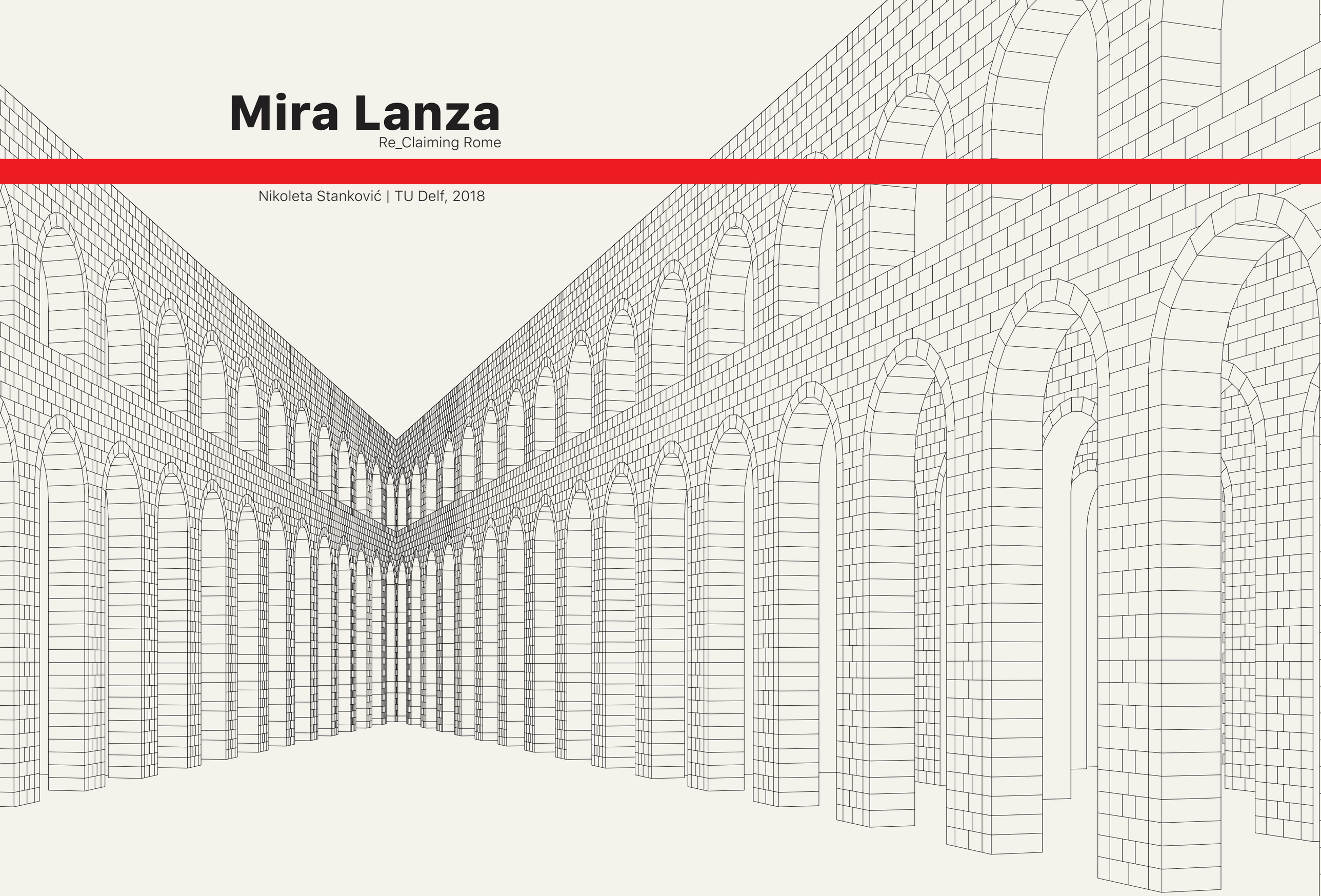
Mira Lanza

Re_Claiming Rome

Nikoleta Stanković | TU Delf, 2018



Rome - city rich in history and culture

Rome, the ‘Eternal City’, has been the centre of one of the globe’s greatest civilizations and has exerted a huge influence over the world in its circa 2500 years of existence.

The attraction of Rome as a cultural hotspot has made it one of the most popular destinations on the globe. In fact, Rome is the fourth most visited city in Europe. However, the influx of the tourists has grown so much over recent years that the city has become endangered through overcrowding. And the mass tourist numbers make life very unpleasant for locals trying to go about their daily lives.

Rome - an overcrowded open-air museum

It is not far-fetched to say that Rome city center has become occupied by tourists. Central Rome started loosing its identity due to their enormous number. Everything the city has to offer is on offer. But the demand became too high.

"The commercialization of culture can undermine the soul of a tourist destination. Local traditions that have a rich cultural heritage are reduced to wearing costumes and putting on acts for the tourists in return for money."

Shopping, tourism, big corporations and hotel chains are slowly erasing the city's identity

There are thousands of hotels to accommodate the visitors, international shopping giants that sell clothing produced in other countries, countless overpriced restaurants with food that is loosing any similarities with Italian cuisine. The tourist excess is becoming unmanageable and it feels like central Rome no longer belongs to its citizens.

Reclaiming the city's identity

The further one moves from the city center, the easier it becomes to see the real life of Rome. In contrast to famous ruins of ancient city such as Roman Forum, the industrial 'ruins' stand abandoned. But they are as much Rome's heritage as the Roman Forum is. Admittedly, not as historically valuable, but nevertheless, worth preserving. Only, in this case, there are opportunities for a more liberal approach; opportunities to make something more from these ruins and to intertwine them with contemporary design, to integrate these areas within the city urban fabric, for them to get again a valuable position that contributes to the construction of the new Rome.

One of the aims of this project within the framework of the studio theme "Re_ Claiming Rome" was to, in a way, reclaim Rome's identity and city's power to change and evolve; to create something of cultural, not commercial value.

