

**THUS  
THE CITY WITHIN**





# -BRUSSELS- A MANIFESTO TOWARDS THE CAPITAL OF EUROPE

A Berlage Institute Project Nai Publishers, Rotterdam

# BERNARDO SECCHI

*L'urbanistica ha forti, precise responsabilità nell'aggravarsi delle disuguaglianze. Siamo di fronte a una nuova questione urbana che è causa non secondaria della crisi che oggi attraversano le principali economie del pianeta.*

## La città dei ricchi e la città dei poveri

# Future Bank

2021-22 MSc3 AR3AI100



National Bank of Belgium, Boulevard de Berlaimont, 1950s. Source: hemels.brussels

## Introduction.

Contemporary society is governed by the regulation and flow of capital. The supply, perceived value and control of money determines, to a large extent, the conditions in which we live, and its accumulation underpins the perceived success of individuals, companies, cities, regions and nation states.

Capitalism enshrines this right of self-enrichment, at every scale. It does however place limits upon it. In order to regulate capitalist economies, complex financial systems have developed, which control finance and secure assets. Banks of many kinds provide liquidity and invest wealth. National Banks control the production and supply of money, regulate their commercial counterparts and, together with governments, define monetary policy and protect national interests. They are the lenders of last resort at times of crisis.

Modern industrialised economies measure their performance through growth, a desire for the sustained increase of national wealth which has underpinned the thinking of National Banks. A sustained increase in gross domestic product has been the mantra of prudent governance, fueled by work and production and regulated through finance, the control of interest rates and levels of inflation. However, we are arriving at the collective realisation that our obsession with enrichment has come at an enormous cost. The relentless extraction of profit has unbalanced the finite resources of the planet to the extent that

humanity now faces an existential threat. As we attempt to address the enormous challenges the future holds, we ask what might be the role of a future central bank?

Set in Brussels, the project will address the transformation of the National Bank of Belgium. This occupies a vast, triangular urban block of 91,000m<sup>2</sup> that is situated at a critical moment between the upper and the lower parts of the city. This is made manifest in the 8m sectional shift across the site as it rises from the austere, 200m long, columnar façade that announces it to the Boulevard de Berlaimont.

From palatial beginnings, the present bank developed as a consolidated aggregation of buildings, planned by Marcel Van Goethem after the Second World War. Its current form is the result of a massive reconstruction project that transformed and rescaled this piece of city into an imposing, yet ultimately alienating urban environment. Built to its boundaries, the introverted nature of the complex reflects the historic need to secure Belgium's financial reserves within its walls. However, since its completion, there has been a fundamental shift in the requirements placed upon it. Industrial functions like the printing and storage of currency have been relocated out of the city, or overseas; finance is becoming increasingly digital; while Belgium's membership of the EU has led to much of the Bank's traditional role being subsumed into the European Central Bank (ECB), based in Frankfurt. In response the National Bank has decided to redefine itself physically.

Interiors  
Buildings  
Cities

Palace

**Post 1830s transformation**



**Brusselization**



## Post 1830s transformation

Impasses



Arcades



Corner buildings

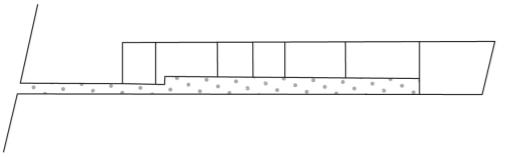


## before 1830 - Impasse

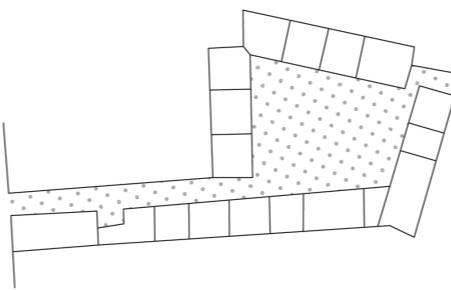
↑ Existing Impasses  
□ Disappeared city blocks



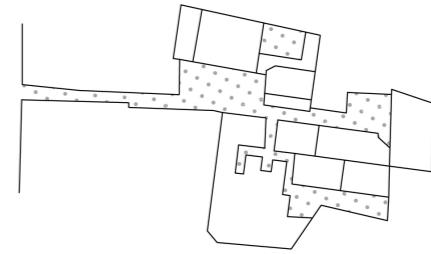
## **before 1830 - Impasse**



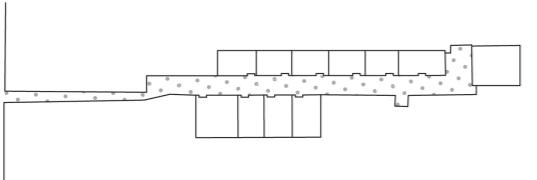
Impasse de la Pie



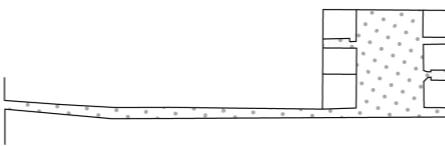
Impasse de Jasmin



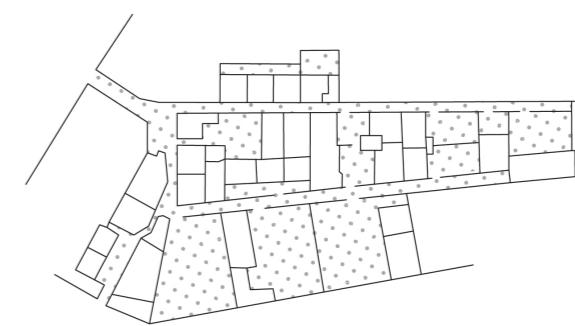
Impasse de St Patronille



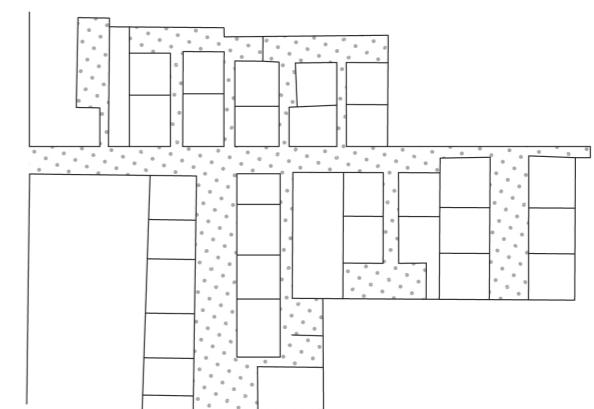
Impasse de Meert



Impasse de la Varsovie

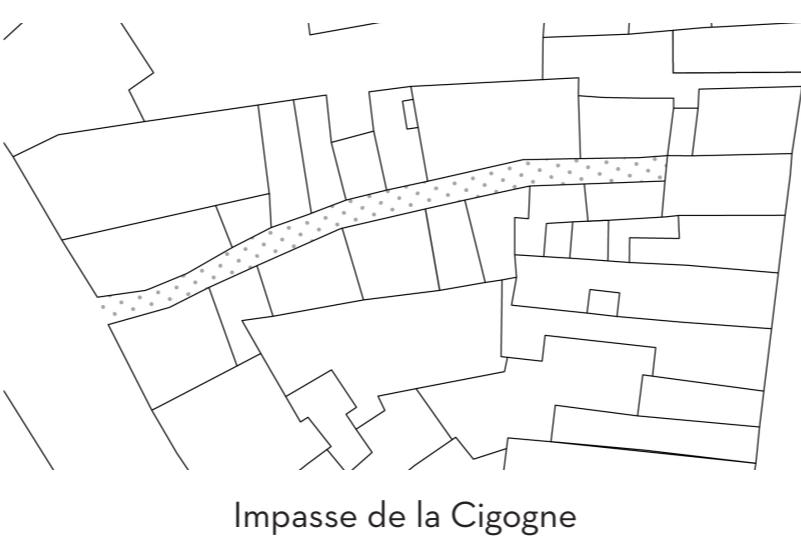


Impasse de la Perle d'Amour

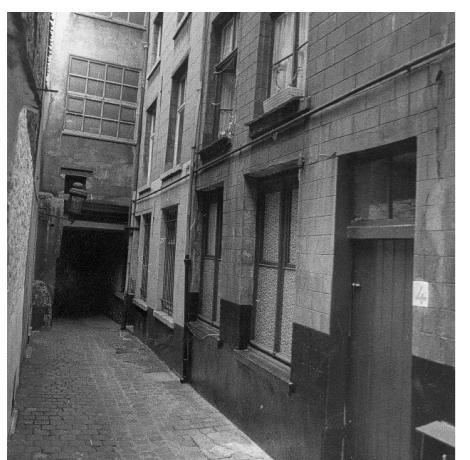
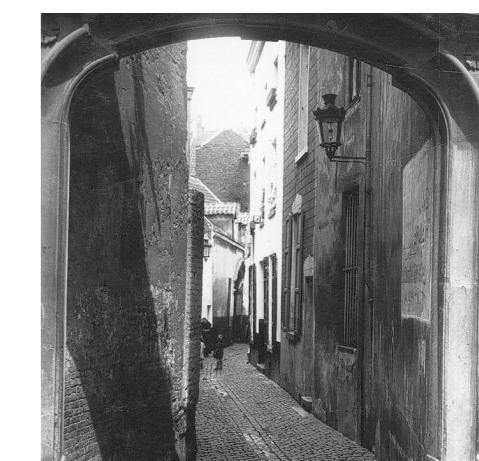
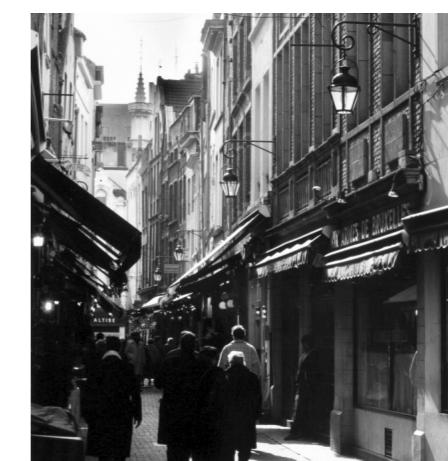
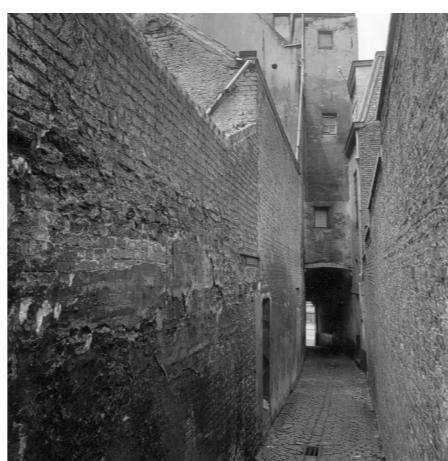
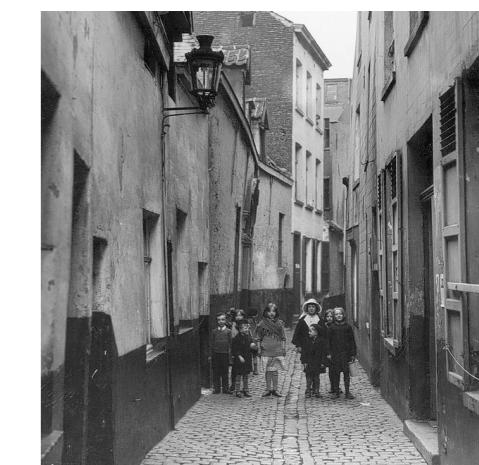


Impasse des Escargots

## before 1830 - Impasse



## before 1830 - *Impasse*



## Post 1830 - Arcade



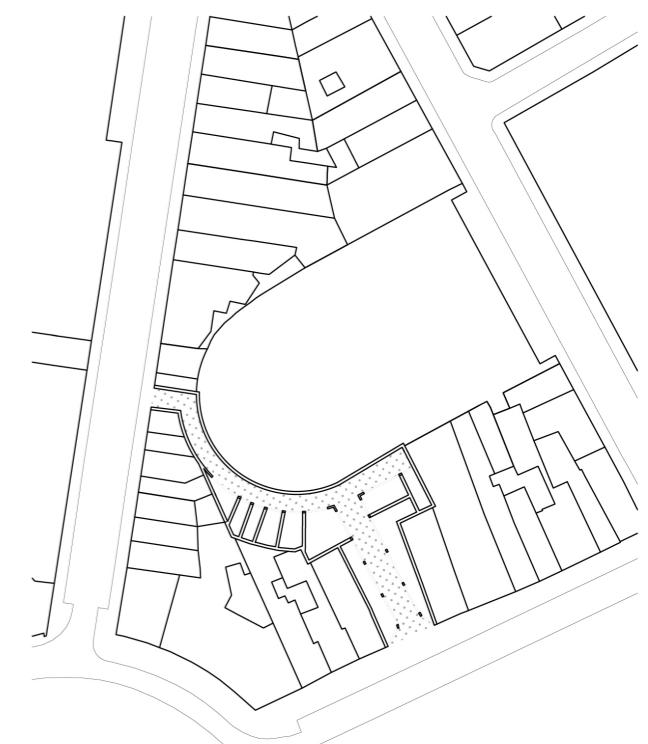
## Post 1830 - Arcade



Galeries Royales

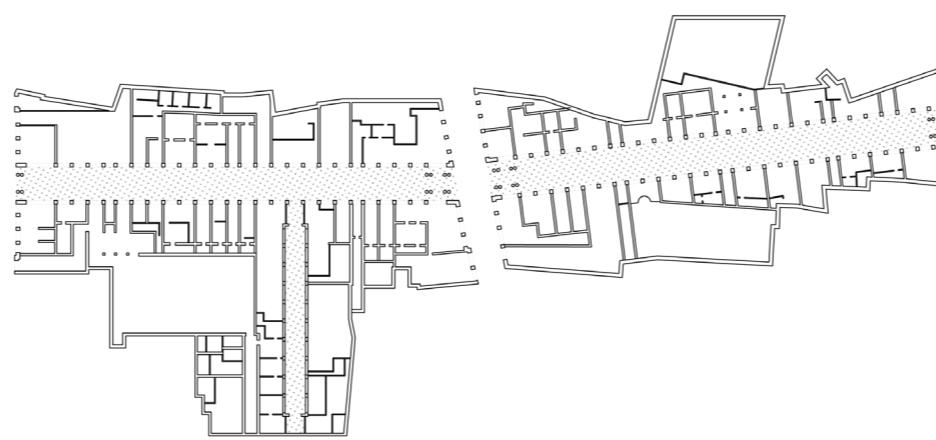
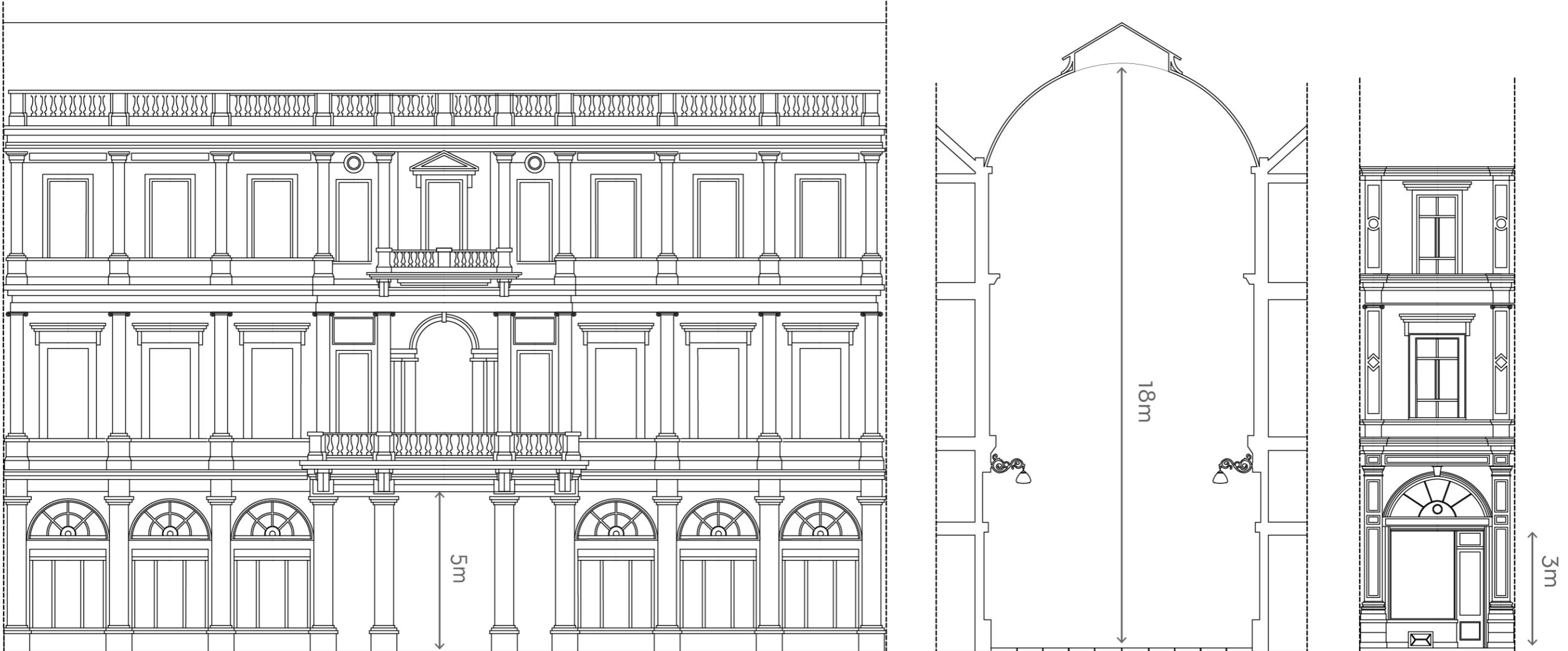


Passage du Nord



Galeries Bortier

## Post 1830 - Arcade



Galeries Royales

## Post 1830 - Arcade



## Post 1830 - Corners, the Haussman model



## Post 1830 - Corners, the Haussman model



## Post 1830 - Corners, the Haussman model



# Brusselization



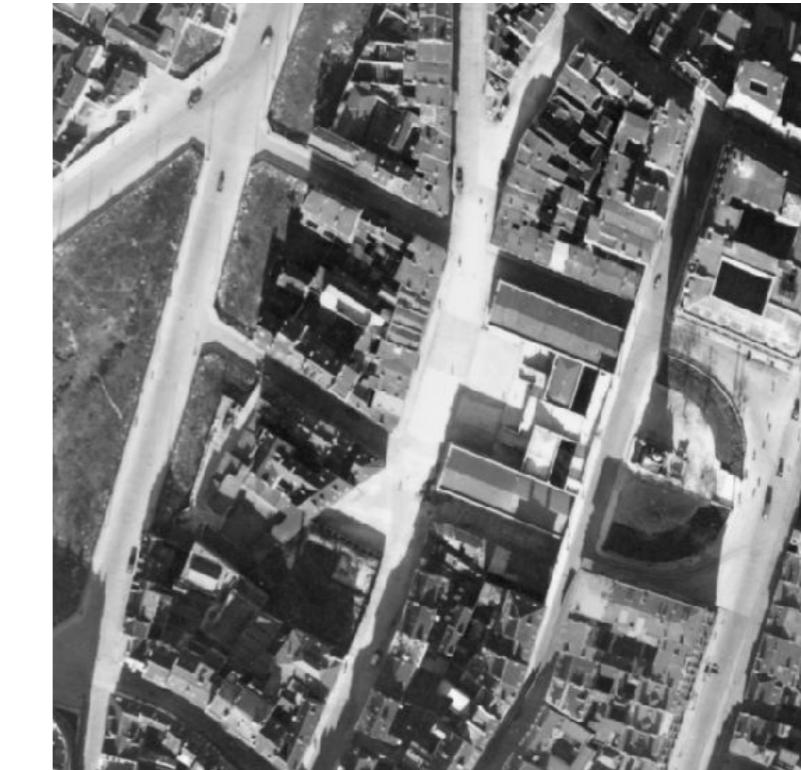
Maison du Peuple , Victor Horta 1899



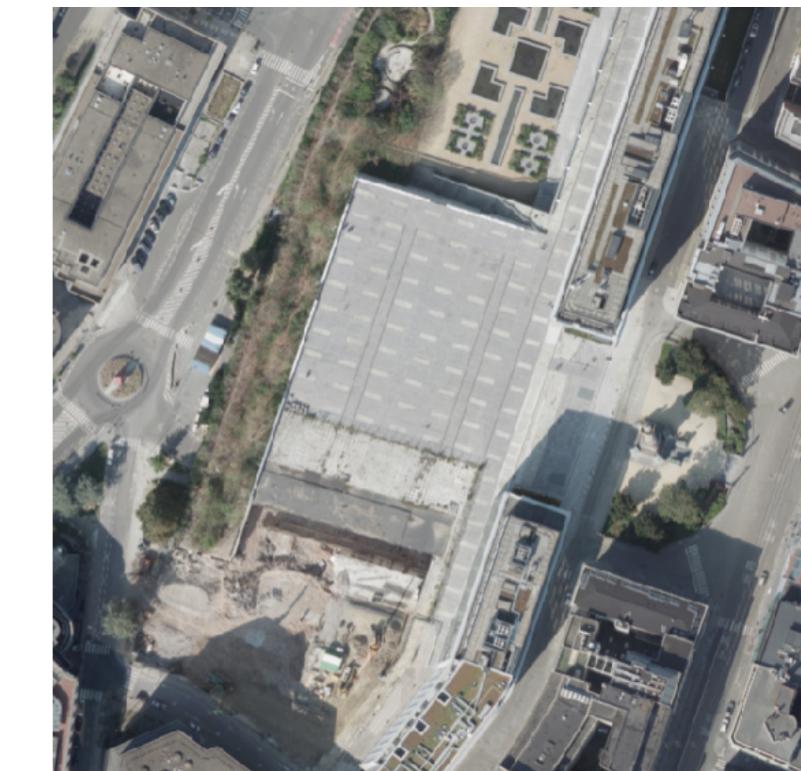
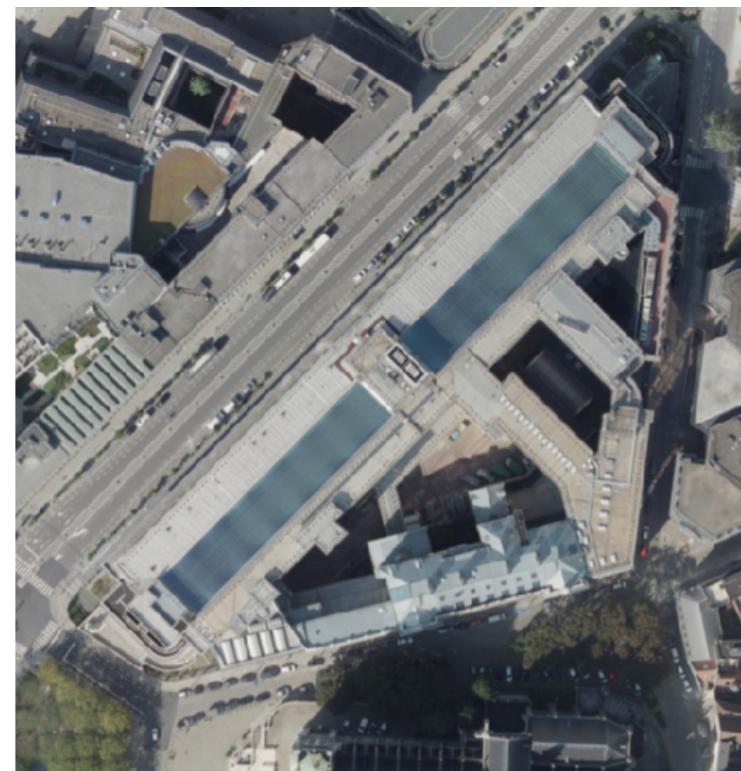
Sablon tower, Vanderauwera 1968

