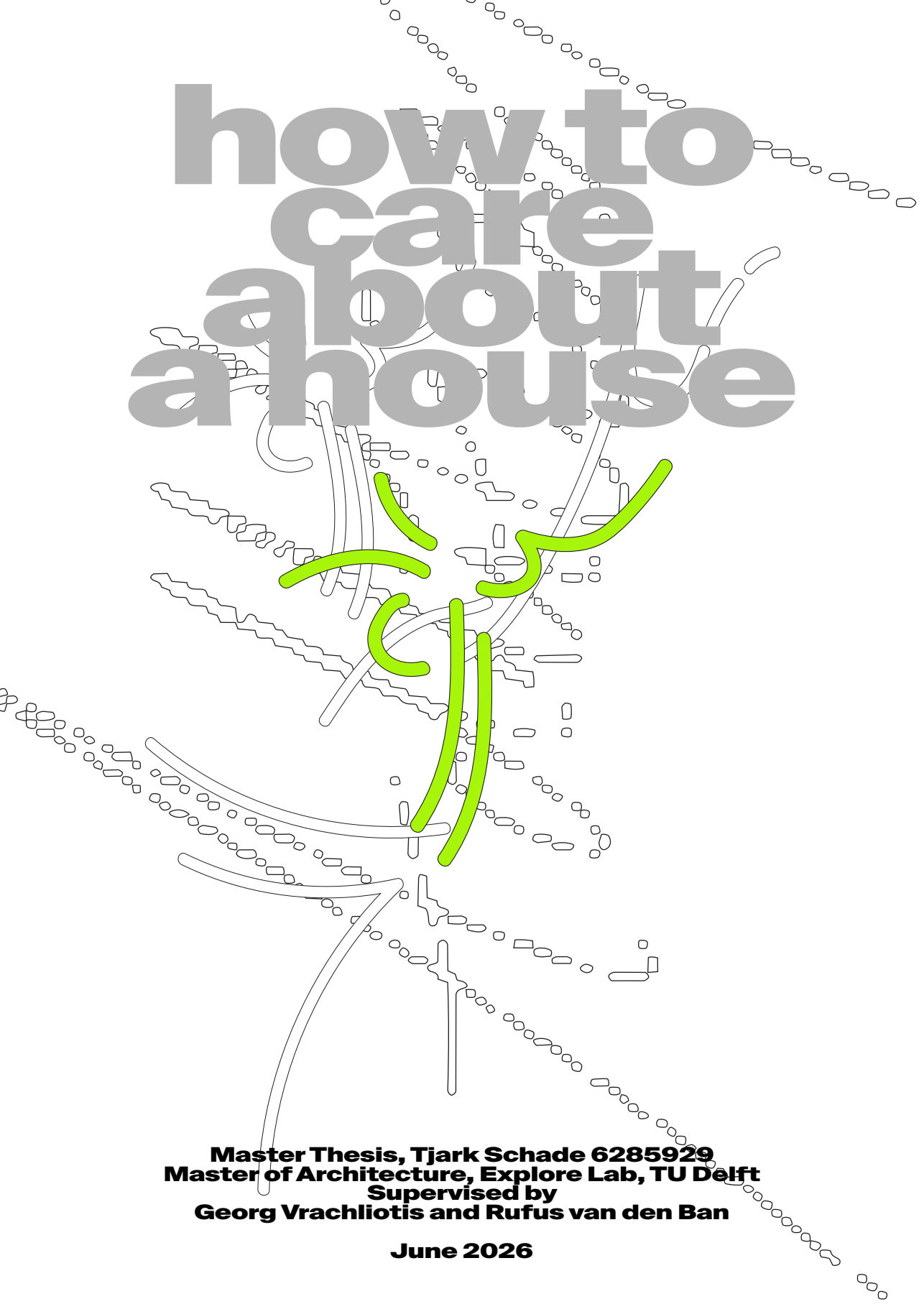


how to care about a house

An abstract architectural drawing featuring a complex network of thin, grey, hand-drawn lines. These lines form various shapes, including long, sweeping curves, straight segments, and clusters of small, irregular shapes that resemble a textured surface or a series of small openings. Overlaid on this network are several thick, bright green lines. These green lines are also curved and follow some of the paths of the grey lines, highlighting specific areas or connections within the overall composition. The background is plain white.

Master Thesis, Tjark Schade 6285929
Master of Architecture, Explore Lab, TU Delft
Supervised by
Georg Vrachliotis and Rufus van den Ban

June 2026



ARE YOU LIVING IN THE REAL WORLD?

PROBLEM STATEMENT

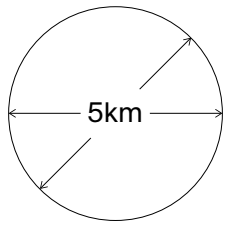
European urban areas have a housing problem, but not a house problem. Property often exists, but not available to the market. Europe is arguably already built.

Housing, having turned an investment product, is increasingly under pressure, and a capital markets-based logic will only increase this. Participating in a socially and material exhaustive new-building practice will only strengthen this trend.

Counter-based strategies to uncontrolled growth should be systemic as imposed to avant-garde one-offs, and can inter alia be directed through the state with its powerful tool of legislating and financial incentivization.

Berlin's lawmakers are developing a "Treuhänder" paragraph to reinstate housing which has been illegally left off the market. This tool sits at the intersection between architecture, economics and care via the state apparatus. Research on this lever seeks to understand the opportunities and threats of vacant infrastructure.

"Gründerzeit"-architecture makes up about 15% of the housing assets in Berlin and they are often privately owned. Shining light on the decades old construction techniques, as well as the legal, financial and co-living possibilities, this thesis seeks an answer to the dangers of capital gains in this 120+ year old archetype for housing by offering a catalogue of repair for the highly standardised brick-timber hybrids.



PART 1

(I)

**WELTSCHMERZ
P. 14**

PART 2

(II)

**A HAZARDOUS
MIX OF
OMNIPOTENCE
P. 38**

(III)

**A HISTORY OF
(LEGISLATING)
HOUSING
BERLIN
P. 60**

(IV)

**THE BEGINNING
OF THE END OF
RE-USE
P. 102**

PART 3

(V)

**DIE WÄNDE
DIE EIN HAUS
BEDEUTEN
P. 128**

(VI)

**LEVELS OF
CARE
P. 204**

PART 4

(VII)

**TEACH A
HUMAN TO
FISH
P. 330**

How to read how to care about a house

This book is built as a funnel: it narrows steadily toward a single house and then opens back out into a method. It moves from why the question matters, through the systems that produce it, down to the individual bricks of one specific building, and finally to a set of tools meant to be picked up and reused by others. Every chapter is a step closer to – or, at the end, deliberately back out from – the central question: How to care for a house?

Chapter 1 – Weltschmerz sets out the motivation. It frames the multicrisis within which architecture now operates, argues that these crises are structurally entangled with the discipline rather than external to it, and introduces care work as the lens through which the entire project is read.

Chapter 2 – A hazardous mixture of omnipotence turns the lens on the profession itself. It is a critique of the architect as starchitect – reactive, market-bound, hiding behind “flexibility” – and a case for reframing the production of housing as a contested field the architect can actively mediate.

Chapter 3 – A history of (legislating) housing Berlin grounds the argument in place. It reads Berlin as a Reallabor: from land speculation and the GSW sell-off to the legislative cosmos that tries to answer it, ending at the Treuhänder mechanism and the case of the Flora.

Chapter 4 – The beginning of the end of re-use makes the historical argument. It traces how the ring kiln and industrial standardisation first encoded reusability into the Gründerzeit brick – and how concrete construction later broke that loop.

Chapter 5 – Die Wände die ein Haus bedeuten narrows all the way down to the material. It analyses the construction of the Gründerzeit Mietshaus itself: the walls, the brick-and-timber logic, and what they mean for a building that has “disappeared from the radar.”

Chapter 6 – Levels of care is where the book turns from diagnosis to repair. It organises intervention across scales – S (details), M (floorplans), L (top-up), XL (legislative and financial system) – and maps each to the actor responsible for it.

Chapter 7 – Teach a Human to Fish closes by reframing the whole project as an open repair archive. The point is not the rescue of one house but a transparent, transferable practice of care that others can take up after the book ends.

Read front to back, it is one continuous argument. Read chapter by chapter, each is meant to work as a tool in its own right and enjoy the graphics.

(I) WELT SCHMERZ *whelpes tale*

PART 1: INTRODUCTION
PART 2: APPROACH

**FAIRYTALES OF NEOLIBERALISM –
COLLECTIVE LIBERATION – ALIENATION
AND SPEED – FEMINIST LENSES ON
HEROISM – MARKET INCENTIVISATION**

As the train speeds from one small town to another, naught meets the eye but vast factories and mighty smelting furnaces. Out of the darkness, they loom, lit by the glare of searing flames. Through the thick smoke, half-clad men emerge, hurrying to and fro. With their glowing rods, appearing now here, now there, they seem, to all the world, like souls in perdition—and truly, they are bodies consigned to the inferno of capitalist damnation.

Eleanor Marx, 1893 in
“Wiener Arbeiterinnen
Zeitung” on her travels
through England

Architecture today is not an aesthetic contemplation, existing in a vacuum of pursuit of form, but it operates within and is entangled within what can best be described as a multicrisis. This can be understood as an overlapping condition of ecological collapse, driving social polarisation and division, housing unaffordability, political fragmentation, decreasing trust in social institutions, and economic precarity. For many young people, this realization manifests as a profound sense of Weltschmerz, the pain of observing the world's current state and recognizing the inadequacy of established tools to address it.

These crises are not external to architecture; they are structurally entangled with it. Still, architectural practice, education, and discourse largely continue to rely on tools, narratives, and ways of doing business developed under fundamentally different assumptions, namely those of continuous growth, market expansion, and technocratic optimism.

Over the past decades, uncontrolled growth, driven by capitalist and neoliberal logics, has paved a way to a widespread social and ecological exhaustion. Architecture has too often functioned as an enabling instrument within this system, translating financial imperatives into spatial form while remaining largely paralysed by the very same market mechanics.

The promises of neoliberalism and technocracy, efficiency and prosperity, have failed to self-correct. Instead, growth without meaningful

regulatory or ethical counterweights has contributed to housing treated primarily as a financial asset, rising inequality, environmental degradation, and a built environment optimised for financial returns rather than long-term care.

This condition is intensified by a hyper-connected global economy in the developed world, that accelerates capital flows and promptly availability of goods and services while deepening social divides and environmental harm. A learned sense of entitlement and plausibility has normalised technocratic systems designed to secure personal comfort and luxury at the expense of collective and planetary limits. In this context, acting “elsewhere” to solve global problems often serves as a displacement strategy. An alternative approach may lie in hyperlocality: addressing small-scale, specific conditions “at home,” not as an escape from global responsibility, but as a strategy to regain agency and accountability within one's immediate sphere of influence.

Rather than proposing a complete break with existing systems, this project argues for a critical reappropriation of the established cosmos; legal, financial, organisational, and architectural, in order to reposition the profession within today's service-based economy. After decades of being framed as visionary “starchitects,” authorised to build ever larger, more symbolic, and more polluting projects under self-produced narratives, architects should face the question of

whether their role and tools can be meaningfully reinvented.

The problem addressed in this thesis is therefore not architecture as form-making, but architecture as a systemic practice operating within monetary, political, societal, and care-related frameworks. Architecture has done a good job at professionalizing reactive behaviour, but often fails to understand itself as the systemic powerful tool of moderating it could be. Drawing on Marxist notion of “seizing the means of production,” the project reframes the production of housing itself as a contested field. In this context, the “market” refers to a system dominated by financial actors who build primarily for return on investment. Social or environmental sustainability tends to emerge only once market returns reward such behaviour, mainly influenced through policy changes, shifts in public opinion, or altered demand patterns.

At the same time, purely state-led alternatives are not without contradiction. State-owned vehicles are often structurally disincentivised from efficiency or long-term innovation. The state is not a financial investor aiming to maximise internal rates of return, but rather to generate what could be described as “trust return.” However, large-scale public investment is frequently hindered by political fragmentation, relatively short election cycles, and the fear of electoral punishment for risky or long-term endeavours. As a result, civil society too emerges as a crucial actor in addressing structural problems that neither markets nor states adequately resolve.

This project situates itself within this gap. It examines collectivisation efforts within civil society and the role architects can play within them, not as passive service providers responding to client demands, but as initiators and co-producers of alternative models of development. Architects often claim to “know what is good,” yet rarely translate these convictions into real-world projects beyond form, materiality, or symbolic gestures. The question therefore also becomes how architectural initiative can be financially incentivised while still operating within existing market structures, and how bottom-up approaches can be integrated rather than romanticised.

Do I care OR doing free stuff will change the world?

Popularised during the pandemic, the notion of CARE work has entered public discussions. Contemporary economic systems and public opinion rewards productive work, but how does socially reproductive “work” can be incentivised financially to produce a more sustainable society?

What tools does such a profession require and is the answer within current case studies of care?

Productive work remains exploitative by nature, so increasing the value of non-productive but social reproductive time-spent, could contain the transformative power to combat today's most pressing divisional issues including social divide, poorness, populist rise and climate changes. The architect at the intersection between public and private interests which will manifest into spaces and built evidences has the opportunity to

moderate such a change and facilitate it. What tools does such a profession require and is the answer within current case studies of care?

How to Care for a House? The Concept of CARE Work

To break this cycle, this project argues for a critical reappropriation of the architectural profession within today's service-based economy. Central to this shift is the concept of care work, which has gained popular traction since the COVID-19 pandemic. While contemporary economic systems primarily reward "productive," extractive labor—the building of the new and the grand—socially reproductive work remains undervalued and underfunded. Care work, in the context of this thesis, refers to the act of tending to, repairing, and maintaining what already exists.

This raises the central question of this investigation: How to care for a house?. If productive work remains inherently exploitative by nature, increasing the value attributed to non-productive yet socially essential forms of maintenance work may hold transformative potential. As Donna Haraway suggests in *Staying with the Trouble*, the task is to become "capable of response" within a thick present, rather than looking for salvific futures. For architecture, this means moving away from being a design-commodity toward being a platform for collective responsibility and social justice. Architects should not be understood primarily as designers of forms, but as enablers of platforms—creating scopes for action within

**CARE
SOLIDARITY
RECIPROCITY
LIBERATION
AUTONOMY
INTER—
SECTIONALITY
RESPECT
EMPATHY
SAFETY
FREEDOM
EQUITY
RECOGNITION
DIVERSITY
JUSTICE
EMPOWERMENT**

which alternative social and spatial relations can emerge.

The state is the entity we have designed as the collective to take care of needs beyond individual requirements. It is essential to rethink this apparatus and its regulations - such as the Treuhänder Paragraph - to understand how they can shape the handling of housing as a shared infrastructure rather than a speculative asset. This project investigates the beginning of these capitalist patterns in the late 19th century, when industrialization caused material practices to decouple from the human scale.

Objective

Given the previously established critique of architecture's complicity within market-driven systems, it becomes necessary to ground the project in a concrete, existing situation rather than an idealised or hypothetical scenario. The ambition is to engage architecture as a practical, systemic tool: not as an ivory-tower discipline producing visual statements, but as a situated practice intervening in social, economic, and political realities.

Architecturally, the project aims to address the transformation and care of existing housing stock, shifting the focus from formal novelty to long-term use, maintenance, and shared responsibility.

Technically, it seeks to understand and visualise

the systems that enable—or prevent—such transformations: ownership structures, regulatory frameworks, financing instruments, and institutional actors. The project therefore deliberately positions itself at the intersection of architectural design, policy analysis, and economic logic.

The motivation for this topic is deeply personal and disciplinary. My original educational background in Business Administration, combined with professional experience in finance and trade, has shaped a critical understanding of market mechanisms, incentives, and capital flows. This perspective, paired with a strong political interest, informs a sustained concern with questions of accountability, power, and distribution within the built environment. Architecture, in this sense, becomes a field where abstract economic decisions materialise spatially, and where alternative logics might be tested.

Ultimately, the project is motivated by a deep desire to work on architecture beyond beauty and representation: to explore how architectural agency can be redefined through care, mediation, and systemic engagement, and how such a repositioning might open up new roles, tools, and responsibilities for the profession.

At the core of the project lies a simple but precise question:

“How to care for a house?” A question which encompasses shining light on the actors and the legal and financial cosmos becoming active when established systems fail to operate a

house within a housing market. Further, this question then asks how a house can be re-instated to operate within contemporary discussions about care and circularity, from its details to floorplans to paying homage to the actors which have come together to make the project possible at all.

Scope

The project is situated in Berlin, used deliberately as a case study and Reallabor. The city's layered history of public ownership, privatisation, housing struggle, and civic activism, combined with a currently strained housing market, provides a dense and productive context in which theory and practice continuously intersect. Berlin's institutional landscape, legal frameworks, and strong tradition of civil engagement make it particularly suitable for examining alternative housing models and collective forms of care.

Within this context, the project focuses on a highly specific site: an abandoned Gründerzeit residential building in Friedenau, in the district of Tempelhof-Schöneberg. The building has been vacant for several years and has attracted sustained public attention, not least through the persistent efforts of a local neighbourhood initiative that has kept the issue visible in public discourse.

The Berliner Mietshaus typology is treated as a potential agent of change. Through historical analysis, typological study, and contemporary



use cases, the project explores how this seemingly ordinary building type has repeatedly functioned as a site of political negotiation, social organisation, and urban transformation.

The scope also includes an in-depth engagement with the case of the “Flora” (including related topics such as Geisterhäuser and the Treuhänder debate), informed by site visits, documentation, and references to cultural and activist projects. These investigations are not treated as background material, but as integral components of the architectural argument.

Initially driven by a fascination with state-owned or networked infrastructure, the project ultimately reframes reuse not as a technical challenge alone, but as an opportunity to make roles visible: the role of heritage, the collective role of the state, and the role of architects as mediators. The chosen case study of the site encapsulates these dynamics, offering a concrete field in which architectural design, systemic analysis, and political responsibility converge.

Within this defined scope, the project aims to remain precise, situated, and manageable, while addressing questions whose implications extend far beyond the individual building.



The importance of free unproductive, reproductive care work can be witnessed and felt within the remote mountain regions of Norway. Situated along the train tracks between Oslo and Bergen in Finse, sits one of the largest huts of the DNT network. Not only giving shelter to tourists, the fully serviced hut provides as a base for voluntary workers maintaing the trail for others to hike on. When talking to these people they radiate a sense of pride and neccessity to give back and care for each other. Their community relies on such work and sense of belonging to reproduce its basis for living.

Part 2: Approach Report, Methods

Methodologically, the work relies heavily on research by engagement: conversations, exchanges with local initiatives, activists, professionals, and institutional actors. This ap-proach acknowledges that knowledge about housing, care, and maintenance is not ex-clusively produced within academic or professional silos, but is embedded in lived experience, civic engagement, and conflictual negotiations. Rather than assuming user needs, the project attempts to listen to them.

It follows a research-by-design methodology, in which architectural design is not the final output of research, but an active instrument within it. Rather than separating analysis and proposal, the project develops architectural interventions while continu-ously testing assumptions, constraints, and potentials through engagement with real actors and real conditions. Design decisions are therefore treated as hypotheses that can be confronted, adjusted, or rejected based on feedback from practice.

An envisioned strategy is the iterative testing of ideas with involved stakeholders. This includes exchanges with neighbourhood initiatives, architects, and other actors en-gaged with the case study. The project does not aim to simulate participation abstractly, but to confront ideas with existing players. In this sense, architectural design becomes a tool for dialogue rather than a top-down solution.

In parallel, the project undertakes historical and regulatory research focused on Berlin's

housing stock, renovation practices, and legal frameworks as laid out in the re-search questions.

This research is used to visualise existing tools, such as legal instruments, funding mechanisms, and organisational models. The intention is to understand what is already available, how these instruments have been used in the past, and where they fail or remain underutilised.

The project combines: fieldwork, including site visits and documentation; case-study analysis, focusing on comparable initiatives in Berlin; mapping, to visualise actor constellations, responsibilities, and flows of decision-making; and design exploration, through architectural drawings and models that test how care, responsibility, and collective ownership might be expressed spatially.

The expected outputs include: an architectural proposal for the selected case study; analytical diagrams and mappings of systems enabling or obstructing renovation and care; and a set of architectural and organisational principles that could be transferred to similar contexts.

The planning of the project follows an incremental logic: initial research and mapping inform early design propositions, which are then refined through feedback, additional research, and iterative design development. This allows the project to remain responsive to new insights rather than fixed to a predefined outcome.

Report: Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of the project builds directly on the positions established in Part 1 and is highly interdisciplinary. Not solely relying on architectural theory, the project draws selectively from economic theory, political economy, and architectural and local urbanistic history.

Economic theory plays a central role in understanding housing as a financialised asset and architecture as a profession embedded within such market logics. Concepts related to capital accumulation, incentives, risk, and return inform the analysis of why certain housing models prevail while others struggle to sustain themselves. In this context, Marxist perspectives serve as a lens through which the production of housing is framed as a contested process rather than a neutral outcome.

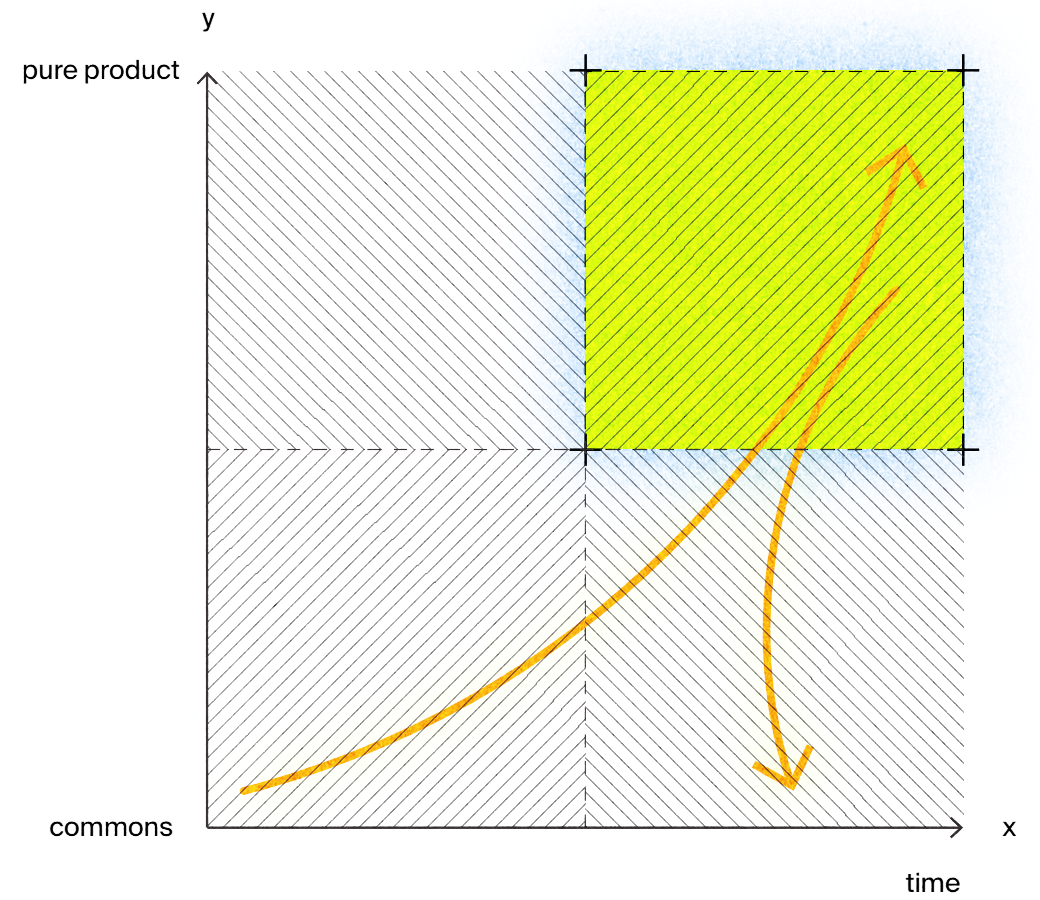
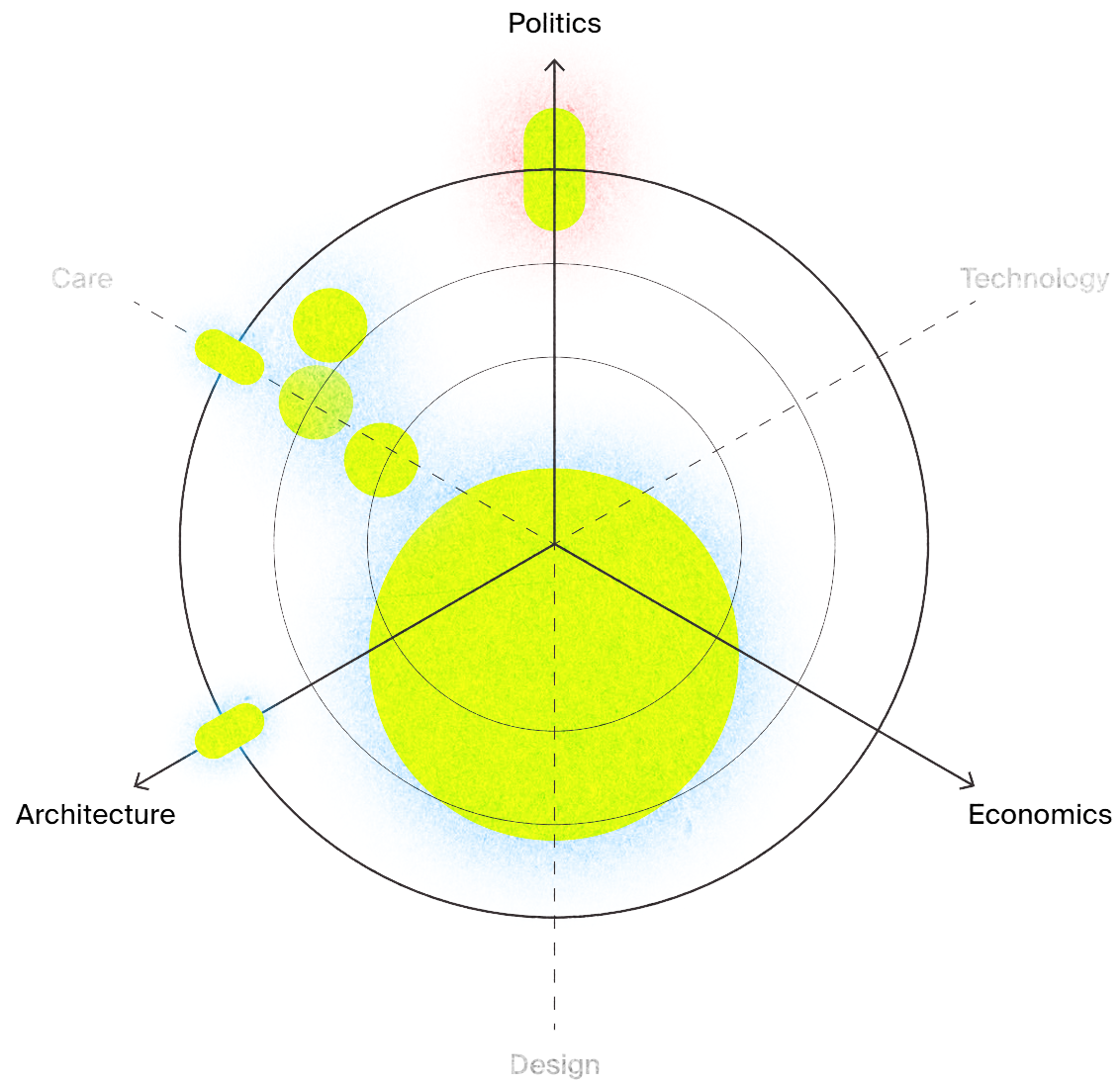
Alongside economic theory, the project engages with literature on civil society movements, collectivisation, and care. This includes both historical and contemporary examples of cooperative housing, neighbourhood initiatives, and forms of socially reproductive labour that operate outside purely profit-driven frameworks. Care is understood not as a moral category, but as a material practice with spatial, organisational, and economic implications.

The historical context of Berlin forms an additional theoretical layer. The city's architectural and urban history, especially about public housing, squatting movements,

experimental renewal strategies, and large-scale punctual privatization, provides a concrete field in which abstract theories materialise. Precedents such as IBA Altbau and Neubau, and more recent housing policies and legislative changes are as institutional and organisational factors.

Finally, the project integrates participation and engagement studies through direct involvement with local initiatives. This includes attending neighbourhood meetings and workshops, as well as conversations with architects, policymakers, and members of the neighbourhood initiative connected to the case study. These encounters are treated as both empirical input and theoretical confrontation, allowing established concepts to be tested against lived experience.

Overall, the theoretical framework is deliberately real-world entangled and pragmatic. It does not seek to resolve contradictions between market, state, and civil society, but to make them legible and operational within architectural practice. Theory is thus positioned as a means to orient and motivate action, rather than as an abstract end in itself.



(II) A HAZAR- DOUS MIX OF OMNI- POTENCE

*Unstable
me*

**PROFESSIONALISING REACTIVENESS
— CARE LABOUR — AESTHETICS VS
SYSTEMATICS**

“Architecture is a hazardous mixture of omnipotence. Ostensibly involved in “shaping” the world, for their thoughts to be mobilized architects depend on the provocations of others — clients, individual or institutional. Therefore, incoherence, or more precisely, randomness, is the underlying structure of all architects’ careers: they are confronted with an arbitrary sequence of demands, with parameters they did not establish, in countries they hardly know, about issues they are only dimly aware of, expected to deal with problems that have proved intractable to brains vastly superior to their own. Architecture is by definition a chaotic adventure.”

— Rem Koolhaas’
introduction in S,M,L,XL

Architecture has suffered from a bubble problem in recent decades. For years, the profession has been framed through the narrative of the “starchitect”, the visionary know-it-all authorized to build ever larger, more symbolic, and more polluting projects under self-produced narratives of progress. This culture of omnipotence is what Rem Koolhaas describes as a “hazardous mixture,” where architects, ostensibly involved in “shaping the world,” are actually dependent on the provocations and demands of clients and institutional actors, often dealing with problems they are only dimly aware of.

Architectural education plays a central role in reinforcing these practice cycles. By training architects primarily for reactive, project-based work financed through competitions or direct commissions, it produces professionals who are structurally dependent on market dynamics and largely powerless in the face of broader economic developments. Architecture offices are largely financed via these cyclical, project-based revenue streams, which forces them into a role of market-bound obedience. In this context, acting “elsewhere” or designing “greenwashed” buildings often serves merely as a displacement strategy to avoid addressing the exploitative logics of the capital system.

Perhaps the most insidious example of this is the obsession with “flexibility.” Walk into any final presentation of a western architectural university studio and you will encounter a familiar picture: if you were to take a shot

of alcohol for every time a project mentions “flexibility,” you wouldn’t make it out alive. This design impulse often contradicts the political beliefs of its authors; by emphasizing flexible floor plans that encourage the agent to decide on their spatial constellation individually, the architect ultimately places the responsibility on the individual. This is a belief at the core of neoliberal tactics that neglects the power of the collective. Architects must regain the courage to make educated, careful decisions on rigid systems rather than hiding behind the mask of “openness”.

Architecture has done a good job at professionalizing reactive behaviour, but often fails to understand itself as the systemic powerful tool of moderating it could be. In Germany, most of the money earned in offices comes through a rigidly organized system of “Leistungsphasen” which are in remuneration anchored to the buildings worth and certain percentage value for each phase. This is leaving little room for initiating projects, since offices income relies on following, potentially slightly interpreting the brief, but rarely changing it.

Following the arguments of Walter Eucken, a key player in establishing Germanys post war economic ideals, the free hand of the market can be steered through incentivisation to enable the market in certain directions. Understanding housing as a market good, architects should educate and realise the possibilities which lie within activism.

Purely market-driven neoliberalist ideals

producing winners and losers. Legislating is the collective's tool of incentivising a market, hence it should be included in the considerations of architecture and an architecture studio.

Yet, despite this looming reality, architectural practice, education, and discourse largely continue to rely on tools and narratives developed under fundamentally different assumptions: namely those of continuous growth, market expansion, and technocratic optimism.

Seizing the Means of Production: A Systemic Practice

Acknowledging the financial aspects of architecture, this project acknowledges market theories not as immutable laws to be obeyed, but as forces that must be studied, negotiated, and strategically engaged. Architecture is a field where abstract economic decisions materialise spatially, and it is here that alternative logics must be tested. By utilizing the Marxist notion of “seizing the means of production,” we must reframe the production of housing itself as a contested field and understanding housing as a product.

In the current market, housing is treated primarily as a financial asset. Investors rarely act out of pure idealism; they respond to trends, risk assessments, and capital flows.

Sustainability or social justice only emerges once the market rewards such behavior through policy changes or shifted demand. Therefore, the architect must step into the gap between the state, civil society, and the market, acting not as a passive service provider but as an initiator of alternative development models. This involves moving beyond the ivory tower of aesthetics and engaging with the real-world legal and financial systems, such as the German HOAI (System for organizing the remuneration for the “Leistungsphasen”) or property ownership structures, that enable or prevent transformation.

Hyperlocality and the Reallabor

In a hyper-connected world where acting “abroad” often serves to solve global problems in the abstract, the strategy of hyperlocality offers a way to regain agency. This project focuses on addressing small-scale, specific conditions “at home” as a strategy to regain accountability within one's immediate sphere of influence. Berlin serves as the prime “Reallabor”(real-world laboratory) for this investigation. The city's layered history of public ownership, mass privatization (such as the GSW sale in 2004), and housing struggle provides a dense context where theory and practice continuously intersect.

The specific site of this research—an abandoned Gründerzeithaus in Friedenau—encapsulates these dynamics. By focusing on this specific

house, the project moves beyond “ivory tower” aesthetics and addresses the 15.2% of Berlin’s housing stock that consists of pre-1919 buildings held (Statistikportal, 2011). This house is not just a building; it is a manifestation of the “Urban Mine,” a repository of embodied energy and historical social struggle. Architecture, in this sense, is framed as a spatial manifestation of shared responsibility rather than a finished commodity.

Ultimately, the goal of this thesis is to redefine architectural agency through care, mediation, and systemic engagement. It seeks to answer: What if progressive architects, the state, and civil society came together to collectively renovate and care for existing housing stock?.

This involves:

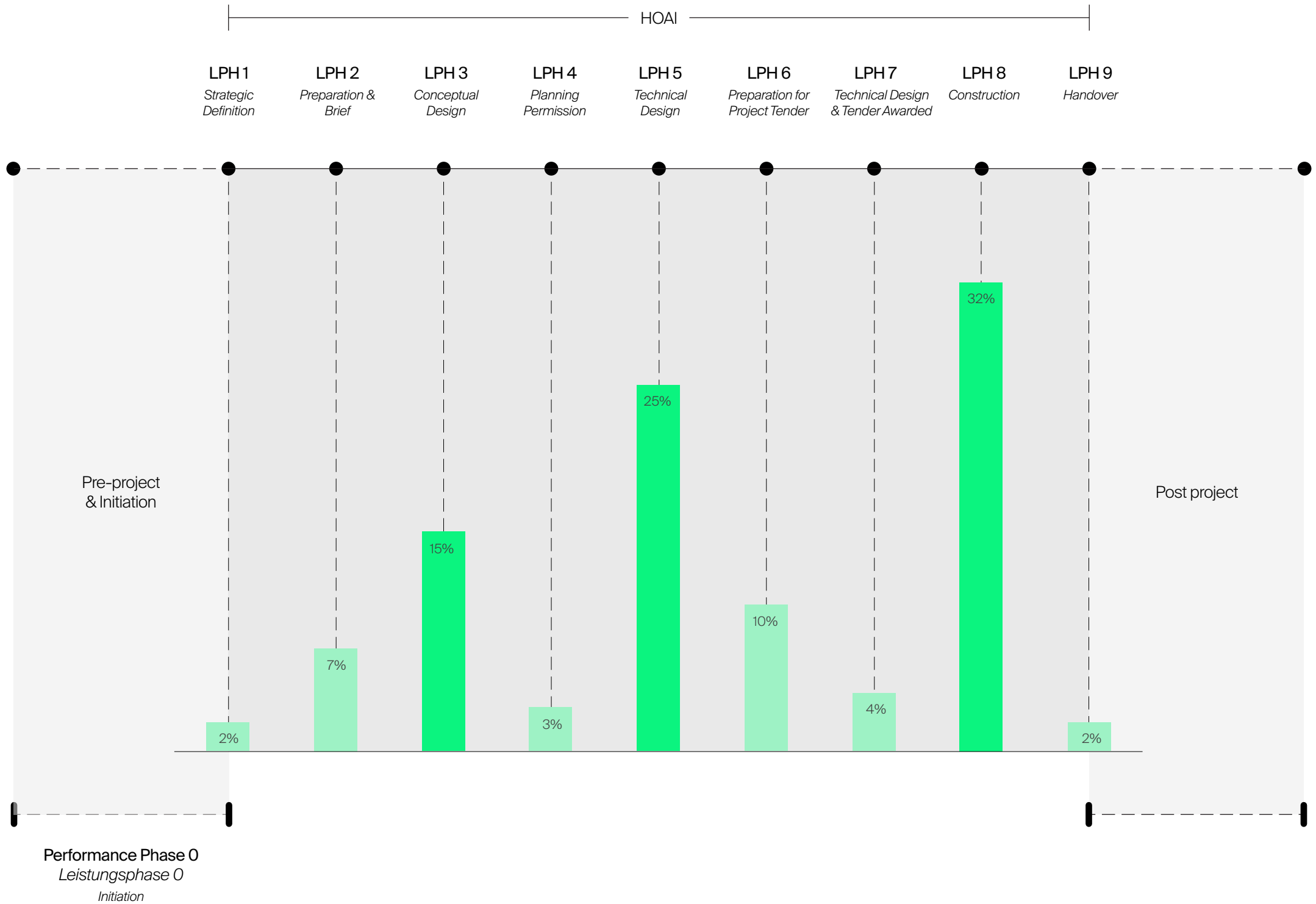
De-aestheticizing the discourse: Lifting architecture out of its “aesthetic bubble” and viewing it as part of an exogenous system of state action and economic logic.

