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Skopje 2063

HUNDERT JAHRE SPÄTER



TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT WIEN / VIENNA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

MASTERARBEIT

SKOPJE 2063 – HUNDERT JAHRE SPÄTER

**Eine Vision über die urbane Transformierung und zukunftsorientierte Entwicklung
des Stadtzentrums von Skopje, die Hauptstadt Mazedoniens**

ausgeführt zum Zwecke der Erlangung des akademischen Grades eines Diplom-Ingenieurs /Diplom-Ingenieurin

unter der Leitung

Ö.Univ.Prof. Dipl.-Ing. William Alsop

E 253/4 Institut für Architektur und Entwerfen, Abteilung für Hochbau und Entwerfen

eingereicht an der Technischen Universität Wien

ARCHITEKTUR

Von

Jasna Georgievska

0327060

Joanelligasse 10/25 1060 Wien

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Information about Skopje



Skopje is the capital of the Republic of Macedonia. Being the largest city in the country, it is a political, economic, academic and cultural center of Macedonia. It is located at the upper course of the River Vardar and below the Vodno Mountain and is positioned on the intersection of two major routes: north-south route between Belgrade and Athens and the east-west route between Pristina and Sofia. The area around the city is very rich in historical remainings from many historical periods, although its development has many discontinuities due to imperial conquests and natural hazards: earthquakes and floods. Skopje is a modern city with a wide range of cultural monuments.

The Skopje statistical region officially numbers 571.000 Inhabitants (2002), even though the unofficial numbers go up to around 700.000. The city is also a center for metal-processing, chemical, timber, textile, leather, and printing industries. Industrial development of the city has been accompanied by development of the trade, logistics, and banking sectors, as well as an emphasis on the fields of culture and sport. The city experiences a continental climate, with hot summers and cool winters.

History | The first well established, larger town in Roman times, located near today's Skopje, was named Skupi. The historical remains are to be seen today. The old Roman town was destroyed in an earthquake in the year 518. No written sources account for the destiny of Skopje in the following three centuries. Towards the end of the X century, Tsar Samuil (974-1014) created the medieval Macedonian state. In that period, Scupi acquired an important role in the centralized state and the merchants from Skopje established trade contacts with the neighboring town and the towns along the Adriatic coast. Shortly after, the town fell in the hands of the Byzantine Empire. In 1282 the town was conquered by the Serbs. The ruler of the medieval Serbian state, Tsar Dusan was crowned in Skopje in 1346. After that, Skopje was named the capital of the Serbian Kingdom. However, the new, Ottoman empire rose in the East and expanded towards Europe. At the same time, some of the old medieval Christian states collapsed. On 19 January 1392, Skopje fell under the Turks. The town was given a new name – Üsküp, and it remained under the Ottoman domination, as well as the rest of the country, for whole 5 centuries. After the Kosovo battle, Skopje was temporarily the capital of the Ottoman Empire. In 1515, another heavy earthquake destroyed a part of the town. In 1912 Skopje was conquered by the Serbs in the Balkan Wars. During the First World War, the town was in the hands of firstly, the Bulgarian, in 1915, and then the Serbian army in 1918. After this period the town belonged to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croatian and Slovenian that later changed its name to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

In the II World War Skopje was again in the hands of the fascistic Bulgaria between 1941 and 1944. After the uprising 1945 Skopje became the capital of the Socialistic Republic Macedonia as a part of Yugoslavia. The city developed rapidly after World War II, but this trend was interrupted in 1963 when it was hit by a disastrous earthquake. After the earthquake's demolition, following the urban design project by Kenzo Tange¹, Skopje evolved into a modern metropolis with a completely new outlook and a wide range of architectural monuments. Since 1991 Skopje has been the Capital of the independent country of Macedonia.

¹ Kenzo Tange (1913-2005) was one of the most significant architects of the XXth century from Japan also winner of the 1987 Pritzker Prize for architecture.

1.2 Urban Development

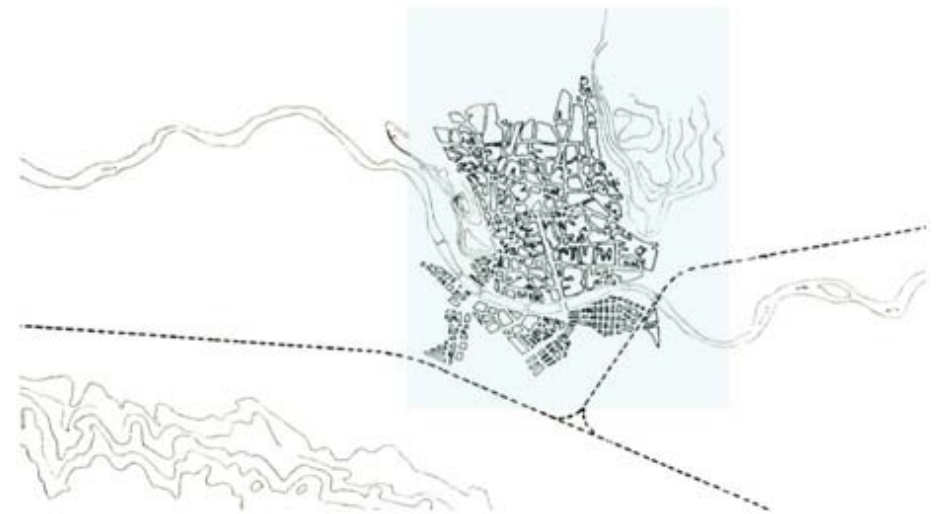
1.2.1 Skopje urban Plans

The first major urban expansion of the town of Skopje, took place in the second half of the 19th century, after the building of the railway connection between Skopje and Solun (Thessaloniki). With spontaneous growth, the suburban area (later on, central part of the town), followed the urban matrix of the town on the other (left) side of the river Vardar, repeating the irregular plane geometry, which was characterized through mixture of street network with anonymous urban filling. Until 1914, there were no larger alterations in the urban development; the built area was still underdeveloped, and became a ground for further planning.

The first regulation plan from 1913 shows a compact urban structure, developed on left (north) side of the river Vardar. The planer Dimitrije T. Leko² implemented new structuring following examples of the European cities, a rational regulation with morphological elements such as squares, streets and block housing. This plan was not implemented.



