

**Thickening the Threshold:**  
designing for communities of convergence  
in contemporary Brazil

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**Abstract**

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Pilgrimage is an act of convergence wherein individual desires coalesce into spontaneous communities. The formation of these communities is facilitated by the liminal quality of pilgrimage: its threshold state between the everyday and the extraordinary. It is this “between-ness” of the threshold, its state between states, that allows for freedom and possibility. The threshold is potentiality, and the act of pilgrimage is a state of threshold, with the pilgrim both part of and removed from the landscapes and communities he passes through.

Contemporary pilgrimages, which are gaining in popularity, must bring together more and different elements than ever before, enhancing the potential of liminality. Any landscape, any journey is composed of overlapping experiences of people, place, and culture. This thesis seeks to take advantage of and build upon existing moments of convergence, overlap, and transition, heightening their sense of threshold at all scales in the pursuit of community.

Using a strategy of overlap and juxtaposition to create liminal spaces, this project encourages moments of *communitas* at multiple scales. At the regional scale, a new pilgrimage route is proposed from Rio de Janeiro to Aparecida that acknowledges its urban context and creates overlapping moments of encounter with natural, historic, and cultural landscapes along the way. Within the hilltop city of Cunha, the demi-urban pilgrimage hotel becomes an exploration of thresholds: between individual and collective, pilgrim and resident, and artist and audience. These moments in-between act as catalysts for connection, providing pilgrims and locals alike with opportunities for interaction, community, and exchange.

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**to the road, for leading ever on.**





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## Preface

I am not Catholic. I am not Brazilian. What, then, led me here, to pilgrimage in Rio de Janeiro?

Though I am not Catholic, my mother is, and I have spent more years than most in Catholic school. Though I am not Brazilian, my family spans continents, faiths, ethnicities. I saw their faces in the shades of brown in Brazil.

Thanks to this family, I have an appreciation of and a fascination with culture, a need to seek out and understand the phenomena of people and place. More than that, though, I find myself on a constant quest for belonging. Thanks again to that family and to those years in Catholic school, I see religion as culture. In my mind, the two cannot be separated. Faith, culture, both are about community and one's place in the world.

A trip to Mexico City introduced the idea of pilgrimage as a modern act, a search for spirit and self. I followed the thread of this idea to Brazil, where pilgrimage is in the midst of a renaissance. Along the Caminho da Fé, I felt moments of intense belonging and equal solitude, often dependent on my surroundings.

It is my belief that architecture can encourage community and that it operates at multiple scales. To me, architecture is more than just a building. It is a spatial ordering that works from the level of furniture and travel brochures to the design of towns and highways. It has the power to facilitate interaction, stir emotions, link to people and place. For this thesis, I chose to explore the architecture of community, to test it at the level of path and pause.

I am not Catholic. I am not Brazilian. But *catholic* means universal, and Brazil is home to everyone. I am a traveler in the modern world, in search of my purpose and my people. This is a project about that journey and architecture's ability to bring us together today.



# 1. Introduction

## getting ready

We need the gap, the pulling away, not just of being, in its withdrawal, but of ourselves from the world of everyday concerns. This too is part of what sacred space opens up for and allows.  
—Robert Switzer

*Along the road, there were two experiences. I was walking the Caminho da Fé, a Roman Catholic pilgrimage in eastern Brazil. My first night, I stayed in a pousada just outside the small hamlet of São Roque. The space was humble, somewhere between a hostel and a family home. I was welcomed with open arms, a hot shower, a snack. My fellow pilgrims and I ate at a long table, sharing stories of the road. Afterwards, we watched TV with the family and talked about local affairs, the protests, the latest pop stars. The next morning, we parted with kisses and smiles, exchanging contact information and tips for the road ahead. Within the space of twelve hours, we had forged a fleeting community of pilgrims and locals, and we faced the day with joy.*

*Several days later, I arrived at a larger town at dusk. The only accommodations were at a small hotel in the center of town. Two men looked up from the TV as I walked in, grunted. One showed me to my room. I went out alone, looking for dinner, ate standing up at a snack bar. Afterwards, I came back to my room and watched telenovelas until I fell asleep. I didn't speak to anyone. In the morning, in the shared breakfast room, pilgrims and businesspeople ate in silence. I packed my bag and went out to the road alone. No one watched me leave.*

This is a project about pilgrimage in the modern world and the challenges presented when an ancient act takes place in contemporary space. What happens when the pilgrimage route must inevitably leave the hills and scattered farms and crash into the demi-urban fabric of small and larger towns? This investigation grew out of the jarring difference mentioned above between the community I experienced in the peripheral pousadas and the sense of anonymity and isolation at the urban hotels. Again and again, this difference expressed itself through spatial patterns that impacted my ability to feel connected to my fellow travelers, my hosts, and the place itself. Open doors and airy patios in the rural lodgings lent themselves to lingering meals, neighbors dropping by, and connections with the natural environment as birds flew past, cats wrapped around ankles, and wind blew in the trees. Personal touches and local curios in the rooms gave a sense of home, of personality and the culture of the place. Long tables brought



1.1: Pilgrimage modern

different group of travelers and locals together and comfortable sofas in shared lounges kept the conversation going long after dinner. Even the shared bathing facilities were an opportunity for interaction, to learn something about one's fellow travelers. In urban accommodations, rooms were reached by long, closed corridors. Each room had usually had a TV and a bathroom, removing the possibility for casual encounters. There were no dinner facilities and the breakfast rooms had small tables and loud TVs, perfect for isolation. A lack of common spaces prevented guests from getting to know each other, and the bare, anonymous furnishings and thick shutters of the rooms provided no ties to the local culture and context. For all the connection they created to people and place, these rooms could have been anywhere, their inhabitants anyone.

These spatial qualities are threshold moments, those which blur the distinction or mark the transition between states: inside and outside, individual and communal, pilgrim and local. As a defense mechanism, urban thresholds were often more severe, clearly delineating the boundary between what is mine and yours, safe and unknown. In rural areas, the thresholds were more gradual as inside bled into outside on the dining porch and pilgrim interacted with local in the kitchen. These thickened thresholds, instead of sharply defining the two states, allowed them to coexist, to converge. In that moment of convergence, community and connection were possible. That is where this thesis begins, in that threshold moment where all is possible. This is an exploration of the space between.

## **The threshold**

Connection occurs between spaces. In thresholds and doorways, one is drawn into conversations and confidences. A moment of convergence between two states, the threshold is simultaneously both states and neither, a space of openness and possibility suspended from daily structures. This is why one often feels freer to express thoughts and emotions with one foot on the stairs or out the door. The "statelessness" of the

**thresh-old:** both a time and a place

the place or point of beginning; the outset;  
the starting point of an experience or event

a region marking a boundary; the line between  
two states

**con-ver-gence:** both an action and a place

the act of bringing two or more things into contact; the act of joining together

the point of converging; a meeting place (a town at the convergence of two rivers)

threshold and the freedom it provides from quotidian cares allows for the formation of ephemeral communities. All travel is a form of threshold, with the traveler both part of and removed from the landscapes he passes through. However, pilgrimage is the most extreme in its expression of spatial and temporal dislocation as the pilgrim finds himself somewhere between the everyday and the extraordinary for the duration of his journey. In a prolonged state of intense and purposeful remove from everyday places and practices, the liminal space of pilgrimage fosters the creation of deep and instantaneous bonds, while simultaneously providing for personal growth and reflection.

Pilgrimage is experiencing a renaissance in the modern world, a world that is increasingly urban. Again the question: what happens when an ancient act occurs in the modern world? How to maintain a sense of threshold and porous boundaries in the crowded and sometimes dangerous realm of the modern city? Taking the idea of thresholds as facilitators for community, this thesis uses a strategy of overlap and convergence to create liminal spaces within a typical urban development. The typology of the demi-urban hotel is transformed into an exploration of thresholds: between individual and communal, pilgrim and local, and permanence and impermanence. The moments when these states overlap serve as catalysts for connection, providing pilgrims and residents alike with opportunities for interaction, community, and exchange.

### **The project**

Much like a pilgrimage, the project is structured in terms of path and pause. At the level of the path, a new pilgrimage route is proposed that celebrates the urban nature of modern pilgrimage and aims to connect pilgrims to the cultural, historical, and natural landscape of Rio de Janeiro state by taking advantage of and enhancing existing moments of convergence, overlap, and transition. At the level of pause, an urban pousada is designed, a pilgrimage hotel which provides food, lodging, and communal as well as individual space for the pilgrim who stops for the night. In an effort to

strengthen ties between pilgrim and local communities, residents are introduced to the project in specific ways, and elements of local culture are incorporated into the space. By employing a strategy of programmatic and architectural thresholds as catalysts for connection, the goal is to create a space that provides the porous boundaries and communal interactions of rural lodgings within an urban context.

### The site

Brazil presented itself as the ideal location for this project. As the largest Catholic country in the world and a nation in the midst of rapid development and modernization, it provides the perfect testing ground for an investigation into the meaning of pilgrimage in the modern world. Furthermore, for a project focused on threshold states and moments of convergence, there is no better place than Brazil. The nation is known for its racial and cultural heterogeneity as well as its socio-economic in-equality. The richest of the rich live here, but so too do the poorest of the poor, all in close proximity. No city better encapsulates this national mish-mash than Rio de Janeiro, which serves as the literal and conceptual point of departure for this project.

Rio lies on the geographic threshold between land and sea, stretching itself out along the coastline. Like other cities in Brazil, it is home to a population in every shade of brown. Racial awareness and discrimination certainly exist, but so too does racial integration, with all colors of cariocas—the word for a resident of Rio de Janeiro—working and playing side by side. Here in Rio, the confluence of rich and poor is more evident than in other cities, with the lower-class favelas sprinkled liberally through more wealthy areas and rich and poor interacting in sometimes uneasy companionship on the streets and at the beach. No matter one's color or class, all join together on the beach and to celebrate the national pastimes of soccer and samba. It is a colorful city, a vibrant city, a modern city on the move, and a perfect location for this exploration of contemporary convergence.



1.2: Threshold, Rio de Janeiro

Thanks to the generous support of the John Morse Fellowship for International Travel, I was able to spend five weeks in Brazil from June to July of 2013. During this time, I visited the major contemporary cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo and experienced modern Brazilian pilgrimage firsthand, as I walked 362km of the Caminho da Fé (described in Chapter 2). This project is grounded in field research conducted during that time, as I gained invaluable insights into contemporary Brazil, the act of pilgrimage, and the moments of convergence and of concern in Brazil's urban centers and growing network of pilgrimage routes. My sincerest thanks to John Morse and his family for making this project possible.

### **The road ahead**

Throughout this thesis, multiple scales and methods are used to explore the design challenge of urban pilgrimage. Chapter 2 opens with a discussion of contemporary pilgrimage. It introduces the concepts of liminality and *communitas* and shows the difficulty of cultivating *communitas* in an urban setting. It offers examples illustrating ways in which people have already begun to tackle the issue of pilgrimage and alternative accommodation models. Chapter 3 describes the methodology employed throughout the project, including guiding principles and goals at both scales. Chapter 4 lays out the path, setting it in its natural and cultural context and highlighting its moments of allusion and convergence. Chapter 5 addresses the choice of Cunha as the site for the urban *pousada*. It looks at its cultural and spatial identity, ultimately selecting a project site. Chapter 6 dives into the design of the pause, of the urban way stop that is at the heart of this thesis as it aims to create a space of safety and connection for pilgrims and locals alike. Finally, Chapter 7 summarizes the project, providing a series of conclusions and reflections upon the process.



## 2. Framework setting out

The decision to go on pilgrimage takes place within the individual but brings him into fellowship with like-minded souls, both on the way and at the shrine. The social dimension is generated by the individual's choice, multiplied many times.  
—Victor Turner

*One night, in a farmhouse in the foothills, I shared dinner with my hosts. I was the only guest that night, so I ate as part of the family. Three generations shared the table; the food was simple, plentiful. A neighbor brought over a bottle of his wine, fresh-pressed from flowers in his fields. We enjoyed it for dessert. Later, in the family room, Maria turned up the radio. This song goes out to a pilgrim from Washington, staying in the house of Maria tonight. They were talking about me, me, on the radio, this special station for pilgrims. Nirvana—of course—came on the air. On the other side of the world, I listened to “Come as You Are,” suddenly home again, home in Seattle, home here, in Brazil with this family, these neighbors, this network of pilgrims and locals.*

Pilgrimage is an act of convergence wherein individual desires coalesce into spontaneous communities. Since their inception, pilgrimages have brought together travelers from all walks of life, journeying for a variety of motivations. On the road, all are welcome and all interact. The journey is open to all, and all are temporarily released from the usual bonds and barriers of society. New communities form based on shared moments and needs along the road. Victor Turner characterizes a pilgrimage as “a field of social relations and cultural contexts of the most diverse types, formal and informal, orthodox and heterodox, dogmatic and mythical, often juxtaposed rather than fused, interrelated, or systematized” (106). Today, that diversity and overlapping of individuals and values is heightened, as contemporary pilgrimage means and offers more things to more travelers.

Ultimately, one undertakes a pilgrimage with the goal of connection. It is a journey made as a reaffirmation of faith, a test of personal strength and character. It is a way of reconnecting to self and spirit. More than that, though, it is also an intimate and unique way to connect with one's fellow travelers and with the people, cultures, and landscapes one encounters along the road. This desire for connection is stronger

2.1: Cattle tracks in the snow capture the convergence of individual paths

than ever in a disjointed and digital modern society. Pilgrimage's ability to provide moments of connection, while simultaneously engaging the traveler in an individual quest, accounts for much of its popularity in recent years. The community that springs up along the road maintains individual identities and desires, but also allows for their cohesion into something resembling the collective. This collective experience is known as *communitas*, and it manifests itself in the spontaneous communities that are created at way stations and along the pilgrimage road.

### **Communitas on the road**

Communitas is the feeling of togetherness and kinship one experiences when outside of ordinary structures. It is the group of strangers suddenly united in the stadium as they cheer for the same team. It is the tourists who meet at the same bar and spend the rest of the trip together. It appears in art and religion: a feeling of possibility and instant connection. It is "a relational quality of full unmediated communication, even communion, between definite and determinate identities which arises spontaneously... it does not merge identities; it liberates them from conformity to general norms. It is a spring of pure possibility" (Turner 250-1).

The formation of communitas relies on a state of openness and possibility. It is only when one is liberated from daily concerns and structures that one is able to engage at the level of communitas. This is why these experiences of connection happen when one is removed from one's typical context: on vacation, at church, at a game, on a pilgrimage. Structure and communitas are opposing forces. Communitas is the breakdown of the normal social structure, and structure is the codifying of communitas. Thus, one rarely feels communitas in the city center or at the grocery store; it flourishes in moments of physical and social marginality. These are moments of liminality, where one is between states or outside of boundaries, in a threshold condition where opposing states intersect, a space that is of both states and neither, a grey zone of potentiality.

The thoughtful and solitary walker finds a strange intoxication in this universal communion. He who can easily adopt the crowd knows feverish joys... That which men call love is so small, so restrained, so weak, compared to that ineffable orgy, that holy prostitution of the soul which gives itself completely, poetry and passion, to the unexpected that appears, to the stranger who passes.

—Charles Baudelaire, "Les Foules"



2.2: Beaches are liminal spaces, caught between land and sea, something more and different than either.

## Liminality

Liminality comes from the Latin word for threshold or boundary: *limes*. To be liminal is to be or to pertain to the threshold or initial stage of a process. Liminality, thus, is both spatial and temporal: a state “betwixt and between” familiar space and time (Andrews and Roberts 1-2). It is a moment and a place of transition, of actively moving from one state to the next or out of and back to one’s typical state. As such, liminality is not strictly peripheral. It doesn’t deal with edges as they bleed out into nothingness, but rather edges as they give way to something other, edges in contact and in conflict, edges in convergence (Thomassen 21-2). Liminality is not marginality, for it is not static. Implicit in liminality is motion, an act of transition, of crossing over and beyond. Liminality is the moment and place of crossing, the spatial and temporal threshold, the instance of  $\neg\neg$ both-and where both sides are present, or none are, and all is possibility. Few rituals better embody the state of liminality than pilgrimage.

“The pilgrimage,” writes Thomassen, “is an emblematic case of liminality because it so evidently represents both a spatial and temporal (and more/social) separation from the ordinary” (28). In the beginning of this section, pilgrimage was introduced as a collective grouping of individuals that results in messy, harmonious moments of convergence. As we have seen, the spontaneous communities of distinct individuals that arise on pilgrimage can be viewed as examples of *communitas*. The reason these communities are able to arise so naturally on pilgrimage, as well as the reason that all feel welcome and liberated to engage with differing groups while on the road, is that pilgrimage occurs outside of the constraints of normal society. It is this liminal quality of pilgrimage that facilitates the experience of *communitas*, as it frees pilgrims from everyday structures, allowing them to be more receptive to possibilities and the connections that arise while on the move.

