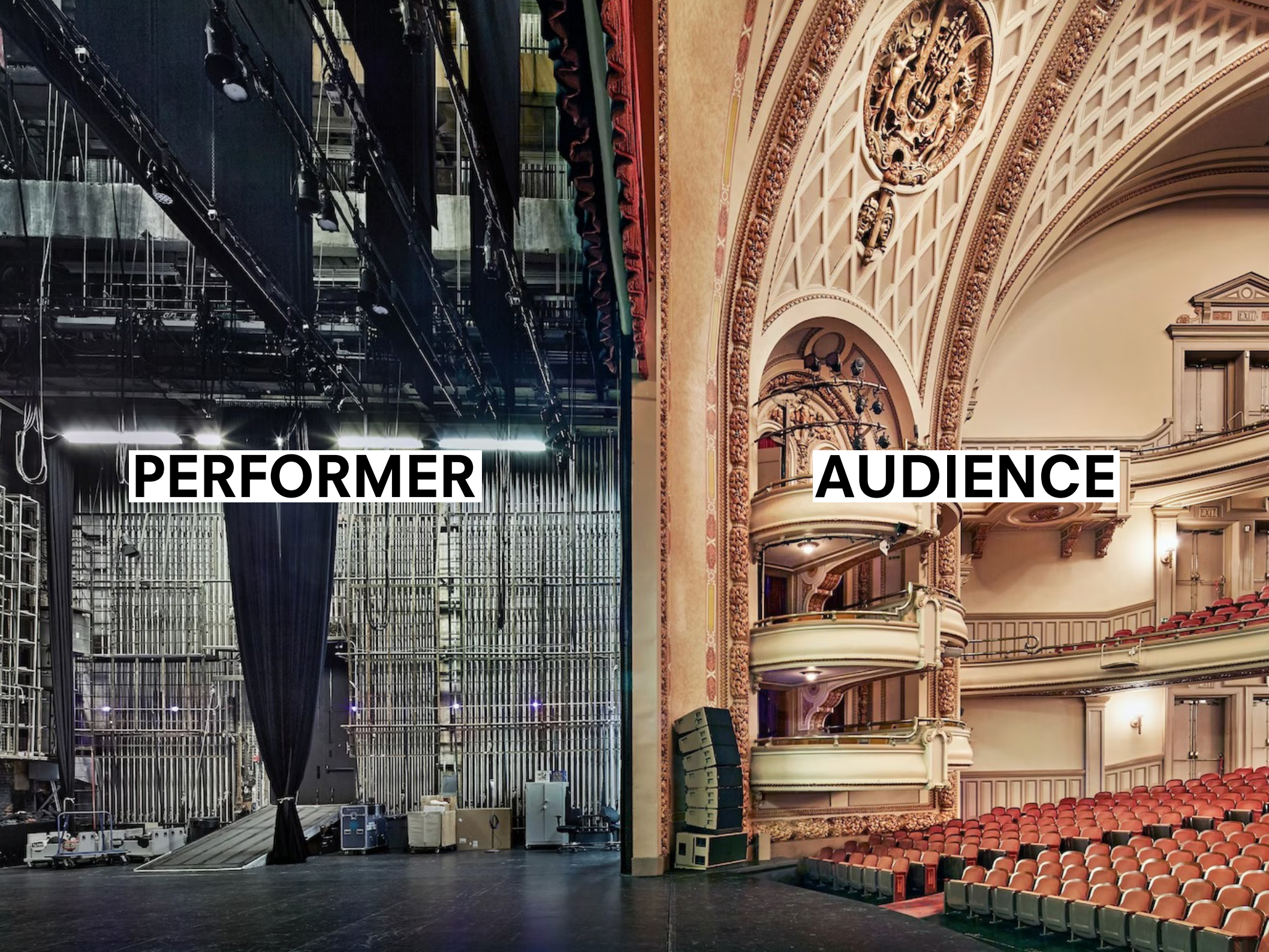
# VOLKSBÜHNE, A STAGE FOR THE EVERYDAY

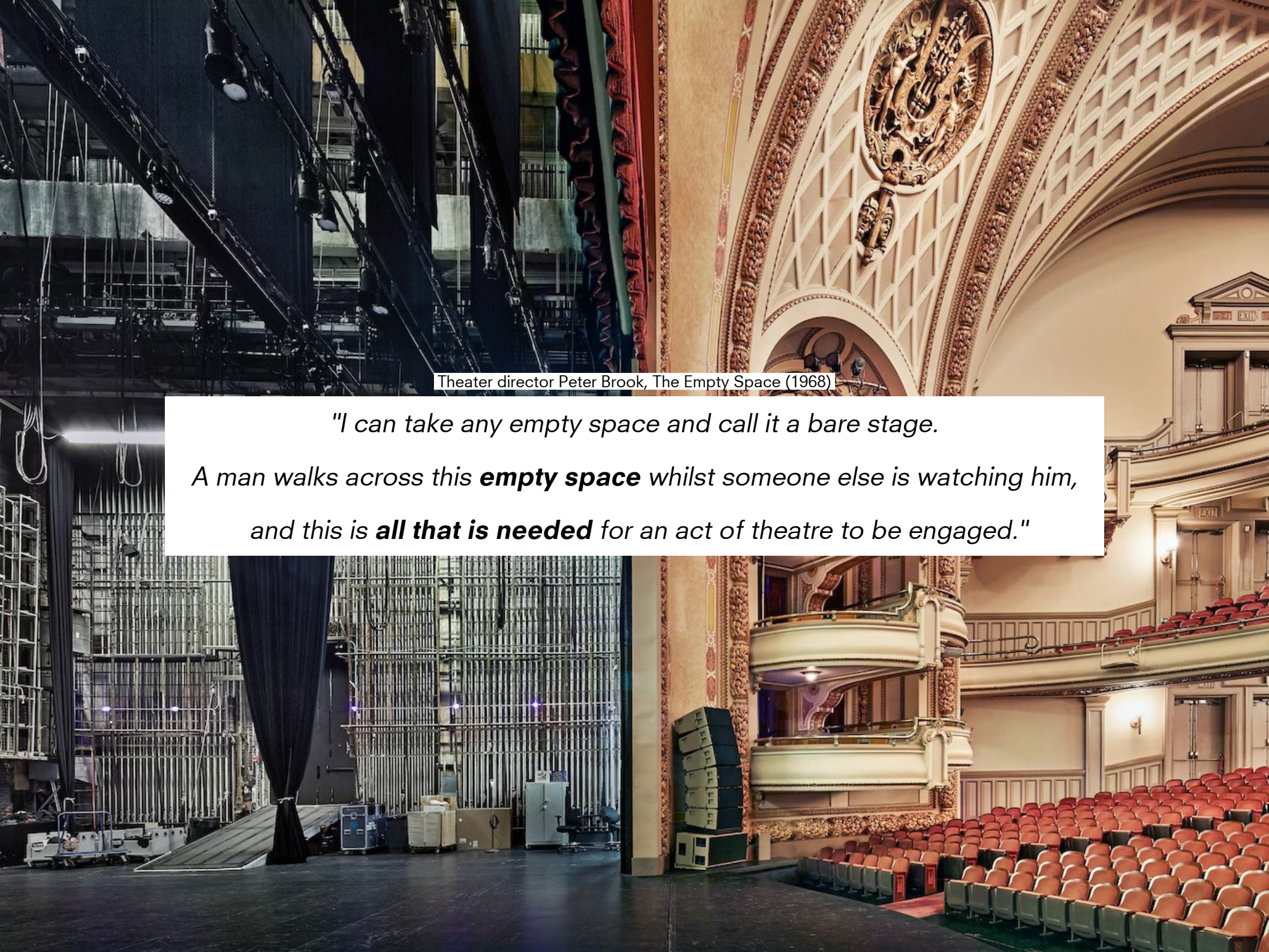
**Pieter Vergeer**
P5 presentation 04-07-2024

Main mentor: Henri van Bennekom
Second mentor: Rico Heykant
Third mentor: Maria Finagina
Delegate examiner: Paul de Ruiter

Ballpit Karaoke Mauerpark, Berlin

Philharmonie, Berlin


PERFORMER
AUDIENCE

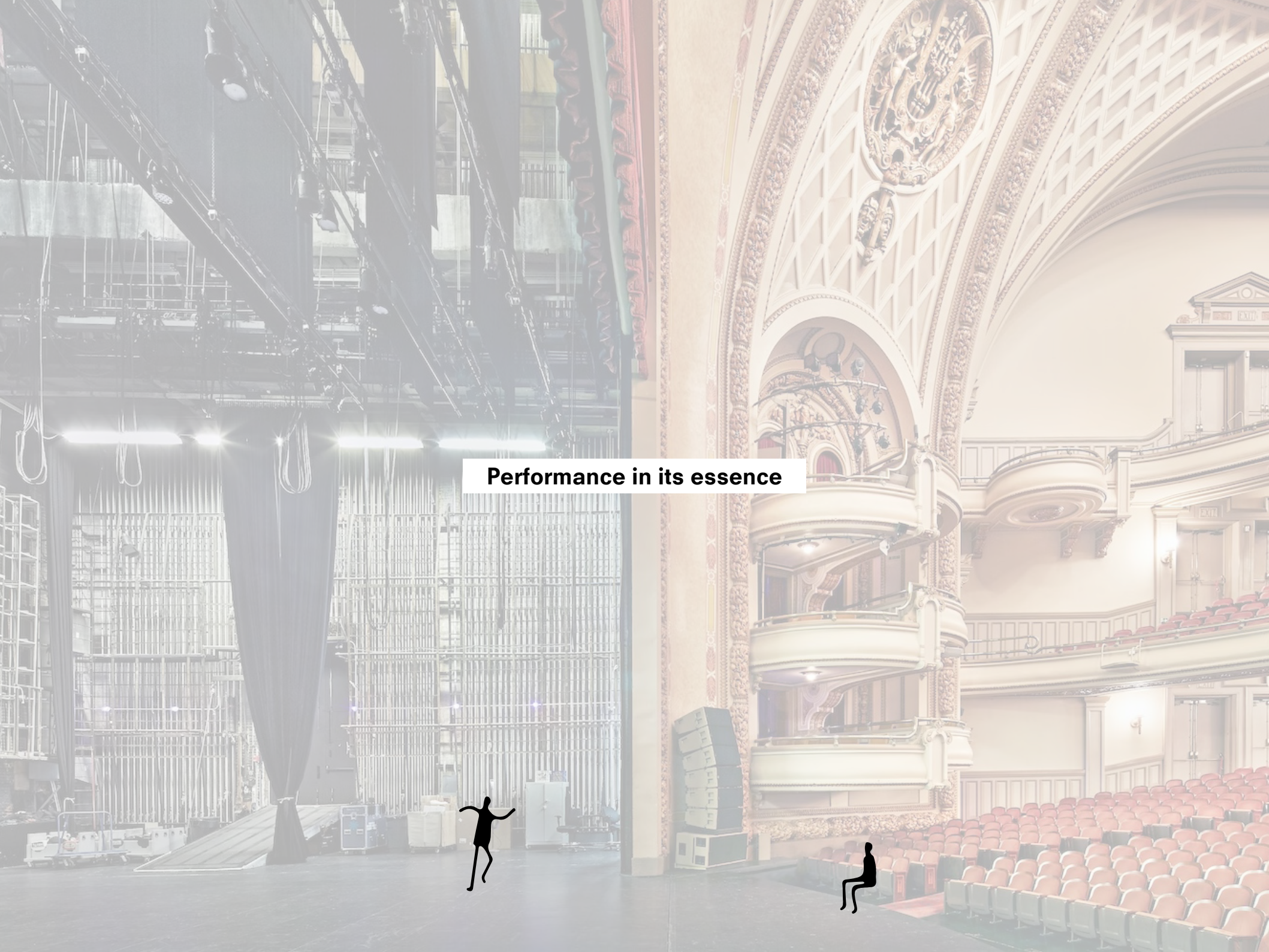


Theater director Peter Brook, The Empty Space (1968)

*"I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage.*

*A man walks across this* ***empty space*** *whilst someone else is watching him,*

*and this is* ***all that is needed*** *for an act of theatre to be engaged."*


Performance in its essence

**Doesn't require a traditional theatre building**

**No strict division between performer and audience**

AHZ RA
PARK

# PROBLEM STATEMENT

In today's society, the **architecture for performing arts is limited** to - oftentimes - prestigious institutions where professional performance takes place **behind closed doors**



Image source: Marek Sliwecki

# PROBLEM STATEMENT

performing arts are a **connector** between all kinds of **people of different backgrounds** due to mutual experience

**Gordon Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory (1954)**

# PROBLEM STATEMENT

we need more **shared spaces** where people of different backgrounds come together to **improve tolerance and equality**

**Eric Klinenberg, Palaces for the People (2018)**

# SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

"a healthy community is not simply held together by shared values, but by shared spaces – physical, real world **locations where people across all strata, and ages, and races, and creeds bump into each other and form connections."**

from *Palaces for the People* by Eric Klinenberg

# SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

## key conditions of social infrastructure

accessible to a diverse range of people by minimizing physical barriers and **economic constraints**

space where people come together and meet new people

accommodate a **variety of functions** and activities

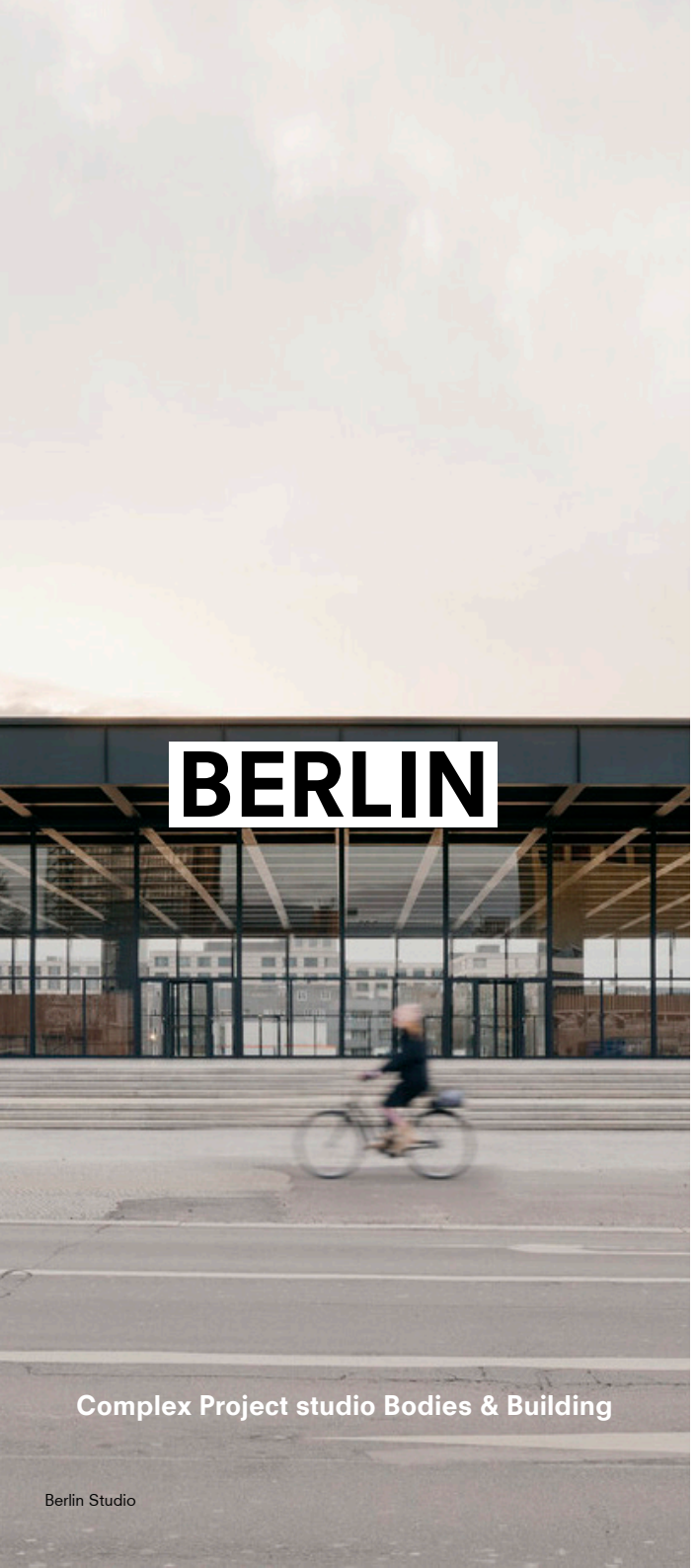
encourage active **civic participation**

facilitate **unplanned** and serendipitous encounters contributes to formation of social bonds

be able to respond to changing societal and demographic trends

# RESEARCH QUESTION

How to design a **building for performing arts** as **social infrastructure** in the 21st century?


BERLIN
Complex Project studio Bodies & Building

# BERLIN

# VOLKSBÜHNE

people's stage

**Complex Project studio Bodies & Building**

**Personal fascination**

# BERLIN

**Complex Project studio Bodies & Building**

# VOLKSBÜHNE

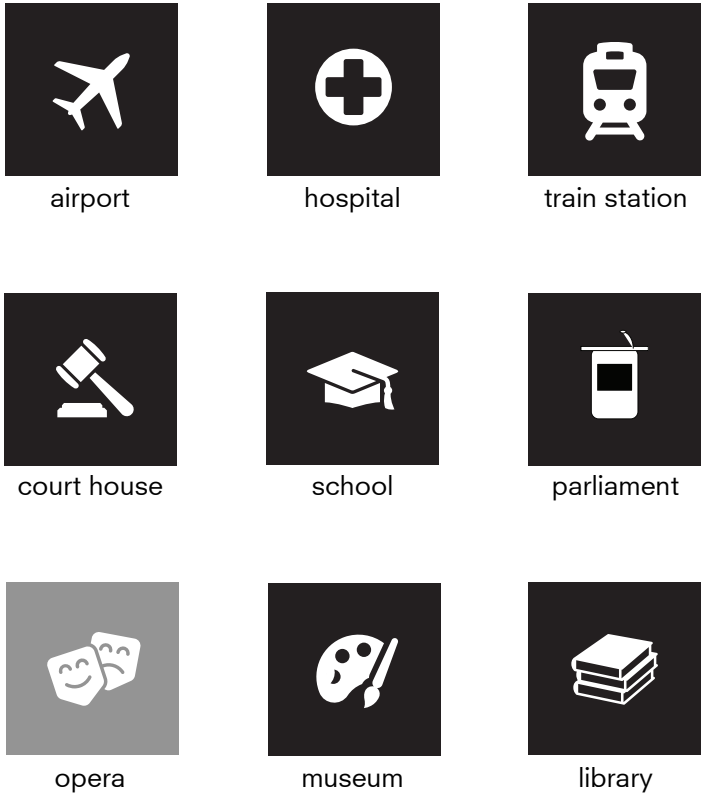
people's stage

**Personal fascination**

# REUSE

**Energy group**

# ENERGY GROUP



# DESIGN BRIEF

client
program
site

# CLIENT

# VOLKS BÜHNE

people's stage

client

# WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

'The Penny Gaff', 1872, theatre for the working class in the UK Source: The Print Collector

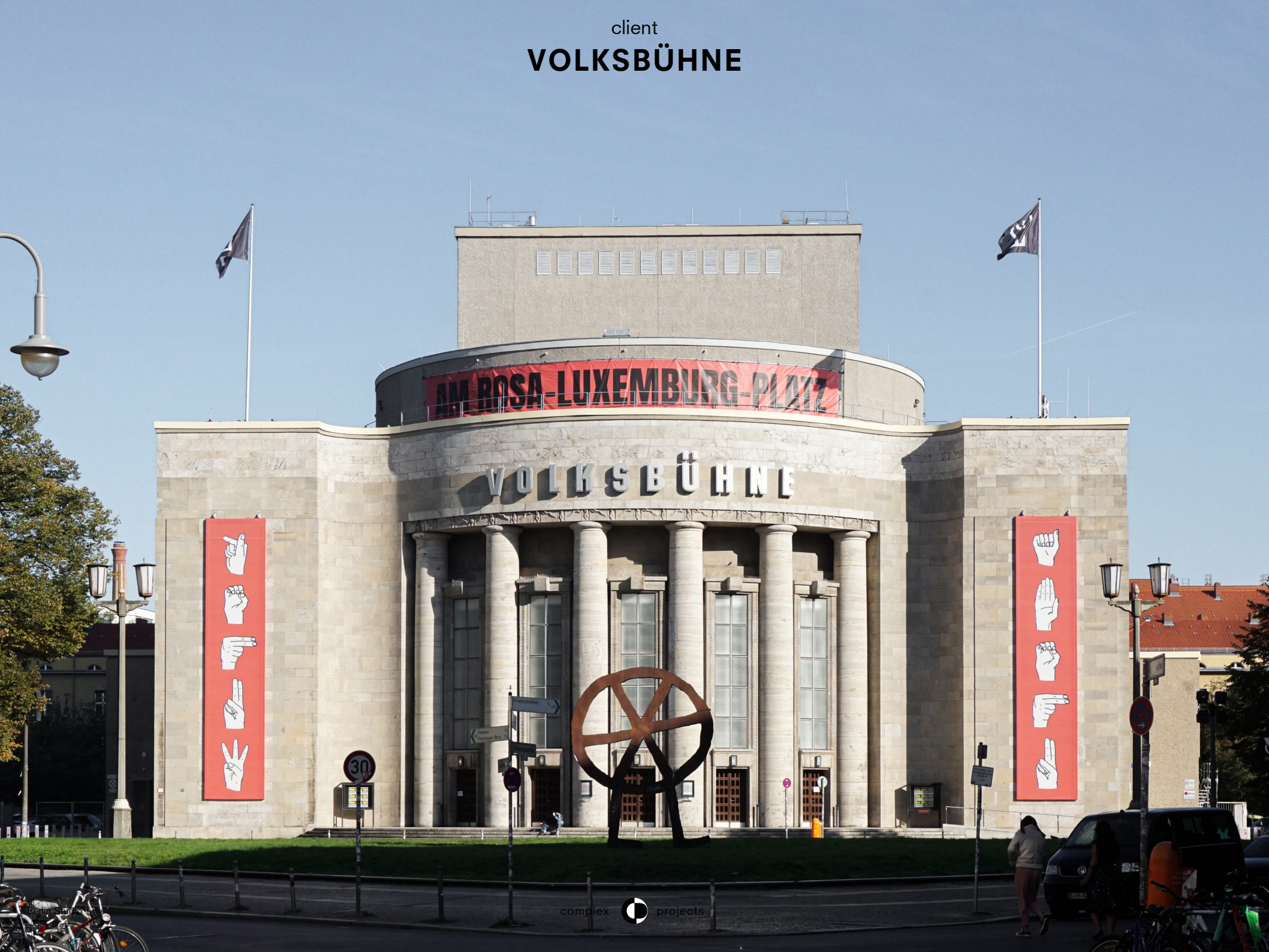
founded in 1890 as a workers class movement

**Volksbuhne's ambition:**

# PERFORMING ARTS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL THE PEOPLE

client

# VOLKSBÜHNE



client

# PROBLEM

THE STAGE News Reviews More... Jobs Tickets Suppliers Training Events

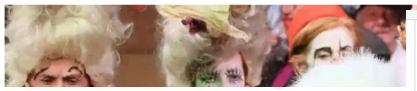
Topics NPO 2023-26 PANTOMIME MUSICAL THEATRE BACKSTAGE & TECHNICAL OBITUARIES & ARCHIVE

## How did Berlin's Volksbuhne end up in a state of crisis?

FEATURES MAY 16, 2018 BY ANNEGRET MARTEN

## Offstage drama at talk of leading role for Tate tre

**Speculation that Chris Dercon could take over as artistic director at the famous 'troublemaker' has caused outrage in Germany's theatre world**



Interview

## Revolt at the Volksbühne: behind the scenes at Berlin's troubled theatre

*Philip Oltermann*

**The Volksbühne, designed to bring art to the working classes, has its own workshop to 'build things you cannot buy'. This curiosity shop of props is at the heart of the row over Chris Dercon's appointment as artistic director**

client

# CHANGED CONTEXT

client

# CHANGED CONTEXT

client

# PROBLEM

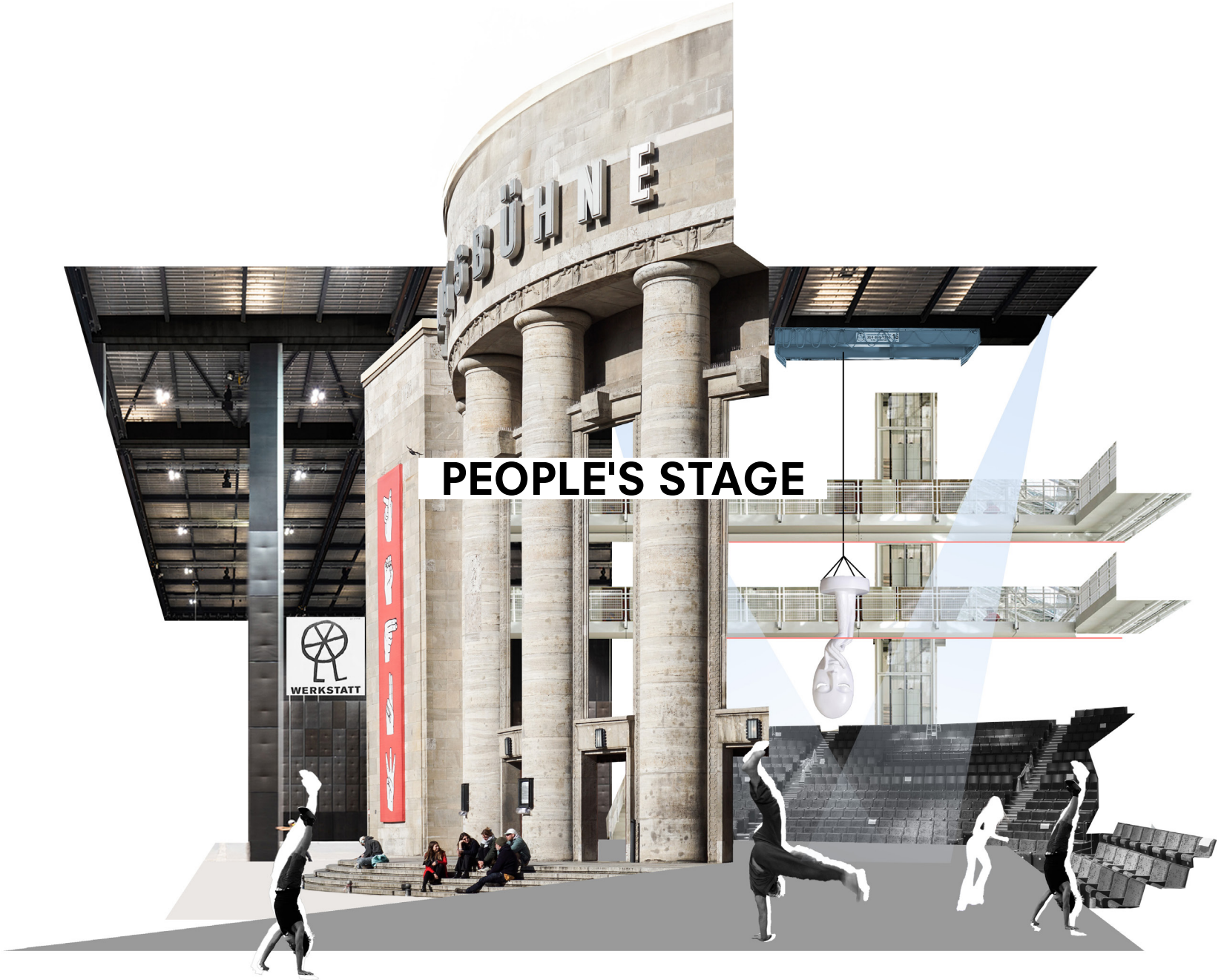
client

# USERS

**3.8 million inhabitant of Berlin**

client

# PROJECT AIM




## PEOPLE'S STAGE

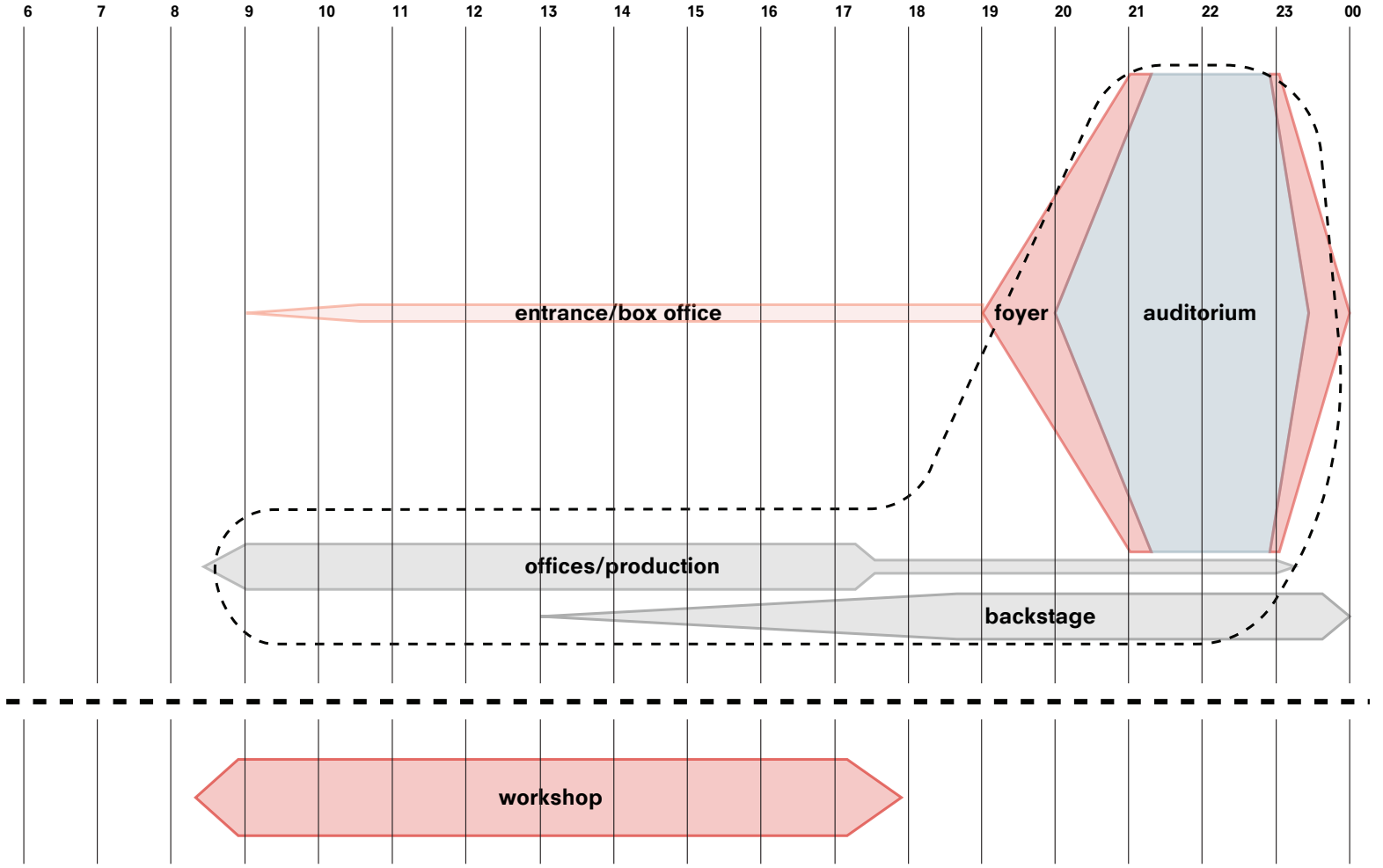
# PROGRAM

# VOLKSBÜHNE THEATRE

**12.500m²**

netto

# PROGRAM-TIME DIAGRAM




**Imbalanced usage** of the building through time. Quiet during the day, high peak during shows

# PROGRAM AMBITION

a **broader** definition of performing arts

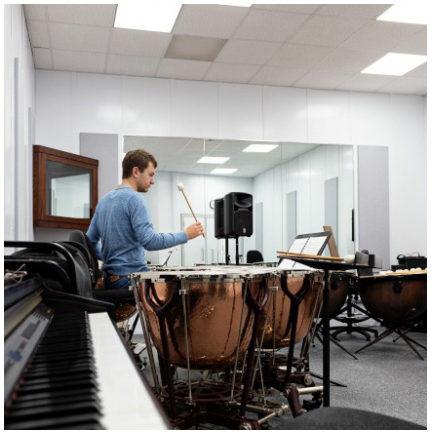
program

# OPEN/CLOSED/HIDDEN STAGE

as defined by Richard Sennett in his book *The Performer*

## CLOSED STAGE

## HIDDEN STAGE



## OPEN STAGE

# OPEN STAGE

## OPEN STAGE

a space where people can be both performer and observer

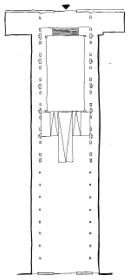
**Cultural Centre Cent Quatre in Paris**

program

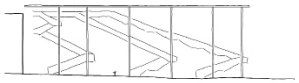
# RESEARCH

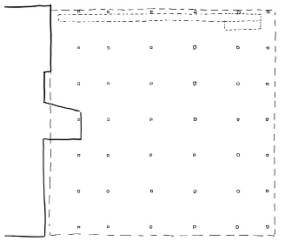
## Spontaneous and flexible performance space

