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**PILGRIM SITE
AT THE
ST AGNES MONASTERY
IN PRAGUE**

MASTER'S THESIS

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AFFIDAVIT

I declare that I have authored this thesis independently, that I have not used other than the declared sources/resources, and that I have explicitly indicated all material which has been quoted either literally or by content from the sources used. The text document uploaded to TUGRAZonline is identical to the present master's thesis dissertation.

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“The object of pilgrimage is not rest and recreation - to get away from it all. To set out on a pilgrimage is to throw down a challenge to everyday life.”

Huston Smith

INTRODUCTION

PILGRIMAGE

HISTORY OF PILGRIMAGE

Pilgrim journey has a very long history. It became a part of spiritual disciplines in almost all worlds' religions. Muslims wander to Mecca, Buddhists to Gangetic Planes in India, Jews travel to Jerusalem, which is the Holy Land for Christians as well. But these are just the most important ones. There are many holy places for each religion, even hinduists, who are not required to undertake pilgrimage at all.

As Jerusalem, many of these places are holy for more than one religion. As example there is the Sri Pada in Sri Lanka. In the summit temple, you can find a 'sacred footprint'. Buddhists believe it is the footprint of Buddha left behind when he visited Sri Lanka. Hindus assume the footprint belongs to Lord Shiva. For Muslims and Christians represents the footprint the spot, where Adam entered the Earth after he was exiled from the Garden of Eden. As a result, the popularity of this mountain is huge, visited every year by thousands of people.



In times, when Jerusalem was inaccessible, or was dangerous to travel to, the European Christians developed different pilgrimage practices. Very popular became labyrinths on cathedral grounds or walking the stations of Cross as a symbol of crucifixion. But the most important from my point of view are pilgrim journeys to sites closer to believer's homes, such as St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, with the remains of saint Peter, or Santiago de Compostela Cathedral in Spain with remains of apostle James.

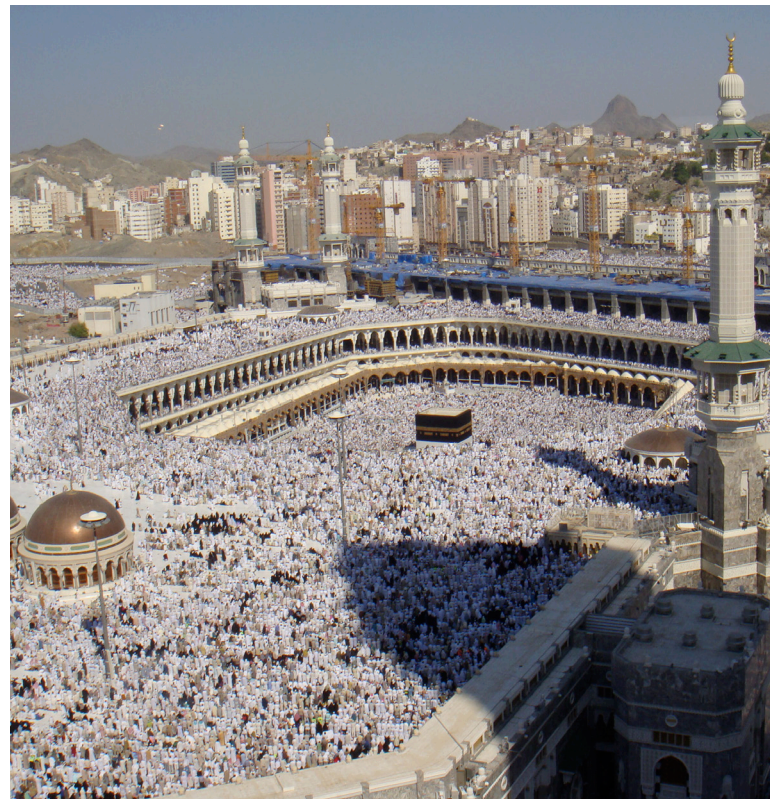
PILGRIMAGE IN MODERN TIMES

Even though the church-going figures are falling, recent years have brought a revival of pilgrimage. For the idea, there have been more than 262 thousand pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela in year 2015, but in year 1990 only 5 thousand.¹ These spiritual-based travels are one of the fastest growing segments in the travel industry.

We live in a busy world full of stress and addiction on modern technology. The pilgrim journey offers us a retreat. Retreat from normal life and a possibility to focus on us and our spiritual virtues. It is not only for strict believers, the religion doesn't play such a role anymore. It is simply a time for silence and reflection, being with oneself and finding greater sense of life's purpose.

There are several reasons why to go on a pilgrimage. Most people decide to go, when they are on crossroads of their lives. Some want to give thanks or honor a

certain place. Other might seek the inspiration and new perspectives. Or they just want to reconnect with cultural heritage and natural world. The pilgrimage can be completed on foot, which is the most common way, on a bicycle or on a horse back. But not to forget, it is a spiritual way, pilgrims are not 'tourists'.



Pict. 1 (opposite page): Sri Pada, Sri Lanka

Pict. 2: Thousands of Pilgrims visiting Mecca

HISTORY OF MONASTERIES

ORIGIN OF THE WORD

The word monastery comes from a Greek original. It developed from 'monos' *alone*, to 'monazein' *to live alone*, to monasterion. Approximately in 14th century it changed from Latin 'monasterium' to nowadays used *monastery*.

FIRST MONASTERIES

Even though pilgrimage belongs to all the main religions,

not the same goes for monasteries. As explained before, monastery means to live alone, to devote the life to God (whatever name it bears) as a correct path to reach the highest level of spirituality.

Oldest monasteries have been established in Buddhism. The first 'vihara' was built around 4th century BC in South Asia. Usually migrating monks and nuns undertook a retreat during the rainy season, for approximately three months, not to disturb new plants. In time, the short stay prolonged into



Pict. 3: Hanging Monastery, China, built in 5th century AD

Pict. 4 (opposite page):

Rila Monastery, Bulgaria, 10th century
Eastern Orthodox monastery

the year round residence. They soon became the centre of learning and philosophy. Nowadays staying in the monastery is the most common lifestyle for Buddhist nuns and monks all over the world.

In Christianity the first monks have been rather hermits as well. In 4th century AD in Egypt St Anthony organized nearby living hermits and they partly shared their lives since. As the father of the first monastery is regarded St Pachomius. He gathered the monks and wrote rules. Each monk lived by himself, but they all shared meals

and work. There were ten communities set up by St Pachomius, two of them for women.

The first Christian monastery in Europe was established in circa 344 in Bulgaria, near the Chirpan city. Since then, monasteries gained the popularity, which culminated in the Middle Ages.



TYPOLOGY OF SLEEPING UNITS

Small, simple with minimum of furnishing. That is the easiest way to describe a monastic cell. But this can be applied on other types of sleeping units as well. Student housing, boat cabin or jail cell are all limited by space. The difference is in the occupation time.

MONASTERY CELL

Monk and nun spend a very long period of time in their cells. Thus it has to be designed to allow some level of personalization. The cell should serve for the daily needs of brothers, so they can fully focus on their path.

“The appearance of the cell varies from tradition to tradition. In the Benedictine tradition, it is often just a small room, with a bed, toilet and a few books. That’s compared to, for example, the Carthusian tradition, where each monk’s cell is much more like a full-fledged apartment, complete with relatively large rooms, hallways, workshop, and even a private garden.”²

I take the monastic cell in the Saint Marie de la Tourette in Lyon as an example. This monastery of the Dominican community has been finished in 1959 and designed by Le Corbusier. It is an extraordinary building that has been chosen by French architects as one of the most important modern architectural project. Corbusier manipulated here light and space in a specific way and created thus really powerful spaces.

The cells are to be found on the upper two floors. They are placed repetitively along the corridor. The geometry

of the cells is simple, based on Corbusier’s Modulor, with the width of a module 1,86 m. The furnishing of the room includes a bed, desk, sink, wardrobe and balcony with glazed wall. The room can be divided into space for washing, sleeping, working and the loggia. A spray-applied whitewashed concrete is to be found on the walls and ceiling, the floor is covered with linoleum. The furniture is made out of wood. There are also different colors accents in the room as well as in the whole convent building.



Pict. 5: La Tourette, monastery cell

Bathrooms are to be found on the floor, near the staircases. The same module as for the sleeping cells is used, toilets and showers are set to fit into two cellular units.

STUDENT HOUSING

Students spend in dormitories up to 8 years of their lives. The rooms are thus personalized on a high level. Nowadays the students' dormitories are like small flats. The bathroom and kitchen are attached, used by one or at maximum two students, each has its own room. But there are also types, where the kitchen and bathroom is shared on the floor. The typical furniture is only the indispensable. A bed, a closet and a table with chair. The rest is left on the inhabitant.

BOAT CABIN

The time spent in a boat cabin is rather short. But the more is the space here limited. The amount of the furniture is similar to the examples before, but a lot of it is built in. Hidden, when not needed, to give more free space to move around. In small boats, the bathroom is not included. On cruisers, the rooms do have a bathroom attached. A whole unit for two persons is then around 13 m².

JAIL CELL

The time spent here is from short to long. Most of the jail cells are inhabited by two prisoners. The furnishing

is simple, bunk bed, one table and chair, sink and toilet. According to European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, the minimal space for a single jail cell is 6 m² plus the sanitary facility, for the multiple-occupancy jail it is 4 m² per person + fully partitioned sanitary facility. Also the minimal light height is 2,5 m and the width 2 m.

PILGRIM HOUSE

FUNCTIONS OF A PILGRIM HOUSE

Nowadays the monasteries, which had once been built outside the cities, are swallowed by them. But they are still closed communities in a closed area. A place that does not cooperate with the city surrounding it. And thus pilgrim houses became often a connecting point between monastery and surrounding areas. Therefore they have to fulfill several functions. They provide a resting place for pilgrims. It is also a meeting point and has the educational aspect.

But pilgrim houses are also accommodation along the pilgrim route. These are usually simple and cheap hostels along the way with shared bedroom and bathroom.

Accommodation in albergues is not just for pilgrims. It can serve to students and youth during seminars and trainings. Or for tourists as a low-cost recreation with the spiritual dimension. There are two different approaches for the sleeping areas or its combination. The beds are either in dormitory, following the life in the medieval monasteries. Or according to the newer monastery organization, pilgrims have private cells.

Very important is the social aspect of the pilgrim houses. It is not only the meeting point for believers and visitors. It may and should affect a wider area. Not only is it a place for cultural and social program, but also a place for meetings and interactions between believers and atheists to help understand and respect

each other.

Educational function is very close to the social one. Different seminars, courses, retreats, concerts, projections or exhibitions take part in the pilgrim houses.

TYPOLGY OF A PILGRIM HOUSE

In the typology, the pilgrim house is comparable to a hostel. Bedrooms are of several types and common spaces. It differs in design. Hostels use to be living loud spaces. The pilgrim house is also place for meetings, but has the spiritual dimension, there should be more space for retreat, relaxation.

The rooms in a pilgrim house can be also compared to monks' cells. Single and double rooms or the bigger dormitories. The level differs in the inclusion of shower and toilet as well. Mostly are the rooms equipped only with a wash-basin, other bathroom facilities are shared on the floor.

PILGRIM HOUSES IN CZECH REPUBLIC



PILGRIM AND RETREAT HOUSE STOJANOV

Administrator: Roman Catholic Church
Since: 1924 (former brewery from 1733), reconstructed 1992
Capacity: single and double rooms
For whom: pilgrims
Other Facilities: refectory, library, chapel, park and monastery garden
Special Regime: opened from 7AM to 9 PM



GUEST HOUSE NOVÝ DVŮR (John Pawson)

Administrator: Cistercians
Since: reconstruction in 2009, original building from 1706
Capacity: single bed rooms
For whom: visitors, families of monks
Other Facilities: refectory, library, chapel, photo exposition of monastic life
Special Regime: respect of silence



PILGRIM HOUSE OF ST JOSEPH , CVILÍN

Administrator: Minorits
Since: -
Capacity: -
For whom: pilgrims
Other Facilities: kitchen, hall, rest rooms
Special Regime: daytime pilgrim house

Pict. 6,7,8: Photos of Pilgrim Houses in Czech Republic



GENIUS LOCI



ST AGNES OF BOHEMIA SVATÁ ANEŽKA ČESKÁ

“When we evaluate the life of St Agnes of Bohemia and her significance in Czech history, arts and literature, we stand in awe of the indelible stamp she has left behind. Influenced by Sts Francis and Clare of Assisi, she identifies with the most modern religious order of the time, which emphasized religious poverty and helping one’s fellow man.”³

Agnes of Bohemia was a medieval Bohemian princess, youngest daughter of king Otakar I. of Bohemia, born in 1211. She was descendant of Sts Ludmila and Wenceslas, patron saints of Bohemia, and first cousin to St Elizabeth of Hungary. In her young age she was engaged several times, but she decided to devote her life to charity, prayer and spiritual works over the luxury and comfort.

Around 1231 Agnes together with her mum Constantine founded the Hospital of Saint Francis (first of its kind in Bohemia), poorhouse and a shelter for pilgrims together with the first Poor Clare community north of the Alps. She became member of this order soon after the foundation of the convent and in just a year was named an Abbess by Pope Gregory IX. Agnes was the first princess in the Poor Clare community. She also founded a male order, Knights of the Cross with Red Star, following the Rule of St Augustine to serve for the needs of the hospital. It was the first organized care for ill patients. It is also the only order to be founded by a woman and also the only order founded in Bohemia. “Supported by the royal family, she helped shape and add new elements to the medieval city- she adopted

the new Gothic style and strengthened the spiritual life of the urban population by introducing the Order of Friars Minor, who preached the Gospel and called for repentance. Agnes’ convent became a centre for new ideas and a place from which more convents were founded.”⁴



Pict. 9 (previous page): View on the Monastery Ground from South- West
Pict. 10 (opposite page): Depiction of St Agnes with the monastery

Pict. 11: Agnes Premyslids give the hospital church over to the first grandmaster of the Cross

She died in 1282, in the age of 71 and was buried in St Francis church. Unfortunately, her relics have been lost during the 15th century and are yet to be found. It is said that 'peaceful and happy times will come to Bohemia, when the remains of beatified Agnes are found'. There are testimonies about her visions and healing powers during her life, but at her grave as well. Agnes was venerated already while alive. Soon after her death, the Latin legend *Candor lucis eterne* telling of the events of Agnes' life and her virtues and miracles, a necessary part of the canonization process, was written and later translated into Czech and German and set to verse. There were several tries for her canonization during the times, but none was successful. It took 600 years to get beatified by Pope Pius IX. on December 3rd 1874 and another hundred years to be canonized by Pope John Paul II. on the 12th November 1989, based on Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity to extraordinary degree.

Just five days after Saint Agnes of Bohemia was canonized, on 17th November 1989 started the Velvet revolution in Czechoslovakia, which ended the 41 years of Communist regime. The year 2011, eight hundred years after she was born, was named a year of Saint Agnes, of the Overthrow the Communism. She is also presented on the famous statue of St Wenceslas by J.V. Myslbek (end of 19th century) as a part of major transitions in the nation. In the new Czech Republic (1993-2011), Agnes was illustrated on the 50 crowns currency note and thus present in the everyday life of residents. The last search for Agnes relics happened in 2010, but her present grave still has not been found.

Pict. 12: Photo of the Statuaries of St Wenceslas, Wenceslas Square, Prague
detail of St Agnes, Patron of Czech People





CONVENT OF ST AGNES OF BOHEMIA, PRAGUE

The former complex of the convents of the Poor Clare and Lesser Brothers reflects the building history of the Early Gothic style in Bohemia. “It is a proof of the foundation of the Old Town of Prague and the beginning of Gothic culture as well as the flourishing of the state of Bohemia at the time of its social, economics and cultural growth.”⁵ There are only few places in Czech Republic, where the tradition and culture of Bohemia are linked with such an extraordinary architectural work.

The aim of the newly founded hospital and convent was to help those in need and thus the spot was chosen on the right side of the river Vltava, on the North-East periphery of the city. From the beginning on, the complex was planned on a grand scale as a first architecture in the Gothic style in the town and shows the quality level of the most advanced buildings of this period in Europe. The whole project was fully supported by the king and his family which is to be seen on the magnificent architectonic character.

For the first building stage is characteristic mixing of Late Romanesque style with the Gothic elements. The oldest core of the convent and a liturgical centre is the double-naved church of St Francis, of which only torso was preserved till our times. Simultaneously with the church the entire convent wing was built. It stretched from the northern outer wall by the Vltava river to the church. All the features needed for everyday life of a convent were to be found inside, such as housekeeping background, kitchen, refectory and the Capitulary

hall (in the order from north) with the nun’s dormitory upstairs. With the architectural intention, the buildings were ‘left’ in the raw, unplastered masonry and its colour effects. The composition of the complex was based on the examples of Cistercian monasteries, but it shows some peculiarities as well.

