

**BEYOND DIPLOMACY**  
Rethinking the Embassy

Diploma Thesis of Integrated Master Degree M.Arch.  
Διπλωματική Εργασία Ενοποιημένου Τίτλου Σπουδών M.Arch.

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This thesis' subject is to **re-examine and redefine the role of the embassy**. The main reason for my involvement with this topic is a historical event that affected the country I come from, while at the same time I find reason to combine it with Cyprus, where I have grown up and reside. More specifically in my work I deal with the case of the Serbian Embassy in Nicosia, and after finding various problems and deficiencies, both spatially and in terms of education and promotion of cultures, I decide to move it to a new location with the aim of its redevelopment. In the design I strategically select some places that were bombed by NATO in 1999 in Belgrade and use them by transcribing programmatic elements from them and their interconnected path through the urban fabric of the city, focusing on the memory of the city, but indirectly also of the bombing event. My goal is to succeed in transforming the role of the embassy from simply state-related to simultaneously educational and pedagogical using a more holistic approach, through the addition of activities and partially memory.

Η παρούσα διπλωματική εργασία έχει ως θέμα **να επανεξετάσει και να επαναπροσδιορίσει την έννοια της πρεσβείας**. Κύρια αφορμή για την ενασχόληση μου με το θέμα αυτό έθεσε ένα ιστορικό γεγονός που έπληξε την χώρα από την οποία κατάγομαι και ταυτόχρονα βρίσκω αφορμή να το συνδυάσω με την Κύπρο, όπου έχω μεγαλώσει και κατοικώ. Πιο συγκεκριμένα, λοιπόν, στην εργασία μου ασχολούμαι με την περίπτωση της πρεσβείας της Σερβίας στη Λευκωσία, και αφού βρίσκω διάφορα προβλήματα και ελλείψεις, χωρικά αλλά και σε θέματα διαπαιδαγώγησης και προώθησης των πολιτισμών, αποφασίζω να τη μεταφέρω σε νέα τοποθεσία με σκοπό την ανάπλαση της. Στον σχεδιασμό επιλέγω στρατηγικά κάποια σημεία τα οποία βομβαρδίστηκαν από το ΝΑΤΟ το 1999 στο Βελιγράδι και τα χρησιμοποιώ μεταγράφοντας προγραμματικά στοιχεία από αυτά, αλλά και της μεταξύ τους πορείας μέσω του αστικού ιστού της πόλης, εστιάζοντας στη μνήμη της πόλης, αλλά έμμεσα και του γεγονότος των βομβαρδισμών. Ο στόχος μου είναι να καταφέρω να μετατρέψω τον ρόλο της πρεσβείας από απλά κρατικό σε ταυτόχρονα εκπαιδευτικό και διαπαιδαγωγικό χρησιμοποιώντας μια πιο ολιστική προσέγγιση, μέσω της προσθήκης δραστηριοτήτων και εν μέρει της μνήμης.

## Contents

Chapter I - Initial Analysis.....	7-14	Moments in Plan.....	35
Historical Background.....	8-10	Section.....	36
Correlation of Events.....	11	Section.....	37
Introduction to the Embassy.....	12	Isometric Section.....	38
Current Existing Embassy.....	13	Collage.....	39
Current Existing Embassy Issues.....	14	Bibliography.....	40
Chapter II - Proposal Development.....	15-27		
New Site.....	16-17		
References.....	18		
Urban Fabric through Belgrade's Points.....	19		
Belgrade's Points.....	20		
Program.....	21		
Initial Form Development.....	22		
Building Sections.....	23		
Scaffolding Concept.....	24		
Addition & Subtraction Method.....	25		
Circulation.....	26		
Danube Courtyard.....	27		
Chapter III - Final Proposal.....	28-39		
Ground Floor Plan.....	29		
Collage.....	30		
Collage.....	31		
First Floor Plan.....	32		
Collage.....	33		
Second Floor Plan.....	34		

CHAPTER I

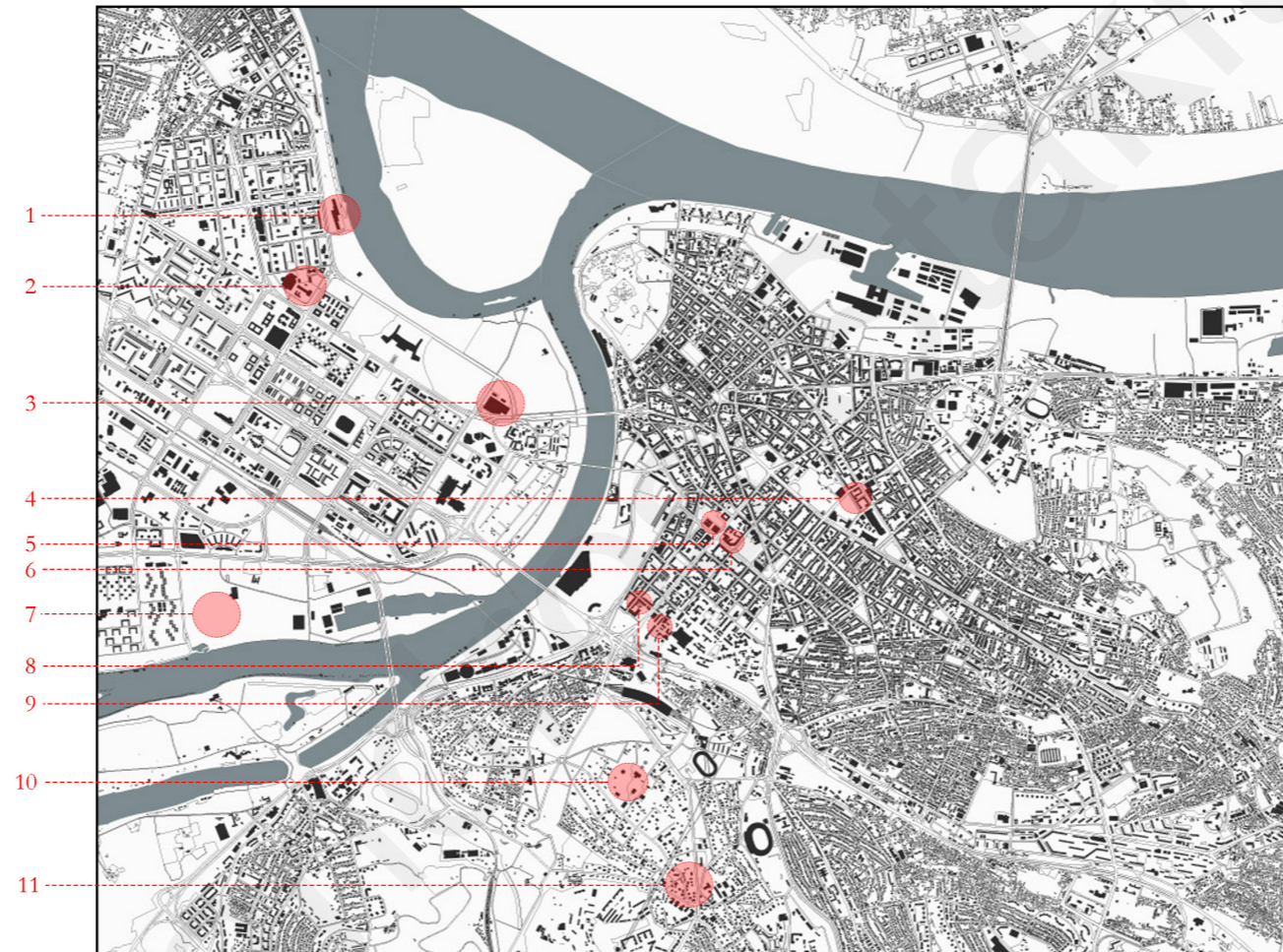
**INITIAL ANALYSIS**

Alexandros Stakits



Serbia is a nation historically plagued by wars, so much so that they form a large part of its history. This work will focus on one of these several dark periods of the country, that of 1999 and **Operation Allied Force**.







“Operation Allied Force” was the name given to **NATO’s operation of bombing Serbian territories**. The event was caused by the war in Kosovo in 1998, where the Serbian forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army were in a state of conflict. It was then that NATO took the initiative to get involved and attempt to calm the situation by proposing peace agreements between the two states which required the deployment of peacekeeping troops on the territories within Kosovo. Serbia refused to sign these agreements, giving NATO an excuse to forcibly place its troops in Kosovo. This resulted in more tensions and resistance from the Serbian forces, which led to the - illegal, as no UN approval was obtained - bombing of the country between 24 March and 10 June 1999.

















- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. “Jugoslavija” Hotel                                | 7. Belgrade Heating Plant                      |
| 2. Embassy of China                                   | 8. Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs        |
| 3. Ušće Tower   | 9. Republic Ministry of Internal Affairs       |
| 4. Radio-Television of Serbia (RTS)                   | 10. Residence of Former President of FRY, Tito |
| 5. Palace of the Government of the Republic of Serbia | 11. Clinical-Hospital Center                   |
| 6. Former Yugoslav Army Headquarters                  |  |

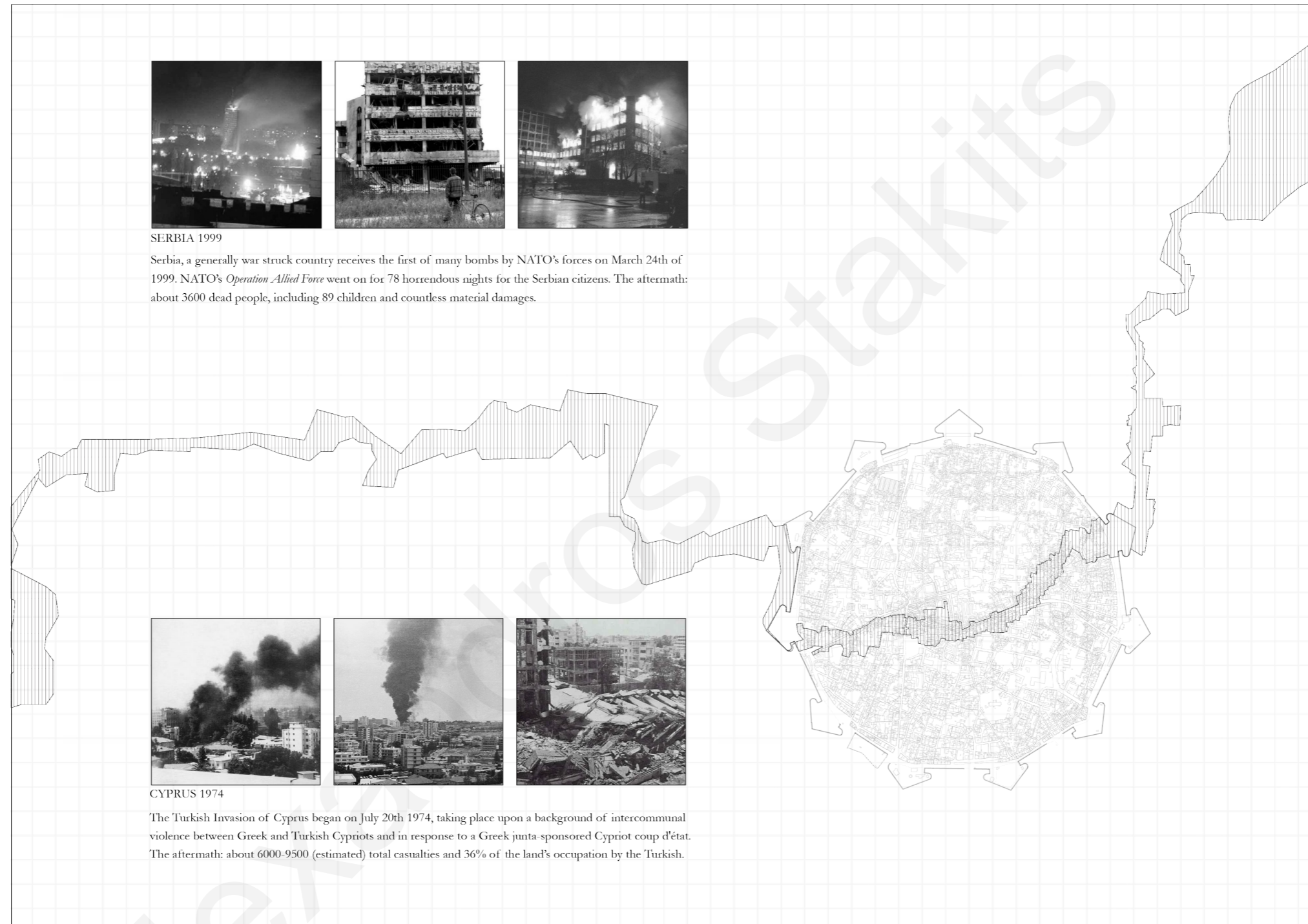
The country’s capital, Belgrade, which this project focuses on, was strategically bombed in **11 places**. These included mainly **government buildings, buildings housing media facilities**, but also places with **civilian population**. One of the places bombed was the residence of the then President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Tito. The whole incident lasted for 78 consecutive days, with some places being bombed more than once.