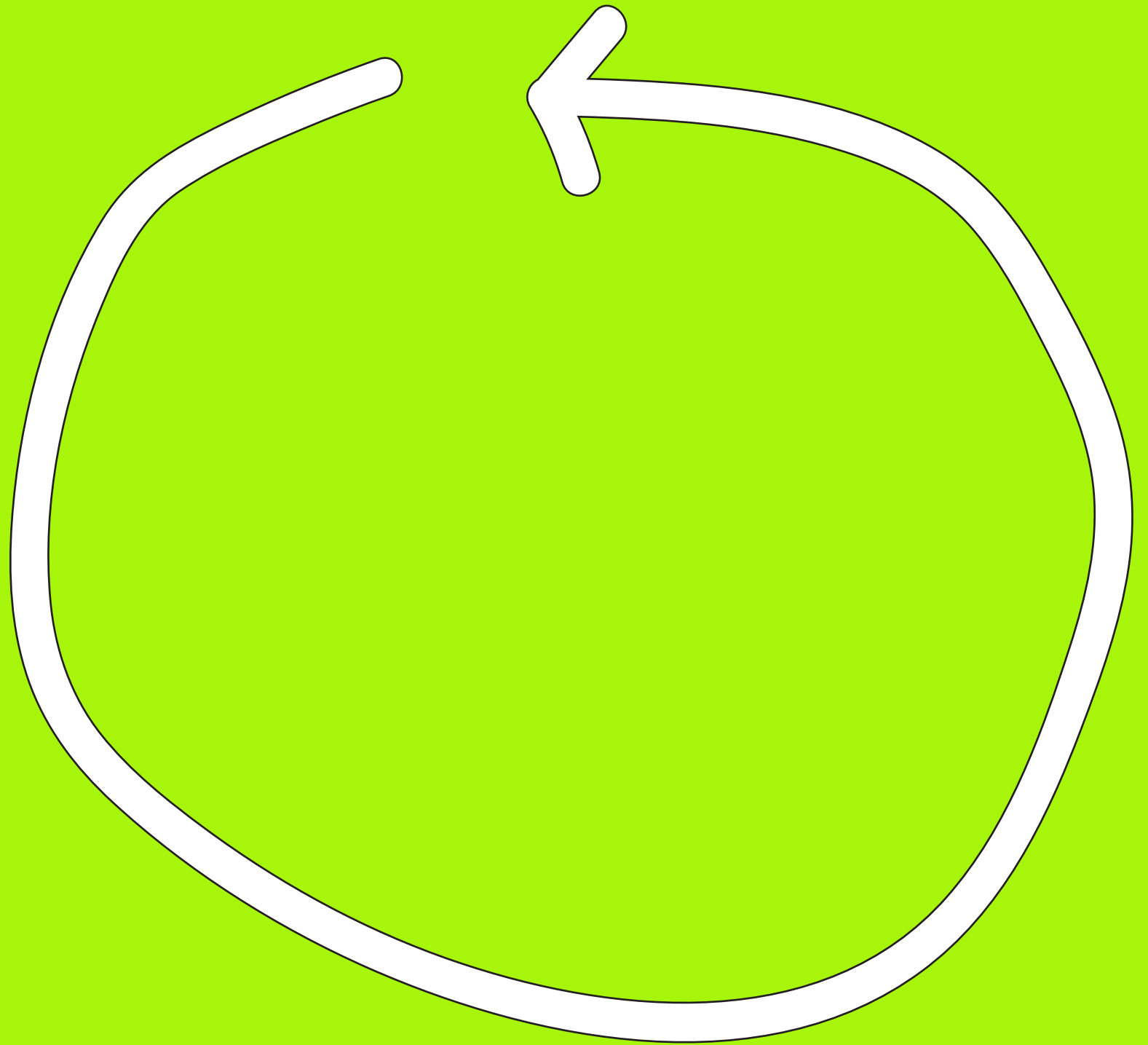
Visualizing the Invisible: Using architectural drawing and modeling not just to show form, but to map the systems, financial, legal, and organizational, that make architecture possible.

Proposing Institutional Change: Thinking a Repair Office or a National Renovation Office where architects function as public servants, treating the building stock as a shared infrastructure that requires constant care rather than speculative replacement

By looking back at the constructive logic of the 19th century and forward to a circular, care-

oriented future, this project attempts to “stay with the trouble” of the Berlin housing crisis. It is time to save the world, not through another grand building, but through the radical act of caring for what is already here.





Leistungsphase (LPH)

- 1 Grundlagenermittlung mit Prüfung des Kostenrahmens vom Bauherren
- 2 Vorplanung mit Kostenschätzung
- 3 Entwurfsplanung inklusive Kostenberechnung
- 4 Genehmigungsplanung
- 5 Ausführungsplanung
- 6 Vorbereitung der Vergabe, einschließlich Ermitteln der Mengen und
Aufstellen von verpreisten Leistungsverzeichnissen (Kostenvoranschlag,
LV)
- 7 Die „Mitwirkung bei der Vergabe“ beinhaltet die Koordination des
Vergabeverfahrens und den Vergleich von dem Kostenanschlag
(Ausschreibungsergebnisse) mit den vom Planer bepreisten
Leistungsverzeichnissen oder der Kostenberechnung
- 8 Objektüberwachung – Bauüberwachung und Dokumentation
- 9 Objektbetreuung inklusive Gewährleistungsverfolgung

Artikel 1
Artikel 2
Artikel 3
Artikel 4
Artikel 5
Artikel 6
Artikel 7
Artikel 8
Artikel 9
Artikel 10
Artikel 11
Artikel 12
Artikel 13

(1) Die Wohnung ist unverletzlich.

(...)

Artikel 14

(1) Das Eigentum und das Erbrecht werden gewährleistet. Inhalt und Schranken werden durch die Gesetze bestimmt.

(2) Eigentum verpflichtet. Sein Gebrauch soll zugleich dem Wohle der Allgemeinheit dienen.

(3) Eine Enteignung ist nur zum Wohle der Allgemeinheit zulässig. Sie darf nur durch Gesetz oder auf Grund eines Gesetzes erfolgen, das Art und Ausmaß der Entschädigung regelt. Die Entschädigung ist unter gerechter Abwägung der Interessen der Allgemeinheit und der Beteiligten zu bestimmen. Wegen der Höhe der Entschädigung steht im Streitfalle der Rechtsweg vor den ordentlichen Gerichten offen.

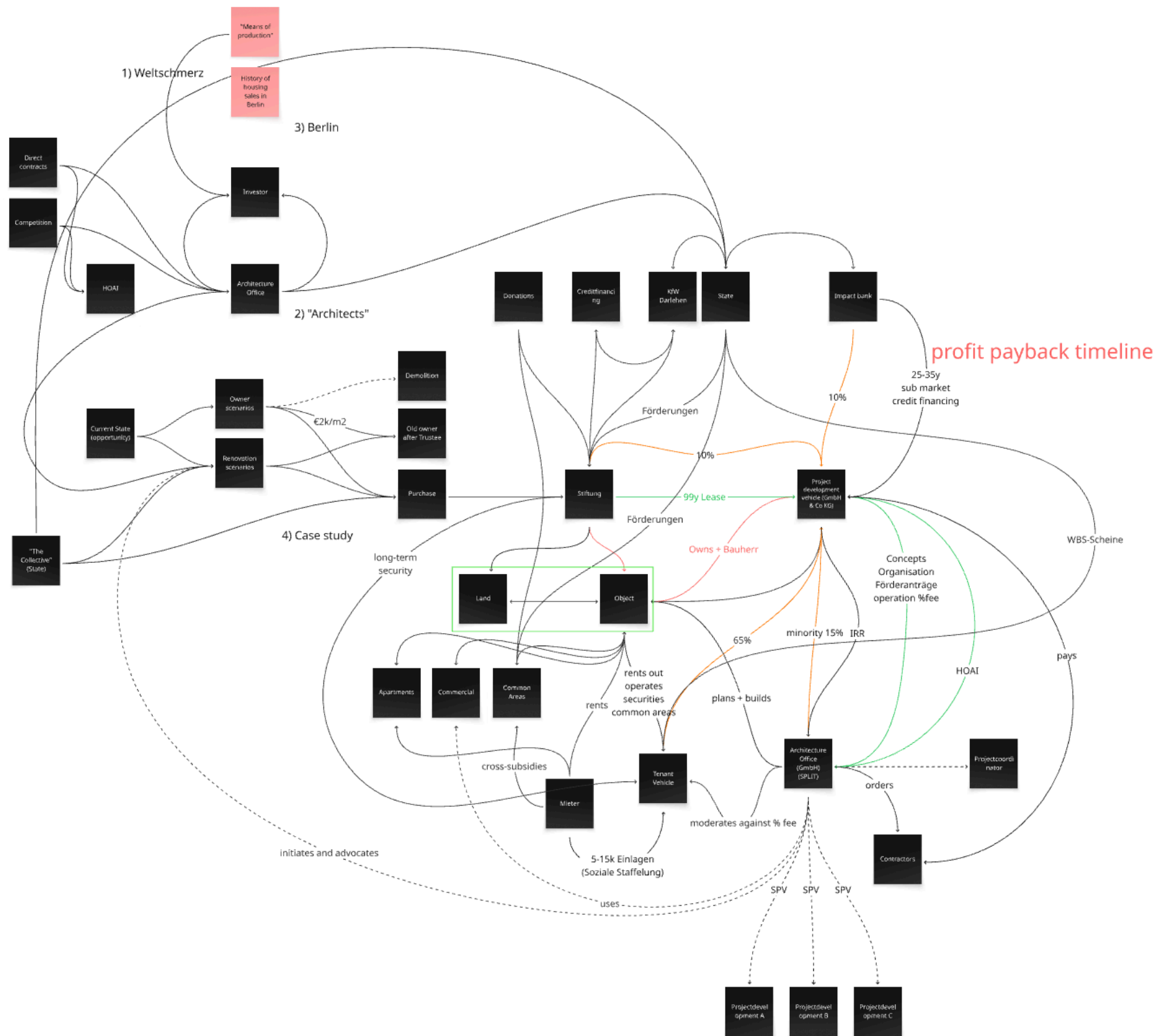
Nichtamtliches Inhaltsverzeichnis

Artikel 15
Artikel 16
Artikel 17
Artikel 18
Artikel 19

(1) Property and the right of inheritance shall be guaranteed. Their content and limits shall be defined by the laws.

(2) Property entails obligations. Its use shall also serve the public good.

(3) Expropriation shall only be permissible for the public good. It may only be ordered by or pursuant to a law that determines the nature and extent of compensation. Such compensation shall be determined by establishing an equitable balance between the public interest and the interests of those affected. In case of dispute concerning the amount of compensation, recourse may be had to the ordinary courts.





*Floorplan and information workshop with Hütten & Paläste Architekten at Tuntenhaus
17.12.2025*

(III) A HISTORY OF (LEGIS- LATING) HOUSING BERLIN

Politische Umwandlungen

**THE BEGINNING OF OUR CURRENT
HOUSING STOCK – HISTORY OF
INDUSTRIALISATION – ADVENT OF
MARXISM – MASS CIVILISATION –
ALIENATION OF 1:1 LABOUR**

“You’re fighting an unbeatable foe (...). Its (...) more powerful than nature or life itself its profit and loss, supply and demand, the elegant flow of currency across the globe. We’re just cogs in a great machine. And we all have our part to play. (...) Because cooperations must still grow. Money must still be made. The machine must still be fed. That is the way of the world.”

Stan Edgar in “Every One of You Sons of Bitches” The Boys” Season 5, Episode 3 created by Eric Kripke, Amazon Studios 2026.

LEGISLATION

Berlin has a rich history of opposing forces clashing within and negotiating real and political spaces. Taking it as a case study, a “reallabor” for the ongoing conflicts about housing interests produces a rich line of examples. A current housing shortage and the prevailing discourse on the Berlin housing crisis often centers on a singular, quantitative metric: the need for more new construction. However, through this very singular lens on this complex issue, it fails to reflect on the systemic failures and instruments enabling the current problems.

Housing is not a casual topic. In the coming years, Germany requires 400,000 new units per year to be built or re-introduced to the market. Latest figures suggest that only around half of these will actually be built. Recognizing the political stakes, the federal landscape has coined any such measures as “Bau-Turbo” – an accelerationist catchphrase that has so far failed to demonstrate meaningful traction.

Yet the singular focus on new construction obscures a more uncomfortable reality: a significant portion of the city’s existing built resource remains inefficiently used, deliberately withheld from the market, or left to decay.

The debate finds its legal foundation in nothing less than the German “Grundgesetz”. Article 14 establishes the right to property – but also its obligation: “Eigentum verpflichtet”, property carries social responsibility, and its use shall simultaneously serve the common good. It is from this constitutional tension between private ownership and public welfare

CURRENT HOUSING MARKET

that Berlin's entire legislative cosmos around housing enforcement is derived.

The current shortage does not begin with a lack of bricks. It can be traced to what might be the origin within a structural history, going back to 1748 in the Hegelmannian sense, of land speculation that made horizontal expansion nearly impossible and forced the city to grow inward and upward. Werner Hegemann famously described Berlin as the "größte Mietskasernenanhäufung der Welt", the world's largest accumulation of tenement barracks. Today's crisis is its inheritance. While a small percentage of vacant housing stock, typically estimated at around 2–3%, is structurally necessary for a functioning market to allow moving and repairs, the city currently harbors a far more damaging form of vacancy.

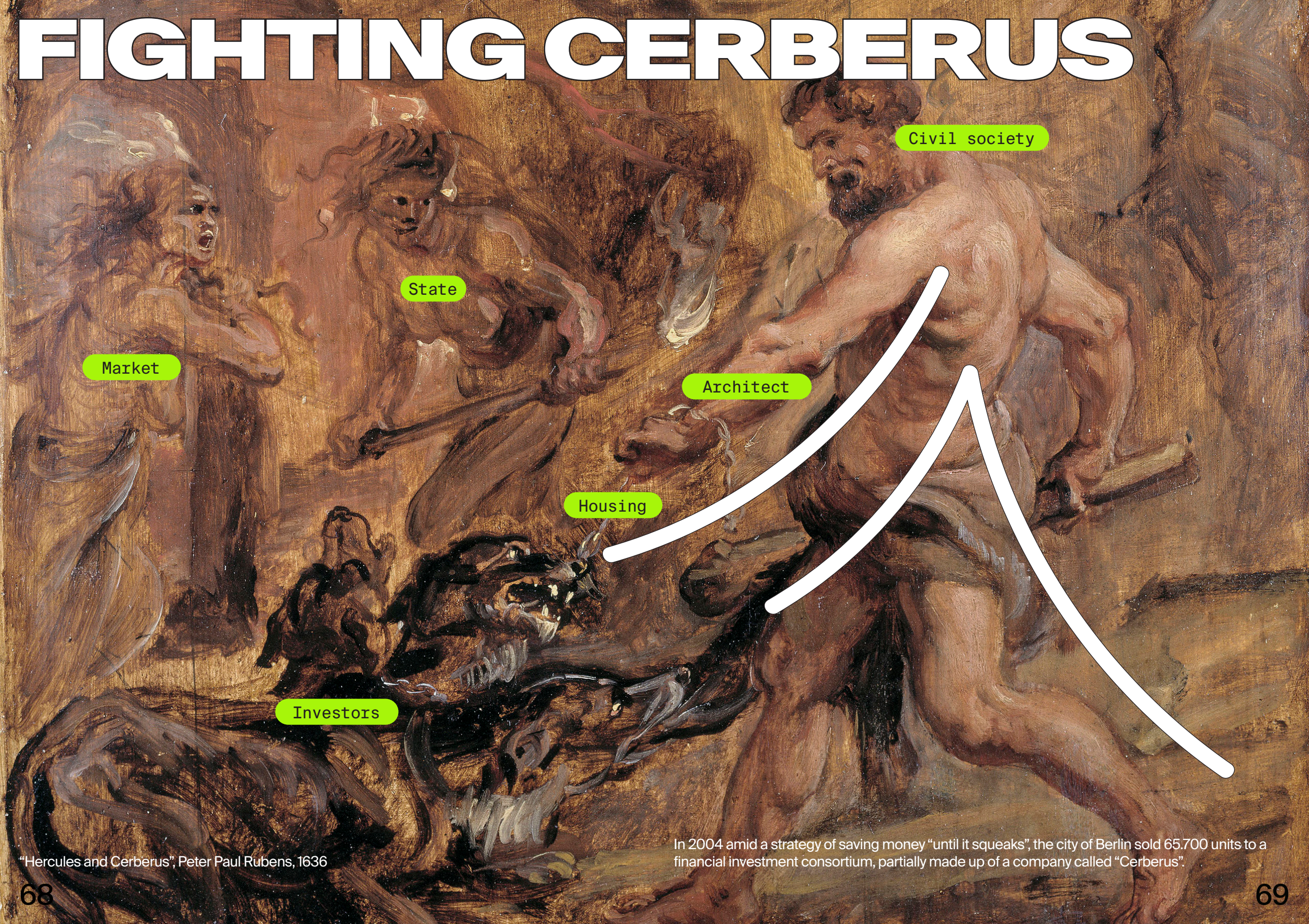
A central economic blockage in the Berlin market is the "Lock-in effect". As rents for new leases have skyrocketed, households that have lived in their apartments for decades find themselves unable to move even when their spatial needs change. An elderly person whose children have left may remain in a five-room apartment simply because relocating to a two-room apartment at current market rates would cost more than staying – or because suitable alternatives simply do not exist. This paralysis prevents the efficient redistribution of space. The market, left to its own devices, does not reward the careful reassessment of space but rather incentivizes residents to cling to existing contracts while young families are pushed to the

STATE THEORY

urban periphery.

Beyond the lock-in effect, the causes for structural vacancy and underuse cluster into three recognizable types. The first is speculative vacancy: owners deliberately withholding units from the market in anticipation of rising land values or future luxury privatization. The second is owner incapacity: individuals physically or financially unable to manage the complex demands of maintaining historic structures. The third, and most troubling, is exploitative inhabitation – buildings technically occupied but characterized by over-occupation, overcrowding, where owners exploit the desperation of marginalized groups, including poverty migrants and refugees, by charging exorbitant rates for substandard or even hazardous conditions. In all three cases, the state as caretaker has frequently failed, allowing valuable built resources to decay while surrounding neighborhoods absorb the negative spillover effects.

Between 1990 and 2005, more than 200,000 of Berlin's formerly publicly owned apartments were sold to private companies. The most consequential single transaction was the 2004 privatization of GSW, the city's largest state-owned housing provider. Sold to a Cerberus and Goldman Sachs consortium for €405 million against €1.6 billion in assumed debt, the portfolio was valued at €3.3 billion by 2012 – roughly four times the sale price. In 2013, Deutsche Wohnen acquired GSW, creating the largest private residential landlord in Berlin with



FIGHTING CERBERUS

Civil society

State

Market

Architect

Housing

Investors

"Hercules and Cerberus", Peter Paul Rubens, 1636

In 2004 amid a strategy of saving money "until it squeaks", the city of Berlin sold 65.700 units to a financial investment consortium, partially made up of a company called "Cerberus".

over 108,000 units. What Berlin surrendered was not merely a balance sheet entry, but the direct spatial leverage over housing allocation and maintenance standards it now spends enormous political capital trying to reconstruct through legislation alone.

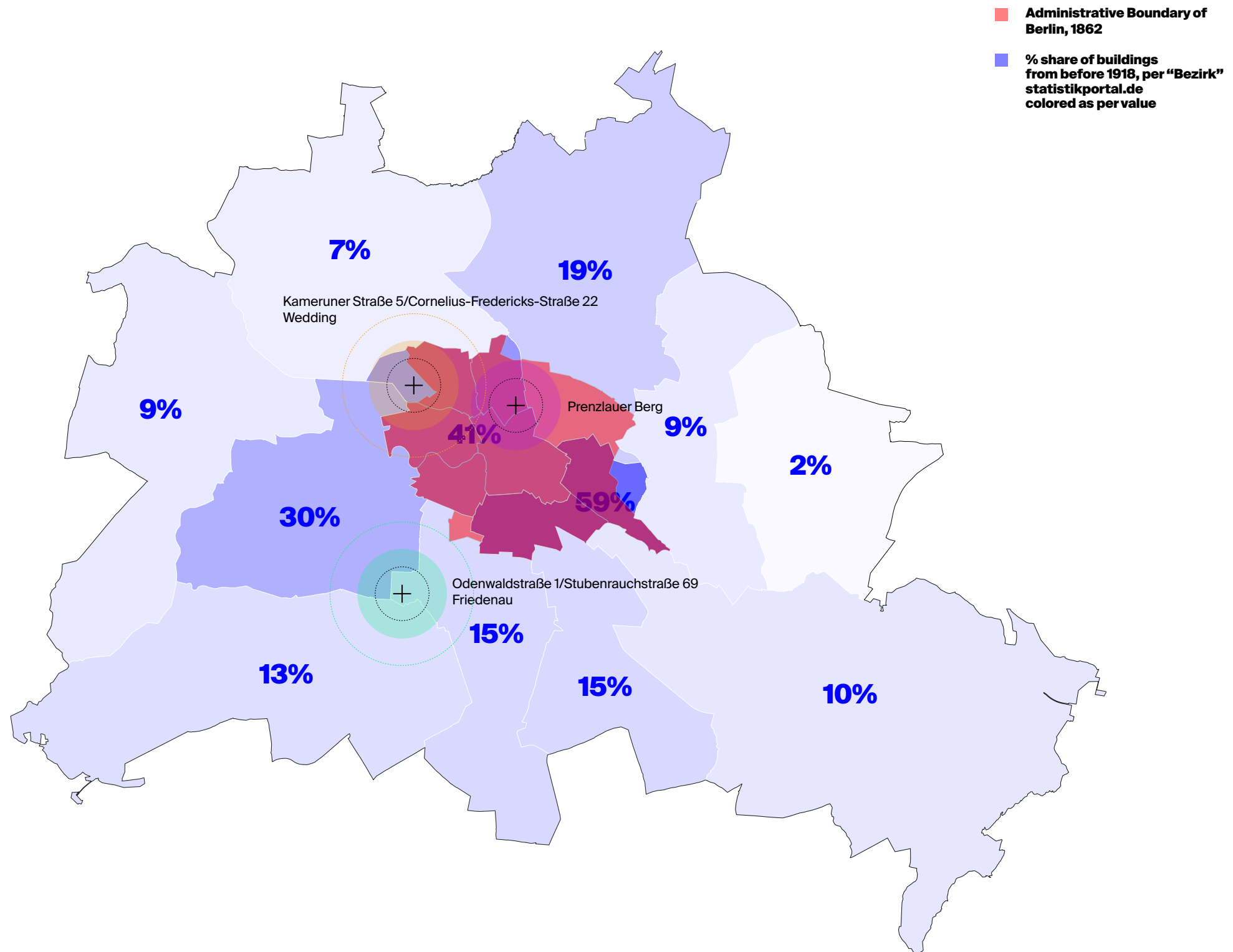
To address these failures, Berlin has developed a legislative cosmos of instruments. The “Zweckentfremdungsverbotsgesetz”, in force since 1 May 2018, prohibits the misappropriation of residential space. The “Wohnungsaufsichtsgesetz” empowers district-level “Wohnungsaufsichtsämter “to inspect and mandate the remediation of housing conditions that fall below legally defined minimum standards. Various financial instruments – from KfW and IBB subsidies to cooperative models like the Mietshäuser Syndikat, the “Kooperatives Baulandmodell”, and the Stiftung Edith Maryon – attempt to structurally secure housing against speculative pressure. The “Vorkaufsrecht”, the municipal right of pre-emption, has been tested as a tool to intercept sales before they reach speculative investors.

The term “Problemimmobilien”, while not legally defined, has become the operative label for the most extreme cases – buildings where financial incentive, willful neglect, or simple incapacity has driven the property into a state of acute misuse or abandonment. The lists of such properties are partial at best, since they can only be disclosed through parliamentary inquiries or journalistic requests, and ruling

parties have little political incentive to declare high numbers. Berlin is currently known to have at least 30 such properties. The disparities between districts are telling: Pankow counts 16, while the Bezirksamt Mitte acknowledges only two – and explicitly excluding the scandal-ridden examples from its count.

At the end of a long chain of enforcement lies the “Treuhänder”, a fiduciary mechanism – a tool of last resort that sits just before the politically incendiary threshold of expropriation. The process is deliberately graduated. It begins with the formal identification of housing deficiencies and the repeated written demand that the owner take remedial action. Fines accumulate. Deadlines pass. Only when the owner has demonstrably failed to act – despite having had every opportunity – can a district appoint a trustee (Treuhänder) who steps into the role of the owner and carries out the required works on their behalf, at the owner’s cost. The trustee is legally empowered to manage the property and undertake all legal transactions necessary to fulfill the ordered measures, with effect for and against the owner. The state physically grants the trustee possession. Ownership itself is not transferred – it is temporarily overridden in the public interest.

The Treuhänder model represents genuine legal novelty in Germany and comes with significant administrative effort and legal risk. Berlin has so far tested the mechanism in three pilot cases, of which the most prominent is Kameraner



Straße 5 in Wedding. That building has stood empty since April 2018, when the Bezirksamt Mitte declared it uninhabitable due to severe deficiencies including absent water supply, overcrowding, and major structural failures. Selected in 2022 as a city-wide test case for the Treuhänder procedure, progress has remained slow – a reflection of how legally demanding the formal preconditions for intervention are, and how effectively a non-responsive owner can delay proceedings simply by remaining unreachable.

Expropriation sits at the very end of this chain, a constitutional ultima ratio that remains one of the most contested political questions in Berlin's housing debate. A second Senate-commissioned legal opinion has been financed to assess its feasibility. It is not a first step, nor a second, nor a tenth. It is what remains after warnings, fines, injunctions, replacement measures, and trusteeship have all been exhausted or failed. The political heat it generates is therefore somewhat disproportionate to its practical frequency – though it remains symbolically essential as the outermost boundary of what a democratic state may do when private ownership demonstrably harms the common good.

What this legislative architecture reveals, in aggregate, is that Berlin possesses the instruments to act – but struggles, procedurally and politically, to deploy them at the scale and speed the crisis demands. The Bau-Turbo fantasy of solving a structural problem through

new construction alone ignores the fact that thousands of units already exist within the existing fabric, waiting to be unlocked, repaired, or redistributed. To care for a house, in this context, means first understanding the forces that keep it empty.

Bezirksamt Tempelhof-Schöneberg von Berlin
Abteilung Bürgerdienste, Ordnungsamt, Straßen- und Grünflächenamt
Bezirksstadträtin

Bezirksamt Tempelhof-Schöneberg, Abt. BürgOS/Grün, D 10820 Berlin



Herrn Bezirksverordnetenvorsteher
Stefan Böltes *BS 22/04/21*

über

Frau Bezirksbürgermeisterin *BS 20.1.21*
Angelika Schöttler

Geschäftszeichen:
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BzBm 0647/XX
Dienstgebäude: Rathaus Tempelhof
Tempelhofer Damm 165, 12099 Berlin
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Für E-Mails mit qualifizierter elektronischer
Signatur: post@ba-ts.berlin.de

Datum: *19.01.2021*

EINGEGANGEN

21. Jan. 2021

Kleine Anfrage - lfd. Nr. 0647/XX

der Bezirksverordneten Dr. Christine Scherzinger (DIE LINKE)

über „Leerstand im Bezirk endlich beenden!“

Sehr geehrter Herr BV-Vorsteher Böltes,

die o.g. Kleine Anfrage beantworte ich für das Bezirksamt wie folgt:

Zu 1. Frage

Wie ist der aktuelle Stand hinsichtlich des Leerstandes in folgenden Immobilien:

1. Geisbergstr. 40, 10777 Berlin
2. Potsdamer Str. 163/165, 10783 Berlin
3. Leuthener Str. 5, Leberstr. 62, 10829 Berlin
4. Hähnelstr. 3, 12159 Berlin
5. Niedstr. 19, 12159 Berlin
6. Stubenrauchstr. 69/Odenwaldstr. 12161 Berlin
7. Büsingstraße 7, 8, Fröaufstraße 7, 12161 Berlin
8. Roennebergstr. 15, 12161 Berlin
9. Bundesallee 114, 12161 Berlin
10. Stubenrauchstr. 3, 12161 Berlin

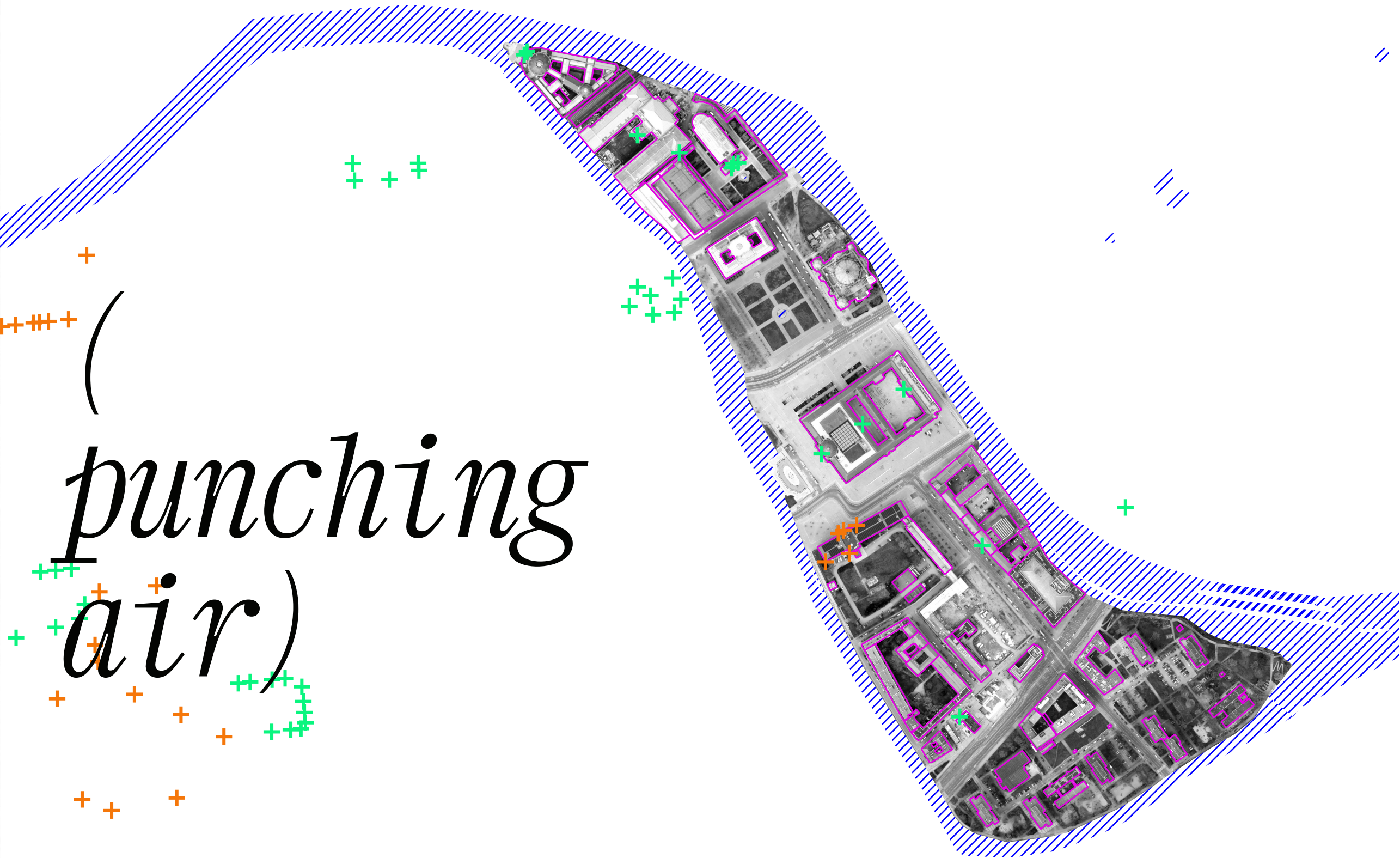
Fahrverbindungen:
Bitte benutzen Sie nach Möglichkeit öffentliche Verkehrsmittel
U-Bahn: -U 6: Alt-Tempelhof oder Kaiserin-Augusta-Str.
Bus: M46 (Alt-Tempelhof); 184 (Rathaus Tempelhof)

Sprechzeiten:
Nach Vereinbarung

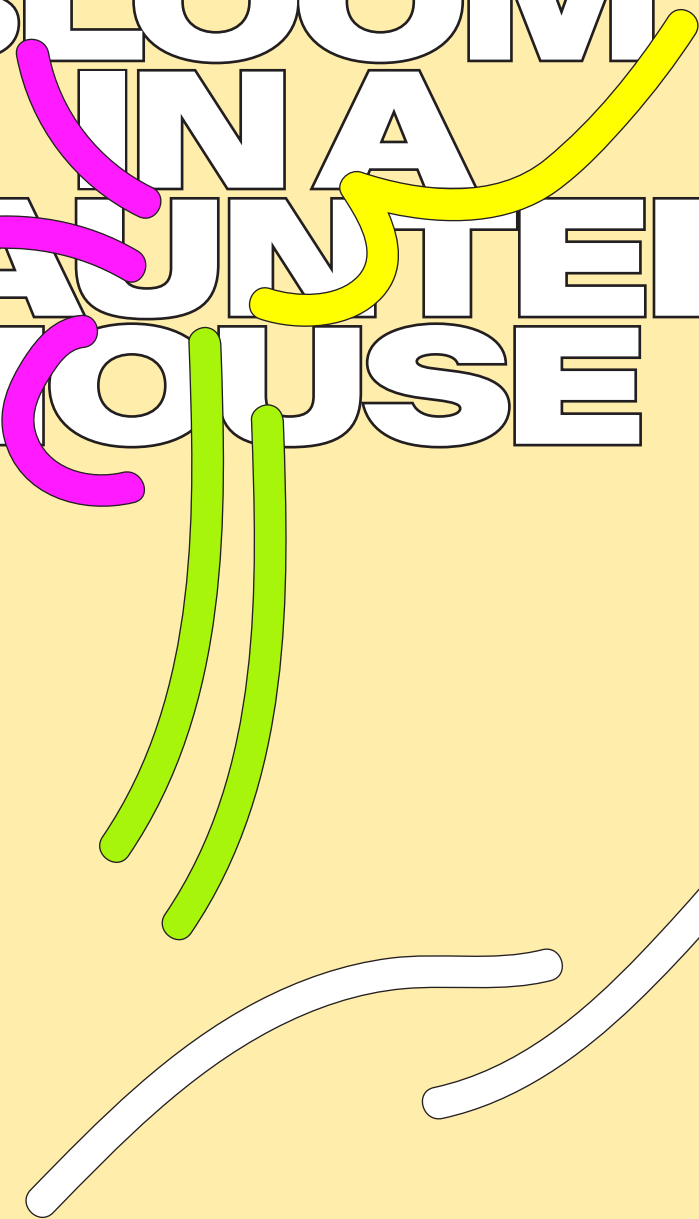
Political infrastructure in Berlin

**The political infrastructure
operated by the state, serving as
examples of care by the state of
Germany and Berlin.**





FLOWERS BLOOM IN A HAUNTED HOUSE





In light of such inefficiencies, civil society often comes together to fill what has been left unsolved by market and political actors. A problem creates the need for solving it and individuals or groups will come together driven by aforementioned care values to often for free but in their own interest solve or at least contribute to solving the issue at hand.

The corner house at Odenwaldstraße 1 / Stubenrauchstraße 69 stands as a reminder of Berlin's century-long struggle between housing as social infrastructure and housing as a speculative asset. Built in 1904/05 under the rigid grid of the 1897's Baupolizeiordnung, the structure initially housed eight rental parties, its facade a "chic" mask for the brutal constructive logic of around 1.4 million bricks typical of the industrialized Gründerzeit.

Having survived the Second World War unscarred, the building became a subject of the geopolitical struggles of German division; with the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, its market value plummeted, arguably triggering a decades-long cycle of speculative vacancy and owner neglect.

By the time of reunification, the house, now known to the neighborhood as the "Flora", had entered a state of terminal decay. Despite administrative fines and threats of forced maintenance by the Schöneberg district office, the owner remained indifferent, embodying the failure of the state to act as an effective "caretaker". In 2019, the building became a site of political conflict when local activists briefly



occupied it, demanding that “Flora” be treated as a blueprint for systemic repair rather than a “ghost house” left to the market.

As of late 2024, the building is a coffin of missed opportunities. The decorative stucco is crumbling, rainwater is pouring through missing drains into the porous brickwork, and the once-robust timber ceilings are likely surrendering to rot and fungus.

This house encapsulates the multicrisis of Berlin’s housing: a monument that should have been protected years ago, now teetering on the edge of a “facadist” renovation that would only result in high-priced luxury condos. The Flora is no longer just a building; it is a prototype for the Trustee Paragraph (§ 4a/4b ZwVbG)—a final legislative lever to reclaim the “Urban Mine” and transform political failure into an architecture of collective care.

This thesis focuses on a specific site that encapsulates these macro-problems: an abandoned Gründerzeit building in Friedenau, Tempelhof-Schöneberg, known as the “Flora”. Vacant for years, it has become a symbol of political failure and neighborhood resilience.

The case of the Flora demonstrates that the solution to Berlin’s housing problem is not just more concrete, but more agency. A local neighborhood initiative has fought to keep the issue in the public eye, demanding that the district utilize the “Treuhänder” paragraph (Trustee statute) to forcibly repair the building and re-occupy it. This site serves as the starting

point for our architectural prototyping: What if we stopped waiting for the market to care and instead used the existing legal and constructive tools to reclaim the city?



Round Table with representatives of the Senate, Berlin's Building Authority and the
Neighbourhood Initiative "Flora"
Rathaus Schöneberg
3 December 2025





Civilsociety in action



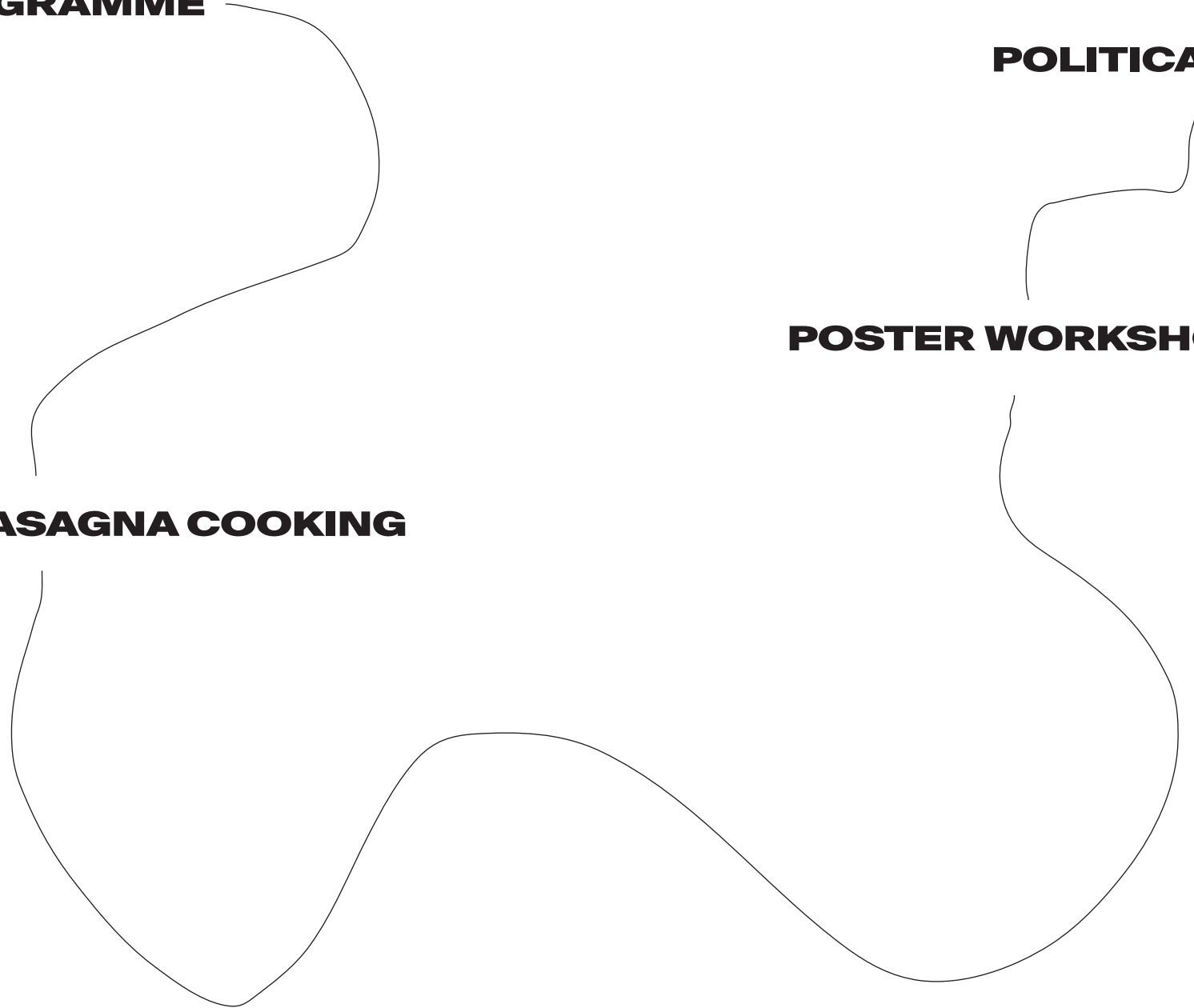
Round Table with representatives of the
Senate, Berlin's Building Authority and the
Neighbourhood Initiative "Flora"
Rathaus Schöneberg
3 December 2025

SPACIAL PROGRAMME

POLITICAL REVOLT

POSTER WORKSHOP

COLLECTIVE LASAGNA COOKING



(IV) THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF RE-USE

Repsital

**THE BEGINNING OF OUR CURRENT
HOUSING STOCK — HISTORY OF
INDUSTRIALISATION — ADVENT OF
MARXISM — MASS CIVILISATION
— ALIENATION OF 1:1 LABOUR —
PYROMANIACS**

As the train speeds from one small town to another, naught meets the eye but vast factories and mighty smelting furnaces. Out of the darkness, they loom, lit by the glare of searing flames. Through the thick smoke, half-clad men emerge, hurrying to and fro. With their glowing rods, appearing now here, now there, they seem, to all the world, like souls in perdition—and truly, they are bodies consigned to the inferno of capitalist damnation.