In the beginning a hospital was part of the convent of the Poor Clares. But in 1238 the hospital has moved and its place was taken by the convent of the Lesser Brothers. Thus an associated dual convent was formed as a natural result of the St Francis principles. The planned layout was changed with the construction of a male convent. The originally grand scale was revised by reduction of the intended parts, but also a number of new features were added, “which exceeded the programme of a mendicant monastery.”⁵ Unfortunately, there are not many historical sources about the convent of Lesser Brothers. In this time the presbytery of the St Francis church was built, which served both the nuns and the monks. It had two buildings attached to its northern side-chapel of Virgin Mary and the Agnes’ private oratory. “The mature Cistercian-Burgundian style used in Central Europe arose in that building period.”⁶

After the building of a hospital was used for the convent of Lesser Brothers, new spot was needed. Thanks to Agnes, a site “ad pedem pontis”, at the foot of the old Judith bridge, was chosen. It is said to be one of the nicest sites in Prague with the view on the Prague’s Castle. The foundation stone was laid in May

Pict. 13 (opposite page):

View on the Monastery churches with the church
Crist the Savior in the front and Prague Castle in
the background

1252. As a part of a hospital, the church of St Francis was built.

After the death of Agnes's brother, King Wenceslas I., she focuses on celebration of her kin by adding a dynastic conception to her convent. On the example of the Landgrave of Thuringia, Agnes decided to build a dignified mausoleum for Přemyslids. The construction of a burial site consecrated to Christ the Savior begins in 1261 with the help of King Přemysl Otakar II. With the project of the sanctuary, the construction activity culminates and the grand scale and high artistic level highly exceeded the original building production. It becomes a Bohemia's purest building of classical northern French Style. The crypt was built under the altar of Christ the Savior for the burial of monarch and his family. Above the altar on the triumphal strip are friezes of St Agnes of Rome and Agnes Přemyslids. Mausoleum and the Virgin Mary Chapel are connected through a monumental triumph gate. Instead of finials are here friezes of five crowned kings and queens of Bohemia.

The first building stage was focused on the basic needs of the convent community. But the later stage mirrors the high level of Přemyslids courtyard and happy period of national history. Many of the artworks that were created in Prague are with its high artistic level comparable with the production of middle Europe.

The beginning of the 14th century means the end of Přemyslids era and thus the convent gets out of the political issues.

There were some precious relics in the convent, which

in some ways stimulated the great collecting passion of the Emperor Charles IV. Among the most valuable are presents from Pope Innocent IV. wood from the Holy Rood and part of Christ's robes, the reliquary with a finger of St Nicholas and the assumed coronation cross of Přemysl Otakar II. (to be found in Regensburg now). It is probable that the royal coronation jewels were kept in the convent as well. An important scriptorium was placed in the convent as well. To the most famous illuminated manuscripts that were created here belongs the Franciscan Breviary, Franciscan Bible and the Osek Lectionary.



Pict. 14: Garden surrounded by the Ambit

In the time of blooming imperial metropolis, in the half of the 14th century, the convents were enlarged again. A double-aisled chapel of St Barbara was built on the place of the original chapel and some modifications of interiors were made. With the beginning of the 15th century came the Hussite raids and the nuns were outcasted for two decades. The period of stagnation and destruction of the convent had begun. The building had served as armory and mint, the convent equipment was destroyed. In these times, the relics of Agnes got lost. In the beginning of the 16th century, the convent is already called 'the convent of St Agnes', but the order of the Poor Clare dies out. The monastery is donated to Dominicans from St Clement church. This means the destruction of the convent of the Lesser Brothers, architectural and moral decay and a selling off convent's lands. In the time of recatholisation the nuns' returns to Prague, but the convent being in insufficient conditions did not allow them to stay long. They returned again during The Thirty Years' War. The destruction of the convent is topped with the fire of the Prague city in 1689. Very frugal repairs were done almost a hundred years after.

The greatest decline was set in after 1782, when the Emperor Joseph II. dissolved the convent. The complex was supposed to be adapted into a prison for 528 prisoners, but this idea was rejected ten years later. The monastery and its equipment were sold. The new owner has rebuilt the convent into a pauper rental house with 91 flats.

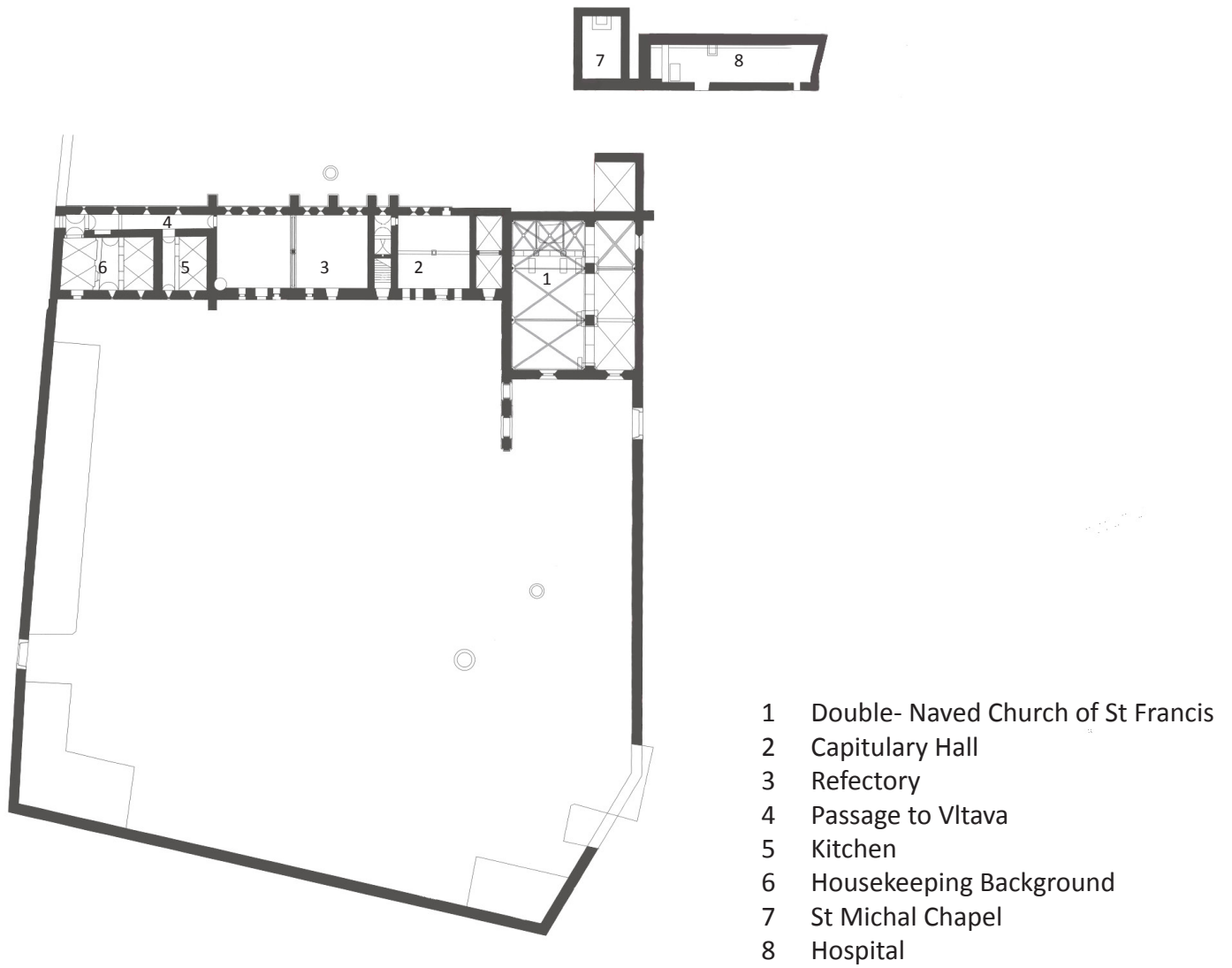
The period of the artistic stagnation and decline had its positives. The Complex was not rebuilt in Renaissance or Baroque, so the Gothic core preserved in its original

purity.

In the 19th century the area became the focal point of patriots. One of the first's bohemian's amateur theaters was performing here. In this time the first expertise about Agnes's convent is written. And after 600 years after her death, is Agnes finally beatified. But the redevelopment of old Prague counts with the demolition of the convent. As an answer 'Jednota pro obnovu kláštera blahoslavené Anežky' (The Unity for the Recovery of the Convent of beatified Agnes) starts to exist. They buy out the convent and the preservation and archeological works begin.

In the last stage is the owner the National Gallery and monastery gets its grand reconstruction. The convent becomes National Historic Landmark and in 1980 is opened for public. The reconstruction culminated with the roofing over the St Francis church, which became a dominant of the complex. In August 2002 Prague was affected by a great flood. The water level in the complex was several meters high. Next years the convent underwent masonry drying and extensive restoration works.

FIRST BUILDING STAGE, SANCTIFIED IN 1234



Pict. 15: First Building Stage



Capitulary Hall

One of the most important rooms in monastery adjacent to the St Francis church. The nuns met at least once a week here to discuss convent problems and discipline.

It is a square hall with a flat ceiling and a central wooden pillar, accessible through a shaped portal. The hall was connected with a room underneath, which served to the needs of abbess, through a staircase.

The main staircase to the dormitory leads along the northern wall of the capitulary hall.



Refectory

It is a two part hall with flat ceiling. One part served as a refectory and the second as a work room for the nuns. The nuns devoted here their time to works such as weaving and textile embroidery, copying liturgical books and probably even book illuminations production.

Each part has its own portal and different window style (rectangular x semicircular).

Very impressive element is a low column without head and two semicircular bands dividing the room in two.



SECOND BUILDING STAGE, 1234/ 1238/ 1245



Pict. 16: Second Building Stage



Presbytery of the Saint Francis Church

The presbytery has two vault fields and a pentagonal apse. The space is divided by the oval pillars, their beads adorned with early Gothic leaves of different shapes. The apse's bass is covered with vine leaves symbolizing God's vineyard. The western field bears a bass with dragon eating its own tail as a symbol of eternity.

Its peculiarity was the altarpiece in front of the southern wall, seen from the north. The position was influenced by the St Agnes privilege to see the priest five times a year.

In this church, Agnes's brother King Wenceslas I. was crowned on the 16. August 1249 and he was buried in the axes of the church after his death in 1253.





Chapel of Virgin Mary

The room was originally divided into two successive spaces, but the wall was torn down soon. The altarpiece was positioned in front of the eastern wall. There was a built-in floor for nuns, which was accessible from their dormitory.

The chapel served for the benediction of the abbess and consecration of the nuns, for which a priest was allowed to enter.



Niche

This niche is located in the south wall of the Chapel of Virgin Mary. It is believed to be the original place of Agnes's grave.



Private Oratory of Agnes

Originally a two floor structure. The ground floor had a ribbed vault, which remains might be seen even today. There was an altarpiece in front of the eastern wall and terra cotta flooring.

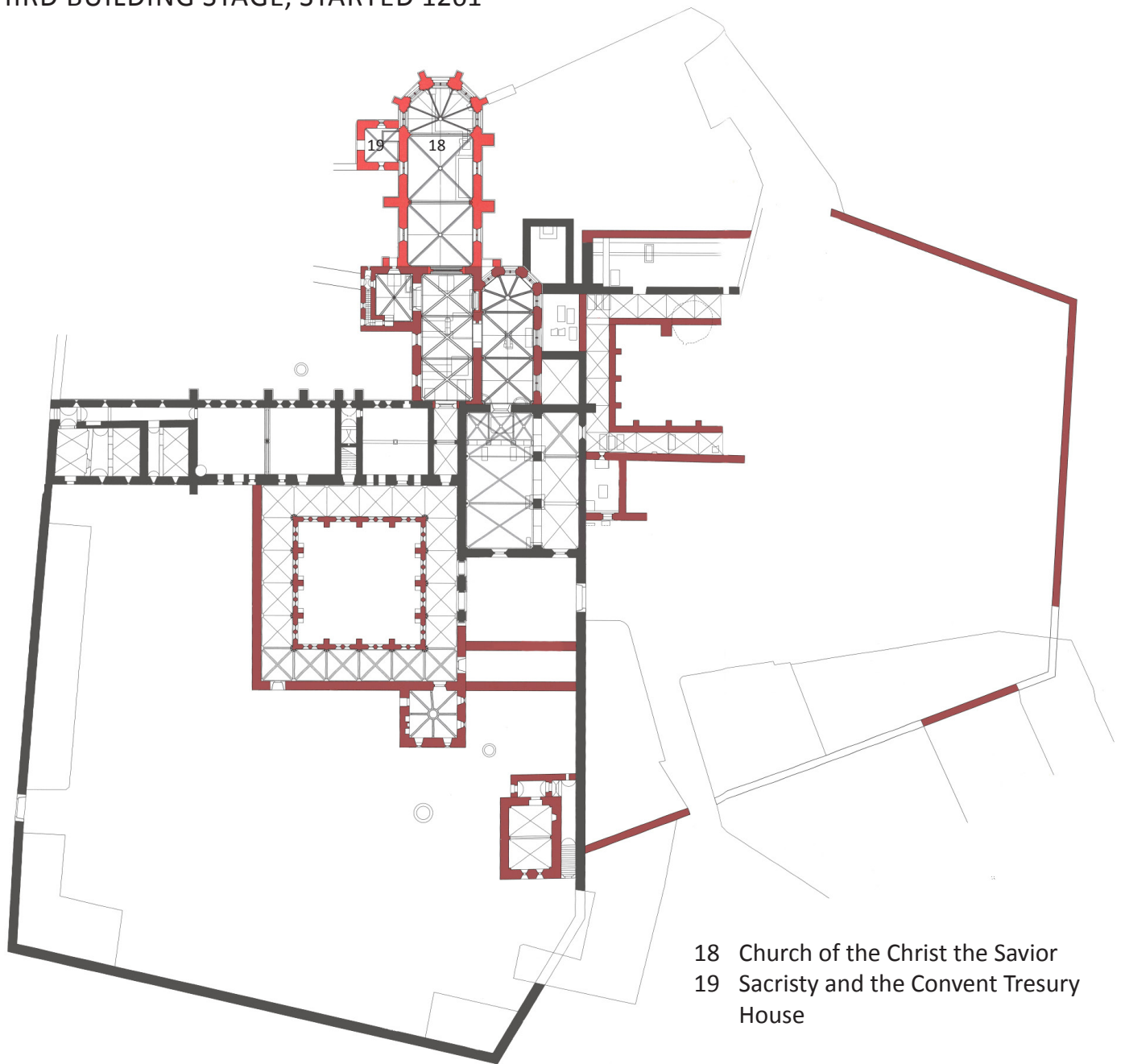
The first floor had a cross-arched ribbed vaulting and storage niches, walls covered in paintings. These rooms were heated.



Ambit

Compared to the original plans, the number of ambit's vaults was reduced from eight to current six. The construction system is a simple cross vault.

THIRD BUILDING STAGE, STARTED 1261



Pict. 17: Third Building Stage



Church of the Christ the Savior

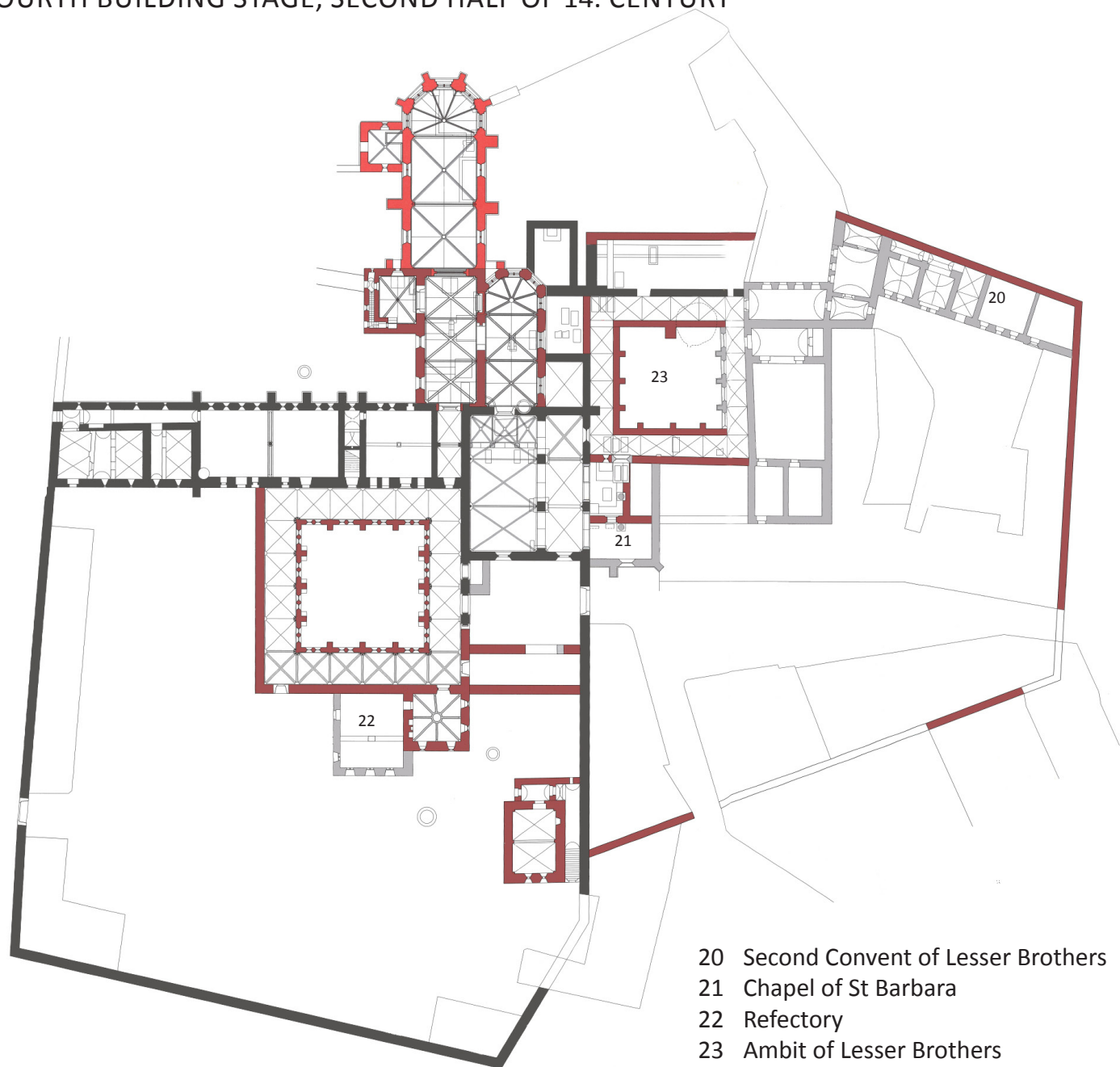
The church was established after the coronation of Agnes's nephew, King Přemysl Otakar II., in the end of 1261. The king thus relates to the first Christian emperor Constantine. The style was influenced by the palace chapel of Luis IX., King of France.