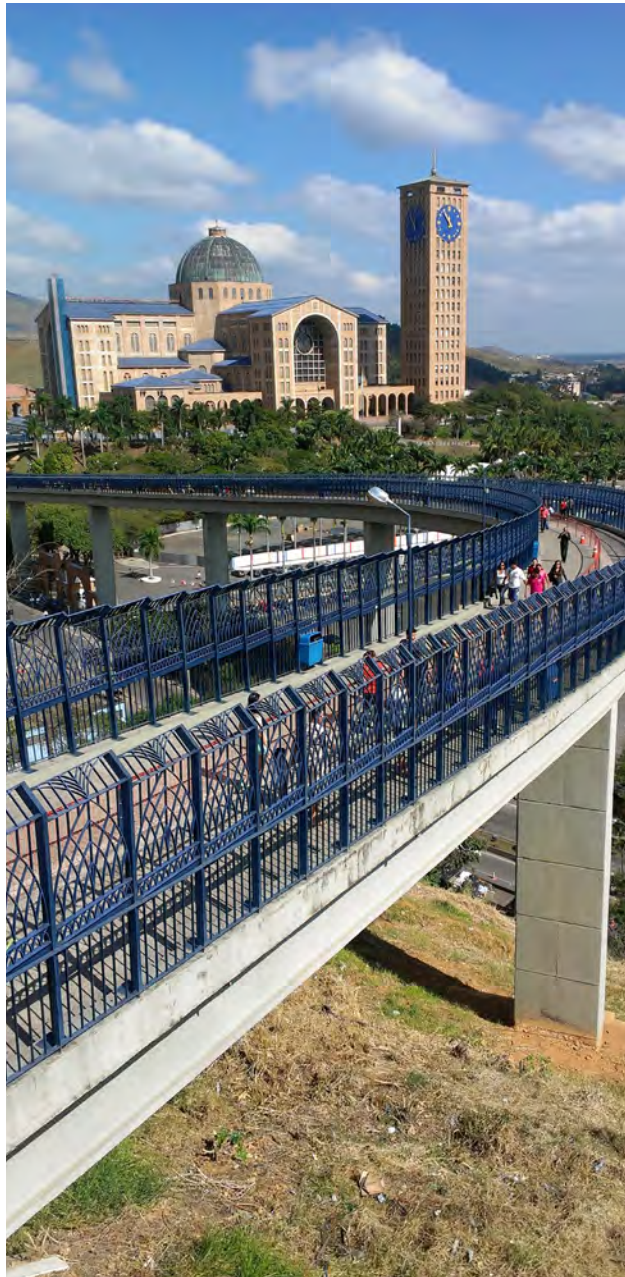
The paradoxical need for separation to feel connection is not a new phenomenon. Writing in 1973, Raymond Williams describes the liminal state of travel and the

connection that, contradictorily, arises from isolation:

From the late eighteenth century onwards, it is no longer from the practice of community but from being a wanderer that the instinct of fellow-feeling is derived. Thus an essential isolation and silence and loneliness become the carriers of nature and community against the rigours, the cold abstinence, the selfish ease of ordinary society. (34)

Here we see the power of the place apart to encourage the community and connections that escape us in daily life. It is for this reason that so many feel communal solidarity with the near strangers they encounter in the in-between state of pilgrimage, instead of avoiding them or shutting them out as they would in the quotidian spaces of the city and everyday life.

In the last decade or so, Brazil has seen a resurgence of interest in pilgrimage, and old, unofficial paths have gained infrastructure and popularity. New routes, too, have been created. Of these, one of the most popular is the Caminho da Fé. In July 2013, I walked 362km of the Caminho da Fé, from São Sebastião da Gramma to the basilica at Aparecida. The journey took me just under two weeks. During this time, I climbed mountains, crossed rivers, visited the highest city in Brazil, and met a full pantheon of warm and colorful characters, many of whom were cows. The following case study is drawn from this experience as well as research conducted before and after the event.



2.3: The basilica at Aparecida, terminus of the Caminho da Fé pilgrimage

### Case Study: Caminho da Fé

Established in 2003, the Caminho da Fé (the Walk of Faith) was founded to facilitate the pilgrimage to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida. The basilica, which was consecrated in 1980, lies in the easternmost corner of São Paulo state and is dedicated to Our Lady Aparecida, the patron saint of Brazil. It is arguably the most important religious site in the country. When Pope Francisco visited Brazil in July 2013, his first Mass was given in the basilica, which is second only to St. Peter's in size. For Brazilian Catholics and those who follow other Christian denominations, the basilica is the heart of Brazilian faith. Every year, it receives thousands of visitors, and since 2011, has become the greatest Marian pilgrimage center in the world, surpassing even Lourdes and Guadalupe. It was only logical that the Caminho da Fé chose this site as its terminus.

The founder, Almiro Grings, had twice completed the Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage in Spain and was inspired by these experiences and by those of Brazilian author Paulo Coelho, who wrote about his time on the road to Santiago de Compostela in *The Pilgrimage*, to create something similar in Brazil. Together with his friends Clóvis Tavares de Lima and Iracema Tamashiro, he reached out to local governments, gathered volunteers, and founded the Associação dos Amigos do Caminho da Fé. On February 11, 2003, the Caminho da Fé was inaugurated.

The creation of a pilgrimage is no simple task. Headquartered in Aguas da Prata, a small town in northeastern São Paulo state, the organizers plotted a route to connect Aguas da Prata to Aparecida do Norte. Their goal was that the route be “logical and non-political.” Using this guideline, they sketched out a route of nearly 500km. Three branches—West, North, and Northwest—begin in São Carlos, Cravinhos, and Mococa, respectively, and converge at Aguas da Prata. From this point, the Caminho da Fé continues some 250km southeast along the Mantiqueira mountain range, climbing up to Campos do Jordão, the highest and one of the coldest cities in Brazil, before



2.4: The Caminho da Fé



2.5: Signs along the Caminho da Fé point pilgrims in the right direction.

descending across the Paraíba valley and finally terminating at Aparecida.

The route is often promoted as a journey of faith and love for nature. It caters to walkers and bikers and takes pilgrims through field and pasture, sometimes following main roads, but more often using a network of private access routes, dirt roads, and trails. The way is marked by hundreds of yellow arrows painted on trees, walls, and fence posts. The arrows guide pilgrims into and out of towns, lead them to rest areas and hotels, and help them navigate the twists and turns of rural roads. Every 2km, a sign is posted listing the distance remaining to Aparecida. At intervals of about 20km, pilgrims find way stops or pousadas where they can get their credential stamped, stop for dinner, and stay the night. The average pilgrim walks 20-30km a day, which determined the spacing of the pousadas as the route was being created. Depending on where the pilgrims begin, the route takes roughly 17-21 days on foot or 8-10 day biking.

Over the past 10 years, some 25,000 pilgrims have followed the yellow arrows of the Caminho da Fé. In the words of the organizers, the pilgrimage provides moments of faith and reflection, connection to nature, and physical and mental health benefits. They state:

Seguindo sempre as setas amarelas, o peregrino vai reforçando sua fé observando a natureza privilegiada, superando as dificuldades do Caminho que é a síntese da própria vida. Aprende que o pouco que necessita cabe na mochila e vai despojando-se do supérfluo.

Exercitando a capacidade de ser humilde, compreenderá a simplicidade das pousadas e das refeições. Em cada parada, estará contribuindo para o desenvolvimento econômico e social das pequenas cidades e propiciando a integração cultural de seus habitantes com a dos peregrinos oriundos de todas as regiões do Brasil e de diferentes partes do mundo.

Always following the yellow arrows, the pilgrim reinforces his faith. Observing the spectacular nature helps to overcome the difficulties of the trail which is a reflection of daily life. The pilgrim learns that all she needs fits in a backpack and rids herself of the superfluous.

Exercising their humility, pilgrims understand and appreciate the simplicity of the lodgings and meals along the route. At each stop, they contribute to the economic and

social development of the towns and facilitate the cultural integration of the locals with the pilgrims who come from all regions of Brazil and from all over the world. (“O Caminho da Fé” )

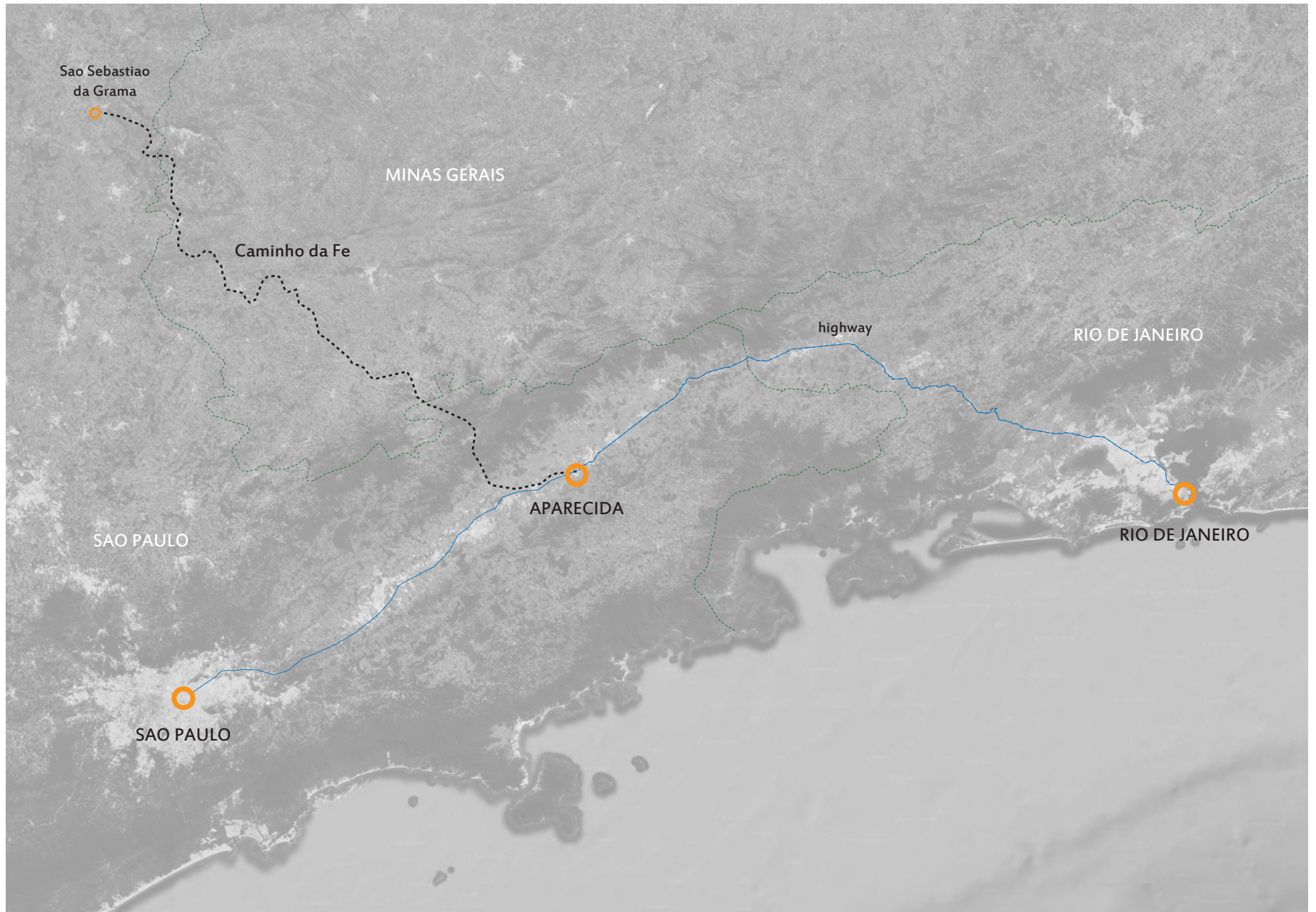
Pilgrims undertake the journey for a variety of reasons. Most travel for the uniqueness of the experience, to spend time outdoors, to test their bodies, and to see a new part of Brazil in a new and intimate way. As one gets closer to Aparecida, the number of religious pilgrims increases. In the earlier stages of the pilgrimage, pilgrims are more likely to travel for secular reasons, yet there is an underlying spirituality to the path, making nearly everyone you meet *boa gente*, or good people. The spirit of route infuses the voyage whether one is religious or not.

Generally people travel in small groups, though some large organizations make the trek annually and others go by themselves for a more self-reflective experience. Biking and walking are equally common; though, since the route is so long, many people undertake the pilgrimage in stages. Some pilgrims complete half of the pilgrimage one year, then the other half the next. Others go when they have a long weekend, travelling the road bit by bit. The Caminho is a vacation as much as it is a spiritual exercise. Though the official feast day for Our Lady Aparecida is October 12th, the busiest time for the Caminho da Fé is in the month of July, when Brazilians typically have winter vacations and the temperatures are cooler and drier.

The Caminho da Fé does an excellent job of providing infrastructure and guiding pilgrims through a remote section of Brazil. However, it does little to address the cultural history of the land it crosses. The focus is on a connection to nature, despite the Association’s goal of promoting cultural exchange between pilgrims and locals. Furthermore, the route begins in small, distant cities. The majority of pilgrims must travel to São Paulo, then take a several hour bus ride to get to the points of departure. It’s nearly a pilgrimage in itself just to get to the starting locations. Though this decision makes sense in light of taking people out into nature and providing a connection with the landscape, it both reduces accessibility to the route and denies the pilgrimage’s



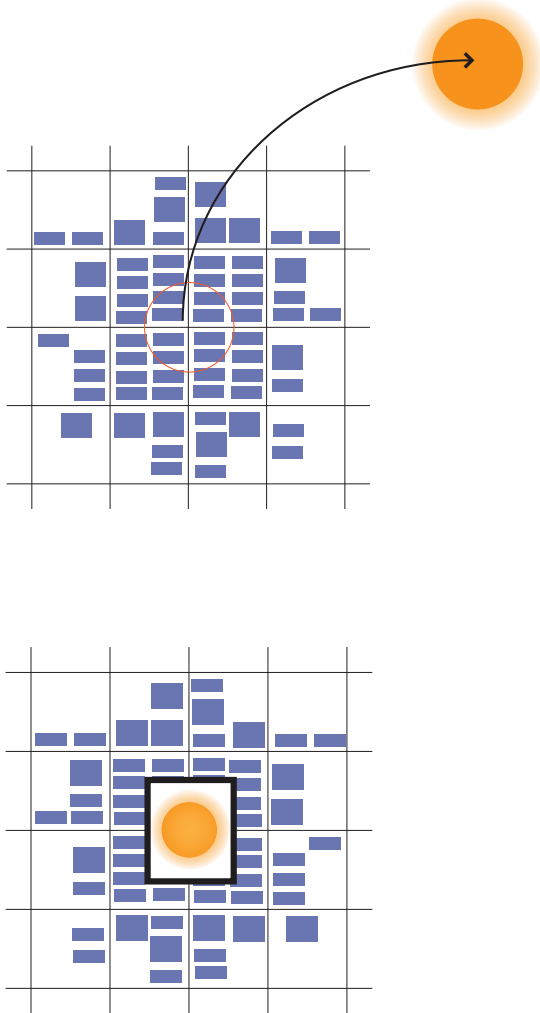
2.6-8: Pilgrims along the Caminho da Fé



2.9: The Caminho begins in rural areas far from any major cities.

founding in the modern, urban era. The majority of pilgrims are from São Paulo state and the bulk of the route is strictly rural. There is a need for an alternative path, one that has the ability to provide more people with the experience of pilgrimage as well as speaking to the cultural context of the route (information in this section from da Silva, “Informações Importantes,” and “O Caminho da Fé”).

A modern-day pilgrimage cannot be confined to the margins and periphery of society. It must, by necessity and practicality, engage with the urban environment. Where historical pilgrimages—and even the ultra-new Caminho da Fé—drew pilgrims in from fields and forests, guiding them across the country before depositing them at their final destination, a contemporary pilgrimage must gather its followers from the cities, and, even if most of the route is pastoral, it is inevitable that the pilgrims will at some point intersect with a city and all its reminders of ordinary life. How to maintain a sense of liminality in this situation? How to continue the easy communion of the road and the country when one is in the city, with all one’s typical barriers and protections engaged?



## Urban communitas

The pursuit of communitas has traditionally taken two forms. The first is that of seclusion. This is the simple answer: remove the community and the individuals from the city. Place the monastery on a mountaintop, at the edge of the forest, on the borders of the world. Here, in isolation, community grows up quickly and out of necessity. But this is not an urban solution. This is a physical denial of the urban condition, a spatial remove from the city. The second form, sequestering, also denies the urban sphere. In this case, the community is located in the city or town. The denial is not spatial so much as spiritual. In this case, thick walls are erected, doors are barred, and the community faces inward, able to engage in communitas, but only at the expense of the urban community that surrounds them. From this approach arises the cloister typology so common in monasteries and holy spaces throughout the world. The cloister gives its denizens the convenience and access of more central living, but allows them to pursue a sense of community by denying that urban context. This project searches for a third approach.

The powerful liminality of the pilgrimage experience is such that it should be able to withstand the pressures of typical urban space. Communitas can happen in cities, as we see in churches, theatres, and sports stadiums. In each instance, controlled proximity to strangers and connection over some higher issue, be it art, faith, or sport, allows communitas to flourish despite the urban setting. Spatially, each of these venues is also a space apart from the typical experience of urban space, places one visits for a proscribed period of time and not every day. Another such space, which offers temporary respite and the potential for connection is the hotel.