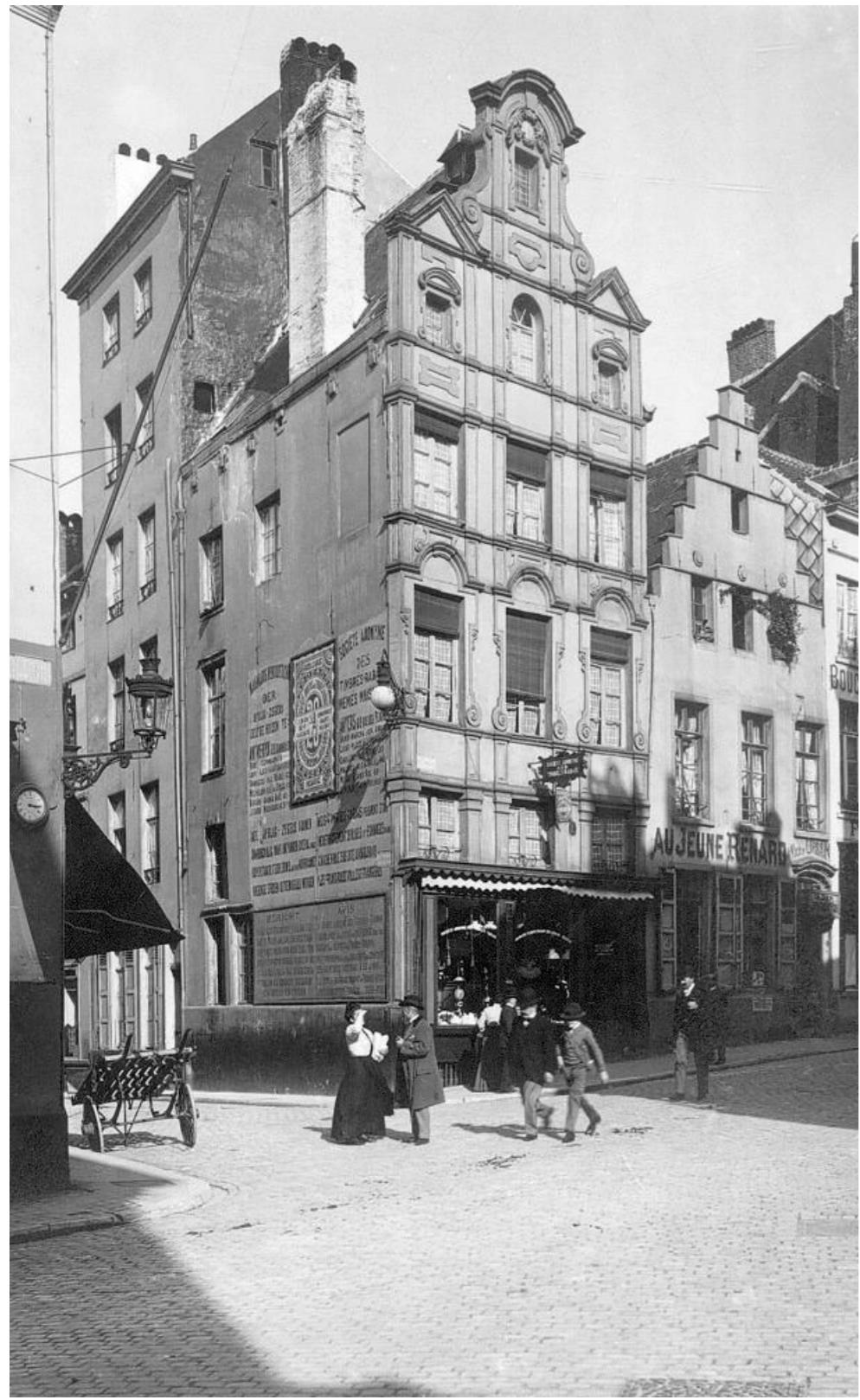
## Brusselization - Bank quarter

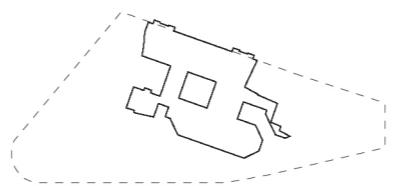
1933



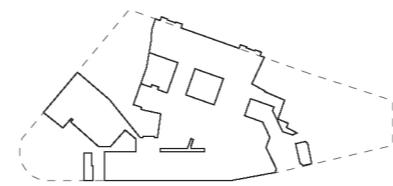
2012



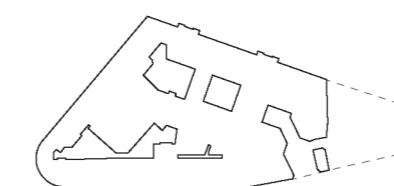




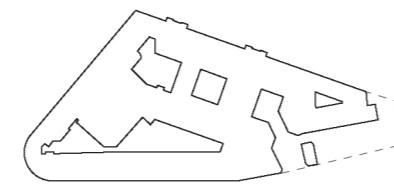
1860-1874



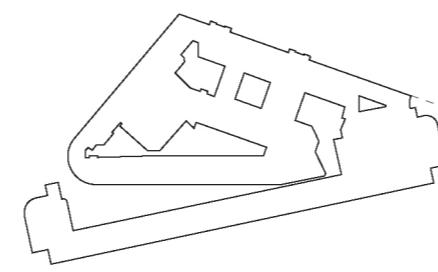
1871-1878



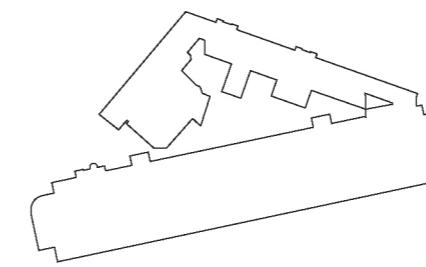
1900-1908



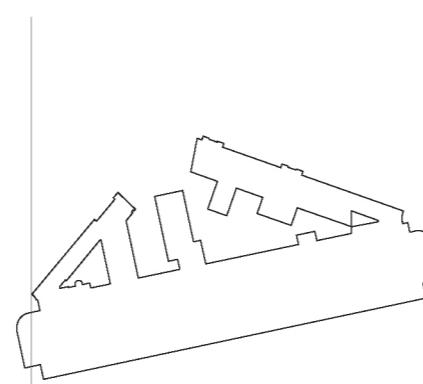
1948-1949



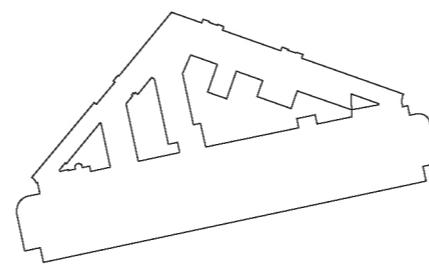
1949-1951



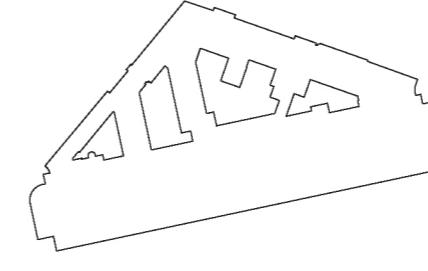
1952-1953



1954

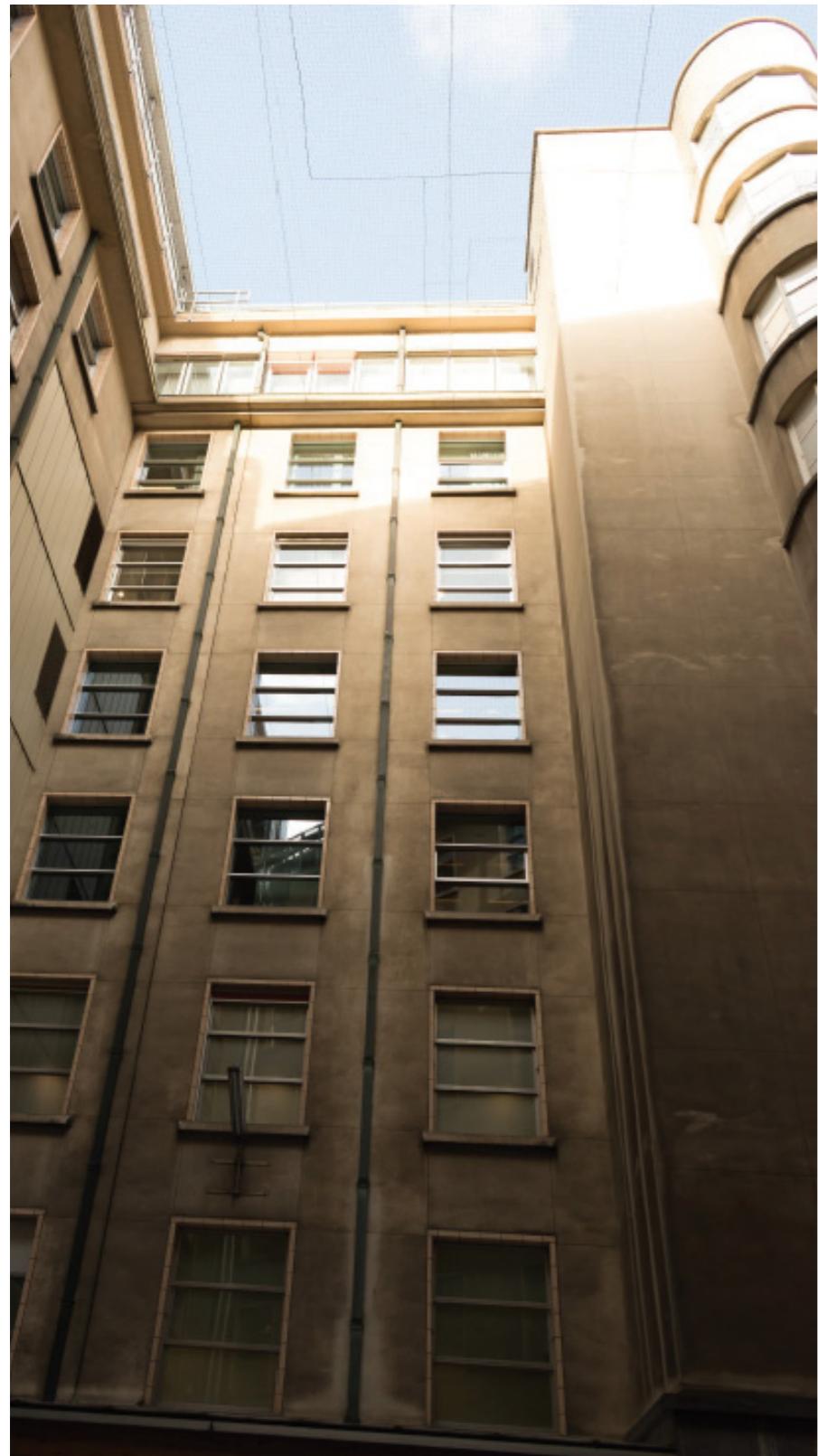


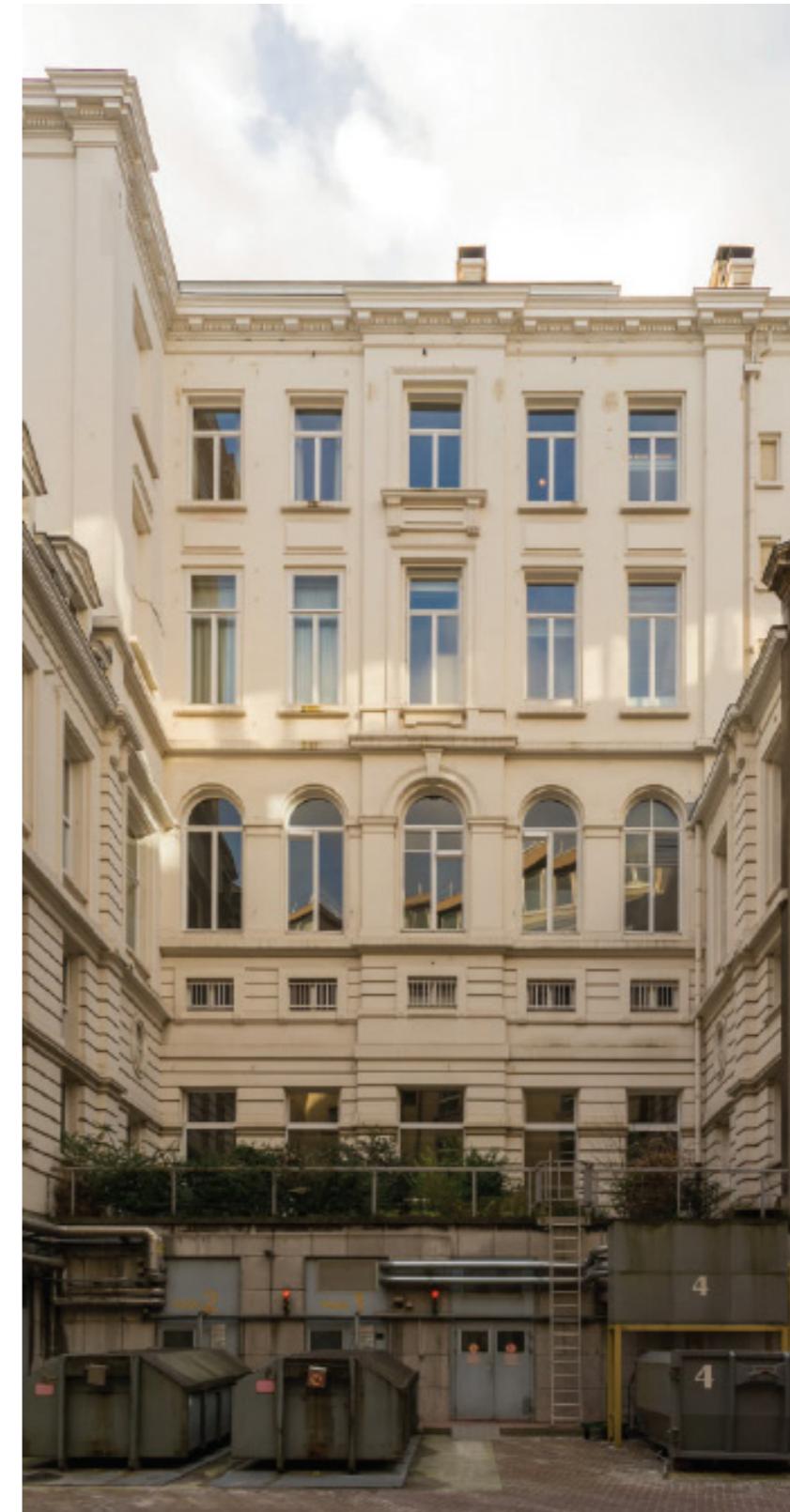
1965



2021

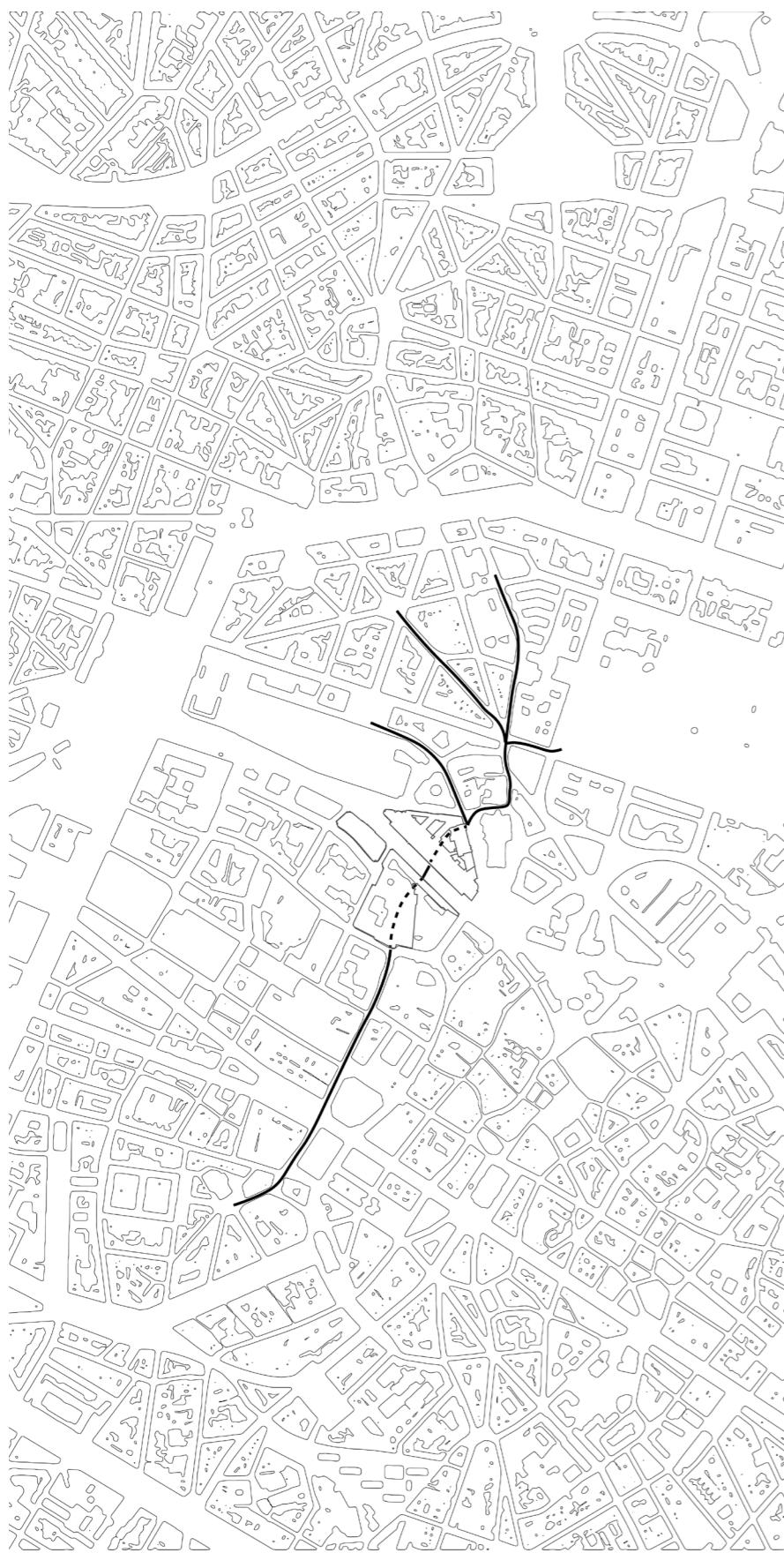








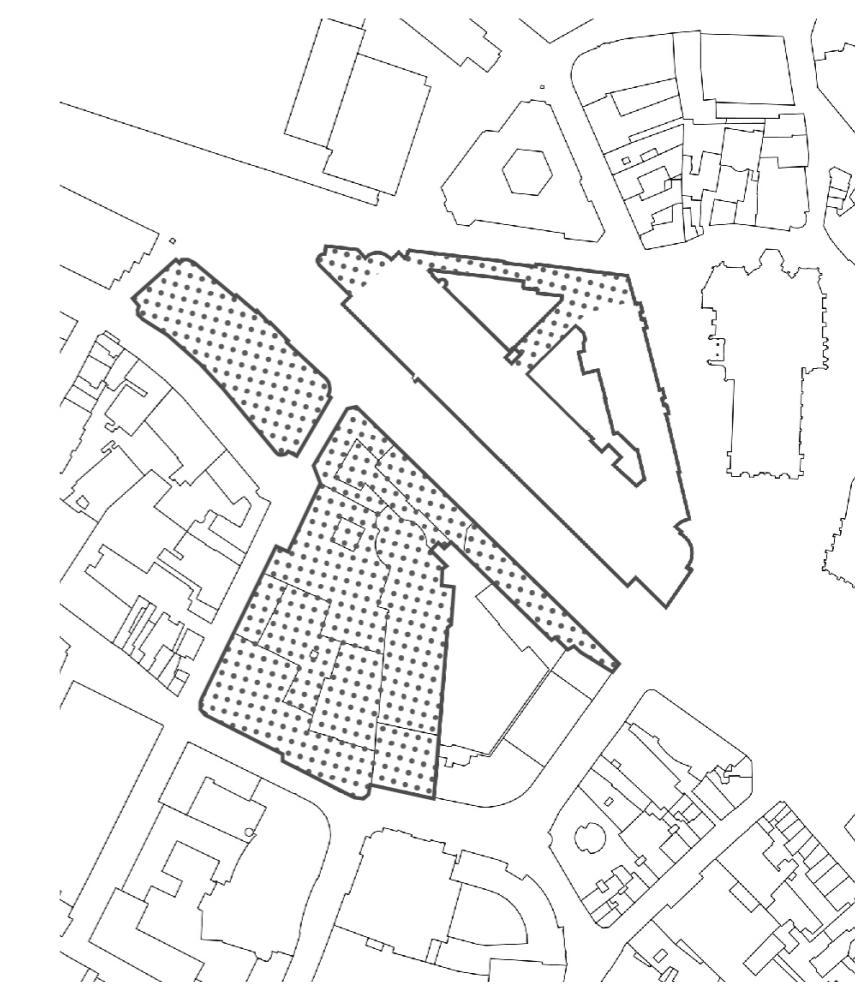
**Urban route**

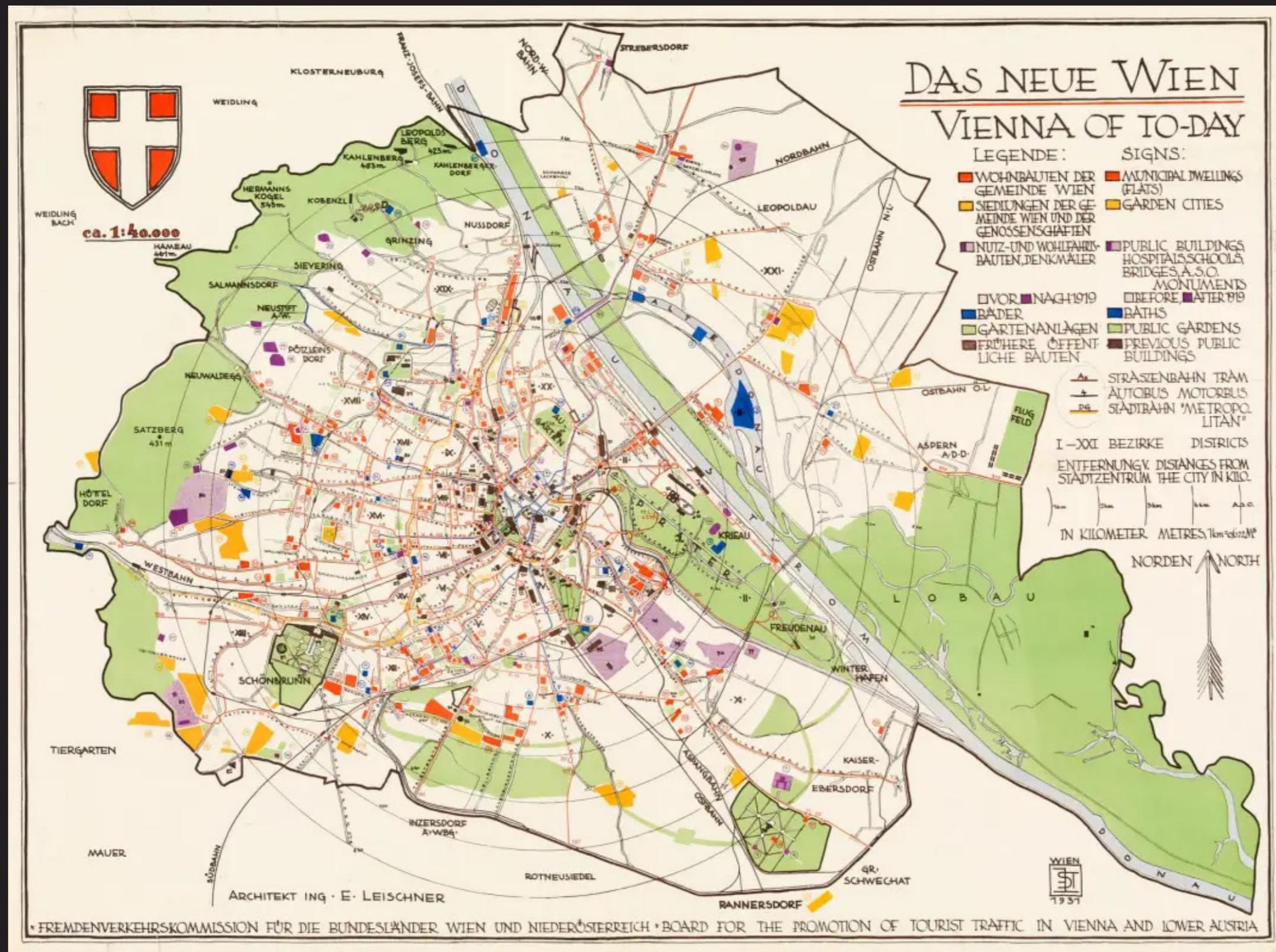


**Partition situation**  
reprogram the block



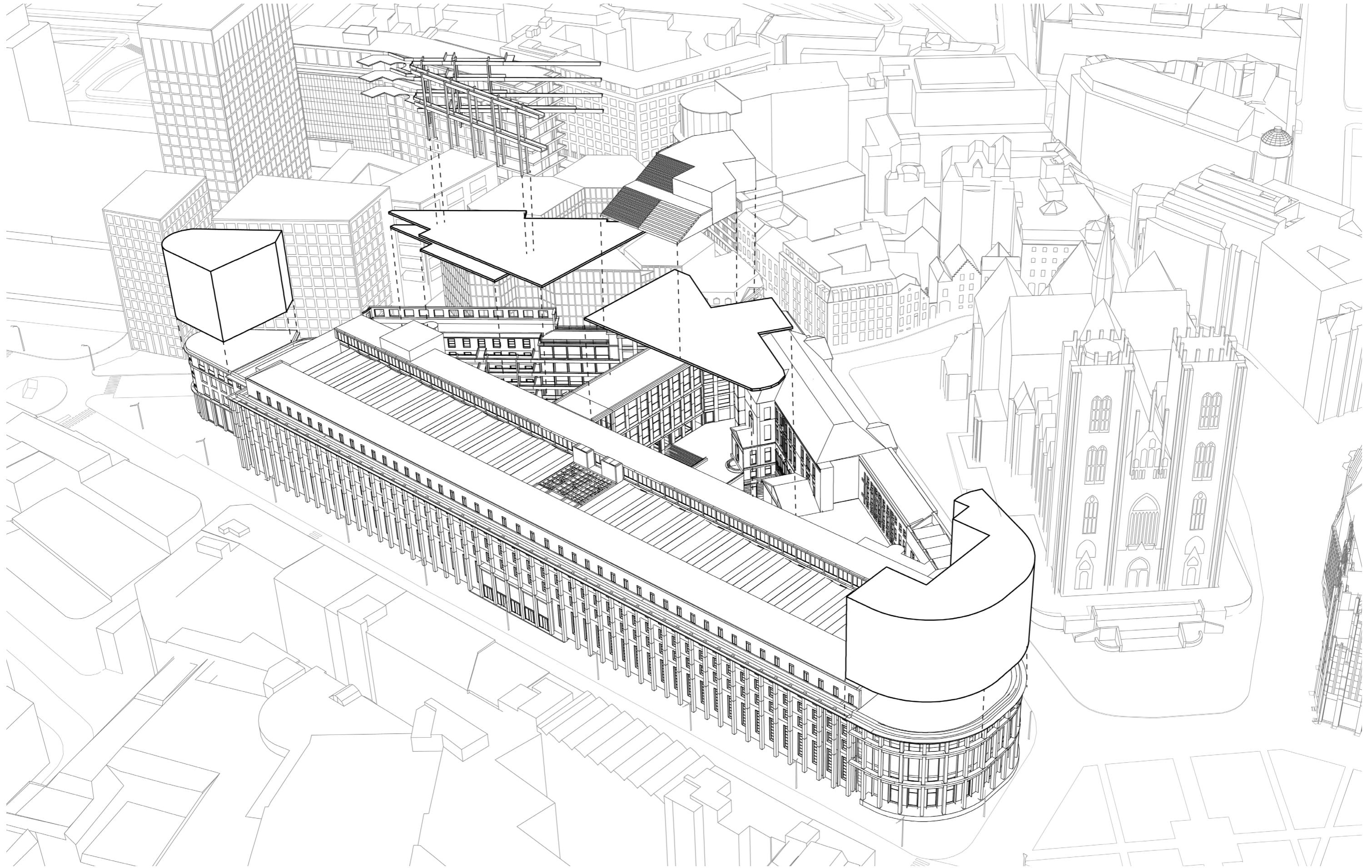
**The Bank's estate**  
use of land property



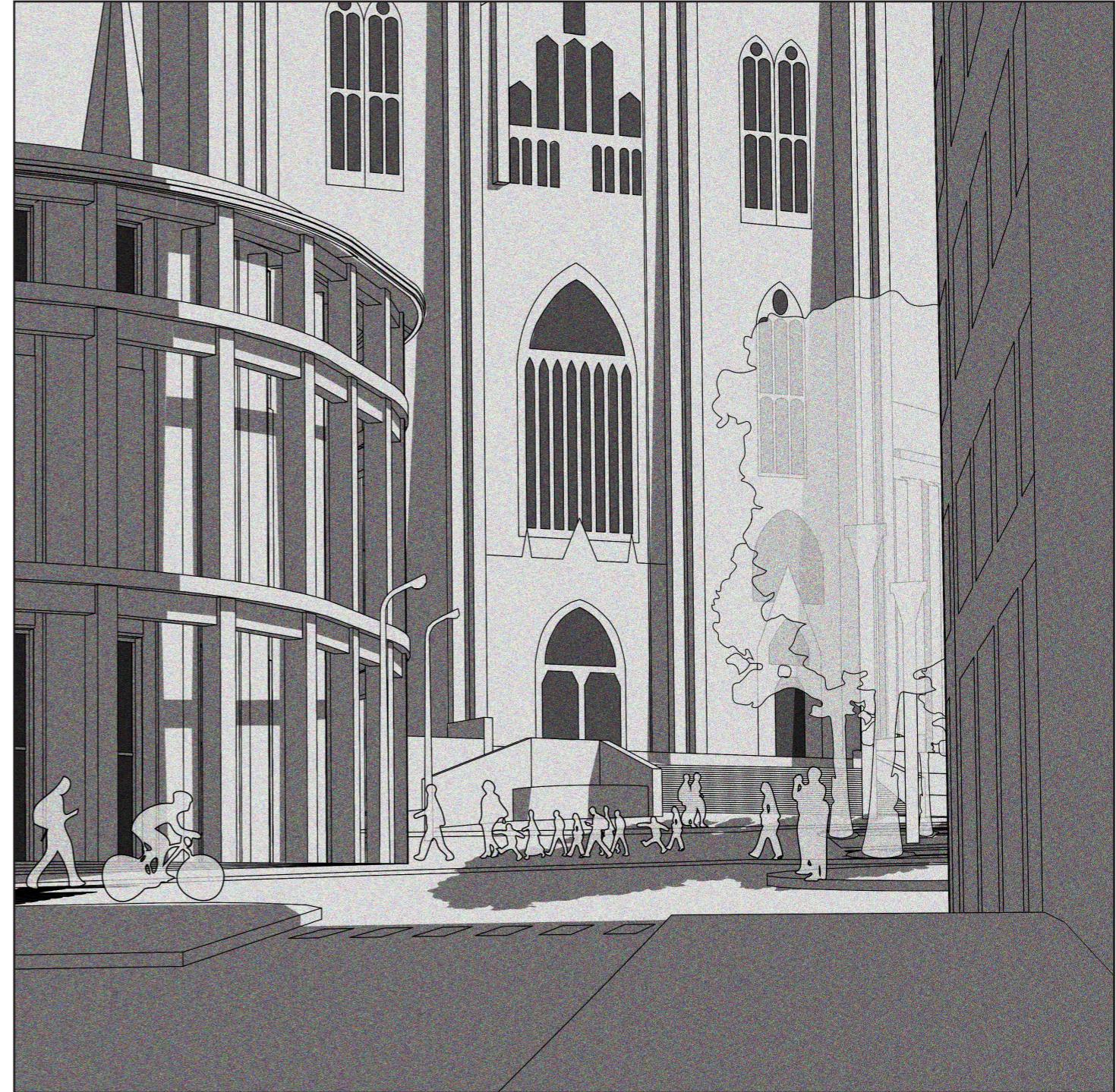
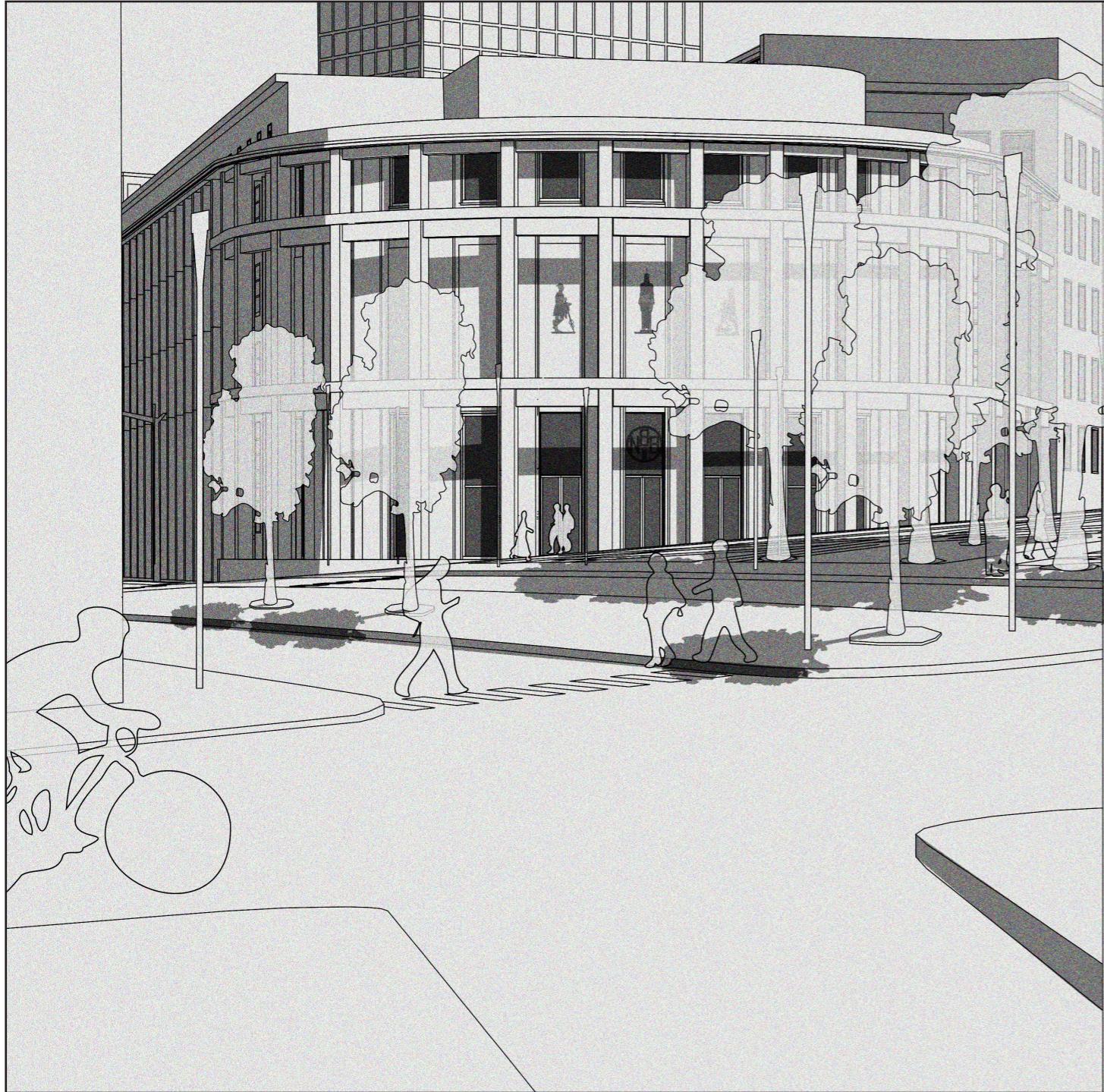


