

The background features a repeating geometric pattern of interlocking circles and lines, creating a grid of diamond shapes. The pattern is rendered in a lighter shade of blue against a darker blue background. The text "VOID CAPITAL" is centered in the middle of the image.

VOID CAPITAL



**THE CITY OF PERPETUAL MODERNITY**









**EMERGING PERIPHERY, TODAY**  
THE WESTERN CENTER AS A MODEL

"Paris" in Tianducheng, China. Jesper Just, Intercourses, 2013.





**WESTERN PERIPHERY, TODAY**  
THE CITY CENTER AS A DESIRE

Mathieu Kassovitz, *La haine* (still), 1995.



**PARIS' PERIPHERY TODAY**  
TWO MODERNIST ICONS

As the periphery seems to lack the basic necessities of a good life, it is condemned to perpetually re-organise and modernise itself. On the other hand, the center serves as an excellent showcase of exciting, added-value cultures. This dichotomy of the urban fabric naturally leads to a continuous flow from the first to the latter; a flow of people, of commodities, of desires. As a result, a constant housing crisis and a demand for further densification of the urban core is at place.



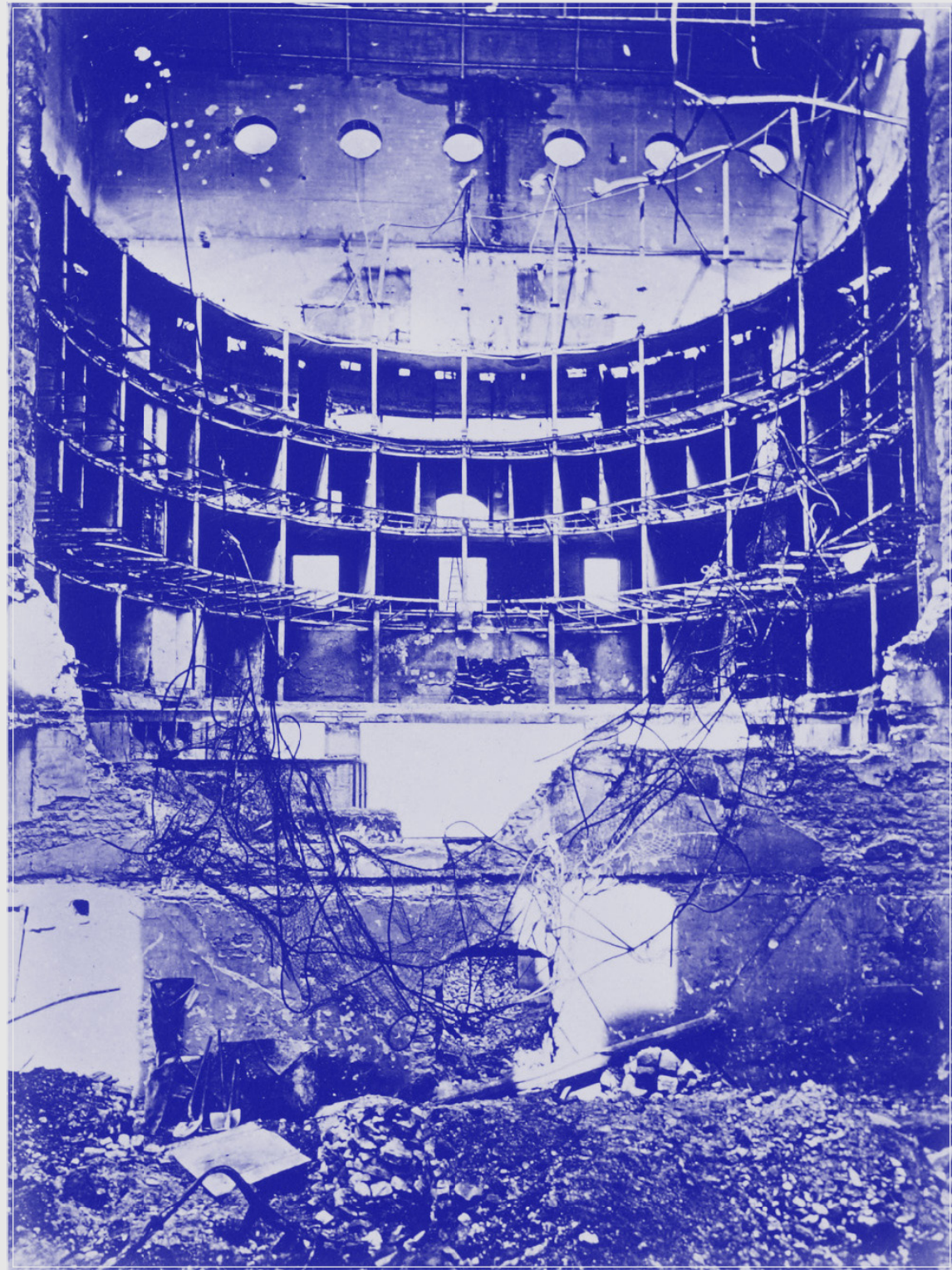


**GRAND ENSEMBLE**  
THE HOUSING DISTRICT



**QUARTIER D'AFFAIRES**  
THE BUSINESS DISTRICT



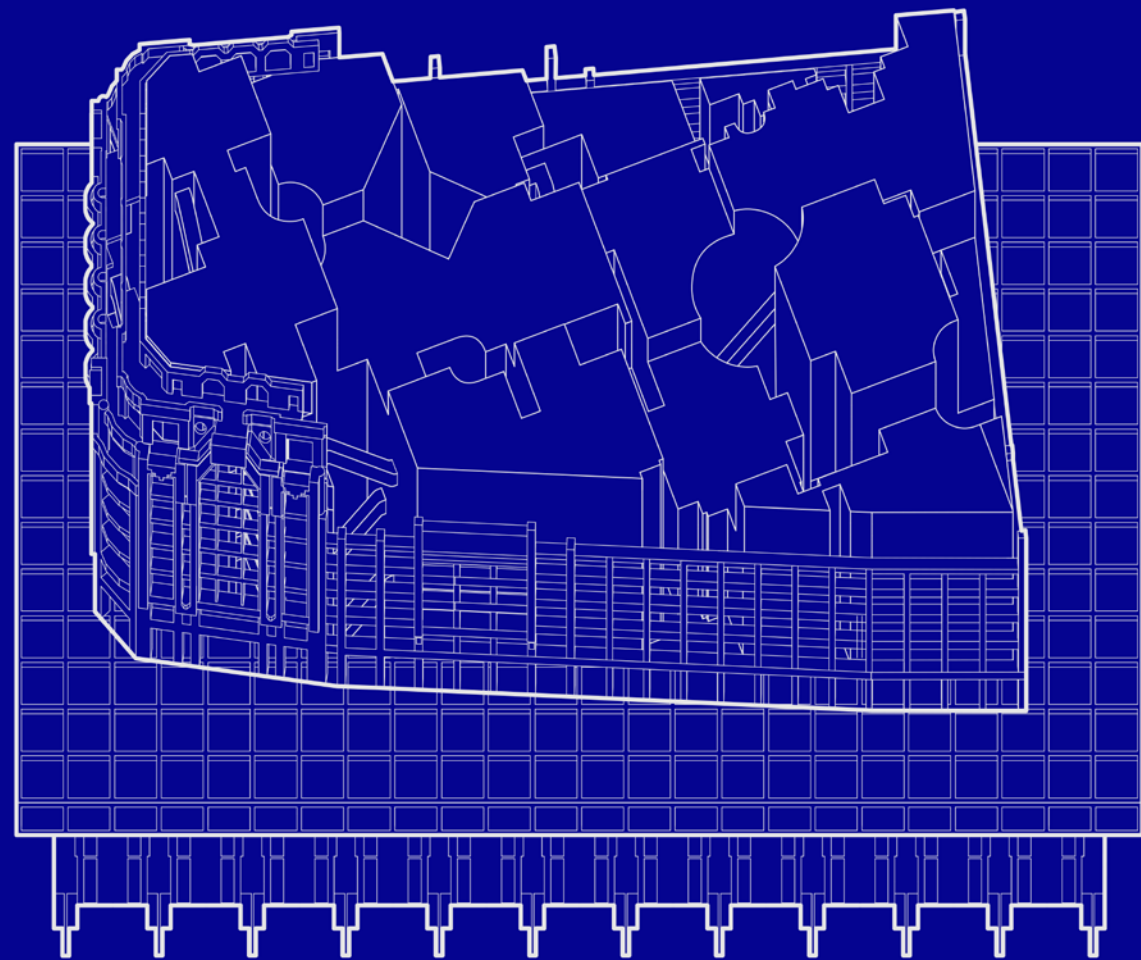


## PARIS' CENTER, TODAY A CITY OF FACADES

When the city center is desired, it becomes itself less and less, city-like. Here, because of an ostensibly ideal status, every change, is strictly prohibited. But in reality, it is a hollow kind of history that is preserved. Most of the buildings have been entirely made over, their façades kept intact. The city seems to be another version of an museum, where all unpredicted social practices are expelled.

The burnt Théâtre Lyrique, A. Liébert, A. d'Aulnay,  
Les ruines de Paris et de ses environs, 1870-1871





**VOID CAPITAL PROPOSES**  
A MODEL OF DENSIFICATION FOR THE WESTERN METROPOLIS.

**THE DEPARTMENT CITY IS**  
A SITE-SPECIFIC APPLICATION OF THIS MODEL.

**PROLOGUE**  
PAGES 05-31

**I THE HOUSING DISTRICT**  
PAGES 32-61

**II THE BUSINESS DISTRICT**  
PAGES 62-125

**EPILOGUE**  
PAGES 126-131



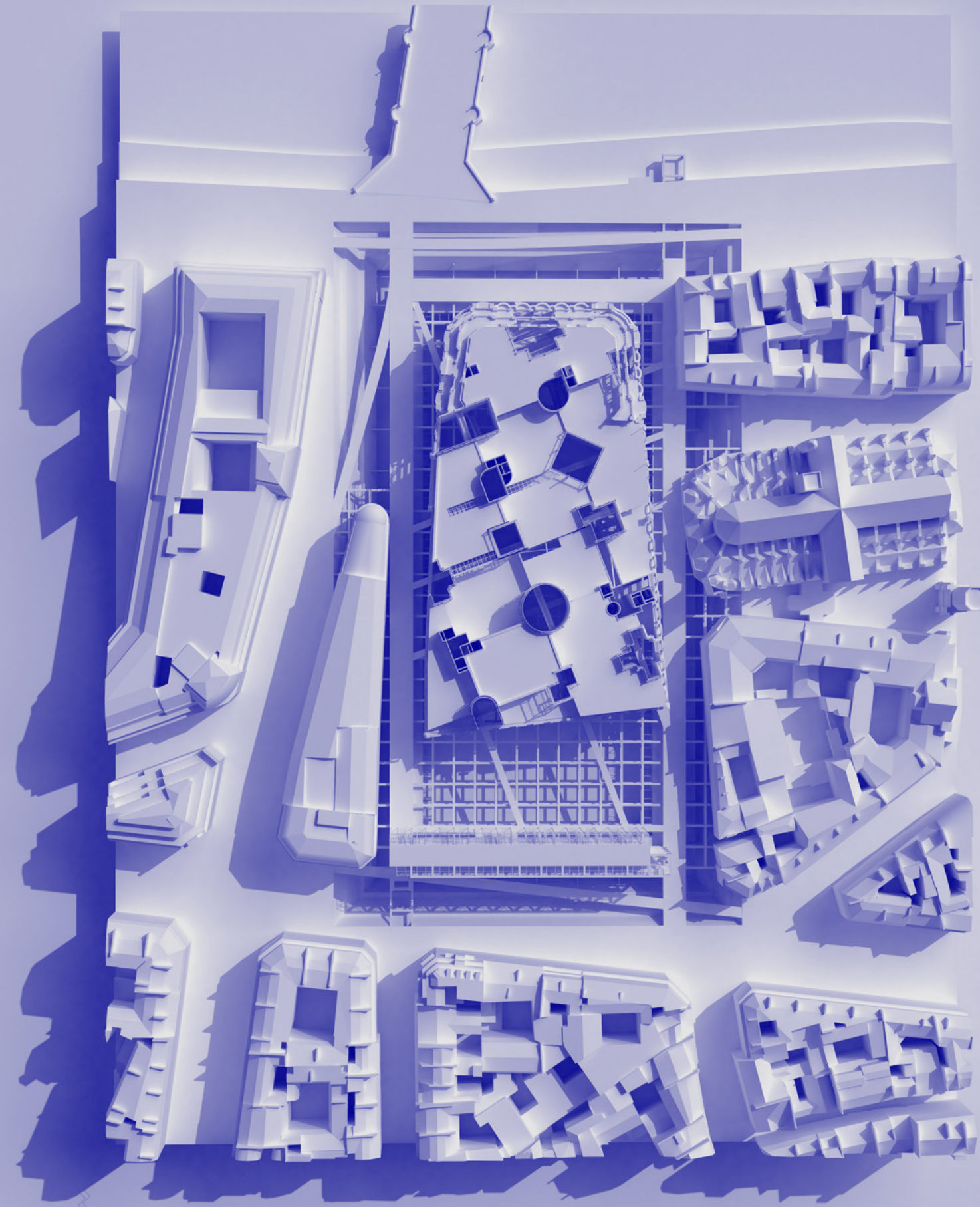
## THE CONTEXT

### AN EPICENTER OF CONFLUENCES

La Samaritaine is built at the heart of Paris' historical centre and of a Unesco protected site. It is also strategically placed at the confluence of old and new urban networks. The site is also situated in the threshold between the old bourgeois and working-class parts of Paris and within at the moment rapidly changing neighborhood. During the last decades, the quarter has witnessed significant gentrification. SANAA's controversial project for La Samaritaine is the landmark of this process.

The old department store of La Samaritaine in relation to Les Halles and Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois neighborhoods



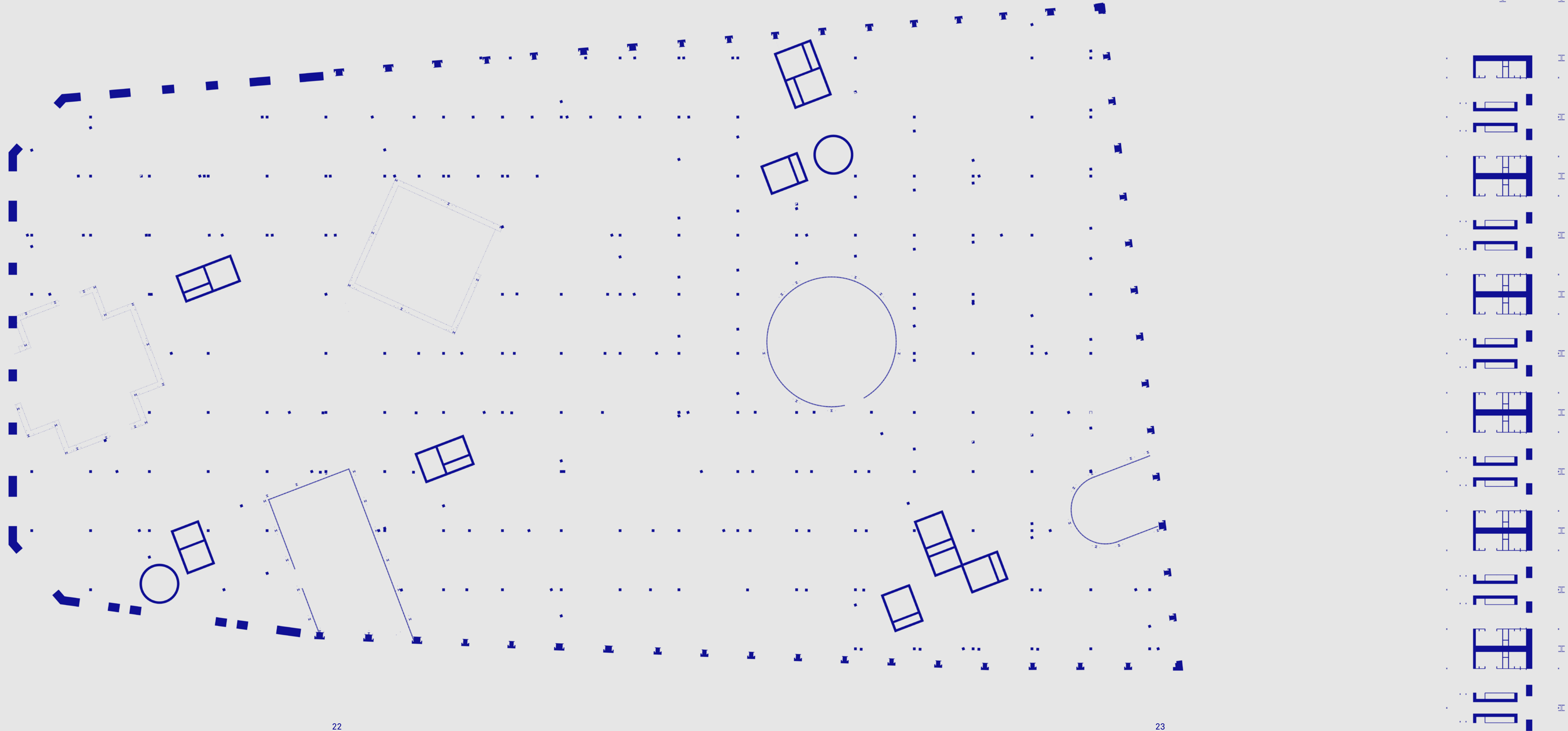


## THE PROJECT'S TEMPLATE A RECTANGULAR PLATFORM

An enlarged horizontal platform is the backbone of the strategy, since it would be the first constructive element of the project to be put into place. It is a strictly unprogrammed surface, dedicated to the spontaneous encounter between the users of the Department City and the rest of the citizens. It is made out of a bidirectional, prefabricated Vierend-eel truss system and incorporates an adaptable services floor, to which parts of the upper building can be plugged in when needed.



