

Unfolding the Hives

Urban Spatialities of Cape Town's Informal Street Trading Network

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the history of Cape Town, informal street trading has remained a form of resistance. This activity became a popular livelihood for many black and coloured South Africans who, following apartheid legislation, were displaced into the periphery, segregated and denied equal opportunities. Many of the tactics enforced by local governments to regulate the street traders reflected the bigger racial and socio-political issues of the segregation and apartheid eras. Acts of perseverance and finding agency through trading have evolved over generations and continue to contribute significantly to the urban landscape and the perception of the city. By revealing layers of the existing network, this thesis highlights choreographies of space through the addition of dynamic structures that support the daily habits of the street traders. *Unfolding the Hives* explores how sustaining the street traders' micro-culture and addressing neglected spatialities is fundamental to blurring the lines that keep Cape Town divided.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could not have gotten through this thesis without my friends and family; near and far, virtual and real, with all of their love and support. They helped make up for the lack of a studio environment and brought lightness to the heavy uncertainty that has been hanging in the air. Thank you x.

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Lastly, thank you to Cape Town, one of the most hectic, beautiful and intricate cities. It is impossible to not be completely in awe with you.

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PROLOGUE

I am openly approaching this study from the two perspectives most naturally available to me. First, as a South African who experienced an early childhood playing in the forests and on the beaches of the Garden Route; but, who only recently had opportunities to realize the extents of the divided urban landscape of the country. Second, and most importantly, as someone who has become deeply drawn to the endless micro-histories that come from spatial experiences since starting to study architecture and design. This thesis is not proposing a solution, it is rather acting as an opportunity to explore a way of thinking about the current conditions. A way of developing a contribution to a conversation, which I hope will keep happening, about how to challenge the existing divides in Cape Town. So I ask you, please let mine be a voice that can belong among many other voices regarding this topic.

During my undergrad there was a chance to travel for a co-op position. After being away from South Africa for over 15 years I chose to return, partly to fulfill this requirement of the program but mostly to go back to a place that despite knowing very little about, I grew up missing. I lived in Cape Town intermittently between 2017 and 2019, and on separate occasions I experienced very different worlds. There are extreme inequalities constantly side by side represented in physical, social, political and economic forms. The amount of resilience and unbreakable strength that I saw on a daily basis, from those who have been continuously neglected throughout the country's history, was extraordinary. One of the most noticeable acts of this is the informal street trading network.



figure 1: Collage suggesting a connection between the many street traders' stands

INTRODUCTION

My primary argument for this thesis is in response to the current conditions of the informal street trading's micro-culture in Cape Town. Their practice is often seen as an unwanted element which obstructs streets and sidewalks, creates competition for formal businesses and is the root of social problems,¹ but this is, and should remain, an observation that deserves to be challenged. The street traders, who have established a long reliable presence in the city's central business district, contribute significantly to the characteristic of the urban fabric and interpretation of the city. Street trading has been viewed as a practice that holds power against the system because it remains a form of resistance and a popular livelihood for those that were displaced into the periphery and denied equal opportunities for economic prosperity during the segregation and apartheid legislations.

I hope this thesis will serve as an effort to expose how the practice of street trading has become an act of agency for the traders and often provides solutions for difficult social issues. The unique potentialities and values that these traders hold and provide, not only for those who fall into the low income and poverty bracket, but for anyone who finds themselves in Cape Town, are a positive contribution to the city. These traders have evolved over many generations and through a closer look, find themselves interacting with many different walks of life, proving to be critical element of the urban experience. Everyday they are bringing together unexpected connections, slowly blurring the divides.

This document brings together three parts. In the first part, *The Unbreakable Livelihood*, Chapter 1 provides a foundation for understanding the history of informal street trading, particularly through a lens that shows the impact of the oppressive legislations and institutionalized racial segregation. In the second chapter, *Agency and Value*, I reveal how street trading has maintained itself as an unbreakable form of survival, resistance and celebration. Chapter 3 unfolds my argument in greater detail, challenging the limiting definitions of the formal and the informal, the

permanent and the temporal, the fragmented and the connected, relating to urban spatialities.

Part 2, A network of unexpected connections, consists of chapters 4 and 5. I pay close attention to the network of the informal street traders. Giving a glimpse into the larger geographies being brought together and their methods of operation. Lastly, Part 3 explores how the presence and micro-culture of the street traders can be elevated with the proposed architectures. These structures simply add another layer, one that learns from their existing methods of operation and can evolve with the needs of the traders, their network and ideally, unfold the hives to reinterpret the urban landscape and challenge the forces keeping important spatial conditions apart.

I will be referring to the sites as **Hives** because I believe there are similarities between the nature of the honey bees and the street traders. Typically, a hive is known for being a place of which is busily occupied but, it is so much more. The hive is not just a place for providing shelter, it plays a role in describing the behaviour of the ones using it while revealing what the environment beyond the hive is like. In relation to the traders, the hives carry the history of their micro-culture but ultimately serve as a gathering place for teamwork in response to their unique and given circumstances. Much like the honeybees, the traders share common goals and rely on their networks and their hives, to help interpret the urban environment and sustain their livelihood.

ENDNOTES - INTRODUCTION

¹ Fidelis Ebot Tabe, “Street trading in the central business district of Cape Town 1864-2012: A study of state policies,” (PhD diss., University of the Western Cape, 2014), 11.

CHAPTER 1

The History of Street Trading in Cape Town

Apartheid

An afrikaans word meaning apart-ness. A system/policy of institutionalized segregation based on race. It was officially in place from 1948 to early 1990s. In 1994 Nelson Mandela won the first universal election marking the end of apartheid, but to this day there are many lasting effects.

Informal Economy/Sector

Commonly “characterized by insecure employment with little to no labour protection.”¹¹ Those involved “do not make unemployment insurance deductions...” and their businesses are usually “...located on a street, [or] open space of a market.”¹² Informal workers are “not recognized or protected under the legal and regulatory frameworks,” therefore they can be “characterized by a high degree of vulnerability.”¹³

Informal Street Trading

Providing and selling of goods and/or services that operate outside of government regulations such as permits or controlled money based transactions and are therefore rarely recorded for taxation purposes.¹⁴

Cape Town South Africa, often referred to as the ‘Mother City,’ became the first urban area in the country to be established by the Dutch East India Company during the mid 1600s as a refueling location for ships along the spice route.¹ The city did not begin with much monetary wealth. Into the late 1800s the economy relied on the fishing and building industries which fluctuated with the seasons and even day by day. Many of the employment opportunities were unstable, producing a high rate of unemployment in the city.

In 1865, the first census was conducted, noting that the population of Cape Town grew steadily with an ever increasing immigration to the colony.² Within 10 years the population had doubled. As Cape Town grew into a bigger city, exploring damaging political and governmental practices, the rest of the country followed. British Imperialism and the white man’s desire to control black and coloured South Africans, propelled it in a direction that led to many extremely oppressive laws being implemented over the late 1800s and all through the 1900s. Racially segregating the population, hindering any existing opportunities for non-white people to find employment and leaving the cities to become some of the most divided and unequal in the world. The effects of the country’s history created one of the most persistent urban changes for the post *apartheid* era: an undoubtedly large and rapidly growing *informal economy* often presenting itself in the form of *street trading*. Throughout these lost decades, street trading remained a popular livelihood for many black and coloured South Africans who

Street Trader

Any person that operates a business (within the informal sector) on the street, in open space or from a market space.



figure 2: Flower Sellers, Cape Town

were displaced into the periphery and pushed into low socio-economic standings. Although this informal economy is now estimated to contribute around 28% to the country's gross domestic product, it is still deeply intertwined in controversies of the "long-established norms of governing the occupation and the use of urban space."³

On any given day, Cape Town's streets are outfitted by street traders at their place making nodes. *Street traders* are a significant part of the city but they operate in an environment found on the borders of policy and society. In South Africa, the history of street trading is synonymous with the efforts of the local governments to control and regulate it. In 1864 when the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope (this refers to the area that, today, falls within the greater city boundary of Cape Town) implemented The Stamp Act, it included street traders in the existing law regulating the local businesses.⁴ This indicates street trading has a long history and also, a long history of countless attempts to control it. Although this act did allow certain traders who were selling goods that were of a necessity for the public, such as fresh fruits vegetables, fish, bread, dairy and meat.⁵ This caused friction with farmers who were also then required to obtain a license for selling the same products.

Many of the tactics used by the local governments to regulate the street traders coincided with the bigger racial and socio-political issues of the time that infiltrated everyday activities. The policies were harshest during the eras of segregation and apartheid, resulting in many traders being displaced from their sites, unable to renew their licenses and having their social conditions undeniably disrupted. The

street traders are not supported by the powers which have built the existing urban space. Traders were often accused of causing traffic congestion on both the street and the pavement so they have been referred to as encroachers and viewed as “unwanted elements in a planned system.”⁶ Perceptions of the traders were also influenced by what they sold and how; sometimes they were considered to be public health issues.

During these years many traders avoided venturing into the city centres in fear of being harassed, fined, having their products confiscated and being arrested. Instead they would operate in the periphery. But, even though trading was considered illegal during apartheid, the informal sector grew immensely, particularly between 1980-1994.⁷ With the end of apartheid in sight and strong economic and socio-political pressures on the country, regulating street trade was switched from the controls of urban authorities to the national government. In the 1990s the city began taking steps towards dissolving the apartheid regime. This was led by regeneration projects aiming for urban renewal. Purging the public spaces of any elements deemed ‘unwanted’ and aiming to reach ‘world class city’ standards by “revers[ing] the perceived ‘decay’ of the CBD.”⁸ Marginalized groups such as homeless people, sex workers, informal parking attendants and informal street traders were still being pushed into the periphery while other businesses such as affluent art galleries, cafés, and clothing stores were able to flourish. Despite only further creating an existence of segregation, the 1991 Business Act played a noticeable role in shifting attitudes towards providing a more progressive approach to the

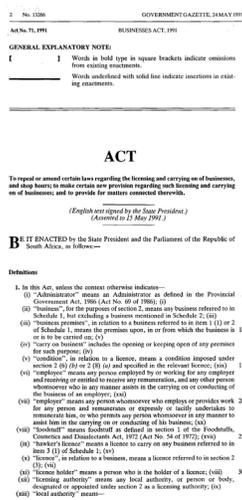


figure 3: Business Act No.71 of 1991

informal businesses. This national law “reduced the powers of local authorities to develop and implement laws restricting informal trading.”⁹ Still, after a significant amount of time has past, Cape Town feels the weight of “the spatial legacy of apartheid city planning practices” affecting informal street trading.¹⁰

Thesis Question: How can unfolding dynamic structures that inhabit the street-scape be used to reveal the importance of the street traders’ presence in the divided urban landscape of Cape Town and help sustain their livelihood?



figure 4: Herb sellers on the Parade, 1945

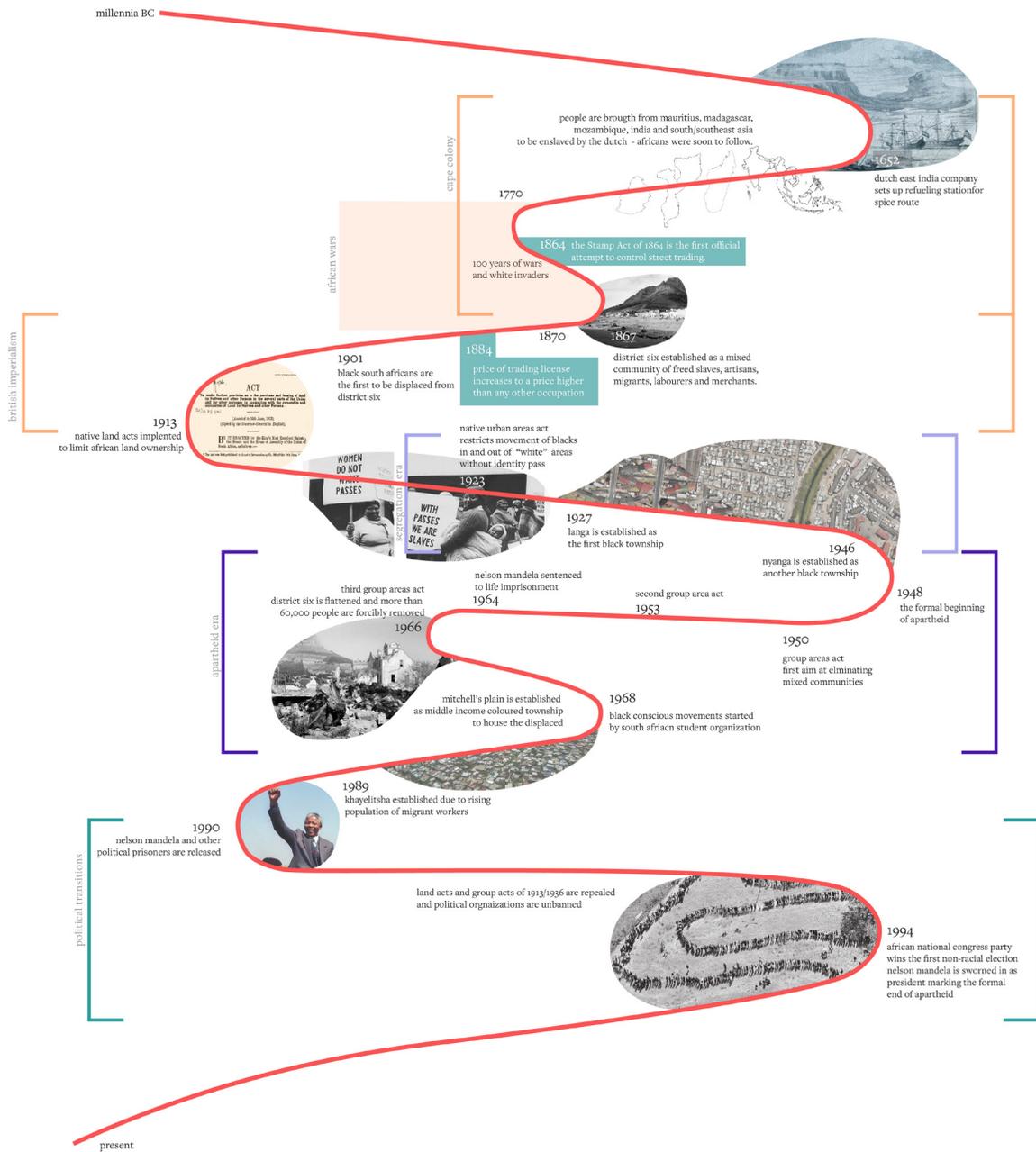


figure 5: Timeline of South Africa's historical governing policies and movements

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- 5 Ibid.
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- 8 Marianne Morange, "Participation, neoliberal control and the voice of street traders in Cape Town – a Foucauldian perspective on 'invited spaces'," in *Popular Politics in South African cities, Unpacking community participation*, ed. Claire Bénit-Gbaffou, (HSRC Press, 2015), 173.
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- 11 Sharyn Sassen, Roshan Galvaan, and Madeleine Duncan, "Women's Experiences of Informal Street Trading and Well-Being in Cape Town, South Africa," *South African Journal of Occupational Therapy* 48, no. 1 (January 1, 2018): 28.
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CHAPTER 2

Agency and Value

Existing policy limitations neglect the spatial and socio-economic elements that allow the street traders to succeed and continue to grow. South Africa's literature surrounding the topic of the informal economy and informal street trading, focuses on highlighting how policies and the authorities' efforts to regulate the sector (which are undeniably intertwined with the country's history) have affected the way the traders have been able to work and evolve.