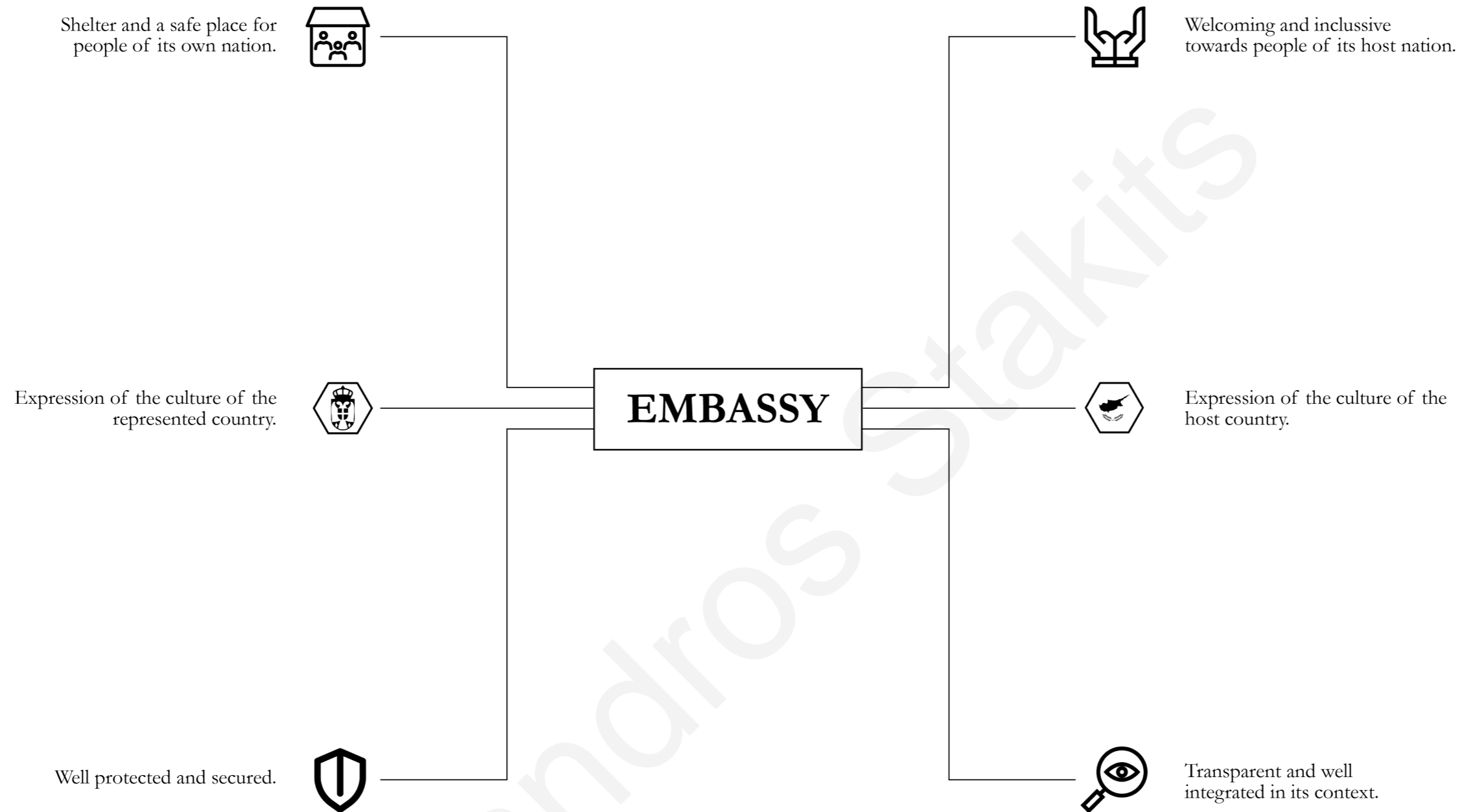
Location	Before	During	Today
1. “Jugoslavija” Hotel			
2. Embassy of China			
3. Ušće Tower			
4. Radio-Television of Serbia (RTS)			
5. Palace of the Government of the Republic of Serbia			

Location	Before	During	Today
6. Former Yugoslav Army Headquarters			
7. Belgrade Heating Plant			
8. Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs			
9. Republic Ministry of Internal Affairs			
10. Residence of Former President of FRY, Tito			





During my initial analysis, I decided that I wanted the project I was going to propose to be based in Cyprus, so I chose to deal with the issue of the embassy which involves **2 states**, the one it **represents** and the one that **hosts** it. Because of this I took the opportunity to draw parallels between the event in Serbia and the **Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974**, connecting the 2 nations through their tough periods and then somehow transcribe/narrate them through the design of my proposal.

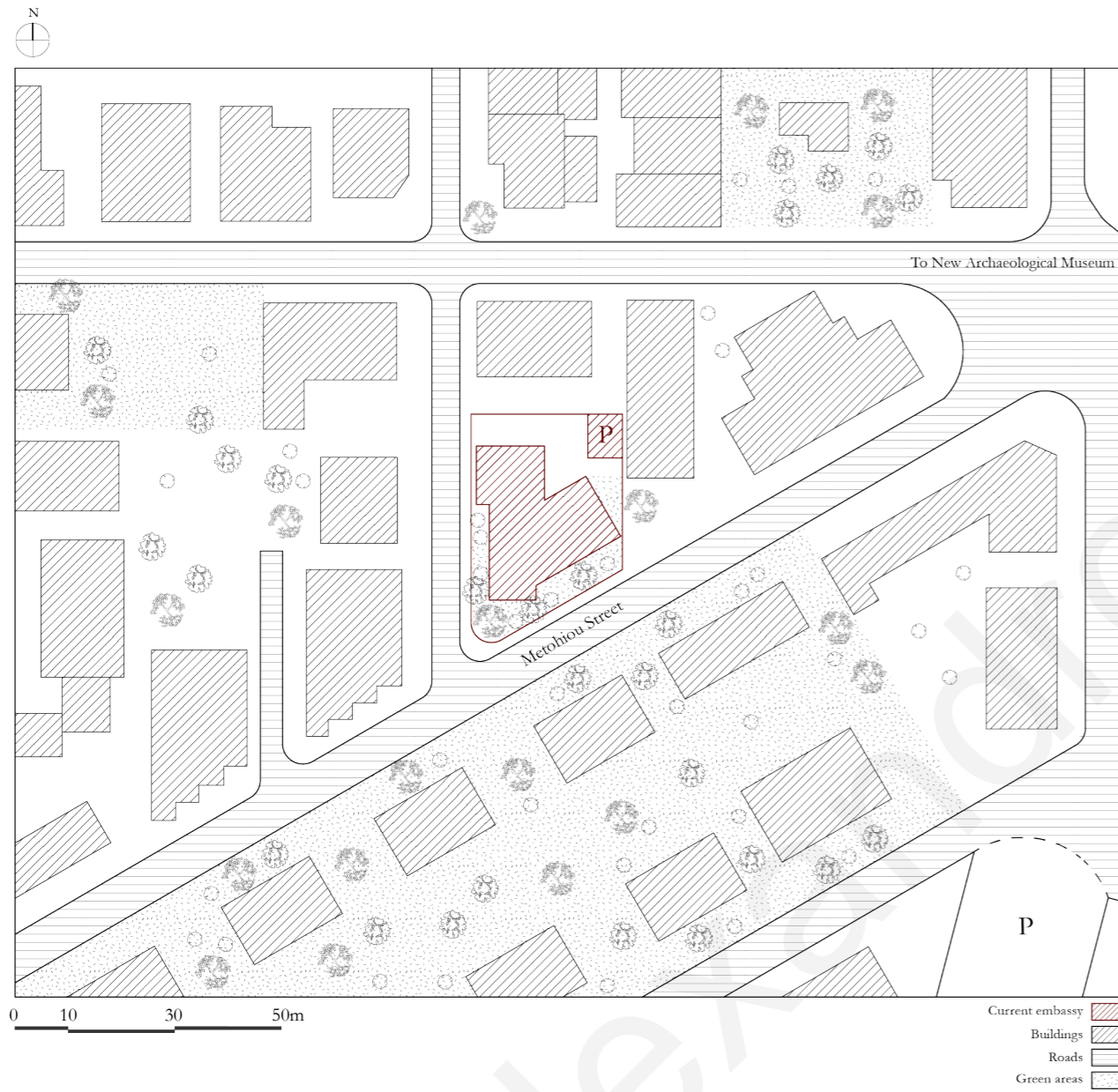


To begin with, **what constitutes an embassy?**

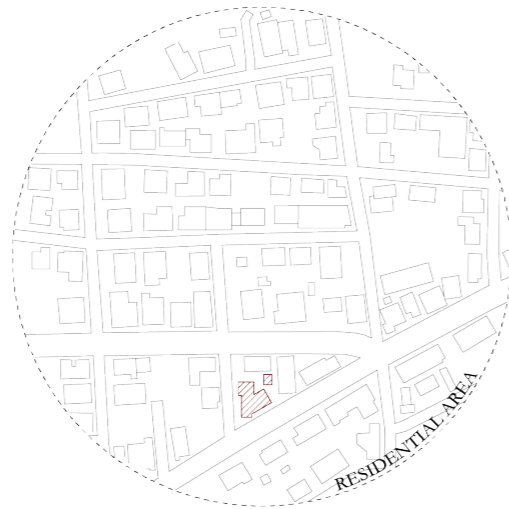
An embassy, in political terms, is the diplomatic mission of one country within another, which offers a range of services, mainly consular. Being a foreign territory within the country, it may be considered by many as **unwelcome**. For this reason, it is advisable for these embassy postings to be carried out in a **transparent** and **friendly** manner, but without altering their strict identity. Through my research, therefore, I have come up with **6 categories** of characteristics that an embassy must meet in order to be successful and accepted in the environment in which it is located.

These categories are as follows:

1. to provide safety and the feeling of a shelter for the people of its own nation.
2. to be welcoming and include people of the host nation as part of them (i.e. through organized activities).
3. to represent the culture of its own nation.
4. to represent the culture of its host nation.
5. as a governmental building hosting important people, to be well protected and defensive.
6. to be welcoming, transparent and integrated in its context.







