

LEARNING from Naples

MEMBRANES



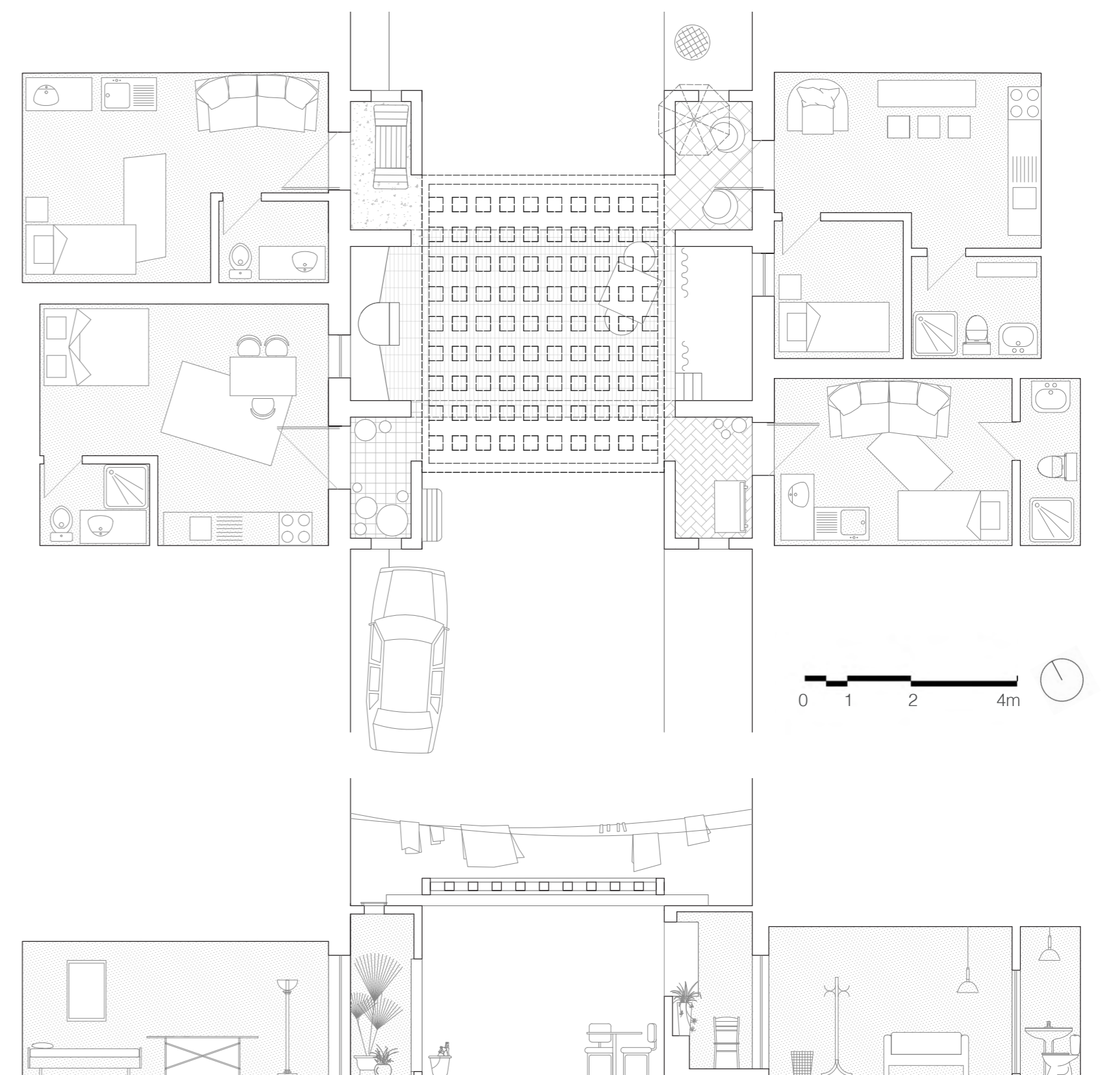
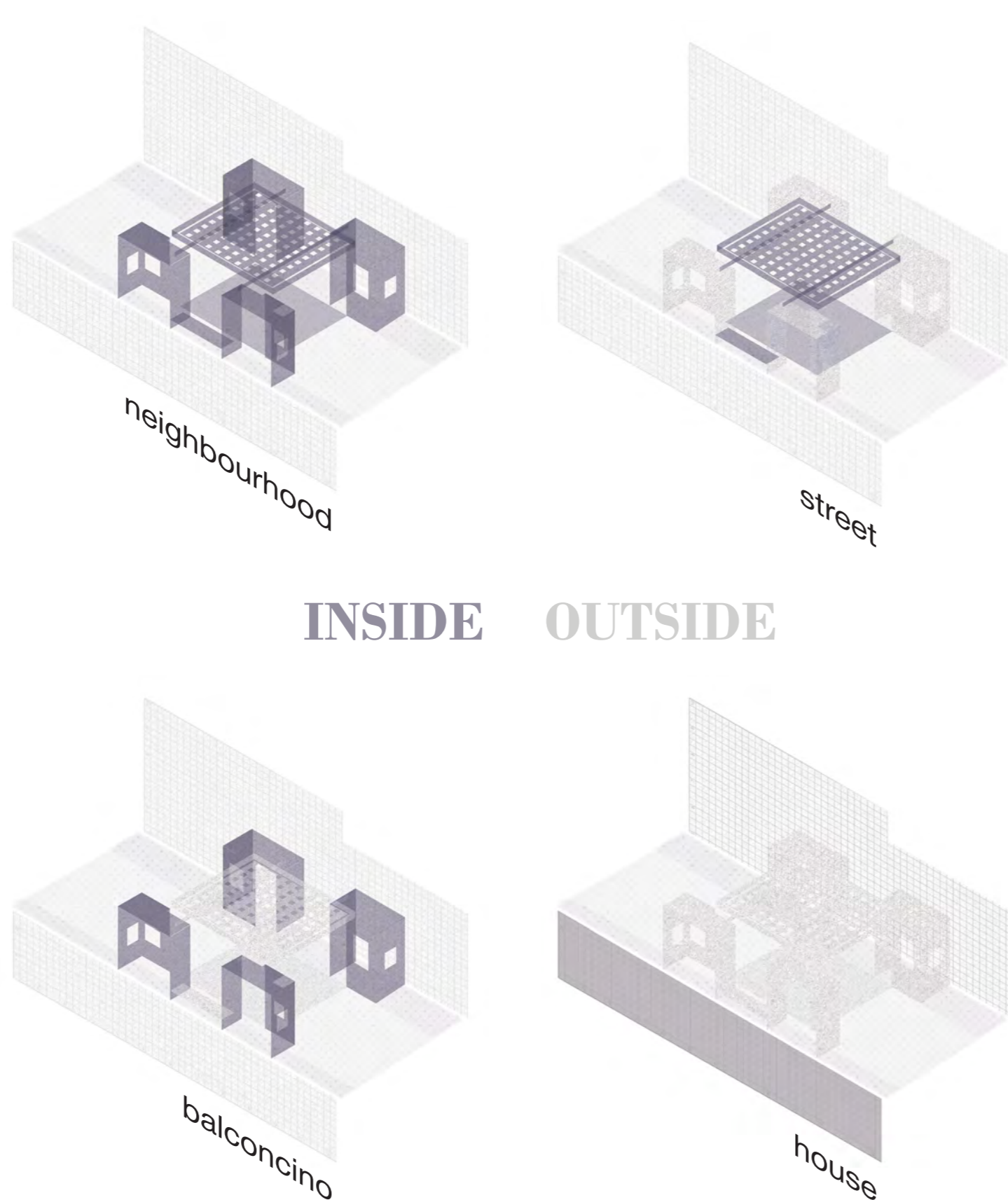
How does the complexity and porosity of the membrane vary within the balconcino-altar spectrum?