Map depicting variety of urban programs of the Red Vienna 1920s

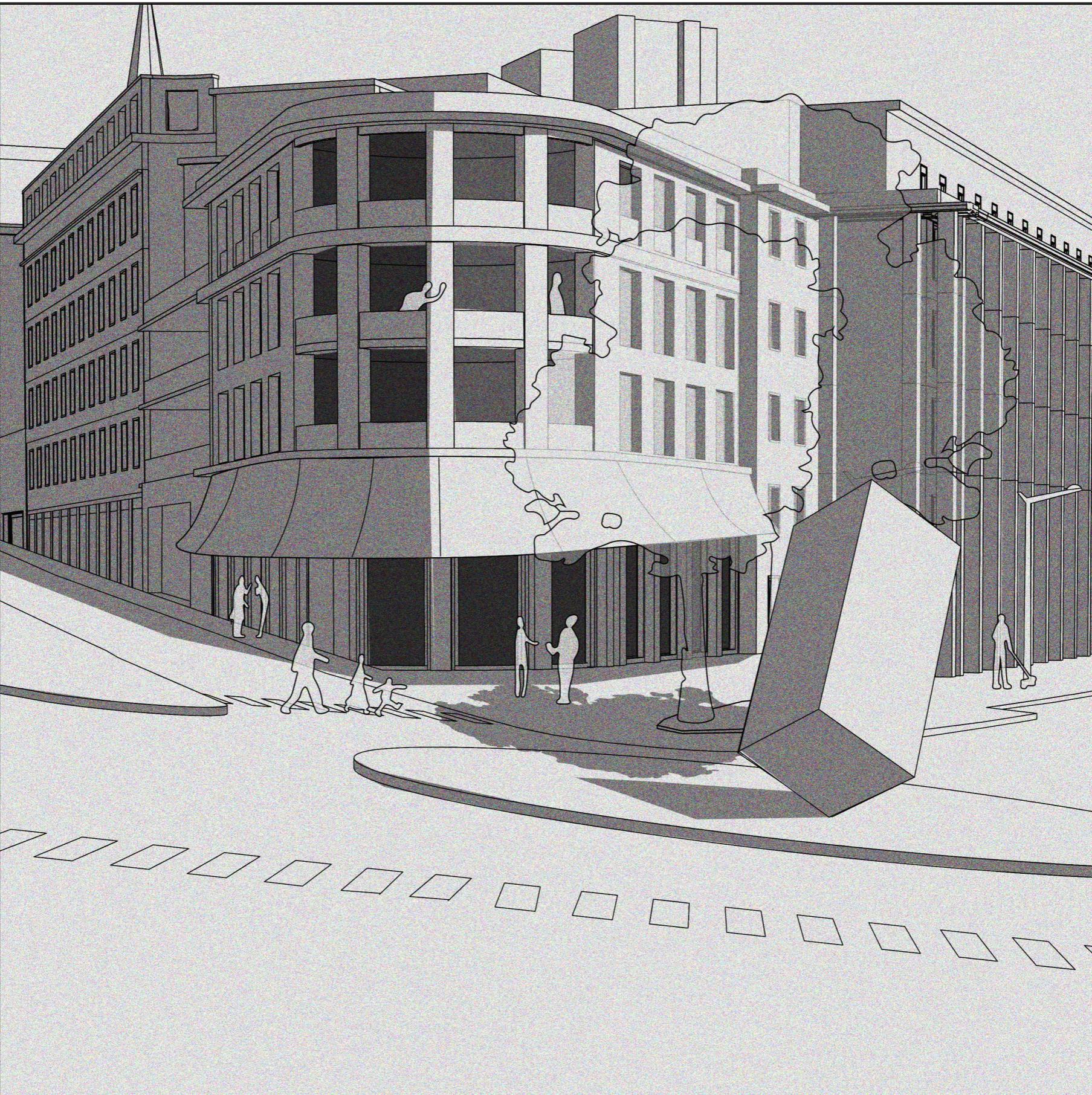
## Urban route



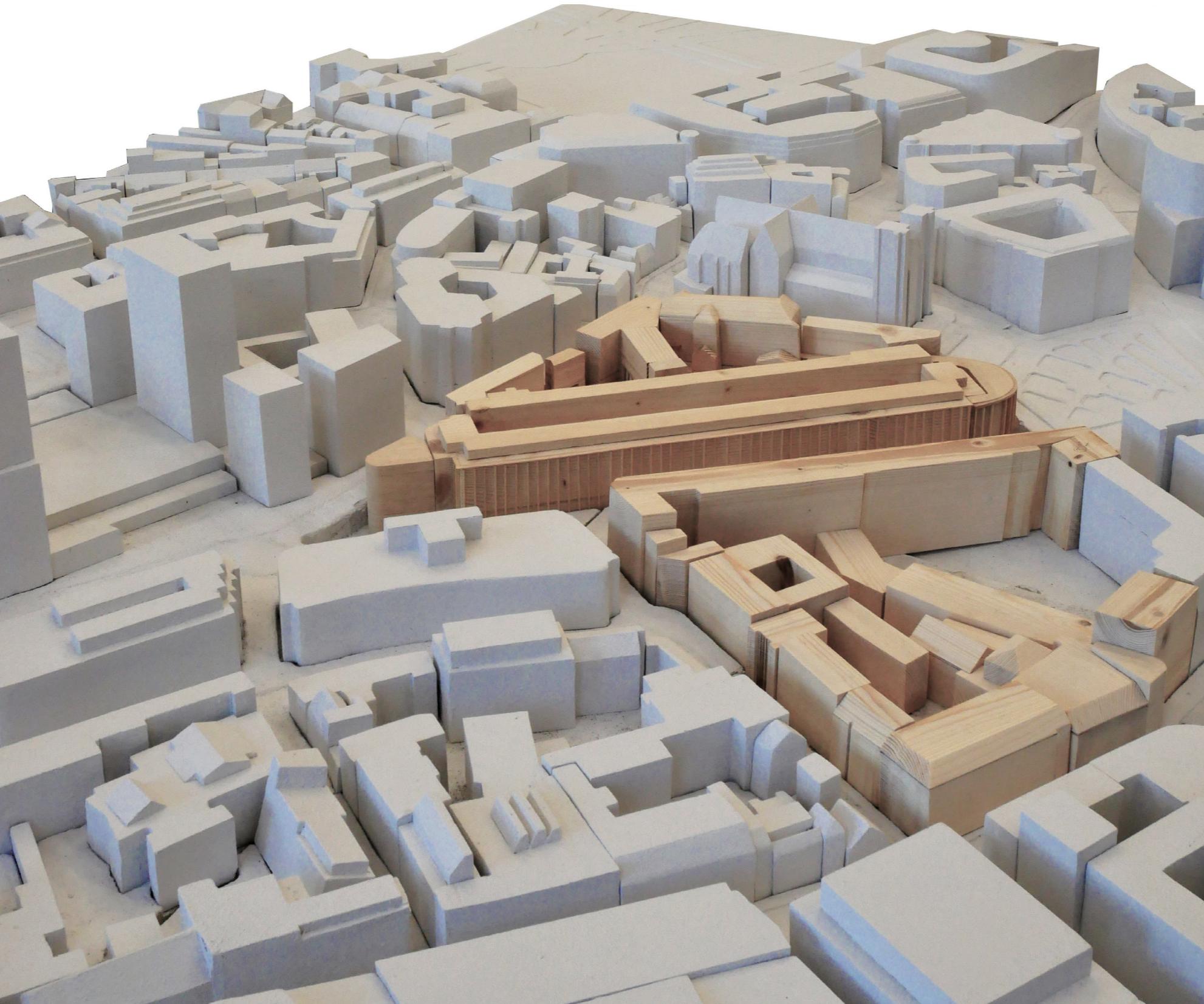
## Urban route



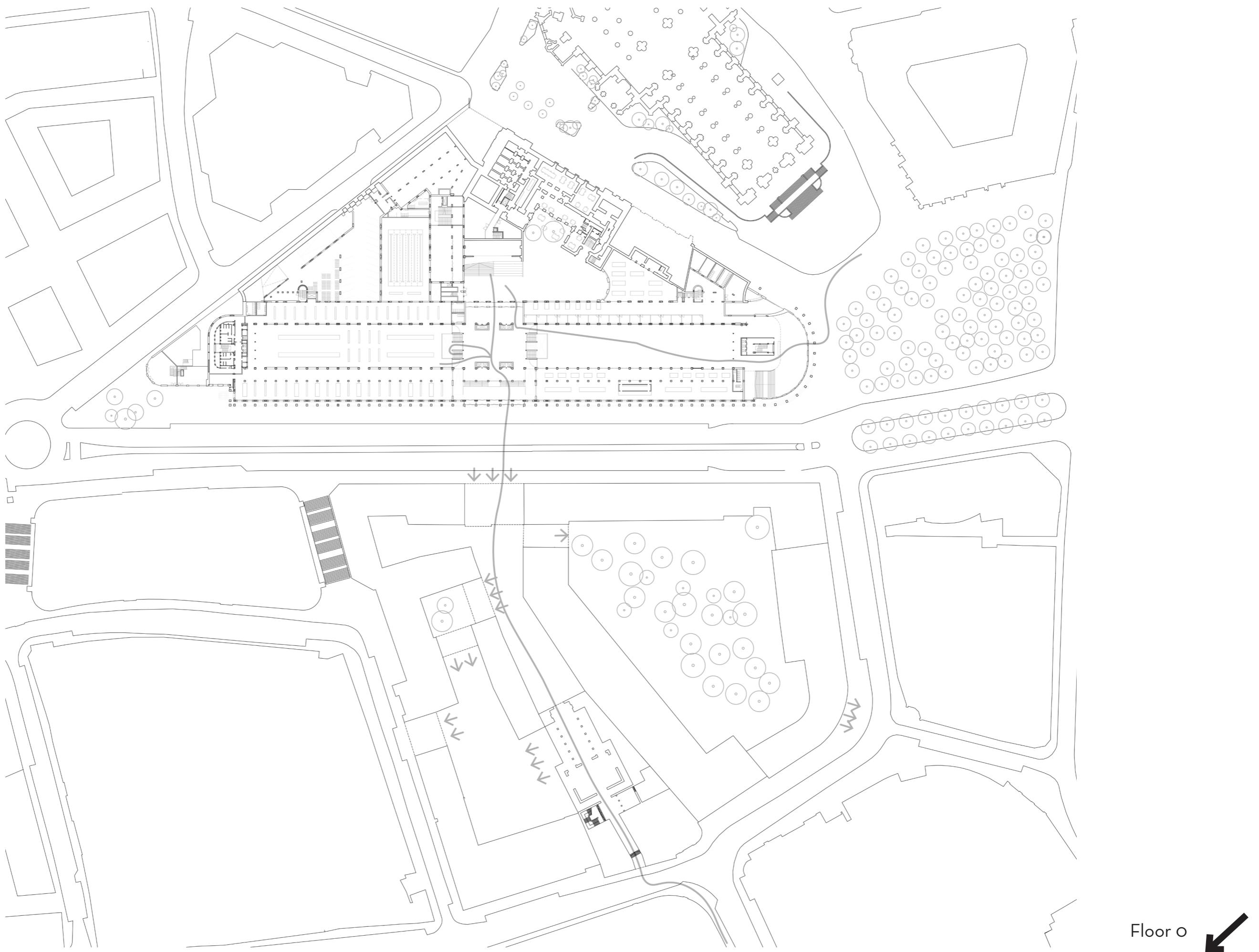
## Urban route



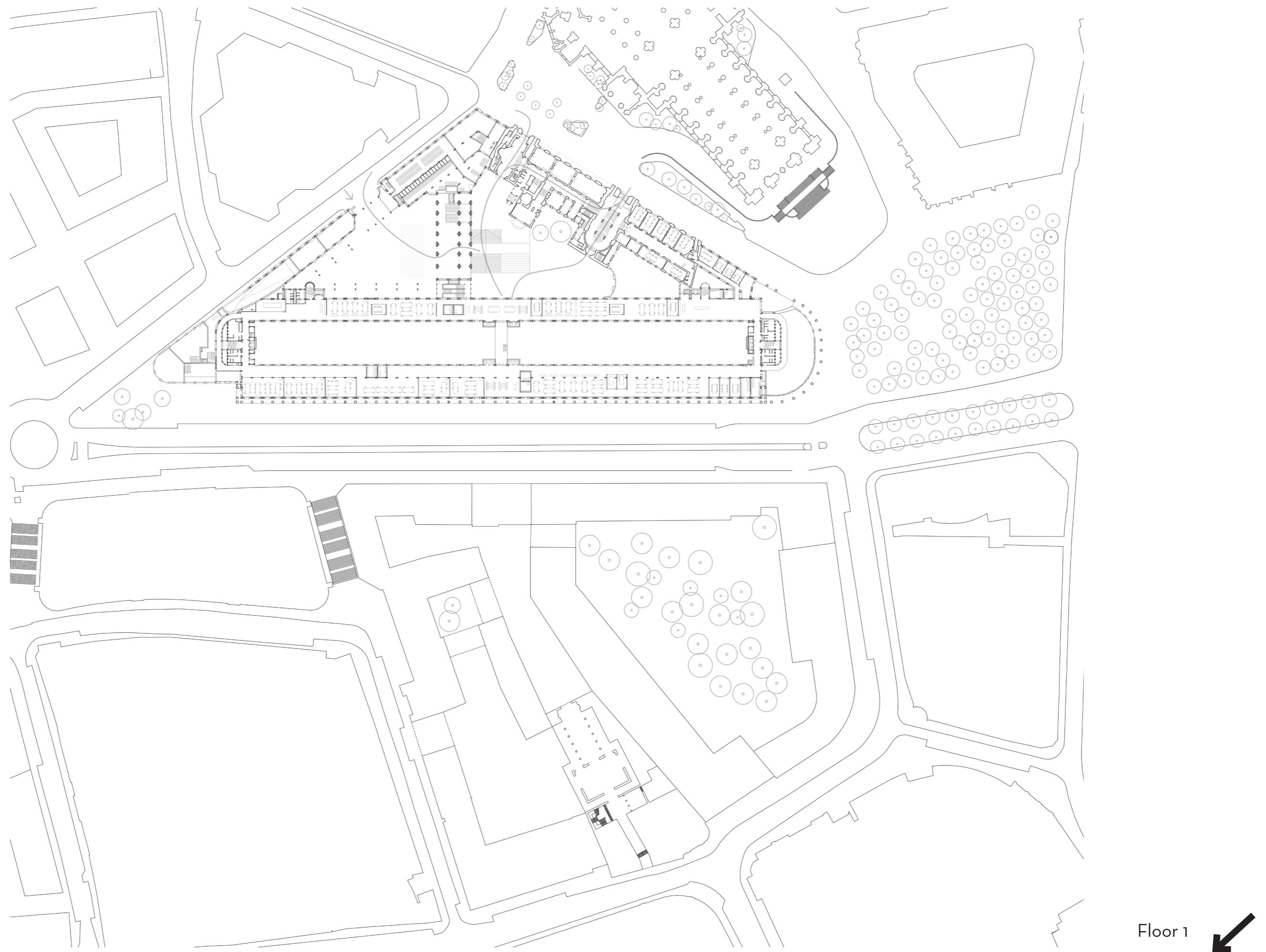
## Urban route



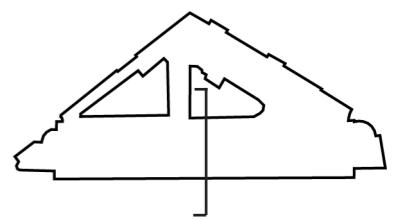
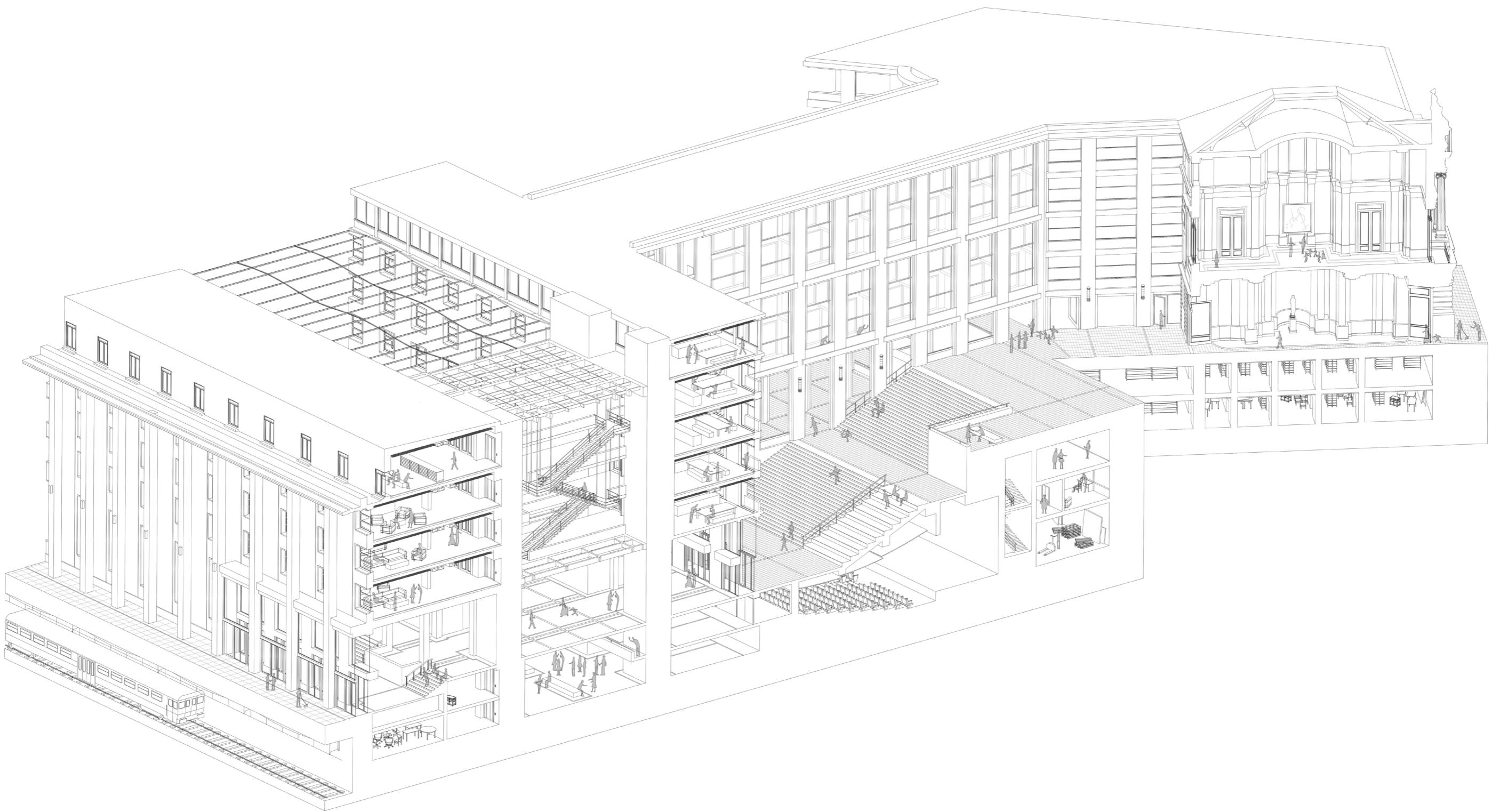
## Urban route



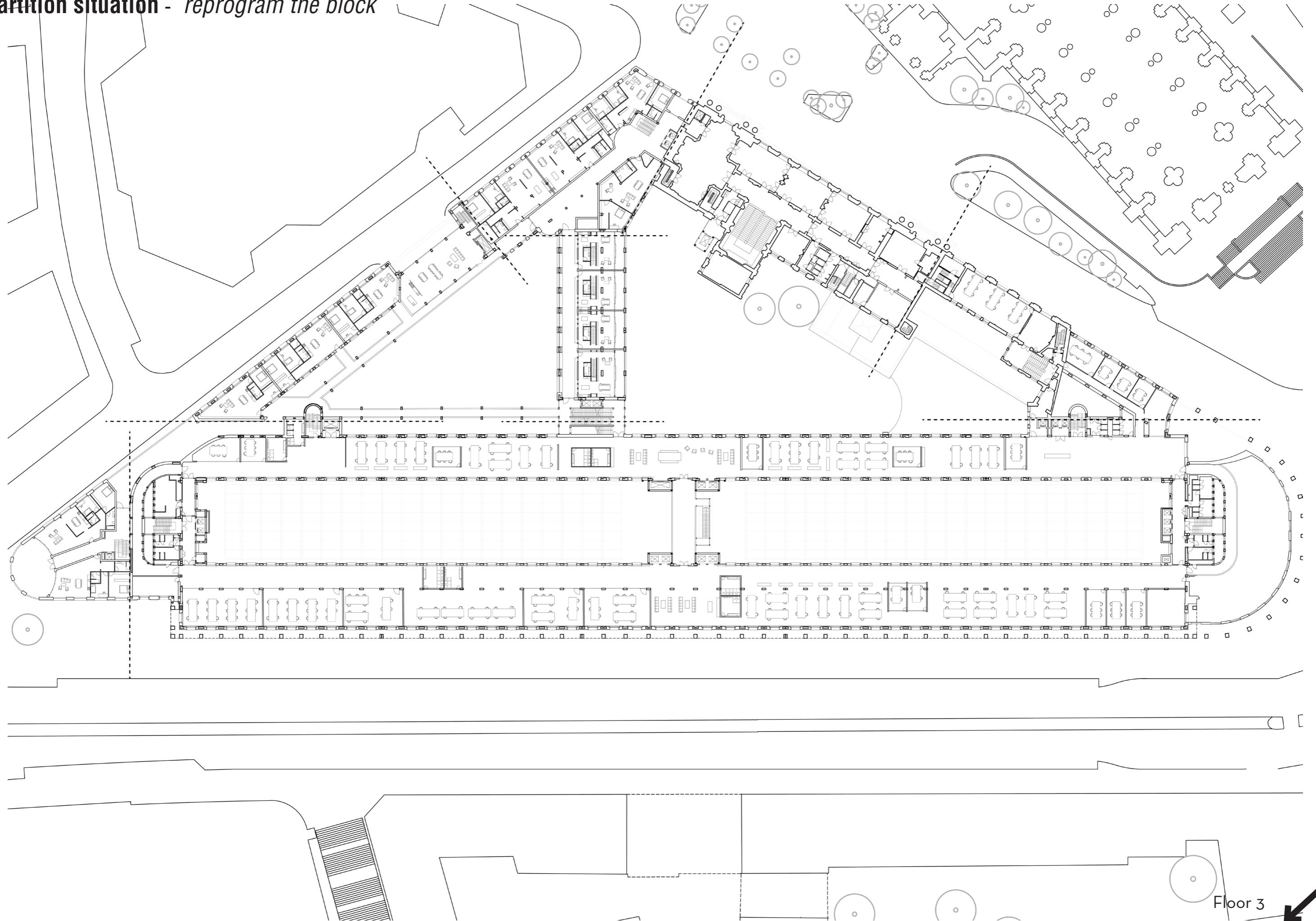
## Urban route

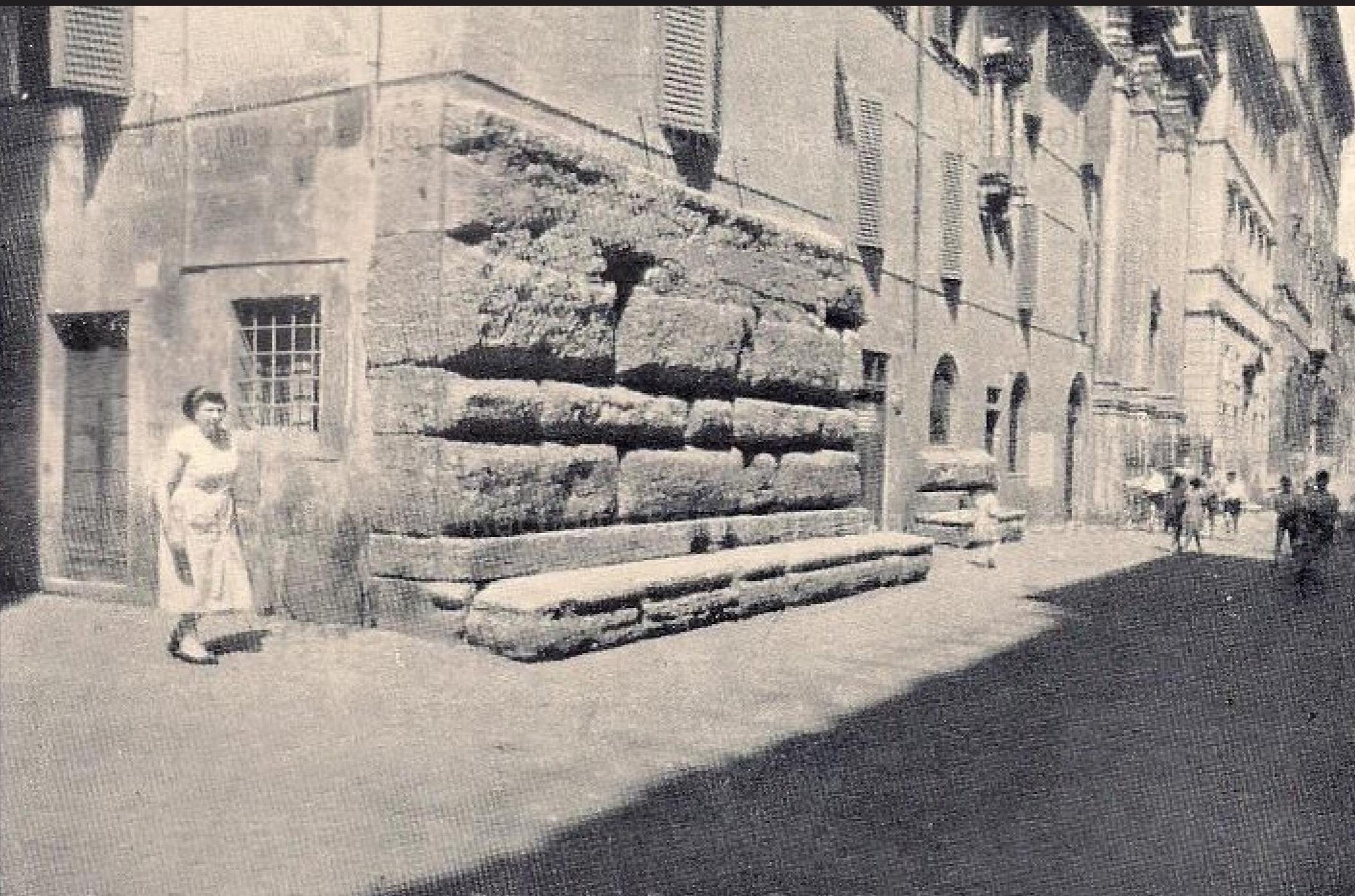


# Urban route



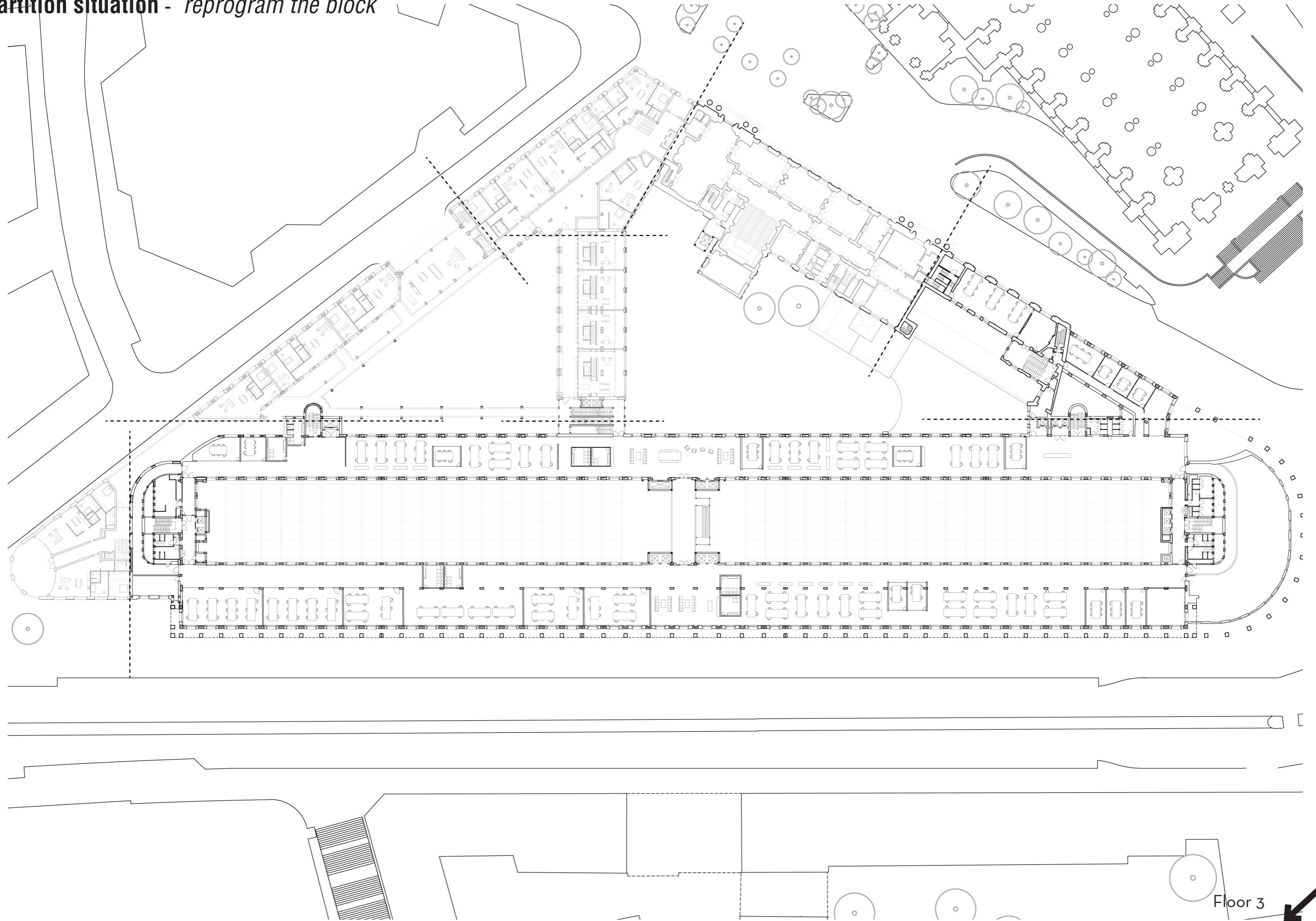
## Partition situation - reprogram the block



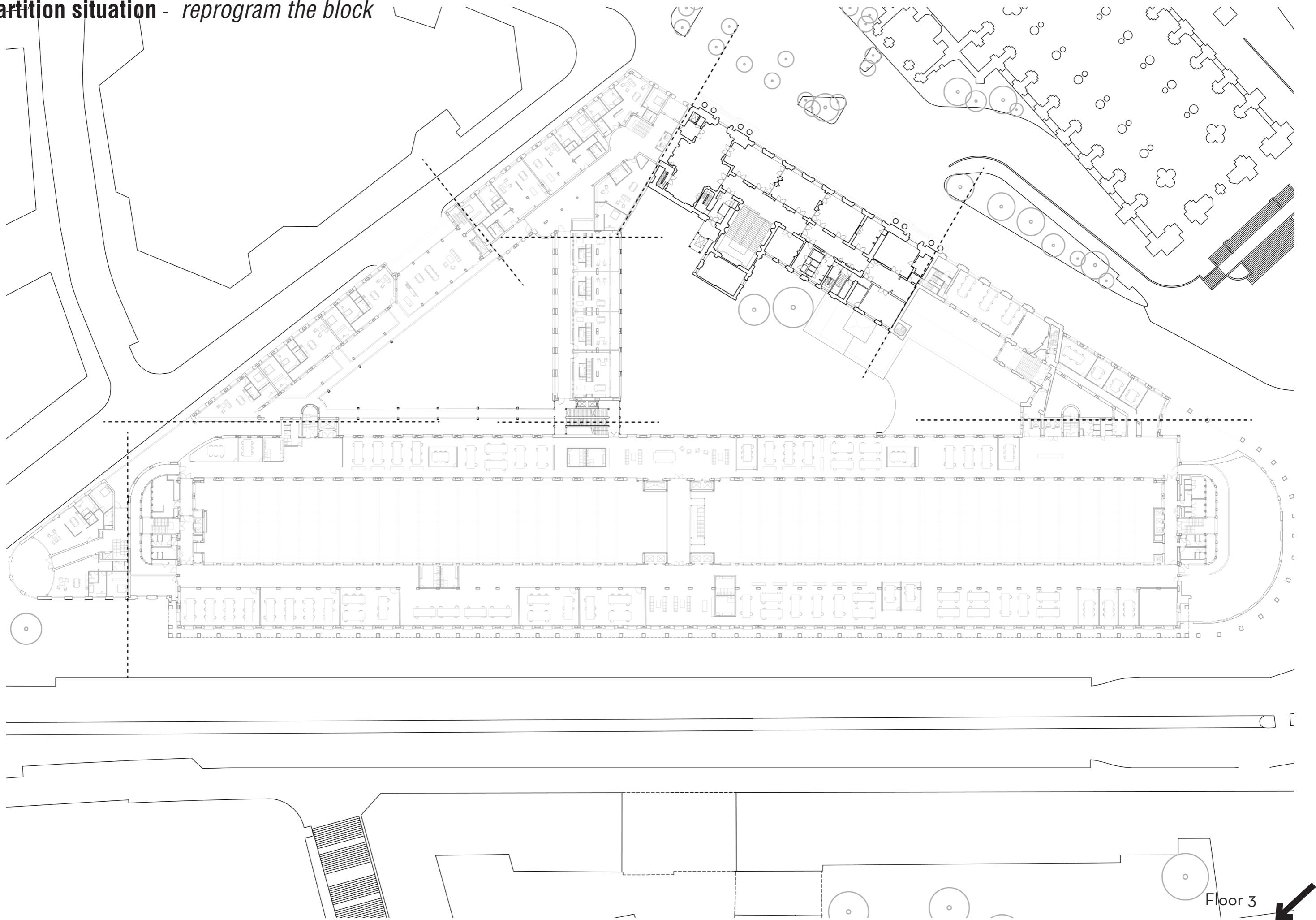


Via Giulia, Rome. Fragments of the rusticated plinth of the Palazzo dei Tribunali commonly known as the sofa of Via Giulia.

