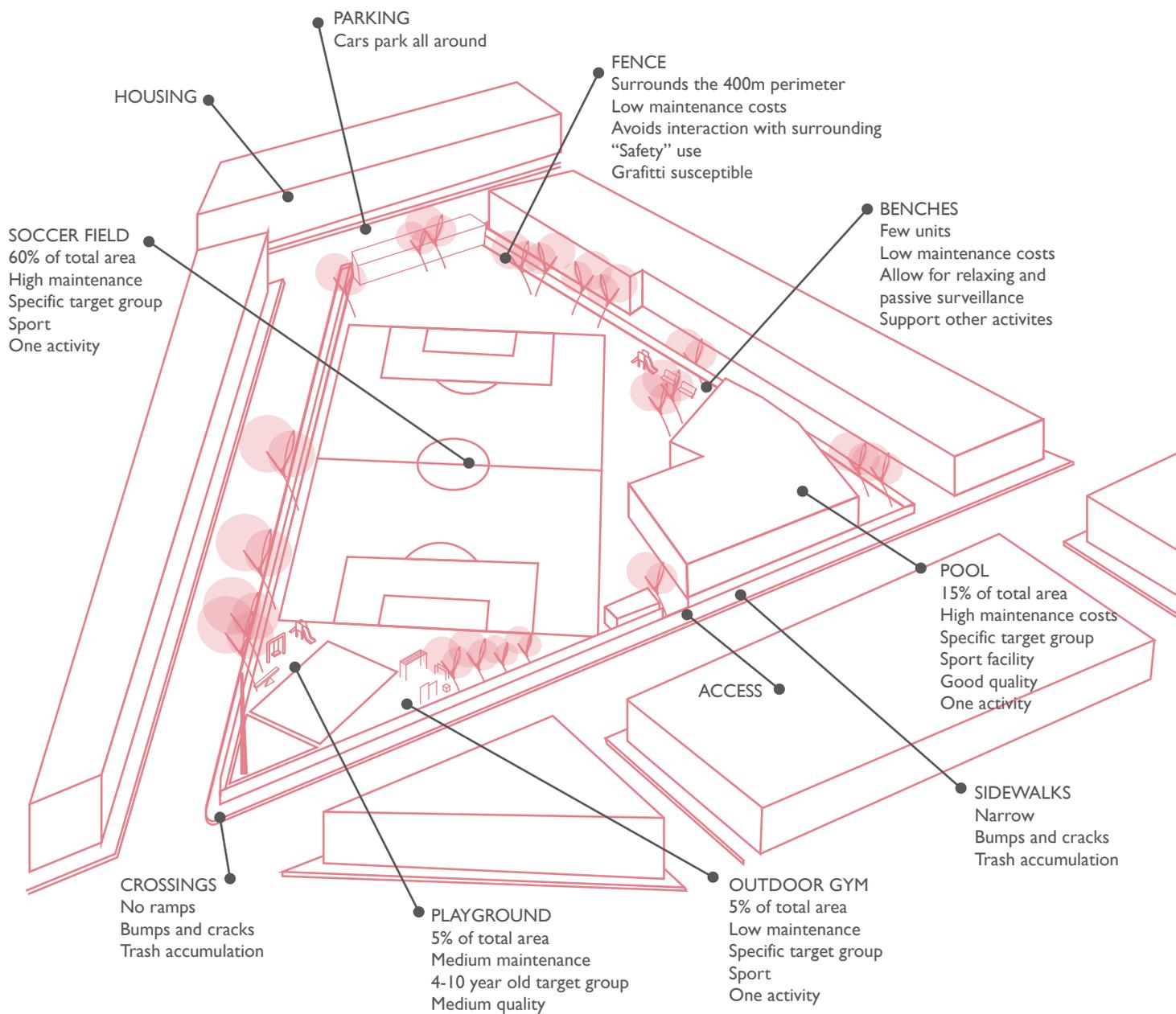
### Las Islas

DEMOCRACY	EQUITY	DIVERSITY
Cultural activities/demonstration Pet friendly Host different activities Community activities Gathering areas	Host different activities Public transport nearby	Cultural activities Sport facilities Pet friendly Non-commercial oriented
GREEN	FAIR	ACCESSIBLE
Local vegetation Green areas Trash containers Bike infrastructure Public transport nearby	Host different activities Non-commercial oriented	Access from all sides Sitting areas Quiet paths Active paths High visibility No fences Bike path

The classification of design elements provide a general view of how such features can promote certain justice characteristics to a given place, however, this is just a first look based on the author's criteria.

These categories will now be used to have a look into The SS and see the elements that it has, creating a new table.

### The SS: Deportivo Durango



DEMOCRACY	EQUITY	DIVERSITY
Little variety of uses Small gathering areas Little involvement from community in design Community participation kiosk	Attracts one main group Only local transport nearby Good quality equipment	Sport facilities Playground No mix of uses Homogeneous inhabitants
GREEN	FAIR	ACCESSIBLE
Few green areas Trash containers Only local transport nearby Solar panels	No mix of uses One group dominates Operates during certain hours	Gated One entrance Few sitting areas Football field as barrier Narrow sidewalks w/o ramps Ramp in entrance and pool
Just features / Injust features		



1



2



3



4



6



7



5



8



9



11



10



12



13



The park has a strong emphasis on barriers through the shapes of a perimeter wall, a controlled access, many different fences, even around the trees. The football field acts as a barrier itself since when there is a match it's not possible to access the playground and outdoor gym equipment.

Barriers, barriers, barriers.

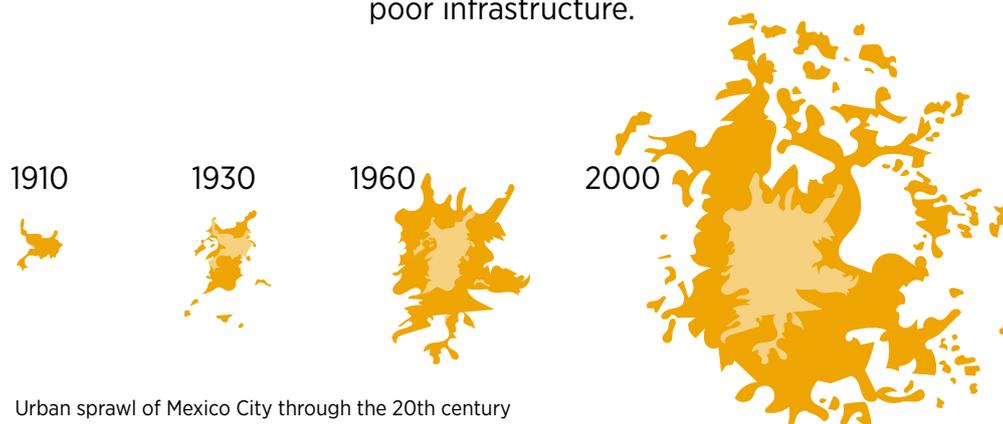
Promoting a fake feeling of safety.

# CONTEXTUALIZATION: MEXICO CITY

México-Tenochtitlan is thought to be founded in 1325. Its foundation is not too simple to explain, it was not the story of a place with a great and old tradition of human settlements, it didn't have any geographical feature such as a particular abundance of resources that would make it logical to stay there; Mexico City's grandfather was born and raised in a land that was chosen due to people ideology: their god Huitzilopochtli ("blue hummingbird to the left" in nahuatl), although they were already settled in Aztlan, sent them to find an eagle standing on a cactus in the middle of a lake while devouring a snake. The city was indeed founded in the middle of a lake (Texcoco lake) in a muddy island, and the city started to claim land from the lake as the empire expanded.

Almost 200 years later, spaniards arrived and conquered a city which is believed to have been the most populated "urban settlement" in the world at that very moment, the first quarter of the 16th century, with about 300,000 inhabitants. New Spain was born (today's Mexico and some parts of the U.S. south and southwest areas) and Ciudad de México would be the new name of México-Tenochtitlan. Back then, religious beliefs shaped the city as well by destroying the ancient temples and building catholic churches on top of them. Urbanisation occurred in the next years, slowly claiming more land from the lake. This would keep happening throughout the upcoming centuries.

Mexico's independence in 1821 and during the 19th and first half of the 20th century would see Mexico City grow rather slowly in population but quickly in importance as the heart of the country: businesses, commerce, education and technology would mostly flourish here before any other place in the country, and therefore it became an attractive place to live, specially during the second half of the 20th century, when, due to industry mainly, the city's population exploded from 3.1 million people in 1950 to 8.2 million inhabitants in 1990. Population influx in short time meant the growth of an uncontrolled city, which created wealthier areas in the most planned or contained zones and poor areas in the peripheries, with low or poor infrastructure.



Urban sprawl of Mexico City through the 20th century



# JUST SPACES IN MEXICO?

To define what a just space in Mexico, or actually anywhere, is, it is first needed to understand the forces behind the existing environment and the people around the development of the city: policy making and design in a given time and context. It is wrong to assume that injustices found in other cities, by the MUF research for instance, such as the Apartheid planning in Cape Town, where racial discrimination still affects the city nowadays, or the social inclusion -or exclusion- issues in Gothenburg, apply to a different city.

Justice in space can sometimes even be seen from above. Public spaces and green areas are often underrated and underestimated in their capacity to provide an enhance the surrounding population's life quality, it can be often seen as a potential place for criminality, homelessness, waste disposal and as a place that generate more costs than benefits, for this reason it is common to have "poor" areas with little to no public space and green areas and, on the other hand, "rich" areas with plenty of these areas. To the right we can observe satellite images from two different neighborhoods in the same city district, can you guess which one hosts a wealthier population than the other?

The lack of public spaces, and more importantly, quality public spaces in underdeveloped neighborhoods is a case of injustice; where the city is not providing with these vital spaces for gathering, expressing, exercising, meeting, recreating and even breathing -especially when you're in one of the most polluted cities in the world- its is no surprise that life quality is lower, given that it is harder to build a community without community places.

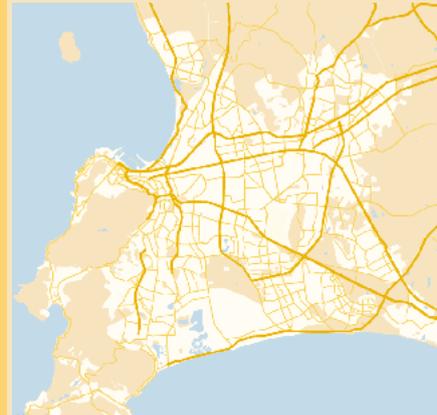
In all this conversation resides the importance of talking about not only spaces or public spaces, but just spaces, places that are designed with a justice mindset, where no community is less deserving of a quality public space that promotes and pushes for community making and social development, where a public space should be designed thinking in what is just for the inhabitants around it.

To continue with the exploration of the site and the influence behind who holds the authority and power in designing a public space, an exploration of relevant stakeholders in Mexico City is needed to understand the driving forces, the problems around justice and the ideas behind the decisions and possibilities in shaping public space in the city.

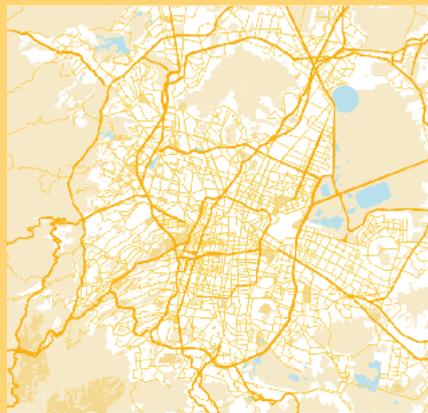
# MEXICO CITY: COMPARISON WITH OTHER MUF CITIES



Kisumu, Kenya  
City population: 550,000  
Metro population: 1,068,826  
City area: 417 km<sup>2</sup>  
Growth rate 2016: 2.8%



Cape Town, South Africa  
City population: 433,688  
Metro population: 4,005,015  
City area: 400.3 km<sup>2</sup>  
Growth rate 2019: 2.49%



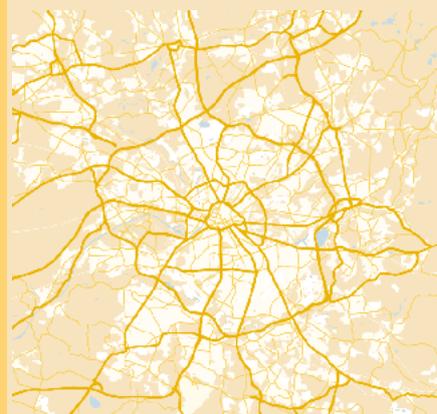
Mexico City, Mexico  
City population: 8,918,653  
Metro population: 21,200,000  
City area: 1,485 km<sup>2</sup>  
Growth rate 2015: 1.17%



Gothenburg, Sweden  
City population: 581,822  
Metro population: 1,015,974  
City area: 447 km<sup>2</sup>  
Growth rate 2016: 1.6%

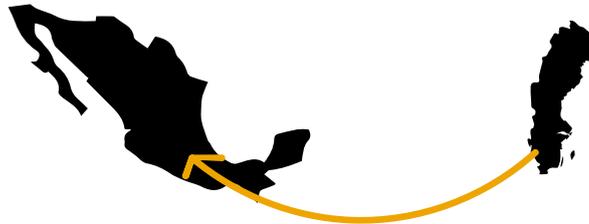


Malmö and Lund, Sweden  
Malmö  
City population: 312,012  
Metro population: 728,293  
Lund  
City population: 91,086  
Metro population: 121,510  
Malmö area: 76.81 km<sup>2</sup>  
Lund area: 25.75 km<sup>2</sup>  
Growth rate 2018: 1.56%



Manchester, UK  
City population: 545,500  
Metro population: 2,798,799  
City area: 115.6 km<sup>2</sup>  
Growth rate 2019: 0.72%

# MEXICO CITY: STUDY TRIP



Why is it important to go to Mexico City as part of the process, in an era of Google Maps, WhatsApp, Skype and several other tools for communication?

The reason is that I believe that in-person interactions have better possibilities for a conversation in opening the chance for relevant experiences-sharing, building trust, having more natural, spontaneous and honest reactions and answers about the discussed topics and breaking barriers: Mexico is still a culture of hierarchies and leaders are perceived as unaccessible to the common person, this activity may contribute to reinforce or to bring down such impression. The study trip to Mexico City provides also with the opportunity of observing the city through the specific lens of the Just City theories, which can provide with a different understanding of public spaces, even for a person who's lived in the city for many years.

Mistra Urban Futures's way of working in their Local Interaction Platforms in Kisumu, Cape Town, Manchester-Sheffield, Skåne and Gothenburg starts by identifying key actors located in every city, these will potentially become collaborators in different projects which have the aim of promoting urban justice. Such key actors are divided in four main categories: Government, Private Sector, Academia and Civil Society. The inclusion of all these categories is relevant in creating a more equal setting where it would be difficult to favour only one of them.

In Mexico City some possible key actors need to be identified to simulate the same kind of approach in understanding different points of view and approaches in city making and how justice is perceived in the local context. A force-field analysis (a diagram of situations, people or factors that promote or hinder the achievement of a certain situation), a list of relevant stakeholders and a categorization of them will be used to select some of them and send an invitation for a face to face interview. The interviews will help in a process of identifying the most important just city features, injustices, the role of the public space and how could it be designed to



# STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

Goal: Improve driving forces →

## Force-field Analysis

### DRIVING FORCES

Political agendas

Meet the city's visions

Sustainability trends

Urbanisation trends, need for planning

Human rights NGOs pushing for better life quality

Improve social justice

Giving more importance to public space design

Social movements

NGOs giving voice to minorities

Recognition about importance of public space

Collaborative practices in modern planning work

Desire for improvement knowledge about cities in global south

Universities as important influencers

Urban planners are seen as more important

Policies supporting involvement of individuals and institutions in supporting community

### RESTRAINING FORCES

Budget allocation

Uncertainty in results

Profit-based development

Lack of information about underdeveloped areas

Little interest in human rights in broader society

Differing definitions of justice and related terms

Lack of trust in institutions

Fear in empowering social uprisings

Minorities without representation

Public space planning based on profit maximization

Complexity in problem-solving

Low expertise and support for multi-stakeholder collaborative projects in the country

Disconnection between academia and political agendas

Planning authorities lack planning background

Low interest in general population about city-wide issues

No information about city-wide benefits

Polarisation between rich and poor areas

Projects seen as economically unviable

Collaborative projects seen as time consuming with no certainty about results

Lack of discussions about urban justice

# STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION



## Government Institutions

- 1 SEDATU - Secretaría de Desarrollo Agrario, Territorial y Urbano
- 2 SEMOVI - Secretaría de Movilidad de la Ciudad de México
- 3 SEDUVI - Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda
- 4 Gobierno de CDMX
- 5 Alcaldía de Coyoacán



## Consulting and Architecture/Planning Institutions

- 6 ITDP
- 7 100 Resilient Cities
- 8 UN HABITAT
- 9 WRI Mexico - World Resources Institute
- 10 World Urban Parks
- 11 Sordo Madaleno Arquitectos
- 12 Tatiana Bilbao



## Civil Societies and NGOs

- 13 Consultorio de Arquitectura Práctica
- 14 AMCPyJP - Asociación Mexicana de Calles, Parques y Jardines Públicos
- 15 ANPR - Asociación Nacional de Parques y Recreación
- 16 Lugares Públicos
- 17 CAMINA
- 18 Libre Acceso



## Academia and research

- 19 UNAM Arquitectura
- 20 UNAM Urbanismo
- 21 UNAM Ciencias Políticas
- 22 Universidad Iberoamericana



## Other citizens

- 23 Citizens

# STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

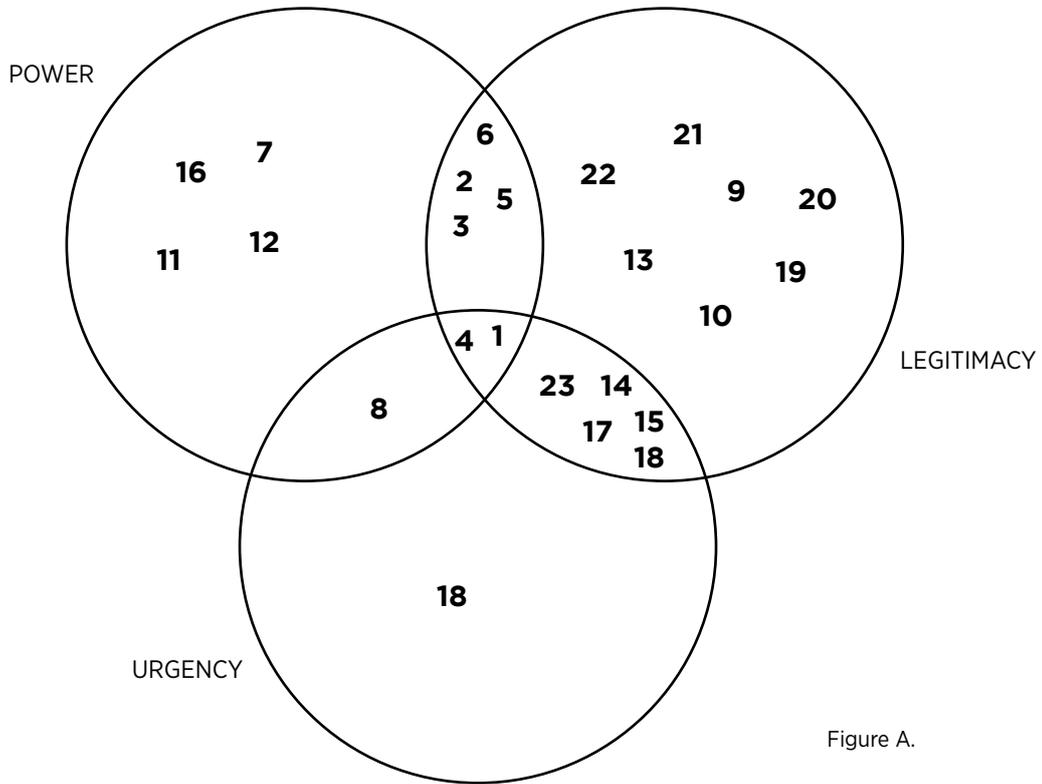


Figure A.

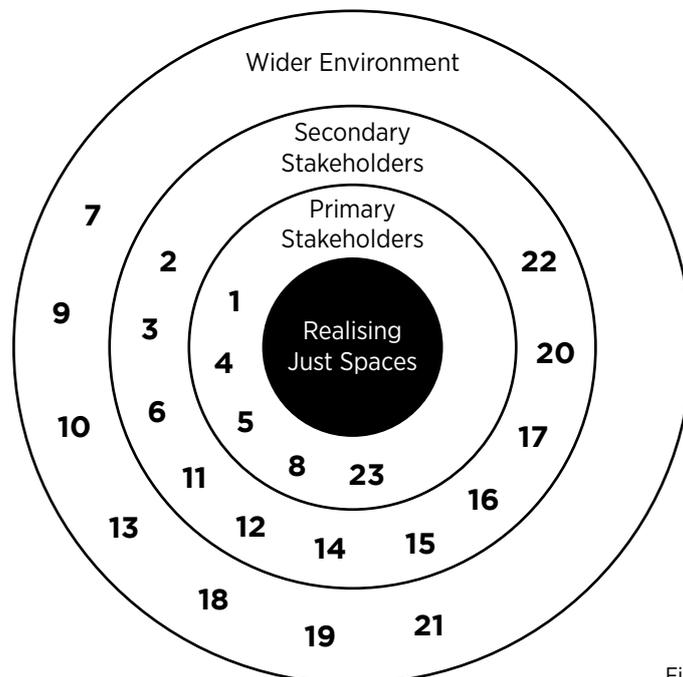


Figure B.

# STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

## Influence-Interest Matrix

	LOW INFLUENCE	HIGH INFLUENCE
LOW STAKE	Less priority SH group	<p>9 7 6 10</p> <p>11 Useful for decision and opinion formulating, brokering</p> <p>21 19</p>
HIGH STAKE	<p>12 23 13</p> <p>16 Important SH group, perhaps in need of empowerment</p> <p>17 14</p>	<p>17 22 8</p> <p>20 2 3</p> <p>5 15 Most critical SH group 4</p> <p>1</p>

Figure C.

These stakeholder identification diagrams helped the process in selecting the stakeholder who were reached through different media, being e-mail the most used, followed by facebook messenger, linkedin and whatsapp, depending on availability and possibility. The stakeholder regarded as little relevant for the process are not shown in the diagrams.

From every organization, director and coordinator positions were selected for communication, as decision-making ability, experience and possibility of influence were important aspects of interest for the process. The plan was to establish a communication channel in order to agree on a day, time and place for a meeting, in which an interview designed by this thesis' author, with the goal being obtaining personal and institutional perspectives about Mexico City, its public spaces and the political and design strategies for their creation, all in relation to The Just City.

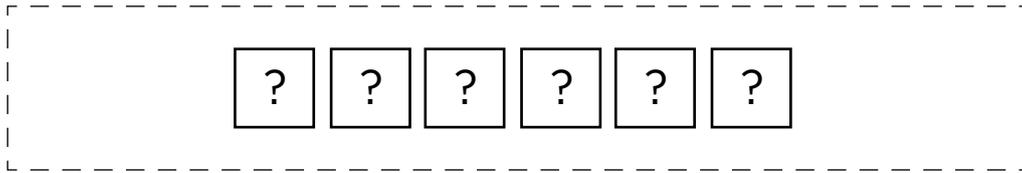
In the appendix 1 a sample of the sent email is shown, modifications were made however in order to tailor-make the e-mail depending on the recipient. The sent invitation for a group discussion is included too as appendix 2.

## THE PROCESS

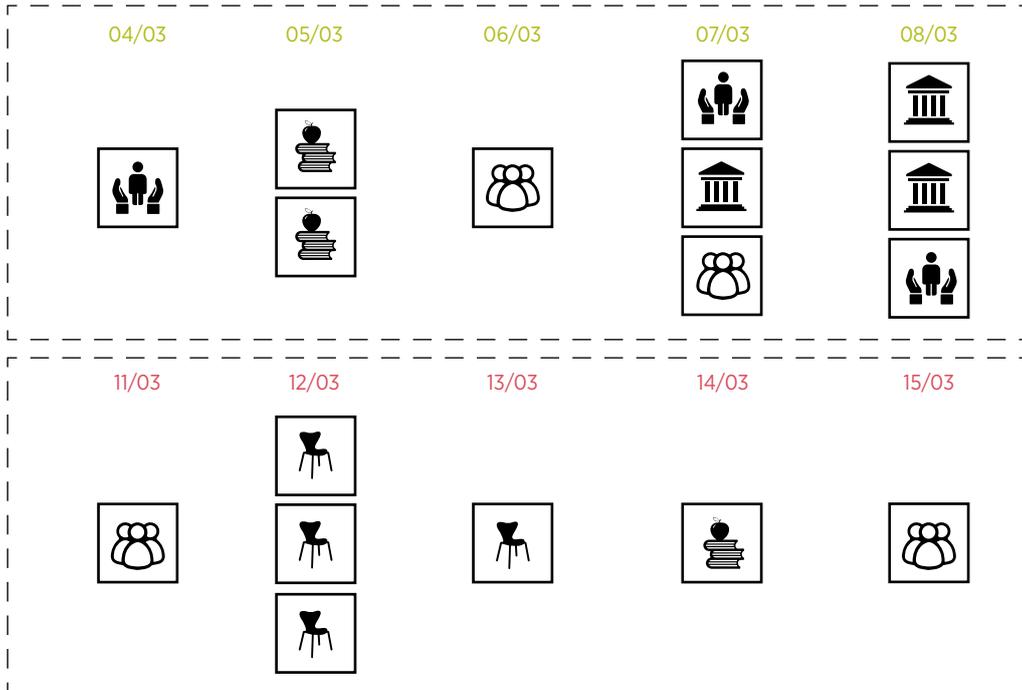
To obtain not only an institutional top-down point of view, a survey was also created and distributed in order to reach a wider and more “common” audience, in order to get perspectives from not only decision makers, architects, urban planners and justice or public space related people, but also different backgrounds.

People participation is paramount in the development of such concept of justice, as it is probably not understood in the same way by everyone. This section will open for new possibilities that can be later translated into the consolidation (altogether with the theory and own reflections) of a Just Spaces theory.

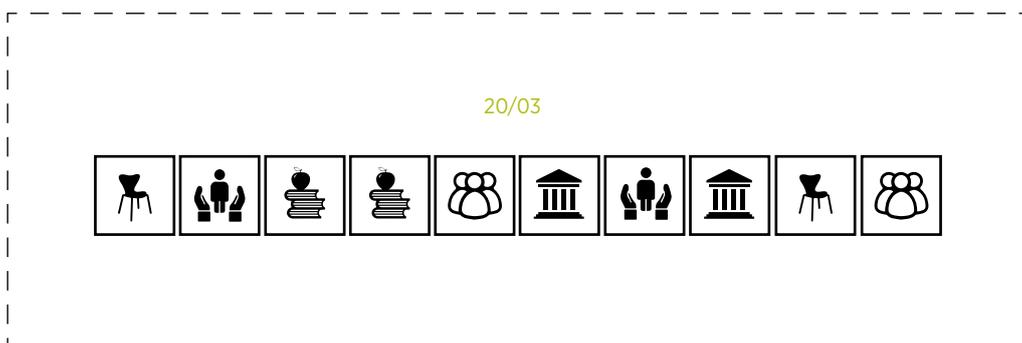
First part: distribution of survey for general population through social media



Second part: Interviews and experiencing public spaces and public transport



Third part: Multi-stakeholder management session



Through these different processes data, opinions, experiences and impressions will be collected and will later be used for the purpose of building a more solid definition of justice in the Mexico City context, comparing the different visions from the approached sources and using these to create a series of results:

1. What are the relevant justice elements for Mexico City right now?
2. What are the most important injustices found today?
3. What are the problems found in the city development due to such injustices?
4. How can justice shape public space design?
5. How can a specific public space be re-design following justice criteria?

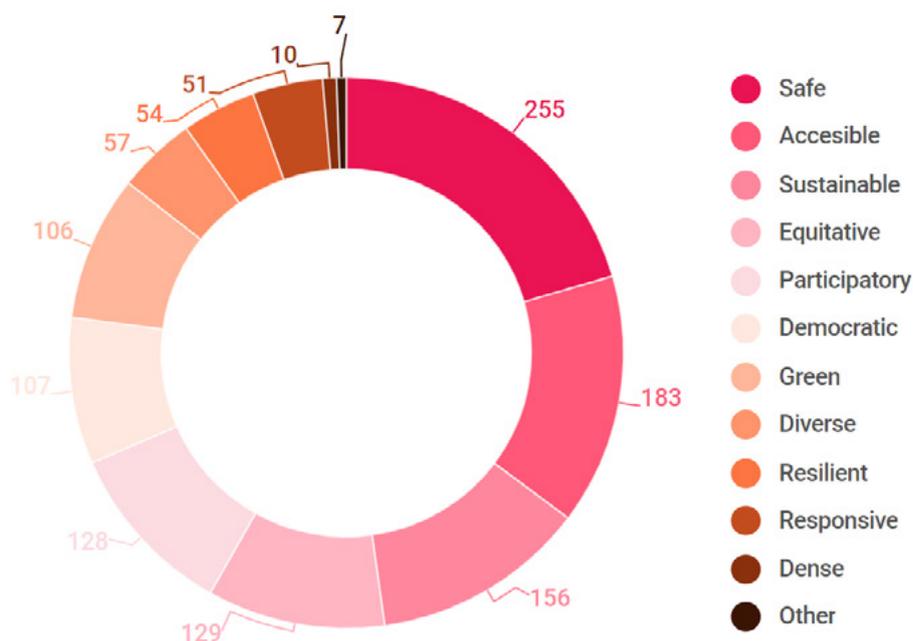


## SURVEY

The survey was sent and spread through social media, the intention was to gather a quick, honest and wide view about some of the most important topics discussed in this document. The focus was to access the common citizen opinion, this information would be used later in the interviews/discussions with different leaders in order to compare how similar/different justice, injustice, public space and responsibilities are seen from the general population and from leaders.

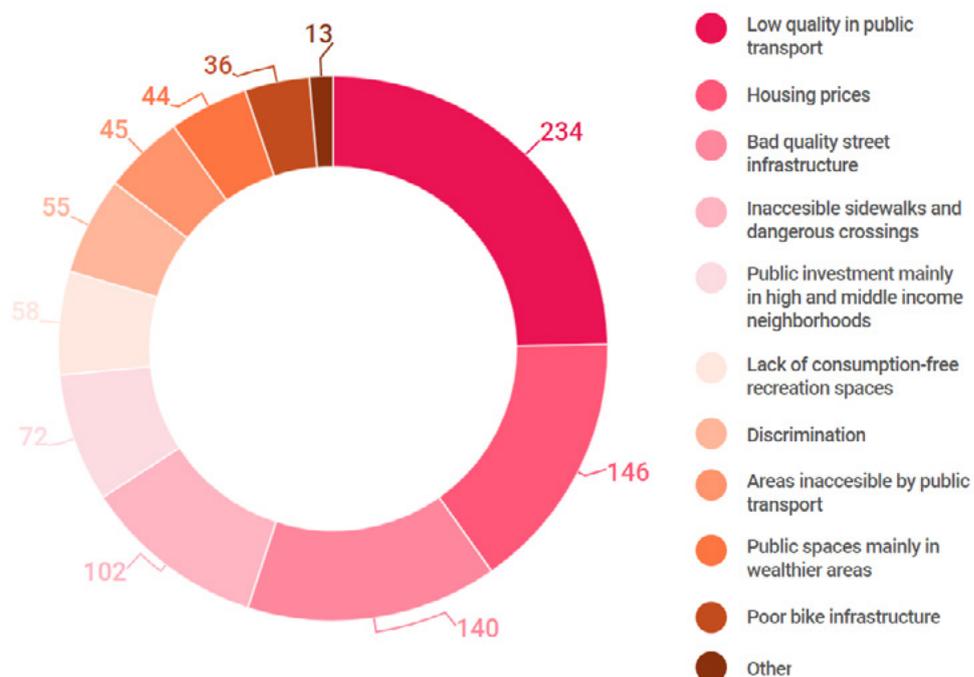
The results are shown in the following pages.

## MOST IMPORTANT FEATURES IN A JUST CITY



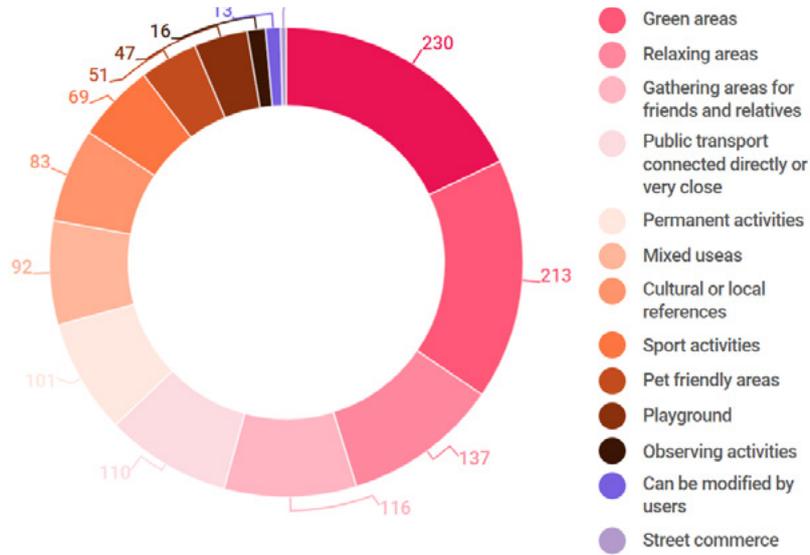
Most relevant: Safe, Accesible, Sustainable, Equitative and Participatory.

## MOST IMPORTANT INJUSTICES IN MEXICO CITY



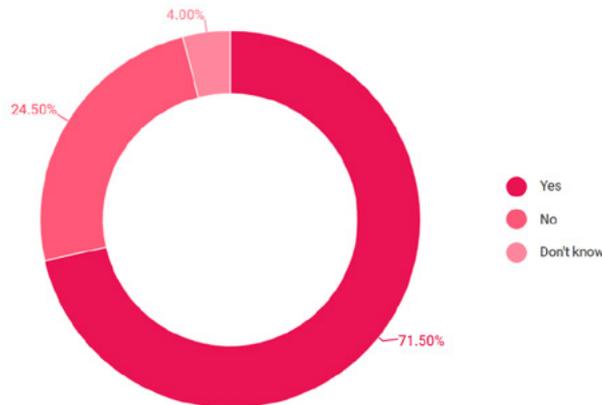
Most relevant: Low quality in public transport, high housing prices, bad infrastructure and sidewalks and crossings.

## MOST ATTRACTIVE FEATURES IN A PUBLIC SPACE



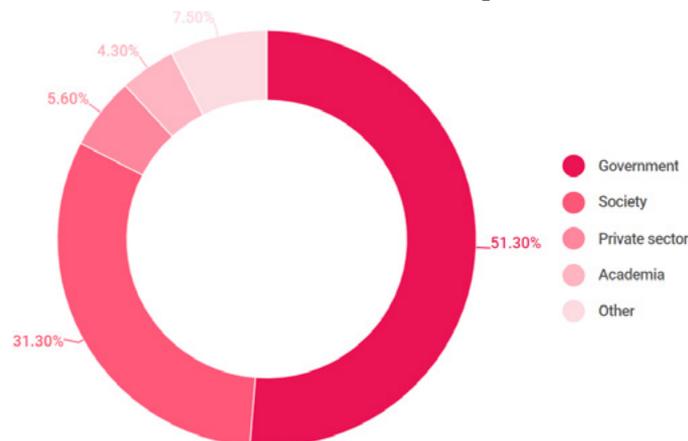
Most relevant: Green areas, public transport, permanent activities and mixed uses.

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING PUBLIC SPACES?



Most relevant: Yes. People want to be involved in the process.

## WHICH STAKEHOLDER HOLDS THE MOST RESPONSIBILITY IN CREATING A MORE JUST CITY?



Most relevant: Government and general population.



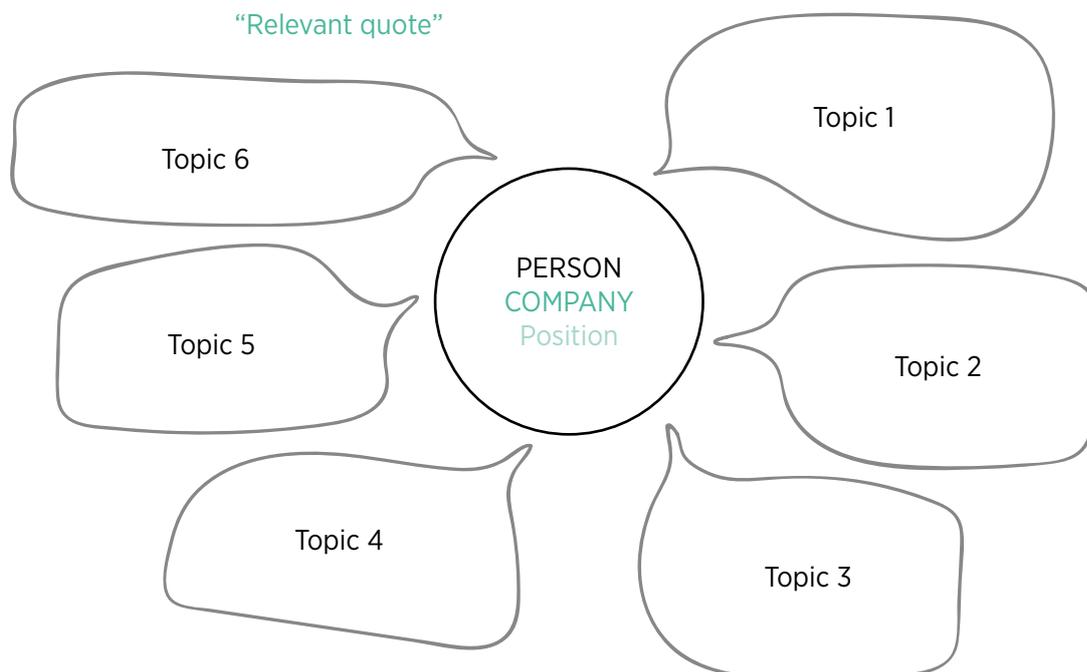
# INTERVIEWS

The following pages will show the most relevant results, views, experiences and data gathered in the interviews.

The main topics discussed during the interviews were:

1. In terms of urban design, what do you think a Just City could mean?
2. Is Mexico City a Just City in terms of diversity, equality and democracy?
  3. What are the main injustices found in Mexico City?
  4. What's the role of public space in promoting justice?
5. Which design features are relevant for justice in a public space?
6. How could a Just City by public spaces strategy be developed?

Due to the fact that the interviews were held in more of a conversation style, the collected input may show or not show all of the topics above, however the results will be presented in the following way:



## SUMMING UP

Through these conversations a few topics became clearer by repetition and some others were put on the table that will add into the discussion and further consolidation of a Just Space concept. The following diagram will show the highlighted topics and it will be presented in the same format as the interviews themselves to facilitate its readability:



## PROBLEMS FOUND IN PUBLIC SPACE IN MEXICO CITY

It's very often that when a project is being developed, along the general process different relevant topics are found and these might be just as relevant to understand as the original core of the project itself. At this point it becomes interesting to look at some of the problems behind public spaces in Mexico City, and each one of these problems could become a thesis by themselves, however, they will only be introduced in this page.

### GOVERNMENT UNABLE TO PROVIDE WITH QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE

As discussed, mainly with Jorge Gerini, in general whenever there's a void in any system, there will be something that will try to fill that void. In this case we're talking about infrastructure and services. In a city with such big extension and population and a lack of planning, the government finds itself unable to plan and provide for everyone. Here is when private interests fill the voids by creating spaces that are mostly designed for wealthier population, such as malls, which excludes mainly people with lower incomes, thus creating a bigger gap within the society, promoting an unjust city with most of its population remaining underserved.

### THE MALL AS "PUBLIC SPACES" AND GATED COMMUNITIES

Malls not only widen the gap between the "rich" and the "poor" in the sense of excluding those who cannot afford it or those with "undesired" behavior (even laying on a bench), but they are slowly taking over the concept of public space, in Mexico City there's a common perception of shopping centers as the meeting points, and this deviates the attention from demanding real public spaces, which we have lost a connection with.

Gated communities are another example of privatizing public space.

### GREEN AREAS AS PRIVILEGE

Green areas are seen as expensive and unnecessary, they are perceived more as an attractive feature that decorates the streets of the rich. The environmental, social and healthy value are often overlooked, affecting the life quality of those with less resources.

### FOOTBALL AS DISTRACTION

Probably the most polemic topic, but to put it in few words: football is often used in poor neighborhoods as a means of community building and healthy lifestyle, however, this often means the few public spaces in these areas are given to a specific group of the population, which hardly works for community building and integration that other public spaces could provide.

# CONSOLIDATING A JUST SPACE THEORY

The consolidation of a Just Space Theory and Design Strategy is the first result of this project. Through the different steps that have composed this thesis a series of data, information, opinions and many more values have been adding into the idea of: how can The Just City research be applied into design, and more specifically, public space design?

In the consolidation, three inputs had been the most relevant into defining the qualities or indicators for a Just Space:

The Just City research (including MUF)



The Survey



The interviews



However, when it comes to analyzing this input, three things are drawn as first points to start:

1. The Just City research is mainly a top-down approach, as it mainly involves decision makers, research, upper institutions and city scale analysis. The Interviews fall in this category as well.
2. The Survey is the main -and only so far- individual-centered approach.
3. More individual-centered approach is needed to consolidate a Just Space strategy, where people must be the base for its creation.

Due to these findings and its consequent analysis, a new input is found to be needed. An input that values the human needs above everything else. Because of this and because of a recurrent relation of justice with basic needs, the new added input is: The Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City (UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, 2016).