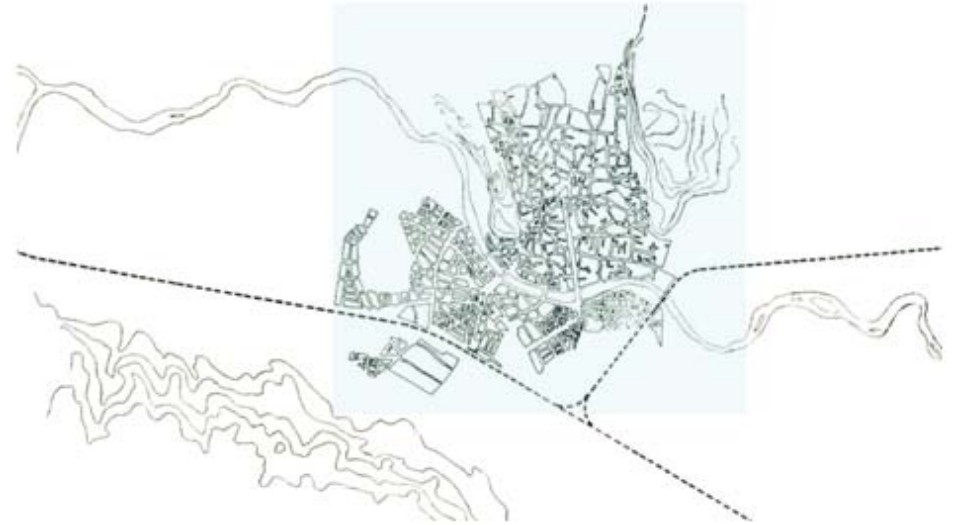
Skopje today



Skopje 1913

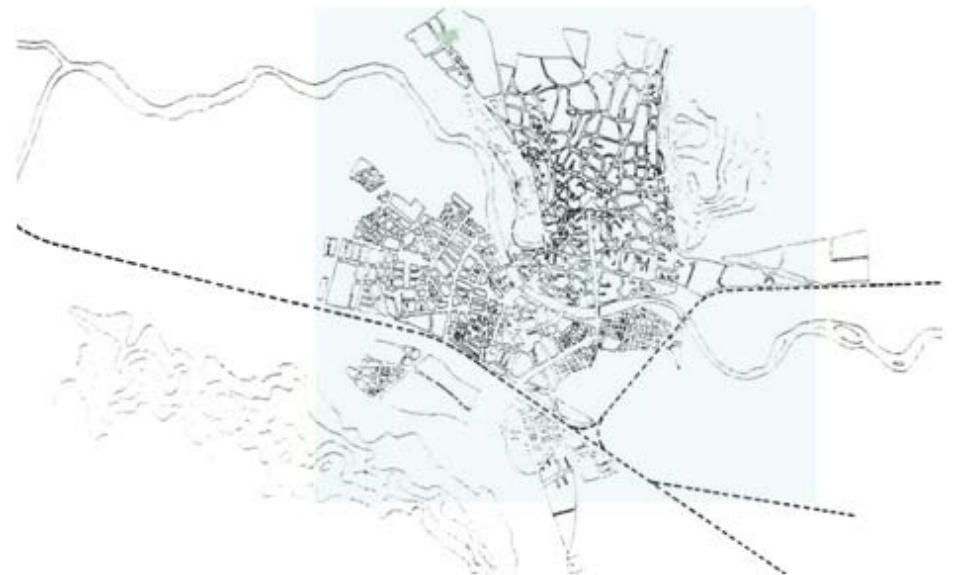
² **Dimitrije T. Leko** (January 22, 1863, Belgrade, Serbia – September 24, 1914, Kragujevac, Serbia) was a renowned Serbian architect and urbanist.

In 1929, the architect Josip Mihajlovic designed a second regulation plan for the town, characterized in similar conceptual standards for the city structure. This period had an essential impact on the future development of Skopje, especially in terms of slow transfer of the town center to the right (south) side of Vardar. After the Second World War, the town planners, suggested supplementation of the missing parts of the existing block housing spaces, as well as the new traffic concept due to the expansion of the city towards west.



Skopje 1929

The 1946 urban plan: the east-west axis designed after the WWII, although in accordance with the urban concept of the previous urban plan, still develops another overturn of the urban development according to the functional displacement. Since the city becomes officially the capital of the SR Macedonia³, and thus the main administrative, trade, industrial and cultural center, this period is the era of the fastest growth of the city. By displacing the main functions along the river, it spreads rapidly along the east-west axis.



Skopje 1946

³ Socialist Republic of Macedonia was one of the 6 Republics of the Yugoslavian Federation

On July the 26th, 1963 a devastating earthquake destroyed and damaged 60% of the built area in the city, mostly taller buildings, individual dwellings with old constructions and many public facilities. Luckily, the Ottoman part of the city, on the left side of the river remained untouched. Already few days after the earthquake, a decision was made about the construction of a new modern city. Despite political tension in the toughest times of the cold war, an international proposal was initiated overcoming all political borders. The United Nations threw an international competition for the reconstruction of the city. A group of famous architects and urban experts, among which the Italian architect Luigi Piccinato⁴ and the Dutch architect Jakob Bakema⁵ were invited to participate in the competition.



⁴ **Luigi Piccinato** (30 October 1899, Legnago – 29 July 1983, Rome) was an Italian architect and town planner.

⁵ **Jacob Berend (Jaap) Bakema** (8 March 1914 – 20 February 1981) was a Dutch modernist architect, notable for his public housing and involvement in the reconstruction of Rotterdam after the Second World War.

The Japanese modernist architect Kenzo Tange won the 1965 internationally UN-financed contest that was a result of the unprecedented world-wide solidarity. He thus designed the Master Plan for reconstruction of earthquake-stricken Skopje. Radovan Mišcevic and Fedor Wenzler, from the Croatian Institute for Urbanism, were announced to be the “second” winners of the competition. At the end, there were several Japanese, Macedonian, Croatian and Greek architects planning the new city, which was to be divided in three zones.

The urban plan form 1965 was developed according to the Japanese concept. It enclosed the core of the city centre, with residential “city walls”, high slabs rising from banked pillars, sharply dividing it from the rest of the central area. It guided city centre traffic through one imposing “city gate”, which also served as an administrative citadel and formed the nucleus of a new east-west axis. In a few months, the Macedonian capital became an international symbol for solidarity and a subject of urban debate for an idealistic city. The eyes of the world were directed to Macedonia. On the 12th February 1965, an article about the plans for Skopje appeared in the New York Times.

