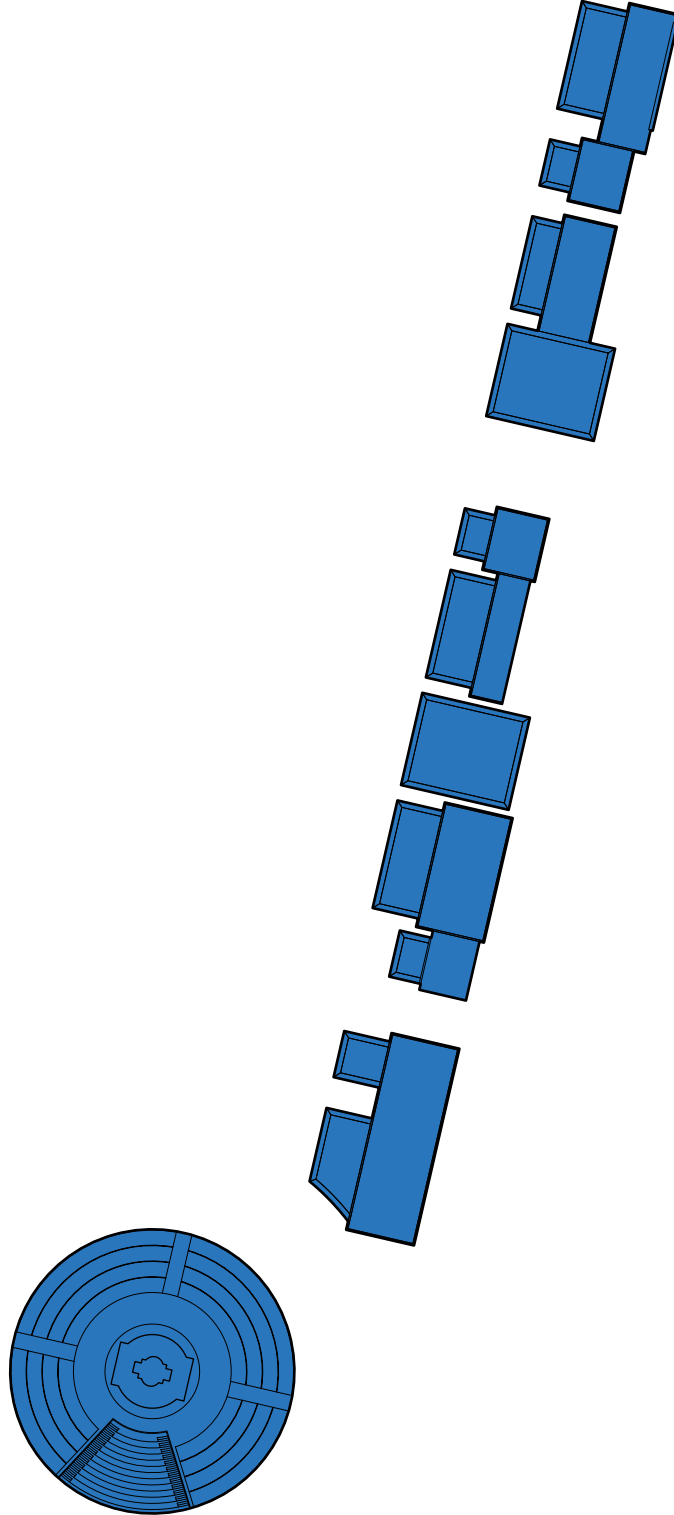


THRESHOLDS OF TAKSIM

A NEW STRATEGY OF URBAN REVITALIZATION



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Thresholds of Taksim
a new strategy of urban revitalization
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AAHM10 | Degree Project in Architecture

Abstract

Spatial experience can be perceived as a kind of exploration of space that evolves within the fragments of lived moments and transforms over time. Squares, parks, and streets are the primary urban spaces where social interactions are experienced at an extremely high level. Taksim is one of the most important and memorable public spaces of Istanbul, Turkey by being an assemblage of a square, a park, and surrounding structures.

The fragmented transformation in Taksim, so-called a process of disidentification, follows a perspective that takes into account how the changes in the essence of a public space have transformed the area into a decontextualised void.

The lack of enclosure of the square, out of scale spatial configurations and the disappearance of urban continuity which cause spatial orientation and articulation problems are the major problems that adversely affect the urban experience are observed under the existing conditions.

This project aims to reactivate and redefine Taksim and its surroundings by enhancing spatial integrity, creating new interventions, and providing new functions to contribute to the development of daily life activities. To accomplish this aim, this project uses threshold spaces as a tool to revitalize an historical urban public space in the context of a collective memory.

It explores a spatial orientation that recontextualizes the users in the square within the spatial framework and integrates with the urban memory through the use, reinterpretation, and design of transition spaces.

The vanished traces of the past and the traces that are still accessible will be references for spatial definitions on the revitalization of urban public spaces by investigating the historical breaking points defined by the political background and the urban interventions affecting the process of change in Taksim.

Contents

Abstract

Introduction

- 9 Memory of Urban Space
- 10 A Place with a Memory
- 11 Aim
- 11 Outline and Structure

1. Understanding the Urban Context

14 Urban Layout of Istanbul

- 16 Location of Taksim in Istanbul
- 18 From an Historical City to a Global City
- 20 Public Square Network
- 22 Arterial Roads

24 Emergence and Evolution of Beyoğlu

- 24 Pera to Beyoğlu in the Late Ottoman Era
- 24 1923-1950
- 25 1950-1985
- 25 1985 and Afterwards

26 Urban Context Analyses

- 28 Location of Taksim in Beyoğlu
- 30 Entrances
- 32 Public Transportation
- 34 Landmarks
- 36 Park No:2
- 38 Greenery Network

2. Taksim Square as an Urban Stage

41 Disidentification Process of Taksim Square

44 Layers of Interventions

48 Site Analyses

- 50 Location
- 52 Land Use
- 54 Borders / Boundaries
- 56 Urban Axis
- 58 Movement / Flow

3. Design Proposal

61 Existing Condition and Site Visit

68 Problems and Elements of the Urban Void

- 68 Taksim Square
- 68 Republic Monument
- 68 The remaining area of Talimhane
- 69 Cumhuriyet Avenue
- 69 Taksim Underpass

70 Design Strategies

72 Site Plan

74 Exploded Axonometric

76 Floor Plans

84 Spatial Flexibility

- 84 The Square
- 84 Cumhuriyet Avenue
- 84 Gezi Park

86 Sections

92 Model Images

96 Visualisations

4. Threshold Space Analyses

101 Threshold Space

102 Threshold Analyses Parameters

- 102 Spatial Definition
- 102 Spatial Sequence
- 103 Spatial Structure
- 103 Spatial Situation

Reflections

Bibliography

Figures

Introduction

Space does not solely describe a particular place where we live, but rather a social and political product (Lefebvre, 1991). It is a concept that can be interpreted in terms of the integrity of the network of relations established with its arrangement, formation, topography, and physical environment. The city is a collection of spaces that respond to human needs socially and physically in all aspects. From a morphological point of view, urban space can be studied separately or holistically together with its constitutive elements. In establishing the relationship between the form and the context, not only the physical framework of the space, but also the social components and historical background that compose them should be examined (Özbek, 2021).

A designed space continues to exist as a dynamic object with its dialectic and without being abstracted from time. It is shaped within the framework of urban identity and without breaking the urban structure. The interaction of the object and the subject contributes to the different interpretations of the space according to the personal interactions of the users by vitalizing an inactive space (Derman, 2020). Spatial experience can be perceived as a kind of exploration of space that evolves within the fragments of lived moments and transforms over time. Squares, parks, and streets are the primary urban spaces where social interactions are experienced at an extremely high level. Such urban spaces can be considered as interaction points or nodes that provide and reflect spatial dialectics and experience with their physical configurations, social, cultural, and historical features (Özbek, 2021).

In terms of defining space, thresholds are spatial appearances that disrupt spatial boundaries, allowing for movement and organizing transitions in space (Boettger, 2014). People cross a variety of different spatial boundaries every day by transiting through one territory to another. A boundary as a spatial delimiter, defines spaces by fragmenting smaller spaces from a larger spatial organisation (Joedicke, 1985). A threshold space is a space that is defined by thresholds and space-defining elements which serves as a preface to the perception of architectural space while establishing not only the transition or movement but also the physical space itself (Boettger, 2014).

Herman Hertzberger defines the thresholds: "The threshold provides the key to the transition and connection between areas with divergent territorial

claims and, as a place in its own right, it constitutes, essentially, the spatial condition for the meeting and dialogue between areas of different orders." (Hertzberger, 1991). This means that the thresholds are transitional spaces between nearby territories with various territorial claims and places of encounter and interaction. Framing and establishing an entrance as the essence of a threshold space provide orientation and promotes an approach to the space (Boettger, 2014). Thresholds, although allowing for transition and reconciliation, are connected with unique symbolic meanings and sociocultural behavioural codes (Stevens, 2007).

Memory of Urban Space

City is the locus of collective memory (Rossi & Eisenman, 1982) which is a set of memories that cannot be interpreted apart from the spatial references (Halbwachs, 1980). Architecture and landscape are significant influential social structures in shaping collective memory and have an impact on the emergence of new collective memories (Rossi & Eisenman, 1982). Such structures are often called 'urban reminders' and have a major impact on urban memory by arousing curiosity in order to encourage people to discover the forgotten past of the place and to convey historical information (Lewicka, 2008).

Remembering and forgetting the past, collectively and individually, is part of what defines our memory of places. Cities with deep-rooted historical layers are constantly experiencing a process of change caused by urban dynamics throughout history and have functioned as essential symbols of the civilizations they belong to by embodying various representative meanings of urban space (Gül, et al., 2014).

In contrast to the never-ending processes of urban change, the essence of the issue is the significance of these memorable fragments since they come together as layers shaping the memory of the city (Rose-Redwood, et al., 2008). Spatial and functional changes, especially in historical city centres, tend to shape the urban memories of the citizens (Erbey, 2017) and the culture in the city.

Thus, changing urban memory not only affects urban history, but also influences the emotional bond and sense of identity of the citizens (Wang, 2016) through the loss of spatial memories.

Christine Boyer contends that, city is a collective expression of architecture, and the memory of citizens is transferred to the present through physical artifacts, for instance the city's streets, monuments, and architectural forms (Boyer, 1994). Furthermore, Maria Lewicka has proposed the term 'place memory' which symbolizes the concept of place as a way of defining the integration between people and place (Lewicka, 2008). Thus, places are remembered throughout the elements of a social history of urban space (Hayden, 1995) and such urban spaces are significant parts of everyday life (Francis, 1987).

A Place with a Memory

Cities have been used as 'theatres' for parades, celebrations, demonstrations, and other public events where political powers show their ideologies and individuals embrace various symbolic meanings (Blockmans, 2003). City squares are strategic focus points which act as urban nodes (Lynch, 1960) and function as primary public spaces where everyday life activities coincide with political events (Batuman, 2015).

Public spaces where the concerns of power relations and political ideologies are represented in society (Goverde, 2009) have formed significant meanings through landmark events, therefore people attach symbolic importance to places because of their experiences and memories related to certain events (Gül, et al., 2014). Taksim, the focus of this study, is one of the most important and memorable public spaces of Istanbul, Turkey by being an assemblage of a square, a park, and surrounding structures.

It is considered the heart of modern Istanbul and located in the Beyoğlu district on the European part of the city. It is the major tourist attraction and leisure centre of Istanbul with its restaurants, shops, hotels, entertainment, and cultural places. At the present time, Taksim, which has become an important transportation hub, functions as a crossroad rather than a square.

The fragmented transformation in Taksim, so-called a process of disidentification, follows a perspective that takes into account how the changes in the essence of a public space have transformed the area into a decontextualised void, as the political power sees the square as a terrain of demonstration rather than enhancing the spatial integrity within the framework of urban memory.

Since the transformation process of Taksim unfolds in fragments, it becomes necessary to examine the area likewise in order to better understand the current situation of everyday life within the spatio-temporal context.

Everyday life and its series of rhythmic activities that take place within its own context have a significant impact and potential to transform and produce space (Kärrholm, 2015). The elements around Taksim, which perform their functions independently from each other, are actually a set of functions that are intertwined and interacted with each other by the user activities. Apart from their main function and programme, such elements with various functional purposes act as a connector that communicates with the user in order to integrate their spatial existence and materiality with everyday life.

For instance, the Republic Monument, which is one of the most important constitutive elements of the construction of Taksim as a square, becomes a connector that integrates with everyday life and with the square by being a waiting, a meeting, and a gathering point apart from its symbolic meaning. Florists, a frequented place with a temporary structure that is not in a stationary location, is also a connector that can be found on one side of the Square. The street food vendors which are mobile and haphazardly settled on the periphery of the monument and the square and along Istiklal Avenue are another connector.

In the spatialization process, lived space incorporates tangible evidence of ordinary social connections. According to Lefebvre, 'everyday life as a lived experience' has energy within itself that may be utilised to modify space and he makes an important contribution to the integration of life and urban space by developing the notion of lived space as a link between spatial actions and spatial representations (Highmore, 2002; Lefebvre, 1991).

For this reason, in order to provide interaction between people and their physical spaces, everyday life becomes a vital factor. The Square, which is engraved as a place where protest groups voice their complaints related to many social and ideological reasons (Gül, et al., 2014) serves for many ideological groups in Turkey with its powerful historical background by means of a political representation and a spatially symbolic meaning.

Hence, it has an outstanding significance in the urban identity of Istanbul and in the memory of its inhabitants (Özaydın, 2012).

It is prone to conflicts and transformations due to the fact that it is a product of an ideology representation and still retains an intense symbolic status as arguably the most important public gathering place in Istanbul. The change in political balances over time has caused many ideological groups to make different claims on the hegemonic meaning of the Square (Kilciler, 2016).

In this context, as a platform used by governments to demonstrate and emphasize their ideologies and social practices to the public in every period since its emergence and evolution, urban interventions were held in Taksim Square that left significant traces on the morphology and memory of the city (Gül, et al., 2014).

Aim

The spatial configuration around the square and Taksim has been shaped and characterized by city expansion and development along with the functions of buildings on the square. It was specifically designed for an overview; it could be viewed by its surroundings as an object, or it could be the viewer as a subject.

The lack of enclosure of the square and the disappearance of urban continuity which cause spatial orientation and articulation problems in urban space are the two major problems that adversely affect the urban experience are observed under existing conditions in Taksim. Hence, a new urban organisation is deemed necessary that will transform the existing undefined space into a series of interconnected spaces in a flexible configuration where space, event, and movement converge into a larger system.

This project, therefore, aims to reactivate and redefine Taksim and its surroundings as an urban stage that is either being watched or lived, to reintroduce the square to the memory of the city and to create an integration with the current urban fabric while studying the relationship between spatial experience, time, and function. To accomplish this aim, this project considers spatial elements of encounter and relations of dialogue with people and place as a 'site of memory' (Nora, 1996) in order to enhance social and spatial interactions through shared values of culture and history by emerging new threshold spaces.

It is aimed to enhance spatial integrity in the Square and Gezi Park, the monument and its periphery, and along the Cumhuriyet Avenue by creating new interventions such as using the Monument as a transition space to access the metro and bus levels, creating new functions on the lower level to link the two different functional volumes as a single space, increasing the water elements that refer to the past from the wall of Maksem building towards Istiklal Street and providing new functions to contribute to the development of daily life activities.

This project is a proposal to use threshold spaces as a tool to revitalize an historical urban public space in the context of collective memory. It explores a spatial orientation that recontextualizes the users in the square within the spatial framework and integrates with the urban memory through the use, reinterpretation, and design of transition spaces.

The vanished traces of the past and the traces that are still accessible will be references for spatial definitions on the revitalization of urban public spaces by investigating the historical breaking points defined by the political background and the urban interventions affecting the process of change in Taksim.

Outline and Structure

This thesis is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter, I defined the urban space to be considered. I subsequently examined the topic of "understanding the urban context" by highlighting analysis maps in both urban and neighbourhood scales with the historical background that addresses the emergence and evolution of Beyoğlu. In the second chapter, layers of interventions are analysed in order to identify the process of how Taksim Square become an Urban Stage by revealing the disidentification process of the square in detailed site analyses in different aspects.

In the third chapter, in order to support my previous analyses, I conducted a site visit. After the findings for design are identified, I applied them to an architectural project and proposed a new design to revitalize Taksim and its surroundings. In the fourth chapter, parameters for spatial analyses are identified and applied within the framework of Egon Schirmer and Till Boettger's threshold space analyses.

Understanding the Urban Context

Urban Layout of Istanbul

Emergence and Evolution of Beyoğlu

Urban Context Analyses

Istanbul, the city between continents, is the most populated city in Turkey with a population of over 15 million residents (TURKSTAT, 2022), serving as the country's economic, cultural and historic centre. The city crosses the Bosphorus sea and acts as a bridge connecting Europe and Asia.

Its urban configuration has altered drastically due to the implementation of massive infrastructure projects which have been ongoing for previous years and have had a significant impact on the city's urban character.

This chapter analyses the project site, Taksim, on various factors both on the urban scale and the neighbourhood scale. It also addresses different phases of the emergence and urban evolution of Beyoğlu from various angles and by combining different aspects that have been characterizing the neighbourhood.

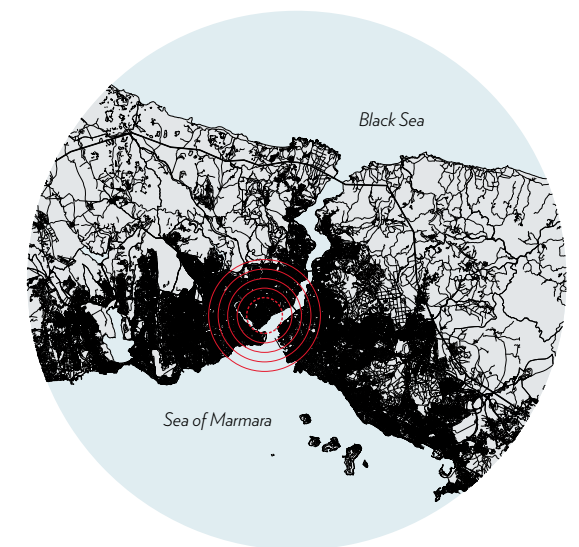
The focus is on exploring the elements and conditions that have contributed to the expansion and growth of the district, and on comprehending the aspects that affected the evolution of the architecture and the urban structure of the area.

A brief description of the emergence and urban evolution of Beyoğlu discusses the effects in four main phases, which are "Pera to Beyoğlu in the Late Ottoman Era", "1923-1950", "1950-1985", and "1985 and Afterwards".

In order to understand Beyolu's dynamic transformation over the last century, it is necessary to consider all of these transitions and aspects.



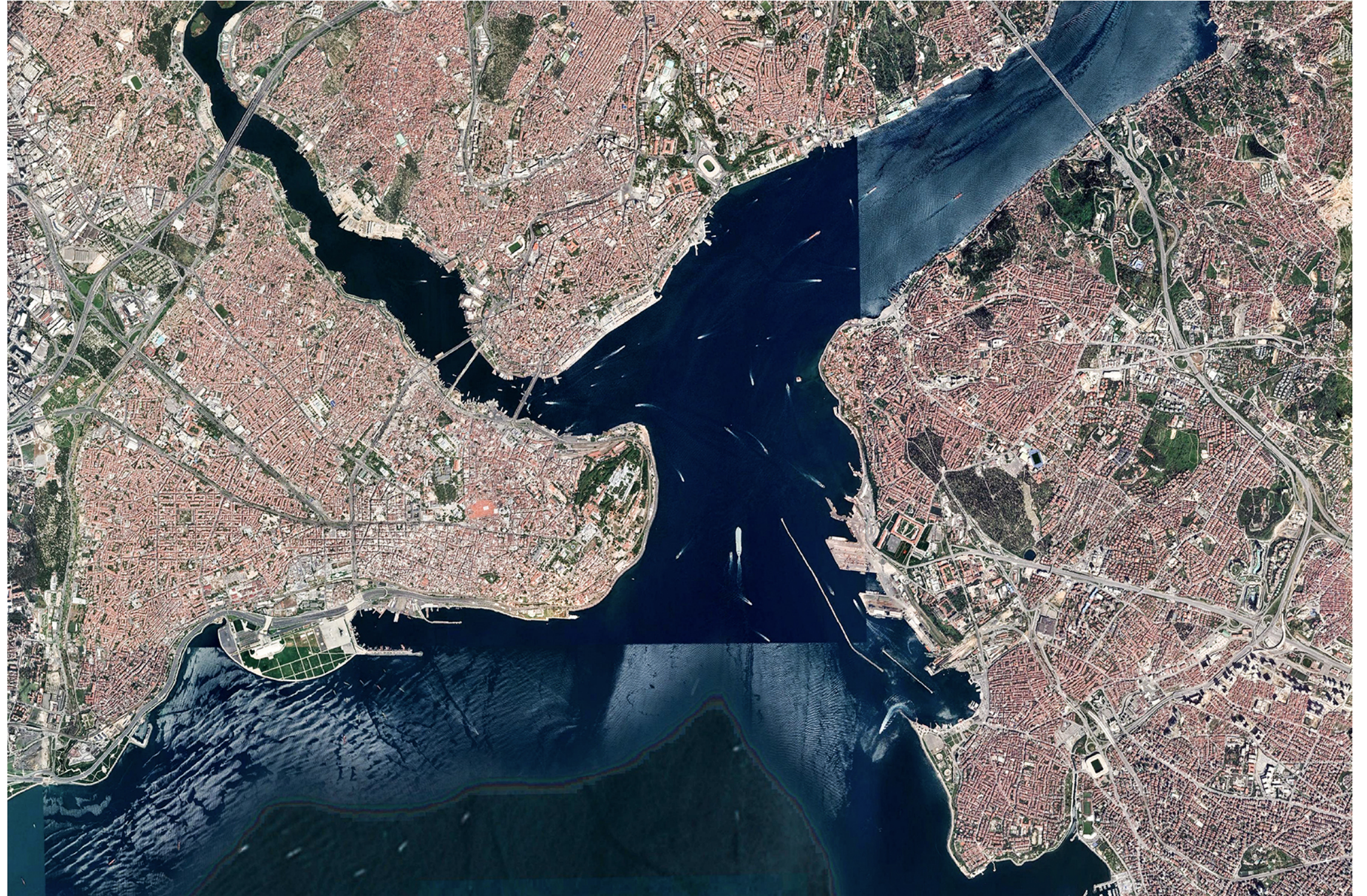
Turkey, transcontinental country in Eurasia



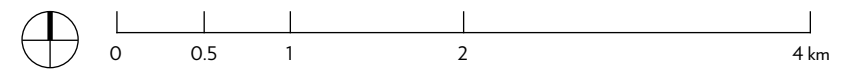
Istanbul, city between continents

Urban Layout of Istanbul

This subchapter addresses the urban layout of Istanbul through site analyses maps on the urban scale that explore some of its most relevant inner structures such as its location, city centre shift, public square network, and arterial roads will be highlighted to serve as a support for the basic understanding of the position of Taksim within the urban context.