#### ISSUES REGARDING AREA

- Placed inside a residential area
- Far from any cultural facilities
- Far from the city center
- Difficult for parking nearby

#### ISSUES REGARDING APPEARANCE

- Not having any features deriving from the Serbian culture
- Difficult to identify and locate
- “Inward” designed
- Unwelcoming and unfriendly

#### ISSUES REGARDING SPATIAL QUALITIES

- Not enough space to cover all the needs of the embassy and staff
- Not enough outdoor space
- Not enough space for desired extensions and activities

#### ISSUES REGARDING PROMOTING THE CULTURES

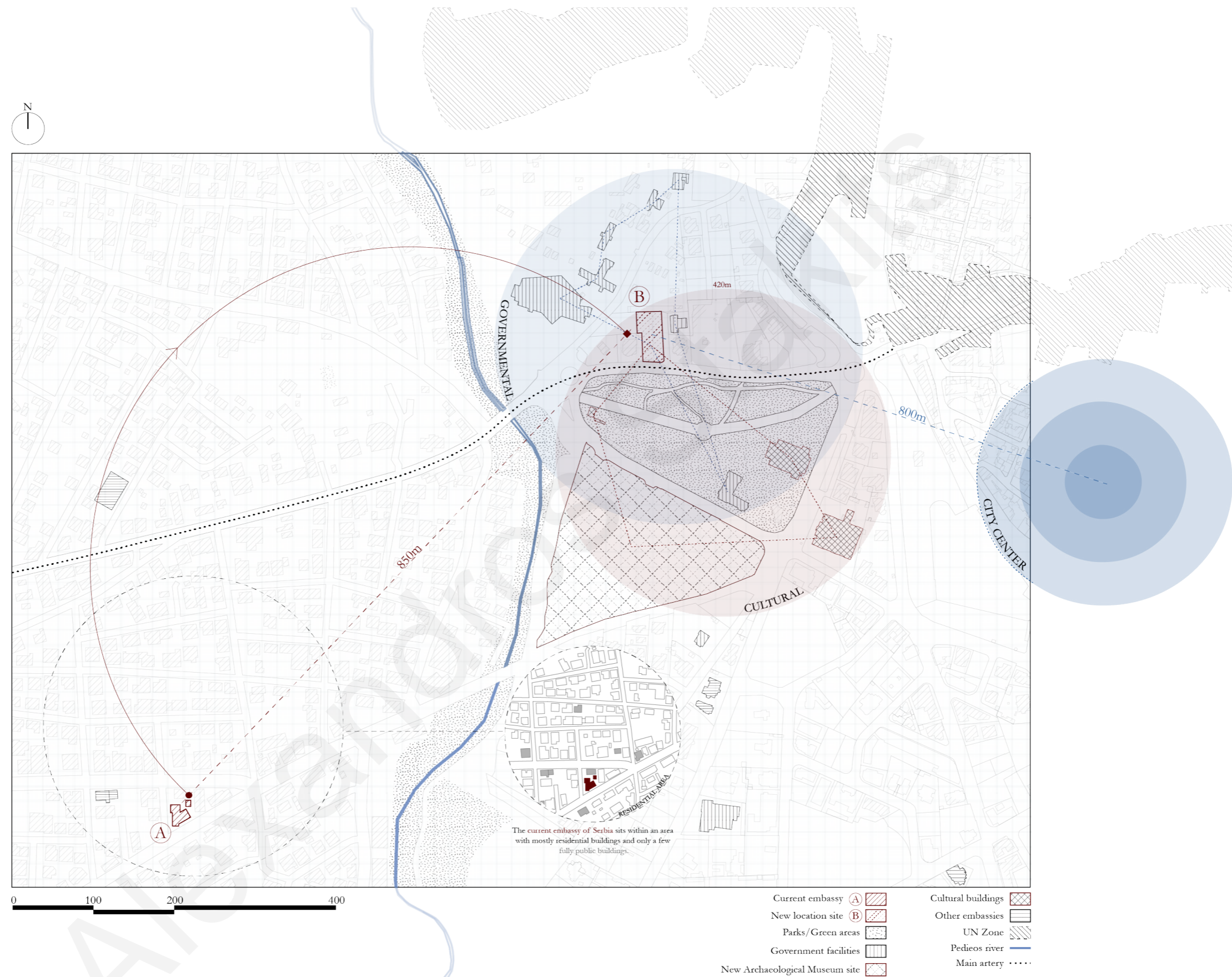
- Not enough space to include culture promotion activities
- Not enough focus on the educational potential of an embassy

For the purposes of this project, I am specifically dealing with the case of the Serbian Embassy in Nicosia. The existing building that houses the embassy is an old mansion on the corner between Metohiou and Vasilissis Olga streets in the area of Engomi. The building is in a **residential area** and is a little **difficult to locate**. The **dense vegetation** in its surroundings and the **lack of features of Serbian culture** are the main reasons for this, since the only feature that could be considered inspired by the country is the addition of brick in some parts of the facade.

However, the issues do not stop at the exterior of the building and its placement, since after contacting the embassy staff it was found that the space allotted to the embassy is considered **insufficient** to meet the needs of the embassy and its staff, as well as for development in terms of education and promotion of culture and relations between the 2 countries. In view of the issues mentioned, I decided that the new proposal should include the **redevelopment of the embassy**, and since the existing location and space were deemed unsuitable, it is a fact that they should be changed.

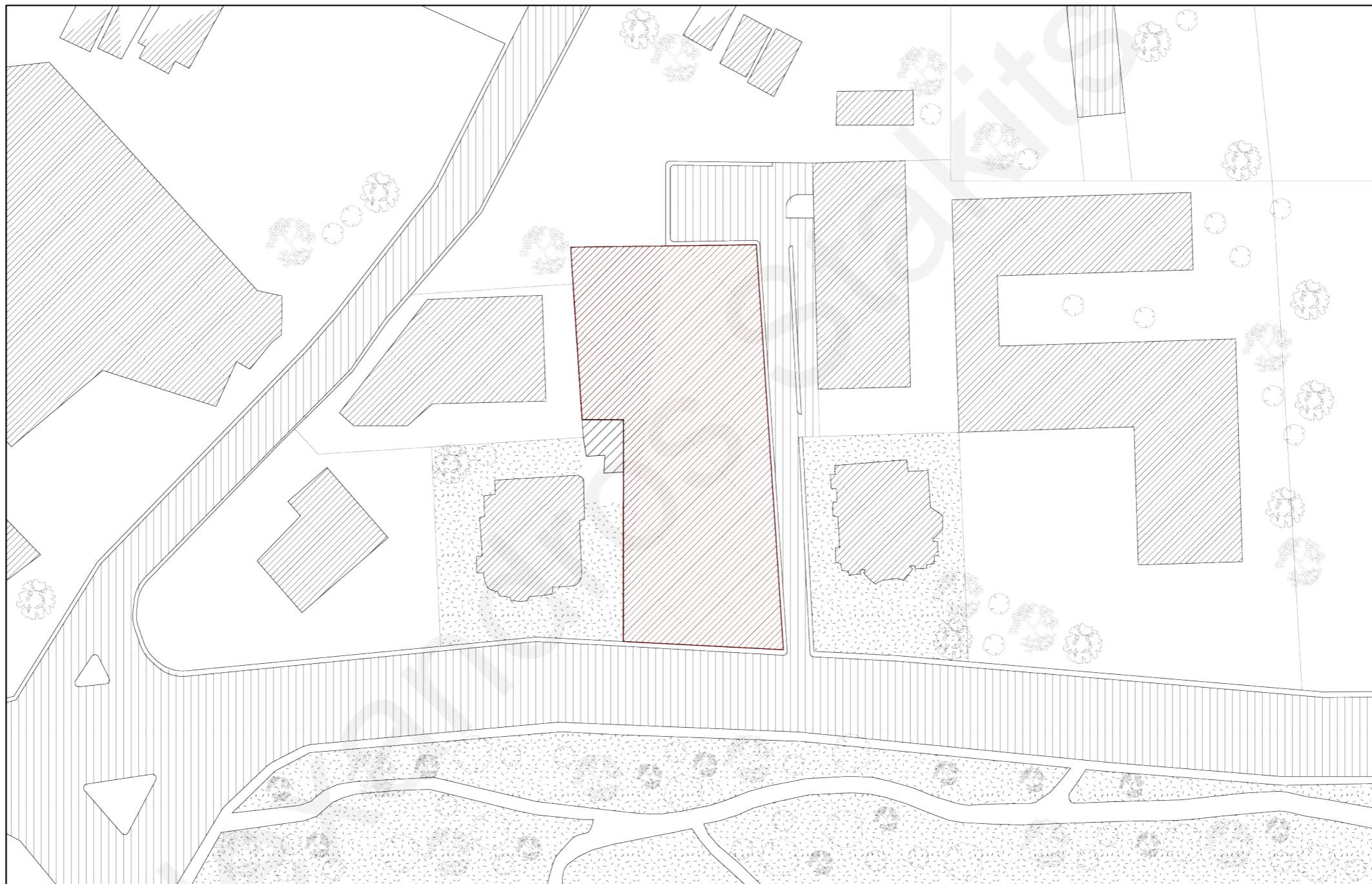
CHAPTER II

**PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT**







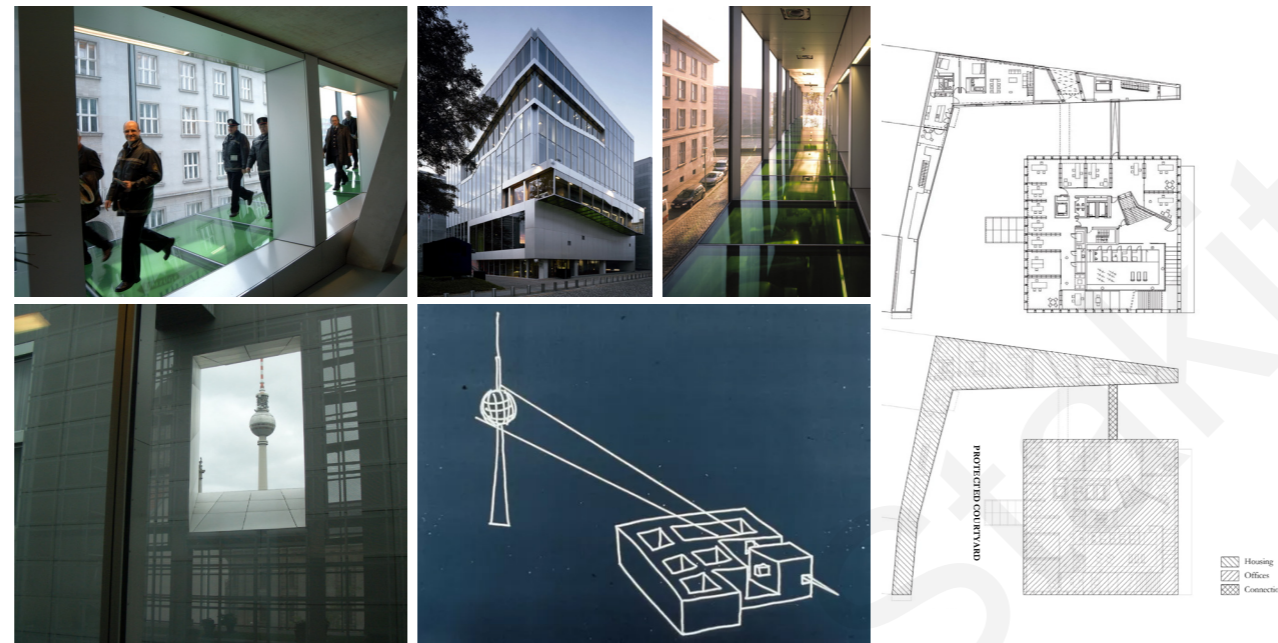
After examining various spots in the area, I considered this one (Point B), which is located next to the Town Planning Department and opposite the municipal garden, to be the most suitable. This particular spot is a hub of various **government** and **cultural facilities**, as well as being in close proximity to the **buffer zone**, thus linking the event of the Turkish invasion, and also the **Pedieos River** passes next to it, thus linking the memory of Belgrade with the Sava and Danube rivers.



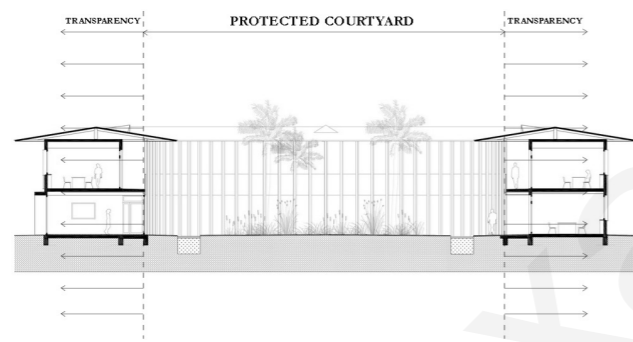
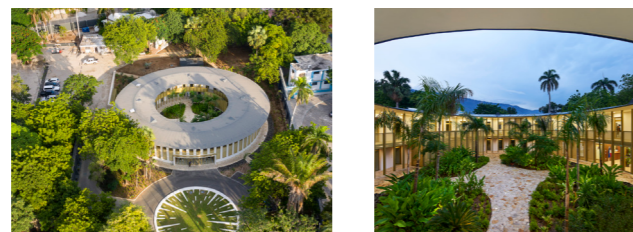