Eleanor Marx, 1893 in
“Wiener Arbeiterinnen
Zeitung” on her travels
through England



The great machinery of industrial capital severed that link. It introduced production processes so accelerated, so abstracted from individual labour, that they began to exceed the capacity of any single mind to fully grasp.

Our modern conception of construction — in which a newbuild and a sensitively repurposed ruin occupy equal standing as acts of creative renewal — would have struck a builder of two centuries ago as faintly absurd. This was not always the prevailing logic. The moments that explain the shift are few, but they are instructive.

One such moment arrived with Friedrich Hoffmann's ring kiln, patented in 1858, at a time when industrialisation was transforming Britain and beginning its march across Germany. Before such innovations, the production of building materials was cognitively legible: a craftsman could apprehend, more or less directly, the relationship between his effort, his time, and his output. Speed and scale were bounded by human comprehension.

Our modern conception of construction – in which a newbuild and a sensitively repurposed ruin occupy equal standing as acts of creative renewal – would have struck a builder of two centuries ago as simply absurd. This was by far not always the norm. The moments that explain the shift are few, but they are painting a clear picture.

One such moment arrived with Friedrich Hoffmann's ring kiln, patented in 1858, at a time when industrialisation was transforming Britain and beginning its march across Germany. Before such innovations, the production of building materials was cognitively legible: a craftsman could apprehend, more or less directly, the relationship between his effort, his time, and his output. Speed and scale were bounded by human comprehension.

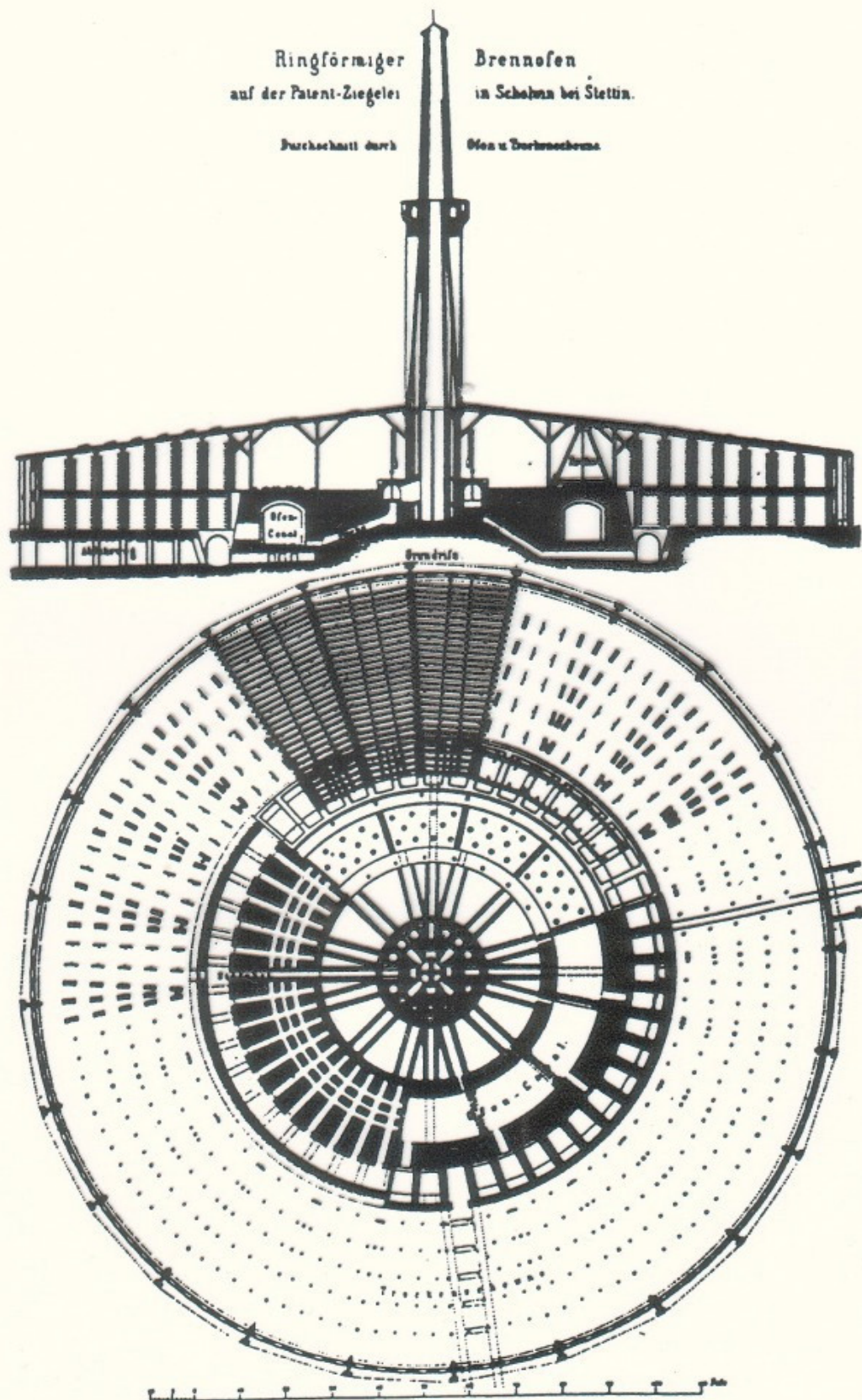
The great machinery of industrial capital severed that link. It introduced production processes so accelerated, so abstracted from individual labour, that they began to exceed the capacity of any single mind to fully grasp. This was not merely an economic transition but a cognitive one. Technology had begun outpacing human cognition – a trajectory that, followed to its terminus, arrives at the modern artificial intelligence and computer technology.

The rapid growth of Berlin into a metropolis of millions during the “Gründerzeit” (German history period, ca. 1870–1918) was not an architectural phenomenon in isolation, it was

the direct spatial expression of industrial capitalism, fired quite literally into billions of bricks. The technological engine enabling and co-thriving within this transformation was Friedrich Hoffmann's Ringofen patent, developed together with Albert Licht, which enabled the continuous, uninterrupted firing of bricks at temperatures between 850 and 1200 degrees Celsius. Unlike predecessor kilns that required complete cooling between firings – consuming enormous amounts of coal – the ring kiln circulated heat through a system of chambers and vents in a perpetual loop. By 1873, 150 such kilns were operating across the Brandenburg region alone, producing 500 million bricks annually. What had been a seasonal, craft-based trade was industrialized almost overnight.

Increasing demand for burning material fostered the ingenuity to come up with new solutions for increasing efficiency of established processes. This new kiln technology gave way. 10 years after the invention, 640 of the same were up and running globally, testament to the demand and hunger of industrialization.

The raw material for all of this was clay – extracted in enormous quantities from the landscape surrounding Berlin, along the Havel, the Spree, the Dahme, and the Finow Canal. The most significant production center was Zehdenick, where the last ring kiln did not fall silent until 1990. The bricks traveled to Berlin by water, loaded onto Finow barges capable of carrying 225 tons, navigating the city's dense



Friedrich Eduard Hoffmann, Ringofen-Patentskizze, 1858. Public Domain, Wikimedia Commons.

canal network. The saying “Berlin was built from the barge” is not a metaphor but a logistical fact. This supply chain was radically local by today’s standards – clay dug from Brandenburg soil, fired in Brandenburg kilns, floated into the city and stacked into its streets.

The material logic was matched by a rigid standardization of form. From 1872 onward, the “Reichsformat” brick – 25 x 12 x 6.5 cm – became the universal module of construction. The “Baupolizeiordnung” codified wall thicknesses in multiples of this unit: from 64 cm at ground-floor street facades down to 25 cm at upper-floor gable walls. Room spans were governed by the structural limits of timber beams, producing a recurring grid of load-bearing walls approximately 5-8 meters apart. The Gründerzeit city was, in essence, a vast arithmetic exercise: a million bricks per “Mietskaerne”, stacked according to predetermined formulas, driven not primarily by comfort but by fire safety concerns – the courtyards dimensioned so contemporary fire engines could turn.

The same standardization that made mass production possible also encoded reusability directly into the material. A Reichsformat brick is interchangeable by definition. When Berlin lay in rubble after 1945, this proved decisive: “Trümmerfrauen” recovered millions of bricks from the destroyed buildings, cleaned them by hand, and returned them to the construction cycle. Broken pieces were crushed into “Ziegelsplittbeton”. The logic of reuse was not

an ethical choice but a structural inevitability – the bricks were uniform, modular, and separable from their mortar, and so they could be salvaged.

What followed in the 1960s marks what might be understood as the beginning of the end of that logic. Industrialized concrete construction gradually displaced the Gründerzeit’s brick-and-timber system. Concrete is not modular in the same sense; it is poured, composite, and inseparable. The local material chain – clay from Brandenburg, lime from Rüdersdorf – was replaced by a globalized supply of aggregate, cement, and reinforcement steel. The closed loop of regional production, water transport, standardized form, and potential recovery was broken.

The Gründerzeit building, with all its regulatory rigidity and industrial scale, thus contains an embedded reuse logic that its concrete successor deliberately abandoned. Understanding this is not mere nostalgia – it is a material argument for the continued relevance of modular, locally sourced construction as a design principle, one that was once not a choice but simply the way a city was built.

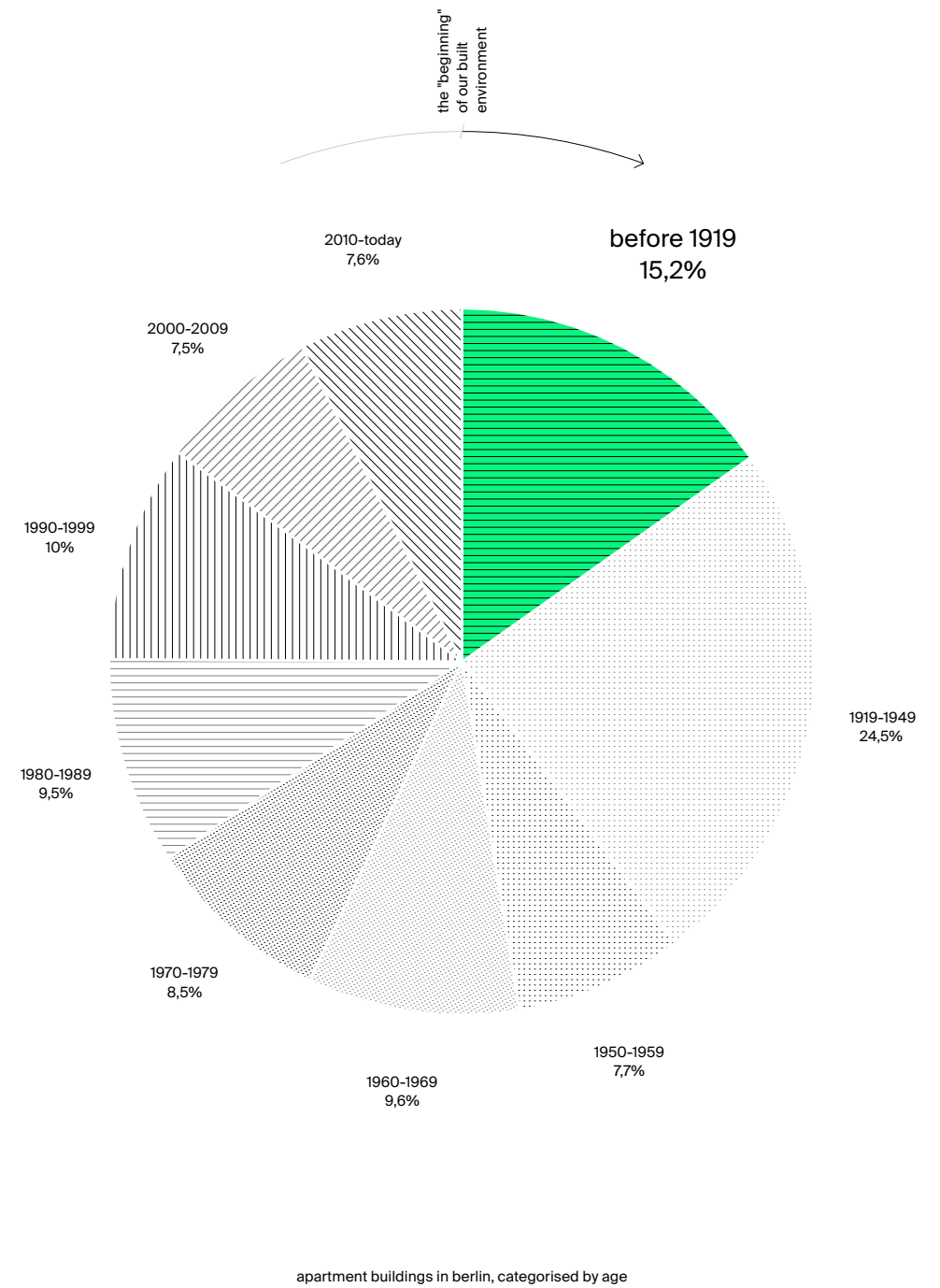
Gründerzeit

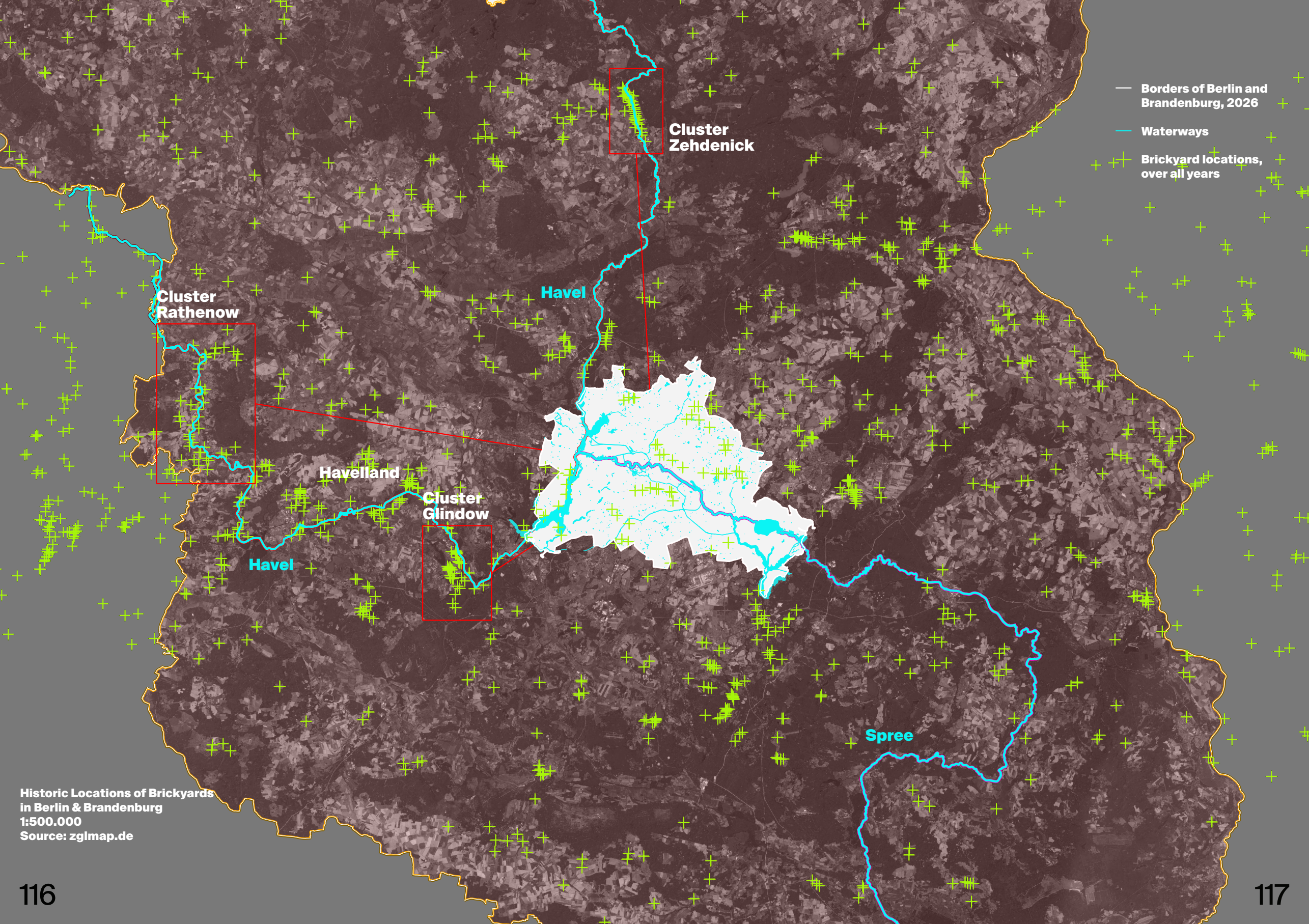
das Kapital

During a period of economic boom, post-war recovery fuelled by reparation payments, and rapid population growth, a building typology emerged that continues to shape cities to this day: the Gründerzeit tenement house. Built between roughly 1870 and 1914, these structures arose under highly pragmatic conditions and construction methods, driven by the pressures of rapid industrialisation and mass urbanisation. Entire city districts were laid out and built within decades, producing a dense, perimeter-block urban fabric that still defines the character of German and European urban areas alike.

Despite their ubiquity and enduring popularity as rental properties, Gründerzeit buildings have received comparatively little systematic attention in architectural theory. They are valued for their spatial generosity, ornamental facades, and adaptability – yet they remain undertheorised relative to their significance. Today, large shares of existing housing stock in Germany dates from before 1918, representing a substantial share of the built environment that any serious discussion of transformation, renovation, or urban sustainability must engage with.

The building police regulations (Baupolizeiordnungen) of 1897 serve as a critical reference point in this context. These codified standards for construction methods, room dimensions, courtyard sizes, and material use provide essential documentation for understanding how these buildings were conceived and realised – and offer a foundation for reconstructing their structural logic, material composition, and latent potential for contemporary adaptation.



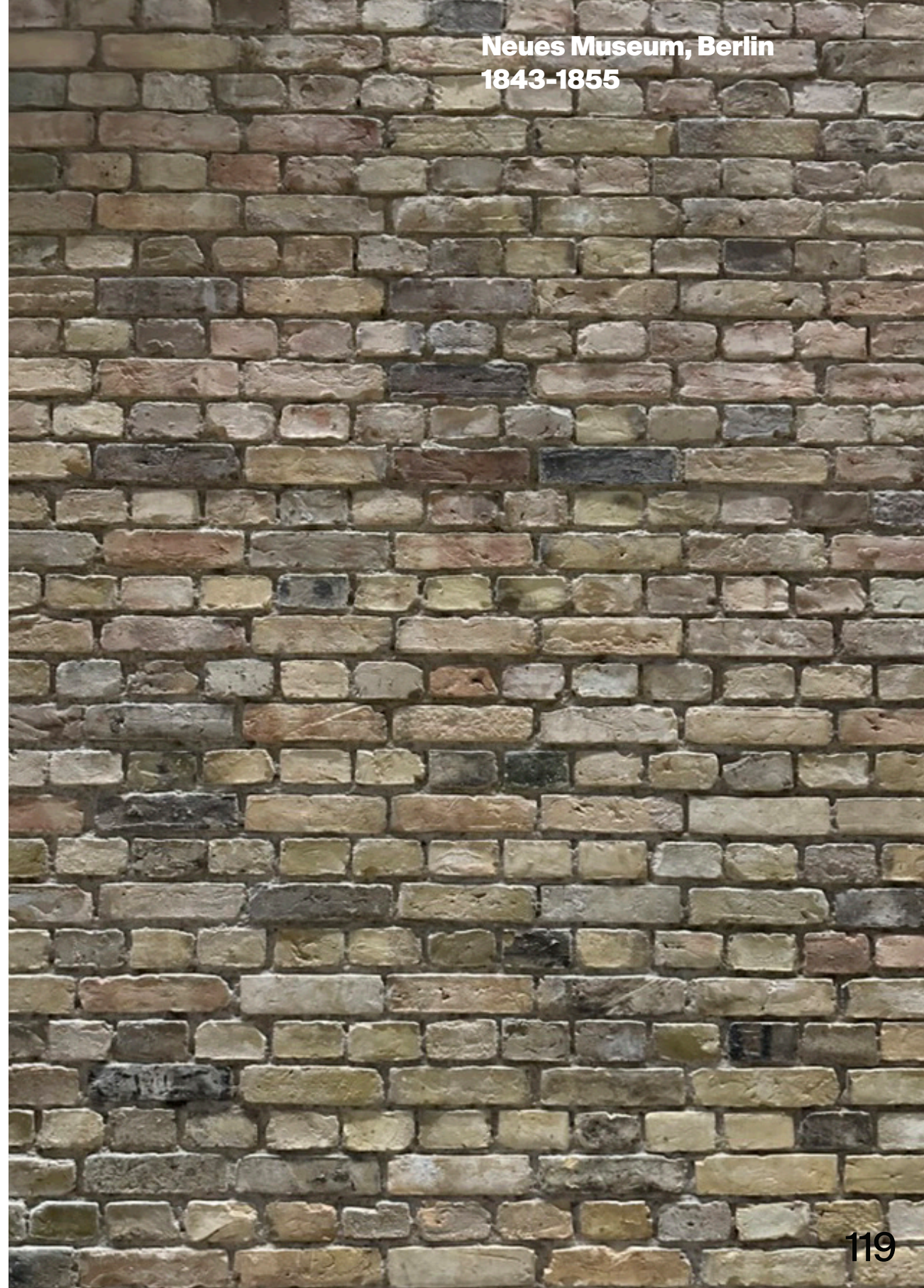


- Borders of Berlin and Brandenburg, 2026
- Waterways
- + Brickyard locations, over all years

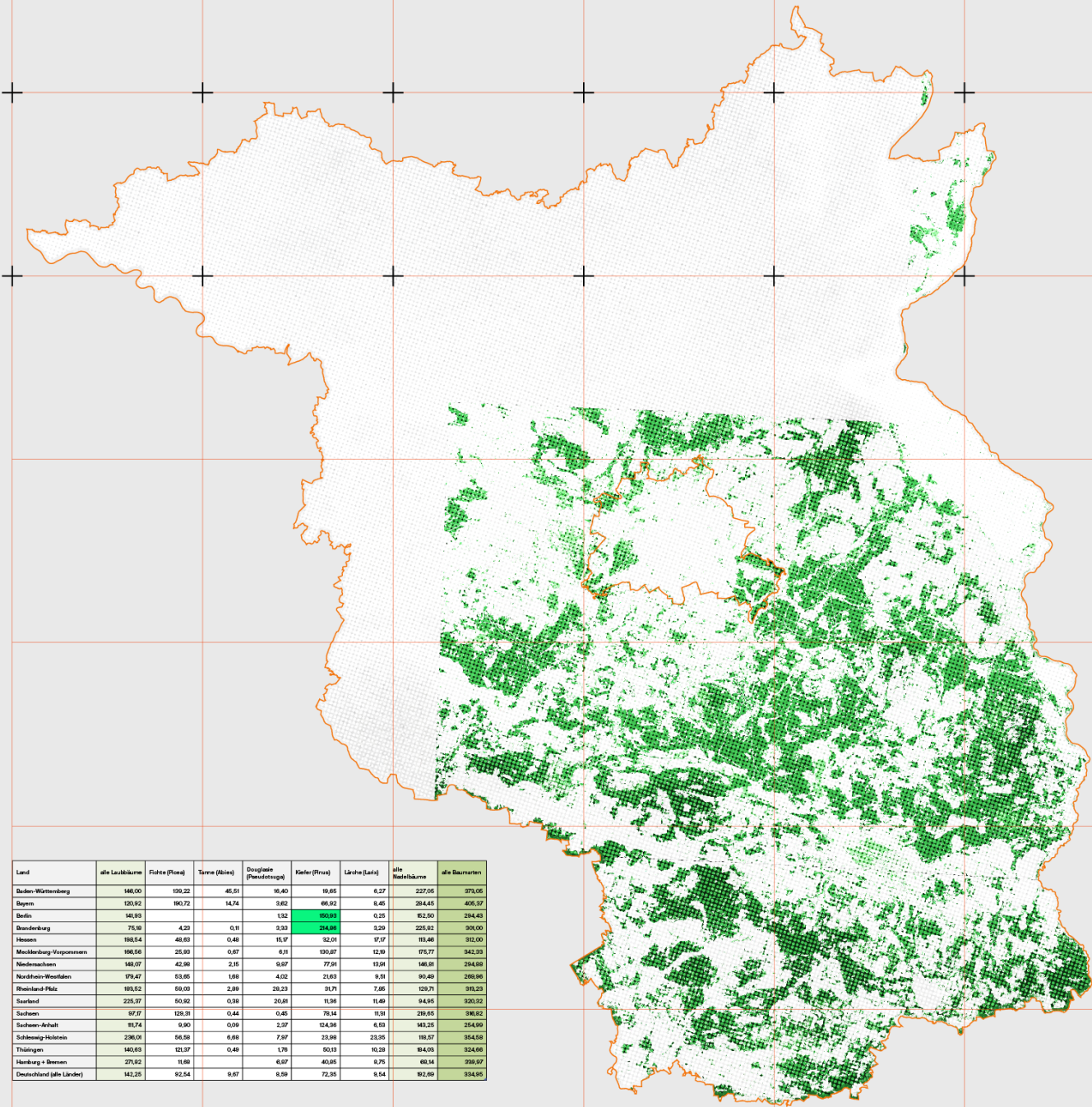
Historic Locations of Brickyards
in Berlin & Brandenburg
1:500.000
Source: zglmap.de

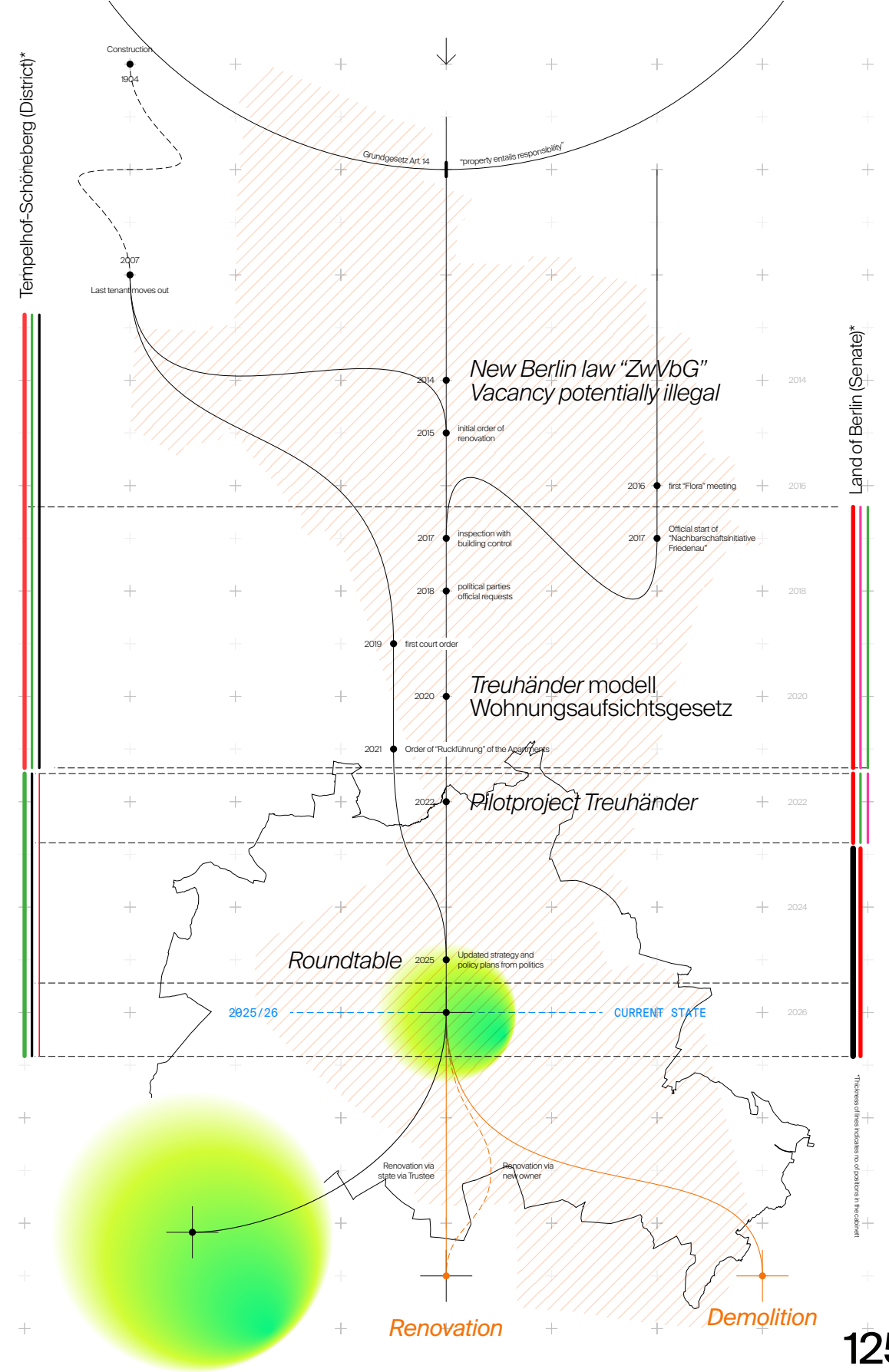
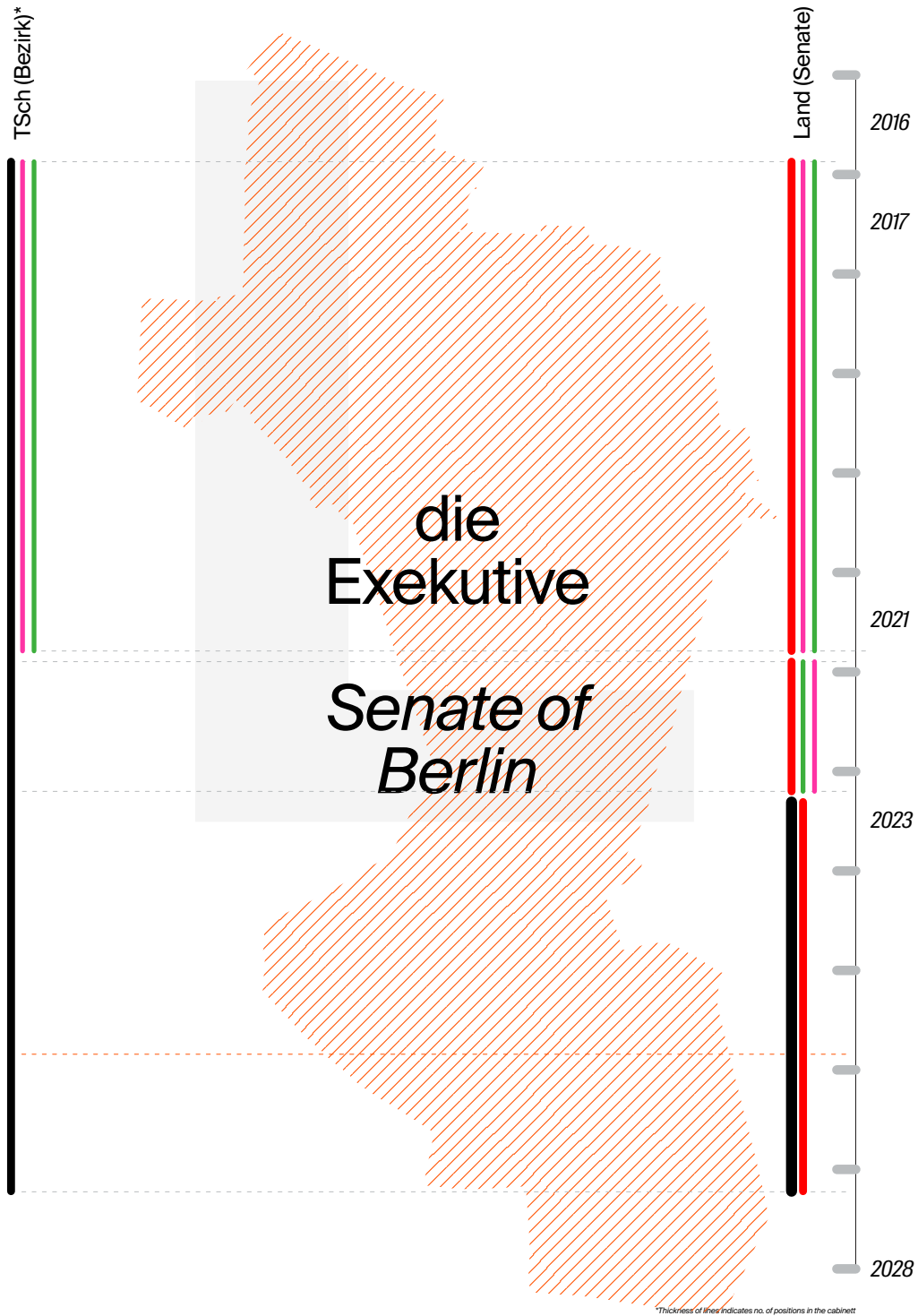
Traces of these brickyards can still be found in modern Berlin, maybe most accessibly and fantastical in the basement of the Neues Museum in Berlin, built between 1843 and 1855. The markings on the bricks tell a story about the network of brickyards and logistics supplying the building with its foundations.

**Neues Museum, Berlin
1843-1855**









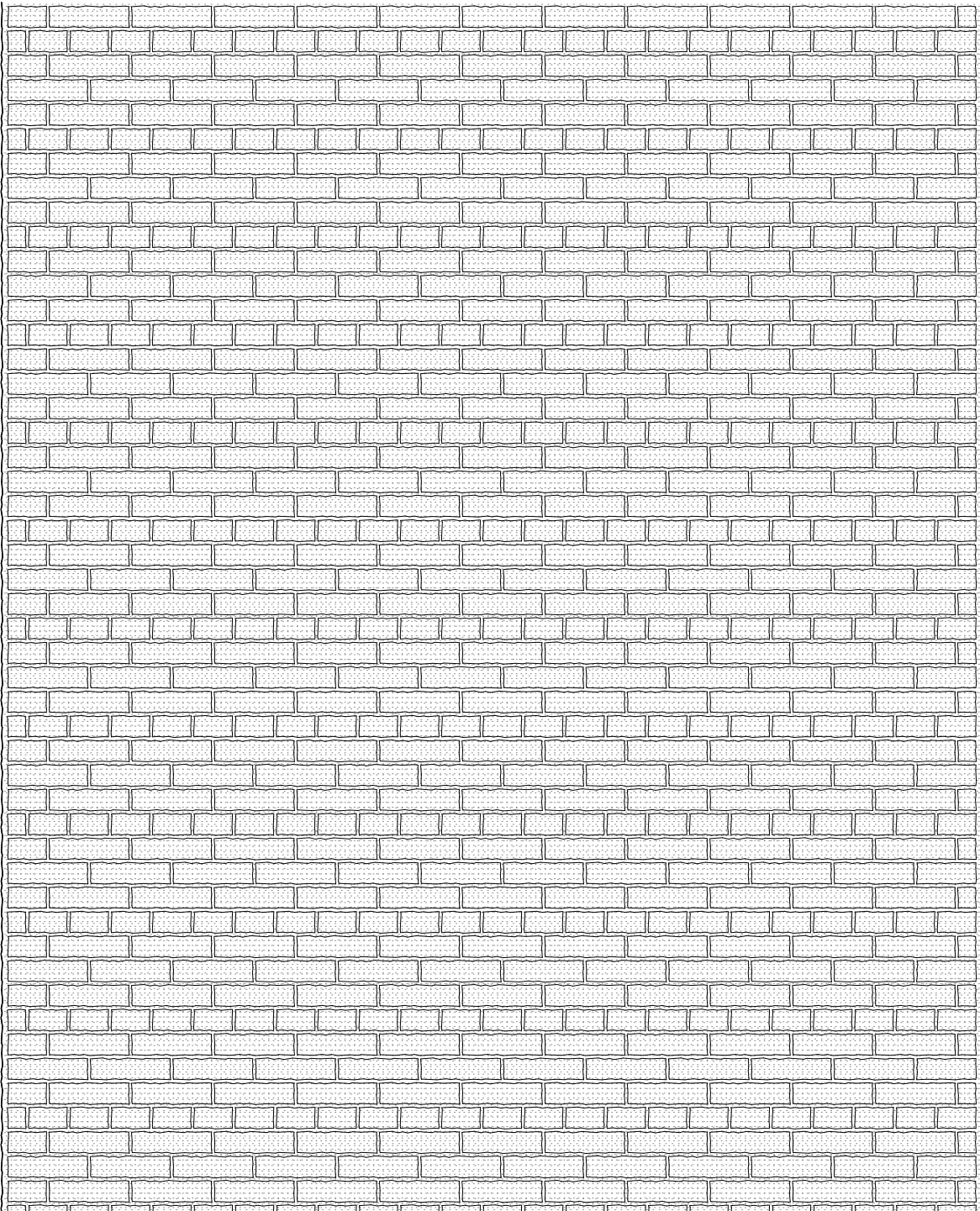
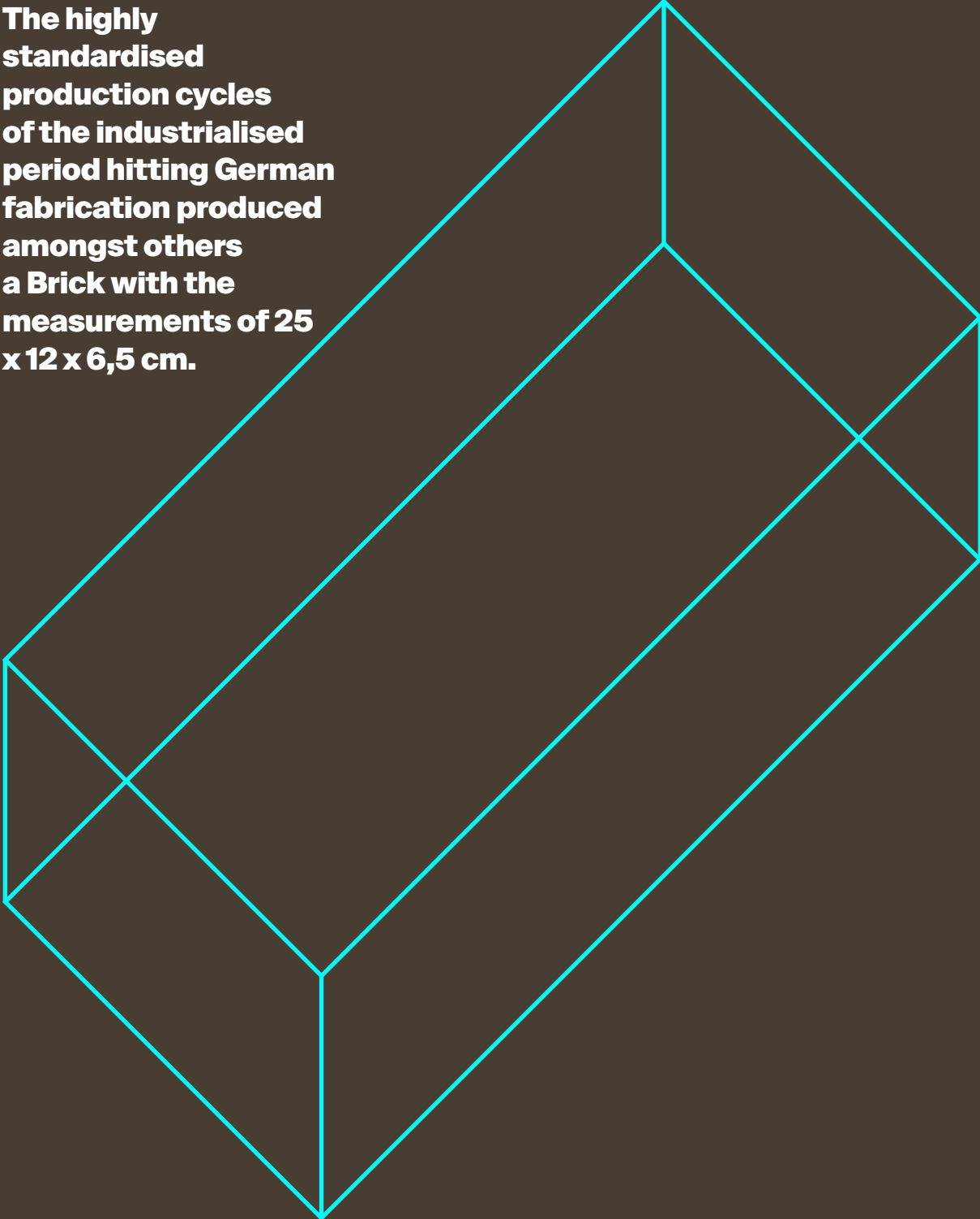
(V)
**DIE WÄNDE
DIE EIN
HAUS
BEDEUTEN**
*material
research*



At the heart of this investigation is the Berliner Mietshaus—specifically the Gründerzeit buildings constructed between 1870 and 1918. These structures constitute approximately 15.2% of Berlin’s total housing stock, and in districts like Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, they make up as much as 59% of the urban fabric. Despite their dominance in the city’s identity, they have largely “disappeared from the radar” of modern architectural transformation debates, which tend to focus on the industrial modernism of the post-war era.