## WHAT IS THE GLOBAL CHARTER-AGENDA FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CITY?

“The Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City aims to promote and strengthen the human rights of all the inhabitants of all cities in the world.” (UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, 2016)

- I. Right to the City
- II. Right to Participatory Democracy
- III. Right to Civic Peace and Safety in the City
- IV. Right of Women and Men to Equality
- V. Rights of Children
- VI. Right to Accessible Public Services
- VII. Freedom of Conscience and Religion, Opinion and Information
- VIII. Right to Peaceful Meeting, Association and to Form a Trade Union
- IX. Cultural Rights
- X. Right to Housing and Domicile
- XI. Right to Clean Water and Food
- XII. Right to Sustainable Urban Development

The human-based approach of the Human Rights gave the complimentary input that, translated through analysis, was used to define the Just Space categories, which are the following and that will be explained in the diagram in the next pages.

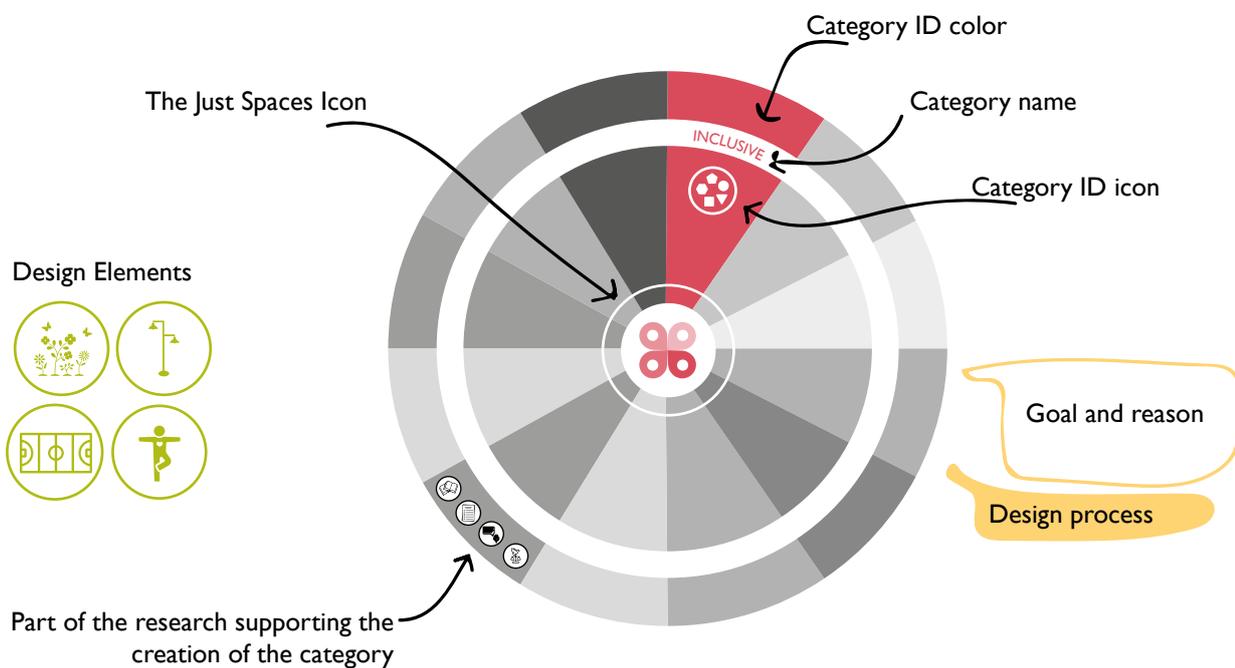


# DESIGNING FOR JUSTICE

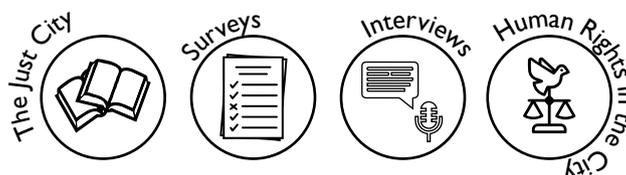
In the following page, the Just Space diagram is displayed. The diagram represents a synthesis of concepts turned into categories.

## HOW TO READ THE DIAGRAM?

The diagram is composed by different elements:



- A **Just Spaces icon** is created to consolidate the creation of the concept.
- A **Category ID Color** is used to give an unique character to each category, making it stand out from the others.
- A **category name** is given by choosing the concept that better represents an ideal, a pillar for the theory.
- An **ID icon** is created to be used in the following pages, as a mean to use icons instead of words.
- A **goal and reason** is stated to clarify the intentions behind each category.
- The **design process** importance needs to be highlighted for each category.
- Design elements** are suggested to show how specific architectural and urban objects can promote justice in a public space.
- And showing the **research behind** the creation of each category is also relevant in showing the support for their existence.



## WHAT IS A JUST SPACE?

A just space in its simplest expression would be a space where justice is found in its creation and purpose, a public space especially, but how can justice be expressed through spatial design?

Justice can be represented not by a singular element but by the combination of some under the same principles, a just space must include design elements that seek to increase one or more of the Just Space Qualities. A Just Space design is an integrative and comprehensive design of all the elements put together in favour of a common goal.

Some examples of design elements that could be included in the creation of a Just Space are:



The following is a definition composed by the author of this thesis, it is not extracted from others' definition but it is built from the research and experience gathered along the process. It is a definition that should be questioned and improved even after this project comes to an end:

**A public space conceived by professionals and non-professionals equally, that through its development, process and result aims to improve the just qualities. It is created to support and improve the life quality of its users. No space should be approached differently than other located in a different area of higher or lower wealth.**

The space should include a strategy around sustainability: resources management, renewable energy, low carbon footprint, low maintenance, social empowerment.

The process should create consciousness around the use of the space and management of its resources. Education can be a tool in this category.

The space is created thinking in a capacity of adaptation to different activities, to allow for 24/7 use thinking in the different potential users along the day hours and it should consider further adaptability from the user in the present and in the future.

The process must focus in the array of users and potential users through the day to identify the uses that could share spaces in different times. Consider holidays needs.

Paths, benches, excersize and sport areas. Green areas accesible to enjoyment. Shelter from weather. Allows for ambulance access.

Health is improved by exposure to green areas, having contact with others, developing social bonds, physical activities are encouraged. The design process must prioritize the health needs and goals of the community

The space is lit during day and night, no dark areas. Benches and activities are distributed. No walls or barriers. Accesces on every side. Traffic calming and crossing strategies. Wide sidewalks.

The design process is of particular relevance in achieving this. Visibility, light, avoiding barriers and other strategies fit into this category. The space should feel as a safe place even for minorities.

The space allows the users to interact on a daily basis with art, by being exposed, involved and creating it. Open air exhibitions, sculptures, art workshops, game tables, colors, structures and spaces open for change.

The process can include local population, including local artists but not exclusively, and the design can be inspired in the local community context.

Open spaces capable of hosting group events are desired. Flexible furniture and structures that can be appropriated.

The design process should be done in such way that the community has the means to express their opinions and be involved in the creation or modification of a given space that affects them.



**JUST SPACE QUALITIES**

The space aims to bring as many different uses and users to the space, considering ages, day and night, active and passive and so on.

Design processes promoting participation are fundamental. It's necessary to pay attention to minorities and vulnerable groups.

The design gives a spatial representation to all included users, prioritizing no group of users above others. Multiple uses can be performed at the same time.

No voice should remain unheard in the design process and result. Lifting minorities is desirable.

The design includes areas where group and community activities, both daily or occasional, can be held. Objects or structures designed and built by the community are included.

The design process should start this quality.

The design of pavements, paths, sidewalks, ramps and crossings should aim at allowing as many users as possible into the space. The design should facilitate movility towards the space and out from it, connecting it to the surroundings and the city.

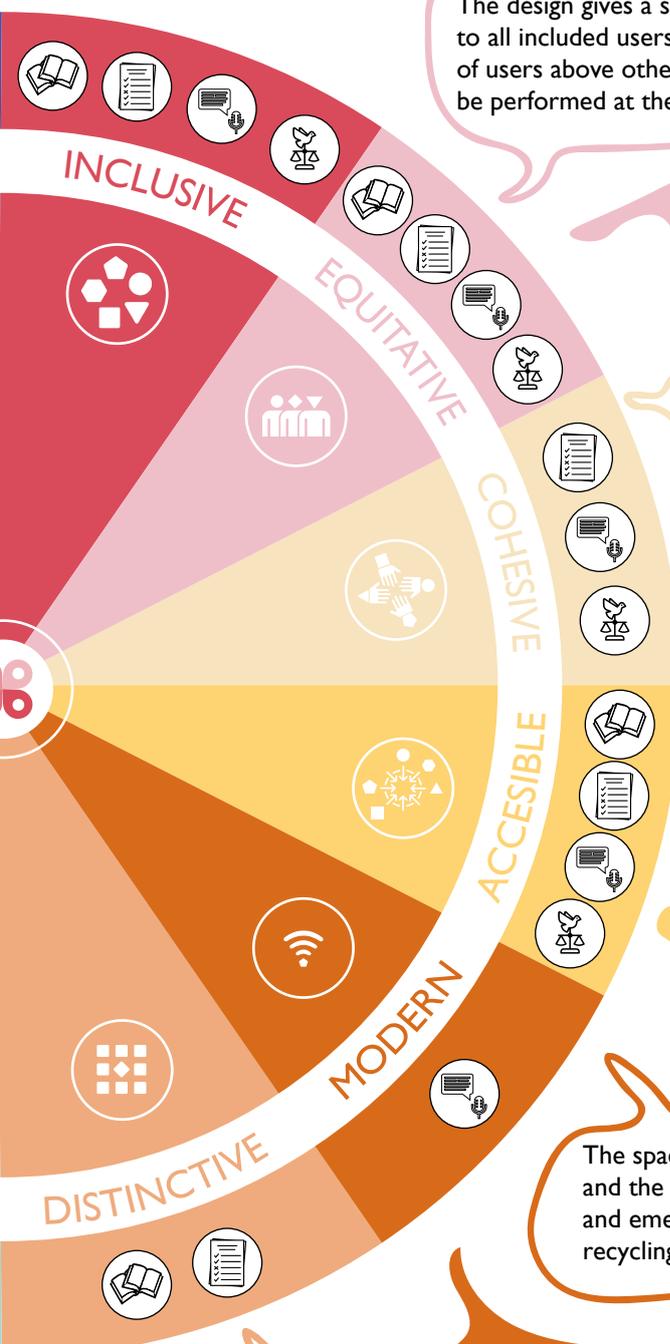
Including users with special mobility needs is a need.

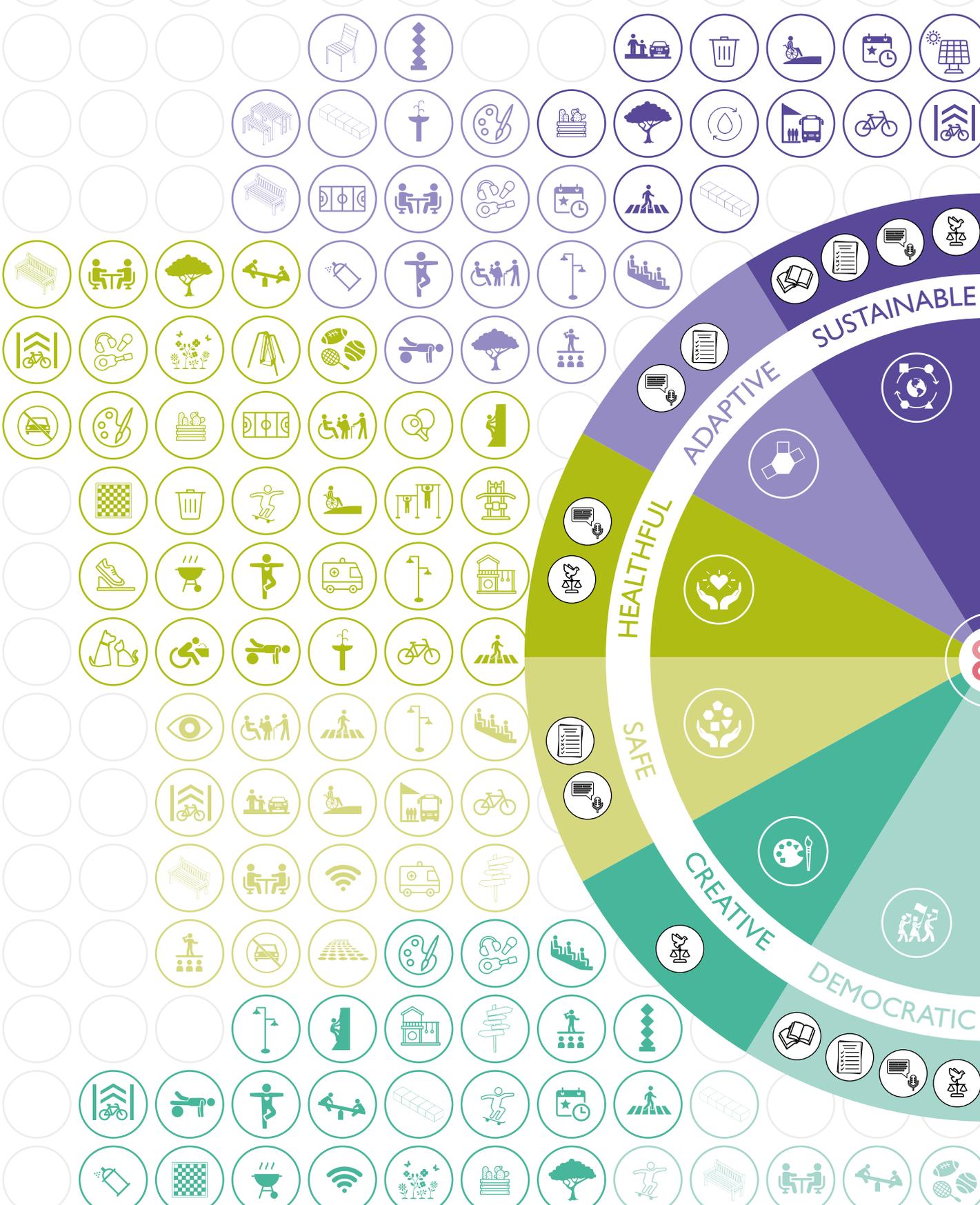
The space should understand the time we're living and the need for communication for leisure, work and emergencies. Technology features such as wifi, recycling machines, plugs, smart lighting.

Identify potential technological needs that might contribute with the improvement of access to resources by the community.

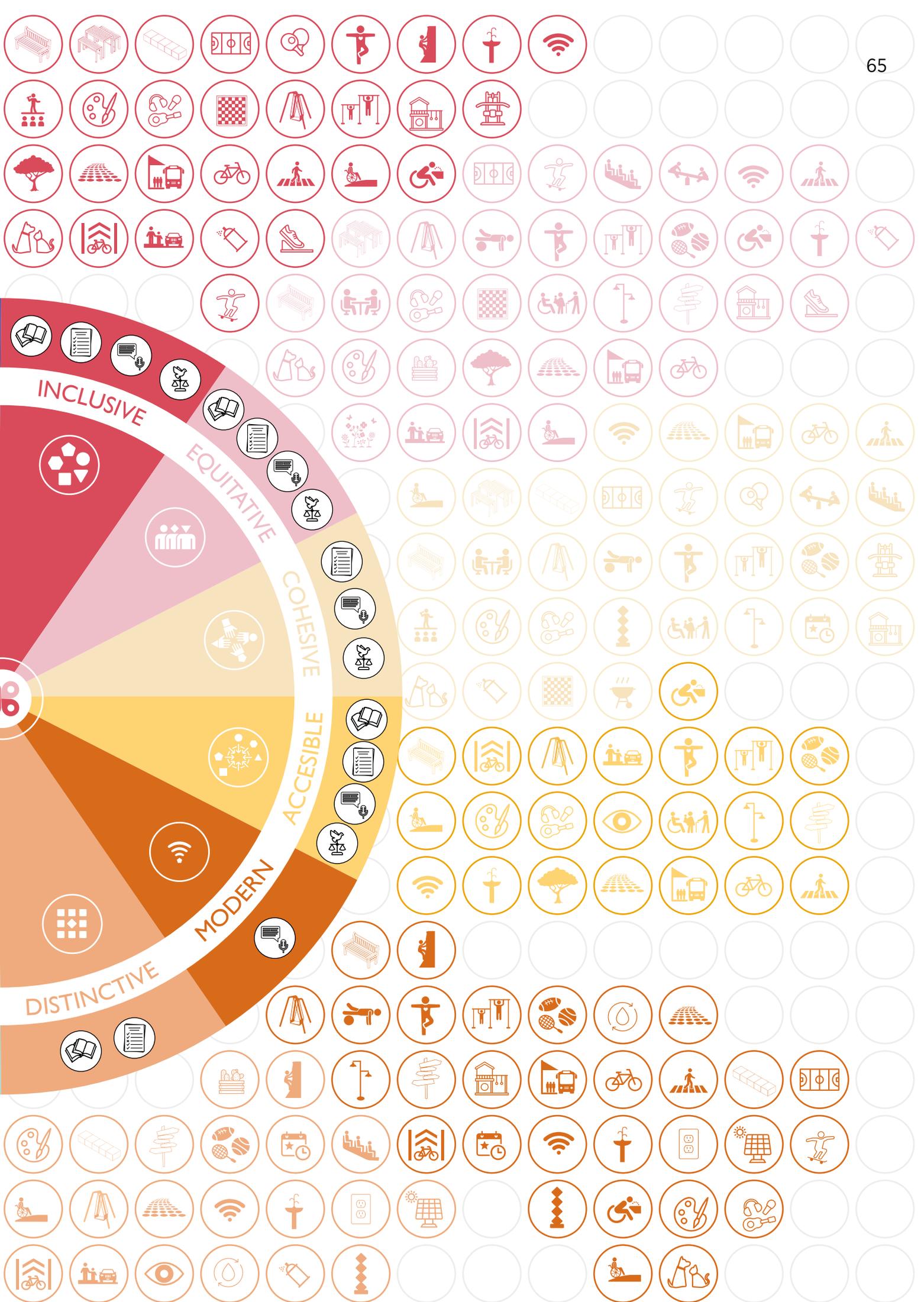
The design is strongly context related, influenced by local unique qualities such as peoples' needs and desires. Particular activities, images and other features are used.

The local context includes people, culture, uses, threats, the presence of vulnerable groups, opportunities and many others can be included in the process and design.





**JUST SPACE**  
**DESIGN ELEMENTS**



INCLUSIVE

EQUITATIVE

COHESIVE

ACCESSIBLE

MODERN

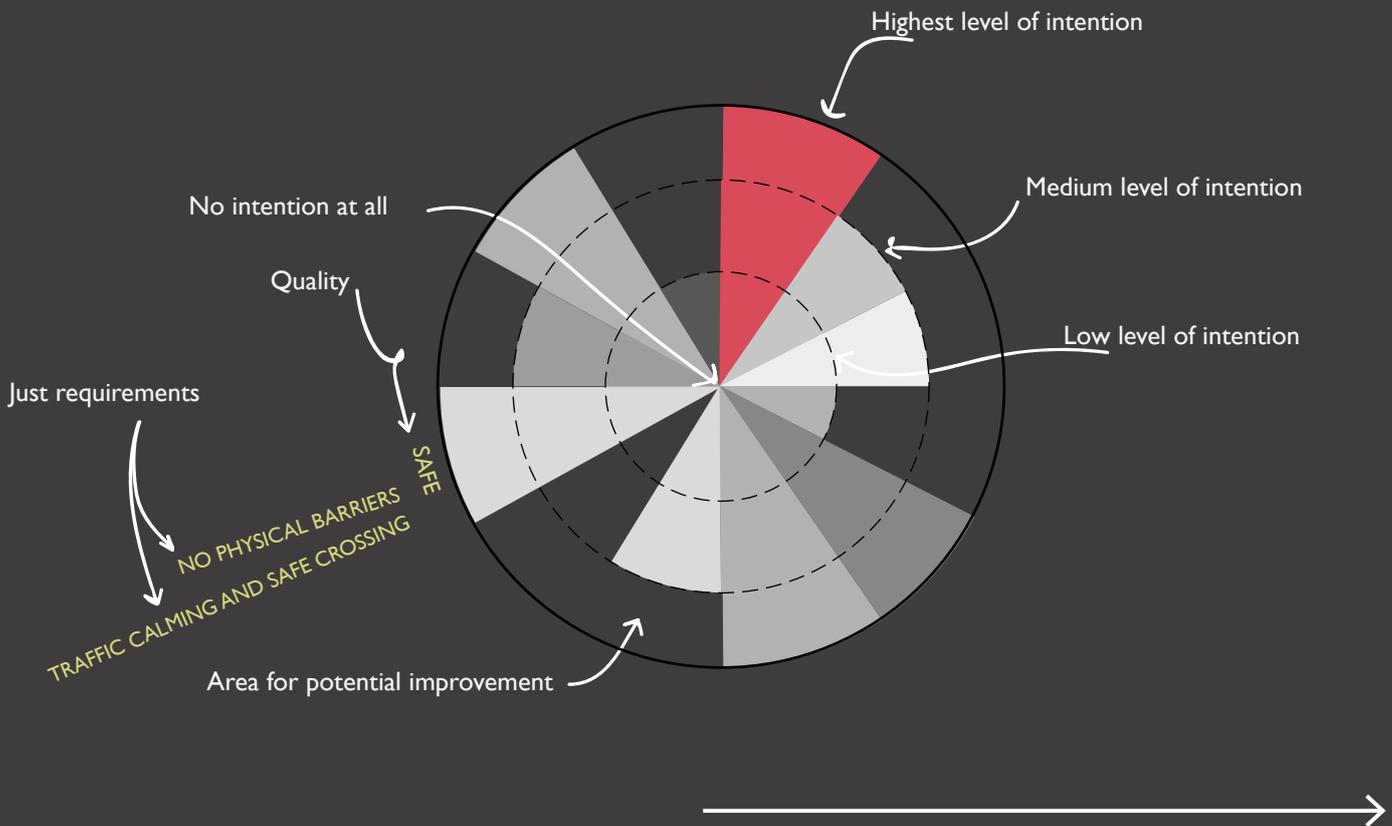
DISTINCTIVE

# ASSESSMENT

An important part of creating a method is to create a way to assess if its accomplishing the desired results or promoting or looking after them through the final result.