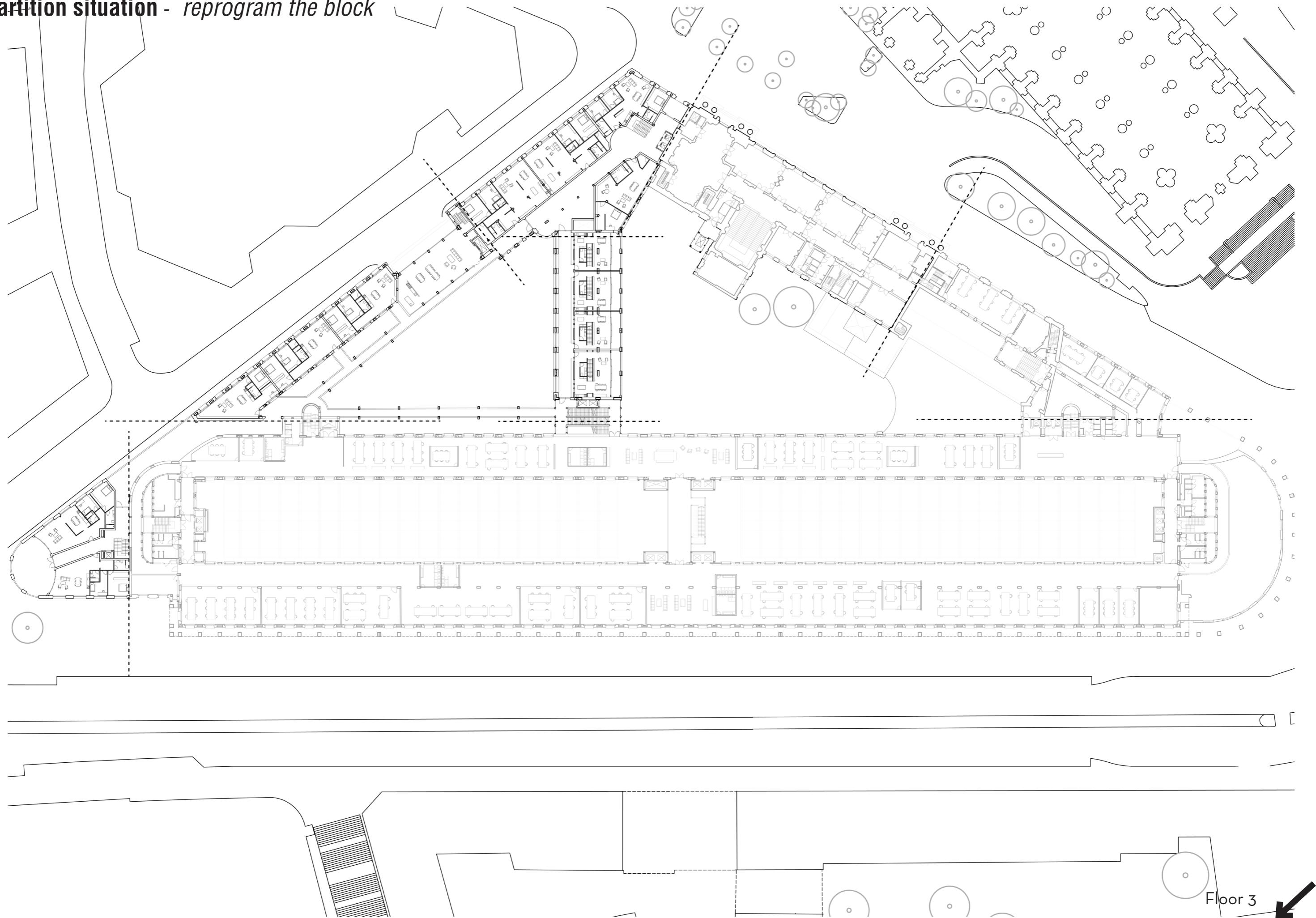
## Partition situation - reprogram the block



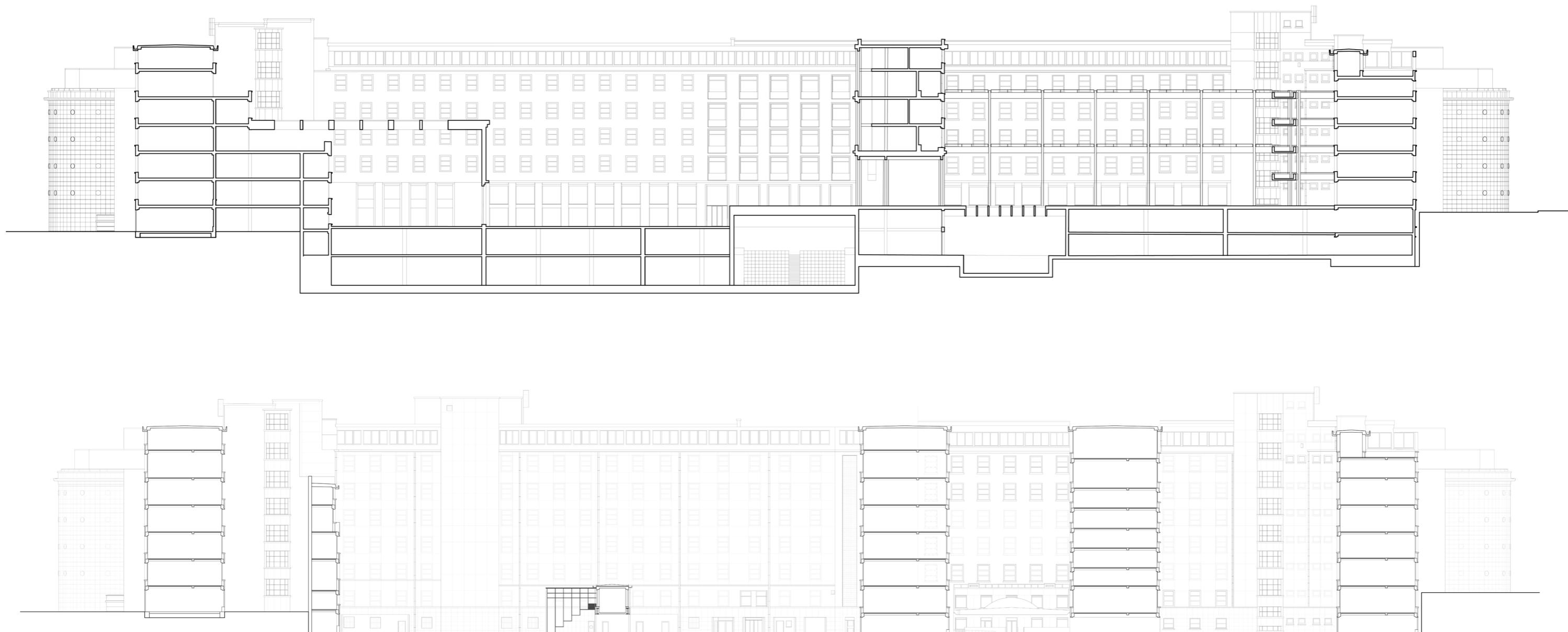
## Partition situation - reprogram the block



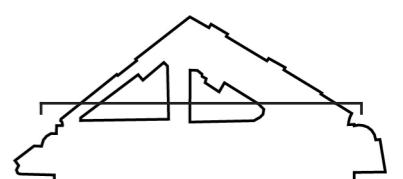
## Partition situation - reprogram the block



## Partition situation - reprogram the block

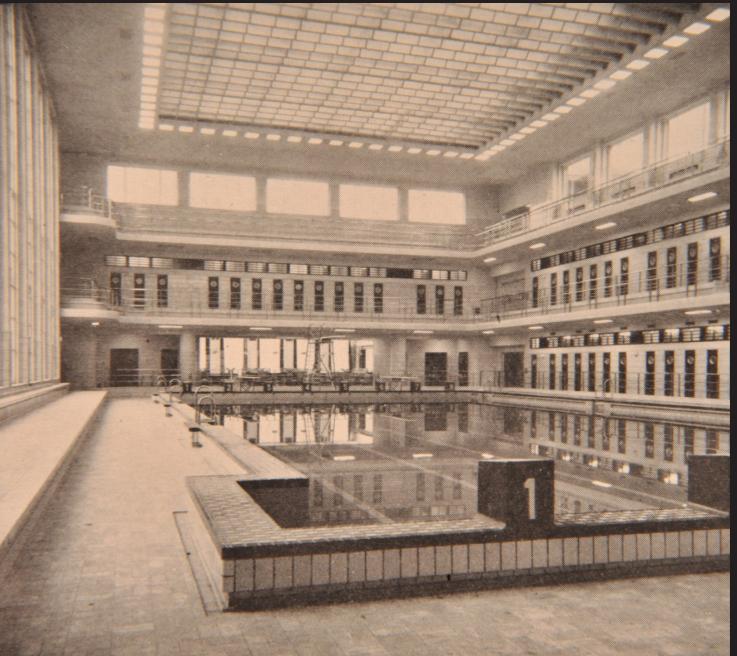


Existing situation





Piscine d'Ixelles, Brussels



Neptunium, Brussels



Bains de Victor Boin, Brussels

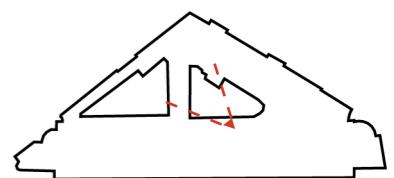
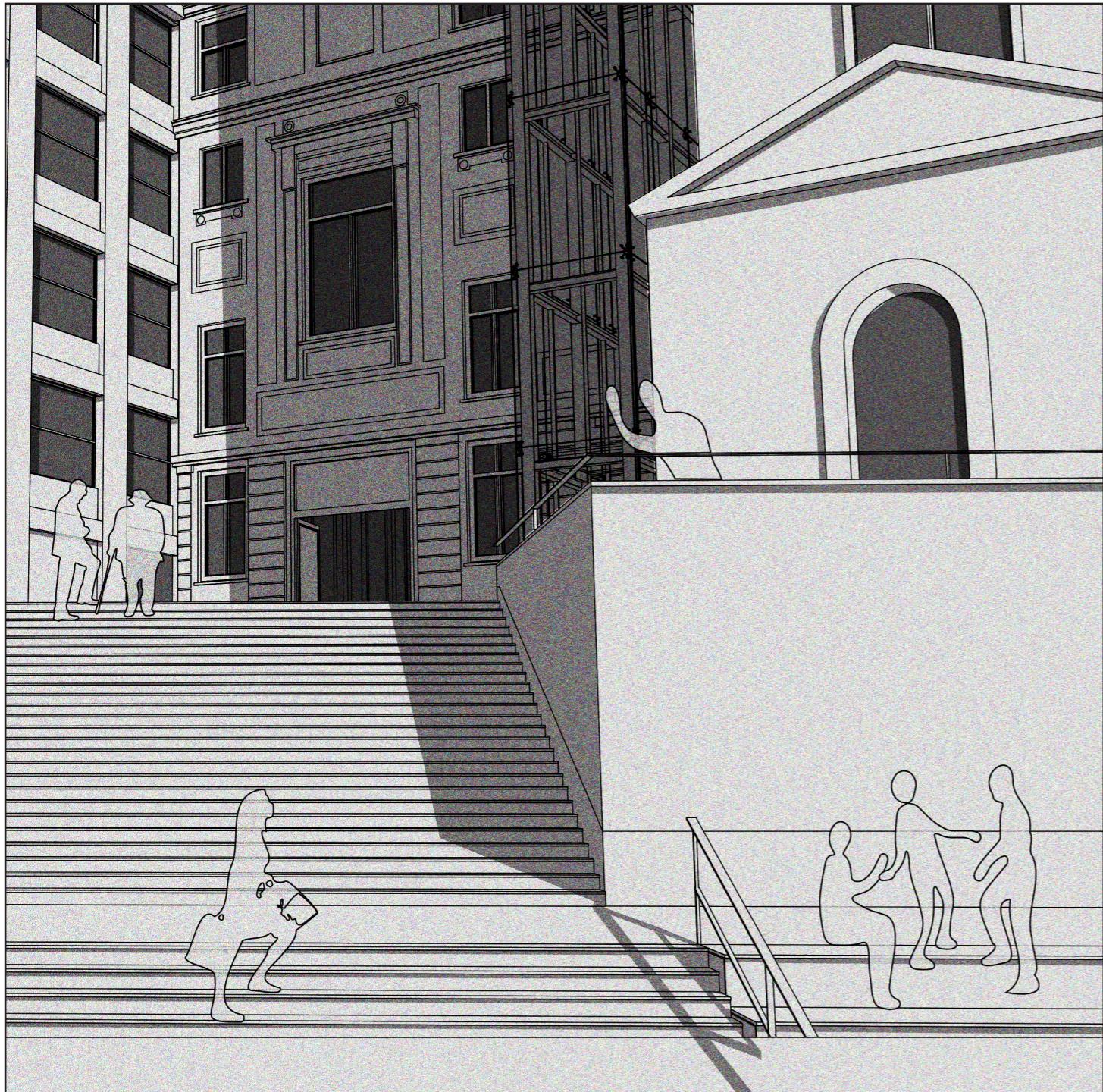


Bains du Centre, Brussels

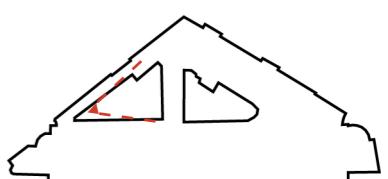
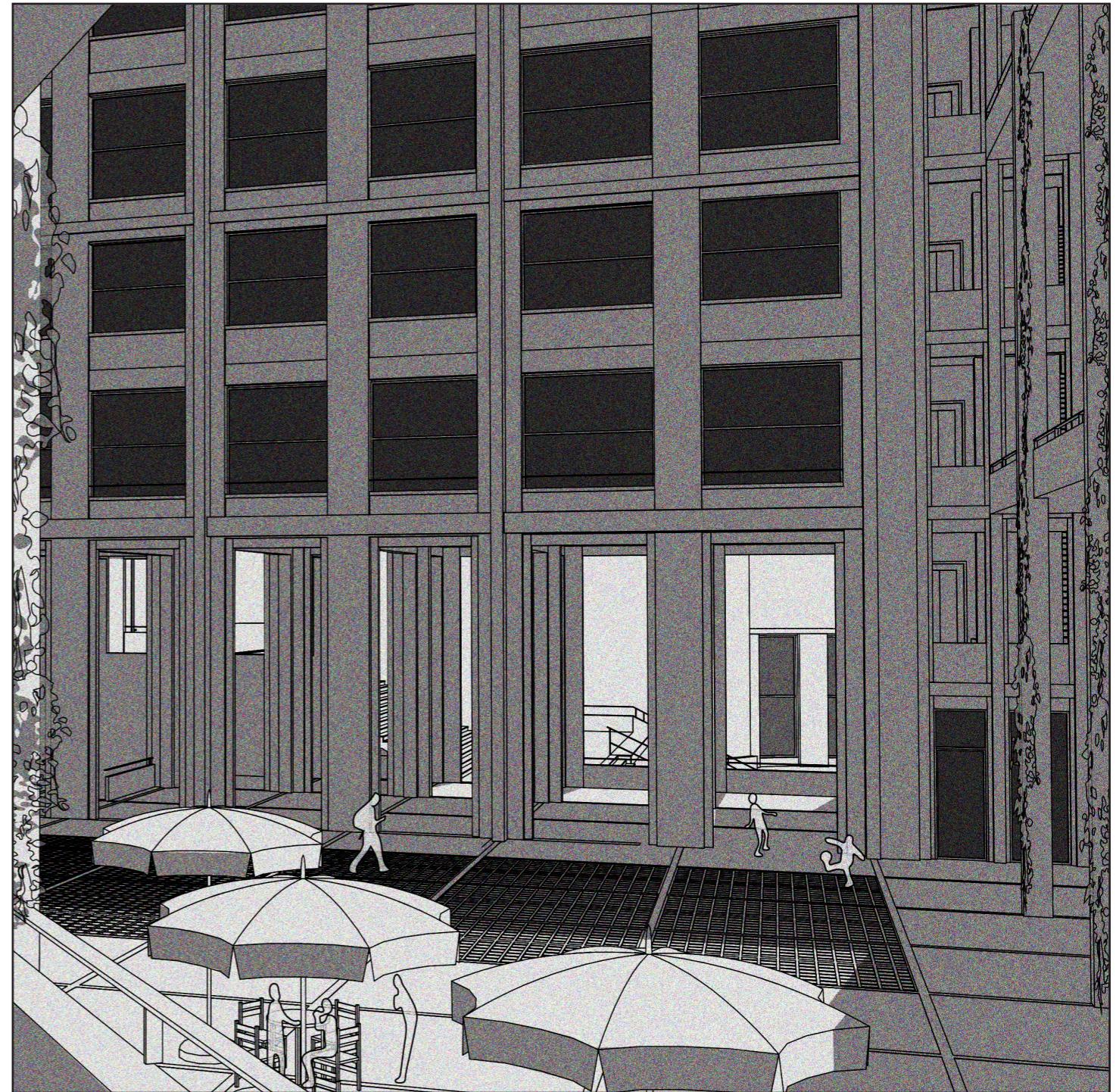


