

Stillness through Time and Space:

An Architecture
of the Memory,
the Remembering,
and the Remaking of Place.

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Memory

past occurrences and events that have defined a site or place, often concretised through objects or buildings.

Remembering

the ability of one's mind to become aware of something from the past, understanding the experiences along the way.

Remaking

to make anew or in a different form; and through memory and remembering, reinterpreting site or place in a way that is respectful to the past and present.



The thesis aims to revive the cultural identity of Florenc.



Content of Thesis

The first chapter establishes the location of the thesis and defines key words that will relate to the understanding and conceptualisation of the project.

The second chapter develops a basis for understanding the site's history, delving all the way back to the 14th century and follows with a series of progressing historical maps, which are compared to the current situation. It explores the functions through various existing maps and analyses such as functions, pointing out land uses, a cultural map to figure out the site's cultural potential, transport analysis to figure out the presence of the traffic and automobiles, and also current uses and qualities of space through site photographs and collages. The site is explored, with analyses such as the visual and the perceptual, as well as the materials of the current condition. Future plans are documented and analysed as well.

The third chapter reviews case studies from different countries that share similar functions serving as reference points towards the thesis. There are three case studies: The first is the Ningbo Museum in China by Wang Shu, a museum that bases its form from the memory of the site. The second is the City of Culture in Spain by Peter Eisenman, in which the theme of fabric of the old and fabric of the new is explored. The third is the Kunsthall in Netherlands by OMA and the case study exemplifies the concept of connectivity.

The fourth chapter serves as a prelude to the fifth. This is where the objective of the thesis is situated, providing the readers the areas the project will focus on, with levels of hierarchies in terms of the wider and closer context. Diagrams also point out key ideas of the project.

The fifth chapter visualises the thesis through a series of drawings, from floor plans to sections and renders. There are also diagrams that define the concept as well as material studies. The drawings are organised in a chronological way, as to show the process of the thesis from the beginning of the semester.

The sixth and final chapter concludes the thesis with an evaluation, finalising the goal of the thesis, and stating the significance of the project relative to the context and how it may serve as a model for an architectural methodology.

Abstract

The historic city wall that separated Central Prague and the present Karlin area is long gone but the functional character still exists in the form of the magistrála (highway) which cuts through the site, damaging both the horizontal and vertical planes. This magistrála, among other issues, create a disconnection between the people and the site. The only cultural landmark is detached from the fabric and the site segregates the two urban fabrics it is surrounded by, thus making it difficult for the people to access the site.

As a thesis project, I will need to reinvigorate the potential of the site that was lost due to the current situation, bringing back its memory of place - the loci - as a prominent cultural site and a vibrant place for pedestrians. The site has undergone multiple incarnations, with each having its own memory, but the presence of the magistrála prevented the site a moment to memorialise it. The idea is to pick up the memory pieces and reflect them in the architecture and urban scope, so that the site will bring about a 'sense of stillness', through the reification of temporal (the past, present and future) and the spatial (the architecture and the urban) elements resulting in a site that remembers its own past and uses the present's aspects for a harmonizing future.



Analysis

The past, the
present and the
future are always
intertwined

History

The Baroque Wall

The name Florenc may have originated from the 14th century when the population from Florence, Italy settled in the area. By then the gothic wall served as fortifications of the city and the area was mainly characterised as an urban edge. Later, the Baroque wall formed the boundaries of the New Town with a gateway towards the Carolinenthal area, where it used to be a farmlands until the late 19th century, which were later used as military purposes (Kasarna barracks and hospital) during the early to middle of the 20th century.

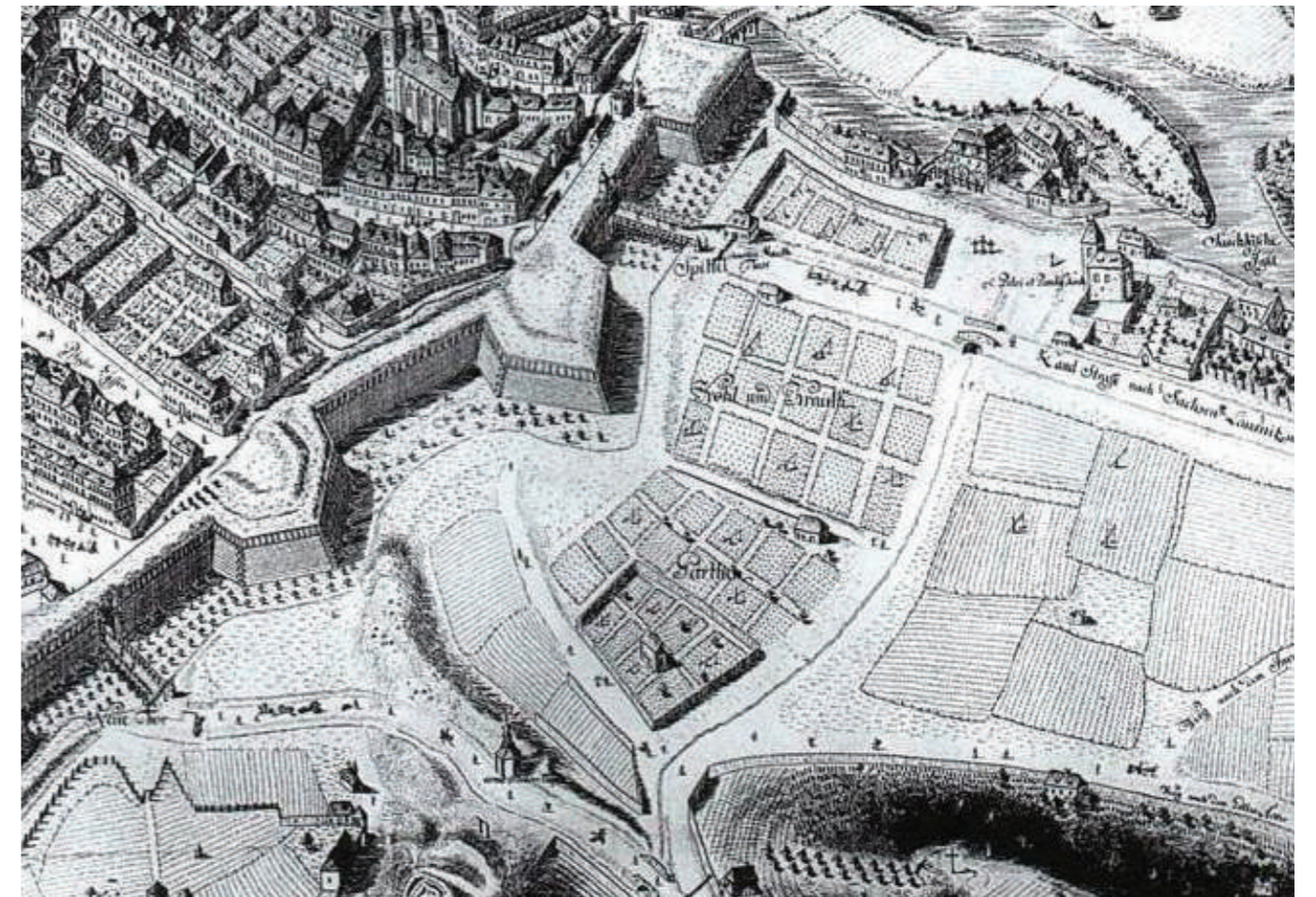


Fig. Drawing of an aerial view of the baroque wall in the Florenc area (1800)

The Prague City Museum

A neo-Renaissance building in the 19th century to house the history of the Prague territory from prehistory to 1784. It includes the well known Langwell model of Prague, built in 1834 showing the entirety of Prague, with intricate details of the Old Town and Prague Castle.

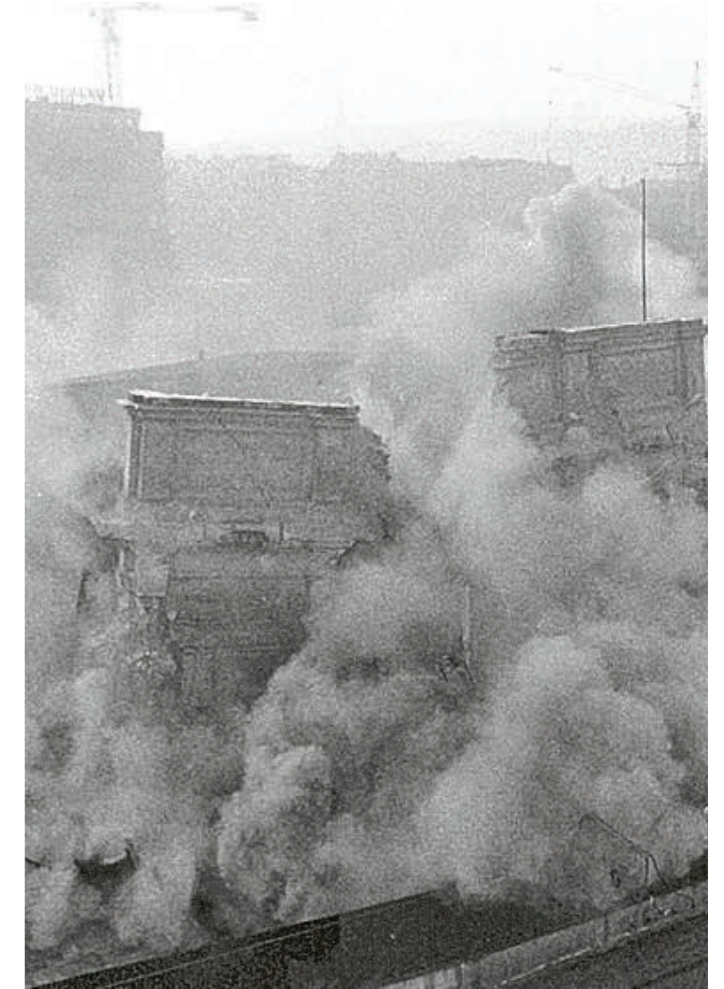
The original cafe pavilion was opened in 1883 and contained a small collection. It was built by Saller and Beninger in 1878. The pavilion was soon found to be too small and so a new larger neo-Renaissance building was constructed from 1896 to 1898 by the architect Balsanek. The building was opened in 1900. The collection includes archaeological collections, decorative arts, porcelain, furniture as well as paintings from the 19th to 20th century.



Fig. Original museum with its developed park before the magistrala (1883)



B. Addition of the museum due to insufficient space (1900)



C. Tesnov railway station in the process of demolition in (1985)

The Těšnov Rail Station

The Těšnov Rail Station was located in the north east of Prague's New Town. It was constructed in 1872 and finished in 1875 by the Czech-German architect Carl Schlimp (1834-1901) but demolished in 1985, 110 years after its completion. It became an important stopover from Austria and other parts of Europe, used for the K.K. Austrian northwest train as the ending station. The station changed its name several times due to the changing of ownership: It was first called the Nord-West Bahnhof from 1875-1919, then called the Ernest Denisstation, after the French historian Ernest Denis (1849-1921), during the First Republic. The station later became Praha Těšnov after the Second World War. It was an important transport route and thus its area, the Těšnov-Florenc, became an active node for pedestrians as the station served as a 'gateway' to Prague. Its previous incarnation - the Spittel Thor - served as a gate that separates the old Karolinenthal and Old Town Prague. But this importance diminished after the rerouting of all trains to the Praha Hlavni Nadrazi (1871) and Praha Masarykovo Nadrazi (1841) thus rendering the Těšnov station to dysfunction, leading to its demolition.

Historical Progression Baroque Wall



1742

Prague's fortification walls underwent several renovations during its time. In the 10th century the wall consisted of clay mounds with wooden gratings and stone cladding. The walls were then renovated to stronger stone walls and the bastion fort star layout was implemented along the fortifications of the city.



1841

The battlement walls were located right in the current project site. The Spittel Thor served as the entry point towards the New Town area, and outwards to Karolinenthal, which was an agricultural area until the end of the century.

The layout consisted of the wall, the moat and surrounding greenery. In its final stage the bastion flanks were filled with parks for the residents of the New Town area.

Těšnov Rail station and Prague City Museum



1891

After the demolition of the wall in the 19th century, the urban pattern of the wall prompted the construction of public buildings to differentiate the fabric of the New town and the Karlin district, which was undergoing a rapid development due to the city's expansion post-wall.

On the Těšnov side, the rail station had been taking passengers in and out of the city from 1875 and its monumental facade provided a new identity towards the site. On the Florenc side the Prague City Museum was constructed around 10 years after the rail station.



1938

Decades later and the site has flourished. The strategic and important node of Těšnov-Florenc prompted several government buildings such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Transportation built along the Vltava river. The frontage of the Tesnov station is laden with carriages and pedestrians - and the establishment of the tram track made it easier for passengers to travel.

The Prague City Museum has been extended and the museum block provides visitors a well designed public park.

Magistrála



1964

After the Second World War, Prague is undergoing an automobile production boom with that the need of a well articulated city for cars. Various plans took into consideration running an access highway through the site, which would mean the demolition of the Tesnov Railstation and the original Prague City Museum.

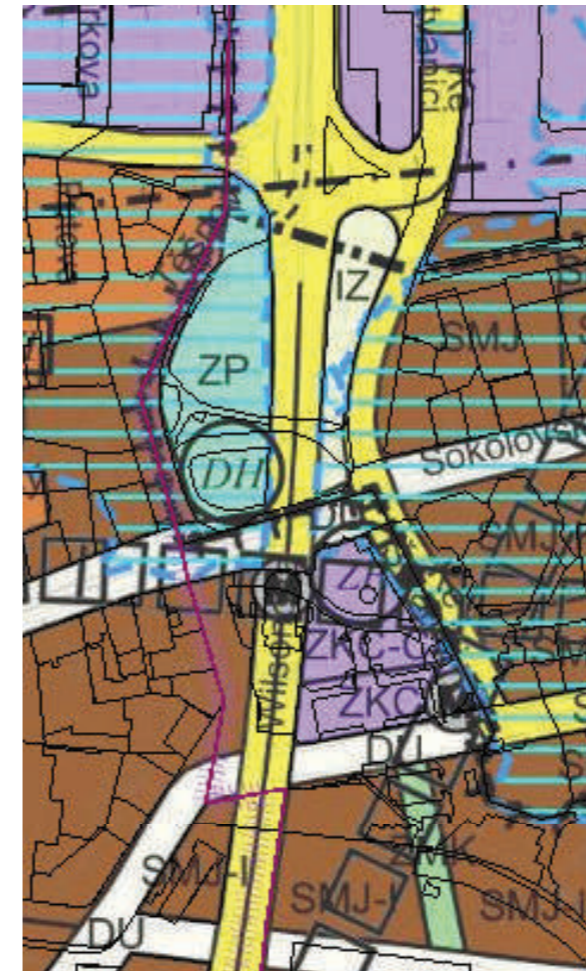


1986

The construction of the magistrála underwent in the 70s and the demolition of the station and the original museum paved the way for the magistrála, connecting the north-south axis of the city. Due to the magistrála, several objects of the urban fabric along it were damaged and displaced, and with the amount of car traffic, an increased level of pollution and noise.

The magistrála hinders the appeal of the Tesnov-Florenc area. The once pedestrian focused site has now become a car-centric one and the barrier the highway creates made it more difficult for pedestrians to access the site.

Strategies



Land Use Map

The current Land Use Map sees the site surrounded by mixed urban cores (SMJ and SV coloured brown) and other types (ZVO, purple) with the exception of the cultural space of the Prague City Museum. It is noted on the south that the currently empty land is labeled as mixed urban, which leads to the fact that adding mixed cores into the southern part of the site is feasible.

While the Tesnov site is labeled as park (ZP, green) it is not under the Prague heritage zone, meaning that different changes can still be applied.



Concept Vision

The immediate response to the site is to use the site's memory to be physically manifested into the site. The Concept Vision sees the Tesnov railsation 'remembered' by the use of void space. Amongst that is the restructuring of the site - with mixed urban cores and visual connectivity towards the Prague City Museum to bring back its importance.

Present

Project Boundaries

Florenc is located in the Prague 8 district, bordering the New Town and Karlín, and adjacent to the Vltava river on the north and the Masarykovo train station on the south. 9 points form the boundaries of the project proposal:

- a. Sokolovska street where the Florenc metro station finishes, in which the station is one of the foci of the project
- b. Krizikova where the Florenc bus station is located
- c. An unused track from the main railway towards Masaryk station
- d. The continuing path of the unused railway track as well as the flyover of the magistrála
- e. Na Florenci square where the proposed development begins
- f. Na Porici street where the main axis road runs through the site and connects with boundary (a.) towards Karlín
- g. Tesnov street edge which continues to Starkova and Petrská streets
- h. Rohanske Nabrezi and Tesnovsky tunnel that runs alongside the river and where the Hlavkuv bridge begins.
- i. Pobrezni Street which is cut off by Ke Stvanici crossroad resulting in an inactive street



Morphology

From a fortified wall that protects the Old Town from invasions, to a significant edge in which monumental buildings improve the surroundings, to a dominant infrastructure that connects the city as a whole, the area has experienced major changes along the course of history. Two urban fabrics can be identified: on the west, the New Town edge and on the east, the front of the Florenc and Karlin districts. The Tesnov park and the Prague City Museum were meant to function as public spaces that accommodate pedestrians, offering quality and safe space. The magistrala prevents that. It acts as a physical boundary that separates the two fabrics and the surrounding public spaces, resulting in a severed site.

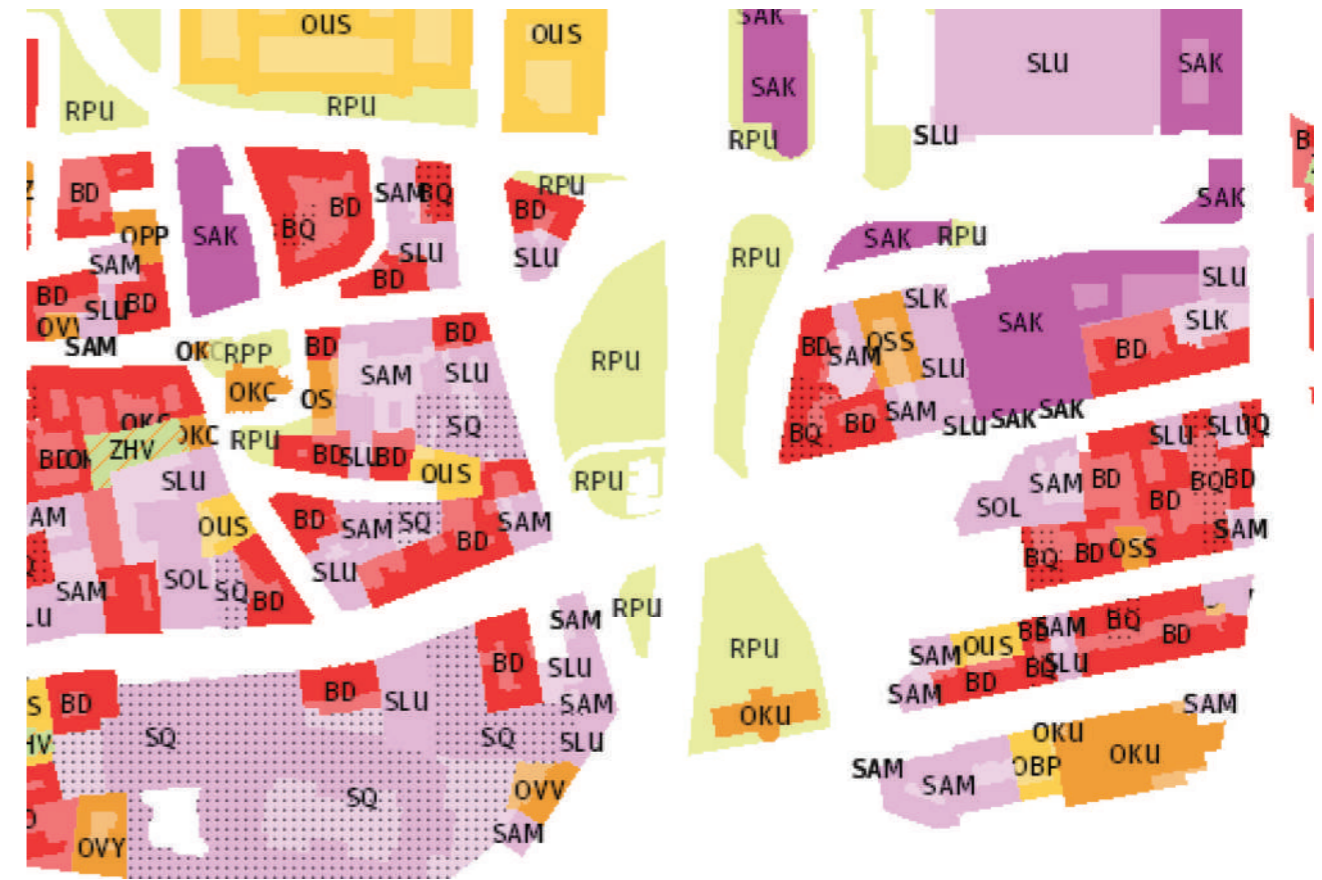


Morphology of the Florenc area

Function

Buildings

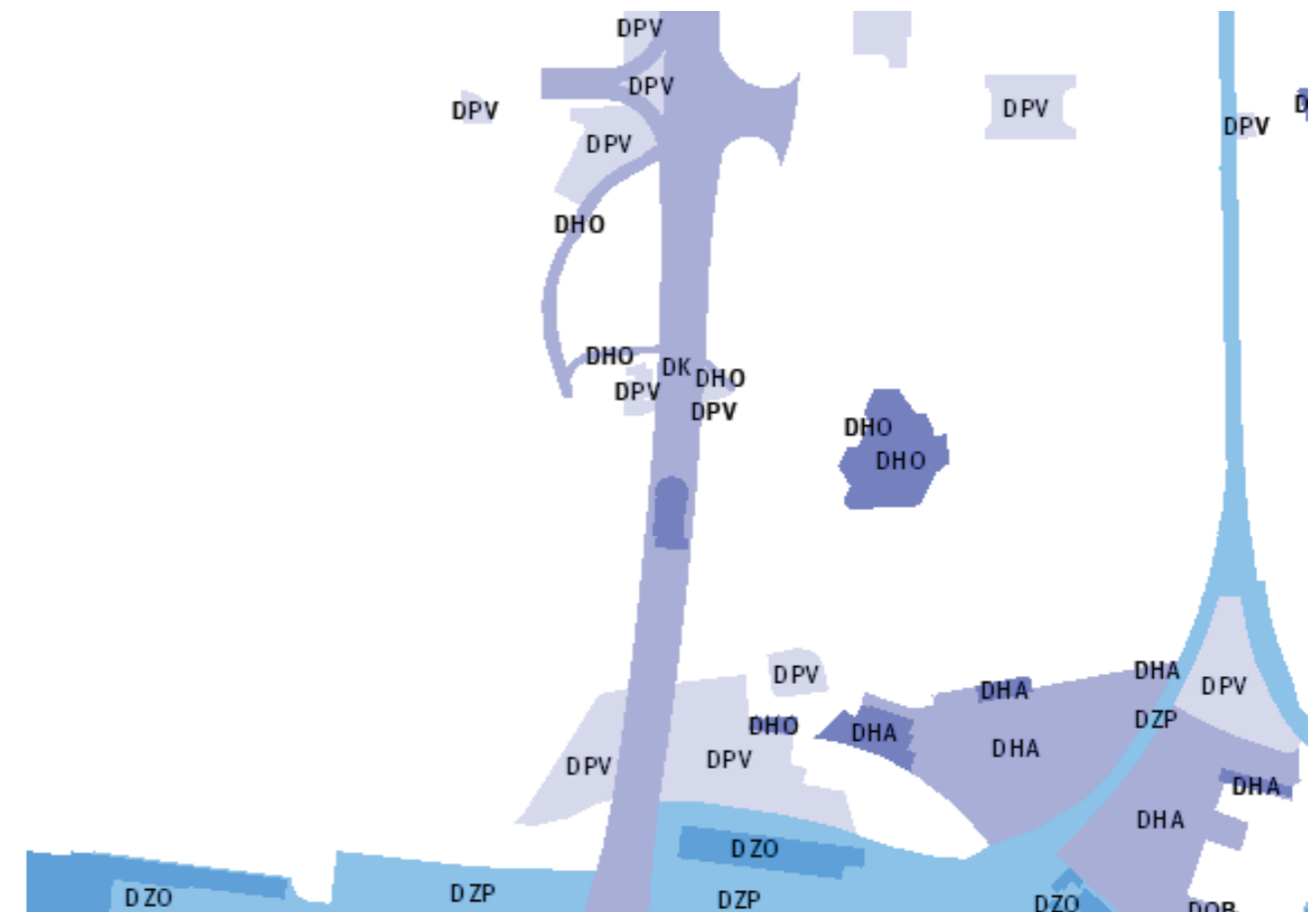
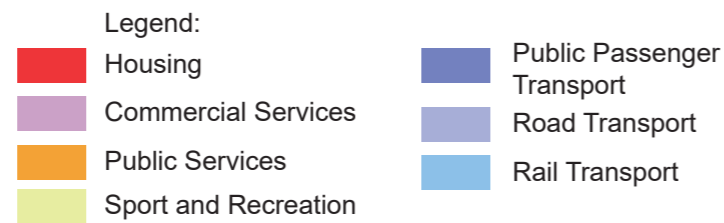
An array of different buildings and space functions can be found in the site. The centre point consists of green space which forms along the magistrala and the Prague City Museum. The east and west parts consist of a mixture of commercial and residential functions. On the north east, several office buildings and the Hilton Hotel form along the Karlin riverbank. Government buildings, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Transportation lies north west of the site.



Function - Buildings

Transport Infrastructure

The transport infrastructure dominates the site. The magistrala cuts through the site from south to north. The site is framed by the Masarykovo Rail Station to the south and river on the north. Additionally the Florenc metro station and the Florenc bus station, both located at the centre of the site, are significant transport nodes which see high commutes throughout their daily operation.

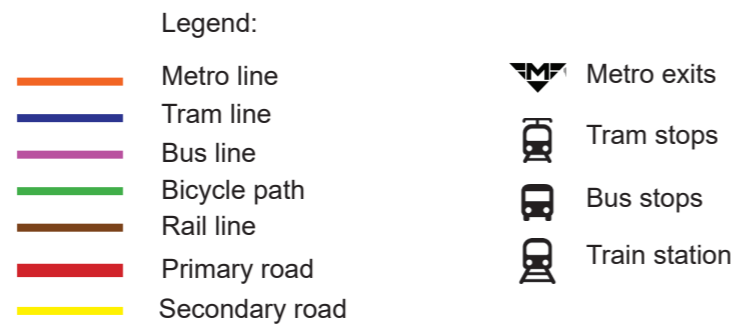


Function - Transport Infrastructure

Public Transport

In addition to the magistrala running through the site, in the wider area the site is an urban transport nexus as it is well connected by metro stations, tram and bus routes, as well as its close proximity to the Masaryk Rail Station and the Florenc Bus Station. The Florenc Metro station carries a high volume of passengers through the B and C metro lines in this station, due to various reasons: its close walkability to the Old Town and the Karlín neighbourhoods; close distance to amenities such as fast food restaurants; alternative tram and bus stops; and the aforementioned bus station which sees tourists arrive and depart internationally.

The amount of access points in the closer site results in an array of stops and stations, which is observable in the Krizikova- Ke Stvanici crossroad, where 5 metro exits are located. Additionally the Ke Stvanici street holds two bus stops on opposite sides, which widen the street. Trams 3, 8, 24 and 92 passes through the Na Porici- Sokolovska street creating a public transport axis, while tram 14 passes through Tesnov towards the Nusle bridge. There is also a tram roundabout south of the Tesnov park. Lastly, there is minimal dedicated bicycle paths compared to the riverside bank.



Traffic Conditions

According to the Prague Transportation Yearbook 2017 by the Department of Transport Engineering, the magistrála sees approximately 88200 counts on a daily basis, and 31600 counts through the riverside Rohanske Nabrezi route. This generates a large amount of noise and pollution in the environment, and creates a physical barrier to its surrounding - the resultant incline of the magistrála creates dead ends to some of the secondary roads such as the Pobrezni street and the Těšnov street (which directs toward the parking lot for the Ministry of Agriculture). The Magistrála is a major highway, and the ramp exits in Florenc thus creating an area dominated by automobiles, derelict to pedestrians. For instance the Ke Stvanici street, with its four lane capacity, separates the Prague City Museum and becomes a difficult to access landmark due to the high traffic intensity of Sokolovska, Na Florenci and Krizikova streets.

