

THUS THE CITY WITHIN

Project book

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Graduation Project Interior Buildings Cities
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*Recuerdo a mi Córdoba, sus calles adoquinadas,
el encalado de sus muros, el frescor de sus patios.
Recuerdo el sonido de sus fuentes y el olor de sus
naranjos. Recuerdo su sol y recuerdo su sombra.*

*I recall Cordoba, its cobbled streets, the whitewashed
walls, the freshness of its courtyards. I recall the
sound of its fountains and the smell of its orange
trees. I recall its sun and I recall its shade.*

PROJECT BOOK

The city	<i>4-13</i>
The bank	<i>14-18</i>
Intervention	<i>19-48</i>
A cityscape	<i>49-70</i>
Reflection	<i>71</i>

Impasses



Arcades

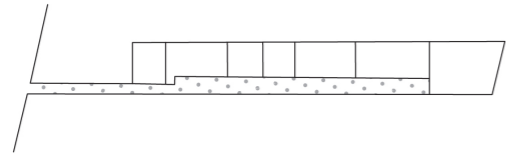


Corner buildings

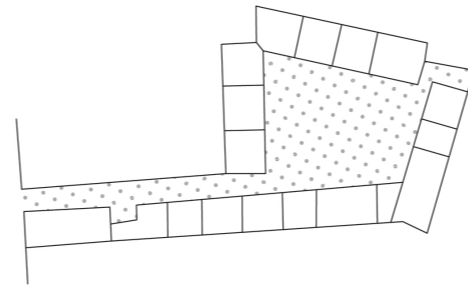




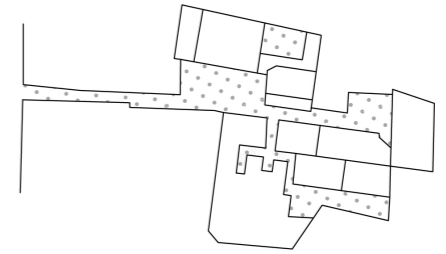
- Existing Impasses
- Disappeared city blocks



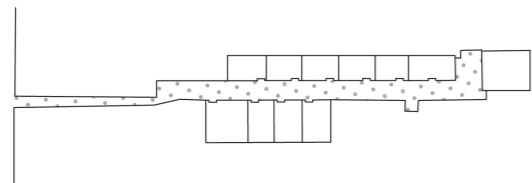
Impasse de la Pie



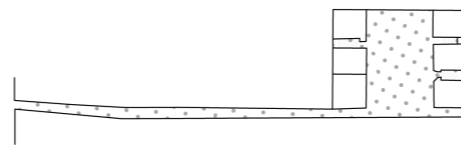
Impasse de Jasmin



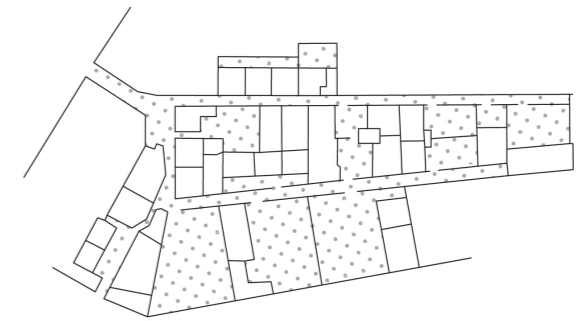
Impasse de St Patronille



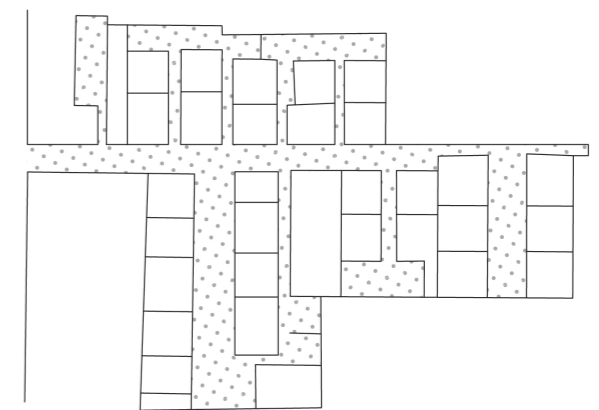
Impasse de Meert



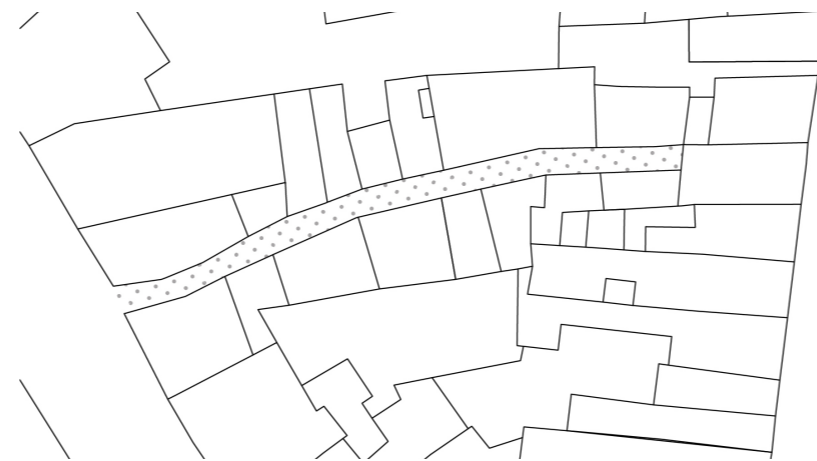
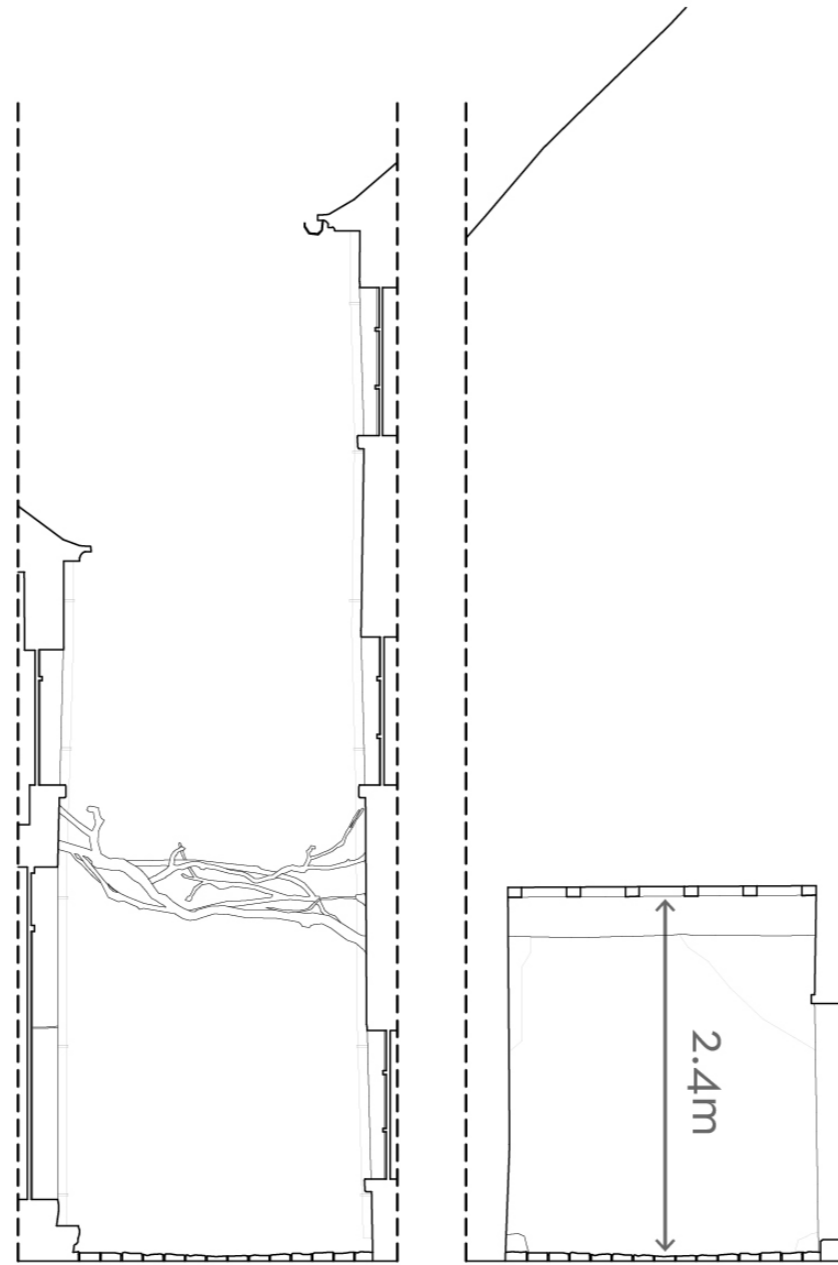
Impasse de la Varsovie



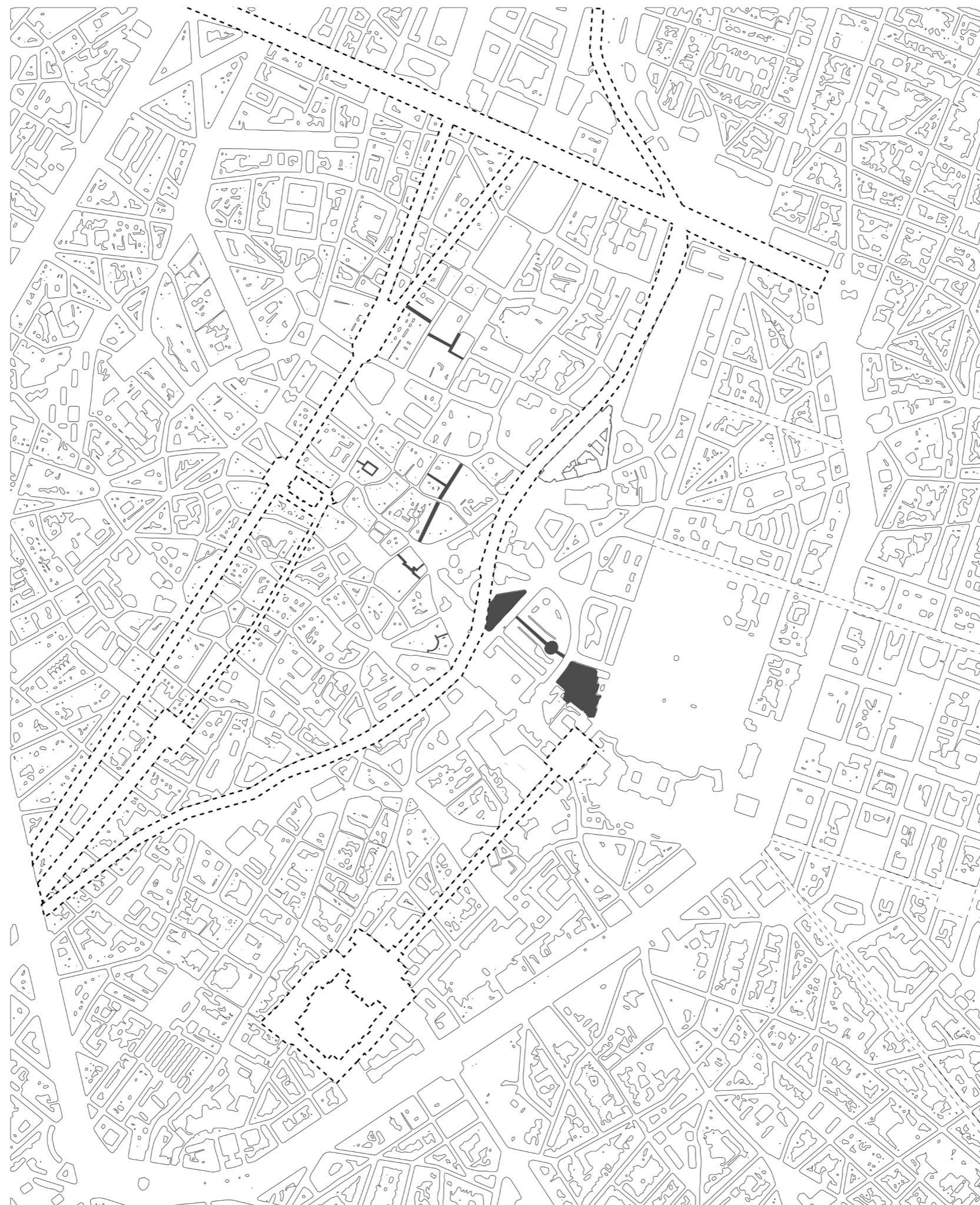
Impasse de la Perle d'Amour



Impasse des Escargots



Impasse de la Cigogne

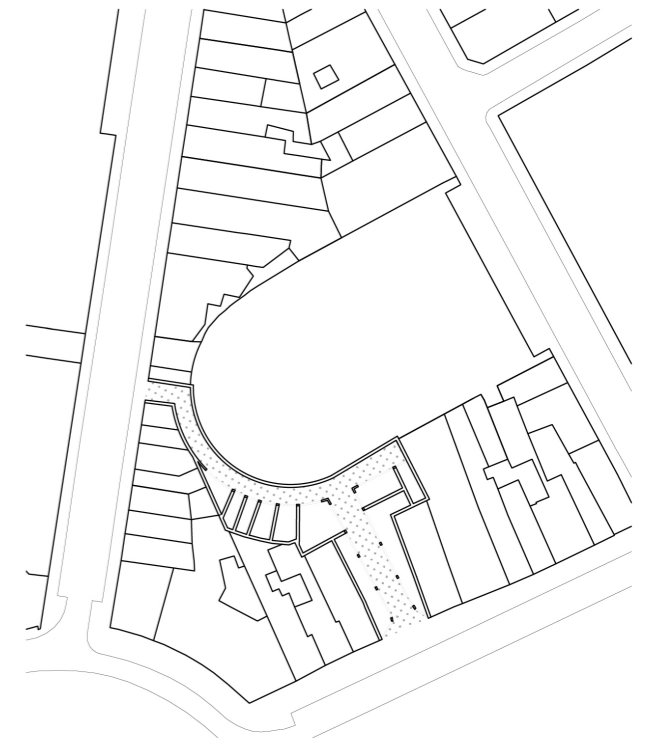




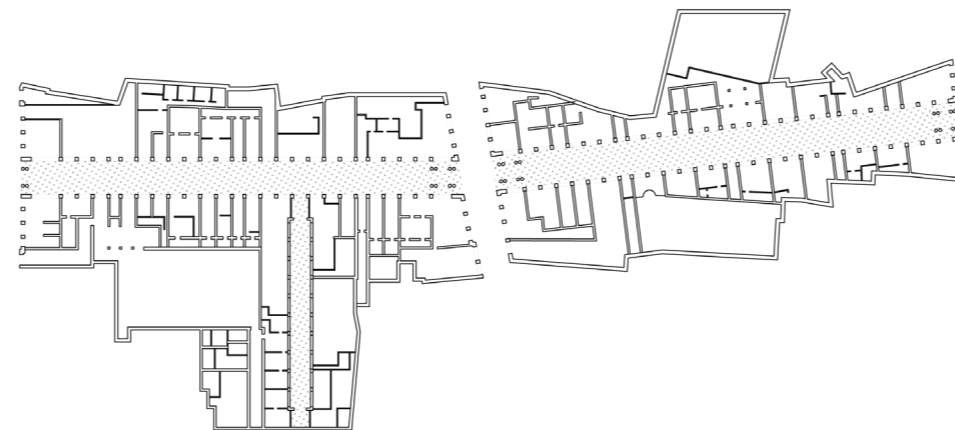
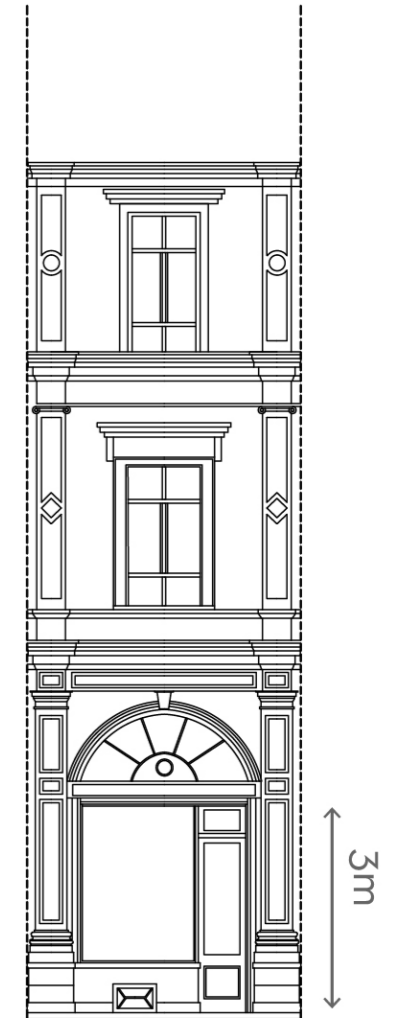
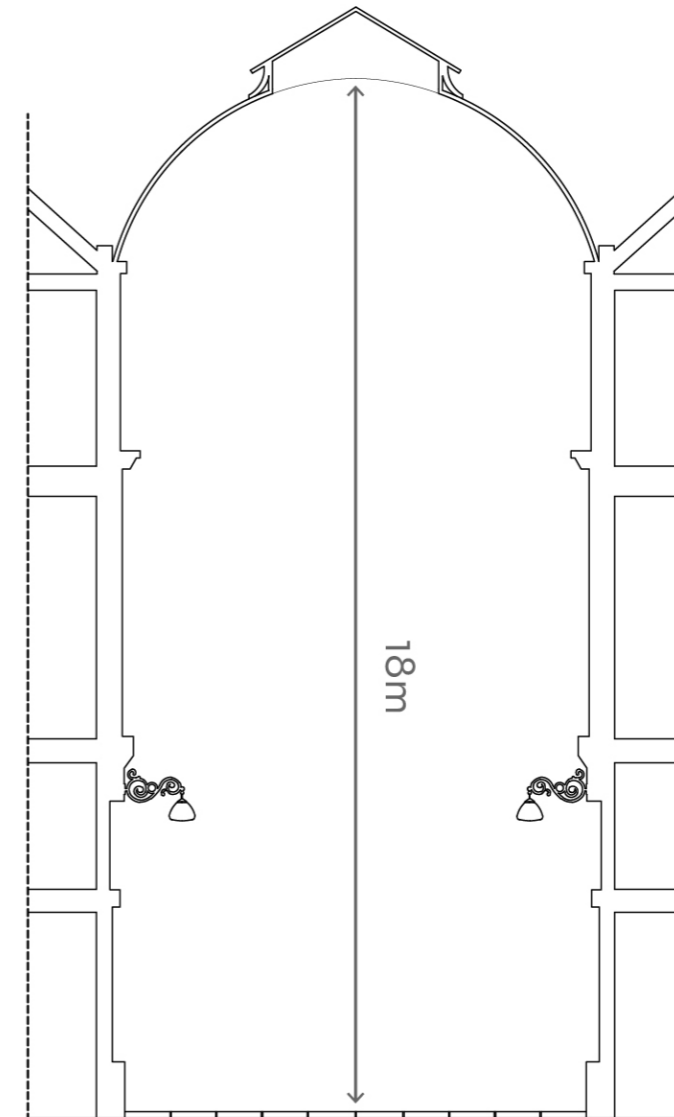
Galeries Royales



