

The Global Table:

Cultivating Conviviality through Food, Space,
and Shared Experience



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Cultivating Conviviality through Food, Space,
and Shared Experience

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IL MENÙ

*A thesis served as a shared meal **

APERETIVO 10

I. FOOD, CULTURE & BELONGING

Food as Sustenance and Survival
Food as Cultural Practice and Ritual
Food, Memory, and Emotional Connection
Belonging, Identity, and Social Bonds
Food as Social Connector
Sensory Cues and Everyday Food Practices

ANTIPASTO 30

II. INSTITUTIONAL FOOD PRACTICES

University as a Social and Cultural Ecosystem
Typologies of Campus Dining Spaces
Food Behaviour and Decision Making
Diversity, Food Insecurity, and Student Realities
Inclusion, Comfort, and Wellbeing
Sustainability and Institutional Food Goals

PRIMO 50

III. PRACTICES OF CONVIVIALITY

Space as Mediator of Social Interaction
Commensality as Social Practice
Memory, Place Attachment, and Collective Meaning
Triangulation, Discovery, and Informal Learning
Exchange, Cultural Commons, and Belonging
Ritual, Temporal Rhythm, and Collective Continuity
Stewardship and Governance
Systems of Practice Supporting Conviviality

SECONDO 64

IV. CASE STUDIES

Criteria for Case Study Selection
Farm is a Table | Office of Tangible Space
Symbiotic Urban Furniture | B.L.U.E Architecture Studio
Heytea Daydreamer | A.A.N Architects

CONTORNO 112

V. SITE AND PROJECT

Site and Context: Politecnico di Milano Bovisa
Users and Social Dynamics
Emergence of Momentscapes and The Mound
Design Development
Visuals, Materials and Atmosphere

DOLCE 206

VI. BEYOND THE TABLE

Systems of Practice
Limitations and Future Directions
Final Conclusion
Bibliography
List of Figures
Acknowledgements

*ABSTRACT

This thesis reimagines the food experience within the Politecnico di Milano Bovisa-Durando campus as a shared and sensorial landscape that encourages cultural exchange, social connection, and sustainable awareness. While food is central to everyday student life, campus dining environments often function as efficient service areas where eating becomes fast, isolated, and detached from spatial quality. The absence of places to pause, gather, or linger limits the social and cultural potential of meals. In response, the research explores how design can align with the university's food policies and sustainability goals to support a community-driven food environment.

Food operates as a cultural language through which people recognize one another and form a sense of belonging. Shared meals historically create dialogue, trust, and collective identity, yet within contemporary academic environments this potential is rarely supported spatially. The university therefore requires environments that consciously enable conviviality which are spaces where different individuals can remain together without obligation. Architecture, in this context, acts as a mediator and not directing behaviour, but shaping conditions that allow relationships to emerge naturally around everyday rituals.

The project focuses on the existing garden of the Bovisa-Candiani campus and investigates terrain as social infrastructure. The proposal reshapes the ground into sculpted mounds, basins, and circular landforms known as Momentscapes. These formations create informal dining areas, gathering zones, preparation spaces, and places for pause and reflection. Through this approach, the campus shifts from a place of consumption to a place of shared experience. The thesis ultimately proposes that community cannot be designed directly, but the spatial conditions for it can be cultivated. By transforming the garden into a convivial landscape, everyday meals evolve into opportunities for connection, cultural understanding, and more conscious engagement with food.

*ABSTRACT (IN ITALIAN)

Questa tesi reinterpreta l'esperienza del cibo all'interno del campus Bovisa-Durando del Politecnico di Milano come un paesaggio condiviso e sensoriale capace di favorire scambio culturale, connessione sociale e consapevolezza sostenibile. Sebbene il cibo sia parte centrale della quotidianità studentesca, gli spazi di ristorazione universitari funzionano spesso come aree di servizio efficienti, in cui il pasto diventa rapido, isolato e privo di qualità spaziale. L'assenza di luoghi in cui sostare, incontrarsi o permanere limita il potenziale sociale e culturale del mangiare. In risposta, la ricerca indaga come il progetto possa allinearsi alle politiche alimentari e agli obiettivi di sostenibilità dell'università per sostenere un ambiente alimentare orientato alla comunità.

Il cibo opera come linguaggio culturale attraverso cui le persone si riconoscono e costruiscono senso di appartenenza. Storicamente il pasto condiviso genera dialogo, fiducia e identità collettiva, tuttavia negli ambienti accademici contemporanei tale potenzialità raramente trova un adeguato supporto spaziale. L'università richiede quindi ambienti che abilitino consapevolmente la convivialità, ovvero spazi in cui individui differenti possano coesistere senza obbligo di interazione. In questo contesto l'architettura agisce come mediatore: non dirige i comportamenti, ma costruisce condizioni che permettono alle relazioni di emergere naturalmente attorno ai rituali quotidiani.

Il progetto si concentra sul giardino esistente del campus Bovisa-Candiani e interpreta il terreno come infrastruttura sociale. La proposta rimodella il suolo in una serie di rilievi, bacini e forme circolari denominate Momentscapes, che generano aree informali per il consumo del cibo, spazi di incontro, zone di preparazione e luoghi di pausa e riflessione. Attraverso questo approccio il campus si trasforma da luogo di consumo a luogo di esperienza condivisa. La tesi sostiene infine che la comunità non possa essere progettata direttamente, ma che possano essere coltivate le condizioni spaziali affinché essa emerga. La trasformazione del giardino in un paesaggio conviviale consente ai pasti quotidiani di diventare occasioni di relazione, comprensione culturale e maggiore consapevolezza verso il cibo.



I

FOOD, CULTURE AND BELONGING

Food is among the most fundamental elements of human existence. It sustains biological life, shapes cultural traditions, mediates social relationships, and evokes emotional memory. From early childhood to adulthood, from private homes to public institutions, eating accompanies almost every phase of human development. Yet, despite its centrality, food is often treated as an ordinary and self-evident activity, rarely examined in its full social and spatial complexity.

Anthropological and sociological research has long emphasized that eating is never a purely biological act. As Fischler (1988) observes, humans are “omnivorous” beings whose food choices are guided not only by nutritional needs but by cultural rules, moral values, and emotional associations. What people eat, how they prepare food, where they consume it, and with whom they share it are shaped by social structures, historical contexts, and collective identities. Food practices therefore function as a language through which individuals express belonging, distinction, care, and memory. Family recipes transmit heritage across generations. Festival meals reinforce communal bonds. Everyday lunches organize work and study rhythms. Even casual snacks shared between friends carry symbolic meaning.

In contemporary urban societies, food has become increasingly mediated by institutional systems and globalized supply chains. Universities, workplaces, and public facilities often provide standardized meals designed for efficiency and affordability. While such systems ensure accessibility, they may weaken the experiential and relational dimensions of eating. Students may eat alone, quickly, and without emotional engagement, reducing meals to functional interruptions within academic routines. At the same time, globalization and migration have diversified food cultures within educational environments. International students bring culinary traditions, dietary practices, and sensory habits that enrich campus life. Food thus becomes a key medium for intercultural exchange and identity negotiation.

This chapter explores food as a multidimensional phenomenon that connects biological necessity with cultural meaning, emotional memory, and social belonging. By examining food as sustenance, ritual, memory, identity, social connector, and sensory experience, it establishes the conceptual foundation for understanding how food-related environments can support conviviality and community formation.

I.I

FOOD AS SUSTENANCE AND SURVIVAL

At its most basic level, food is essential for human survival. It provides the energy and nutrients required for physical development, cognitive functioning, and emotional wellbeing. Eating sustains metabolism, supports growth and repair, and maintains the energy required for movement, attention, and learning. Because eating must happen repeatedly, it becomes one of the most consistent rhythms through which everyday life is organised.

Although eating begins in the body, it quickly affects psychological experience. Meals structure the day through predictability from breakfast, lunch, dinner to breaks between work and this regularity often supports a sense of stability. Food can also influence comfort and mood because familiar tastes and repeated routines provide continuity, especially during periods of stress or transition. Maslow's model depicts physiological needs are the groundwork that allows higher motivations such as belonging and participation to emerge, even though real life does not follow a strict ladder (Maslow, 1943)

Food acts as a social institution because it transforms an individual necessity into a shared event with implicit norms like how long one stays, how attention is distributed, how turn-taking and exchange occur. Shared meals create a low-pressure form of connection because they combine a common activity with time and proximity. Eating together often supports the formation of everyday bonds, friendship, familiarity, and informal community, especially in settings where people come from different backgrounds and may not share other routines (Simmel, 1997).

Food also becomes one of the clearest everyday carriers of identity: it signals where one comes from, what one values, and how one relates to others. Fischler captures this duality by describing food as central to identity because it is incorporated into the self while also expressing collective belonging through shared norms of taste and practice (Fischler, 1988). Historically, the broad shift from survival to culture can be traced through the growth of cooking traditions, routine meal structures, and shared culinary knowledge. Repeated nourishment becomes a shared practice and shared practice becomes cultural continuity.

Spatial conditions influence whether eating becomes a rushed necessity or a moment that can extend into conversation, observation, and lingering. Eating environments are not defined only through visual appearances but also is an embodied multi-sensory experience (Pallasmaa, 1996)

Food as sustenance and survival can therefore be understood as a layered relationship: biological maintenance, psychological regulation, socio-cultural meaning, and spatial conditions that enable or constrain everyday practice. Designing food environments that address nutritional needs while supporting emotional and social wellbeing requires an integrated understanding of sustenance as a lived experience rather than a technical provision.

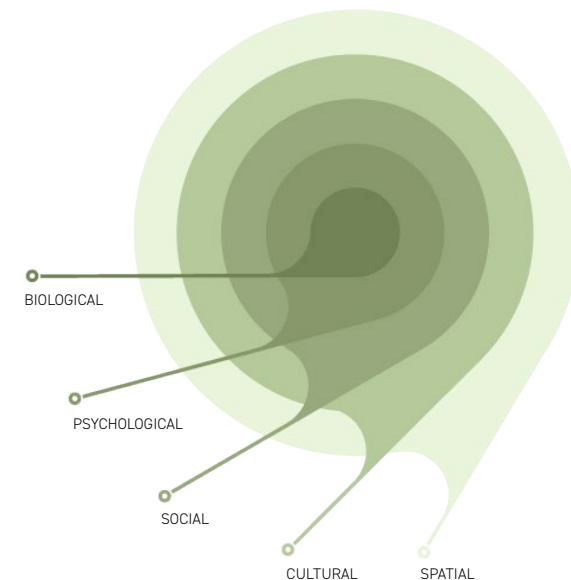


Figure 1.1 Dimensions of food and eating

I.II

FOOD AS CULTURAL PRACTICE AND RITUAL

Beyond its biological function, food operates as a powerful cultural system. Across societies, eating is governed by shared rules, symbolic meanings, and ritualized behaviours that reflect collective values. Anthropologist (Mary Douglas, 1972) argues that meals function as cultural codes, structuring social order through patterns of inclusion, exclusion, and hierarchy.

Every culture develops distinctive practices regarding when, how, and with whom food is consumed. These practices regulate everyday life and reinforce social belonging. For example, in many Mediterranean and European contexts, meals are extended social events characterized by conversation, multiple courses, and communal participation. The ritual of clinking glasses during a toast, often accompanied by direct eye contact, symbolizes mutual respect and shared presence. Failure to perform these gestures may be interpreted as social distance or disrespect.

In contrast, Japanese dining traditions emphasize aesthetic harmony, seasonality, and restraint. Meals are carefully arranged to reflect natural balance, and etiquette prioritizes gratitude and attentiveness. Practices such as saying *itadakimasu* before eating and *gochisousama* afterward express appreciation for both food and those involved in its preparation. These rituals reflect broader cultural values of humility, respect, and collective responsibility.

Indian food practices offer another distinctive example. Traditional meals are often shared while sitting on the ground in circular arrangements, particularly in domestic and ceremonial contexts. This spatial organization fosters equality and intimacy, minimizing physical hierarchy. Eating together from shared dishes emphasizes communal participation and mutual trust. In many regions, meals are accompanied by gestures of hospitality, such as insisting that guests eat more, reinforcing social bonds through generosity.

Religious traditions further shape food rituals. Islamic halal practices, Jewish kosher laws, Hindu vegetarian customs, and Christian fasting periods regulate consumption according to moral and spiritual frameworks (Bell, 1997). These practices integrate everyday eating into broader systems of belief and ethical conduct. Festivals and celebrations amplify ritual significance. Weddings, religious holidays, and national events are often marked by specific dishes prepared collectively. These meals function as symbolic reenactments of heritage and continuity. Preparing and sharing traditional food becomes an act of cultural preservation.

Ritualization also structures everyday routines. Family dinners, weekend lunches, and shared breakfasts create temporal rhythms that organize social life. Through repetition, these practices become normalized and emotionally significant. In public and institutional environments, however, many traditional rituals are disrupted. Standardized food services often lack the spatial and temporal flexibility required for ritual performance. Recognizing the importance of food rituals is therefore essential for designing environments that respect cultural diversity and support meaningful participation.



Figure 1.2 Representation of diverse food cultures

I.III

FOOD, MEMORY AND EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

Food carries an unusual emotional intensity because it is experienced through the body and the senses, and because it is repeated across everyday life. A small sensory detail like steam rising from rice, the bitterness of coffee, the softness of bread, can reawaken a scene that feels distant in time yet immediate in feeling. This capacity is widely described in psychological research and in everyday narratives: food does not only remind people of events; it often reactivates the emotion attached to them (Herz, 2004). In this way, food memory is not simply "remembering what happened." It is a form of recall where sensation, mood, and place return together.

One reason food memories feel vivid is that taste and smell have a direct relationship with emotional processing. Olfactory and gustatory cues are closely connected to neural systems involved in emotion and long-term memory, which helps explain why food-related recollections can appear suddenly and with strong affect (Herz & Engen, 1996). A smell can bypass deliberate thinking and produce a felt response. Comfort, longing, embarrassment, warmth before a person even names what they are remembering. Compared to many visual memories, food memories often have a stronger bodily quality: they are recalled as textures, temperatures, and atmospheres as much as images.

Personal food memories often originate in childhood because early eating is closely tied to routine, care, and emotional safety. Family meals, school lunches, festive dishes, and "comfort foods" become sensory templates that can accompany individuals throughout life, especially during periods of change. Popular culture captures this mechanism clearly in *Ratatouille*, when the critic Anton Ego tastes the dish and is immediately transported back to a childhood scene an example of how flavour and texture can trigger involuntary, emotionally dense recall. These memories do not return as neutral facts but as atmospheres: a room, a relationship, a feeling of being held within a familiar rhythm (Herz & Engen, 1996; Herz, 2004).



Figure 1.3 Recollection of childhood memory (*Ratatouille*, 2007)

For international students and migrants, food memory becomes especially important because relocation interrupts ordinary cues. When language, climate, and social codes change, food is one of the few cultural elements that can be carried, recreated, or searched for. Cooking traditional dishes, looking for familiar ingredients, or gathering around foods from home becomes a way to maintain identity and to regulate homesickness. These practices can also support cultural negotiation: food provides a bridge between private memory and public life, allowing individuals to share something of themselves without requiring full explanation. In diverse university contexts, this becomes a daily strategy for coping, socializing, and maintaining emotional ties to “elsewhere.”

Food memory is not only individual. It also has a collective dimension. Groups form shared narratives through repeated eating situations: annual celebrations, weekly habits, everyday rituals between lectures, late-night snacks during deadlines. Over time, these repetitions attach meaning to particular settings. A bench, a garden edge, a campus café corner, or a shaded patch of grass can become meaningful not because of its form alone, but because it holds recurring social scenes. In this sense, memory contributes to place attachment: the environment becomes emotionally “thicker” as experiences accumulate and are retold. These associations matter in institutional settings like universities because students often inhabit the campus through recurring micro-moments rather than through formal events.

Food memory forms through a simple sequence. An encounter begins with a sensory cue (smell, taste, or the sight of a meal) that attracts attention and signals comfort or familiarity. When a person engages, the cue becomes an experience through participation: eating, sharing, talking, or lingering. Through emotion, repetition, and multisensory intensity, the moment leaves an imprint, attaching meaning to both the food and the setting. Later, a similar cue activates recall, where the memory returns as a felt atmosphere often bringing back people, place, and emotion together.

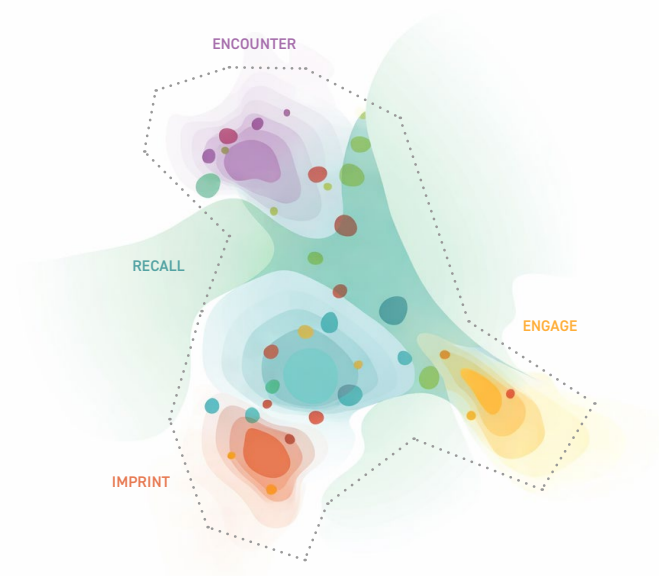


Figure 1.4 Food Memory Cycle

I.IV

BELONGING, IDENTITY AND SOCIAL BONDS

Food practices play a central role in shaping personal and collective identity. What individuals eat, how they prepare food, and with whom they share meals communicate social position, cultural affiliation, and personal values. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) argues that taste is not merely a matter of individual preference, but a socially constructed system shaped by class, education, and cultural capital.

From childhood, individuals learn food preferences through family environments, social norms, and cultural exposure. These preferences become embedded within self-identity and influence later behaviour. For example, vegetarianism, religious dietary restrictions, organic consumption, or traditional cooking practices often reflect ethical, spiritual, or cultural commitments.

Food also functions as a symbolic boundary between groups. Certain dishes, ingredients, or eating styles may be associated with specific communities. While these distinctions can strengthen internal cohesion, they may also produce exclusion. Belonging therefore depends on the ability to navigate both familiarity and difference. Commensality, or eating together, represents one of the most powerful mechanisms for producing belonging. Fischler (2011) emphasizes that shared meals symbolize acceptance and trust. Being invited to eat with others signifies social recognition, while exclusion from shared meals may reinforce marginalization.

Food is central to both collective identity (groups define themselves through eating patterns) and individual identity (people are formed through what they incorporate, materially and symbolically) (Fischler, 1988). This dual scale is especially relevant on campuses where students shift between multiple identities national, linguistic, disciplinary, social and where belonging often depends on small daily interactions rather than formal membership.

In multicultural environments, food becomes a primary medium for negotiating identity. International students often introduce traditional dishes to peers as a way of expressing cultural heritage. Cooking and sharing food enable individuals to represent themselves beyond stereotypes and linguistic limitations. At the same time, institutional food systems may constrain identity expression by offering limited dietary options. Standardized menus may neglect cultural diversity, reinforcing feelings of invisibility. Inclusive food environments must therefore accommodate varied practices and preferences.

Belonging is reinforced through repeated participation. Regular encounters in shared food spaces gradually transform strangers into acquaintances and acquaintances into friends. Through these processes, individual identities become embedded within collective networks. Designing environments that support diverse food practices and encourage shared participation contributes to social integration and emotional security.

I.V

FOOD AS SOCIAL CONNECTOR

Across cultures, food serves as one of the most reliable tools for creating and maintaining social relationships. Anthropologists and sociologists describe shared meals as fundamental mechanisms for building cooperation, empathy, and trust (Simmel, 1997). Eating together creates structured opportunities for interaction. Sitting around a table establishes physical proximity and visual contact, encouraging conversation and attentiveness. The rhythm of serving, eating, and clearing plates provides natural pauses that facilitate dialogue. Even informal food-sharing functions as a social connector. Offering a snack, sharing coffee, or exchanging homemade food communicates goodwill and openness. These gestures often initiate friendships and reinforce existing relationships.

In academic environments, food-related gatherings play a crucial role in shaping peer networks. Study groups, club meetings, project discussions, and celebrations frequently revolve around meals. Such occasions foster collaboration and mutual support. Food also mediates emotional support. During periods of stress, such as examinations, deadlines, or personal difficulties, shared meals provide comfort and reassurance. Preparing or receiving food becomes an expression of care.