While it is important to understand the ways this livelihood has been historically governed, it is crucial to place value in how the collective identities of the street traders have created a powerful network from their predisposed circumstances. As a group who is usually passed by and declared invisible, street traders have persevered and remained present in the city, seeking for themselves and their livelihood to be seen as positive layers. These acts of perseverance and finding agency through trading have evolved over many generations creating a phenomenon of an ever growing activity that will continuously find its way into the urban landscape despite the regulations.

Occasionally referred to as the 'second economy', street trading in Cape Town has been able to thrive in its own way and over time it has revealed itself as a somewhat stable occupation for many of the traders. The informal sector is among the top five employment sectors in the city¹ and records from 2003 indicated that 42 percent of traders have relied on this livelihood because they lost their previous jobs or have not been able to access another form of employment.² In



figure 6: A trader setting up their products on the pavement

2009 the Informal Trading Bylaw recognized the important roles this occupation plays in alleviating poverty, creating income and entrepreneurial skills. But, most importantly, it acknowledged “the positive impact that [it] has on the historically disadvantaged individuals and communities.”³ The city of Cape Town now recognizes informal street trading is an important part of the city’s economy and how it provides opportunity for the traders as well as accessible goods and services for locals.

Anyone who is a legal resident of South Africa or has a valid work permit can become an informal street trader once a permit is acquired. Depending on what kind of trading will be done, there is a possible need for additional certificates on top of the cost for a permit. Permits can cost between R69 to R1500 (\$5 - \$125) depending on the location and the demand at the time. In South Africa the minimum wage is R20/hour (\$1.75/hr) but since the traders rely on the public space which can produce unpredictable conditions for operating, a steady income is not always achievable.

Although some regulations have eased, others still exist. Street traders all over the world deal with the possibility of criticism, displacement, and unjust policies. Many desired changes happen to focus on those present in the global south. The most common way authorities have attempted to address conceived issues is by creating “off-street markets where it is legalized, stabilized, contained and prevented from causing congestion or contaminating formal business operations.”⁴ These efforts are often wasted as traders prefer to operate from the streets, as public space is their most essential element. Mainly



figure 7: Trafalgar Flower Market spills out on the sidewalks



figure 8: Vibrant paintings for sale in St Georges Mall



figure 9: African curios for sale in Greenmarket Square

Micro-history

The meaning of micro-history has yet to be bound to one definition. The historian, S.G. Magnusson, described it as the most interesting and innovative approach to history, especially of anthropology and sociology, on a very small, intimate scale; the most appropriate instrument to probe particular lives and times to reveal fundamental experiences and understandings.⁷ Another historian, Georg Iggers, believed this approach to history allowed the focus to shift towards “the margins of power rather than the centre.”⁸

seeking to drastically change the traders’ methods of operation by formalization, instead of proposing alternative ways for the traders to inclusively exist in the urban. Pressure to formalize could mean creating more difficulties for the traders to sustain this as their livelihood. In addition, a large aspect of these actions not having impactful results of improvement is tied to misunderstanding the systems that the informal street trading network relies on.⁵ Their methods of operation and reasonings are rarely considered when cities are developing policies. Appeals to formalize do not direct energy towards addressing areas of vulnerability that the people who rely on this livelihood are burdened with. Like any other systems or environments, without exploring “its own dynamic, internal organization and patterns of existence,” the network of informal street trading might appear to be in complete disarray.⁶ With a deeper recognition for these systems that exist outside a set of regulations, this narrative of informality being branded by chaos can be disconnected from the *micro-history* of the street traders or possibly even redefined to better suit the valuable characteristics.

Cultural history is usually framed as being of less importance than events that change the shape of nations as a whole. However, in South Africa, and specifically Cape Town, it is the cultural contributions of the nation which played a significant role in how historical events have continue to shape the identity of the city. History and culture can not be separated. Without one the other would not exist. Placing value on acknowledging cultural history can restore narratives that often become forgotten or neglected and create hopeful actions towards

sustaining the admirable aspects of resilient communities.

Exploring the micro-histories of street traders provides an essential departure point for revealing the layers in which the traders have contributed to the overall characteristics and spatialities of the city. Moving away from the over arching centres of history of Cape Town subverts the macro narratives to better acknowledge the focused histories and experiences. This allows *Unfolding the Hives* to draw towards powers that lie in the periphery. The marginal powers, held by the street traders, are brought into Cape Town everyday along with their livelihood, giving opportunity for the unexpected to arise as their practice activates spatialities of the urban.

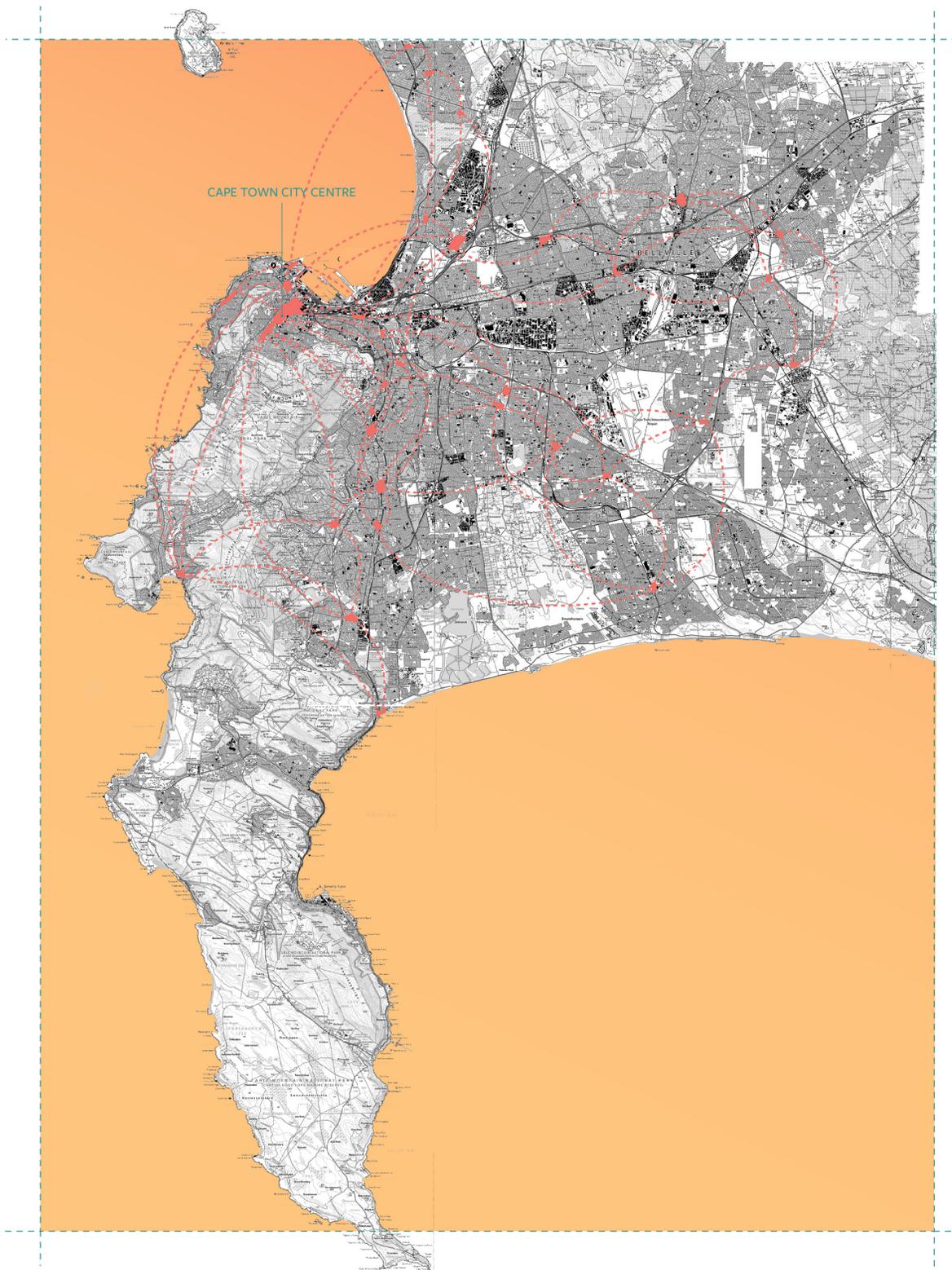


figure 10: Map of Cape Town - highlighting the many urban centres connecting to one another

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CHAPTER 3

Gradients of Urban Spatialities

Cape Town is comprised of multiple contrasting conditions attempting to occupy the same physical space. Urban political geographer, Yonn Dierwechter, uses Cape Town as a case study to further explore geographers Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift’s theoretical work involving geographies of *neglected spatialities* in urban landscapes. He highlights their thoughts surrounding the need to provide an awareness of opportunities for relationships to be formed between opposing uses of the same spaces. In Cape Town there are spatialities being overlooked and left unexplored because of the tendency to declare particular elements of higher importance than others.¹ This perspective sustains a static city; one that is unable to reveal or embrace the crucial characteristics and opportunities which derive from “the intersections of culture, economy, biology, planning, governance, micro, macro, and so on.”²

Neglected Spatialities

Any properties relating to or occupying space that can contribute to an overall awareness of intertwined existing urban elements but are often overlooked or disregarded.

With the presence of street traders in the city, unique intersections are formed between the favoured and the neglected spatialities. These intersection offer chances to reveal what the spatial relationships between them could look like. Whether these are physical, social, political or economic, they are all “rooted in the nature of urban space as a place of shared experience and radical difference, habitual routine and unexpected events.”³ Viewing Cape Town as a layered landscape, one that can be unfolded, can help reveal other versions of the city, brought about by historical divisions.

It is important to note that these contrasting spatial conditions currently exist on gradients, a “space” created between the favoured and the neglected. When brought together, the spatialities can play an essential role in how the urban landscape will be perceived. So, they should not be limited to one position, one approach or one way of being represented. There are three prominent gradients from which the design proposals have generated. *Unfolding the Hives* is exploring how the traders are challenging the perception of the fragmented and the connected, the formal and the informal, the permanence and the temporality, (which are living together in the city) and creating environments for the harsh lines of division to blur.

Unfold

To open, to unravel, to extend; to reveal, to communicate, to narrate; to emerge, to happen, to evolve.

Hives

A hive is known for being a place of which is busily occupied but, it is so much more. The hive is not just a place for providing shelter, it plays a role in describing the behaviour of the ones using it while revealing what the environment beyond the hive is like.

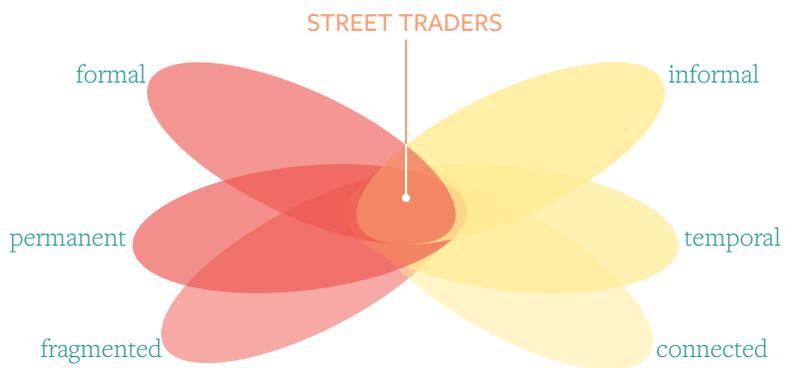


figure 11: Diagram of favoured and neglected spatial divisions

Fragmented | Connected

There are important social structures that contribute to the layered urban landscape and are also crucial elements for the network of informal street trading; such as transportation hubs, public spaces and routes of circulation. Within Cape Town, these structures are connected to one another by function and purpose but more noticeably, they still remain fragmented by racial and socio-economic divisions inhabiting the city. Street traders have used their circumstances to their advantage and shaped opportunities for these conditions to be reinterpreted, bringing together the unexpected. With the support of the proposed designs this effort is explored further; to not only become a meeting of similar components but a *weaving* together of the neglected and favoured spatialities, allowing one to compliment another and create a symbiotic relationship.

Weave

To create a complex story from a number of inter-connected elements.⁹

Formal | Informal

‘Informal’ is a term you hear often in South Africa. It can be seen a creative and adaptive response to the repercussions left behind by the apartheid era, but also something that has been forced and reinforced. For the purpose of this thesis being about the powerful presence of street traders in Cape Town’s city centre, the definition of ‘informal’ is found through a few different directions. Although it is more commonly known as the opposite of ‘formal’, both of them have contested qualities. ‘Formal’ is often understood as being something that is official, recognized, or typified in the system. It is fair to state that many of the businesses in the city centre which inhabit a building

could be placed far on the formal side. The businesses are validated by having an official space to operate and can clearly be recognized by this structure. A dependent relationship to the policy systems of economics (earning taxable income) or educational opportunities (access to degrees, certifications or licenses) also becomes a characteristic of 'formal' status.

However, 'formal' can also be used to describe something that has ceremonial and ritual qualities; a process which becomes a habit whether it is out of necessity or desire. This is where a gradient appears and the line between contrasting spatial conditions begin to blur. One could argue that with this understanding, the 'informal' street traders could start to shift away from that title and challenge what is 'informal' and 'formal' based on the way their livelihood operates and their daily habits. The process of how the traders make their way into the city, set up their stalls, conduct their daily interactions for sales, take down their stands, secure their goods, and then travel back out of the city to their homes, could be interpreted as ceremonial or ritualistic even more so than the unchanging formal.

Informality is generally seen "as the opposite of the structured, organized formal work."⁴ How street traders are viewed, is deeply intertwined with urban strategies for the informal systems. To some degree these perceptions even play a larger role in the policy making opposed to the realities of what takes place in the physical street scape.⁵ With a deeper recognition for these systems existing outside a set of regulations, the narrative of unstructured chaos can be disconnected from the street traders micro-culture.

Permanence | Temporal

Dynamic

Characterized by continuous changing and productive activities; to be energetic, to always evolve.

What is permanent and what is temporary is connected to the relationship that exists between the formal and the informal. The officially recognized businesses are most often represented as a static, reliable structure or occurrence within the city. But, in Cape Town, this definition should not exclude the informal businesses. Street traders are a *dynamic* yet reliable presence in the city, differing from formal businesses by not being limited by a static condition. The temporal nature of the traders has derived from their micro-history and more officially, the City by-laws which require their structures to be removed at the end of the day.⁶ Most of the traders rely on temporary structures to display their goods and claim their space. These require approval from the Development Management Department to ensure public safety, just as building would require approval of the city before construction.⁷ While these restrictions might limit a successful and consistent business, the temporality of these structures can be seen and leveraged as an advantage, particularly in responding to these spatialities being activated to challenge these divides.

Testing these definitions of has influenced the architectural proposals. Recognizing each condition reveals opportunities for unfolding the hives and intertwining the layers. Ultimately these new layers will sustain the traders as a powerful presence, creating “a richer sensibility of spatial occupation, but also suggest[ing] how spatial limits are expanded to include formally unimagined uses in dense urban conditions.”⁸



figure 12: Collage of Trafalgar Flower Market - sidewalks are filled with flowers during the day but vanish at night until the next day.

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 3

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4 Rida Qadri, "Vending the City: Mapping the Policy, Policing and Positioning of Street Vending in New York City," (Master thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2016), 8.

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CHAPTER 4

Larger Geographies

We see this contrast, on the ground, in the city. Squeezed between the mountains and the sea, Cape Town presents an atmosphere of a big city in a limited amount of space. Many people are travelling into the city centre from the periphery; neighbourhoods which stretch around the mountains, across the peninsula and over the cape flats. What is responsible for bringing so many elements and people together? Acknowledging where, how and why they come together will reveal the important spatialities of the informal street trading network found in the urban landscape, which have long been neglected.