In the following page a series of requirements are written and should be followed depending on each specific Just Space Quality, six requirements are written on each as an example, however the list can and should grow bigger given a deeper approach. These will be used to assess the projects analyzed and created on this thesis.

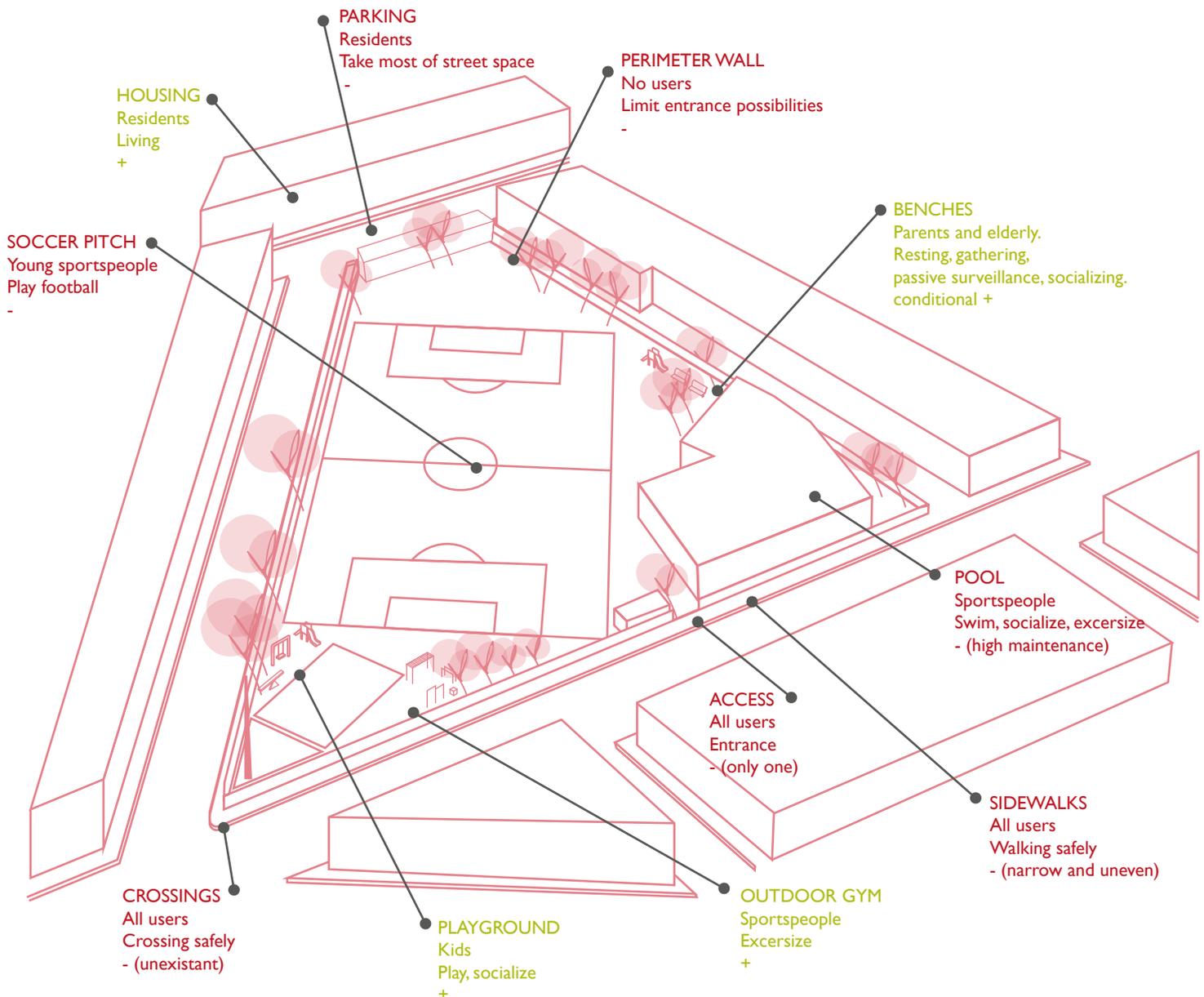
The Just Space Quality assessing ring is divided in four different levels of accomplishment, each level is achieved by including every two of the requirements for the category:





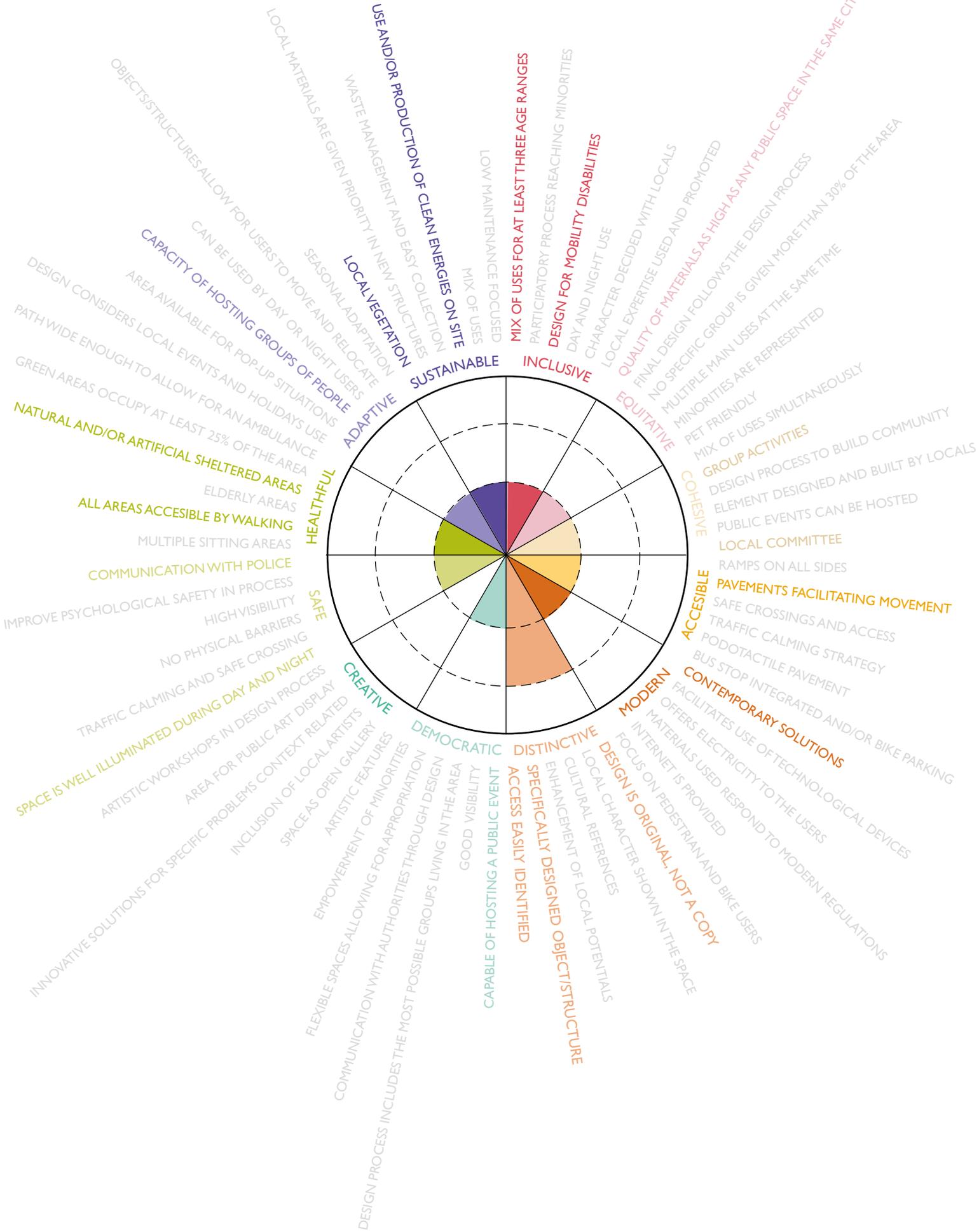
# FORCE-FIELD ANALYSIS

## PHYSICAL ELEMENTS



In the following page an analysis of the existing design elements are assessed in regard of the proposed Just Space Features. The information will bring knowledge about which features need to be improved in the next phase: designing for justice.

# JUST SPACE QUALITIES ASSESSMENT



## IMPORTANT

The following pages show the development of a project based on the developed Just Space Qualities, however, it is important to note that this is an academical approach which couldn't and shouldn't be used in a real life project due to the lack of a participatory process. The result displayed is a designer approach, which would actually go against the nature of a just space.

The applicability strongly relies on the input that the community would have to offer; a real Just Space design cannot be separated from the participatory process and all the richness of the unknown that this brings.

Nevertheless, it was still important to show an outcome containing the Just Spaces work as an exploration of a possible applicability in real life.



# THE DESIGN PROCESS

1

The surrounding blocks are included in the intervention area. It is important to create, not only a specific site intervention, but to connect with its immediate environment. Some relevant public sites are identified in the surroundings:

1. Kindergarden
2. Elementary school
3. Community Center
4. Community kitchen
5. Health Center
6. Government office
7. Secondary school
8. Main road with public transport
9. Road park
10. Secondary school
11. Art school
12. Road park
13. Museum

Just Space Qualities involved:



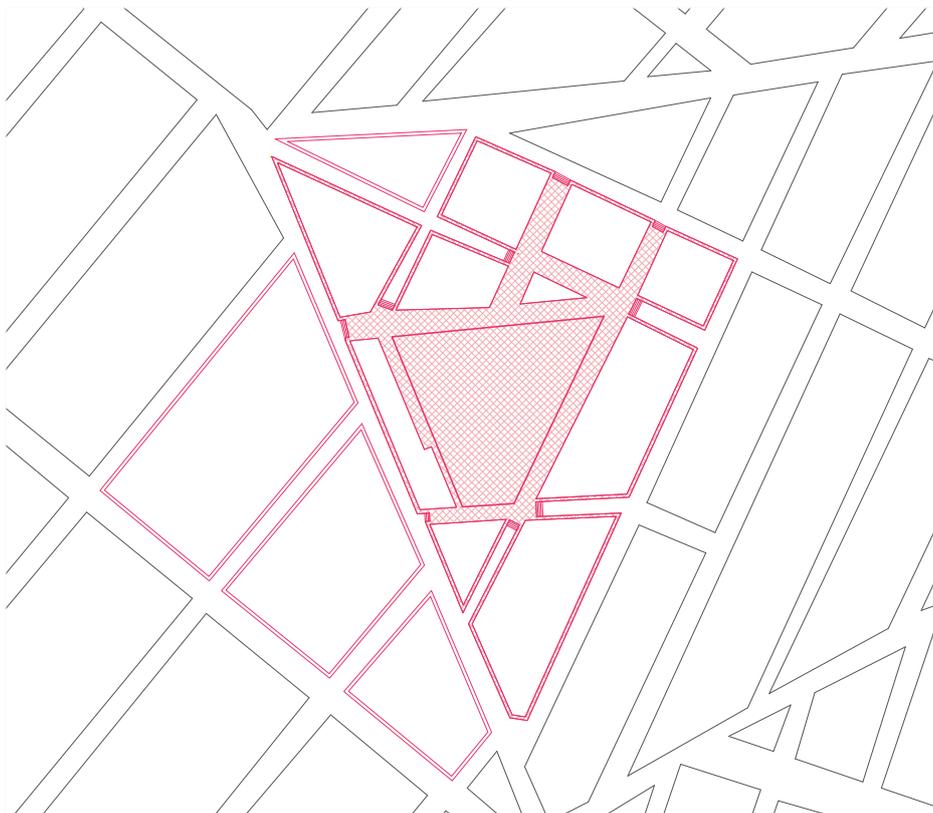
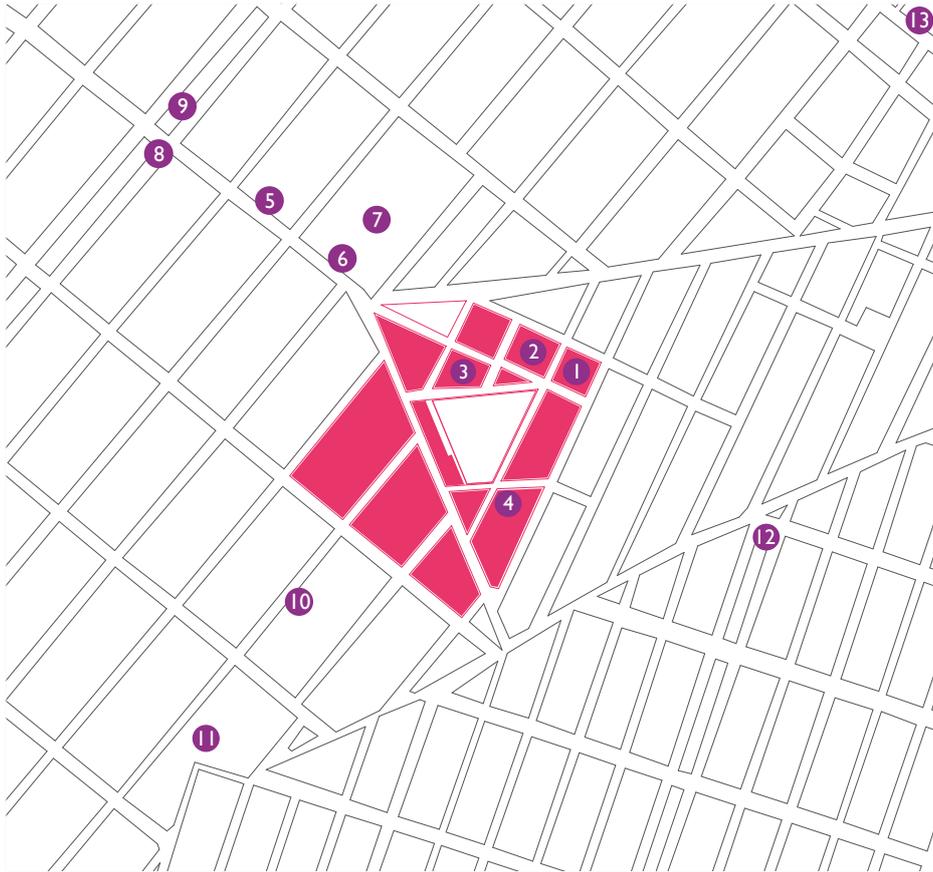
2

The pattern shows the extension of the pedestrian-focused perimeter: the creation of a Zone 30, slowing down cars and removing obstacles by levelling both the street and the sidewalks, improving the accesibility and safety of the site.

The perimeter extends towards the kindergarden and the elementary school.

Just Space Qualities involved:





3

To improve bike mobility, a bike lane is included in the design of the immediate surroundings.

Just Space Qualities involved:

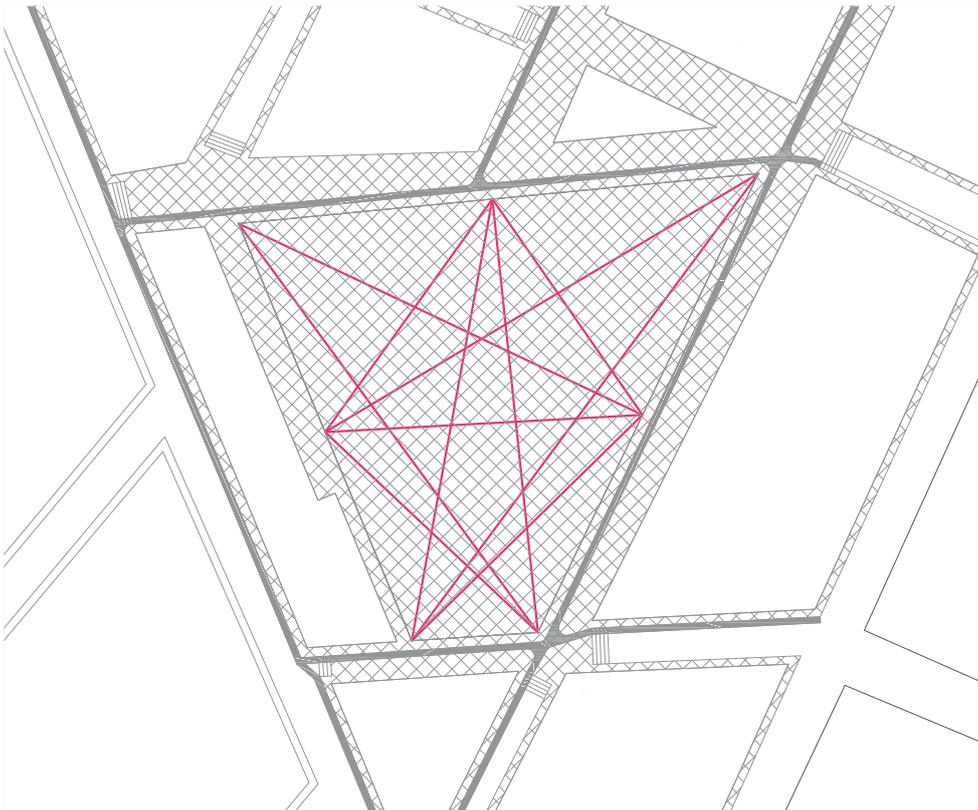
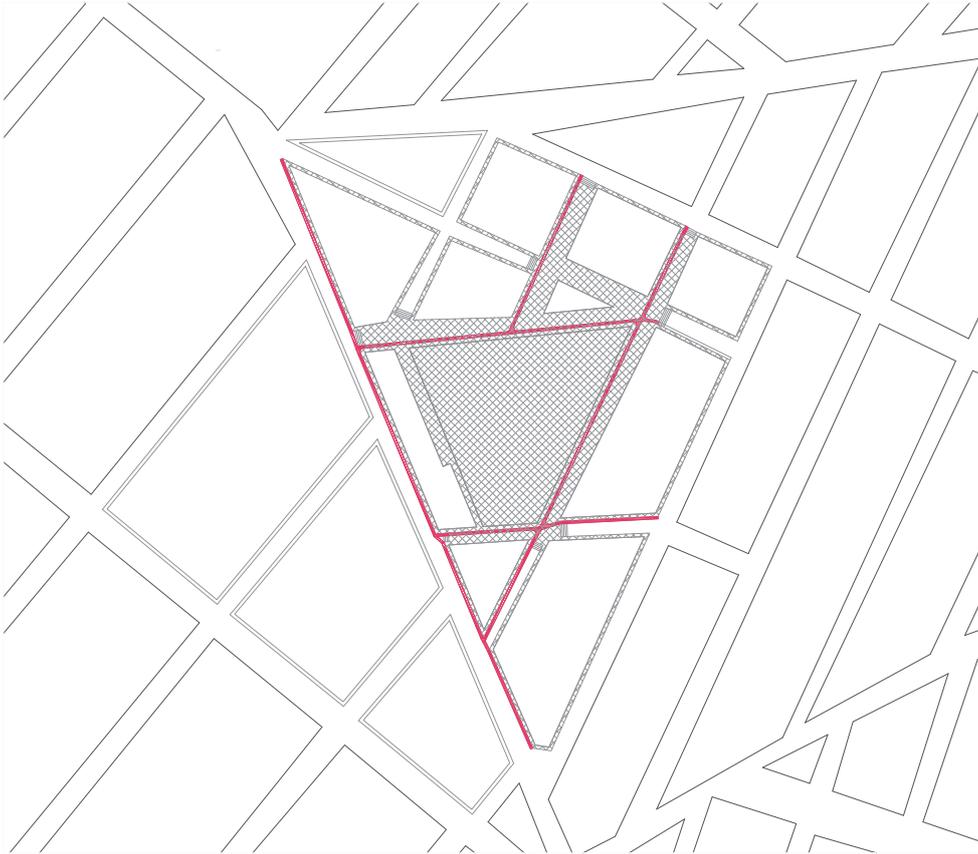


4

To break distances and to connect, a web of lines is created, showing the shortest path between relevant parts of the new park.

Just Space Qualities involved:





5

The lines become potential paths, each one of them acquires its name in relation to the public services identified in the first map. The name will provide later with potential uses and zones.