In many cultures, hospitality is expressed primarily through food. Guests are welcomed with elaborate meals, and hosts demonstrate generosity through abundance. These practices reinforce social hierarchies and moral values related to respect and responsibility. Contemporary digital communication has reduced opportunities for face-to-face interaction. Social media, online learning, and remote work have transformed social patterns. In this context, shared food experiences remain among the few practices that consistently bring people together physically. Public food spaces that support lingering, conversation, and flexible use enhance these social functions. When designed thoughtfully, they become platforms for friendship, collaboration, and emotional connection.



Figure 1.5 Dining Table Artwork (Salini Perera)

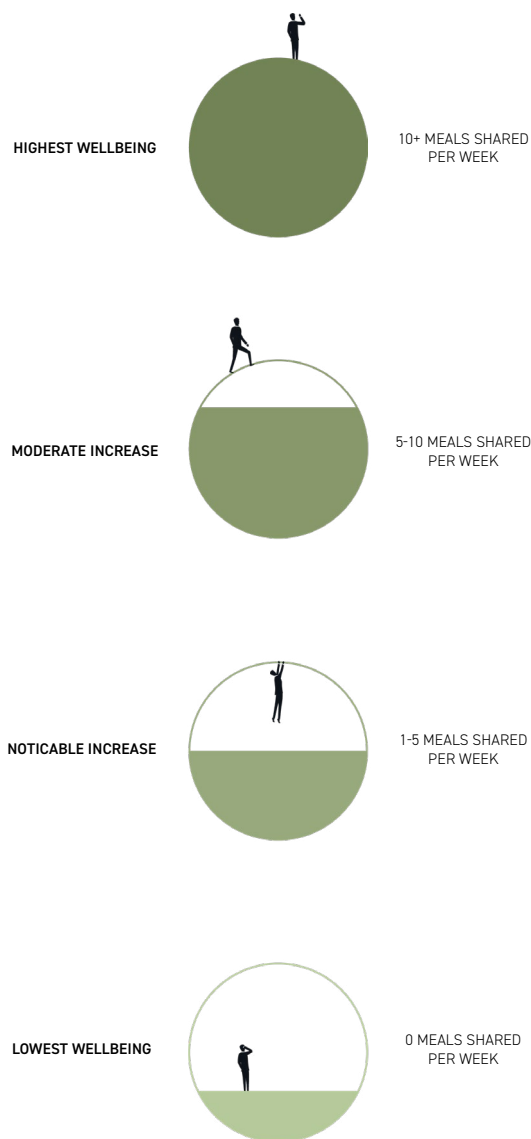


Figure 1.6 Representation between shared meals and wellbeing

Beyond cultural symbolism and social bonding, recent global research demonstrates that shared eating practices are directly associated with measurable psychological wellbeing. The World Happiness Report (2025) identifies meal sharing as one of the most reliable behavioural indicators of social connection across cultures because it is an observable and repeatable everyday action rather than a subjective perception of belonging (De Neve et al., 2025).

Using survey data from more than 150,000 participants across 142 countries, the study found that the number of meals people share with others strongly predicts life satisfaction, positive emotions, and reduced negative emotions. Individuals who shared even one meal per week reported higher life evaluations than those who ate all meals alone, and wellbeing continued to increase progressively as the number of shared meals increased (De Neve et al., 2025).

Importantly, the relationship remained significant even after controlling for income, employment, education, age, and household size, suggesting that the benefits of shared meals are not merely economic or demographic but inherently social and experiential (De Neve et al., 2025).

Across regions and cultures, people who regularly share meals experience:

- Higher life satisfaction
- Stronger positive emotional states
- Lower levels of loneliness and negative affect
- Increased social support and reciprocity

This evidence reinforces the idea that eating together is not simply a leisure activity but a recurring micro-ritual that reinforces belonging and psychological stability. Spatial environments that enable casual, frequent and inclusive food encounters therefore function as everyday infrastructures of mental wellbeing rather than optional amenities.

I.VI

SENSORY CUES AND EVERYDAY FOOD PRACTICES

Eating is a multisensory experience involving taste, smell, sight, touch, and sound. These sensory dimensions strongly influence perception, satisfaction, and emotional response. Psychologist (Charles Spence, 2017) demonstrates that food experiences are shaped as much by environmental conditions as by flavour itself.

Visual appearance creates expectations before tasting. Colour, arrangement, and lighting affect perceived quality and appetite. Sound also influences experience: the sizzling of food, background noise, or quiet atmospheres alter emotional tone. Texture and temperature contribute to comfort and pleasure. Smell plays a particularly important role. Aromas activate memory and anticipation, preparing the body and mind for consumption. Environmental scents can influence mood and social behaviour. Tactile engagement is often overlooked in Western dining traditions, yet it remains central in many cultures.

In Indian cuisine, eating with hands is considered an integral sensory and philosophical practice. According to Ayurvedic thought, the five fingers represent natural elements - earth, water, fire, air, and space symbolizing bodily balance (Lad, 2002). Touching food enhances awareness and connection. Japanese dining similarly emphasizes sensory harmony. Attention to texture, temperature, and seasonal variation reflects respect for natural cycles. The careful selection of tableware and materials enhances tactile and visual engagement.

Everyday food practices are shaped by sensory habits developed through cultural learning. Individuals become accustomed to specific flavours, textures, and atmospheres. These habits influence comfort levels and social participation. Institutional environments often neglect sensory quality in favour of efficiency. Harsh lighting, noise, synthetic materials, and strong odors may reduce pleasure and discourage lingering. Such conditions weaken social engagement. Designing food environments that address multisensory experience enhances emotional attachment and social interaction.



Figure 1.7 The Illusion of Taste (Olimpia Zagnoli)



II

INSTITUTIONAL FOOD PRACTICES

Universities are not only institutions of learning; they are complex social ecosystems in which academic, cultural, and emotional lives intersect. Students do not merely attend classes and complete assignments; they inhabit campuses for extended periods, forming relationships, routines, and identities. Within this environment, food plays a central role in shaping everyday experience.

From early morning coffee to late-night study snacks, from formal cafeterias to informal gatherings in corridors and gardens, eating structures daily rhythms. Food spaces become sites of encounter, reflection, stress relief, and celebration. Yet, despite their importance, university food environments are often designed primarily for efficiency, cost management, and logistical convenience.

Recent research highlights that campus dining systems influence student wellbeing, academic performance, and social integration (Ahn & Davis, 2020; El Zein et al., 2018). Food insecurity, cultural exclusion, and lack of informal gathering spaces can negatively affect mental health and sense of belonging. Conversely, supportive food environments can foster resilience, collaboration, and community engagement.

This chapter examines university food practices as spatial, social, and institutional systems. It analyses how dining typologies, accessibility, diversity, sustainability, and wellbeing intersect within campus environments. By situating food within the broader university context, the chapter establishes the conditions that motivate the design intervention developed in later chapters.

II.I

THE UNIVERSITY AS A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM

Universities function as miniature cities. They contain housing, workplaces, recreational spaces, commercial services, and cultural institutions within a relatively compact territory. Students, faculty, staff, and visitors interact daily, creating dense social networks shaped by institutional structures and spatial organization. Scholars describe campuses as “learning landscapes” where formal education is complemented by informal social learning (Temple, 2008). Corridors, courtyards, libraries, and cafeterias become sites of knowledge exchange beyond classrooms. These spaces facilitate peer support, interdisciplinary interaction, and identity formation.

Food environments are central to this ecosystem. Cafeterias, cafés, vending areas, and outdoor eating zones operate as social hubs. They enable encounters between students from different disciplines, years, and cultural backgrounds. Through repeated interactions, these spaces contribute to community cohesion. However, not all students experience campus life equally. Commuters, international students, part-time workers, and financially constrained individuals often navigate campuses differently. Limited time, resources, or cultural familiarity may restrict their participation in social activities (Low, 2011).

Institutional policies also shape social dynamics. Meal plans, opening hours, pricing strategies, and vendor selection influence who uses food spaces and how. When these policies prioritize efficiency over inclusivity, they may unintentionally reinforce social divisions. Moreover, academic pressure and competitive environments can reduce opportunities for informal interaction. Students may prioritize productivity over social engagement, eating alone or skipping meals. This pattern can weaken community bonds and increase isolation. Understanding universities as social ecosystems highlights the need to design food environments that support not only physical nourishment but also emotional wellbeing and social connection. Food spaces should function as transitional zones where academic intensity is balanced by informal interaction and restorative experiences.

Approvvigionamento pubblico e privato nelle aree urbane



The research further emphasizes participatory processes involving students, staff and stakeholders as essential to creating lasting food environments, demonstrating that when people contribute to shaping food spaces, they develop attachment and collective responsibility toward them (Fassi, 2024). Consequently, the university dining environment should be understood not merely as a functional service but as a cultural interface where everyday interactions construct community identity and social cohesion.

II.II

TYPES OF CAMPUS DINING

University food environments take diverse forms, reflecting institutional priorities, cultural contexts, and economic constraints. These spaces can be broadly categorized into several typologies, each offering distinct social and spatial qualities.

Centralized Cafeterias

Central cafeterias are the most common dining typology. They serve large numbers of students through standardized menus and fixed schedules. Their design emphasizes circulation efficiency, capacity, and cost control. Seating is often arranged in rows or clusters, prioritizing turnover. While cafeterias ensure accessibility and affordability, they may limit social engagement. High noise levels, uniform furniture, and rigid layouts discourage prolonged interaction. Students often treat these spaces as transitional zones rather than social destinations.

Commercial Cafés and Franchises

Many campuses host branded cafés and food outlets. These spaces offer variety and perceived quality but are usually more expensive. They attract students seeking comfort, familiarity, or status-oriented consumption. Commercial cafés often provide more intimate atmospheres, softer lighting, and flexible seating. As a result, they function as informal study and meeting spaces. However, economic barriers may restrict access for some students, reinforcing social stratification.

Informal Eating Areas

Informal eating zones include corridors, stair landings, libraries, and outdoor benches where students consume packed lunches or takeaway food. These spaces emerge through appropriation rather than formal design. Although lacking infrastructure, informal areas often support spontaneous social interaction. Their flexibility allows users to adapt space according to need. However, limited shelter, seating, and hygiene facilities constrain comfort and inclusivity.

Residential Dining Facilities

Student housing often includes shared kitchens and dining rooms. These environments support domestic-scale food practices, encouraging cooking, sharing, and experimentation. They play a crucial role in community building among residents. Yet, residential facilities vary widely in quality and availability. Overcrowding, inadequate equipment, or cultural conflicts may hinder positive experiences.

Outdoor Food Spaces

Gardens, courtyards, and terraces increasingly serve as eating areas, especially in Mediterranean climates. Outdoor spaces provide psychological restoration and social openness. They support informal gatherings and sensory engagement. However, many campuses underutilize outdoor potential due to maintenance concerns, seasonal limitations, and lack of infrastructure.

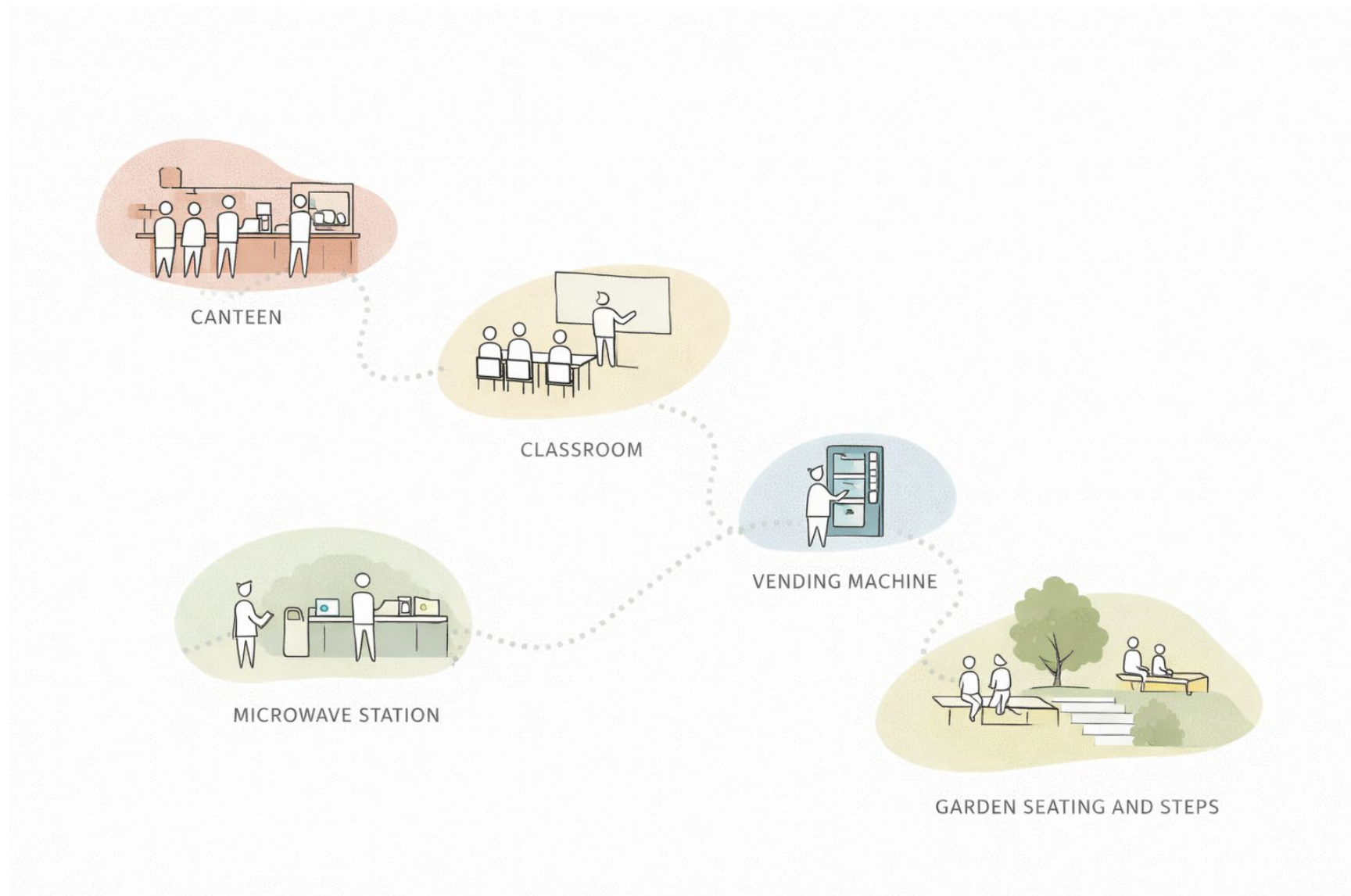


Figure 2.2 Flow and movement between campus

II.III

FOOD BEHAVIOUR AND DECISION MAKING

Within university settings, food choice is often interpreted as a personal decision guided by taste, preference, or nutritional awareness. Contemporary food-environment research, however, situates eating behaviour within a socio-ecological framework, where individual decisions are shaped by overlapping layers of influence like personal, social, institutional, environmental and systemic operating simultaneously (Turner et al., 2018). Students therefore do not simply select meals; they respond to cues embedded in the campus food ecosystem. Eating becomes a continuous negotiation between agency and structure, where behaviour emerges from the interaction between human needs and environmental conditions.

At the individual level, hunger, habits and prior experiences guide immediate food decisions. Much student eating behaviour follows routine rather than deliberate evaluation, with individuals repeatedly selecting familiar foods in familiar locations at predictable times. Academic rhythms reinforce these habits: lecture schedules dictate meal timing, deadlines alter appetite patterns, and cognitive fatigue encourages energy-dense or comforting foods. Emotional states including stress, anxiety, isolation or celebration further influence consumption, frequently overriding nutritional intentions (Macht, 2008). Eating thus functions not purely as nourishment but as mood regulation and cognitive coping. What appears as preference often reflects the management of time, attention and mental effort.

These individual responses are activated by the surrounding environment. The campus food setting structures encounter before preference forms. Visibility of counters, circulation routes between classrooms, waiting time, and seating availability determine what students notice and whether they remain in a space. Research shows that proximity, convenience and order of exposure significantly affect consumption regardless of prior intention (Sobal & Wansink, 2007; Wansink, 2010). The environment does not eliminate choice but quietly prioritizes it. A vending machine along a daily path becomes habitual behaviour, whereas a comfortable communal table encourages extended presence. The university food environment therefore acts as a form of "choice architecture," guiding behaviour without explicit instruction.

Social dynamics further shape eating patterns. Students modify pace, portion size and food variety depending on companions, typically eating more slowly and diversifying intake during shared meals (Herman et al., 2003; Sobal & Nelson, 2003). Shared eating synchronizes schedules, anchors friendships and reinforces belonging. In multicultural campuses, food also mediates identity: familiar dishes provide psychological comfort while shared dishes enable cultural exchange (Bisogni et al., 2002). Social eating increases wellbeing and reduces perceived stress (Dunbar, 2017). Consequently, the absence of communal spaces does not only reduce interaction; it alters dietary behaviour itself by shifting eating toward functional and isolated consumption.

Institutional structures extend these behavioural influences. Opening hours, pricing strategies, menu cycles and service logistics shape temporal eating rhythms. Students adapt routines to institutional food schedules rather than the reverse, forming patterns around the availability of services. These institutional decisions operate within broader supply chains, policy frameworks and cultural norms that determine what food is provided and valued. Individual choice therefore occurs at the smallest scale of a coordinated system.

Accessibility and affordability strongly condition how students engage with this system. For many, food decisions are constrained less by preference than by economic pressure and time limitations. University dining systems commonly rely on standardized menus and fixed service hours to ensure efficiency, but this predictability can reduce flexibility for diverse needs. Rising tuition, housing and living costs limit disposable income, making price a primary determinant of selection. Students facing financial constraint frequently prioritize low-cost, calorie-dense foods over nutritional quality (El Zein et al., 2018). Prepaid meal plans may also produce inequality: those able to pay upfront gain reliable access to structured dining, while others depend on vending machines or off-campus fast food. Such disparities influence not only diet quality but participation in social eating environments.

Time scarcity intensifies these patterns. Academic workload, commuting and part-time employment reduce opportunities for slow meals. Students often eat between classes, alone and rapidly, transforming eating into a functional task. Queue-based service, disposable packaging and rigid seating arrangements further encourage turnover and discourage lingering. The design of service environments thus supports speed over sociability, reinforcing solitary consumption habits.

Accessibility also involves physical and cultural inclusion. Students with disabilities may struggle to navigate crowded cafeterias or access suitable seating, while international students may encounter unfamiliar foods or institutional procedures. Inclusive environments require varied service formats, adaptable layouts and culturally diverse offerings. By addressing economic, temporal and spatial barriers simultaneously, universities can support dignity, participation and wellbeing.

Understanding eating behaviour through this layered socio-ecological perspective reframes campus food spaces as behavioural environments rather than service facilities. Students are not merely consumers selecting meals; they are participants within a structured ecosystem where spatial configuration, social interaction and institutional organization continuously shape decisions. Designing university dining environments therefore means designing behaviour influencing how students gather, how long they remain, what they explore and how experiences are remembered. Food becomes not only sustenance but a medium through which routine, community and wellbeing are constructed.

II.IV

DIVERSITY, FOOD INSECURITY, AND STUDENT REALITIES

University populations are increasingly diverse in terms of nationality, socioeconomic background, religion, and lifestyle. This diversity enriches campus culture but also generates complex challenges for food provision.

Food insecurity has emerged as a major issue within higher education. Studies show that a significant proportion of students experience uncertainty regarding access to sufficient, nutritious food (Ahn & Davis, 2020). Financial instability, housing costs, and limited employment opportunities contribute to this condition. Food insecurity affects academic performance, mental health, and social participation. Students facing hunger or nutritional deficiency may experience fatigue, anxiety, and reduced concentration. They may also withdraw from social activities involving food, reinforcing isolation.

Cultural diversity further complicates food access. International students often encounter unfamiliar ingredients, preparation methods, and meal schedules. Dietary restrictions related to religion or health may not be adequately accommodated. For example, halal, kosher, vegetarian, vegan, and allergy-sensitive options may be limited or inconsistently available. This lack of representation can undermine cultural identity and emotional comfort. Social stigma often prevents students from seeking assistance. Food banks, subsidies, and support programs exist on many campuses, yet utilization remains low due to fear of judgment. Creating discreet and inclusive support systems is therefore essential.