The geometry of the architecture is dominated by the Golden Section. The entrance gate bears the friezes of the crowned heads of five kings and queens. Also Agnes, together with the St Agnes of Rome, is depicted on the head of the triumphant band above the altarpiece of the Saviour. It looks down at the entrance of the Premyslid's crypt, which is situated underneath the southern half of the polygonal apse.

The burial place became the pride of the ruling dynasty. It houses remains of Přemysl's wife and daughters, Wenceslas II.'s daughter and a Countess Griffina. It was furnished with rare manuscripts and reliquaries as well.



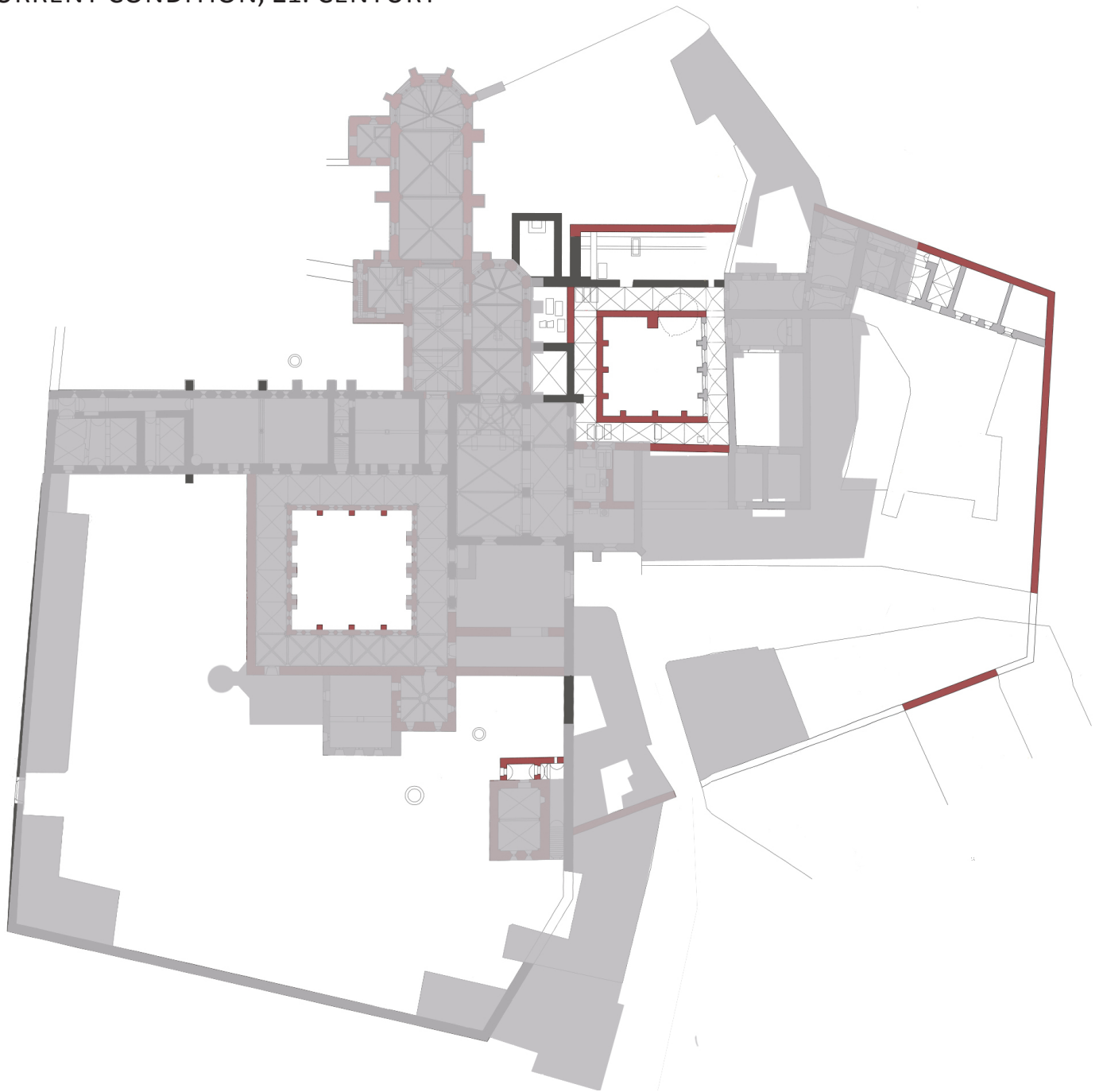
FOURTH BUILDING STAGE, SECOND HALF OF 14. CENTURY



- 20 Second Convent of Lesser Brothers
- 21 Chapel of St Barbara
- 22 Refectory
- 23 Ambit of Lesser Brothers

Pict. 18: Fourth Building Stage

CURRENT CONDITION, 21. CENTURY



Pict. 19 (next page): Skeletal Satircase



Western Facade of the St Francis Church

The asymmetric, double-naved church used to be the centre of the newly established monastery and a first building in Gothic architecture in Prague. It was just a ruin in the beginning of the 20th century. The current form is a result of the 1983 restoration, when a steep roof was build.

The church works as a concert hall nowadays, opening just for performances.



Skeletal Staircase

During the renovation, that began in 1965, a spiral skeletal staircase has been built for the needs of the National gallery. It is situated on the not interesting northern facade of ambit. For the staircase there have been used modern technologies and style. The old and new creates together unique atmosphere.

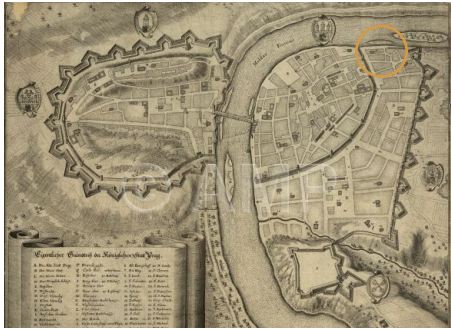
The monastery garden is closed for the visitors, so you don't see the staircase from any view point.





ANALYSIS

DEVELOPMENT OF THE URBAN STRUCTURE ACCORDING TO THE OLD MAPS



Map of Prague 1650



Map of Prague 1769



Map of Prague 1800



Map of Prague 1835



Map of Prague 1873



Map of Prague 1909-1914



Map of Prague 1938



Map of Prague 1948



Map of Prague 2016

REDEVELOPMENT OF PRAGUE, AFTER 1893

In the February 1893 was approved the law for the urban renewal of Prague Old Town and Josefhof. It meant the demolition of the current structures and building of new ones. There were several reasons for this decision- environmental (frequent flooding), social and hygiene, urban (narrow streets) and economical, but against was a huge part of the Prague population. In the year 1938 returns B. Hypšman to the renewal

and suggest finishing it in the neighborhood of the Agnes's Monastery. The site remains neglected and stands in big contrast to the new building of Ministry of Industry and Trade. He reminds also of the historic value of this part of the city.

The renewal law ended its power in 1943.

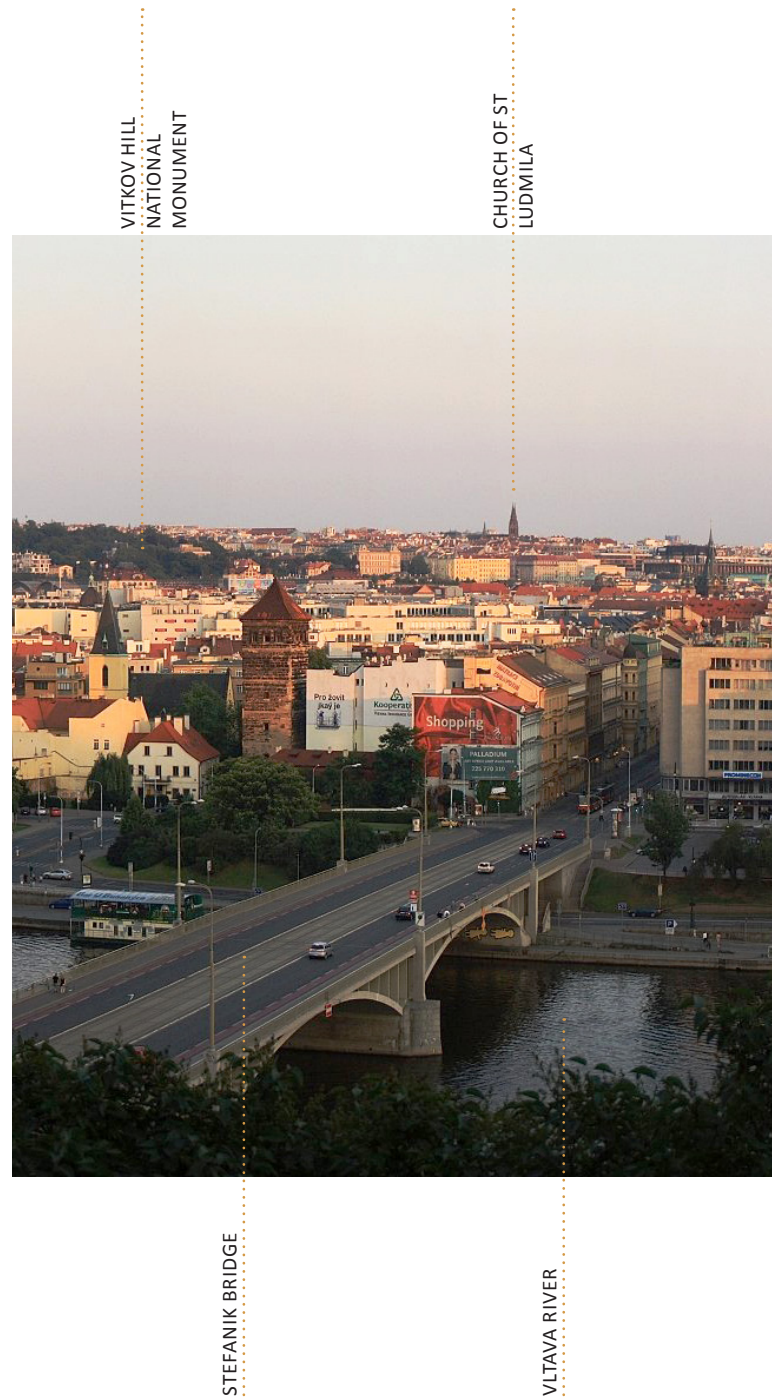


CURRENT URBAN SITUATION

The site is located in the Prague inner centre, in the Old Town city quarter, next to the Vltava River. The Old Town of Prague is part of the UNESCO World Heritage.

In this location, you can find mixture of two different urban principles. There is a historic part with the monastery complex symbolizing harmony. And there is a redeveloped area, just a mechanical composition of buildings, which ignore its surrounding. This builds together an urbanistic structure, which is strongly disturbed.

This city part is in close neighborhood with the Vltava River, but divided from it by a busy street. On the other side of the river, there is one of the biggest Prague's city parks- Letna Hill Park, with the symbolic statue of Prague Metronome (since 1962).



NATIONAL MUSEUM

THE POWDER TOWER

PRAGUE CONGRESS
CENTRE

BASILICA OF ST JAMES

CHURCH OF OUR LADY
BEFORE TYN

ASTRONOMICAL
CLOCK

PETRIN TOWER



MINISTRY OF
INDUSTRY AND TRADE

LETNA HILL PARK

ST AGNES MONASTERY

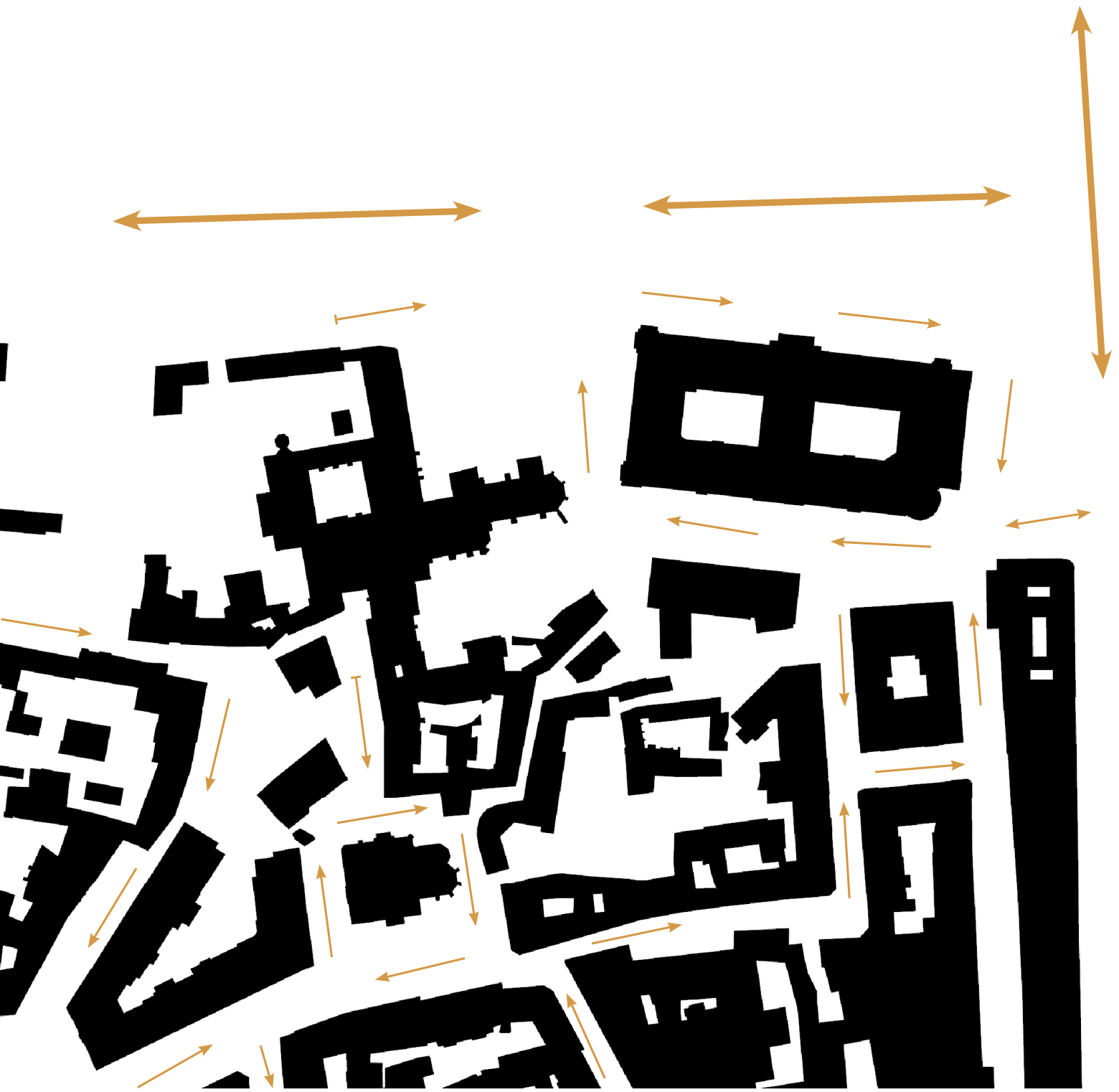
ANALYSIS OF TRAFFIC

In Urban Scale, this area is loaded with traffic, which is the dividing element of the area.

On the embankment, there is a four-lane road connected to the bridge nearby. Inside of the developed area, according to urbanistic rules, there are mostly one-way or death-end streets.

As visitors to the monastery, we are coming from the river, so we have to cross the street. Unfortunately, the entrance to the monastery next to the river is not open (as well as the garden behind), therefore we have to go around the monastery to enter it. The sidewalks around such a monument are narrow, full of pedestrians. There is even a street leading to the north gate of the monastery, the closed one. Moreover the whole way is not wheelchair friendly.



