

HARMONISING WITH DISSONANCE

COMMON MARKET FOR KELDRIMÄE

3	ABSTRACT
4	PART 1: INTRODUCTION
6	PART 2: APPROACH
12	PART 3: RESULT
20	PART 4: DISCUSSION
22	BACKMATTER

Tallinn is a dissonant city, constituted by fragmentary materialisations of superimposed layers of historical visions, that were developed under radically different socio-political frameworks. The resulting dissonance reaches from the large urban scale, down to the human experience of the city. Today, Tallinn is subject to progressive “smoothing”, homogenising and commercialising its cityscape, based on the exclusion of materially and socially dissonant elements. This is especially tangible in the Central Market of Tallinn, that is characterised by dissonant heritage, the Soviet market hall, on the one hand, and a dissonant community, Russian speaking vendors and market-goers, on the other. Its isolation and poor condition, has brought the market under imminent threat of demolition, which would eliminate the storied history of the site and eliminate its characteristic dissonance. By problematising fragmentation and valuing a generative reading of dissonance, based on the notion of defamiliarisation, a new proposal is drafted, that attempts to turn Keskturg from a poorly maintained commercial space into a common local centre, fostering both the connection between isolated communities and the fragments of built heritage on site. It attempts this by bringing together difference – instead of superficially smoothing, it harmonises with Tallinn's *dissonance*.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

PROBLEM AND RELEVANCE

The project develops from a view on Tallinn as a dissonant city, constituted by fragmentary materialisations of superimposed layers of historical visions, that were developed under radically different and opposing socio-political frameworks. This reading is transscalar: reaching from the large urban scale, down to the human experience of the city.

But today, Tallinn is subject to progressive “smoothing” (see Boer 2023) – the homogenisation and commodification of its cityscape, that manifests itself in the musealisation of the old town¹, the lack of freely accessible public space, previously existing communal grounds being sold off, becoming sites for property development and the spread of shopping malls, that have internalised much of the public life and commerce activity (ibid., 74f.). Historically, the city's development was shaped by various ideas of centrality, leaving it without a definitive centre. Today, it is shifting development to the port area (see Tallinn Harbour 2017), but both the remnants of former centres and new developments do not provide freely accessible public interiors. Instead, constructions like “private public spaces” and shopping malls dominate recent developments. They are based on market logics and aim for the fabrication of a homogenous, smooth experience at the cost of excluding materially dissonant elements and financially insolvent population groups (see Boer 2023, 96f.). I believe that local sub-centres can combat this isolation and become backbones for public life in the neighbourhoods. By integrating necessary services and amenities into the quarters, they could become a crucial cornerstone of the vision to turn Tallinn into a “15-minute city”, that is laid out in the Tallinn 2035 development strategy (see City of Tallinn 2020). Meanwhile, the future of so-called dissonant Soviet heritage² is uncertain: it frequently lays unused and is often prepared for demolition, which would erase a critical historical layer from the cityscape.

In the field of these issues, the project takes shape: it proposes to see the “unfinished” (EKA 2021), “disjunct” (Tschumi 1994), heterogeneous character of Tallinn as a strength and, rather than demolish, critically engage with its dissonant Soviet heritage, shaping a space that addresses both the social and material dissonances. This results in the following question:

How can we design with Tallinn's urban dissonance to shape local centres, that address the ongoing smoothing of public space and isolation of communities?



1 DISSONANT ENCOUNTERS

¹ even anachronistically, flattening the development over centuries into a superficially coherent “medieval” tourist commodity
² used in the context of the Urban Agenda for the EU to denote “potentially problematic or controversial heritage” (Bull 2021)



2 SOVIET MARKET HALL WITH PROJECTED REDEVELOPMENT



3 REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL ON INTERIOR WALL

SITE AND SCOPE

The site for the project is the Central Market (Keskturg) in Keldrimäe, a neighbourhood bordering the Maakri district and right outside Kesklinn. It is a part of Tallinn, that has not yet been *smoothed*, on one hand providing space for an isolated Russian-speaking community but on the other, falling into disrepair and retaining stigma for its Soviet history and presence of the Russian language.

In Soviet planning, Keldrimäe was considered a “microrayon”, a quarter with its own amenities and the market at its center (see Port 1983). Until today, only the market hall¹ (accompanied by later additions and infills) is realised, leaving the local center incomplete. Previous plans, drafted by Estonian architect Olga Bruns for Eesti Projekt, also feature communal functions for the quarter (see Bruns 1968). The project builds on the unrealised plan and attempts to combat the existing isolation of the community, allowing for encounters in a public space, by amending the market with a new interpretation of its originally planned communal programme, turning it into a truly common space.²

Keldrimäe is one of the districts that were “renewed” under Soviet planning and prototypical for the materially heterogeneous cityscape of Tallinn: old wooden houses are enclosed by massive Soviet blocks, whose courtyards and open squares have been filled in with recent developments and parking lots³. The condition of the existing building stock on site is poor and the functional

density, especially in colder months, is relatively low. Because of this, the neighbourhood, and the market area in particular, faces immense pressures of modernisation and densification. An investment firm has bought the land and is planning to redevelop the site. KOKO architect’s proposal for the investor would incur demolishing the assemblage of market buildings, sheds and a building from the tsarist time, in favour of a dense urban block [3]. This would eliminate the storied history of the site and eliminate its characteristic dissonance. While the plans to redevelop have been postponed by multiple years due to lacking investment, the future of Keskturg remains uncertain. Inversely to the developer’s proposal, the project aims to alleviate the stigma towards the market by addressing, not erasing its dissonant heritage, retaining and highlighting the relationship between the historical layers on the site.

Because of these specific conditions and the contemporary pressure, Keskturg could become a prototype for engaging with Tallinn’s social and material dissonance, allowing for an application of the broader research question to the site:

How can Tallinn’s Central Market be transformed from a poorly maintained commercial space into a common local centre, to foster both the connection between isolated communities and the fragments of built heritage on site, through encounters of difference, rather than superficial smoothing?

1 for the special role of markets in the Soviet central-planning system, see Šiupšinskas & Lankots, 2019

2 literature on commons ### to insert ###

3 for changes (and infill phenomenon specifically) in Soviet neighbourhoods post 1991 see Mariotti & Leetmaa 2024 and see EKA, 2021

PART 2: APPROACH

METHOD AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The project is based on a theoretical framework, that problematises the fragmentation, I observed on the fieldtrip to Tallinn, as an ill-addressed issue. By conceptualising *dissonance* as generative, it presents an alternative to the prevalent *smoothing* of Tallinn's historically layered cityscape, which has itself, formed isolated pockets of *smooth* space in the city. *Dissonance* is seen as engendering the confrontation between fragments, combatting the ongoing smoothing and creating rich spaces of difference.

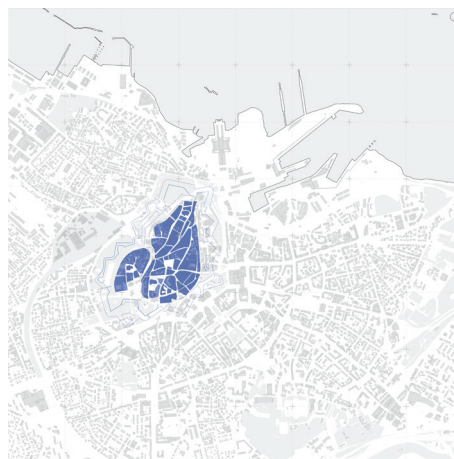
This conception of dissonance is constructed from multiple methodical angles.

1. Archive Research: Tracing Fragmentary Visions

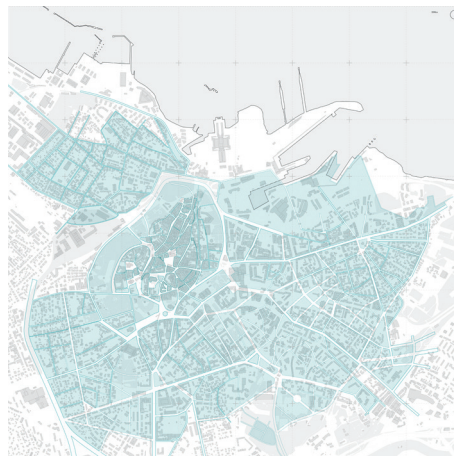
The first angle is contextual field- and archive research: in pair work with Adrienne Woo Woon Cheong, we initially collect master plans that have guided the city's development and lay them over the figure-ground plan today. Through this, the heterogeneity of the city becomes evident: none of the master plans were completely realised – Tallinn remains an “Unfinished City” (EKA 2021), not following a coherent logic from any one of the plans. Instead, the city reads as the amalgamation of various fragmentary realisations of these radically different visions.

2. Plan Analysis: Different Logics of Centrality

Their backgrounding frameworks shape the character of these visions. By analysing the plan drawings, we can find differences, that we can trace to different notions of centrality: the medieval city is dominated by the logic of the bastion, enclosed by the city wall. Inside, all central functions find their place, most notably the market square – the civic and commercial center of the city. Saarinen's plan for an expansion, influenced by the development of other European capitals like Paris and Berlin at the time, “Greater Tallinn”, retains the medieval core, but turns its bastion belt into a green belt and ring road. For expansion of the city, he plans with large radiating street axes, placing squares and public functions at their intersections. In the second Soviet masterplan centres are classified in three grades – *A centres* with national importance, such as large public institutions like the national library or Linnahall, *B centres* with city wide importance like the central post office or the Central Market and *C centres*, that provide amenities on the scale of the quarter or “*microrayon*”. In post-Soviet planning, the logics seem market-driven, creating development zones across the city, such as Maakri business district or the renovation of first Rotterman, then the Telliskivi and Kalamaja area. Instead of municipal planning, developments are often in private hands and focus on the creation of commercial centres. This is especially evident with the establishment of shopping malls, that have largely internalised both commercial activity and public life. With the establishment of development zones, main centres of activity shift – right now towards the port, driven by a new master plan for the area (see Tallinn Harbour 2017).



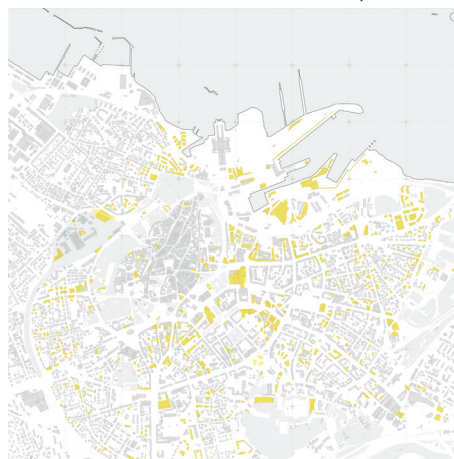
4 MEDIEVAL REVAL CITY PLAN, 1699*



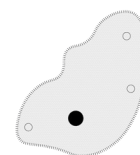
6 SUUR-TALLINN MASTER PLAN, 1913*



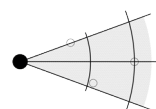
5 SECOND SOVIET MASTER PLAN, 1968*



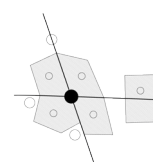
7 POST-SOVET DEVELOPMENTS, 1991-*



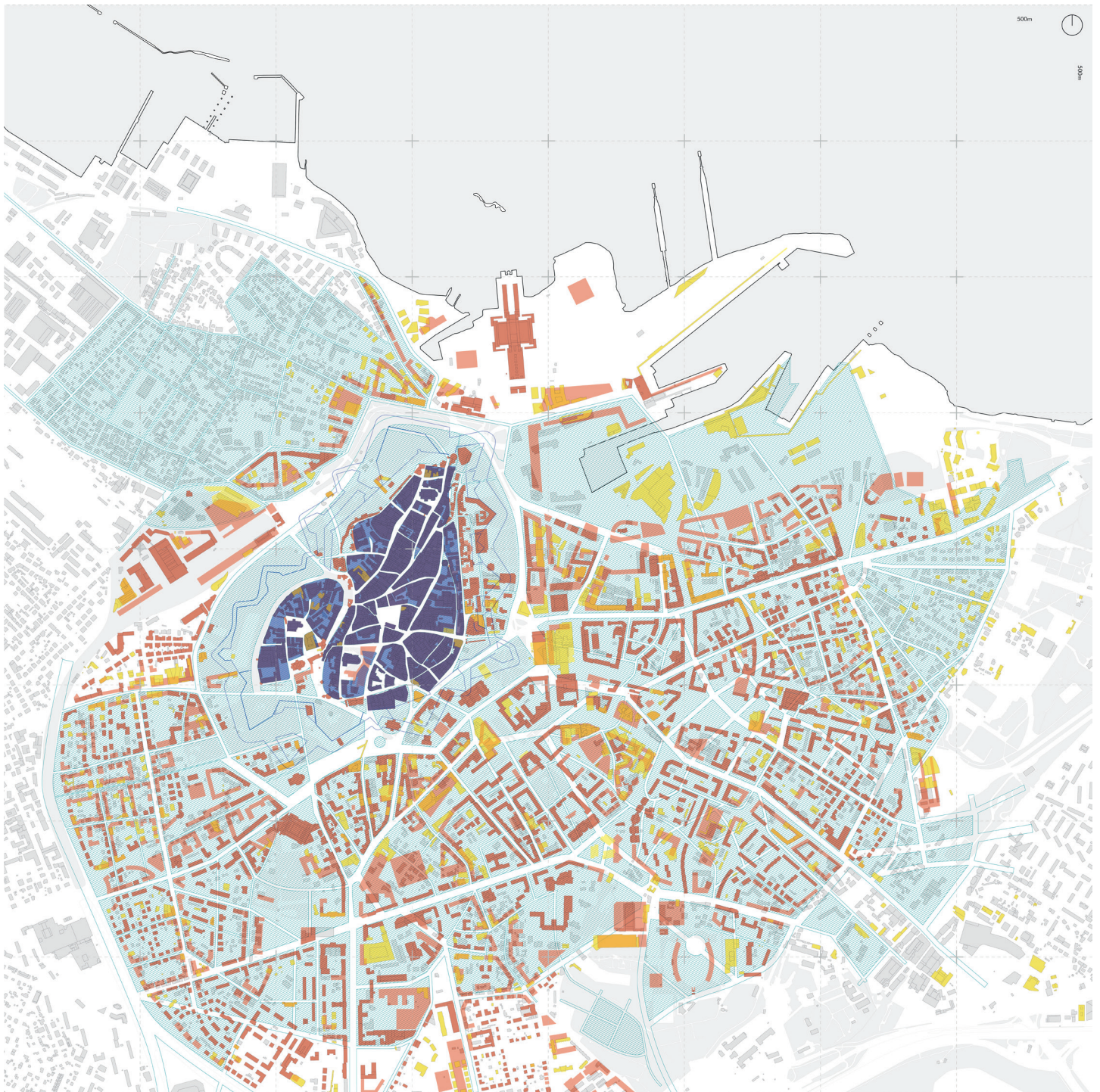
8 WALL - AND CORE



9 RADIATING



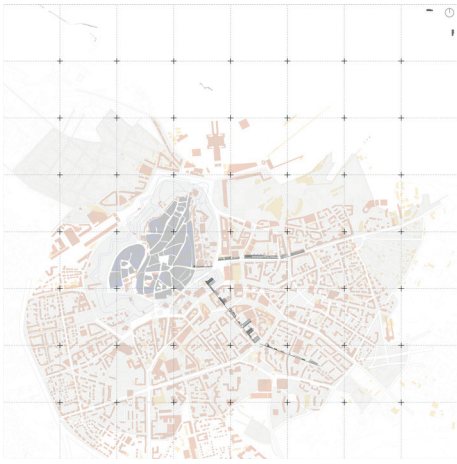
10 ABC



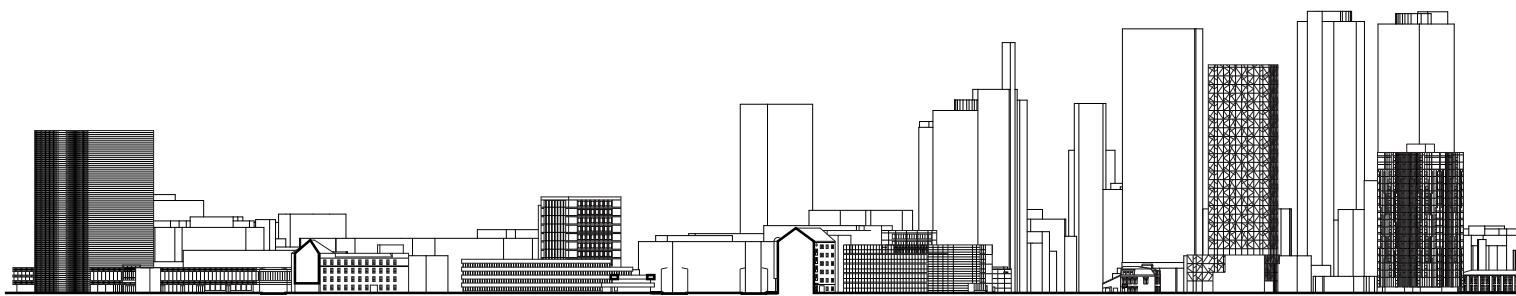
11 SUPERIMPOSED MASTER PLANS*

3. Relational Reading of Plans: Clashes in Visions

By superimposing the plans, we can identify areas with high concentrations of clashing visions. In the old town, the plans mostly match up, leaving it as a fragment, that has largely lost its former functions, whereas the area surrounding the bastion ring features a high density of clashes in vision.



