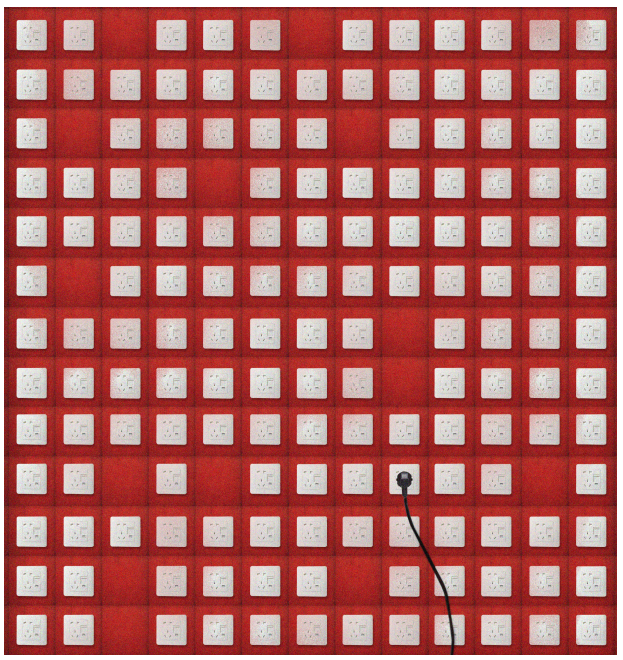

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Explore Lab 25
Project Book

Technical University Delft
Department of Architecture
2017 . 2018

Design Mentor . Hamed Khosravi
Research Mentor . Stavros Kousoulas
Building Technology Mentor . Ype Cuperus

I would like to thanks my tutors Hamed, Stavros and Ype for their invaluable knowledge, commitment and support which never ceased to be present during this incredible year.
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Grazie alla mia famiglia, al loro amore e fiducia per i quali sarò eternamente grata.

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from the city of production to the productive city

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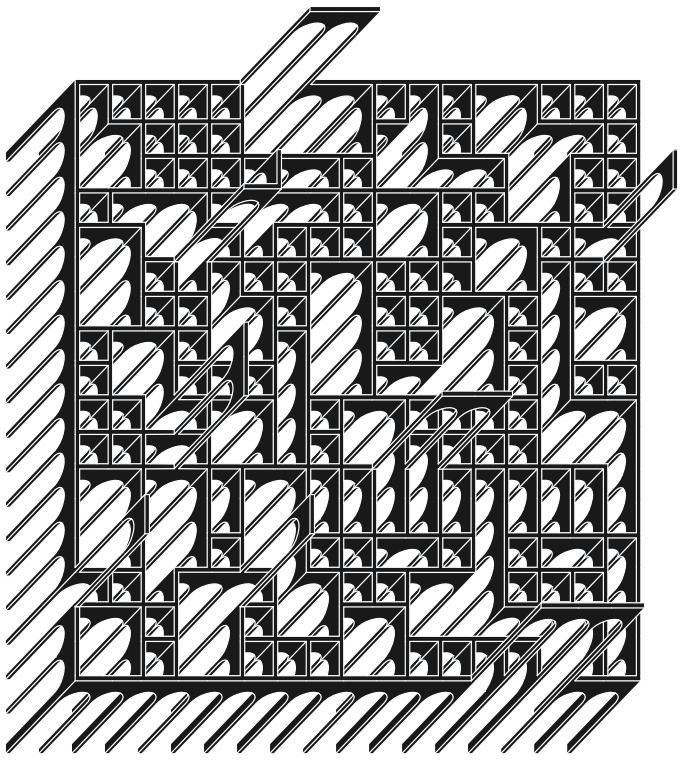
INTRODUCTION



Accelerated Square, drawing by author

Even the most innocent architecture is the result of specific forces.
Architecture must stand against stillness and classification. It must embrace movement and become endless transformation, leading every time towards a moment of estrangement, which must become its only purpose. When that which used to be seen as timeless and eternal is deliberately altered across time, in a way that aims to overturn the paralysing thought that things have always been that way, and therefore that there is nothing that can be done to change them.
"Architecture is a tool for oppression and control. Architecture is a tool for revolution and liberty"[1]. Architecture must be adventurous, from the latin *adventurus* which means about to happen. *"But instead of opening up into some catastrophic or messianic future it leads rather into invisible temporal dimensions of the present"*[2].
Against the idea of no-future, against utopia and dystopia, against nostalgia, against celebration, against the endless quest of positioning, against all -ism, against opposition, against distrust, against political and a-political, against historical, against reification, against clarification.
Architecture is mysterious. Architecture must flow. Architecture must become an open ended, never completed project, allowing possibilities to happen, to be retrieved, to fail or succeed, to change, to transform, to subvert.
Architecture is life, it hosts life, it generates life, and as much as life architecture must be uncontrollable and never predictable.
Architecture must breathe.
"High on his tower, as far as possible from the earth, sits a human being. He has so transformed his eyes, with the aid of gigantic optical instruments, that they have become fit to penetrate the universe up to its most distant stars"[3].

If cold, then cold as a block of ice.
If hot, then hot as a blazing wing.
Architecture must blaze[4].

1 Nick Axel, *Manifesto for an Architectural Future*

2 Svetlana Boym, *Architecture of the Off-Modern*, Forum Project Publication, 2008

3 Jakob von Uexkull, *A Stroll through the Worlds of Animals and Men: A picture book of invisible worlds*, 1934

4 COOPHIMMELB(L)AU, 1980

MONOTOWNS

THE ARCHITECTURE OF ADVENTURE

In a world where no landscape is left truly untouched and where everything comes with a specific function, I intend to refer back to that spatio-temporal moment in which avant-garde experimentations generated a complex collection of visionary ideals and projects, in which architecture was experienced as a continuous process of reflection and reinterpretation of the present human condition, rather than as a problem-solving practice or a profit maker tool. This, in order to rediscover an ideology of the present that is not subservient to political or economical conditions, and to unveil an architecture of adventure whose accelerated flow advances a possibility for an alternative present.

Although one cannot ignore the influences of the socio-political condition of each individual spatio-temporal fragment, I find it impossible to confine this movement to a specific period of time, because of its ability to extend over temporality and distance. In this context, Soviet Union is a great example of how ideas evolved during time, transforming and being appropriated, eventually succumbing to the overarching power of institutionalised practices and governments. This very contrast between paper and built architecture is what I intend to explore most deeply, trying to individuate the threshold, if there is one, and how we can design on its edge. Paper architecture, as described by Svetlana Boym, especially referring to the Soviet avant-garde of the 20th century, is "*an architecture of radical projects done during the era of stagnation that were (…) architecturally adventurous even if barely functional. This kind of architecture*", she continues, *"is not immaterial; rather it redefines the relationship between materiality and virtuality in the broadest sense of the word virtual, ranging from a virtuality of imagination to one of technology*"[5]. In this sense, the border between what is abstract and what is real becomes a blurred line, because of the capacity of the abstract to influence the real on a far greater extent than the real itself.

After the Russian October Revolution, Soviet Union experienced a lack of stability and resources caused by the ongoing international and internal conflicts. For this reason, despite the intention to proceed with a massive urban development, none of the initiatives advanced were realised. On the other side, the climax of the revolts generated a new political and social conscience, culminating into the production of subversive ideas that became the guiding principles for city planning in the following years: *"one can scarcely any longer imagine in today's 'pragmatically oriented' Russia the enthusiasm that broke out after the revolution. Hunger and destruction during the war, communism, the ongoing civil war in the country's border areas and the impoverished everyday life provoked in young people - as strange as this may seem today - not dejection, but an unprecedented creative enthusiasm and willingness to work*"[6]. The overall intention was that of reinventing society and the built environment, "*promoting common ownership of resources, universal education, income and gender equality, an end to global imperialism, and the unification of town and country*"[7]. Following this wave, in 1920 the Soviet Government founded the VKhUTEMAS, the Moscow Higher Artistic and Technical Workshops, giving architects and designers the possibility to be scientifically, technically and politically educated in all fields of the artistic discipline. Especially, in contrast with the tendencies of the avant-garde in the European metropolises, visual arts and artistic training were

5 Svetlana Boym, *The Architecture of the Off-Modern*, Forum Project Publications, 2008

6 Irina Tschepkunowa, curator of the Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, introduction to the catalogue of the exhibition "Vkhutemas: A Russian Laboratory of Modernity Architectural Designs 1920- 1930", December 2014

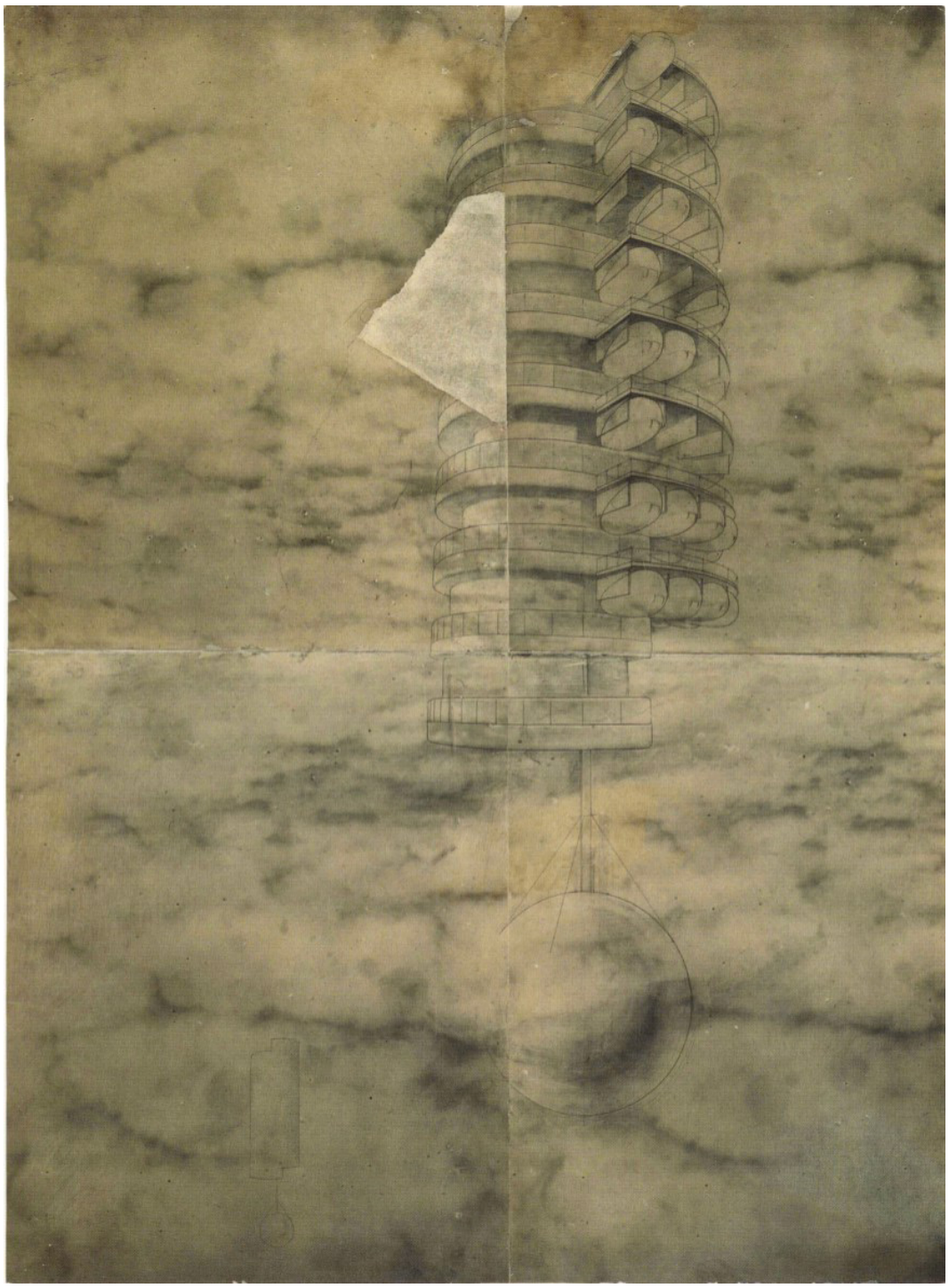
7 Peter Sigrist, *Imagining the Socialist City*, Polis, 2009

not considered as the expression of specific tendencies, but were seen as tools to develop new methods and means to be used in the shaping of the new society. The freedom that characterised the production prevented the works to fall under stylistic classification, promoting the validity of any style or form as long as it represented a brave attempt to look forward. As an example of that, Tatlin's slogans "*Art into Life*" and "*Art into Technology*" do not claim to render art or life subservient to the revolution, instead, they stand for the intention to "*revolutionise technology and society by opening horizons of imagination and moving beyond mechanistic clichés*"[8].

What is striking when observing the works produced during the years of the VKhUTEMAS is especially the fact that despite their radical avant-guardistic position, it was not only the utopian side to be developed, but also, and mostly, their technicality. The detail of each project scaled down to investigate the production of the new mode of life, new habits and new contexts, and how architecture could stimulate and foresee a further and deeper revolution. Between the most audacious investigations of the time stands the City of the Future of Georgii Krutikov. Inspired by Tatlin's machine and Khlebnikov's city planning, Krutikov presented his thesis as a quest for mobile architecture, proposing a metamorphic structure able to shrink or expand according to different conditions. The idea of a mobile architecture was not developed only in the building aspects, but also in the lifestyle of the new citizens, for whom Krutikov designed flying machines that operated connecting the ground with the suspended structure. The obvious unfeasibility of the project didn't prevent Krutikov in defending its physical feasibility, that challenged the limited resources and the state policy with alternative possibilities for living.

In opposition to the Studios atmosphere, the state was taking a more pragmatical position for its development, that culminated in Stalin's approval of the first Five-Year plan of 1928. The school was renamed the Higher Artistic and Technical Institute (VKhUTEIN), and the People's Commissariat for the Economy replaced that of Education in directing architectural training. From 1926, school education shifted the focus on Fordist and Taylorist concepts as guiding principles in housing projects, leaving aside the daring proposals that were being developed in the previous years.

[8] Svetlana Boym, *Architecture of the Off-Modern*, Forum Project Publication, 2008



Georgii Krutikov, City of the Future, 1928

THE ARCHITECTURE OF RESISTANCE

The Five Year Plan of 1928 signed the beginning of a succession of initiatives aiming at the economical development of the country[9]; if initially the plans followed Stalin's policy of Socialism in One Country, through the years they were modified and adapted according the political and economic situation. Among the first resolutions were the abolishment of private land ownership and the establishment of collective farms that, if one side allowed agriculture to modernise, on the other heavily destabilised the system, causing famine in many areas of the Soviet Union. The increasing unrests between the population, together with the post-war presence of foreign invaders in eastern territories, represented a threat to the stability of the newborn Union. As a consequence, Stalin promoted massive industrialisation followed by the creation of several industrial complexes that were meant to foresee the needs in case of a war break out. The requested rapidity of construction and production opened the way to an architecture of efficiency, that laid the basis in shaping the new class of soviet workers. Urbanisation took over isolated areas such as Magnitogorsk, Dnieper, and Nizhny Novgorod, expanding the built territory and making necessary the modernisation of connections and transportation in order to cover the distance that was separating dead zones from administrative centres turning Soviet Union into "*a territory unified by an infrastructure of productive epicentres*"[10]. A new landscape was emerging: an archipelago populated by newly built mono-towns[11], in which the economical domination of one industrial power set the basis for the inflexibility and the homogenisation of lifestyles and built environment that we can still experience in the present days[12].

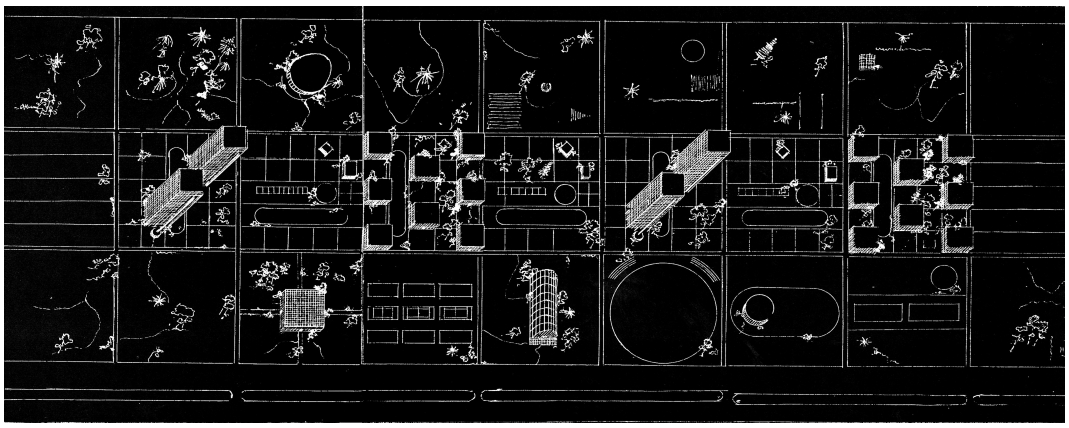
Ivan Leonidov, whose work still stands as an inspiration for contemporary projects, gives us an insight of the contrast that architects were experiencing when the wave of revolution promoted by the VKhUTEMAS was still too strong to be suppressed by the new policy, and yet had somehow to accomplish its duty and serve the aims of industrialisation. In 1927 Leonidov presented his proposal for the Lenin Institute as his thesis project, three years after Lenin's death, and right at the time of Stalin's uprising to power. The design, that was to host facilities for scientific and social development, stood out for its daring structural solutions and the extensive use of materials such as steel and glass, which were elements of experimentation in the architectural field. Its utopian connotation as centre for cultural innovation was counterbalanced by the importance recognised to scientific exploration, seen not only as a fundamental practice to develop industrialisation, but also as a tool for ideological transformation of the emergent society. Coherently with the principles of constructivism, formally and theoretically, the project managed to show how science had ceased to be a discipline confined to the industrial field, representing the will of the time to turn it into a governing principle in direct contact with people's everyday life. Soon after, Leonidov became involved in many competitions, that saw him working as a teacher together with a team of students from the VKhUTEIN, through which he was able to carry on his experimentations. Between the production of these years stands the design for the new mono-town of Magnitogorsk, that was meant to combine a metallurgic industrial complex together with workers' housing and facilities. Leonidov's ethical thinking, focused on the merging between life and artistic production, is expressly put forward in

9 First plan 1928–1932; Second plan 1933–1937; Third plan 1938–1941; Fourth and fifth plans 1945–1955; Sixth plan 1956–1960; Seventh plan 1959–1965 (period of economic growth and construction of Togliatti); Eighth plan 1966–1970; Ninth plan 1971–1975; Tenth plan 1976–1981; Eleventh plan 1981–1985; Twelfth plan 1986–1990; Thirteenth plan 1991.

10 Francesco Marullo, *Logistics Takes Command. Architecture, Warfare, Abstraction*, Log n. 35, 2015

11 From Russian моногород, monogorod in which -gorod means town.

12 It is interesting to point out that, in order to achieve the goals of the First Five-Year Plan, Soviet Union established forced labor camps as a method for re-education of the population. The increasing feeling of dissent generated by the collectivisation of resource gave the state many apparent reasons to multiply arrests and transform prisoners in free workers that could rapidly lead the Union towards industrialisation. Many people were imprisoned for small or no crimes and sent to work in one of the labor camps that started spreading in the territory. Most of the labor camps became ruins, others were incorporated into the new settlements.



Ivan Leonidov, Magnitogorsk, 1930



Map of Russian monotowns, drawing by author



the project conceptual organisation, in the intention of using architecture as an instrument to mold individuals and society, and in the recognition that the architect's main task should be that of organising life.

Magnitogorsk layout draws back to Arturo Soria's project for the Ciudad Linear developed for Madrid in the late '800, in which the long city strip consisted of a sequence of functionally specialised sectors. The principles of the plan were subsequently revived by the Soviet architect Nikolay Milyutin in the late 1920s, whose Marxist ideals promoted the physical connection between educational and labour institutions in the planning of the sectors. On the other side, Leonidov envisioned a linear strip in which the square was the main regulation tool "*from the outline of the city to the layout of the single rooms. It also leaded the logic of the potential expansions of the whole city, which could be augmented through the addition of other squares, turning it into an open system*"[13]. Residential and educational buildings were equipped with numerous common spaces that already showcased Leonidov's intention to improve dialogue and collaboration between inhabitants.

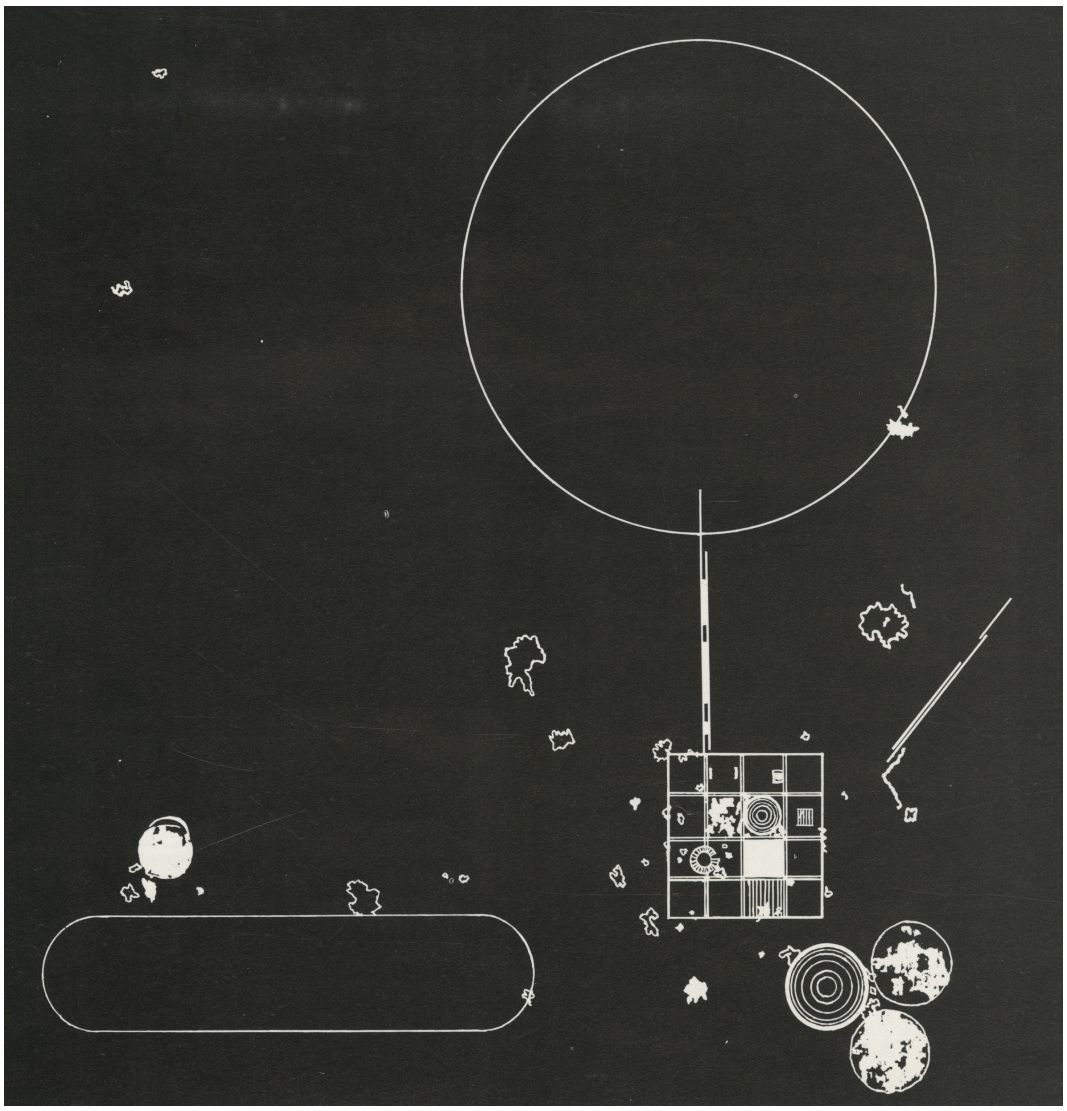
Linked to the idea of organisation lays in depth Leonidov's struggle in the attempt of coherently merge the freedom of work and the overarching policy imposed by the state. Socialist initiatives such as the abolishment of private ownership of the means of production, and the consequent dissolution of class differentiation, were seen as collective efforts leading towards a state without a head, freed from oppression and exploitation. However, even if formally the Soviet Union supported an equitable and carefully laid out economic plan, workers and production were controlled by the newly established managerial class, that while pretending to overlook the gradual economic development, took advantage of the ignorance and the naivety of working class administrators/functionaries. Eventually, while workers were loosing control over industry, and were being increasingly pushed towards forced labour (this period saw the introduction of labour practices that would later be identified as the Stakhanovite movement[14]), managers reinforced their jurisdiction through concessions and privileges (Stalin's support): *"the betrayal of the revolution gave birth to another monstrous version of the state whose economy was still based on the nationalised ownership of the means of production yet totally controlled by a ruling class of managers, technicians and functionaries: it represented a new planned centralised system of bureaucratic collectivism*"[15].

Despite the coercive measures taken by the Soviet state, Leonidov couldn't abandon the ideals inherited in the post-revolutionary atmosphere, and gradually focused his attention on how to create new institutions for workers, envisioning the possibility for an architecture of resistance that through the creation of a new lifestyle would enhance political and social awareness and highlight the importance of education. Without openly positioning himself against the soviet system, Leonidov conceived the transformation as a process, that didn't solely represent his counter-project to socialist prohibitions, but even more his vision for the future soviet citizen. The proposal for the Club of New Social Type, despite being situated quite early in his career, stands as the best representation of his progressive ideals: refusing all kind of institutional classifications his design was neither an educational nor a recreational building, but a multi functional stage that offered life the possibility to perform its potential in all its forms. The club hosted an incredible amount of diverse

13 Mariabruna Fabrizi, *Ivan Leonidov's Competition Proposal for the Town of Magnitogorsk (1930),* Socks, 2016

14 Stakhanovite was promoted during the second Five Year Plan and later defined as a Stalin's propagandistic instrument aimed at increasing the production in the new industrial Soviet Union.

15 Francesco Marullo, *Logistics Takes Command*, Log n. 35, p. 65



Ivan Leonidov, proposal for the Club of New Social Type, 1928

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16 Leonidov interview with Club novogo sotsial'nogo tipa (Project for a Club of a New Social Type), Sovremmenaja Arkhitektura, no. 3, 1929

17 Ibid.

18 Explanatory note on the project , SA, 1929

19 Francesco Marullo, *Logistics Takes Command*, Log n. 35, p.70

facilities such as laboratories, botanical gardens, public halls, libraries, and cinemas, in a stream where stillness was not allowed and where life and production were becoming one. Leonidov further detailed his idea of productive life in many interviews where he stated: "*Whatever a person does he gets tired. But one gets relative rest from one kind of work by engaging in another. A person's working day, cultural development and leisure can only be organised by taking the processes of work as starting point*"[16]. In this sense, we can look at his projects as architectural platforms where *"there was no such a thing as absolute rest, for life was a constant stream of activities and labour, which acknowledged no difference between production and its reproduction*"[17]. Growing stronger in his mindset and position, Leonidov's work culminated in the project for the Moscow House of Industry, where he eventually denaturalised the principles previously applied in Magnitogorsk and the Club of New Social Type to apply them in the design for the administrative headquarters of the Supreme Economic Soviet of the Russian Republic, the ultimate representation of the bureaucratic soviet system in the Stalin era. His intention was that of eliminating pre-established hierarchies and labor divisions, stating that "*Work is not a regrettable necessity, but a sense of purpose in life. Work as a physical and psychological condition must be totally organised*"[18]. In this context, organisation is not seen as an instrument of control, but rather as the only condition necessary to achieve the creation of a collective sphere where inhabitants could freely perform their activities in a context of a conscious collectivisation. None of Leonidov projects were realised, and especially the House of Industry generated dissent and criticism through which he was accused of supporting dangerous ideals in contrast with the policy of the state. However, his work put forward the possibility of an alternative strategy that starting from "*individual tactics of subversion in the construction of everyday life, instilling and promoting forms of publicness within the domestic realm itself and eradicating obsolete cultural values with new collective daily rituals*"[19] refused to succumb to the state-imposed lifestyle.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF CONTROL

On the other side, despite the progressive ideals laying behind the creation of a new society, the hyper organised layout of the mono towns eventually ceased to be the representation of a new future and turned out to be a government tool for oppression and control. Life in the Monotowns was organised following the principles of an assembly line, based on efficiency and industriousness to meet the state needs of fast development. In the same way, the design was pledged by specific rules, as reported in the book ЖИЛАЯ ЯЧЕЙКА В БУДУЩЕМ - Living Cell of the Future, principles of planning of soviet monotowns (1982), which presented the main guiding principles for the design of the new buildings, shaped on the various needs of people, aiming at maximising space and organising life as an efficient sequence of actions.

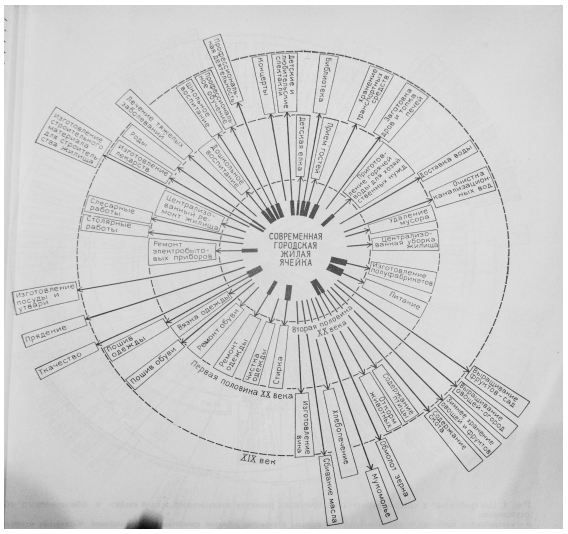
As a consequence the architecture of the town was highly specific and every built space had a planned function that was supposed to be coordinated with the work in the factory. This intention was shared in many of the newly built settlements, and as already mentioned, it generated a new language of pre-established components and forms that contributed in creating the contemporary architectural landscape of the mono towns. Indeed, disregarding location or time of construction several of these pre-designed blocks can be found in many of them.

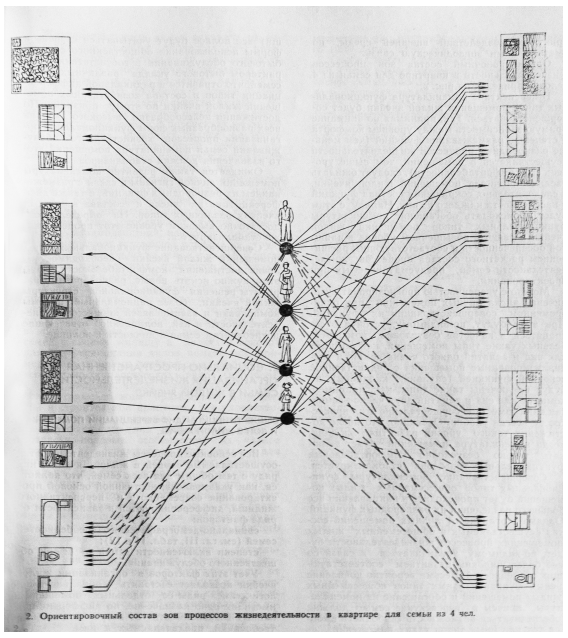
In particular, we can take as an example the town of Togliatti, the largest built in Soviet Union and still functioning. Constructed in the 60s as an industrial complex for FIAT car manufacturing 1000km east to Moscow, the town was supposed to host one of the greatest facilities for car manufacturing in Russia, becoming an extensive centre for production. The plan of the city, designed by the Soviet architect Boris Rubanenko, was inspired by that of Magnitogorsk and was based on a grid of squares one kilometer per side, each of which contained the fundamental facilities for living such as housing, commercial spaces, hospitals, schools and green areas. These often pre-fabricated blocks were re-proposed following different configurations and orientation, theoretically improving the variety of the overall appearance; however, the incapability of the architecture to be appropriated or personalised, caused the town to fall into a loop of repetitiveness that with the time came to mirror the living practices it engaged. The urban rigor, together with the very geometrical organisation of infrastructure was planned in order to facilitate and accelerate citizen's movements from one place to the other, minimising what was considered an unproductive time expenditure. Moreover, the hierarchy present in the urban organisation is clearly visible in the differentiation of functional zones that hosted leisure and sport in the river front, work in the factory, culture in the central axis, and recreation in the forest that sided the town. Especially the forest was considered as a sacred element for the well being of the Russian citizens, as the emblem of the healthy lifestyle of the efficient worker, and to highlight this aspect the forest also hosted small holiday houses that were supposed to provide workers with rest from the working environment.

The city, with its very readable and concrete set of established routines, represents the fieldwork to study the creation of everyday life rituals and to understand their materialisation in architectural space.

In particular, the current economic stagnation in Russia and the slowing down of the production, has lead the mono towns to a state of inactivity,

[20] Strelka Magazine, *The dreasm of Baikalsk: new life for a one-industry town*




2. Ориентировочный состав зон процессов жизнедеятельности в квартире для семьи из 4 чел.

Illustrative diagrams from the book ЖИЛАЯ ЯЧЕЙКА В БУДУЩЕМ - Living Cell of the Future, principles of planning of soviet monotowns (1982)

generating lack of jobs and a general feeling of discontent in the population, and proving the need of finding alternative productive sources. Especially the younger generations share the will to emigrate in the capitals, Europe or America, lacking in their home town the flexibility of jobs and education.

According to the official figures shared by Strelka, only 89 of the 313 Russian monotowns can be considered socially and economically stable, the rest are either in a state of deep crisis or barely surviving[20]. Indeed, the long-lasting economical dependence of Togliatti to the industrial destiny of one main factory had two main consequences on the life in the monotown. On the one hand, the slowing down of the factory production created a radical collapse in terms of citizens' employment. On the other hand, it put under question the whole educational framework, that originally served the labor demand of the main factory, directly addressing its capacity to update its proposal according to the new needs of the labor market. Furthermore, the lack of interest in architectural preservation and the incapability of the administrative system in funding projects that could support an eventual re-development, confine the town to stillness, highlighting on an even greater extent the connection between living habits and the fixed architectural layout.

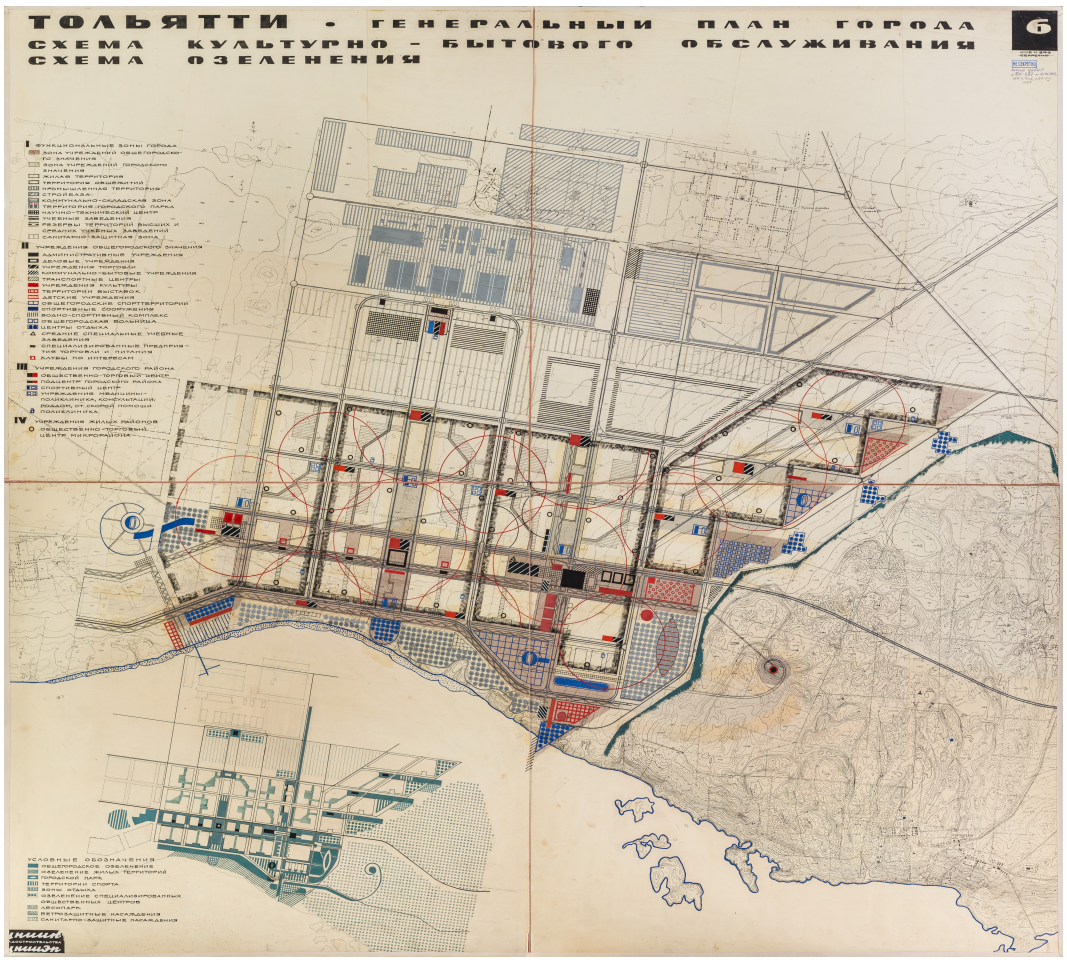
Following this reflection, it is my intention to use architectural theory to unveil the existing relations between the city components, in order to subsequently abstract them and put forward their eventual re-interpretation.

By reading the urban layout following Deleuze and Guattari theory of assemblage the attention shifts from the objects to their operations, allowing a deeper understanding of the routines engaged by the built environment. Starting from territories and rhythms I intend to explore the rituals of everyday life, how they are triggered and connected with their architectural form and how can they eventually act as starting point in the creation of new ones. These new rituals of resistance represent a fundamental point for the project, by putting forward the possibility to temporarily resist the system they envision a life liberated by the chain of production for consumption.

Using the situation of Togliatti and drawing the attention on Russian monotowns, I intend to engage into a broader discourse, that touches upon the topics of work, education and modes of life; without the aim of finding a solution to the contemporary economic debate, but putting forward an alternative approach my goal would be eventually that of questioning contemporary design, reinterpreting architecture as a challenging practice, with the power of being simultaneously a tool for oppression and revolution.