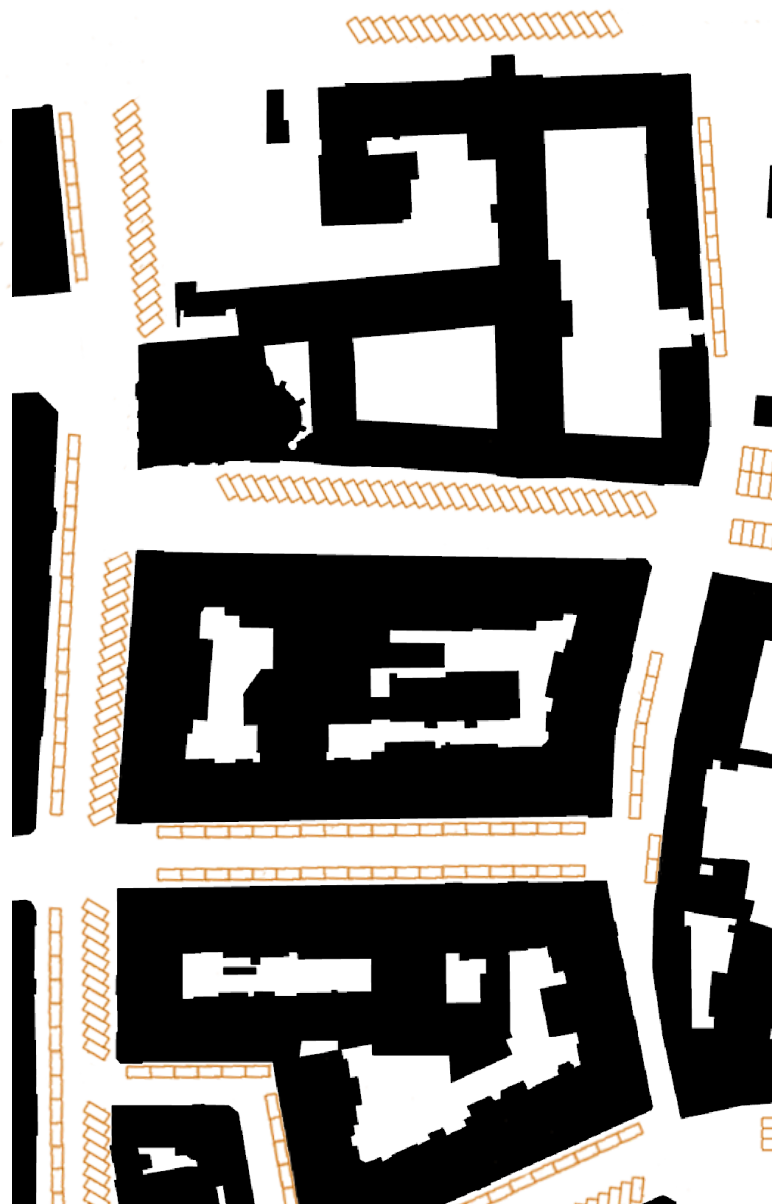


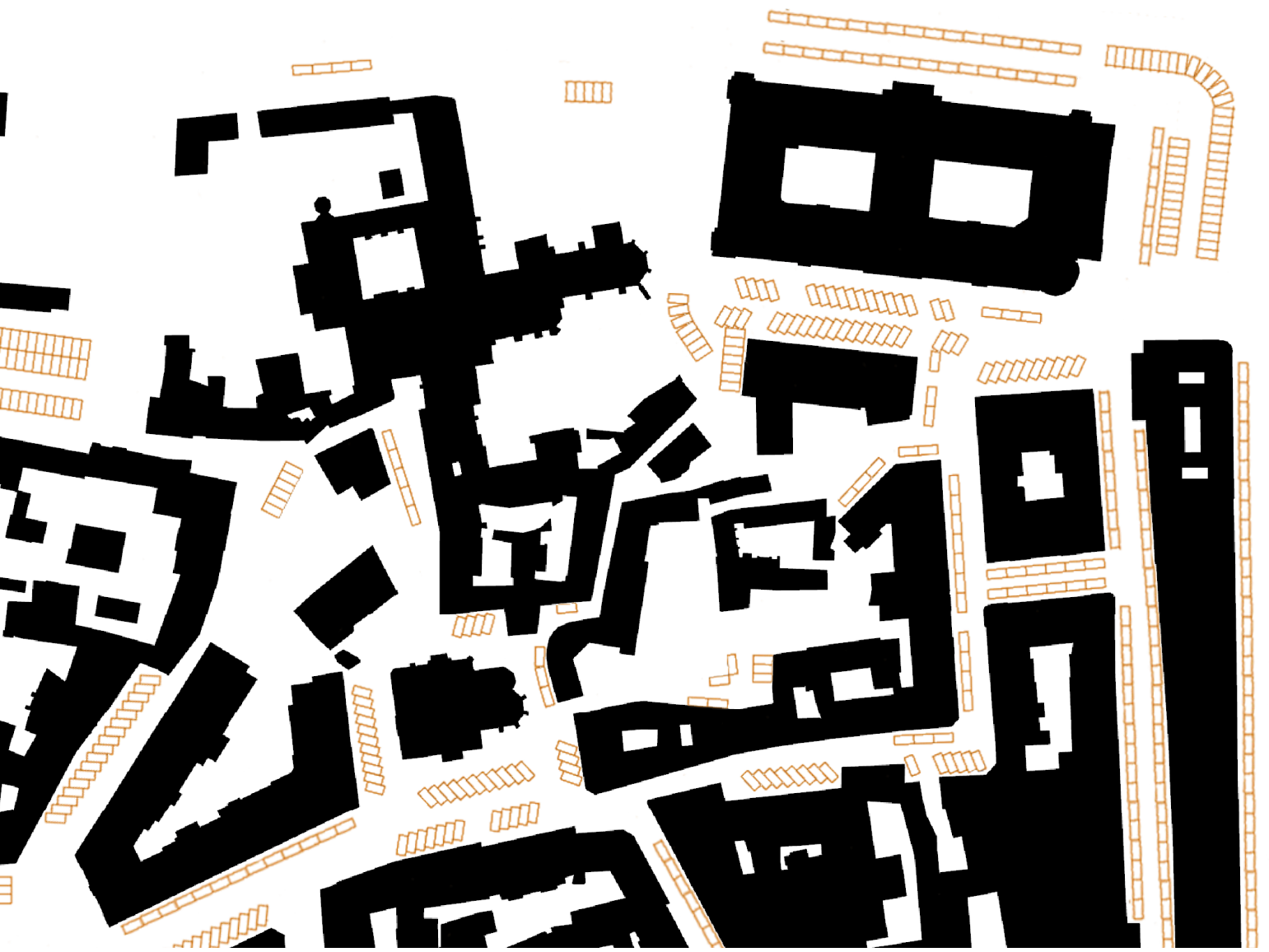
ANALYSIS OF PARKING SITUATION

Maybe even more visible problem than traffic with the narrow sidewalks is the number of parking spaces. As you can see on the picture, the streets of this area are filled with cars. Each rectangle represents one parking lot, which makes for approximately 300 parking places in total.

The buildings in this area were built in the time, when cars were not an issue, so they do not have any garages. The whole area is a 'blue zone', residential parking, but already there are more parking tickets sold to the residents than there are parking lots. Even though the public transport in Prague is on a high level, and this location is situated central, people still require to have their cars at hand.

As we walk around the monastery, there are cars everywhere. It starts in front of the northern wall and goes on. It is very disturbing and it kills the genius loci.





ANALYSIS OF GREENERY

The connection with the nature in Prague is very strong. Even though the site is located in an old part of town, the nature is not far away. The original monastery was built at the river bank. After the regulation of Vltava River, the bank was moved away. But the water level also sunk two meters compared to site level.

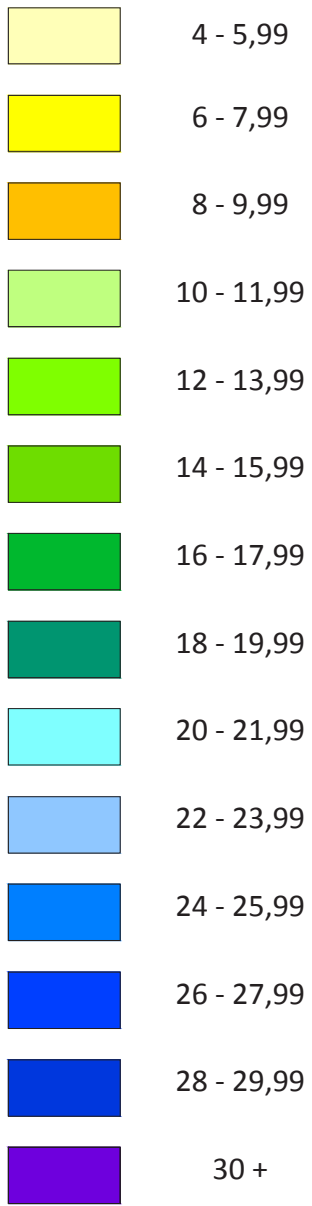
The closest greenery is located in the monastery park. This is unfortunately closed. On the same river side, there is situated a small park just in front of the next block of buildings. The whole park is used as a kid's playground. On the other side of the river bank, there is a Letna Hill Park. It is a place with lot of trees, lawns, cafes, amazing view and I believe everyone can find his favourite spot there.

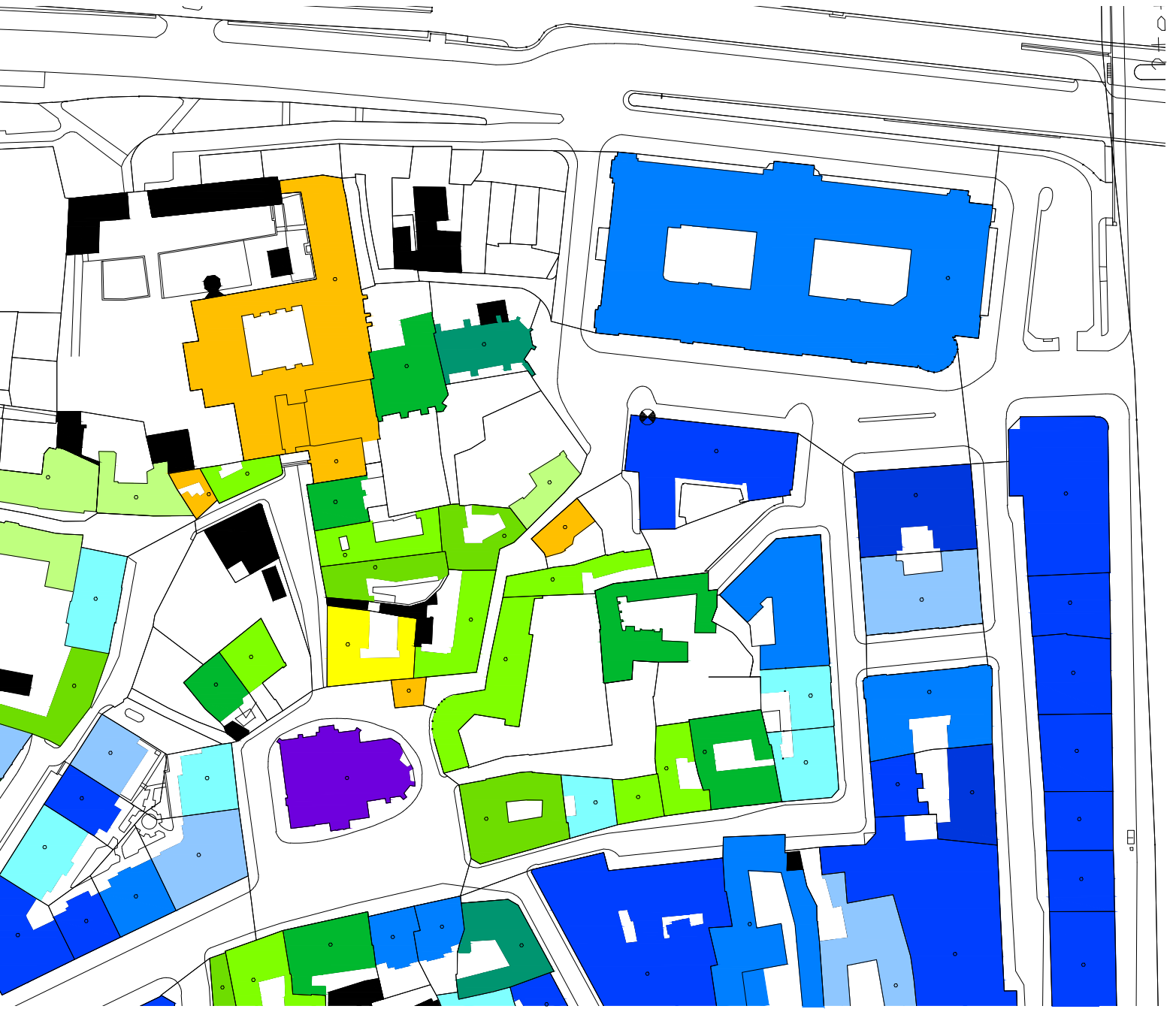
As described, it is not a problem to find some nature close to the site. But mostly it is devoted to all kinds of social activities. A place to read a book next to a great architecture would be welcomed. And I believe a monastery garden is great for this purpose.



RIDGE HIGHT

LEGEND IN METERS





SITE CONTEXT





PHOTOS OF THE SITE



↑3

6↓



↑4

7↓



↑5

8↓



↑9

12↓



↑10

14↓



↑11

18↓





1 ←

→ 2



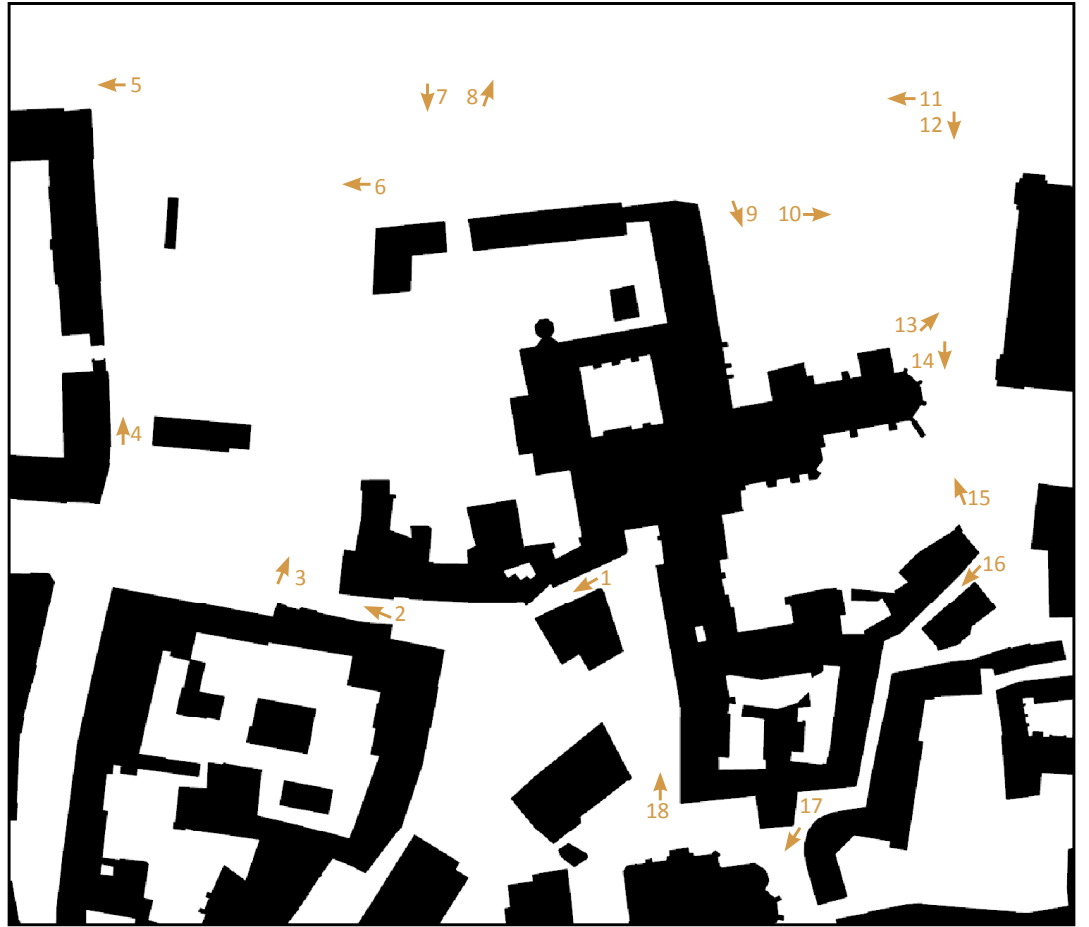
13 ←

→ 15



↑ 16

17 ↓



SITE DESCRIPTION



A

- rectangle site
- flat area with a gentle slope on the north side
- a parking lot situated in the south part
- in the middle part of the site there is a sport ground surrounded by a wall
- the north part is characterized by tall trees dividing the streets Na Františku and the Dvořákovo embankment

B

- rectangle site
- gently declining slope from the embankment (higher level) to the Na Františku street (lower level)
- greenery in the whole area without important park arrangement
- there is an entrance portal into the monastery in the western part of the enclosure wall

C

- rectangle, enclosed site
- area is a part of monastery, enclosed by a wall
- there are tall trees on the site, but the whole condition of the site is unpleasant
- the entrance to this part is through the gate in the northwest corner and another gate near the church of the Christ the Saviour

In the current situation, the whole site is out of attention of Prague citizens and tourists. Only the sport ground is partly used. The site is degraded by the very frequented and noisy street Dvořákovo nábřeží, which runs between the site and the Vltava River. Also the surroundings south and west of the site are not in best condition. In the east there is a new dominant, the building of Ministry of Industry and Trade built in the traditionalism spirit.

