

SOUR

“A deeply free and public space plays a vital role in our world, equally important in our digital age as in Greco-Roman times when they were marketplaces for goods and ideas. As common ground, squares are equitable and democratic; they have played a fundamental role in the development of free speech.”

- Catie Marron, *City Squares: Eighteen Writers on the Spirit and Significance of Squares Around the World*

Project Details

Location: Taksim, Istanbul

Date: 2020

Client: Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

Status: Finalist

Area: 182,000 m²

A Place for Everyone

A Research Case Study

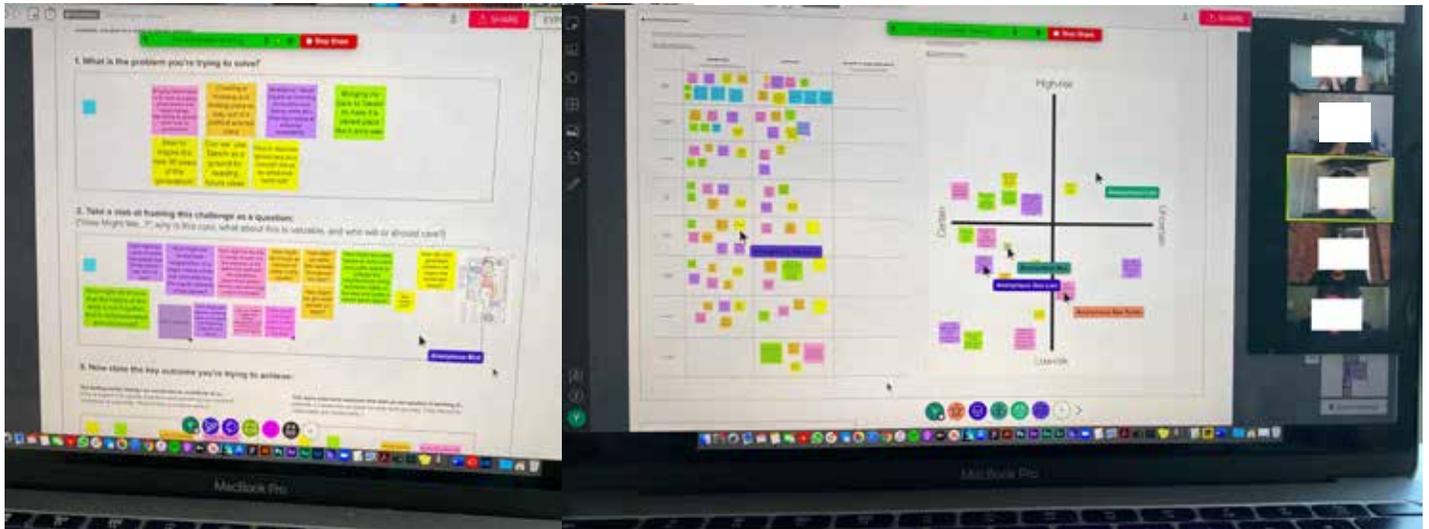
Our proposal - Urban Commons - envisions a public space reunited with the people and enlivened by its community. A destination that co-creates with its guests and a space that celebrates the culture. Through architectural and urban interventions that promote accessibility, activities, and arts, we revitalize this public space into becoming the city's focal point for practicing democracy and inspiring the future.

Designed in collaboration with Balmori Associates, Cana Bilsel, and Sara Belge, together with a diverse team from disciplines including art, history, museology, tourism, data analysis, traffic, security, inclusive design, and sustainable design.

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Problem Statement

For Istanbul's most important public space, how might we build spatial resilience, revitalize the neglected historic site and engage the public?



Some images from our ideation and synthesis sessions on MURAL.

Outcome

An array of programs offer a unique opportunity for activating this urban public space in new ways and brings a diversity of functions together: meeting, exchanging, flaneuring, consuming, working, entertaining, playing, dining, and making.

These programmatic elements act as a vessel for expression and serve as a melting pot for different people and ideas to come together. Avoiding generic programs gives the opportunity to create rich programmatic calendars tailored to the diverse surrounding local community as well as to an international crowd. The variety of spaces cater to everything from demonstrations to festivals and celebrations. The space and its surrounding areas create an envelope that is flexible enough to allow for a perpetual state of reinvention; adapting to the dynamic culture of metropolitan life.