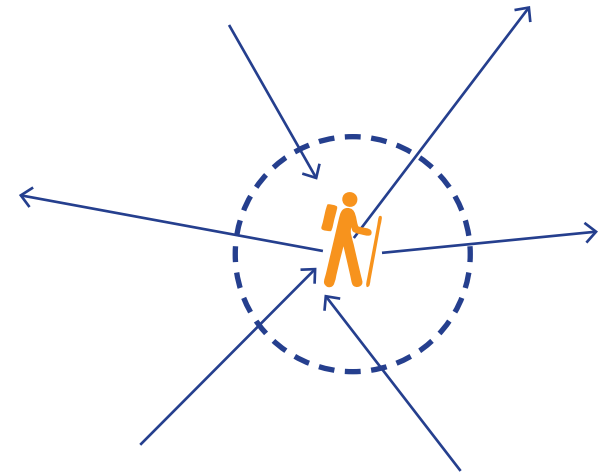
2.10-11: Seclusion (above) flees the urban context.  
Cloistering (below) shuts out the urban context

## The pilgrimage hotel

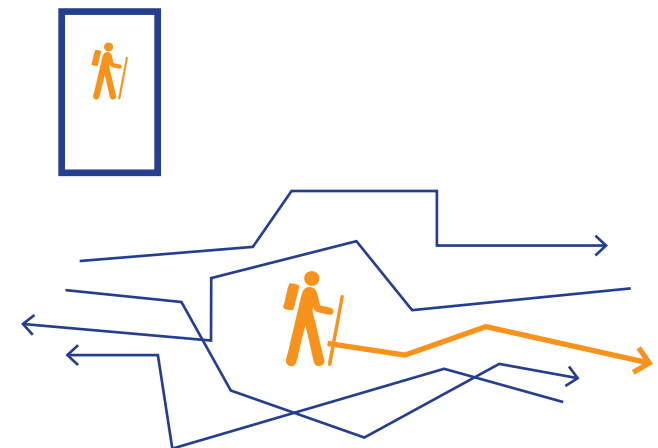
The hotel is an essential component to any pilgrimage. The first hotels grew up along the ancient routes to Rome, Mecca, and Jerusalem, providing spaces of shelter and moments of pause for those who made the journey. These early inns and hotels created the model that rural retreats and pilgrimage pousadas—the Brazilian term for inn, typically combining traits of a hostel and a bed and breakfast—follow to this day: communal meals offered in-house, shared and private rooms, and a chance to talk with the innkeeper and fellow travelers, catching up with the news of the day and connecting with friends new and old.

As a space for tourists and people on the move, a hotel is a spatial threshold, constantly in a state of transition and flux. The hotel has the sensation of being a place apart, where couples go to celebrate anniversaries, high schoolers hold prom after-parties, and tourists find excitement and sanctuary in a new city. These are events that happen outside of the normal societal bounds—the hotel provides the spatial location for these temporal experiences. What is unique about the hotel, like churches, theatres, and stadia, is that it is a liminal, threshold space that occurs within the structures of daily life. In many ways, a hotel is just a business. It is what Pritchard and Morgan call a “closed and civilized” space. Yet, the hotel is not merely civilized. “Whilst the hotel,” they continue, “is subject to the same laws and mores which govern our lives elsewhere, it is also seemingly a place of anonymity where guests can ‘disappear’ and where the normal social conventions can be challenged and flouted” (764). In this way, the hotel can be seen to share some of the qualities of pilgrimage, which also challenges normal social conventions, opens guests to a sense of possibility, and brings together disparate groups of people.

However, in the city, it is the feeling of anonymity that opens the traveler up to possibility, rather than the moments of collective interaction that characterize the rural pousada and allow for experiences of *communitas*. Typically, the strength of the



2.12: Rural accommodations have porous boundaries and communal spaces which facilitate connections.



2.13: Urban accommodations with limited shared space and solid barriers as defenses against the chaos outside.



2.14-15: Porous rural lodgings (above) in contrast to closed-in urban spaces (below)

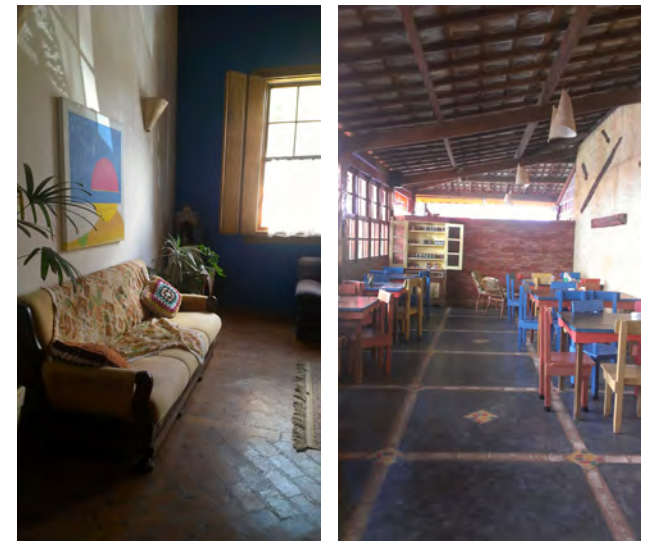
contemporary urban hotel is that which Pritchard and Morgan mention above: it offers a place to disappear. The anonymity of the urban hotel arises as a defense mechanism against the pressures of the city. In a crowd of strangers, it is safer to be unknown. With this anonymity, the guest is able to disengage from society. Removed from its strictures and censure, anything could happen, leading to the link that exists between hotels and illicit practices. This, too, is the pure potentiality of the threshold, but its foundation in a sense of isolation and withdrawal make it anathema to the idea of *communitas*.

It is my belief that this anonymity and lack of personal interaction is what leads to the loneliness and transgression of the urban hotel. As mentioned above, while I was walking the pilgrimage route, my loneliest and most dissatisfied moments occurred in the cities. Stopping for the night at a hotel where I was a faceless transient, setting out in search of dinner alone on night-dark streets, coming back to a television in a solitary room: this was the antithesis of the sense of belonging and spontaneous community I felt at the more intimate, rural stops. And I was not the only one. In *The Art of Travel*, Alain de Botton writes, “In this crowded, anxious sphere, it seemed harder than it did on an isolated homestead to begin sincere relationships with others” (136). On these isolated homesteads, lacking the defensive anonymity of the urban hotel, it was the interaction with host and traveler and the balance of communal and individual space that allowed for moments of connection and a feeling of well-being, a sense of being part of something greater: *communitas*. In my research, I came across several projects which strove to create community in an urban setting. The first of these was the Hotel Pousada da Praça, which I encountered along the Caminho da Fé.

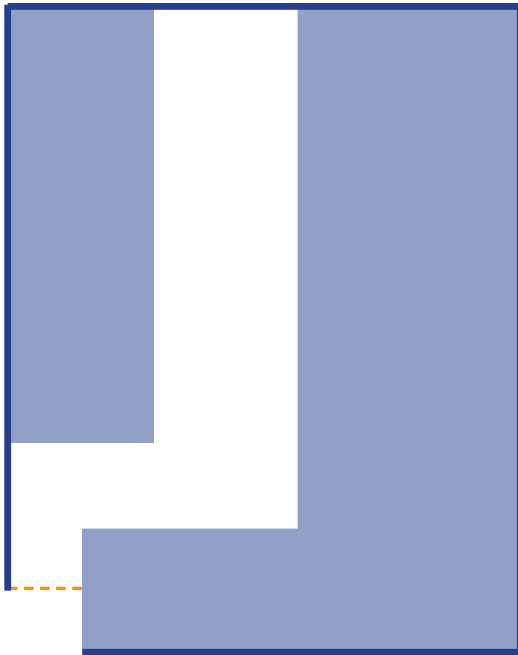
### Case study: Hotel Pousada da Praça

In walking the Caminho da Fé, I had the opportunity to experience a wide range of pilgrimage accommodations first hand. These ranged from a simple family farmhouse to a charming bed and breakfast to an utterly miserable downtown hotel. Of all the accommodations I experienced, the Hotel Pousada da Praça came the closest to providing an intimate space for spontaneous communities in an urban setting.

The Hotel Pousada da Praça is in a restored, 100-year old building slightly removed from the main church plaza in Paraisópolis. Like its name suggests, it balances elements of a hotel with those of a pousada. The program is arranged in two components framing a lush inner courtyard. One is an L housing reception and activities related to rest and recreation: the rooms and shared common spaces for the guests. It has two stories devoted to guest rooms—giving it a capacity beyond the typical pousada—and offers a variety of accommodations including shared rooms, double rooms, and several private rooms with their own balconies. This leads to a diversity of lodging options and an excellent blend of individual and communal space. The second, smaller zone is a bar containing the communal dining area, the kitchen, and other service spaces. In the courtyard between the two halves of the building, covered and uncovered open space provides guests with a variety of options for interaction and relaxation. Unlike a typical pousada, the staff does not sleep on site, but they are small enough that they give a friendly, family air to the whole experience. The hotel is beautifully decorated by a local designer with strong colors and eclectic furnishings that make the space feel more special than the normal lodgings. It is a small thing, but it seems that the care taken on the interiors encourages others to take the same care and respect with each other. Furthermore, local art has been carefully incorporated throughout the space. For the tired traveler who does not have the time to explore the town, this offers a simple and effective way of experiencing the local culture and flavor of the place (“Sobre a Pousada”).



2.16-18: The inner courtyard (above) and lounge and dining areas (below) of the Hotel Pousada da Praça



This hybrid hotel-pousada balances individual and communal needs in a bright, relaxing atmosphere. It takes advantage of the climate to provide interior, exterior, and transition spaces whose diversity allows for a wide range of activities. Having a second story and a non-live-in staff increases its capacity, making it more appropriate for the urban setting. A sense of community and tranquility reign inside. However, this is primarily accomplished by ignoring its urban environment. The Hotel Pousada da Praça, though located just steps away from the heart of the city, is extremely inwardly-focused. Their approach to creating sanctuary and fostering *communitas* has been to shut out the urban activity that surrounds them. I would like to see if it is possible to experience the same sense of *communitas* while embracing an urban context.

#### Case study: Neri & Hu projects

Two projects by the Neri & Hu Design and Research Office layer individual and communal spaces to create instances of overlap and transition to great effect. Both are inspired by the traditional Chinese courtyard house, which addresses issues of periphery and center and must accommodate several families and generations in one space, providing moments for privacy and gathering. The Cluny House in Singapore lifts private elements off the ground, creating an open and communal lower level. Double-height spaces create moments where the individual realm above and the collective world below interact and overlap. Transparency on the lower level and slatted, wooden shutters on the upper create a porous boundary between inside and out (“Cluny House / Neri & Hu Design and Research Office”).

The Yingjia Club is a multi-storey VIP sales club the firm designed for China Vanke, China’s largest residential developer. It is consciously designed as “a spatial sequence of contrasting elements,” a move that reflects a both-and design philosophy of juxtaposition. Individual and communal spaces are layered vertically as well as horizontally, and are tied together by sculptural circulation and multiple openings



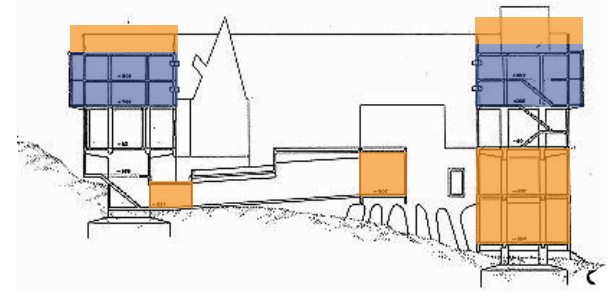
2.19-21: Organization of spaces (above) and interior thresholds in the Hotel Pousada da Praça

looking up, out, and down. The sense of journey and movement is highlighted by the strength of the stair and circulation pieces, creating a sense of transition and threshold as one moves throughout the project. These references to liminality as well as the juxtaposition of individual and collective spaces in both projects speaks to the experience of pilgrimage as a community of individuals in motion (“Yingjia Club at Vanke Beijing / Neri & Hu”).

### Case study: La Tourette

The Dominican priory of Sainte Marie de La Tourette, in Éveux, France, was designed by Le Corbusier and completed in 1960. Sited on a steep slope, it provides individual cells and communal spaces for 100 monks. Though its program is inherently inward-looking, the project gracefully balances collective and introspective spaces and makes excellent use of its sloping site. Communal areas are on the ground floor, with the individual cells—each with an outward-looking balcony—above. A modified cloister rings the roof. The interplay of the interior courtyard with the outward-facing cells creates a nice juxtaposition of focus. Programmatically, the project has many similarities with this thesis. Furthermore, the materiality and modernist language of Corbusier’s design, while provocative in the context of demi-urban Cunha, are familiar to the Brazilian design aesthetic. High modernism and Corbusier are celebrated throughout Brazilian architecture, and the use of concrete and strong color is constant throughout the country. With the simplicity of its design, its use of topography and modernism, and its creation of a cohesive whole through the balance of reflective individual and communal elements, the priory at La Tourette offers much inspiration (Svieven 1).

The above case studies provide examples of ways to balance collective and individual needs, encouraging a diversity of space and interactions. They also often include in-between zones and spaces of transition or passage. These are the types of



2.22-24: The section (top), use of color (middle), and siting and materiality (below) of La Tourette



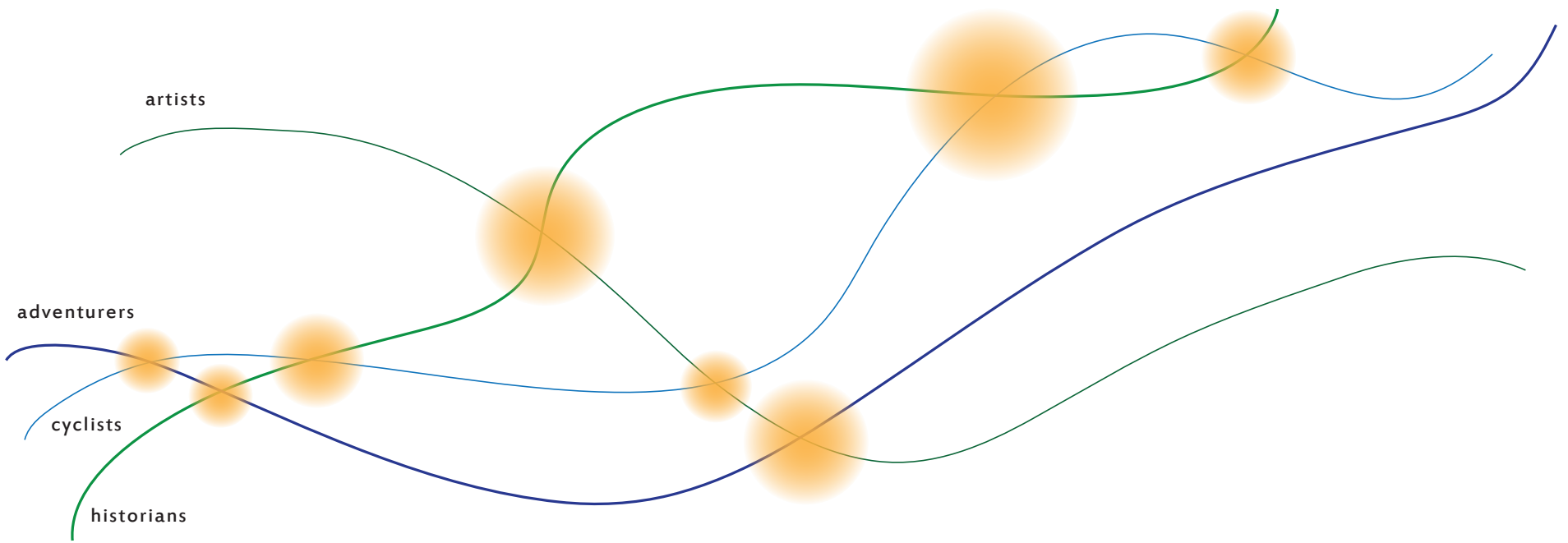
spaces that act as thresholds, facilitating the creation of *communitas*. It has been more difficult to find examples of projects which embrace an urban context and the local population. This will be the challenge as the project continues.

### **Communitas in the city**

Is it possible to feel *communitas* in the urban hotel? The projects above, though each with differing context and program, hint that there must be some way to encourage Turner's spontaneity of interrelatedness. Is there a way to capture the feeling of liminality and freedom one experiences on the road while one is stopped for the night in a crowded city? This thesis hopes to address this question. Pilgrimage itself is a liminal experience and the structure of the hotel is such that it often functions as a threshold or in-between place. It is my belief that the inherent liminality of pilgrimage and the hotel are such that a space conducive to *communitas* could be proposed, a space that welcomes the contradictions inherent in such a project: urban and liminal, individual and collective, resident and traveler. It is here that the project begins.



2.25-26: A sense of journey and threshold permeates the Neri & Hu projects. Simple materials lend tranquility.