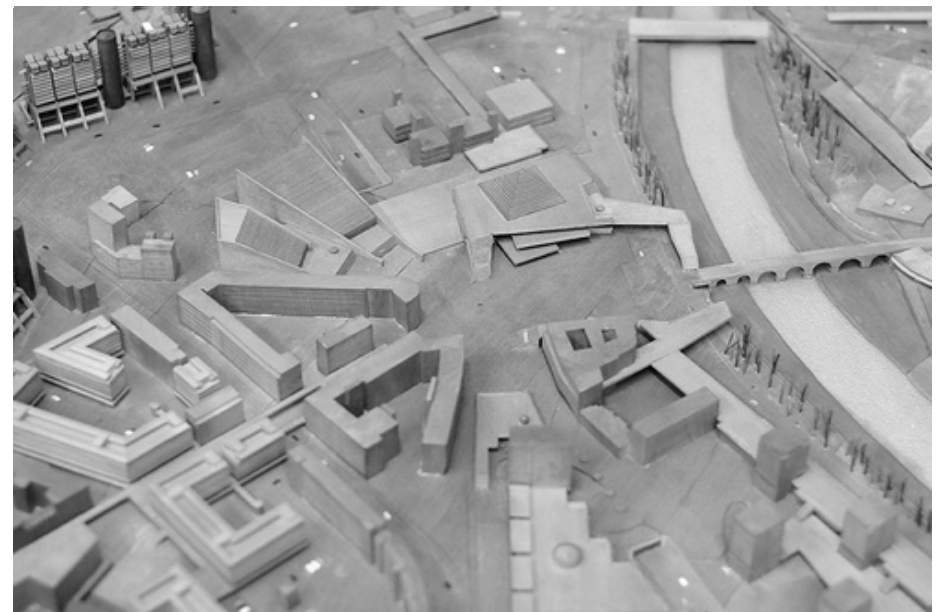
Never the less, after some parts of the plan commenced with their implementation throughout the next decade, the building activities slowed down before the beginning of the 1980’s, due to political reasons, until they were completely stopped, leaving Skopje, partially reconstructed and almost without its individual expression.

The 1981 urban plan: according to this urban plan of Skopje, the city slowly transfers into a metropolis, demanding other facilities, especially a better public transportation network. The city center again became attractive pedestrian area with collective buildings. A whole new east region was planned, containing better proportioned districts, especially the pre-planned infrastructure, which at that time was the finest in the city.

Entry of Kenzo Tange, model, fragment: City Gate

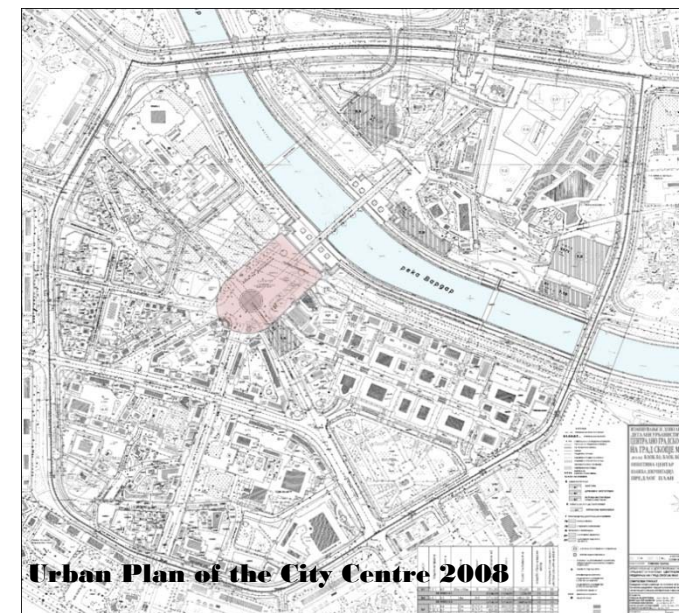
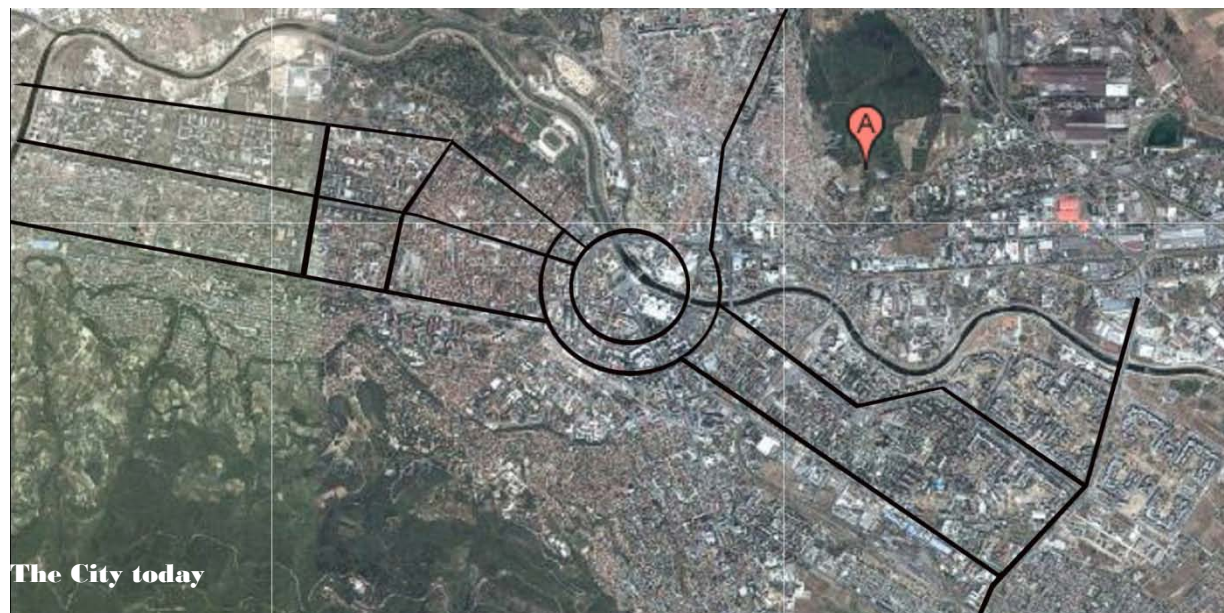


Entry of Kenzo Tange, model, fragment: City Square



1.2.2. Urban development of the city centre

The physical structure of the inner city area, in its existence of around 100 years, developed in three phases: Phase of becoming and formation, Phase of stagnation and destruction and Phase of reconstruction. The first phase is tightly connected to the first urban projects, the formation and the spontaneous changes of the urban fabric. The basic constitutional element of the physical structure of the town, at that time, was the block housing. This typology was usually defined by the radial arrangement of the streets, displaying a triangle or quadrant ground form. The block was filled with apartment houses on the upper floors and a public ground floor. The streets had a unified aesthetics due to the application of the composing rules for the façade, which were typical for the urban architecture from the end of the 19th Century. The main square Macedonia existed as an open space from the beginning of the 20th Century and was defined with the first regulation plan as a half-elliptic form orientated towards the Stone Bridge⁶. Even though the square is today known to be on the right (south) end of the bridge, it has to be seen as a unity with the smaller space that is still underdeveloped and to be found on the other (north) end of the bridge. Together they form an oval open space with the bridge in its center. It is a promising space, which connects the old town center and the new one, and its completion is crucial for the total appearance of the city core, as it should represent the connection between the historical and the modern, as well as Orthodox and Islamic architecture and life in the city. The second phase is the stagnation before and during the earthquake 1963 as a result to either political or environmental catastrophes. The third phase occurs after the earthquake with reorganizations of the city core, which had brought many imperative changes. A completely new urban concept was developed. It was a drastic utopist concept for a socialistic and idealistic city centre. This concept examined many new interdisciplinary methods. The city grew faster after the earthquake. This made the urban redefinition of the center even more necessary, with a special reconsideration of the center traffic network and the public transportation services. The central district was surrounded with the new built City Wall structures that redefined the so-called Small Ring, a name commonly given to a route formed from a number of major streets that encircle the central part in most European cities.