0 10 20 40

- Site 
- Buildings 
- Roads 
- Green areas 



Dutch Embassy in Berlin, OMA



French Embassy in Haiti, Explorations Architecture



Embassy of Finland in New Delhi, ALA Architects

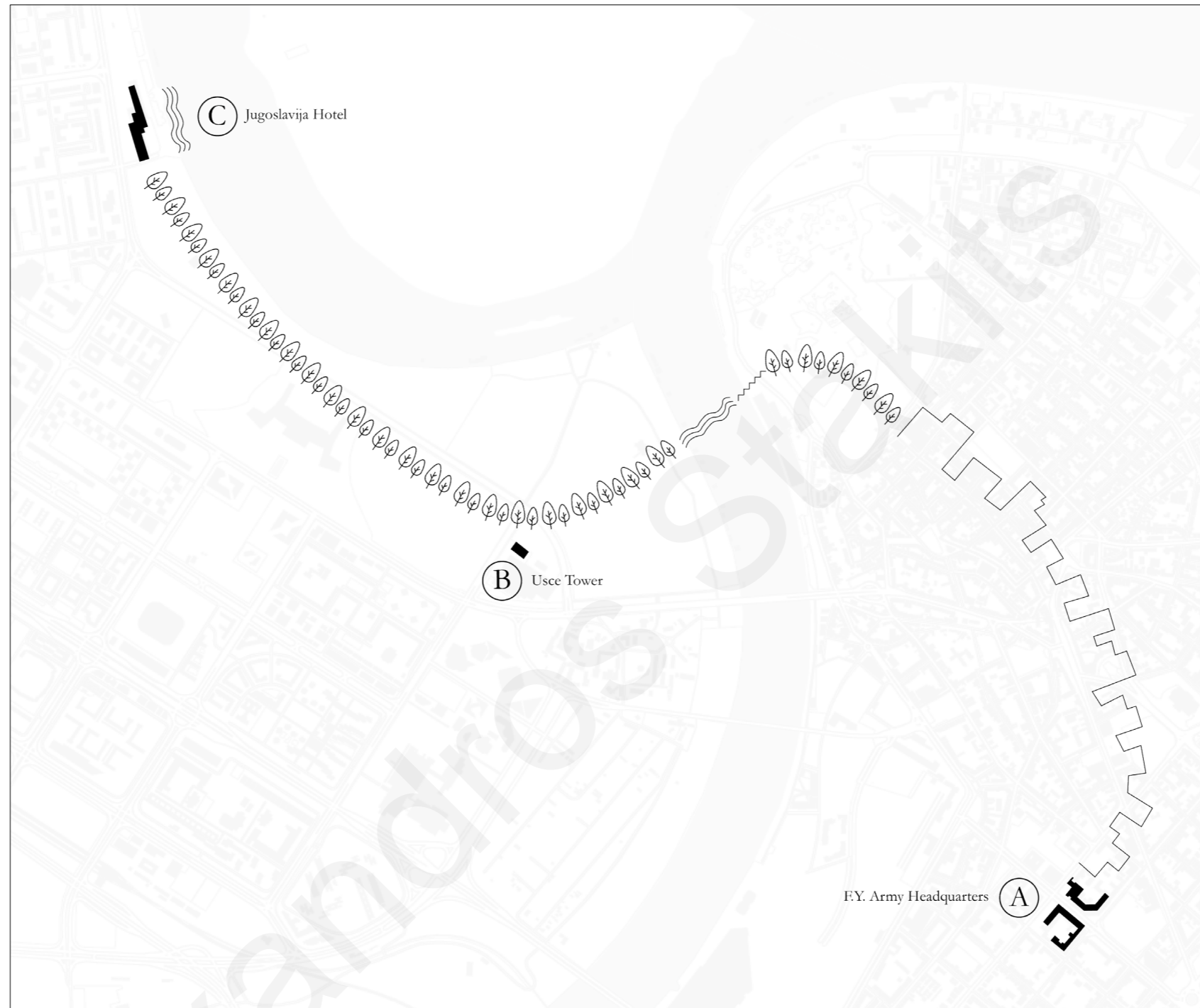


Embassy of Canada in Washington D.C., Arthur Erickson

With a view to the new proposal, a number of projects of a similar nature were examined from which different elements were drawn. Firstly, the Dutch Embassy in Berlin by OMA, is of interest in the way it manages movements. The **circulation** is essentially the main part of the building, while the other spaces such as offices etc. are placed in a secondary stage around it. The corridors are also used by the staff as meeting places. Also interesting is how **the building narrates the city**, for example through views to specific parts of it. Finally, I see how they manipulate the levels of privacy between the buildings, placing the embassy building at the street, and at the back, residences for the staff, creating a protected intermediate outdoor space.

In some other projects, 1st the embassy of France I see the management of **privacy levels** between the inside and the surrounding, in the embassy of Finland in India the **integration of the 2 cultures** in the proposal, which I use more conceptually and programmatically than architecturally, and finally in the Canadian embassy in the US important is that a part of the building is dedicated for the purpose of **exhibiting Canadian artists**.

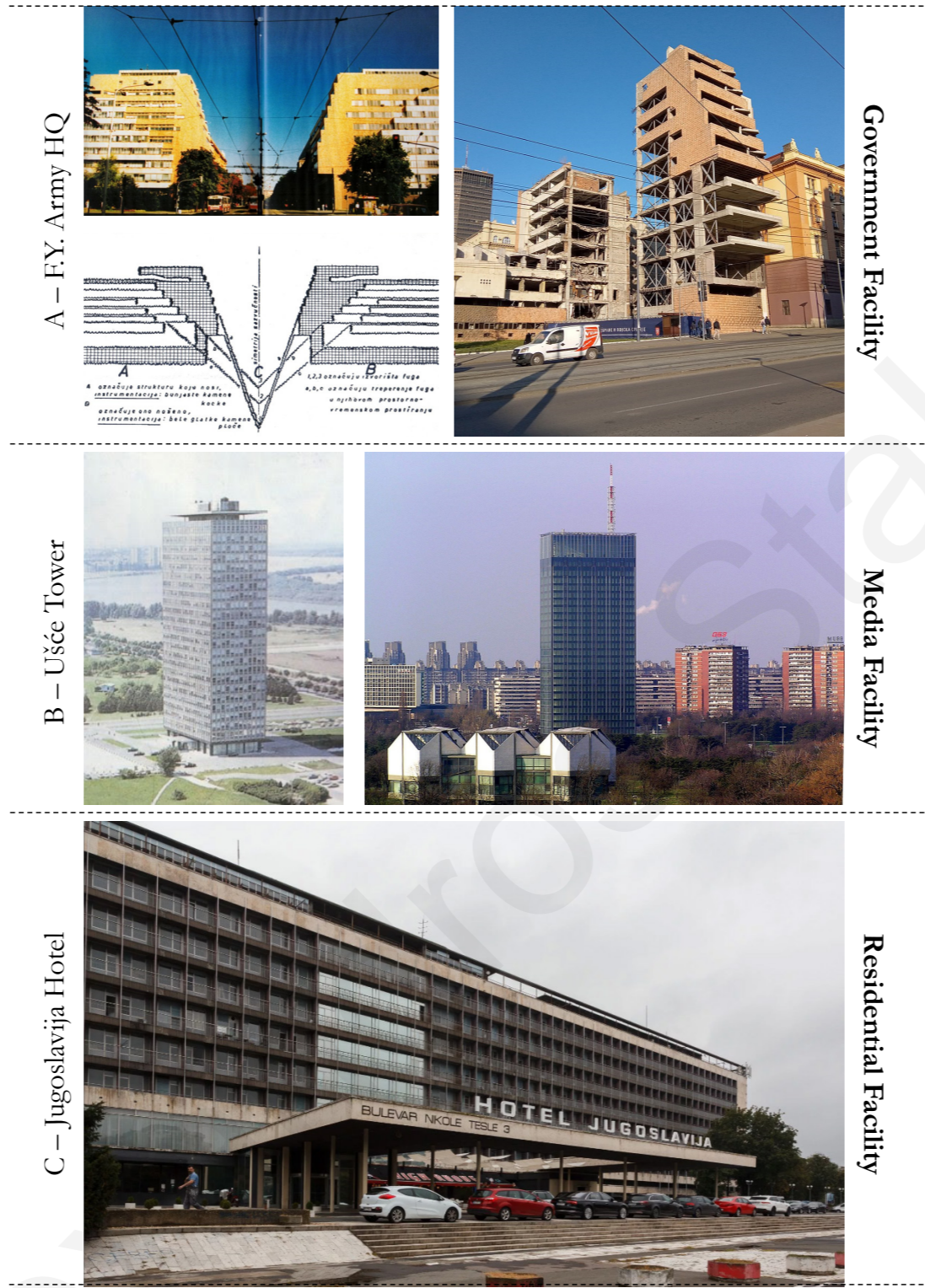




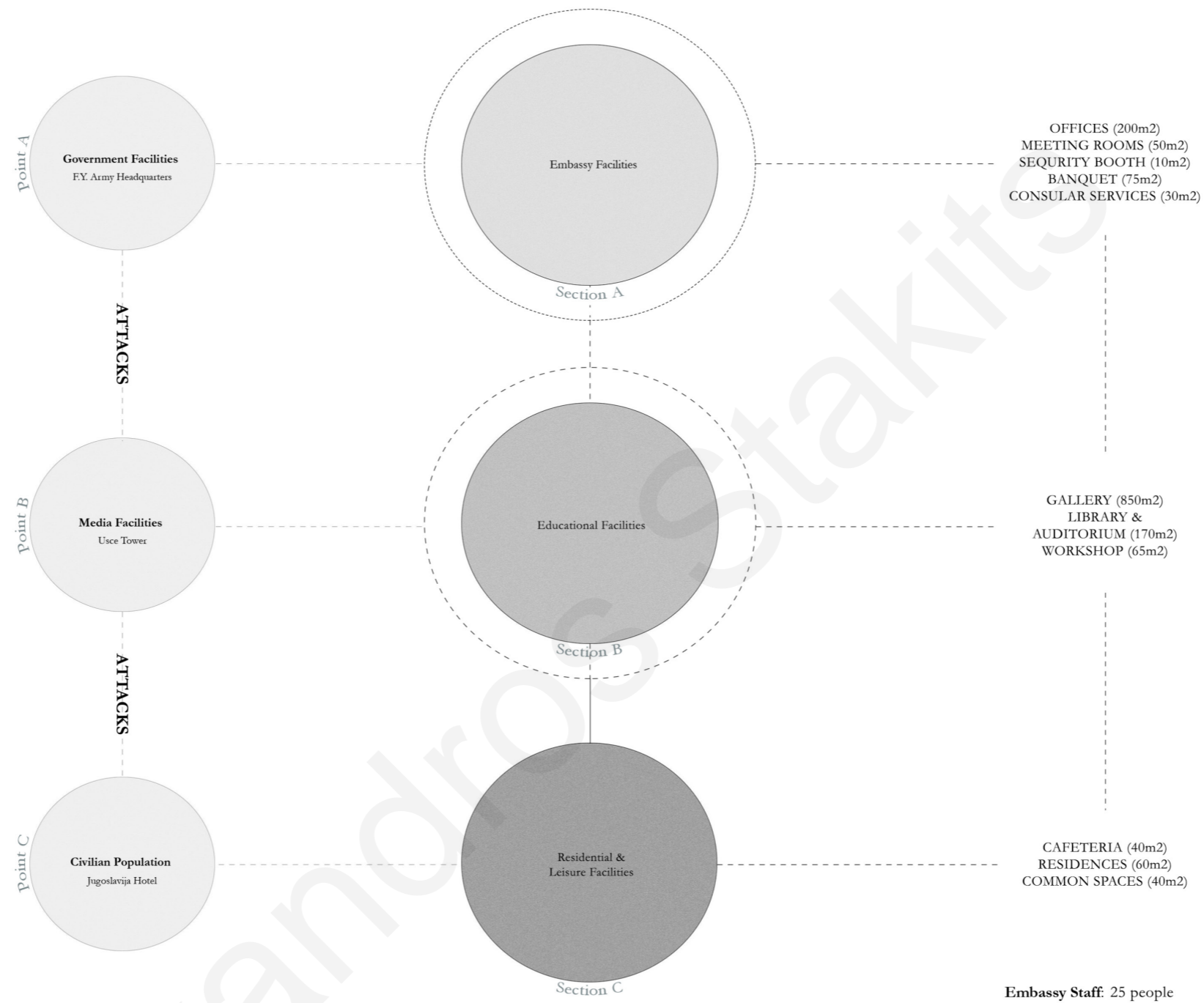
After having seen the attacks in Belgrade, we can conclude that there are **3 types/categories of attacks**, which are:

1. Attacks on **government buildings**,
2. Attacks on **media buildings**,
3. Attacks on **civilian population**.

Based on this, 3 of the most important sites that were bombed, one from each category, are selected and characteristics of the path between them through the urban fabric of the city, such as the **nature element, ups and downs within the city, and the path through the built environment** are recorded.