# 3.

## Methods

strategy session

We have found that pilgrimage systems, at several levels of complexity and organization, can be fruitfully studied as binary sets of oppositions.  
—Victor Turner

*While on the road, my most important possession was a folded computer printout, listing the distances between towns and the names of accommodations in each. On lonely nights, I charted out all the different routes I could take, the permutations of foot and bus that could take me home most swiftly. On bright mornings, I checked my agenda, folded the map, shouldered my bag. It was good to have a plan.*

It is the aim of this thesis to celebrate the urban experience and embrace and enhance moments of convergence as catalysts for community. This approach operates at the level of the path with the design of a new pilgrimage route and at the moment of pause in the creation of a pilgrimage way station or pousada. Yet, in reality, the investigations can be seen as operating at three scales: the route lies at the scale of the collective, the pousada works at the scale of the cohort, more intimate and personalized than the route, but not as specific as the individual room, which operates at the third scale, that of the individual. The bulk of the project, of course, lies in the convergence between the collective and the individual, at the intimate yet open level of the cohort, where an urban pousada was designed to explore architecture's ability to provide introspective as well as communal experiences for travelers and locals in an urban setting. Each step and every scale of this project was informed by my time spent in Brazil.

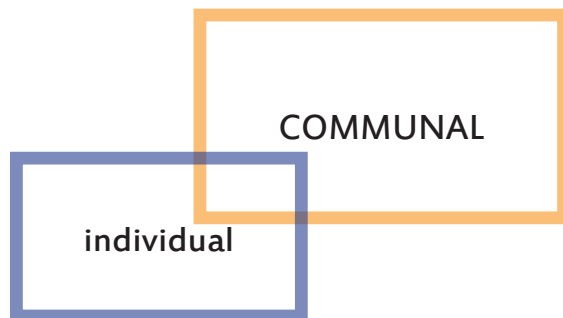
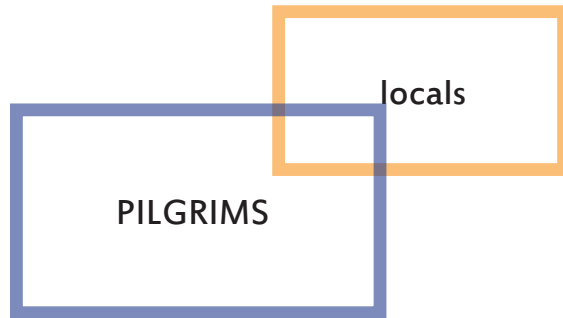
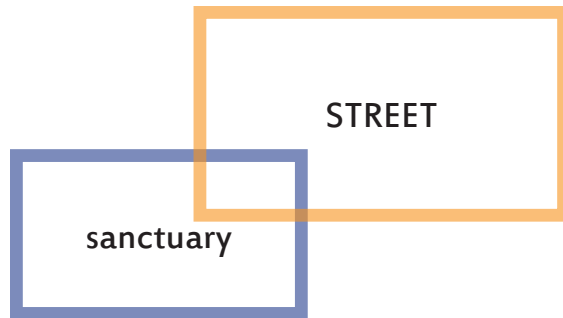
In laying out the new pilgrimage route, the primary concerns were that it not shy away from urban dwellings and infrastructure, that it be easily accessible to an urban population, and that it provide moments of connection not just to the landscape, but to the culture, art, history, and local residents. In this way, it would function as a path with multiple levels of interest and engagement that could appeal to a variety of travelers, encouraging the convergence of different groups, values, and motivations in the pursuit

of *communitas*. For this reason, the project sought out existing infrastructure and moments of cultural, historic, and natural interest, weaving them together along a single path in the hope that diverse groups would use the route for diverse purposes, interacting at these nodes of interest and sparking moments of connection.

For the urban *pousada*, the site had to be urban and contain existing uses and activities that could be used to enhance moments of convergence. Thus, a larger town with a strong cultural identity would be ideal. For the site itself, it had to be conducive to the act of convergence, meaning adjacent to existing centers of culture and activity, but also provide the intimacy and tranquility that are needed to foster connections. In this case, something near existing centers, but perhaps underused or slightly off the beaten path would provide the proper conditions to explore the architectural creation of urban *communitas*.

Following the examples of the case studies detailed above, the design for the *pousada* aimed to provide a variety of interior and exterior, as well as individual and communal, spaces. Each precedent project featured a central communal space, like a courtyard, as well as gradations of transparency and privacy as one moved vertically through the buildings. These design moves proved quite inspiring. Furthermore, like the Neri & Hu projects, the *pousada* design hoped to showcase a sense of journey and path appropriate to its siting along a pilgrimage route. The sense of local culture present in the Hotel *Pousada da Praça* was also something the project strove to accomplish. Finally, the project looked to the materiality of *La Tourette* and its balance of inward- and outward-facing spaces.

Building upon these precedents, three design thresholds were created to guide the design. In each case, it was important to acknowledge both halves of the pair and to ensure that each co-existed and converged within the project. These thresholds were defined as lying between:



1. *Street and sanctuary*, where the urban experience and interactions of the street encountered the community and meditative tranquility of the sanctuary;
2. *Pilgrim and local*, such that travelers and local residents alike would find activities of interest and opportunities to interact; and
3. *Individual and communal*, where spaces are provided for reflection and introspection as well as connection and communal activity in the spirit of pilgrimage's identity as an individual journey undertaken collectively.

In each case, one element of the threshold took slight precedence in order to better address the thesis goal of providing spaces of overlap to facilitate the formation of community. Based on this premise, the street and communal aspects, with their sense of motion and collectivity were privileged. Also, being that the pousada is, at its heart, constructed to serve the needs of the pilgrimage population, pilgrims received slight favoring over the local residents. However, despite the weighting, each element of the three design thresholds was seen as essential. The aim of the project was that by balancing the two halves of each design threshold, spaces could be created that would express heightened liminality, acting as thickened thresholds and providing catalysts for connection.

3.2: Design thresholds (weighted to privilege the street, pilgrim, and communal components)



# 4.

## Path

choosing the route

The quality and degree of the emotional impact of the devotions... derive from the union of the separate but similar emotional dispositions of the pilgrims converging from all parts of a huge sociogeographical catchment area... It is the confluence of innumerable individual woes and hopes.

—Victor Turner

*Usually, the road took me through fields and forests. I said hi to cows and farmers, picked bright oranges off trees. The world was quiet around me except for the wind in the trees and the birds in the bushes. Sometimes, though, I walked along the highway. It's hard to avoid modern infrastructure on a modern pilgrimage and dumb not to take advantage of it. So I walked on shoulders, honked at by truck drivers, stopped for directions, offered a lift. Eight guys on four motorcycles hollered like banshees as they flew past.*

The experience of pilgrimage has broadened. In earlier times, a variety of transportation means were employed by necessity and ranged based on economic means from the simple foot traveler to those who moved by donkey, horse, cart, or caravan. Today, the choice of vehicle is an intrinsic part of the experience and can greatly influence the way one interacts with the journey. As cycling gains in popularity, pilgrimage routes are re-appropriated to accommodate alternative means of transportation, and pilgrims receive physical as well as spiritual satisfaction from the journey. It is with this increasing diversity of uses and motivations in mind that I charted the route of my own pilgrimage, which caters to pilgrims traveling by a variety of means and for a variety of reasons.

Building on the success of the Caminho da Fé, this thesis proposes an alternate route to Aparecida, one that more directly addresses the urban condition of modern pilgrims, while making more explicit the route's ties to history and culture. The founders of the Caminho da Fé have said that the path could always be altered and that they are open to the possibility of adding additional cities. It was this willingness to modify the route, as well as their unfulfilled goal of cultural exchange amongst of locals and pilgrims that encouraged me to rethink the existing route and propose the Caminho Confluente, the Way of Convergence, a pilgrimage from Rio de Janeiro to Aparecida.

4.1: Rio de Janeiro, where sea, mountains, and city collide and all are in motion

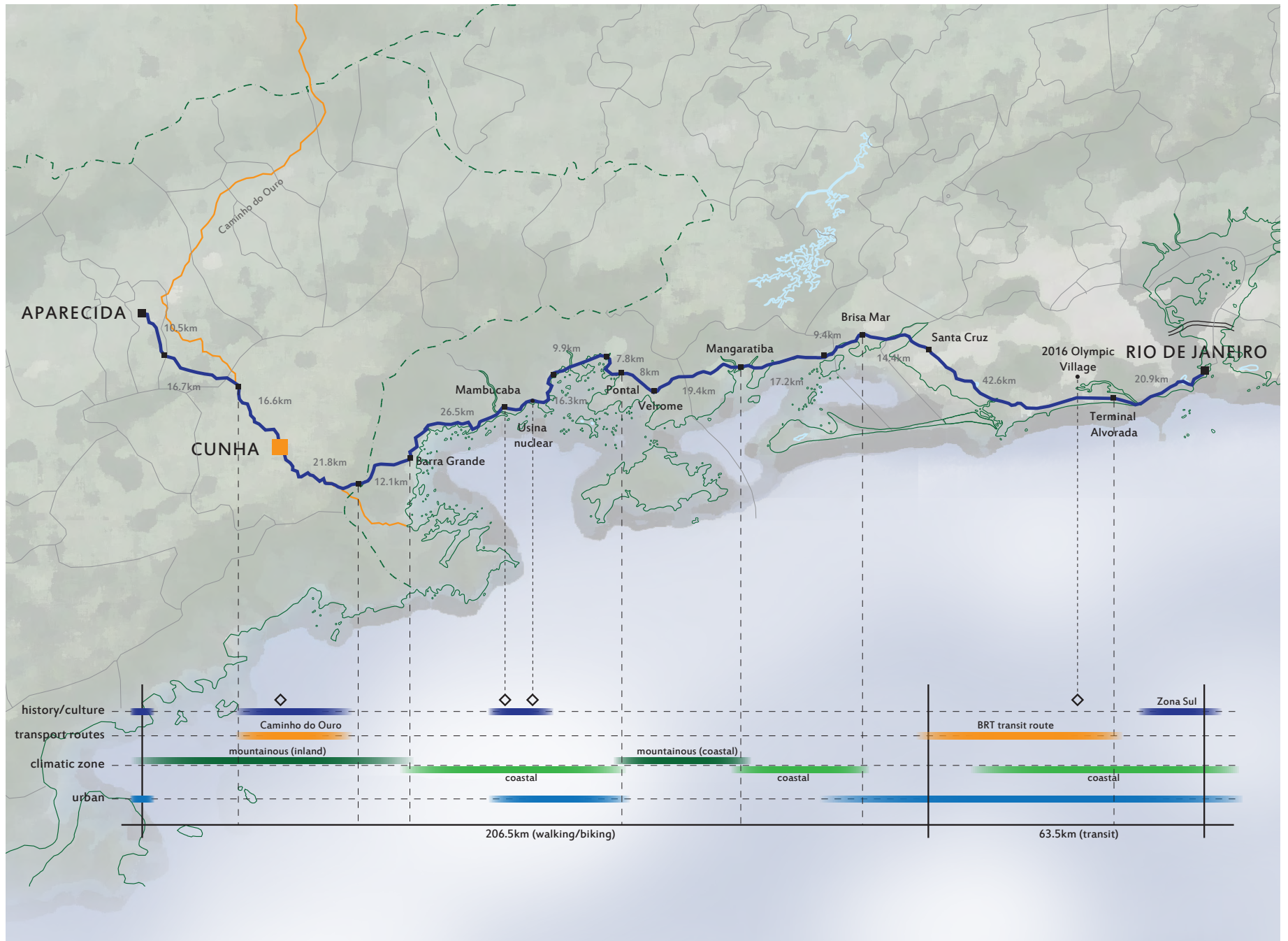
## O Caminho Confluente

The Caminho Confluente begins in Rio de Janeiro and follows the Costa Verde before climbing into the mountains that frame the Paraíba Valley. In contrast to the Caminho da Fé, the route is not as heavily focused on nature. Instead, it is to be a catholic and spiritual route: *catholic* in the sense of universal and *spiritual*, not in a religious sense, per se, but in the sense of capturing the spirit of a place. Robin Sheriff (1999) writes:

The allure of Rio de Janeiro may be an effect produced less by its startling topography and breathtaking vistas than by what tourist brochures are apt to call its 'spirit.' The magic of Rio is constructed, really, from a collectively imagined and ideologically managed enchantment. Accepted within everyday discourses throughout Brazil as something of a metonymic enactment of national culture and character, Rio is portrayed as exuberantly spontaneous, 'racially mixed,' egalitarian in its ethos (if not in its objective structures), free spirited and casual, and, during certain days of the year especially, just a little bit shameless. (3)

It is this definition of spirit that I use here and this vision of national culture and character that I hope to embody in my architecture. The route and the stops along the way were chosen to embrace the urban condition of modern pilgrimage, while still connecting pilgrims to the landscape and culture through which they travel. Effort was used to take advantage of existing infrastructure and to provide a variety of experiences that together can begin to give the pilgrim a sense of the spirit of south-eastern Brazil. Wherever possible, cultural and historic moments are referenced. The route aims to strike a balance between the urban and rural, modern and traditional, and natural and social. The choice of the route comes from extensive map study and cultural research, as well as a two-day road trip that took me from Rio de Janeiro, along the Costa Verde to Paratí and through the inland mountain ranges. Thanks to this experience, I was able to construct the pilgrimage described below with its diversity of cultural, historical, and environmental experiences.





## The route

Taking the idea of Rio de Janeiro as the spiritual and cultural heart of Brazil—the embodiment of a nation—the pilgrimage begins in this vibrant figurehead. Situating the start of the route in Rio de Janeiro connects the most culturally important city in Brazil to its most important religious site. Furthermore, it embraces, rather than denies the urban component of contemporary life, siting the experience firmly in the modern day. The Caminho da Fé, as mentioned above, begins in small towns located hours away from any major city. It does not deal with the messiness of cities, and, by beginning so far away from any important center, becomes inaccessible to those who lack the additional resources of time and money to undertake a secondary journey before beginning the primary one.

Starting the route in Rio de Janeiro opens the experience of pilgrimage to a much wider population. The metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro is home to over 12 million people. It is the most popular tourist destination in the country, for Brazilians and foreigners alike. When one wishes to experience the soul of Brazil, one begins in Rio de Janeiro. No trip to Brazil is complete without a visit to Rio. This pilgrimage uses this popularity as an opportunity to create a more universal, catholic experience, opening the adventures of the road to a truly diverse population, one that more accurately reflects the complexity of contemporary society, particularly that of Rio de Janeiro.

The route begins in the South Zone of Rio. Home to Copacabana, Ipanema, and the vast, sprawling favela of Rochinas, the Zona Sul is the spiritual and cultural heart of Rio de Janeiro, the home of samba and Carnaval, the Brazil one dreams of. This is where the route begins. From the Zona Sul, pilgrims board the Transoeste bus at Terminal Alvorada. Instead of the fragmented beginning of the Caminho da Fé, where pilgrims can begin at any of four different cities, along this route, everyone rides the bus together to the beginning of the pilgrimage. In this way, the pilgrimage commences in a way

that is universally accessible and that acknowledges its founding in the present day. It takes advantage of new infrastructure, embracing the utility of modern transportation and celebrating the pilgrims' urban roots. The Transoeste is part of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network that is being constructed for the 2016 Olympic Games. Partially inaugurated in summer 2012, it takes riders from Terminal Alvorada to Terminal Santa Cruz. Pilgrims ride the entirety of the route. Of course, for purists, it is always possible to walk this portion of the route. The bulk of the pilgrimage infrastructure, however, does not begin until Santa Cruz.

At Santa Cruz, pilgrims strike out on foot or by bike to complete the rest of the journey, which stretches 206km to Aparecida in São Paulo state. Roadside chapels along the way provide moments for individual reflection, while pousadas at regular intervals bring these individuals together, housing them for the night.

From Santa Cruz, pilgrims follow a semi-urban path to Brisa Mar. From there, they travel along the coast, parallel to the aptly named Rodovia de Rio Santos: Highway of the Holy River. This experience along the Costa Verde continues for several days (41km), bringing the pilgrims in contact with the spectacular landscape and small towns along the coast. After Mangaratiba, the route briefly climbs into the hills, coming out at the other end of a small peninsula in the hamlet of Velrome, then climbing into the hills until the pilgrims reach Pontal. Here, they again follow the coast, winding in and out of towns and skirting the foothills of the mountains. Just before reaching the Vila Histórica at Mambucaba, the route passes by a large nuclear power facility, the only one in Rio de Janeiro state and a powerful reminder of modern technology and infrastructure before the travelers reach the colonial charms of the Vila Histórica. This is Brazil in a nutshell: old and new smashed together, past and present converging into a messy and colorful whole. Having guided the travelers through this node of convergence, the route leaves Mambucaba and makes one more scallop through the mountains and down to the coast before climbing into the hills for good at Barra Grande.



4.4-9: Scenes from the Caminho Confluente



From this point, the route no longer follows the coast. Instead, it moves diagonally through the mountains, crossing into the state of São Paulo before joining up with the historic Caminho do Ouro. This route, which was used in colonial times to transport gold from the interior to the coast, stretches from Paratí on the Costa Verde to the town of Ouro Preto in the state of Minas Gerais. This Caminho is a tourist route in its own right, yet much of the route is only accessible for those on a guided tour. The proposed route works with this existing infrastructure to expand the experience of the Caminho do Ouro, allowing pilgrims to travel the route without a guide and linking them to this historic moment of Brazil's history.