AT THE GROUND LEVEL THE DEPARTMENT CITY FORMS A CONTINUUM WITH THE SURROUNDING CITY



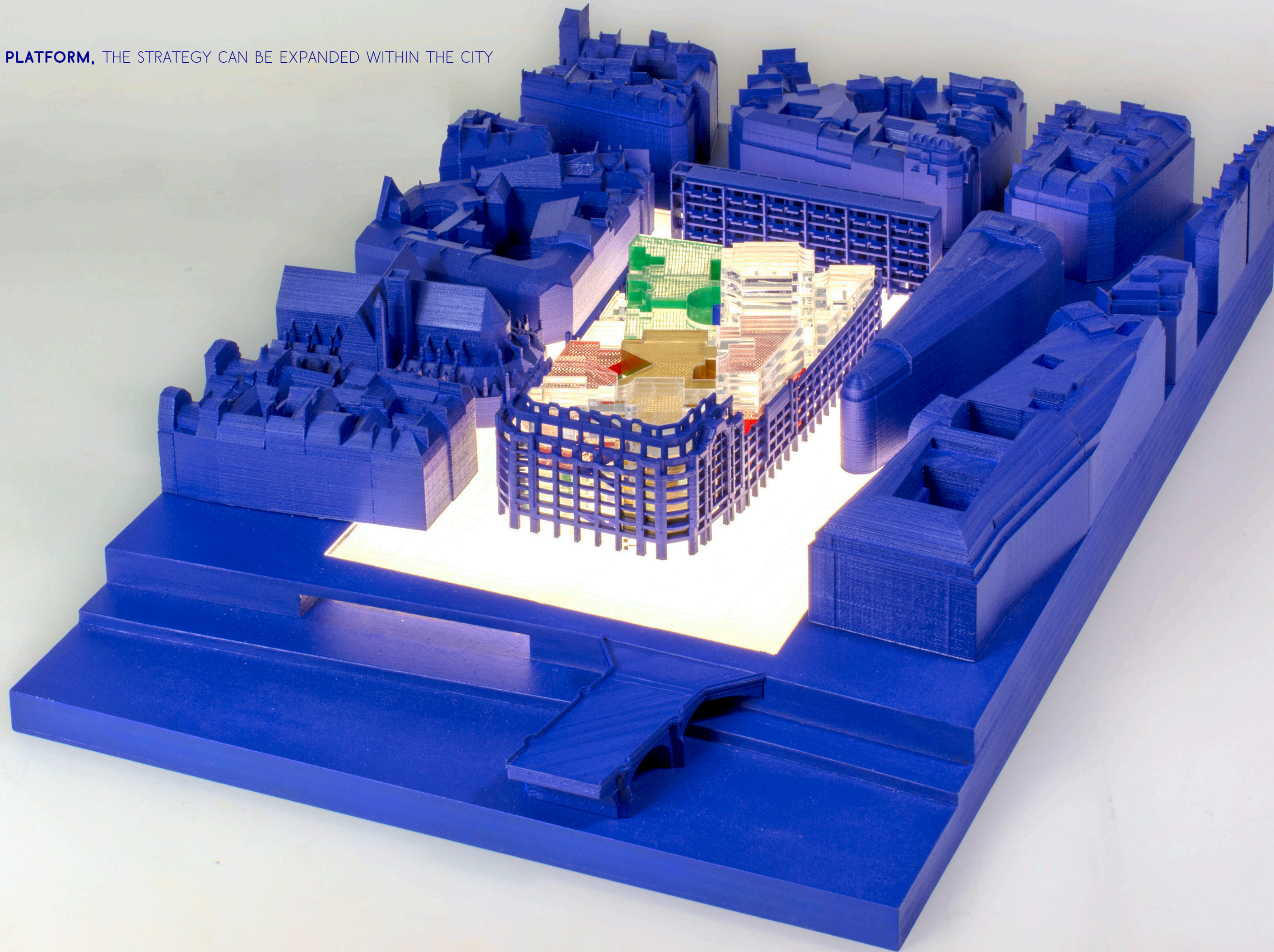


PLAN 00 ENTRANCES, PUBLIC SPACE



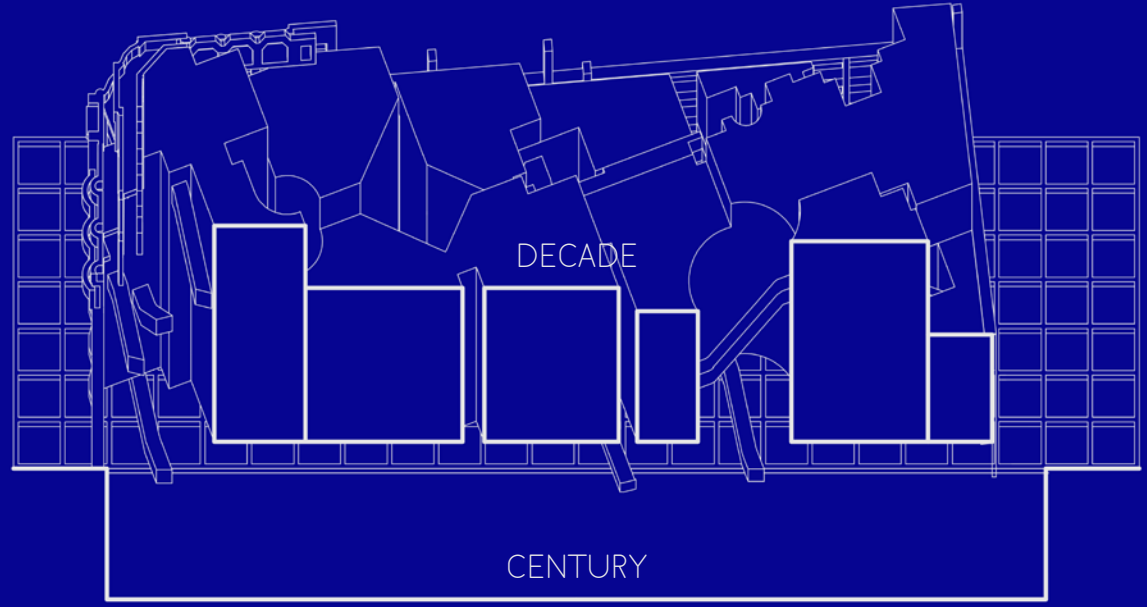


BY EXTENDING THE PLATFORM, THE STRATEGY CAN BE EXPANDED WITHIN THE CITY





**THE DEPARTMENT CITY IS A NEVER ENDING PROJECT**  
PROPOSED TIME FRAME



**DECADE**

**THE BUSINESS DISTRICT IS MARKET-DRIVEN AND PROGRAMMATICALLY INSTABLE**

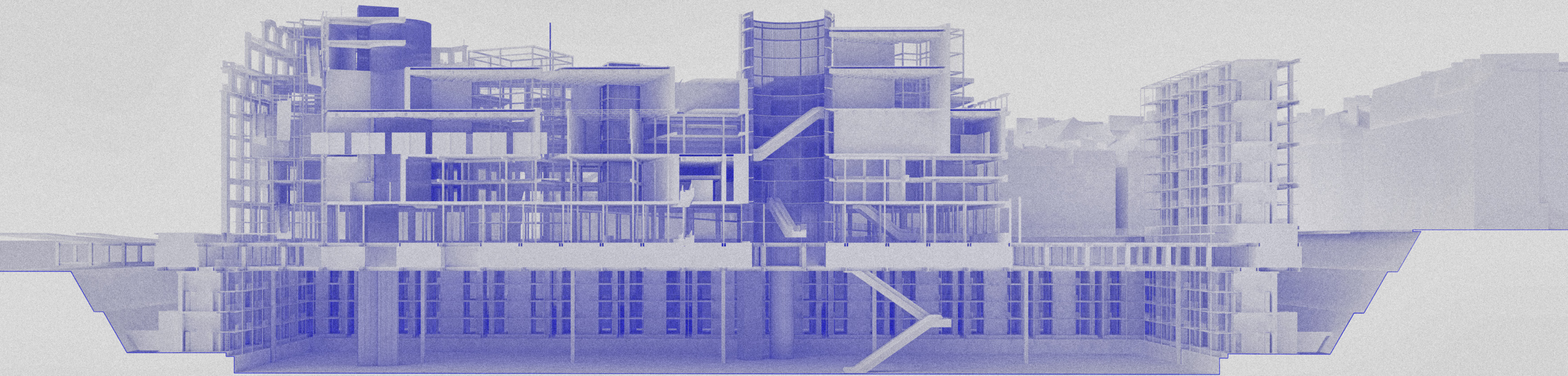
Placed above the ground, the “Quartier d’Affaires” is able to incorporate the architectural ambitions of both Welfare State and Neoliberal utopia, upon request. Following the current economic model, a more fragmented configuration is presented here. It is subjected to change on an average pace of a decade.

**CENTURY**

**THE HOUSING DISTRICT REMAINS RATHER STABLE THROUGH TIME.**

Living standards do not change that rapidly and typological transformations do not necessarily follow the advances of the market. An average time increment of a century is appropriate for a substantial reconfiguration of the “Grand Ensemble”.



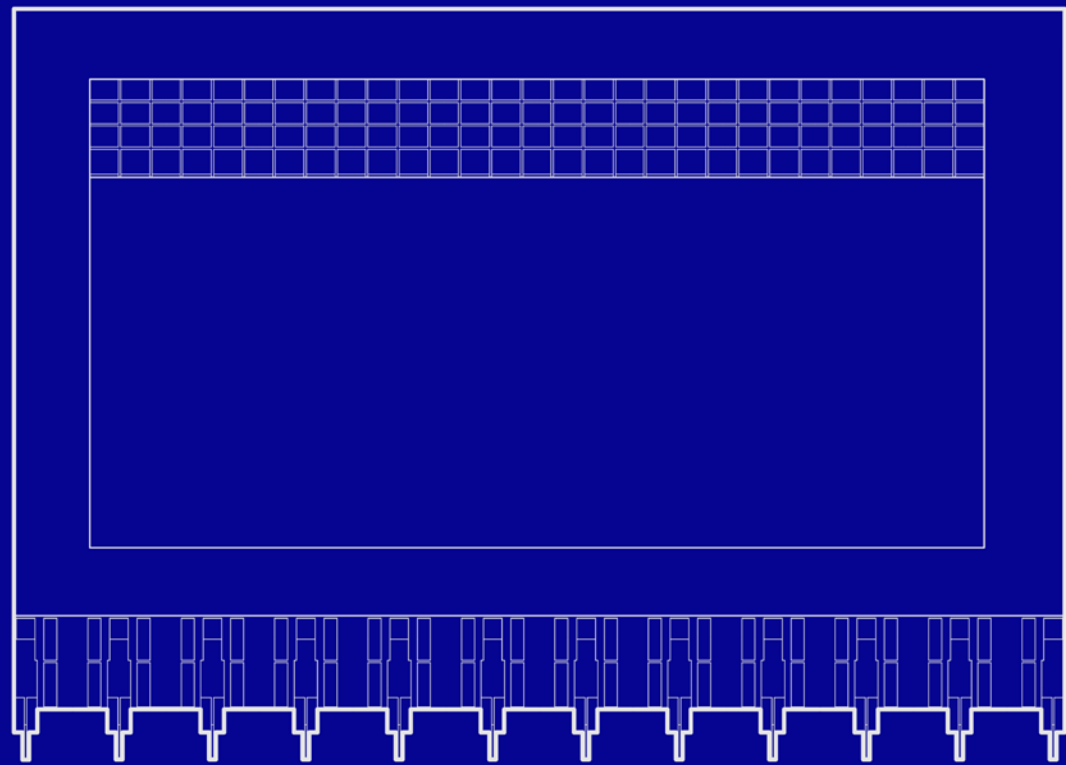


**LONGITUDINAL SECTION** THE BUSINESS DISTRICT ABOVE THE HOUSING DISTRICT



**GRAND ENSEMBLE**  
THE HOUSING DISTRICT



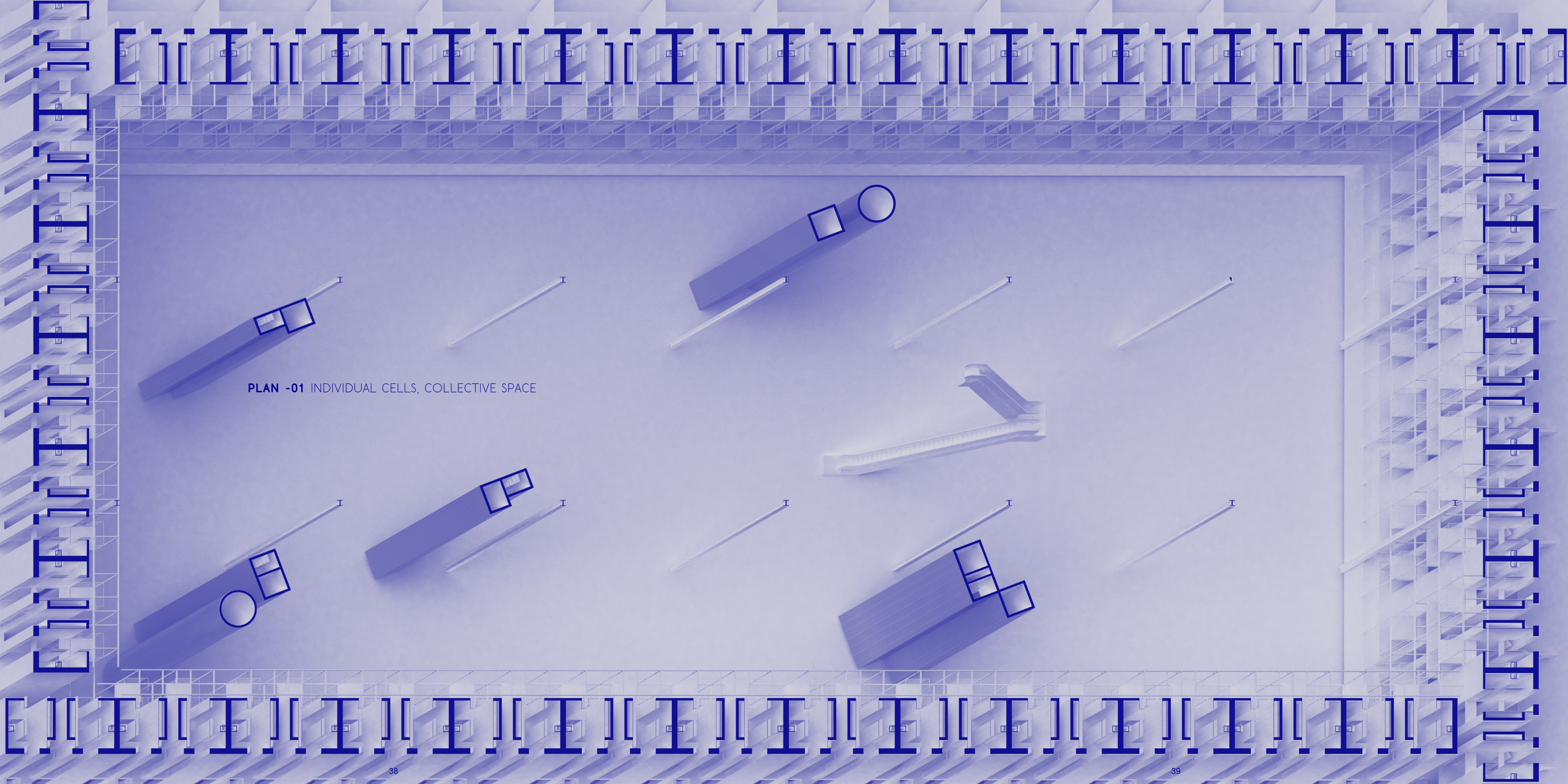


VOID IS A PLACE, WHERE PEOPLE MEET



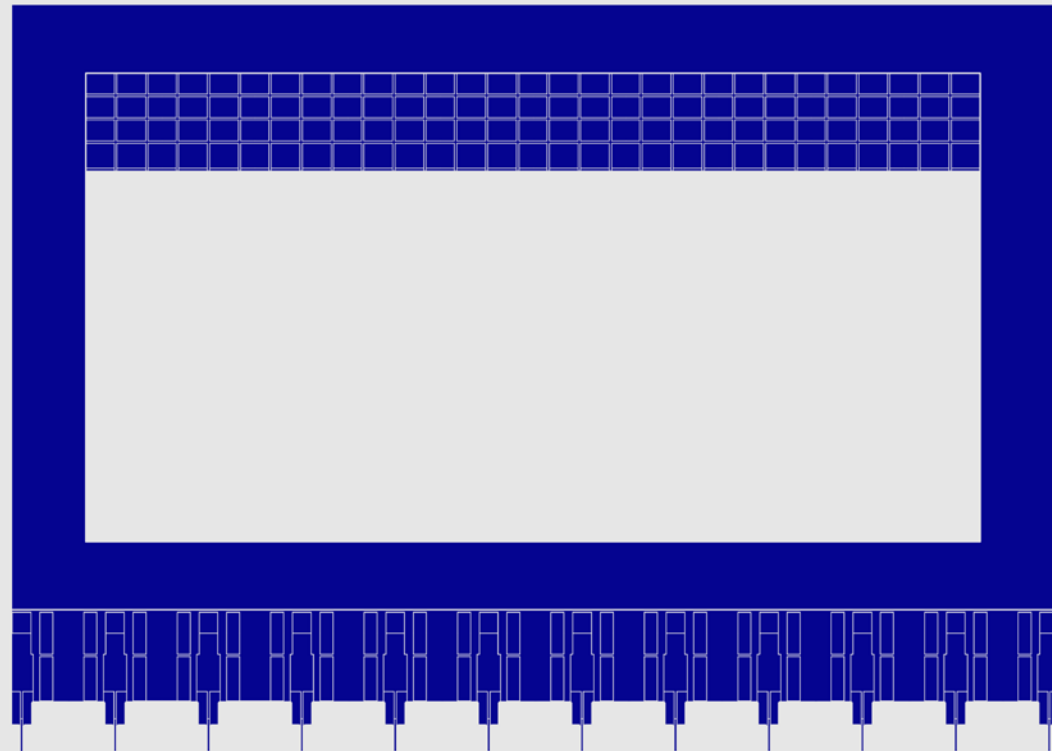
AT THE LOWER LEVEL EVERYDAY LIFE IS SHARED BETWEEN TWO AREAS:





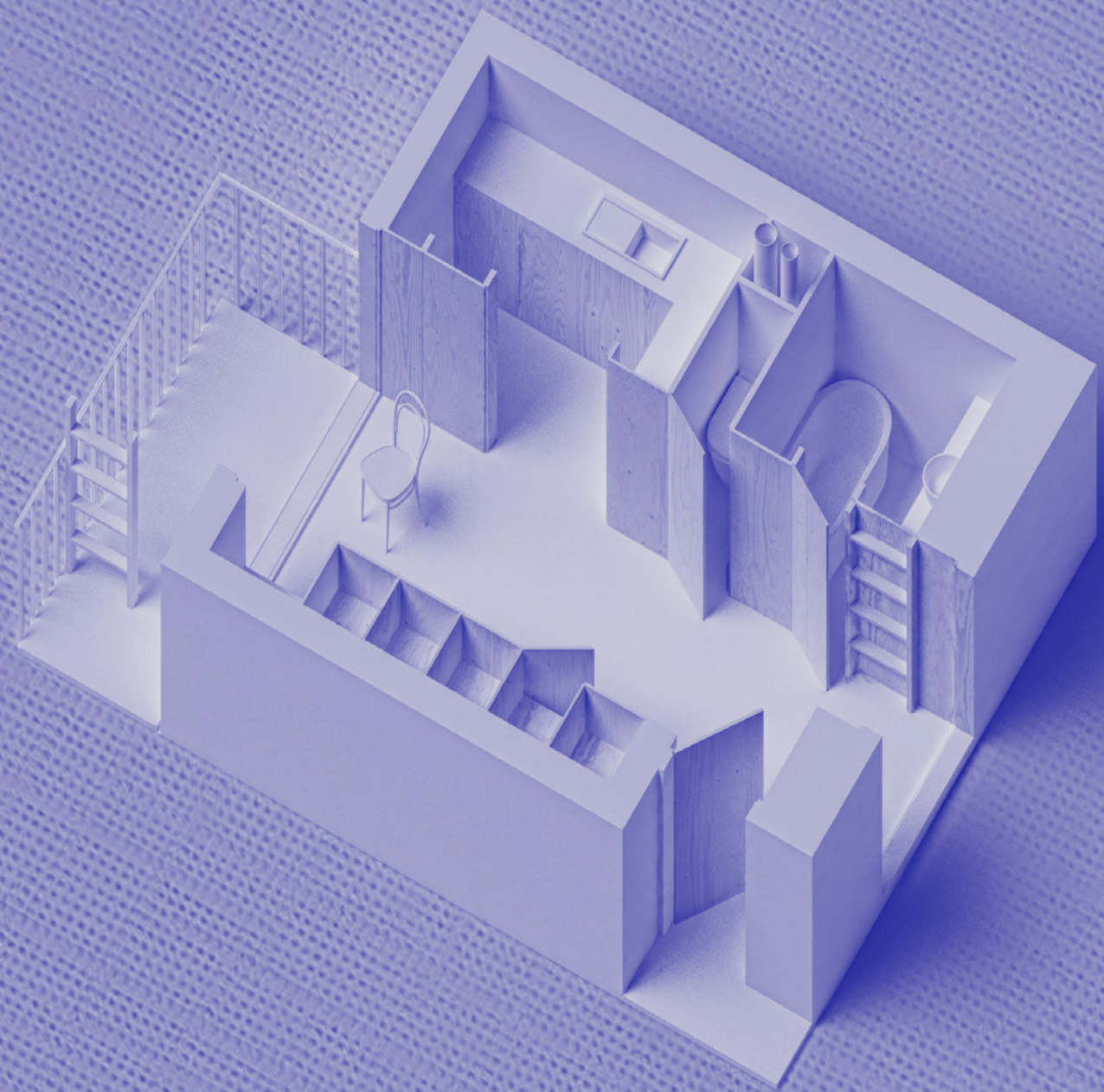
PLAN -01 INDIVIDUAL CELLS, COLLECTIVE SPACE



