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A SQUARE OF ENCOUNTERS

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1) Republic Monument, 2) Proposed Taksim Gallery, 3) Proposed amphitheatre, 4) Gezi Park, 5) Car Park

Essay: conceptual description

The conceptual approach to this competition is to design Taksim to maximize shared cultural, economic and ecological values. We devote particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define Taksim and support its ongoing evolution based on the achievements it represents. This is because we understand the city of the future as a sustainable city (i). A city assuming a central position in operationalizing the three main pillars of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – social, economic and ecological (ii). We guide our approach based on the principle that cities are major contributors to climate change, but they can also offer a part of the solution (iii). We intend to transform Taksim into a liveable, inclusive and future-oriented public space by relying on key principles of landscape urbanism, urban planning and design (iv).

Our goal is to design Taksim as a multifunctional public space of everyday encounters. A public space of encounters, capable of overcoming the current social and ecological deficits by empowering the embedded urban identity and the socio-cultural histories of the Square. In other words, cultural identity, the quality of the green spaces, the accessibility, and inclusiveness – that is a youth- as well as elderly-friendly Square, welcoming permanent residents and visitors, are as important as economic development of those using Taksim to conduct their business such as flowers or simit sellers. Engaging people to create the kinds of places that reflect their artistic expressions, identity, vision, needs, and desires is a central tenet of our design.

The core structure of the proposed design is the Taksim Gallery (**Drawing 01**) designed in a shape of a Tulip (**Diagram A**). The form of a Tulip has been used in the design of the parametric façade of the Gallery (**Drawing 02; Diagram B**). The Taksim Gallery intends to empower broad and diverse networks of local entrepreneurs, community organizations, and local residents as well as visitors to spur creativity, visual contemplation, well-being, and liveability throughout the year. The Gallery has the highest elevation point of approximately 8 meters, which work as a 360 degrees viewpoint over the Square (**Diagram C**), the Republic Monument and surroundings (**Drawing 03, 04, 05**); yet it does not obstruct views toward other iconic buildings in the vicinity.

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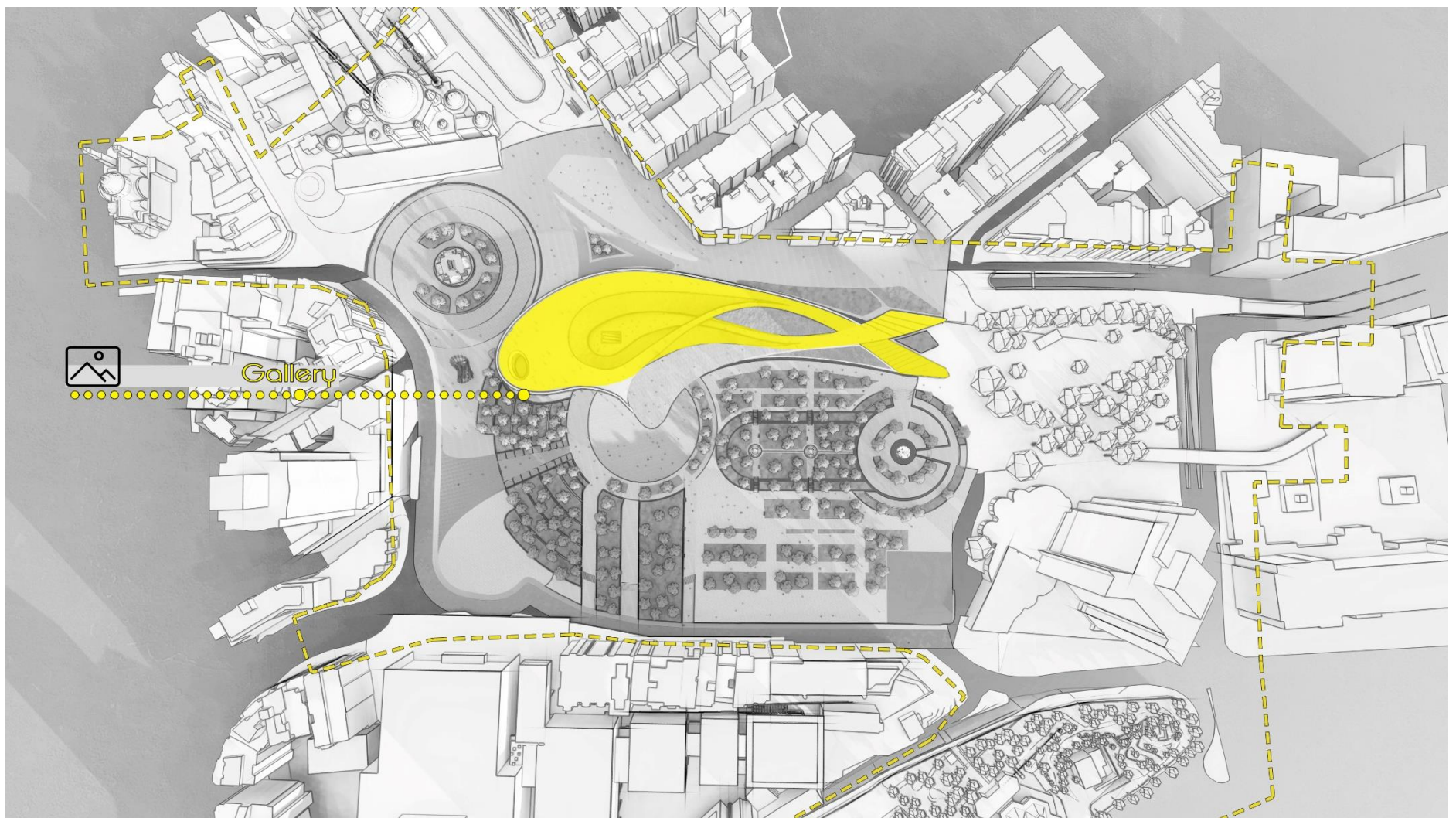
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Drawing 01: Overview of the proposed concept