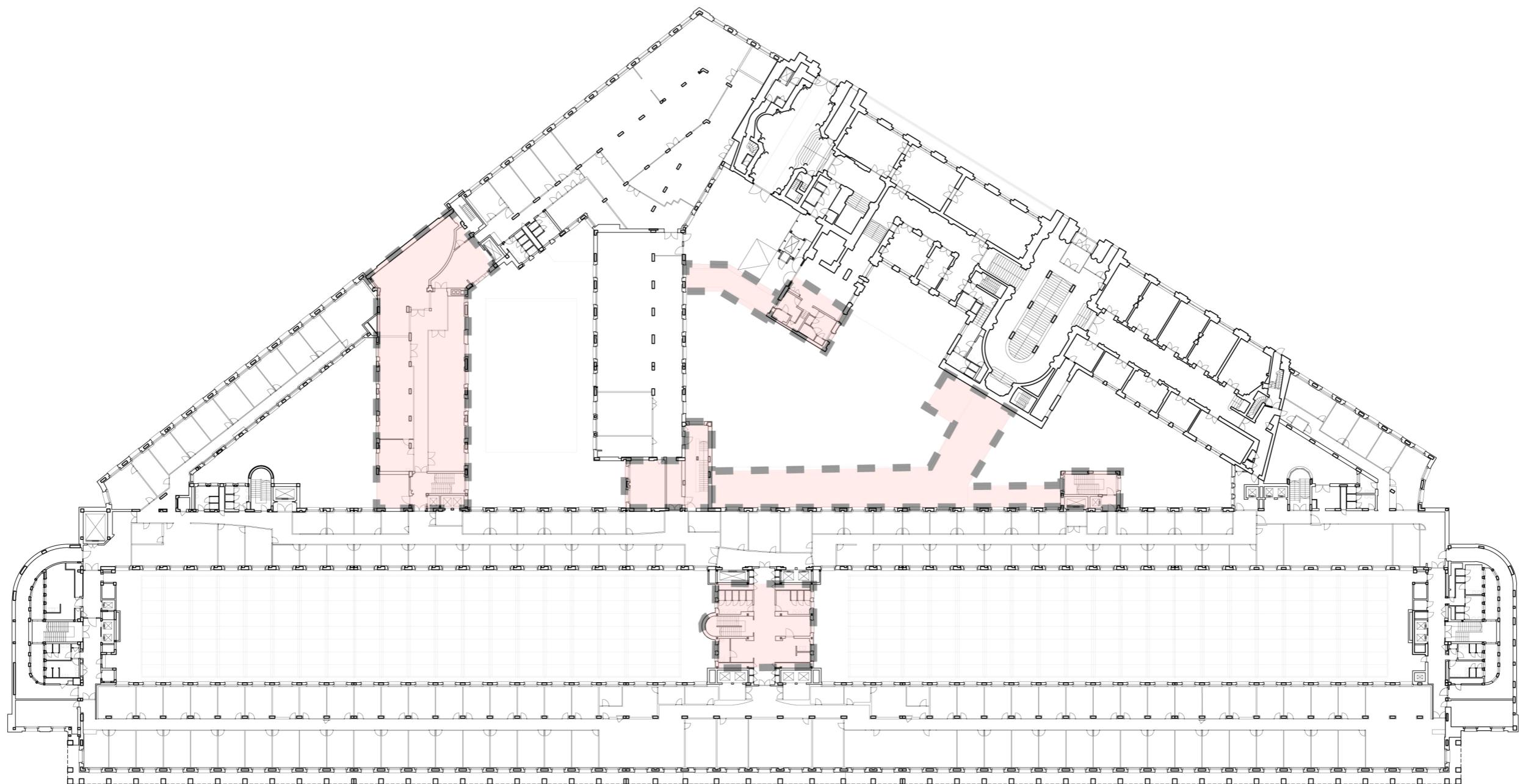
Piscine d'Ixelles, Brussels

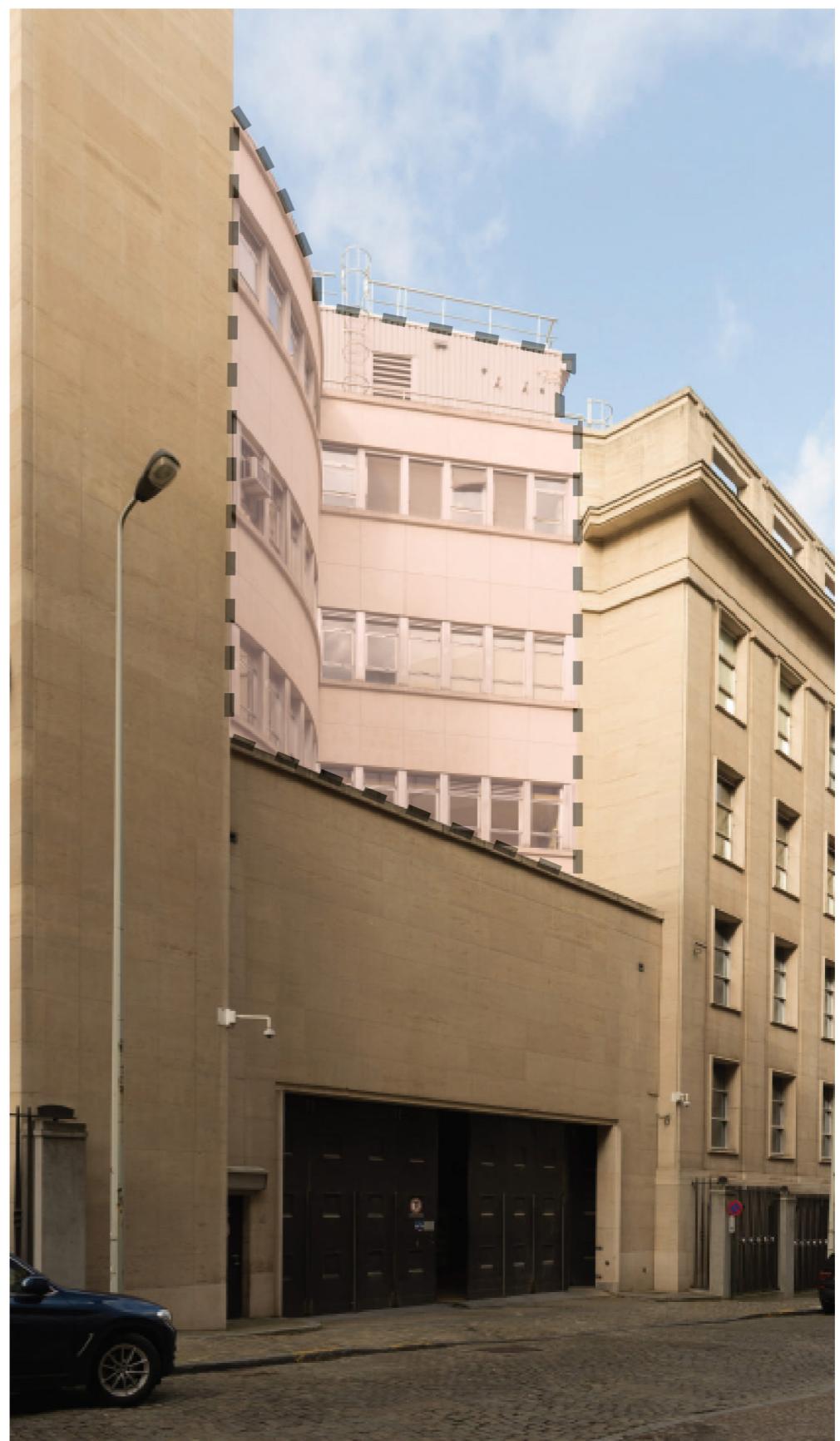
## Partition situation - reprogram the block