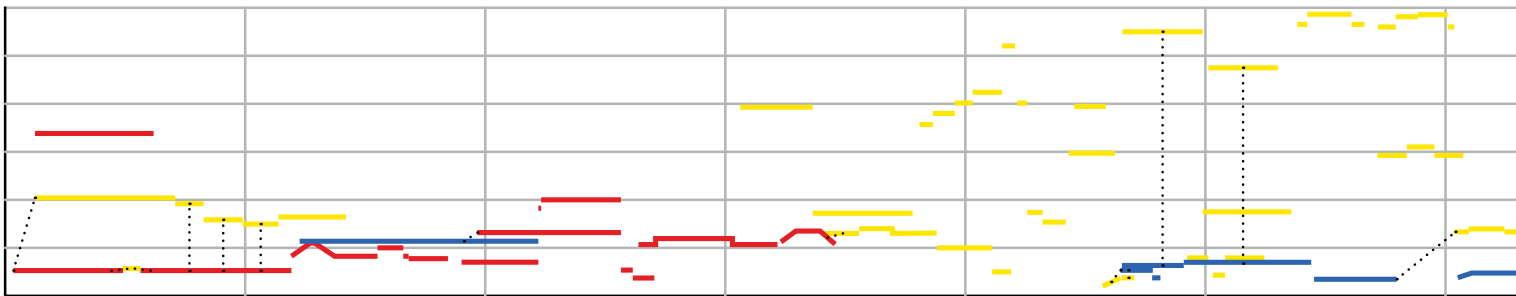
15 SECTION LOCATION*



12 URBAN SECTION



13 CODED URBAN SECTION

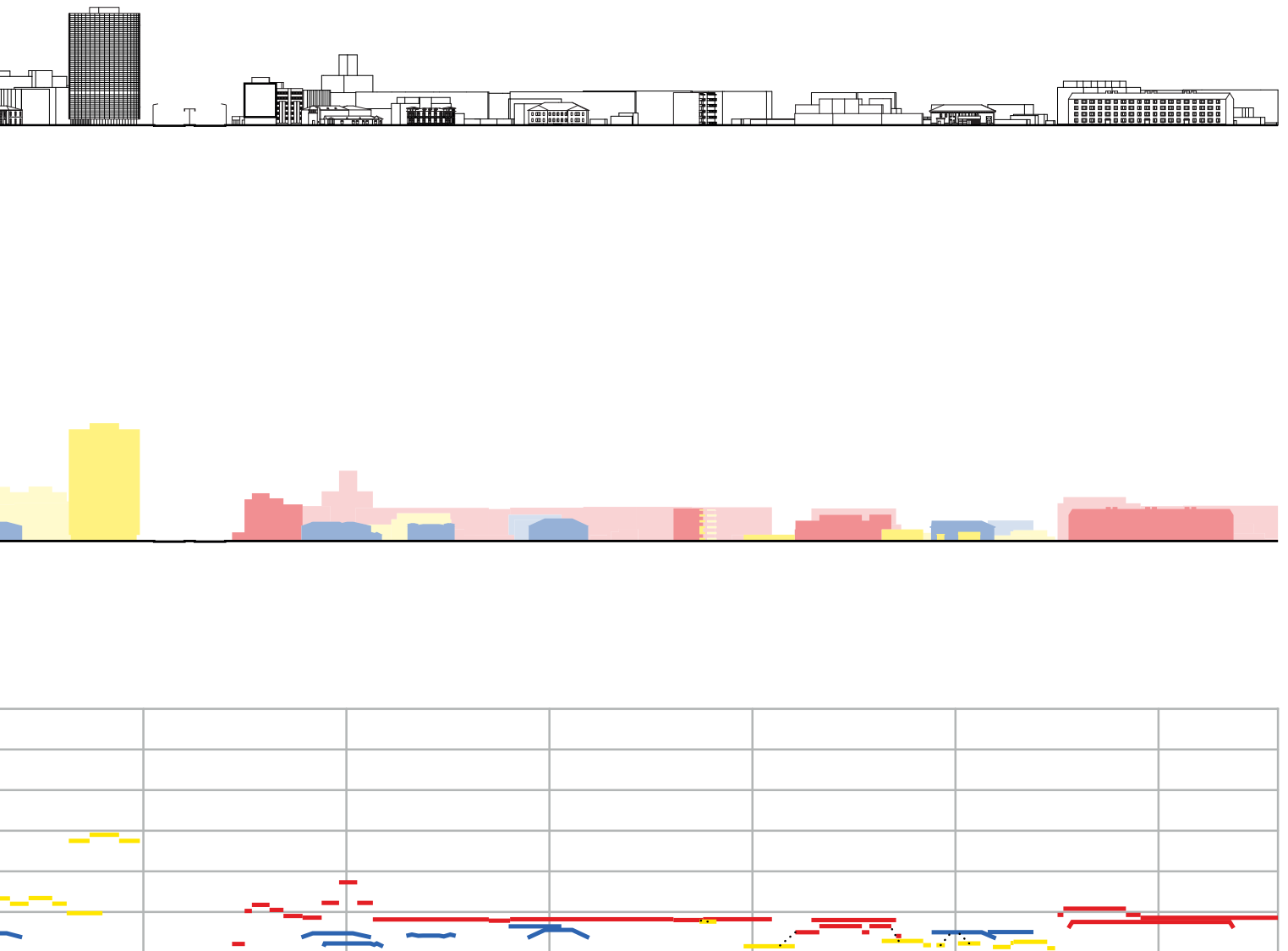


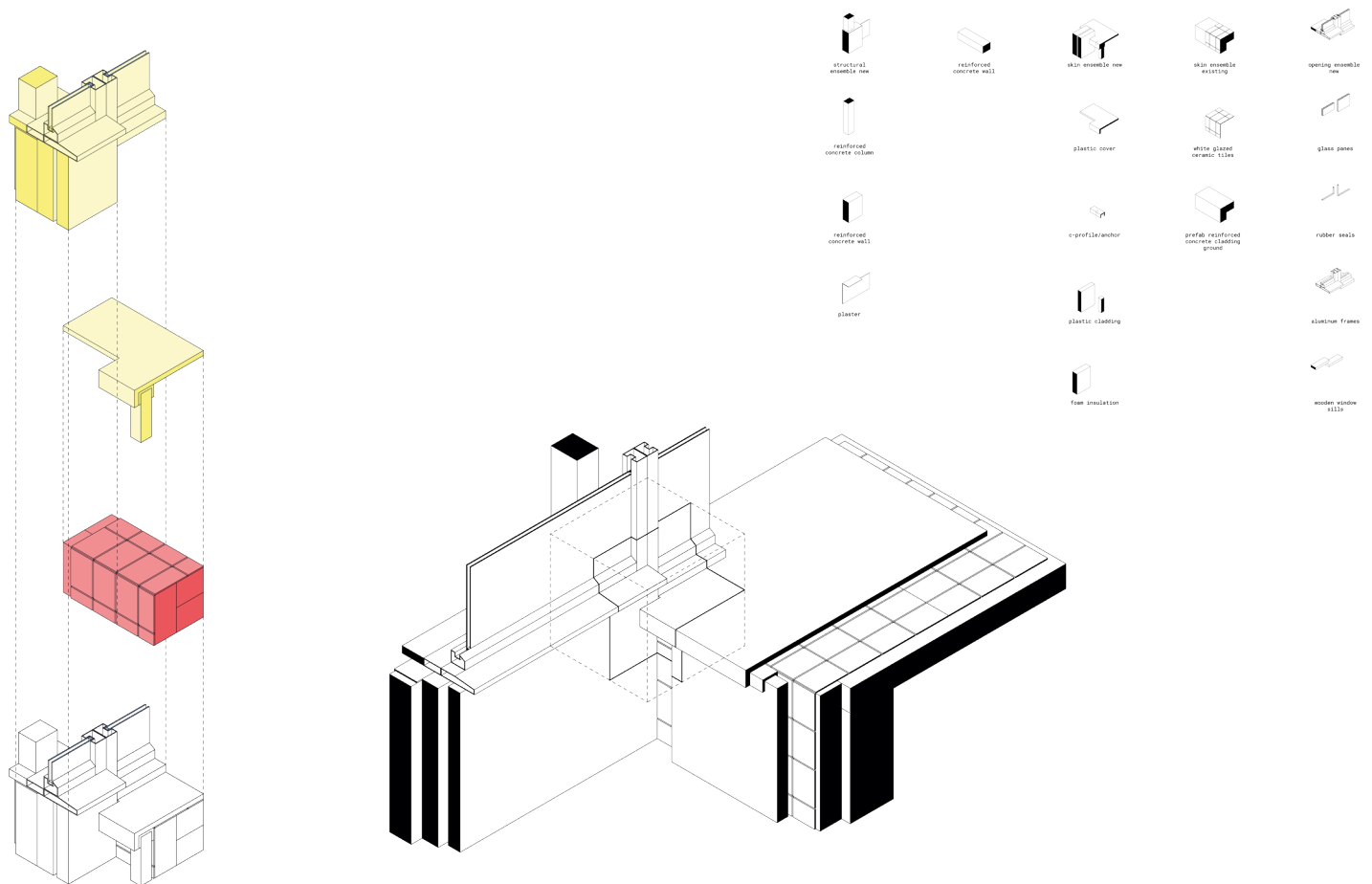
14 DISSONANCE DRAWING

4. Interpretative Section: Dissonance

An urban section through this area reveals the material effect of the superimposition of visions and illustrates a possible sequence of experiencing these encounters, bringing them to an experiential level. Abstracting the section and coding the buildings by period (pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet¹) frames the material assemblage in the section as a superimposition of different layers. We can study and qualify relations between their respective parts as a sequence of interactions. This abstraction, can also be read as a *score* of Tallinn, framing the different periods as *voices*, that unfolds as an experiential series, when followed through the city.

¹ This is a pragmatic abstraction: while clear time periods, they are neither homogenous in themselves (see the differences between the two Soviet masterplans), nor strictly distinct (for influences of Nordic Modernism in Tallinn's second Soviet masterplan see Metspalu & Hess 2017, see the post-Soviet developments and detailplans following the zoning of the Soviet masterplan. An example for a materialisation is the Radisson Blu Hotell in Maakri, whose shape follows Soviet block delineation, see figure #####NUMBER SUPERIMPOSED MPLANS####)





16 VIRU FRAGMENT (EXAMPLE FOR FRAGMENT STUDY METHODOLOGY)

The drawing suggests vastly different relations in the encounters of buildings from differing time periods, depending on the neighbourhood. The relationship between differently coded buildings in Kesklinn is often characterised by layering: post-Soviet building parts are added onto Soviet and pre-Soviet structures, often obscuring their Soviet heritage behind additions of glass and steel. In Maakri, new high-rises dominate the pre-Soviet structures, but keep them visible, whereas barely any traces of demolished Soviet structures remain. Keldrimäe is a heterogeneous ensemble of buildings, where pre-Soviet buildings are surrounded by large Soviet apartment blocks, which dominate the quarter. Post-Soviet development is mostly found in the form of unorganised infill. Apart from smaller intersections, buildings are juxtaposed, sharing little physical connection.

While the other two quarters show material signs of smoothing, covering up, demolishing and – as the pre-Soviet structures in Maakri, incorporating superficially consonant historical fragments as decoration, Keldrimäe seems to be on the verge of this transformation, with small renovations taking place, but overall presenting a

richly juxtaposed image. Keskurg in particular shows a cluster of loosely connected fragments. Based on this heterogeneity and the relevant, contemporary pressures on the Central Market, it is selected as the site for the project. The drawing resembles the sequence drawings by Sergei Eisenstein or Arvo Pärt, but rather than being used as a compositional device, it fulfills an analytical function. What draws them together is the sequencing of events¹.

5: Fragment Analysis: Dissonant Encounters

In a next step, the clashes are studied in detail; by photographing human-scale encounters of heterogeneous fragments and classifying the material qualities of each². The analysis shows how the fragmentary material expressions from superimposition on a large scale, via a relational reading, could be understood as complex material assemblages. Reflecting their subjective, experiential character, I draw on the musical concept of *dissonance*, to describe the perceived (im-) material clashes, that can be observed, when their fragments are read in relation to each other.

¹ More on the notion of events in relation to dissonance in the Theoretical Framework

² To be elaborated in the next phase of the project, for now see figure 16 from the disciplinary analysis.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DISSONANCE

Smoothness and Negativity

René Boer conceptualises the smooth city as a "hegemonic force" (2023, 141), that erases complexity. Driven by logics of commodification that are based on excluding population groups and practices outside the norm, it causes a homogenisation of the cityscape – a flattening of social, historical and material complexity. This also results in overbearing blandness, which Byung-Chul Han traces to the absence of negativity, making critical distance and reflection impossible. He argues that "The unbroken visibility of the object [...] destroys the gaze. Only the rhythmic oscillation between presence and absence, veiling and unveiling keeps the gaze awake" (see Han 2015 in Boer 2023, 51).

Musical Dissonance and Consonance

In music theory, dissonance means an unpleasant harmony, that occurs when at least two notes are sounded at the same time. It arises from the difference of the dissonant harmony from familiar, consonant harmony – "tonal" dissonance – on one hand and psychoacoustic limitations of the ear – "sensory" dissonance – on the other (see Johnson-Laird et al. 2012, 24f.). Just as consonance is not purely productive, dissonance is not necessarily destructive. Instead, we can abstract them to dissonance as tension or expectation and consonance as release (see Rehding 2019). Mirroring Han's notion, one is reliant on the other: the release of consonance is only enabled through the negativity of dissonance, giving it both the capacity to be jarring and generative.

