

# Beyond the Classroom







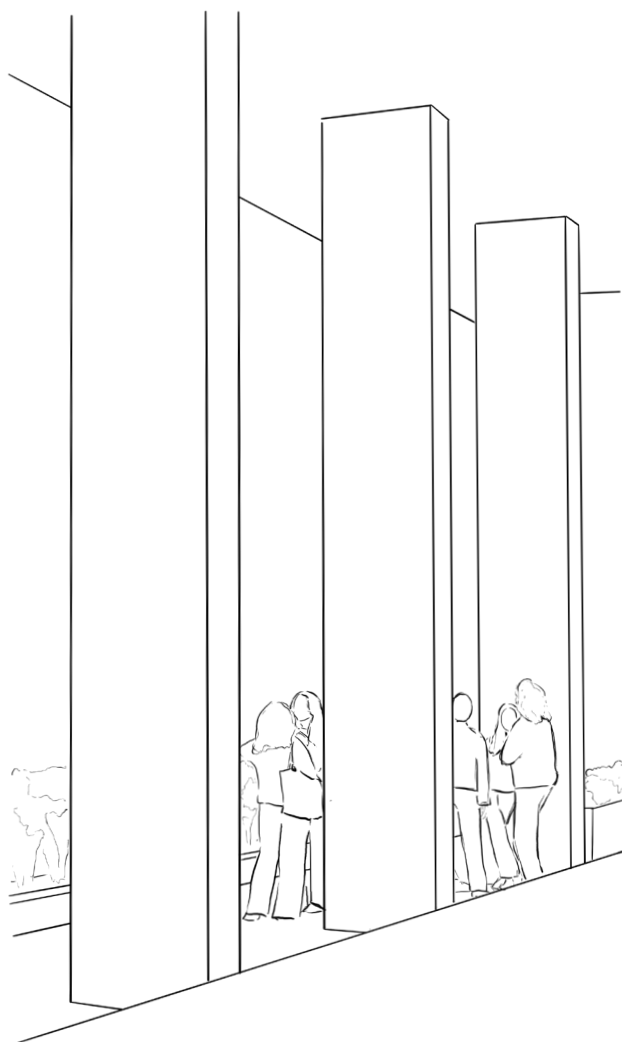
Bodies and Building Milan

**CIVIC**









## **Abstract**

This research explores how university spaces can adapt to the transformation of education while sustaining the civic responsibility of universities in fostering social engagement. Focusing on Bocconi University as a case study, the research develops design requirements for a new building on the Bocconi campus in Milan. Milan, a city providing several perfect opportunities for the university design. The city offers Bocconi a unique chance to strengthen its global recognition by creating better connections with the creative economy and the society. The study analyses key subjects such as the client, the site and the program. Concluding that the new building must become a social and innovation-stimulating space that connects students with the city. The building has to reflect innovation, create space for the creative economy, serve as the social hub on campus, and offer continuity between exterior and interior spaces. By doing so, the building will not only enhance the university's civic and social connection to the city but also support the ongoing transformation of education through innovation

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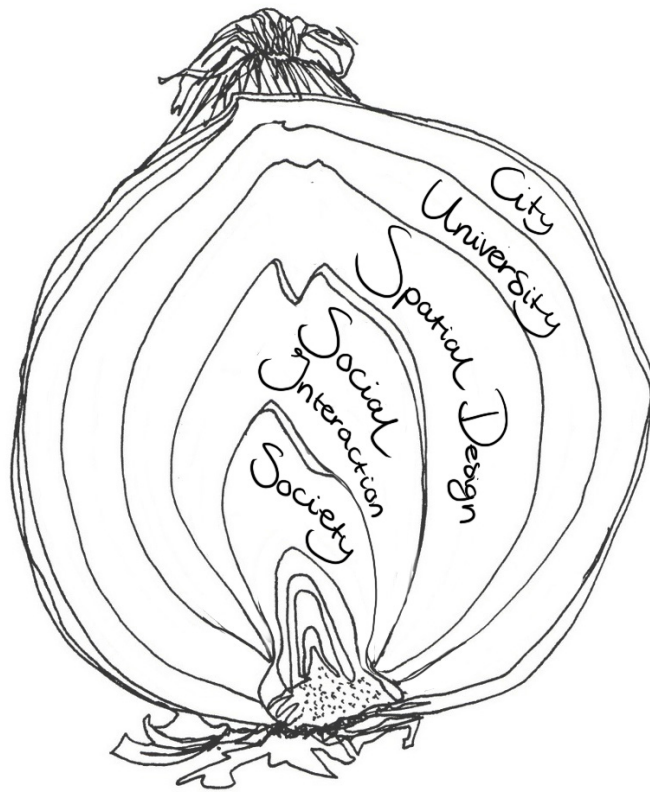
### **June 2025**



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**01**

# Research Plan



## **The Connection Onion**

The onion visualises how society, social interaction, spatial design and the university all relate.

## Introduction and Problem Statement

Universities are recognized as places for academic learning, as knowledge centers. Philip Larkin stated, universities are: 'By day, a lifted study-storehouse, night converts it to a flattened cube of light. Whichever's shown, the symbol is the same: knowledge, a University, a name' (Larkin, 1988). However, the university's function and significance for society extends beyond the academic exchange (Brennan & Cochrane, 2019). In 1968, something other than academic life took place in the courtyards of Milan's State University. Students gathered to protest, not only about the outdated study programs, but to question the university's role in the city. Students occupied lecture halls and courtyards to discuss how universities affect a collaborative society and to demand more student involvement in the city (Kurz & Tolomelli, 2008; Università Degli Studi Di Milano Statale, n.d.). In that moment the university became a civic space in the most tangible sense. The function of the university building shifted from being an academic space to a public theater, stimulating dialogue and imagination. Students were challenging the structure of institutions, and consequently considering their own position within the university and society.

Through the protest in Milan, students highlighted the important civic role that universities play in society. Aside from teaching academic knowledge, university spaces are used to shape a collaborative society. They contribute by creating social engagement in

a city. This could be described as democratization, but rather than focusing on the political meaning, democratization refers to the process by which students develop social skills and actively participate in society through social interaction (Sanborn & Thyne, 2013). This form of democratization is present within the everyday life of every student, but it may go unnoticed. From the interactions with other students, the shared use of space, the encounters with differences and the ongoing participation in dialogue, students are gaining collaborative values through social interaction (Dewey, 1916). In this sense, social engagement can be defined as the civic role of universities within society.

Today, this civic role is increasingly under pressure. What happens if attending a university is no longer necessary for learning? More and more, digital technologies are shaping educational methods. Developments such as artificial intelligence, hybrid learning and different realities are causing learning to shift away from the physical spaces of university (Alenezi, Wardat & Akour, 2023). Although these new educational tools and methods offer new positives as flexibility and easy accessibility, they also raise questions about the changing role of the university. If the exchange of knowledge can happen anywhere at any time, what role do university spaces still play?

Rather than replicating what happens more digitally now, perhaps the



## Research Plan

university spaces should focus on what cannot be digitalized. The physical university could become more about what happens in between, the conversations people share and the informal encounters. These moments make students relate to each other and the world surrounding them (Temple & Fillippakou, 2007). This is often where democratization happens, where there is listened, debated and differences are encountered (Sanborn & Thyne, 2013). Most universities already support this civic role, but what if it became the main purpose of their physical space? What if universities are social spaces, more than learning spaces?



*Student Protests Milan 1968 (Kurz & Tolomelli, 2008)*

## Research Question

When the traditional role of the university is changing, perhaps the civic role should become the main subject in order for the physical spaces to stay relevant. Universities not just as a places for knowledge exchange, but as a spaces where students participate in society. If the civic role of universities can be defined as social engagement in society, the question becomes how universities can shape their spaces to support this role, while acknowledging the changing educational methods and the influence this has on their spaces. Therefore the main question for this research is: **‘How can university spaces adapt to the digital transformation of educational methods while sustaining their civic role in social engagement?’**

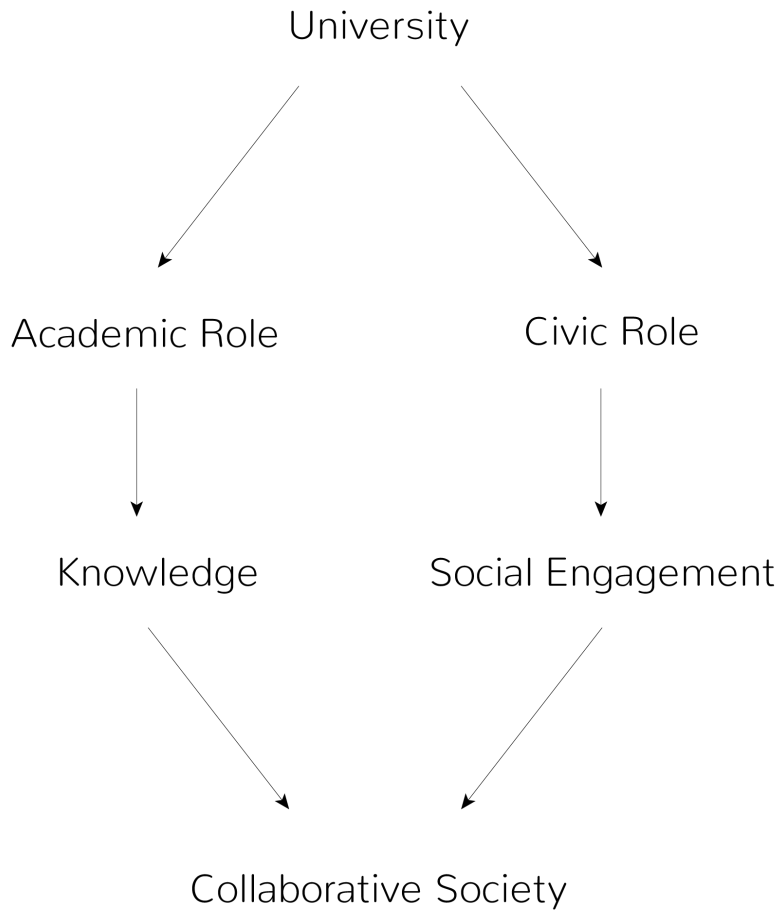
In order to research this question it is important to understand what is already known about the influence of the digital transformation of educational methods. What are these transformed methods and how do they influence the way spaces are used? Furthermore to understand the civic role universities had in history, have now and could develop in the future. How do university spaces influence the civic role within society? And how could the spaces be reimaged to support the civic role of social engagement in society?

Sub questions will be used to examine these various themes. Firstly, how are educational methods changing as a result of digitalization? What are the educational methods used

now and how will these develop? Secondly, what influence have these transformations on how university spaces are used, so on human behavior? What is the link between human behavior and spatial design? Focusing on phenomenology. Thirdly, What influence do the transformed educational methods have on the role of universities in cities? Fourthly, What is a space for social engagement? How can we design university spaces for social interaction? Fifthly, how could university spaces be reimaged to support both digitized educational methods as social engagement?

Overall this study aims to explore how digitally transformed educational methods influence human behavior, How tWhis behavior shapes the use of university space, and how spatial design, in turn, can respond to and guide that behavior. The goal is to understand how university spaces can support the transformed educational methods while sustaining their civic role within cities.

*‘How can university spaces adapt to the digital transformation of educational methods while sustaining their civic role in social engagement?’*



## Theoretical Framework

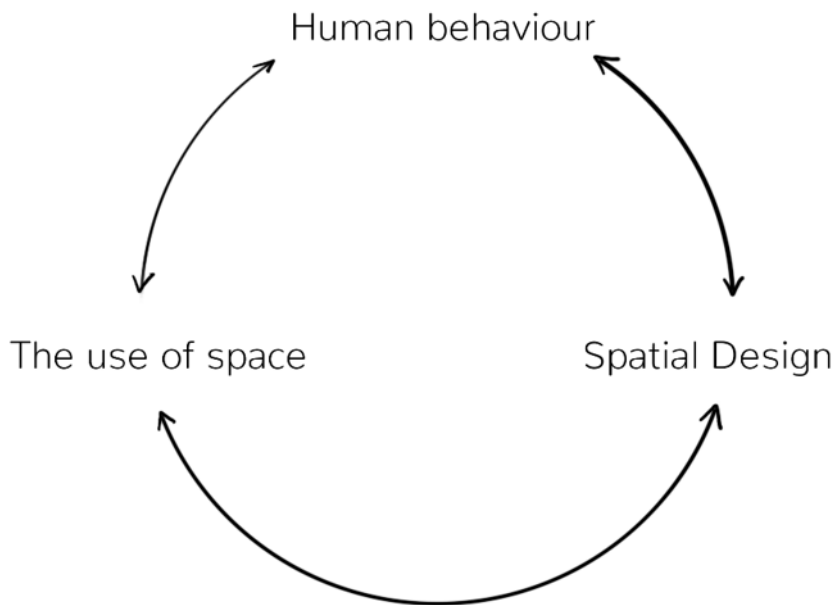
The research will explore various theories that examine the evolving role of university spaces as civic spaces within modern society. These theories can be organized in four themes: the role of universities in society, the digital transformation of educational methods, the influence of spatial design on human behavior and the reimagination of university spaces.

In his book 'the idea of University' from 1852 John Henry Newman explained his theory on what a university should be. According to Newman, the university should be a place where education is about more than preparing people for their careers, it is about shaping people to contribute to society. He emphasizes the role of a university to prioritize personal development and social interaction. Newman viewed universities as essential to the development of society, serving as spaces where ideas can be freely explored.

Expanding on this perspective is John Dewey. He adds another dimension to the university's role: its contribution to democratization. Relating to Newman's theory, John Dewey describes democracy as more than just a governmental system, it is the way people interact with each other. In his

theory 'University as a fundamental social process for a democratic society' (1916), Dewey explains the important role of universities in educating people about the aspects of 'living together. He sees the university as spaces where critical thinking, social responsibility and shared interest are developed through interaction and participation. These are all examples of fundamental aspects of human development to create democracy (Dewey, 1916). In his theory Dewey presents the idea of the university as a tool for democratization through social interaction to enhance social engagement in a society.

In an interview Jeanne Gang, the founder of Studio Gang Architects, explains her view on the role of architecture in society. She describes it as relationship builder: "I think of architecture as a system, how you set up various opportunities for people to relate to one another, and to be empowered. What are the opportunities for people to interact? How can buildings spark new relationships?" (Belogolovsky, 2019) In her research project on reimagining the civic commons, Jeanne Gang builds on this belief by proposing various strategies for increasing the potential for social interaction and creating a more



collaborative society. One of these strategies entailing the expansion of library functions to promote the digital development of society.

This digital transformation is relevant not only for libraries, but also for many other types of typologies, such as universities. Lesley Gourlay explores this in her book 'Posthumanism and the Digital University' (2020). In this book, she investigates the changing role of universities by examining how technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and different realities influence educational methods. While universities continue to serve as knowledge centers, they are adapting to a new period in which digital technologies increasingly shape how knowledge is collected, produced, and distributed. The integration of for example AI, VR, and AR into educational practices is transforming how knowledge is experienced and interacted with. Making physical learning spaces unnecessary for learning (Harry & Sayudin, 2023).

If the physical learning space is no longer required for universities to teach knowledge we can question what role universities will serve. As spoken about before, this could be sustaining but also reimagining the

current role of universities for social engagement in society. This would mean we need to design spaces for the concept of democratization. Peter Aeschbacher and Michael Rios explore these democratic spatial designs in the article 'Claiming public space: the case for proactive democratic design' (1995). They define a democratic space or place as one characterized by recognition, engagement, and materiality. Recognition entailing spaces influencing individuals to recognize their place in society, they are part of a community. Engagement focusing on creating spaces that contribute to social interaction and participation. Materiality linking to the physical design to reflect societal values as for example openness and transparency (Aeschbacher & Rios, 1995). Michael Cassidy expands on the concept of democratic space, emphasizing the value of flexibility and adaptability (Cassidy, 2023).

When imagining the design of democratic spaces, it is important to analyze the relationship between human behavior and spatial design. Connected to this is the concept of phenomenology, developed by Edmund Husserl. Phenomenology is the study of how people experience and perceive their surroundings, with



an emphasis on consciousness and subjective experiences (Soltani & Kirci, 2019). Rahimi, Levy, Boyd, and Dadkhahfard (2018) found that design has a direct impact on human behavior by creating the physical context in which activities take place and sensory stimuli are experienced. The relationship between behavior and design, as well as the other way around, is complex, because how people interact with a space influences their emotions, actions, and overall experience, which varies per person.

Building on this are Philip Long and Stephen Ehrmann, as they try to describe the future of learning spaces. In their theory they argue the ineffectiveness of the traditional classroom and learning spaces we know now. They speculate about the new forms educative buildings should have, relating to the constant transformation of education. The most relevant transformation being the digitalization of educational methods. As they note, 'A building designed today will change electrical systems once, furniture at least twice, and software systems fifteen times or more' (Long & Ehrmann, 2005). In this note, they compare the rapid pace of digitalization to the adaptability of space. Their vision is for

educational spaces to be optimized for multiple sets of functions while also remaining flexible to changing requirements. To imagine the classroom of the future, we must first change our own beliefs about learning spaces, moving away from formal learning and embracing the informal. And from seeing learning as listening, reading, and taking notes to seeing it as situated actions, collaboration, coaching, and other forms of interaction (Long & Ehrmann, 2005).

## Methodology

The research will be conducted using multiple methods, including a literature review, case study analysis, and a field study. Furthermore, as the research begins on the basis of design through research, in Msc4 this will shift to research through design. This will ensure a comprehensive approach and offer a fresh perspective on the research.

### *Literature*

Through analysing literature it will become clear what is already known about topics such as the role of universities in society, the digitalization of educational methods, and the relationship between behaviour and spatial design. This will serve as a foundation for the research into how university spaces can adapt to digitalization while also fostering social engagement in a society.

### *Field Study*

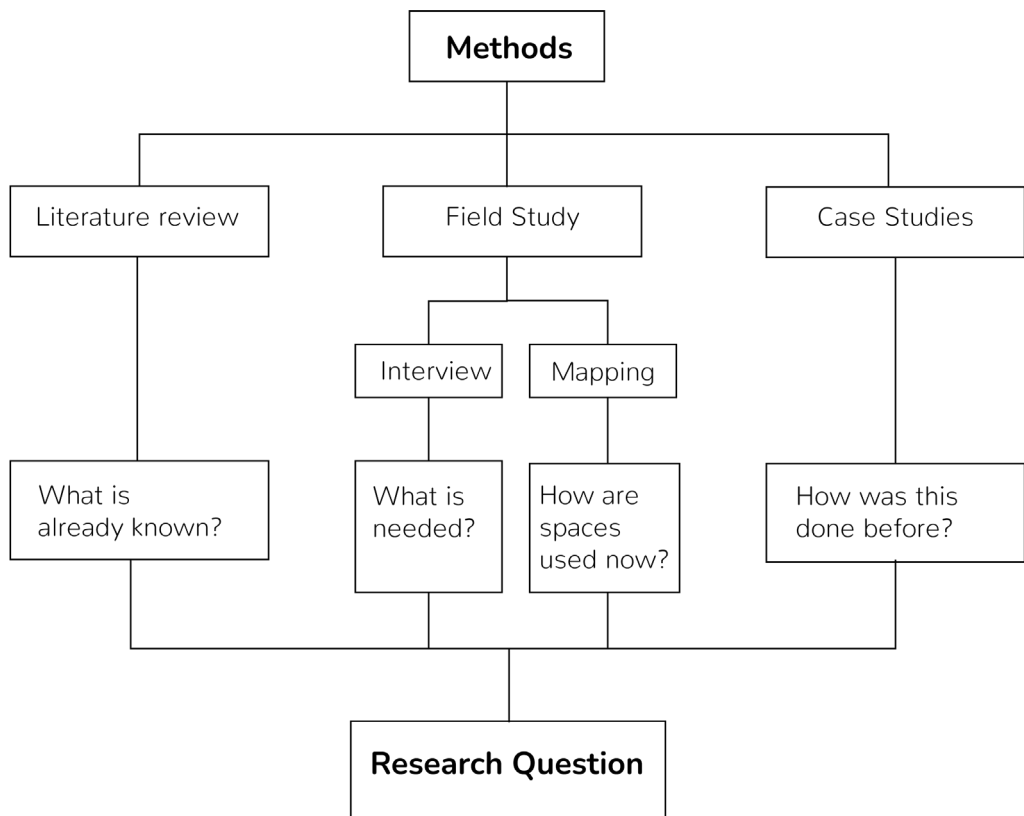
This research will include a field study in Milan. This is where the design assignment is located, namely at the Bocconi University. The field study consists of two methods. The first method involves interviewing students from Bocconi University, as they will be the main users of the new building. The interview will include questions about the role

of the physical university buildings for them now and in the future. Questions that will be asked are: 1. What role does the university have for you? 2. How do you think the digitalization of education has changed your interactions with physical university spaces? 3. Do you feel like the university provides the needed designed collective spaces to enhance social engagement? 4. Is Bocconi providing spaces for you as a student to participate in innovation and perhaps even the creative economy of Milan? 5. How does the design of spaces shape your sense of belonging or identity as a student? 6. Could you describe the university spaces that you need or want?

The second method will involve mapping using annotated drawings and pictures. In the mapping there will be a focus on the social spaces on and around the campus of Bocconi University. This will investigate the relationship between existing designed spaces and human behaviour on the campus.

### *Case Studies*

Furthermore, case studies will be analysed. This will provide insights into how other architects approached aspects as social interaction and connections to



the city in their designs. The case studies will provide a better understanding of program requirements and spatial aspects, as well as how things were done correctly or incorrectly in previous projects related to the research. The case studies that will be analysed in this research are the Bocconi University building in Milan designed by Grafton Architects, the Law Faculty in Paris designed by Chartier Dalix, the Architecture Faculty in Delft designed by a collaboration of five architecture firms, the Haus der Digitalisierung in Tulln designed by Gallister and Kronaus Mitterer Architekten, and the Aalto University Väre Building in Espoo designed by Verstas Architects.

While these case studies are all about different aspects of architectural design that are relevant to different aspects of the research, they do overlap in some ways. Bocconi University investigates the defined relationship between public and private as part of a private campus in Milan. Furthermore, it investigates the relationship with the city using designed transparency and limited openness. The law faculty in Paris explores the relationship between university and city by designing public spaces and repurposing historical barracks positioned in the city structure. It delves deeper into circulation and flow in relation

to the interaction of behaviour and spatial design. The Architecture Faculty at the Technical University of Delft focuses on the design of social interaction and engagement. The BK city explores the themes of unintentional interaction and flexible and adaptable spaces. The Haus der Digitalisierung building investigates the link between innovation and architecture. The design focuses on creating spaces that reflect innovation and the future of technology, as well as areas for innovation research and exploration. It both showcases and creates opportunities for innovation. Lastly, the Aalto Väre building in Finland is a building that has a collaboration concept. The building combines different functions in one space to improve interaction in various fields and encourage research and innovation.

## Research Plan



1. Architecture Faculty TUDelft



2. Väre Building Aalto University



3. Law Faculty Paris



4. Haus der Digitalisierung

1. Architecture Faculty TUDelft (Braaksma & Roos Architects, 2024)
2. Aalto University Väre building (Meichsner, n.d.)
3. Law Faculty Paris (Grazia, 2019)
4. Haus der Digitalisierung Tulln (David Schreyer, 2023)





*Grafton Building Bocconi University (Own Photograph, 2025)*



## **Expected Results**

## **Research Plan**

This research plan explores how university spaces can adapt to the digital transformation of education while sustaining the civic role of social engagement in society. This will be researched with several methods as were described. Literature study to answer the questions on what is already known. Field study to explore what is needed and how spaces are used now. And lastly case studies to get inspired, how has it been done before?

The study is expected to show that, in response to the ongoing digital transformation of education, university spaces must evolve beyond their focus on learning. As learning becomes more accessible through digital platforms, physical universities might have to enhance their social engagement role within society. The findings are likely to suggest that university spaces should prioritize social engagement and interaction, recognizing them as important aspects of the university spatial design. Therefore the research will probably support the central hypothesis: that university spaces should primarily be social spaces, encouraging connection and collaboration while also accommodating flexible, innovative and potential digital learning environments.