## Partition situation - reprogram the block

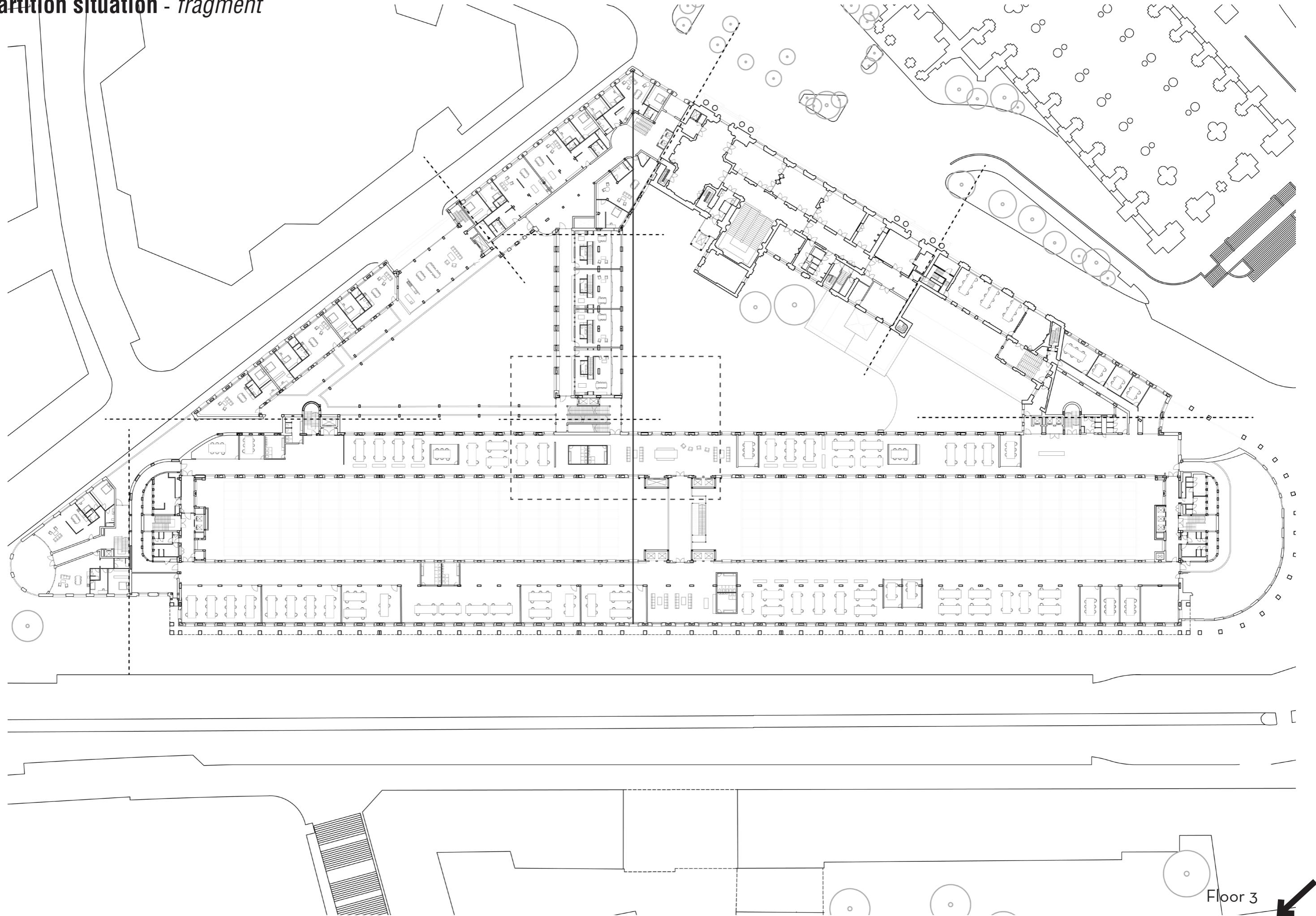




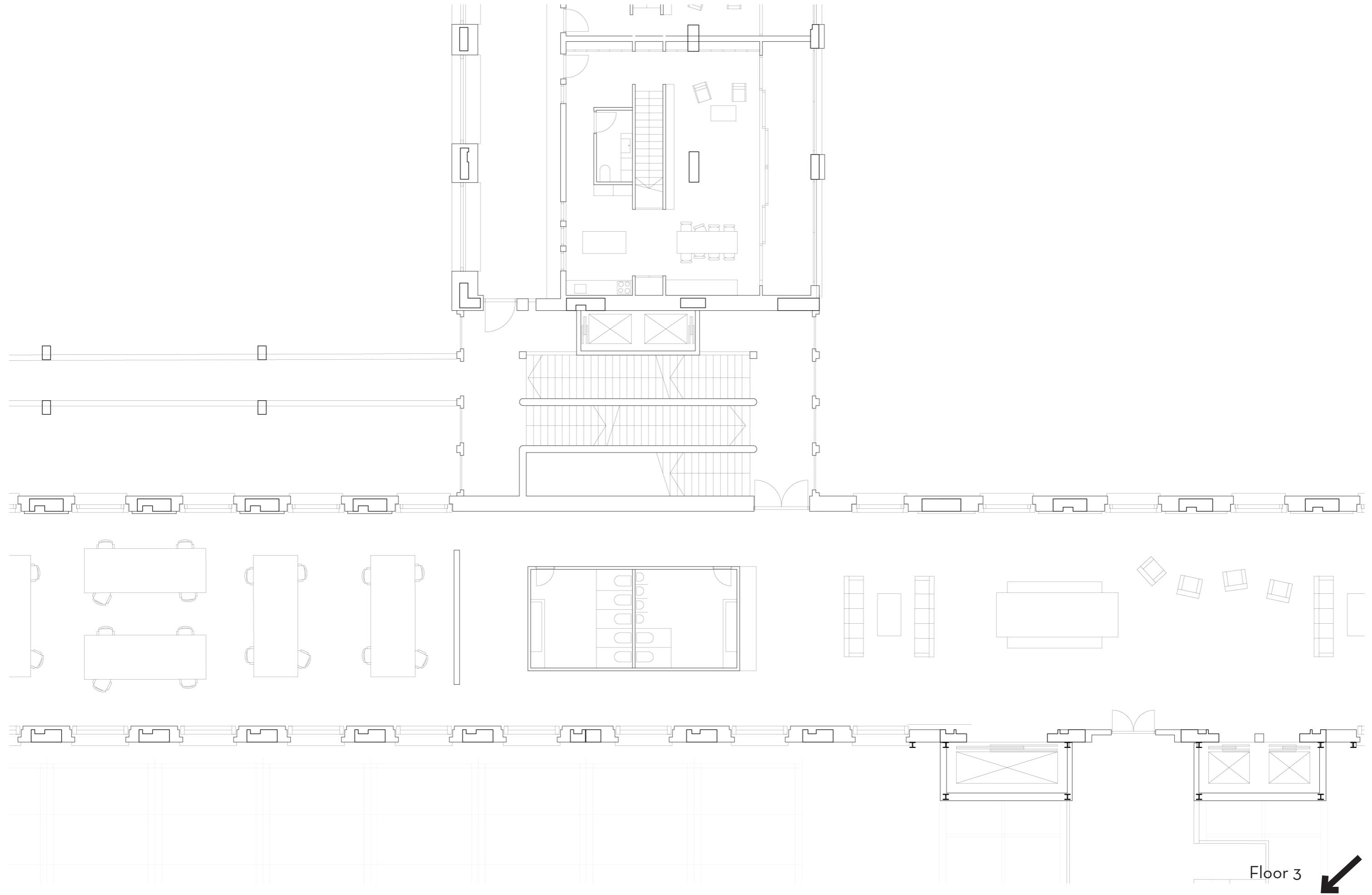




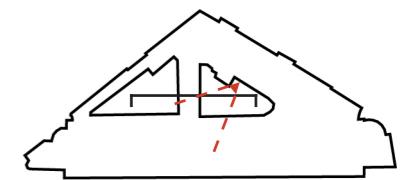
## Partition situation - fragment



## Partition situation - fragment

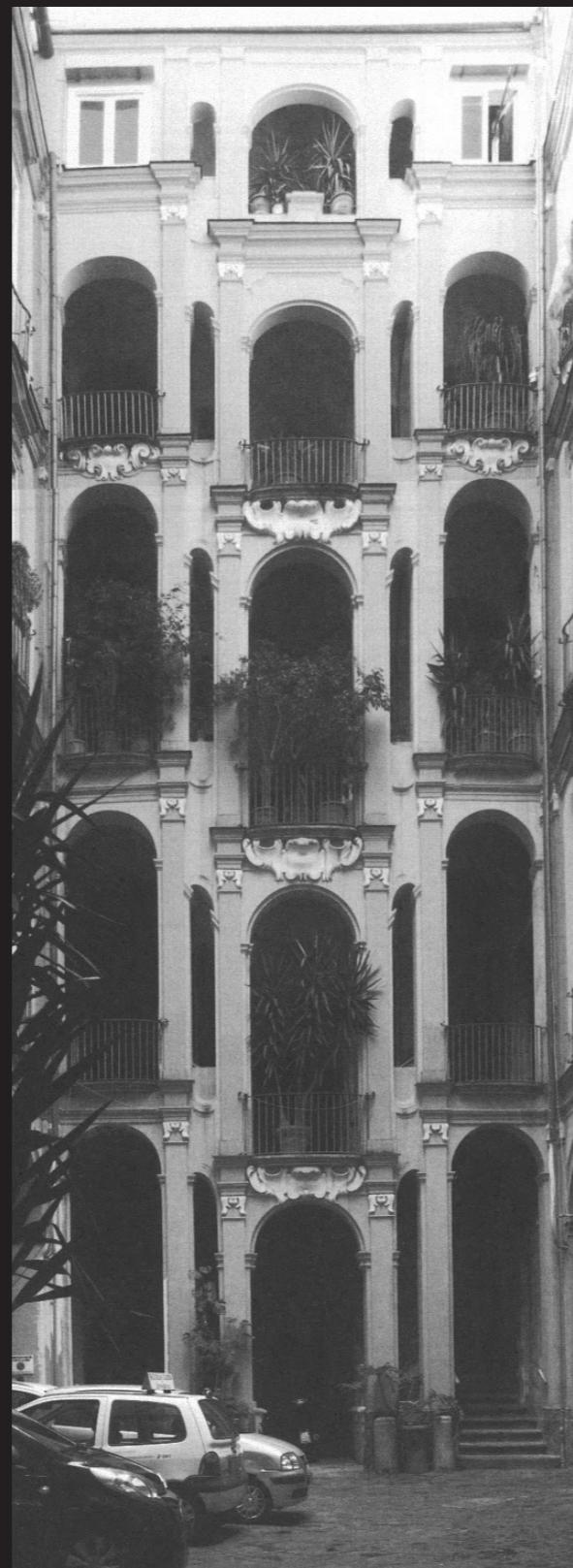


## Partition situation - fragment

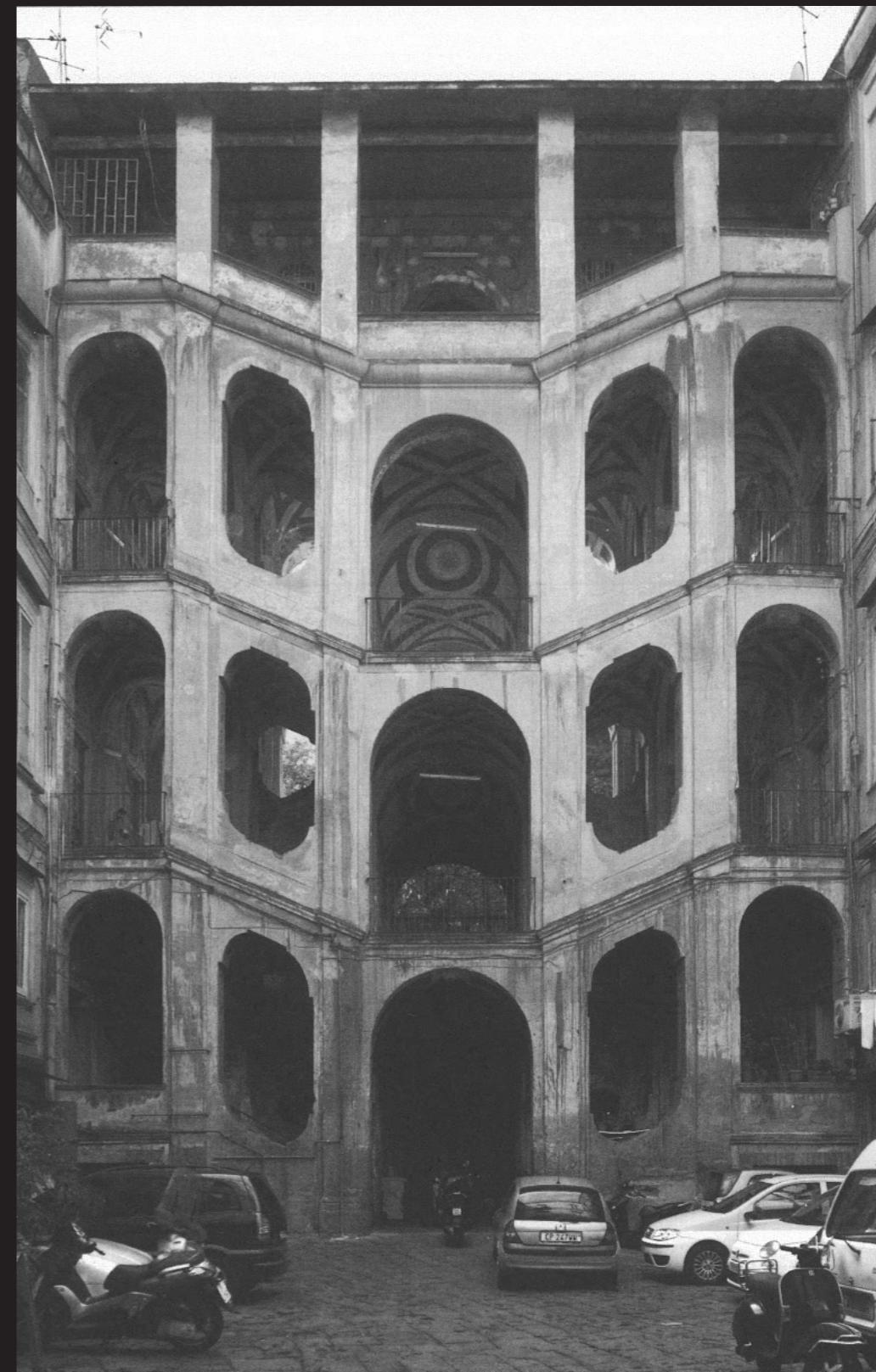




Palazzo Trabucco, Nicolo Tagliacozzi

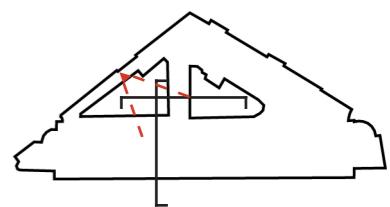


Palazzo d'Afflito, unknown architect