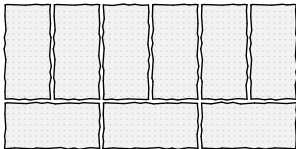
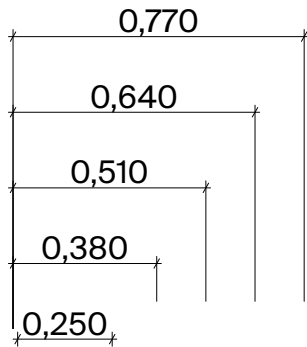
These buildings were the world’s first true “social mass housing,” yet today they are often inhabited by a decreasingly diverse population. In many gentrified areas, large Gründerzeit apartments that once housed multi-generational families or worker collectives are now occupied by only a few individuals, leading to a loss of social density and community-oriented living forms.

**The highly
standardised
production cycles
of the industrialised
period hitting German
fabrication produced
amongst others
a Brick with the
measurements of 25
x 12 x 6,5 cm.**



Bricks, “Reichsformat” 65 x 120 x 250mm
(1. January 1872) 1 : 2 : 4

Baupolizeiordnung 10mm butt joint
Berlin, 1897 12mm bearing joint

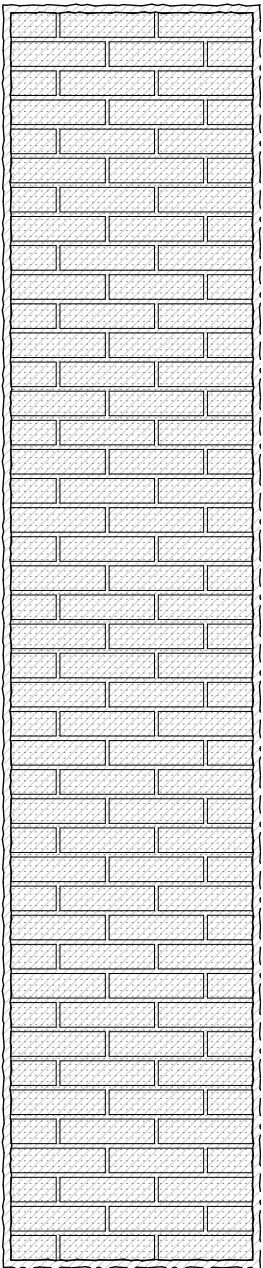
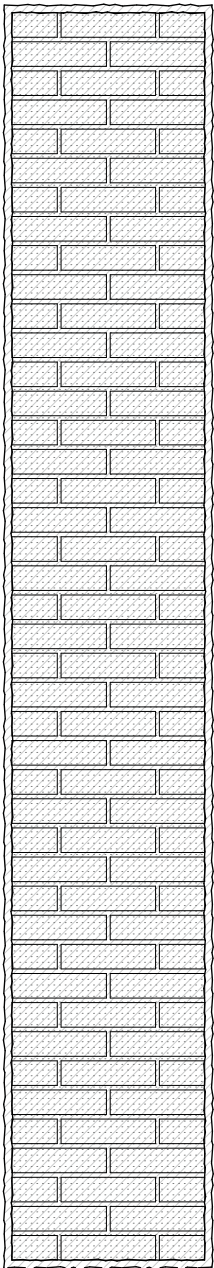
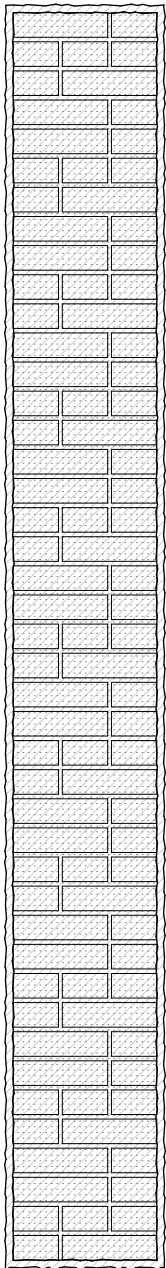
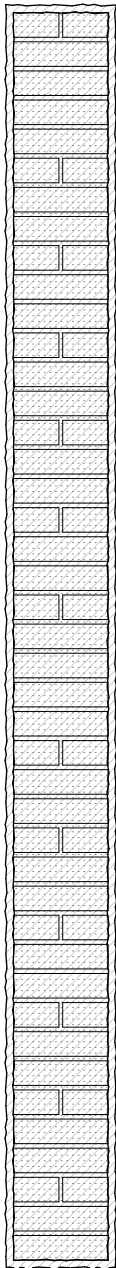


25cm

38cm

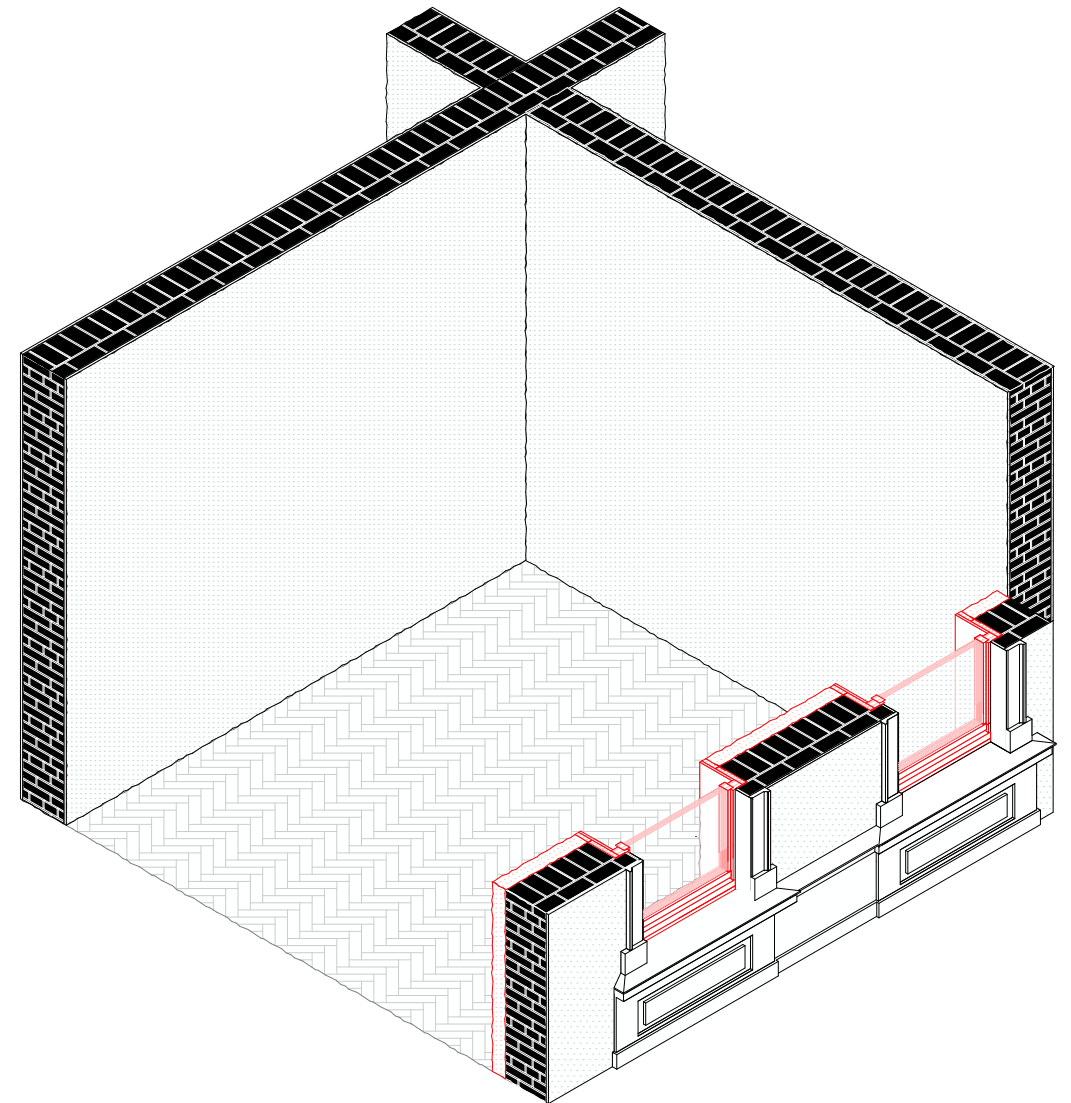
51cm

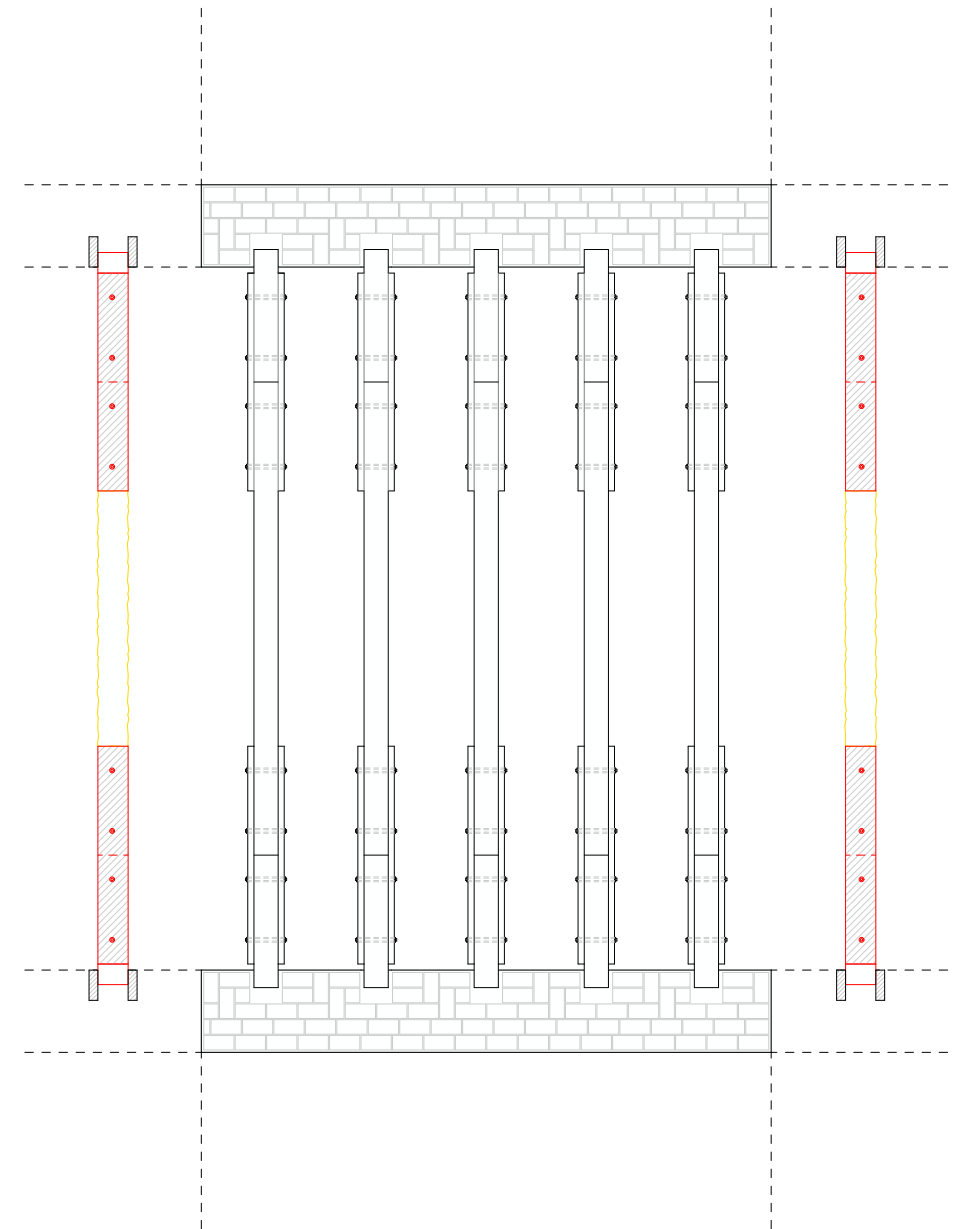
64cm

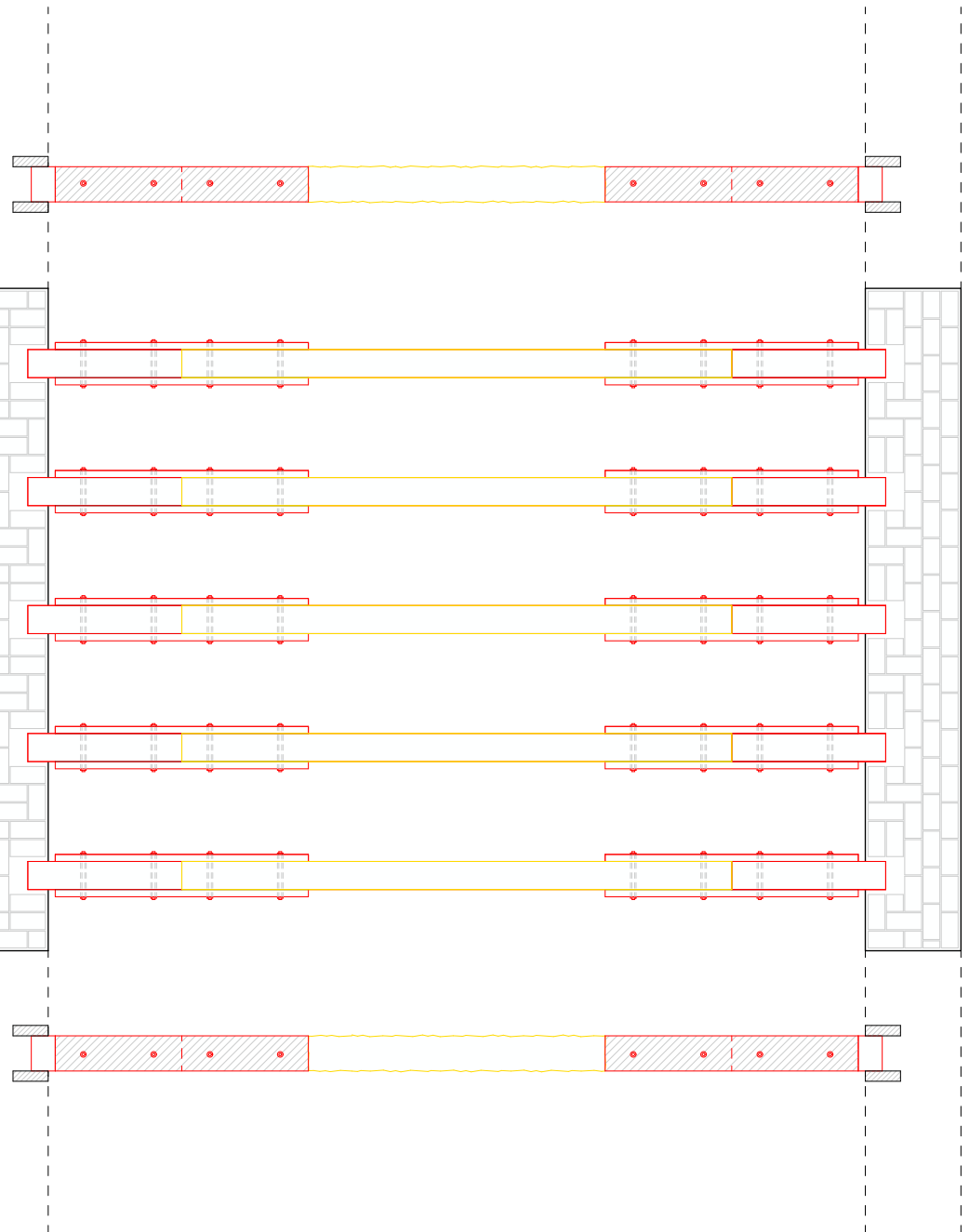
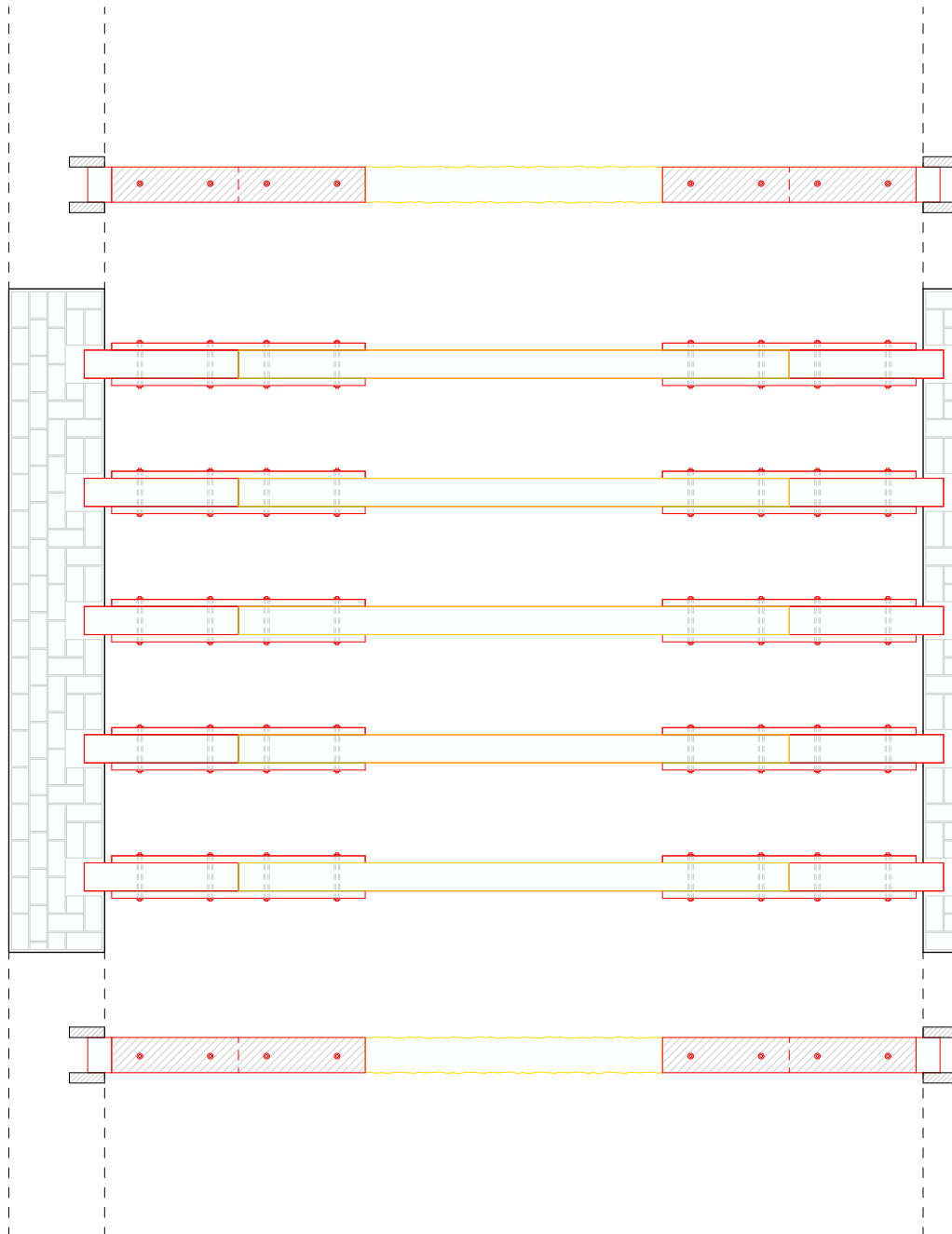


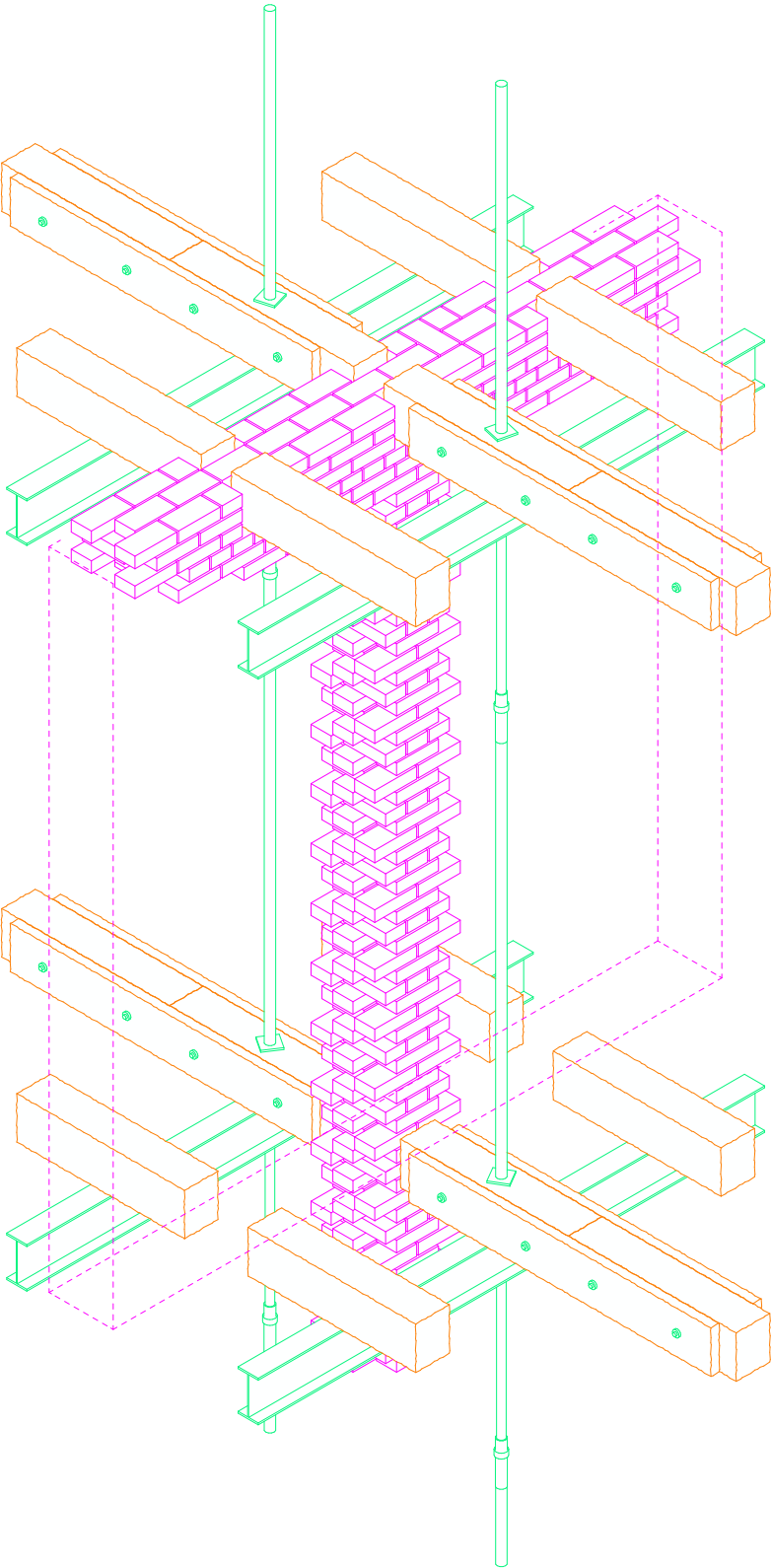
die
Wände,
die ein
Haus
bedeuten

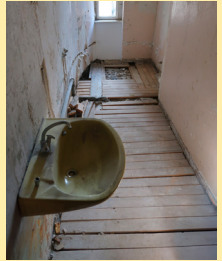
(THE WALLS THAT MEAN A BUILDING)



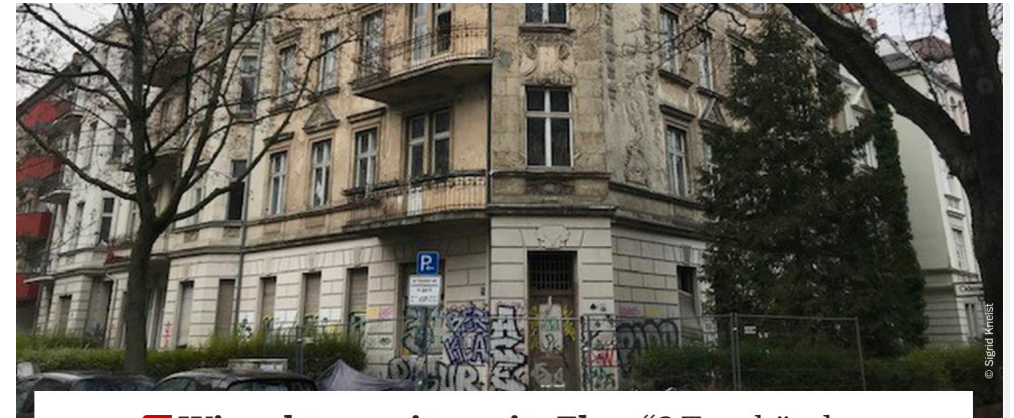








THE FLORA



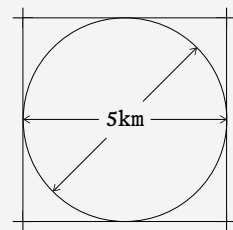
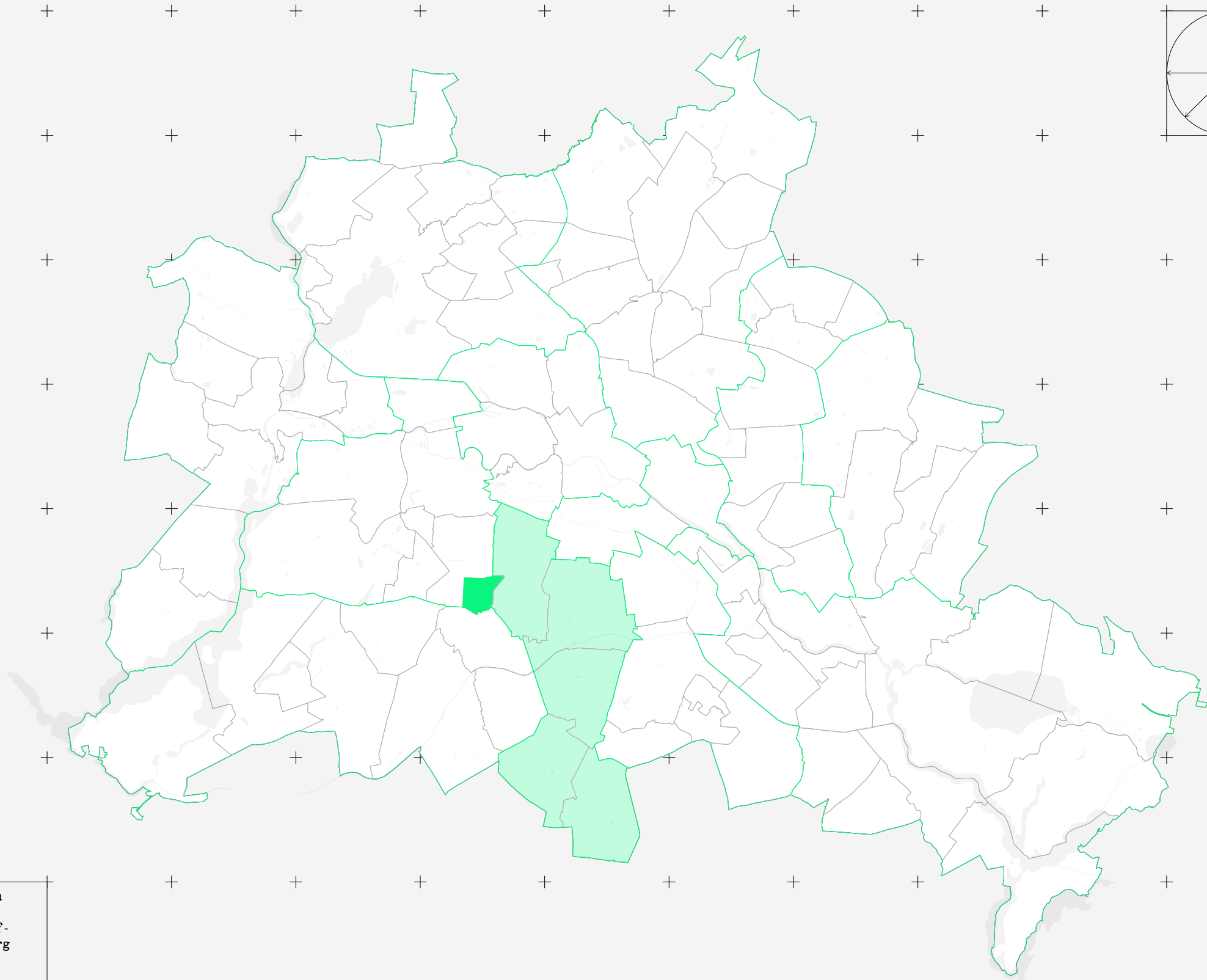
T+ Wie geht es weiter mit „Flora“? Treuhänder soll Geisterhaus in Berlin-Friedenau retten

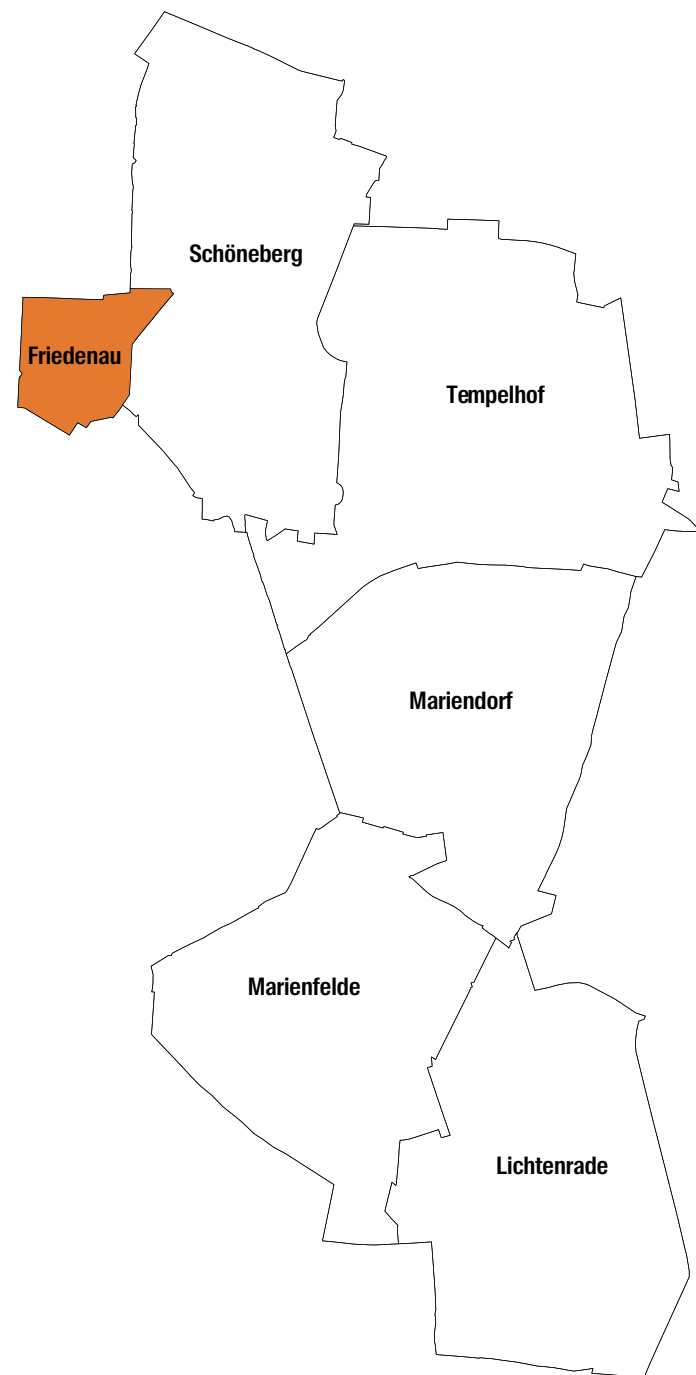
Seit fast zwei Jahrzehnten steht das prächtige Haus leer, ein Treuhänder-Pilotprojekt soll mit einiger Verzögerung Bewegung in den Fall bringen. Das sind die nächsten Schritte.

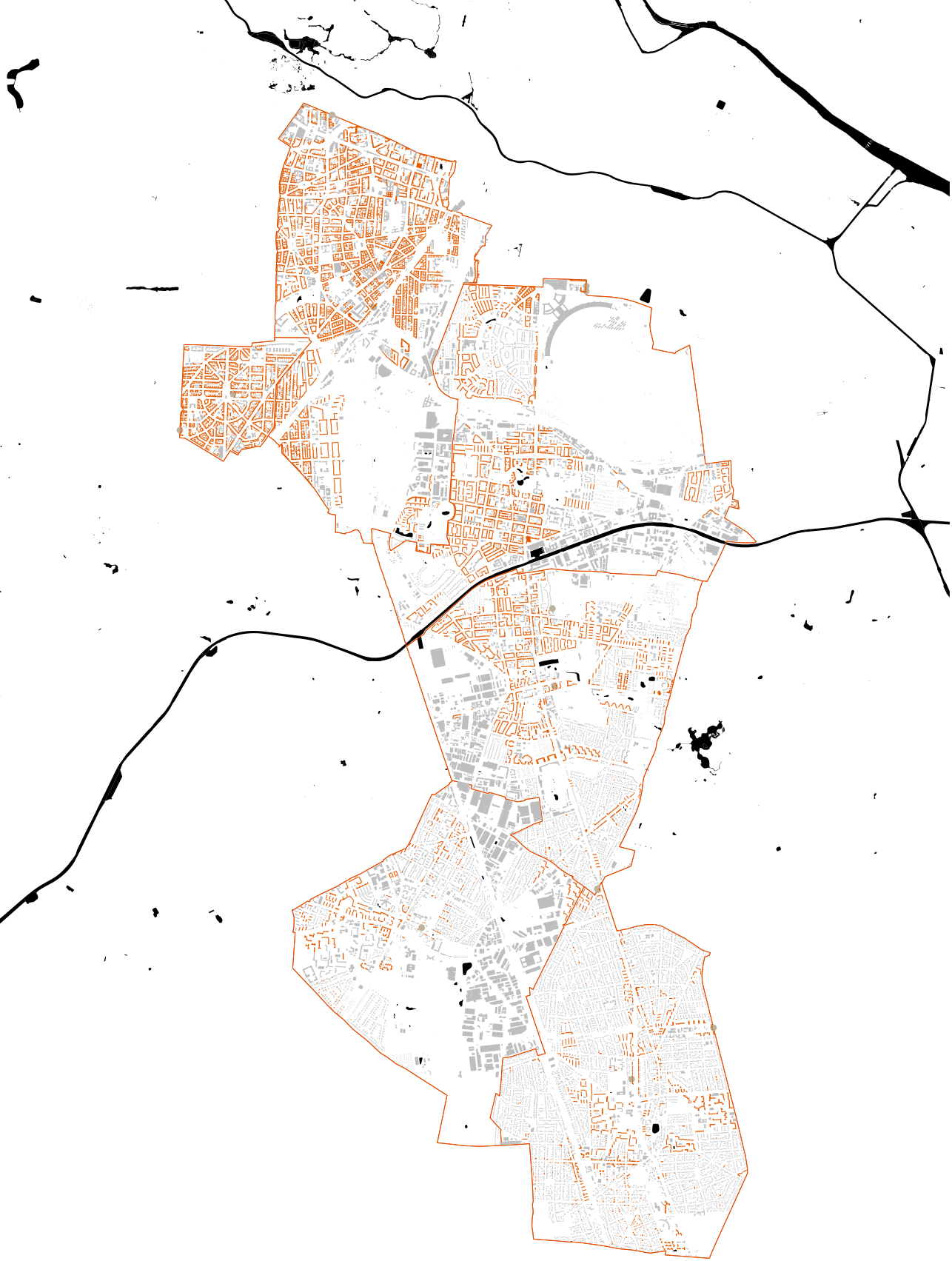
Von Alexander Conrad
Stand: 04.12.2025, 14:30 Uhr

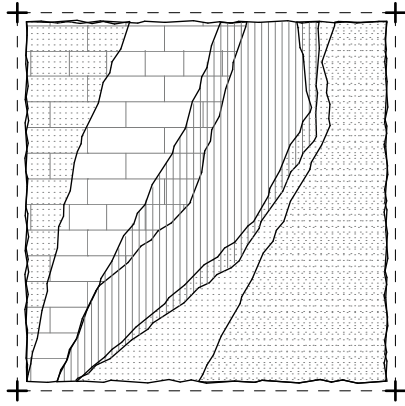
Die Finanzierung für das Treuhänder-Pilotprojekt, um das leer stehende und allmählich verfallende Friedenauer Geisterhaus an der Odenwald-/ Ecke Stubenrauchstraße wieder bewohnbar zu machen, ist gesichert. Das teilten Vertreter des Bezirksamts Tempelhof-Schöneberg und des Senatsverwaltung für

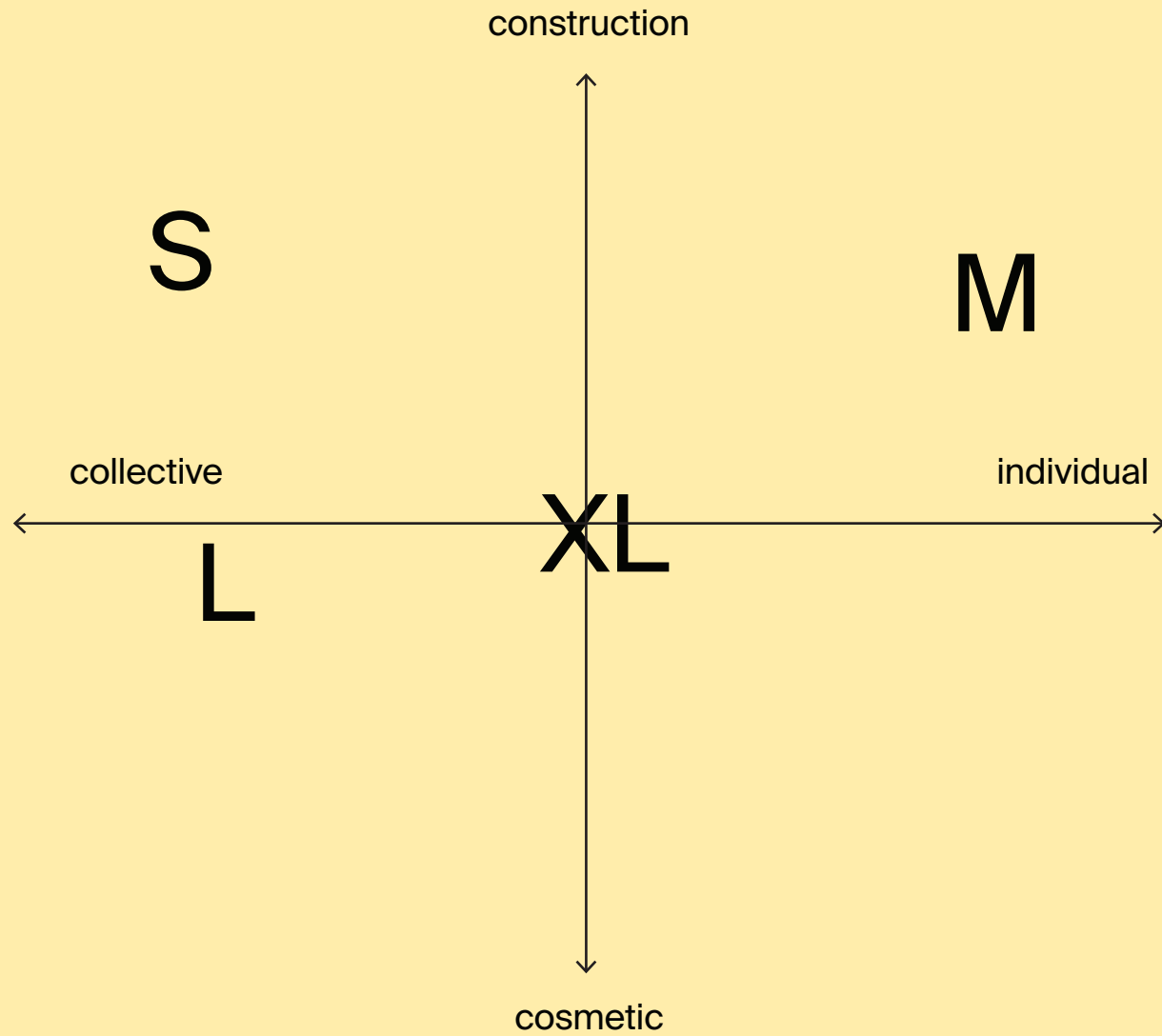
Friedenau
Tempelhof-
Schöneberg
Berlin
Germany











Levels of

(VI)

CARE

The logic of the restauration follows an incremental categorization within scale and ownership. Details are S, redesign of floorplans is M, the top-up also referencing greater issues on the housing market is L and thinking a legislative and financial system is XL.