These major problems can be listed and addressed in the proposal:

1. A transport nexus only to accommodate transport related activities (metro to bus station, B to C line, etc)
2. No direct means of going from the Florenc bus station to the Masaryk rail station (the two major transport nodes)
3. Lack of bicycle paths
4. Magistrála: its elevated structure causing problems to public buildings and secondary roads
5. High intensity traffic separating landmarks and other parts of the area
6. Noise and pollution



Traffic map. scale 1:3500

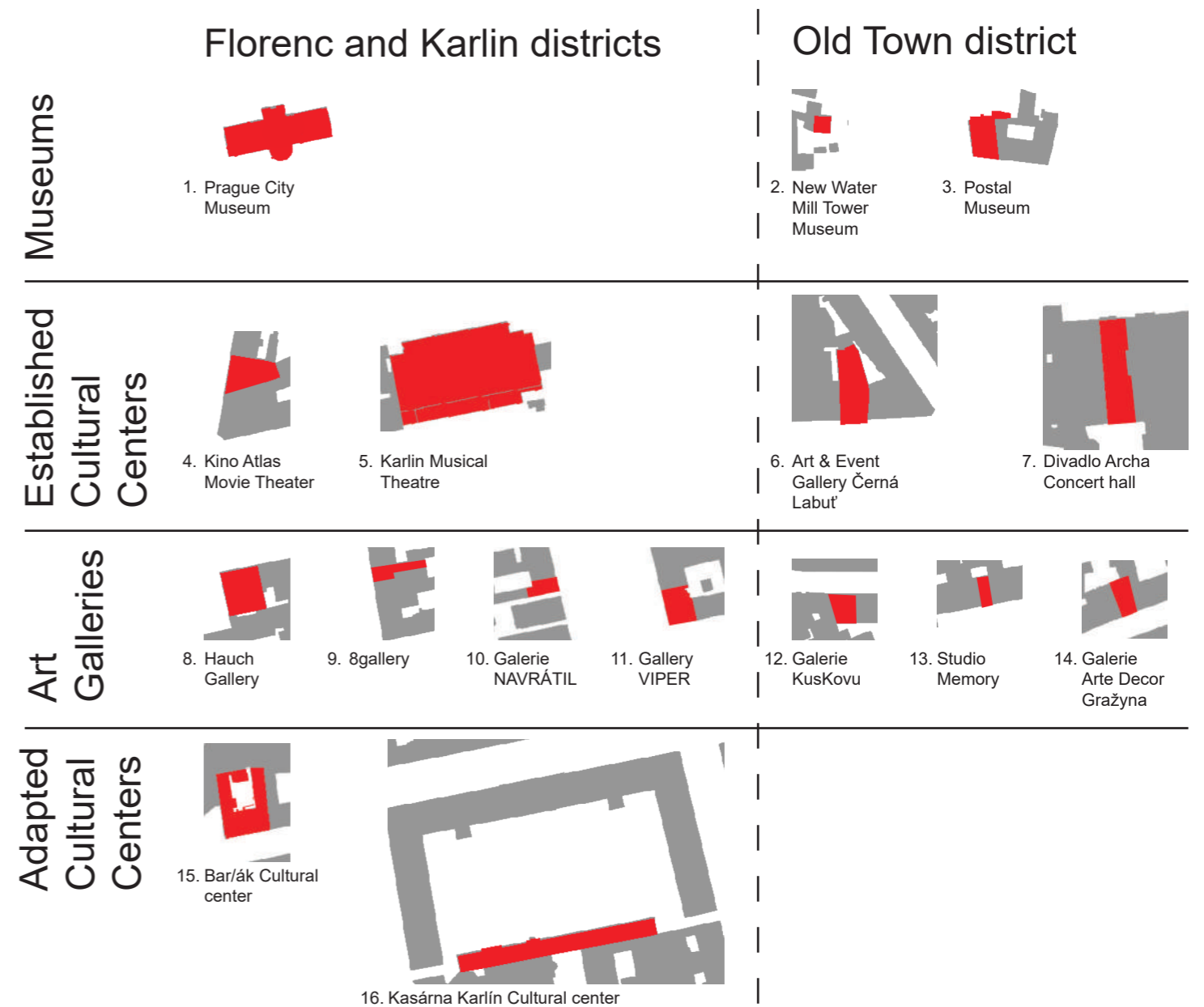
Cultural Institutes

The City of Prague Museum is the lone cultural building in the site yet it is isolated. In the wider site, the Karlin Musical Theater is the closest established cultural center with programs housed in a large building. The Atlas movie theater is also close by, but its hidden nature makes it difficult to notice. Bar/ák is a newly developed cultural center by means of adaptive reuse of an old garrison. It contains a courtyard cafe/theater with a gallery on the ground floor. The Karlin barracks also uses this new typology of reusing dysfunctional buildings into a cultural center. On the Na Porici street two centers can be found, the Art & Event Gallery Černá Labuť and the Divadlo Archa Concert hall and several art galleries can be found in both the Karlin and Old Town districts. In total there are about 16 Cultural centers or buildings of cultural functions.

Within the site, the area around Tesnov and even south of the Prague City Museum lacks any presence of a cultural building. For the site to become a prominent cultural destination, a new cultural center needs to be established as to create a 'culture strip', adding to the city museum. Architecturally, this new intervention should visually and functionally be a reflection of the city museum - symmetrical and in conjunction but contemporary in its style to allude an architectural play. This would mean the new intervention would take the shape of a cultural complex as to contradict the single building function (observed in the city museum) to a multiple building with courtyard function (observed in the newer cultural centers). This would house multiple functions such as museum, art galleries, restaurants, cafes and experimental functions.

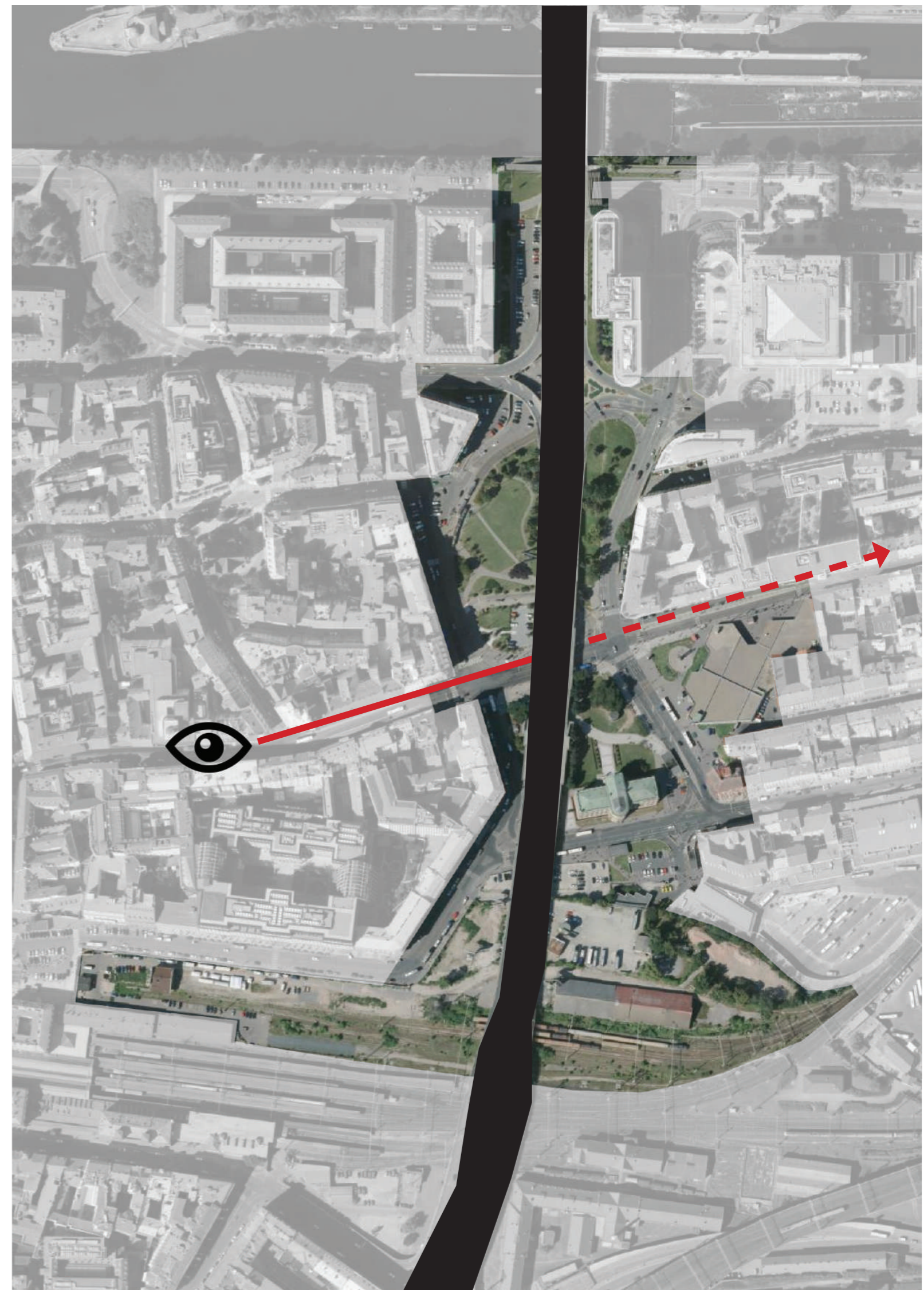


Location of Cultural buildings in proximity of Florenc



Visual Analysis

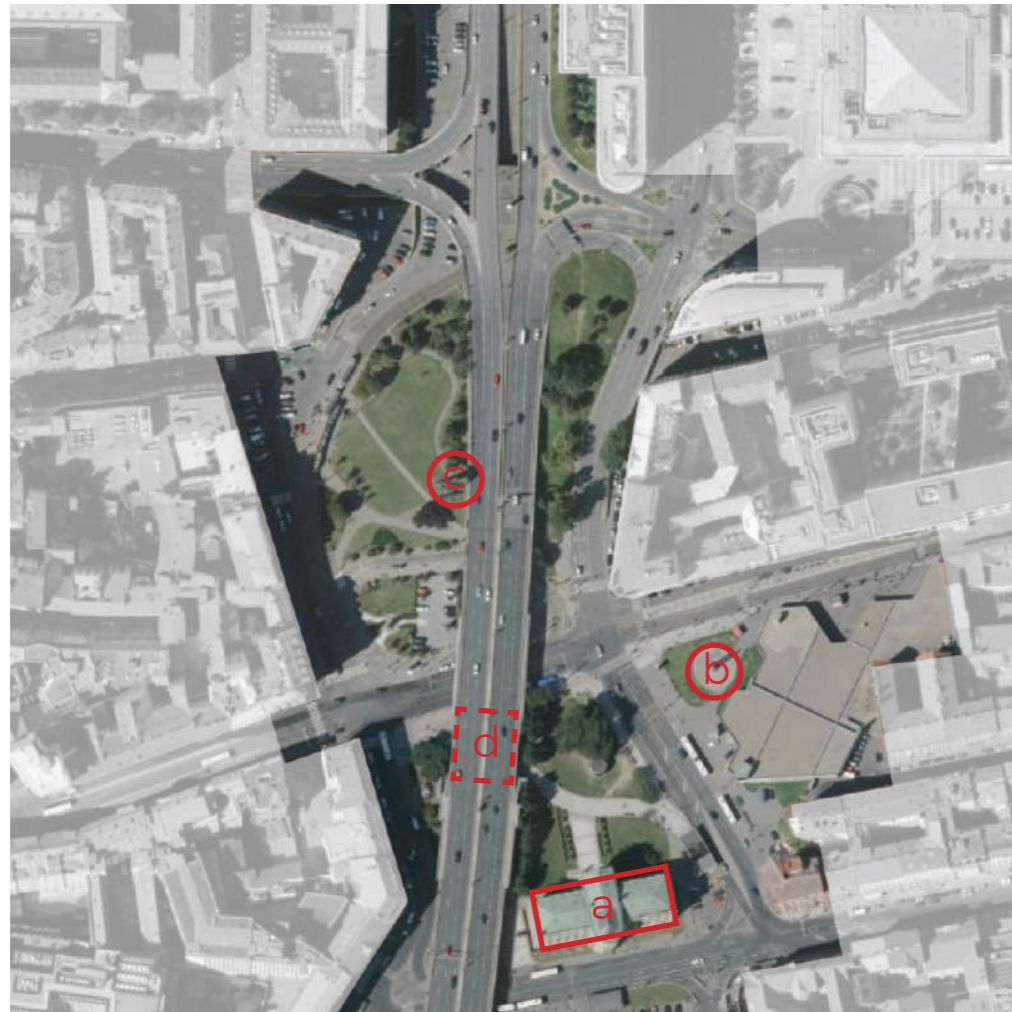
There is a present disconnection of the continuous urban fabric caused by the magistrala on the east-west axis. The visibility is broken after the barrier and urban buildings were replaced by the highway structure, traffic and ugly street furnitures. Nevertheless, the neighborhood is considered one of the most accessible areas in Prague because of the public transport. But by that and the fact that car dominate the street and parking areas, the centre of the site, especially the City Museum of Prague, becomes isolated and detached from the fabric, making it an island surrounded by automobiles. The area is unsafe and unattractive, with homeless people using the space, worsened by the noise and pollution from the cars and trams.



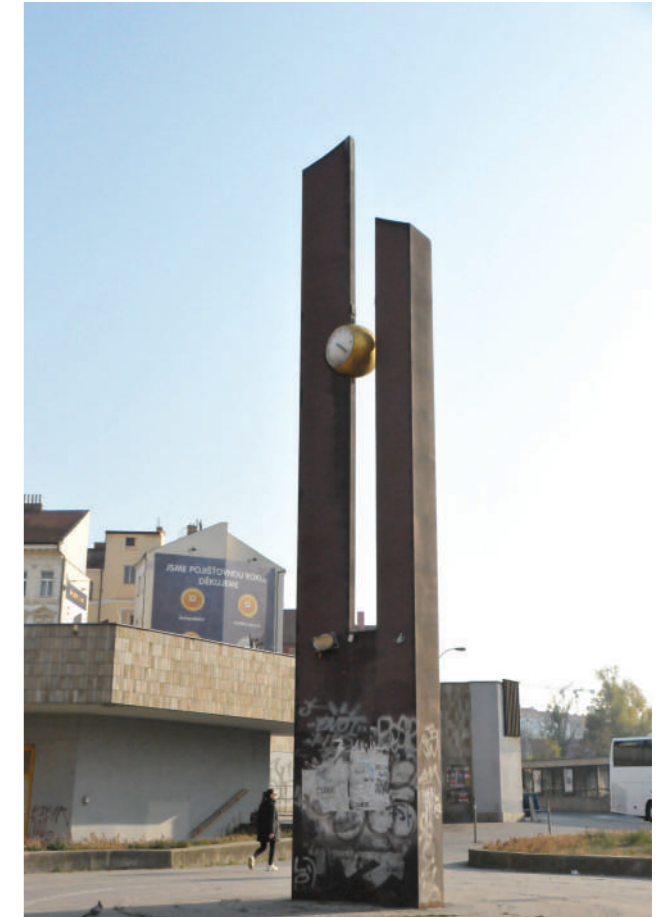
Current Situation

The character remains an undefined, identity-less site. Between the Old Town urban fabric and the Karlín urban fabric, one can observe several monuments. The most obvious would be the Prague City Museum, its robust mass unwavering through changes ever since its completion. The unusual shape of the world clock in front of the Florenc metro station also becomes a landmark, serving as a marker and meeting points for pedestrians. But these significant landmarks are met with their counterparts - the more detestable ones. The colossal billboard is an eyesore for commuters who use the Těšnov park to pass through, and the McDonald's (a 'monument' in its own globalisation terminology) is considered an anomaly due to its hidden characteristic.

The surfaces of Tesnov and Florenc are made of repugnant materials, save from some prior redesigns around Florenc's paths. Strips of concrete bridge, barriers and low walls hinder the movement of the pedestrians, creating an unattractive environment. Urban design components such as benches are lacking and in some parts are of low quality.



a. Prague City Museum



b. World clock



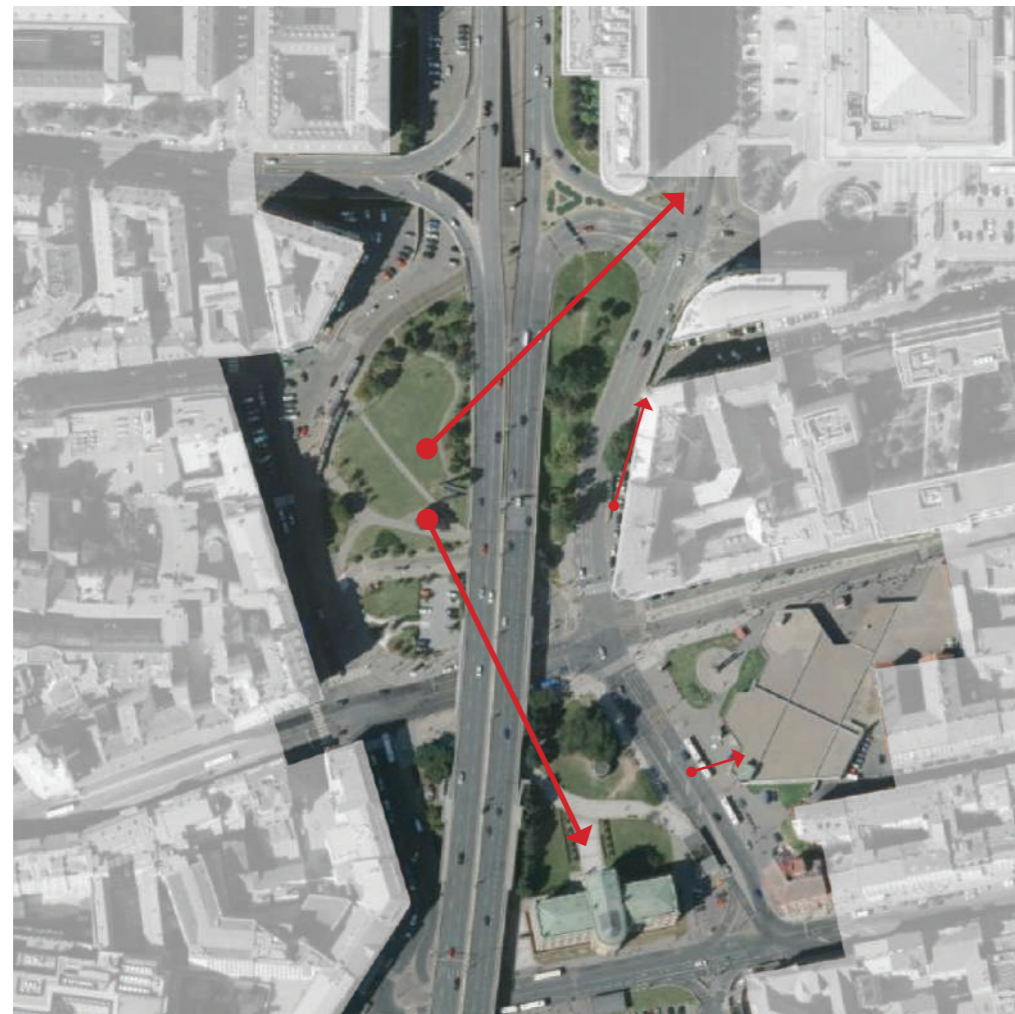
c. Billboard



d. Fast-food restaurant



View of the magistrala, with the Prague City Museum and the Zizkov TV Tower in the background, from Tesnov park



Tesnov park looking towards the Allianz building



Allianz building from Pobrezni street, note the barrier



Frontage of Florenc Metro station



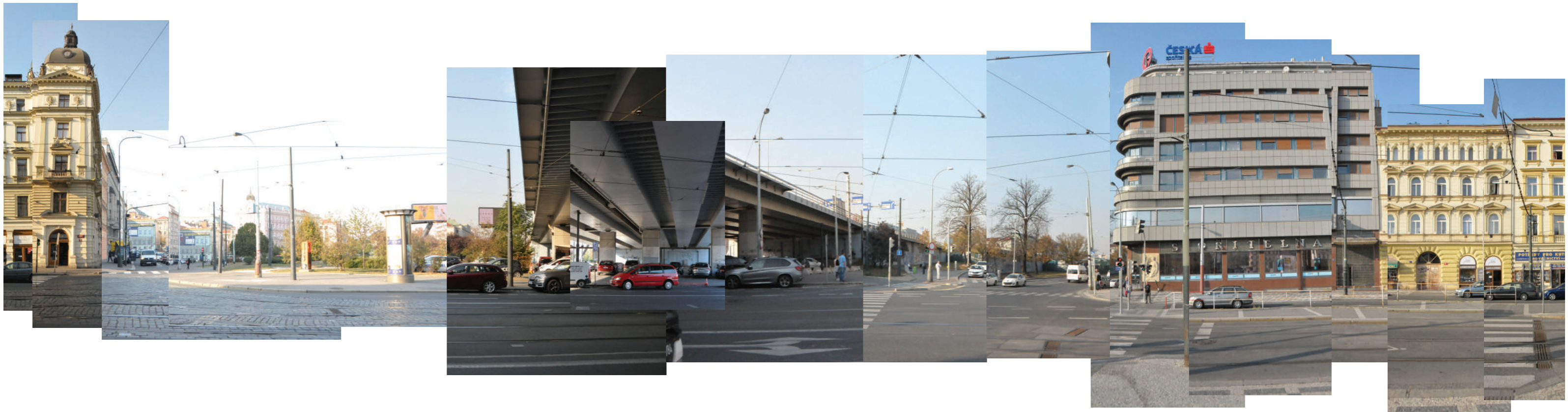
Graffiti on the facade, looking towards Ke Stvanici street

Materiality



Strips of concrete and other elements that define the site

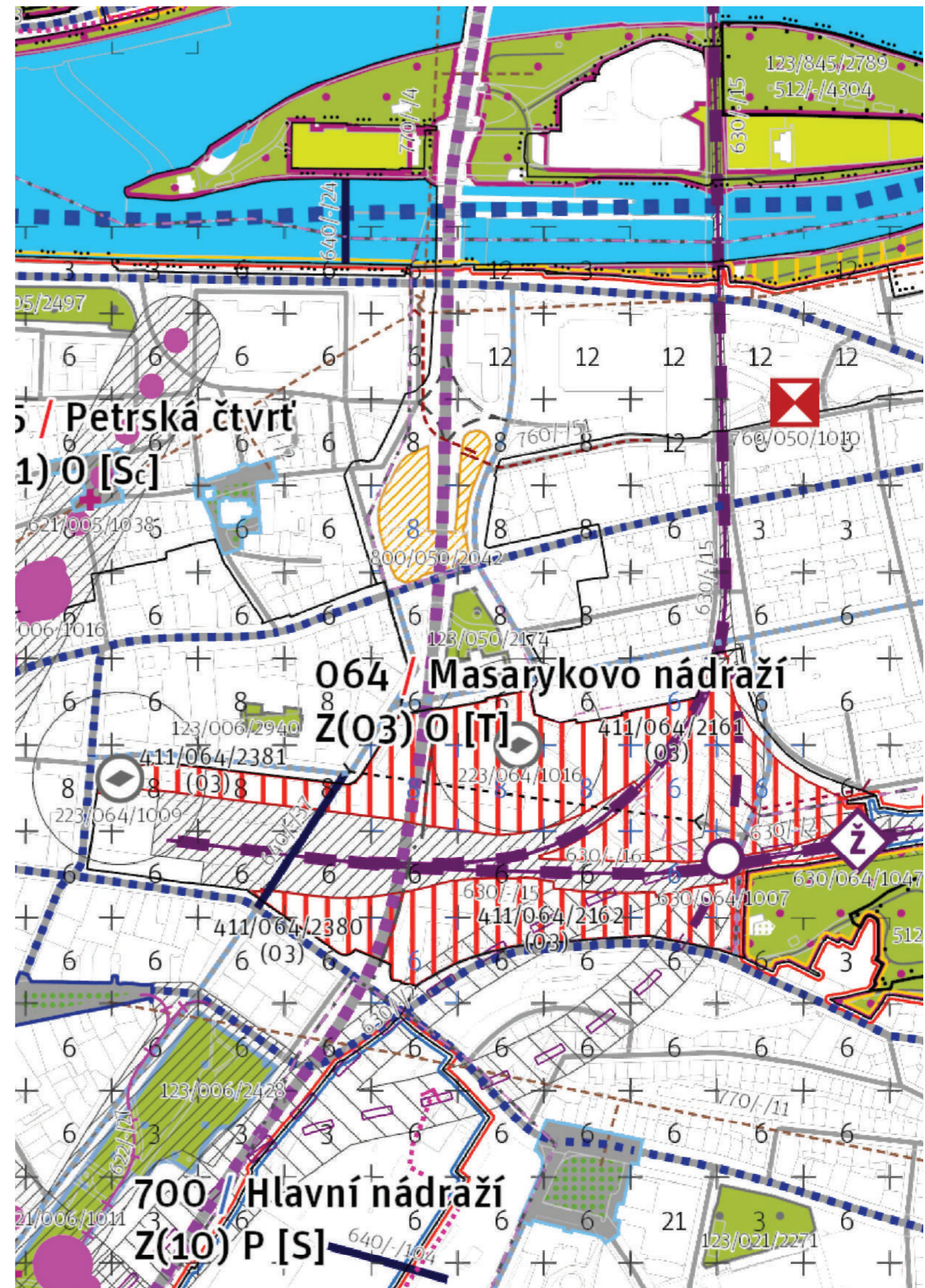
Elevations



Future

Strategic Plan

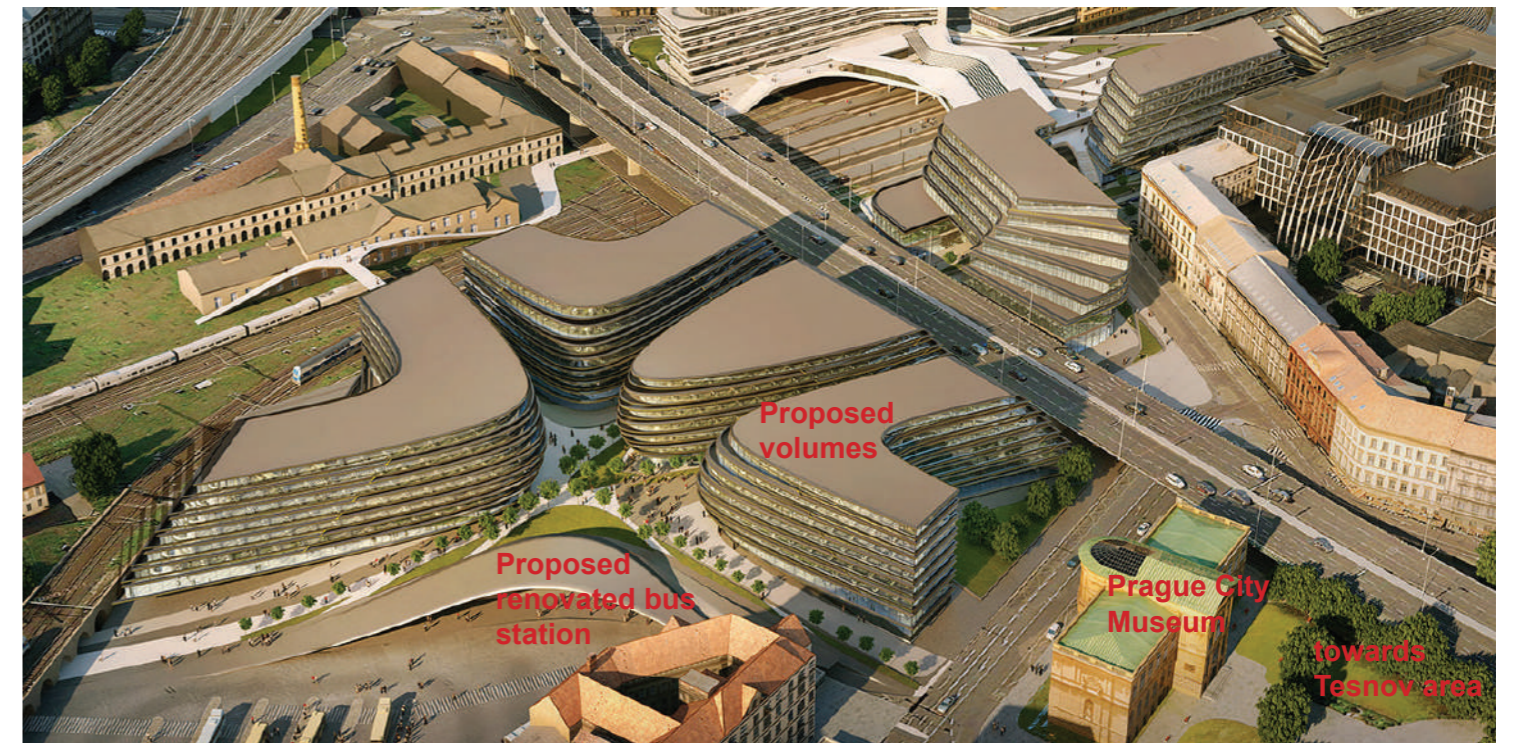
The Institute for Planning and Development of the Capital City of Prague has proposed what is called a Metropolitan Plan. Based on agreement from professionals of various fields, it consists of a vision of the development of Prague for the 15-20 years managed by the public administration, investors and citizens. In the site, The Tesnov park is planned to be an area of public amenity, mainly civic amenities and the City Museum of Prague area a city park garden area. On the other hand, the Masarykovo Station, a critical area for development, is labeled as transformation area with mixed use.