3) Proposed amphitheatre, 6) 360 degrees viewpoint of Gallery, 7) Circular flow of water, 8) Metro Station

Diagram A: Location of Taksim Gallery



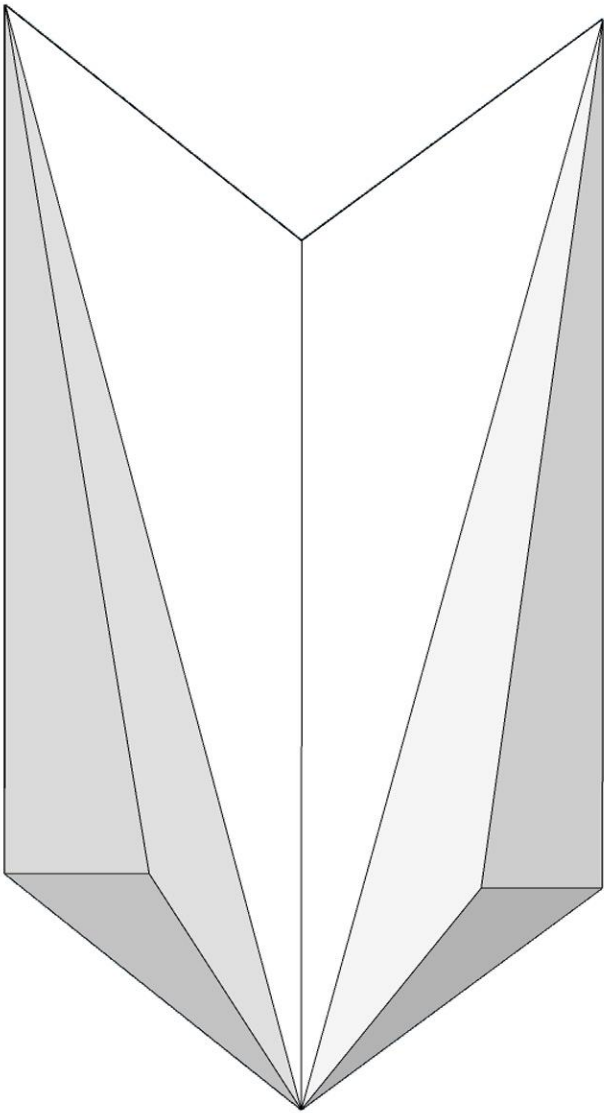
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Drawing 02: The parametric façade of the proposed Gallery