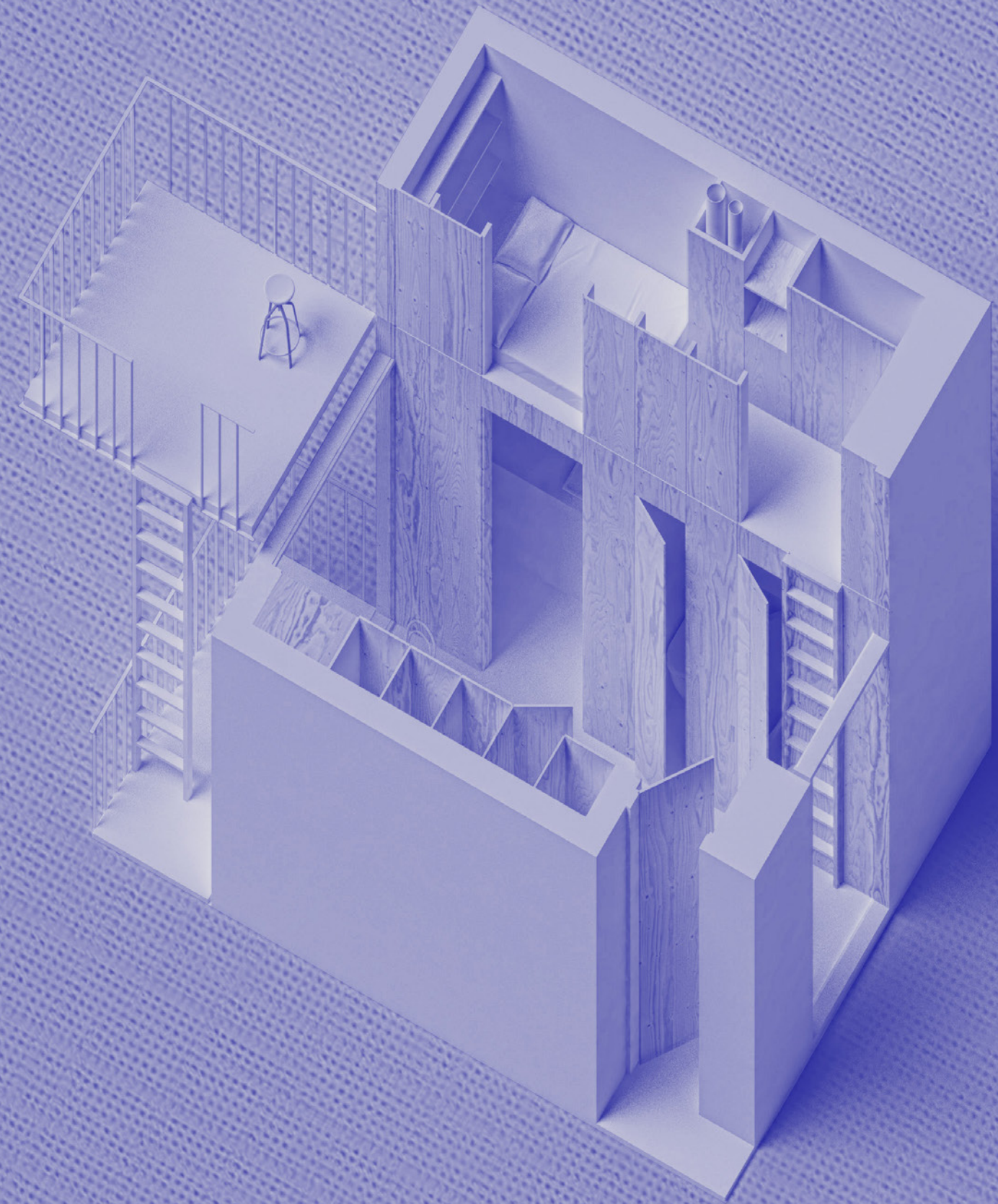


**THE INDIVIDUAL CELLS** SATISFY BASIC NECESSITIES



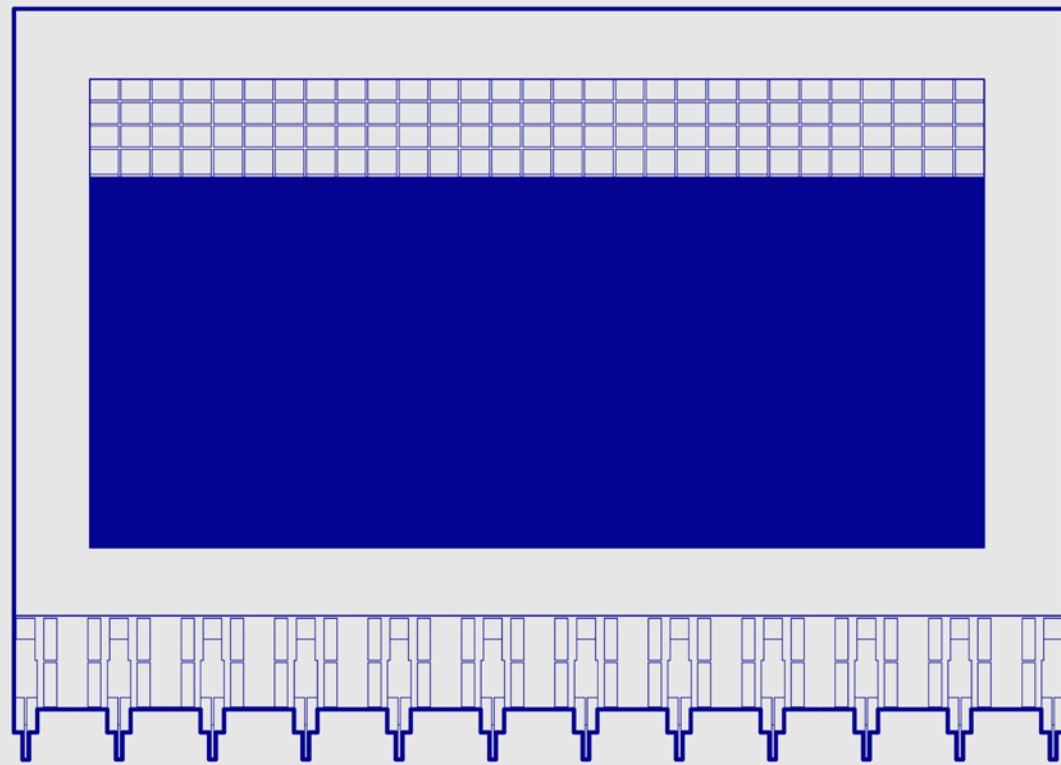


GROUND FLOOR



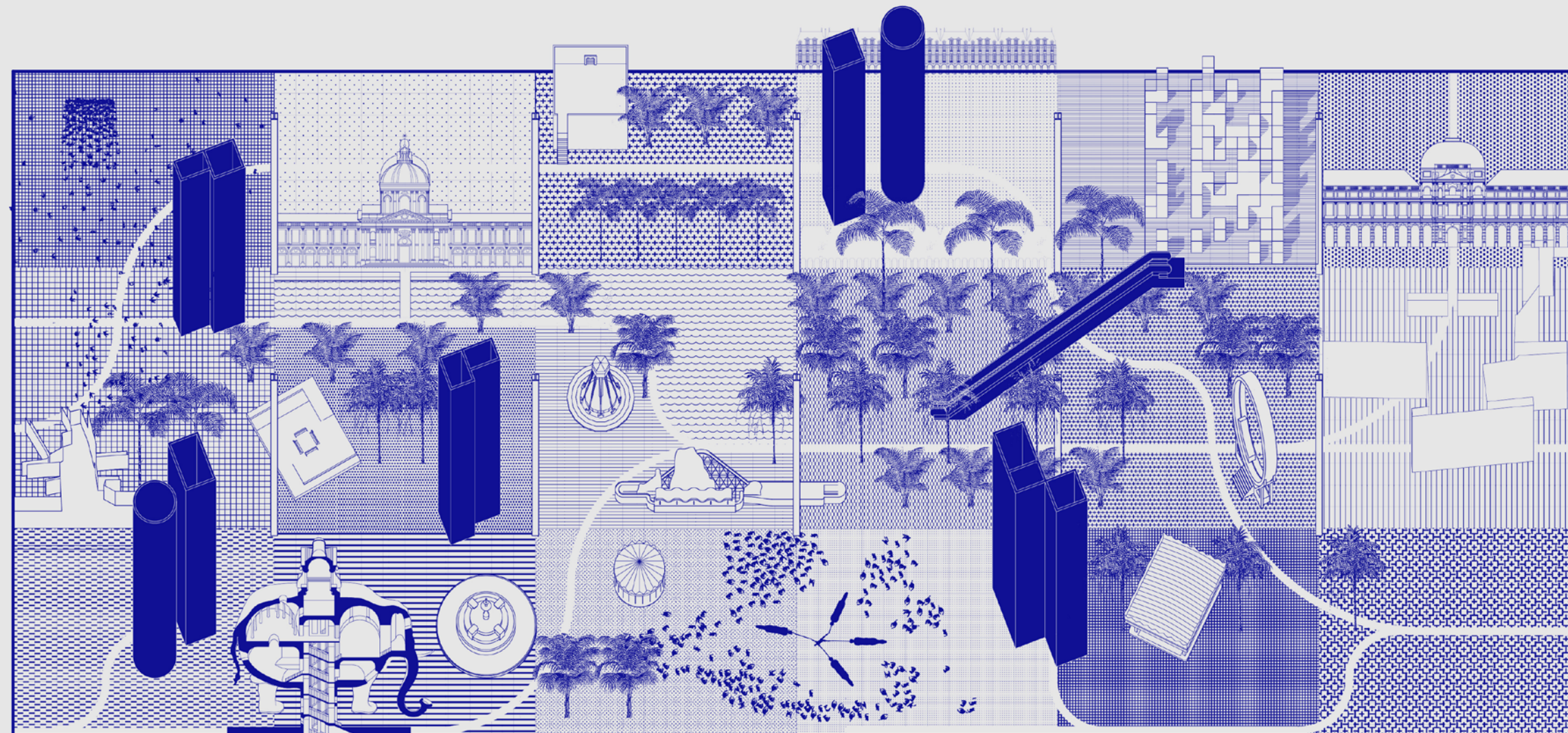
FIRST FLOOR





**THE COLLECTIVE SPACE** IS A HEDONISTIC RETREAT





A COLLECTION OF BOURGEOIS RITUALS ISOMETRIC PROJECTION





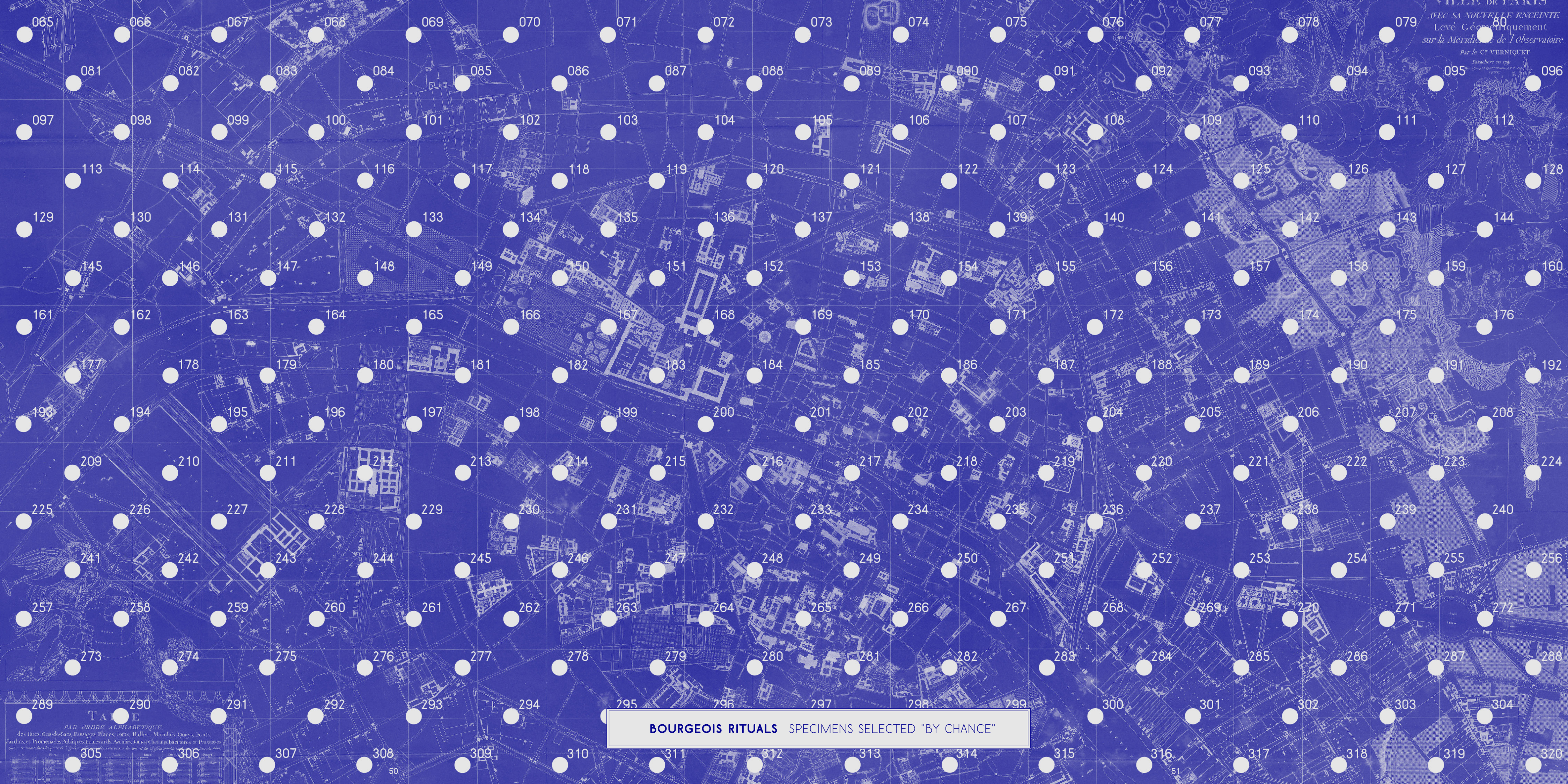
**THE DEPARTMENT STORE AS A CITY**

## **INTERIORISED URBAN RITUALS** A PLACE FOR THE CITY'S HIDDEN DESIRES

When the old department store was implanted on the site, it absorbed all leisure infrastructure of the quarter within its own volume: gardens, tennis courts and promenades disappeared, while new, exciting program made its appearance inside the block. A similar movement happens here: The housing district, as another cabinet of curiosities accumulates in graphic and textual form, testimonies on the potential of the Parisian unbuilt fabric to give place to diverse practices of social life. This study presents a repertoire of repeating social events with a strong correlation with their surrounding infrastructural layout and a class-consolidating role. The chosen rituals can even last for a few moments, but can be repeated countless times. The normalised image of main-stream leisure program (theme parks, pools, sports facilities) can be challenged by looking at the richness of urban memory.

The Employees' Sports Association inside the Samaritaine complex, Samaritaine Archives.





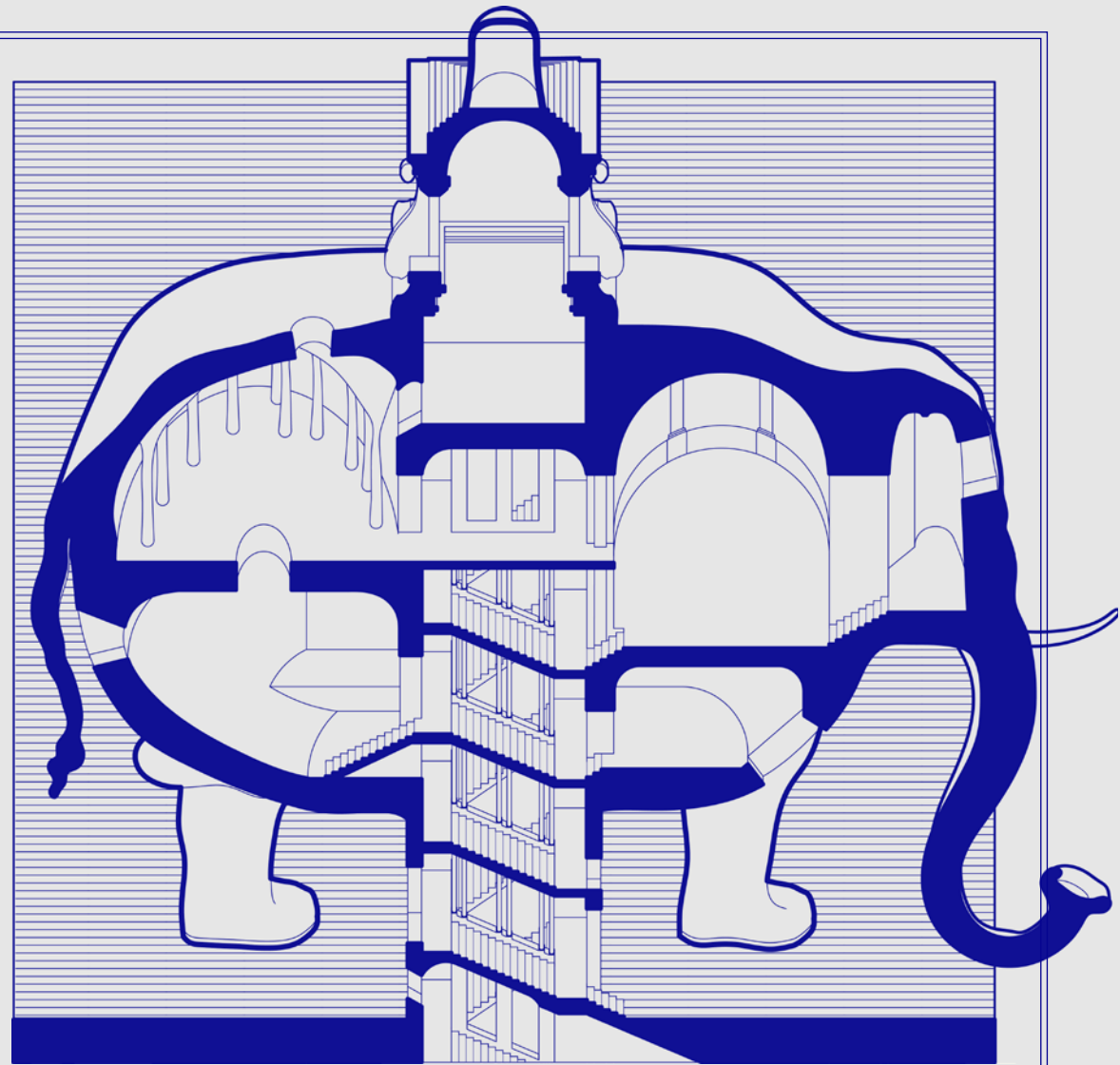
VILLE DE PARIS  
AVEC SA NOUVELLE ENCEINTE  
Levé Géométriquement  
sur la Méridienne de l'Observatoire  
Par le C<sup>te</sup> VERNIQUET  
Parachevé en 1790

TABLÉ  
PAR ORDRE ALPHABÉTIQUE  
des Rues, Cours-de-Sacs, Passages, Places, Ports, Halles, Marchés, Quays, Ponts,  
Jardins, et Promenades Publiques, Boulevards, Avenues, Routes, Chemins, Barrières, et Paroisses  
dans le Département de Paris. Le tout sur le plan de la Ville parachevé en 1790.