Centquatre
**Paris**



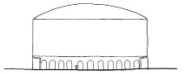
Theatre Square
**Antwerp**

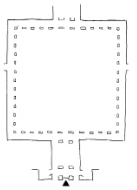




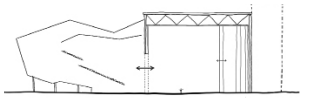
Teatro Oficina
**Sao Paulo**

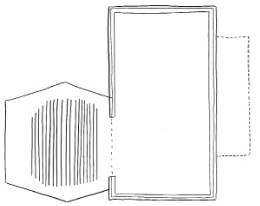
Scheepvaartmuseum
**Amsterdam**





The Warehouse (Aviva)
**Manchester**

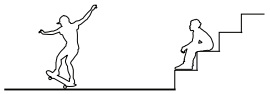




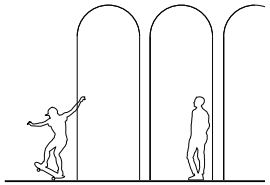
# ARCHITECTURAL MEMBRANES

Architectural elements to design an open stage, defined as
**architectural membranes** in Richard Sennett's *The performer.*

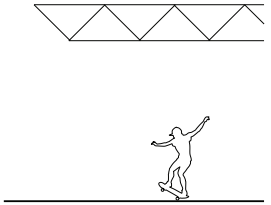
**Seating**



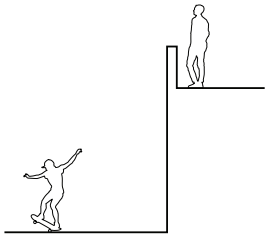
**Gallery**



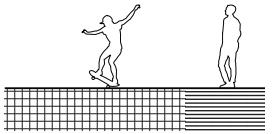
**Canopy**



**Height difference**



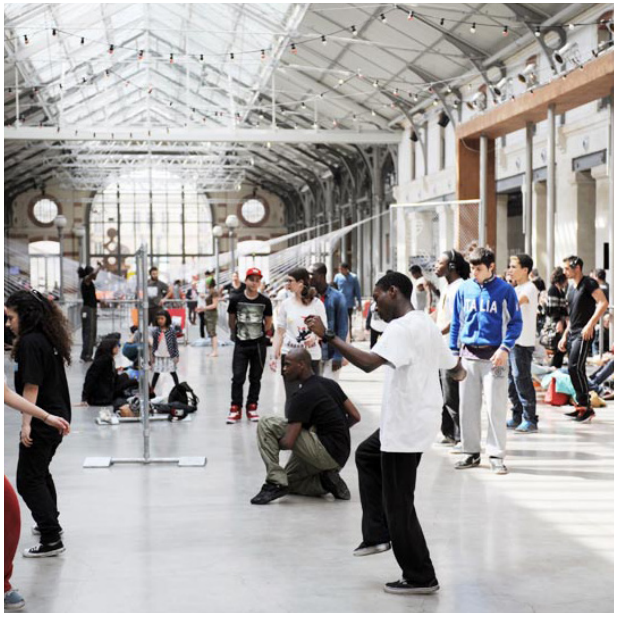
**Materiality**



# PROGRAM ADDED

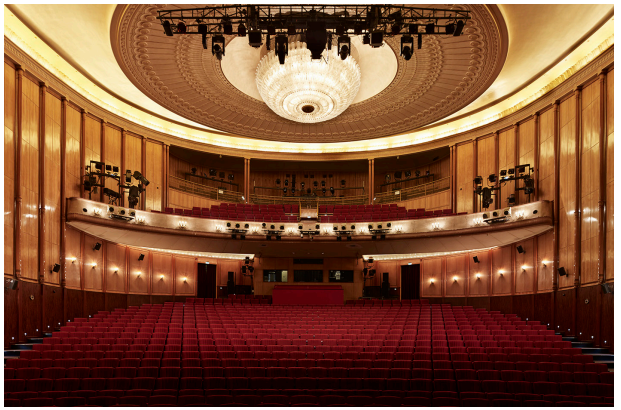
**OPEN STAGE**

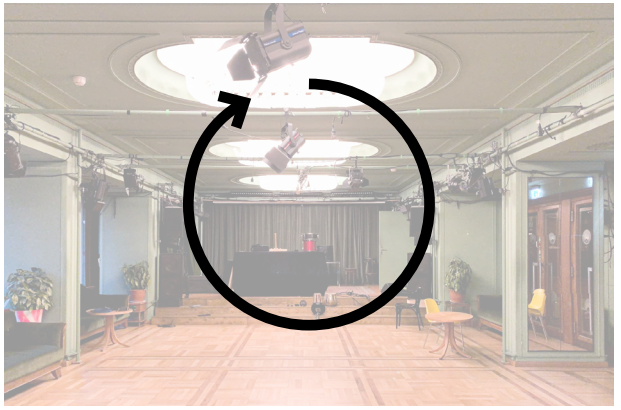
**VOLKSPLATZ**

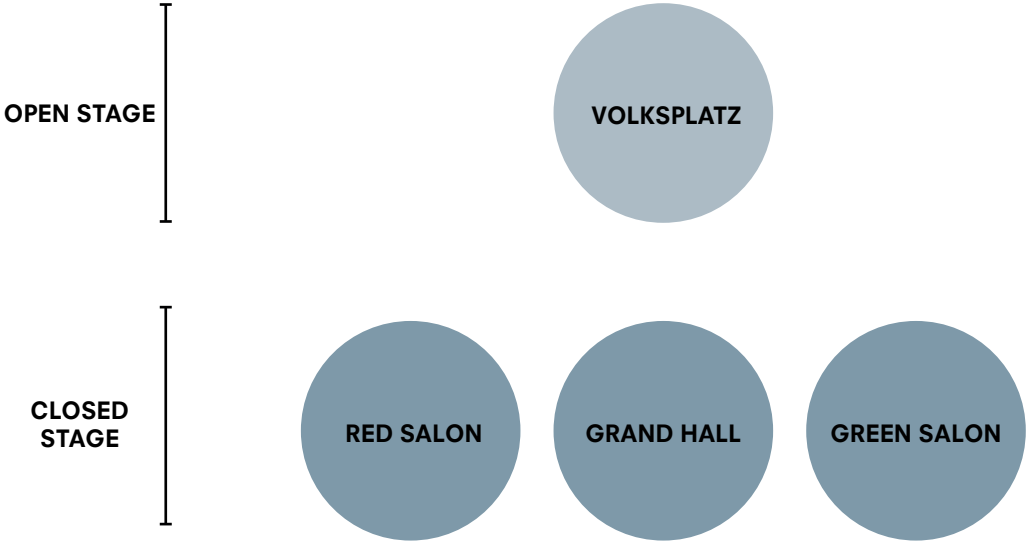


Volksplatz will be the **heart of the building**

# PROGRAM ADDED

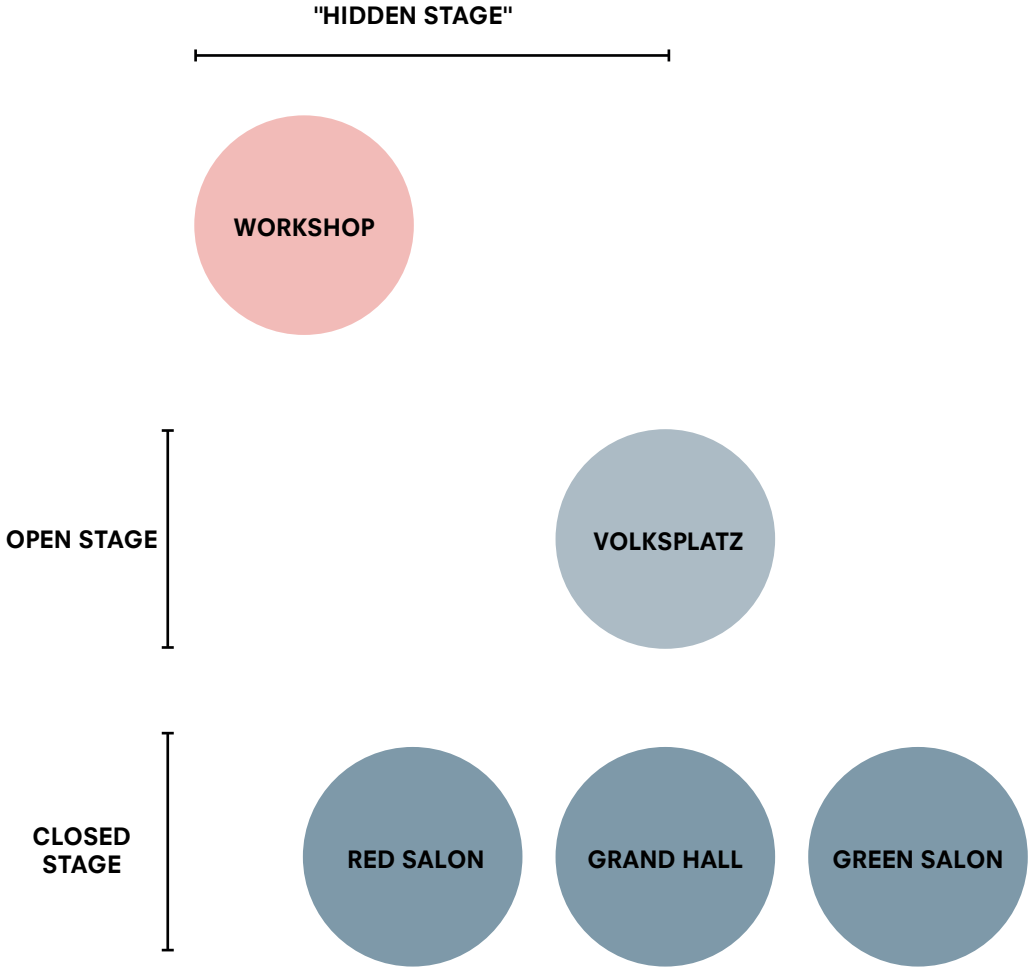


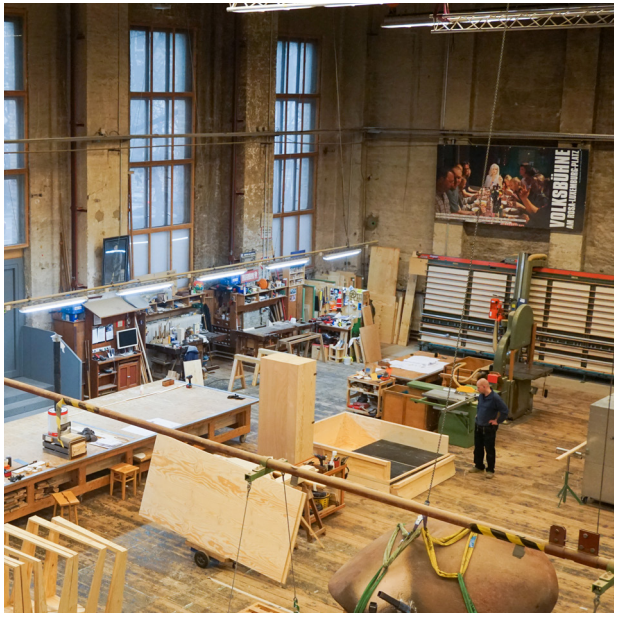





Grand hall **preserved**, red- and green salon **rebuilt**

# PROGRAM ADDED






Workshop is moved **'under one roof'** with the rest of the Volksbühne organisation

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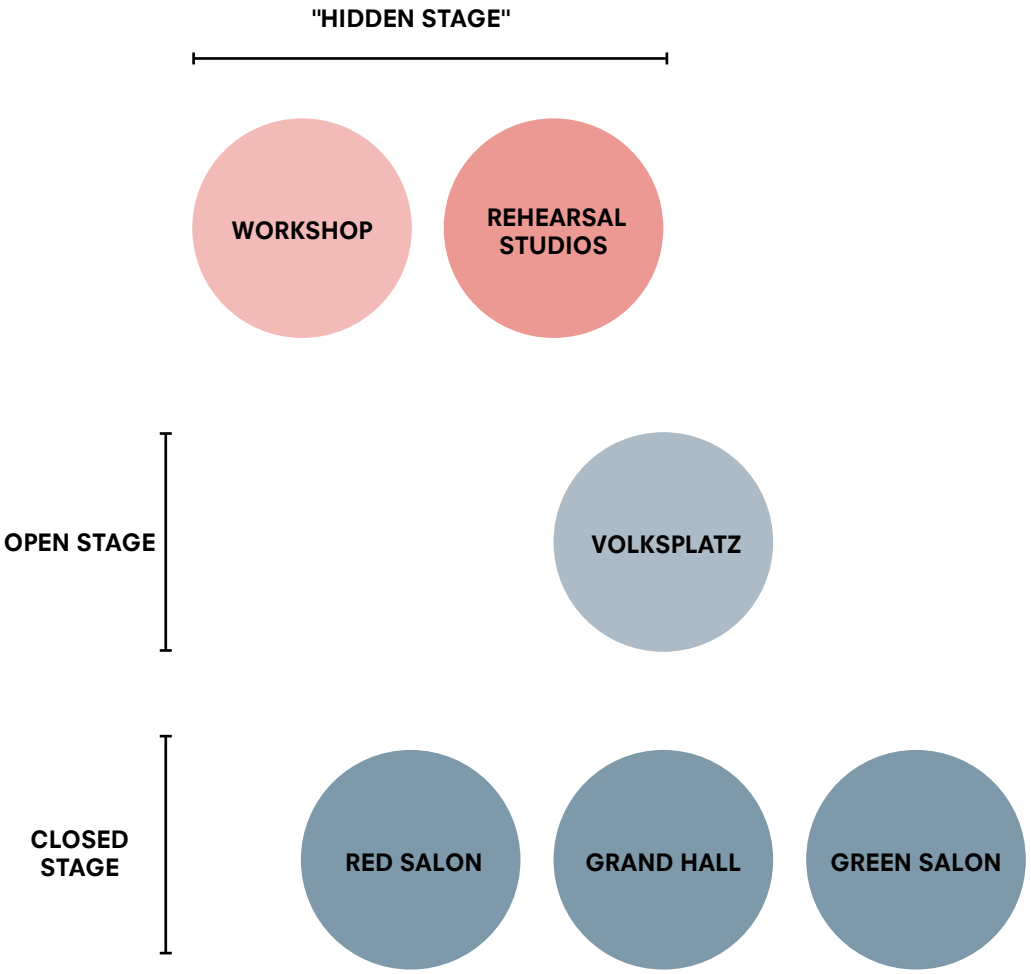

Rehearsal rooms are used by both the Volksbühne and **on reservation by the people**

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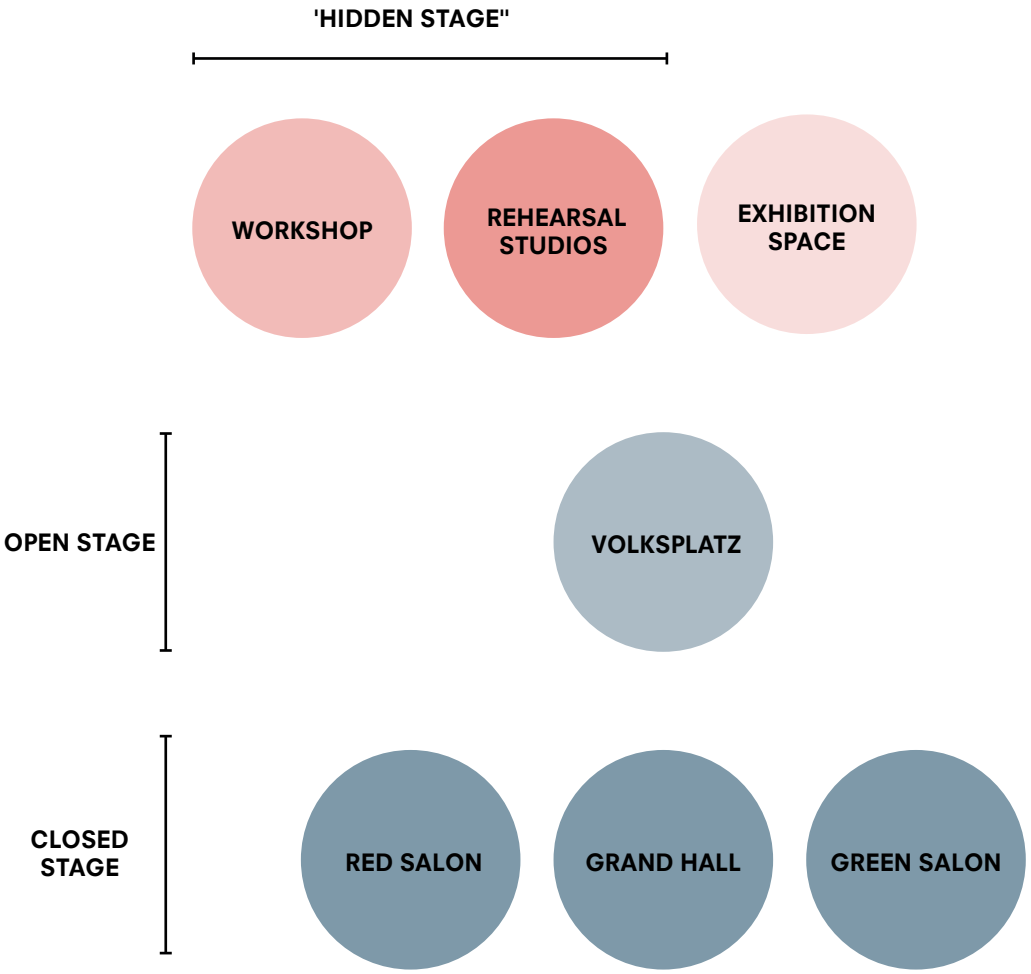
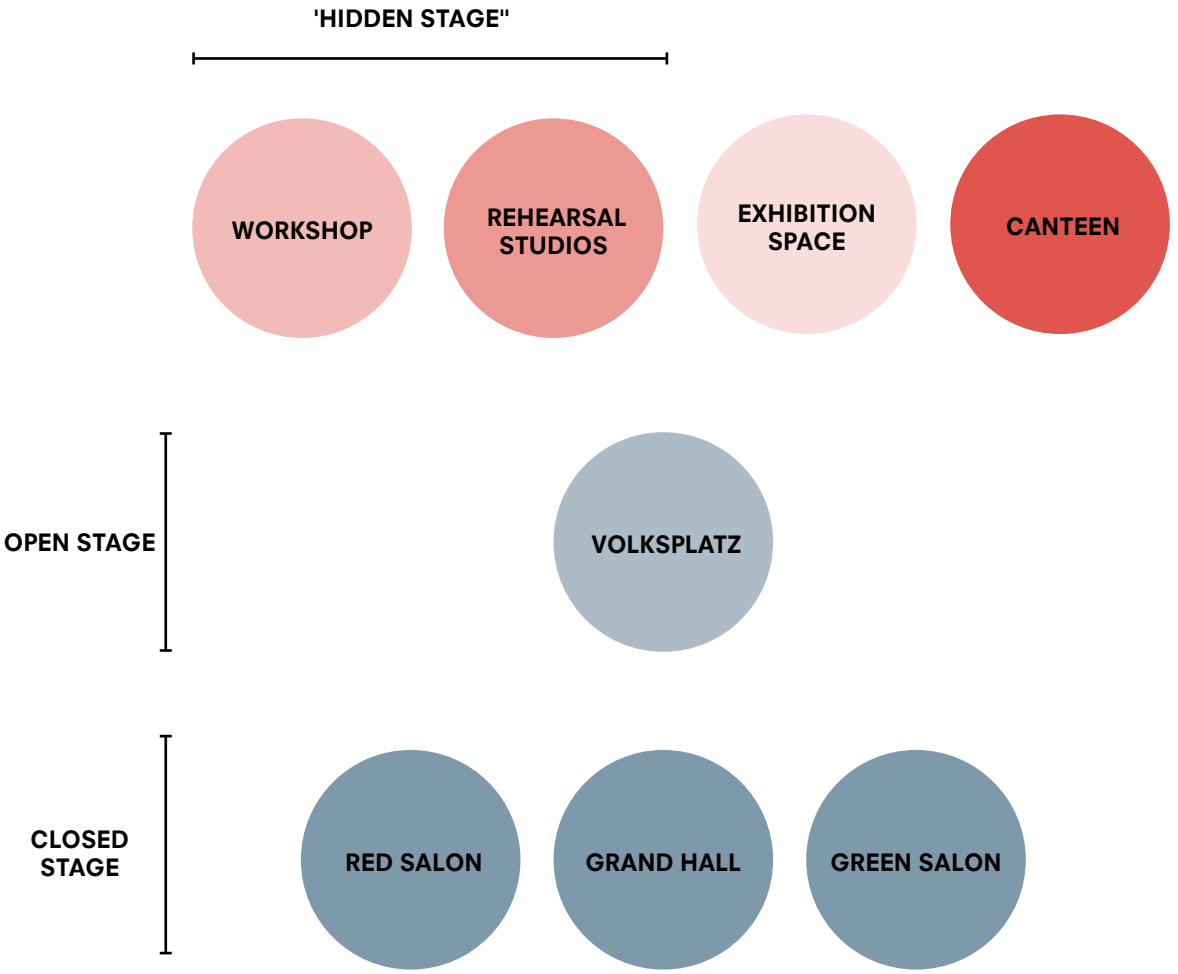


Volksbühne canteen for both **employees and the public**, to **invite** the people

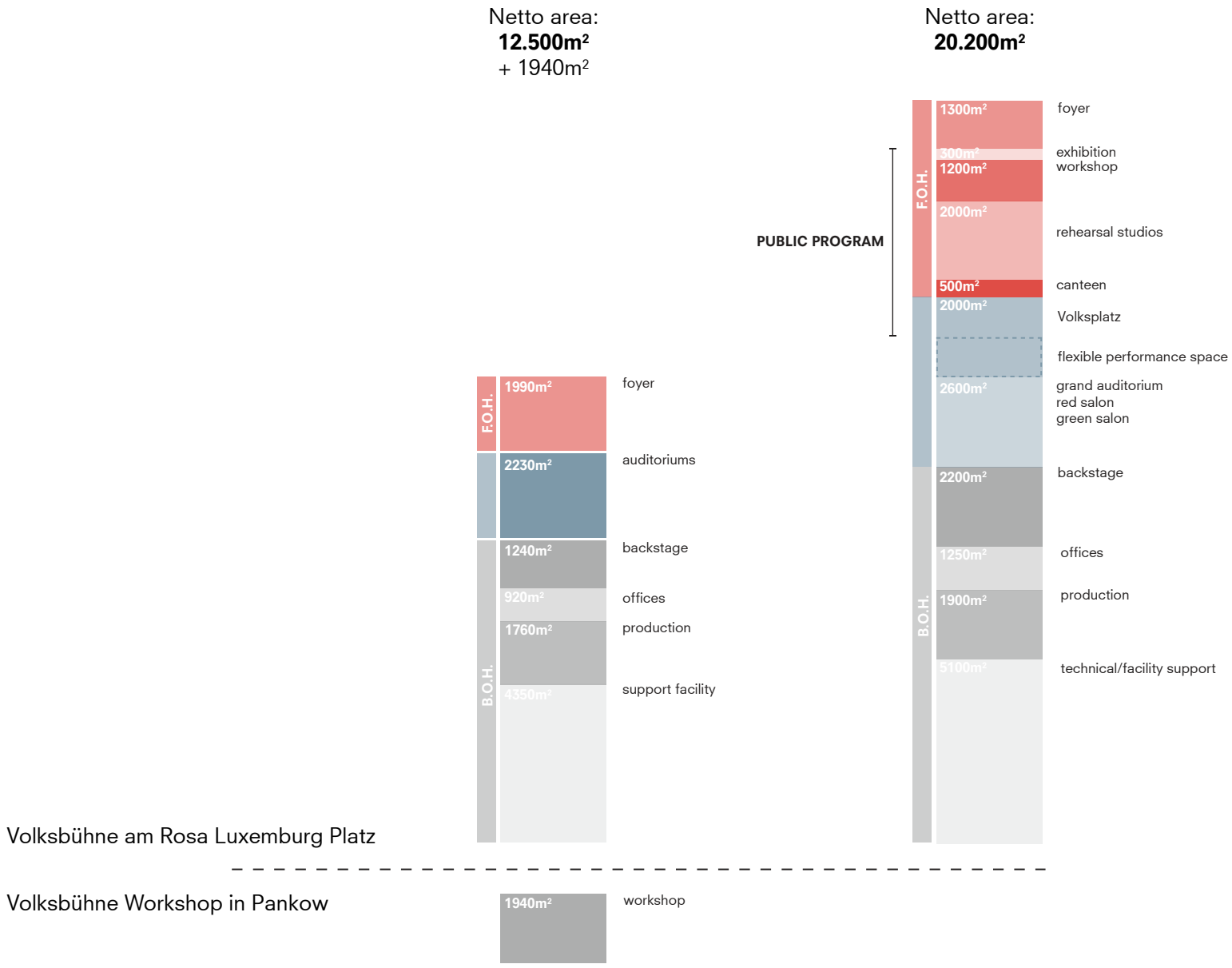
# PROGRAM ADDED



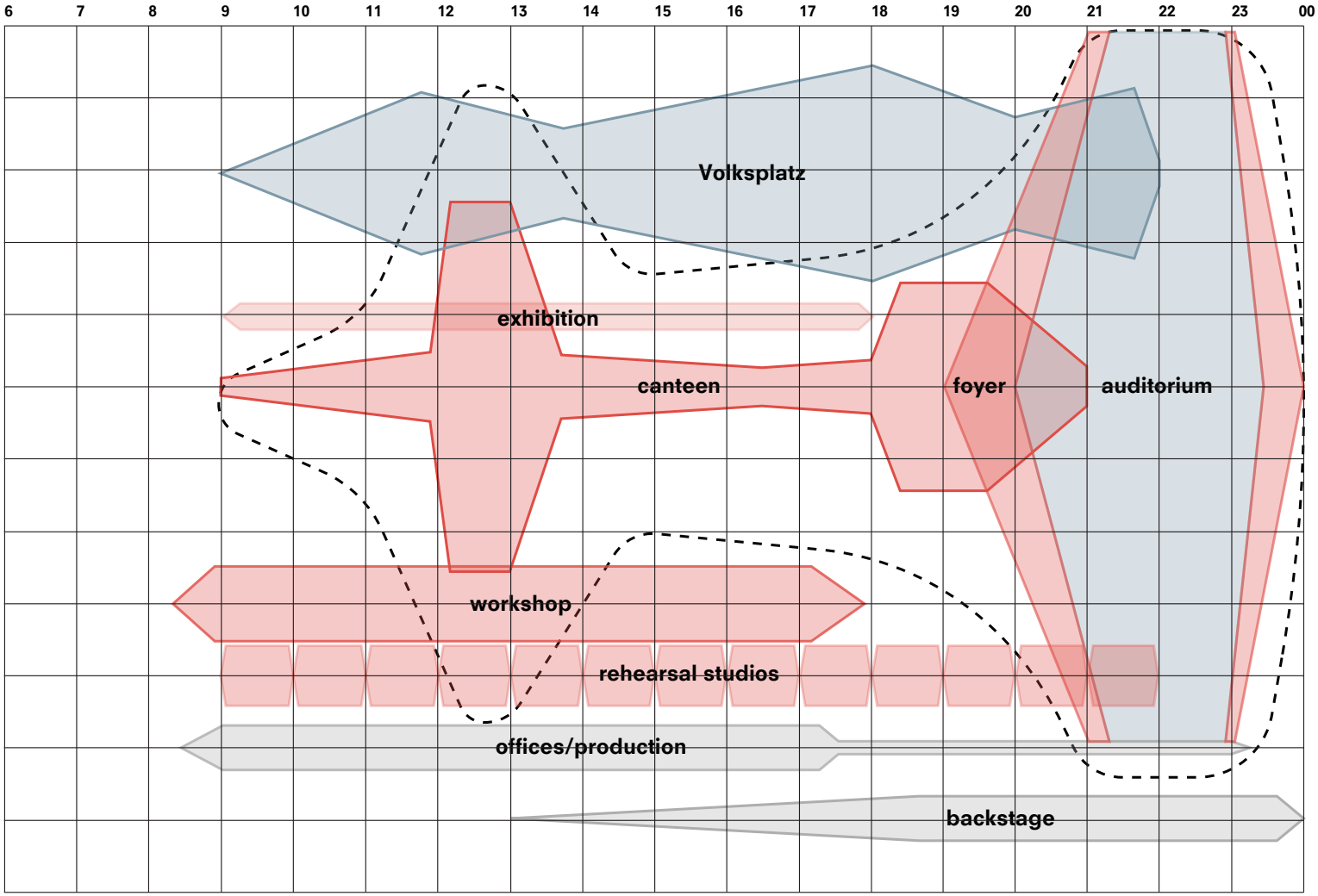
A publicly accessible **exhition of decor- and costumes** of Volksbühne performances

