

GËRMIA
center for contemporary creation

GËRMIA - center for contemporary creation

reimagine the relationship between the city, its past and art



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'Nothing disappears completely... In space, what came earlier continues to underpin what follows ... Pre-existing space underpins not only durable spatial arrangements, but also representational spaces and their attendant imagery and mythic narratives'

Henri Lefebvre 2010, 229

Introduction

This work examines and argues the reuse of an existing building, a former department store, and its transformation into a center of contemporary creation, using architecture as an instrument to resolve a specific urban vision and reimagine the relationship between the city, its past and art.

The focus lies in the typological transformative reuse as well as in reactivation of an important architectural socialist modernist heritage in a specific context. Through detailed contextual analysis as well as typology research, this work, in addition, tries to answer the question of how to deal with the Yugoslav modernist legacy in Prishtina, what do these landmarks represent and based on an example explore their reuse potential as well as give an answer to the unfinished utopia.

Moreover, the attempt in this regard is to point to the power of architecture to tell a story and start a new dialectic in an existing context.

There are a lot of stories this book tries to portrait aiming to elaborate the statement - story of a city being between identities, the tale of its inhabitant and their urban rituals, the evolution, transformation, expansion, the culture and arts through times, a story of the rise and the fall of the culture of consumption, a portrayal of the former department Gërmia, its presence and absence on the cityscape and urban life and finally the story of acknowledging the old story and start a new dialogue with it.

In this sense, the book becomes a hybrid narrative. It is a composition of frames containing space, time and atmosphere that allow multiple narratives to be scripted at the same time. Throughout several pictures and graphics in each chapter the author tries to achieve a mosaic narration that contrasts different subjects and gives the reader a visual perception of each written paragraphs.

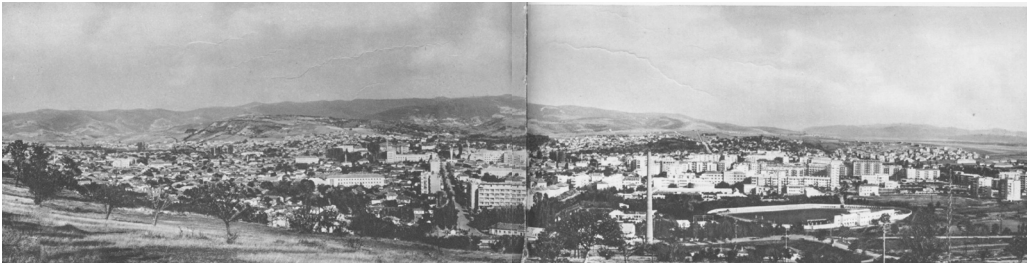
The chapters and subchapters are deliberately structured and in their composition they represent a collection of single disciplines - all leading to the final project.

The project, which manifests the stated thesis, is by no means a solution but a reaction to the current state. The chosen existing building represents a conglomerate. Built over the ruins of the old city, it clearly pictures the Yugoslav utopian ambition as well as the unfinished moder-

nisation of the city of Prishtina. The post war ideological shift from socialism to pure capitalism is strongly reflected in the building itself. The former Department Store Germia which used to house one of the most vital and dynamic social interaction in the city, today it can be described as a composition of a monster due to its overwhelming physical presence in the cityscape and simultaneously a ghost due to its absence in isolated behaviour towards the public space and the inhabitants.

Thus, this is the juncture when architecture suddenly assumes the quality of a player, of something that rewrites the palimpsest. With a fictive architectural scenography, the design juxtaposes in the project three conditions - the use, reuse and transformation in a state of permanent interaction offering an ensemble of fragments congealed into a single image. In this respect, a paradigm shift emerges. The architecture that was born to cover the city's deepest roots embraces the past and becomes an active urban actor, generates a series of relationships between different actors and interconnects narratives.

Lastly, this project aims to enhance the power of the architect's primary storytelling medium - the architectural drawing and its potential to reimagine as well as influence reality.



'From a small market town with some 16,000 inhabitants, Prishtina has become, during the last twenty years, a town numbering 50,000 residents. From ancient cobbled and dusty streets rising above small houses of the past, magnificent many-storied edifices have soared into the sky while straight, broad avenues and streets stretch away. A growing number of high chimneys scrape the sky successfully competing with high minarets and the bell tower'

Prishtina Monograph 1965, 108-109

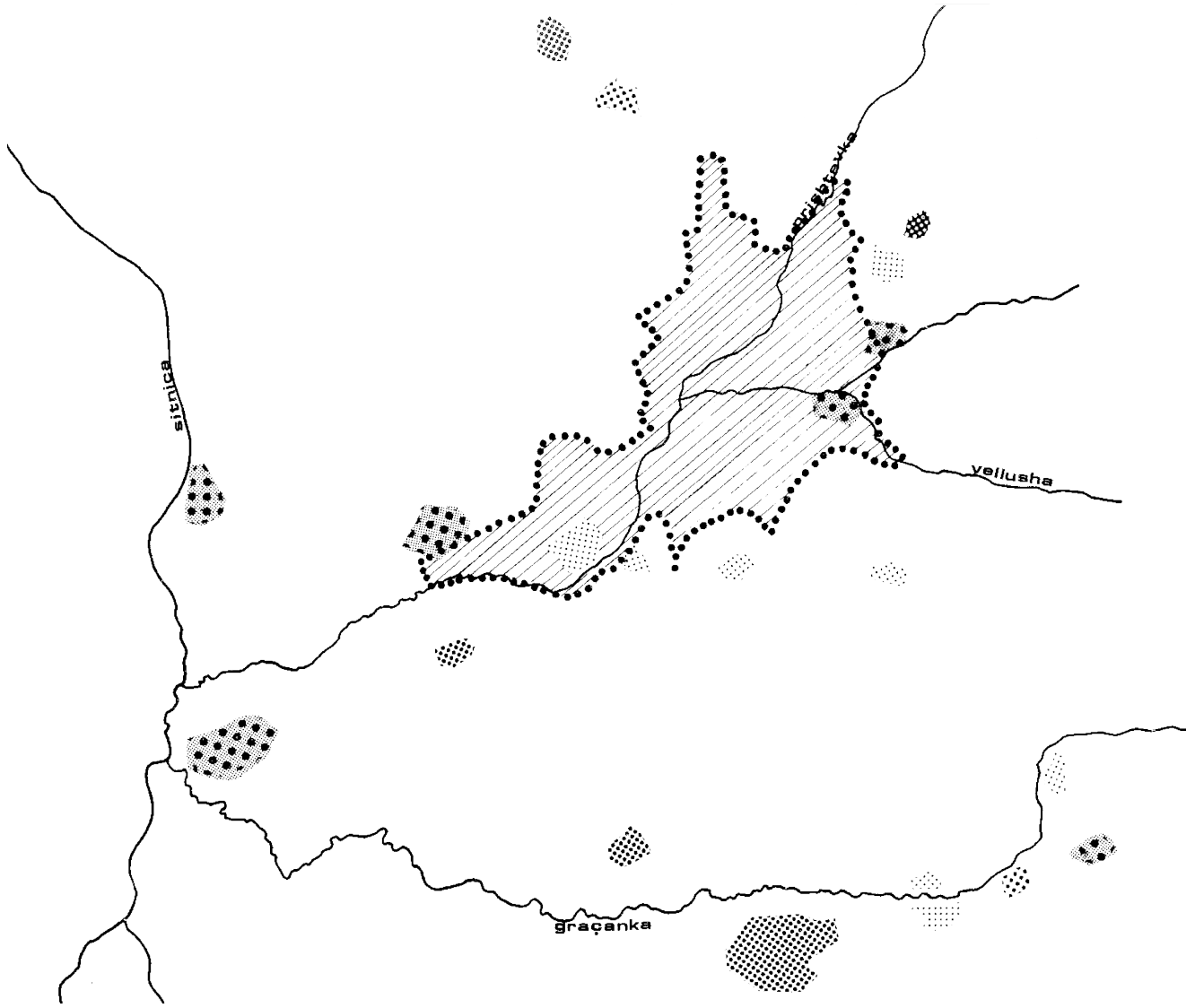
Between Identities




Prishtina city of future

Every city has its own significance and is a projection of beliefs and ideologies of its society, searching for its urban forms. One might say, a city is a collection. A collection of people, of cultures, of languages and experiences. The collective memory of its people, passed from a generation to another, which is connected to objects and places is the city itself. Or as Rossi defines it, the city is the locus of the collective memory and the relationship between the locus and the society becomes the main image of its architecture and its landscape. In this sense, the history of the city becomes the most helpful tool to grasp the significance of the urban structure as it is related to the collective memory and the place itself.¹ But a city collects much more than memories. Everytime it experiences a transition, the question of identity takes the stage. Analyzing it from a sociological perspective in the sense of a society and less of an individual, all identities are constructed. The issue is how, from what, by whom and for what. The construction of an identity is influenced and uses materials from a wide range of aspects like history, natural topography, collective memory, culture or religion² and it results as a combination, into a DNA that makes that specific place special and gives the sense of uniqueness. With the rise of the global identities and cosmopolitanism as an issue of the twenty-first century, the crisis of keeping this uniqueness appears.

In the context of the post-Yugoslav cities, specifically on architecture and social space, there is a lot of in-betweenness when we talk about identity issues. Historically and politically, being between Soviet and Western, architecturally between continuity and tabula rasa, socially between individual and collective and finally being between past and future, there is no doubt that these cities are experiencing an identity crisis and Prishtina is one of them.

Positioned in the central part of Balkan Peninsula, Prishtina as the capital city of the youngest country in Europe, represents its young spirit also through its dynamic urban composition. This urban composition is complex and multilayered, influenced by each of its historical eras and its social transition. From the time when Prishtina was mentioned as a 'village' until today, the city changed its image and its structure constantly, leaving limited trace of its history and cultural heritage.



- 
 neolithic age
- 
 bronze age
- 
 roman
- 
 medieval period
- 
 potential areas
- 
 city's boundary

The story of Prishtina starts nearly 10.000 years ago.³

The very first footprints of its existence are proven through Neolithic findings discovered in the surrounding of Prishtina like Matican, Gracanica and Ulpiana which are supposed to date back the 8th century BC. The oldest settlement in the area of Prishtina is the one near the river of Gracanka, east side of the village Gracanica and the first Illyrian settlement from the 4th century found in the river valley of Vellusha river.⁴

Bardylis brought several tribes in the region and rooted the Dardanian Kingdom in the 4th century BC, which is also known as the Dardani period. During the Roman Empire, the region of Prishtina was considered as one of the most important roman cities in Balkan. Ulpiana which today lies about 7 km from present day Prishtina, in the 2nd century A.D. became a roman municipium. An Earthquake in 518 A.D. tremendously damaged the structure of the city, which was than rebuild by Byzantine Emperor Justinian I and renamed as Justiniana Secunda.⁵

There are less traces of old settlement in the site of present day Prishtina, however certain locations are considered to be possible, yet unexplored archaeological sites.

The first written source that mentions Prishtina as a name is from Byzantine Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos, who describes Prishtina as an unfortified 'village'.



Ottomanization

The transformation of ottoman cities was a process that emerged during 15th to 19th century. The Empire, aware of their power, forced a ruled development of the cities across the whole territory. Existing cities were reconstructed- the case of transformation- while small settlements were expanded and totally rebuilt -the case of extension. The morphological structure of the settlements as well as their spontaneous urban composition followed a similar logic, as the same ottoman layout was applied to every city.⁶

The process of understanding the conversion of the urban fabric of Prishtina and most of the cities in Balkan in this period is hard due to the lack of plans, as ancient plans or cadastral plans as a process came later during the 19th century. In the case of Prishtina it is even more difficult to determine because the traces of the old city vanished on later historical events, so the only documentation that represents this image are a few fragments and pictures from the past, stories and memories of citizens and stories of travel writers. While in the ancient times there existed the old city of Ulpiana and during the early middle ages Artana as a city of miners, Prishtina of today had less importance until the ottoman period, when it started to become an influential trading center due to its central position in the Balkans and rich mining town Novo Brdo. During this period of time, the city was known for skilled craft workers and artisans and this tradition is still present. Its importance is described through travel writers since the 18th century, where it was mentioned mostly as an important settlement of trading fairs between Selanik and Sarajevo with many inns Hans and covered Bazaars, which in fact made the city become an important trading center since the 14th and 15th century. According to the description of the french geologist Ammie Boue during his visit in 1830, we can imagine Pristina as a small city with mostly single-story constructed houses, wide streets and narrow pedestrian paths. Further describes Ammie Boue the old city bazaar as the central core of Pristina and the still existing Clock Tower as a dominant city landmark. Another traveler, Baron Gamer said in the 19th century that there was a big city on the way from Istanbul to Novi Pazar called Pristina.⁷ According to Pierre Pinon, in the case of balkan cities, we should speak of 'ottomanized' rather than ottoman cities in the strict sense, referring at least to urban forms, which are partly inherited and rarely reconstructed. The 'Ottomanization' of the conquered towns and cities, espe-



cially in the case of large cities where the main line was construction of new or modification of churches into mosques, configuration of neighborhood facilities such as hamams, madrasa, imanet, library and hanns. In the case of Constantinople, practically all the churches were converted to mosques, beginning from Hagia Sophia.⁸

Prishtina as all the other surrounding cities was also converted and 'ottomanized'. Using wisely the topographic and the environmental conveniences the city was built spontaneously in between the two hills that way creating a pleasant panoramic scene.⁹ The main two spatial organization featured the centre with economic, religious, cultural and other activities as well as the residential neighborhoods mehalles. The center was organized around the great mosque composed by public functions surrounded by housing areas expanded approximately similarly in four directions of the city. The road network consisted of limited main streets- 'matrix' streets in irregular layout and alignment with a number of dead end alleys cul-de-sacs for local use. Another spatial feature of the center was the situation of craftsman quartier for trading purposes, as trading was fundamental for ottoman cities, known as bazaar or carsi. This quarter was composed of a regular and dense network of alleys lined with one to two-story shops. The Mehalles in the other hand, were housing units neighborhoods, constructed mostly spontaneous with no order. The division of the private space to the public one was marked by the high wall fences that surrounded the gardens of the houses. The spatial division of indoor and outdoor spaces was not only physically present but also in a social context, as usually, the indoor spaces belonged to the women and the outdoor to the men's life due to a religious influence of islamic culture.

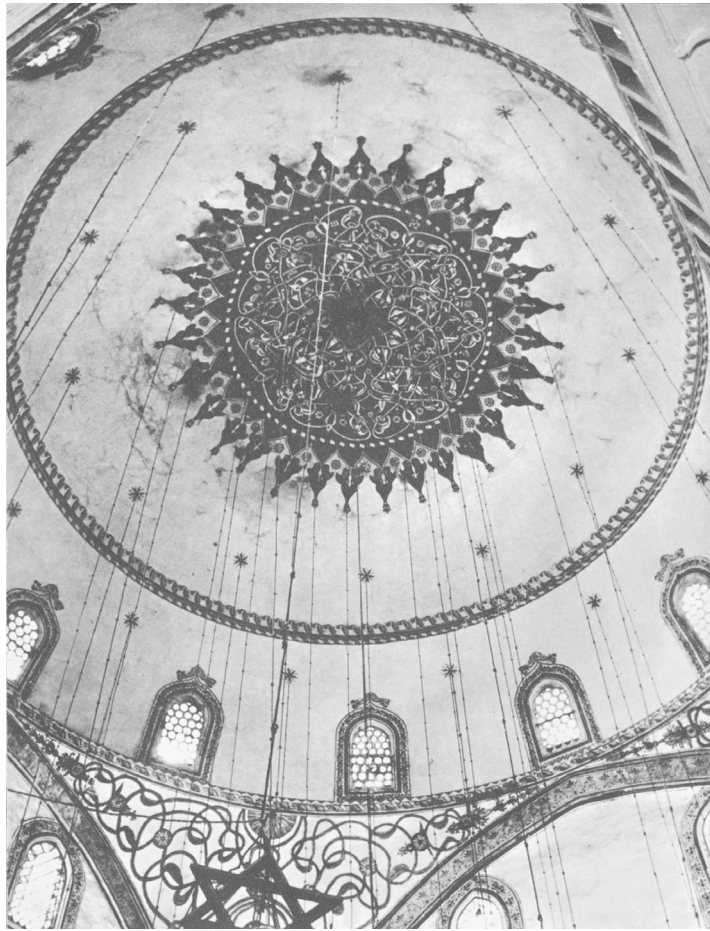


Urban Rituals

Every neighborhood had its own mosque and would usually be named after this mosque. Inhabitants of mehalles had tremendous rapport with each other. A few mehalles were characterized by talented craft families or any other occupation. The urban landscape of housing units took its place along the streets and was dominated by overhanging roofs and corbeling. The link to the nature was also an original dimension that Ottomans brought to the city. In this sense, most of the houses had a garden either in front of the house or in the back.¹⁰

The two main urban axis of that time were "divanjolli" as an east – west axis that came from "toukbahqe" and passed through the city center where the market area was placed continuing this way toward west to the train station. This was known as the main public tissue in the city. The north – south axis was more important from economical point of view since through it the trade caravans were passing the city of Prishtina and going to the important cities in the Balkans. Through time this road would become the main chain of the physical development of the city.¹¹

As the ottoman cities were spontaneous structures, the urban composition of public squares didn't own a spatial quality in the sense of a certain shape. They were usually generated at the crossroads as amorphous type of squares.¹² Despite that, less of the real public and social life happened in those 'squares'. The role of the main square was taken by the marketplace - bazaars, the mosques and hamams where most of the public gatherings and social interactivity happened. The social life as well as the social space was totally influenced by religion, in this sense the public life was not equally frequented from women and men. Women used to gather in private houses or in hammams, while men spent the day outdoor trading and their social life had a business character.



Mosques

One of the main urban facilities inherited from the ottoman period in Prishtina are the Mosques. They are still visibly evident in the urban form despite the structural changes of the city on later historical events and their silhouette is still dominant next to other city landmarks. A spatial organization characteristic of their gardens is the presence of graves as well as springs and fountains. The urban focus while constructing the mosques was the access and the number of people living in the surrounding Mehalla as each mosque belonged to a certain neighborhood. Despite its architectural influence on the city structure, the mosques played an important role on social and cultural aspect. Mosques of Prishtina were used not only for religious purposes but for a long time they served also as a house for linguistic and social lectures called Mejtepet. Mejtepet were usually educational classes, voluntary initiatives agreed between children's parents and the mosque teachers. They were out of the compulsory primary school programs and some kind of 'unofficial' classes nevertheless very attended from locals. Beside educational lectures, social and cultural events took also place, so the inhabitants were very related to their mosques.

Until the beginning of the Second World War, Prishtina owned fourteen mosques. One of them was demolished in 1954 (Llokac Mosque), located in the present city center of Prishtina, nowadays called Mother Teresa Boulevard, in order to implement the city urban plan designed from yugoslav leadership. The thirteen remaining ones, represent an important part of cultural heritage for Prishtina as well as for Kosovo. ¹³

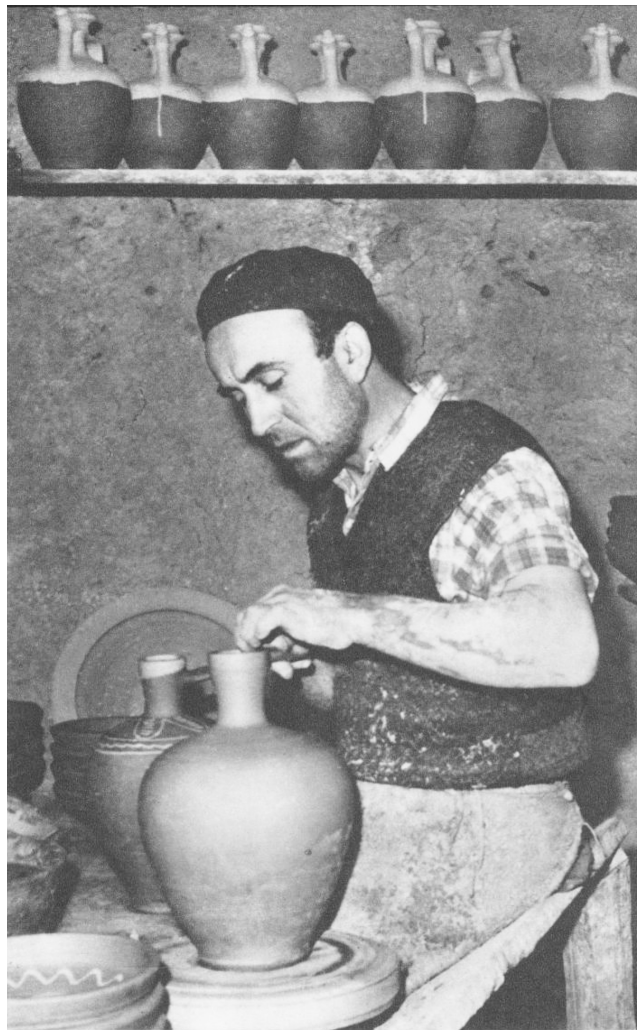


Turkish baths

The Great Hamam

The great Hamam dates back to the 14th-15th century. It is a part of the complex of the Sultan Murati Mosque and was a very important social and cultural facility for the city. Its interior was symmetrical designed in two quarters - for women and men - consisted of central anteroom (apoditerium, dressing), a passing heating space (tepidarium) and bathroom (caldarium) with a bin for storing water, which was covered with eighteen domes. Domes were decorated with sixteen small glass windows that create a half-light.

The Turkish bath played an important role in social life of Prishtina's inhabitants, for example in the tradition of the weddings. Especially for the women, the great hamam was a place of conviviality and joy, a social space where women came together, to bathe and socialise. Here many ceremonies took place and the most interesting one was the ceremony of the preparation of brides for their wedding. The original function of the great hamam was abandoned in 1960 and the facility was partially used as depot and shop. Since 1989 the building of Hammam is not maintained, despite the building being considered as one of the most important monuments of the city of Prishtina. Recent years, i.e. since 2007, investments have started for the preparation of conservation/restoration plan and the restoration process is still ongoing.¹⁴ On the other hand, the bazaar Hamam, which was in the center of the city, was destroyed on later historical events and its traces were found a few years later while building the government building, but unfortunately ignored from the former government.



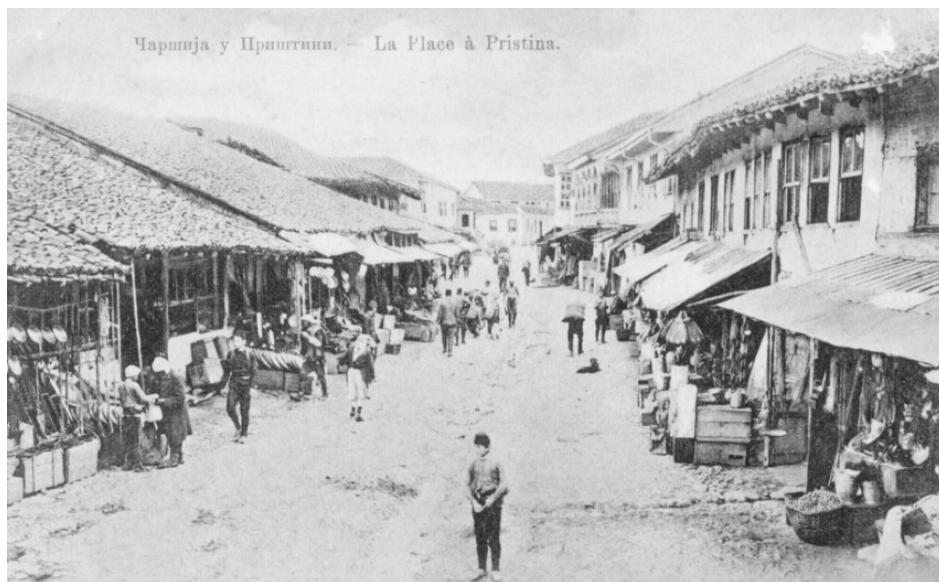
The culture of trading Old Bazaar and Crafts

The ottoman cities had a strong relation to commercial and trading systems. Bazaar or carsi was the most important trade. A craftsman quarter usually in the core of the city center consisting of bedesten (covered market), hans and caravanserais (inns for travelers) with a collection of shops where different crafts and goods were exhibited.

Prishtina's old Bazaar was a creative and commercial center at the same time. It was built during 15th century and expanded until the 19th century. The covered market area consisted of complex stores with goods of higher value, while the open part was characterized by smaller units in a row of crafts shops, usually used once a week where merchants exposed their products. Its importance for the city is described and documented also through travel writers. In 1660, Evliya Celebi claims that Prishtina had a market area Bazaar, a hamam, 11 khans and about 300 different shops.¹⁵ The number of shops increased up to 500 as the morphological structure of Bazaar was constantly in change and expansion because the structure was not designed in advance but spontaneously composed along the dense network of cobblestone paved alleys. The spatial division through roads made it possible that similar crafts to be clustered in smaller groups and owned an alley. Shop units were mostly single-story constructions where the ground floor space was used as a workshop space for crafts working, as well as exhibition of products and trading area. Here and there existed also two-story units where the upper floor was used as depot. The stores were constructed of three main materials - clay, wood and stone. Not only visually but also functionally the front facade facing the road usually composed of large wooden windows and long eaves was the most important one.

There were around 50 different handicrafts practiced in the Bazaar of Prishtina.¹⁶ They were crafted by gifted silversmiths, goldsmiths, coppersmiths, tinsmiths, blacksmiths, gunsmiths, tub-makers, cutlers, potters, farriers, saddlers, boot makers, tailors, quilters and curries.¹⁷ Prishtina was known as the center of coppersmiths and pottery crafting, which spread later in other kosovar cities. Copper pots were crafted for domestic and cult purposes while clay pots were crafted for wheat and water preservation. Decorations used in these crafts were wavy zigzag lines, circles, and semicircles.¹⁸

Чаршија у Приштини. — La Place à Pristina.

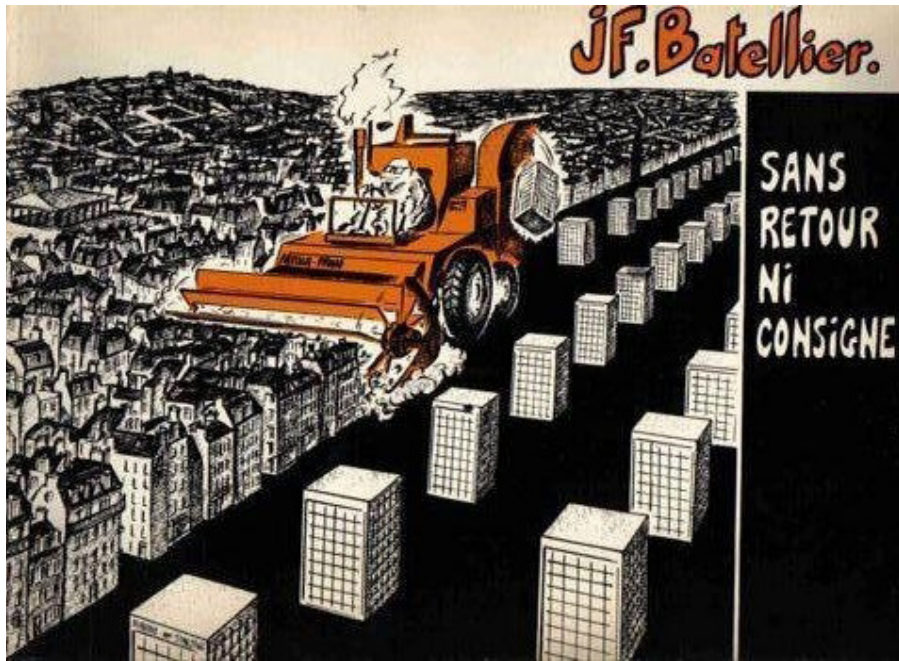






Beside trading, the creative quarter was also the main place for public assembling and had a great social significance for the inhabitants of Prishtina. It was a place of exchange for local and international traders, as many shops belonged to talented Jews, Albanians and Turks and Bazaar was visited by other craftsmen from different countries. Important social and cultural feature of Bazaar were also the small cafes which served traditional tea and drinks, sweet shops and bakers. These places were even used for discussing and criticising, blood feud reconciling, selling and purchasing of property, affiancing procedures, setting of marriage dates, sharing patriotic feelings and cultivating trust or Besa. Being close to each other, the traders used to hang around their shops and drink tea while exposing their goods.¹⁹

In general, the shops lied along rivers and so did they in Prishtina, as they were located between Vellusha and Prishtevka rivers. Today neither the bazaar nor the rivers are to be seen in Prishtina. The old Bazaar destruction happened during 1950s and 1960s and together with this an important part of the city's history and collective memory has vanished. Instead, buildings like Kosovo Assembly, Municipality of Prishtina, PTT and Brotherhood and Unity socialist square were constructed. Its location in the present time Prishtina is approximately between Mother Theresa Boulevard in the south, UCK Street in the north and Agim Ramadani in the east, being close to the site of the chosen building for this work.



