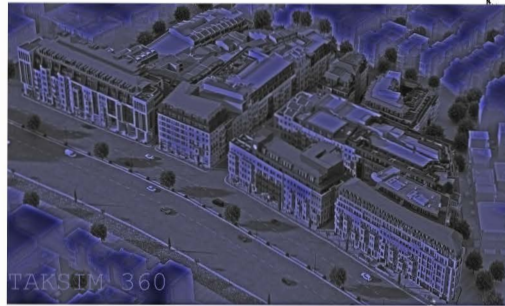


WE STAY

Strategy for the cultural and physical reappropriation of a district



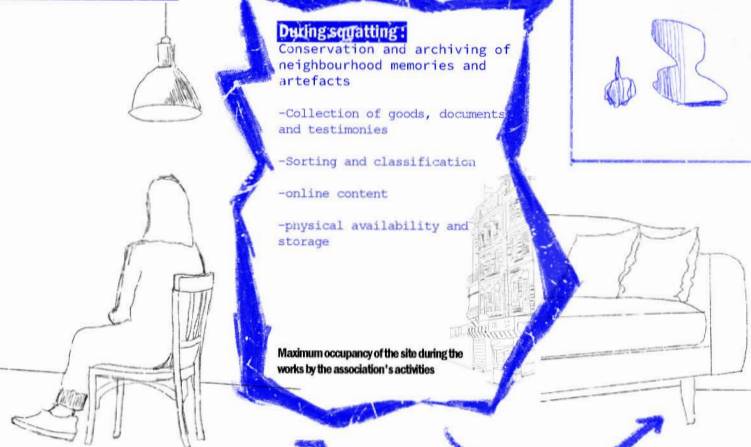
**Preventing
the destruction of
the urban fabric**