Proposals: Zaha Hadid Architects Masaryk Railway Station

"The revitalization of Masaryk Station has the ambition to create a new Central Business District in Prague. The design is based on the Zaha Hadid Architects architectural studio. The intention is to maximally respect the history of the territory and the existing area, while creating an extraordinary architectural work that will become an integral part of the modern form of the city of Prague.

The project will be implemented in phases with completion scheduled in the years 2022-2025 and will offer up to 100,000 m² of new office space, shops, restaurants and cafes. Great attention is paid to public areas, greenery and city parks. The proposed unique roofing of the Masaryk Railway Station should provide a new connection between Prague 1 and Karlín and Žižkov. The planned investment is about CZK 10 billion." - PENTA website



Aerial Rendering of the proposal by ZHA

The undergoing project of the Masaryk Railway Station by Zaha Hadid Architects renovates the historical station with the aim of allowing the ease of pedestrian movement from the north to south axis. The project also regenerates the brownfield area behind the Prague City Museum, connecting the transportation nodes of the station and the Florenc Bus Station.

Concept

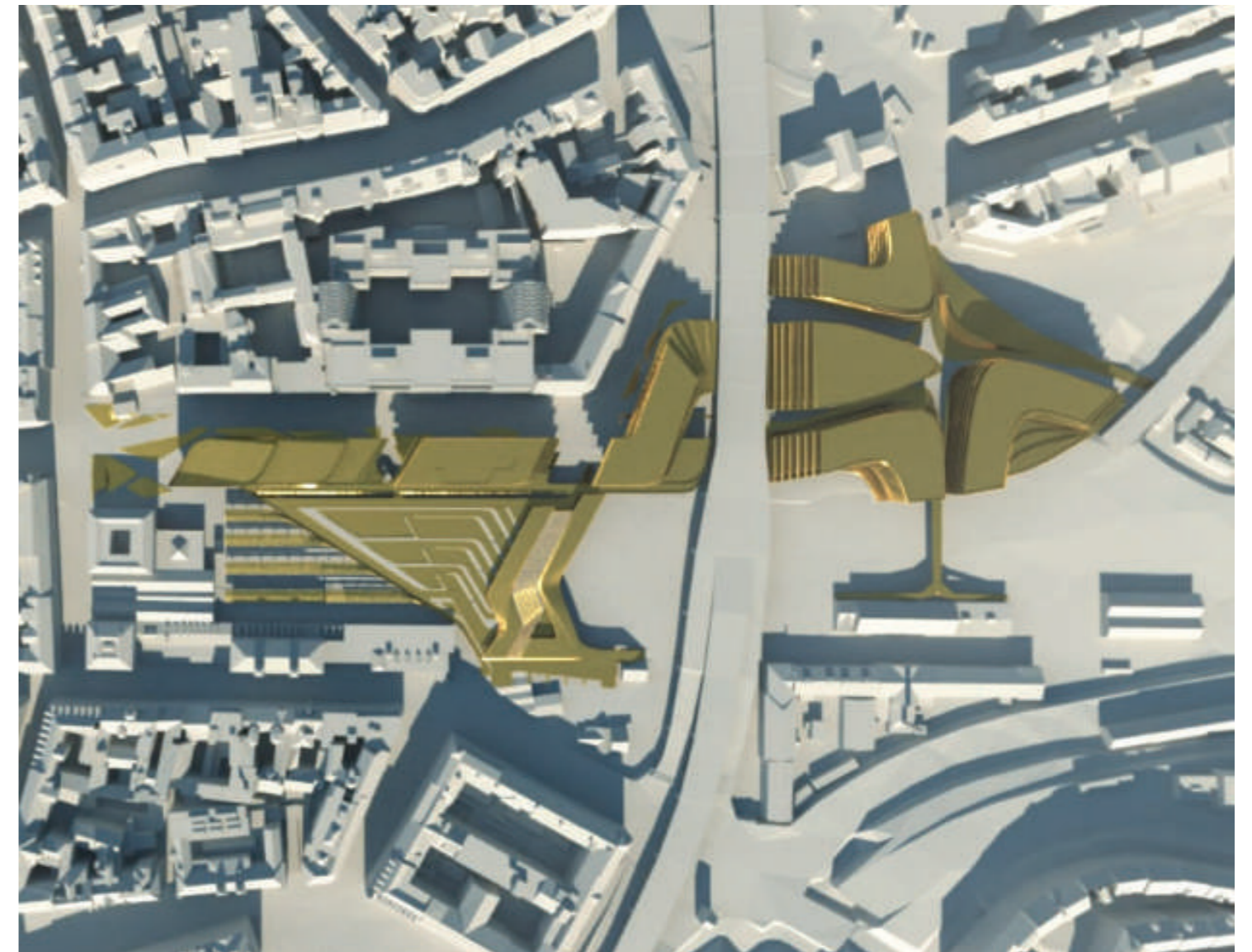
ZHA implements a striking contemporary concept that uses the flow of movement to shape the form. This concept of dynamic movement integrates the transport nodes through a unified design by contemporary features such as quality urban spaces and a pedestrian bridge spanning above the train tracks. The curvature of the building symbolises the unobstructed flow of movement, converging at points of greater public spaces, and a coherent flow of movement from one area to another.

Critique

The first problem is the typology of the proposed buildings: in such an important site and close to the center, having a monotonous massing that does not use any architectural play (e.g. horizontality and verticality) would only banalise the entire area. This typical contemporary approach contradicts the playful and diverse forms of the historical buildings. Having a more creative massing would surely make a more interesting project. The most important critique is the lack of context - the neglect of the northern part to Florenc and Tesnov. The proposal runs along the historical footprint of the wall hence the project boundaries should include all three sites: Tesnov, Florenc and the Masaryk area. In the proposal, The Prague City Museum is ignored and so the fabric feels incomplete, only accommodating the south part and the bus station. The massing volume behind the museum dominates the space, degrading the quality of the museum which, in fact, is considered the center of the site. With this dominant mass and the magistrala, the museum is disconnected even further.

Conclusion

The ZHA project is an example of how the concept of dynamic flow has lesser impact, given the historic layers the site has accumulated over the centuries. The attitude of disregarding the past and present elements of the site goes against what my thesis is aiming for. As for the thesis task is **to bring out the historic layers** and characterise them in the new context, as to preserve and 'remember' the memory of previous elements.



Masterplan of the proposal by ZHA

Proposals: Jan Gehl Magistrala Project

Jan Gehl's proposal of revitalising the magistrala consists of organised step by step short and long term interventions bound in a well detailed and analysed urban design approach. With the main focus of the project being from the Nusle bridge to the river, it emphasizes the need of giving back the city to the pedestrians allowing them to have ease of access to landmarks such as the National Museum and to other parts of the city.

Concept

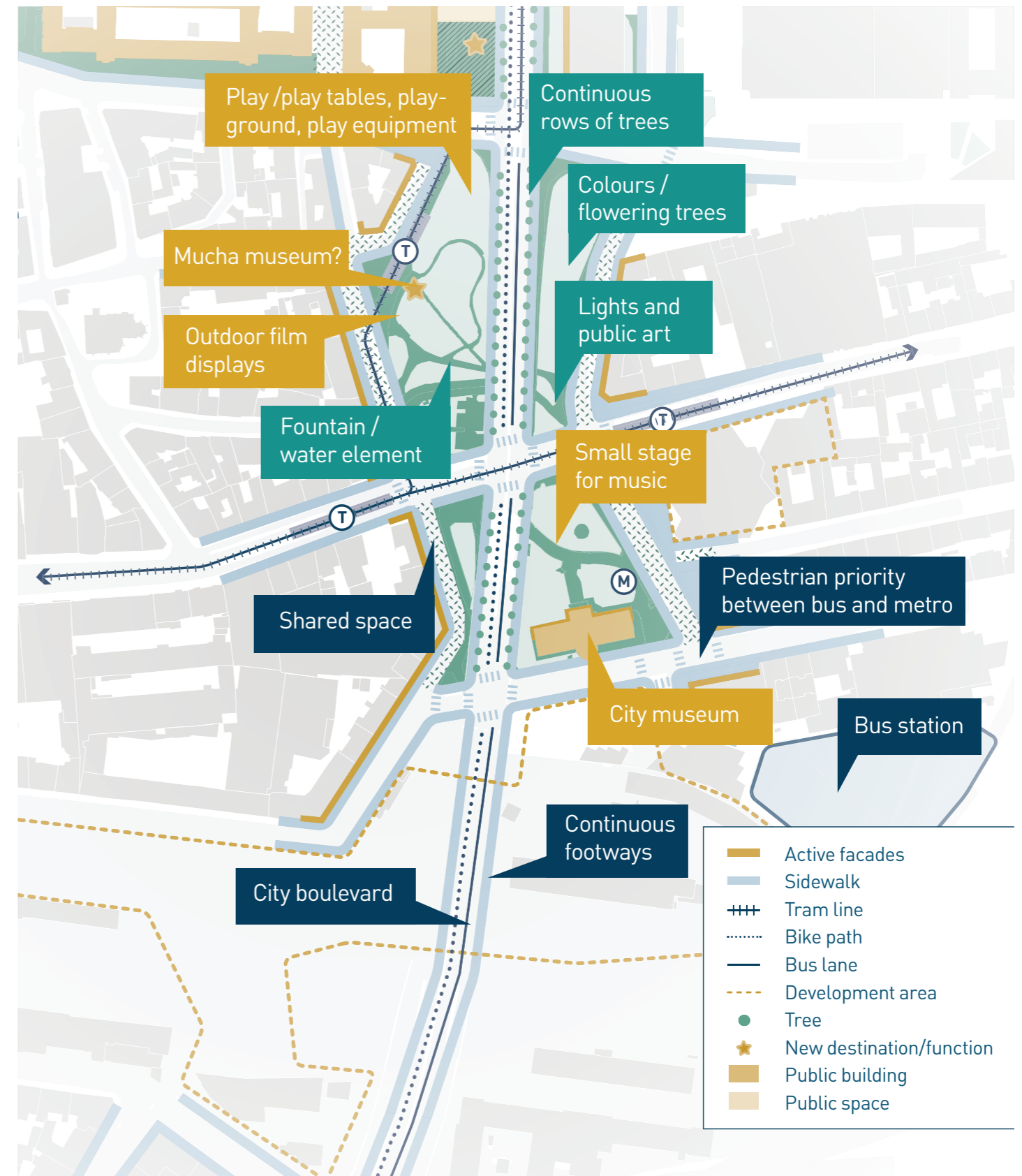
Three key themes become the basic requirements of the project: amenities, community and mobility. These themes are explored in various parts along the magistrala, giving it certain distinctive characters, in reference to certain projects such as the Copenhagen green belt and the Vienna Ringstrasse. In the Florenc area, the vision is to ground the magistrala, creating a boulevard towards the bridge and getting rid of the fly-over and underpasses. The park is extended with some shared spaces along with active frontages and ideas for cultural buildings that activate the potential of Florenc, thus bringing back the pedestrians.

Critique

A vision is often seen as superficial until it is done, and Jan Gehl's vision can be said as such. Implementing attractive spaces into the site is feasible and necessary but there are some limits which have to be respected, even if it is a bad thing: the main problem of the vision is the approach of demolishing the magistrala to make way for a 'city boulevard'. While the idea of getting rid of the magistrala is welcomed, in reality this requires labour and expenses the city will be unable to provide.

Conclusion

In defence of the magistrala, I see it as an element of the site which should be used, given the consequences it has created. To respect the magistrala is to respect the present, and in this thesis, respecting the past and present are key to create a harmony, a stillness in which all aspects of time is used.



Masterplan of the vision by Jan Gehl



Precedents

Projects from
around the world
that influence the
methodologies
of the thesis:
the site relation,
architectural form
and material use

Wang Shu: Ningbo History Museum

Ningbo, China / 2008



The Ningbo history museum is what I would consider a 'museum that stands still'. It is exemplified as an architectural project that recognizes the past while at the same time using contemporary techniques to signify its outlook towards the future, revered for its appreciation towards tradition and the awareness of being under the growing movement of globalization.

Urban Concept

The strength of the museum lies in its loyalty to its purpose – while the building functions as a historical and cultural exhibition of the city and region, the building itself is an exhibition to the city: "The building is both a sculptural object and a field-condition: an iconic presence in the landscape and a literal exhibition of a lost pedestrian-scale urbanism". It contrasts the vertical characteristic of the skyscrapers, which in themselves are an allegory to the nature of man and the desire to build up and at the same time reflecting the ideals of the government, located close to the museum, and replies to them with a composition of horizontality, concomitant to the mountains and the sea. The principle of dualities is at play, and the clash between man-made ideals and nature results in a moment of in-between, and that moment is what I consider as 'architecture of stillness'.

Architecture

The form of the museum is sculptural and robust at first sight, but by the implementation of scavenged bricks, shown in [figure 2] and the traditional bamboo formed concrete (whereby these implementations can be considered as ecological) the form exposes its fragility. The play of solids and voids through cuts and breaking down masses results in a roofscape that is reminiscent to the "traditional Chinese village" as the cuts and angles recalls "the pitched roofs of local vernacular architecture [...] reflect the width of historic pedestrian lanes [...] reference the spatial experience of premodern Chinese urbanism". The robustness and fragility in the use of modern materials and local techniques, along with the architectural play of masses that reveal a vernacular character, allow the visitors a moment for contemplation, to think about the past and the future and "reminding visitors of what has been lost".

'A Project that respects its historical values and reinterprets it in a contemporary setting.'



Inspiration

The museum was designed by the architect Wang Shu along with his wife Lu Wenyu, under the self-co-founded Amateur Architecture Studio, and was completed in 2008 at the time of China's rapid economic growth ("While much of the world has been wrestling with a recession, China's economic rise has continued unabated"). The form of the museum is inspired by the nature, the mountains and the ocean. It is mainly identified by its contemporary materials but with the use of traditional techniques: "salvaged brick, bamboo-formed concrete, and industrial channel glass" that forms the façade, the massing volume and the interior. The architect's ingenuity and talent are not only from his deep "understanding of construction techniques and the capabilities of local craftsmen" but also his ability of "collapsing history through the superposition of styles and the inventive adaptation of formal strategies from traditional Chinese architecture." The firm's "attitude toward history suggests a way forward [...] that doesn't rely on flashy renderings and iconic forms, but that can retain those essential qualities of the historical fabric" is an approach that is relevant in the current culture of the architecture profession, an approach I will be incorporating in the future as an architect.

Conclusion

As for the thesis, an array of conceptual methods and approaches can be collected. **In bringing back the memory of the past**, the use of recycling traditional bricks and tiles scavenged from destroyed homes is considered a sustainable approach but more importantly, the arrangement which is "laid by construction workers who were free to select and place the bricks at random" instills a sense of permanence and memory thus a careful understanding of materiality is fundamental towards the design of my thesis. **The temporal and spatial qualities from the play of masses** resulting in a unique character can be applied in Florenc and Tesnov, a site where such quality, creating the uniqueness and moment of stillness, is crucial for reviving the site's fabric for a future incarnation. Lastly, Ningbo Museum's **elements of verticality and horizontality** encourages the user to journey through the museum, understanding its layers of history.

Peter Eisenman: City of Culture

Galicia, Spain / 2011



The City of Galicia is a monumental project that establishes itself with the city identity. Its beauty can be understood from its material and how the public space becomes an active environment the more people there are.

Urban Concept

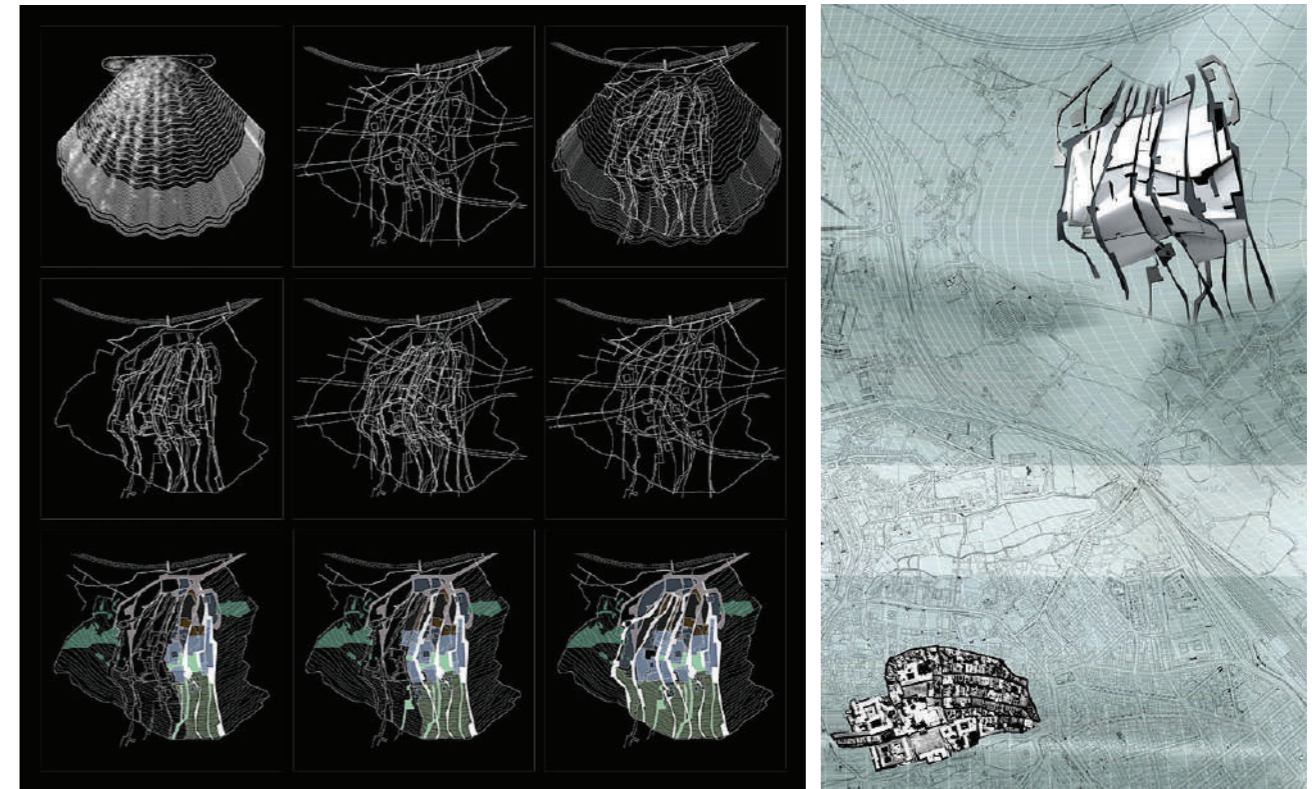
The shape of the project is based from the morphology of the city (fig.1), integrating the city's streetscape with the contours of Mount Gaias where the project is situated in which the top was excavated, becoming a plain, to realize the project. The shape of a scallop (fig.2), itself a symbol of the city, is ingrained into the roofscape, resulting in a curved form implied as an imitation of the hills it is surrounded by. The buildings are clad with stone and the Cartesian grid is clearly marked with the use of different types of stones. The concept of the scallop interweaves the medieval town and the layout of the cultural center, creating a progressional experience of two different places but with a similar identity.

Architecture

The composition of the buildings overtakes the natural landscape of the hill. The buildings with their flowing form facing towards the city, retains some of the natural landscape and encapsulates it, defining the landscape as urban squares in the so called city. Peter Eisenman is a conceptual architect that uses context and accompanying symbols as his tool for his works. His predominant style (1), the manipulation of the Cartesian grid, allows him to design architecture that seems to rise above and below, amorphous and distinctive, in accordance to the elements of the y-plane and the z-plane of the grid. To further the notion of designed identity, the materials of stone which is used for the project is locally sourced from the surroundings.

The project resembles that of a city in terms of its walkability. The movement from exterior to interior is transitional, using arcades and open passageways from one building to another. Floor to ceiling heights are of double volume to provide an open atmosphere.

‘A Project that captures the contextual identity and turns it into form and function.’



Inspiration

In Belogolovsky's "Conversations with Peter Eisenman" interview, Belogolovsky brings the topic on Eisenman's belief on the irrelevance of details, to which Eisenman expresses that he is "not interested in details" and "not interested in beauty" as he claims that "it misses the point", followed by him saying "Beauty does not disrupt anything. If you see something beautiful, you don't pay enough attention to it. Beauty, because of its very nature does not demand close attention." This architectural dogma is what ultimately detracts the visual and functional character of the project.

The project opened in 2011 but it was still incomplete as Spain underwent a severe economic crisis in the period of 2008-2014 (Knight, L) which consequently held back the completion. The construction itself made it more difficult as the budget tripled due to the difficulty and expensive design, and in 2013 the decision to halt the project was made (Precedo, J).

Conclusion

This project is significant towards my thesis in its execution of concept and relation to context. **The use of singular but varied material palette** can be a conceptually viable in establishing an identity of the form. **Geometric forms** and their manipulation will often result in a form that reflects the contextual. Providing **ease of walking** around or off the building allows more users to the site.

References

Fig.1 - The morphology of the city is reified in the project. Taken from <https://eisenmanarchitects.com/City-of-Culture-of-Galicia-2011>

Fig.2 - The symbol of the scallop guides the form of the project. Taken from <https://eisenmanarchitects.com/City-of-Culture-of-Galicia-2011>

Belogolovsky, V. "Interview with Peter Eisenman: 'I Am Not Convinced That I Have a Style'" 11 Apr 2016. ArchDaily. Accessed 11 Feb 2019. <<https://www.archdaily.com/785334/interview-with-peter-eisenman-i-am-not-convinced-that-i-have-a-style/>> ISSN 0719-8884

Knight, L. What is to blame for Spain's pain? (2012). BBC News. Retrieved 11 February 2019, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/economy-12201202>

Precedo, J. (2013). Feijóo ordena que quede sin acabar la Cidade da Cultura. EL PAÍS. Retrieved 11 February 2019, from https://elpais.com/ccaa/2013/03/26/galicia/1364329470_537113.html

OMA: Kunsthal

Rotterdam, Netherlands / 1992



The Kunsthal in Rotterdam is a collective of several interior public spaces, intertwined with a distinct, responsive circulation route that allow users to enter the building in and out while experiencing the happenings of what the spaces hold along the way, all encased in a compact design. It is an example of architecture that is spatially flexible and functionally complex.

Urban Concept

The building borders between two significant urban spaces. A highway on the southern facade that faces towards the water surface half a kilometer away, acting as a dike - a long raised embankment to protect from flooding. And on the north facade is the Museum Park, a connective urban space with several cultural functions such as the Natural History Museum, an Art Museum and an outdoor movie theater. In the east and west axis, access roads follows through the building, connecting the buildings it is adjacent to. The Kunsthal serves as a bridge, connecting the busy dike and the quiet park, while itself being autonomous owing to its variety of exhibition spaces and ramps that access the roof terrace.

Architecture

The Kunsthal is a series of spaces connected by a 'continuous circuit'. The ramps provide a layered system that goes in and out of interior and exterior spaces, as well as above and below ground. The ramps are transitional and responsive towards the interior spaces, as all of these spaces (the exhibition halls, galleries, auditorium and restaurant) connect to the ramps. Thus the building can be considered fully open - visitors can enter the building and experience events and talks in the auditorium, enter the exhibition space, experience the gallery, enjoy the roof level and eat at the restaurant and exit towards the park in one go, by the help of a seamless system of ramps.

‘A Cultural building that connects its spaces as well as the spaces it is surrounded by.’



Conclusion

Rotterdam is considered an architectural playground where innovative methods and concepts can be implemented freely owing to the city's interest in a dynamic environment. Here the building is an **extension to the site**, connecting the north-south and east-west axis buildings and urban spaces. What it does in the exterior it also does in the interior. The interstitial ramps transition between exhibition spaces, galleries and the auditorium, revealing a layer of **social connectivity** as visitors are able to interact with the spaces and other visitors with ease.

These key aspects can be applied to the thesis, as the two sites are considered similar. The layered levels are all connected through this building and my intervention in Florenc should act the same as well, connecting the magistrala and the ground level in a seamless way. Additionally, the complex series of functions (residential, commercial, retail and cultural in one block) I will implement in my thesis will allow exchange of people with different purposes of visiting the site.

References:

Kunsthal. (2019). OMA. Retrieved 25 April 2019, from <https://oma.eu/projects/kunsthal>
Andrew Kröll. "AD Classics: Kunsthal / OMA" 11 Jan 2011. ArchDaily. Accessed 25 Apr 2019. <<https://www.archdaily.com/102825/ad-classics-kunsthal-oma/>>



Objectives

A culturally
dominant strip that
uses the past and
current elements
of the site

Project Focus

The thesis will explore the possibilities of **reimagining the character** of Florenc, the Těšnov area, the railway on the south as well as the riverside on the north, through architectural and urban interventions as these areas are considered parts of a larger whole. As an architectural thesis, the design should adhere to the context, the history as well as involving architectural principles such as sustainable design, accessible design and monumental design. In addition, the thesis should serve as a progressive proposal in the sense that it may extend to other parts of the city.

1. Architectural Intervention

A

The Primary area of interest in the project. This requires an architectural and urban intervention that brings back the lost cultural identity of the site by creating a new typology based on historical precedents but with the magistrala in mind.

b

An Architectural intervention at the metro station aiming to bring back the identity of a portal hub. This would require visual connectivity and openings that bring people in.