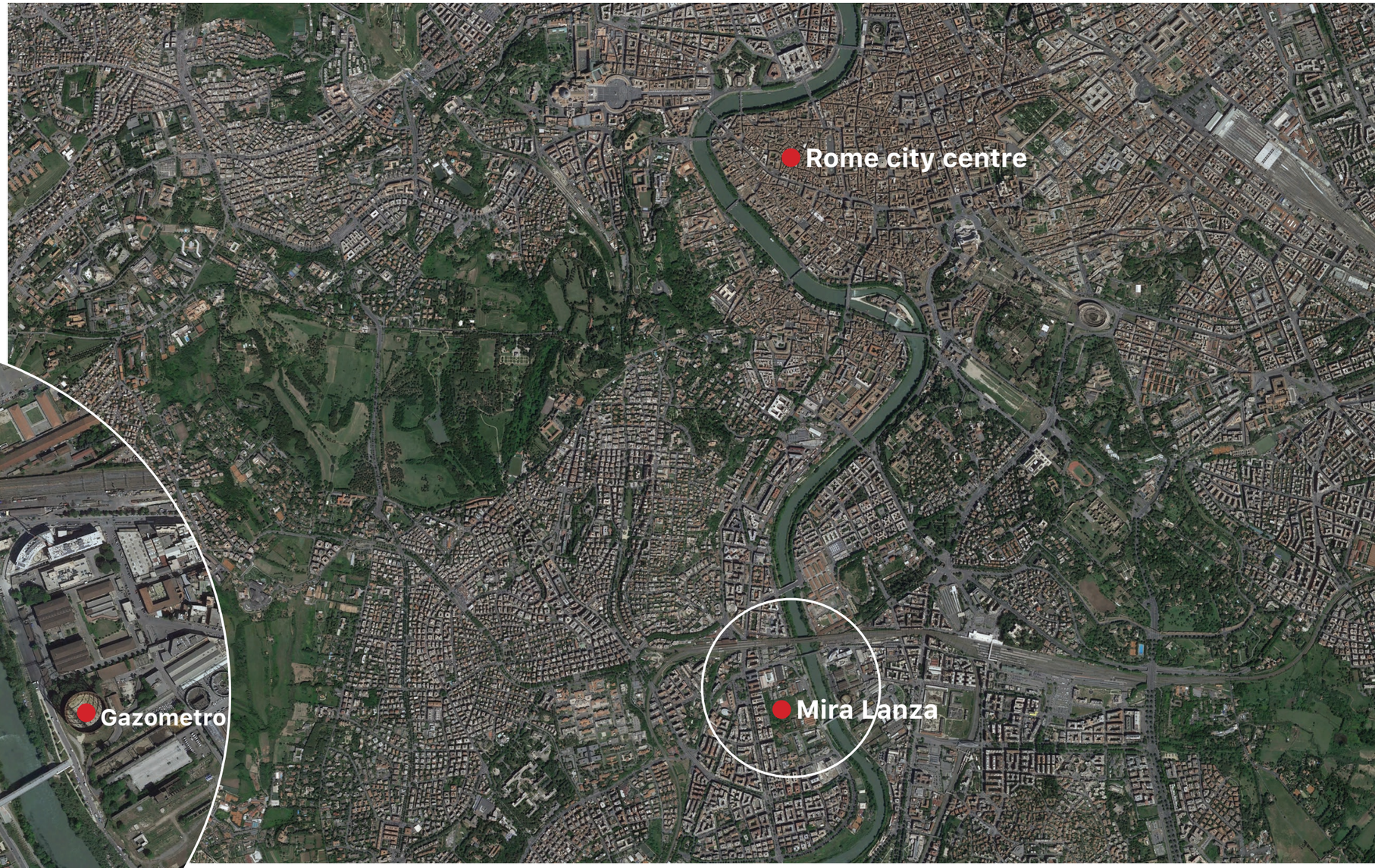
Former industry

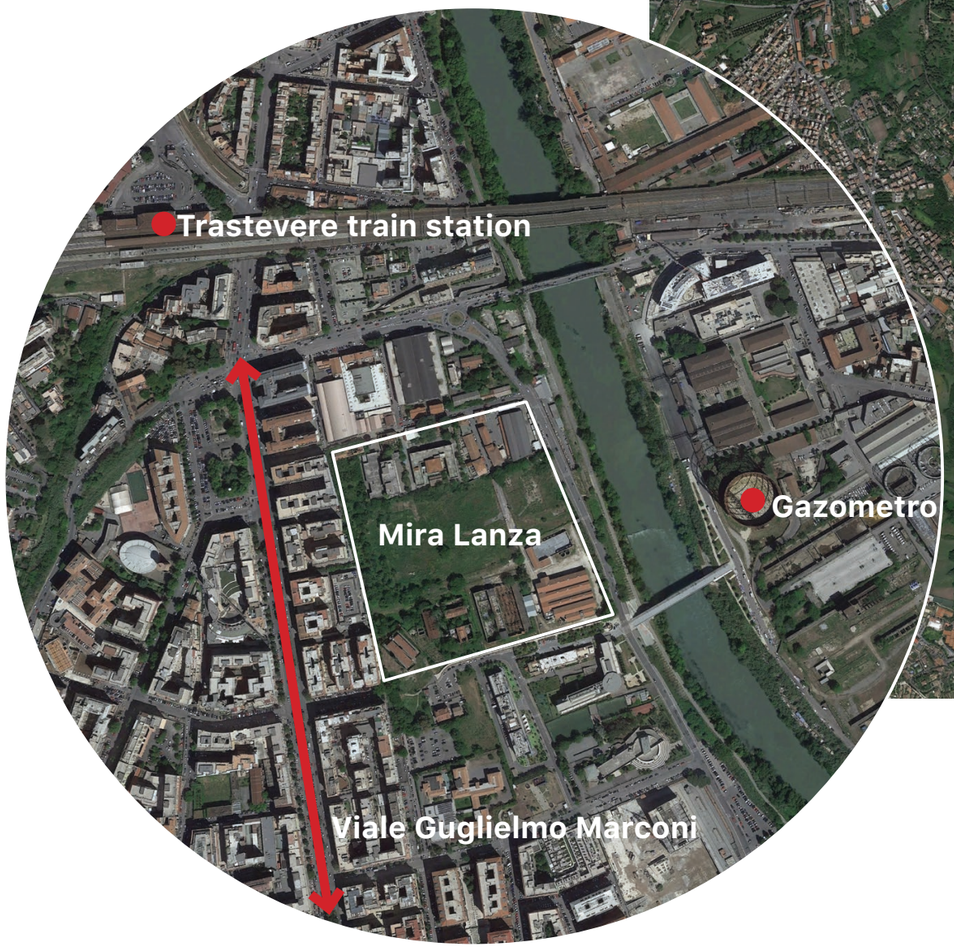
Mira Lanza was a factory that produced toiletries, but today it stands abandoned. Half of the buildings are now demolished and the other half is in decay. Still, it provides an interesting scenery, and some of the buildings are partially used as theater and museum, while others are occupied by homeless people.

Location

The site of Mira Lanza is situated in a suburban area of Rome, just outside the city centre.

Gazometro - the huge industrial landmark - is located across the river from the site. Busy Trastevere station is a few minutes away from Mira Lanza. Viale Marconi - a street occupied by shops and cafes - passes by the site.





Local economy

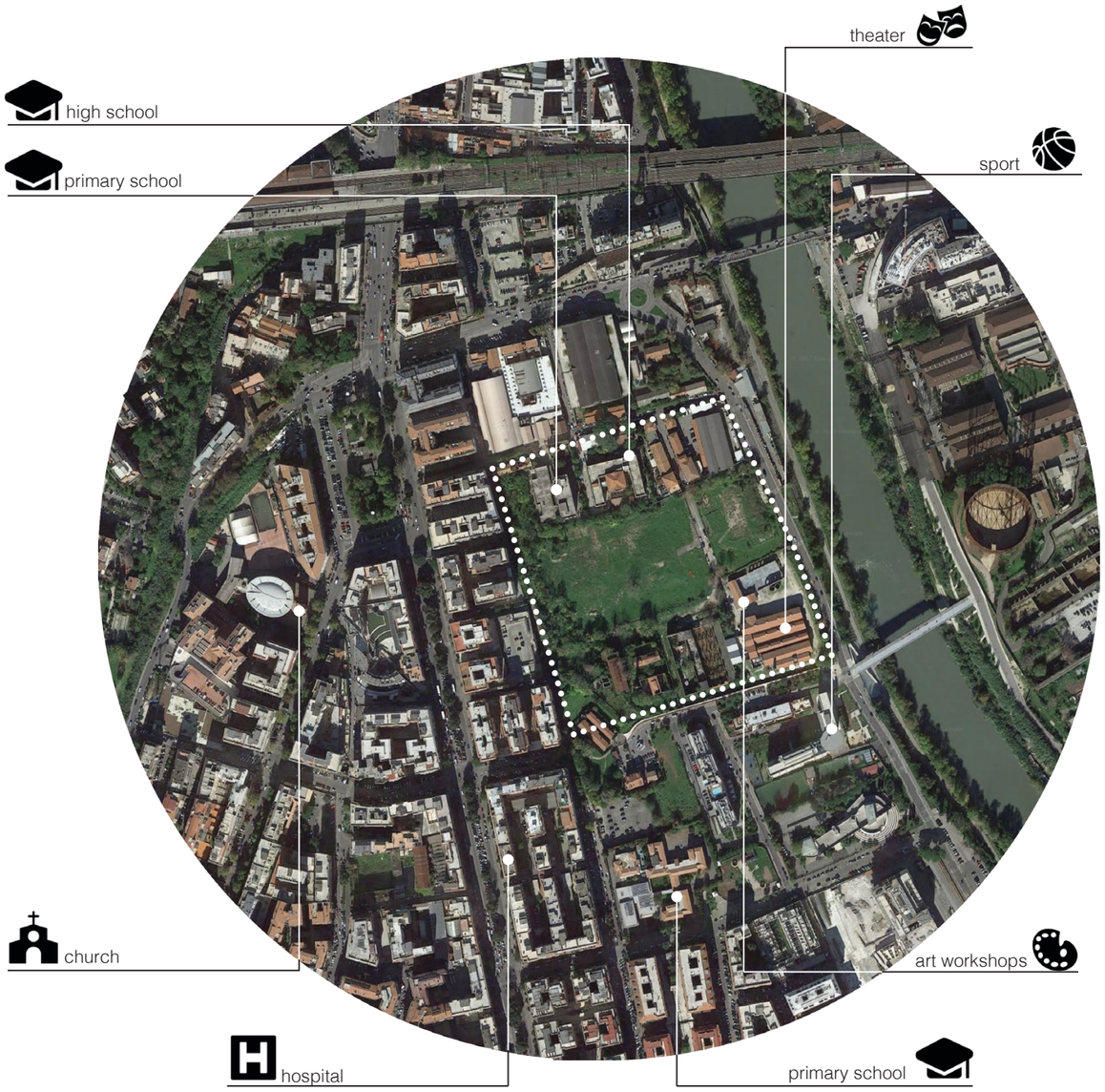
In terms of commercial facilities the site itself has, basically, nothing to offer. However, Viale Marconi, that passes along the site, is a busy street with a considerable amount of shops, supermarkets, cafes, restaurants and other buisnesses. Despite the proximity of such a popular spot for visitors, Mira Lanza doesn't attract nearly as much of them.

Cultural and public facilities

On the other hand, Mira Lanza faciliates quite a lot of public establishments, in contrast to commercial. Teatro India, modern art workshops, schools and Red Cross base are situated on Mira Lanza site.

This indicates that Mira Lanza has a great potential in being an inviting public centre within Rome.

Nevertheless, the area still has a feeling of abandonment and decay, and, in fact, doesn't get that much visitors.



Housing

Mira Lanza is situated in a more suburban part of the city.

Research reveals, as seen on the map to the right, that the area is densely populated. This shows that Mira Lanza has the potential to be a place where people who live nearby will spend their leisure time given the right circumstances.

It is also a place that separates the housing blocks from the river, which is also a natural attraction for people.

Ecology

While researching the ecological aspect of the site and it's surroundins it became apparent that there are not enough places for recreaction and for people to enjoy nature.

While the Tiber is passing right by the site, where there is a lot of greenery along the water and where Romans like to spend their time cycling and running, Mira Lanza has no direct connection to it due to high river banks that separate the city and the river.

Reclaiming connection to the River

Mira Lanza area has an advantage of being located alongside the Tiber River.

The Tiber played a key role in Rome founding, and through the centuries it was critically important to Roman trade and commerce, as it was used to ship stone, timber and food to Rome. Later, Romans connected the river to the sewer system in order to bring water to the rest of the city.

Today Tiber flows between high walls, but during Roman times it was well known for regularly flooding the areas around it, for example it used to flood the area of Campo Marzio to a depth of around 2 meters.