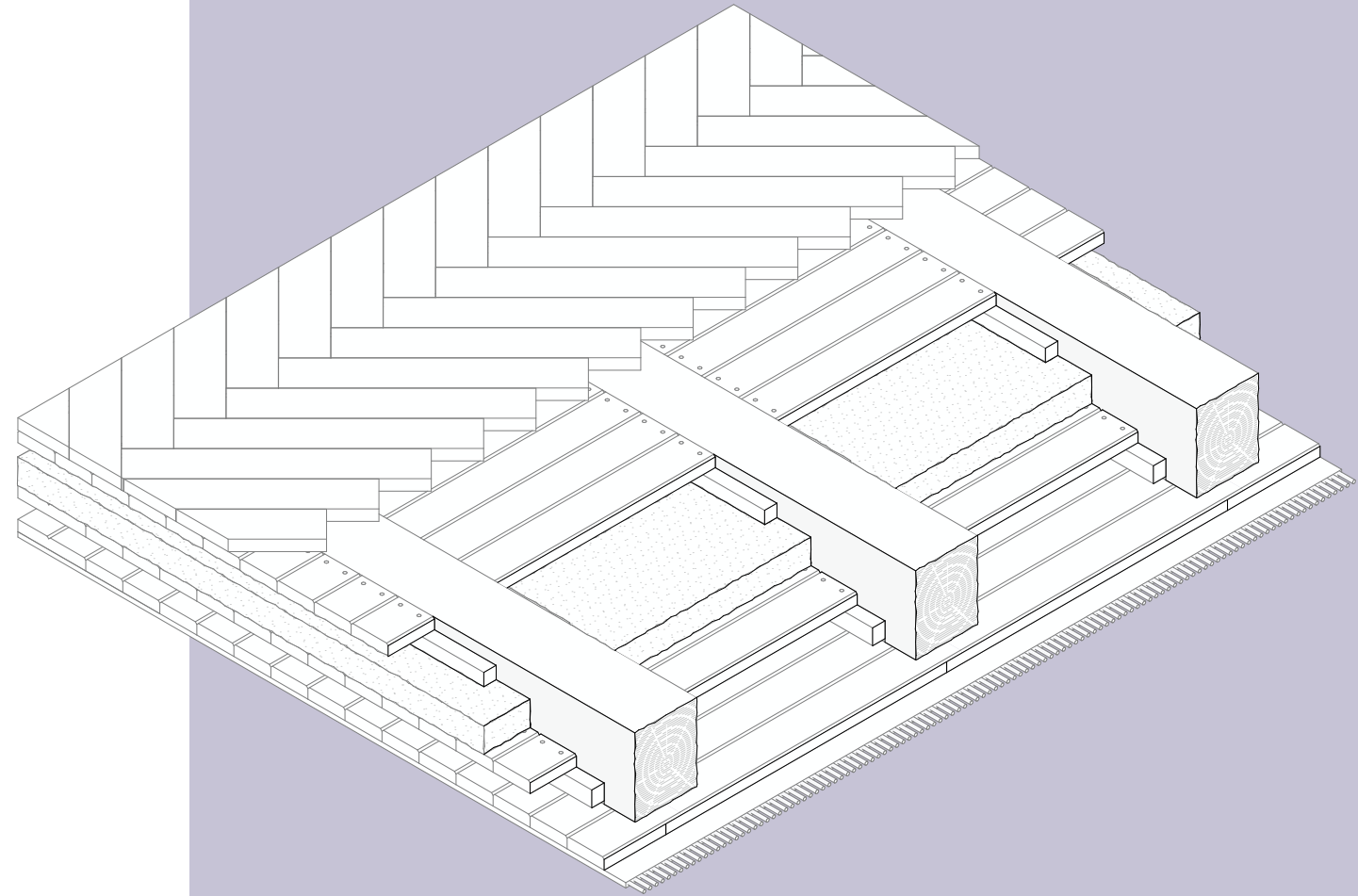
Further, the different measures are thought within an ownership structure that the state is responsible for providing the infrastructure for housing, hence is responsible for S and L, whilst individuals shall decide on L and the collective of all stakeholders are to negotiate the strategies of XL

S	Floor
	Beams
	Facade
	Balcony
	Stairs
M	Insulation
	Floor Plans
	Partition Walls
L	Details
XL	Strategies

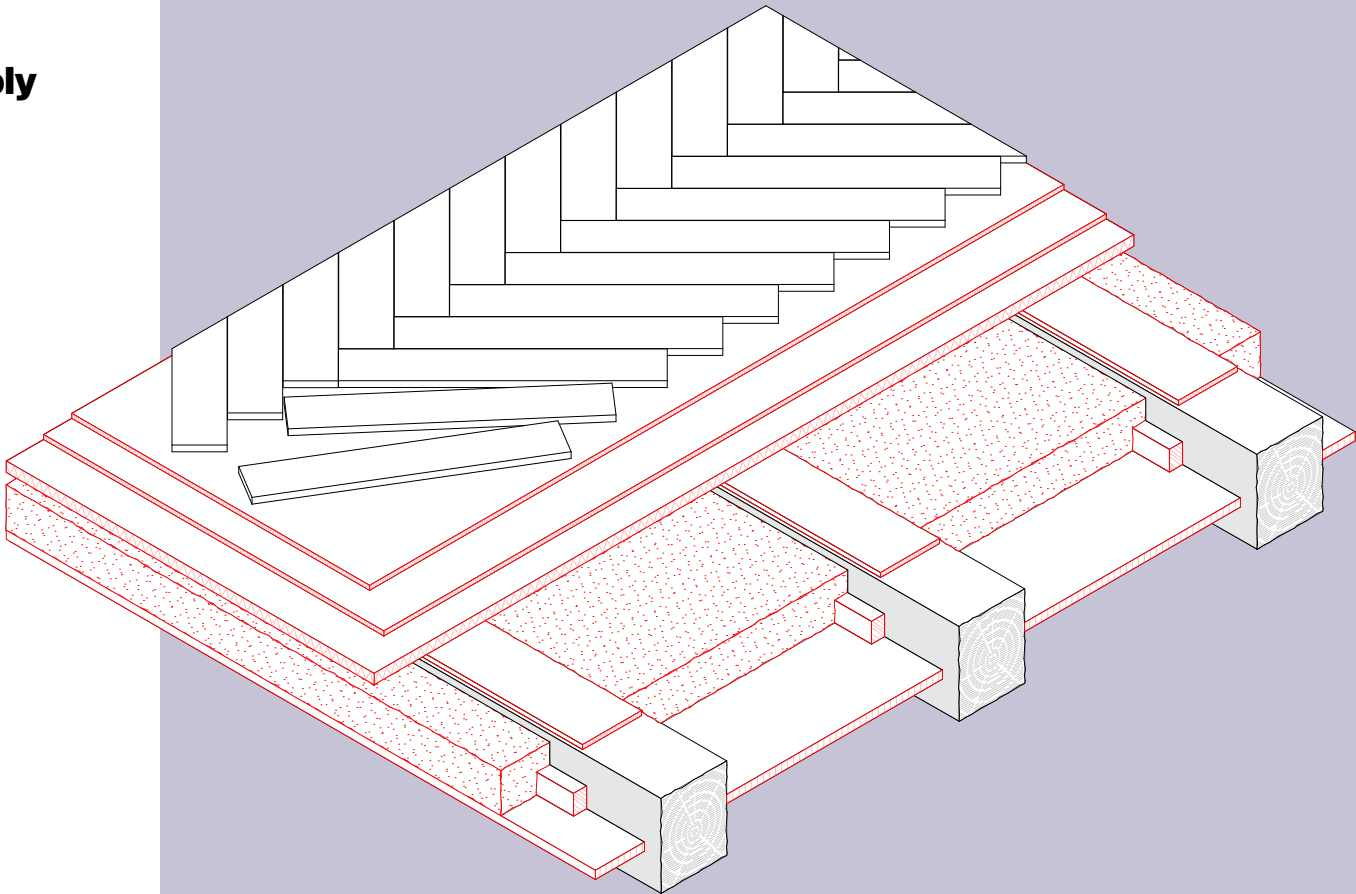
(S)
DETAILS

FLOOR

35	Flooring, wooden
200/250	Beams, spruce
35	Subfloor, fitted
40/50	Beam, screwed
120	Loose fill
35	Subfloor, fitted
40/50	Beam, screwed
25	Board layer
-	Straw mat
15	Render / Base coat plaster

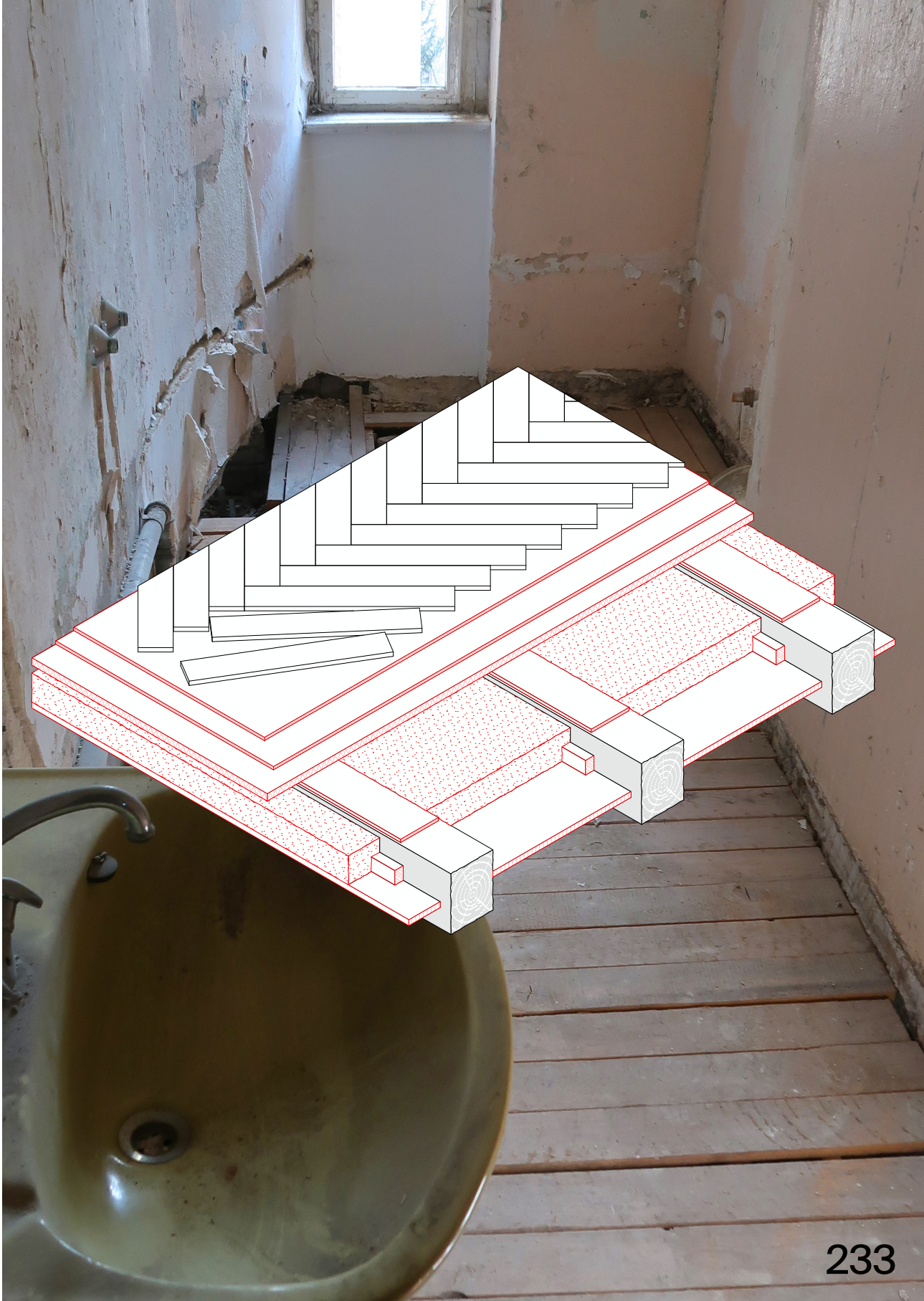
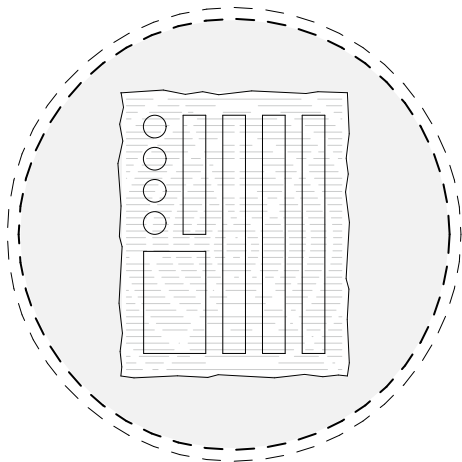
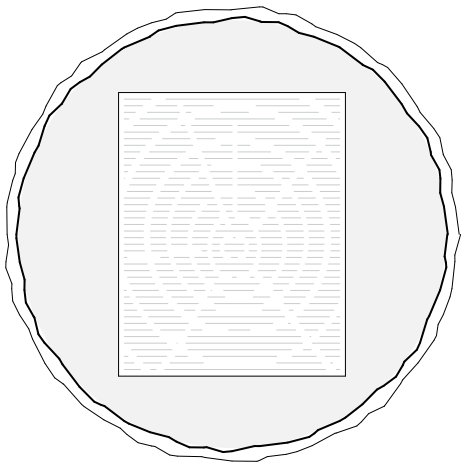


- 18 Reclaimed wood floor boards
- 13/13 2-ply loam construction panel
- 30 cork impact soundproofing/installation layer
- PE film, diffusion-resistant, min. 30 cm overlap
- 13 insulation strip, above beams only
- 20 air cavity
- 120 inlaid hemp thermal insulation
- 60/40 timber beams, screwed into beams support for ply
- 24 plywood, visibile from below



The timber beams, originally cut from trees still hold a wide potential of re-using the material for smaller beams, wooden dowels or boards for facade or floor construction.

- 18** Reclaimed wood floor boards
- 13/13** 2-ply loam construction panel
- 30** cork impact soundproofing/installation layer
- PE film, diffusion-resistant, min. 30 cm overlap
- 13** insulation strip, above beams only
- 20** air cavity
- 120** inlaid hemp thermal insulation
- 60/40** timber beams, screwed into beams support for ply
- 24** plywood, visible from below