The practice of street trading involves many diverse typologies of informal exchanges happening in the public space.¹ Each day the street traders have frequent interactions with people, building a network relationships. The livelihood of the street traders is not only of importance to them but to everyone who finds themselves in this network; whether it is because they rely on the products, or part of the larger geographies brought together by the trading. Some people value the sense of connection that can happen in diverse public spaces, enough to argue that even the most fleeting interactions can prove to be quite meaningful.² A countless number of these fleeting interactions are occurring around other important social structures. The social structures support the layers of the larger geographies while providing reason for them to coming together, forming the foundations for the street trading network and the city itself. Areas such as transportation hubs and common routes of

movement in and around the city are some of the most crucial social structures for the city, but more specifically, for street trading.

Although apartheid was meant to divide, it in fact created unequal dependencies and porous borders; building a reality that is “caught up in continuous circulatory migrations and asymmetrical intimacies.”³ To this day, in Cape Town, black and coloured South Africans who are pushed in the periphery have to navigate into the white and more affluent neighbourhoods for work via public transportation. This consequential pattern catalyzed the transportations hubs, located in both the city centre and the suburbs, to become the street trading hives with the highest density of traders.

So, many of those who rely on public transportation also rely on or contribute to the street trading network and vice versa. Whether it is for transporting themselves, their products and materials or their customers, these social structures are possibly one of the most important layers which contribute to the larger geographies of the network. Multiple times a day, as people make their way around the city, train stations, taxi ranks and bus terminals are flooded with people. These spaces are transformed into social and cultural hubs by the traders presence; providing reason for people to gather and interact with others as they buy their goods or wait for their rides. The traders are also challenging how this urban spatiality can be used to explore the opportunities of these liminal spaces becoming spaces of resistance against the divided urban landscape.

Popular routes of circulation and movement around the city are a social structure that is often forgotten about as they are such an obvious

element of a city. The streets and the pavements are an unavoidable yet engaging urban spatialities. These hives have a thoughtful task in responding to the surrounding conditions; their relationship with the street, the sidewalk and the store fronts is important as it reflects the opportunities for reinterpreting how the space can be used. When a mutually beneficial relationship forms between the site and the traders, it shows the potential of these social structures and how they contribute to the larger geographies of street trading. Most importantly, it exposes a need to sustain the activities and livelihoods which rely on them. For this reason, a focus on highlighting these contributors reveals just how many more possible layers can make up the urban landscape and the street trading network. The urban spatialities created by the street traders intertwine with many aspects of the city's characteristics and identity and leave endless possibilities for expanding.

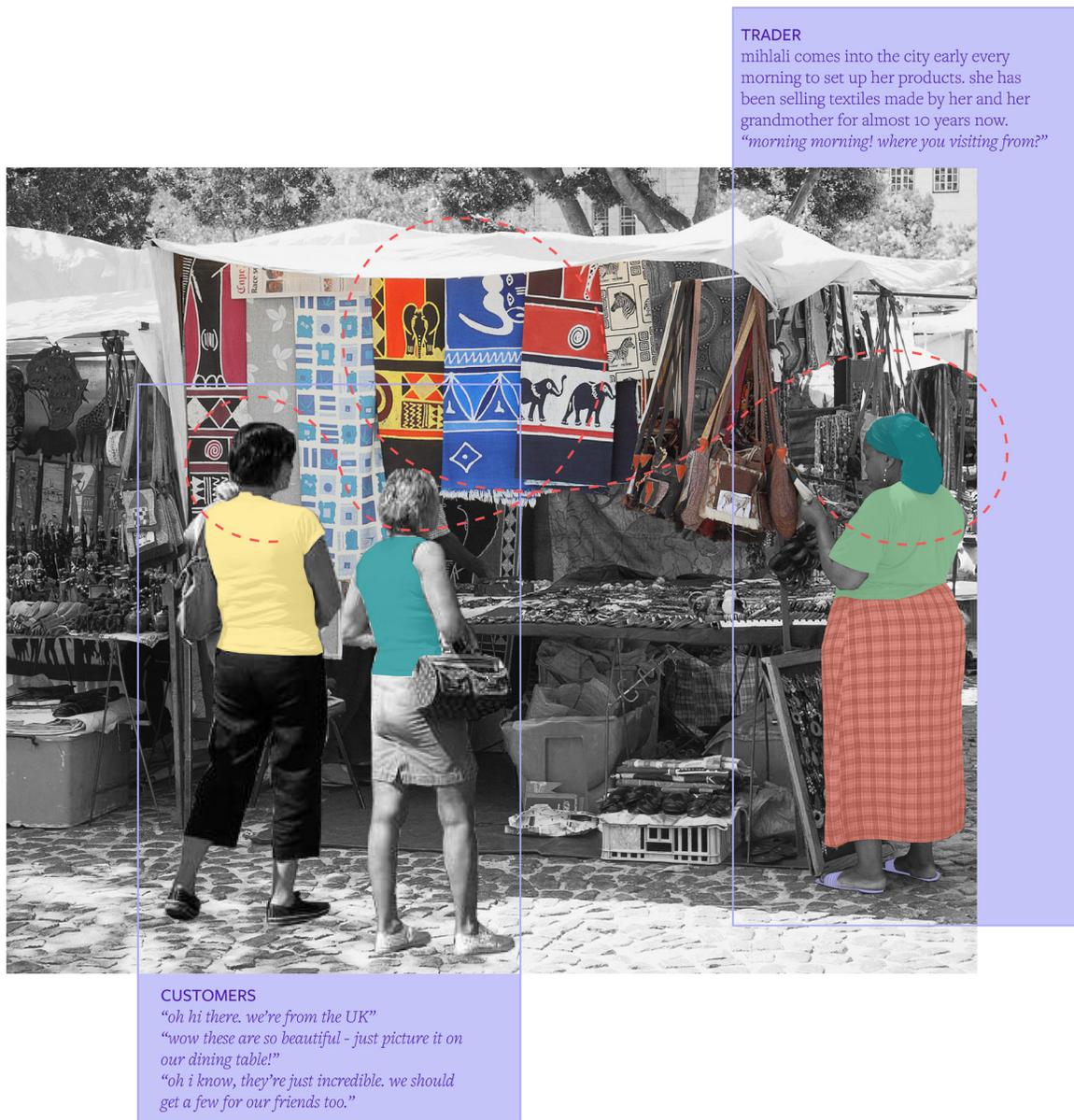
Unfortunately, with a new era of accessibility to outside products and retailers, the once very diverse and unique products being sold are harder to find. In the past, traders would sell goods and products that they created or had unique access to. Now many more traders are selling goods that are similar to each others' and to the recognized businesses' nearby. This shift has made it easier for anyone to become an informal street trader as long as they can get a permit and find something to sell. This is not always the case. There are a few traders who still give reason to believe that there is still opportunity and space to sustain the micro-culture of their livelihood in the streets of Cape Town. A few policies have even been put in place to reduce trade of counterfeit goods.⁴ The city has a vision for a thriving and valued informal trading sector so

there is a need to support the way the street traders can challenge the existing relationships between the divisions in order to create an environment which proves sustainable and beneficial for both.

People themselves, as the most mobile form, have contributed significantly to these larger geographies that are already linked together because of the informal street trading network. As Cape Town continues to grow, so do the possibilities of more unexpected interactions between a variety of different social groups and characters. As a flourishing metropolis and a popular tourist destination that has won people over with its beautiful mountains and beaches in such proximity to the lively streets, the city is full of many different walks of life. Cape Town is animated by the collective daily habits of people occupying the urban, for shopping, exercising, gathering, resting, or working. It is these organic movements that help materialize a dynamic city, but the street traders add another layer and activate them to play a larger role in Cape Town's urban, economic and most importantly social, fabric.



figure 13: Collage suggesting connections between a Trafalgar flower seller and customer



*according to the Department of Statistics South Africa, apart from travellers coming from else where on the African continent, tourists from the United Kingdom are in the top 5 - with the United States coming in first and Germany, the Netherlands and France following.⁵

figure 14: Collage suggesting connections between a Greenmarket Square trader and the customers

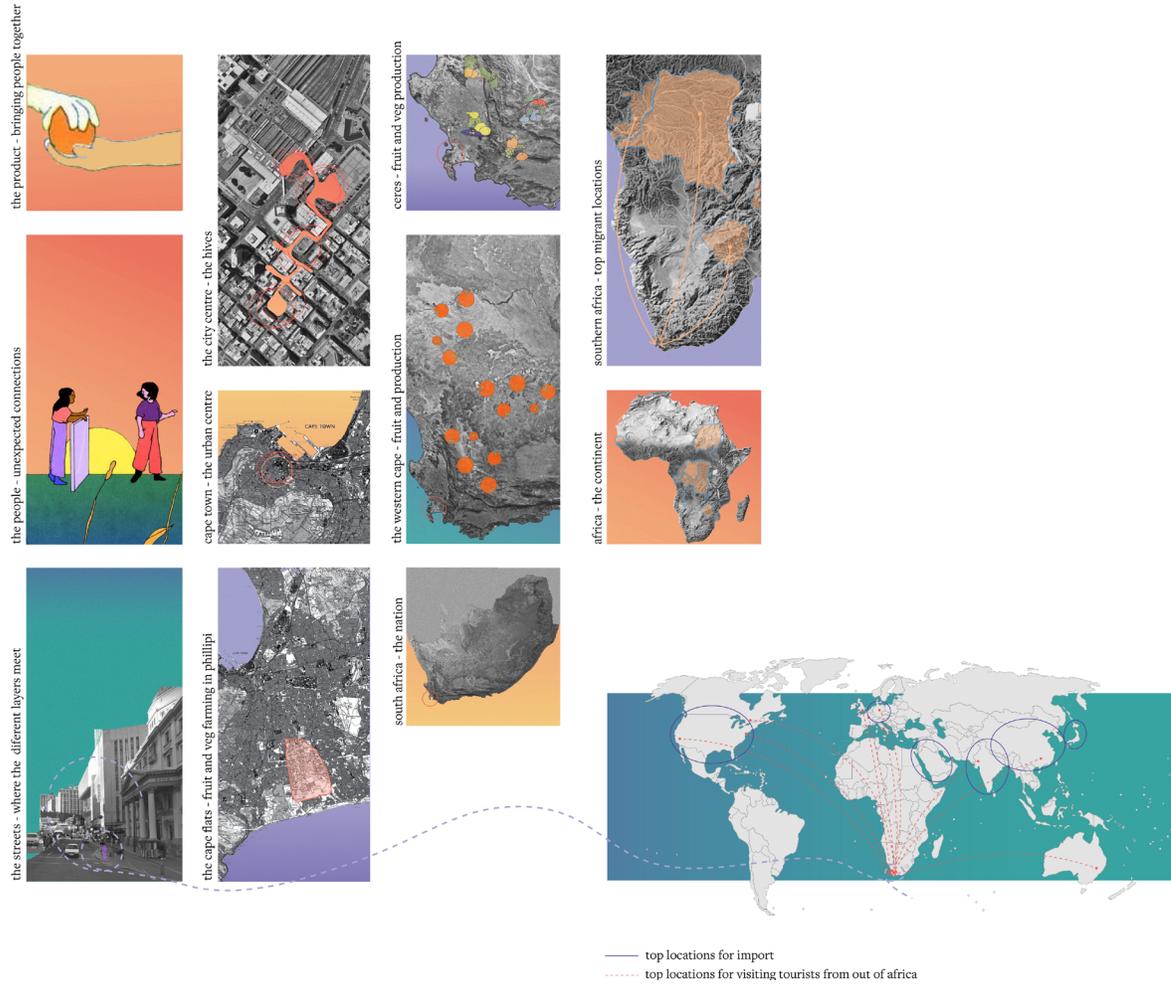


figure 15: Collage indicating larger connections that are formed in relation to the informal street trading network

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 4

1 Nyathi, "Reconciling informal and formal trader through architecture," 75.

2 Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Renia Ehrenfeucht, *Sidewalks: Conflict and Negotiations Over Public Space*, (The MIT Press, 2009), 37.

3 "Informal Trading Policy 2013", City of Cape Town, Isixeko Sasekapa, Stad Kaapstad, [https://resource.capetown.gov.za/documentcentre/Documents/Bylaws%20and%20policies/Informal%20Trading,%202013%20-%20\(Policy%20number%2012664\)%20approved%20on%2026%20September%202013.pdf](https://resource.capetown.gov.za/documentcentre/Documents/Bylaws%20and%20policies/Informal%20Trading,%202013%20-%20(Policy%20number%2012664)%20approved%20on%2026%20September%202013.pdf). 7.

4 Lindsay Bremner, "Border/Skin," in *Against The Wall: Israel's Barrier to Peace*, ed by Michael Sorkin, (New York: The New Press, 2005), 131.

5 "3.5 million travellers to South Africa", Department: Statistics South Africa, <http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=10637>

CHAPTER 5

Learning from Transient Structures by Recognizing the Hives

Informal street traders can be found at locations all over the city and throughout the suburbs, but the highest concentration is in the urban core; over thousands of traders all within a few blocks of each others hives. Just like the spatialities of the urban networks, there is a visible gradient of the existing fragmented hives. These hives transition from areas in the middle of the city, often populated by tourists, towards areas usually only frequented by locals who rely on the public transportation systems (trains, taxis, golden arrow buses) grabbing goods on their way in or out of town. A variety of different hives and different products has inevitably lead to a few different methods of operation. A variety of typologies are considered under the guidelines of the policies: seasonal traders, street/pavement trading (Adderley street), pedestrian mall (St. Georges Mall), public market (Greenmarket Square, Grand Parade), trading at road intersections (this is not common in Cape Town's city centre, but is often seen outside the city of in smaller urban areas), and lastly, trading in open public spaces such as parks, mobile traders, and beach trading.¹

The structures are transient in nature and commonly built from recycled materials. They can be constantly modified and reinvented to suit new needs of energy and movement. The network is not just perceived by the way the structures come together but by how they transform the spaces their claiming to hold associative value, support livelihoods, and activate the urban. The different ways of claiming space have resulted from the conditions of the traders only being able