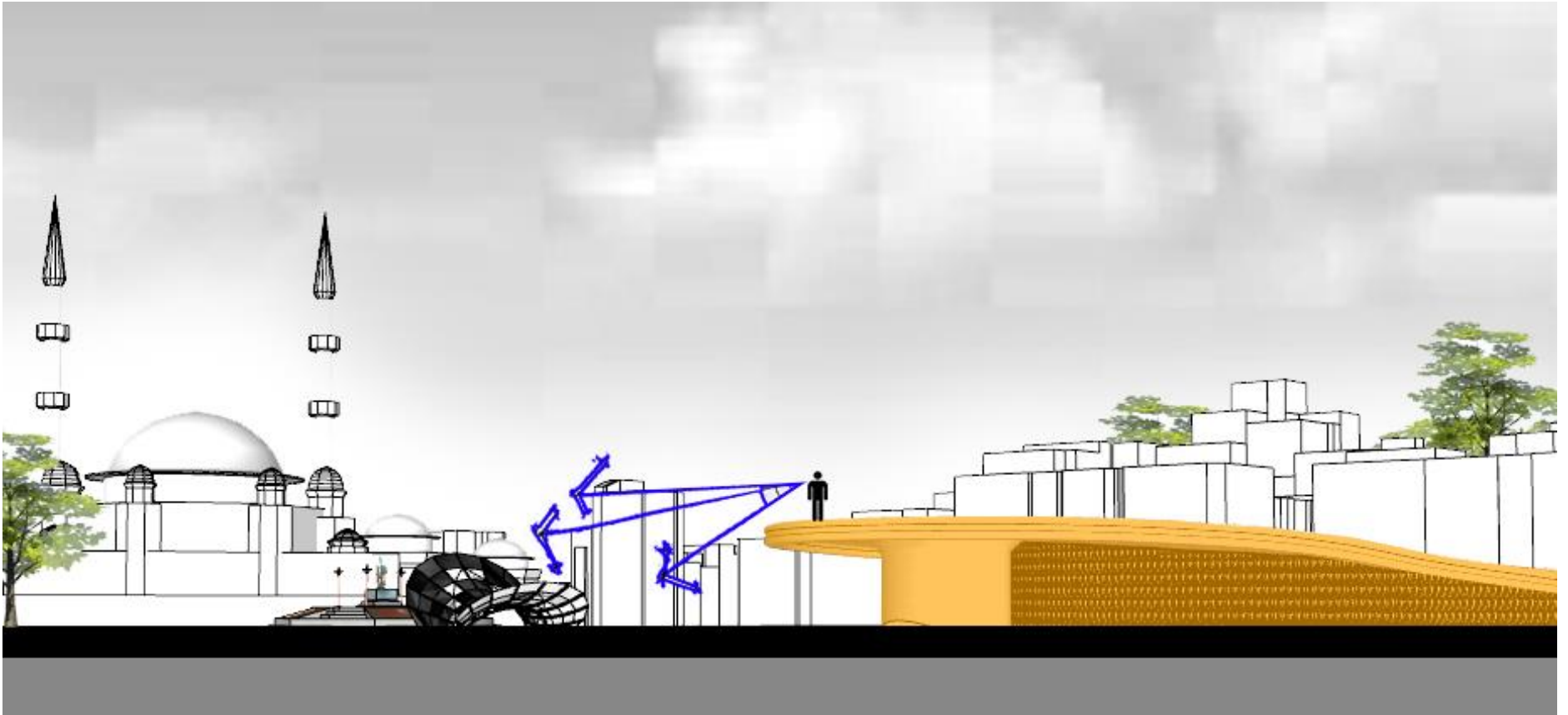
Diagram B: Detail of the tulip form used in the design of the parametric façade and the Gallery



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Diagram C: 360 viewpoint



The design of the Gallery follows the principle of enriching a collective spatial memory. This means value the important socio-cultural achievements that unfolded at Taksim. We envision Taksim as playing a central role in the city and invigorating the quality of life, cultural flows and entanglements between Taksim, Beyoğlu and Şişli districts and İstanbul.

Drawing 03: Perspective over the Gallery



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Drawing 04: Taksim Gallery viewpoint (6)



1) Republic Monument

Drawing 05: Close-up on Taksim Gallery viewpoint (6)



7) Circular flow of water surrounding the Gallery, 8) Metro Station

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The prime element guiding our methodological approach is to design Taksim in a way that meets the needs and aspirations of those interacting with the Square throughout 24 hours. This permanent usage of Taksim brings both, economic-oriented revenues but also ecological challenges, due to traffic congestions, current absence of trees and vegetation, which are fundamental for mitigating biodiversity loss. Furthermore, preserved natural landscapes amenities as urban green parks as Gezi Park, green areas in Squares work as sources of wellness and urban dwellers who live near green spaces are less likely to die early (v). Involving sensitivities of citizens in the co-design of nature-based solutions in public spaces strengthens democracy, overcomes power imbalances and enhances ties within communities and gives residents a sense of ownership over their local environments, all while tackling the negative effects of climate change. Reversing the current high rates of loss is paramount. Supporting growing of global carbon pools in healthy soils and vegetation reduces the amount of carbon in the atmosphere. There is also momentum and scientific information to implement nature-based solutions in the design of Taksim, together with a design attracting and retaining people to meet, debate, progress and play, including children (Drawing 06; Diagram D).

Drawing 06: Taksim as an inclusive and interconnected Square



Diagram D: Proposed location of children's playground



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Living in cities such as Istanbul offers many economic benefits. However, the concentration of human activities also creates environmental stressors with severe influence on people's health and well-being. Public spaces play a role in overcoming these social and environmental constraints of living in cities; they are also important in generating social interaction, helping to develop strong bonds and emotional attachments between people and spaces (vi). This shapes our understanding of Taksim as a Square of encounters of different social groups living in the city that is social, economic and ecologically sustainable (**Drawing 07**).