**02**

# Graduation Plan

## Design Assignment

In order to research the question 'How can university spaces adapt to the digital transformation of educational methods while sustaining their civic role in social engagement?' a design assignment is created.

While education is becoming increasingly digital, the civic role of the university remains essential. To explore how architecture can both support the digital transformation of education as the civic role of universities in social engagement a new university building will be designed. Within the context of the research, the Bocconi University in Milan offers an interesting case for this design assignment.

The university is currently ranked 920th in the world and 36th in Italy, but aims to climb the global ladder. Bocconi aspires to be a leading international university for social sciences, with a focus on business and economics, they want to improve by focusing more on innovation and entrepreneurship (Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan 2021-2025 - Bocconi University, n.d.). This ambition for innovation, as well as the emphasis on the process of students transitioning to society, are relevant to the research topic and serve as a solid foundation for the design assignment.

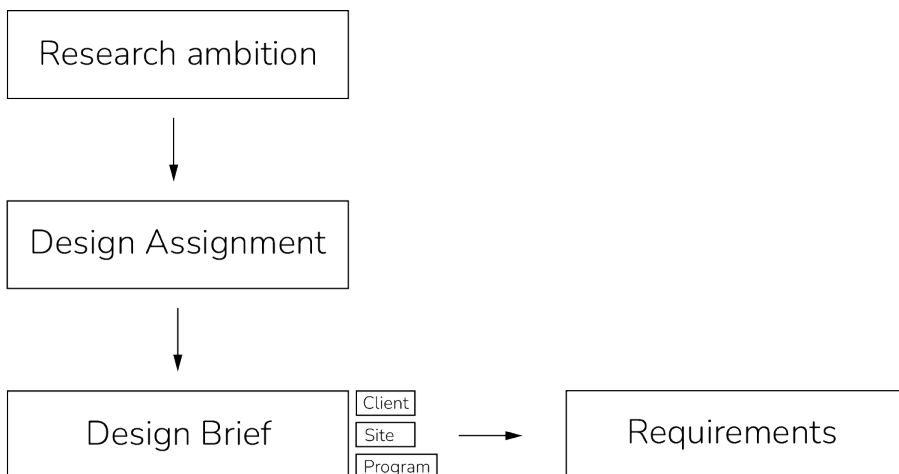
The new Bocconi building is envisioned as a social and innovation-stimulating space that connects students not only to one another but also to the city. Rather than traditional expansion, the university intends to increase its societal relevance by improving its connections with society through innovation, civic and social engagement, and collaboration with Milan's creative economy.

Milan as a global hub for design, fashion, and entrepreneurship, provides the perfect environment for this approach. By connecting students to the creative economy in Milan, Bocconi will provide students with the opportunity to test their ideas, build networks and engage with real world developments. The new building will support this by providing workshop and study spaces that are flexible, innovation labs (AI, VR, media), and designed social areas that promote collaboration and interaction. The building will become a space where students are encouraged to take initiative and engage with each other and the city.

By providing spaces for innovation and student initiative alongside areas where social interaction, community, knowledge, and

creativity intersect, the new design will explore the question of how university spaces can adapt to the digital transformation of education while maintaining or enabling their civic role in society.

To start the design process for the new Bocconi building, the vision for the building must first be translated into a design brief. This will offer a clear plan for what is needed in the design to achieve the buildings ambitions. The design brief will focus on three topics: the client, site and program of the building. From the design brief specific requirements can be identified, these will be applied later in the design process.



## Civic Lens

This design assignment is approached through a civic lens. The question “what is civic?” has many answers, it depends on who you ask. In this research, civic architecture is understood as the intersection between society and the government. It forms a bridge between the larger scale of urban structures and the smaller scale of daily life.

Civic buildings as hospitals, operas, libraries, and universities have a clear public function. They are recognizable and unmissable in a city. Their spatial design has symbolic, functional, and social value.

In this research, a collage is used to visualize various interpretations of civicness. A curtain opening to a theatre of the civic. Each frame shows that civic space is defined by its ability to collect meaning through use, memory, and movement. Civicness can be recognized at eye level, street level, and even from above. It is interwoven within the urban environment.

One example where civic becomes visible is the university. A university’s civic role is to prepare students for society, through knowledge exchange, personal growth, and social engagement. Civic architecture in this context

becomes readable through design elements as transparency, the balance between open and closed, a strong connection to the public space, and a sense of reputation or symbolisms.

Within this civic lens, the **arcade** plays an important role. In Milan, the arcade is a recurring and iconic architectural element, deeply embedded in the city’s civic identity. It is a space defined not by enclosure, but by structure: open, transparent, and accessible. The arcade gives architectural form while offering shelter, shade, and safety. It does not separate itself from public space through walls, but positions itself alongside it as an invitation to the public. People relate to the building through the arcade while maintaining the freedom to choose whether or not to engage.

It is a place of simply being for humans, no specific function tied to the space, humans choose what they need it for. On a rainy day we will find shelter, on a hot day we will find shade, in the darkness of night we will find protection and on the brightest day we will find each other.

The arcade will become an design element for the design assignment.



Civic Theater (Own illustration, 2025)



## Arcades of Milan





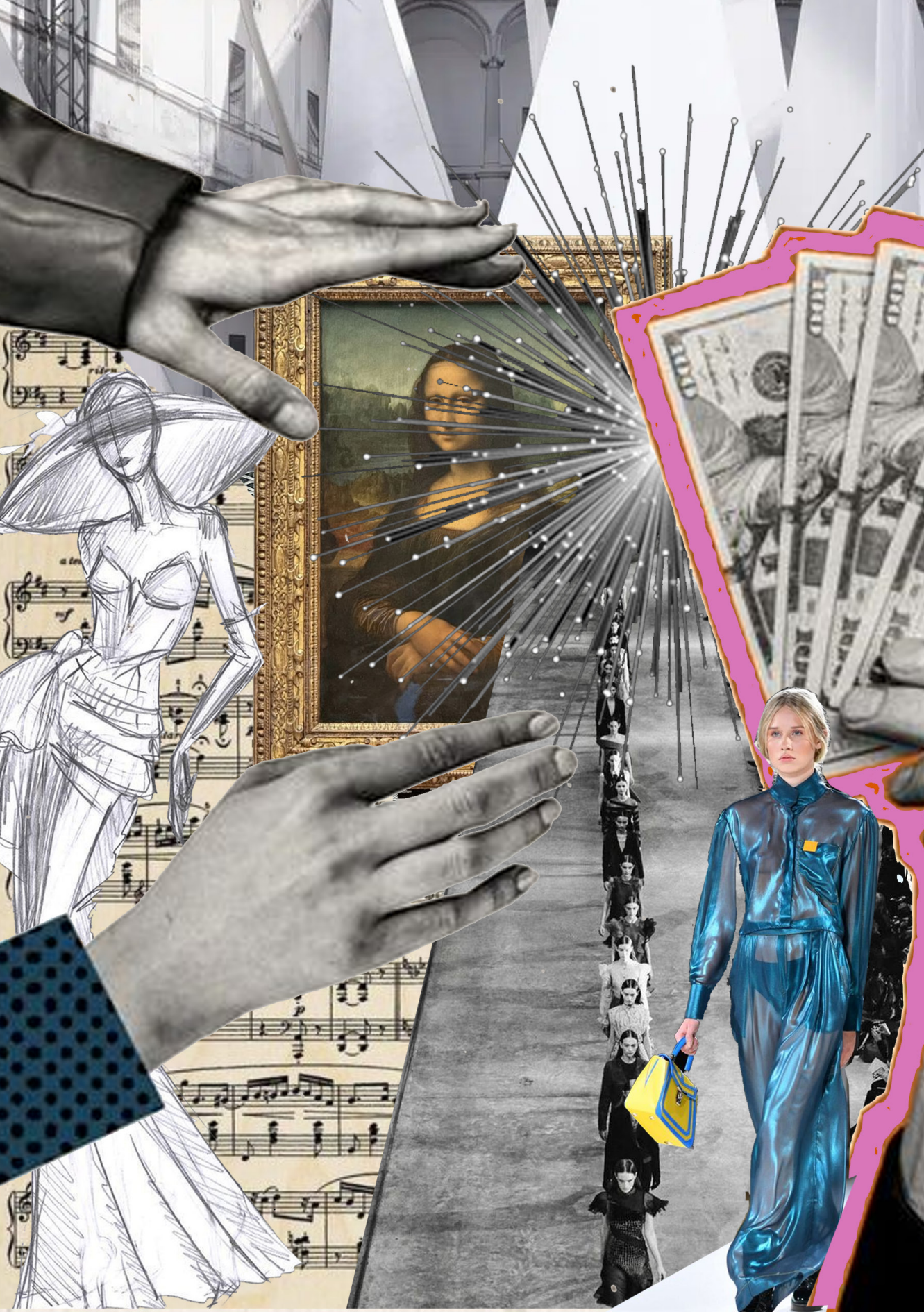
## Graduation Plan



**03**

# Theory









## The Creative Economy

When designing in the city of Milan it is essential to understand the 'creative economy'. This economy puts Milan globally on the map in contribution to the global economy.

The creative economy refers to the economy that supports the creative sector, which includes art, media, design, technology, and culture. This sector is increasingly important to the global economy. According to UNESCO, the creative economy contributes 3.1% of the global BBP in 2024. BBP stands for the total global economic value produced in a single year. Cities serve as catalysts for the various sectors in this creative economy. For example, Hollywood and Silicon Valley for entertainment and technology, New York and Milan for design; and Paris, London, and Milan for fashion and art (Agarwal, 2024).

### *The creative economy in Milan*

Milan holds a unique place in the global economy. The city is well-known around the world as a fashion and design hub. Every year, events such as Milano Design Week and Milano Fashion Week attract thousands of visitors and generate millions of euros in revenue solely from tourism. In 2024, the city was ranked the third-largest contributor to the global creative economy, with

strong connections to other relevant global cities (Agarwal, 2024). The table shows the strength of the creative industries' connections between Milan and other cities. What stands out is Milan's strong connection with several major global cities, including New York, Dubai, and London. Positioning Milan as a global hub for the creative economy (Shen, Zhang, & Li, 2023).

### *The university*

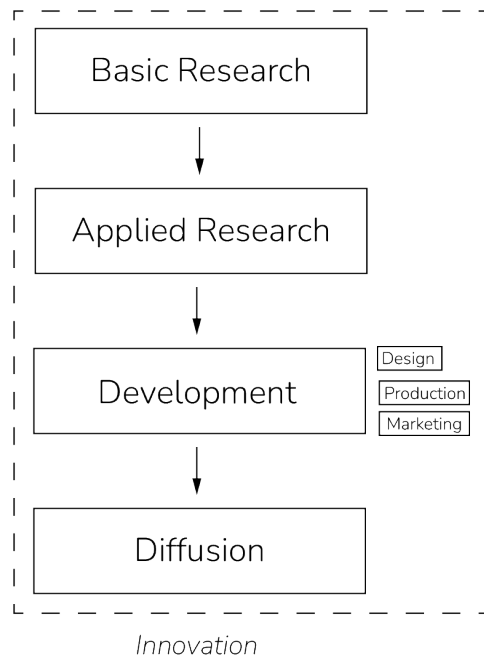
In this ecosystem of the creative economy, the university is gradually gaining a more prominent role. Not only as a centre for new research and technological innovation, but also as a hub for talent generation and attraction. As a catalyst for creating an open environment that promotes both innovation and economic growth. Universities have the ability to foster new ideas and start-ups while also providing an inclusive environment that appeals to creative and entrepreneurial individuals (Araya & Peters, 2010).

Furthermore, the digitalisation of education provides an opportunity for universities to commercialize their research findings more quickly. Presenting an opportunity to strengthen the university's connection to the creative economy (Pingki, Silamat, Hernawati &

Rahman, 2025). This relates to the linear model of innovation; the process of moving from basic research to applied research to research development can be sped up. Universities that serve as an engine of innovation, with ideas flowing from university science to commercial technology (Godin, 2006).

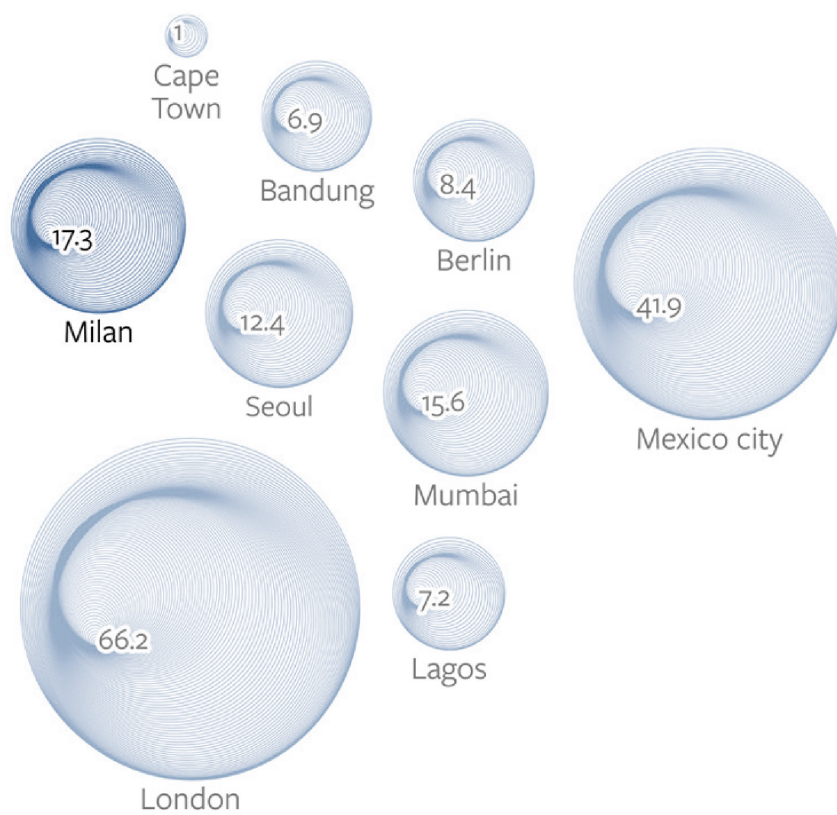
In conclusion, when designing a new university building in Milan, it is critical to consider the creative economy and its potential for contribution. The new university building provides an opportunity to enhance Milan's contribution to the global creative economy, putting the city and its university on the global map. Through innovation and commercialization, the building can serve as a catalyst for economic growth for both the city and the university.

*Linear model of innovation (Godin, 2006)*

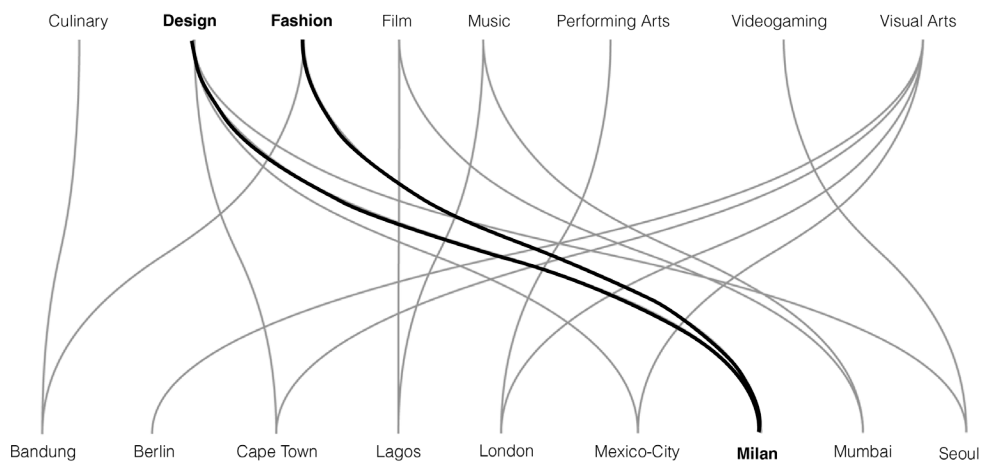


Level	Name of Cities and C <sub>i</sub>
Level 1	Rome 86.0, <b>Paris 83.26</b> , London 73.57
Level 2	<b>New York 69.74</b> , Madrid 68.72, Berlin 66.08, Munich 62.56, Barcelona 60.79, Vienna 60.79,
Level 3	<b>Dubai 57.46</b> , Brussels 57.27, <b>Hong Kong 56.58</b> , Amsterdam 56.39, Frankfurt 55.96, Tokyo 54.82, Hambourg 54.63, Moscow 53.74, <b>Shanghai 53.51</b> , <b>Singapore 53.07</b> , Zurich 51.54, <b>Beijing 50.44</b>
Level 4	Lisbon 49.78, Istanbul 49.34, Geneva 48.46, <b>Sydney 46.93</b> , Praha 45.37, Koln 44.49, Stuttgart 44.05, Lyon 43.17, Liverpool 43.17, Luxembourg 41.41, Copenhagen 40.97, Saint Petersburg 40.53, Warsaw 40.53
Level 5	Athens 39.65, Kiev 39.65, Antwerp 39.21, Stockholm 37.89, Nice 37.00, Dusseldorf 36.12, Basel 34.08, Budapest 34.36, Bilbao 33.92, Porto 33.92, Rotterdam 32.60, Marseille 32.60, Helsinki 31.28, Oslo 31.28
Level 6	The Hague 29.96, Seville 28.19, Lille 28.19, Eindhoven 27.75, Belgrade 25.99, Bremen 24.67, Tallinn 24.67, Zagreb 24.23, Riga 18.50, Minsk 17.62

*Connective strength of creative industries between Milan and Cities (Shen, Zhang, & Li, 2023)*







Cities and their leading creative sector - Milan (Agarwal, 2024)

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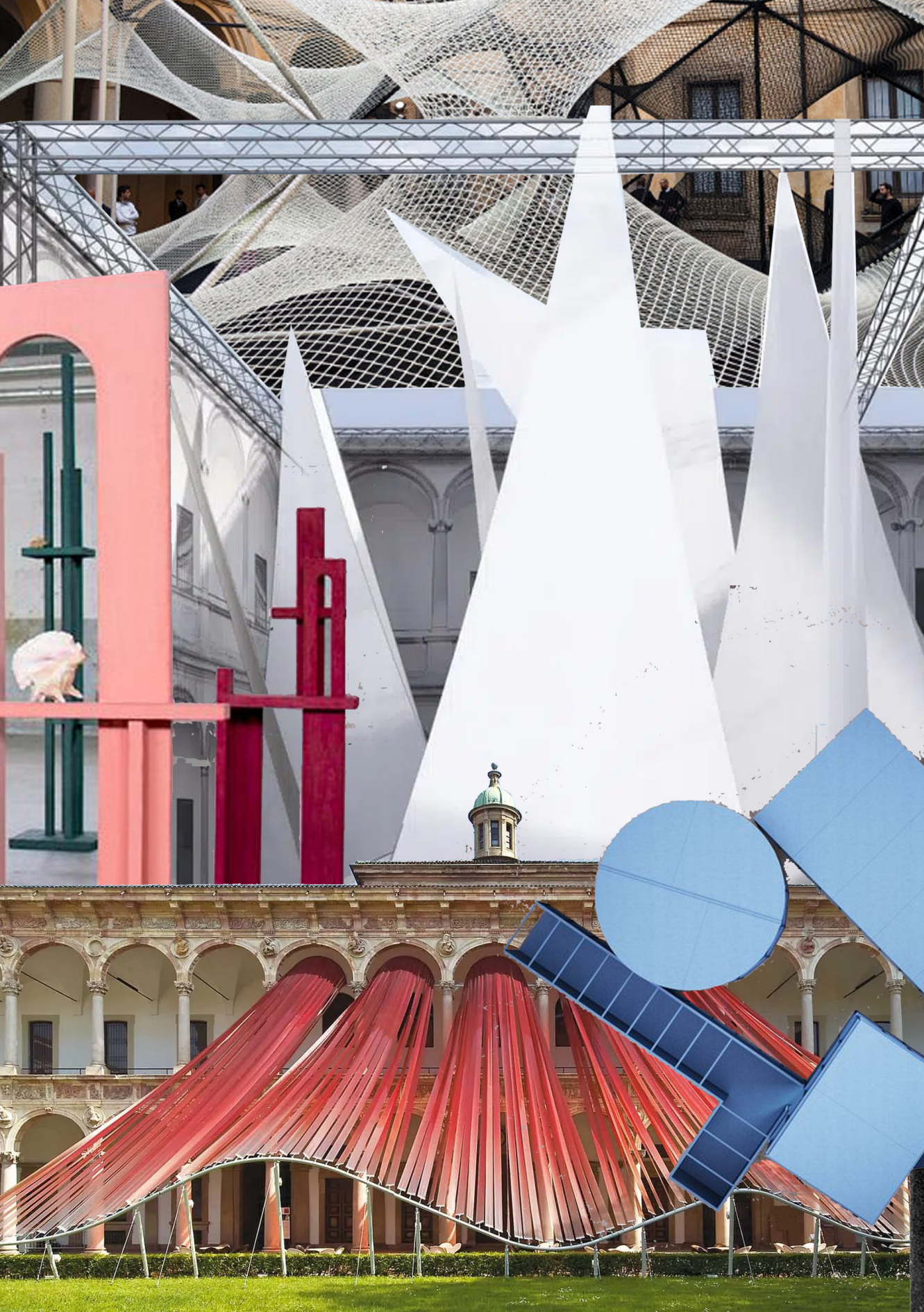


PRADA  
MILANO

DAL 1913









# MILAN DESIGN WEEK



monet



*Bocconi featured in fashion week campaign (Russo, 2024)*





*Anna Wintour at Bocconi (Benigno, 2025)*

*'Universities are created to tackle the unknown. While their future cannot be planned, the tools they have at their disposal to meet the future can be improved'*

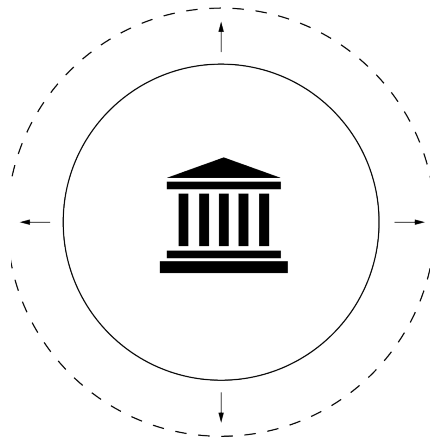
*(EUA, 2021)*

The university of the future must reposition itself in society and technological landscapes. Universities are increasingly becoming active participators in the social and innovative ecosystem, rather than simply serving as a knowledge. The expectation is that universities will become more social and digitally engaged (Carayannis & Morawska-Jancelewicz, 2022).

In this context, It is important to understand that a university for technology is not the final goal. According to Serpa and Ferreira (2019), technology is not the most important factor to consider for the future university. It is only a tool used for social challenges. Universities should not only focus on technological advancements, but also on how it fits into broader contexts like innovation, the social society, and the digital environment. Examples include that the university will focus more on collaborative innovation spaces, diverse education providers, flexible learning models, peer-to-peer platforms, and training partnerships. (Carayannis & Morawska-Jancelewicz, 2022).

This broader approach does not exclude digital transformation of education. The use of digital technologies enables universities

to go beyond their boundaries, changing courses, redefining delivery models, and influencing the entire university ecosystem (Hashim, Tlemsani, & Matthews, 2021). The embracement of this change is needed for universities to make any step towards the future society.



*Universities beyond their boundaries  
(Own Illustration, 2025)*

## University without walls

The European university institute describes their vision for European universities in 2030 as a 'university without walls'. With this they mean universities that are more open and engaged in society while sustaining their role as knowledge center. All of Europe's universities have to be responsible and united in their mission of learning and teaching, research, innovation and culture in service to society.