The monastery and surrounding sites lie in the city urban conservation area belonging to the list of UNESCO. It is important to set the new buildings very sensitively into the urban context and Prague panorama. Also the monastery wall with its gates has to be respected. According to the urban plans, the parking lot and sport area can be cancelled. Also the short street Na Františku leading to the north gate of the monastery might be closed and used differently.

The new complex of buildings should respect the genius loci of this city part and rise the attractiveness of this ground. Because of this reason, not only a hostel for pilgrims will be build, but high importance lies in the newly developed public space.

The goal of this project is to stress the importance of this place in the Bohemian history and history of Prague and give it a representative surrounding. Make it not only a target for tourists but also for citizens and pilgrims.

Genius Loci
Central Position in the City
Easy Public Transport
Proximity of the River Vltava
Views
Importance and History of the Place
Spirituality
Flat Terrain

Road Barrier between River Vltava and the Site
Noise from the busy Road
Occurance of Homeless People
Narrow one-way Streets
Dirty Streets, Dark Corners- Danger
Fragmentation of Space
Unused and Dilapidated Areas

S

W

O

T

Attractive Spot for Residents and Tourists of all
Generations
High Potential of the Site
Spirituality
Spot for relaxation and Quiet in the City Centre
Unification of Problematic Spots

Possible Floods
Developers
Possible Loss of the Site Identity and Atmosphere
Growth of Transport
Increase of Dust and Noise
Decay of Protected Buildings





PILGRIM SITE
AT THE ST AGNES MONASTERY
IN PRAGUE

URBAN CONCEPT

M 1:1500

The biggest problem of the current situation is the traffic and parking situation, as shown in the analyzes. In my project I also focused on solving this problem in the closest surrounding of my site with non-dramatic changes. Of course It would be wonderful to stop the traffic between the site of the monastery and the Vltava river or to hide it in a tunnel, but that kind of change would be major in Prague and need to be developed in bigger scale.

My proposal consists of regulation of traffic, reduction of parking spaces and enlargement of the pedestrian zone. I modified the number of road lanes in the embankment to one in each direction. This should decrease the noise. I believe that the historical monument of the St Agnes Monastery and the Ministry of Industry and Trade are of such an importance, that the traffic around them should be calmed. The new pedestrian zone reaches also to the Church of St Castulus, located south from the monastery. Together they create a walking friendly environment.

LEGEND



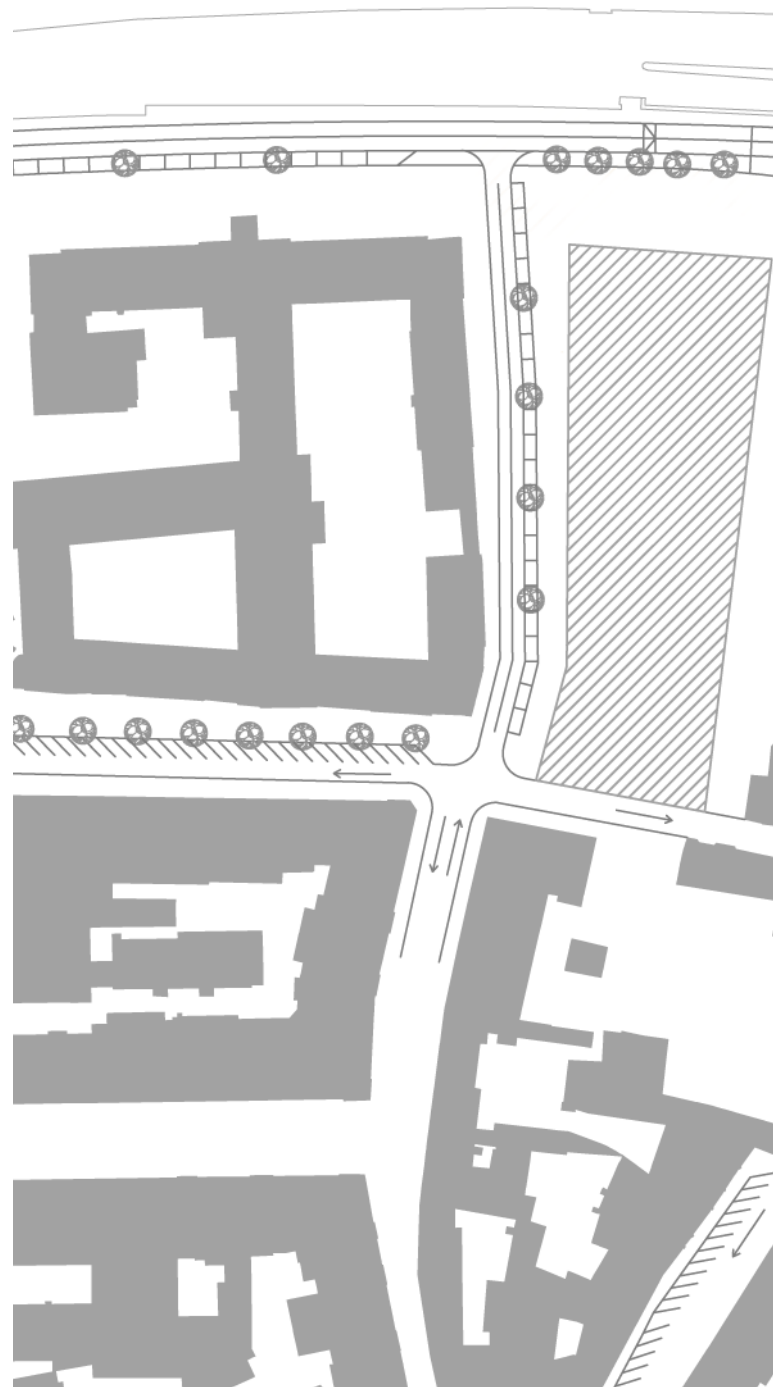
Current Objects

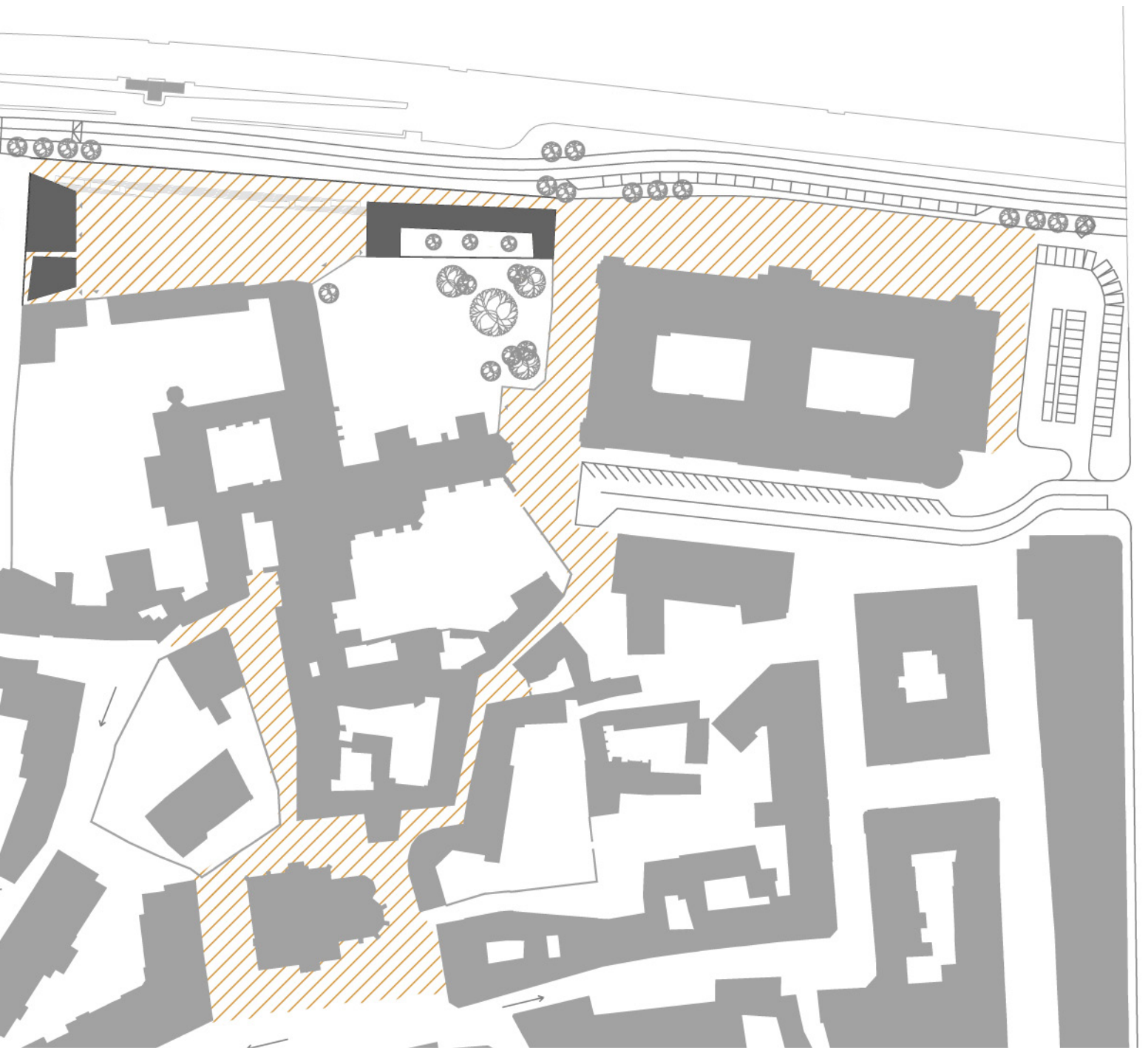


New Objects



Enlarged Pedestrian Zone





SITE CONCEPT

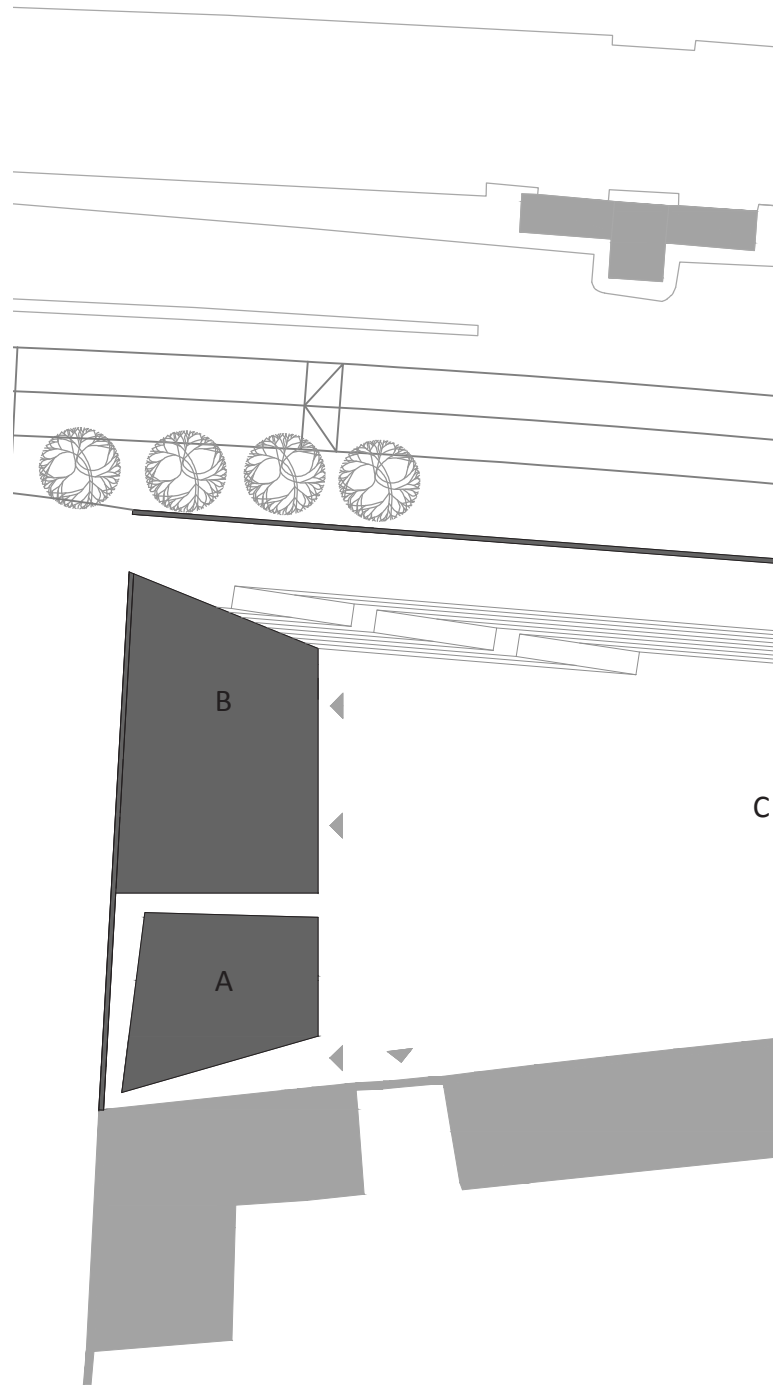
M 1:500

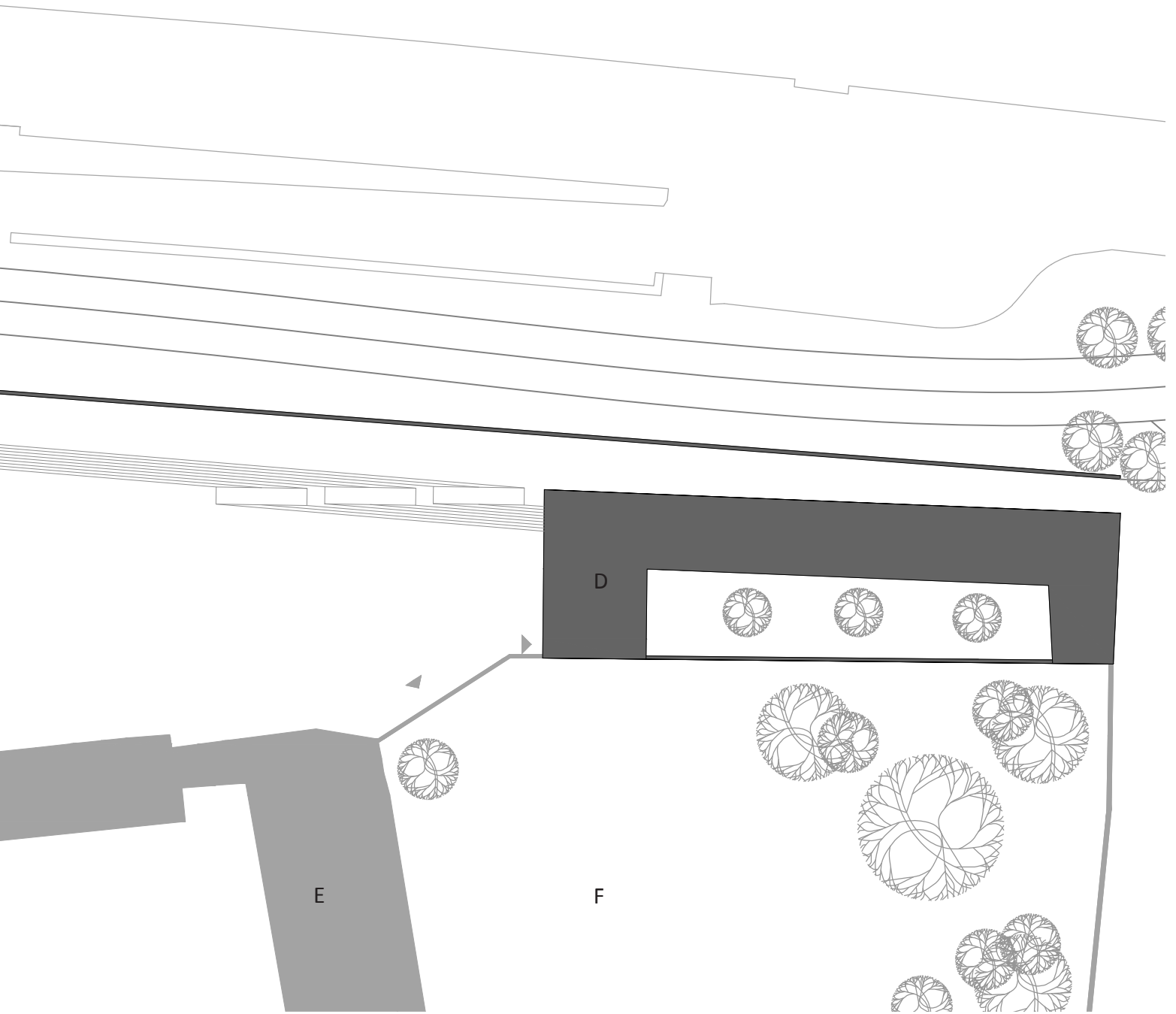
After the financial reasoning, I have decided to sell the western part of the site. Either to the current tenant, or to the developer. The burden of the site will be set with borders, which you can see on the previous page, for an apartment building with multifunctional parterre and two underground floors for parking, rentable for the residents of surrounding buildings as well. This sale should financially support the construction of my project.

The project is located to the north from the monastery. It consists of a central square, where pilgrims can gather. From the Square there is also a gate for the monastery and the monastery garden. In the East there is designed a pilgrim house, on the opposite side there are situated a new St Agnes Church and Multifunctional Space with a cafeteria downstairs.