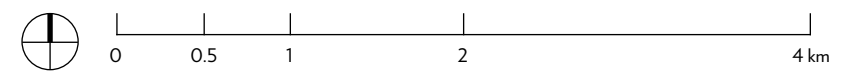
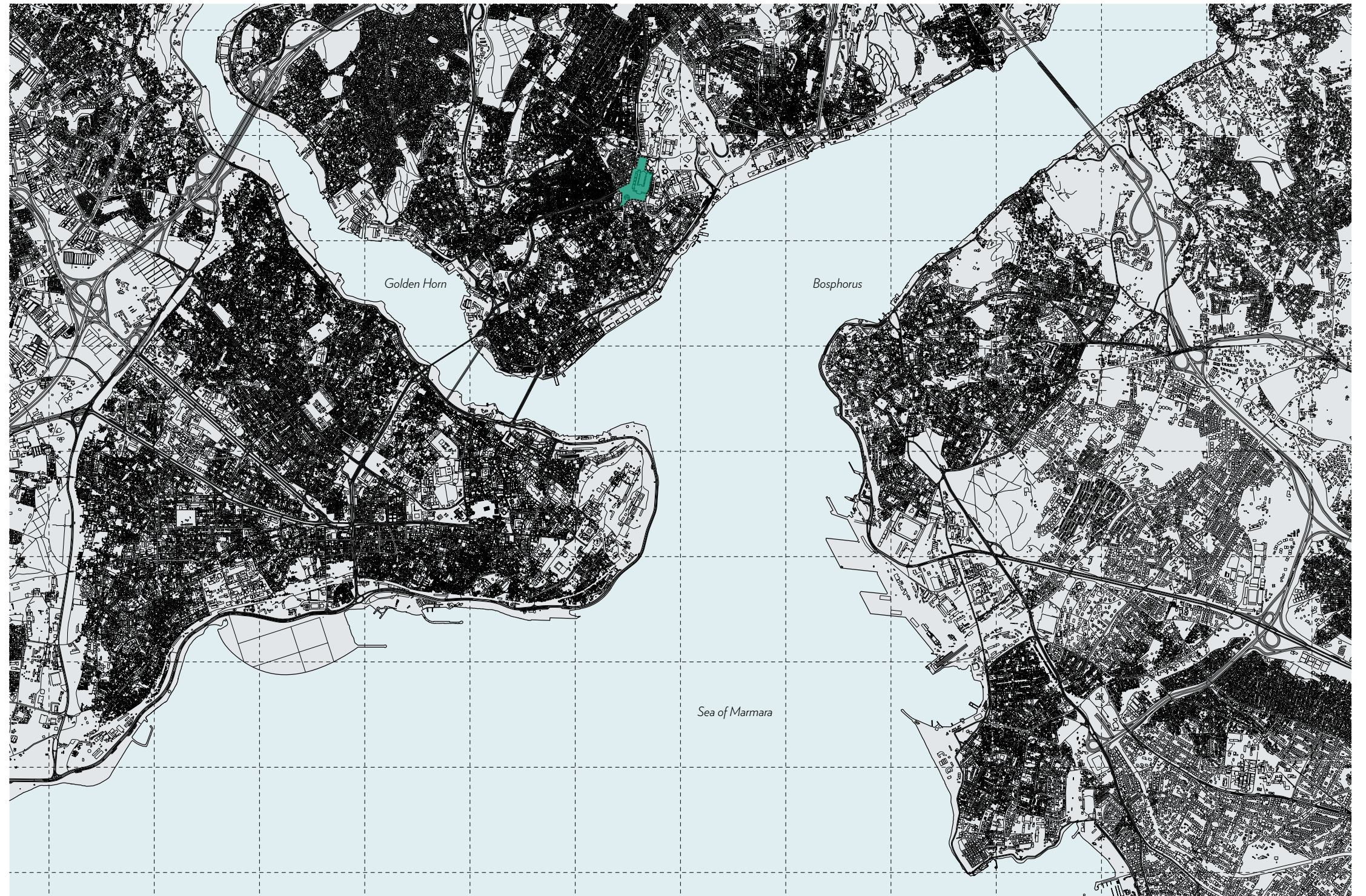


1.1 Google Earth imagery of Istanbul Peninsula, taken in 2021.



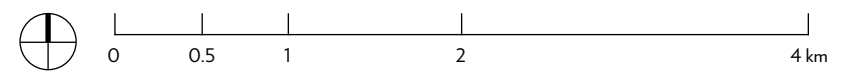
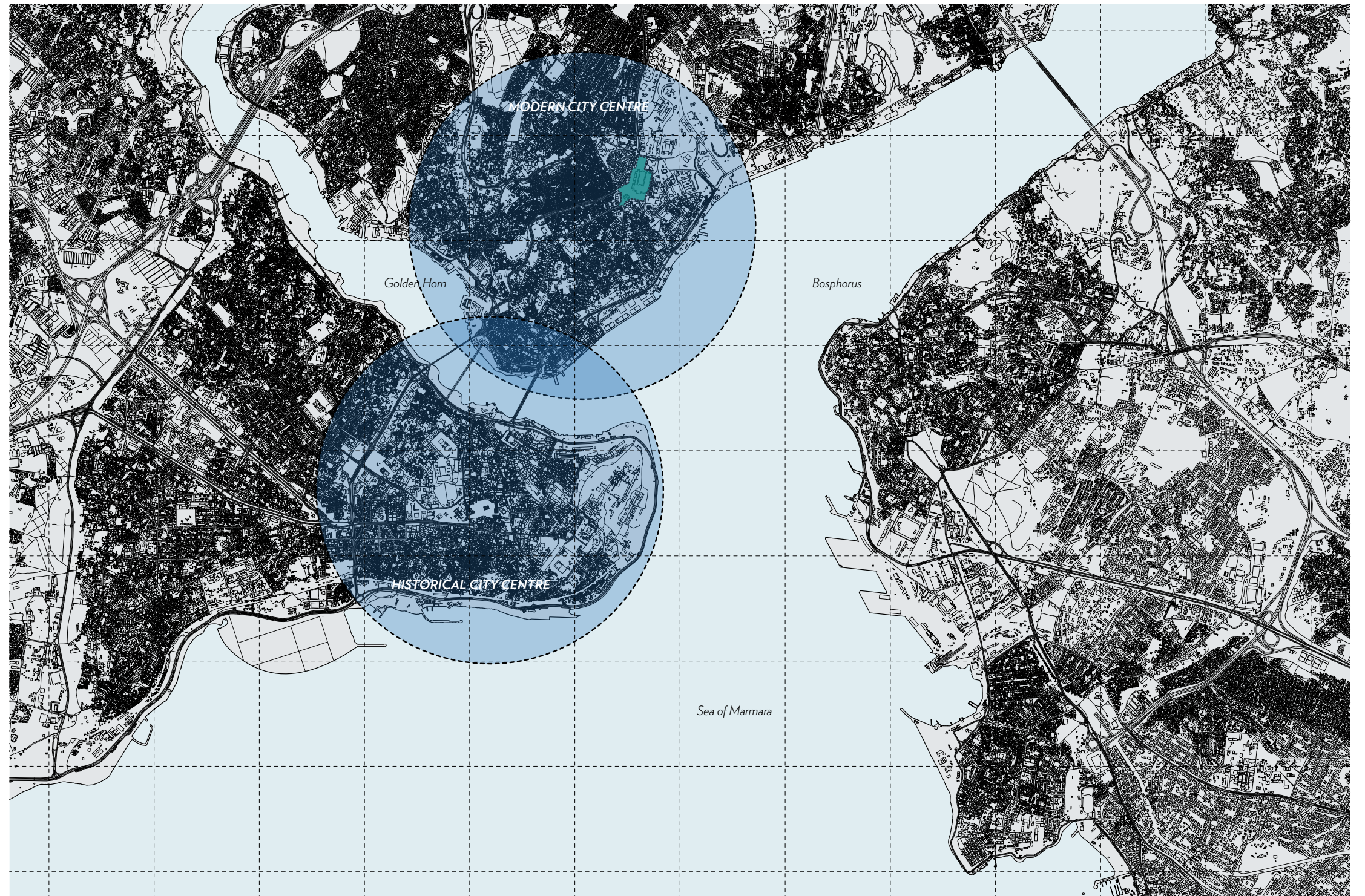
Location of Taksim in Istanbul

Taksim is situated in Beyoğlu district in the European part of Istanbul, Turkey.



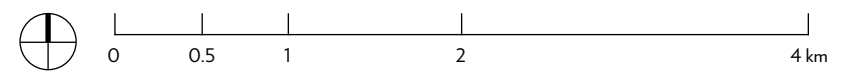
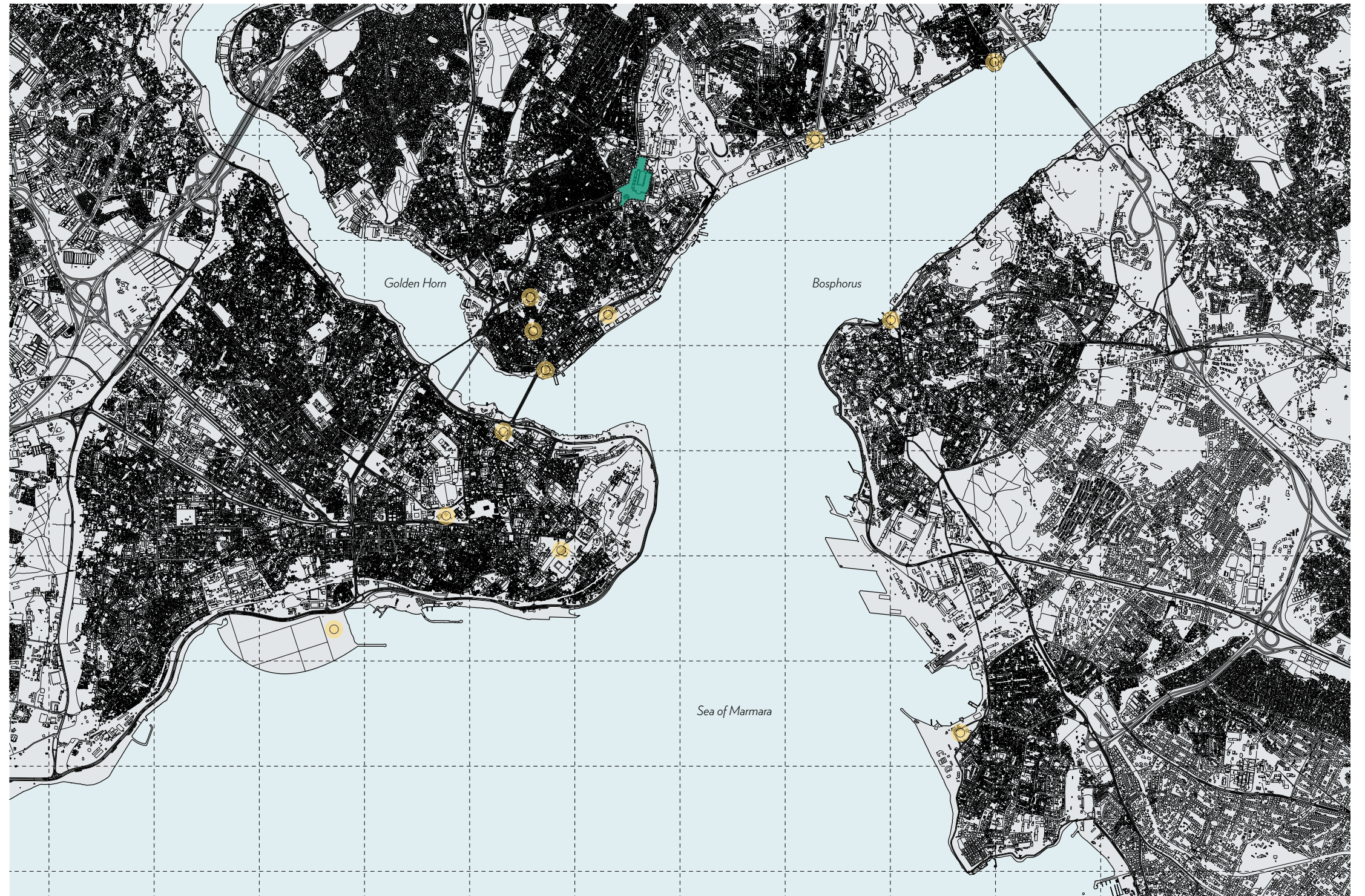
From an Historical City to a Global City

As a result of urban developments, the city expanded from the historical peninsula, which was its old centre, towards Galata and Beyoğlu, and Taksim Square emerged as a product of this expansion in spatial terms, and in this way, Beyoğlu and its surroundings became the new face of the city.



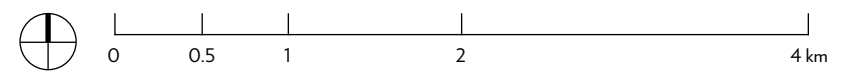
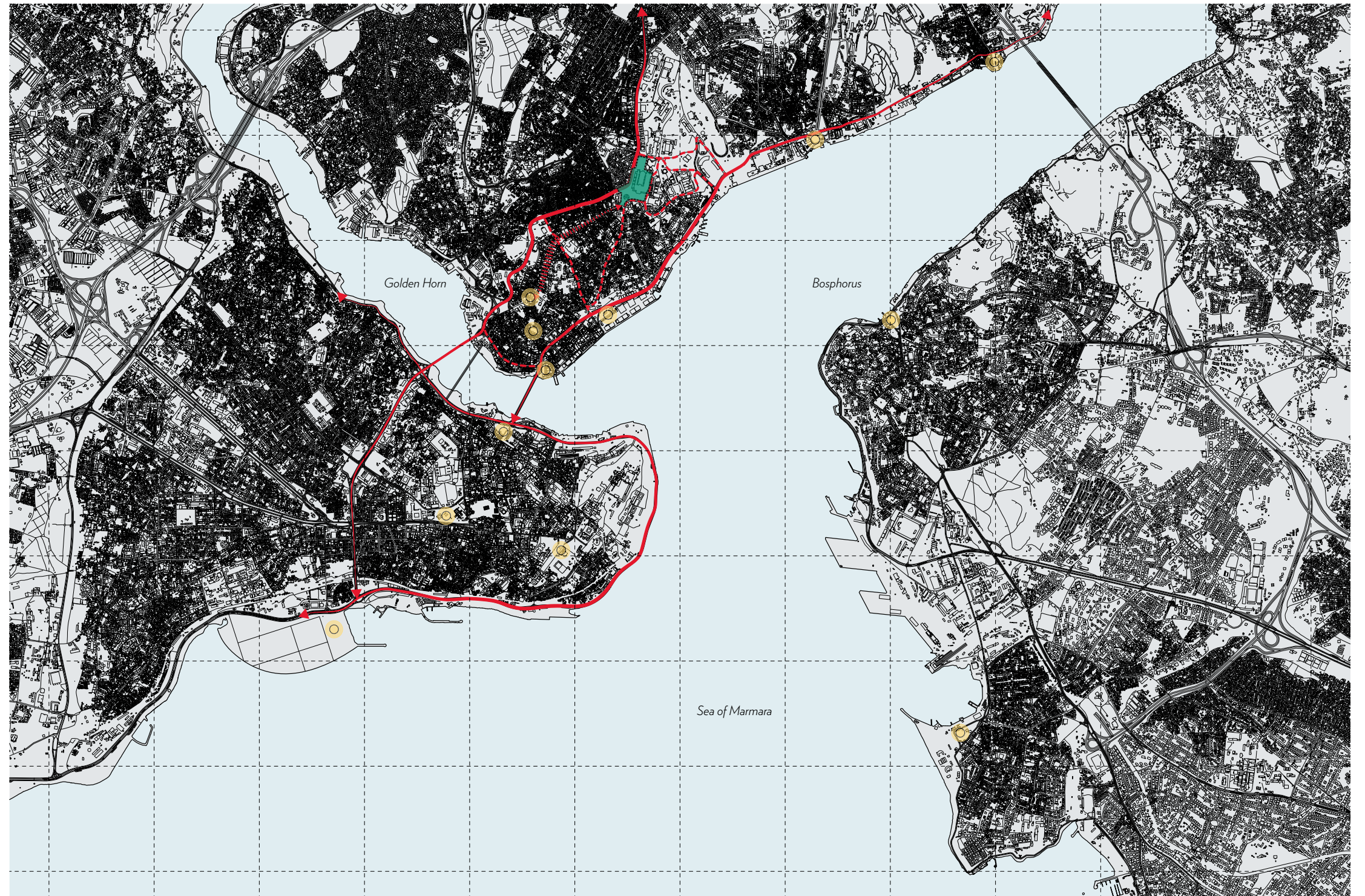
Public Square Network

Taksim Square is considered one of the most important public spaces in Istanbul due to its strategic position in the city and with its historical and political background.



Arterial Roads

Among the main arteries of the city around the project site, Taksim, as a transportation hub, has an important role as a node connecting the focal points of the city.



Emergence and Urban Evolution of Beyoğlu

Pera to Beyoğlu in the Late Ottoman Era

As a district of Istanbul, Beyoğlu has a very strong historical heritage and it has been shaped by diversity. The region has hosted local people in very different social structures since the Byzantine Period which left a significant mark on both urban space and urban life. Beyoğlu, which was covered with vineyards and orchards until the 18th century, was known as “Pera Vineyards”. In the 17th century, European wealthy people, primarily English, French, Venetian, Dutch and Genoese Ambassadors, as well as Ottoman Christians, built large mansions in gardens in Beyoğlu. Unlike Galata, which is a commercial centre, Beyoğlu has developed as a residential area for the upper class (Kardaş, 2004). In the 20th century, in parallel with the development in the 19th century, the construction of new masonry and contemporary apartments made Beyoğlu even more important (Dökmeci and Çıracı, 1990).

1923-1950

Although the Ottoman Empire fell at the end of World War I, Beyoğlu continued to be the most important district of Istanbul, along with its major commercial street, Istiklal Avenue. Another important point for Beyoğlu in the early New Republic era is the arrangement of Taksim Square and Taksim Esplanade by Henri Prost, which emerged with the destruction of the Artillery Barracks (Bilsel, 2010). In the early years of the Republic, the zoning laws of the city administration, which remained from the Ottoman Empire, were completely changed. For the Republican administration, the reconstruction of the city means that it not only gains a contemporary appearance but also creates a healthy living environment (Sezgin, 1996). To meet the demands of the industries, the buildings needed to be modernized since neither physical urban structure nor urban services were sufficient to satisfy the new demands (Dökmeci, et al., 2007).



1.2 A view from Caddesi-i Kebir (Istiklal Avenue) in the late 19th century.



1.3 A view from Grande Rue de Péra (Istiklal Avenue) in the 1930s.



1.4 An expression of daily life in Gezi Park in 1944.



1.5 People resting on the greenery of Taksim Square in 1940s.

1950-1985

In the development process of the country, Beyoğlu could not attract developers due to the sensitivity of the historical urban texture, and the population of Beyoğlu decreased rapidly. The urban structure was not adaptable to modern modes of transportation due to the narrow and limited old circulation network.

Therefore, the dimensions of the plots were not sufficient to accommodate a larger business centre and also not suitable for residential purposes. This situation affected the high-income group who moved to the nascent centres of the city (Özuz and Dökmeci 2005).

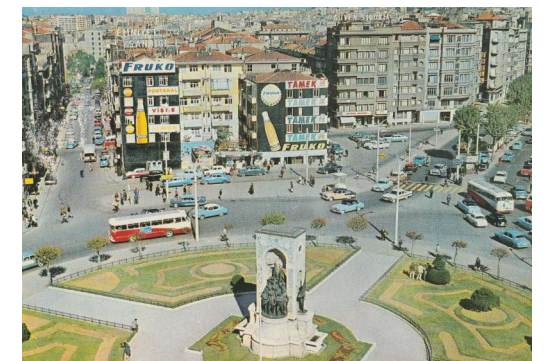
1985 and Afterwards

After 1980, especially since 1990, there has been a revival and renewal movements in the district. Renovation started in the old streets of Beyoğlu, and in this process, old apartments and residences began to be restored. The demolition of Tarlabaşı Boulevard in 1988 and the pedestrianisation of Istiklal Avenue in 1993, have affected the architectural and cultural dimensions of Beyoğlu.

Istiklal Street, which has been transformed into a long shopping and cultural axis, has gained a much more lively and vibrant atmosphere than before. In 2004, Urban Transformation Policies were announced and privatization projects started. Today, the most important process affecting Taksim Square and Beyoğlu, in general, is the Taksim Pedestrianisation Project, which started in 2012 (Özbek, 2020).



1.6 Aerial view of Taksim in the late 1950s.



1.7 A view of the Republic Monument and Talimhane in 1960s.



1.8 Taksim Square in the 1970s.



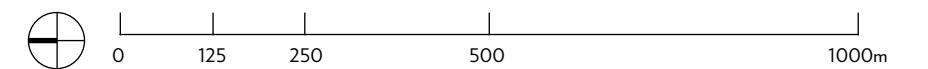
1.9 Taksim Square after the pedestrianisation project in 2014.

Urban Context Analyses

This subchapter analyses the site on the neighbourhood scale that explores some of its components of the urban structure such as its location in the district, entrances to the area, public transportation network, landmarks, Park No:2 and greenery network will be highlighted to serve as a support for the basic understanding of the dialogue between Taksim and Beyoğlu district.

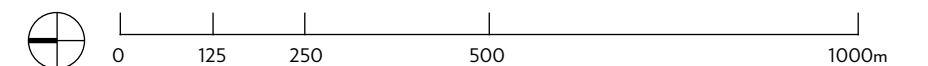


1.10 Google Earth imagery of partial Beyoğlu district, taken in 2021.



Location of Taksim in Beyoğlu

Taksim Square is the heart of modern Istanbul, originally it was a water distribution centre in the late Ottoman era and the name 'Taksim' derives from 'division' or 'distribution'. The stone reservoir, Maksem, is located at the southwest end of the square by the beginning of İstiklal Avenue in Beyoğlu. The Republic Monument is at the southern end of the square and The Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) dominates the eastern end of the square. Gezi Park, to the north, is what replaced the Ottoman artillery barracks. Cumhuriyet Avenue goes north from the square along the west side of Gezi Park to the upscale districts of Şişli and Beşiktaş. Taksim is a main transportation hub with numerous hotels, restaurants and pubs surrounding the area.