Defamiliarisation and Generative Dissonance

The dual nature of the effect seems to resemble logics of alienation and defamiliarisation. Defamiliarisation can be conceptualised on the base of an act of distancing, or "systematic estrangement" (Gilroy 2005, 135), similar to the constitutive function of "Entäußerung" in Hegel's seminal duplicate theorisation of alienation (see Hegel 1973 [1807]). As with Brecht's "Verfremdungseffekt" – where he uses defamiliarisation as a method of estranging the known, supplanting katharsis as a moment of reflection – defamiliarisation, contrary to alienation, is not pathological, but a productive act of stepping away from habitual or known patterns. As an inverse to alienation, defamiliarisation reveals the ways in which one is unconsciously alienated (see Lamberth and Dingeldey 2023)¹. Like dissonance, this duplicity also only emerges in relation to something: alienation means to be alienated from or of something², just as dissonance can only emerge as harmony in the relation of an interval.

If there is defamiliarisation as the productive inverse, revealing an unconscious, alienated state through distance, could there be a similarly productive reading of dissonance,

revealing tensions in unreflected dissonances? And how could we use architecture to enable its generative characteristics potential?³

Defamiliarisation and Disjunction

A translation into this realm could come from Bernard Tschumi's theorisations on disjunction or dissociation: based on Jacques Derrida's work on deconstruction⁴, he argues to abandon notions of synthesis or the design of a coherent, complete and unchanging whole in favour of designing with operations such as super- and juxtaposition, that negate and disrupt one another, leading to "dis-integration" (Tschumi 1994, 198). He even briefly mentions defamiliarisation as a strategy of deconstruction. Yet, by not conceptualising it beyond a broad turn against the familiar, he seems to omit a critical element of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*: defamiliarisation is not just "the loss of certainty, of center, of history" (ibid. p. 238), but could also reveal tensions in existing relations, as his own project for an Arts Center in Tourcoing and the concept for Strasbourg County Hall show: the former renders the existing structures in a new light by superimposing a walkway system under a shared roof and the latter binds existing buildings from different periods together, shedding light onto the relation of old and new⁵. In Tschumi's framework, these moments of defamiliarisation can be seen as "events" (ibid. 249), which he aims to engender, but not directly design (see Tschumi in Verkerk 2017, 44).

Purity and Porosity

This follows Richard Sennet's call for designers not to design for purity (see Sennet 1970, 24f.) but accept change and inconsistency (see ibid., 7). Sennet contextualises the personal experience within notions of community: he claims that communities based on sameness create an illusory "counterfeit of experience" (ibid., 36). In his observation, the "gradual simplification of social interactions and forums for social exchange" (ibid. 51) has led to the deterioration of social life. And while he rejects the design of communal bonds by planners, he argues that they can create a basis for exchange through the creation of a "multiplicity of contact points" (ibid. 56) in the public sphere (see ibid., 82, 102f.). But this also requires accessibility or "porosity", managed by various thresholds (see Boer 2023, 193f.). In an act of imposing upon the existing dissonances, the architect, has the ability to create a non-neutral framework for appropriation. Instead of smoothing over, this approach aims to add a new layer. The aim of the project is to harmonise *with* the existing, to engender *generative dissonance*.

Could methods of large-scale superimposition and framing-together of disjunct material elements and previously isolated communities alike – by critically evaluating and highlighting existing difference – serve as a basis for the emergence of events that carry generative dissonance?

¹ Parts of this passage on alienation are adapted from my theory thesis "Recontextualising Residential Alienation as Biopolitical Struggle" (2025).

² In Jaeggi's notion, the "loss of power [and] meaning" (2014, 46).

³ This generative potential is even alluded to and part of the definition of dissonance, in a report for the Urban Agenda of the EU: "It is true that dissonance can be viewed as problematic, indicating that heritage management should strive to achieve consonance [...] However, dissonance can have a positive role in challenging established and hegemonic discourses and allowing for peaceful contestation of values and meaning which is at the basis of democratic coexistence." (Bull 2021, quoted as in Potz & Scheffler 2022 for German Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building)

⁴ For an overview see "Jacques Derrida" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Lawlor 2023).

⁵ See Strasbourg County Hall project (www.tschumi.com/projects/56, accessed 08.04.2026)

PART 3: RESULTS

DESIGN EXPLORATION

The design exploration starts by considering the existing condition as richly diverse and complex, but also as isolated and fragmented. The buildings are merely juxtaposed and follow the axes imposed by the Soviet market hall building. Additionally, the outside stall and roof structures are in very poor condition and cluttered onto the site¹. The community is isolated and both the market and the market-goers are stigmatised. The design process aims to find an approach that addresses both the tacit social and material dissonances on site. Additionally, it aims to improve the situation of the market – to also relieve it from development pressures.

The main methods in the design exploration are studying prior proposals for the site, reference studies and a theoretical grounding in literature. These analytical methods guide the design process: references provide ideas, that, similarly to the logics of the parallel Soviet drafts and the recently conducted competition are tested against each other in options. Just like the other visions for the site stem from particular ideological backgrounds, the conducted theoretical exploration provides a conceptual basis. The evaluation of options is conducted on this basis and against the goals that are set out from it.

Introducing Material Consonance

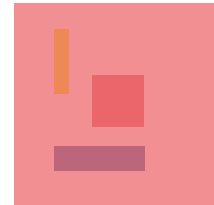
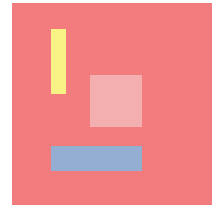
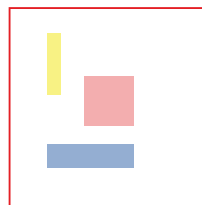
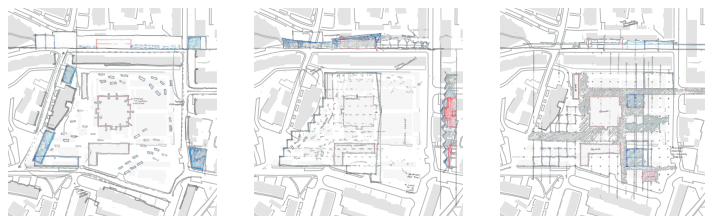
Three preliminary options, conceptualised by their aim to pull together the ensemble, were developed alongside each other: The first is to use the existing, strong urban frame, that the surrounding Soviet apartment blocks provide and complete it, to frame the entire site as a market square. While seeming strong in a volume study, this does not help with the need for a covered market, which would probably lead to further cluttering in the future, nor does it take away from the monumentality of the Soviet market hall. The two other options work with providing a structure or “datum” (Ching 2007, 234) to bind the buildings on site together: if we evaluate the existing buildings as isolated, the datum provides a common backdrop. In the first option, this is achieved by a common roof; in the second option, a mat knits the buildings together [17]. A common plinth was not tested, as it would require a large amount of excavation or earthwork, in order to retain functional spaces at near-ground floor level. As the mat concept would resemble the binding logics of the existing infill-clutter and come with the same inflexibility, possibly providing a large amount of smaller, segmented spaces and, from eye-level, block, rather than frame the existing buildings, the concept is discarded in favour of the roof, which is subsequently tested in a physical 1:500 site model [18].

Introducing Material Dissonance

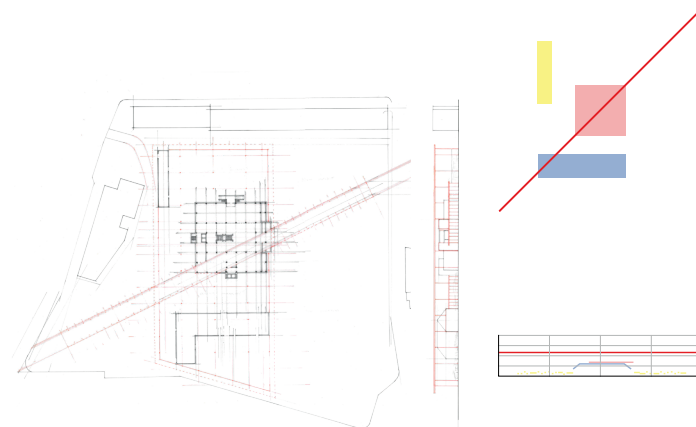
Through testing in the model and study of the competition submissions² for the redevelopment of the site, another gesture is added: an axis cutting through the

¹ For the infill phenomenon in Soviet neighbourhoods post 1991 see Mariotti & Leetmaa 2024; see EKA 2021

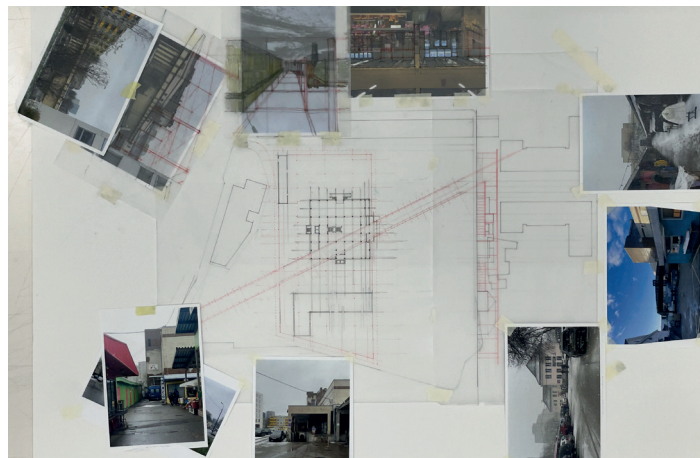
² See diagonal boulevard in KTA Architects submission (2019)



17 FRAMING DISSONANCE, CONCEPTUAL DESIGN OPTIONS



18 AXIS AND ROOF, PRELIMINARY DESIGN A1



19 PERSPECTIVE SKETCHES, ROOF STUDY

site. This is informed by reference studies on the tackling of dissonant heritage³ – although in the case of the market hall, these interventions seem too drastic, the piercing of the building at an angle seems to take away from monumental quality and its dominant position on the site.

By studying the effect in model and axonometric drawing, the gesture is refined only to pierce the market hall building, but not cut. Alongside these far-removed drawings, a series of sketches is used to study the interventions from a human perspective. The function and position of the axis is fixed by investigating the created negative space.

After reflection and development of concrete material implementations of the two, secondary effects of the gestures becomes evident: the roof ends up dividing the site, carrying dissonant qualities while the axis connects and collects the three zones on site, carrying consonant qualities.

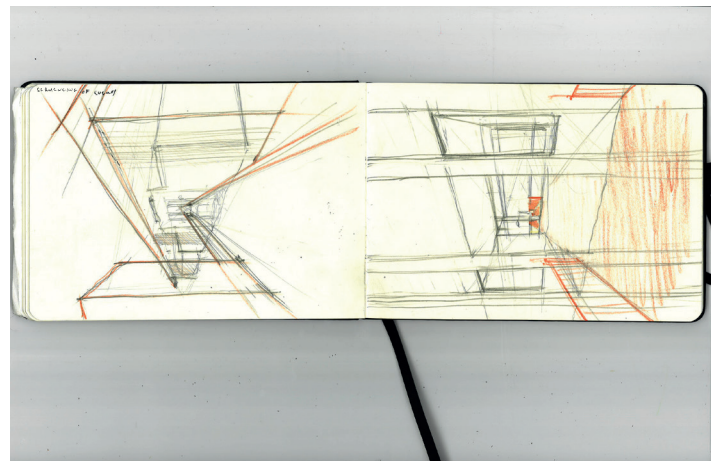
Working With and Through Scales

On one hand the project develops scale as a tool in the design: the roof super-scaling the market hall, the axis bringing the human scale into the ensemble. But it also employs scale as a tool in designing:

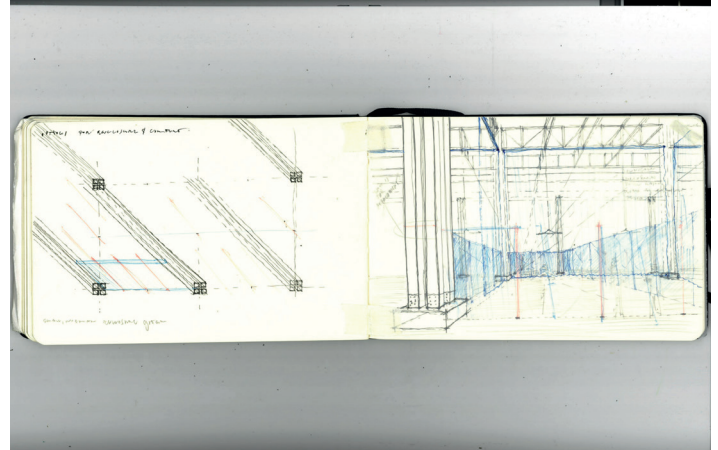
The zoning and planning of gestures on the neighbourhood scale (1:500) is complemented by the study of fragments where the gestures meet: here, following the analysis of the city, the focus lies on the material realisations (1:50/1:20). On this scale, how people could interact with and appropriate the framework is central: through eye-level sketching and drawing people interacting with elements and material assemblages (till 1:5) on smaller scales, the encounter with the gestures is refined, bringing planning back into the large scale. Not only taking the perspective of people in the space [see 21], but drawing, from an observer position [see 23], the social interaction in the built framework, allows for criticising and evaluating design decisions. In the design process, this has led to the generation of a framework approach: the design is robust, but, through the gestures playing with the existing situation, they create a variety of places with different conditions. The structure is the base for this, but its skin is flexible: the textiles can be coloured, exchanged, recut, placed differently. Even the roof is developed into simpler and more demountable construction: adaptation and appropriation, following layers are not planned in, but made room for.

To achieve constructive ease in the large roof, a system of same, easily joinable nodes is developed. By working in a back-and-forth between the scales, a system is developed. The intention for the roof is generated in the large scale, but the study of its joint on the small scale is what allows for the ease of its construction. This is also conducted in options on the large scale, leading to option studies on the small scale [see 24], that are complemented by references. Like the early analysis with visions for Tallinn, when the options are drawn on trace, they can be layered – one affecting and changing the other [see 22].