To activate the site, the proposal prioritizes placemaking: a process by which we can shape our public spaces in order to maximize shared value. A large component of this is triangulation; paying attention to the functions and identities that define the space and the community. Triangulation in public spaces - more than just promoting better urban design - facilitates creative patterns of use. A great public space is more than just a sum of its parts, and triangulation creates added value as it generates additional uses and opens more opportunities for improvisations, enabling an on-going place in the making.

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How We Did It

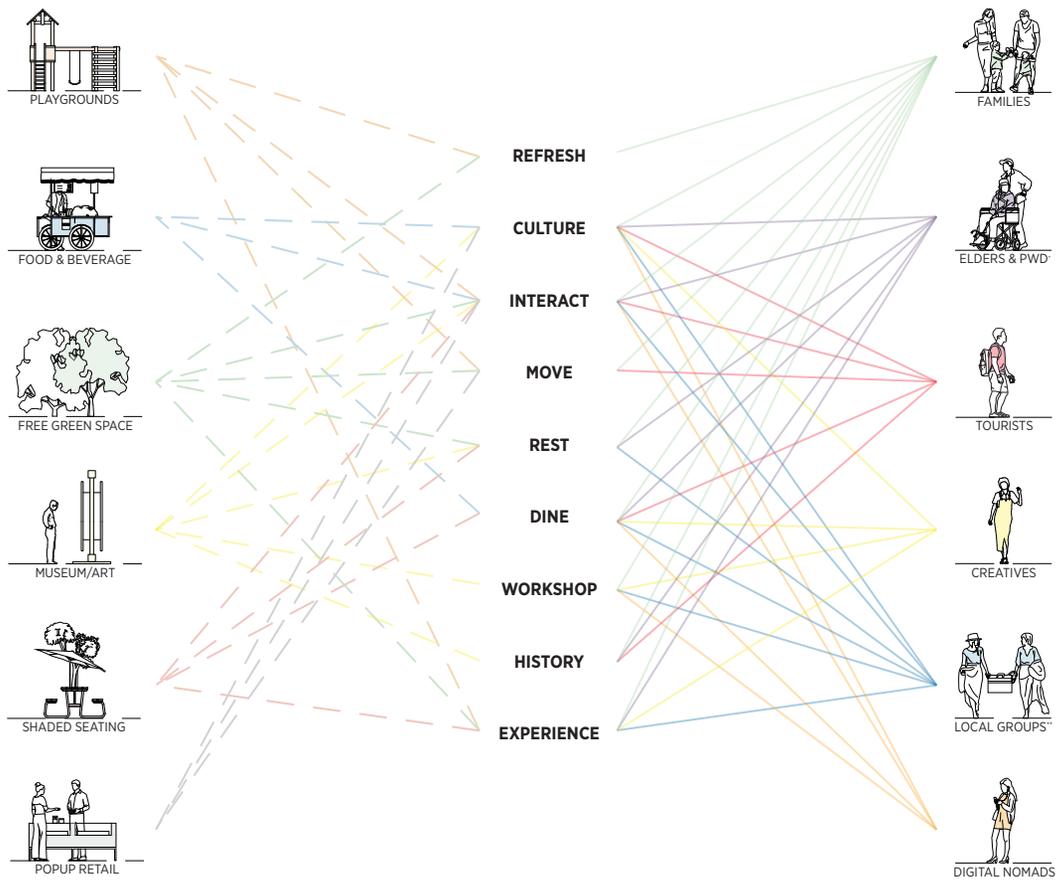
- **Desk research** - our typical baseline to begin research. Secondary sources give us an understanding of what has been done in the past, what questions have been asked and answered, and what remains to be learned.
- **Online ethnography** - including surveys distributed to locals and visitors, social media analytics, Reddit and other forums, travel blogs, and more.
- **Interviews** - with museum study experts, tourism experts, traffic and security experts, inclusive design experts, sustainable design experts, data analysts, and local and international artists and historians.
- **User-centered design process** - based on an explicit understanding of the users, activities, and the context. Our process was iterative in every phase and involved users and experts throughout the design and development processes.