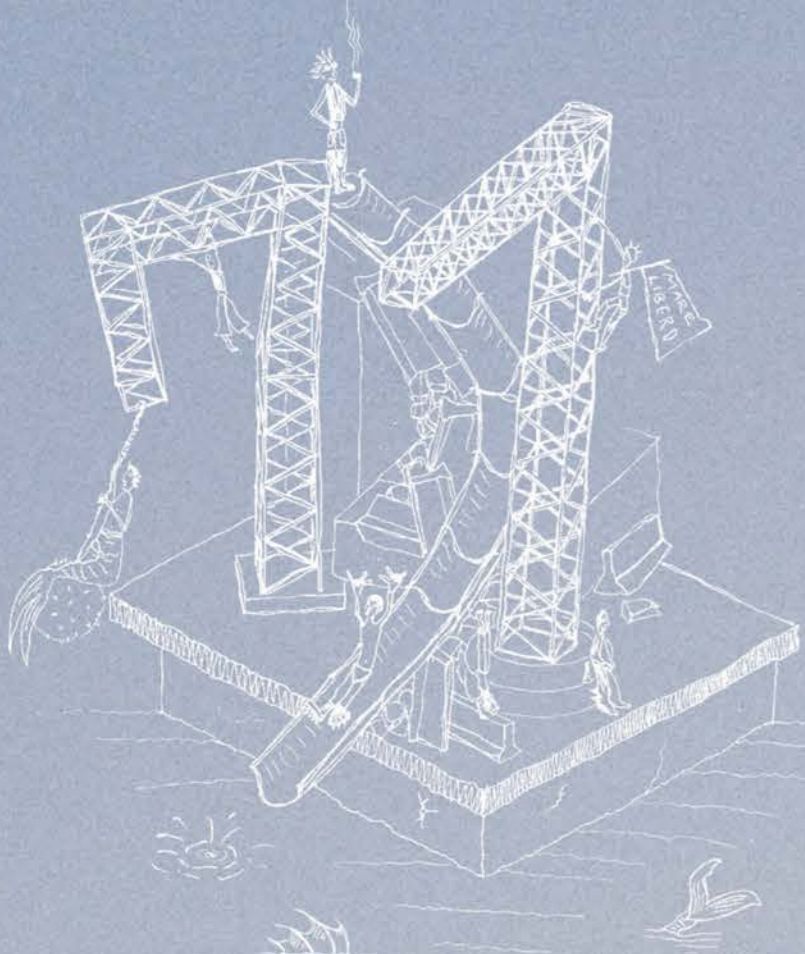
This fascinating idea emerged during the second stage of our project, which focused on sensing, intuiting, and imagining. During this second phase, as illustrated by the respective poster, we discovered a fascination for the so-called balconcini. These seemingly informal and ordinary thresholds became a central element of analysis in our study, key to understanding and solving our problem surrounding architectural identity.