Bathhouses, natatoriums, and water stages once were synonymous to Rome at a time when the city represented the pinnacle of society and innovation. And Tiber played a central role in that image of Rome.

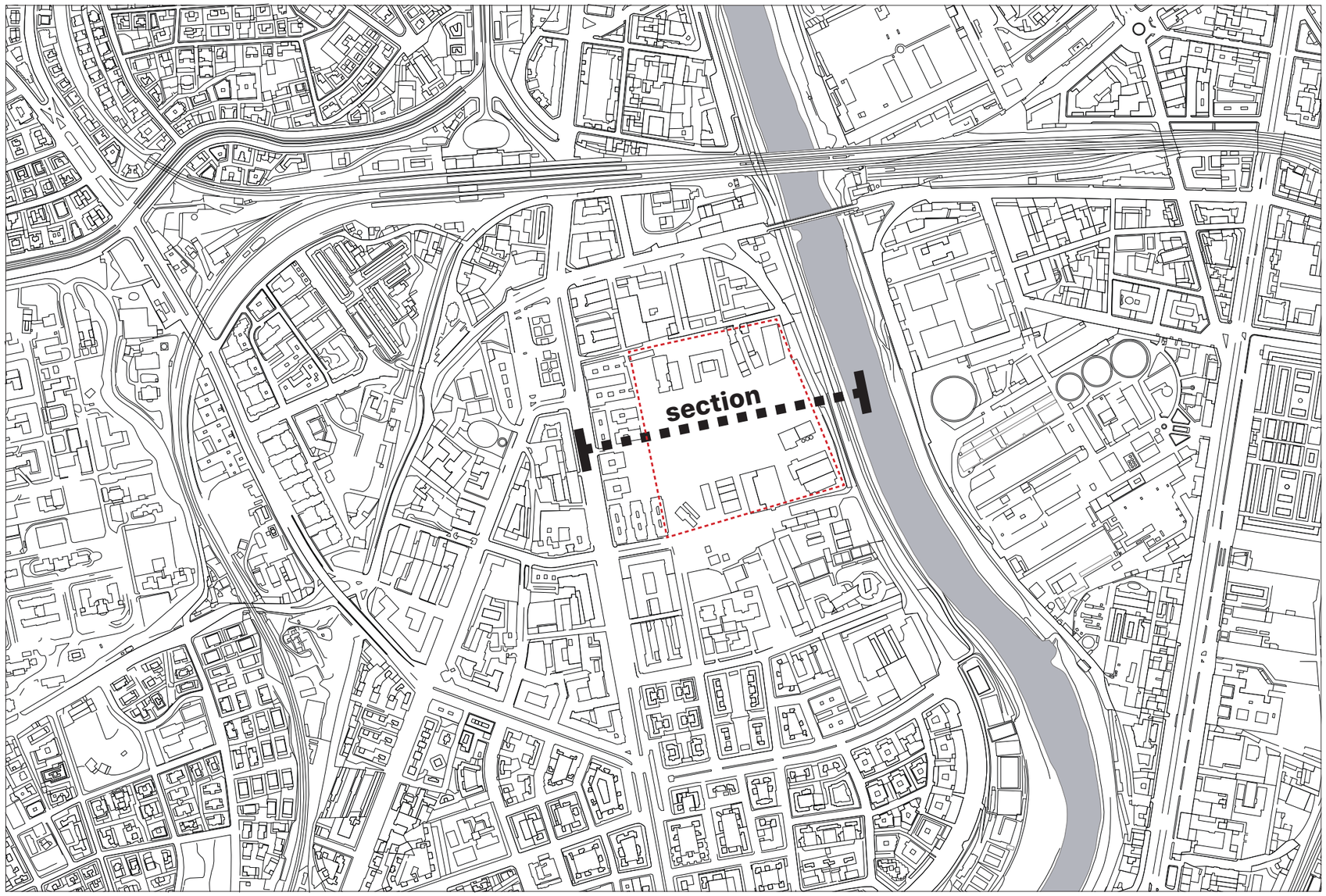
Connecting the area of Mira Lanza to the Tiber River was one of the aims for this project.

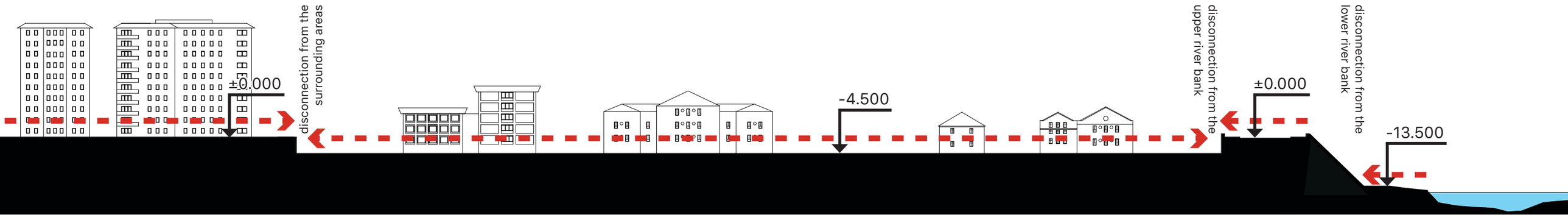
Disconnection

The research of the physical aspects of the site in relation to the surroundings revealed several ways in which Mira Lanza is disconnected from the city.

First of all, it's ground level is below the level of the surrounding streets by 4 to 5 meters which gives the impression that the site is "sunk" below the ground.

Secondly, this part of the city has a clear urban grid of streets, while the site of Mira Lanza is in disarray and doesn't have a clear structure.





Concept: Infrastructure

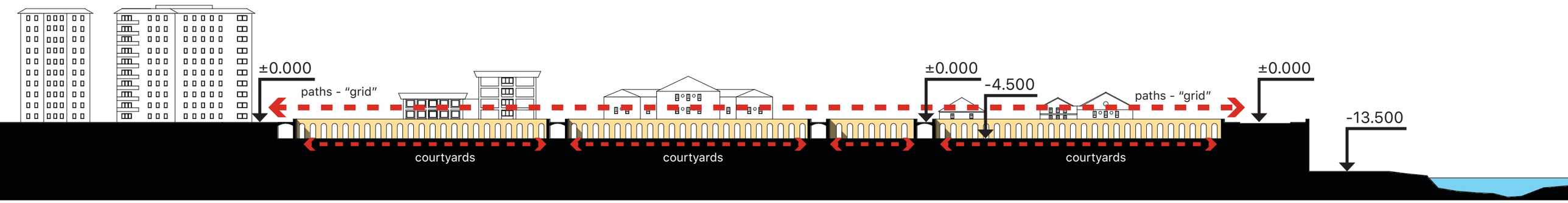
According to the morphological research of the area and its urban fabric, there was a need to make Mira Lanza a part of the city, using existing grid and extending it inside the area.

At the same time, the hight difference inside and outside Mira Lanza allowes the grid to get a third dimension. This grid becomes spatial and also creates a set of courtyards that could be percieved as “sunk” into the ground.

Moreover, the spatial grid becomes a way to “frame” the brownfield, which is the area itself, and create different “pictures” inside each “cell”.

In this way, the site becomes more approachable, while at the same time new courtyards create a set of more intimate urban interiors.

The reference for this concept could be found in ancient Roman architecture, and in that way, it claims the connection to the historical evidence of the city.



Concept: Landscape

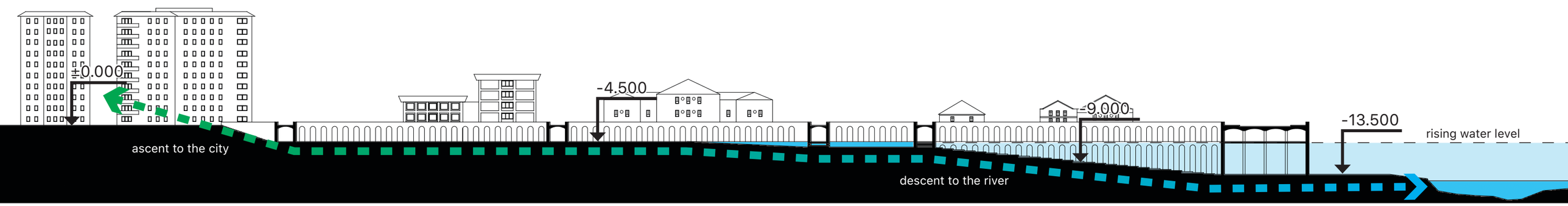
Following one of the project aims of connecting Mira Lanza to the Tiber, and the research into the ecological state of the area, while making sure it's more approachableto the public, there was a need to introduce the design of the ground level of the area, independently from the spatial grid.