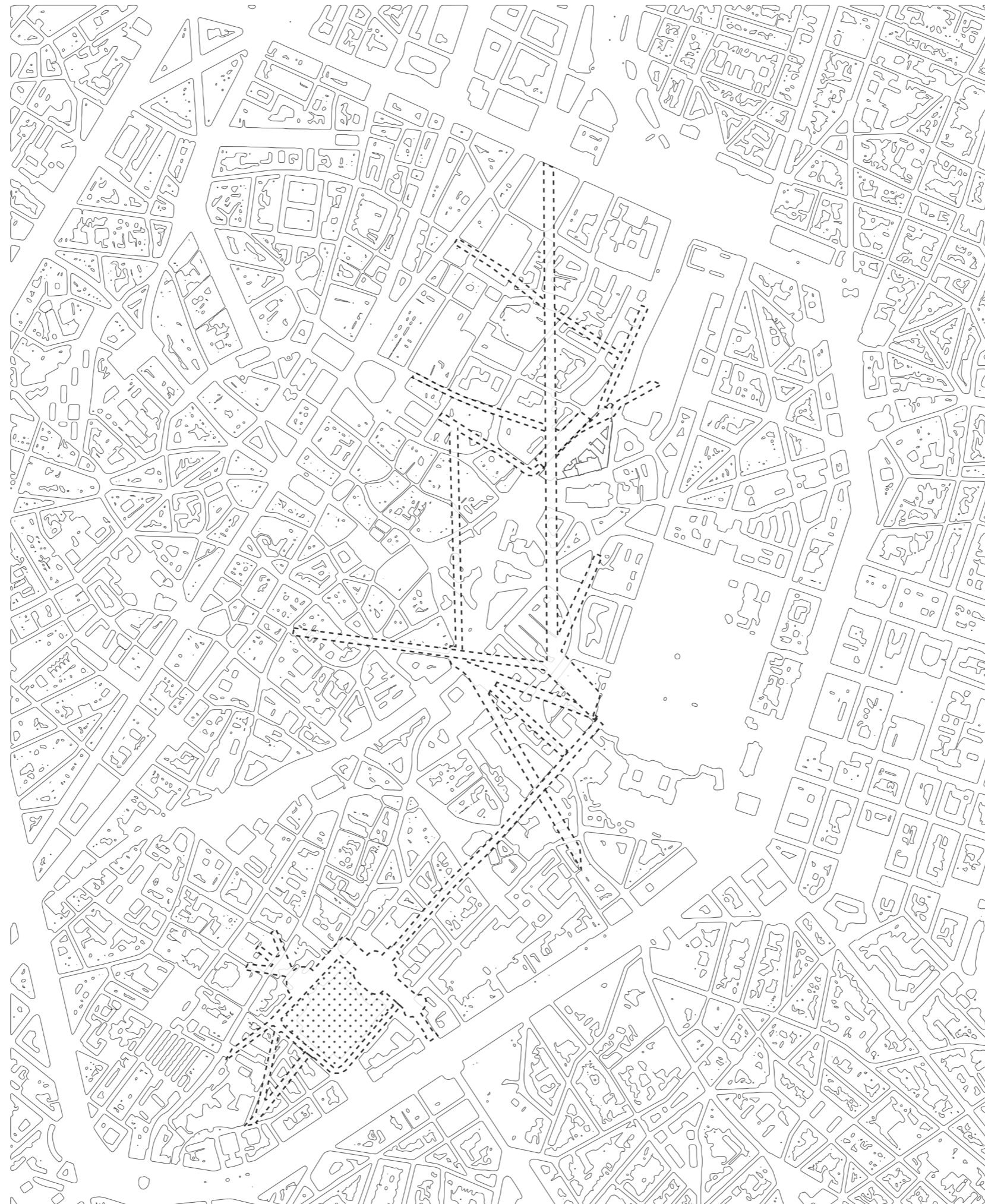
Passage du Nord



Galeries Bortier



Galleries Royales



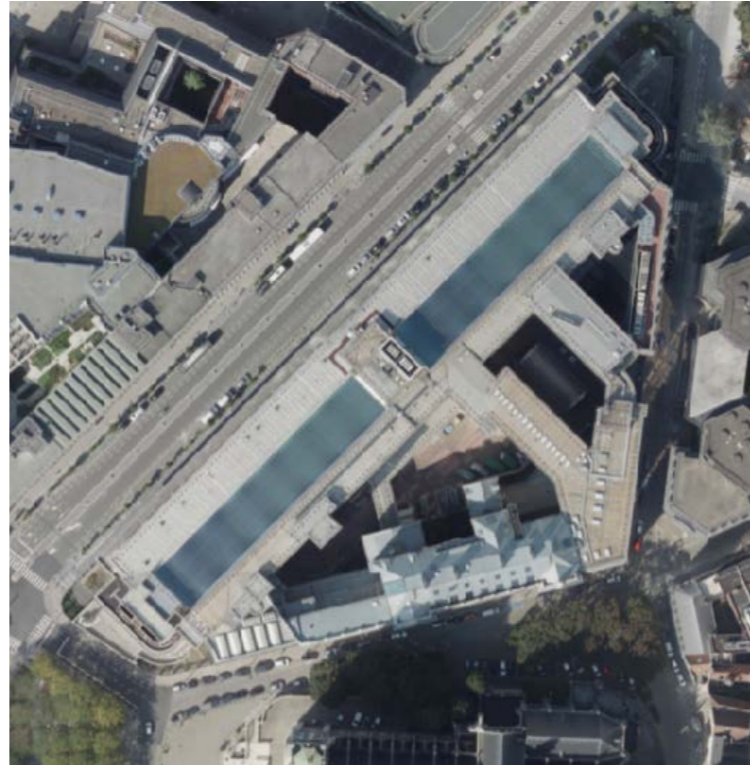
Unrealized urban transformations



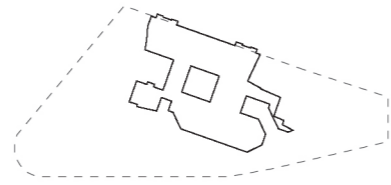
1933



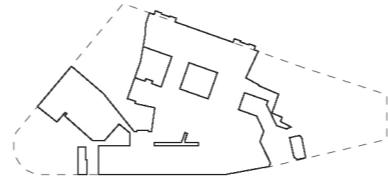
2012



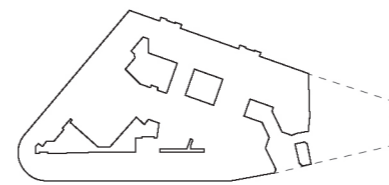




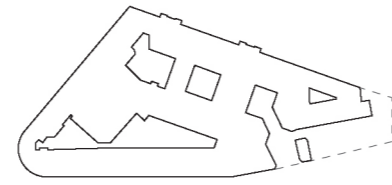
1860-1874



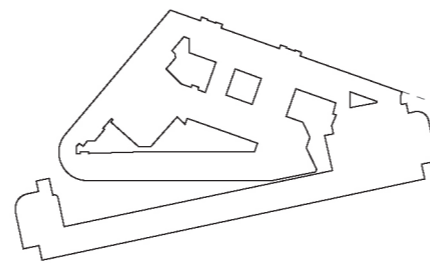
1871-1878



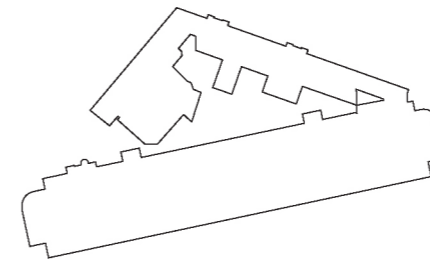
1900-1908



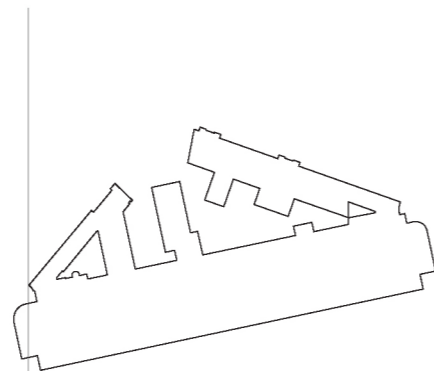
1948-1949



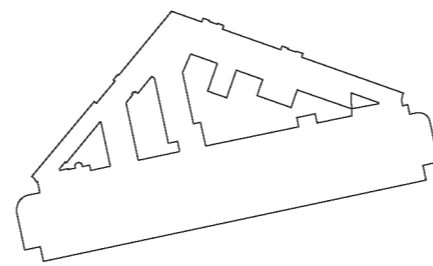
1949-1951



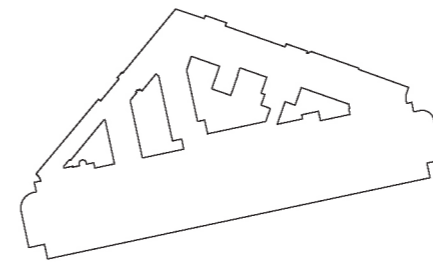
1952-1953



1954



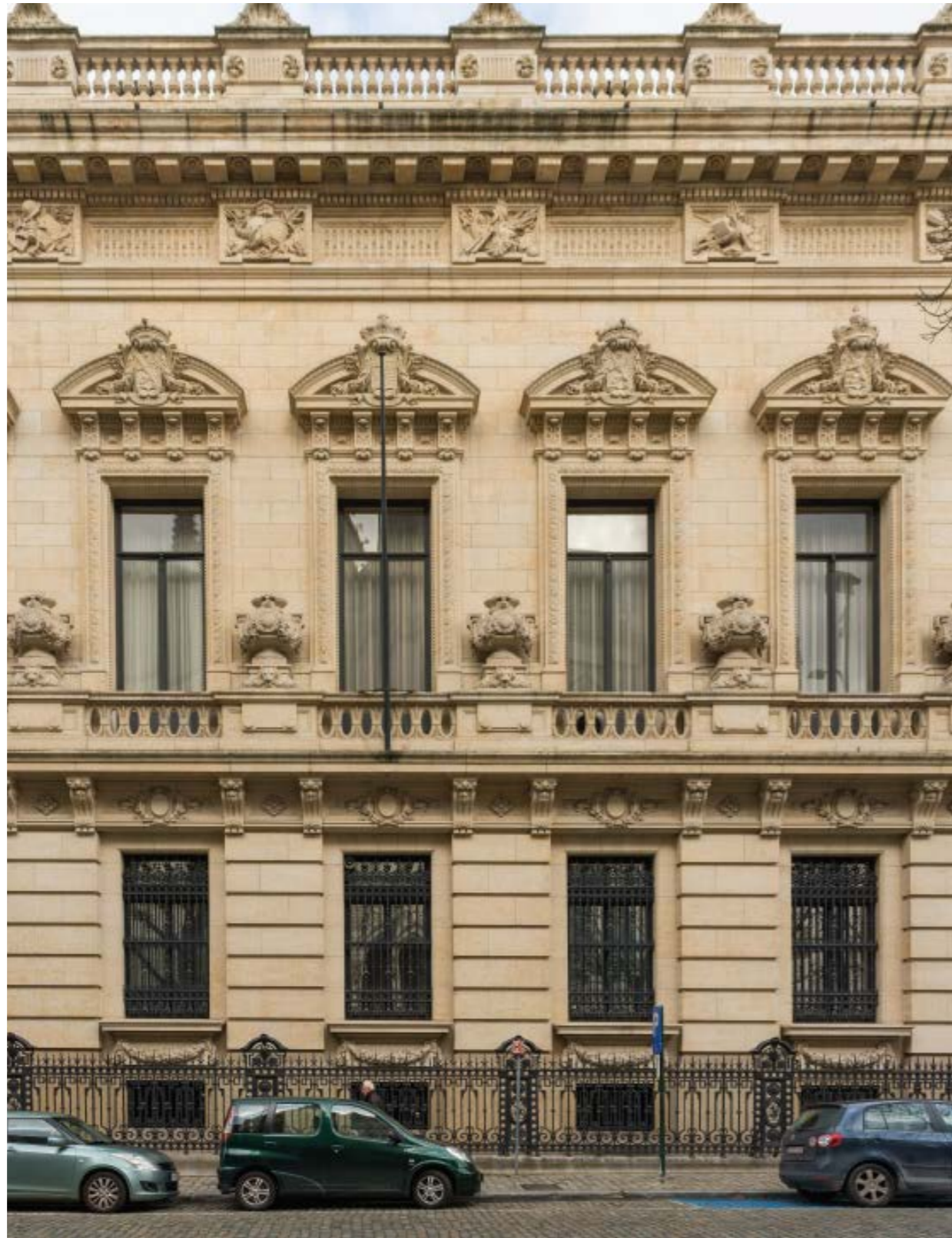
1965



2021







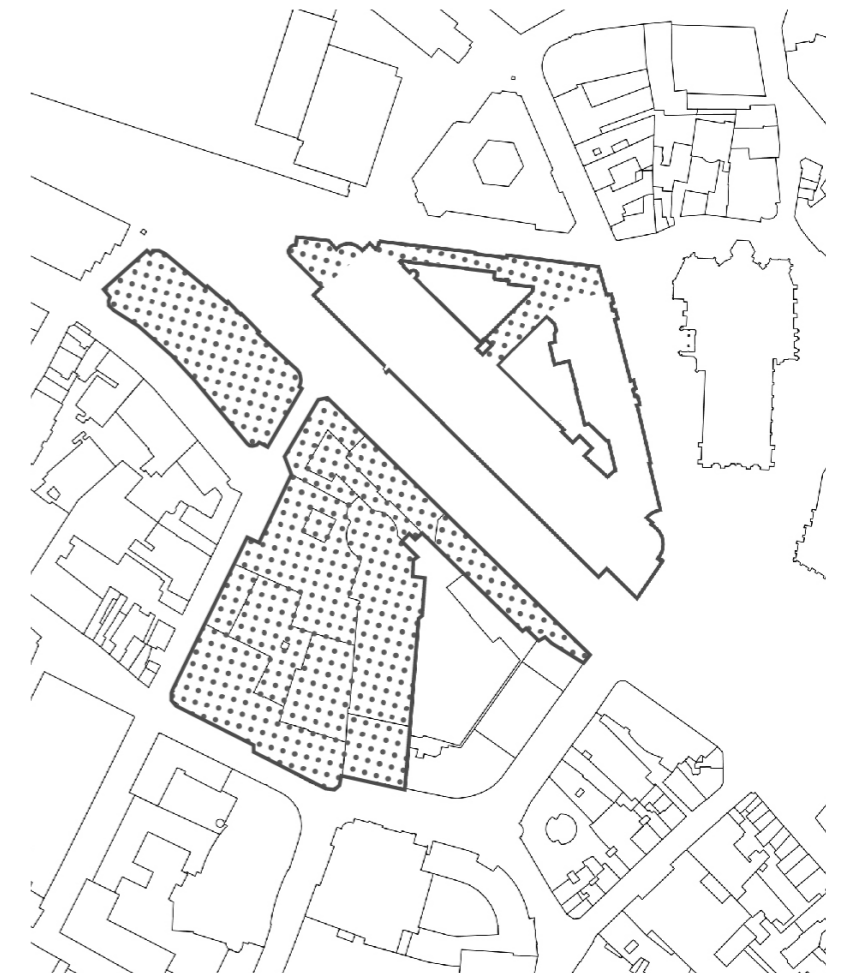