**BOURGEOIS RITUALS** SPECIMENS SELECTED "BY CHANCE"

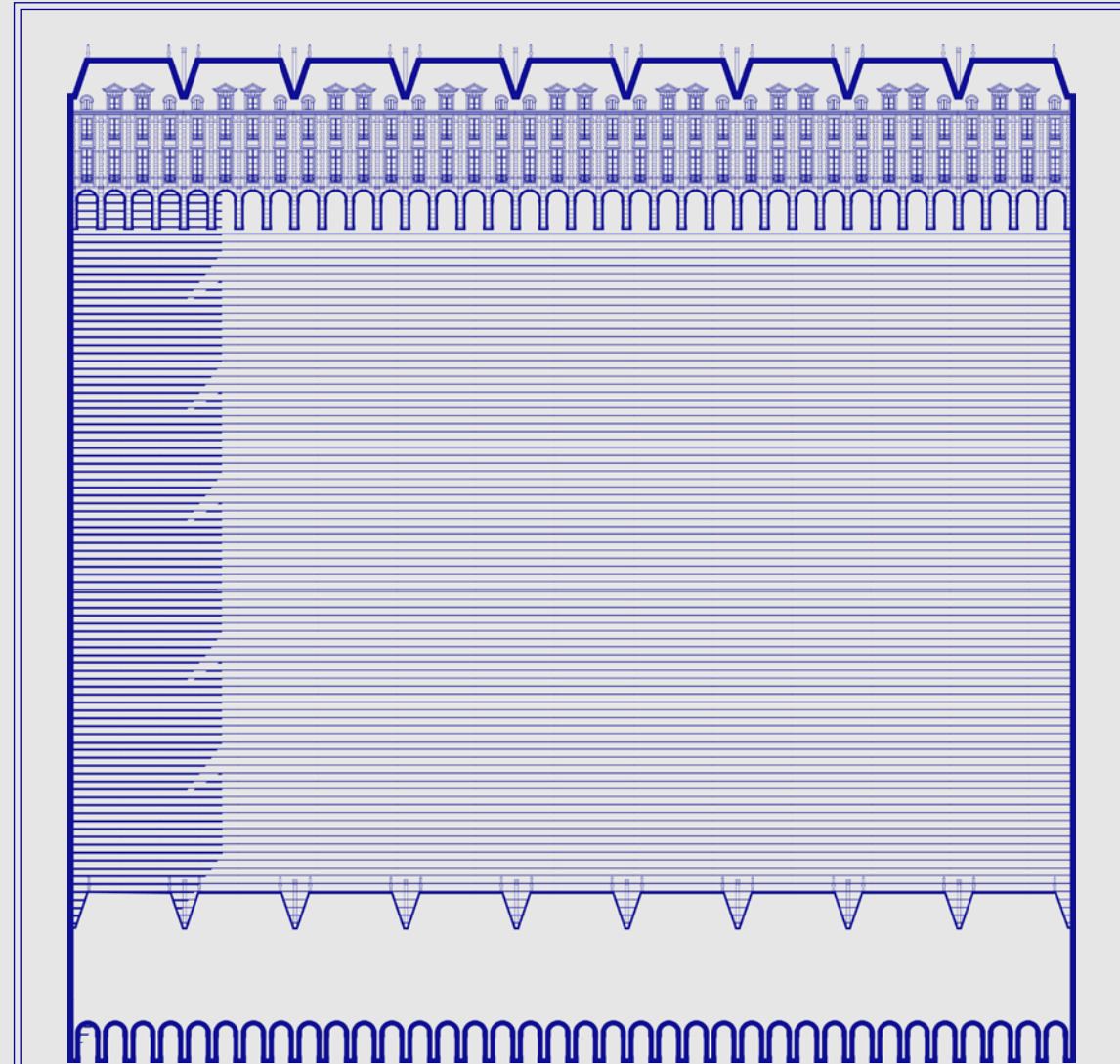


082



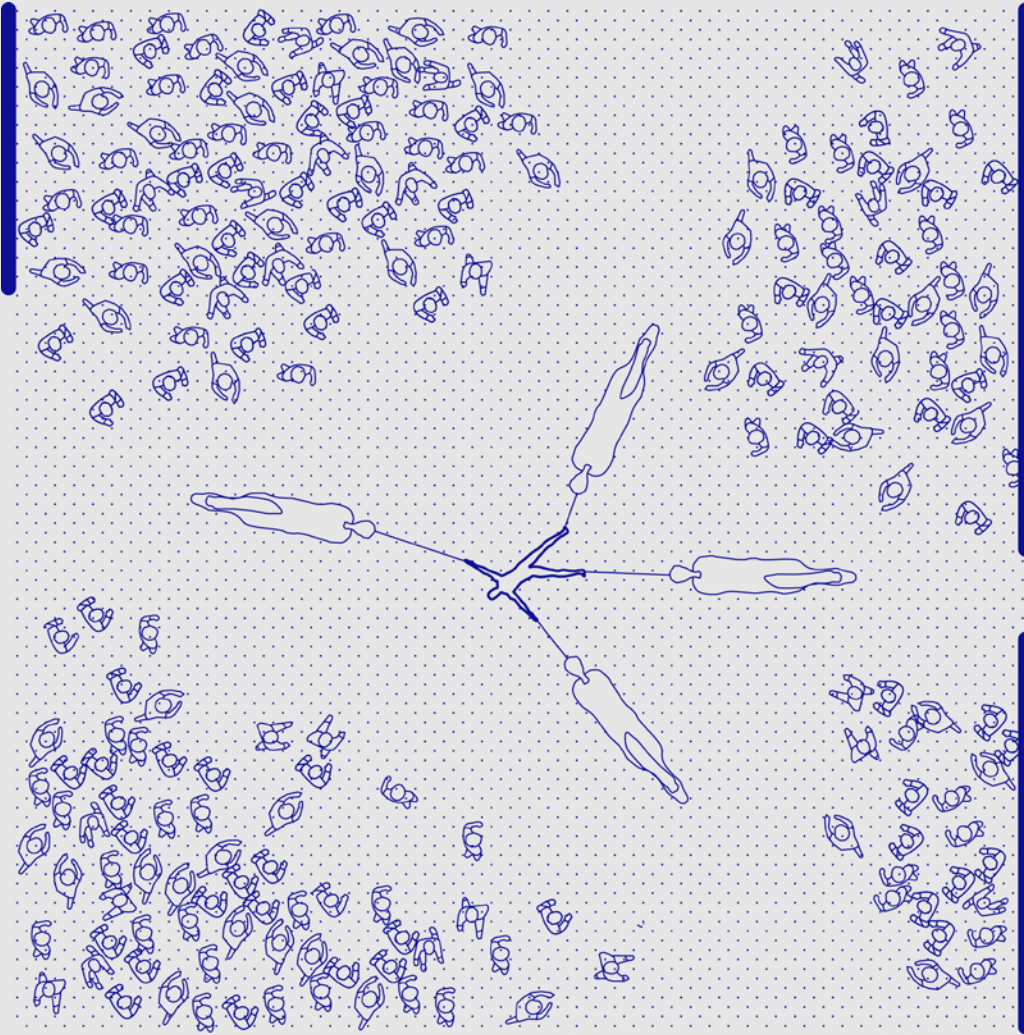
**WINTER GARDEN.**  
19 FEBRUARY 1748

219

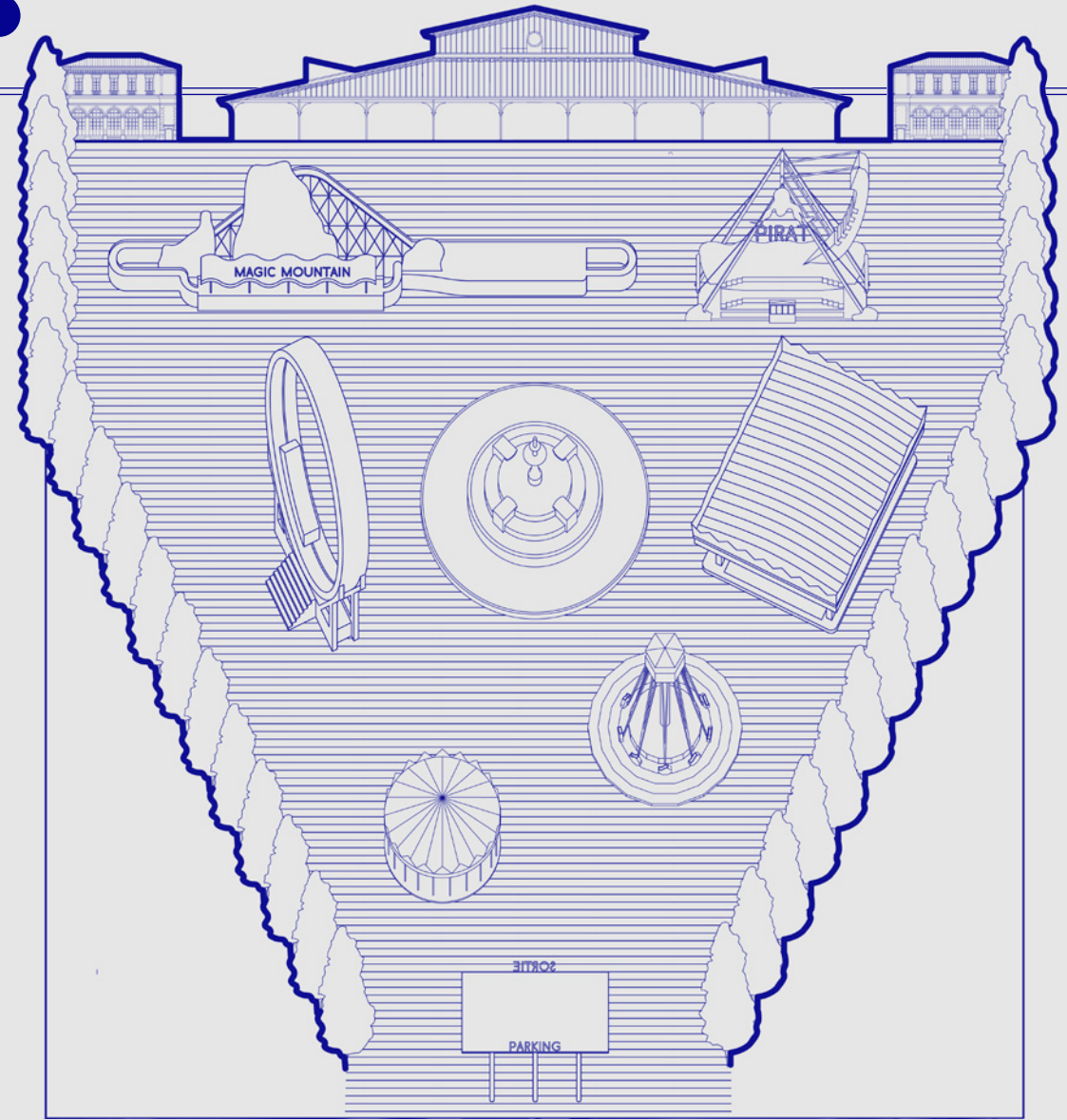


**STOCK EXCHANGE**  
5 APRIL 1612



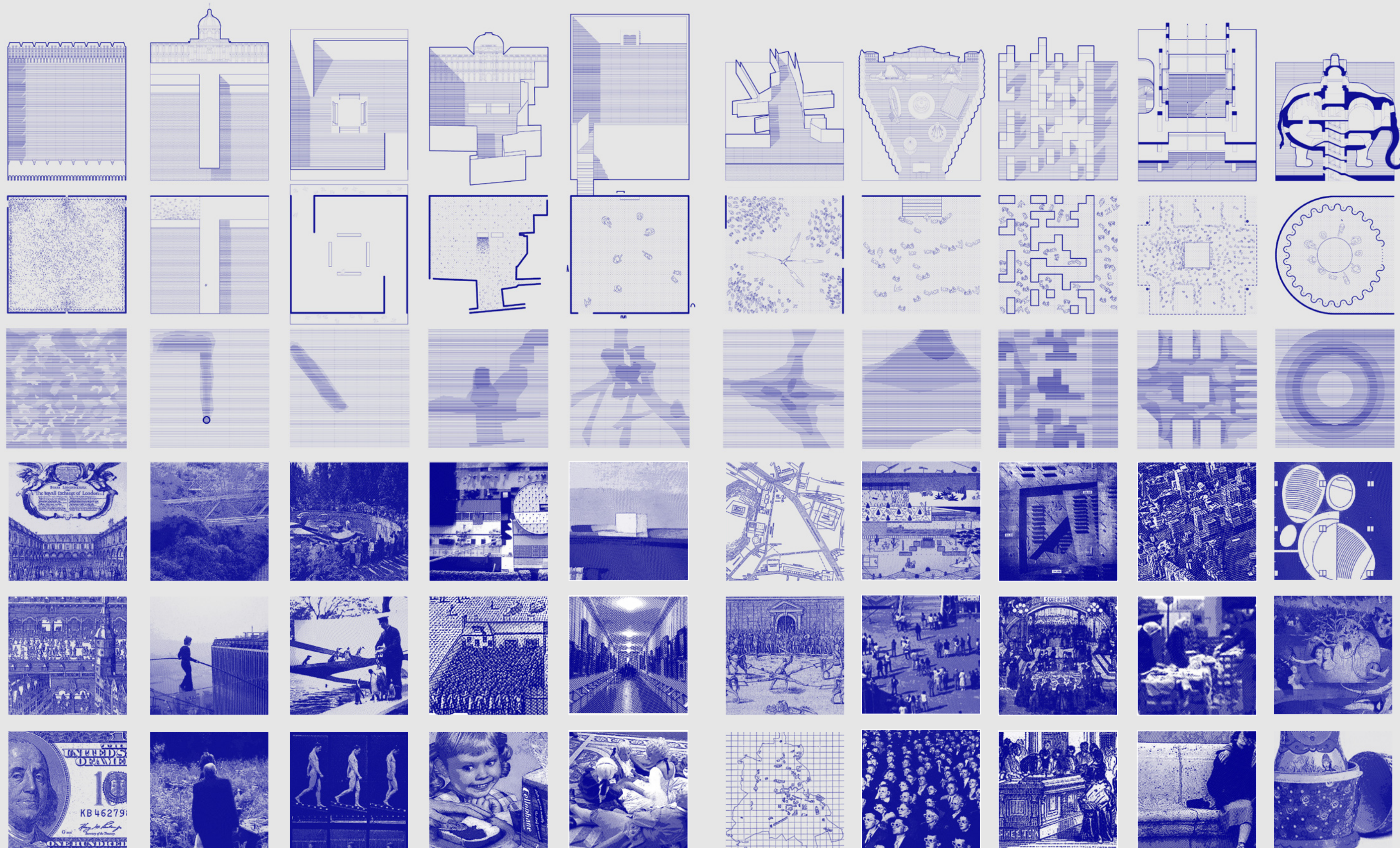


**DISMANTLING YARD.**  
27 MAY 1610



**PLAYGROUND.**  
APRIL 1980





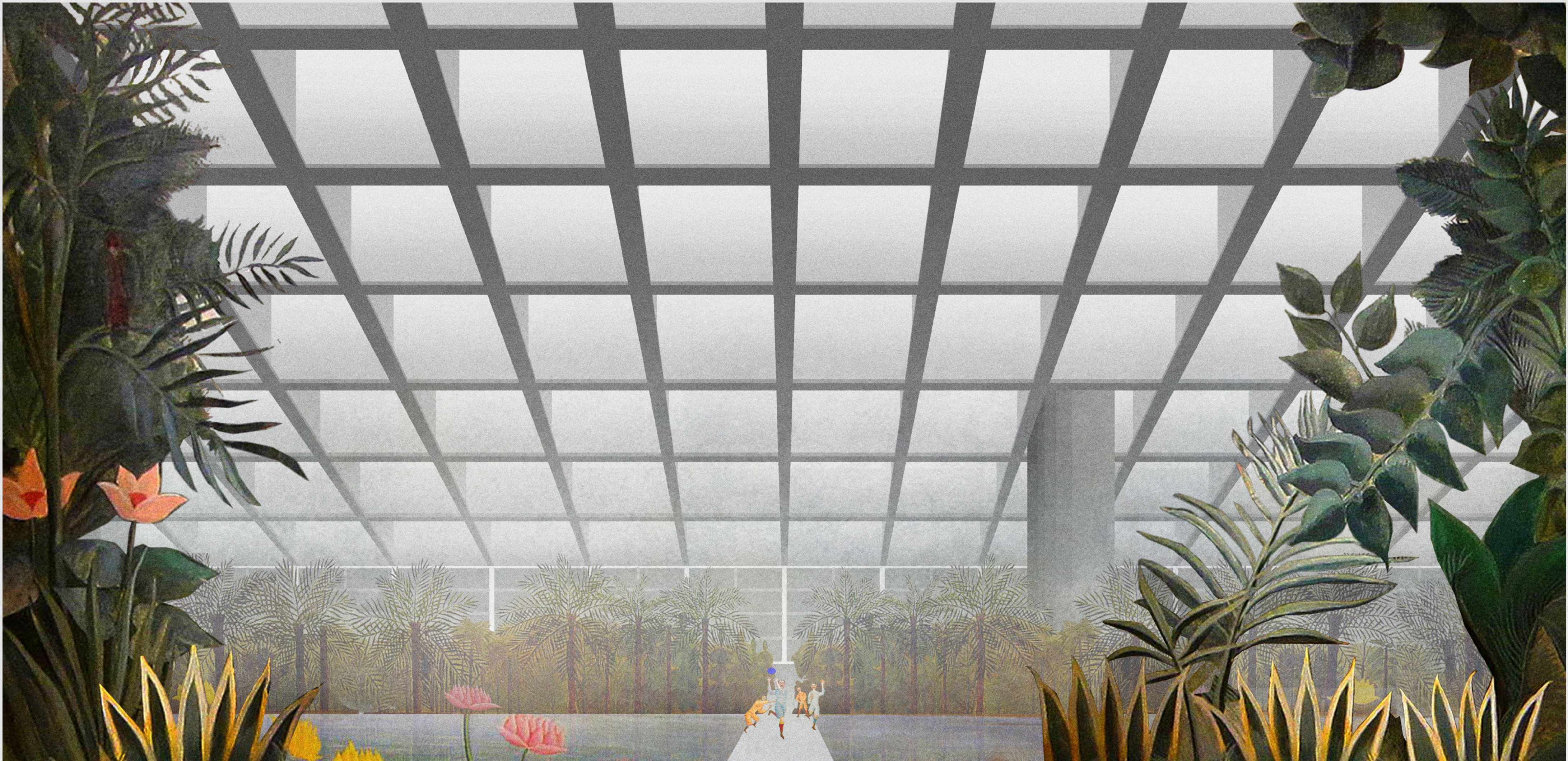
TEN PARISIAN RITUALS INFRASTRUCTURE, MOVEMENT AND POWER RELATIONS





COLLECTIVE SPACE VIEW TOWARDS THE SKY

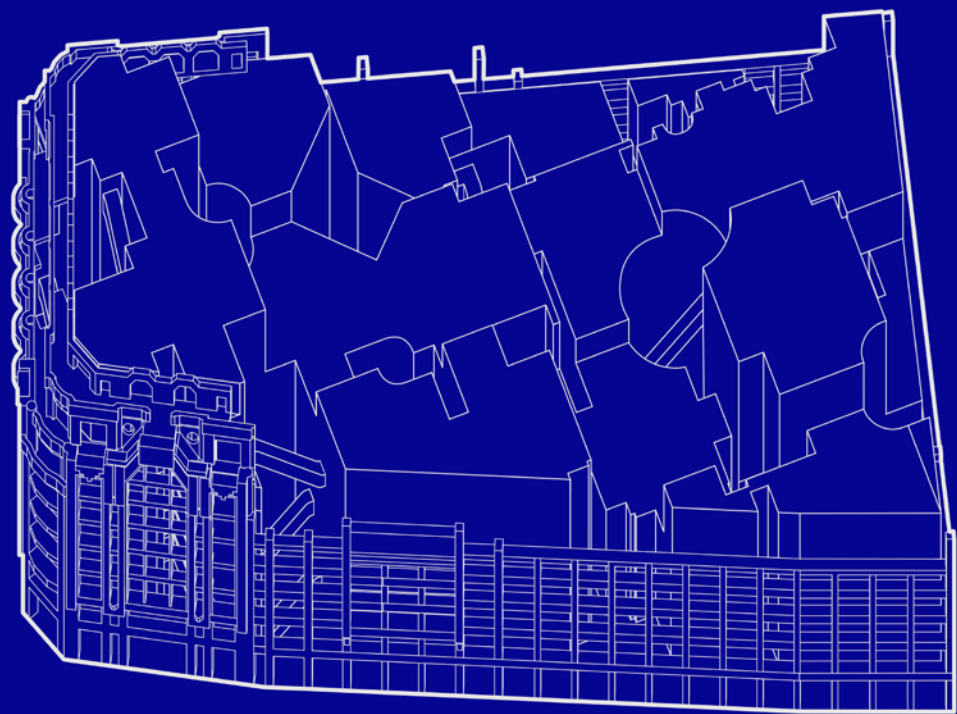






**QUARTIER D'AFFAIRES**  
THE BUSINESS DISTRICT

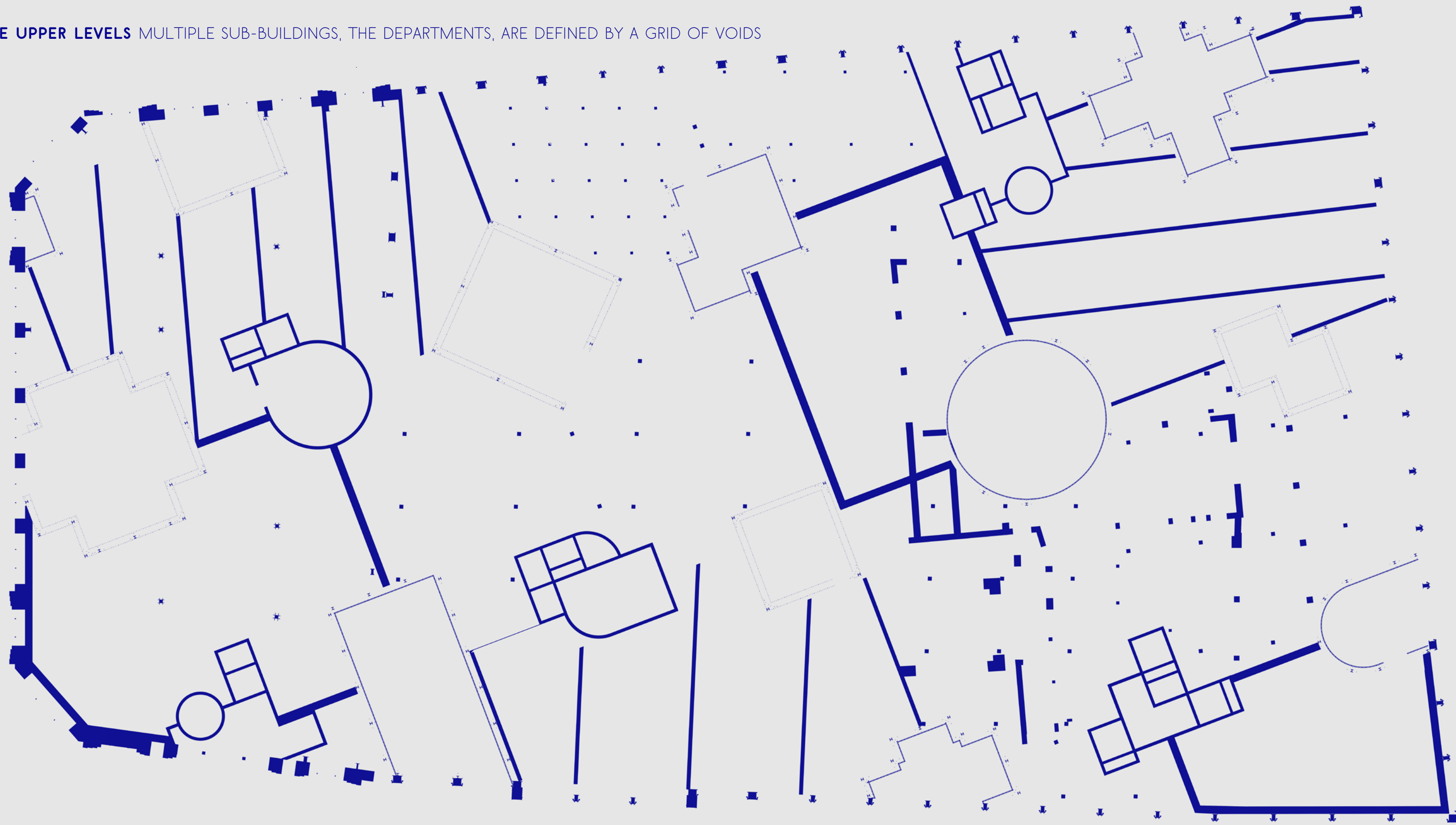




VOID IS A TOOL, WHICH CREATES INFRASTRUCTURE

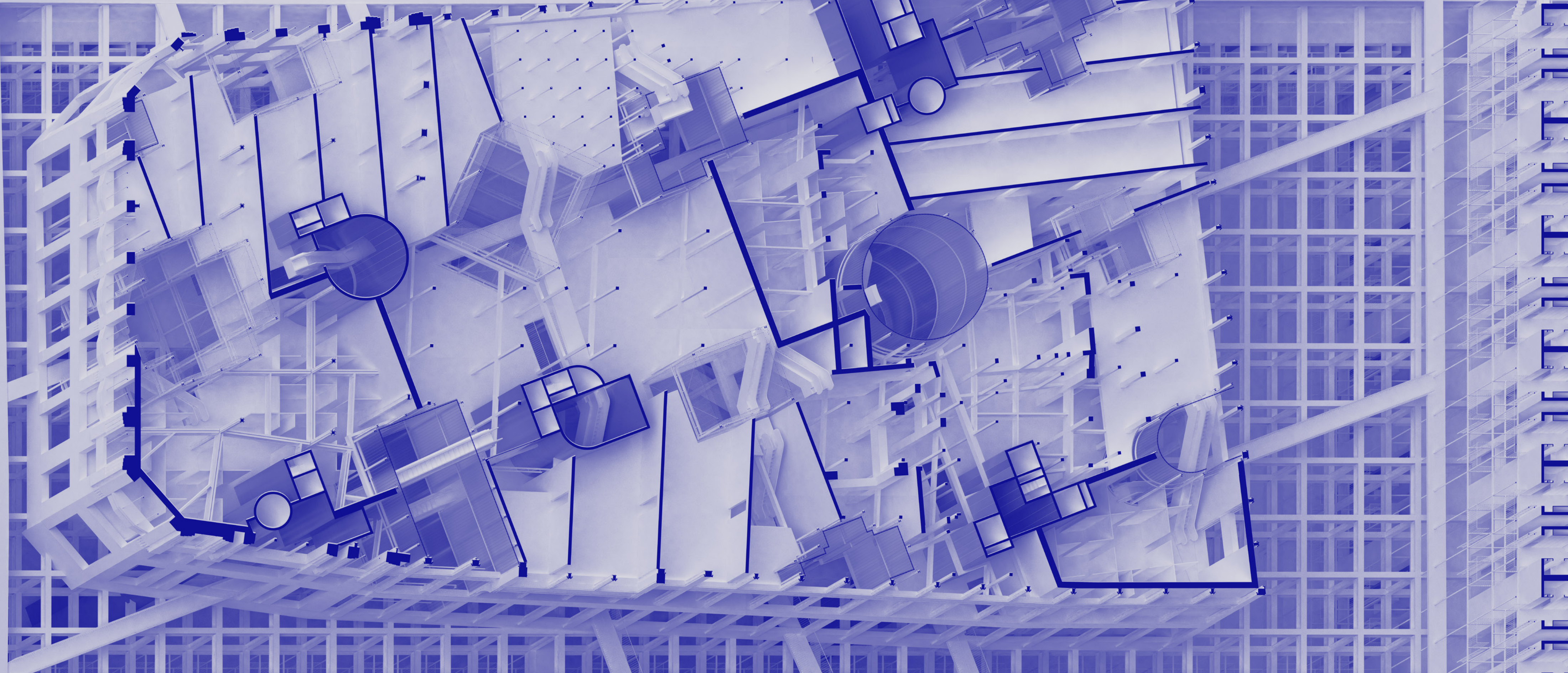


AT THE UPPER LEVELS MULTIPLE SUB-BUILDINGS, THE DEPARTMENTS, ARE DEFINED BY A GRID OF VOIDS

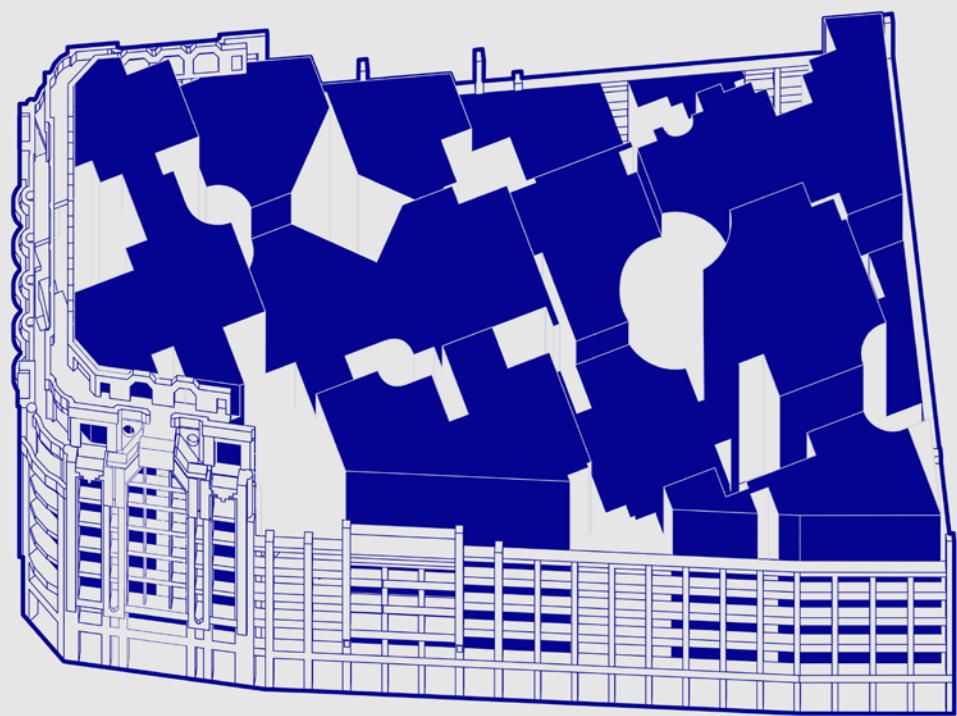




PLAN +01 DEPARTMENTS, VOIDS

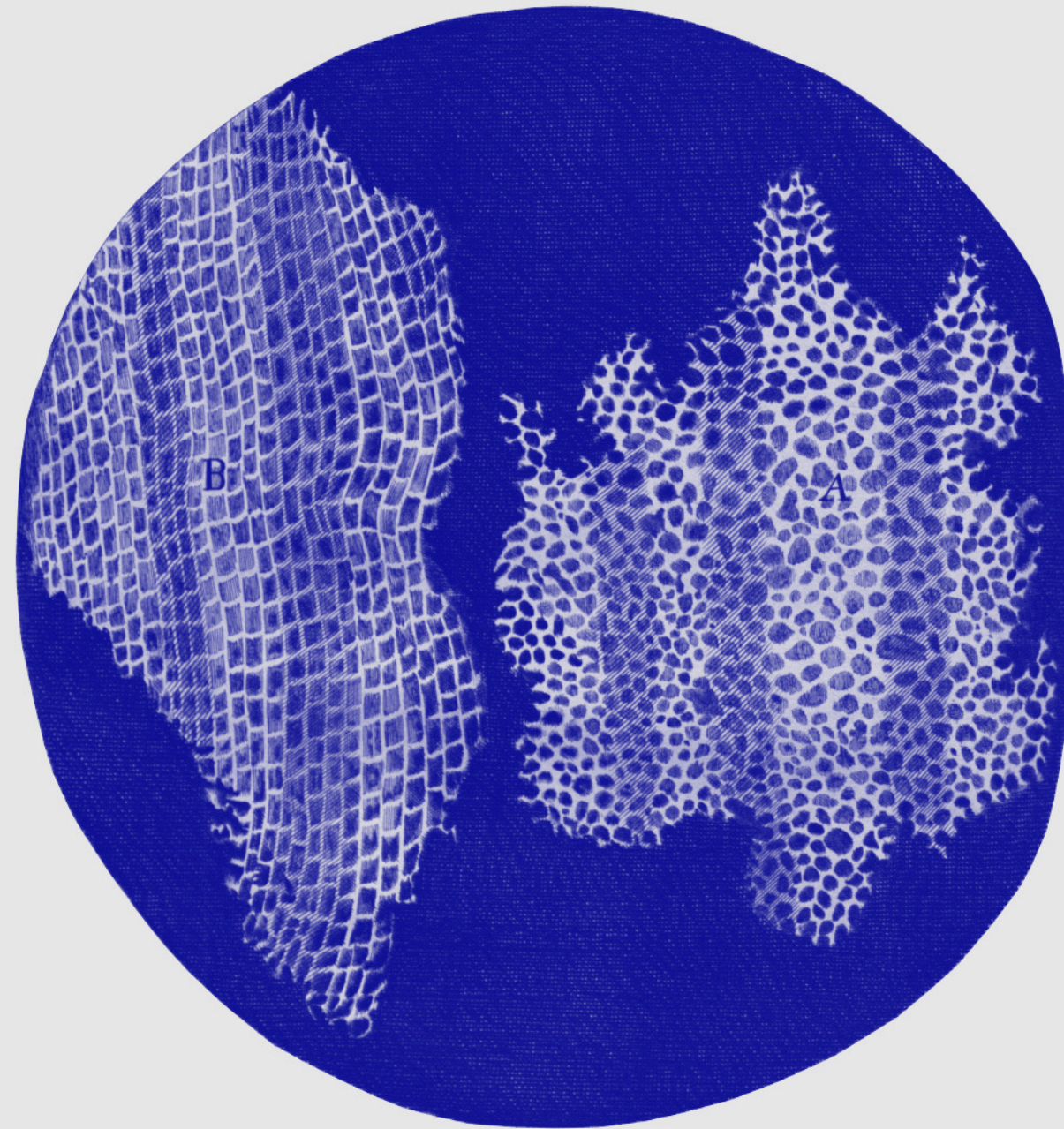






**DEPARTMENTS** ARE EPHEMERAL





## DEMOLITION AND PRESERVATION THE DYNAMIC CITY BLOCK

For the reconstruction of London, Robert Hooke, by studying the ways according to which matter is distributed in living organisms, proposed the dynamic block: an urban entity which has the capacity to organically reconfigure itself, from within. His project for London's cartesian grid would never see the light of the day. However, in Paris, urban fabric presented striking similarities. Samaritaine's block has always been in an area of radical transformations. It was probably here that Haussmann's project became clearer than anywhere else: The new, artificial Paris seemed here to be divided by an entirely newly woven network of generic blank voids, that had nothing to do with the past city. It was an imperfect but physical system of abstract coordinates, almost like a distorted grid.