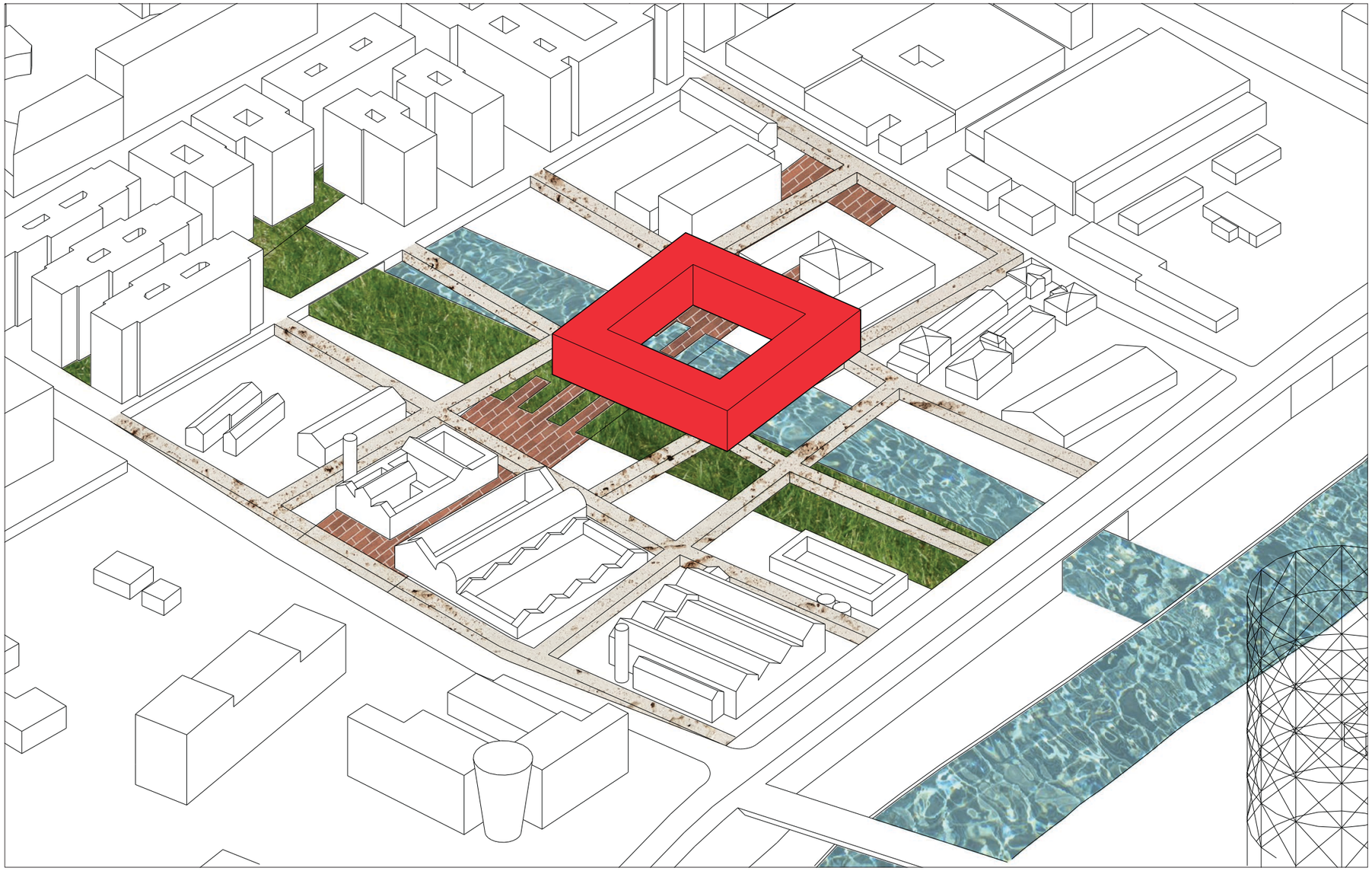
While 'viaducts' create connection to the upper river bank and the city, the "landscape" creates a slowly descending path from the city to the river itself.

This path has two parts: greenery and water, while the third is a promenade that is marking the centre of the area and makes it more approachable for the sites along the Tiber.

As the Tiber rises, a part of the area fills with water, creating an existential experience - observing the changes to the space that are brought by forces of nature.

This concept also has the ojective to allow the area more clean air by planting more trees along the green path.



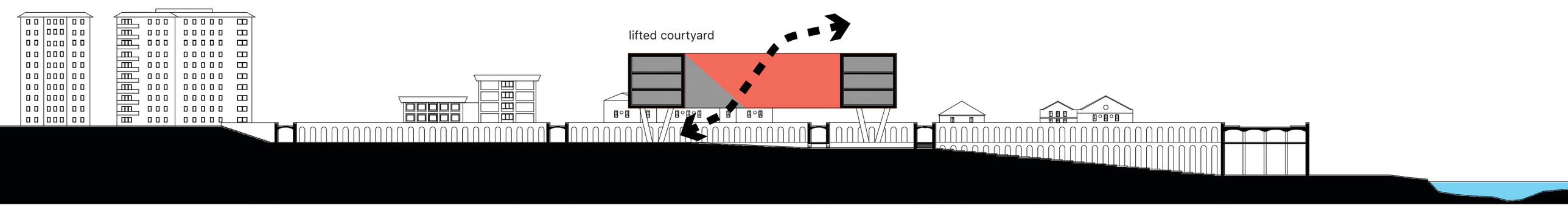


Concept: Architecture

Another intention for Mira Lanza was to create a public building that will be interesting for people who live nearby, for children who study in the schools there, people who visit the theater or museum that are already a part of Mira Lanza. In other words, create a community centre, that will act as the main local attraction.

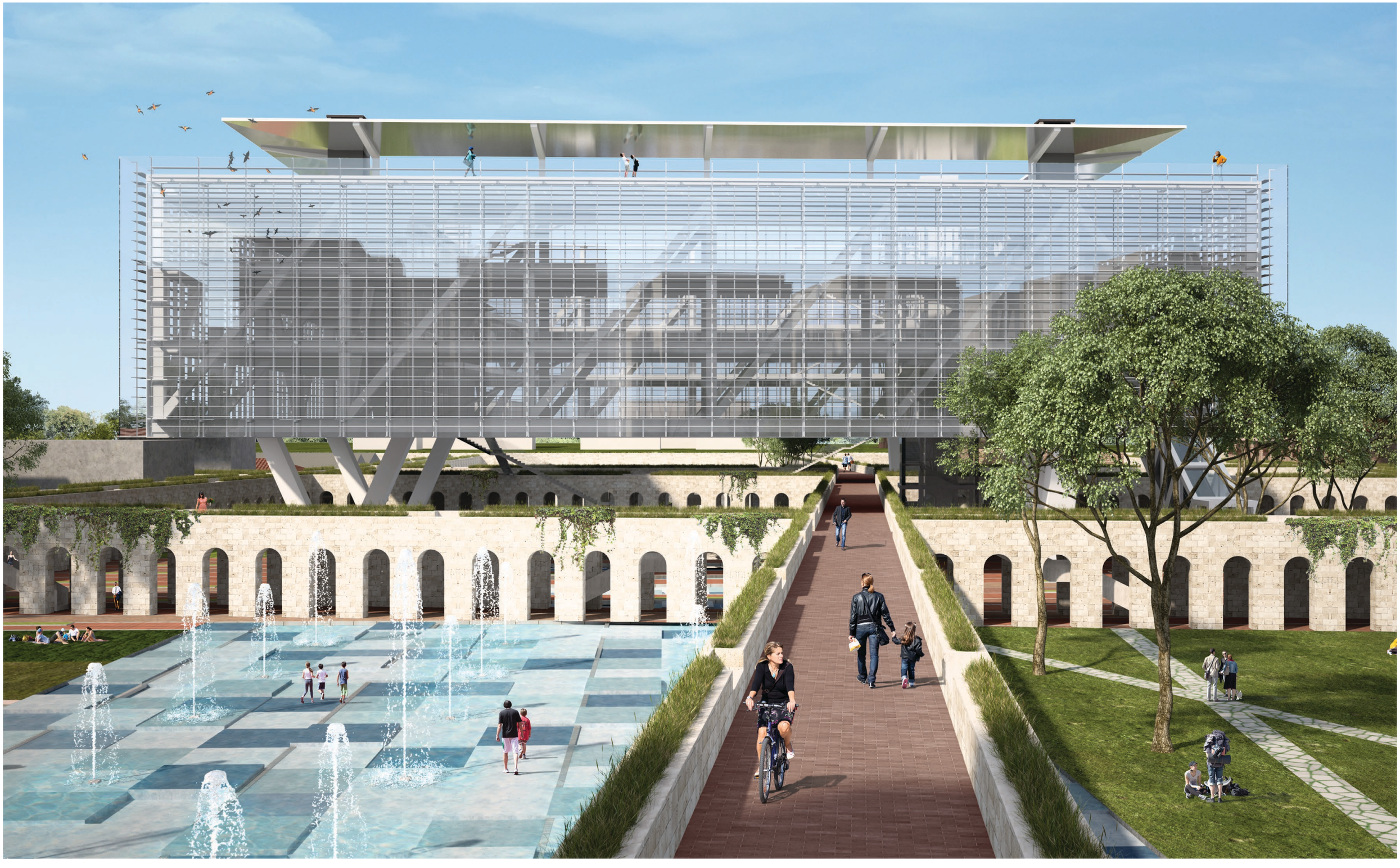
This is also in line with the notion of creating something of cultural, not commercial value.

While the “viaducts“ create “sunked in“ courtyards, the building, lifted above the ground, reverses this concept, establishing a lifted courtyard, that marks the central point of the area and acts as a frame of the interaction between the layers of “viaducts“ and the “landscape”.