Urban route

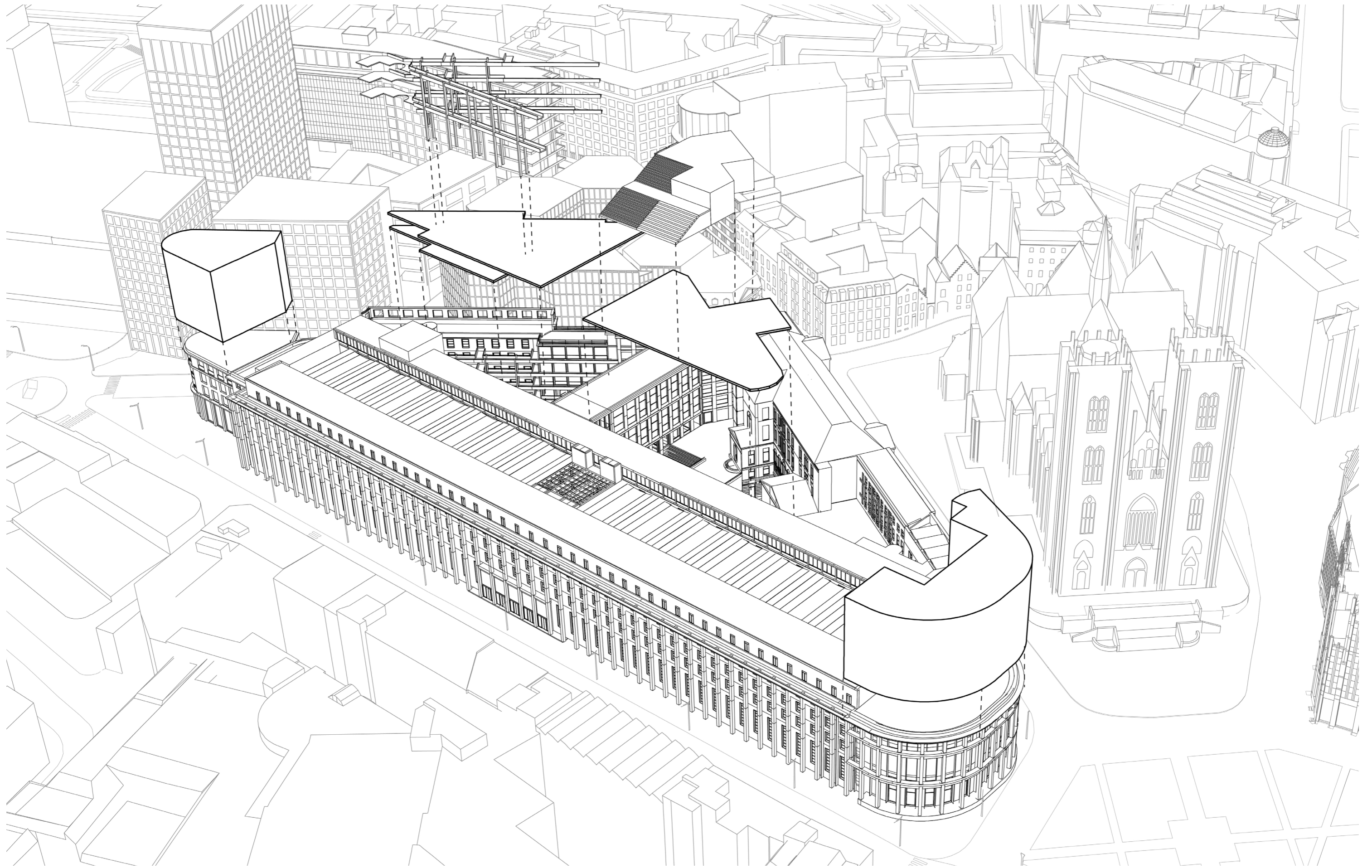


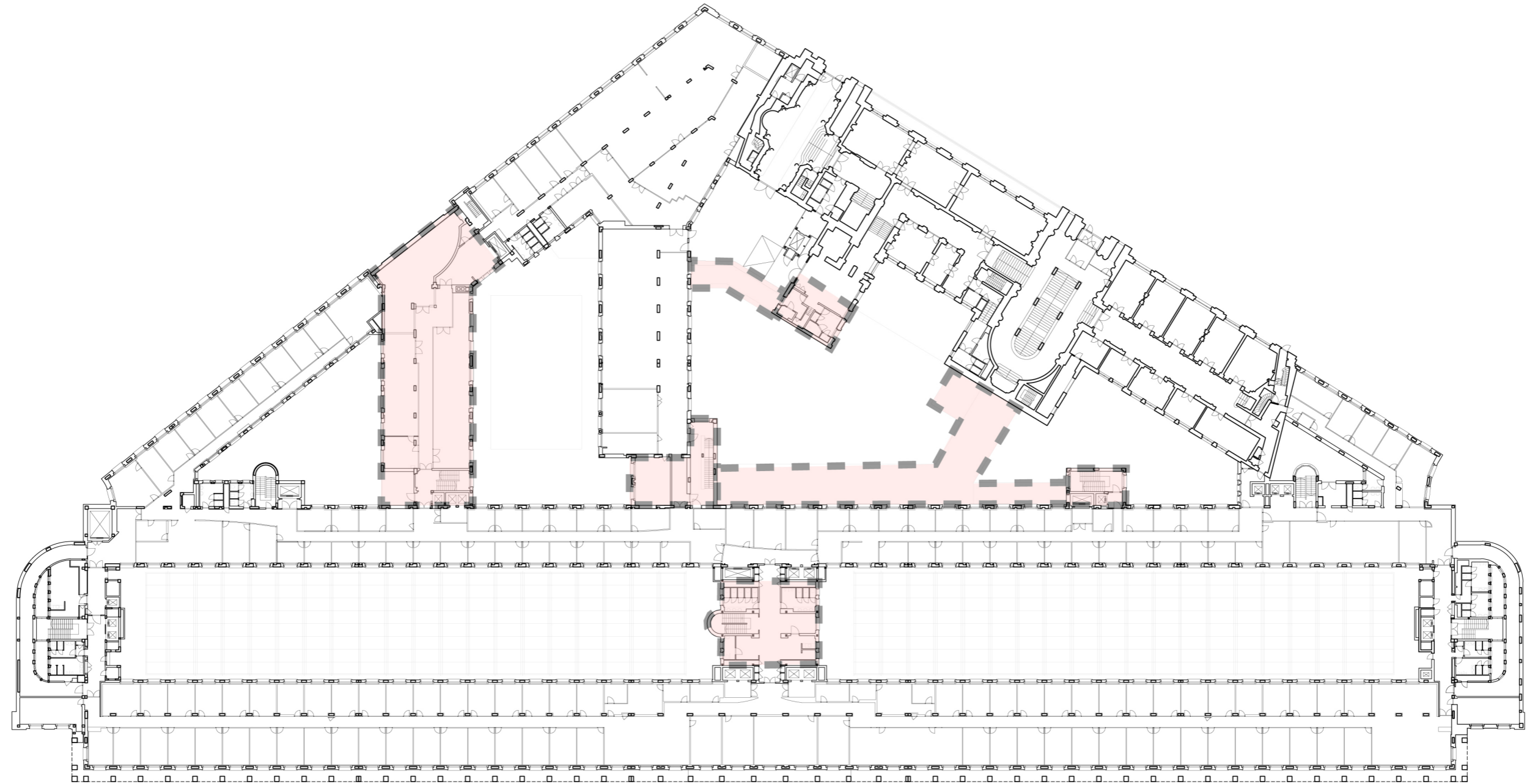
Partition situation reprogram the block



The Bank's estate use of land property

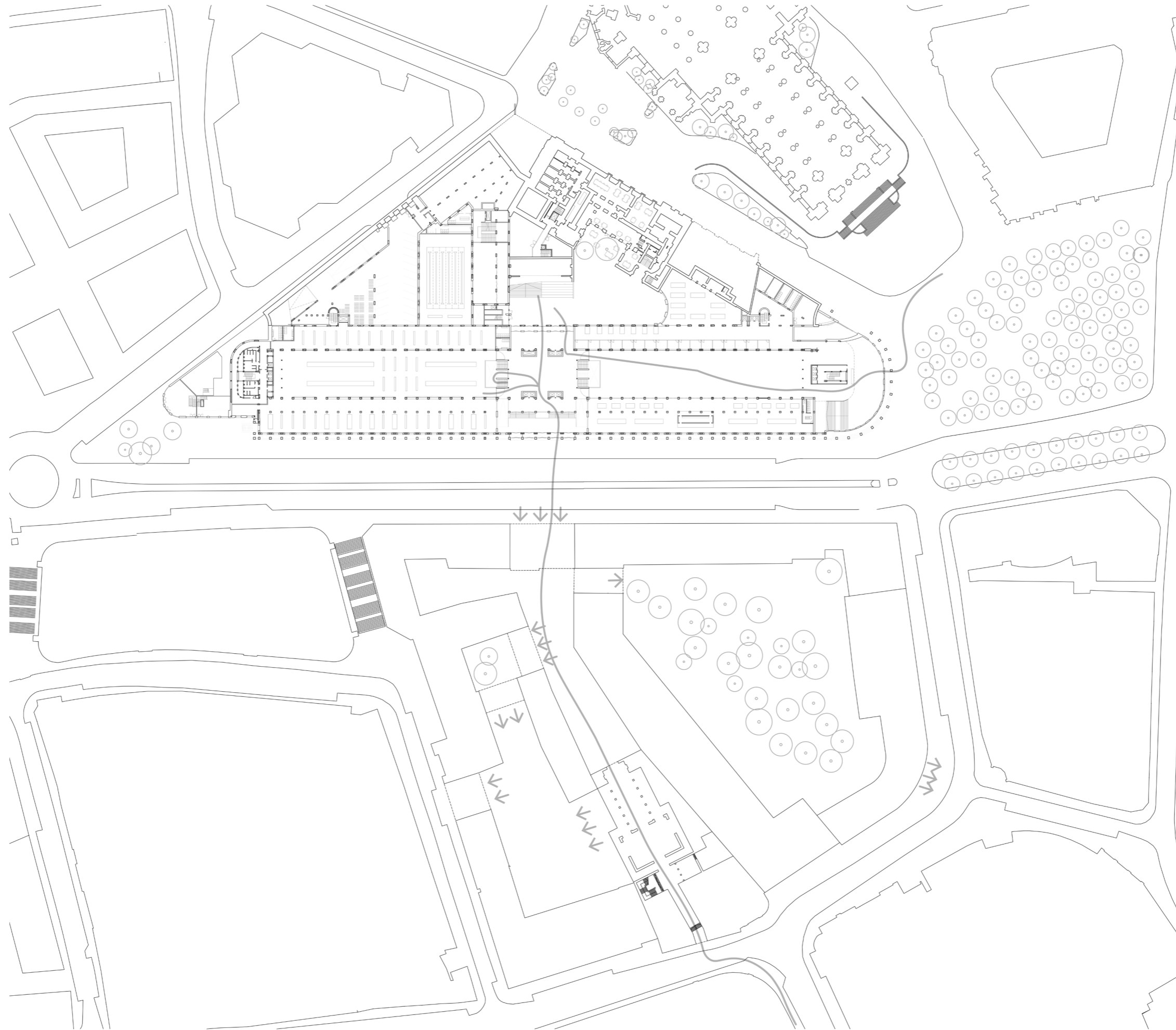




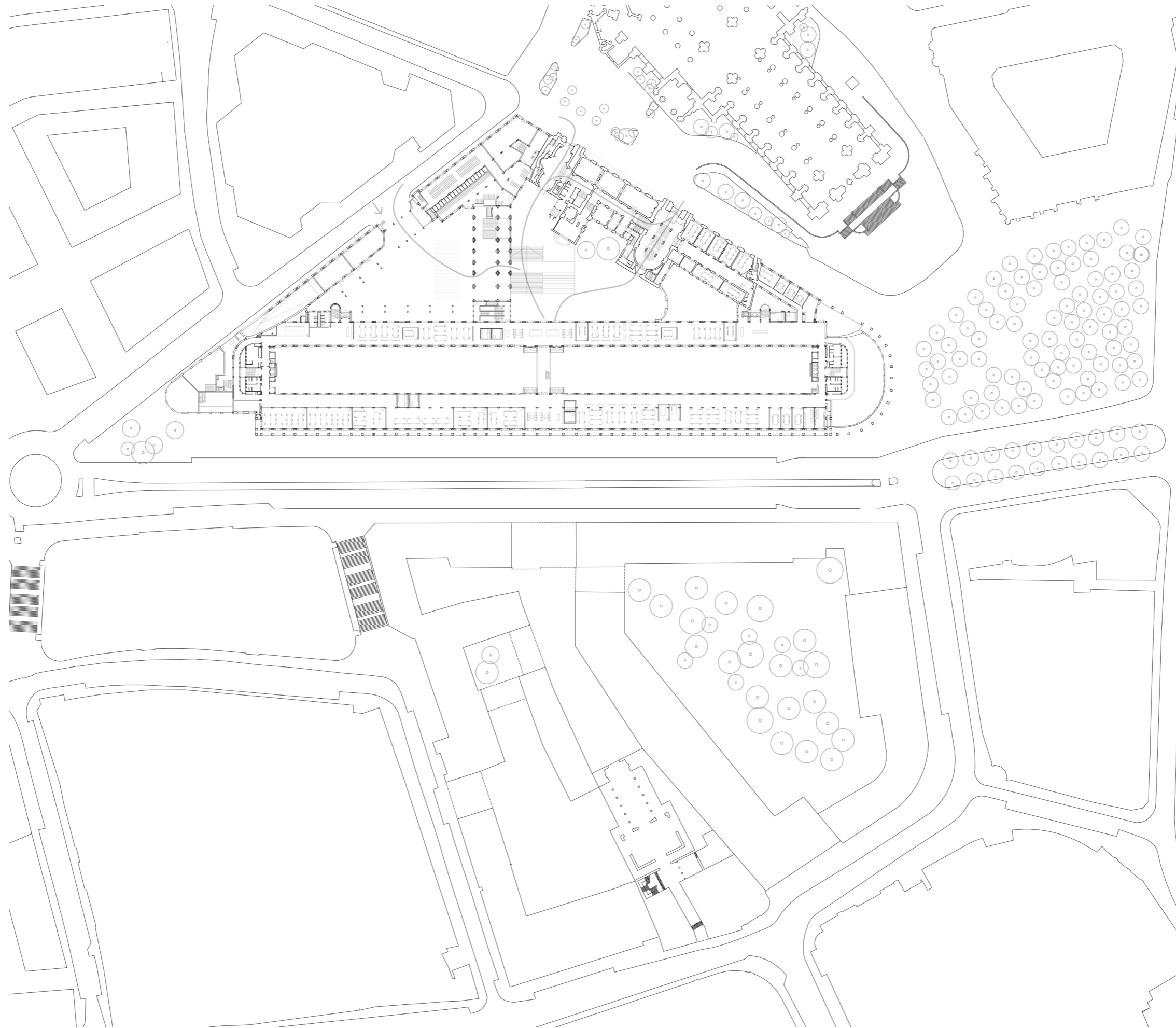






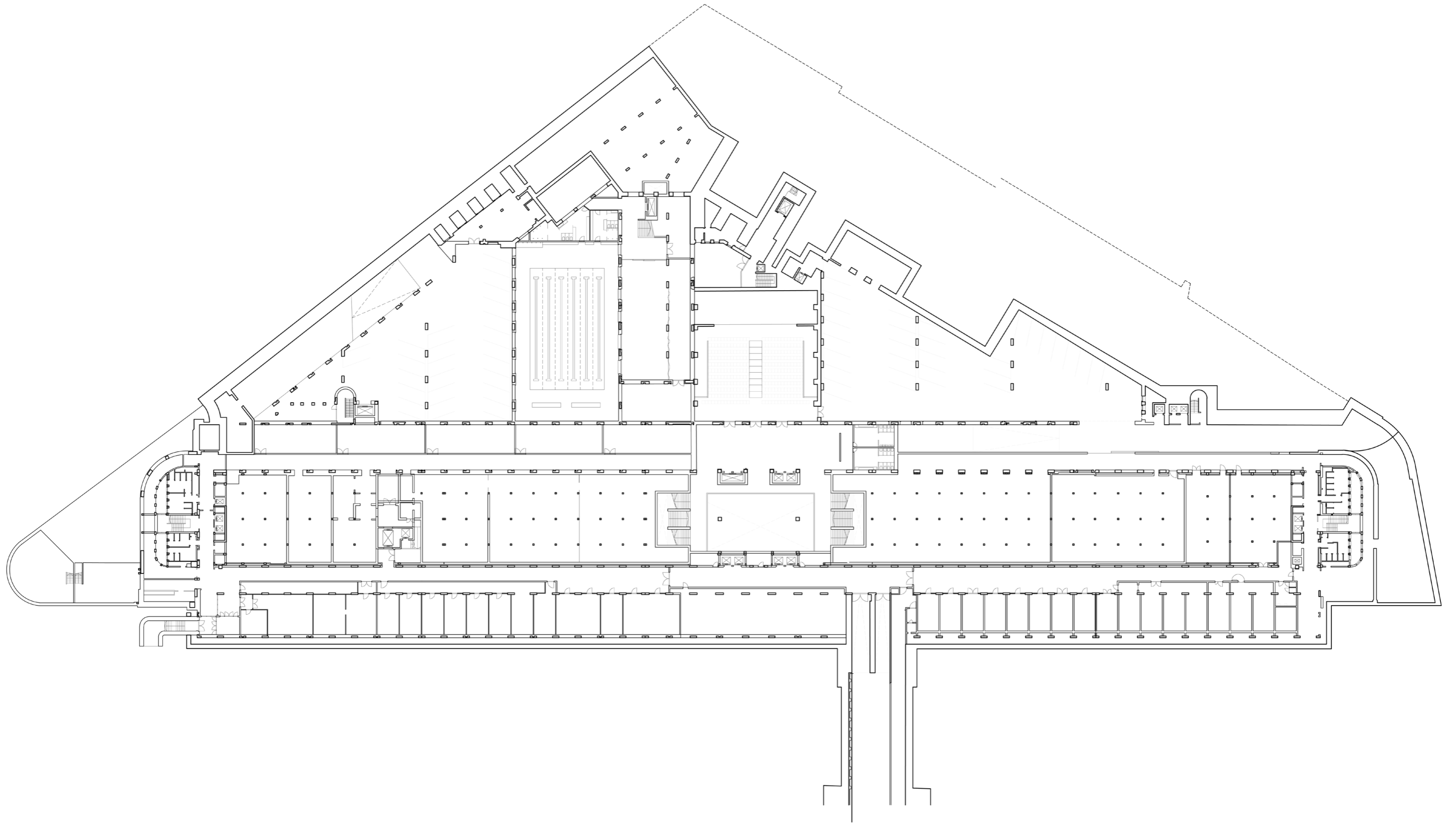


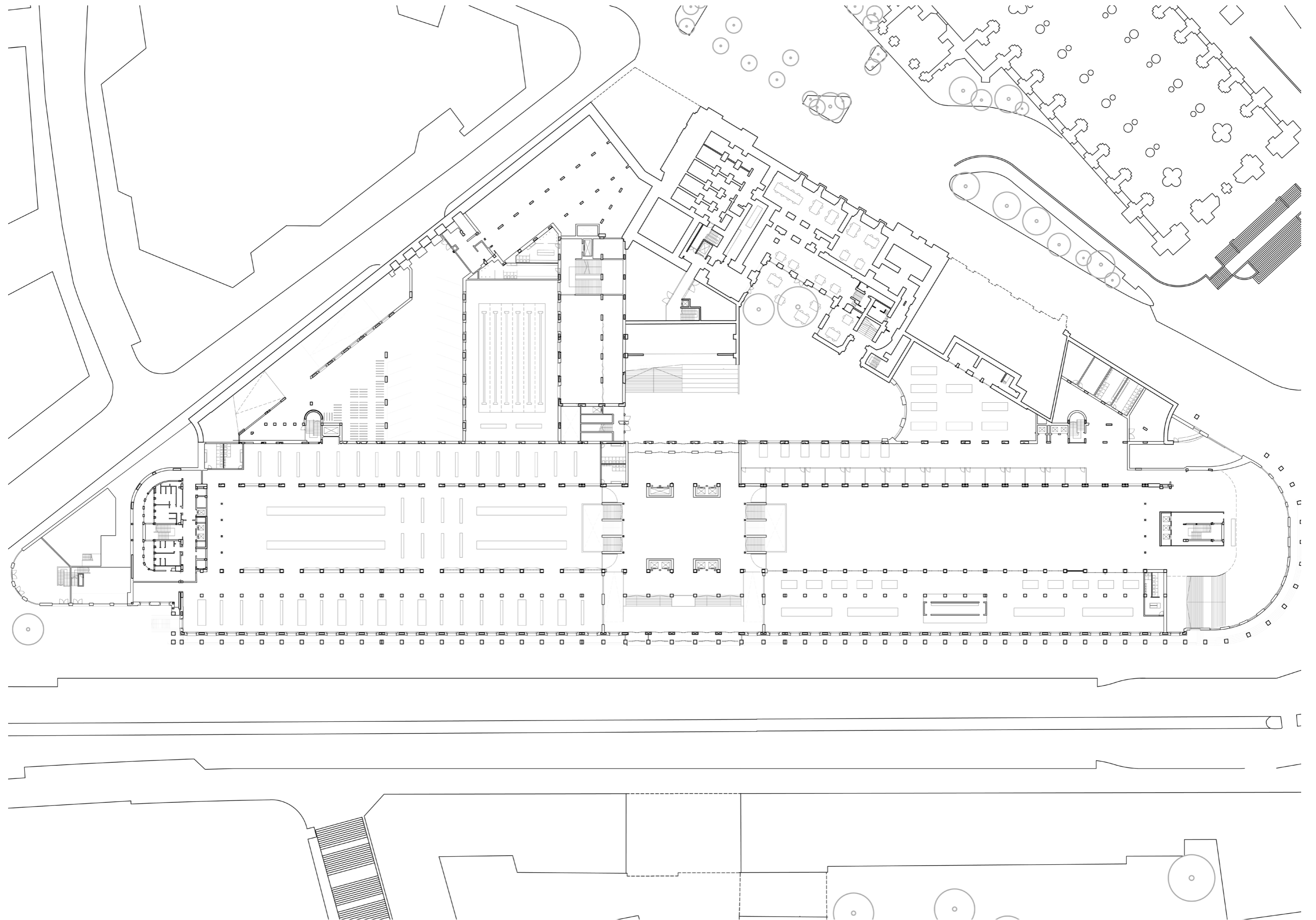
Floor 0 

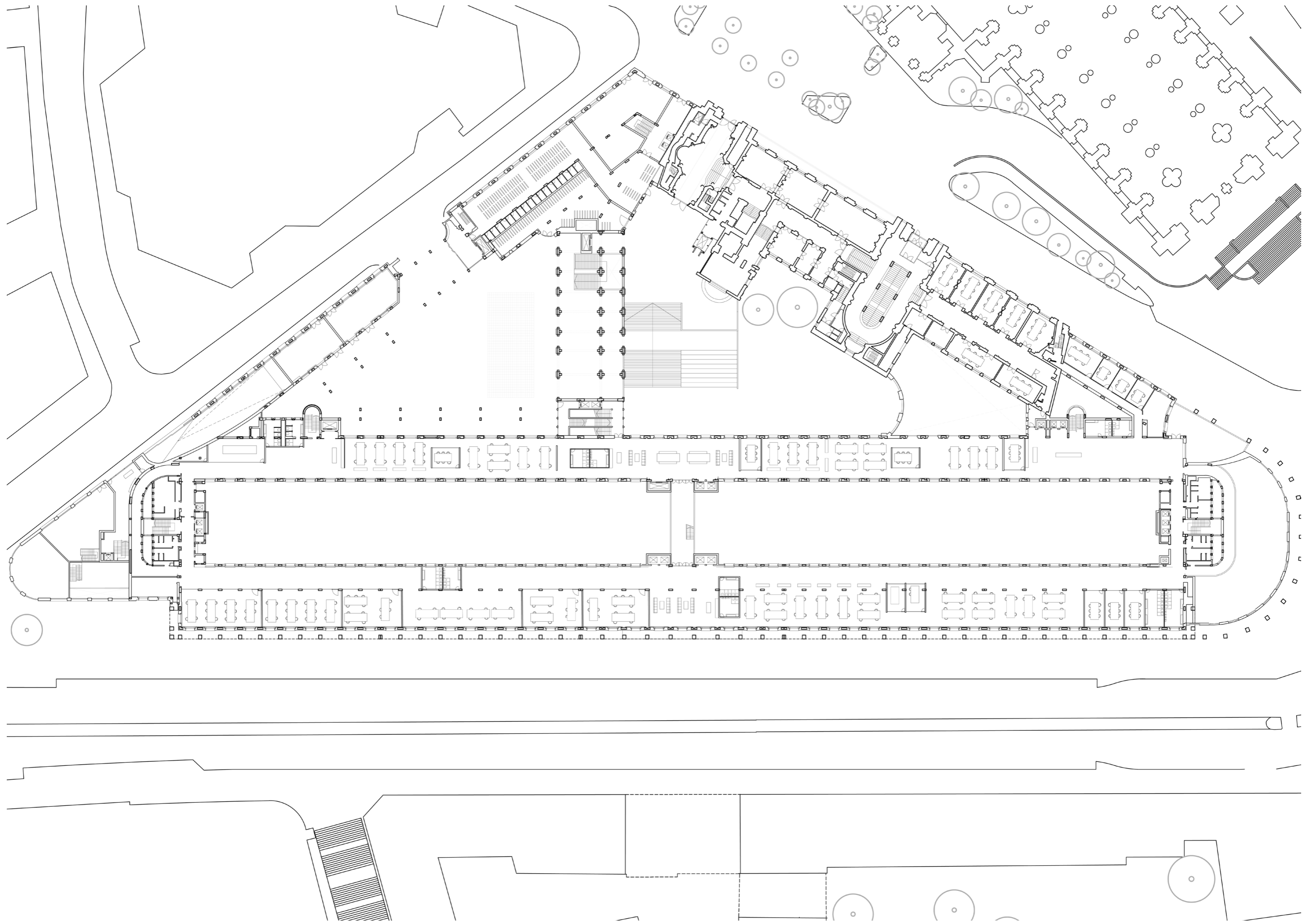


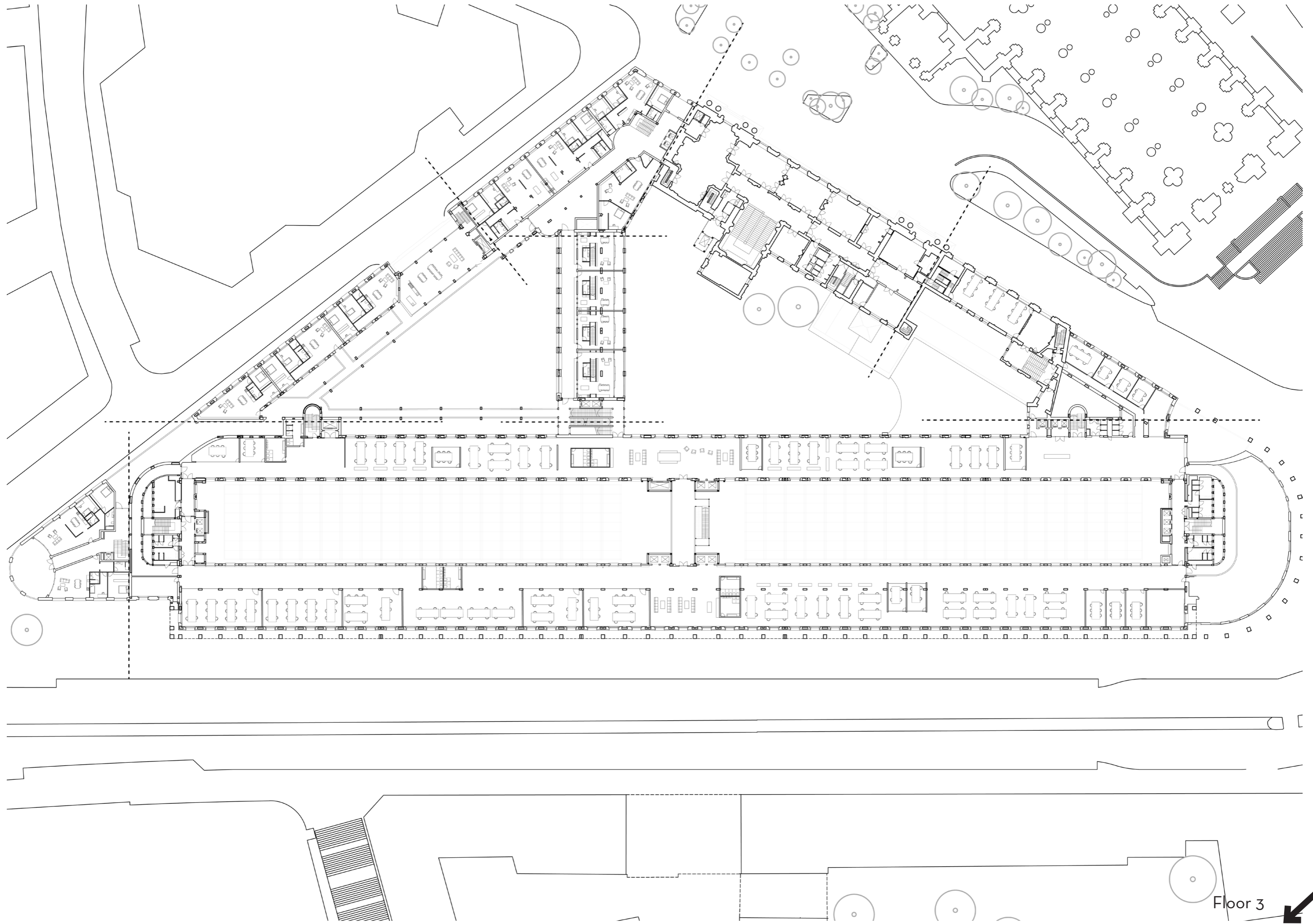
Floor 1





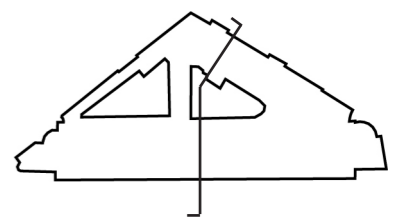
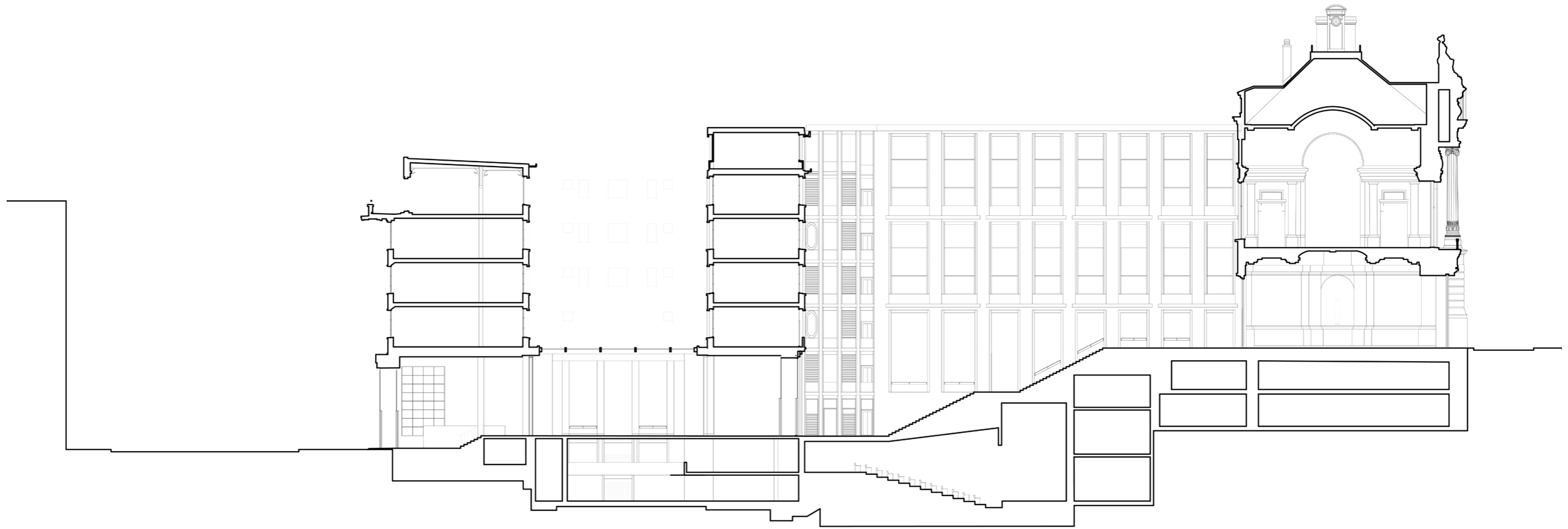


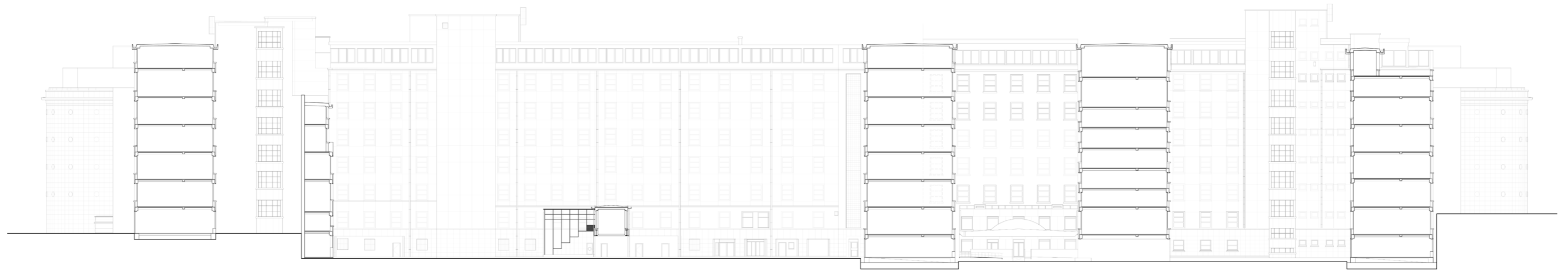
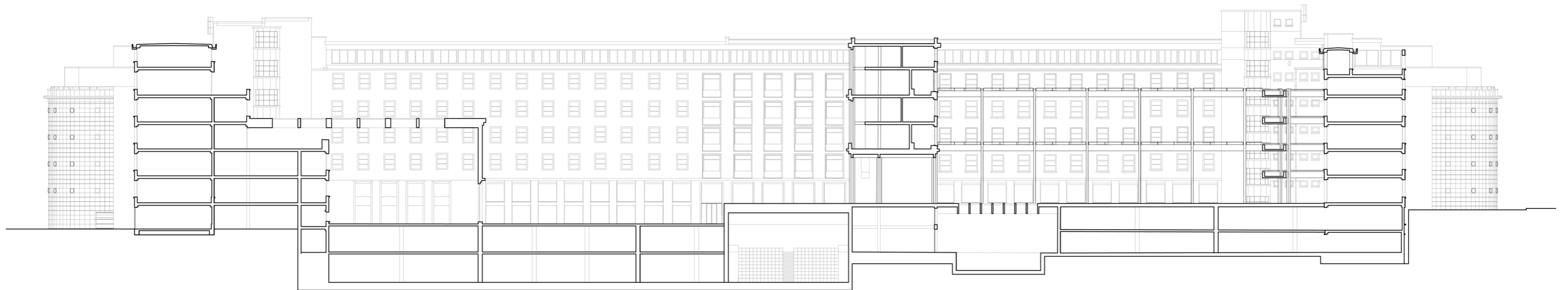




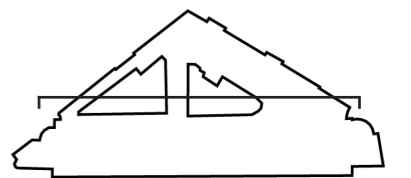
Floor 3

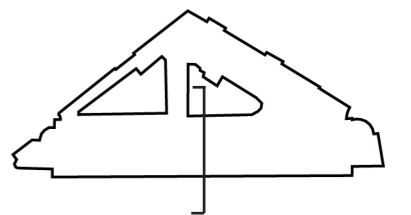
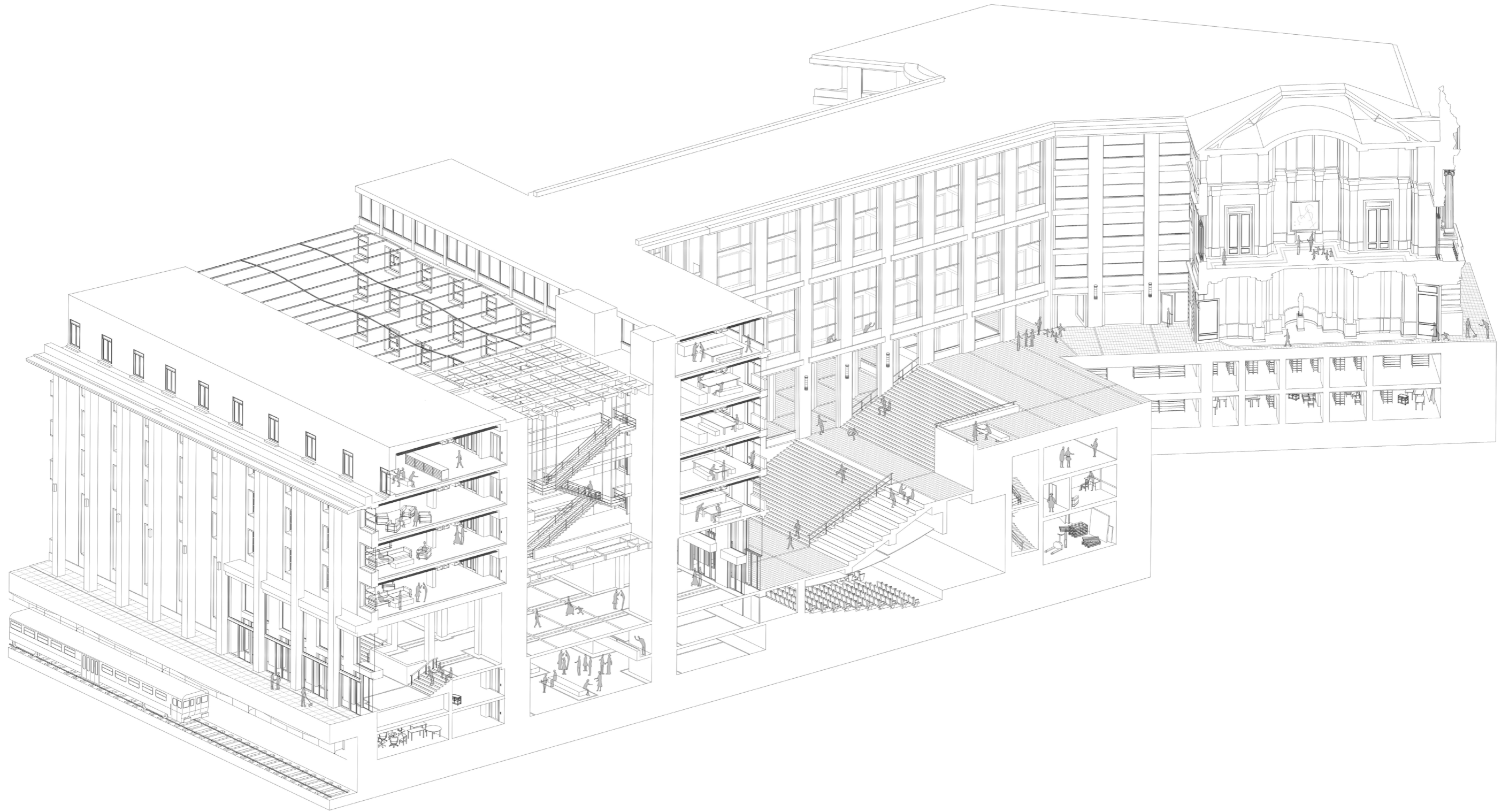