Transversal and longitudinal sections of a piece of cork.  
R. Hooke, *Micrographia* (London: J. Martyn and J. Allestry, 1665), 113.





**1830 PARIS** VOID IS BASED ON SITE-SPECIFIC NEEDS

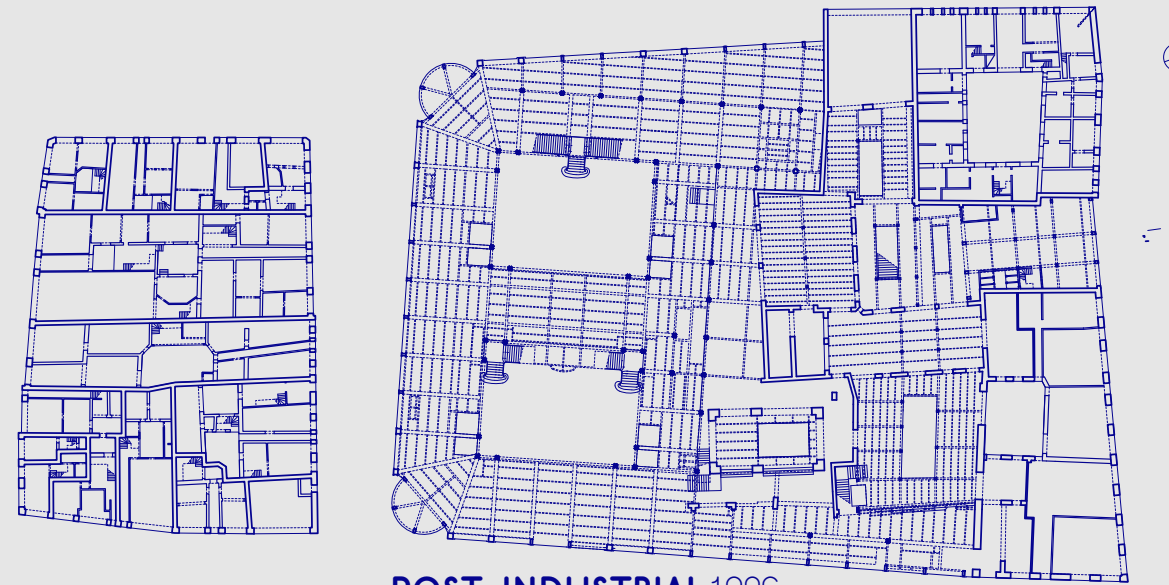


**2016 THE UNIVERSAL CITY CALLED PARIS** VOID IS BASED ON ABSTRACT COORDINATES, THE GRID





**POST-MEDIEVAL** 1806



**POST-INDUSTRIAL** 1906



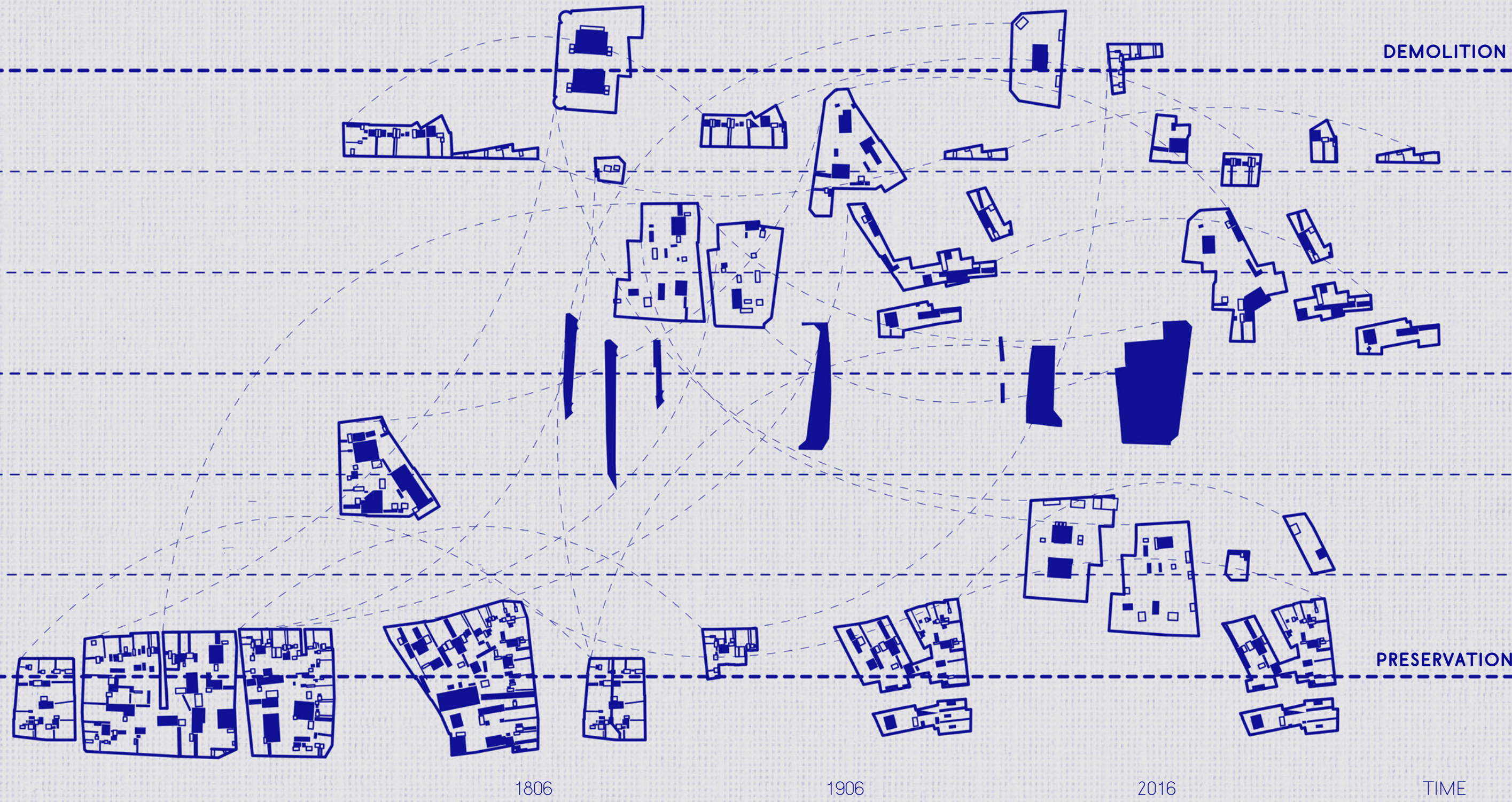
**POST-MODERN** 2016

**THREE PHASES OF THE DEPARTMENT CITY'S BLOCK**

**DEMOLITION AND PRESERVATION**  
TRANSFORMATION OF THE SITE

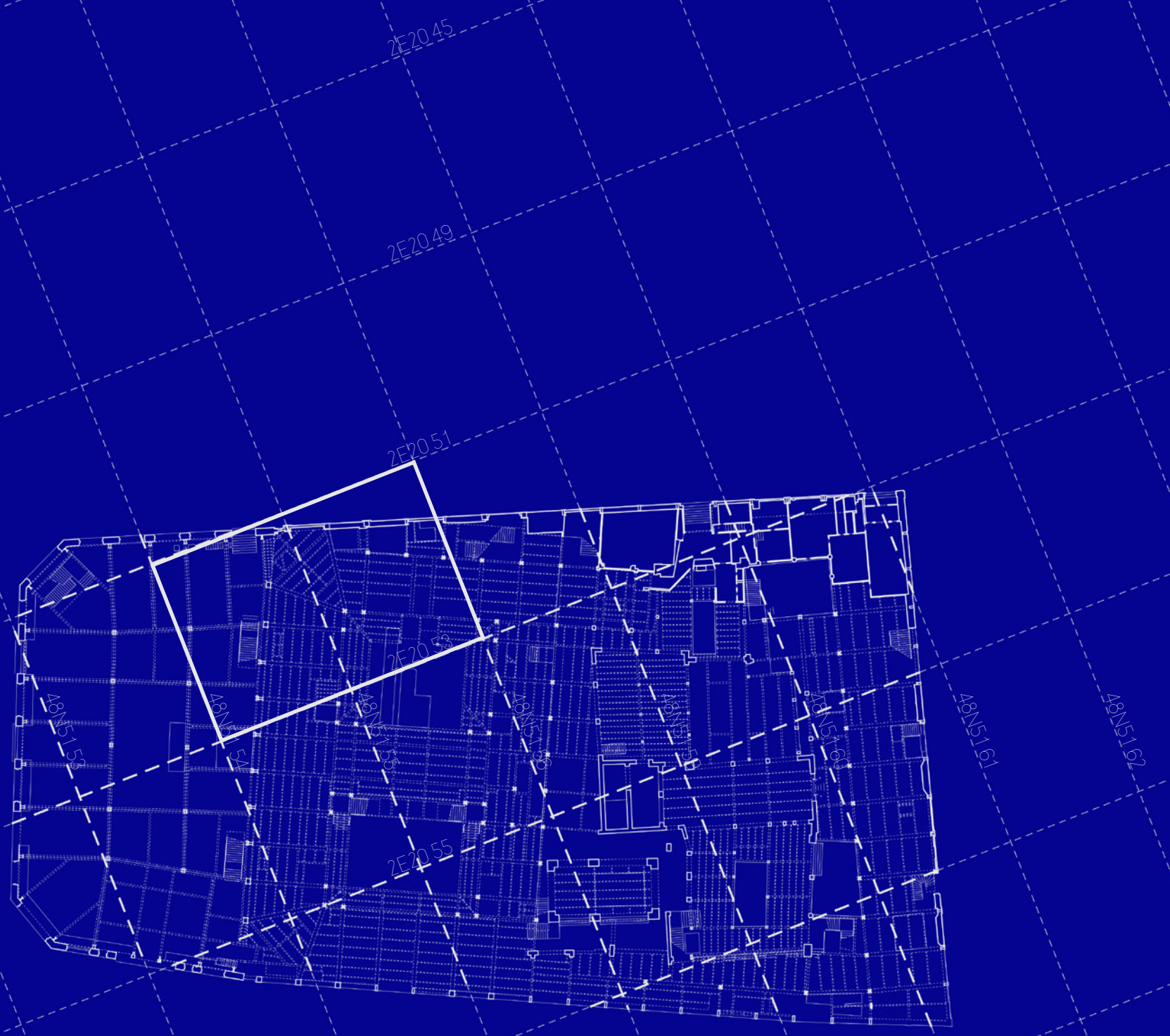
Parisian void was ever in process of becoming. Samaritaine is itself a hybrid city block. It was never designed from scratch to be a department store, but it was born out of the transformation process of the medieval fabric. A detailed formal study of the block has identified some recurring, basic patterns of changes amongst the post-medieval, the post-industrial and the post-modern layers of the city. In order to map those historical transformations through time, the existing building was divided into comparable and measurable entities. To do so, a generic analytical orthogonal grid was used, suggesting that an identical process can be followed for every other building in the city. This grid follows the north-south latitude and longitudinal lines crossing the site.





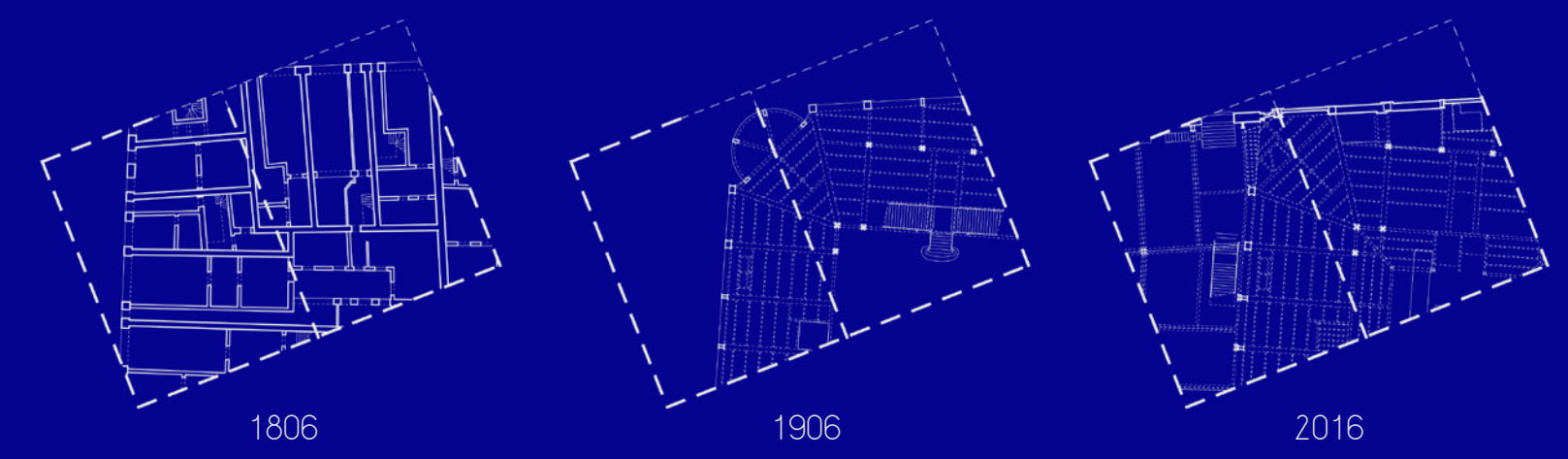
THE BLOCK'S EXISTING COMPLEXITY SUCCESSIVE PROCESSES OF TRANSFORMATION THROUGH TIME





LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE LINES CROSSING THE SITE SUPERIMPOSED ON THE EXISTING PLAN

**DEMOLITION AND PRESERVATION**  
COMPLEXITY MAPPED



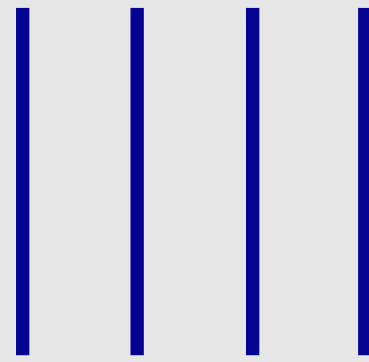
1806

1906

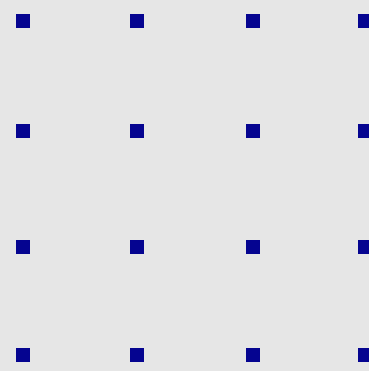
2016

EXAMPLE: AVAILABLE INFORMATION FOR ONE URBAN FRAGMENT

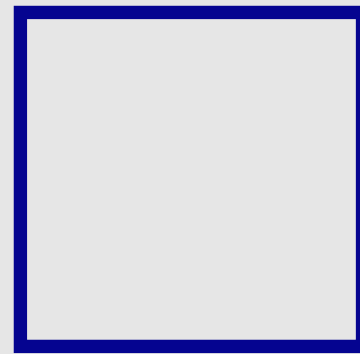




PLANES



FREE PLAN



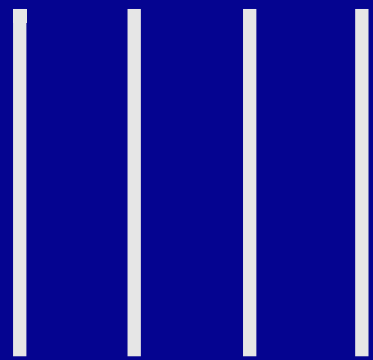
BOX

DOMINANT TYPOLOGIES

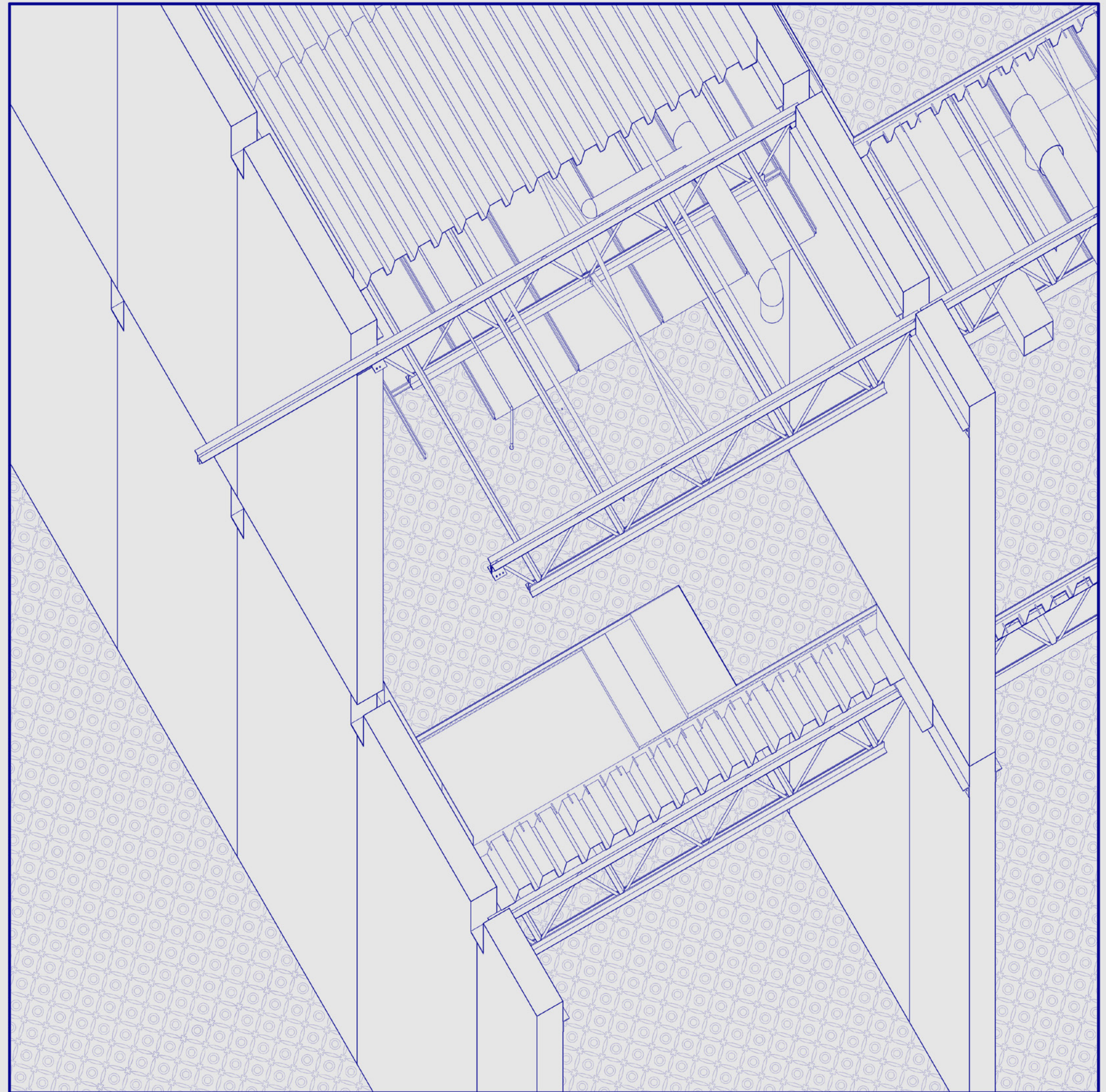
**TPOLOGIES**  
TOOLS FOUND IN SITU

Three banal (or obvious) structural systems have been identified as the main tools that were used for the site's historical transformation : the Free Plan, the Planes, the Box. They can be found in either: hybrid combinations (when the new was intervened with the existing), or in separate clusters (when brutal annihilations of the previous situation had taken place). Urban forms follow the same renewal cycle. When the evolution of each part of the building is put into perspective, only a limited number of possible futures seems to be probable to occur: which fragments are more likely to be demolished, which ones to be preserved. Thus the architect can now perform on a normative level: Rather than a pursuit of the invention of new forms per se, design operates by simply accelerating or hindering already ongoing processes.