J.F. Batellier.

SANS
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Communist Utopia

The story of transformation and erasure of the Ottoman city fabric commenced after 1920 to continue after the World War II in the socialist system, influenced by social, political and economic changes. In general, this process touched most of the cities in western balkan as new ideologies were introduced to the society.

This way, the 19 November 1944 became the new birthday for the city²⁰, being still under the regime of Yugoslavia even after the World War II, its urban structure experienced drastic changes. A 'unified' urban layout with a destructive approach towards the past was practised denying the urban context. This way Prishtina obtained a similar character to many other urban centres of Yugoslavia. A new form of public life, of lifestyle, of culture and above all of architecture was introduced with the aim of creating a new spatial platform, promoting the political and social ideologies along with that also constructing a new identity, a Yugoslav identity.

Since 1947 when Prishtina gained the role of political and administrative center of Kosova and became the capital city, constant changes happened in the name of progress, unity, fraternity and freedom - in the name of modernization.²¹

New forms of architecture emerged by attacking the city's old core, the genius loci. The old Bazaar as one of the most vital part of the public life in the city was torn down. Trying to minimize the role of the religion, the socialist system denied many bazaars in balkans as they were owned by waqfs charities managed from mosques. Under the slogan 'Destroy the old, build the new' not only the covered Bazaar, but also the Llokac Mosque, the most important of the catholic churches, the synagogue, an old traditional turkish bath and many buildings from the ottoman era were destructed leaving room for fine, tall, modern buildings and big squares of the 'labour class.'²² There were no attempts to preserve the city's history as in other cities in the region such as Sarajevo and Skopje. The inhabitants, not aware of the importance of the cultural heritage, influenced by crisis and post war situation, looking ahead to a 'brighter future', helped the destruction with voluntary work and with great enthusiasm.

The former regime determined some priorities and urgent tasks for the city development, starting from compilation of a general urban plan. The plan was composed based on a capacity of 50.000 inhabitants, an area of around 505 hectares and will first be applied in 1953.²³



The following period introduces a transformation for Prishtina also in the institutional level. It represents the age when many institutional buildings and public institutions were established for the first time. Having everything concentrated in the 'new capital city' encouraged a massive migration from all the other kosovarian cities towards Prishtina, as the new future for the city seemed to be very promising. This way many new city quarters for housing purposes were built. The process of planning of the new quarters was a fragmented process, as individual parts of the city were composed and planned separately without a solid urban master plan for the whole city. This way the connection between the fragments sometimes failed by creating void spaces in-between and undefined puzzles.

Nevertheless, looking at it from another angle, despite the 'mistaken' destructive approach towards the historical and spiritual heritage, this period has also its positive influences as for Kosovo it marks the beginning of a new architecture style and at the same time the architecture profession itself. The utopian ideas of building a new spatial fabric for a 'new society' and a 'new capital city' was to be seen in many characteristic elements like oversized constructions 'mega structures', the loss of the human dimension, the composition of facades, the heterogeneous agglomeration of housing quarters and the most important - the radical spatial division between vehicular traffic from the pedestrian traffic. This was achieved by elevating the ground floor of the housing blocks on a platform for pedestrians while maintaining the ground level only for cars. This way, modern urban existence generates new aspirations. It produces new enterprises, new languages and new cultural forms.

The lifted platform was the main urban-identifying element for the city, composed through tunnels and pedestrian bridges enabling this way a rich spatial interplay of different layers of activity.²⁴



Yugoslav socialism strongly identified with modern architecture. For instance, the elevated pedestrian network of roads as a three dimensional separation which became part of the basic vision of the future city was at that time a truly identifying element of Modernist urban theory. Architects aware of the international trends but at the same time influenced by their social and cultural context tried to compose some kind of a regional architecture identity. In the case of Prishtina this context was denied and neglected (with exception of a few local architects) as most of the projects were planned from various architecture offices from Belgrade and other Yugoslavian countries.

Significant projects from this period that contributed on the new identity construct were: Grand Hotel, Media Building 'Rilindja', Department Store 'Germia', National Library and the University Campus Masterplan, Youth Center Boro and Ramizi as well as housing masterplans like Ulpiana and Dardania.













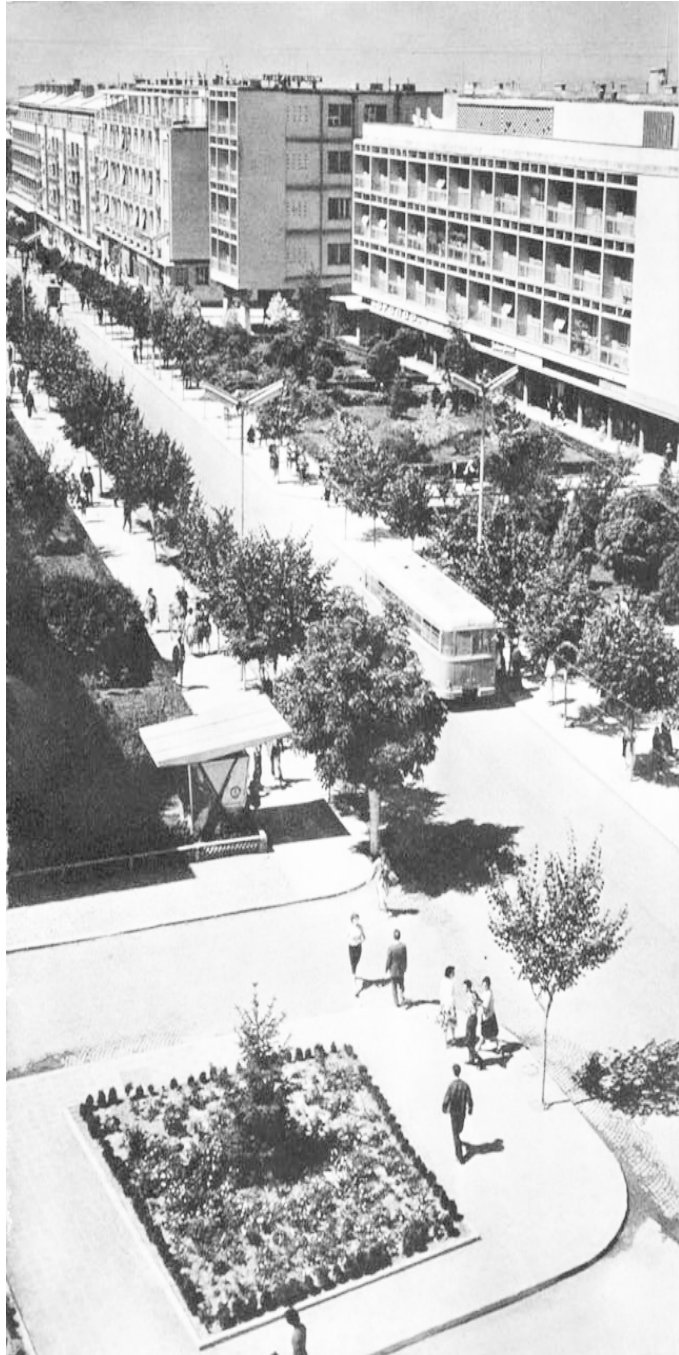


Marshal Tito Street

Performing the new identity, a new form of social life was born in the socialist city. In this period of time, shape played an important role on designing the city, this is why the new public spaces were characterized through certain spatial geometry. Leaving the tiny streets of ottoman era behind, the new system introduced not only tall buildings but also wide, overscaled streets and pedestrian 'boulevards'. This way the culture of 'korso' was introduced. The new urban landscape partly kept the commercial influence on public spaces, but this time instead of a dense bazaar structure, the shops and commercial facilities were placed along the wide streets. 'Korso' was a new form of public gathering, a daily parade where crowds of people used to walk in the city mostly during the evening and make a few 'rounds' while they discuss, talk or enjoy the walk. At the beginning in Prishtina this culture was practiced in the Divan Jolli axis and in the bazaar area, to move on later on the new square 'Marshal Tito Street' today named 'Mother Theresa Boulevard'.²⁵ This way, a new social interaction and a new public life was introduced.

Marshal Tito Street was one of the first interventions from the socialist regime with the approval of the general urban plan in 1953. After cutting down the east west urban axis 'Divan Jolli' the city public life was reconstructed in the north south direction.²⁶ This way the social interaction moved from the old bazaar to the new boulevard. While widening the street, the old facilities of Llokac neighbourhood which lied in this area were torn down including Lokac Mosque, the Catholic Church and many houses. The new concrete landscape should hide the old pavement and create a space for the 'new society'. The most important political, cultural and commercial functions were placed along the street. Starting from Hotel Grand, to modernist housing blocks, green stripes and small squares, hotel Bozhur, national theater, government building, department store 'Germia' and many small shops in the ground floor, this street brought a new dimension to the city. The commercial function with the new shop and the department store was a kind of substitute of the old bazaar introducing another type of consumption culture to the city.

In a functional dimension, the space was a controlled one. The squares along the street as gathering places were mostly used from the authorities to express national identity and propaganda, which is very visible on the way they were designed. Placing statues of communist heroes



and organizing political gatherings for speeches in glory of communist society the space was a mirror of political realities and became an ideological space. Political events were followed with music and dance performances of the so called 'cultural and artistic associations' but no public organized activity for culture was allowed as the system had a total control over the use of the space.²⁷ The only non political social interaction that this space provided was the ritual of 'korsó' which as a culture was inherited from this period and is still very important for the public life. Seen as very frequented and providing a multiplicity of experience the space later in 1987 will become a pedestrian area.

As a result of political struggles and ethnic tensions this public space will turn to a platform for social discontent, violent protests and public frustration. The failure of the communist system was followed with public gatherings and demonstrations in the streets and squares, which later caused a massive firing of Albanian workers from state institutions and exclusion of albanian ethnic group from the public life including schools, hospitals and cultural facilities. Public life was denied, which lead to a total detachment and tension between ethnic groups. This phenomenon is expressed spatially through segregation - 'improvised' public functions for albanians were hosted in private houses while the real public functions were managed from serbian authorities with restriction of other ethnic groups. Even the names of the streets and open spaces changed, for instance in the case of 'Marshal Tito Street' the name changed to 'Vidovdanksa', while all the street tables, direction, shops and advertising were serbianized, many of them written mainly in cyrillic alphabet to sharpen the power of the regime. Once turned to a pedestrian area, a few years later because of this tensions, the street turned again to car traffic in 1991 to prevent the protests.²⁸

The parallel system of public life and ethnic division, generated two different spatial experience of the city. While both of ethnic groups were still living in the same city, their experiences about the same space differed. It is true, no wall was ever built to divide them so sharply, but the social segregation was very defined, even with the absence of a physical boundary. The parallel system of public life generated the culture of cafe places as cultural backup for the albanian youth. Being denied from the system, the youth would use the cafes for a long time as places to develop the culture of discussion, exhibition, theater performances and literature events.



'The river flows far away from the city. The river is a kind of liquid railway, a goods station and a sorting house. In a decent house the servant's stairs do not go through the drawing room - even if the maid is charming (or if the little boats delight the loiterer leaning on a bridge)'³⁰

The buried river

Along with the rise of industrialism and the rapid urban evolution, the role of water flowing in the cities was gradually reduced for utilitarian reasons denying its initial role on the city's landscape with the exception of some recreational and leisure areas. Many cities incapable of the rapid expansion suffered a long time the lack of an adequate sanitation and a social hygiene. This led many thinkers and utopian urban planners to focus on hygiene of the urban spaces while imagining the future of the society. Le Corbusier - as one of the most influential urban planners, considering his theoretical approach towards city development, pushed city planners to reject the natural heritage of cities. To him, the nature is uncontrollable and chaotic, so the task of a human being is to give it certain shapes based on geometry. His vision of the city of tomorrow were based on the principle of tabula rasa - first cleaning the historical site and then building the city including here also the natural topography of the cities like lakes or rivers.²⁹ Order, geometry and logic should lead the city's improvement according to Le Corbusier - there is no place for a river in his vision of the modern city.

His ideology about the modern city had a huge impact on several generations of future architects and urban planners, who, following his statement contributed on cities identity reconstructions by denying their past, following the ideology of the so called 'urban progression'. The denial of natural topography and water of a modern city lead to buried rivers in concrete, like in the case of Prishtina.

The process of the erasure of Prishtina's past emerged also with the transformation of its natural landscape. As a new capital city, it should be given a urbanized city image by hiding everything what possibly maintains the rural character. Wide concrete pavements would even hide the city's natural geography - its rivers. The old city of Prishtina used to stretch out between two rivers - 'Prishtevka' and 'Vellusha'. 'Vellusha' - the main river - was covered in the 1950s, while 'Prishtevka', twenty years later after the city planners failed to put a proper wastewater system and prevent the floods. This way, Prishtina had buried its rivers forever, together with its past. Today, as none of the rivers are visible, young generations detached from the city's past, as no traces are to be seen, will walk over the concrete pavements without knowing that underneath their feet, the rivers keep flowing.

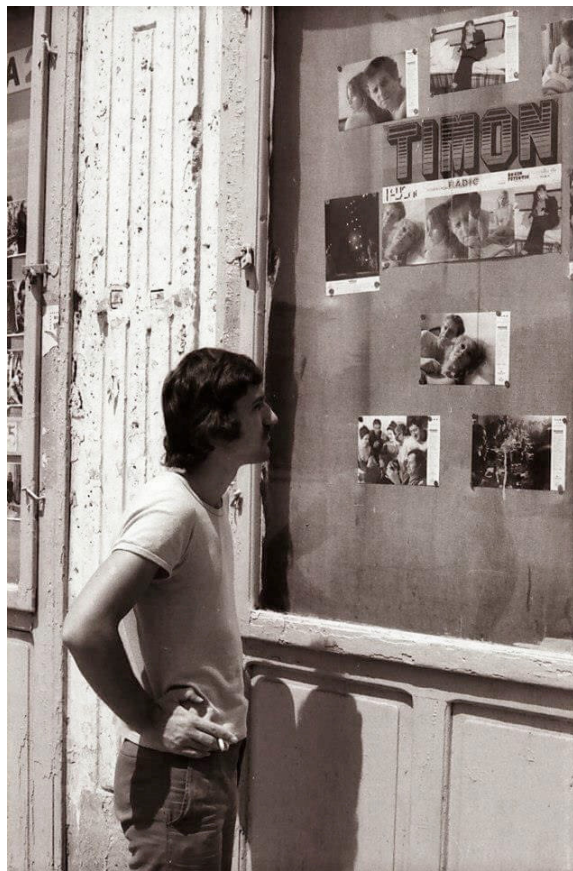


Arts and culture

Until the period of World War II, the culture capital of Kosovo was concentrated in Prizren, as the city of Prizren became an official center of culture in the Ottoman Era. Prishtina didn't own much of a culture heritage until this period of time, since it was mostly known and developed as a trading center. The arts, influenced from traditional lifestyle, were framed in artisans and handicrafts and the first movements toward an artistic scene were still held back due to the power of religion. First amateur theater performances in Albanian language appeared in the early 30s, mostly improvised in private homes, yards and gardens due to the absence of a theater.³¹ The largest investments on culture facilities for Prishtina started from the early 50s until the late 80s during Tito's regime, when Kosovo gained political, economic and cultural rights, which greatly aided the emancipation and modernization of Kosovar society. This period of time was an immensely fertile cultural period for Kosovo, as in a very short time, all the important cultural mechanisms were activated. The first institutions were the ones for literature and education - the libraries. The National Library was established in 1944 and is still the highest institution of its kind in Kosovo. Followed by the National theater (1949), Museum of Kosovo (1949), Provincial Archive (1954) and after the 60s national film company Kosovafilm, Shota Ensemble, Prishtina's University (1970), the Art Gallery (1979), many media and publishing companies, Radio station, TV Prishtina, this way enriching the cultural life of the city³². Despite the institutions, in every city a culture and art association was established which was in charge of managing the main cultural and artistic events.

The national theater, as one of the first steps in Kosovar cultural transformation was at the beginning built as a house of culture and later turned to a theater. This cultural function was embraced from the inhabitants with a great enthusiasm. The audience at the beginning were usually only high class society of rich people or academic ones as the mass was still not familiar with the culture of performing arts³³.

Despite the ethnic conflicts, due to the rapid cultural evolution, Kosovar artists had a good connection to other Yugoslav countries and many cultural exchanges took place. The necessity of Kosovar artists to pursue academic degrees in music, performance and visual arts in other countries strengthened the cultural interactivity. This way, the art scene was totally influenced



by yugoslav schools, as they were more updated with international trends and had already reached artistic movements like abstract art, minimalism, pop art and hyper realism, due to the opportunities of study visits and exchanges to world art centers. In Kosovo though, the lack of an educated art loving public as well as professional galleries or institutions where critical thinking about art would be discussed led to a much slower progression of the visual art scene in comparison to other yugoslav countries.

Unlike other socialist countries where culture and arts had to adapt the communist ideologies and dogmas, in yugoslavia literature and arts were fields of a free expression. Artists and writers at that time enjoyed broad freedom and they participated in various avant garde experiments. Yugoslavia valued and supported all kind of arts but as everything else that it offered, arts and culture were also censored and certainly limited to the state tolerance. Banned works were considered especially the ones that threatened the 'brotherhood' ideology and expressed nationalistic feelings. As a result, many kosovarian artists, fearing the censorship chose forms of hermetic and symbolic expressions instead of literature ³⁴.

The period after the 90s until the end of the war, was not only a dark period in a political and social aspect but also in a cultural and artistic one. As kosovar albanians as an ethnic group were banned from all cultural institutions, the artistic scene was spread all over the city, hiding under the roofs of private houses, gardens and cafes, trying to keep this 'new artistic movement' introduced in the 50s still alive.



Post-socialist space

After the war, Prishtina and all the cities of Kosovo were facing the symptoms of a post-conflict situation. Identity crisis was deepened as for a society that has gone through so many changes and regimes, it was hard to define whether they were kosovars or albanian kosovars, whether they belonged to Europe or non-Europe, whether they were influenced from yugoslav or from ottoman culture, whether they were a country or a region? This confusion influenced also the way cities developed. In the case of Prishtina, even though the city survived the war with not many traces of violence, the post war construction was the most destructive period.

The rapid growth of population was caused first of all from the refugees that returned back, second from a high migration rate from smaller settlements towards the capital with the hope of better chances for employments and third from international workers who moved into the capital for certain missions. Uncontrolled and informal urban constructions emerged, as an answer to the immediate need for residential space and much of it looked unfinished or improvised as the city was bursting at the seams ³⁵.

The local authorities due to the lack of necessary documentation to prove the legal status of many properties and the loss of archived plans during the armed conflict were totally incapable of managing the situation. Even though the regulatory plans from Yugoslavian era existed, they were considered insufficient. Up until 2005 it was even impossible to obtain a building permit because of all the planning confusion. Abandoned flats, houses and properties were occupied and the city kept growing uncontrolled for a long time.

While the system failed to draft regulatory plans, the urban development was totally left in the hands of investors - building companies, international investors and wealthy family clans - which aiming to profit the most from this chaotic situation, kept buying existing houses or buildings in the city center, demolishing them and replacing with multi-floored, oversized, mixed used structural compositions. The first two floors of these new structures usually consisted of glass facade store and commercial spaces and the upper floors were left for housing. This way, the investor and the landowner would make a deal for their 'part' of the profit and the land would be used at its maximum. The ones who refused selling their small houses, gradually were surrounded on all sides by new apartment buildings up to eight stories high. Pedestrian paths



and streets, originally designed for a lower density, were suddenly overshadowed, overcrowded and sometimes even occupied because certain owners took over the sidewalks.

The other case is the addition to existing buildings which is a phenomena that already existed in the late 90s as well. These additions also were made for residential purposes, usually on top or on the side of the building, also with the purpose of maximising the neto area of residential spaces thus higher profit.

Referring to architecture 'styles' created in this period, the phenomena of 'freedom' is directly expressed in the complex compositions that appeared. Feeling detached from their history, society would express themselves on the new structures trying to reference to 'tradition', only this tradition now comes from elsewhere. European historical elements that were not found in the traditional kosovarian architecture, were used or directly attached to new built buildings like a decor to give them some certain look. As the need to consult an architect disappeared, because the investors didn't have to adapt to a regulation city plan, the neighborhoods appearance - as Kai Vöckler describes - represent a composition of a classical, victorian, oriental, american free style architecture which uses the elements of modernism such as the load bearing steel and concrete structure. It is common to find this kind of architecture in South Eastern Europe, also named as 'Turbo Architecture' or 'Balkanology'³⁶.



Rursus

The city kept on erasing and transforming the collective memory. Inherited yugoslav modernist architecture was also an issue after the war. It was never valued properly and almost all of the buildings suffered a low maintenance or fatal transformations also controlled from private investors due to the privatisation of almost all of them. Some of the buildings facades were covered like 'Rilindja' or a part of 'Hotel Grand' hiding the purity of the architecture they represented, while some of them were left in the hands of certain governmental facilities for temporary use and were adapted without any consideration to the original design. One of the most iconic building of this time and the most powerful landmark of the city - the palace of youth and sport 'Boro Ramizi', originally designed for sport and concert activities, representing the heart of the city's youth life in Yugoslavia and a symbol of Brotherhood and Unity, now is used as a parking lot and for commercial use while a huge space of it is left abandoned. Another example is also Hotel Bozhur, which is one of the first buildings built in the former Marshal Tito Street. Today there is nothing left from the original design, as the building went through drastic transformations while renovation into a 'luxury' hotel. Small groups of activists organized a protest in May 2016, with the attempt to stop a new facade that was applied over the patterned concrete original facade of the technical university building also built during the socialist modernist era. With the justification that this building has a poor energy performance, insulation and white paint covered the building in a very short time, ignoring the protests and discussions against this process. In a small public discussion in Prishtina I personally attended, called 'Destroy the old, build the new' where the fate of the yugoslav architecture legacy was discussed, the director of the Museum of Kosovo, went further saying that he considered these buildings as 'orphan buildings' because they are perceived like this from the society. The post-war situation left these buildings orphans and that efforts must be made to identify who should be responsible for looking after them.

This way, the architecture that for its time used to represent a vision a society, today is denied and covered.











'Sheshi' – Mother Theresa Boulevard

As every other political and social change, the after war freedom directly influenced the public life and the use of public spaces. With the rise of the population in the capital city, the public life was intensified and constantly enriched. The youth who suffered isolation in the 90s were very motivated for a new beginning and a social interaction in the public. Walking in the streets, sitting out in the terraces, dancing and performing in the boulevard became very common and the fear from former regime disappeared ³⁷.

The main urban tissue that hosted the public life after the yugoslav detachment was the former 'Marshal Tito Street' which was renamed after the war and turned to 'Mother Theresa Boulevard'. The car traffic was first limited only until the evening and finally in 2007 the Street became a pedestrian area.

The boulevard was a witness of all the social changes in Prishtina. While during the 90s it used to host violent protests and tensions between ethnic groups, after the war it turned to a place of hope and social interaction. The liberation was manifested through many cultural activities in open spaces especially in the Boulevard, like music concerts, youth activities and holiday celebrations, which helped the city's social life recover in a short time.

The enthusiasm of being free soon started to vanish and the use of this space turned to a daily routine. Social crisis, isolation as a result of visa issues, high levels of corruption, high rate of unemployment and a general public dissatisfaction led again to the activation of many protests in the boulevard. Hosting the main governmental institutions like parliament and government building, the boulevard turned into a platform of a free expression for all kinds of events. Having a high daily frequency it became the ideal place for many artists to express their critical thinking against many social taboos or their own political criticism. A numerous art installations take place in form of public art, that raise questions for social issues like the yearly public art installation for missing people from the war, installation for wartime sexual violence, performances for social taboos on LGBT community and human rights, installation for the EU membership and the kosovar society isolation, photograph exhibitions showing kosovar reality and many other kinds of permanent art pieces that tend to express the critical practice of artists.



Contemporary art scene

Beginning in the 90s, when art and art institutions weren't accessible for kosovar albanians, a new contemporary art practice was born, but as it couldn't show up in the public, it happened in a restrictive environment hosted by many private houses. After the war though, this scene flourished at once³⁸. But for the young artists, the post war situation in Kosovo wasn't followed directly with joy, happiness and celebrations. Instead, returning home after a violent conflict, finding their own land stuck in a lot of problems, created a chance to give their artistic contribution on reflecting to this issues.

More than fifty percent of the kosovar population today is younger than 25 years old, meanwhile the opportunities for these young people are very limited. A high unemployment rate, lack of financial and logistic support for artistic and cultural activities, old-fashioned art schools which are not open to conceptual art or experimentation and especially the visa policies are troubles that this blooming young artistic spirit is facing every day. Being unable to travel freely, makes it almost impossible to participate in international shows and collaborate with artists from other countries. Alban Muja - a visual artist and filmmaker living in Prishtina in his interview for the New York Times magazine once said : 'I was taking part in a show in Russia but I could not go. But it was not even about getting a visa, they didn't recognize my passport.'³⁹This way, surviving as an artist in Kosovo is really challenging, taking also in consideration that the kosovarian society is still conservative and not able to value contemporary art properly, as the influence of religion is still present. Also the lack of spaces for alternative art as well as spaces that could support this 'spontaneous' art scene somehow makes the isolation even worse. Having the National Art Gallery as the only Institution for professional exhibitions - which despite of its good transformation the last four years, still remains a drop in the ocean comparing to the demand - the alternative artistic scene kept carrying on in private, improvised or occupied spaces mostly on the own expenses of the artists. Despite the problems, contemporary art never faded, artists kept fighting for spaces, transformed abandoned buildings, performed on open public squares and their voice never extinguished. A few very successful examples are to be seen lately, starting from independent art galleries like 'Tetris' and 'Stacion' whose aim is to support the emancipation of the contemporary art scene not only in a local but also in an international



dimension, organizing various exhibitions, performances and other events. Furthermore, there are numerous voluntary initiatives of young artist groups on 'occupying' and re-vitalising abandoned spaces for cultural use and events like 'Hackerspace' - a transformation of an abandoned private house to a co-working experimentation studio, 'Termokiss' - transformative reuse of an abandoned building that used to serve the public heating company 'Termokos' into a space for social and cultural gatherings and 'Hapesira' - a team of young artists tempting to reactivate temporarily abandoned buildings through cultural events.

A transitional shift in this dimension was the art performance event 'Prishtine - Mon Amour' in 2012 which aimed to claim the burnt and abandoned hall of the Palace of Youth and Sports (ex-Boro Ramizi) - one of the most iconic landmarks of the city -and give it life with performance art and space manipulations ⁴⁰. One hour of mega-performances in different levels of the building reached up to 2.500 visitors and it was a proof for the artistic and non-artistic community, that they own the power and the ability to reclaim wasted community space and transform it in a creative way ⁴¹.

Kosovo's first participation in Biennale Arte in Venice 2013 and the first nomination for 'Oscar' in the film industry are maybe the first glimpse to a brighter future for kosovarian artists and at the same time a reward for the hard work to keep the spirit alive in those hard circumstances. The youth can stride into the future, knowing that they are the harbingers of a change.