program: proposal

# PROGRAM BAR



# PROGRAM-TIME DIAGRAM

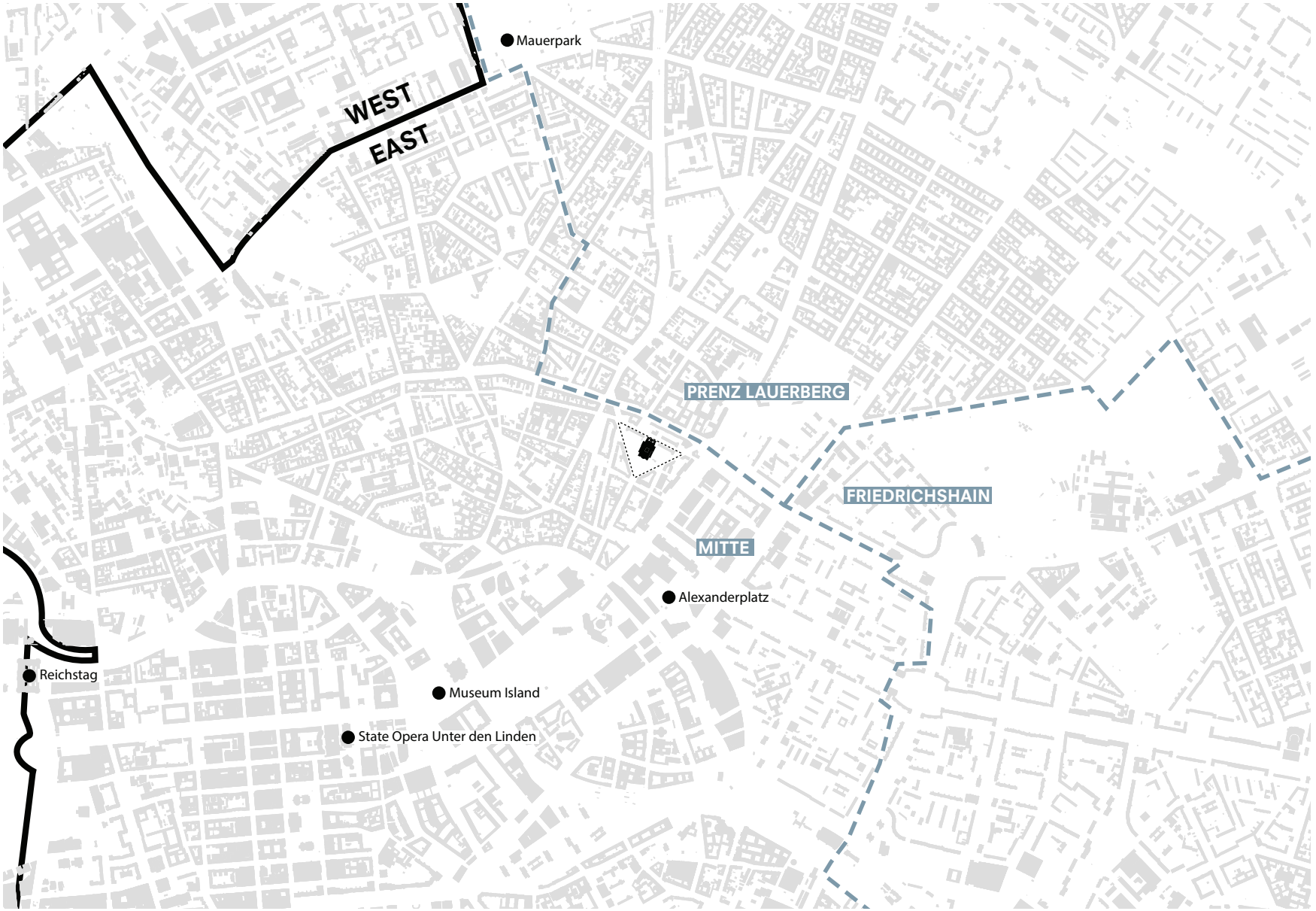



The new multi-functional diverse program results in **all day-long activity**
in both front- and back of house

# SITE

site

# DISTRICT




The iconic triangular site is recognizable in Berlin's urban fabric

site

# SCHEUNENVIERTEL

at the heart of the **workers class** district

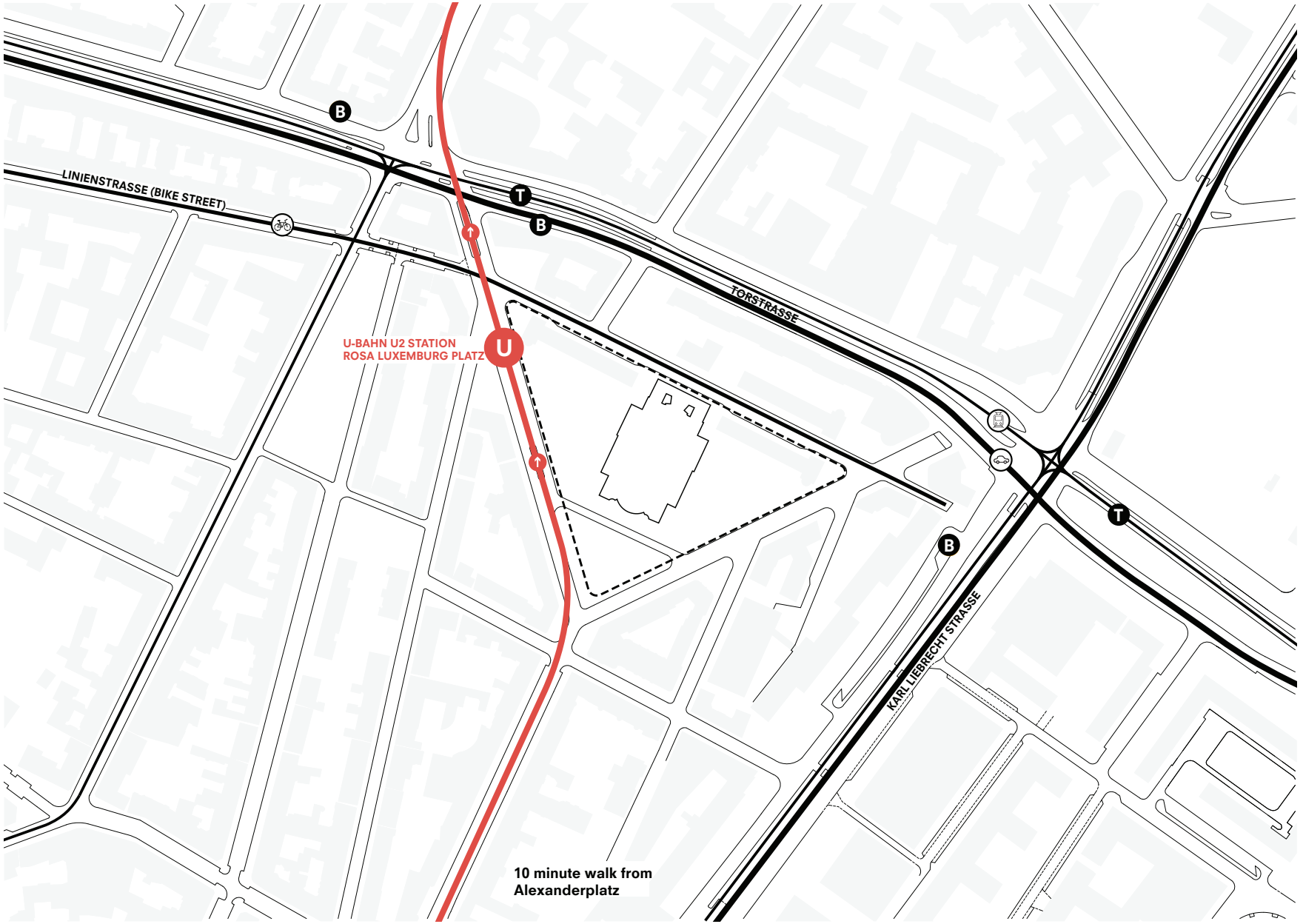
site

# SCHEUNENVIERTEL

at the heart of **gentrification**

site

# ACCESSIBILITY




The site is easily accessible by different modes of public transportation

site

# AXIS

Volksbühne is located at the end of an axis

# LINIENSTRASSE MONUMENTS

Volksbühne shares the plot with residential monuments on Linienstrasse

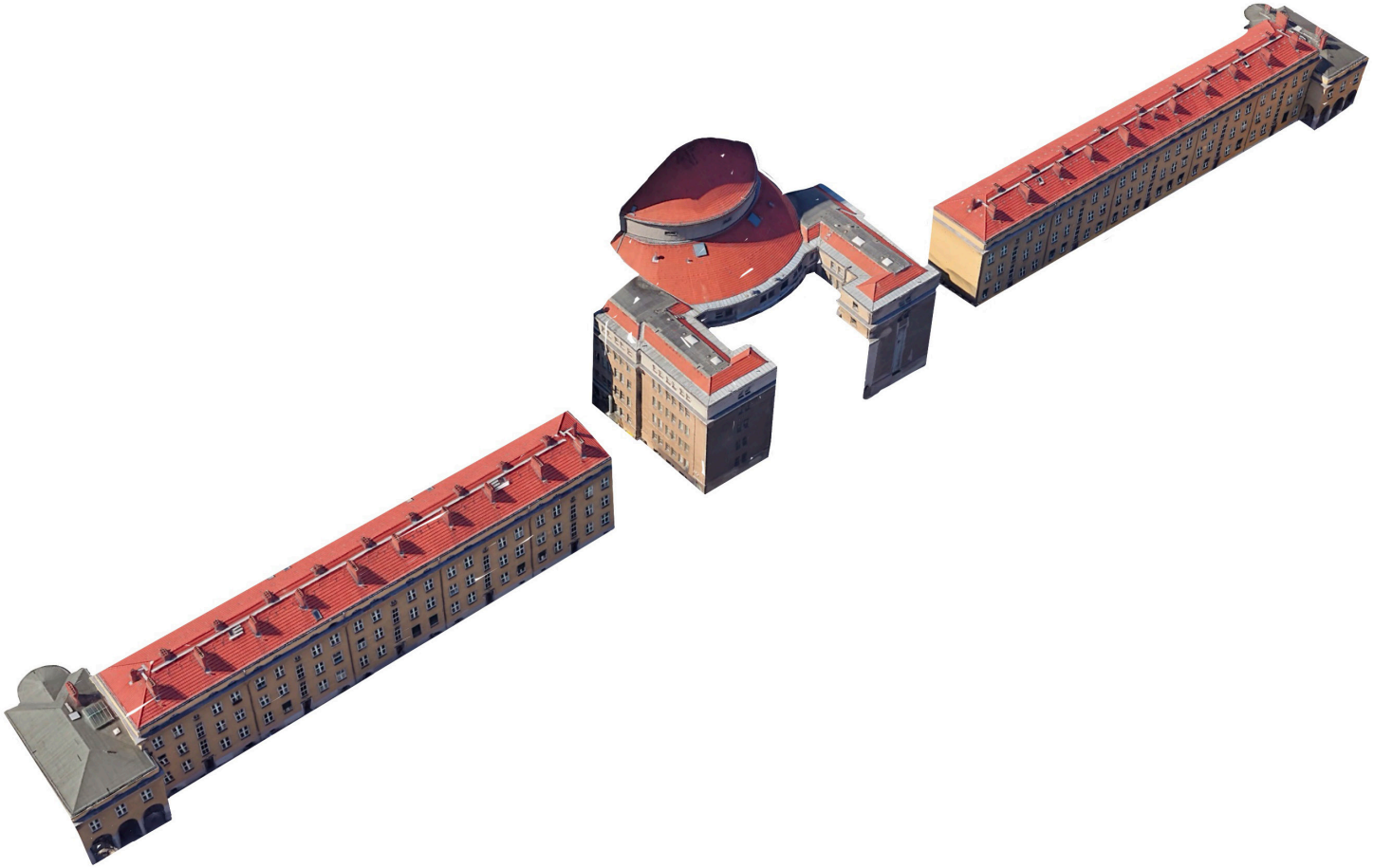
# LINIENSTRASSE MONUMENTS

Volksbühne shares the plot with residential monuments on Linienstrasse

# LINIENSTRASSE MONUMENTS

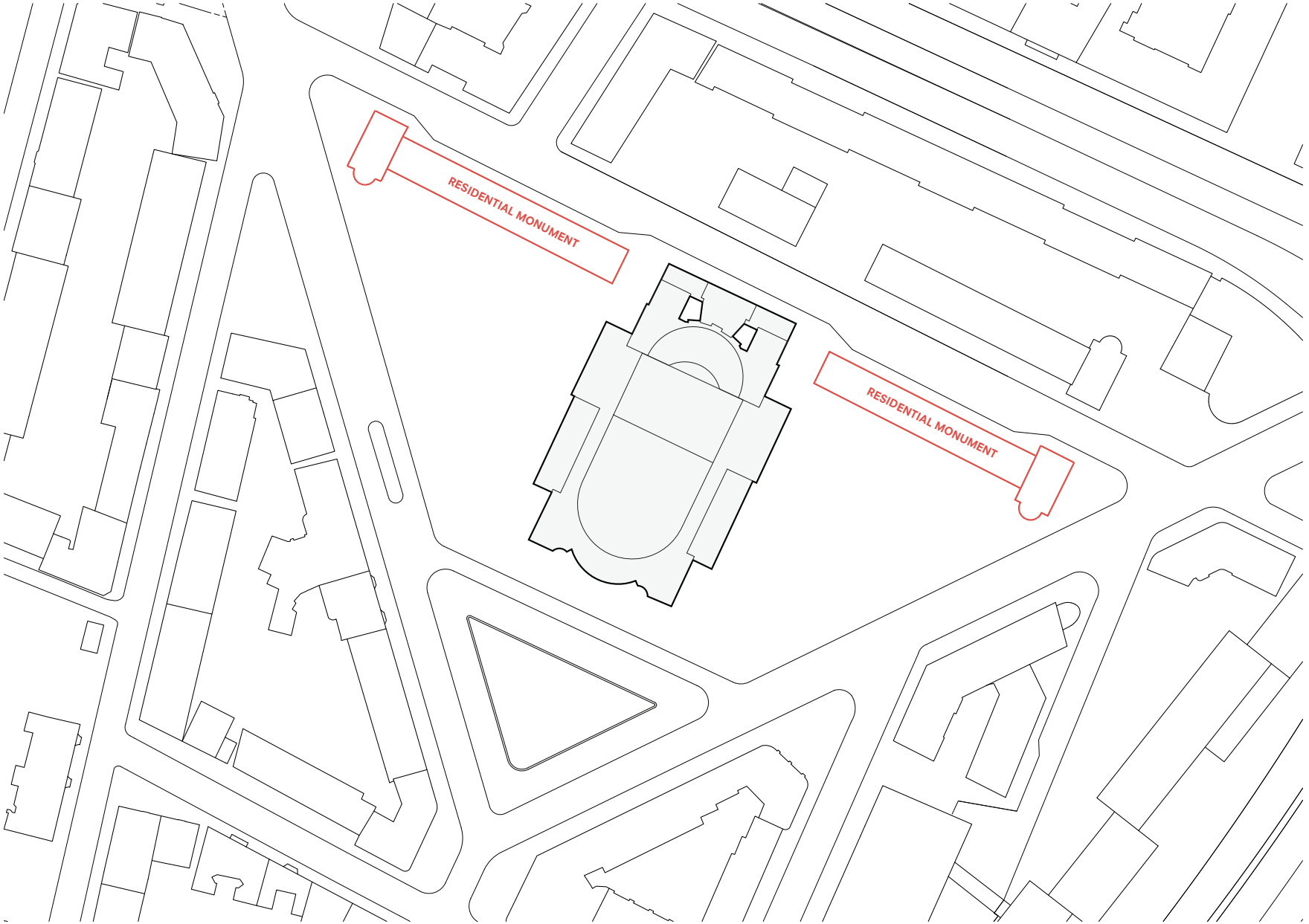
Two monumental residential buildings on the site

# LINIENSTRASSE ENSEMBLE



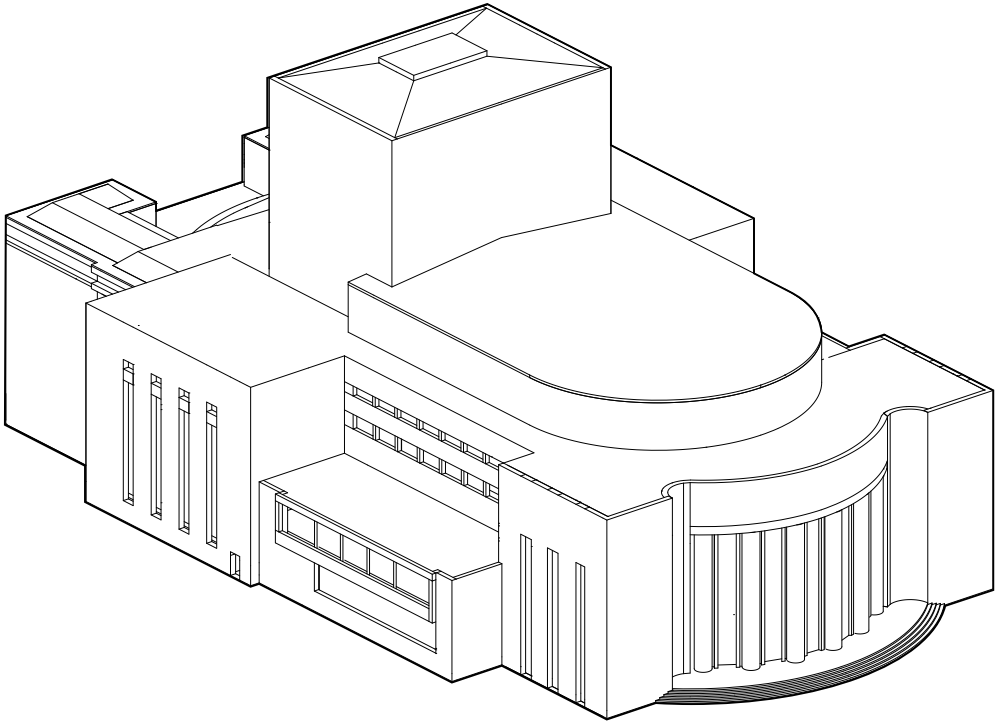
site

# LINIENSTRASSE MONUMENTS




Two monumental residential buildings on the site

# MONUMENT RESEARCH

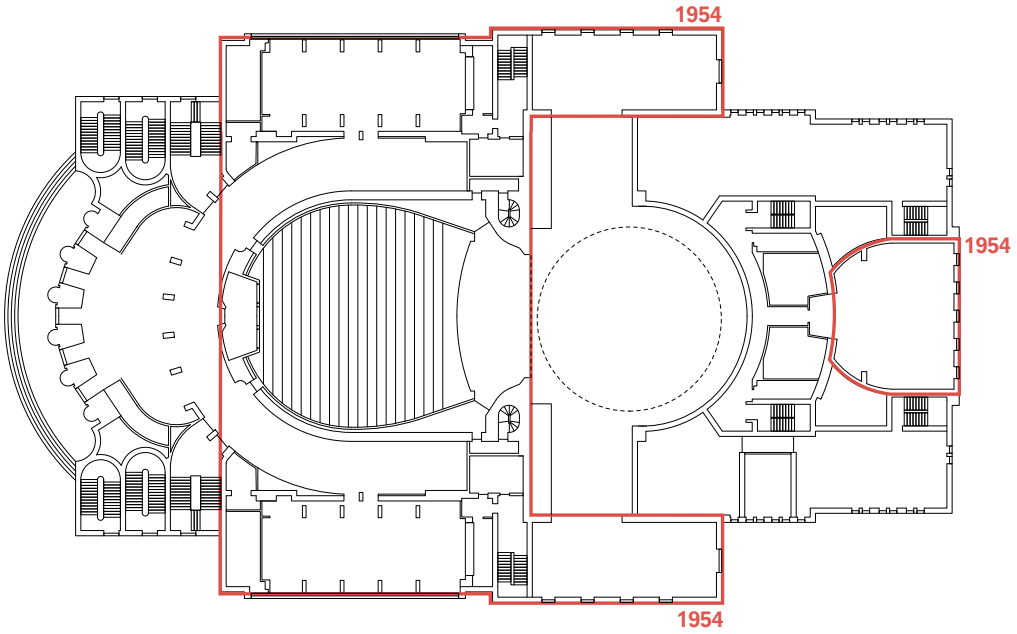


site

# HISTORY

A **listed monument**, constructed in **1914** and designed by **architect Oskar Kaufman**

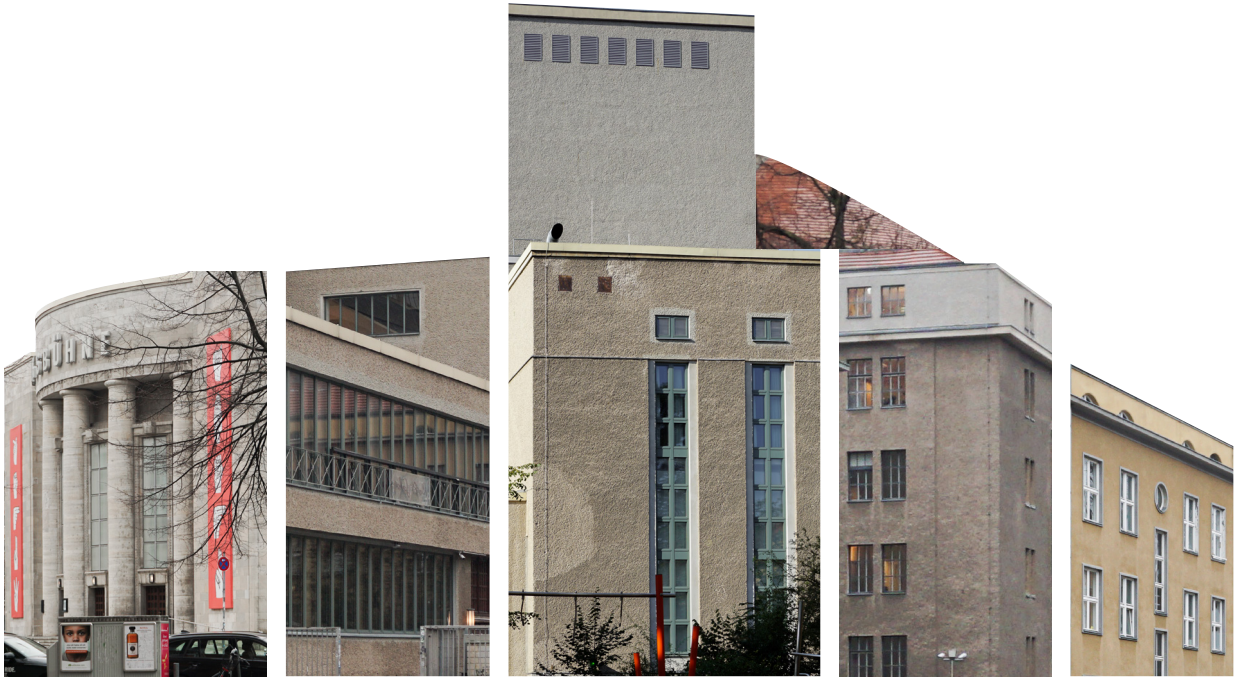
# 1954 RENOVATION




Parts of the Volksbühne transformed in 1954

site

# ARCHITECTURAL PATCHWORK

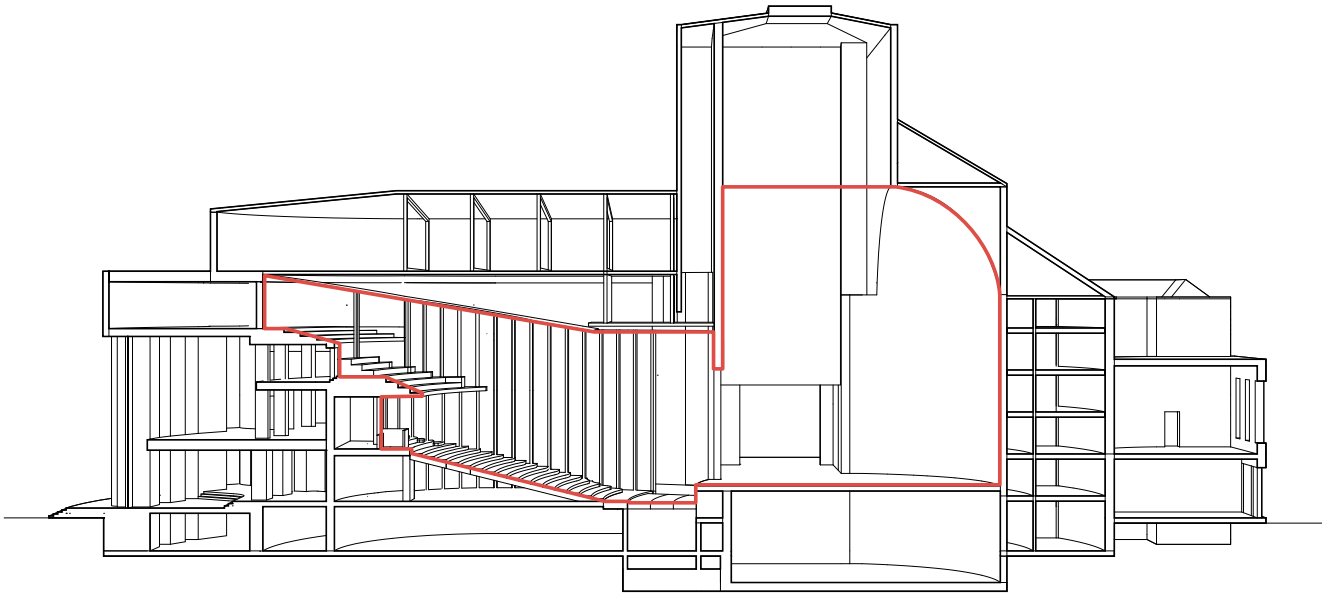


site

# MONUMENTAL FRONT FACADE

site

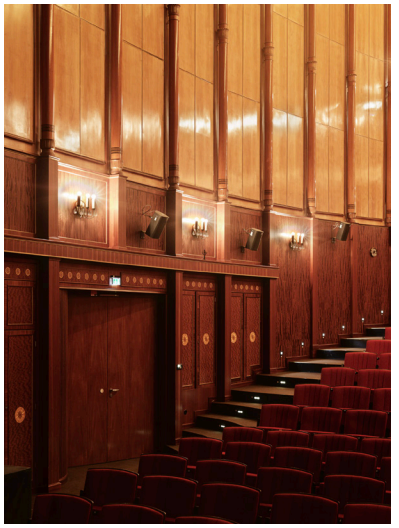
# AUDITORIUM



Auditorium and stage bear monumental value

site

# AUDITORIUM



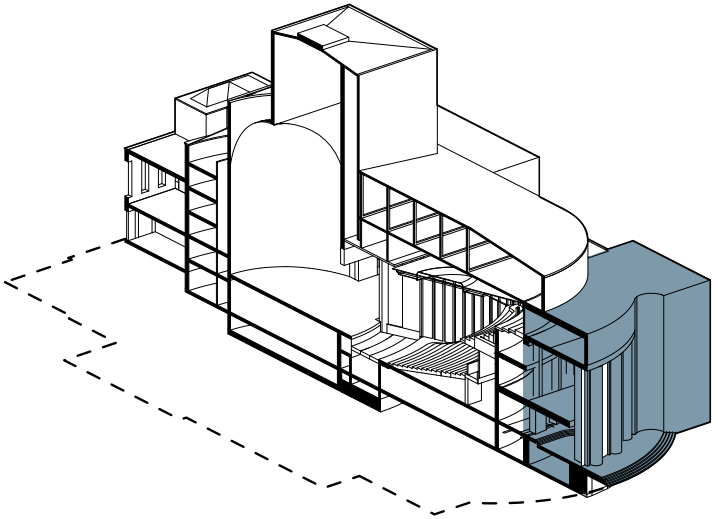
*"an important document of the **representative theater architecture of the early GDR**, and illustrates the great importance attributed to the Volksbühne during this time"*

Berlin Listed Monument documentation

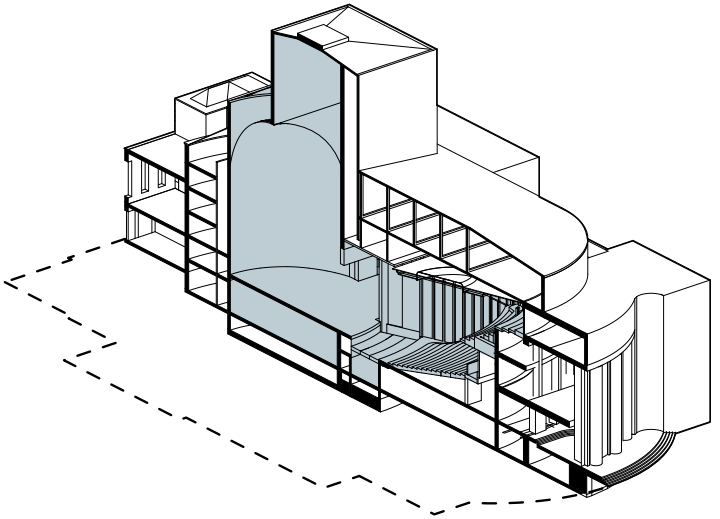
The grand auditorium nowadays (capacity 725 seats)