Universities have to build on their capacity to evolve and become the drivers of societal change. They will provide an open, transformative space for common knowledge production through research, education, innovation and culture (EUA, 2021)



*University without walls*



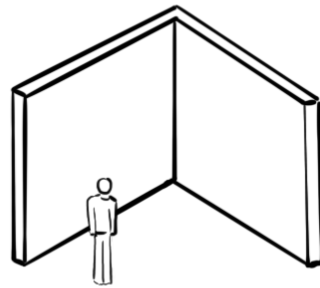
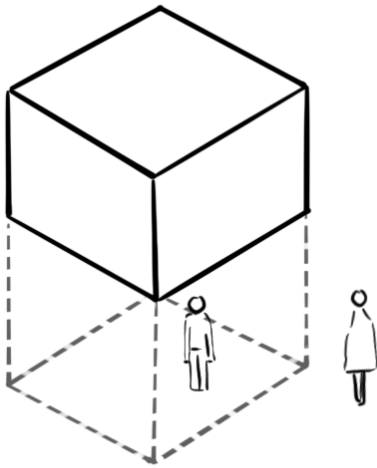
Architecture is more than just aesthetics or engineering; it influences human behaviour. The way spaces are designed affects how people move, work, focus, and interact. Architects can influence this behaviour directly or indirectly via light design, form, routing, and function. The way a space connects to the street shapes how a building is perceived and approached. Lipman (1969) explains, "As architects, we help to shape people's future behaviour through the environment we create."

The influence extends beyond individual behaviour. Architecture has an impact on how people interact. Spaces and society have a reciprocal relationship. Social structures provide meaning to spaces, and spaces can improve social structures. An open space with multiple functions, for example, facilitates interaction, whereas a small hallway is more functional. When there is a relationship between who and where, spaces take on meaning in society (Hanson & Hillier, 1987).

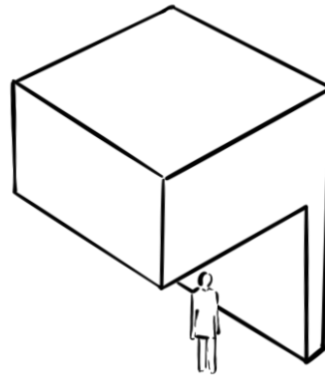
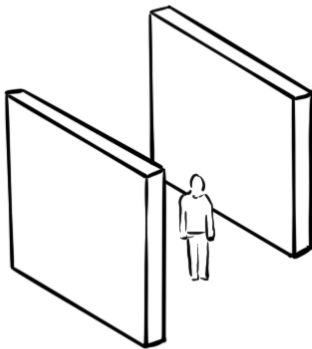
Nonetheless, we should not overestimate spatial design for specific behaviours. Behaviour is not solely determined by the person's environment. Kurt Lewin, a psychologist, developed the

formula  $\text{Behaviour} = f(\text{Person, Environment})$  to explain how an individual's behaviour is influenced by their environment (Paiva, 2018). It is critical to understand that the use of architecture is not limited to the designed environment, there are additional variables. Every person is unique, with different memories, experiences, and connections. Therefore, the way multiple people interact with the same space differs (Lipman, 1969).

In conclusion, architectural design has an impact on human behaviour, both individually and socially. However, the influence is never absolute. As a result, allowing for flexibility or change can improve the long-term quality of the designed space. Bocconi believes it is critical to consider the goals of different spaces. For example, if a space must be social or provide the ability to focus. This emphasis on behaviour rather than one specific of person, combined with an open concept and flexibility, will result in qualitatively designed spaces that respond to behaviour instead of just behaviour responding to the space.







**04**

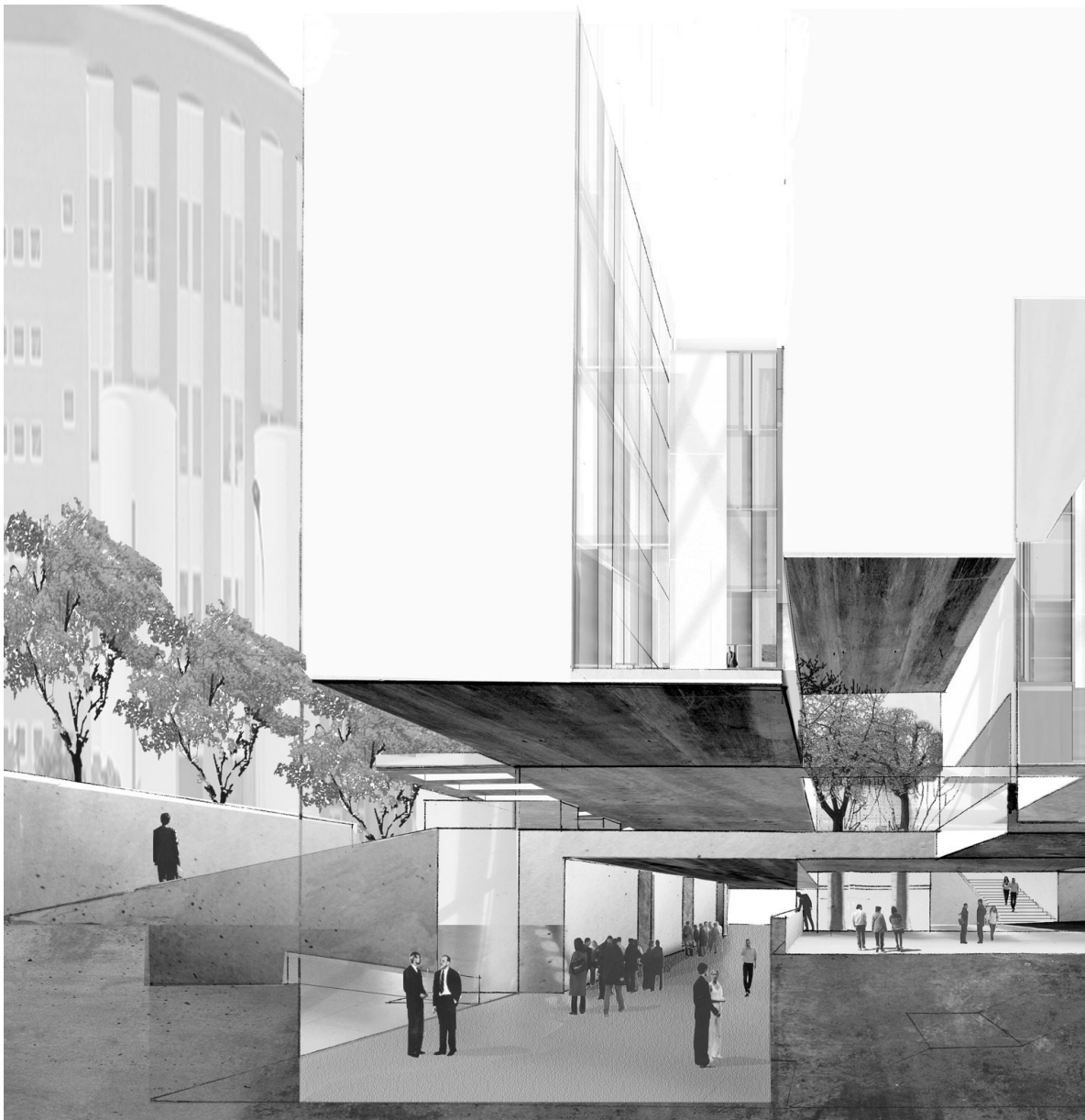
# Design Brief



In this chapter the design brief for the future building of the Bocconi University is presented. The brief is based on various analyses divided among three key topics: **Client, Site and Program**. The brief will serve as the basis for the research-by-design phase of this research.



*Photo by Lorenzo Zandri (n.d.)*



*Section by Grafton Architects (2008)*



# Client



## Client

As the building will be located on the campus of Bocconi University and also will function as a university building the client is Bocconi University.

### Bocconi

#### *The university*

The Bocconi University was founded in 1902 and is located in the city of Milan, Italy. The university is a private university that offers different programs of study, but focuses on economics, business and law. Bocconi excels in specifically these programs of study and has grown to be into one of the top global universities for business education (About Us - Bocconi University, n.d.). Currently Bocconi University is ranked 920th globally and 36th in Italy (EduRank, 2025).

#### *Mission*

According to Bocconi, their mission is to advance and spread social science knowledge through research and innovation. While they aim for global impact, they currently prioritise socioeconomic progress at the local, national, and European levels. Bocconi also advocates for a sustainable environment that promotes social and cultural interaction (Mission - Bocconi University, n.d.).

However, as the research delves deeper into Bocconi University, it raises the question of whether the university truly provides this social environment. This will be addressed later in the research.

#### *Ambition*

Bocconi aspires to be a leading international university for social sciences, with a focus on business and economics, they want to improve by focusing more on innovation and entrepreneurship.

Bocconi wants to introduce an evolved teaching model that incorporates innovative methods and technologies. Where students can understand and elaborate on theories while applying knowledge and critical thinking to problem solving. Integrating classroom knowledge into daily life. Furthermore, Furthermore, Bocconi wants collaboration to be a more important theme in the curriculum.

According to Bocconi, students should understand trends that lead to innovation. This has become fundamental to the social sciences. Bocconi wants to contribute more to students' entrepreneurial and innovative mindsets. This includes being open to new ideas and challenges, as well as flexible and proactive (Vision 2030 - Bocconi University, n.d.)

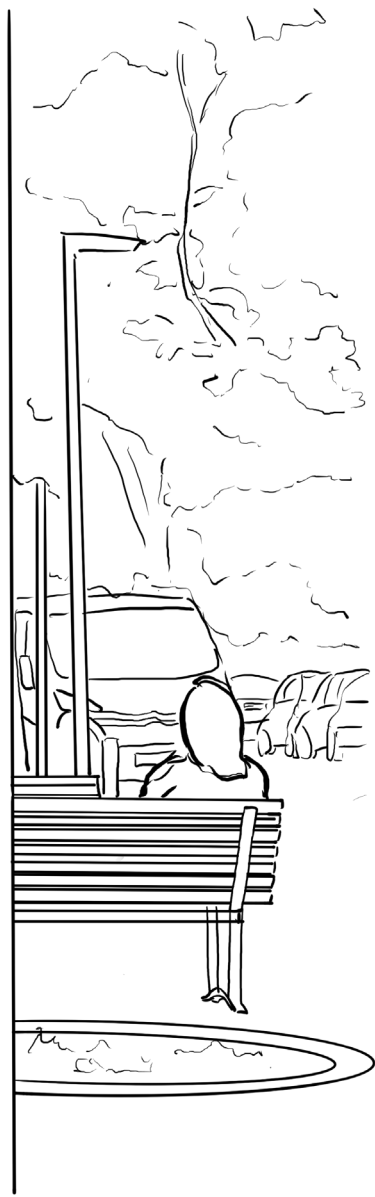
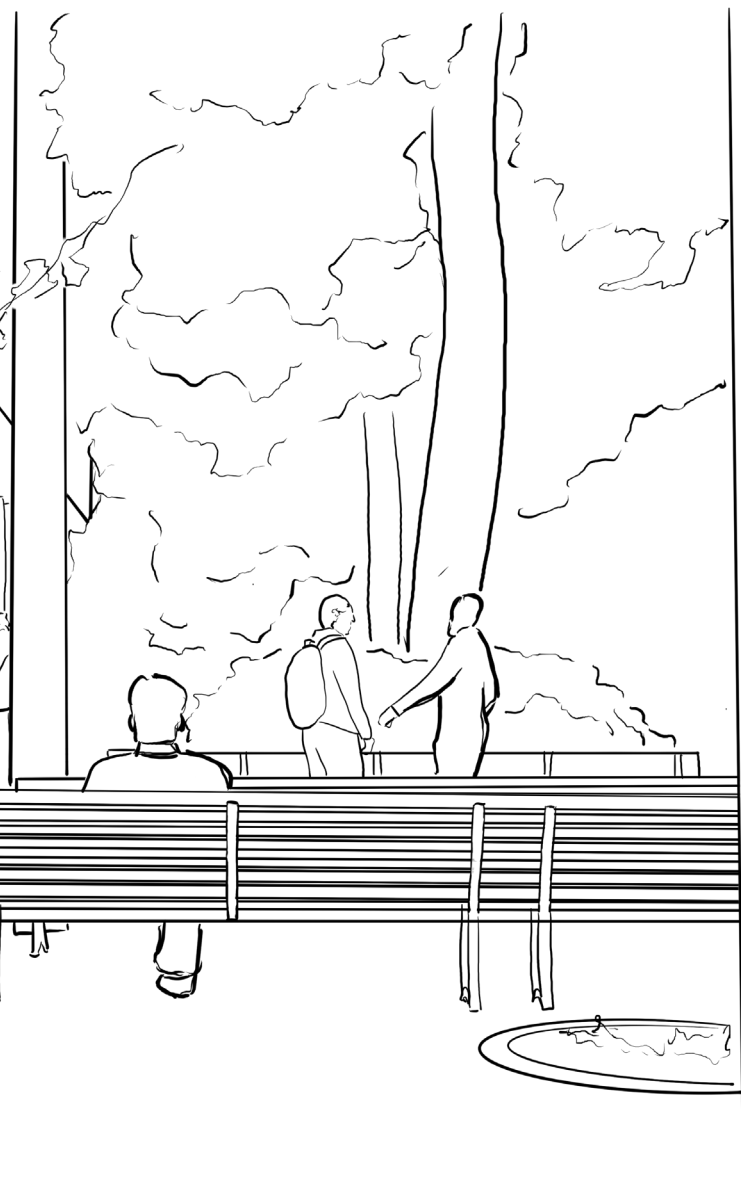


*Bocconi aspires to be the leading global university for business and economics, by focusing more on Innovation and Entrepreneurship.*

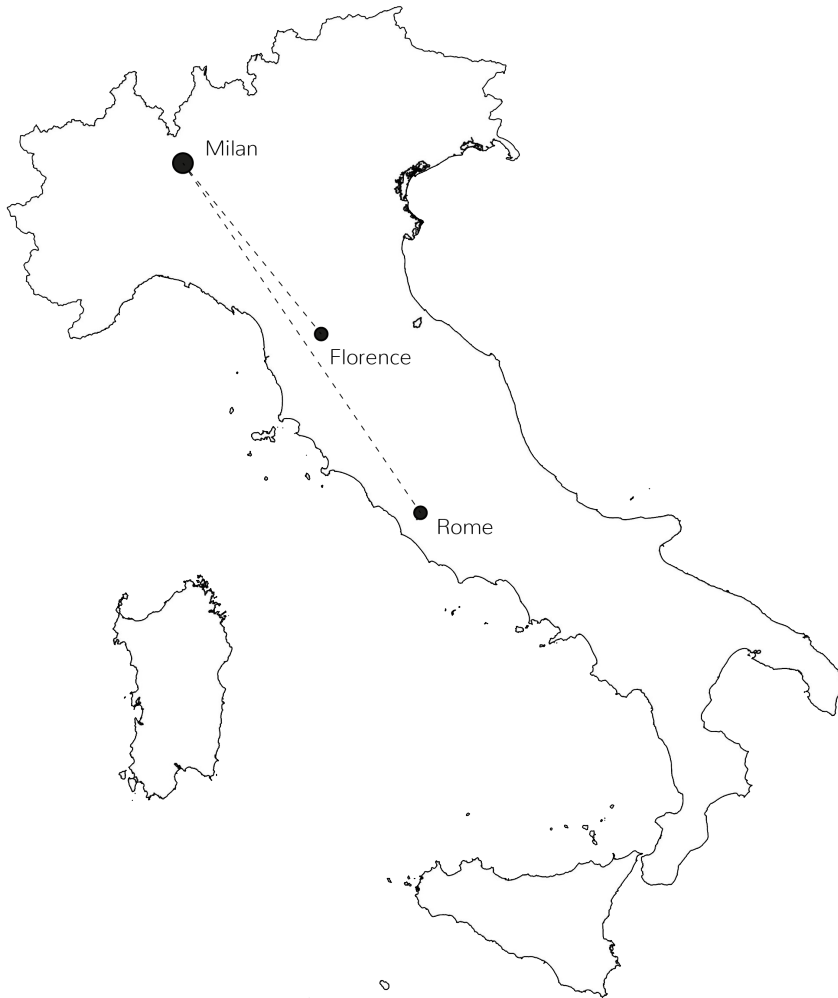
*(Vision 2030 - Bocconi University, n.d.)*



# Site



Own Illustration (2025)



*Milan as connector (Own Illustration, 2025)*



### *Milan as connector*

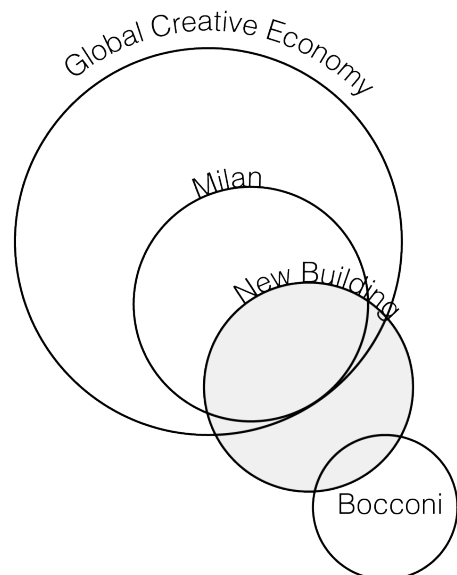
The new building will be situated on the Bocconi Campus and will serve as a Bocconi University building. Bocconi University is based in Milan. Milan is a large city in Italy, with 1.3 million residents. As previously stated, Milan plays an important role in the global creative economy. Milan serves as the creative economy's connector, and as the world's third largest city, its connections with Rome and Florence help to put Italy on the map for the creative economy. Other than Milan, Rome and Florence are more focused on art, literature, and music.

Milan's position in the global creative economy, combined with Bocconi's ambition to become a more prominent international university, creates an opportunity. When it comes down to increasing Bocconi University's global recognition, improving its relationship with the creative economy is a good place to start. Bocconi is a well-known business and economics university, so this connection makes sense and is very exciting for the university and its students.

### *Site as connector*

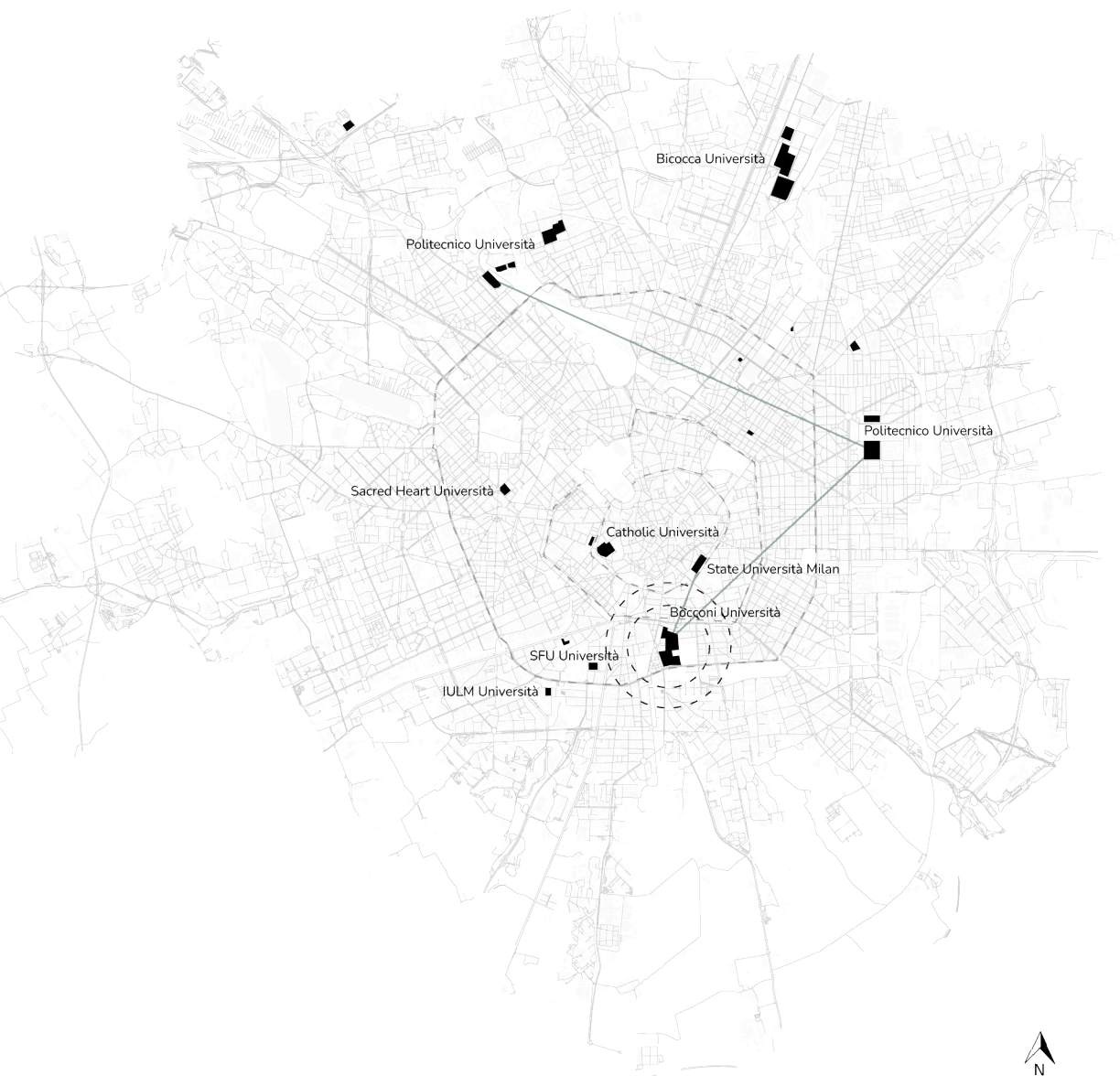
The question is, how can the university achieve this? The program will make a significant contribution, but the positioning of the new building on the site will also be important. When connecting with the city, it is critical for the building to radiate that connection. Perhaps by opening up to both the city and the campus, promoting transparency and connection. A continuity between the exterior and interior could be created.

To better understand how the site can help Bocconi connect to the city and global structures, it is necessary to first understand the site itself.





*Historic layers of Milan (Own Illustration, 2025)*



## Bocconi in the city

### Location

The city of Milan offers a complex urban structure that is based on several historic layers. This becomes clear in the three city walls still recognizable in the city structure. The Medieval, Rome and Spanish wall showcase the growing of Milan through time.

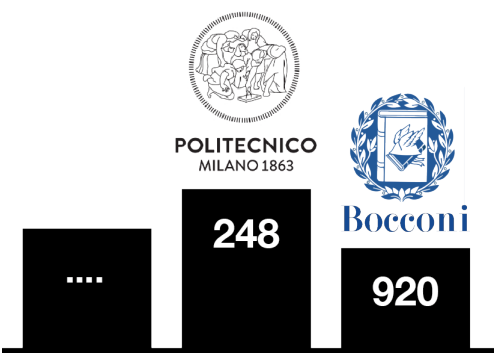
The Bocconi University is situated in between the Medieval and Spanish wall structure. Therefore it is positioned at the border of the historic center. The campus forms an important connector between the center and the rest of the city.

### University connection

Multiple universities are located in the city of Milan. Politecnico di Milano and the Milan State University form the two biggest universities next to Bocconi. Politecnio is ranked 248th in the world and 7th in Italy and therefore has a established a better position than Bocconi (EduRank, 2025). However, Politecnico does not focus on business or economics but forms a engineering, science and technology university.