There is no doubt that despite all the effort, the art scene of Kosovo will not appear in the map yet, however the new generation of artists shows that kosovarian art can be vibrant and dynamic, it can bring down the walls and go beyond the borders, finally it can help the country *find its own identity!*





Mapping

urban morphology
culture infrastructure
public space
hidden rivers

Prishtina 1937

First Regulatory Plan (Scheme)
16.000 inhabitants

| | | | |
0 1 000 m



1 *Destruction of the core part of old town - New city center*

Unplanned expansion of the residential in the south and north

Prishtina 1953

*General Urban Plan (Scheme)
50.000 inhabitants*



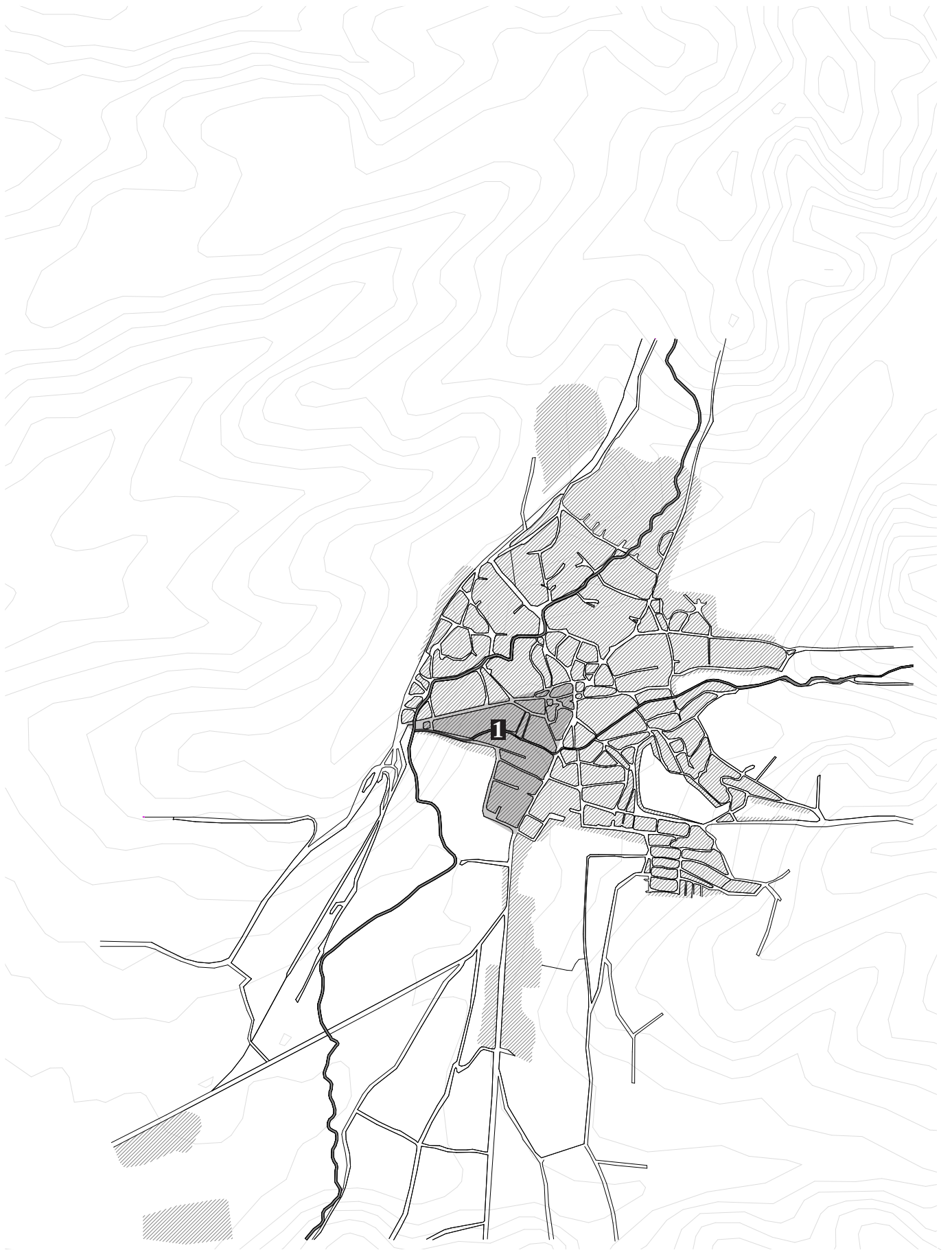
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1 000 m



- 1 *New administrative center*
- 2 *Emergence of planned districts*
- 3 *Emergence of medical center*
- 4 *Emergence of industrial area*

Unplanned expansion of the residential in the south and north

Prishtina 1967

*General Urban Plan (Scheme)
100.000 inhabitants*



0

1 000 m



- 1 *Development of sports center*
- 2 *Development of university center*
- 3 *Planned residential neighborhoods in the south*

Unplanned expansion of the residential in the north

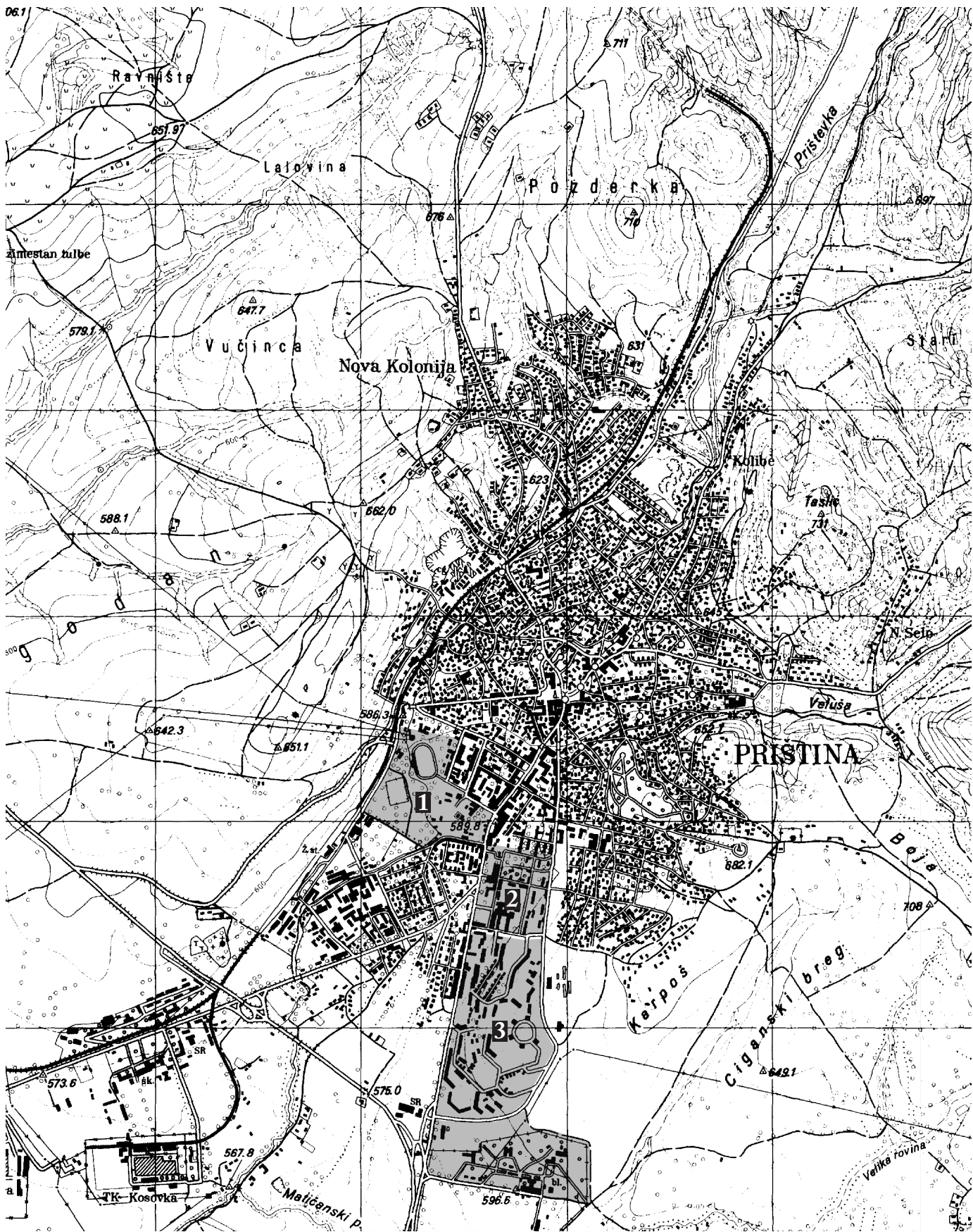
Pristina until 1969

General Urban Plan (Scheme)



0

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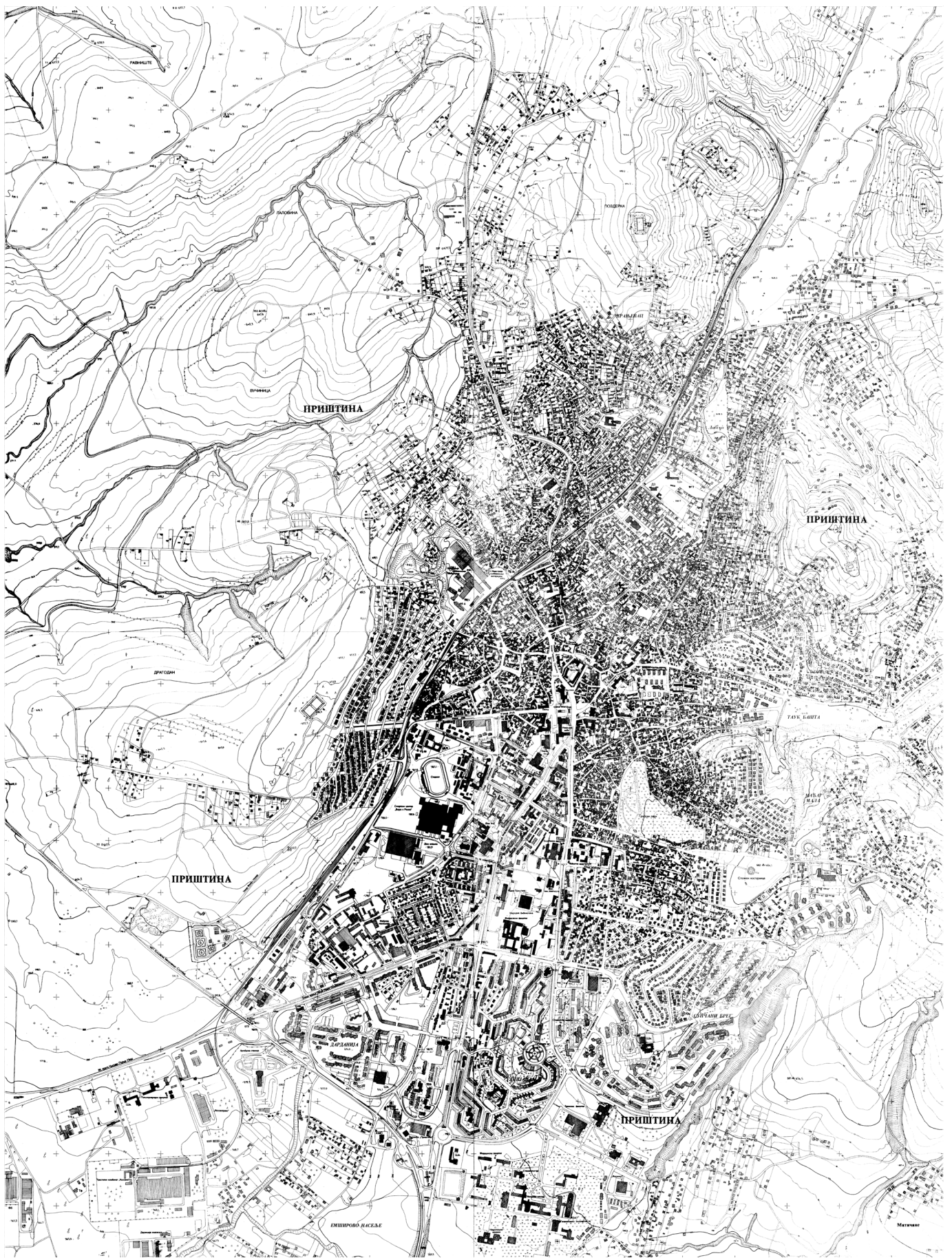
Construction of residential districts
Unplanned expansion of the residential in the north

Prishtina 1983 - 2000

General Urban Plan (Scheme)
225.000 inhabitants



0 | | | | 1 000 m



Prishtina 2012

General Urban Plan
205.133 inhabitants



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1 000 m



black - institutional culture, literature and art spaces

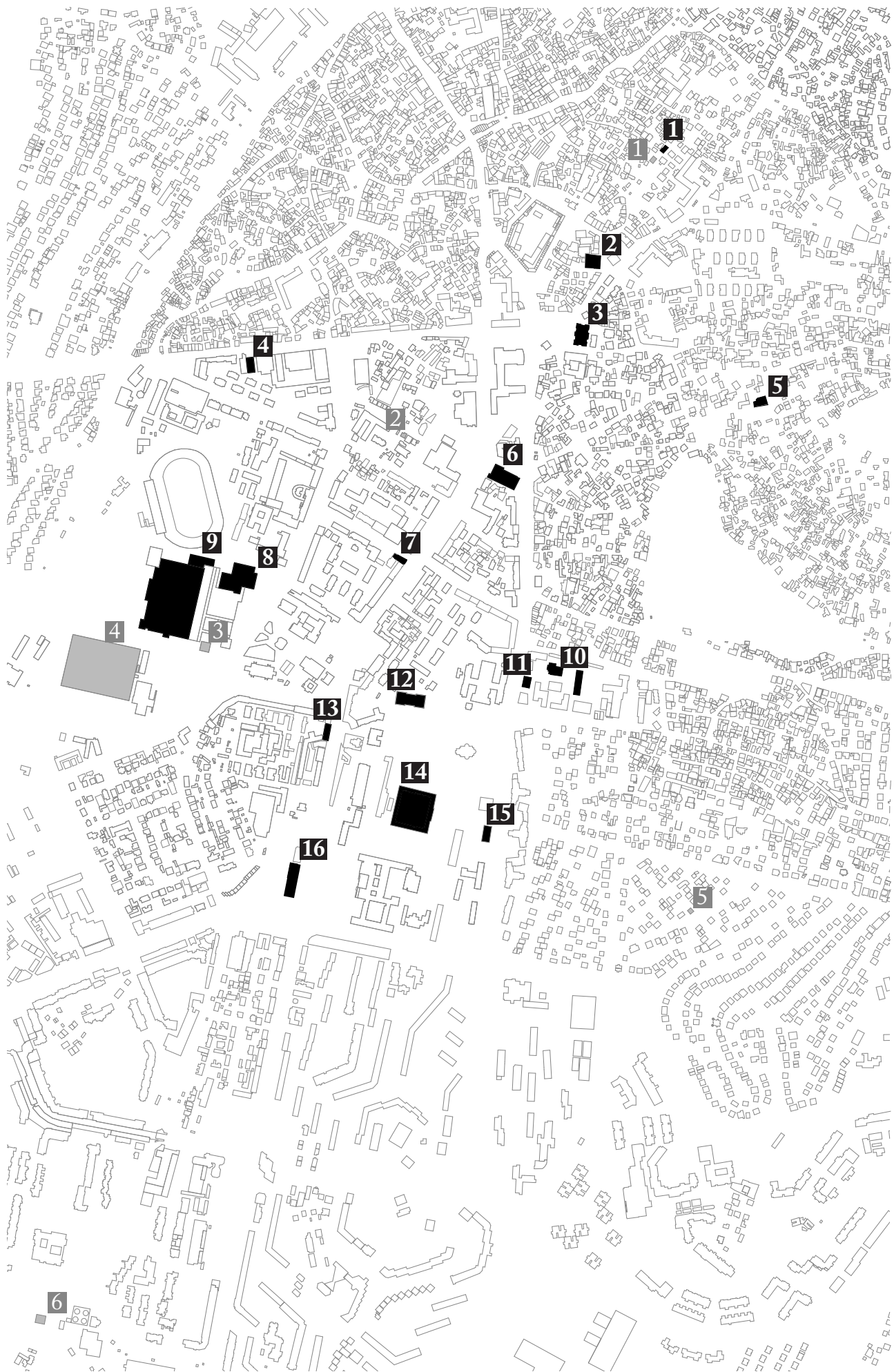
- 1 *ethnological museum*
- 2 *the great hamam*
- 3 *national museum of kosovo*
- 4 *gallery of ministry of culture*
- 5 *dodona theater*
- 6 *national theater*
- 7 *abc cinema*
- 8 *concert hall ,salla e kuge‘*
- 9 *palace of youth and sports ,boro ramiz‘*
- 10 *faculty of architecture, multipurpose hall ,moedlarium‘*
- 11 *academy of sciences and arts of kosovo*
- 12 *faculty of arts*
- 13 *academy of music*
- 14 *national library*
- 15 *national gallery of kosovo*
- 16 *mother theresa cathedral*
(temporary uses as a concert hall)

gray - informal culture, literature and art spaces

- 1 *stacion - center for contemporary art*
- 2 *dit e nat bookstore cafe - cultural platform*
- 3 *lambdalambdalambda international gallery for contemporary art*
- 4 *rilindja warehouse concert hall/nightclub*
- 5 *hackerspace co working space for culture and education*
- 6 *termokiss social and culture center*



0 1 00 m

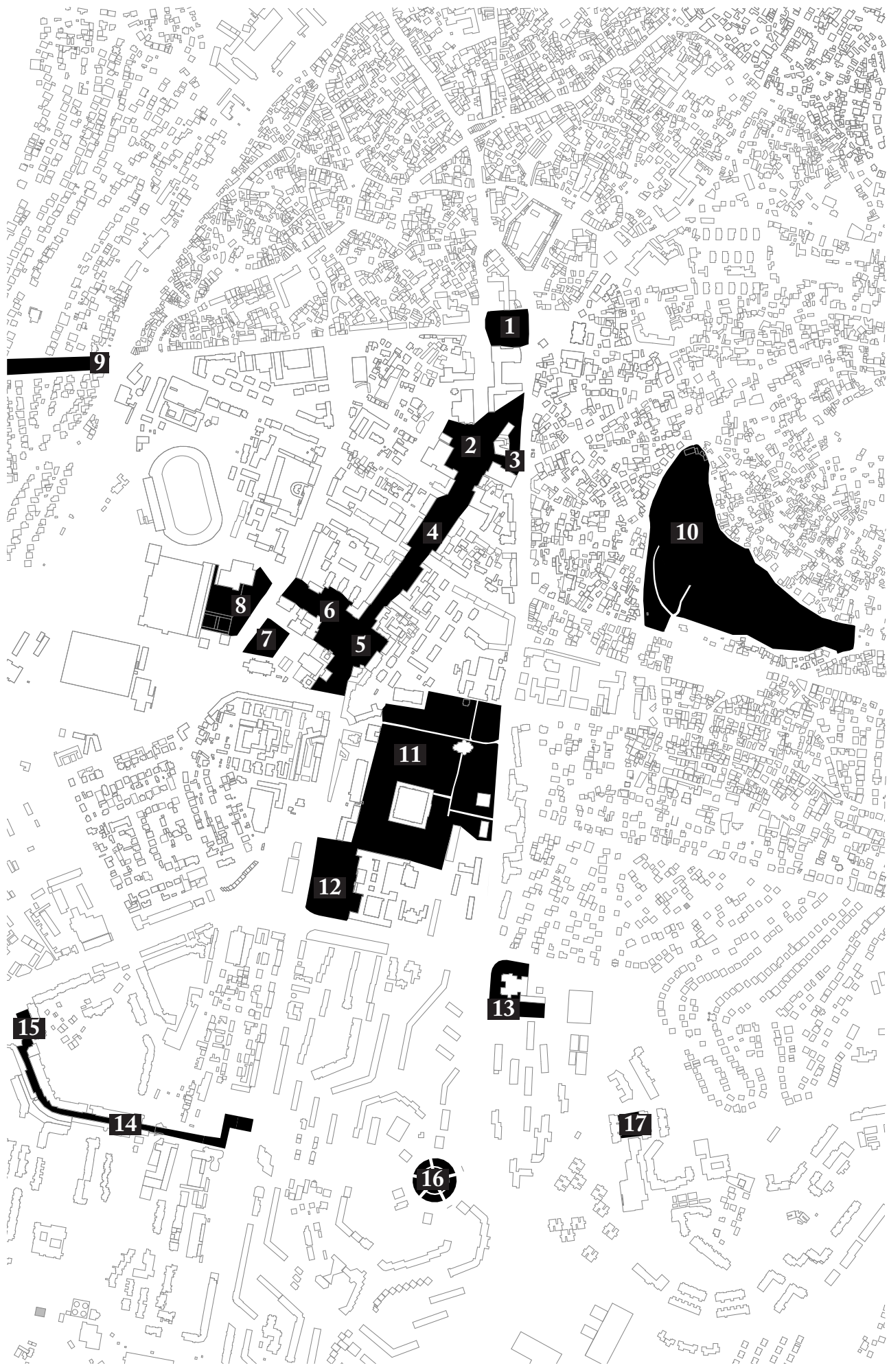


public spaces – squares, boulevards

- 1 *adem jashari square*
- 2 *skenderbeu square*
- 3 *the independence park*
- 4 *mother teresa boulevard*
- 5 *zahir pajaziti square*
- 6 *edit durham square*
- 7 *heroine park*
- 8 *boro ramizi platform and new born square*
- 9 *arberia stairs*
- 10 *city park*
- 11 *university campus and hasan prisbtina square*
- 12 *demonstration square*
- 13 *eleven march square*
- 14 *kurrizi elevated platform*
- 15 *bill clinton square*
- 16 *fountain square*
- 17 *the freedom square*



0 100 m

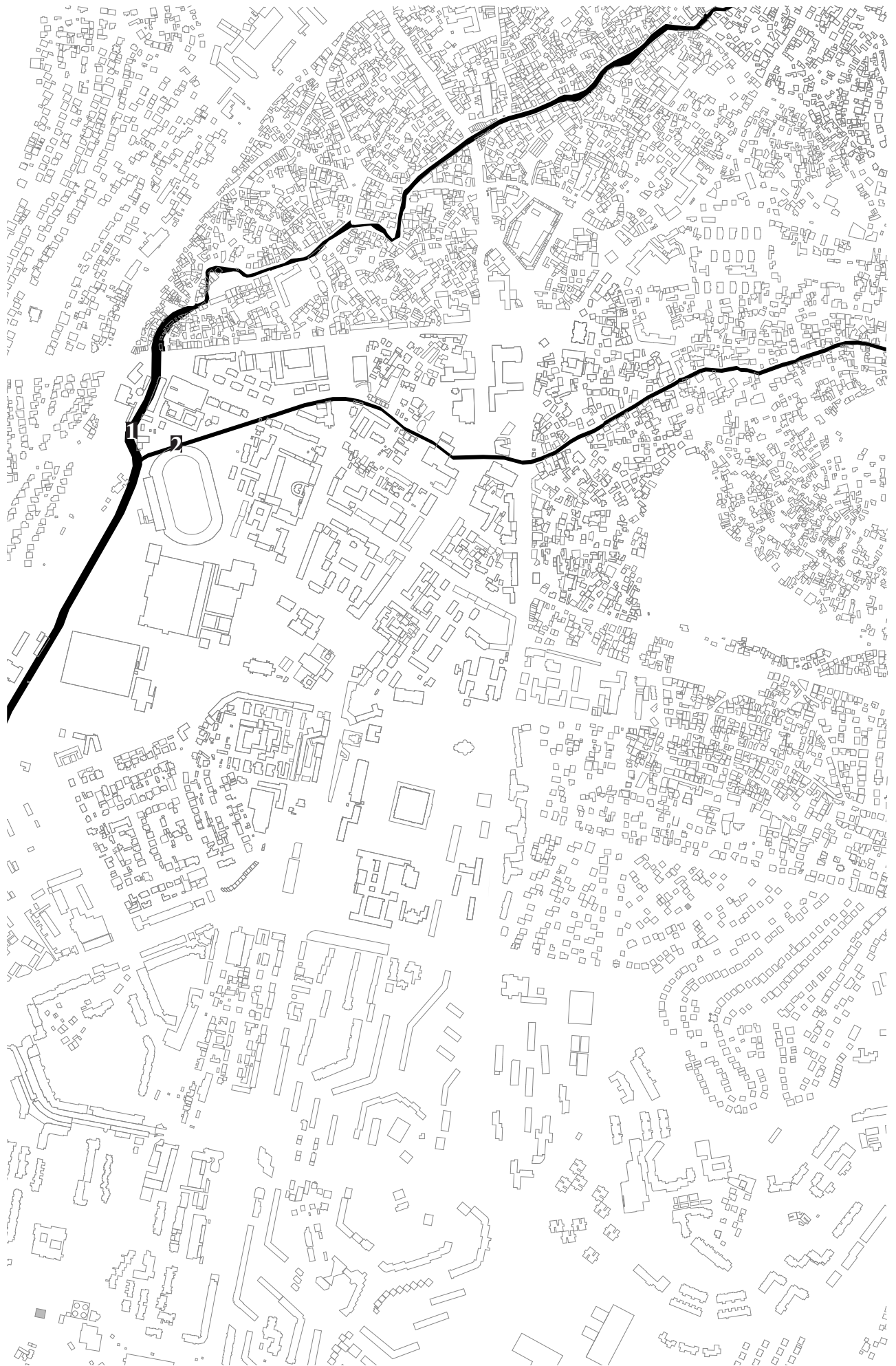


the hidden rivers

- 1 *prishtina river*
- 2 *vellusha river*



0 100 m



Note:

In the following collages, certain socialist landmarks are removed from the city panorama. The intentional absence is used as a visual tool to remark the presence and dominance of the socialist monuments in the cityscape.

Collage becomes a tool of removal, instead of addition and paradoxically allows capturing fragments.

Photoessay

socialist landmarks in the cityscape





Grand Hotel Prishtina Hotel



















*'Shopping is arguably the last remaining form of public activity'*⁴²

Rem Koolhaas 2002, 125

The culture of consumption

Vision

Trading as a culture is one of the most significant phenomena that followed the human being history. Mercatura (trade) was even defined as an art according to medieval concept of ordered skills *Artes Mechanicae* ⁴². Its role in linking cultures as well as intensifying human interaction is undeniable and deeply rooted. Its evolution in an architectural dimension follows different forms, starting from primitive exchange gatherings to marketplaces, bazaars, passages to the latest architecture typologies like department stores and shopping malls. The culture of consumption evolved parallel to the society needs and progress, using architecture as a tool for fascinating and improving customer experience. These are encompassed within design of retail architecture which means designing an open exhibition, a visual and spatial concept that creates consumer desire by emphasizing aesthetics.

Department stores have been one of the pillars of early modern retail, an incubator hosting sophisticated crafts, social exchange and daily life dynamics. In terms of progression, they were very important as they pushed the limits of emancipation and civilization. Until this typology appeared, shopping as a pleasurable, luxury social activity was practiced only by upper classes and was seen as an enhancement of social status and identity. The process of democratization of 'luxus' would only start with the appearance of department store, which turned to a platform of free movement, personal mobility, urban spectatorship, social freedom. For the first time everyone was able to shop, driving towards no social classification and above everything, it provided a platform for women empowerment and the rising emancipation movement. Until then, women were excluded from the experience of modernity, they were still wearing corsets and long dresses and they weren't able to vote, but they could shop ⁴³. And this marks a paradigm shift, the vision of independence for a 'modern' human being.



Department stores, the city and modernity

Retail typologies are strongly related to their physical and urban environment. While shopping malls as a visionary architecture desperately tried to densify the suburban areas, department stores, especially in Europe, were mostly positioned in the city centers, trying to absorb as much audience as possible. Being characterized by continuous flux and frequent encounters with strangers, department store became a gathering point, a place of meeting and a generator of a dynamic urban life. Opening towards main public spaces and extending squares inside the ground floor of the building was one of the most important spatial qualities of these buildings. The vertical communication, which as a topic became much more interesting with the invention of escalator, was also an element of interaction with the surrounding, extending the public space vertically on all levels.