# VALUE ASSESSMENT

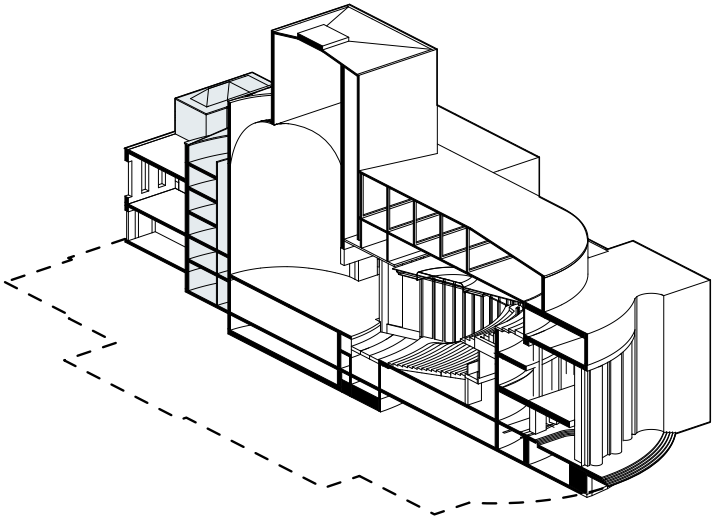
Very high monumental value



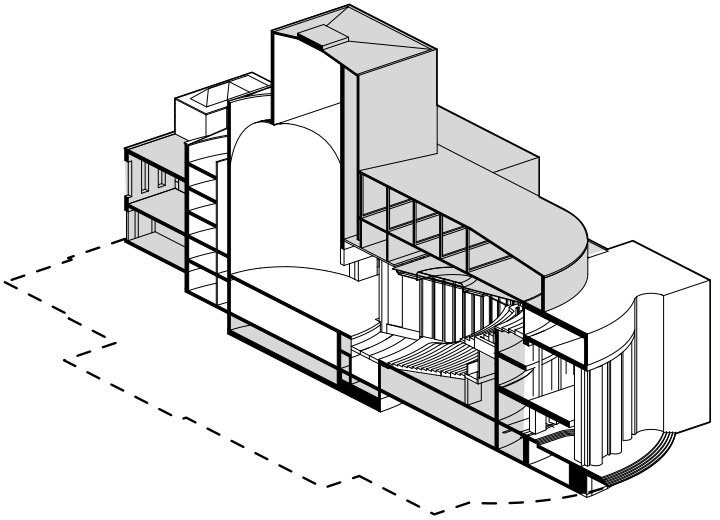
High monumental value

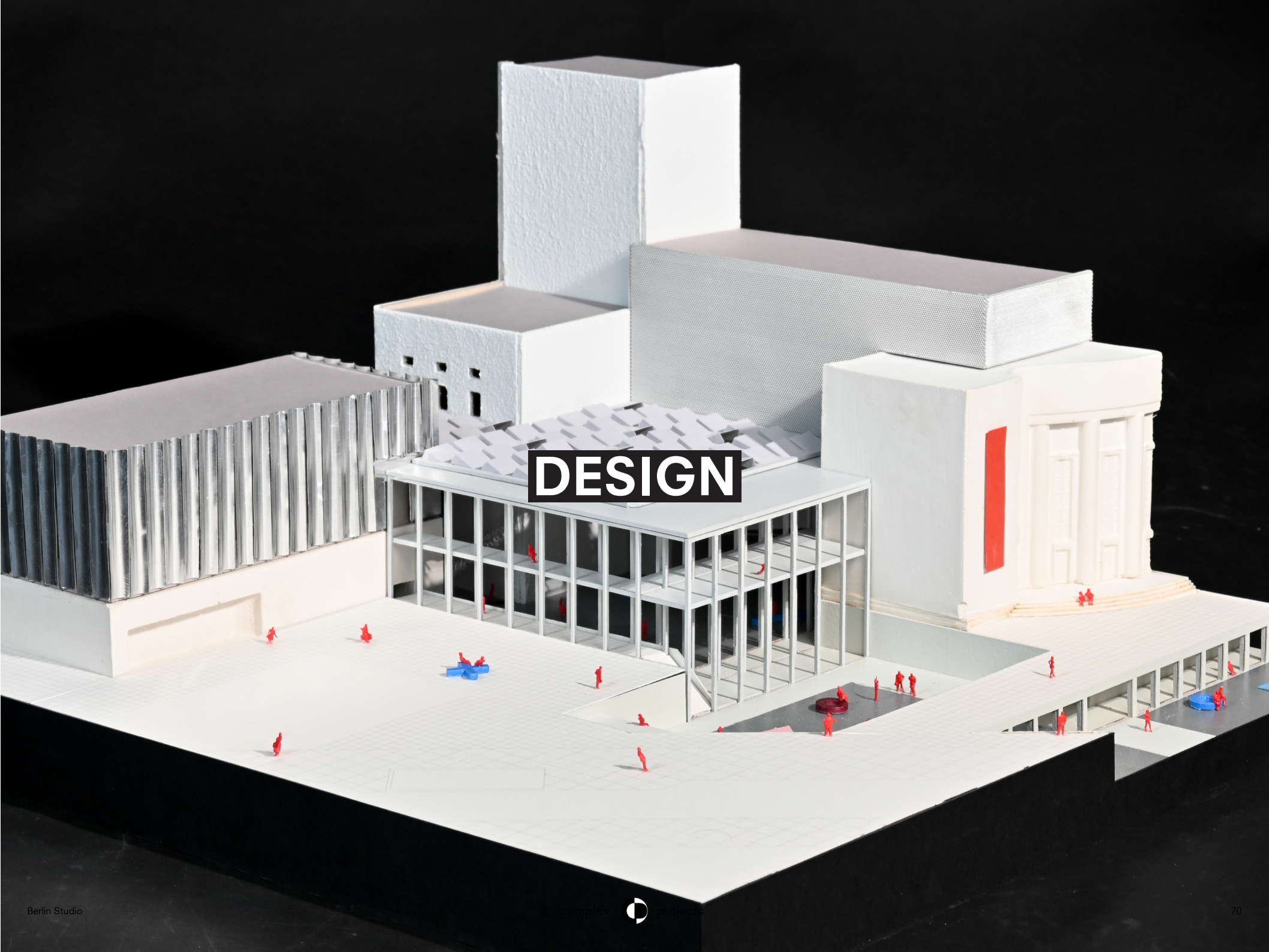


Medium monumental value

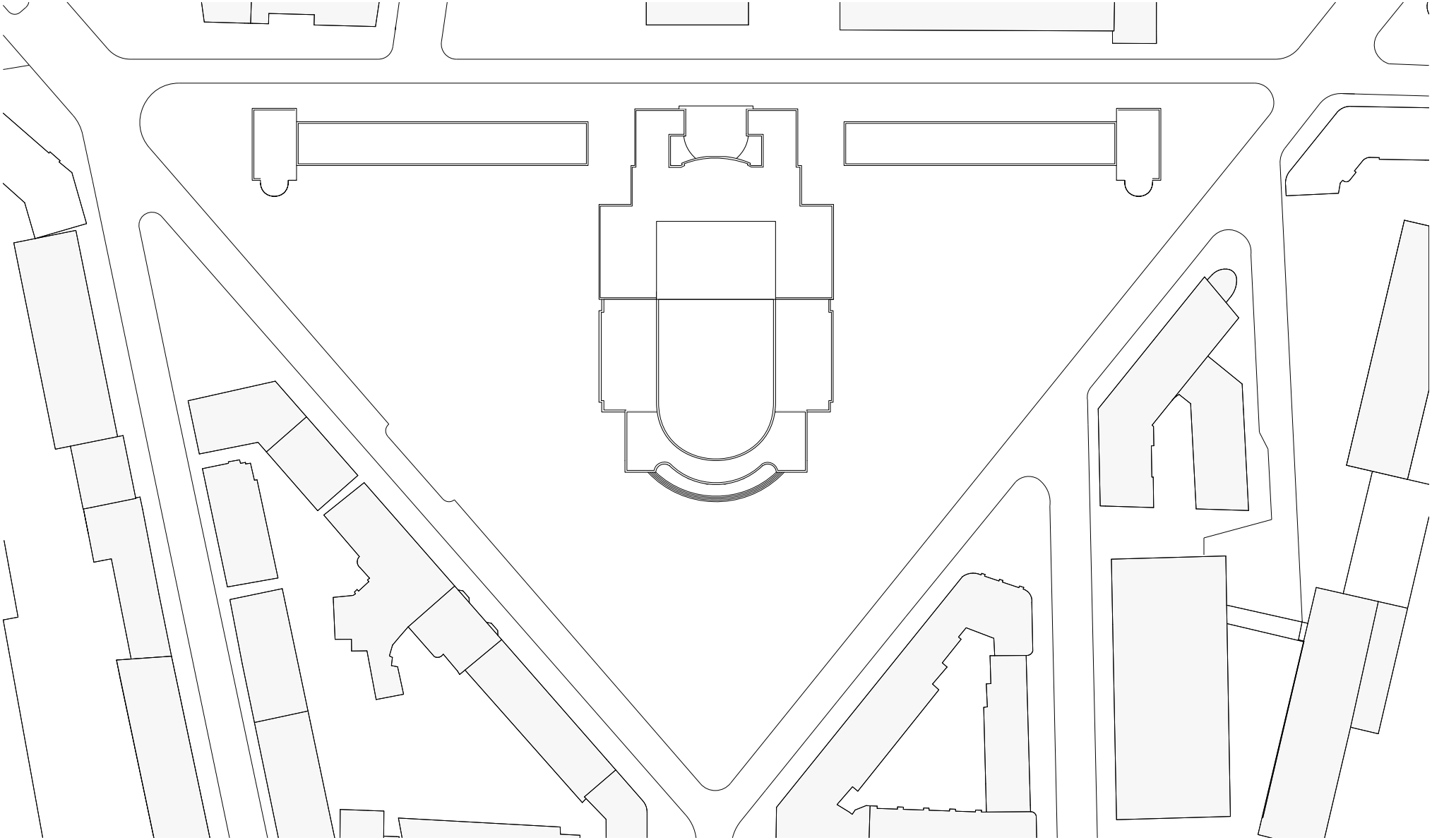


Low monumental value

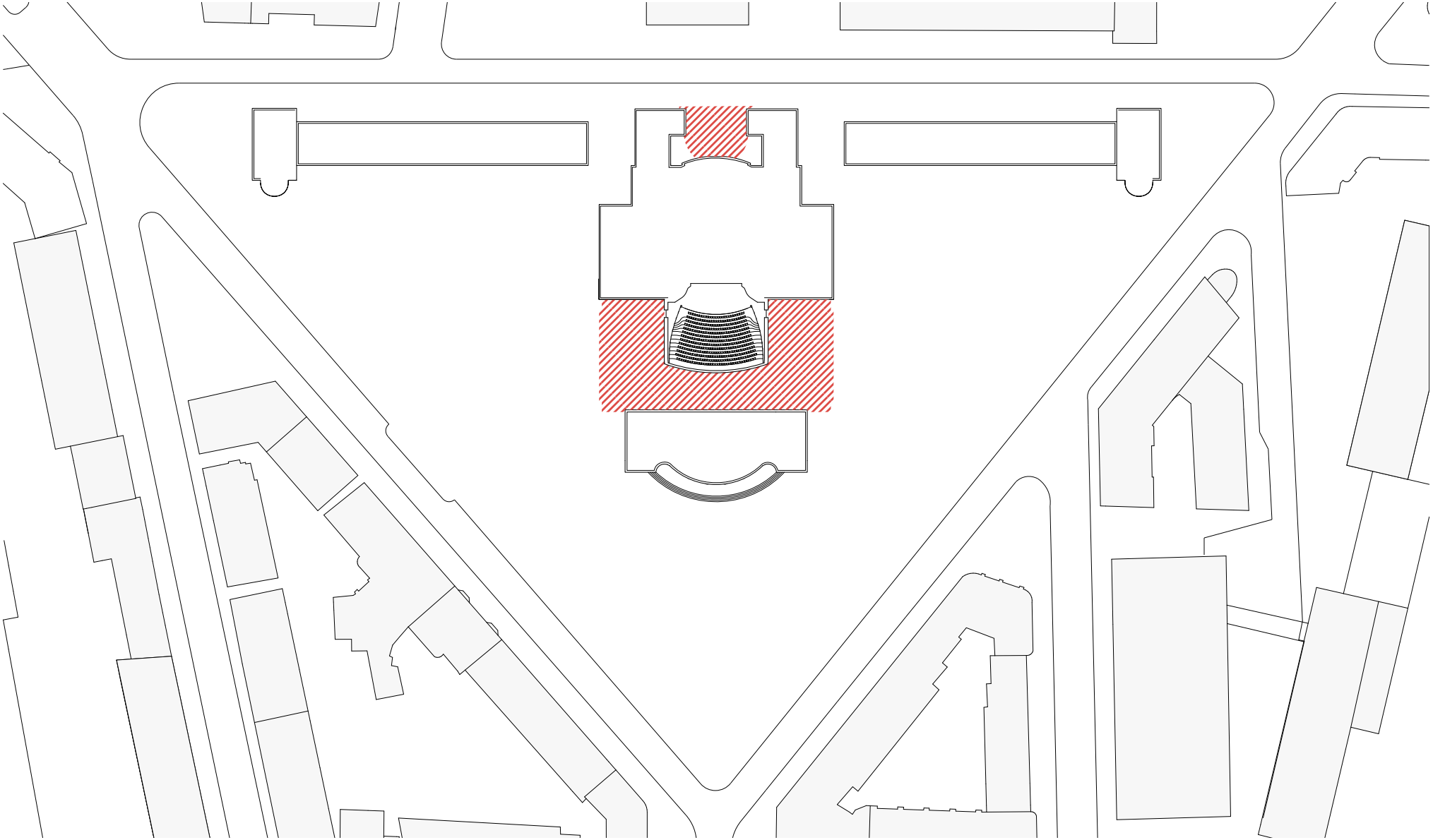



DESIGN

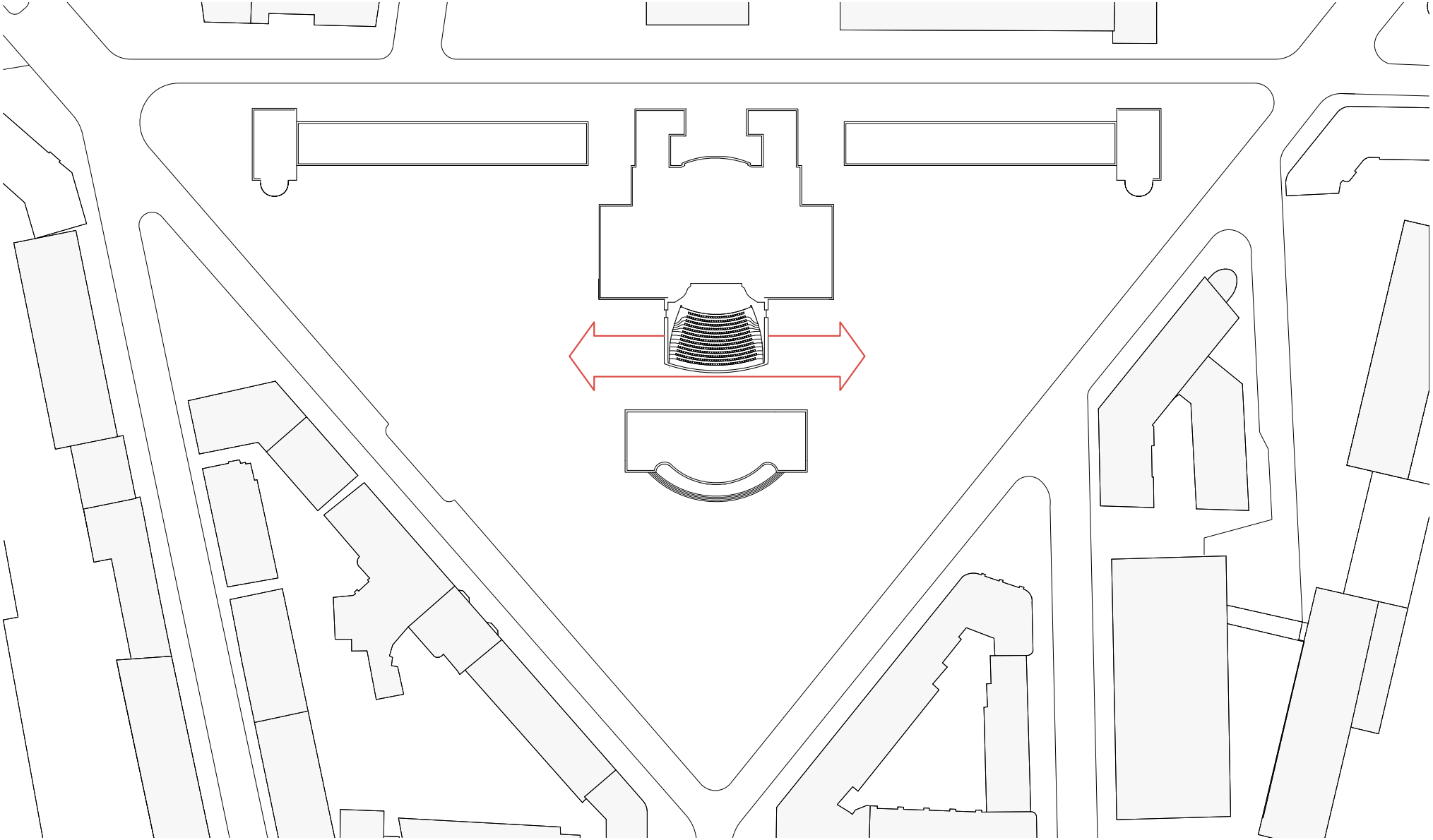
# CONCEPT



# 1954 ADDITIONS DEMOLISHED

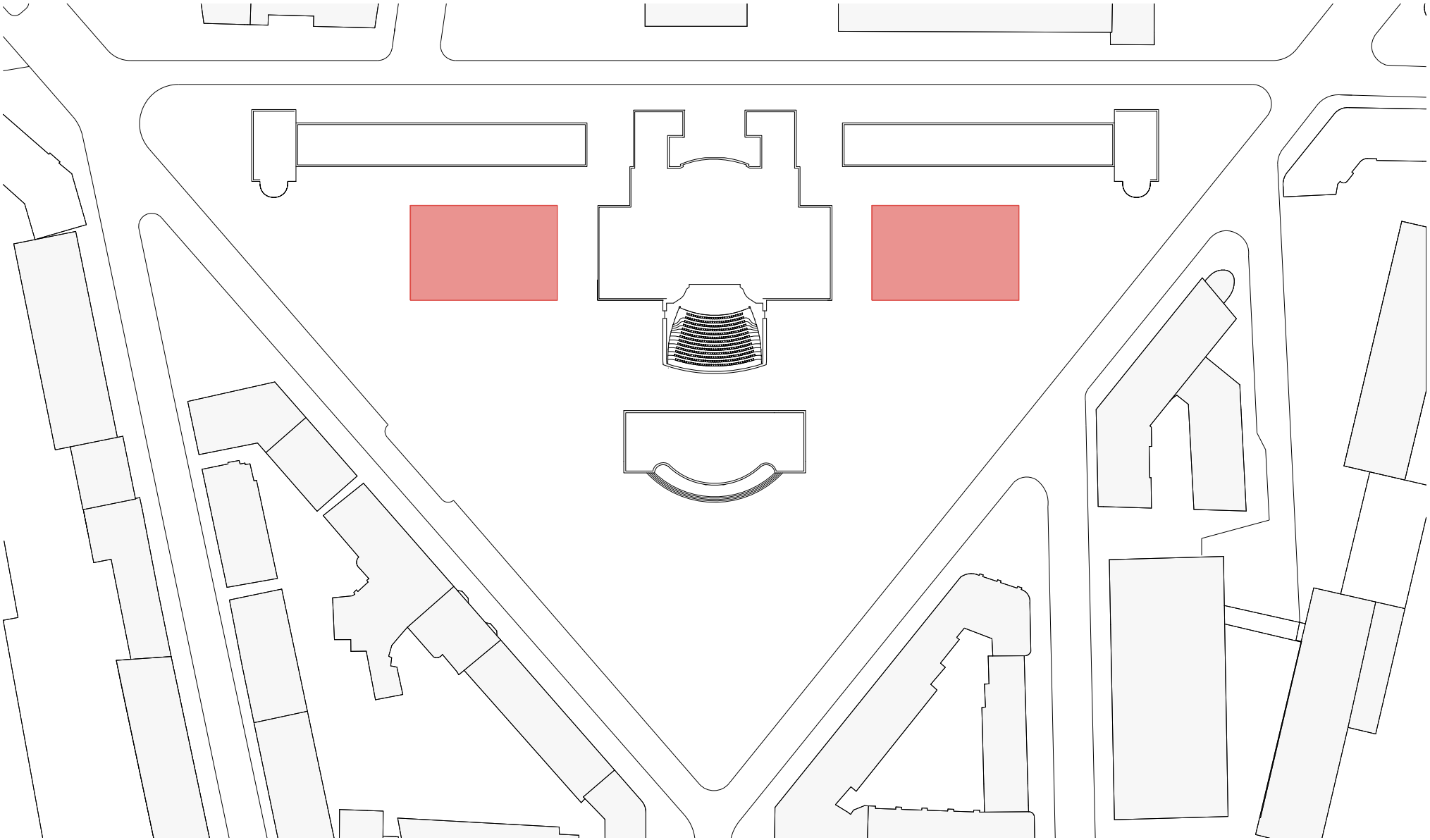


# CONNECTING TWO SIDES



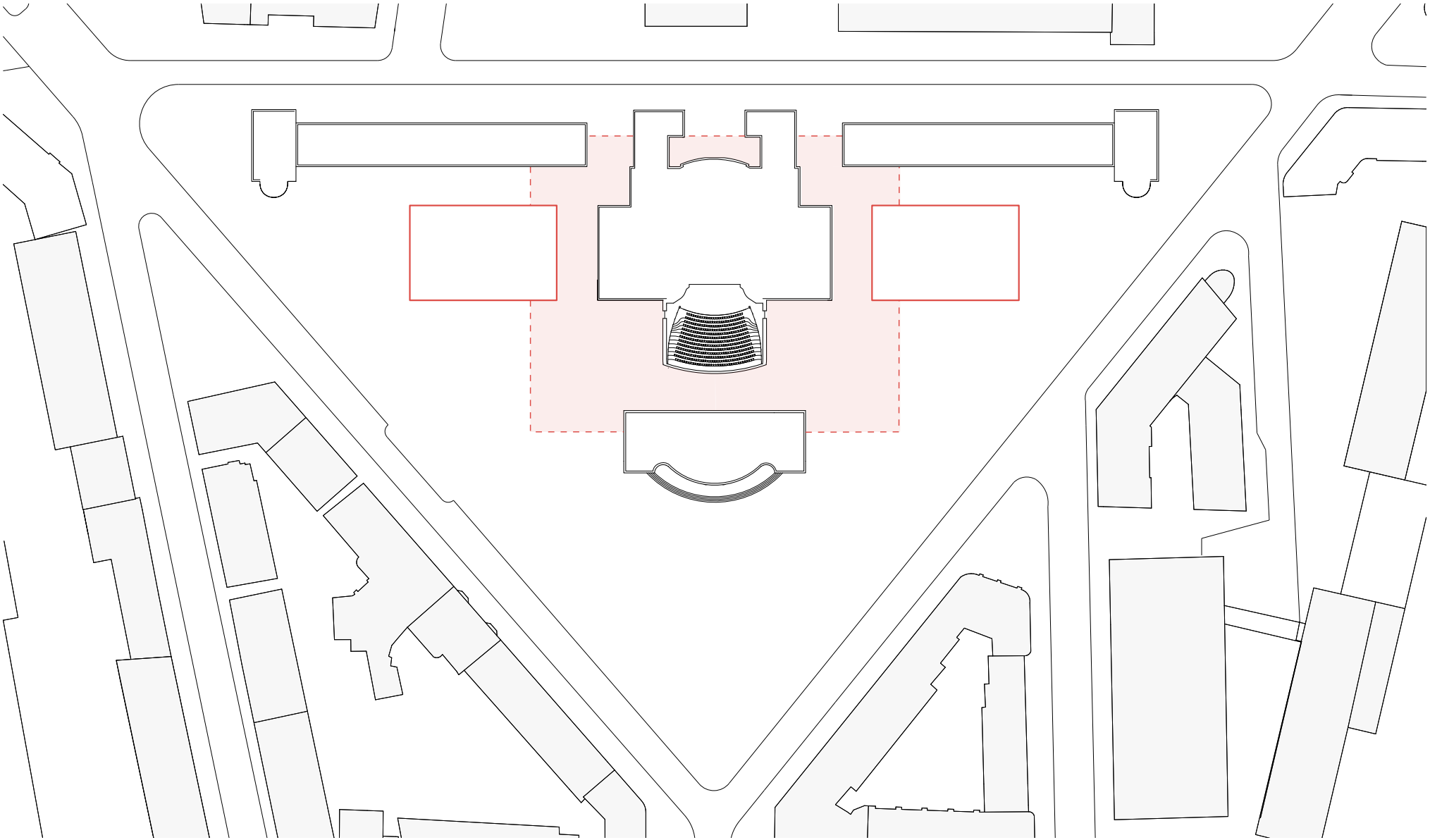
concept

# ADDED VOLUMES



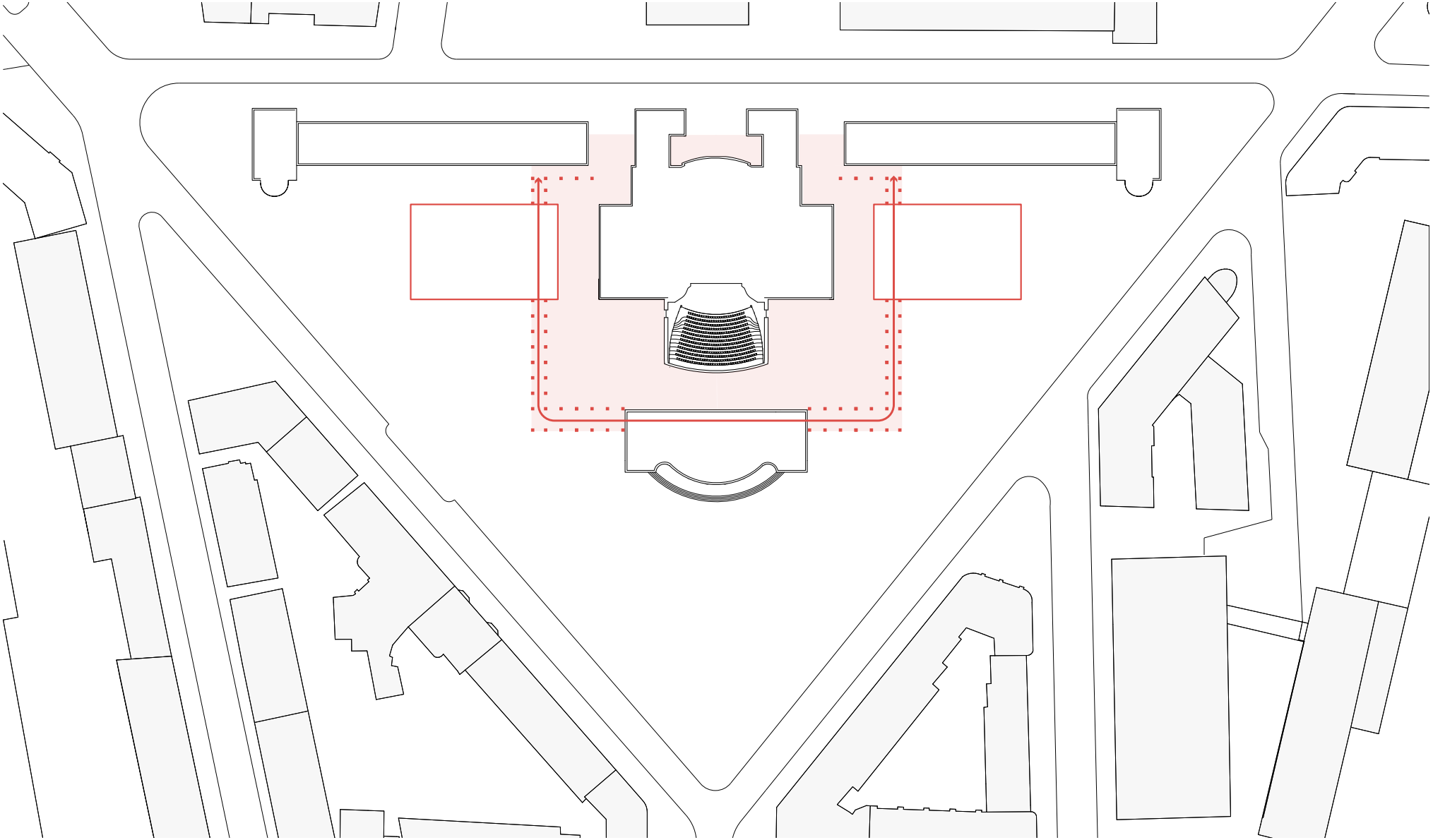
concept

# TRANSPARENT CONNECTING VOLUME



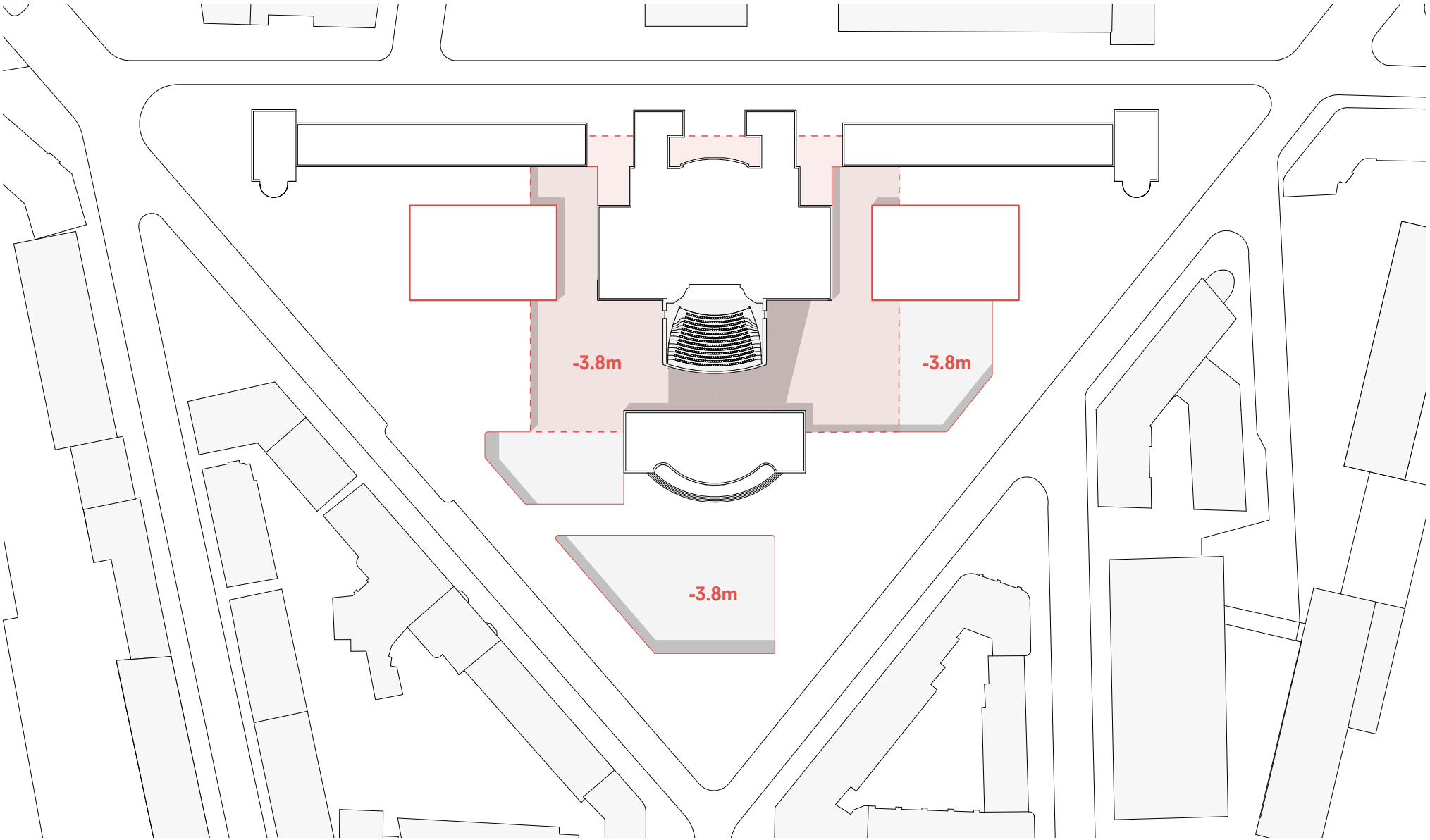
concept

# GALLERY

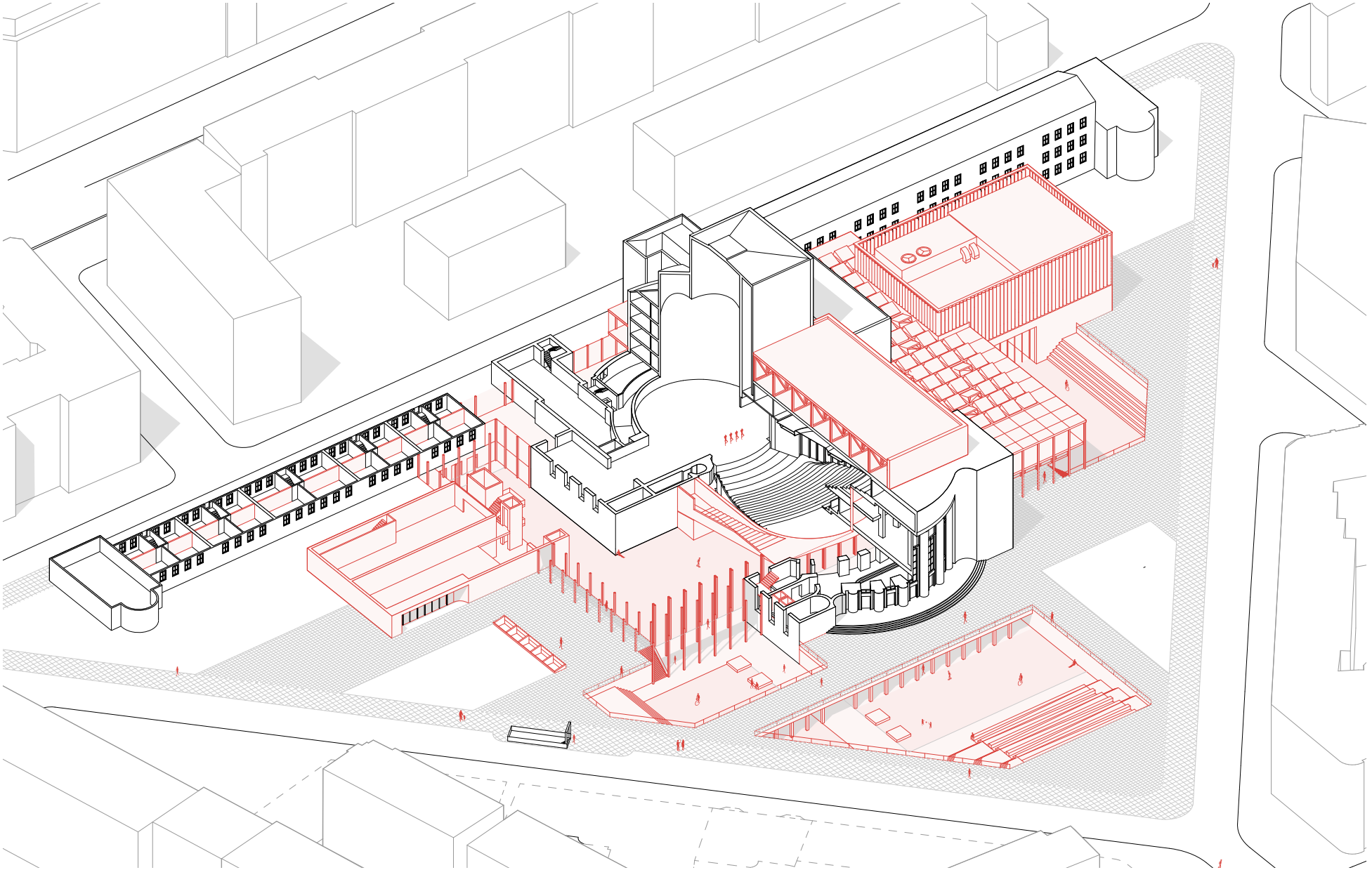