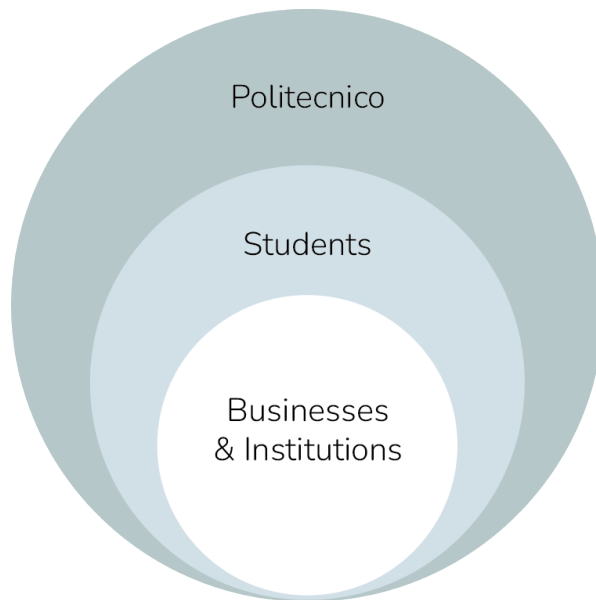
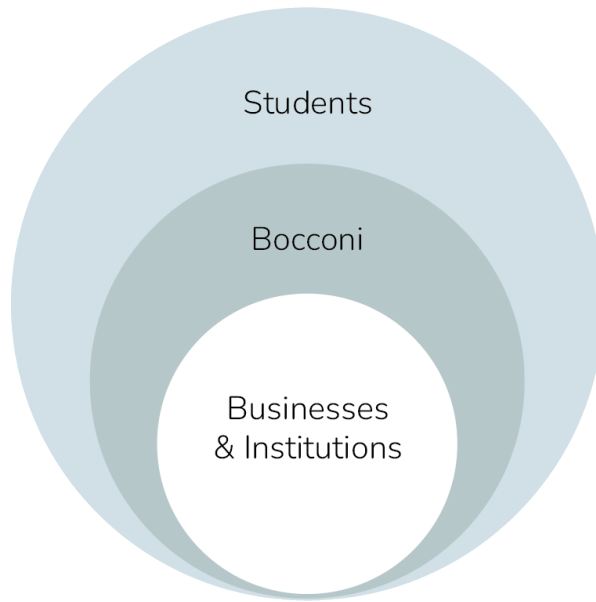
Politecnico distinguishes itself from Bocconi by emphasising innovation through technology and science. The university not only offers various study programs related to these topics, but it also has strong

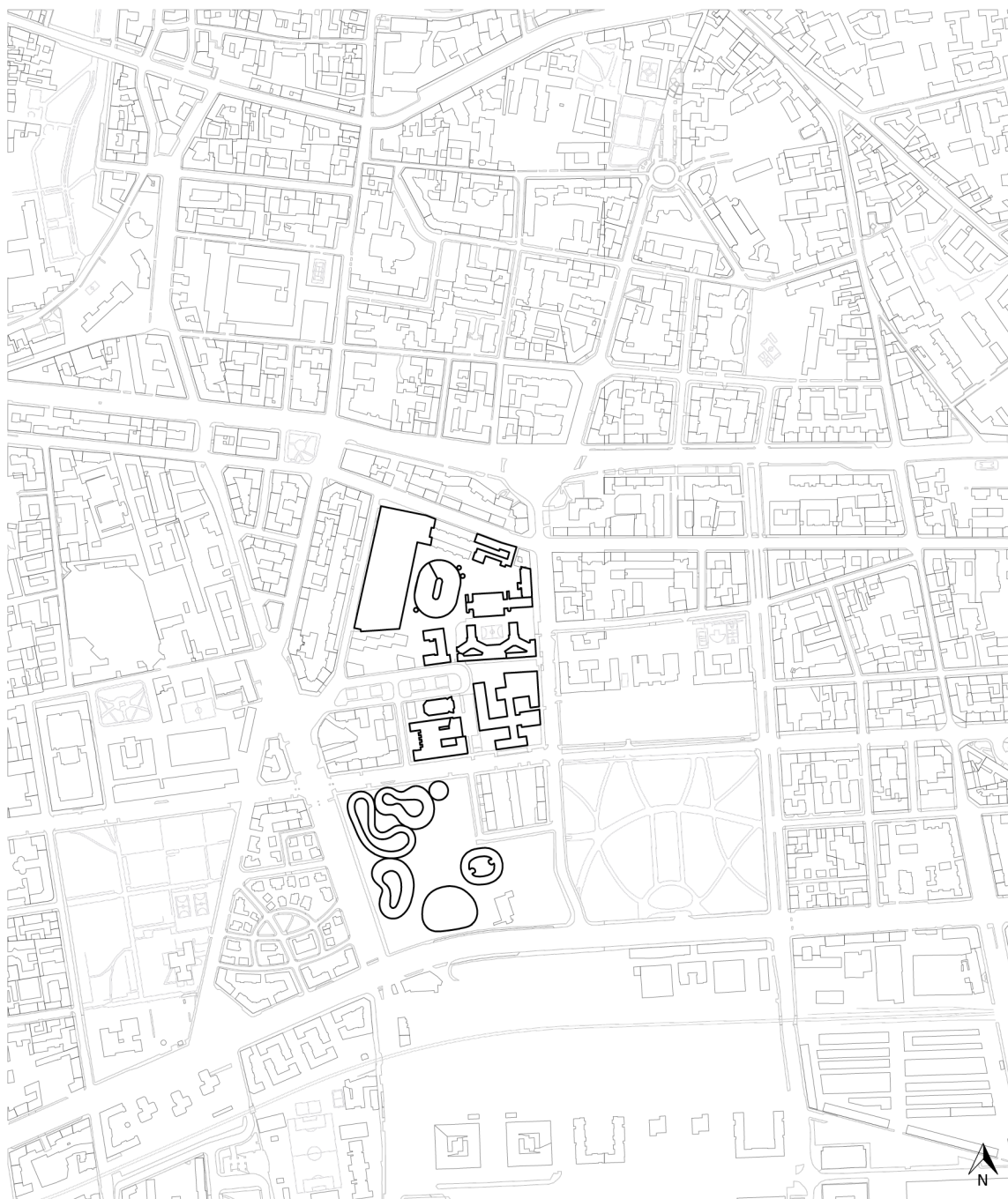
collaborations with businesses and research institutions. This provides a more practical approach to their education (Politecnico Di Torino, 2025) (Politecnico Di Torino, 2023). Students can apply their knowledge in real-world situations. Preparing them for society. As a result, Politecnico could have a stronger connection to Milan and the rest of the world. This approach would be interesting for Bocconi to implement, but focused on their expertise in business and economics. The opportunity is already available through the creative economy.



Politecnico VS Bocconi (Own Illustration, 2025)

*Politecnico offers students strong collaborations with businesses and research institutions*





Scale 1:10.000

*Bocconi University Map (Own Illustration, 2025)*



Bocconi is positioned in between two former city walls. This makes Bocconi the in between, the connector. Connecting the historic center with the rest of the city.

### *Accessibility*

As connecting point there is already a lot of different types of public transportation around the campus. Two tram lines and multiple bus lines connect Bocconi to the rest of the city. In contrast, the site offers limited accessibility to cars on campus, which enhances the pedestrian campus. There is the possibility to park the car in parking garages around the campus.

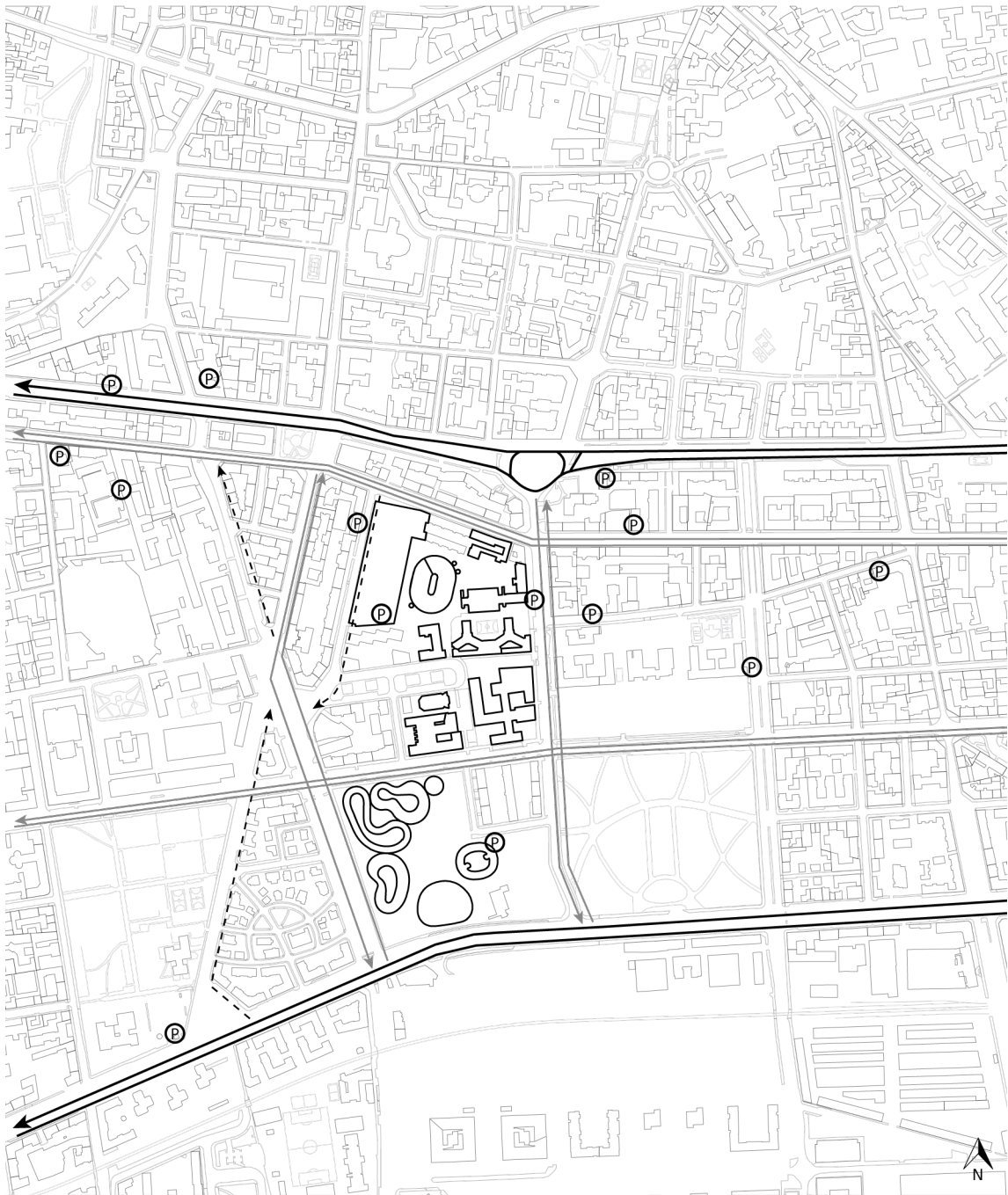
### *Green*

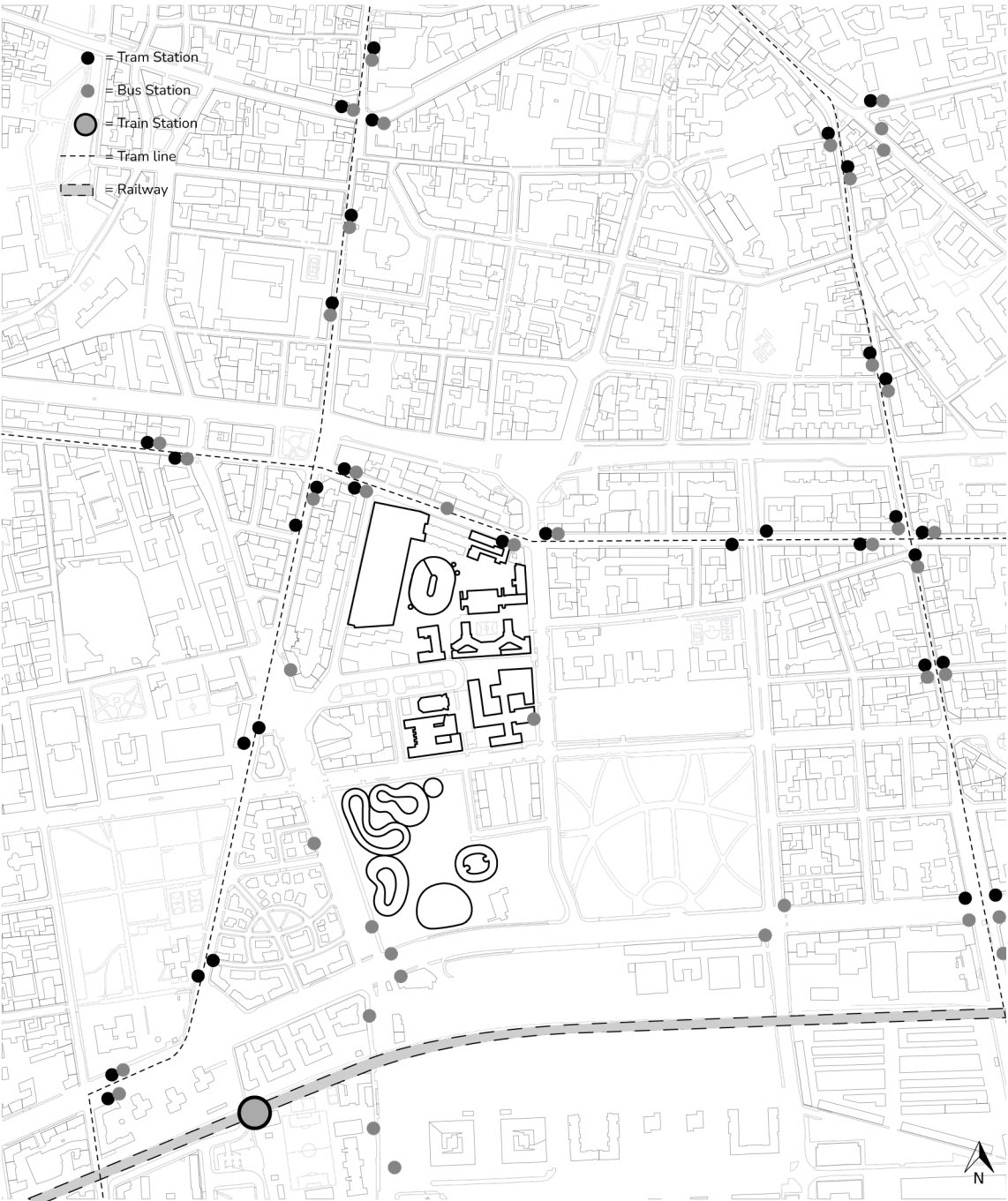
Qualitative public green surrounding Bocconi is limited. Most of the green around Bocconi is not designed, gated or not used by the people of Milan. Bocconi is positioned in between the places that do offer green. The new building therefore has the opportunity to become the connector of green.

### *Pedestrian Campus*

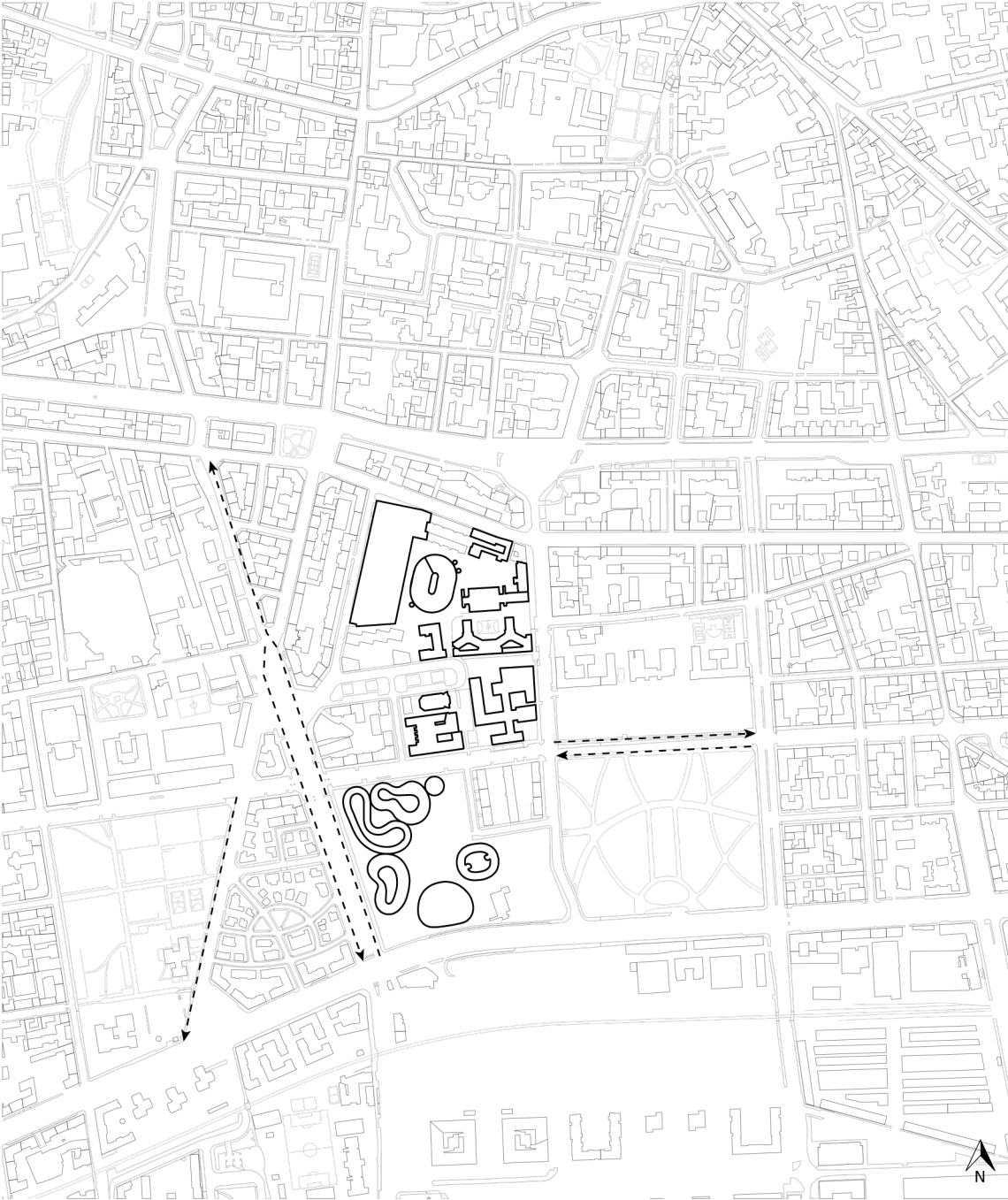
The campus itself is designed for pedestrians. Bicycles, cars, and public transport are all positioned around the campus.

Car





Biking lanes

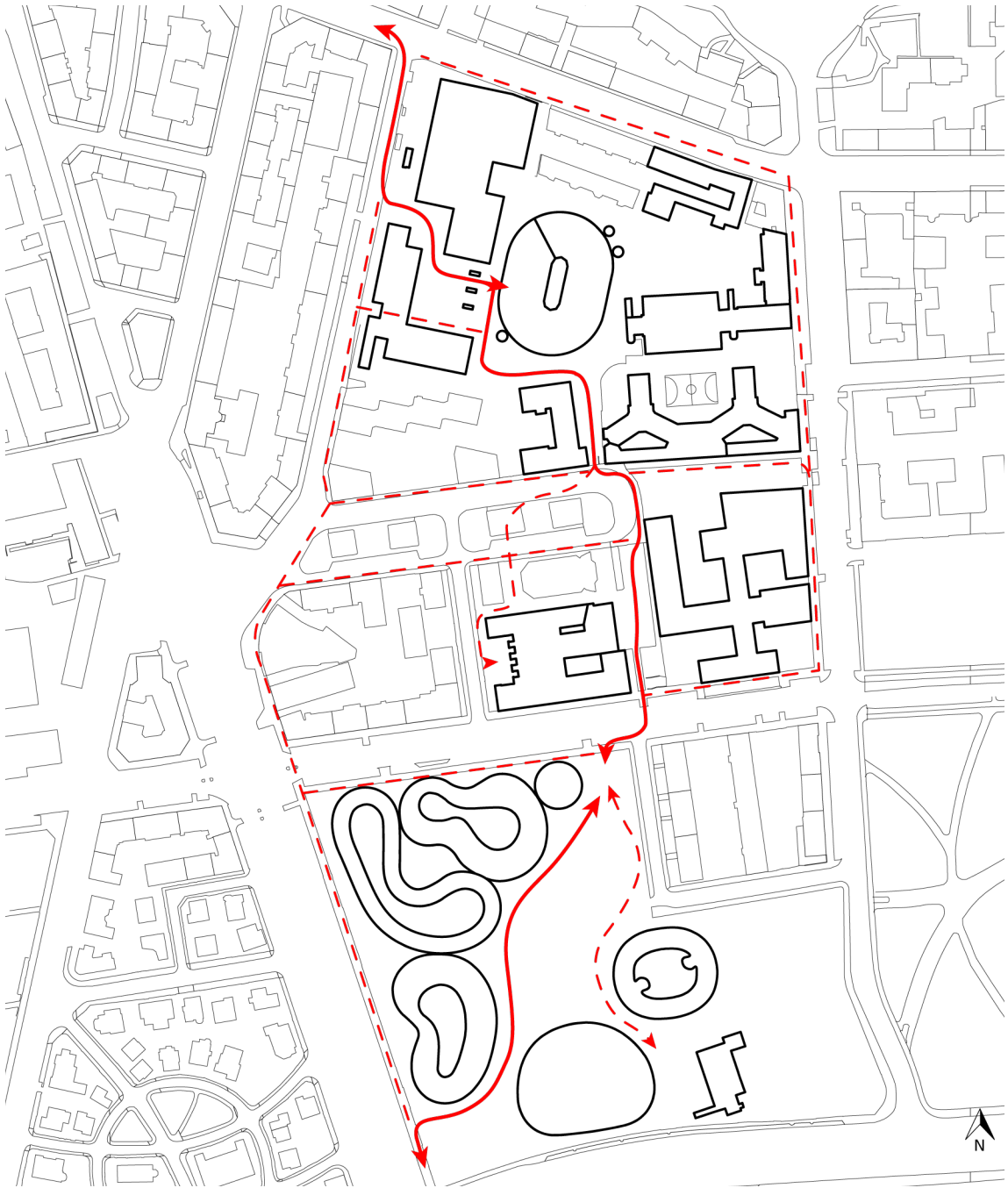








Pedestrian



Scale 1:4000



*Pedestrian Campus (Own Photo, 2025)*

## **Bocconi Campus**

### *Building zones*

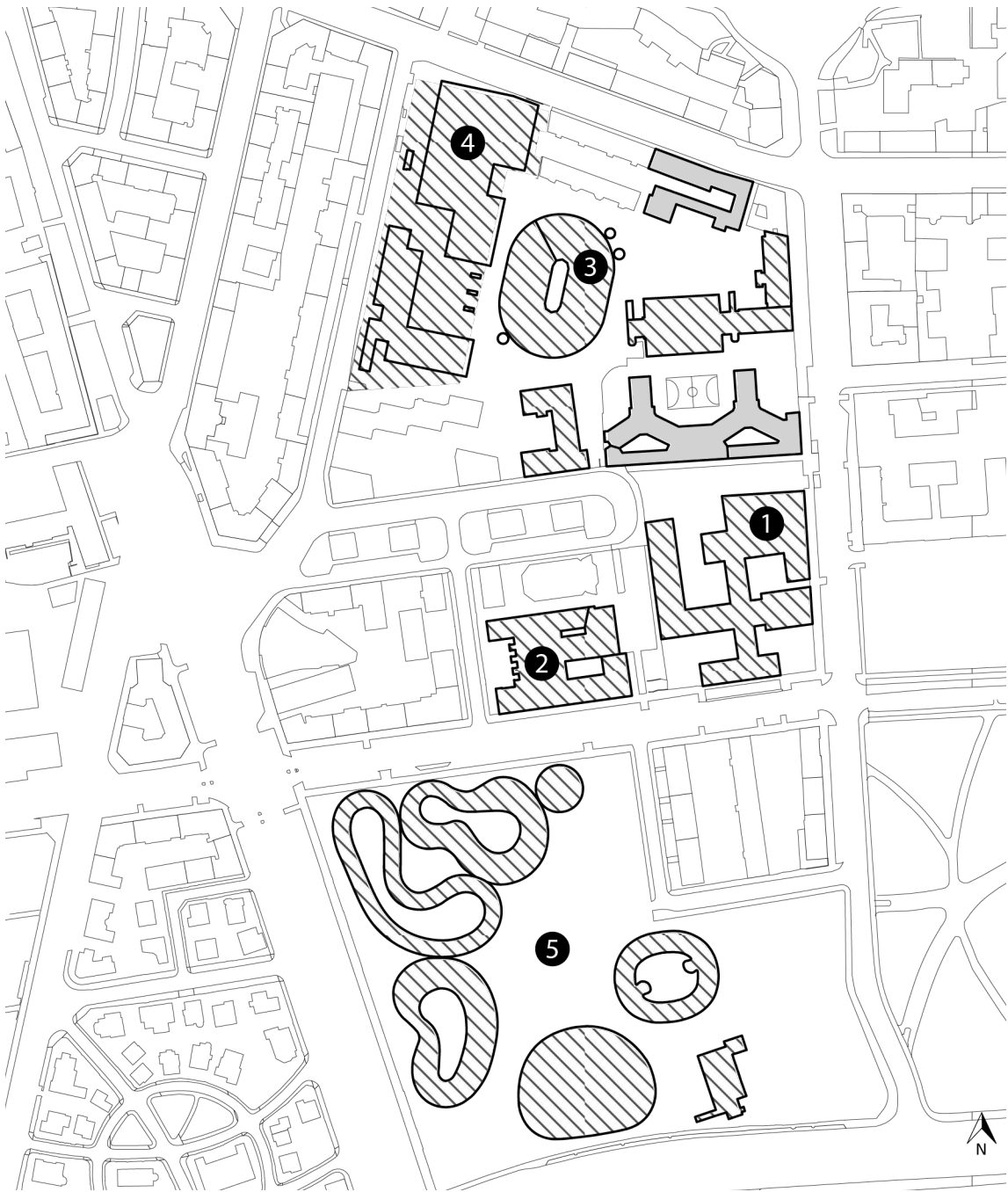
The Bocconi university consists of three zones with campus buildings. The older buildings of the university are positioned in the middle zone. From here Bocconi grew to two sides. First, towards the city, where the Gardella and Grafton building are positioned. Followed by the growth of the campus in the other direction. Here is the newest part of the campus located, designed by SANAA.