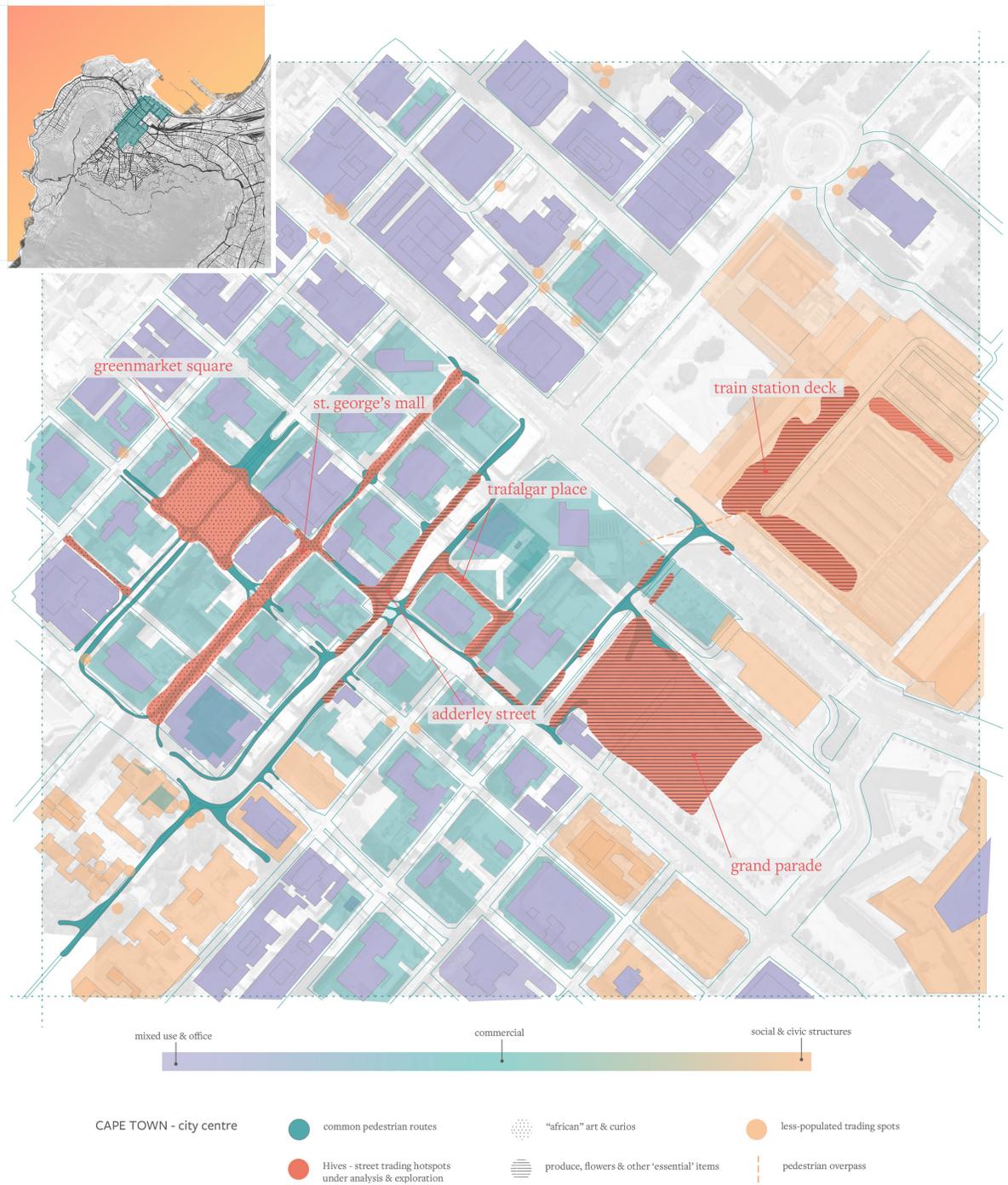


figure 15: Map of Cape Town's city centre - highlighting the Hives and important surrounding context

to occupy the public space during certain period of the day. As a lively presence on the street, the traders have gained agency by interpreting their own ways to occupy it.

Each of the diverse typologies have developed specific structures, influenced by site and the kinds of goods being sold, as means of displaying and transporting their goods. The most common goods and products being sold are fruits and vegetables, shoes, clothing, bags, sunglasses, hats, cosmetics, cell phone accessories, candy, chips, cookies, cigarettes, African art and crafts, jewellery, and flowers, but as the livelihood continuously expands there could be so much more. Through a deeper look at the five most popular and widely used trading sites in the city centre, the typologies can be revealed. Despite the slightly different set ups, all of the structures are removed from the public space at the end of the day, leaving the space looking untouched until the next sunrise when it all begins again.



figure 16: Ariel of Greenmarket Square showing the space claimed by traders

5.1 Greenmarket Square

Greenmarket Square is positioned in the heart of the city just one block away from Long Street, a popular destination for restaurants, bars and nightlife. Although the square is accessed by narrow streets it is almost impossible to miss. As the country transitioned through of different political legislations, it gave way for changes from a former slave market during the Dutch occupation in late 17th century to a popular flea market, a car park, a farmer’s market and to what it is today, a market of mainly African arts and crafts.² Compared to the other hives, the majority of customers found here are tourists “making

the market a meeting place for people from diverse cultural backgrounds.”³ There are over 400 traders who activate this public space everyday. Only around one third of them are South Africans, the rest have migrated from all over the continent with hope to find a stronger livelihood.⁴ Despite these differences, they all set up a colourful display of African crafts, fabrics, jewelry or clothes under old fading canopies held up with metal frames and the help of trees near by. This contrast to the surroundings creates “an island of economic marginality within an ocean of wealth embodie[d] by the upgraded colonial buildings, refurbished loft apartments and newly built office blocks.”⁵

This hive is constantly challenging what is considered permanent or impermanent. The traders can be found there almost every single day of the year, setting up in the same spot each day and returning it to an empty cobble stone square at night, only displaced occasionally for city organized events such as concerts or festivals. So apart from being theirs on a regular basis, traders who rely on this space to sell their goods are still considered informal because of their ephemeral methods of operation. But, as an open space that attracts the public there is potential through this practice for additional structures to allow an unfolding of the hive so the space can welcome more unexpected connections to happen.



figure 17: Greenmarket Square section



figure 18: St Georges Mall section

5.2 St. George's Mall

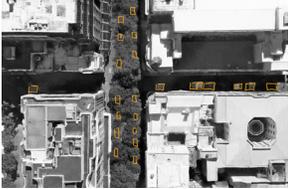


figure 19: Ariel of a portion of St George's Mall showing the space claimed by traders

What used to be a congested street is now a lively pedestrian mall surrounded by rows of trees providing an ideal location for trading. Only one block away from Greenmarket Square, this hive stretches across the city centre from Thibault Square to St. George's Cathedral. Here, you can find more goods tailored to tourists and occasionally even locals as well as the highest concentration of jewellers in all of Cape Town. The transient structures set up here are similar to those in Greenmarket square, using almost every possibly inch to hang and display their products. At times the structure itself can completely disappear behind all of the beautiful curios. The street traders occupy the middle lane leaving the outside two for more efficient circulation and access to the officially recognized and protected businesses. This organization clearly divides the mall into three, restricting any closer connections to happen socially and spatially across the lanes.



figure 20: Ariel of a portion of Adderley Street & Trafalgar Place showing the space claimed by traders

5.3 Adderley Street - Trafalgar Place

Running parallel to St. Georges Mall, Adderley street is one of the main arteries in Cape Town. Connecting the company gardens, parliament, national galleries and museums with the international convention centre and the central train station. With endless amounts of foot traffic it has proven to be a great environment for street traders selling products to the whole city. The products found here can range from clothing and cosmetics to electronic accessories and a variety of food.

As such a busy street with popular recognized businesses this

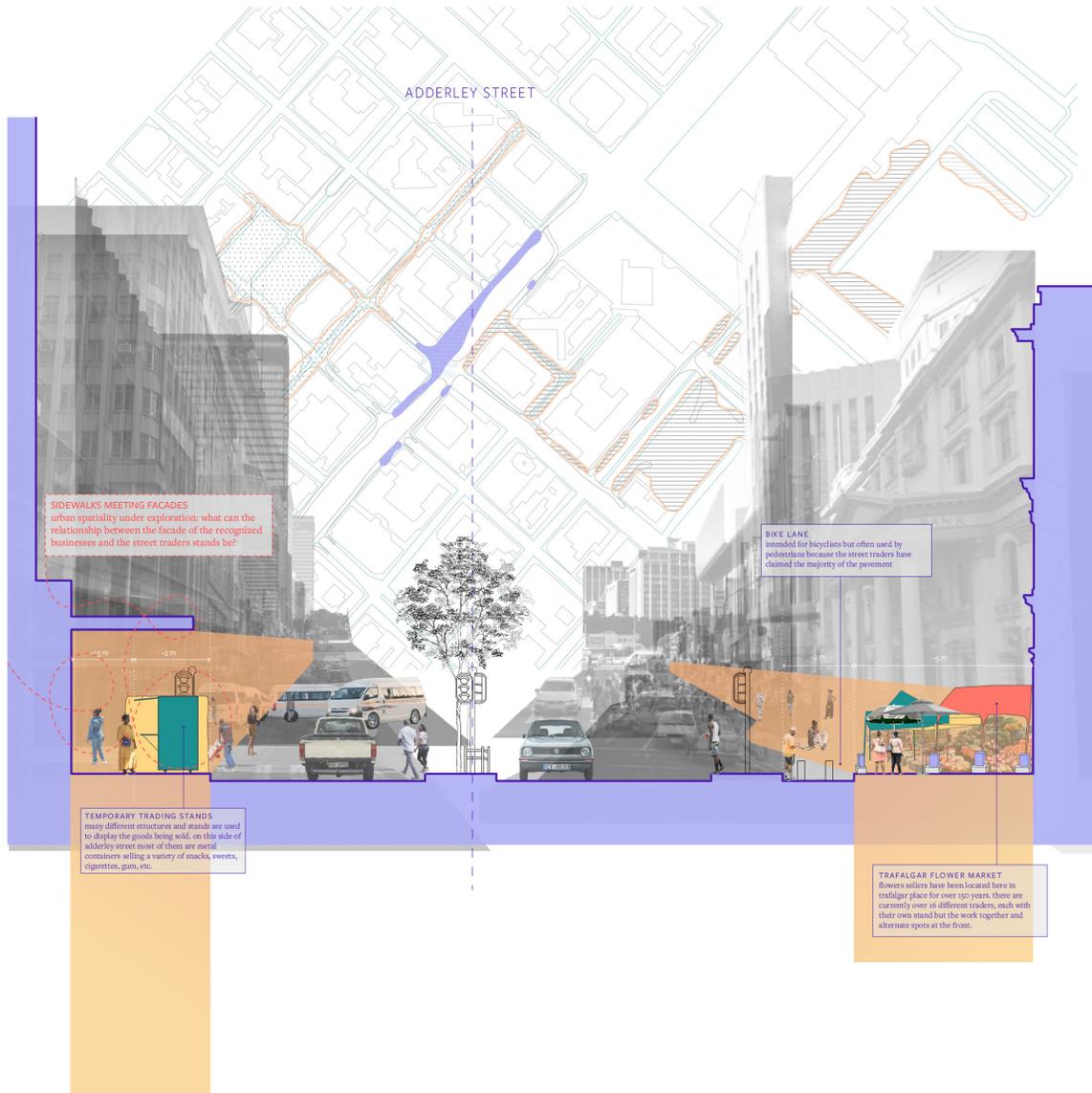


figure 21: Adderley Street section

hive, provides an interesting relationship between the formal and the informal. Traders set up the stands on the edge of the sidewalks creating 2.5 metre wide tunnel stretching down most of the street allowing both of these economies meet. But apart from the spatial proximity, elements connecting the two are indistinguishable and there are very few cases in which a mutually beneficial relationship has formed.

Trafalgar place can be spotted by the bold overflow of flowers spilling out from the alleyway onto Adderley street. This flower market is considered an iconic component of Cape Town's culture. It has been nurtured by generations of traders who have been selling flowers there for over a 100 years.⁶ This hive is pocketed by the surroundings buildings, connecting to the Golden Acre shopping mall and to another backstreet with more street traders. Most of the market is covered by a structural canopy but as more traders join the flower selling business, fabric canopies and umbrellas are being using to claim the sidewalk space.



figure 22: Ariel of Grand Parade showing the space claimed by traders

5.4 Grand Parade

As the oldest public space in Cape Town, Grand Parade has rich history attached to it. In 1990, Nelson Mandela addressed over 50,000 people who gathered in the square, which was broadcasted to the rest of the nation following his release from prison.⁷ Today, it remains an important landmark across the street from City Hall, the central public library and the Castle of Good Hope. After receiving an upgrade for the 2010 FIFA world cup it has continued to provide space for many protests, political rallies, musical shows, cultural festivals and more

frequently, a public market held by informal street traders.⁸ Located a few blocks further from the other hives, the traders here are usually interacting with locals looking for fresh produce, fabrics and other items that can be found for reliably lower costs than formal retailers.

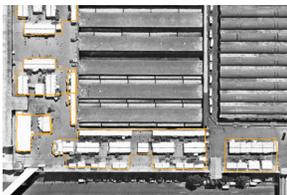


figure 23: Ariel of Central Station Deck showing the space claimed by traders

5.5 Cape Town Central Station Deck

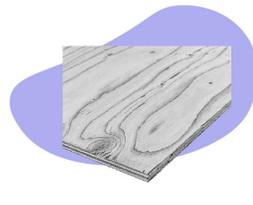
This hive is located on top of the central train station. The deck became street trading location due to an attempt of improving the station during an upgrade in 2010. Many of the traders were relocated from their previous locations to the deck without much notice or choice and forced to deal with ill-designed stalls, unfit for Cape Town's weather conditions.⁹ Since it is above ground, this market space goes unnoticed for many people in the city. Functioning mostly as a taxi rank, it is above street level and only accessible from within the station, an overhead pedestrian walkway or, of course, by taxi. Because of this, it is one of the more segregated trading sites in the city, only serving and attracting people who rely on the train or taxis as their mode of transportation. Similar to the Grand Parade, the goods sold here are mainly products that can be bought on a daily basis as the locals, including other traders, are commuting to from work.



figure 25: Collage indicating the commonly assembled temporary structure typologies



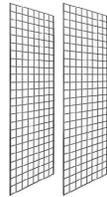
metal bars join together for structural support and displaying goods