Togliatti under construction, 1965, Togliatti City Archive



Distribution Plan of Togliatti
Boris Rubanenko, 1965



Circulation Plan of Togliatti
Boris Rubanenko, 1965

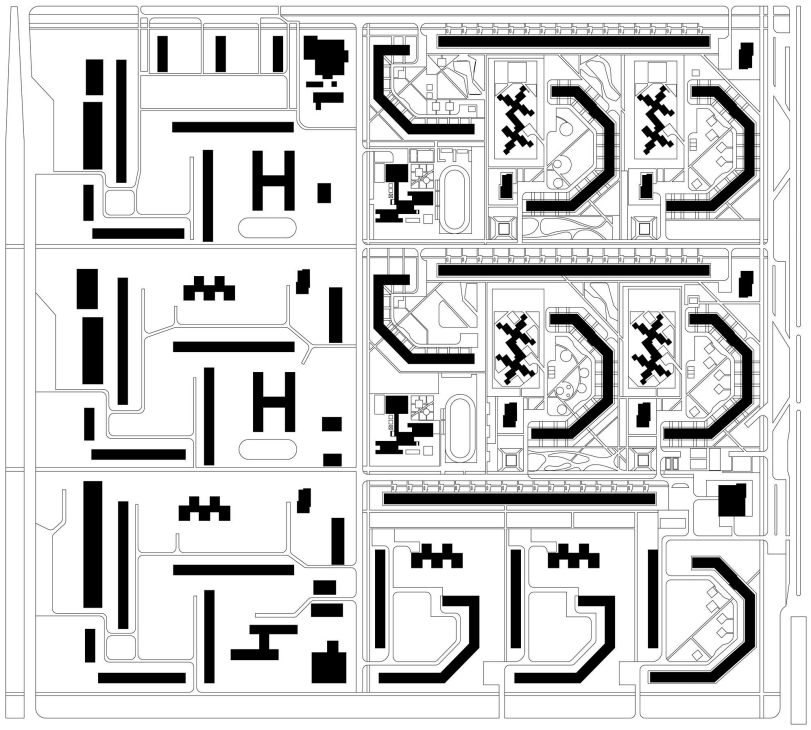
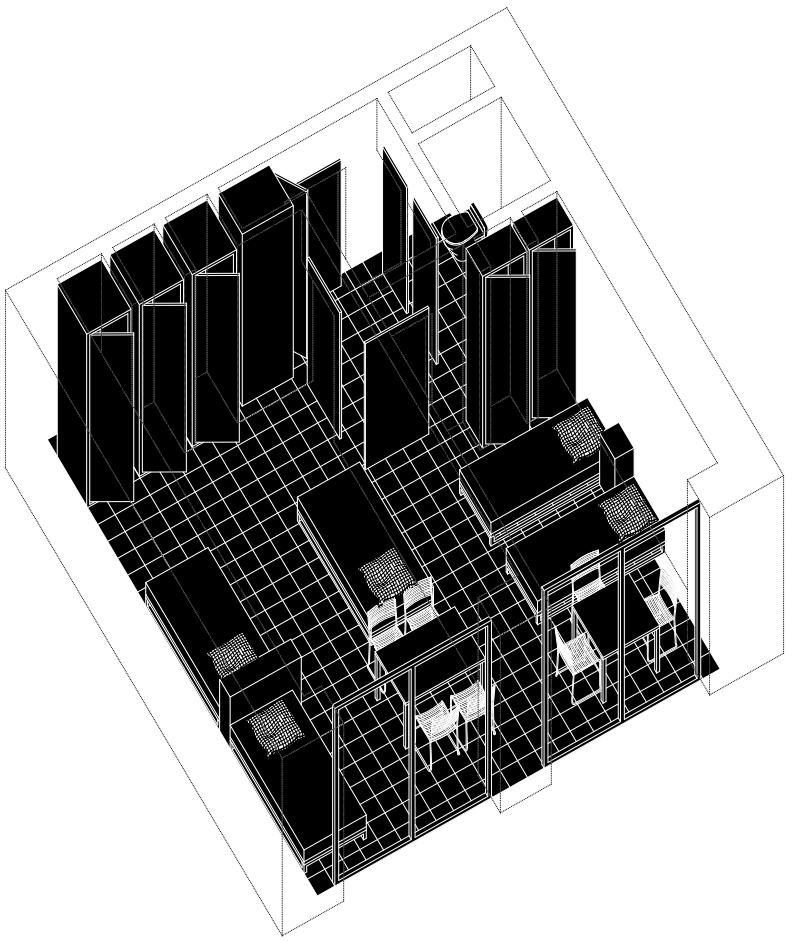


Diagram of block configuration, Togliatti
Courtesy of architect Mikhail Solodilov



Living unit for five people , drawing by author

TOGLIATTI(GRAD)









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TERRITORIES AND BLACK HOLES

"A plan is not dissimilar from an abstract machine insofar as it implies a rational ordering of reality according to the disposition and distribution of forces into measurable quantities: to project, machinare - that is, to bend nature to our utility, as Daniele Barbaro translated it."[20]

In the machinic assemblage that is the city, the plan represents the instrument through which the diverse components are organised. As P. V. Aureli mentioned, the plan is a concrete abstraction, in the sense that even being intangible and therefore abstract, it is able to generate the reality, influencing people and their relation with the city components in a concrete way. In this sense, the process of construction (of societies, of cities, of buildings) is based on a process of abstraction, that is, the capacity to translate concrete relations and forces into representative elements. Marx already introduced the concept of reification in Das Capital, defining it as the objectification of social relations, shifting the attention from the acting subjects to the actual exchange between them, and considering the relation as a subject with capacities and powers in itself.

In this sense, reification is the process through which every aspect of the world can become representative, and in the architectural discourse, it represents the ways in which space is constructed. A fundamental example of reification is geometry, from the ancient Greek: γεωμετρία; geo- "earth", -metron "measurement", which represents the materialisation of an abstract concept into schemas of order and control which are able to produce tangible outcomes when applied in the plane of reality. In this sense, geometry becomes an organising principle rather than an abstract concept.

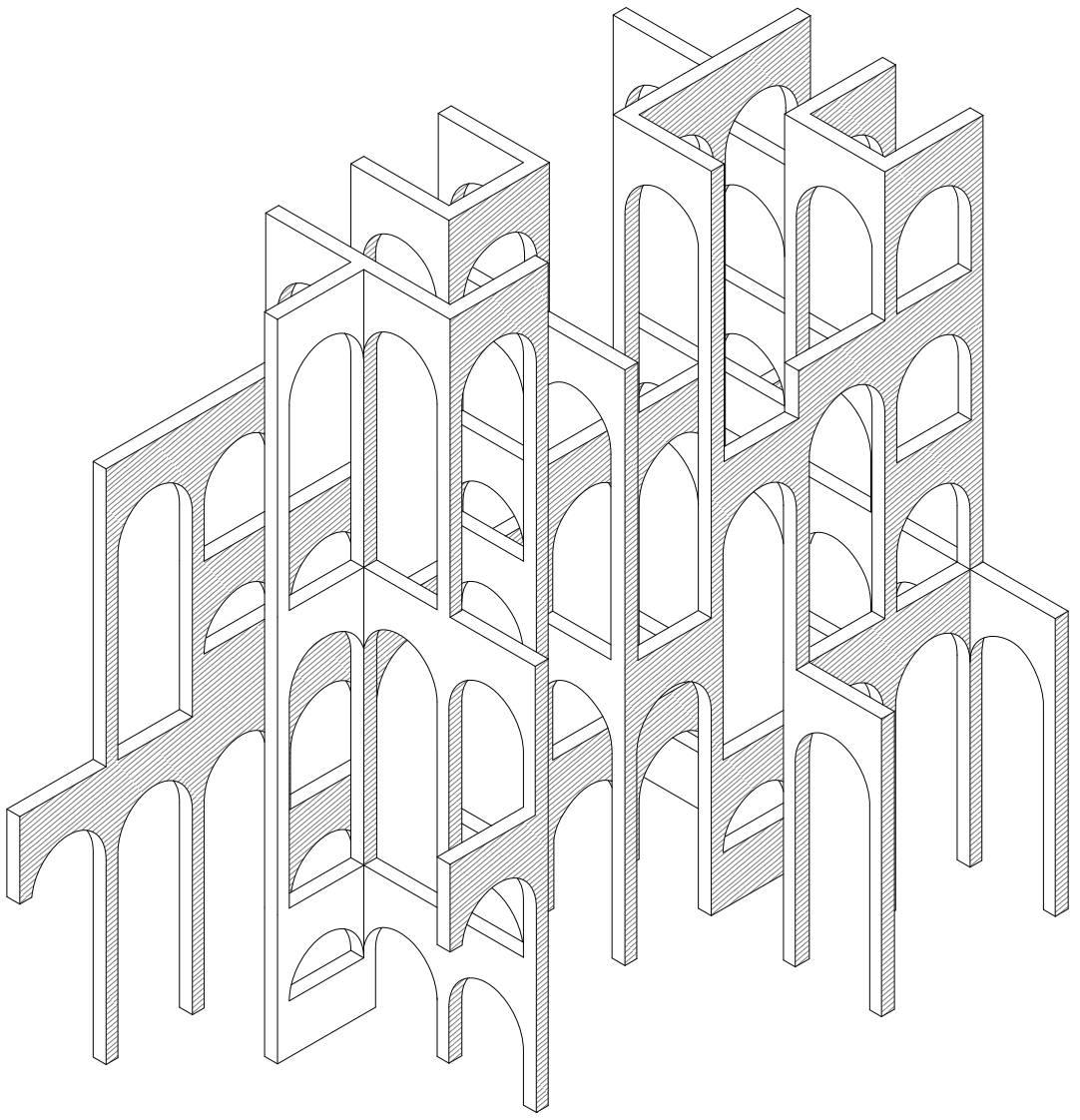
Especially, the general conception of soviet modernist buildings and, on a larger scale, the entire planned system of Togliatti, aims at the creation of an organised and efficient object through the rationalisation of form. The very etymology of the word recalls its core meaning: that of giving a measure to the chaotic face of earth. Without a diversification in scales, geometry acts as a regulation tool in organising spaces and their functions. In this sense, the grid system and the hierarchical organisation of buildings represent the piano regolatore that the city was supposed to embody, controlling the distribution of both tangible and intangible forces.

In general, the idea of absolute organisation was at the core of the socialist society in the Soviet Union after the Stalin took the power, "*Between the New Economic Policy (NEP) and the first five-year plan it was no longer the moment for symbolic objects in space or propagandistic monuments to the masses: architecture had the social task of creating frames, rhythms and institutions for the new man, treating his whole life and the entire national territory as unlimited fields of action*"[21]. Therefore, the aim of architecture was that of giving shape to a new set of habits and routines that would translate into a new form of life, the so called *byt* (literally everyday life), able to satisfy the need of growth and industrialisation of the country. Rhythm, therefore, was not seen anymore as an abstract theory, but through a process of reification it became the organising tool of the new settlements, and the generator of the productive mode of life.

Deleuze and Guattari introduced the term ritornello along the concept of rhythm, referring to it as "*any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial*

20 Francesco Marullo, *Logistics Takes Command*, Log n. 35

21 Francesco Marullo, *Pure Programme and Almost no Form*, San Rocco Magazine



Cathedral of Rhythm, drawing by author

motifs and landscapes"[22]. Finally, there are no transcendent rules or truths able to structure the existence, and the lack of an overarching organising principle presupposes that there must be "*an arrangement of intervals, a distribution of inequalities through which individuals construct a home for themselves*"[23]. In this sense, ritornello represents the very first act of appropriation made by man on nature; the principle able to give order to chaos[24]. This process of appropriation is identified by Deleuze and Guattari with that of territorialisation, as the imposition of a specific set of acts on any territory constitutes the very process of formation of that same territory. Therefore, territorialisation simultaneously "*reorganises functions and regroup forces*" by applying rhythm to chaos. In the same way, deterritorialisation concerns all those operations that result into a destabilisation of the territory, and represents its tendency of becoming something else: "*A territory or home is neither created once and for all, nor is it ever fully closed in upon itself. Its continued existence is a matter of work and change, even though this may be characterised by a slowness that suggest eternal stability to human eyes. (…) A territory is always in process of deterritorialisation, in becoming what it was not before, perhaps even becoming something entirely new*"[25].

In this sense, it is important not to consider Chaos as a negative force to be restrained, but rather as a parameter that is always present in different quantities in the same territorial characterisation, bringing forth territorialising or deterritorialising processes.

Therefore, in a territorialised assemblage, rhythm consists in a sequence of acts that concur in the definition and characterisation of the assemblage. The *mise en place* of this set of actions is made tangible through the architectural space, using the plan as an instrument of rationalisation and definition of relations and forces. Especially, the plan generates a specific mode of spatial perception, which translates in what we can refer to as a rituality of the everyday life[26]. As it happens in the planning of monasteries, in which every architectural space is related and shaped in function to a specific moment in the monk's life, the function of the plan is to make these moments legible and therefore repeatable. Following this reflection, the same control that organises the day of the monk, is exerted by the laws of productivity on the soviet worker (for whom the day is punctuated by specific moments that sign the beginning or the end of an action).

The same reasoning can be reflected into the power of market forces that, despite acting in an intangible way, are able to mold the lifestyle of the contemporary society. In the same way, as we can see from the following images, which represent the plan of the Monastery of Saint Gall, of the Indiana Engine Work Factory and Archizoom diagram of the city as a *continuous system of relational forces*, the architectural space evolves and transform adapting to the different needs of the controlling powers, and gradually shifting from the very tangible and visible configuration of compartmentalised spaces to the intangible layout of forces in the contemporary city.

However, rituality represents a non-directional process of definition, in which space defines ritual and ritual defines space; in this sense there must be no distinction in conceiving the layout of a space and its outcome on the inhabitant, instead, both have to be considered as itinerant part of the process of formation.

Following this reflection, the geometrical

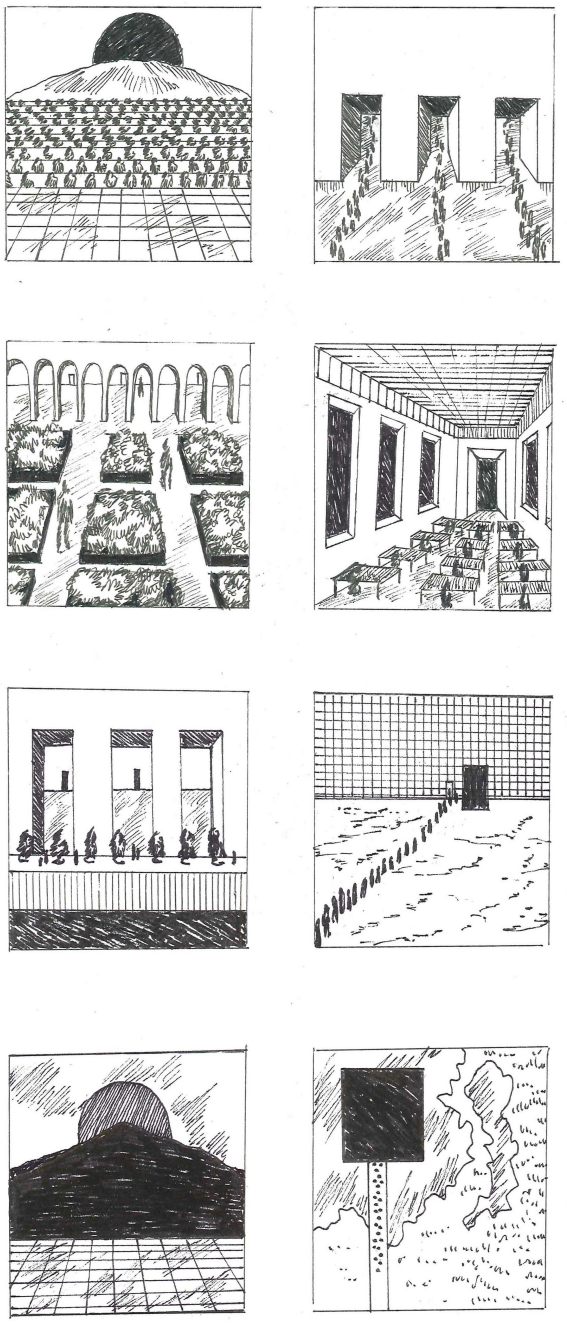
22 Arjen Kleinherenbrink, *Territory and Ritornello*, Deleuze Studies 9, 2015

23 Ibid.

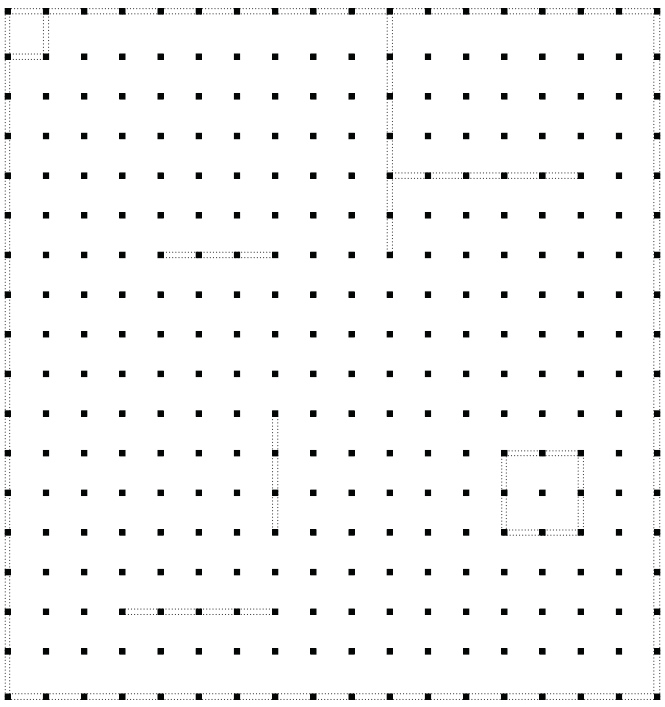
24 Chaos is here referred to as one of the components of reality, together with Earth and Cosmos. This classification follows the intention of eliminating any notion of unified nature or holistic world in favour of the conception of reality as a system of assemblages.

25 Arjen Kleinherenbrink, *Territory and Ritornello*, Deleuze Studies 9, 2015

26 It is important to clarify that rhythm and ritual are two separated and differently defined concepts. While ritual is generated through repetition, rhythm consists in a sequence of intervals that doesn't necessarily need to reflect a repetitive pattern. In this sense, as Deleuze and Guattari state "It is the difference that is rhythmic, not the repetition", a difference that has the potential of becoming a ritornello, when recognised by living beings as an organising principle. Rhythm, therefore, generates ritual.

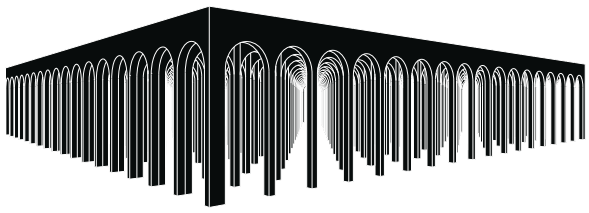


Storyboard of monk/worker daily routine, drawing by author



Plan Living Unit, drawing by author





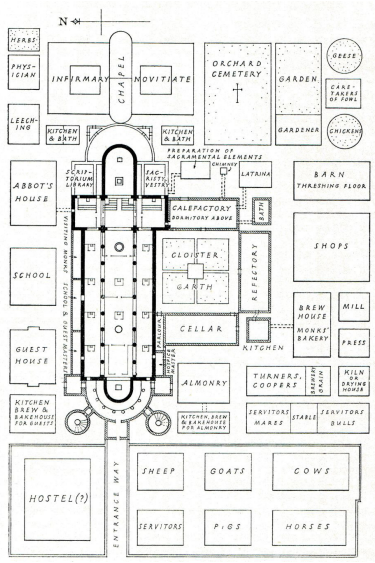
Facade and Perspective Living Unit, drawing by author

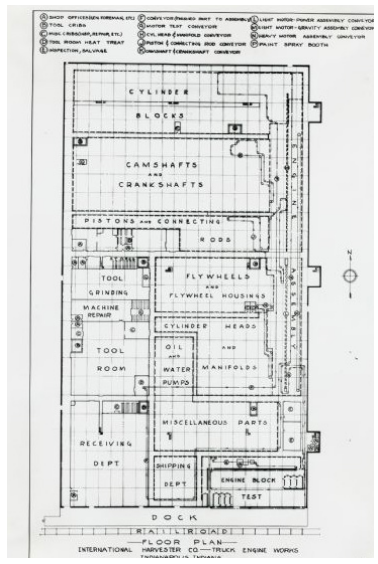
rhythm in the plan of Togliatti, generates a pre-defined set of movements that represents the materialisation of its overarching principle. The hierarchical disposition of social zones and the clear definition of commercial, housing and cultural facilities contribute to the clarification of the planned human flows and its expected interactions with the built environment. The perception of the space, therefore, couldn't be lead by arbitrariness, and the repetition of this designed sequence of movements and operations was supposed to lead to the creation of a ritualised routine that would consist in the new *byt* of the productive worker. Architecture was subservient to a specific scope that didn't end in the working day but that considered life as an unlimited field of action. Therefore, as we can observe in the city, when rituality is crystallised into a specific form it becomes controllable, or as Aureli mentioned "*It becomes a non-governmental form of power*"[27]. In this context, the assemblage doesn't admit any possibility of destabilisation, falling in what Deleuze and Guattari call a *black hole*, and depriving the ritual of its point of rupture, that is, what prevents it from being an instrument of control rather than regulation. Following this reflection, the same control exerted by the laws of productivity in the soviet socialist community can be reflected into the power of market forces, that are able to mold the contemporary society. Indeed, both of them are characterised as intangible entities, neglecting the possibility of direct involvement. As it happens in religion, ritual is controlled by an entity that is not physically present, a condition that further highlights the impossibility of destabilisation.

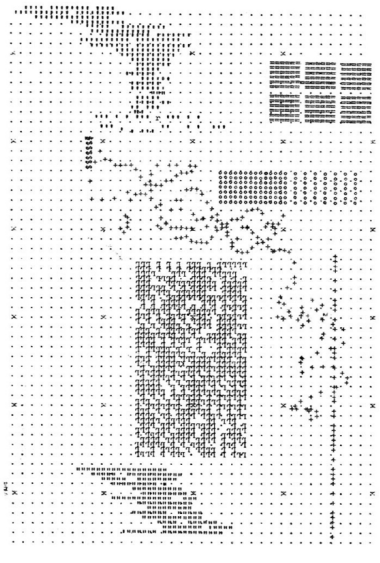
If we are to translate this reflection to the plan, it is clear the difficulty to individuate an hypothetical point of rupture in the architectural space, which tends to be a fixed element per se. Therefore, the question would be how to reinvent architecture as an ensemble under continuous destabilisation, which, despite being an itinerant part of the financial/productive apparatus (since we already stated the impossibility of acting outside the system or against it), still recognises and accepts the potential of becoming. More in general, how can the tools be abstracted from their function, but still allow the function to take place, in order not to ever fall into fixation. In this sense, rituality would become the only tool of (self) regulation, making the institution or the state become redundant due to the already established system of rituals that would act as an ordering tool in the creation of men and men's territorial settlements. To find the point of rupture, we should go back to Deleuze and Guattari theory of the creation of territories, in the sense that, "*a territory" (or a ritual) "is always in process of deterritorialisation, in becoming what it was not before, perhaps even becoming something entirely new*"[28].

27 Aureli lecture on representation, HNI Rotterdam

28 Arjen Kleinherenbrink, *Territory and Ritornello*, Deleuze Studies 9, 2015

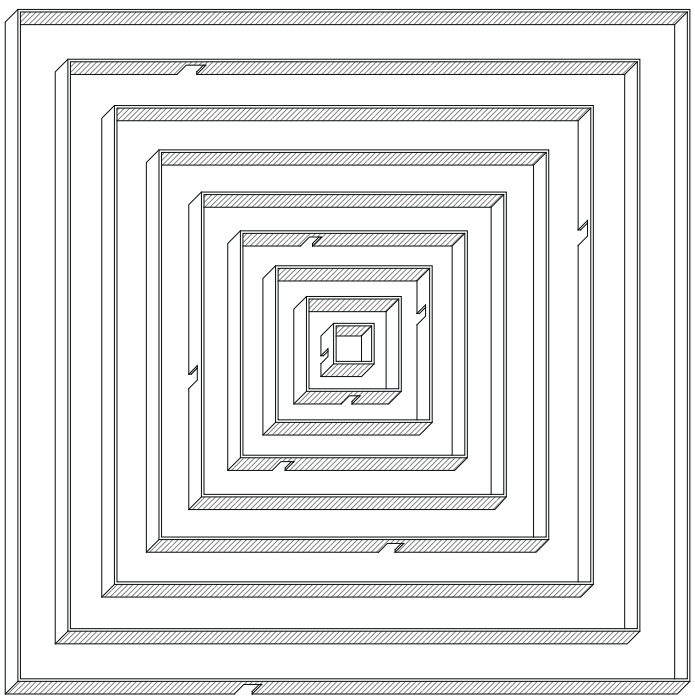






Plan of the monastery of Saint Gall
Steel engine works, Indiana
Archizoom City as a Continuous System of Relational Forces

CITY



2. Stanza of the organic bunkers, drawing by author

1. Stanza of the exodus from without
There is no innocent state of nature to defend: cities are flourishing ecosystems in themselves, a true "human participation in nature".

2. Stanza of the inorganic life
It was eight thousands years ago: the city was born as the exoskeleton of the human, as the external concretion of our inner bones to protect the commerce of bodies in and out its walls.

3. Stanza of the organic bunkers
Even plague and pox were never passive folks: invisible architects, they redesigned streets and houses, shaping also our institutions, the form of hospitals and prisons...the border between organic and inorganic life blurs.
Buildings breathe and ferment - architecture is the bunker of life.

4. Stanza of the telluric insurgency
Urban cannibalism is the art of overgrowth. There is no interstices and no in betweens, everything grows - against everything else.

5. Stanza of the ternary dance
Putrefaction is still life.

6. Stanza of the alliance with the parasite
We renew the alliance with the kingdom of parasites that made humanity win the first war against invisible enemies.

7. Stanza of life as incorporation
It was not by a game of genetic roulette, but with an act of pure cannibalism that evolution commenced: smaller cells engulfed by bigger cells, old specied in the warm belly of new ones..friendly ingestion. All the life of the spirit, from poetry to philosophy, brings trace of this remote incident, of this ancestral endo-symbiosis. Inspiration is always incorporation.
8. Stanza of the mouth eating the eye (George Bataille)
Incorporation and not snesation is the vehicle of our experience in the world.
"Cannibalism alone unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically...The spirit refuses to conceive a language without a body.

11. Stanza of the self-imposed siege
Today is the time of sustainable gardens to reincarnate the new spectres of siege - amd the moral equivalent of war. The pacified horizon of sustainability manifests like a wartime without war (...).
The patriotic war of surplus has indeed moved its home front to the inner front. As there is no longer an outside within the ideology of degrwoth we have established the borders of our own siege.
Urban cannibals - eat the rich![29]

[29] Wietske Maas and Matteo Pasquinelli, *Manifesto of Urban Cannibalism,* 2012

The concept of production is constantly changing following the development of the economic system. The production of tangible objects is nowadays sided by an intangible one, that consists of innovation and the work of the mind. Since the 1960 we are witnessing a change that from the production of goods, in which the factory acted as a fundamental agent in the process, is gradually shifting the focus to the production of knowledge. The term post-Fordism is commonly used to sum up the main lines of this transformation process. In particular, Fordism refers to the implementation of all those practices that sought to increase the speed of productivity, a quest that was inherited from military assembly lines, when pieces of weapons had to be produced and shipped in the shortest time possible. As a consequence of the Fordist turn, the increasing impersonality and repetitiveness of the work and the lack of communication in numerous factories, caused workers to become disconnected from their actions and each other, transforming into an appendix, and gradually loosing the right to own their production.

On the other side, what happens with the advent of knowledge production, is that life itself is put at work and becomes the emerging force in capitalist development. In this sense, those actions that were once considered to be outside the system of production tend to be incorporated as its new fundamental means, causing the working schedule to expand, blurring the border between life and work. As a consequence, the place of production ceases to be the factory per se, and becomes ubiquitous. The advancement of technology has allowed us to work everywhere and work is gradually acquiring a domestic connotation. In this sense work becomes a totality, or as the Russian architect and urban planner Ivan Leonidov stated following a Marxist ideology, the very reason for human existence "*…not a regrettable necessity, but a sense of purpose in life*"[30].

This kind of intangible production represents a process that is not confined anymore to the act of physical work, but which extend into a practice that involve all aspects of our everyday life, blurring the border between life and work. As a consequence, the factory ceases to be the place of production per se, and the worker is replaced by automated machines which develop parallel to the technological advancement. Instead, the contemporary factory is represented by the city itself, as the main hub of exchange, encounter, creation and innovation. In this sense, Cities are living entities, that grow and develop following the laws of the market. Cities ceased to be the theatre of happening, turning instead into actors, able to maneuver the continuous flow of people and objects. As stated in Deleuze and the City "*Constituted by complexes of forces, encounters and relations, the city is a machinic assemblage, and neither smooth nor striated nor even holey space can exhaust the many points of passage, entry and egress its dynamic system entails*"[31].

If we are to refer to the contemporary city as a complex agglomerate of diverse forces, it is necessary to firstly acknowledge the impossibility of achieving a homogeneous synthesis between its parts. In this context, the concept of totality has to be put aside, because it implies a singularity/unity that would reduce the city to an ensemble that acts like one. What is lost in this line of thinking is the fact that the different components of the city act separately and presents different capacities. Therefore, it would be reductive to consider the general capacities of a city as the outcome of the properties of a heterogeneous ensemble. Instead what a city can

30 Ivan Leonidov, interview with Club novogo sotsial'nogo tipa, 1929

31 Hélène Frichot, Catharina Gabrielsson, Jonathan Metzger, *Deleuze and the City*, Edimburgh University Press, 2016

do is given by the capacity of affect of its components, or as DeLanda puts it "*...the reason why the properties of a whole cannot be reduced to those of its parts is that they are the result not of an aggregation of the components' own properties but of the actual exercise of their capacities*"[32].

This is why it is indispensable to appropriate Deleuze and Guattari theory of assemblage in the attempt to reinterpret the urban environment, in a process defined by Brenner and Schmid as "*an open-ended interplay between critique (of inherited traditions of urban theory and contemporary urban ideologies), epistemological experimentation (leading to the elaboration of new concepts and methods) and concrete research (on specific contexts, struggles and transformations)*"[33].

The theory of assemblage, firstly explained in the book A Thousand Plateaus published by the French philosophers in 1980, recognise the existence of any entity as an ensemble of different components. These components have themselves individual properties and capacities and interact with each other, producing a new set of properties that becomes characterising of the whole. In this sense, what the assemblage theory allow us to avoid is the generalisation to define the market, the state, or the city, as entities, asking instead for a consideration of those as aggregates of people, forces and spaces. As stated by Levi Bryant "*...assemblages, being wholes whose properties emerge from the interactions between parts, can be used to model any of these intermediate entities: (...) cities are assemblages of people, networks, organisations, as well as of a variety of infrastructural components, from buildings and streets to conduits for matter and energy flows*"[34]. Cities, regardless of their scale, location or configuration, must be considered as assemblages, as systems made of different components that interact with each other in space and time.

Therefore, any kind of social entity can't be defined only by its properties but also by its capacities, which means by what it is capable of doing when when interacting with another social entity. This statement reflects back to the theory of affects, which consider objects not on the base of what they are, but rather on what they are capable of doing. Therefore, in the attempt of translating these reflection to the urban environment we are able to identify the city as an assemblage and study its components focusing on their operations. In this sense, a building will not be defined by its being a building, on the contrary, by the way its properties are able to interact with and affect its surrounding.

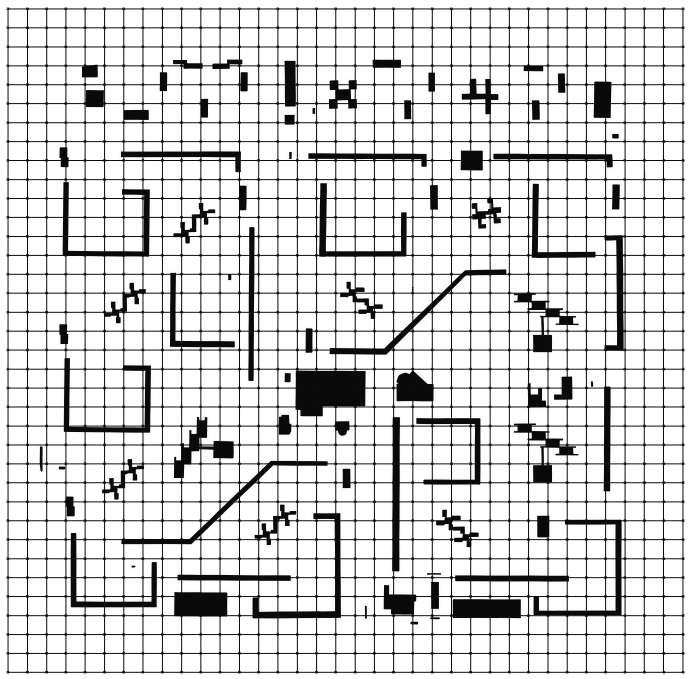
As it happens in Togliatti each planned square meter is thought according to its outcome on the living habits of the inhabitants. Indeed, when building a functional city, the affect that the architectural space has on citizens cannot be ignored.

Following the philosopher Manuel De Landa, when an organisms is defined as an assemblage, the relations happening between its parts are not necessary but depends on circumstances, that is, they are contingent. In the same way, components' operations may act along two opposite directions. They can operate in accordance and therefore increase the internal homogeneity of the assemblage stabilising its identity and producing what is referred to as a process of territorialisation; or components may instead increase heterogeneity, or move boundaries, destabilising the assemblage and bringing forth a process of deterritorialisation. The existence of these two processes doesn't imply their univocality, in this sense, "*One and the same as-*

32 Manuel De Landa, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, Continuum, 2006

33 Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid, *Towards a new epistemology of the urban*, City Volume 19, 2015

34 Levi Bryant, *Ontocartography: an Ontology of Machines and Media*, Edimburgh University Press, 2014



Assemblage and Components, drawing by author

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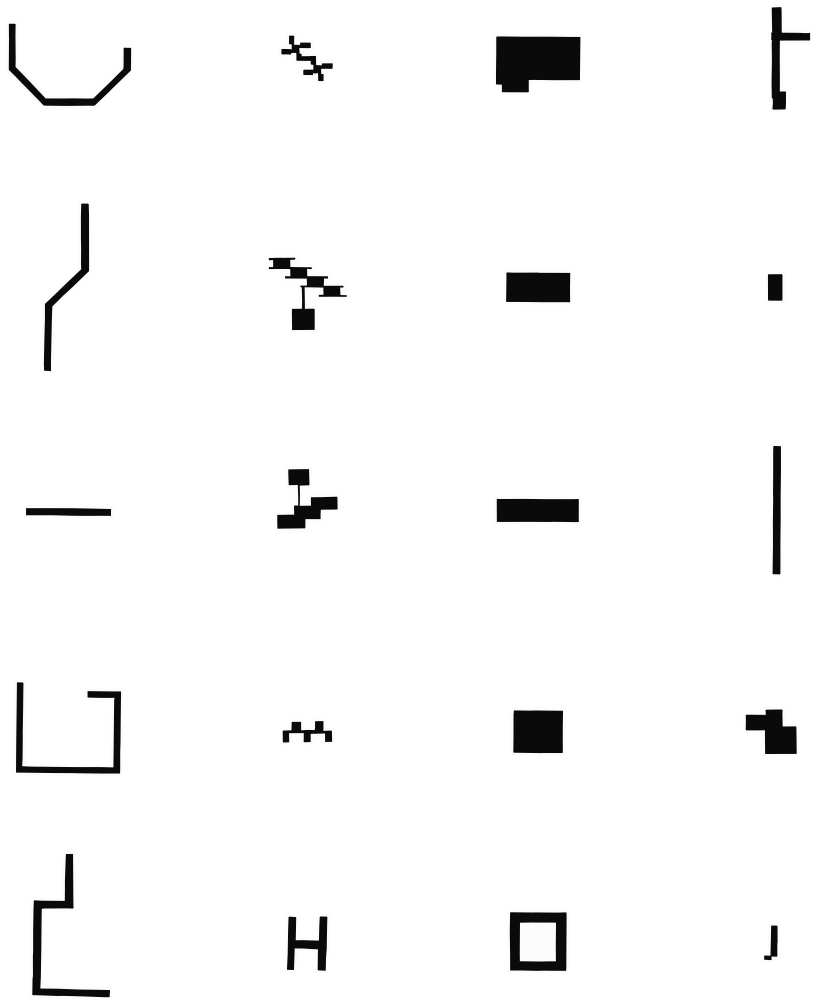

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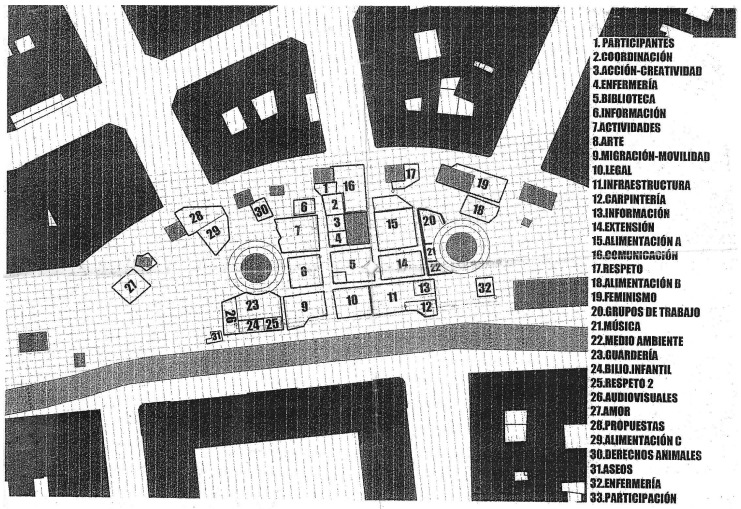


Acampada Sol during the third week, June 2011

semblage can have components working to stabilise its identity as well as components forcing it to change or even transforming it into a different assemblage. In fact, one and the same component may participate in both processes but exercising different sets of capacities"[35].

Following this reasoning, interactions between components are not obligatory and pre defined, on the contrary, they adapt and change and therefore may lead to the formation of different articulations, producing new sets of capacities and properties. To recognise the capacity of components to be *re-assembled* in alternative ways, is essential when starting the process of conceiving alternative assemblages. To put it straight, we can use as an example the experiment of Acampada Sol[36], where a different configuration of the space and its use, generated a new set of relations between the inhabitants producing a new assemblage with its own properties and capacities. In this sense it is important, when imagining alternative assemblages, to start from the analysis of the relations between components and their capacities, in order to understand how to re-code them for different purposes. The concept of coding especially is a key point in this reflection. Referring back to the Deleuze theory of flow, code and stock, coding represent the instrument through which translate the relations between assemblages' components, that is a method of interpretation of flows of people and objects. As a consequence, the process of coding is an essential step in the creation of a new territory and, in general, in the process of territorialisation, in the way that it helps settle an act not only in space and time, but also in the realm of social practices.

Having a better understanding of the schema "city - assemblage - components - properties and capacities" we can start analysing how this translates into the concept of city as a machine and why it should be used in this reflection. The fact of considering the city as a machine showcase the will of focusing on its capacities rather than its properties, or as Levi Bryant sates "*Confronted with a machine, our first thought is not of its properties and qualities, so much as its operations*"[37]. This means to focus on how the machine acts, a process that instead of generating from the question "what it is", focus on the question "what does it do".

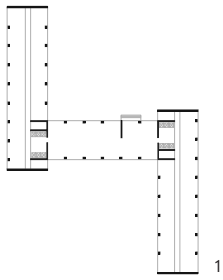
Following this reasoning it is useful to identify a machine's capacities into powers and its output as operations. The difference between powers and operations is that the former are intrinsic, present in the machine even if they are not visible or tangible or put into practice; on the other hand the latter represent the exercise of a specific power in the production of a manifestations when subject to specific stimuli in specific circumstances.

To make a concrete example we can consider the city itself as a working machine. In this context a bank would represent one of the components. We might say that the power of the bank is that of providing a secure storage space for capital: this represents the static property of the building, which is there even if the entity is not operating (even if the bank is closed, it is still a bank, but it looses its capacity of distributing money f.e.). As for the operation, Levi Bryant distinguishes four different kinds. Agentive manifestations concern transformations in the behavior of a machine as a result of inputs coming from within or without; those could be identified f.e. with the opening hours of the bank, without this input the building would result always open or always closed, therefore this manifestation brings a change in the building prop-

35 Manuel De Landa, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, Continuum, 2006

36 Acampada Sol was a manifestation part of The anti-austerity movement in Spain, also referred to as the 15-M Movement. In 2011 citizens of Madrid took over Porta del Sol building up their camp site in the central square. The camp site was provided with a map showing the diverse locations, a first aid tent, and numerous committees organising communications, food distribution, and safety advices. The high level of organisation of the camp became the representation of a new idea of society governed by citizens, finally representing a source of inspirations all over the world.