To explore this concept further, we designed a *hyper-balconcino* for one of the streets in the Historic Centre of Naples. This intervention, a shared space for four houses on the ground floor, aims to introduce a new *multiscalar* complexity to balconies. By adding a squared roof supported by the four corners of the balconies on the lower floor, we aimed to create a space that is not actually owned by any of them, but rather collectively used by all the neighbours. A small platform elevates this space from the asphalt road as an act of *territorialisation*. The neighbourhood inhabitants are thus solely responsible for deciding whether the road is open to traffic, or will be closed in order to use this space for watching soccer or eating outside. The coffered roof between the ground balconies creates a new additional membrane, a space neither inside nor outside that represents the next level of *appropriation* of public space, creating layers of separation and connection over the concept of private property.

We began our intervention by asking ourselves how Neapolitans interact with their architecture and how this interaction shapes their architectural identity. The dynamic relationship of the citizens with the city continuously transforms membranes, creating multiple layers of inside and outside spaces. In Naples, every space has the potential to act as a membrane between an inside and an outside; the more complex these membranes become, the more they can transform and be transformed. Both habitats (our living spaces) and habitus (our ways of living) can deepen, make more porous, and plasticize a membrane, ultimately informing the continuous interchangeability of what becomes a monument and what a tool. Leading to the final question:

How much is architecture in Naples an act of production rather than an act of observance and speculation?