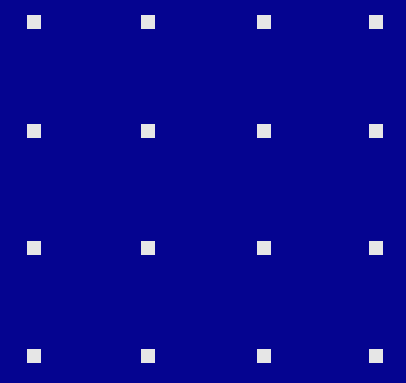




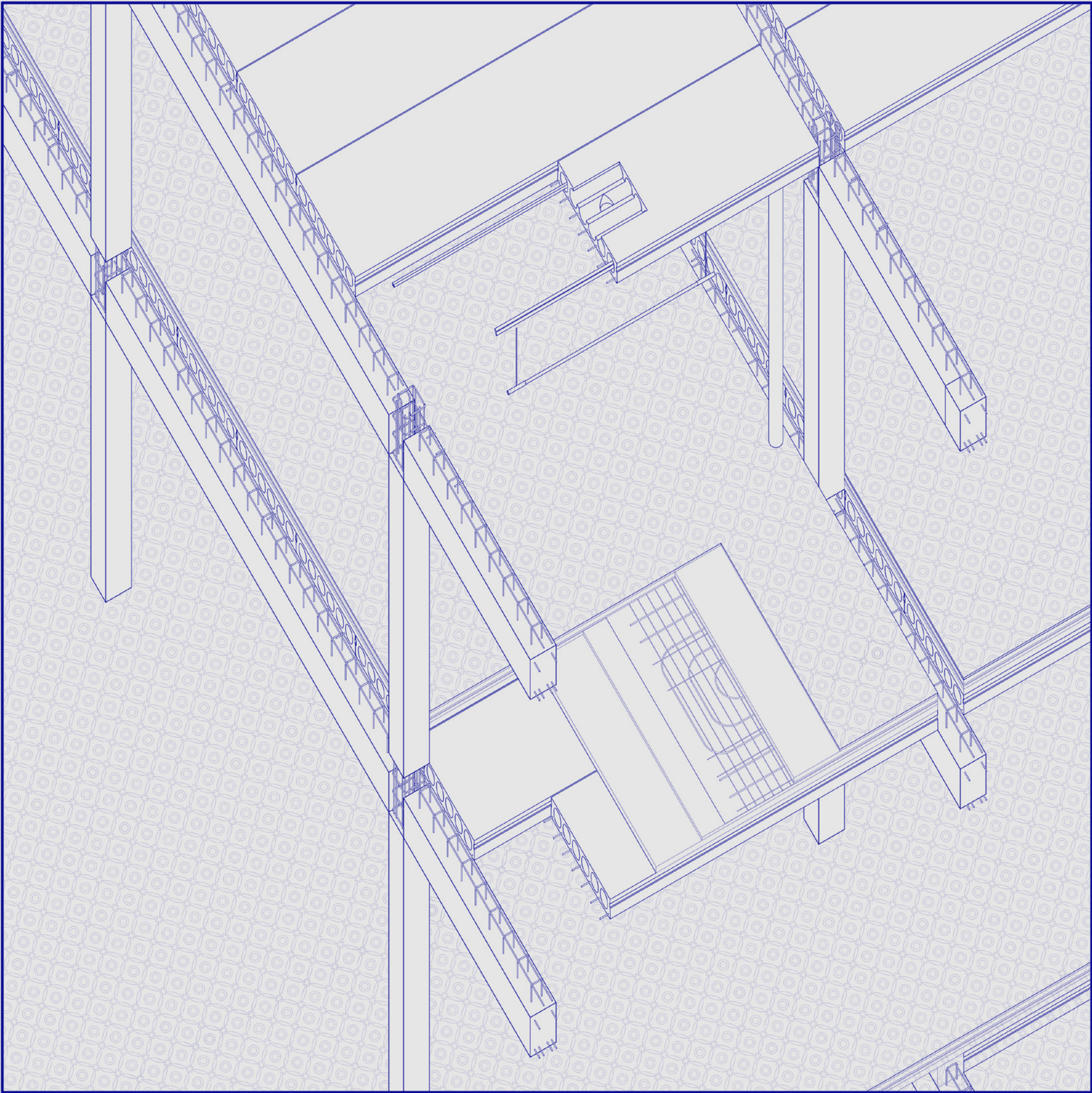
PLANES



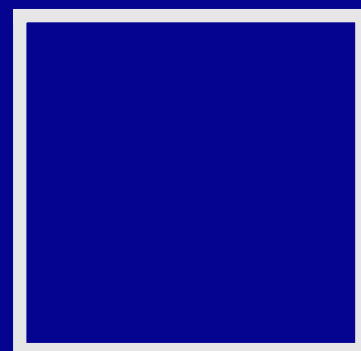




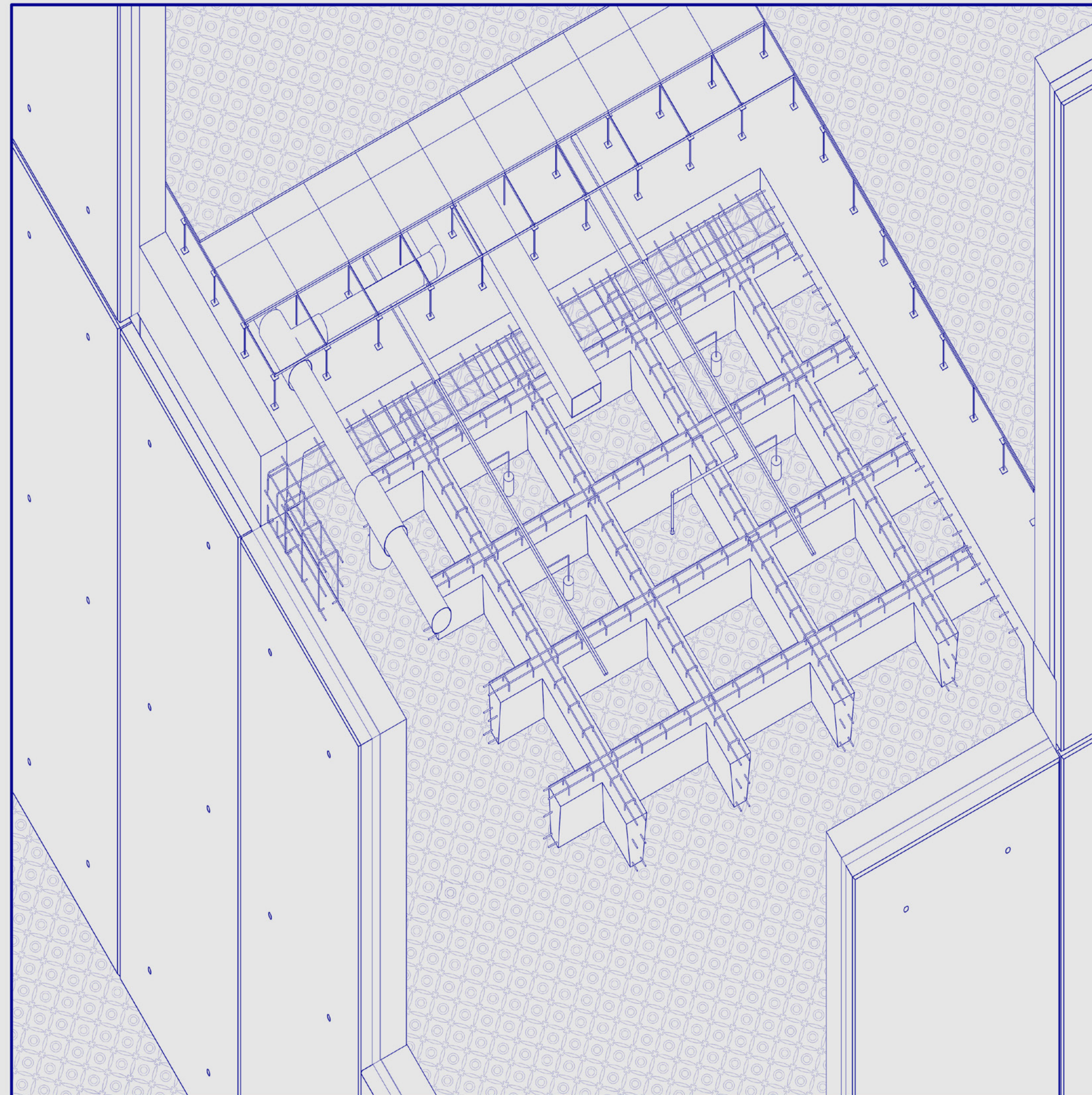
FREE PLAN



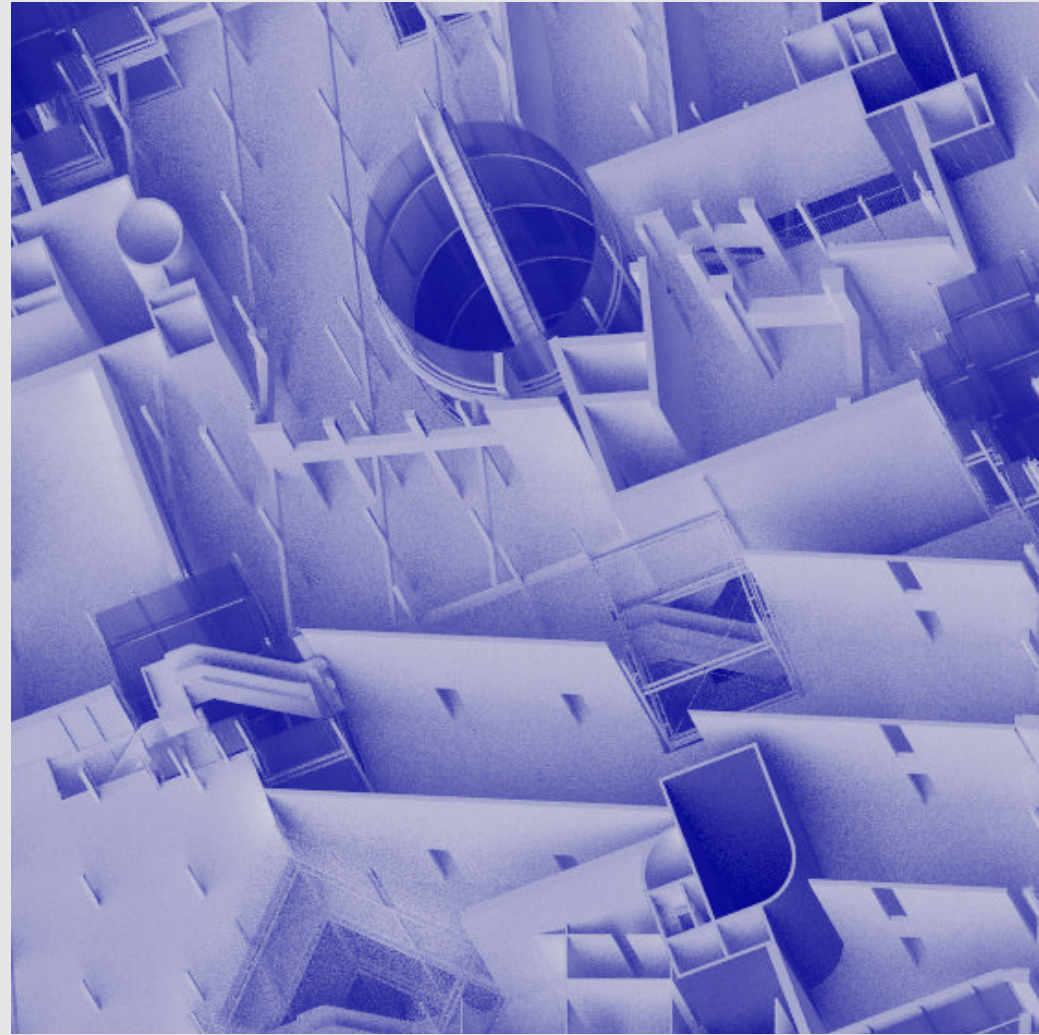




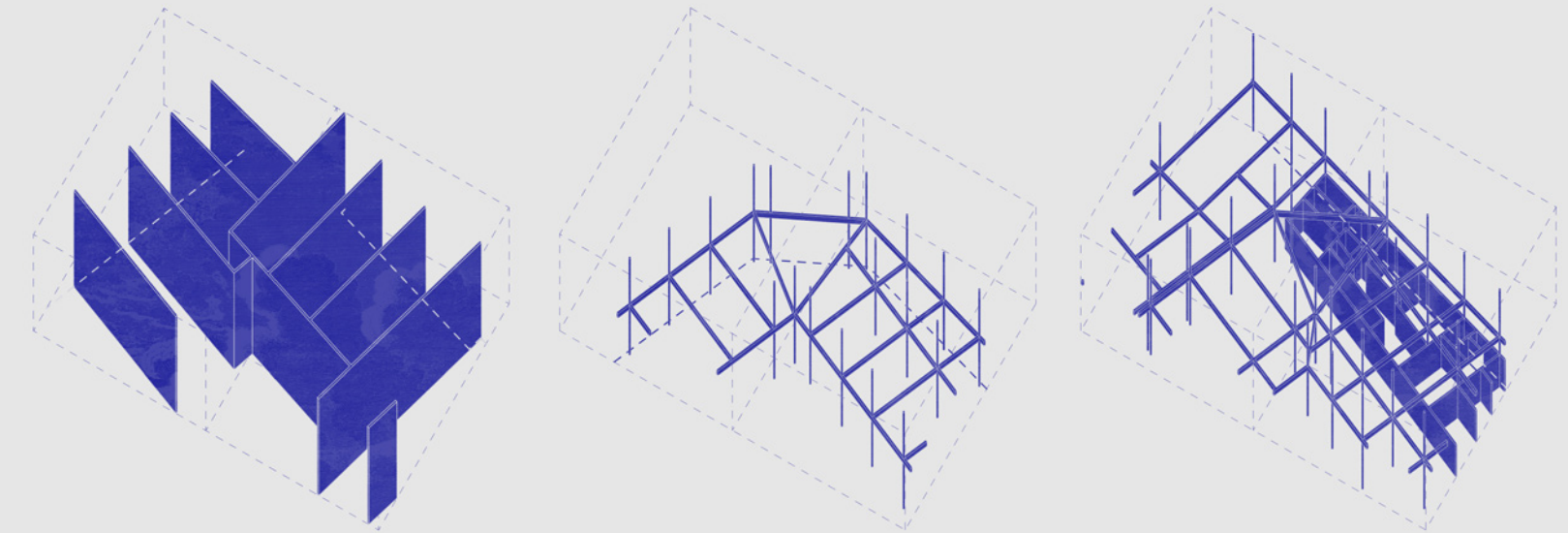
BOX







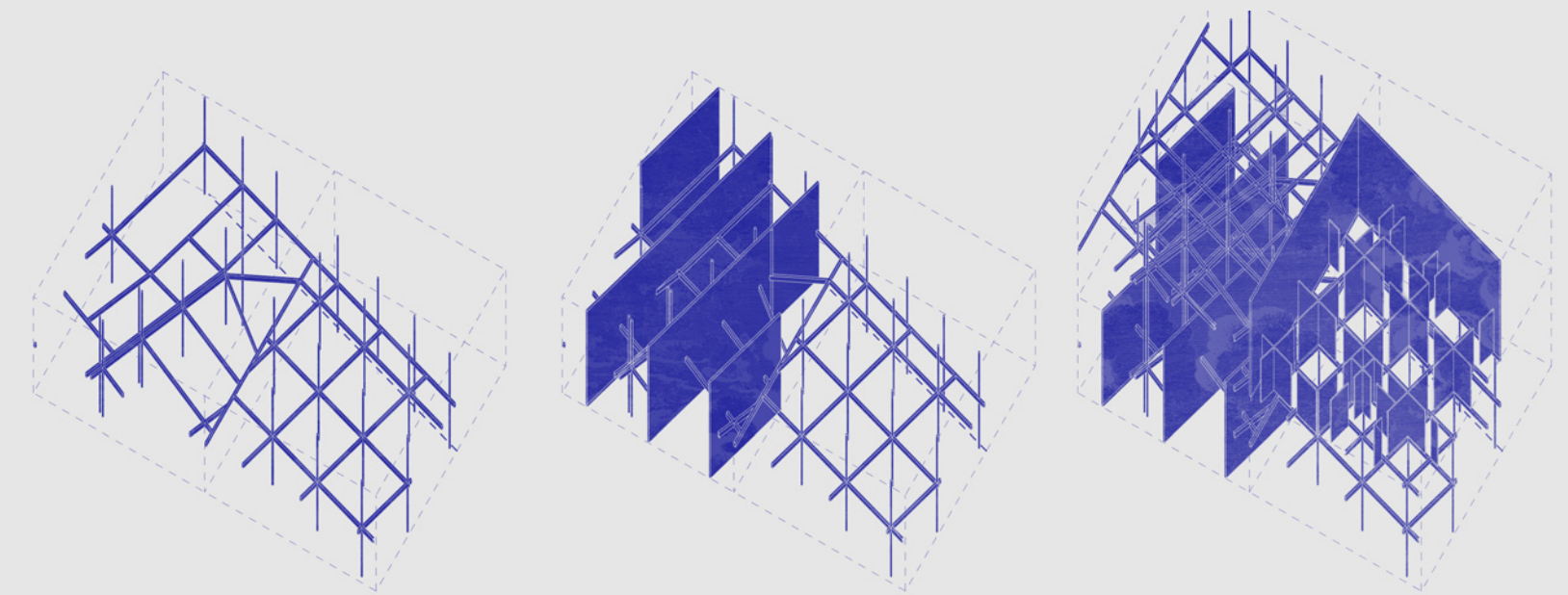
**PATH-DEPENDENT EVOLUTION**  
 NORMATIVE LEVEL ARCHITECTURE



1806

1906

2016



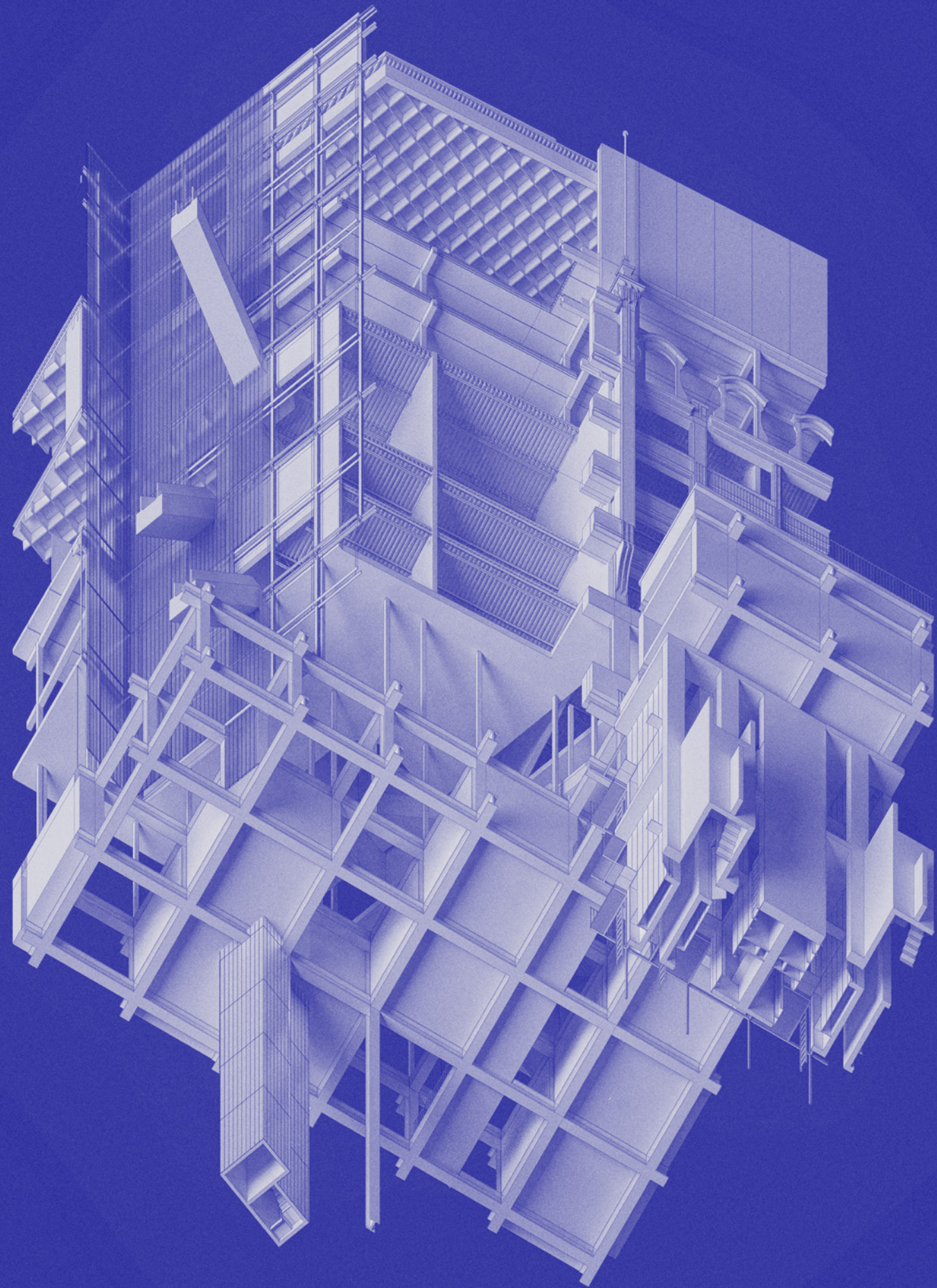
2016

2026

2036...