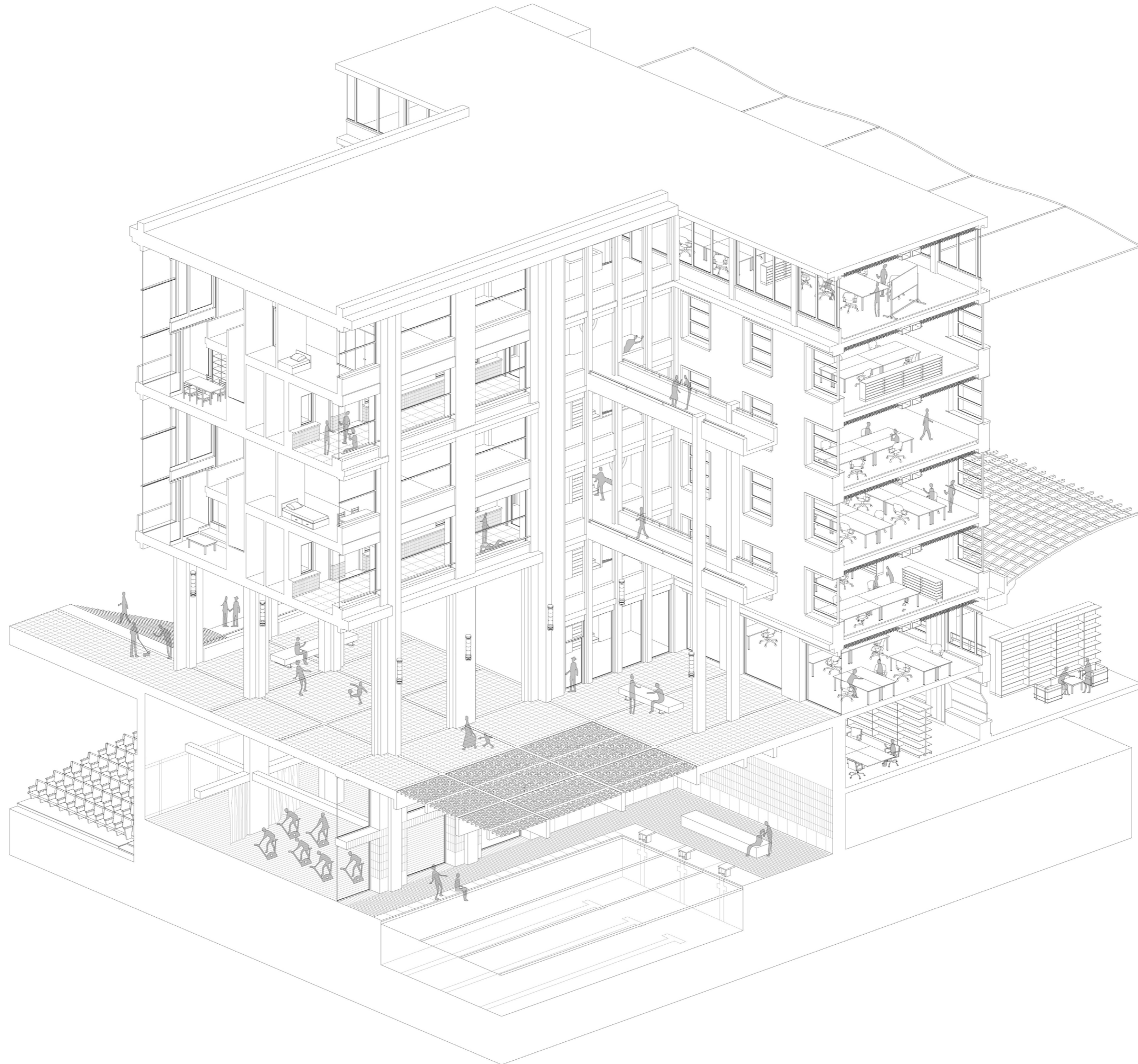


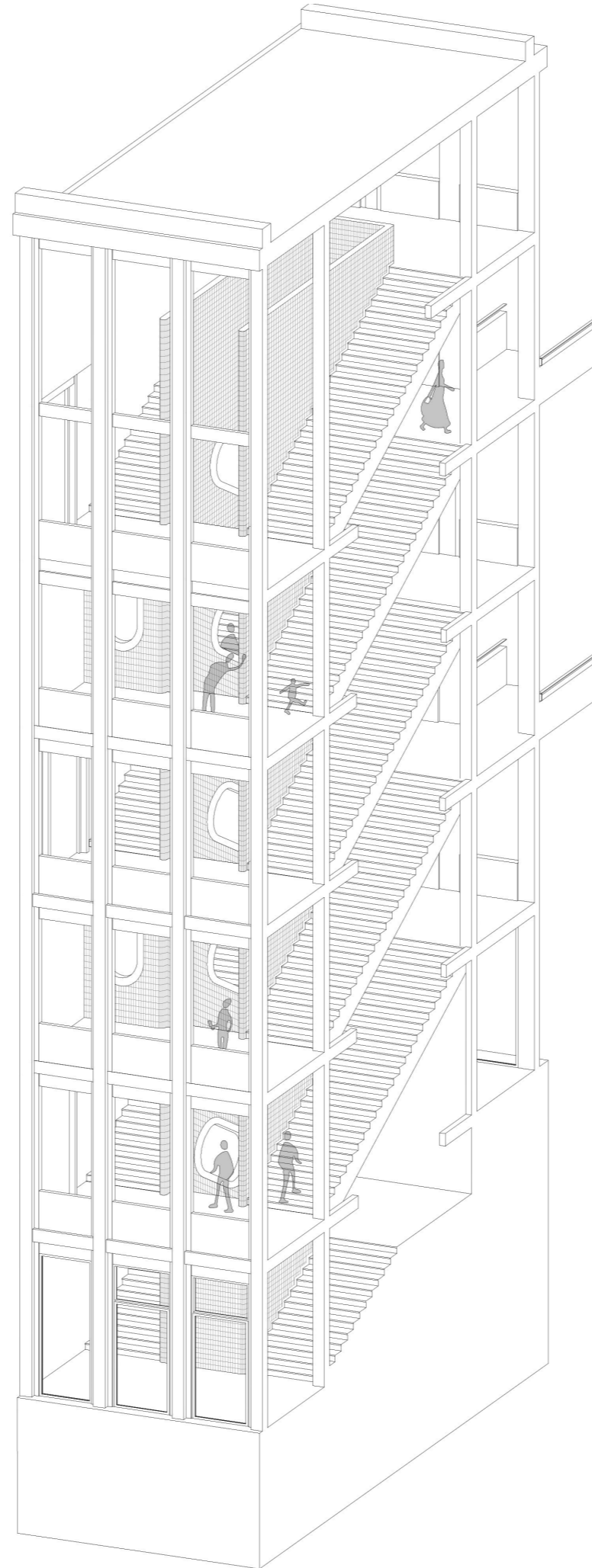


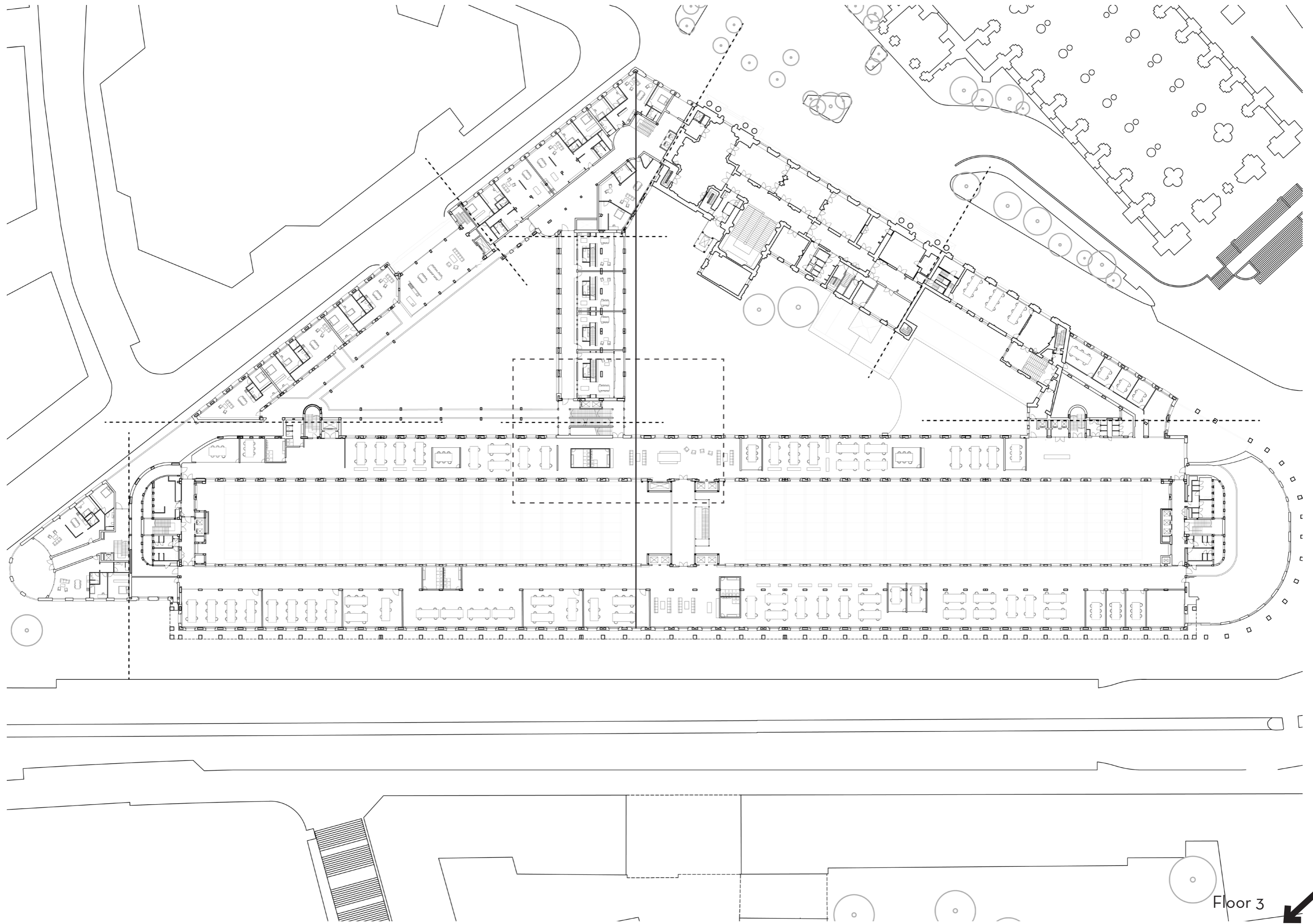
Existing situation

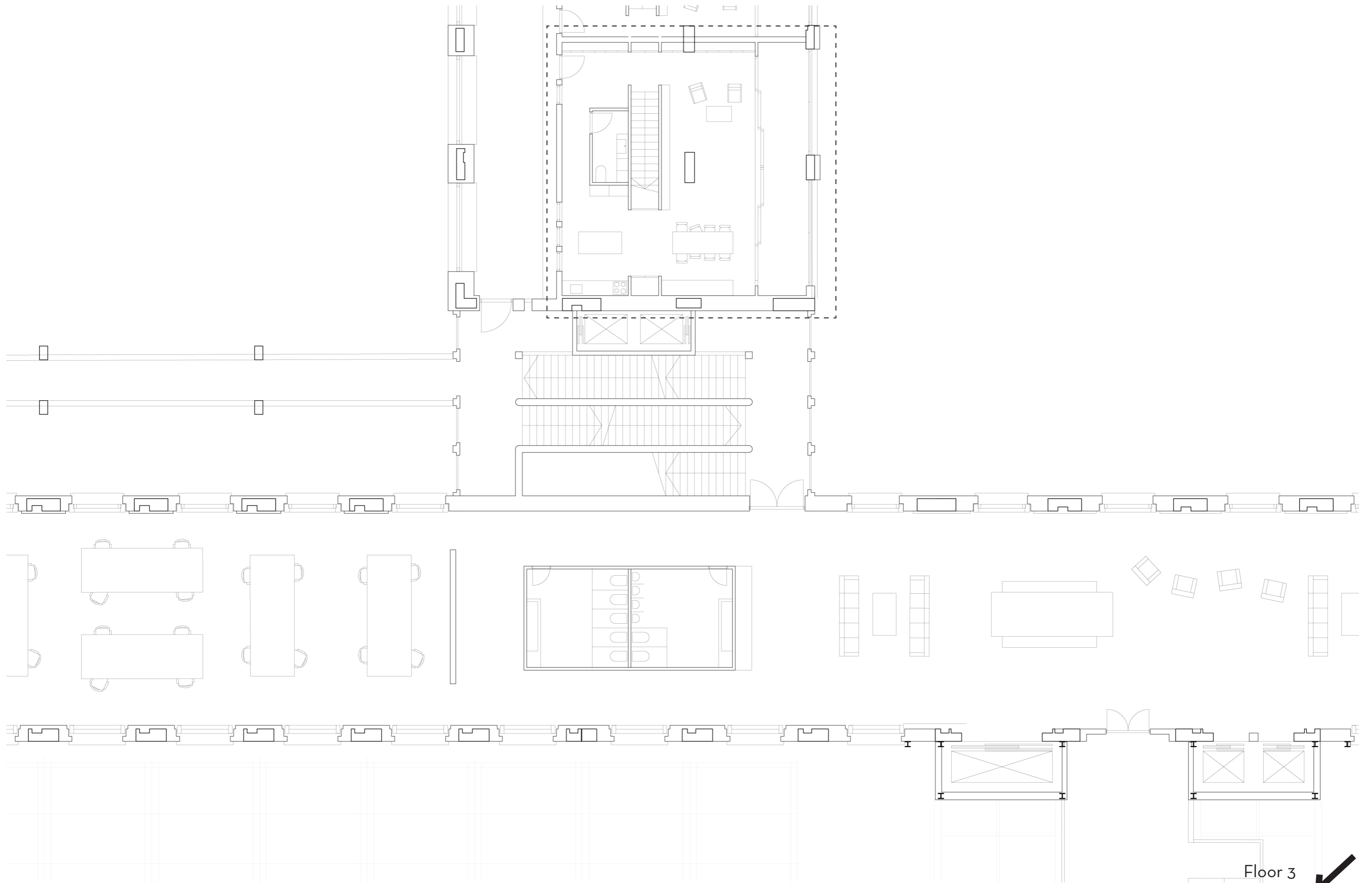


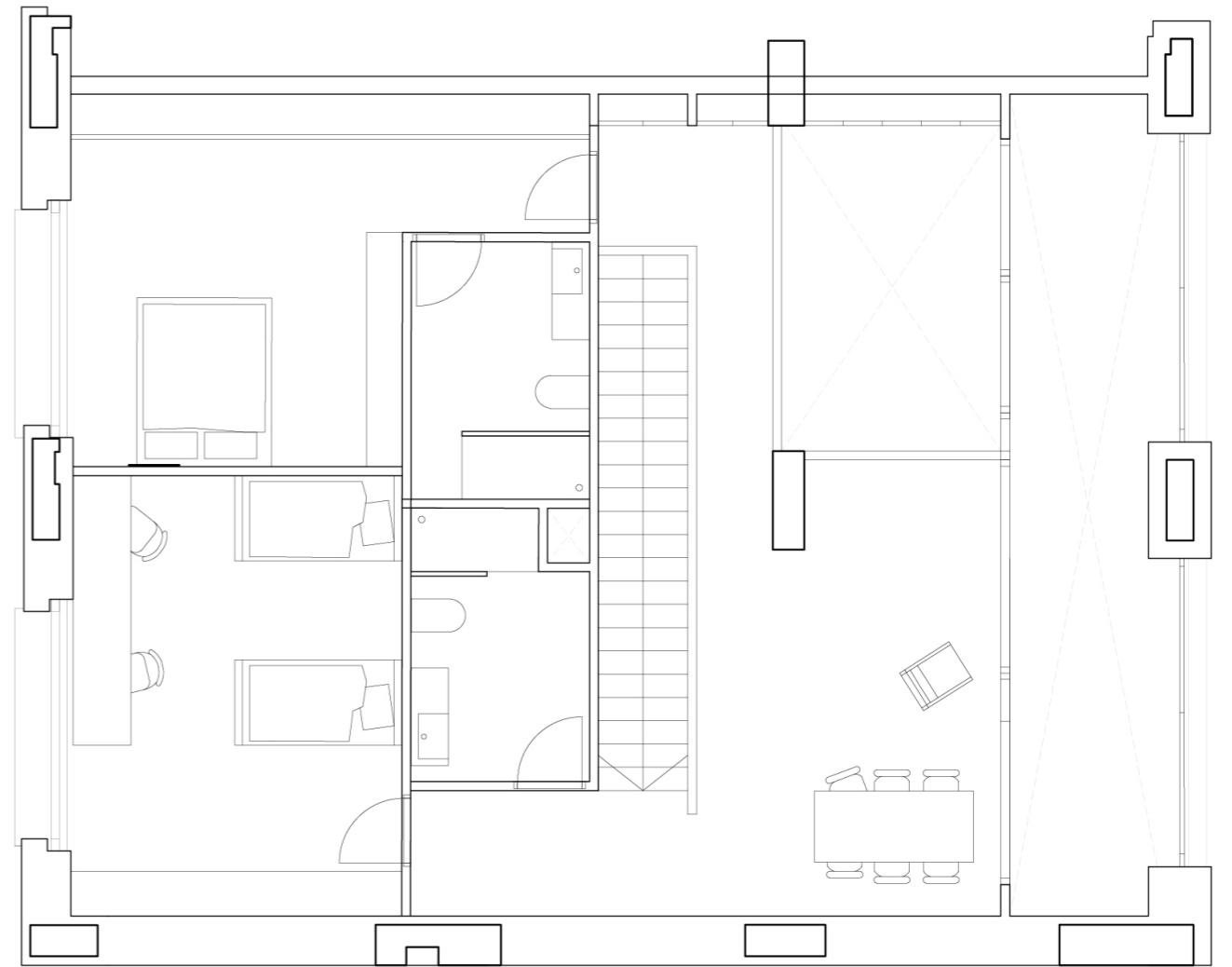
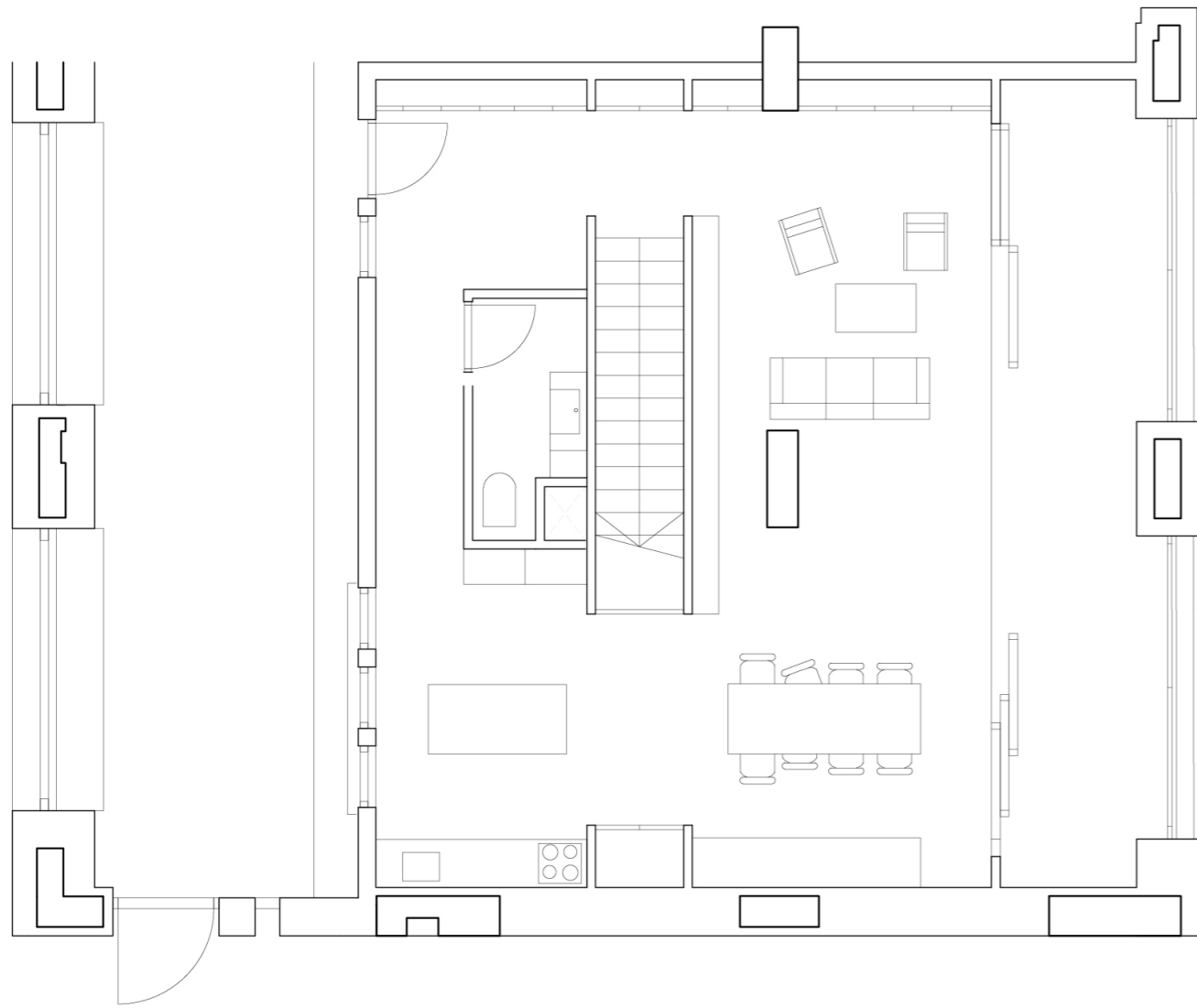


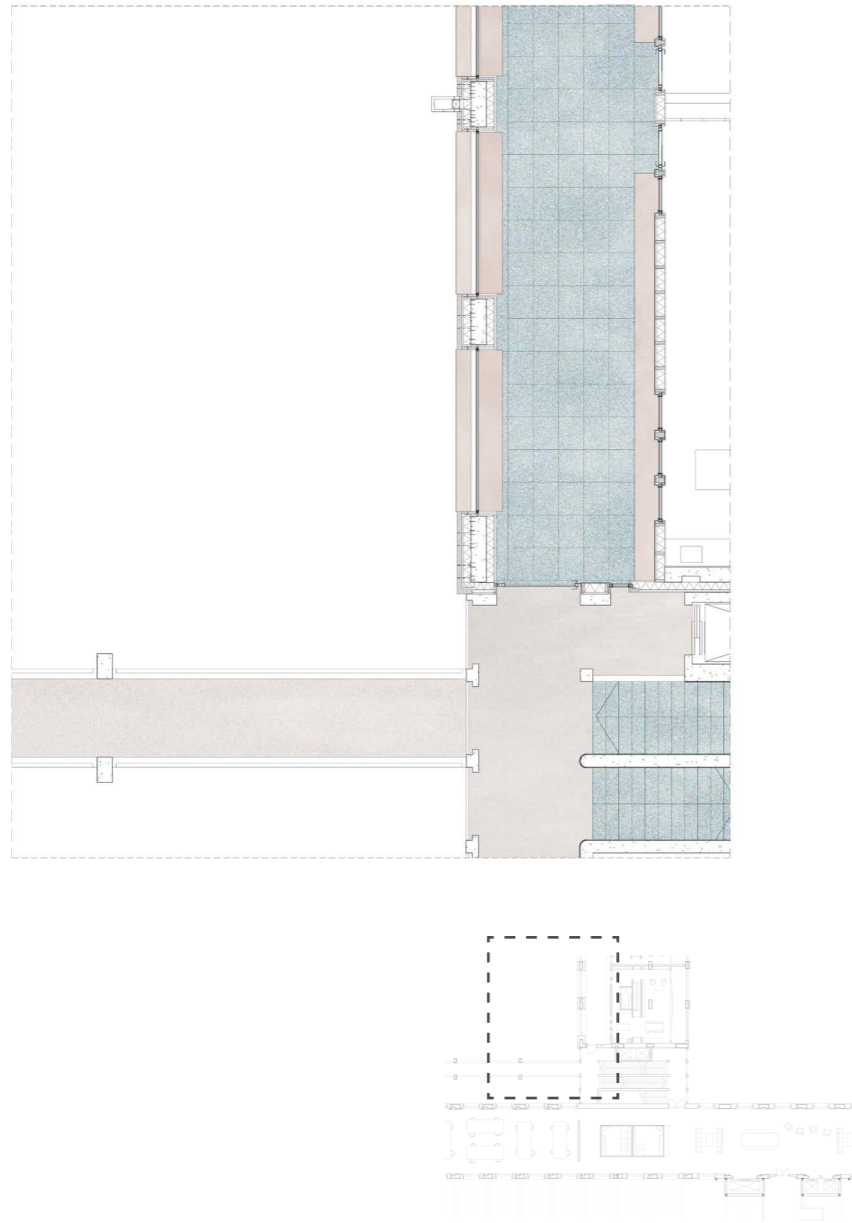


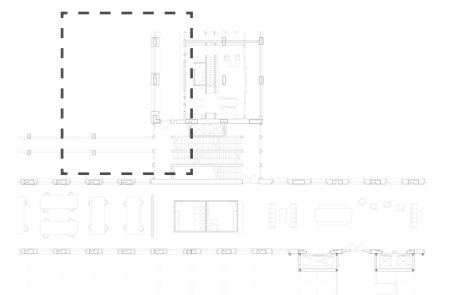
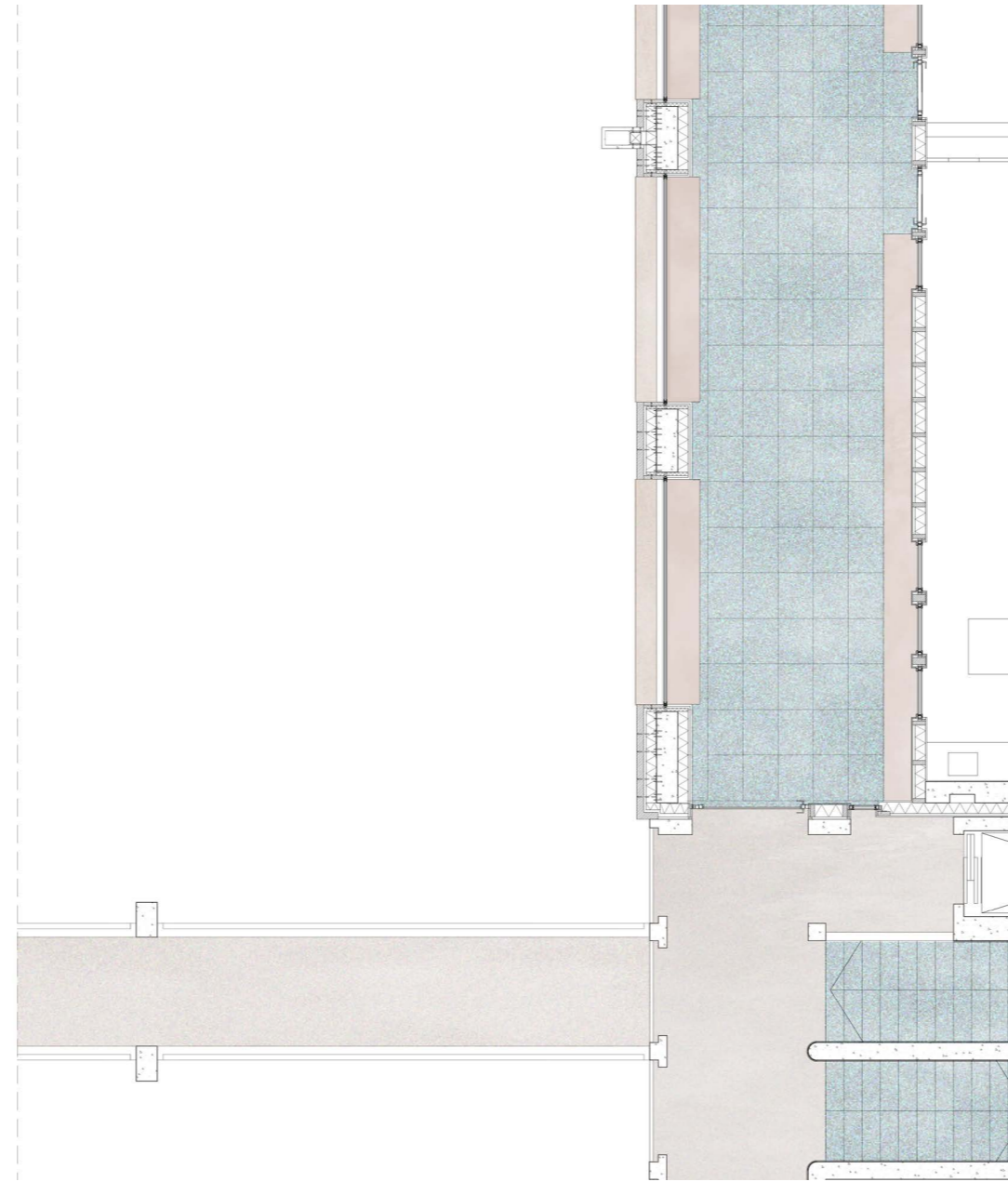