wood boards used as tables



tarps or canvas used on top of structural frames or lay products down on



metal grid panels used for structural support and displaying goods



plastic jugs filled w/ water to hold structural supports in place



rope or line used to hold and secure structures



plastic cartons used to support other elements of the structure or to display



cartons used to display



umbrella used to cover products from weather



canopy tent used to cover products from weather and claim space

figure 25: Catalogue of temporary/dynamic materials

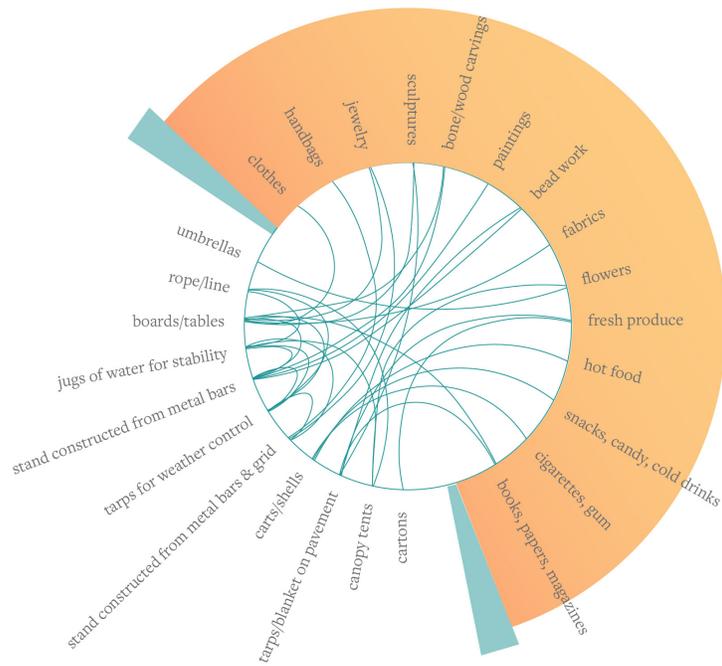


figure 26: Diagram of common combinations made between materials and products

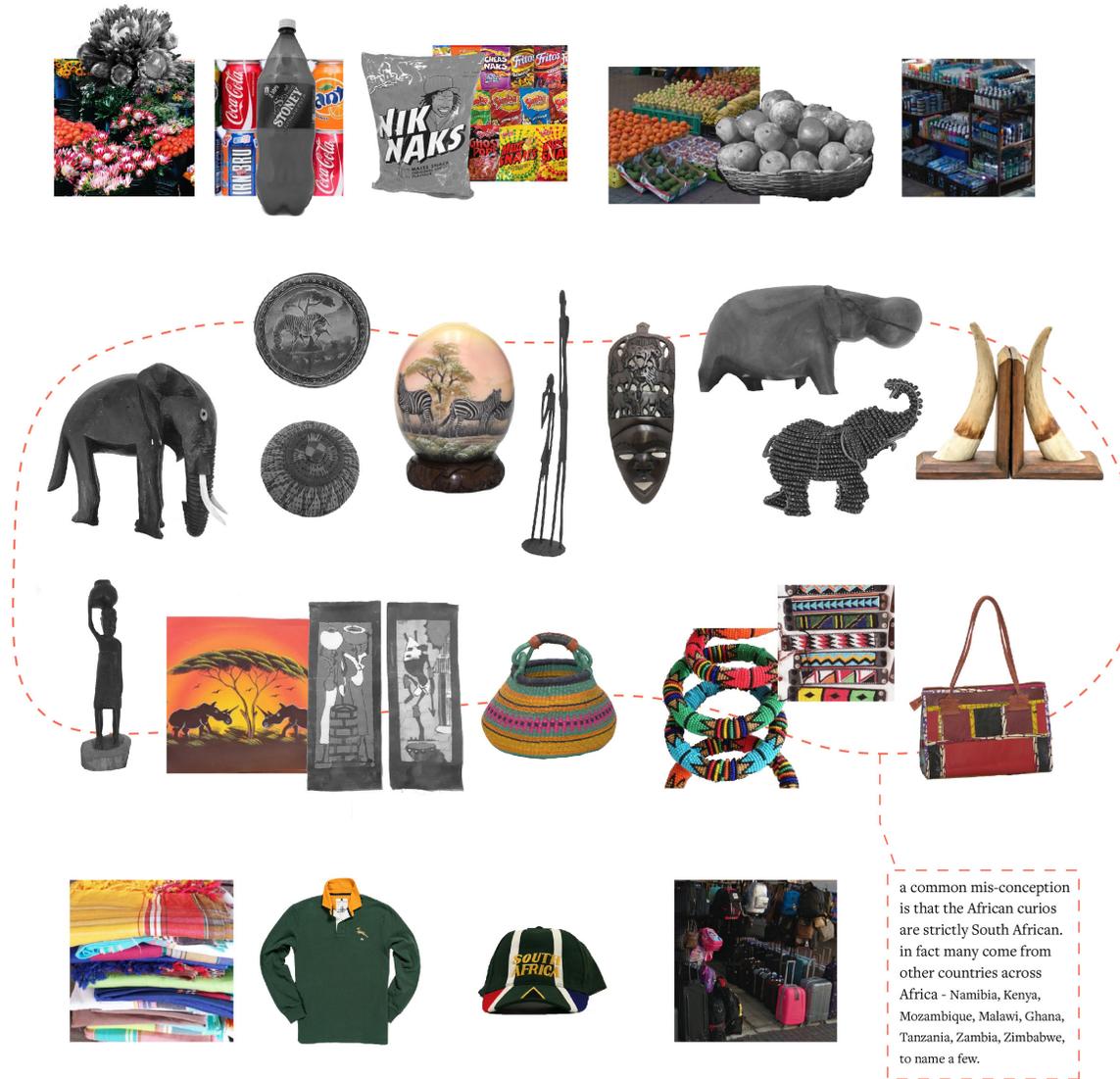


figure 27: Catalogue of products and goods

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 5

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CHAPTER 6

Blurring the Divides

Although street traders have been practicing this livelihood successfully for many decades, a persistent obstacle has been access to safe storage. Since the traders operate on a cyclical basis, borrowing public space during the day and sensitively returning it to a static condition at night, security of materials and goods is a necessity in order to maintain a successful business. Many of the traders are travelling into the city everyday from the cape flats by public transportation so moving and storing their products safely is challenge. Over 90% of the traders who operate in the city centre use the available storage spaces.¹ A small percentage extend their process by bringing their products home with them every night or to other storage locations outside of the city centre. This can be quite a mission as many of the traders are still located far into the periphery of the city and rely on public transportation to navigate their way around the city. Currently, some of the storage areas in Cape Town's city centre are still blocks away from where the traders set up their stands. This creates a movement of traders pushing their wrapped up materials and products through the streets as the city is waking up.

Usually these rented storage spaces do not cost the traders a huge amount but since it is not controlled by the traders themselves, this resource can be exploited.² With the rise in the number of traders operating, it could begin to outweigh the number of storage spaces. Providing storage for traders is a business of its own; some of these spaces are owned by other formal business owners, but a mutually

beneficial relationship formed between the formal and the informal for storage is rare.

The daily habits are a part of what defines their micro-culture. Their ritualistic process also describes how a contribution, to challenging the racially divided urban landscape in ways that many other urbanities do not, is created. Across all of the hives, the beginning and end of their process appears to roughly take the same shape, but with a closer look, unique spatialities unfold throughout the day in each location. In search of ways to sustain this practice, which arises everyday from the indistinguishable storage locations, some new structures reflecting a similar language have begun to inhabit the hives. Each of them inviting security and storage of materials and products overnight but during the day, unfolding to add another layer to the street traders existing methods of operation in *public squares*, *pedestrian malls* and along the edges of *sidewalks meeting the facades* of the officially recognized businesses.

With each step of unfolding, the structures provide elements of both permanence and temporality as they physically unfold to accommodate different needs and allow opportunity for more agency. They mediate relationships between formality and informality, and reveal different layers of urban spatialities, which are linked to the street trading network, that can come together to challenge the neglected conditions and connect the fragmented.

Public Squares - Storage Unfolds into Social Structures

Every morning a group of street traders arrive in the city centre. After walking a few blocks from the taxi rank they make their way to Greenmarket Square. These traders have been working side by side for a few years and have become good friends. They used to go separate ways to gather their materials and goods from different storage locations, before meeting back up at the square to start setting up their stands. Now, as they approach their hive they know everything has been waiting there safely. Sitting over the cobble stones, is a structure that takes on many tasks to support the hive, just like the street traders. At night the folded envelope are stretched out, making use of the empty open space. Not only does it store the traders' products and materials but it also holds space for them while they rest, and creates curiosity for what might evolve from it during the day.

As a team, they begin unfolding the storage to transform the static square. First, the big doors on either side are unlocked and swung out to the side, revealing their belongings. The structure is big enough for them to go inside and gather their smaller bins used to keep everything organized. Gradually more traders are arriving at the hive and collecting their belongings. Once all that remains is the outer shell, the traders push the folds together to claim back the space. But, the purpose for this structure does not stop there. With limited resources, street traders have learned to use what is available and create something for their advantage. Borrowing from this approach, the big doors fold down into tables and benches that can swing around following the sun or the shade and activating the desired space. Changing from day to

day or even morning to afternoon, when needed these surfaces can be used in many ways.

At lunch time, one of the traders sits down on one side to enjoy their food, bought from a fellow trader a few blocks away, in the company of some locals who work in near by buildings, also enjoying their food and conversation while taking a break. Meanwhile the other side is being used by another trader as a workshop space for refining skills, adding finishing touches to their carvings, and even displaying them.

The Network - A Weaving Canopy

The structure is recognizably different from the traders' stands so a connection is made between it and the network of existing stands. A light but durable fabric is lifted up by the traders using line, and the help of the structure's vertical post, it stretches out to near by trees and stands, creating a canopy. After only a short period of time more fabrics have appeared. The hanging fabrics attached to each structure come together as one large canopy, floating above near by streets and weaving further through the city; highlighting common pedestrian routes and connecting the fragmented hives to each other and to the urban fabric.

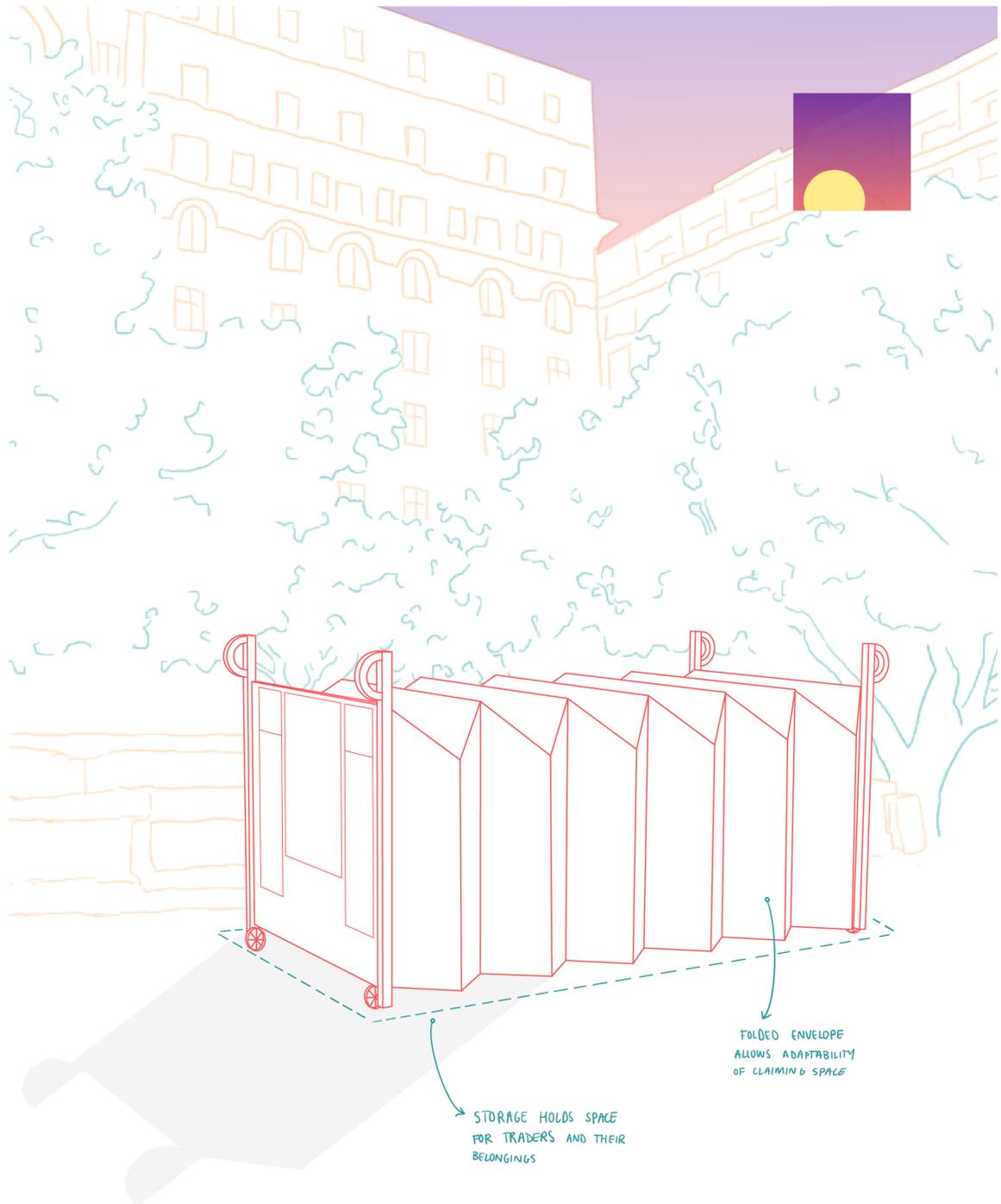


figure 28: Public Squares - Overnight into Early Morning - the folded envelope is stretched out making use of the empty square and holding space for the traders



figure 29: Public Squares - Early Morning - big doors on either side are unlocked and swung out to the sides revealing their belongings



figure 30: Public Squares - Morning - once all that remains is the outer shell, the traders push the folds together and claim back the space



figure 31: Public Squares - Day time - doors swing out and fold down into tables and benches for gathering, working, displaying products

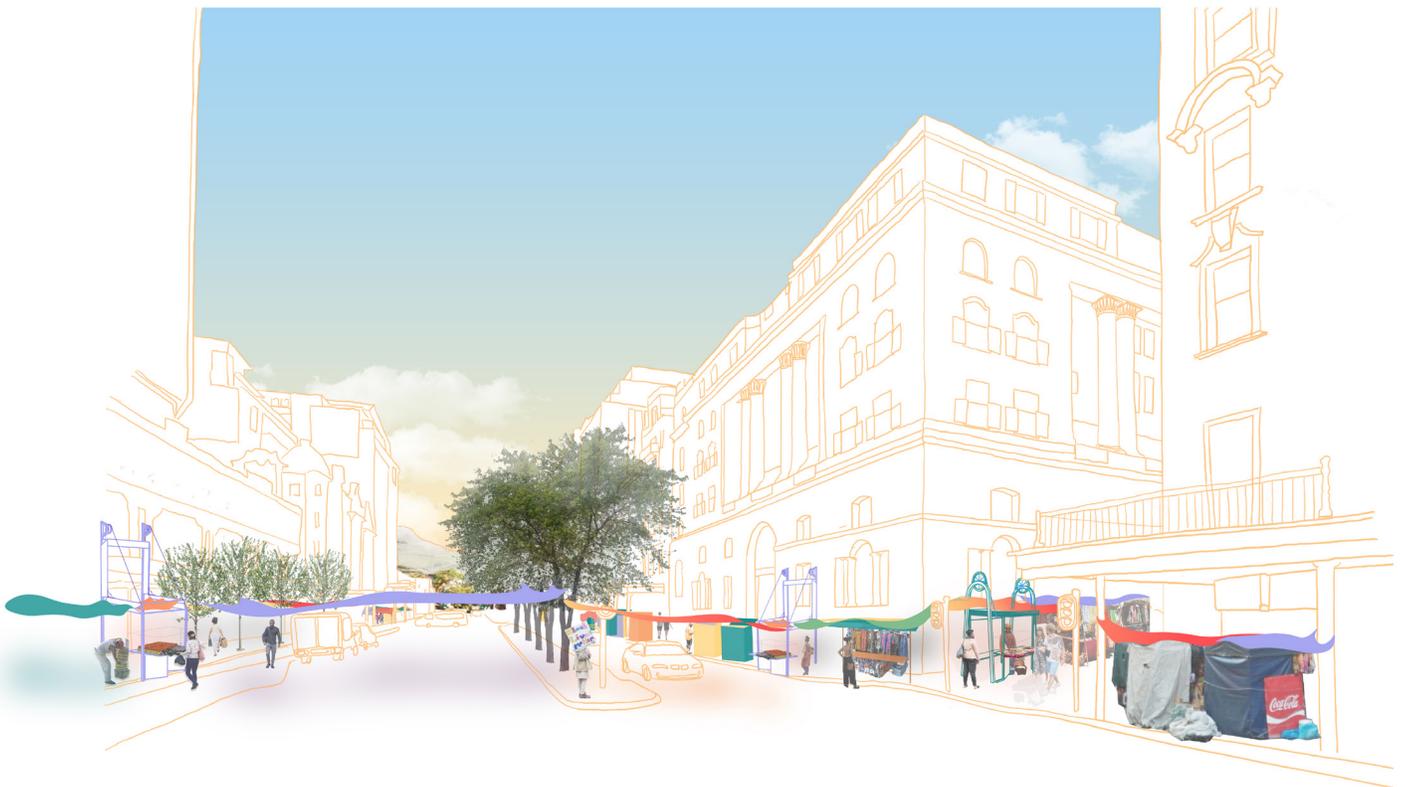


figure 32: Canopy - Day time - fabrics from each structure connect to form a weaving canopy, guiding people from one hive to another

Pedestrian Malls - Storage Unfold to Extend the Activated Hive

From Greenmarket Square, the canopy guides people to the next hive, St. Georges Mall. Here, some other new structures have been inhabiting the pedestrian mall in between the trees. Being smaller than the public square structures, a series of them are scattered down the mall, each connected to the next by the fabric canopy. Overnight the storage is secured hanging above the pavement, maintaining a continuous presence but leaving space underneath for circulation or those seeking refuge from the weather. Just like the last, this dynamic structure has found its place within the street traders daily process, transforming and activating the street-scape along with the set up of their existing stands.