**Stopping
population eviction
and aggressive
gentrification**



COMPAIGNING

for culture and recognition of life experiences

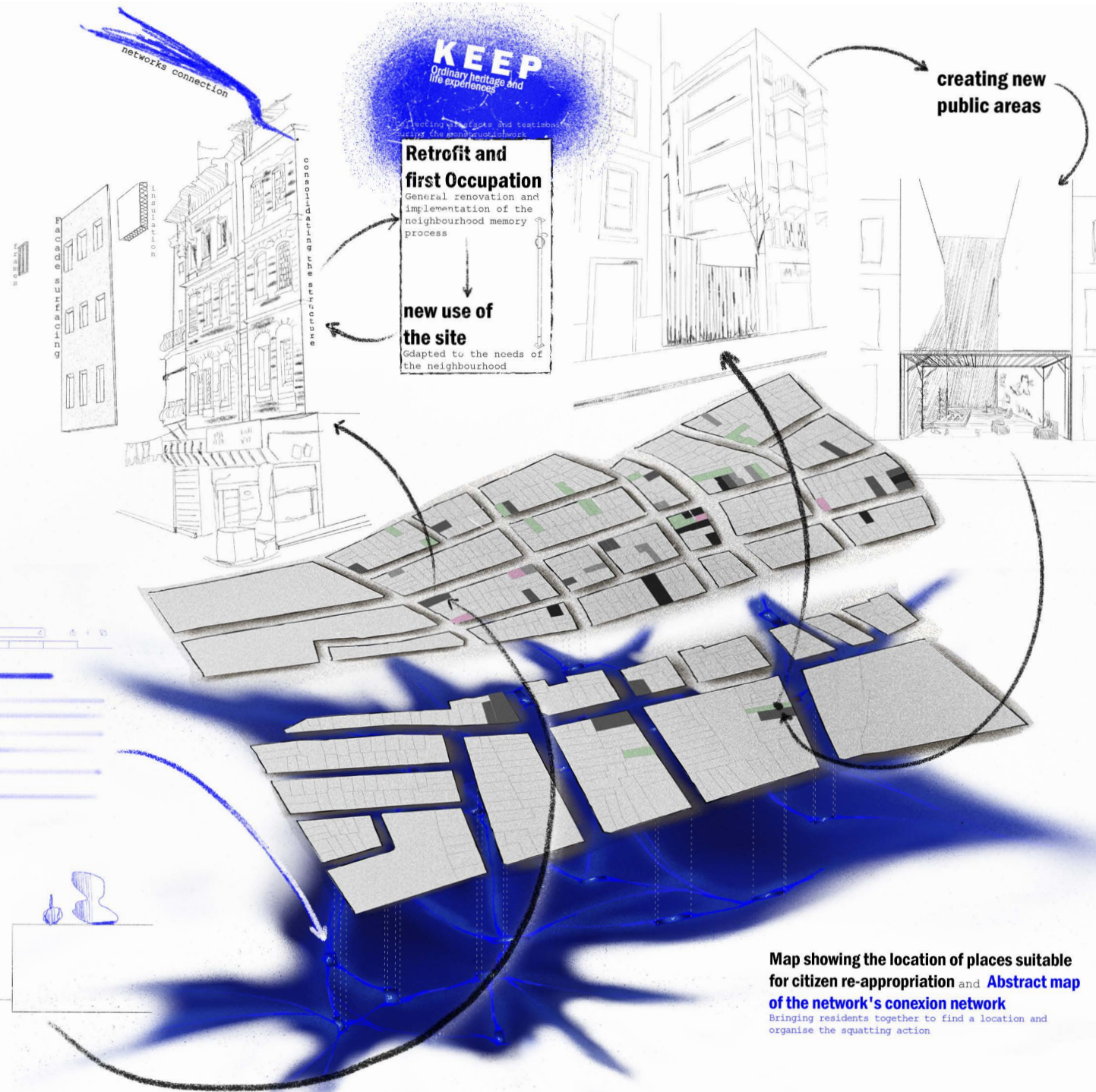


During squatting:

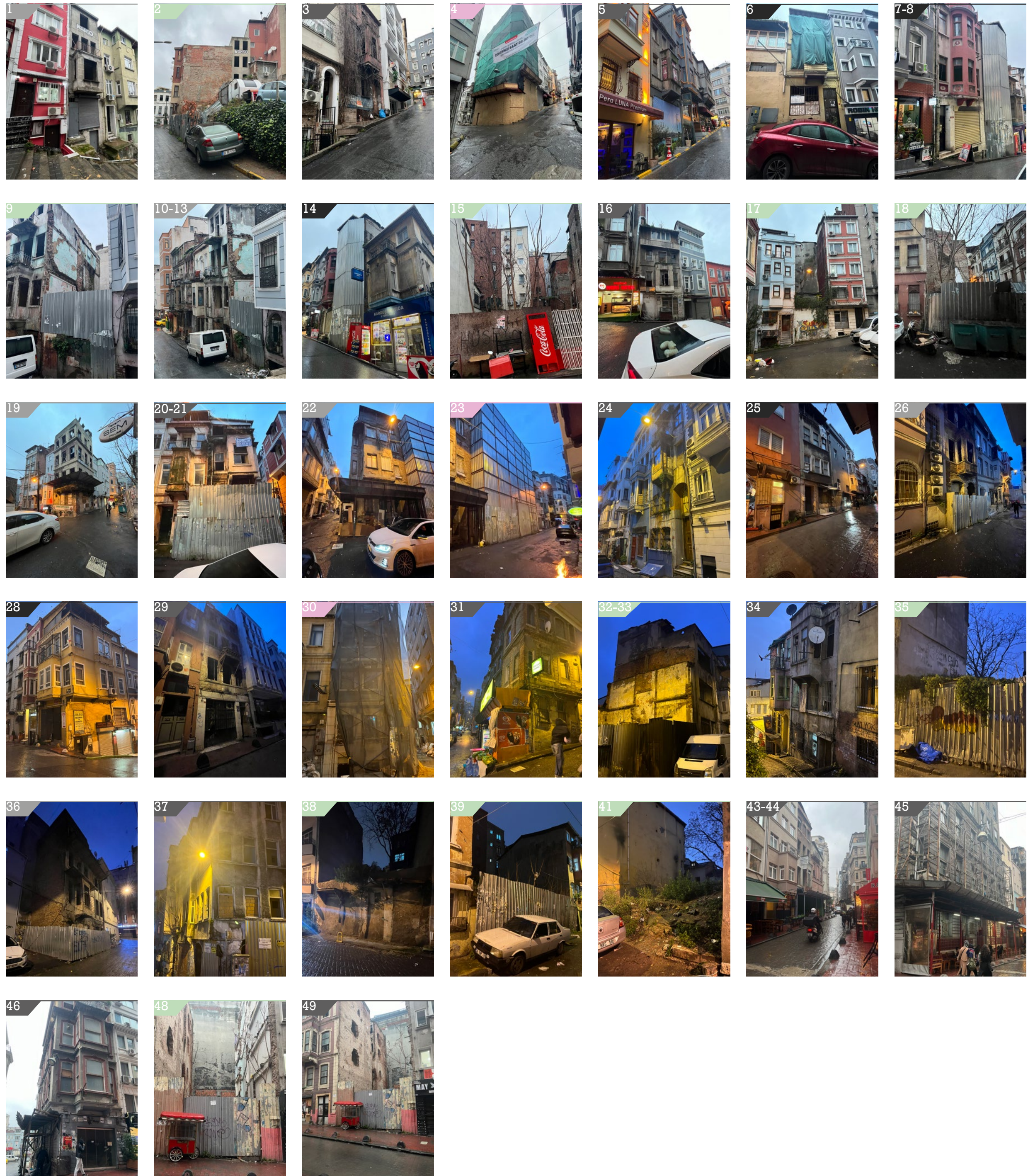
Conservation and archiving of
neighbourhood memories and
artefacts