Drawing 07: Proposed greenery



8) Metro Station

The proposed Taksim Gallery strengthens the social cohesion between Taksim with the surrounding dense commercial streets, businesses, transportation network, Atatürk Cultural Centre and places of worship. The slope of the Gallery is soft, making it suitable for the elderly, wheelchairs, those with reduced self-mobility and baby carts (**Drawing 08; 09**). This is in line with our core goal of designing Taksim that 'leaves no one behind' as stated in the Sustainable Development Goals. For the inside of the Gallery, we propose a multifunctional space composed of small stores which can be used for trade, but fundamentally for educational and cultural purposes serving the local community and visitors. The design of the interior is under elaboration.

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Drawing 08: Perspective over Gallery, amphitheatre and redesign of Gezi Park stairs (9)



Drawing 09: Amphitheatre and Gezi Park stairs (9)



Pedestrian and cycling paths will be colour distinctive. Street lighting will be incorporated at the ground to illuminate the both paths at night. A uniform distribution of street lighting will provide a stronger sense of safety and security, mentally and physically. The elevation of the Taksim Gallery supports the principle of a multifunctional Square with easy access to the Metro Station while contributing to safety and security (**Drawing 10**).

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Drawing 10: Interior of Taksim Gallery with easy access to Metro station



8) Metro Station

Specifically, the elevation of the Gallery enforces safety and contributes to reduce crime, in line with Jane Jacobs's 'Eyes on the Street' and the principles of mix-used in public spaces (vii) (Drawing 11). We are planning to relocate flower and simit sellers to a specific location in the Square (Diagram E).

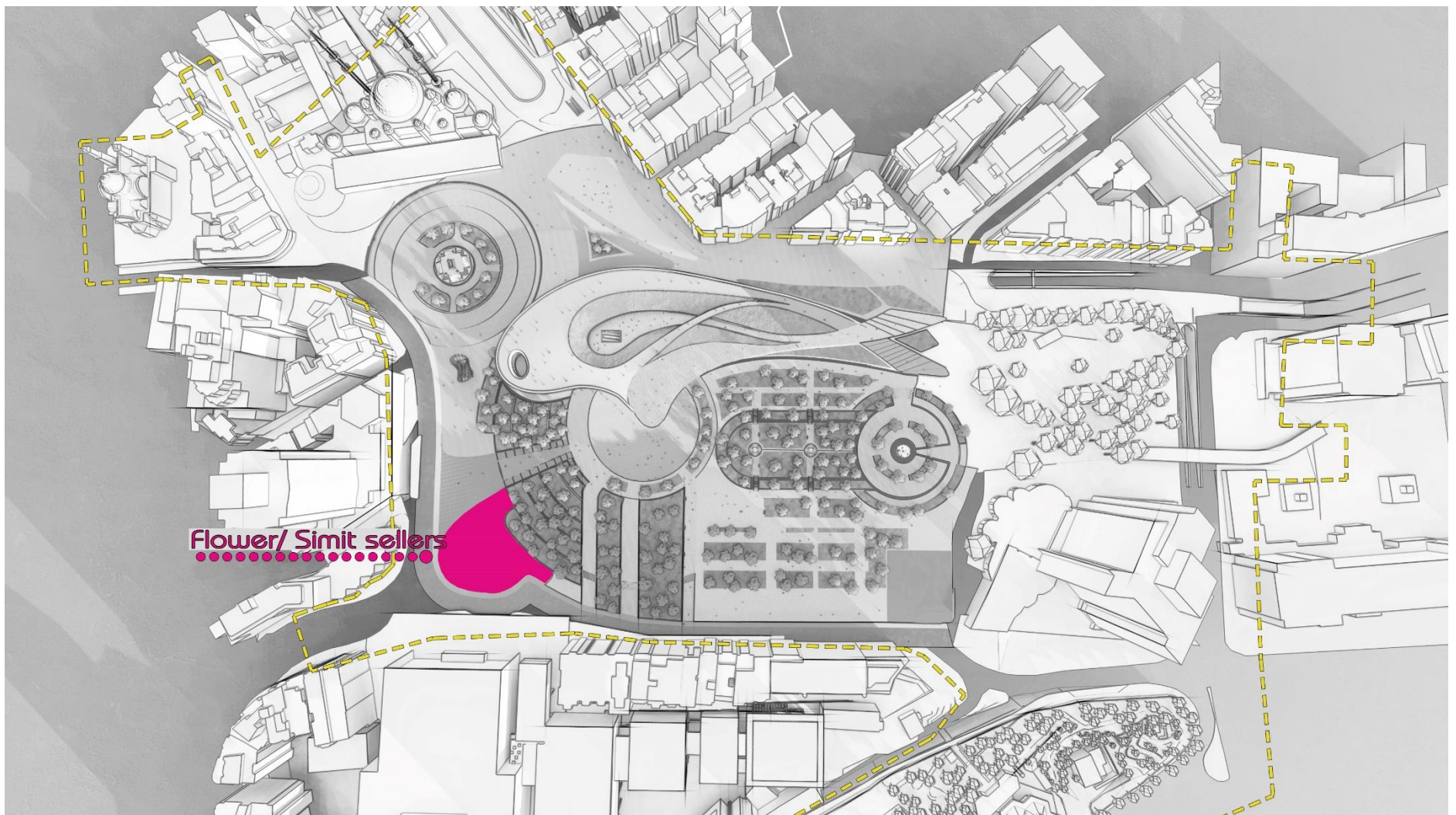
Drawing 11: Interior of Taksim Gallery



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Diagram E: Proposed location for flower and simit sellers