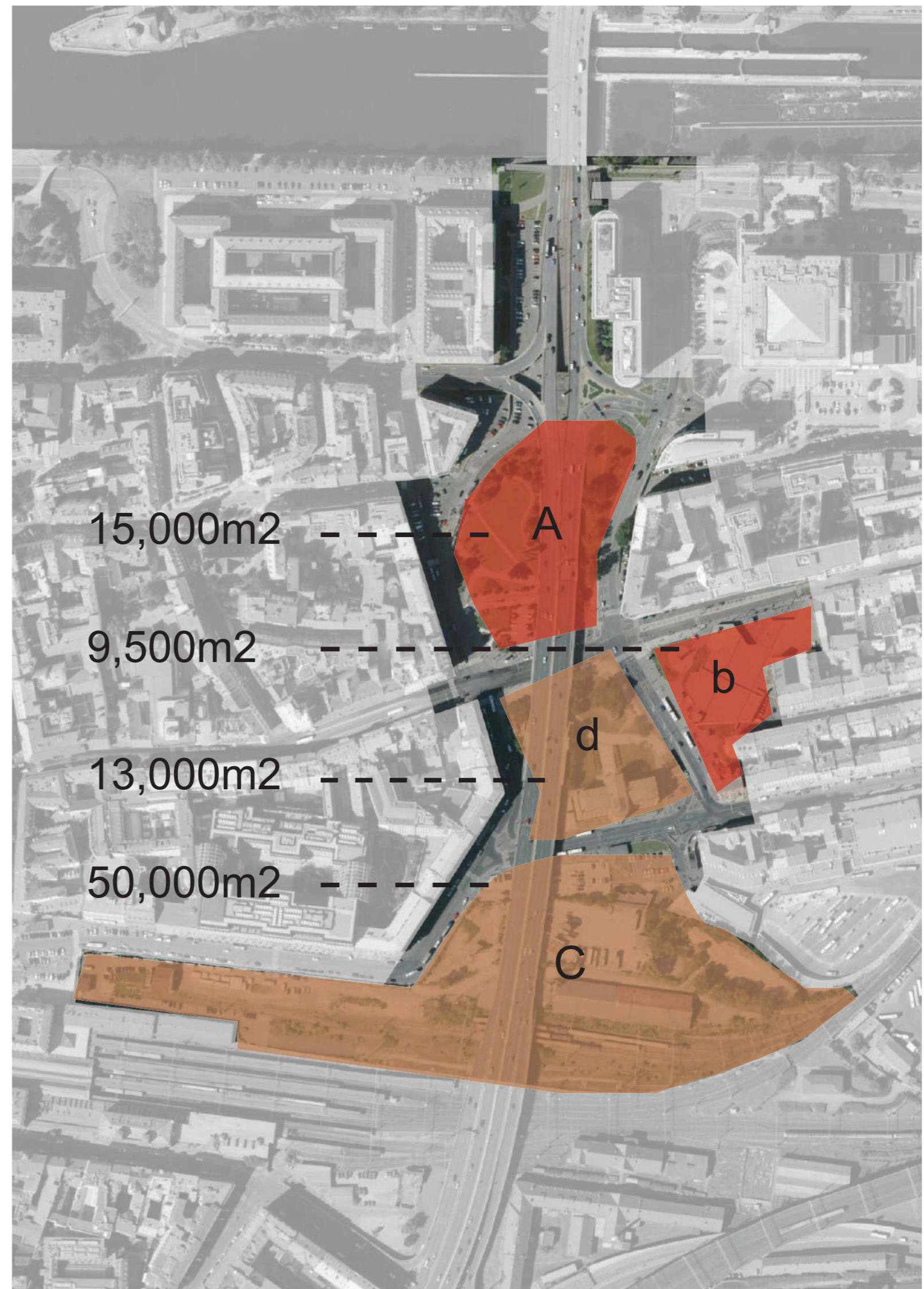
2. Urban Planning Intervention

C

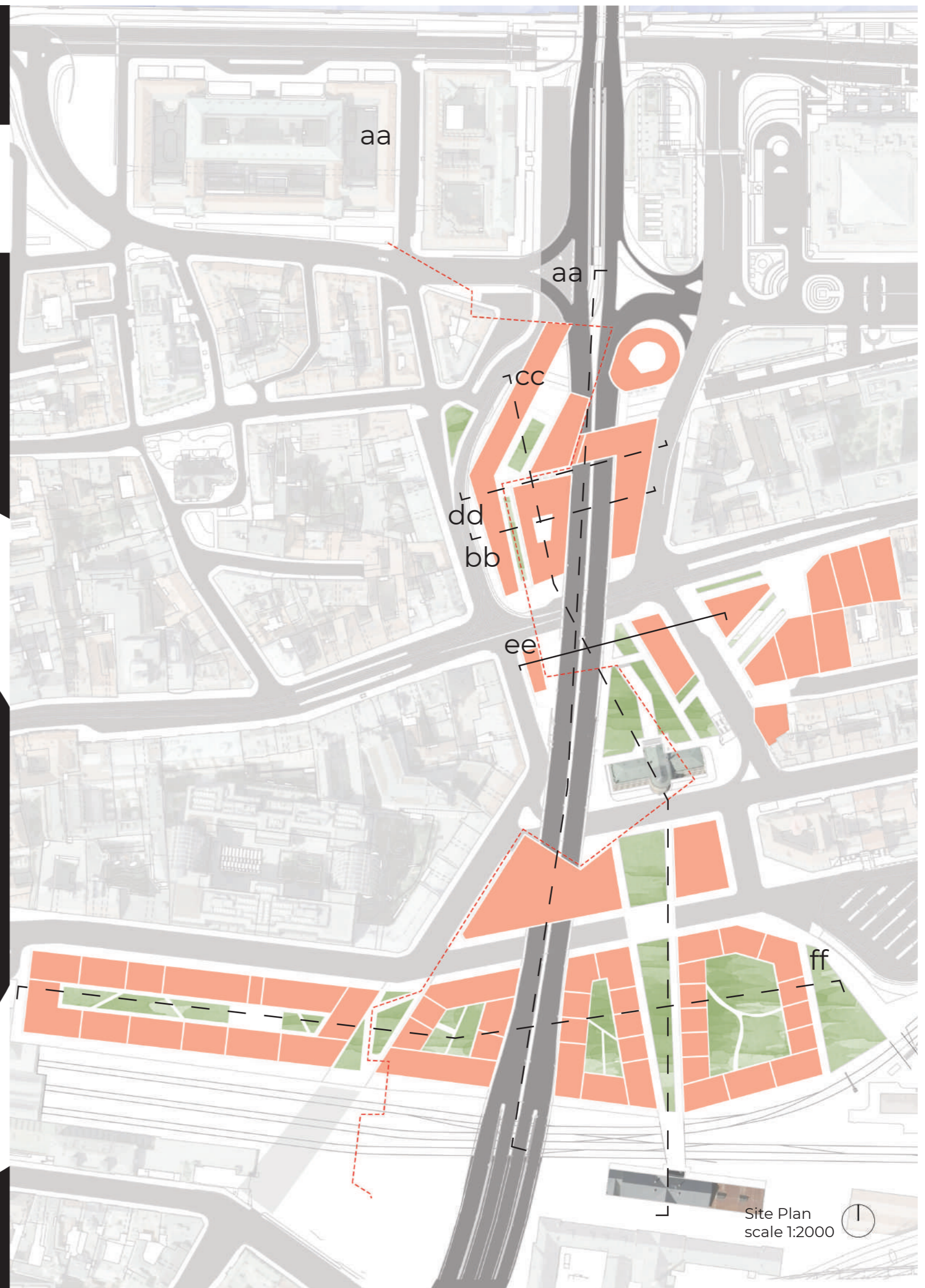
The neglected and unreachable site is considered a hidden treasure due to its proximity to various public transport and short distance to the centre of the city. This area is large enough to be developed as an extension to the interventions in A and B with a focus on mixed use functions.

d

The site is in need of an urban redesign which allows to bring back an ease of access towards the museum.



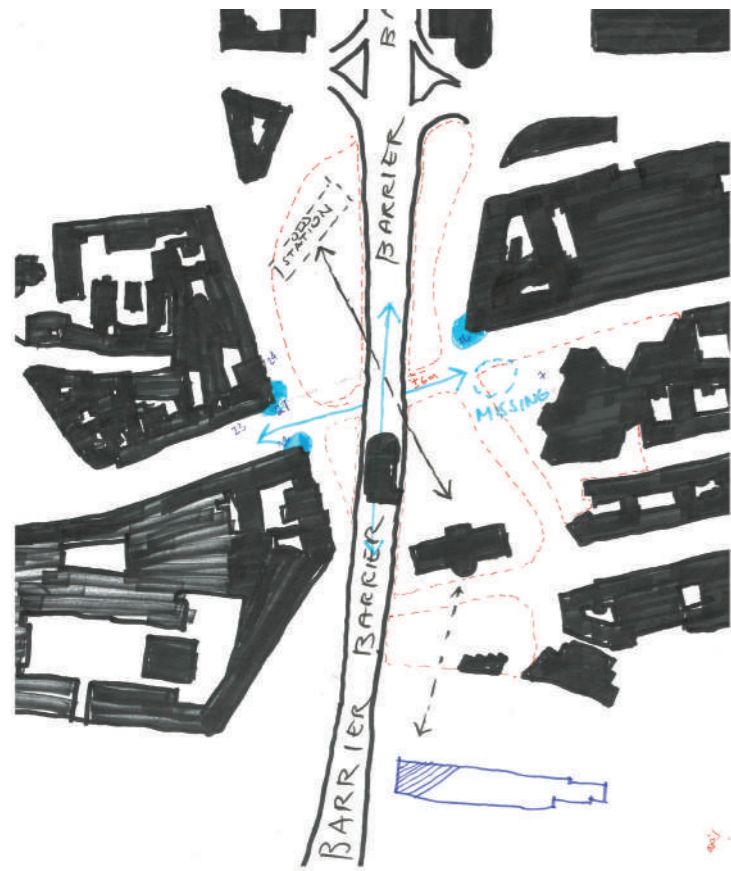
Drawings



Site Plan
scale 1:2000

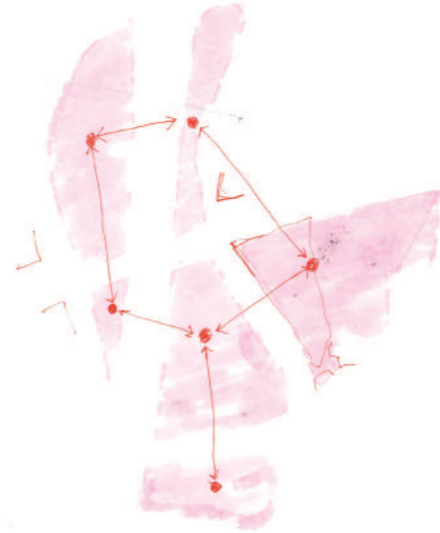


Initial Sketches

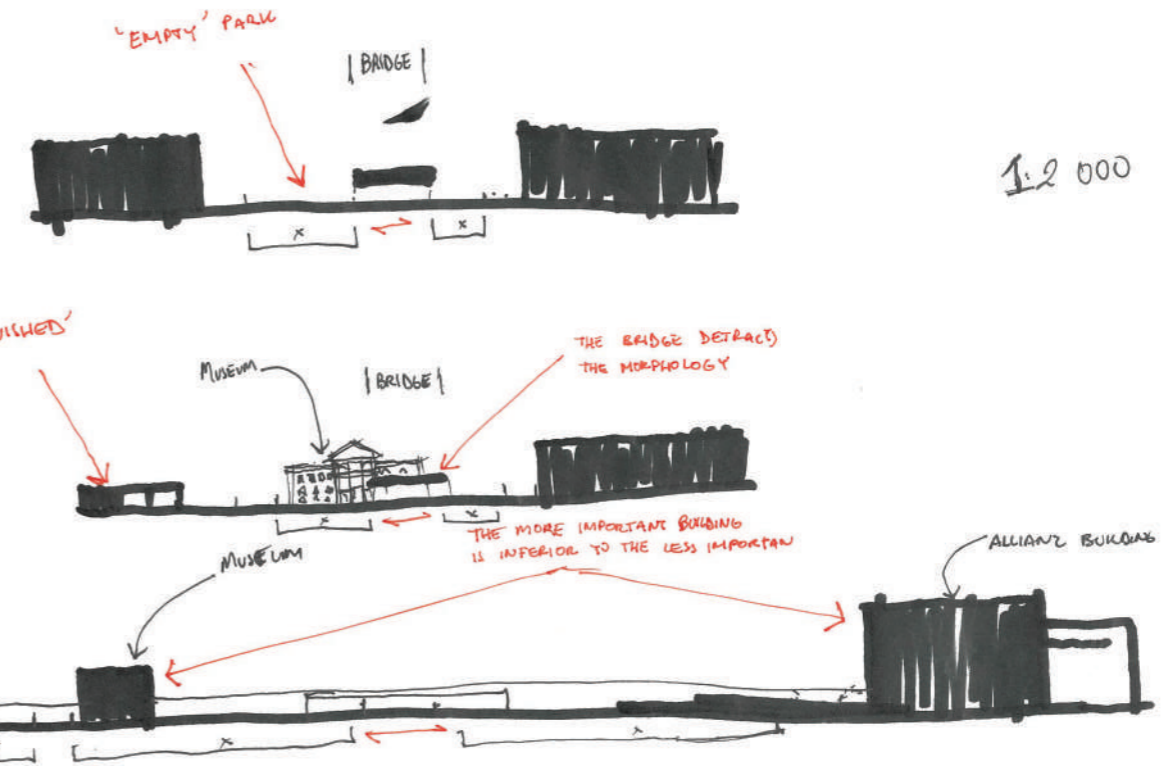


Current conditions of the site

FRAGMENTED

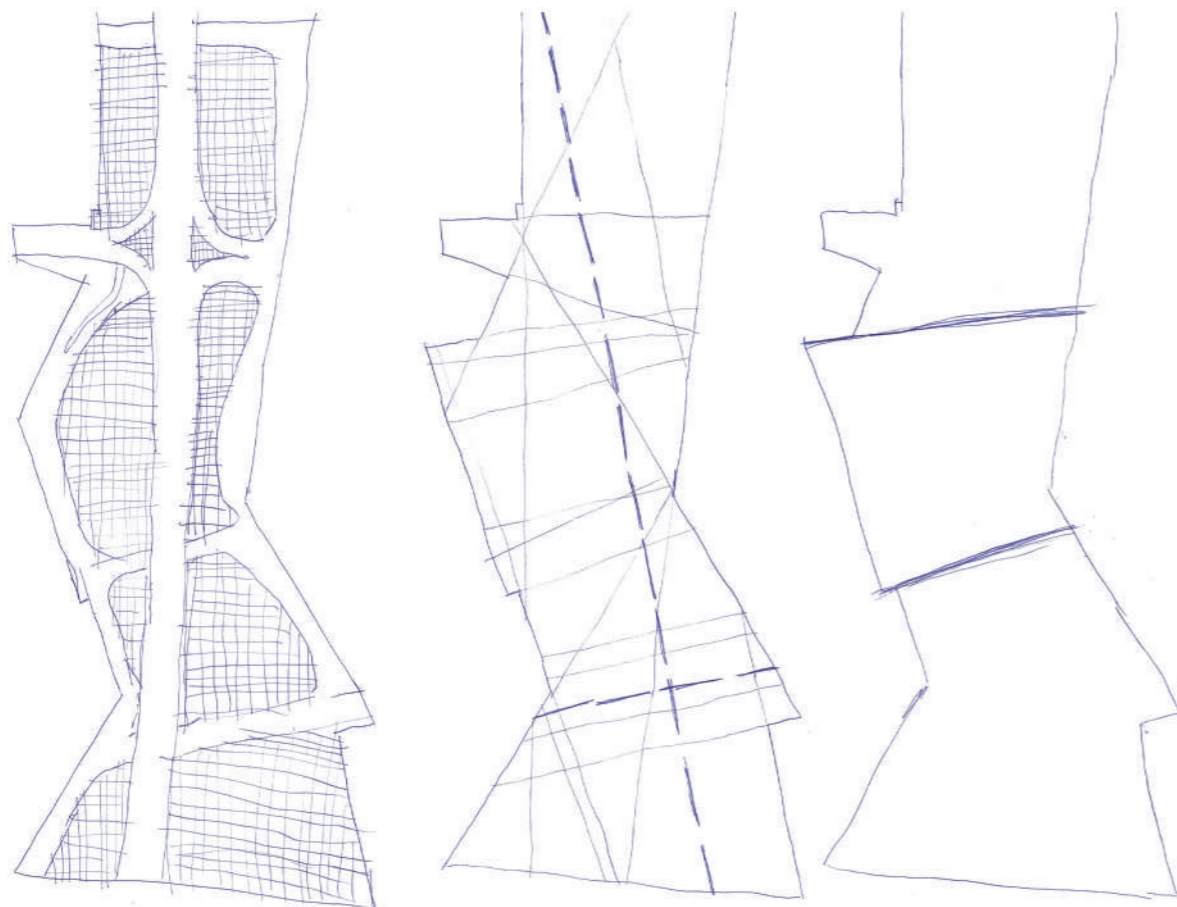


How to connect the fragmented spaces?



Current conditions of the site

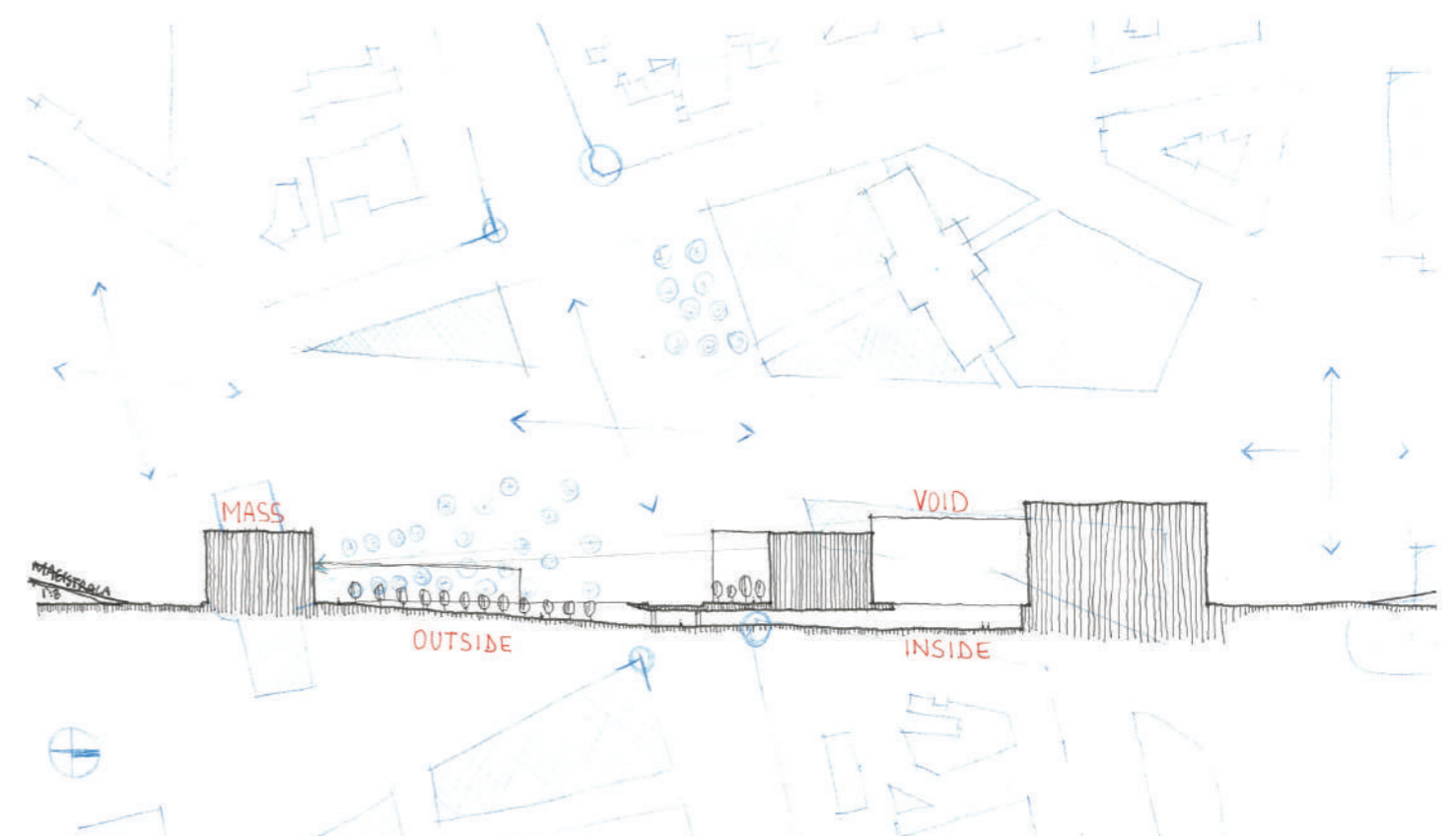
Anatomy of Site



Cartilages

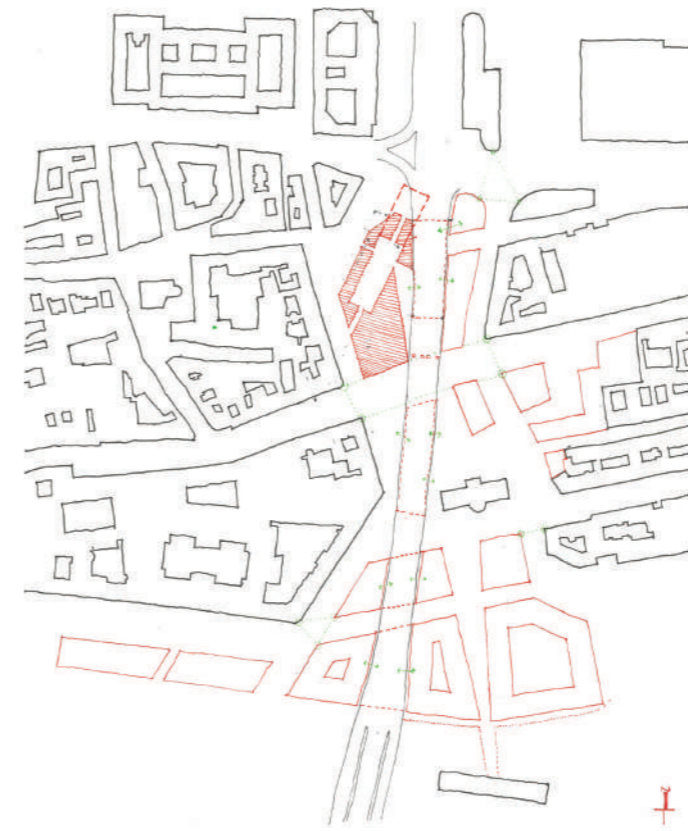
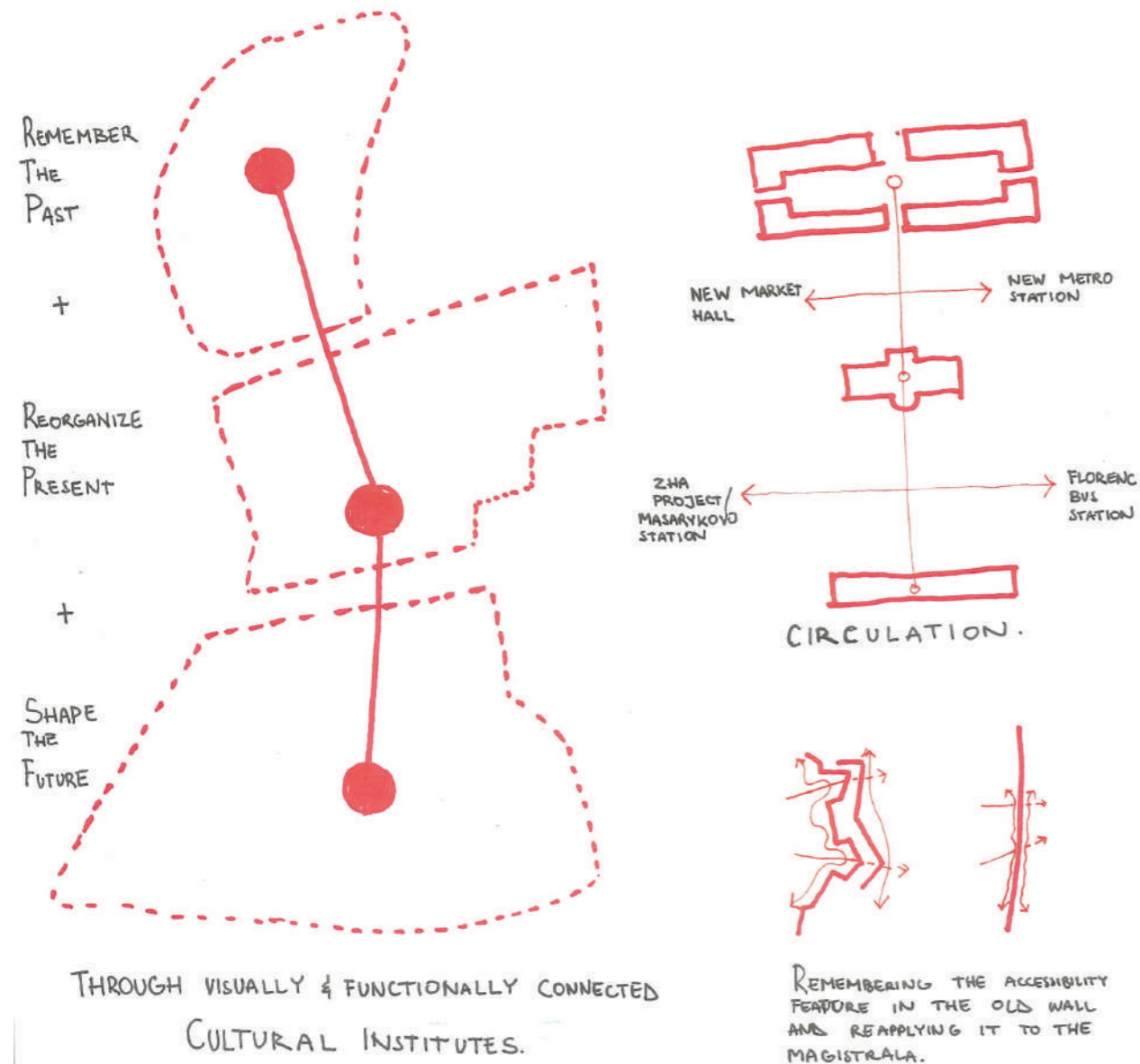
Muscles

Bones

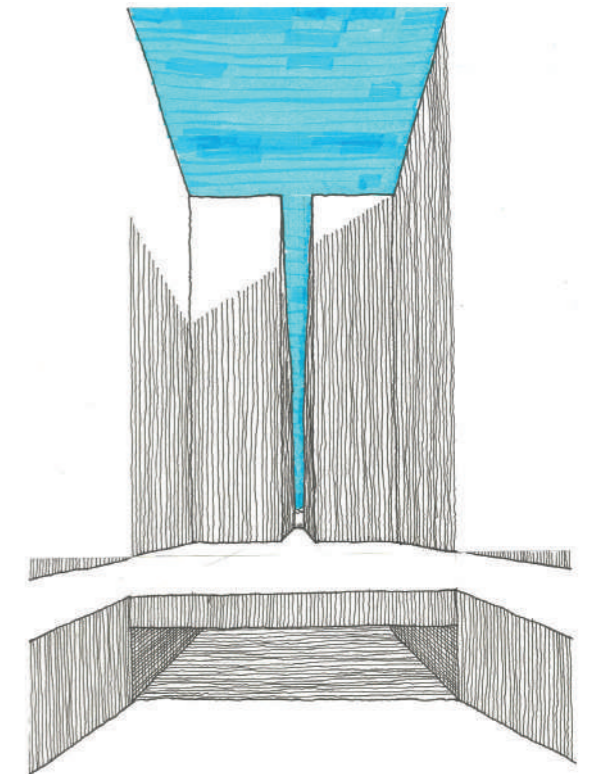
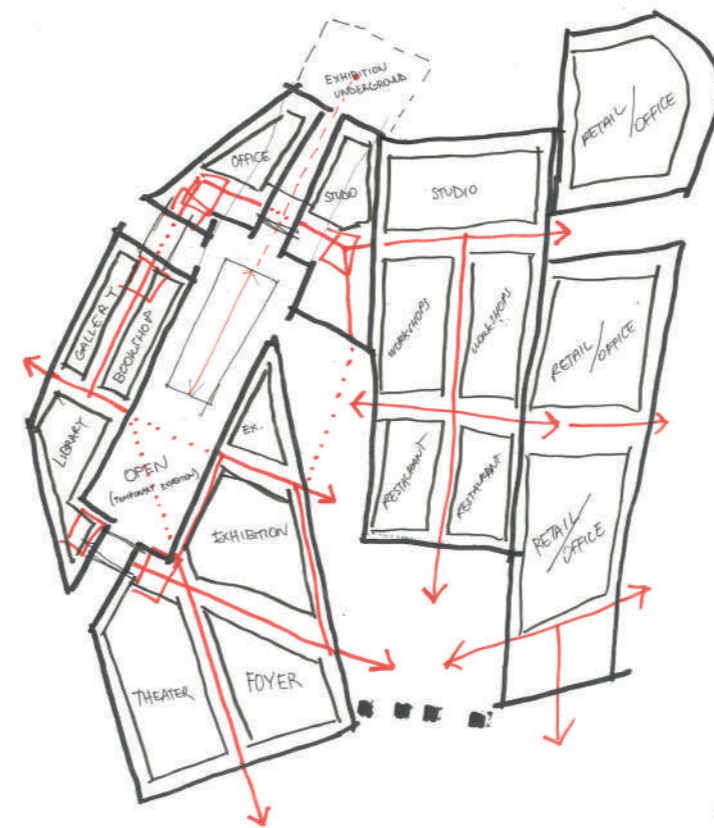
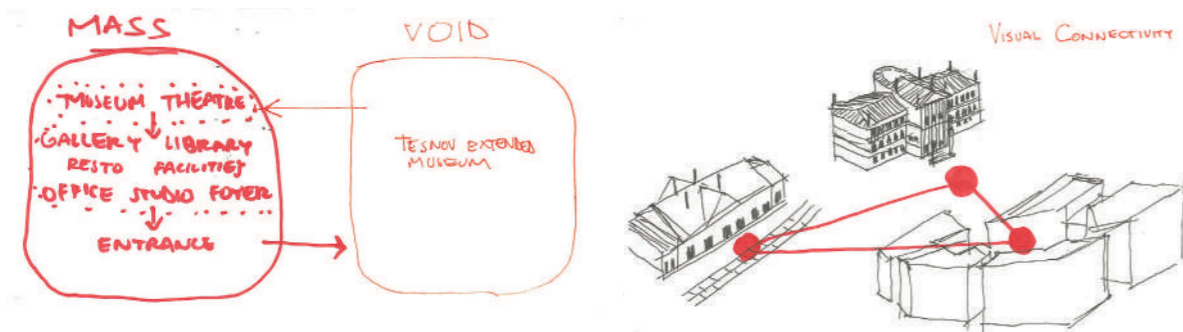