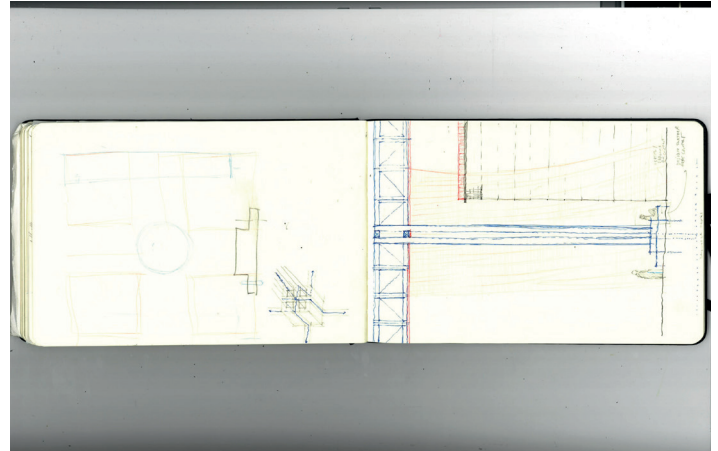
³ See *Dokumentationszentrum Nürnberg* (Domenig 2001), *Bunker 599* (Atelier de Lyon & RAAAF 2010), see also related *Jüdisches Museum Berlin* (Libeskind 2001)



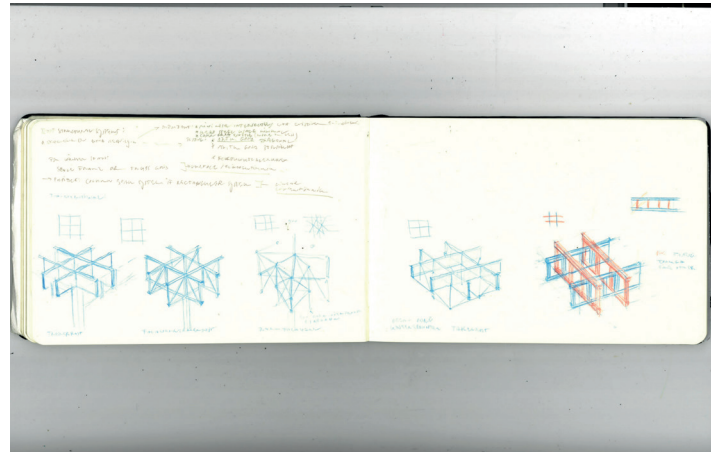
20 PERSPECTIVE SKETCHES, AXIS STUDY



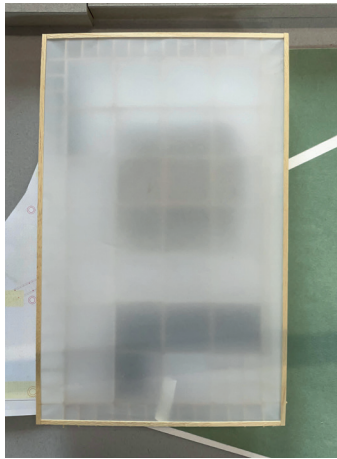
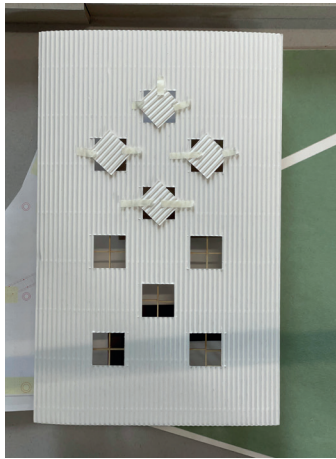
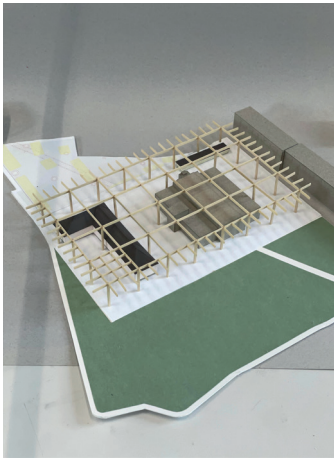
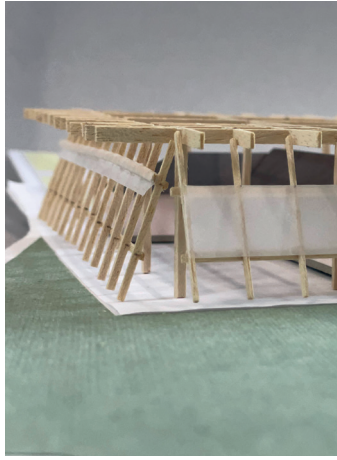
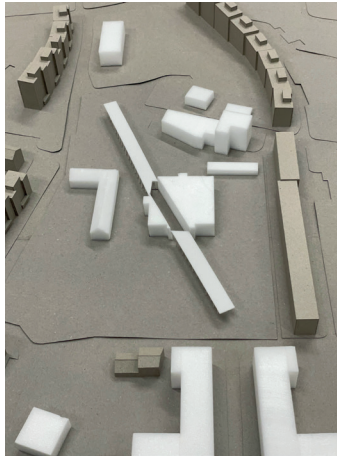
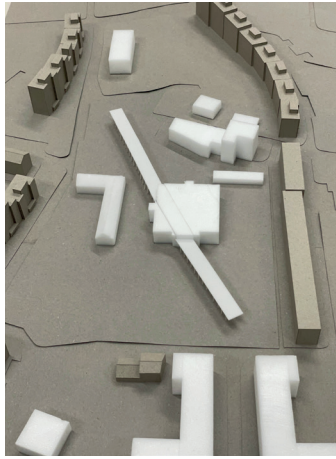
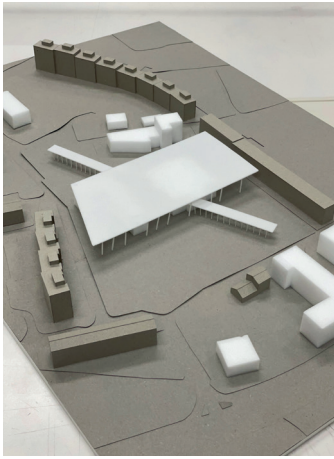
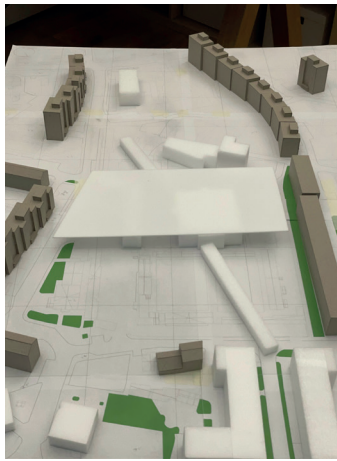
21 ENCLOSURE SKETCHES (LAYERED)



22 ENCOUNTERING THE COLUMN



23 ROOF NODE STUDY



24 SELECTED MODEL STUDIES

DESIGN PROPOSAL – HARMONISING WITH DISSONANCE

The design proposal adds a new layer to the dissonant site, rather than smooth it out. It is defined by two large gestures, that engage with the previously tacit dissonances. Instead of introducing one coherent gesture, their individual logics are superimposed, creating the conceptual basis of the project in their harmonisation with the existing. They work in tandem, introducing consonance where the other introduces dissonance and vice-versa, denying their counterpart's monumentality through contradiction – harmonising *with* the existing dissonance.

Firstly, a generous roof, that, on one hand, acts as a connecting planar datum (Ching 2007, 234) – frames the tsarist building, the soviet market hall and the post-soviet infill shed as one ensemble. It de-monumentalises the soviet market hall by superscaling it, by introducing a new, larger reference scale. It treats as same, taking away from its dominating position on site. On the other, the roof divides the site in three zones, creating different conditions in each: the tight square, the covered market and the open neighbourhood park. This is amended by curtains, that can separate of areas under the roof and frame specific encounters between the layers of the assemblage.

"To cover an existing edifice with an exterior envelope is to carry out a reconciliation between the past and the things to come, between nostalgia and modernity. The procedure mimics the construction of the city itself and highlights the existing edifice, exhibiting its archaeology [...]" (Alain Guiheux in Abram et al., 94)

Secondly, a provocative walkway, on one hand, acts as linear datum – sequences the experience on site, stringing the square, covered market and park together. On the other, whereas the roof de-monumentalises through superscaling, the axis changes the approach to the structure from the human scale. People enter the structure on the first floor, imposing a new sequence of compression and decompression. Where the roof treats the Soviet building as same, the walkway deliberately marks it as different, piercing above its former main entrance, denying the ensemble's direction by introducing a new, diagonal orientation. The linear structure serves as both a logistical backbone and part of a much-needed connection from the tram stop in the North to the sports centre, South of the site (cf. KTA 2019).

In addition to the balance through contradiction, smaller, slightly conflicting gestures, like having the axis perform an unclean cut through the existing building and the envelope showing its edges on its corners aim to not elevate the new additions into monumental status¹.

The project aims to densify the use of the market site – to provide financial reason to keep the existing heritage and allow freeing up and allocation of spaces for communal use. Crossprogramming cultural, market and social activities allows for previously underused spaces to

change use in a daily, weekly and seasonal rhythm. It also brings people from different communities onto the site, allowing it to become a "contact point", that engenders dialogue by providing common space (see Sennet 1996).

Crossprogramming for Seasonal Functional Density

The large gestures on site are backed by functional reasons: the walkway also serves as the logistical axis for circulation of people, trucks, water and power and the roof with its enclosure protects against the heavy snow and wind.

The project operates with a gradation of programmatic definition, based on the required installations and climatic conditions for specific uses: semi-permanent uses are programmed in the less-flexible spaces of the existing buildings – the covered space underneath the roof changes throughout the day, while the uncovered outside space is open to radically changing use throughout the year, even capable of hosting temporary festivals on the green space or and expansion of the market onto the public square, should weather conditions allow. In order not to fence these "zones of exceptions" (see Boer 2023, 53²) in clearly defined areas, but for them to spill into adjacent territory and to invite uncontrolled uses from the outside, the interventions aim for porosity, leaving every space outside the existing buildings always accessible. Instead of programmatic assignment, different conditions are created.

The gradation in programmatic definition is also the basis for treatment of the existing structures. Instead of full demolition or decorative integration, the existing buildings are still the functional center pieces of the market, but the approach to them is varied, yet consistently pragmatic: retrofitting them for denser use where possible and deconstructing structures in poor conditions to open them up to new uses. This reaches from the introduction of a flexible layout and thermal retrofit of the tsarist farmer's union building through the demounting of the market hall's roof for retractable covering, to the partial dismantling of sheds to their structure for adaptation as shelters and full dismantling for reuse, only leaving their foundations as scars to be appropriated.

Movable systems are also introduced in the roof and its perimeter enclosure: shades allow to block wind or sun depending on weather conditions and season. The curtain enclosures allow temporary pockets to accommodate programmes side-by-side, during times the market is not busy or when events require spatial separation. These systems can all be operated by hand, giving the people in the neighbourhood agency over their building.

As with the roof, that frames the central buildings on site together, the curtain enclosures work as smaller, flexible frames within. The "main hall" highlights the selective deconstruction of the main market hall and provides a central gathering and performance space. The "courtyard" highlights the communal tsarist building's outdoor space in relation to the height of the roof and

¹ Inspired by Charles Jenck's description of Alvar Aalto's townhall in Säynätsalo as a "series of alternating signals" (173), announcing gestures to see them "partially fulfilled – and falsified" (ibid. 175), thereby de-monumentalising the civic building.

² These "zones of exception" seem like a posivist turn on notions like Agamben's (1998), Esposito's (2008) or Mbembe's (2003) observation on the selective deomination in the context of Biopolitics.

provides a more intimate outdoor and play space. The "alley" frames the tsarist against the axis piercing the market hall building facade and creates a street-like situation that can serve as basis for a street market. The "backstage" is a more intimate concert setting, that frames the market hall against the small wooden shed. Finally, smaller enclosures, fashioned from the partially deconstructed skeletons of shed-structures provide small sheltered exclaves.

Additionally, crossprogramming and the establishment of climate zones aims to keep rent for market stalls affordable: the interventions require investment, but maintenance is reduced.

Materiality and Detailing

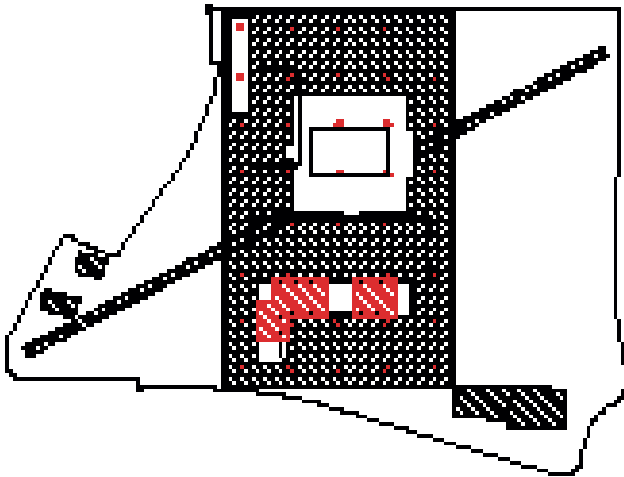
To reduce financial investment and climate impact, not only is the climatized space reduced to a minimum, but material choice is made from what is locally available: steel from the deconstructed sheds and the strong lumber industry around Tallinn.

The materiality and detailing of the interventions is based on their role: the axis pierces the market hall building violently – it is constructed from reused steel pieces, that are used in their original lengths: the old stalls, in the form of the axis coalesce to turn against the market hall, but are also collected in a linear motion. In the connection to the market structure, they leave no gap, it is filled by in with coloured cork, that allows for thermal expansion and marks the flush seam between the structures. The roof, on the contrary exudes calmness in its regularity: it is fashioned from locally available timber, avoiding column intersection with the tsarist and shed structures, but piercing the market hall. Their intersection is marked by the absence of material and the presence of light, as mirrors line their cut and allow users to see the column extend beyond the Soviet structure's roof seamlessly. The roof is covered by a membrane, that is stretched over it like a canvas. On its edges, the canvas wraps down, protecting the wood's end grain and giving the roof volume. By peeking underneath the roof, and on its corners, this is questioned: the spectator can see the wooden structure on which the canvas is laid. The roof is entirely constructed from basic wood profiles for all members and joint by bolts, that are reinforced by split rings. Where the axis is collecting reused material, the roof follows a modular approach. Where the axis seems violent and heavy, the roof seems generous and light. Both reject smoothness through their differently textured and rough surfaces. This means, that the proposal, also following the ideal of porosity, rejects a full glass facade. Instead, as with the roof, textiles are used as sheltering in the perimeter and the smaller enclosures. The flexible elements can be operated by hand and give agency to the user.

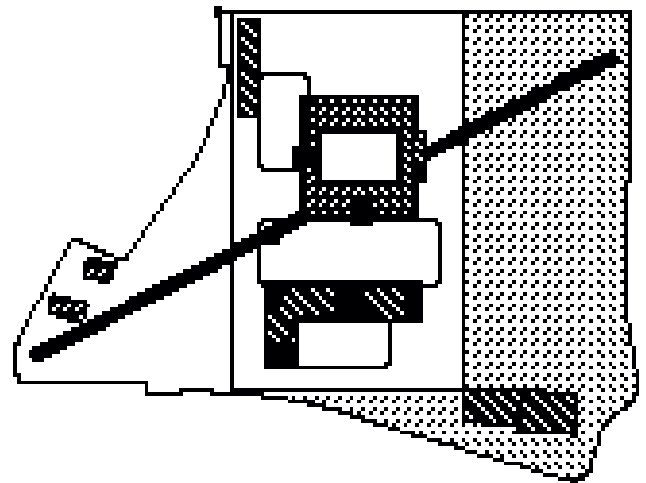


25 FINAL DESIGN: GROUND FLOOR PLAN

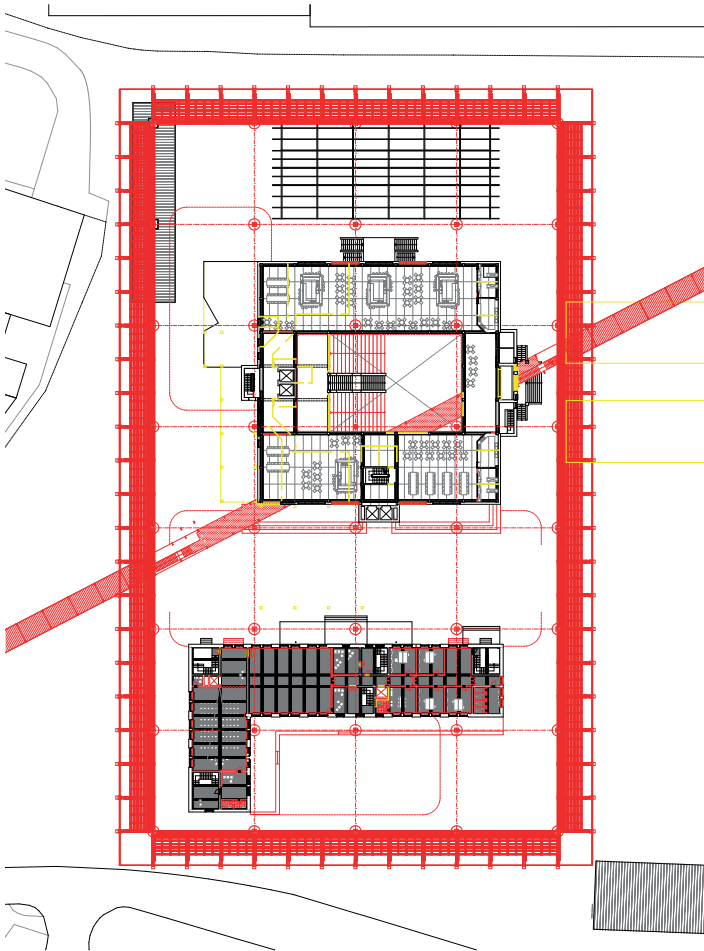
- HEATED
- - FLEXIBLE
- ENCLOSED
- - FLEXIBLE
- YEARLY+
- - WEEKLY