Diversity also influences social interaction. Students may gravitate toward culturally familiar groups, reducing cross-cultural exchange. Food environments that encourage intercultural participation can help bridge these divides. Recognizing student realities requires moving beyond average user models. Effective food systems must address varied economic capacities, cultural expectations, and emotional needs.

II.V

INCLUSION, COMFORT, AND WELLBEING

Food environments play a significant role in shaping student wellbeing. Beyond physical nourishment, these spaces influence mental health, emotional stability, and social belonging. Environmental psychology demonstrates that spatial qualities such as lighting, acoustics, materiality, and layout affect stress levels and mood (Ulrich et al., 2008). Harsh lighting, noise, and overcrowding may increase anxiety, while natural elements, soft materials, and visual openness promote relaxation.

Comfort also involves social safety. Students are more likely to remain in spaces where they feel accepted and respected. Experiences of discrimination, surveillance, or exclusion reduce willingness to participate. (Low et al., 2005) emphasize that public spaces are never neutral. Design choices reflect institutional values and influence who feels welcome. Seating arrangements, signage, and behavioural norms shape patterns of use and exclusion.

In university dining contexts, inclusive design includes providing varied seating types, quiet zones, group areas, and accessible facilities. Such diversity accommodates different personalities, cultural norms, and emotional states. Food spaces also function as informal support environments. Students often share concerns, seek advice, and build friendships during meals. These interactions contribute to emotional resilience.

Mental health challenges among students have increased globally. Anxiety, depression, and burnout are widespread. Spaces that encourage rest, reflection, and gentle social interaction can mitigate these pressures. Integrating food environments with green spaces, daylight, and flexible seating enhances restorative potential. When students associate dining areas with comfort and care, they are more likely to engage socially and maintain healthy routines.

II.VI

SUSTAINABILITY AND INSTITUTIONAL FOOD GOALS

Sustainability has become a central concern in higher education. Universities increasingly commit to environmental responsibility, ethical sourcing, and waste reduction. Food systems play a crucial role in achieving these objectives. Institutional dining contributes significantly to carbon emissions, water consumption, and waste production. Packaging, food waste, and transportation generate substantial environmental impact (Garnett, 2011).

Many universities have introduced initiatives such as local sourcing, plant-based menus, composting, and reusable containers. These programs aim to reduce ecological footprints and promote responsible consumption. However, sustainability efforts often focus on technical solutions rather than behavioural change. Without student engagement, policies may remain symbolic. Effective sustainability requires integrating environmental values into everyday practices.

Food environments can function as educational platforms. Information displays, participatory gardens, and waste-monitoring systems raise awareness and encourage reflection. When students understand the consequences of consumption, they are more likely to adopt sustainable habits. Social sustainability is equally important. Fair labour practices, ethical sourcing, and inclusive access contribute to institutional responsibility. Sustainable systems must balance environmental, economic, and social dimensions.

Design plays a crucial role in supporting sustainable behaviour. Spatial organization influences waste sorting, food sharing, and resource management. Visible infrastructure makes sustainability tangible and accessible. By aligning food systems with institutional goals, universities can transform dining environments into living laboratories for sustainable living.



III

PRACTICES OF CONVIVIALITY

Conviviality refers to the everyday processes through which people create relationships, shared meanings, and a sense of belonging within common spaces. It does not emerge spontaneously, nor is it generated solely through architectural form. Instead, conviviality develops gradually through repeated social practices that are supported by physical settings, cultural norms, and institutional structures.

In food-related public environments, conviviality is closely connected to acts of gathering, sharing, observing, and participating. These acts are often informal and unplanned, yet they play a fundamental role in shaping social life. Social practice theory emphasizes that such everyday activities are sustained when material arrangements, competences, and shared meanings are aligned (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012). Similarly, urban sociologists and public space researchers argue that social vitality depends on how spaces enable people to encounter one another naturally and comfortably (Whyte, 1980; Oldenburg, 1999).

Rather than understanding conviviality as a subjective atmosphere or temporary mood, this chapter approaches it as a structured outcome of interconnected systems. These systems guide how people use space, how they relate to others, and how they construct collective identities. Through food-related practices, conviviality becomes embedded in daily routines and spatial habits.

This chapter therefore investigates conviviality as a set of socially produced practices. It draws upon theories of public life, commensality, place attachment, ritual interaction, and commons governance to identify the mechanisms through which community is formed and sustained. The aim is to establish a conceptual framework that can later inform spatial design strategies.

III.I

SPACE AS MEDIATOR OF SOCIAL INTERACTION

Spatial mediation refers to the capacity of the physical environment to regulate proximity, visibility, orientation, and duration of encounter without verbal coordination. Rather than directing behavior through instruction, the environment guides interaction by shaping what feels comfortable, possible, or natural. In shared eating settings, this mediation determines whether individuals remain isolated occupants or gradually become participants in a collective presence.

Human interaction is strongly influenced by distance and orientation. (Hall, 1966) demonstrated that interpersonal relations correspond to measurable spatial ranges: intimate, personal, social, and public. A dining environment that offers only one fixed distance forces users into either excessive closeness or complete separation. By contrast, a range of positions allows individuals to select their level of engagement. People often begin at the margins, observing before participating, and gradually reposition themselves. Space therefore supports a progression from coexistence to interaction.

Visibility further shapes this transition. When activities are partially visible, they invite curiosity without pressure. (Whyte, 1980) observed that people prefer locations where they can watch others before deciding to join them. In food environments, seeing others eat, prepare, or converse communicates permission to do the same. Complete exposure can feel intrusive, while complete enclosure discourages participation; intermediate conditions encourage voluntary engagement. Open edges, level changes, and shared thresholds mediate this balance by allowing presence without obligation.

Centrality also plays a significant role. Objects placed at a shared focal point operate as what (Gehl, 2011) calls contact points: neutral reasons to gather that reduce social hesitation. Interaction becomes secondary to the activity, allowing strangers to relate indirectly through a common reference. Movement and continuity determine the duration of occupation. Spaces that lie along natural paths enable brief pauses; those slightly removed allow longer stays. (Alexander et al., 1977) describe this as a gradient of publicness, where areas transition from circulation to settlement. Spatial mediation therefore operates as a silent negotiation between environment and user.

III.II

COMMENSALITY AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

Commensality, defined as the practice of eating together, represents one of the most powerful mechanisms for social bonding. Across cultures and historical periods, shared meals have functioned as rituals of inclusion, cooperation, and trust (Fischler, 2011; Grignon, 2001). From an anthropological perspective, eating together symbolizes acceptance and mutual respect. The act of sharing food creates temporary communities in which participants synchronize their actions, rhythms, and attention. These moments promote empathy and emotional connection, even among individuals who may not share close personal relationships.

Sociological research further suggests that commensality structures social hierarchies, group identities, and norms of behaviour. Who eats with whom, where, and under what conditions reflects broader social dynamics. In informal public settings, however, commensality can also reduce social barriers by offering neutral grounds for interaction. In university contexts, shared eating often occurs in transitional spaces: between classes, during study breaks, or before social events. These moments provide opportunities for spontaneous gatherings and cross-cultural encounters. International students, in particular, may use food-sharing as a way to express identity and seek connection.

Public dining environments that support commensality transform eating from an individual necessity into a collective experience. When people are encouraged to sit facing one another, share surfaces, and remain in place after meals, food becomes a medium for conversation, reflection, and friendship. Moreover, commensality extends beyond formal meals. Sharing snacks, tasting unfamiliar dishes, or exchanging homemade food are equally significant practices. These everyday gestures reinforce reciprocity and social trust, contributing to long-term community formation.

III.III

MEMORY, PLACE ATTACHMENT, AND COLLECTIVE MEANING

Convivial spaces do not exist only in the present moment; they accumulate experiences over time. Through repeated use, people associate places with personal memories, emotional events, and social relationships. This process creates what environmental psychologists describe as place attachment: the emotional and symbolic bond between individuals and specific environments (Altman & Low, 1992). Place attachment develops through both personal and collective experiences. Individual memories such as studying late with friends, celebrating small achievements, or sharing meals during stressful periods become intertwined with shared narratives. When multiple users associate similar experiences with the same location, a collective memory emerges.

Public spaces that support memory-making allow users to recognize their presence within a larger social history. Placemaking research emphasizes that meaningful places are those where people feel represented and acknowledged (Project for Public Spaces, 2016). These places are not interchangeable; they carry stories, traditions, and emotional significance. Memory in public space is often embedded in subtle ways. It may appear through physical traces, recurring rituals, familiar routes, or shared reference points. Even the repeated arrangement of furniture, habitual meeting spots, or seasonal events can function as mnemonic devices that reinforce continuity.

(Low et al., 2005) emphasize that public spaces actively shape who feels welcome and represented, influencing processes of belonging and exclusion. In university environments, where students frequently arrive and depart, memory plays a crucial role in maintaining social stability. Graduating cohorts leave behind symbolic traces, while new students gradually insert themselves into existing narratives. This layered process transforms space into a living archive of student life.

Furthermore, collective memory strengthens social responsibility. When individuals recognize a space as meaningful and historically shared, they are more likely to respect, protect, and contribute to it. Memory thus supports both emotional belonging and long-term sustainability. By facilitating opportunities for users to inscribe, recall, and share experiences, convivial spaces enable the formation of enduring social bonds.

III.IV

TRIANGULATION, DISCOVERY, AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Social interaction in public space rarely begins without stimulus. People often require a shared point of attention that makes engagement feel natural and socially acceptable. (Whyte, 1980) describes this mechanism as triangulation: a process in which an external element such as an object, display, or activity, connects strangers and initiates communication. Triangulation devices provide neutral topics for interaction. They allow individuals to comment, ask questions, or express curiosity without personal risk. In food-related environments, such devices may include menus, information boards, rotating displays, or shared resources. These elements transform passive co-presence into active engagement.

Discovery plays an important role in sustaining conviviality. When users encounter new information, unfamiliar ingredients, or diverse cultural references, they are encouraged to explore and reflect. This process generates informal learning, which occurs through observation, conversation, and experimentation rather than formal instruction. Environmental psychology suggests that curiosity and novelty stimulate social behaviour by increasing attentiveness and emotional involvement. Spaces that regularly introduce new stimuli prevent routine from becoming monotonous and encourage repeated visits.

In multicultural contexts, discovery also functions as a bridge between different social groups. Learning about unfamiliar food traditions, dietary habits, or culinary practices fosters mutual understanding and respect. These exchanges often occur through everyday interactions rather than structured programs. Importantly, triangulation devices must remain accessible and inclusive. Overly complex or exclusive systems may discourage participation. Effective discovery mechanisms invite contribution from diverse users and allow multiple interpretations.

By embedding opportunities for exploration and dialogue, convivial spaces support continuous social activation. Interaction becomes part of daily routine rather than an exceptional event, strengthening community cohesion.

III.V

EXCHANGE, CULTURAL COMMONS, AND BELONGING

Conviviality is sustained through practices of sharing and reciprocity. Exchange does not only involve material goods, but also knowledge, skills, and cultural traditions. These practices contribute to what scholars describe as cultural commons: shared resources maintained through collective participation (Ostrom, 1990; Foster & Iaione, 2016).

In food-related environments, exchange often occurs through informal gestures: offering snacks, sharing recipes, lending utensils, or introducing traditional dishes. These actions establish trust and signal openness. Over time, repeated exchanges generate networks of mutual support. Anthropological studies emphasize that food exchange functions as a form of social communication. It expresses care, hospitality, and recognition. In diverse communities, such practices help negotiate differences and reduce cultural distance.

Commons-based systems differ from commercial or institutional models. They rely on collective responsibility rather than individual ownership. Their success depends on shared values, transparency, and mutual respect. When properly supported, commons become powerful tools for social integration.

In university settings, where students often experience displacement and cultural transition, exchange practices support emotional security. Sharing familiar food or teaching others how to prepare it allows individuals to maintain cultural continuity while participating in new social environments. Furthermore, exchange encourages active participation. Users are not merely consumers of space, but contributors to its social life. This shift from passive use to active involvement strengthens belonging and reinforces community identity. By supporting shared resources and reciprocal practices, convivial spaces function as platforms for intercultural dialogue and collective ownership.

III.VI

RITUAL, TEMPORAL RHYTHM, AND COLLECTIVE CONTINUITY

Social communities are sustained through repetition. While spontaneous interactions initiate relationships, it is recurring encounters that transform them into stable social bonds. (Collins', 2004) theory of interaction ritual chains explains how repeated gatherings generate emotional energy, solidarity, and shared identity.

Rituals do not require formal ceremonies. They often emerge from everyday routines: meeting for coffee before class, studying together during exams, or gathering for weekly meals. These practices create predictable rhythms that structure social life. Temporal rhythms provide emotional stability. Knowing that certain events or interactions will recur fosters anticipation and comfort. In dynamic environments such as universities, where schedules and populations frequently change, rituals create continuity and familiarity.

Seasonal and cyclical activities also play an important role. Cultural festivals, academic milestones, and collective celebrations reinforce collective memory and reinforce institutional identity. These events integrate individual experiences into broader narratives. Rituals also function as mechanisms of inclusion. New members learn social norms and values through participation. By joining recurring practices, they become recognized members of the community. (Putnam, 2000) argues that declining everyday social participation weakens community bonds, highlighting the importance of shared routines and collective practices.

From a spatial perspective, rituals require supportive environments. Spaces must accommodate gatherings, adaptation, and repetition without excessive restriction. When architecture supports ritual practices, it strengthens social cohesion. In food-related public spaces, rituals associated with preparation, sharing, and celebration transform everyday consumption into meaningful social experience. Through repetition, these practices anchor conviviality in time as well as space.

III.VII

STEWARDSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Convivial spaces do not sustain themselves solely through design; they persist through care, shared responsibility, and collectively understood rules of use. Stewardship refers to the ongoing maintenance, adaptation, and protection of a shared environment, while governance concerns the social agreements that guide behavior within it. In spaces of shared eating, these two dimensions operate together: the place remains welcoming because users participate in its upkeep, and participation becomes possible because expectations are legible and socially reinforced.

Shared food environments often function through informal regulation rather than strict enforcement. Everyday actions like cleaning a table after use, rearranging seating to include others, sharing utensils, or respecting waiting order constitute as common-pool resource governance, where collective benefit emerges through locally understood norms rather than centralized authority (Ostrom, 1990). A dining space, particularly in educational settings, behaves similarly to a commons.

Stewardship further introduces temporal continuity. Users begin to recognize the place as something they return to rather than merely pass through. This perception transforms the relationship from consumption to care. (Oldenburg, 1999) observed that successful informal gathering places develop “regulars” whose repeated presence anchors social life and encourages maintenance without formal assignment. In a campus context, this may appear through students refilling water stations, rearranging furniture after group use, watering nearby planting areas, or informally guiding newcomers about shared practices. Such gestures are minor individually but collectively construct a culture of responsibility.

Within convivial environments, stewardship and governance therefore represent a shared contract between people and place. Through repeated interaction, responsibility becomes habitual rather than instructed.

III.VIII

SYSTEMS OF PRACTICE SUPPORTING CONVIVIALITY

Drawing from the literature discussed above, conviviality in public food spaces can be understood as the result of interconnected systems of practice. These systems organize how people interact, share resources, construct meaning, and assume responsibility within collective environments. Rather than functioning independently, these systems reinforce one another. Spatial conditions influence social behaviour, memory strengthens belonging, exchange encourages participation, and governance ensures continuity. Together, they form an integrated framework through which conviviality is produced and sustained.

<i>System of Practice</i>	<i>Primary Social Function</i>	<i>Key Practices Supported</i>
Spatial Mediation	Regulates intimacy and exposure	Gathering, observing, co-presence
Commensality Infrastructure	Enables social bonding through eating	Sharing food, informal sitting
Memory & Place Attachment	Builds collective identity	Remembering, marking, storytelling
Triangulation & Discovery	Triggers informal interaction	Browsing, recommending, learning
Exchange & Cultural Commons	Supports reciprocity and belonging	Sharing, borrowing, cultural introduction
Ritual & Temporal Rhythm	Sustains social continuity	Repetition, anticipation, seasonal events
Stewardship & Governance	Ensures collective responsibility	Caring, maintaining, organizing

Table 3.1 Convivial Systems of Practice



IV

CASE STUDIES

Conviviality refers to the everyday processes through which people create relationships, shared meanings, and a sense of belonging within common spaces. It does not emerge spontaneously, nor is it generated solely through architectural form. Instead, conviviality develops gradually through repeated social practices that are supported by physical settings, cultural norms, and institutional structures.

In food-related public environments, conviviality is closely connected to acts of gathering, sharing, observing, and participating. These acts are often informal and unplanned, yet they play a fundamental role in shaping social life. Social practice theory emphasizes that such everyday activities are sustained when material arrangements, competences, and shared meanings are aligned (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012). Similarly, urban sociologists and public space researchers argue that social vitality depends on how spaces enable people to encounter one another naturally and comfortably (Whyte, 1980; Oldenburg, 1999).

Rather than understanding conviviality as a subjective atmosphere or temporary mood, this chapter approaches it as a structured outcome of interconnected systems. These systems guide how people use space, how they relate to others, and how they construct collective identities. Through food-related practices, conviviality becomes embedded in daily routines and spatial habits.

The selection of case studies represents a critical step in establishing the relationship between theoretical research and design practice. Rather than functioning as sources of formal imitation, case studies are examined as spatial, social, and organizational experiments that demonstrate how conviviality, food practices, and community engagement can be supported through design.

The chosen case studies were selected based on their relevance to the core themes of food as cultural and social practice, public space as a platform for belonging, and conviviality as a system of everyday interaction. Each project was evaluated not only for its architectural quality, but for its capacity to generate sustained social engagement.



Figure 4.1 Overview of the project

FARM IS A TABLE

Typology	EARTHWORK / DINING SPACE
Location	TREIBER FARMS, NEW YORK
Architect	OFFICE OF TANGIBLE SPACE
Theme	PROCESS-BASED CONVIVIALITY

OVERVIEW

Farm is a Table is an immersive dining installation that redefines the relationship between food, land, and communal experience. Conceived as both an earthwork and a dining space, the project challenges the conventional understanding of “farm-to-table” by collapsing the distinction between production, preparation, and consumption. In this project, the table itself is the farm.

The intervention consists of a long communal table carved directly into the ground, with seating embedded into the earth. Wild grasses, weeds, and flowers grow directly from the table surface, transforming the act of dining into an encounter with the living landscape. Food is not brought from elsewhere it emerges from the very ground that supports the gathering. The event occurred on Treiber Farms on the North Fork of Long Island, New York. September 27, 2025.



Figure 4.2 Aerial view of the project



Figure 4.3 Food presentation integrated with soil and vegetation



Figure 4.4 Participants seated within the excavated ground table

PHILOSOPHY

The conceptual foundation of Farm is a Table lies in rethinking food not as a commodity but as a relational experience. The project draws inspiration from *A New Futurist Cookbook*, a contemporary reinterpretation of the 1932 Futurist manifesto by F. T. Marinetti. While the original manifesto celebrated speed, modernity, and provocation, this reinterpretation redirects those energies toward care, ecological awareness, and social inclusivity.

Rather than spectacle, the project emphasizes attentiveness to soil, to seasonality, and to one another. By embedding the dining experience directly into the landscape, the design invites participants to reflect on food's origin, labor, and ecological context. The tools and platters (made from farm implements) intentionally blur the boundary between functional object and artwork, stressing material continuity from soil → utensil → plate → body.

SPATIAL ORGANISATION

The table sits flush with the ground plane, maintaining continuity of the cultivated surface. Seating is carved directly into the soil, embedding bodies within the terrain and removing the separation between human posture and landscape topography. Linear crop rows guide approach and movement, gradually transitioning participants from observers to occupants. The elongated format avoids a privileged position, so there is no head of the table and orientation becomes lateral rather than hierarchical. Participants face one another across a shared plane, reinforcing dialogue through spatial equality and uninterrupted sightlines across the field.