Food for Thought:

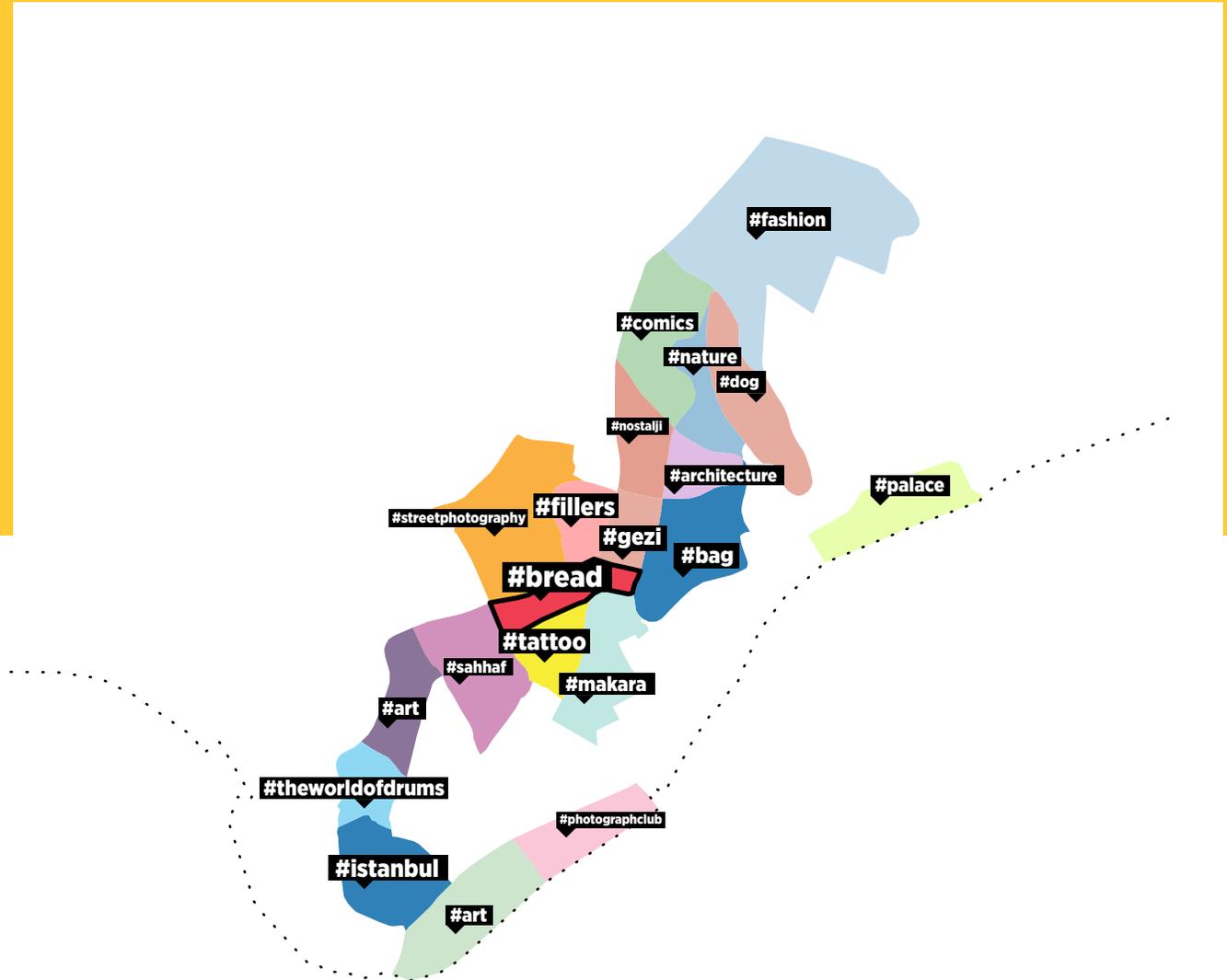
- **Uniting people, place, and memory** - the creation of public space is often entwined with ideas of local identity and belonging. Public spaces are structured by social, political, and cultural transitions, as well as diverse forms of cultural heritage. A central question in our research and design process was: how might we honor the spatial memory of this public space?
 - *How might public space help us understand history while also playing a role in creating a better future?*

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Our persona chart triangulates what matters to our users in a public space. Understanding our users allowed us to uncover how they would use the space and what was required to make the space inclusive for all.

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Istanbul Hashtag Map. Our social media analysis sourced from Instagram from May 2020 to July 2020.