Implementing play of mass and void, inside and outside to the site

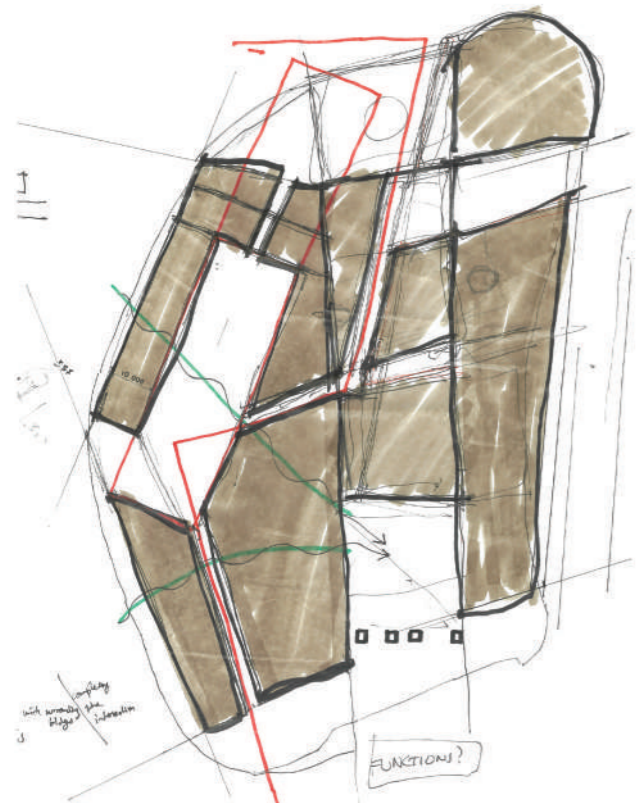
Concept



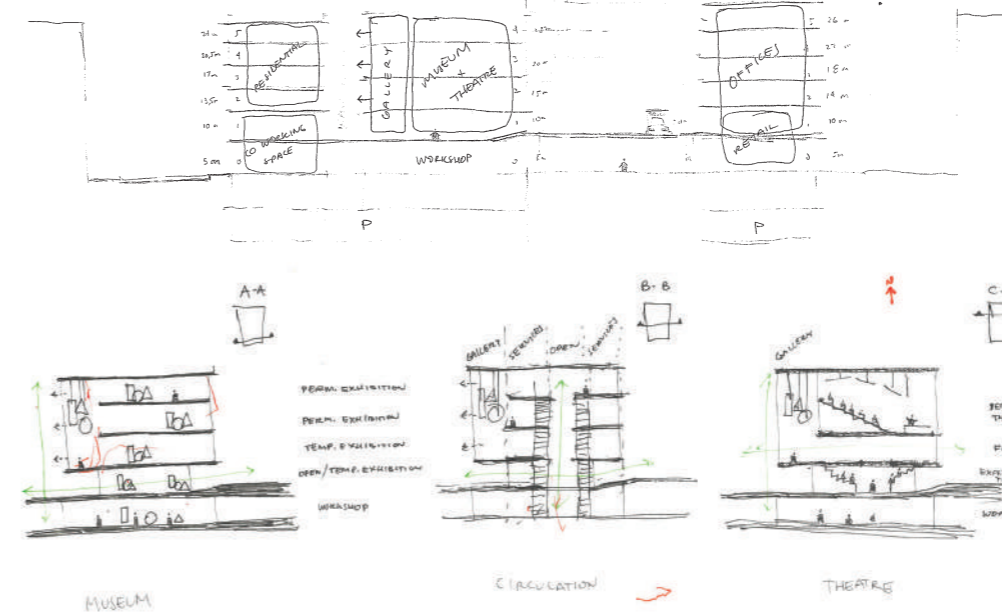
Respecting the Memory of the Place



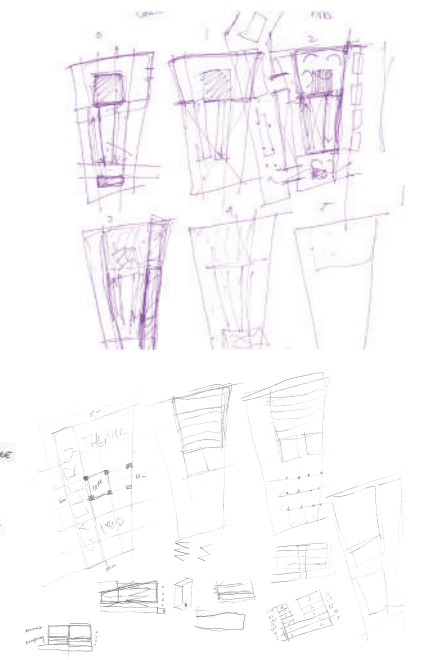
Post Concept



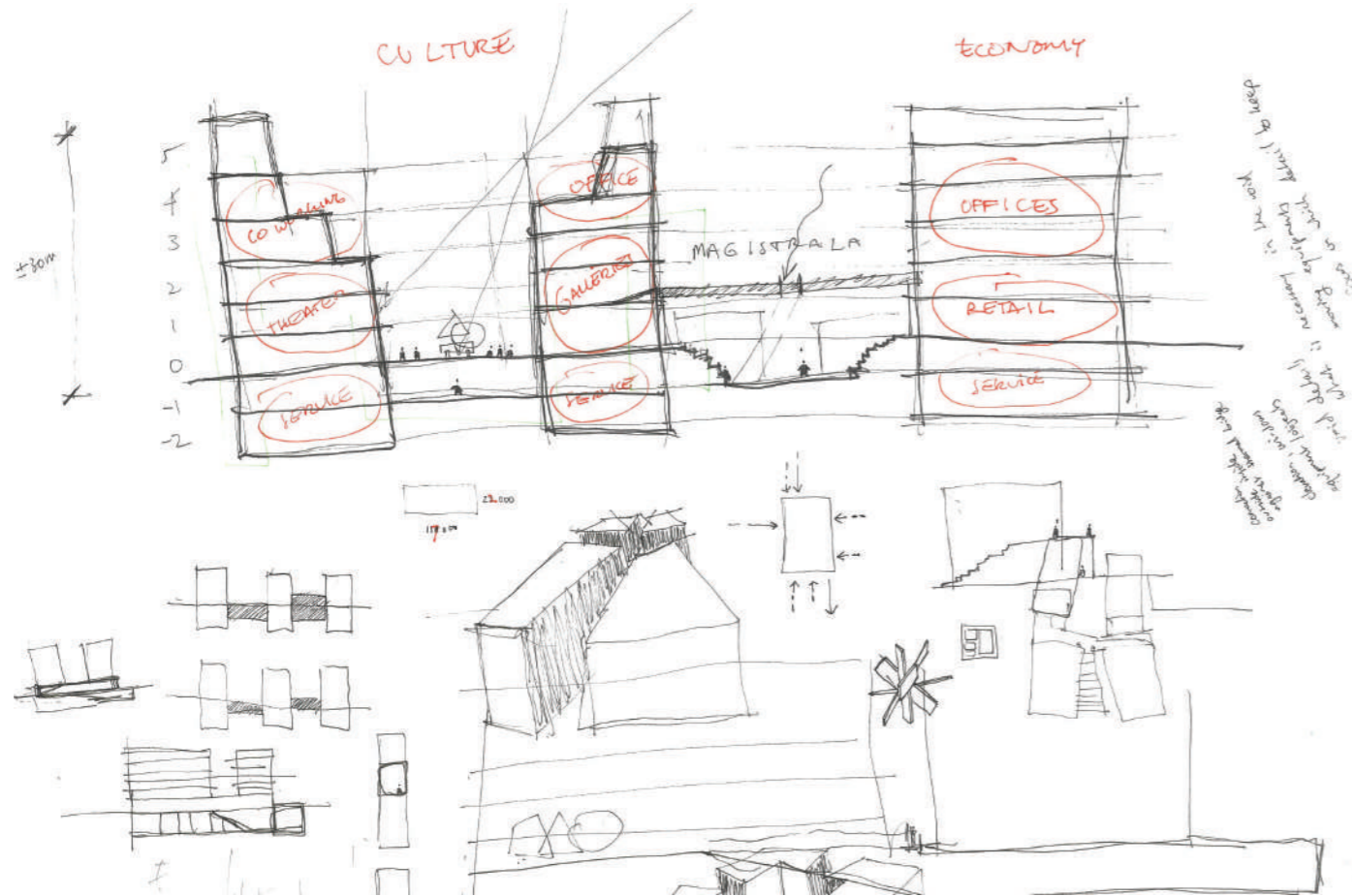
Using the footprints of the wall to shape the form



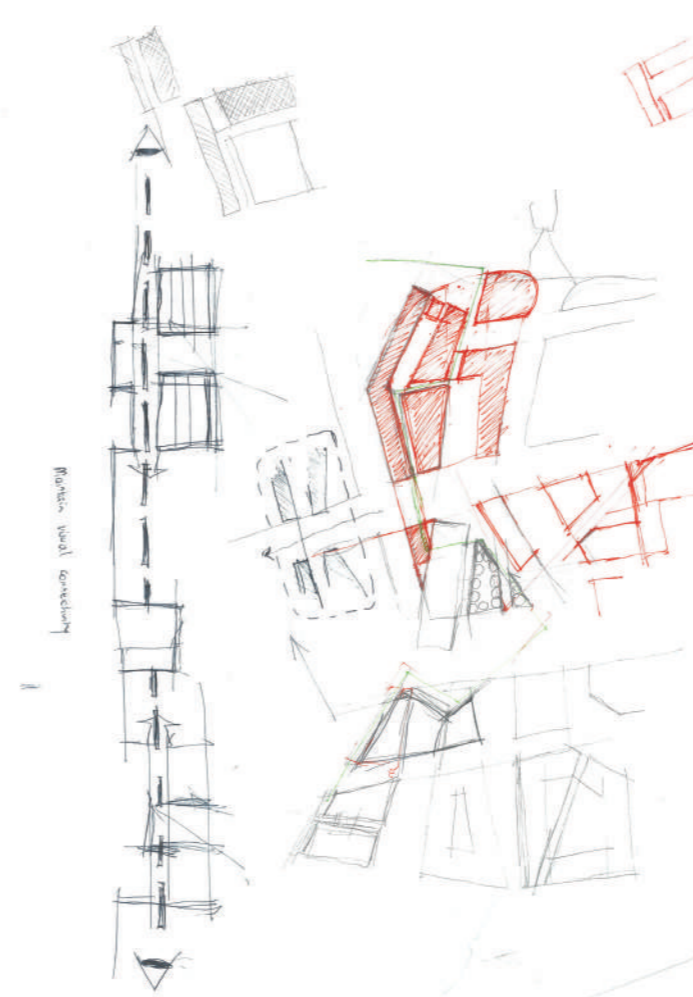
Sections of the museum



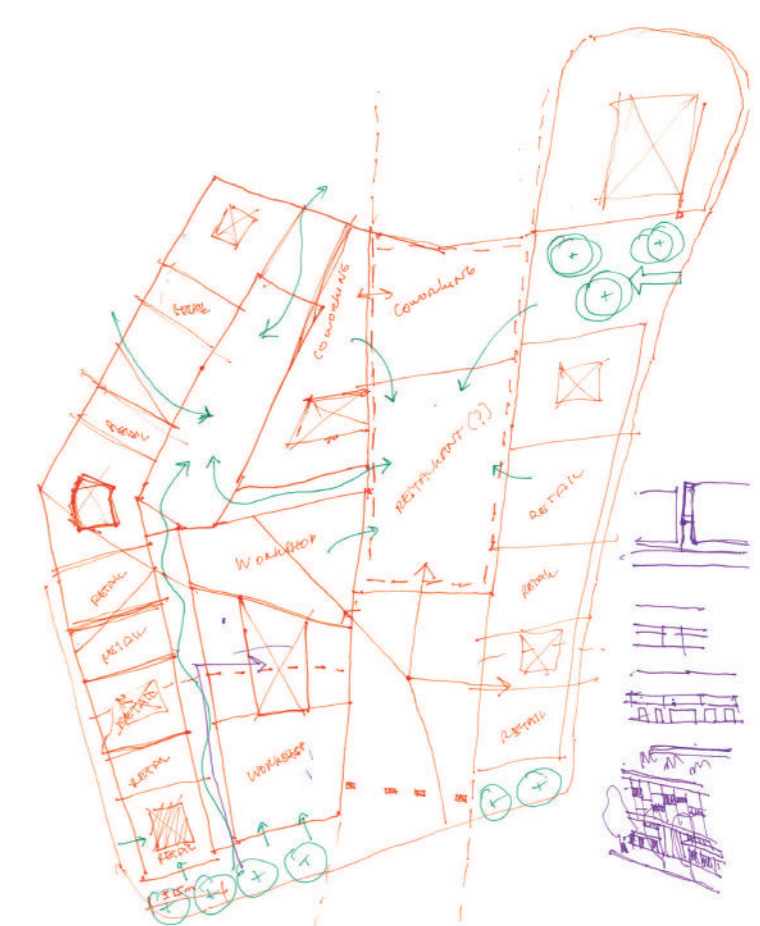
Floor plans studies



In depth section and form studies

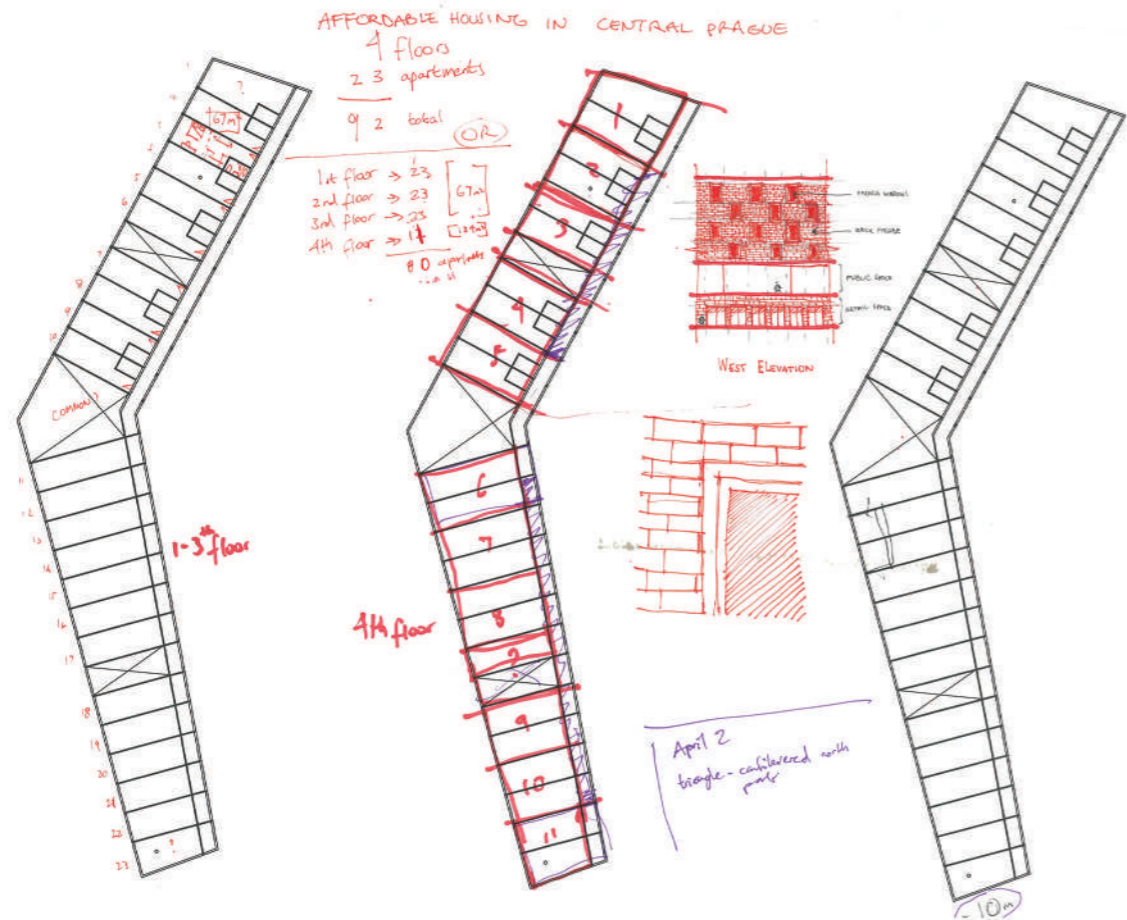


Relations to wider context

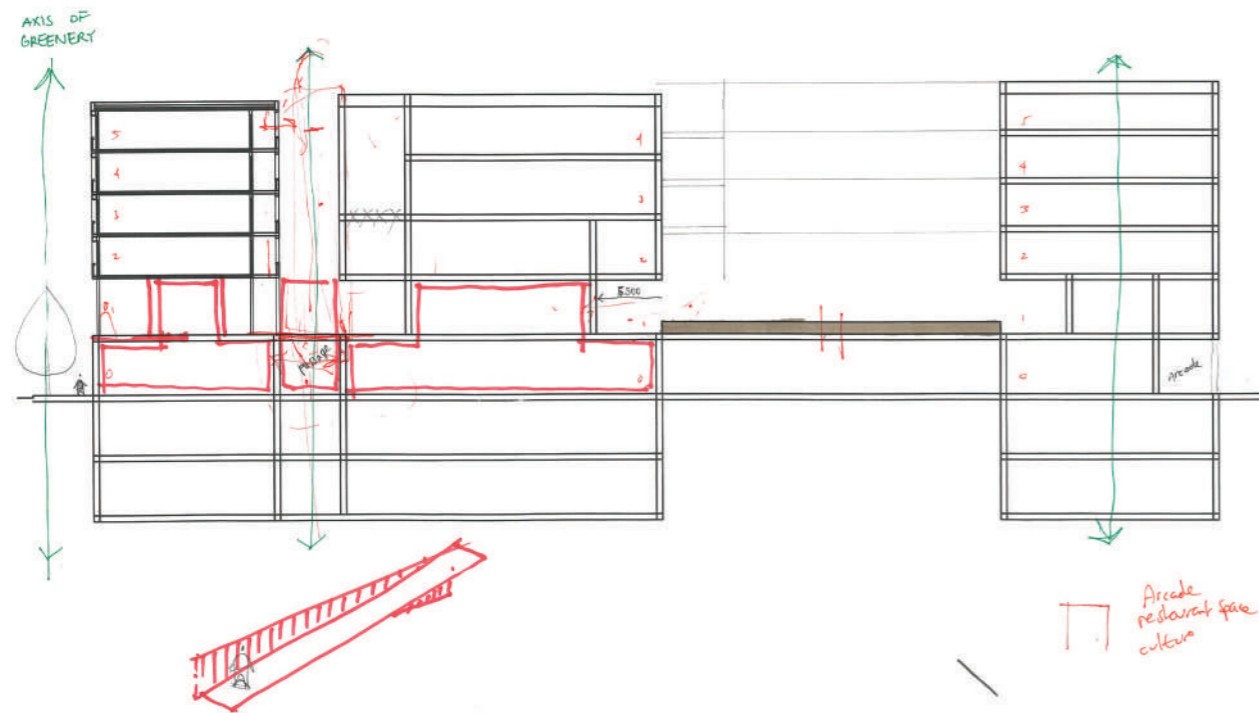


Circulation

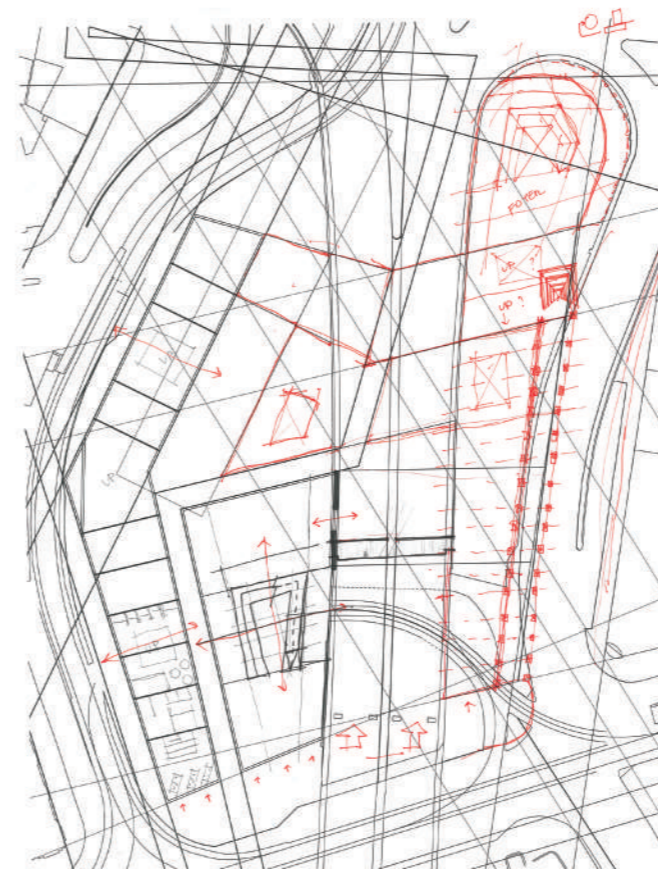
70% Progress



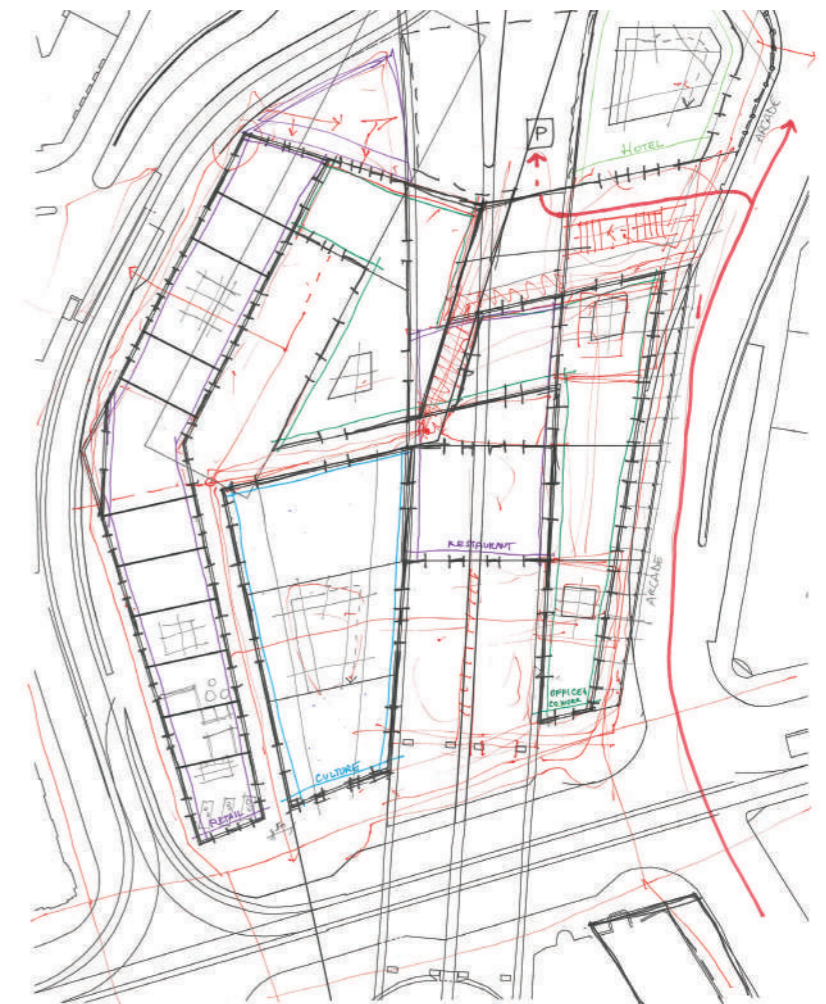
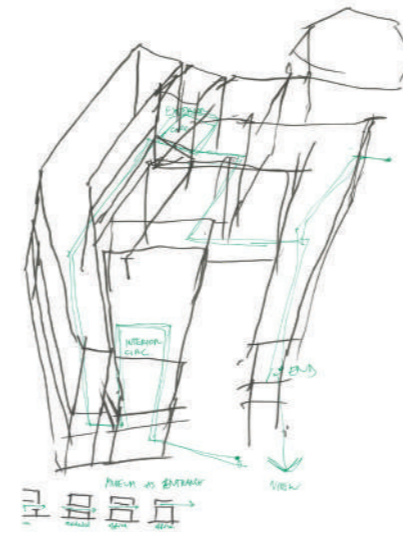
Apartment layout organization