In our design, there is a strong presence of water representing a function of Taksim when it was first designed that is the distribution of water. By enhancing the element of water, we revive less vivid identities and narratives; increasing, thus, a collective spatial memory about the origins of Taksim and the surrounding districts (**Drawing 12**; **Diagram F**).

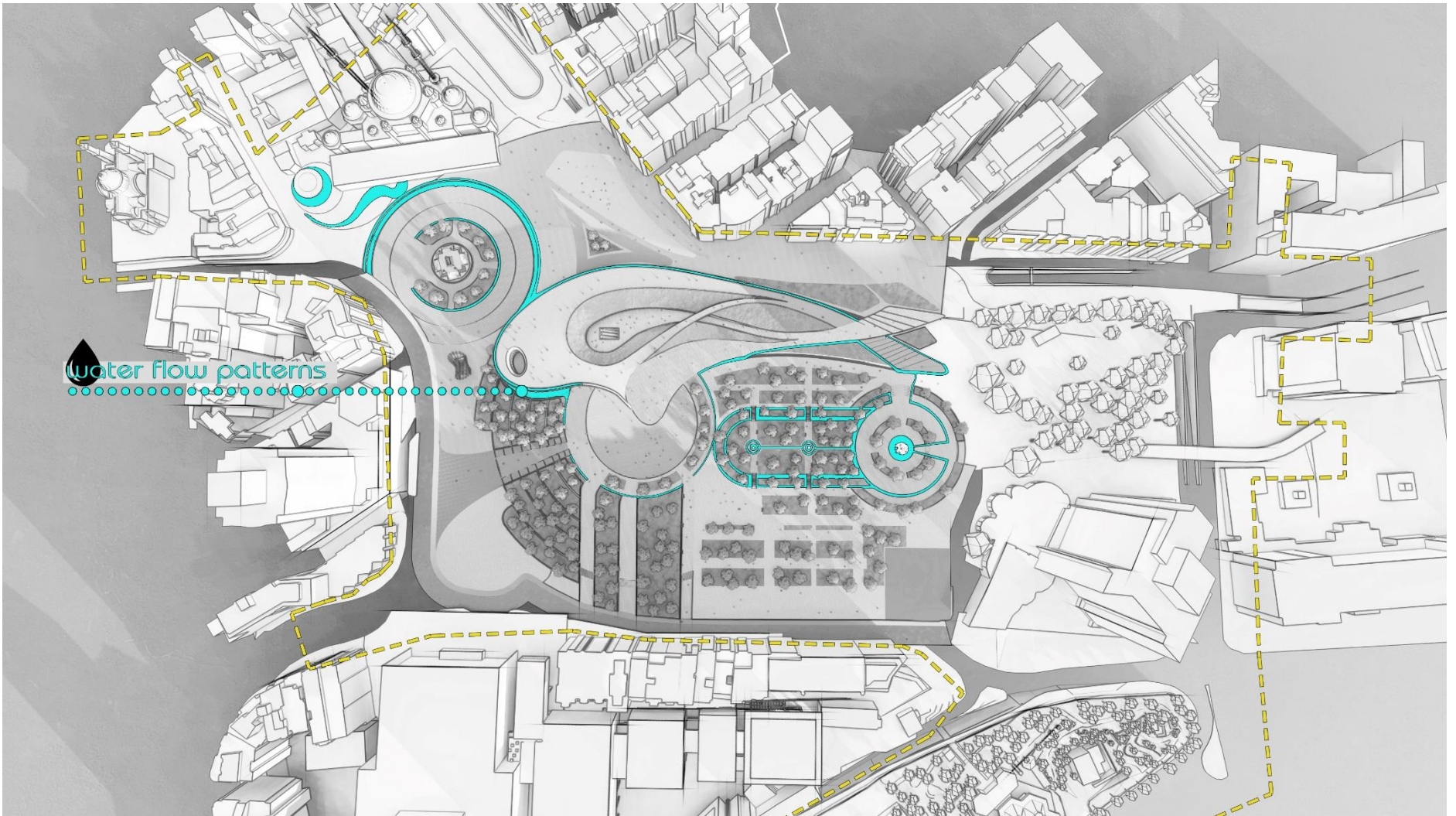
Drawing 12: Liveable and age-friendly Taksim



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Diagram F: Proposed water flow patterns



Preserving local activities will enhance an atmosphere of attachment between the urban dwellers and the Square – a sense of belonging and satisfaction. We intend to maintain the elements that are traditional in Taksim but with a modern, future oriented scenery. We intend to use local materials in the design; this will empower the local economy. These materials will be carefully selected to minimize the ecological impacts. We propose the use of vernacular materials (**Drawing 13**).