Entrances

This map shows the entrances to the project area from different zones of the neighbourhood. The most important is İstiklal Avenue, formerly known as the Grande Rue de Péra, starts in Taksim Square by the Republic Monument and extends southwestward to Galatasaray Square and Tünel Square. It is a 1.4-kilometre pedestrian street in the heart of Beyoğlu and the city's most popular strolling and shopping street lined with boutiques, cafes, consulates, restaurants, galleries, cinemas and banks, with residential purposes.



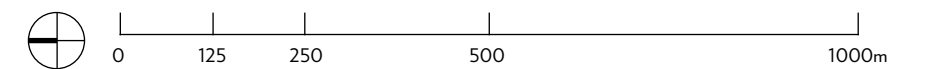
Public Transportation

As a transportation hub, Taksim provides access to different public transportation vehicles. Tram, metro, funicular, bus/dolmus and ferry are the main means of transportation in the region.



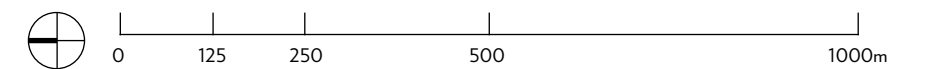
Landmarks

Taksim is the node of many attraction points in the city and it is possible to access the most significant landmarks of Istanbul by walking from the square.



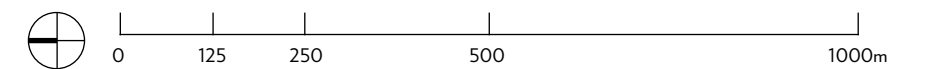
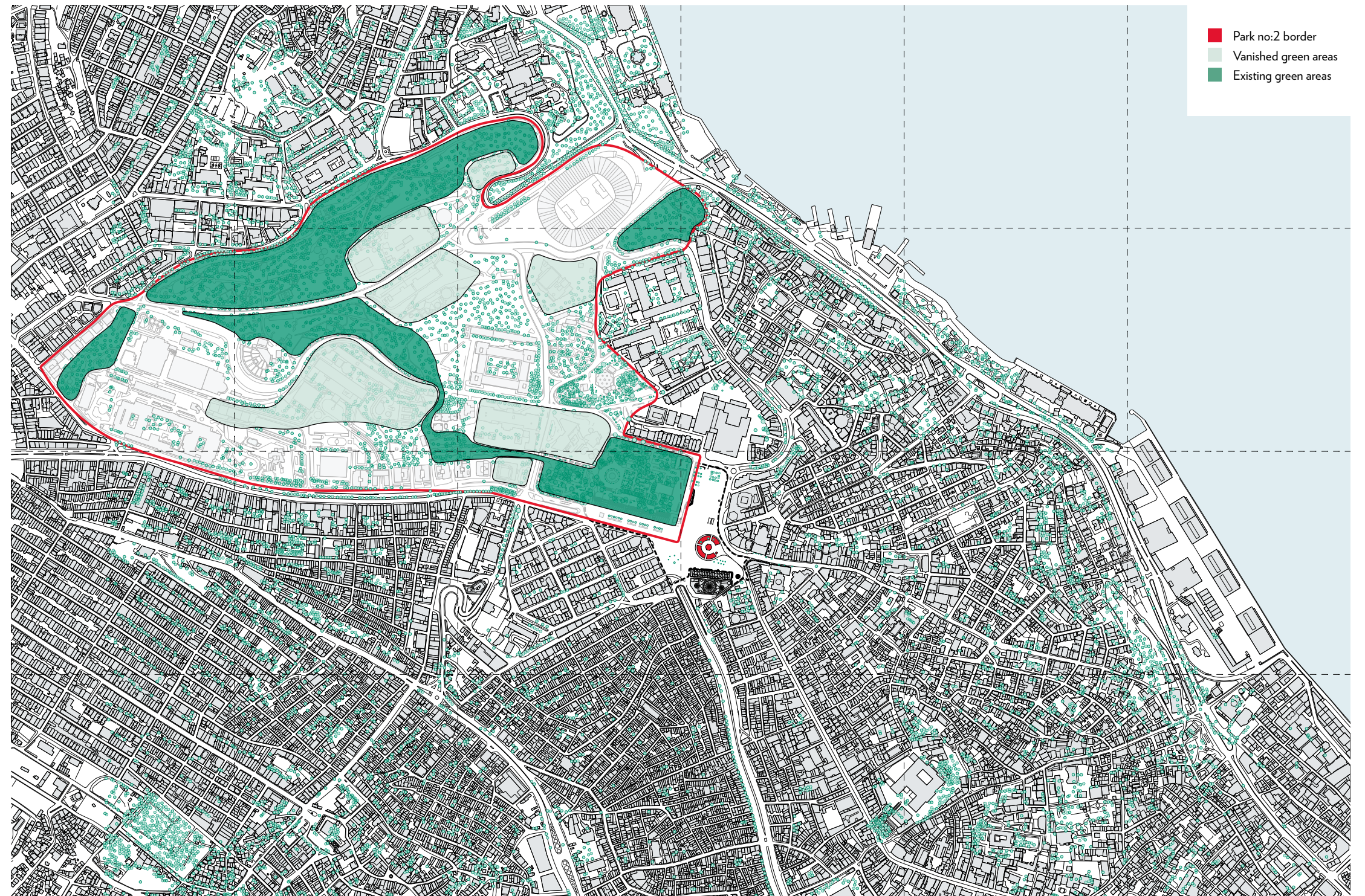
Park No:2

Through the master plan of Istanbul prepared by Henri Prost in 1937, the artillery barracks were demolished, and the area was reorganised as a city park. Apart from the park, the plan included a theatre, conference halls, gathering halls, clubs, bus terminals, post office, and parking lots. The park, starting with the Gezi Esplanade and Taksim Square which acts as a terrace with a view of the Bosphorus, was named 'Park no:2' by Prost (Erbey, 2017).



Greenery Network

Park no:2 developed over time in a different way than it was conceived. More than half of public and green areas have vanished due to the new constructions.



Taksim Square as an Urban Stage

Disidentification Process of Taksim Square

Layers of Interventions

Site Analyses

Disidentification Process of Taksim Square

Taksim Square represents one of the most significant public spaces in the whole of Turkey. It is considered more than a meeting point or a transport hub. We could say it is a place that reflects political intentions and it is the materialization of the complexity of multifaceted aspects. This chapter explores this complexity by going through different aspects that are crucial for understanding the characteristics and significance of the place.

During the Ottoman period, the courtyard of the barracks and Talimhane Square are the two plains that made this area active and functioned for military uses. Therefore, it is possible to understand the development of this area only in parallel with the transformation of the Artillery Barracks in the Ottoman period and the development of the region in that period. The Ottoman Taksim was formed with the construction of Maksem in 1732 in a place located on the periphery of the city (Üzümkesici, 2010).

Upon the decision to build the Barracks in the 19th century, first, some of the cemeteries in the region were moved to the Feriköy cemetery, and then it was decided to create gardens around the Barracks. On this occasion, Taksim Garden took its place in the north of the Artillery Barracks, as the first designed public park of the Ottoman Empire (Cezar, 2002).

The opening of Talimhane Square for development at the beginning of the 20th century was an important reason for the Artillery Barracks to lose its function. The functioning of the barracks as Taksim stadium started with the years of occupation. With the end of the occupation years, the square and barracks, which experienced a social change again, were rented and turned into a football stadium. Taksim Stadium, which provides an environment for collective gatherings, has been a preparation for the transition to the public sphere of the Republic (Yıldırım and Erdem, 2015).



2.1 Military ceremony at Talimhane in 1922.



2.2 Taksim Square while the old barrack served as a stadium in 1940s.



2.3 Construction of the Gezi Park after the demolition of Artillery Barracks in 1941.

The establishment of the Republic in 1923, created the need for an urban open space and then a square for the incorporation of new lifestyles into the city and for parades. The formation of the square started with the construction of a Republic Monument, which will symbolize the Republic, in 1928. In the process, which started with the filing of some of the barns and ended with the destruction of the Artillery Barracks, Talimhane Square will be transformed into the new neighbourhood of the modern city dweller by the construction of high-rise residential blocks.

During this period, the Talimhane region participated in the daily life of the Republic and defined the border of the square in the northwest direction. With the intervention of Prost, the void where the metro exit is located today, between the Cultural Center, Gezi Park, and Marmara Hotel has been revealed after the remaining barns were demolished (Yıldırım and Erdem, 2015).

The 1:5000 scale master plan prepared and completed by Henri Prost for Istanbul in 1937 was approved by the authorities in 1939. According to this plan, Topkapı Palace and Sarayburnu region are designated as Park No. 1, and Taksim-Dolmabahçe-Maçka region as Park No. 2. A park with an esplanade (Gezi Park) and a terrace opening to Taksim Square and were arranged in 1940 in the large area that emerged after the demolition of Taksim Artillery Barracks (Özsavaşçı, 2005).

A terrace raised by steps in the direction of Taksim defines the entrance, and the park continues with a geometrically arranged excursion area in the form of an esplanade, where it finally ends with the Taksim garden. In this axial approach to park planning, the idea of creating an open perspective connecting to the green corridor is crucial (Bilsel, 2010). Gezi park has the significant importance of being the first park in Istanbul that built in the Republican era.

After this intervention, Taksim Square gained more importance and caused the development of the surrounding neighbourhoods and it became the centre of the city (Dökmeci and Çıracı, 1990).

The junction formed around the Kristal Casino which was built in the 1930s and the Republic Monument with its circular boundary defines the geometry of the square. The casino surrounds the monument and the circular roads that formed around it, and while it borders this area from the north, it joins daily life with its portico extending into the square.

After the Kristal Casino was demolished in the early 1960s, the square lost its northern boundary (Yıldırım and Erdem, 2015). Although the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM), which was opened in 1969, forms a strong boundary of the Square, adapting its modern facade to a historical look has long been controversial.

With the buildings on the south and east facades of the Square, it has lost its historical monumental character due to vertical development (Erbey, 2017).

The Pedestrianisation Project, which started in 2011, is the most critical intervention affecting the spatial character of Taksim Square. The aim of the project is to pedestrianize Taksim and take the vehicle traffic underground and remove Gezi Park and replace it with the new Artillery Barracks building as a shopping mall.

This project had a negative impact in terms of spatial organisation on Taksim and its surroundings, not as being a pedestrianisation project but as a disidentification project. In addition, as the recently arranged square was not designed appropriately and caused orientation problems, the undefined vast concrete void in Taksim gradually enlarged.



2.4 Gezi Park under construction in 1941.



2.6 Taksim Square and Gezi Park with a view of Bosphorus in 1944.



2.5 Aerial view of Taksim and its surroundings 1960.



2.7 Taksim Square during the construction of AKM in 1953.



2.8 Taksim Square in 1960s.



2.10 Taksim Square in 2010s.



2.9 Taksim Square in 1970s.



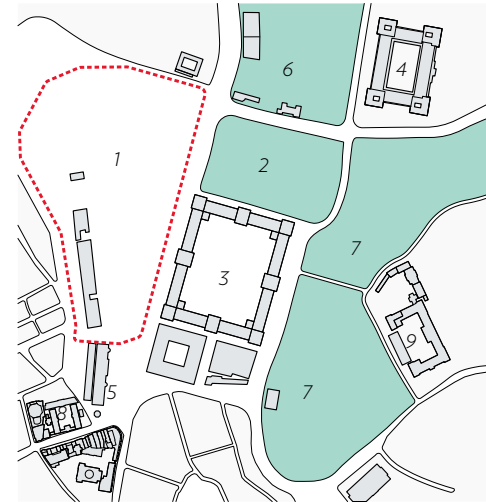
2.11 Taksim Square in 2021.

Layers of Interventions

1806-1928

1909 / Separation of the Talimhane land from the artillery barracks

- 1 Talimhane
- 2 Taksim Garden - an organized urban space
- 3 Taksim Military Barracks
- 4 Stone Barracks
- 5 Maksem
- 6 Pangaltı Armenian Cemetery
- 7 Ayazpasa Cemetery
- 8 Consulate of France
- 9 Surp Agop Hospital

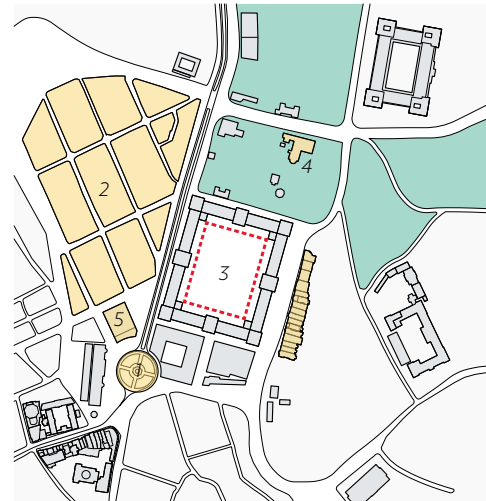


2.12 Thrillseekers rented motorcycles from Talimhane in 1920s.

1928-1940

1928 / Unveiling of the Republic Monument and transformation of the Talimhane district

- 1 Monument - a new formal urban space
- 2 Talimhane - a new urban development
- 3 Taksim Stadium - military barracks courtyard, irregular urban space
- 4 Taksim Municipal Casino
- 5 Kristal Casino

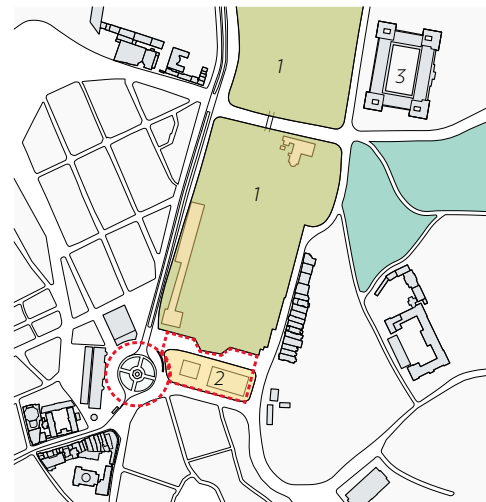


2.13 Republic Monument and Taksim Square in 1930s.

1940-1960

1940 / Destruction of the artillery barracks
1940 / Construction of the Gezi Park

- 1 Gezi Park - an organized urban space
- 2 Taksim Square - new urban space that establishes a disconnected relationship with the monument
- 3 Istanbul Technical University

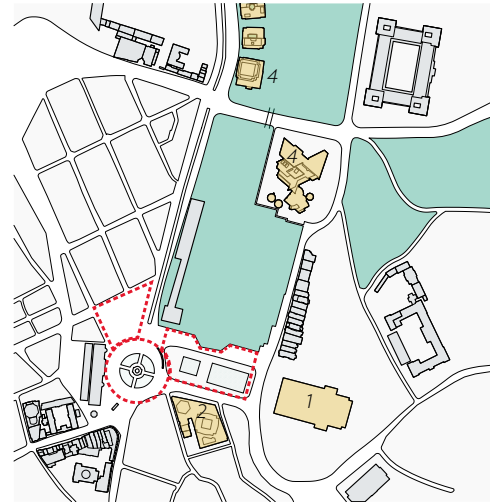


2.14 Gezi Park under construction in the early 1940s.

1960-1980

- 1960 / Destruction of Kristal Casino
- 1969 / Opening of Atatürk Cultural Centre
- 1975 / Construction of hotel zones

- 1 Atatürk Cultural Centre
- 2 The Marmara Hotel
- 3 Sheraton Hotel
- 4 Divan Hotel

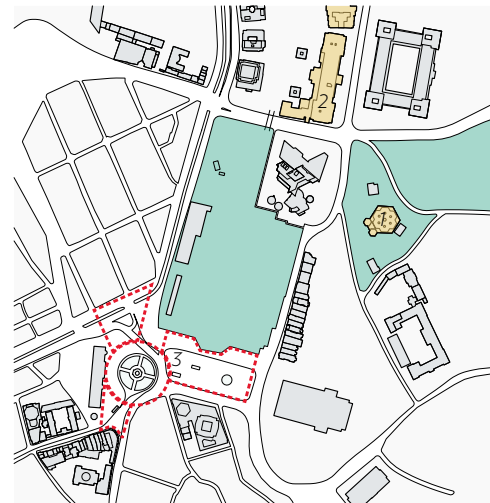


2.15 Entrance to Taksim Square from Istiklal Avenue in 1960.

1980-2012

- 1986 / Opening of Tarlabaşı Boulevard
- 1990 / Pedestrianisation of Istiklal Street
- 2000 / Opening of the Taksim M2 Metro Line
- 2006 / Opening of the Kabataş-Taksim Funicular Line

- 1 Atatürk Library
- 2 Grand Hyatt
- 3 Monument and Square - expansion of an undefined urban void

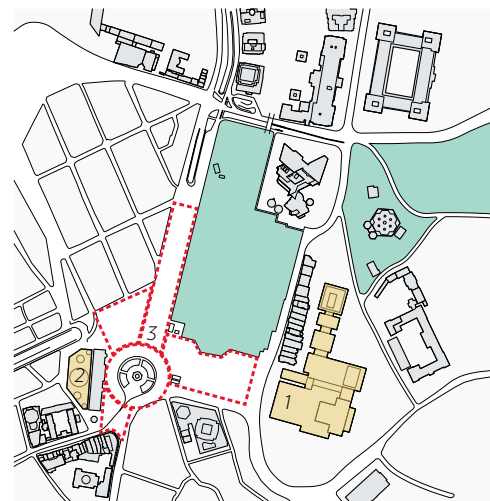


2.16 Taksim Square in the early 2000s.

2012-2022

- 2012 / Pedestrianisation Project
- 2013 / Gezi Protests
- 2014 / Delinking of Pedestrian Connection to Harbiye
- 2018 / New Harbiye Pedestrian Bridge
- 2013 / Gezi Park Protests
- 2014 / Delinking of Pedestrian Connection to Harbiye
- 2018 / Construction of the New Atatürk Cultural Centre
- 2018 / Construction of Taksim Mosque

- 1 New Atatürk Cultural Centre
- 2 Taksim Mosque
- 3 Monument, Square and Cumhuriyet Avenue - out of scale and undefined Taksim void after the pedestrianisation



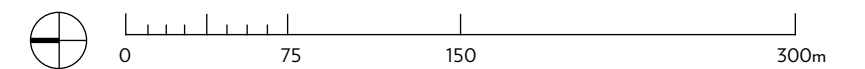
2.17 Existing situation of Taksim Square after the pedestrianisation project in 2020.

Site Analyses

This subchapter analyses the project site that explores some of its characteristics that define Taksim such as its location, functions that surround the area, borders and boundaries, urban axis, movement and flow diagrams will be highlighted to serve as a support for the basic understanding of the structure of Taksim and its surroundings.

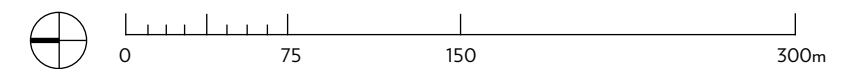
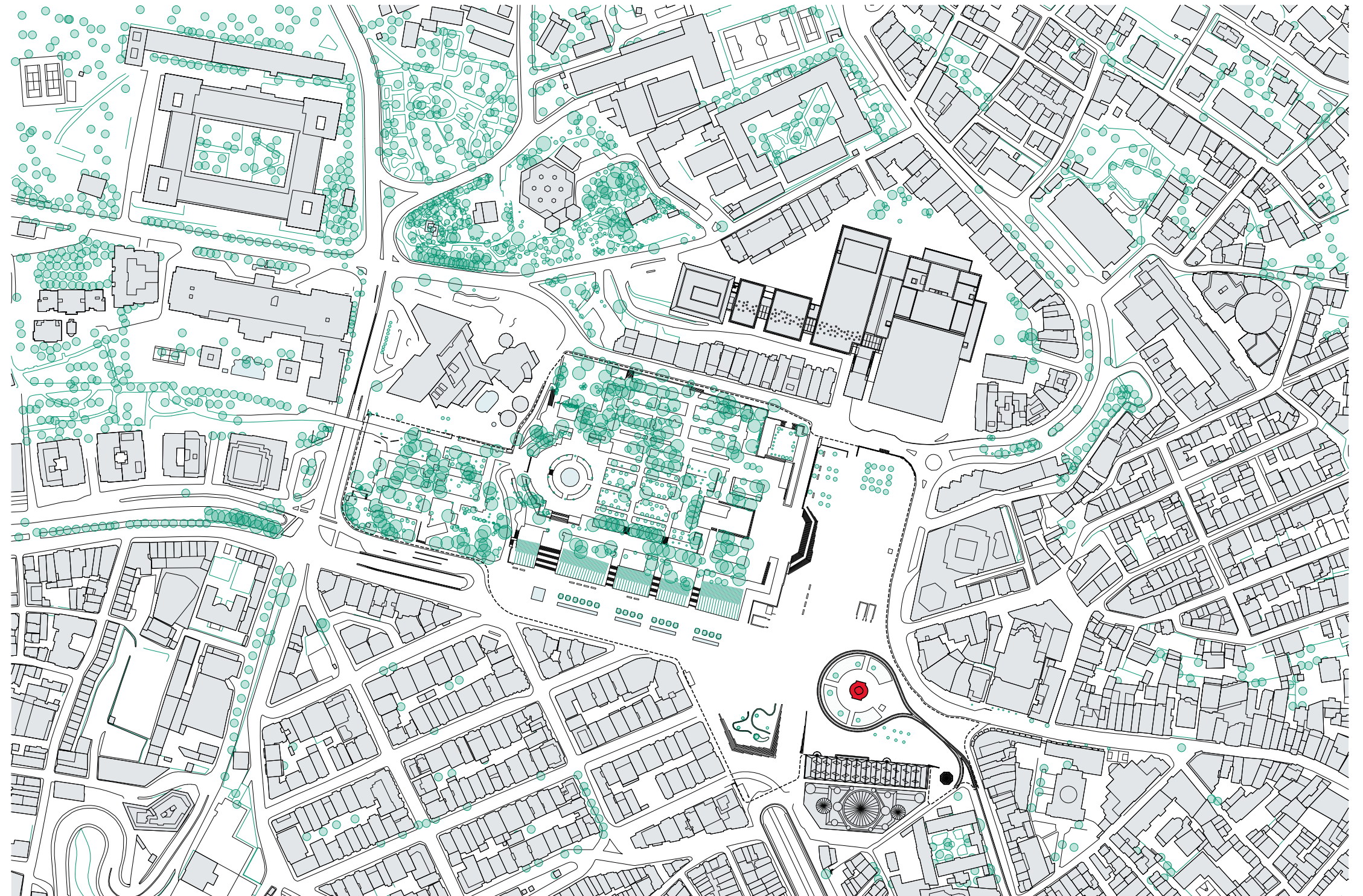