### *Building Roles*

The buildings on campus all serve as traditional higher education facilities. The various buildings house classrooms, lecture halls, workshop spaces, and a library. When speaking with students, almost all of them stated that the architectural quality of the majority of the buildings on the older parts of the campus is very low, and that the new part of SANAA is inaccessible to most students because it consists of a residential building, a sports complex, and educational buildings designed for PhD students and some master's tracks. This means that almost all Bocconi students receive their education in the older buildings on campus.

The buildings on campus now are not designed for students, but

rather for the purpose of more traditional education. The buildings do not yet have the capacity to accommodate the transformation of education, which includes studying more on the laptop and digital learning. In addition, the current campus buildings do not encourage collaboration. As students become more independent, causing interaction and social engagement becomes more essential in the design of a university building. These findings can be used for the new building design.



-  University Buildings
-  Campus Residences





1. Giuseppe Pagano - 1941



2. Giovanni Muzio - 1965



3. Ignazio Gardella - 2001



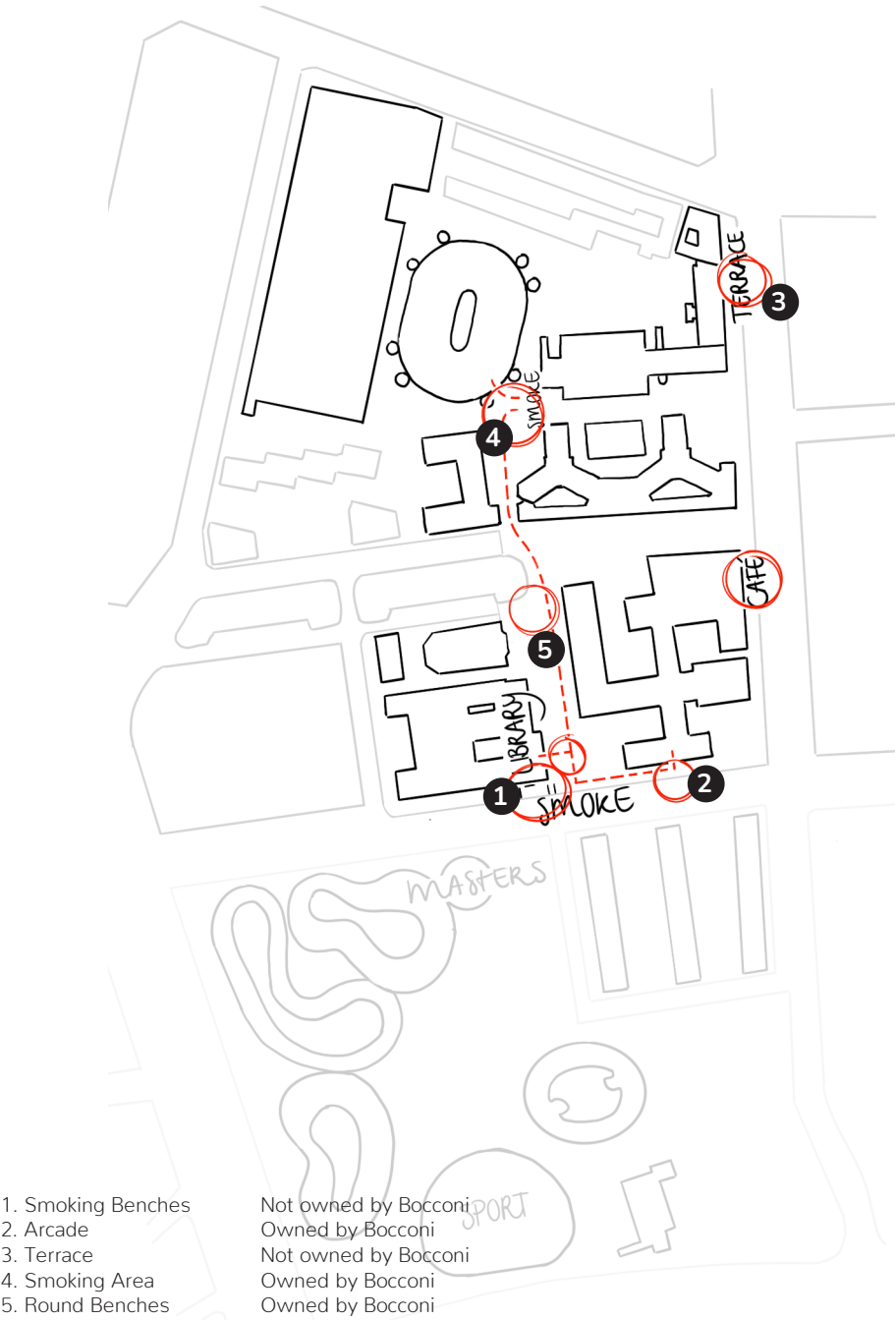
4. Grafton Architects - 2008





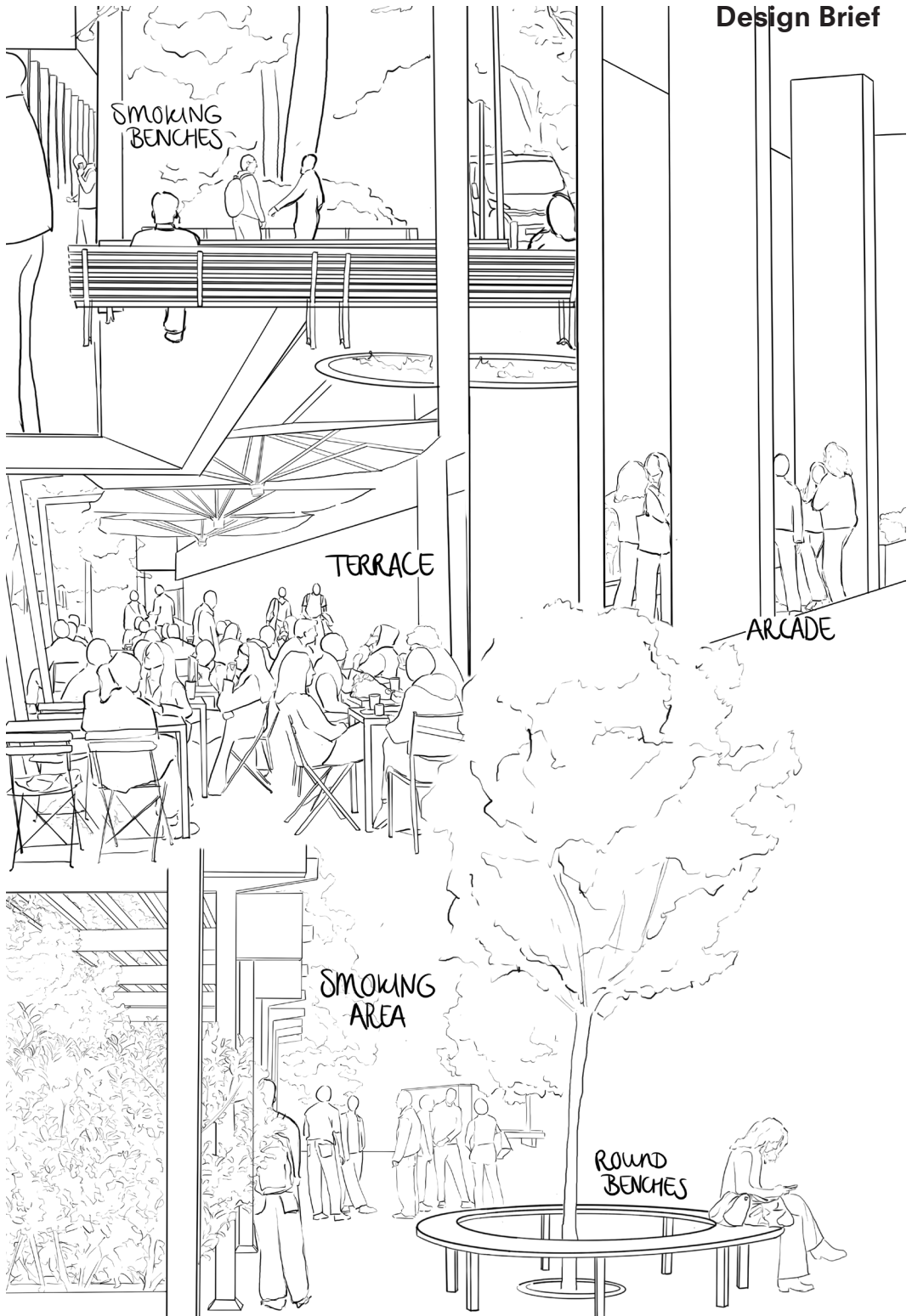
5. SANAA - 2019

(Own Photo's, 2025)



(Own Illustration, 2025)

## Design Brief



(Own Illustration, 2025)

## Social Bocconi

During the field study at the Bocconi Campus it stood out that designed social spaces could be considered rare. Five designed elements were found for social engagement, the first being the smoking benches just outside of the campus border, these are not Bocconi owned but placed there by the government of Milan. The second being the arcade, a typical architectural feature in Milan. An architectural element creating a space for simply 'being'. A small transition space offering shade, cover and intimacy. This arcade was used a lot by student to gather and talk before distributing to other buildings where they probably had another class. The third element were two terraces of cafés in the street forming the border of the campus. These terraces are not Bocconi owned but used by the students to engage socially for a coffee or a drink. These are probably visited often, as the Bocconi campus offers nothing comparable with great social quality. The fourth social element at the campus was the smoking area located at the intersection between multiple educational buildings. The third element was two café terraces on the street. These terraces are not Bocconi-owned, but are used by students to socialize over coffee or a drink. These are most likely visited

frequently, as the Bocconi campus provides nothing. The fourth social element on campus was a smoking area located at the intersection of several educational buildings. This smoking area featured a small square and a pergola that provided shade and cover. The fifth element were the round benches. After speaking with students, we can conclude that these benches are used, but not socially. When sitting in a group, everyone is facing different directions, making conversation difficult.

The field study reveals that there are some designed social elements on or near the Bocconi Campus. However, nearly half does not belong to or originate from Bocconi. And the social elements initiated by Bocconi are of low quality and could be interpreted as not being designed but rather simply placed.

### *Interviews*

The lack of social spaces was confirmed by Bocconi students through some interviews. Many students were very frustrated when talking about the subject. "The social space is now the smoking spaces" one student observed. 'I see more computers than people' stated another student.

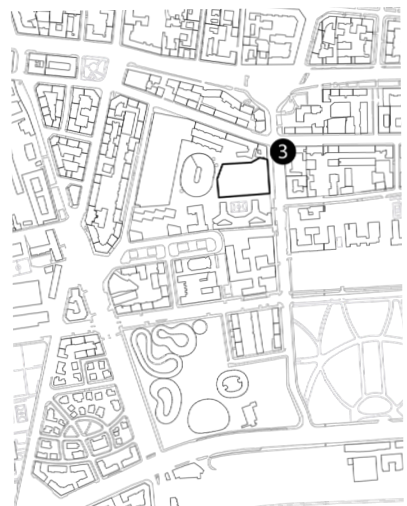
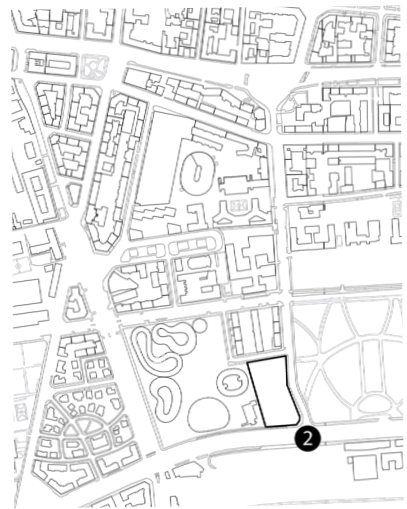
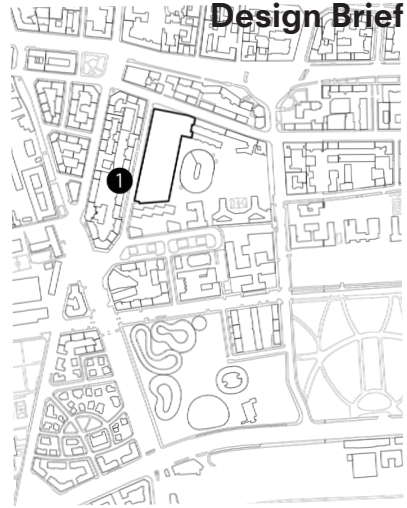


## Site qualification

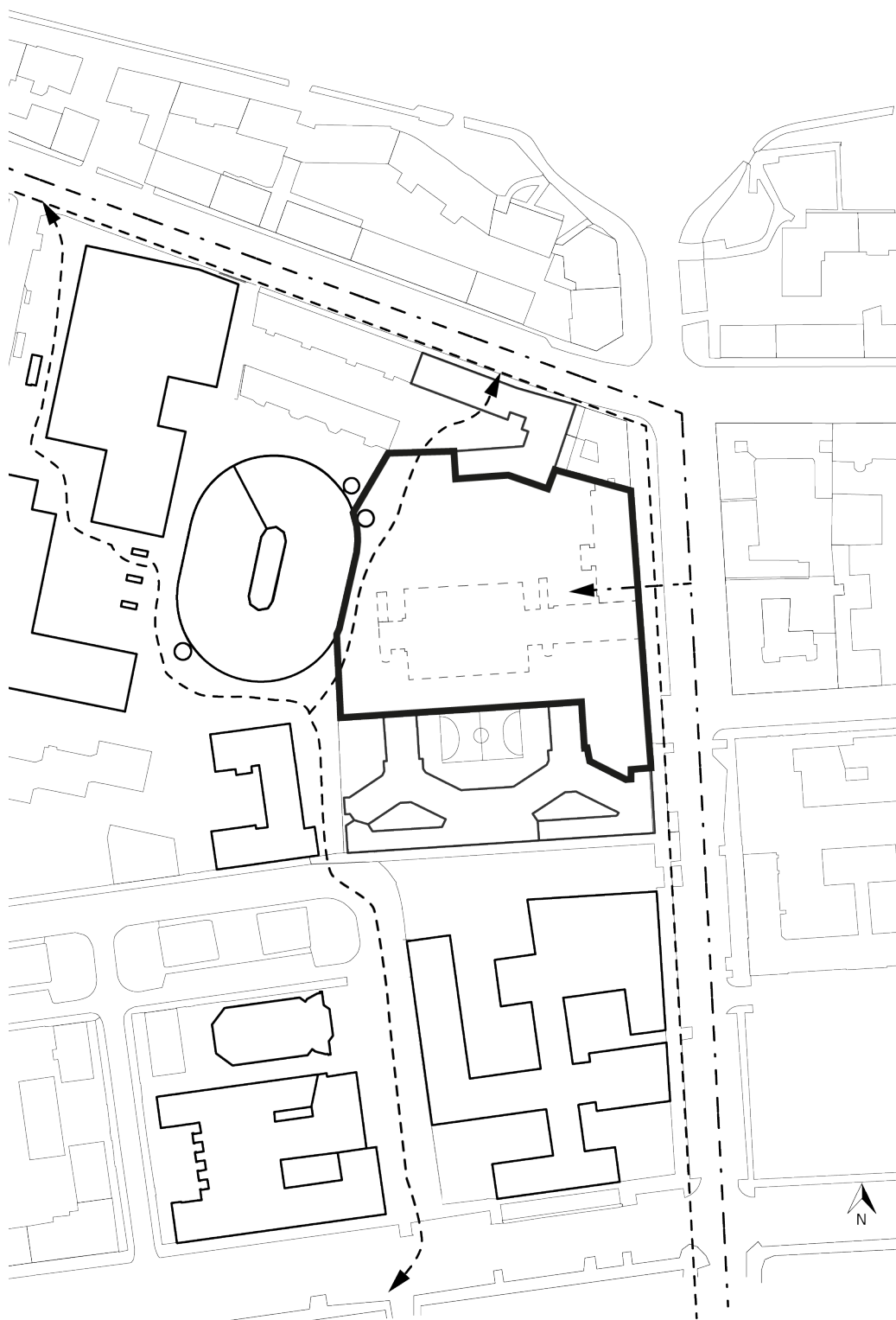
The site of the building should therefore form the perfect location for social interaction. A place where people meet, intentionally but maybe even more important: unintentionally. The site should become a place of connection. Connection among people but also with the city. The site should offer visibility for people from the city, but also on global scale. The site needs to support the new Post Card for Bocconi.

Out of the three potential sites the third site has been chosen. This site is positioned directly on the Bocconi Intersection, the spot where students from multiple buildings cross to either move to their next class or to the street.

## Design Brief







(Own Illustration, 2025)

The site is placed in between two campus residential buildings and one educational university building that mainly houses study spaces, classrooms and lecture rooms. Furthermore the site forms a border along the Bocconi intersection. This intersection forms a social meeting place at the campus. From this point students move into different directions onto the campus.

The connection from the city to the site is currently limited to the entrance of the parking garage. However with the surrounding buildings often having an active plint there are a lot of opportunities to enhance connection and engagement between students and society, for example through connecting the site to the city more.

On the site currently stands a vacant building. This used to be a research facility and includes a parking garage beneath the plot. The is in poor condition and appears to have been vacant for many years. When it was attempted to research the program that was previously located in the building further, there were no results.