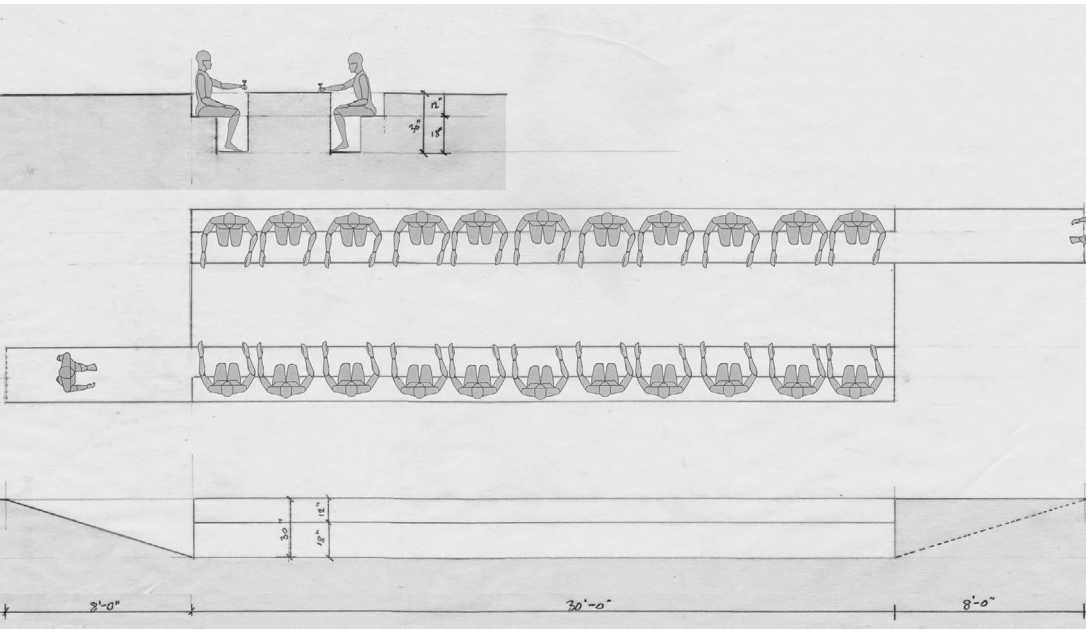


Figure 4.5 Plan and sectional drawing of the project

MATERIALS AND ATMOSPHERE

Material intervention is intentionally restrained. Compacted earth, untreated timber, and adapted agricultural metal form the primary tactile palette. Vegetation grows through the table surface, functioning as an active component of the spatial composition rather than decorative planting. Changes in wind, temperature, light, and smell continuously alter the atmosphere, producing a temporal environment shaped by weather and season. The sensory experience is therefore unstable and participatory: diners remain aware of soil moisture underfoot, insects, and the proximity of cultivation. The landscape operates as an environmental medium rather than a background.



Figure 4.6 Pre-meal preparation of the earth table setting

CONVIVIALITY

Social interaction is structured through shared activity rather than seating proximity alone. Participants observe harvesting, assist in handling ingredients, and collectively follow the preparation process before eating. Conversation emerges around actions like tasting, cutting, passing tools, hence generating slower and more attentive communication. The absence of service hierarchy encourages equal participation, while the shared orientation toward the land produces collective attentiveness. Conviviality here is not only interpersonal but ecological: participants relate simultaneously to each other and to the environment that sustains the meal.



Figure 4.7 Face-to-face communal interaction along linear seating



Figure 4.8 Bodily occupation within the carved terrain section



Figure 4.9 Food presentation integrated with soil and vegetation

RELEVANCE

This case study demonstrates that social cohesion can be generated by sequencing practices across a landscape. It supports the thesis argument that dining spaces should enable preparation, gathering, and reflection rather than only consumption. The project informs the Momentscapes strategy of embedding activity within terrain, particularly the idea that spatial design can choreograph awareness, participation, and memory. The key takeaway is that commensality is strengthened when users become co-actors within the food process rather than passive occupants of seating.



Figure 4.10 Nighttime gathering shaped by candlelit atmosphere



Figure 4.11 Overview of the project

SYMBIOTIC URBAN FURNITURE PROJECT

Typology	TACTILE URBAN INTERVENTION
Location	BEIJING/SHENZHEN, CHINA
Architect	B.L.U.E ARCHITECTURE STUDIO
Theme	INCIDENTAL URBAN INTERACTION

OVERVIEW

The Symbiotic Urban Furniture project explores how everyday circulation spaces can support occupation without losing their primary function of movement. Rather than creating a dedicated plaza, it introduces small attachable elements into leftover street conditions like stair bases, façade edges, guardrails, and pavement margins and providing surfaces for sitting, leaning, placing objects, or briefly eating. These additions extend existing infrastructure so the public realm accommodates behaviors normally pushed into private interiors.

The project understands the city as a continuous social field. By distributing micro-amenities along movement routes, it transforms walking paths into sequences of inhabitable pauses. The furniture does not interrupt circulation but thickens it, allowing different durations of stay to coexist. Individual actions remain minor, yet collectively they generate a constant background level of social presence across the street.



Figure 4.12 Overall spatial system embedded within the existing courtyard



Figure 4.13 Terraced seating supporting simultaneous individual and group use



Figure 4.14 Everyday street appropriation using informal and movable seating outside storefront edge

PHILOSOPHY

The project is premised on a critique of the “smooth city” the contemporary tendency to erase small, textured protrusions that once allowed inhabitants to appropriate street edges for everyday life. Rather than designing grand civic gestures, the studio proposes a mutualistic relationship between furniture and urban fabric: the city supplies structure (steps, rails, columns), the furniture supplies uses (sitting, perching, eating, reading). This symbiosis reclaims the public realm for micro-domestic practices by distributing low-commitment opportunities for occupation across routes of movement. Social life is not manufactured as an event; it is catalysed as a pattern of small acts like a bench for a coffee, a ledge for a lunchbox, a shelf for a map, that collectively re-stitch private routines into public space.

SPATIAL ORGANISATION

The project introduces kit-of-parts that “grafts” onto residual conditions: stair risers become long tables and benches; handrails receive small hanging tabletops; columns are embraced by seating; corners host sheltered nooks. These modules are intentionally heterogenous in scale and posture, from low stools for solitary retreat to long communal tables for group gatherings. This produces a layered gradient of occupation: brief, standing pauses at rail-mounted boards; medium-length perching on step benches; longer stays at communal tables. The spatial logic privileges permeability and choice so that users can move from transit to pause without breaking their route, and so social interactions can expand or dissolve fluidly.



Figure 4.15 Distributed furniture elements enabling flexible gathering configurations within the structural grid

CONVIVIALITY

Users share space without obligation to interact. Individuals occupy recessed areas while groups gather at elevated zones, enabling simultaneous solitude and sociability. The design supports co-presence and awareness of others without enforced engagement, thus creating a comfortable social density. Users appropriate the pieces in creative ways (maps unfolded on long tables, pets nesting in under-seat pouches), indicating the design's success in enabling a repertoire of practices. Conversations emerge naturally while quiet occupation remains respected.



Figure 4.16 Students occupying stepped platforms during everyday activities

MATERIALS AND ATMOSPHERE

Material choices articulate a balance between urban resilience and domestic tactility. Early prototypes used steel and walnut durable structural backbones paired with warmer timber surfaces, while later iterations incorporate laminated bamboo lumber for a natural texture and ecological reading. Surfaces are readable and approachable. Hard, load-bearing components anchor the furniture visibly to infrastructure while wooden seats and soft inserts invite bodily contact. The resulting atmosphere is pragmatic but hospitable and the furniture makes rough urban edges legible as comfortable spots for sun, work, or a quiet pause, and it visually signals availability rather than exclusivity.



Figure 4.17 Modular pegboard wall supporting temporary storage and interaction



Figure 4.18 Long communal tables encouraging shared occupation

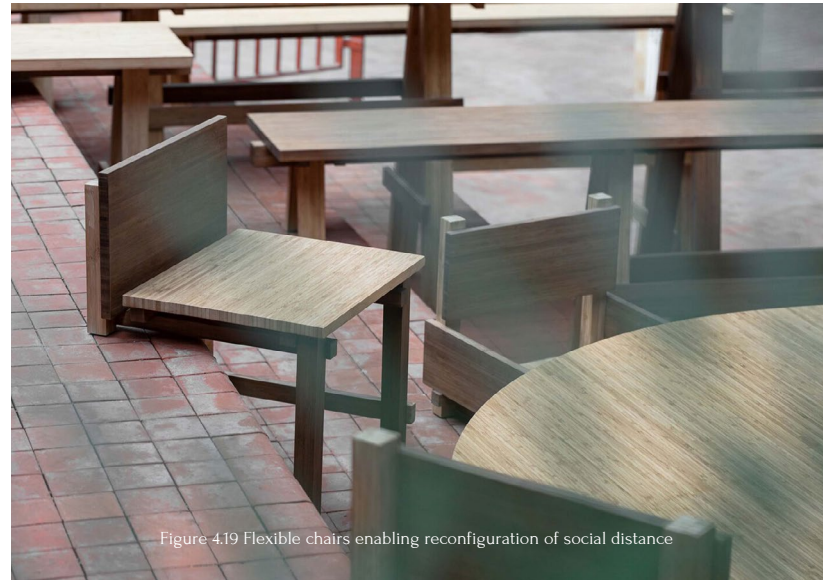


Figure 4.19 Flexible chairs enabling reconfiguration of social distance



Figure 4.20 Furniture attachment integrated into structural railing edge

RELEVANCE

The project provides spatial strategies for overlapping emotional states within one environment. It demonstrates how topography and enclosure gradients regulate social intensity. Using minimal spatial additions, when thoughtfully sited, can catalyse a wide repertoire of uses. The primary takeaway is that conviviality can coexist with reflection when spatial differences allow users to control exposure. The design operates less as an object-based design and more as a behavioural catalyst, where spatial modification is minimal but its influence on everyday social rhythms is continuous and pervasive.



Figure 4.21 Adaptive seating landscape inserted within existing concrete structure



Figure 4.22 Overview of the project

HEYTEA DAYDREAMER

Typology	RETAIL OUTLETS
Location	SHENZHEN/GUANGZHOU, CHINA
Architect	A.A.N ARCHITECTS
Theme	ATMOSPHERIC CO-PRESENCE



Figure 4.23 HeyTea Logo

OVERVIEW

The Heytea Daydreamer series by A.A.N Architects is not a single retail interior but a spatial experiment conducted across three tea shops in Shenzhen and Guangzhou. Each outlet explores how distance between bodies influences social behavior and the idea that different interpersonal distances produce different kinds of communication and relationships. Rather than designing seating as a functional arrangement, the architects design social relationships as spatial form.

The three stores therefore operate like three calibrated environments: collective encounter, relational negotiation, and reflective separation. Across all outlets, the brand moves away from the conventional café logic of dispersed tables and instead constructs continuous landscapes of long tables, flowing surfaces, and sculpted volumes that choreograph how people gather, observe, or remain alone. The project reframes a tea shop as a “third space” where strangers, couples, and groups can coexist without conflict. The architecture offers spatial distances that allow behavior to emerge.

PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Edward Hall classified four interpersonal distances, while Erving Goffman described "meeting" as constant mutual attention in public spaces, underscoring humans as social animals whose group dynamics shape and are shaped by individual positions and spatial scales. Small spaces foster closeness among similar individuals, while larger ones offer inclusivity and diverse communication modes, a relationship ever-present in human activities.

Unlike traditional tea shops with private distributed seating, the Heytea DP123 series explores new-era distances through flexible "sitting down" that supports solo indulgence, couple romance, or group revelry, transforming the venue into a novel socializing paradigm beyond mere appetite satisfaction.

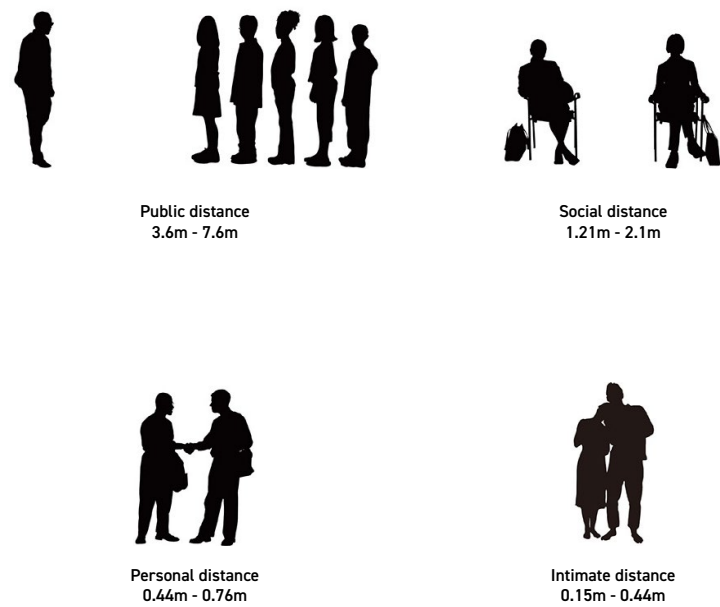


Figure 4.24 Proxemic diagram indicating gradations of interpersonal distance

"BELIEVE IT, YOU WILL MEET."

The first store compresses distance to encourage awareness between strangers. Nineteen small tables combine into one large shared surface, allowing multiple groups to sit facing one another within the same spatial field. People remain part of a larger social environment even while occupying their own place. Privacy and openness overlap, conversations remain local but visibility remains shared. The atmosphere resembles a communal dining hall where interaction is possible but not required.

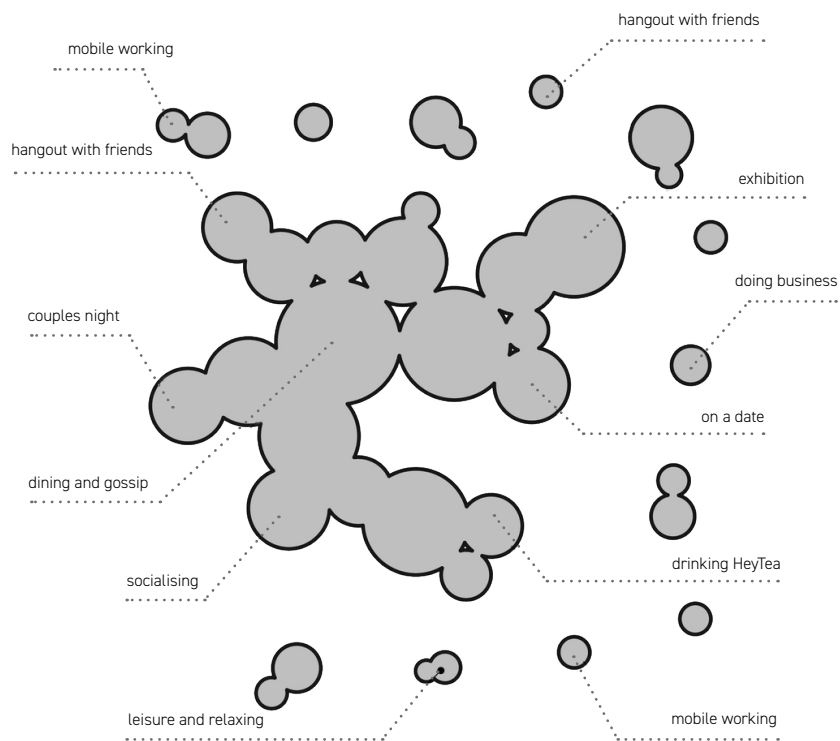


Figure 4.25 Behavioral mapping showing overlapping social activities within shared seating field

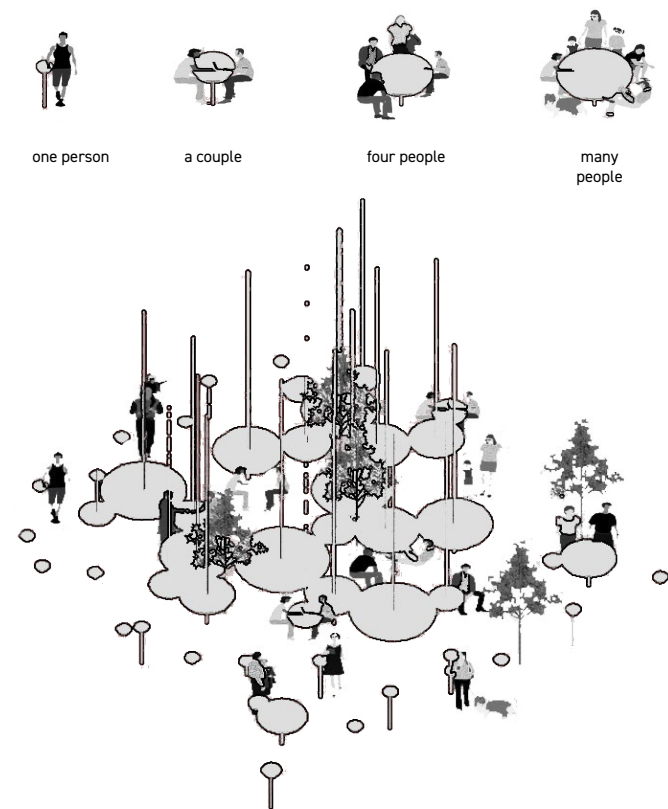


Figure 4.26 Axonometric sequence of table transformation strategy

SPATIAL STRATEGY

Nineteen small tables combine into one large shared table, deliberately dissolving boundaries between groups. Rather than isolated seating clusters, the space produces overlapping territories, face-to-face, side-by-side, and diagonal orientations occur simultaneously. This arrangement allows privacy and openness to coexist: users remain part of a larger social environment even while focusing on their own companions. The strategy replaces separation with controlled exposure. By keeping everyone within one visual plane, the architecture increases awareness between strangers and creates the potential for interaction without enforcing it.

MATERIALS AND ATMOSPHERE

The interior relies on a restrained palette of concrete, steel, glass, and smooth mineral finishes to keep visual focus on human presence rather than decoration. Continuous surfaces reinforce the perception of a shared ground. Lighting is even and open, avoiding pockets of enclosure so the entire space reads as one collective room. The resulting atmosphere is lively yet calm: the material neutrality allows people themselves to become the primary visual elements, strengthening the feeling of being part of a social field rather than occupying a private booth.



Figure 4.27 Top view emphasizing relational voids between tables



Figure 4.28 Central communal table integrating planting and vertical spatial elements

“STREAMS IN THE VALLEY”

The second store introduces curvature to mediate relationships. Inspired by the ancient Chinese cultural practice of *Qu Shui Liu Shang*, a ritual where participants would sit along the banks of a meandering stream and place glasses of wine on trays, letting them drift with the current. When a glass stopped in front of someone, they had to compose a poem or drink the wine. The design reinterprets movement and social exchange through spatial form.

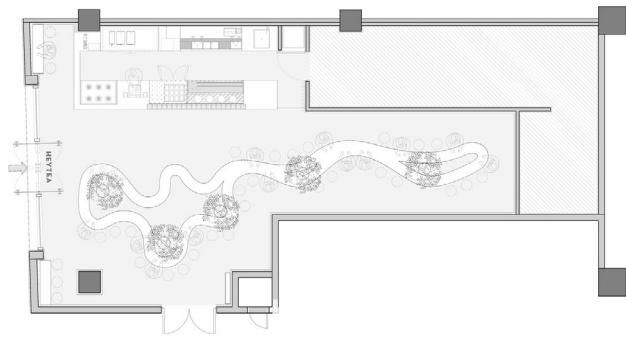


Figure 4.29 Plan of the project

SPATIAL STRATEGY

A continuous meandering table organizes the interior of the shop. Different positions along the curve create varying distances between users, some closer, some farther, allowing individuals to select their comfort level through placement rather than enclosure. The flowing geometry connects all occupants while preventing uniform proximity. Instead of a single social condition, the space offers a gradient: brief encounters near crossings, quieter conversations along the edges, and observation from afar. The architecture therefore choreographs changing social relationships through movement along the curve.

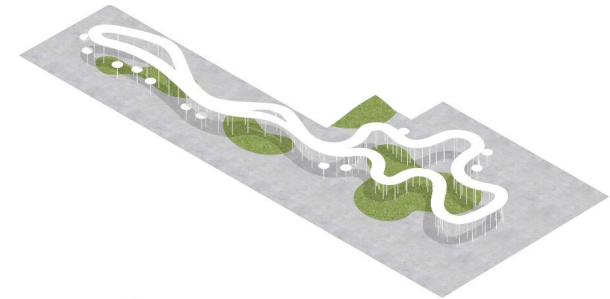
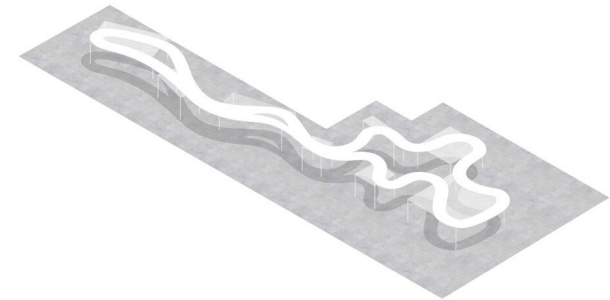
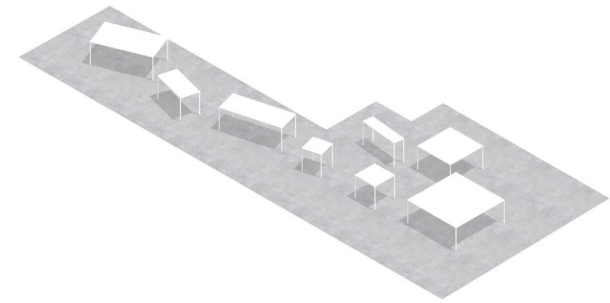


Figure 4.30 Transformation sequence from concept to design

MATERIALS AND ATMOSPHERE

Muted, undulating ceilings created with metal sheets, and soft reflections evoke the imagery of a stream within a valley. Materials remain minimal as concrete and metal surfaces but the continuous forms soften their perception. Lighting and ceiling modulation create a rippled spatial effect, producing a sense of gentle movement across the room. The atmosphere feels more contemplative and the curved geometry breaks the visual field into smaller perceptual zones, allowing conversation without constant exposure while maintaining visual continuity.