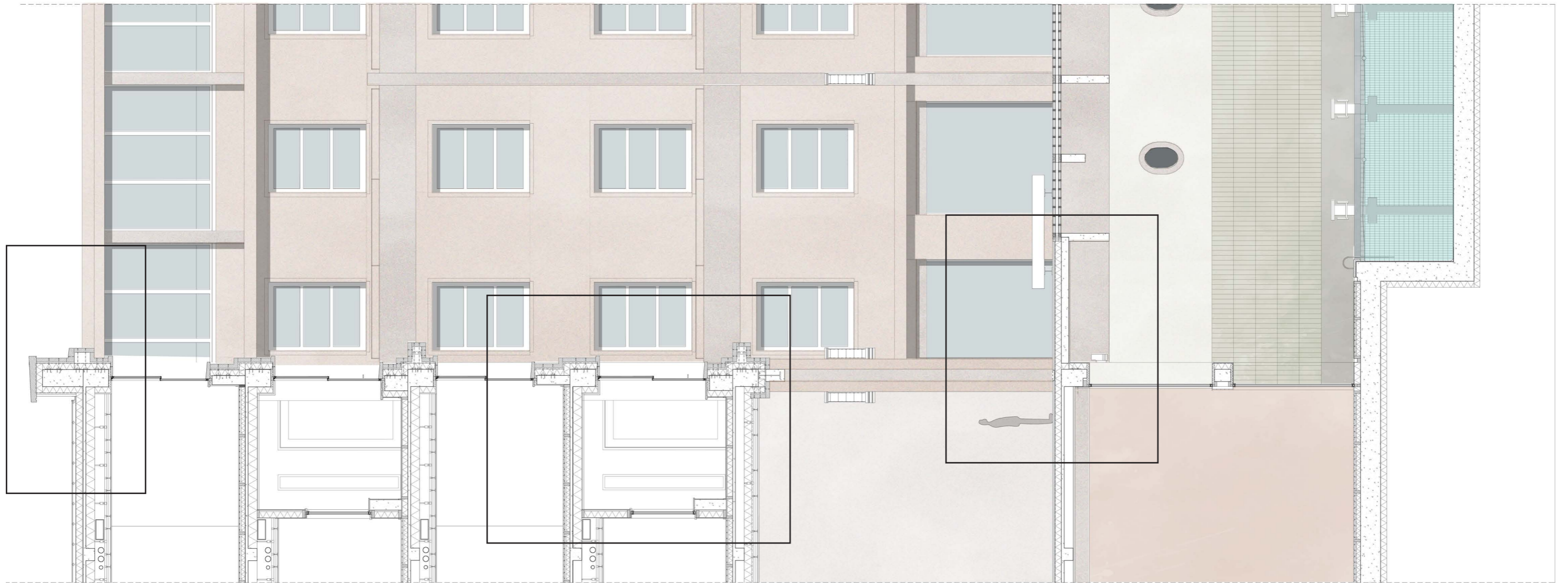




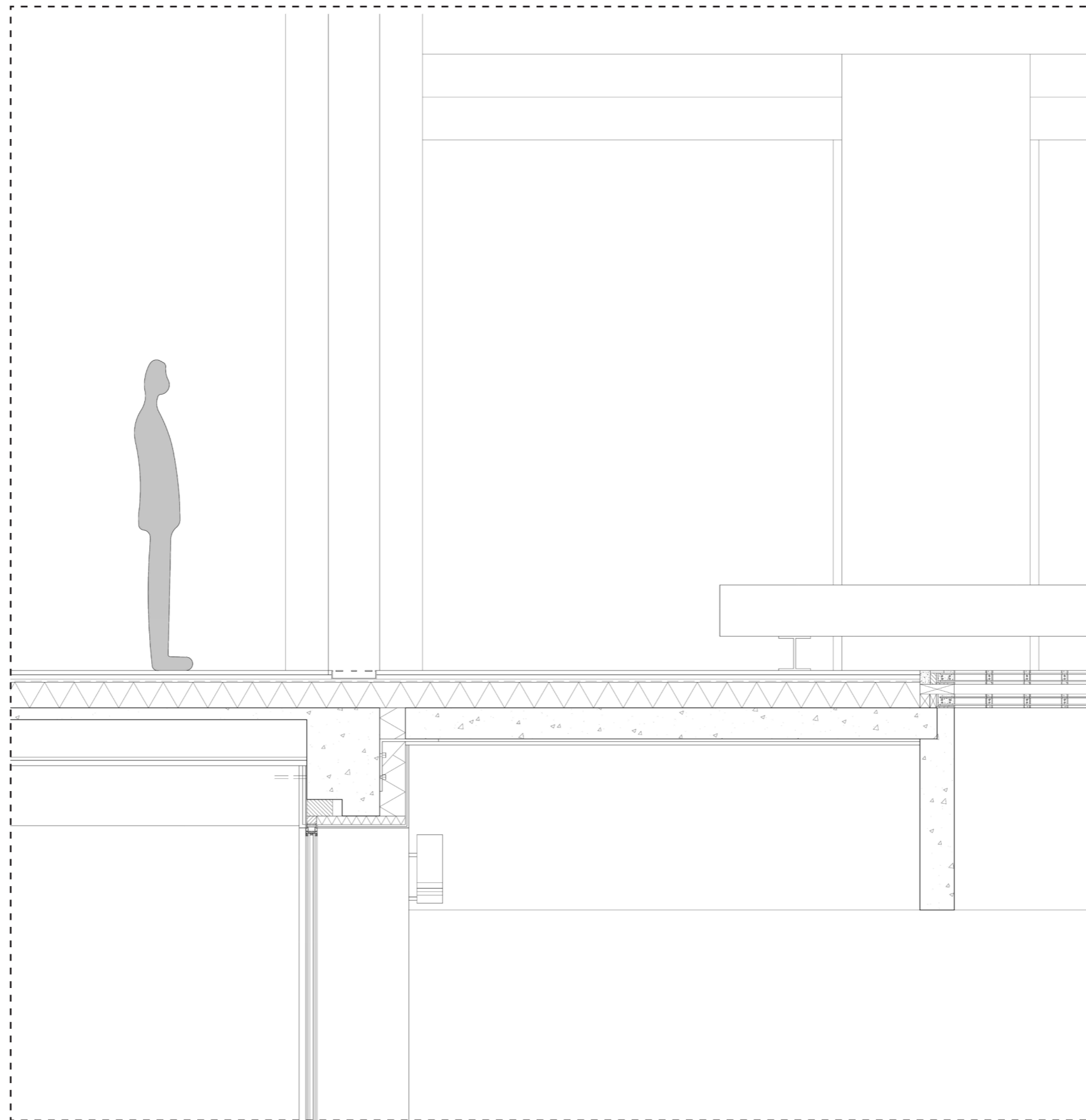


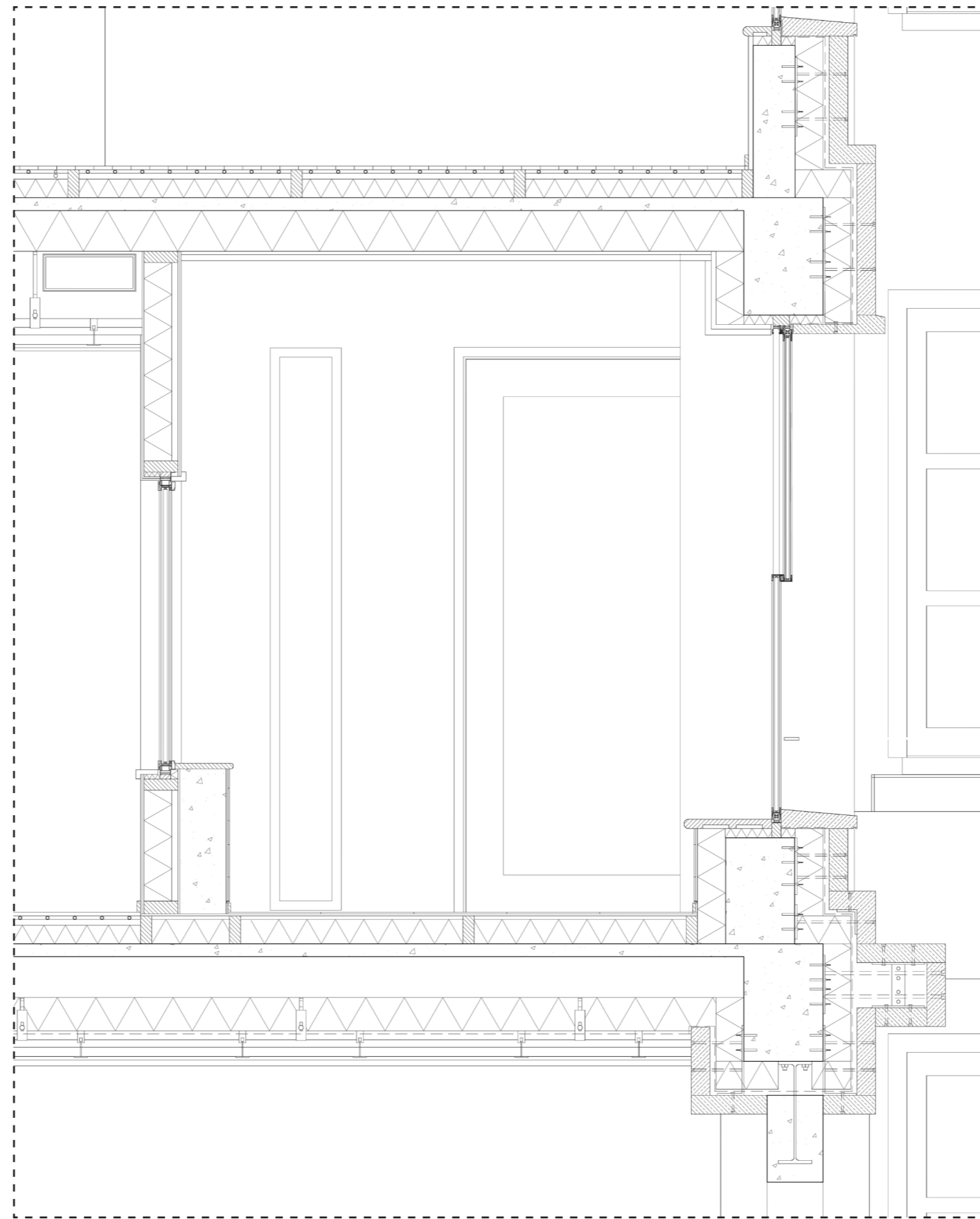


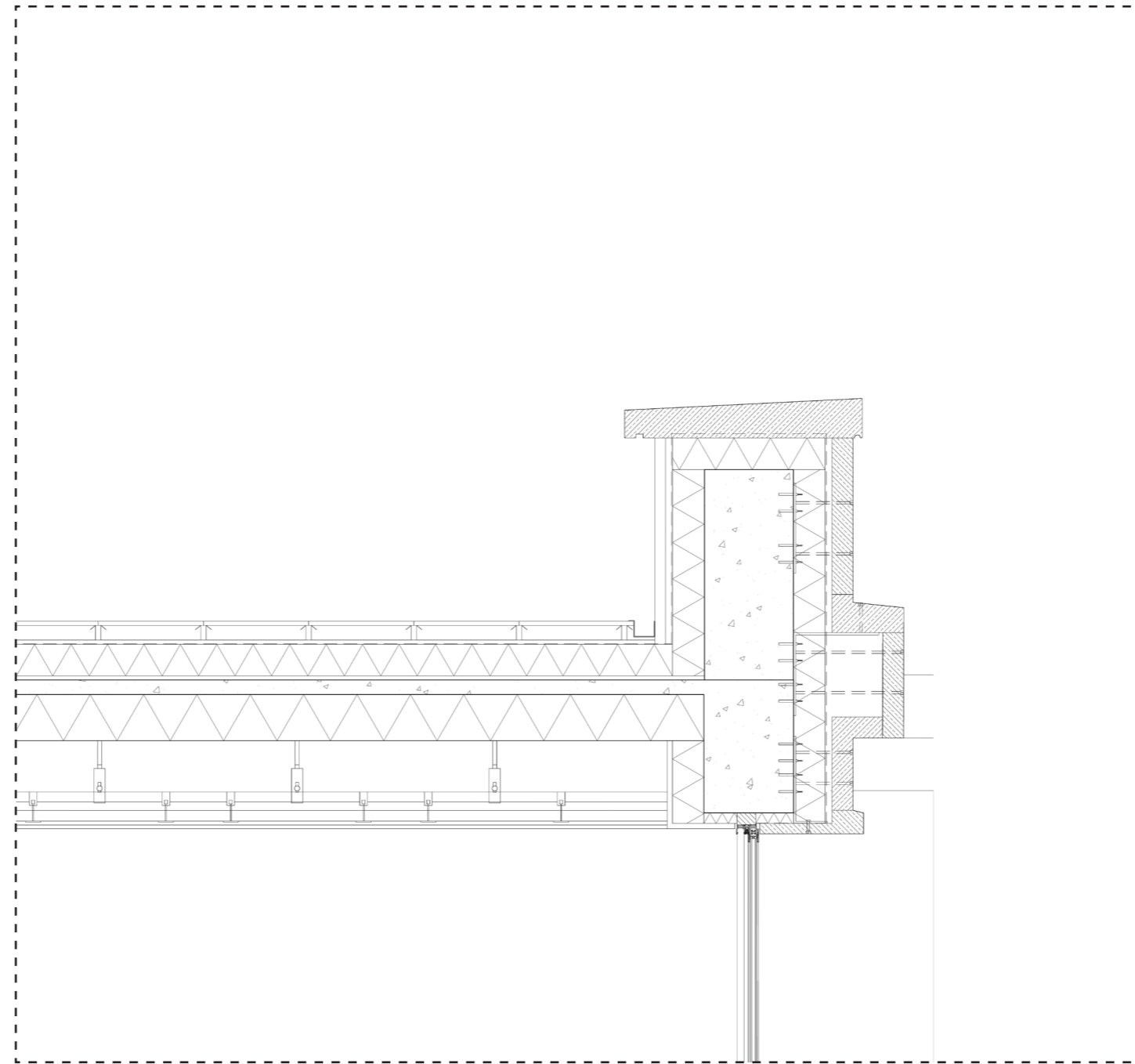


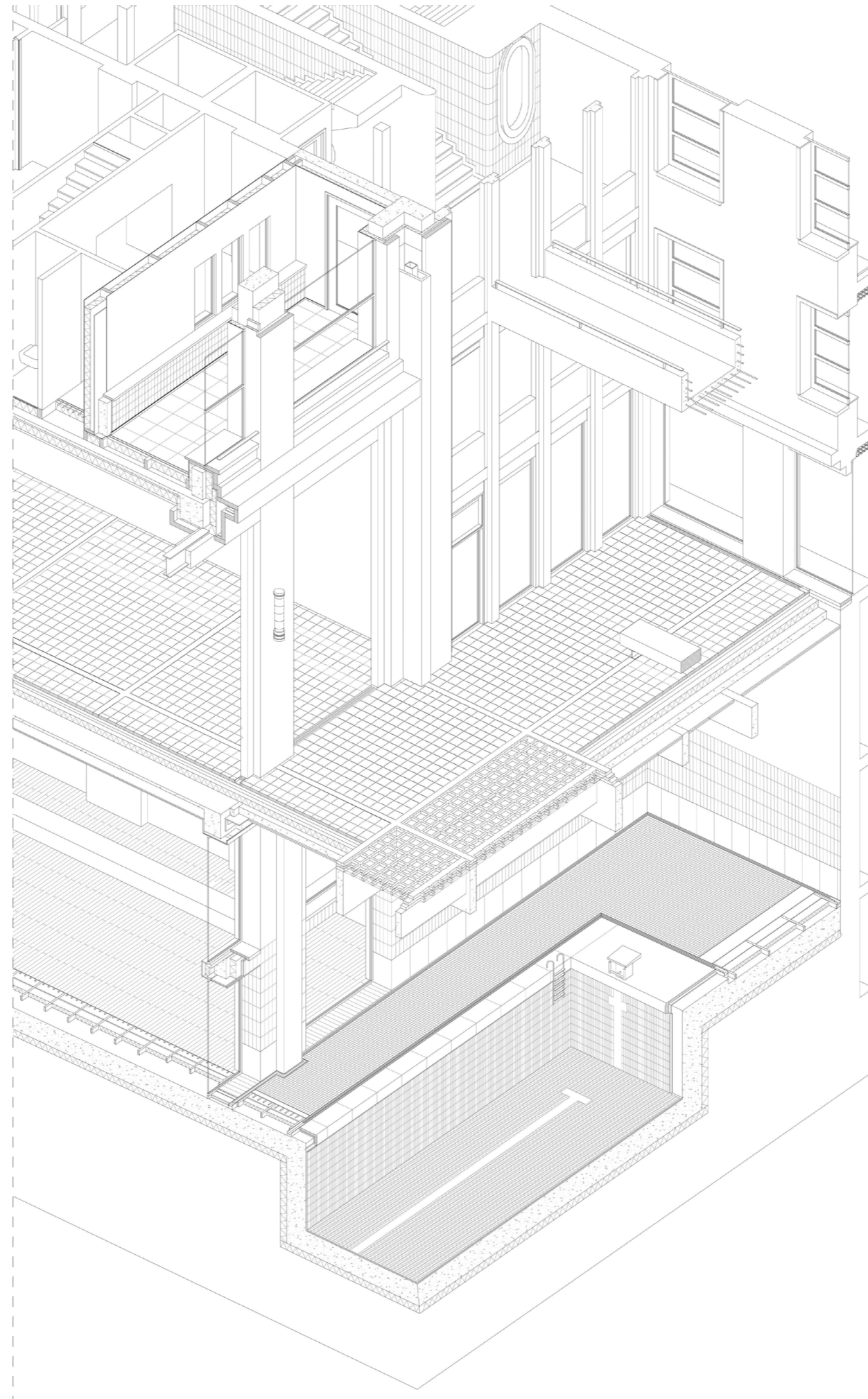


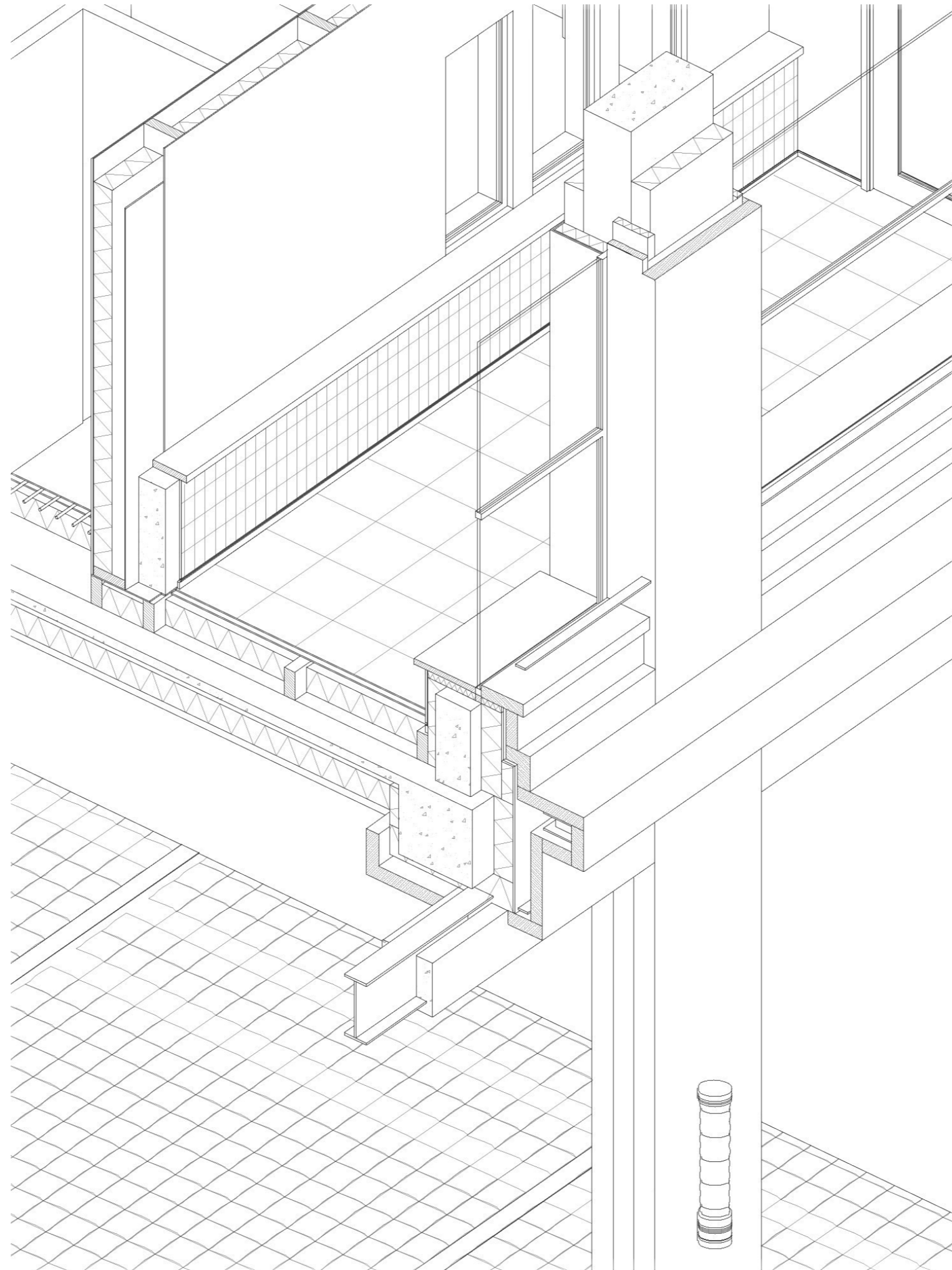


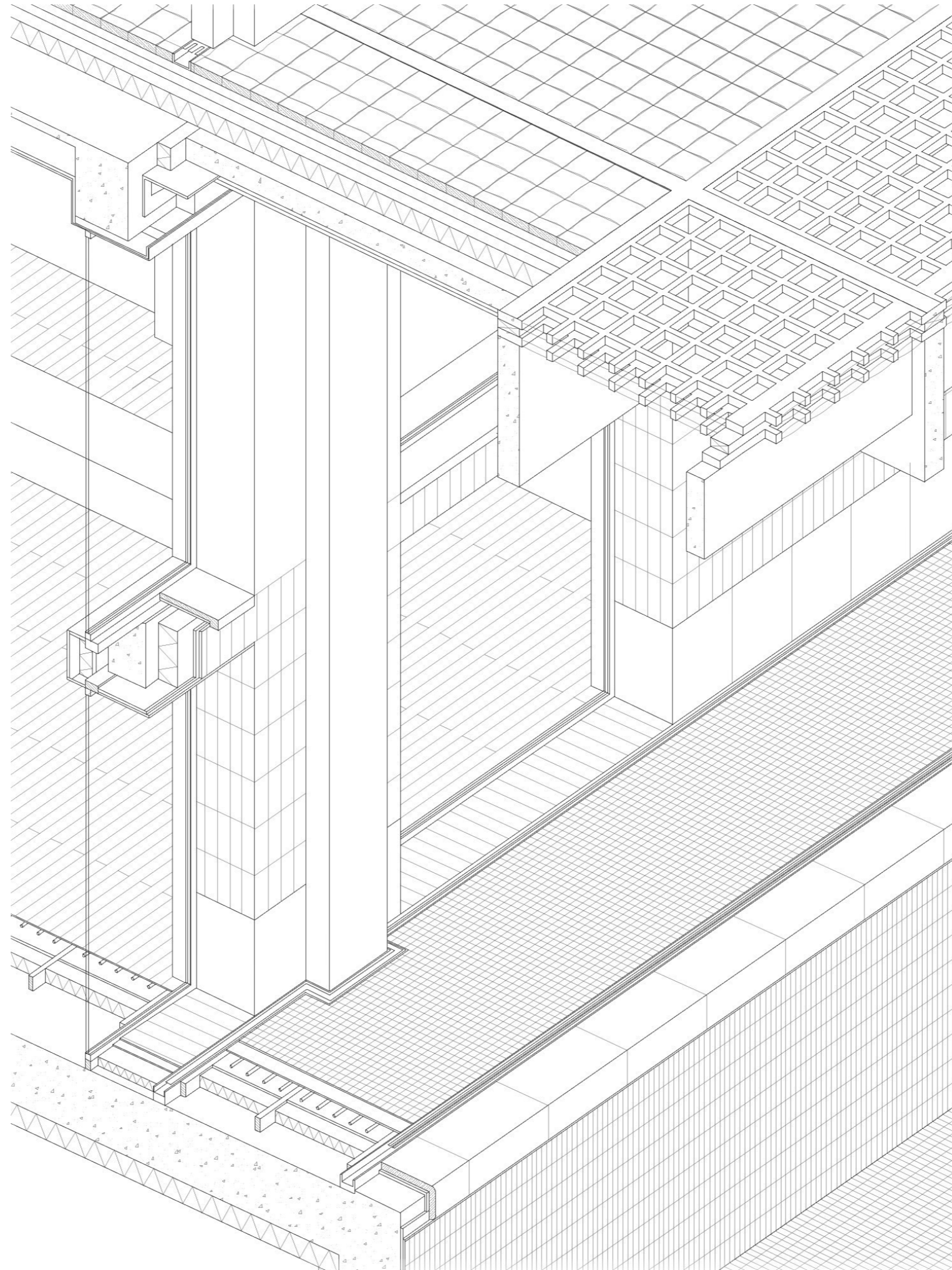


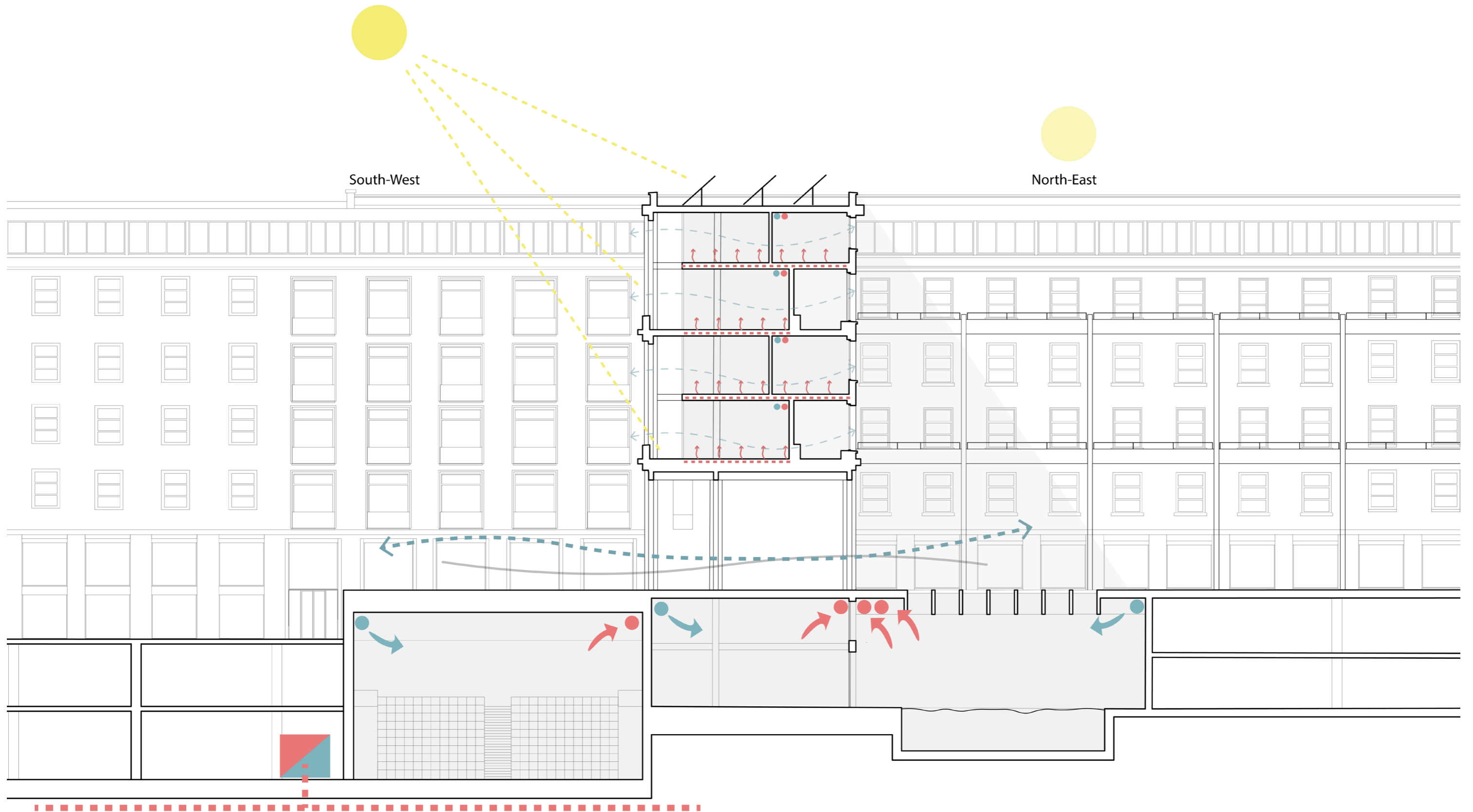