37 Levi Bryant, *Ontocartography: an Ontology of Machines and Media*, Edimburgh University Press, 2014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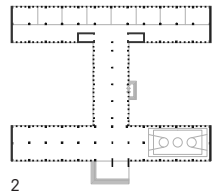
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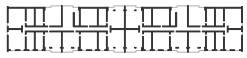
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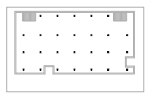
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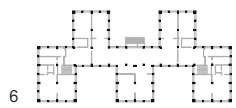
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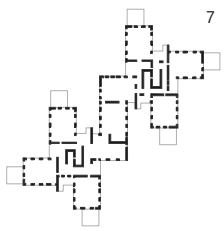
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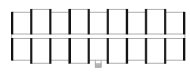
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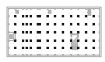
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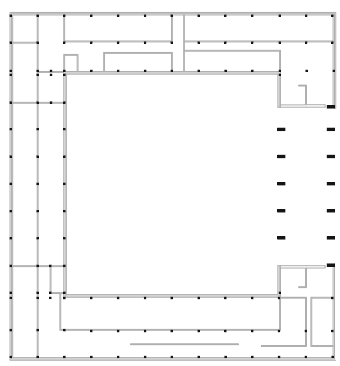
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Catalogue of existing components
1/3/4/8. Housing; 2. High school; 5/9. Commercial; 6/7. Kindergarten; 10. Offices / Administration

erty of accessibility. Material manifestations are those produced by an operation that generates an output that departs from the component in question; f.e. people withdrawing money from the bank. The last two operations, local and qualitative, are described by Bryant respectively as: those that are variable depending on the conditions in which they take place, and those able to transform some of the machine qualities like color, shape, or texture. However, we might argue, that all qualitative manifestations are local and depend on external circumstances, and that all local manifestation are qualitative, since they produce a change in the qualities of the component. A better example to understand this statement would be, following the previous ones, the ageing of the facade of the bank due to the passing of time and the exposition to weather agents. The impossibility of categorising this operation under one of the two before mentioned, highlights the thin line that separates the two concepts and the fact that, perhaps, they can't be separated at all.

Going back to the general discourse, in order to clarify the supposed outcome of this research, I should bring again a passage from Levi Bryant before giving a clarification: "*We do not know what a machine can do. We can only discover the being of a machine and its powers, through acting upon it and varying its relations to other machines to discern what local manifestations and becomings arise as a consequence*". This statement is in clear contradiction with the one saying that machines don't need any entity to be present to put forward their operations. We do know what a machine can do, when related to specific circumstances, and we can acknowledge its powers by studying its operation and the way it affects the surrounding or other machines. What we don't know, is how the machine would operate if those circumstances would change, and this would be exactly the further step to be made after having a complete understanding of what are the machine's components, properties and capacities in the moment they are being studied.

As a musician needs an extensive backup knowledge of rhythm, notes and their laws, before start composing, in the same way we need to understand components and their actual functions and affects before starting the process of re-arranging and eventual re-coding.[38]

[38] The separation of the two processes is here specified in order not to fall into a generalised approach. Re-arranging concerns the transformation of qualities of the component (spatial and material), while re-coding stands for the transformation of its intangible ones, like its given function or its established relations with other machines.

BODY

"*But which is the revolutionary path? Is there one? – To withdraw from the world market, as Samir Amin advises Third World Countries to do, in a curious revival of the fascist 'economic solution'? Or might it be to go in the opposite direction? To go further still, that is, in the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization? For perhaps the flows are not yet deterritorialized enough, not decoded enough, from the viewpoint of a theory and practice of a highly schizophrenic character. Not to withdraw from the process, but to go further, to 'accelerate the process,' as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven't seen anything yet*."[39]

Following what was earlier introduced about the development of productive practices towards a work of the mind, and the blurring of the border between life and work, it is inevitable to merge the discourse with the current debate on acceleration. The concept has been extensively studied by Benjamin Noys in *Malign Velocities* (2014) and has been appropriated and repurposed by numerous theorists and writers. Drawing from Deleuze and Guattari Anti-Oedipus accelerantionism is figured as the tendency to push the characters of capitalism to its climax, the only process that is believed could eventually bring the system to its collapse.

Rather than considering here the entire field of debate, I will confine the concept of acceleration to the architectural practice, inevitably reducing it but simultaneously opening its interpretation to the need of the presented discussion. To imagine the accelerated city it is inevitable to go back to its deterritorialising processes, being those the key point to avoid fixation. Here the focus is on flows and relations, as the city components that are the drive of the continuous movement. Rather then relying on architectural fiction as Noys does in Architecture of Acceleranionism, it is arguably more appropriate to imagine that acceleration happens through far less spectacular means. In this sense, it is not about the style of architectural constructs common to all fictional futuristic representations, but it is instead about the operations they engage, the endless possibility of connection, the multiplicity of choice, the interweaving of the architectural practice in one big movement that is able to hold every function together, without the need of specifying it. In the accelerated city, citizens never stop. They continuously undergo a double ended process of influence and being influenced, a loop in which it is impossible o isolate a starting point. As a consequence, citizens reject the fixation of household and live nomadically moving from one place to the other, as the architectural space offers endless possibilities for use, they are liberated from compartmentalisation. In this picture, consumer are transformed in goods, assets able to generate capital through the inevitability of their production. The space changes accordingly, following the needs of the market, continuously transforming facilities with no function and yet the ability to host all of them in one, with no fixed characteristics in order to be possible everywhere. A new era of absolute architecture, an architecture that becomes subservient to economy.

The typical plan is the ultimate representation of this architectural impersonality, the variety of functions, the acceleration, the ability to change and transform following periods and laws. The contemporary metropolis is building upon that, simultaneously the market is adapting its means of control to this ever changeable layout, establishing intangible hierarchies that

[39] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp.239–40

are as much ephemeral as concrete.

In the acceleration of the city what is pushed to its extent is its impersonality, the non-function and non-specification, accelerating is finally depriving from labels. However, while undergoing this deprivation architecture risks to falls again in the loop of self contradiction, and from liberating tool becoming an innovative and perfectly efficient instrument of control.

To further dwell on this contradiction, three cities are used here to embody three different states of deterritorialisation, in an attempt to unfold the operations that acceleration enacts in the built environment, through three fictional tales that are not fictional at all.

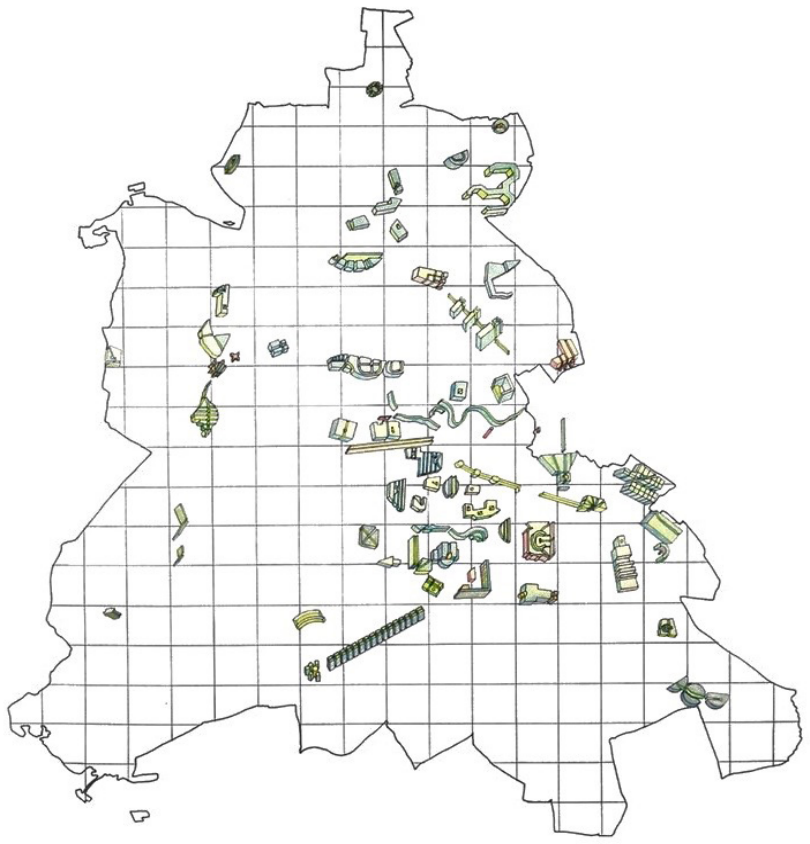
The first city planned as a machine for control doesn't allow the inhabitant to appropriate it, therefore it is always destined to failure because of its incapacity of adaptation and transformation. In this sense, the planned layout becomes a cage that freezes the machine in a specific time and situation, generating a mindset that is incapable of conceiving alternative solutions or ways of development. On the other hand, the unplanned or chaotic city is engulfed by the forces of contingency that don't allow any system to settle and that, at the same time, become a system on their own. This case eventually brings to a confusion of functions and identities that leads to a gradual loss of livability. The city here becomes the maze of the everyday life, a place stuck in its form in which the endless list of possibilities leads to the incapacity of action, or rather the inefficient one, which lacks overarching organisation principles principles at the very base. This represents the situation of the contemporary city, where inhabitants have lost the control of their own built environment, which has become an irrelevant and banal agglomerate of objects that don't inform[40] each other. From a hyper relation between the machine components we are switching to a massive singularisation in which not even opposition can be considered as a bridging feature, but rather stands as a further example of the impossibility of reconciliation. To further elaborate, we can refer to Koohlas and Ungers' vision of city[41]. While Ungers considers the city as an archipelago in which opposition brings unity, Koohlas recognises the individuality of difference and the irreconcilability of the city components, that are free to transform and develop without affecting the overall system. In this context, identity ceases to be a unitary concept, being, instead, the irresolvable contradiction that characterises the city and becomes its very first defining feature. The irreconcilability of the built environment is therefore the outcome of the internal contradiction generated by the economic system, which exasperates conflict and confrontation nullifying the attempt of a coherent process of diversification. In this sense categorisation, subdivision, specification, become obsolete instruments of control whose capacity of regulation is made powerless by the uncontrolled assembling of components in the city. This reflection leads to a very specific question which Aureli posed quite synthetically: "*…today it is reasonable - almost banal - to ask not what kind of political power is governing us, but whether we are governed by politics at all - that is, whether we are living under a totalitarian managerial process based on economy, which in turn uses different political modes of public governance ranging from dictatorship to democracy to war*"[42].

At this point, it might be useful to translate the cities in three typologies of assemblage in which the irreconcilability brought forth affects the outcome in different ways. This because, as al-

40 They don't produce something, they inform - create forms, producing relations or operations.

41 In this case I refer in particular to Ungers idea of the city as an Archipelago and Koohlas "The City of the Captive Globe", 1972. Indeed, despite being influenced by Ungers' concepts, Koohlas reflection differs especially in the definition of differences and of what constitutes the organising principle of the city in itself.

42 Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, The MIT Press, 2011



Osvals Mathias Ungers, Berlin as a green archipelago, 1977



Rem Koohlas, The City of the Captive Globe, 1972

ready stated, it is impossible to reduce the concept of assemblage to a unitarian one, and through this categorisation it is possible to initiate a conscious classification that can help the understanding, and that avoids the falling into generalisation. Cities are all built contradictions, machines that are always clashing in the process of their same own definition; this because of the fact that if one component is stating one thing, the other component is stating the opposite. To better explain, if an assemblage is defined as extremely territorialised, it can be read as an operative machine, exerting control on the inhabitants; this would be translated into the city as always equal to itself, in which no variations are allowed and the hyper specification leads to the creation of a compartmentalised lifestyle. On the other hand, what is defined as its counterpart, or the extremely de-territorialised assemblage, can be described as innocent machine, or inactive; being this the city always different to itself, in which the overarching arbitrariness produces an infinity of possibilities that ends up becoming the new ruling principles by which the inhabitants are constantly leaded.

The third typology of assemblage is what we consider as the ultimate mix between control and arbitrariness, or the city that is always different but always equal to itself; one that doesn't reject the technological advancement and the overall acceleration of lifestyle, but that, instead, turns these tools into constructive principles for a regulation that is not externally controlled. This being therefore the accelerated machine, the only one whose main principle of functioning and concept can be augmented. It is from this considerations that we should start when reconsidering the building of our cities and on a smaller scale, of architectural bodies within cities.

Thereafter, if we were to analyse the components of operative and innocent machine, we could classify the former as being defined by relations of control and the latter by relations of informality. In the operative machine the functionality or the effectiveness of the assemblage is the priority, therefore, the components are organised into hierarchical order and affect each other following pre-established patterns. In this context, the main feature that regulates and directs the assemblage is logistics: the detailed organisation and implementation of a complex operation, the provision of facilities and services. In a general business sense, logistics is the management of the flow of things between the point of origin and the point of consumption in order to meet requirements of customers or corporations.

Being logistic the main tool for regulation in the city, as we can clearly see in Togliatti, it becomes the main system, the base around which everything else is rotating. In the hyper controlled city logistics is recognised as the very organising principle or the primary instrument with which shaping the rituality and movements of the inhabitants in the space. Streets act as relations, communication, bridges, between the components, as tubes between the machine parts that provide the flowing of fuel without which the machine cannot function. What Deleuze and Guattari refer to as flow becomes here not only the moving substance but the structure as flow in itself.

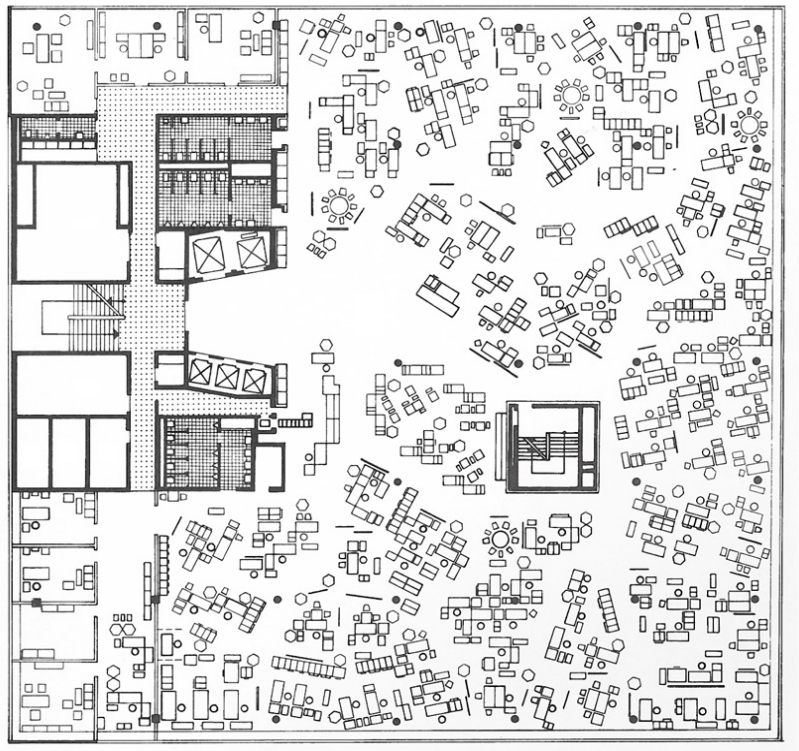
On the other side, the components of the innocent machine can be identified with their unplanned relations, bounded to a loop of constant innovation that eventually leads to its own destruction. The absence of any controlling principle doesn't allow bodies to persist and therefore it is destined to remain ephemeral, without ever



Accelerated City, drawing by author

being able to influence, rather than being influenced. In this system architecture represents the ultimate form of appropriation that can counter act the order imposed by logistic.
In the third city, or what we referred to as the accelerated one, the division between logistic and architecture doesn't exist anymore, in order to comply with the speed of living practices and the merging of life and work architecture turns itself into logistic, becoming a system, a perfectly working machine. If we are to refer back to what has been said about ritual and rhythm and if we are to avoid the crystallisation of architecture in an instrument of power, it is necessary to maintain its malleable character, its ability to evolve, continuously grow and shrink, move, and become not only chameleonic in the sense that it changes in the aspect but not in the function, but truly and mostly metamorphic. Not just a Potemkin city but an always evolving assemblage that displaces and deterritorialise without ever falling into fixation. At this point we can draw a line back to the contemporary capitalist tendency. This, despite being born from a completely different age and circumstances, and despite acting through different tools, shares with the studied soviet approach to the urban organisation of monotowns one intention, that of rendering every aspect of life part of the production process. A tendency that is increasing nowadays and that is considering even leisure and free time as productive activities. If before, this productive organisation of life had the aim to make production more efficient, now it aims to create new typologies of products available for the market.
The genericness of the free plan eventually becomes the new tool for capitalist production and the production of knowledge, for which the fundamental feature is the multi functionality of the space with the aim of increasing its capacity to be constantly re-purposed in order to fulfill the ever-changing needs of the market. As we can see in the plan of the Osram Headquartes by Walter Henn in Munich, architecture is reduced to technical elements, so the space can constantly adapt to different modes of production that requires extreme flexibility.
However, despite apparently lacking any principle of hierarchical organisation, the free plan eventually turns into an intangible instrument of control, as it happens in the Bureau Landschaft where even if the configuration seems extremely chaotic, everything is actually carefully planned according to changes of command and hierarchies within the office itself, but these features of organisation are hidden and performed by the workers themselves. Therefore, as it happens in Togliatti, architecture becomes a non-governmental form of power that organises common actions in productive ones establishing frames, rhythms and rituals of the everyday life.

Nevertheless, it is inevitable to ask ourselves how can we plan without ordering or without giving pre-established functions, how can we design an architecture devoid of content, of function, and free to be appropriated always in different ways. And more important, how can the concept of the free plan not become another non-governmental form of power. In order to attempt to answer these questions it is necessary to consider again the concept of ritual, exploring how ritual and rhythm working together could act as possible tools to shape a new architectural configuration that would trigger different uses.
In this scenario, the main (and only) function of architectural space becomes that of being a platform for life to unfold, a conclusion that calls for the recognition of production as a vital outcome, inevitable and immanent in any living being. Following this statement, it is fundamental to clarify the concept of liberation not as freedom from but as freedom of, leaving aside the impossible image of a life liberated from the demands of production and competition and highlighting, instead, the possibility of liberating production and its means from their fundamental economical constraints.



Osram Headquarters, Walter Henn

RITUALS OF RESISTANCE

In his essay Less is Enough P. V. Aureli inquires about the concept of asceticism as a tool to re-interpret the logic of production from fordist to neoliberal processes. Quoting Max Weber definition, other-worldly asceticism acknowledges the possibility of an existence freed from any distraction that fully dedicates itself to the ethics of work and production. It is not by chance that the concept relates back to the soviet attempt in shaping the byt (everyday life) of the soviet worker, controlling the operations of mind and body with the aim of achieving a new society composed by an extremely efficient working army. As in itself, the core of asceticism is a constant focus on the self and its practices and operations, structuring them following a specific set of rules, that can be externally or internally imposed. Especially this last differentiation is the key point in the definition of power as an over imposed ruling system, or, on the other side, as the effort of the individual on itself in order to maximize his capacities. Spinoza identifies the two terms respectively with *pouvoir* (*potestas*) and *puissance* (*potentia*)[43], recognising the possibility of being respectively an oppressed or an active subject. As it concern the regulation of self, asceticism in the contemporary society represents once more an instrument of control *à la mercè* of the forces of production and competition, becoming one of the fundamental sources of the ethics of capitalism, and bringing forth the common tendency of work to own, of continuous innovation, of productive life, and of meaningless accumulation.

We come to understand, at this point, that while celebrating the establishment of a new liberal market freed from the constraints of physical work, and opposed to the inhuman exploitation operated in factories, our condition as workers, as both producers and consumers, is not so distant from that we repulse. Our inner *puissance* is therefore bended by an over imposed power that repurposes it in order to meet the needs of production. With cognitive production we become multifunctional objects ourselves, for whom the capability of doing multiple things in less time, or at the same time, is the achievement of the greatest goal.

But the very nature of asceticism, and the fact that it addresses firstly the operations of the individual, introduce the possibility of a counter act that can re-purpose ascetic practices from oppression tools to rituals of resistance. Asceticism materialises therefore in a new set of habits, that is self imposed, regulated following a self-chosen rhythm, that doesn't stand as an ideological attempt, but that is represented by the reinterpretation of the very common acts of the everyday life as the ultimate possible moments of revolution.

Architecture comes here to be the main device for triggering self-enactment, enhancing the awareness of users and their operations: "*architecture does not simply accommodate specific domestic rituals but enacts them, without fully conditioning them*"[44]. Form, therefore, is not conceived anymore following a style or an image, but according to what it can do, to the actual features that the individual needs to achieve a self-regulation. In this sense, architecture cannot be merely functional, nor aesthetic; architecture needs to be a challenging practice, it needs to demand participation and awareness.

Quoting the French artist and sculptor Meir Eshel (Absalon), who refers to the experiment of designing his own inhabitable cell, "*I can't imagine a life without structure, I'm sure that I have to create new rules to escape from other rules. It is a kind of technique of living. Inventing new rules, constraints, despite the fact that*

43 Deleuze further elaborates on the difference between the two terms: "There is no bad power (puissance), what is bad, we should say is the lowest degree of the power (puissance). And the lowest degree of the power (puissance), it is the power (pouvoir). I mean, what is malice? Malice consists in preventing someone to do what he can, malice consists in preventing someone to do, to effectuate his power (puissance). Therefore, there is no bad power (puissance), there are malicious powers (pouvoirs). Perhaps that all power (pouvoir) is malicious by nature. Maybe not, maybe it is too easy to say so… […] Power (pouvoir) is always an obstacle to the effectuation of powers (puissances). I would say, any power (pouvoir) is sad. Yes, even if those who "have the power" (pouvoir) are very joyful to "have it", it is a sad joy; there are sad joys. On the contrary, joy is the effectuation of a power (puissance). Once again, I don't know any power (puissance) that is malicious. The typhoon is a power (puissance), it enjoys itself in its very soul but…it does not enjoy because it destroys houses, it enjoys because it exists. To enjoy is to enjoy being what we are, I mean, to be "where we are". Of course, it does not mean to be happy with ourselves, not at all. Joy is the pleasure of the conquest (conquête) as Nietzsche would say. But conquest in that sense, does not mean to enslave people of course. Conquest is for example, for painter to conquest the color. Yes, that yes, that is a conquest, yeah here this is joy."
Abécédaire, Gilles Deleuze, Interview by Claire Parnet, 1988

it can be restrictive, creating one's own constraints, I think that is the best way, I can't imagine any other way"[45].

The ever changing production means, that are now switching towards an immaterial production and the work of the mind, "*where the boundary between work and non-work is impossible to trace*" and "*life itself has become the main source of production*", to focus on our operations gives us the ultimate chance to turn our own life into a form of resistance, considering "*all its material and organisational aspects as a possibility for change*"[46].

Eventually Aureli concludes his reflection envisioning a life "*detached from the social ethos of property, from the anxiety of production and possession, and where less is just enough*"[47], a conclusion that however seems to leave out one of the main point deduced from the understanding of the relation between life and work: the inevitability of production. The fact that individuals, human beings, are always undergoing processes of production, because bodies continuously engage in material and immaterial manifestations. The aim therefore, is not that of depriving man from its puissance, but that of acknowledging the existence of production, in the sense of engaging in any kind of activity that affects other individuals and/or the surrounding, as the very reason for human existence, therefore depriving it from any other typology of super imposed external purpose. And from there derive the uselessness of possession and accumulation, interpreting production as a personal process that cannot be manipulated nor owned but just experienced and shared.

Especially referring to cognitive production, this means to free it from its economic purpose and therefore reinventing architecture as a liberating device and the production of knowledge as a practice for self enrichment and self realisation.

44 Pier Vittorio Aureli, *Less is Enough*, Strelka Press, 2013

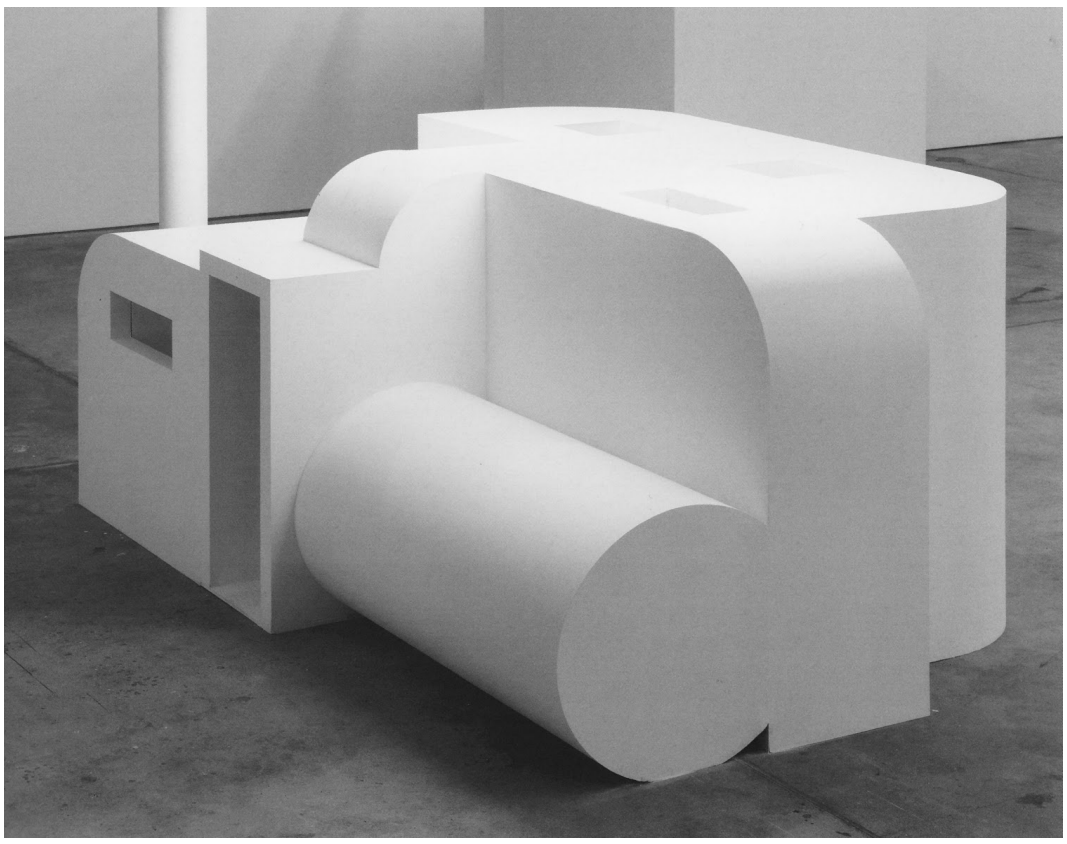
45 Susanne Pfeffer, *Absalon*, Cologne: Walter Koenig, 2012

46 Pier Vittorio Aureli, *Less is Enough*, Strelka Press, 2013

47 Ibid.



Absalon, Living Cells, 1992



COUNTER(PROJECT)

REFLECTION

Following the premises given in the research, the main question developed in the project is how to reinvent architecture as an assemblage under continuous destabilisation, which, despite allowing the needs of the market and production to be fulfilled, and therefore not trying to fight or going against the economic system, is endlessly undergoing a process of transformation. In the project, the use of Deleuze and Guattari Theory of Assemblage, functions as a method to analyse and understand the existing environment, shifting the attention from the objects to their operations. This has hallowed the reading of the city as a machine, made of different components that acting together produce diverse operations.

Especially the way the components operate, generate a specific set of unwritten habits and routines that influence the everyday life of the citizens. These established rituals have been unfolded in the research in order to uncover the eventual problematics that are representative of the critical condition of the city. Russian mono towns, indeed, are experiencing an era of crisis due to the stagnation of the economy and the lack of alternative resources. Citizens, especially young generations, share the will to emigrate, while the built environment is not capable to respond to the constantly transforming needs of the market.

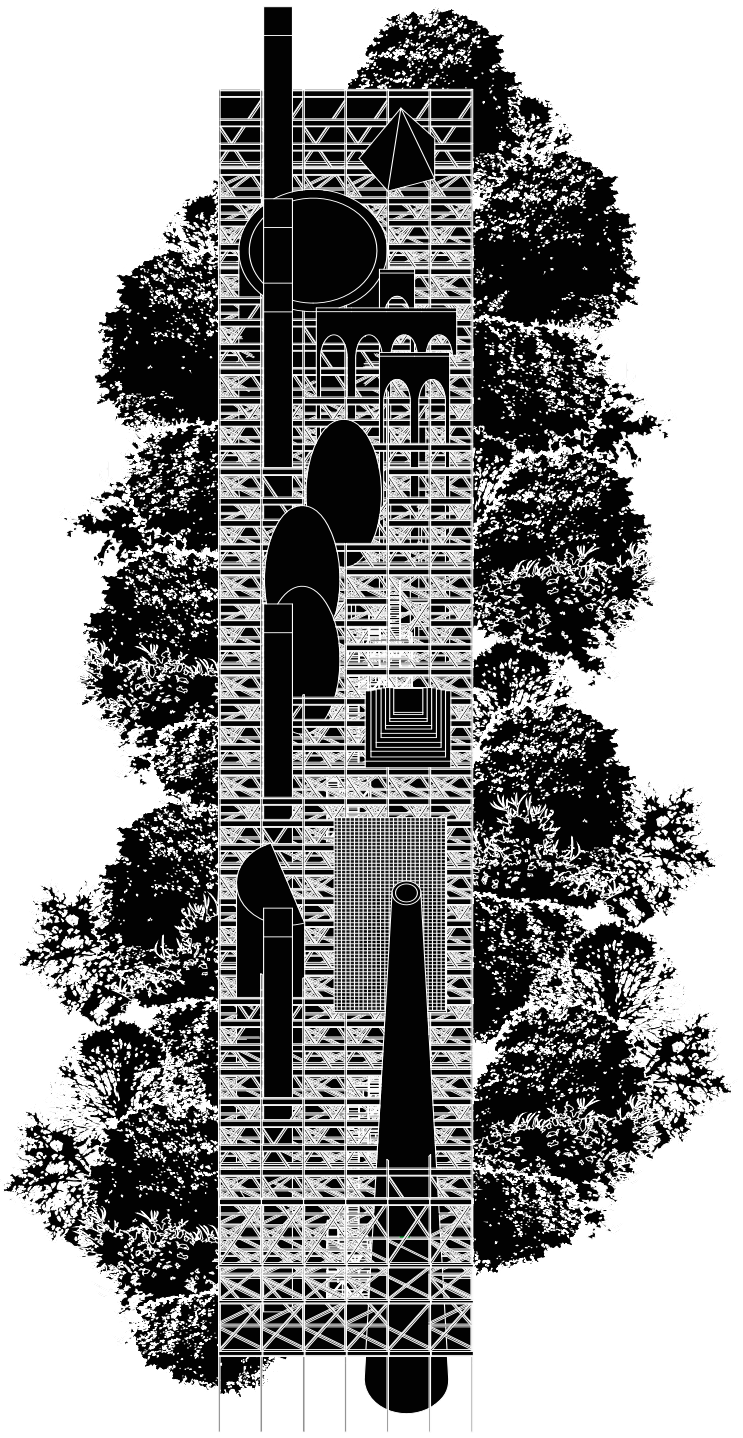
Concurrently relating to the contemporary debate on the capitalist system, the project deals with the current transformation of the concept of production, that is gradually shifting from production of goods to production of knowledge. In this scenario, the line separating life and work is blurred, and the city unfolds endlessly interlinked maze of spaces that don't host any specific function and yet are able to host any.

The project investigates how architecture becomes an instrument of control, bending to the needs of the market and imposing hierarchical systems over everyday life. As a consequence, taking as an inspiration the projects of the Russian avant-garde developed in the Russian schools of arts in the period following the October revolution of 1918, and especially the work of Ivan Leonidov, the project seeks to re-interpret the productive spaces of cognitive production, from housing to laboratories to libraries, liberating them from the institutional labels and turning them into tools able to challenge the practice of daily living.

By changing the time and way of appropriation of architectural spaces the projects aims to investigate a possibility for an architecture that doesn't become an instrument of control, that doesn't impose daily routines but that triggers the creation of diverse new rituals able to influence the shaping of society and citizens.

To take part in the Explore Lab Studio gave me the possibility to follow my own interests, developed while attending the MSc2 course of Complex Projects - In Cities during which I had the chance to study American Corporate cities and to speculate about their future development. The discussion about automated production, sharing of data, campus and corporations preceded and lead the way to the more rooted and careful reflection carried on with this project.

The extreme diversity of the studio allow students to confront each other on diverse themes, and especially in the Academic environment, which is often bended to the rules of pre-imposed design guidelines, to have the freedom to follow one's own fascination is what in the end generated deeply motivated projects and students. The extensiveness of the project and its



The Infrastructure, conceptual drawing by author

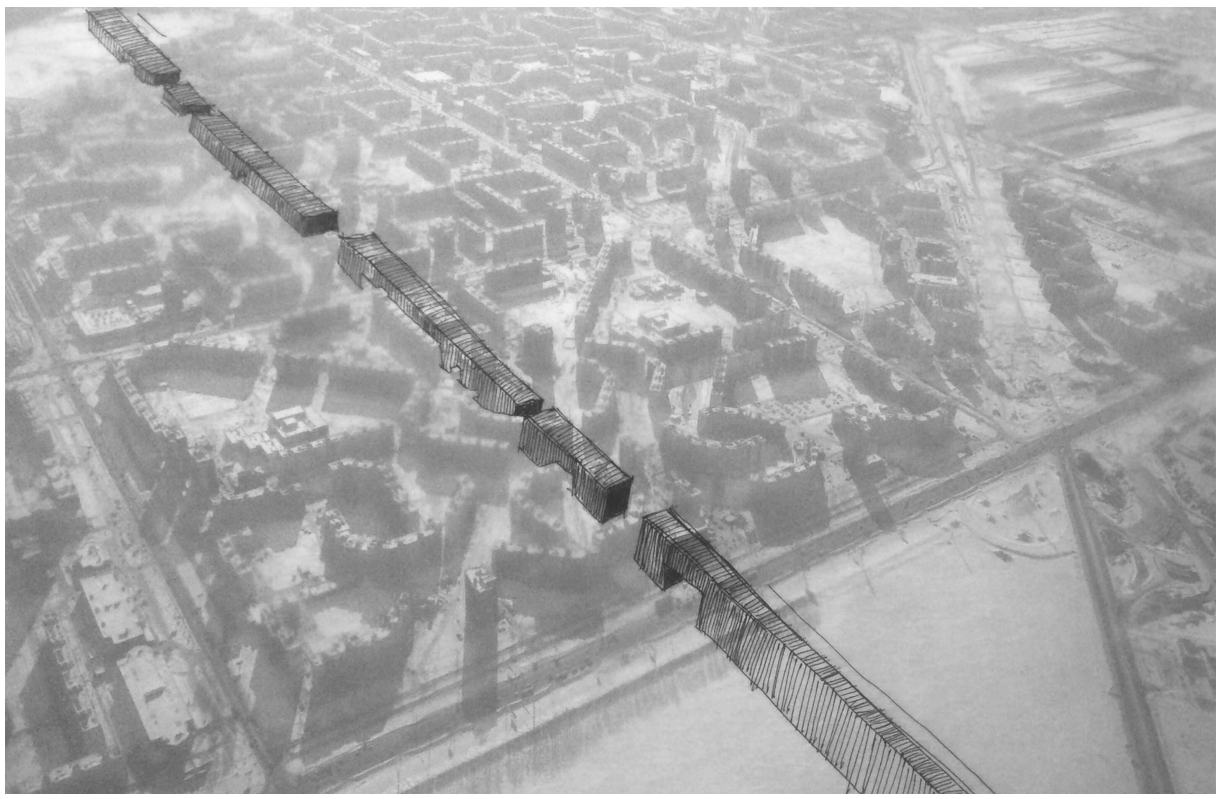
multi faceted character allowed me to interlink architecture and urbanism, dealing both with existing territorial dynamics, in and outside the city, and with the human scale. Shifting between scales the project seeks to put forward a site specific design, that aims to stimulate the production and the attention on the topic of Russian mono towns to the eye of an academic European and non-European public. In this context, the research is fundamental to connect the inspiration and the basis of the project to its actual materialisation. The project also wants to question the contemporary architectural design, aiming to shift the attention from what buildings are to what they can do, and therefore to the power of architecture which must be seen as a challenging practice, always on the edge of being an instrument of oppression or liberation.

The research method was based on an extensive study of diverse literature related to the topic of production, rituals, capitalism, power, and machines. This was followed by an extensive study of the selected study case and its peculiarities, applying the assemblage theory on field and relating theoretical concepts to architectural space. The research also included an exploration on field, carrying on several diverse activities in order to understand actual situation and dynamics (economical, social, urban) collaborating with local associations, architects, historians and citizens (in particular with the Centre for Contemporary Art of Togliatti, and the Urban Centre). The main challenge was to relate the existing problematics with the problematics of contemporary architecture, unfolding a design able to counter act existing problems through innovative alternatives with the intention to put under question the relevance of usual approaches on the topic (many project for Russian urbanisation issue apply copy pasted European solution without taking in consideration the existing dynamics) and questioning the future of contemporary architecture in the view of a further and deeper merging of living and working practices.

One of the project aims is to question the contemporary approach on Russian urbanisation, currently experiencing a lack of attention (monotowns) and reviving the subversive projects of Russian avant-garde. At the same time, the projects experiments with alternative solutions that question the common way we perceive architecture, working places and educational institutions, highlighting the need of a transformation in the design processes and goals, considering architecture not as a problem solving practice or a profit maker tool but rather as a tool to question the way we live and work. It is important to also highlight that the concepts put forward in the projects are intended to be able to be extrapolated and re-interpreted to imagine an architecture able to challenge the user and his/her established routines.
More in detail, the project wants to question the possibility of production not for consumption (both of material objects and ideas), therefore challenging the necessity of accumulation and classification and most of all private property, considering knowledge as a common good instead. The criticality of this reflection acts specifically in relation to the economic system and the contemporary lack of attention that is currently experienced in the everyday life, simultaneously putting forward the necessity to improve social interaction and awareness, the processes of thinking and reflection, liberating them from their economic purposes, aiming to the creation of a consciousness that starting

from the individual would eventually spread and influence the entire social body.

The intervention unfolds design concepts against classification, categorisation, compartmentalisation but also against material and immaterial accumulation, re-interpreting architecture as a challenging practice. Especially in the realm of academia, it is fundamental to experimen, to put forward these challenges before they're implemented in a material way. The scale of the projects seeks to represents this concept and therefore surpasses the limits of what can or cannot be built to put forward an idea, an alternative that doesn't want to be a solution but a starting point for a further reflection. In the same way, every aspect of the design is conceived to be able to be appropriated, re-interpreted and re-proposed in a different scale and condition therefore allowing the project to be not only a site specific intervention but a trigger for new ideas, questioning the way we design contemporary architecture.