### Just Space Qualities involved:



6

Different zones are identified, providing for different uses and users. Each zone has its own qualities and character, but remain connected to the others at the same time.

### Just Space Qualities involved:





7

Urban furniture and design elements are located to support the activities in each zone.

### Just Space Qualities involved:



8

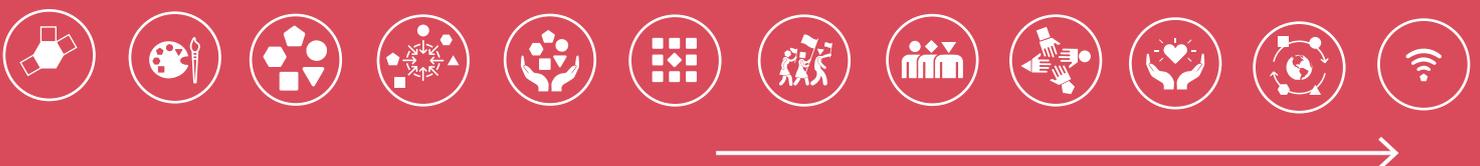
A ribbon and a community built sitting pavilion are added as the last layer.

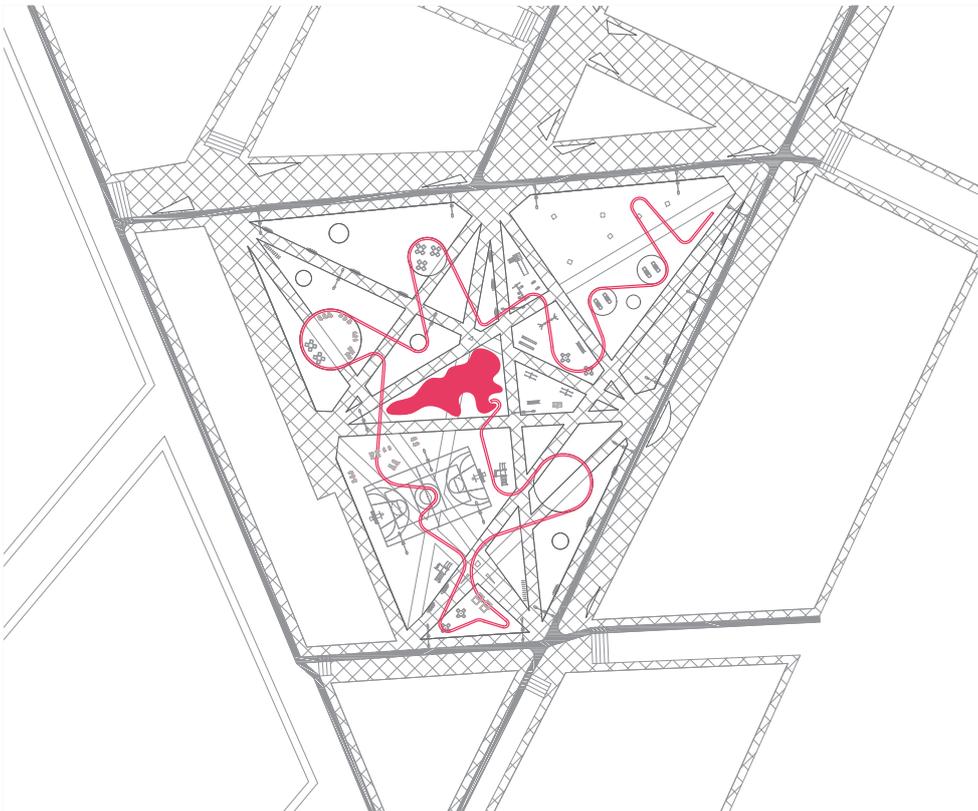
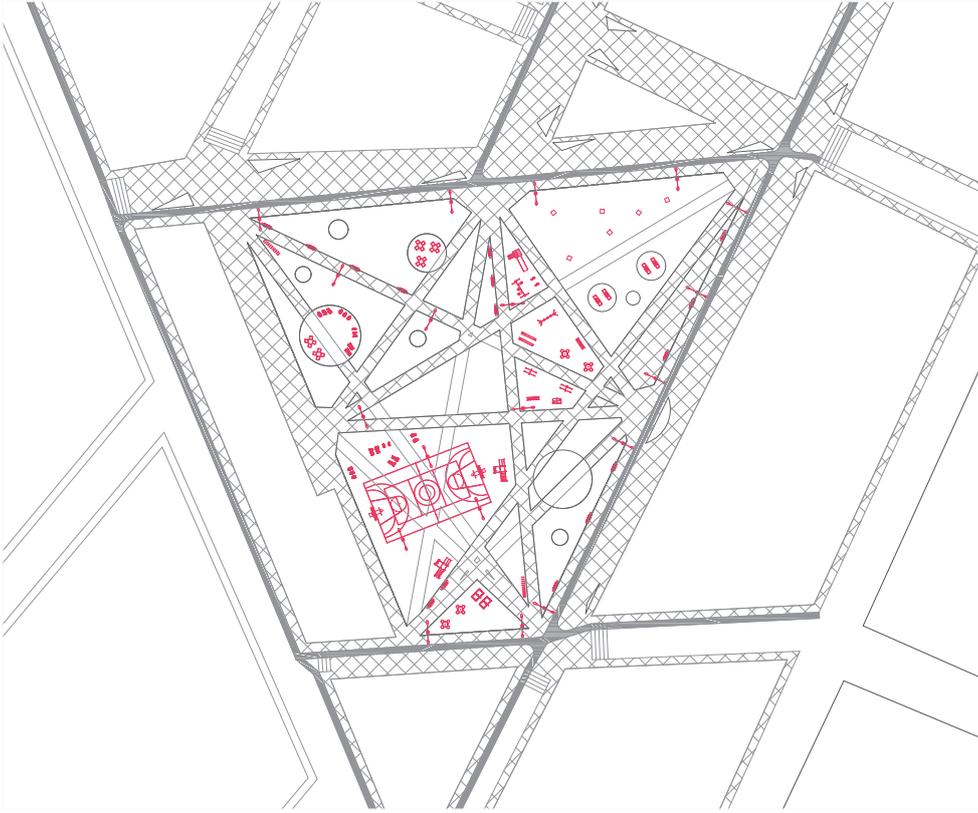
The ribbon is built by re-using the material from the perimeter wall which shall be removed. The ribbon will host many different activities, uses and characters depending on the area where it goes through.

The ribbon represents the invisible thread of justice, but it also represents other values that are intended to be enhanced in the park.

The Pavilion represents the work of the community in building something for everyone. It becomes a sitting and observing area that welcomes everyone, while creating a 360° observation platform that can provide for active and passive interactions.

### Just Space Qualities involved:





Secondary school place  
 Kids 12-15  
 Gathering, sitting, ping pong  
 Close to: bike station, sports area, green area

Gathering, sitting, v  
 Close to: all other

Multi sports court and gym  
 Sportspeople  
 Gathering, climbing, excersizing  
 Close to: pavilion, bike station,  
 multi-use area, playgrounds

Multi-purpose area  
 Everyone  
 Gathering, sitting, observing,  
 performing, demonstrating  
 Close to: access, green areas,  
 sport area, playgrounds

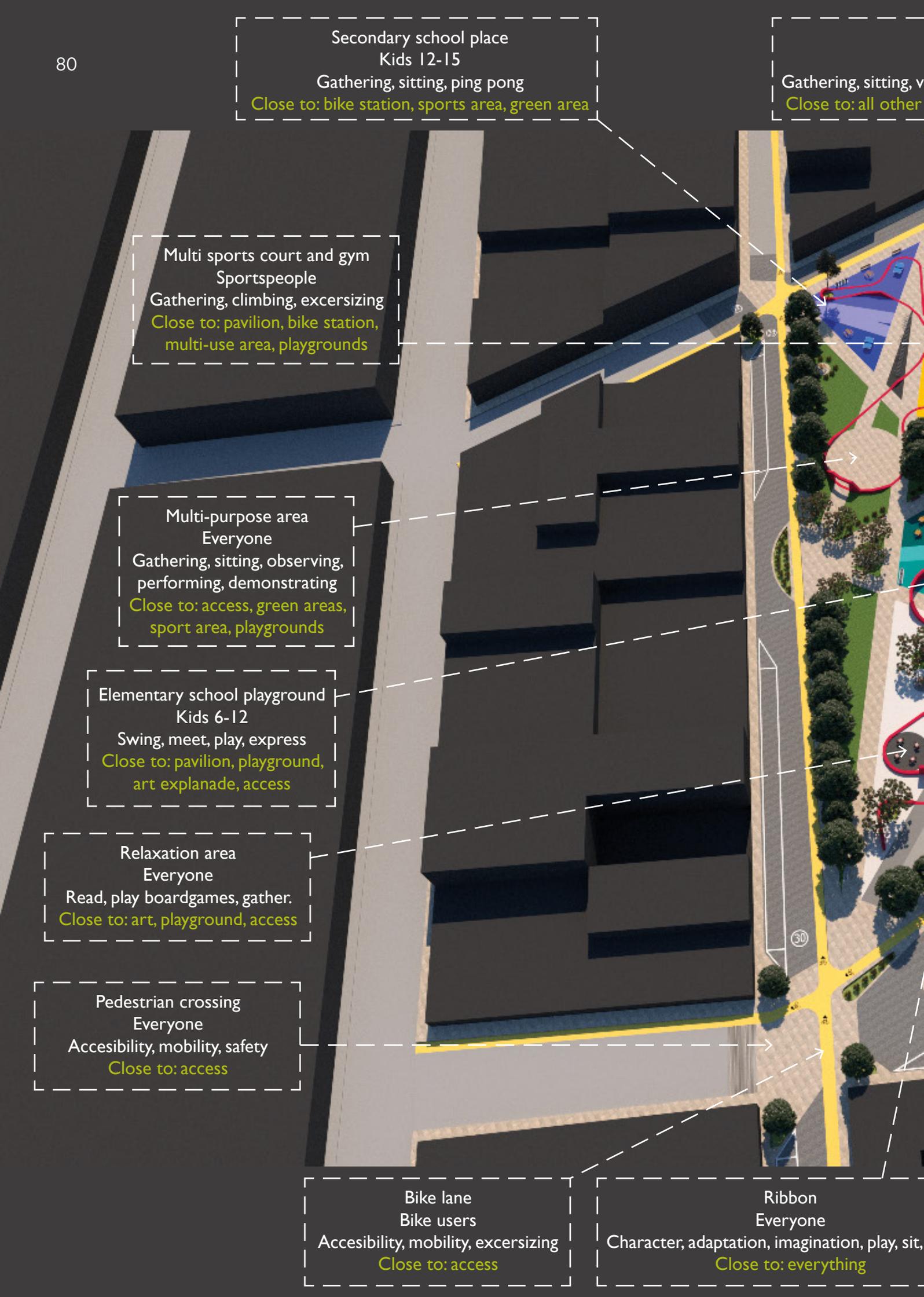
Elementary school playground  
 Kids 6-12  
 Swing, meet, play, express  
 Close to: pavilion, playground,  
 art explanade, access

Relaxation area  
 Everyone  
 Read, play boardgames, gather.  
 Close to: art, playground, access

Pedestrian crossing  
 Everyone  
 Accesibility, mobility, safety  
 Close to: access

Bike lane  
 Bike users  
 Accesibility, mobility, excersizing  
 Close to: access

Ribbon  
 Everyone  
 Character, adaptation, imagination, play, sit,  
 Close to: everything

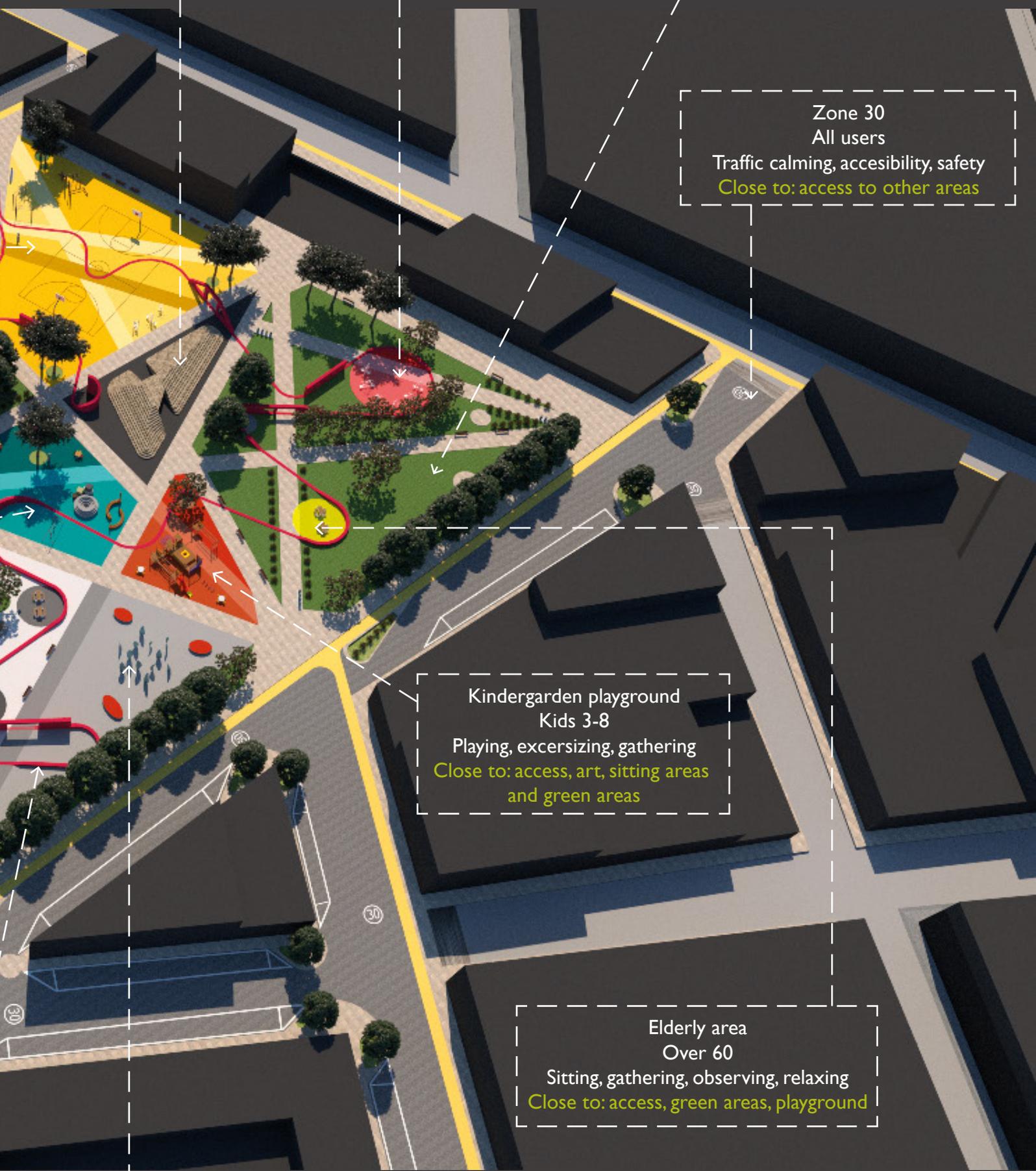


Pavilion  
All users  
Viewpoint, passive interaction  
areas, located in the middle

Adults gym  
Over 40  
Excercise, gathering, privacy  
Close to: green areas, access

Green areas  
Everyone  
Relax, gathering, privacy  
Close to: everything

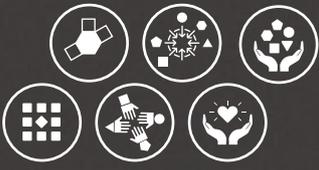
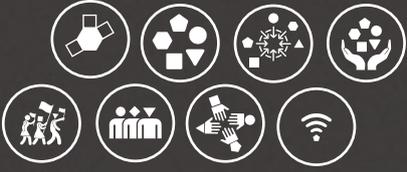
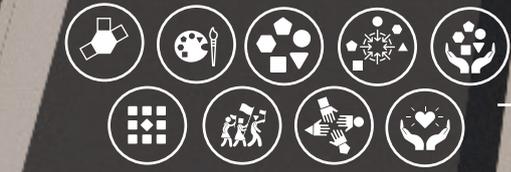
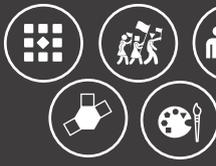
Zone 30  
All users  
Traffic calming, accesibility, safety  
Close to: access to other areas

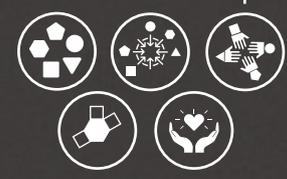
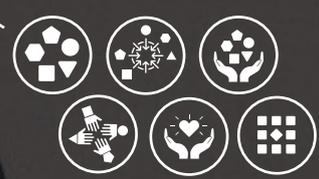
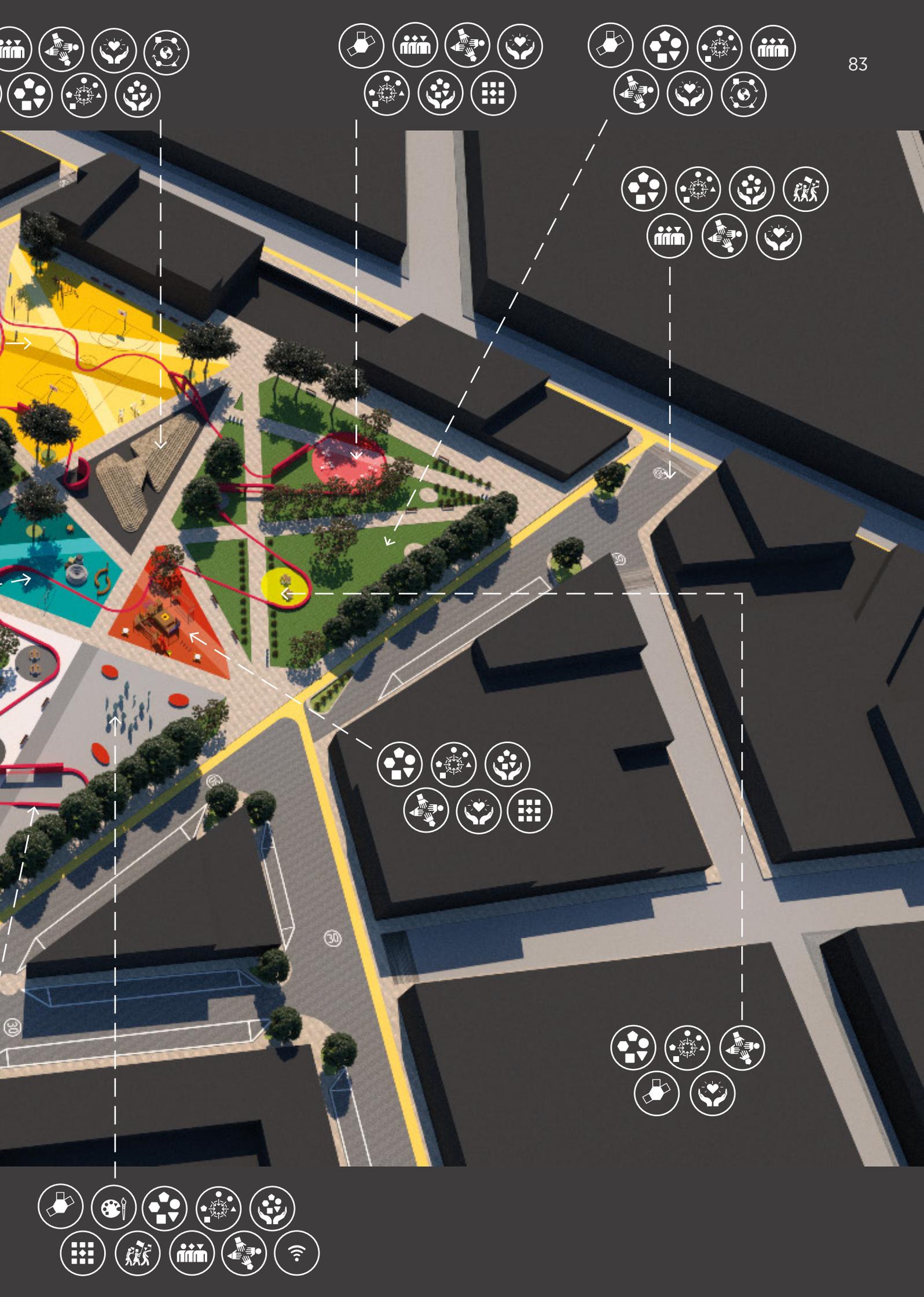


Kindergarden playground  
Kids 3-8  
Playing, excersizing, gathering  
Close to: access, art, sitting areas  
and green areas

Elderly area  
Over 60  
Sitting, gathering, observing, relaxing  
Close to: access, green areas, playground

gather  
Art explanade  
All users  
Gathering, observing, interacting, workshops  
Close to: access, green areas, playground