LEGEND

- A St Agnes Church
- B Multifunctional Object
- C Square
- D Pilgrim House
- E Monastery
- F Monastery Garden



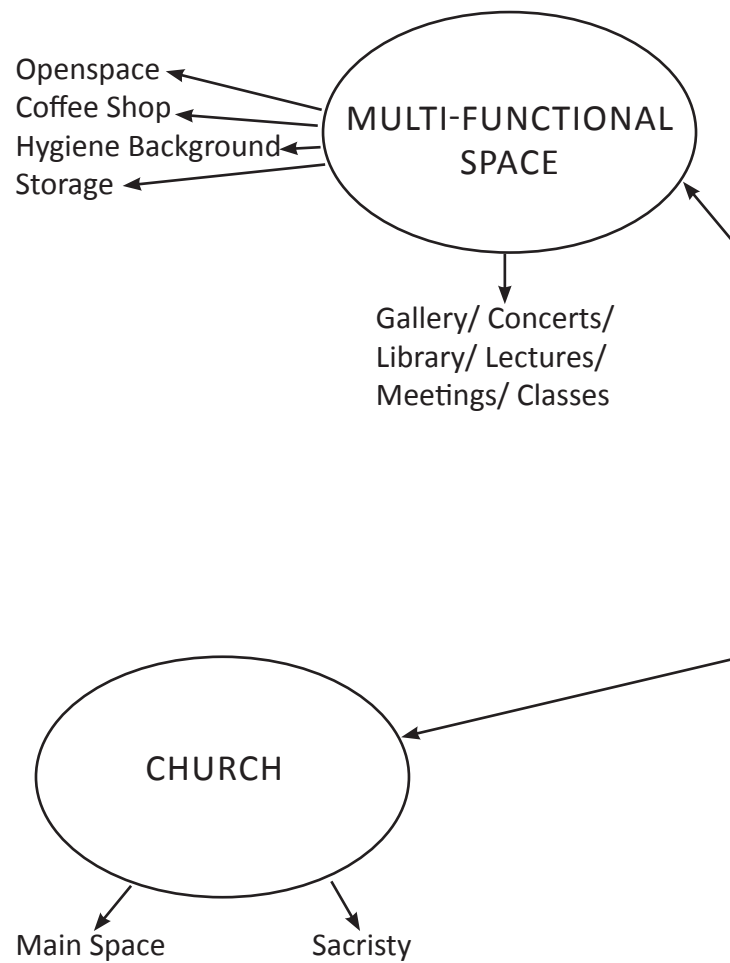


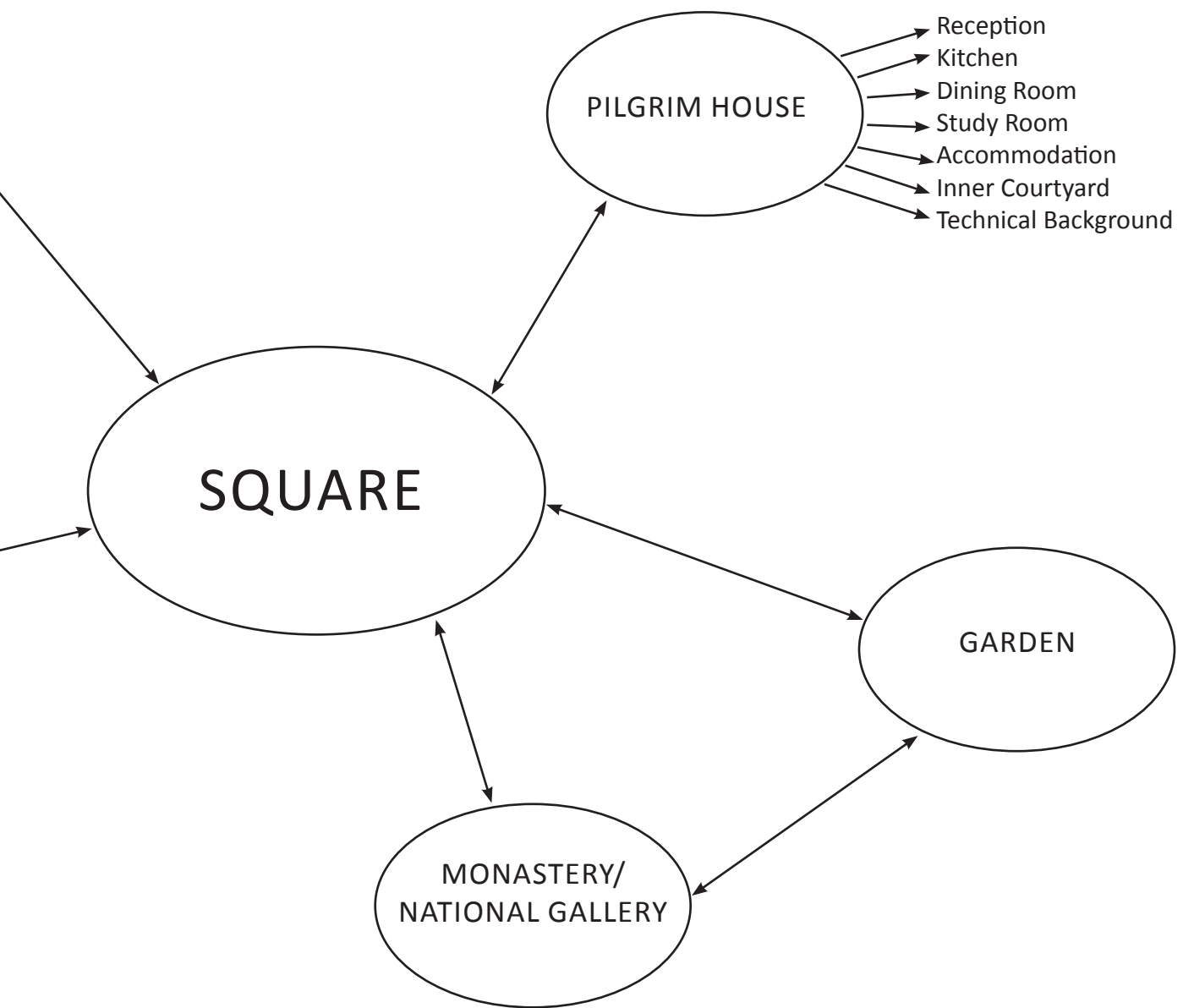
RELATIONS DIAGRAM

The new objects will become a part of the current monastery. Old and new units will be connected. I paid huge attention not to break genius loci of this place. All the new buildings are low, its height related to the height of the walls surrounding the monastery.

I think it is important to open the monastery from the north, from the river. Thus I have created a square that is located in front of this gate, in the centre of the new complex. All the functions, old and new, are reachable from this point. It is also a space for bigger gatherings.

The Agnes monastery is built with the raw, unplastered masonry. It is the material of its time and fully admitted. For the financial reasons, I have decided to use the same material for the whole project, but a plastered one. I want the new buildings to appear simple, paying tribute to the older neighbour.





EVOLUTION

I took a lot of inspiration from the St Agnes Monastery for the designing of the new Pilgrim Site. The evolution of the project follows in the same way, as the project of the monastery, which has been built almost 800 years ago.

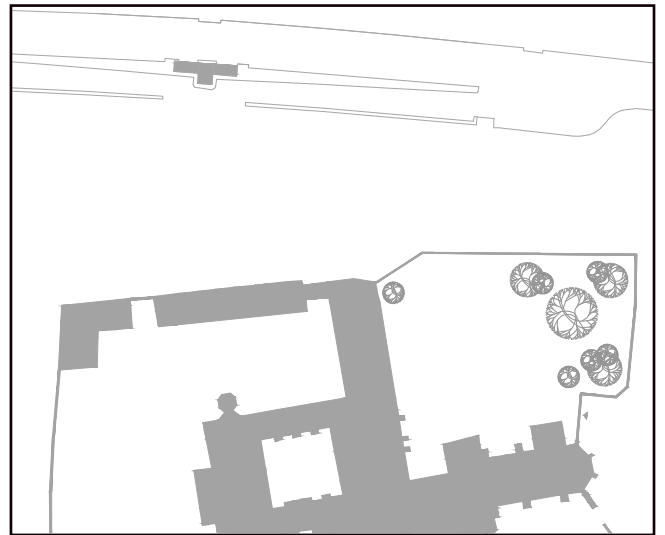
First I build a wall. This defines the site which might be built-up. I have decided to prolong my site towards the river.

In the next phase, the objects are added. The buildings are aligned around the inner circuit of the wall. The buildings are 'inverted'.

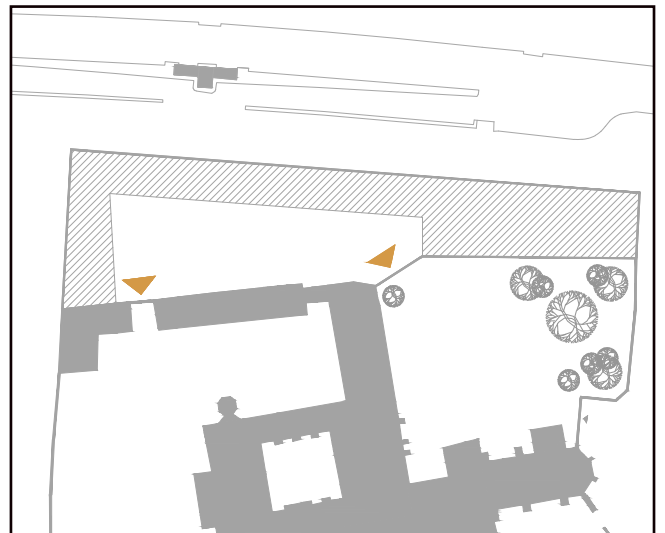
As the project is not built on the 'green meadow', the next step of the design is a reaction on the neighbouring buildings. The connection to the monastery and the garden should be left unbuilt.

I have decided to lead the wall on the further edge, on the boundary with the road. This means, I need to make space for the pedestrian sidewalk inside the closed site.

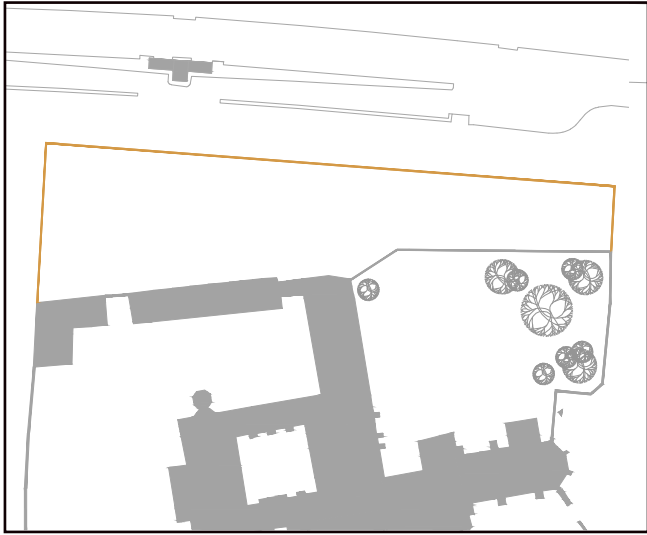
The last schema shows the resulting position and size of the newly designed objects, which are the outcome of former steps.



1_Current Monastery



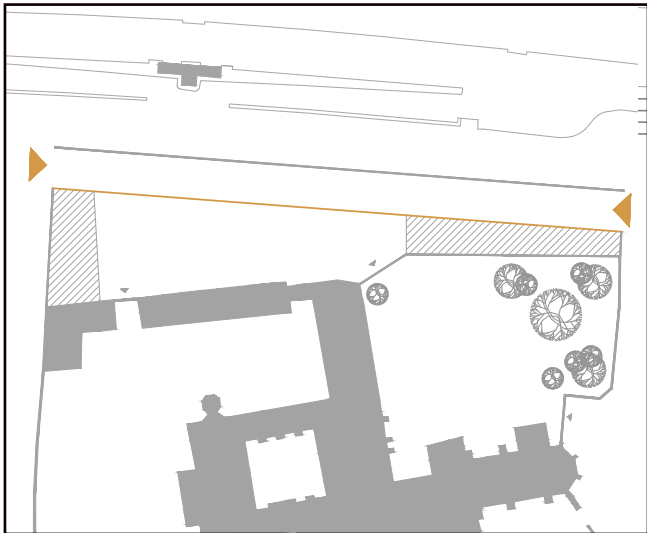
4_Entrance to Monastery and Garden



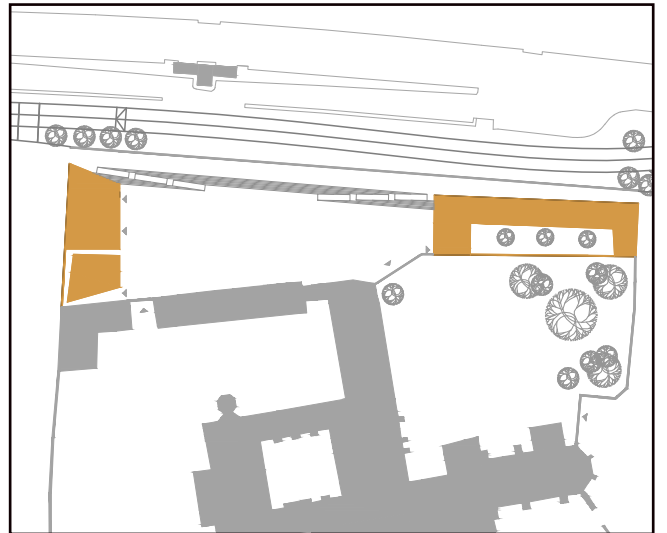
2_Wall



3_Buildings along the Wall



5_Space for Sidewalk



6_Pilgrim Site

ST AGNES CHURCH AND THE MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACE

There are several churches in the monastery ground, but none of them is used as a church anymore. Most of them belong to the national gallery and one is a concert hall, opened rarely. I believe, this site deserves a functional church. And also, there are only few churches of St Agnes in Czech Republic, because not many churches have been built after the Agnes' beatification.

The church is marked with a building-high cross, which is cut into the front facade of the church. It represents the altar. In the interior it creates an interesting light-play, together with the lighting on the circuit of the ceiling .

There is a small sacristy placed in the neighbouring building. The priest makes just few steps from there to the special entrance near the altar.

The rest of the first floor of the second building serves as a cafeteria with a gallery. It is a place to feel good, take a rest from sightseeing or just meet some friends.

Upstairs there is a multifunctional space to be found. The 'empty' room is adaptable and thus suitable for lectures, meetings, concerts or classes.







Entrance to the St Agnes Church

A corridor surrounds the church. It hides the true entrance to the church, which is from the south and this allows to position the altar on the east. The fact that the corridor is narrow and lined by high walls should bring the visitors' attention up to the sky, heaven and God.

Square

The square is left free, able to be adapted for different situations. During casual days, a simple movable mobiliary can be placed there. Also the size of the square allows more people to be assembled there.

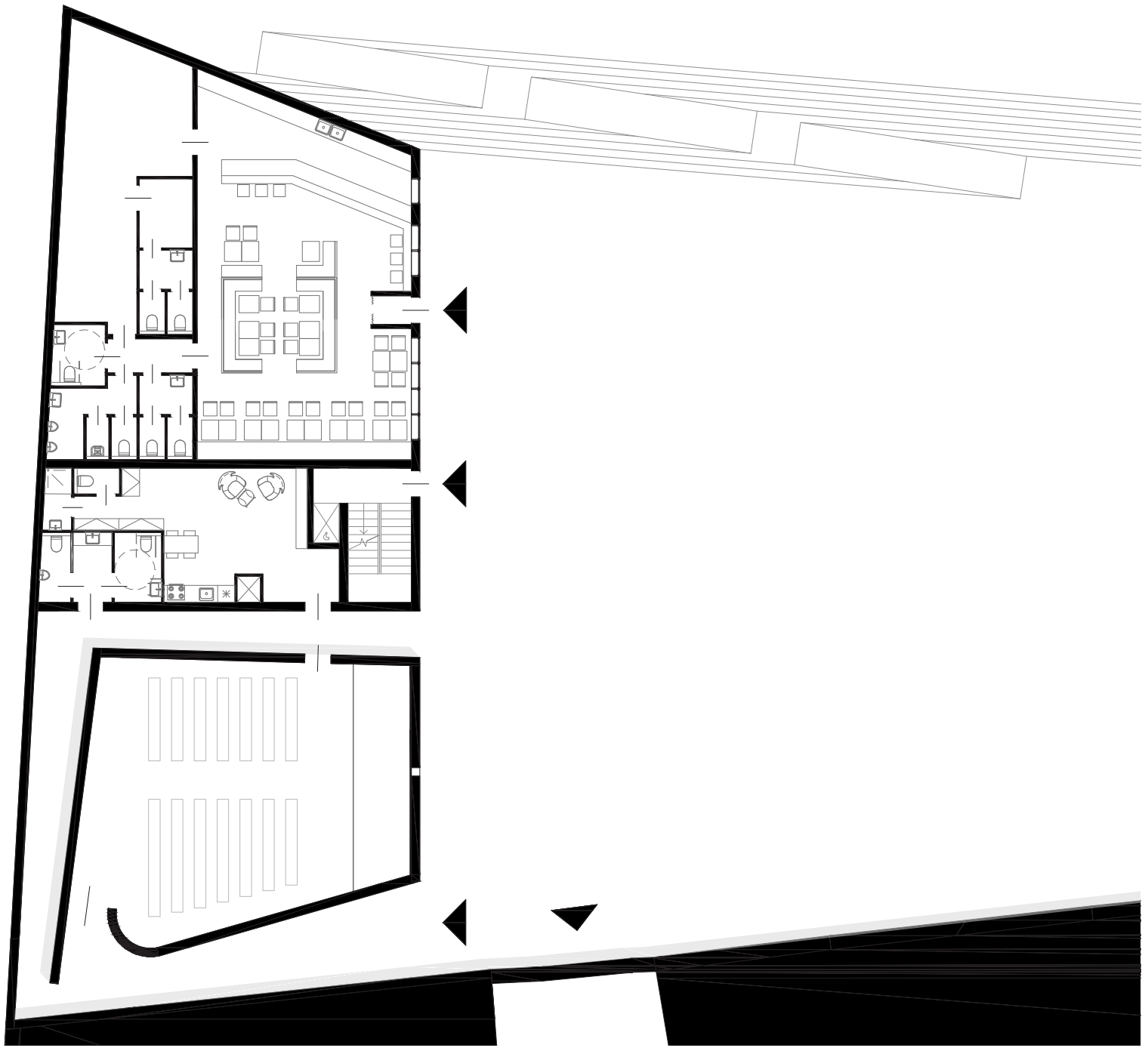
In the peak days of pilgrim interest, when the space of the church is not sufficient, a bigger mass will be held outside, with the building-high cross of the front facade in the background.