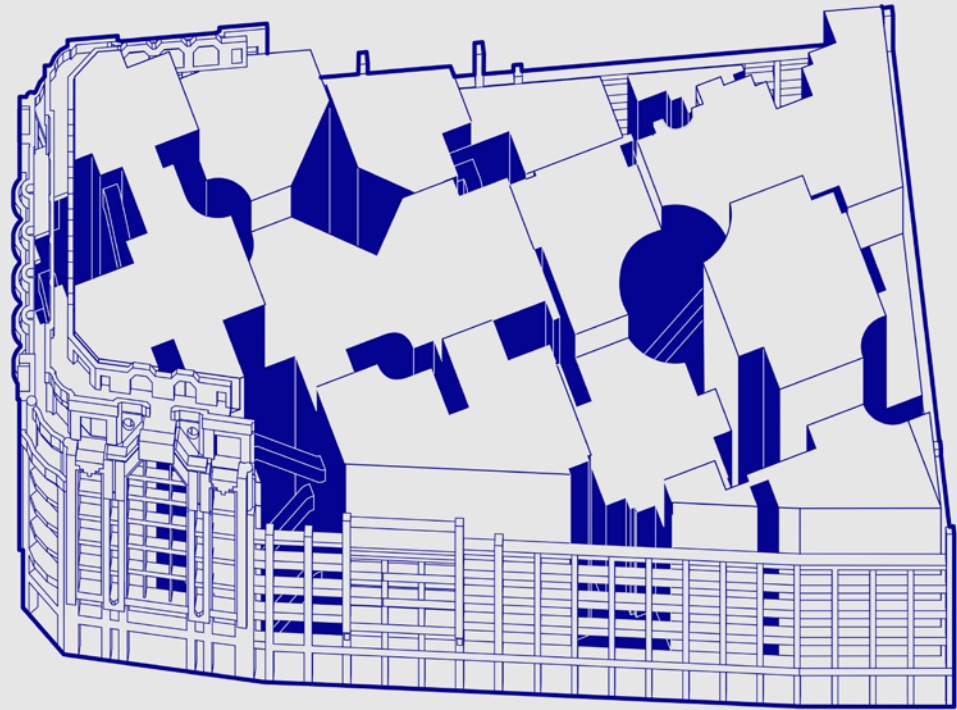
PROJECTION OF THE CHOSEN FRAGMENT INTO THE FUTURE (PAGE 81)





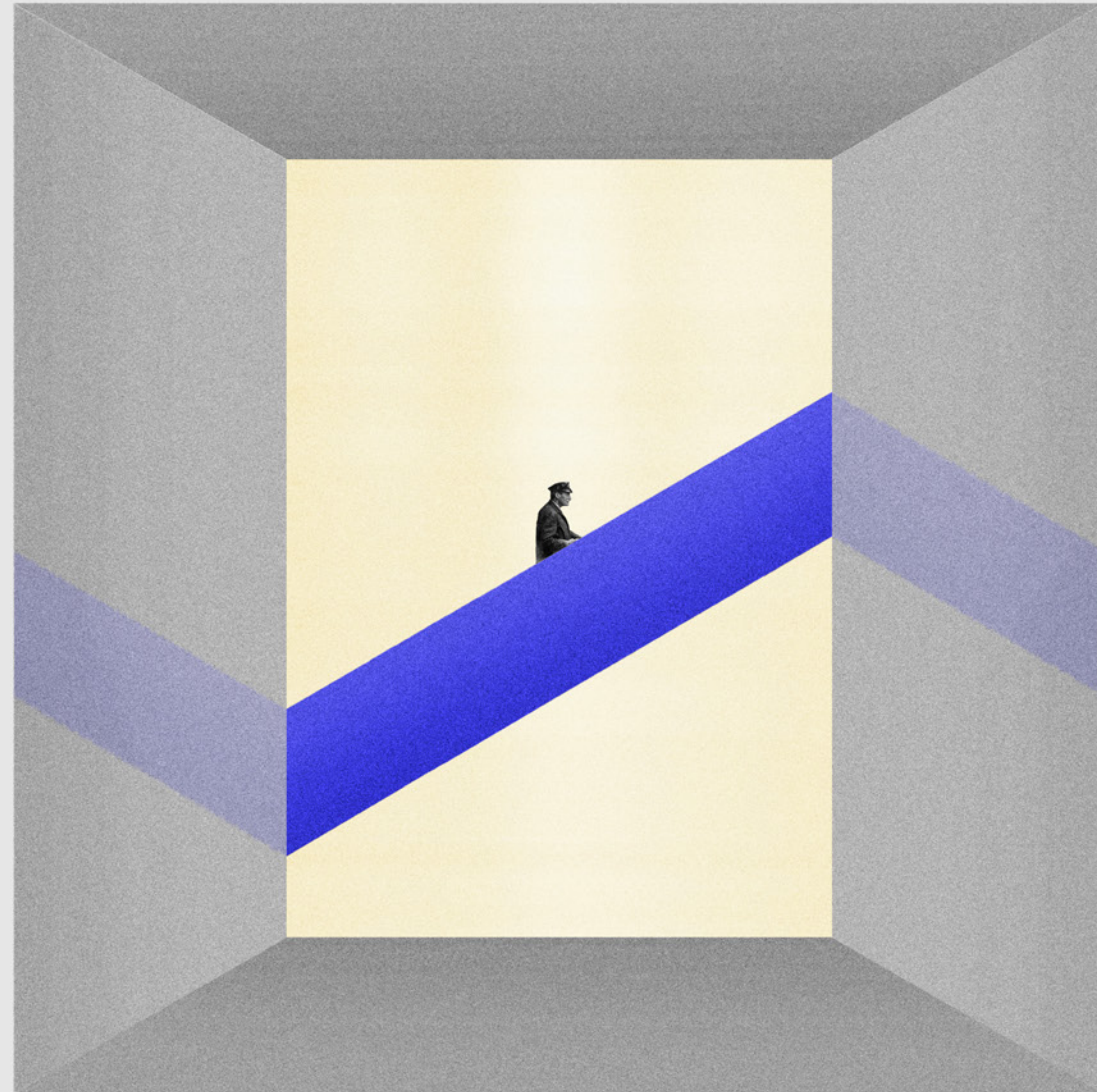
**STRUCTURES' ARTICULATION**  
WORM'S EYE AXONOMETRIC PROJECTION





**VOIDS** ARE PERPETUAL

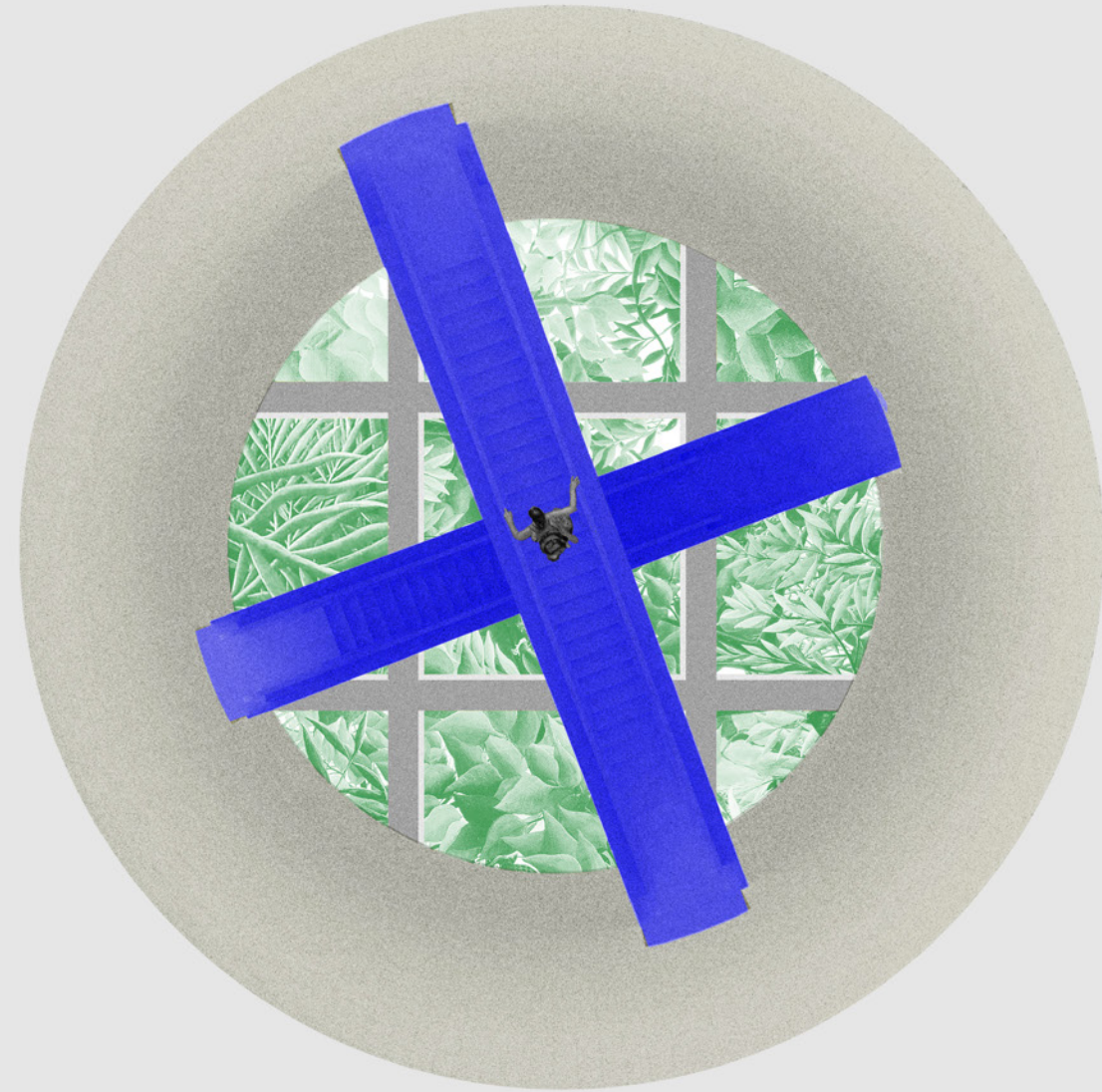




PROFILE VIEW

**VERTICAL CIRCULATION / REFLECTIVE**  
ANODIZED IRON

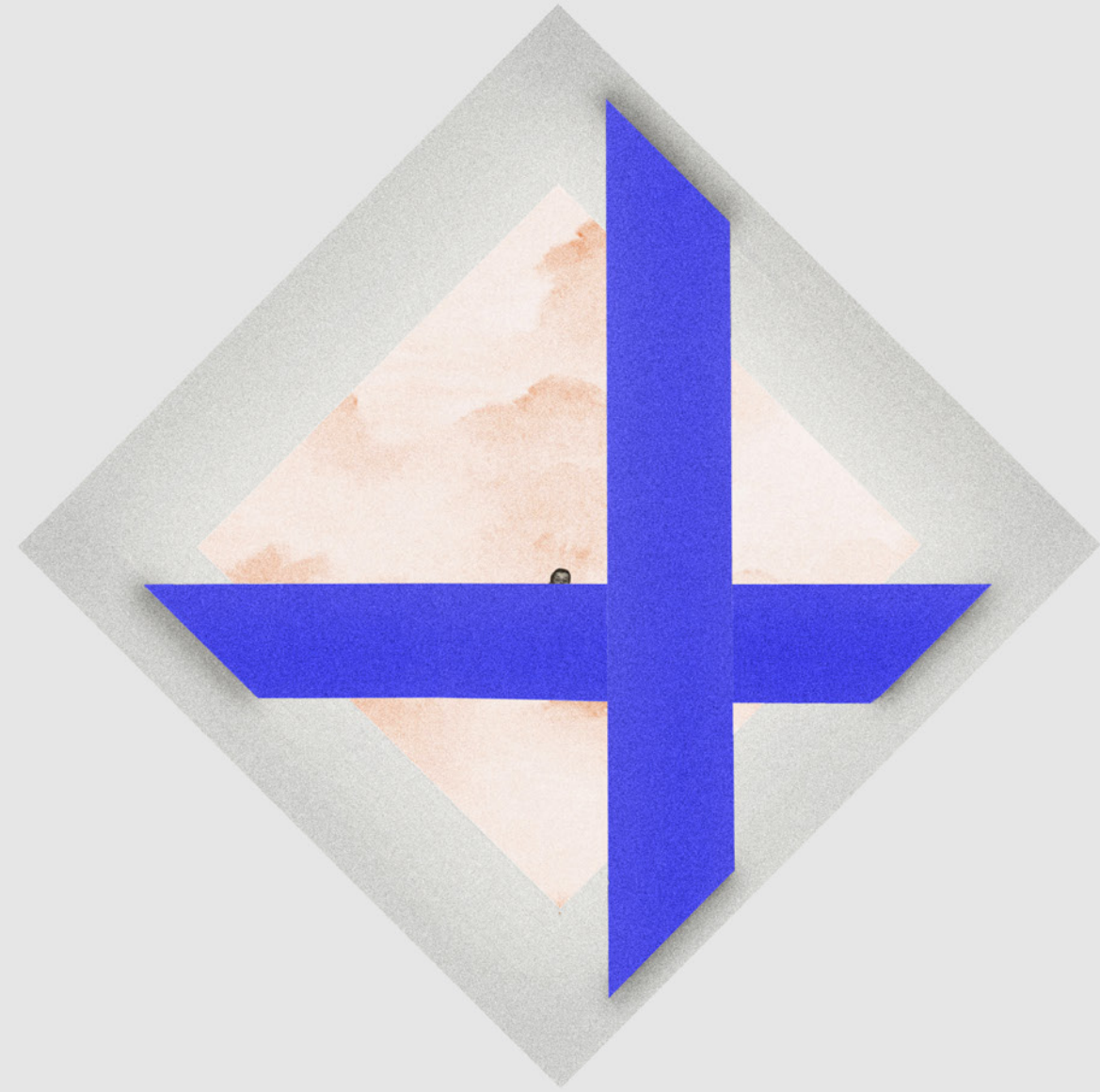




VIEW TOWARDS THE WINTER GARDEN

**LIGHT/ TRANSLUCENT**  
LOW IRON U-PROFILE GLASS PANELS, LAMINATED (MILK) GLASS WALL





**VENTILATION / POROUS**  
STAINLESS STEEL MESH

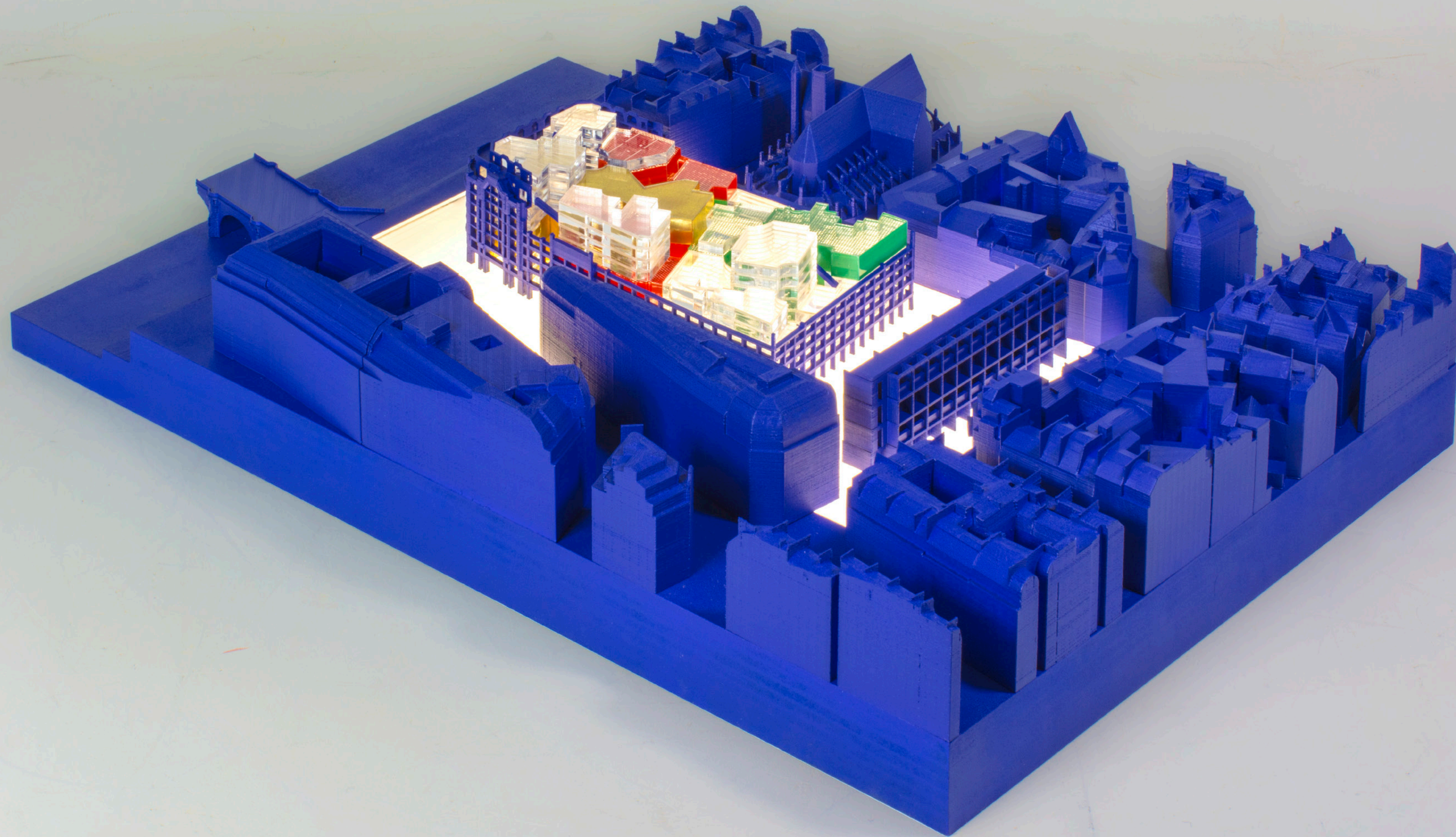
VIEW TOWARDS THE SKY



VOID CAPITAL IS NOT ABOUT FINISHED ARCHITECTURE.  
IT CONSTRUCTS CONDITIONS

VOID CAPITAL IS AN OPEN SOURCE ARCHITECTURAL BLUEPRINT.  
UNTIL COLOR, LIFE ITSELF, TAKES OVER





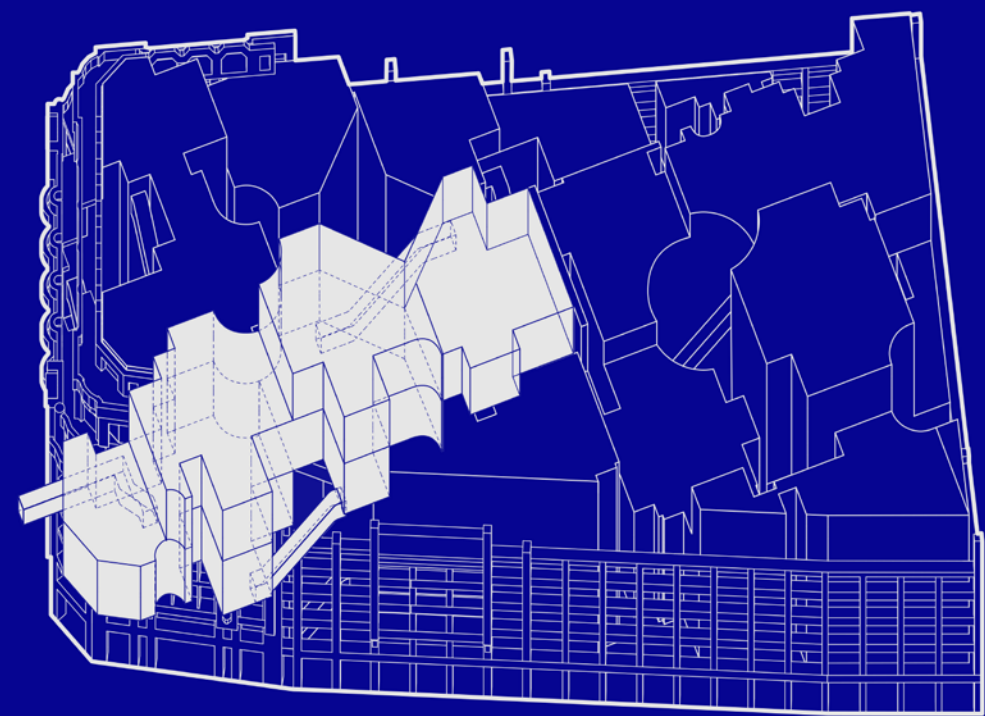


## DEPARTMENTS

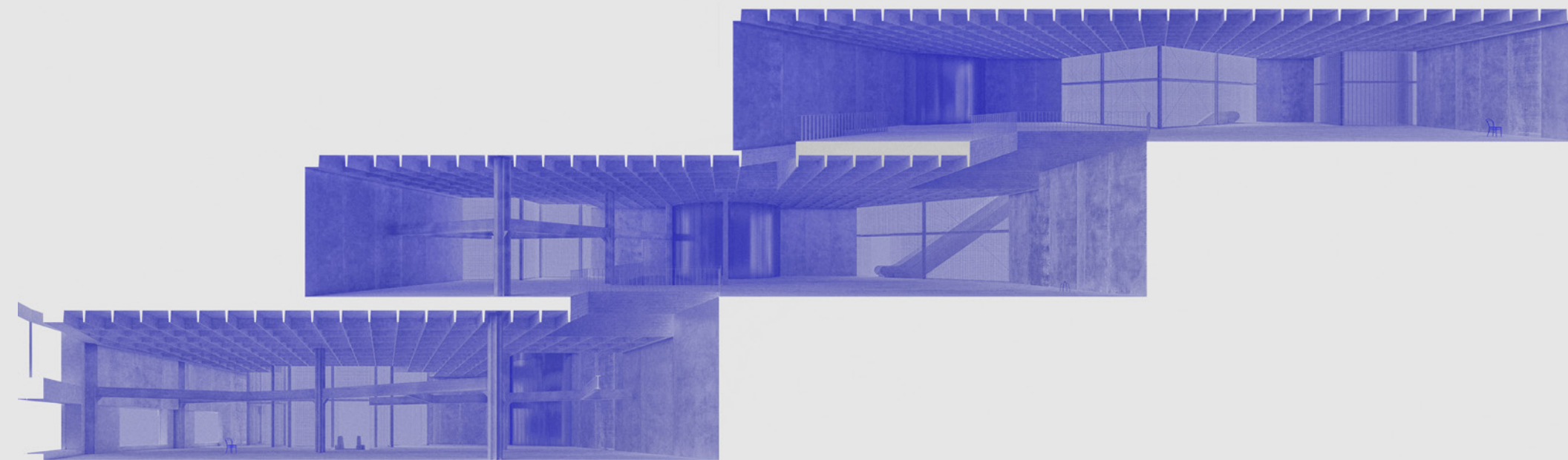
### THE BUILDINGS OF THE DEPARTMENT CITY

The original Parisian department store presented an exciting concentration of arts, crafts and services. It was within that context that the grand magasin became the simulacrum of Haussmann's city, within a single, massive building. As in the clearings of the urban fabric, the interior hall was the only element that, thanks to its various benefits, legitimated the outrageous size of such the building. The grand magasin manifested, better than anywhere else, that in the market economy, the void is needed. Nowadays, however, the majority of the Parisian interior halls have been closed. While today's city centre moves away from an exclusively commercial character, the commodity-based definition of the term "department" also fades away. In the Department City, the typologically homogeneous territories can operate independently from the rest of the building and can house multiple functions. Three examples are presented here.