Figure 4.31 Linear intimate seating zone beneath reflective ceiling surface



Figure 4.32 Overhead view of continuous serpentine communal table



Figure 4.33 Spatial continuity between service counter and shared seating



Figure 4.34 Interior perspective highlighting fluid tabletop morphology

“BEYOND THE MOUNTS, AND PEOPLE BEYOND”

The third installment of the Daydreamer Project explores how people gather and disperse within a shared environment. A continuous communal table extends through the space, replacing conventional scattered seating and encouraging collective presence. Irregular upheavals atop the table mimic layered hills shrouded in clouds from traditional Chinese ink-wash paintings, functionally sectioning drinkers while a curved, mountain-like ceiling evokes Fu Mi’s Song Dynasty masterpiece Spring Mountain and Auspicious Pines placing guests amid misty valleys, verdant shadows, and contemplative tea sips.

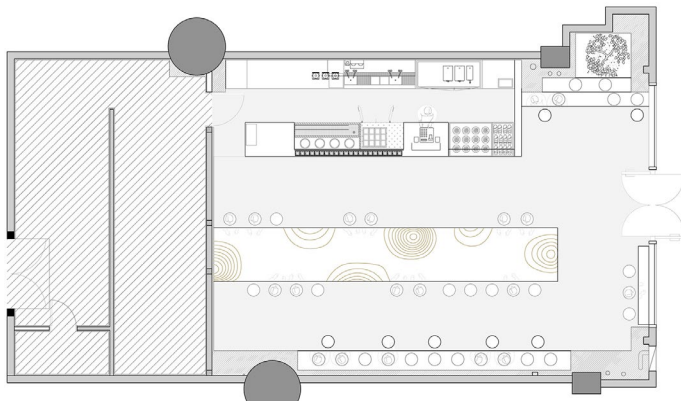


Figure 4.35 Plan of the project

SPATIAL STRATEGY

The table acts as a central organizing element, guiding movement and interaction throughout the interior. Above it, layered architectural forms inspired by traditional Chinese ink landscape paintings create a sense of depth and spatial rhythm. These overhead elements subtly divide the space while maintaining visual continuity.

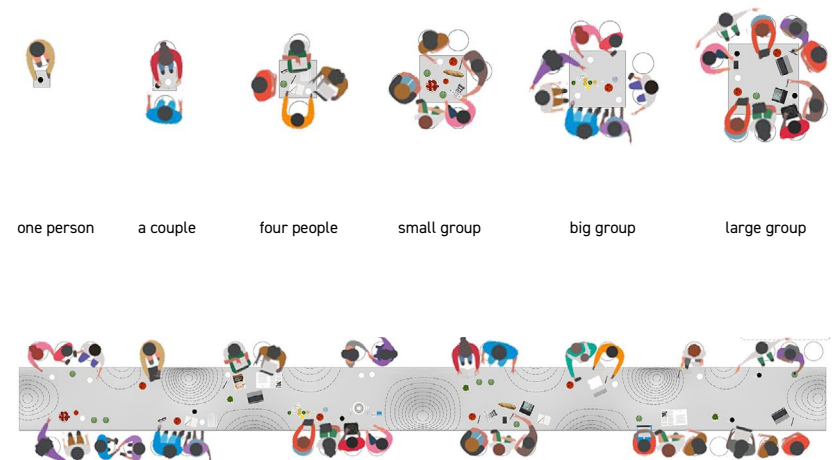


Figure 4.36 Linear behavioral scenarios distributed along the communal table

MATERIALS AND ATMOSPHERE

Concrete and smooth finishes remain consistent with the series but are perceived as softer due to shadow and sectional depth. The segmented light and topography generate intimate pockets of calm within the larger interior. The atmosphere becomes introspective and the space supports quiet occupation and contemplation while still retaining collective identity as a shared tea environment.



Figure 4.37 Service counter framed by rhythmic ceiling structure and flowing seating edge



Figure 4.38 Collective occupation along continuous counter seating



Figure 4.39 Rhythmic ceiling profile mimicking the table creating spatial enclosure



Figure 4.40 Longitudinal interior view emphasizing the overall ambience

RELEVANCE

The Daydreamer series demonstrates that social behaviour in shared environments is shaped less by program and more by calibrated interpersonal distance. Across the three stores, variations in proximity, curvature, and visual interruption produce distinct modes of occupation, awareness, negotiation, and retreat without changing the functional use of the space. The project shows that a single typology can host multiple psychological conditions when spatial continuity is maintained but perception is modulated. The effectiveness of continuous surfaces in supporting coexistence, the role of sectional depth in providing comfort without enclosure, and the ability of form rather than signage to guide behaviour. The overall conclusion is that convivial environments emerge when users can control their level of exposure while remaining part of a shared spatial field.

Figure 4.41 Overhead view revealing clustered seating islands and circulation pockets



V

SITE AND PROJECT

The selection of the site is grounded in the broader research inquiry into food as a social medium. Throughout the study, eating has been understood not only as sustenance but as a cultural practice capable of producing memory, identity, and collective presence. Because such practices rely on diversity and repeated encounter, they are most visible in environments where varied populations overlap within everyday routines. The university campus represents one of the few contemporary settings where individuals of different cultural, geographic, and social backgrounds share time, schedules, and spatial resources on a daily basis. Food therefore becomes a common language through which difference is negotiated and familiarity gradually formed.

Within this context, Milan offers a particularly relevant setting. As an international academic and economic centre, the city concentrates a wide spectrum of cultures and lifestyles, and its institutions attract transient yet recurring populations. Students carry personal food traditions while simultaneously adapting to new ones, producing hybrid habits of eating packed meals, takeaway consumption, shared snacks, and informal gatherings. The campus becomes a microcosm of this urban diversity, where global food cultures are present but not always spatially supported. The coexistence of difference, routine repetition, and temporal overlap positions the site as a fertile ground for observing how convivial relationships emerge through everyday acts of eating.

The background research suggests that conviviality does not arise solely from programmed events or designated dining facilities; it often develops in intermediate situations, pauses between classes, shared benches, improvised seating, and brief exchanges around food. These behaviours indicate a latent demand for environments that acknowledge eating as a social practice rather than an isolated functional activity. The campus is therefore considered not simply as a location but as an experimental field where patterns of gathering, separation, and co-presence can be examined and spatially interpreted.

V.I

SITE AND CONTEXT | MILANO

The project site is located within **Politecnico di Milano | Bovisa-Candiani** campus, a university district developed through the adaptive reuse of a former industrial area (ex-gasworks) and subsequent campus expansion driven by an international competition (1998) that positioned Bovisa as a key node of urban regeneration in northern Milan. Within Bovisa, Politecnico is organized into two main poles: Bovisa Durando (School of Design) and Bovisa La Masa (Engineering and technological innovation).



Figure 5.1 Milan City Map

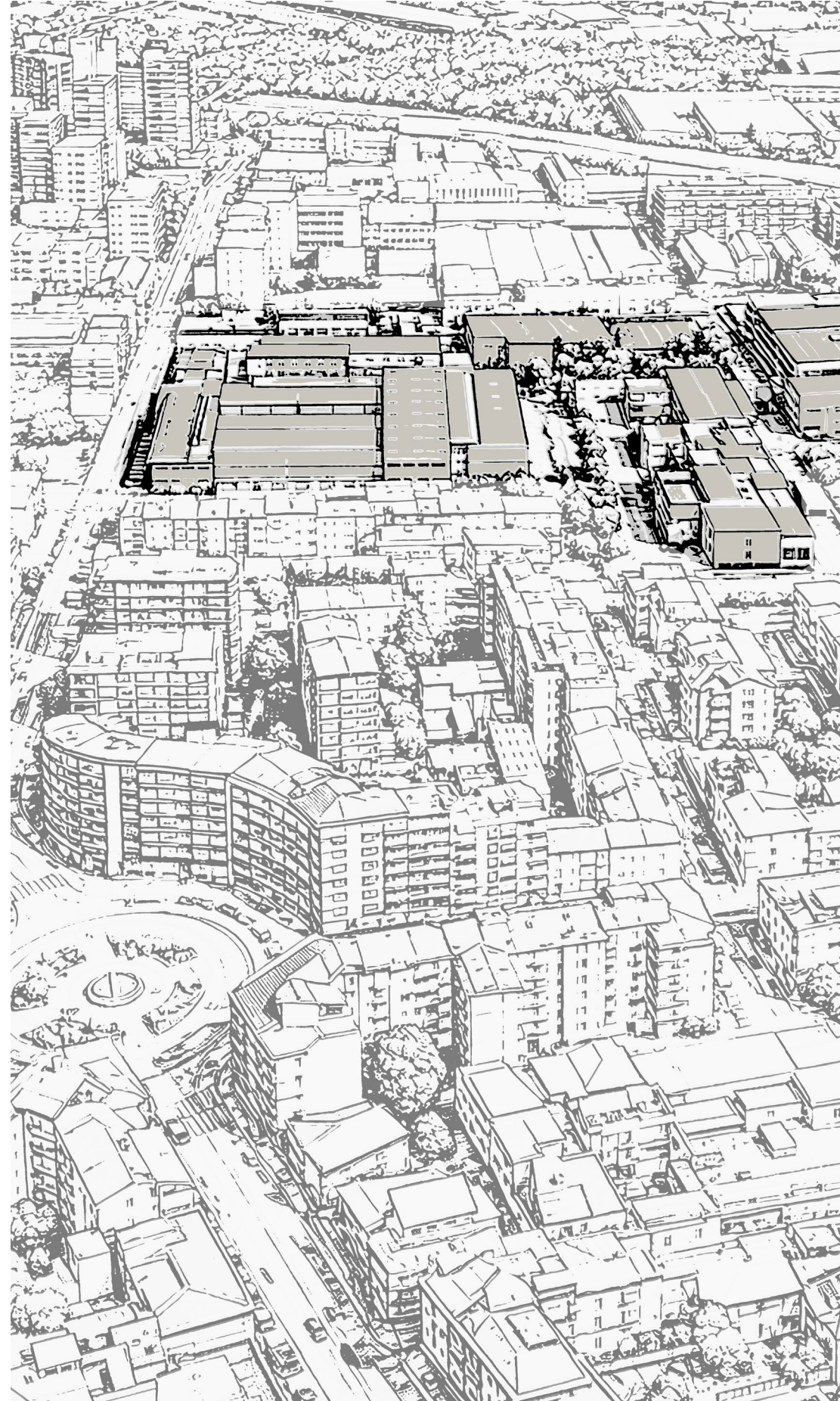




Figure 5.2 Site plan of Bovisa-Candiani Campus

Eating within the campus does not occur in a single designated environment but across a spectrum of spatial situations that differ in comfort, exposure, duration of stay, and social openness. Observation reveals that students continuously adapt available surroundings to accommodate food practices from quick bites between classes to extended shared meals. Each category supports a distinct behavioural pattern and reflects a different level of intentional occupation. Together they illustrate that conviviality on campus emerges not from one place but from a network of spatial conditions that either enable or restrict lingering, sharing, and coexistence. These locations can be understood as four recurring typologies

TRADITIONAL SPACES

TRANSITIONAL SPACES

OUTDOOR SPACES

THE GARDEN



Figure 5.3 Collection of different campus dining typologies

TRADITIONAL FOOD SPACES

(Classrooms, corridors, lobbies, pockets, cafet rias, bars)

Traditional indoor spaces provide the most immediate physical comfort, shelter, seating, and flat surfaces and therefore become the default environments for eating. However, these areas are rarely intended for that purpose. Students remain aware of their temporary occupation: meals are often brief, contained within personal boundaries, and shaped by the need to vacate quickly. Conversations occur within existing social groups rather than expanding outward, as spatial organization reinforces small clusters and parallel activities.

Because these spaces are programmatically defined for study or circulation, food behaviour remains secondary. The atmosphere is functional rather than social; individuals sit facing laptops, walls, or circulation routes instead of one another. Even when shared tables exist, they are perceived as work surfaces, limiting interaction with unfamiliar users. As a result, conviviality appears but remains localized as a collection of private gatherings rather than a collective environment.



Figure 5.4 Interior view of the Poli-bar Cateen



Figure 5.5 Outside view of the Poli-bar canteen and cafeteria



Figure 5.5 View of the corridors inside B2



Figure 5.6 Students eating and working around the corridors

TRANSITIONAL FOOD SPACES

(Entrances, stairways, walkways, passages, fire exits)

Transitional areas host some of the most frequent yet shortest eating moments. Students pause briefly with snacks, coffee, or takeaway food while waiting for classes or friends. These spaces are characterized by movement and visibility; users remain partially oriented toward circulation, ready to leave at any moment. Their functionality is improvised such sitting on steps, leaning against railings, or standing along edges.

Despite their informality, these places generate spontaneous interaction. Because users are not spatially committed, encounters are light and fluid: greetings, brief conversations, or shared observations. However, the lack of comfort prevents longer stays. The architecture supports pause but discourages settlement, making conviviality momentary rather than sustained. These spaces demonstrate how proximity can initiate social contact, yet without supportive conditions it rarely develops into collective presence.



Figure 5.7 View of the stairway entrance outside B2



Figure 5.8 Students seen eating on the stairways



Figure 5.9 Students eating at the transitional space between buildings



Figure 5.10 Students eating on the footpaths and walkways

OUTDOOR FOOD SPACES

(The Ovale, restaurants ,shops, open campus grounds)

Outdoor campus areas extend the duration of stay by offering openness and freedom of posture. Groups gather on steps, ledges, and ground surfaces, rearranging themselves according to sunlight, shade, and social preference. Here eating becomes more visible and shared; meals often transform into conversations, and individuals linger beyond the act of consumption.

The environment supports coexistence among different groups without strict boundaries. However, the dispersed nature of these areas prevents a clear spatial focus. Social life spreads across multiple spots, forming temporary clusters that dissolve as conditions change. Conviviality is therefore present but fragmentedly active yet spatially diluted, dependent on weather and available edges rather than stable spatial support.



Figure 5.11 Students eating around the ovale



Figure 5.12 Post-meal conversations near the ovale



Figure 5.13 Collection of images showing The Ovale

THE GARDEN

(Central green, cultivando, volleyball court, central mound)

Although part of the outdoor category, the garden functions differently because of its scale and openness. It attracts longer occupation: people sit on the grass, or on the picnic tables, play, rest, or simply remain after eating. The environment allows both solitude and gathering, and activities extend beyond meals into leisure and observation. The presence of the community garden introduces awareness of food production, subtly linking eating with cultivation.

Unlike other spaces, the garden supports extended duration without social pressure. Groups form naturally, individuals remain comfortably alone, and interactions emerge gradually rather than through necessity. The wide ground reduces territorial boundaries while maintaining shared presence. Among all typologies, this space reveals the strongest potential for sustained conviviality not because it prescribes gathering, but because it allows multiple forms of occupation to coexist over time.



Figure 5.14 Overview of the entire garden



Figure 5.15 Collection of images showing The Garden and Coltivando

V.II

METHODOLOGY: OBSERVATIONS & INTERVIEWS

The analysis presented in this chapter is based on a combination of prolonged personal observation, participatory experience, and informal interviews with students from different cultural backgrounds studying at the Bovisa campus.

As a daily user of the site, the author observed dining behaviors across multiple seasons, time periods, and academic conditions, including regular semesters and examination periods. These observations were complemented by informal conversations with students regarding their routines, frustrations, and preferences related to food on campus.

Through this qualitative approach, recurring patterns, spatial behaviors, and social dynamics were identified. These insights were then organized into a process-based framework that reflects the lived experience of students rather than an abstract theoretical model.

To complement spatial observations, informal interviews were conducted with students from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds studying at the Bovisa campus. These conversations aimed to understand everyday food-related routines, challenges, and emotional associations with campus dining environments.

Three representative narratives are presented below to illustrate recurring patterns within students' experiences.

PARTICIPANT A

Course: Laurea Magistrale
Department: Product System Service Design
Nationality: Turkish

Participant A described her daily meals as a continuous negotiation between time, affordability, and convenience.

"I usually decide in the morning whether I will bring food from home or buy something outside. If I bring food, I already know I will have to wait for the microwave. Sometimes the queue is so long that I skip eating properly. If I go outside, I think about distance and price. It's always a calculation."

Regarding eating spaces, she explained:

"On sunny days, I love to sit outside, but most places are already taken. We sit on stairs or on the edge of paths. It's okay, but not comfortable. You're always adjusting."

She also emphasized difficulties during preparation:

"When I forget my fork or napkin, there is nowhere to get it. You have to improvise. The microwave rooms are very small and stressful when everyone is waiting."

After meals, she highlighted hygiene issues:

"There is no place to wash containers. I go to the bathroom, which feels wrong, or I put everything dirty in my bag."

PARTICIPANT B

Course: Triennale
Department: Interior and Spatial Design
Nationality: Italian

Participant B emphasized speed and efficiency as dominant factors in his routine.

"Most days, I eat very fast. I look at my schedule first. If I have only 20 minutes, I just buy something and eat wherever I find space."

On spatial behavior, he noted:

"I don't really look for tables. If I see free stairs or benches, I go there. Everyone does that. It's normal here."

He explained how preparation is often minimized:

"I rarely bring food from home because warming it takes time. Buying something is easier, even if it's not healthy."

Reflecting on social interaction, he stated:

"We sit together, but everyone eats their own food. Sometimes we talk, sometimes we're on our phones. It depends."

PARTICIPANT C

Course: Laurea Magistrale
Department: Mechanical Engineering
Nationality: Indian

Participant C described food as strongly connected to emotional comfort and cultural identity.

"For me, food is home. When I bring Indian food, I feel better. But it's difficult to eat properly here."

On cultural exchange, she observed:

"We have people from everywhere, but we don't really share food practices. It stays private. If there were workshops or shared cooking, it would be amazing."

She highlighted challenges during anticipation and preparation:

"I think a lot before bringing food. Will I get space? Will it get cold? Will I have time? Sometimes I decide not to bring it because of these doubts."

Regarding post-meal experience, she added:

"After eating, I like to sit and talk. That's my favorite part. But there is no place that feels made for that. You're always just borrowing space."

V.III

USERS AND
SOCIAL DYNAMICS

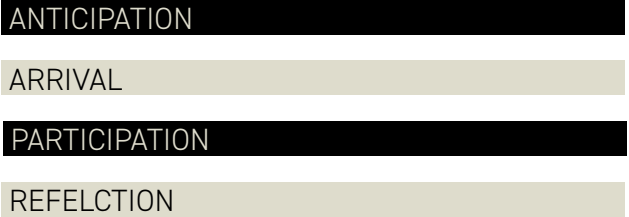
Dining within a university campus is often perceived as a functional necessity: a pause between academic activities aimed at restoring physical energy. However, everyday practices observed at the Politecnico di Milano Bovisa campus reveal that eating is not a singular act of consumption, but a layered social process shaped by decisions, negotiations, spatial conditions, and interpersonal dynamics.

For students, especially within an international and multicultural environment, meals become moments of social encounter, emotional comfort, cultural expression, and temporary belonging. This chapter investigates how students experience food-related practices on campus and how these experiences are structured through spatial and social conditions.

Rather than viewing dining as an isolated activity, this study understands it as a sequence of interconnected phases, ranging from initial decision-making to post-meal reflection. These phases reveal both opportunities and limitations within the existing campus environment and form the foundation for the design intervention proposed in this thesis.