LAYOUT GROUND FLOOR

M 1:200

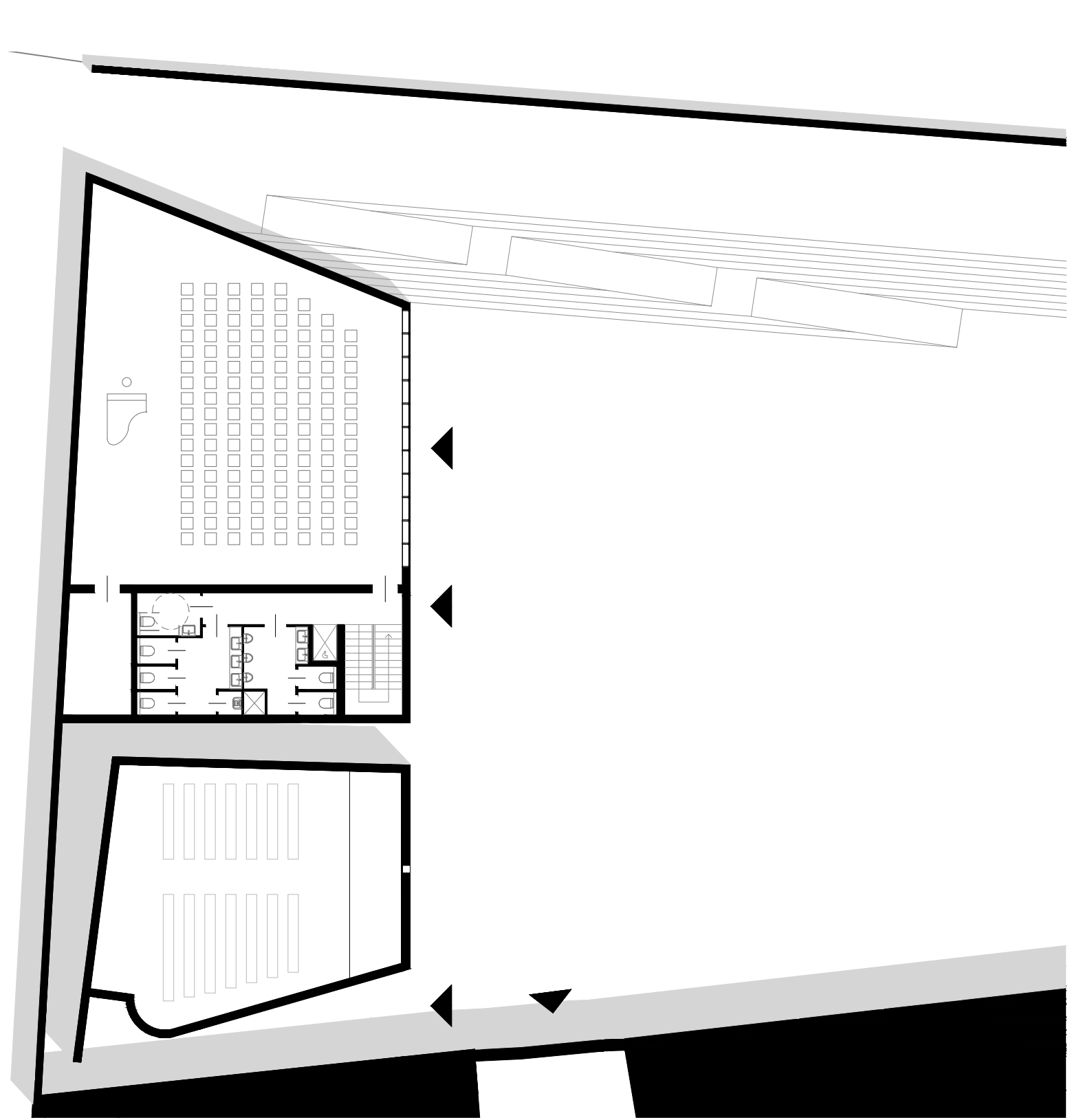




LAYOUT FIRST FLOOR

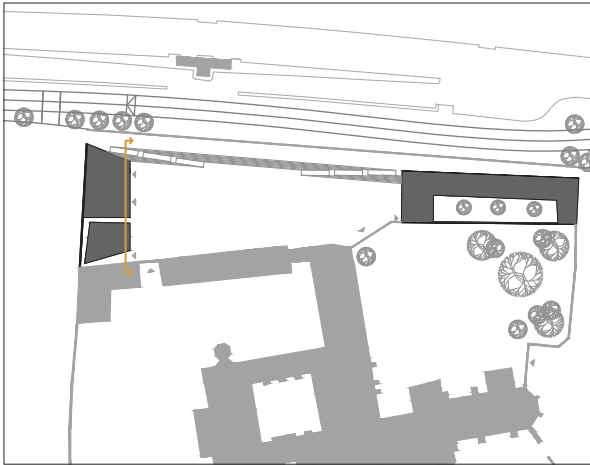
M 1:200





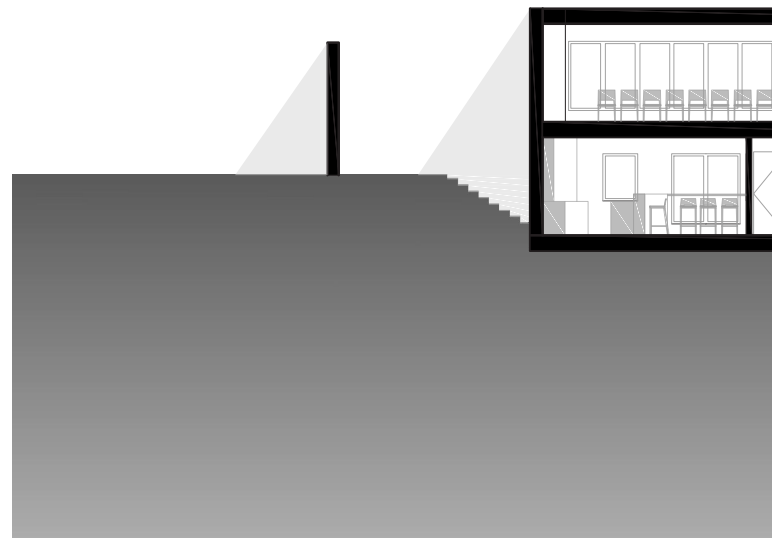
SECTIONS

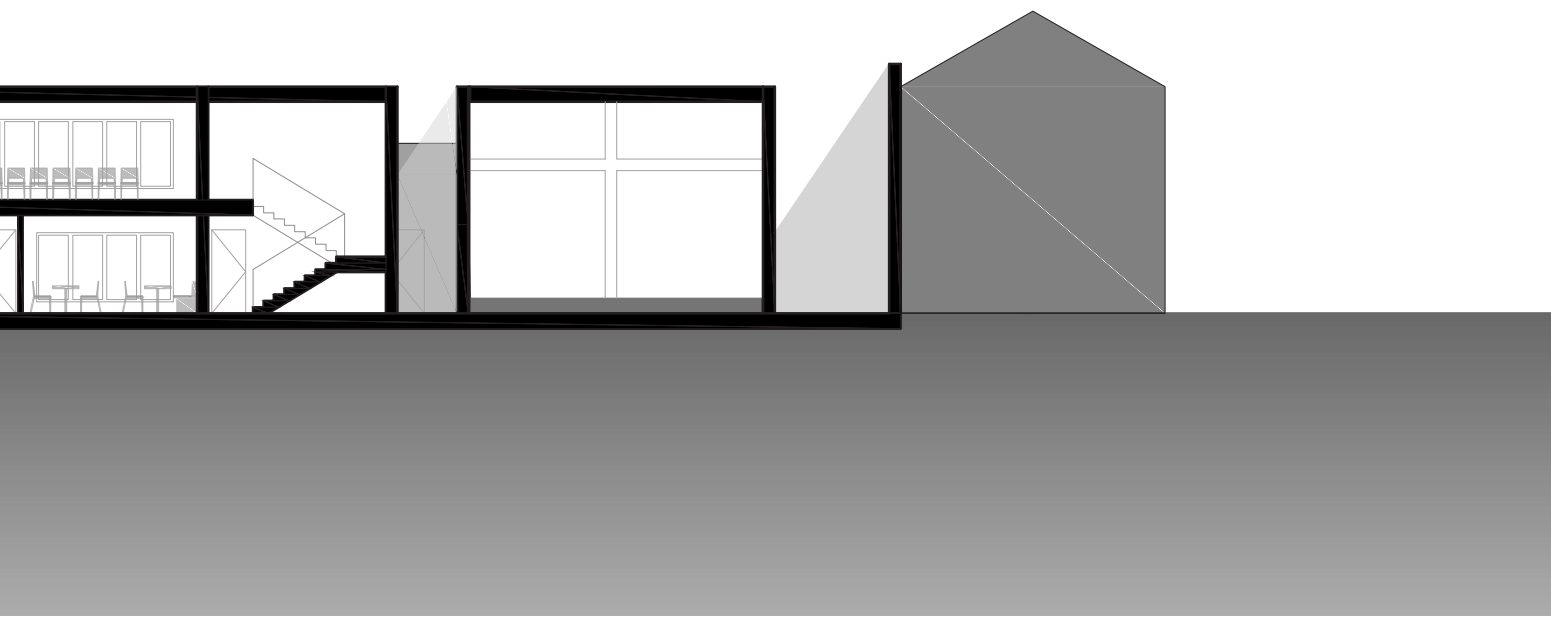
M 1:200



+ 6.600 _
+ 6.000 _

+ 3.000 _
+ 1.500 _
± 0.000 _





PILGRIM HOUSE

Pilgrim House is a two floor building, with an inner courtyard, neighbouring the monastery garden. The mass of the building has a form of a letter U, the yard opening to south. This form allows more sun to get into the yard with the building blocking the traffic noise. The whole house is inverted with most of the windows overlooking the courtyard.

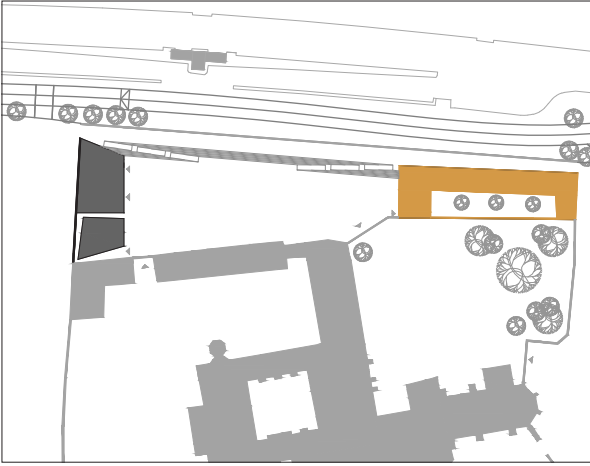
You enter the pilgrim house from the square to a half floor. The whole object is moved one and half meter lower than the square level. On the ground floor are located common rooms, in the western part of the building there is a kitchen and a dining room, in the east part is library to be found. Rest of the object serves for accommodation of over 50 people. There are several types of the rooms, mostly single and double rooms with private or shared bathroom. There are also two rooms of a hostel type, each for six visitors. I took the inspiration in the simplicity of monastic cells. The rooms are furnished purely and purposefully.

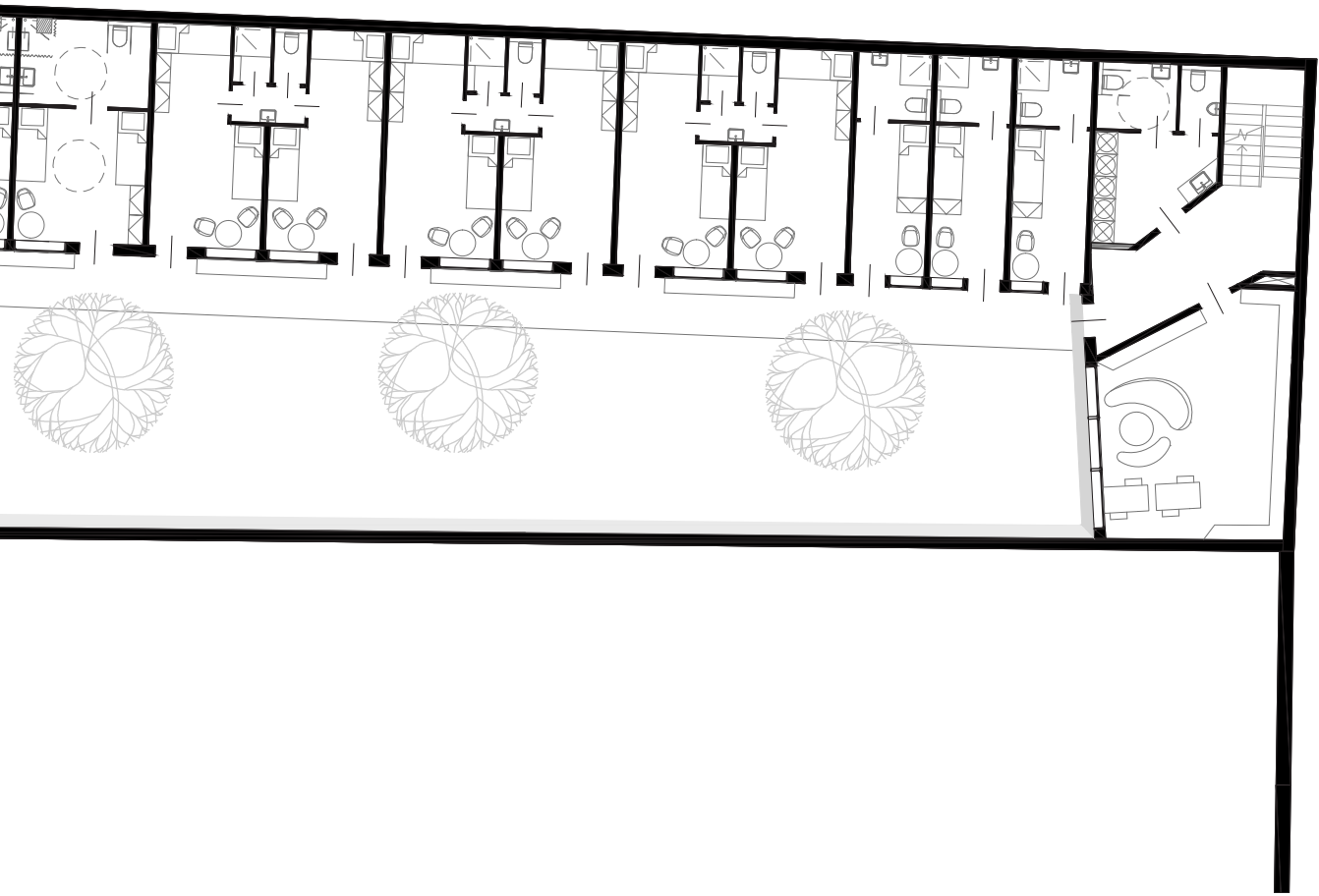
Being on a pilgrimage is about being with the inner self, but also about the communications with other pilgrims. Thus the bedrooms are small, but the common rooms and garden are suited for meeting with others.