By the late of nineteenth century, this typology became the icon of consumer culture and during the twentieth century reached its 'zenith' becoming the high point of modernity. Zola describes the department store at the center of his novel as a modern machine which devours the small outdated commercial enterprises surrounding it which were unable to compete with mass produced commodities with the small specialty shops and their covered arcades⁴⁴. Department stores offered other spatial qualities, displaying goods in a safe and pleasant environment allowing the consumer to freely explore without feeling obligated to buy.

They were clearly much more than just places where merchandise was bought and sold. By expansion of public space and spectacle which included exhibitions, galleries, leisure gardens and a bit later also cinemas, they offered a range of entertainments and visual pleasures becoming this way a platform to experience culture. Consumers would visit them not only for the shopping itself, but also as attractions, as monuments of modernity⁴⁵.

In the architectural discourse, retail typology did not own much attention regarding its spatial and architectural qualities. A turning point in this direction was the early 2000s 'Harvard Guide to Shopping' from Rem Koolhaas, a vast compendium of text, images, and data concerning the consumerist transformation of city and suburb from the first department store to the latest mega mall, where the architect attempted to engage more meaningfully with the shopping typology. On a theoretical level, his intention was to empower the spatial qualities but at the same time to raise a critique of contemporary urbanism and city building.

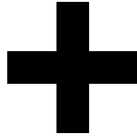
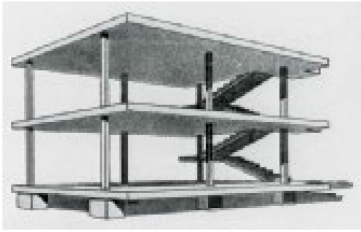


Escalator

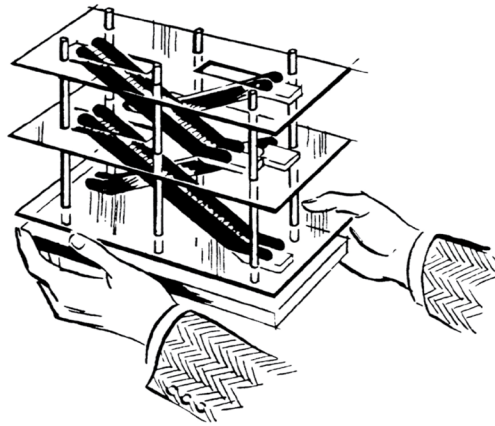
There were several technological inventions through the years, that tried to improve the shopping experience like the catalogue, radio, counter, interior skin, air conditioning, artificial lighting and the escalator. But more importantly, the invention of the escalator marks an paramount milestone in the history of consumption architecture and will be portrayed as a symbol of progression. As a new element introduced at the beginning of the 20th century, the escalator was rapidly adopted by shops. As a result, the impressive design of traditional staircases in the department stores (often very dramatic, central positioned, decorated and designed with balconies and balustrades) began to disappear as the new technology of 'moving stairway' offered a much efficient way of movement through the building pulling masses from the streets into the depths of the stores - crowds of anonymous consumers lifted free of charge and moved vertically through the space of consumerism. Following the post-war shopping euphoria, Otis Elevator Co. produced a new generic system for the typology in the late 40s. The purpose was the combination of the escalator with a cheap steel frame⁴⁶, which in 'The Harvard Guide to Shopping', made by the Harvard Graduate School of Design and OMA, this new structure would be compared to Le Corbusier's Maison Domino as an ideology to implement a new building system that would radically transform the configuration of future buildings. Just like Maison Domino which tended to define the minimum structural requirements for dwelling, Otis's system defined the minimal structural requirements for shopping. The new formula of Maison Domino + Escalator = Shopping had a big influence on the way the architecture of department stores developed the next decades and would become the template and generator for a new paradigm of interior territories.

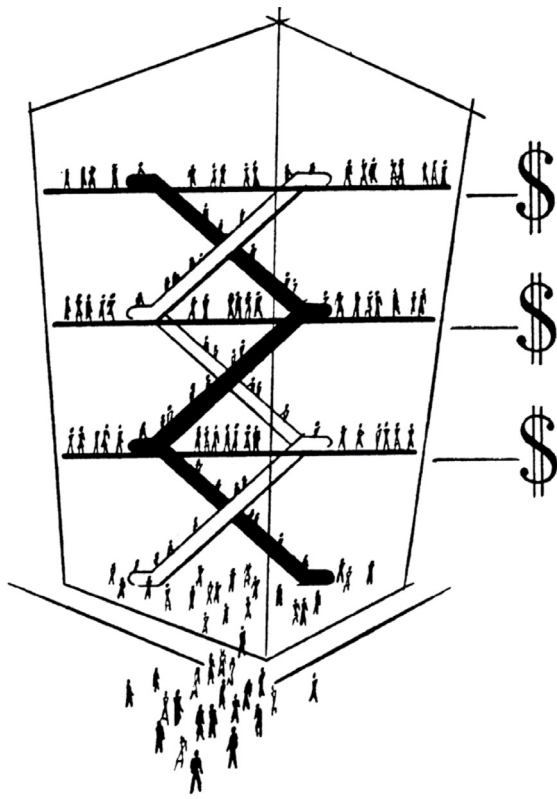
The escalator flows through the building, creating this way a fluid transition between its levels and denying the distinction between floors. Hence, it was used as an instrument of smoothness and connection, blurring the true feeling of scale, creating an uninterrupted experience and a smooth transition from the street level to the upper public platforms⁴⁷.

After the announcement of the new system Maison Domino + Otis in the ads and design manuals, a new idea of even more efficient consumerist space was introduced. The new prototype, in a form of multi-story department store was proposed and designed by Antonin Raymond,



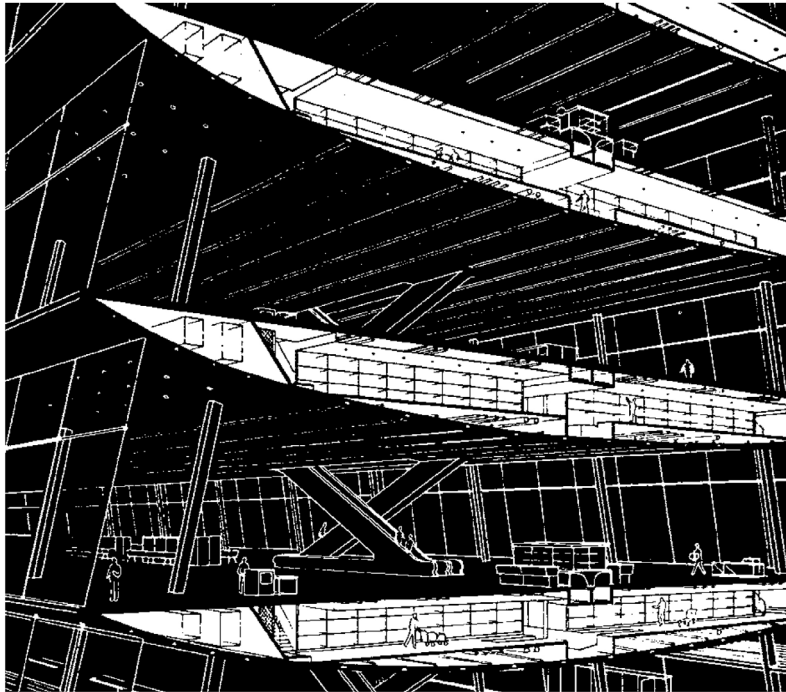
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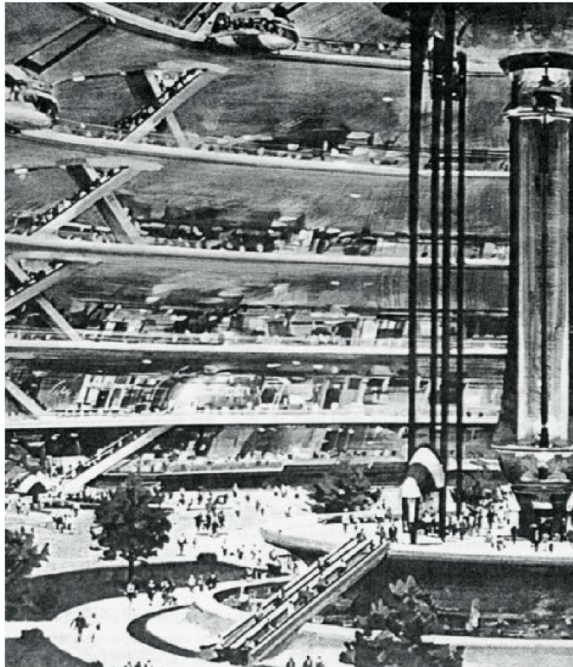




Ladislav Rado and Louis Parnes. It offered a free consumer space by removing effectively any non-consumer spaces such as offices, administration and storage from the shopping area and by placing these spaces in the ceiling trusses hiding them completely to create a free territory for uninterrupted shopping. This way the ceiling floors would thicken to host all the hidden service functions and the newly liberated shopping areas would connect using freestanding set of escalators in a crisscross arrangement smoothly connecting retail areas. By being able to access every other floor, the escalator enabled to vanish the entire non-shopping program from the consumer experience providing uninterrupted 'lifting' from one area to another and this way the physical abutment would no longer influence a coherent spatial experience. By the end of 70s, Otis presented his own version of the utopian escalator city. It was some kind of an expansion of the previous idea of efficient consumerist space. Using the escalator as an instrument to offer a vertical connection, this time the efficiency and high capacity of this mechanical movement went so far as to liberate the street from traffic⁴⁸. The use of the escalator as a tool for smoother connection was complemented by the expansion of shopping.

Just as the difference between spaces became blurred, so did the activities become conglomerated. As schools and airports turned into shopping centers, malls adopted museums and downtowns became malls, the escalator became an omnipresent symbol, linking activities in a pleasant, attractive manner. The escalator not only made new scales, areas and spaces available to us but also delivered us to the new forces that profoundly shape our cities⁴⁹.







Once upon a time in Yugoslavia living and losing the consumerist lifestyle

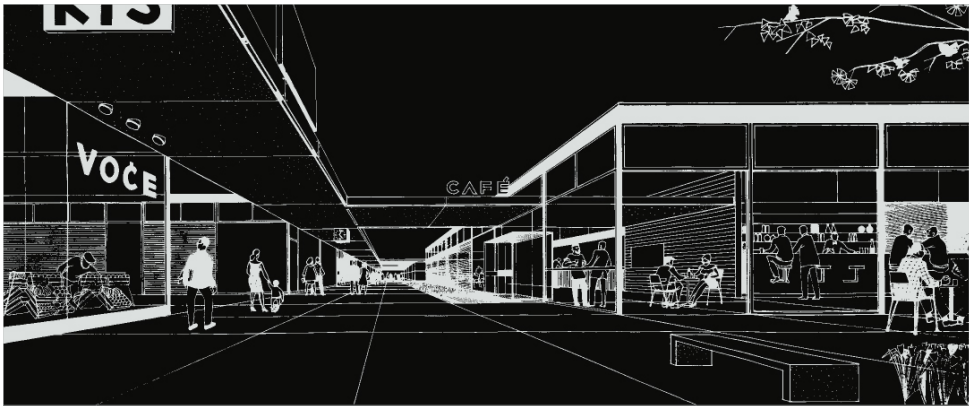
The process of shaping the socialist consumerism in Yugoslavia started from the mid 1950s. By activating mechanisms of capitalism in a socialist political system, Yugoslav politics encouraged the growth of a deep and complicated relationship with shopping, spending, acquiring and enjoying, creating this way a modern consumer society who enjoys entertainment. By opening to the cultural codes of the west and discarding the traditional consumption practices, Yugoslavia shaped the new consumer model which would no longer be fulfilled with only basic material needs. Introduced to a variety of goods and services, the consumption of experiences like holiday, moviegoing, dancing and drinking in discotheques, foreign travel, became a central concern of social life of citizens, where satisfaction was directly connected to the ways they would consume such goods⁵⁰.

Due to the denial of the traditional markets, the new consumer had to be fascinated through impressive architecture, among other things. Yugoslavian architects were sent through western countries as well as America, to get inspirations from the latest technologies and architectural improvements regarding consumption culture. This way, self-service shops, supermarkets and department stores that pursued Western ideals of luxury, choice, satisfaction and modernity started to appear in every city. Paramount in the architectural discourse was especially the department store as a typology.

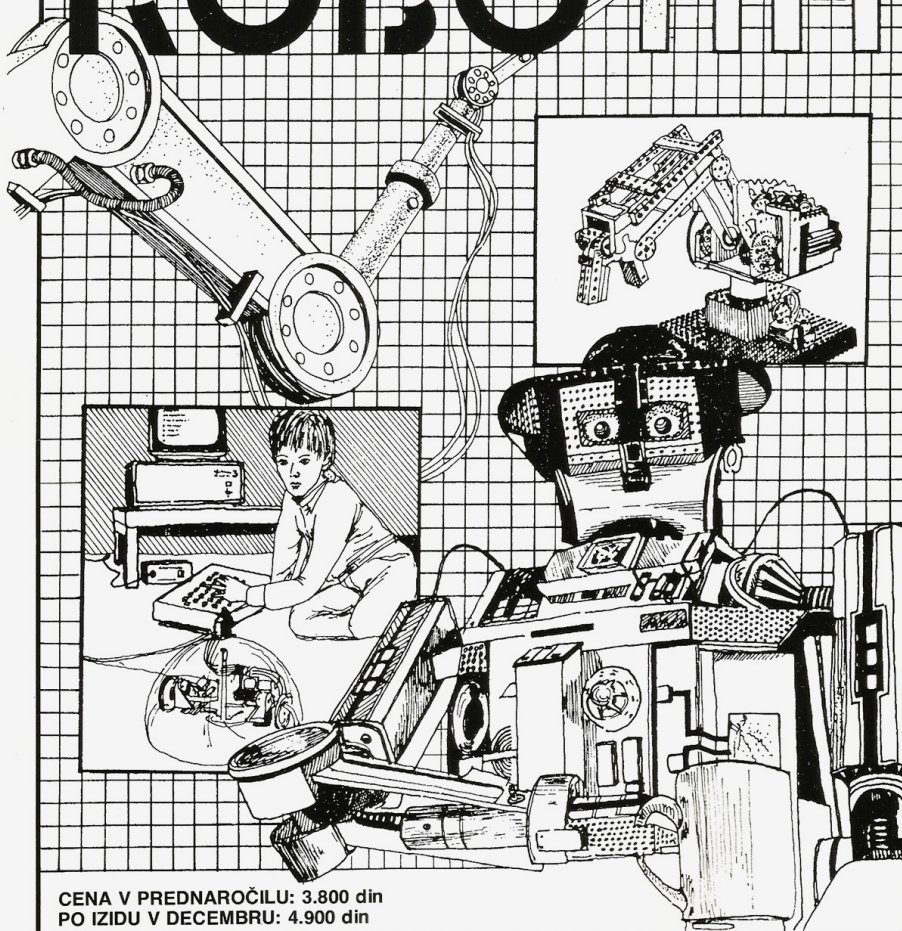
Department stores appeared as independent structures in central parts of the cities usually along the main boulevards, commercial streets or frequented promenades and represented the dominant point in main squares or crossroads - turning to the busiest urban city point and attracting a large number of consumers. Besides their commercial communication, they played a great role as interactive social centers due to their great connection to pedestrian streets, sharpening this way the social life in city centers. The typology was all about fascination and technology aiming to offer the consumers a unique experience. Main entrances were situated along the public spaces or squares, while the ground floor usually covered in glass represented an extension of the public space inside the building. The vertical communication was achieved through escalators and staircases offering a good overview of retail space and an efficient movement through the floors.



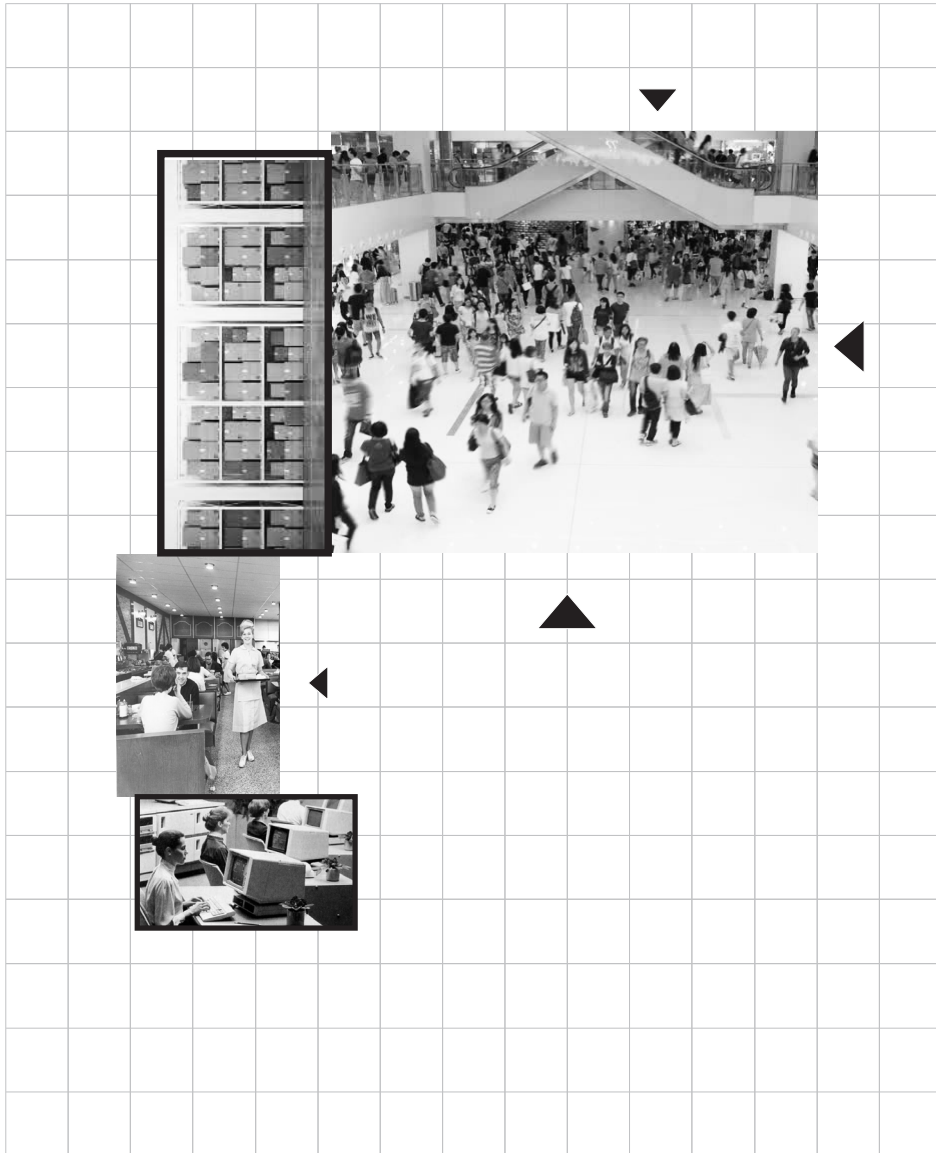
Escalators of the department stores were almost in every city the first escalators in town, being an attractive invention of that time. Flexible configuration of the floors due to the absence of walls achieved more intense social exchange and interaction. Restaurants and cafes with roof terraces were also a part of each department store intensifying the social life inside the building. As many other buildings of this era, also the department stores struggled to survive due to conflicts and post conflict situation. Once representing a vision and a social ideology, today many of them are damaged from the war or totally transformed due to the process of privatization after the fall of Yugoslavia. An example is the former department store 'Sarajka' in Sarajevo, which was partly damaged during the armed conflict. Despite that, its privatization resulted in a total transformation - from a blue aluminium modern facade into a typical commercial glassbox. Once a 'blue snowflake' for the city, today it's original shape and identity has totally vanished.



KNJIGA O ROBOTIKI



CENA V PREDNAROČILU: 3.800 din
PO IZIDU V DECEMBRU: 4.900 din



1972-1999

Function: Department Store

Distribution of program in four buildings:

Sales Area, Storage Manager, Restaurant, Administration Office

OPEN TOWARDS THE PUBLIC SPACE

Department Store Germia

the story

After the demolition of bazaar during the 50s-60s, which as a structure was mostly spontaneous and unplanned, the traditional culture of trading was left behind and new contemporary forms of retail spaces were introduced. The process of creating a consumer society was manifested by introducing modern retail stores with a new concept of consumption, where for the first time, the principle of self-choice and self-service was introduced.

Starting with the first self service supermarket in the 50s near Carshia Mosque and with a serie of shops during the 60s spread on the ground and first floor of a residential building on the south ending of Marshal Tito Street today known as 'the old department store', following with the department store 'Germia' in the 70s, the culture of trading and consuming in Prishtina experienced a total transformation in terms of forms of consuming and social demand.

In the northern part of Marshal Tito Street, almost in the borderline between the old city and the new modern structures, lying near the ruins of the old bazaar, the Department Store Germia was built in 1972 and was designed by the architect Aleksandar Pasevski.

During this period of time, almost every city in Kosovo and in Yugoslavia in general owned a department store. They appeared as independent structures in central parts of the cities and represented the dominant point of the trade center which was built in main squares or crossroads with well defined micro urban and commercial structures - many times right along the Marshal Tito Street, taking the role of the busiest urban spot and becoming a centralized attraction of trade market. Since its opening in 1972 until the end of the 90s Department Store Germia was not only a place that offered a variety of goods, but also a venue, a place of exhibition and social interaction where purchase became a pleasure.

During the 90s and the years following, due to its central location, the department store Germia stood as a silent witness of protests, demonstrations and ethnic violence that took place in the Marshal Tito Street.



a modern hybrid

The original masterplan proposal in 1972 introduced the idea of a culture and art scene on the north and north-west surrounding of the department store. A library, new theater with a theater promenade and a theater square, despite the fact that the national theater on the opposite of the department store along the Marshal Tito Street existed since the early 50s, as well as an art gallery were seen in the masterplan but for unknown reasons they were never built.

The shopping complex was designed as a composition of four different shaped volumes, which were connected as a single unit, but still were operating independently hosting a program of an open sales area with the corresponding warehouse area, a self service restaurant/ canteen and an administration building. Its openness towards the public space in an urban context took advantage of the highly frequented location in the heart of the city, inviting and attracting a large number of consumers.

Main entrances to the department store for the consumers were planned from Marshal Tito Street and the square, while the delivery entrance was placed on the back of the building. In spatial and functional terms, the drawn in the ground floor of the main building had three entrances positioned on all three sides of the department store building. The entrances to the main sales area were set up in such a way that when a consumer entered the store, one had a clear overview of the free open space, where the escalator set in the middle would lead vertically through the building to the upper floors of retail space. Despite the escalator, the vertical communication was achieved through one main staircase accessible for consumers, two additional staircase for the employees and the delivery, and an outdoor emergency staircase. Nevertheless, the escalator was the first one in the city and the department store Germia was the first and the only building with an escalator, making it to a true attraction for the citizens. Everyone was talking about...*the moving stairs!*

Due to economic limitations, a skeletal structural system was applied, whose mushroom-shaped columns released the ceiling for the installation channels and at the same time enabled a free sales area. The absence of walls in the main building offered a wide open space where the goods were exhibited and a free movement throughout the building as well as an intense social interaction found place.



Just like the interior space, the outer skin of the buildings was kept minimal on design. There were five main textures used for the whole structures: engraved concrete, anodised aluminium folded sheets, opaque texture, transparent glass and dark glass. While the administrative, the restaurant and the warehouse building were designed using engraved concrete with linear textures and simple openings, the main focus lied on the main sales building. The ground floor was transparent and the above lying volume of the main building was designed opaque, covered by a monumental facade of origami folded aluminium sheets and solid surface behind it without any opening. The four dark glass boxes on the angles allowed penetration of the daylight and offered a panorama view towards the public space.

For the city of Prishtina, department store Germia was not only a place to buy, it was an open cultural canvas that worked as a social condenser as well as a place for bespoke fashion and design. It was an experimental lab to establish a social interaction of the city and its urban context, a diverse collection of values and identities.





Big scale proposed masterplan
1972
Status: unfinished

Department Store Germia
A- Sales Area/Department Store
B- Selfservice Restaurant
C- Administration

Ubuilt structures
1- Library
2- New Theater
3- Theater promenade
4- Theater Square
5- Art Gallery
6- Commercial Building
7- Bank
8- Provincial Square



1
0

1
100 m

Ground Floor Plan with the surrounding
1972

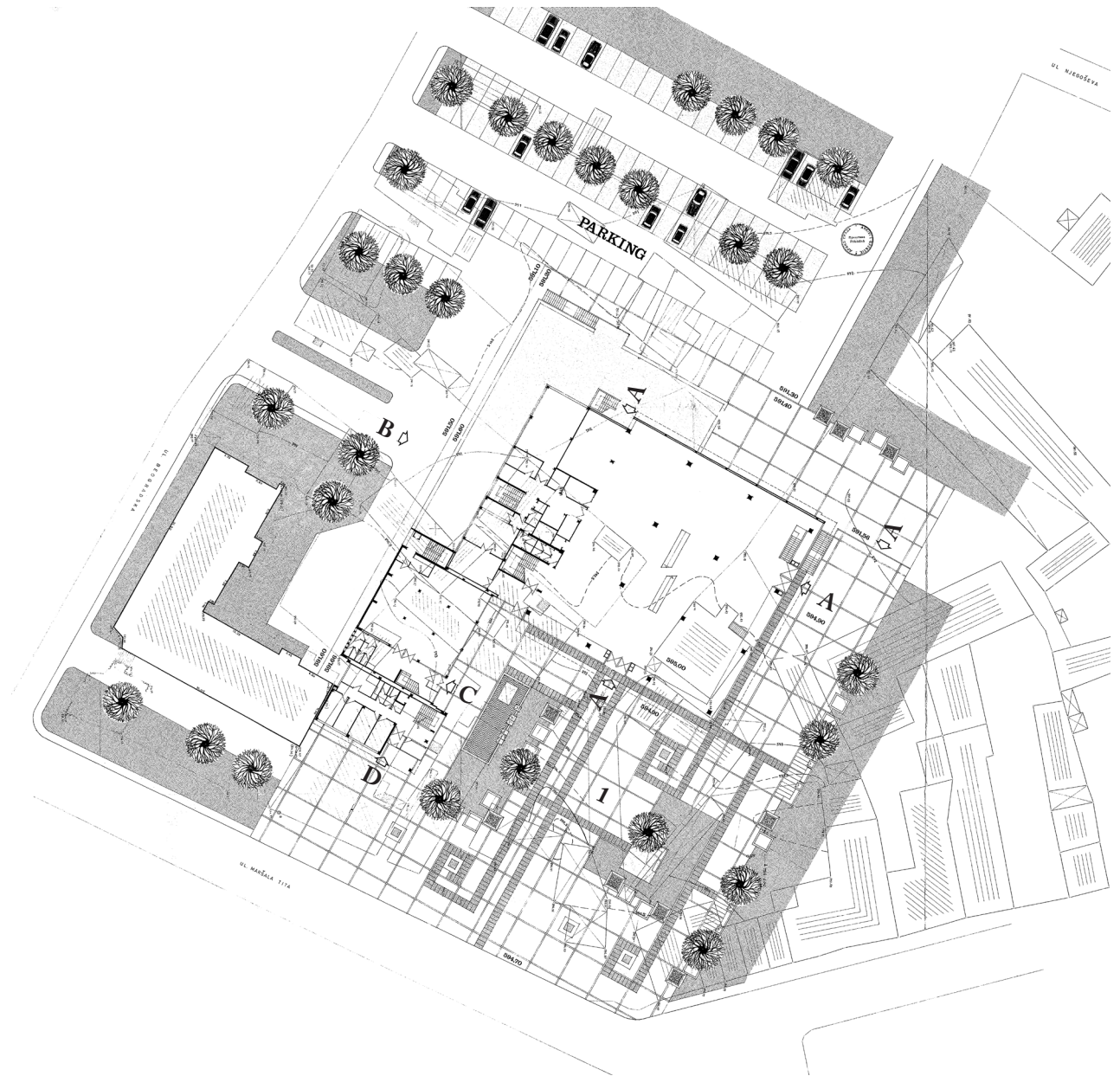
Entrances and horizontal circulation
A- Consumer's Entrance
B- Delivery
C- Entrance to the Restaurant
D- Entrance for the administrative employees