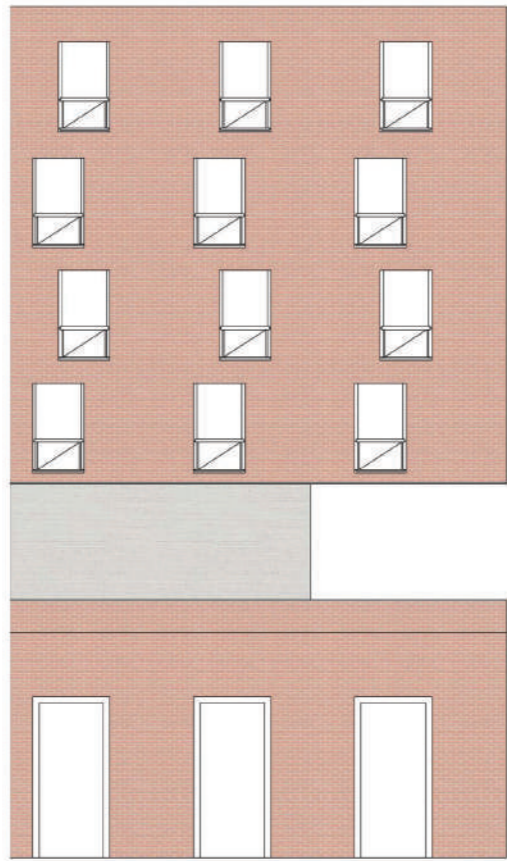


Section on CAD



Layout organization, Floor plan configuration, and circulation

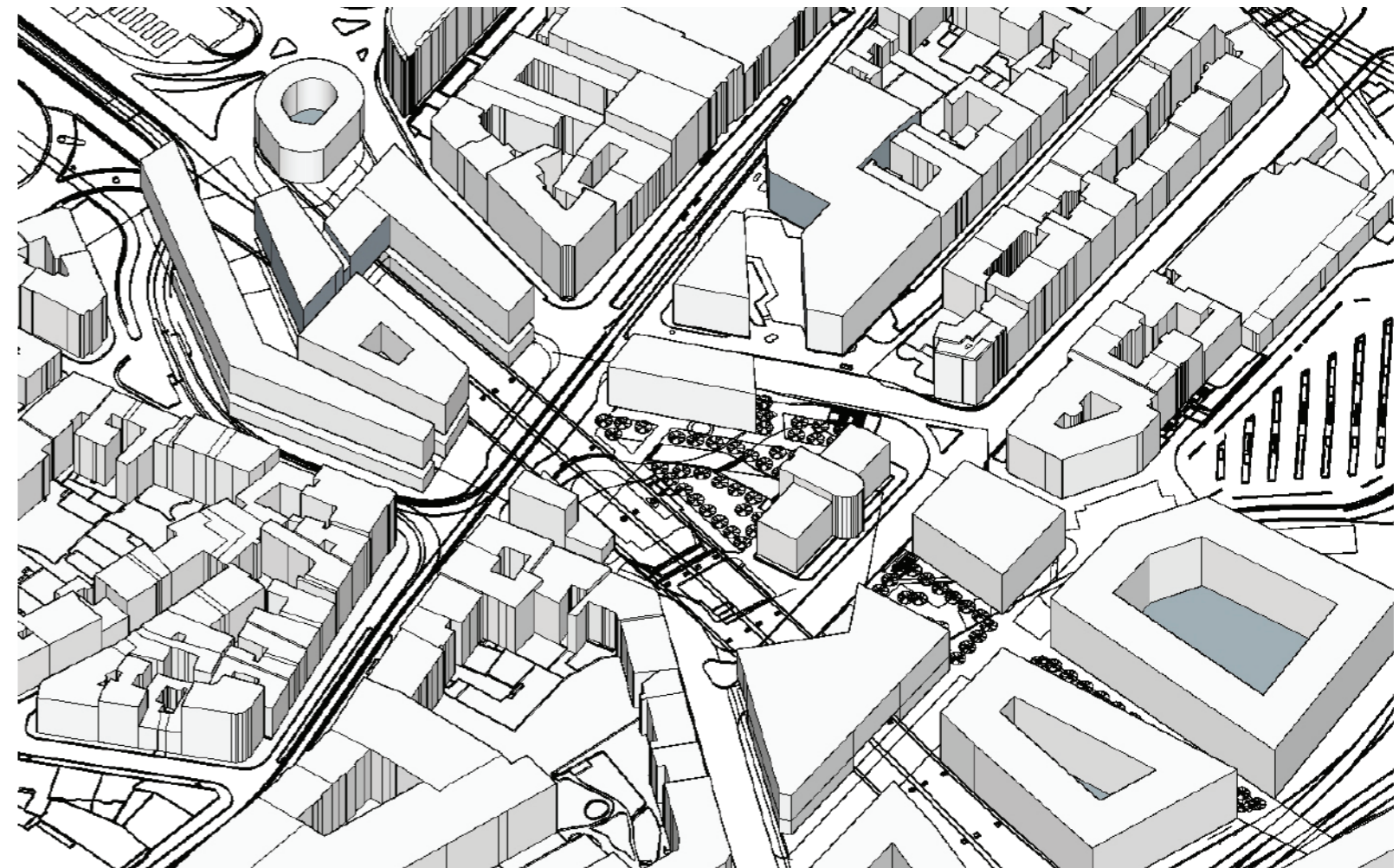
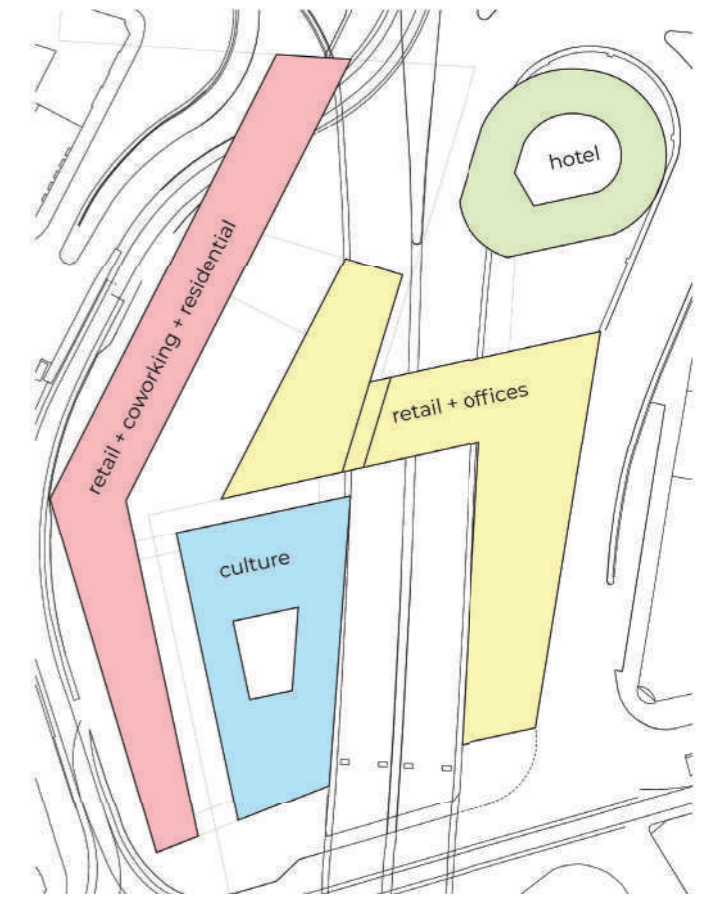




main facade - new brick



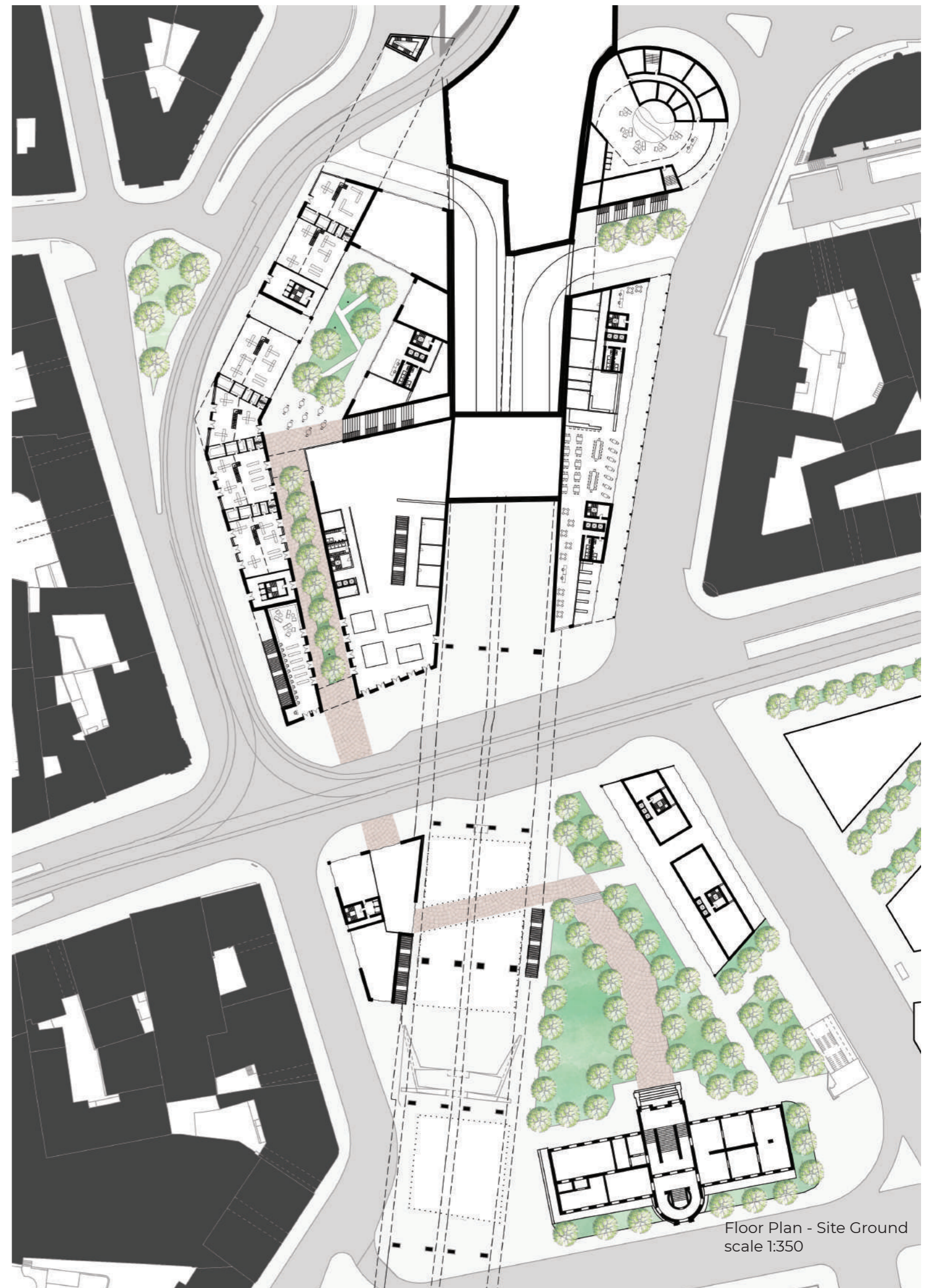
historical facade - reused brick



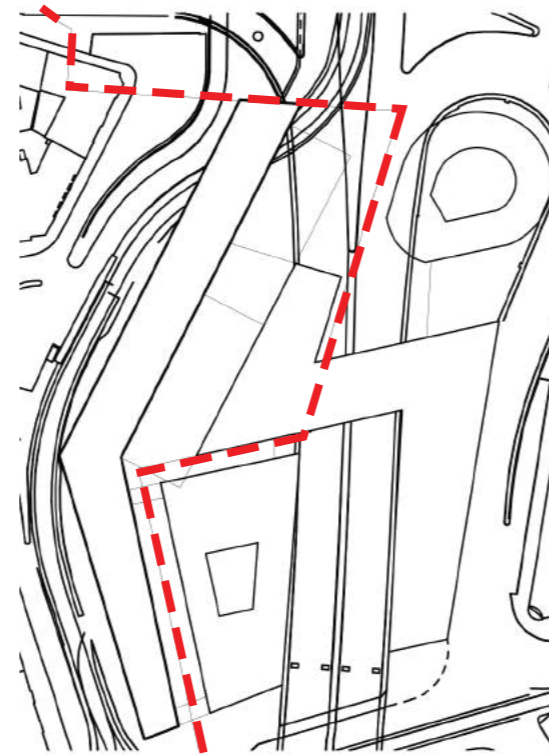
Final Drawings

List:

Site Plan	1:2000
Site Ground Plan Diagram	1:500
Axonometry	
Floor plans 1st floor	1:350
2&3rd floors	1:350
3&4th floors	1:350
Floor plan Underground	1:350
Elevations N, S, E, W	1:250
Sections aa	1:400
bb	1:400
cc	1:400
dd	1:400
ee	1:400
ff	1:400
Perspective exterior	
interior	
In-depth report	

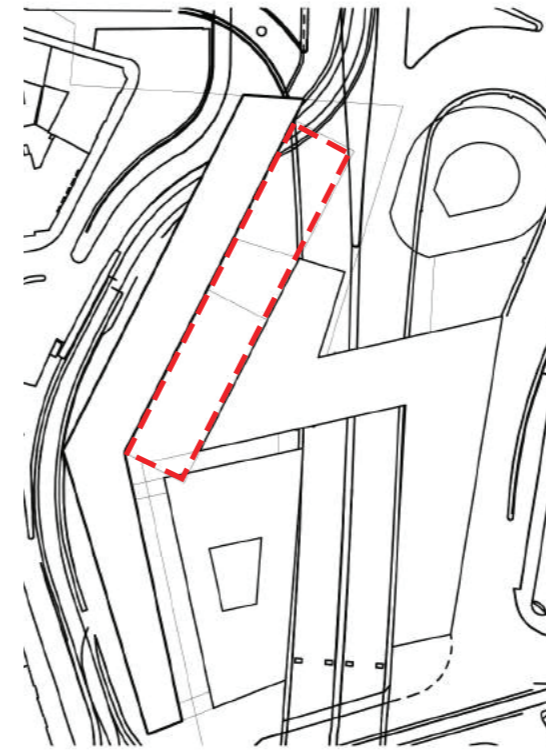


Tracing the historical and present elements



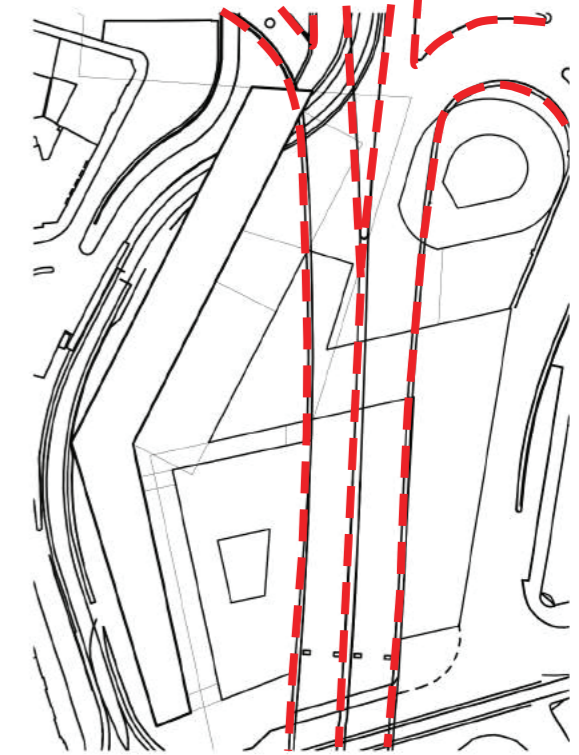
baroque wall

The baroque wall is a dynamic element in the site. It is memorialised as an interstitial, weaving in and out, up and down. Its physical form converts to a ghost form, and the buildings are shaped along the footprints of the wall. The ghost wall retains its strong form, cutting through volumes in different ways: it can cut through entirely, creating a strong opening for which pedestrians can walk along, it can cut partially, creating an opening for a different level, or a balcony. The wall instills the architectural play on form. Blocks take an irregular form, but sensible to the wall and thus the context.



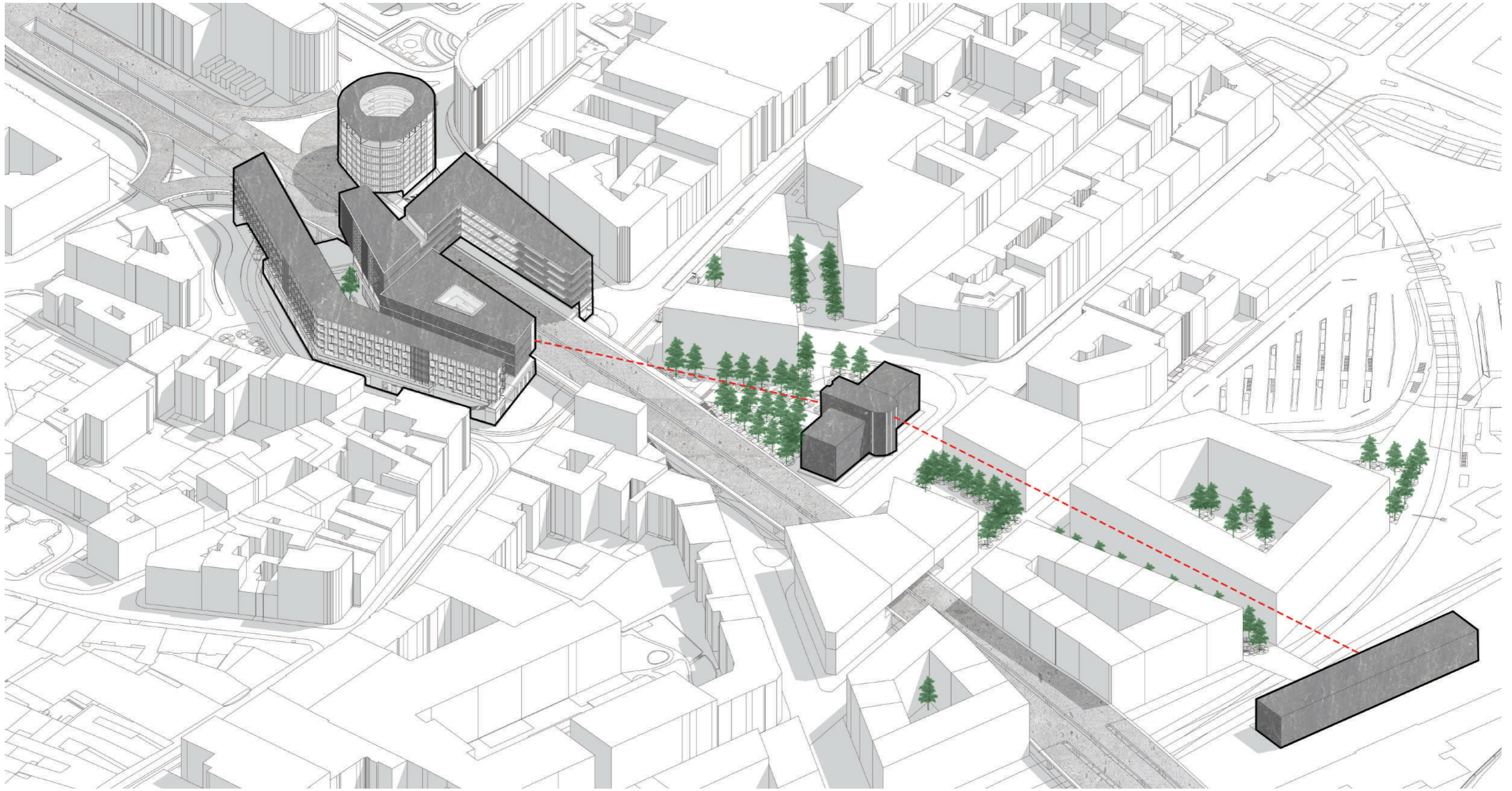
tesnov rail station

The historical building is a static element, its physical form now remembered as a void in the site. Its original nature is brought back in a different way: visitors from different access points congregate in the center, and with the addition of first floor public amenities, the void is filled with social interactivity of people from various backgrounds. They can be employees taking a lunch break; performers after their show from the cultural centre; coworkers hanging out; and residents mingling along.

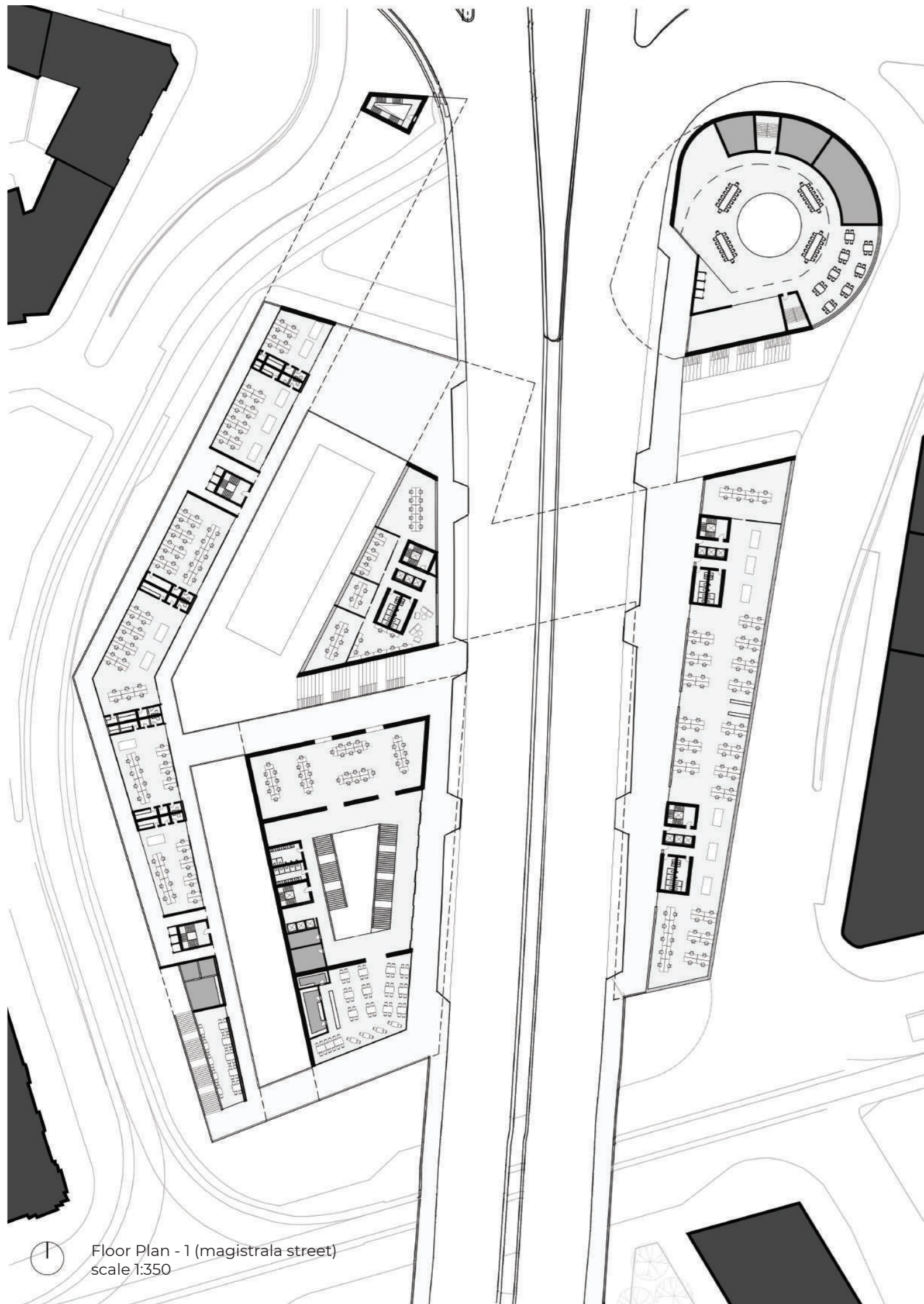


magistrala

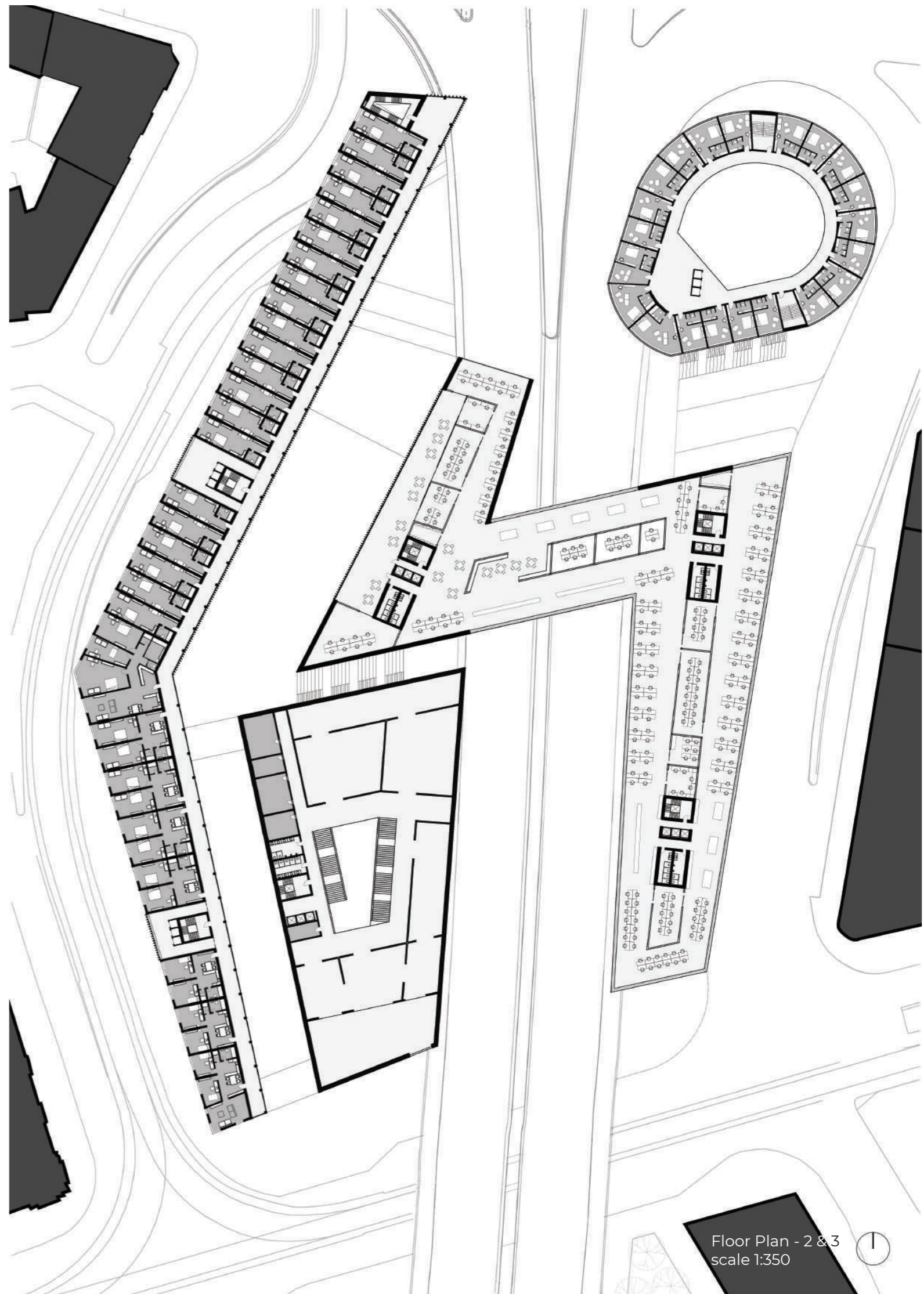
The magistrala is often seen as an unapproachable city element. In this project the magistrala is treated as an extension of the public flow of circulation. In the tesnov block, Pedestrians are able to take the stairs to the magistrala directly, and on this floor a variety of functions help give the identity of the site for a more social and cultural environment. The magistrala street extends further, as pedestrians are able to visit the museum, exit to the upper street, walk along and then take the stairs down to the Prague City Museum - or further towards the new development. What was once an impenetrable barrier, the magistrala has become a helping hand in providing a coherent flow for pedestrians between one space to another.



