

A PUBLIC MONTESSORI SCHOOL AND TEACHING FACILITY FOR MEXICO CITY

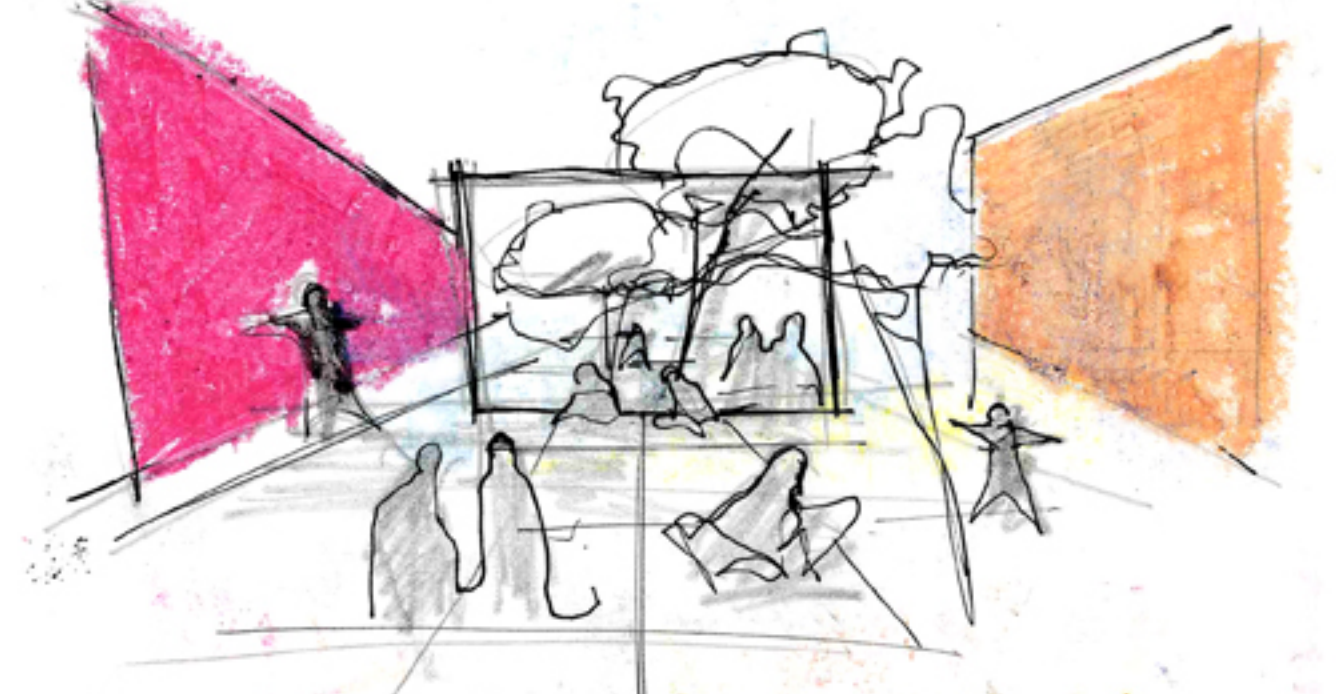
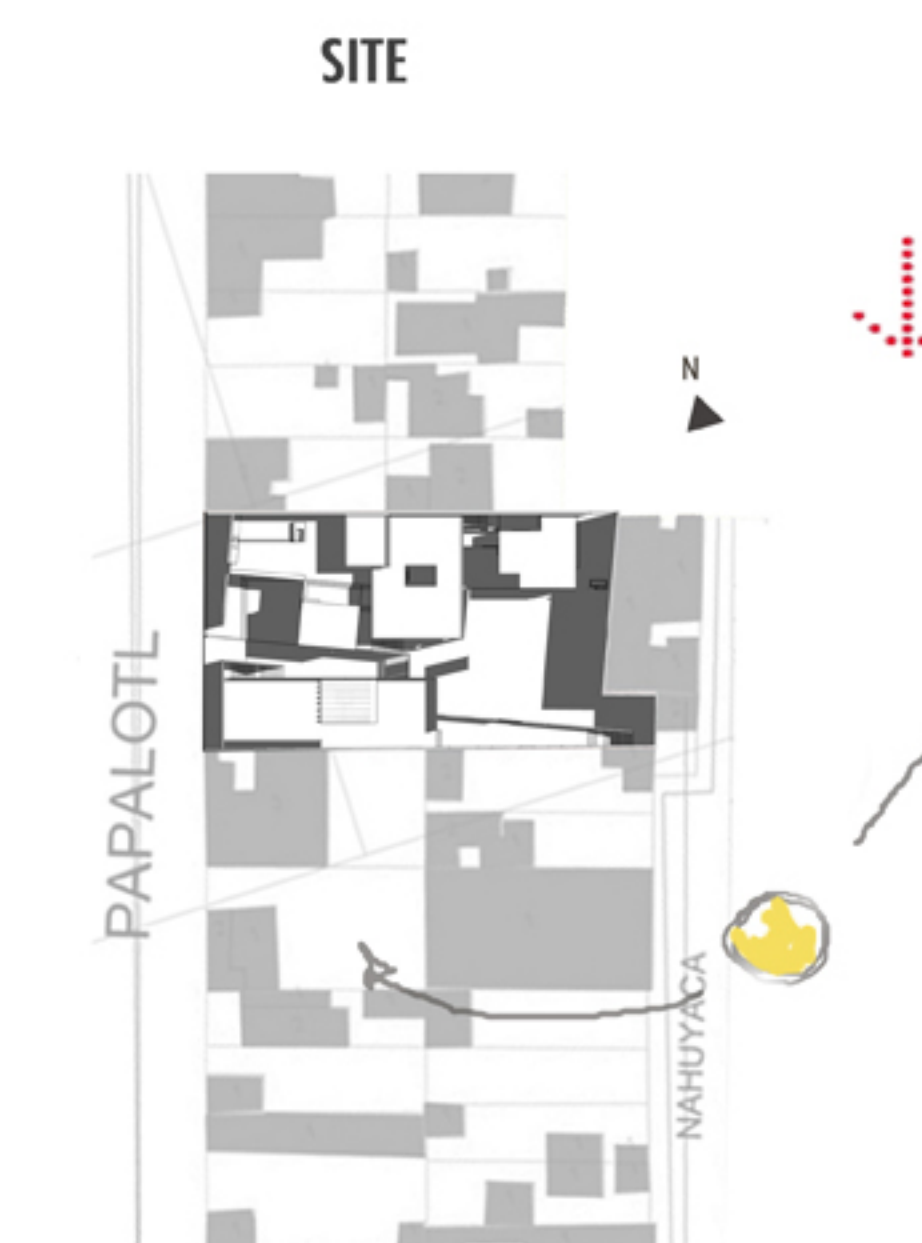
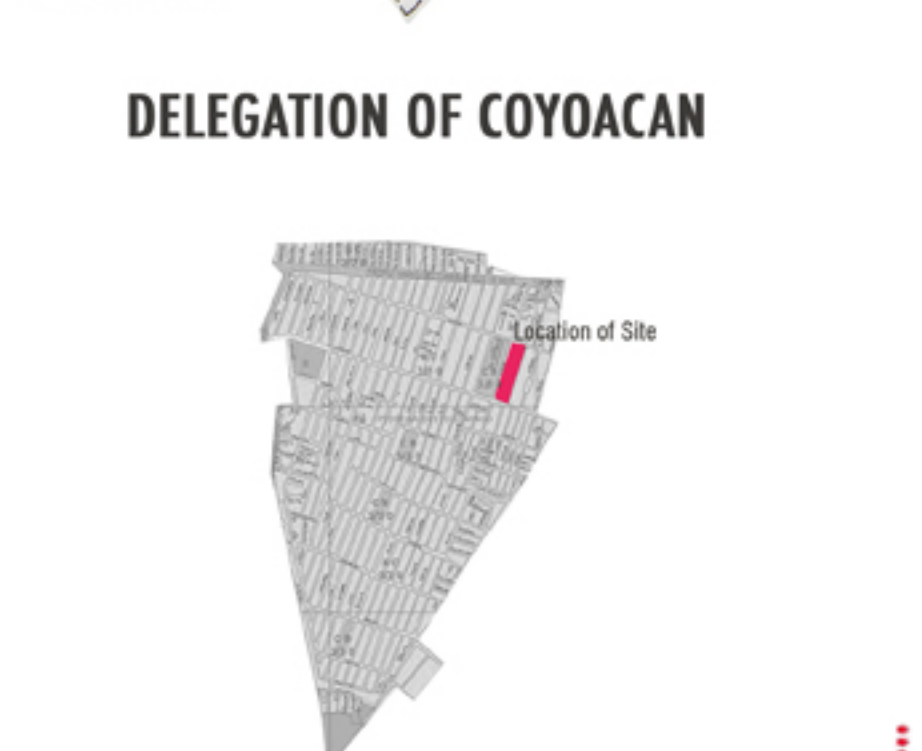
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“Education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual and is acquired not by listening to words but by experiences in the environment.”
 -Dr. Maria Montessori