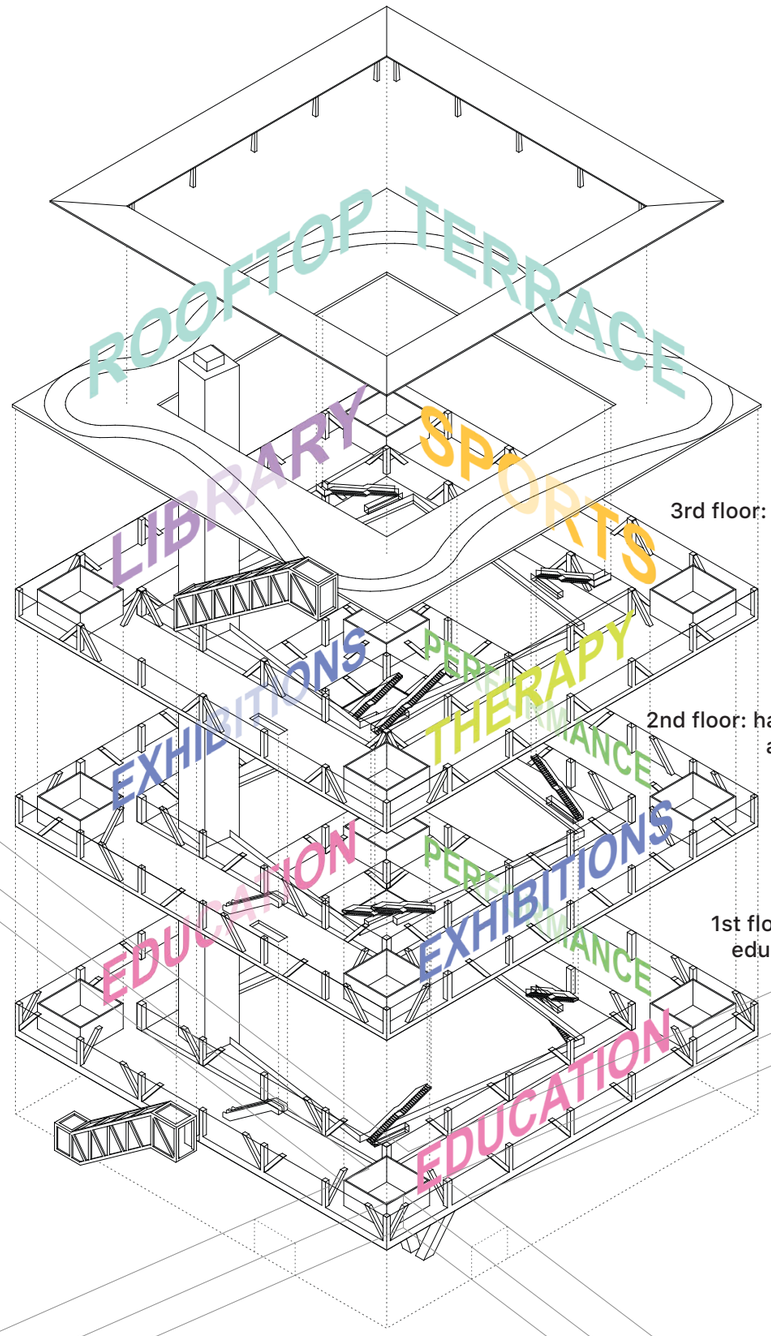


Masterplan

Elaboration: Landscape



Zoning



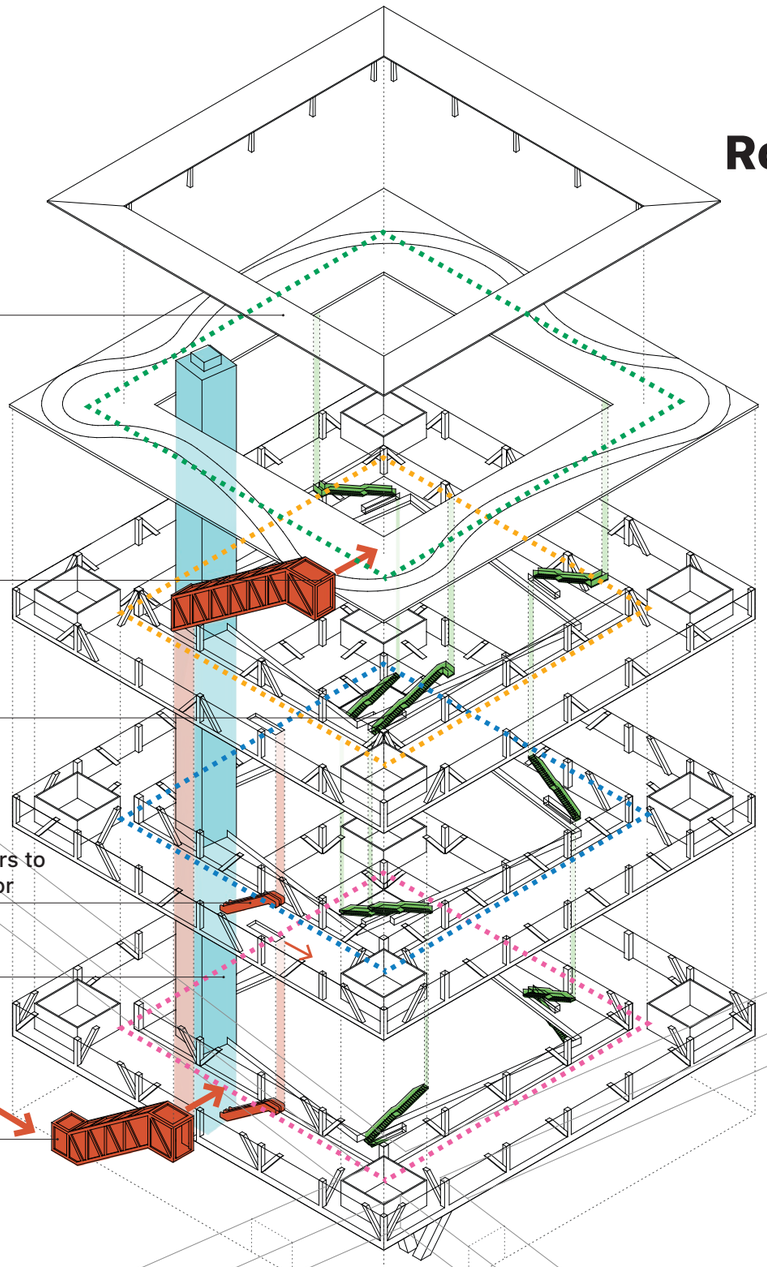
Rooftop: leisure

3rd floor: self-development body and mind

2nd floor: halls for exhibitions and performances

1st floor:classrooms for educational purposes

Routing



Roof sunshade

Main rooftop acces point