DINING AS A PROCESS:
INTERCONNECTED PHASES

Campus dining at Bovisa unfolds through four interconnected phases: Anticipation, Arrival, Participation, and Reflection. These stages do not function as rigid steps, but as fluid moments that overlap and influence one another. Together, they shape the everyday experience of eating within the university environment.



ANTICIPATION

(Decision-Making and Mental Preparation)

The dining experience begins before eating, in a phase shaped by planning and expectation. Students weigh time between classes, affordability, distance, waiting time, and available facilities before deciding whether to bring food, buy it nearby, or skip a proper meal. Rather than preference alone, the choice becomes an adjustment to schedules and spatial constraints. Interviews indicate this stage is governed by uncertainty. Students estimate queues, check seating availability, and consider preparation time before committing. Limited infrastructure, scarce microwaves, lack of surfaces, and shared equipment introduces the risk of delay or discomfort. Minor factors such as forgotten cutlery or unavailable space can alter meal plans, revealing the fragility of the system. Many therefore modify what they eat according to expected inconvenience rather than desire.



Figure 5.16 View of the Microwave space for warming the meals

Preparation is inseparable from anticipation. Warming food, opening containers, and organizing belongings occur in small microwave rooms designed for efficiency. During peak hours, crowding produces stress and discourages interaction, encouraging speed and individual completion. Some students avoid home-cooked food altogether because preparation consumes valuable break time. Within a culturally diverse campus, this stage reveals a lost opportunity. Although students carry distinct culinary traditions, the spatial conditions restrict exchange and collaboration. Preparation remains private and functional rather than participatory. Consequently, anticipation is frequently characterized by compromise: eating habits adapt to infrastructural limitations instead of being supported by them.



Figure 5.17 Phase I: Anticipation

ARRIVAL

(Finding, Appropriating, and Settling into Space)

Arrival marks the moment when students locate and occupy a place for eating. This phase involves continuous spatial negotiation and adaptation. On favorable weather days, students prefer outdoor environments. However, the campus lacks intentionally designed dining landscapes. As a result, students appropriate available elements such as staircases, walkway edges, circular ledges, grass areas, and recreational zones. These spaces function as informal dining environments through repeated use, despite not being designed for this purpose. One interview participant noted that sitting on stairs or benches is "normal" practice, reflecting collective adaptation to spatial scarcity. The main garden area contains a limited number of conventional tables, which are frequently occupied.



Figure 5.18 View of a student eating in the garden

During peak hours or short breaks, students often relocate to classrooms, corridors, or circulation spaces, proximity becomes more important than comfort. Time spent searching for seating often results in food cooling down, reducing satisfaction. Nevertheless, dining remains largely informal and non-hierarchical. Students select spaces based on accessibility and comfort rather than formal rules or social status. Despite physical proximity, social interaction during meals is often limited. While students sit together, each individual usually consumes their own food. Arrival thus reveals both spatial creativity and structural deficiency. Students demonstrate adaptability, yet their experience is shaped by improvisation rather than intentional design.



Figure 5.19 Overlay Phase 2: Arrival

PARTICIPATION

(Exchange of Information and Culture)

Within the campus environment, cultural exchange rarely develops through explanation alone. Although students come from diverse backgrounds, encounters with difference often remain verbal or symbolic. Food operates differently: it carries memory, habit, and ritual, allowing culture to be experienced through action rather than description. Tasting, observing preparation, handling ingredients, and sharing techniques communicate meaning directly and sensorially, often requiring little language. Everyday student life already contains these moments in small forms. Individuals bring snacks from home, demonstrate familiar preparations, or recreate routines such as brewing tea, preparing coffee, or shaping traditional dishes to maintain connection with their place of origin.

These practices generate curiosity and conversation, yet they remain limited to small social circles. The absence of shared preparation surfaces, tools, and suitable environments prevents them from extending into collective activities, and the effort required to improvise discourages repetition. As a result, participation occurs but remains fragmented and temporary. Cultural knowledge is exchanged informally rather than collectively, and learning depends on personal relationships rather than shared opportunity. The campus hosts diversity but rarely supports collaborative engagement with it. Participation therefore reveals a clear gap between social willingness and spatial provision.



Figure 5.20 Group of students talking during the meal



Figure 5.21 Overlay Phase 3: Participation

REFLECTION

(Post-Meal Practices and Emotional Processing)

Reflection begins once eating ends, when students pause before returning to academic activity. Rather than leaving immediately, many remain seated to decompress, continue conversations, or simply regain focus between classes. These moments act as informal recovery intervals: attention shifts from task-oriented behaviour to relaxed presence, allowing both social bonding and individual mental reset. Several interview participants described this period as the most meaningful part of the meal and not the act of eating itself, but the time when urgency fades and interaction becomes unstructured. However, the campus provides little support for this transition. Basic post-meal routines such as rinsing containers or disposing of leftovers are inconvenient due to the absence of accessible sinks or cleaning stations.



Figure 5.22 View showing the Cultivando space

Furthermore, the campus lacks spaces that support light post-meal rituals such as drinking coffee, eating fruit, or engaging in quiet reflection. These activities are important extensions of the dining experience, yet they remain unsupported spatially. Opportunities for sensory engagement, relaxation, and digestion are therefore limited. Reflection becomes a passive waiting period rather than an intentionally designed moment of restoration. The post-meal well-being depends not only on food but on the spatial capacity to support a gentle return to everyday routine.



Figure 5.23 Overlay Phase 4: Reflection

INTERPRETATION OF SOCIAL DYNAMICS

The analysis of Anticipation, Arrival, Participation, and Reflection reveals that campus dining at Bovisa operates as a continuous and interdependent social system. Students navigate this system through constant adaptation, improvisation, and negotiation of available resources and spaces

Anticipation exposes the emotional and cognitive burden associated with uncertainty, time pressure, and limited infrastructure. Arrival demonstrates the informal appropriation of circulation spaces, landscapes, and residual areas due to the lack of intentionally designed dining settings. Participation highlights the individualized nature of food handling and the absence of environments that encourage shared participation. Reflection reveals unmet needs related to hygiene, comfort, sensory engagement, and emotional restoration

Together, these dynamics indicate that students are highly resilient and creative in responding to spatial limitations. However, their dining experiences are shaped more by necessity than by intentional support. Collective presence is common, yet collective experience remains fragile and inconsistent.

POSITIONING OF THESIS

Within this framework, Arrival, Participation ,and Reflection emerge as the phases in which spatial design can exert the strongest and most immediate influence. These moments represent the transition from movement to settlement and from consumption to emotional processing. They are the stages where comfort, atmosphere, accessibility, and social proximity most directly affect user experience.

Accordingly, the scope of this thesis focuses primarily on enhancing **ARRIVAL, PARTICIPATION and REFLECTION** through spatial intervention. The project seeks to transform improvised and transitional eating behaviors into intentional, inclusive, and emotionally supportive environments. By reimagining how students settle, gather, and remain within dining spaces, the design aims to foster sustained social engagement and post-meal well-being.

Anticipation is recognized as fundamental components of the dining process and provide essential contextual understanding. However, within the limits of this research, it is addressed primarily as background conditions. This phase represent potential area for future investigation and extended design development.

THE SOCIAL MEAL SEQUENCE

A shared meal does not occupy space in a single way. Although eating appears as one activity, the way people use a place change continuously while they remain within it. A gathering gradually stabilizes through small spatial adjustments, pausing nearby, placing belongings, orienting bodies, gathering around food, relaxing posture and eventually lingering after the meal.

These changes occur within the broader phases of arrival, participation, and reflection but they operate at a finer spatial scale. What evolves is not the activity itself, but the relationship between people and the ground they share. The same group successively requires awareness, temporary claim, mutual orientation, relaxed posture, shared center and finally a space to remain without purpose.

Most existing campus environments support only fragments of this occupation. Circulation areas allow stopping but discourage staying, tables allow eating but restrict reconfiguration, and open lawns allow sitting but lack a shared reference. Because no single setting accommodates the full range, users repeatedly adjust furniture or relocate as their gathering develops.

The sequence illustrated here therefore does not describe behavior, but the changing spatial demands produced by a shared meal. A place designed for collective dining must be capable of holding these varying conditions without requiring users to reshape the environment.

Observe → Settle → Interact → Trust → Share → Belong

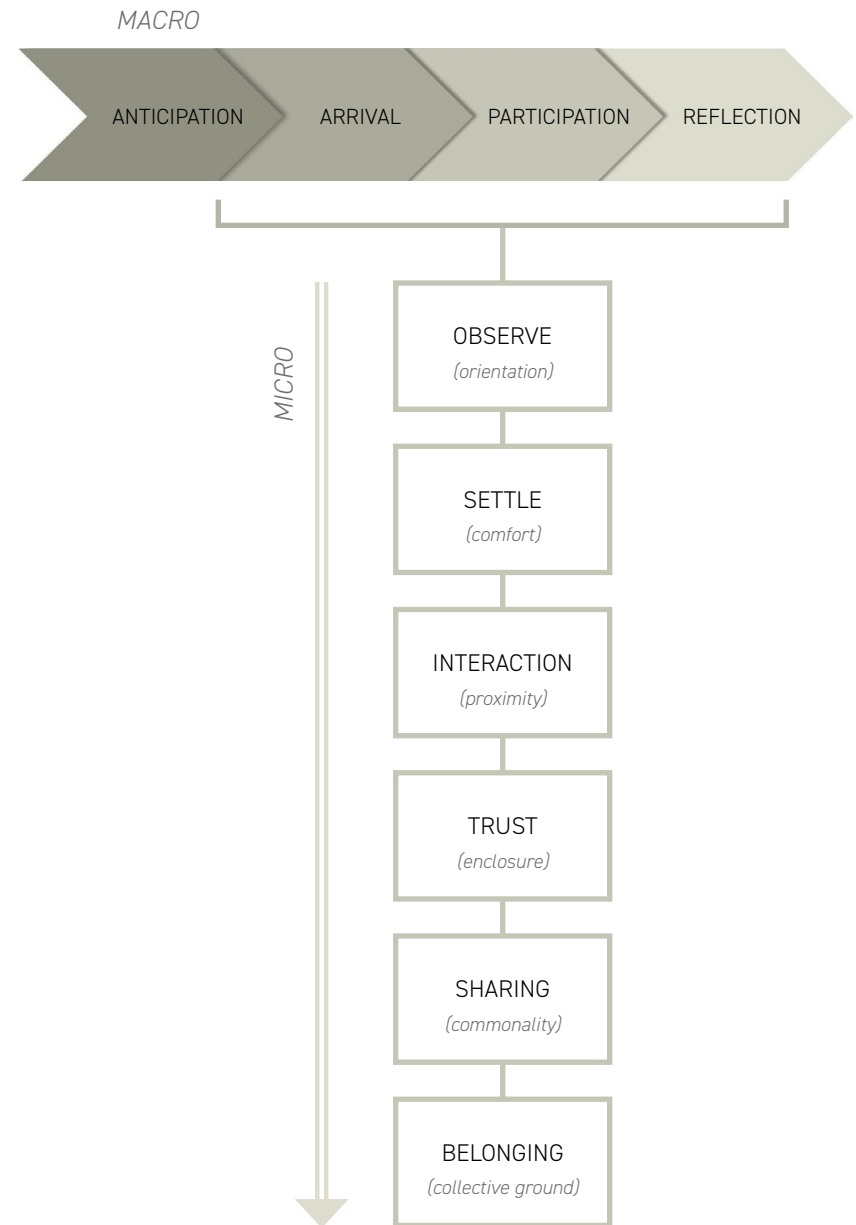


Figure 5.24 Diagram showing the social meal sequence

FROM BEHAVIOUR TO SPATIAL LOGIC

Shared meals involve shifting modes of use, and the environment must therefore accommodate variation rather than provide a single type of seating. Each stage of occupation depends on a specific spatial quality: the possibility to pause without obligation, to establish temporary presence, to orient toward others, to relax posture, to gather around a focal point, and to remain after eating.

These are not programmatic functions but spatial attributes like degrees of visibility, proximity, enclosure, centrality and continuity. When these attributes coexist, users can regulate their level of engagement without relocating. The space thus supports both participation and retreat within the same setting.

Instead of dividing the site into fixed zones, the project introduces a spectrum of spatial situations that operate simultaneously. The landscape mediates between individual presence and collective occupation, enabling use to evolve gradually from arrival to lingering.

Through this translation of behaviour into spatial capacity, a series of differentiated yet connected environments emerges within the terrain, each calibrated to a particular intensity of togetherness while remaining part of a continuous ground.

SOCIAL STATE	USER NEED	SPATIAL REQUIREMENT	ARCHITECTURAL RESPONSE
Observe	Understand surroundings	Visual access & multiple edges	Allow presence without commitment
Settle	Feel safe individually	Personal territory	Soft boundaries & edge seating
Interaction	low-risk contact	Shared focal elements	Enable conversation through triangulation
Trust	Emotional ease	Partial enclosure	Equal eye-level gathering pockets
Sharing	Exchange food	Central accessibility	Encourage collective use without ownership
Belonging	Stay together	Continuous ground	Create memory and co-presence

Table 5.1 Translation of Social behaviour into spatial logic

V.III

EMERGENCE OF MOMENTSCAPES AND THE MOUND

From these spatial conditions arise recurring types of situations that support different degrees of engagement. These are defined as Momentscapes — spatial archetypes shaped by behavioural thresholds rather than programmatic function. Each Momentscape does not prescribe a specific activity; instead, it provides an environment in which particular forms of interaction become more likely to occur.

Some Momentscapes support observation and settling, others facilitate small encounters, and others allow collective presence. Their distinction lies in relative visibility, proximity, and enclosure rather than physical boundaries. As a result, they operate simultaneously and remain accessible to different users at the same time.

The Momentscapes therefore form a relational system rather than isolated rooms. Their importance lies in their coexistence: together they construct a range of social possibilities within one continuous environment. Through variation rather than separation, they translate behavioural diversity into spatial experience.

(Social Landscape + Moment = Momentscape)



Figure 5.25 Illustrative conceptual images showing different social landscapes

Within the site, the existing mound presents a continuous and adaptable ground condition capable of supporting gradual transitions. Unlike constructed pavilions or fixed furniture, terrain allows differences in height, slope, and exposure to occur without rigid boundaries. This continuity makes it possible to organise multiple degrees of openness while maintaining a unified space.

The mound is therefore not treated as an object but as a spatial medium. Its surface can be shaped to produce orientations, edges, enclosures, and shared grounds while preserving visual and physical connection across the garden. Through modification rather than addition, the landscape becomes the primary architectural element.

By embedding the Momentscapes within the terrain, the project maintains accessibility and informality while accommodating varied modes of occupation. The mound enables spatial differentiation without fragmentation, allowing the sequence of social engagement to unfold naturally across a single continuous ground.



Figure 5.27 General photograph of the mound in the garden



Figure 5.28 View of the mound from the top



Figure 5.26 Illustrative conceptual image representing the mound

V.IV

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The existing mound becomes the spatial spine of the project, guiding both movement and organization across the site. By carefully splitting it, a new connection is formed between the front and back of the garden, transforming a barrier into a passage. The terrain is then reshaped into a continuous, undulating surface that extends the character of the mound across the landscape, allowing the ground itself to structure occupation. Momentscapes are inserted both above and below this surface, creating varied degrees of exposure and enclosure within the same field. Light canopy structures provide environmental protection while maintaining openness, and small ancillary elements and furniture like seating edges, shelves and activity points introduce curiosity, pause and interaction along the route.

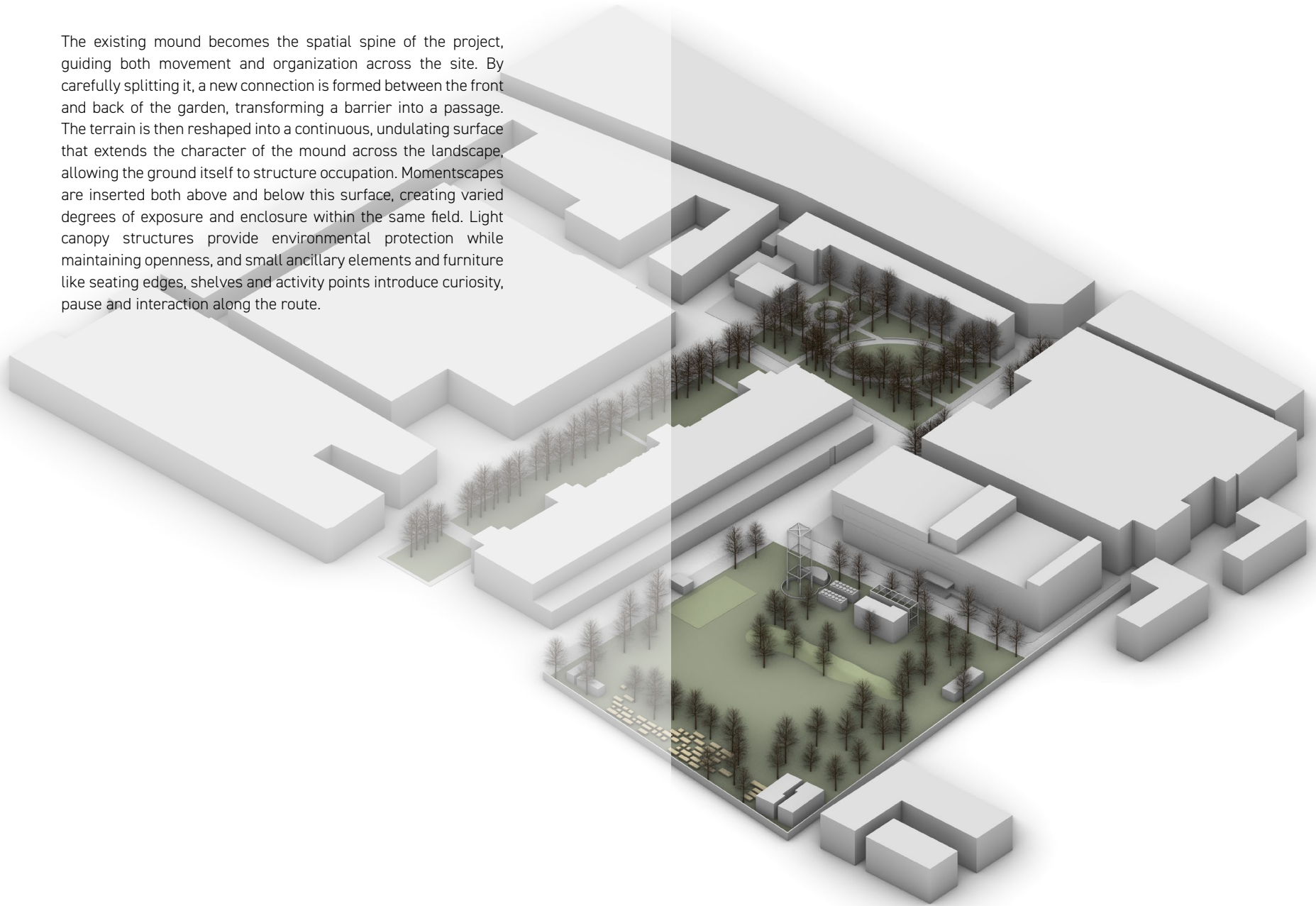
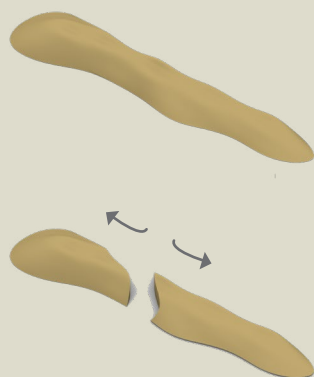


Figure 5.29 3D model overview of the campus (site)



Splitting the mound to establish a connection between front and back of the garden