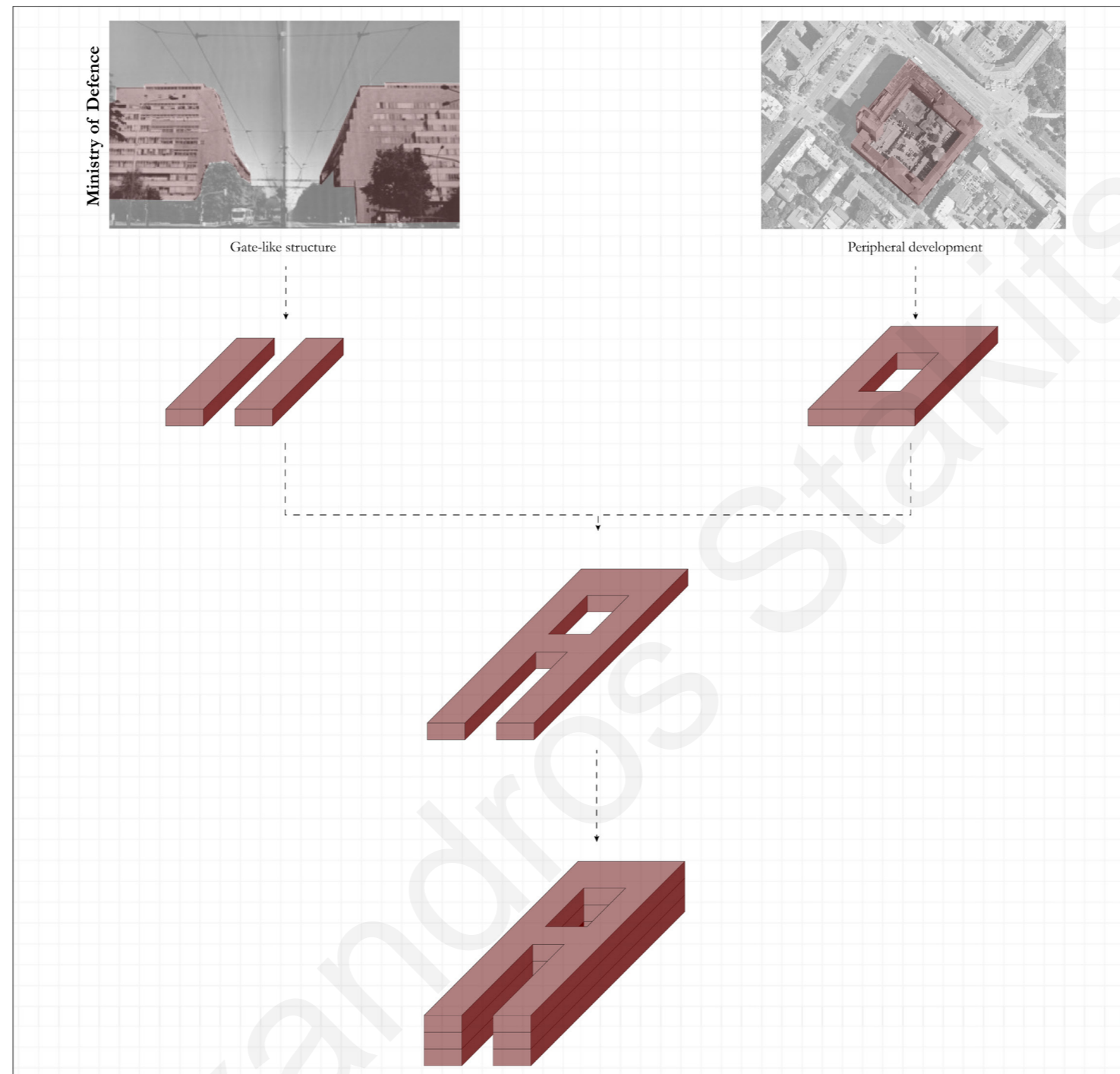


Focusing on each point individually, **programmatic elements** of these points are taken into account, mainly their uses, which I will then attempt to transcribe programmatically in my own proposal.

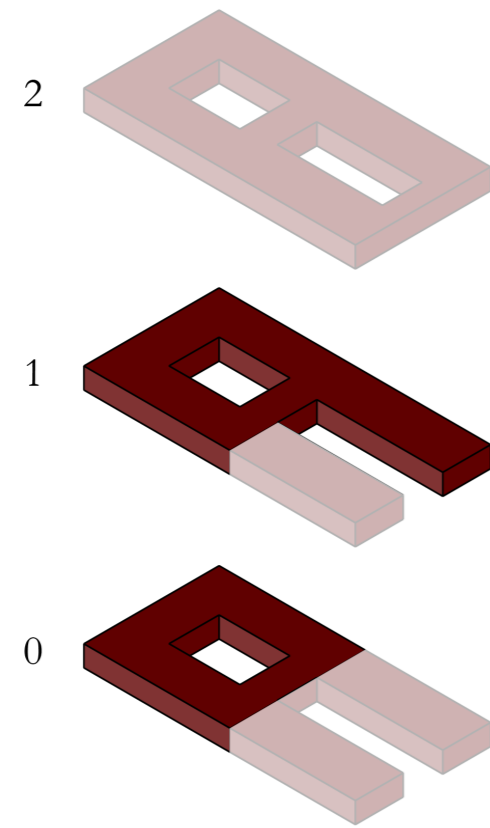


The new proposal will include 3 main sections of spaces: **the embassy spaces, the educational spaces, and the residential and recreational spaces**, which respectively parallel the 3 main categories of attacks in Belgrade. The media, being the means of connecting the ordinary citizen (civilian population) with the government, the proposal will attempt to perform the same role through the educational facilities being the bond of the ordinary citizen with the embassy and the culture of the represented nation.

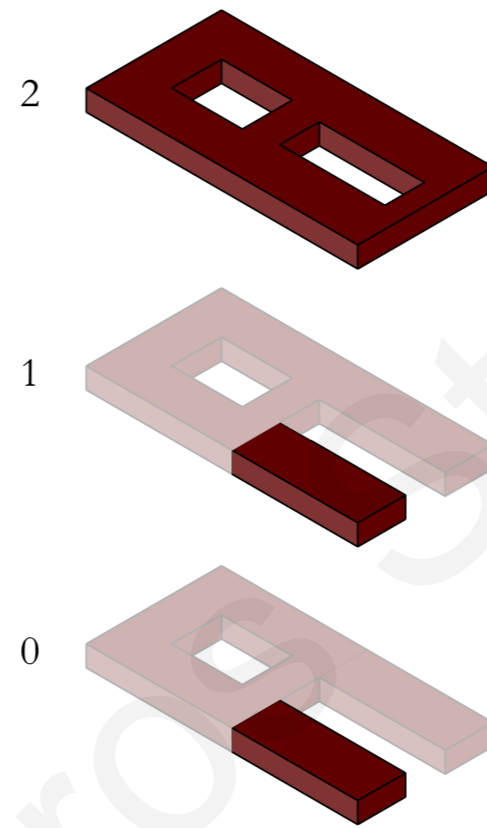




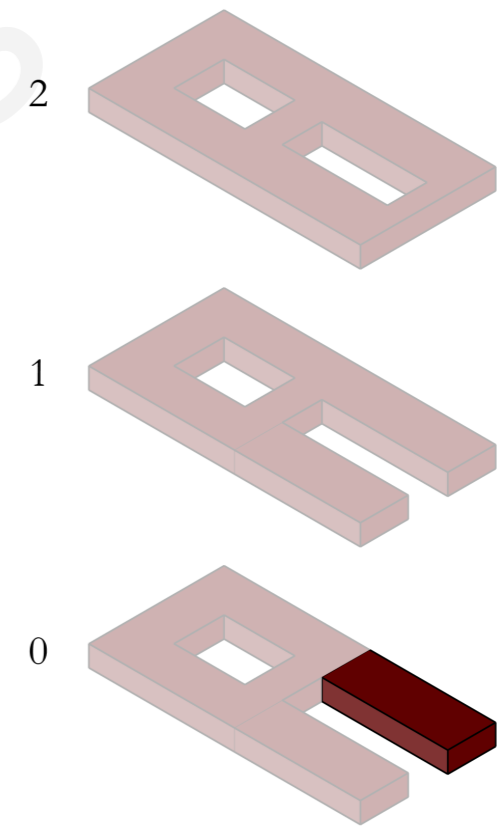
As a starting point for the design I use Point A, the buildings that housed the headquarters of the army of the former Yugoslavia. From this I extract the elements of the **peripheral development**, but also the development to the left and right of the street where they create a reference, or a **“city gate” point of the city of Belgrade**.



**SECTION A**  
Embassy Facilities

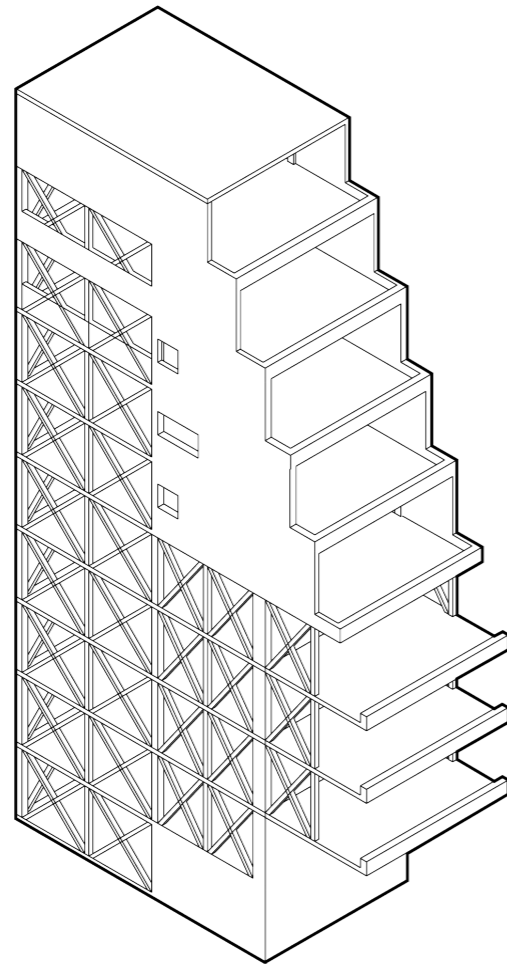


**SECTION B**  
Educational Facilities

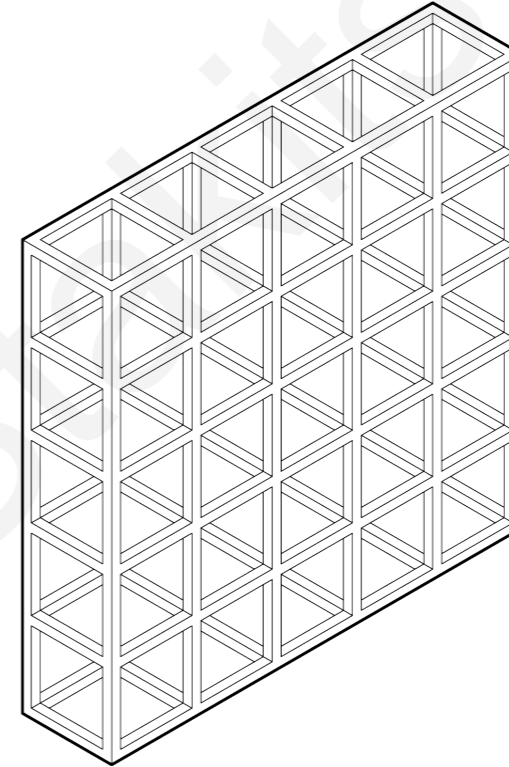


**SECTION C**  
Residential & Leisure  
Facilities

I then look at the placement of the sections within the building, keeping the embassy spaces in the back to maintain the necessary privacy. The educational spaces such as the library and the exhibition are placed towards the main street in front, in a way that they are the users' and passers-by's first contact with the building. The exhibition occupies the entire area of the top floor, creating views towards specific points in occupied Cyprus.