- Collection of goods, documents
and testimonies
- Sorting and classification
- online content
- physical availability and
storage

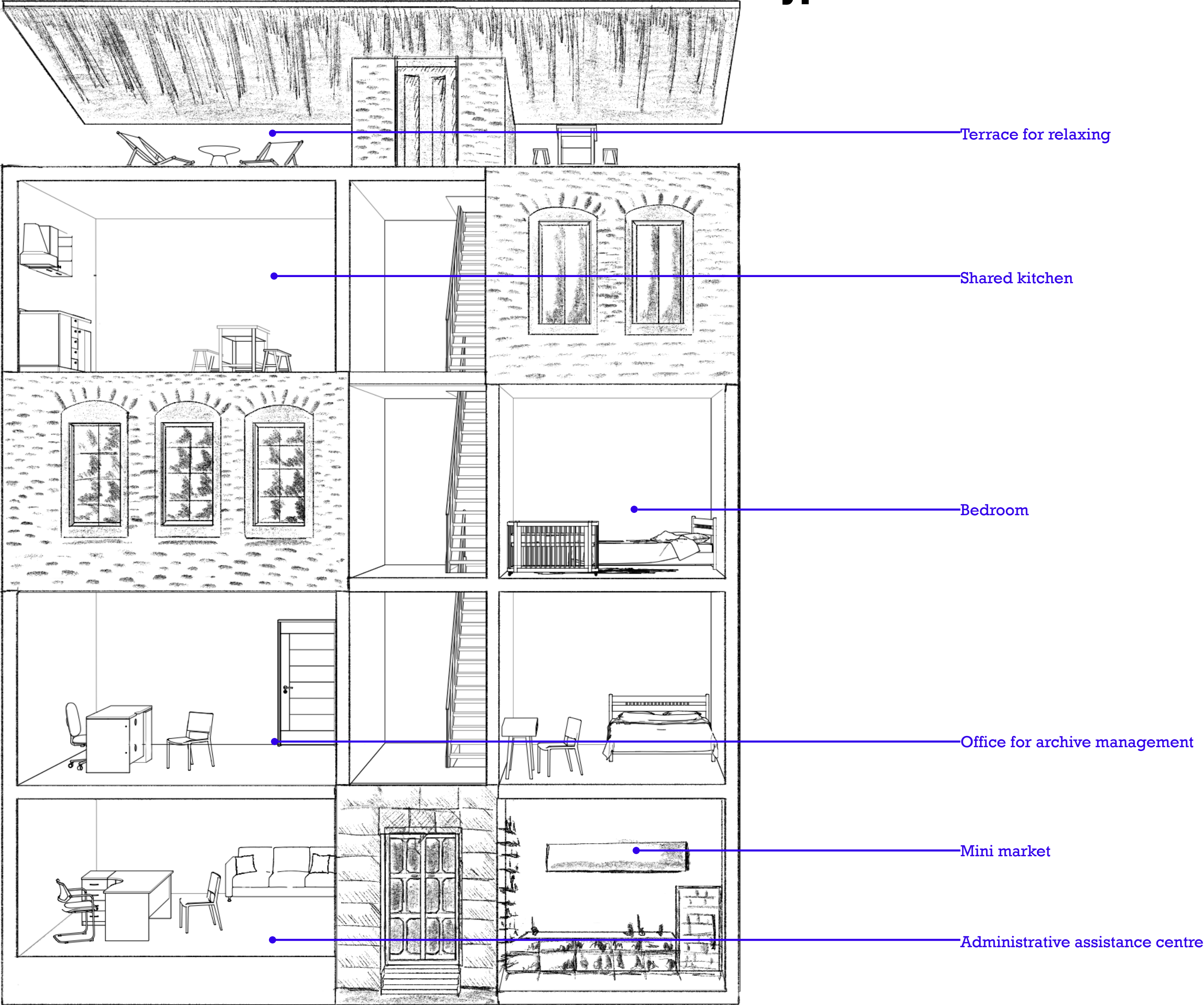
Maximum occupancy of the site during the
works by the association's activities