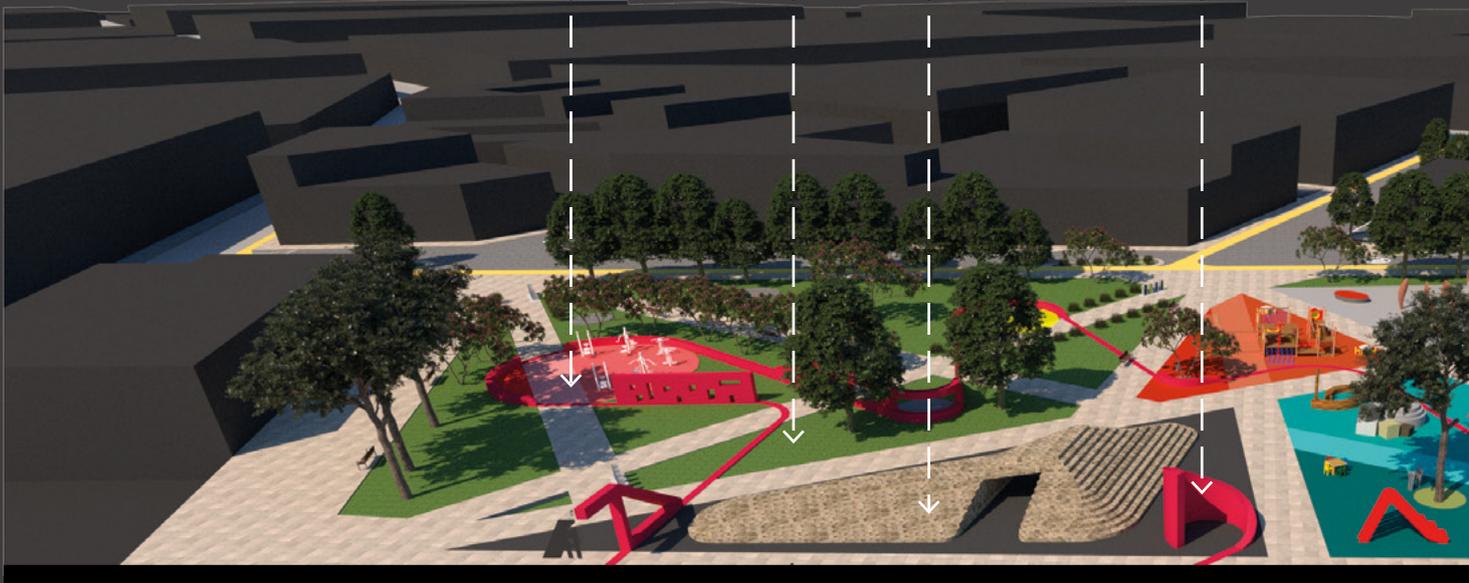


Outdoor gym

Green areas

Pavilion

Ribbon tail



Outdoor gym

Multisports court

Western gate

Green area

Playground

Me

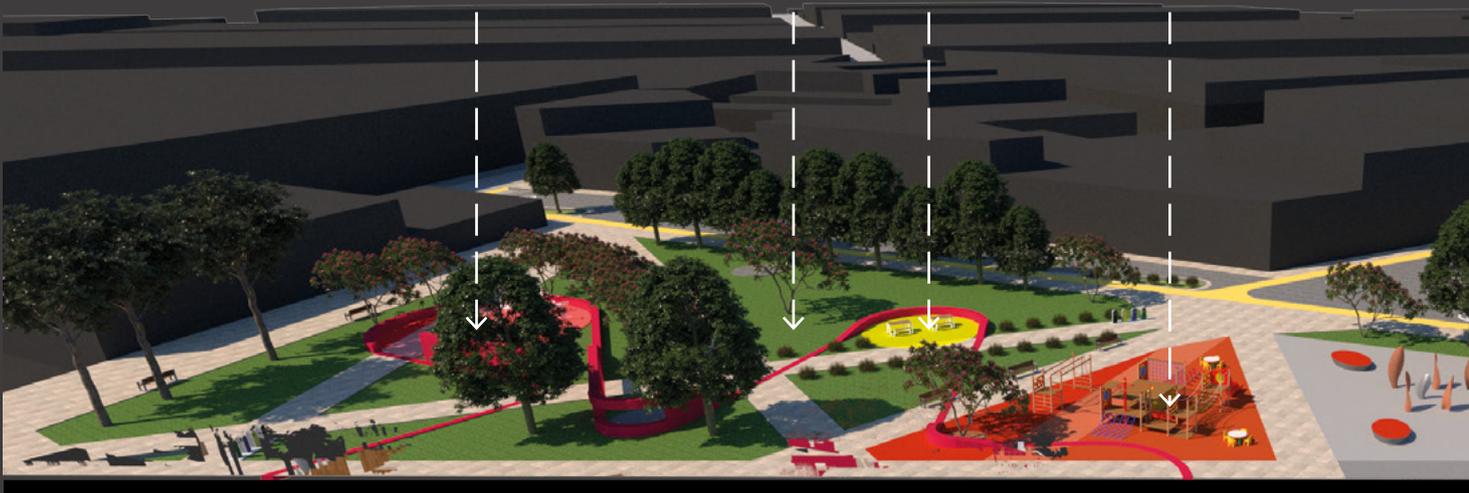


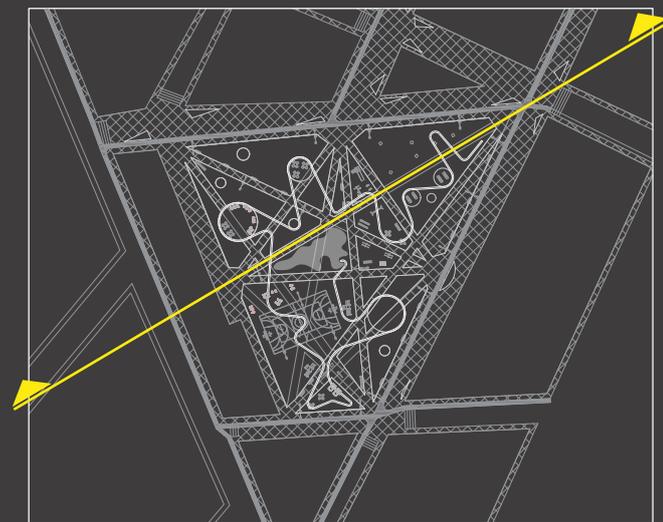
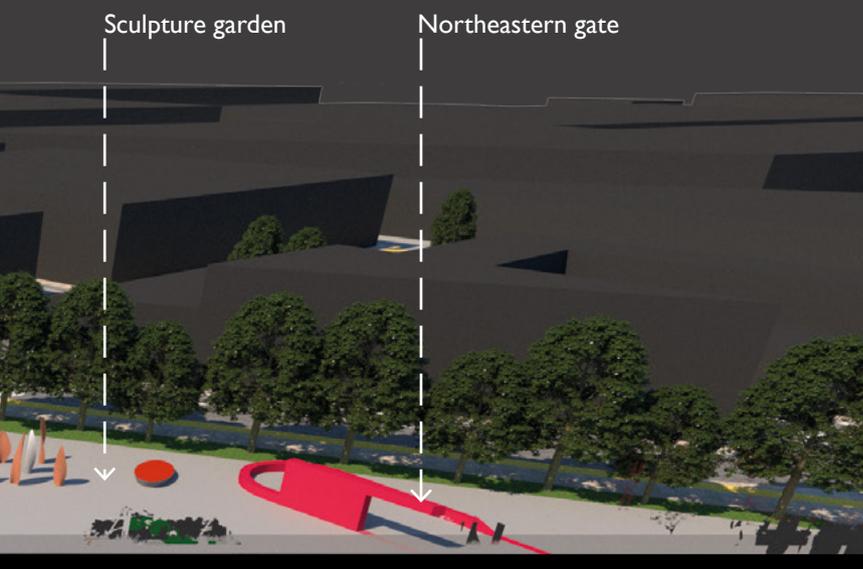
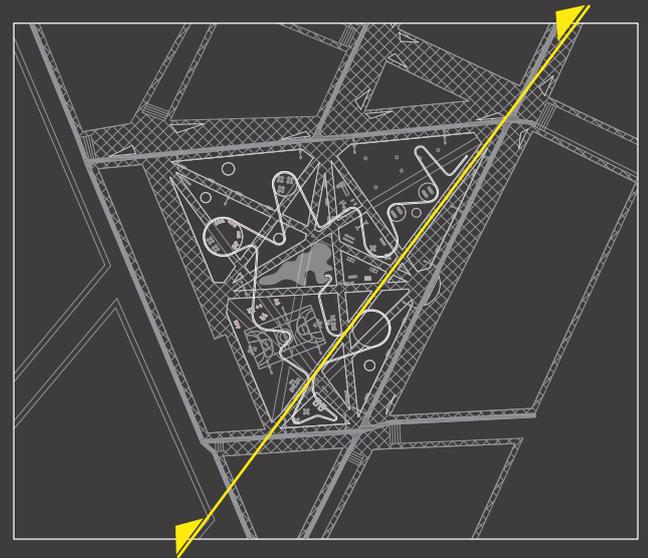
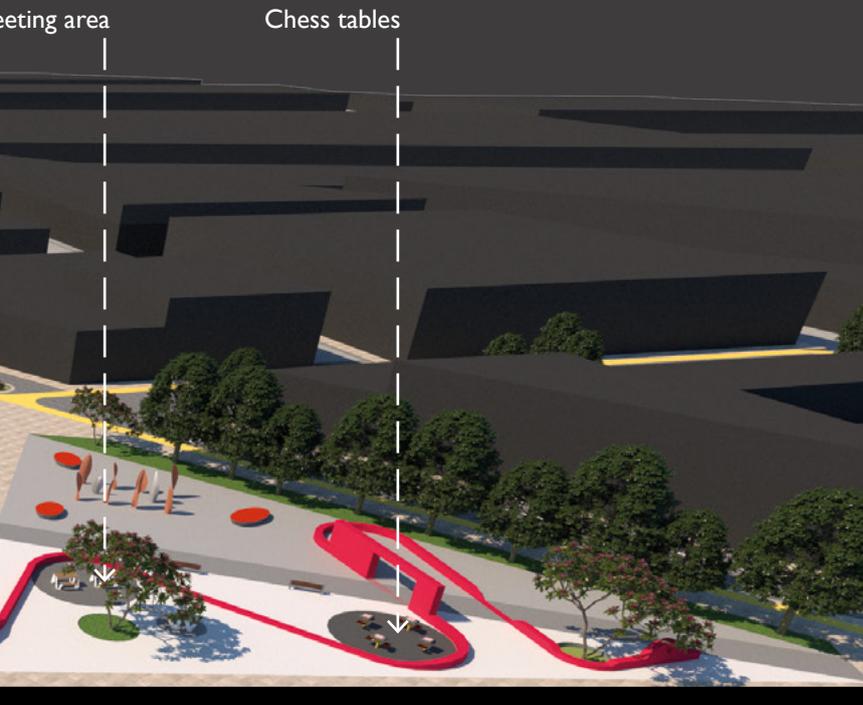
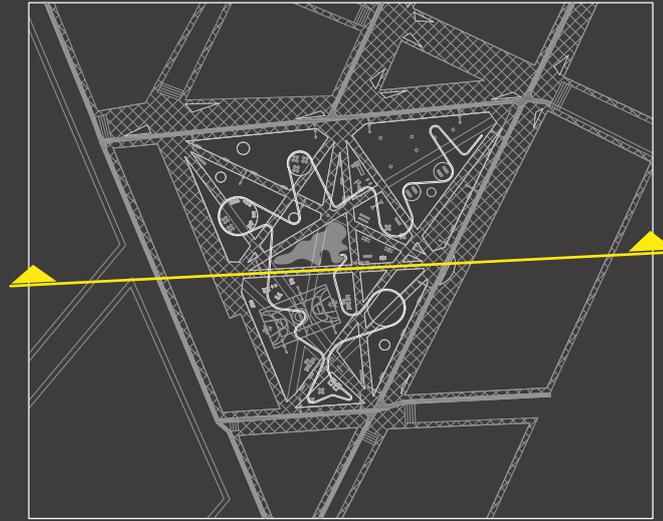
Outdoor gym

Green area

Elderly area

Kinder playground





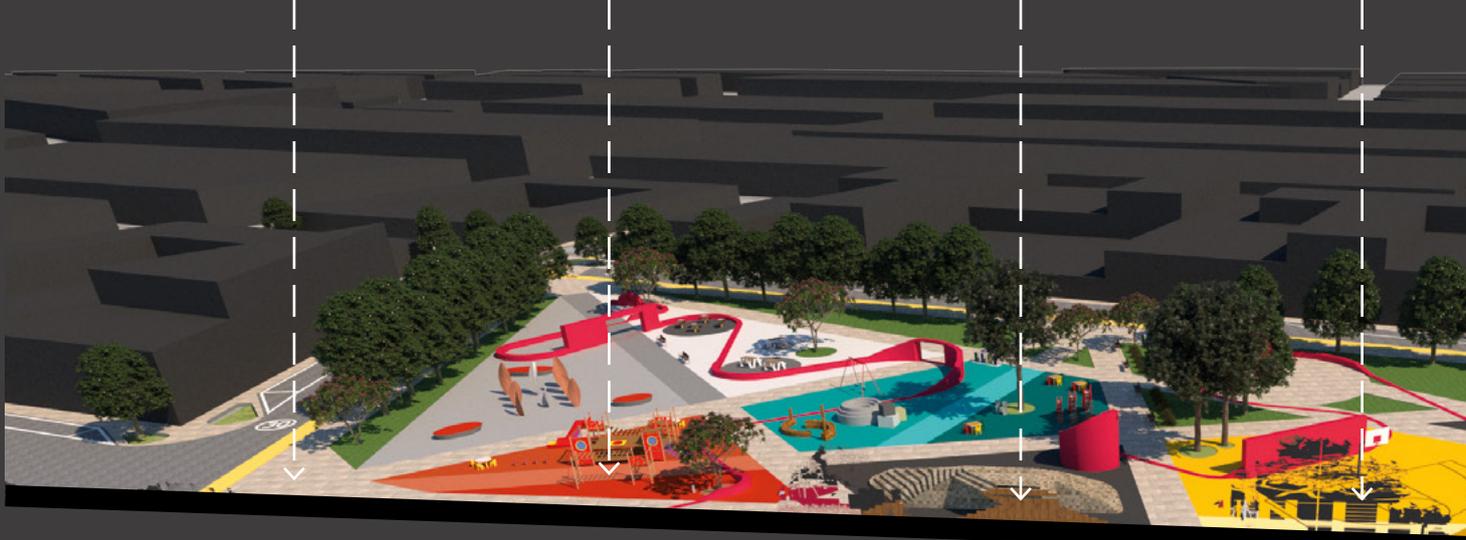
Northern access

Kindergarden playground

Pavilion

Multisports court

Bike



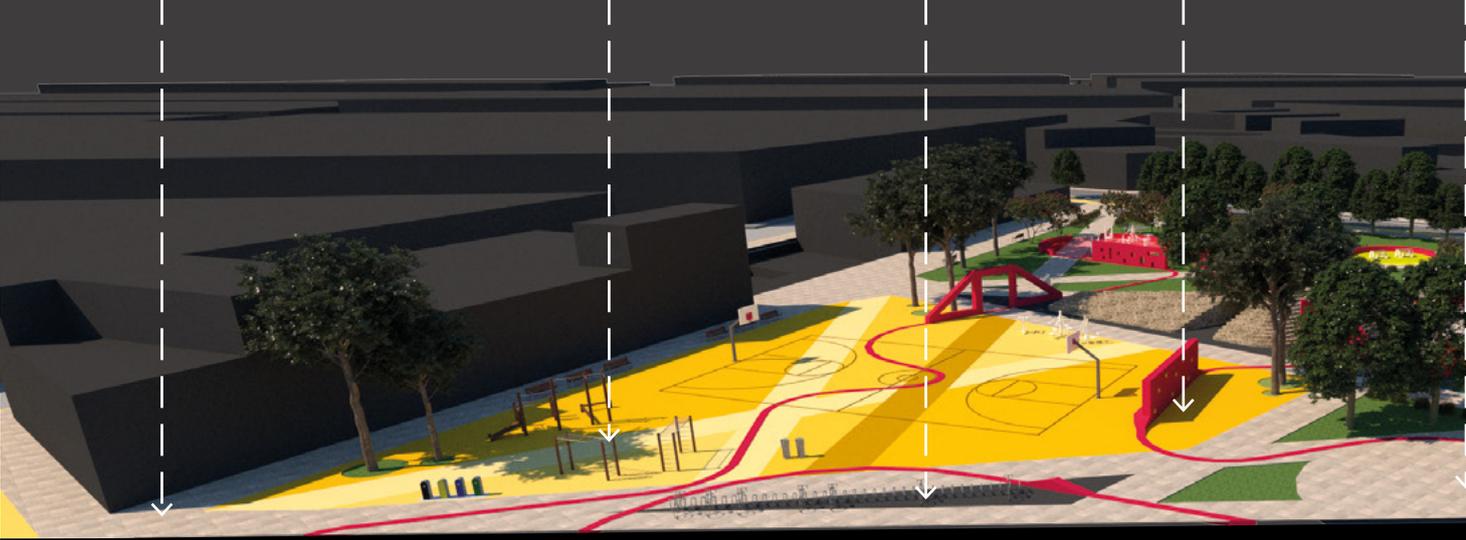
Southwestern access

Outdoor gym

Bike parking

Climbing wall

Meeting area/Stage



Secondary school playground

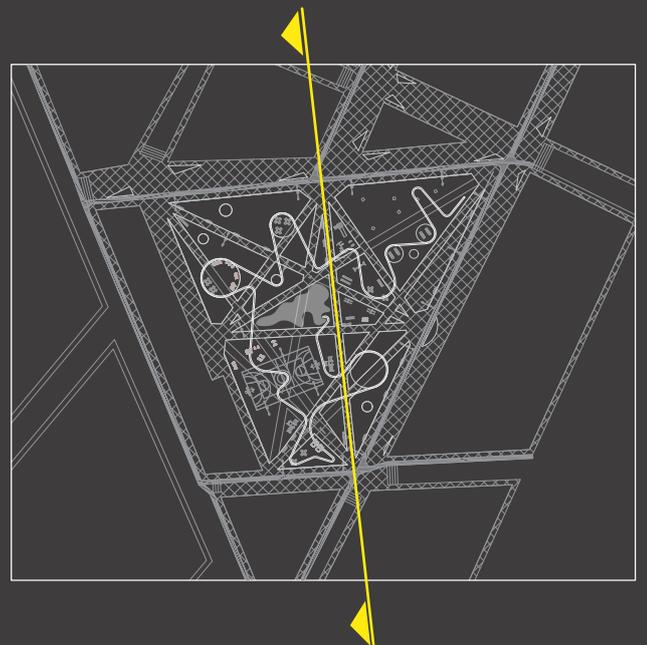
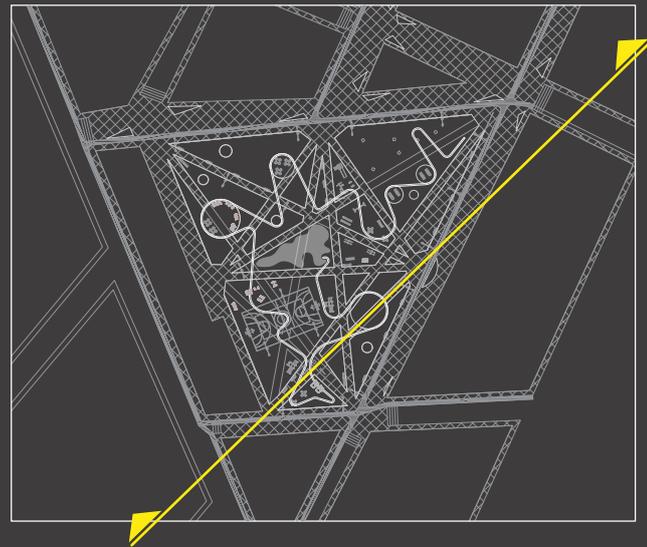
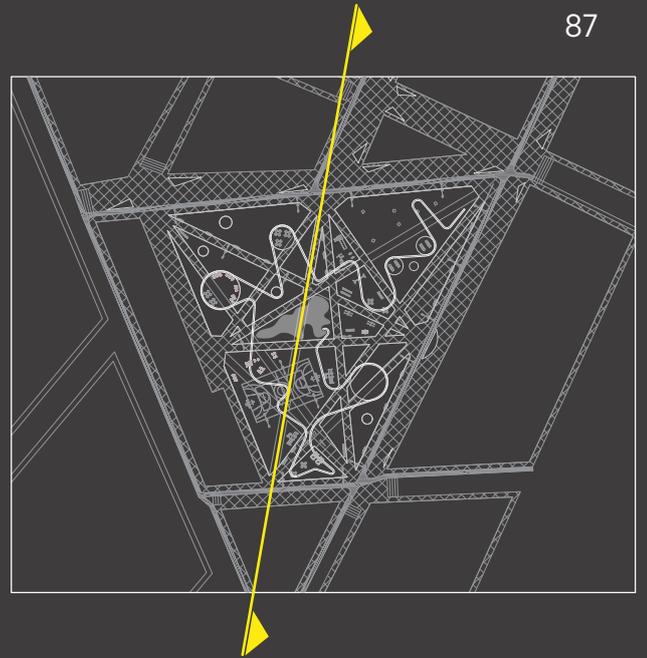
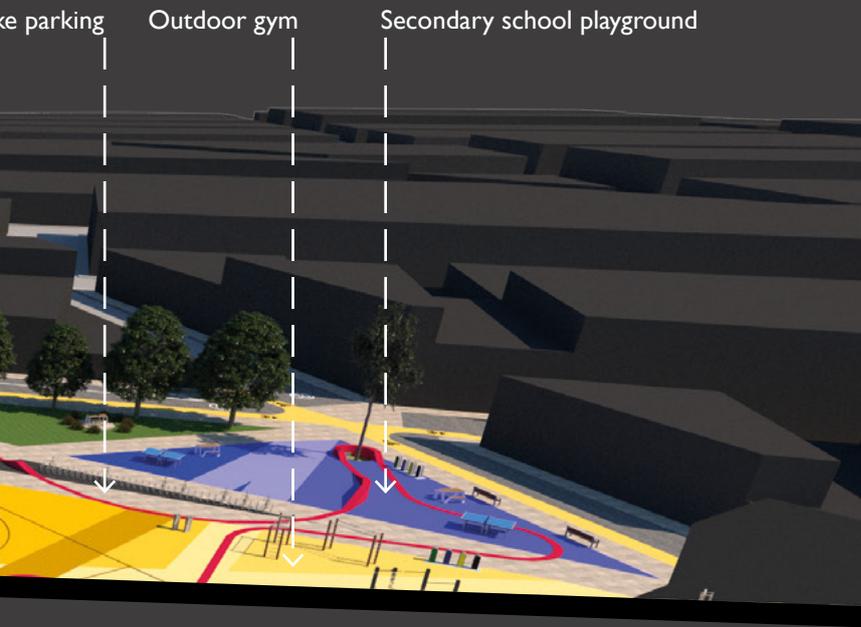
Bike parking