Shortly after joining the Caminho do Ouro, the pilgrimage passes through Cunha, a hilltop town known for its waterfalls and its ceramics. This city is the focus of the next section, as the thesis moves to the level of synthesis: that of the cohort, where individual and collective come together and the complexities and contradictions of contemporary pilgrimage and the demi-urban experience are most fully addressed. After Cunha, the pilgrims continue on the Caminho do Ouro for several kilometers before finally climbing into the high, dry hills that surround the Paraíba River Valley. From here, it is just a short descent to the town of Aparecida and the culmination of the pilgrimage.

For those that are restricted by constraints of time, money, or health, the majority of the pilgrimage runs parallel to a large highway and the major connector between Rio de Janeiro and the Costa Verde. This permits even those individuals who are unable to complete the pilgrimage on foot or by bike to experience the stops along the way and to share in the moments of connection and spontaneous unity of travelers on the road. At certain points, primarily those moments when the route takes to the narrow mountain paths, the automobile infrastructure is unable to follow the proposed route due to the difficulty of constructing new roads and the potential interference those roads could have on the more delicate ecosystems of these regions. At these times,

those traveling by automobile will continue to follow to Rodovia Rio Santos. Each time, they will soon be reunited with those traveling by foot or by bike and may complete the pilgrimage together.

### The spiritual context

Though much of the route was chosen based on practicalities such as working with existing infrastructure and providing moments of interest for a diversity of travelers, certain aspects of the pilgrimage route also have more spiritual implications. As mentioned above, the towns of Mambucaba and Cunha, as well as the Caminho do Ouro have special historic and cultural significance that connect the pilgrims to the artistic and colonial traditions of the region. The route was also chosen to resonate with its final destination as much as possible.

The Basilica of Our Lady of Aparecida, which is the terminus of the pilgrimage, was built as a shrine, the National Shrine, to Our Lady of Aparecida. Legend has it that three fishermen in the colonial era were having a bad day on the River Paraíba. Desperate to catch enough fish to feed their royal guests, they prayed to the Virgin Mary and cast their nets again. Pulling up their nets, they found—still no fish—but a dark, headless statue. They set it aside, cast their nets again, and pulled up—no fish—but the head of the statue. The two parts were united to reveal an image of the Virgin Mary, a black Madonna. The fishermen renewed their prayers and cast their nets once more. This time, they pulled them up overflowing with fish, and fell to their knees before the image of the Virgin. Since this time, the cult of Our Lady of Aparecida has grown to become the national shrine of Brazil.

Our Lady of Aparecida is revered as the Queen and Patroness of Brazil. She is also the patron saint of expectant mothers, rivers, the sea, gold, honey, and beauty. As much as possible, the pilgrimage route was chosen to reflect these patronages, thus the importance of a route that follows the coastline (rivers, the sea) as well as the historic



4.10: Nossa Senhora da Aparecida

Caminho do Ouro (gold) and that stops in towns with artistic and cultural (beauty) significance. In this way, the pilgrim experiences different aspects of both the local culture and that which he can expect to find at his destination. These subtle allusions to Our Lady of Aparecida and the ultimate goal of the pilgrimage permeate the route, making for a more nuanced and holistic experience.

The hope of this new route is to create an accessible and spiritual experience of connection and introspection. The route offers an alternative, more intimate way of experiencing the spectacular landscape and culture of Rio de Janeiro state, an experience that can be enjoyed by Cariocas, visiting Brazilians, and foreign tourists alike. When one wishes to experience the soul of Brazil, one begins in Rio de Janeiro. With this proposed route, the pilgrim is able to take that search for Brazil's soul to the next level, taking to the road and pairing a cultural quest with a personal one. Along the route, those personal moments come to the forefront. A pilgrimage, in many ways, is a personal journey. Once the route was laid out, the next step was to consider the moment of pause and to find a site for the urban pousada which is to be the focus of the remaining chapters.



5.1: The Caminho Confluente follows the hills through Cunha

# 5.

## Pause finding a site

If we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.  
—Yi-fu Tuan

*I kept hearing about Cunha. Driving north from Paratí, just before the road gave out, we came across a ceramicist in the hills. He offered to rent us his waterfalls for the hour, asked where we were going. “North,” we said. “North? You must be going to Cunha. It’s full of ceramics. Everyone goes to Cunha.” It was the first we’d heard of it, an arts town in this land of beaches and cattle, but “you can’t get there,” he continued. “The road washed out five years back.” From then we knew we had to get to Cunha.*

In choosing a site, the primary concerns were that it be urban and that it provide moments of potential convergence, be they programmatic, cultural, historical, or something other. Having driven and bused the majority of the proposed route, the city of Cunha was chosen for its rich cultural and artistic traditions, its proximity to Aparecida, and its potential for connections. The level of emotion and intensity along a pilgrimage, as well as the actual number of pilgrims, tends to increase as one approaches the destination. Cunha’s location just under 50km from Aparecida means that it is near the end of the pilgrimage and, as such, is optimally placed to take advantage of the heightened emotional states of a maximum number of pilgrims, making it a perfect testing ground for the thesis’s investigation into the formation of community in liminal states.

### The city

Cunha, which means *wedge* in Portuguese, is a hilltop town dating to the late 18th century. It has a dry, pleasant climate, good restaurants, several nature parks, and 5 noborigama wood-fired kilns, making it one of the most important centers for ceramics in Brazil. The city is also known for its pinenuts and its concentration of VW Beetles—the highest in the country. Its population is predominately Catholic. Occasionally, a horse canters down the main street in town. It is a city on the cusp, both a regional

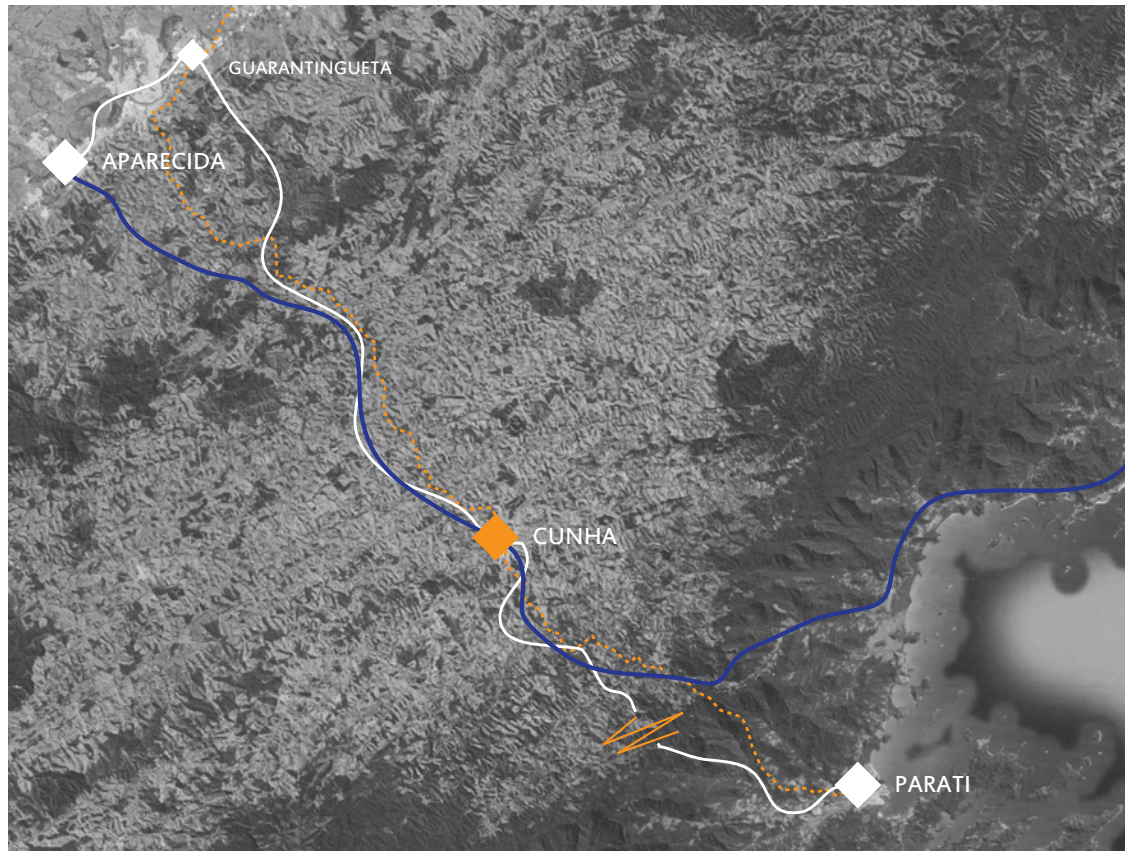


5.2-9: Scenes from Cunha



center and small, rural hub. Its core, though, is dense and lively, with packed streets, several churches, a covered market, a giant furniture store, and all the messy adjacencies of urban life.

In terms of an urban experience, Cunha, at just over 23,000 residents, is the largest town between Paratí on the Costa Verde and the destination of Aparecida in the Paraíba River Valley. This is small, yes, but still stands in stark contrast to the emptiness of the hills which surround it. Furthermore, as has been shown, it is in these demi-urban conditions that the hospitality experience most suffers and one finds the greatest potential for enhancing the traveler's sense of connection, place, and safety.



5.10: Cunha is situated between Aparecida and the Costa Verde and along the Caminho do Ouro (orange line)



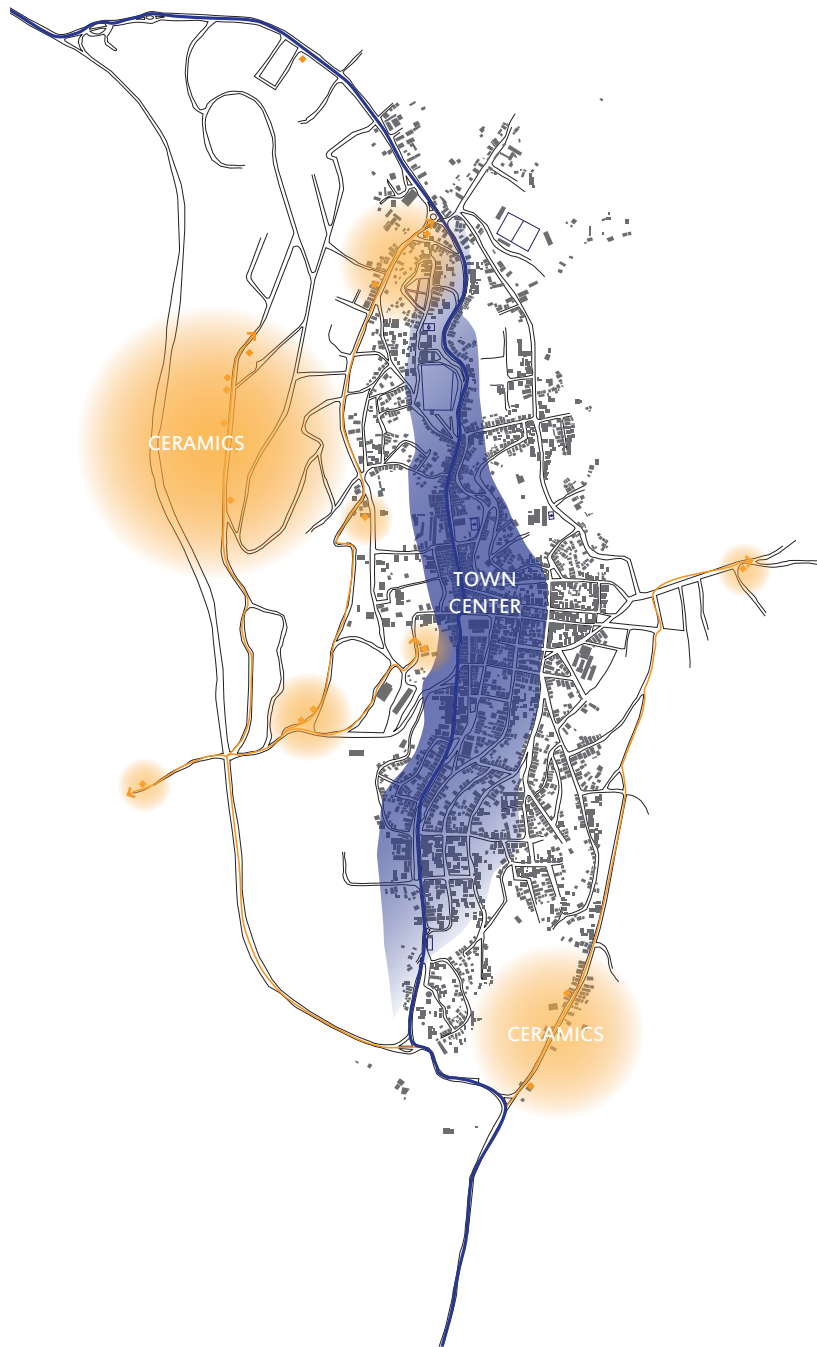
5.11: A noborigama (climbing) kiln

The potential for creating and enhancing connections were ultimately what drove the choice of Cunha as the project's site. Despite being the major urban center between the Costa Verde and Aparecida, the road connecting Paratí and Aparecida washed out twenty kilometers south of Cunha in 2009. It has been impassable ever since. The government has plans to restore the road, but thus far, nothing has been done. The opportunity to reforge this connection between the Basilica and the coast was irresistible. Entering Cunha from the south, the Caminho Confluente will reconnect the coast with the interior, bringing new visitors and reestablishing the city as an important node between two major attractions.

Despite the lack of connections from the south, Cunha is already a destination in its own right. Known for its gastronomy, waterfalls, and ceramics, the city acts as a portal for the environmental parks and eco-preserves which surround it, including the Parque Nacional da Serra da Bocaina and the Parque Estadual da Serra do Mar. Since 1976, the town has also been an important center for South American ceramics. The region has a long tradition of ceramics, but it wasn't until the construction of the town's first noborigama kiln by a Japanese couple in 1975 that the utilitarian craft was transformed into an important and refined art. Today, Cunha is home to sixteen ceramic ateliers and five noborigama kilns, making it one of the most concentrated ceramic centers in the southern hemisphere. The noborigama kiln, which belongs to the anagama family of stepped, chambered kilns, takes advantage of the steep topography of this hilltop town to create a kiln with multiple chambers and firing temperatures, which can fire pieces throughout a two week period. In addition, Cunha sits along the historic Caminho do Ouro, the colonial route used to bring gold from the interior to the Portuguese galleons waiting off the Costa Verde. This traditional route forms the main road in town, a major circulation spine that runs along the ridge spanning the entirety of the town. Cunha tumbles gracefully down the hills and into the valleys from this central circulation route.

Since the time of the Caminho do Ouro, Cunha's importance has been marked by its ability to connect to something else. In the simplest terms, the town has functioned as a threshold from time immemorial: first as a major hub between the coast and the interior for those transporting gold, today as a space to eat and refuel before heading out to the natural wonders which surround the town. Even the ceramic ateliers are scattered in the valleys which surround the main ridge of the town, making the central core once more a place of pause before continuing on a path to somewhere else. For this reason, Cunha serves as the ideal city for this investigation of threshold and convergence, of path and pause.

Taking the existing convergence of artistic and eco-adventure communities, as well as those active history buffs who choose to follow the Caminho do Ouro, this thesis adds an additional instance of convergence: the pilgrim path. The proposed Caminho Confluente enters the town from the south, following the Caminho do Ouro along Cunha's major circulation spine and through its downtown core. Once the town was chosen and the path laid out, the next task was to find the specific site which would host the proposed pousada and serve as a testing ground for the ideas laid out in this thesis.