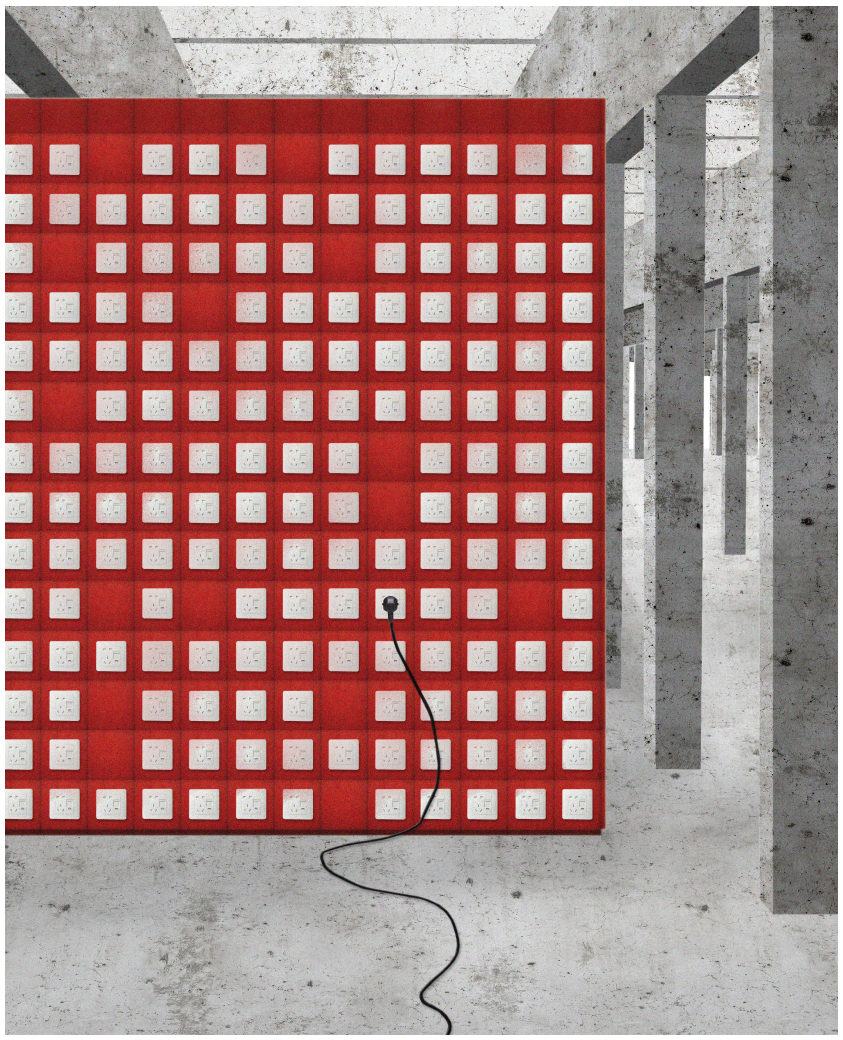


The Infrastructure, conceptual drawing by author

THE RADICALITY OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Devices to live

These drawings represent a first conceptual attempt to materialise new rituals into actual architectural devices that have specific affects on users and the way they interact with them. Following the functional principles of contemporary capitalist tools, the objects are re-imagined in order not to be the materialisation of intangible forces, but as devices always undergoing a process of destabilisation enacted by the users themselves.



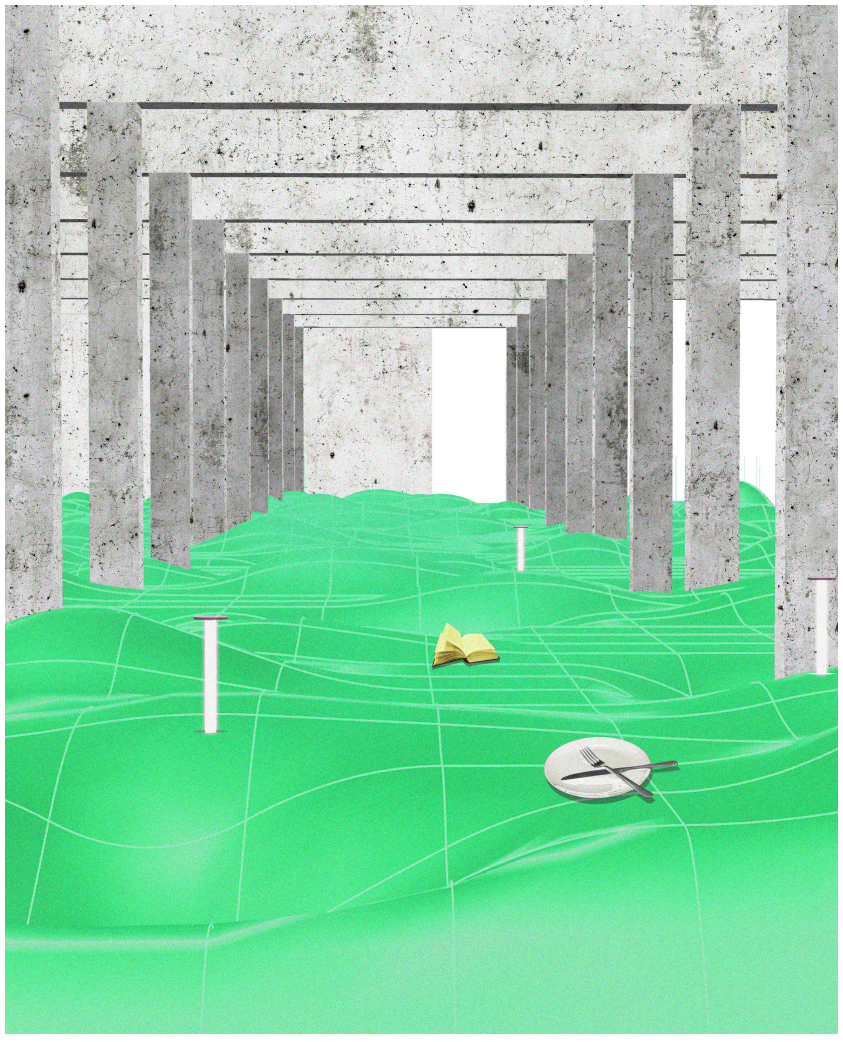
The Plugger



The Sleeping Capsule



The Social Club

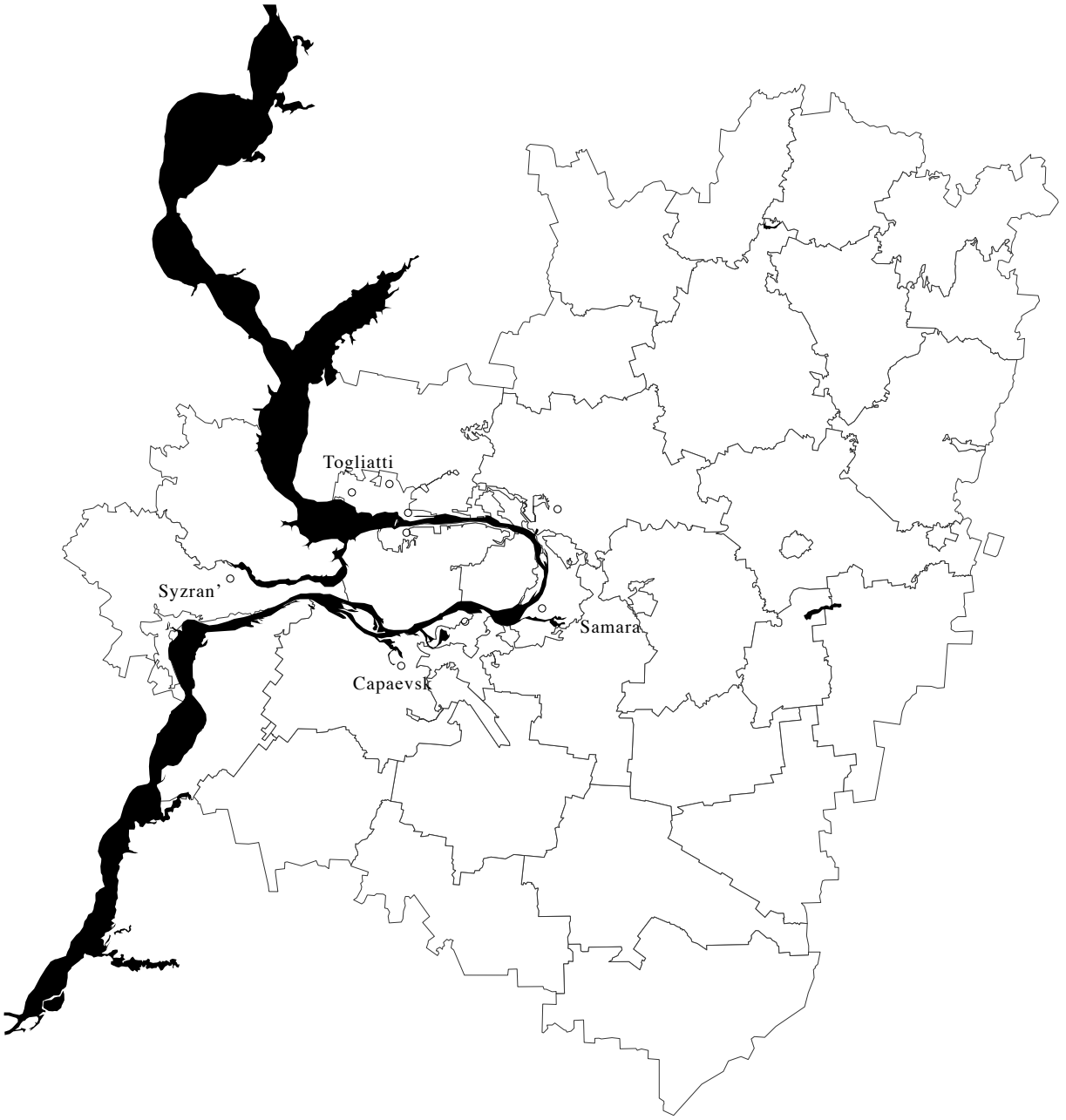


The Canteen

TERRITORIAL STRATEGY


Moscow
Togliatti




Togliatti
Syzran'
Samara
Capaevsk

The starting point of the project is that of acting as a counter strategy for the economy of the territory, turning the industrial infrastructures of Togliatti and the neighbouring towns that are located in the territories around the Volga river, into an infrastructural basis for a project that would repurpose them from the production of goods to the production of knowledge.

This territorial strategy aims at intensifying the existing connection especially between Togliatti and the neighbouring towns adding meaning to the existing railway line, that links the city with Samara (the capital) and Moscow, and strengthening the connection with the Airport, in order to maximise movement and increase the exchange between the city and the outside.

Taking the form of an infrastructure the intervention crosses the Avtozavodsky factory district creating a direct connection between the station and the river docks, concurrently highlighting the importance of river and riverfront in the life of the city, currently in a state of decay.





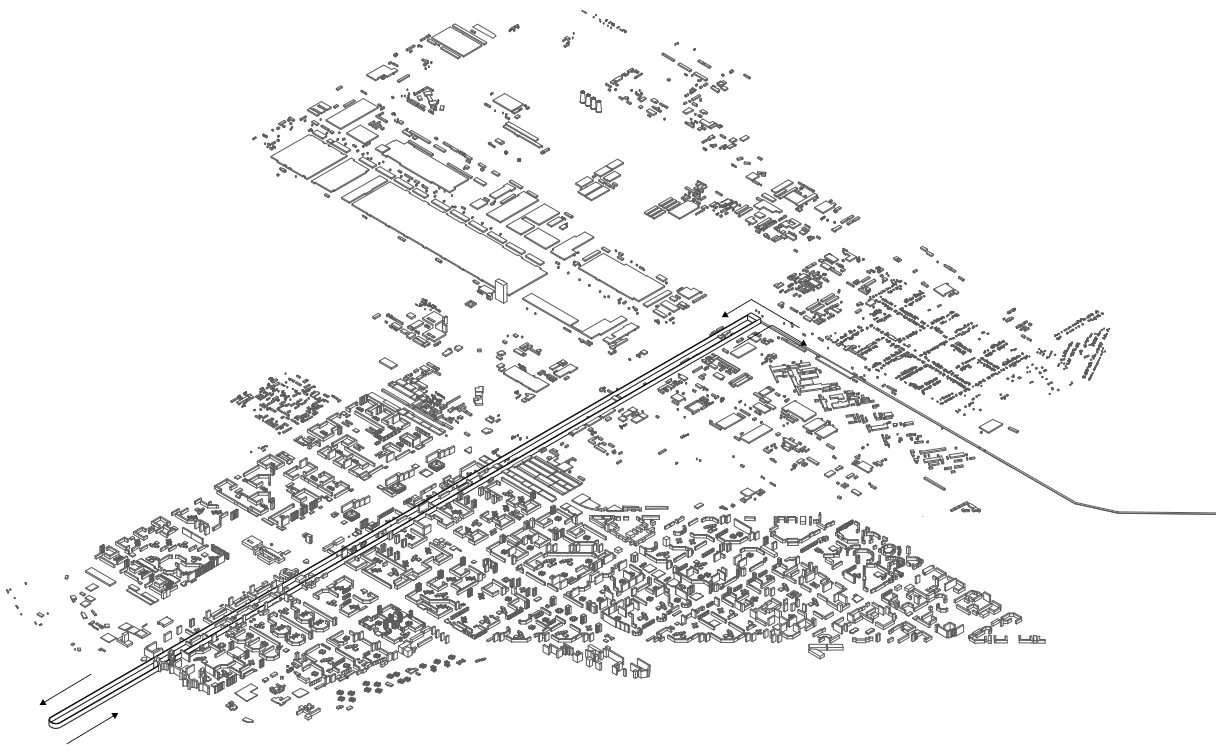


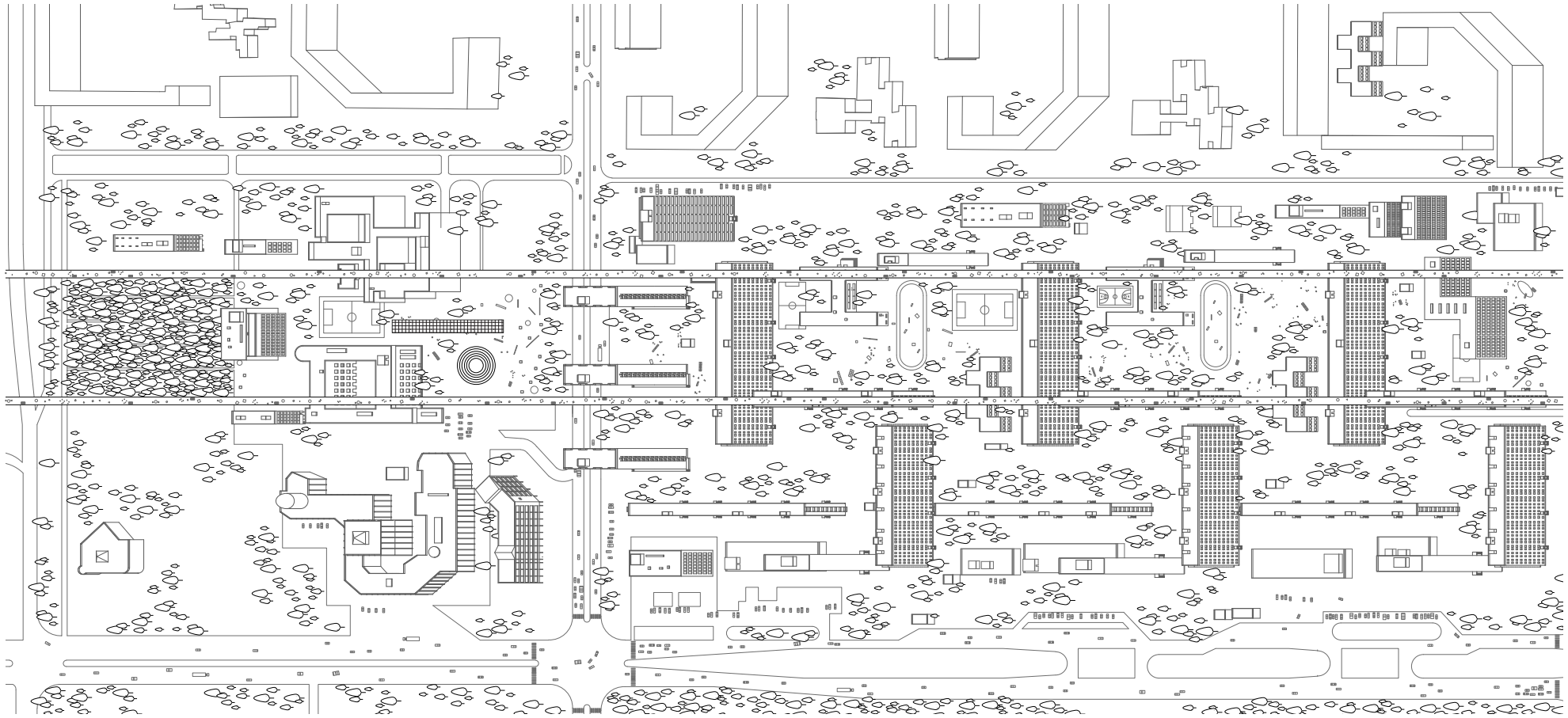




COLLECTIVE INFRSTRUCTURE

Following the premises of the research and considering the urban realm as the main site of interest the project locates itself in the city, serving also as a tool to study the existing, to unfold and challenge the established frames. Its infrastructural nature provides the city with a new circulatory system: in the top level a conveyor belt functions as the ultimate mode of collective transportation, turning the city into a gigantic factory, in between the need of speed of contemporary society and the interpretation of traveling as the ultimate form of collectivity. Crossing the city at a moderate velocity users are forced to withstand continuous encounters and confrontation. A second conveyor belt runs underground, serving an endless warehouse where materials for construction are temporarily stored.



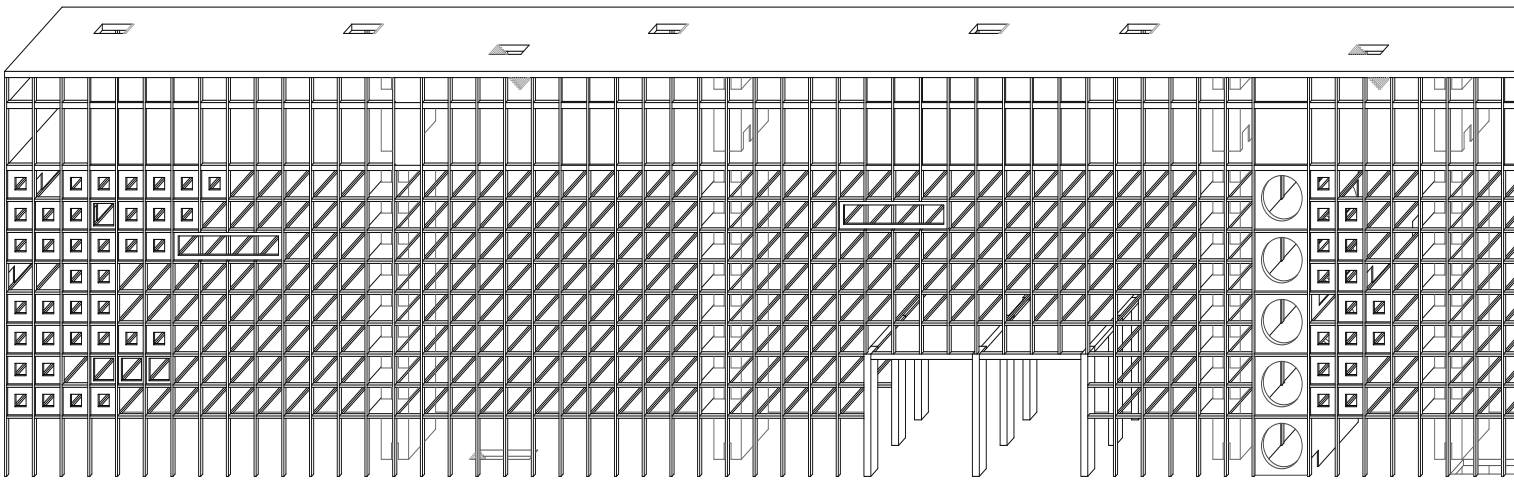


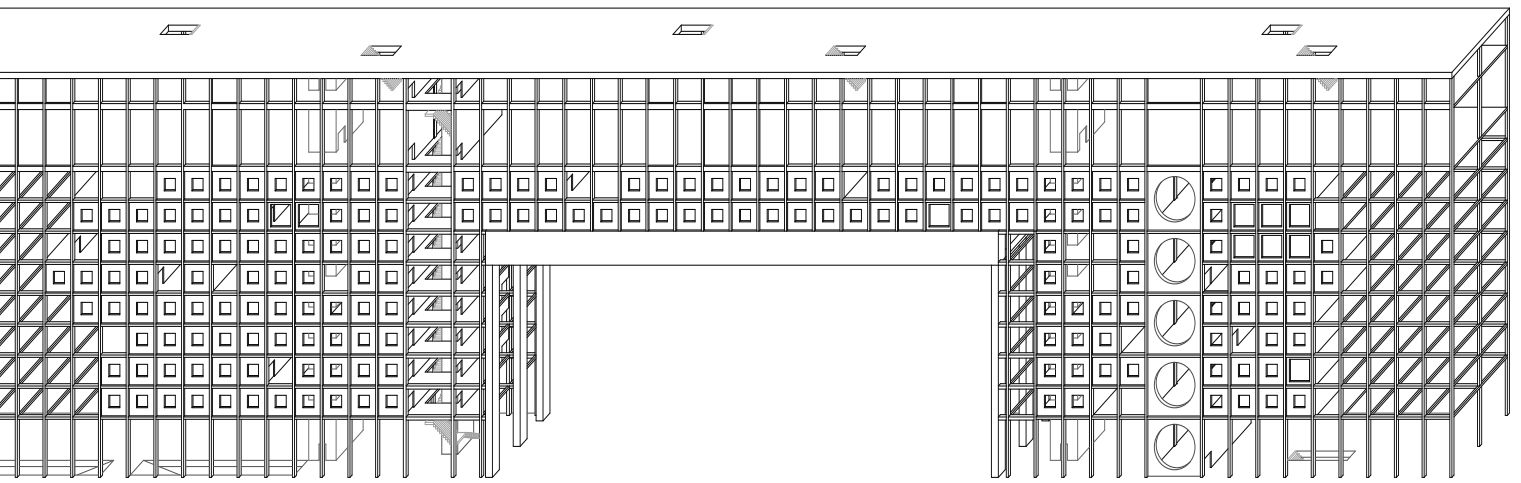
INHABITABLE INFRSTRUCTURE

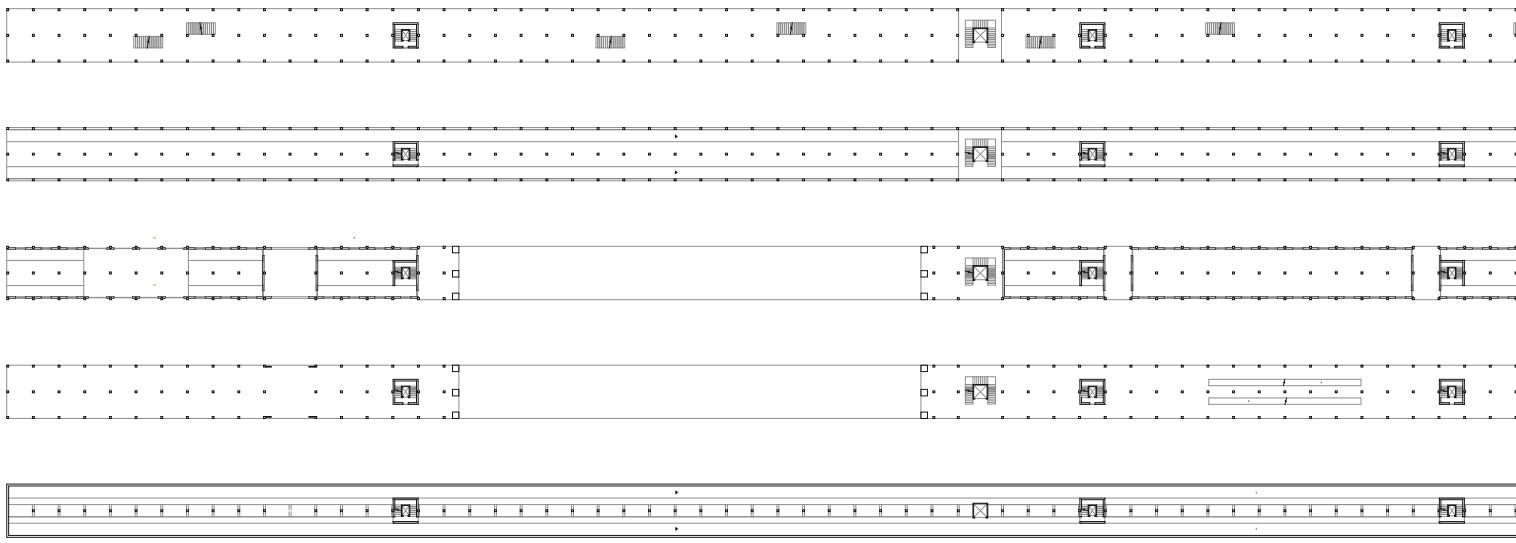
At the same time, the infrastructure functions as a tool to study the environment, challenging the established routines inherited from the life in the factory. When crossing with an existing building the infrastructure becomes inhabitable, triggering a process of regeneration and transformation that involves the existing buidling and its inhabitants, becoming a backbone of both the renovation works in the building and the new lifestyle introduction.
Six levels represent the journey of the inhabitants toward a different lifestyle. Each level focused on the establishment of a specific living practice, that runs against the set of rules imposed by the production market. The inhabitants of the infrastructure eventually become the workforce for the renovation works, while experimenting with an alternative way of living. Over six months the inhabitants go from the bottom to the top floor, each floor generating or breaking an established habit, while working on the renovation. Like a paid internship inhabitants are lead by the space to focus on their practices, changing together with the city.

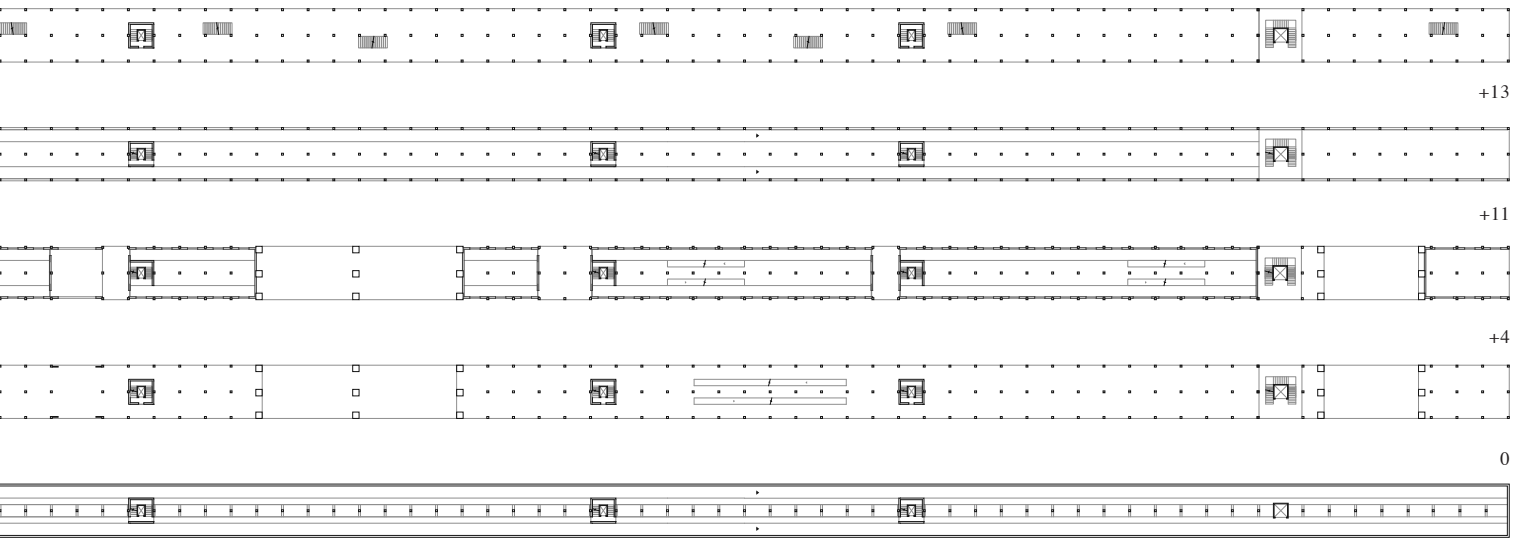
“Architecture does not simply accommodate specific domestic rituals but enacts them, without fully conditioning them. (...) To focus on our operations gives us the ultimate chance to turn our own life into a form of resistance, considering all its material and organisational aspects as a possibility for change.”

Pier Vittorio Aureli, Less is Enough, Strelka Press, 2013



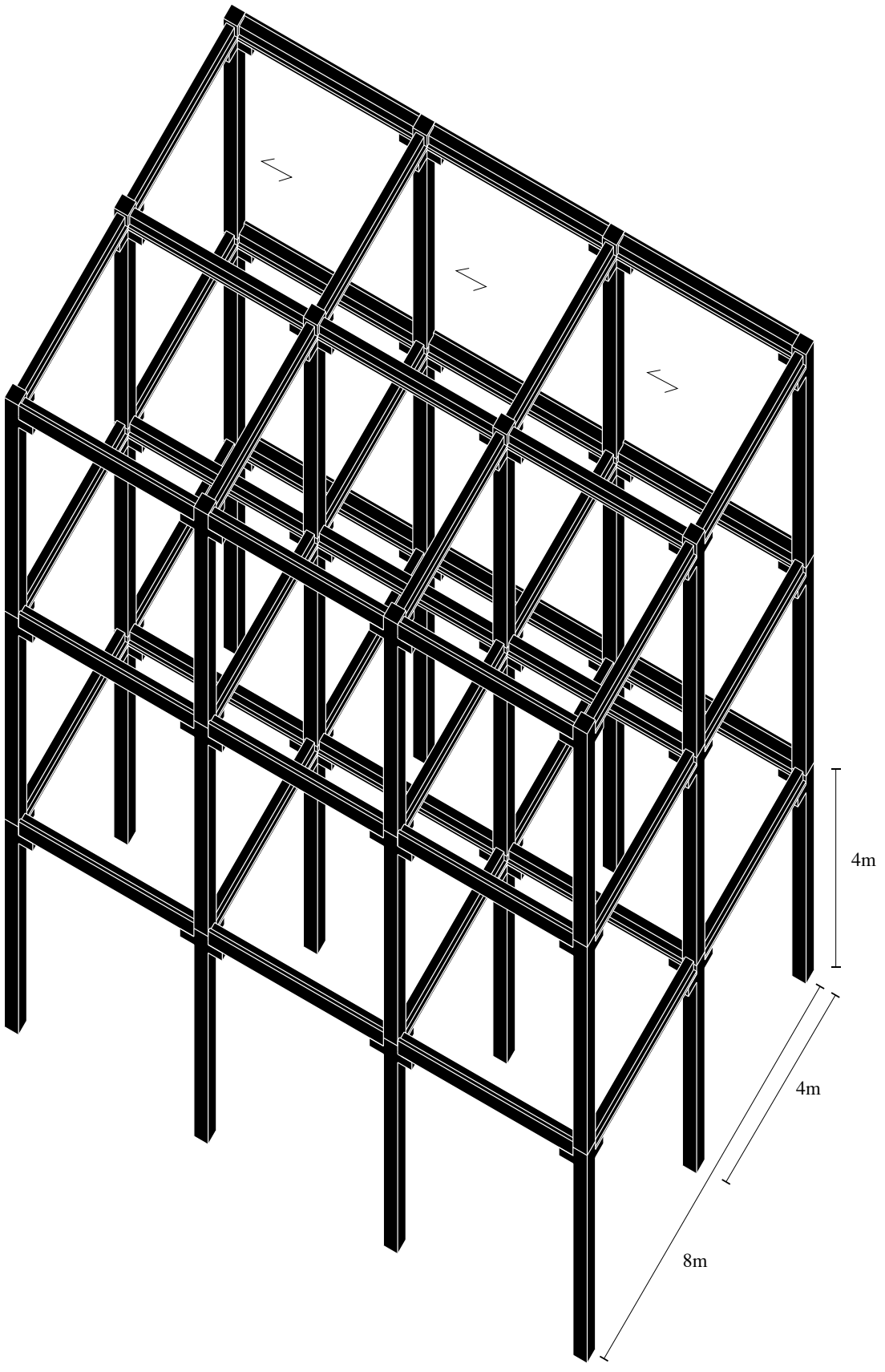


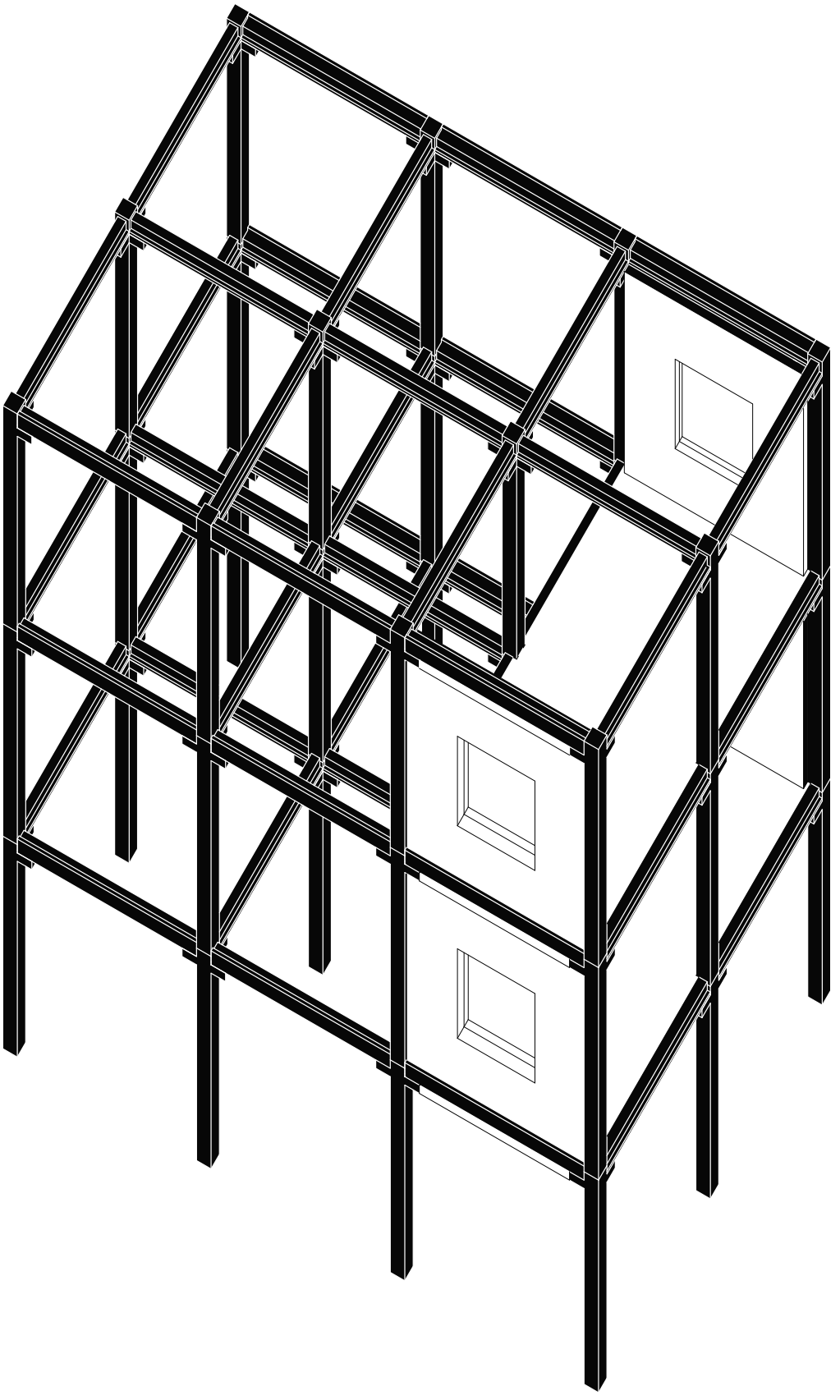


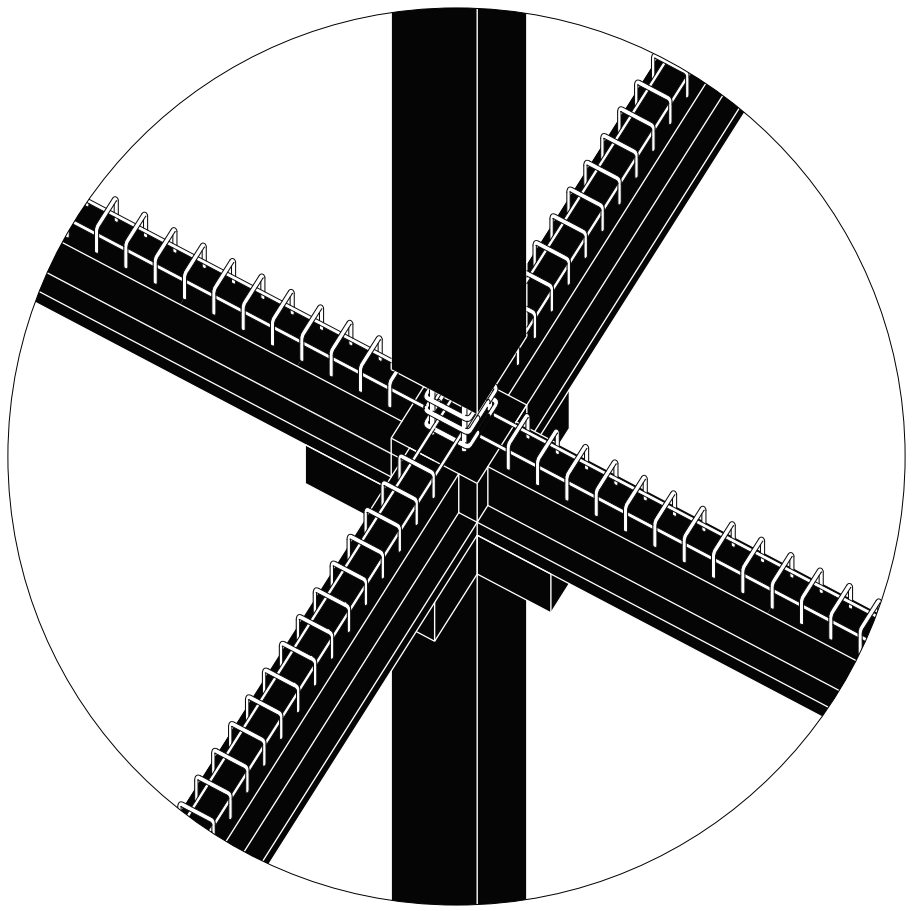

+13
+11
+4
0
-1

STRUCTURE

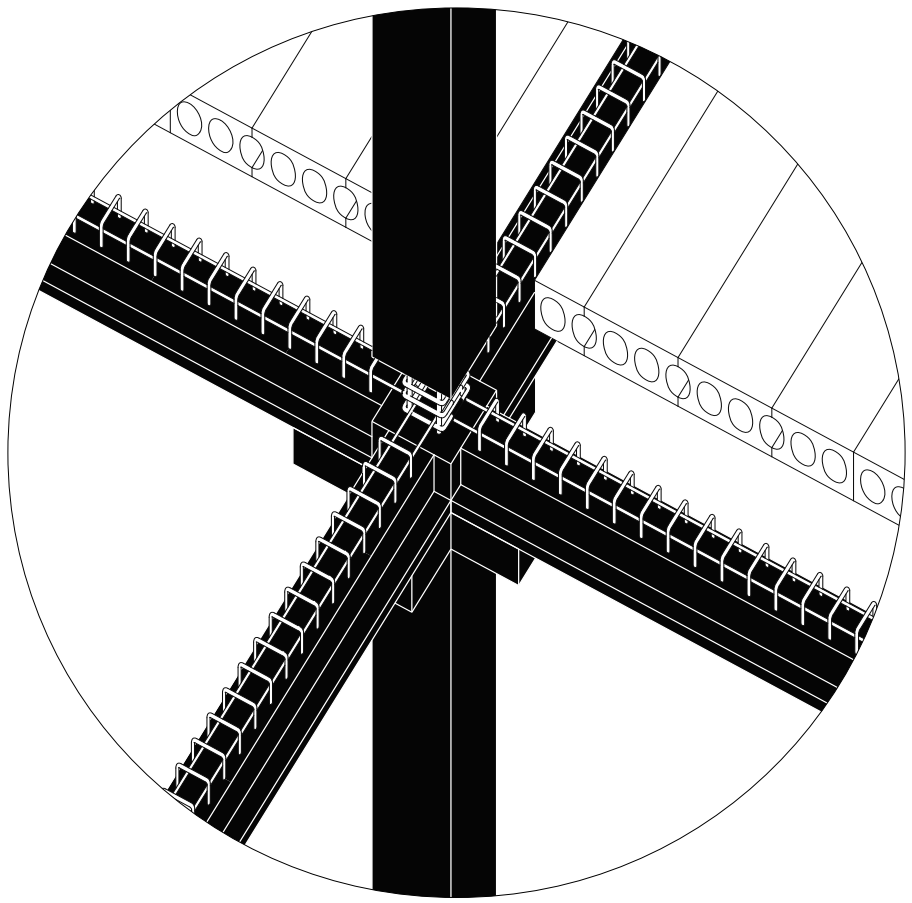
The infrastructure is built with prefabricated concrete elements that can be assembled in phases. The elements are transported to the building site through the underground conveyor belts. The regularity of the external structure generates an endlessly transforming interior informing and being informed by the existing structures it crosses.
In order to achieve the internal freedom the building of the living spaces is kept separated from that of the structure, therefore allowing it to maintain its flexibility and capability to adapt to different time and social conditions. As a consequence when inhabited the structure is closed from the inside with prefabricated panels that insulate the living spaces while leaving the main structure visible.