Map of places suitable for citizen reappropriation dans le quartier de Şehit Muhtar



Hypothetical visualisation of a reappropriated building



WE STAY

Strategy for the cultural and physical reappropriation of a district

The Şehit Muhtar district is located to the north-east of Istiklal Street, next to Taksim Square. The building density is high, the streets and courtyards are narrow and the only breathing spaces are provided by the religious buildings. Its proximity to Taksim Square and Istiklal Street means that the southern and eastern parts of the district are popular with tourists and attract a lot of pedestrian traffic.

The main urban feature, however, is the imposing Boulevard Tarlabaşı. It forms a boundary and a physical separation between the north and the south. At first glance, this division highlights two different characteristics of the district. In fact, architecturally, the taller, larger and more prestigious buildings are to be found in the southern part, particularly near Istiklal. It is also more economically active, with many bars, nightclubs and shops. On the other side of Tarlabaşı, shops are more limited to mini-markets and small cafés. These differences do not, however, prevent us from identifying common issues, which we will address below.

The north of Beyoğlu has been developing rapidly since the mid-19th century, with a rapidly growing population and a high density of building. In the 1950s, Turkish society underwent a paradigm shift, moving from being predominantly rural to predominantly industrial. This led to a migration of the rural population from Anatolia to Istanbul. The old, ruined buildings built more than a century earlier were used as homes by these people. In order to link Taksim to the west of the city and 'clean up' the district, the authorities decided to build a wide boulevard through Beyoğlu. This project required the destruction of 368 buildings, 167 of which were listed. In the medium term, this also had the effect of increasing the property value of the area to the south of the boulevard, forcing the population to move to the north of the boulevard.

Today, as the tourism sector has developed, selling the area around Taksim as a nightlife paradise and the Istanbul Hype, there is a shortage of facilities for tourists. The Taksim 360 project marks a milestone in the confiscation of the district. This large hotel complex crosses the limits of the boulevard and moves north. Despite its aesthetic similarity at first glance to the typical houses of the district, the work involves the almost systematic destruction of all

the existing buildings in order to build new ones. The connection with the existing urban fabric is kept to a minimum, creating an isolated environment.

Behind the obvious economic considerations behind the district's urban history, the ambition is also to make the working classes disappear, making them suffer a double penalty. Firstly, the number of available homes is being drastically reduced, through major works and destruction. Then, the increase in the price of rent and goods in shops will make everyday life impossible. In the process, the image of the district, the experience of the residents and the ordinary heritage will also be destroyed.