- ceramics, trips by car
- ceramics, trips by bus
- natural attractions

5.12-13: Ceramic ateliers (left) and typical visitor paths (right) bypass the town center



5.14: The Caminho Confluente runs past the Praça Rosário and the chosen site

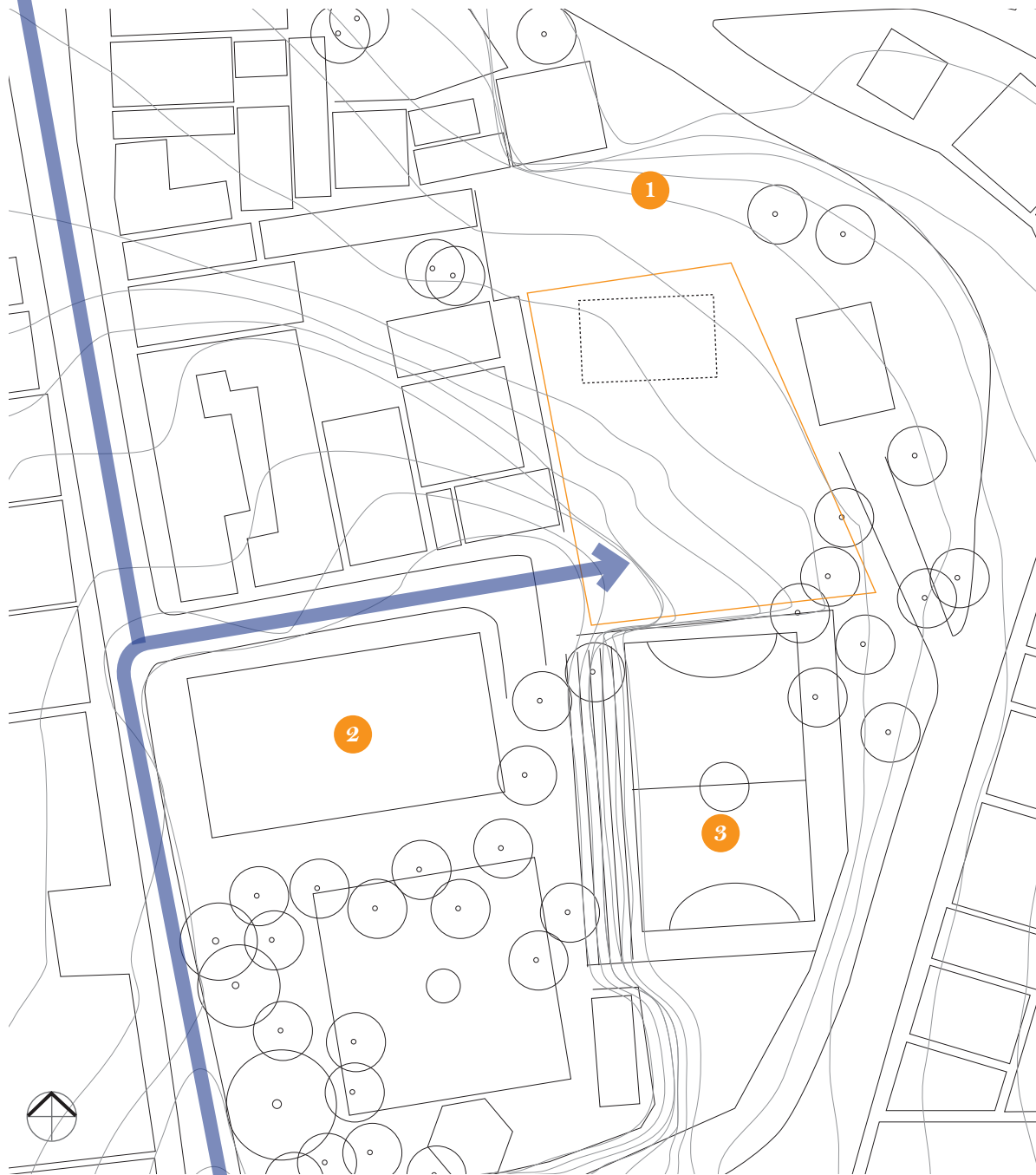


5.15: The approach to the project site  
off the pilgrimage path

## The site

A pilgrimage pousada must lie near or adjacent to the pilgrimage path. This narrowed the selection of potential sites to those near the main road and ensured that the project would have the most urban context possible, an important element in this exploration of community in an urban environment. Looking at the major public spaces in town, as well as instances of underutilized space, the Praça Rosário, which serves the Igreja da Nossa Senhora Rosário e São Benedito, Cunha's second largest church, emerged as a prime candidate. The plaza surrounding the main church in town functions as Cunha's major public space, hosting festivals and celebrations, a covered market, and casual encounters. The Praça Rosário is just as spacious and serves as just as strong a landmark—it is common practice to place pilgrimage pousadas near churches, as they are easily recognizable in the urban fabric—but is much less hectic than the Praça Cônego Siqueira, making it more likely that it would be able to foster a sense of intimacy and security despite the urban environment. Just north of the Igreja do São Benedito is a small, dead-end street terminating in a large lot currently home to an under-construction single family residence. This space was chosen as the project site.

The site is just off the main street in town. Passing between the Igreja do São Benedito and a multi-story furniture store, one enters a short street that ends in the project site. To the south is a walled, sunken soccer court. The church and adjoining plaza lie to the southwest; across the street from the church is a large school. The site's western neighbors include a single-family residence, a clinic, the furniture store, and an apartment building. A single-family home sits below the site to the east, accessible from the other side of the block. The convergence of church and soccer field, residences and small businesses gives the site powerful adjacencies and grounds it in the culture and community of the town. The site is at the crest of a hill and drops 7 meters to the northeast. Incredible views open out over the hills and residences to the east.



5.16-18: The chosen site and its adjacencies lie just off the Caminho road

1 Steep slope at eastern site boundary



2 Igreja do São Benedito and adjoining plaza

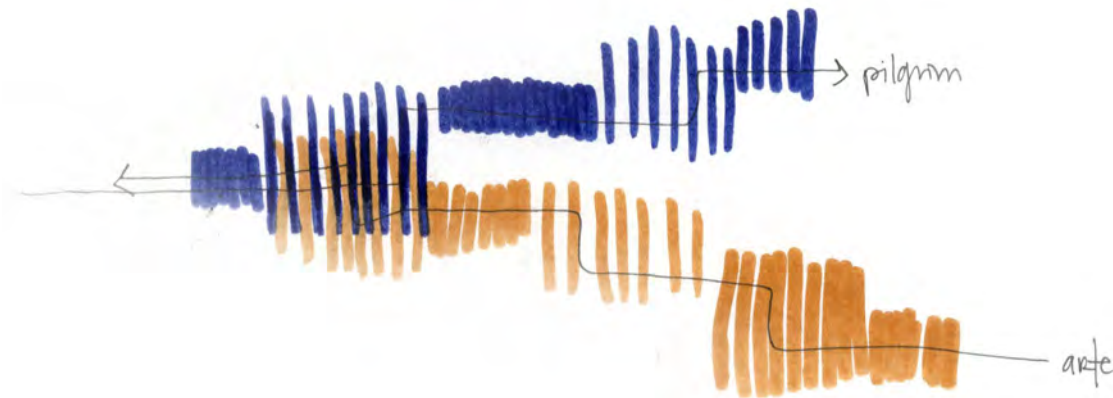


3 Soccer court to the south of the site

## The program

The program for the site, as discussed in previous chapters, works on the level of pause by creating an urban pousada where pilgrims and travelers can stop for the night. However, in the hopes of creating a sense of place and connection to the local community, a ceramics component is added to the typical pousada program. Realizing how peripheral the ceramic ateliers are, the project sees an opportunity to introduce ceramic culture to the urban core by fusing it with a new cultural institution—the pilgrimage pousada—whose goal is to foster moments of convergence and provide links to local culture and community. In this way, a small ceramics atelier with display space, a noborigama kiln, and a venue to sell local work is interwoven with the pousada program.

This enriches the project and its users in several ways. For the pilgrims, who have such a limited time to spend in town, the atelier offers a quick and easy way to engage with an important aspect of the local culture they might otherwise miss. These travelers act as a built-in audience for the artists, and the central location of the project gives local residents a more convenient way of interacting with ceramic production, as well as a centralized venue for viewing and buying the artworks. Finally, for the operators of the pousada, the inclusion of the ceramics atelier creates a more balanced revenue stream and provides additional income during the off-season for pilgrimage during the wet and hot months.



5.19: Conceptual diagram fusing pilgrim & local arts paths



5.20: Sign for a typical pousada along the Caminho da Fé

*Pousada* is a Brazilian word which recalls the notion of pause. It is a term used throughout Brazil to refer to a type of lodging that falls between a hostel and a bed and breakfast and is the word used by the organizers of the Caminho da Fé to describe the lodgings along their route. Pousadas are typically smaller and more intimate than hotels. They offer private and shared rooms and are likely to be family businesses, without a lot of additional staff, giving one the potential for personal interactions with the owner and host. A communal breakfast is always served, and dinner service is usually an option as well. Many pousadas provide communal space such as TV lounges or living rooms in which their guests can interact.

The advantages of a pousada lie in the intimacy and personalization of the experience. Often, the guest is made to feel like one of the family, creating a sense of community not only amongst guests but between guests and hosts. The downside of the pousada is that it has limited capacity and is often peripherally located, as it is difficult for individuals to afford large blocks of land in a city center. However, due to the increasing popularity of pilgrimages, there is a need for accommodations that can hold a larger number of guests. Also, in terms of sustainability, it is more responsible to create these lodgings in an urban setting that already has all the needed infrastructure, preserving undeveloped areas so that they can maintain their biodiversity and be appreciated for their natural qualities. Thus, the urban hotel makes increasing sense for the modern pilgrimage. It is the aim of this thesis to imbue this anonymous institution with the sense of intimacy and *communitas* that is so frequently felt in the simple, rural pousada.

For this investigation, an urban pousada is created with lodging for up to 48 pilgrims as well as space for dining, experiencing local culture, and connecting to local residents and fellow travelers. It is fused with a ceramics atelier to encourage the interaction of pilgrims with the town's culture and residents and vice versa. The busy season for pilgrimage is during the drier, cooler months of July and August. Another

spike occurs in October with the feast day for Nossa Senhora de Aparecida. On the off-season, the rooms of the pousada and its support facilities can be used by visiting artists, creating a more balanced and sustainable revenue source for the project.

## **Program Components**

### **Pilgrimage**

- 24 rooms
- Chapel
- Reception
- Outdoor lounge, upstairs
- Bathing facilities/WCs
- Kitchen and laundry
- Bike storage

### **Arts**

- Ceramic atelier/showroom
- Noborigama kiln
- Wood and material storage

### **Shared**

- Dining/banquet room  
+ adjacent cafe terrace
- Media lounge
- Ceramic gallery
- Terrace
- Lower plaza  
+public spaces along path

5.21: That view.





## 6. Project

an urban intimacy

Sacred space has little meaning in and of itself. It is the interaction between the space and the individual that has meaning.  
—Mark Sedgwick

*As the sun dropped lower in the sky, I started to think about where I would stay for the night. Some places had only one option, but for those with multiple lodgings, would I make the right choice? Good company and a good night's sleep made all the difference the next morning for facing the road ahead. Would it be like Dona Natalina's, where I lingered over coffee in the morning sun, playing with the dogs? Where I left with snacks for the road and eagerness for the day. Or would it be Tocos de Moji, without a common room or even breakfast, where I awoke at the crack of dawn, ready to get this over. The place made all the difference.*

The ultimate testing ground for this exploration of thickened thresholds and converging communities was the urban pousada, the most tangible and designable spatial element of connection one encounters along a pilgrimage. Rooted in the urban and cultural fabric of Cunha, the design process was structured around the three design thresholds set forth in Chapter 3. Beginning with the threshold of street and sanctuary, the project then moves on to address the balance of pilgrim and local and individual and communal, always in search of a harmony that can enhance and soften the experience of threshold, creating spaces where individuals are able to engage and communities emerge. Remembering the spatial moments experienced in such spaces along my own journey, the design tried to recall the gradual thresholds and porous boundaries of the country within the urban and cultural vibrancy of the city.

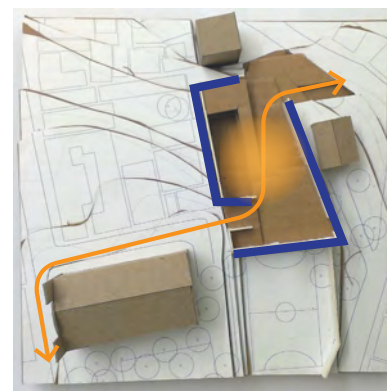
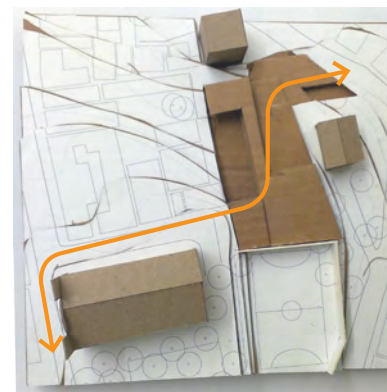
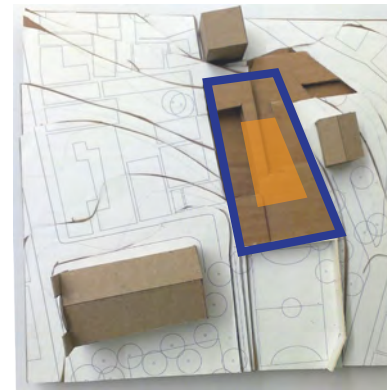
### Street and sanctuary

The design for the pousada begins with the idea of sanctuary. In the country, on the road, in the homes of grandmothers, it is the sense of safety that allows pilgrims to lower their defenses and enter into a liminal state of openness and possibility. The initial gesture of the project, then, is to create this feeling of security in the urban context of Cunha. Taking inspiration from the cloisters mentioned in Chapter 2, where seclusion is

explored as a design strategy for facilitating *communitas*, the site is delineated by high concrete walls. This focuses the energy of the project inward and creates a feeling of security and safety. However, this runs counter to the thesis's major goal of celebrating the project's urban context.

Thus, the next move is to immediately begin to break the walls. Corners pull apart, allowing for a path to continue from one end of the site to the other, connecting what has been a dead end street off the town's main artery to the roads and communities that lie downhill to the east. This series of stepped terraces negotiates the site's seven meter grade change and provides additional downtown access for the bulk of Cunha's residential population, which congregate to the east of the project site and the main downtown corridor. This being the southern hemisphere, the northern trajectory of the path also opens up the interior space to prime solar access. Smaller moves begin to further erode the wall, creating moments of porousness that provide connection to the project's urban and natural context. In this way, the initial feeling of cloister and security translates into a space of shelter that is no longer secluded from its urban environment, but open to the movement of locals and travelers in select and controlled paths. These moves address the design threshold of street and sanctuary, beginning with the safety of the sanctuary and introducing the activity of the street.

Where the walls pull apart at the two corners of the site, two major thresholds are created. The first lies to the rear of the Igreja de São Benedito, at the end of the small street running parallel to the church. Along the side of the street containing the residences and small businesses, the wall continues slightly along the property line, wrapping the edge of the street around the site and creating a more complete sense of enclosure. This gesture is counteracted by a fissure in the wall above street level and by a reciprocal stepping back of the wall where it comes around the other end of the site. This creates a threshold that is more open to the church, the Praça Rosário, and the adjoining soccer court than it is to the commercial activity of the main street. In this



6.2-4: The enclosure of sanctuary (top) is broken by the street (center) to create the design strategy (bottom)

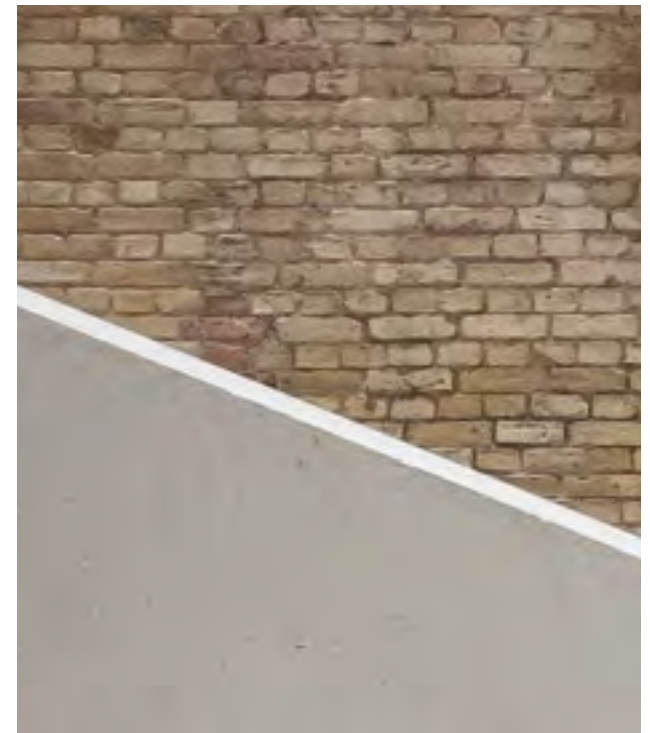
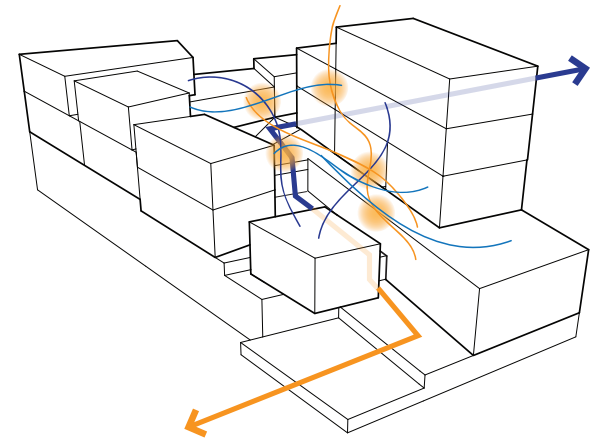


6.5: Threshold at the Igreja de São Benedito

way, community functions are prioritized and access to the space is subtly controlled by simple architectural moves in favor of communal, cultural, and religious activities.

At the other end of the project, the threshold is more gradual. The wall continues as a low retaining wall, pushing back the hillside and gently delineating the space. Shallow steps lead up into the project, with space for seating and planting carved into the topography. This allows the space to function as a small urban plaza, a destination in and of itself for the residents approaching the project from the east. Public communal space is rare off the main town spine, particularly this far to the north of the town. The hope is that this space can provide the residents of northeastern Cunha with an additional place for congregation and recreation and encourage them to continue up through the site and to the community facilities at the top of the hill. The building mass hovers above this entry plaza, heightening the sense of threshold and transition and beckoning those in the plaza to enter the project proper.