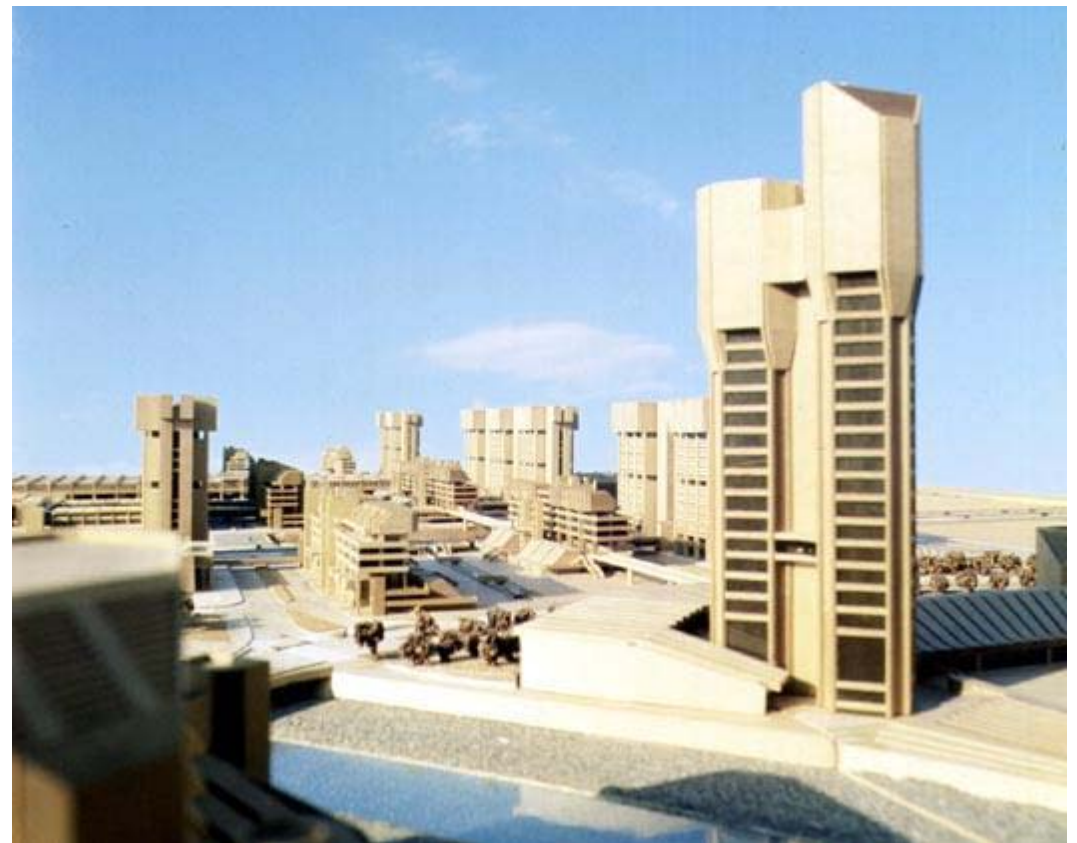
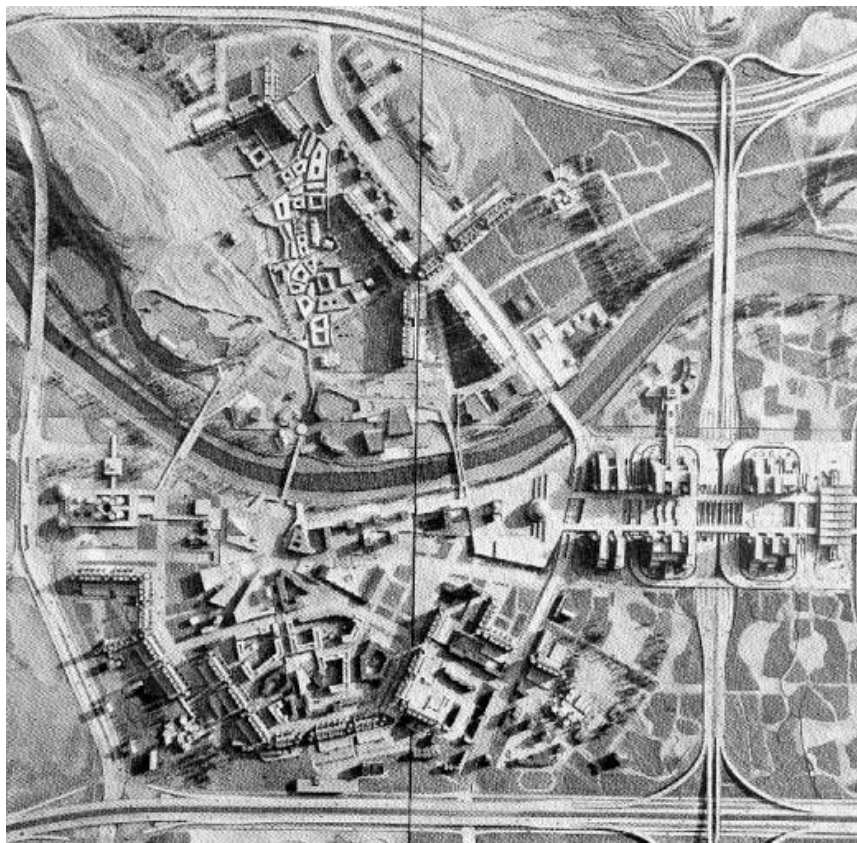


⁶ Macedonian: Kamen most, is a bridge across the Vardar River in Skopje, constructed in the 15th century. The Stone Bridge connects the Macedonia Square, in the center of Skopje, to the Old Town of the city and is considered a symbol of multiculturalism.

The City Wall contained one third of the built surface, a residential complex for 30.000 people, which was an important, almost completely realized, feature of the master plan. Directly behind the City Wall a second so-called Big Ring was developed to stress out the traffic in the center of the capital. Within the Small Ring the center was naturally divided with the river flowing through it. The riverside sites on the left bank were allocated for cultural institutions, such as the Opera House, an architectural masterwork of the Slovenian architects B10 71, built in 1981. The city center on the right side situated the administrative, business and shopping facilities like for example the Post Office Building from the famous Macedonian architect Janko Konstantinov built between 1974 and 1989. The city planners, in order to complete the Small Ring as well as avoiding tunneling under the Kale Hill or locating high buildings around the Çarsija (the old Bazaar), decided to position a new bridge and major road. The Stone Bridge, taking over the function of main pedestrian connection leads to the new Department Store, which was completed in 1977.