In the morning, the traders turn the two wheels on either side, lowering the storage to the ground to unload their belongings. The folded envelope is detached from the frame and then lifted back into the air, this time squishing together to take up less space and the frame is then put to use. Facing the middle of the mall, the surface folds down into a table for the traders to use for displaying their products. On the other side, it folds into a bench allowing anyone to stop and sit for a moment and enjoy the vibrant activities of people shopping, gathering, and socializing around this hive. The three lanes which used to remain separated have begun to intertwine allowing the hive to spill out of the middle lane and stretch to the edges.

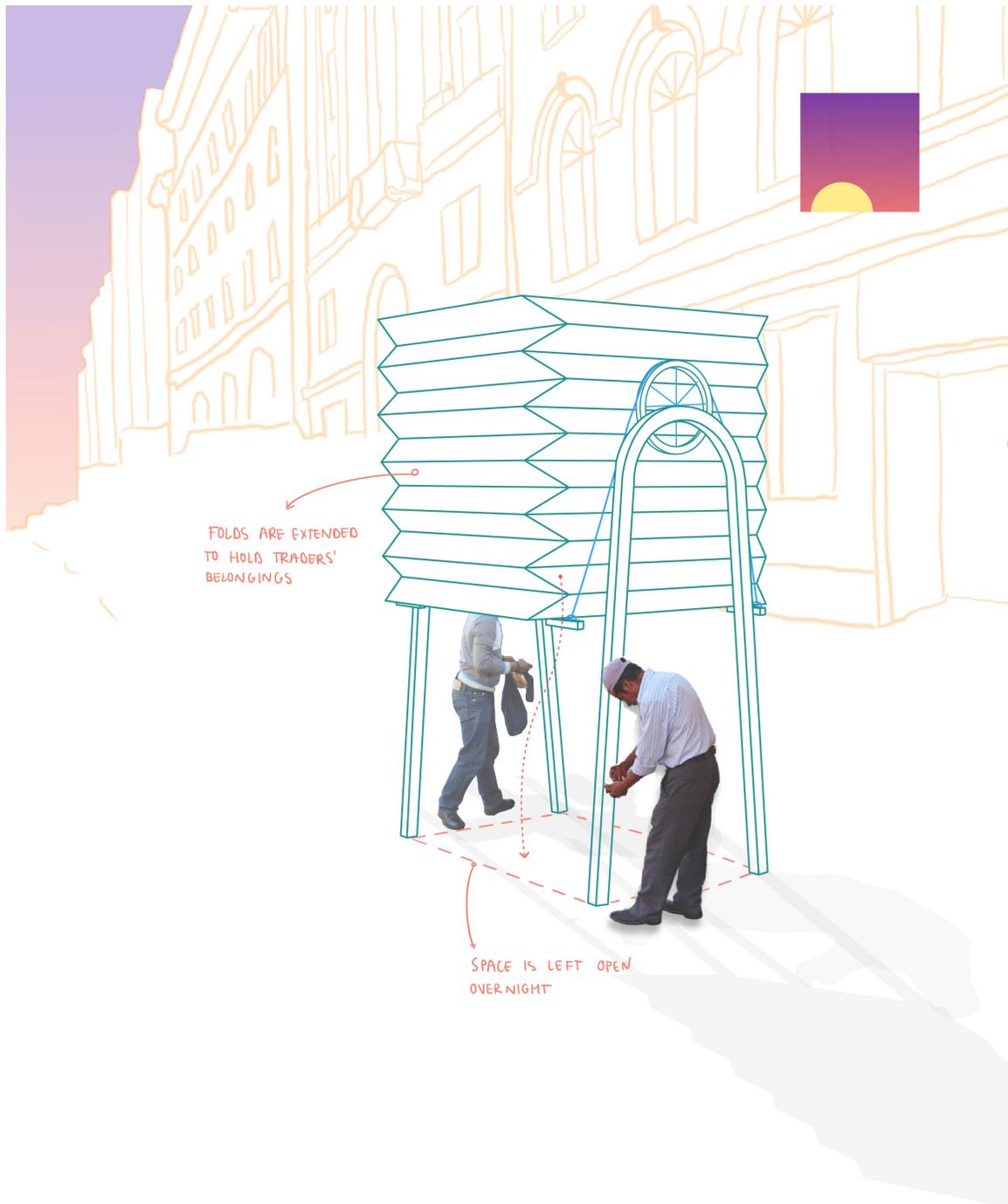


figure 33: Pedestrian Malls - Overnight into Early Morning - the structure is secured, hanging above ground



figure 34: Pedestrian Malls - Early Morning - using the pulley system on either side lowers the storage to the ground

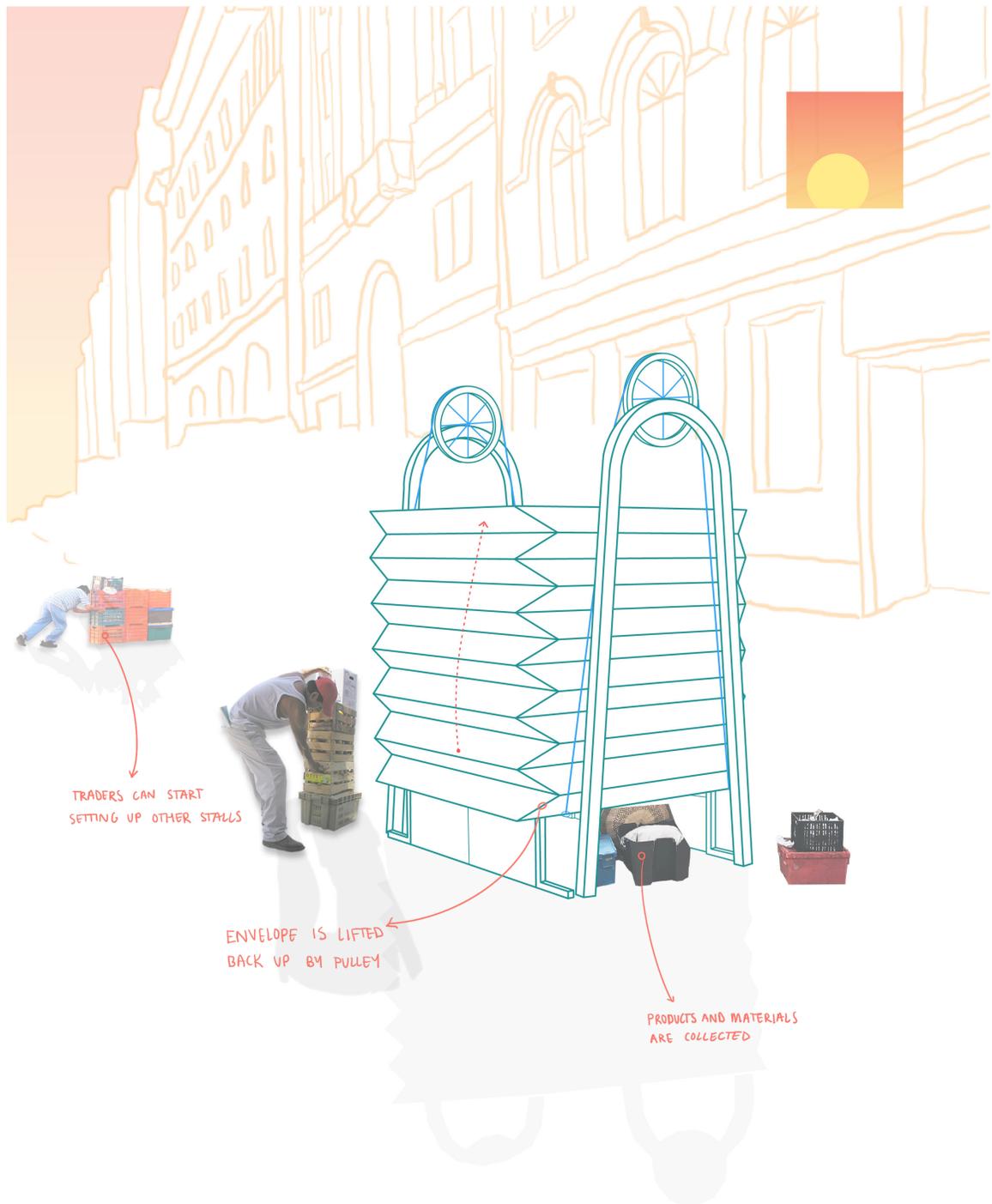


figure 35: Pedestrian Malls - Morning - after unattaching the folded envelope from the frame, the folds are lifted back up



figure 36: Pedestrian Malls - Late Morning - on one side a table is formed, facing the middle and lending display space for the traders



figure 37: Pedestrian Malls - Day time - on the other side a bench allows anyone to sit down and enjoy the various activities happening around the hive

Sidewalks Meeting Facades - The Structure Unfolds to Blur the Line Between the Formal and Informal

Some of the new structures added to the street trading network have a smaller presence on the streets but they have taken on an a very important role. Along Adderley street these structures have started to connect the edges of the sidewalks with the facades of the buildings, solidifying more intertwined relationship between the two. Just like the others, these structures support an element of temporality, transforming from one use to another throughout the street traders different phases of the day. Each morning, a connection unfolds as the structure does. This connection challenges the existing spatial relationship between the recognized businesses and the traders. Everyday the traders and the other businesses are sharing this space but they are also leaving it fragmented. The main purpose of this structure is providing a blurring zone where one use, need or condition is able to meet another.

When the traders arrive at their hive with their belongings gathered from the other storage structures, they find the structures folded up, resting against the facade and elevated off the street. Overnight they have been acting as security shutters for the store fronts. The structures are strong but light enough to be unfolded by a single trader. By pulling on a line, a component of two parts is unfolded becoming parallel to the sidewalk. Then, with one more pull, the full form is revealed. The first part consists of a frame holding up colourful light fabrics as a canopy, extending the facade out to join the second part. The second part, the front panel of the structure, stands

vertical on the edge of the pavement supporting the canopy. It unfolds once again becoming display surfaces for the traders. By connecting the needs of the traders and the neighbouring businesses, the space left fragmented becomes a powerful force pulling them together and blurring that divide.

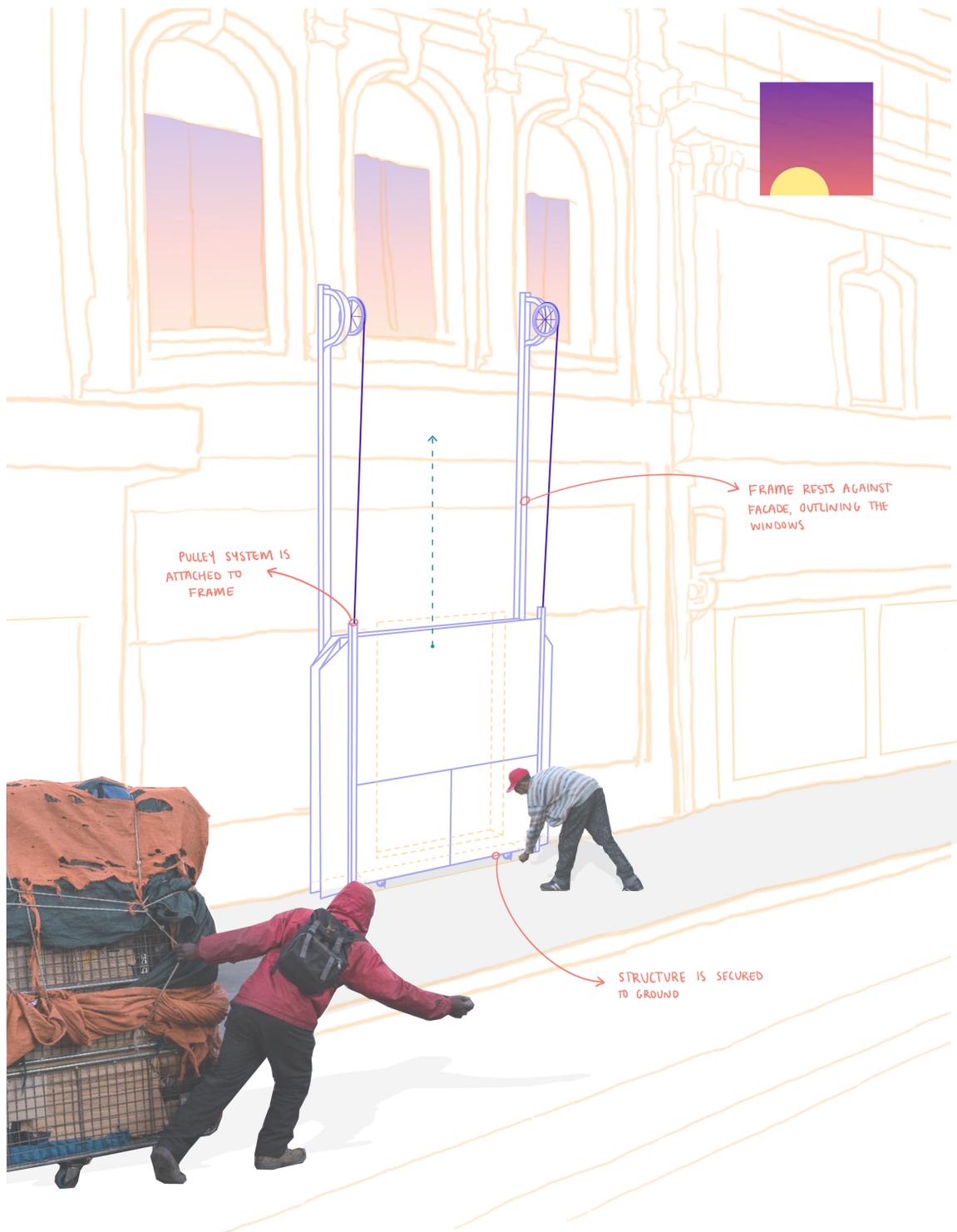


figure 38: Sidewalks Meeting Facades - Overnight into Early Morning - the structure rests against facade acting as security shutter