2.18 Google Earth imagery of Taksim and its surroundings, taken in 2021.



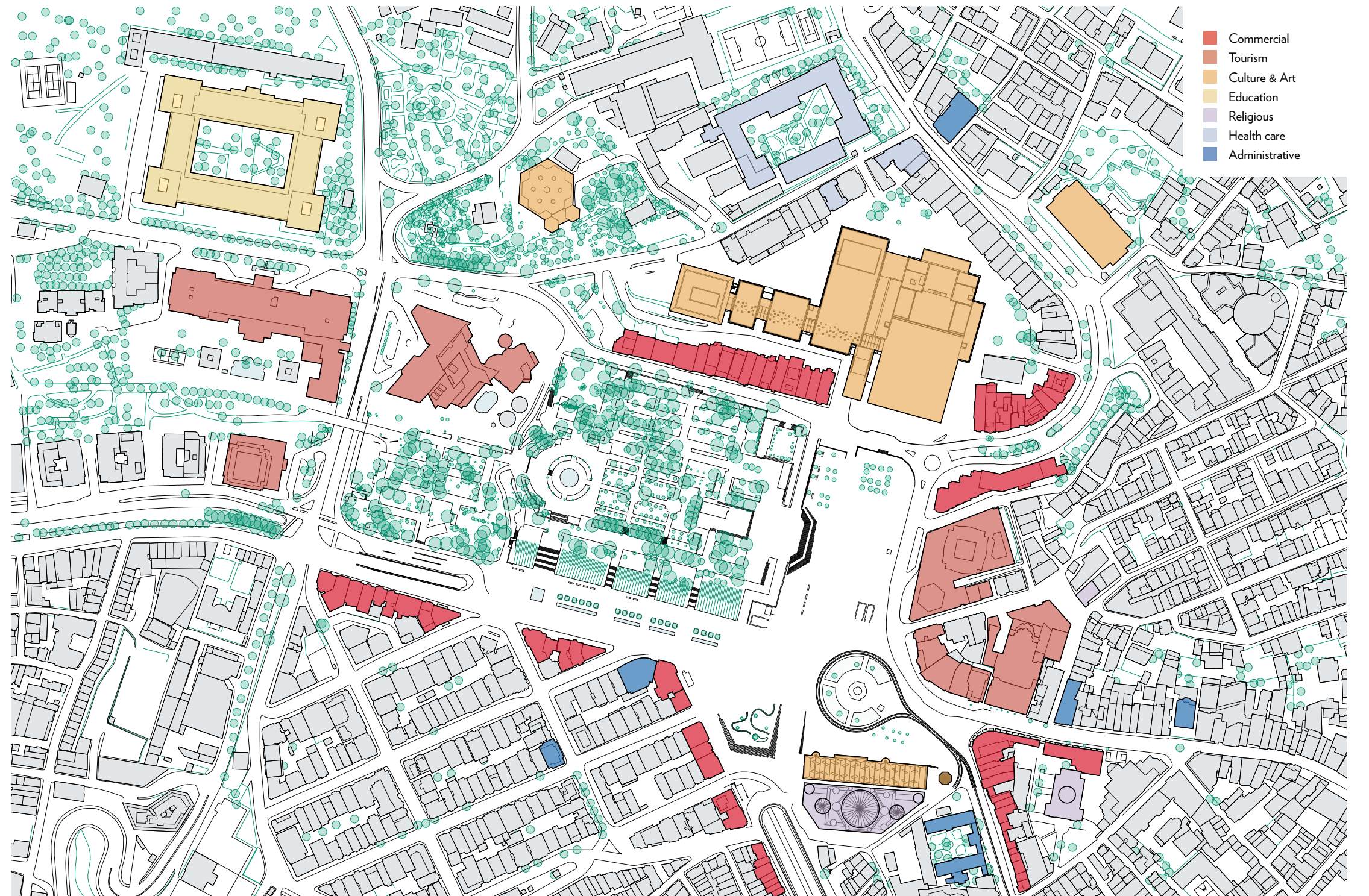
Location

Rather than defining Taksim as solely a square, it could be considered as more of an assemblage consisting of a series of buildings, a park, a monument and a square.



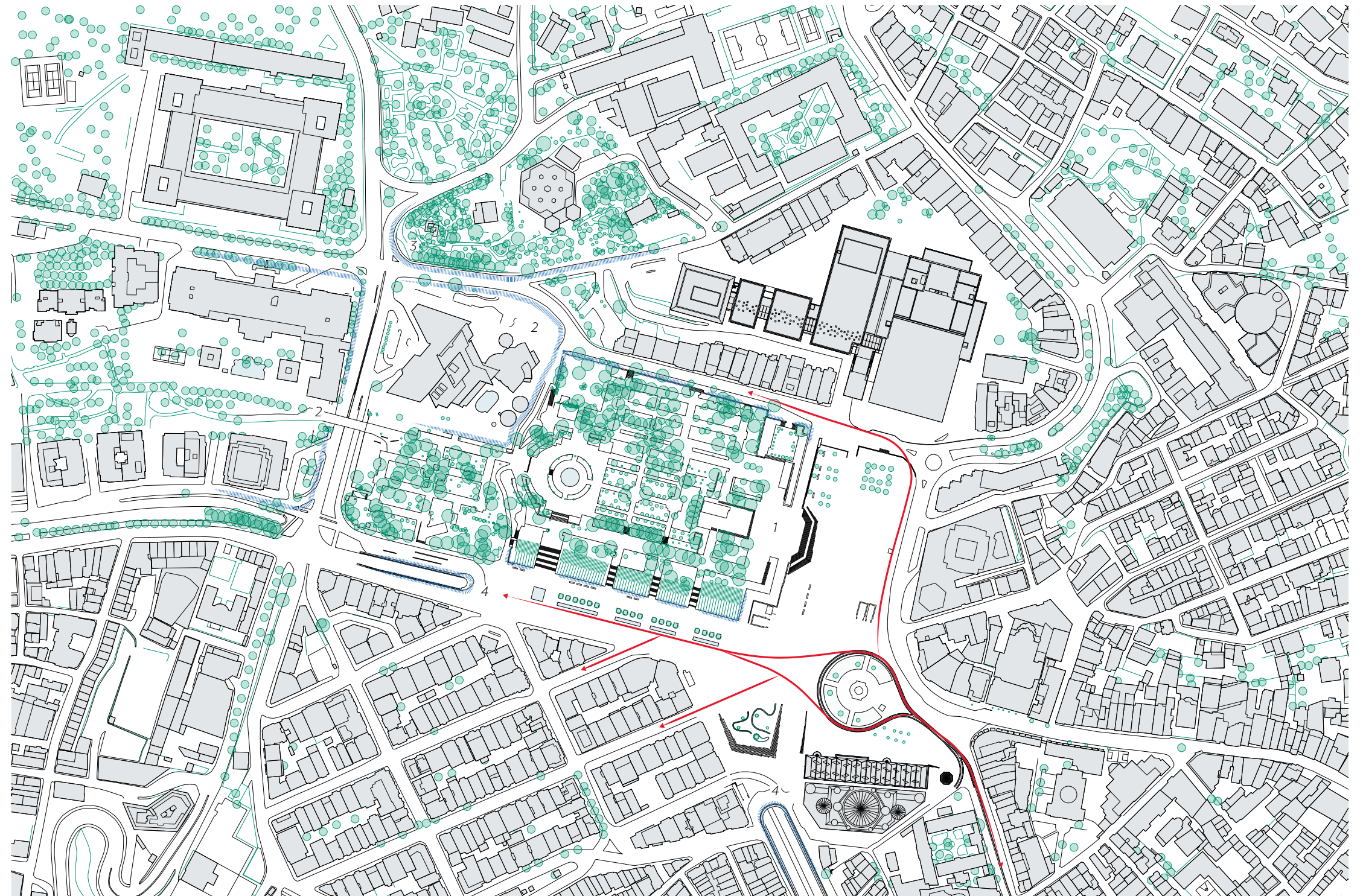
Land Use

The most significant structures surrounding Taksim are the functions with commercial, tourism and cultural uses.

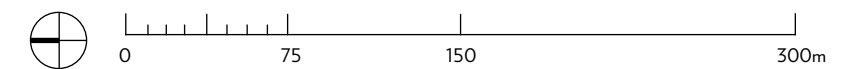


Borders / Boundaries

The lines that define Taksim's borders restrict it rather than transforming it into a more interactive public space.

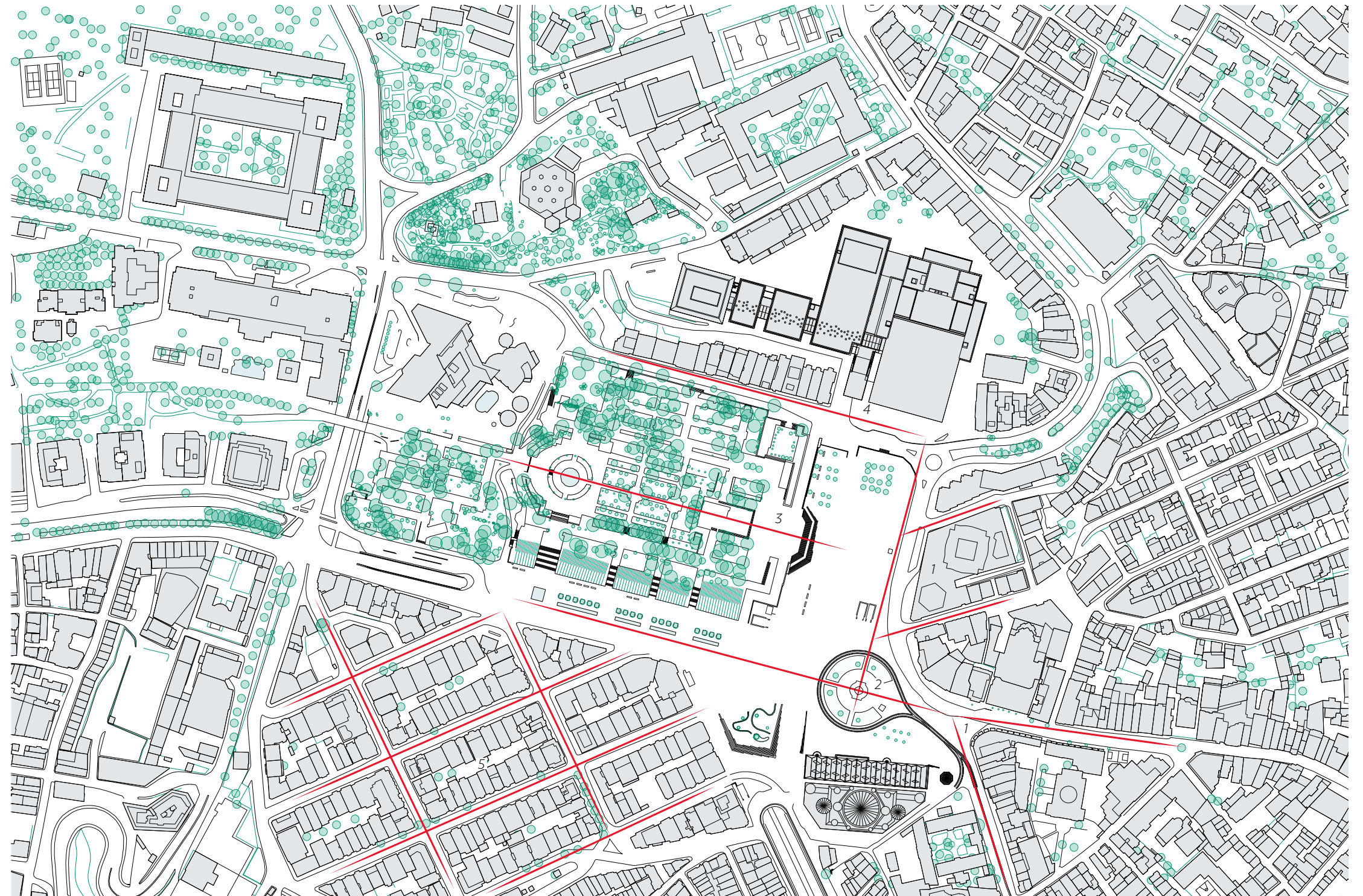


- 1 Disidentification of Gezi Park border
- 2 Hotel walls
- 3 Library walls
- 4 Underground road walls

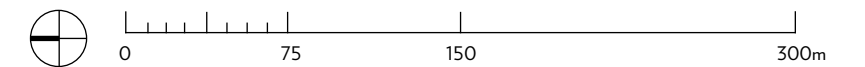


Urban Axis

The urban axis which is the most important factor in defining the movement zones in Taksim, constitutes the spatial character of this region.

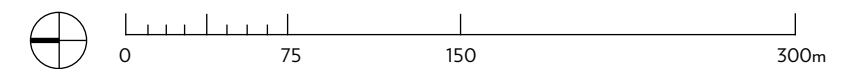


- 1 Commercial and recreational axis
- 2 Republic Monument axis
- 3 Gezi Park axis
- 4 Cultural axis
- 5 Talimhane urban fabric



Movement / Flow

Most of the human movement and flow can be observed in Taksim, a space which is constantly vibrant, in motion and with high dynamics at the entrance of Istiklal Avenue, around the monument and at the stairs of Gezi Park. The fact that the movement is restricted in such a wide area reduces the potential of the area. For this reason, the spatial relations of Cumhuriyet Street with the park and the square with the monument and park should be reviewed.



Design Proposal

Existing Condition and Site Visit
 Problems and Elements of the Urban Void
 Design Strategies
 Exploded Axonometric
 Site Plan
 Floor Plans
 Spatial Flexibility
 Sections
 Threshold Space Analyses
 Model Images
 Visualisations

3

Existing Condition and Site Visit

On February 15, 2022, I visited the site to better understand the existing condition of the project area, and analyse and document the problems and potential design inputs. Starting from the area that is defined as the main entrance point of the Square and connected to the Republic Monument from Istiklal Street, I analysed the edges of the Gezi Park to see the access problems to the park and explored potential areas that can be used as threshold spaces.

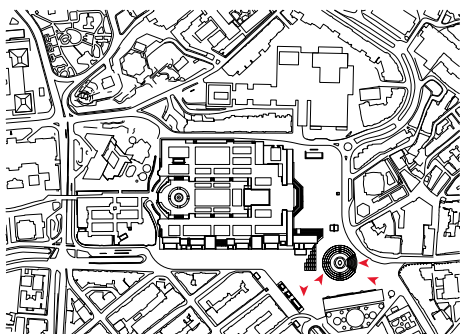
In order to better comprehend the relationship between the park, monument and cultural centre around Taksim Square, I approached it from different points and sought solutions to the scale problems of the area. Visiting the project site not only allowed me to have a better perspective of the Square and its surroundings physically but also allowed me to see how daily life activities, human movements and flows integrated into different spaces in Taksim.



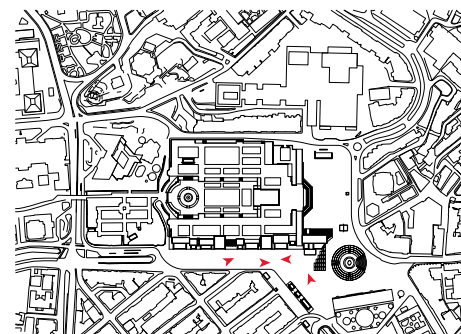
3.1 Aerial photo of Taksim Square and Gezi Park taken with a drone, taken in 2020.



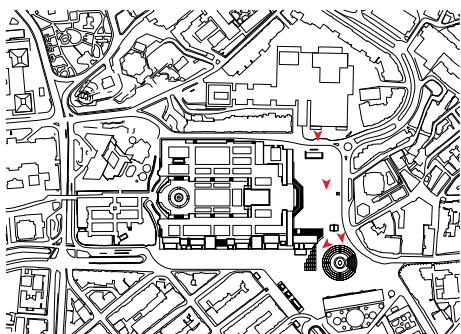
3.2 Aerial photo of Taksim Square and Gezi Park taken with a drone, taken in 2020.



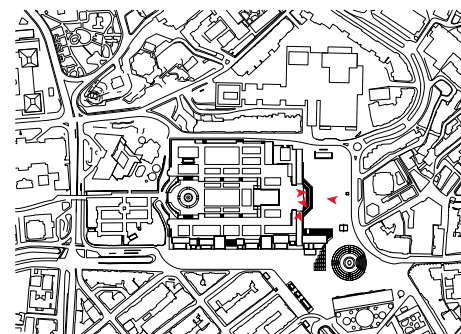
Photos of the existing conditions in the periphery of the Republic Monument in 2022.



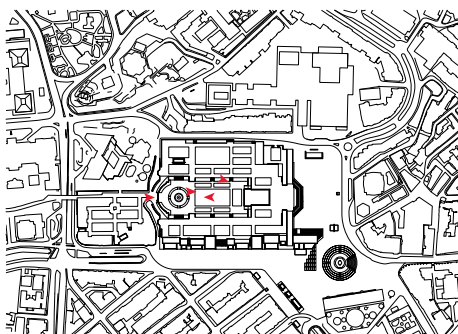
Photos of the existing conditions in Cumhuriyet Avenue in 2022.



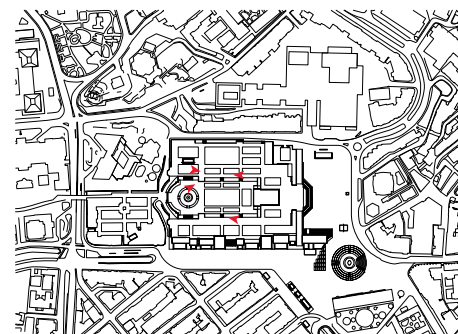
Photos of the existing conditions in Taksim Square in 2022.



Photos of the existing conditions in the stairs of Gezi Park in 2022.



Photos of the existing conditions in the sunken part of Gezi Park in 2022.



Photos of the existing conditions in the esplanade of Gezi Park in 2022.

Problems and Elements of the Urban Void

1 Taksim Square

It is a square that has lost its character and identity and lacks urban scale, proportion and boundaries. The level difference between Tak-ı Zafer Street and the Square, causes a challenge for accessibility and blocks views.

The asymmetrical ramp of the park acts more as a barrier between the park and the square rather than connecting them. Due to this situation, there is a timid connection and failure of welcoming visitors into the park and vice versa.

2 Republic Monument

It was strategically built in its current location as the intersection of the main urban axis, and after the urban interventions, it became an undefined node in the urban void of Taksim.

The iron fences surrounding the monument restrict access and prevent it from becoming an interactive urban element.

3 The remaining area of Talimhane

It occupies a large space as an undefined void and it is devoid of urban identity and amenities.

It does not have a spatial programming that will enhance daily activities by interacting with its environment.

4 Cumhuriyet Avenue

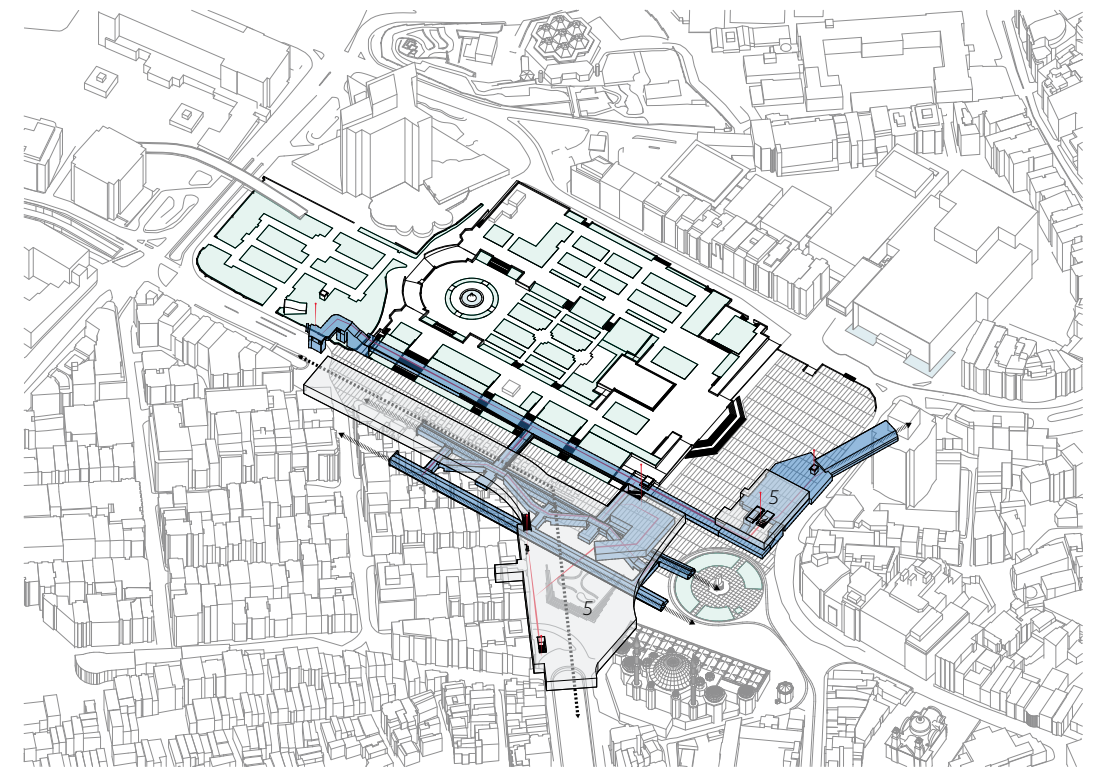
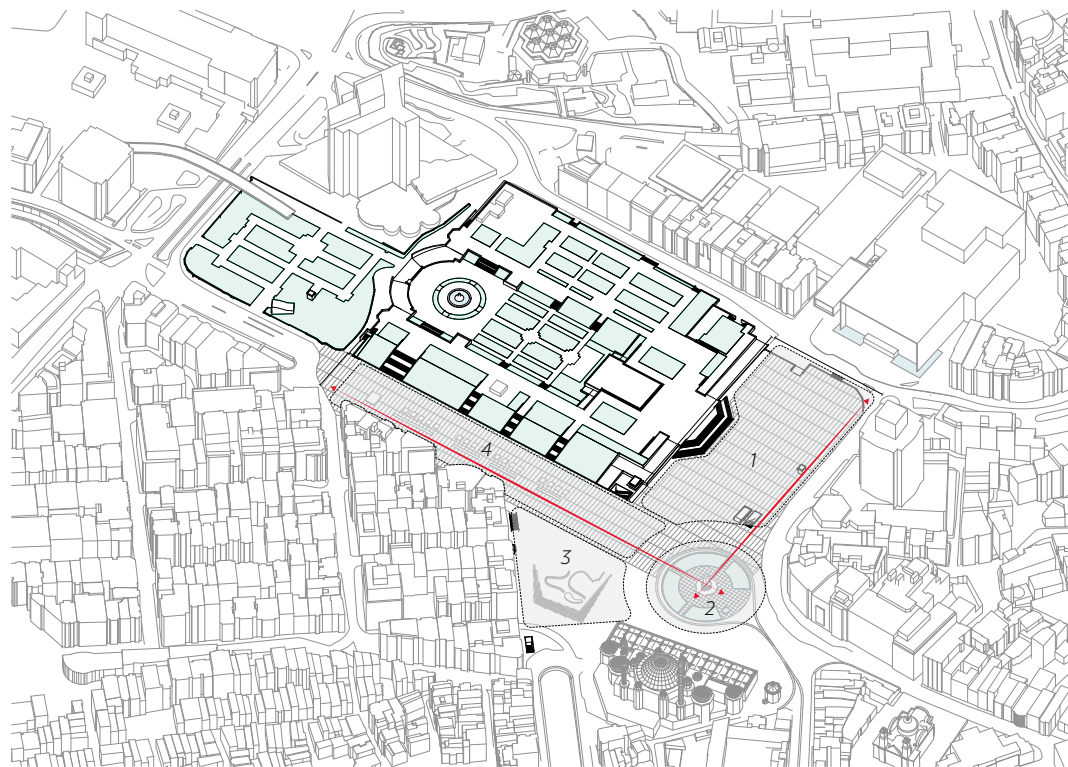
The avenue, which is one of the main axis of the region, has become a non-functional 200 meters of park border and a useless urban corridor as a result of its destroyed functions within the scope of the pedestrianisation project.