In the 1990s, Macedonia experienced a transitional period with many problems. Most of today's urban conditions were generated as a reflection to the processes of economic and political transformations of the society that took place in the years of post-socialistic transition. Through the processes of decentralization, democratization and privatization, the urban matrix as well as the space organization developed new functions and demands, inconceivable for the socialist era. Since the independence of the Republic of Macedonia in year 1991, Skopje became the capital city and demanding new facilities: embassies, diplomatic residences, facilities for governmental and non-governmental organizations, foreign schools and universities, transformation of the industrial capacities, trade-mark expansion etc.

Entry of Kenzo Tange, model, and 3D Perspective of the City Gate



This period did not reflect much in the outlook of the city centre. However one cannot say that the space in the center did not have enough room or potential to be completed or redeveloped. On a contrary, many parts remained underdeveloped, and could not be recognized as planned areas because they were simply not finished. The drastic political spin in the '90s has not only put an end to the political system, but also to the progress of the development of the city center. It is nowadays that the new political and economic structures are being completed which brings the redefinition of the city core to the focus of re-thinking and re-building. On the other side, Skopje was rapidly spreading outside the central area as a result of the population growth, with mostly residential collective buildings with improved quality standards.

1.3 The city center today

The center of Skopje is given its largest shape-over in the decades after the earthquake. Currently, there are several monuments, public, religious, administrative and business buildings in various phases of construction. Almost all of them were envisaged, designed or commissioned, in the last few years. However, the logistical and transportation problems have been largely disregarded, creating a hectic urban environment unseen before.

1.3.1 Current socio-political situation and its spatial reflections

As mentioned, the transitional chaos of the economic and political systems can be deemed, to a great extent, as finished. Naturally it had great effect on many socially important aspects of life. There has been a massive brain-drain, stabilization of the nationalistic government and a soaring influence of the public in decision-making. A crucial factor when discussing the urban development of Skopje is the relation between the public, the experts and the governments on local and national level. They have different needs, goals and visions for the city's development. But they do form a mechanism that today shapes the appearance of Skopje.

An interesting social phenomenon in Skopje is the nostalgia for the pre-earthquake city that prevails even in generations that have not witnessed it. New urban and architectural developments are rarely seen as serving a common interest, particularly aesthetic. This can be in part explained with the people's limited access, due to financial or visa issues, to modern urban centers in Europe, America and Asia. In the same time, the national government is keen on emphasizing the importance of Skopje as the Macedonian capital as well as the national character and history. For this purpose, large financial means have been assigned to this goal. With a large approval rate outside of Skopje, the Government is facing small resistance from the nostalgic citizens of the city. In this situation, many architects have found themselves competing for the projects rather than challenge them on an expert level. Thus, unopposed, the government has started a process which in Skopje is sometimes called "architorture". This expression most appropriately defines the incompetent development in the city center, driven by immature visions and snobbish reasoning of the authorities. While the construction is rapidly completed, there has been a disregard for transportation issues as well as other supporting infrastructure. On the left river bank, the commissioning of three museums and a theater is, of course, a generally positive development in the Skopje city center. But the architectural style of those buildings is often explicitly dictated by the authorities and generally resulting in a rather infantile version of the landmarks in the western capitals or a repetition of already seen work (the Old Theater). On the right river bank, grotesquely oversized monument of Alexander the Great is commissioned demonstrating nothing but the Governments idea of Macedonian continuity. The existing city square is also to accommodate a large Orthodox church, emphasizing the 'biblical heritage', despite the rather large public resistance over (it seems) only this specific edifice. Although not certain, another copy of the pre-earthquake Officer's House is to be placed on its old place but in a new role of City Hall. Facing it, currently a business building is being constructed in a quasy pre-earthquake style. Probably the most fascinating embodiment of the "architorture" of Skopje is the

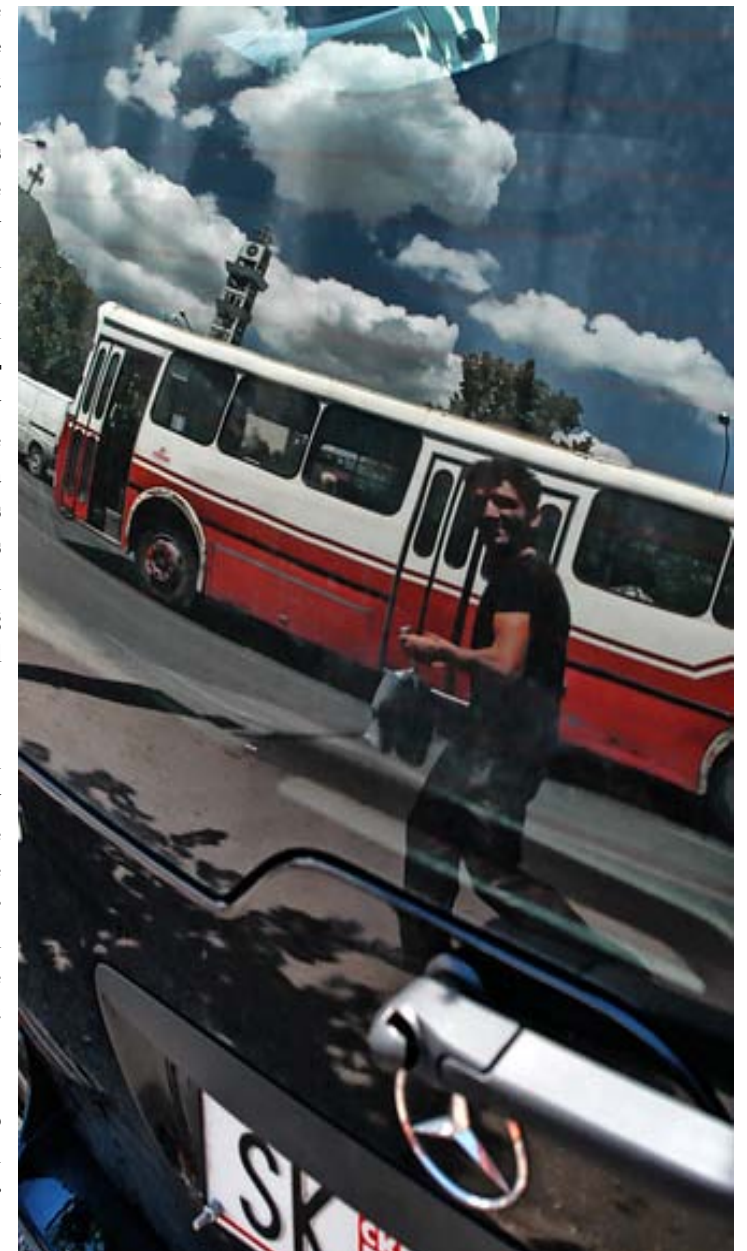
Mother Theresa Memorial House. The architectural Review quotes Erich Raith of the Technical University in Vienna: 'The structure is designed very perfunctorily, with too many stories to tell, but without any essential message to give.' The Review calls the design 'atrocious'. But it acquired the authorities' approval and met no public opposition.