4m
4m
8m





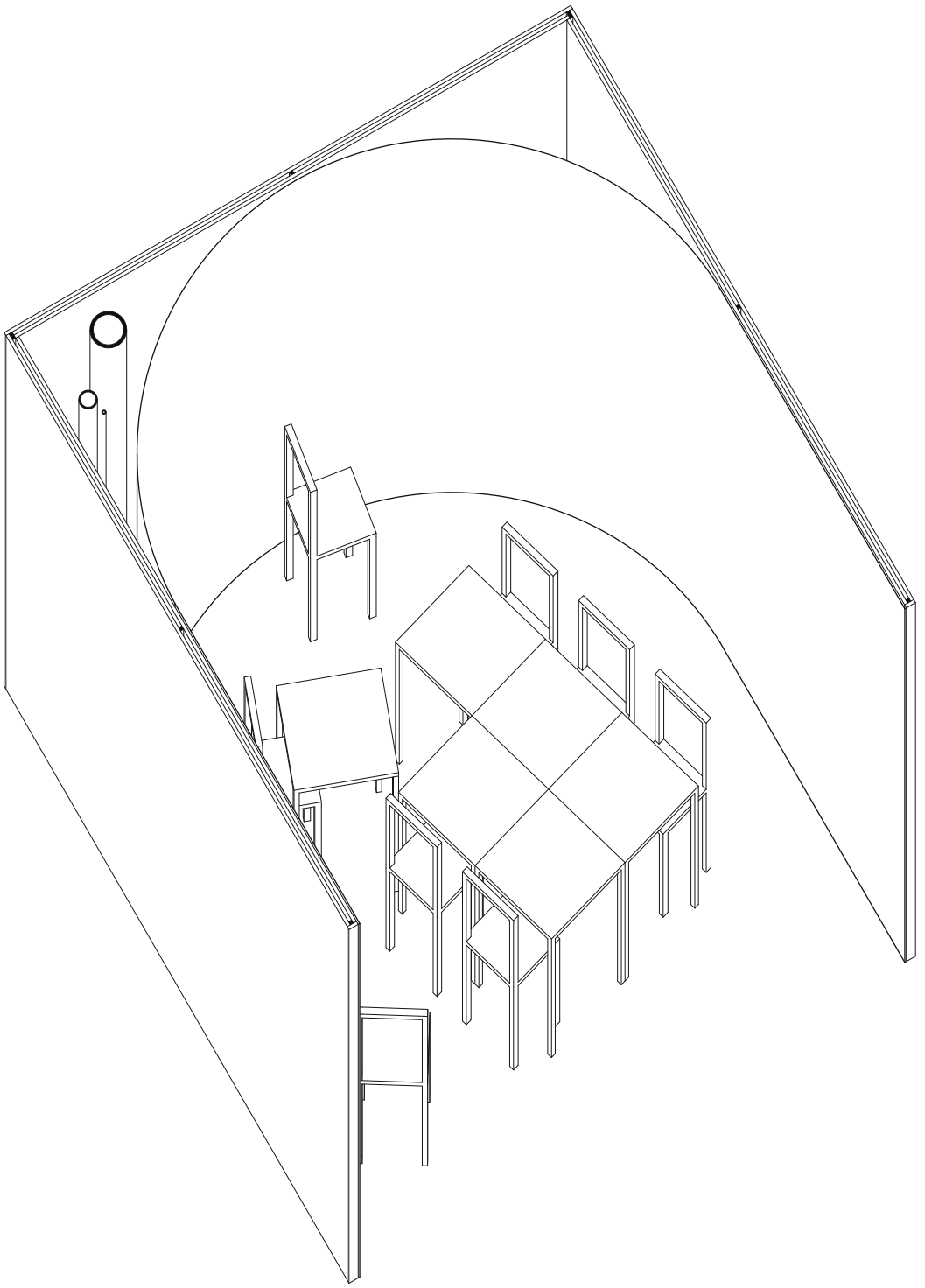
Basic building structure

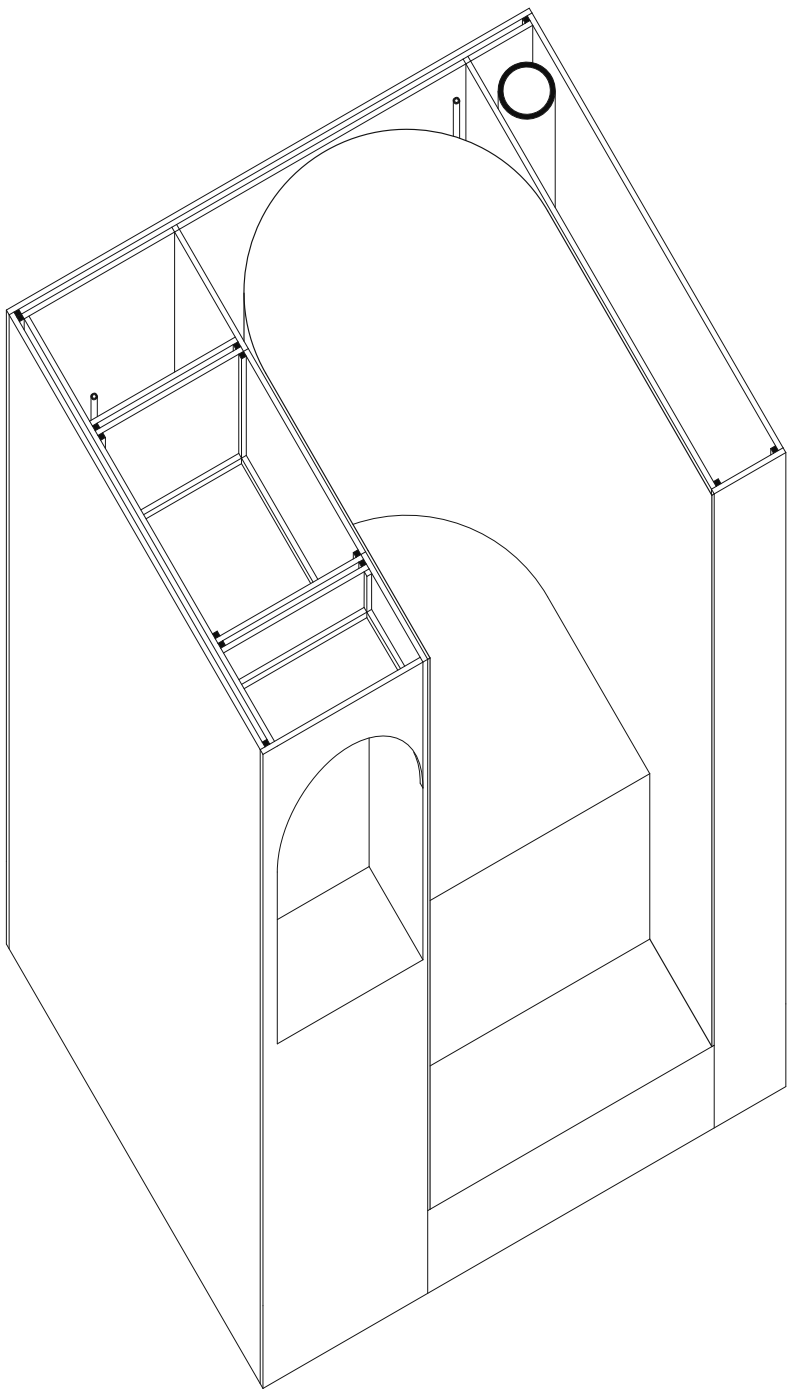


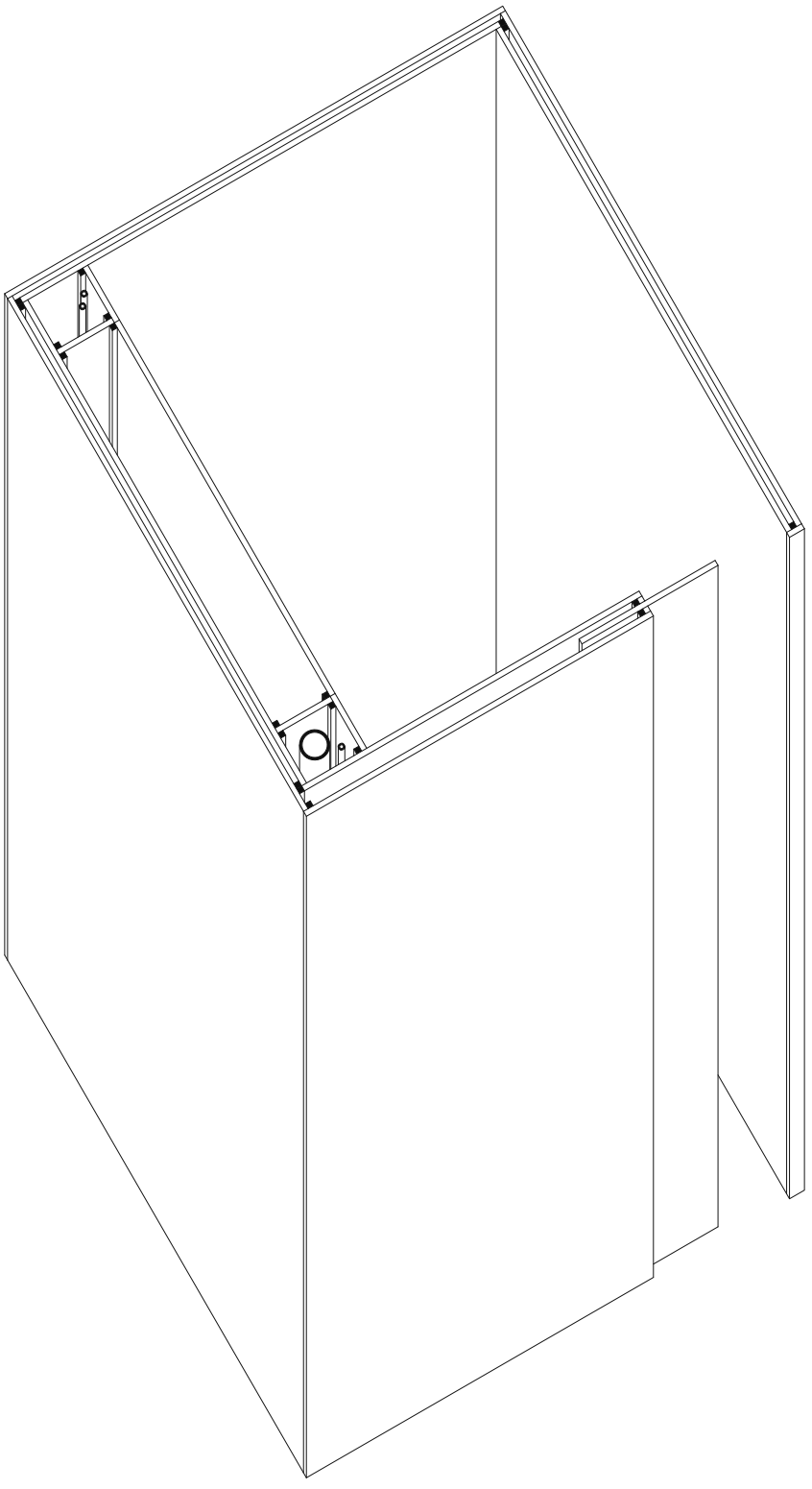
Infill for inhabited spaces

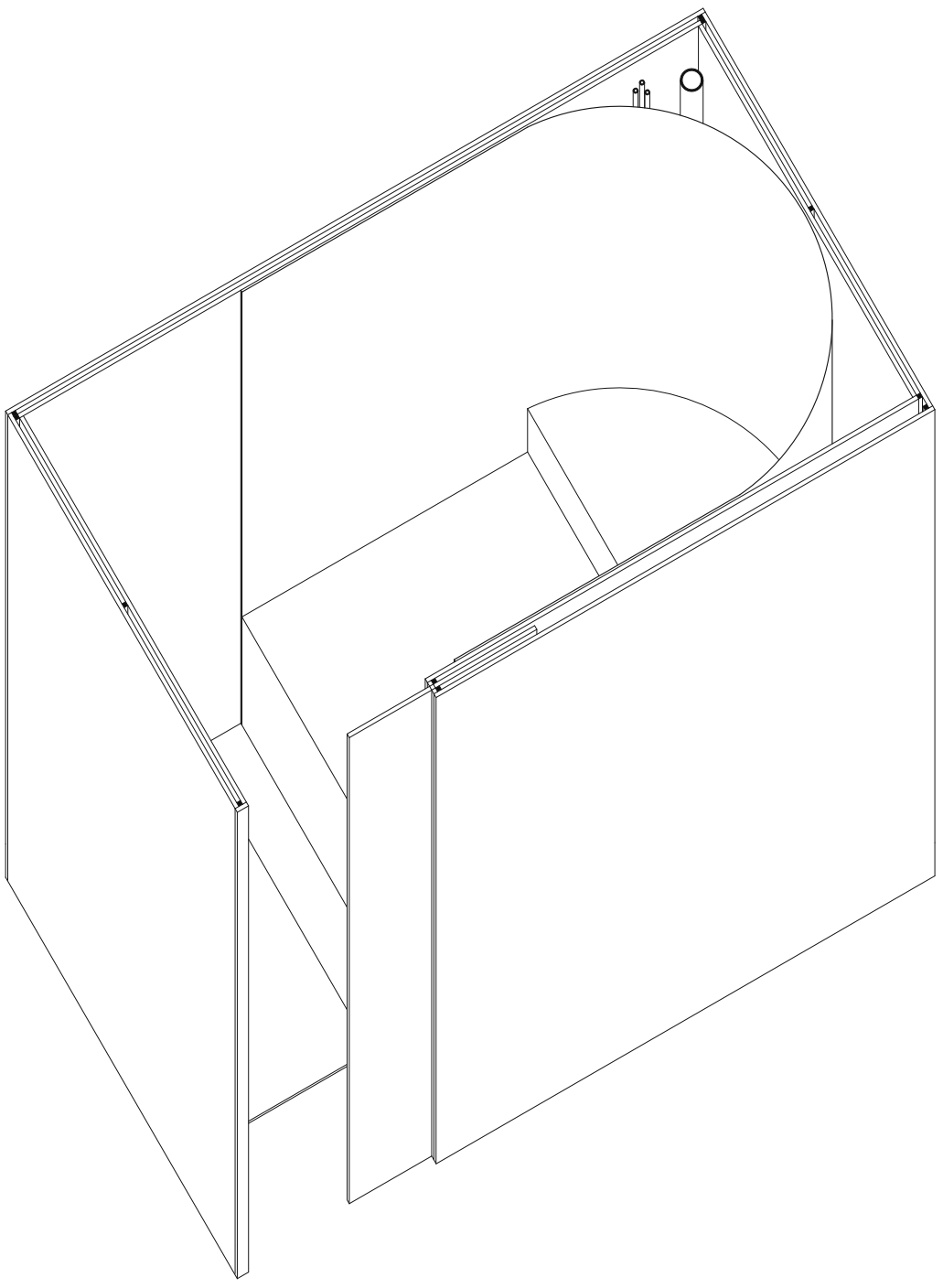
CAPSULES FOR LIVING

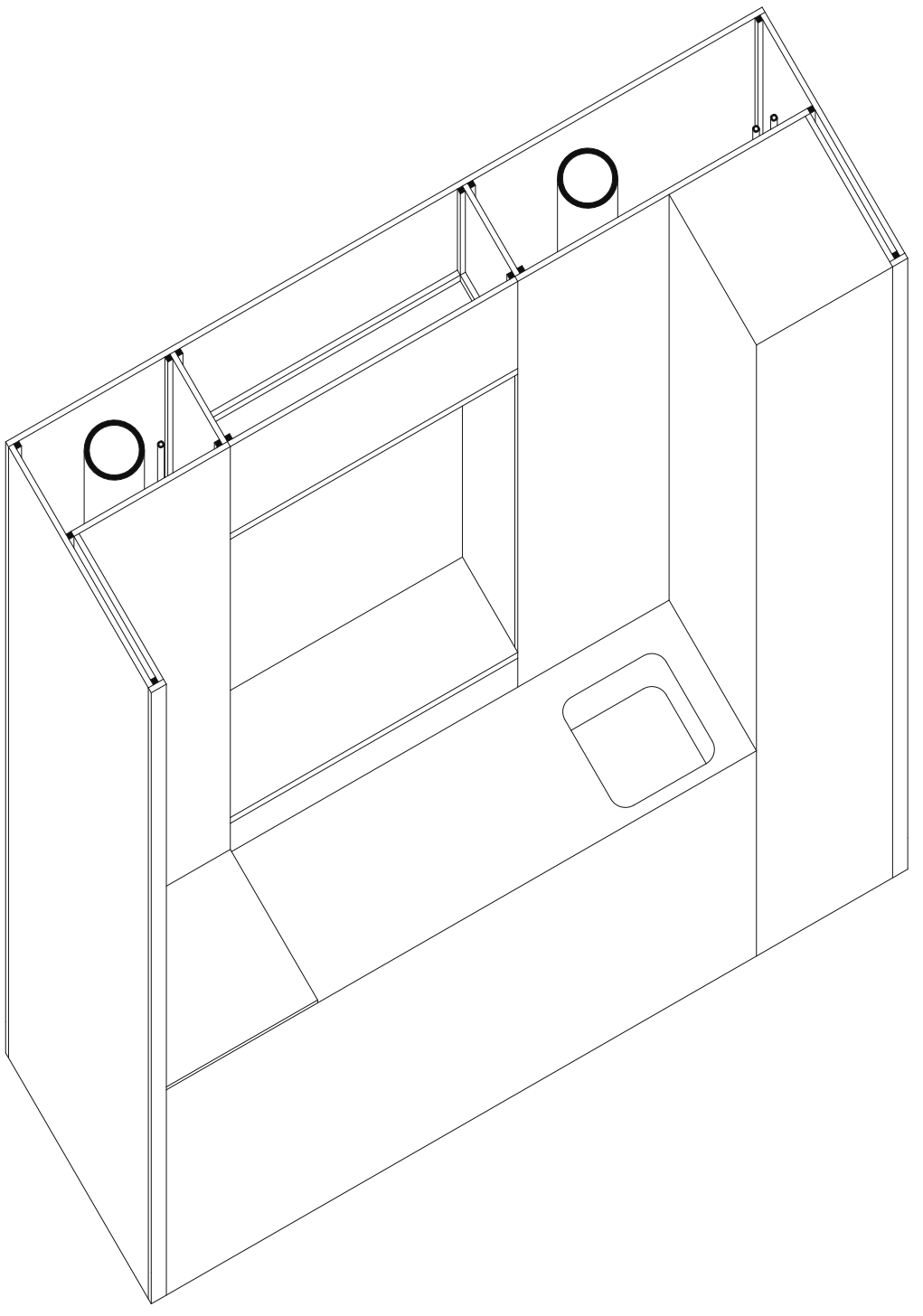
The six levels are organised starting from minimal units, that recall the architecture of the *cubiculum*, a very small room of the roman house used for contemplation and solitude, rest, or private meetings, whose configuration characterises it as the only place where public observance can be escaped.
The nature of the spaces aims at overturning the common hierarchy imposed by society in the household breaking the composition of the family unit and reintroducing inhabitants to a new form of collectivity.
The first level is composed of spacious but empty capsules in which the only space available is that of the body, therefore asking for the liberation from surplus material possessions, which are stored in the underground and eventually become material for study and experimentation. Here inhabitants are free to gather in small groups, each witnessing the separation from their belongings.
The second level is composed of individual capsules of minimal dimensions, here the inhabitants are forced to focus on the self, engaging in a process of reflection.
In the third level physical production is reintroduced again and the level is composed of individual working spaces in which inhabitants can explore their capacities and potential.
In the fourth level inhabitants are reintroduced to a limited form of collectivity, that of the couple, the space is compose of bedrooms that become the place of gathering and confront.
In the fifth level partitions are abolished and the space is composed only through steel frames that function as ephemeral divisions. Inhabitants are re-introduced to the collective life where living and working become one stream.
In the sixth level all the possibilities are given, capsules are free to assemble in every possible way and collectivity and individuality coexist in a continuous swing. Inhabitants gain access to the conveyor belt and when the renovation works are finished get the chance to decide if leaving, staying in the inhabited zone taking care of it, going back in the renovated building or continue following the infrastructure and the renovation works.