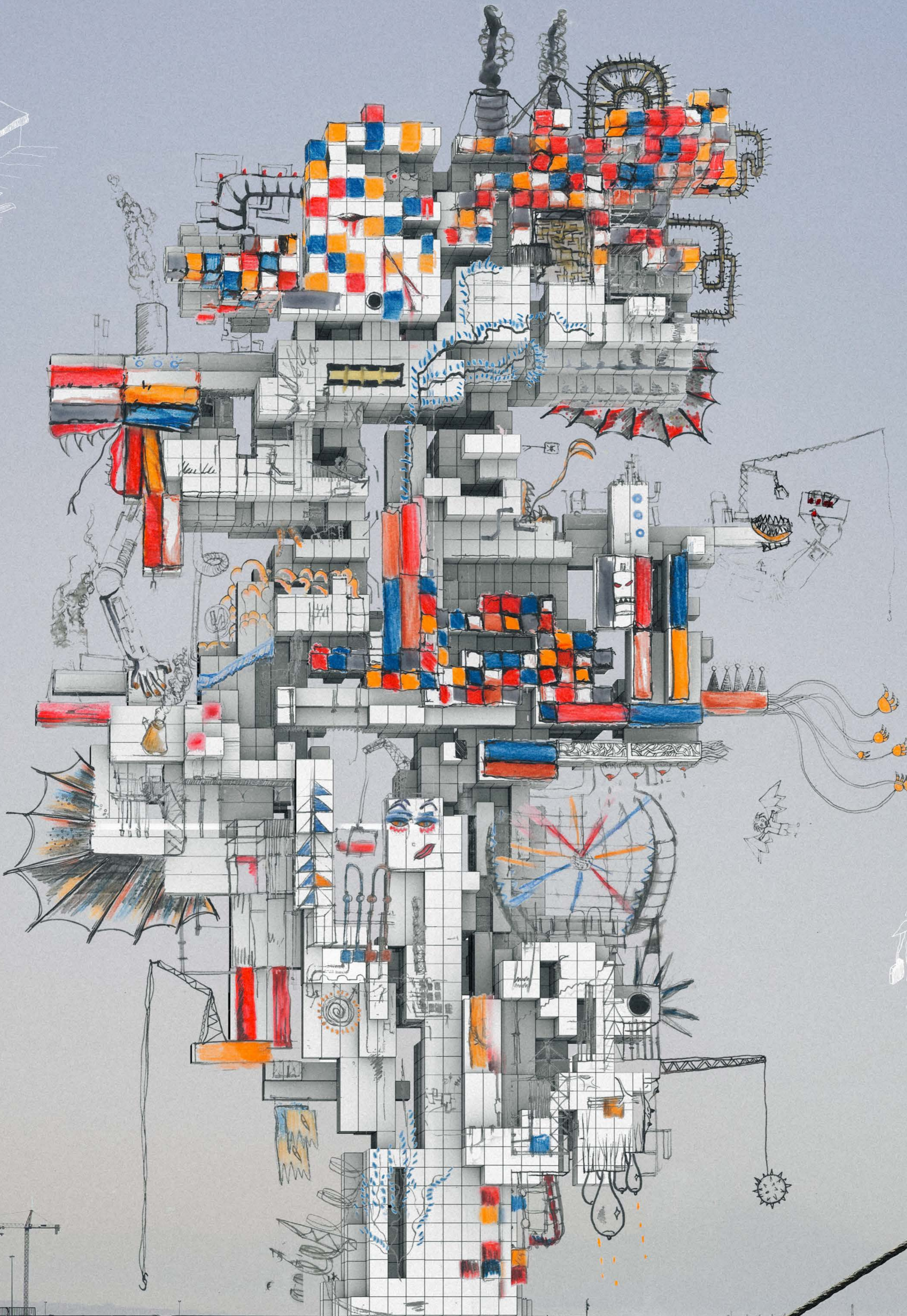


The Reappropriated Barriers

In order to regenerate what has become stuck and again bathic Naples in the endless sea of possibilities, the Cybersiren emerges. This is a fantastical creature lying at the heart of the sea, the machine and human. It is born at the place where the port, the Mediterranean and the Neapolitans collide. Zir creation beyond genesis catapults a challenge to the conventional origin. Ze exists in a state of ephemerality, only appearing after the emergence of static and over coding. Ze only wakes up in the silence that arises from stuckness and only sleeps again when stuckness is resolved and things are put back to their natural disorder. Being a hybrid of machine and organism, the Cybersiren is as much a creature of social reality as a creature of fiction and thus has the power to change our lived social relations, those being the most powerful political construct. Like the sirens from the stories, the Cybersiren sings, sounds creating vibrations that disrupt which has become stuck, resonates with the people in order to reinstill their belief of the sea and city being one, luring them into breaking free from the grid in order to reignite what was once there and is still visible in the rest of the city. The Cybersiren is an invitation to be playful, to challenge authorities, to dispel the idea of the port being a static place, one that's merely there for efficiency's sake.