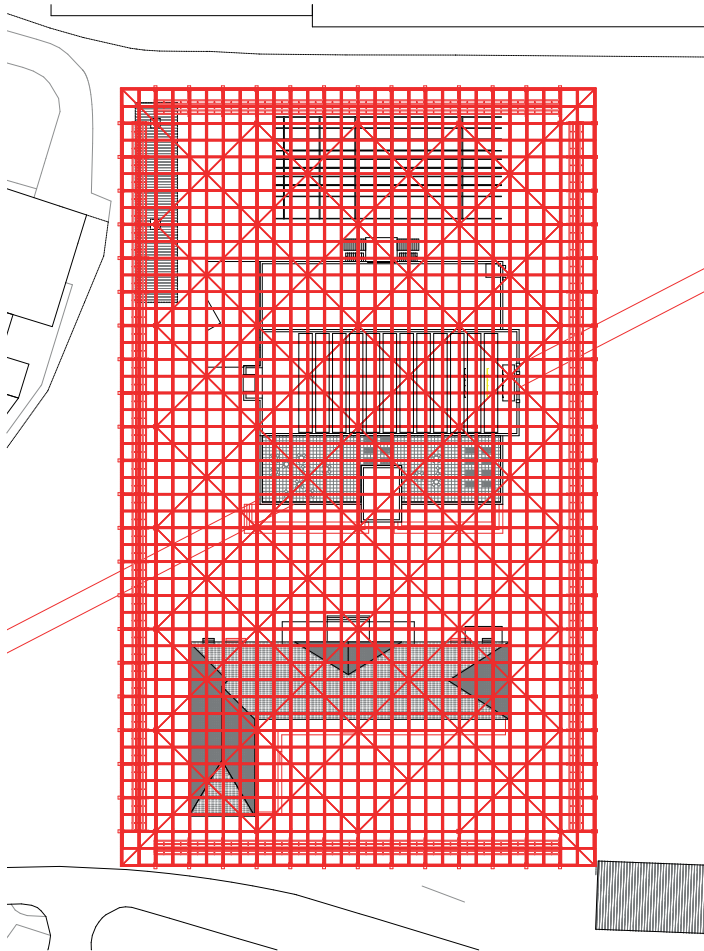
DIFFERENT THERMAL CONDITIONS



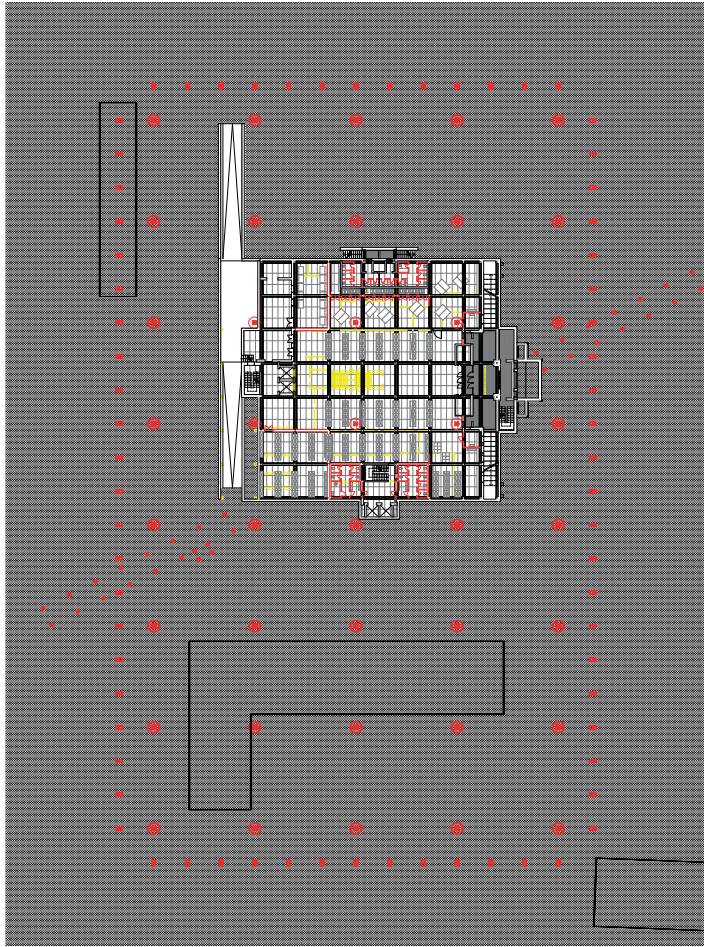
GRADATION OF CROSSPROGRAMMING DENSITY



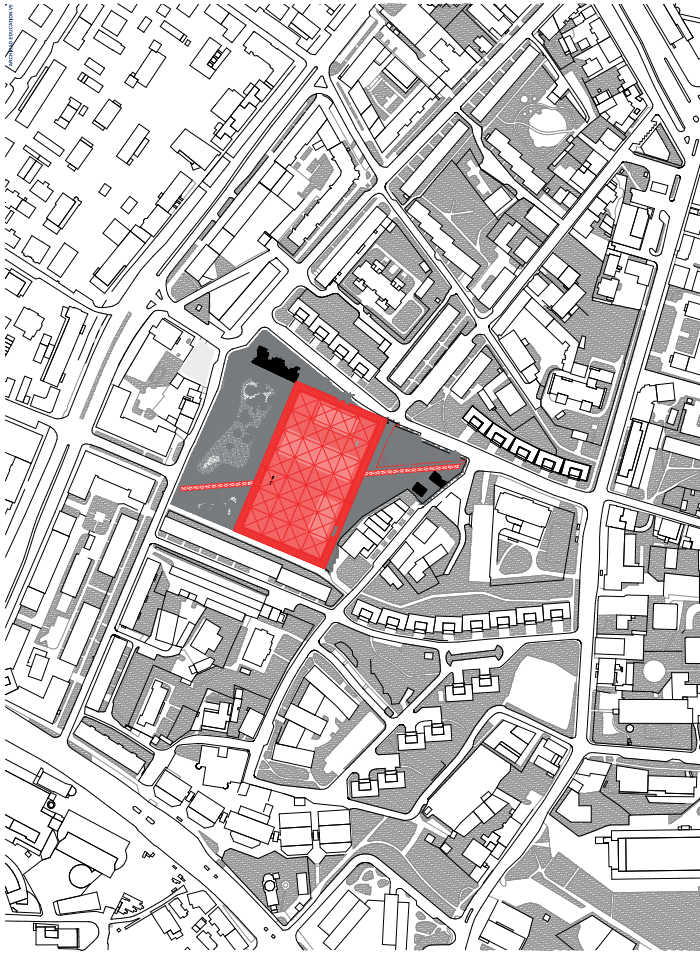
28 FINAL DESIGN: FIRST FLOOR PLAN



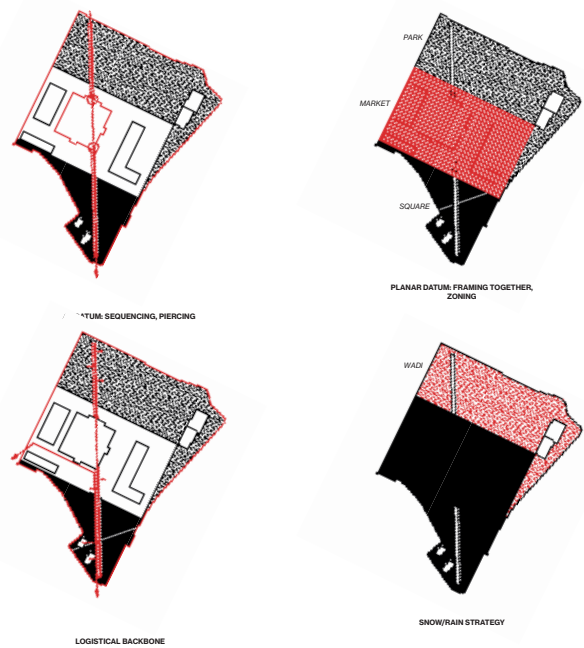
26 FINAL DESIGN: SECOND FLOOR PLAN



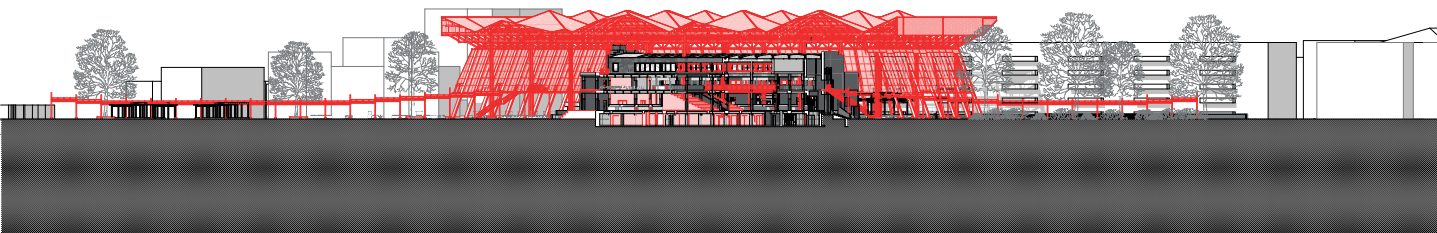
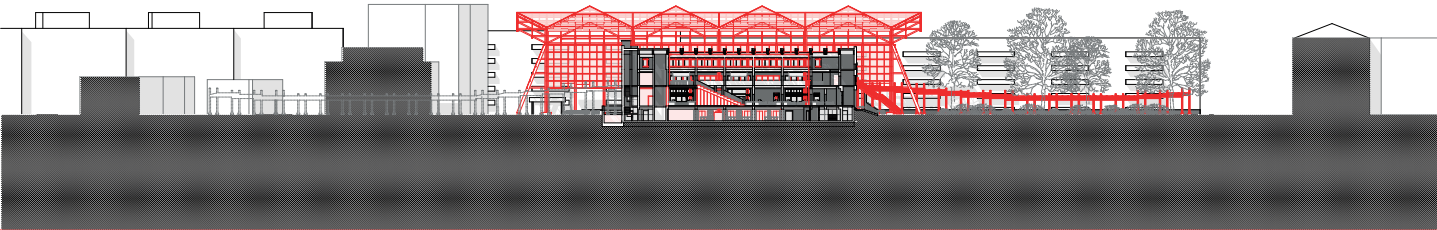
27 FINAL DESIGN: BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN AND FOUNDATIONS



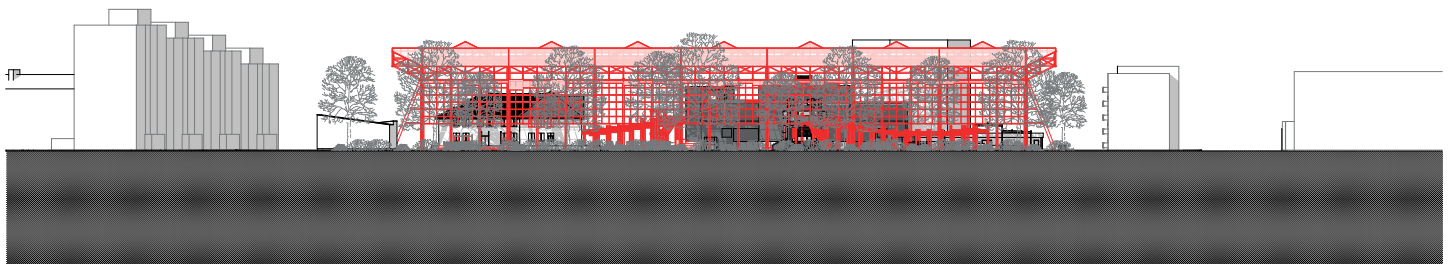
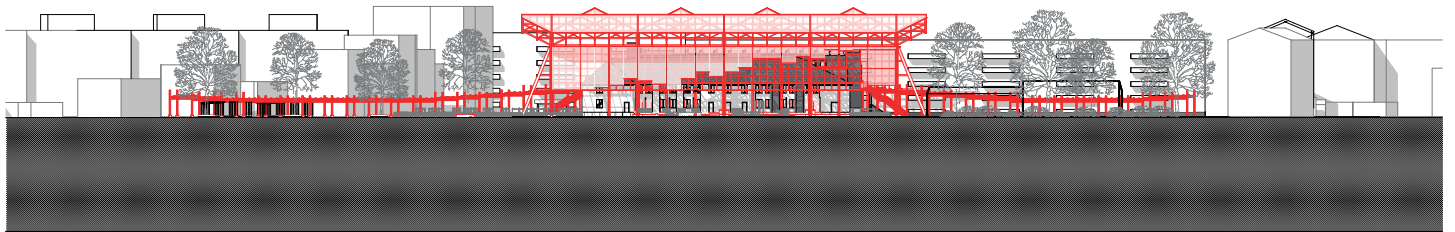
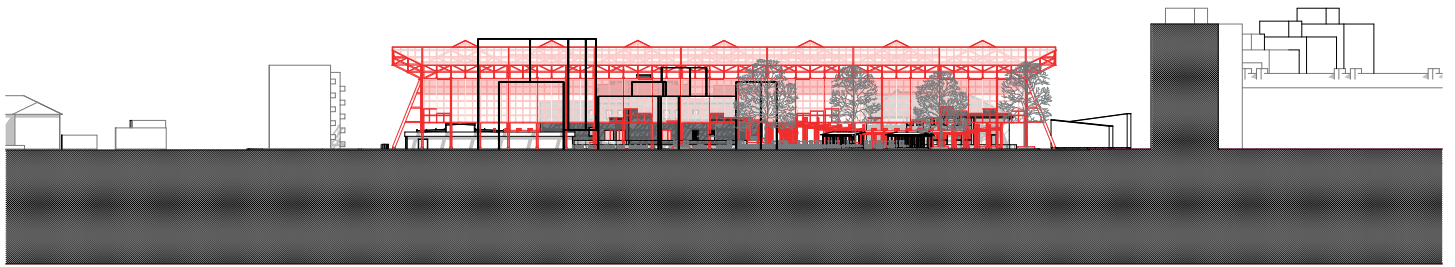
30 FINAL DESIGN: SITE PLAN