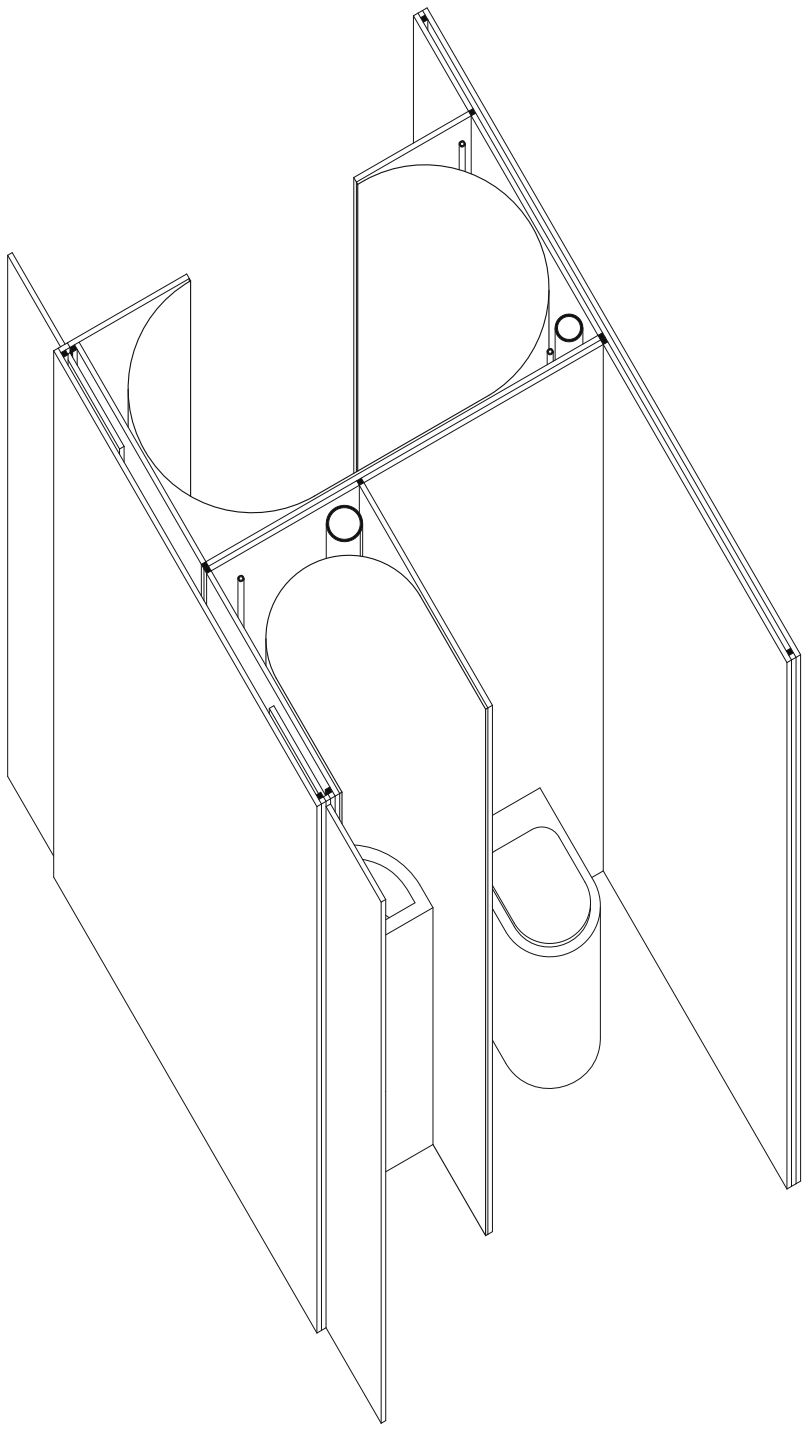














Concrete models of the capsules

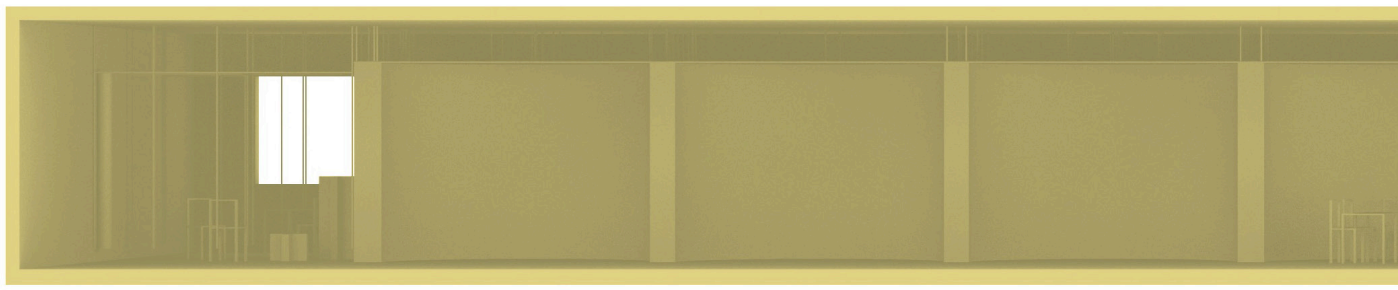


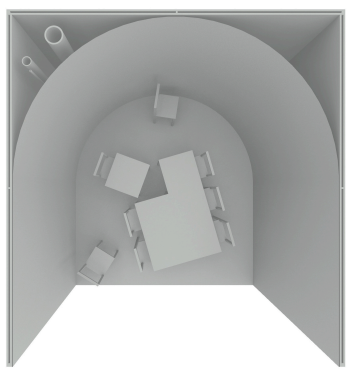




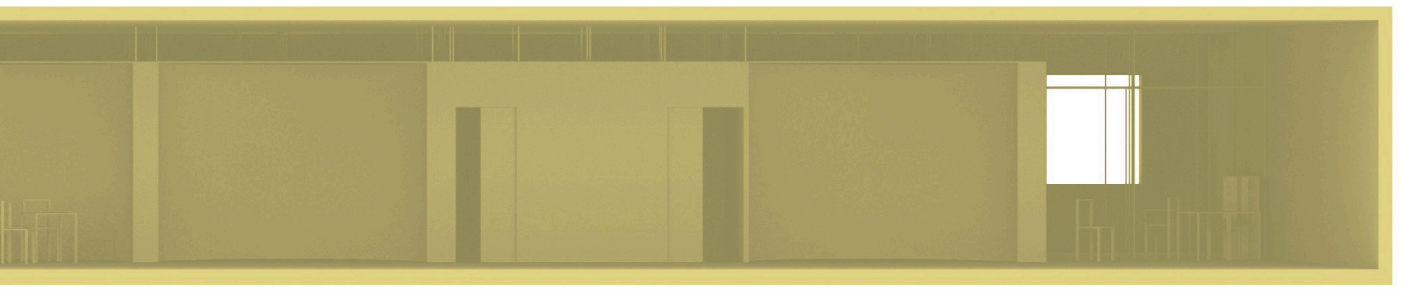
6 (FUNDAMENTAL) LEVELS

Ceremony
Death
Education
Love
Encounter
Life

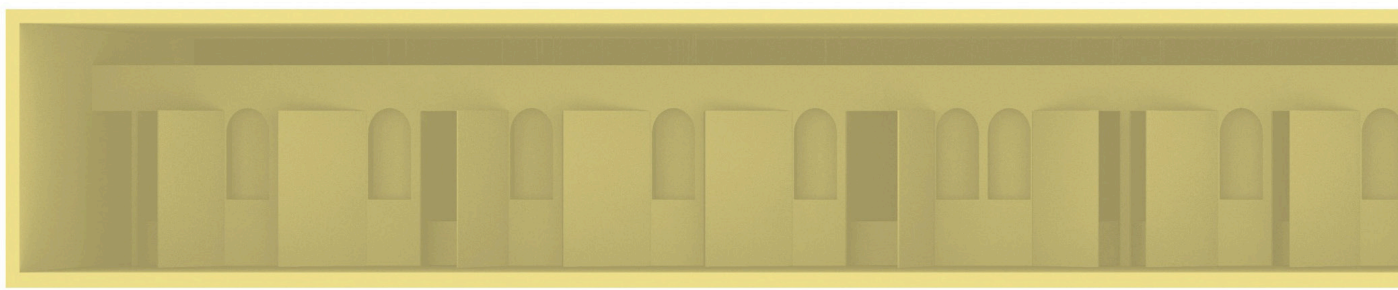


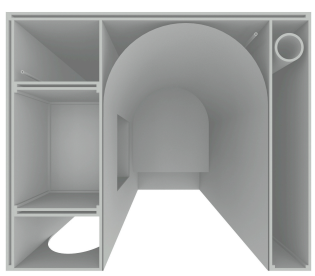


I / Ceremony

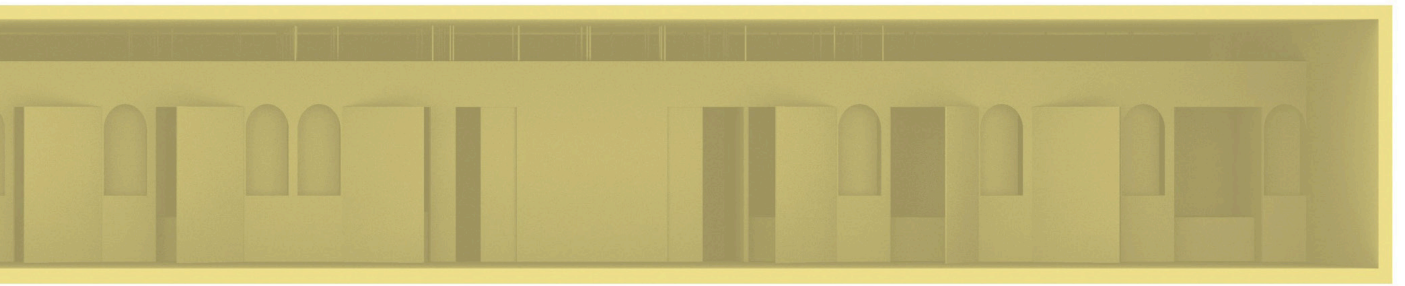


I



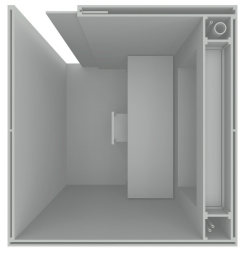


II / Death

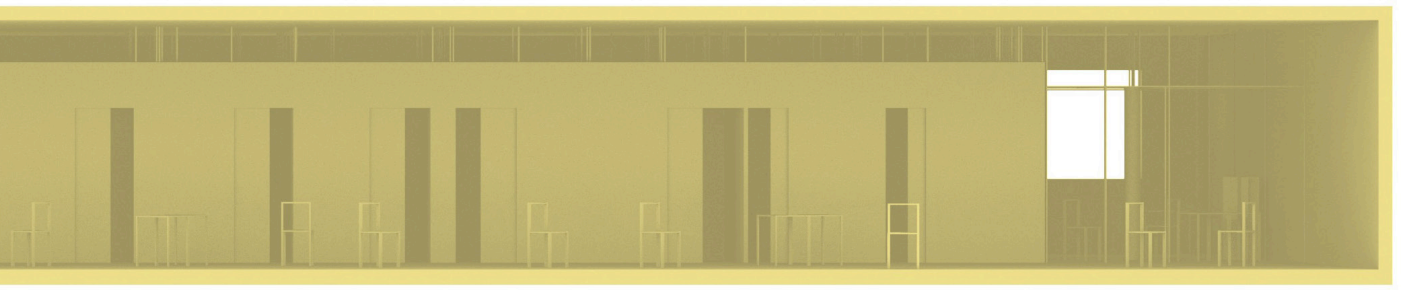


II

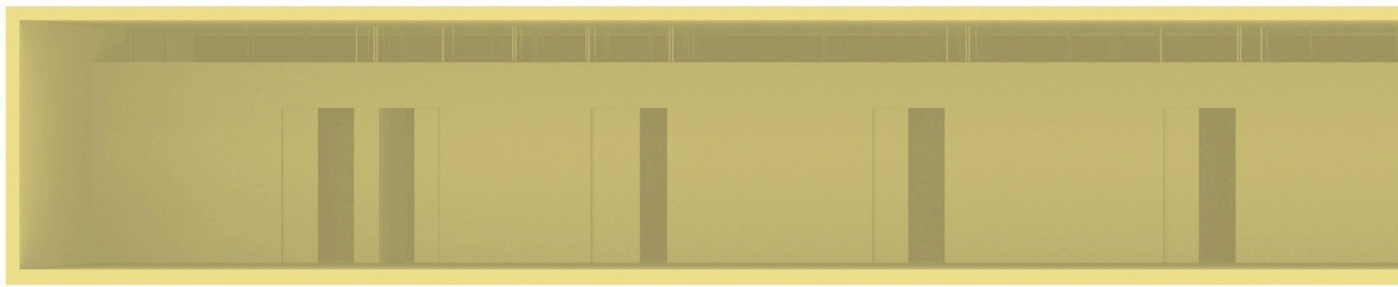


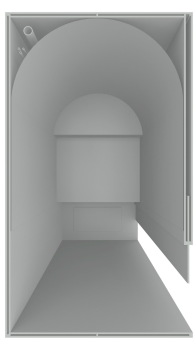


III / Education

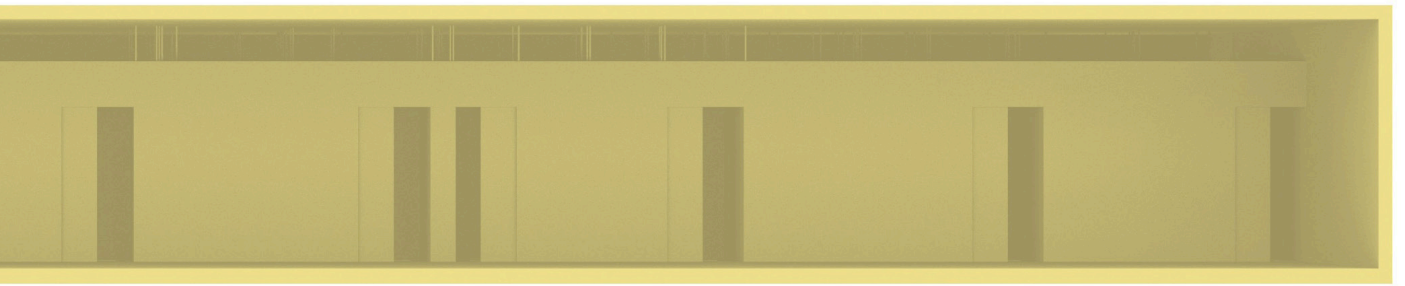


III



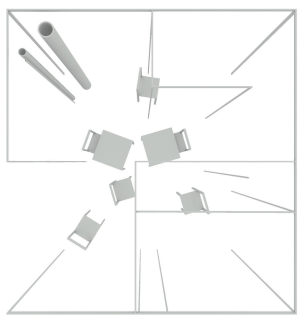


IV / Love



IV





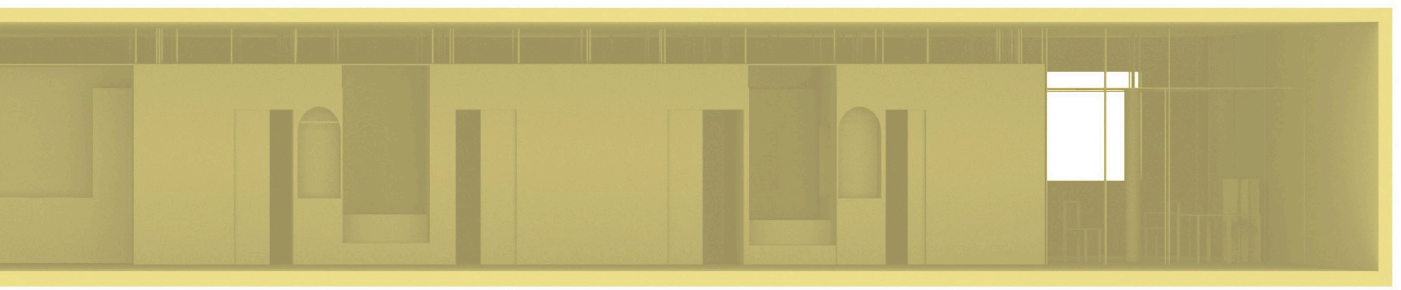
V / Encounter



V/x2



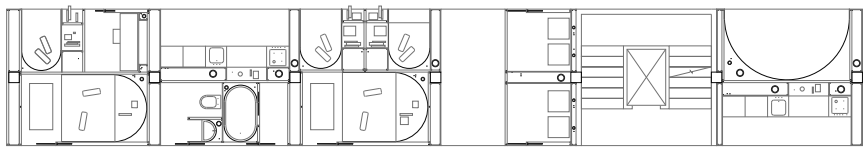
VI / Life

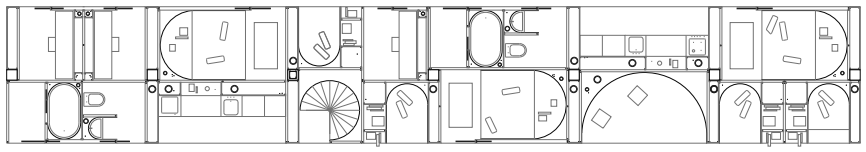


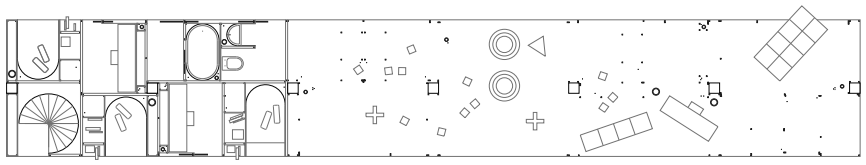
VI/x2

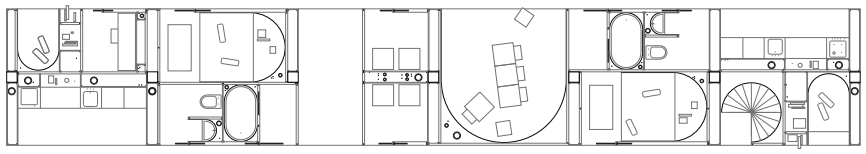


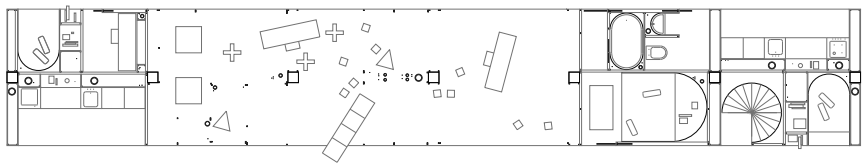


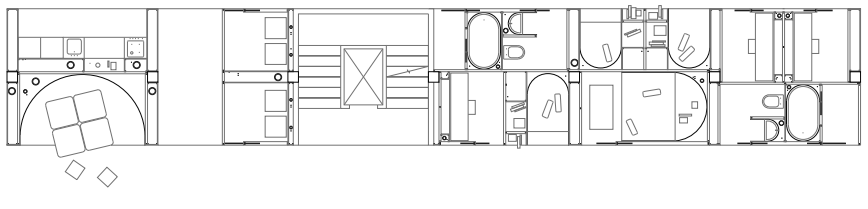




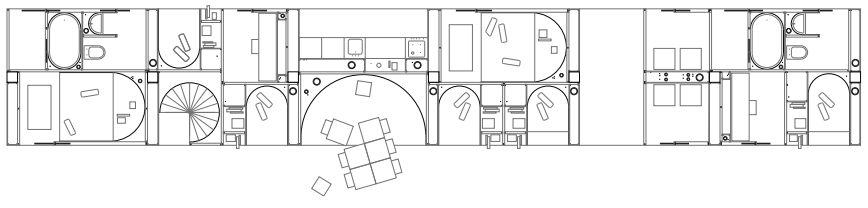


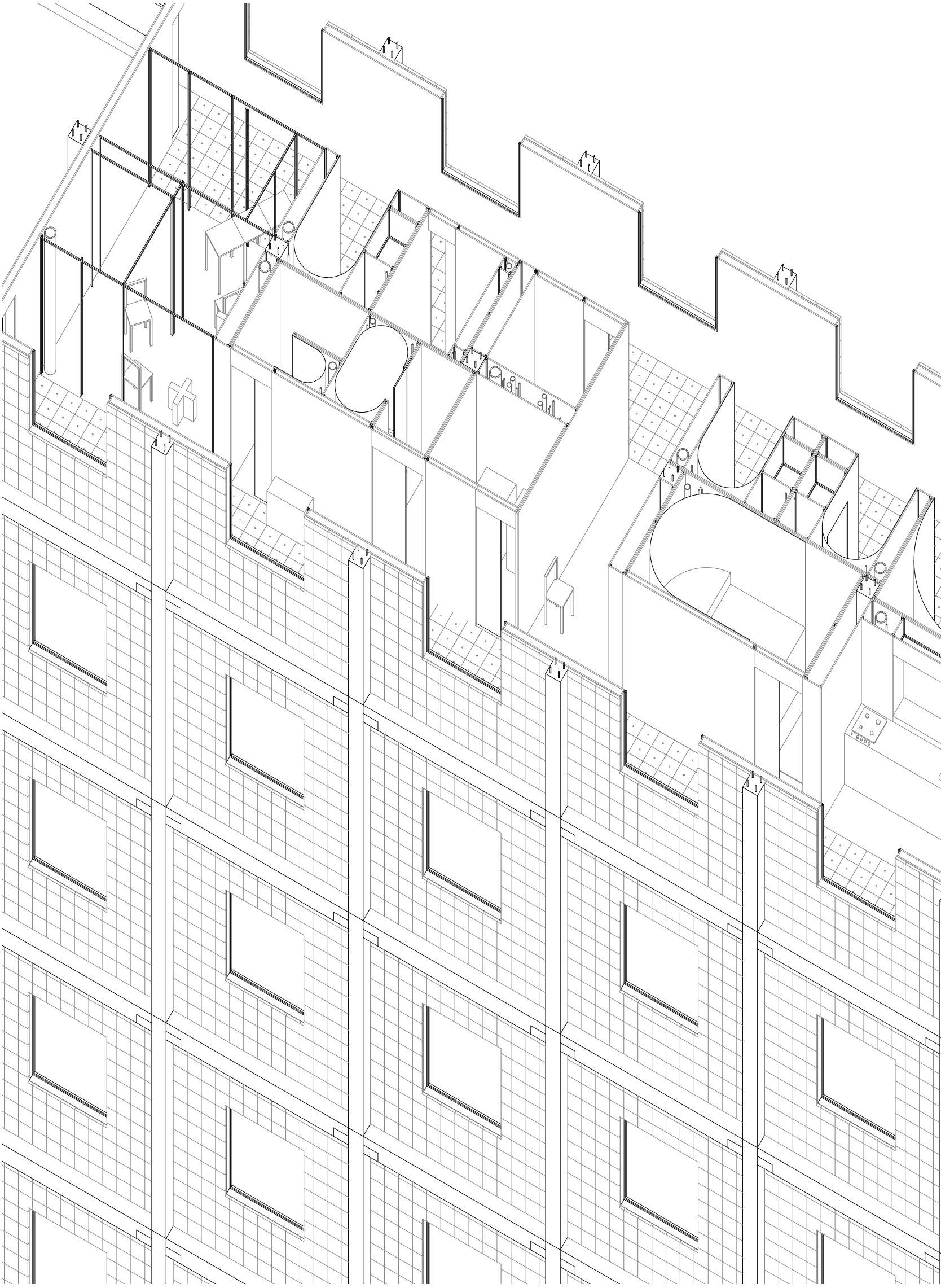


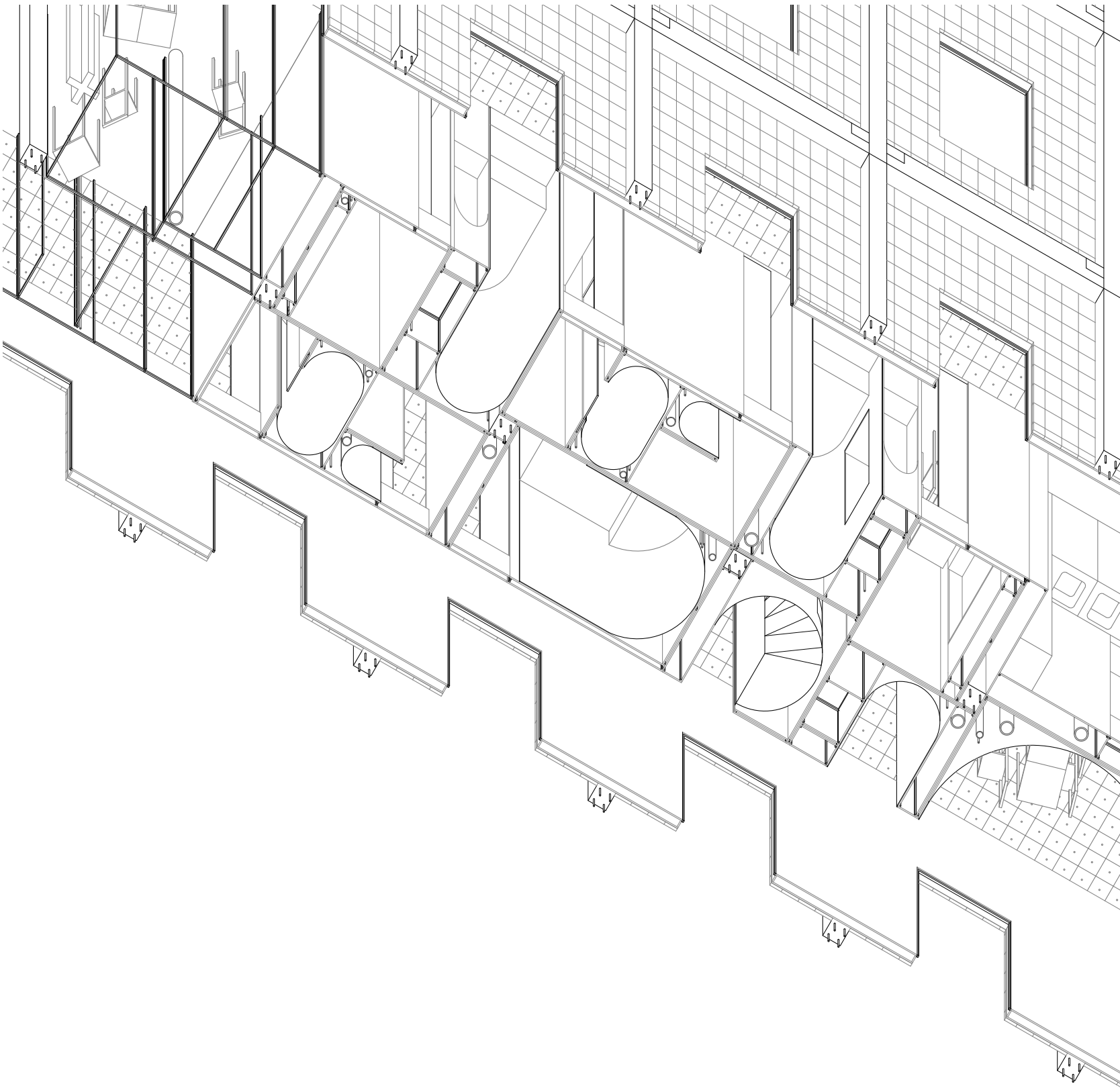


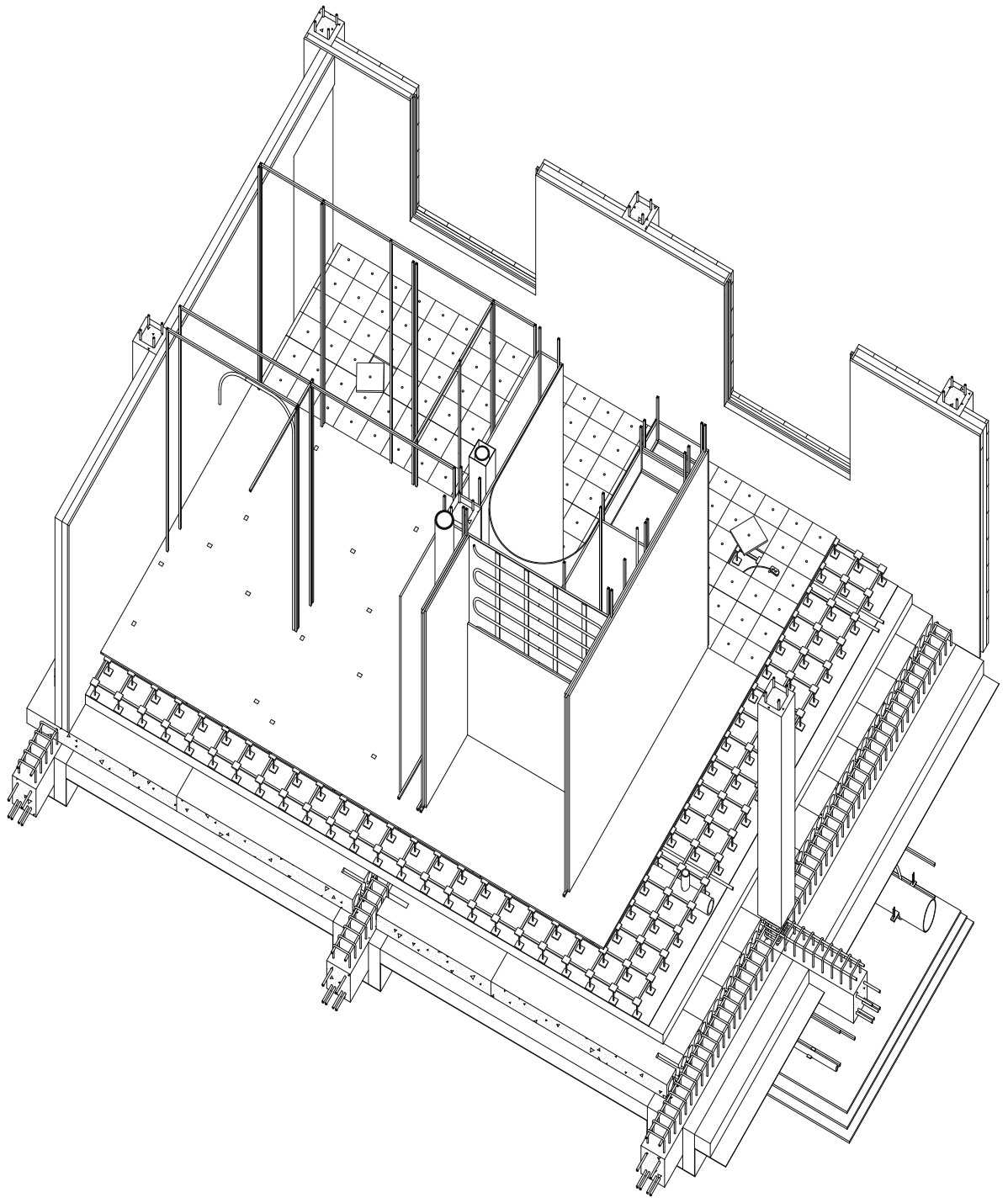










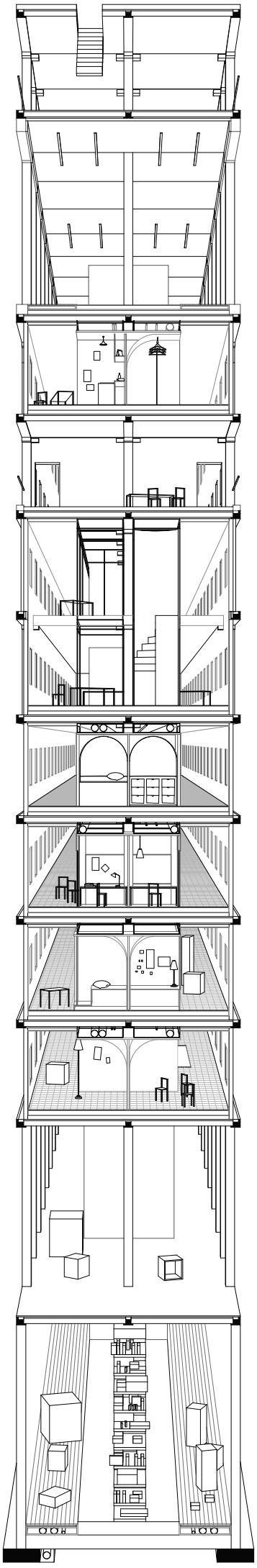


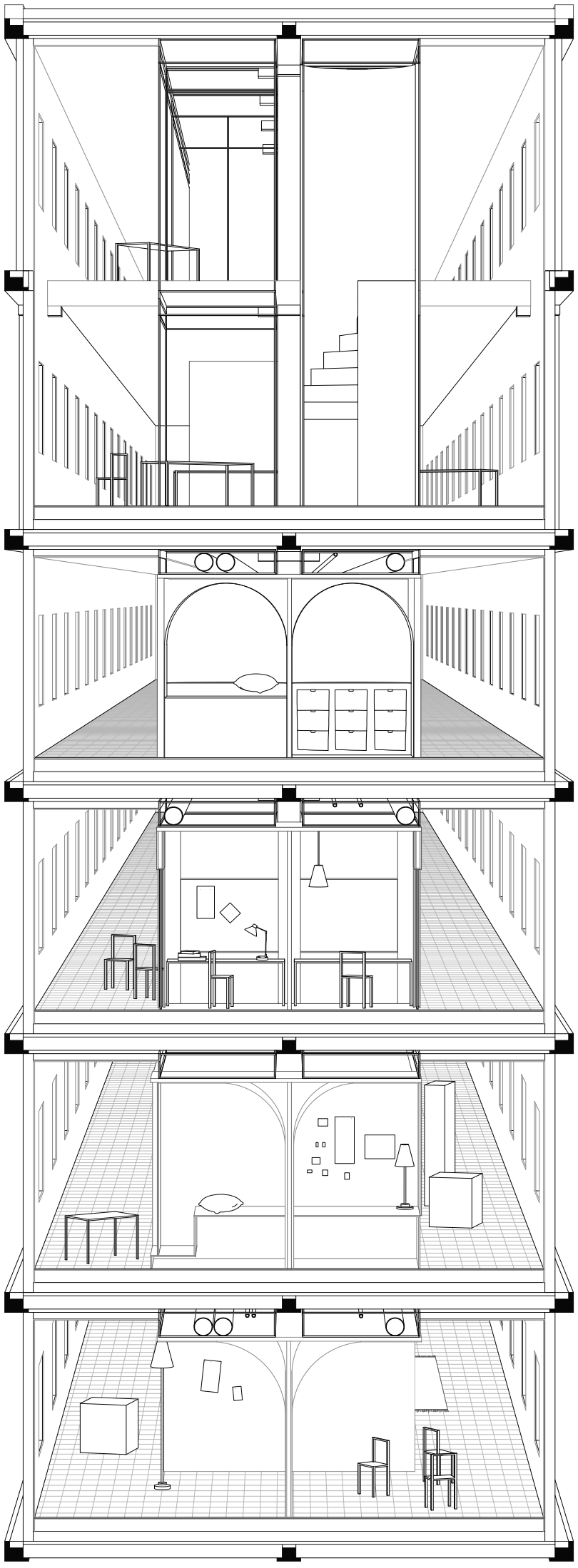
THE SIXTH LEVEL

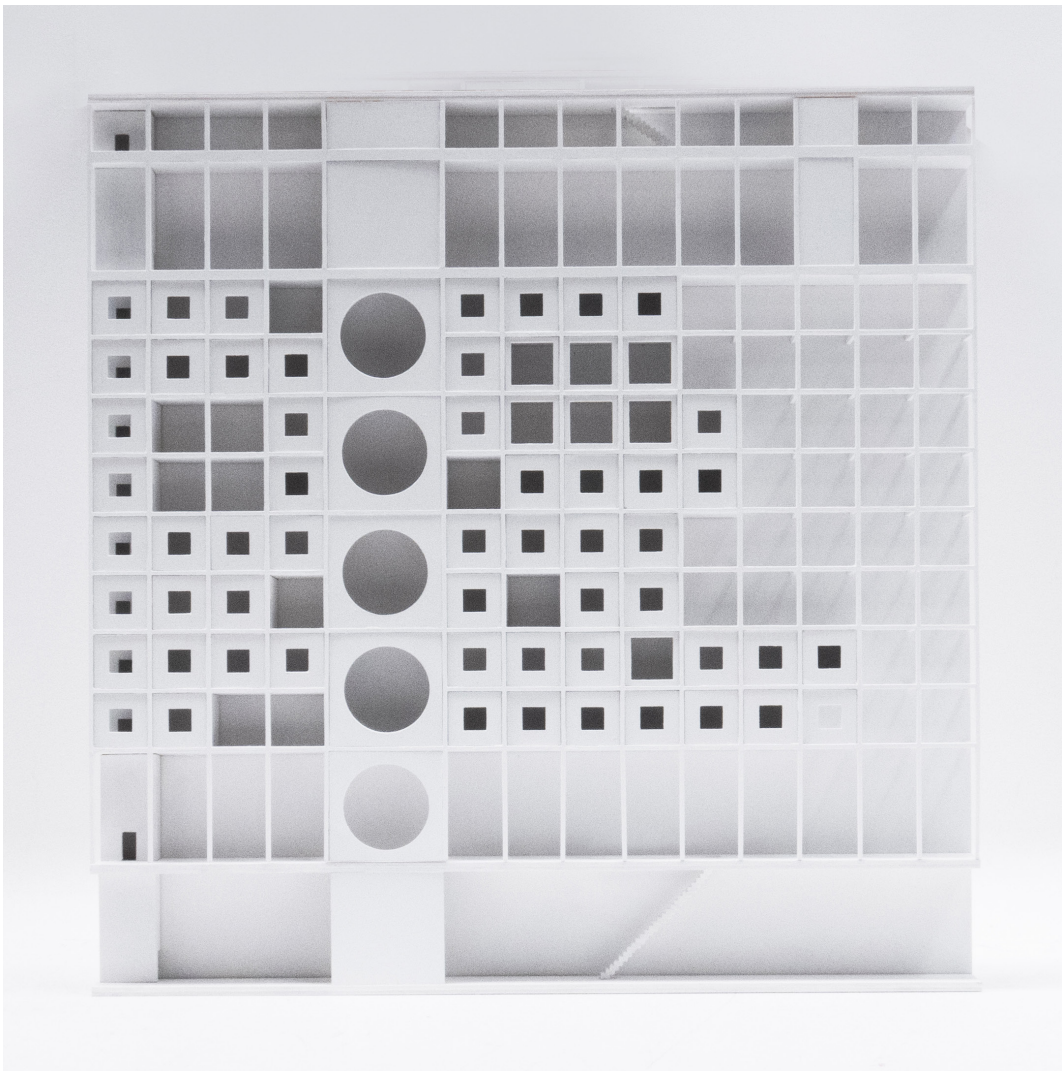
In the sixth level the space becomes generic, opening up possibilities for living and giving the chance to the new educated citizen to establish his/her own riruality. Open spaces are therefore punctuated with niches that can be inhabited in various ways and of which the only way to constraint the body is through dimension, orientation and enclosures.

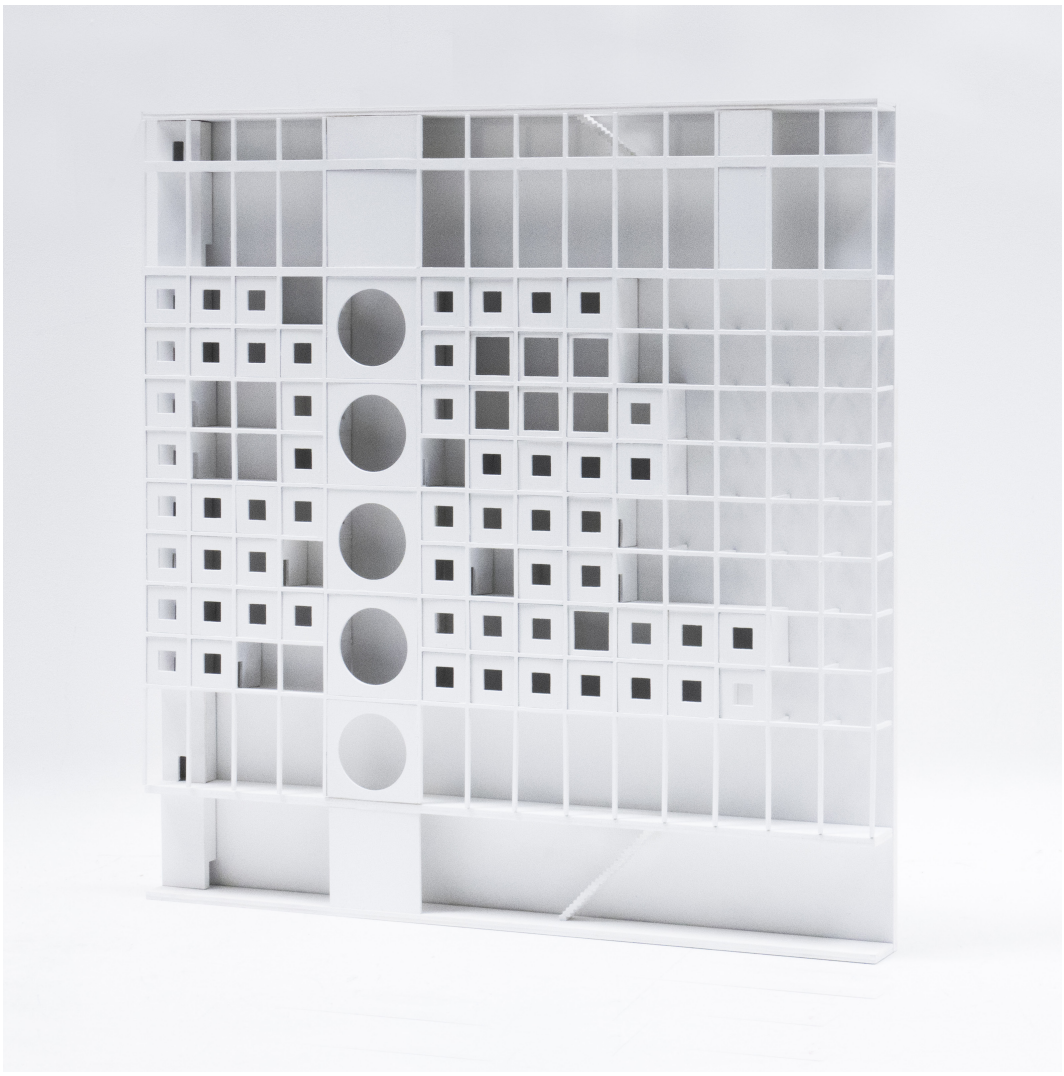
The niches are there in constant juxtaposition with the openness of common space, that becomes a gathering zone that has to be crossed when passing from one niche to the other and that therefore triggers a contiuous alternation between solitude and collectivity.

In the collective zone the floor functions as an endless plugger, tiles can be lifted allowing users to connect everyehere and therefore rendering productive the entire space. The niches become the functional core of the level, hosting heating pipes and technical equipments.





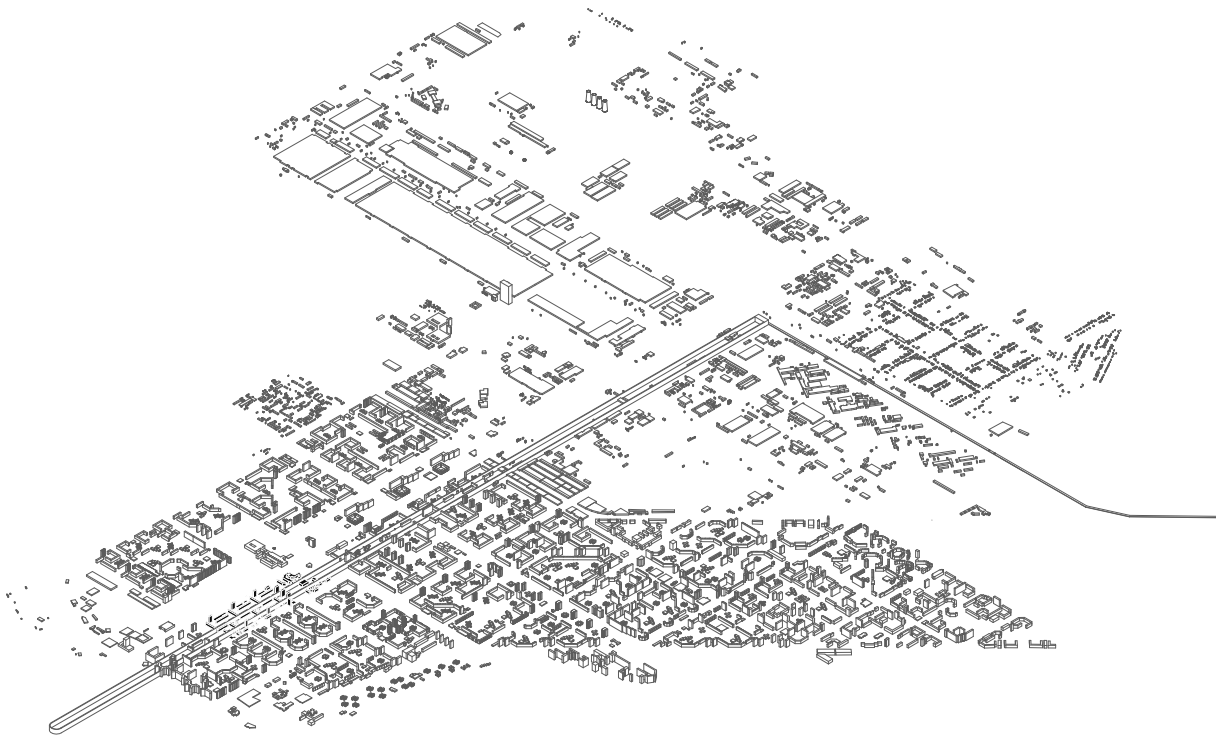


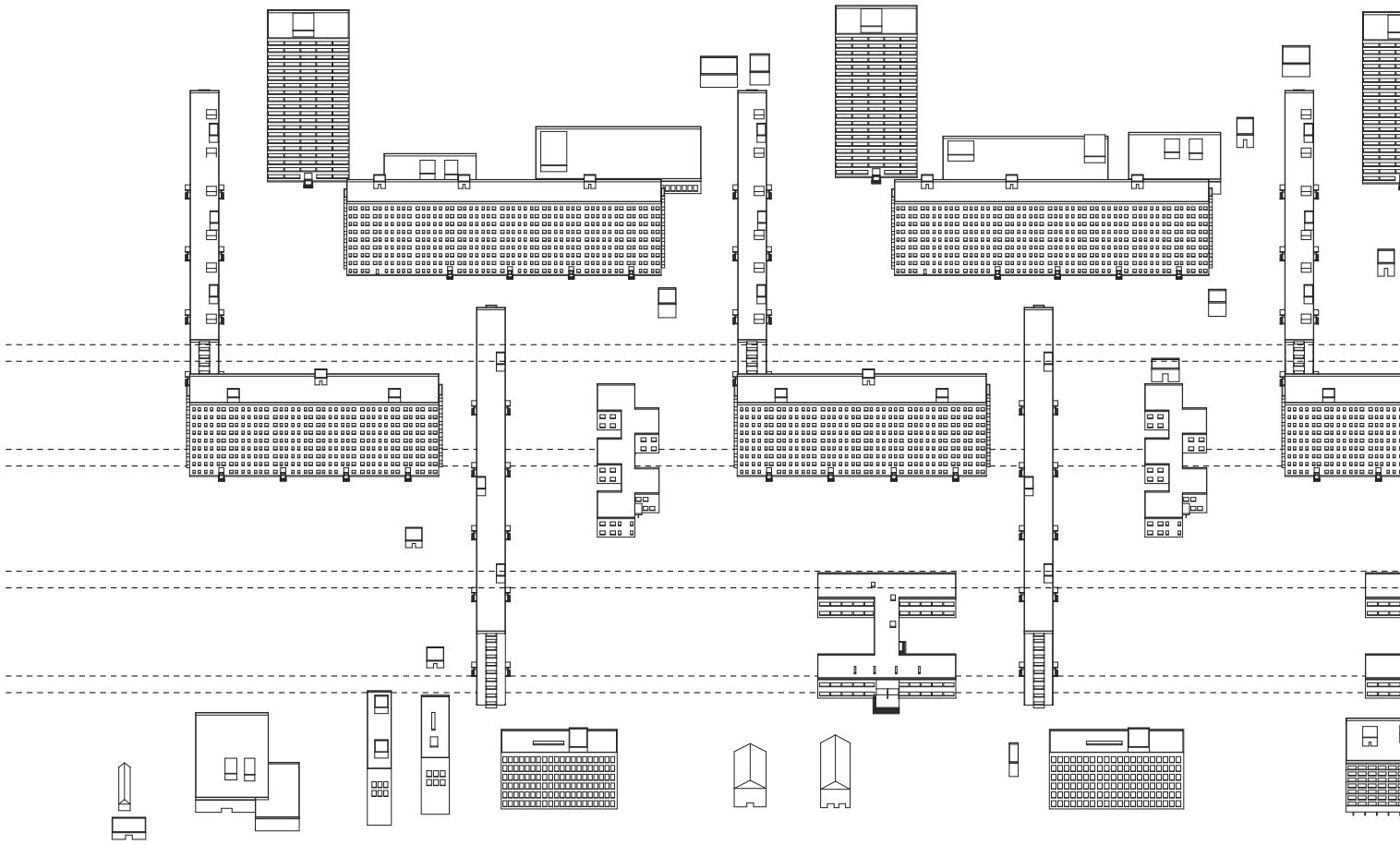


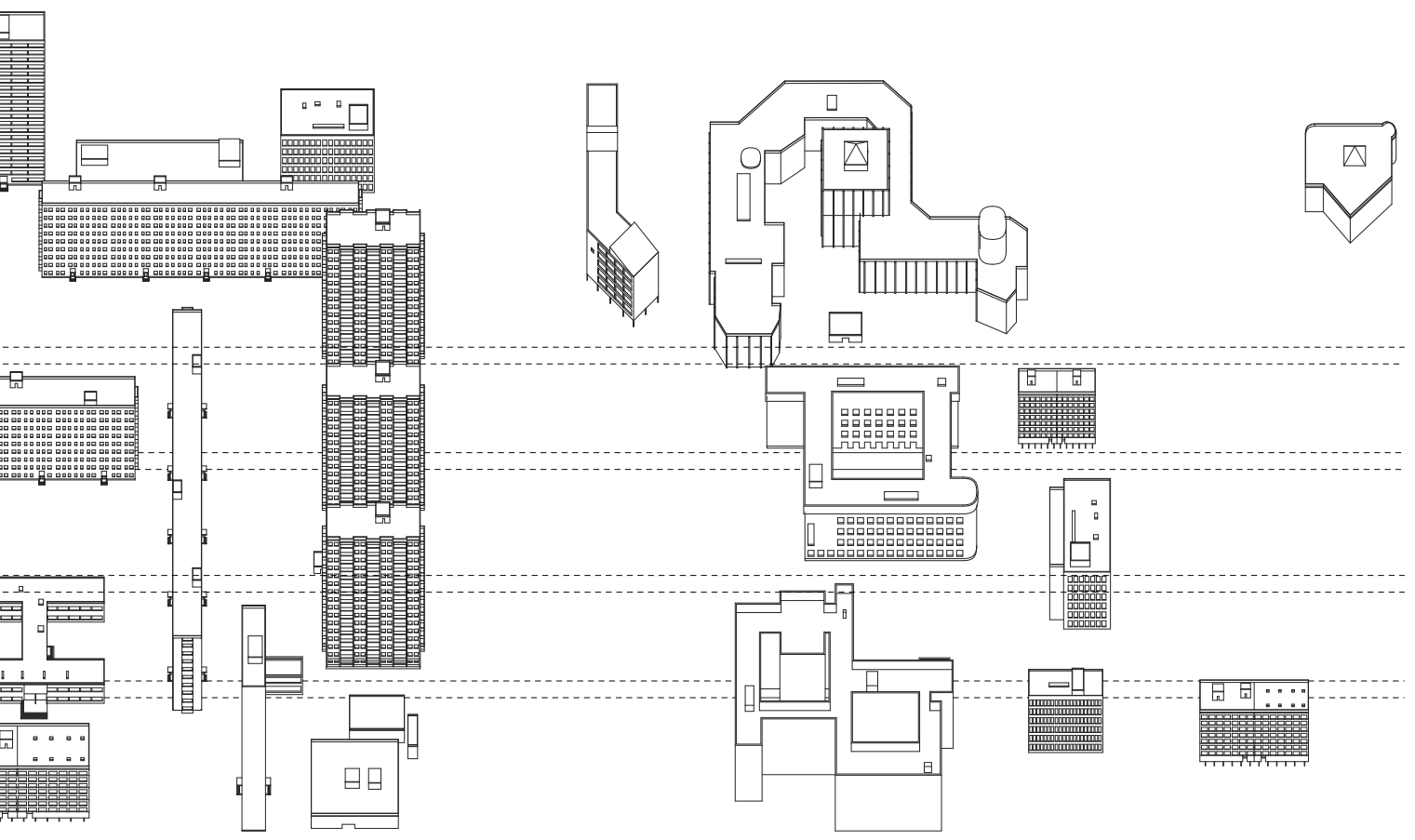
7 PROJECTS

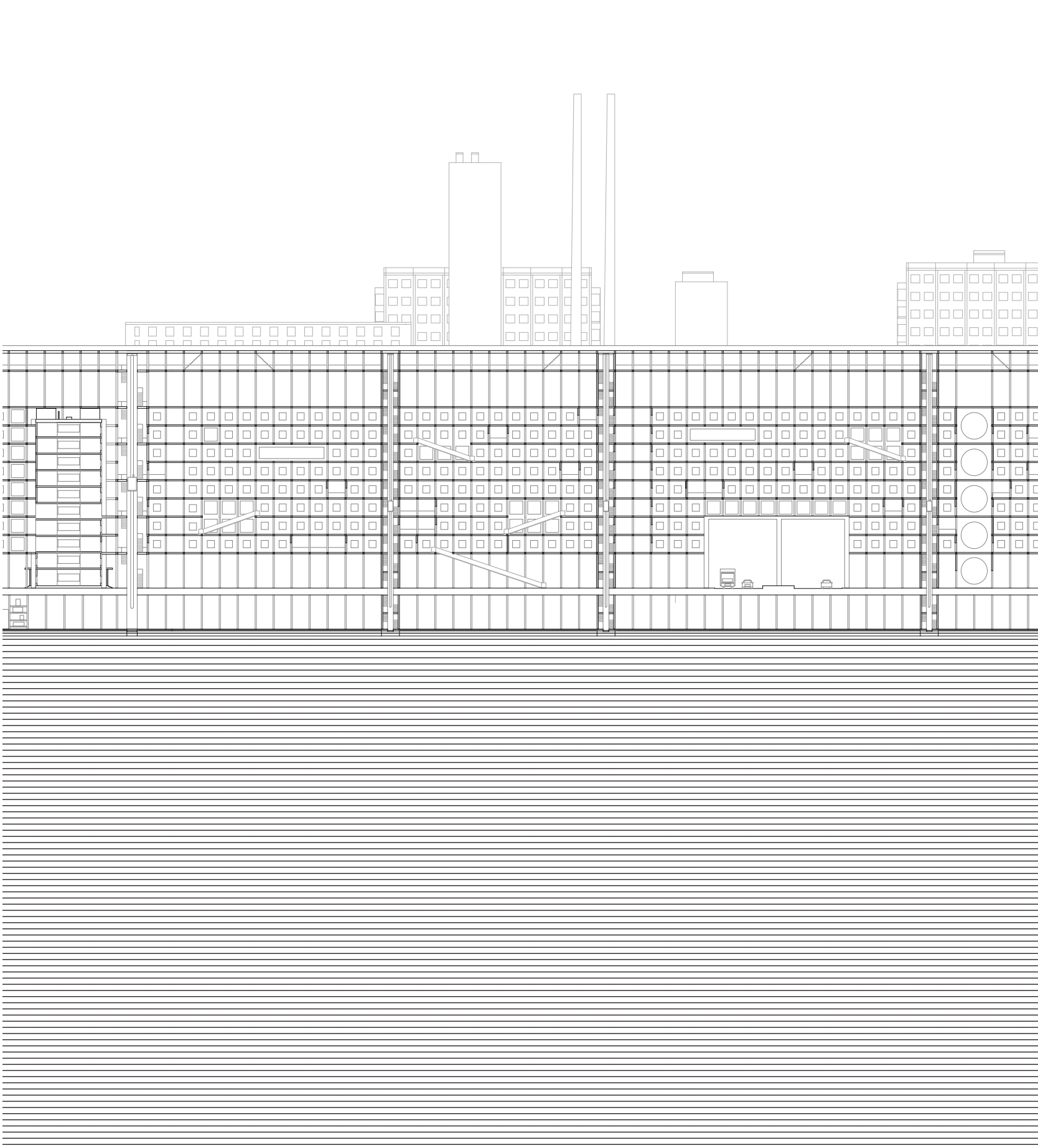
Crossing the existing buildings the infrastructure enacts a process of transformation, reshaping former actions into productive ones that complete and expand its internal functioning.
The crossed buildings, part of the vocabulary of prefabricated soviet architecture are therefore examined and reinterpreted turning them from isolated satellites of the factory to expanded public facilities of the infrastrucural machine.
Following the needs of spaces of the contemporary production of knowledge and merging them with the needs of the inhabitants extrapolated from the 10 problematics, existing offices, schools and housing blocks are turned into archives, laboratories and ateliers.
The process of re configuration of the components follows the principles of the free plan, physically keeping only the load bearing structures the buildings are cleaned from partition walls and pre imposed space hierarchies, becoming therefore containers that are respectively broken, expanded, opened and so on in order to trigger the creation of a new rituality for immaterial production.