Throughout time and its swarm of social-political fluxes, the Neapolitan port has developed into an environment giving off the feeling of the post anthropocene upon entering as aesthetics have come to be stringent and prescribed, the port seems static. Forces of change having lost their direction. Conversely, the past of Naples and its port is distinguished by its complexity, deriving from the richness of local narratives and storytelling one the one hand and fluctuating political discourses on the other. Naples' port has served as a nexus of exchange, trade, and governance for ages before having been catapulted into an age of modernization. The relationship between the port and the city found its evolution in this complicated historical progression in which Naples' political ecology reformed. The current machine landscape is a grotesque manifestation of that.

Despite the port being a place void of stories as of today, religion and mythology have always had a profound impact on Neapolitan's everyday life. The narratives about the city all revolve around love and death, a juxtaposition of two ubiquitous things throughout humanity and thus, speaking to the imagination vividly. According to the legends, Napoli was founded after Ulysses, one of the heroes of Greek mythology, receives a warning for the sirens before going. With their hypnotic voices of the sea, they would seduce passing sailors before killing and eating them. In order not to fall prey, Ulysses blocks out the ears of his sailors with wax and lets himself be bound to the mast. In desperation because of not being able to lure him into the sea, the siren Parthenope threw herself into the sea and died. Where her body washed up on shore, the city of Naples arose. Another tale tells of that of Vesuvius, a centaur in love with Parthenope. Upon hearing this, Zeus becomes jealous and transforms him into a volcano. Lastly, there's the tale of the river god Sebeto, the river which used to end up in the Mediterranean at Naples' Porta della Maddalena. In the story, Sebeto and Parthenope were involved in a love affair which couldn't last. Likewise, these days the actual river has completely dried up due to irrigation and canalisation and is yet another representation of the loss of story.



The Cybersirenetic Uniform Dome



The Queered Costumes



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CHRONICLES OF THE CYBERSIREN

Projections of Hyper-Individualism

A Projector Point I

Coinciding with the three states of the tipping plane, a projected image consists of two points at a distance, creating a zone in-between. Point A of the projected shrine is the projector itself, requiring input in the form of a designed image and energy needed to perform its actions. The projector has an aimed direction, place and authorities responsible for its maintenance and care. In contrast to the 2024 christian shrine, the shrine in a post-christian Naples operating under decentralized belief systems in an apparent future of ever-increasing individualization functions under the chief authority of the individual. Transcendence through monotheistic faith, with all its intentions aiming towards a single higher truth, is replaced by a multiplicity of personal belief systems with a high variation in desires and means of transcending. We anticipate a situation of Hyper-Individualization, where the shrine would reconfigure itself as the expression of one individual's belief system. All points of the shrine would be initiated by a single person through their authority over point A, the projector and eternal designed image. Wherever the light of the projection falls, and whoever interacts with it, the digital 'input' image will not alter but instead adapts to fit the changing context. The shrine reimagined in this hyper-individualistic, post-christian future is an expression of individuality and multiple belief systems, but also a means of territorializing through the projected frame of expression.

A-B Zone Distance

Distance is a necessary ingredient of care, the transcending desire machine. A union with the transcendent authority, or the image of worship, implies an impossible equilibrium. In the image of the shrine we see a separation of worshiper and worshiped through physical boundaries, where care is about maintaining the right distance. In the projected shrine, this distance becomes about the zone in-between projector and surface, loosely translated to the throw of the projector. This zone contains a new set of potentials. By projecting into space, territory is claimed by personal expression. The streets are saturated with color and light, creating a neighborhood-wide tapestry of beliefs and desires. In the way that the image claims the street, the street also becomes part of the projected image through this throw zone. Objects and people can pick up the image and merge with it, although a true unification with the digital 'transcendent' image remains impossible. The interaction between the internal belief system externalized through projecting implies a new way of expressing individuality. Distance modulates intensity, which is now modulated by the self as well as external movement and activity in the street. The self is represented by a single image claiming territory, claiming a place of belonging rather than belonging through joining an existing institution like religion or family. Belonging, faith, transcendence and desire are modulated and broken down by external flows, but immanent to the self