The project proposes a counter-offensive to the aggressive gentrification carried out by the public authorities. The aim is to conserve and improve the district's architectural heritage, and to enable residents to return to a sustainable way of life. All this, while promoting the history and memories of the district. The first step is to set up an online network of residents and others who are ready to carry out grouped and targeted actions. A preliminary survey and classification will identify unoccupied buildings and empty plots available for occupation. Priority should be given to buildings that are newly or partially abandoned, or in any case in fairly good condition, as long as the group has no precise knowledge of the structural engineering.

Once a location has been chosen, the group discreetly prepares the intrusion. Once at the site, the first stage consists of immediate security and structural diagnostics, as well as the installation of a living quarters for a limited number of people, to occupy the premises 24 hours a day.

Next, the work should focus on the structural aspects in general: checking the integrity of the structure, reinforcing the walls, renovating the floors, etc. It is essential to carry out this stage of the work before opening up the site to a larger number of people to carry out the rest of the work. This focuses on updating the equipment, servicing and connecting to the water and electricity networks, and insulating against rain and cold.

This stage involves setting up a system for preserving and archiving the neighbourhood's memories. Assets, documents and testimonies are collected in the occupied building. Workshops are organised via the Internet action network to sort, photograph and film the testimonies and draw up information sheets. The physical artefacts are then put to good use in the rehabilitated areas, and the dematerialised documents are published on the website.

The final stage of the work involves specializing the site. As mentioned above, the district is home to a number of precarious residents whose needs are not being met by the services available in the area. The most obvious solution is to provide new housing, to be distributed throughout each reclaimed area to encourage long-term occupation. Sexual health centers could provide support and offer tools to sex workers so that they can carry out their work in better conditions. Similarly, an administrative assistance center could help people in an irregular situation to deal with administrative problems. Communal areas for preparing meals, celebrating traditional festivals or public meetings could be made available to honour and give a voice to local residents. More generally, these places are designed as extensions of the home, where residents can make the place their own and create a shared experience.

The particular case of empty plots of land is a quick and easy opportunity to provide breathing space in the city. In the manner of Aldo van Eyck, children could find play areas, while parents relax under the trees or grow carrots in shared vegetable gardens.

This project proposes a reappropriation of the neighbourhood through the occupation of places destined for the capitalist ambitions of people outside the local ecosystem. Occupying these places creates useful and necessary spaces, and also curbs the aggressive gentrification at play in Şehit Muhtar.

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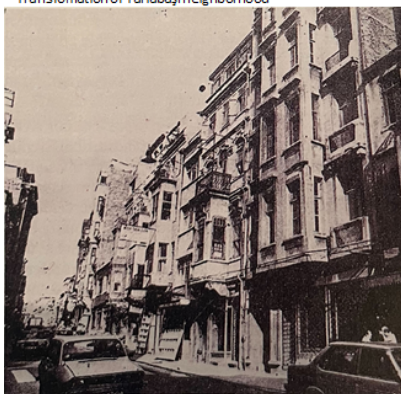
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[Didem Tali - Transgender sex workers in Istanbul | LensCulture](#)



Transformation of Tarlabası neighborhood



Buildings before destruction



Travaux de construction du boulevard Tarlabası, 1988, Marc Eginard



"Many men in Tarlabası find it difficult, even impossible, to have a family because the money they earn is not enough to provide for a household. There are also those who have wives and children back in their villages, whom they can only afford to visit a few times every year. This man lives on his own in a small room decorated with Hollywood movie posters and a portrait of Che Guevara."

Extract from:

EREMINA, Svetlana, *Tarlabası: the dusk*, mashallahnews, 2013.
<https://www.mashallahnews.com/Tarlabası-the-dusk/>

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"In the same way that a miner can go hundreds of metres down the ground despite the risks to feed his family, we do sex work. It's dangerous. We know it. But as long as the stigma lingers, we continue to get excluded and bullied in all walks of life, sex work will remain the only way of making money."

Oyku Ay

Extract from:

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