Escape routs

Secondary escalators to the 2nd and 3rd floor

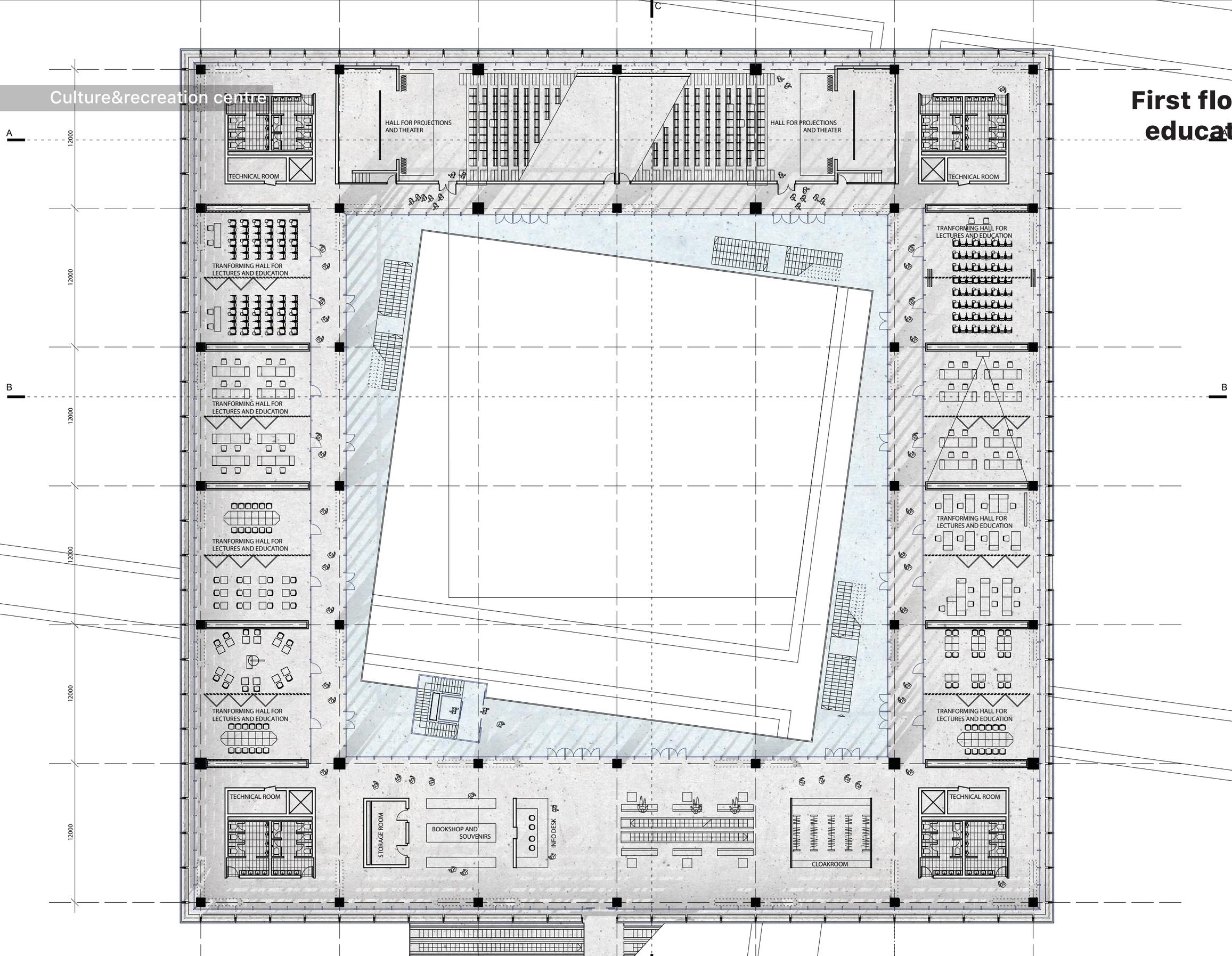
Lift

Main entrance through escalator

Culture&recreation centre

Ground floor: entrance

First floor : education



Culture&recreation centre

Second floor : exhibition

TECHNICAL ROOM

EMERGENCY EXIT FOR PROJECTION HALLS

TECHNICAL ROOM