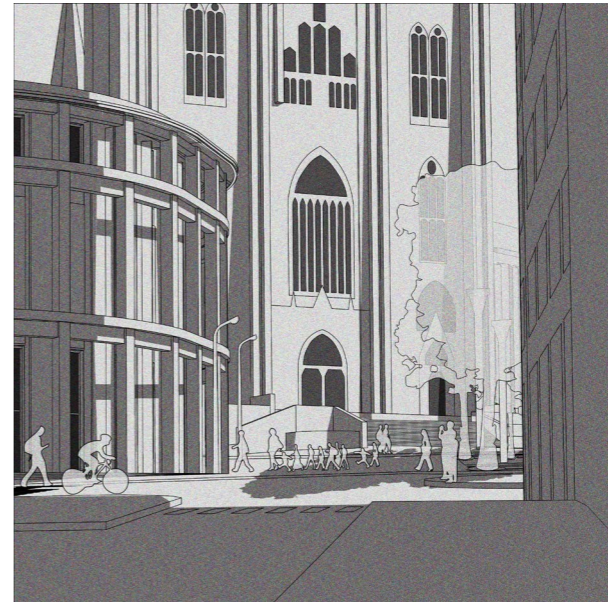
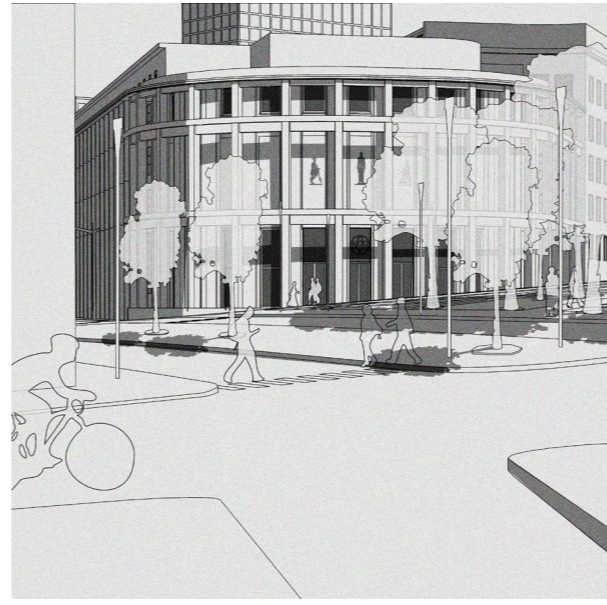
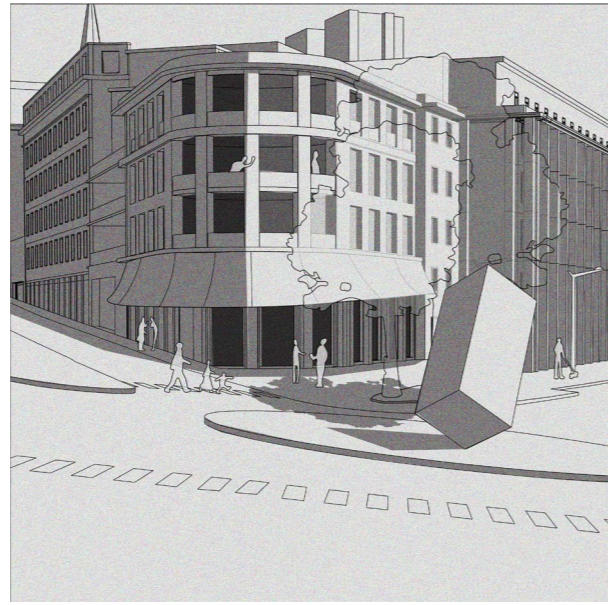




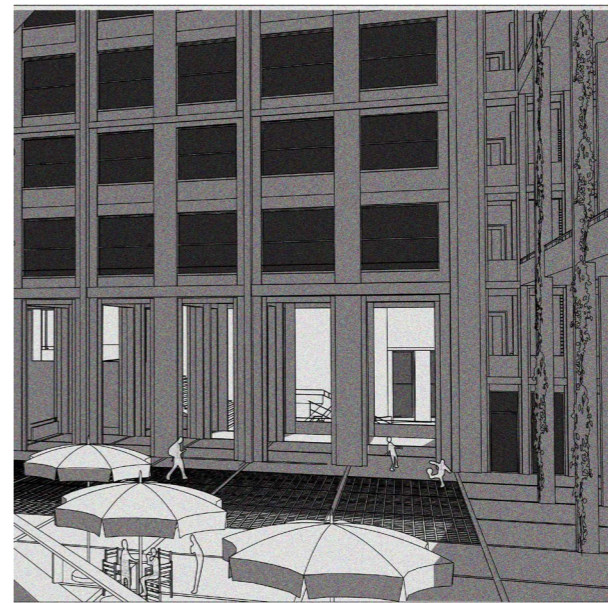
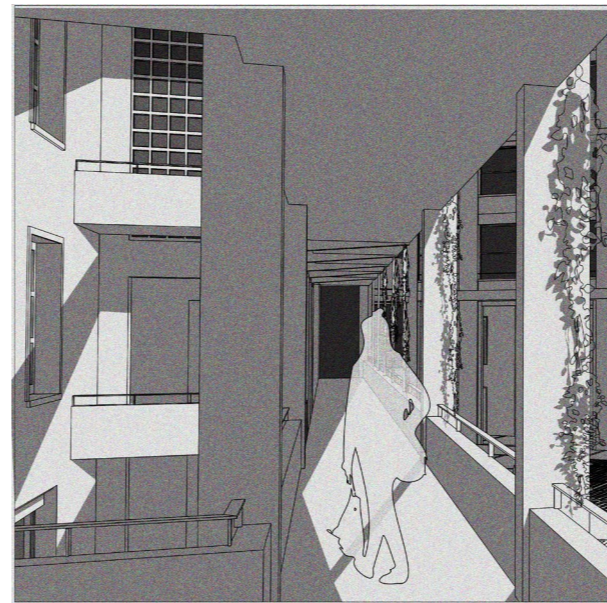
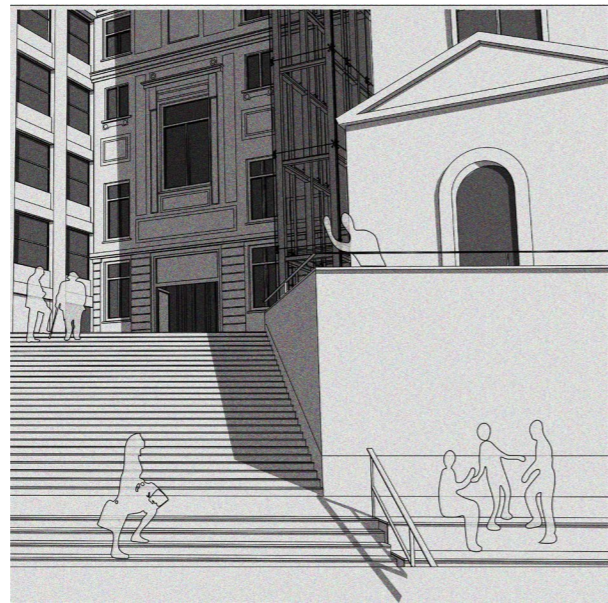
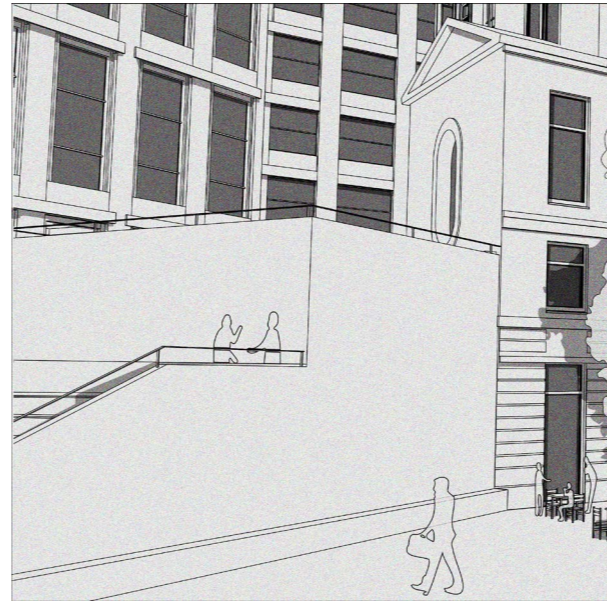
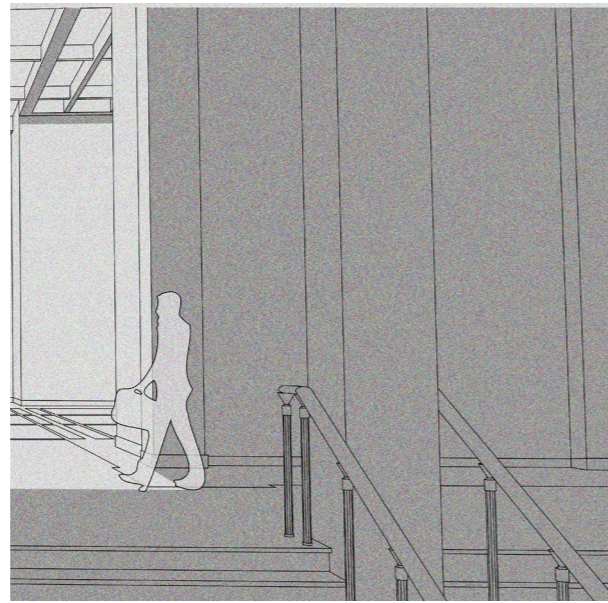
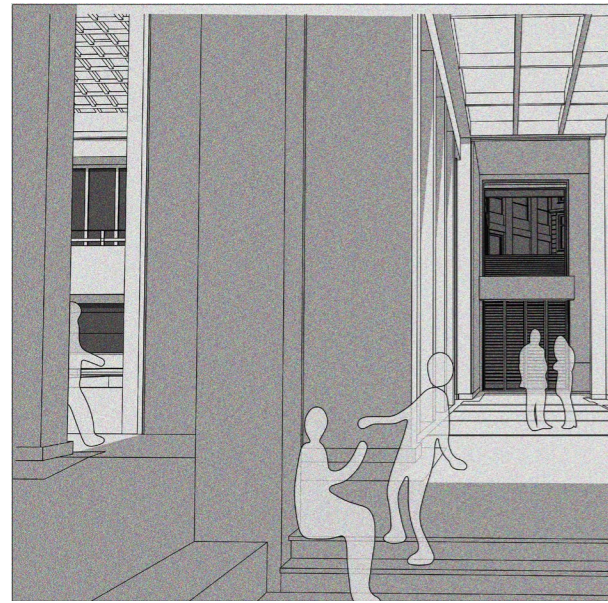