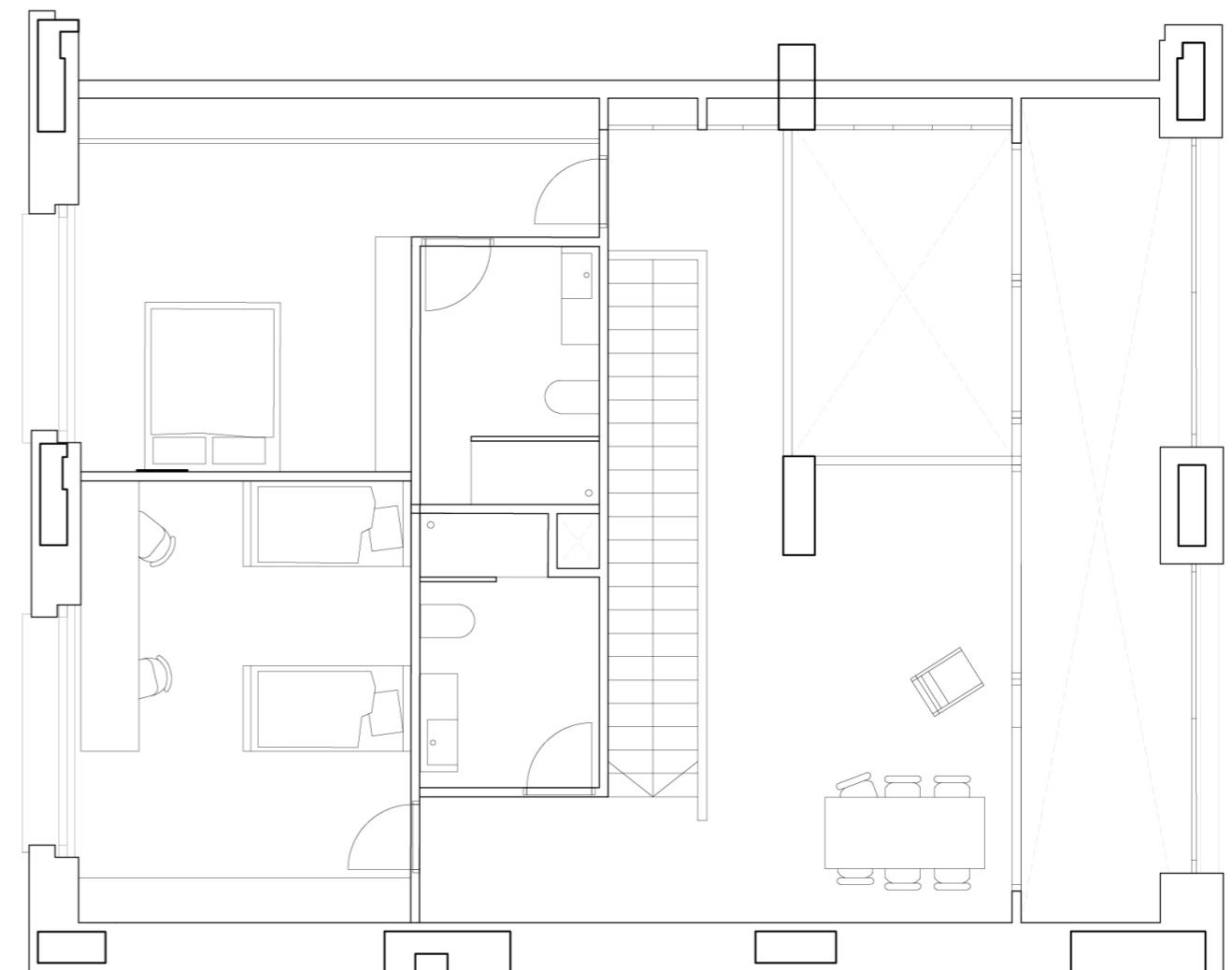
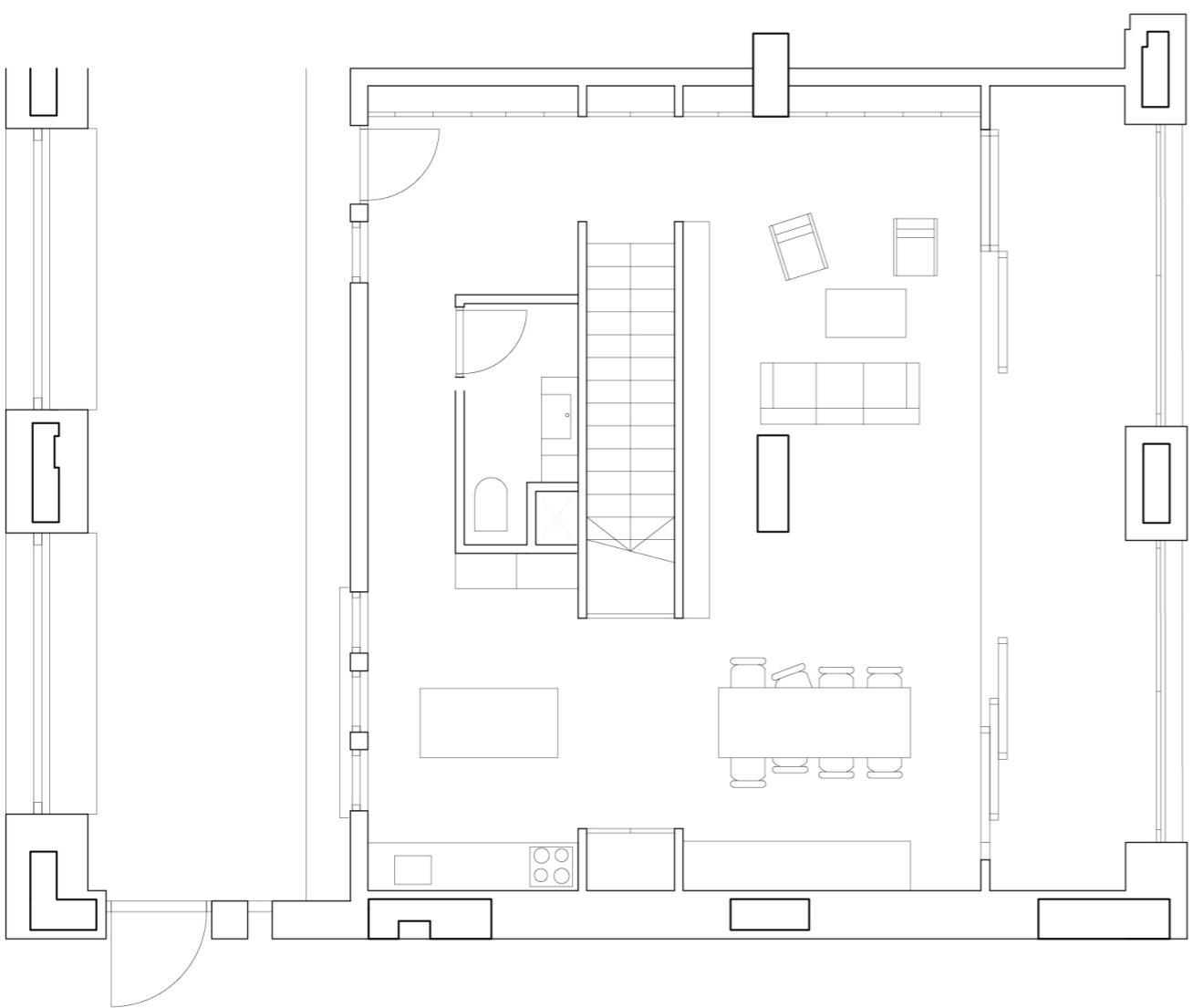


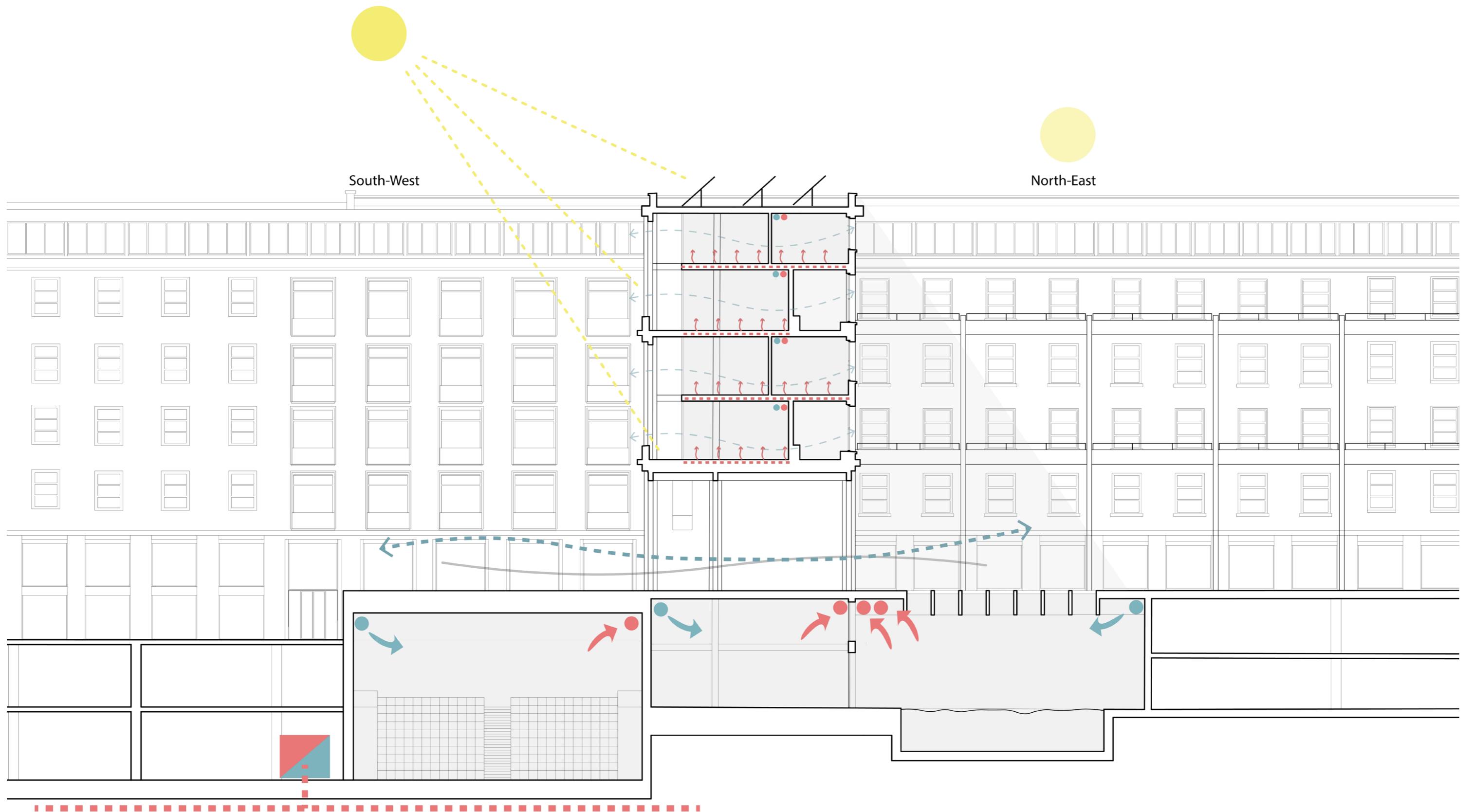
Palazzo Sanfelice, Ferdinando Sanfelice

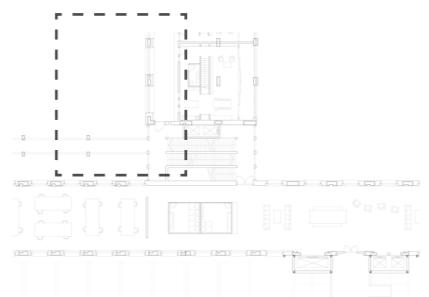
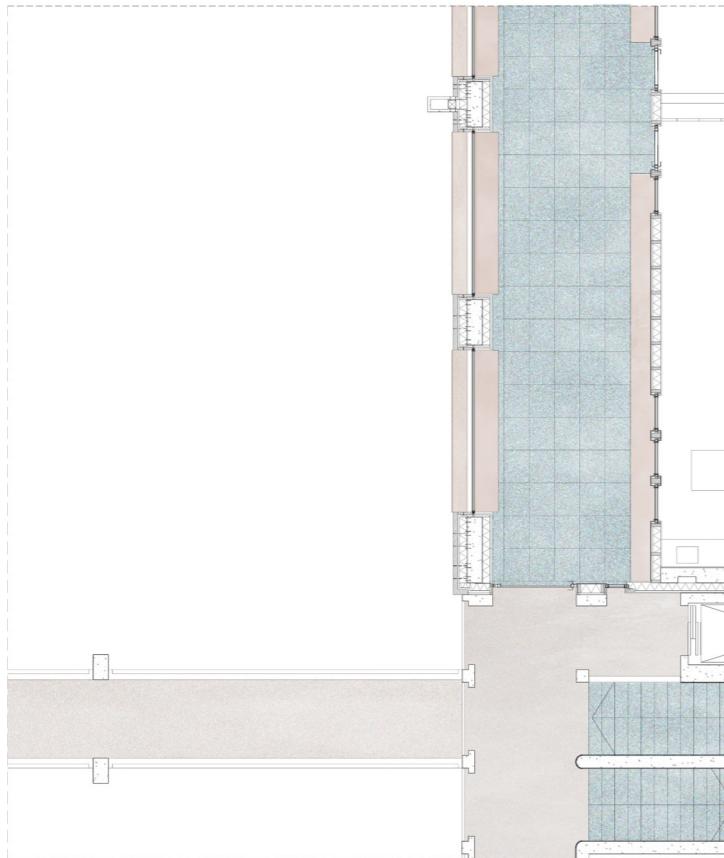
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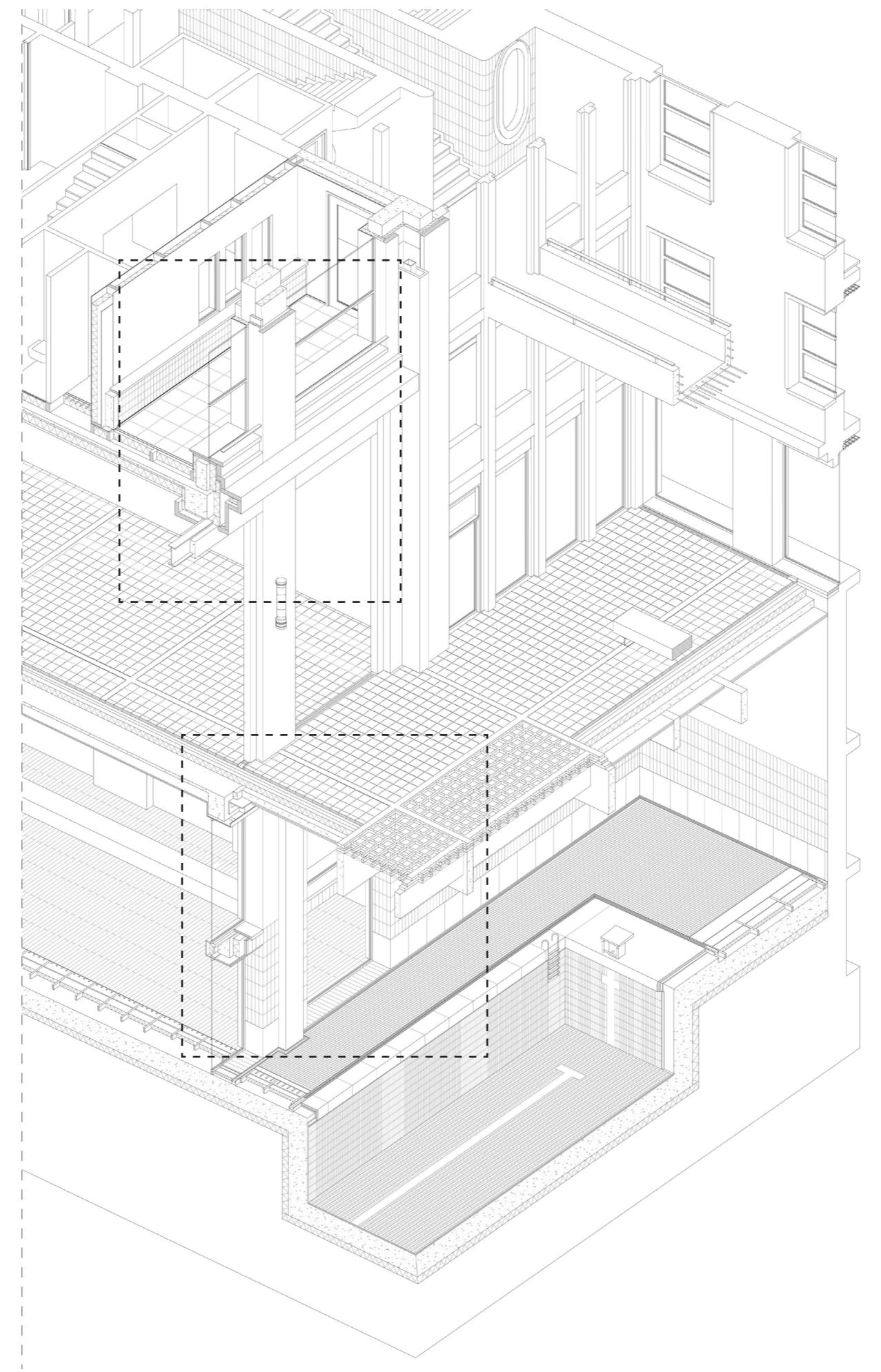


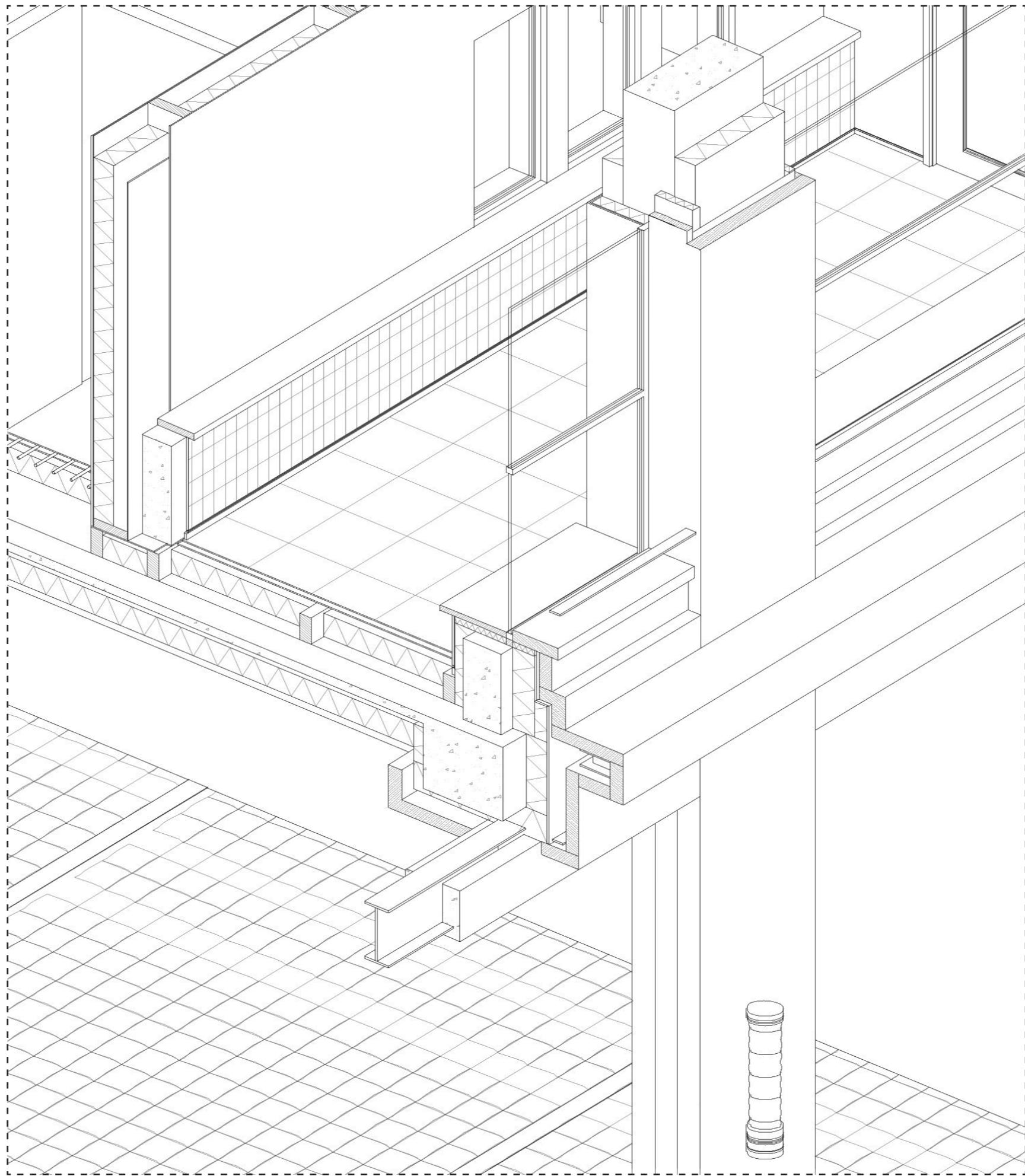
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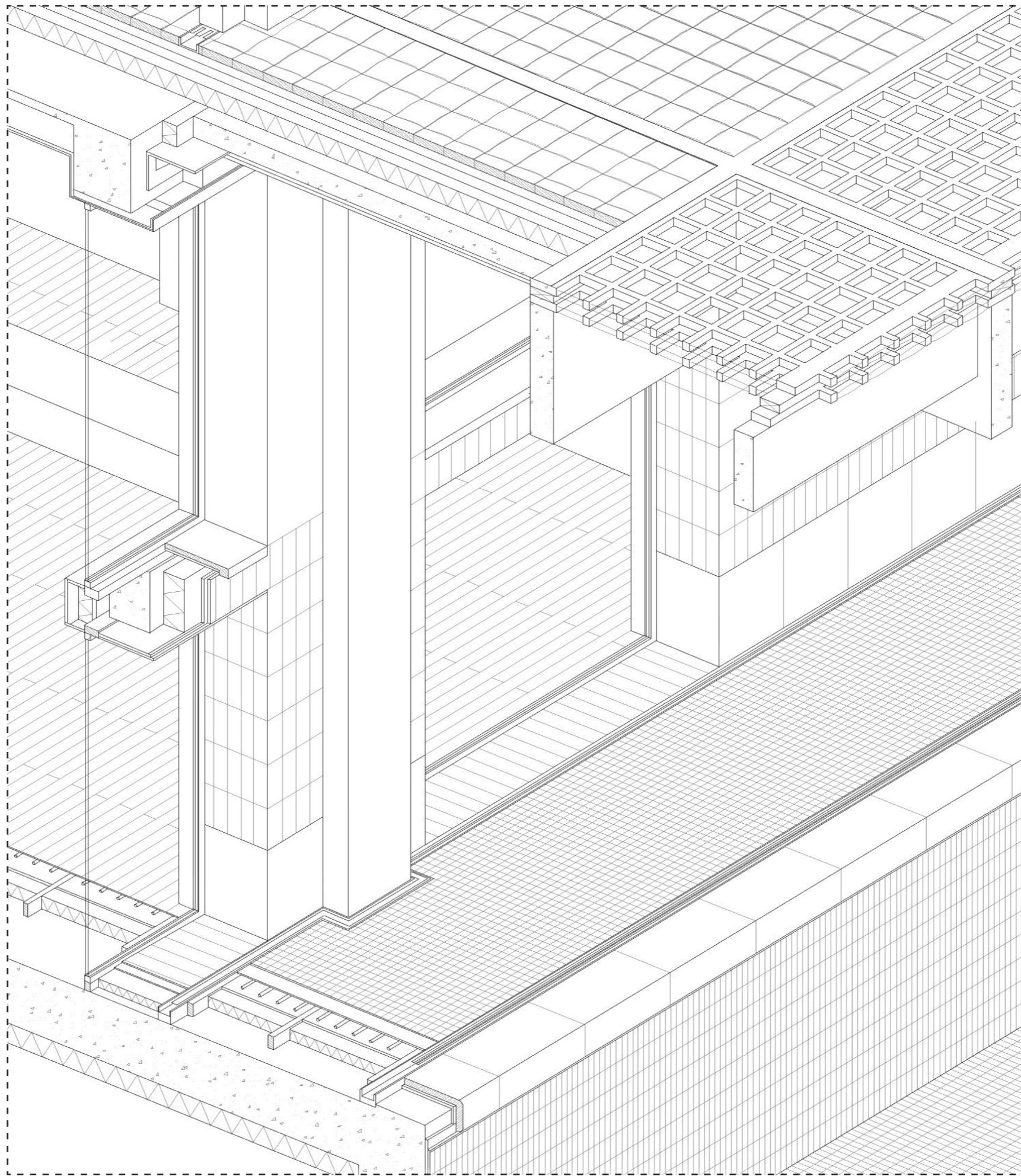