1- The Square



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100 m



First Floor Plan
1972

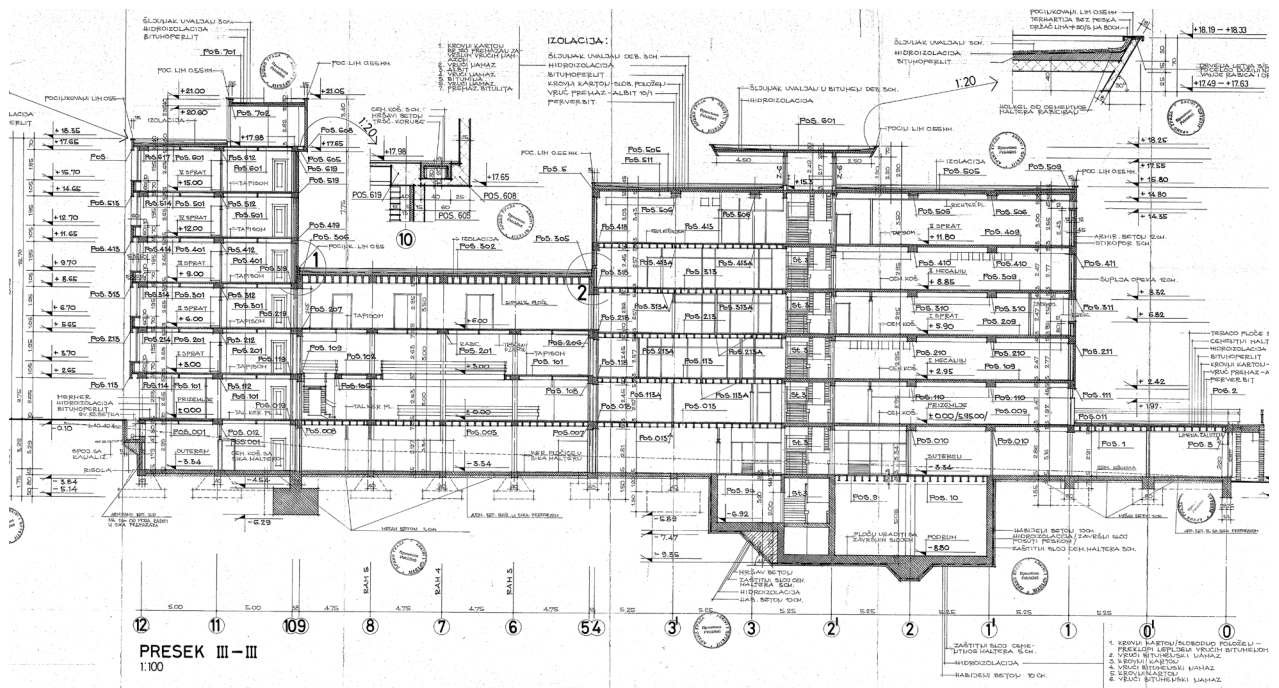
Vertical circulation:

- A- Escalator for the sales area*
- B- Main staircase for the sales area*
- C- Additional staircase for internal use*
- D- Emergency outdoor staircase*
- E- Staircase for the administrative building*



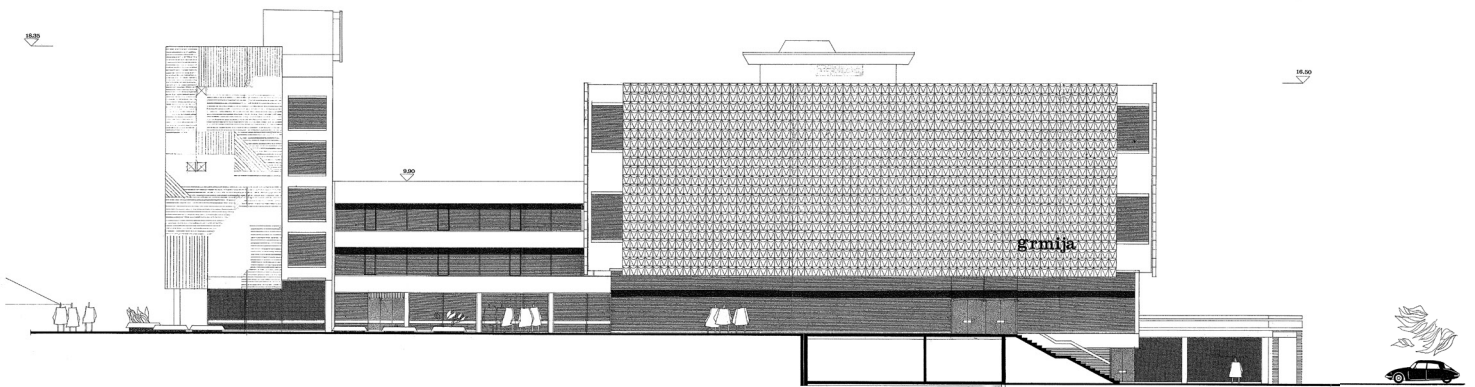
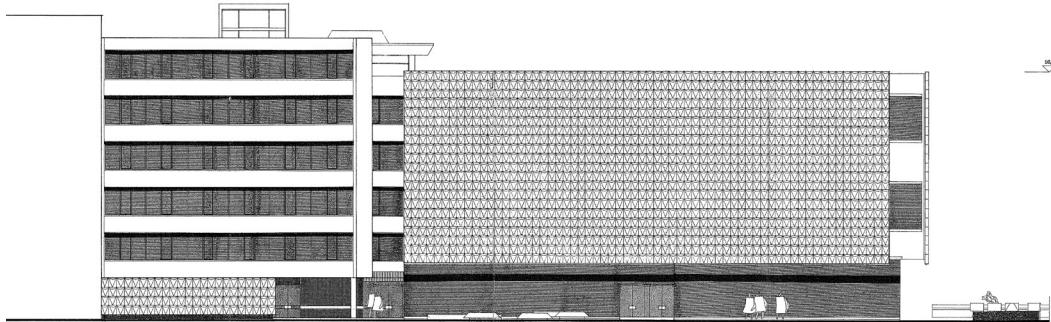
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Section III-III
1970

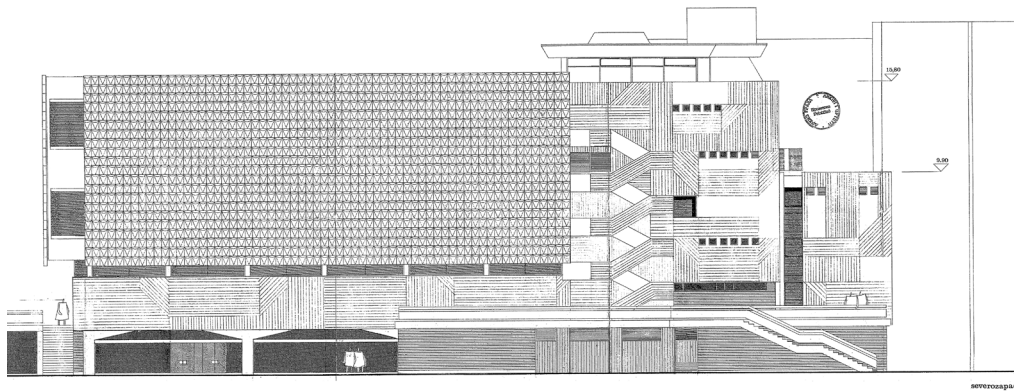
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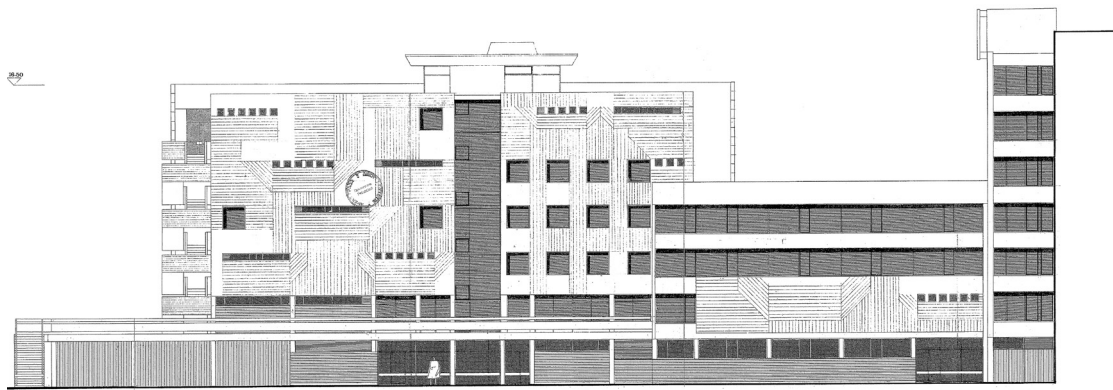
-  natur beton
-  maska od sijam. ploča
-  fasadna opeka

Elevation South-East
 Elevation North-East
 1970

0 10 m



severozápad



-  natur beton
-  maska od alim. plocha
-  fasadna opeka

Elevation North-West
Elevation South-West
1970

0 10 m

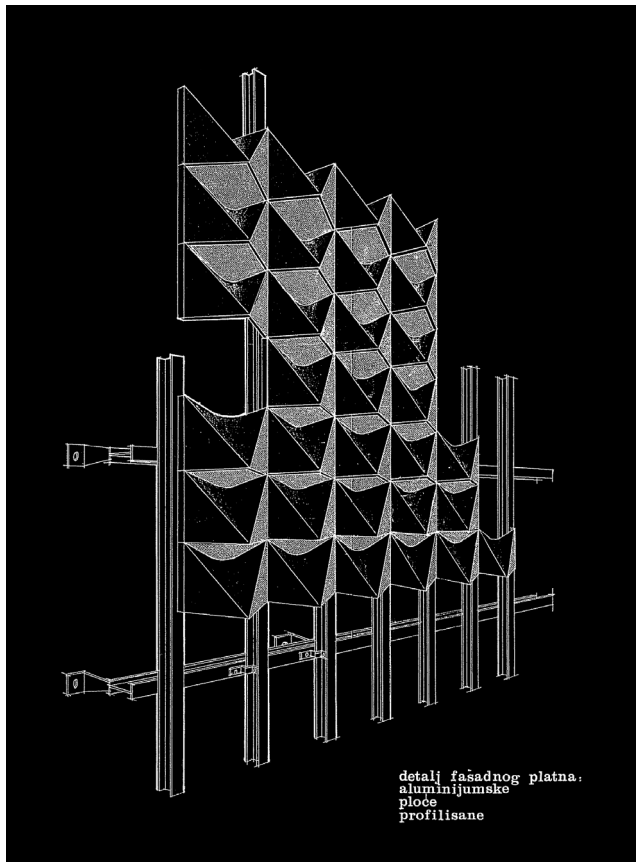


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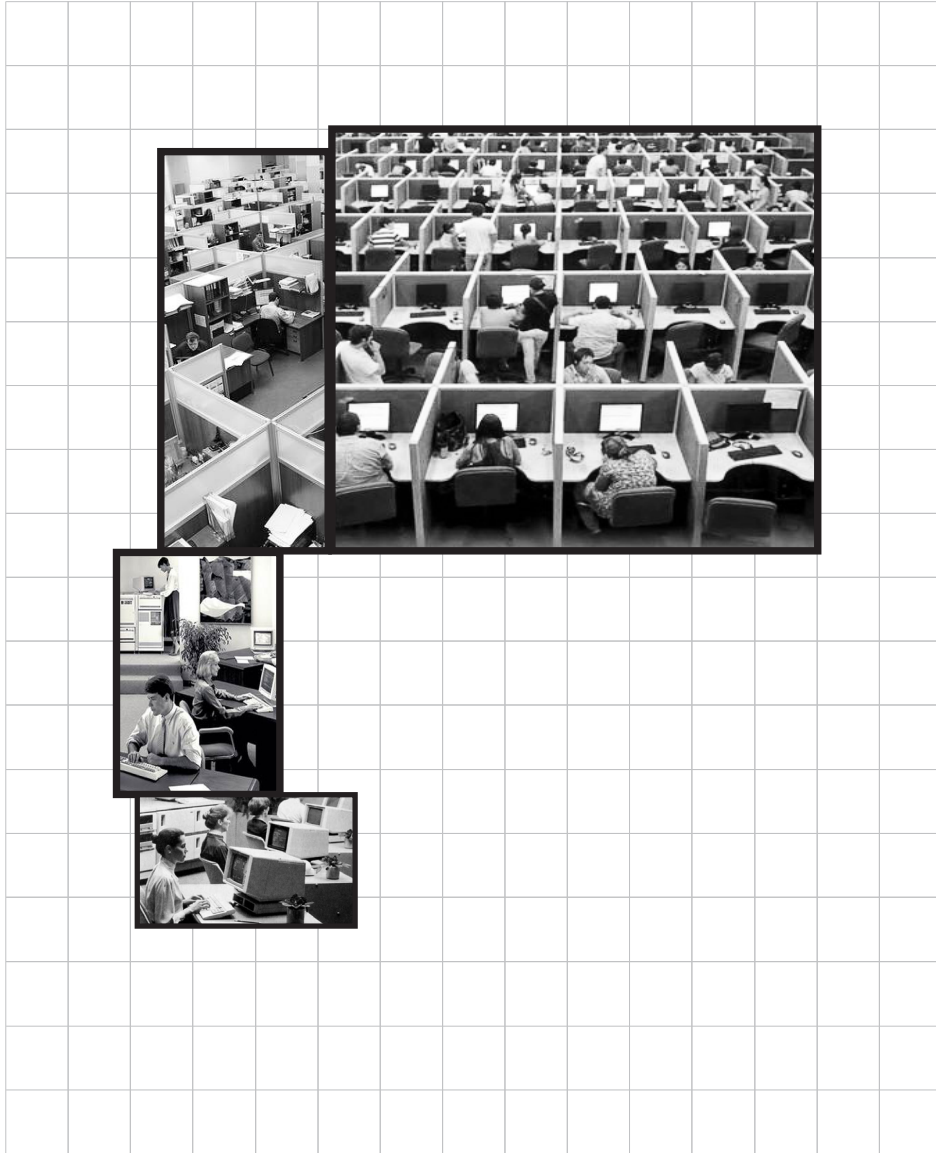
In ex-Yugoslav countries it was usual to re-built the same project in many different cities, in order to unify the architectural language and provide all cities with similar infrastructure. There are a lot of similar school, hospital, hotel and residential projects found in different cities in Yugoslavia.

This is a picture of the Department Store in Gorazje, Bosnia built four years later than the one in Prishtina. The picture is shot after the war by Andrew Moore.

Afterwards, the building went through tremendous changes due to private investor renovation and doesn't own the golden facade anymore.



detalj fasadnog platna:
aluminijumske
ploče
profilisane



2000-2005 UNMIK Offices

2005-2017 Different governmental offices:

Tax Administration of Kosovo Offices

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Infrastructure

Ministry of Public Administration

Central Procurment Agency

Ministry of labour and social welfare

Ministry of economic development

PUBLIC ACCES DENIED!

architecture ON SALE

As the department store Germia and many other buildings that hosted public facilities used to be a social property, their status after the war remained undefined. So, the department store Germia as a retail didn't exist anymore. All it was left, was its 'orphan' architecture.

The ownership of these public assets belongs mostly to the Kosovo Privatization Agency and is undergoing the process of privatization. The process of transferring formerly state-owned assets into private hands, often has been marred by flagrant corruption. In some cases, when the process takes very long, these buildings are rented out to private investors or given for temporary use to governmental facilities until the status of the building is solved. Since there is no law to protect their architecture and even though most of them are really important landmarks for the city, for instance the Hotel Grand which was once sold and then taken back again on the ownership of KPA or the Department Store Germia which is given for temporary use to a few ministries and governmental departments, the investors who rent, buy or temporary use them apply harsh changes to adapt those buildings to the new functions having no consideration for the collective memory and the architecture values those buildings represent.

In the case of the Department Store Germia, each ministry or governmental department was given a certain space and judging from its appearance today, it seems like each department was totally free to 'restyle' the building. Analyzing the current floor plan, most of the changes are to be seen in the former sales building. The escalator, that used to be the heart of the building, is locked up in the middle, framed and hidden. Also the main staircase is not accessible in all the floors. From the site visit, most of the employees didn't know that these two staircases even existed. The insensitive adaptation changed a lot of its outer image as well. Two of the buildings were painted in orange, covering this way the pure concrete facade. The main building now has fifteen openings even though the original design had foreseen a monumental clean facade with no windows. The four boxes are reduced to two and an additional emergency outdoor staircase was added on the front facade. When interviewing one of the managers, I was told that there was no architect hired to do these changes, but they were mostly spontaneous changes step by step adapting the needs of the offices.

But when talking about the loss of the city, it is less about architecture to be discussed as what really matters is the loss of public life and the social interaction. The back of the building is fenced and only a small part of the building which serves as a reception is publicly accessible. This way, the architecture that used to host one of most vital social activities, today is an isolated island in the heart of the city.

First Floor Plan
2017

Escalator, staircases and horizontal circulation

A- Locked up escalator

B- Staircase not accesable at every floors

C- Currently used as a main staircase

D- Existing emergency outdoor staircase

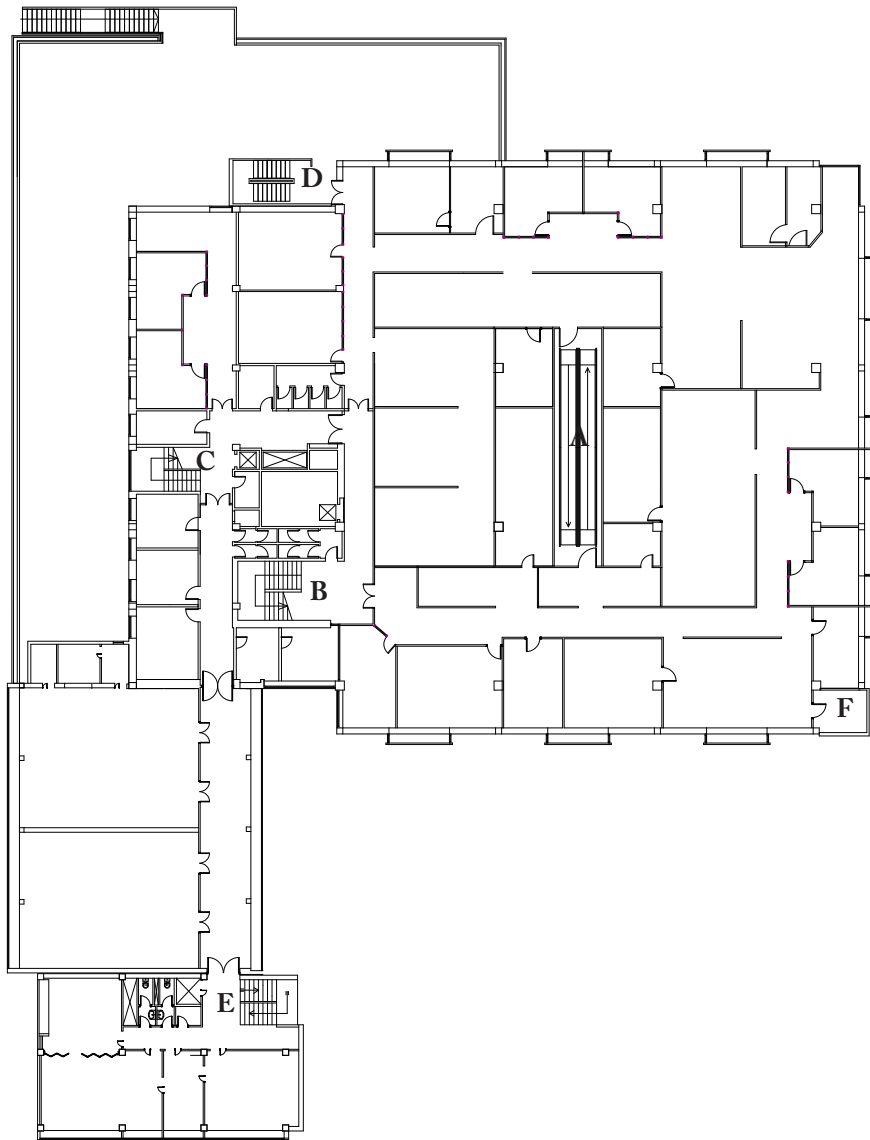
E- Staircase for the administrative building

F- New emergency outdoor staircase



0

10 m





























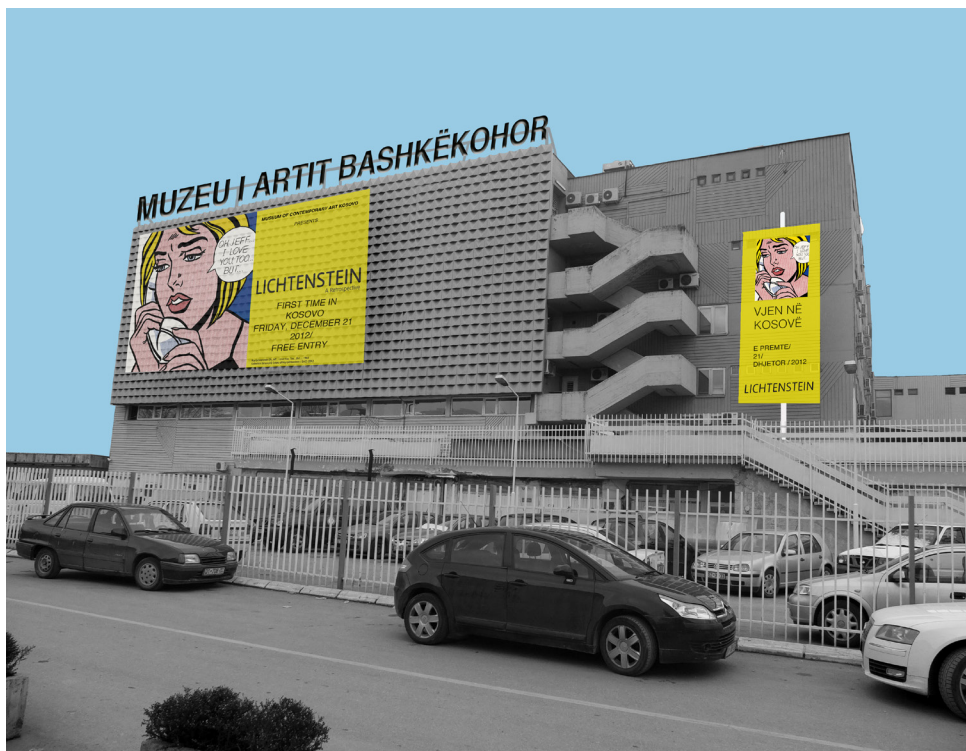












tendency

There have been a few discussions, debates and ideas about the future of what used to be department store Germia. Parameters like its central location, the high frequented square on the front side, being next to the national theater as well as the significant active public life this building used to owe, are leading the discussion towards the idea of reactivation through culture. Taking into consideration that especially spaces for exhibition, but also all kind of spaces for art and culture are lacking comparing to the demand, and the blooming artistic scene in Prishtina, having this space in the heart of the city that could be available and suitable to this use, offers a great opportunity. The departments that are currently using the space, are slowly moving to their new buildings, so the former department store will soon be unvacated.

There are two main proposals from the municipality and the ministry of culture. According to this two institutions the options are either it should turn to a concert hall or to a museum of contemporary art, as they are researching for a long time for a fitting context and an available plot for both of the projects. Until now, both proposals are hold in abeyance, due to the lack of proper institutional engagement.

In his illustration 'I Love You, Too...But...' Driton Selmani, a young a visual artist based in Prishtina, reimagines the former department store as a home for art lovers, as a museum of contemporary art. His artwork illustrated for the article 'Let's culturize politics' (orig. albanian 'Te kulturohet politika')⁵¹ was published on a local magazine, attracting this way the attention of media and the artistic community.

Nevertheless, the department store Germia owes great potential to enable collective cultural interaction and growth. Its re-use for art would be a great chance to reconnect with the cityscape as well as with the sociocultural needs of the society.

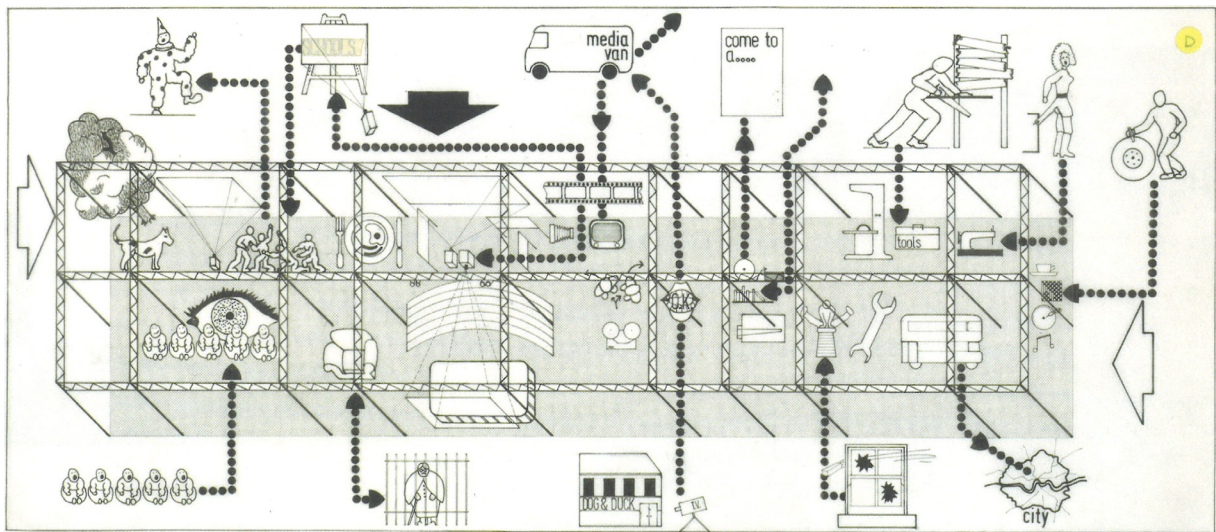


CASA DELLA CULTURA

Architecture that hosts culture has evolved a lot the last century, starting from the appearance, but most of all, in the way it communicates with the city and its openness toward its users. In a democratic society these buildings play a great role on critical thinking, freedom of expression and critical intervention. Beside houses of parliaments, universities and places of demonstration, a great impact on raising awareness of certain social phenomena is made from galleries, museums, theaters and spaces of culture. They are a mirror or a self-image of a society, a space for reflection and self-expression.

Among all the different kinds of topics related to architecture that host culture and art, there are three main topics that influenced me not only in the process of designing the chosen building and the project itself but also in the process of choosing reference projects. The first very important topic I wanted to bring up to discussion was the urban and social impact of a culture center in the community and its relation to public space. 'It's a cultural machine -Centre Pompidou' and 'To the bone - Palais de Tokyo' are two cultural centers in the same city, originally both attempting to differentiate itself from the mainstream classical museum mission, trying to offer an alternative, interactive space and a platform for contemporary art scene.

In the case of Centre Pompidou - the monumental scale and its exaggerated expression of industrial elements made it very soon an internationally identifiable landmark. And this way, the promised flexibility and spontaneity somehow had to die. All the center could do about it was to place different artistic disciplines in one space but its reliance on administrative bureaucracy, inevitably meant that its content would represent a form of official taste, in contrast with the spontaneous creativity to which it had aspired. So with or without its intention, the building became an icon and its aim to abolish the academic (elitist) culture in the name of 'free creation' was hardly achieved⁵². Yet, the center remains as one of the most influential cultural monuments in architecture and its interaction with the urban space had great social beneficence, establishing a traditional relationship between public space and public building.



As a contrast to it, the conversion of the Palais de Tokyo into a contemporary art venue by Lacaton&Vassal in 2002 tries to answer the demand on alternative spaces for contemporary art with an absence of a strong architectural image. With a sensitive approach towards the existing structure, the exterior is left unchanged and the minimal architecture interventions focus on the internal space, trying to avoid the 'Bilbao Effect' of a sculptural monumental architecture that attracts public for its shape - focusing in material rather than form. The architectural approach towards the existing and the commitment to raw and unfinished aesthetics correspond also to the art that it was intended to accommodate - an alternative space for contemporary art⁵³.