Creating a connection valley that allows movement and pause

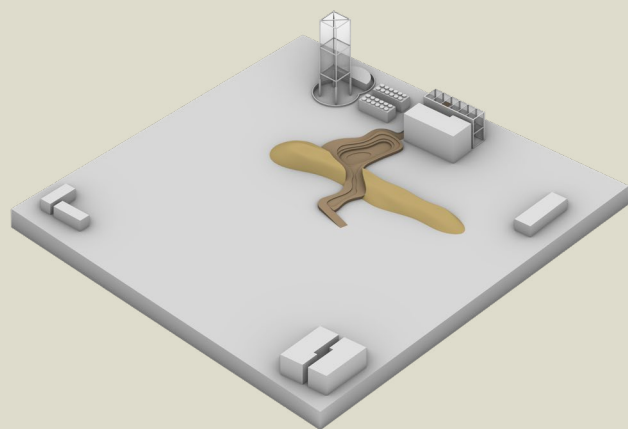
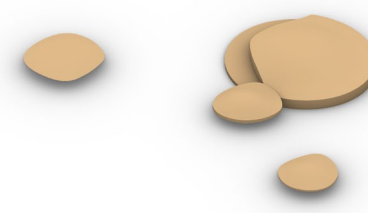
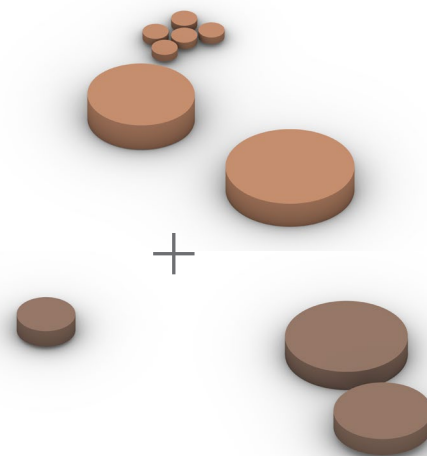


Figure 5.30 Mound Transformation



Reshaping the terrain to extend the character of mound



Insertion of volumes above and below the ground level

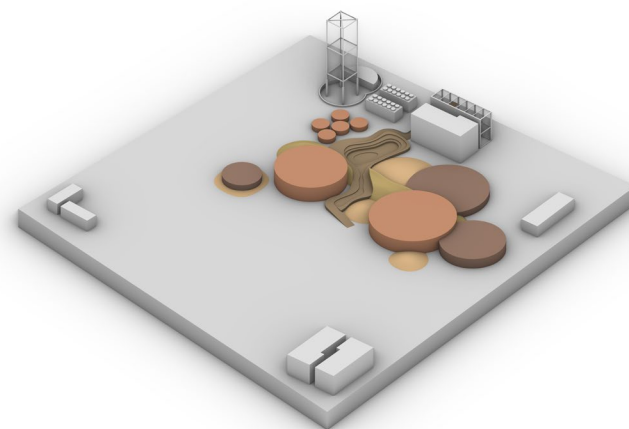
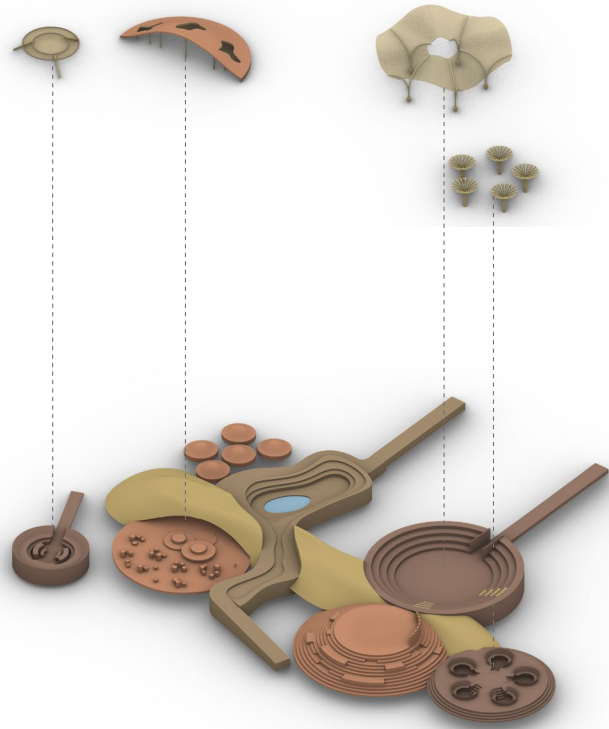


Figure 5.31 Terrain Formation



Defining the volumes into momentscapes and adding canopies



Figure 5.32 Spatial Insertion



Surrounding context and placing ancillary functions



Figure 5.33 Integrated Landscape



Figure 5.34 Illustrative Site Plan of the project

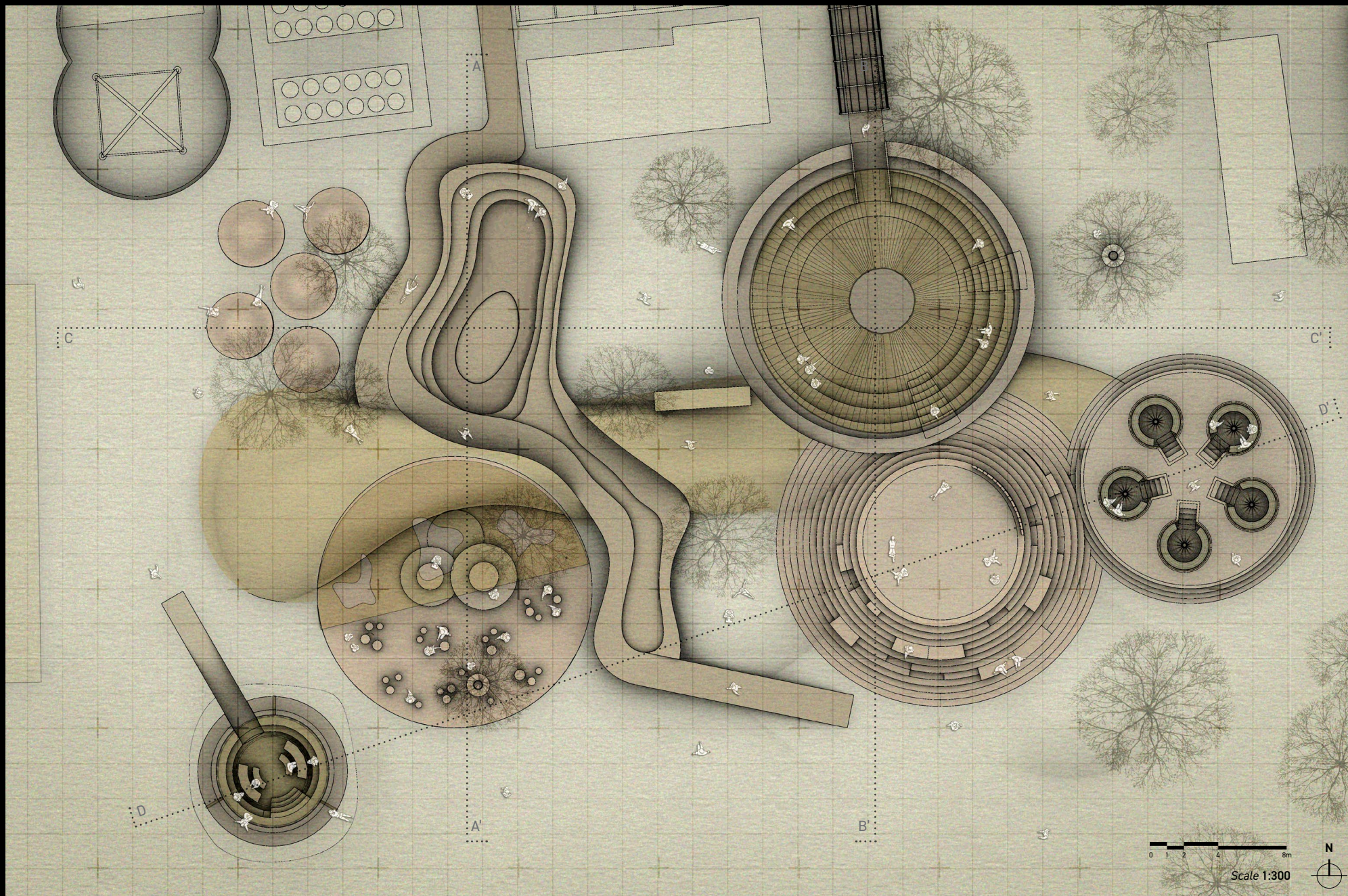


Figure 5.35 Project Plan

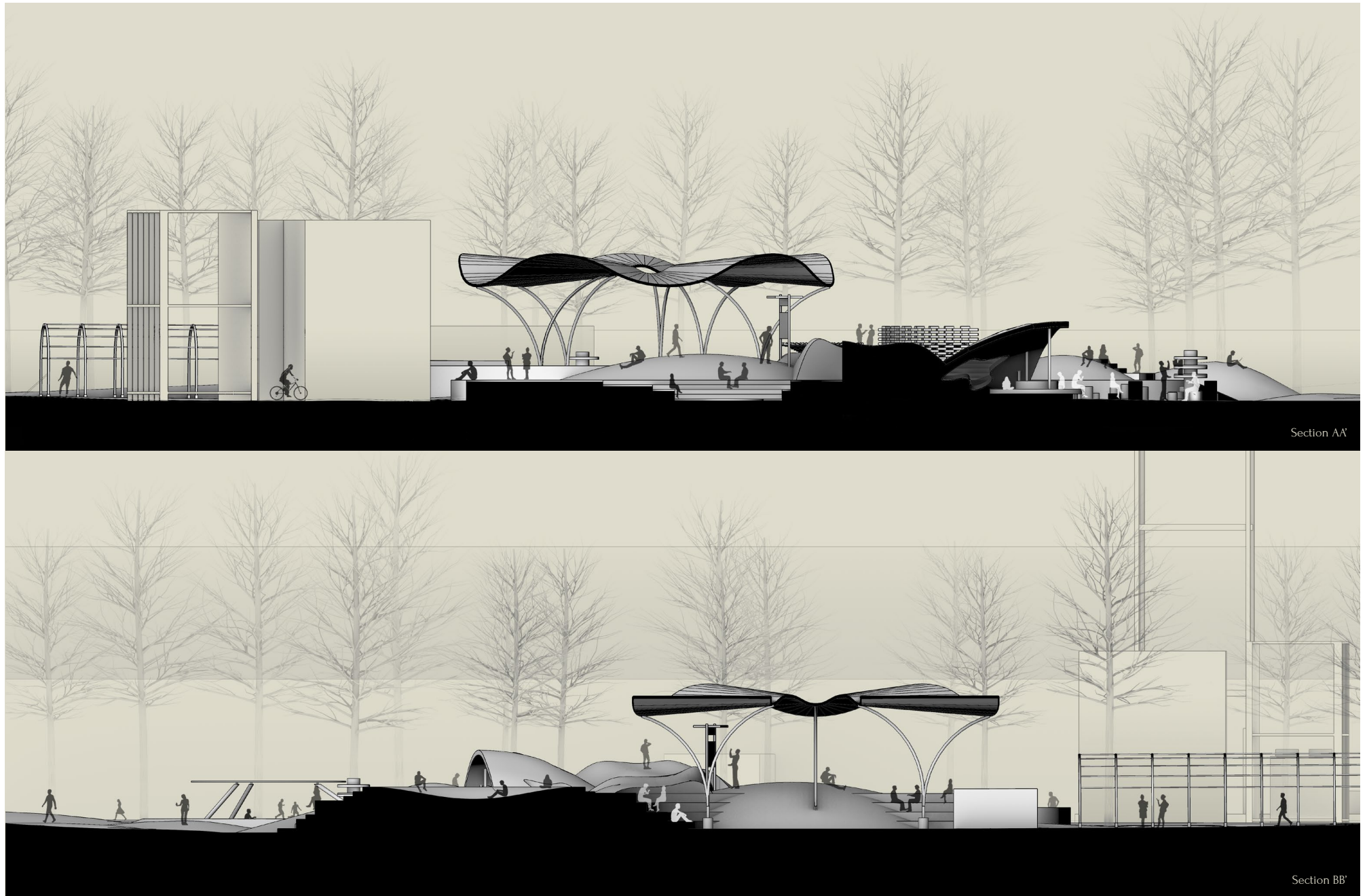


Figure 5.36 Latitudinal Sections of the Project

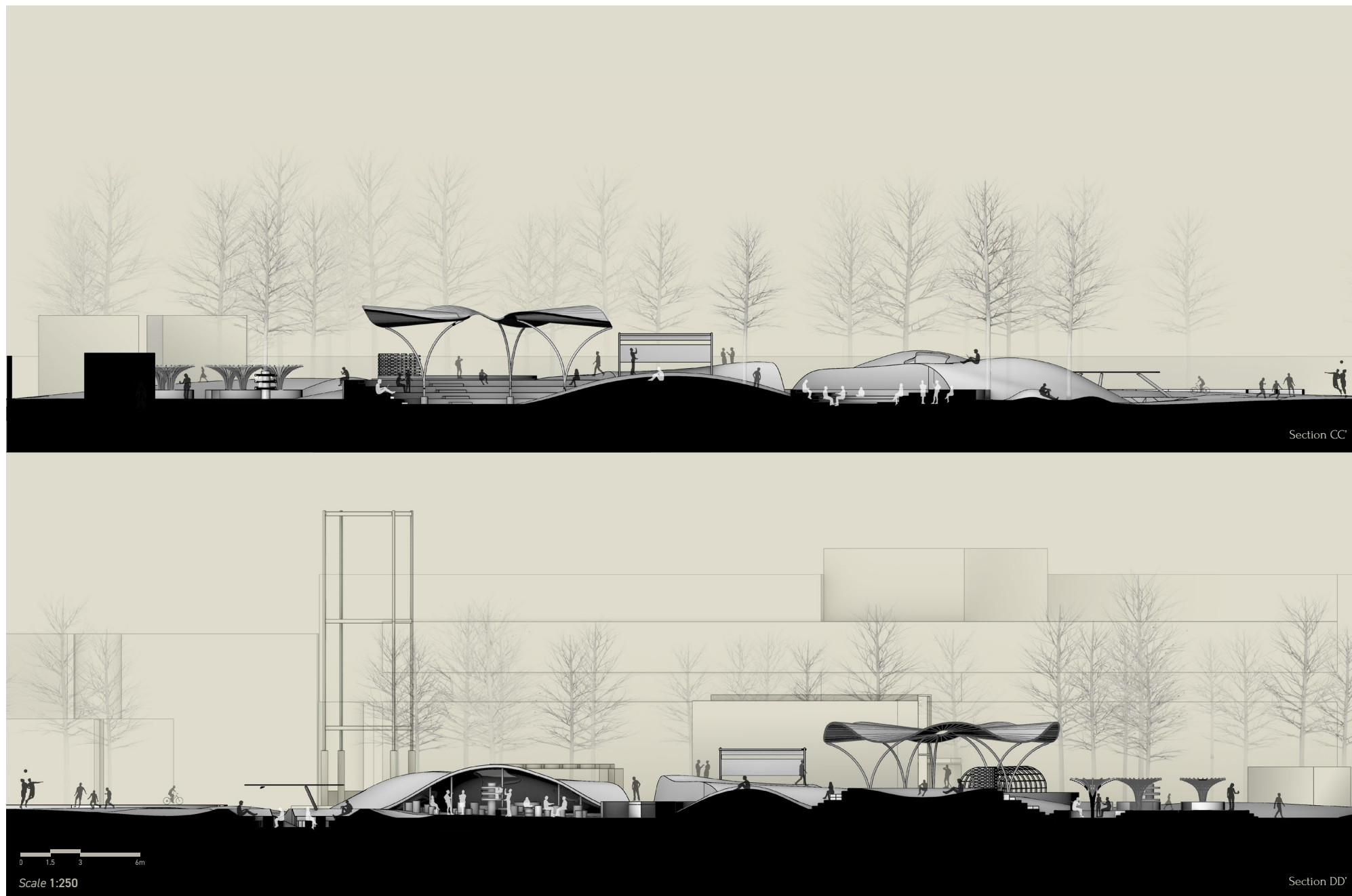
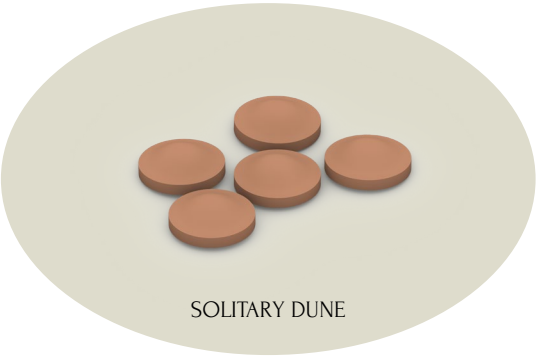


Figure 5.37 Longitudinal Sections of the Project

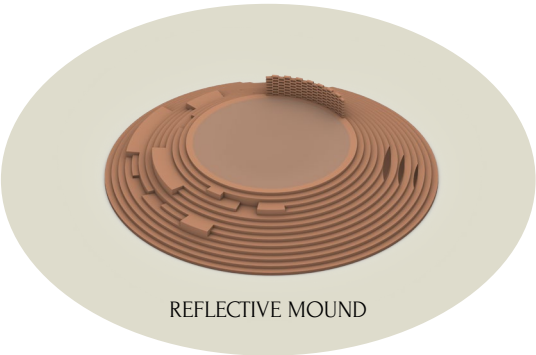
ABOVE THE GROUND MOMENTSCAPES



SOLITARY DUNE



COVERT POCKET



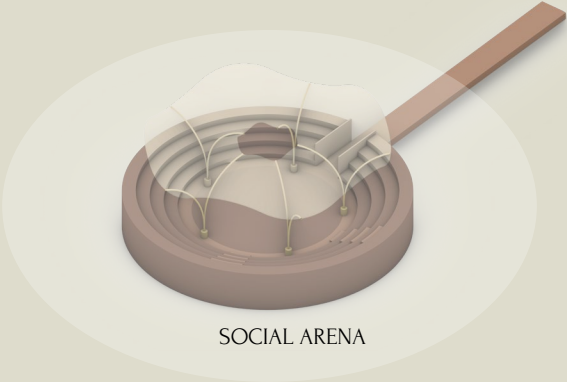
REFLECTIVE MOUND

Figure 5.38 Momentscapes Diagram above the ground

BELOW THE GROUND MOMENTSCAPES



INTIMATE BURROW



SOCIAL ARENA



COLLECTIVE BOWLS

Figure 5.39 Momentscapes Diagram below the ground

V.VI

VISUALS, MATERIALS AND ATMOSPHERE

The following visuals present the landscape as a lived environment shaped through occupation rather than fixed form. Each render captures a different condition from shifting light, seasonal colour, weather and time of day, revealing how the same ground transforms with use. Spaces alternate between gathering and retreat, movement and pause, showing that atmosphere is not embedded in the object but produced through presence. Users become the primary agents of change, directing how the environment feels at any given moment.

Material expression supports this variability. Timber, rammed earth, cobbled paths, planted surfaces and water respond differently to sun, shade and moisture, allowing texture, sound and temperature to evolve throughout the day. Vegetation grows, filters views and softens edges, while open clearings accommodate activity that cannot be predetermined. The landscape therefore remains adaptable, capable of hosting conversation, performance, study or solitude without altering its structure.

Rather than presenting a static architectural image, the renders demonstrate the capacity of the terrain to hold diverse experiences simultaneously. Architecture acts as a quiet framework that guides behaviour through gradients of enclosure, elevation and proximity. The visuals communicate possibility of a continuous field where collective interaction and individual presence continuously redefine the spatial character.



Figure 5.40 Render showing the overall aerial view of the design



The Social Arena forms the most extroverted moment within the landscape, a shared ground where gathering happens without invitation. The sloped terrain and stepped edges allow multiple ways of occupying the space: sitting, reclining, passing through, or pausing around others. At its centre, the circular cobbled clearing operates as a flexible stage, supporting informal performances, teaching moments, or spontaneous group interactions. Rather than prescribing behaviour, the geometry allows proximity to be negotiated naturally through distance, height, and orientation.

BAMBOO CANOPY (PELUPUH)

GRADUAL SOCIAL SLOPE

GREEN TUNNEL

CENTRAL PERFORMATIVE SPACE

GRADUATED SLOPE

An undulating bamboo canopy spans lightly above, filtering light. Timber seating gradually dissolves into grass, allowing vegetation to reclaim the constructed edges and soften spatial boundaries. The material palette includes cobble, bamboo, earth and wood which reduces visual weight and foregrounds atmosphere over object. The arena therefore reads less as an inserted structure and more as a clearing shaped for people, where conviviality emerges through occupation rather than architecture.

Figure 5.41 Render showing the Social Arena



Figure 5.42 Render showing the Solitary Dunes



The Intimate Burrow sits below the surrounding ground line, the space reduces visual exposure and gently shifts attention inward toward shared presence. The continuous seating ring supports small groups in conversation, eating, or quiet pause, allowing interaction to occur without the pressure of surrounding activity. The depression creates comfort through enclosure while still maintaining awareness of the larger landscape.

CIRCULAR FLAT GLASS ROOF

REFLECTIVE MIRROR

METAL PIPE SUPPORTS

COMPACTED EARTHEN WALLS

A light hovering canopy marks the space above without sealing it, allowing sky, air, and changing light to enter the chamber. Earthen walls, stone seating and compacted ground produce a tactile, grounded atmosphere that absorbs sound and softens movement. The space operates as a burrow within the field, where gathering becomes slower and more attentive. Here, social exchange emerges through closeness rather than visibility.