ARTS DEPARTMENT SITUATION WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT CITY



ARTS DEPARTMENT LONGITUDINAL SECTION





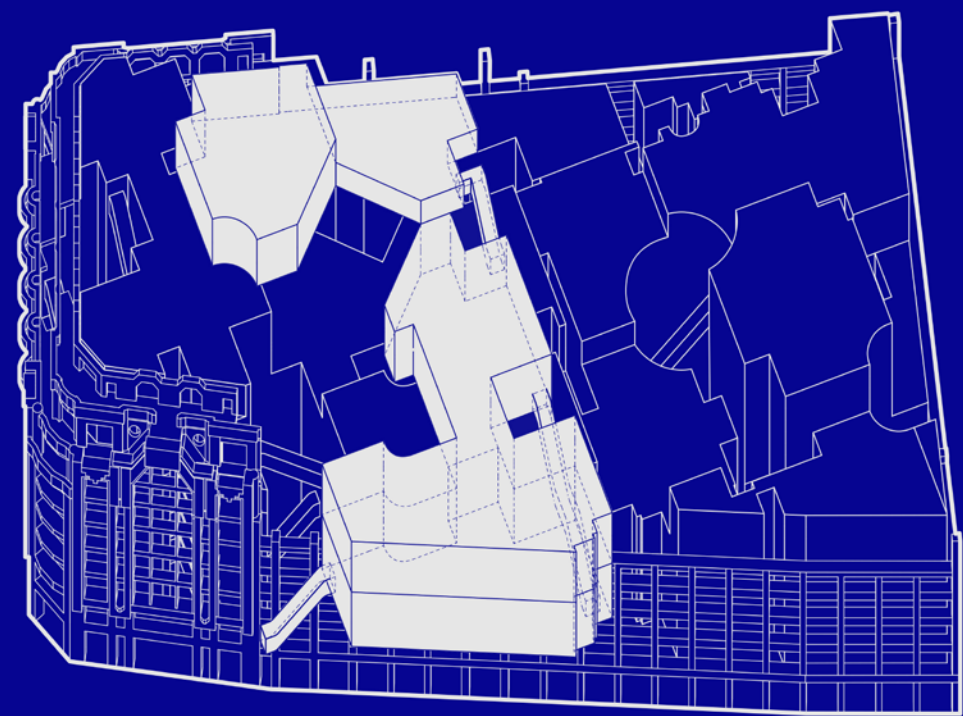
COMPLETION ARTS DEPARTMENT



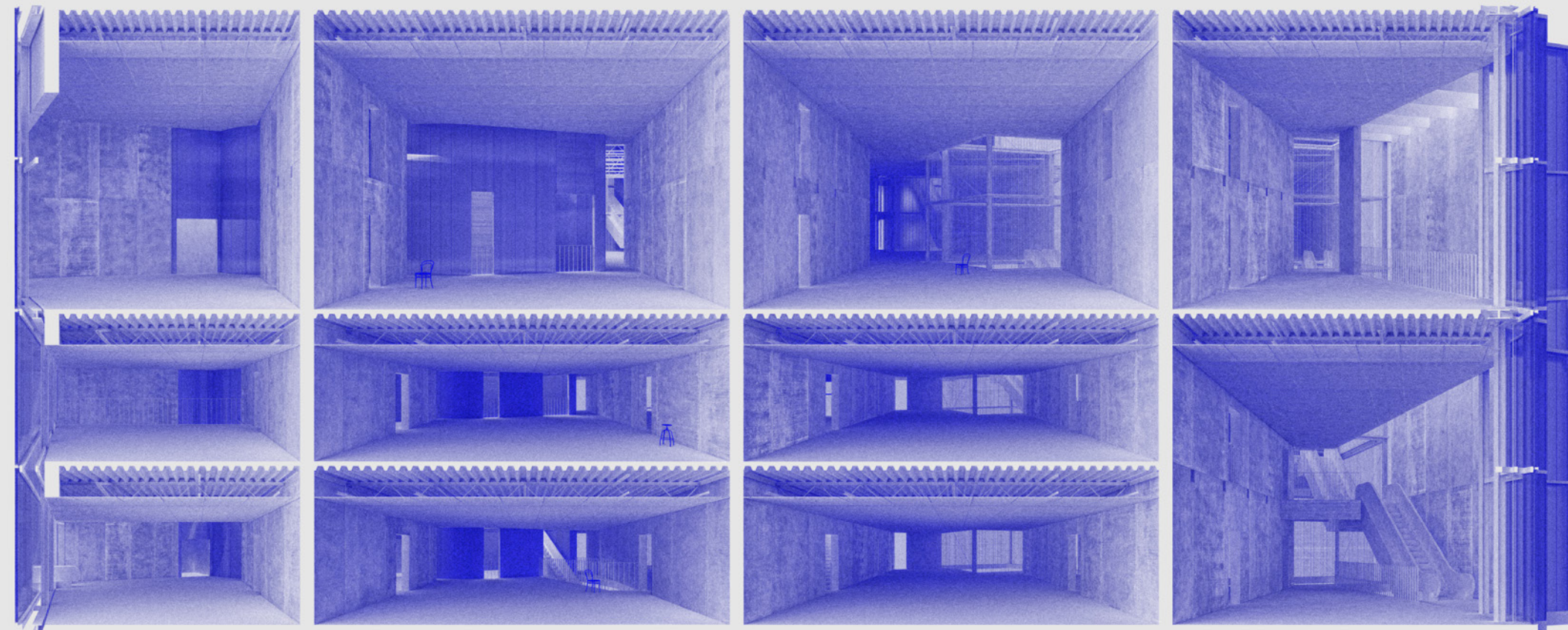


APPROPRIATION ARTS DEPARTMENT





CRAFTS DEPARTMENT SITUATION WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT CITY



CRAFTS DEPARTMENT CROSS SECTION



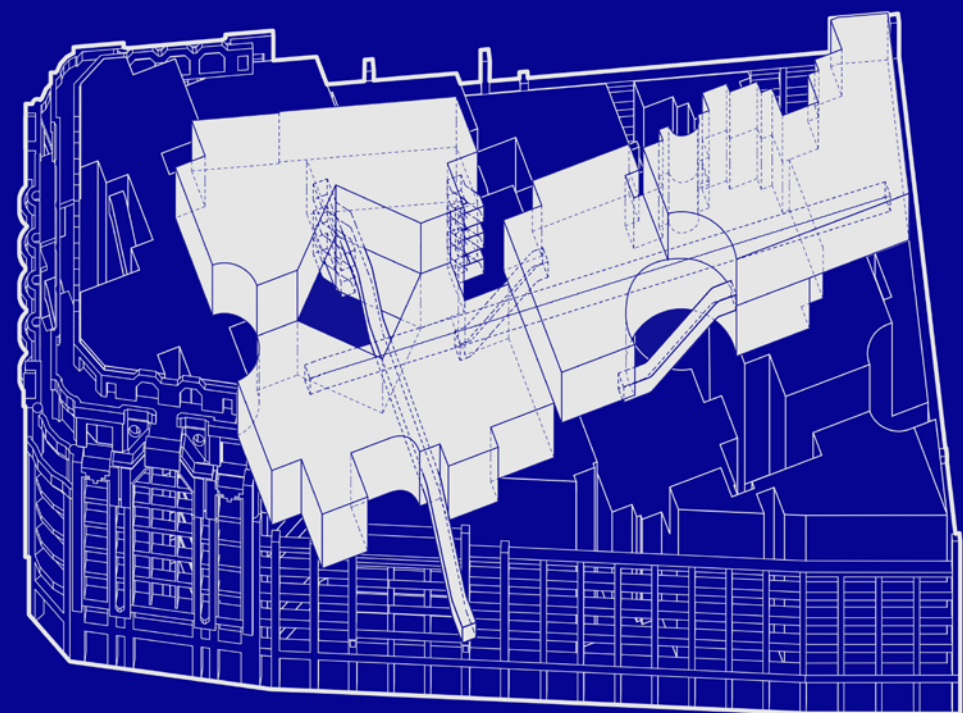


**COMPLETION** CRAFTS DEPARTMENT



**APPROPRIATION** CRAFTS DEPARTMENT



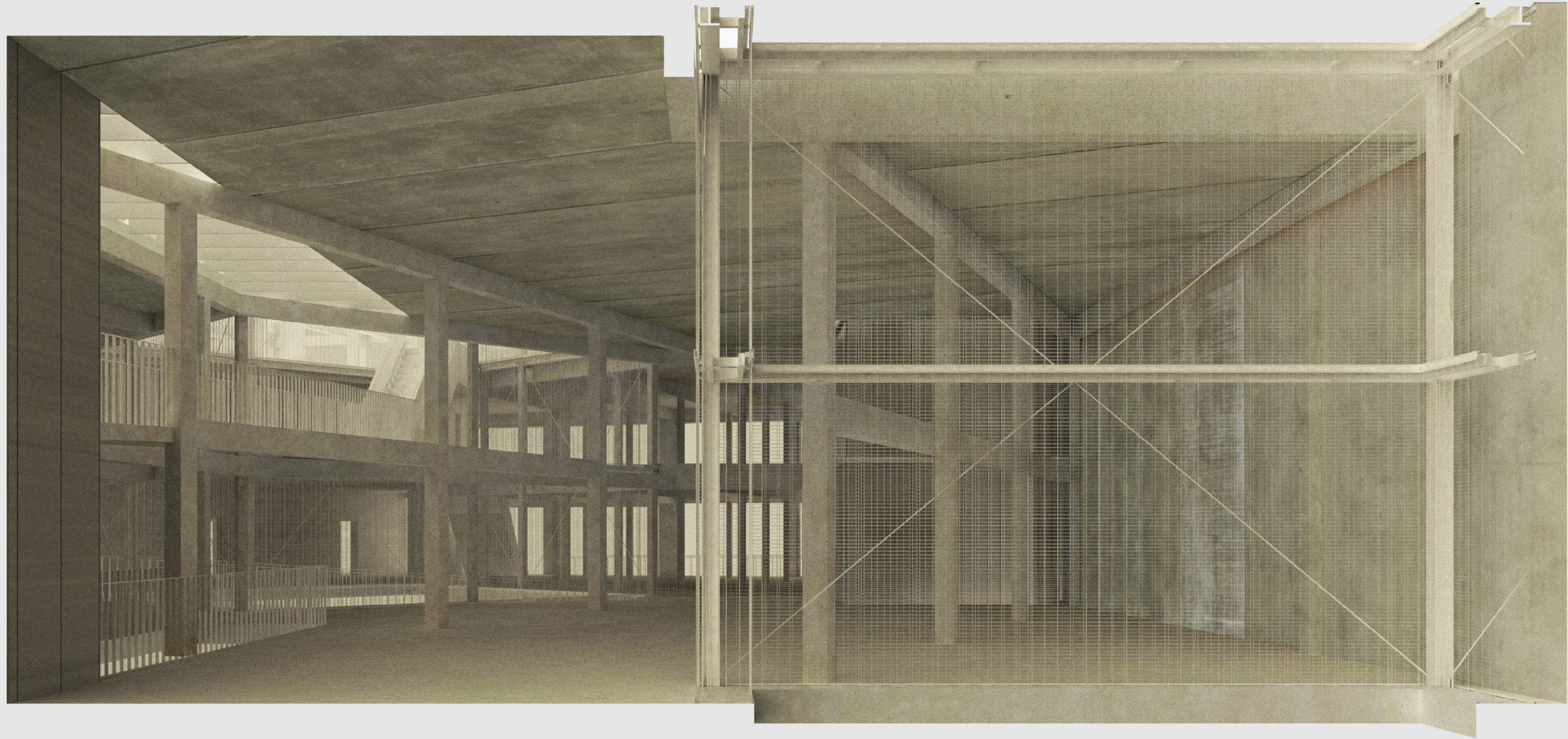


**SERVICES DEPARTMENT** SITUATION WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT CITY

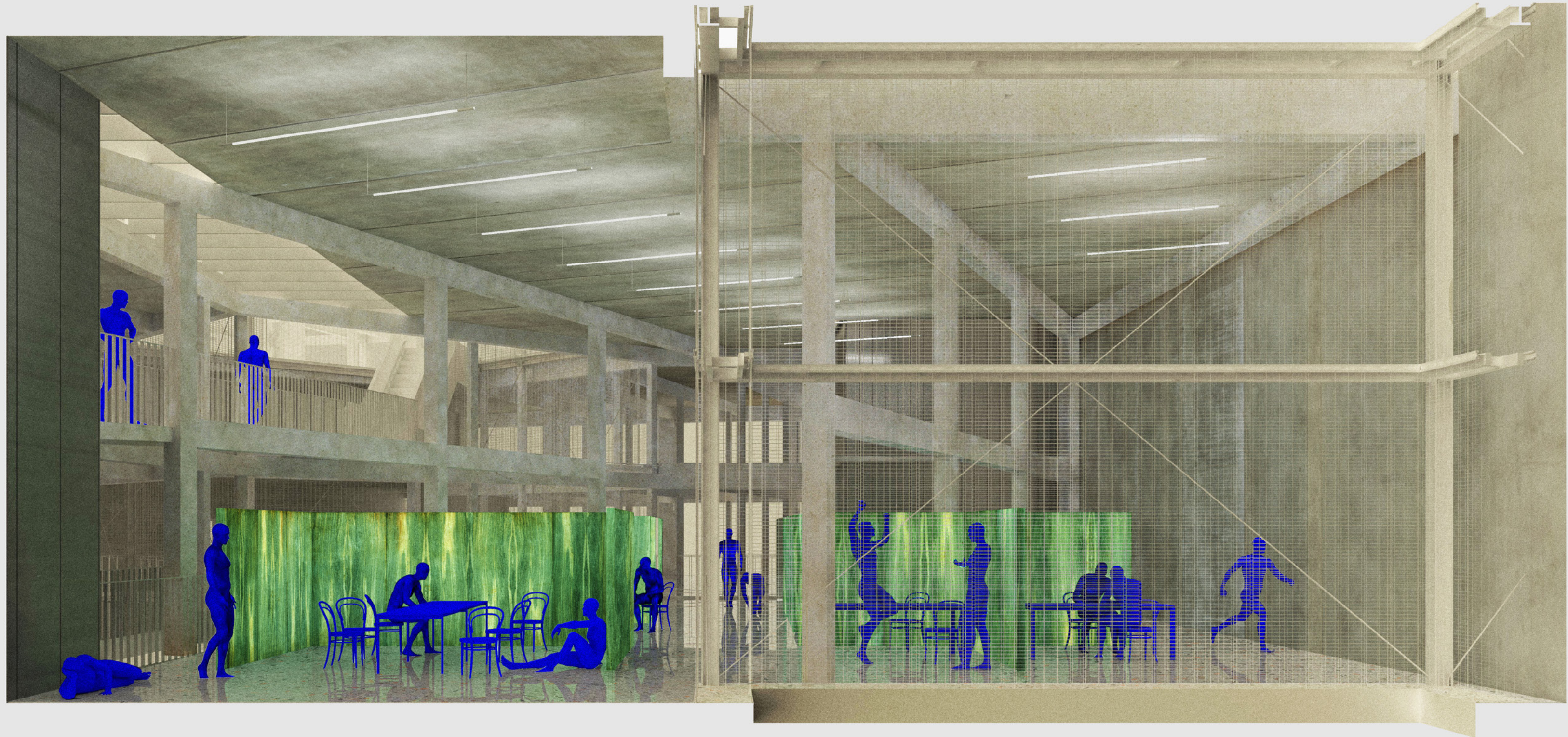


**SERVICES DEPARTMENT** LONGITUDINAL SECTION



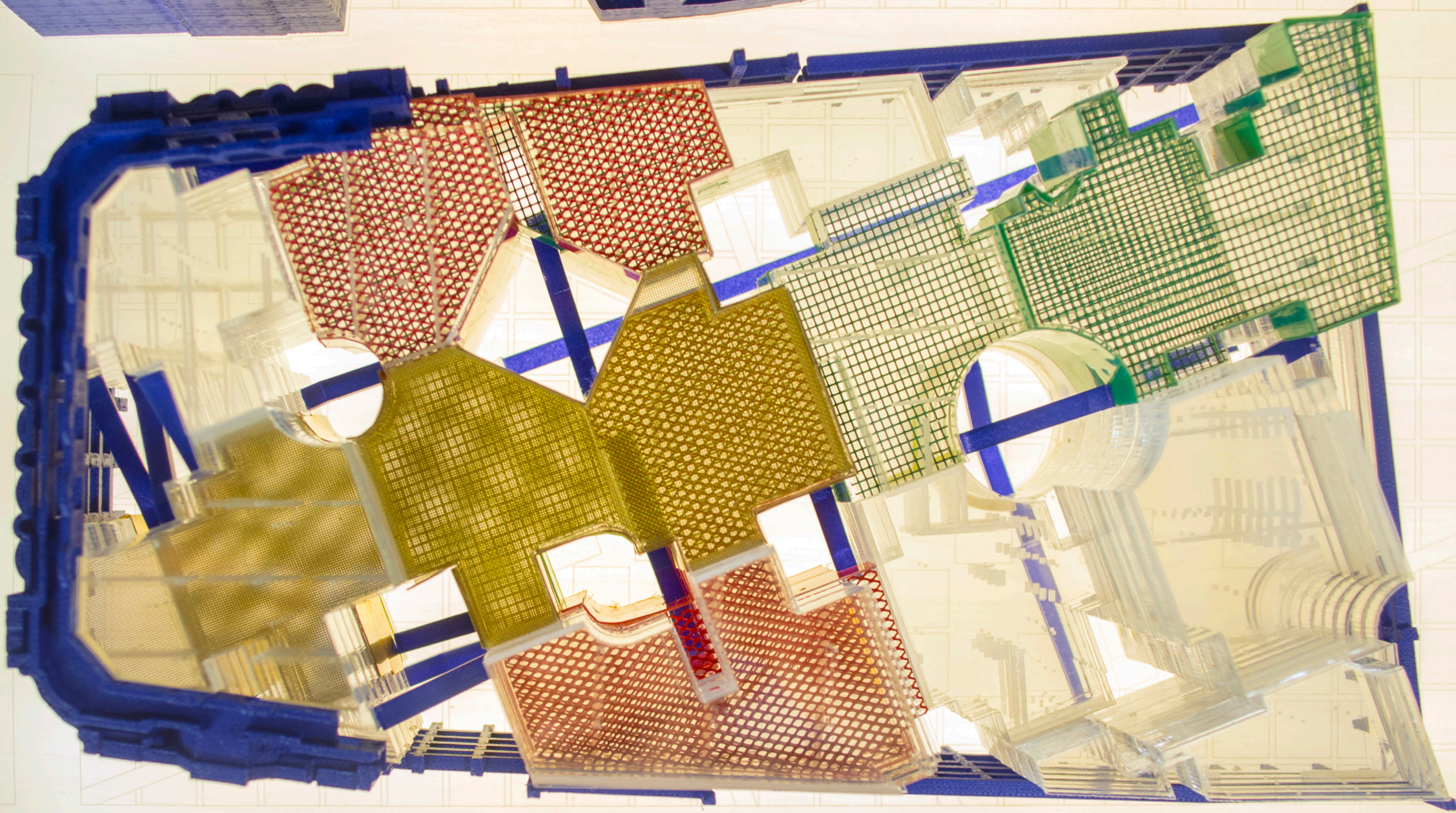






APPROPRIATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT

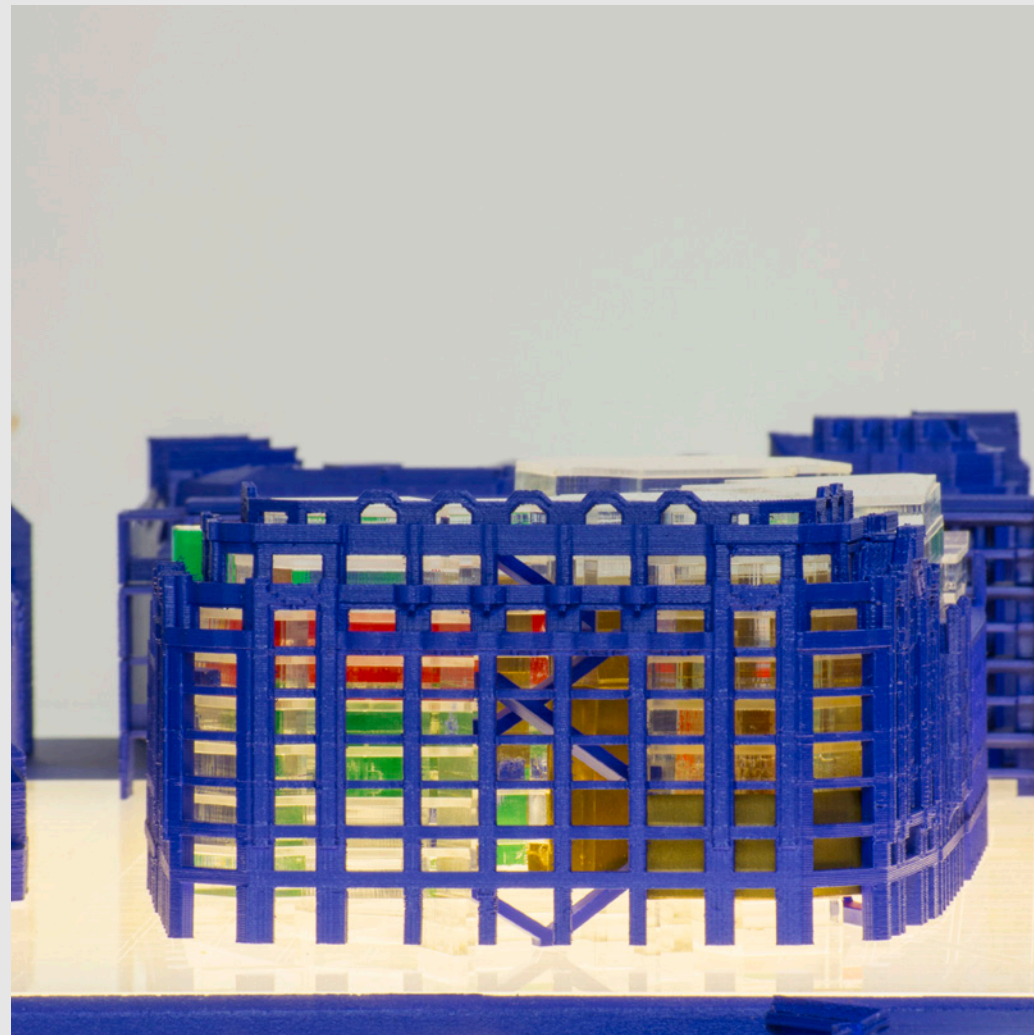






EPILOGUE





**VOID CAPITAL**  
THE CITY OF PERPETUAL MODERNITY

Modernity is fundamentally ephemeral. The re-actualisation of this fading image is one of the architects' main responsibilities. An architecture of minimal intervention; an architecture that prefers to create conditions rather than imposing solutions; an architecture flexible enough to accommodate unpredictable future uses; those are all issues at the heart of today's discourse within the discipline. As long as function withdraws from the past's creeds, the experimentation on the openness of the form, which does not limit itself into white-washed boxes, but also stimulates imagination with dream-like images), has to come into the fore. This is why, void's fundamental simplicity of form and potentially exciting performance can be of an interest for us today.

Someone could argue that form should not have the intention to result in a sequence of temporary images. This is understandable, however it is hard to imagine how architecture would be able to bypass the reality of the current economic model which does use similar tools (perhaps more intensely than ever). For the architect, constructing with the forms that already exist seems to be more demanding than inventing new ones. Representing architecture in its most primal qualities, namely in solids and voids, is a task that turns our focus to the composition itself. Revisiting the role that the void can have in the emergence of new urban practices presents a double potential: grasp the commodified character of the existing models, but instead of doing another tabula rasa take advantage of them and allow modern ones to occur.



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