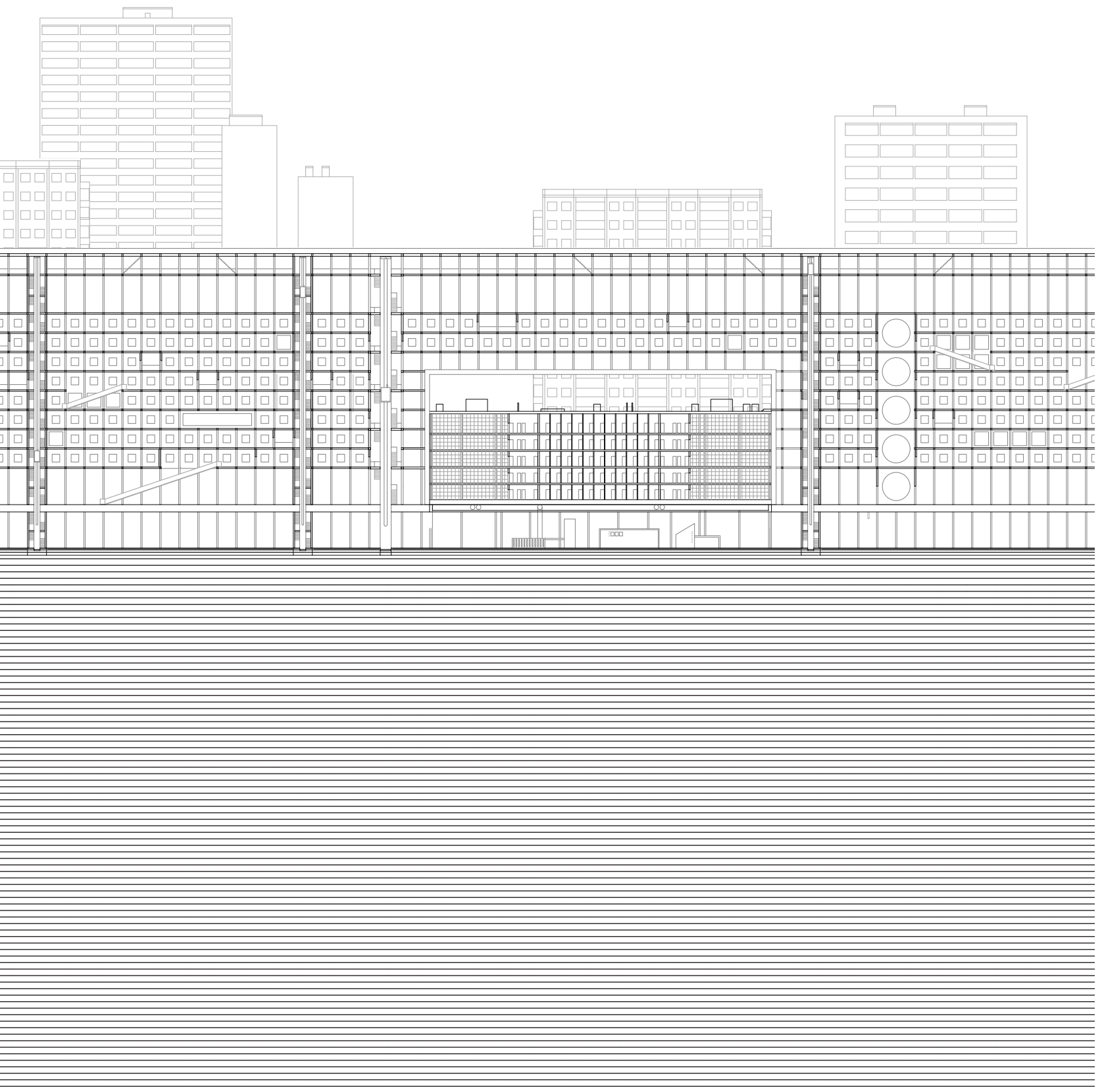
The infrastructure acts as a backbone for the process of transformation. The underground conveyor belt is used to transport leftovers and new materials, while open connections allow vertical movement between levels. At the same time, the new prefabricated concrete structure directly touches the existing buildings, extending the new system of pipes and cables inside the buildings and merging infrastructure and crossed buildings into one unique multifunctional intervention.
The new rituals enacted in the six projects are described in the architectural spaces and accompanied by a narrative that unfolds imagining a possible life inhabiting and interacting with them.
Each one of the here presented projects enacts a new ritual of resistance, that can be respectively characterised with a specific action that is propagated in the city punctuating the day, or by the subtle but continuous subversion of a common practice.



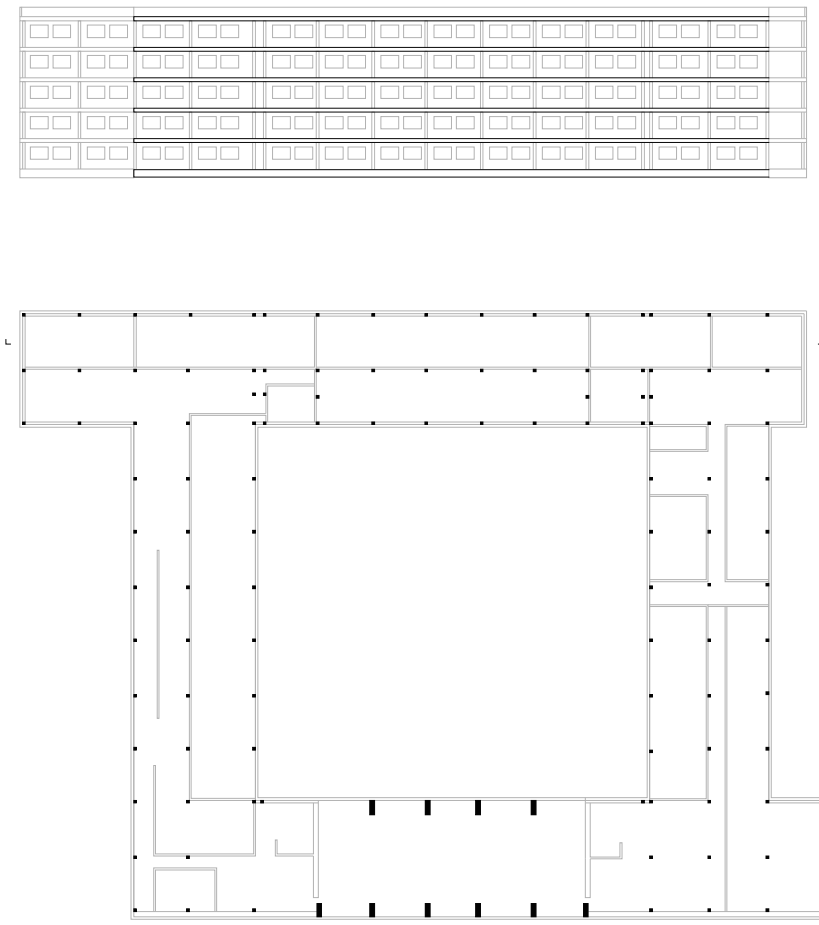




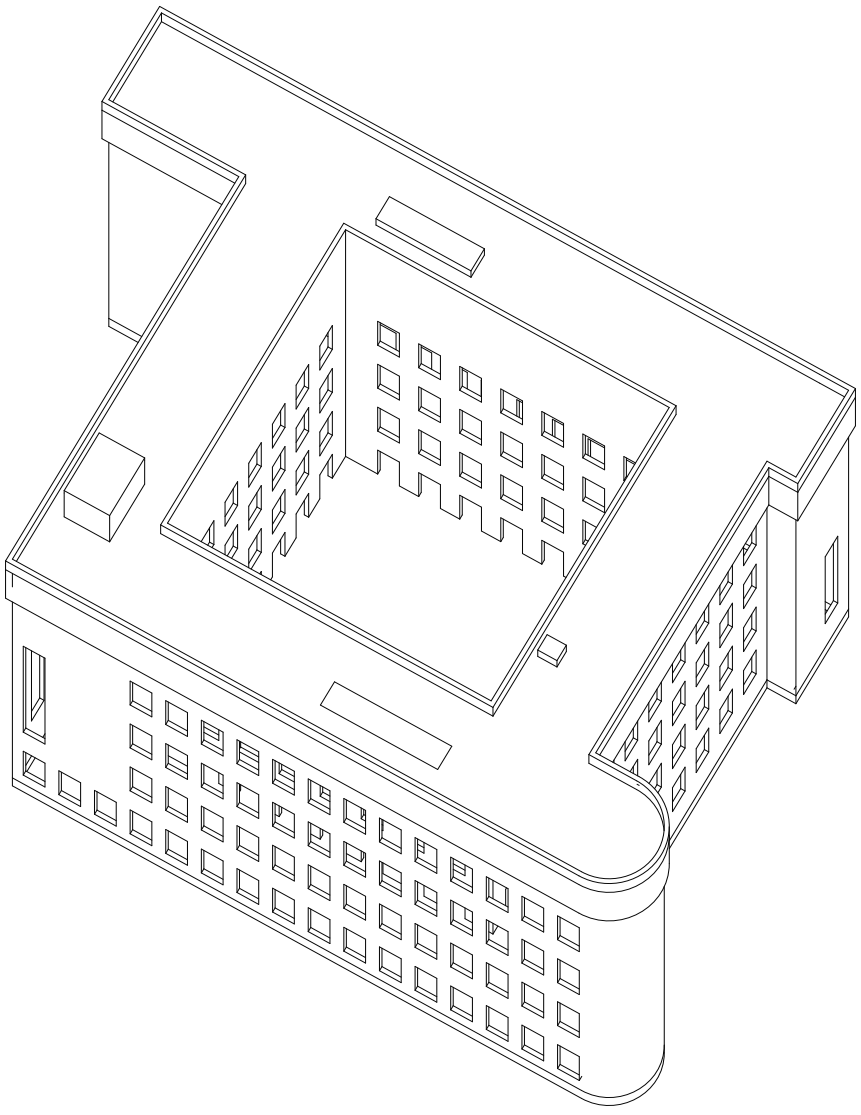


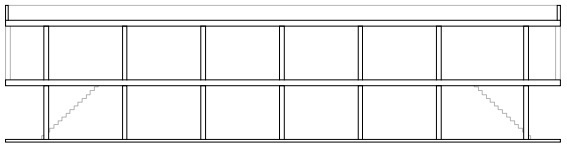


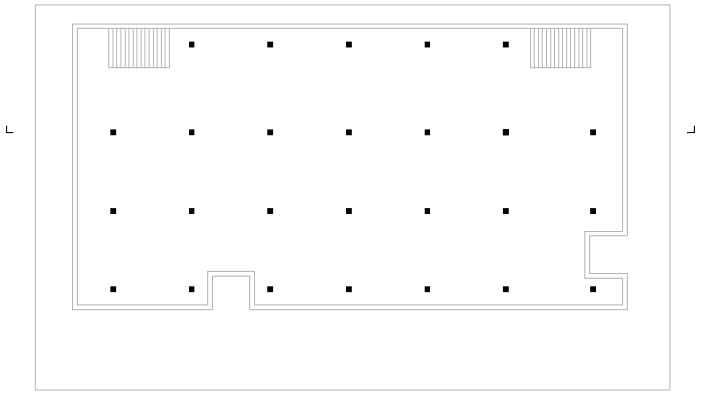
EXISTING COMPONENTS



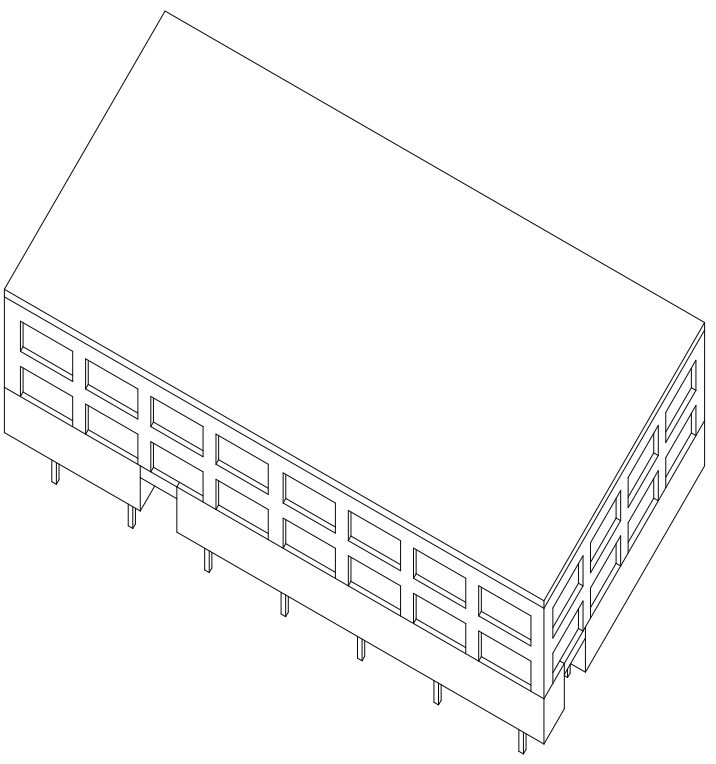
Office Block

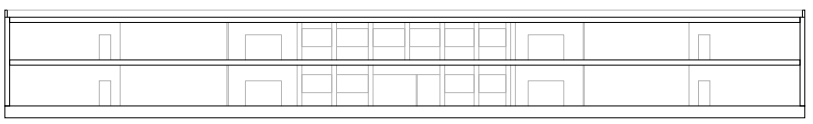


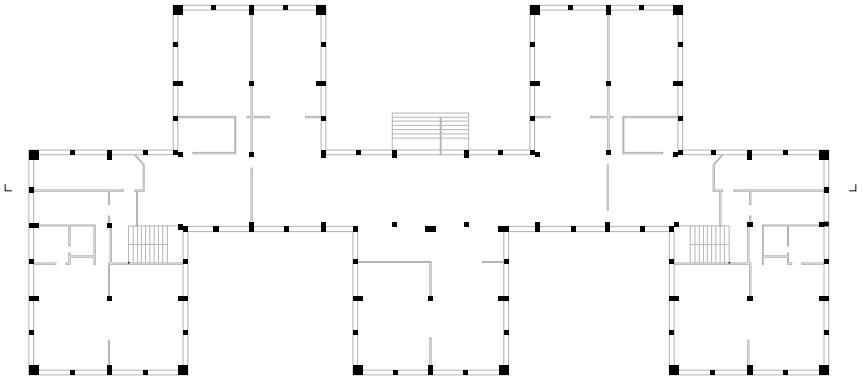




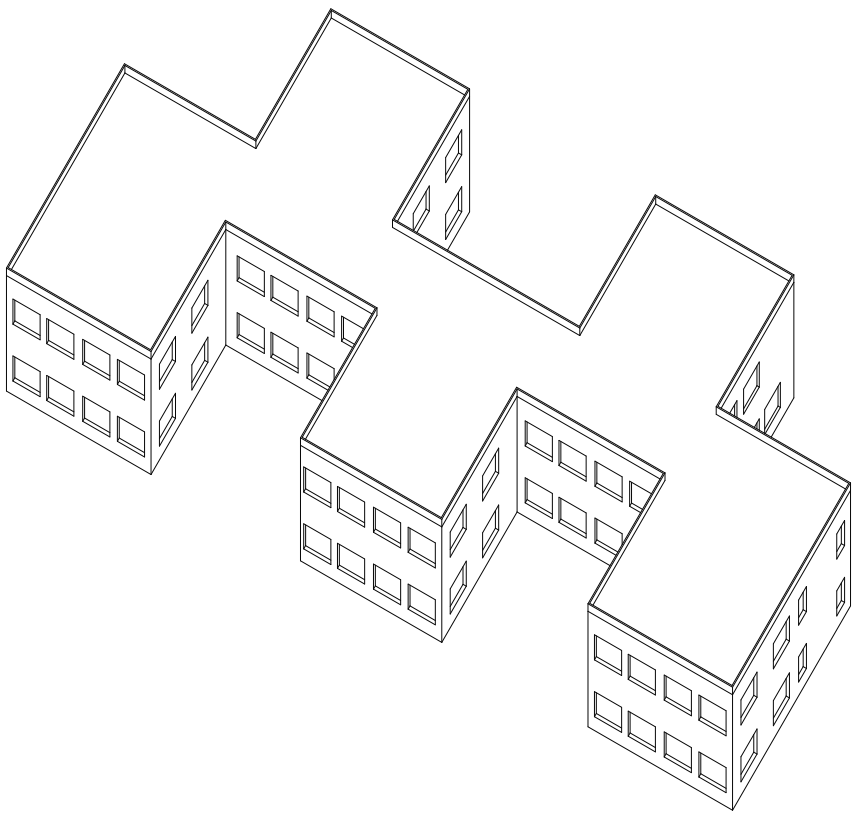
Commercial

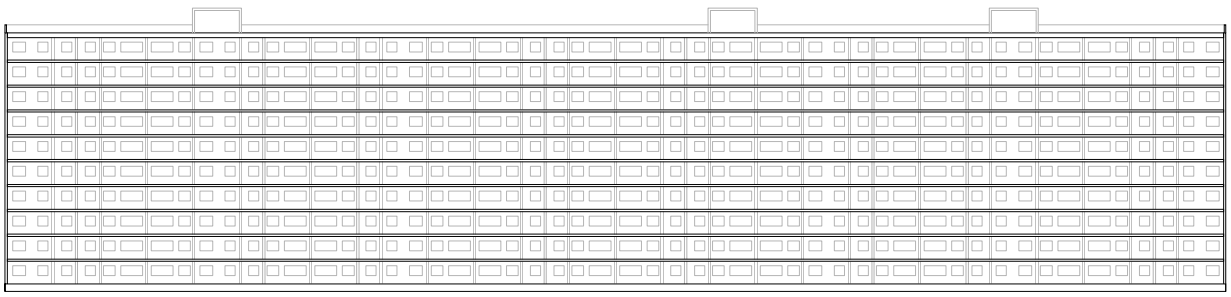


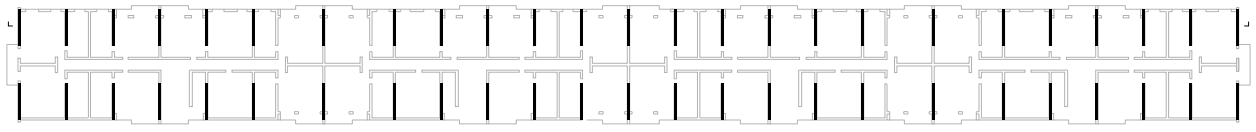




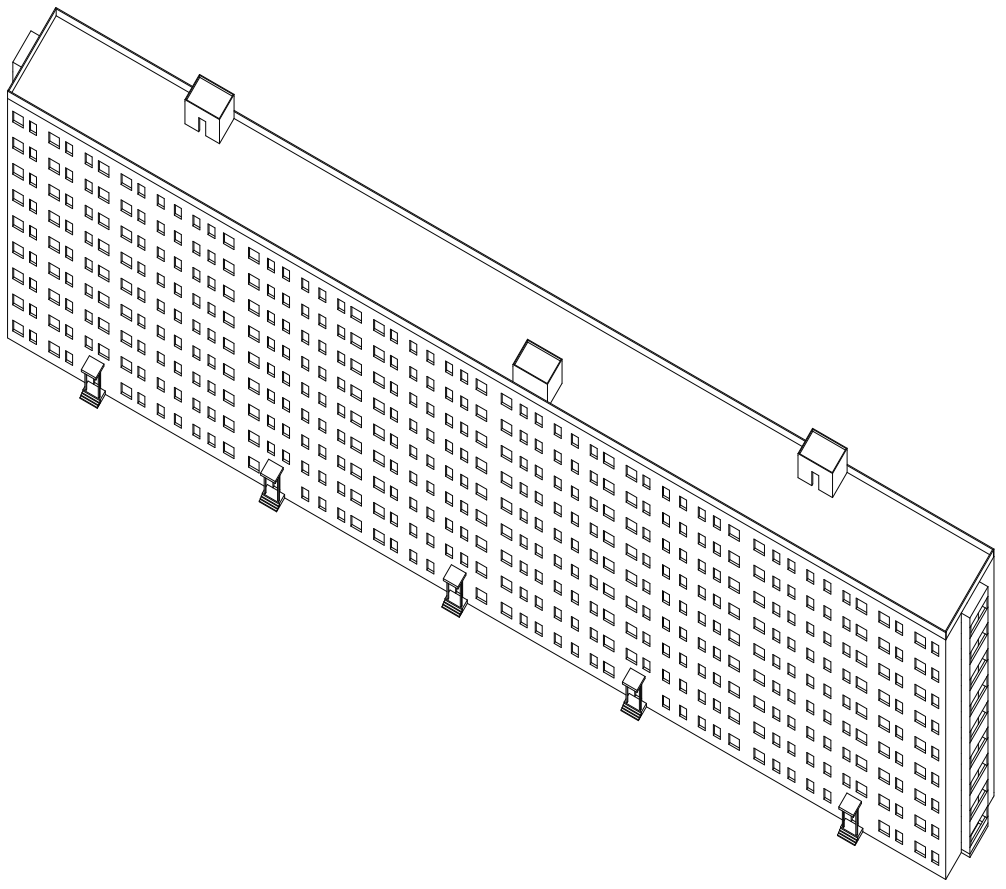
Education

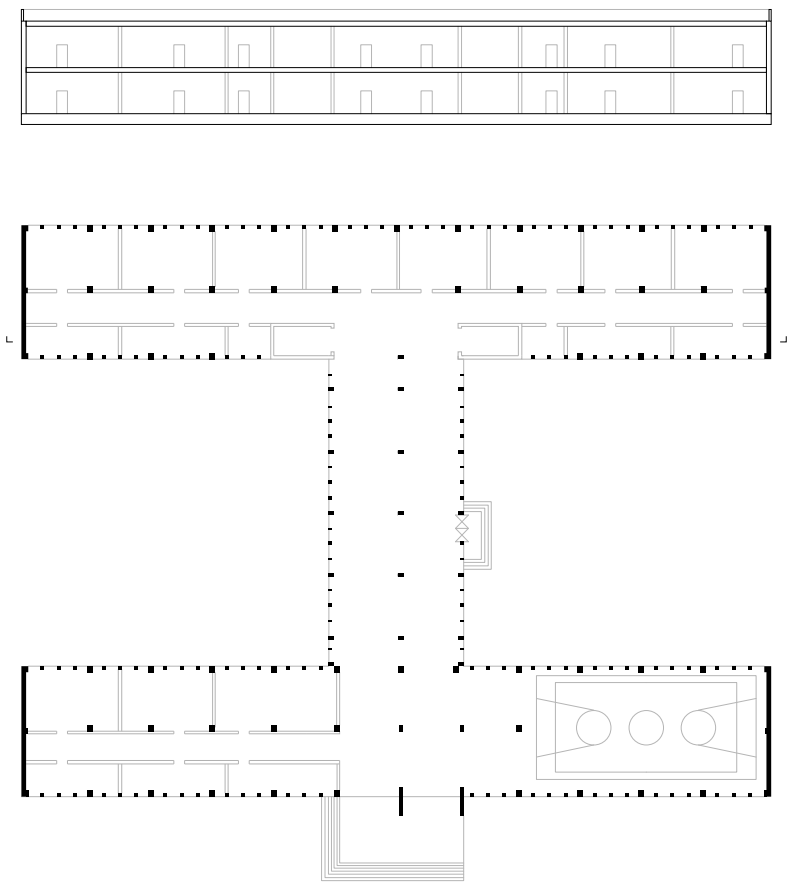




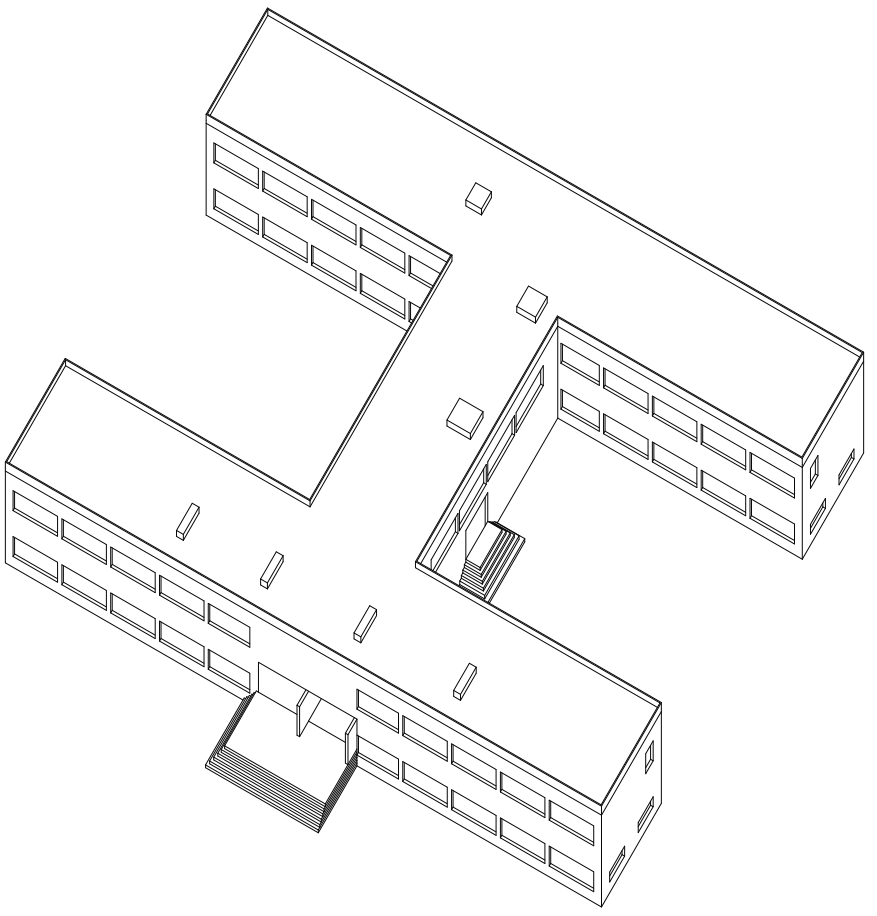


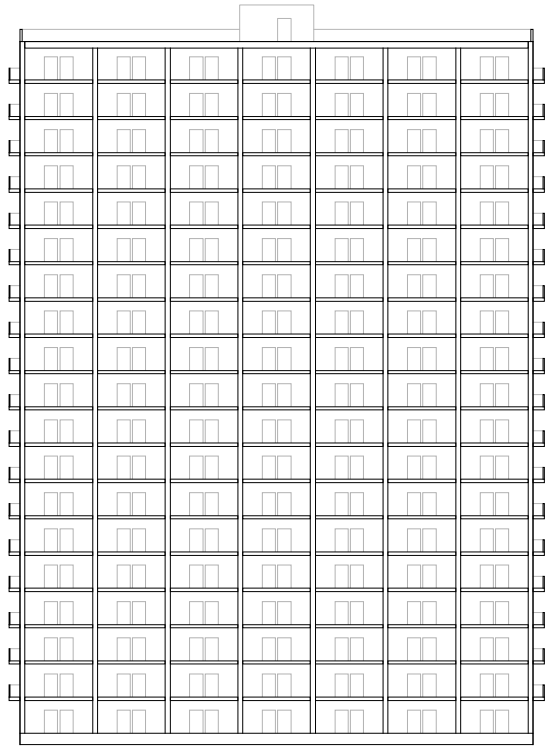
Housing Block

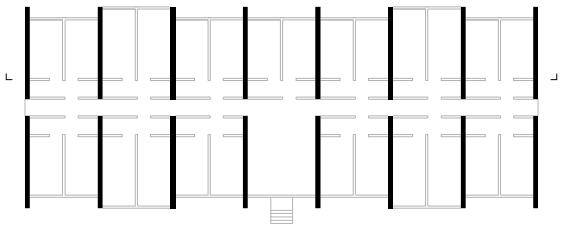




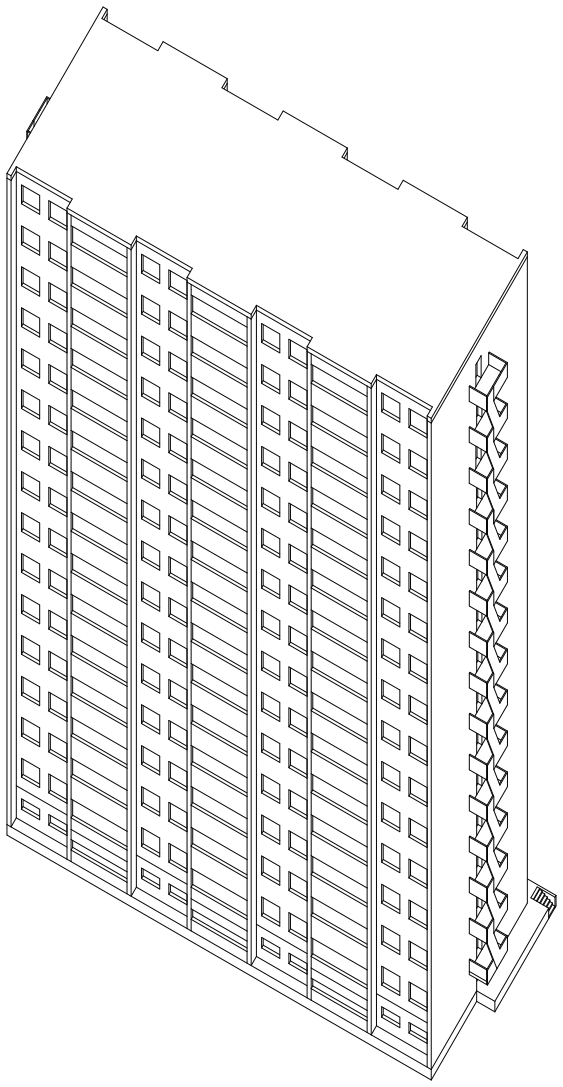
Education



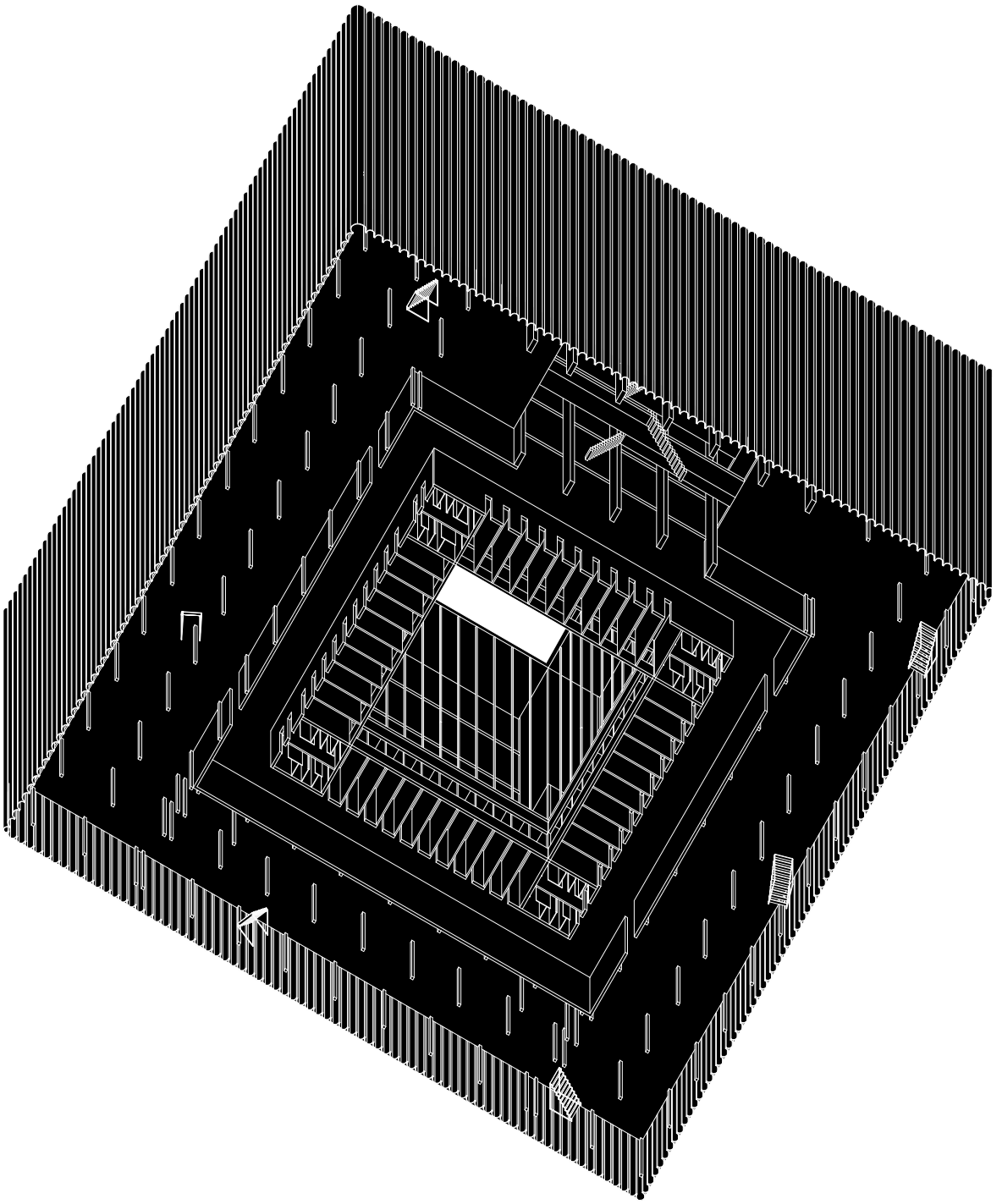




Housing Block



7 PROJECTS

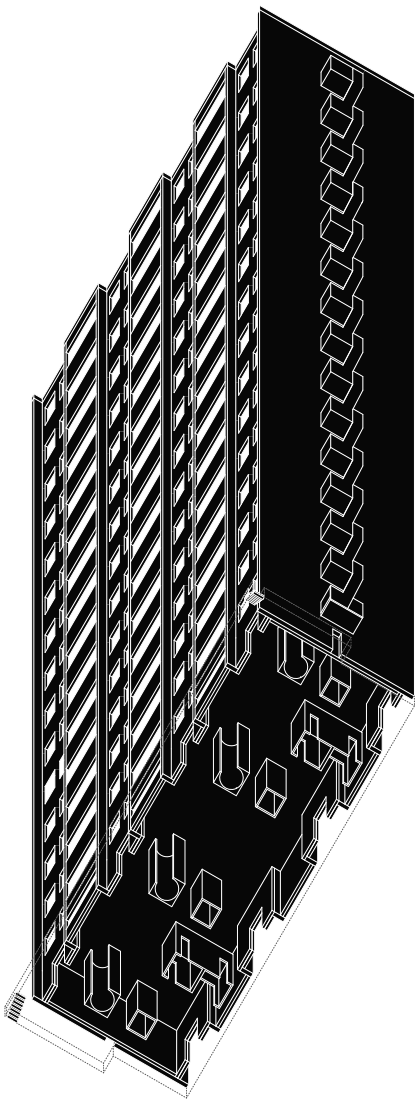


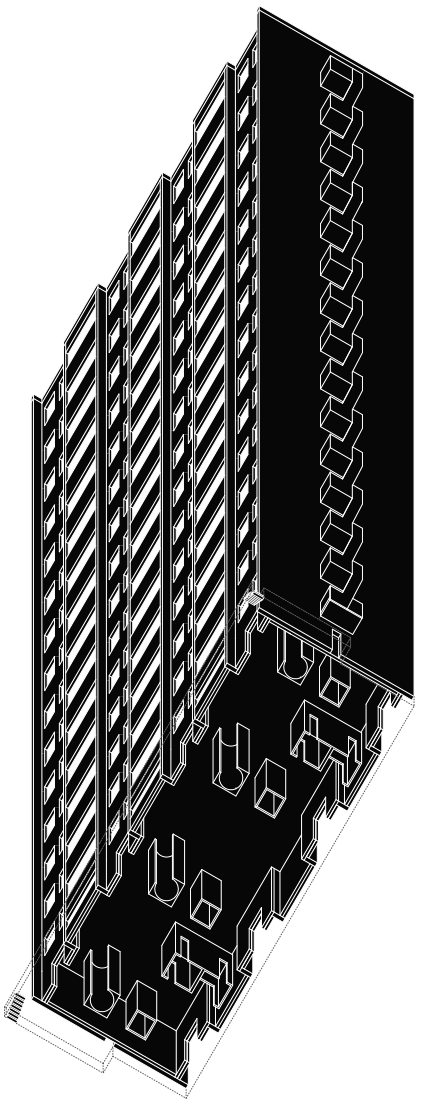
THE TEMPORARY ARCHIVE

After many ages of stacking pieces after pieces in useless towers of objects the man finally looks back, and finds himself submerged by the amount of information he collected. Finally aware, he walks away to find a new place where to start again, but eventually he realises that everything accumulates and he cannot escape the loop of production. He conceives, then, a space where it is still possible to get lost, to discover without the necessity of classification. In there he stores his knowledge illogically, every piece to be found again and again for no specific reason, in an endless loop. The man wonders, and he becomes wiser. Other men join him, they store their memories, he comes across things he would have never imagined.

The books stacked in illogical sequences slowly travel on conveyor belts, they descend, from top to bottom, eventually reaching the incinerator. Readers continuously move them, they bring them up, they accelerate their journey to the underground, they bring them up again, they stop, they read, they wonder. It is an endless practice, readers stay for days, or weeks. At the end of the day they eventually reach the ground floor and overwhelmed they take a rest in the individual cabins.

Sometimes the archive burns, the incinerator ejecting smoke in the clouds as a signal, but the readers don’t try to stop the fire, eventually they stand to watch, and they finally feel liberated.