The public integrity and continuity that existed in the past between the park and the street has become a useless urban space in the current conditions.

5 Taksim Underpass

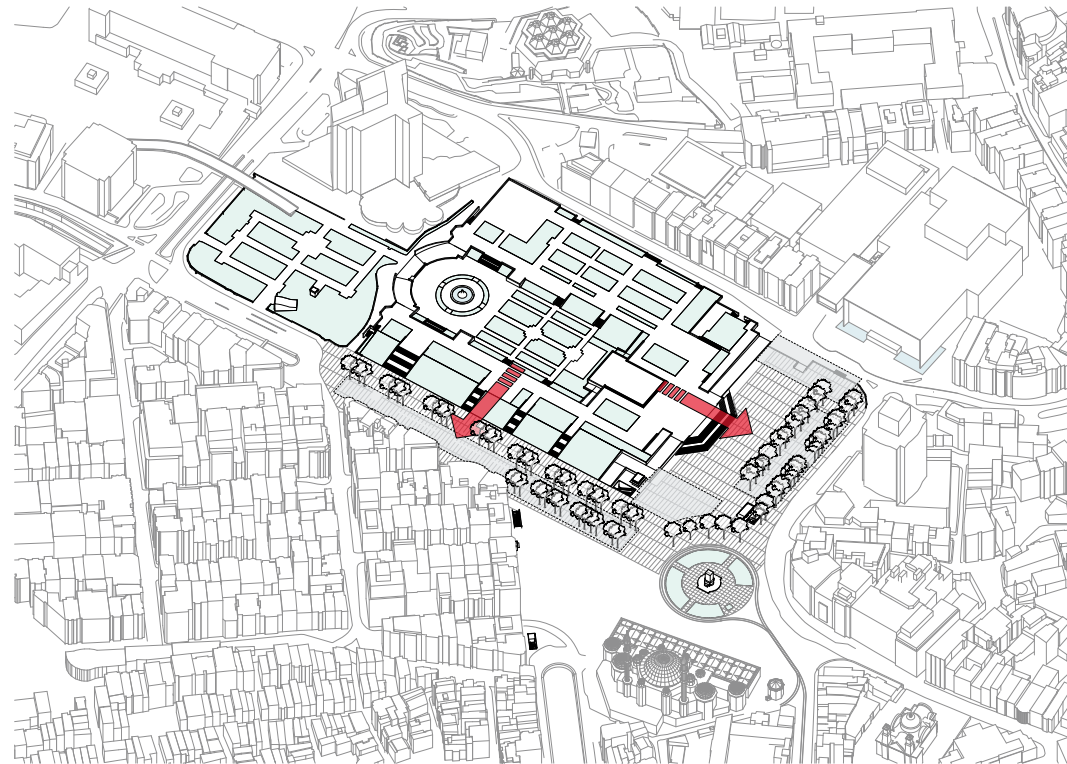
Taksim is an underground rapid transit complex which is serviced by the M2 line of the Istanbul Metro, the Kabataş-Taksim Funicular (F1) line and bus stations. Despite being such a heavily used place, it has a rather complicated circulation scheme.

Spatial integrity is physically lacking between the railway line volume and the bus stop volume. There is no common ground where the two main masses can be accessed from the Square.



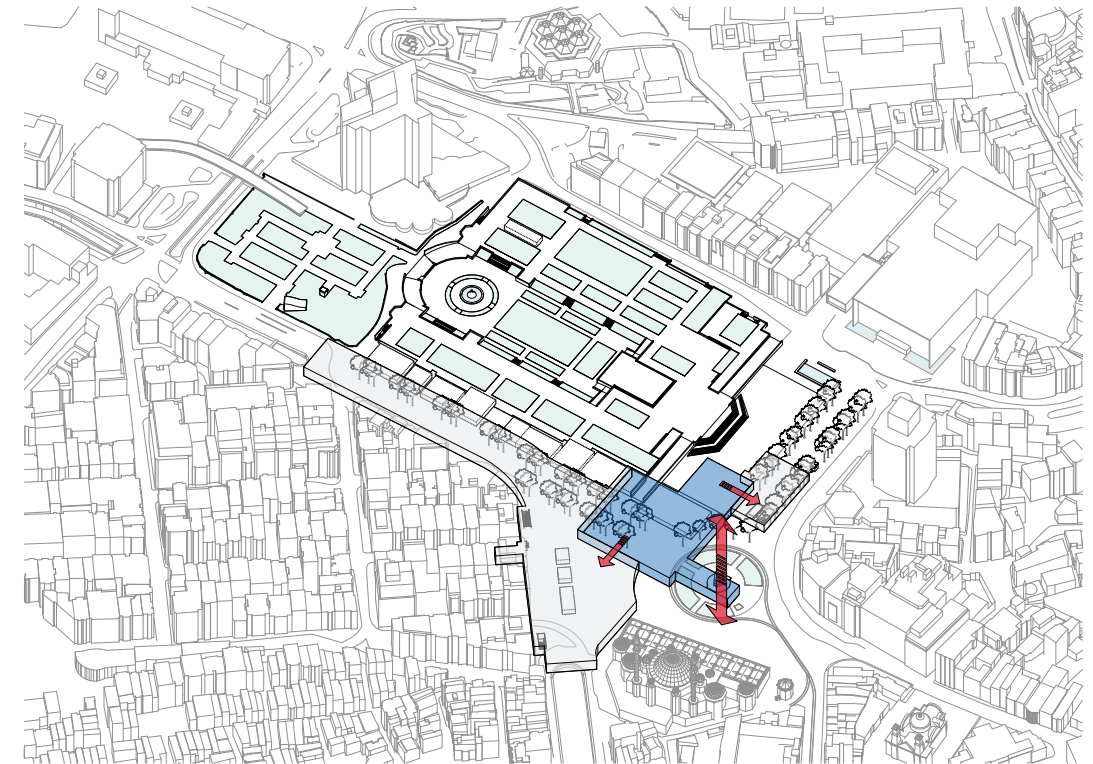
Design Strategies

Extending Gezi Park



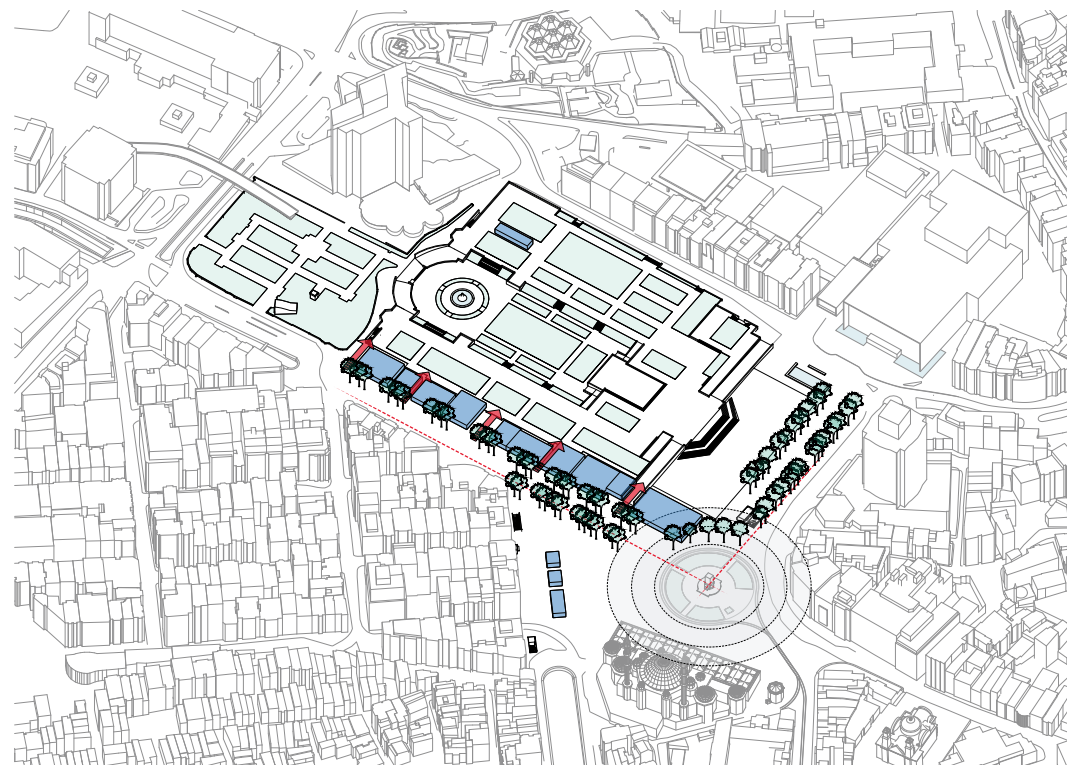
Redefining the square and merging Gezi Park with Cumhuriyet Avenue

Linking Spaces



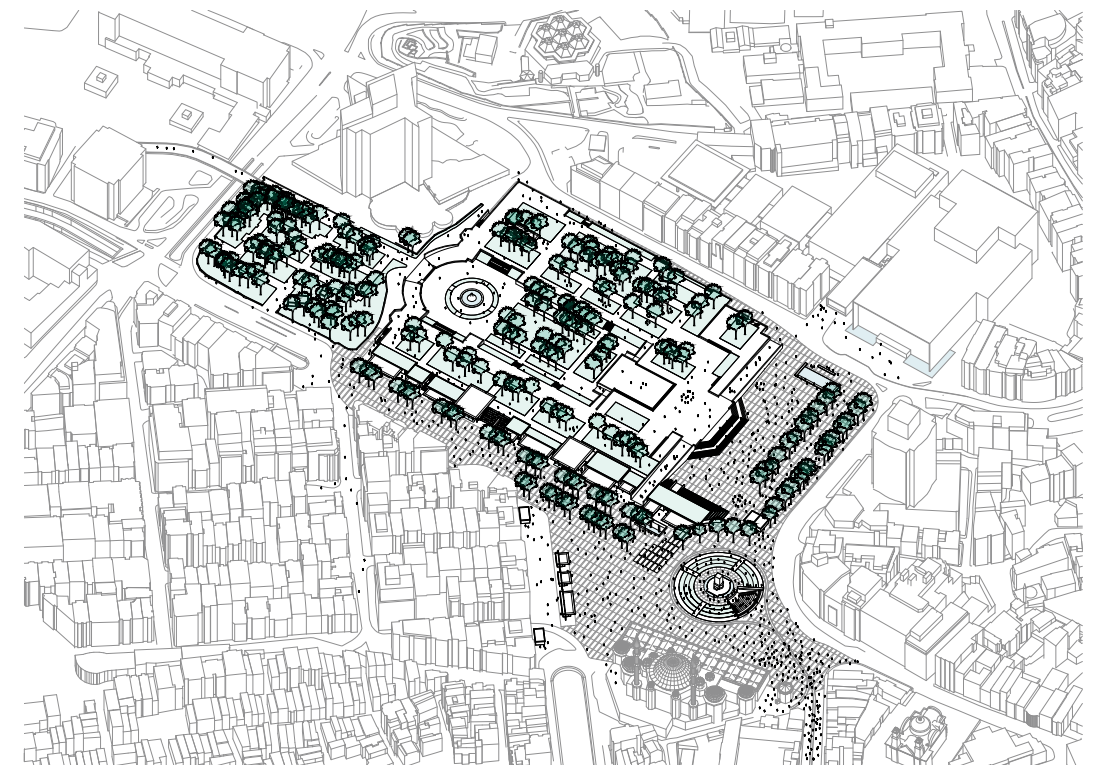
Connecting transit hubs with a cultural programme to activate underground spaces

Curing Cumhuriyet Avenue



Creating a new urban corridor by producing a commercial axis and an urban attractor by functioning the monument as a stage and an entrance to underground

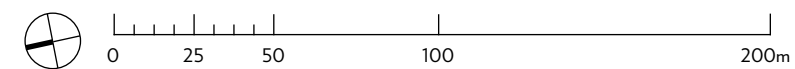
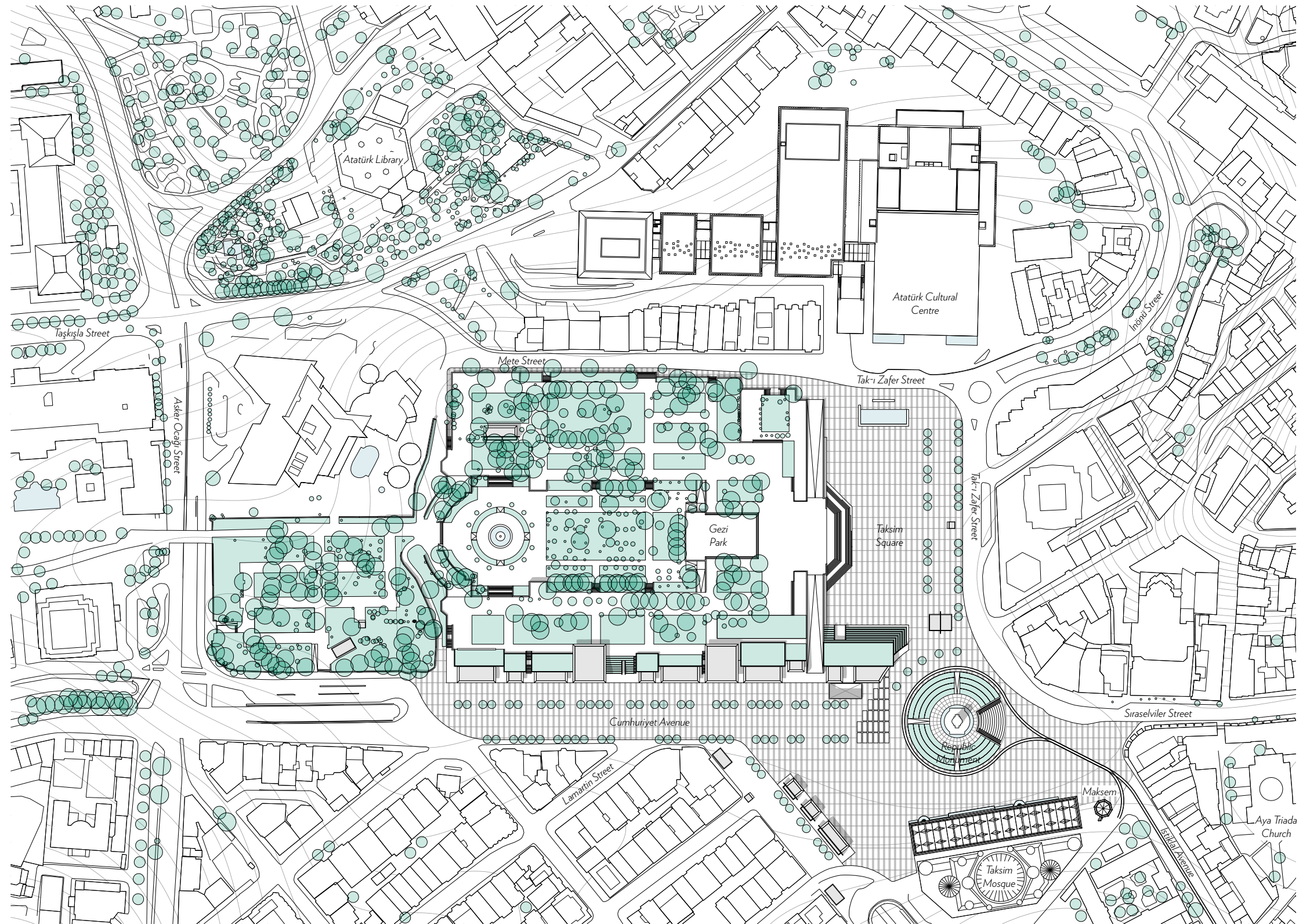
Spatial Integrity



Revitalizing the spatial quality and articulation

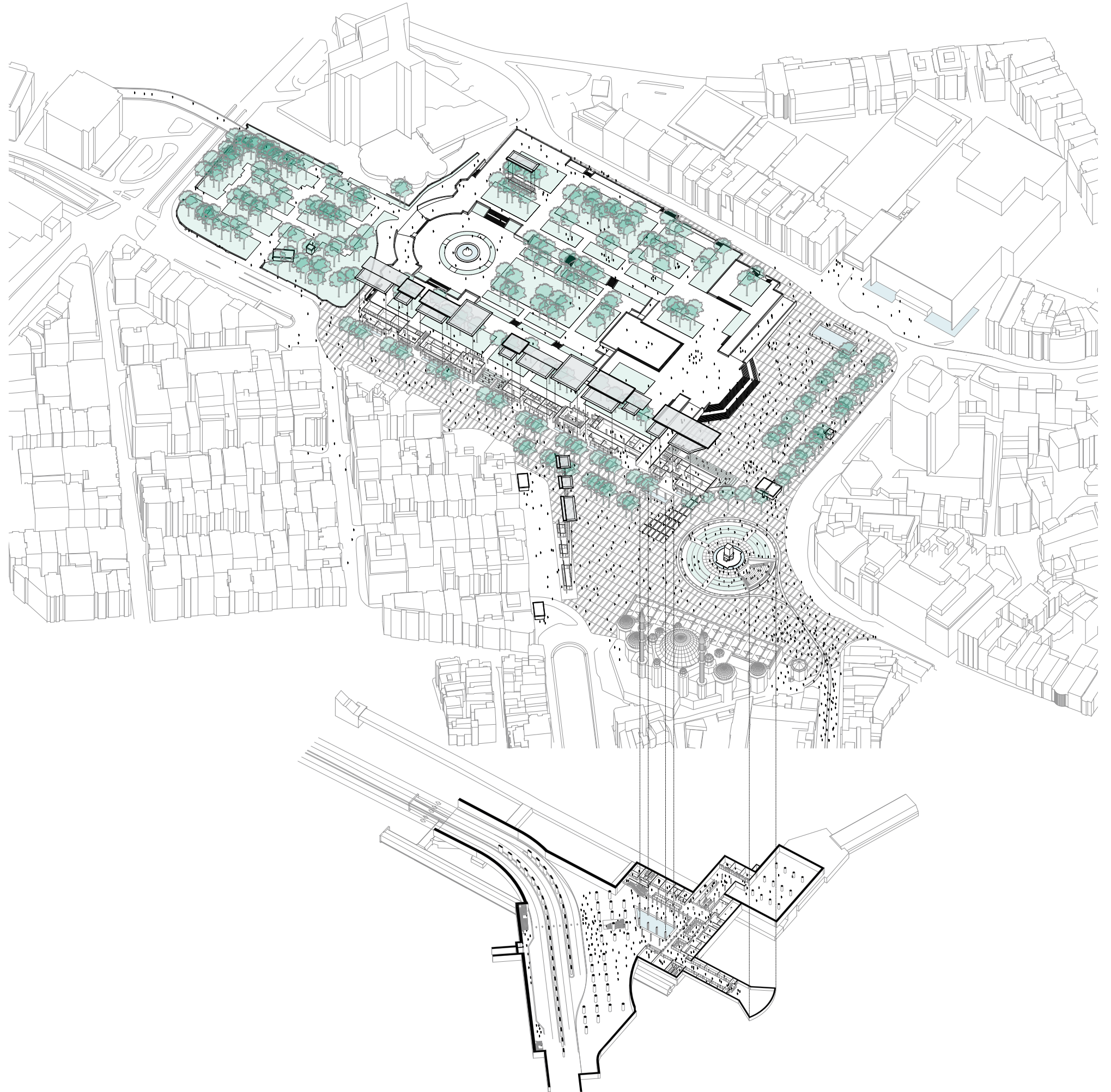
Site Plan

The site plan of the proposed design as a result of the design strategies that emerged after the exploration of the project area.