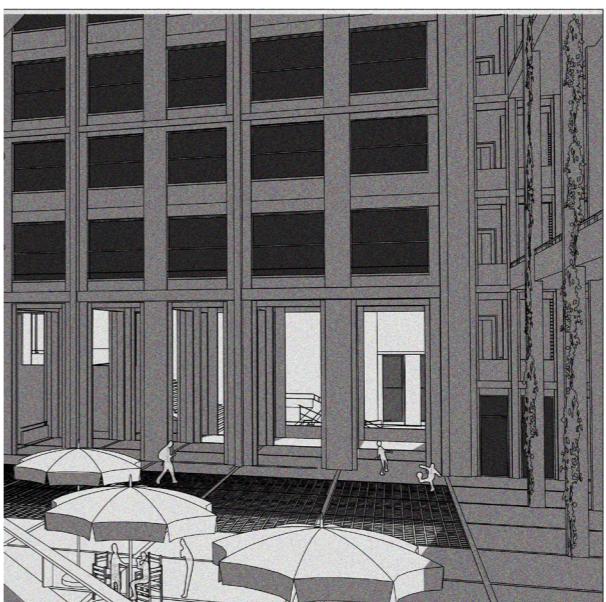
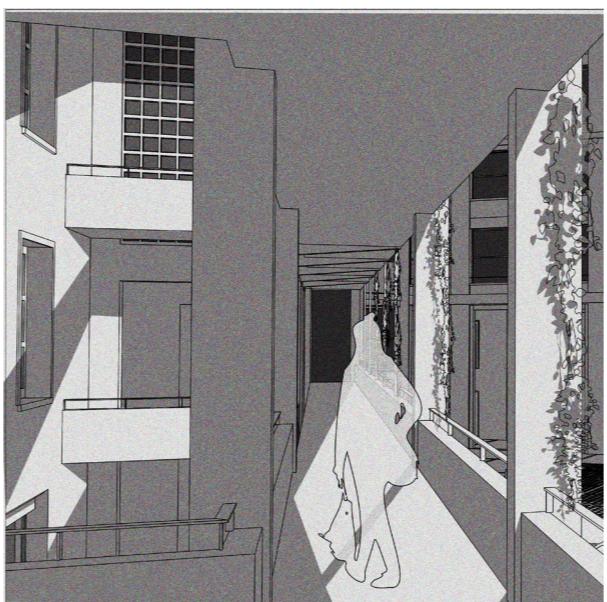
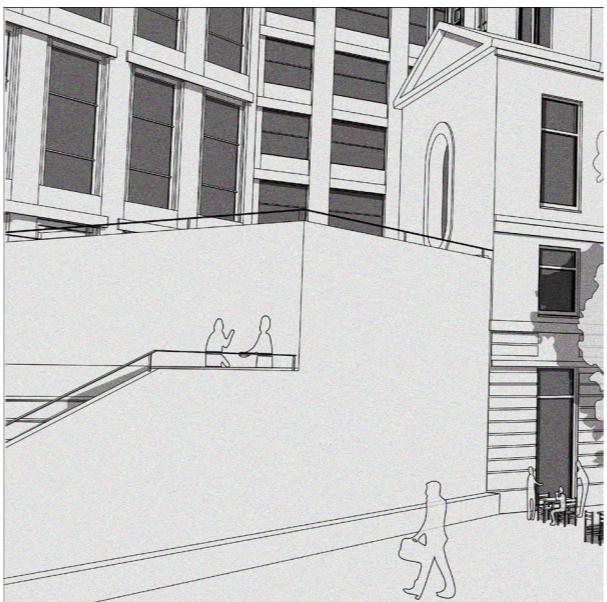
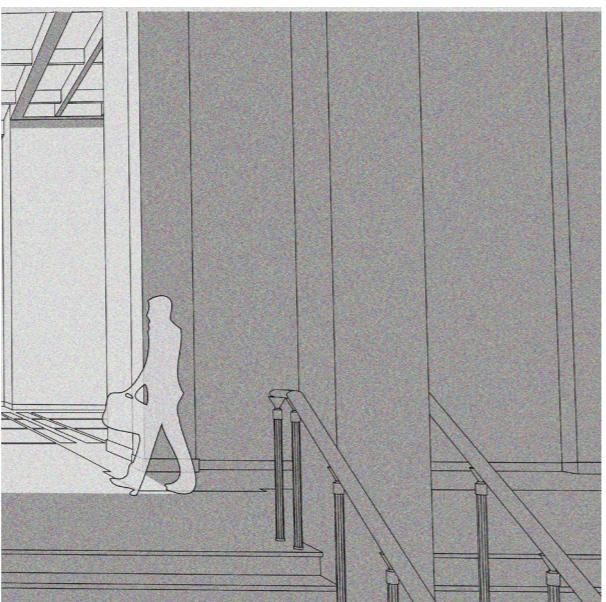
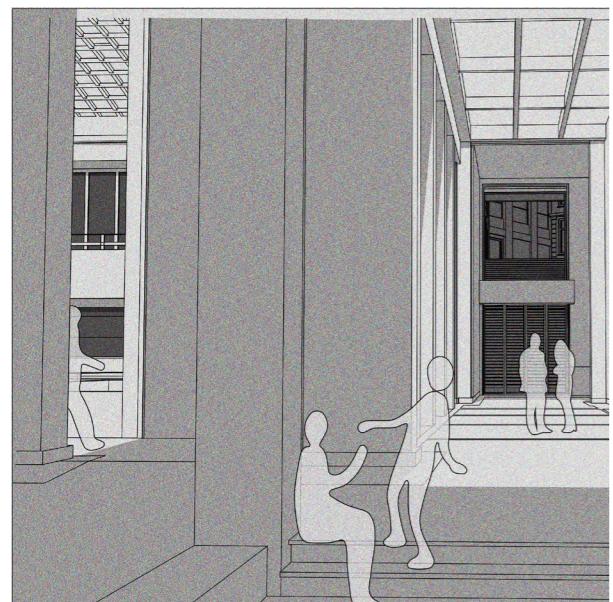
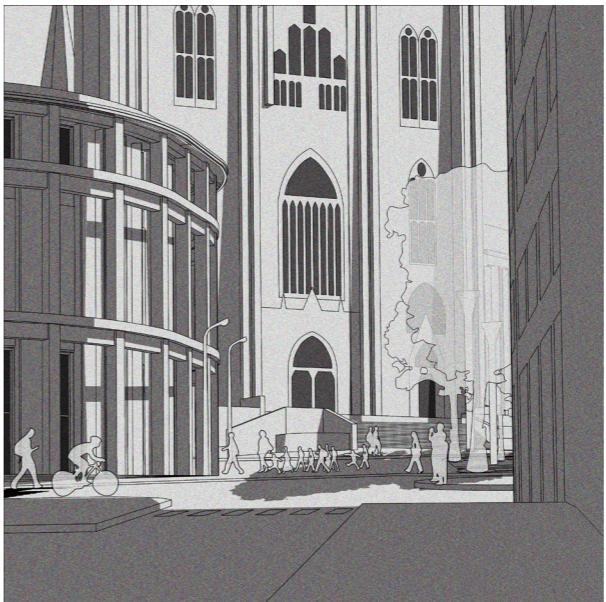
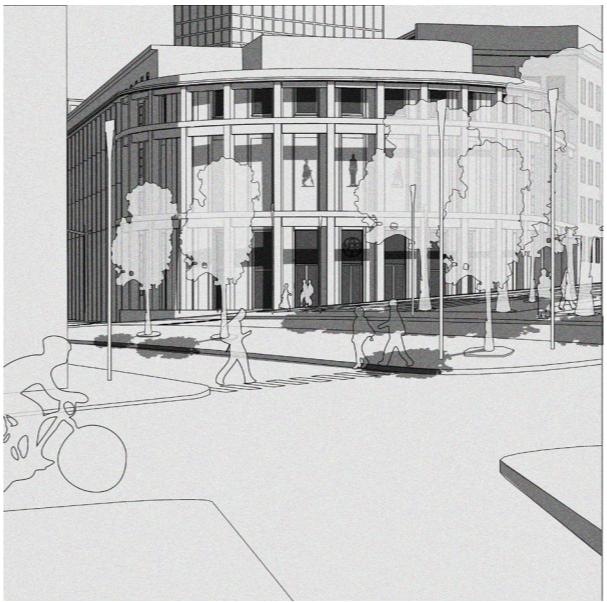
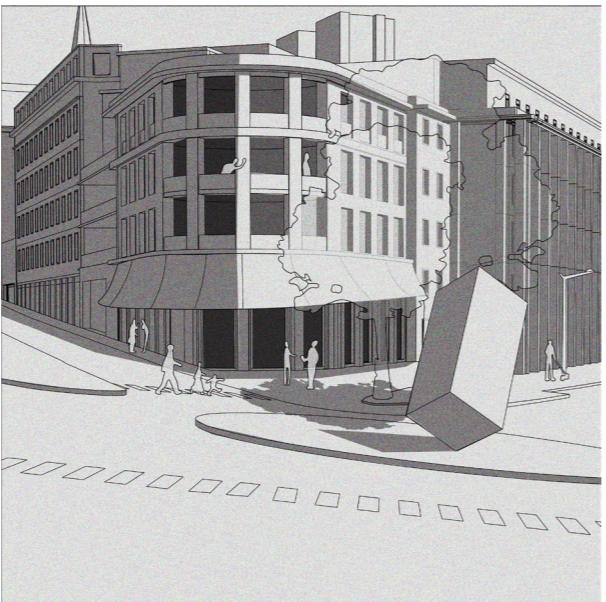
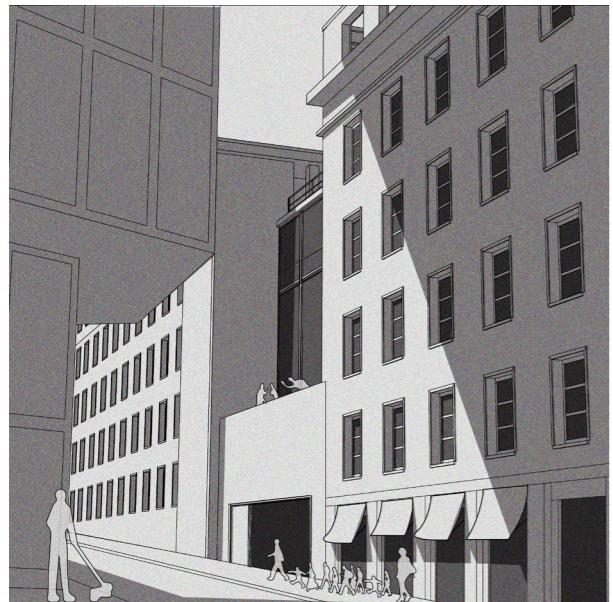


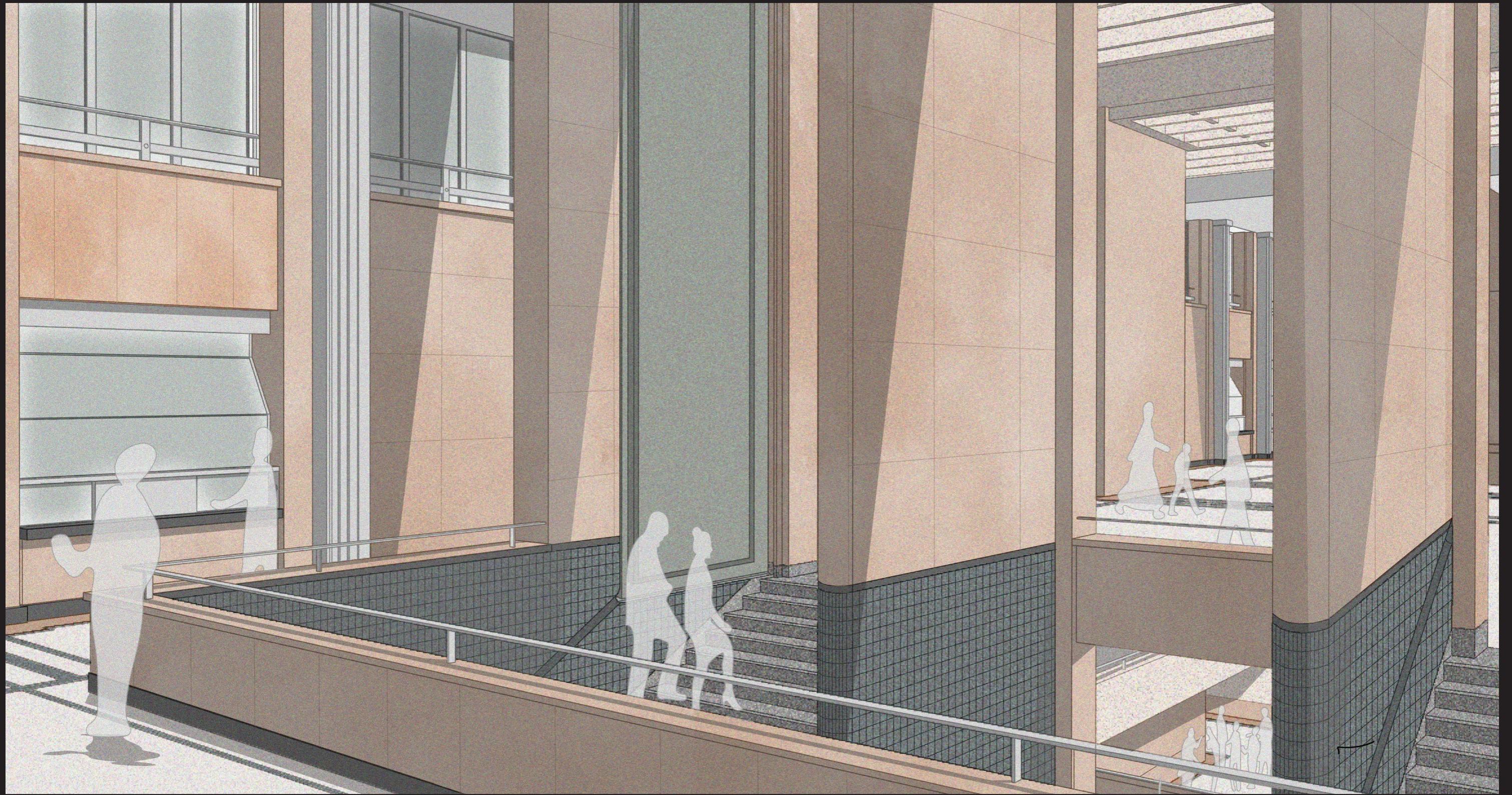


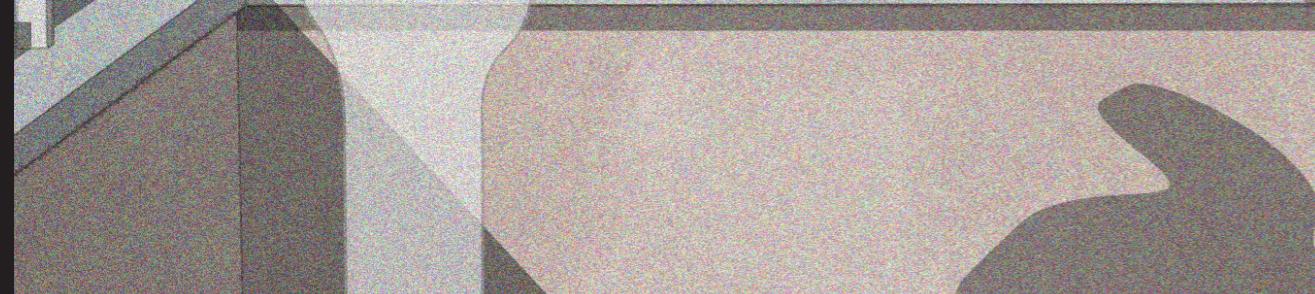




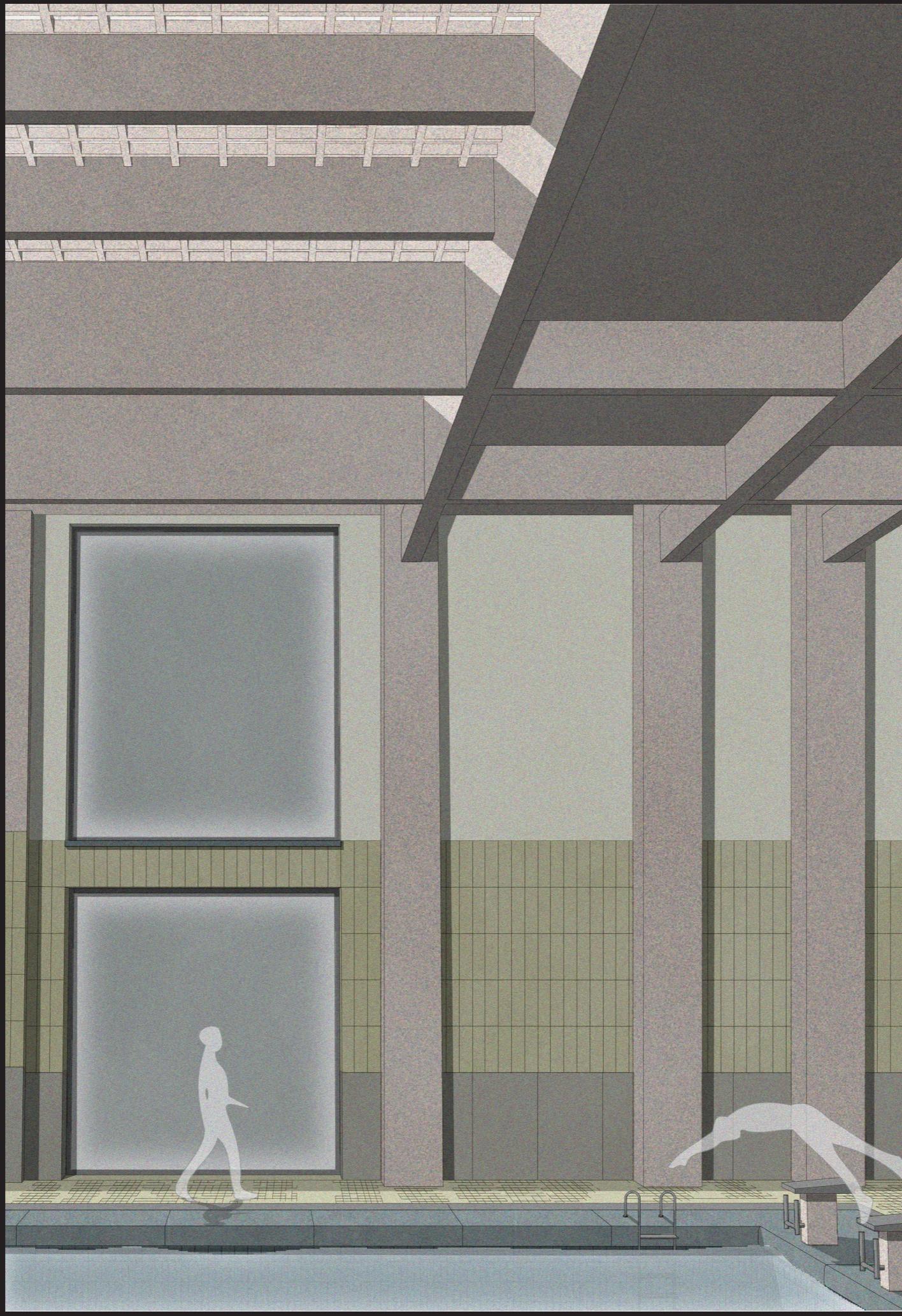
# THE CONCISE CITYSCAPE



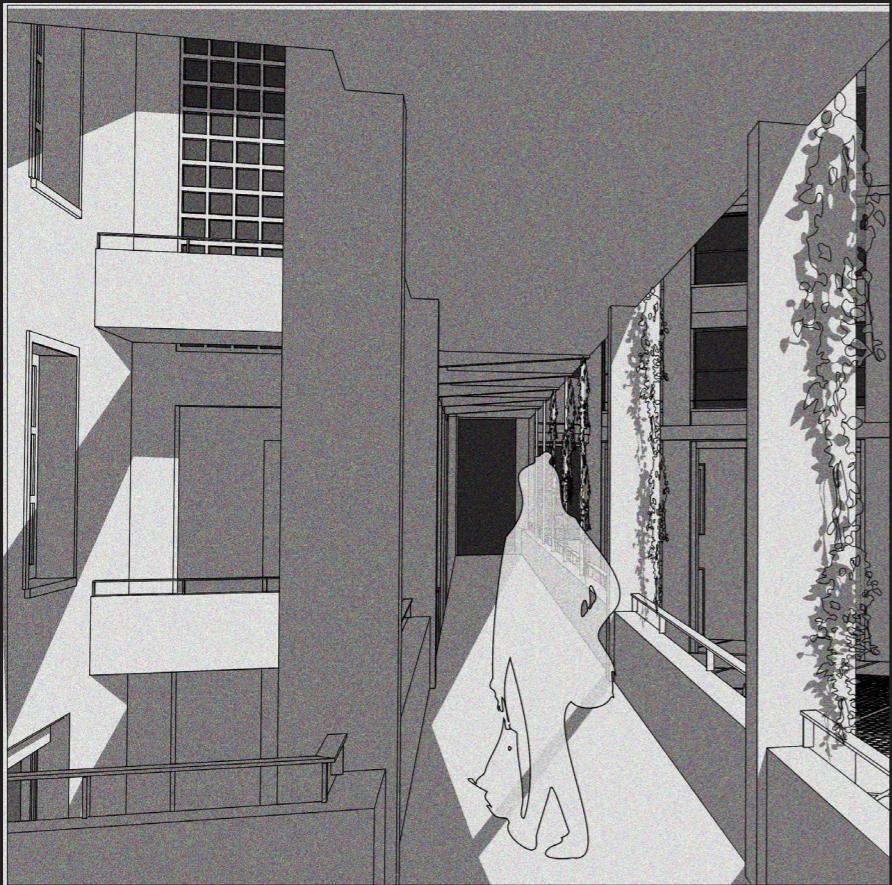




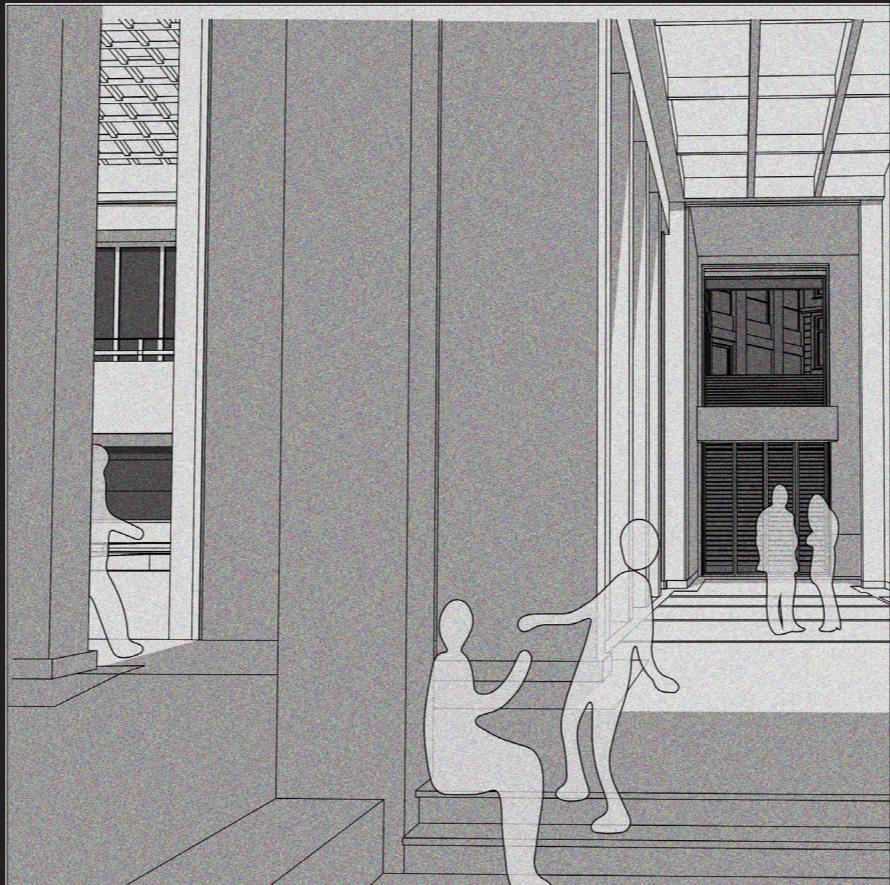




Impasses



Arcades



Corner buildings