There is this third important issue that I refer to a specific case-study and that is the poetic coexistence of art and architecture which is described by 'Between art and architecture - Kunsthau Bregenz'. Zumthor by designing the cultural center Bregenz, enhances and defines specific tools to create qualitative spaces for art. The architectural language achieves an atmospheric composition of light, volumes and the given context, this way successfully simplifying the complexity.



It's a cultural machine *Centre Pompidou*

In 1969, an international competition and the first competition opened to foreigners was organized by the ministry of culture. Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers, the winners of the competition and the architects of the building, proposed a radical designing strategy using only the half of the space available, leaving the other half as a courtyard or a public 'Plaza'. The cultural building was designed to be more like an infrastructure ready to host culture than as a representative architecture. The building became an immediate architectural icon for Paris and it was seen as a symbol of modernisation in the city.

Following the 1960s trends in architecture led to the development of the museum as a kind of kinetic, dynamic machine. No doubt that the centre could never have been built without the precedent of the Fun Palace and the Inter-Action Centre and without the programmatic and spatial organization of the Kulturhuset in Stockholm⁵⁴.

By placing the technical facilities and the walkways on the facade, a huge interior space with no pipes, no columns, no walls was created for the functions inside - a museum architecture liberated from its contents. The absence of walls gave the architects the freedom and the maximum flexibility to place the program in the building and gave the visitors a big culture factory to explore.

The building houses different cultural events and a diversity of functions such as museum and exhibition halls, theater, cinema, city library, reading room, restaurant and cafe.

The court strengthens the connection of the center to the city. The light slope, invites naturally the people and leads them to the main entrance. According to the original design, there was supposed to be no barrier between the building and the forecourt, but the architects were forced to make changes that reduced the accessibility. Art and city life meet right at the entrance hall. Due to the transparency and the openness, the entrance hall creates a continuation of the city inside the building and at the same time, does the forecourt exhibit the life of the city. The whole facade is made of walkways and small squares, which makes it also a public space accessible for everyone and offers people a free panorama⁵⁵.

' But we always thought that the forecourt was as important as the building. In a city as dense as Paris, we thought it was wrong to use all of the land. It's the forecourt that is the real urban space, it's this empty space that makes the center possible. Thanks to the court the center belongs to the city.'⁵⁶



between art and architecture *Kunsthhaus Bregenz*

„The art museum stands in the light of Lake Constance. It is made of glass and steel and a cast concrete stone mass which endows the interior of the building with texture and spatial composition. From the outside, the building looks like a lamp. It absorbs the changing light of the sky, the haze of the lake, it reflects light and color and gives an intimation of its inner life according to the angle of vision, the daylight and the weather⁵⁷.

From the urban context to the spatial interior concept, everything is as decisive as it is sensitive when it comes to the architect's minimal 'touch'. Placing the modest skyline on the right angle with the lower administration building creates a further city square. This way upgrading not only the interactivity between the two new buildings but also taking up the dialog with the street space and structurally complete the puzzle. An authentic relationship between art and architecture was achieved by providing enough free space for the museum. By removing the secondary and maintenance functions such as the administration, library, shop, cafe, bookshop, etc. to the second building, it became possible to plan the Kunsthhaus as a pure, variable museum and exhibition building. Due to the small building site, a horizontal placement of exhibition spaces was avoided in favor of a stacking enfilade, where the linear alignment of the galleries became a vertical concatenation, but the principle of walking through the galleries was still preserved. The journey starts with the high entrance floor, followed by two almost identical floors and finalized with a higher exhibition hall - a subtle series, which in poetry would be named as a b b c. Distinguished by its imposing functional envelope and unwavering spatial concept, the building was conceived as a daylight museum. The architect's solution is a twice filtered light through a layer of space - a scattered light, enabling the insight of different light zones in the exhibition hall. The ceiling brings in a filtered light from fixtures far enough that the light becomes diffused, indicating this way the power of architecture to enhance and accommodate works of art in space⁵⁸.



to the bone *Palais de Tokyo*

Occupying the two hectare riverside Seine, Palais de Tokyo was originally designed in 1937 for the occasion of the Paris International Exposition. The cultural complex was conceived as a gallery for the modern-art collections of both the French state and the city of Paris, a never-the-twin parentage that led its Beaux-Arts-trained architects to design a twin building which would host two separate museums: the east wing-Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and the west Musée national d'art moderne. While the eastern half is still home to Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, the western state-owned wing has had more chequered fortunes, hosting a number of different institutions and events in its time, all related to visual arts. When Centre Pompidou took the national art stage and by the 1976 superseded its original purpose, the Musée national d'art moderne closed⁵⁹. The Ministry of Culture decided at the beginning of the 90s to install a cinema museum under its roof, but the project dropped soon following a change of government in 1997. The structure got abandoned until 1999 when finally a scheme was launched which intended to consign part of the west wing building to the promotion of contemporary art. Baptised simply 'Palais de Tokyo', this new institution drew a parallel to the New Yorker PS1 or the Berlins KW contrasting this way the Centre Pompidou, which originally was billed as a forum for exciting spontaneous events, excitement later transformed to a classic museum mission when hosting the Musée national d'art moderne.

Palais de Tokyo became therefore simply a venue, with no permanent collection, occupying 7.800sqm to host art and culture. It was no wonder that right after its opening, it made its mark in the Parisian art scene and became a permanent institution and one of the largest platforms for contemporary creativity in Europe. Just as in the original restoration, in the last one in 2010, the architects' approach towards the existing structure did not change. When visiting the structure back in 1999, Lacaton&Vassal conviction was that 'The architecture was already there'.

The stripped to the bone interior that exposes and embraces raw materials was kept in its gutted state, where every process involved with breaking through has been celebrated and left exposed, rather than plastered over, freeing this way the space from the typical clean room sterility atmosphere⁶⁰.

The exhibition space has maximum flexibility and openness. The visitor is free to explore uninhibited through the building's floors and rooms without having to follow any dictated routes. While the bottom basement spaces exert an almost expansive tomb-like aura, the upper levels bask in the warmth of sunlight through glass roofs, making a romantic run out of the space⁶¹.

With its unfinished look, the space signals potential for intervention and becomes a simulacrum of the visitors and artists empowerment⁶².

Center for contemporary creation

synopsis

The above written chapters are deliberately structured and in their composition they represent a collection of single disciplines, all related to the main task - reimagining the relationship between the city, its past and art.

Through an architectural, social and cultural analysis of the context, the typology research of department stores, their vision and the human and historical relevance of the chosen existing building as well as the comparison of contemporary architecture references, the project acts like a memorial of the existing and a celebration of the upcoming. Besides trying to discover the spatial qualities of the existing and to emphasize it affirmatively by reactivating the space through art, it shifts focus from being an isolated island inside the city to becoming a social centre of gravity. The aim is to create a theatrical palimpsest in which multidisciplinary activities, people and their processes interact. In this sense, the project has the goal of making the building public in its character, above all in its spatial conception creating a platform for the established artistic community, and encouraging public interaction and exchange with arts. The architectural interventions are conceived as a dialogue between critical conservation, architectural experimentation in a specific context and enrichment of the current cultural infrastructure. The cultural regeneration of the former department store Germia provides the opportunity for the arts and the audience to coexist and play in an experimental 'palace' of contemporary art.

Outside the pages of this work, the project attempts to provoke critical reflections on the socialist modernist heritage and provide a platform for further discussions for the acknowledgment of the architectural value of these buildings. In spatial terms it tries to find an answer to the unfinished modernisation of Prishtina. It's ambition is also to initiate real discussions about the loss of common ground and the use of public space and to provoke the imagination by using the power of architectural drawing to establish an alternative reality and translate it in spatial terms rather than simply confirming the existing conditions.

In this context, I would like to start a new dialectic between the city, the society and art.

Nolli Plan Prishtina
Site

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the challenge of change

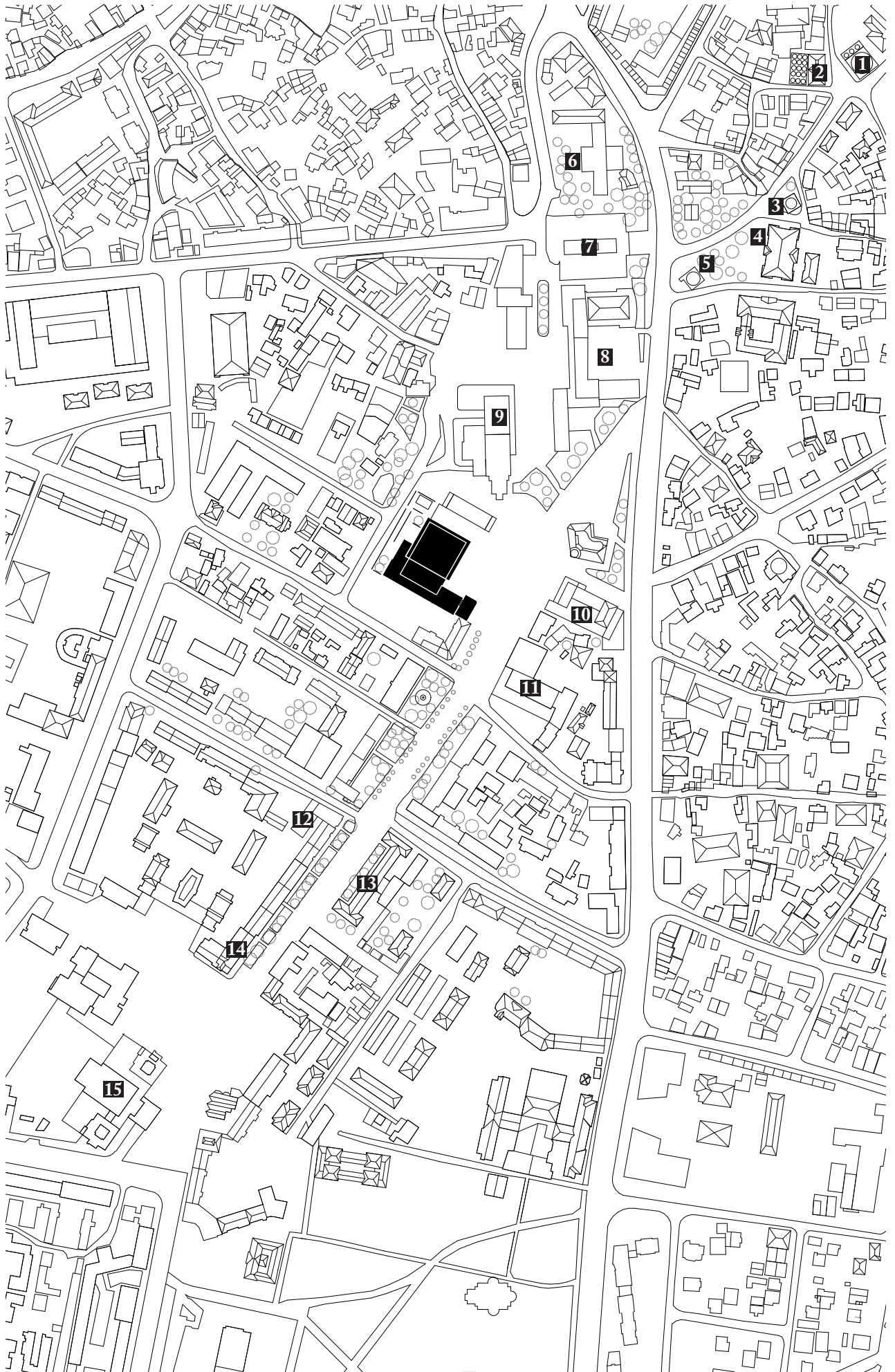
The current context surrounding the building is a composition of governmental, commercial, mixed use housing structures and the national theater in the opposite all having the former department store and its attached public space in the center. An important parameter that led to the decision of the transformative reuse to a center for contemporary creation is the original thought dating back to the 70s masterplan to establish a cultural square with art and culture facilities in the back of the building, which never took place. What was supposed to be a cultural hub, turned into a group of small scale houses with mixed residential and commercial use. Nonetheless, the current state offers a convenient framework to support the original idea. The building communicates with the national theater and can provide additional spaces for the use of the theater whilst hosting multidisciplinary arts. This is regarded as an opportunity to turn the whole area together with the shared square in between into a culture and art space, where the public space acts like an outdoor platform for activities, events and performances for both sides.

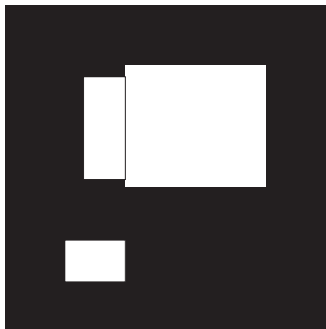
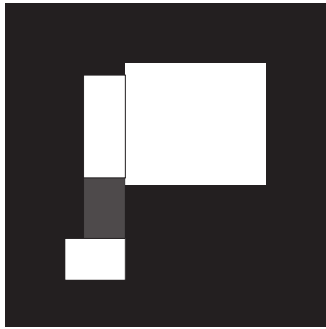
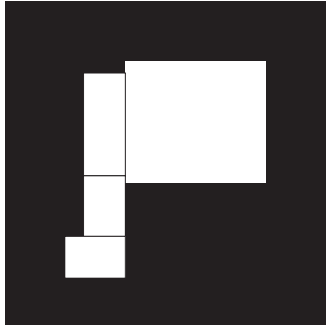
Above all, the decision of the architectural transformative approach is a manifestation of the current presence and the absence of the building. Its physical presence on the cityscape is overwhelming but its doors are closed therefore in socio spatial relationships it is absent. The prominent presence on the urban pattern of the main public space of the city promises a high frequency and establishes a strong relationship and inclusiveness of the mass in art and culture unlike the museum complexes away from the city center that usually interact with a smaller audience and only certain groups with high interest in artworks. Indirectly, this creates the possibility to engage the mass and bring art education near to the residents.

- 1 *Sulltan Mosque*
- 2 *The Great Hamam*
- 3 *Jashar Pasha Mosque*
- 4 *National Museum of Kosovo*
- 5 *Carshia Mosque*
- 6 *Prishtina Townhall*
- 7 *Adem Jashari Square*
- 8 *Assembly of Republic of Kosovo*
- 9 *Government of Republic of Kosovo*
- 10 *The National Theater*
- 11 *Hotel*
- 12 *ABC Cinema*
- 13 *Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport*
- 14 *Ministry of Energy and Mining*
- 15 *Hotel Grand*

Current context

0 | | | | | 1 00 m





reaction

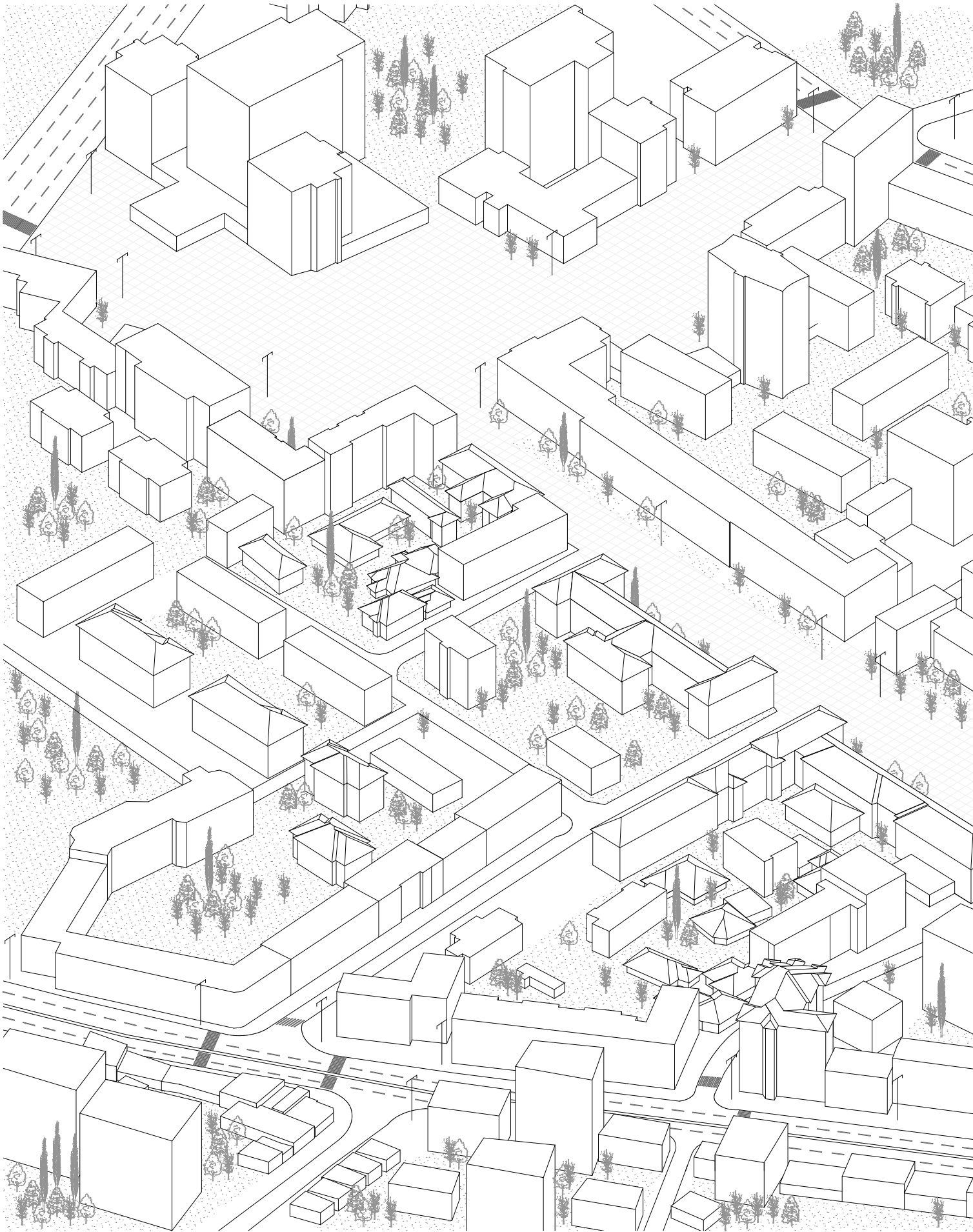
One of the first and main idea, considered from the urban scale, is the reach of openness and accessibility of the building from all the sides, moreover a very important component is the free circulation around it and intervisibility.

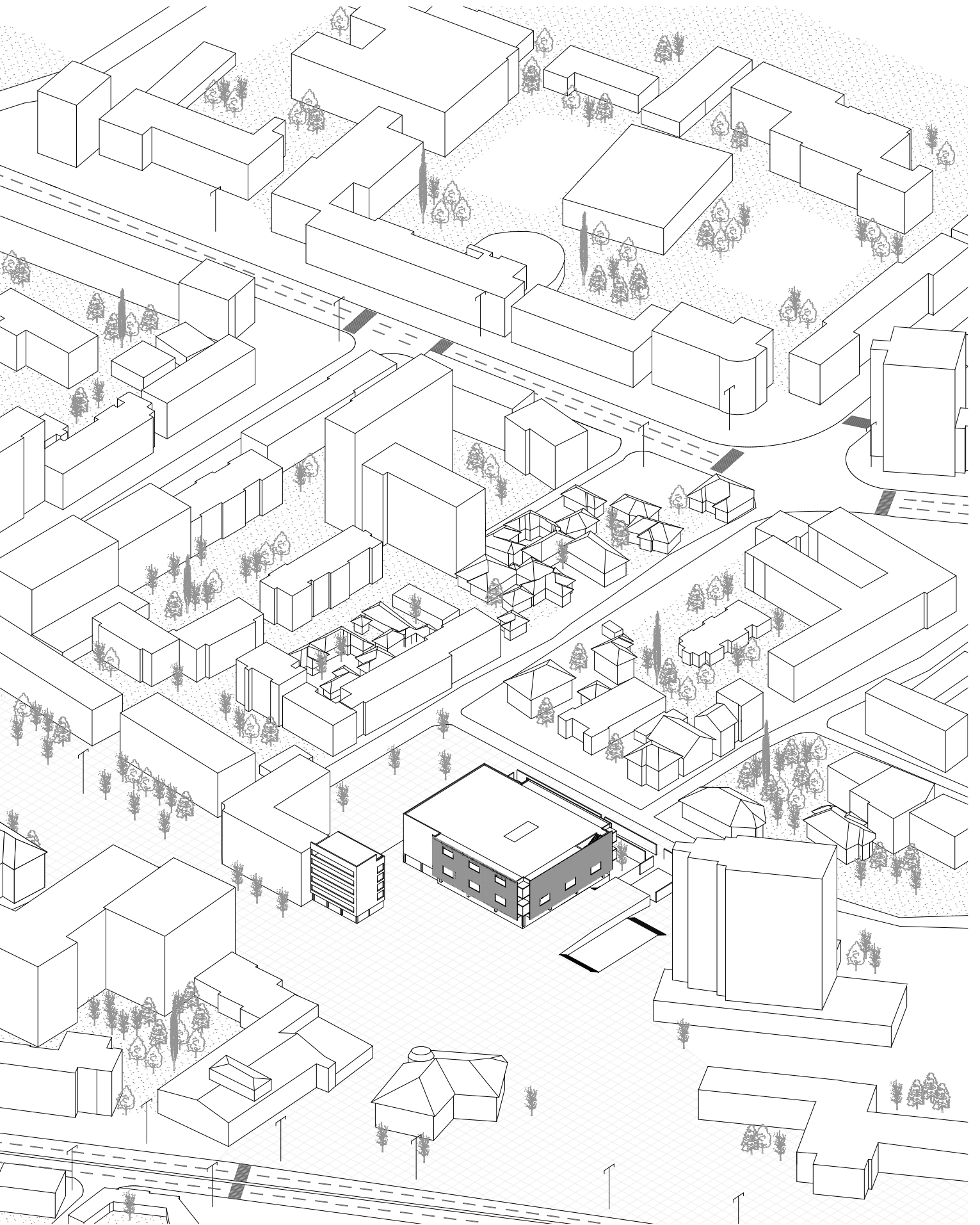
Due to the current use, the single volumes work completely independently and each building has its own entrance. Hence, the composition of four different volumes frames an L- shaped boundary on one side of the complex creating this way a visual and physical barrier. Therefore the sensitive approach of keeping the existing structures is considered critical. During the process of design, there are a few interventions that were considered.

One of them would be the opening of a single passage or the whole ground floor of the building B, which as an architectural gesture offers the free circulation around the complex but has other disadvantages. Prishtina owns a lot of passages, especially in the socialist modernist residential structures where the elevated pedestrian areas used to separate the circulation of cars from people. Due to the poor maintenance and the critical lightening for most of them, their usage in some cases turned to a surreal experience.

As a reaction to the current state, aiming to expand the repertoire of spatial typologies in which art can be exhibited and achieve new connections in the urban pattern the proposal foresees the demolition of the building B. As a result, visual discontinuities are broken and a new in-between space of interaction emerges : The void.

The void expands the frontal square in the south-west axis, and becomes a significant element for open air use. In contrast to the remaining volumes, it offers a diversity of spatial environments and through the absence of a certain structure in architectural terms, introduces spatial variables and enhances the in between as a space of inspiration and experimentation. The structures open themselves toward the public space and are no longer a hermetic heterotopia.







the square and the garden

The linear stretched public space Mother Theresa Boulevard which at the same time remarks the main pedestrian axis in the city, is a very important parameter for the design. The boulevard hosts already a wide palette of outdoor activities starting from sport activities to street vendors, meeting point, parade, protests, art, music and diverse cultural performances. Its hybrid character makes this common ground to be a magnetic attraction for citizens of all ages.

The former department store Germia positions itself as a composition of a main 'pavilion' and its additional volumes, originally open towards the square. With the recent transformation, the building detaches itself from the public space denying the context, focusing its program in the interior and cutting the communication with the outdoor space. As an answer to the complexity of the transformation process the proposal tends to regenerate the relationship of the building with the square by setting transparency on the ground floor. The public space as an urban interior, a contiguous juxtaposition of room without a roof penetrates inside the building to promote a major dialogue between internal and external space, liberating new perspectives and unveiling the real substance of the building to the audience. In socio spatial terms, the square provides a great opportunity to bring the people off the street into the space of the arts, influencing a social bridging of the artists and the audience and providing a space for the artists to share and promote their works with the public. Meantime on the backside of the building a contemporary garden as a design element is added to the urban fabric. The backyard in contrast to the crowded frontal square hides behind its walls and is quiet. It offers a space for outdoor exhibition, installation and above all a place for silence and reflection. It smoothes the transition from small structured housing to the culture center and tries to reconnect of the cityscape with its lost landscape.



river nostalgia

The lost connection of the city with its natural topography during the years of modernisation caused an emotional and physical detachment of its citizens with the past.

The project tempts to recover the erased memory of the city. And this is a paradigm shift. The architecture that was born to cover the city's deepest roots embraces the past and reveals its old traces. A deep scratch on the floor starting from the square flowing inside the building, drawing the natural line of the buried river underneath will follow the steps of the pedestrians. Here rests the river Vellusha!



actors

Aiming to establish a house for everyone and understanding the production of art as an important process the project tries to engage the local artists, the residents, the culture and art institutions and international artists serving like a junction, a meeting point and an experimental lab for contemporary art. For the local artists, it is a great chance having a space in the heart of the city where they can produce, curate and exhibit their artworks. Wide rooms in the basement floor dedicated to art education make it possible for the faculty of arts, music, performance and literature to access suitable spaces for rehearsal generating this way a dynamism and heterogeneity within the house. Above all, the most important actors are the residents of the city. The new center for contemporary creation gives them back the social life and interaction this building used to host as a department store, enriches the cultural infrastructure in the city and gives them the chance to be included in all the processes, from the production to the exhibition of art, making them not only spectators but also part of the program.



Function: Center for contemporary creation
Distribution of programm:
House of exhibition, House of Activities, The production tower

OPEN TOWARDS THE PUBLIC SPACE

program

The original design of the department store had foreseen a separation and independence of each structure of the complex in programmatic terms, allowing at the same time a coexistence. The transformative reuse to a center for contemporary creation, translates spatially the new program following the original use of each space. It aims to understand the complexity of the existing structures and to use the different spaces adapting to each of the activities that are able to enhance their individual spatial vocations. As a result an exciting palimpsest emerges. The functions overlap with the initial ones and a new complementary relationship between consumption spaces and art spaces is established. The typological transformation of the building allows a new interpretation, where architecture becomes the frame for the art. By doing so, the new composition is linked to the past while the past itself is reactivated by the contemporary. A new and surprising constellation of functions, activities and events arises. New typologies emerge.

House of exhibition.

Due to the size, proportions of its bearing structure, the depth of the building, the lighting conditions, its spatial qualities, the architectural image and above the fact that this structure used to host already an exhibition - the exhibition of goods, the new design foresees this pavilion to rehost exhibition, this time displaying art. Drawing such parallels, the spatial essence of the building will be enhanced, reaching the original design matrices to propose them again in an interpretative way and reestablish the relationship between architecture and its context.

While the ground floor will remain flexible in its use and serve like an indoor public space that hosts temporary exhibitions and diverse other activities, the upper floors will house all kind of exhibitions of contemporary art from sculpture, painting, installation, visual arts to diverse collections giving the city approximately 3.300 square meters and two levels of unobstructed open space dedicated to art exhibition. By removing the secondary and maintenance functions like administration library shop cafe, it became possible to design the main pavilion as a pure, variable museum- and exhibition building.

House of activities.

The south-western wing of the complex works partly as a support for the house of exhibition

with attached additional space for exhibition, partly independent from the rest of the structures. On the ground floor are placed functions with an open character like children creative center, cafe and shop, directly connected to the outdoor terrace. In the upper floors, due to the denser bearing structure comparing to the exhibition house and the 'occupied' space for two staircases, the building functionally is split in two parts. The western side hosts a media library and bookstore in the first floor, leaving much more flexibility to the rest of the floors for two multipurpose rooms each 200 square meter. The rooms can join the exhibition space when necessary, but also can work independently hosting diverse events, lectures, seminar, workshops, or performances. The other side of the building is more cramped because of the stairway, elevators and shafts. The leftover space will be divided in single cell for rehearsals and workshops mostly for sound, photo and video booths.