## Campus

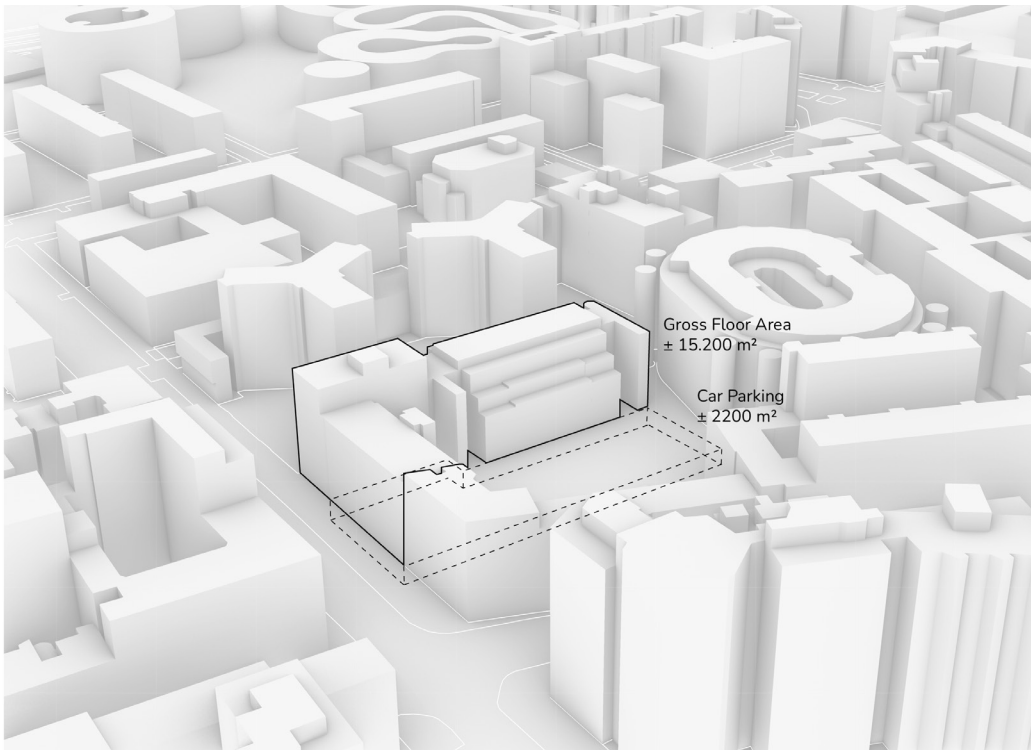


*Current situation site (Own photograph, 2025)*

## Design Brief

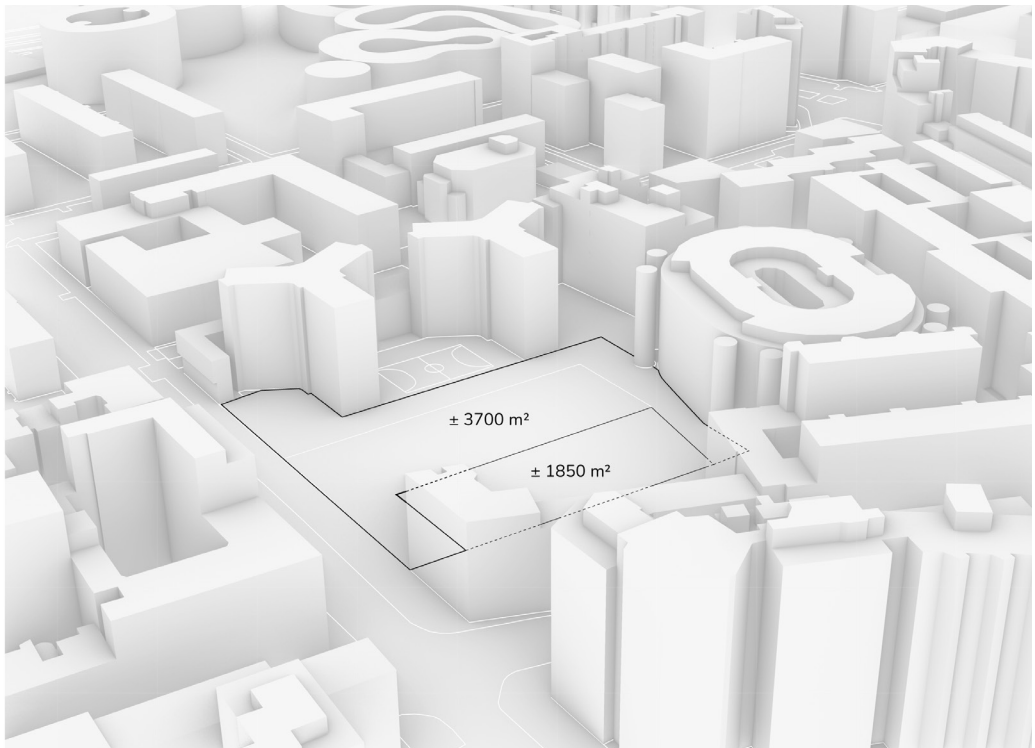
*City*





*Site with vacant building*

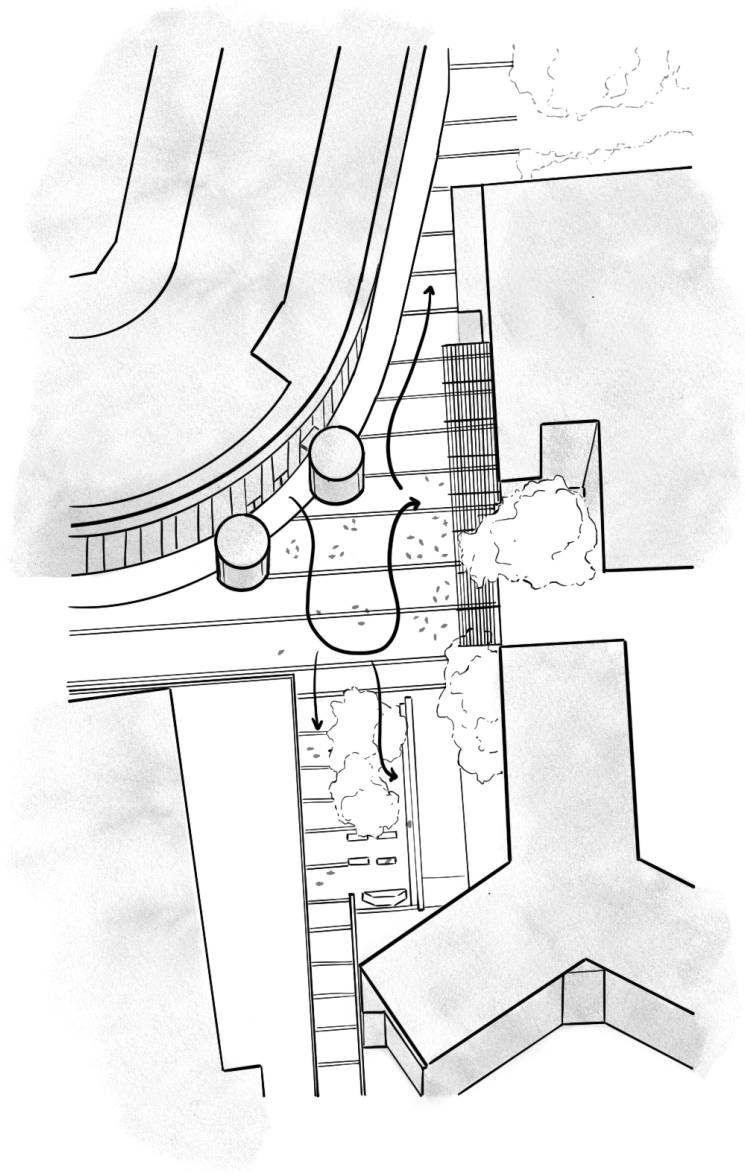




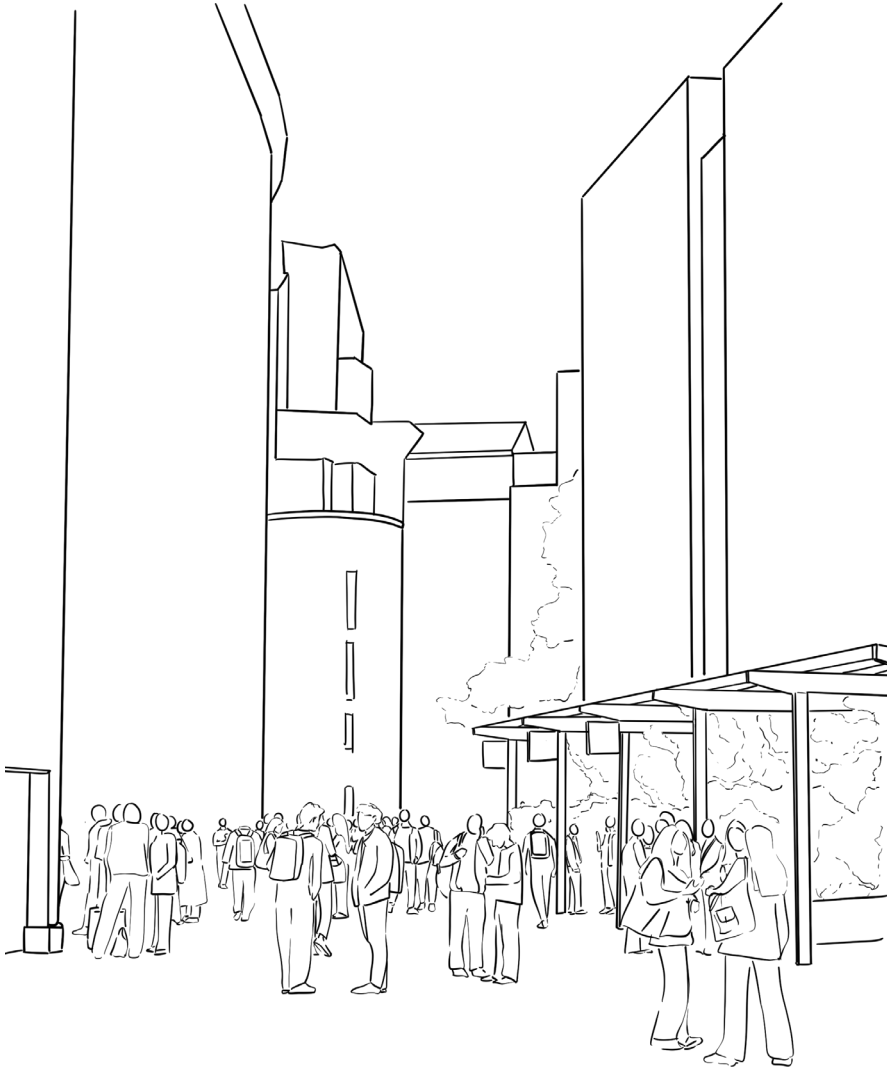
*Site*

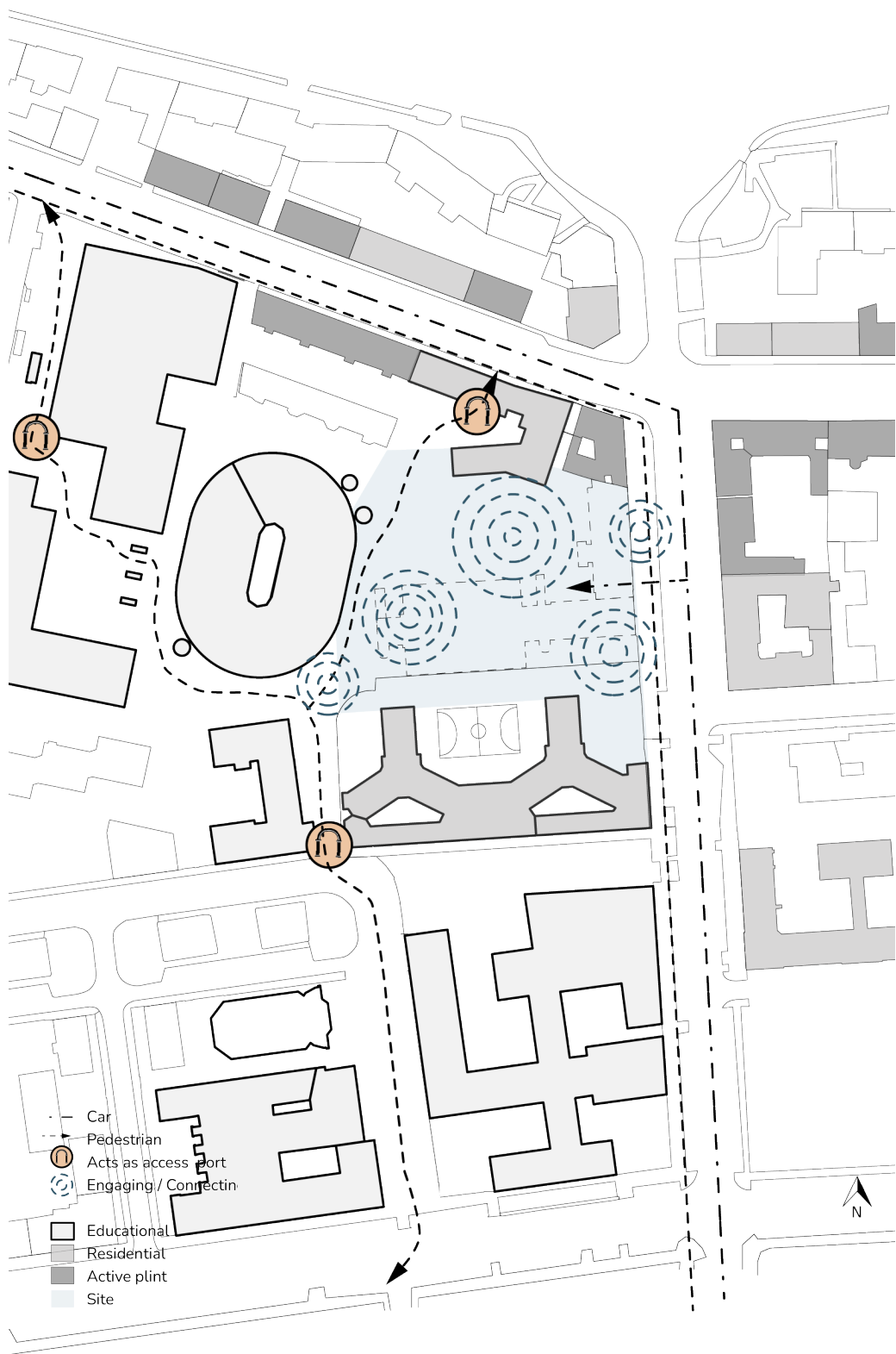
The site of the new building consists of a total area of  $5550 \text{ m}^2$

Bocconi Intersection



(Own illustrations, 2025)





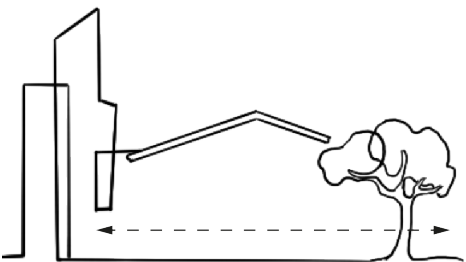
The site must improve Bocconi’s connection with the city of Milan in order to enhance the university’s relationship with society, and thus with the creative economy.

The site can do this by fostering a connection with the city. Creating a continuity between exterior and interior. Furthermore, through fostering transparency and visibility. For the people of Milan, but also for global recognition. The site must support the new building as Bocconi’s postcard. This could result in a building that reflects a landmark both on the outside and inside. For example, the program will stand out from other Bocconi buildings and even other universities. Through reflecting innovation and adaptability.

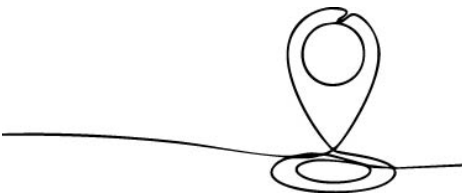
The site will become Bocconi’s designed social space. The one it longs for. The site will increase social engagement by encouraging both intentional and unintentional interactions.



Social Space



Connection



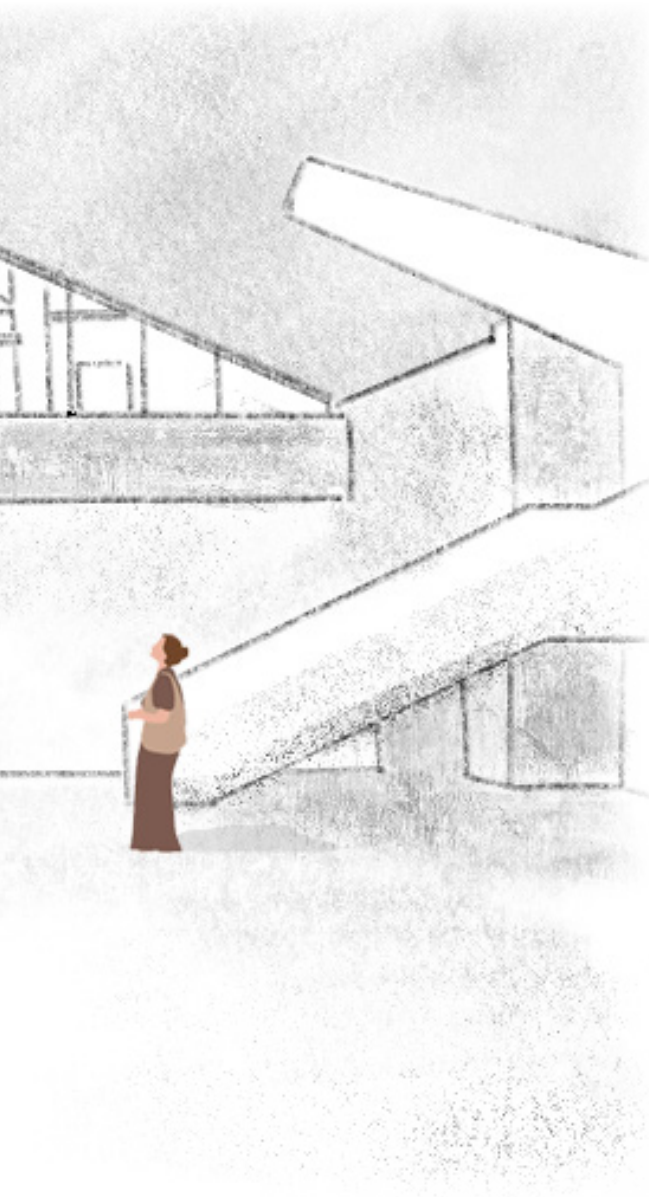
Postcard

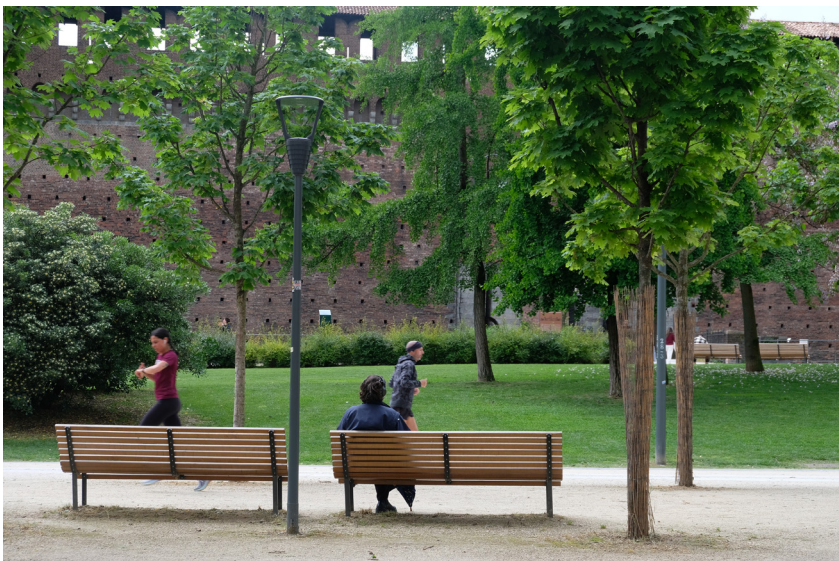




(Own Illustration, 2025)

# Program





*The living city (Own photograph, 2025)*

In order to define the program and requirements for the new building there are a few steps to take.

First, it is important to determine the building's program ambition. After this the students' perspectives will be analyzed using the interviews conducted during the field study. The next step is to understand the current situation. The building site consists of a vacant building. Therefore, the Grafton Building is used for program analysis of the current situation. Following this analysis, four additional case studies are used for benchmarking. These case studies will be examined through various layers, namely public versus private, focusing on three design elements: experience, explore, and connection. These are based on the connected learning model, which will be explained further later. After the analyses, the case studies can be compared. This information is useful in determining what works and doesn't work for the building's program. As a result, the plan for Bocconi University's new building can be determined.



## Building ambition

Based on the theoretical research, the client and site analysis the ambition for the new Bocconi building can be described.

The new Bocconi building will be designed as a social and innovation-stimulating space that connects students with the city. The design will support the ambition of Bocconi to achieve a more prominent role as global university. This will be accomplished not by traditionally expanding the university, but by better connecting the university with society, through innovation, civic and social engagement, and collaboration with the creative economy of Milan.

Milan as an important city in design, fashion, and entrepreneurship, provides the perfect environment for this approach. By connecting students to the creative economy in Milan, Bocconi will provide students with the opportunity to test their ideas, build networks and engage with real world developments. The building will facilitate this by providing work and collaboration spaces that are flexible, innovation labs (AI, VR, media), and designed social areas. The building will become a space where students are encouraged to take initiative and engage with each other and the city. At the same time these spaces will also meet the current needs of students of providing more study environments and designed social spaces.

While education is becoming increasingly digital, the civic role of the university remains essential. This building will address both: it will support digital transformation while offering a physical space where social interaction and engagement, community, knowledge and creativity intersect.

### *Program ambition*

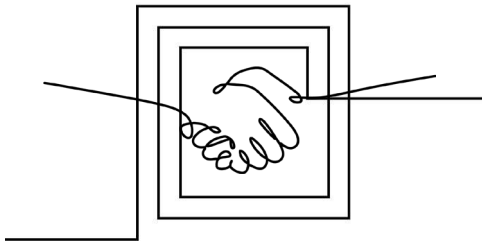
From the building ambition a few focus points for the program ambition can already be concluded.

The program needs to facilitate innovation and social engagement. Innovation by supporting the transformation of educational methods, encouraging research and collaboration. The program could for example provide an innovation lab and collaborative spaces. Furthermore social engagement could be facilitated through the program by fostering collaboration and human interaction. Social spaces should be qualitatively designed and gain a prominent place within a building.

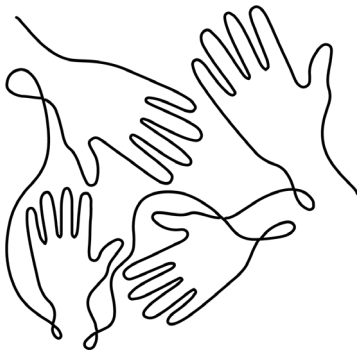
*(Own Illustrations, 2025)*



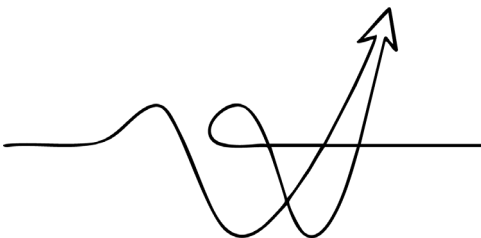
## Design Brief



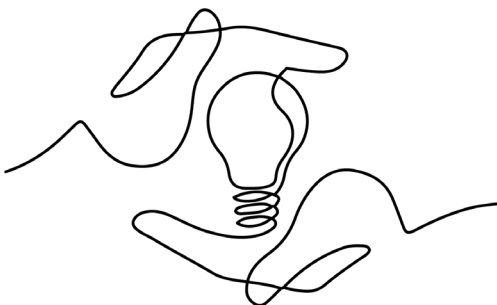
*(Civic) Connection*



*Social engagement*



*Creative Economy*



*Innovation*

## Student perspective

### *Interviews*

To understand the current program of the university it is important to hear from the people who use the campus daily. Therefore there were twelve people interviewed during the site visit to Bocconi University. From the twelve people ten were students.

Almost all of the students agreed that the architectural quality of the older buildings on campus is very low. And I see you thinking: but there was just a new part of the campus built? Most students are unable to access the SANAA-designed campus area. This section of the campus includes a residential building, a sports complex, and educational buildings designed for Ph.D. students and some master's tracks. This means that almost all Bocconi students receive their education in the older buildings on campus. As a result, most students do not benefit from the newer architecture.

A consistent theme throughout the interviews was the lack of social spaces on campus. Many students were frustrated by the lack of social areas. **"The social space is now the smoking spaces"** one student observed. Another reflected on the long-term consequences of a lack of social interaction by sharing her brother's experience during covid: **"My brother did all of his lessons at home, and he believes it is a bad idea. He received good grades, but did not learn much about communication or other social skills."**

The lack of social space is closely related to another common problem: a shortage of study spaces. "I feel like there are not actual social spaces owned by Bocconi, only study spaces, and they are too little as well" a student commented. In fact, every student interviewed mentioned a lack of study spaces. "There is a problem with the space in the library, you have to fight for a seat." Others described arriving early only to find every spot already taken. One person put it simply: **"Study spaces are missing. I arrived at ten o'clock, and everything was already full."**

Many students expressed that they would like a more balanced environment that encourages both individual work and collaboration. "I would like a place to meet people from other courses." and "There is no space to network with students." Another student notes: "I would design a new study space, but also a space where we can hang out." and "The university is not only a place for lessons and learning, but also to find a community and to build a more professional network." Finally, students indicated that they need more designed outdoor spaces.

These interviews show that students are not simply asking for more square meters, but for spaces that encourage a connected community, collaboration, and personal growth. They want a building that feels like theirs.

### *Conclusion interviews*

We can conclude from the interviews that the students have preferences for what the new building should offer in terms of program. First, a designed social space. Students need a space that connects them, where they can relax as well as collaborate, creating a sense of community. Second, current program of the campus lacks study spaces. As a result, students would like the new building to include more study areas. Finally, there is no qualitatively designed outdoor space on campus. This could be a good addition to the campus to not only create a healthy environment but also encourage social interaction.

The perspective on the future program of the site connects with the program ambition for this project. Designed social spaces, incorporating outdoor in this design and still meeting current needs through offering study environments.

*‘The social space is now the smoking spaces’*

*‘The university is not only a place for lessons and learning, but also to find a community and it is a way to create a more professional network’*

*‘I see more computers than people’*



*Social or just smoking? (Own photograph, 2025)*



*Grafton Building at Bocconi Campus (Own photograph, 2025)*



When this project began, the potential site focused on where the Grafton building is currently located. However, after visiting the site and considering other options, it was determined that it would be better to relocate the potential site to where a vacant university building currently stands. This site has a number of qualities that relate to the new building's ambitions as well as its program. Furthermore the Grafton building is a landmark for Bocconi University. Although it is rarely used by students, it serves important functions as an administrative and office building, which would otherwise have to be relocated.

The new site is located next to the Bocconi intersection, where students currently meet and cross paths. On the other side of the site is the street, which provides an opportunity to connect more with the city. Furthermore, the site currently provides some green space, but it is rarely used and of poor quality. All of this demonstrates that this site has potential to become the ideal location for the new building.

The vacant building previously was a research facility and includes a parking garage beneath the plot. The building is in poor condition and appears to have been vacant for many years. When it was attempted to research the program that was previously located in the building, there were no results. Therefore, the Grafton Building was chosen to represent a current Bocconi University building program in the benchmarking analysis.





*Architecture Faculty from TUDelft (n.d.)*



*Aalto University Väre building in Espoo (Meichsner, n.d.)*



*Law Faculty in Paris (Grazia, 2019)*



*Haus der Digitalisierung in Tulln (David Schreyer, 2023)*

To analyse the program five case studies will be benchmarked to later compare and draw conclusions for the new building design.

### *Grafton Building Bocconi*

The Grafton Building was chosen as the representative building for the program analysis of the Bocconi University. The building will be explain further later.

### *Architecture Faculty TUDelft*

The Architecture Faculty building at TUDelft was chosen as a case study for two reasons. The first is that it serves as a global landmark for the architecture faculty. The orange hall is immediately recognizable and forms the faculty's post card for relations. The second reason is the social culture of the building. The open circulation and open character encourage both formal and informal social interaction and stimulates social engagement. The workshop spaces on the top floors serve as study, social, and circulation spaces all at the same time. The academic program of this faculty differs, but the example of social architectural design can be very valuable for the program analysis.

### *Väre Building Aalto University*

The Väre building at Aalto University is regarded as a highly collaborative building and therefore interesting as case study. The building's design, which includes multiple small indoor squares, creates an environment helpful for casual interactions. Students will meet both formally

and informally in these squares, as well as in the cafeteria, galleries, and group work areas. Furthermore, the workshop spaces are positioned next to each other in flexible layouts. This creates spaces that are adaptable and encourages collaboration, which stimulates new businesses and innovative ideas.