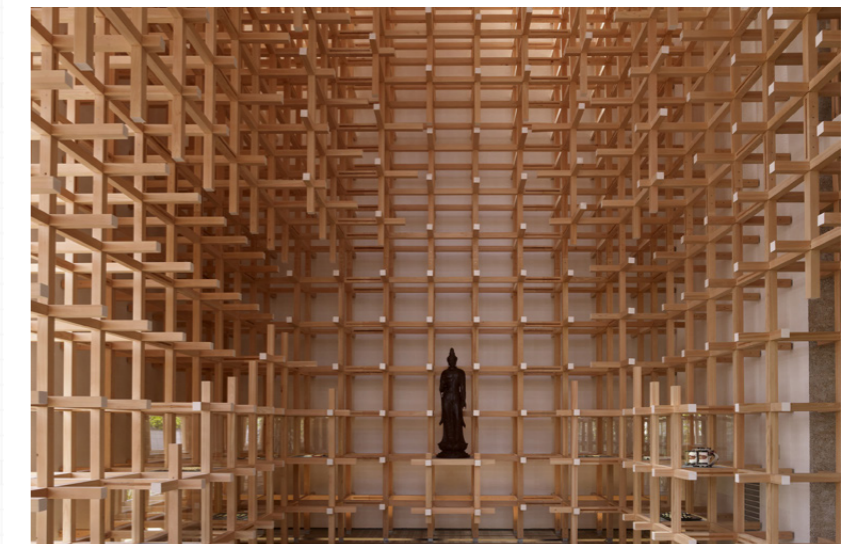
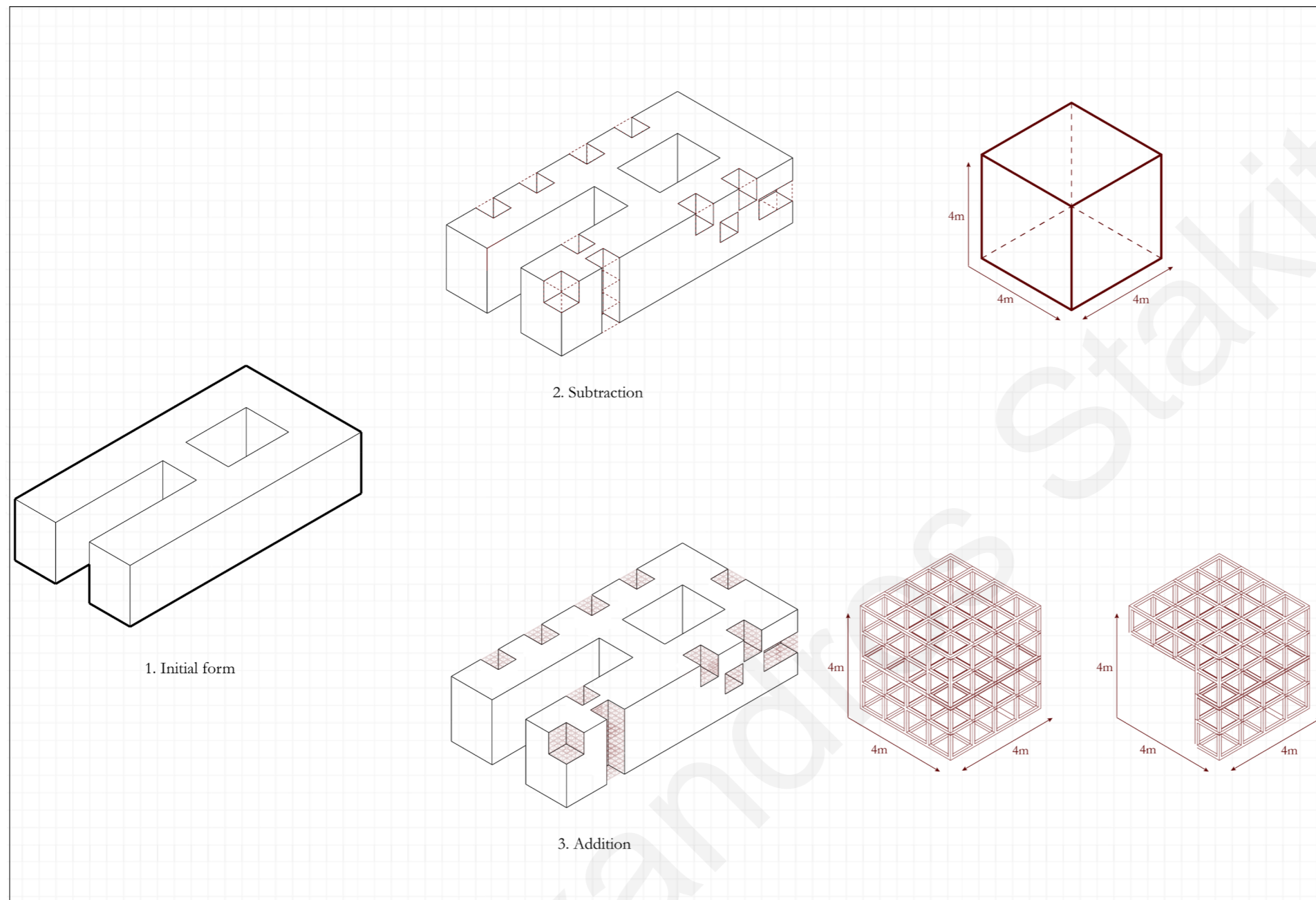


Current state of the F.Y. Army Headquarters in Belgrade



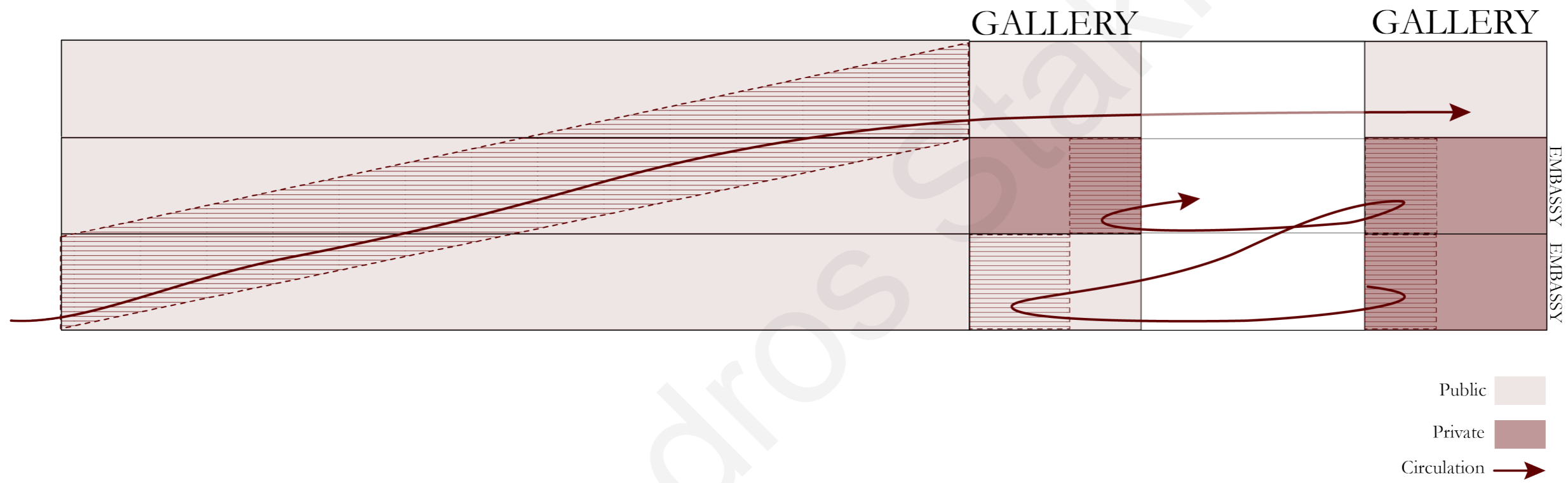
Scaffolding used on facades' openings enhancing privacy and for space creation purposes

Seeing the existing image of the buildings of Point A with the **scaffolding**, I take this element and the concept of the '**incomplete**', and use it by modifying and integrating it in my own way into the project.



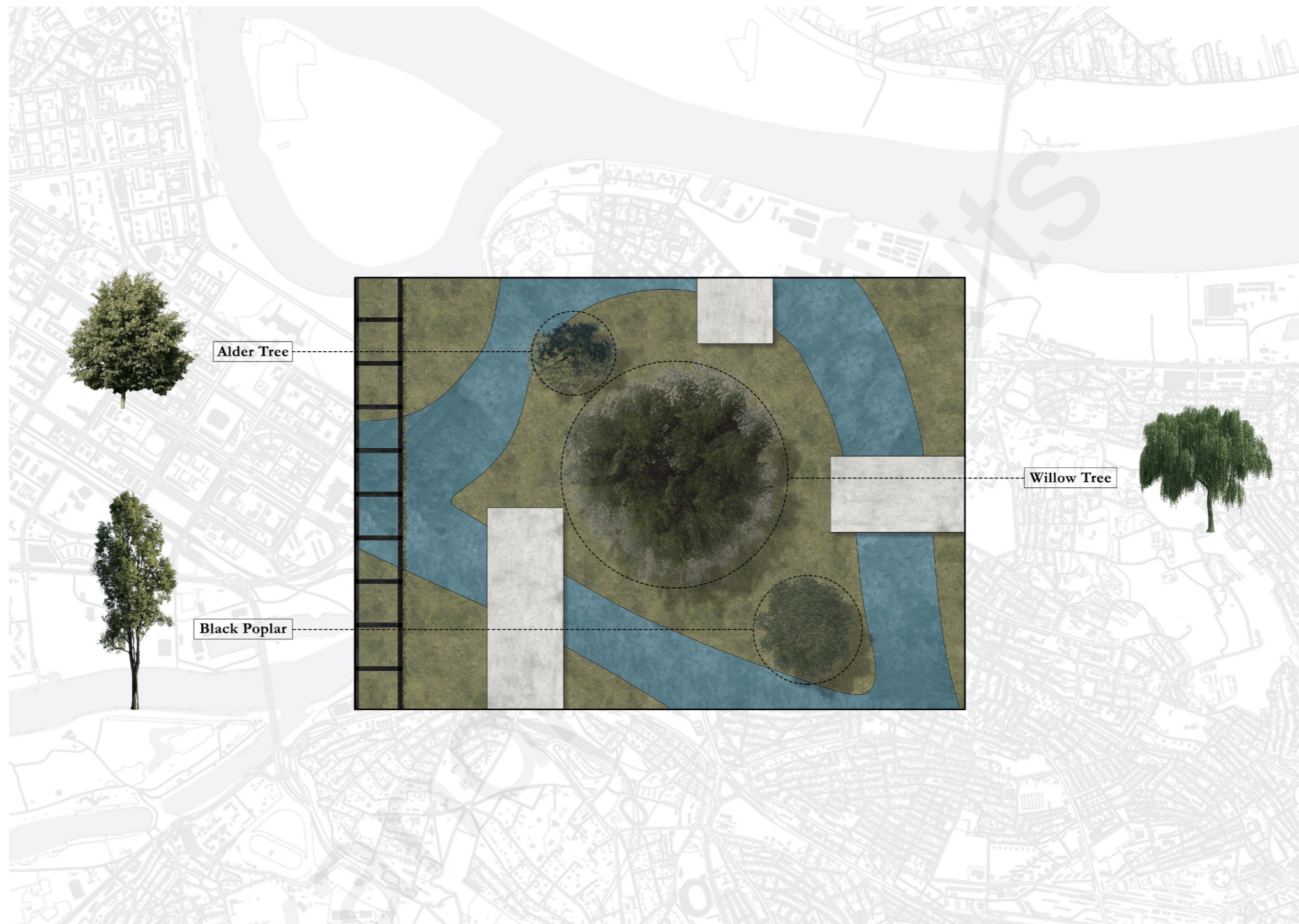
CG Prostho Museum, Kengo Kuma & Associates

I create **pockets** of 4x4x4 meters in different parts of the building, which I then fill with **scaffoldings**, in different ways depending on what experience I want to create. For example, in the pockets on the ground and 1st floor, the scaffoldings are placed only on the outside along the building's facade, creating **accessible semi-open spaces**. In contrast, on the 2nd floor where the exhibition is located, the scaffoldings occupy the entire volume of the pocket, acting as sources of natural light, but also - inspired by the CG Prostho Museum by Kengo Kuma - as **spaces where exhibits can be placed**.



For the circulation in the building, I decide to keep the circulation in the embassy areas autonomous and isolated from the rest of the areas of the project, thus maintaining the level of privacy they require.





In an attempt to transcribe some of the moments of Belgrade and the route through the points I have chosen in the work, I design the central courtyard in a way that attempts to convey the experience of the Danube in some way. I bring the element of **water** into the courtyard, taking the form where the Danube flows around the Great Island of War in Belgrade, while I also bring in elements of nature such as some of the **main flora species** that grow on the banks of the river.