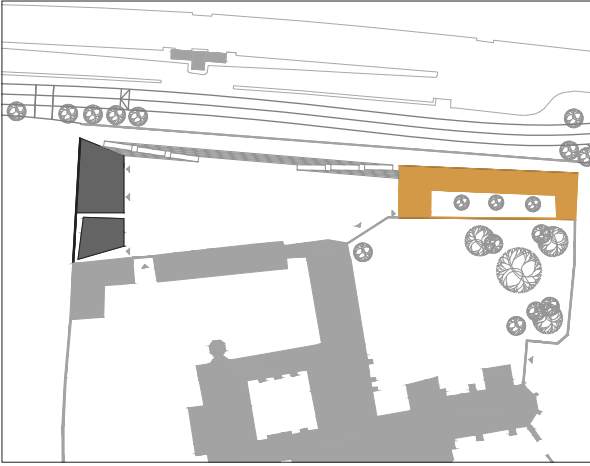


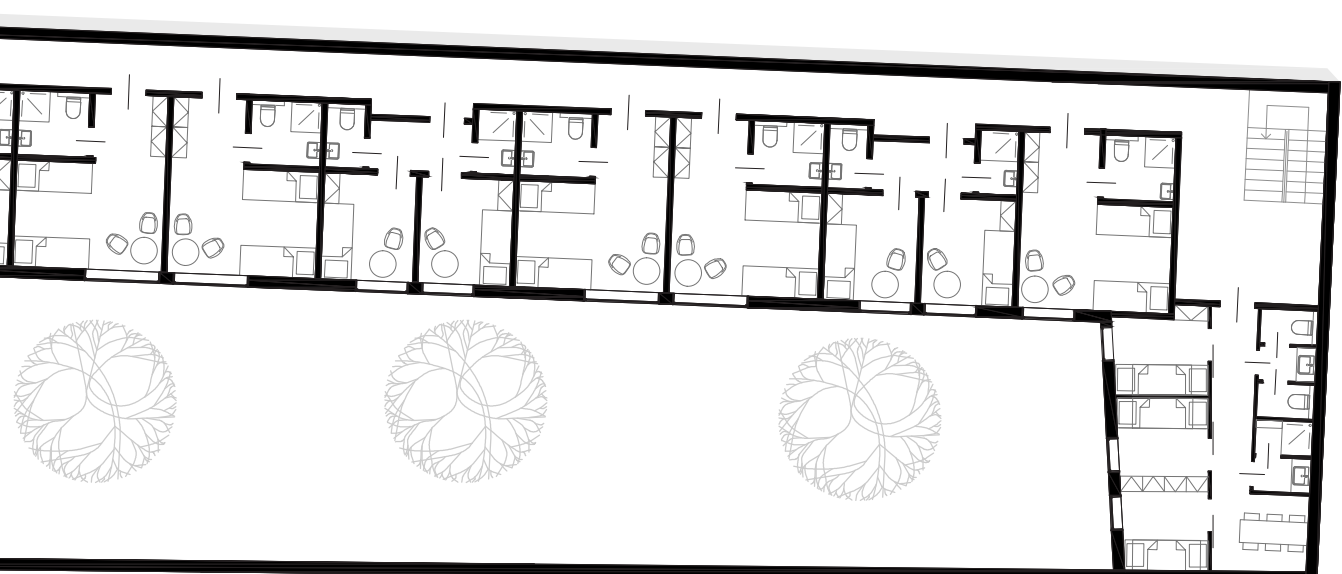
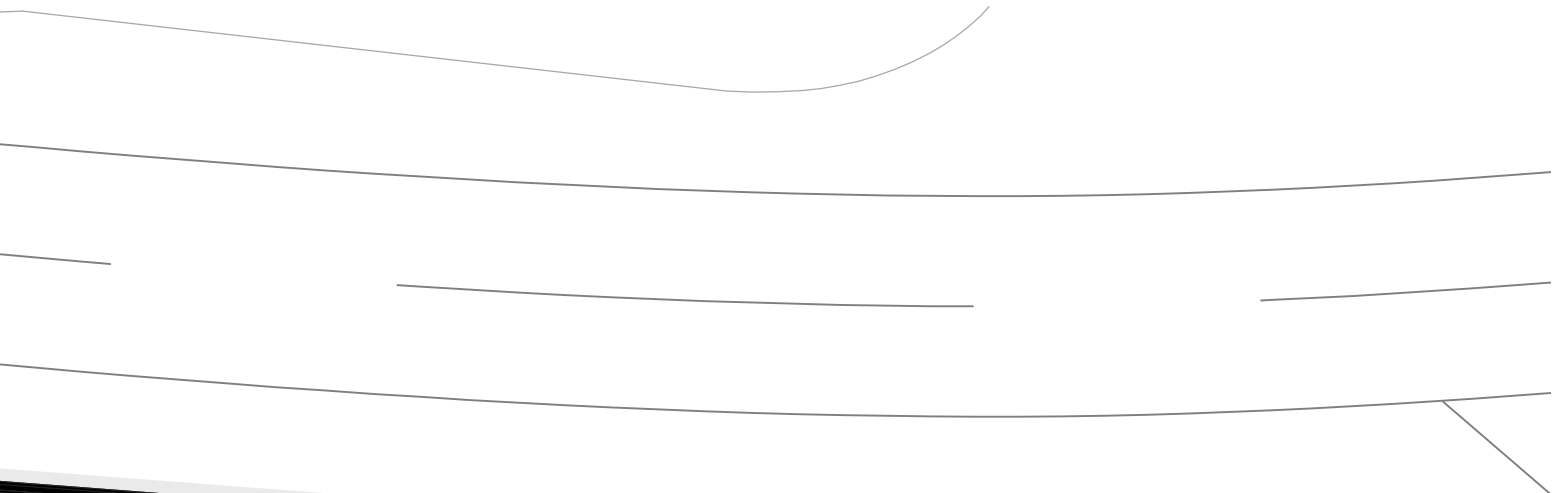
LAYOUT GROUND FLOOR
M 1:200



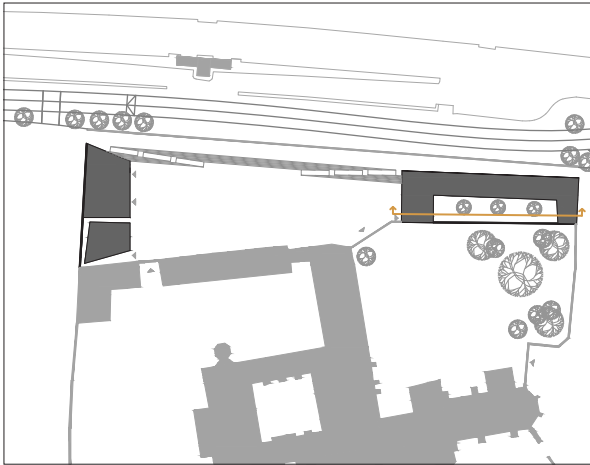


LAYOUT FIRST FLOOR
M 1:200



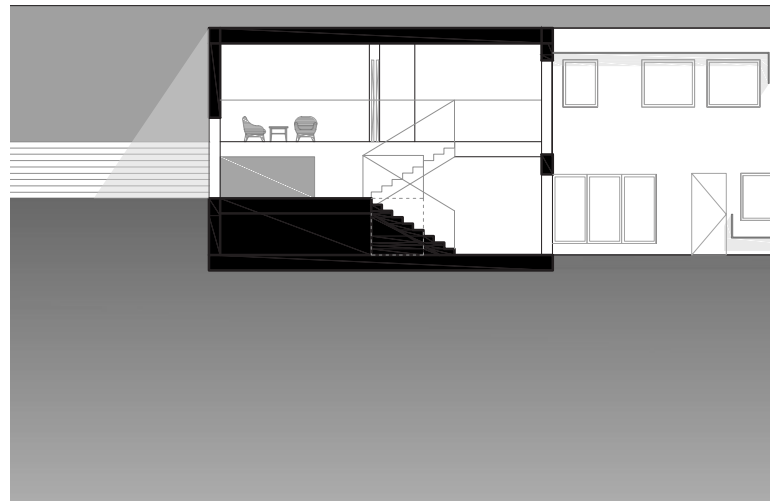


SECTION
M 1:200



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..+ 4.500 ..

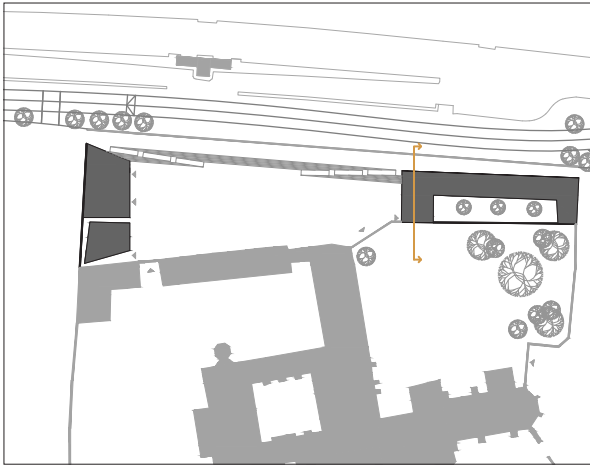
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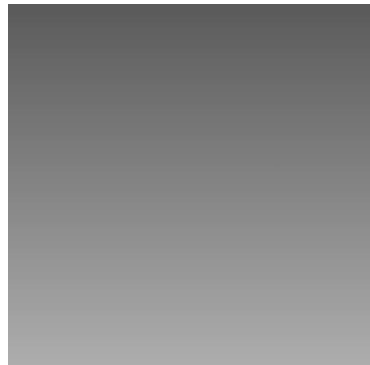
SECTION AND ELEVATION

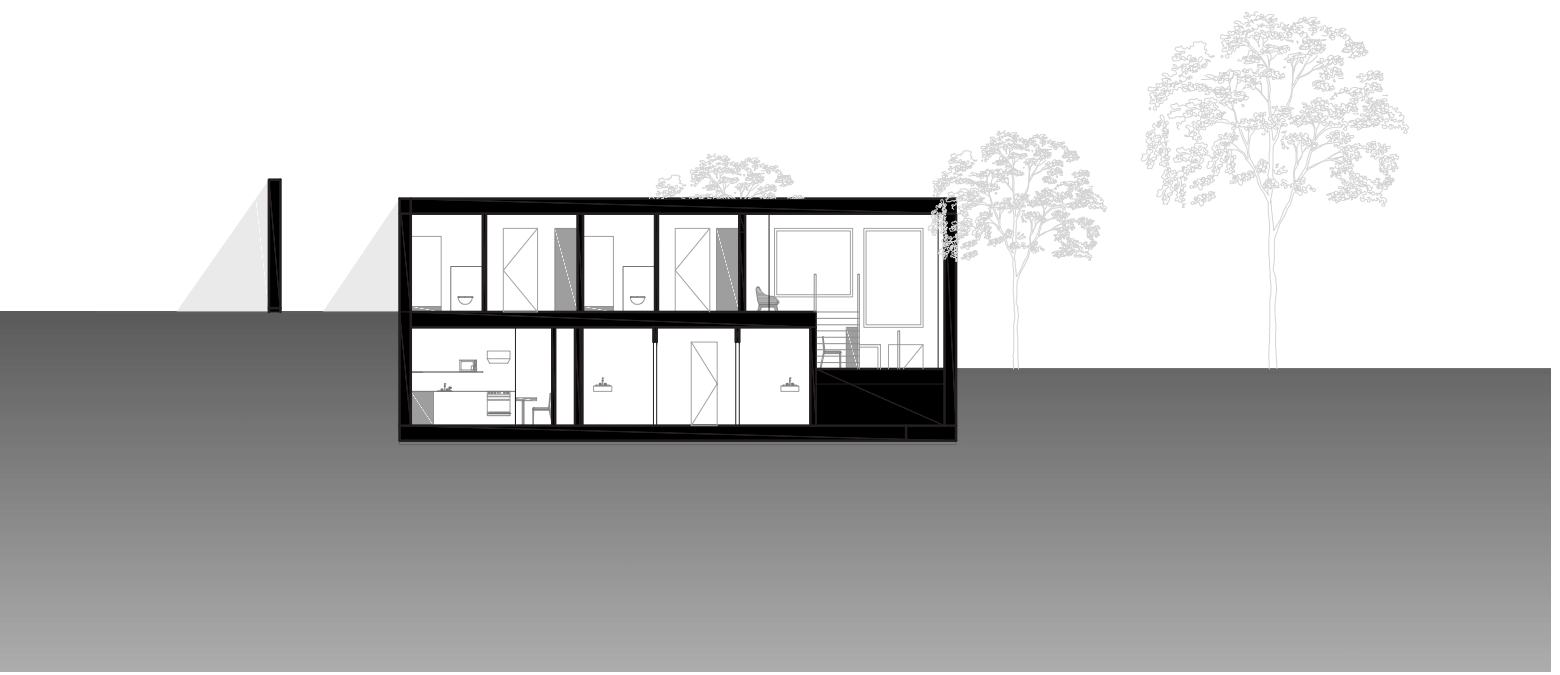
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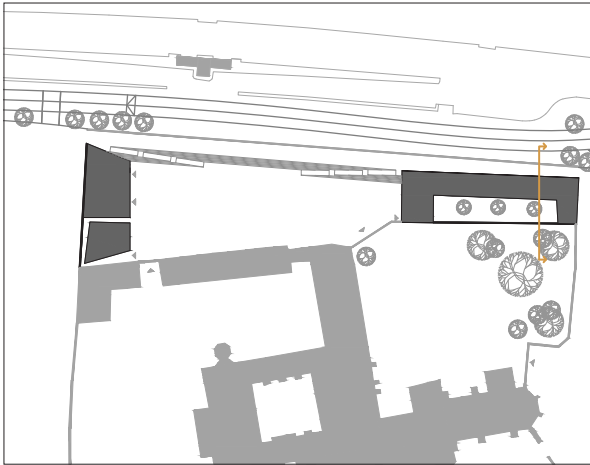
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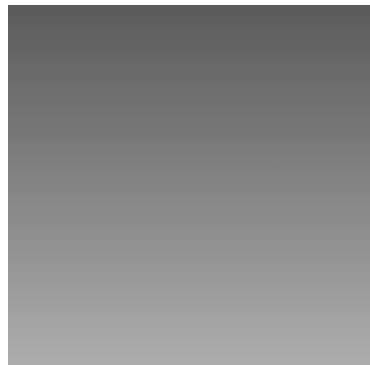
SECTION AND ELEVATION

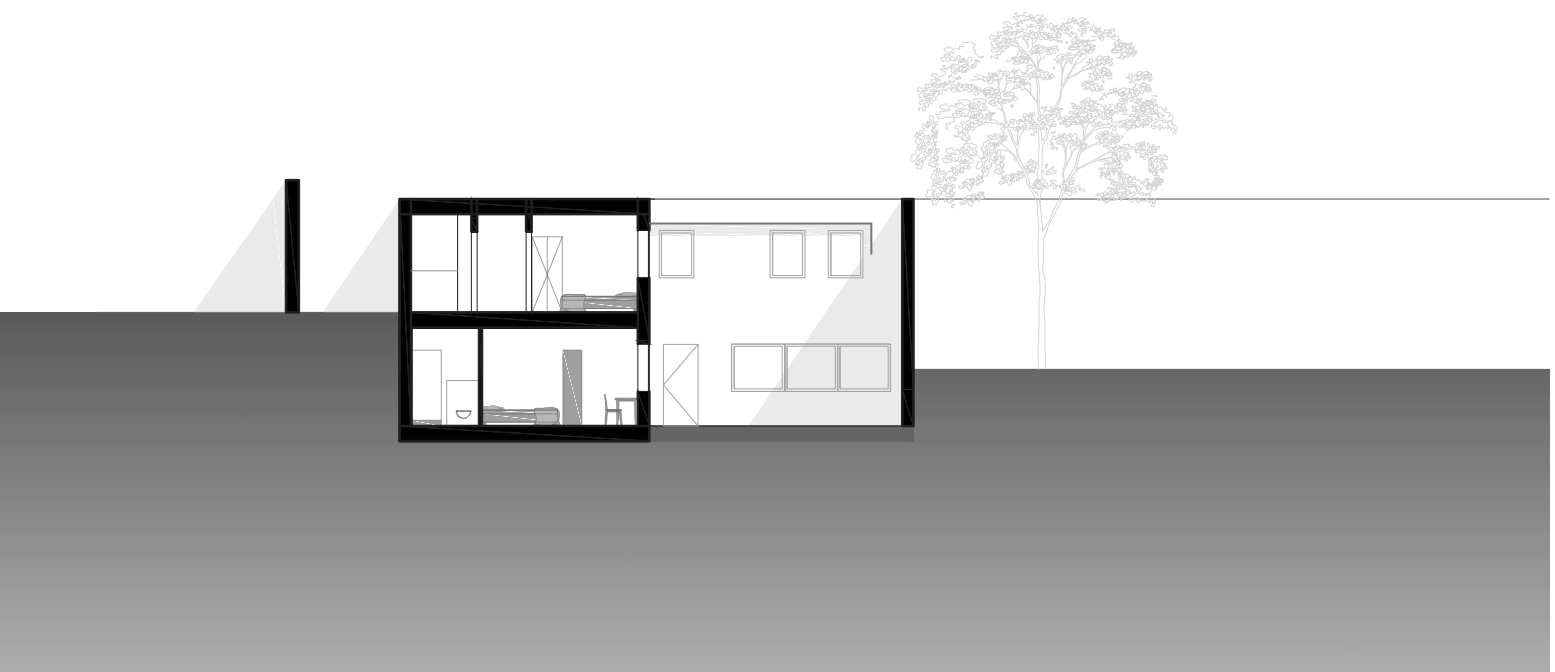
M 1:200



..+ 4.800..
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..+ 2.800..
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3,4 Soukupová, H.: Svatá Anežka Česká. Vyšehrad, spol. s.r.o., Prague, 2015, page 379

5 Soukupová, H.: Anežský klášter v Praze. Odeon, Prague, 1989, page 369

6 Soukupová, H.: Anežský klášter v Praze. Vyšehrad, spol. s.r.o., Prague, 2011, page 449

ILLUSTRATIONS

All the Illustrations, Plans, Pictures and Graphics, which are not listed below, were created by the author.

- | | | | |
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