Drawing 13: Proposed pavement



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The green system will be widely spread around Taksim Square compensating the current lack of vegetation and trees but by maintaining the existent trees. Geometrically the green area and the Square space has been integrated. The concept of Gallery establish a stronger connection between the Square and Gezi Park. There will also be a green space at the top of the proposed Gallery (**Drawing 14**). Urban greenery in urbanized spaces as Taksim mitigates the urban heat island effect (vii).

Drawing 14: Details of the pavement to use in the redesign of Taksim Square and connection to Gezi Park



About the Gezi Park, we intend to redesign it by including more trees, green areas, new pavement and water flow patterns. We keep the iconic stairs, but propose a redesign. The water flow connects the main elements of Taksim: the Park, the Square and the Republic Monument (**Diagram F**). Ramps facilitate the connection between Gezi Park, the Gallery and the Square (**Drawing 15**; **Diagram G**).

Drawing 15: Overview of Taksim Square and connection to Gezi Park

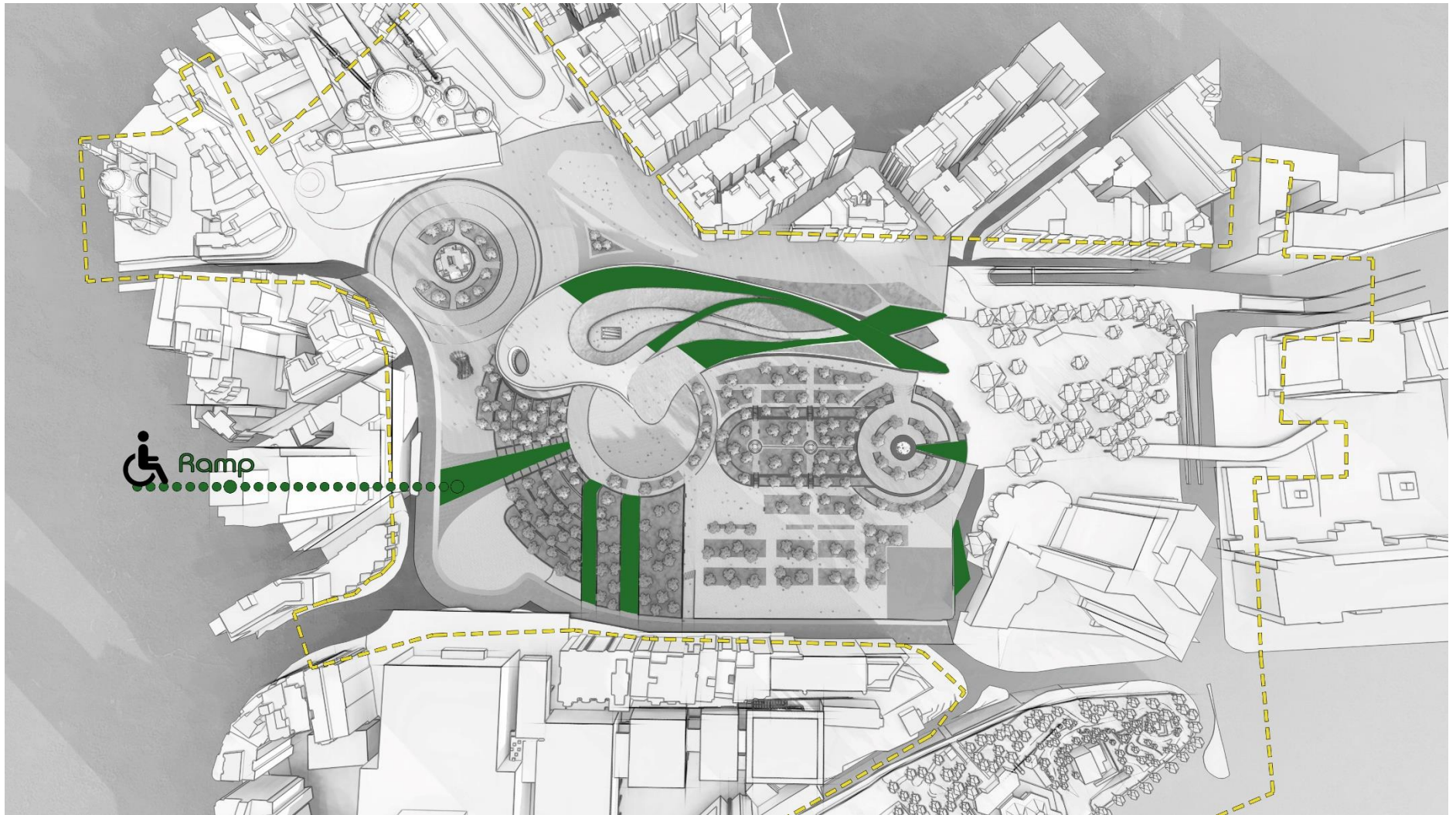


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13

Diagram G: Identification of ramps allowing access to the Square, the Gallery and Gezi Park