Exploded Axonometric

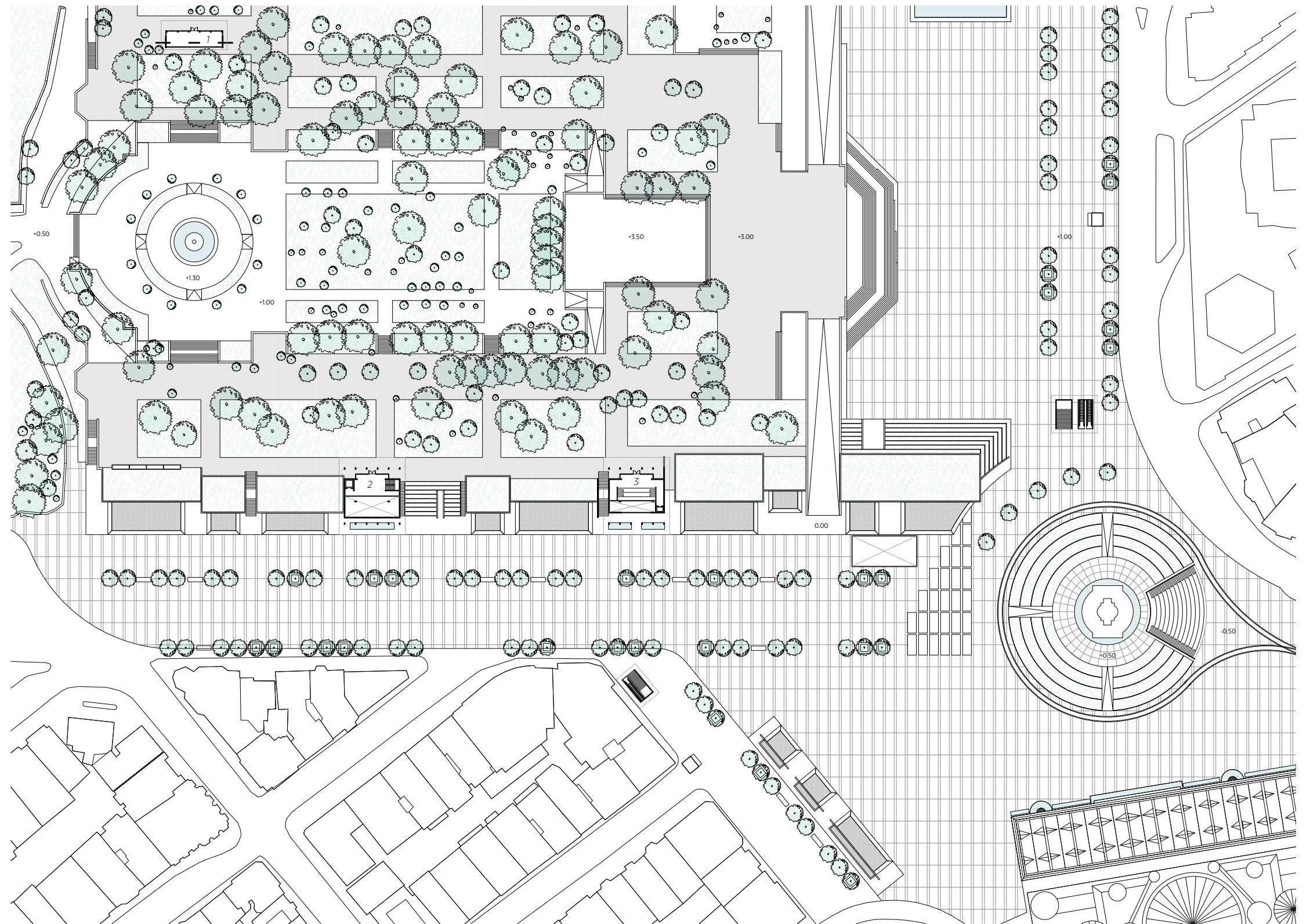
The exploded axonometric diagram indicating the spatial integrity of the proposed design, shows that the different uses of the building blocks located at both the ground and the underground level are actually part of a whole and that they act together while approaching the existing problems of the area in fragments.



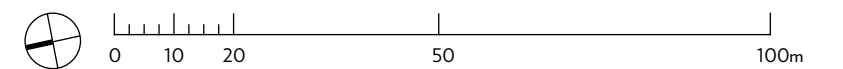
Floor Plans

First Floor Plan

The plan showing the Gezi Park level, indicates the elements that have become part of the area and the relationship of the park with its surroundings.

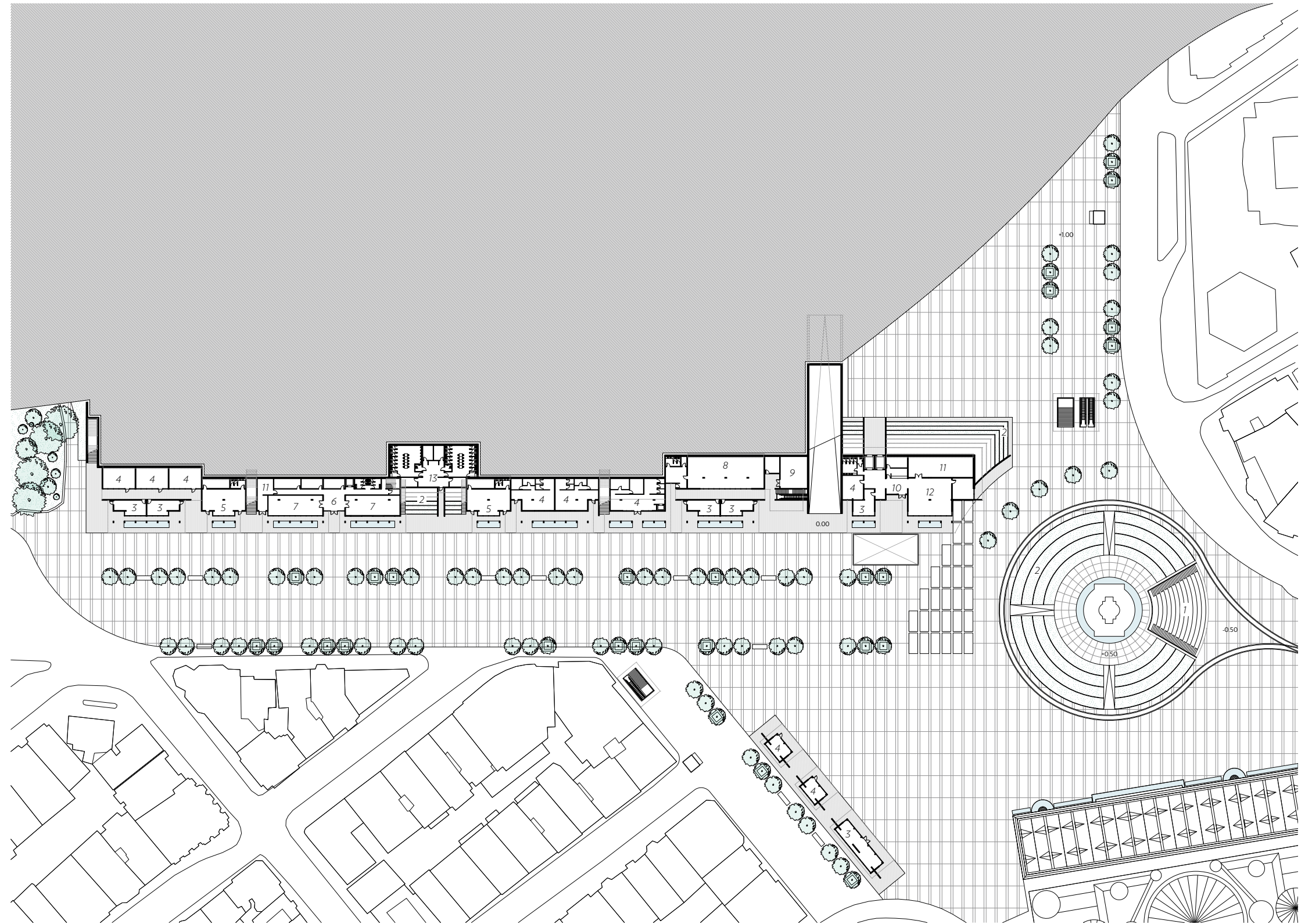


- 1 Park Kiosk
- 2 Store
- 3 Cafe

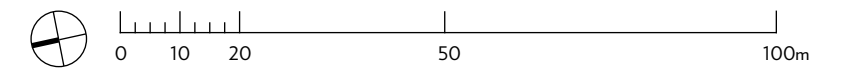


Ground Floor Plan

The plan showing the Cumhuriyet Avenue level indicates the threshold space, the relationship between the new commercial strip and the Republic Monument and its surroundings, and the new entrance to the underground from the monument.

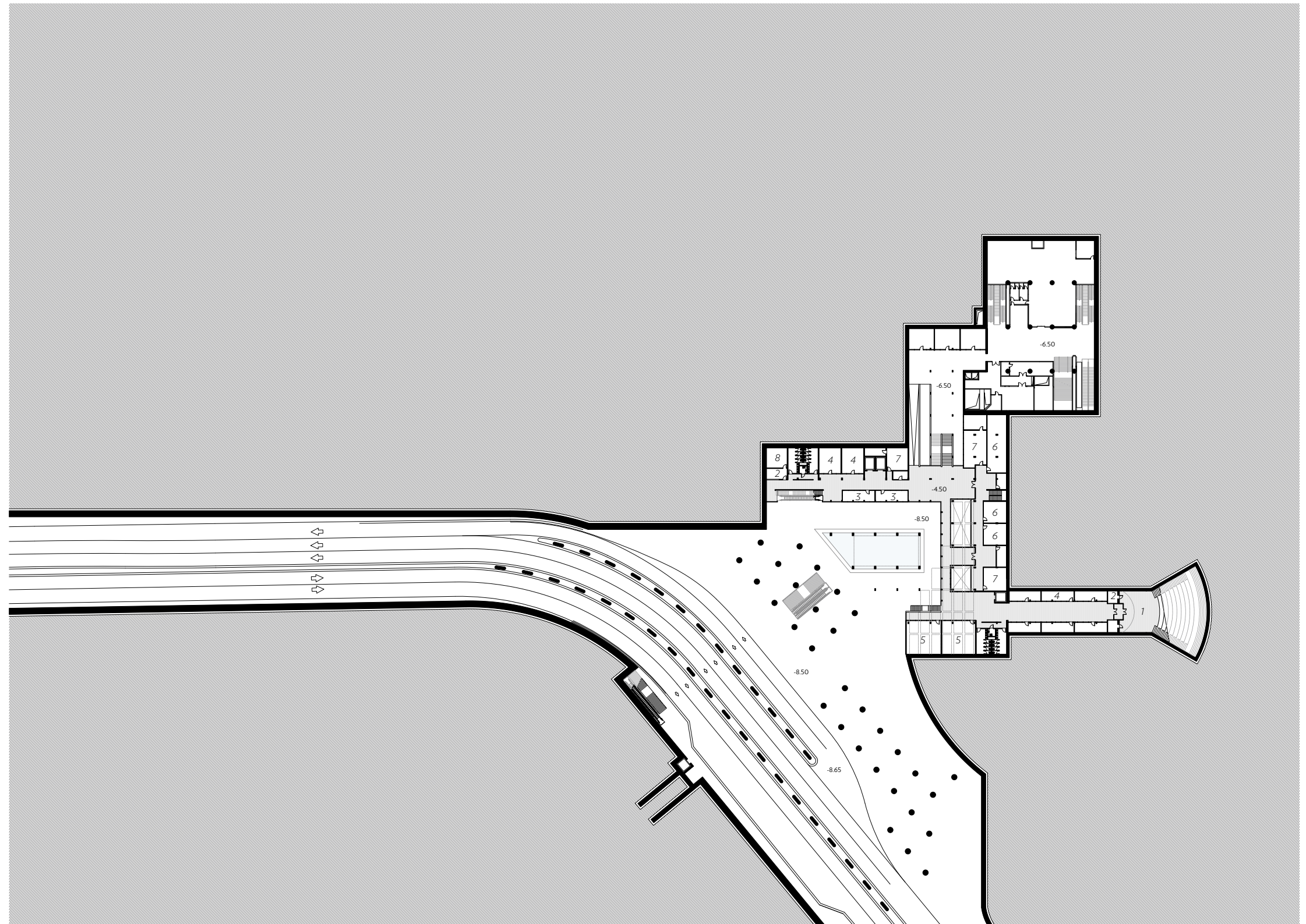


- 1 New Underground Entrance
- 2 Urban Stairs
- 3 Cafe / Buffet
- 4 Store
- 5 Restaurant
- 6 Taksim Art Gallery
- 7 Exhibition Hall
- 8 Workspace
- 9 Police Office
- 10 Visitor Centre
- 11 Administration
- 12 Reception / Gathering Area
- 13 Public Toilet

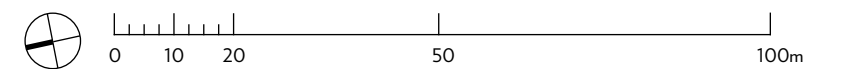


Level -1 Floor Plan

The plan showing the passage level indicates the new entrance to the underground and the series of spaces that act as a connector by linking the existing subway entrance and the Taksim underpass.



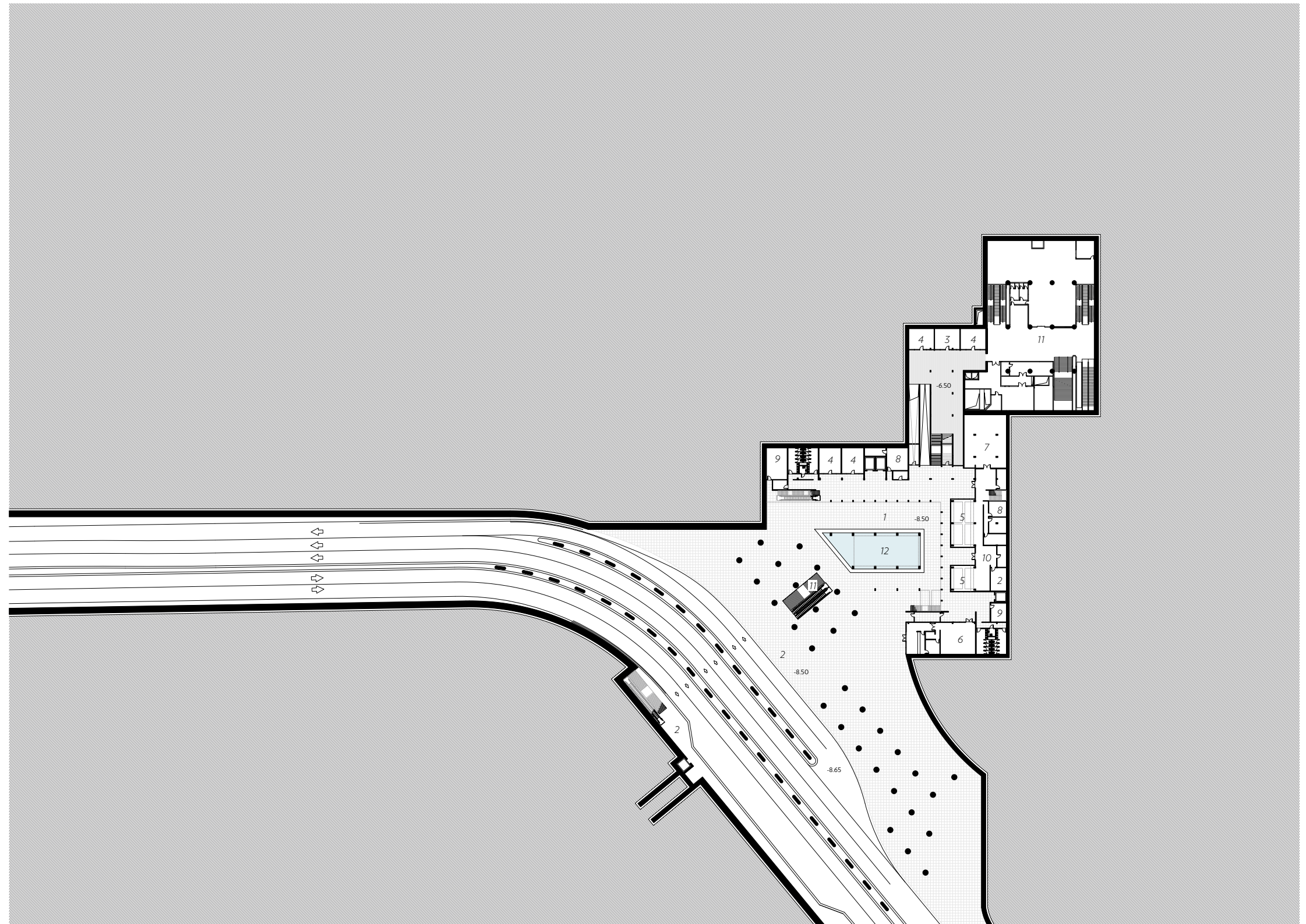
- 1 Entrance
- 2 Security
- 3 Cafe / Buffet
- 4 Store
- 5 Multipurpose Hall
- 6 Workshop
- 7 Offices
- 8 Technical Room



Level -2 Floor Plan

The plan showing the transportation level indicates the courtyard with a pool acts as a threshold space and the series of spaces surrounding it enhances the spatial quality of the Taksim underpass.

- 1 Courtyard
- 2 Bus Waiting Area
- 3 Cafe / Buffet
- 4 Store
- 5 Exhibition Hall
- 6 Seminar Hall
- 7 Workshop
- 8 Offices
- 9 Technical Room
- 10 Taksim Memory Gallery
- 11 Existing Funicular and Metro Entrance
- 12 Water Pond



Spatial Flexibility

The Square

Taksim Square has become a more accurately scaled place in the urban context of Taksim with its enframed spatial arrangement. The steps of the info centre unfolding into the square, the pool located at the part of the AKM meeting the square, and the row of trees that disconnect the traffic density of Tak-ı Zafer Avenue from the square have framed and redefined Taksim Square. With the wide and open space it provides, the square has become a more area suitable for events such as public demonstrations, concerts and cultural events, open-air cinema and theatre plays etc.

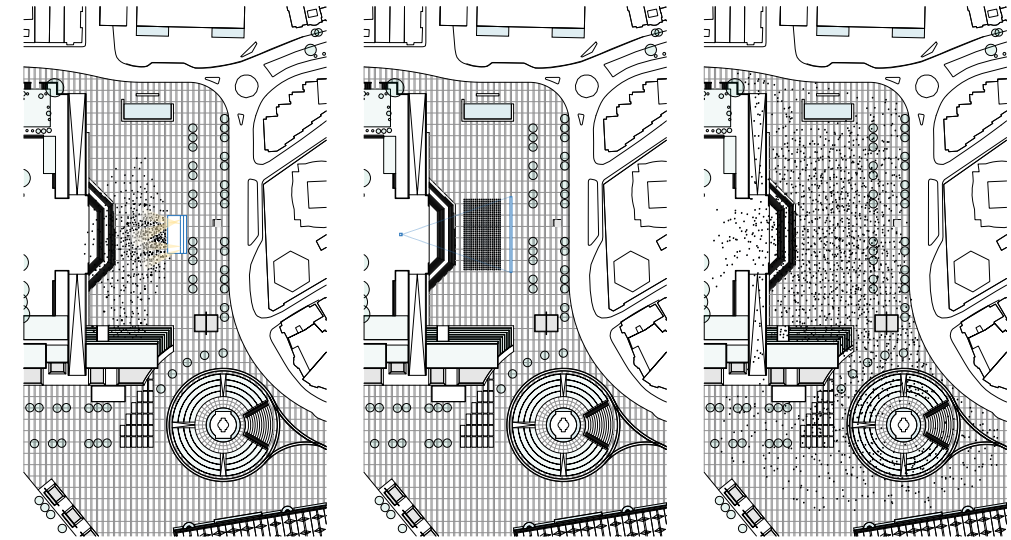
Cumhuriyet Avenue

Cumhuriyet Avenue, which has become a vibrant and active urban corridor due to its linear form, functions around it and the new commercial activities added to the Gezi Park border, provides a suitable venue for celebrations and demonstrations, and cultural fairs and expos etc.

Gezi Park

Gezi Park is one of the most attractive elements of the city due to its spatial organization suitable for being an esplanade and being a park spread over different levels. As the resting point of Beyoğlu, it is a place where the density of the square is not felt and it always maintains its serenity.

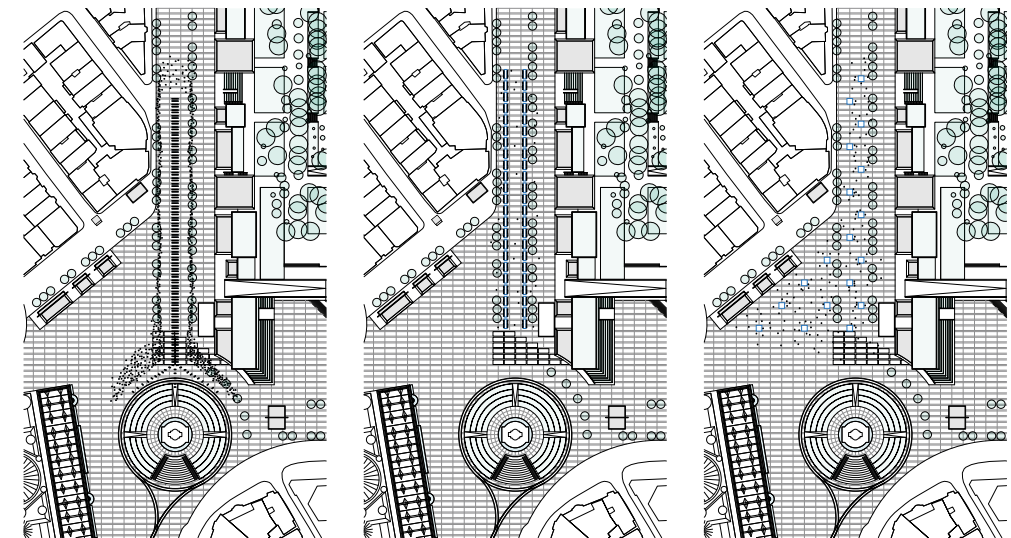
Two blocks from the newly added commercial strip support the spatial arrangement of Gezi Park with its store and cafe. The park, which has a continuous circulation, is a very suitable place for New Year's market, gastronomy festival, food bazaar, art exhibitions and design installations, outdoor forums etc.