TRANSFORMING HALL FOR EXHIBITIONS AND PERFORMANCES

TRANSFORMING HALL FOR EXHIBITIONS AND PERFORMANCES

TECHNICAL ROOM

CAFE

SOUVENIRS, INFOPOINT

TECHNICAL ROOM

A

B

C

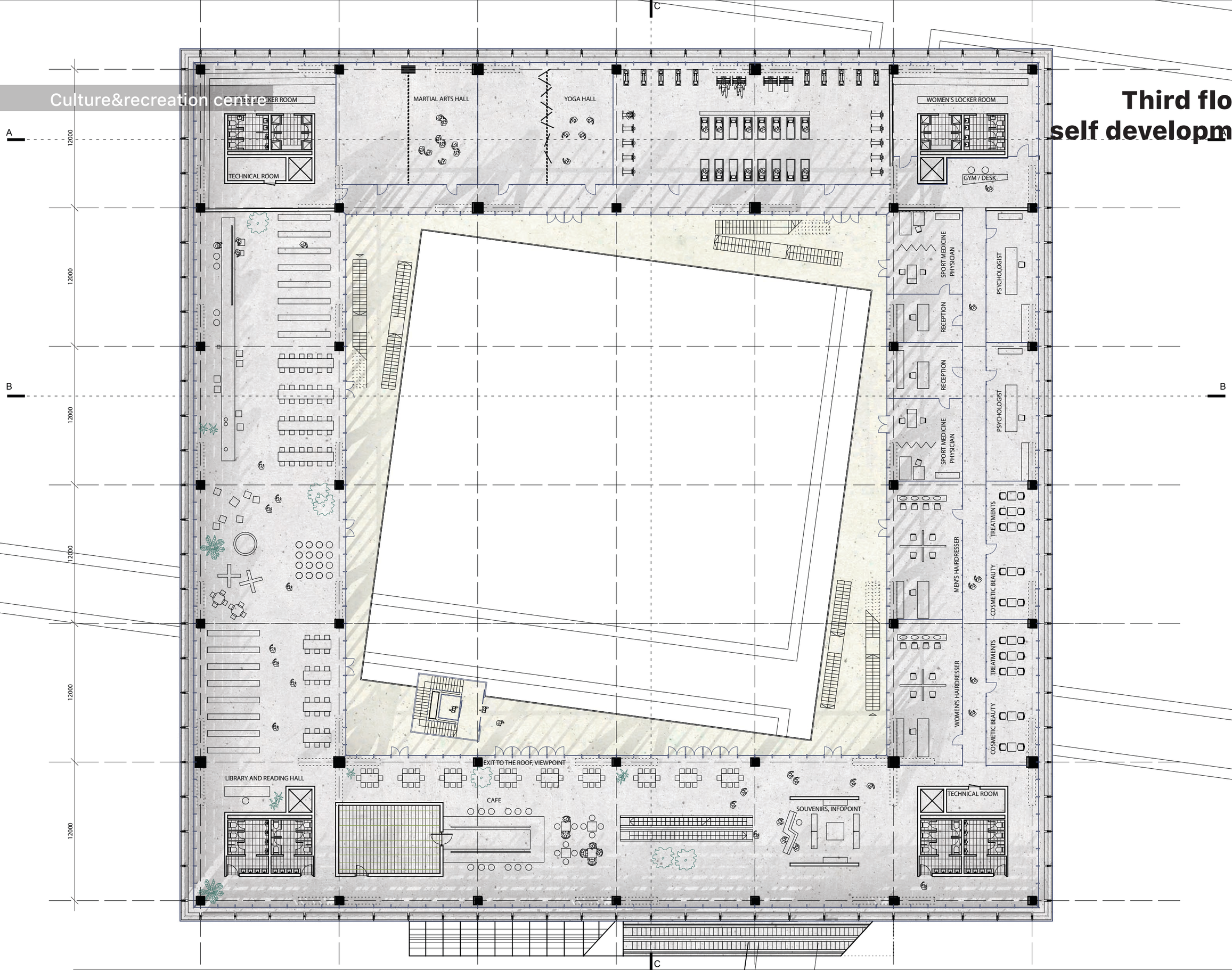
12000

12000

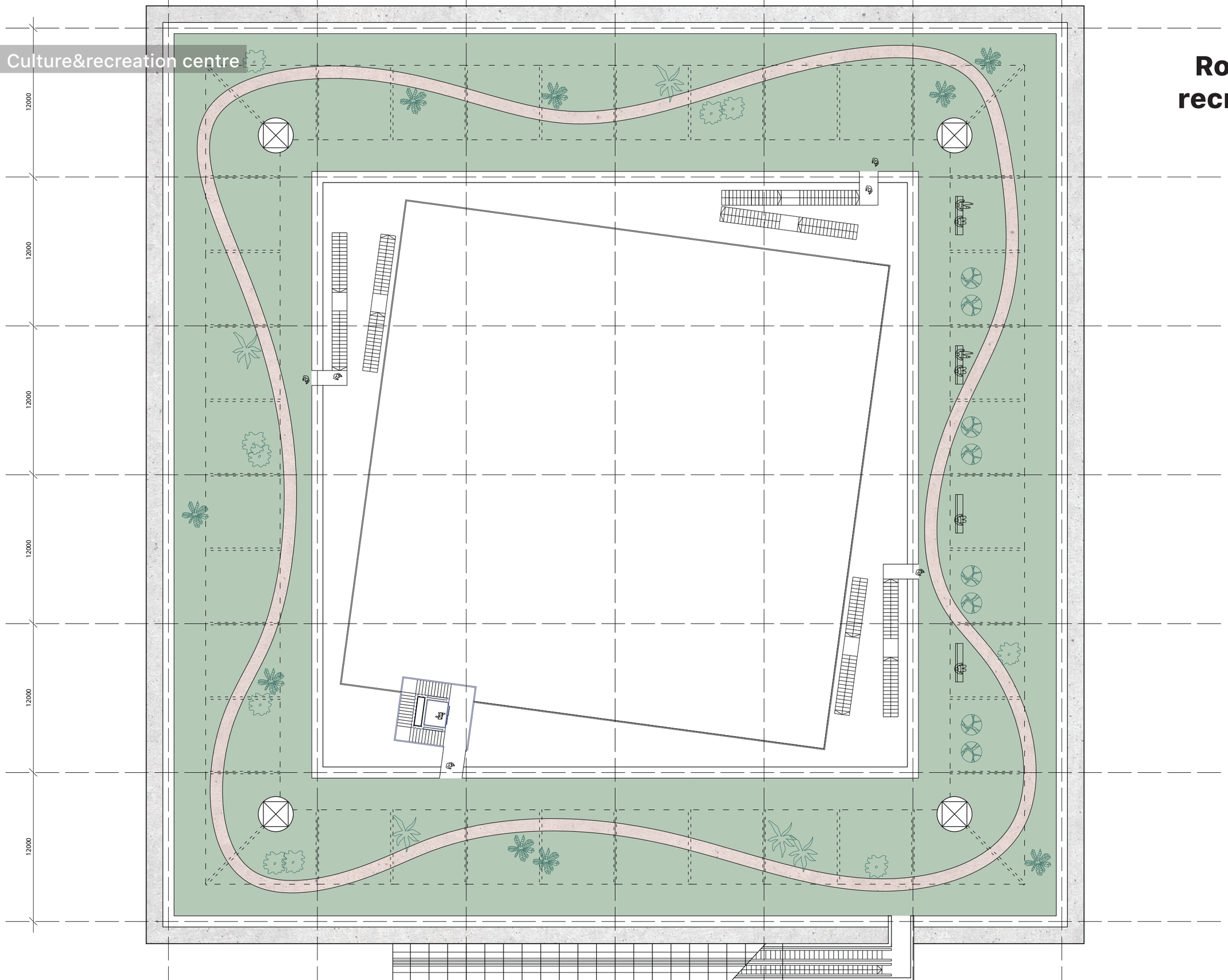
12000

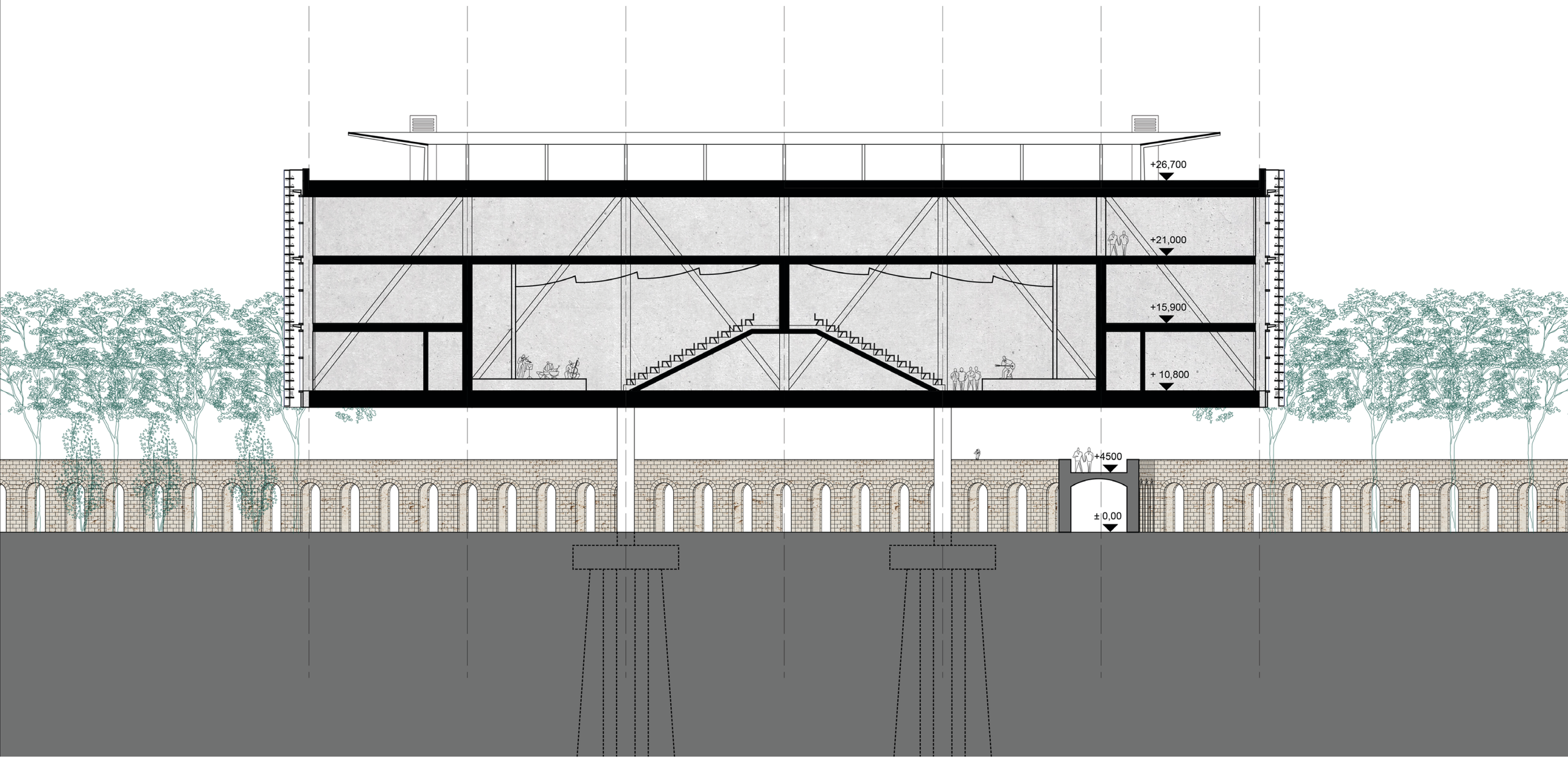
12000