Climbing wall

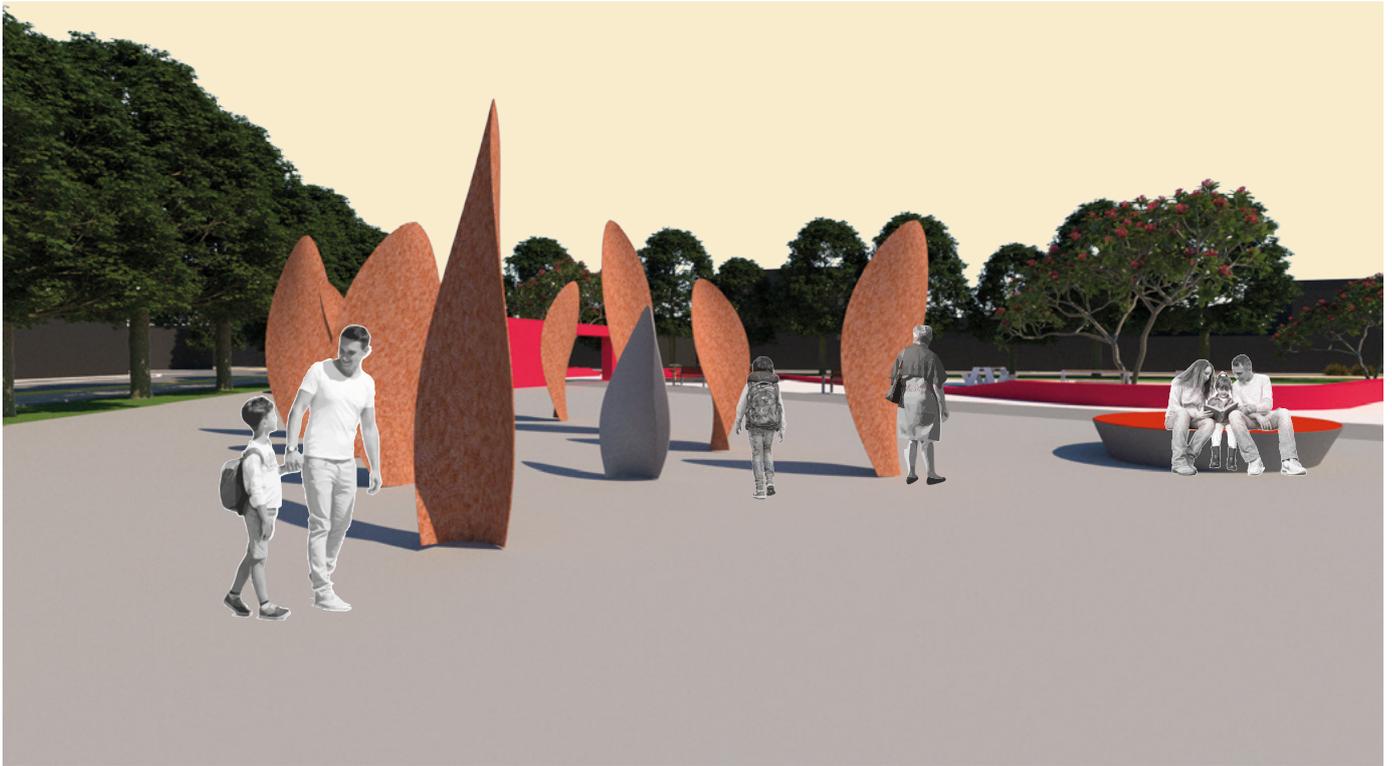
Ribbon tail

Pavilion





Art explanade



Area for exhibitions, sculptures, gallery, art workshops, artistic displays and music.

Northeastern access



Pedestrian crossing, bike lanes, zone 30. Access to park

Pavilion



Observation of surrounding activities like playgrounds and art explained.

Kindergarden playground.



Kindergarden playground.

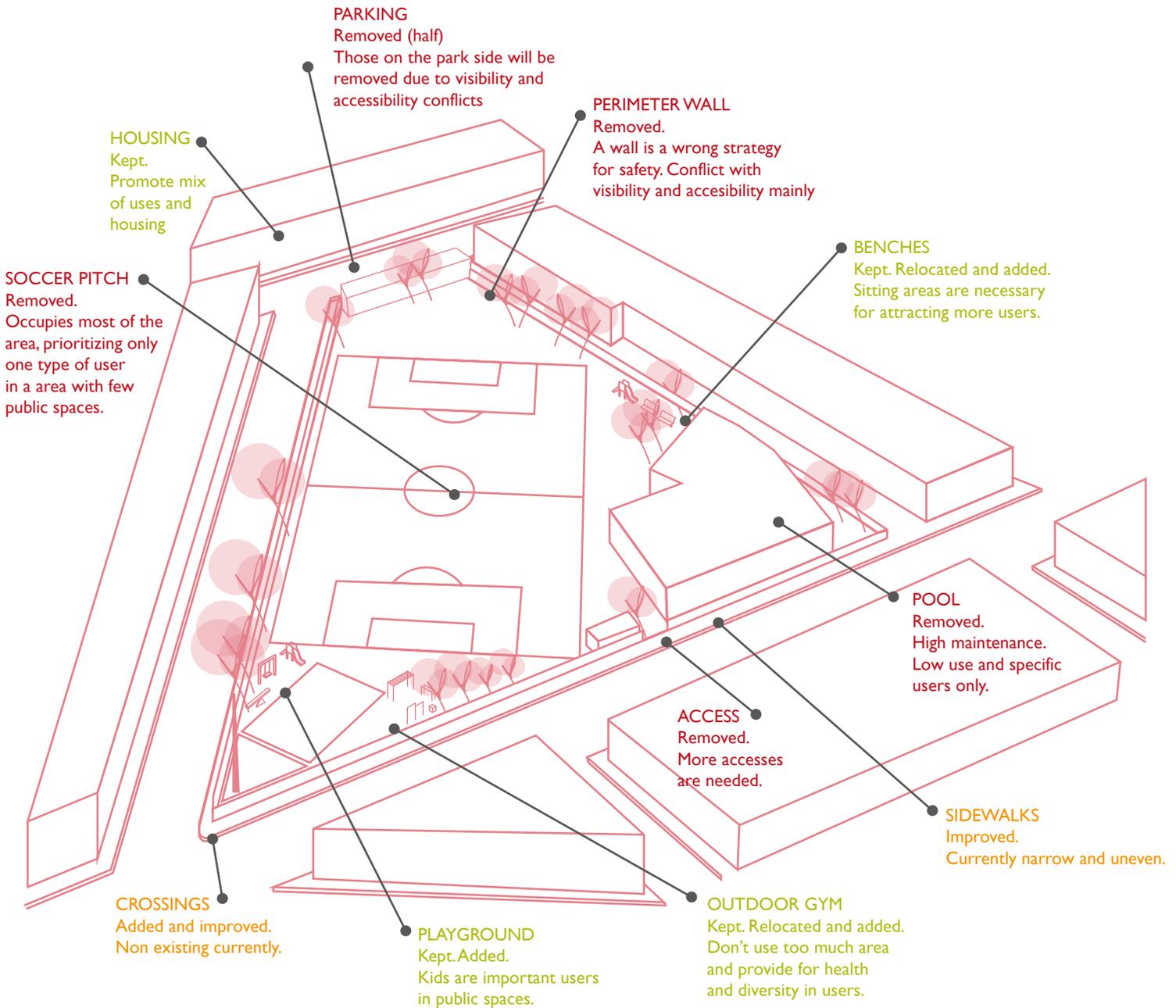




# JUST SPACE QUALITIES ASSESSMENT



# REMOVED/KEPT ELEMENTS



# CONCLUSIONS

This project was developed after the idea of developing a Just Space model for designing (or support the design) of public spaces, taking one in Mexico City as an example.

The existing research and application of the Just City was the starting point in understanding what can justice do for urban environments. Combining Fainstein's and MUF's concepts (democracy, equity, diversity, green, accesible, and fair) resulted in a first approach in understanding how design elements could be linked with justice, however, it proved that there was a need of other input to be able to take this step.

The context related approach of the Just City opened the idea of finding more resources in Mexico City and the people who is in charge of taking decisions, to dig out unseen problems and opportunities. The key actors and the chosen site fed the process, adding new layers of complexity and richness. The gathered information at this point asked for more and this is when the Humand Rights in the City came in. Using all of these inputs by analyzing, selecting, disregarding and proposing was the main objective, the time to connect ideas and to take stands.

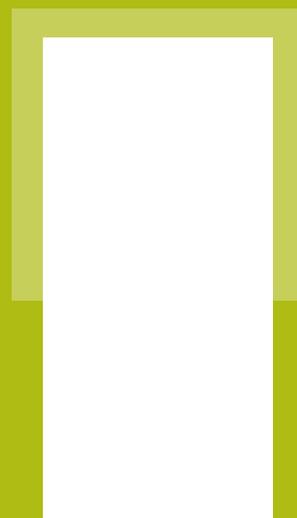
Deportivo Durango is a semi-public space located in an underdeveloped neighborhood, lacking, among other things, public spaces and green areas. The site provided with an interesting setting where justice could be a very relevant player in re-shaping it. The problems found in a given space can turn into possibilities for reflection. Applying the developed method of Just Spaces created a new setting where new discussions should arise.

A Just Space, by adding the Qualities defined in this project, is an inclusive, equitative, cohesive, accesible, modern, distinctive, democratic, creative, safe, healthful, adaptive and sustainable space, all of these qualities worked through process and design. It's fair to remember that Justice as in a Just Space doesn't belong to the objects, the lines or the colors themselves, justice is the fair mix of everything according to its regional context. Justice can be used to design or re-design public spaces as shown in this project but, considering that justice belongs to a place and time, to which extent is it possible then to design just public spaces?

This project comes to an end in these pages, however, it ends hoping for further questioning and development about the proposals shown here, hoping for a fresh mind and eyes, maybe even for someone foreign to the achitecture laguage, in order to keep proposing steps that can be followed in order to achieve more just spaces, and eventually, more just cities.

The persistence of injustice in the world's cities—dramatic inequality, unequal environmental burdens and risks and uneven access to opportunity—demands a continued and reinvigorated search for ideas and solutions.

(Griffin, Cohen and Maddox, 2015)



# REFLECTION

Due to the personal character of this section of the thesis, the following text will be written in first person, as opposed to the rest of the document.

Design and research are most of the times seen as the two faces of a coin, part of the same but either you go for one side or the other. The potential of research in design is, I believe, big and necessary. The opportunity that this project gave me represented a first at this scale, even after a five year Bachelor and one and a half years of Master studies. And it was a very valuable experience that I'll take with me for the years to come.

The process wasn't perfect of course, it is hard to stay on the same track from start to finish, specially when you get so much interesting input. Now that the project comes to an end it is appropriate to stop and reflect.

The process started as an ambition of taking Mexico City as a whole for analysing its public space strategies and proposing policies for improving the situation, promoting them from a Just City vision. Due to a requirement of having a design proposal this changed, and the need of having a specific place to put a proposal on brought Deportivo Durango into the equation. It made sense then to restructure the aim of the project and the focus of how to use the research and input already gathered. A decision that I struggled to take, since it meant giving up on my original intentions, ended up bringing a new exciting path once I fully embraced it. And the final result is something I'll always be very proud of.

The lack of a real bottom-up process that could add input from the inhabitants of the communities around Deportivo Durango is probably the biggest opportunity for improvement of this thesis. Including this could have benefitted the project both in the theoretical part and the design part, adding an additional layer of context specificity, which is one of the biggest points about a just design. The difficulty of being thousands of kilometers away from the study site was too difficult to breach, considering also the required time and energy that this would have required. Speaking about time and energy, here comes the next point of this reflection: the interviews.

The interviews are one of the best experiences of the whole process, because they were an opportunity to try myself in meeting high profile people, those in a decision making level, to ask, listen, comment, gather information and processing it afterwards, in order to get an understanding about how decision are taken, what's their perception about the city and how we could change it, if it is even possible at all. As a self defined

introvert, these meetings also challenged myself to abandon my comfort zone time after time every time I was driving or walking towards the next meeting. It is very eye-opening to be able to be face-to-face with these people who appear almost unreachable, and realize that they are actually pretty regular (not in any disrespectful way whatsoever) human beings, who are glad to share, engage in a conversation and admit own gaps in their professional roles and knowledge. As an ending point for these interviews I had the plan of bringing all of these people into the same room and have a conversation with all of them, a so called “multi-stakeholder meeting”, however, this time the pressure, stress and anxiety that every interview represented multiplied itself and for peace of mind I decided to not organize it, I felt it was already enough. Sometimes I regret the decision of not making this final effort, sometimes I don’t at all. In the end, it was an amazing process, and this took me to the next steps feeling more confident with the picture I was modelling in my mind and the situation about justice in Mexico City and how to proceed into the design phase.

The Just Space Qualities came after identifying similar factors and concepts through the process, but of course in the end you need to take decisions and it can never be a direct translation of everything that you get. All decisions are influenced not only by the input that you’re receiving during the process, but also by your own interests, preconceptions, reflections, background and many more things, and it always comes the insecurity of defining concepts, words that suddenly need to somehow express a whole process in a few letters, and this responsibility creates doubt and it is easier to avoid conflict and not define anything at all. This thesis taught me the importance of taking decisions, of understanding that every single decision could be challenged, and yet these challenges are needed, stands have to be taken, in order to let the process evolve. It might be you that will need to take steps back to re-think things, or in the best case you let your ideas in the open and hope that it creates enough curiosity or even conflict in someone else’s mind, and this can begin a new process, and this is right. This is actually true in my own process, understanding that The Just City literature and application was not enough to me, to this project, and that it is not meant to provide with all the answers but to raise other questions; we need to take decisions but not without reflecting about them.

This project was an exploration through an iteration, it was a very valuable opportunity. And it was a confirmation that we need to do more.

This project finishes as an open question to anyone, even to my future self: are these really steps towards achieving more just cities? are just cities something achievable at all?

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# APPENDIX

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COMMUNICATION  
WITH STAKEHOLDERS
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- 106** APPENDIX3:  
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# COMMUNICATION

Buen día,

El motivo de este correo es la posibilidad de acordar una entrevista con usted. Explico a continuación.

Mi nombre es Jorge Ahumada, estudiante de Maestría en Arquitectura y Planeación Urbana Sustentable en la Universidad de Chalmers en Gotemburgo, Suecia. Por motivo de mi tesis, la cual aborda temas de sustentabilidad social, principalmente del desarrollo social a través de la planeación urbana y diseño del espacio público, me encuentro realizando una investigación de las prácticas y estrategias de diseño al respecto en Ciudad de México.

Por este motivo estoy interesado en reunirme con gente cuyo trabajo esté involucrado, al mando o interesado en estos temas, tal como es el caso de **INSERTE NOMBRE DE EMPRESA U ORGANIZACIÓN**, con la finalidad de establecer una conversación acerca de lo que se hace en México, lo que se ha hecho y lo que se hará en el futuro, así como de lo que no se ha realizado aún y cuáles son las razones detrás de ello.

Todo lo anterior se realizará para obtener datos y perspectivas para presentar una imagen general sobre la situación y futuro de CDMX y elaborar una guía de estrategias de diseño enfocadas principalmente en espacio público para promover el desarrollo social.

Lo que solicitaría de ustedes es un espacio de aproximadamente 30 minutos en su agenda para llevar a cabo una conversación con algunas preguntas guía, en sus oficinas si así lo desean, en el horario de su preferencia, un día entre el 4 y 14 de marzo de este año.

Le agradezco su atención y quedo al pendiente para cualquier contacto, esperando que sea de su interés este tema y podamos llevar a cabo esta conversación acerca del futuro de nuestra ciudad y su gente.

Saludos

Arq. Jorge Ahumada Abrego

# COMMUNICATION

Good day,

The reason of this email is to discuss the possibility of arranging an interview with you. I explain the intention in the following.

My name is Jorge Ahumada, student enrolled in the Msc in Architecture and Planning Beyond Sustainability at Chalmers University, in Gothenburg, Sweden. I'm currently developing my thesis which is focused in social sustainability, mainly within social development through urban planning and public space design, for this reason I'm doing research about Mexico City's strategies and ongoing practices related to this.

In order to further develop my thesis I'm strongly interested in meeting with people whose work is involved in these topics, such as INSERT COMPANY OR ORGANIZATION NAME, with aims in establishing a conversation in what is being done in Mexico City, what has been done and what are the plans for the future, in addition to what hasn't been done yet and the reasons behind this.

All the previous will have the goal of collecting data and human perspectives from different levels in order to build a document about the current situation in Mexico City and the future of it, and elaborate a design for social development guide focused mainly in public space strategies.

What I would like to ask from you is 30 minutes of your time to realise this conversation through guiding questions, in your offices if so is your wish, in the time and day of your preference somewhere between the 4th and 14th of march.

I appreciate your attention and I'm available for any extra information that might be needed from your side, hoping that this is of your interest and we can have a fruitful discussion about the future of our city and its people.

Best regards,

Arch. Jorge Ahumada Abrego

**Just City: Just Spaces**

A research on Mexico City's public space strategies  
and a guide to achieve a more just city.  
Msc in Architecture and Planning Beyond Sustainability



**CHALMERS**  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

# CONVERSACCIONES MX

Un foro de discusión con múltiples expertos sobre el potencial del  
diseño urbano y el espacio público en el camino a  
**desarrollar ciudades más justas**

Instituciones gubernamentales, académicas, privadas y sociales  
reunidas en un espacio de intercambio y creación de ideas  
y potenciales colaboraciones multi-agentes

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¿Cuándo?

Semana del 18 al 22 de marzo de 2019  
(Día por definir)

¿Dónde?

CDMX (Sede por definir)

¿Más información?

En la parte posterior de esta invitación, por correo y whatsapp

# CONVERSACIONES MX

¿Interesado en participar?

El evento tendrá aproximadamente tres horas de duración con dos intermedios de 15 minutos con fika\*

Cada bloque será complementado por datos estadísticos, investigados por el autor de este trabajo o recolectados a través de las entrevistas individuales.

## INTRODUCCIÓN: Ciudades Justas (5 min)

Plática de introducción y contextualización (Jorge Ahumada)

## PRIMERA PARTE: La Ciudad Justa y el espacio público (40 min)

Temas a desarrollar:

1. Construcción de una definición grupal de Ciudad Justa.
2. El rol del espacio público en una Ciudad Justa.
3. Agendas de sustentabilidad y su enfoque social en la actualidad.