Concerts and cultural events

Open air cinema and theatre plays

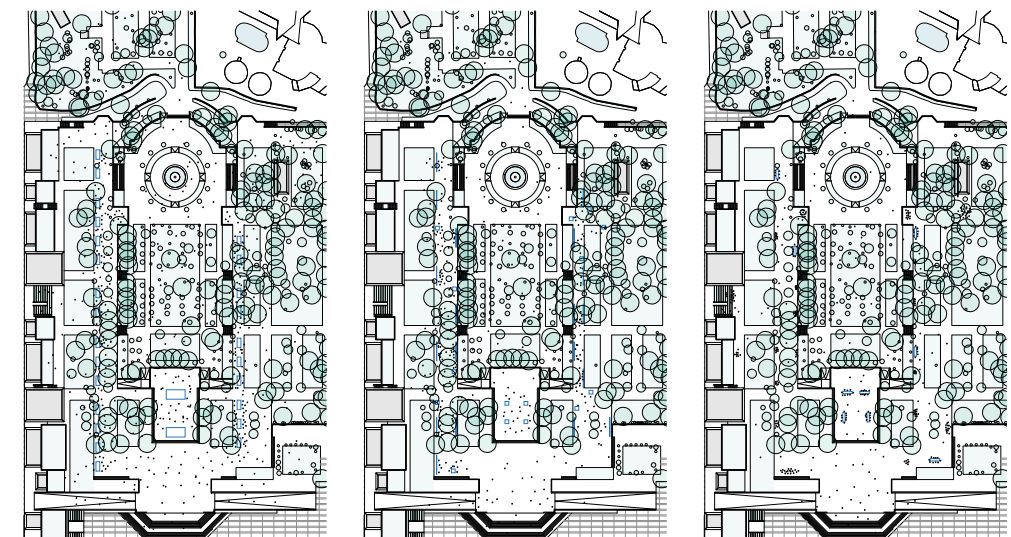
Public demonstrations



Celebrations and parades

Ramadan dinner

Cultural fairs and expos



New Year's market, gastronomy festival, food bazaar

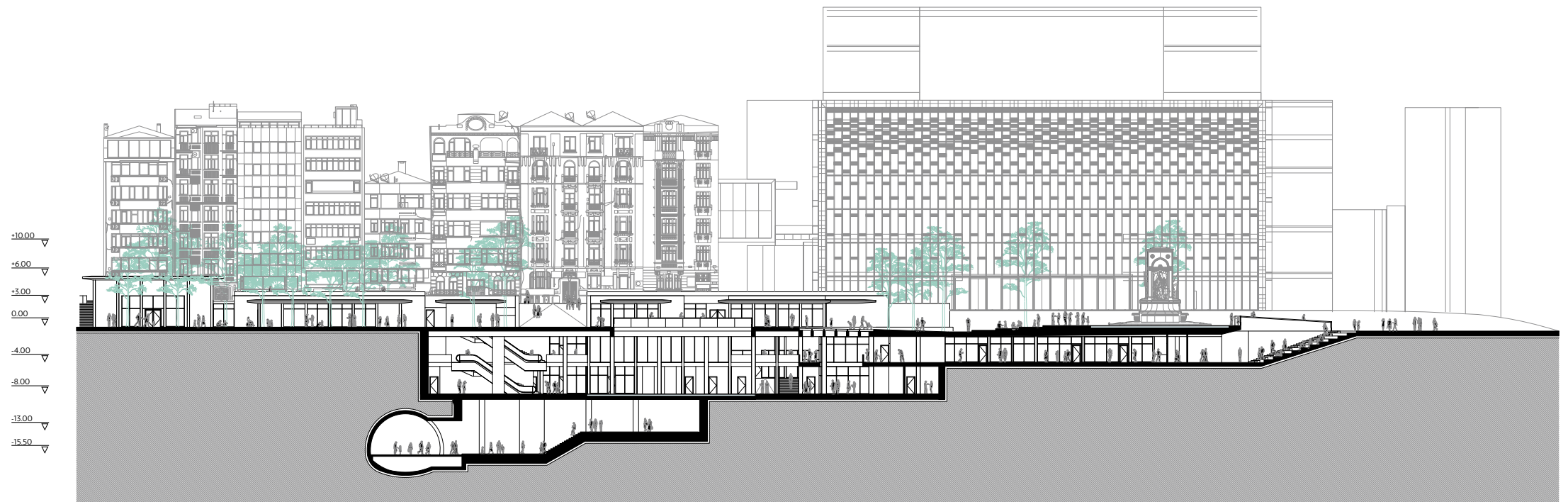
Art exhibitions and design installations

Outdoor forums

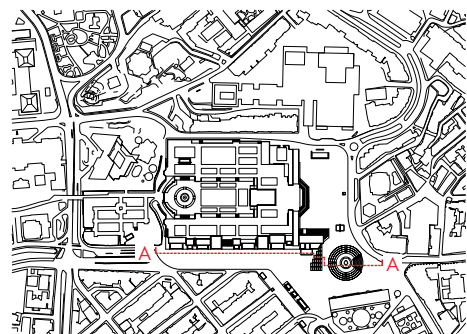
Sections

Section AA

This section shows the relationship between the new entrance to the Taksim underpass below the Republic Monument, part of the commercial strip on Cumhuriyet Avenue, and the courtyard located underground that connects the existing metro entrance and bus waiting zone.



Section AA



Section BB

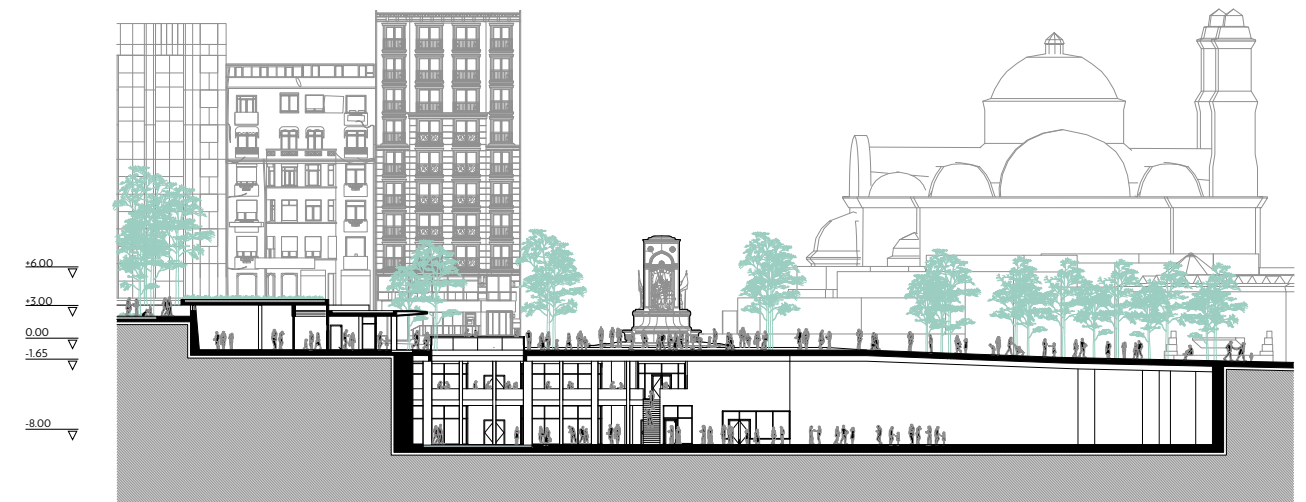
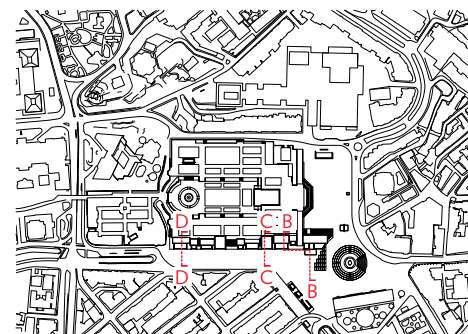
This section shows the spatial relationship between the park, and the main space slightly elevated above the park level which is one of the three different typologies in the commercial strip on Cumhuriyet Avenue, the portico, and the slit allowing the natural light and ventilation to the underground courtyard and the periphery of Republic Monument.

Section CC

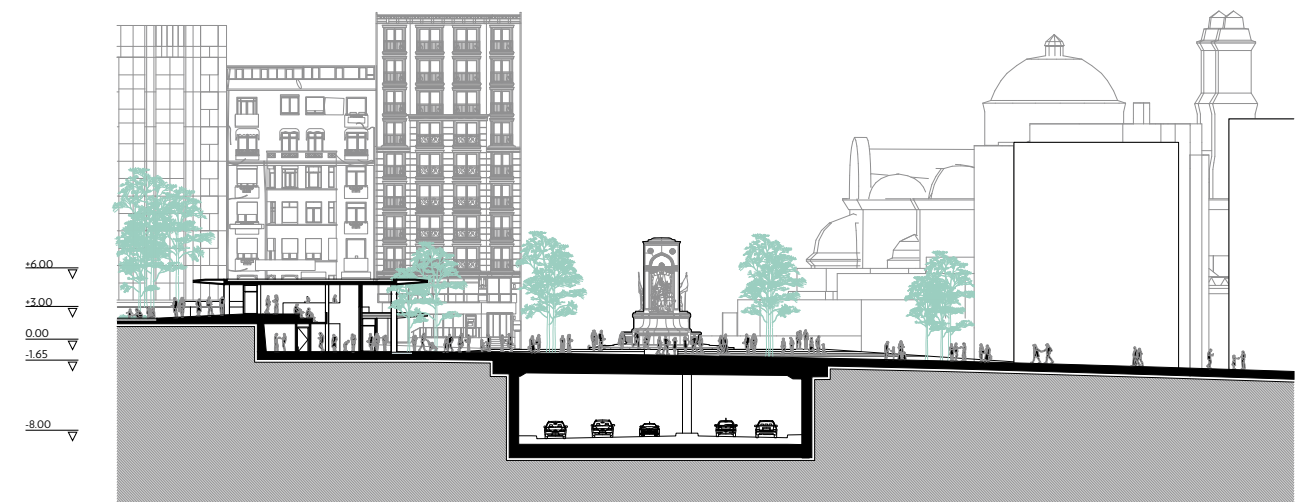
This section shows the spatial relationship between the park, the main space with a two-storey height which is one of the three different typologies in the commercial strip on Cumhuriyet Avenue, the portico, and one of the Talimhane streets.

Section DD

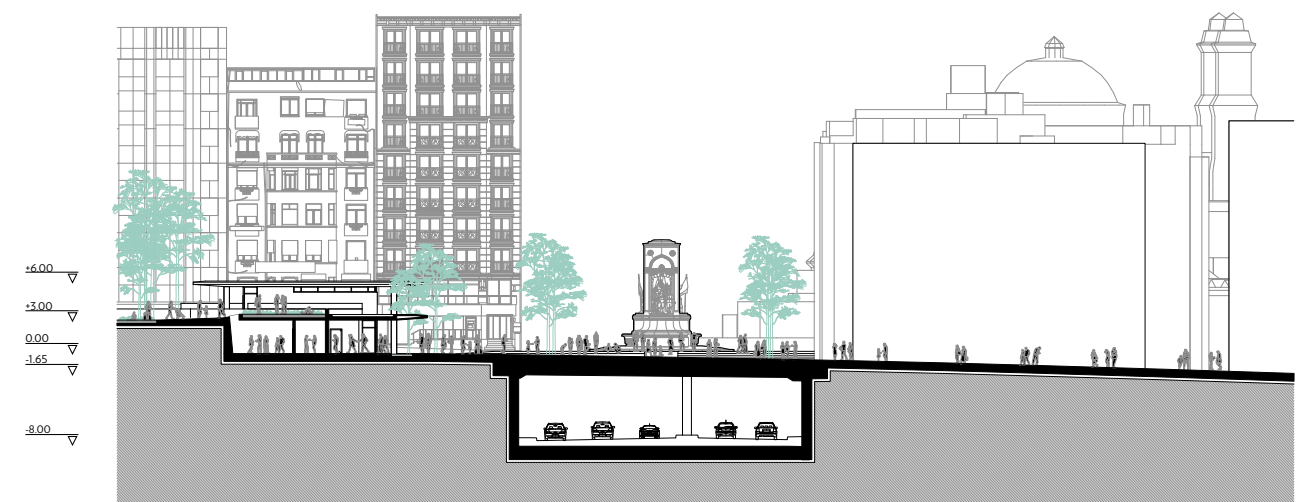
This section shows the spatial relationship between the park, the main space that acts as an extension of the park which is one of the three different typologies in the commercial strip on Cumhuriyet Avenue, the portico, and one of the Talimhane streets.



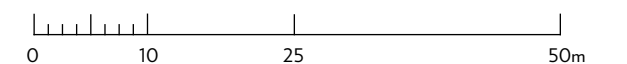
Section BB



Section CC



Section DD

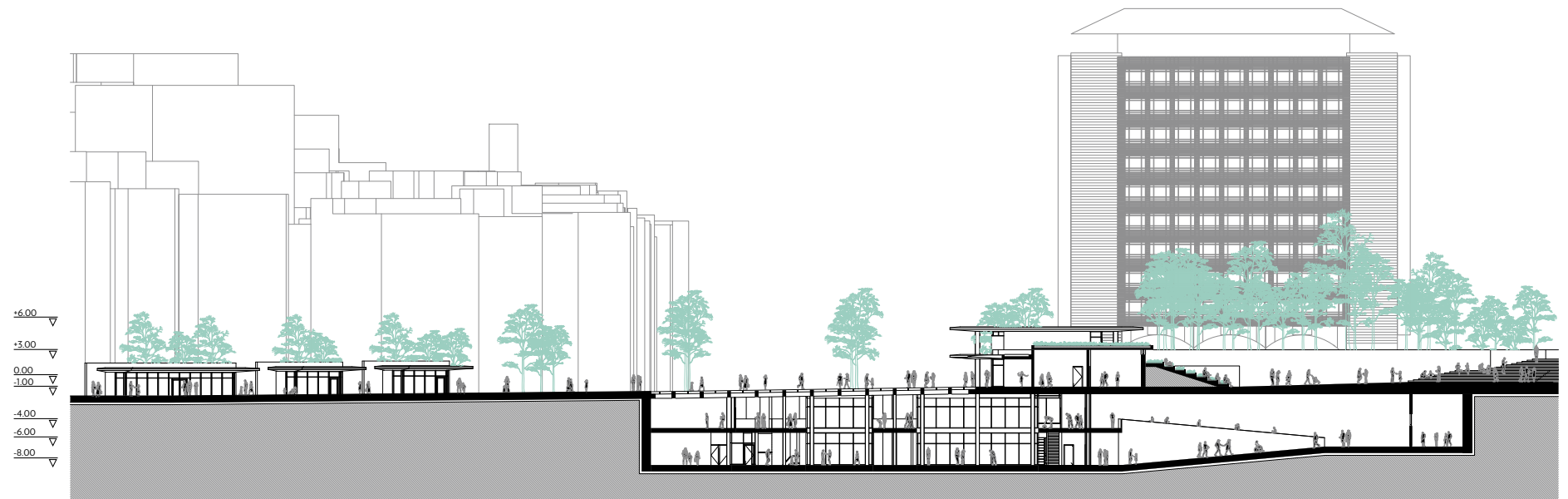
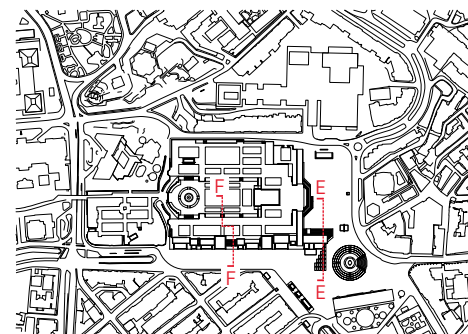


Section EE

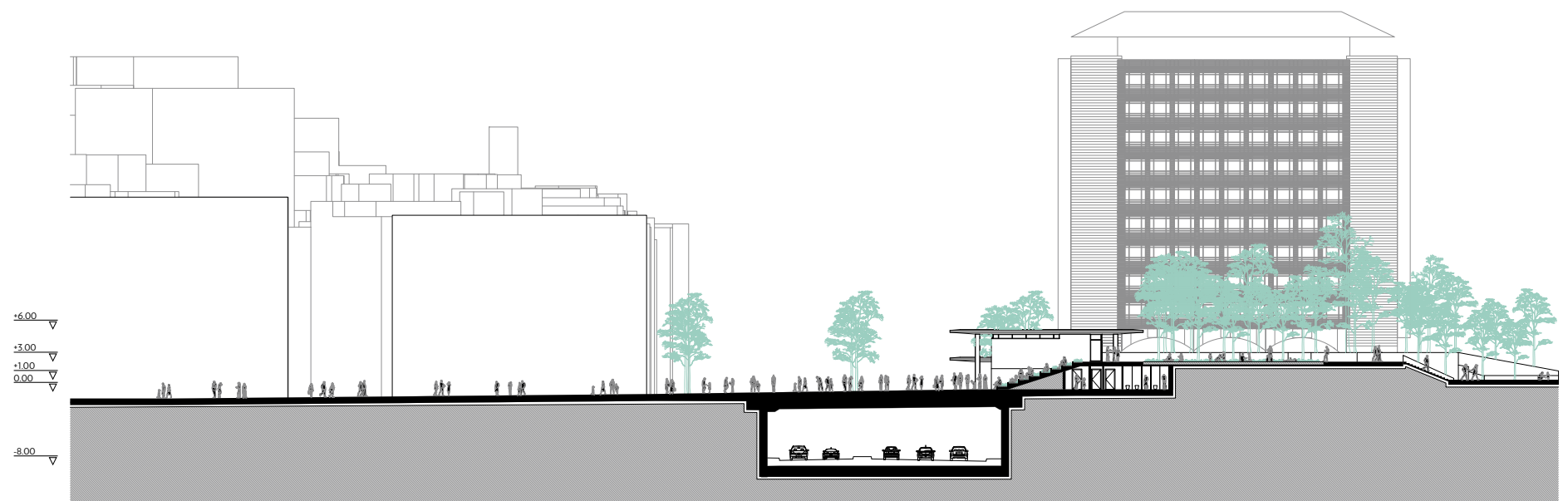
This section shows the relationship between the info centre which is the function of the commercial strip on Cumhuriyet Avenue that meets the square, and the spaces that act as a continuation of the square creating a new and defined urban space between the monument and the street. It also expresses the relationship between the main functions underground and the new metro connection.

Section FF

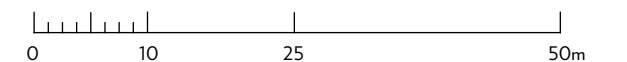
This section shows the spatial relationship between the different levels of Gezi Park with one of the new access points to the park from Cumhuriyet Avenue and one of Talimhane streets.