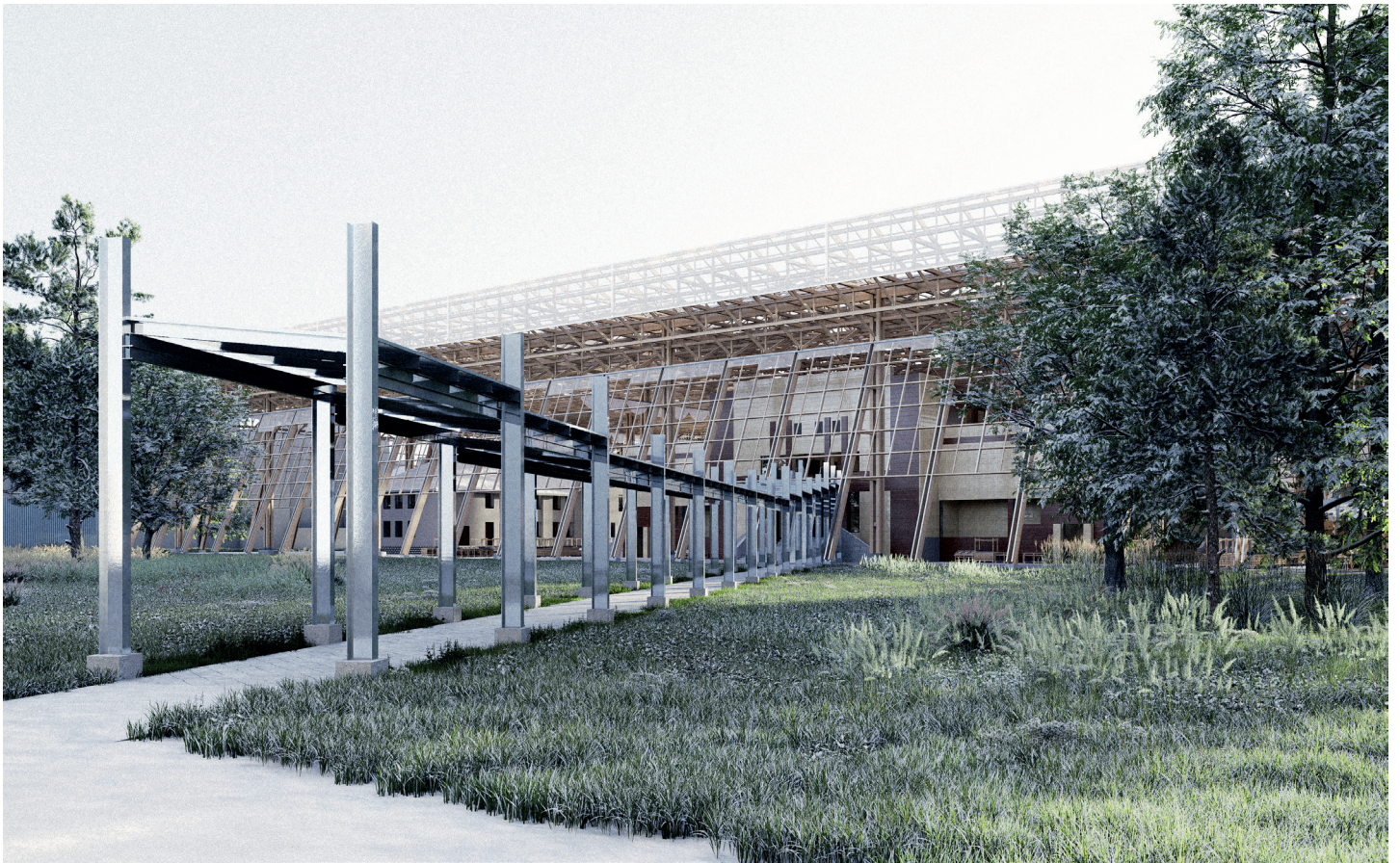


31 FINAL DESIGN: GESTURES PARTI DIAGRAMS



29 FINAL DESIGN: SECTIONS





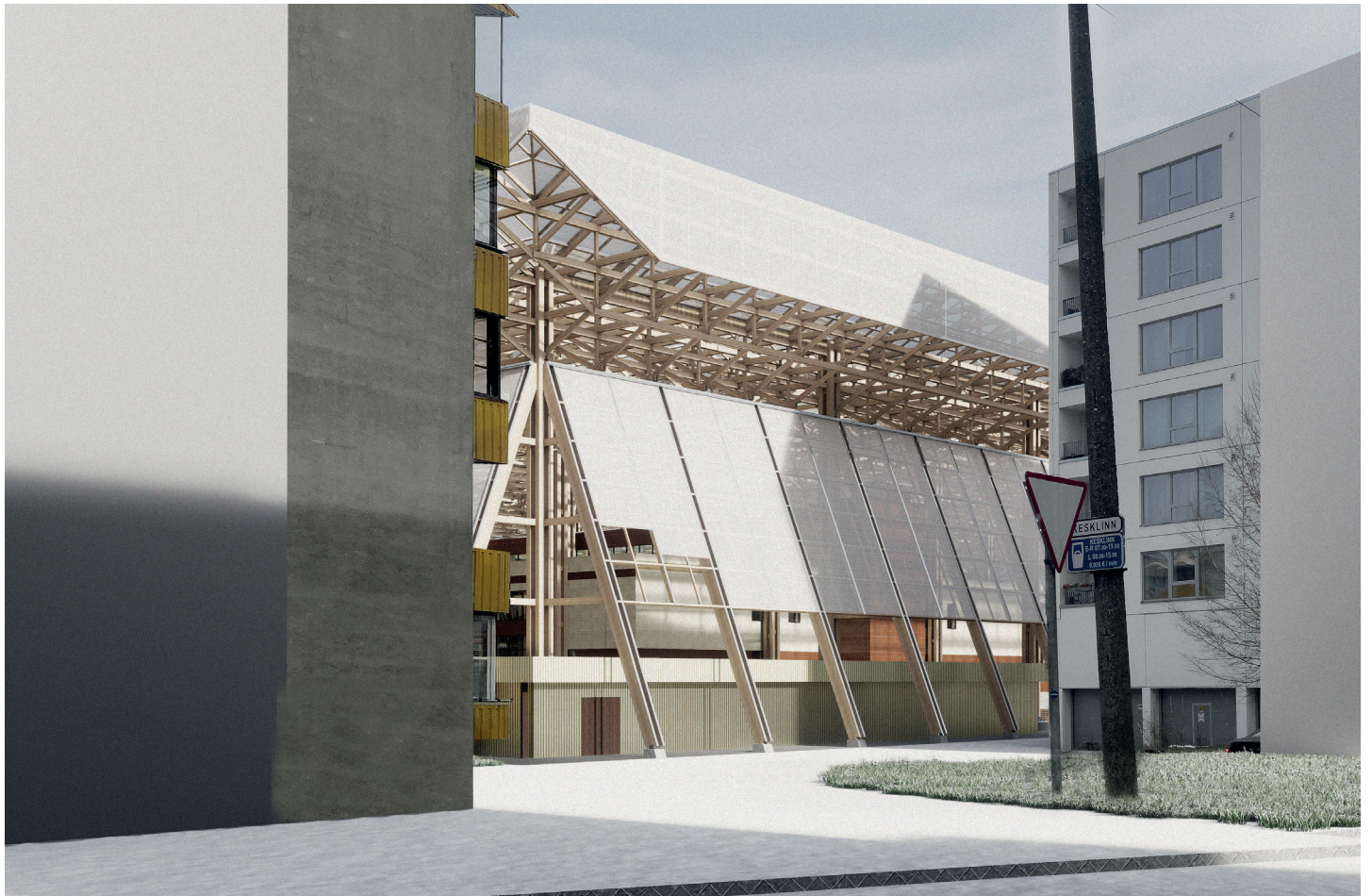


34 FINAL DESIGN: IMAGES

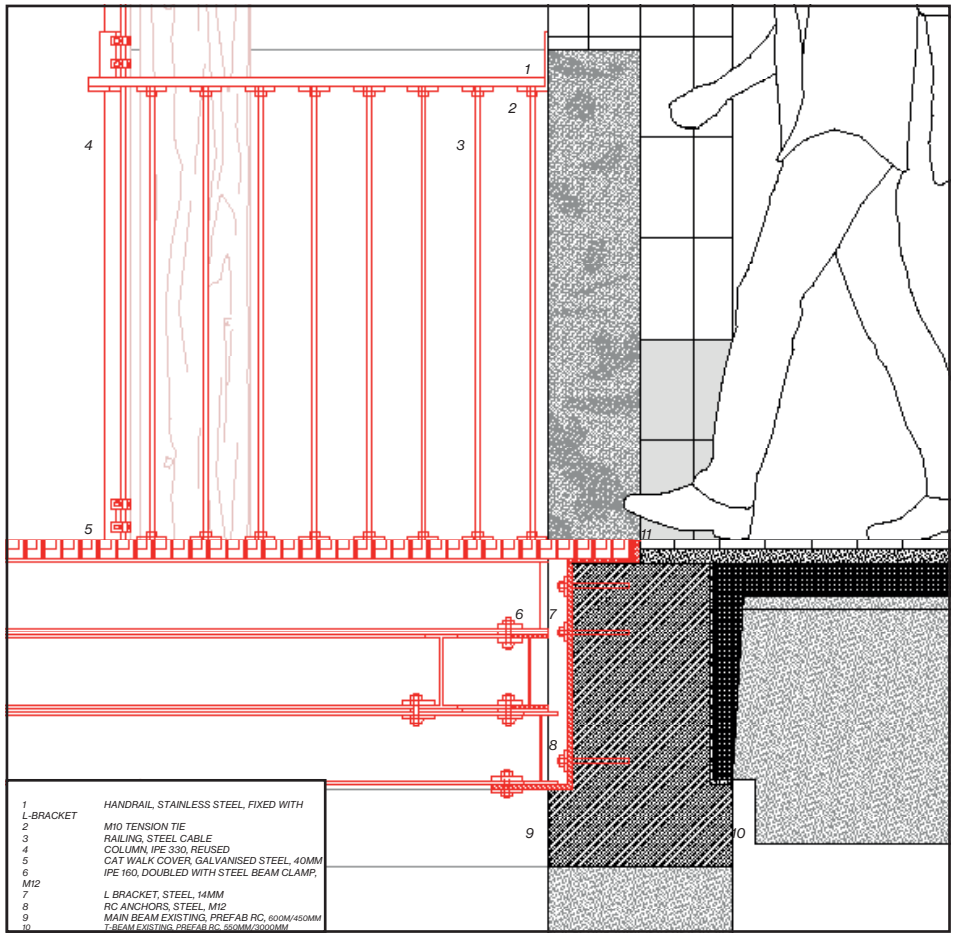




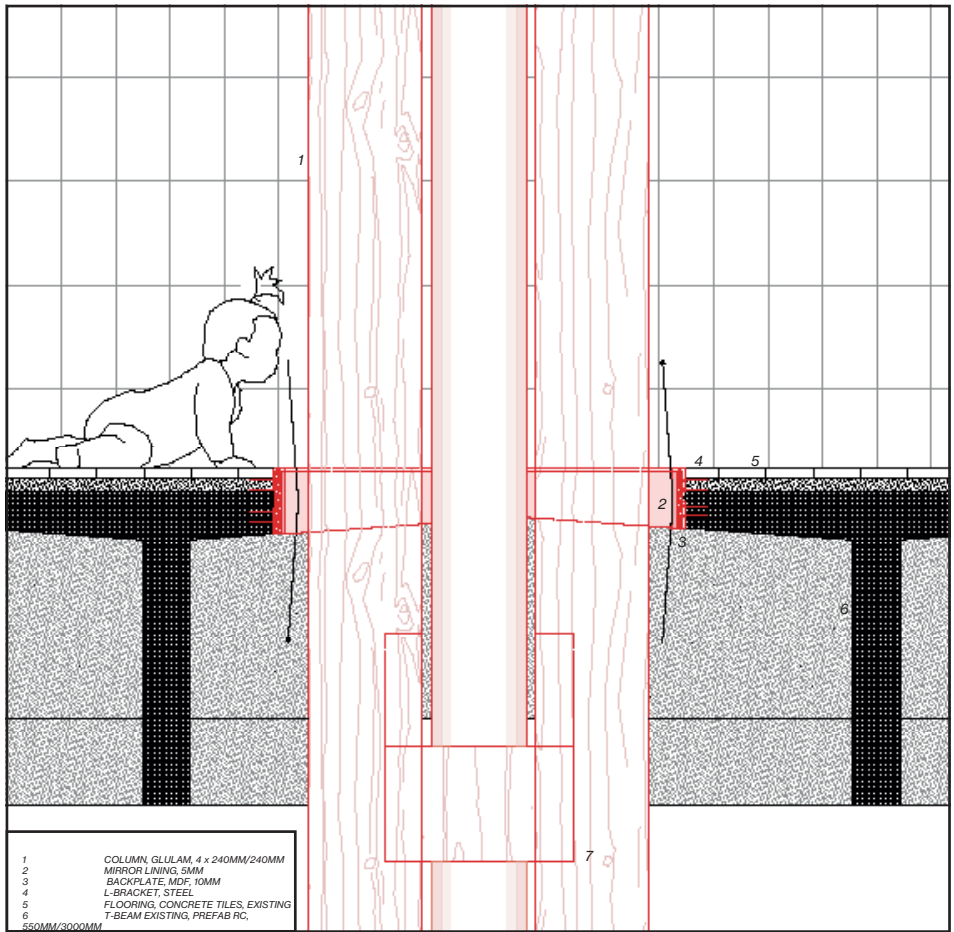
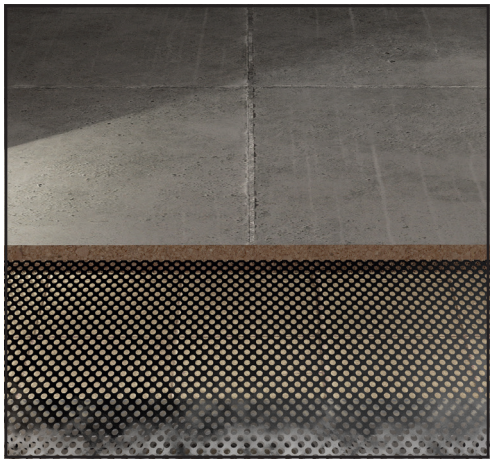
36 FINAL DESIGN: IMAGES