1.3.2 Life in the city

The city's life revolves around its center, with many of the national and administrative buildings in its vicinity or in it. Most of the buildings in the city center accommodate businesses of various sorts that attract a large number of people. The average, but growing scale of the social life also influences the overwhelmed traffic situation. Yet, with few social places, the City Square is usually used as a transport route by the citizens or occasional political and cultural happenings that require larger spaces. Most of the social life is taking place along the so-called Macedonia street leading up to the City Square. To a lesser degree, after a few years of abandonment, the Old Turkish Bazaar on the left river bank is also becoming a place of social happenings. In recent months, an unusual, but not yet large number of tourists (foreign and domestic) can be seen throughout the center, especially around the Mother Teresa Memorial House – presumably fascinated by its unusual appearance. The Opera House, currently the only edifice of cultural significance in the center, effectively cut off from the pedestrian zone on the other side of the river bank and shaded from the Old Turkish City – Macedonia Street communication line, holds a somewhat abstract meaning for the citizens. But its contemporary appearance is probably not to blame (having in mind the nostalgic citizens of Skopje), as much as the lack of communication with the space around it. Seen from the other bank and even rarely passed by, the impression of the distant, isolated building causes events held in the Opera to occur usually in front of small, very dedicated audiences.

The planned Philharmonic Hall next to it, if the communication is not improved, will likely fail to turn that space into a socially active area. The main focal point in the city center today, is the City Shopping Mall at the City Square, on the opposite bank from the Opera House. It is the place of not just shops and businesses, but also of social life. The trend of massive construction around it has diminished its role as 'the place' to visit for social activities, but it still a place that holds microeconomic importance. Its construction after the 1963 earthquake had a dominant role in the tearing of the more intricate socio-economic network of the Old Turkish City, moving this activity's focus on the right river bank, where it still remains rather dominant.

As can be seen from the example of the City Shopping Mall and the Opera House, two large areas in the city center, there is an appalling disconnection of space and functionality in the very core of the city. The communication of the center with other parts of the city is not without its problems as well.



SKOPJE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Contradictions



Mother Theresa memorial house

Design for the new Church commissioned by the current government



2. PROJECT REVIEW

2.1 Current problems on the site and solution concept

The new urban concept of the city center of Skopje developed in this thesis, analyses several current problems that exist in the central area and offers solutions on the basis of urban redefinition, through removing existing structures that no longer apply to the new conceptual thinking, as well as remodeling of the physical plan and giving new additional functions according to the new spatial needs. In the plan there is a new traffic solution, new communications between important parts of the center, river expansion and revitalization of the river banks as well as development of modern architectural structures that complete the open spaces which are crucial for existence of urban life and contemporary culture. Anyhow, some of the ideas have to be seen partially as utopist, regarding the current political state of mind of the people running the city, than the economic issue as well as the several great traffic and ecological measures that need to be taken in order for this concept to maintain in real life.

Basically, as already mentioned, Skopje's center is in lack of built structures in some parts, which are now open spaces not formally planned as such, but remained free of buildings as a result of unrealized planning. This spaces should contain buildings in order to define the public areas in front them. In this project the buildings are generally closed city blocks, not higher than 35 meters, sometimes not completely closed in the ground floors to provide pedestrian and in some cases also traffic circulation.

1



Current situation on the main square

2



Structures required to form the main square

3



Suggested solution in the project

| **The second and very important problem is the position and function of the big department store in the central area built in the 1977. This relatively big structure with ground surface of around 15.000 square meters is a shopping and office center on three floors, implemented on a huge parcel together with a small park. The park is oriented towards the only street that runs through the small ring and is overly stressed with traffic. That makes this green space unbearable. The basic problem is the position of the very long structure towards the river and the park towards the street, what should possibly be the other way round. In the current position, the shopping center is a border between the park and the river throughout half of the city center. The next issue is the functionality of the whole complex, in fact, the great amount of space that needs to be filled with shopping and office facilities. Nowadays, only the ground floor of the shopping center functions completely, and the other two floors are generally empty of fluctuation and usage. It is also inevitable to mention, that the structure was constructed in the '70s and is to be found in a very bad condition with a renovation very hard to imagine. The surroundings of the building are even more problematic. There are some leftovers of city block houses trying somehow to connect with the wide spread monolith and other types of architecture which are closing the view towards it's fine façade, that one cannot even see from the other side of the river. Almost all of these buildings are old and have no special architectural worth except for a few really interesting ones.**

Since I started working on the project my main goal was to somehow deal with this situation, especially since this part of the city is very important for its location and urban potential. I tried many typologies to give meaning, function and beauty to this space, such as: green landscapes on top of it, hanging bridges, small housing structures floating over the roof, even a glass cover to connect its parts in a meaningful whole, but unfortunately nothing seemed to work. In failure of idea for dealing with this problem and with several consultations with my mentor the problem was finally "dealt with".