concept

# SUNKEN SQUARE



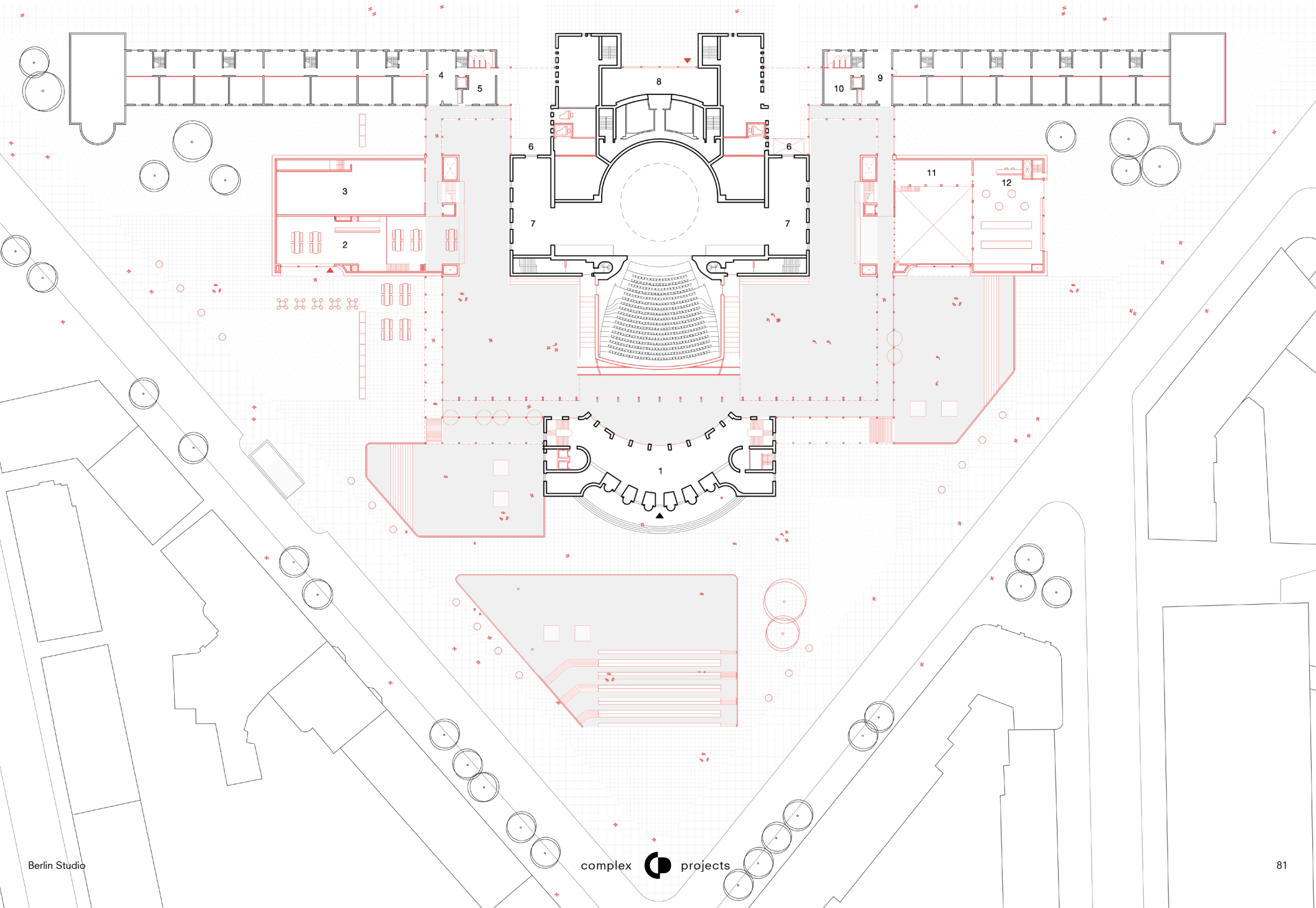
# THE DESIGN



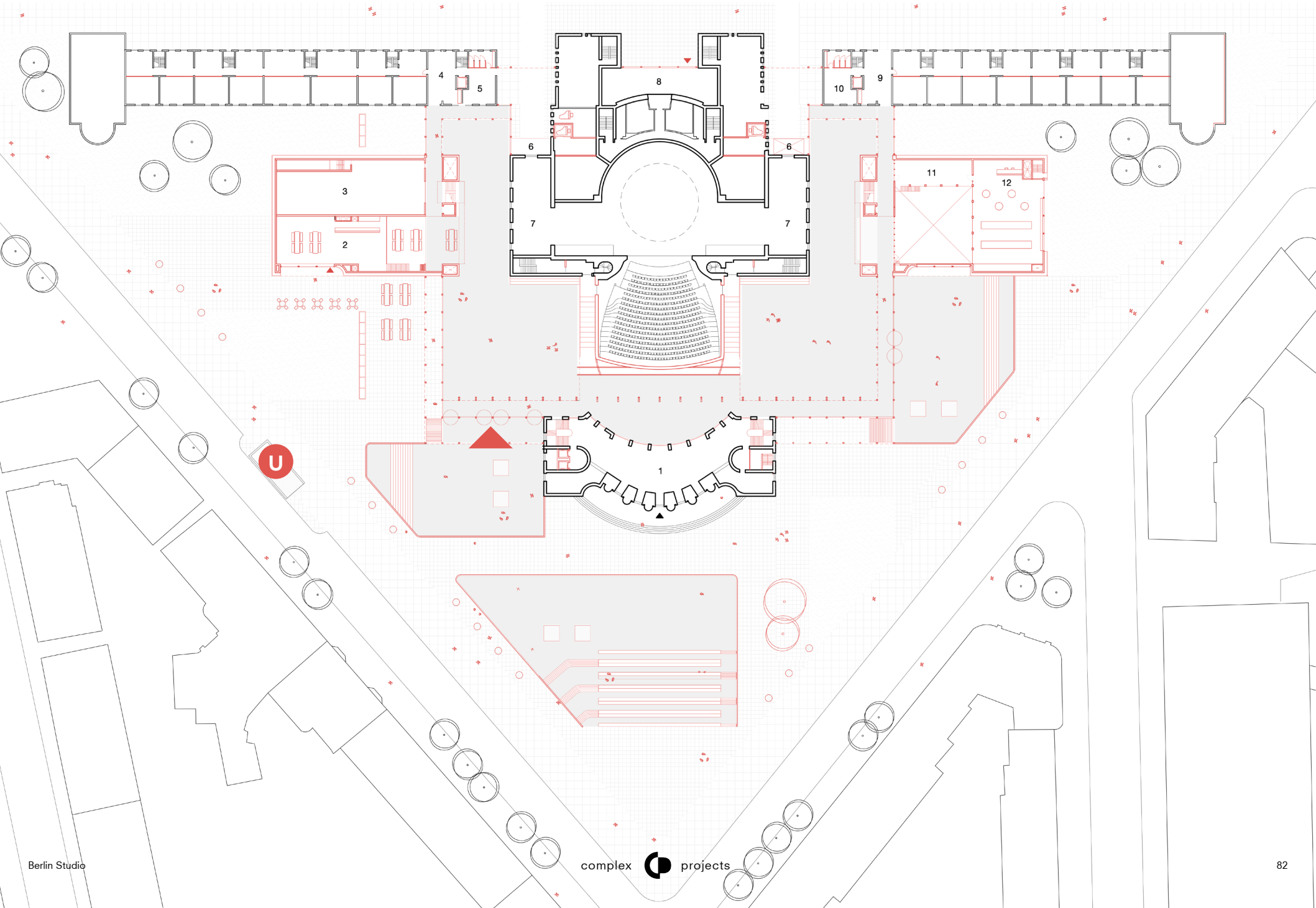
# FRONT PERSPECTIVE DAY

# FRONT PERSPECTIVE NIGHT

# FLOORPLAN STREET LEVEL



# FLOORPLAN STREET LEVEL



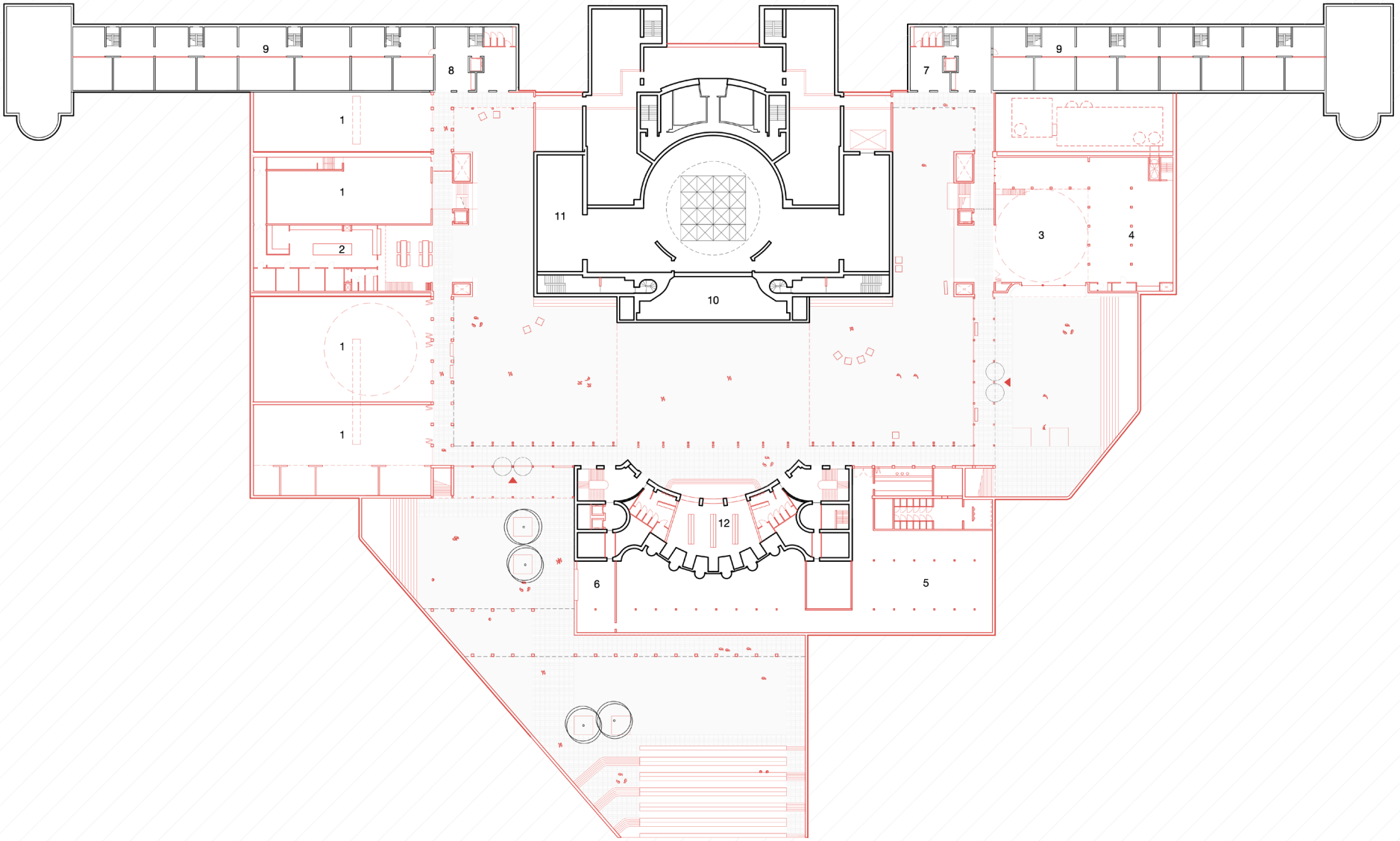
# ARCHITECTURAL MEMBRANES

# ARCHITECTURAL MEMBRANES

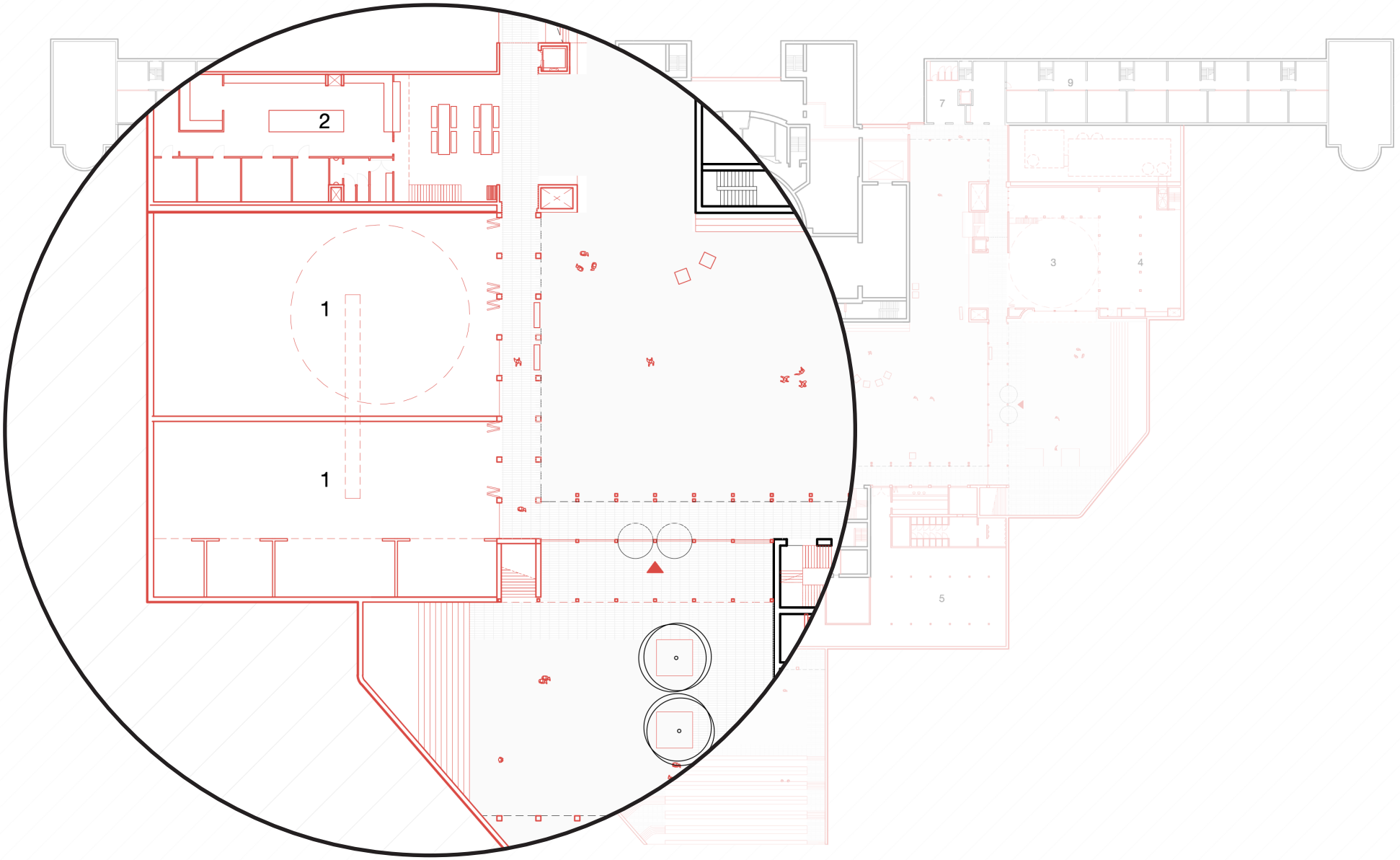
# ARCHITECTURAL MEMBRANES

# ENTRANCE PERSPECTIVE

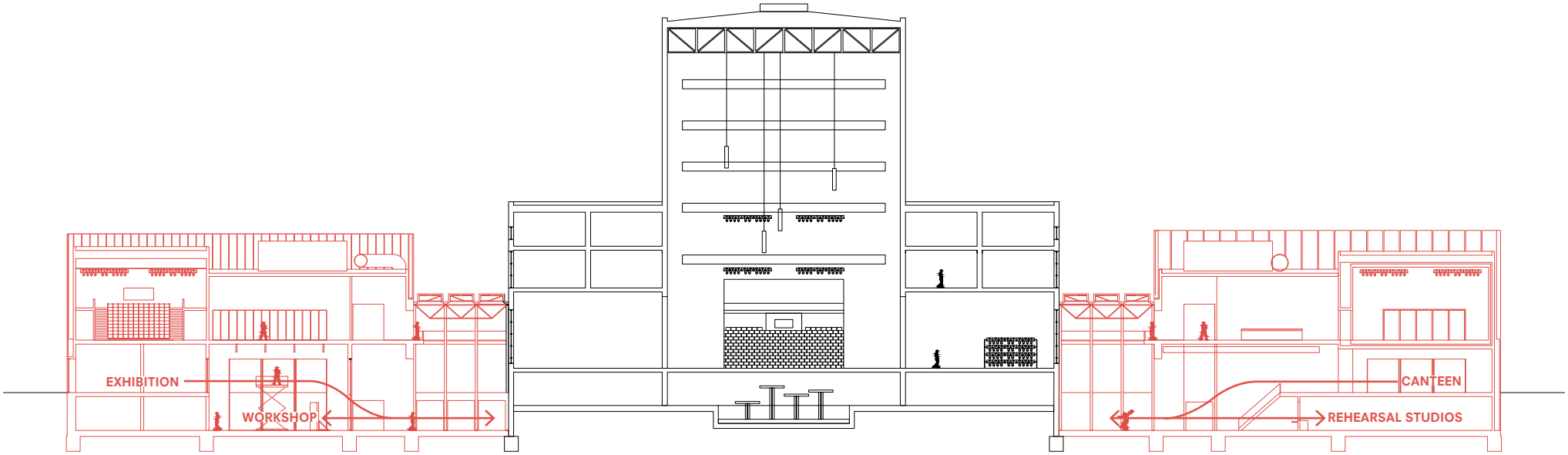
# -1 VOLKSPLATZ LEVEL



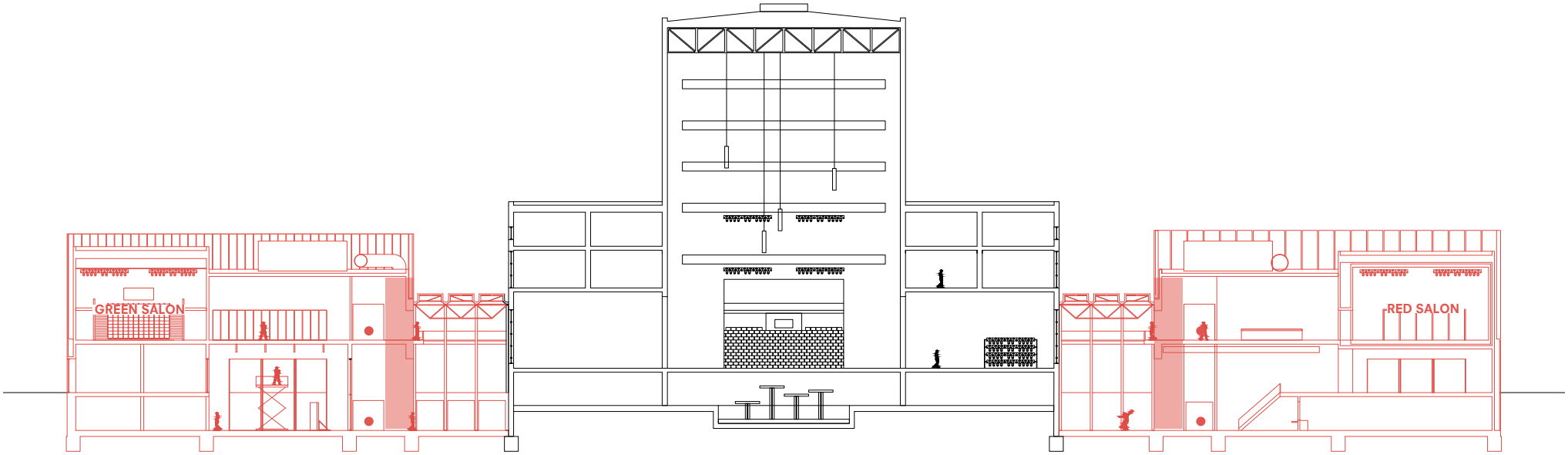
# -1 VOLKSPLATZ LEVEL



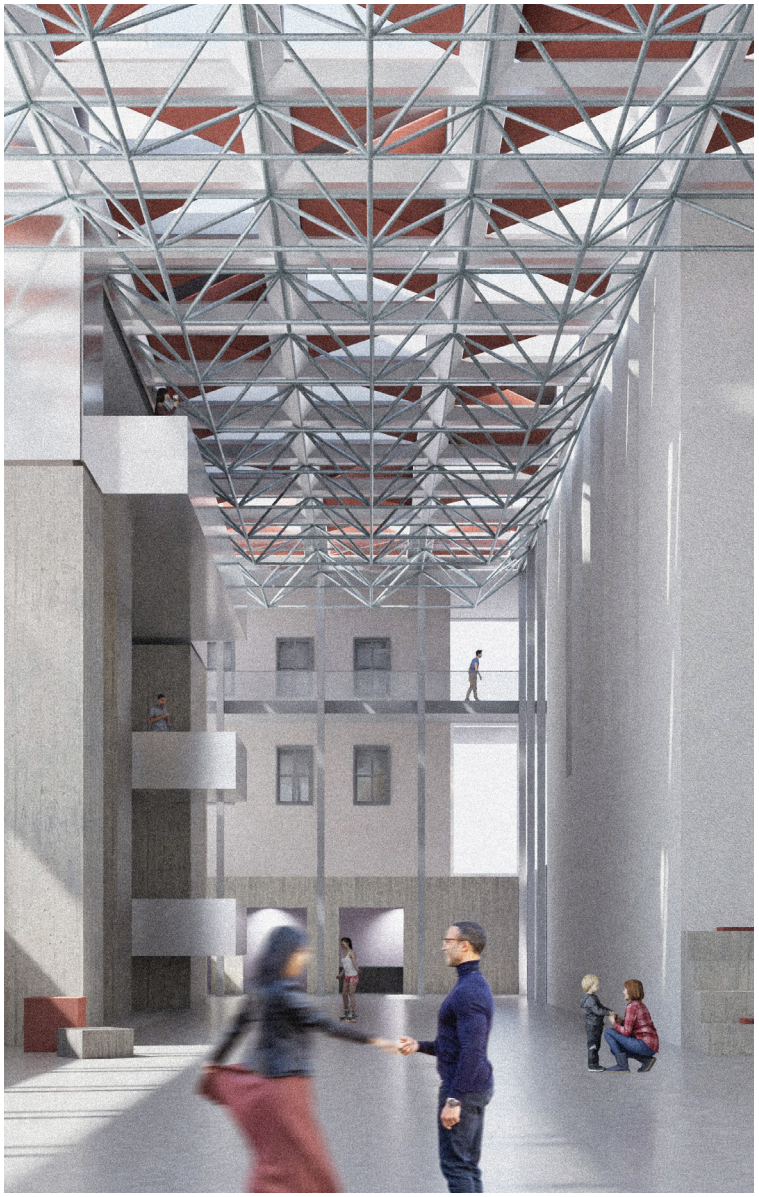
# SECTION BB

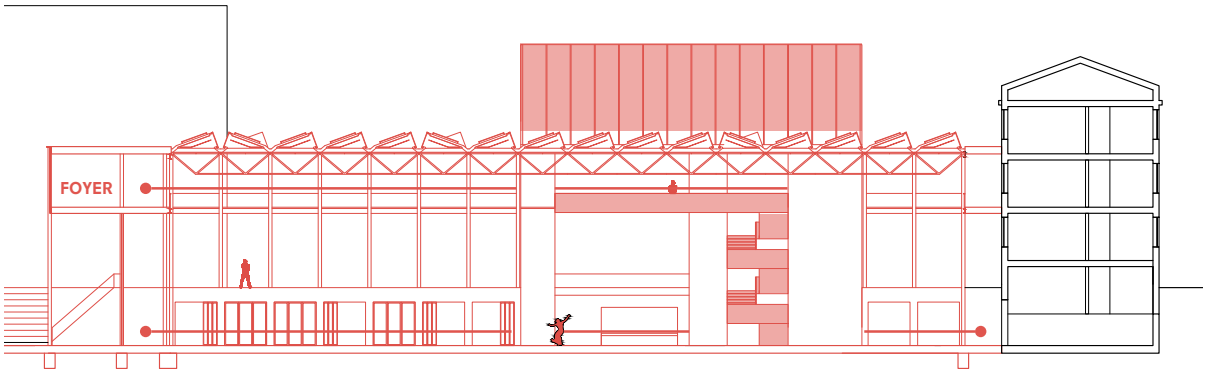


# SECTION BB

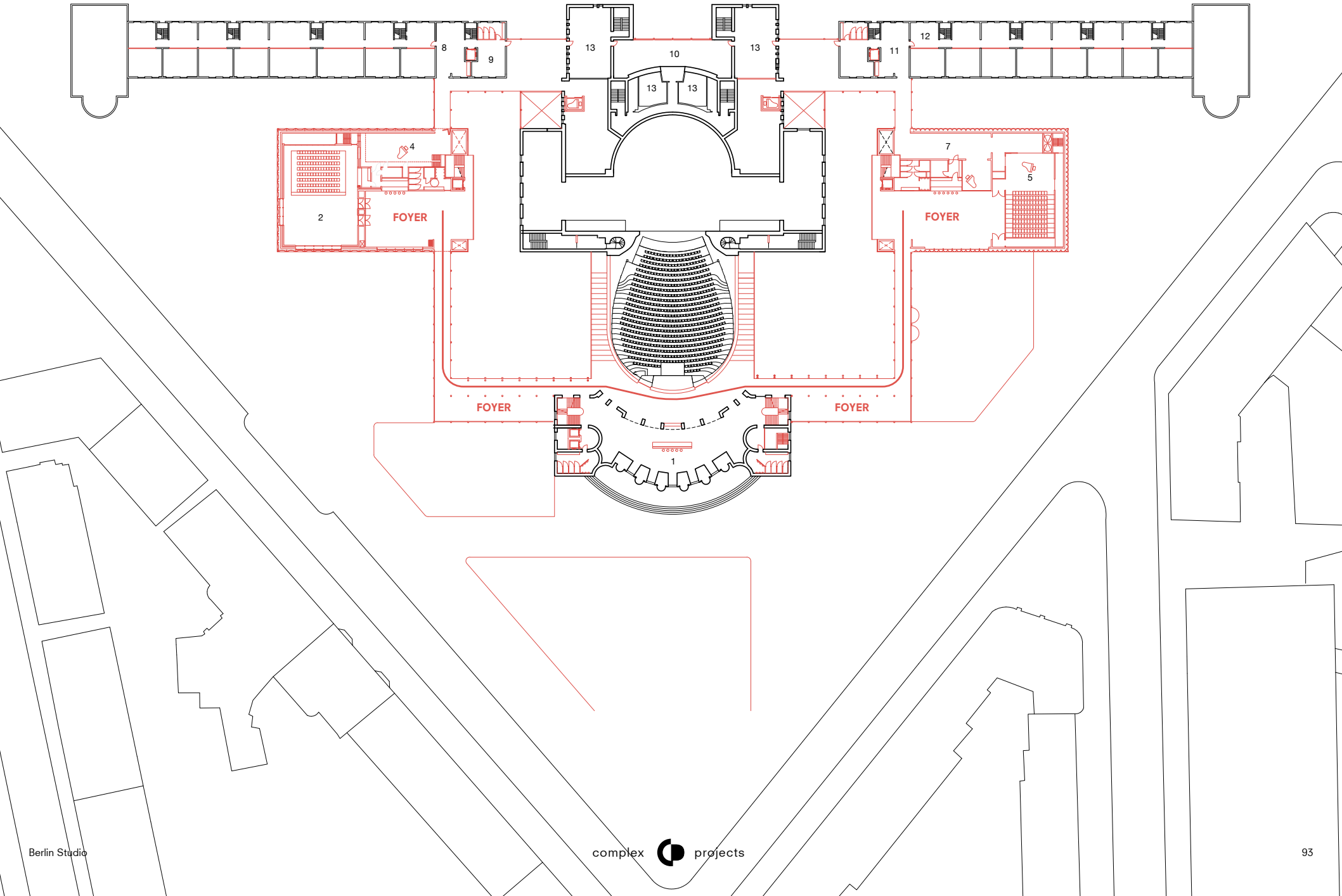