Throughout the project, a simple material palette is used to heighten the sense of sanctuary and tranquility. In contrast to some of the more colorful buildings which surround the site, the pousada is constructed of simple, white-washed concrete and warm, clean brick. These two materials create strong contrasts as they wrap around each other and pull back or push forward to offer glimpses of the other material, enhancing the sense of convergence and overlap. The building has a concrete frame structure with brick infill, a building system which is common and affordable throughout Brazil, meaning that the pousada could easily be built by local workers using local materials. This would engage the Cunha community from the outset of construction.



6.6-7: Warm brick and simple concrete (below) balance the energy of path and connection (above)

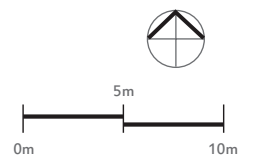


6.8: Threshold plaza to the northeast

6.9  
Ceramics-level Plan



1. Plaza Threshold
2. Chapel (above)
3. Ceramics Work/Showroom
4. Ceramics Workshop
5. Kiln
6. Wood Storage



6.10  
Church-level Plan

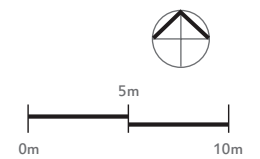
1. Reception
2. Gallery Courtyard
3. Dining Room
4. Outdoor Dining
5. Kitchen/Laundry
6. Chapel
7. Bike Storage
8. Kiln (below)
9. Media Lounge
10. Terrace
11. Church Threshold
12. Plaza Threshold
13. Path



6.11  
Second-level Plan  
18 rooms



- 1. Outdoor Living Room
- 2. Bathing Facilities
- 3. Access to Above



6.12  
Third-level Plan  
6 rooms

- 1. Bathing Facilities
- 2. Connecting Bridges  
(below)





## **Pilgrim and local**

The design threshold of pilgrim and local expresses itself programmatically throughout the project. The initial breaking of the wall to create the project's interior street divides the wall in two. Each side is subsequently thickened with program such that one speaks more fully to the pilgrimage experience, while the other is more grounded in the local and artistic components of the project.

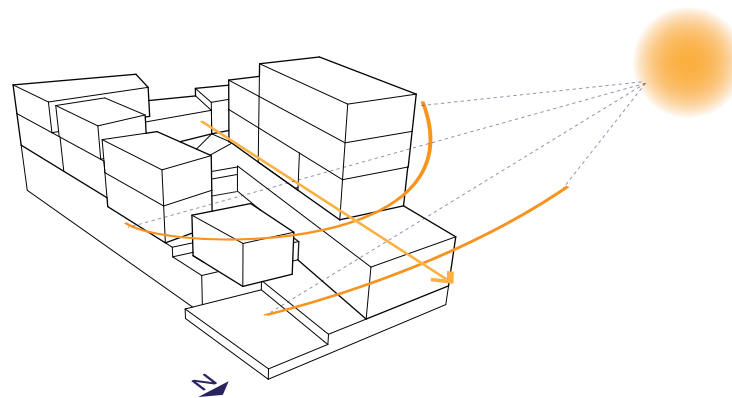
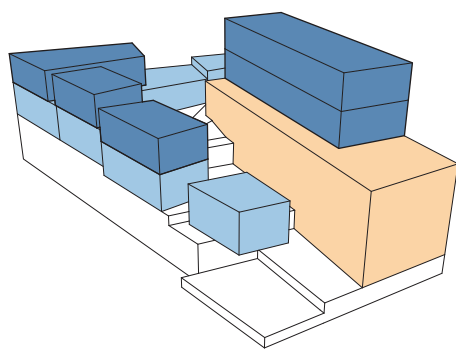
As one enters from behind the church, the wall folds in, drawing the individual into the site and delineating the entry to the pousada. Here, one checks in for the night and receives one's keys. One then moves east down a shallow set of stairs into an enclosed courtyard that serves as a ceramics gallery for local projects as well as the works produced on site. From the courtyard, one can either move upstairs to the individual rooms or continue east down another shallow set of stairs into the main dining space. This room sits at the southeastern corner of the project, nestled into the crux of the wall. Yet, several large openings are carved into the wall, opening up views out over the hills to the east and the soccer court to the south. In this way, the diner connects implicitly to his natural and cultural environment. The north wall of the dining area opens up completely with a series of folding doors to double its capacity in the welcoming Brazilian climate. Immediately adjacent to this exterior dining and café area is the kitchen, providing easy access for the cooks and staff to service the dining spaces. Included in the kitchen area are the laundry facilities, creating a service zone. The final element in this band of the project is the chapel and reflection space. Accessed by a short flight of steps, it hovers over the entry plaza to the north and provides expansive views out over the city and into the hills beyond—a perfect space for contemplation and reflection, especially in the morning, before beginning one's journey, as the sun rises over the hills.

Architecturally, the components of this portion of the project are expressed as distinct volumes, moments along a path that guide the traveler up and through the

6.13: Section highlighting the pilgrimage (left) and ceramic (right) components of the project.

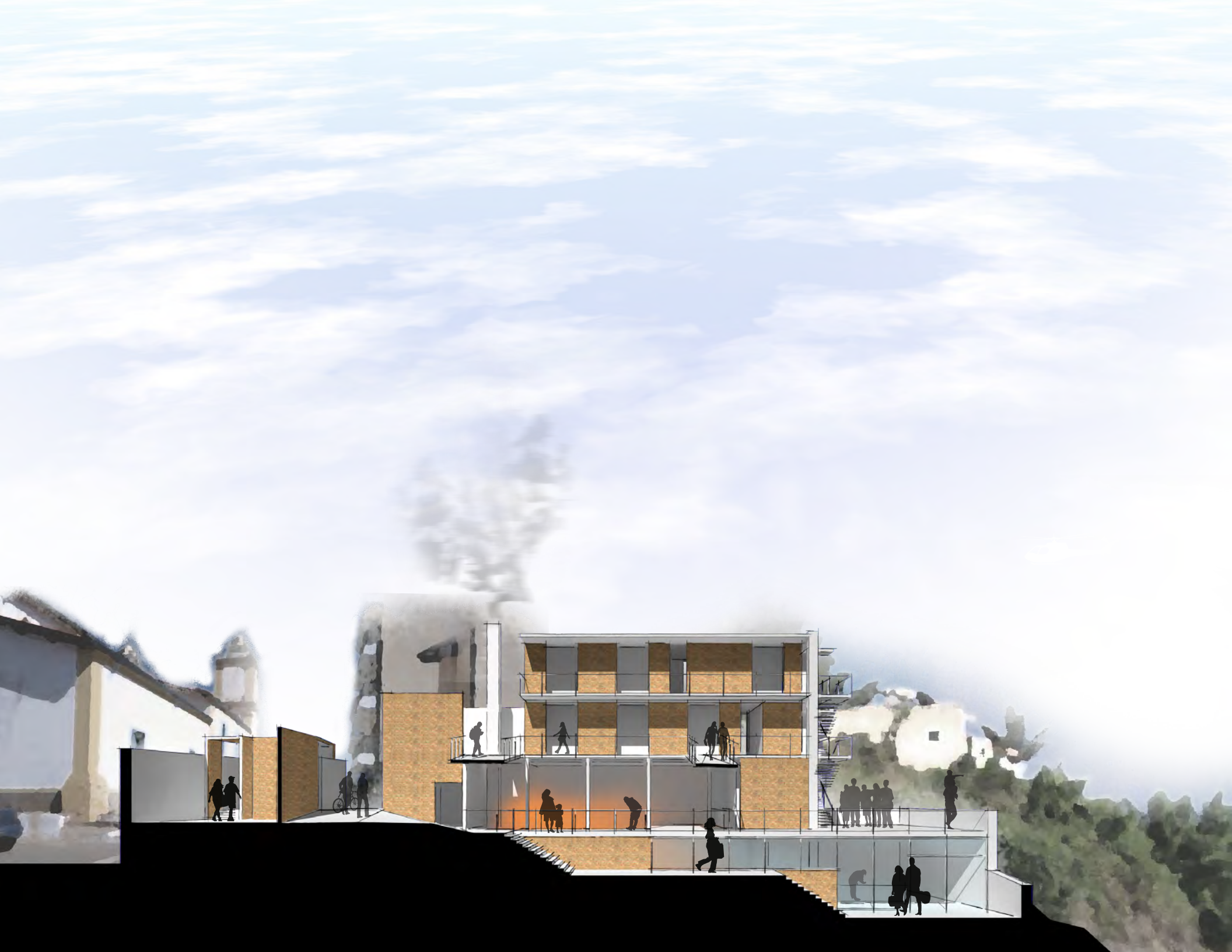
project, culminating in a space of introspection and personal connection at the chapel. Breaks in the surrounding wall serve to heighten the distinctness of these spaces and create differing conditions of threshold and transition between one moment and the next. This part of the project could function on its own as a complete and workable pilgrimage pousada. Yet, there is another component to the project that introduces the idea of local culture and aims to create the moments of spontaneity and convergence that this thesis is all about.

6.16: Section through the path looking towards the chapel and dining spaces and out over the hills (pilgrimage)



6.14: The project is divided into pilgrimage (light blue) and local/ceramic (orange) components. (left)  
6.15: Its northern orientation provides maximum daylighting for the central path. (right)





The second element of the project speaks to the local culture and the prominence of the ceramic arts in an effort to encourage the convergence of pilgrims and local residents and artisans. This part of the project is dug into the earth in contrast to the pilgrimage component which rises up above the topography. This move alludes to ceramic's earthy nature and the sourcing of its materials: clay and wood. As one moves up from the public plaza, 2 meters above grade, one encounters the ceramics showroom. This space is the public interface for the ceramics component of the project and introduces residents and visitors alike to the work conducted in the atelier. Immediately adjacent to the showroom is that atelier, with space for several artists to design and create. This space opens up into the kiln area, where a Noborigama kiln takes advantage of the rising topography to step up the hillside, its gentle progression recalling the episodic nature of pilgrimage. The kiln space includes ample wood storage areas and is unroofed. This allows for individuals on the path above to look down into the kiln area and watch the activity as they move through the project. The entire ceramics realm is lit from above and from raised windows fronting onto the main path. Materials are brought in through an underground service tunnel.

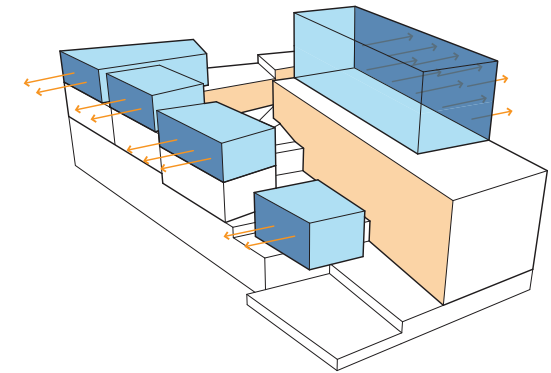
A large terrace looking out east of the hillside sits on the roof of the ceramics showroom. Adjacent, yet tucked within the wall is a media lounge with wi-fi access, a small snack bar, and a large screen. This is where movies and soccer games are shown and becomes an active community amenity for both the residents of Cunha and those traveling the Caminho Confluente. This space looks down over the ceramics kiln, linking the communal and artisanal components of the project together—as well as allowing fans to watch as the kiln is stoked to celebrate soccer goals. To the other side of this open kiln space, right as one enters the project from the church, is a bike storage area for those cycling the route. With the inclusion of spaces that serve and appeal to both pilgrims and local residents, the project aims to balance the two groups and create moments of convergence, satisfying the design threshold of pilgrim and local.

6.17: Section through the path looking towards the church and ceramics atelier (local)

## Individual and communal

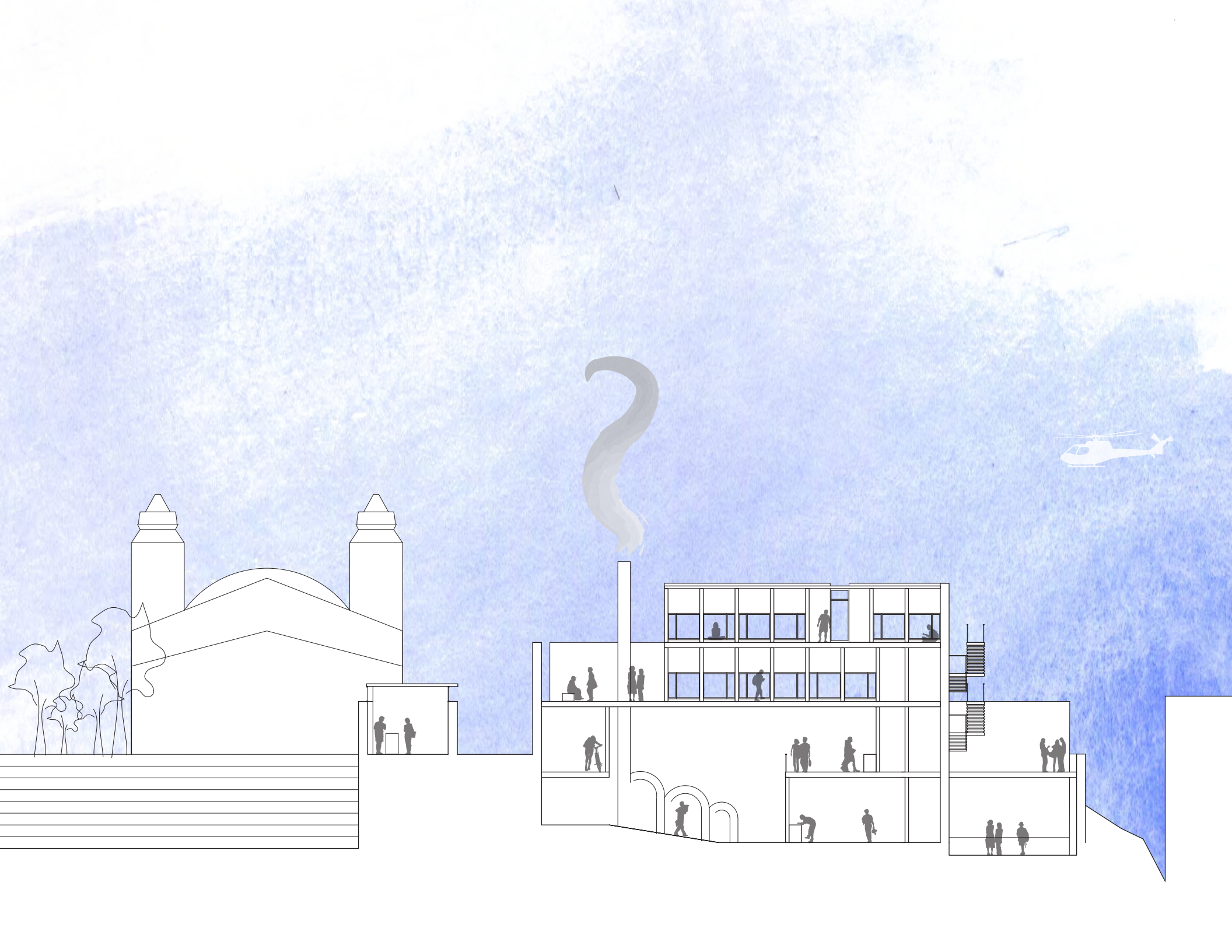
The third and final design threshold is that of the individual and the communal. This is where the project began, with pilgrimage's unique ability bring together individuals along a shared path, forging communities of disparate dreams and desires. The true magic and potential of pilgrimage lies in this union of the individual and the communal, of a solitary act taken collectively in an individual mindset of openness and connection. Thus, it is the individual elements that unite the collective program components detailed above. As one moves up, the project transitions from the individual to the communal. There is a shift in focus as well, from the inward focus of the communal spaces below towards the shared path, to the outward focus of these individual spaces to the urban and natural context of the site. The second and third levels stand in contrast to the porosity and openness of the lower levels with their cellular density of rooms. This is where the accommodations sit and where the individual predominates. One moves through the realm below, engaging with others along one's path, stopping to watch the activity at the kiln, sharing a drink or a story with one's fellow travelers or a local passing through. Yet up above, one enters one's room.

These upper levels are devoted to twelve pairs of individual rooms. The decision was made to provide only individual, not group accommodations to enhance the sense of the individual journey and the moment of personal retreat at the end of the day. The rest of the project is so fully concerned with the collective, that this moment of pure individuality seemed justified and appropriate. These rooms sit atop both parts of the project, the pilgrimage and local components. They are connected by two bridges which bind the two halves of the project together, recalling pilgrimage's foundation in the individual and creating spatial thresholds for those on the path below as they sense moments of transition above. Ultimately, it is the individuals that hold pilgrimage and this project together as they converge.



6.18: Shifting focus between individual and communal spaces.

6.19: A section through the western bar contrasts the activity and openness of the ceramics atelier and main level with the cellularity of the upper levels.