This project proposes a new alternative learning facility for a low-income neighbourhood in Mexico City. The program includes a small primary school for approximately 160 students, a teachers training center that also acts as a place for after-school programs, and a community library.

The interest in this thesis topic stemmed from a concern for public education facilities, specifically those in Mexico City, where the infrastructure and quality of education still struggles to meet the demand of the population. Existing typologies for primary and secondary public schools function to some extent, but many have an aggressive exterior that projects an image of heightened security and a lack of resources. Most primary schools appear out of scale for the size of a small child and look more intimidating than inviting. These walled complexes are also not commonly used outside of school hours and therefore are not used to their full potential as a place for continuing education and social gathering.

This project offers a new take on the environment of public schools in Mexico. It is sensitive to its location and believes in the role education plays in the lives of both children and adults. Its attention to detail explores the complex beauty of simplicity and the relationships that lead to a holistic learning environment



Design Based on Five Principles

1. The Courtyard: A very important aspect of Mexican culture. It can be used as a serene resting place or a social gathering place and is essential for natural ventilation and shade.
2. Colour and Plants: The bright and colourful tradition of Mexico can be seen in their abundant use of flowering trees and vines and the extensive use of brightly painted walls.
3. Intense light and use of Mineral Materials: The Mexican sun is a material in itself and changes the perception of coloured and rough textured walls throughout the day. The use of stone or volcanic rock (quite common in Mexico City) gives mass to the walls, which helps to combat the dry heat of the summer and the cooler winter evenings and mornings.
4. Luis Barragan's brilliant unification of the Mexican tradition and the modernist aesthetic.
5. Present day contemporary architecture.