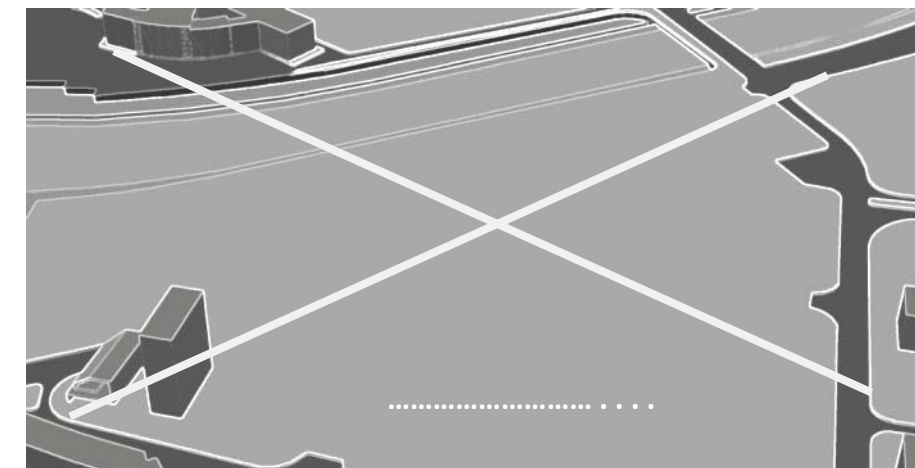
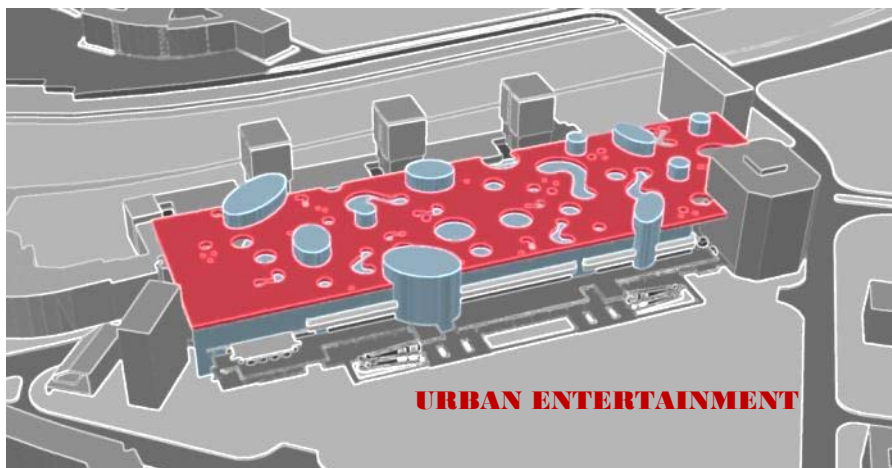
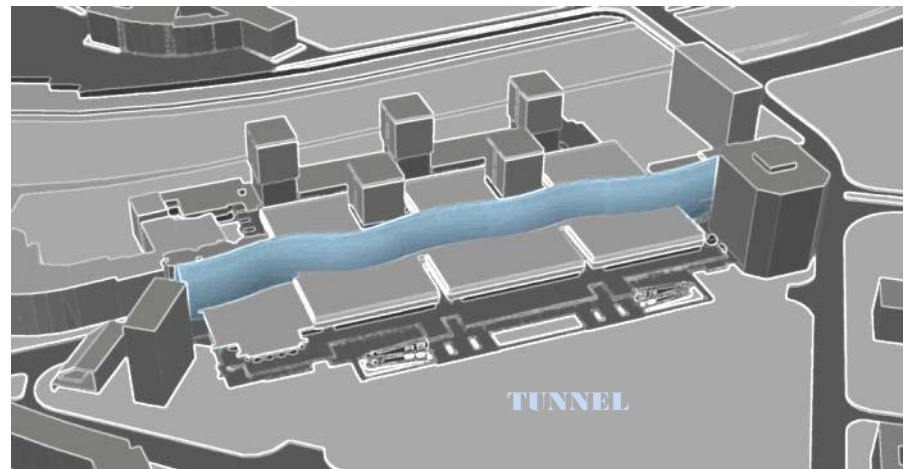
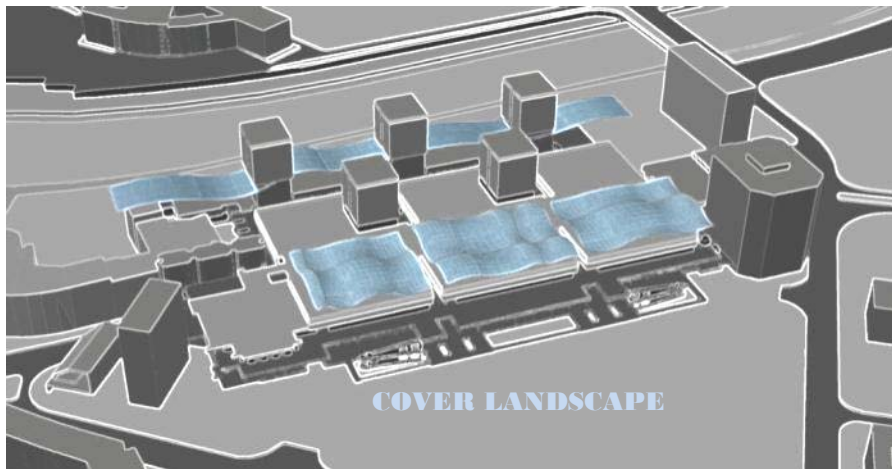
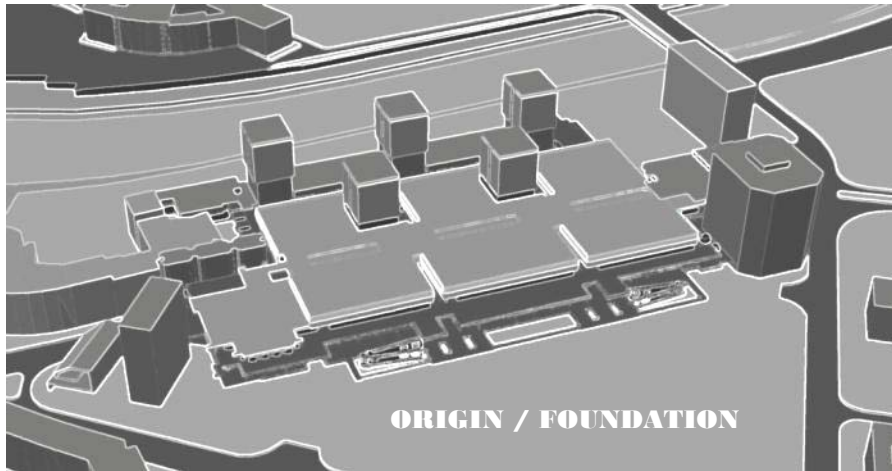
Frontal view of the city trade center



View from the river



So, now after the measures taken, a new working site was provided and a big amount of shopping functions were removed. Skopje's center could now regain the small shops in the ground floors of the buildings and the life in the old Turkish Bazaar, the so-called Çarsija, which somehow lost its customers on the account of the big shopping mall.