### *Law Faculty Paris University*

The law faculty in Paris explores the relationship and connection between the university and the city by designing the outdoor public space located within the city structure. It delves deeper into the circulation and flow of the building in relation to the interaction of behaviour and spatial design. This case study is interesting for the program to dive deeper into program relationships and functions in relation to each other but also in relation to the city.

### *Haus der Digitalisierung of University of Applied Sciences Tulln*

The Haus der Digitalisierung building investigates the relationship between innovation and architecture. The design focusses on creating spaces that reflect innovation and the future of technology, as well as areas for innovation research and exploration. It both promotes and generates opportunities for innovation. As this relates to one of the goals for the new building's program, it would be valuable to analyse this case study to gain a better understanding of the

## Benchmark layers

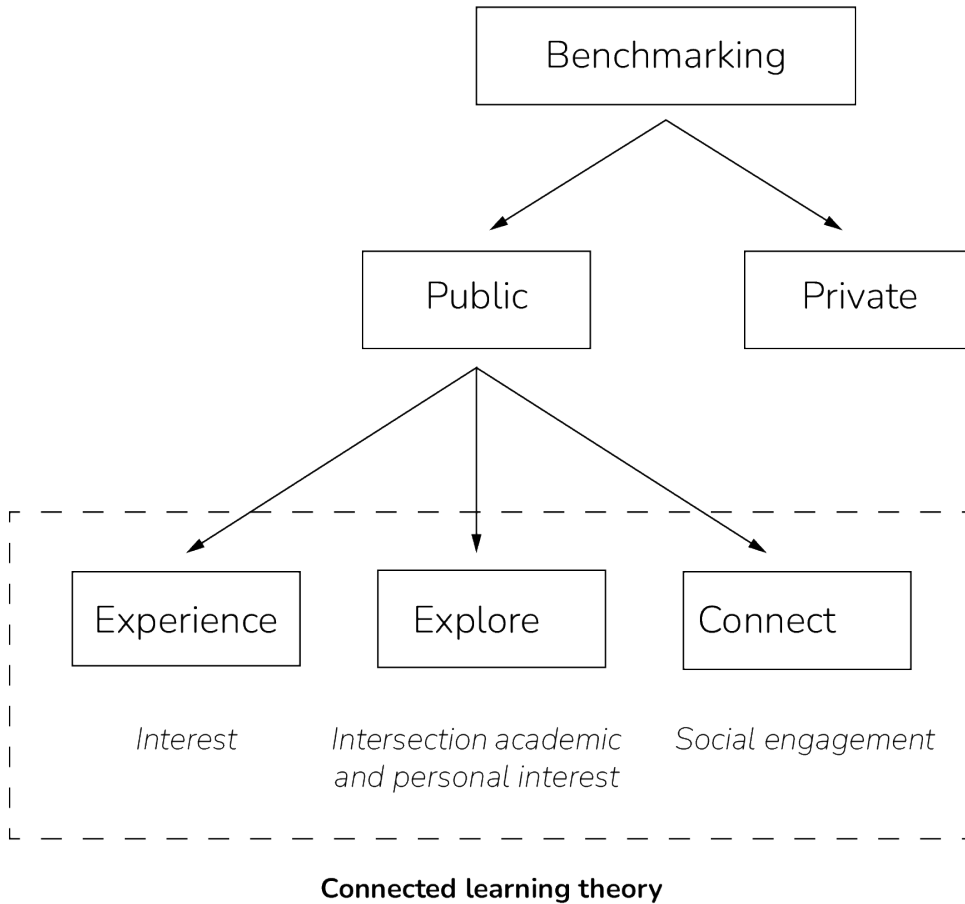
The benchmarking of the various case studies consists of three layers. The first layer being public and private. The second layer consists of dividing the public layer into three components. The final layer entails the percentages and square meters per function in the program.

### *Experience, Explore & Connect*

The three elements, Experience, Explore, and Connect, are based on the connected learning model theory. According to this model, an educational environment should focus on the connections between various layers of learning, such as interest, social engagement, and academics. The model proposes that the environment can support education by designing spaces that focus on different areas of learning (Ito, Gutiérrez, Livingstone, Penuel, Rhodes, Salen, Schor, Sefton-Green & Watkins, 2013).



















The element **experience** drives from the layer of interest. For example, the first impression of a building comes from its entrance and foyer, how you proceed to walk through open or closed circulation influences how you perceive and experience the building. An open concept may feel more inviting or transparent, sparking your interest at multiple levels. Whereas closed circulation leads you directly to the point where your interest was sparked. **Explore** comes from the intersection of academic learning and personal interest. The student can take the initiative and gain control over the space. It could be translated to (flexible)

study and collaboration spaces, as well as opportunities to pursue personal interests. For example in a workshop space, an innovation lab, as well as a spaces for pop-up initiatives. **Connect** stems from the social engagement element. The places where people interact with one another and with their environment. It includes areas for both formal and informal social interactions (Ito et al., 2013).



# Benchmarking

## Legend

-  Parking
-  Storage
-  Offices
-  Green Space
-  Coffee Spaces
-  Restaurant / Café
-  Study Spaces
-  Meeting Rooms
-  Workshop Spaces
-  Lecture Rooms
-  Library
-  Aula
-  Commercial Spaces
-  Extracurricular Spaces
-  Reception Area
-  Toilets
-  Open Circulation Area
-  Circulation Space



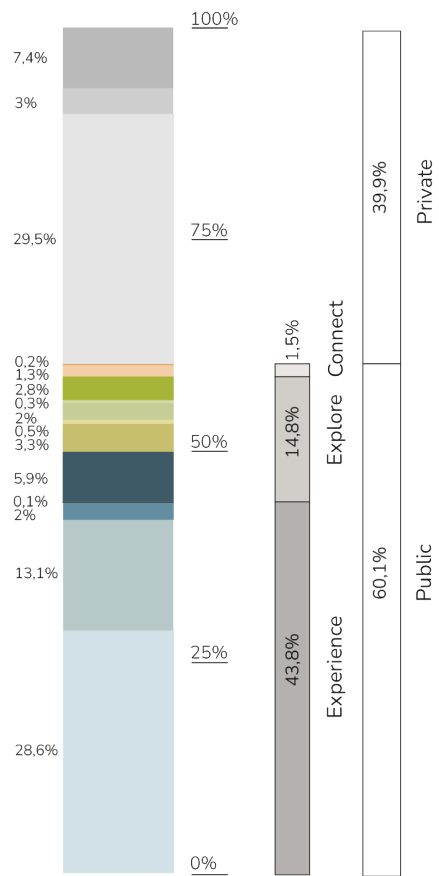
As there is no current program of the vacant building, the Grafton building was analysed.

The program of the Grafton building mainly consists of office spaces or spaces with a private character. The building clearly distinguishes between public and private functions. The ground floor and everything beneath it are public, while the floors above are private. The building's public and private divisions could function as knowledge borders.



**Grafton Building - Milan**  
2008  
Grafton Architects  
68.000 m² Total floor pace

Foyer Grafton Building (Own photograph, 2025)



Grafton Program (Own illustration, 2025)

## Case Studies



**Architecture Faculty - Delft**  
2008  
Braaksma & Roos Architecten  
35.400 m<sup>2</sup> Total floor pace

*Architecture Faculty from TUDelft (n.d.)*



**Väre Building - Espoo**  
2018  
Verstas Architects  
45.400 m<sup>2</sup> Total floor pace

*Aalto University Väre building in Espoo  
(Meichsner, n.d.)*



**Law Faculty - Paris**  
2019  
ChartierDalixArchitectes  
9710 m<sup>2</sup> Total floor pace

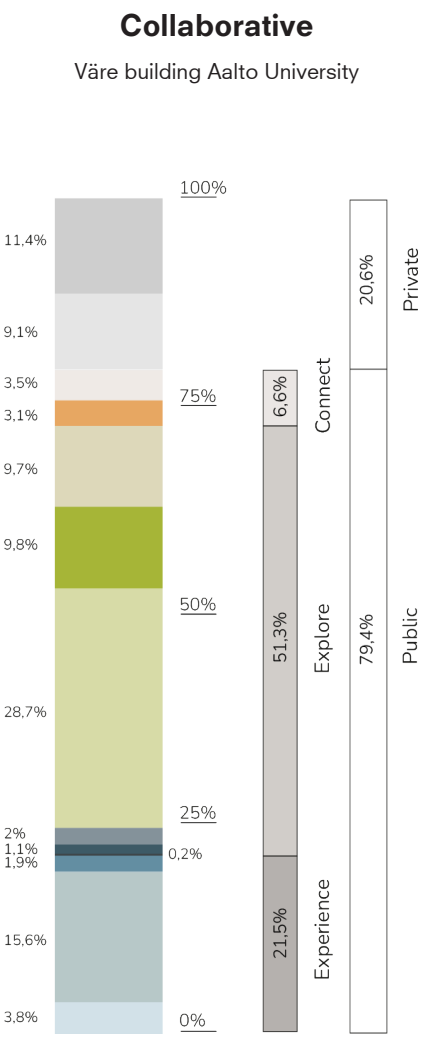
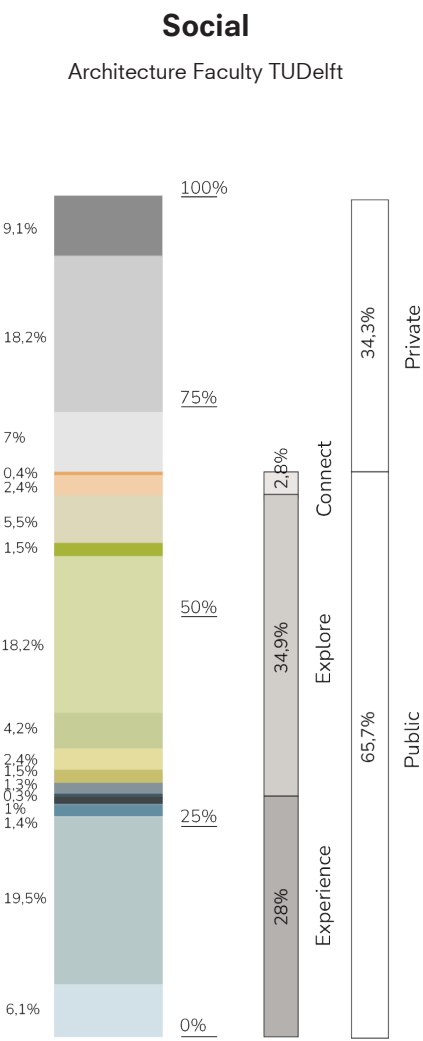
*Law Faculty in Paris  
(Grazia, 2019)*



**Haus der Digitalisierung - Tulln**  
2022  
Gallister+Partner, Kronaus Mitterer  
4991 m<sup>2</sup> Total floor pace

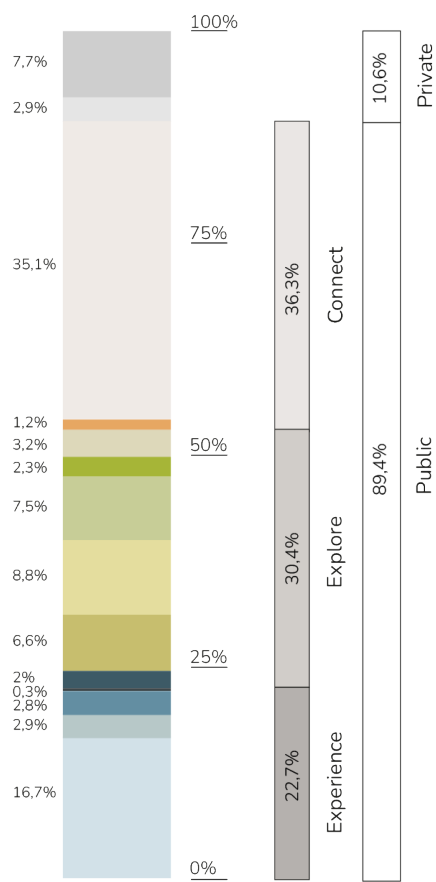
*Haus der Digitalisierung in Tulln  
(David Schreyer, 2023)*

Case Studies



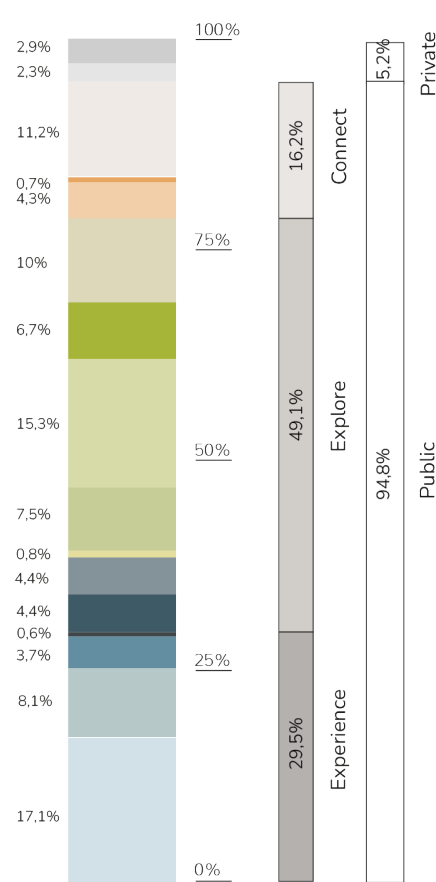
Connection

Law Faculty Paris



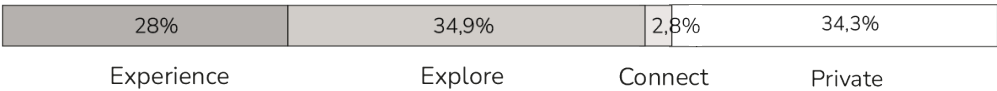
Innovation

Haus der Digitalisierung

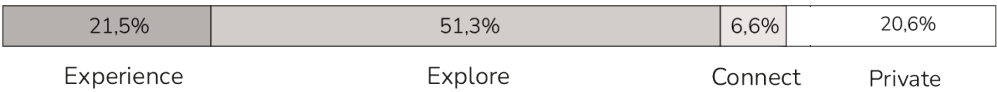




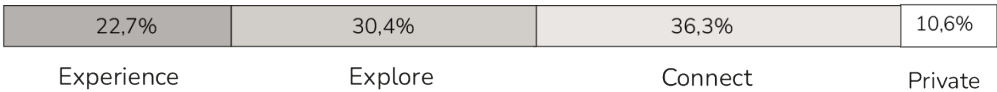
Architecture Faculty TUDelft



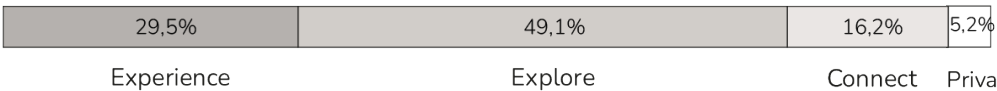
Väre Building Aalto University



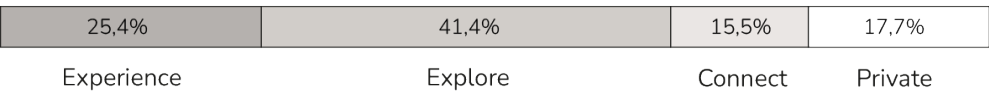
Law Faculty Paris



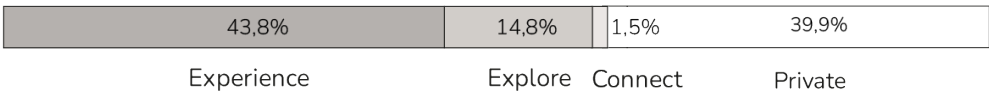
Haus der Digitalisierung



Average



Grafton Building Bocconi



New Program



Program illustrations (Own illustrations, 2025)

The average of the benchmarking percentages is used to draw conclusions on the program for the new campus building. The average program can be compared to the Grafton program and demonstrates a significant difference in all program elements. This makes the change in character of the building visible.

The average program is not directly the program for the new building. To transform the new building into a social and innovative space that connects students to the city, some program adjustments are necessary. The amount of private space needs to be reduced and is estimated to become around 10%. Furthermore, to increase social engagement in the building, the percentage of the program element 'connect' must be raised to 23%.

In the new design, the public layers will be more balanced. Connection, social engagement, and innovation will be prioritised. The majority of the program will be dedicated to 'explore'. This portion of the program will focus on the student's exploration. This can occur in education through 'regular' study and workshop spaces, but it also includes student initiative and innovation. This can be supported, for example, by creating spaces

where a pop-up store or start-up can be realised, spaces where businesses and students can network, or workshop spaces dedicated to different realities.

To facilitate connection, designed spaces for social interaction will be introduced. For example, a café with an outdoor terrace and an exhibition space that allows for student initiative. Furthermore, the program's 'experience' layer contributes to this 'connect' layer by designing to reflect openness. Open circulation and flexible space use will contribute to this.

## Relationship Schemes

### *Grafton Building*

Bocconi is a private university, which emphasises the distinction between public and private and influences the knowledge shared. Therefore, the building's connection to the city is interesting. The facade provides transparency into public spaces and limited openness for private spaces. However, what you see as public because of the facade might not be as public as we think. The foyer and exposition area, which also serve as the building's open circulation area, are only open to the public on Bocconi's terms and are usually empty.

The building does not provide many functions for Bocconi students. As a result, they rarely use The building is mainly used to house management and the administration of the university.

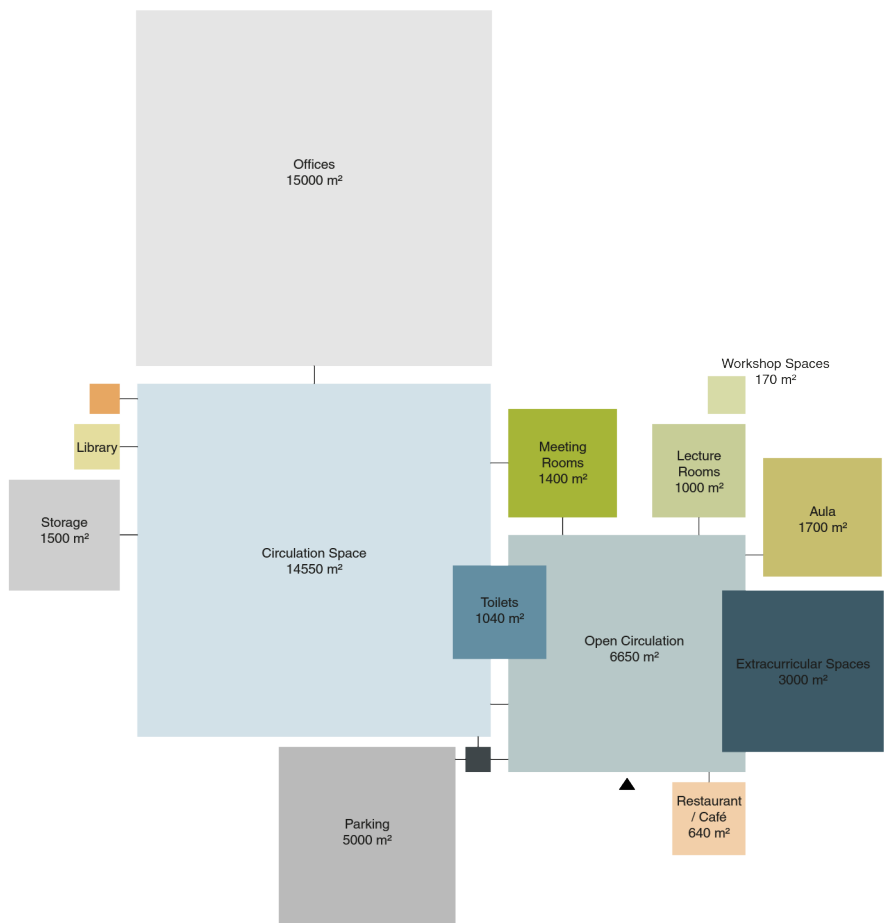
### *Case Studies*

When analysing the case studies it became evident that to create a more social and collaborative environment, it is essential to design for interaction. Open circulation, clusters of different functions, and designed social spaces such as a café all promote social engagement within a building. The architecture faculty at TUDelft demonstrates this well by connecting most

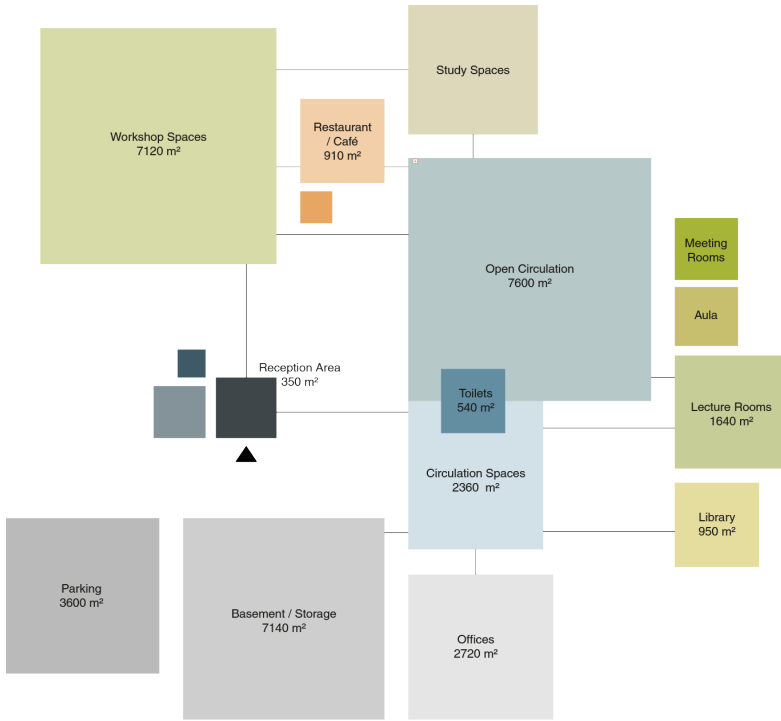
functions to open circulation and giving the open circulation another function as a workshop space..

A café, restaurant, or terrace could also be used to establish connections with society and the city. The law faculty in Paris does this by designing a large green space available to the public.

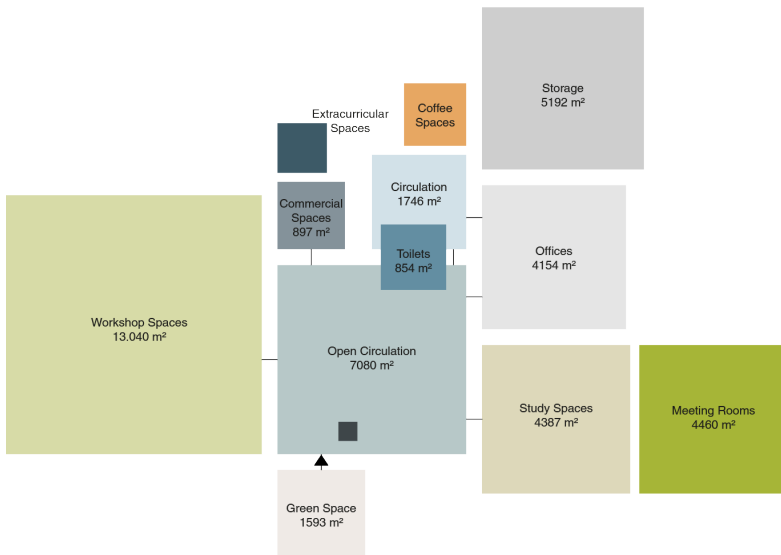
Furthermore, inviting and inspiring spaces are required to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship. Connecting with the creative economy inspires and invites collaboration. Providing pop-up initiatives, expositions, and exploration spaces. The Väre Building and Haus der Digitalisierung achieve this in different ways. The Väre building provides a wide range of workshop spaces that encourage collaboration by placing them next to each other. The Digitalisierung building provides a workshop space that connects with the city by functioning both as a research as exhibition space.