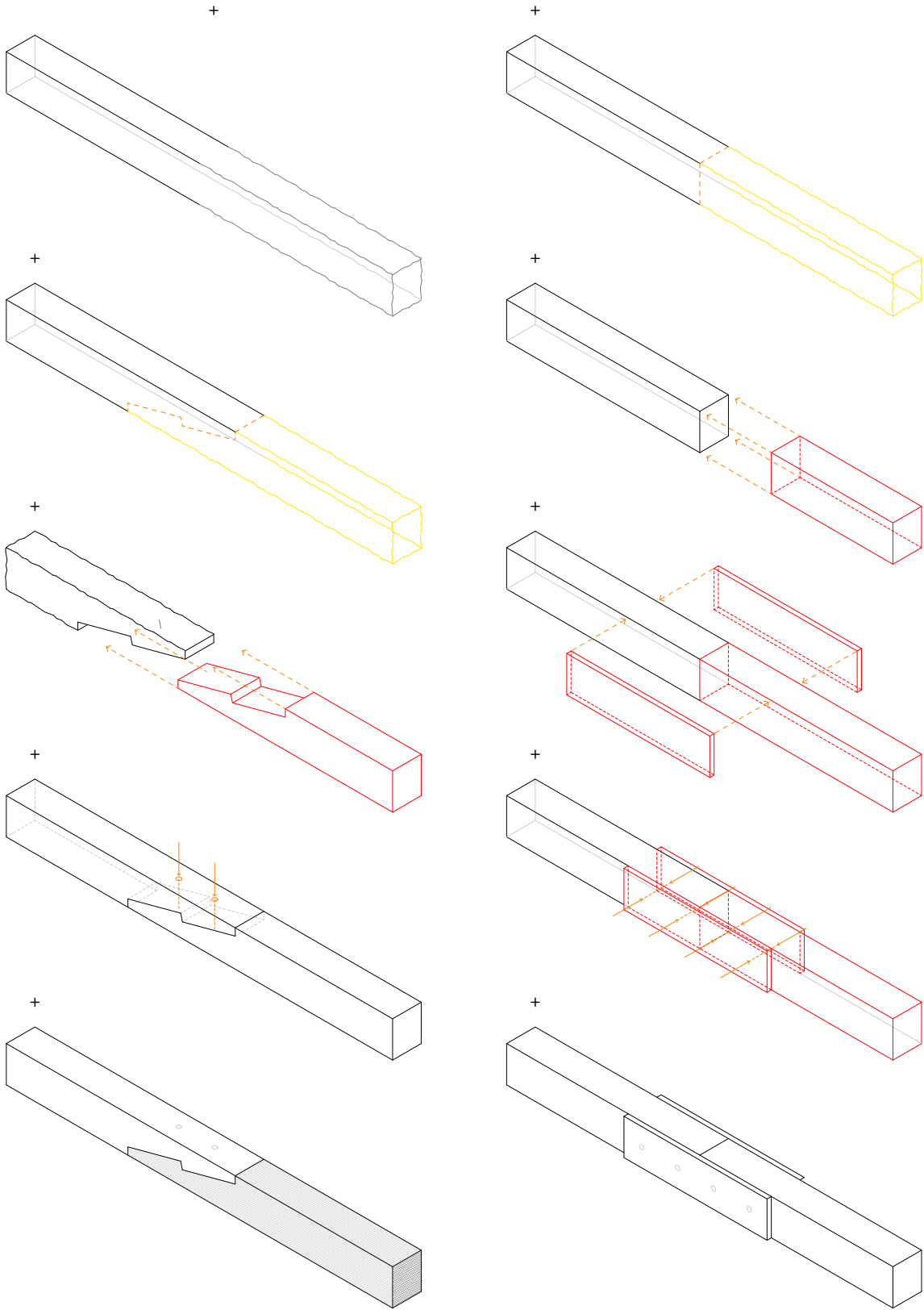


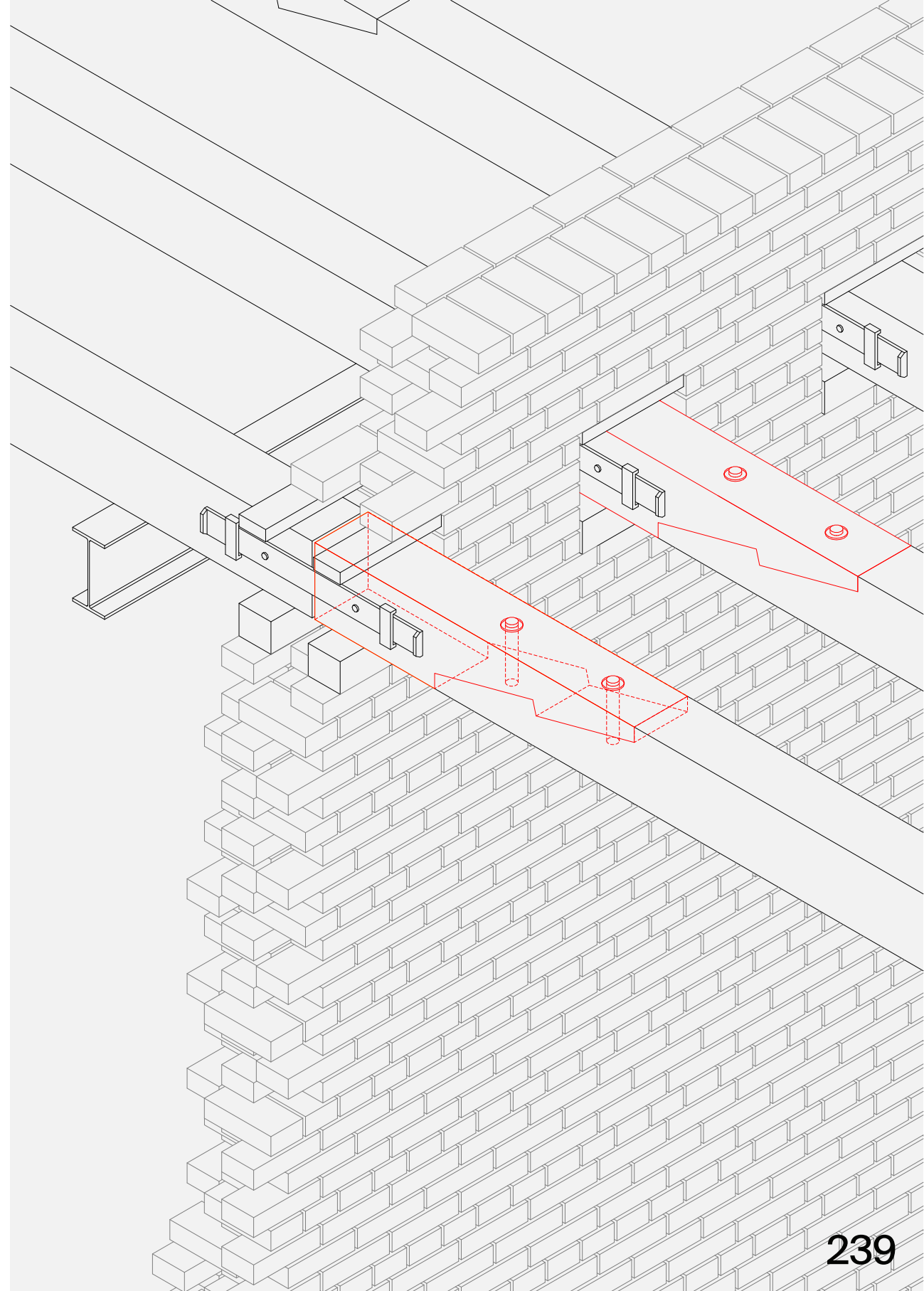
(S)
DETAILS

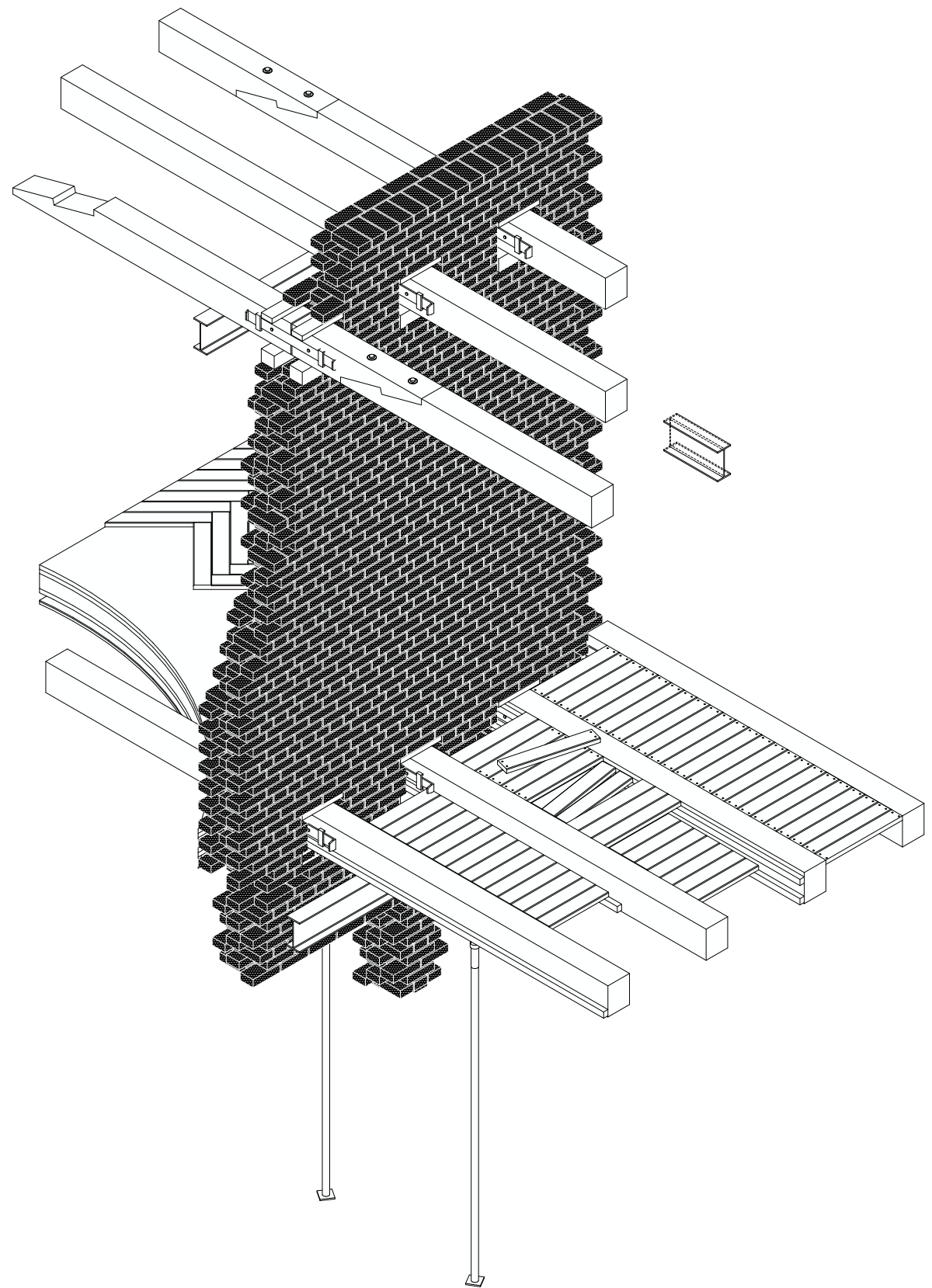
BEAMS

Beams

Renovation strategy

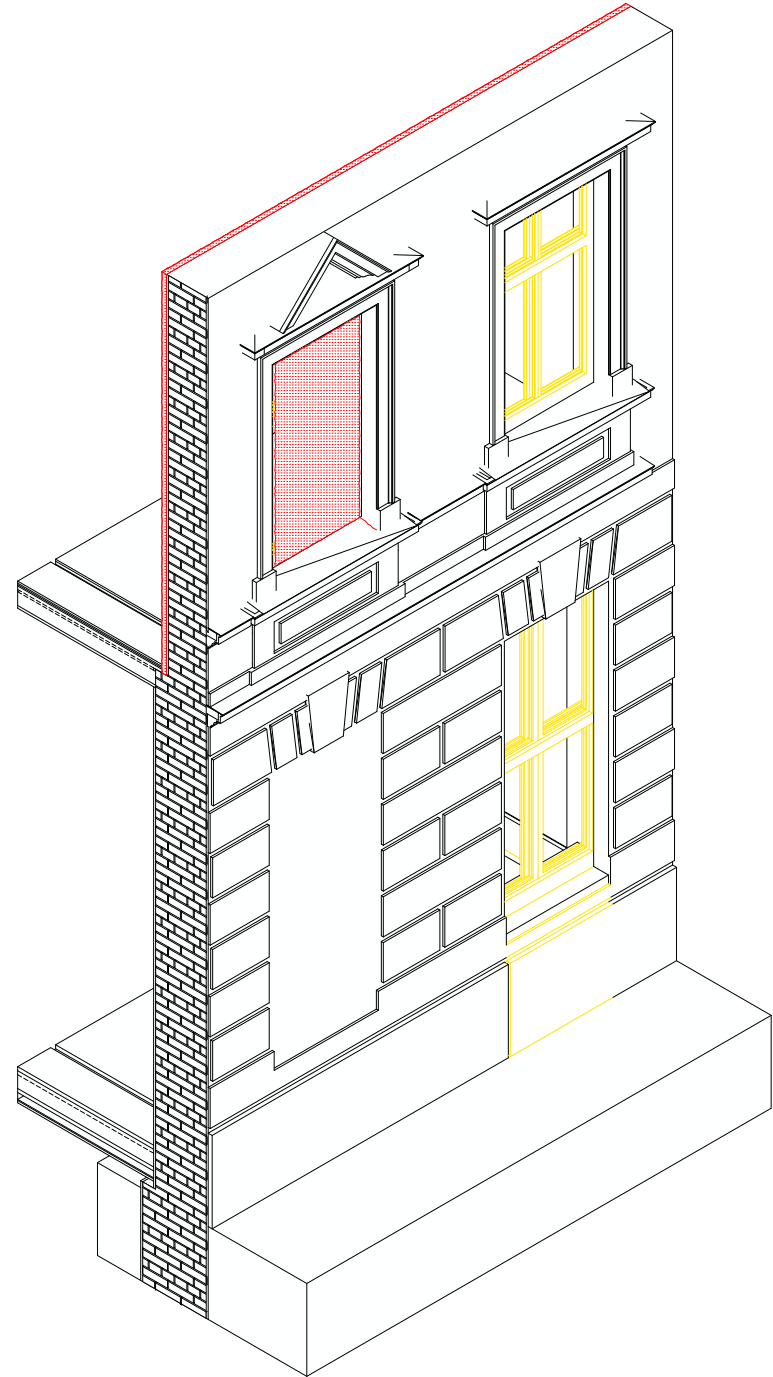




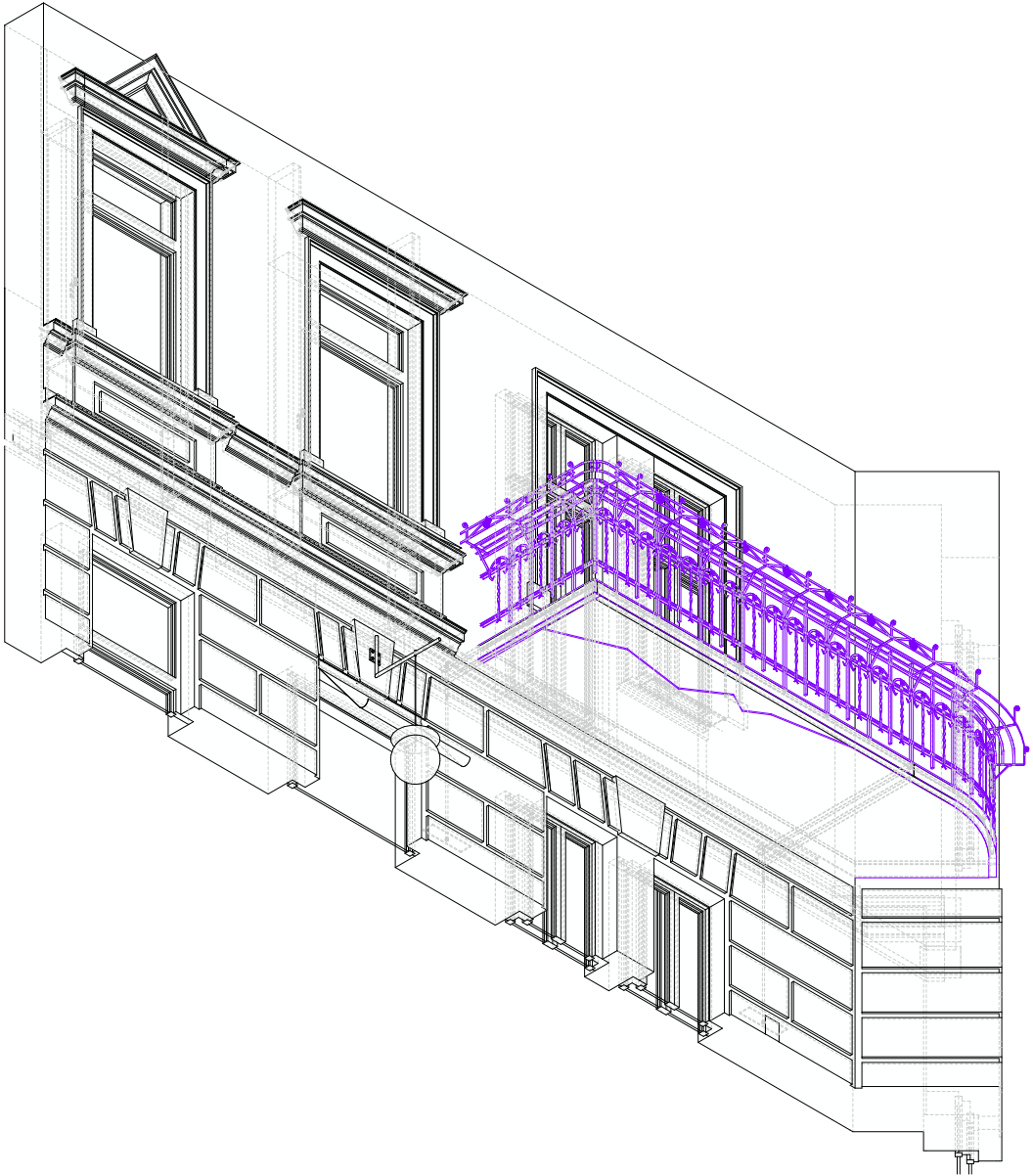


(S)
DETAILS

FACADE
BALCONY



AXO ERDGESCHOSS3 1:33



Facade, entrance addition

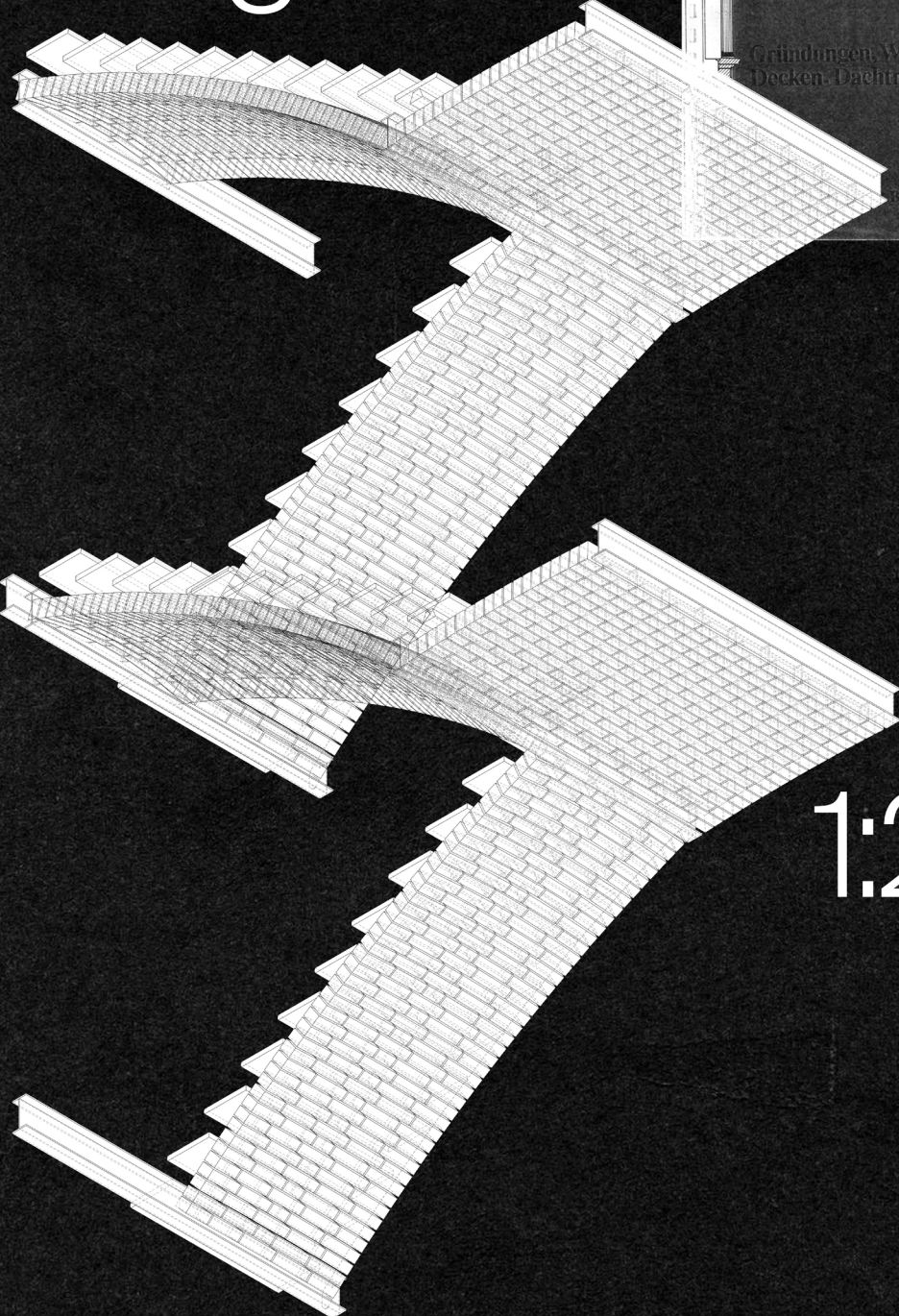


(S)
DETAILS

STAIRS

scaled down to 1:50

Altbau Katalog



1:20

Treppe

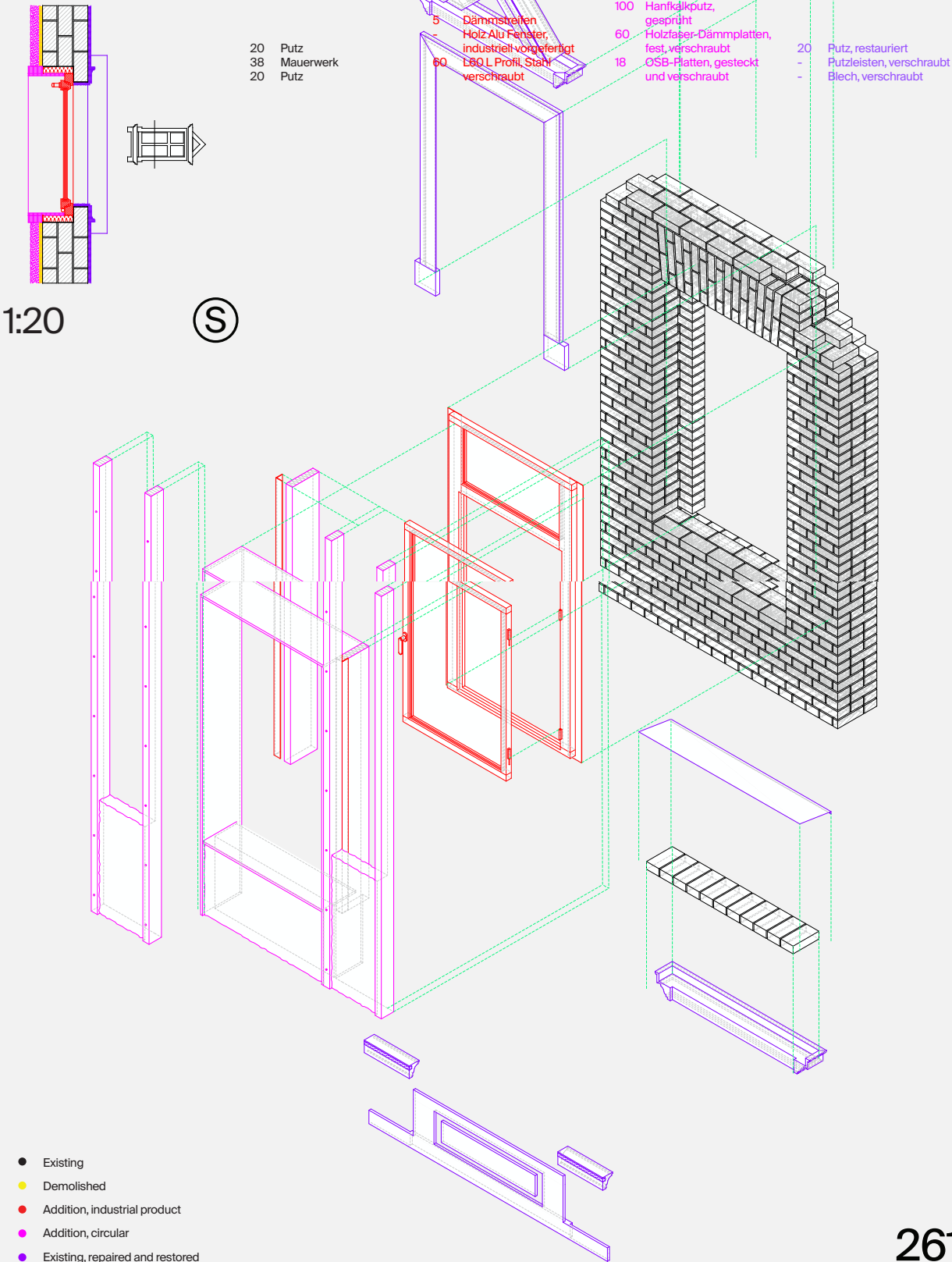
(S) DETAILS

INSULATION

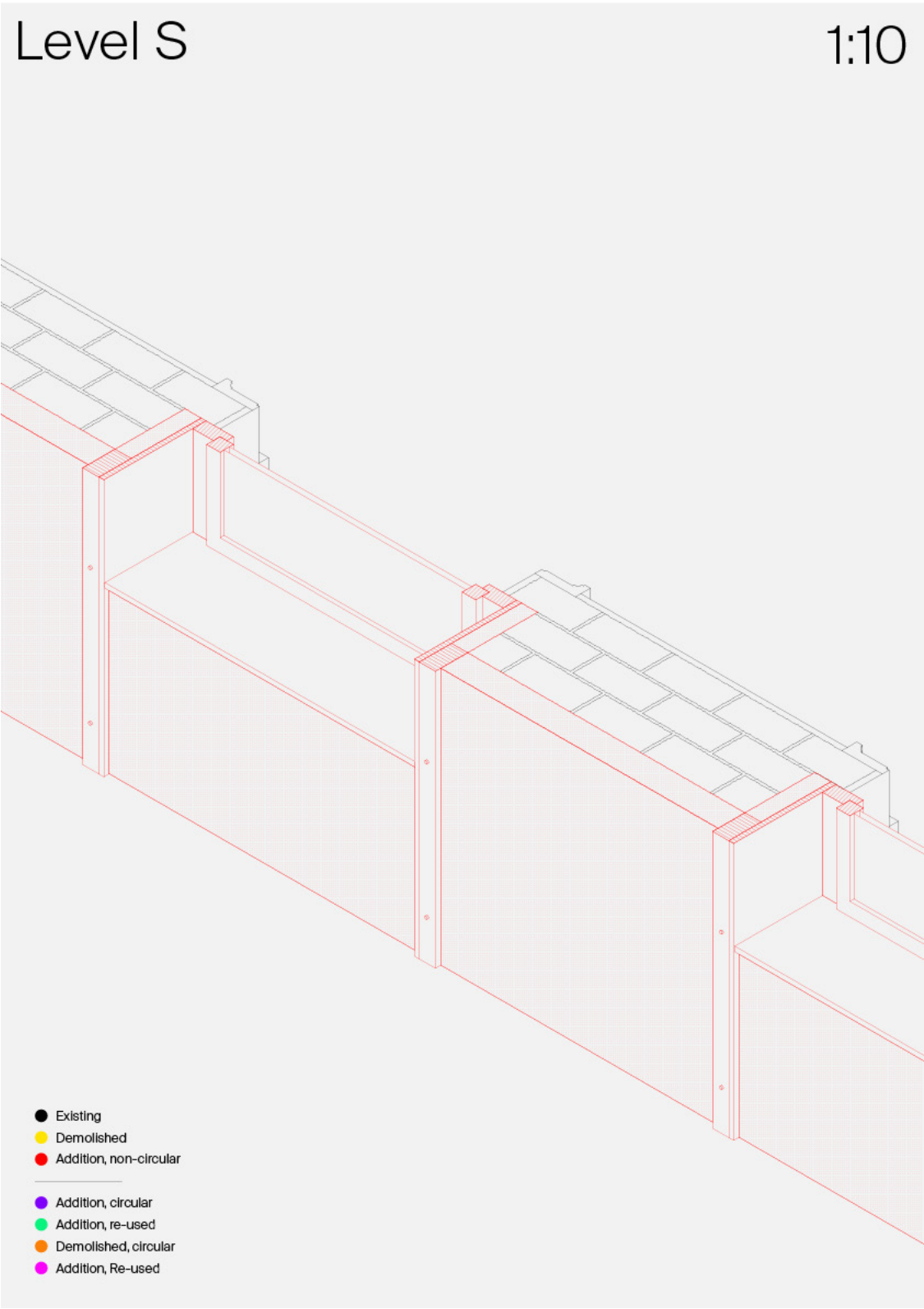
Insulation renovation strategy 1:20

scaled to 1:50

die Wände,
die ein Haus
bedeuten



Insulation renovation strategy
1:20
scaled to 1:20



(M) FLOORPLANS

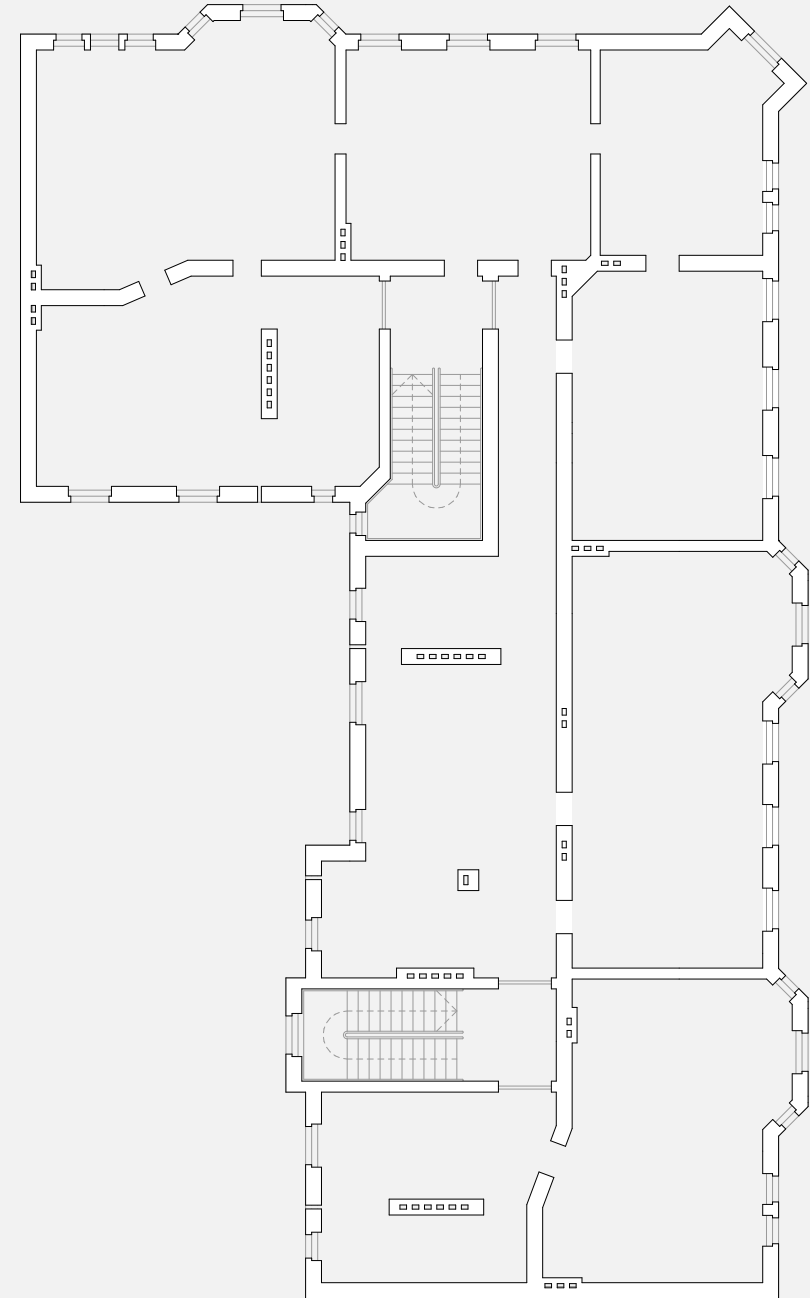
The floorplan proposals are organised around a set of spatial values derived from the preceding analysis of care. Two scales of intervention are considered. At the level of the individual dwelling, the existing room structure of the Gründerzeit grid, with its relatively modest room sizes and clear orthogonal logic, is treated not as a constraint but as a resource. Rather than opening up or merging rooms, the proposals work with this inherited logic, introducing flexibility through reversible partitioning and by following the structural rhythm already embedded in the building's load-bearing walls.

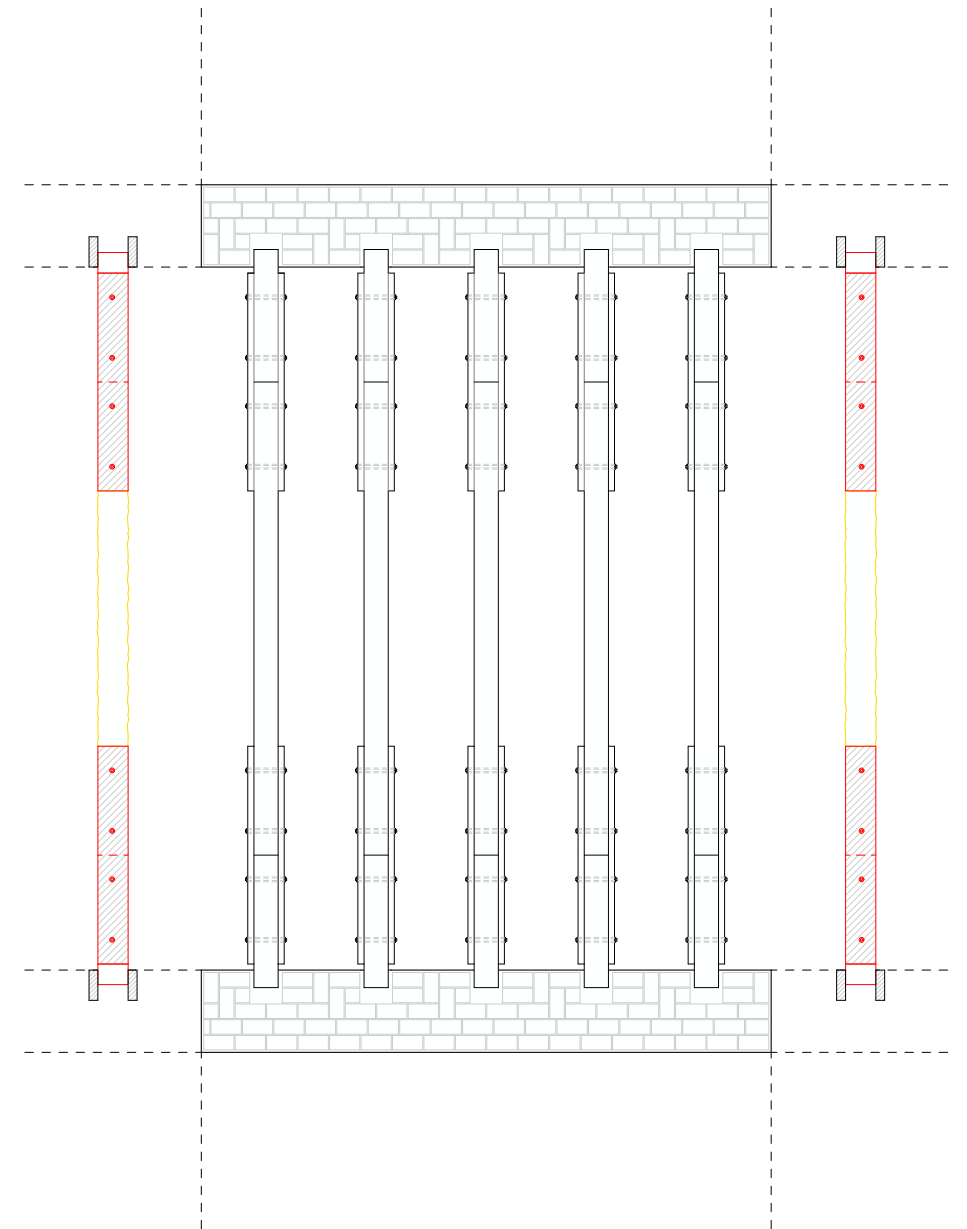
At a larger scale, this same grid allows for broader reconfigurations across units or floors. Within the apartment, the kitchen is reconsidered as the primary communal space: enlarged and opened, it operates as a living room as much as a place of cooking, a room where the labour of sustenance becomes visible and shared rather than hidden.

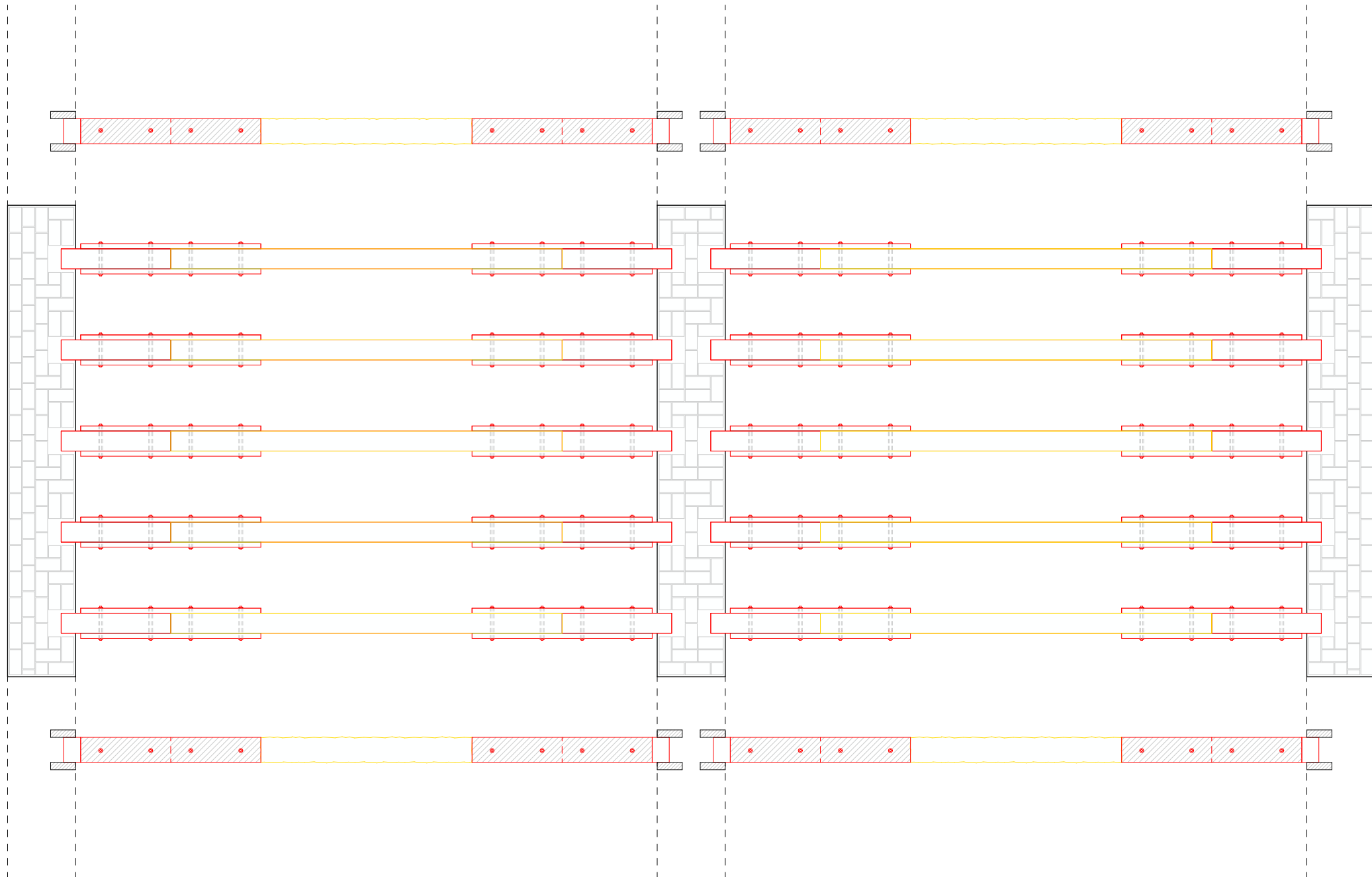
At the scale of the building, the proposals take seriously the feminist critique of reproductive labour as something historically privatised and made invisible within the individual household. Shared infrastructure and children's play spaces opening onto a garden are reintroduced not as amenity but as a structural commitment: a way of redistributing care work from the individual unit into collective space. Within the apartments themselves, the accessibility of ancillary rooms is addressed, ensuring that the everyday logics of maintenance, storage, and domestic organisation are legible in the plan rather than residual.

Floor plan logic

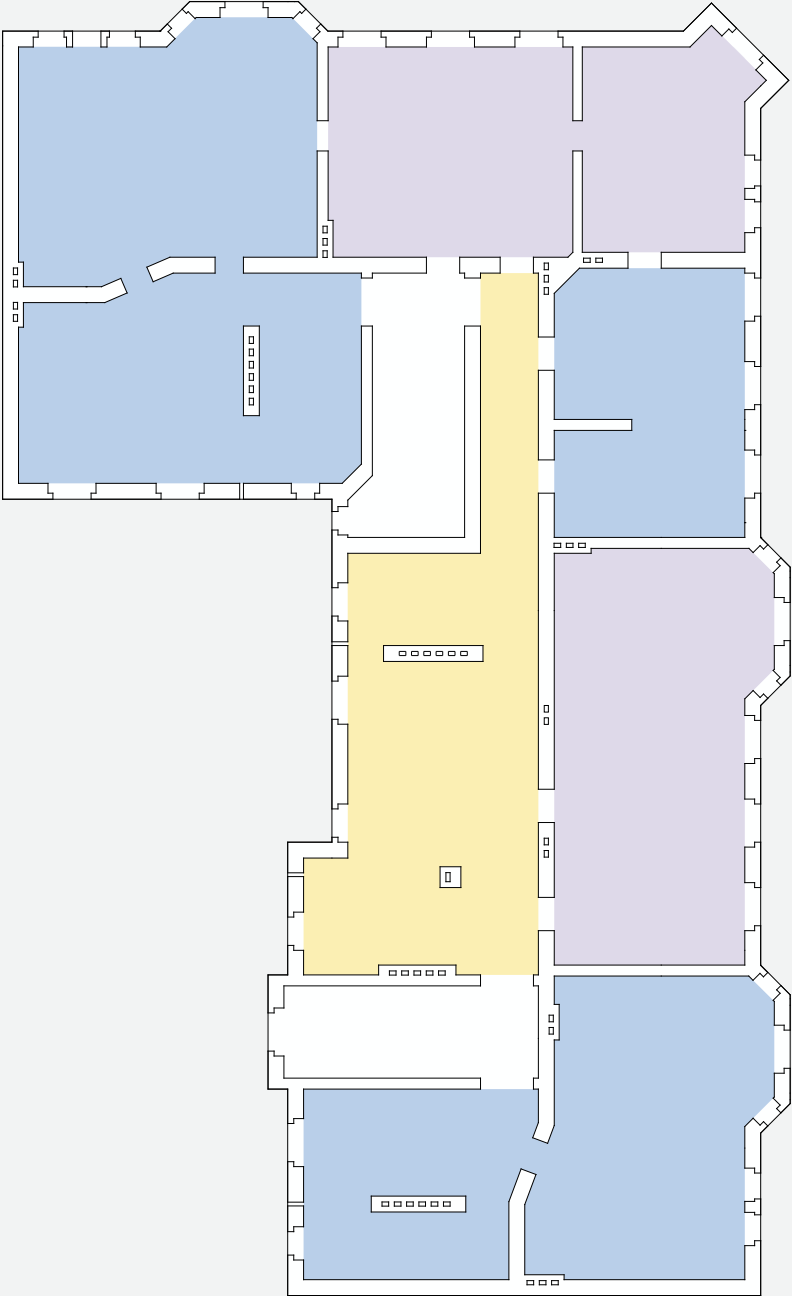
Following the established rigid grid-like logic of the Gründerzeit buildings with it's 3 different walls, in this case 5,1m apart from each other, the redesign of the floorplans takes this logic as a design principle to understand the opportunities of this archetype.

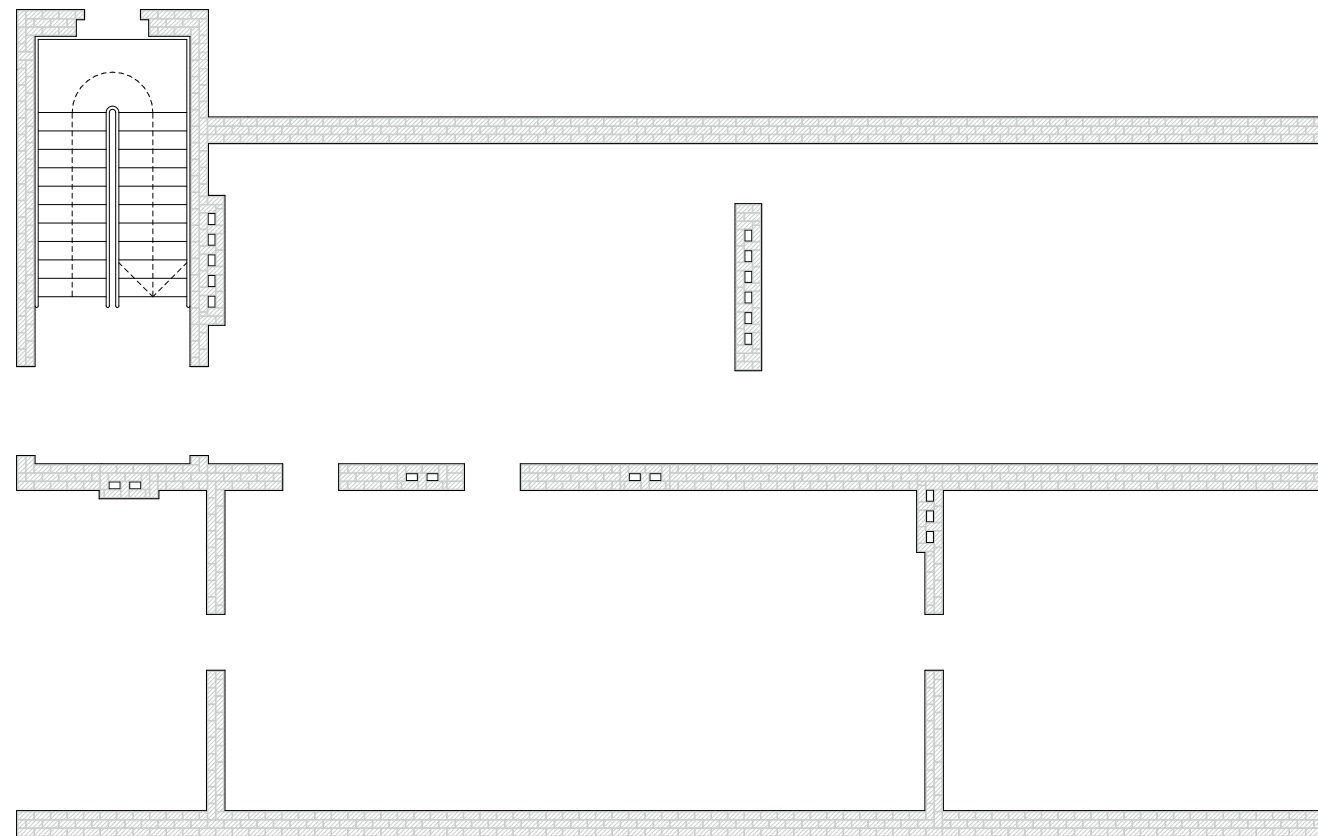




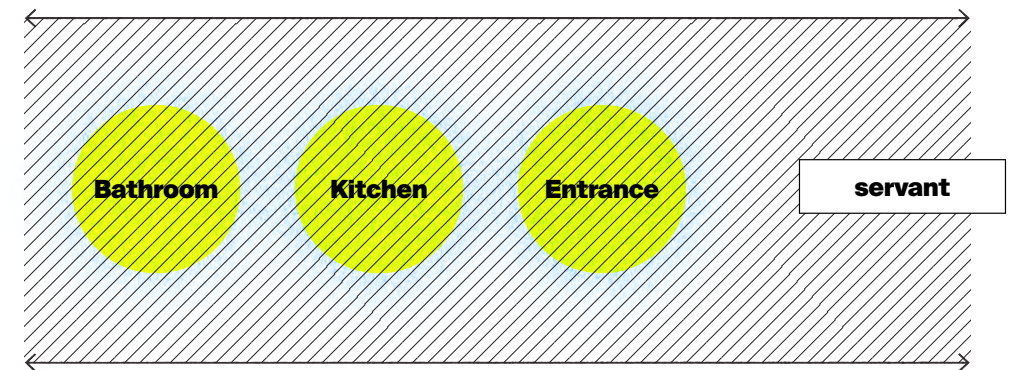


Embarking from its larger apartments that would combine sometimes up to 5 rooms into one apartment, the reallocation allows for more apartment numbers, thus inviting more styles of living into the same structure.

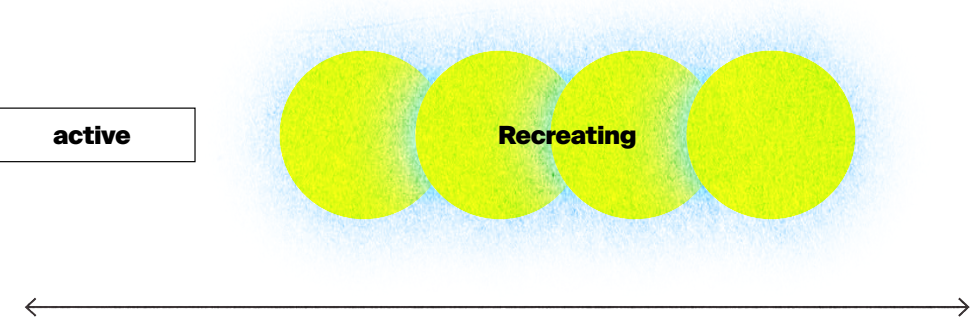




back wall



active

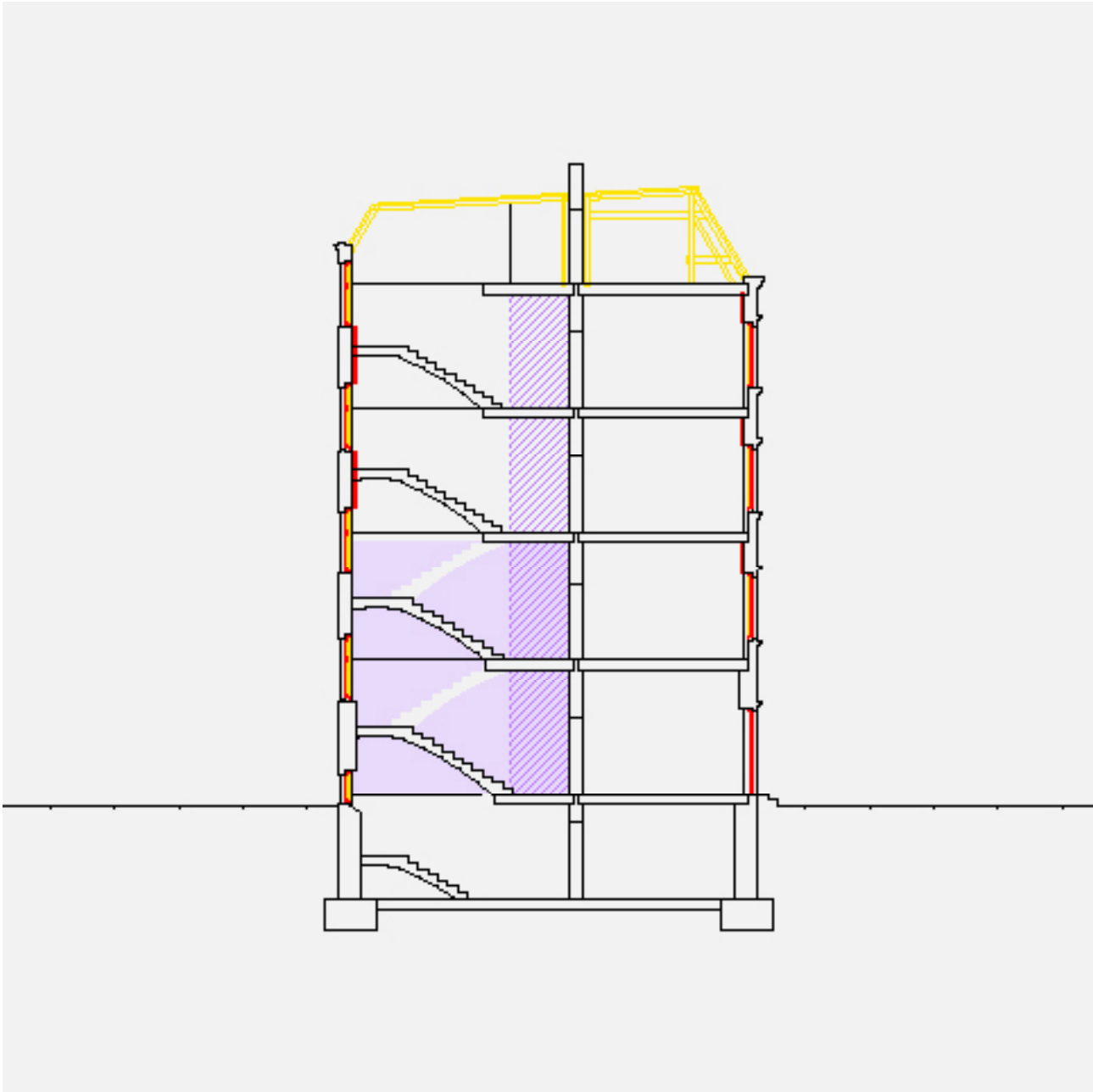


front wall

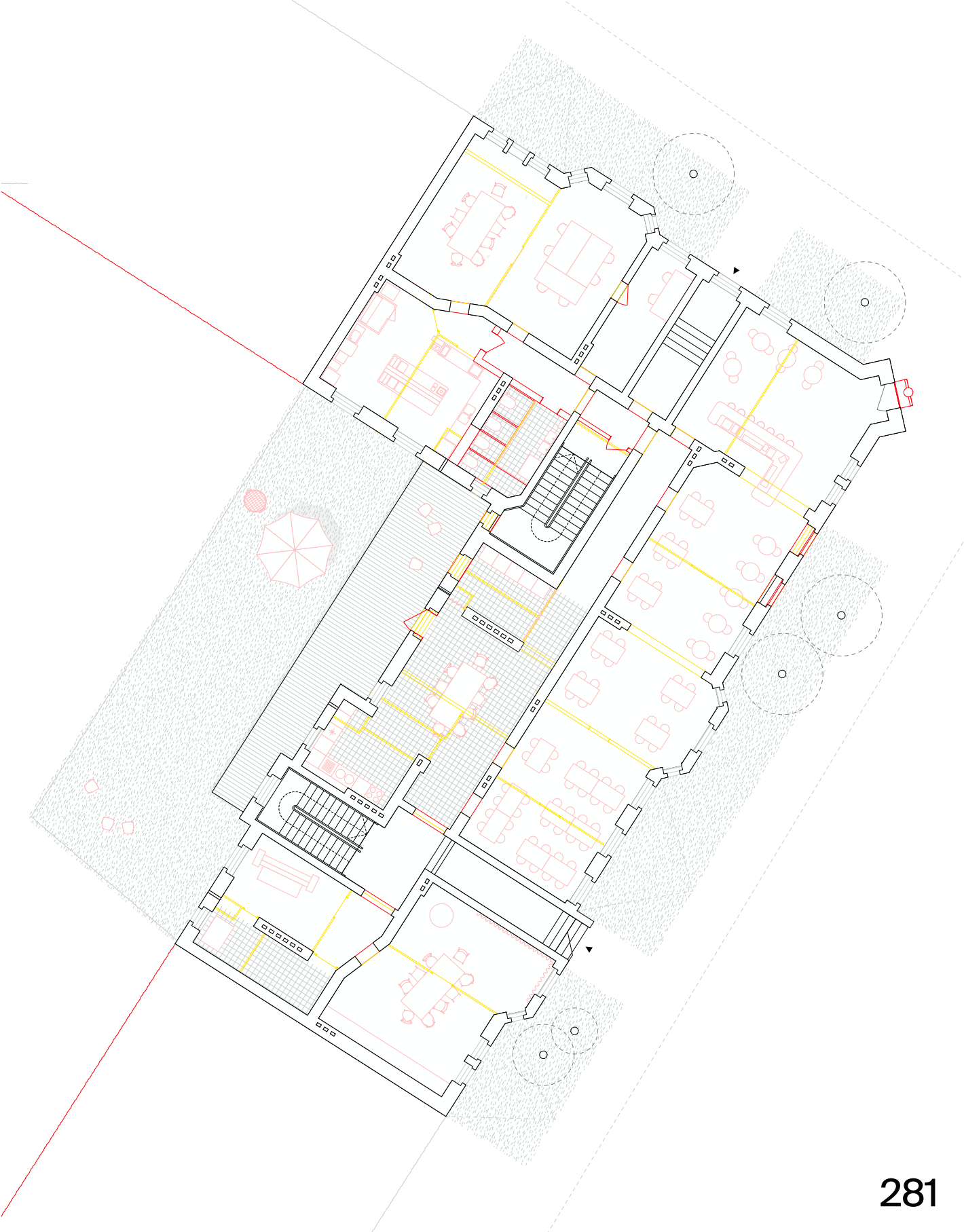
Cluster concept

Section A—A
1:200

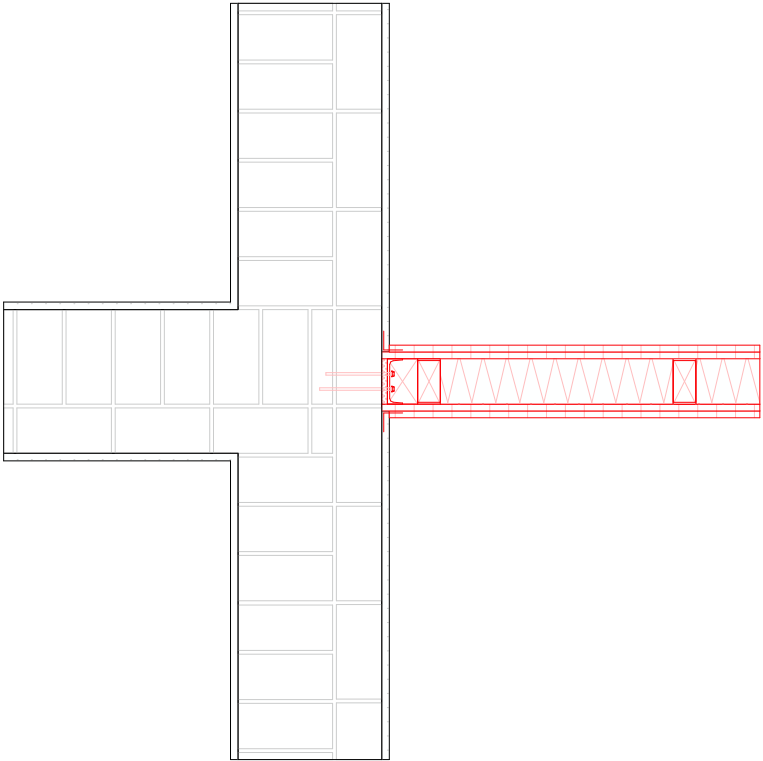
The garden facing spaces in the groundfloor are broken up in 2 levels, allowing for more communication within the house via shared corridors.