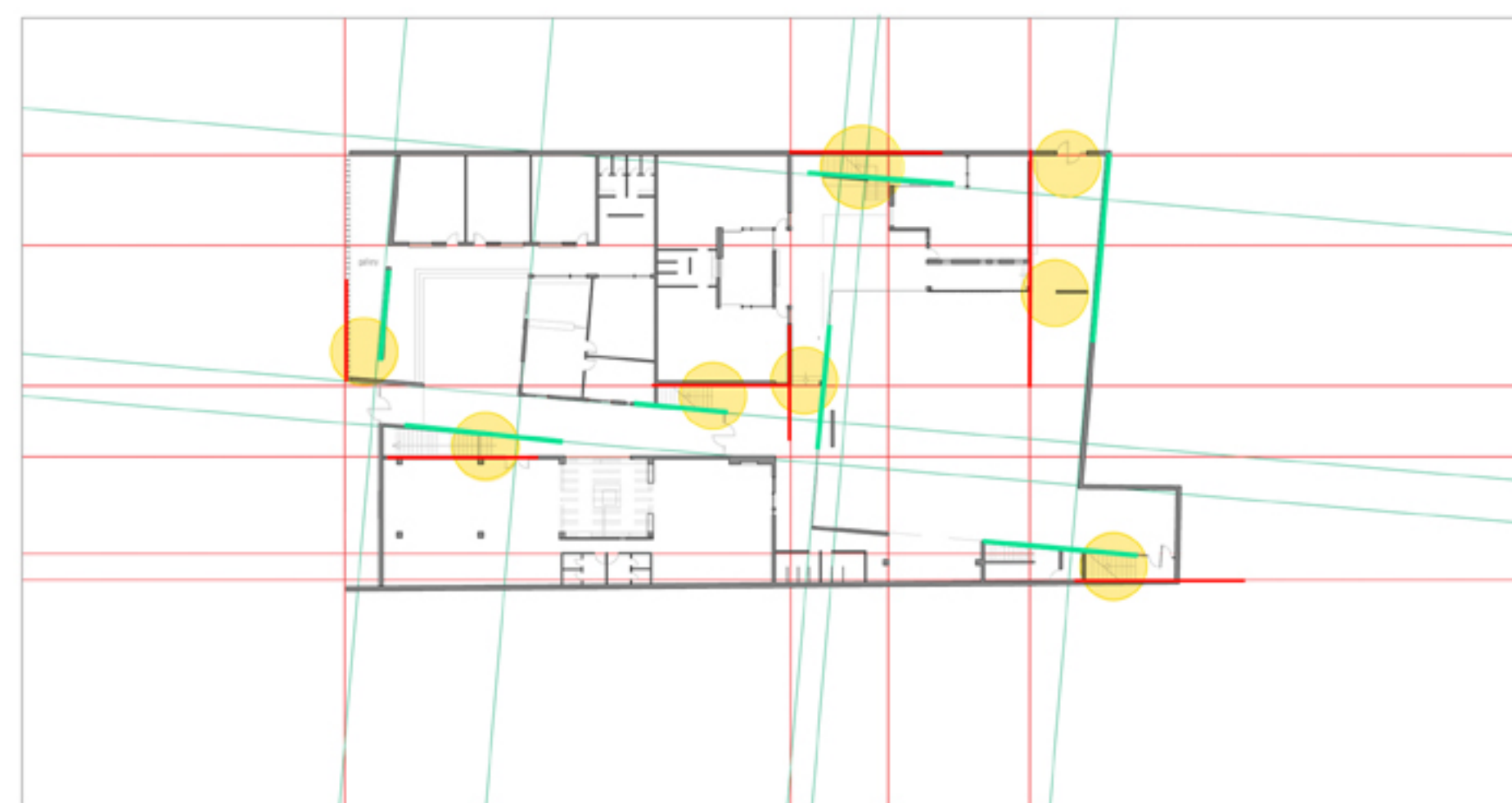
Design Strategy:

There is an inherent distinction between a child's perception and that of an adult. They are two worlds that are complexly interwoven and interdependent and cannot be uniformly attributed to one or the other. At times children display great maturity beyond what is commonly associated with their age, while adults have the capacity to revert momentarily to childhood. It is usually when these moments collide (between two people or within oneself) that the most profound insights are unleashed.

The urban organization of the area can be seen as a metaphor for this tension. It is a manifestation of two active forces: the ordered street grids laid out by the municipality and the loose organization of the inner houses and alleyways resulting from the people's appropriation of the area. This trend is very prevalent in Mexico City, as it is a city made up of little towns that each have their own urban fabric and logic. These two forces are expressed in the shape of the site.