Figure 5.43 Render showing the Intimate Burrow



Figure 5.44 Render showing the Covert Pocket

The Reflective Mound acts as an elevated pause within the landscape, offering distance from activity without separation from it. From this height, users overlook the various momentscapes watching movement, gatherings and daily routines unfold across the garden. The gentle slope encourages reclining and lingering rather than circulation, turning the mound into a place of observation and mental rest. Presence here becomes contemplative, where participation happens through viewing.

REFLECTIVE HORIZON

MEMORY BLACKBOARD



A standing blackboard introduces a shared layer of expression: notes, suggestions, memories and messages accumulate over time as a collective record of use. Mist, soft light and reduced noise reinforce the slowed atmosphere, supporting reading, thinking, or quiet conversation. The mound therefore functions as a cognitive clearing, a space for processing experience rather than producing activity. It becomes the memory horizon of the project, where reflection transforms occupation into meaning.

Figure 5.45 Render showing the horizon from Reflecting Mound



TIMBER CANOPY

Timber canopy structures filter light into patterned shade, while a perforated lattice wall frames the edge of the mound, casting shifting shadows and creating a gentle visual boundary. The wall partially screens the bowls without isolating them, allowing awareness of surrounding activity while maintaining comfort within the group. Curved seating holds relaxed postures and encourages lingering, gradually turning the space into a site of habit. The bowls therefore operate as a social infrastructure for everyday rituals rather than singular events.

The Collective Bowls form a cluster of circular seating environments designed for repeated group use. Each sunken ring gathers small communities around a shared centre, supporting eating, conversation, and routine meeting throughout the day. The arrangement allows multiple groups to coexist, close enough to feel part of a common atmosphere yet distinct enough to maintain group identity. Belonging here emerges through familiarity and repetition rather than occasion.

LATTICE SCREEN

Figure 5.46 Render showing the Collective Bowls and the screen

A sequence of thresholds moves from the water edge to the gathering arena, guiding users through gradual shifts in activity. Stepped stone seating around the basin supports brief pause, cooling and informal encounters before the terrain rises toward the shaded collective space. The canopy-covered tiers emerge progressively, allowing people to observe, join or remain at the edge without abrupt transition. Together, the spaces create a fluid experience where movement, waiting and participation blend into a continuous social landscape.



Figure 5.47 Render of the view looking from the mound



Figure 5.48 Render showing the waterbody and the walkway



Figure 5.49 Render of the Reflective Mound (TOP)

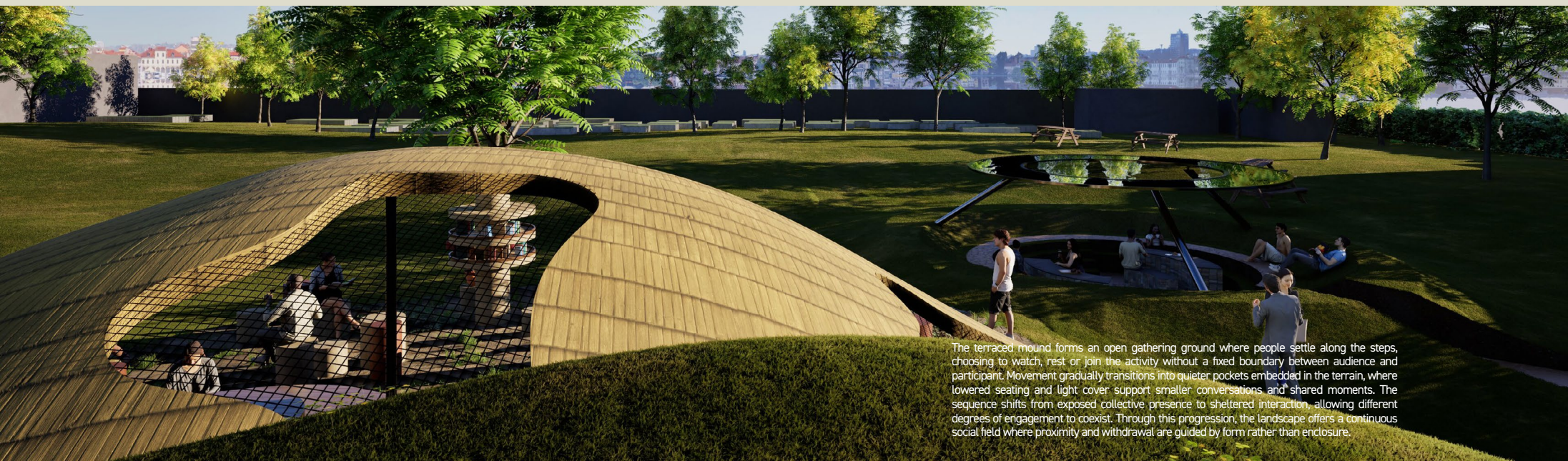


Figure 5.50 Render showing the garden and surrounding (BOTTOM)



Figure 5.51 Interior render of the Intimate Burrow space (TOP)

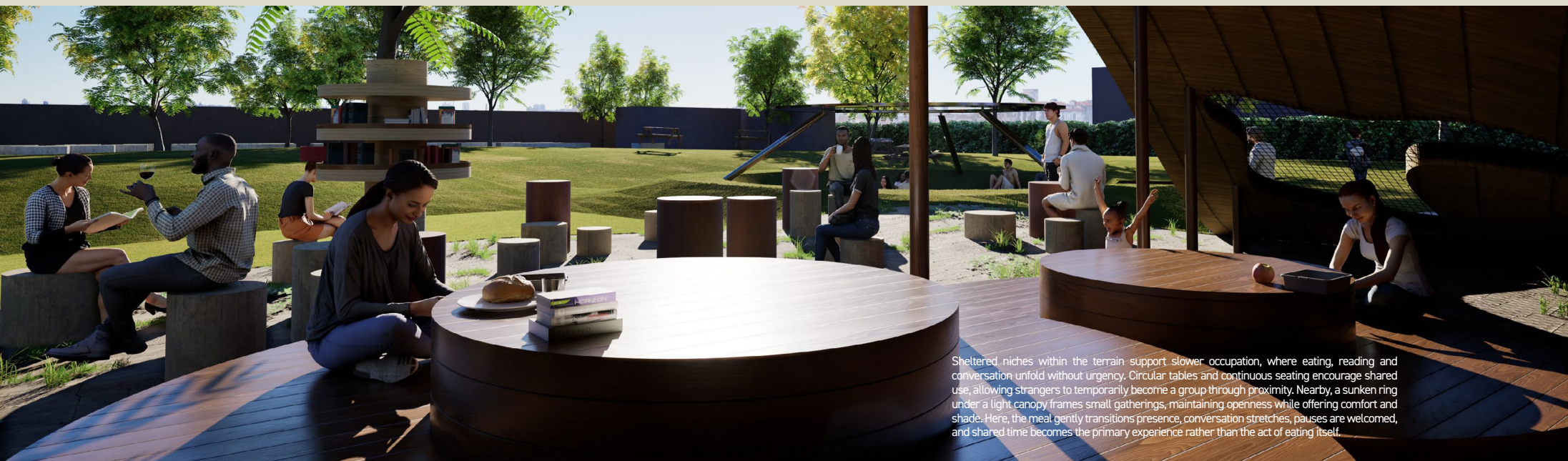


Figure 5.52 Interior render of the Covert Pocket space (BOTTOM)



The Reflective Mound acts as an elevated pause within the landscape, offering distance from activity without separation from it. From this height, users overlook the various momentscapes watching movement, gatherings and daily routines unfold across the garden. The gentle slope encourages reclining and lingering rather than circulation, turning the mound into a place of observation and mental rest. Presence here becomes contemplative, where participation happens through viewing.

Figure 5.53 Render view passing through the green tunnel (TOP)

Figure 5.54 Render showing the ramp and the connecting space (BOTTOM)



VI

BEYOND THE TABLE

The project does not conclude at the moment a meal ends. What has been constructed is less a finished composition and more a prepared ground. A framework that anticipates use rather than prescribing it. The spatial systems introduced throughout the site establish conditions for conviviality: proximity without obligation, visibility without exposure, gathering without confinement, and retreat without isolation. Yet these qualities only become meaningful when inhabited. The landscape therefore operates as a canvas; its forms, materials and atmospheres provide structure, but the community completes the work through occupation, habit and interpretation.

The project extends beyond the table into community formation. The physical intervention initiates interaction, but its future is determined by how people gather, adapt and care for it. The architecture provides the setting; the users produce the narrative. Over time, the space shifts from designed environment to collective habit. A place continually rewritten through participation, where conviviality is not a moment but an evolving practice.

VI.I

SYSTEMS OF PRACTICE

The systems of practice embedded in the project (commensality, ritual, exchange, discovery and reflection) are only partially authored by design. Certain aspects are spatially supported: circular seating encourages shared meals, thresholds foster encounter, water and planting slow movement, and varied enclosures allow gradients of togetherness. Other aspects remain intentionally unresolved. Cultural exchange, belonging and collective meaning emerge over time through repetition, negotiation and memory. The project acknowledges that conviviality cannot be installed; it must be practiced. Each gathering leaves traces that reshape how the space is understood and reused, gradually transforming infrastructure into shared culture.

Beyond everyday dining, the site anticipates collective stewardship. Temporary events, shared cooking sessions, seasonal markets, reading circles or cultural celebrations can occupy the bowls and clearings without requiring spatial modification. Elements may be added by users — recipe boards, notice walls, movable furniture, seed libraries, or communal storage — allowing information exchange to evolve organically. In this way, the space remains adaptable not through mechanical flexibility but through social authorship. Change is expected and welcomed as part of the project's life.

Long-term continuity depends on ownership. Maintenance, care and programming can be undertaken by student-led groups or rotating governing bodies that manage planting, cleaning, scheduling and shared resources. Stewardship becomes a social practice rather than an institutional obligation, reinforcing responsibility and belonging. The environment is therefore sustained not only materially but culturally, as repeated acts of care embed identity within the landscape.

SYSTEM OF PRACTICE	SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICE	EXAMPLES	SPATIAL TRANSLATION
Spatial Mediation	Eating posture and spatial arrangement express social relationships and degrees of formality.	In Japan and Korea, meals are traditionally taken on the floor around low tables; in India and Middle Eastern contexts, people often sit in circles on mats; in Europe, dining occurs at elevated tables.	Multi-height eating terrains allowing floor-level, low, and standard seating around shared zones.
Commensality	Shared dishes and central serving practices encourage trust, reciprocity, and collective participation.	Indian thalis, Middle Eastern mezze, Chinese family-style meals, and Spanish tapas place food at the center for communal sharing.	Central shared platforms with peripheral personal ledges for collective dining.
Memory and Place Attachmen	Food memories function as emotional anchors connecting individuals to family, place, and identity.	"Mother's soup," "grandmother's pasta," "first pizza in Milan," and late-night student meals often become symbolic personal narratives.	Recipe-memory rings and curated food-story inscriptions embedded in circulation edges.
Triangulation and Discovery	Sensory curiosity toward unfamiliar food stimulates informal interaction and learning.	Street-food aromas in Southeast Asia, spice markets in India, and European bakeries often initiate spontaneous conversations.	Sensory stations with spices, herbs, textures, and rotating ingredient displays.

Table 6.1 Applied and possible systems of practices on the project

SYSTEM OF PRACTICE	SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICE	EXAMPLES	SPATIAL TRANSLATION
Exchange and Cultural Commons	Food exchange operates as a form of hospitality, care, and social bonding.	Offering sweets in South Asia and the Middle East, food gifts in East Asia, and homemade dishes in Mediterranean cultures symbolize affection.	Hospitality shelves for wrapped food gifts, tea sachets, and cultural snacks with origin tags.
Ritual and Temporal Rhythm	Repetitive food-related practices structure everyday and seasonal social life.	Exam-season coffee rituals, Ramadan iftar, Diwali sweets, Christmas baking, and weekend brunch traditions.	Seasonal food calendar strips and ritual platforms supporting recurring food events.
Cultivation and Care	Growing and tending food strengthens emotional attachment and environmental awareness.	Home gardens in India, European allotment gardens, and balcony herb cultivation among students reflect this practice.	Ingredient - specific gardens linked to cultural recipes and shared harvesting rules.
Governance and Stewardship	Food practices are regulated through shared norms, roles, and responsibilities.	Elders serving first, assigned cooking roles, shared cleanup duties, and rules around leftovers exist across cultures.	Rotating stewardship roles and visible governance panels.

Table 6.2 Applied and possible systems of practices on the project

VI.II

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The project establishes a foundation rather than a finished condition, allowing its meaning to grow through use over time. As students repeatedly occupy the Momentscapes, patterns of gathering, preferred meeting areas and informal rituals will gradually emerge, transforming designed space into shared habit. Future development therefore depends less on physical additions and more on participatory governance, rotating student bodeis or associations can manage programming, planting and maintenance, turning care into a collective practice and reinforcing a sense of ownership.

The landscape also anticipates evolving systems of exchange. Recipe boards, shared libraries, temporary cooking events or cultural gatherings can periodically activate the site without altering its structure, enabling knowledge and memory to accumulate spatially. Light digital tools, such as shared schedules or community archives, may support coordination while keeping physical interaction central. In this way the environment remains adaptable not through mechanical flexibility but through social authorship.

Its long-term success lies in openness. As users change, the space can absorb new customs, celebrations and forms of togetherness while maintaining coherence. Rather than preserving a fixed design state, the project continues through collective participation which is sustained, modified and reinterpreted by each generation that inhabits it.

VI.III

FINAL CONCLUSION

From the background study and observation of user dynamics, the project positions architecture as a mediator rather than a final outcome. The Momentscapes translate everyday behaviours of eating, waiting, meeting and resting into spatial conditions of enclosure, visibility and proximity. Instead of directing activity, the landscape supports different levels of participation, allowing individuals to engage, observe or withdraw while remaining part of a shared environment. The space therefore operates as a continuous social ground shaped through occupation.

Conviviality emerges through conditions rather than form. Integrated materials, vegetation and sensory variation encourage lingering and repetition, gradually building memory and belonging. By embedding practices of gathering, retreat, discovery and stewardship, the intervention shifts architecture from a fixed composition into an evolving framework that adapts to its users over time. The value of the project lies in its openness. As people inhabit, reinterpret and care for the landscape, the design moves beyond construction into collective life. The architecture provides structure, but community completes it by transforming space into a shared cultural practice sustained through everyday use.

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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Dimensions of food and eating

Figure 1.2 Representation of diverse food cultures

Figure 1.3 Recollection of childhood memory (Ratatouille, 2007)

Figure 1.4 Food Memory Cycle

Figure 1.5 Dining Table Artwork (Salini Perera)

Figure 1.6 Representation between shared meals and wellbeing

Figure 1.7 The Illusion of Taste (Olimpia Zagnoli)

Figure 2.1 Public and private food procurement and short food values chains in urban areas (ON foods, 2022)

Figure 2.2 Flow and movement between campus

Figure 4.1 Overview of the project

Figure 4.2 Aerial view of the project

Figure 4.3 Food presentation integrated with soil and vegetation

Figure 4.4 Participants seated within the excavated ground table

Figure 4.5 Plan and sectional drawing of the project

Figure 4.6 Pre-meal preparation of the earth table setting

Figure 4.7 Face-to-face communal interaction along linear seating

Figure 4.8 Bodily occupation within the carved terrain section

Figure 4.9 Food presentation integrated with soil and vegetation

Figure 4.10 Nighttime gathering shaped by candlelit atmosphere

Figure 4.11 Overview of the project

Figure 4.12 Overall spatial system embedded within the existing courtyard

Figure 4.13 Terraced seating supporting simultaneous individual and group use

Figure 4.14 Everyday street appropriation using informal and movable seating outside storefront edge

Figure 4.15 Distributed furniture elements enabling flexible gathering configurations within the structural grid

Figure 4.16 Students occupying stepped platforms during everyday activities

Figure 4.17 Modular pegboard wall supporting temporary storage and interaction

Figure 4.18 Long communal tables encouraging shared occupation

Figure 4.19 Flexible chairs enabling reconfiguration of social distance

Figure 4.20 Furniture attachment integrated into structural railing edge

Figure 4.21 Adaptive seating landscape inserted within existing concrete structure

Figure 4.22 Overview of the project

Figure 4.23 HeyTea Logo

Figure 4.24 Proxemic diagram indicating gradations of interpersonal distance

Figure 4.25 Behavioral mapping showing overlapping social activities within shared seating field

Figure 4.26 Axonometric sequence of table transformation strategy

Figure 4.27 Top view emphasizing relational voids between tables

Figure 4.28 Central communal table integrating planting and vertical spatial elements

Figure 4.29 Plan of the project

Figure 4.30 Transformation sequence from concept to design

Figure 4.31 Linear intimate seating zone beneath reflective ceiling surface

Figure 4.32 Overhead view of continuous serpentine communal table

Figure 4.33 Spatial continuity between service counter and shared seating

Figure 4.34 Interior perspective highlighting fluid tabletop morphology

Figure 4.35 Plan of the project

Figure 4.36 Linear behavioral scenarios distributed along the communal table

Figure 4.37 Service counter framed by rhythmic ceiling structure and flowing seating edge

Figure 4.38 Collective occupation along continuous counter seating

Figure 4.39 Rhythmic ceiling profile mimicking the table creating spatial enclosure

Figure 4.40 Longitudinal interior view emphasizing the overall ambience

Figure 4.41 Overhead view revealing clustered seating islands and circulation pockets

Figure 5.1 Milan City Map

Figure 5.2 Site plan of Bovisa-Candiani Campus

Figure 5.3 Collection of different campus dining typologies

Figure 5.4 Interior view of the Poli-bar Cateen

Figure 5.5 Outside view of the Poli-bar canteen and cafeteria

Figure 5.5 View of the corridors inside B2

Figure 5.6 Students eating and working around the corridors

Figure 5.7 View of the stairway entrance outside B2

Figure 5.8 Students seen eating on the stairways

Figure 5.9 Students eating at the transitional space between buildings

Figure 5.10 Students eating on the footpaths and walkways

Figure 5.11 Students eating around the ovale

Figure 5.12 Post-meal conversations near the ovale

Figure 5.13 Collection of images showing The Ovale

Figure 5.14 Overview of the entire garden

Figure 5.15 Collection of images showing The Garden and Coltivando

Figure 5.16 View of the Microwave space for warming the meals

Figure 5.17 Phase 1: Anticipation

Figure 5.18 View of a student eating in the garden

Figure 5.19 Overlay Phase 2: Arrival

Figure 5.20 Group of students talking during the meal

Figure 5.21 Overlay Phase 3: Participation

Figure 5.22 View showing the Coltivando space

Figure 5.23 Overlay Phase 4: Reflection

Figure 5.24 Diagram showing the social meal sequence

Figure 5.25 Illustrative conceptual images showing different social landscapes

Figure 5.26 Illustrative conceptual image representing the mound

Figure 5.27 General photograph of the mound in the garden

Figure 5.28 View of the mound from the top

Figure 5.29 3D model overview of the campus (site)

Figure 5.30 Mound transformation

Figure 5.31 Terrain formation

Figure 5.32 Spatial insertion

Figure 5.33 Integrated landscape

Figure 5.34 Illustrative site plan of the project

Figure 5.35 Project plan

Figure 5.36 Latitudinal sections of the project

Figure 5.37 Longitudinal sections of the project

Figure 5.38 Momentscapes diagram above the ground

Figure 5.39 Momentscapes diagram below the ground

Figure 5.40 Render showing the overall aerial view of the design

Figure 5.41 Render showing the Social Arena

Figure 5.42 Render showing the Solitary Dunes

Figure 5.43 Render showing the Intimate Burrow

Figure 5.44 Render showing the Covert Pocket

Figure 5.45 Render showing the horizon from Reflecting Mound

Figure 5.46 Render showing the Collective Bowls and the screen

Figure 5.47 Render of the view looking from the mound

Figure 5.48 Render showing the waterbody and the walkway

Figure 5.49 Render of the Reflective Mound

Figure 5.50 Render showing the garden and surrounding

Figure 5.51 Interior render of the Intimate Burrow space

Figure 5.52 Interior render of the Covert Pocket space

Figure 5.53 Render view passing through the green tunnel

Figure 5.54 Render showing the ramp and the connecting space

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“a tavola non si invecchia”