## Case Studies

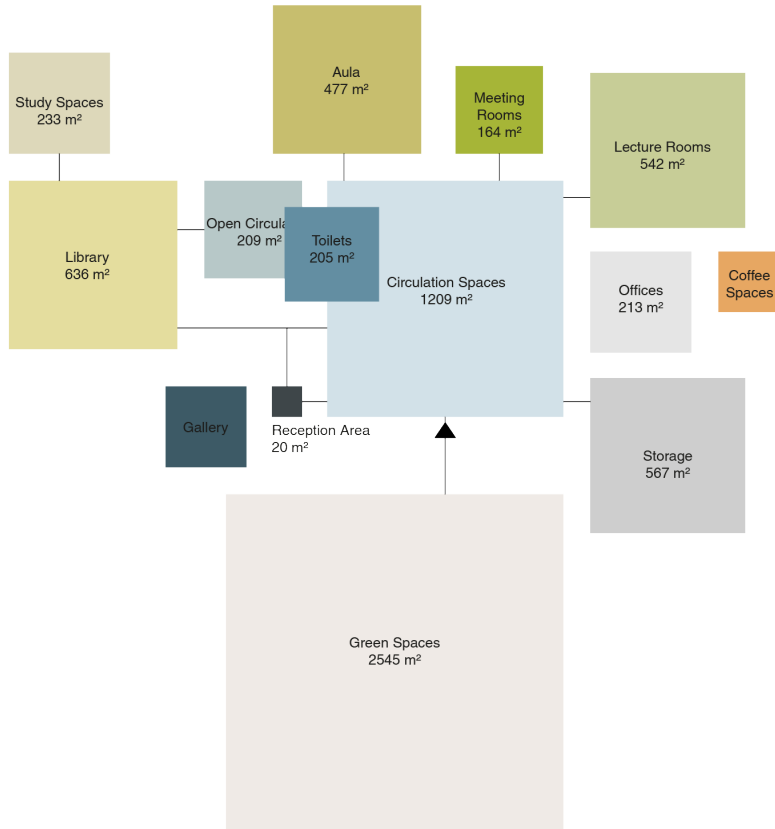


Architecture Faculty TUDelft

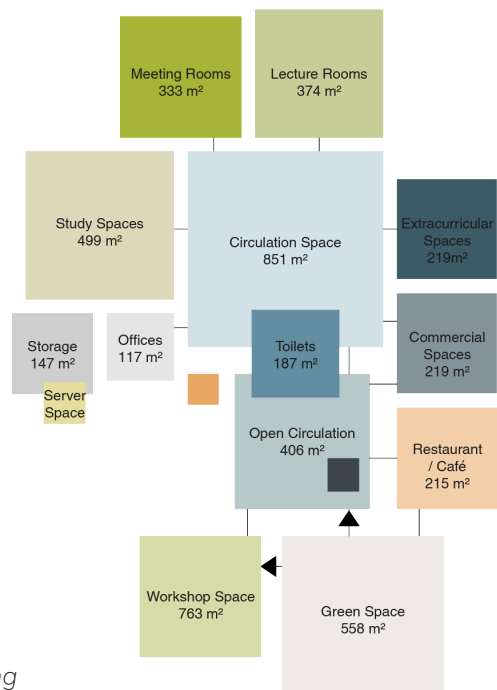




## Design Brief

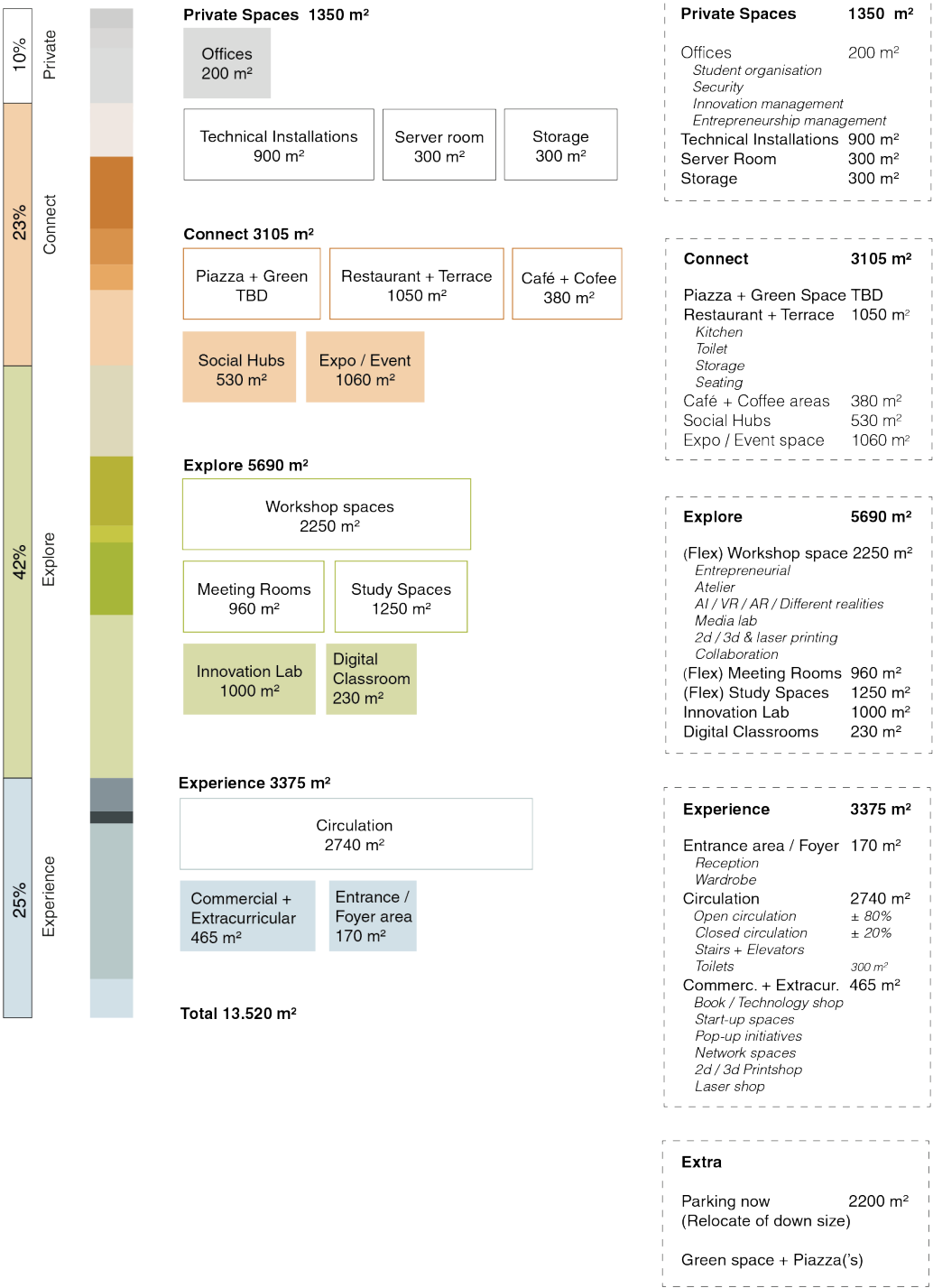


Law Faculty Paris



Haus der Digitalisierung

# Proposed Program



(Own Illustration, 2025)

## Proposed Program

The specific program that is proposed for the new building of Bocconi is visible on the former page.

The goal is to connect many functions to this circulation while also placing different functions within the open circulation. For example, extracurricular spaces, exhibition areas, and social hubs could all be integrated into the circulation space.

To connect a restaurant, café, several coffee spaces and social hubs are introduced. Furthermore through adding functions to the building that foster collaboration as workshop spaces and the innovation lab the building strives for a comprehensive social character.

Exploration through innovation and own initiative will be main themes in this building. The innovation lab, media lab, various workshop spaces, and meeting rooms all aim to spark curiosity. Spaces designed to inspire and facilitate new ideas. Spaces focused on connecting to the creative economy.

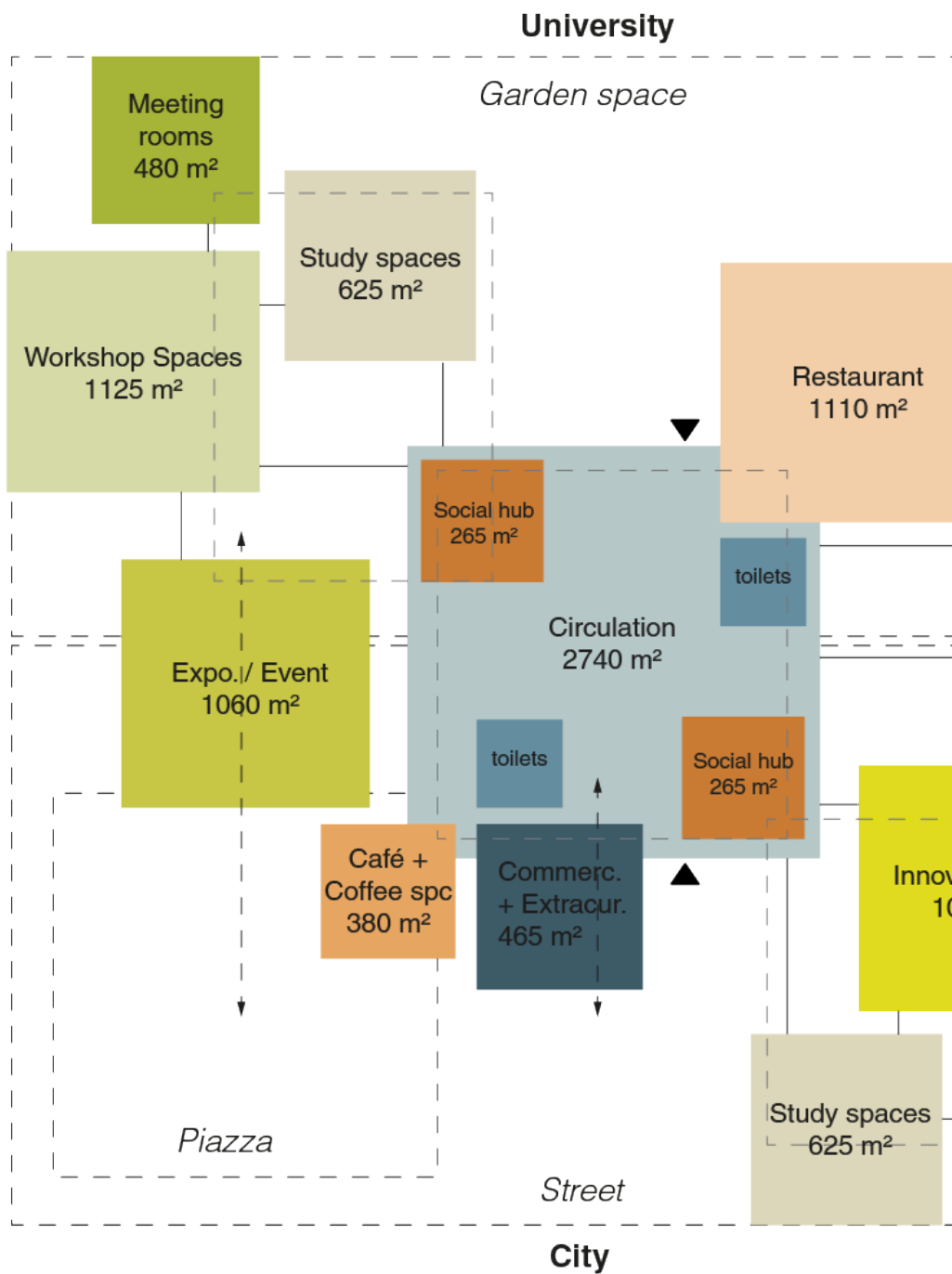
Furthermore, the 'exploration' spaces also support the transformation of education in for example the digital classrooms or flexible study spaces.

## Proposed Relations

To strengthen the connection between society, the city, and the university, 'connect' spaces are located on both sides of the site. Furthermore, the open circulation will function as a connector, providing continuity between the exterior and interior.

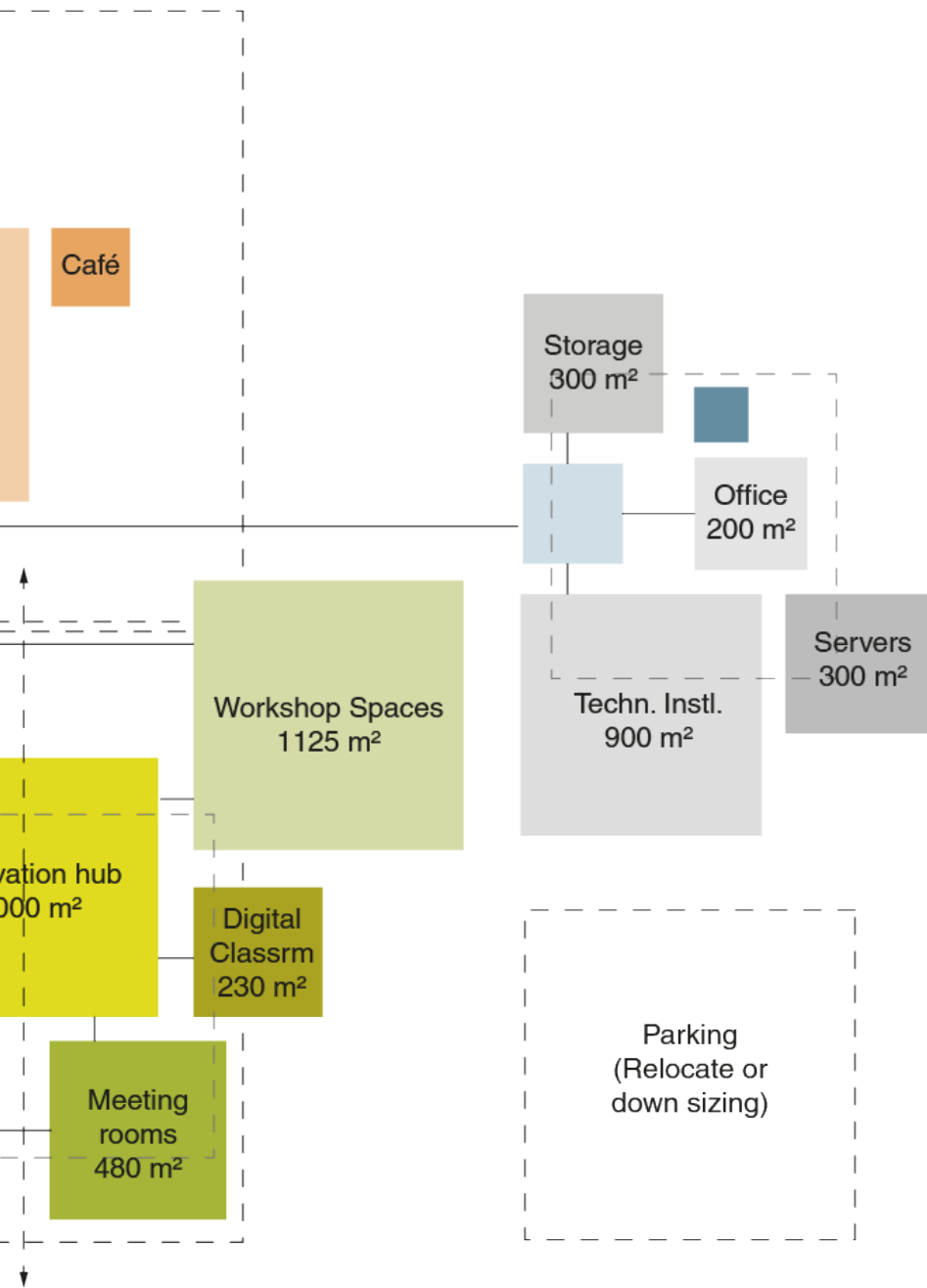
For the building to be recognized globally it is important to represent innovation in the architectural design and the program. Therefore, the innovation lab and connecting functions are placed on the city side of the site. Functions that are more focused on students face the campus and may extend all the way to the street side in order to maintain transparency and connection.

Proposed Relations



(Own Illustration, 2025)

Design Brief





**05**

# Conclusion

## Conclusion

The phase of research-through-design has been finalized for now. Starting with the question 'How can university spaces adapt to the digital transformation of educational methods while sustaining their civic role in social engagement?' This research aimed to provide several design requirements that will support the research in the phase of design-through-research. Through analyzing theory, conducting field studies and exploring case studies the design focus can be concluded.

The new Bocconi building will be designed as a social and innovation-stimulating space that connects students with the city. The design will support the ambition of Bocconi to achieve a more prominent role as global university. This will be accomplished not by traditionally expanding the university, but by better connecting the university with society, through innovation, civic and social engagement, and collaboration with the creative economy of Milan.

Milan as an important city in design, fashion, and entrepreneurship, provides the perfect environment for this approach. By connecting students to the creative economy in Milan, Bocconi will provide students with the opportunity to

test their ideas, build networks and engage with real world developments. The building will facilitate this by providing work and collaboration spaces that are flexible, innovation labs (AI, VR, media), and designed social areas. The building will become a space where students are encouraged to take initiative and engage with each other and the city. At the same time these spaces will also meet the current needs of students of providing more study environments and designed social spaces.

While education is becoming increasingly digital, the civic role of the university remains essential. This building will address both: it will support digital transformation while offering a physical space where social interaction and engagement, community, knowledge and creativity intersect.

## Requirements

In preparation of the next phase of this research, namely the design phase. It is important to define the requirements for the new Bocconi university building.

### *Postcard*

As the building must serve as a postcard for Bocconi Universities, it is important that both its architectural design and function reflect the character of a landmark. The landmark needs to reflect innovation and creativity. The Grafton and SANAA-designed buildings on the Bocconi Campus already speak loudly and make Bocconi recognisable, this trend must continue. However, this applies not only to the architectural design, but also to the function and programming of the building. The program includes innovative spaces and new initiatives for a university building that are rarely seen in a similar structures.

### *Creative Economy*

Milan provides an excellent opportunity for the university to connect with society and make a name for itself on a global scale, so the program and architecture must accommodate this. This opportunity is based on the creative economy. By connecting students to Milan's creative economy, they form a more direct connection with society. For example, through

giving them the opportunity to practise real-world scenarios related to their studies.

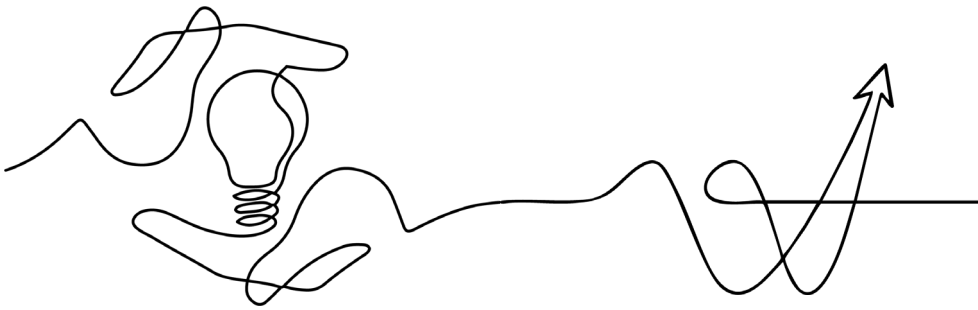
### *Connection*

To strengthen the connection between the university and society, as well as to increase social engagement not only on campus but also in the surrounding community and city. It is critical to express this connection literally in the architectural design of the new building. This can be accomplished by creating a continuity between the exterior and interior spaces of the building. Furthermore design aspects as openness and transparency can play an important role.

### *Social engagement*

As the current Bocconi campus does not encourage social interaction or engagement, the new building must function as the campus's social hub. The current social spaces for students are on the street and not owned by Bocconi. Therefore a restaurant, café, coffee area's, a designed outdoor space, and several social hubs must be located in and around the new building. These can also serve as connecting points for social spaces that already exist but are located outside of the campus boundaries.

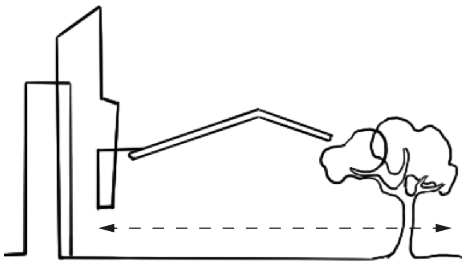
## Requirements



*Reflect innovation  
and creativity in the  
Architectural design  
and function of the  
building*

*Create spaces  
for the creative  
economy*

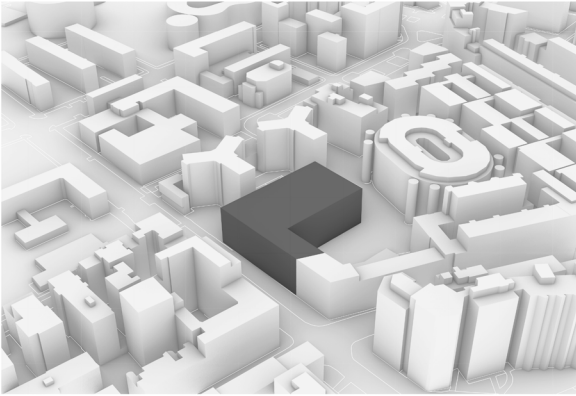




*Continuity from  
exterior to interior*



*Function as  
social hub*



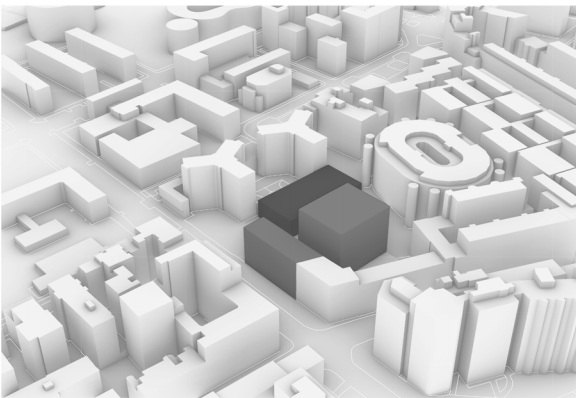
### **Total Floor Area**

13.250 m<sup>2</sup>

### **Spread**

4 levels

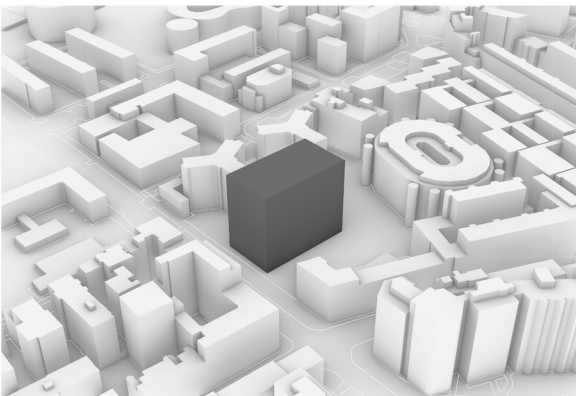
2.850 m<sup>2</sup> covered site area



### **Clusters**

4, 2 and 6 levels

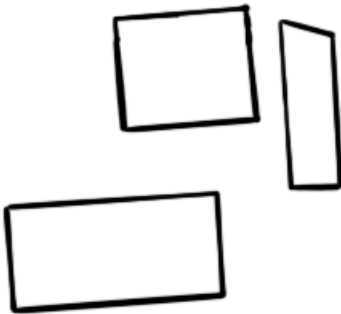
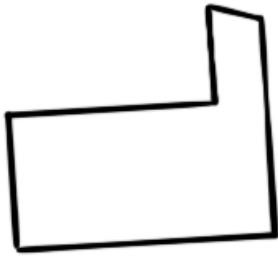
3.165 m<sup>2</sup> covered site area



### **High-rise**

8 levels

1.660 m<sup>2</sup> covered site area



## Mass studies

A massing preview was created to give an idea of the program that would be placed on the site. As described, the site has limited space and clearly defined city borders. This is also evident in the massing. When 13.250 m<sup>2</sup> is added to the site, it becomes clear that the program will cover a significant portion of it. When building high rise this is less. However the program's ambitions do not really align with this form. Clustered spaces offer the possibility to arrange different levels while creating different spaces in between. The spread allows the program to continue in one line but creates a stronger boundary along the city.

All of these insights contribute as valuable information to the project's design-through-research phase. It is obvious that the new building requires a design that does not feel overly heavy on the site. This requires an innovative design with creative ideas.

## Next Steps

This exploration of form will be continued in the design phase. This phase is characterized by the statement design-through-research.

**06**

# Appendix



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