B Surface Point II

The projected image is picked up by surface and object, creating an ensemble that forms the image in space. The area where the image is picked up creates point B, the boundary of zone A/B. The designed 'input' image of the projector expresses the personal shrine, the individual belief system which can manifest in an infinite number of ways. With the self as the new highest order, this image takes the place of the holy figure as the medium. The projection creates distance, allowing for interaction and temporary merging within the throw zone but never a true unification. The image is altered through the unleashing of potentials in this zone, bringing out the temporal image in space. Temporality, distance and territorialization are all drives of a system of care, or the desire machine. In its most abstracted form, a shrine is a frame with an image in it. The outline of the projection becomes the frame of the digital image, while the frame in the natural world is represented as a boundary of some kind. Our boundary between the domain of the self, the home, and the expressive public domain, becomes the frame of the door or window. Using this natural frame as a boundary, blurring the relationship between internal and external becomes even more evident, as there is now a choice to shut the projection out, invite it into the house or for passers-by to throw their shadows into the living space. The most primordial rituals, like making breakfast become part of the shrine itself, part of a choreography.

Belief in Post-Christian Naples

Having a belief is one of the most primal senses of human kind, because it gives purpose to being. In our research question we challenge the idea of a centralized belief system, such as Christianity, and ask ourselves how belief is expressed in post-Christian Naples. Our design proposal depicts Hyper-Individualisation as a decentralized system of belief. Increasing individualization is already present in society, with the predicament to grow further. The rise of social media is perhaps an accelerating factor. We believe that looking at the consequences of Hyper-Individualisation is specifically interesting in the context of Quartier Spagnoli. The neighbourhood is known for its many family shrines, which share stories of tragedy and fortune, resulting in a strong sense of community.

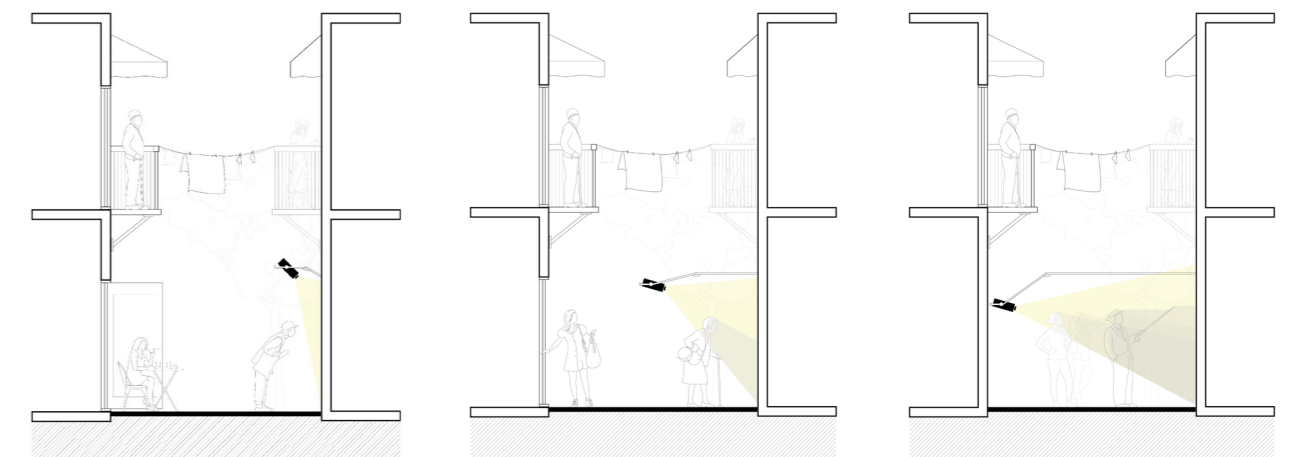
The word hyper derives from the Greek 'hyper' meaning excess and was later understood in American English as meaning excessive or misleading publicity or advertising. Similar to an advertisement, a shrine acts as a medium to communicate one's beliefs towards the outside or the public. The task of an advertisement is therefore to fuel and assist in a brand's growth, which would be the individual itself. To create a brand implies the selection and showcasing of attributes that makes one an individual. The shrine becomes a visual manifestation of an ideal self, which is thought to a certain point of excess in our design proposal by the person worshipping becoming part as an artefact of the shrine itself.

How is the notion of care expressed towards a digital shrine?