Alexandros Stakits

CHAPTER III

**FINAL PROPOSAL**





Moving on to the floor plans, we see on the ground floor, as mentioned before, that I keep the entrance to the **exhibition** and the **library** towards the main street. Under the library's **auditorium stairs** there is a **workshop** that can be used by the artists of the exhibition. The opposite section houses a **cafeteria** and **3 rooms** designed to temporarily accommodate either Serbian citizens who come to Cyprus and are still in search of accommodation, or people who come to take part in activities related to the embassy. In the northern part, where the **embassy** is located, **offices** are placed around the perimeter on the outside, while the **large corridors** between the offices and the **courtyard** are also used as meeting/relaxation areas for staff. Here we see that the scaffolding elements are also coming inside the building, in smaller dimensions and used mainly as **furniture**.

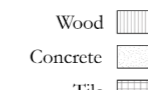
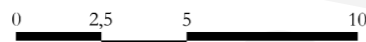
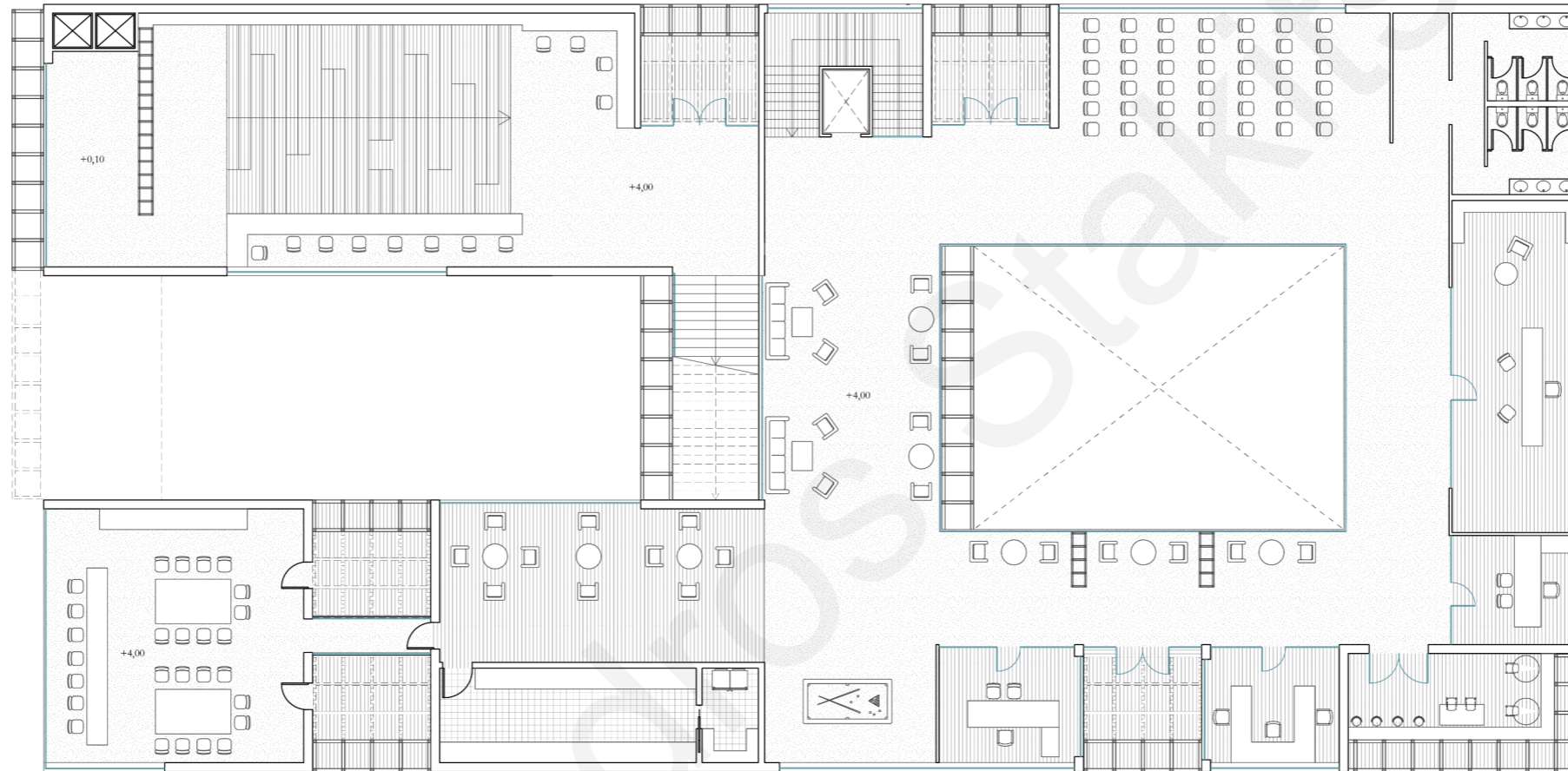
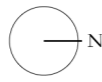












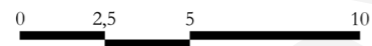
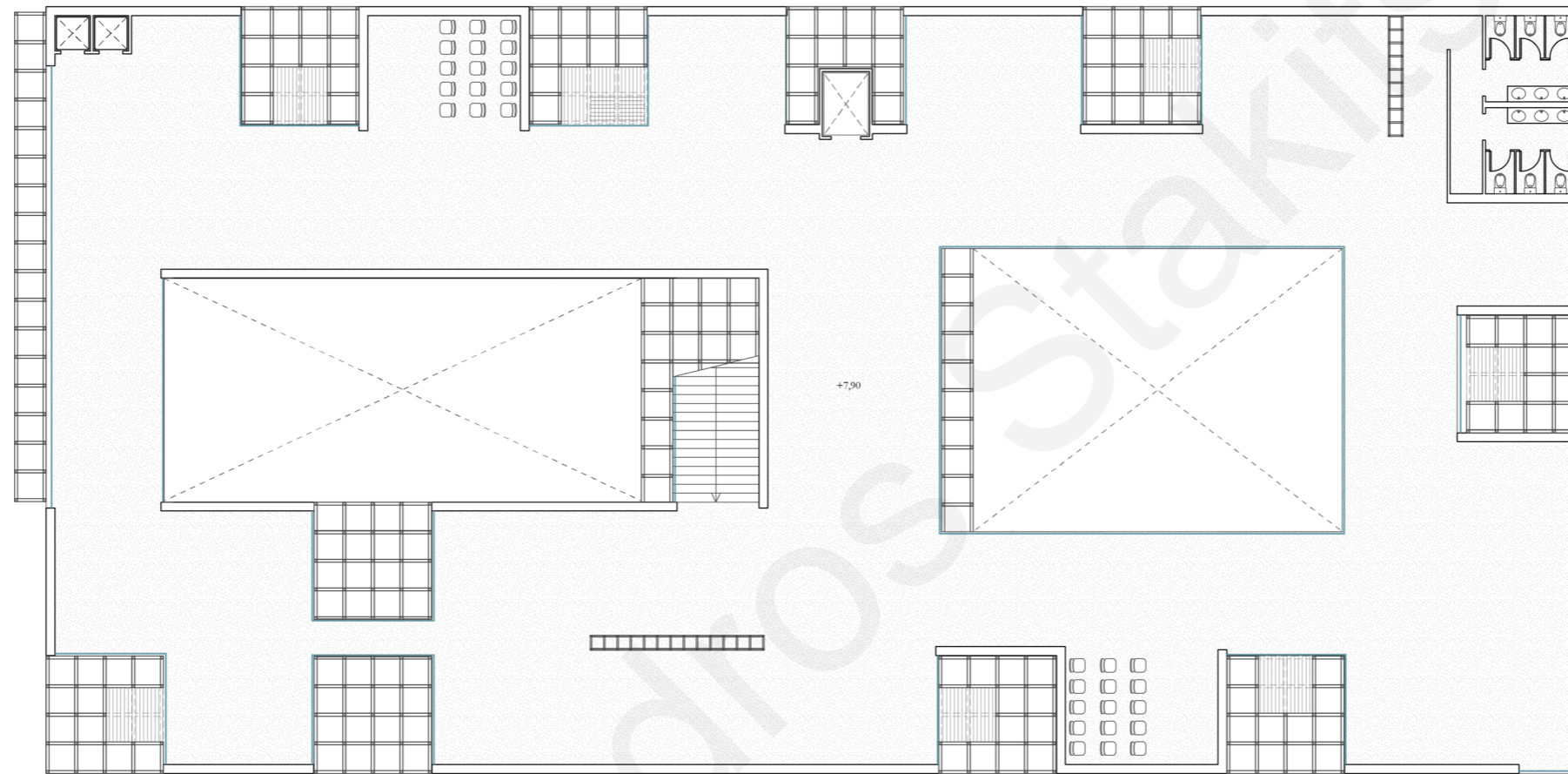
The floor plan of the first floor shows the development of the **library** along the staircase, which is also used as an **auditorium**, as well as the **staircase-bridge** leading to the top floor where the **exhibition** is located. At the rear, the **embassy** is developed in the same logic around the perimeter, while at the bottom towards the front street a **banqueting hall** for official purposes is placed, with views towards the green gardens of the Municipal Garden.



First Floor Plan







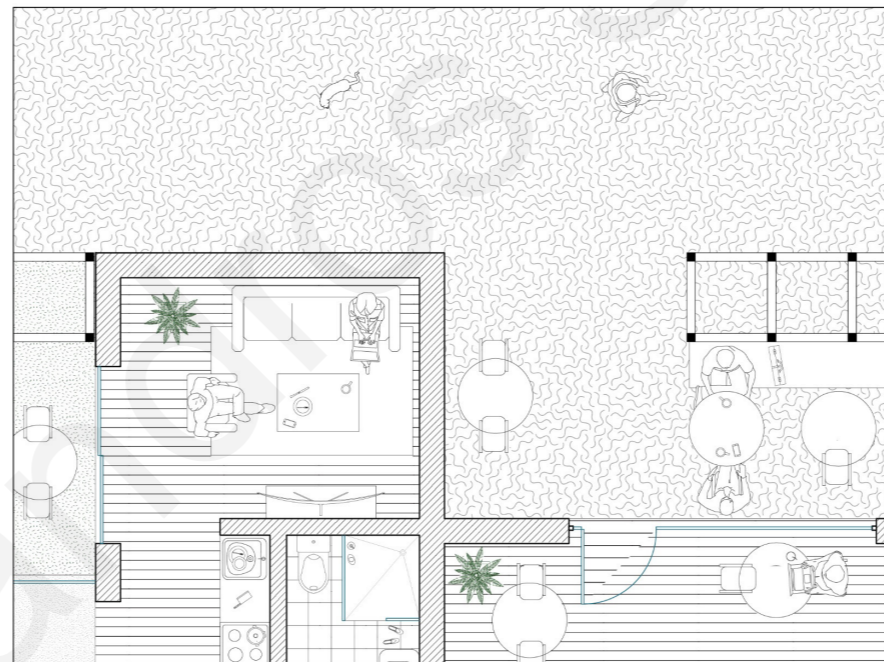
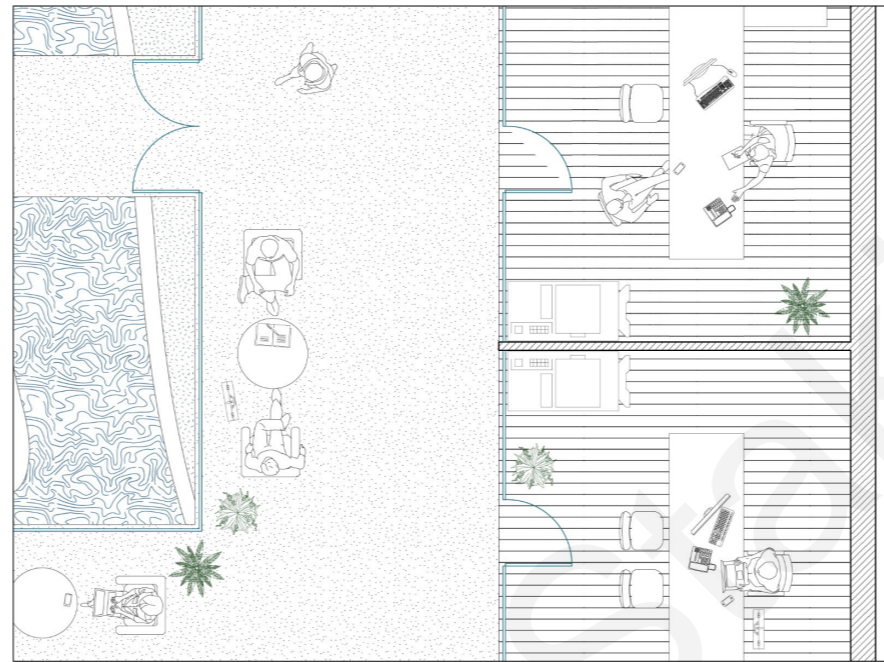