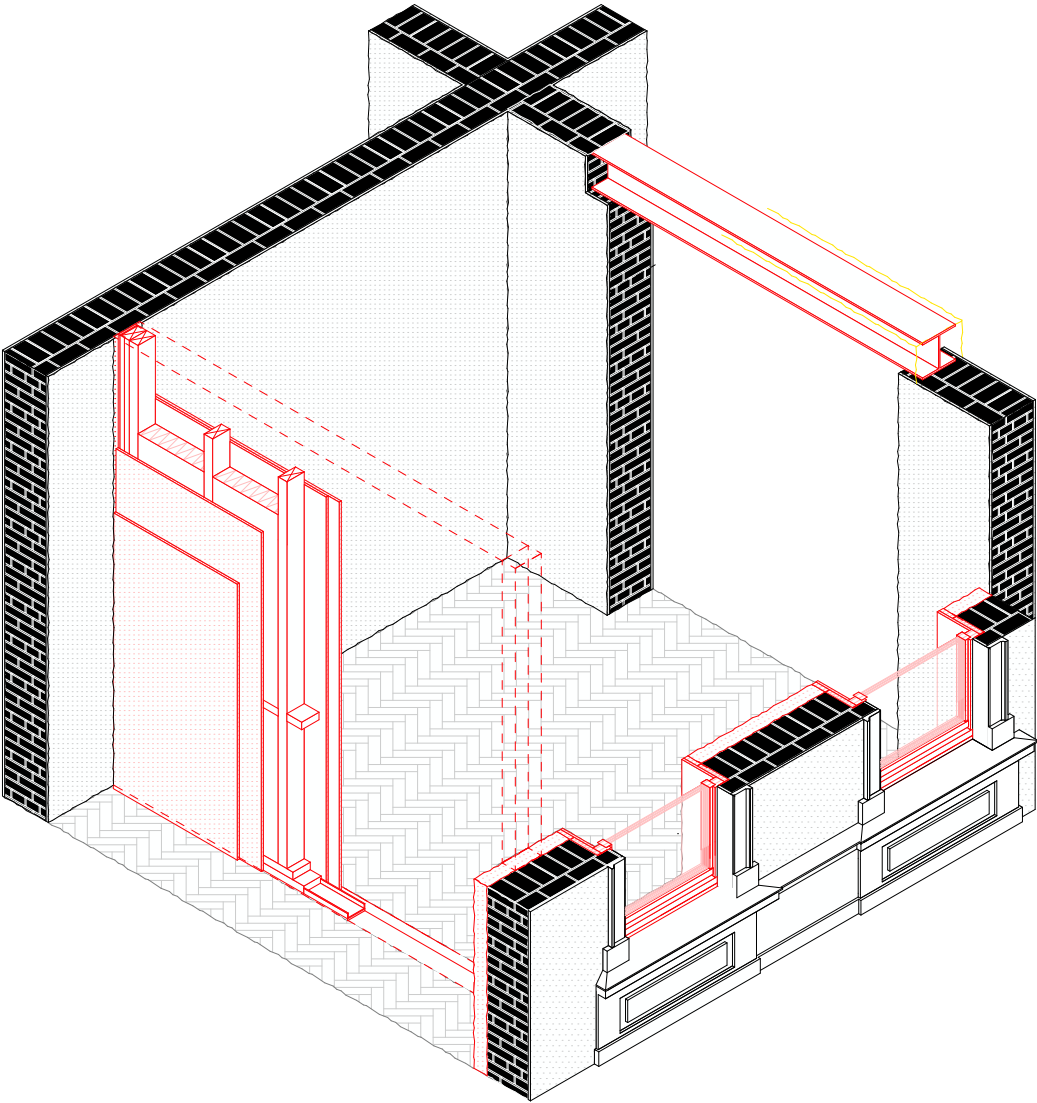
- Restaurant, open kitchen for private and public
- Cluster Living Room, incl. garden
- Poster workshop
- Hot desk working area
- Bathrooms



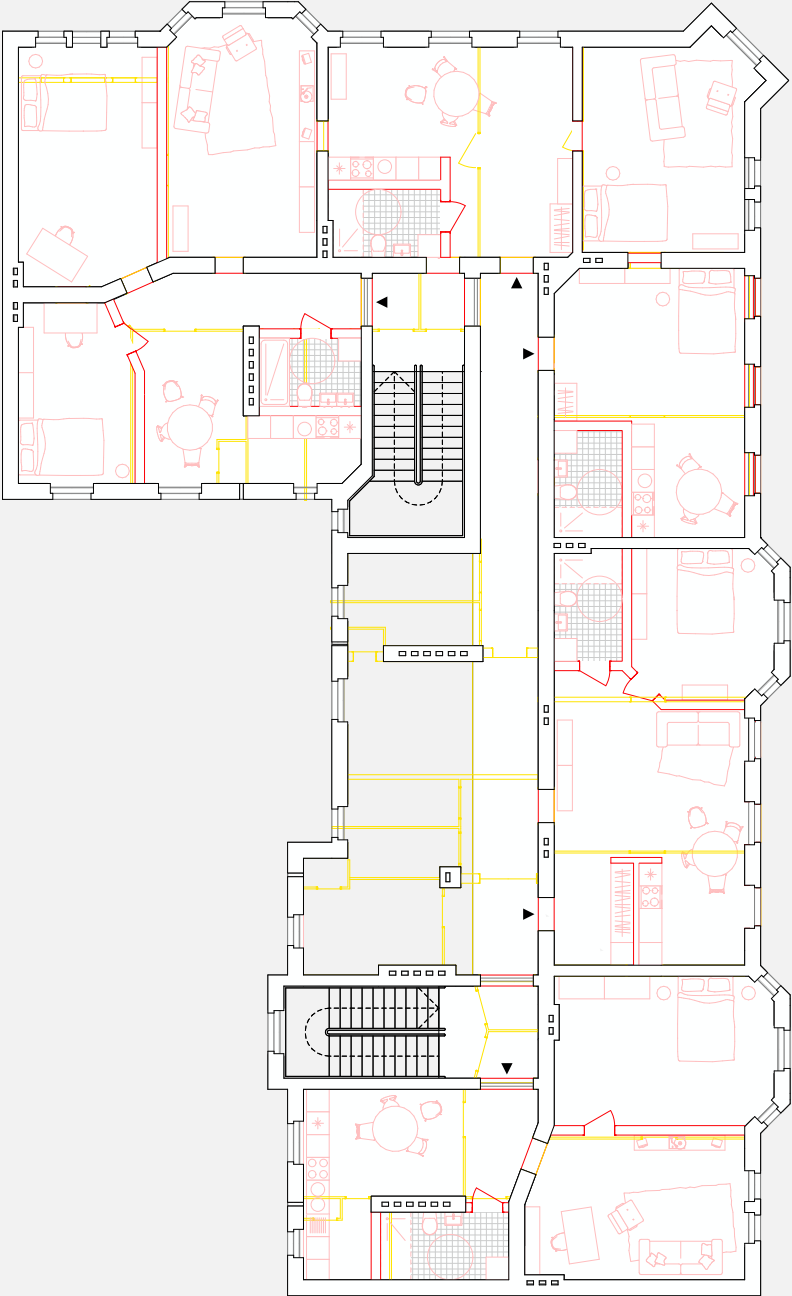
20 rendering layer
380 masonry
20 rendering layer



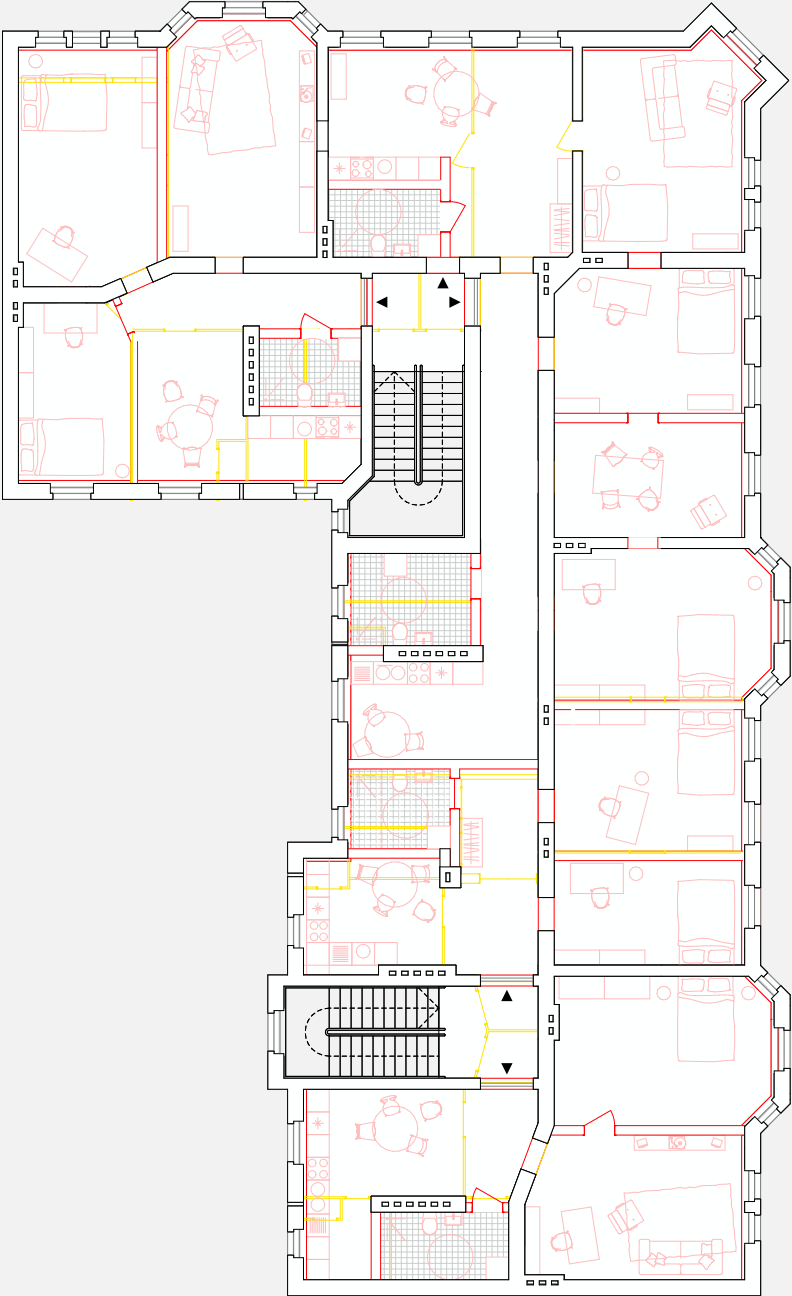
12 three-ply panel, painted
18 plywood
120 insulation, hemp loose
120/60 timber frame incl. acoustic decoupling, wool felt
18 plywood
12 three-ply panel, painted



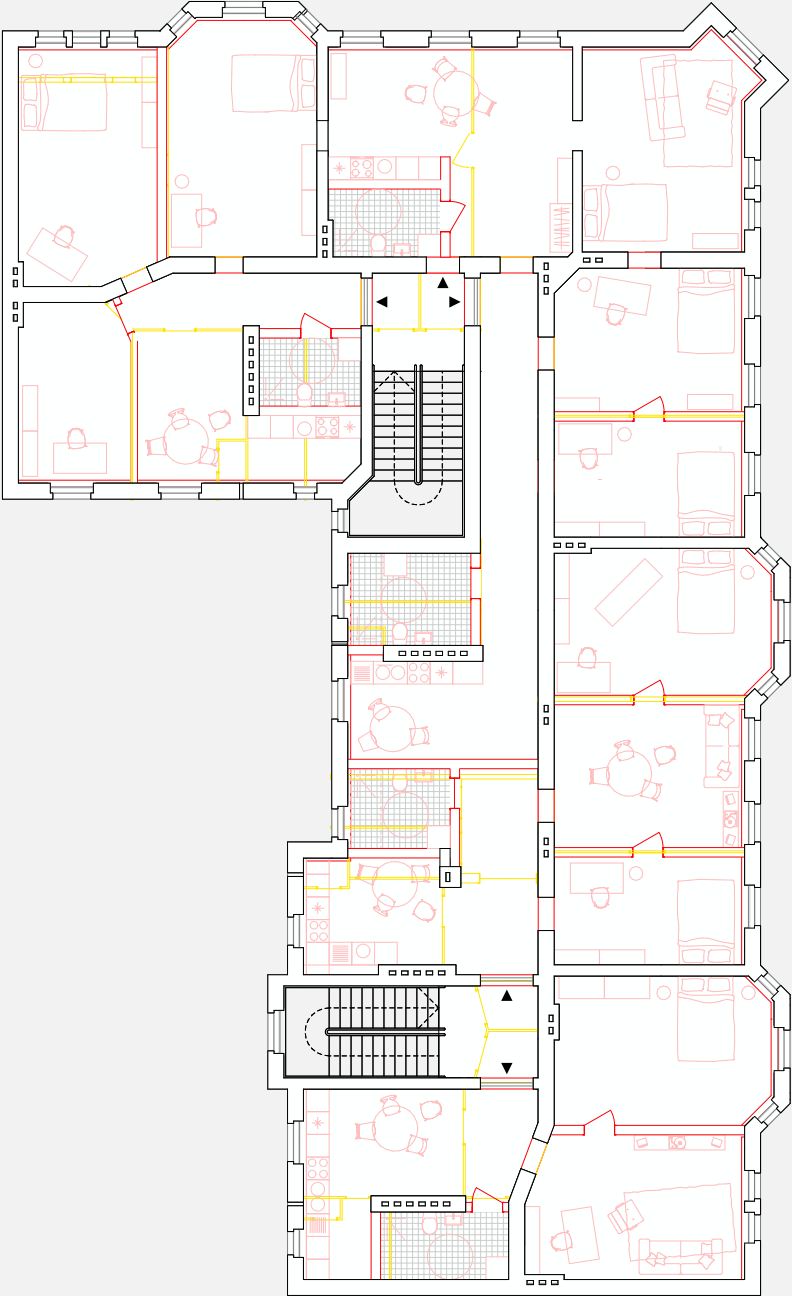
- cluster split level communication zone
- 3,5-room apartment
- 2-room apartment
- 1-room apartment
- 2-room apartment
- 2,5-room apartment



- 2,5-room apartment
- 2-room apartment
- 3,5-room apartment
- 2,5-room apartment
- 2,5-room apartment

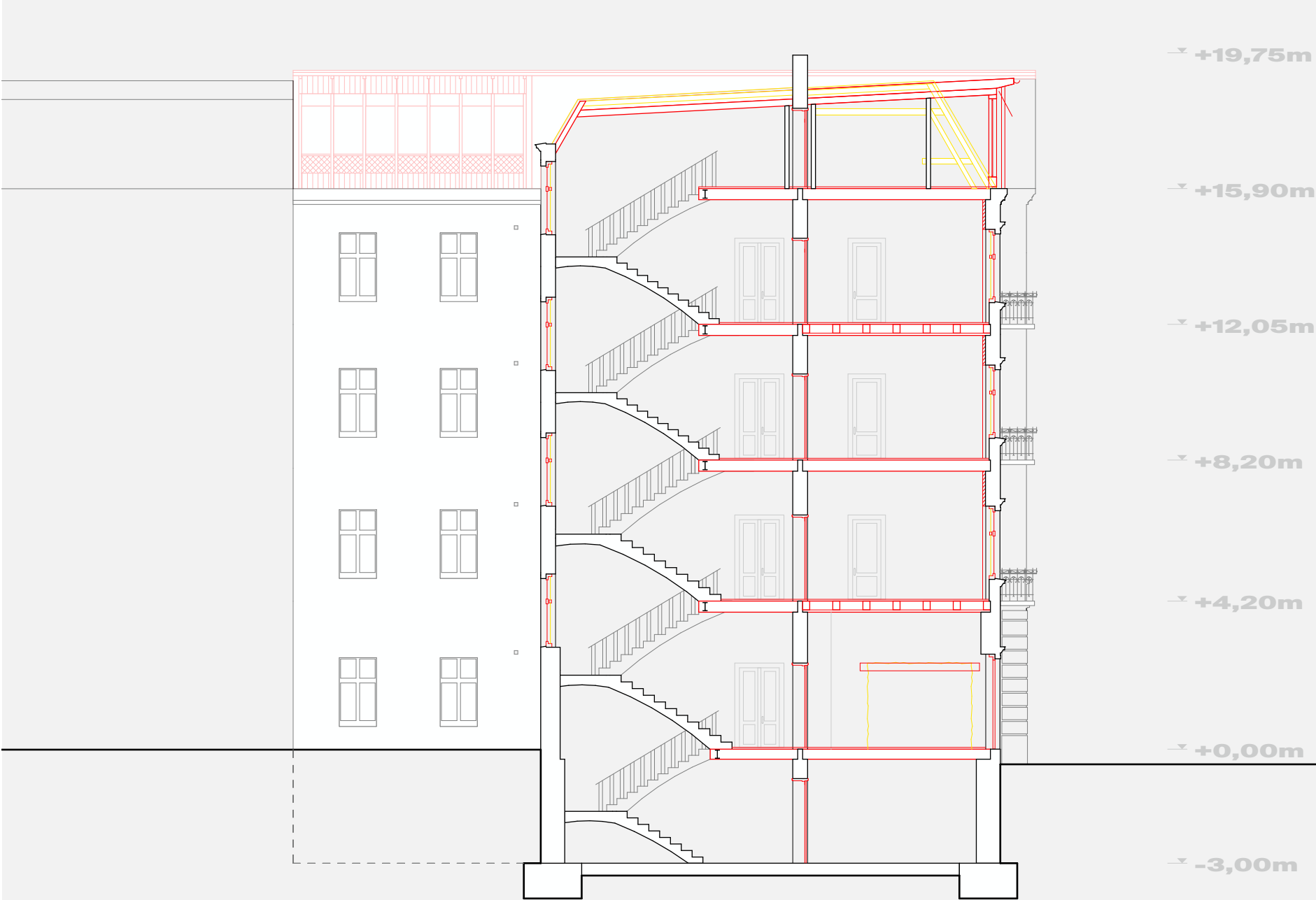


- 3,5-room apartment
- 2-room apartment
- 2,5-room apartment
- 3,5-room apartment
- 2,5-room apartment

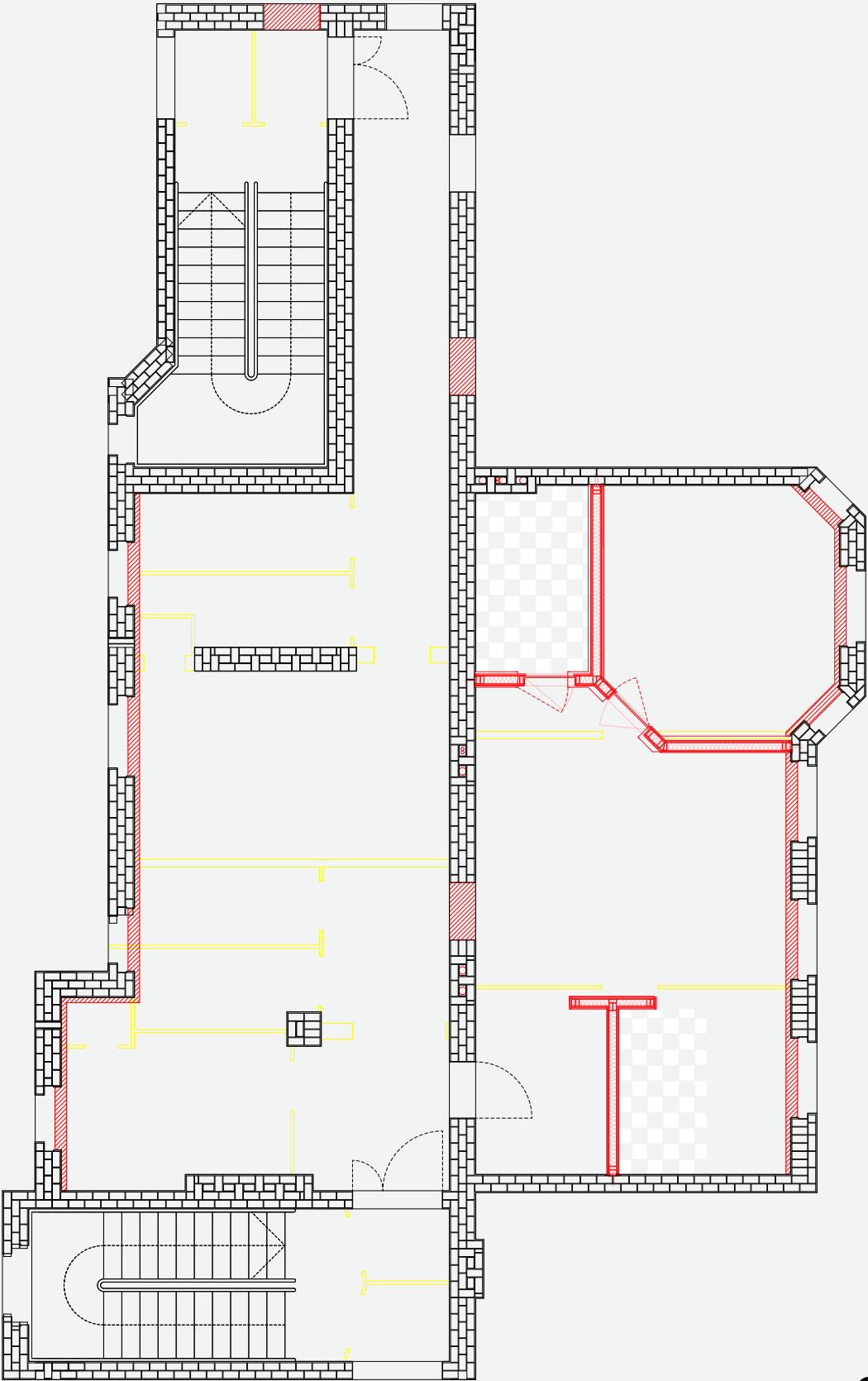


Eastern Elevation
1:200
(scaled to 1:400)

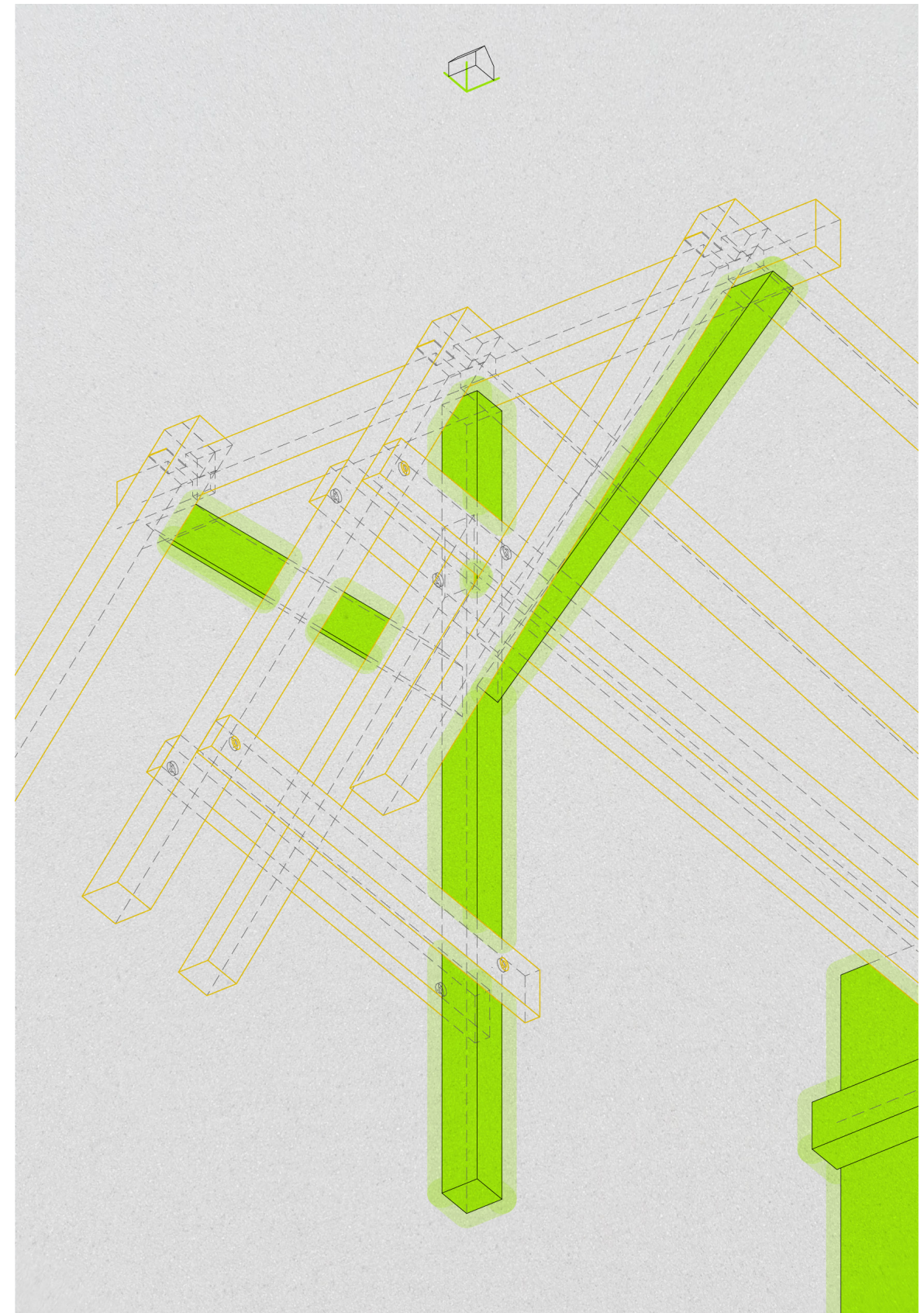
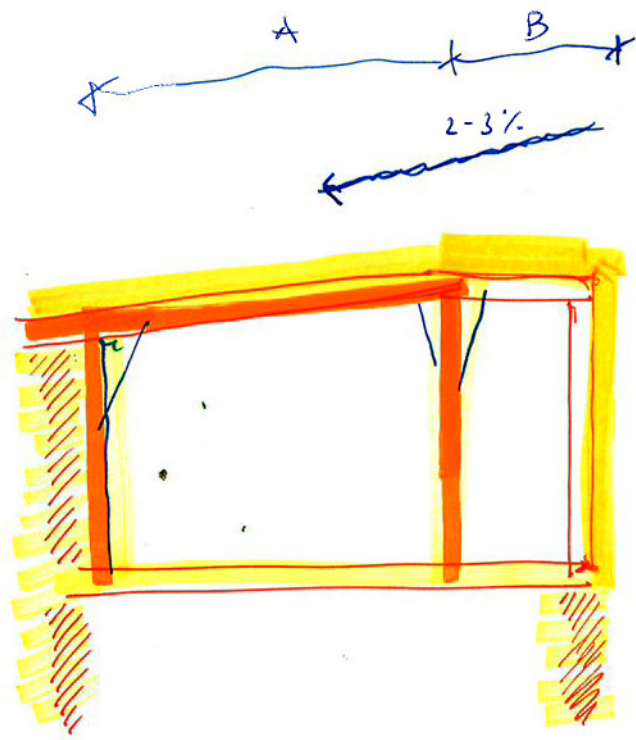




1:50 Floorplan
scaled to 1:100



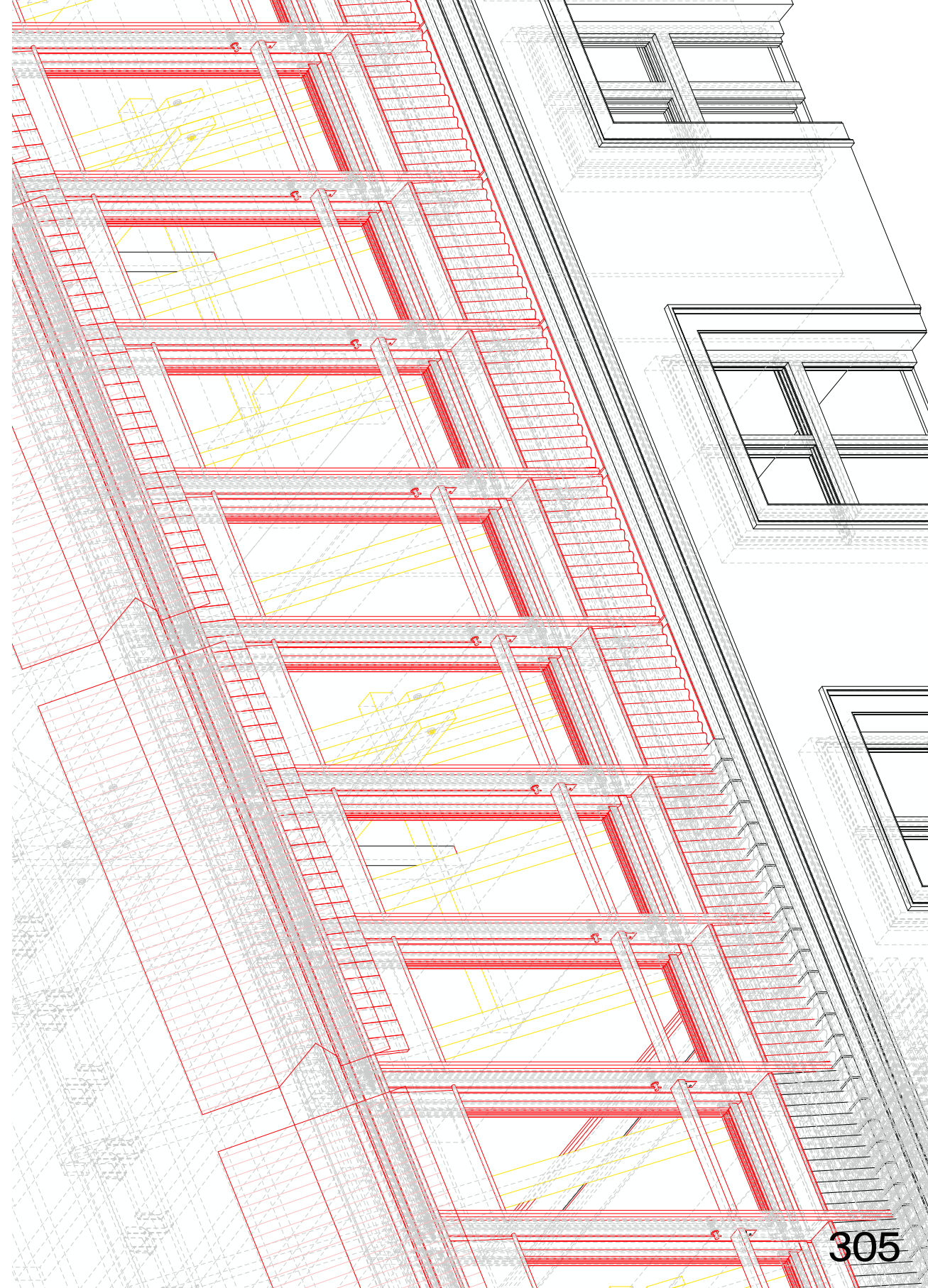
(L)
TOP-UP

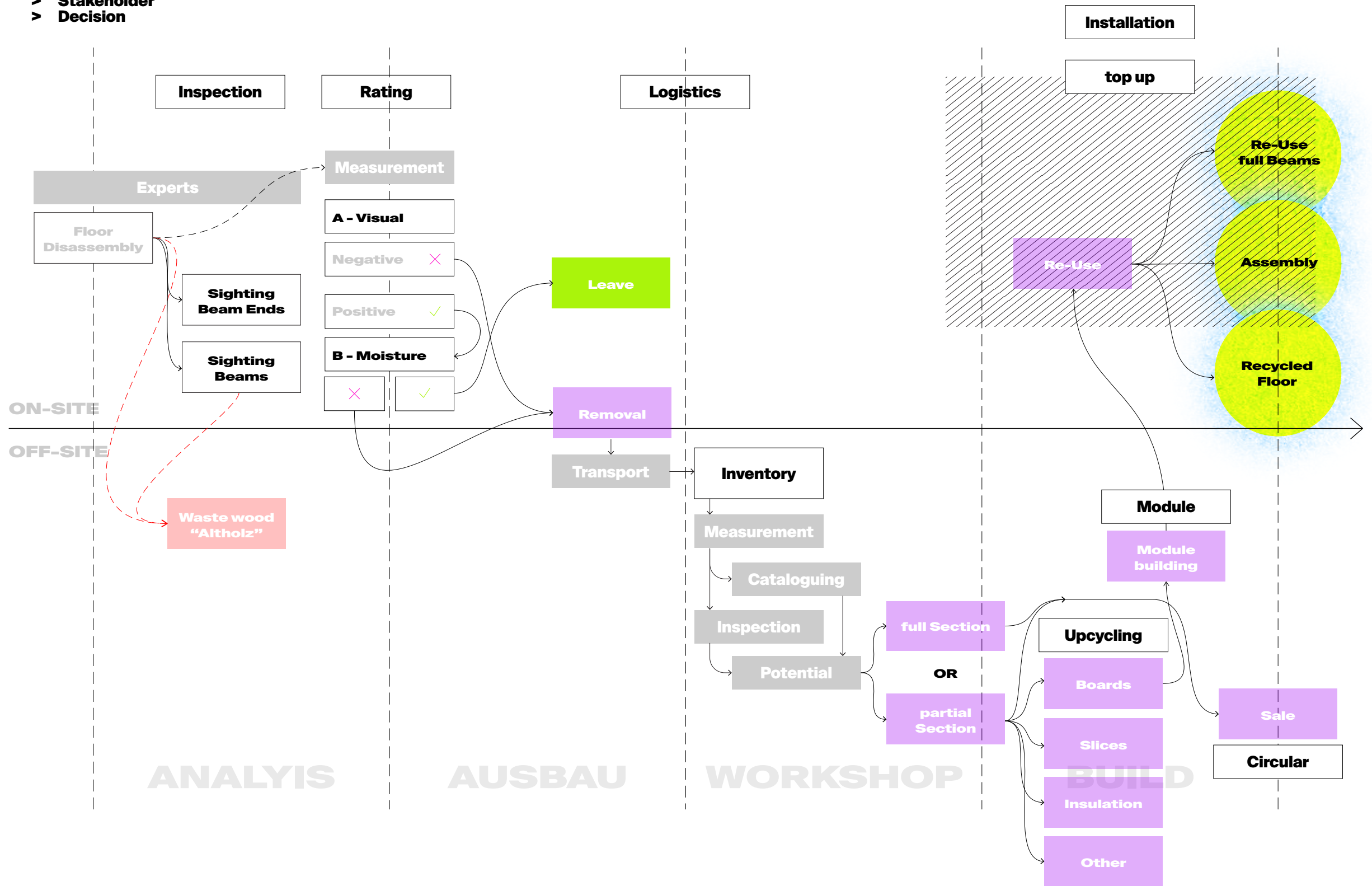


Floor
Disassembly

Sighting
Beams

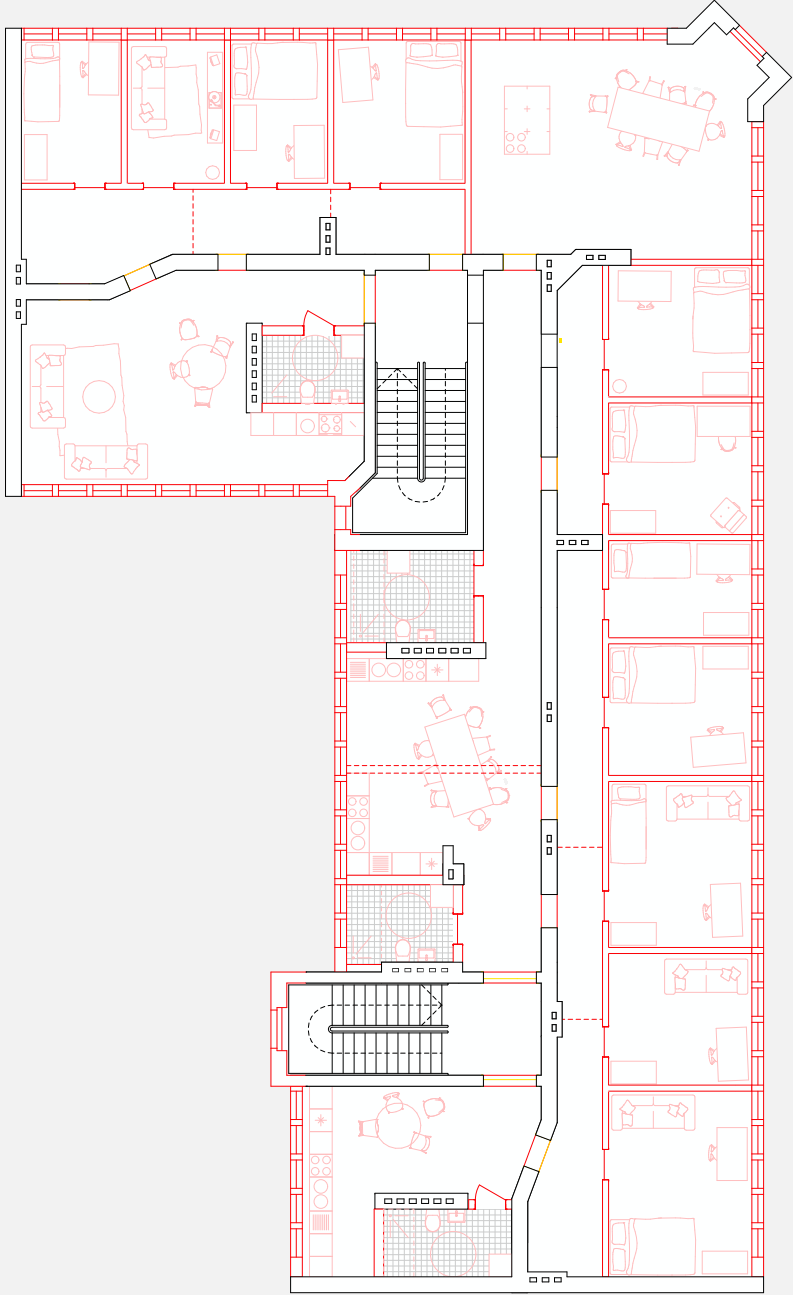
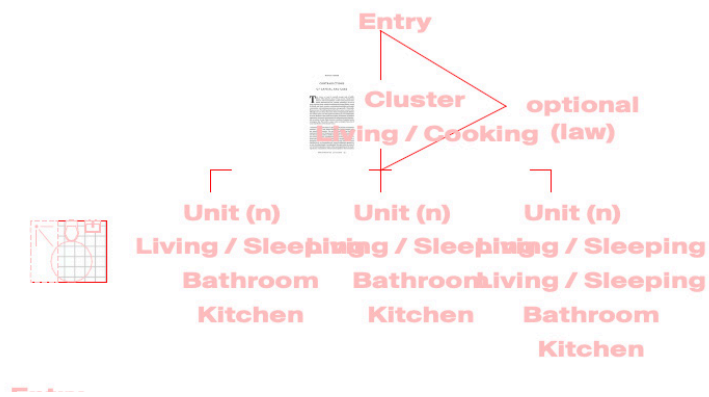
Waste wood
"Altholz"