Rituals can be seen both as an expression of hyper-Individualisation as well as care, since they express one's personal perception. One of the main characteristics are, that rituals are singular but can only sustain through the plurality of sequences. Projecting the shrine onto a door offers the opportunity of a private space becoming part of the shrine itself, including the resident, practicing their daily ritual habits. The most primordial rituals, like making dinner, move to the centre of one's attention when illuminated by the projector. This notion pushes the idea of an hyper-Individual to the extreme, by turning oneself into the object of belief. Hyper-Individualisation can also lead to living in a way with disregard to others. In the example of a digital shrine, this can be expressed through the expansion of one's territory. In order to gain a wider projection surface and therefore more space to express one's individuality, the projector needs to be moved further away, which implies the territorialization of public space.

greater distance
= more space to express one's individuality
= 'faster' transcendence

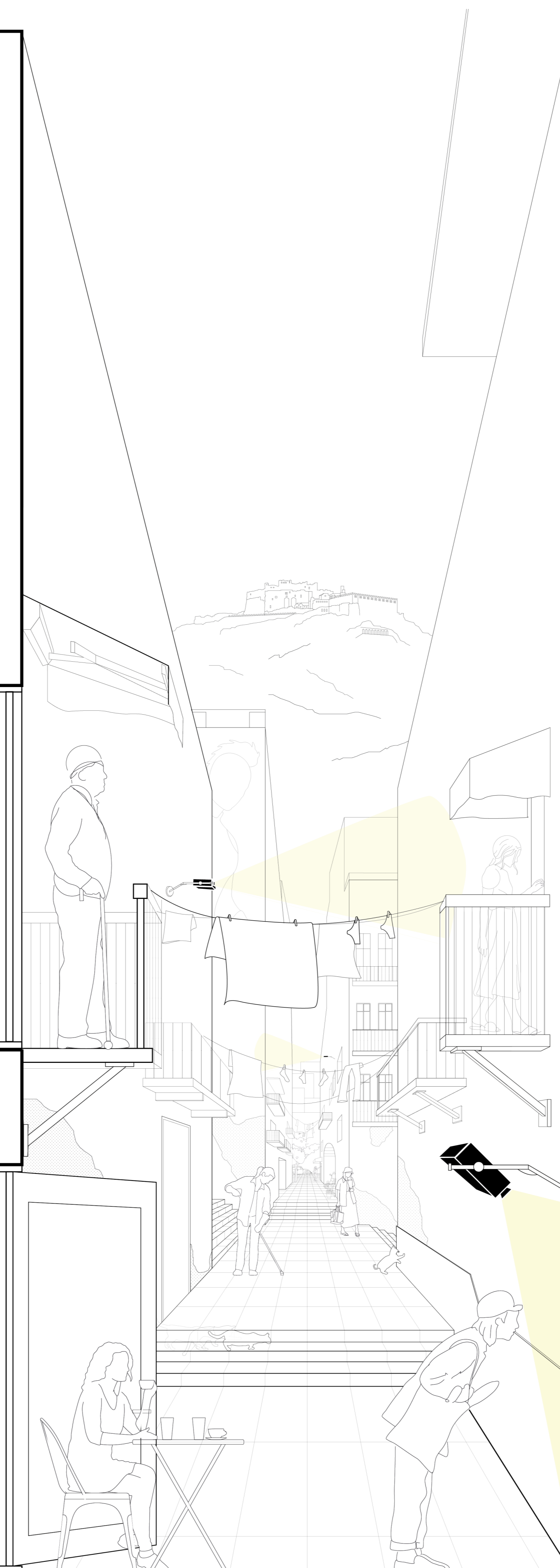
The position of the projector can be divided into three categories:



1. authoritarian - schizophrenic (when the projection is taking up the whole stretch of the street and forces passers-by to interact with itself)
2. democratic (when the passers-by have a choice to participate in the projection or not)
3. authoritarian - paranoid (when the projection is aimed directly at a wall with no space to interact)

The observation about the impact of distance on transcendence is contradictory to the remark we made in the Motor-Image, which stated that a shorter distance between two points leads to a higher intensity and therefore faster transcendence.

greater distance =
more complex expression
= less intensity = 'slower' transcendence



¹hyper-. Online Etymology Dictionary, updated on 28.09.2017.
<https://www.etymonline.com/word/hyper->

CHIAIA

on the rocks