Third floor : self development



Rooftop : recreation

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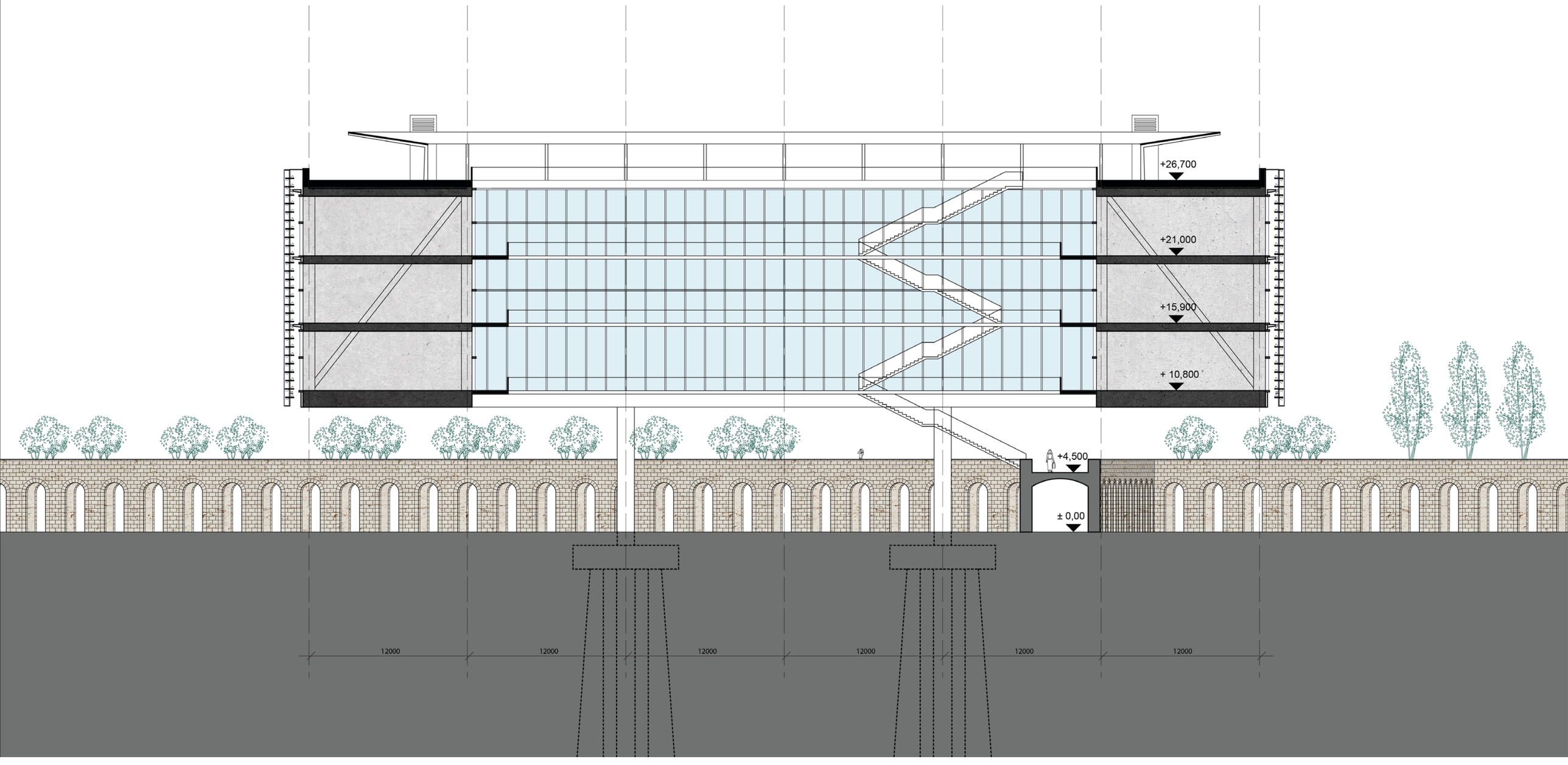
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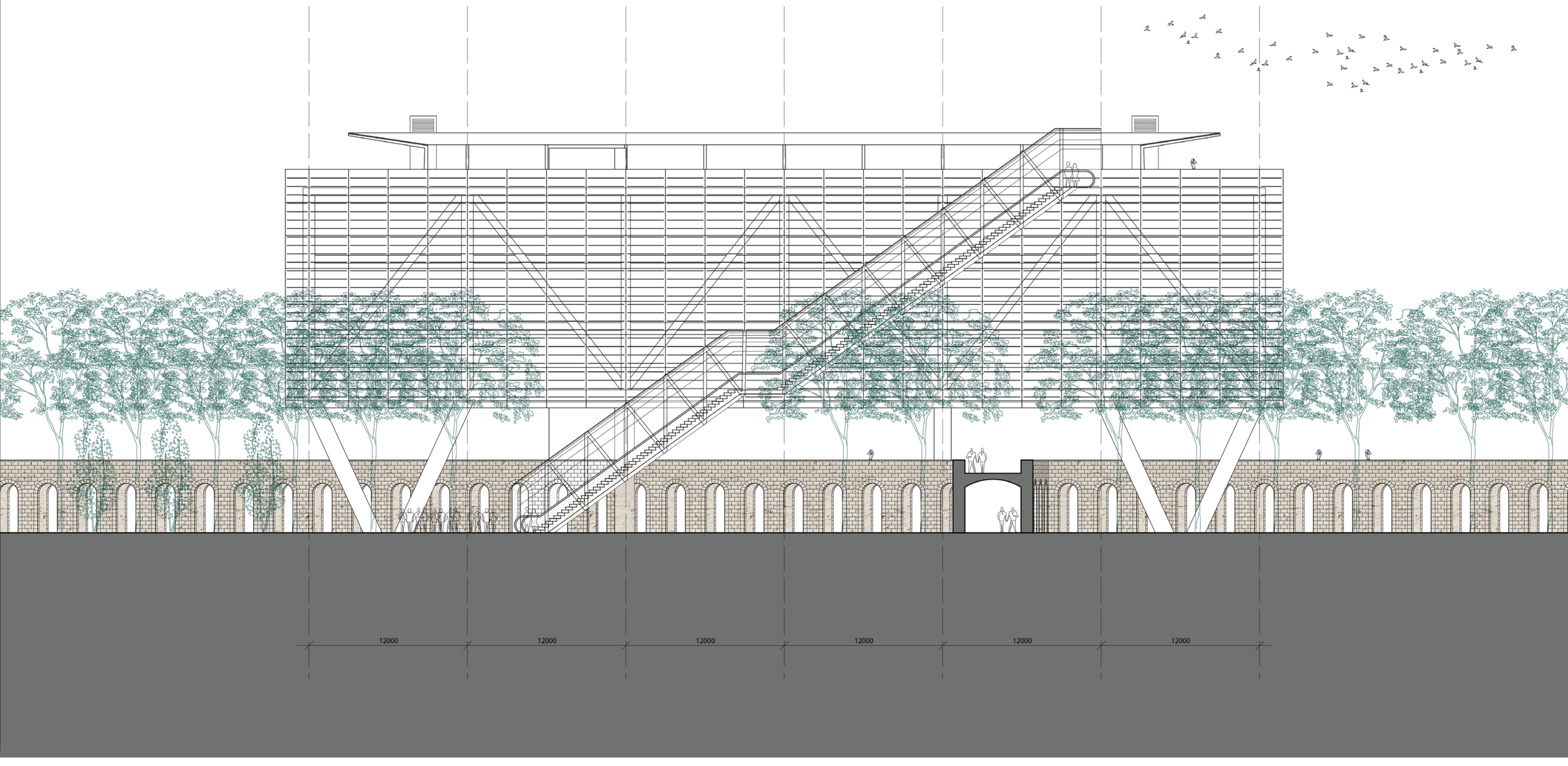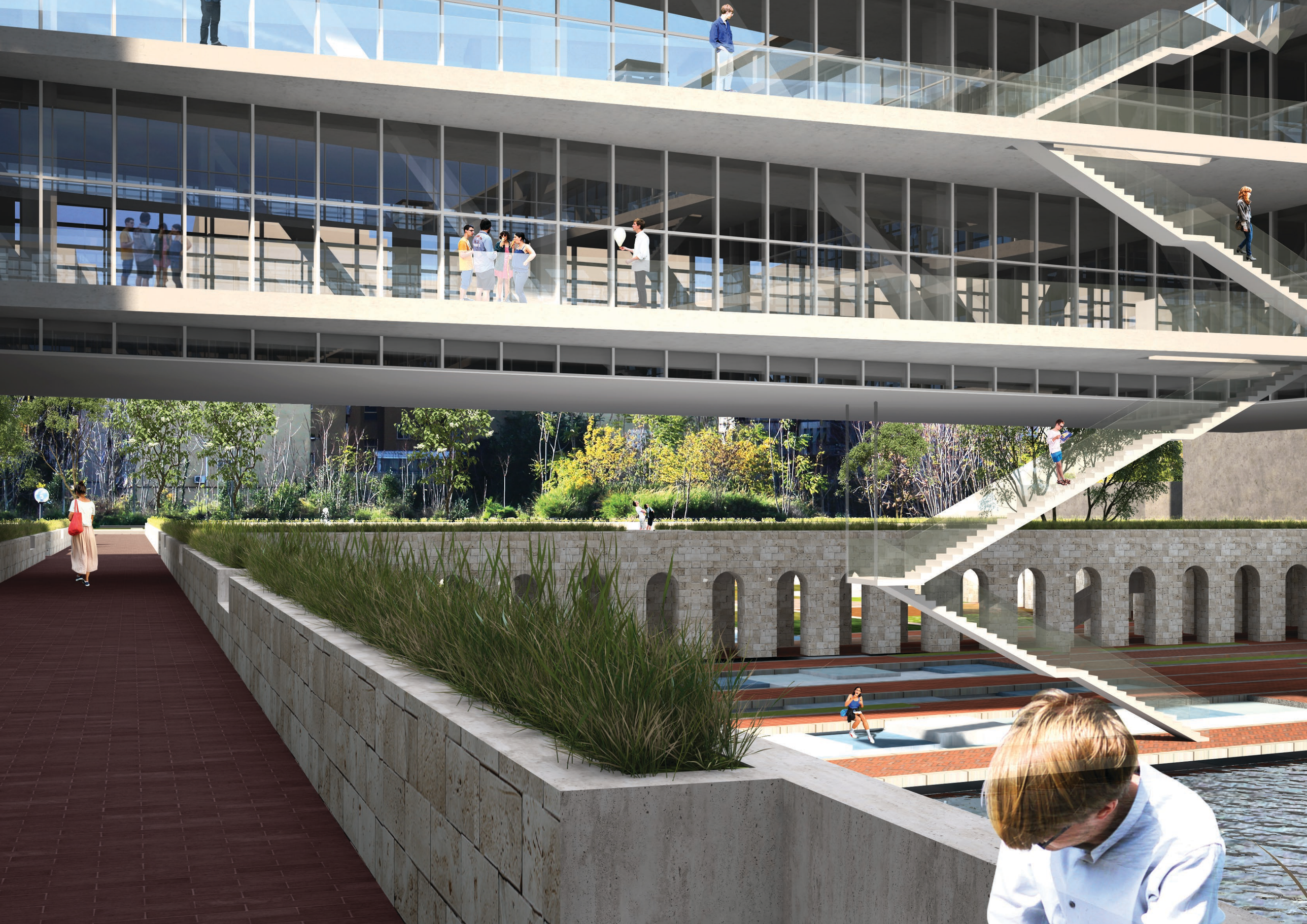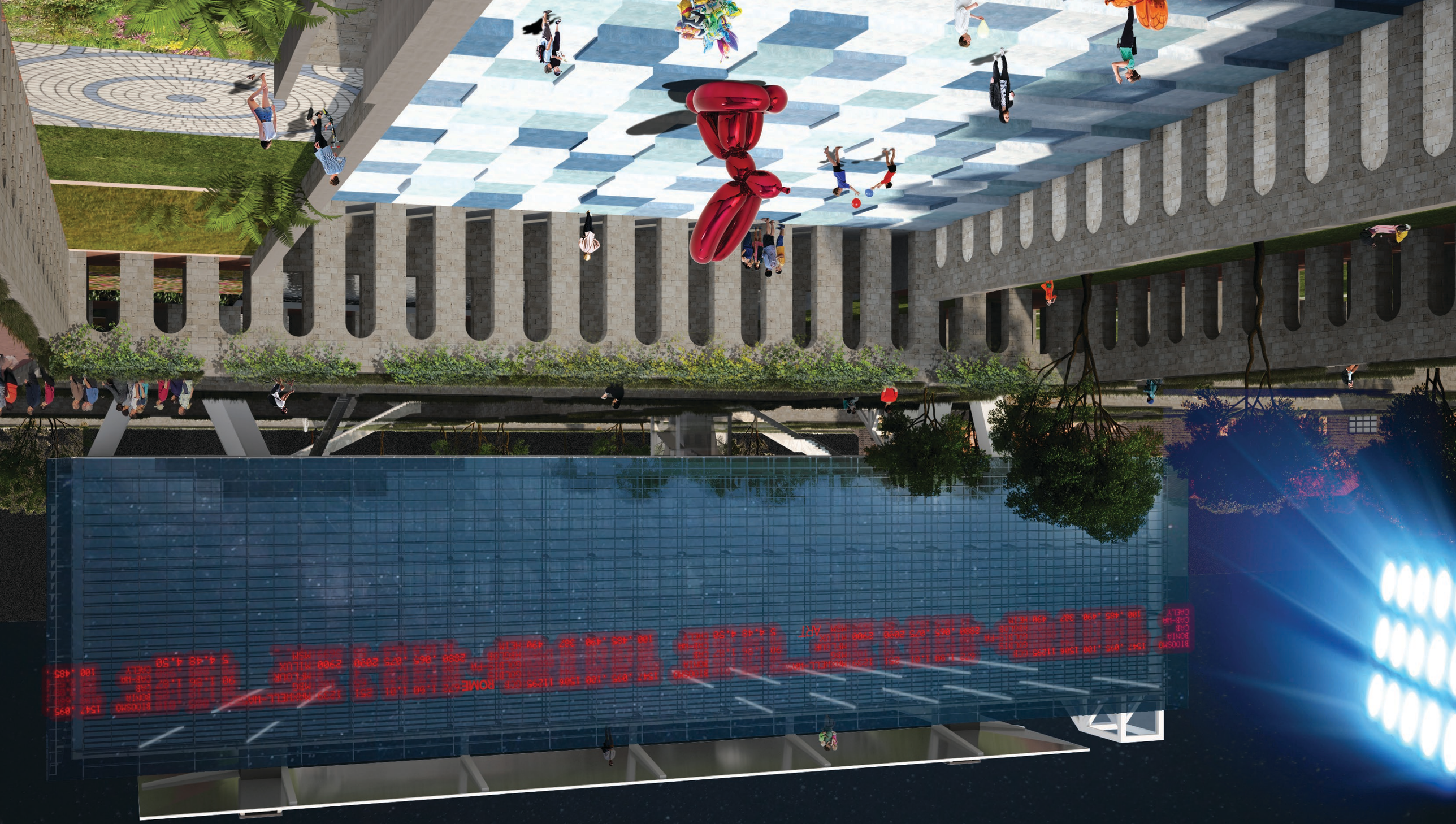
Culture&recreation centre