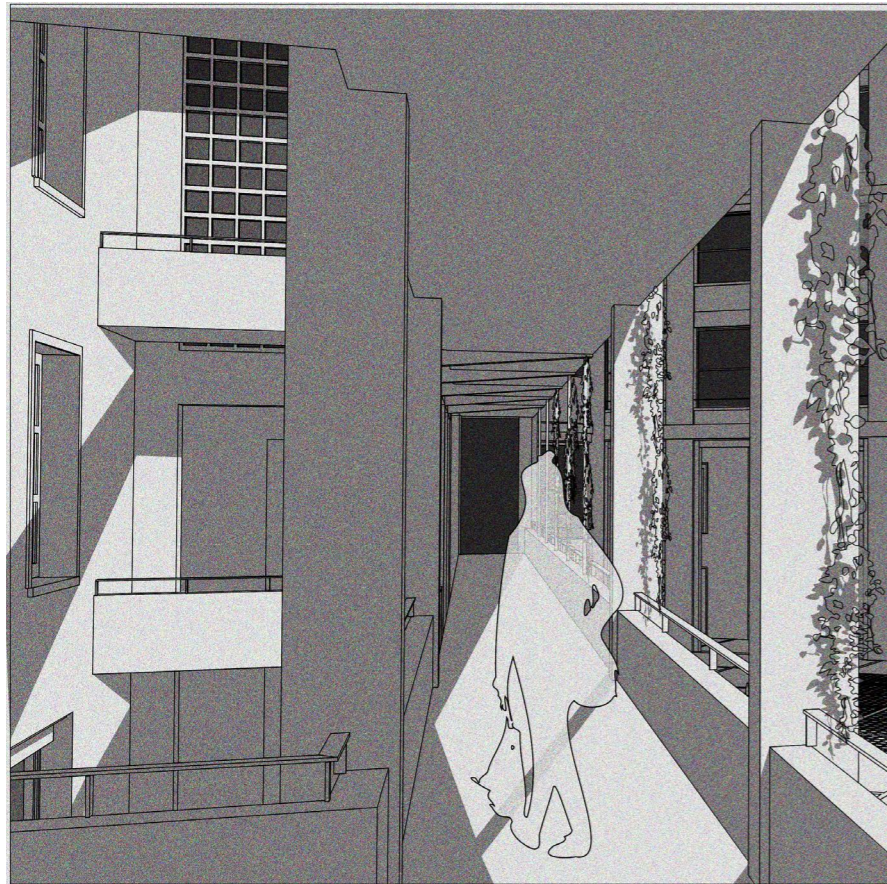




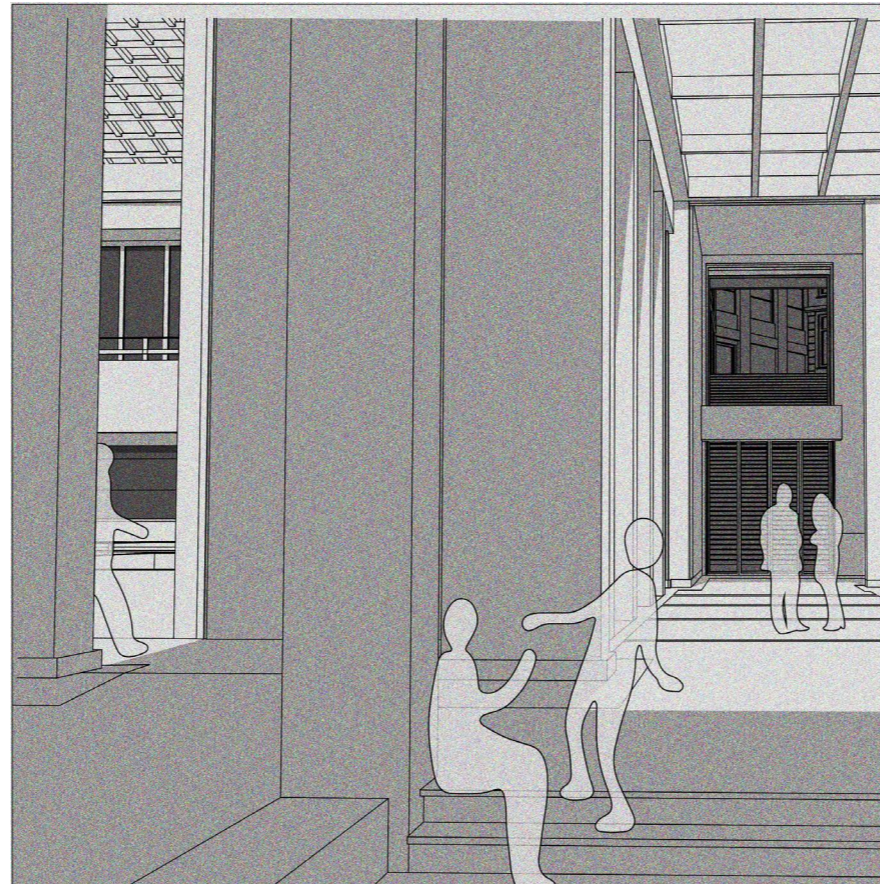
THE CONCISE CITYSCAPE



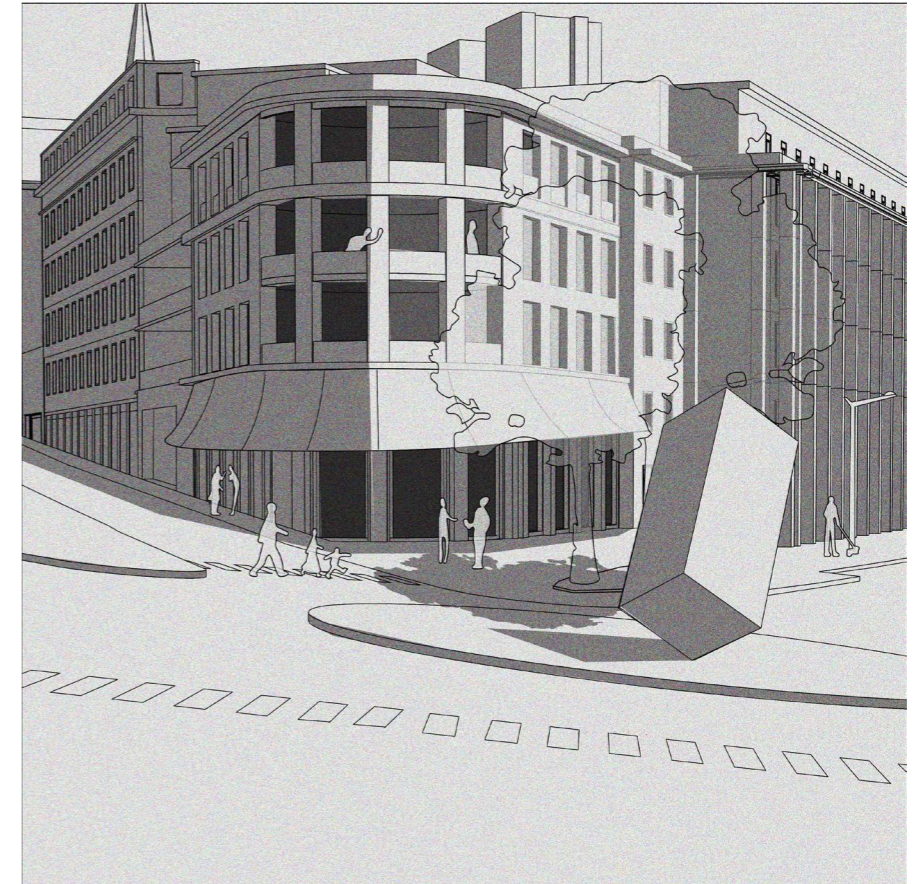
Impasses



Arcades



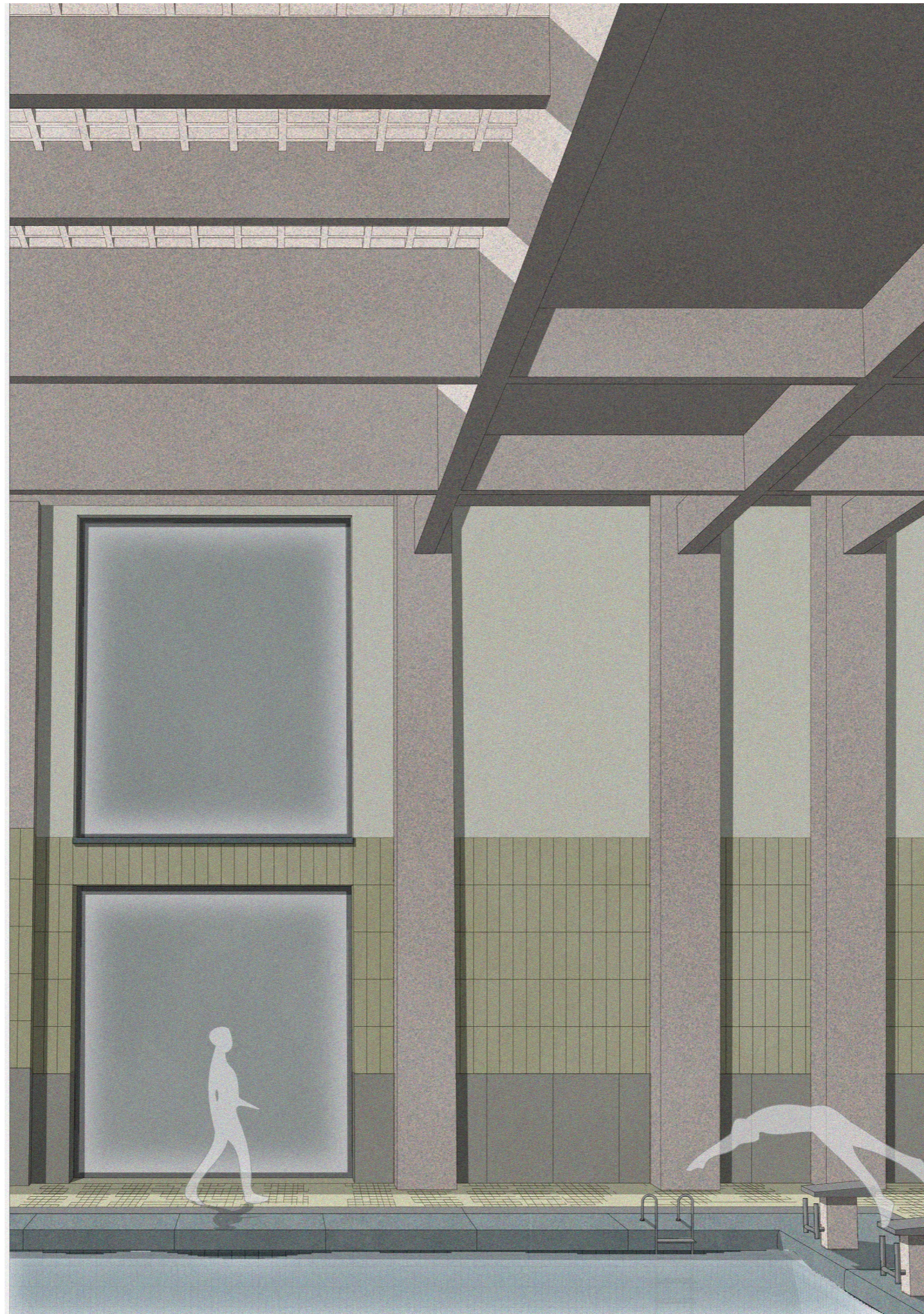
Corner buildings

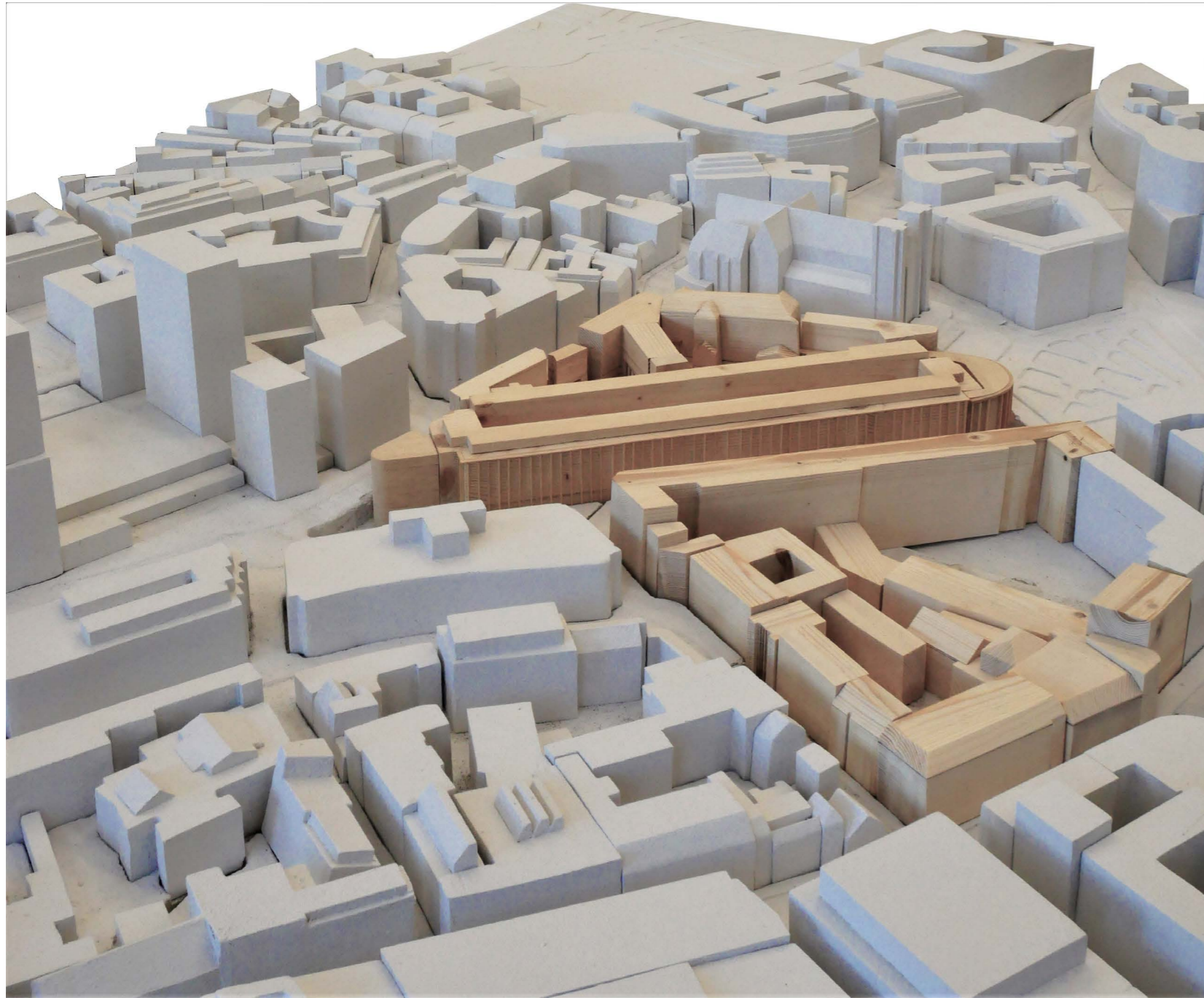


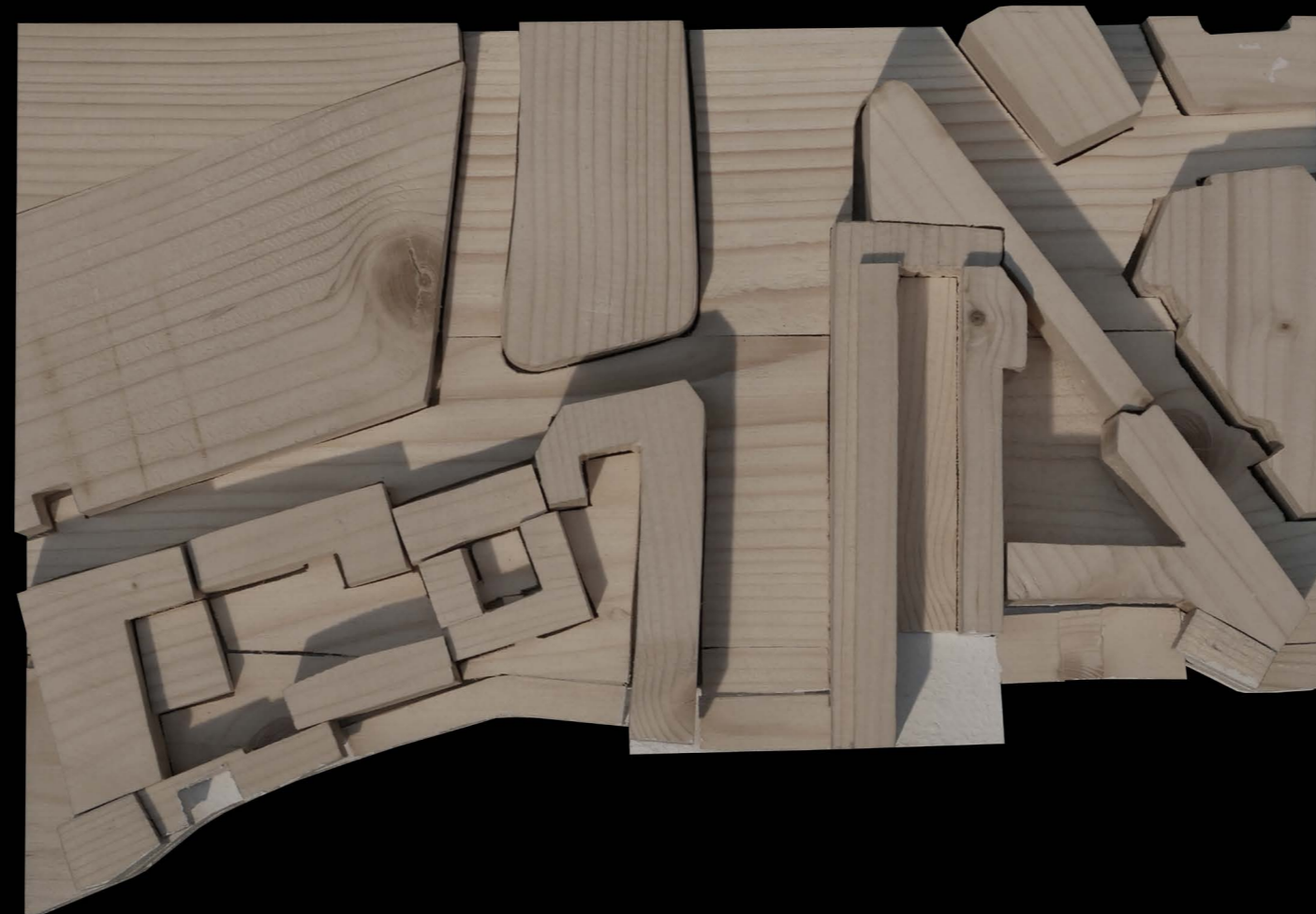


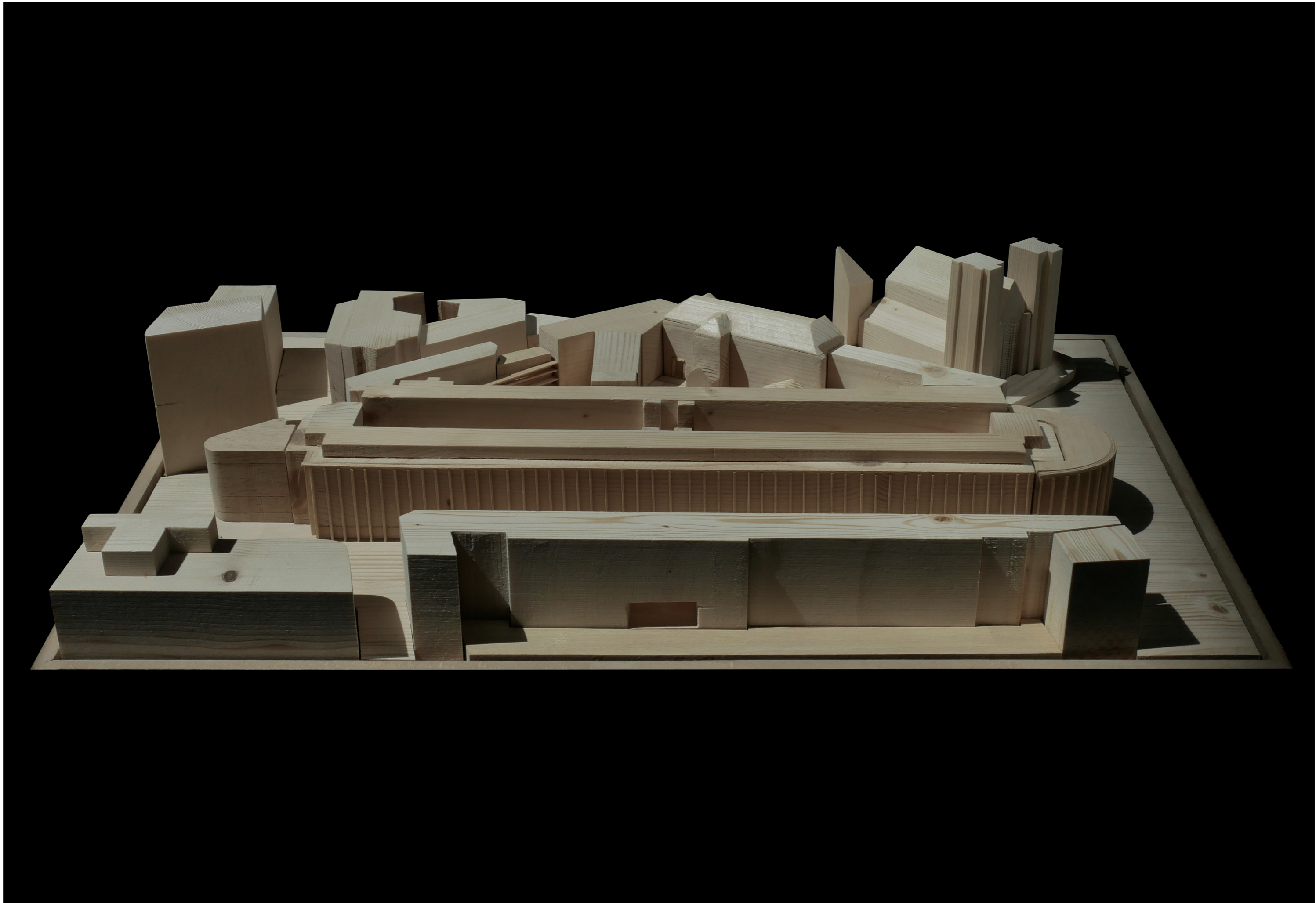


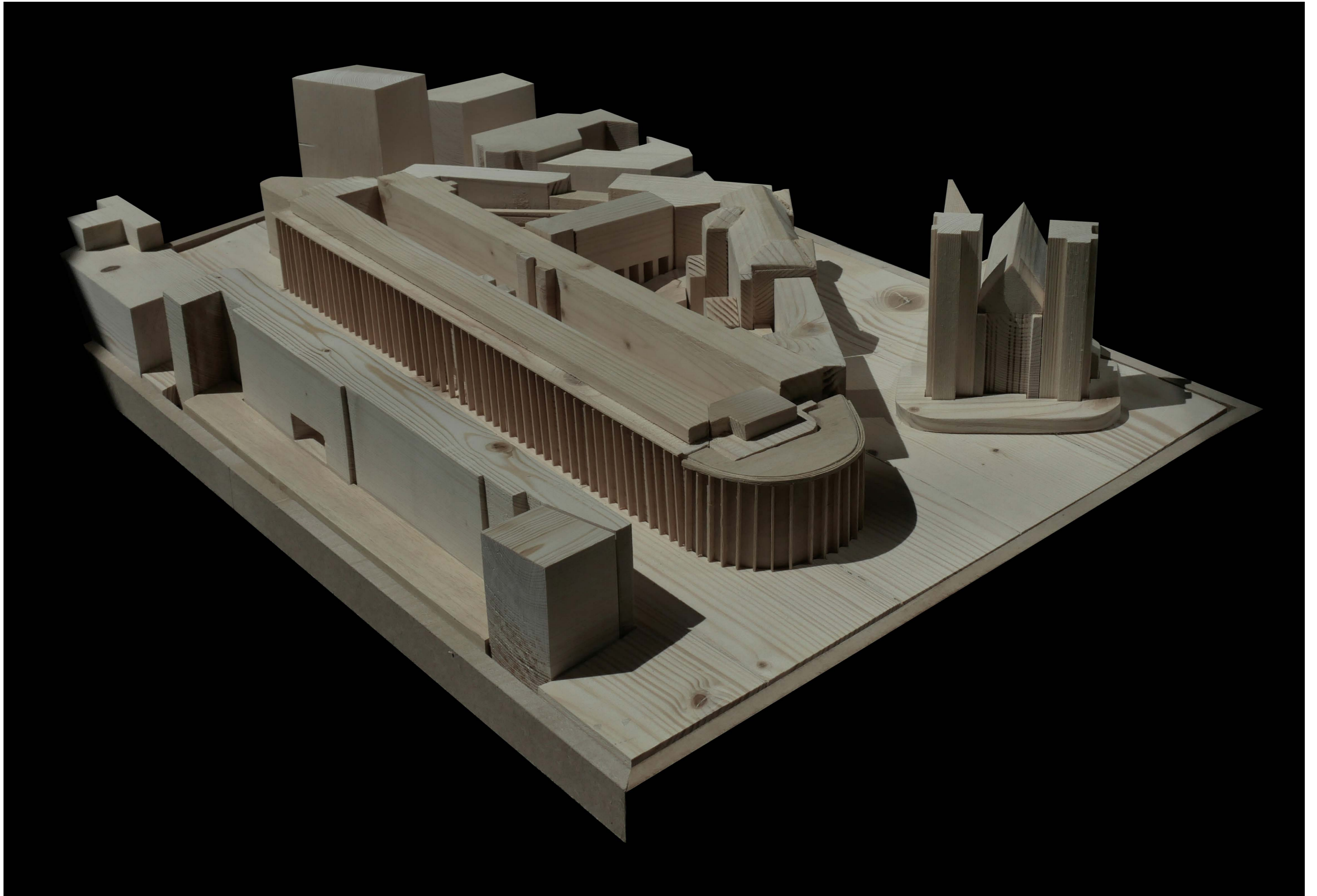


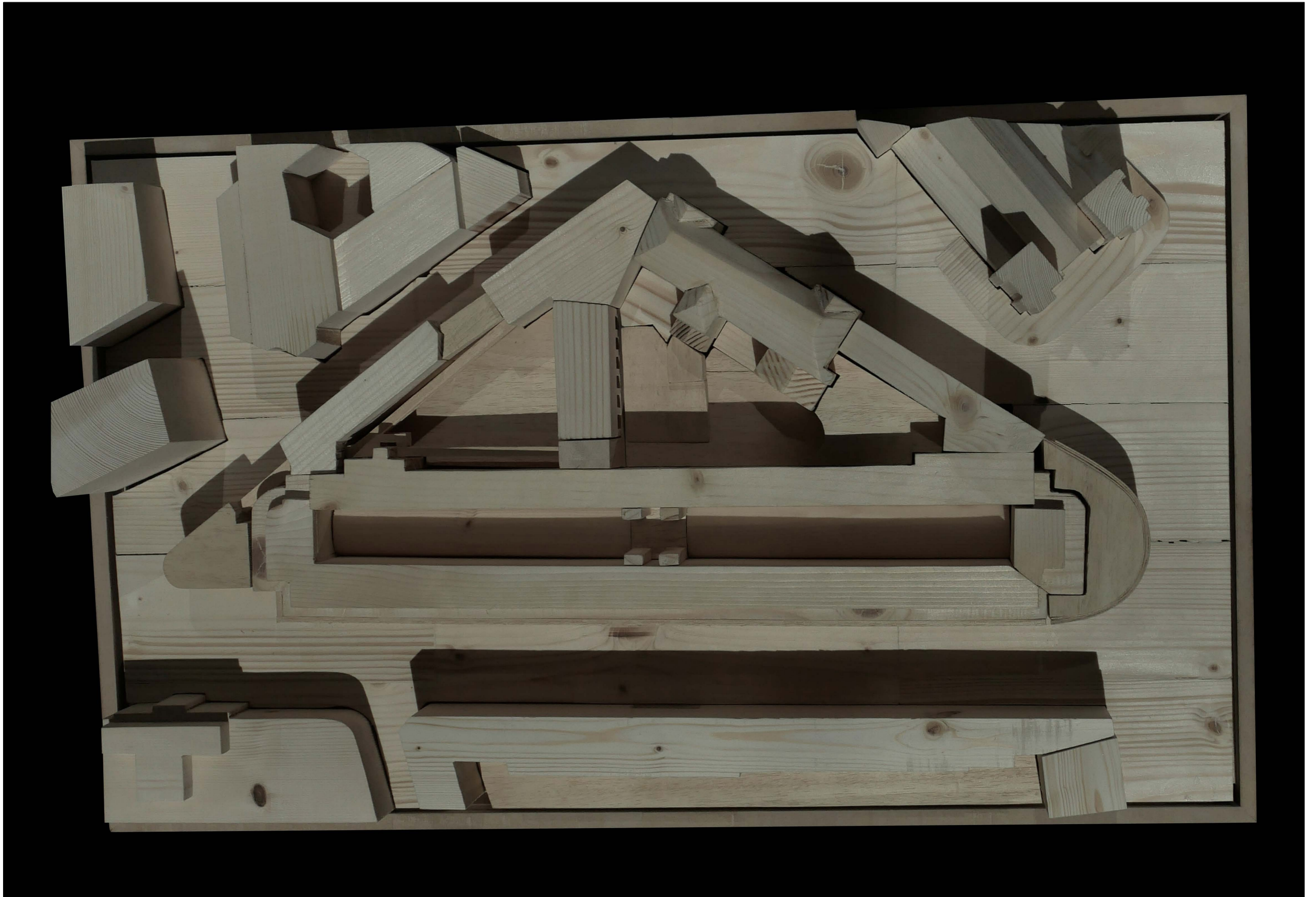


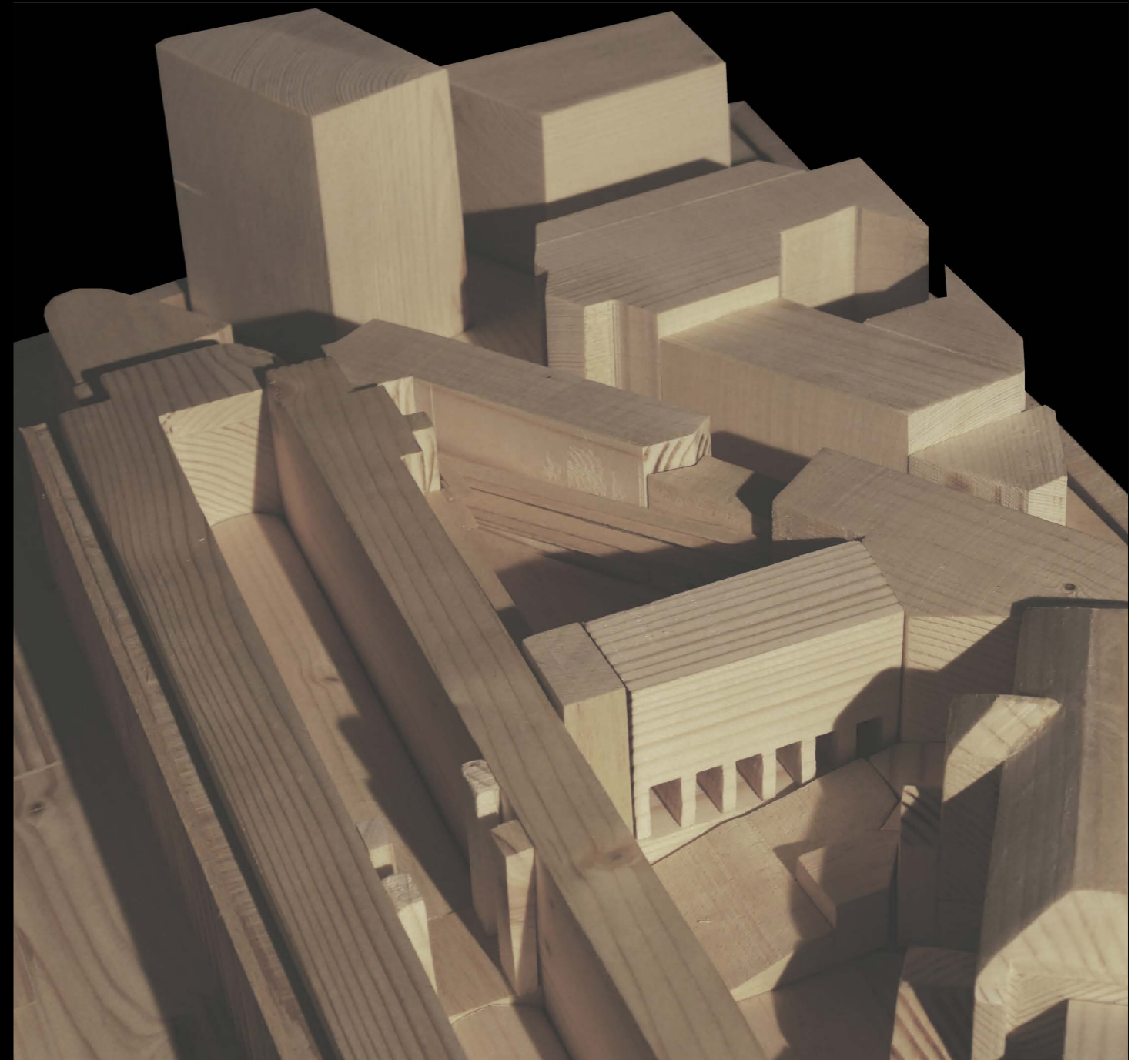
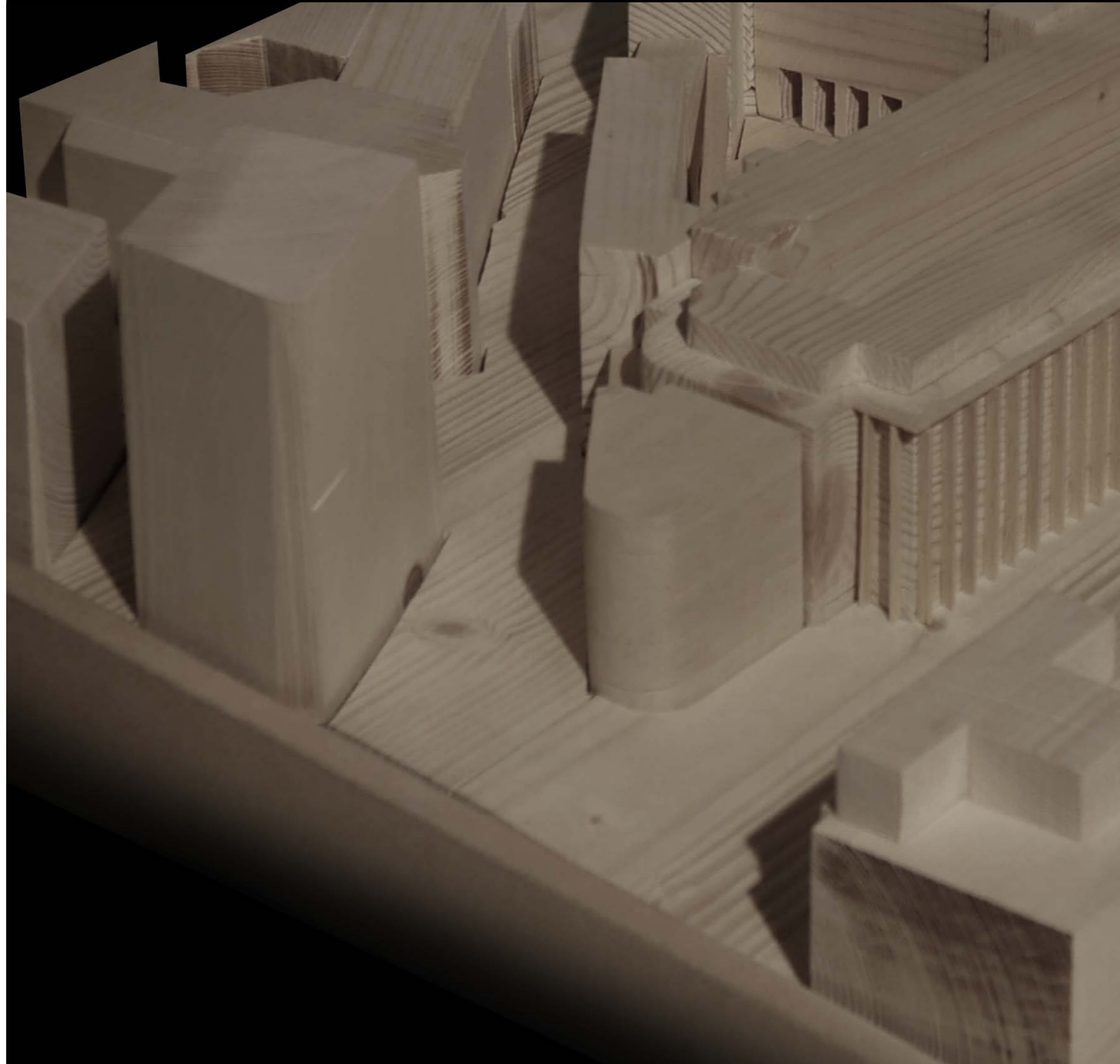