The production tower.

The six story high building aligned with the buildings along the boulevard, houses artist studios/ateliers, temporary residence and administration, providing this way a space of cultural production. The temporary residence will offer national and international artists the possibility to spend time in the complex while curating their exhibitions or participating in workshops/lectures including them in the chain of production of art. The artist ateliers, reduced to 5x5m squares offer intimacy and coexistence enhancing the art studio and its aura as the ultimate site of creation.

The Basement.

Setting a program on the basement had two priorities. The cellar as a platform resting on the ground should first of all house an archive of the artworks, considering that the city doesn't have any proper storage for such a purpose. A part of the 1.000 square meter storage is thought to be as a 'schaulager', where the rooms are designed as spaces for both storage and display at the same time, preventing this way the typical museal distinction of the 'storing' and 'seeing' and enabling an access to the stored art for researchers, teachers, school groups, museum

professionals and artists and reaching a wider public. The second important issue was giving as much space as possible to the rooms for educational purposes, highlighting the art education as an important process to stimulate creativity and engage youngsters. Over 1.000 square meters dedicated to art education will provide an experimental platform, a framework of flexible spaces that can be orchestrated and transformed over time, where new interactions between different art disciplines and a variety of lectures, workshops, open discussions, art lessons encompass many aspects and create a vibrant multi layered and multidisciplinary contemporary art academy inside the house aiming to connect the center for contemporary creation with all kind of artistic institutions, formal and informal galleries, different NGOs as well as the faculty of arts.

The void.

The void emerges as a space in the middle of the complex, creating a further public space which not only upgrades the communication between the existing buildings but also takes up the dialog with the frontal square and the boulevard and structurally completes the ensemble. In the contrast to the big public space, it offers more intimacy and suggests inflow paths all around the building. Instead of adding new structure, the space is left empty. Being closed on two sides, but still outdoor and open, it challenges the fundamental conditions of space and establishes an oppositional interplay between form and formlessness. Different scenarios are thought about the space like outdoor exhibition, temporary market, art installation, artistic open performance, temporary pavilions, outdoor workshops and a setting of spontaneous events - trying to avoid a fix program, leaving the space to evolve itself adapting to the needs of the community.

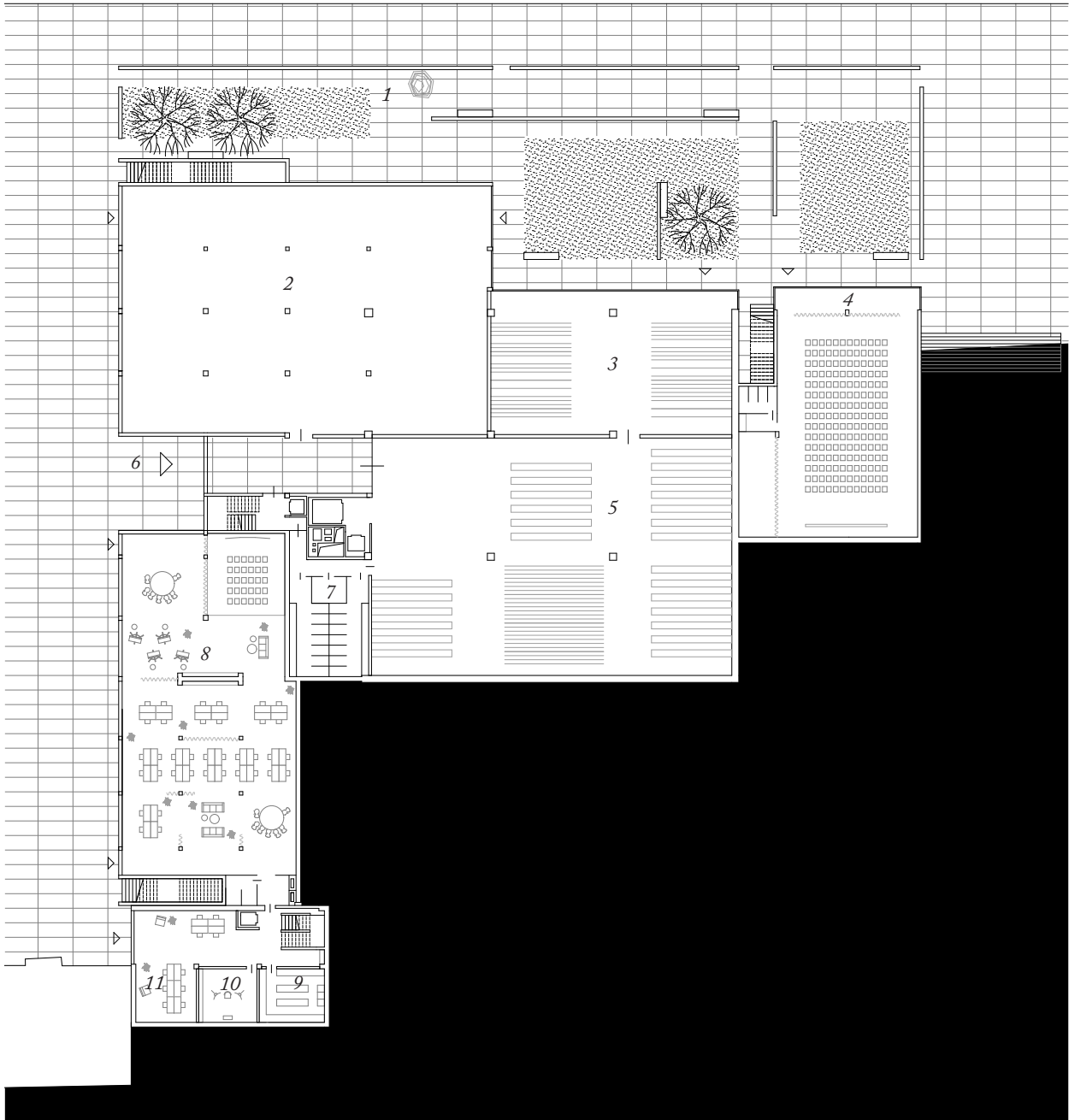
The programmatic scenario is just one possible scenario. It doesn't necessarily mean that the gallery space should always remain only for exhibitions. All the rooms can join, separate, accommodate different activities related to contemporary art. Ateliers can turn to meeting rooms, working cells can become exhibition cells, the open exhibition space can become a lecture hall or a space to host a runway fashion show. This way, the architecture becomes the frame for artwork and culture activities, allowing art to express its own independent voice and grow inside the house.

- 1 *outdoor exhibition space and garden*
- 2 *multipurpose room/hall*
- 3 *exhibited archive*
- 4 *lecture hall*
- 5 *archive*
- 6 *backentrance/delivery*
- 7 *toilets*
- 8 *workshop space*
- 9 *storage and laundry for artist studios*
- 10 *dark room/photo video studio*
- 11 *workshop space*

Basement Floor



0 10 m

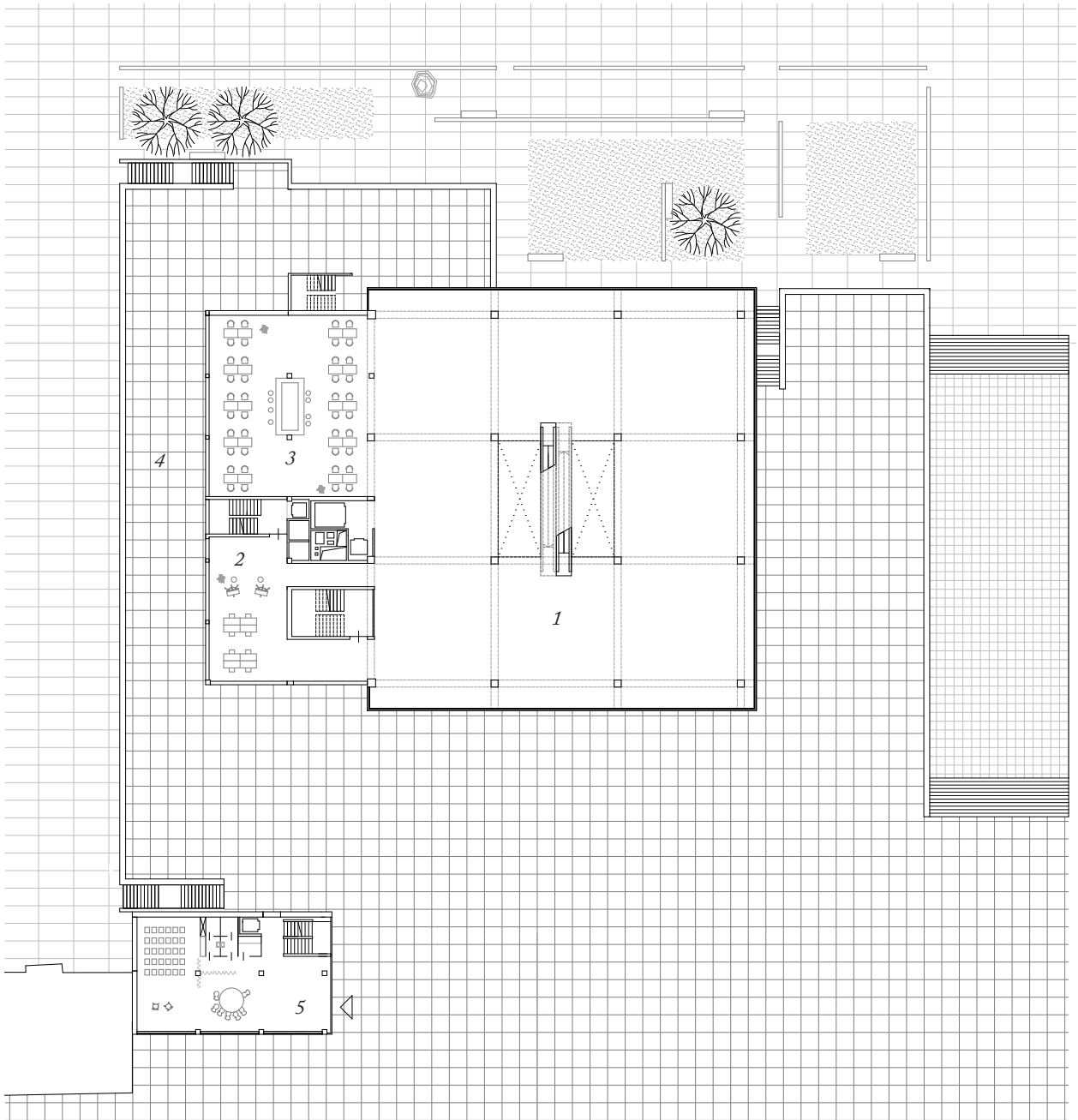


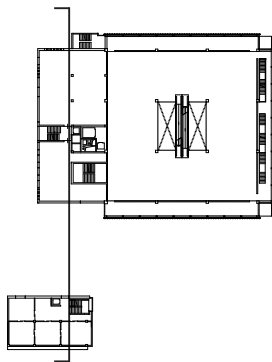
- 1 *entrance hall/ activity hall/ lobby*
- 2 *workshop children*
- 3 *coffee and shop*
- 4 *terrace*
- 5 *entrance/ lobby/ communication area*

Ground Floor



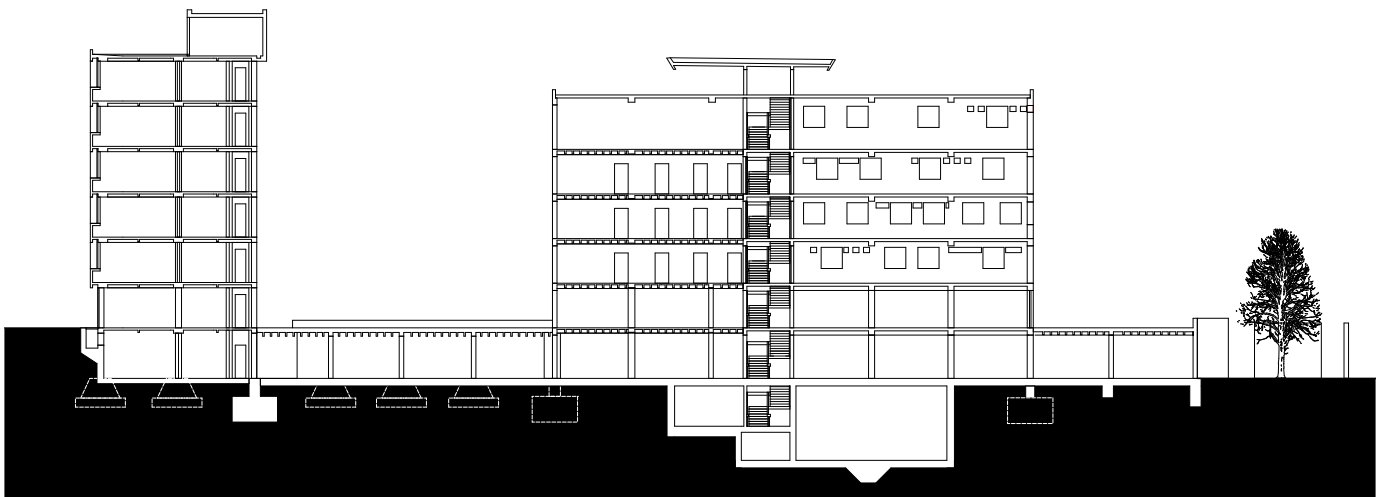
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Long Section

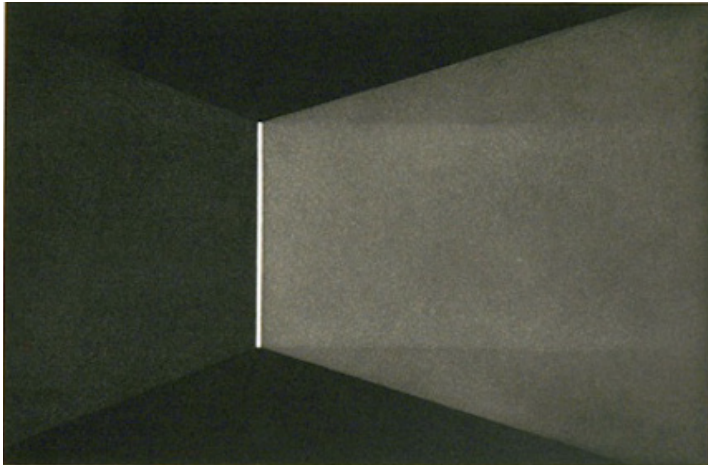
0 10 m



Ground Floor Axonometry

The interaction with the public space and the vertical circulation





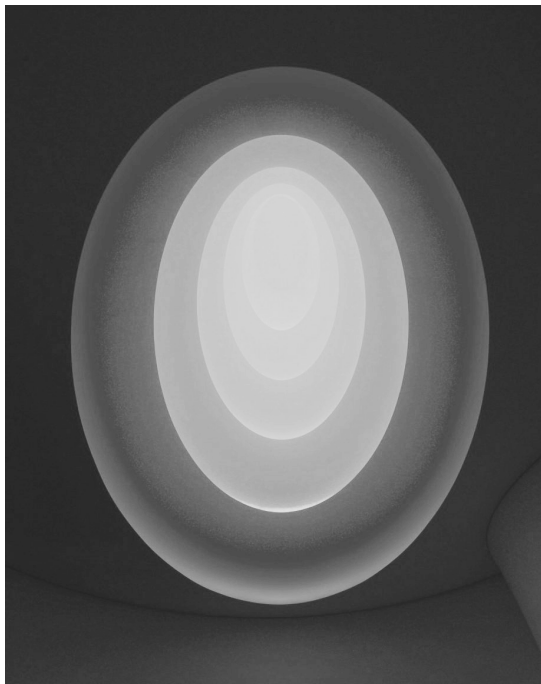
spatial sequence

The project aims to expand the collection of spatial typologies in which contemporary art and cultural activities can be practiced and the urban rituals can be performed.

Flowing connection and openness towards the public space is achieved setting full transparency on the ground floor. This way the ground floor becomes a covered plaza, an indoor pavilion that can be populated by multitude of activities and the threshold expands into the gallery space, placing art in everyone's everyday. Except the cafe that sits right next to the terrace, the ground floor is left unprogrammed. It can always open its doors and join the square as an available common ground to accommodate bigger events.

Shell. Slice.Slot.

Especially challenging during the design process was dealing with the existing facade, considering that despite the monumentality and cleanness of the original design as a department store, the after-war transformative reuse caused fifteen openings in the main facade which changed the architectural image of the complex in an irreversible way. The aluminium studs could easily reproduced and the openings could be covered, but that approach would cover a lot of the building's identity. The present-day facade shows not only the history of the building itself, but is at the same time a mirror and a reflection of the history of the city. The structure is a palimpsest of modern substance and represents clearly the status of all the socialist modernist landmarks in Prishtina. Instead of a direct intervention in the outer skin, the typological transformation foresees a less visible intervention. The architectural 'touch' happens mostly on the inside of the main pavilion. A second shell, like an offset of the outer skin contour takes place on the inside of the building and creates an inside closed exhibition area, keeping a certain distance from the existing structure. The space between the existing facade and the new shell becomes the buffer zone between the interior and the city on the other side. It allows the visitor to escape the exhibition space and offers him a space of reflection, a place to create a visual connection with the city. This way, the lively and vibrant public spaces in front of the building becomes the exhibition, displaying the life of the city framed through the openings of the existing facade. The inner shell is open in the corners, expanding spatial parameters such as accessibility and cross-visibility and creating spatial interactivity between the interior exhibition area, the buffer zone and the city.



In the north-east side of the in-between zone, a new staircase connects the exhibition space directly with the rooftop and affects the circulation routes, giving more possibilities to explore the building.

The design of the intersection of the house of exhibition with the house of activities is given attention, leaving the option for the exhibition area to expand on the next building, offering a variety of rooms with different heights and encouraging visitors exploration throughout the space.

Stacked Enfilade.

The absence of walls and the intention to create wide free spaces for the exhibition, meant leaving the horizontal sequence, the classical enfilade. Instead, the exhibition area consists of vertically stacked galleries but the principle of walking through was preserved due to the floating vertical circulation - the escalator. The spatial layout pursues a clockwise turning motion while going up to the galleries, avoiding the visitors to get to see only the targeted exhibitions. Having no physical interruption like walls or any other structure, one can grasp the gallery space at a glance while being carried between the floor by the escalator corresponding to a contemplative walk through an art collection.



Cut Out.

In order to enhance the central escalator as a fluid vertical communication and reestablish its relation to the city two cutouts on each side of the escalator are made on the ceiling. The 4x11 metre openings in the floor create triple height space (15 meters) for the lobby, allowing extra large sculptures to be displayed, refine the escalator experience and connect the levels throughout the height of the building. This way, the escalator becomes the beating heart of the building.

Other ceiling cut outs are made on the so called 'in-between' zone to let the rays of light pierce into the gallery space.

Cells.

The cell, as an architecture reduced to its essential, serves like a simple box to give the artist an intimate space to reflect, brainstorm and create. It is flexible and adaptable, can always expand and transform. Their users are temporary, that come, create, curate, exhibit and leave. Beside the artist studios in the production tower, several production cells are designed on the house of activities that could support the creative users of different multidisciplinary arts.

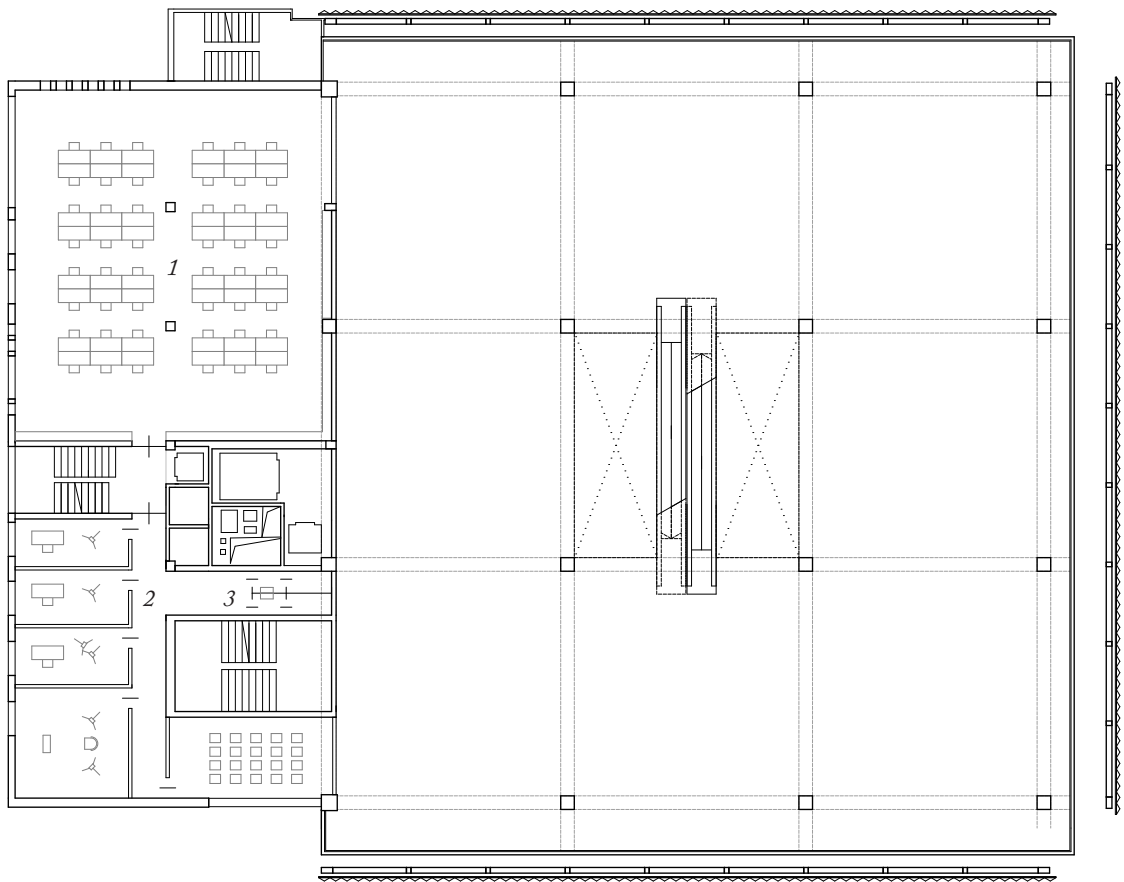
- 1 *media library*
- 2 *toilets and wardrobe*
- 3 *workshop cells video/photo studio*

First Floor



0

10 m



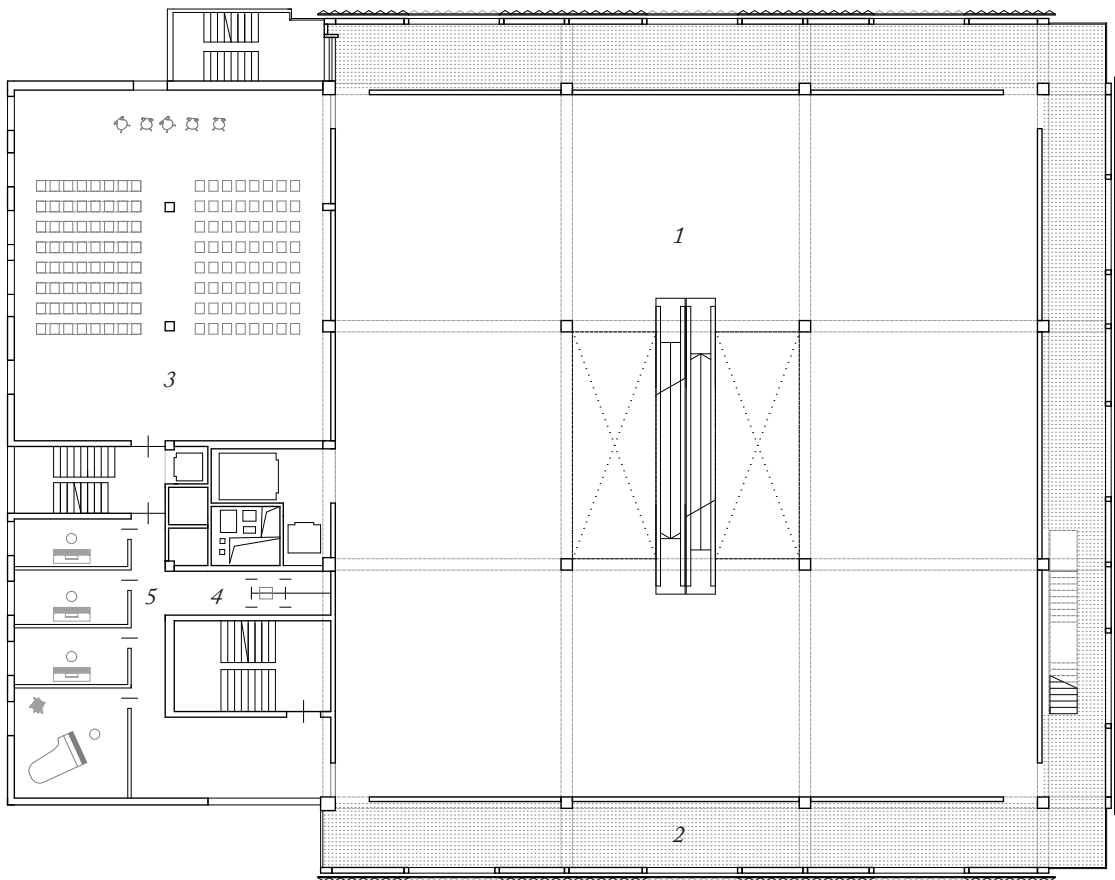
- 1 *main exhibition space*
- 2 *the inbetween*
- 3 *multipurpose room*
- 4 *toilets and wardrobe*
- 5 *rehearsal cells music and sound*

Second Floor



0

10 m



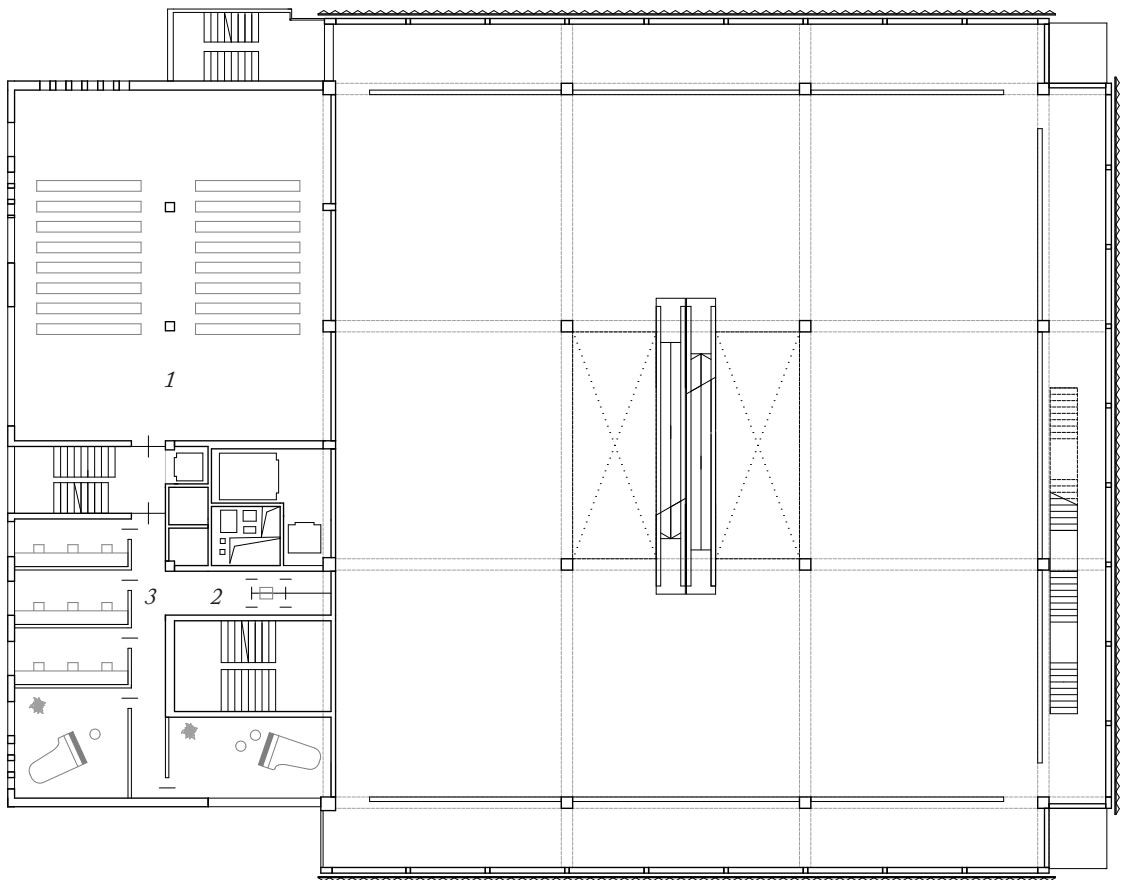
- 1 *multipurpose room*
- 2 *toilets and wardrobe*
- 3 *rehearsal/workshop cells sound/video*