Our concept prioritises public transportation and ecological means of mobility such as cycling (**Diagram H**). Our approach facilitates access to the existing Metro Station (**Drawing 16**). The entrances to the station (n. 8 in the drawings) will be renovated. We propose the removal of the existing Police station near Gezi Park because the presence of police gives a sense of insecurity to passer-by people, both visitors and residents. We are expecting Police to use more sustainable means of mobility for law enforcement.

Diagram H: Proposed cycling paths and parking

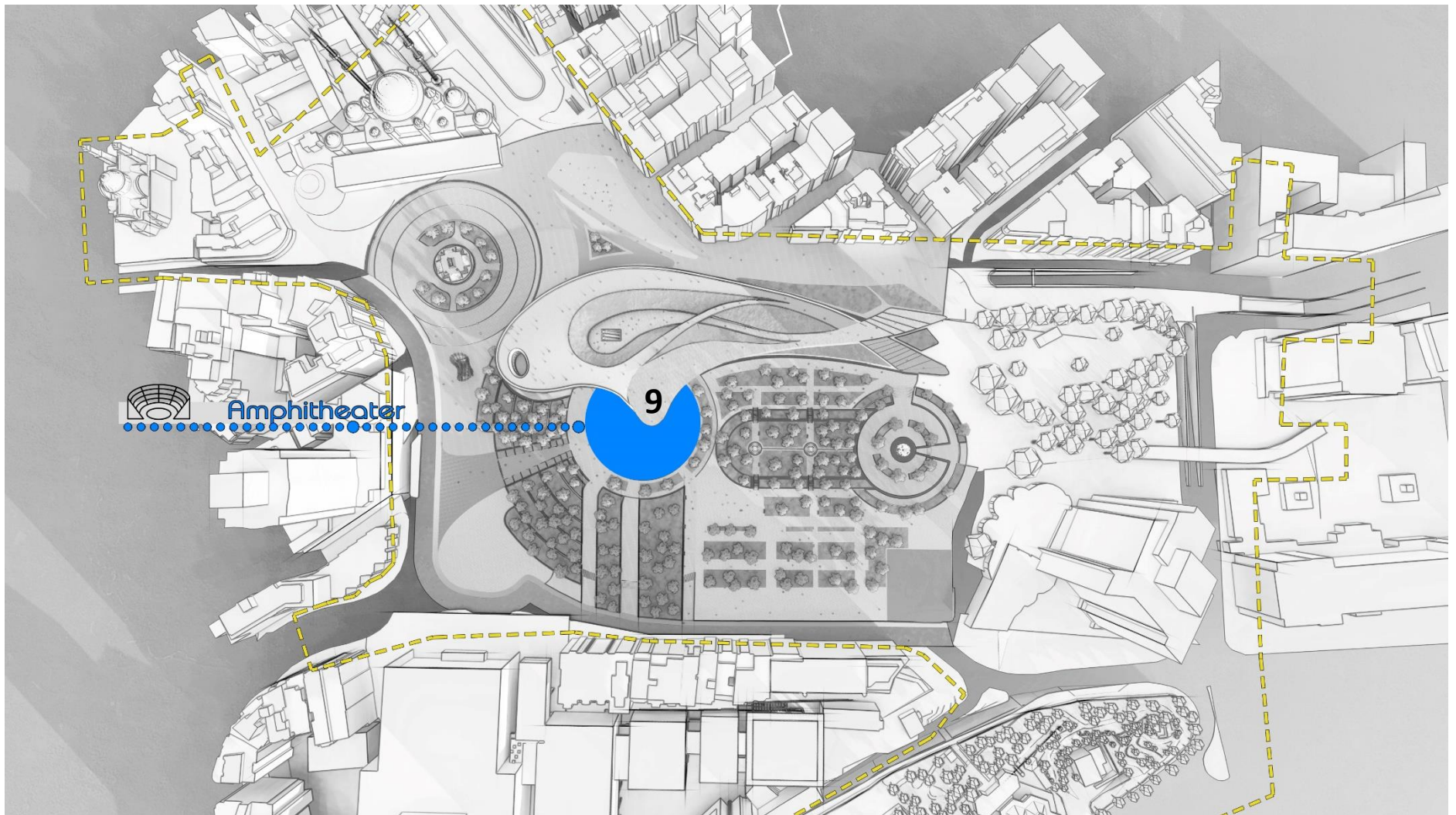


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Our design includes an extension of pedestrian paths. We propose an amphitheatre, which will allow recreational activities, such as street-music concerts and art-based performances within a platform integrated in the overall plan (**Diagram I; J**).