## SEGUNDA PARTE: CDMX, ¿una ciudad justa con sus habitantes? (45 min)

1. CDMX y la Ciudad Justa. Injusticias urbanas
2. El espacio público como elemento de justicia en CDMX
3. Estrategias actuales en CDMX trabajando con espacio público

## TERCERA PARTE: Acciones para una ciudad más justa (60 min)

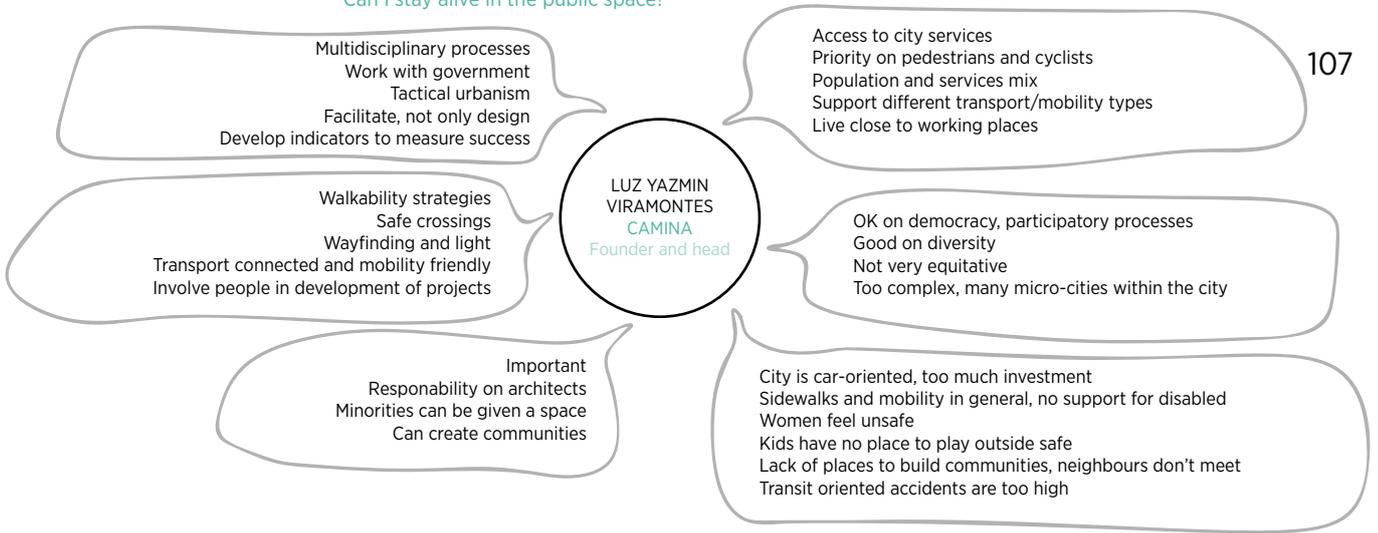
1. Construcción de FODA sobre la situación en CDMX hacia realizar una ciudad más justa
2. Identificación de elementos de diseño y estrategias para realizar Espacios Públicos Justos
3. Identificación de colaboraciones y métodos necesarios para CDMX
4. Reflexiones individuales y grupales

Si estás interesado en participar y/o colaborar de alguna otra manera, por favor no dudes en contactar a través del correo y número de teléfono incluídos en esta invitación

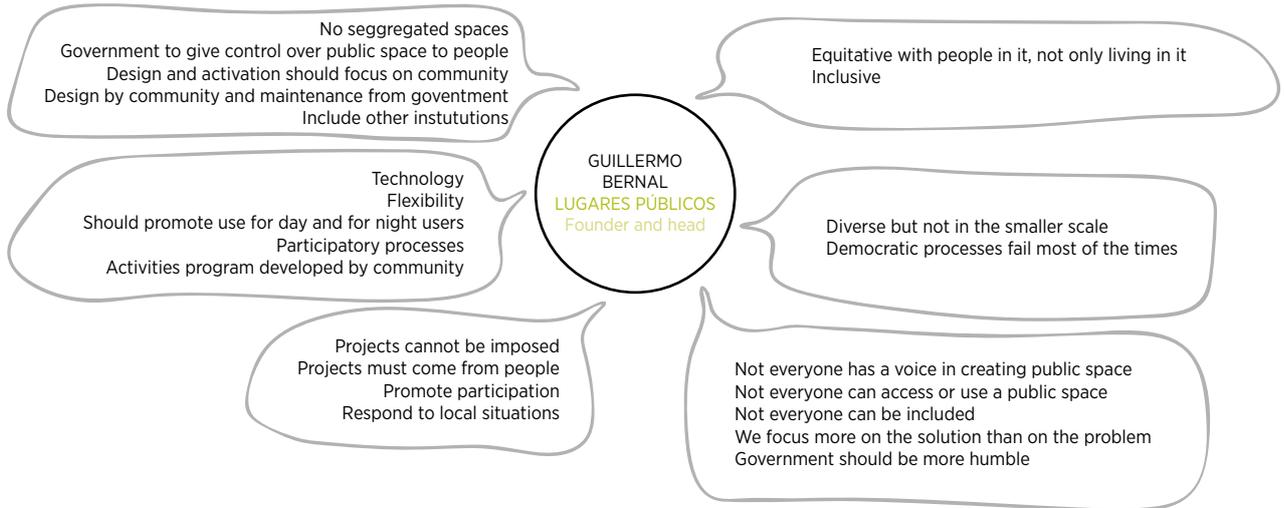
\*fika es un término sueco para denominar al momento de café y snacks con plática informal



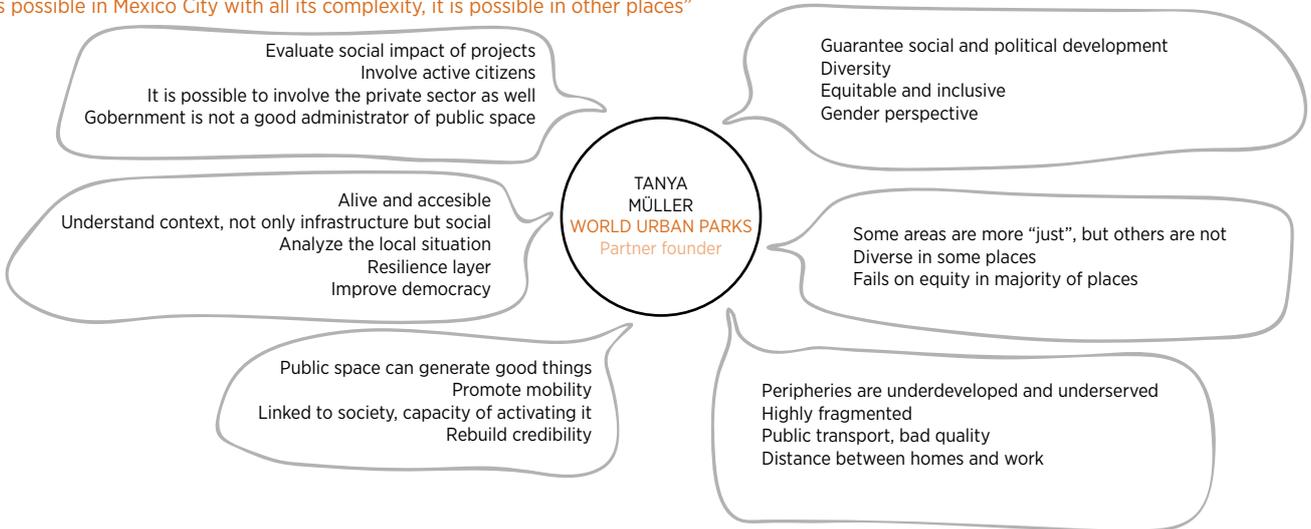
“Can I stay alive in the public space?”



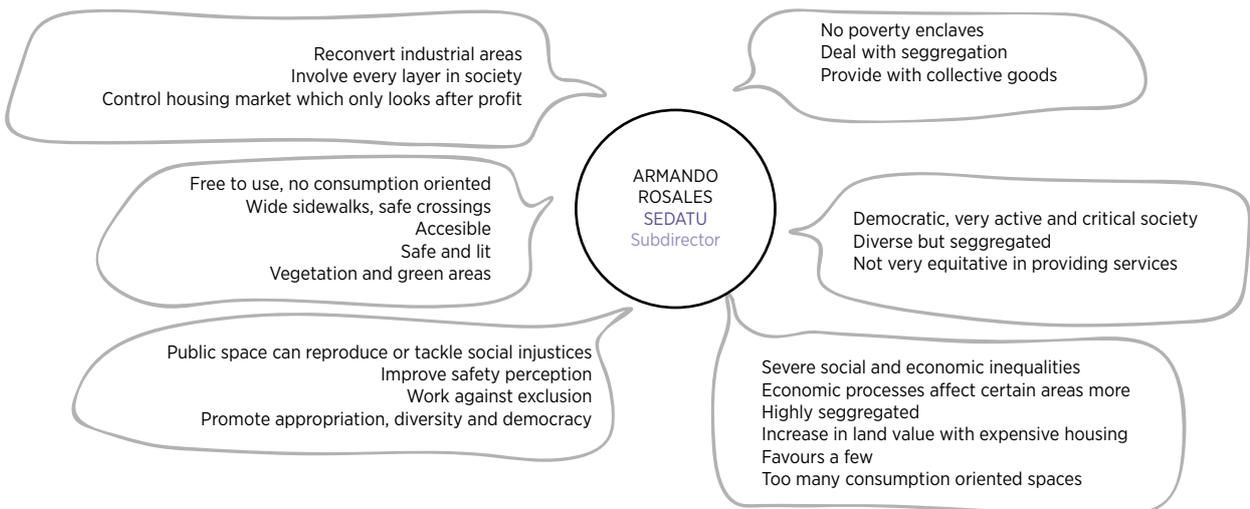
“Technology can help breach barriers”



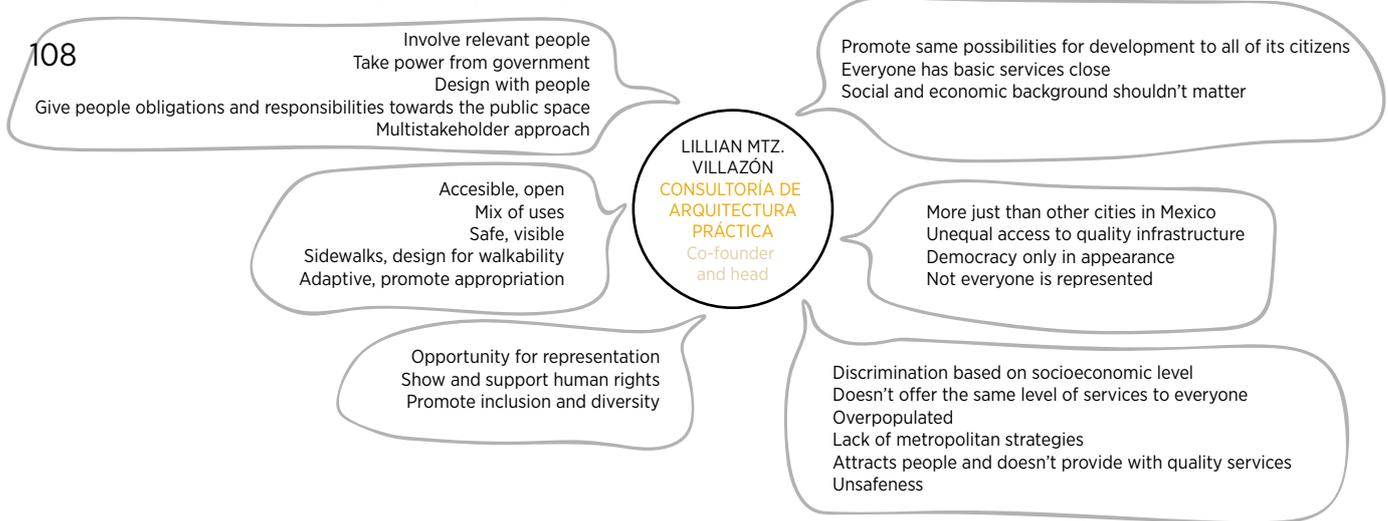
“If it's possible in Mexico City with all its complexity, it is possible in other places”



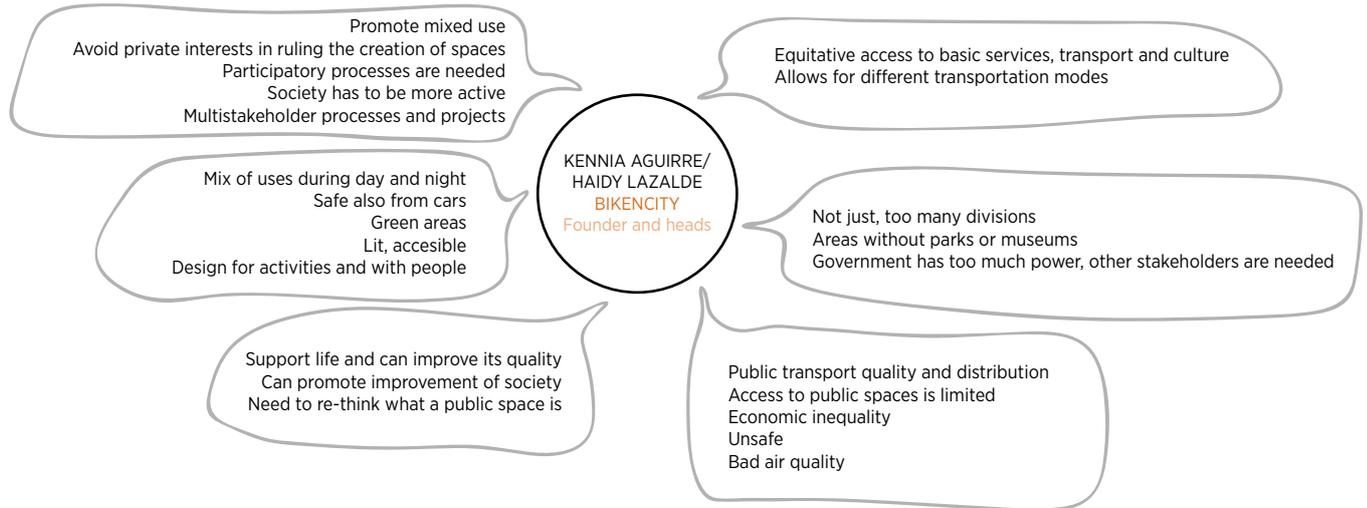
“Without dignified public space, to develop oneself is harder”



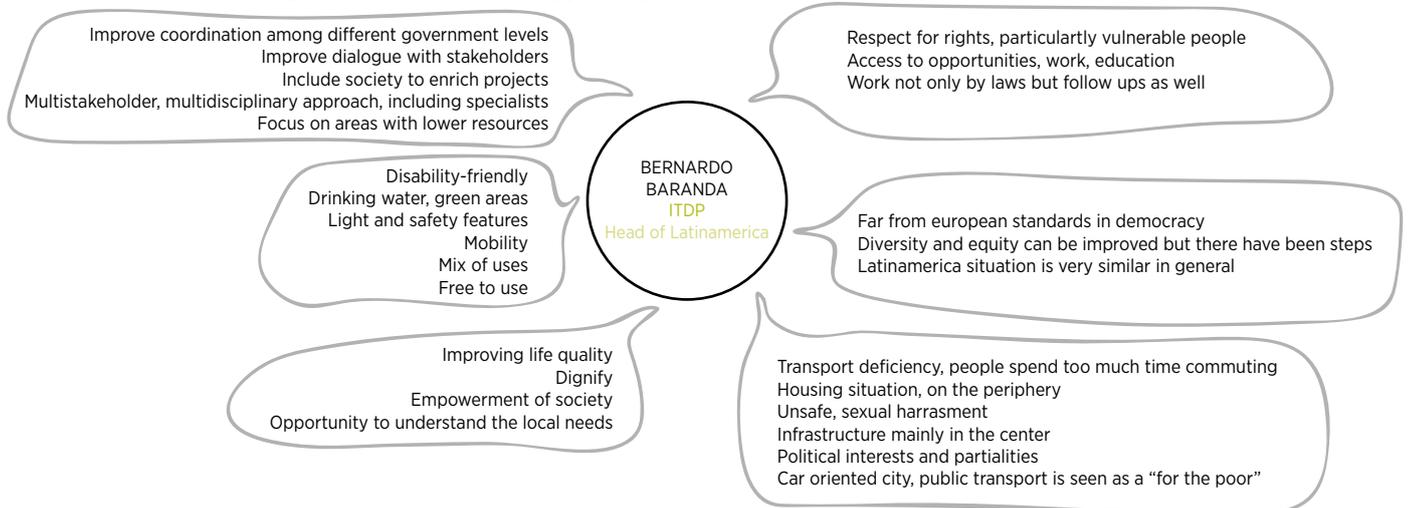
"Public space is as public as private interest allows it"



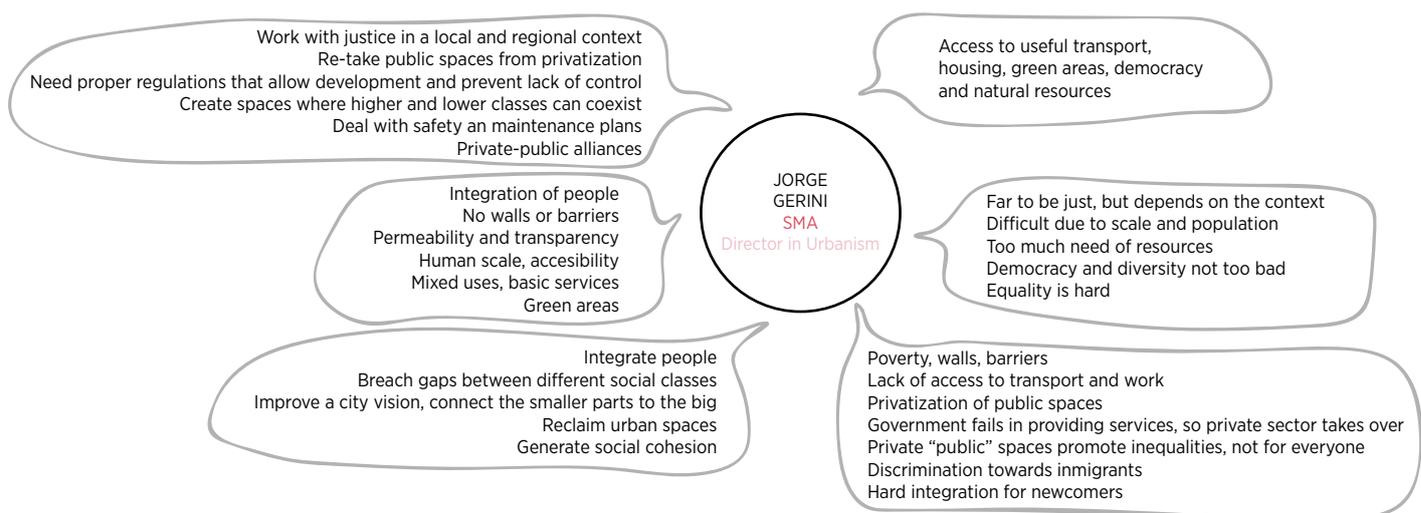
"Participatory processes aren't done due of lazyness"



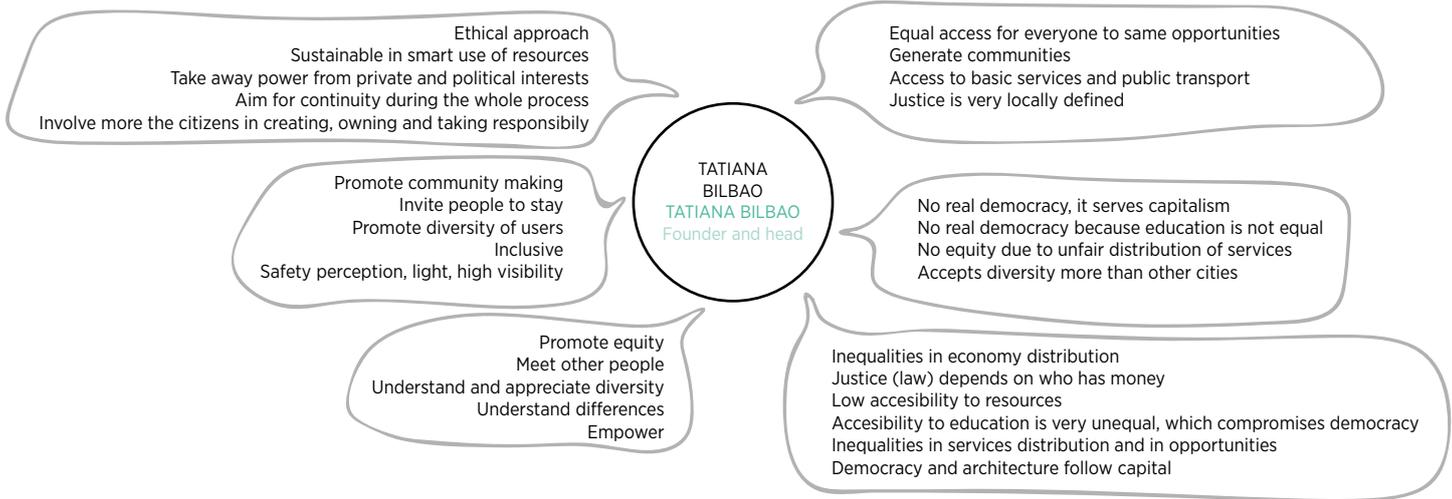
"Government should have more long term visions and look for support in specialists"



"How many people can the city actually support? We're creating an ecological crisis with cities like this"



“Every space that gathers people, where you get the chance to see others, is an opportunity to create a more just city”



“There is no clear interest in research”





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Spring 2019