Wood   
Concrete 

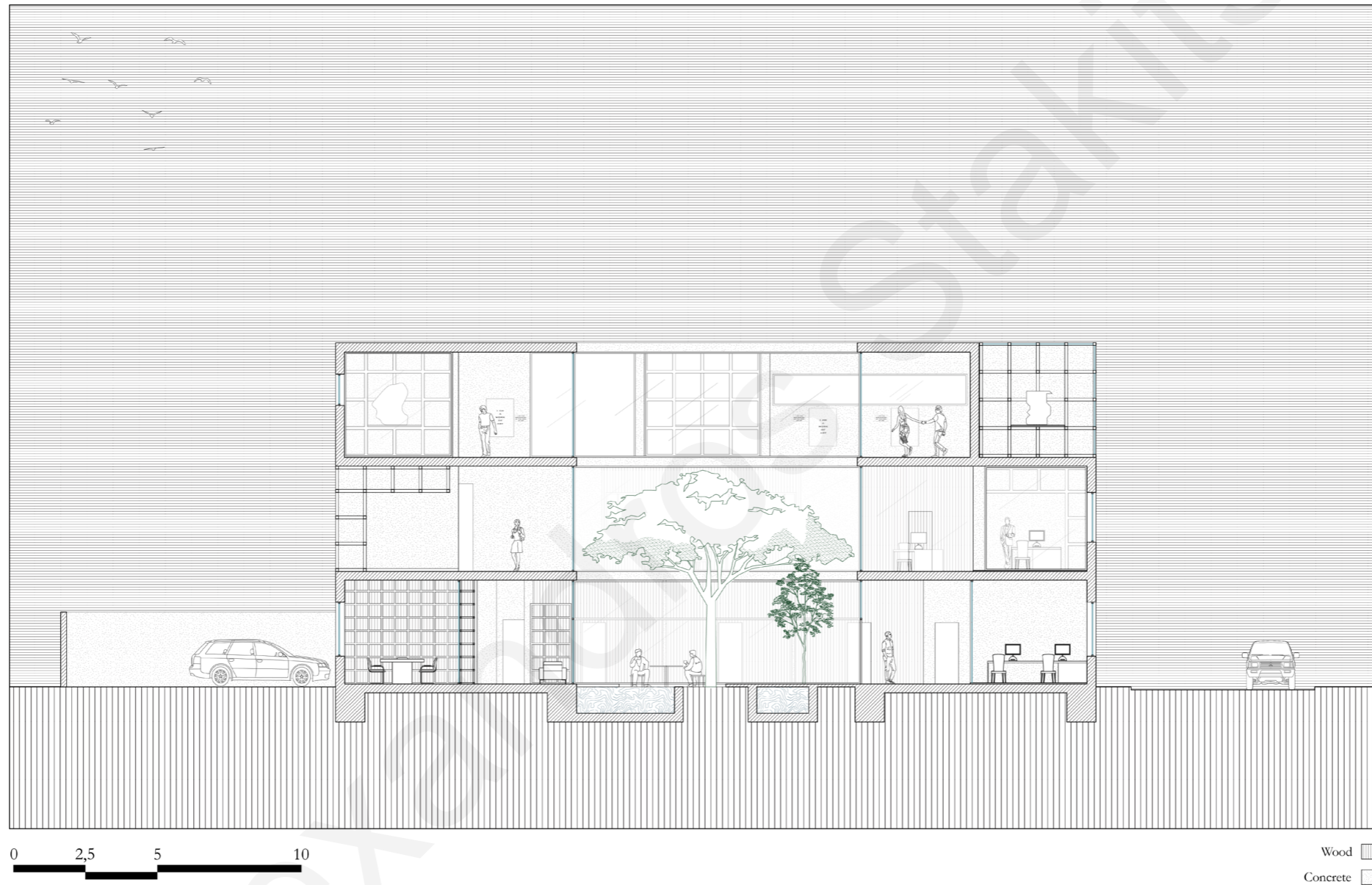
On the top floor, which entirely houses the **exhibition** space, we can see the 2 openings where framed views of occupied Nicosia are created, in the north facade, such as Pentadaktylos and Ledra Palace, while also visible is how the pockets with the scaffoldings contain platforms on which exhibits can be placed.

Second Floor Plan



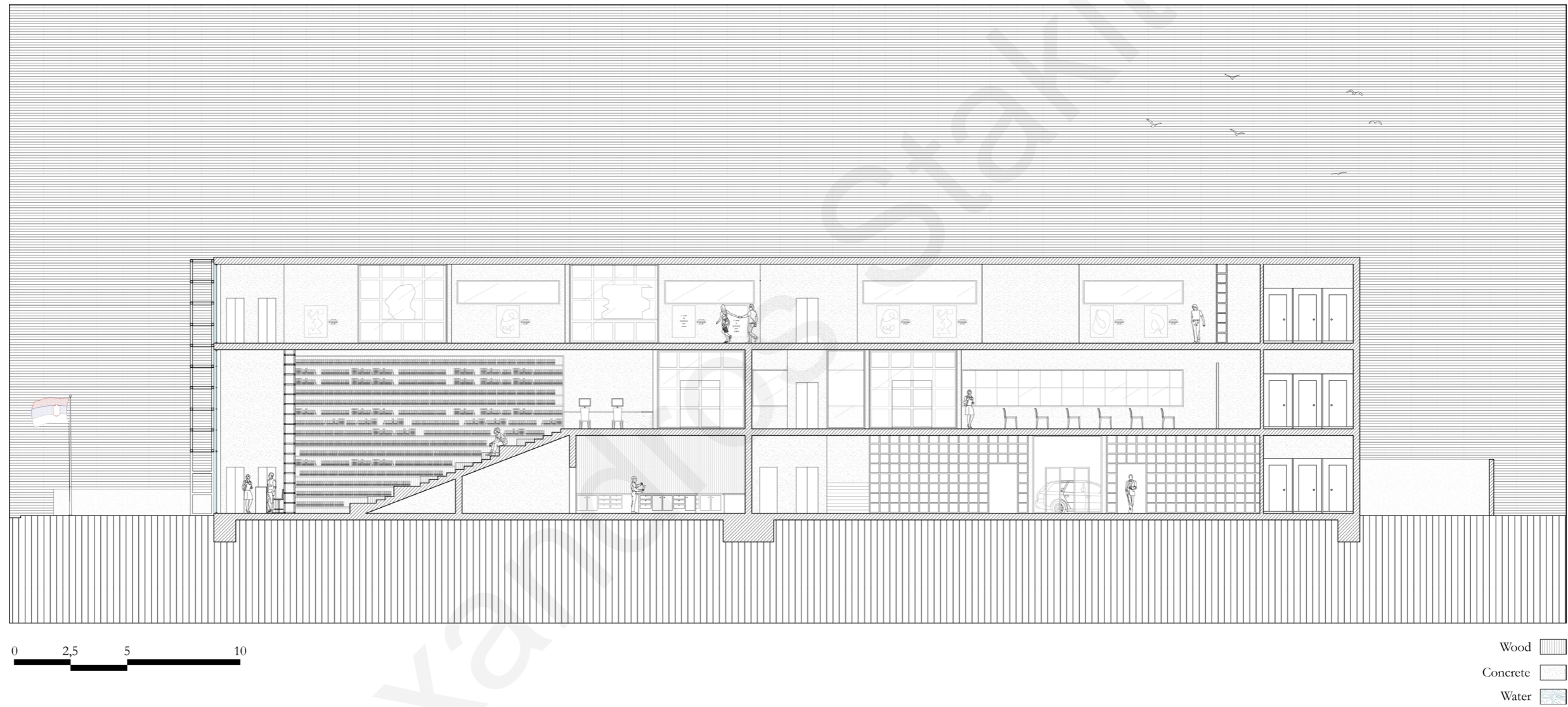


Then we see the relationships between certain areas in plan, such as the offices and corridors of the embassy with the central courtyard, and the cafeteria with the dormitories and the main road to the entrance of the embassy.

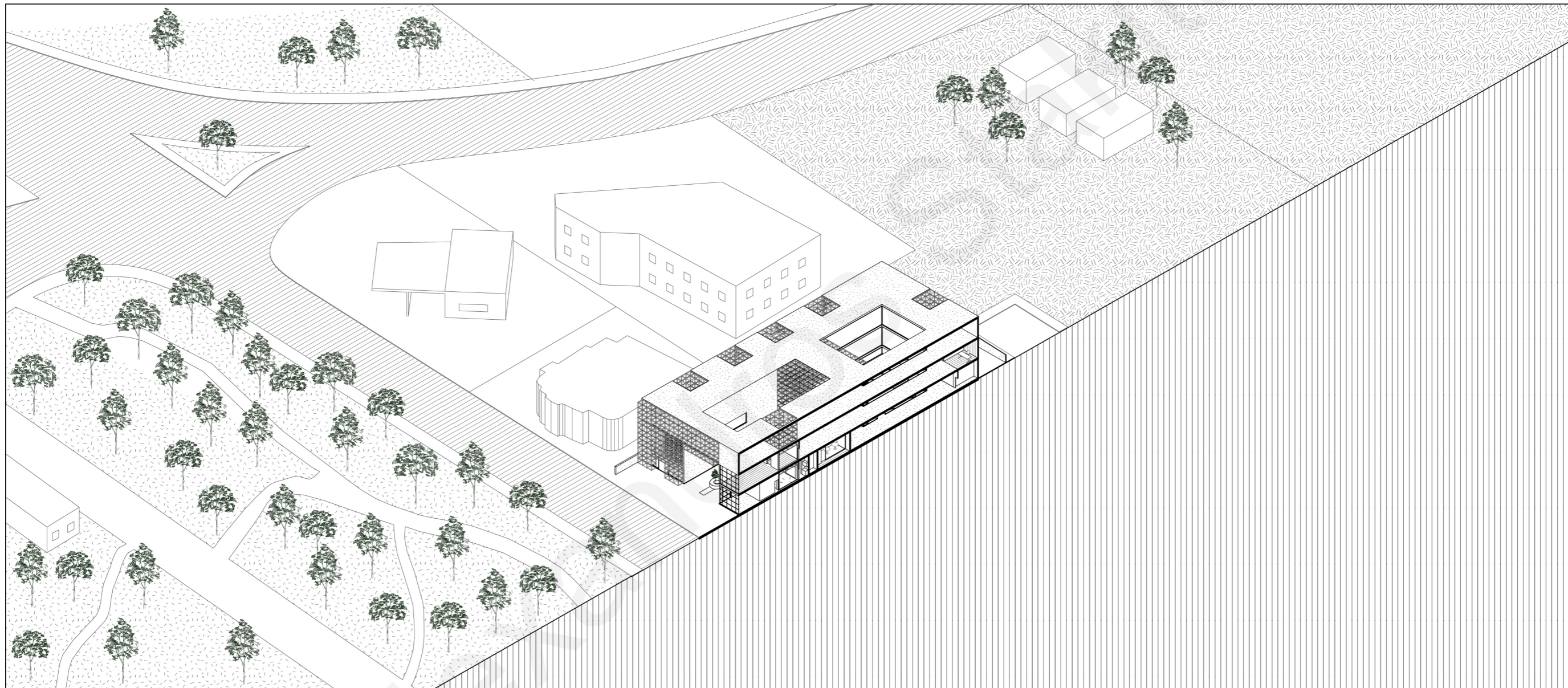


The section of the small side shows the relationship between the **embassy** and the **exhibition** space and the **central courtyard**, as well as the **pockets** that house exhibits on the top floor.





The section along the long side shows more clearly how the **library** spaces and the spaces below it are developed, but also how the **exhibition** space unfolds at the top floor.



Isometric Section







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- ArchDaily (2012) *GC Prostho Museum Research Center / Kengo Kuma & Associates*, ArchDaily. <https://www.archdaily.com/199442/gc-prostho-museum-research-center-kengo-kuma-associates>
- ArchDaily (2013) *Tchoban Foundation - Museum for Architectural Drawing / SPEECH*, ArchDaily. <https://www.archdaily.com/371724/tchoban-foundation-museum-for-architectural-drawing-speech-tchoban-and-kuznetsov>
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- Baldwin, E. (2020) *Rethinking embassy design: Building diplomacy around the world*, ArchDaily. <https://www.archdaily.com/949506/rethinking-embassy-design-building-diplomacy-around-the-world>
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