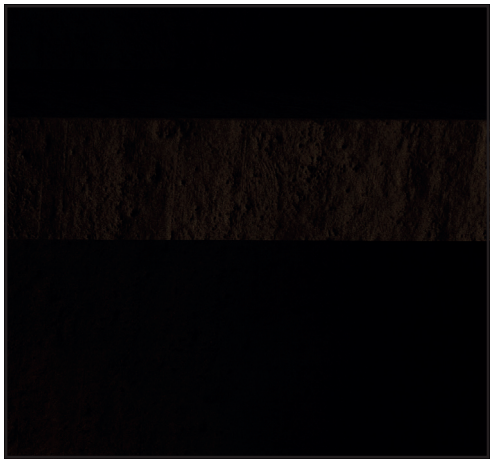
37 FINAL DESIGN: IMAGES

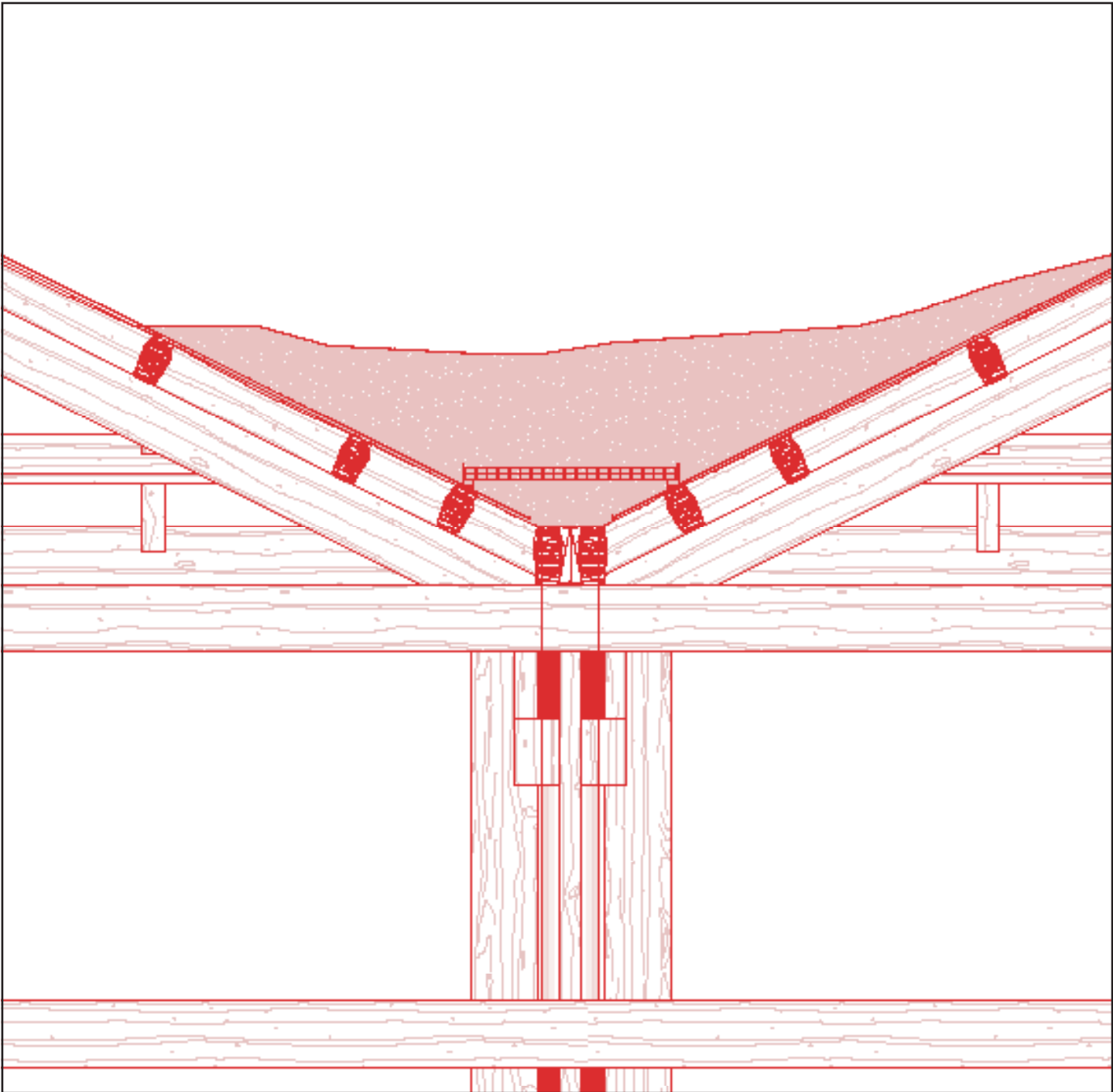


WALKWAY MAIN HALL INTERSECTION DETAIL, CORK SEAM

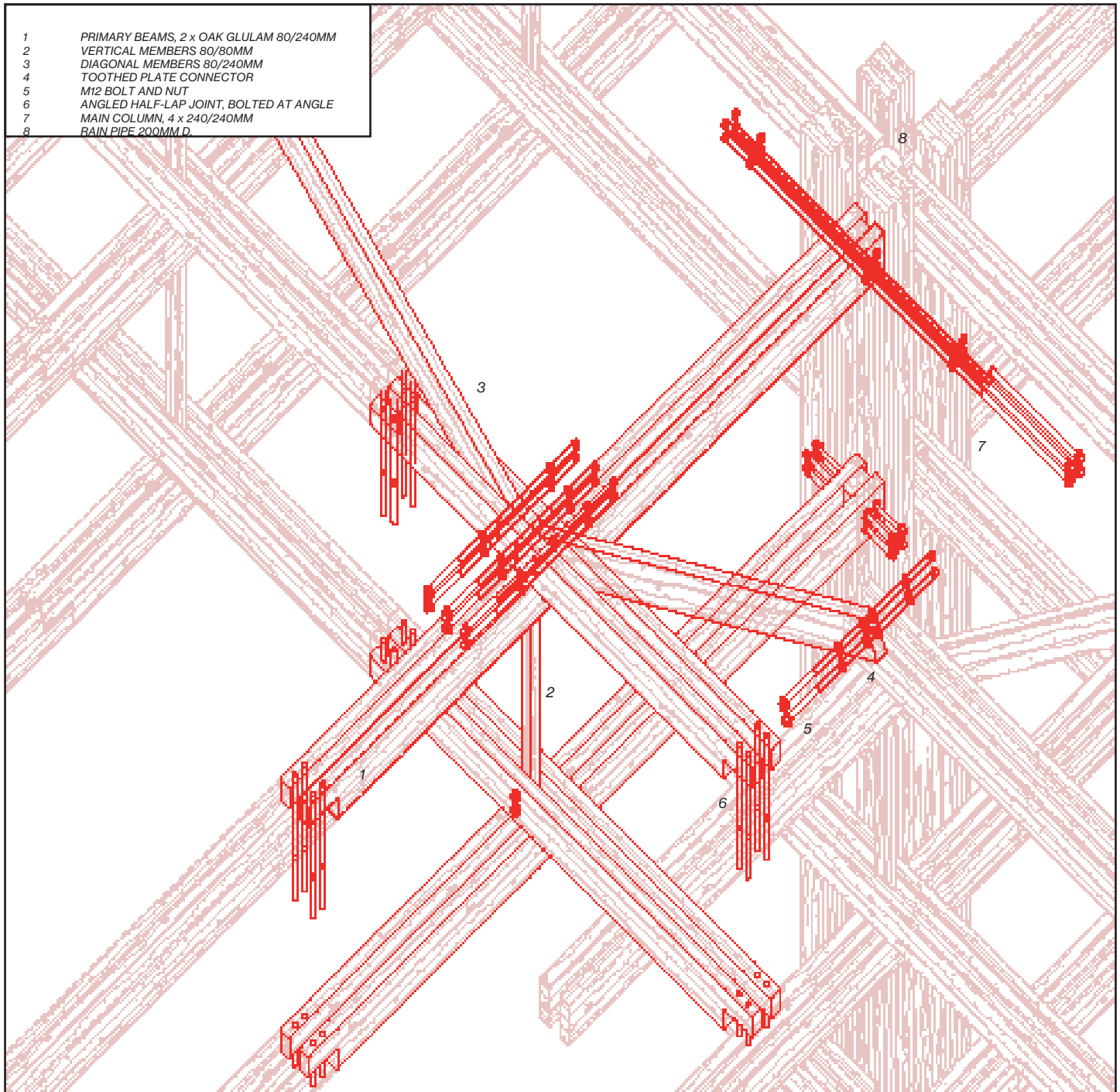


COLUMN MAIN HALL INTERSECTION DETAIL, LIGHT GAP



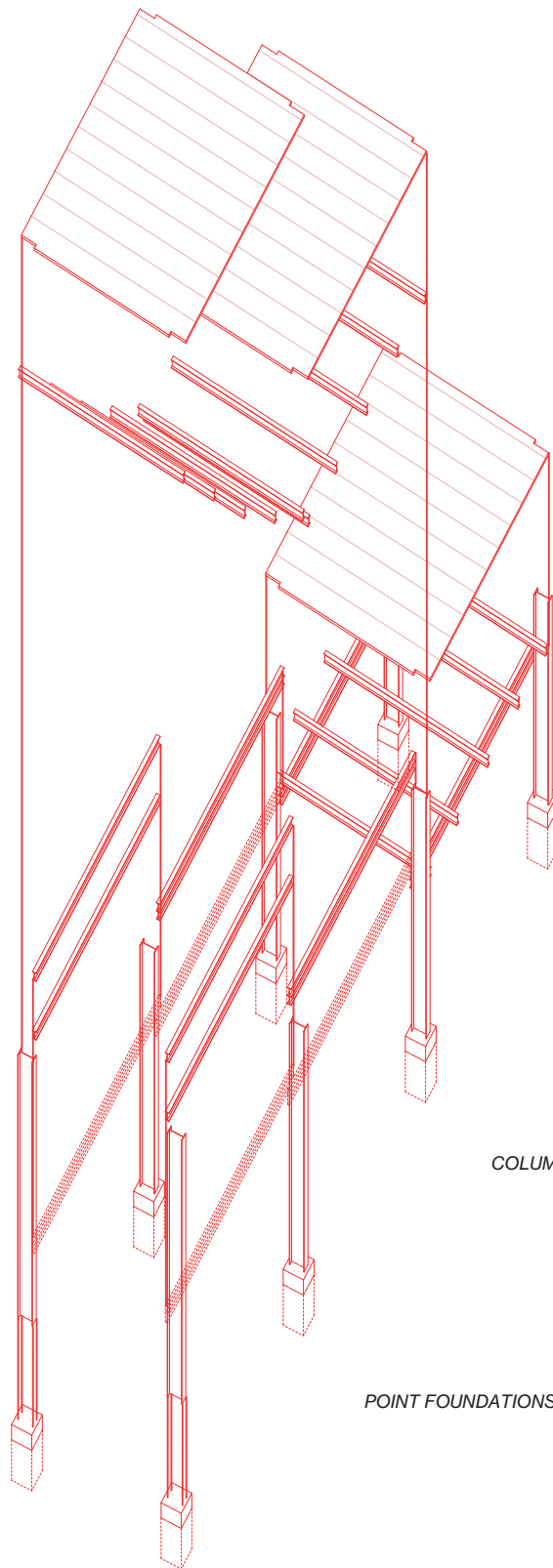


COLUMN MAIN HALL INTERSECTION DETAIL, LIGHT GAP



ROOF NODE CONSTRUCTION DETAIL

1:25 (1:20)

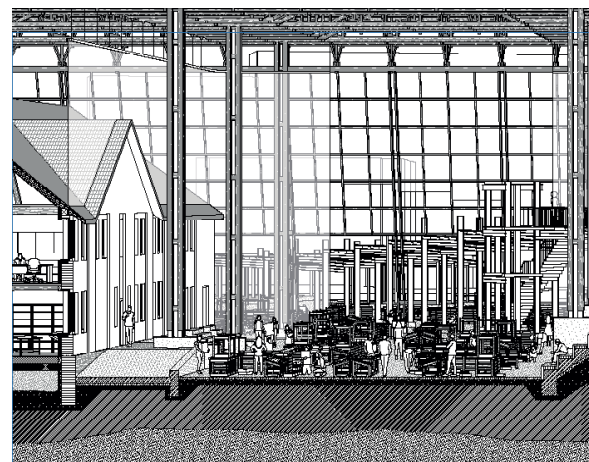
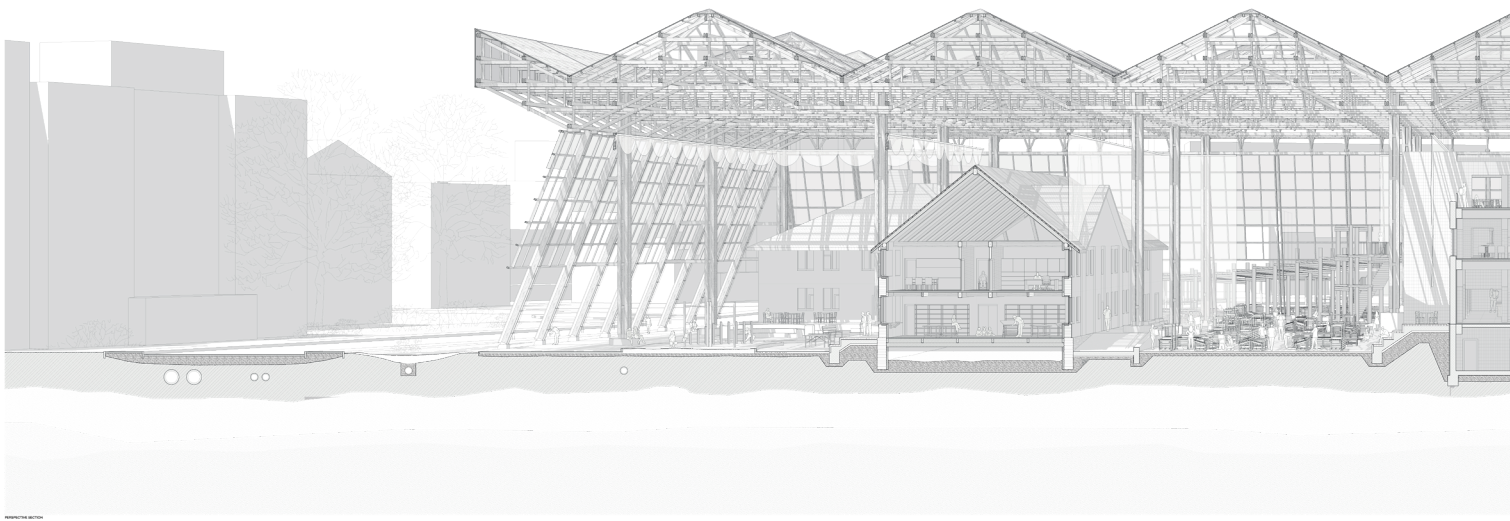
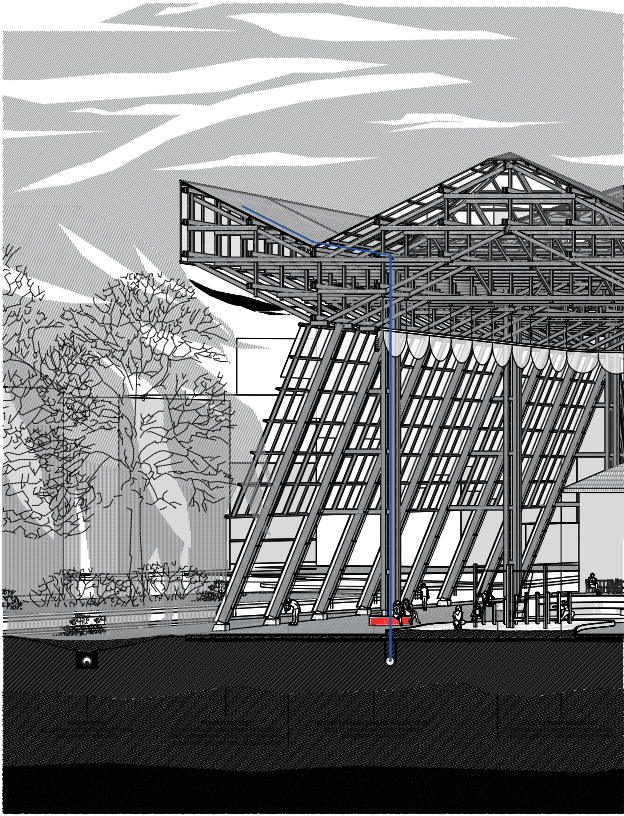