### **Moments of convergence**

This thesis aims to create moments of convergence in the pursuit of *communitas*. Thus, careful programming and strategic instances of overlap were employed to facilitate these connections. The art courtyard space (Fig. 6.20) adjacent to the pousada's entry introduces pilgrims to the local craft culture from their first encounters with the space. As new shows are installed, gallery openings create another opportunity for locals and travelers to interact. The projection of the upper floor into this courtyard creates a sheltered space below and a moment of spatial threshold between the individual realm above and the communal area below. This courtyard, as well as the adjoining dining areas, both interior and exterior, can also be rented out by the community for birthdays, performances, and celebrations, bringing the local component of the project into an area that is more devoted to the pilgrimage. During normal hours, the dining facilities can be used by the community as well, encouraging locals and pilgrims to eat together.

The placement of the main lounge and media area (Fig. 6.21) in the local component of the project encourages pilgrims to engage with Cunha's residents over drinks, internet passwords, and soccer games. Easy access from the ceramics atelier below means that artists can easily come upstairs for a break and to interact with pilgrims and residents alike. The large terrace above the atelier provides another instance where this interaction can occur and creates an excellent place to watch the sunrise after partying until dawn, as Brazilians are wont to do.

The chimney of the kiln provides another moment of convergence as it pierces the enclosed courtyard above. This space functions as an outdoor living room (Fig. 6.22) for the pilgrims, providing a more private space of connection—pilgrims only—in this more individually-focused zone. Pilgrims circle the chimney like a hearth, enjoying its warmth on cool nights and relaxing and joking together no matter the temperature. The walls surrounding the courtyard peel back just slightly to provide elevated views back to the Igreja de São Benedito and the main road. This area can be seen from the

6.20: View of the gallery courtyard from reception.

6.21: View from the terrace back towards reception and the kiln.



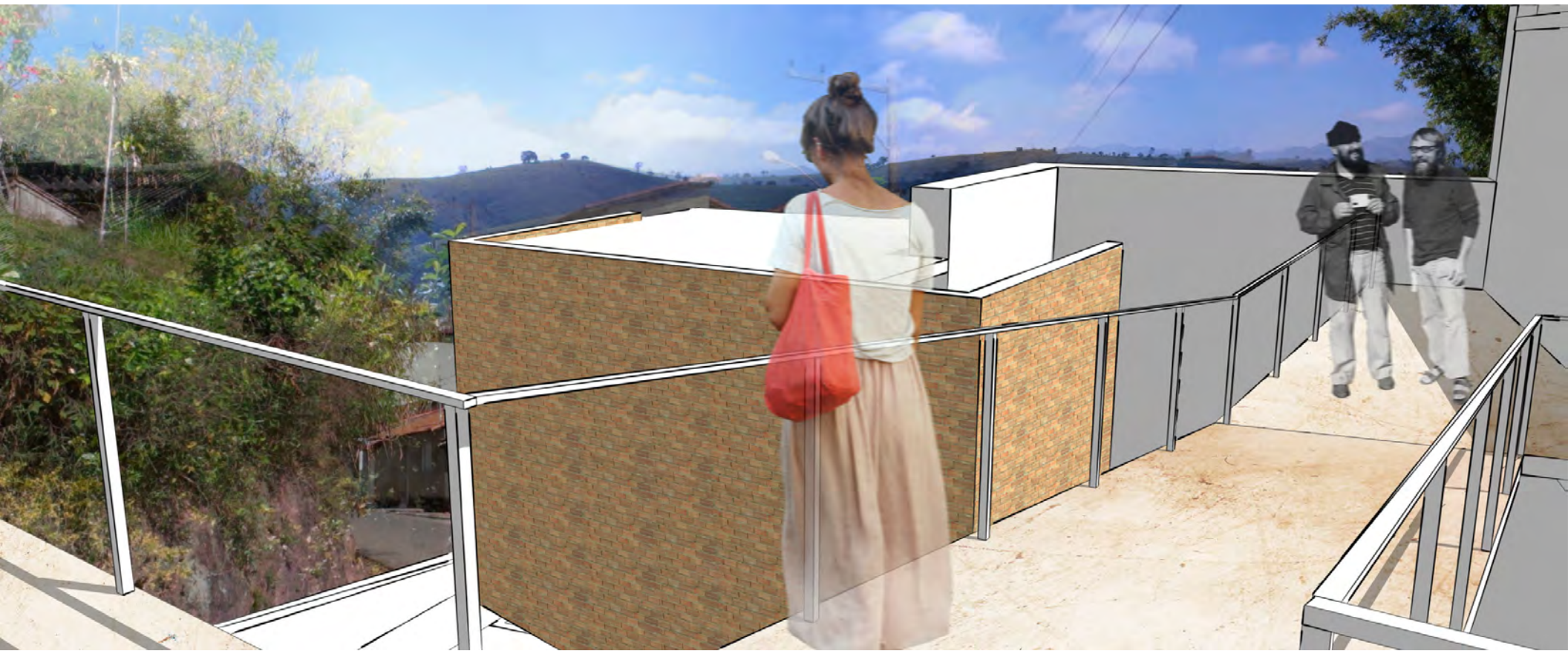
6.22: View of the outdoor living room with chimney running through.



entry, creating a small moment of visual convergence, a hint for the traveler of what's to come.

On the upper levels, an additional moment of convergence occurs at the threshold to each room. Rooms are arrayed in pairs, with a shared sink at the recessed entrance. Here, even the most shy has a final opportunity to interact with one's neighbors while brushing one's teeth or filling a glass of water for the night. After this final moment of convergence, the pilgrim passes into his or her individual room to pass the time in rest and reflection.

6.23: Looking out over the chapel and into the hills from the upper level.



## The room

The individual cells of the pilgrim's rooms provided the final opportunity to explore the concept of the threshold. Where larger parts of the project focused more on programmatic overlapping and convergence, with only a few spatial thresholds as walls cracked open, bridges spanned above, and stairs stepped down, the room was an excellent opportunity to break down the elements of the threshold and employ them throughout the space. In this way, the project aimed to create a heightened sense of liminality, a thickened threshold, even in this individual realm, such that the pilgrim could enter into a state of openness and potentiality while at rest.

For this exercise, the threshold was broken down into six constituent parts based upon one's experience passing through a doorway:

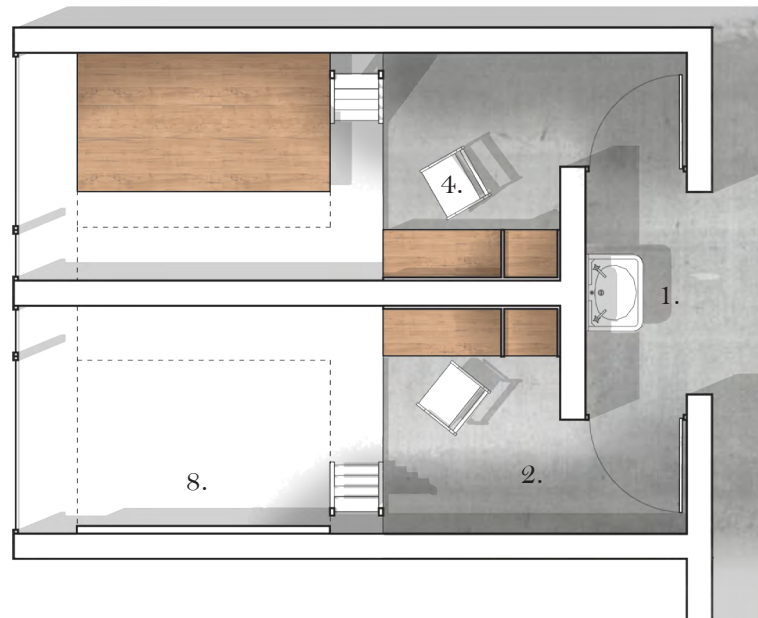
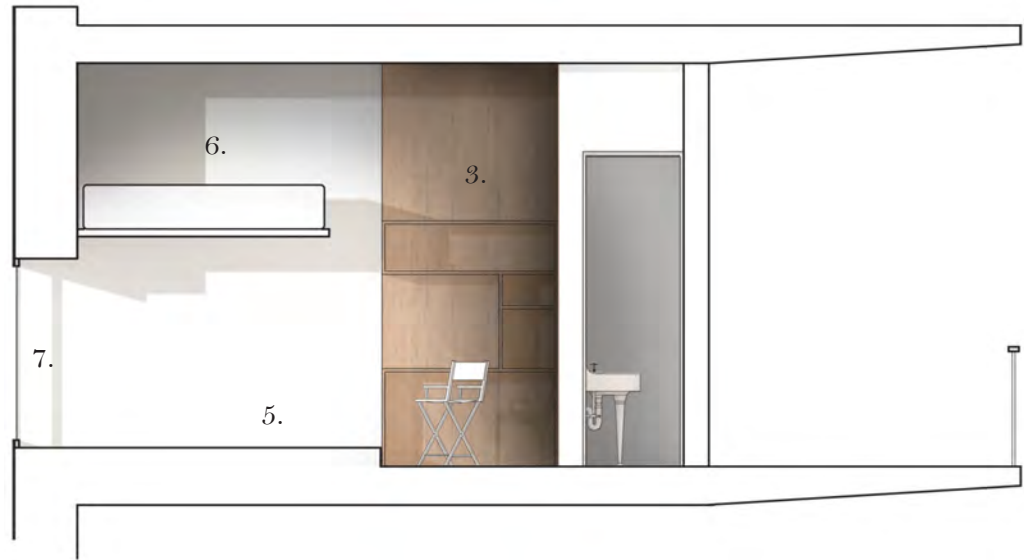
- Step up (over a lintel)
- Compression (as the space contracts)
- Step through
- State change (as materials and space transition)
- Step down (from the lintel)
- Expansion (as the space opens up)

Of these six, all but "step down" were used in the design of the individual room.

From the threshold zone with shared sink, the pilgrim turns and steps through the doorway as the space contracts. He turns again and the space opens up. Here, a built in desk and shelves provide space to store his belongings, to write in his journal, and to read. Hooks on the wall let him hang up his bag and coat; a corner holds his staff. The desk chair can be folded when not in use, further opening and transforming the space. The flooring of the shared space outside continues in this zone, yet stops as the pilgrim steps up and into the resting area. This space is 15cm above the other zone. The rise of

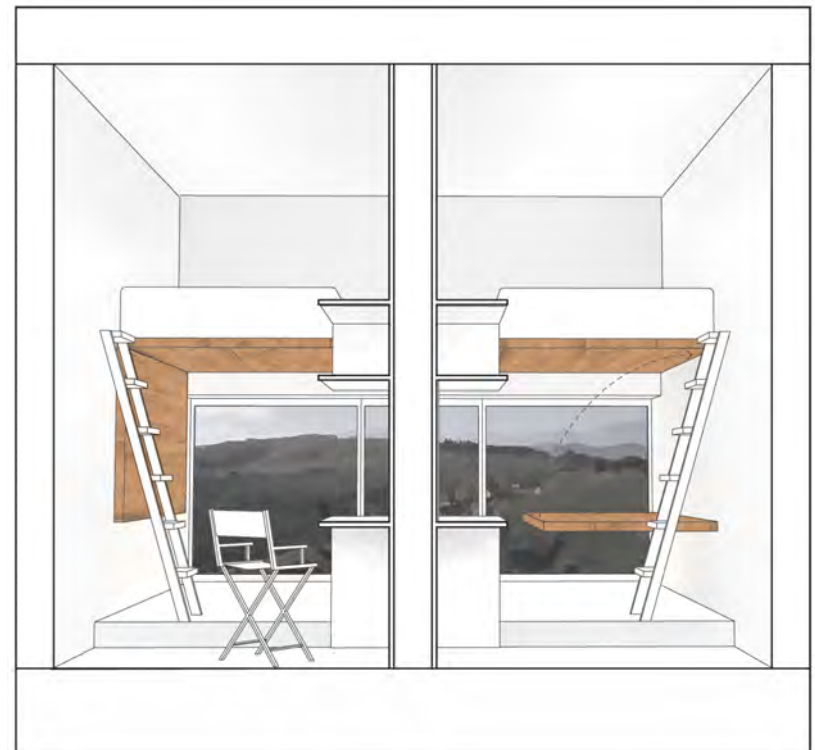
6.24-25

Room plan (below) and section (above)



1. Shared sink
2. Exterior flooring continues in room
3. Built-in desk/storage
4. Flexible furniture
5. Raised rest area
6. Elevated bed
7. Window threshold
8. Deployable second sleeping surface

the step is lined with ceramic tile produced on site. A window is punched into the thick wall that lines the room, giving views of the town and the hills. This window is flush with the floor and rises up 1.5 meters so that the view is best appreciated in a posture of rest and reflection, humbly seated on the floor. From this position, the pilgrim appreciates the thickness of the wall that encircles him and expands outwards over the hills, forgetting the narrowness of the space in contemplation of the view that stretches out before him from wall to wall. The bed is raised above the window, keeping that sense of expansion and connection to the landscape clear and unobstructed. It can be reached by ladder, but for those who do not wish to climb or who travel with a companion, an additional surface folds out from the wall and can accommodate a second mattress. The elevated bed acts as another spatial threshold, creating a moment of compression and transition that are only heightened with the deployment of the second surface and the transformations that creates in the space.



6.26: Section through a typical room pair showing change in spatial character due to the flexibility of the furniture



6.27: A moment of rest inside the room



# 7.

## Conclusion

where do we go from here

*I walked and I walked and I walked. The road went ever on and on until one day, I was there. Eighteen kilometers became ten, two, zero. Outside of the city, a construction worker congratulated me on my journey. I wasn't there yet! I wasn't...I was there. And just like that, it was over. All this build up and then, done. Relief, accomplishment, withdrawal. Exhaustion. I did it.*

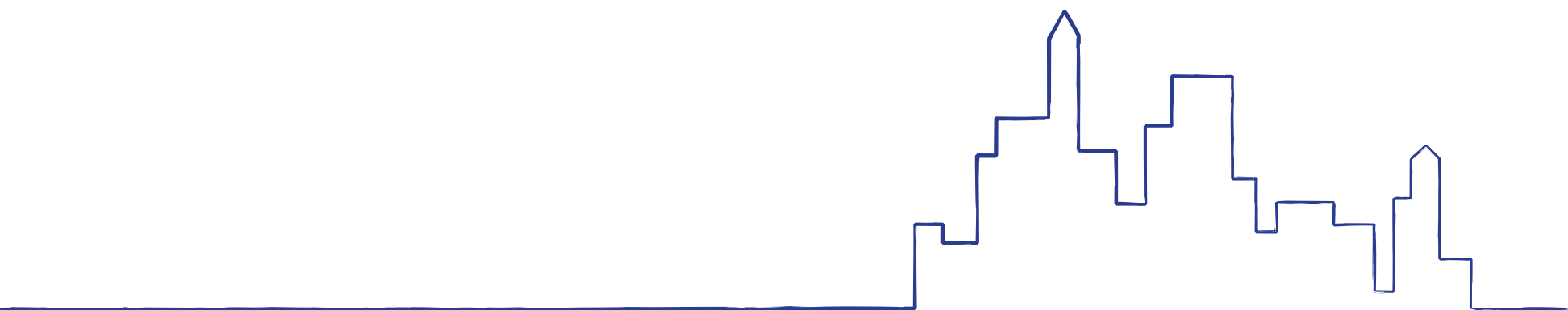
A thesis is a lot like pilgrimage. Ten weeks fly by as quickly as 300km, endless at first, but oh so finite by the end. At that end, the project is done, the journey finished. This thesis was presented on 4 December 2013 and received favorably by the jury. Discussions were sparked about the nature of pilgrimage today and what it means to travel and engage with a people and a place. The project's fit into its urban context was lauded as well as its conceptual backing and spatial richness. Certain criticisms were raised about the complexity of the project, a quality inherent in a thesis founded on the principles of convergence and overlap. Additional design iterations would address the more superfluous of these complexities, allowing the moments of threshold and convergence at the core of the project to shine more clearly.

The ceramics portion of the project was another element which was questioned. This was the last piece added to the project and the least resolved. Following the mid-review, discussion revolved around whether or not to keep the atelier. Given the additional level of interaction with the community and culture of Cunha that the ceramics component provides, the decision was ultimately made to keep it. This decision was enforced by the parallels between the episodic journey of pilgrimage and noborigama ceramics with their stepped series of firings. Functioning at both a conceptual and programmatic level, the atelier stayed. However, the resolution of the ceramics portion is not as complete as that of the other elements and could bear further study.

## **Journey's end**

This is a project about thresholds. It is about the moments in-between when individuals intersect and spark community. It is about pilgrimage in the modern world, an individual journey taken collectively through spaces both ancient and contemporary. It is about motion and connection, path and pause. The solution presented above was very site- and program-specific, yet it offers a recipe to counteract a contemporary issue and an alternative way of thinking about hospitality in demi-urban areas, where lodgings are often anonymous and isolating, no matter which country they are in. Lacking the intimacy and privacy of smaller inns and the infrastructure and amenities of large, urban accommodations, these hotels provide an experience that is faceless and placeless. This project offers one solution for giving them a face and a place: by creating a sense of security and tranquility that permits the inclusion of local and cultural components and provides visual, spatial, and programmatic connections to context and community. Each project is different, as each community is different, as each individual is different. Along the path, we are all different, all unique, yet all moving together, united by our dreams and desires into ephemeral communities. It is the hope of this thesis to have created a space worth pausing for. The road goes ever on and on...





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