# SECTION CC





# +1 AUDITORIUM LEVEL



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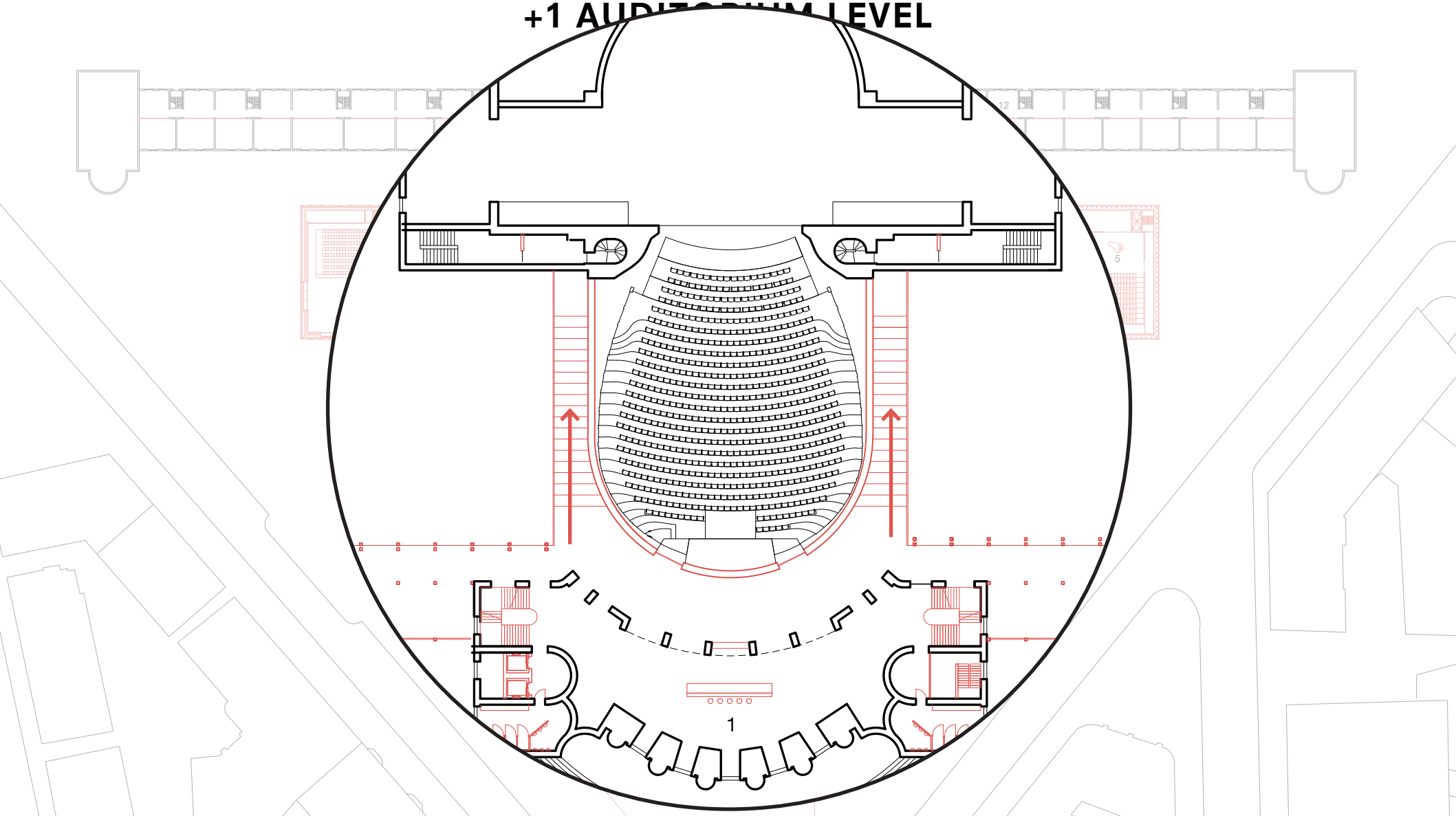

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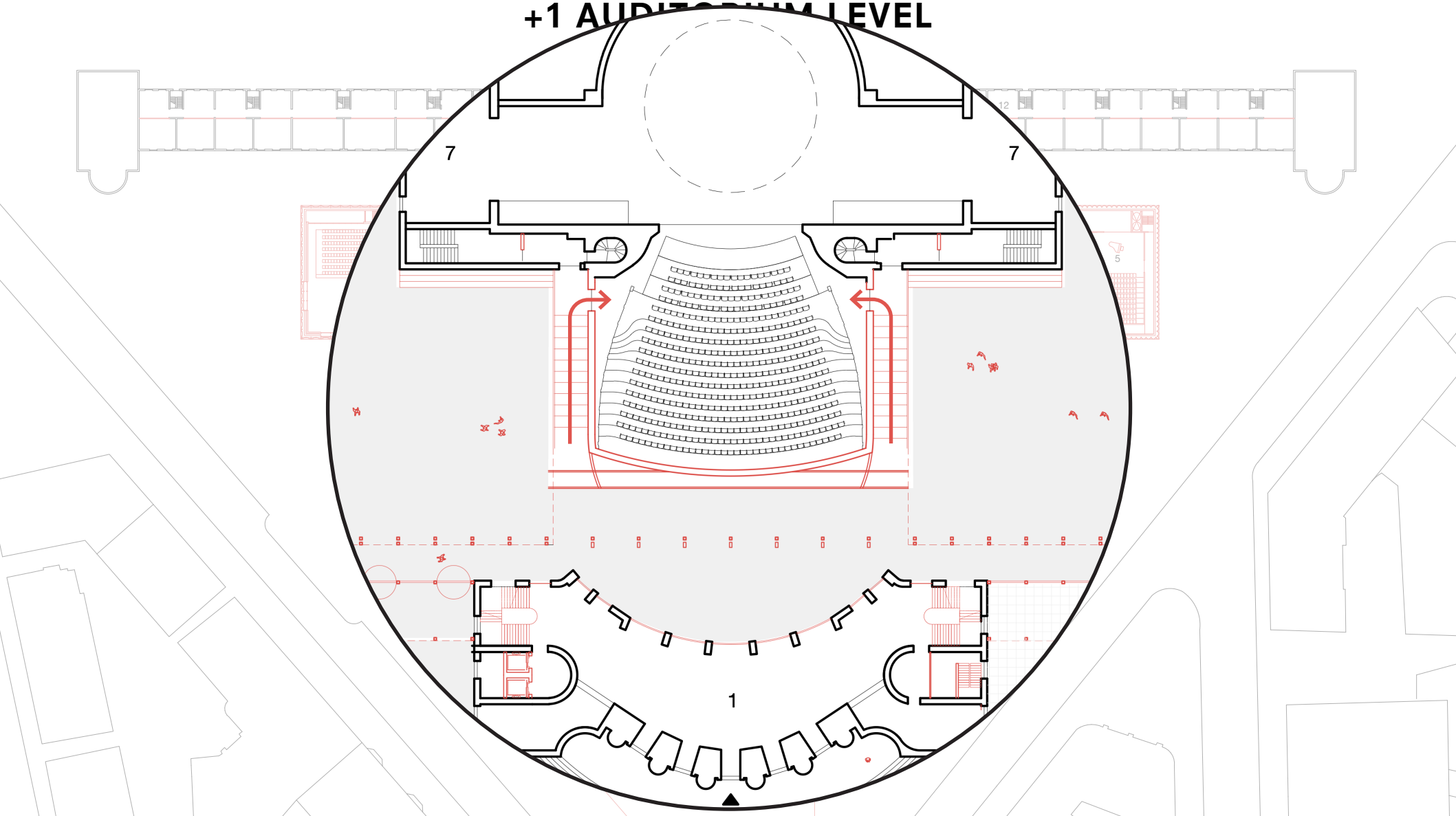
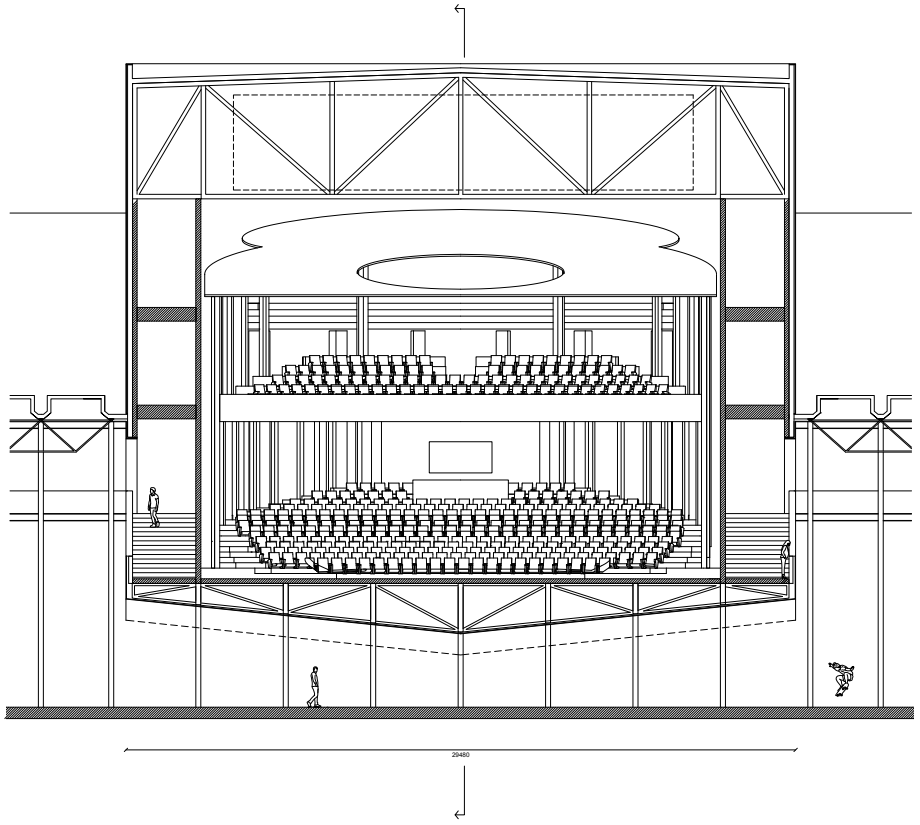
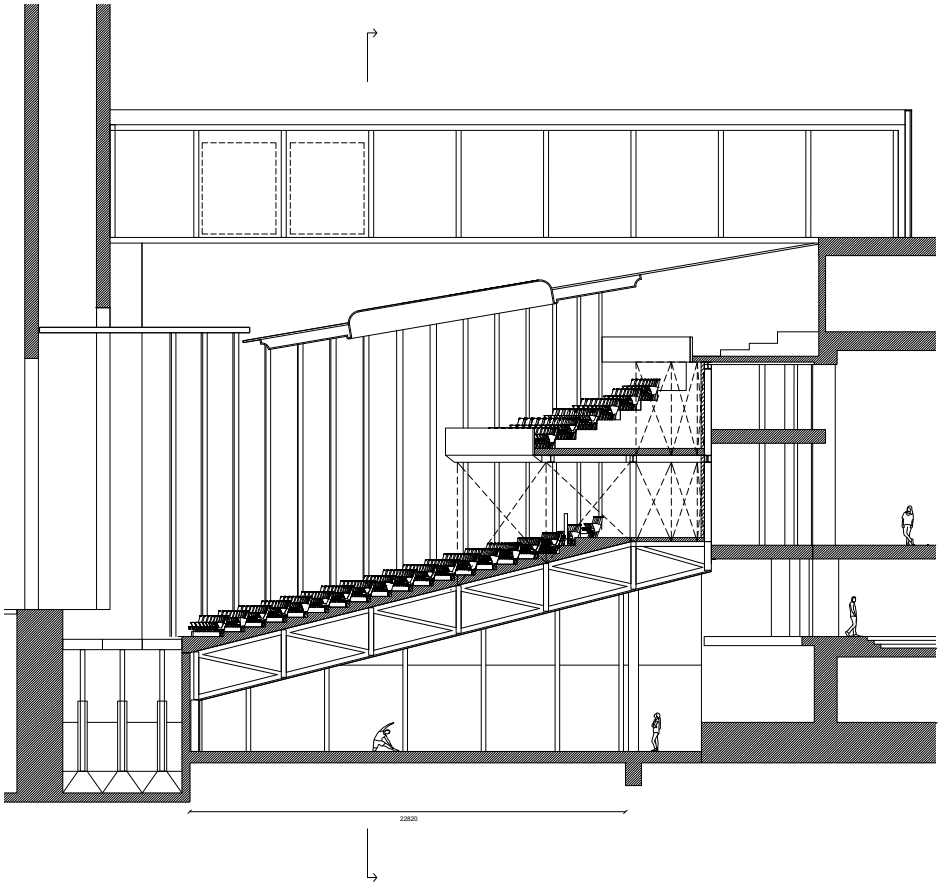


# PASSAGE AUDITORIUM

# PASSAGE AUDITORIUM



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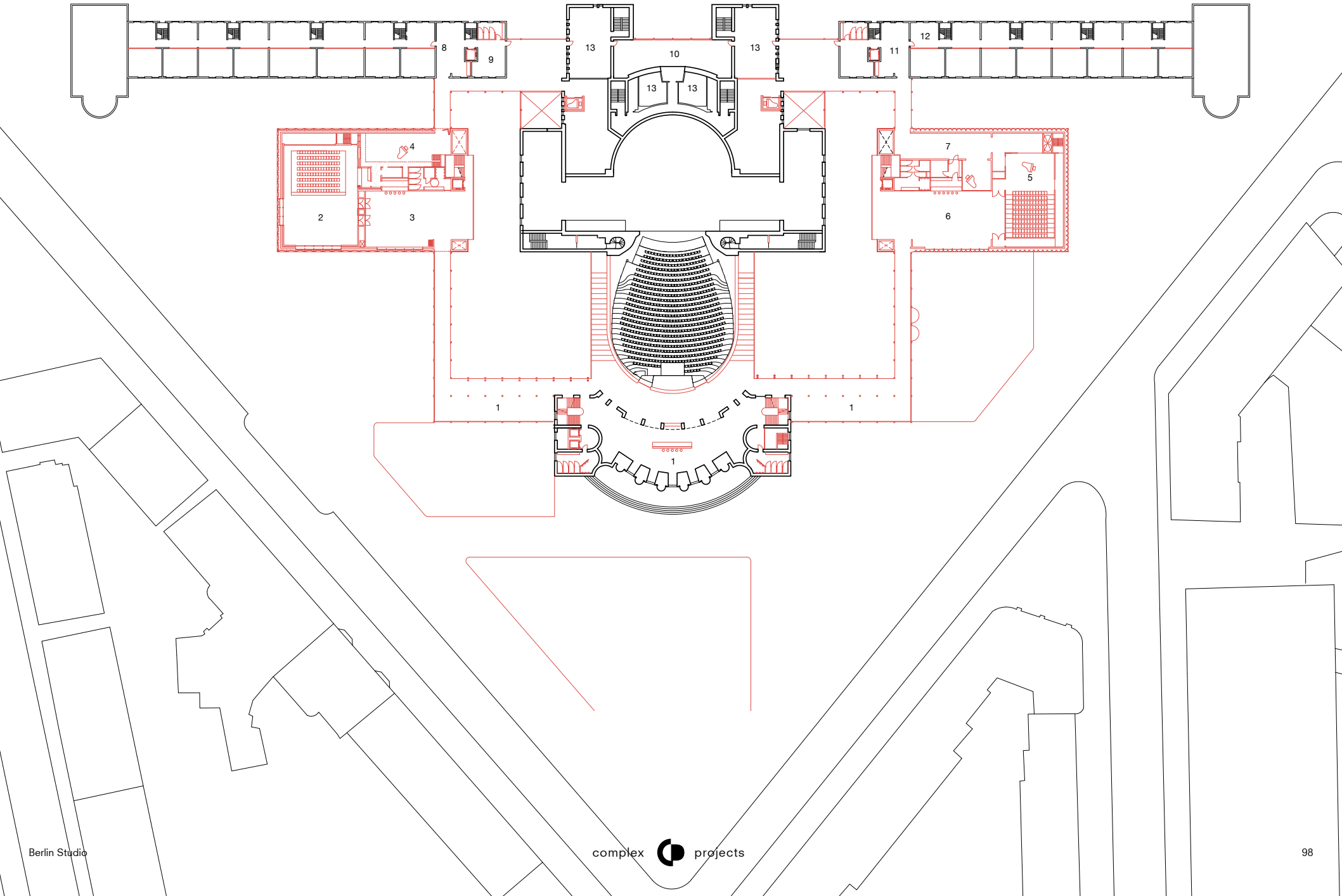

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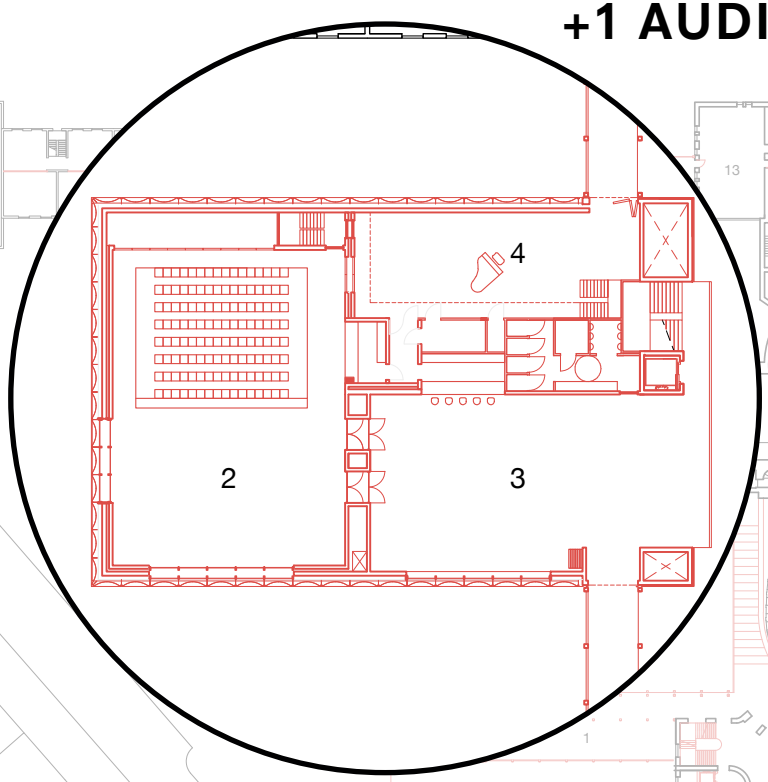
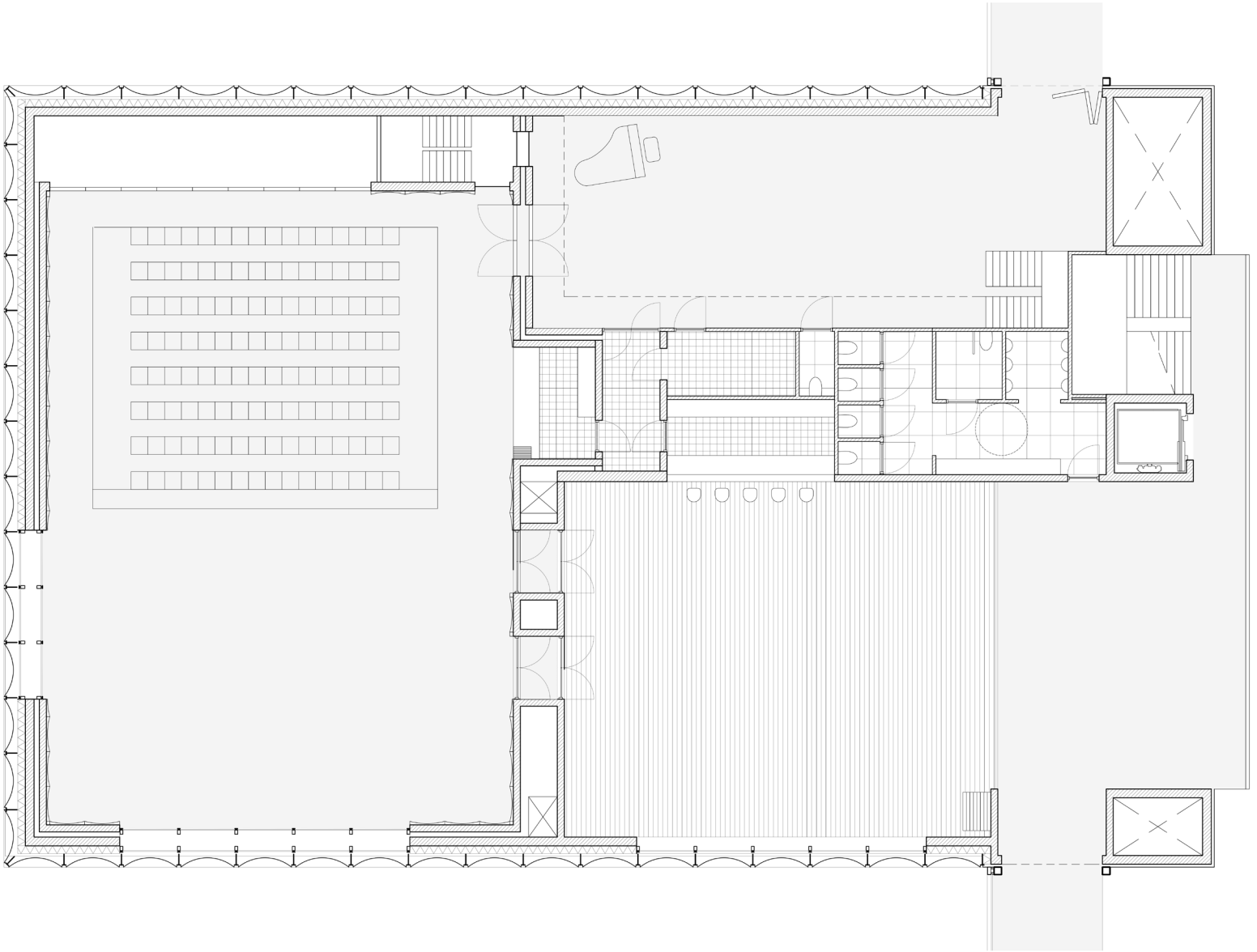


# 1:50 RED SALON



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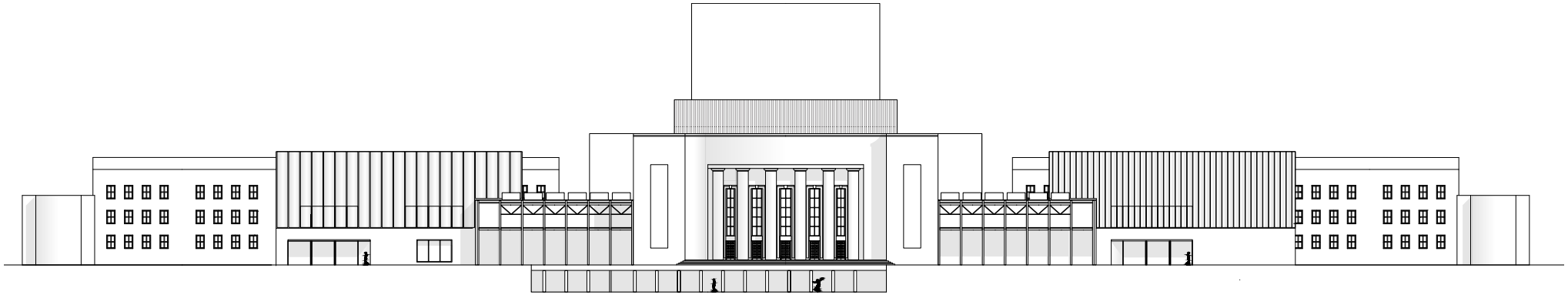
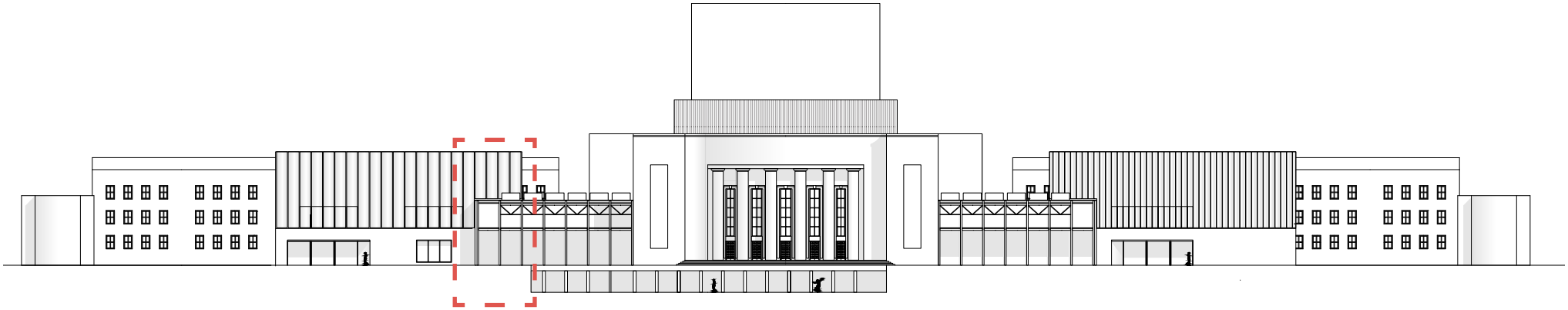