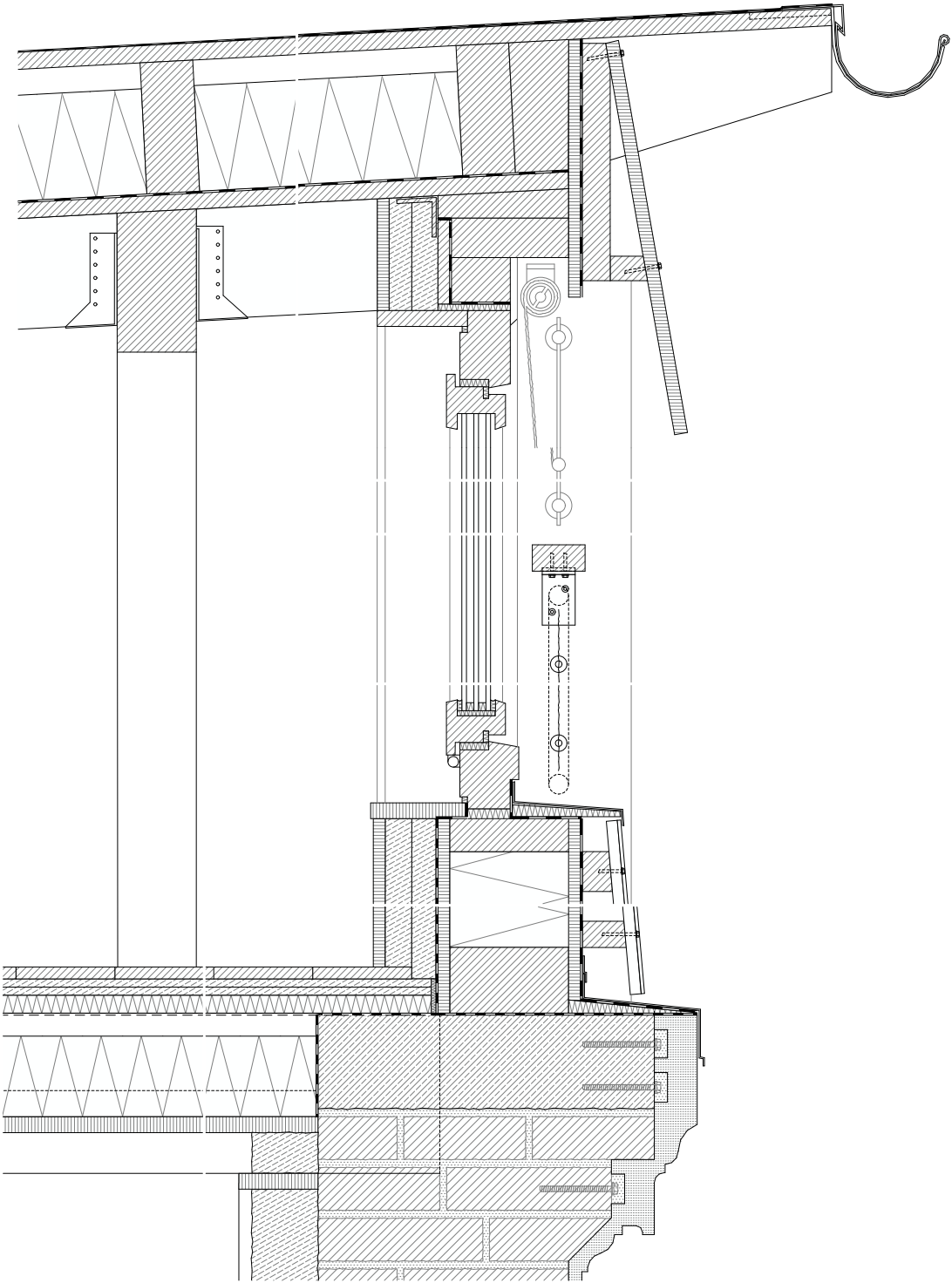
The top-up floor plan is the almost direct logical result of the research. 4 apartments to receive social housing subsidies, flexibility in its allocation of walls, more expensive units re-financing the repair of the house and the entire grid relying on 91cm, the grid of the beams throughout the entire house.

all apartments combinable for 1 shared flat
individual four units 2-3 units + bathroom and kitchen

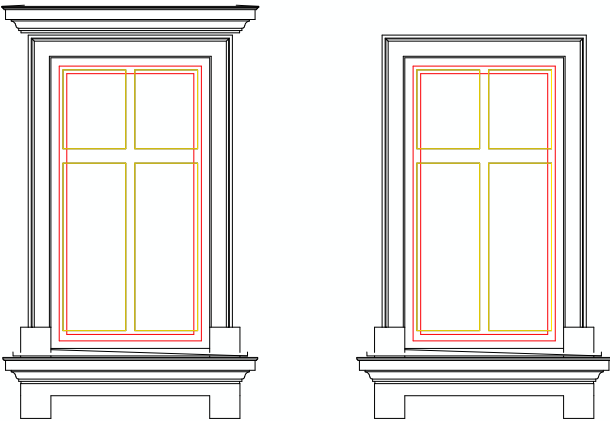
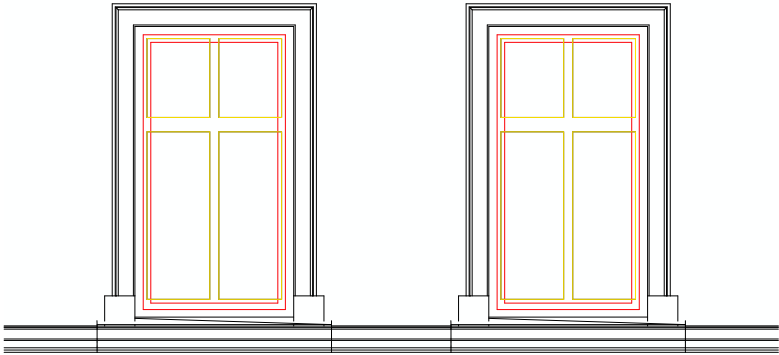
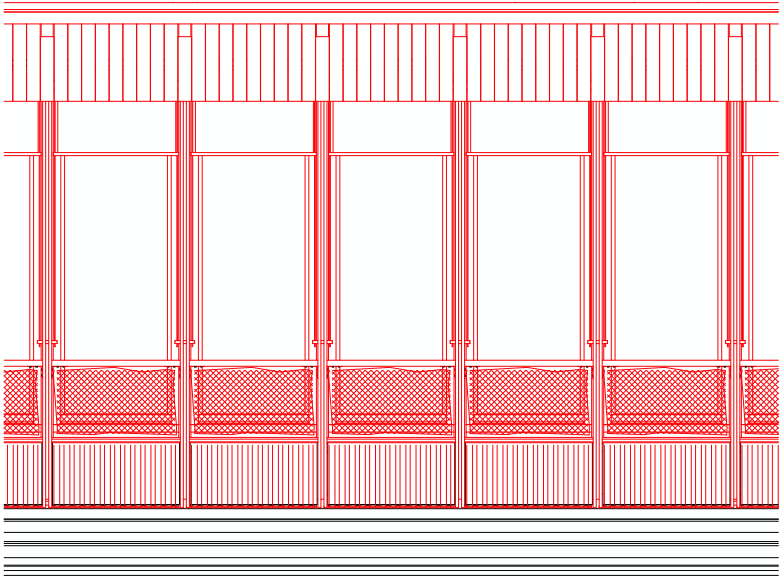
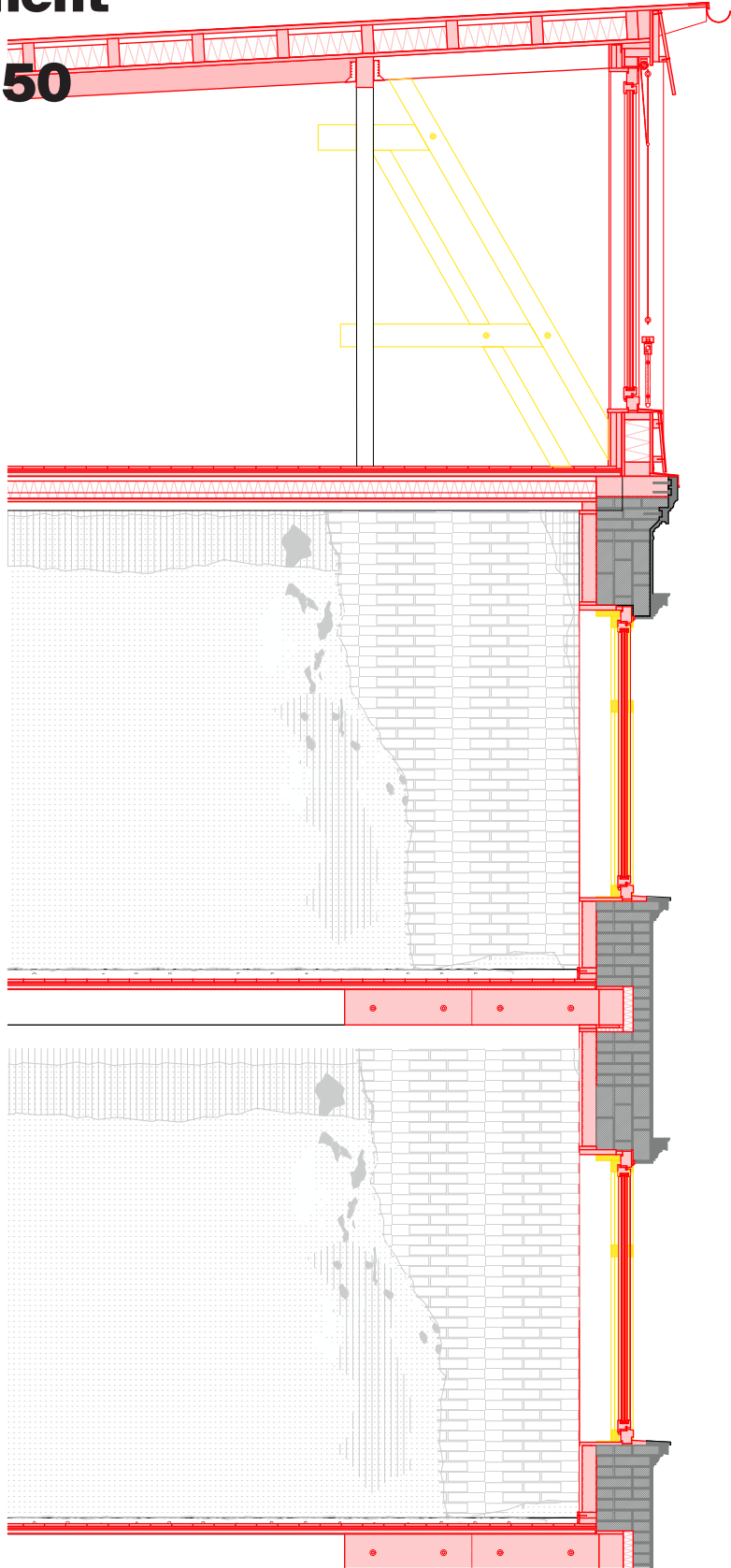


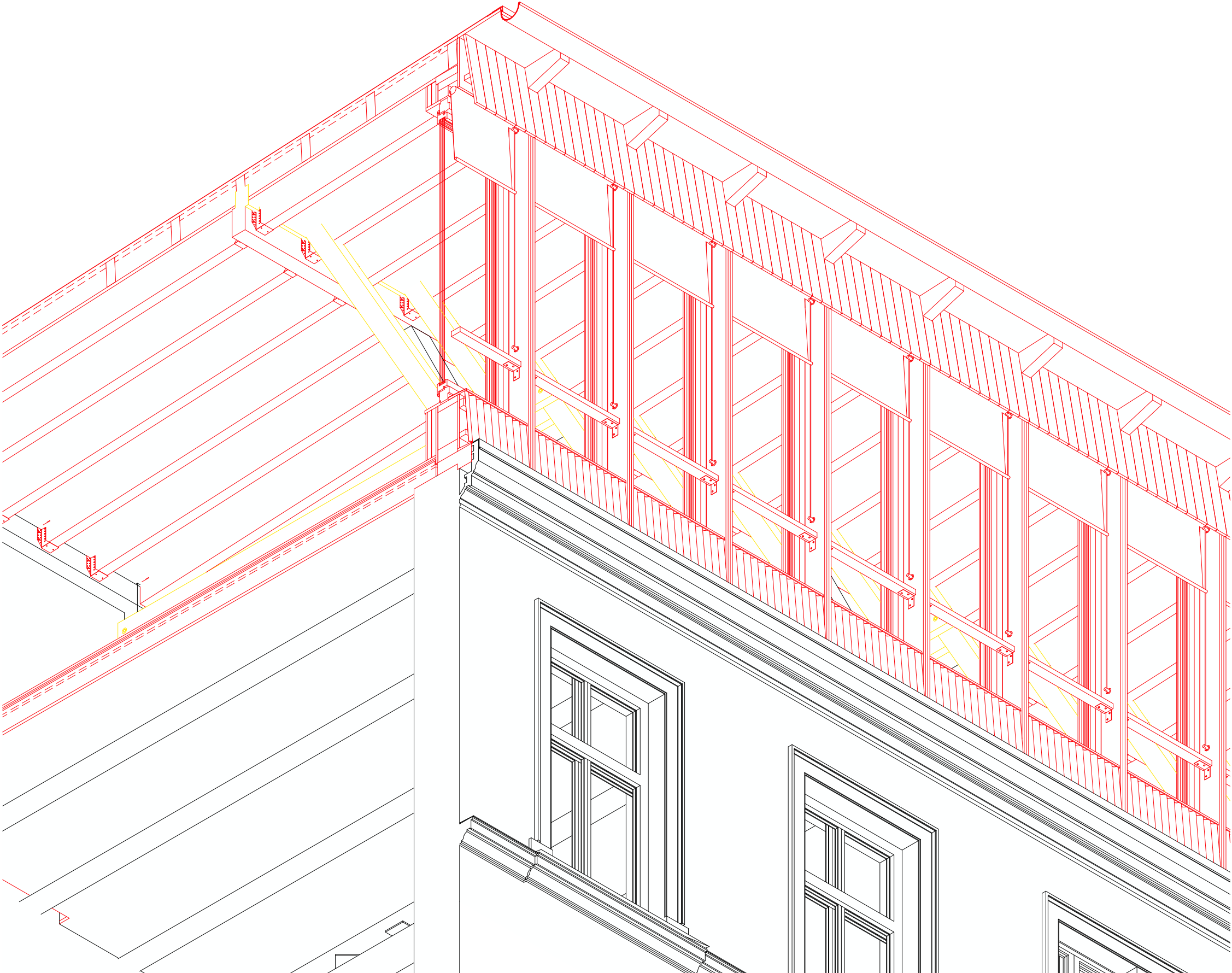
Details exisiting wall + top-up 1:10 (scaled up from 1:5)

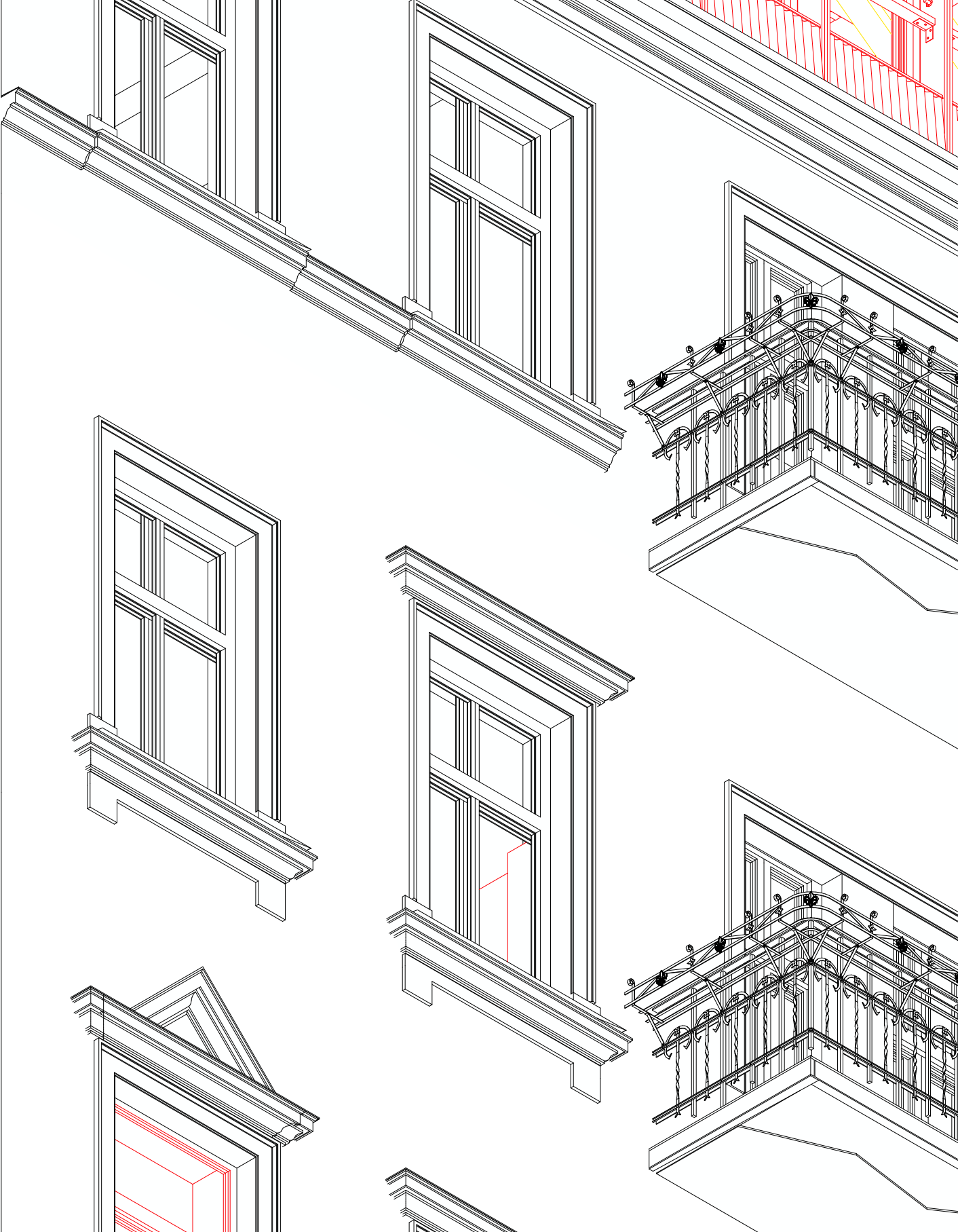
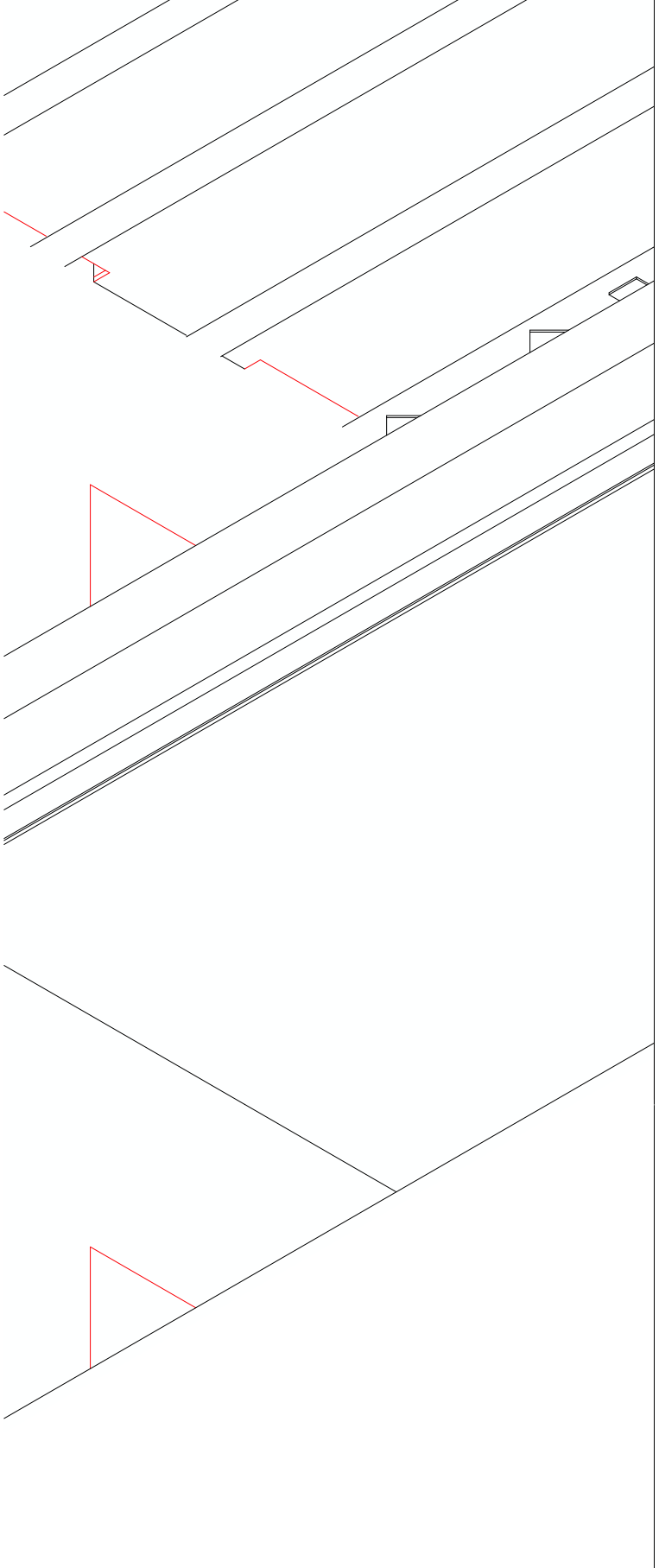
Wall, existing	20	Plaster, reinforced where required
	—	Plaster formwork, screwed into brick
internal insulation	380	Brick, Reichsformat (250/120/65)
	100	hemp-lime spray, capillary active
Floor, added	18	Reclaimed wood floor boards
	13/13	2-ply loam construction panel
	30	cork impact soundproofing/installation layer
	—	PE film, diffusion-resistant, min. 30 cm overlap
	13	insulation strip, above beams only
	20	air cavity
	120	inlaid hemp thermal insulation
	60/40	timber beams, screwed into beams support for ply
	24	plywood, visibile from below
Wall, added	510/15	ring beam, reinforced concrete
	—	reclaimed Aluminium cladding
	—	sarking membrane, windproof, breathable
	18	refurbished plywood
	180/60	refurbished construction grade timber frame
	180	loose infill insulation, seagrass or hemp
	18	reclaimed plywood
	—	PE film, diffusion-resistant
	40+40	loam construction panel with double loam
	18	plywood render layer
Fall protection	—	Stainless steel mesh fall protection, clamped, set into stainless steel frame and screwed into timber columns
Window	—	Triple glazing in wood frame with aluminium cover
Upper facade finish	60/40	timber beams screwed into ply
	20	refurbished wood slates
Roof	—	2-ply bituminous sheeting
	24	boarding
	80/200	timber rafters
	40	air cavity
	160	mineral wool thermal insulation
	—	vapour barrier
	24	plywood

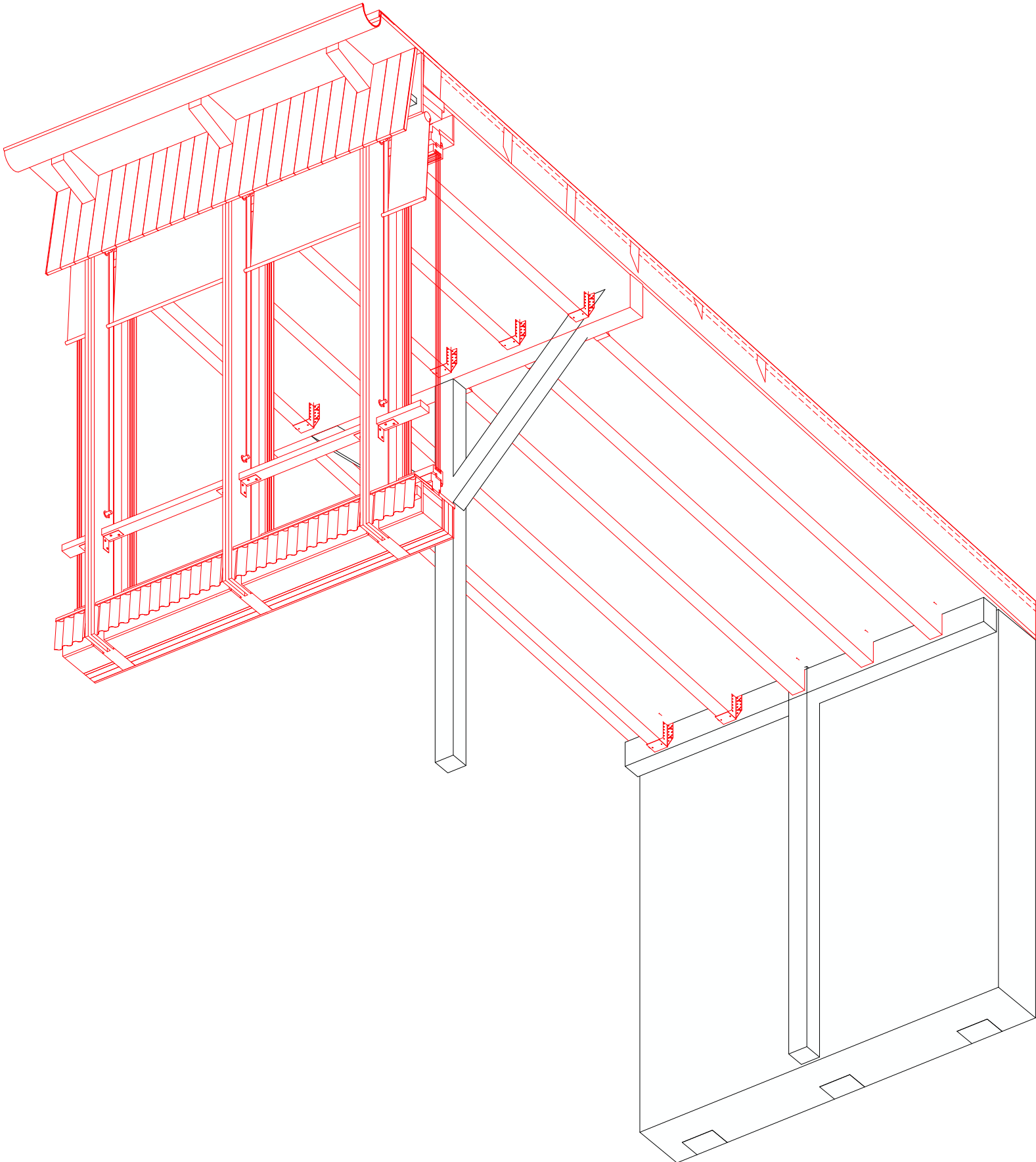


Full Fragment
1:10
scale to 1:50

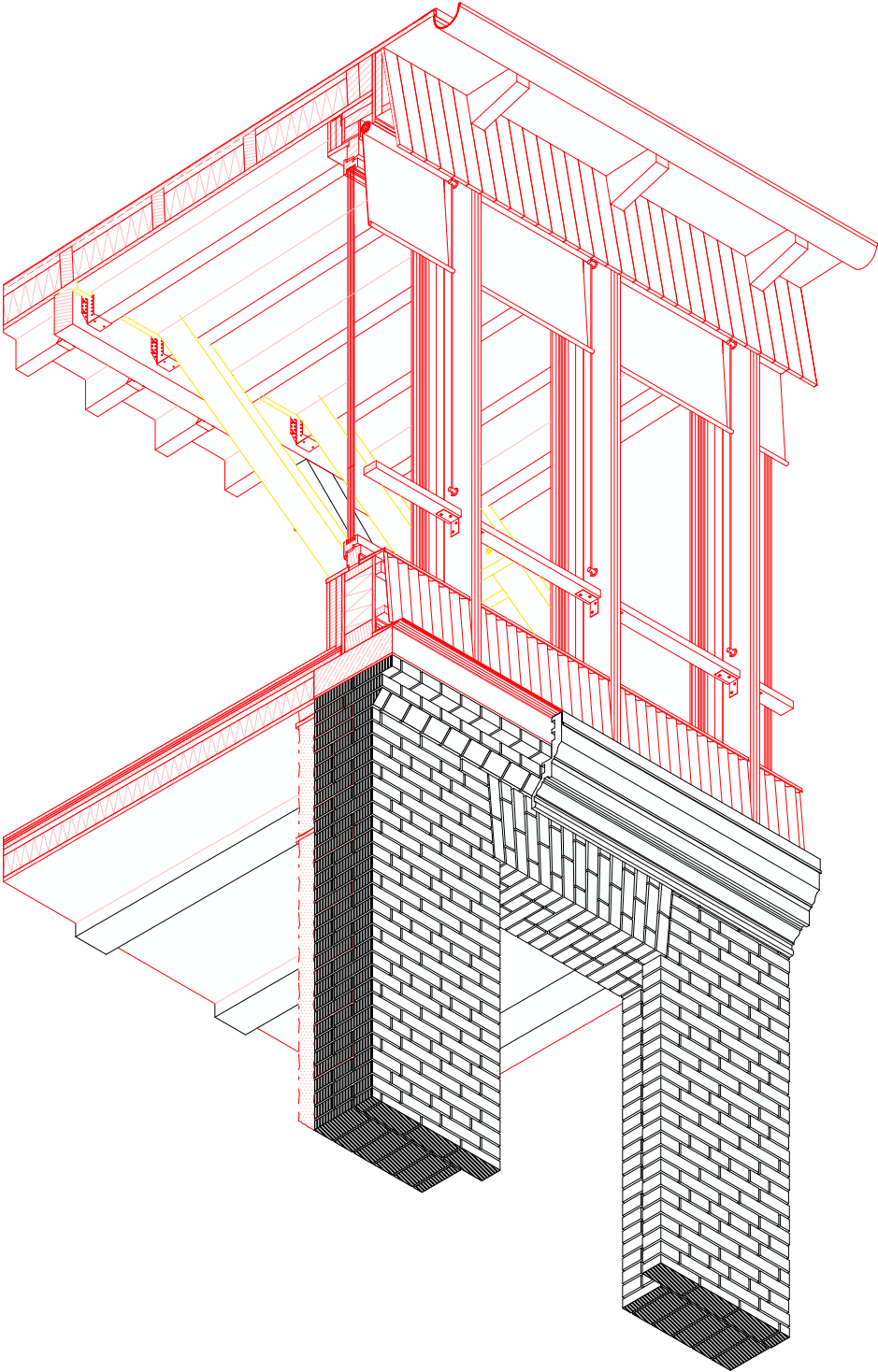


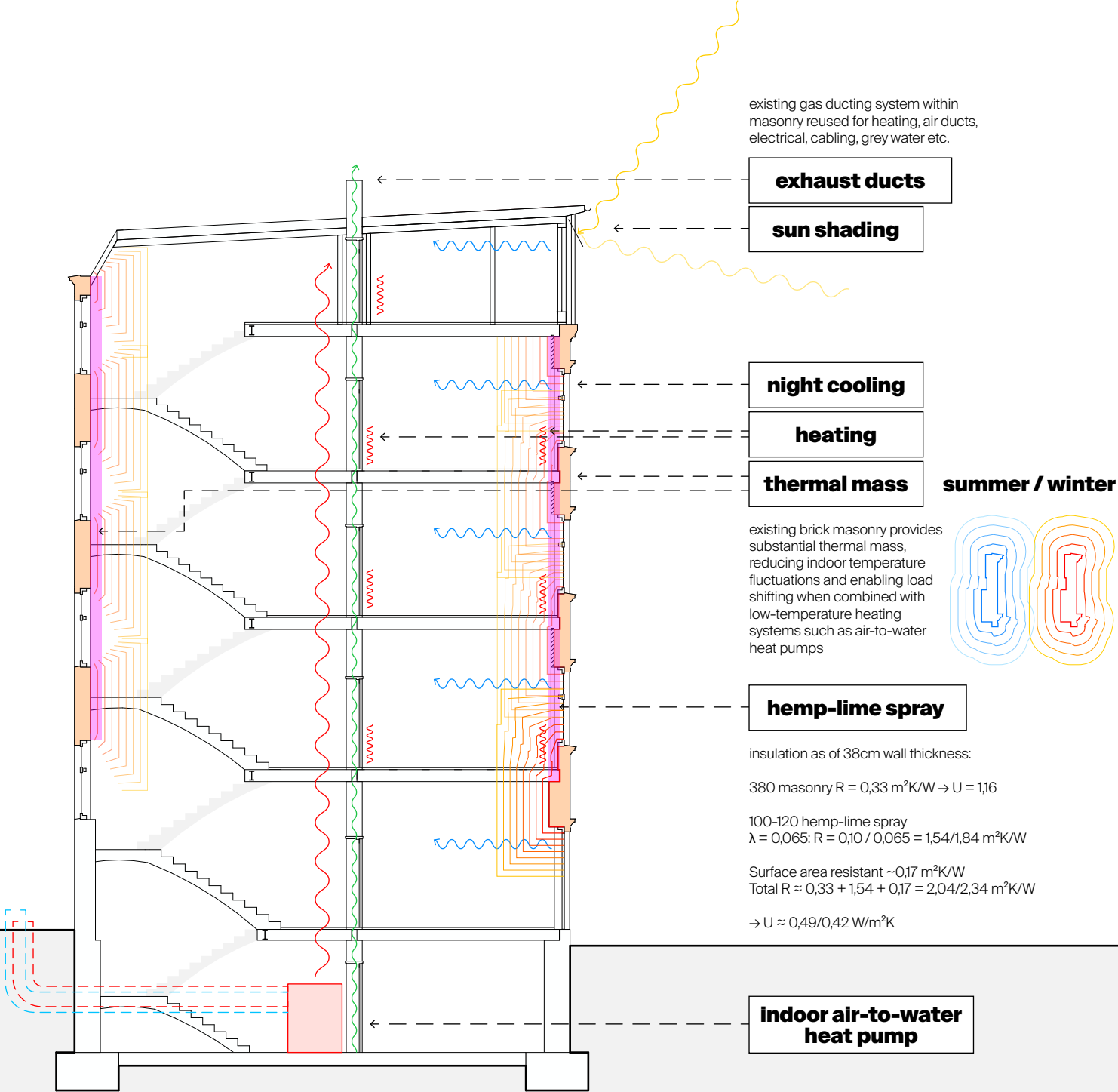






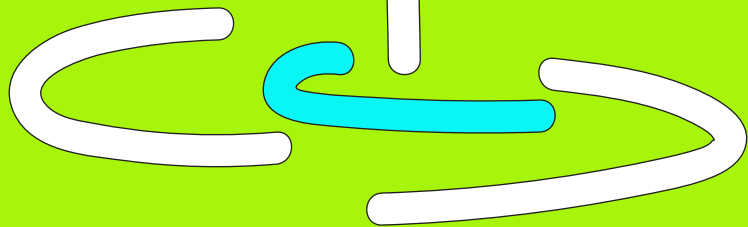
1:20
(scaled to 1:40)





**(MID)
TEACH
A HUMAN
TO**

*reporting
records
rules
of scale*



This thesis asks what it means for a state to look after its built environment, not as an administrative function, but as a political, history and architectural commitment. About what it says how it handles the ideals of care, rewarding productivity beyond economic interests. The thesis proceeds from a simple premise: to care is inherently to tend to what already exists. It is therefore not interested in the design of something new, but in the intelligence, value, and potential embedded in what is already built.

Conclusion

Returning to where the project started, the central claim has held: architecture is not merely a building practice. It is a mediator between often opposing forces – market, state, and civil society – and the discipline through which those conflicts acquire a physical, everyday form. The Flora is not interesting because it might one day become a beautiful renovation. It is interesting because it is a place where a constitutional tension (*Eigentum verpflichtet*), a financial logic (speculative vacancy, the lock-in effect, the GSW sell-off), a legal instrument (the *Treuhänder* paragraph), and a neighbourhood's stubborn attention all collide and become spatial. To care for that house is to make those forces negotiable rather than inevitable. The architect's work, in this reading, is less the authorship of form than the moderation of conflict – and the production of evidence that such moderation is possible.

This is where the proverb “teach a man to fish” does its real work. A single repaired house feeds the city for a day. A catalogue of repair, a widespread method or rethinking for reading the constructive logic of the brick-and-timber hybrid, for navigating the legal cosmos that keeps a building empty, for assembling the financial instruments that could unlock it – feeds it for considerably longer. The ambition was never the one-off rescue of one Gründerzeit corner house, but a transferable, repeatable practice of care that others could pick up after me.



Implications

Two implications follow, and both depart from how architecture is usually taught and practised.

The first is the experiments and studios deliberate included consideration on the financial. Architectural education trains us to be fluent in form and nearly illiterate in money, even though money is the medium in which most decisions about the built environment are actually made. Bringing capital flows, remuneration structures (the HOAI and its Leistungsphasen), subsidy mechanisms, and ownership models into the centre of an architectural project is the precondition for the discipline to act systemically rather than reactively. Making these mechanisms visible is itself a design act. It is the part of “teaching to fish” that the profession has most consistently refused to do.

The second is engaging through architecture. Throughout, architectural means – drawing, mapping, modelling, the patient description of a wall – were used not only to propose but to communicate, to convene, and to argue. Architecture became a way of entering rooms that would otherwise be closed to it: neighbourhood meetings, conversations with the district, debates about a paragraph of housing law. The drawing was the rod handed across the table. Its significance lay less in what it depicted than in what it made discussable.

Reflection on the process

The financial investigation, which I had thought as central, thinned out toward the end. The ambition to model the full economic case for a Treuhänder intervention – to show, in numbers, that care can be financed and even incentivised – was only partially met, and that gap leaves me unsatisfied. It is the part of the rod I sketched but did not finish carving, and it is the most obvious place for the work to be taken further.

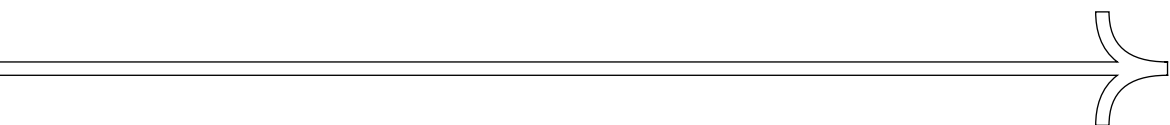
A second limitation was physical. I never stood inside the Flora. The building’s political charge, the sustained public attention around it, and ultimately the legal prohibitions on trespass made entry impossible. My understanding of its condition is therefore archival and inferred rather than touched: the crumbling stucco, the timber ceilings surrendering to rot, the water entering through missing drains are reconstructed from documents and from the logic of the typology, not from being in the room. Working more closely with physical models might have produced a more materially specific, more situated outcome. But that specificity would likely have come at the cost of the systemic argument – the very thing the project set out to make. The trade-off was real, and I chose the system over the single room. I am not certain it was the right choice; I am certain it was a choice, and naming it openly is part of handing the method on.

What unambiguously worked was engaging first-hand with the people who already hold a stake in the house – stakeholders, politicians,

and above all the neighbourhood initiative. This proved the most generative method in the entire project. It formed a genuine bond to the site and, more importantly, taught me the cosmos of a single house: the dense web of actors, obligations, histories, and frustrations that any one address contains. No amount of desk research produces that knowledge. It is itself a kind of fishing lesson, received rather than given – a reminder that the people closest to a building often already know how to care for it and lack only the tools, the standing, and the legibility that the discipline could help provide.

This is finally why transparency is the method and not merely a value. To do architecture transparently – to open the legal, financial, and constructive black boxes and render them as drawings anyone can read – is aesthetically and purposefully loaded. It reconnects a complex, abstracted world to the ad-hoc, situated questions people actually ask of a building: who owns it, why is it empty, can we live here, what would it take. Design, in this register, is communication. And communication of this kind is a way of producing heritage: not the heritage of the protected facade, but the heritage of knowing how to keep something – how to repair, maintain, and continue it.

Teaching a human to fish only emancipates if the rod is shared and the water is open. The deepest tension the project never resolves – and should not pretend to – is that care work remains undervalued and largely unpaid, and that handing people the tools does not, by itself, give them the time or the security to use them. Open-sourcing the method is necessary but not sufficient. Still, it is the part of the work an architect can actually do: to refuse to hoard the rod, to draw the system so that others can read it, and to leave behind not a single saved house but a transferable, openly held practice of caring for the houses we already have.



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