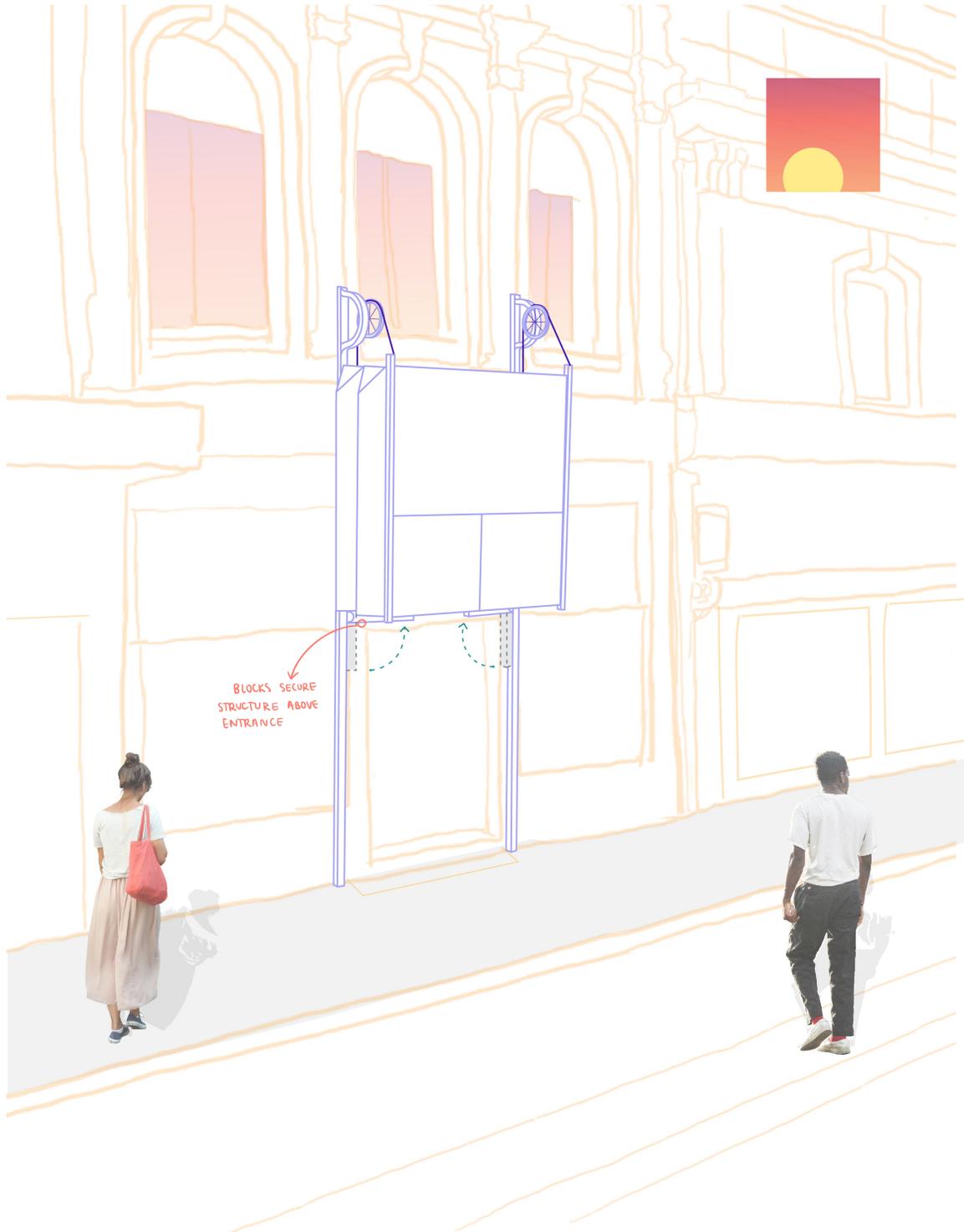


figure 39: Sidewalks Meeting Facades - Early Morning - the structure is lifted off the ground

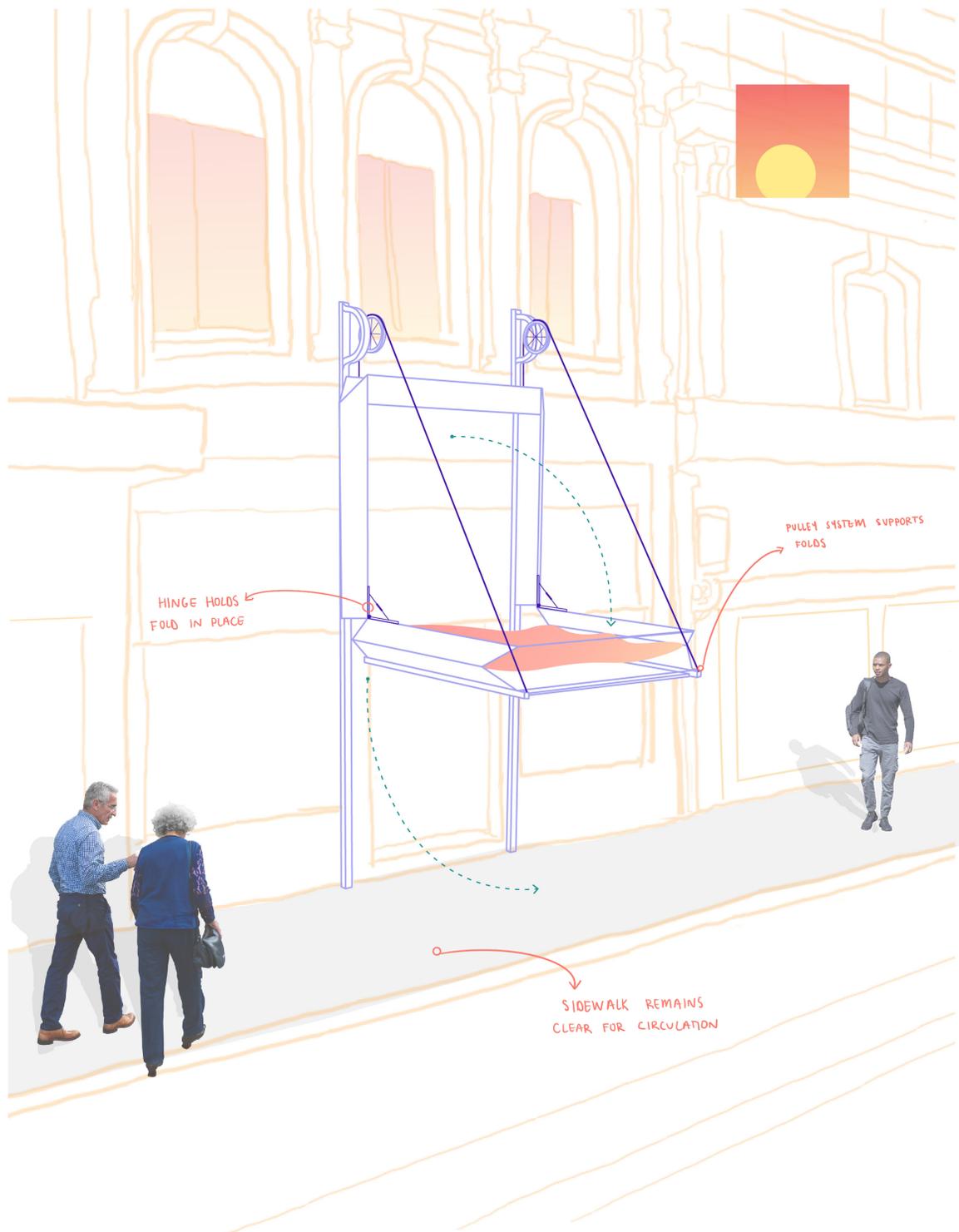


figure 40: Sidewalks Meeting Facades - Early Morning part 2 - the first fold is let down parallel to the sidewalks

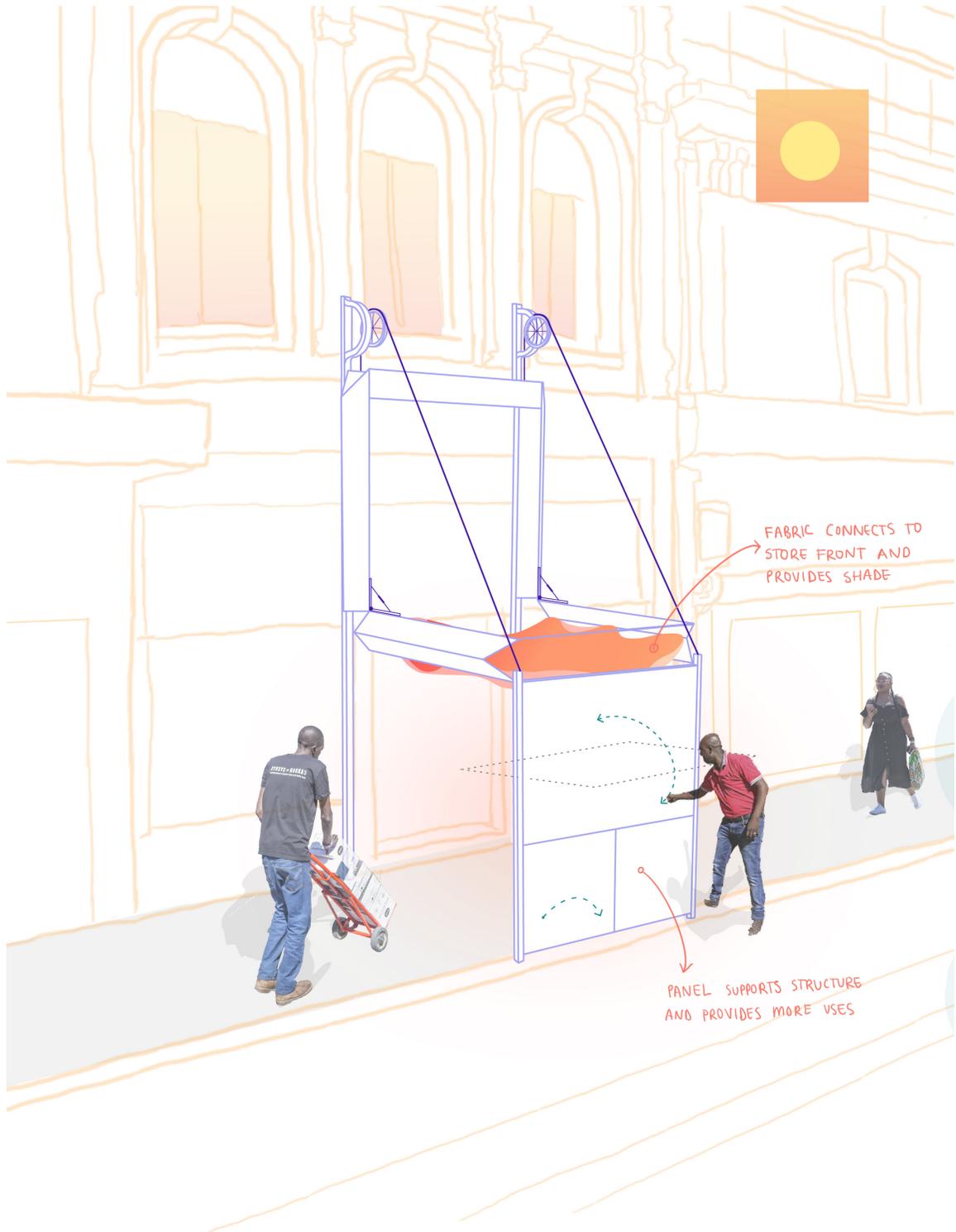


figure 41: Sidewalks Meeting Facades - Morning - with another unfold the front panel meets the ground

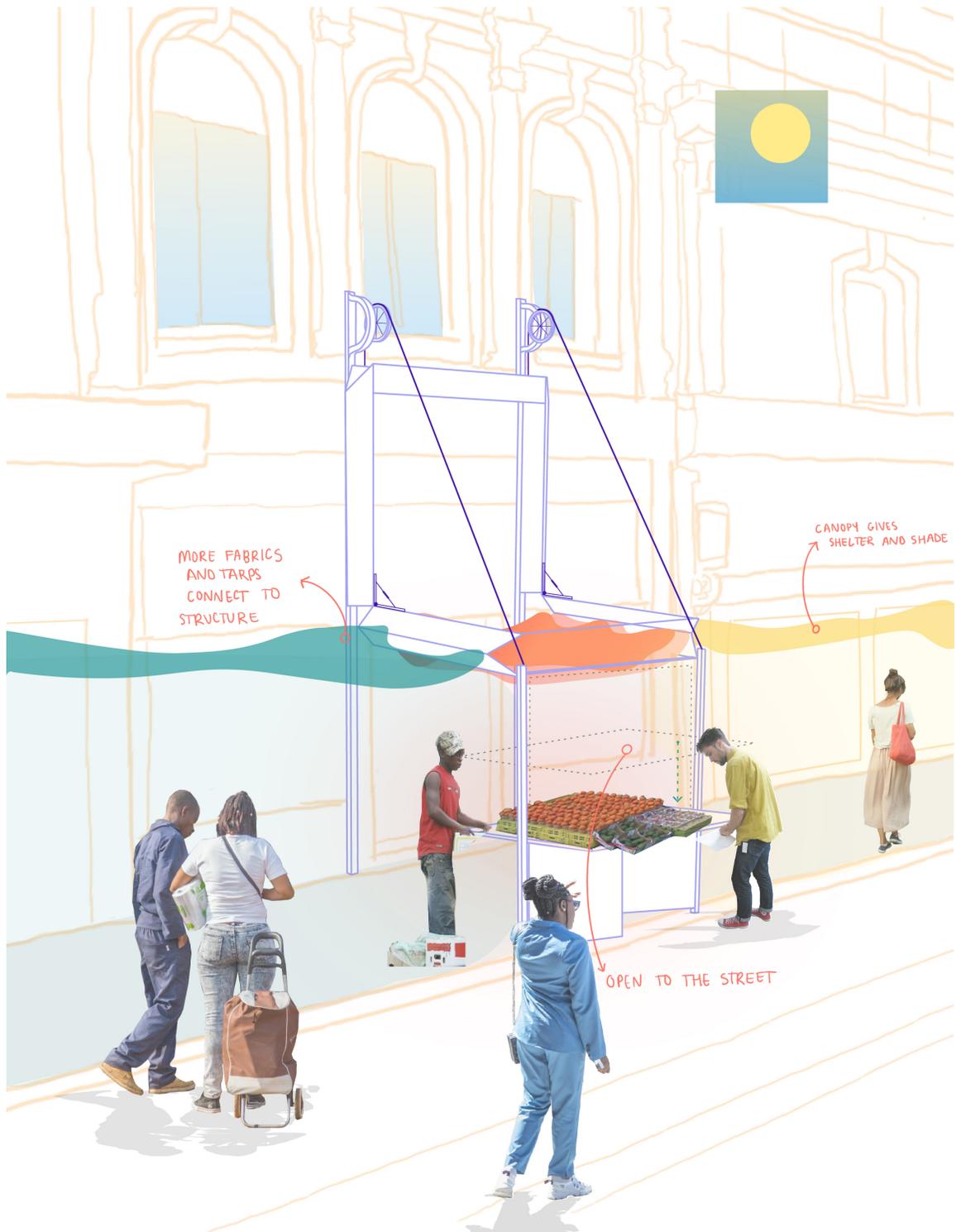


figure 42: Sidewalks Meeting Facades - Day time - front panel folds out into a table for the traders to display products



figure 43: Collage representing the visible connection created from the weaving canopies