Third Floor



0

10 m



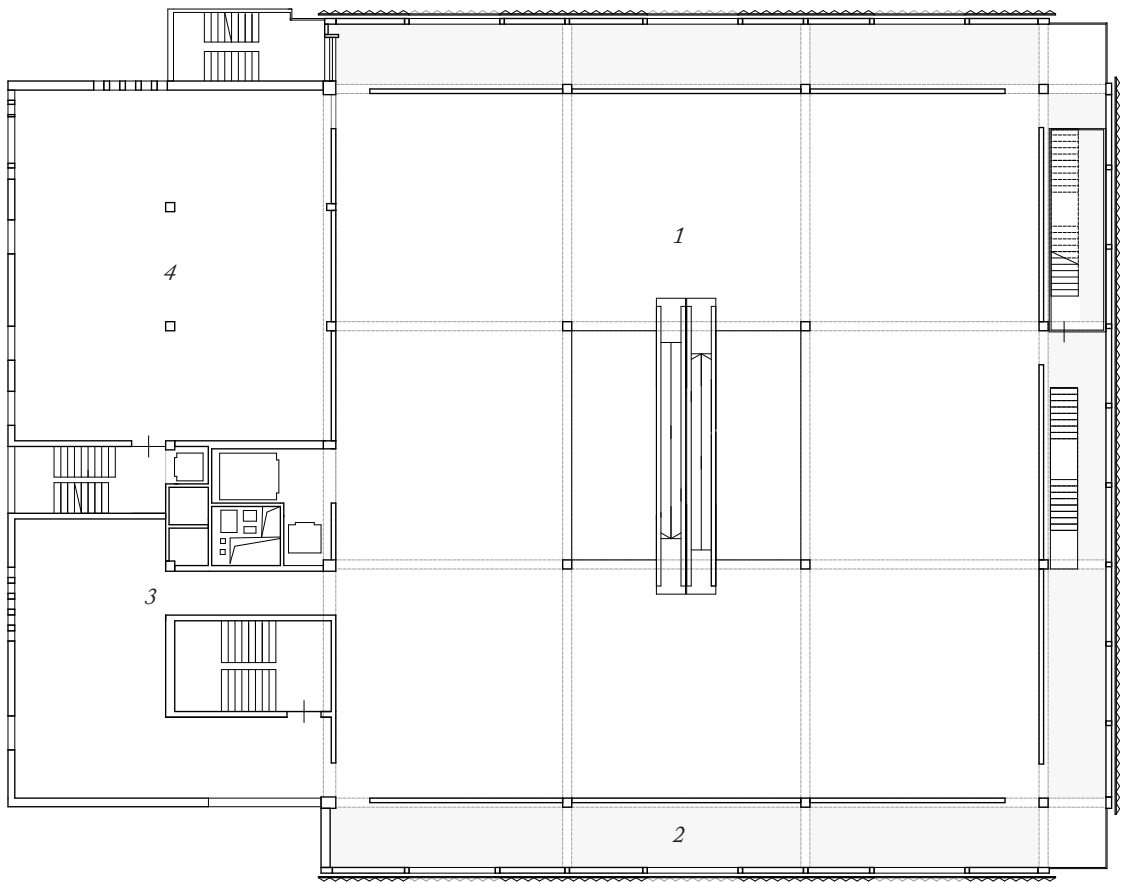
- 1 *exhibition space /collection*
- 2 *the inbetween*
- 3 *screening exhibition*
- 4 *multipurpose room*

Fourth Floor



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0

1
10 m

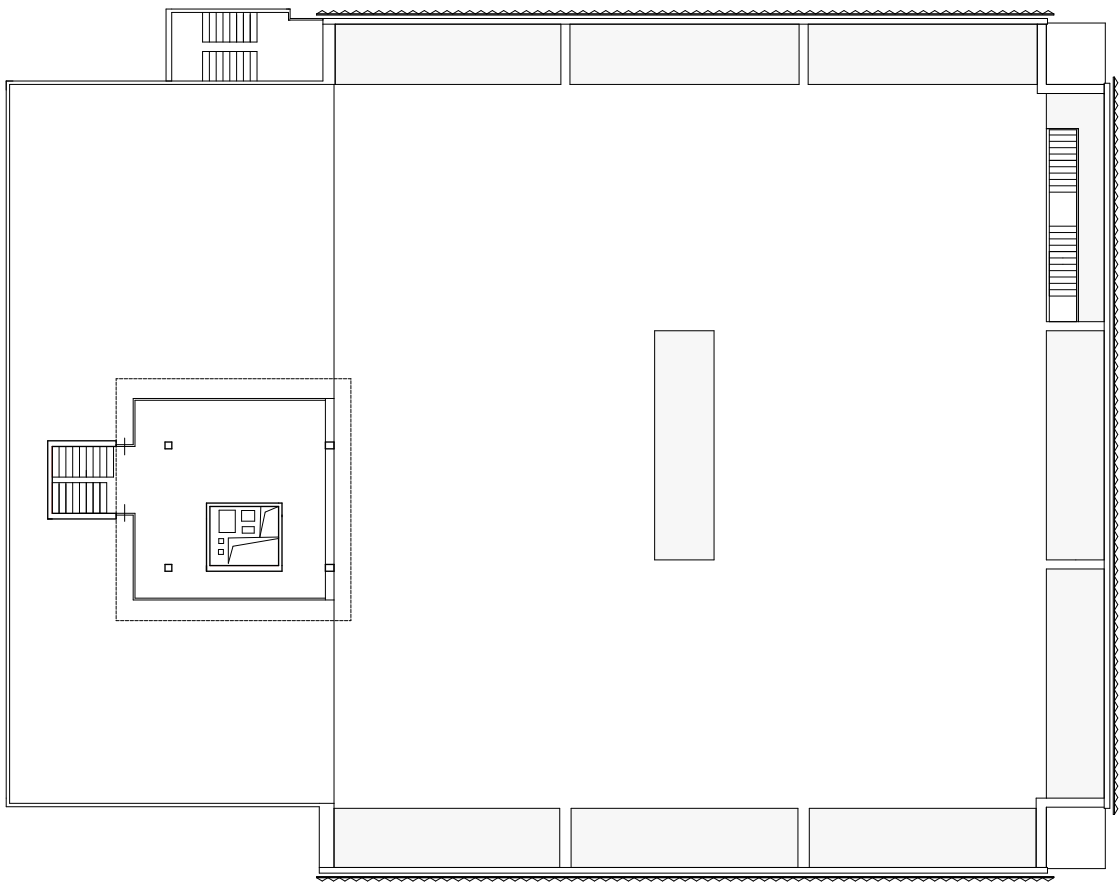


Top View



$\frac{1}{0}$

$\frac{1}{10\text{ m}}$



House of Production

First and Second Floor - Artist's Ateliers

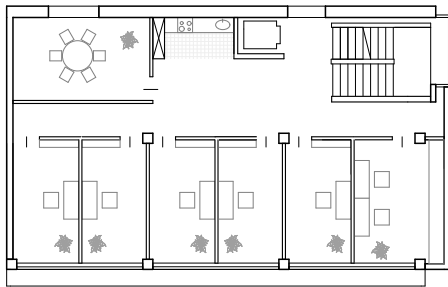
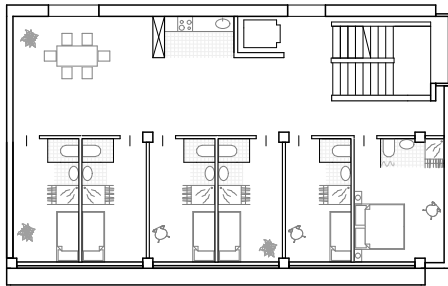
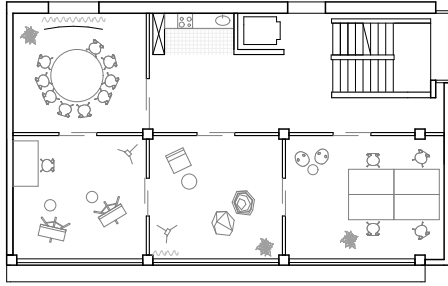
Third and Fourth Floor - Artist's Temporary Residence

Fifth Floor - Office, Administration



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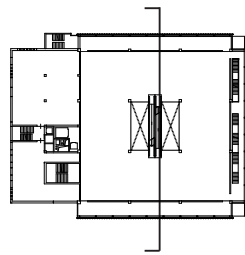
10 m





light

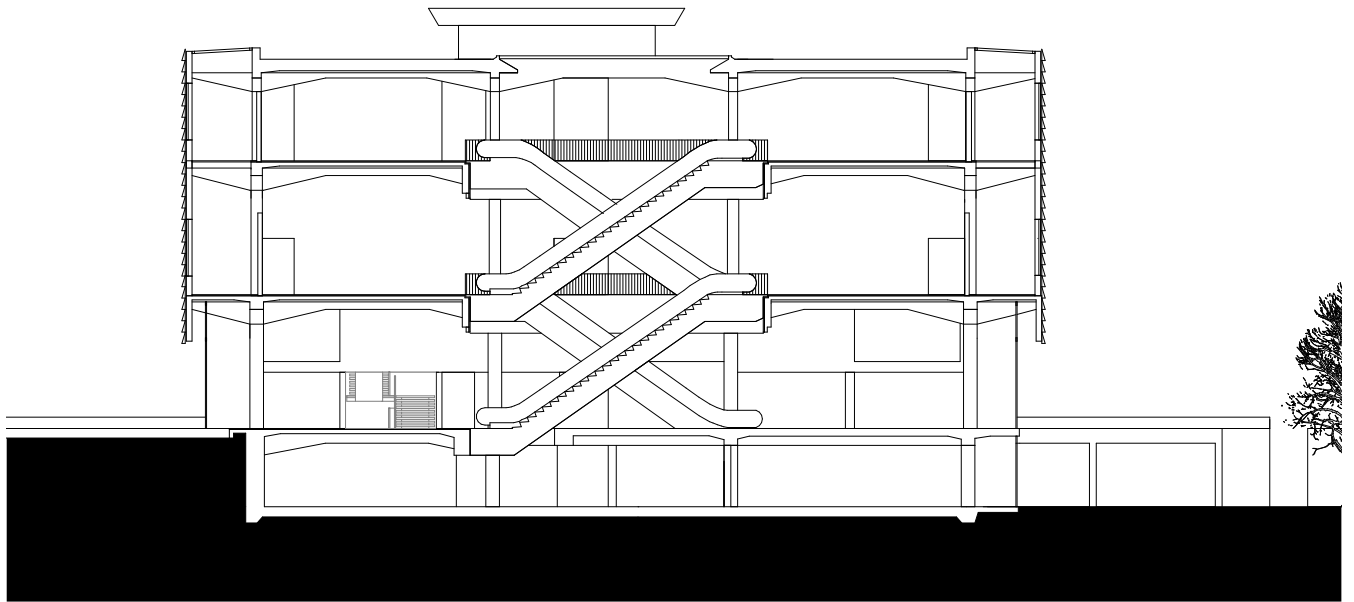
The light concept as a department store for the sales area was kept to minimal, having no windows on the facade and allowing daylight penetration only through the boxes located at the angles. After the excessive amount of openings during the after-war transformation, the main pavilion gets natural light from all the sides serving to the temporary offices. The decision to place exhibition spaces in the main pavilion lead to a re-conception of the daylight strategy, considering that for such a use the building should provide more indirect light and avoid the direct one. The main sources for indirect light are the horizontal openings in the ceiling. Through the inner shell as a structure, the exhibition area 'steps back' on the inside of the building creating a gap all around. The in between zone acts like a light filter and orchestrates the rays of daylight throughout the house. Lateral light gaps as openings of the inner shell allow light penetration and inter visibility through attached light boxes on the angles and create visual contact from between the exhibition interior and the outdoor plaza. While the inbetween zone becomes a light aisle, the main central atrium-like opening on the heart of the building with the skylight shifts the focus of the building on the main circulation area - the escalator. Movement emerges in space. Spatial curiosity is aroused.

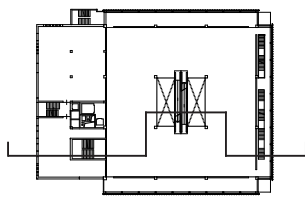


Cross Section

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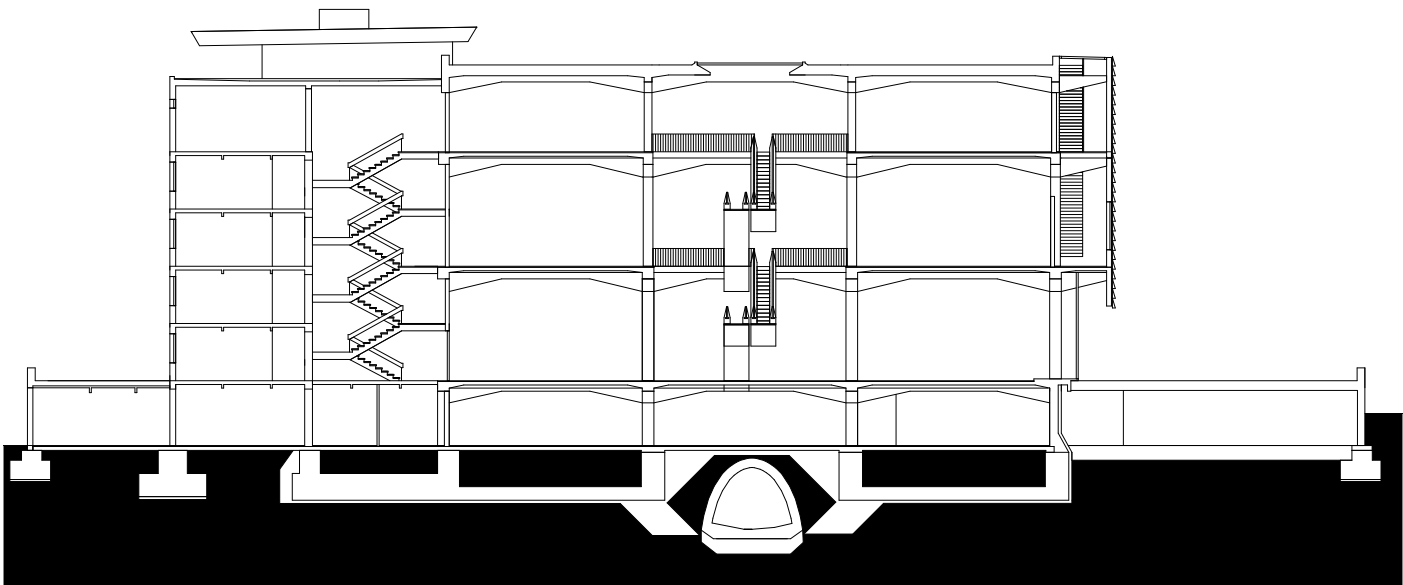
10 m

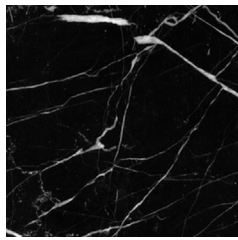
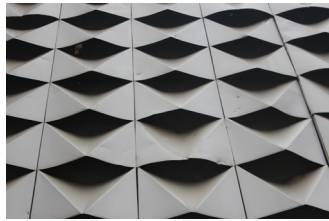




Long Section

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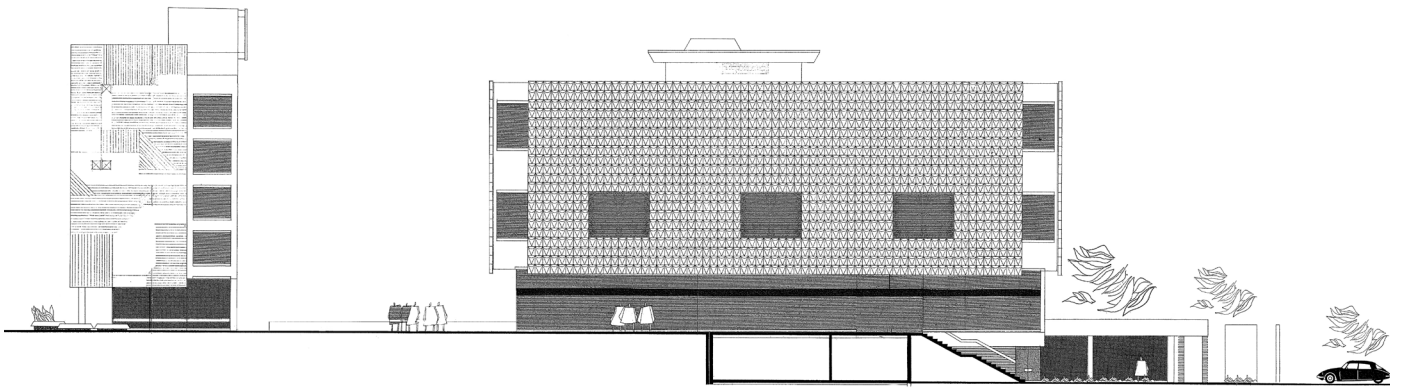
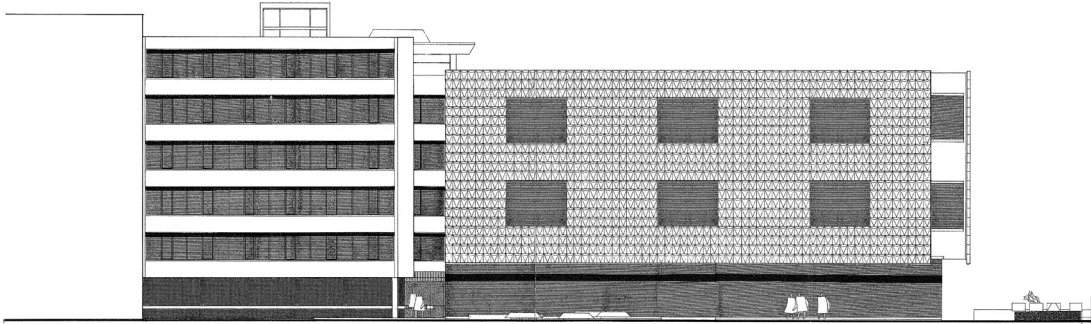


facade textures

interior

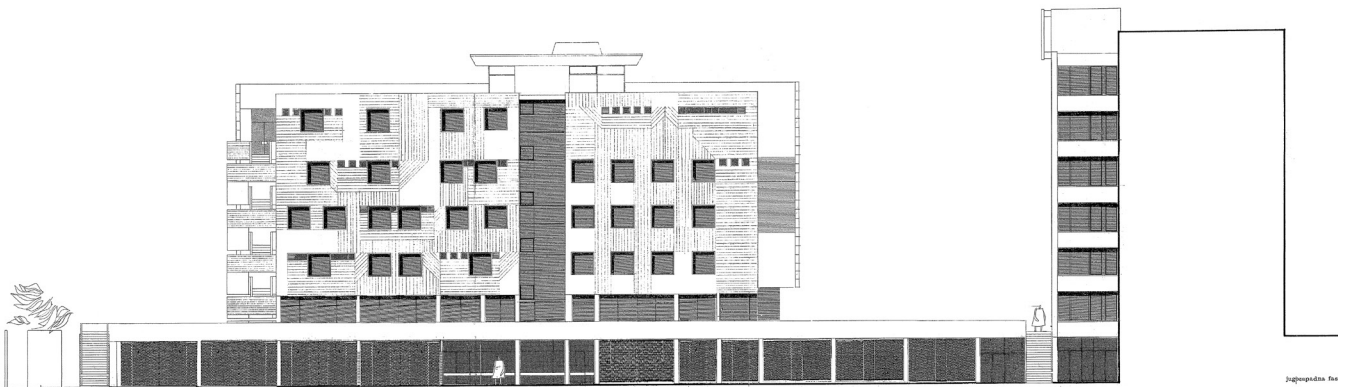
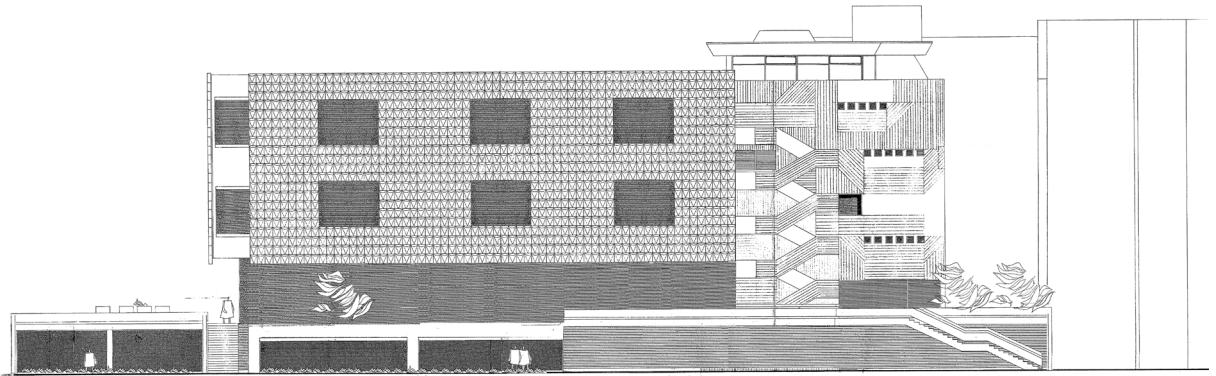
materiality

The project treats all the existing textures carefully, trying to show the real skin of the building from the inside as well as from the outside. As a department store and later as an office building its bearing structure was covered through dropped ceiling. Regarding the transformative reuse to a center for contemporary creation, the project foresees the uncover and unwrap of certain parts of the building in order to show its true essence and enhance material ethics over material aesthetics. Especially in the exhibition area, the bearing structure should be visible and avoid the clinical sterility of white cube exhibitions. Other existing textures like black marble staircase and painted walls will remain untouched as a part of the composition, while for the ground level a terrazzo flooring to remark the idea of a public indoor plaza will be paved. The unfinished aesthetics, stripped to the bone, lived-in rawness of the bearing structure and the ceiling will contrast the white inner shell walls, which as new elements added to the composition take a 'respectful distance' not only physically but also conceptually and represent a white surface, a new beginning. The symbiosis of the white new surfaces and the raw ripped concrete will differentiate clearly the old and the new structure but also compose a unity, a juxtaposition and coexistence of continuity and new beginnings.



Elevation South-East
Elevation North-East

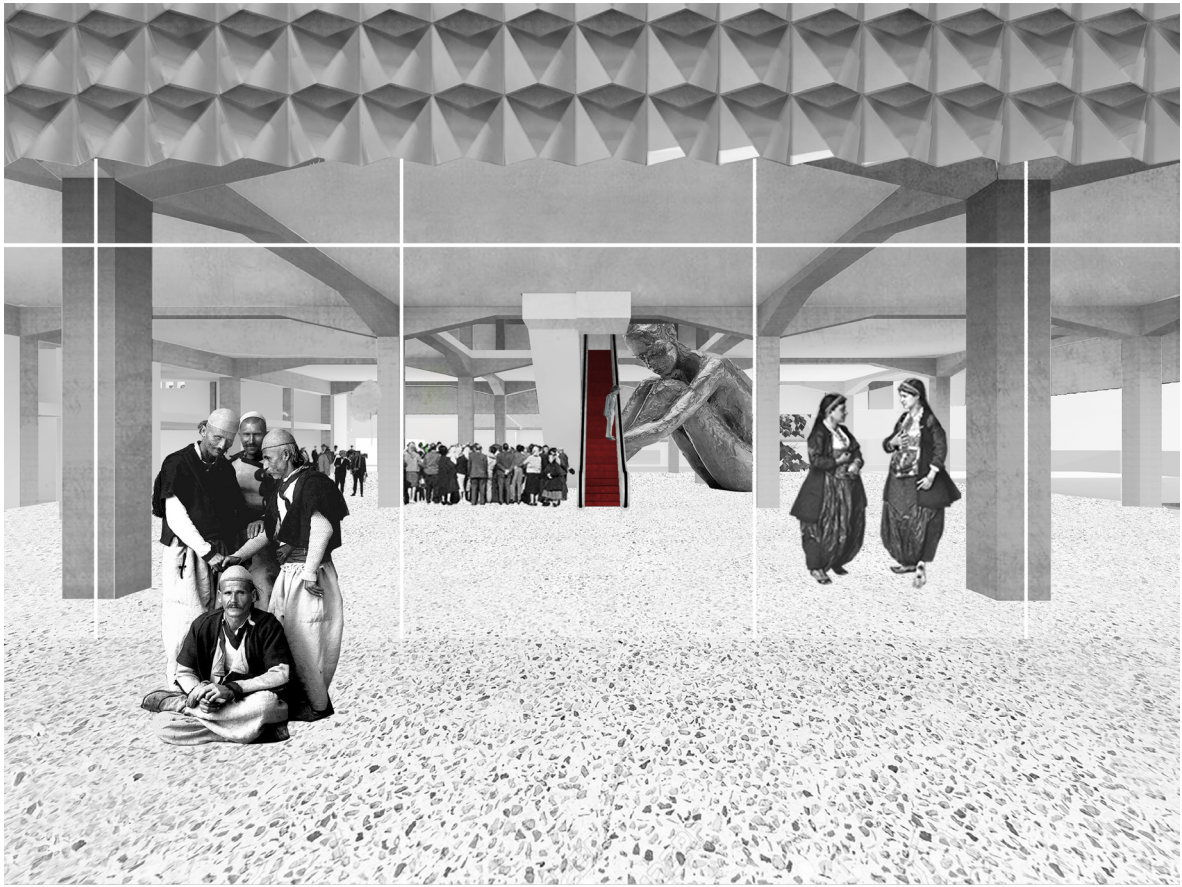
0 10 m



Elevation North-West
Elevation South-West

0 10 m

the square
the house



the garden



indoor atrium



inbetween



atelier



Appendix

Endnotes

1. Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (New York: MIT Press, 1982), 130-131.
2. Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2010) 52-53.
3. Warrander Gail, *Kosovo* (The Bradt Travel Guide), (England: Bradt Travel Guides, 2007) 85.
4. Assembly of Prishtina, *Prishtina Monograph*, (Belgrade: Beogradski graficki zavod, 1965) 5
5. Milot Berisha, 'Archaeological Guide of Kosovo' Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, Archaeological Institute of Kosovo, Pristina 2012, 70
6. Pierre Pinon, *The Ottoman city of the Balkans, The city in the Islamic World* (vol 2), (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008) 143-150.
7. Sanije Gashi, *Prishtina e femijerise sime*, (Prishtine: Grafoprint Press, 2013) 19.
8. Pierre Pinon, *The Ottoman city of the Balkans, The city in the Islamic World* (vol 2), (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008) 143-150.
9. ChwB, 'Heritage of Prishtina', ChwB Kosovo office, Prishtine 2008, 7
10. Pierre Pinon, *The Ottoman city of the Balkans, The city in the Islamic World* (vol 2), (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008) 143-150.
11. ChwB, 'Heritage of Prishtina', ChwB Kosovo office, Prishtine 2008, 8
12. Ilir Gjinolli. *Public Space in Kosovo, Transformations through History- Doctoral thesis*, (Graz: Technical University of Graz, 2015) 93.
13. Sherafedin Sylejmani, *Prishtina ime*, (Prishtine: Java Multimedia Production, 2010) 66.
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