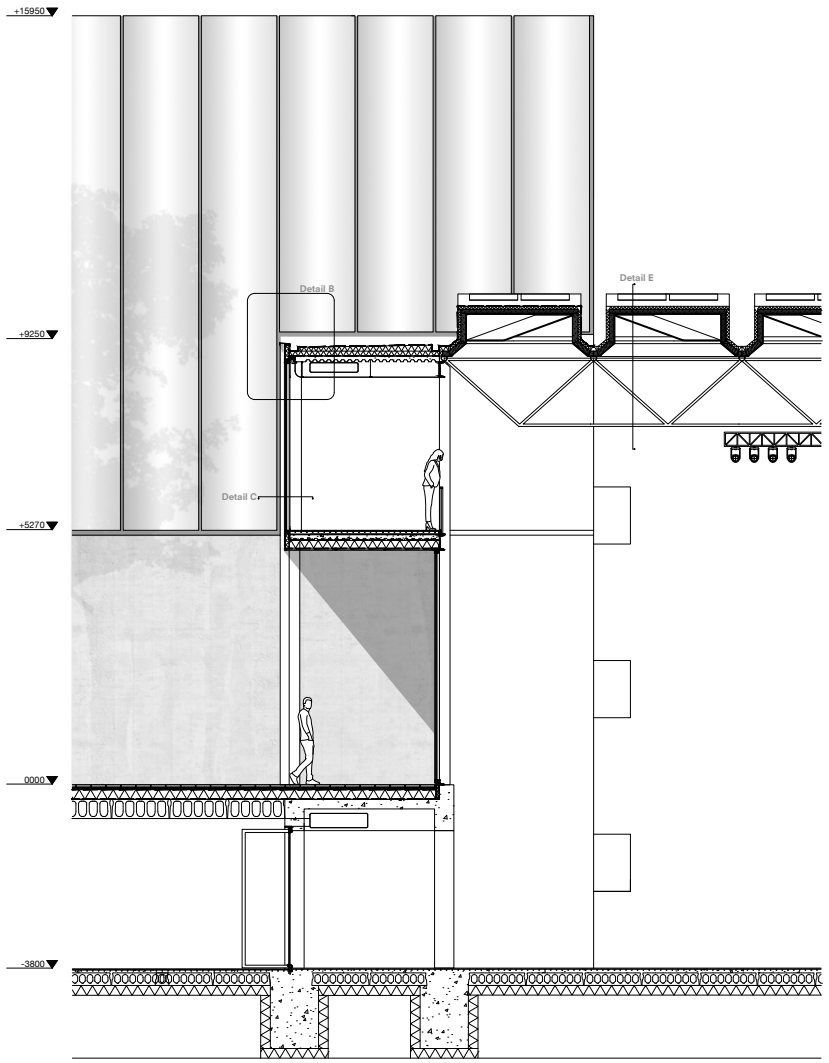
breaking symmetry through steel cladding