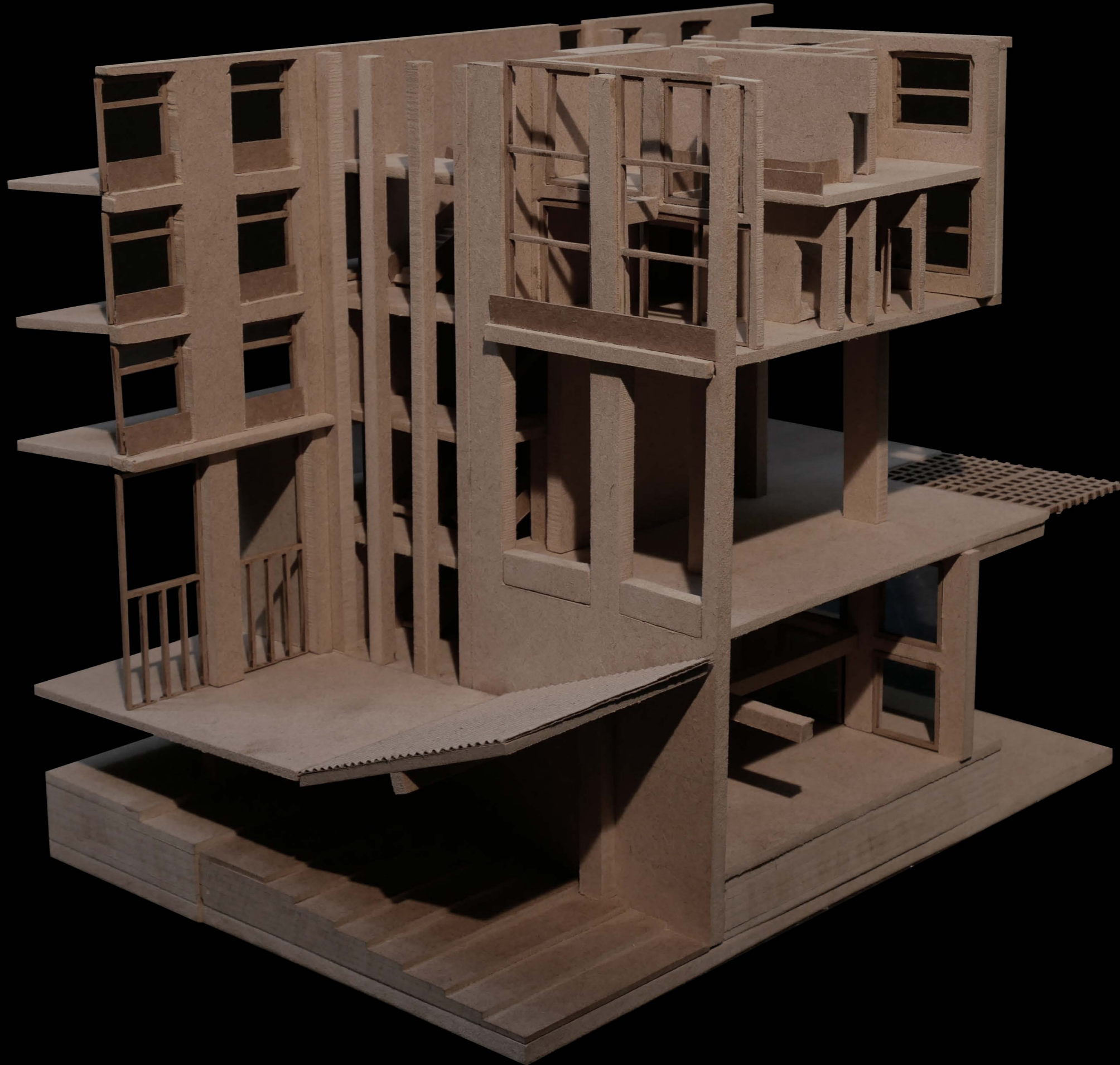


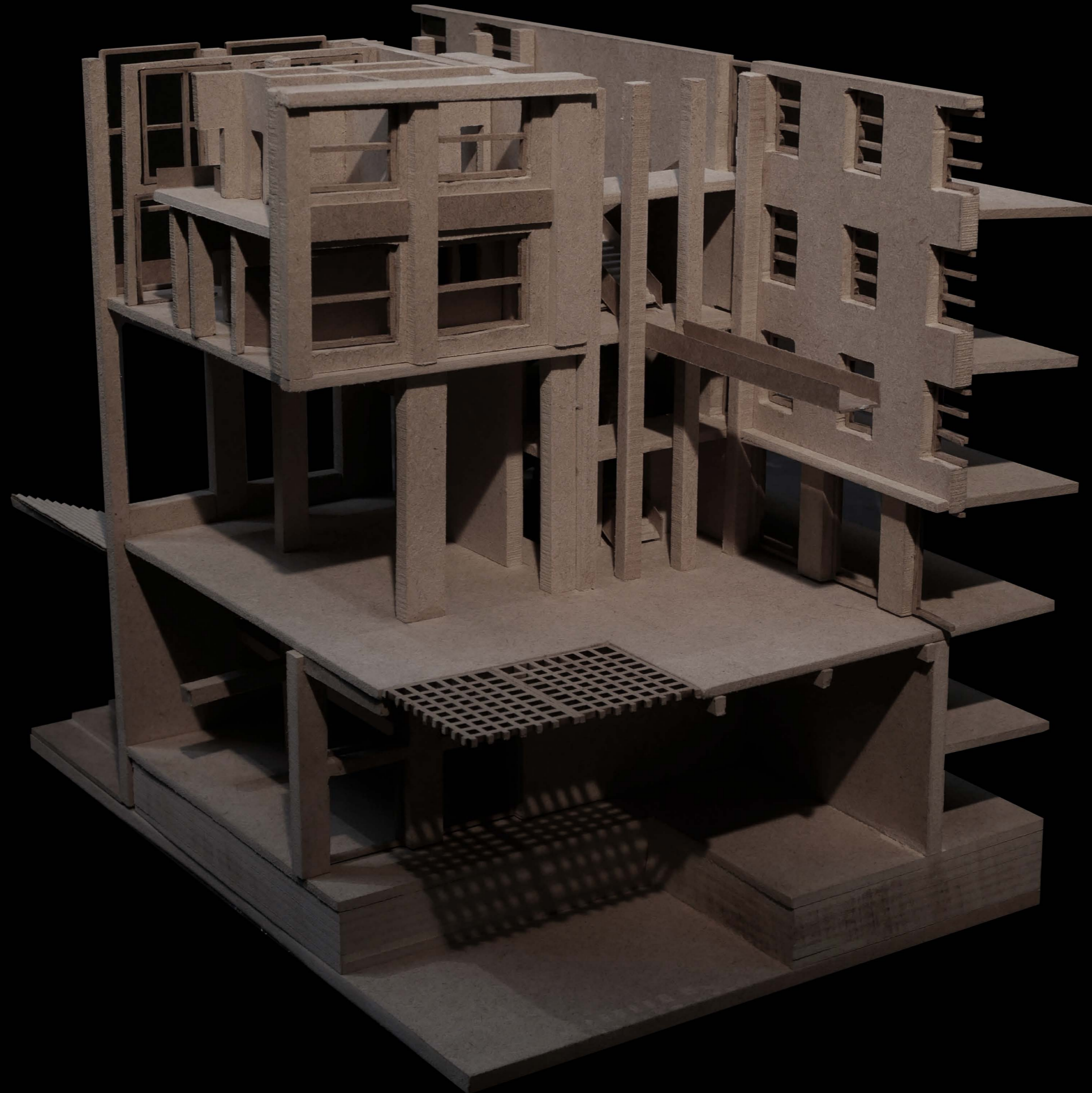


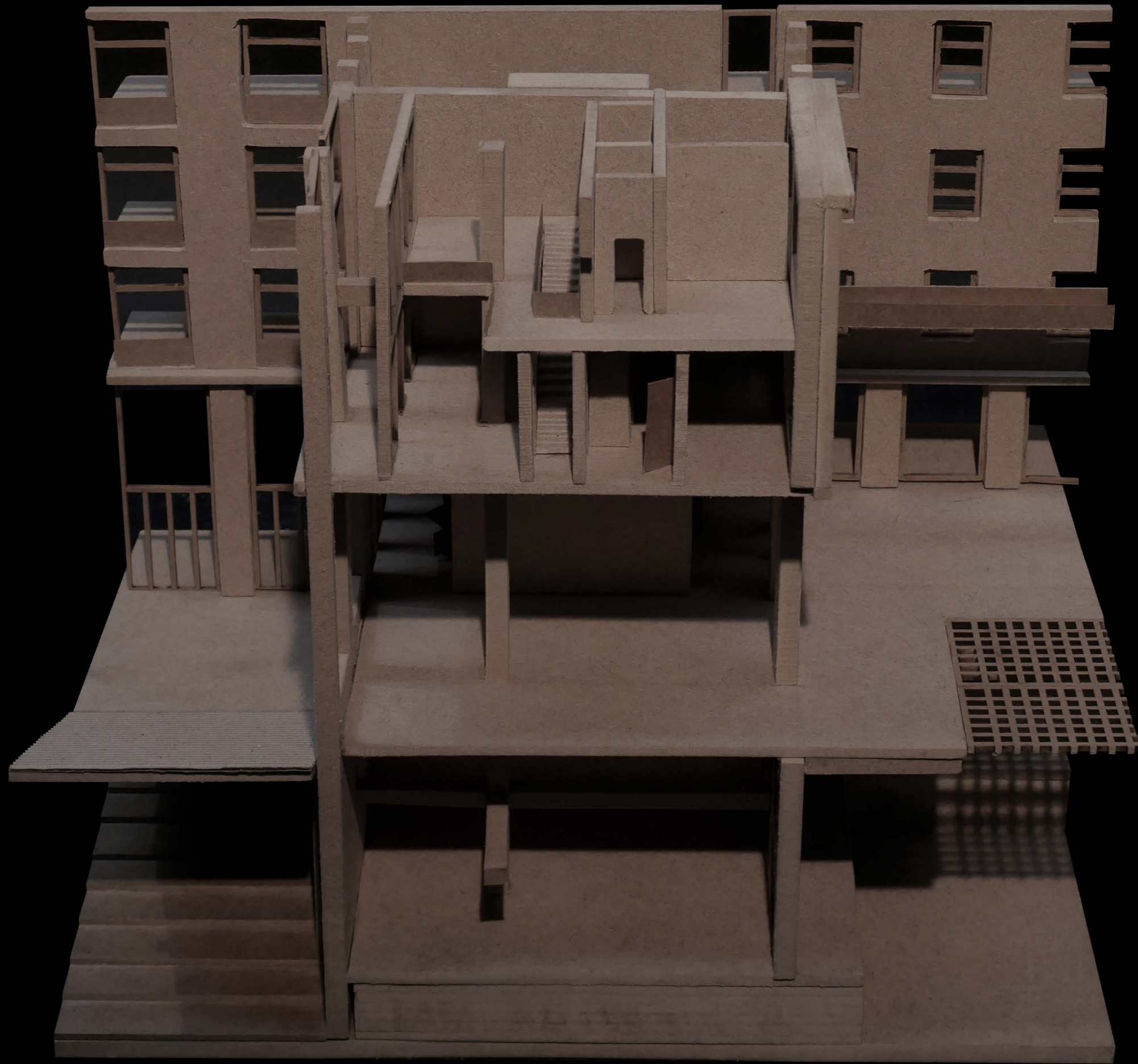






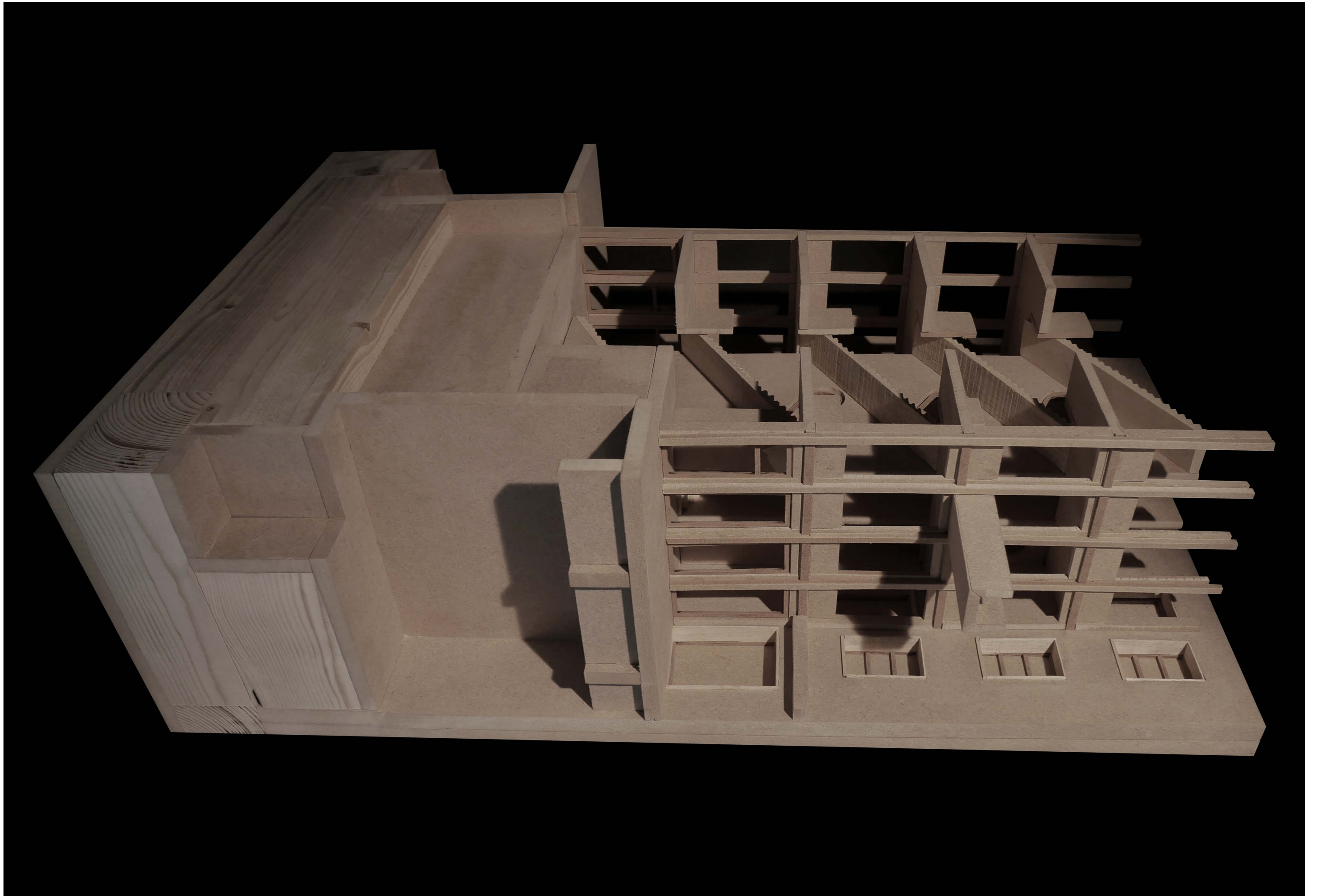


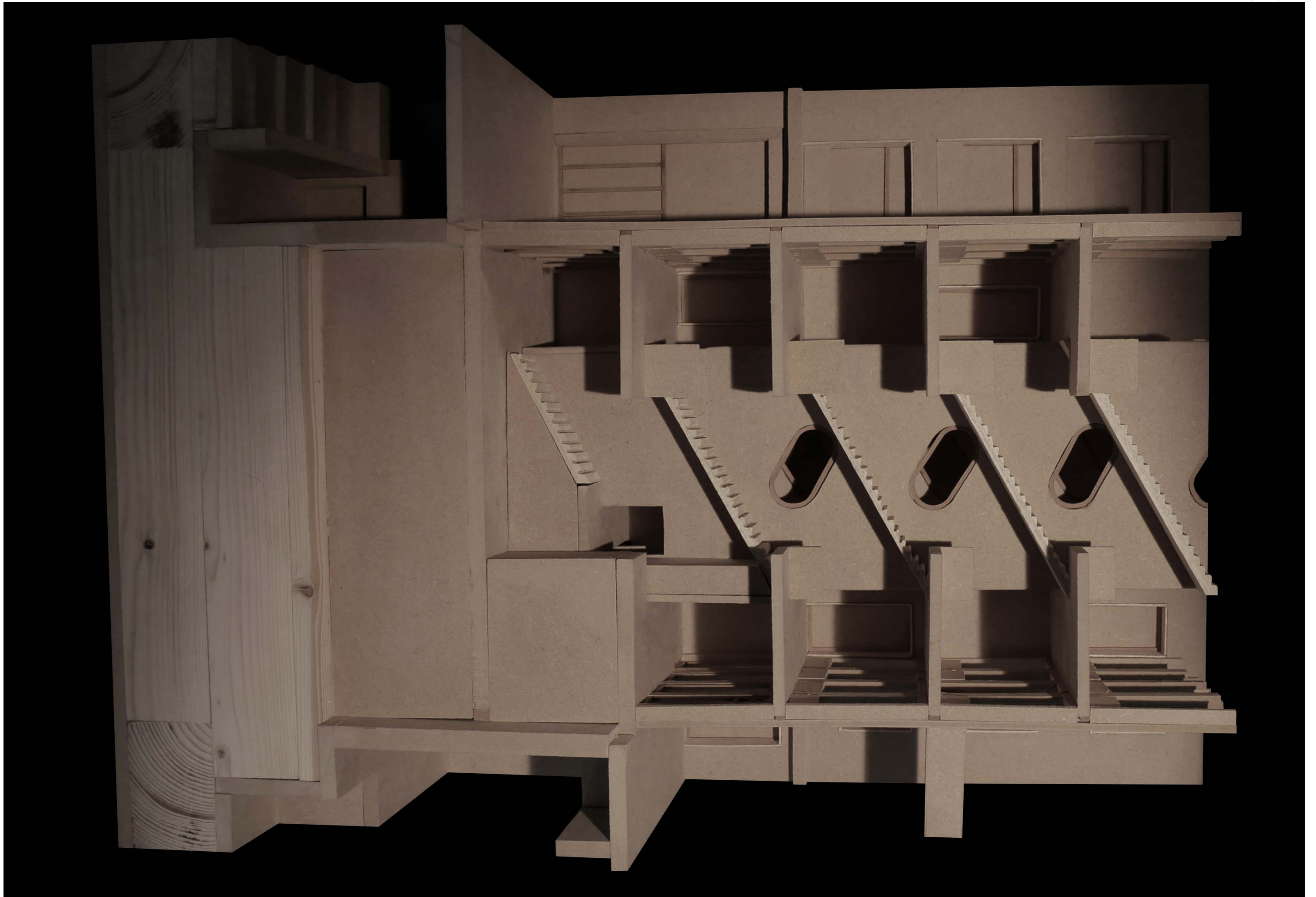
















REFLECTION

Following the line of thought established in the Research Plan, the project of the transformation of the offices of the National Bank of Belgium (NBB) has adopted a dramatically different scale from that of the office desk and workplace, a scale that deals with the public essence of the institution and the way this piece of estate sits in the city of Brussels.

The in depth analysis of the history of urban transformation of the city of Brussels, revealed the problems of the Central European capital cities during the second half of the 19th century, which have been unavoidably inherited by the city of the 21st century. The process of urban gentrification of the historic town, firstly by pushing out the working classes to the periphery in favour of the wealthy bourgeois and secondly exploiting land value financially erasing any hint of residential life from the old city at the heart of Brussels' Pentagon. The result of these consecutive processes of urban transformation can be read in space through the architectural typology of Brussels and have been explained in this research by means of the alley, the shopping arcade, the corner building and the blocks of Brusselization. Understanding them not only as architectural devices but also as urban figures has helped untangling the history of urban gentrification in Brussels which constructed through time a division between the rich bureaucratic upper eastern city and the working class neighbourhoods in lower western Brussels, articulated by a touristic uninhabited historic city where the National Bank of Belgium sits. More than anywhere else, Bd Berlaimont and the building of the NBB are examples of this urban transformation that has emptied from the residential life of this area of Brussels. In a process that anticipated Brusselization, the NBB made sure to erase a mixed block where housing and retail used to make a piece of the city to turn it into a monolithic impenetrable office block. This essen-

tial aspect of the site, together with the research make a project with three fundamental intentions:

Create a public route able to establish another point of connection between upper and lower Brussels, increasing the porosity of the city and the permeability of an existing urban structure. Reprogram the block to revert the process of Brusselization and erode its monolithic nature through the introduction of residential and retail functions. Maximise the value of the land property which is currently owned by the NBB to launch a program of affordable housing capable of setting a starting point to revert the process of gentrification and land speculation that has historically threatened the process of urban transformation of the city.

These three points become the nexus between the conclusions of the research and the design decisions that followed the P2 and P3 examinations. Therefore the final design proposal is concerned with each of these aspects, from the scale of the building mass and how it is oriented towards the city to the scale of a service staircase that tries to create a partition situation between two different programs embedded in the block. It is precisely in the mediation between scales, which is ultimately the materialisation of a research, where this particular studio provides the most appropriate framework for the project to develop. In this sense, despite the project not being restricted to the topic of the office space, the multiple conversations and study of references has been extremely useful to get acquainted with the importance of coherence in scale, from the city to the interior. Besides, the precise mapping of the existing situation of the building as part of the brief before P3 (Intelligent Ruin), has been relevant to create awareness about the necessity to work with what is already part of the site. Reuse seems like another recurrent theme

of the Studio which has truly enriched the project giving it a shade of reality and introducing the idea that urban transformation begins in the existing urban structures and not in imaginary visions.

It was always the intention of this project to remain within realistic constraints of an existing urban ruin and put emphasis on the current and historical power of policy making as one of the fundamental tools of the city which must be led by public institutions. The control of a market economy operating in the streets, squares, parks, interiors and buildings of our cities must be regarded not as a constraining factor but as a tool for equality in the city.

Land is far too precious to exist as private property.