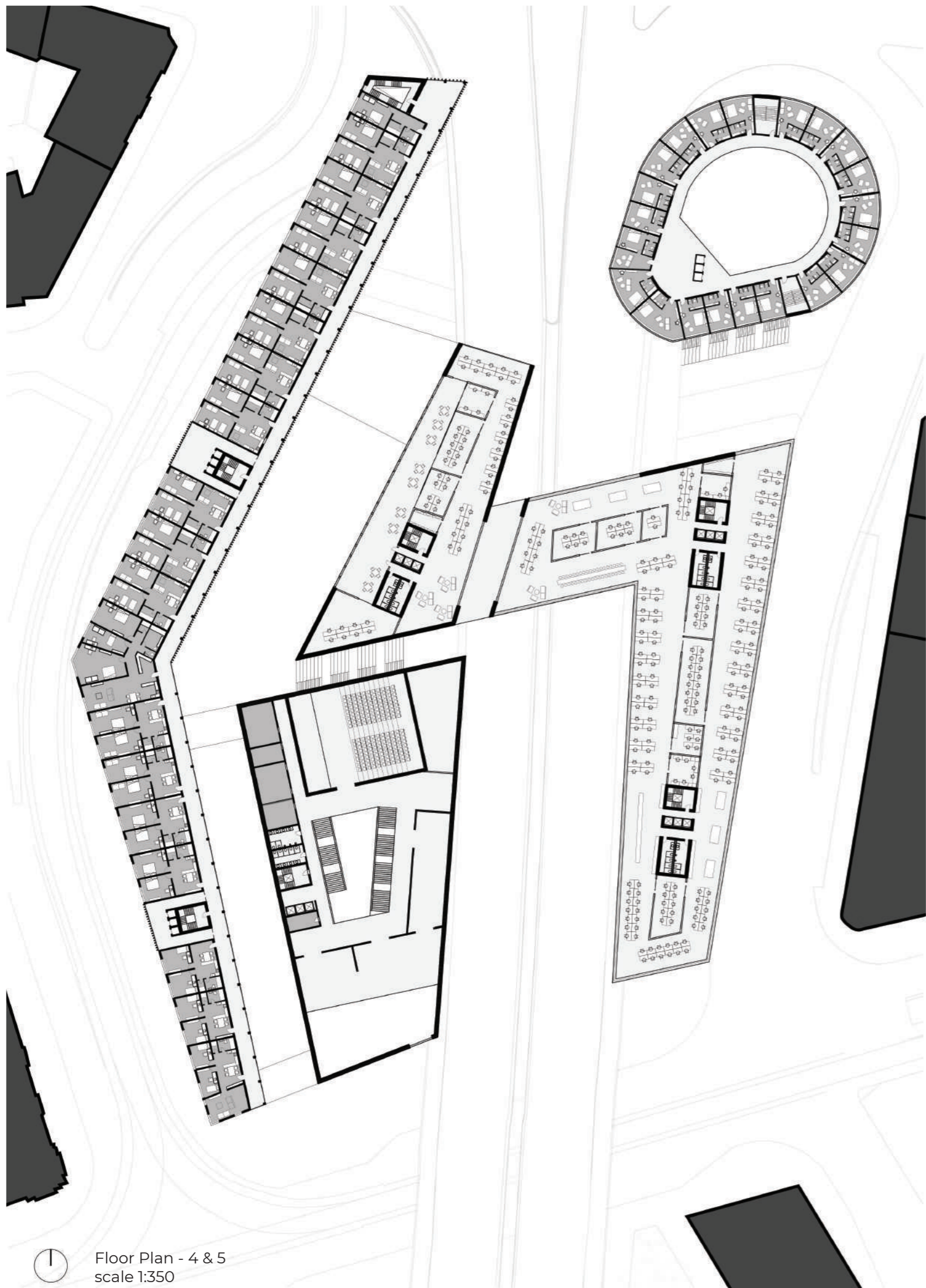
Axonometry



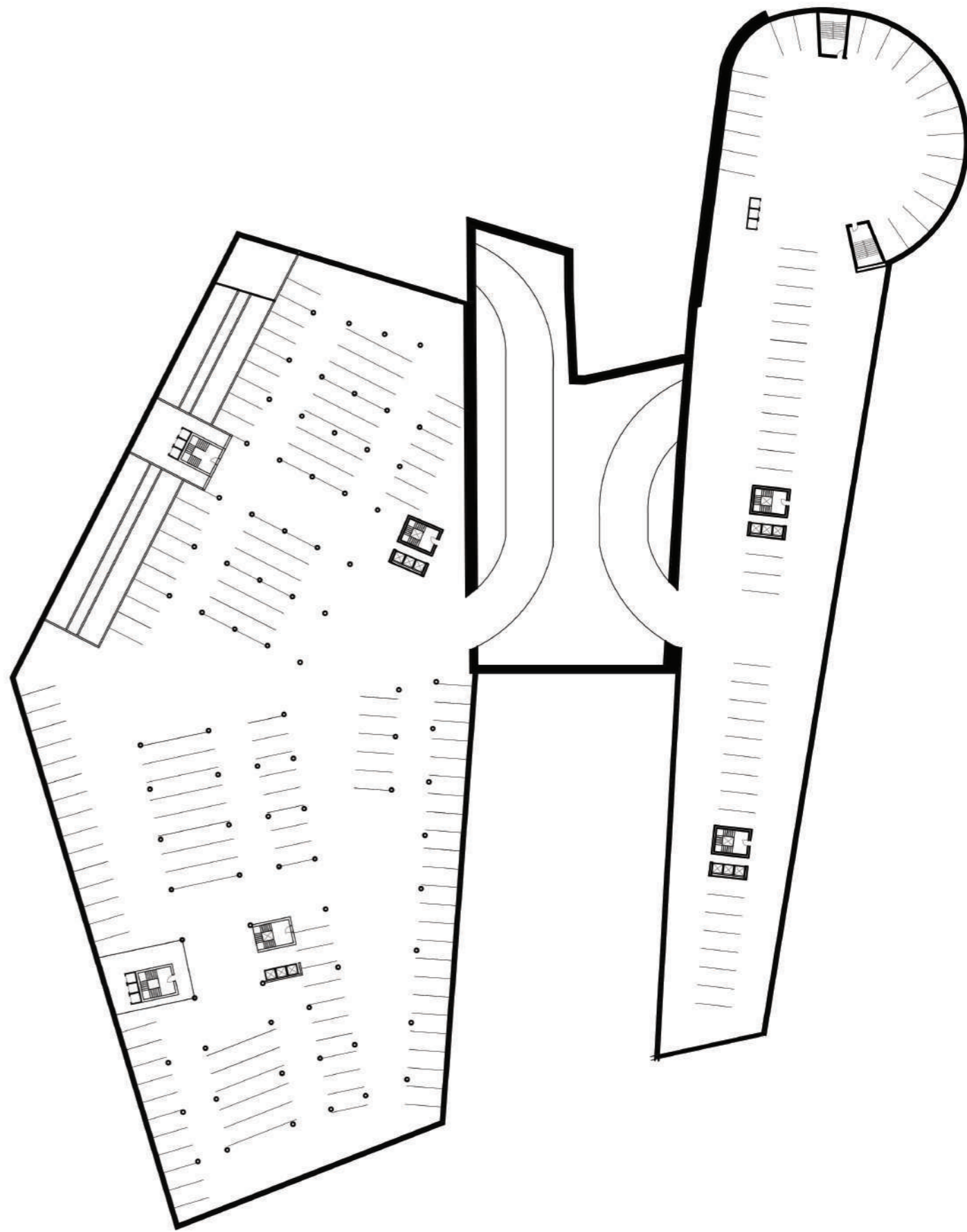
Floor Plan - 1 (magistrala street)
scale 1:350