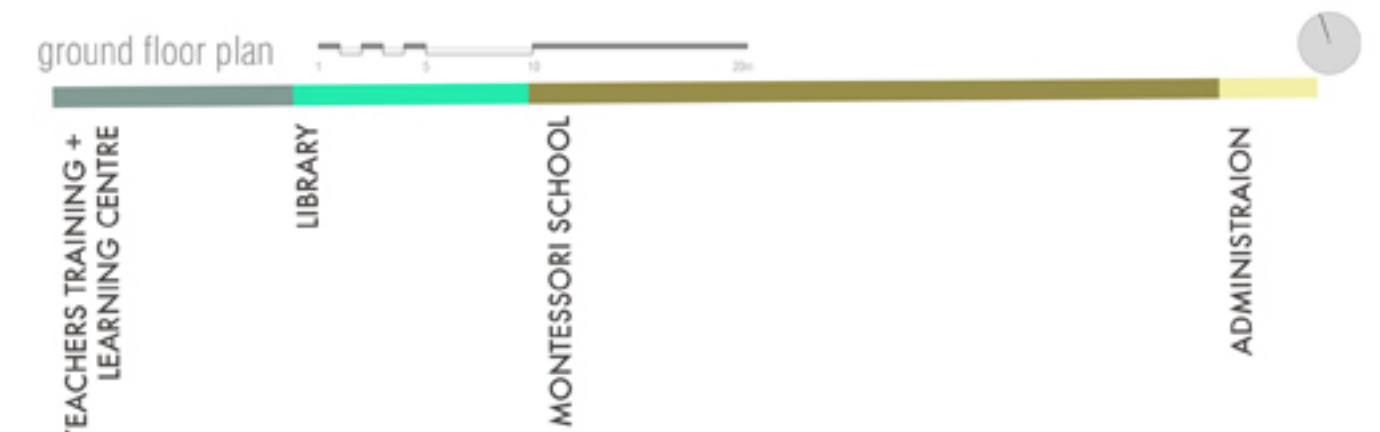
The plan expresses the tension between an orthogonal and a skewed organization. This interaction changes the expectations one has of the space and promotes discovery and learning. The design comes together under the rule that the convergence of two grids creates an opening to a new level. It is at this junction that we change heights or penetrate another area leading to unexpected directions.

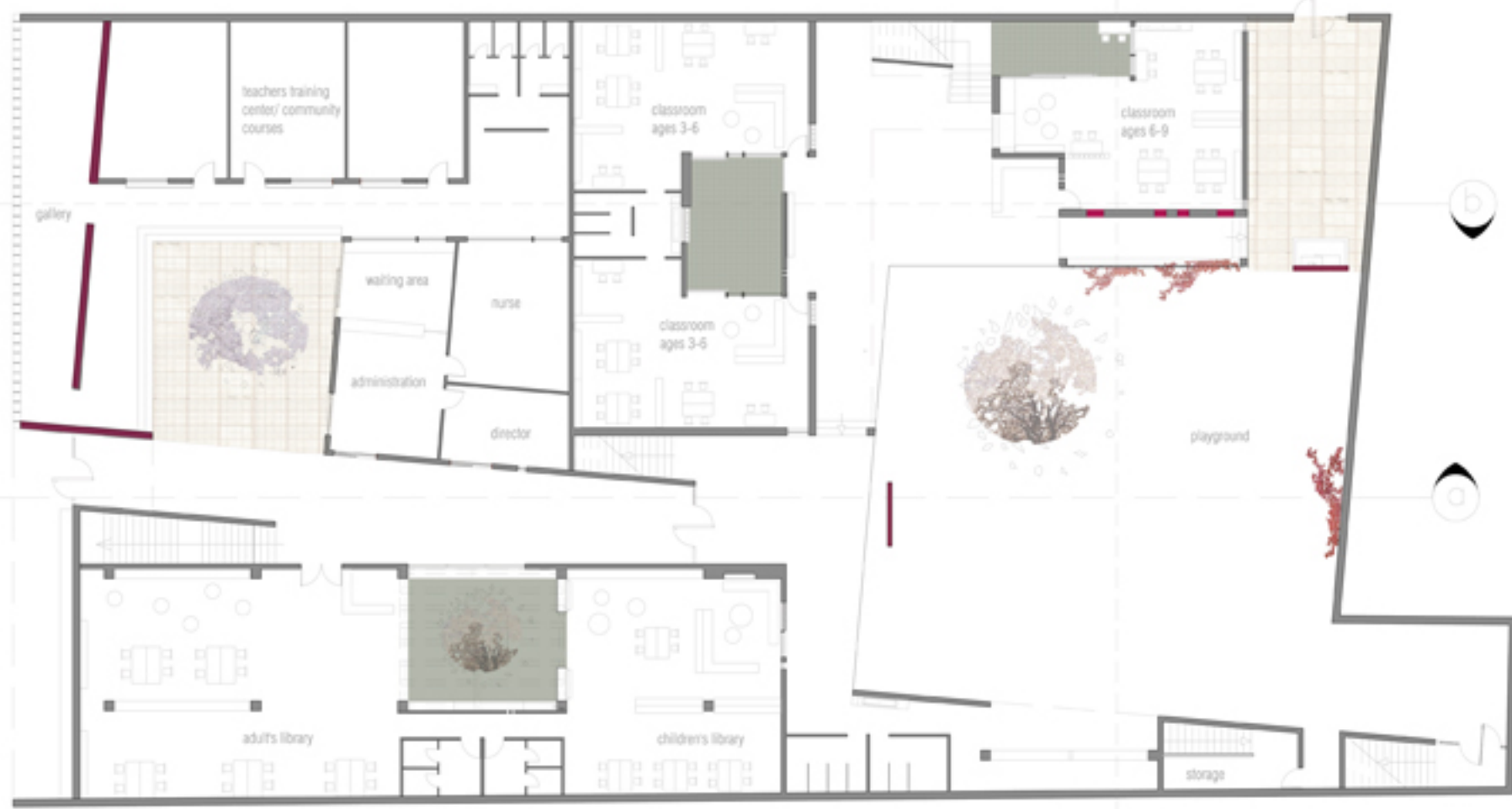
Because neither the child's perspective nor the adult's perspective belongs solely to either group, the grids are not representative of one or the other; it is the interaction between the two that is of importance.