Diagram I: Proposed location of the open-air amphitheatre and Gezi Park stairs (9)

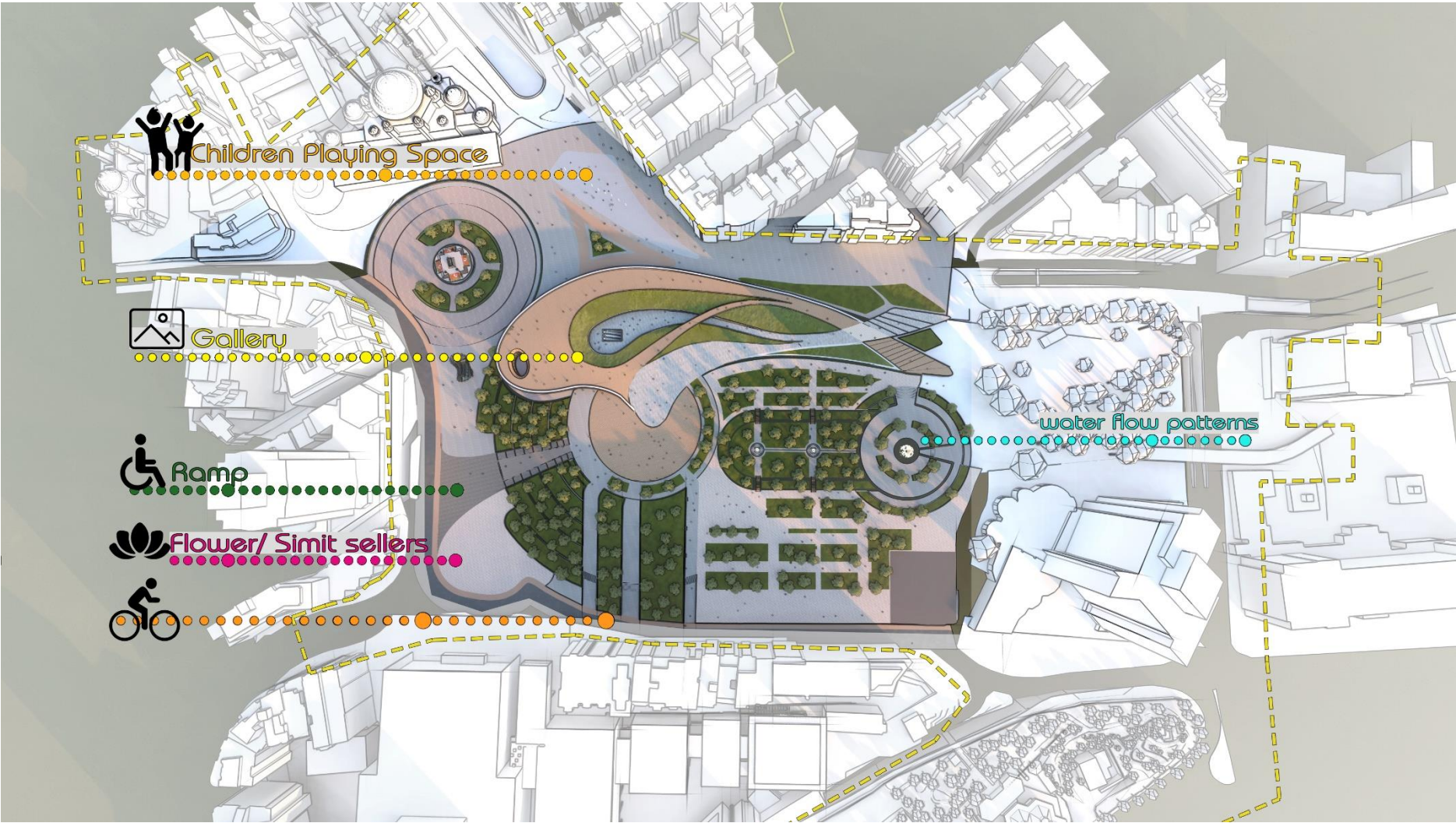


Drawing 16: Overview of Taksim, connection to Metro and Republic Monument



1) Republic Monument, 6) Upper platform of Taksim Gallery, 8) Metro Station

Diagram J: Comprehensive plan



Organization chart

Professions	Roles
Architect	Concept, design, drawings
Architect	Concept, design, technical assistance
Strategic spatial planner	Research, concept and justifications
Urban and regional planner	Research design, concept and project overview
Urban Designer	Concept, design and technical assistance

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(vii) Aboelata, A. et al. (2019). Evaluating urban vegetation scenarios to mitigate urban heat island and reduce buildings' energy in dense built-up areas in Cairo. *Building & Environment*, 166.