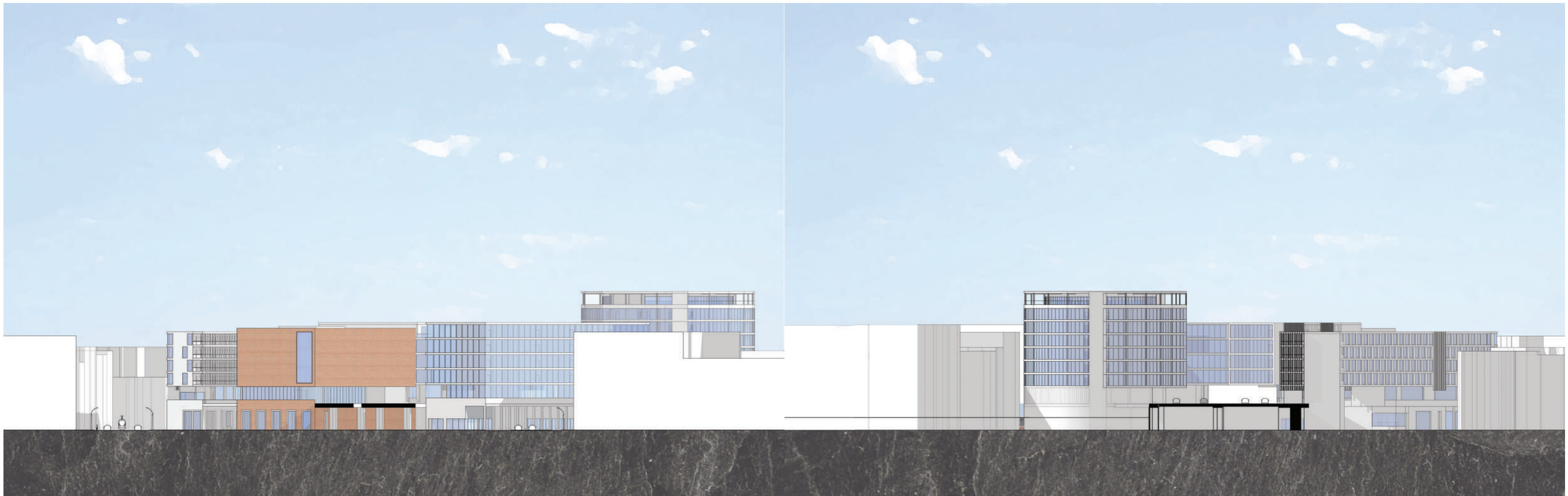
Floor Plan - 2 & 3
scale 1:350



Floor Plan - 4 & 5
scale 1:350

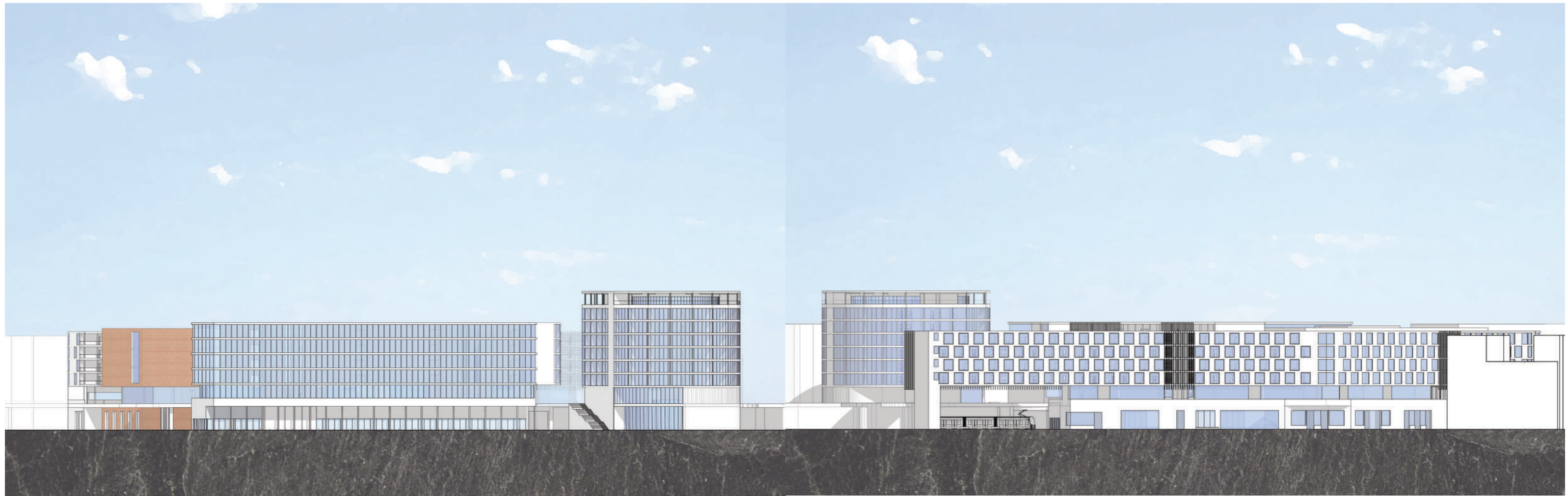


Floor Plan - Underground
scale 1:350



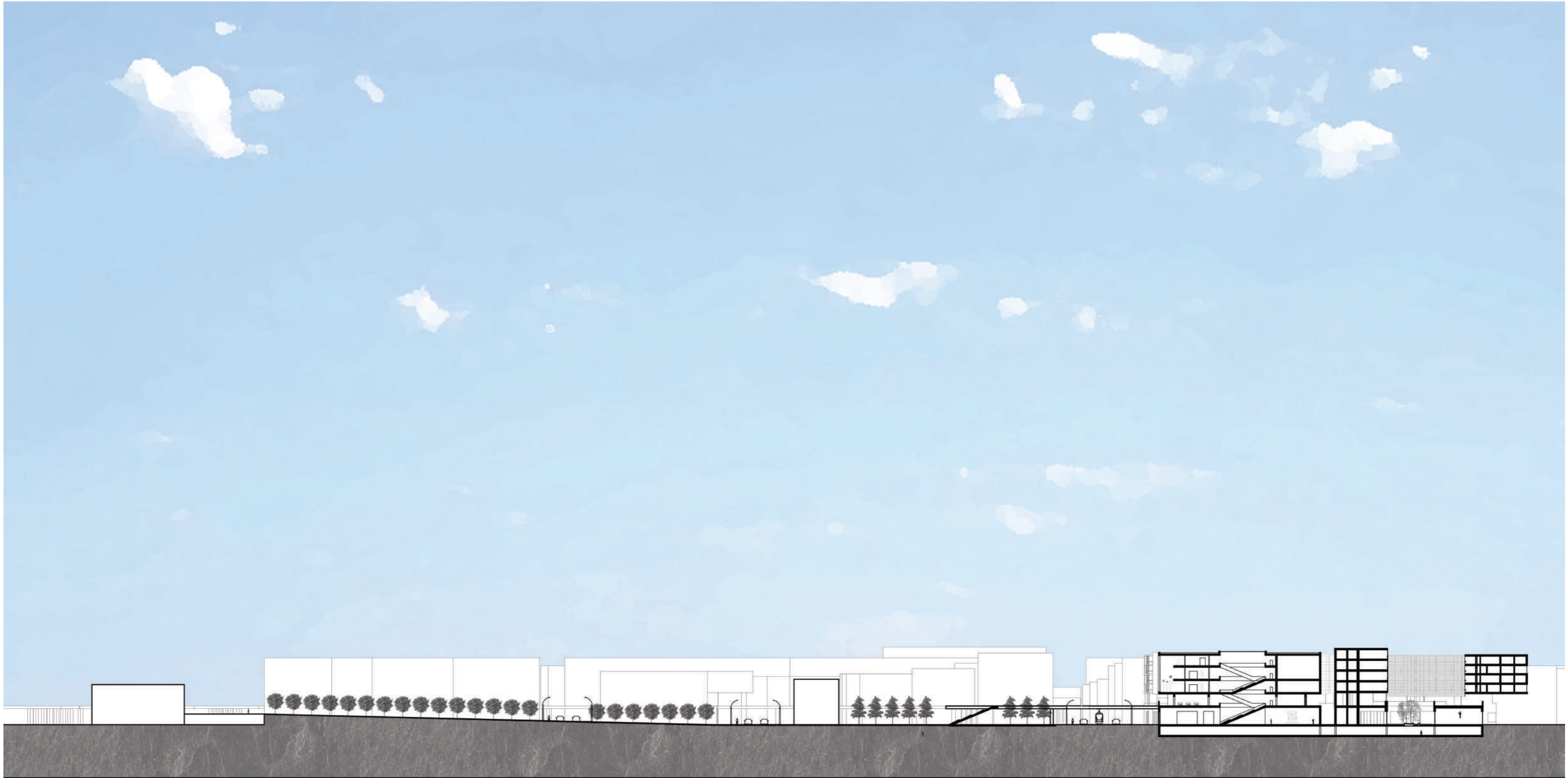
South Elevation
scale 1:1000

North Elevation
scale 1:1000



East Elevation
scale 1:1000

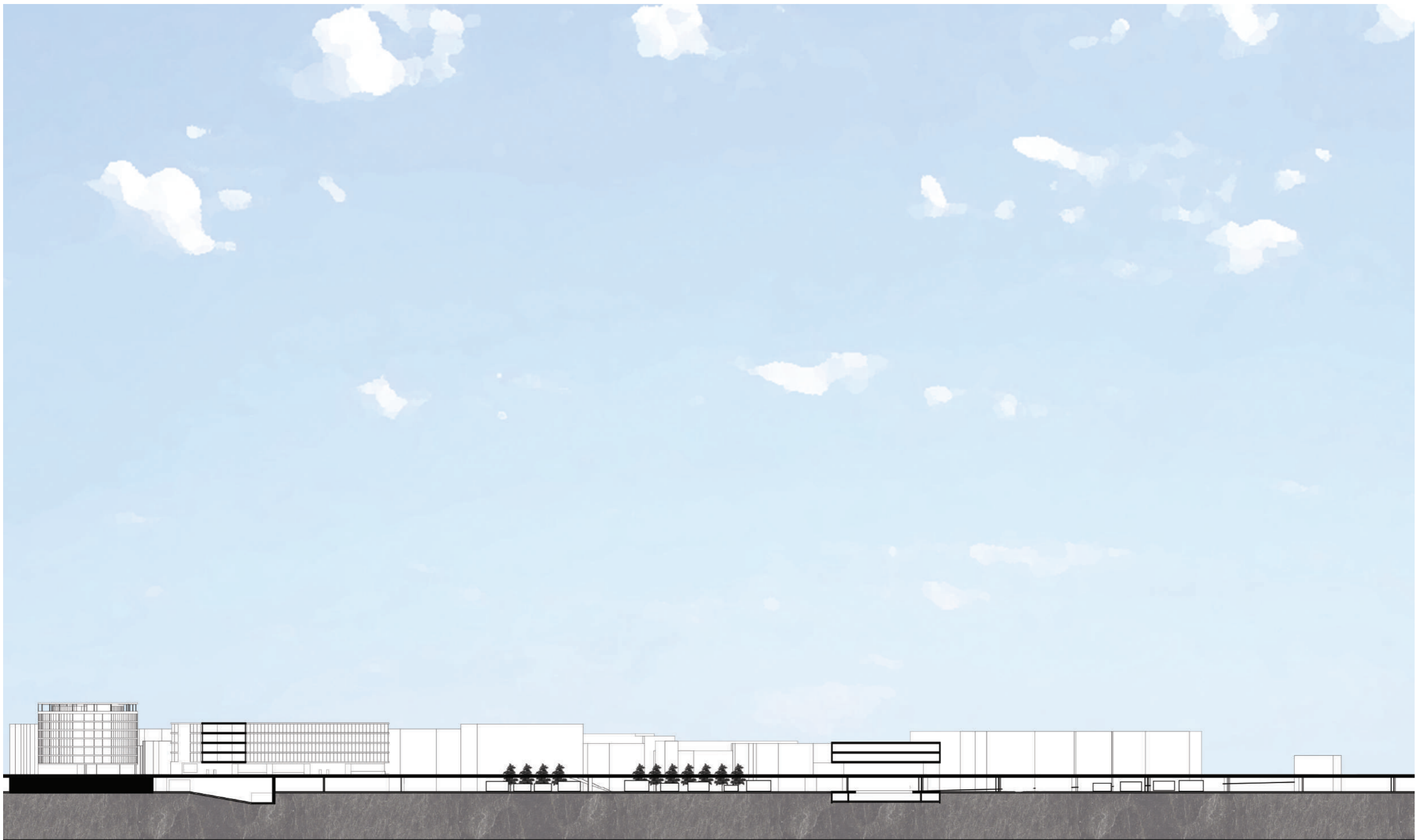
West Elevation
scale 1:1000



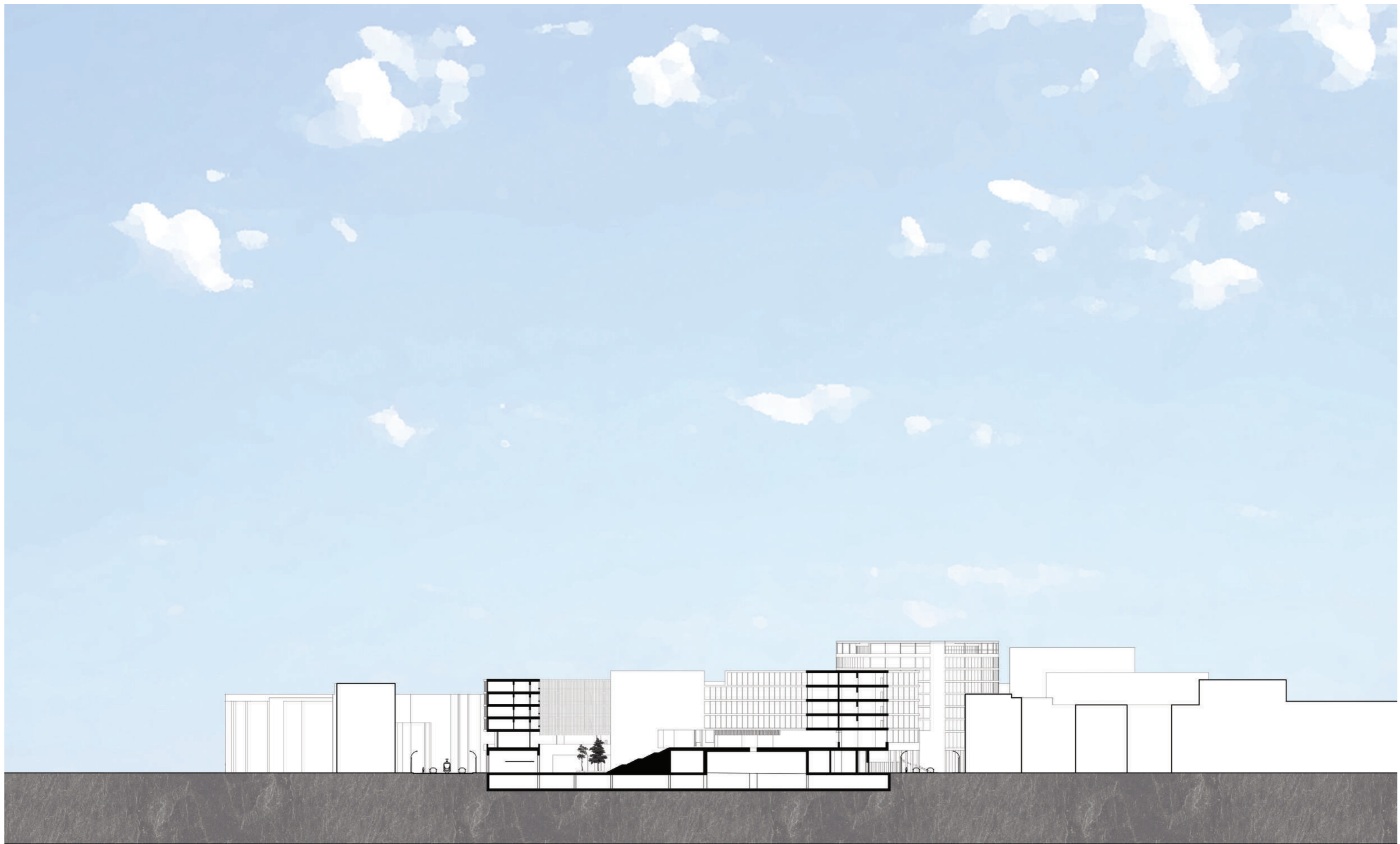
Longitudinal Section - AA
scale 1:400



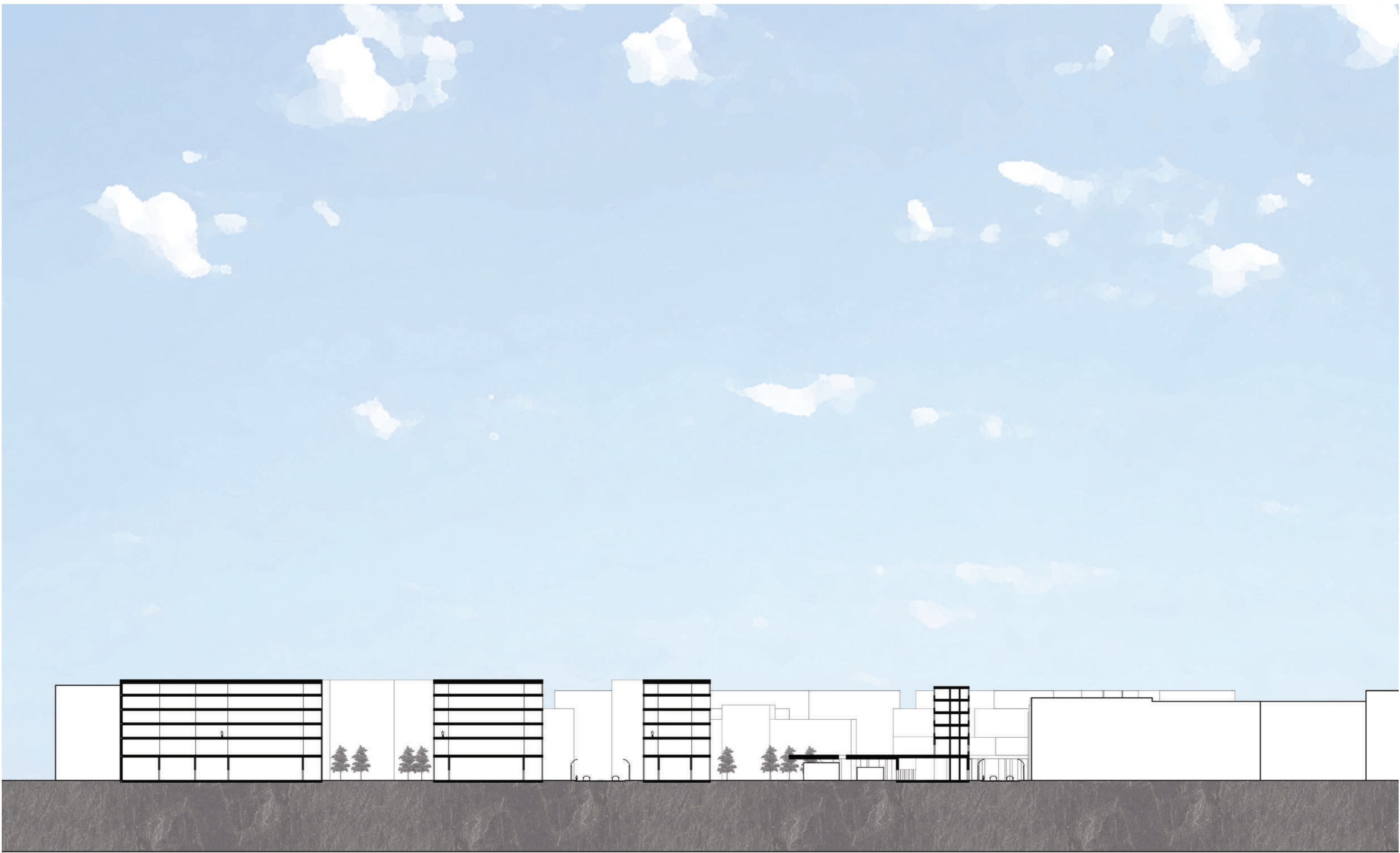
Cross Section - BB
scale 1:400



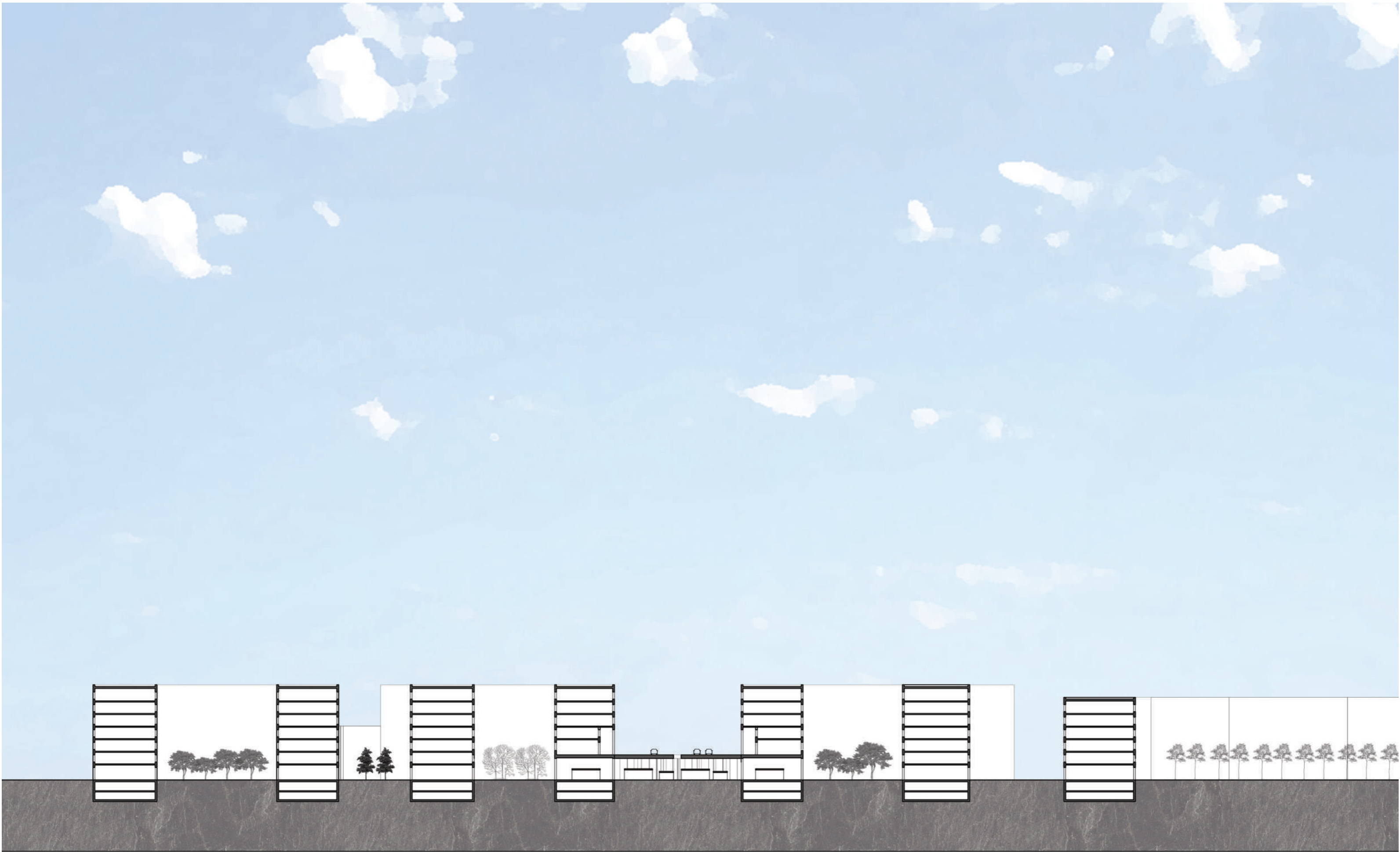
Longitudinal Section - CC
scale 1:400



Cross Section - DD
scale 1:400



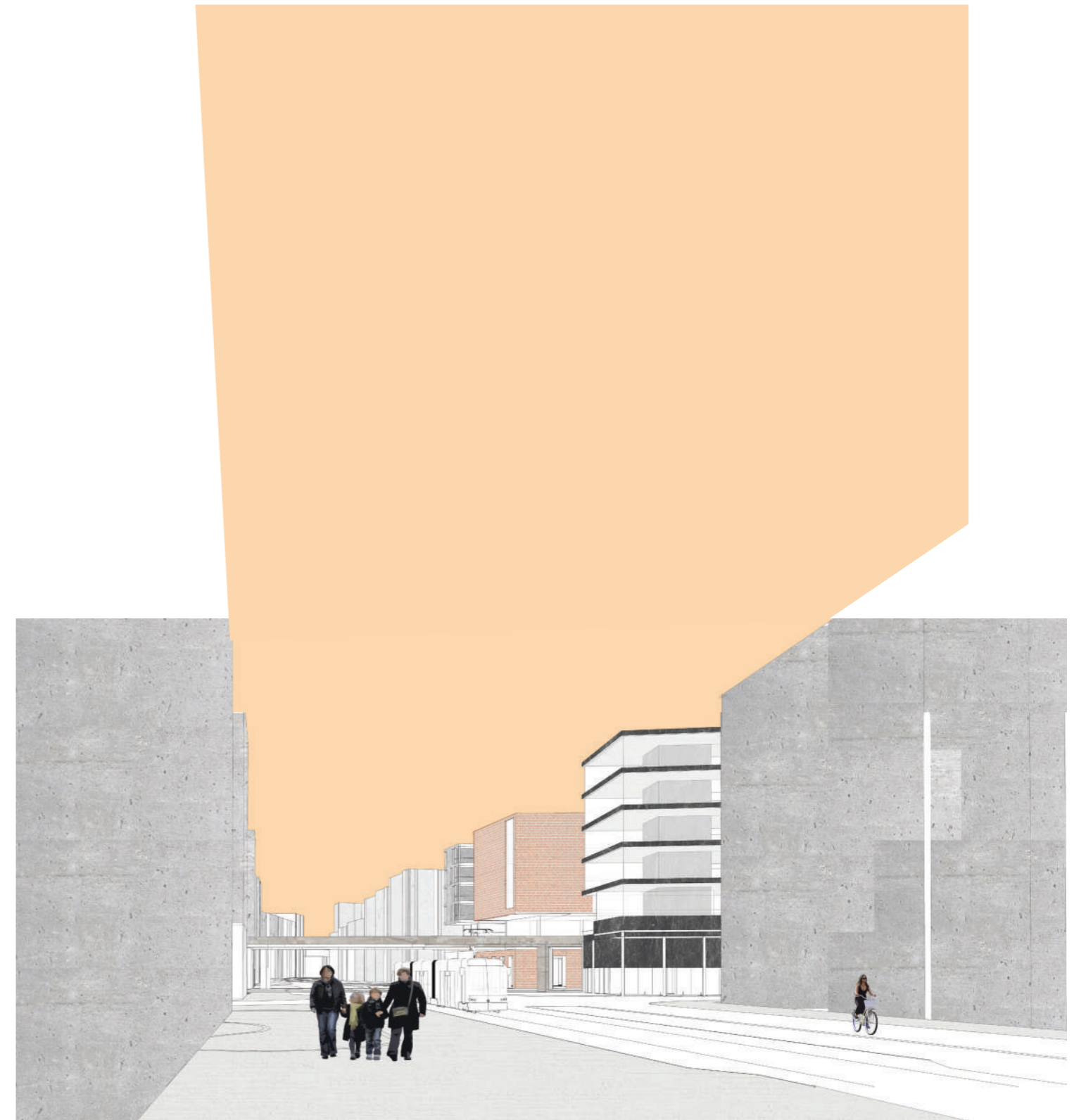
Cross Section - EE
scale 1:400



Cross Section - FF
scale 1:400



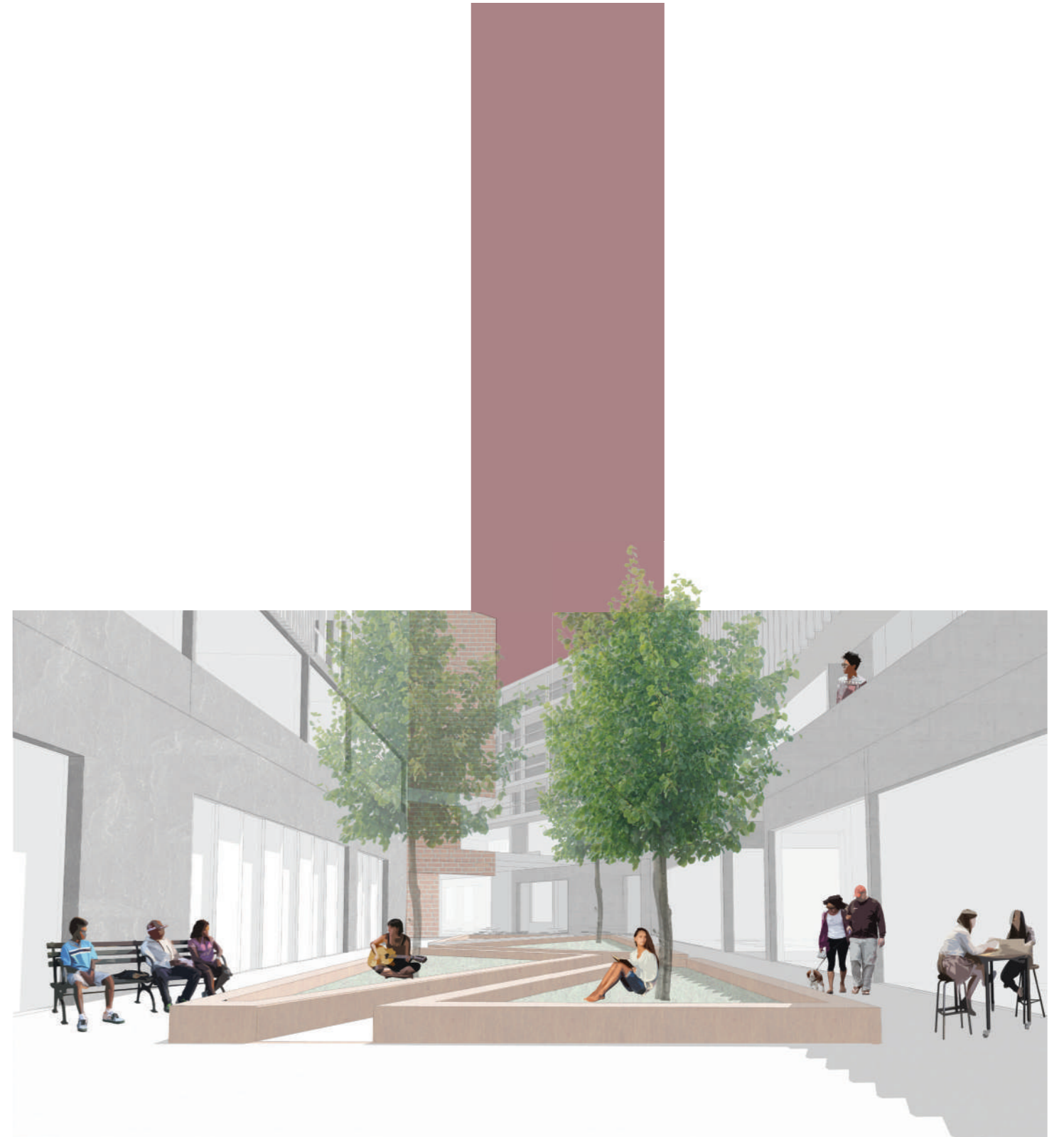
The now accessible magistral street



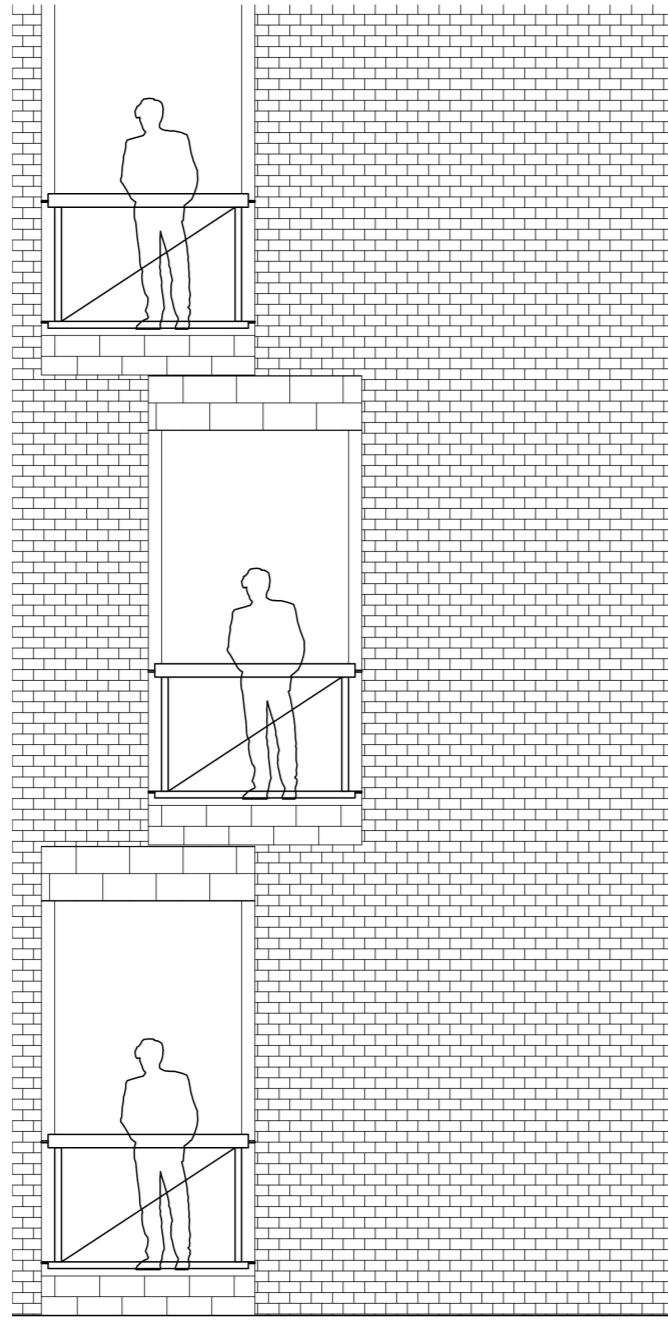
The two urban fabrics is connected and the magistral softened



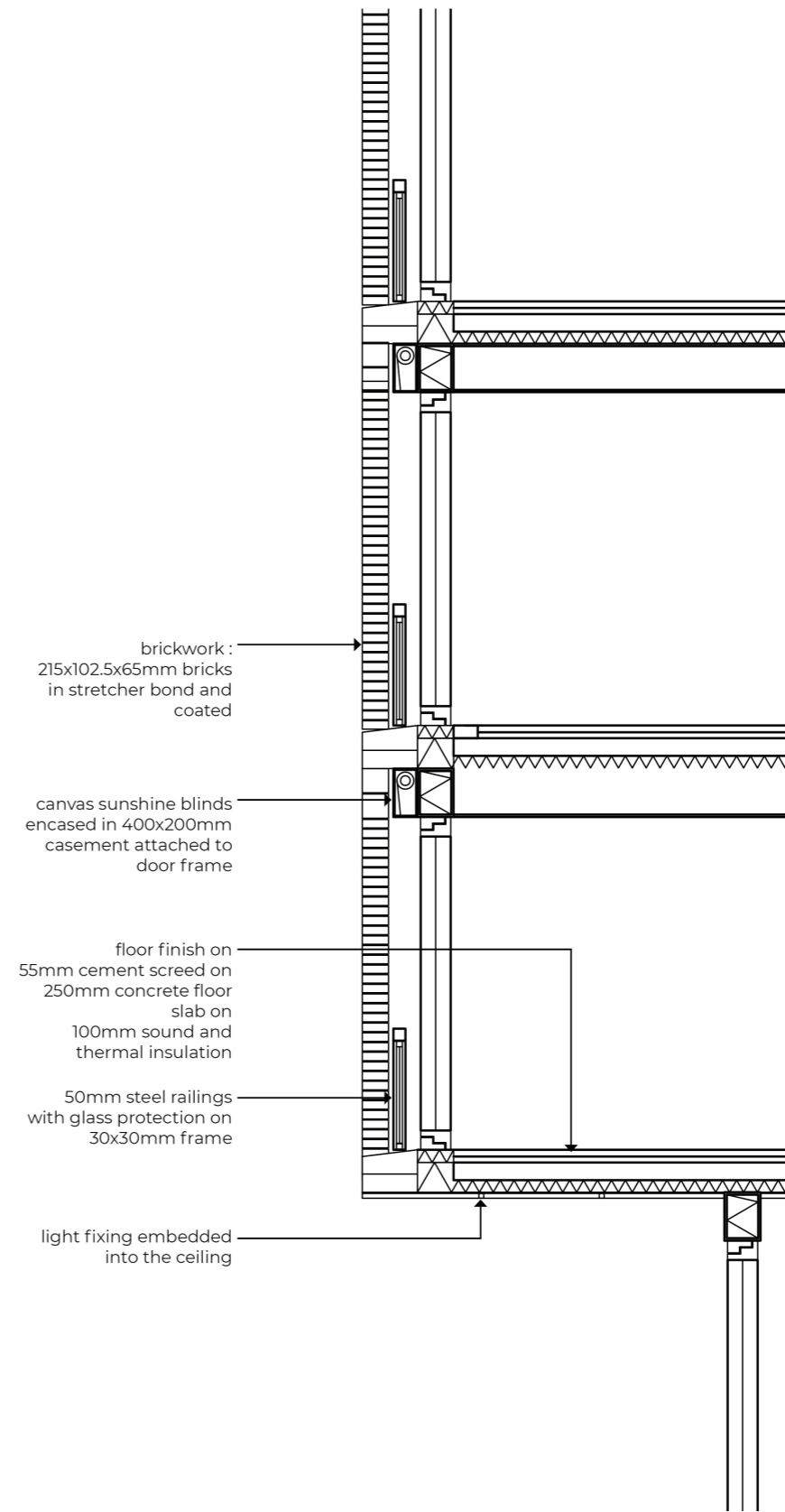
A view towards the Prague City Museum and beyond.



The vibrant yet quiet Tesnov courtyard, a haven for those who seek peace



facade detail



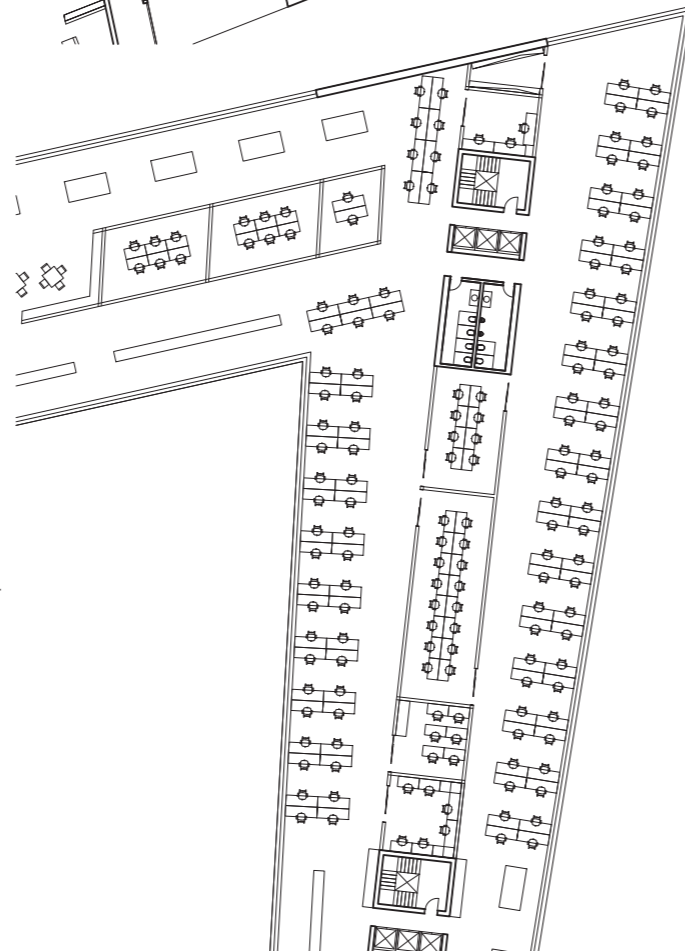
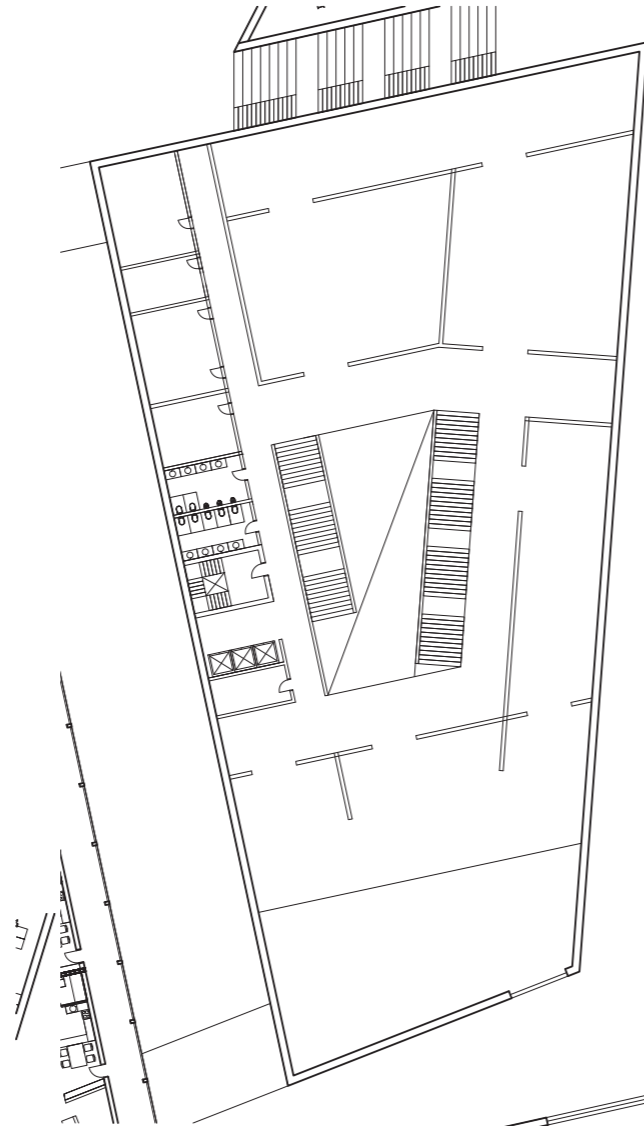
The museum

The new Florenc cultural museum offers 4 floors of exhibition space and a theatre for classical and experimental performances.

On the ground floor, flexible boxes provide different uses such as a bookstore or a resting space. The atrium takes in sunlight, illuminating the entire museum. After the atrium, visitors will be met with a spacious open room in which temporary exhibitions and events occur. Access towards the inner courtyard is also possible from here. The first floor of the project acts as an extension of the magistrala street. For the museum, a cafe and workshop spaces act as the frontage of the museum. The museum aims to educate visitors with the history of the site in which the Baroque wall and the Těšnov rail station once stood. It is also an addition towards the existing Prague City Museum, offering itself as a helping hand to regenerate the site to a more cultural one. The facade consists of brick cladding to symbolise the old wall. It is solid throughout, to emphasize its importance as the main force of the block.

The offices

The office building has the most dynamic form as it undergoes a reaction through multiple elements: the wall, the railstation, the magistrala and the surroundings. Each of these elements are of different attitudes and the office building reacts to each of them differently. In the wall footprint it behaves the same way as the museum: a solid brick facade along the path, yet again symbolising the robustness of the wall. On the railstation side the facade is pushed inwards, creating a terrace for the office workers. A row of decorative columns symbolise the old columns of the station, this pushed back facade and columns provide not only the visitors but the office workers space to reconnect with the past. As for the surroundings, the building meets it with a glass facade, along the magistrala and towards various viewpoint such as the City Museum, the Zizkov tower and the Vltava river. The use of glass facade aim to open up the site, offering see through experiences that go beyond the site.



The mixed residential

The ground floor is mainly retail that is accessible from the road but also from the pedestrian street. This attitude is a glimpse of the building's semi permeable character. The retail differs slightly from one another, to reflect the opposite block on the west. They have mezzanine floors and storage space that divides each parcel. Here the tesnov railstation is remembered once again. An opening takes the visitor from the tesnov tram stop directly towards the courtyard, a nod to the railstation's once prominent front facade.

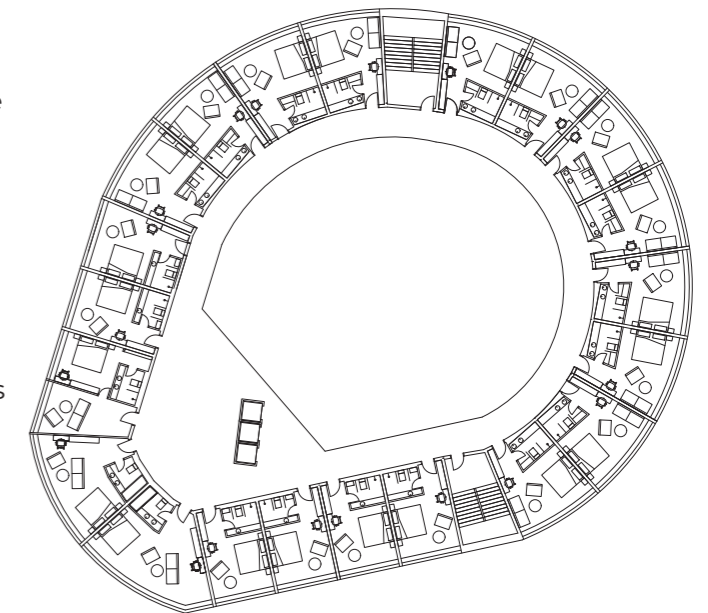
On the upper floor (the magistrala street) primary functions are of coworking spaces. This in-between space allows the interaction of coworkers as well as residents of the building, activating the space into a more socially livable block. A series of bridges also adds this connectivity between the buildings.

The residential spans 4 levels in which they are mostly affordable. It would only make sense to have affordable housing, as the block is in close proximity to the center and various transport nodes. Three typical layouts allow a diverse type of residents, from single to couple, students to professional, as well as small families.



The hotel

The hotel takes the shape of an oval that has reacted to the surrounding building lines and the memory of the wall. It is a relatively small hotel compared to the Hilton hotel nearby but the 7 levels and open atrium compensate for that. The open atrium opens up the otherwise constricted space and allows sunlight to enter the interiors. On the ground floor, the main feature is an open foyer with landscape elements in the center and on the upper floor, a restaurant that looks upwards and to the outside with a point of access from the magistrala street. There are x rooms on one floor, and with 7 levels makes it x amount of rooms. there are two layouts - m2 and m2



Public spaces

In the proposal, the design of the public spaces adheres to the memory of the site. Three particular spaces can be identified: the tesnov courtyard, the Prague city museum park, and the Florenc boulevard.

The tesnov courtyard characterizes itself as a ghost of the demolished tesnov rail station. The length and the width is approximate of the building's footprint. On the northeast, the courtyard is not enclosed by a facade (apart from the ground floor function), this is to symbolize the demolished right wing of the station after the magistrala was built as well as the direction of the trains that took passengers in and out of the country. The courtyard is a void but at the same time, a place where people can intermingle. A row of trees now occupy the center and with public functions such as retail shops and cafe, with the addition of being enclosed and surrounded by buildings, and multiple access points, the Tesnov courtyard is a safe and attractive space for pedestrians and visitors alike.

The Prague city museum park has been redesigned in a way that it follows the footprint of the old Baroque wall. Collonade of trees and sufficient green space ensures that the park is restored to its former beauty. The building northeast of the City Museum acts as a border adhering to the angle of the old wall at the same time as a gateway character. It gently encloses the park, separating the street but provides access points and public functions such as a cafe by the park. Stairs allow pedestrians to access the magistrala for a coherent flow between the tesnov block, the central park and the southern blocks

A visual connection between the City Museum, the new tesnov cultural center and the railway museum by masarykovo station is established to note the importance of the three cultural centers. A pedestrian boulevard connects the City Museum and the railway museum, providing tree coverage and a large yet enclosed green space in the center of the city. The proposed blocks provide ground floor amenities such as retail, restaurants and other functions that enrich the area, increasing the economy and the livability of a previously neglected site.

Technical Report

A. Cover Report

a.1. Identification data

a.1.2. Name :

Stillness through Time and Space: An Architecture of the Memory, the Remembering, and the Enduring of Place
Prague, Czechia

a.1.3. Country:

Architectural Institute in Prague

a.1.4. Client:

Dandika Thanos

a.1.5. Architect in charge:

a.2. Site data

a.2.1. Zoning:

Tesnov: Recreation and park

Florenc: Cultural + Transportation

Masarykovo: Mixed urban

a.2.3. Size

Tesnov: 15,000m²

Florenc: 13,000m² + 9,500m²

Masarykovo: 50,000m²

B. General Technical Report

b.1. Description of the developed area

The site consists of three different areas: Tesnov, Florenc and Masarykovo. The magistrala runs through these areas resulting in problems. Concurrently, the sites lack any development especially the Masarykovo site which holds potential for an economic hub. At this point of writing, an ongoing project by Penta sees the development of the area

b.2. Specification of the site

The proposal bring various functions to the site. The Tesnov block consists of retail, office, culture and residential that ensures the regeneration of the site. The landscape of the Prague City Museum will be improved, with buildings that dampens noise and pollution from the cars. Under the magistrala, various functions such as markets and amphitheatre can occur. In the Masarykovo area, a large scale development with mixed use will greatly improve the economy and livability of the site.

b.3. security and protection

The Tesnov block is secure owing to its easy to access pathways.

b.4. Impact of the development on surrounding buildings and properties

The proposal will establish a connection between the New Town and Karlin urban fabrics

C. General description of the project

C.1. General urban and architecture designs

C.1.1. Urbanism - zoning regulation

Tesnov: mixed use zoning.

Florenc: Recreational and park

Masarykovo: mixed use zoning

C.1.2. Architectural design

The architecture of the Tesnov block is variant, to reflect the various architectural styles in Prague. mixture of concrete, brick and glazed buildings also show the architectural play on permeability. These three materials represent their functions as well as to its surroundings. For example, the cultural center is of brick, a direct relation to the old baroque wall. At the same time, the brick allow a well insulated building that can hold exhibitions and events.

D. basic parameters of technical and technological equipment

d.1. technical design

Hvac and natural ventilation

d.2. fire safety design

Strategically placed cores ensure a safe and easy to access exit path.

Conclusion

When the past
meets the present
in equal stance,
stillness is achieved

for the city

Prague is widely known for its historical identity, but with the constant shift in the field of architecture (the metacritical environment), this identity needs to be adapted for it to redefine itself in the current setting.

A couple of projects insinuated this adaptation, several methods were implemented: in the Zaha Hadid Masarykovo project, the concept of speed urges a dynamic flow of human movement in the city centre, while focusing on the station's surroundings and providing a potential for an economic hub. In Gehl's project, the magistrala is delevated to the ground to invite city boulevards, pedestrian safe streets, and a green corridor along the city lines.

While these methods are acceptable approaches, they are blind to Prague's true potential: the strength of the past. For a contemporary project to be accepted in Prague it has to adhere to the layers of history, which the city is abundant of. The old must be reiterated in the contemporary setting while still be unique to its own.

My project offers the solution of how to capture the history rich city.

1. Bringing back historic elements to the site
2. Adhere to the building lines and city fabric
3. Using architecture play of volume and material, reflecting the city's diversity
4. Respecting the present situation, even if the elements are considered a hindrance to your design

These key points provide an environment where the past and present meets together equally - and by that instance, the architecture of stillness is achieved.

Furthermore, the thesis can serve as a guide on how to tackle the magistrala. The magistrala is seen as a barrier by most, but in this project it becomes an addition to the new buildings. In this way the present is respected and creates a more site specific function.

for the self

The subjective reason for choosing the site stems from my increasingly unpleasant daily commute experience from Florenc station to ARCHIP. Having to see the Prague City Museum losing its identity due to the increasing traffic and noise from the magistrala has initiated a need for me, as an architecture student, to fix it.

The second and more objective reason is the critical need to establish an understanding of how contemporary architecture should approach a site, through contextualization and the reiteration contextual elements such as the past and present layers. This is a concurring dialectic, where contemporary architecture often neglects its context in favor of attaining an iconic shape.

By implementing the architecture of stillness through time and space, the past and present become precedents in which the form and function could take shape. the form is highly contextual, but its design in the contemporary setting defines its autonomy. Material use is dependent to both the current state of the built environment as well as the preceded architecture (the wall, the rail station).

At the beginning, I was doubtful of my choice of the site, as it seemed difficult to do. But after numerous studies, site visits and the support from studio leaders and friends, I was able to offer a design that may help the city solve problems relating to architecture and the current situation of Prague.

Stillness through time and space: an architecture of the memory, the remembering, and the enduring of place is what I would consider the culmination of all my design approaches throughout my 6 years of architecture. Viewpoints, architectural play, old and new, static and dynamic, urban key lines and contextual forces are amongst my main concept approaches and I believe the thesis covered most.

To conclude, the thesis was demanding yet rewarding, it pushed my limits of critically solving a site and this knowledge is something I would like to bring along for my architectural career.