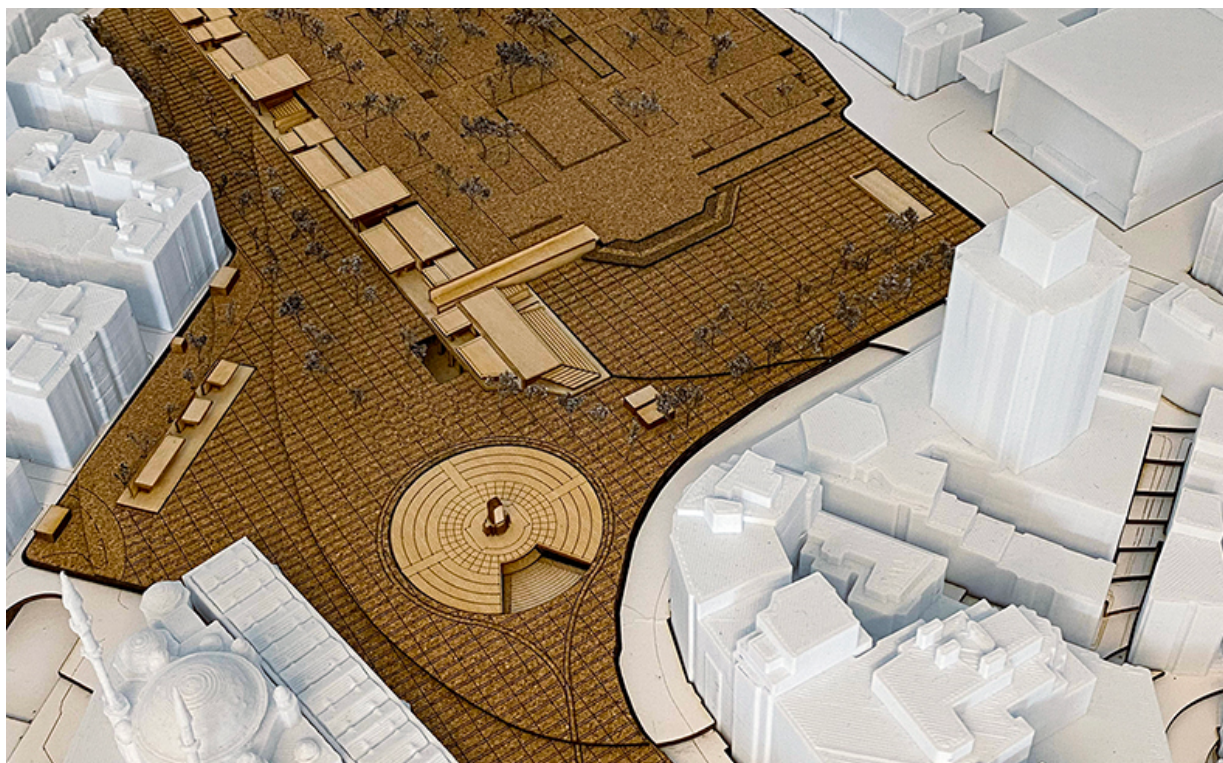


Section EE

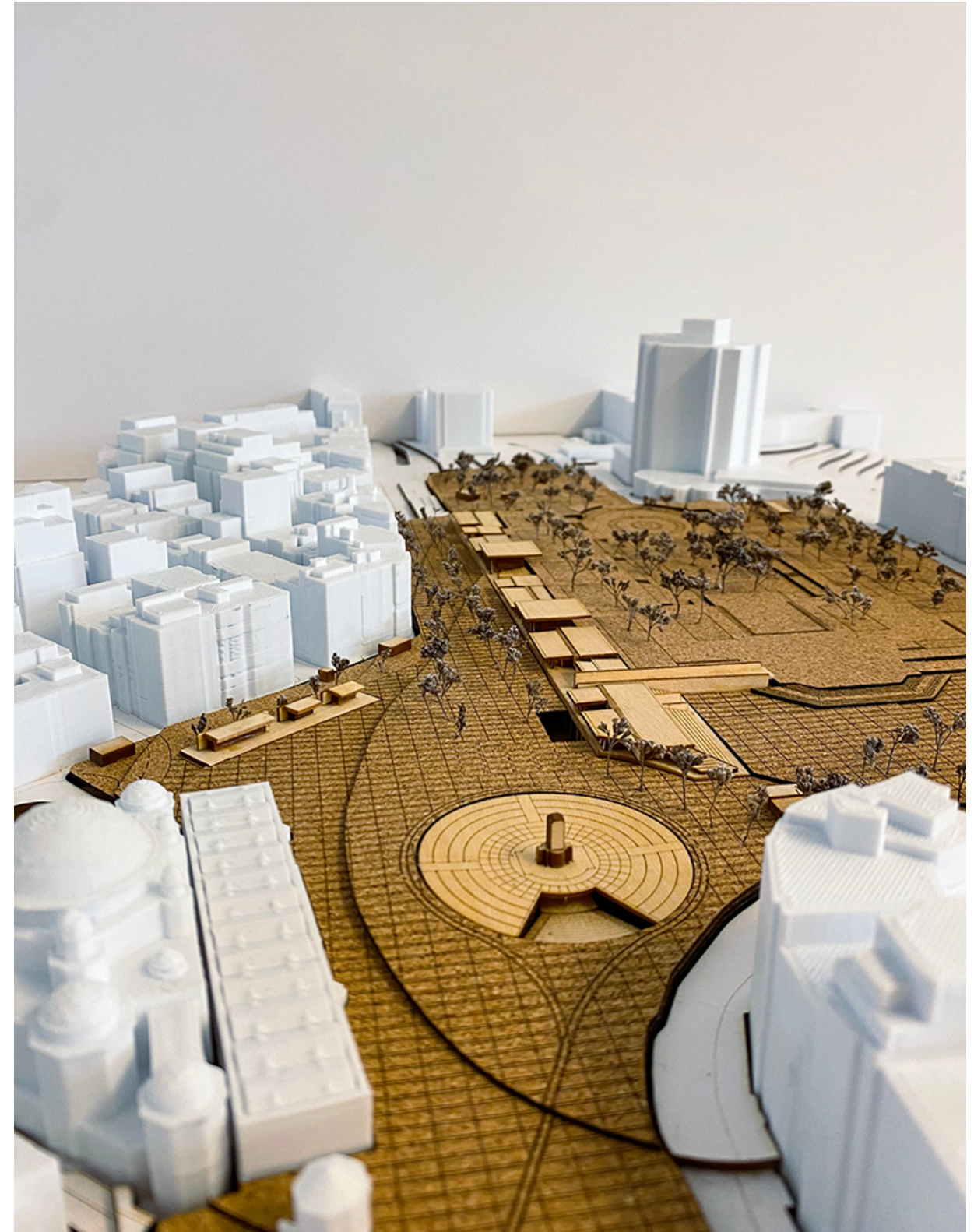
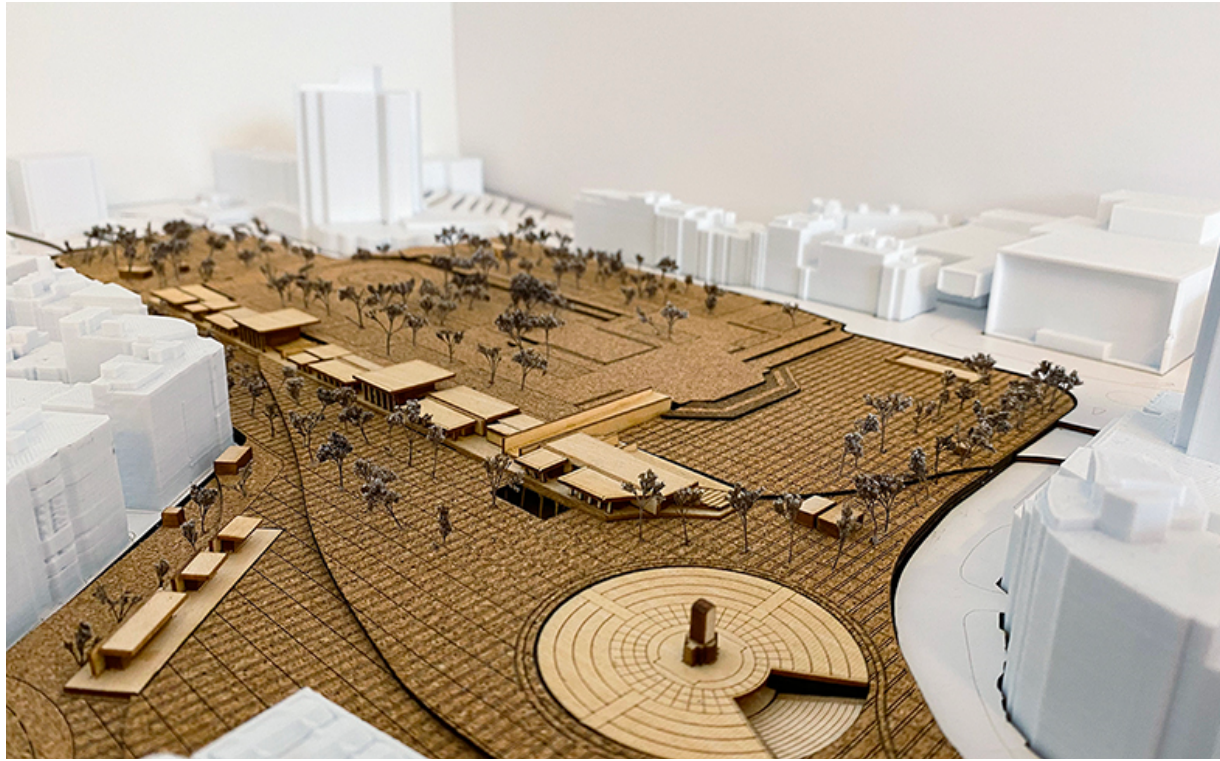


Section FF





Physical model in 1:1000 scale made of wood, cork, 3d prints and cardboard.



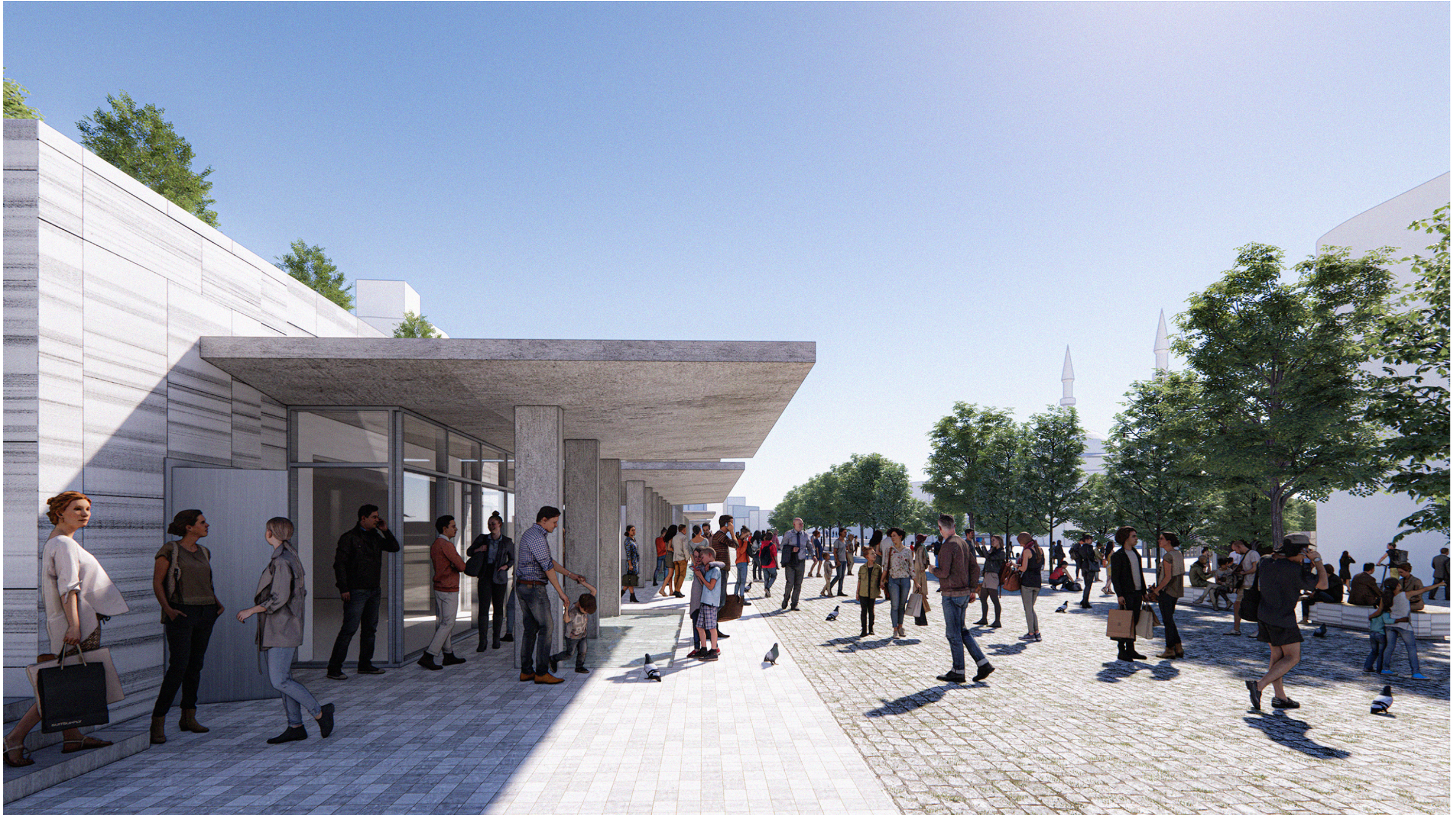
Physical model in 1:1000 scale made of wood, cork, 3d prints and cardboard.



A view from the elevated Republic Monument towards Taksim Square, the new underground access and the commercial strip.



A view from the commercial strip from Cumhuriyet Avenue: the Taksim Art Gallery on the left and the urban stairs leading to Gezi Park on the right.



A view from the portico towards Cumhuriyet Avenue and the Republic Monument.



A view from the courtyard on the transportation floor towards the slit opening into the square.

Threshold Space Analyses

Threshold Space

Threshold Analyses Parameters

Threshold Space

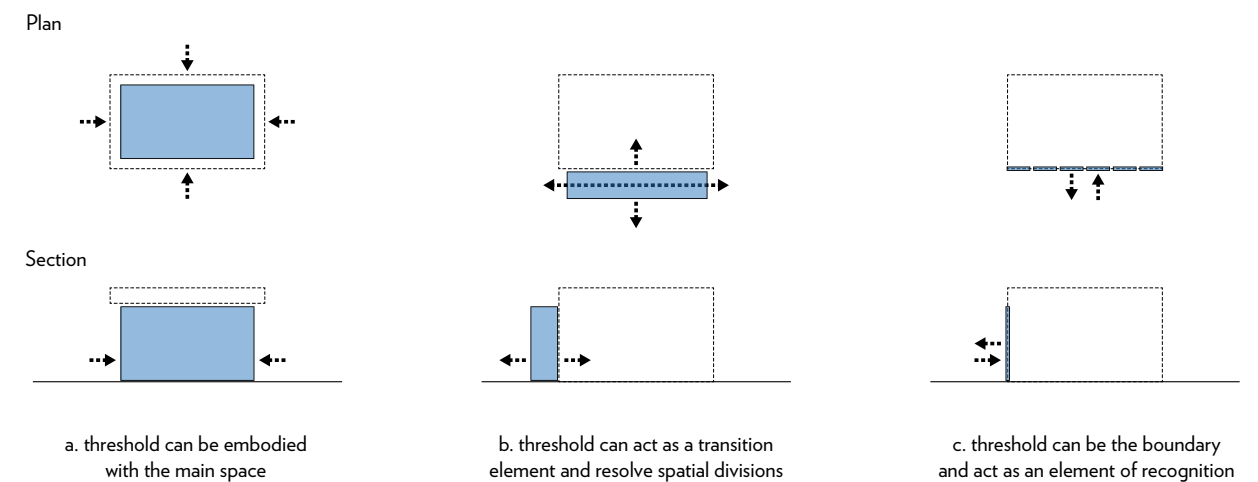
This section defines threshold spaces and discusses how they are adapted to design as a method. In addition, this section analyses how the commercial strip in the proposed design in Chapter 4 functions as a threshold space and is deconstructed into the elements inspired by the approaches of Egon Schirmbeck and Till Boettger, within the framework of their threshold space analyses.

The term threshold space can be described as 'connection', 'intermediate area', or 'interface between incorporation spaces and separation spaces' (Behnke-Pfuh, 2005). Thresholds define spaces by acting as both a boundary and a transition. Threshold space can be defined and characterized from various points of view including the user, the space, and the architecture. It is a state of transition that separates and connects spaces (Boettger, 2014) or it is the space that links other spaces, mediums or objects (Dee, 2001).

Thresholds are spatial situations that allow for mobility and transition in spaces by creating openings in boundaries. They intrigue the user to cross one space to another. They serve as an interface to the space, establishing not only the transition but also the space itself (Boettger, 2014).

While analysing threshold spaces, the focus is on the threshold space itself, not the entire architecture and the six parameters that establish the framework of the analysis of Schirmbeck and Boettger are 'spatial definition', 'spatial sequence', 'spatial structure', 'spatial situation', 'spatial design', and 'spatial function' (Boettger, 2014).

This section analyses the threshold space by using the first four of these parameters in order to more clearly examine the spatial relations of the design within itself and its immediate surroundings and how it can respond to the problems in the project site in a spatial sense.

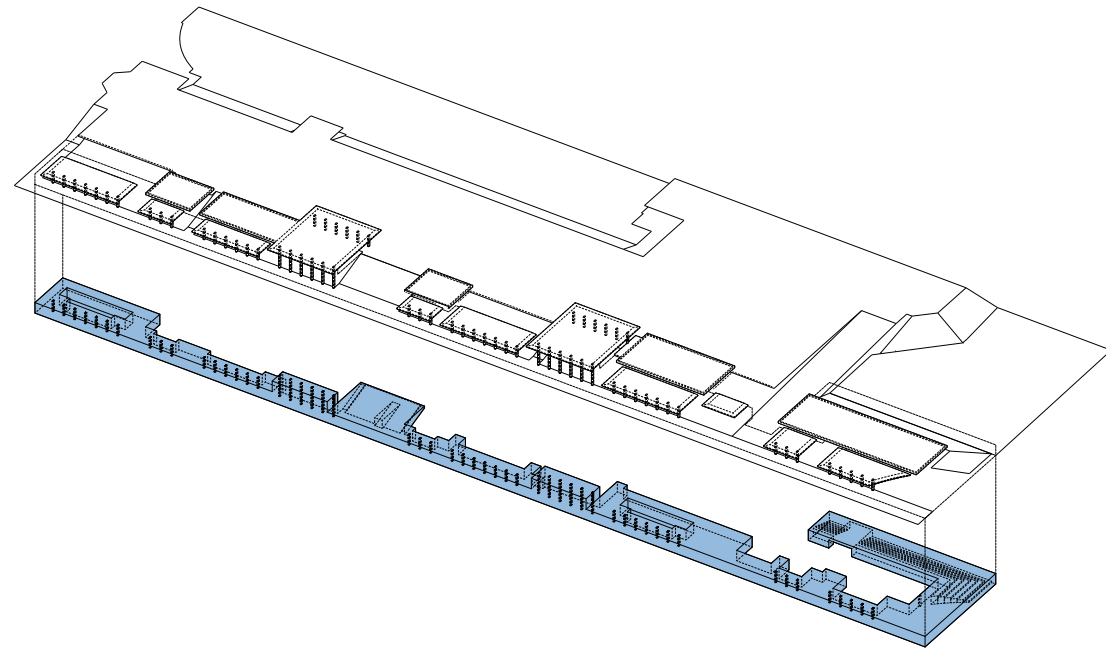


Different interfaces of threshold spaces

Threshold Analyses Parameters

Spatial Definition

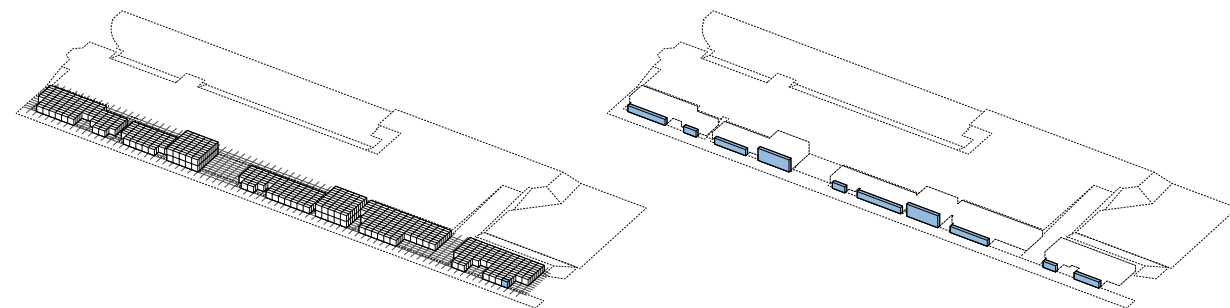
The spatial definition defines whether the threshold space is perceived as a whole or as a part of a process by determining the trace of the spatial body and defining the boundaries of the threshold space (Boettger, 2014).



Delimitations of the threshold space and body of the threshold space

Spatial Structure

The spatial structure examines the form and order of threshold space by analysing the geometry and the spatial organization. It also expresses the proportions of the threshold space and defines whether it is integrated or provides its own structural organization (Boettger, 2014).

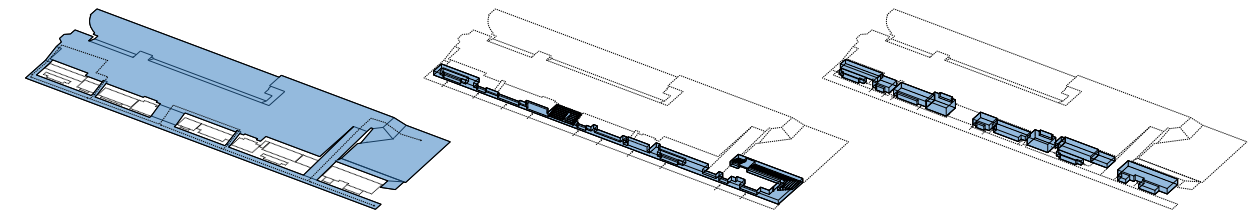


Modular composition of the threshold space

Openings of the threshold space

Spatial Sequence

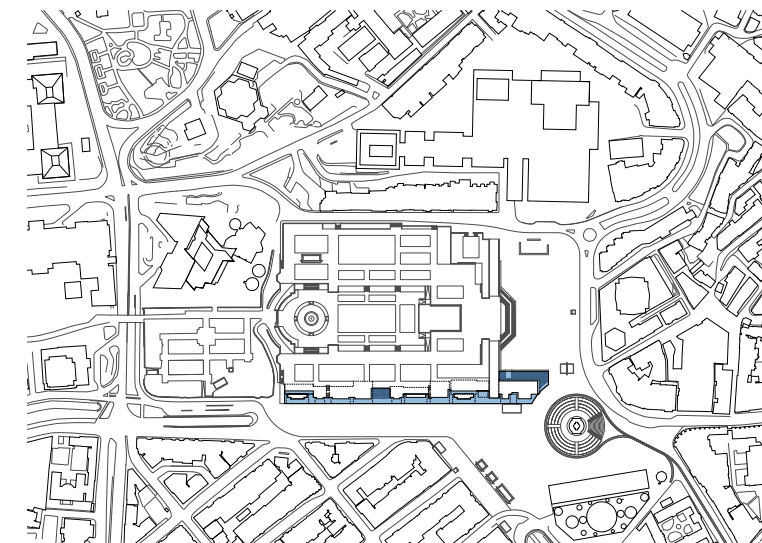
The spatial sequence is an important parameter for the deconstruction of spatial experiences in threshold space analysis, which indicates the order and phases of the perceived spaces (Boettger, 2014).



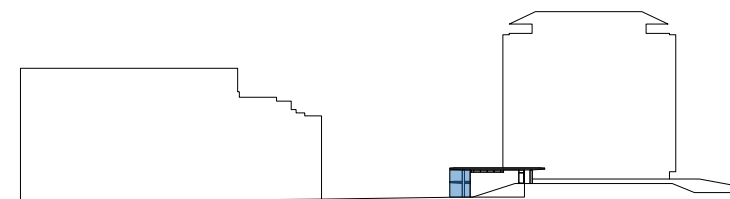
Threshold space sequences

Spatial Situation

The spatial situation defines the layout of the threshold space that has been created. This parameter examines how the threshold space is related to the topography and its environment within the architectural boundary and urban context (Boettger, 2014).



Urban context of the threshold space



Enframed threshold space

Reflections

I perceive this project and process as an outcome of where my interests in architectural practice and the knowledge and experience I have gained throughout my education life are intertwined. The fact that the elements of space and space can create a unique spatial experience by interacting with surrounding factors has always made me think about how full of potential is the limited areas imposed by the architecture and therefore the space its boundaries and the functions it offers, and I questioned how this situation can be reorganised again.

I started to construct the project by considering that spatial experience is an indispensable part of daily life and its activities. The fact that it has a deep-rooted and multi-layered historical background and that it can host a wide variety of activities while choosing the field that I will be working on during the term has been considered. Thus, I chose to examine Taksim Square, which is located in Istanbul, as it contains many conflicts, diversity and problems related to architecture and related fields.

The first step in my approach to the vast urban void, which is composed of a complex and complicated series of spaces, was to embrace the void and not alienate it. While examining the dynamics between the void, Gezi Park, Istiklal Street, Taksim Underpass, Cumhuriyet Street, and AKM, I discovered that this area functions as a whole, but its problems are fragmented, which was very constructive in forming my design strategies.

For a place with a fragmented organisation like Taksim, I envisaged an structurally integrated but spatially fragmented and articulated design. The fact that I gave the most importance and attention during the design process was to pay attention to the direct interaction of the spaces that could produce constructive solutions to the existing conditions with the problematic areas. For this reason, by adapting the concept of 'threshold space' to my design, I have constructed a series of spaces that intervene in the problems with their own means as an interface.

What made the thesis process easier but also challenged me throughout the semester was my familiarity with Taksim and its surroundings. I knew the area well and had spent a long time there before, which was a huge advantage for me. On the other hand, being a very large and multi-layered site meant just as much design input, which made it difficult for me to make decisions throughout the process.

In conclusion, examining the effects of different spatial compositions on the solution of problems and doing a lot of experimentation allowed me to observe and identify the possibilities and potentials of interventions in the urban context. By not only designing, but also conducting a spatial analysis of the design, I studied the effects of threshold spaces as a design tool to revitalize an urban structure in a more comprehensive and detailed way, which made me learn the capacities of the perceived space, conceived space, and lived space.

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Figures

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- 2.18** Google Earth, 2021. *Taksim Square, 41°02'14"N, 28°59'11"E, elevation 78m.* [Online]
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- 3.1** İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality, 2020. *Oblique Drone Images of Taksim* [Photograph].
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