ROOFING SHEET METAL

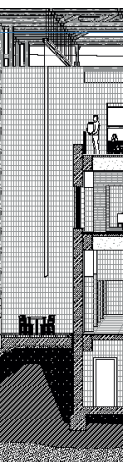
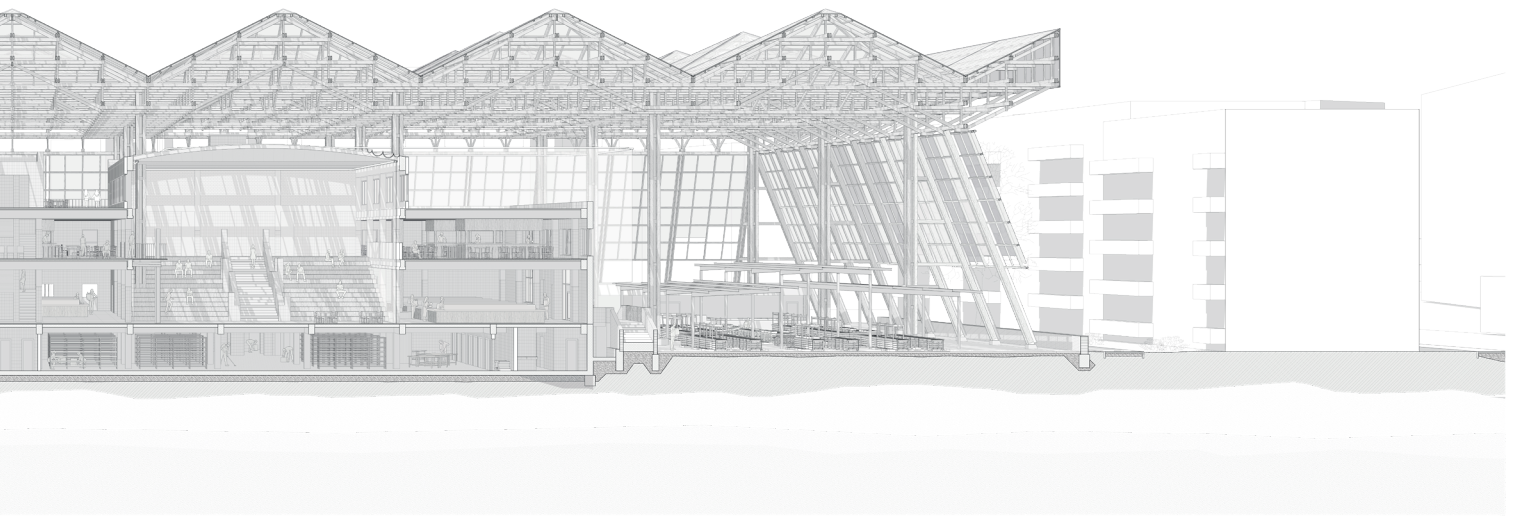
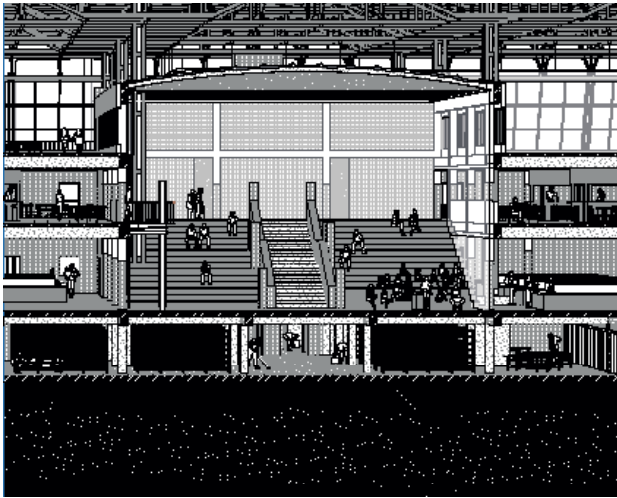
BEAMS IPE 160, STACKED

COLUMNS IPE 330

POINT FOUNDATIONS 500/500MM



42 FINAL DESIGN: PERSPECTIVE SECTION



DESIGN REFLECTION – HARMONISING WITH DISSONANCE

Reflection on Design Ambitions

My observations in Tallinn and the findings of the analysis problematise the homogenisation and flattening of its material and social cityscape:

How can we design with Tallinn's urban dissonance to shape local centres, that address the ongoing smoothing of public space and isolation of communities?

This has remained the central investigation throughout the duration of the thesis: Tallinn's urban dissonance serves as the starting point of the project and the combatting of smoothing the goal of its design. It is hard to evaluate now whether these aims can possibly be achieved with these architectural interventions, but the project makes a concerted effort to do so.

The problematisation already signifies a critical position towards the commercialisation and inaccessibility of many third spaces in the city, that is marked by smooth pockets like shopping malls, cruise ships and tourist centres. By linking the experiential and very well known nature of dissonance with the concept of smoothing, the project is based on solid theoretical ground. Keskturg is a poignant place to intervene against this development, the typology of the market, which has historically been crucial in subverting dominant logics, is fitting.

How can Tallinn's Central Market be transformed from a poorly maintained commercial space into a common local centre, to foster both the connection between isolated communities and the fragments of built heritage on site, through encounters of difference, rather than superficial smoothing?

The final design focuses heavily on the engagement with the dissonant heritage of the Soviet structure – the walkway and roof are adequate gestures to intervene and complement the existing heritage. Rather than demolition, the project implements a framework of critical addressal, leading to interesting new relationships between existing and the new. The implementation of the large-scale roof seems potent and, despite its sheer size, a fitting intervention in the neighbourhood, that is so dominated by the Soviet urban frame. For the roof to achieve the lightness and generous character the design intends, the porous, but still very present facade seems to be a hindrance. Although the rhythm in the roof is convincing, the expression in the elevation still retains a blocky character, that would have perhaps benefited from moving away from the purely planar spatial impression from underneath and implementing a rhythm that goes beyond the tent roofs. The logic of the volumetrically massive, but finely constructed and open structure, similar to a cloud, however, is strong. While the design plays with the fabric in the roof, the facade and the enclosures, assigning different degrees of opacity, it is worth considering if a colour strategy, rather than material subtlety would have

made the gesture more light and playful. Especially the curtains for the enclosures would benefit from a more cheerful detail planning, incorporating elements from the neighbourhood. While the roof is generally successful in its design, both in function and introduction of a consonant melody, a focus on a more musical analysis of its rhythm, melody and timbre could have been useful to evaluate its character.

While the roof received a lot of attention in its design, the axis fulfils its function in regards to the Soviet heritage, but in its own form could use more elaboration. The reused character is strong and the idea of collecting the steel parts from the dismantled sheds resourceful, the expression of the structure could use refinement. That being said, how the axis intersects with the Soviet structure is interesting and, after developing it from a harsh cut to a subtle piercing, appropriate to the dissonant heritage. Its more consonant aim, the stringing-together of different parts of the site is a little undermined by the strong focus on the Soviet and Tsarist building. It would have been interesting to develop a more detailed strategy for all the existing structures on site. Additionally, the relationship between the two large gestures is meant to be a little unclear – perhaps to the point where they are not read as one layer. The final design of the two large gestures is convincing in its theoretical grounding and provides an interesting approach in their combination of consonance and dissonance. It might be interesting to use more musical methods to explore the harmony they create in tandem with the existing.

The ambition to create a common local centre is fulfilled by introducing communal, cultural and social functions alongside the market. Crossprogramming is a highly effective way of bridging the gap between communities. It might have been exciting to spend some time devising a more detailed idea of how this market could be organised: who are stakeholders and how can they be involved in running Keskturg. Building on the ambitions of the original Soviet microrayon plans seems to have been a good approach – the role of what a modern community centre could be, involving more research into other examples of the typology proved hard – also because of the combination with a market. The project does not attempt to force social encounters. Instead, Sennett's idea of creating contact points through the programmatic and spatial organisation is the goal, that the final design aims at. But while the approach of providing a framework with different conditions, that can be governed by the market-goers themselves is convincing, designing a detailed organisational structure could have been an alternative approach.

Could methods of large-scale superimposition and framing-together of disjunct material elements and previously isolated communities alike – by critically evaluating and highlighting existing difference – serve as a basis for the emergence of events that carry generative dissonance?

The theoretical framework proposes the engendering of generative dissonance. The roof and walkway create new readings of the existing structure and the drawings, which centre the human experience with the structure are a necessary counter to the somewhat graphical exercise of the design on the large scale. Introducing them earlier in the design would have helped to understand the possibly emerging events better – the time for this was limited by the theoretical explorations, that are equally crucial for the design. It seems that the final result does expose existing dissonances, addressing them through harmonisation employing consonant and dissonant means, but whether this is enough to cause truly generative experiences could only be evaluated in practice.

The porosity, flexibility and user agency the project seeks is designed for: the robust framework is complemented by semi-permanent skin, flexible enclosures and movable curtains. Their operation lies in the hands of the market-goer. And while the design forces porosity, by deconstructing thresholds, practical concerns could, in the long term, undermine these ambitions. Agency is given to the community, but this could also mean, that porosity is reduced instead of remaining truly public. The project also seeks to keep the rents at the market affordable after the redevelopment – a cornerstone of whether the design could be successful in not excluding the vendors, who often suffer from changes in market management and price hikes. And while the resources are sourced locally and sustainably, their joinery is simple and demountable, the scale of the intervention is very large. Throughout the design process, the necessary reinforcement of the roof and the addition of a partial facade have turned the project into a more robust, but also more costly ambition. Its success is decided by the programmatic density, which is, in part, subject to the involvement of the city to enable events to happen and fund public spaces. Should this not happen, the flexibility would allow for changing use, but it is unclear whether it could retain the character of a neighbourhood centre.

The project provides a possible approach towards engendering generative dissonance against smoothing. Whether this could be successful depends on many factors outside architecture, that could have been studied in more detail. Additionally, the experiential side of dissonance is present in the final results, but underrepresented in the methodology. A shift towards a more inhabited site and imagination of its experience rather than the structural and theoretical elaboration would have been required to study the impact on these issues. But these are also the most convincing characteristics of the design, bringing it into the real world, proving it is buildable. A reduction in scale could have possibly allowed for a closer look into all aspects – but at the same time, this would have not been possible on this site, that is a highly fitting environment based on the initial fascinations.

The Design and the Architectural Profession

The project argues against the current smoothing, that most developments in Tallinn, and beyond exude. It

rides on the resurgence in care for existing heritage, that has caught on in architectural circles, but is still negligible in the political debate. Projects like this one strengthen the call for a sensitive approach to demolition. It also aims to include political, artistic and theoretical considerations into the work of architects, that they are already inevitably entangled with. It stands against the pushes for conceptual simplicity, instead proclaiming value in ambiguity. It shows how architects can work between restoration and demolition, between consonance and dissonance. And while its impact on the architectural profession can be assumed to be minimal, it showed me that the translation from theoretical frameworks to aims and finally, an architectural design are necessary. But also, that this framework needs time to develop.

In the context of Tallinn, it could provide an outside perspective on its Soviet heritage. Some built fabric can be ill-fitting and be reminders of oppression, but erasing them would erode the collective memory. The project formulates an approach of engaging with, rather than erasing dissonant heritage.

Finally, the design questions the architect's will to design everything or strive for complete liberalisation of space. Planning imposes a position. But this does not mean that the planner is almighty: they may not be able to directly design absolutes, but maybe they can influence possibilities.

Conclusion

Looking back at the project, its strongest aspects come from the continuous interplay of theory, analysis and design. It has shown that projects can produce concrete spatial strategies in response to difficult conditions, employing theoretical frameworks and testing against technical and spatial realities. But especially the social ambitions remain speculative, downright non-existent in unbuilt work.

This process has raised many interesting questions, but – even in the scope of a graduation project – at this scale, more than I am able to answer to the quality of the problem.

FIGURES

1	<i>Dissonant Encounters, photograph</i>
2	<i>Soviet Market Hall with Projected Redevelopment, photograph</i>
3	<i>Redevelopment Proposals on Interior Wall, photograph</i>
4	<i>Trace of Medieval Reval City Plan, 1699*</i>
5	<i>Trace of Second Soviet Master Plan, 1968*</i>
6	<i>Trace of Suur-Tallinn Master Plan, 1913*</i>
7	<i>Trace of Post-Soviet Developments, 1991-*</i>
8	<i>Diagram of Wall-and-Core Centrality Logic</i>
9	<i>Diagram of Radiating Centrality Logic</i>
10	<i>Diagram of ABC Centrality Logic</i>
11	<i>Superimposed Master Plans*</i>
12	<i>Urban Section</i>
13	<i>Urban Section Coded by time period</i>
14	<i>Dissonance Drawing abstraction</i>
15	<i>Section marked in Superimposed Master Plans*</i>
16	<i>Viru Fragment Drawing and Material Catalogue*</i>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abram, Joseph, et al. 1999. *Tschumi Le Fresnoy: Architecture In/ Between*.

Boer, René. 2023. *Smooth City: Against Urban Perfection, Towards Collective Alternatives*. Amsterdam: Valiz.

Bruns, Olga. 1968. *Keskturng Project Drawings*. Tallinn: Eesti Projekt. Estonian Museum of Architecture Archives (EAMFk11313-11345).

Bull, Anna Cento. 2021. "Approaches to Memory in Dealing with Difficult/Dissonant Heritage: Report for the Action 10 of the Partnership on Culture and Cultural Heritage." *Urban Agenda of the EU*. Brussels.

Ching, Francis D. K. 2007. *Architecture: Form, Space, & Order*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

City of Tallinn. 2020. "Tallinn 2035 Development Strategy" <https://www.tallinn.ee/strateegia/development-documents> (accessed January 20, 2026).

EKA – Estonian Academy of Arts. 2021. *City Unfinished: Urban Visions of Tallinn*. Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts.

Friedrich, Daniel. 2025. "Recontextualising Residential Alienation as Biopolitical Struggle." *Entanglements: Theory Thesis Collective Journal* 4 (Spring): 90–95.

Gilroy, Paul. 2005. *Postcolonial Melancholia*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Havik, Klaske, et al. 2017. "Seeking for Architecture – A Conversation with Bernard Tschumi." In *EVENTS: Situating the Temporary*, edited by Herman Verkerk, 31–51. Basel: Birkhäuser.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1807. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. (1973 edition used).

Jaeggi, Rahel. 2014. *Alienation*. Translated by Frederick Neuhauser and Alan E. Smith. New York: Columbia University Press.

Jencks, Charles. 1985. *Modern Movements in Architecture*. London: Penguin.

Johnson-Laird, Philip N., Olivia E. Kang, and Yuan Chang Leong. 2012. "On Musical Dissonance." *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 30 (1): 19–35. <https://doi.org/10.1525/mp.2012.30.1.19>.

KOKO Architects. 2026. *Keskturng Redevelopment Proposal*. Tallinn:

17	<i>Conceptual Design Option Drawings</i>
18	<i>Preliminary Design A1 Drawings</i>
19	<i>Perspective Sketches, Roof</i>
20	<i>Perspective Sketches, Axis</i>
21	<i>Fragment Sketches, layered, Enclosures</i>
22	<i>Fragment Sketch, Column</i>
23	<i>Option Sketches, Roof Node</i>
24	<i>Final Design Drawings</i>
25	
26	
27	
28	
29	
30	
31	
32	
33	
34	
35	...

Detail Plans DP041060_DP_PJ_PDF_042 & DP041060_DP_SK_PDF_044. <https://tpr.tallinn.ee/> (accessed January 20, 2026).

KTA Architects. 2019. *Central Market of Tallinn*. <https://www.kta.ee/central-market-of-tallinn> (accessed March 30, 2026).

Lamberth, Annabell, and Philip Dingeldey. 2023. "Von der Entfremdung zur Verfremdung: Das epische Theater zwischen Kunst und Marxscher Sozialtheorie." *Soziologiemagazin* 16: 41–64. <https://doi.org/10.3224/soz.v16i1.04>.

Lawlor, Leonard. 2023. "Jacques Derrida." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2023 Edition, edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/derrida/>.

Mariotti, Jasna, and Kadri Leetmaa. 2024. *The Unfinished Project for the Socialist City and the Legacy of Its Multiple Ecologies*.

Metspalu, Pille, and Daniel B. Hess. 2018. "Revisiting the Role of Architects in Planning Large-Scale Housing in the USSR: The Birth of Socialist Residential Districts in Tallinn, Estonia, 1957–1979." *Planning Perspectives* 33 (3): 335–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2017.1348974>.

Port, Mart. 1983. *Nõukogude Eesti arhitektuur*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat.

Rehding, Alexander. 2019. "Consonance and Dissonance." In *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Concepts in Music Theory*, 437–466, edited by Alexander Rehding & Steven Rings. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sennett, Richard. 1996. *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life*. London: Faber & Faber.

Spencer, Douglas. 2016. *The Architecture of Neoliberalism: How Contemporary Architecture Became an Instrument of Control and Compliance*. London: Bloomsbury.

Šiupšinskas, Matas, and Epp Lankots. 2019. "Collectivist Ideals and Soviet Consumer Spaces: Microrayon Commercial Centres in Vilnius, Lithuania and Tallinn, Estonia." In *Housing Estates in the Baltic Countries*, edited by Daniel Baldwin Hess & Tiit Tammaru.

Tallinn Harbour. 2017. *Urban Design Guidelines for the Tallinn Port Master Plan 2030*. https://www.ts.ee/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Tallinn-Masterplan_2030_Report_ENG_.pdf (accessed January 20, 2026).

Tschumi, Bernard. 1996 [1994]. *Architecture and Disjunction*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.