- Nodes where the two grids create an opening.
- Ordered grid
- Disordered grid

ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

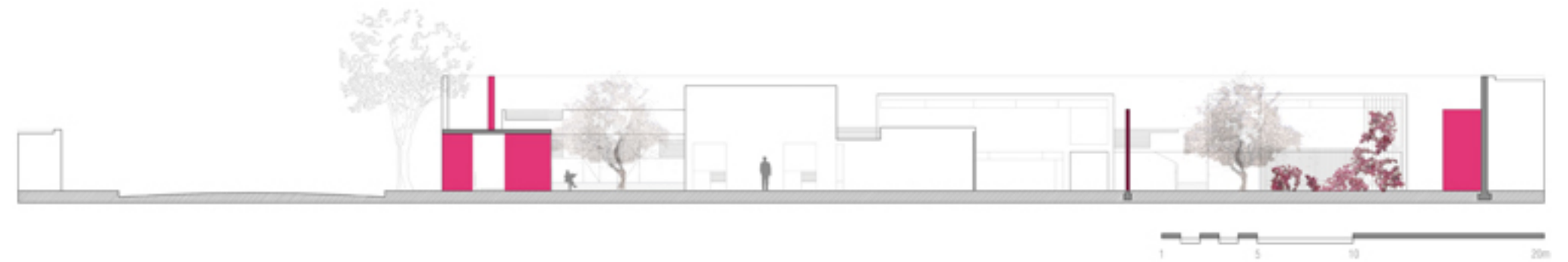




Ground Floor Plan



Northwest Elevation



Section aa



First Floor Plan



Section bb



Section cc



Administration Building: NW facade



Library: Interior courtyard facing children's section



Montessori School: SE facade (children's entrance)

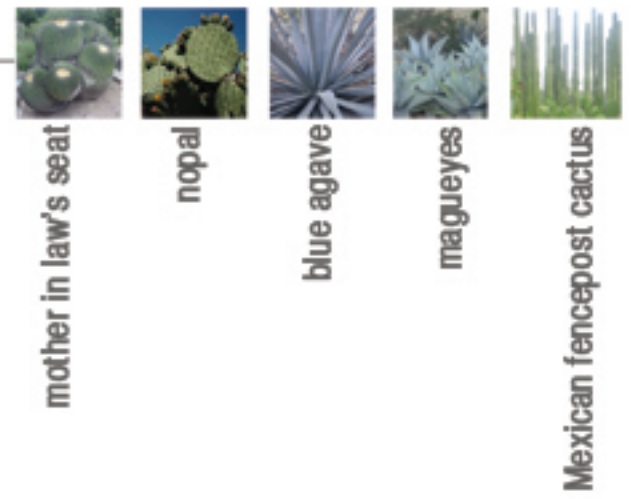
Vegetables, Herbs and Edible Flowers: Exploring Urban Agriculture



Flowering Trees: Exploring Colour



Cactus Garden: Exploring Shapes and Textures



roof plan

Fragrant Flowers: exploring scent