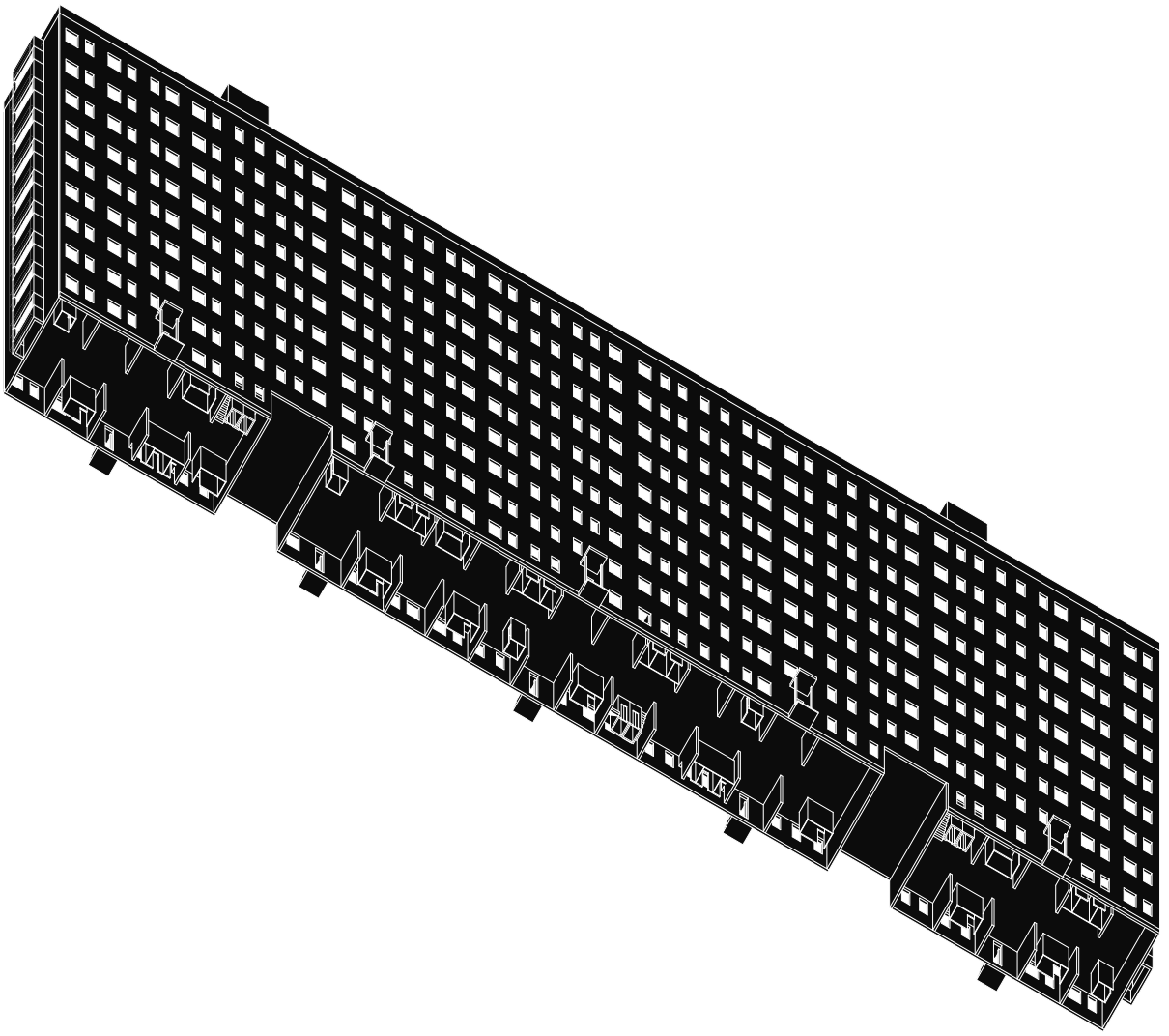




PERFORMANCE ROOMS

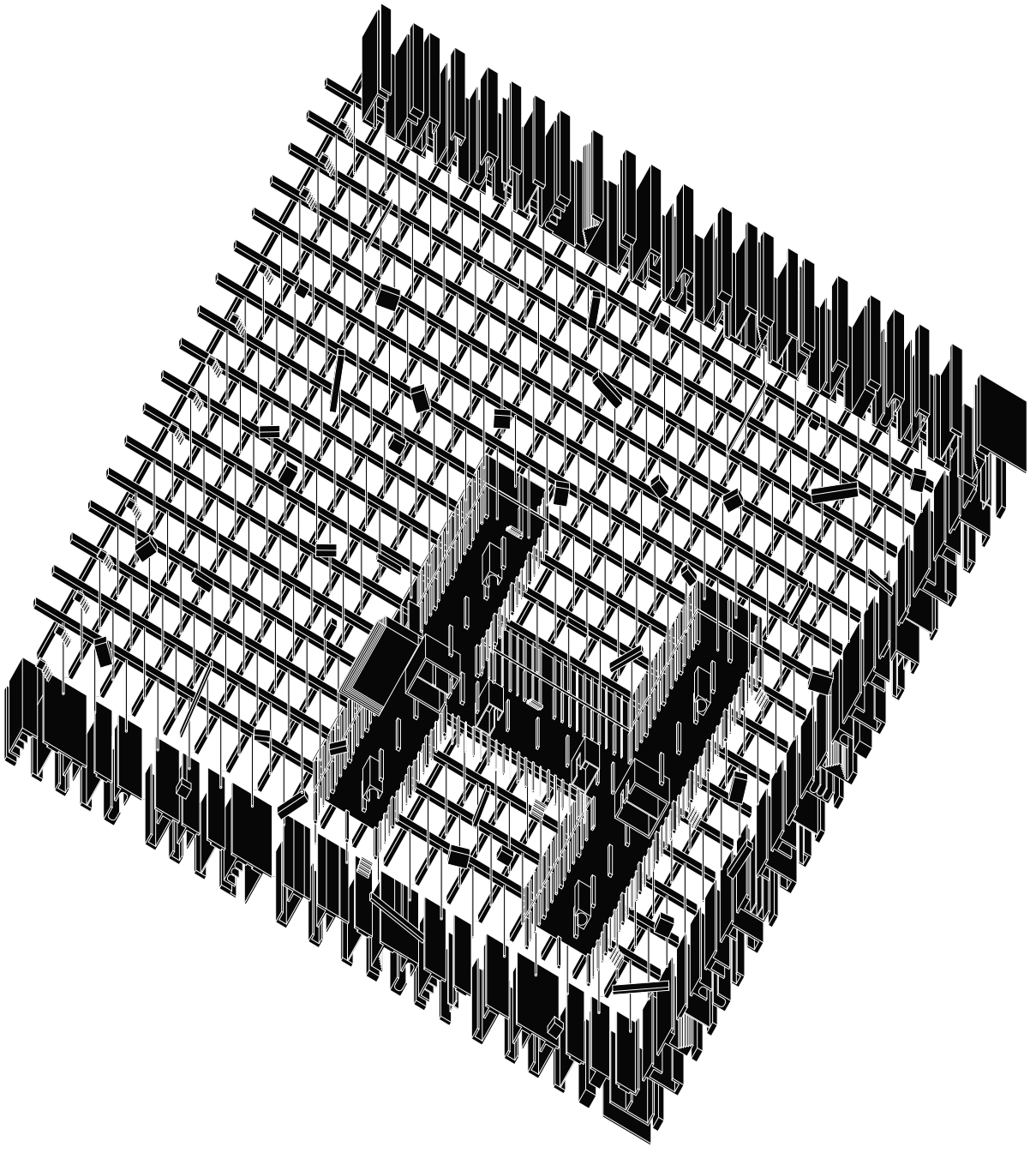
Devoted to the liberation of the performative powers of every human being, the rooms stand as isolated containers. No fee is imposed to attend the show, no requirements to perform. The performers share their experience through many forms: the rooms host concerts, plays, conferences and lectures. The rooms are like pumps that propagate intensity in the polluted sky above the city, the three gigantic boxes are connected by suspended bridges. In the bridges screens cover the walls, the performances are recorded and projected there, sometimes the Performers would stop to watch, gathering around some scattered chairs.

A soft light pervade the space, filtered by the movable curtains. The Performers climb the infinite stairs like a continuous flow, getting lost in the labyrinth of rooms, then finding the way again. They climb as they would climb the Tower of Babel, they’re elevated from the ground, their minds like empty fields waiting for inspiration. The artist is between them, but it is no different under the same light of neons.



HOUSING FOR ALL PEOPLE

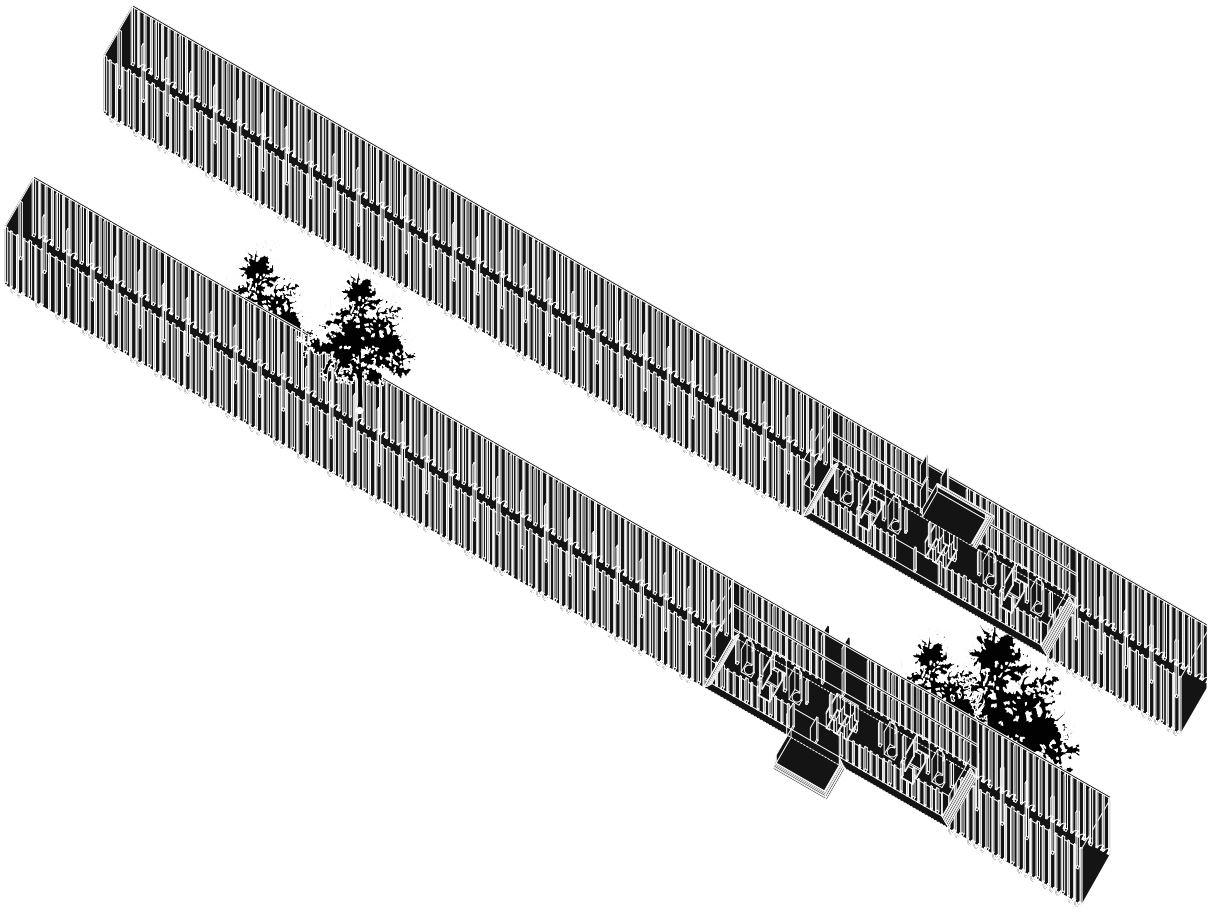
No division, no compartmentalisation, no private property, no specification. The society deprived of its main hierarchical system, the household. In a land where there is no need to own or to delimit, the house becomes the ultimate collective space, where everyone finally comes together and perform the act of living. Some tell stories, some cook, some read, some talk. The space is finally freed from any specialisation, it coordinates its movements with those of its users. There are no constraints, the space is always different and yet always the same. Only one thing stands still, providing the ultimate place of solitude, where in the deepest silence, the Inhabitants dream about the days to come.



ART ATELIER

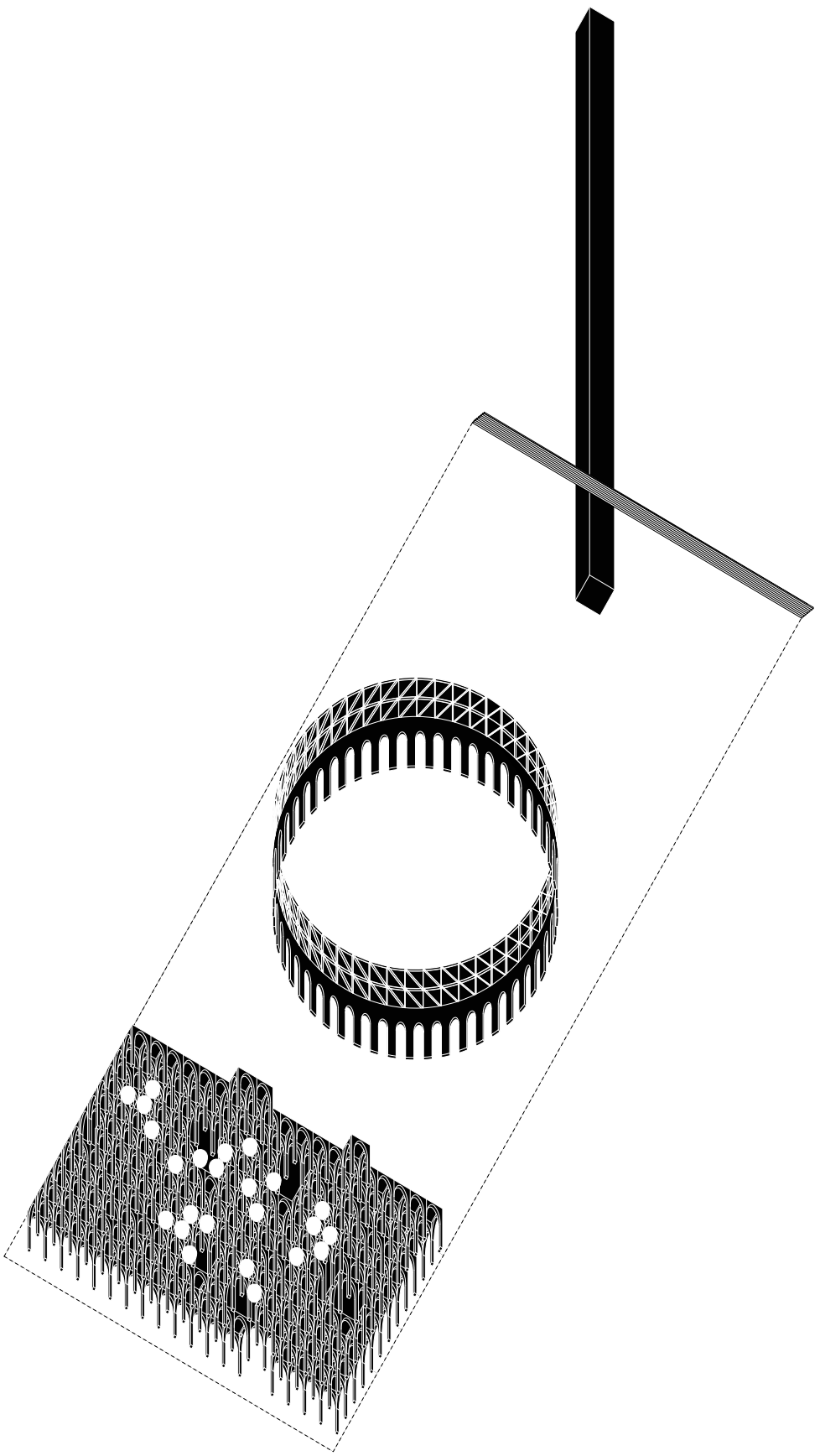
The false academy is not an academy. Coherently to the idea that every body is expressive, art acquires a diverse connotation. Liberated from the need to be valued, every form of expression becomes valuable. Liberated from the label of being an artist the artist just inhabits the academy, becoming a resident, the resident becoming an artist.

A sequence of rooms along the perimeter functions as buffer between inside and outside. In the endless sequence of rooms, niches and doors that bring in the hall or nowhere the entrance is concealed. The visitors go in and out the rooms inevitably getting lost in admiring golden sculptures, paintings and gypsum human bodies. When finally reaching an entrance the endless field of doors receives the visitor and transports him(her) in a parallel dimension, where walls in perpetual motion continuously reconfigure passages and spaces.
Inside the artists move the art objects around, aimlessly trying to fix the exhibition layout. Eventually they give up and let their work flow in all directions, wandering alongside the visitor to find it back. Everyday artists replace objects, there is no fixed collection, tags are white rectangles, pedestals turn into plug-in stations and chairs are scattered around without order.
The replaced objects are brought in a procession to the market, but no sadness walks with the artists, the procession is a festive occasion, when they reach the black towers the iron bells start ringing. Inhabitants descend in the market square to take the objects, they will use the gypsum, the canvases, the gold again and again in a endless loop of production and reproduction.



LABORATORY + MARKET

Covering meters and meters of ground and overlapping with building and bridges the market appears as a land of forgotten debris. Citizens wander between the mountains of objects that grow skyward in the mirror of a natural landscape. All of them wear specific glasses that allow them to spot materials and their state. They wander and often stop to pick up pieces, storing them in the chariot they carry behind. Some of them climb the mountains, producing a metallic sound of broken pieces and waterfalls. Meanwhile in the laboratory the work never stop, citizens are busy with continuous experimentation, they run around the machines like ants building an anthill. The laboratory extends in two wings, directly opening to the market. Almost in the middle, a safe zone is created, here citizens come to sit, but they don't stop working, they compile forms and write reports discussing about their findings. At night the laboratory is open, often citizens would climb off their beds and like sleepwalkers they would reach the machines, struck with a midnight idea that needs to be experimented.

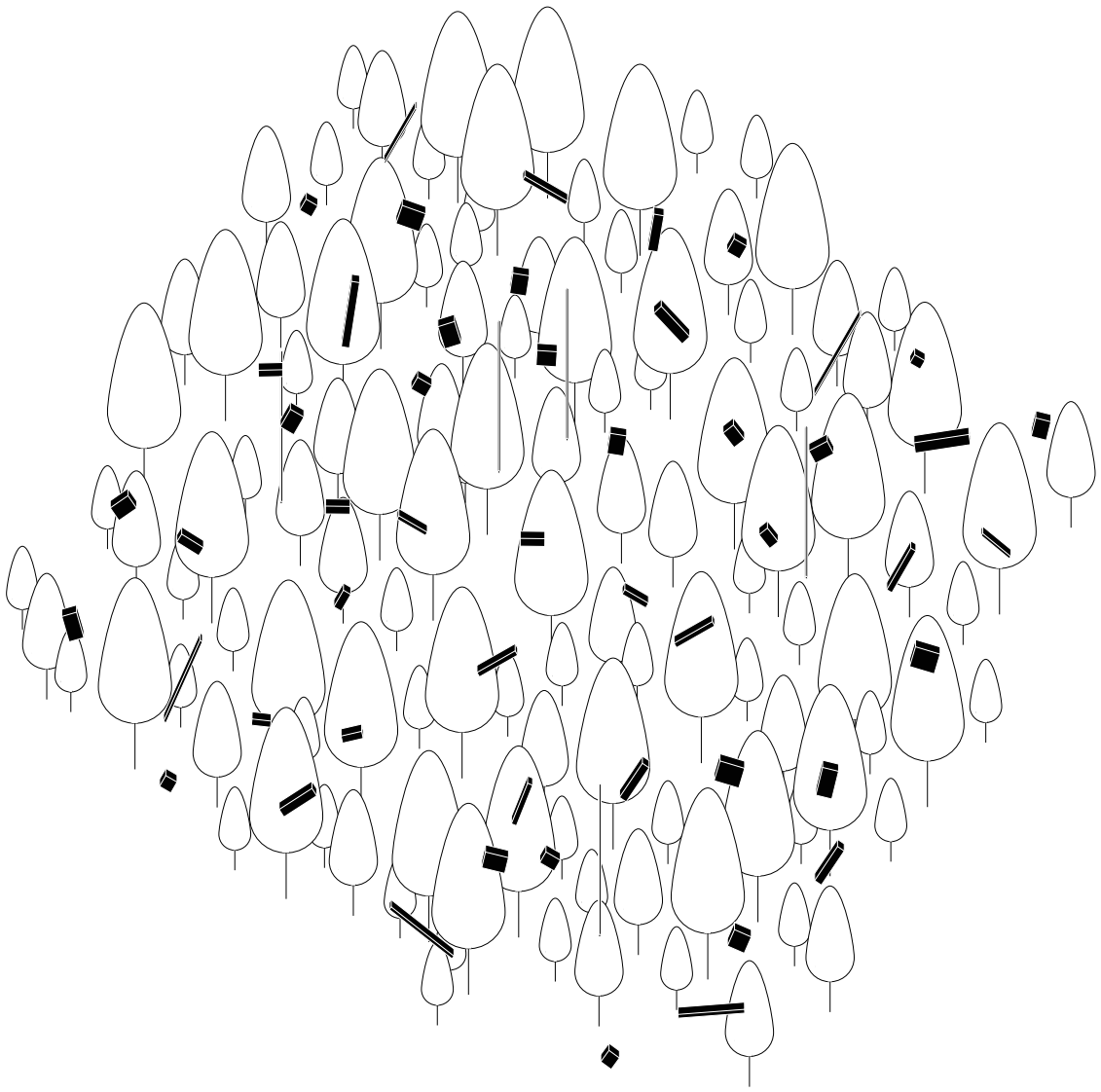


SOCIAL CLUB

Before everything was created was a concrete plinth, the foundation for something to come. The plinth was two hundred meters long and around fifty meters large. Like an island adrift in the sea it stood still, waiting. One day on the plinth a steel structure was installed, geometric and cold, based on modules of two meters. Only one column stood different, as large as the modules it was cave inside and covered with stairs, outside screens, broadcasting all the news coming from the world. Politic, finance, war, science, biology, philosophy, art. Like the Traiano Column it stood immanent, telling a story about the future.

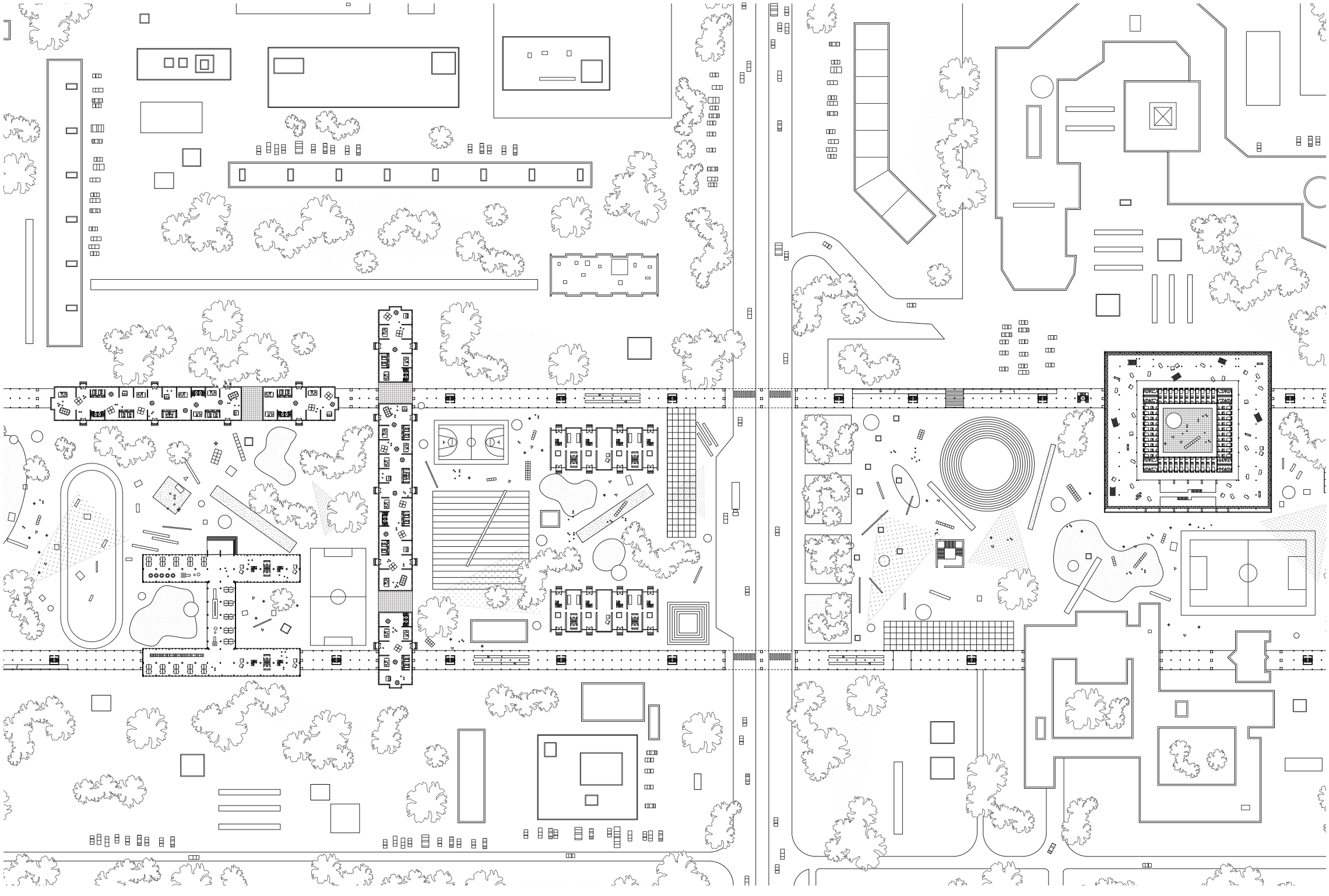
The Wonderers often stopped to watch, firstly just from the car, creating infinite cues, then the parking came, so they left the car and stood there at the feet of the immense monster, in silence. Always after having been to the Column the Wonderers felt the need to talk about what they had seen, they strived to share and confront themselves, overwhelmed by the amount of information, extremely exciting or terrifying. Unable to find a space large enough to contain them all, they decided to build their own. Excavating the concrete in the middle of the plinth they created a rudimental amphitheatre, hight steps on the sides and a large platform in the centre. The Wonderers talked and discussed for days and years. Always, after gathering, they felt the need to retire in silence and reflect on what had been said. But there was no place quite as that.

One day, on the left side of the plinth, opposite to the column, they built the Cathedral, using the steel structure as the main structure they excavated the concrete creating an infinite amount of rounded holes in the ground, like primitive huts, in a forest of columns. There they stood to take decisions, each one alone but aware of the presence of others. The Wonderers would shake hands descending the stairs, promising to come back the following day. There were decisions to be taken, they had to build parks, archives, rooms, and bridges.



WINTER GARDEN

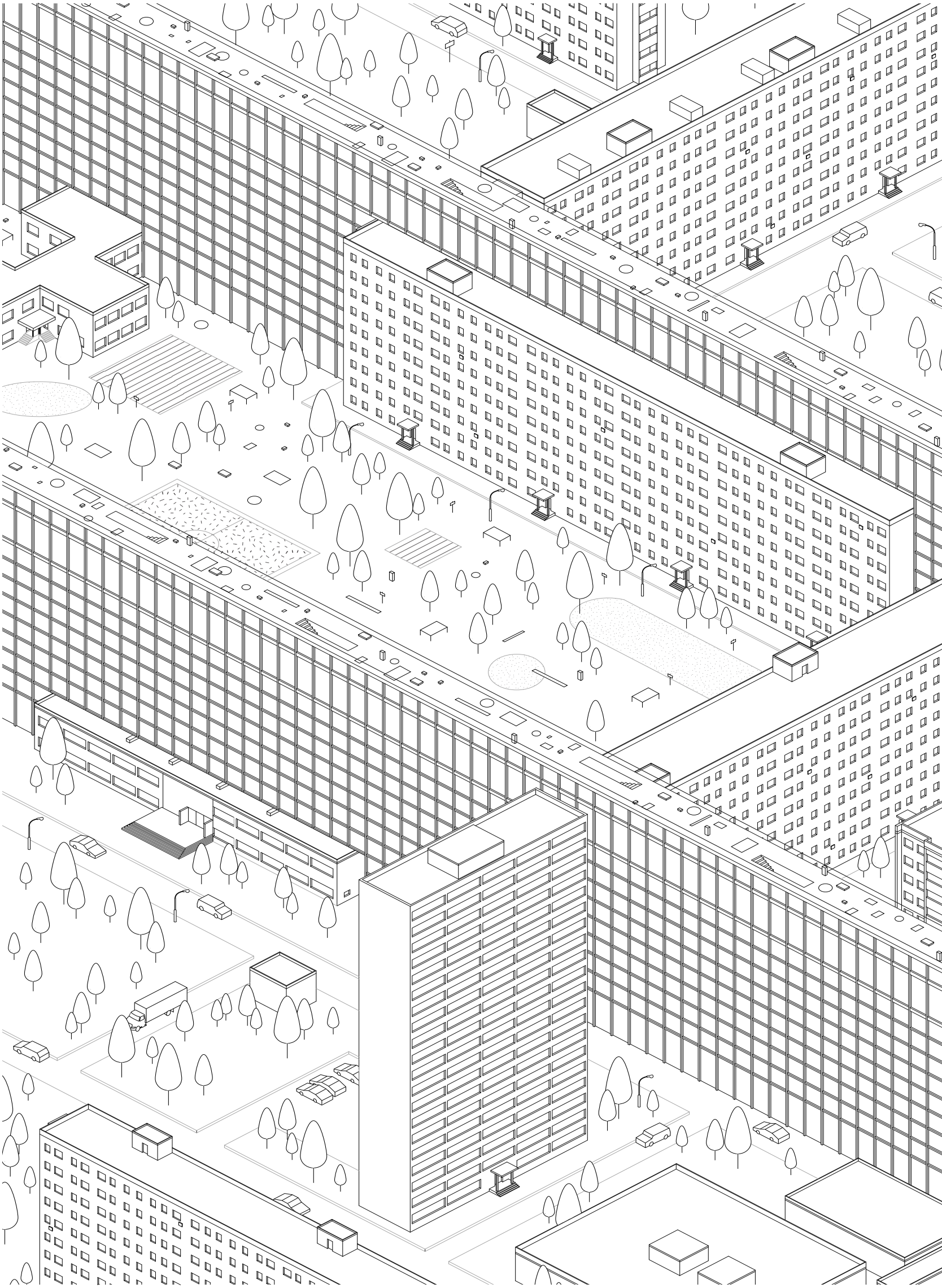
Apparently untouched lays on the ground an infinite field of vegetation. Massive aeration conducts maintain the temperature at the ideal level for the field ecosystem. Along the paths incandescent tubes warm the surrounding air in the colder days. Like classical statues, hidden in the grass, are the remains of the existing utilitarian structures, silent witnesses of their transformation. At a closer look, the existing ruins are punctuated with white obelisks, plugs that allow ubiquitous connections. Wifi signal materialises into the cables of the irrigation system that descends from the suspended bridges. An old man plant crops in a corner on the notes of Dimitri Shostakovich Jazz Suite No. 2.

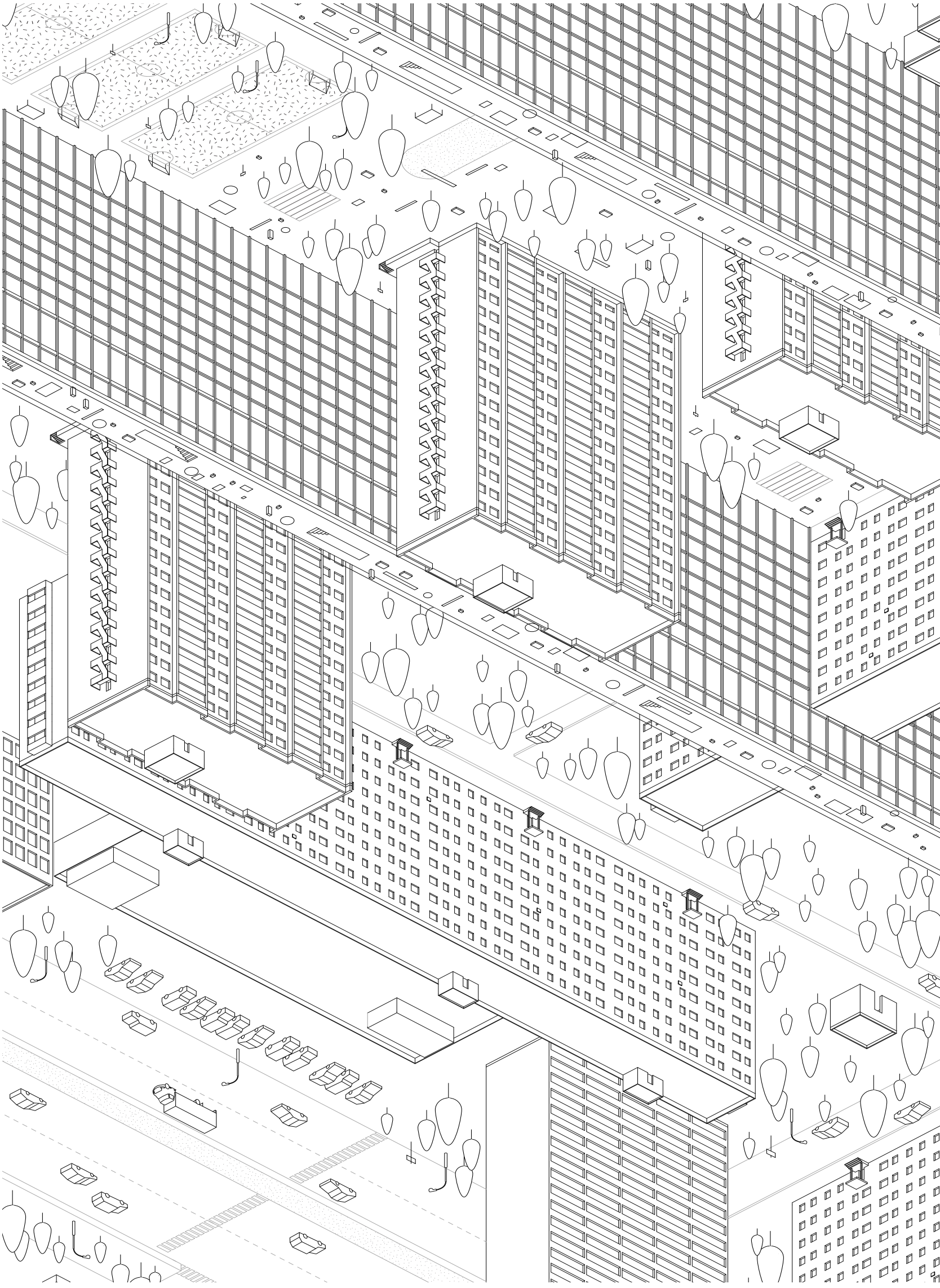


A NEW ASSEMBLAGE

Eventually the wall and the city become one assemblage, expanding the new rituality outside the delimited zone. Rather than imagining a secluded eden the project seeks to unveil the potential of existing spaces, while questioning the way we design contemporary architecture. Deprived from its individuality architecture becomes simple and easily adaptable and transformable according periodical transformations.
At the ground floor, clearly delimiting the space, the infrastructure leaves the surrounding free enclosing a zone with a permeable threshold, transforming it into an endless field for everyday life to unfold, where street markets are merged with sport facilities, gardens and open theatres.

The configuration of the new city calls for the fundamental recognition of production as an inevitable outcome of any living being. Following this statement the concept of liberation is intended in the project not as freedom from but rather as freedom of, leaving aside the image of a life liberated from the demands of production and highlighting instead, the possibility of liberating production and its means from pre-imposed economical constraints. As a consequence, the living practices of the infrastructure and the renovated buildings focus on the production of the self rather than on that of the object, which on the other hand enters a loop of continuous production / destruction.
From here it derives the uselessness of possession and accumulation, interpreting production as a personal process that cannot be manipulated nor owned but just experienced and shared, in this way re-interpreting immaterial production as a practice for self enrichment and self realisation that focuses on the production of the self. For such reasons in the strip nothing is owned, but property comes only from use and is therefore a temporary concept.





EPILOGUE



Internal configuration I / Steel frame



Internal configuration II / Capsules



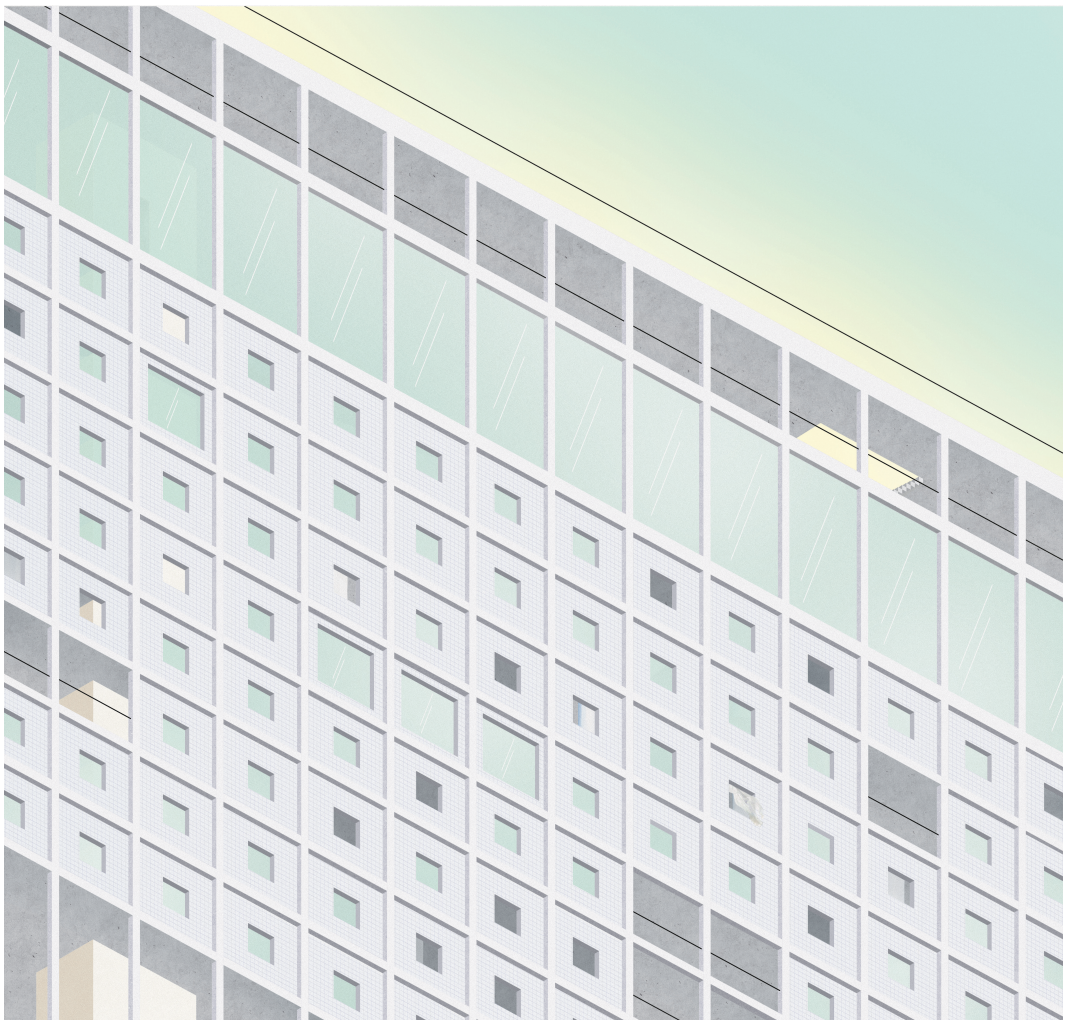
Interior of the sleeping capsule



Underground conveyor belt



Ground floor



Inhabitable infrastructure



Scenario I



Scenario II



La Città

81. Coketown (Inghilterra).
Il monumento continuo visto come elemento di confronto. Ma non c'è bisogno di arrivare fino a Coketown per capire che è molto più utopico pensare di continuare a vivere nelle nostre impossibili città...

Superstudio, Il Monumento Continuo.
Storyboard, dattiloscritto, 1969

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