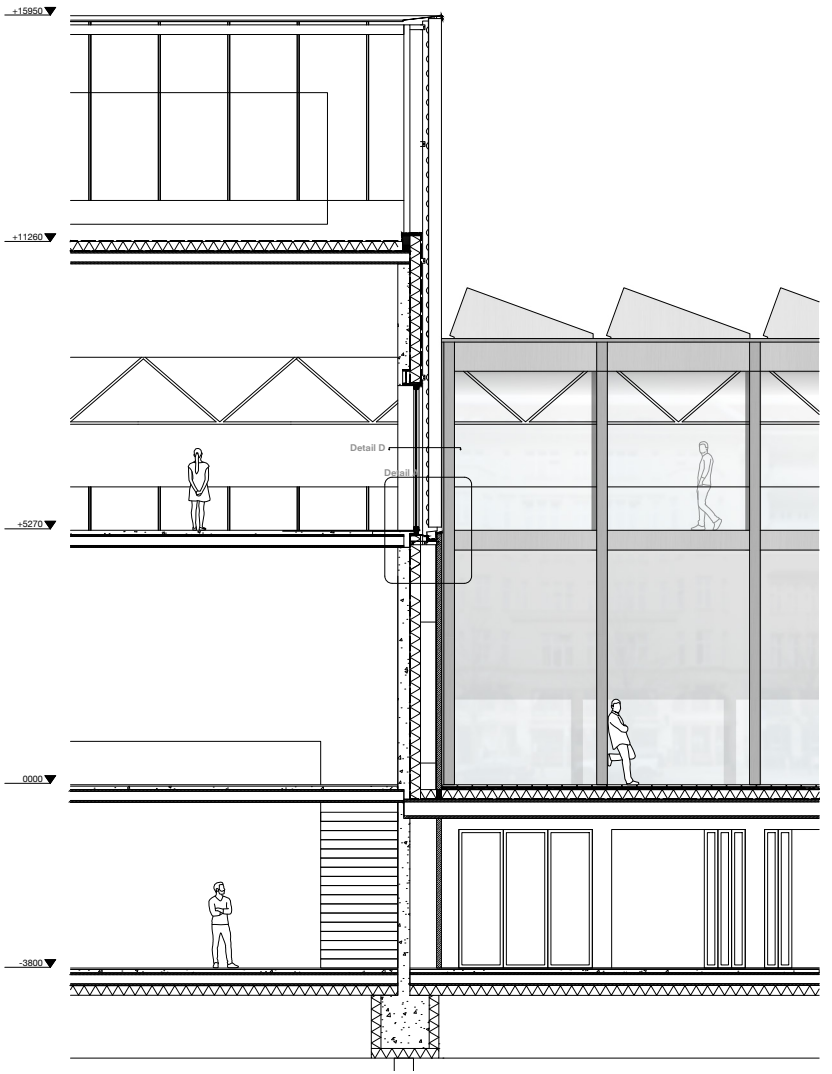
# ELEVATION



breaking symmetry through steel cladding

# FACADE FRAGMENTS



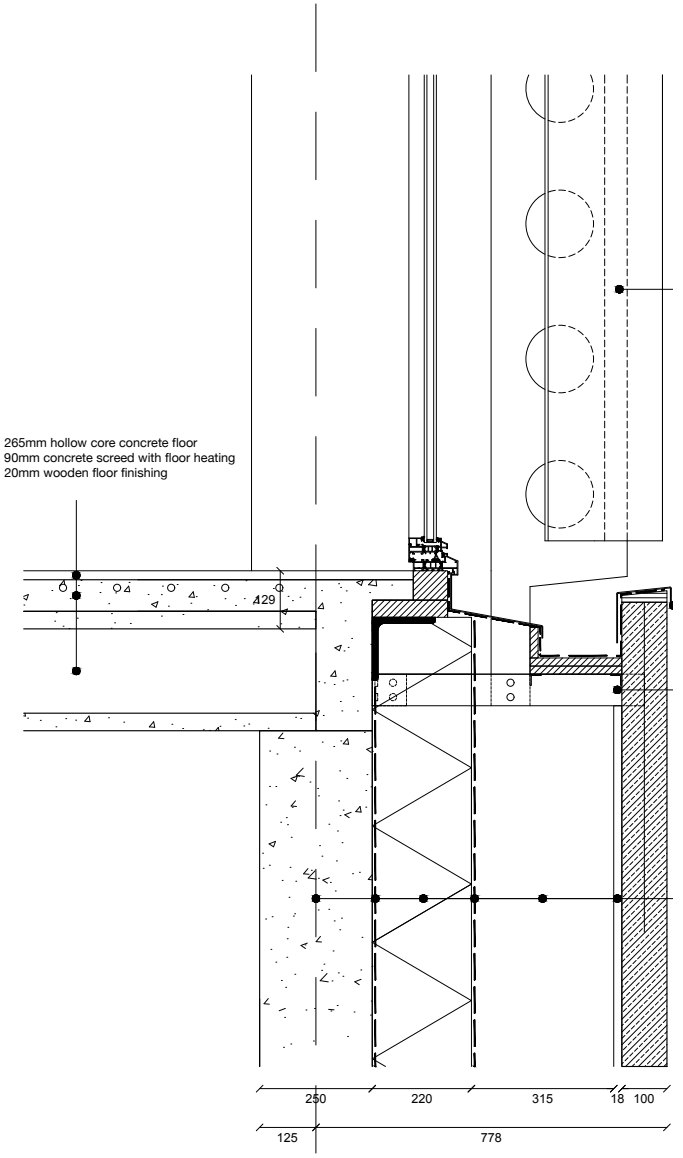
# MATERIAL CHOICE

## facades in direct surrounding

## Volksbühne existing materials

# MATERIALISATION

# MATERIALISATION



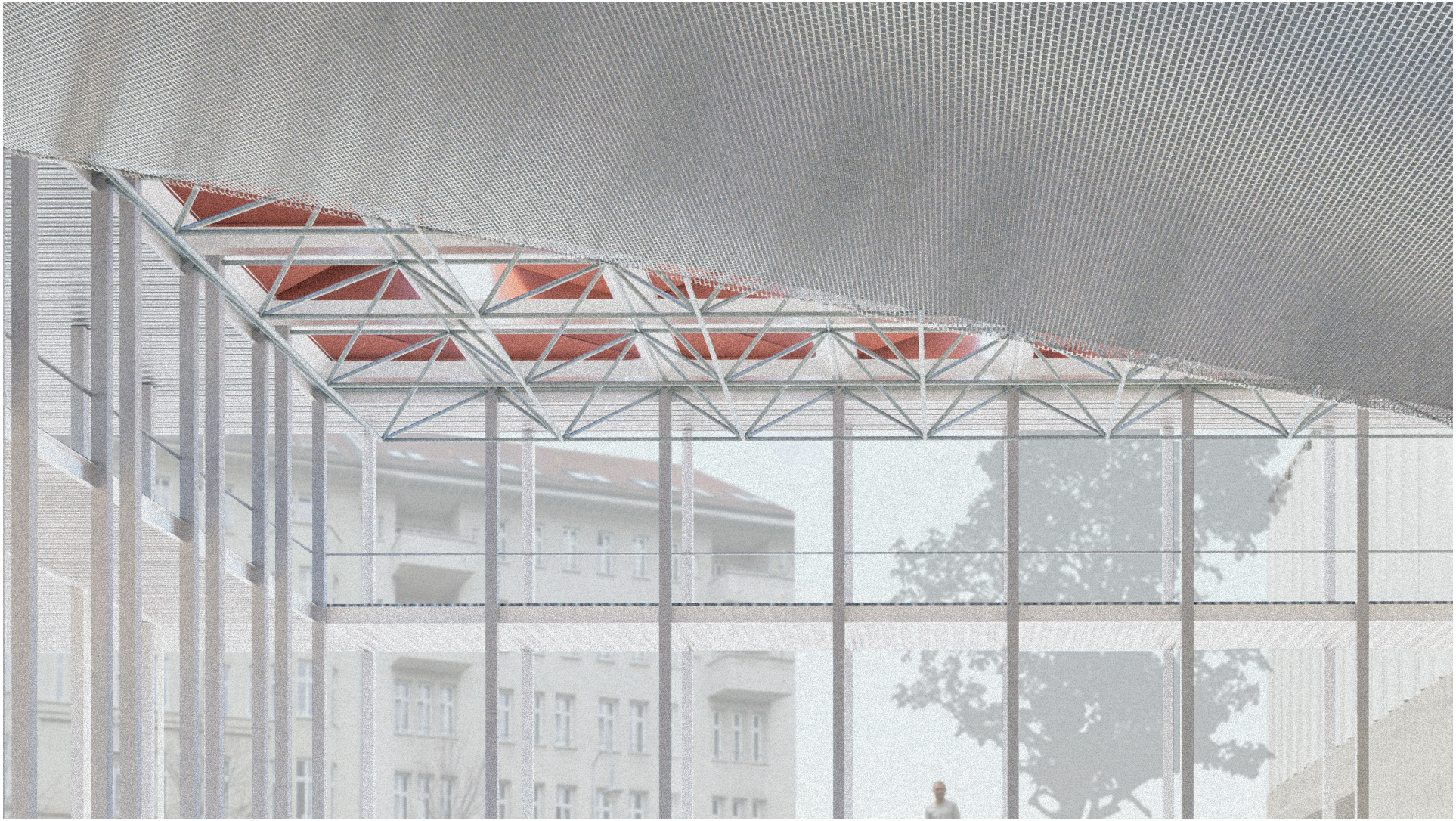
# PERSPECTIVE UNDERNEATH AUDITORIUM

# PERSPECTIVE UNDERNEATH AUDITORIUM

base columns made of reused concrete of existing building

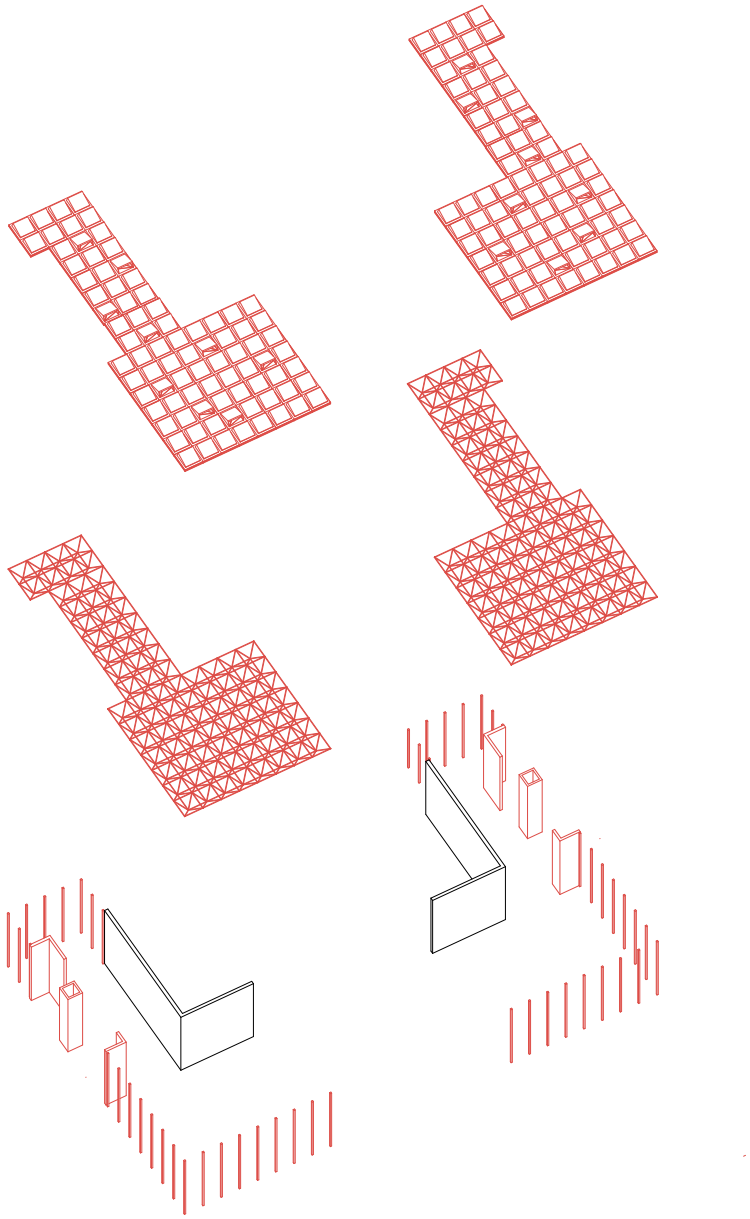
# PERSPECTIVE UNDERNEATH AUDITORIUM

# PERSPECTIVE UNDERNEATH AUDITORIUM

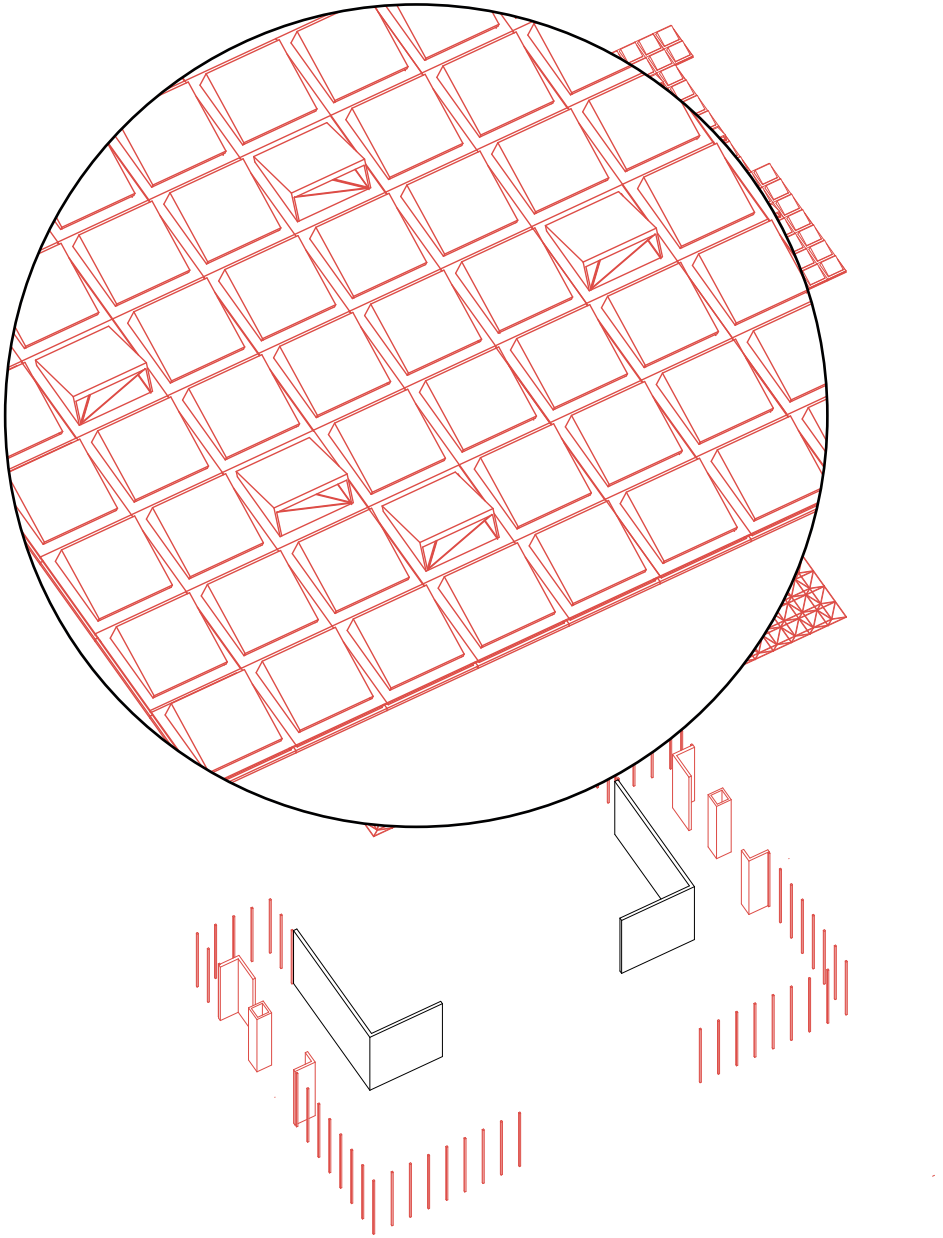


space frame roof

# SPACE FRAME CONSTRUCTION

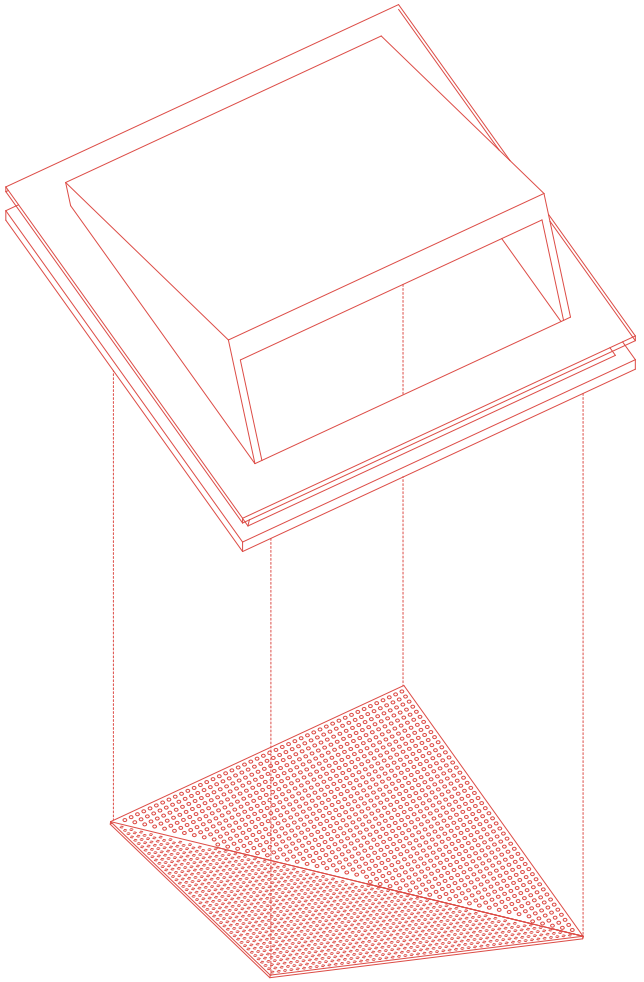


# SPACE FRAME CONSTRUCTION

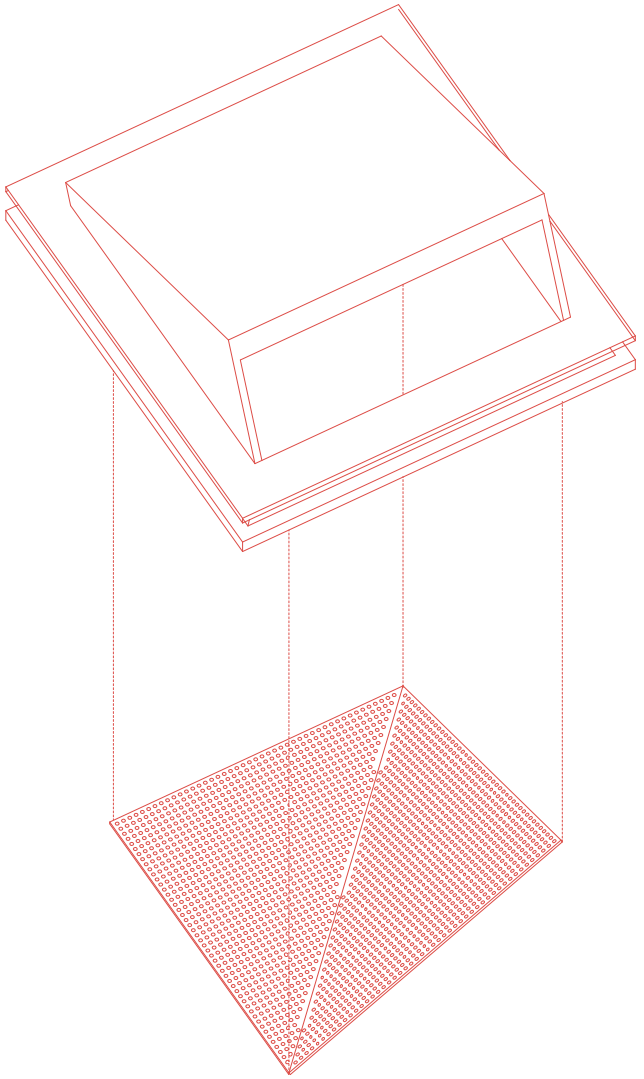


building technology

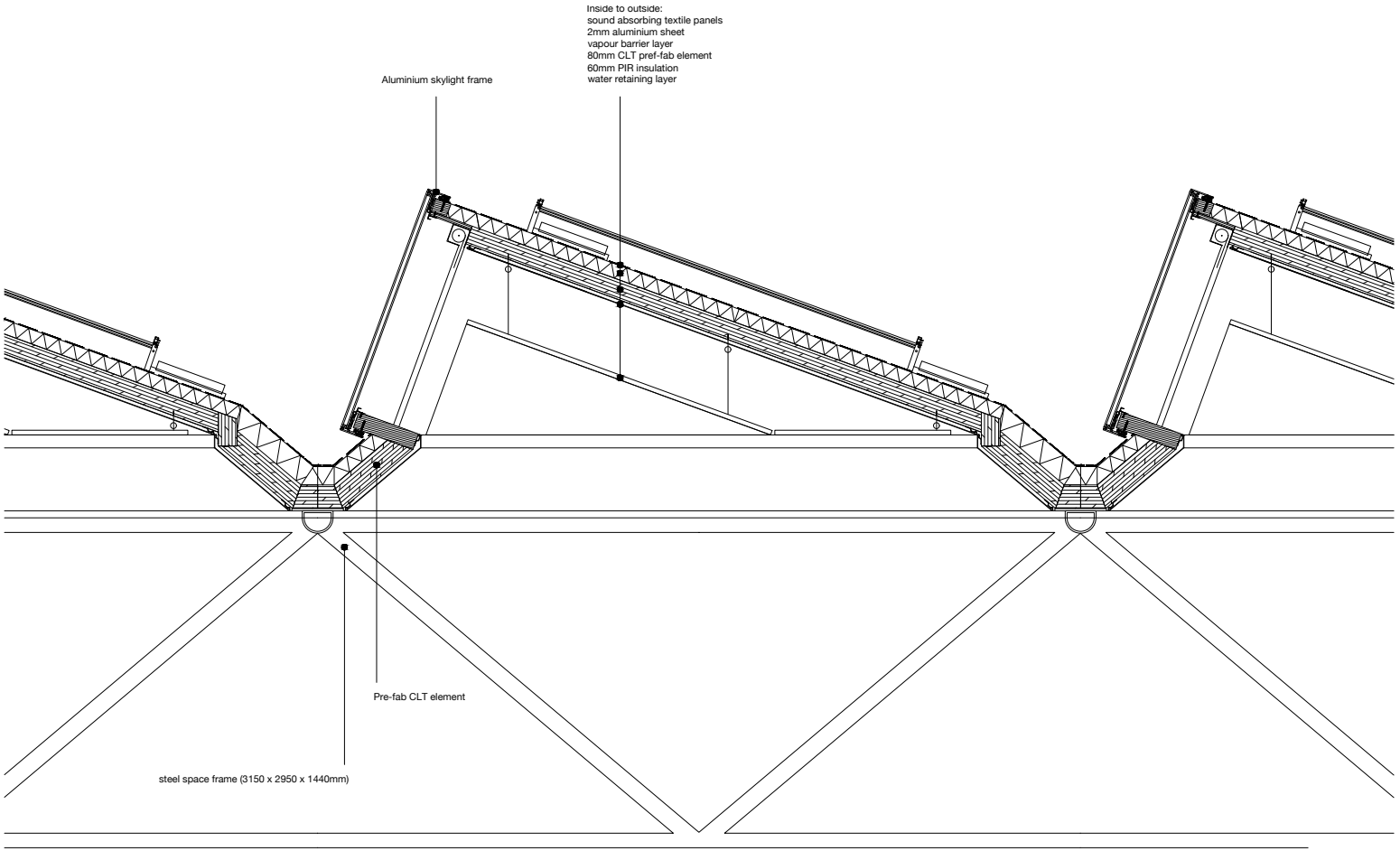
# SKYLIGHT ELEMENT



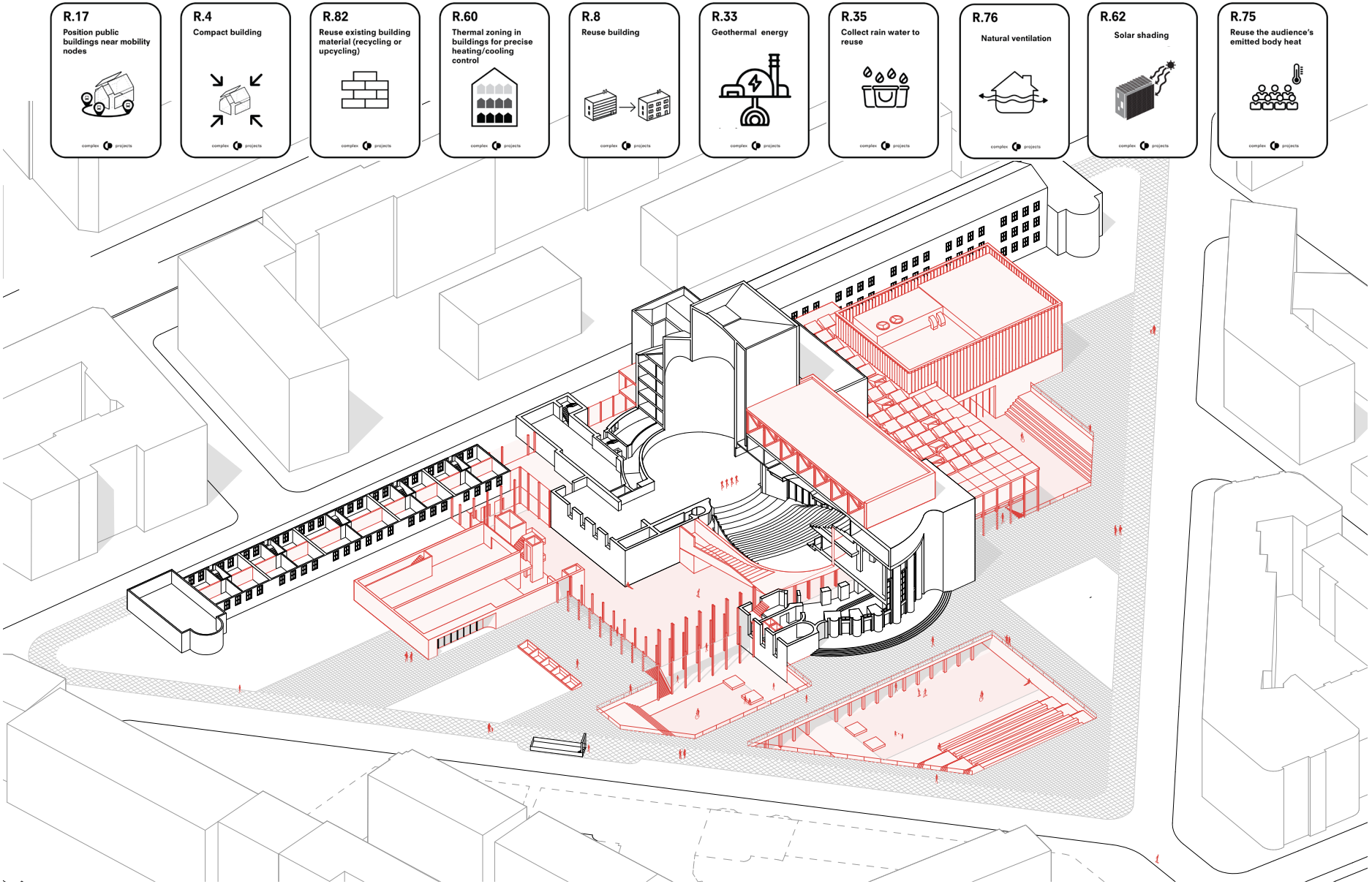
# SKYLIGHT ELEMENT



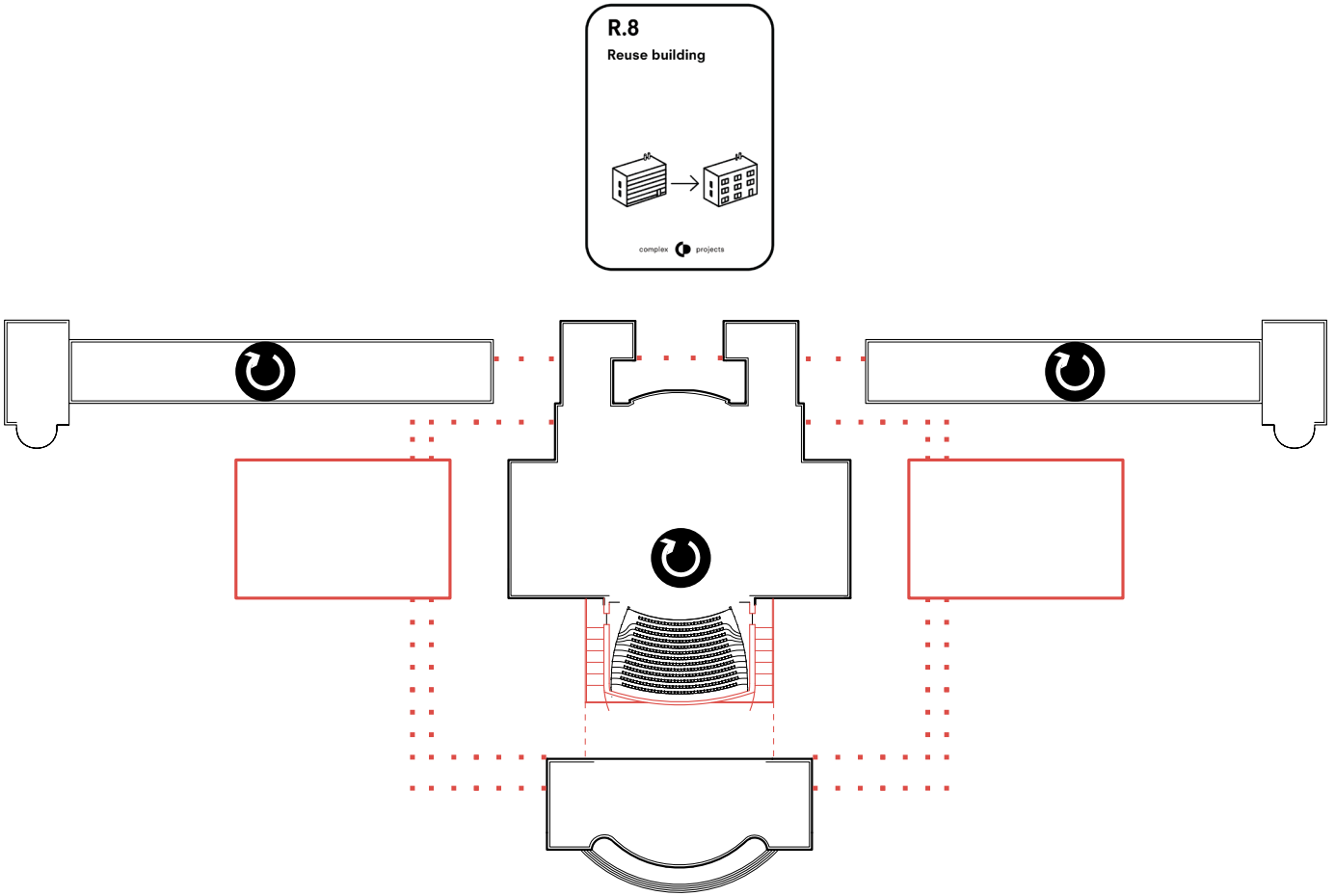
# SKYLIGHT DETAIL



# ENERGY GROUP STRATEGY



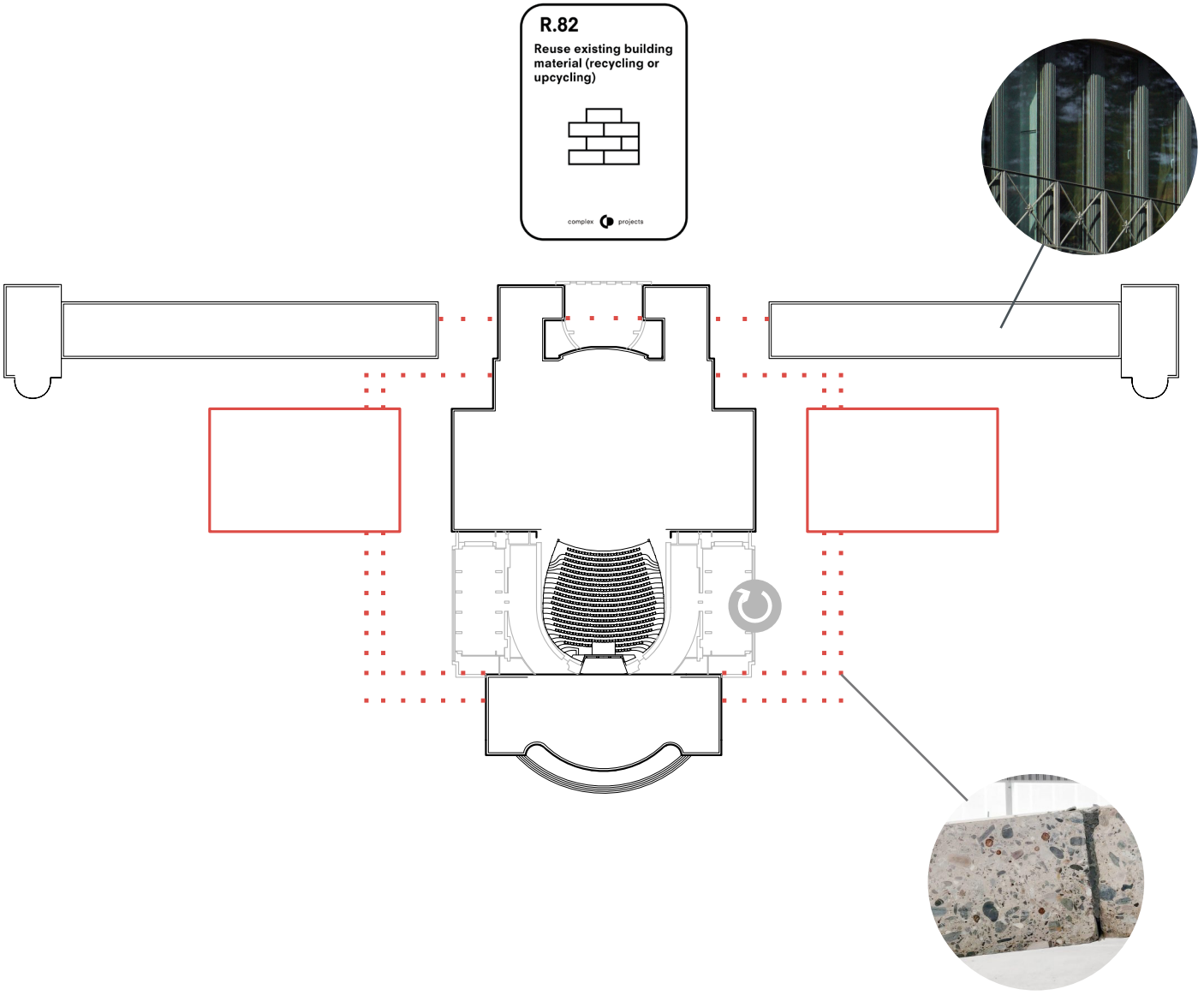
# REUSE OF EXISTING BUILDING



# REUSE OF MATERIAL

**R.82**

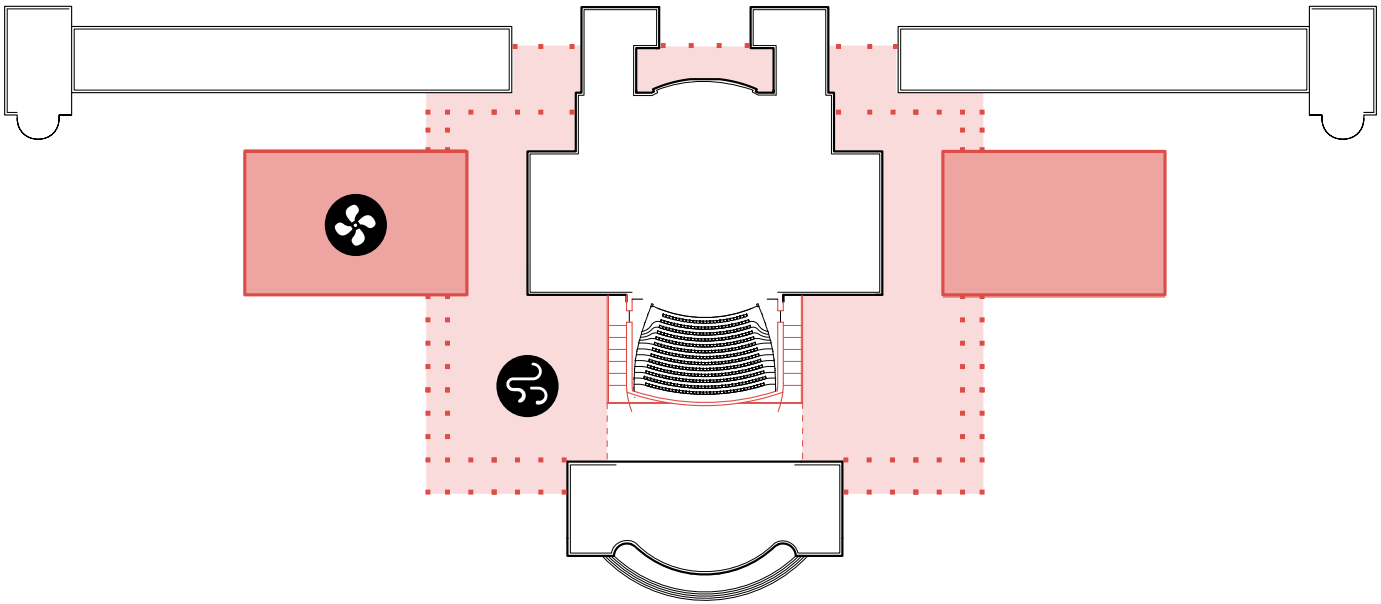
**Reuse existing building material (recycling or upcycling)**



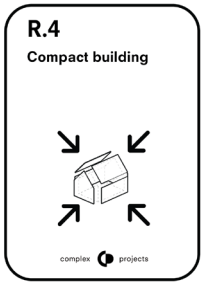
# CLIMATE ZONES

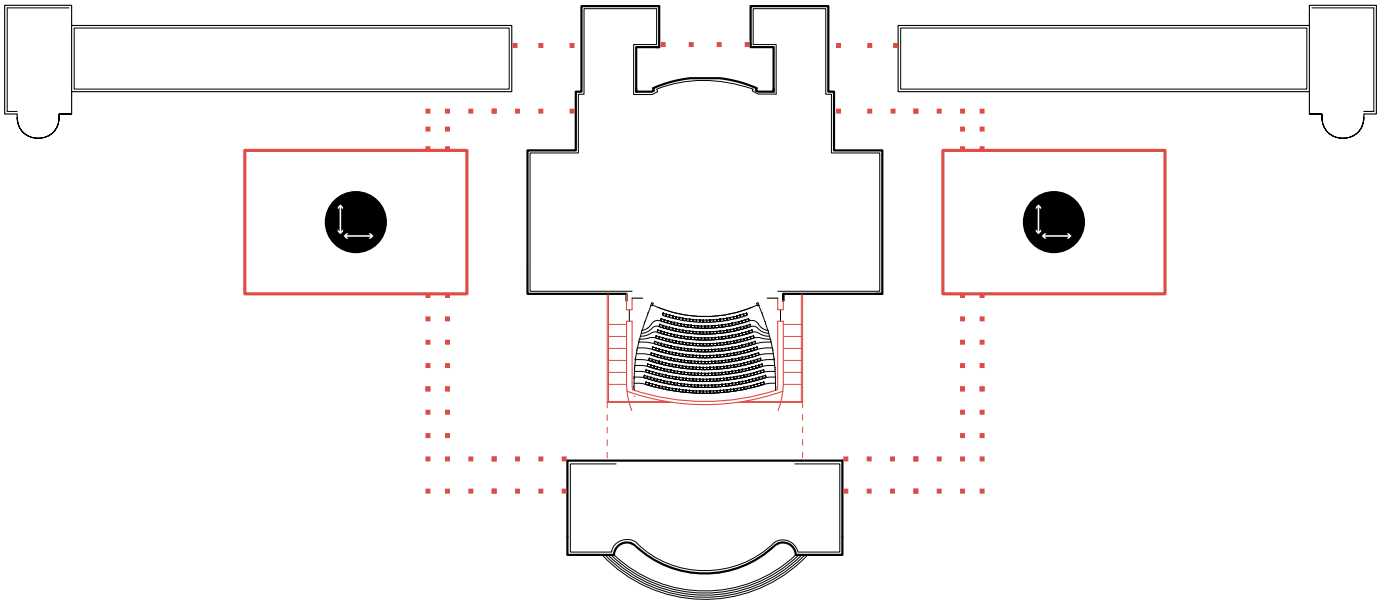
**R.60**

**Thermal zoning in buildings for precise heating/cooling control**



# COMPACT BUILDING



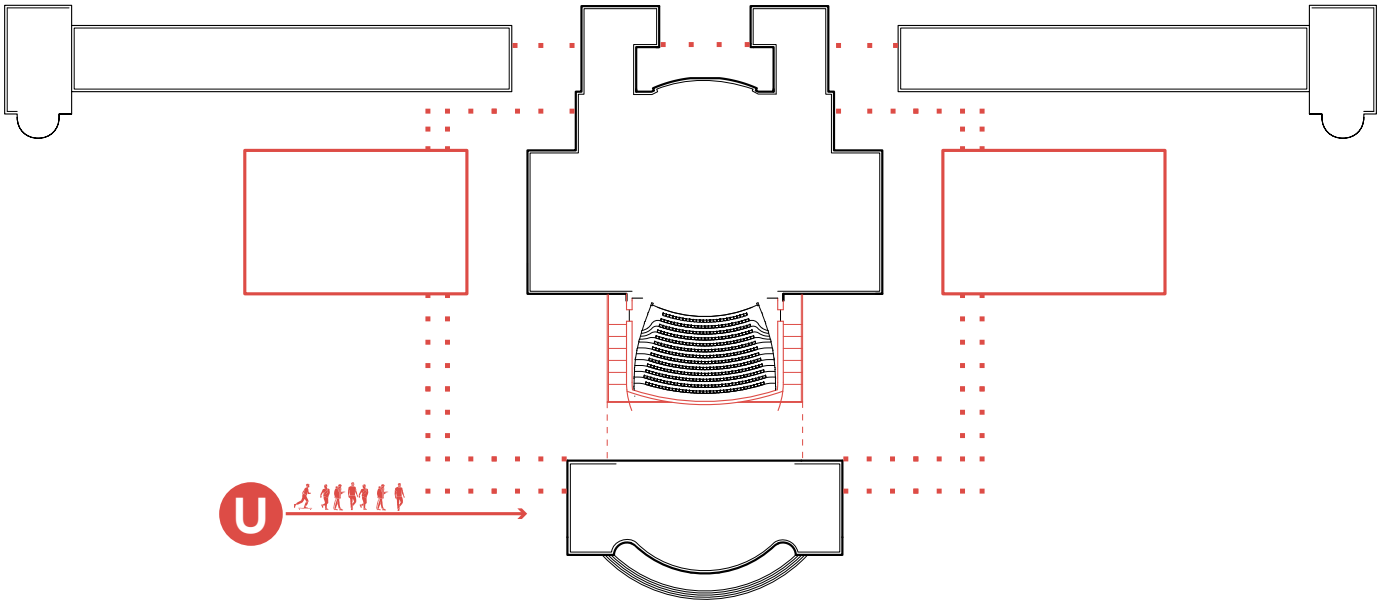



# PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

**R.17**

**Position public buildings near mobility nodes**

complex projects

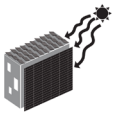


energy

# SUN

**R.62**

**Solar shading**

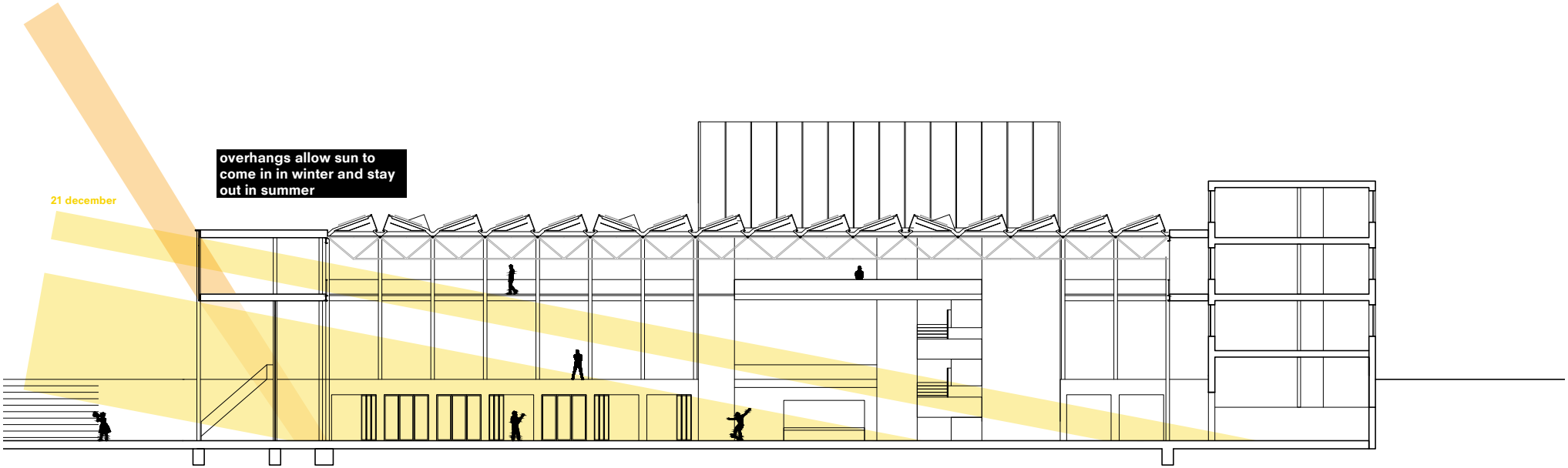


complex projects

21 june

21 december

**overhangs allow sun to come in in winter and stay out in summer**

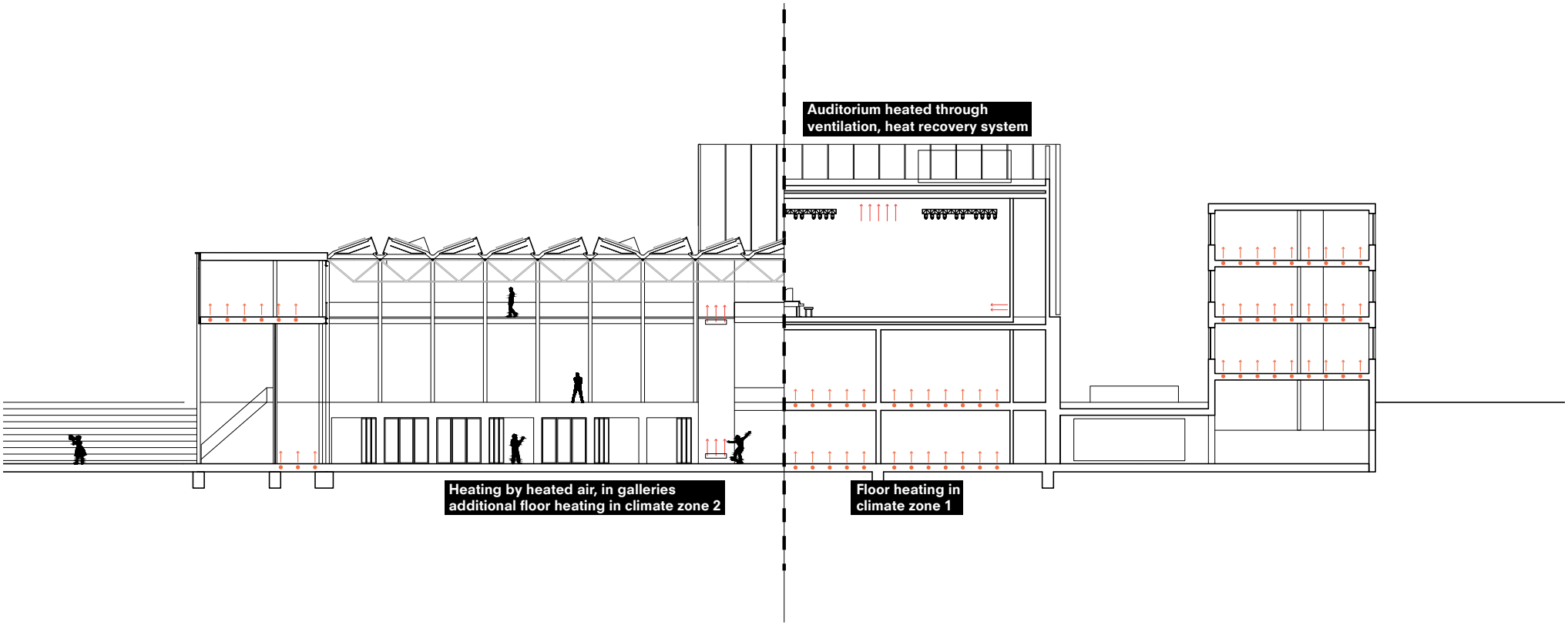


# CLIMATE SCHEME WINTER

**R.75**

**Reuse the audience's emitted body heat**

complex projects



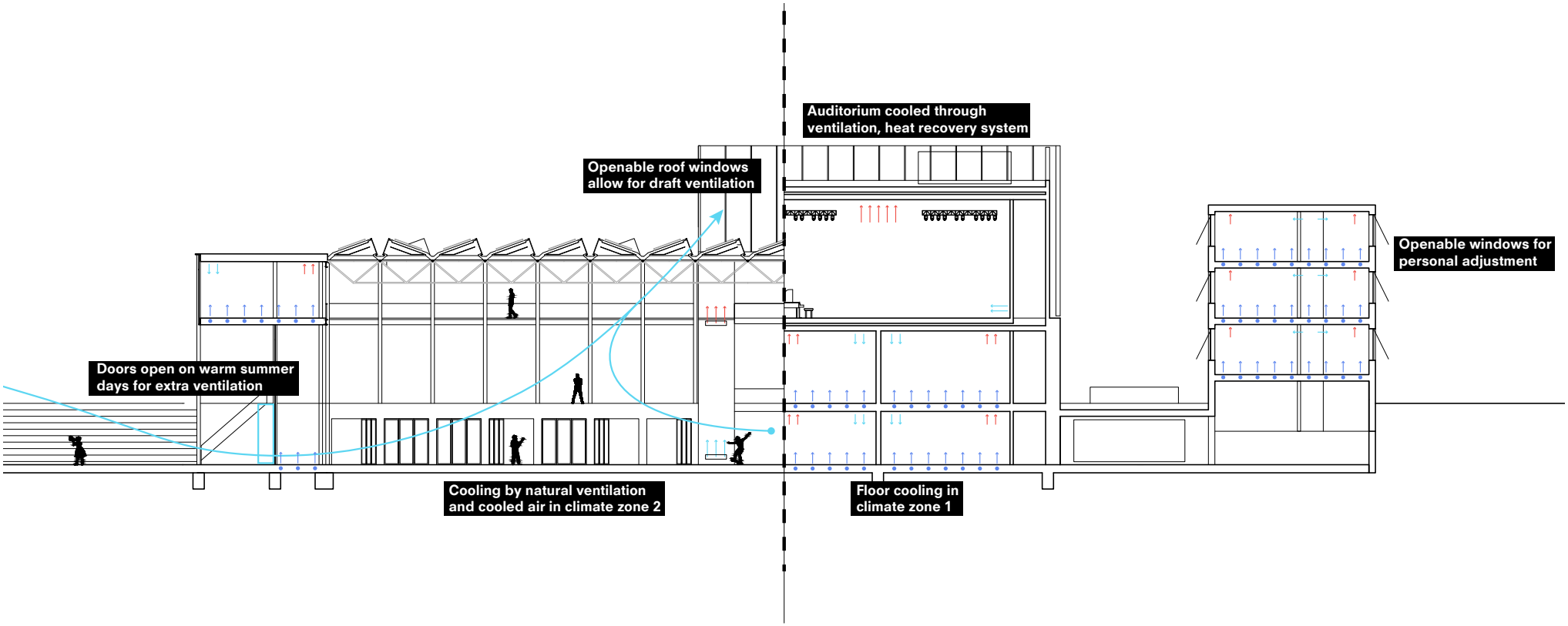
drawing set

# CLIMATE SCHEME SUMMER

**R.76**

**Natural ventilation**

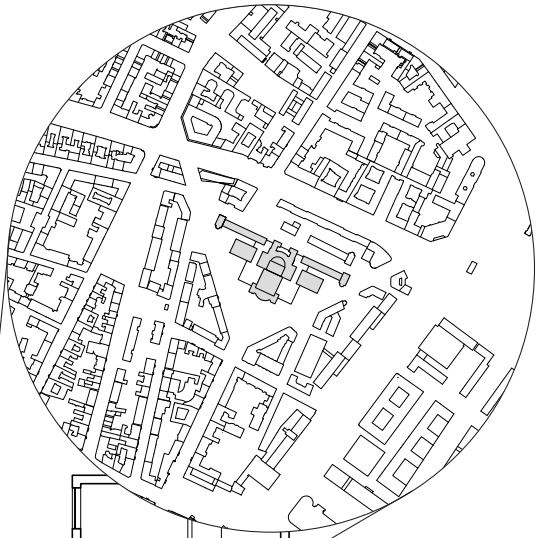
complex projects

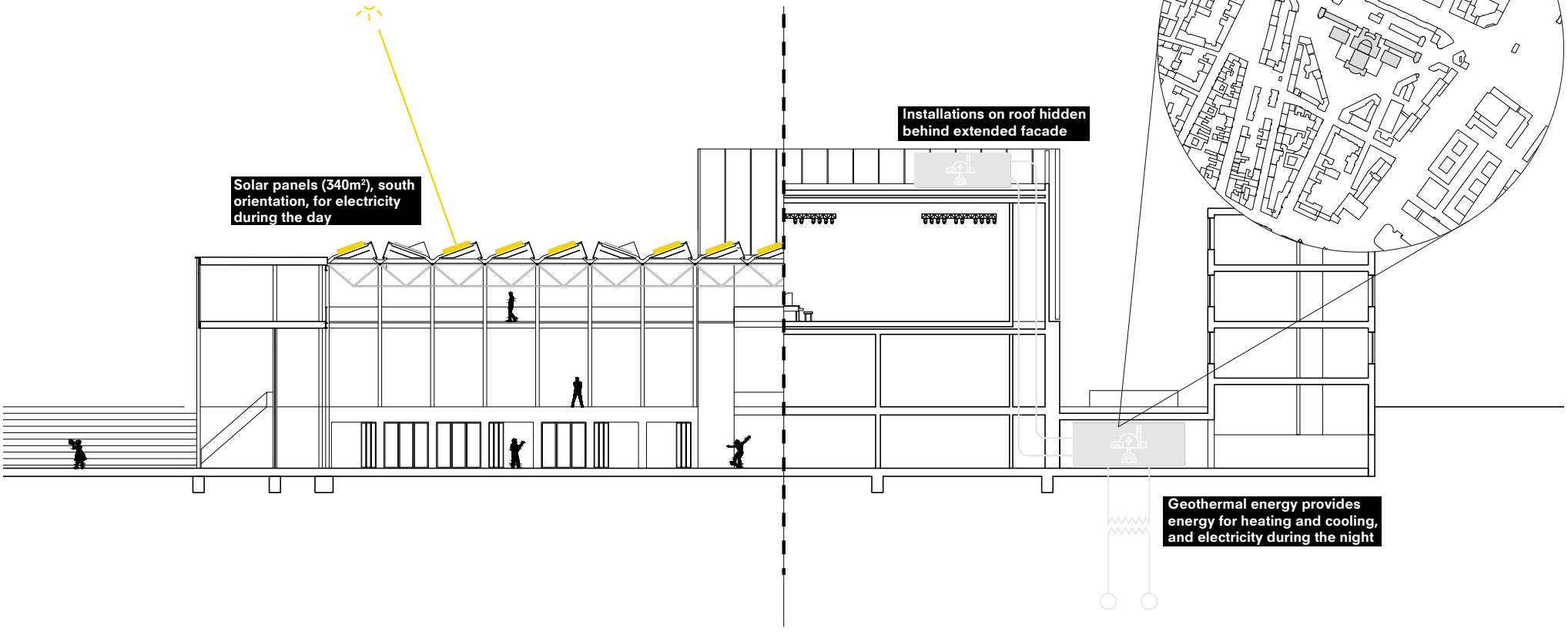


# GEOTHERMAL AND PV

**R.33**
**Geothermal energy**

**energy provided to 2400 households (33640000 kWh)**





# CONCLUSION

# RESEARCH QUESTION

How to design a **building for performing arts** as **social infrastructure** in the 21st century?

# SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

## key conditions of social infrastructure

accessible to a diverse range of people by minimizing physical barriers and **economic constraints**

space where people come together and meet new people

accommodate a **variety of functions** and activities

encourage active **civic participation**

facilitate **unplanned** and serendipitous encounters contributes to formation of social bonds

be able to respond to changing societal and demographic trends

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# VOLKSPLATZ AS A SUNKEN SQUARE

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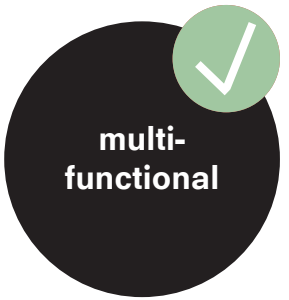


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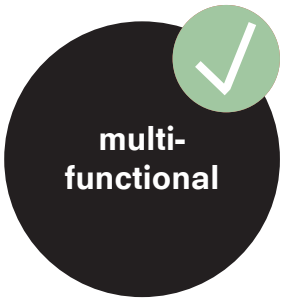


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# OPEN/CLOSED/HIDDEN

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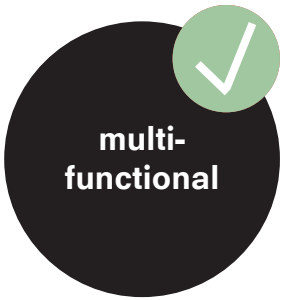


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# ARCHITECTURAL MEMBRANES

# VOLKSBÜHNE, A STAGE FOR THE EVERYDAY

# THANK YOU