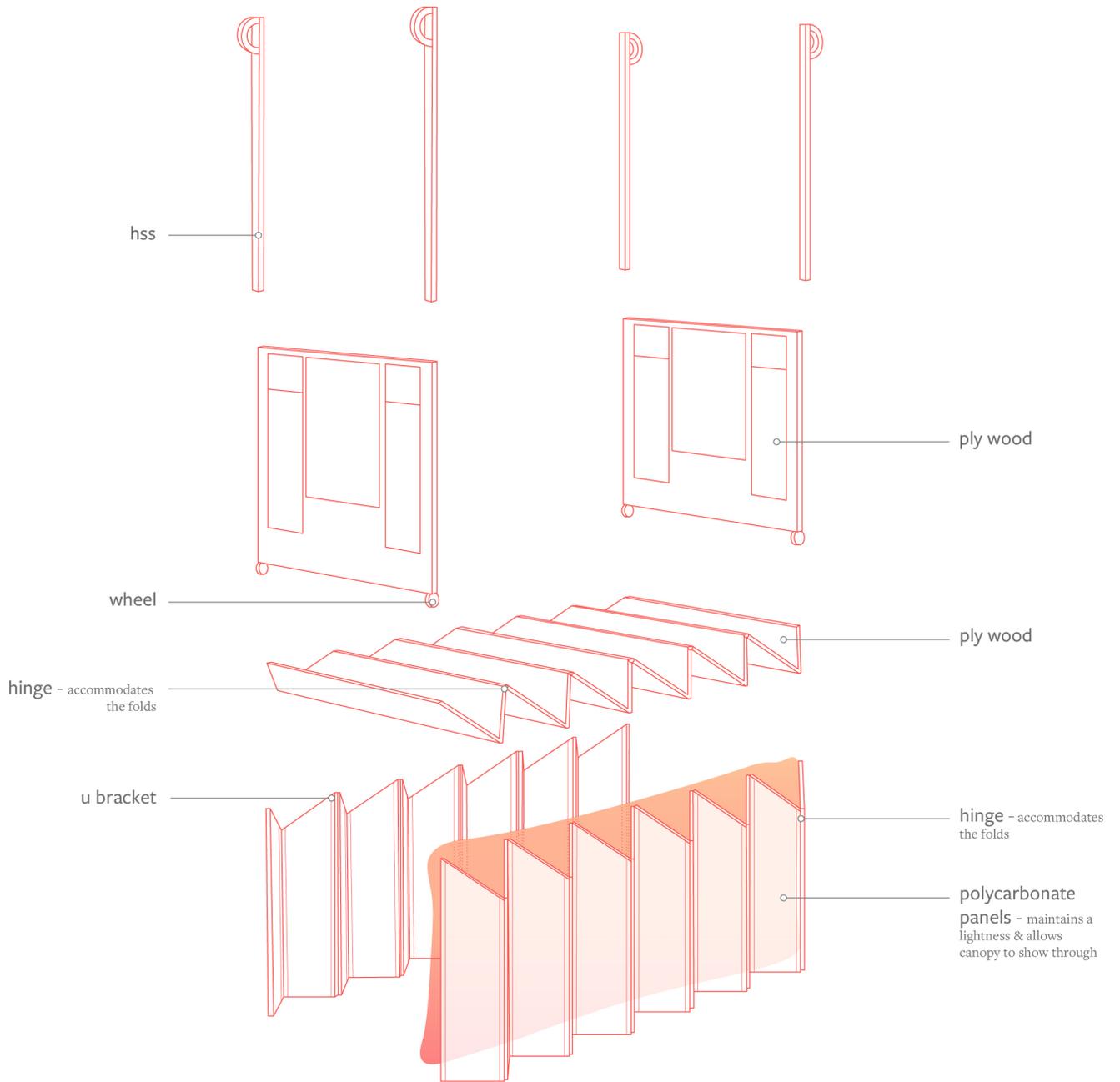


figure 44: Construction and material diagram of the storage that unfolds into social structures

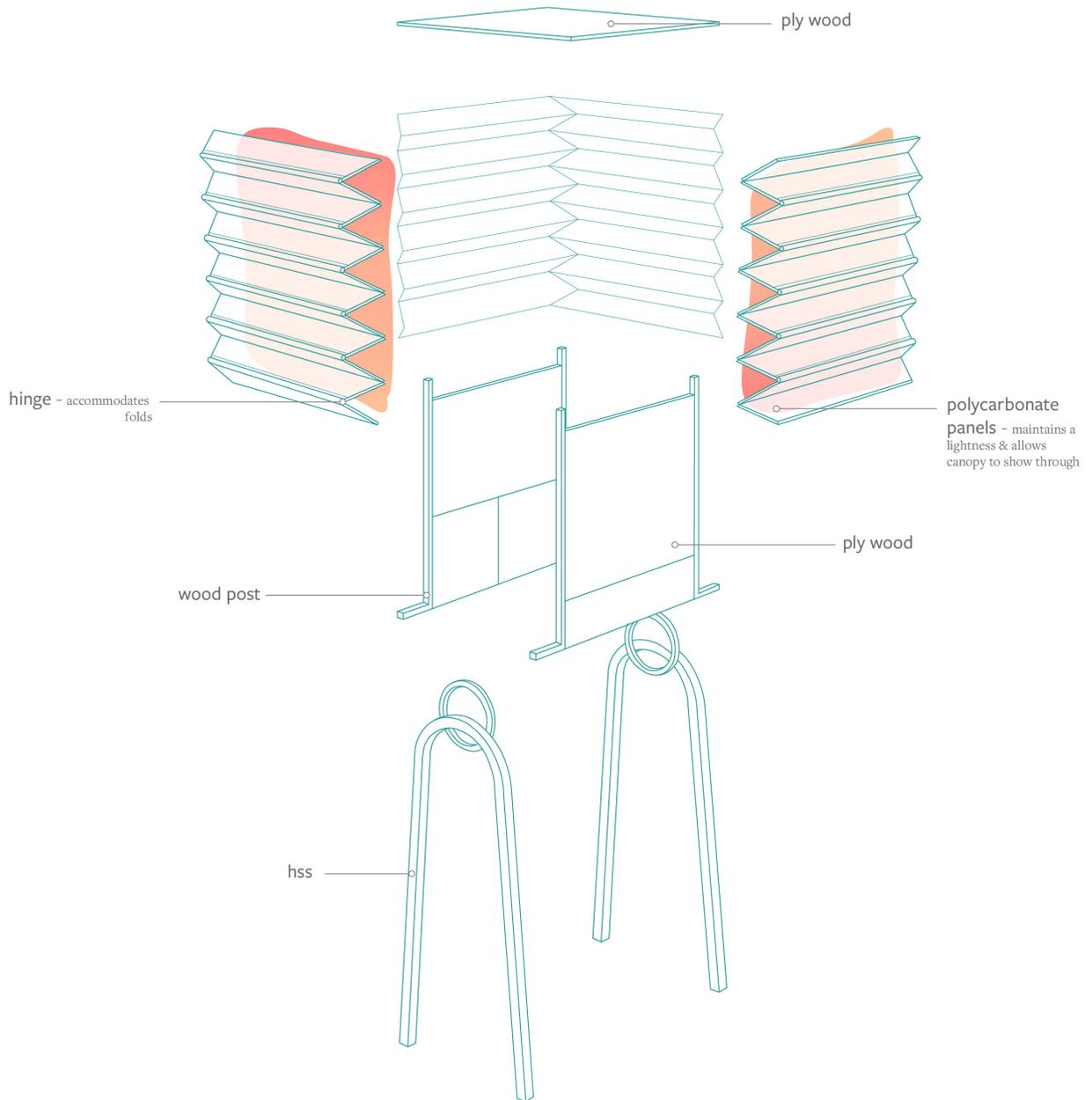


figure 45: Construction and material diagram of the storage that unfolds to extend the activated hive

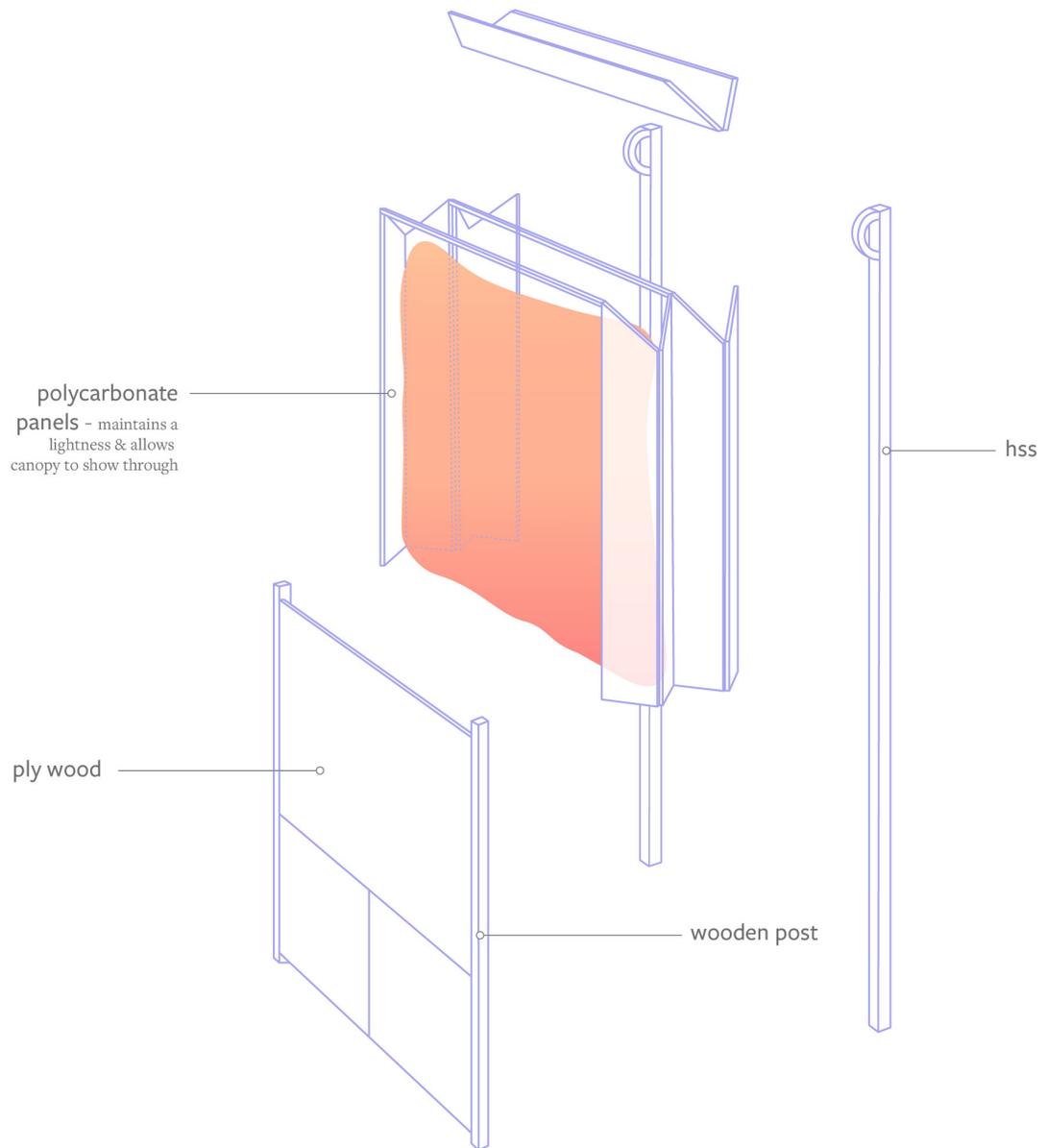


figure 46: Construction and material diagram of the structure that unfolds to blur the line between formal and informal

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 6

¹ van Heerden, “Street Trading in Cape Town CBD: A Study of the relationship between local government and street traders,” 80.

² Ibid, 81.

CHAPTER 7

Choreographies of Space - A Conclusion

Through their practice of unfolding each of the hives, the structures have taken on their own identities but maintain their role as an important component of the processes that make a successful hive. Over time, from reading the choreographies of these structures inhabiting the streetscape, some of them have adapted and begun appearing in other areas hinting to their need. They continue to unfold, transforming existing spatial conditions into a stage, set for things to happen in response to their context with the help of the street traders and fellow urbanites.

The bigger storage structures are now being used in many other public squares around the city centre and Cape Town's other urban areas. Greenmarket square has become a central hub in the city. Tourists and locals are treating it as a gathering space, rather than just a meeting place. Many spend time under the canopy, sheltered from the hot South African sun, watching the traders keep the energy of the crowd high. At other locations the storage structures have modified to provide space for safe sleeping overnight, unfolding into a jungle gym structure for kids to play on throughout the day.

In St. Georges Mall, some of the structures have adapted and are now being used to collect rain water, supplying fresh accessible drinking water for the street traders and the public. As for the structures that inhabit the facades, more and more are appearing, extending the officially recognized businesses out onto the sidewalks inviting street traders to areas they have not yet activated.

With all the new layers of the dynamic structures being added to the urban landscape, the canopy follows, weaving each one to another; revealing the powerful impact of the informal street trading network and expanding the unbreakable livelihood that will continue to blur the divisions of Cape Town.

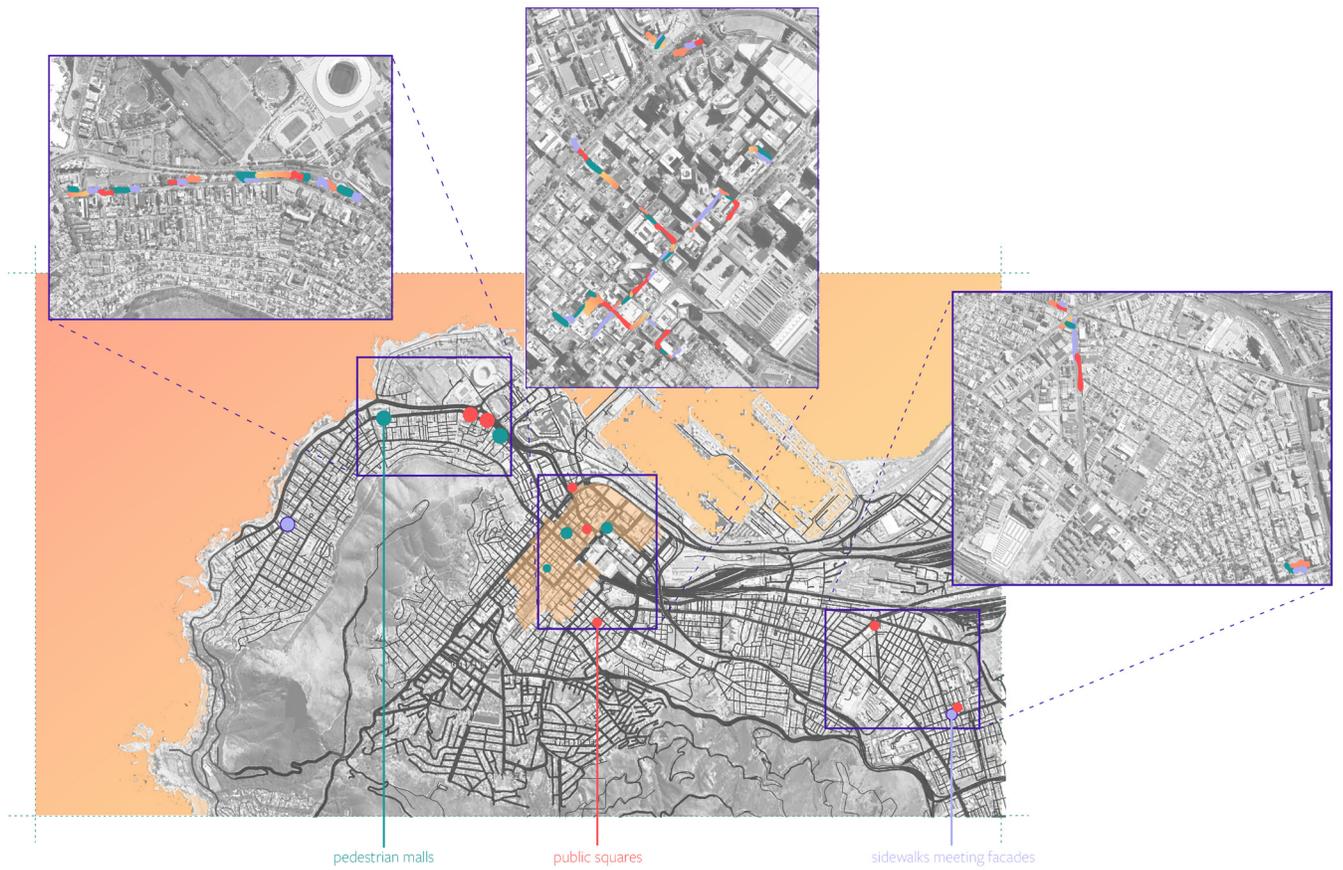


figure 47: Collage of possible locations for the future hives

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