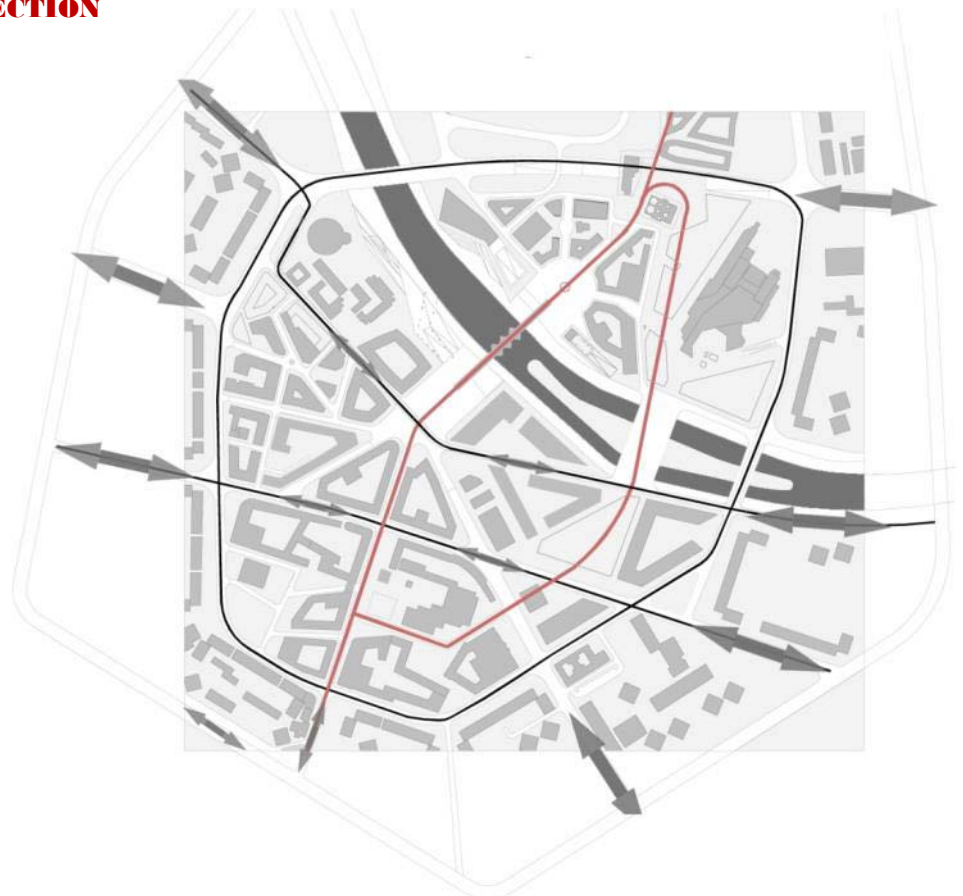


| **The next problem is one of the common issues architects have to deal with, through urban renewal of cities. Never the less, the traffic issue in Skopje is a mostly serious one, regarding the huge spreading of the city in the last 40 years after the earthquake, which inevitably means a great deal of automobiles driving through it every day. All these cars combined with the hardly functional public transportation and a huge pile of taxis constipate the streets in the center so much, that measures need to be taken as fast as possible. Skopje has no subway, no tram and not enough parking lots. The complete solution to this problem does not find its place in this project, not only because it is not the architect but the traffic engineer who gives such answers, but also because of the necessity of a completely reconstructed traffic system, based on an analysis of the whole city and the development of a completely new public transportation system.**

However, some changes in the traffic system of the city center appear in this project as well, which are trying to better the communication between the center and the other parts of the city without filling its streets with cars. It is important to mention that, the small ring is almost completely pedestrian only, with one wide street running through it, which is a concept that needs to remain as such. In this project a second wide street is provided in the underground level, it is a fast communication between two major roads, and provider of entries in the new underground parking places that are filling out most of the room under the big public structures that appear. The removing of the big shopping mall has offered enough space to manipulate several street constellations in the center to provide faster and better connections. In the new concept, the pedestrian communications were given advantage to, and the whole communication concept in the project is based on the walking routes that take place on the site. Next to the old connection between the street Makedonija, through the Stone Bridge, up to the Čarsija, a new one appears, returning the walker back towards the center through the new designed area and the new wide pedestrian bridge over the river.

MAIN TRAFFIC CONNECTION

MAIN PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION



| **The fourth major problem that has been examined in this project, is the one part of the city centre in the small ring, that is to be found on the left river bank, an area, smaller than the one on the right bank, which is sadly empty and lifeless but very important. The site, originally planned to be filled with cultural institutions and other facilities was naturally and artificially bordered from the rest of the city with the river, the Kale Hill and the big boulevards surrounding the small ring. In that way this area gradually became a so-called “tampon” zone between the right bank, the “true” center of the city and the Çarsija which leads to the old town, today the Islamic part of the city. The lack of living and entertainment functions, the lack of urbanized space and green zones, as well as the huge differences between the Orthodox (right bank) and the Islamic (left bank) people has, in time, turned this area into a space, rarely visited and partially ghettoized. A big role in the definition of this space as such, has also the river side with its boring look, and no additional functions, which attracts no visitor to the river. It is also important to mention that the river itself is in a very bad ecological condition, one more reason not to be visited.**

This was a breaking point why I decided to spread the project site on the left bank as well. Whatever I have done only on the right bank, if it was not in a constellation with the left one, it probably would have been useless. Therefore the idea of shopping, which has been removed from the center as an enclosed interior, was to appear in the cultural region of the left bank following the small shops, restaurants and craftsman’s stores of the Çarsija. Better explained, the need of a new connection between the city center and the Çarsija, is not to be planned as a new typology that comes from the center towards the left bank, but vice versa, an old typology in a modern design comes from the Çarsija and fills the free surface that appears after the removal of the shopping mall on the right bank. The existing small stores of the Çarsija were the outgoing point for the design of the new area. Inspired by them, a new straightened geometry appears in the empty spaces between the Opera and the existing old urban fabric. The low rise units ordered in a geometrical milieu could be combined in one or more spaces according to the needs of the user.



The structure they are building is following its way towards the right bank of the river. This is where a crossing bridge is needed. At this point a new connection comes up, a pedestrian bridge brutally wide spread over the river. The pedestrian crosses the bridge under the impression that he has never left part of the city behind, but feeling the natural flow of one part of the city into another one. In the following thinking process, the shopping itself did not seem to be enough to revitalize this part of the city especially since the Çarsija is also a mixture of old-town galleries, museums, craftsman stores and other functions. Therefore, the combination of the small units in different forms and heights could as well serve different purposes, as for example living, working and leisure.

Hopefully this vision of Skopje’s new center presents the city as a unique and exceptional place, which would invite visitors and residents to enjoy wandering through its paths.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL STUDY

The schematic analysis of the adapted plan of the city center shows several different typologies that appear in the area, such as the city block, the City Wall and several individual typologies or combinations of the former two. The first conceptual action refers to the implementation of the so-called SUBSEQUENT STRUCTURES, i.e. typologies analogous to the basic ones of the surrounding environment. This action is calm and unites very naturally with the existing elements. In this way, the site becomes a new base / foundation for urban actions.

The inner city area, in its essence, is defined with two elements, divided with a strong border, connected with each other only through a thin line in the middle of the circle they are building. The second action starts with the fundamental necessity of bringing these two main elements together. Therefore a **NEW CONNECTION between the two parts appears, consisted of two equal components, which have different positions, in order to attach the parts more effectively, but same appearance and directions in order to define them as one idea.**

The third conceptual action refers to the insertion of contrasting structures as an opposition to the existing typologies. This **OPOSITE REACTION comes up as a consequence of the previous step and is defined with the new typologies that exist together with the new connections as one idea.**

Afterwards, the point of view, changes towards the border that divides the elements. It is a boring border. In order to properly connect the two parts, it is also necessary to give meaning to their border for it is the third major element of the inner city area. The idea appears, to disturb the boredom with structures that follow the length of the border-element but not as simple lines but as **DISTURBED LINES.**

Observing the plan divided vertically with the thin connection between the two main elements, there appears a need of a different treatment of the two parts and their conceptual ideas. On the left side, there appears the **COMBINATION of the **DISTURBANCE** and the **OPOSITE REACTION**, and on the right side of the plan, a combination between the **NEW CONNECTION** and the **OPOSITE REACTION**.**

Furthermore, the structures, which evolve around the surrounding environment, are changing as a result of the characteristics of the location. For example the structures on the left are spreading on wide voids and according to the quality of this space are given a unified appearance as a big whole. This feature was completed through associating small structural entities into a large- scaled unification, which serve the same purpose.

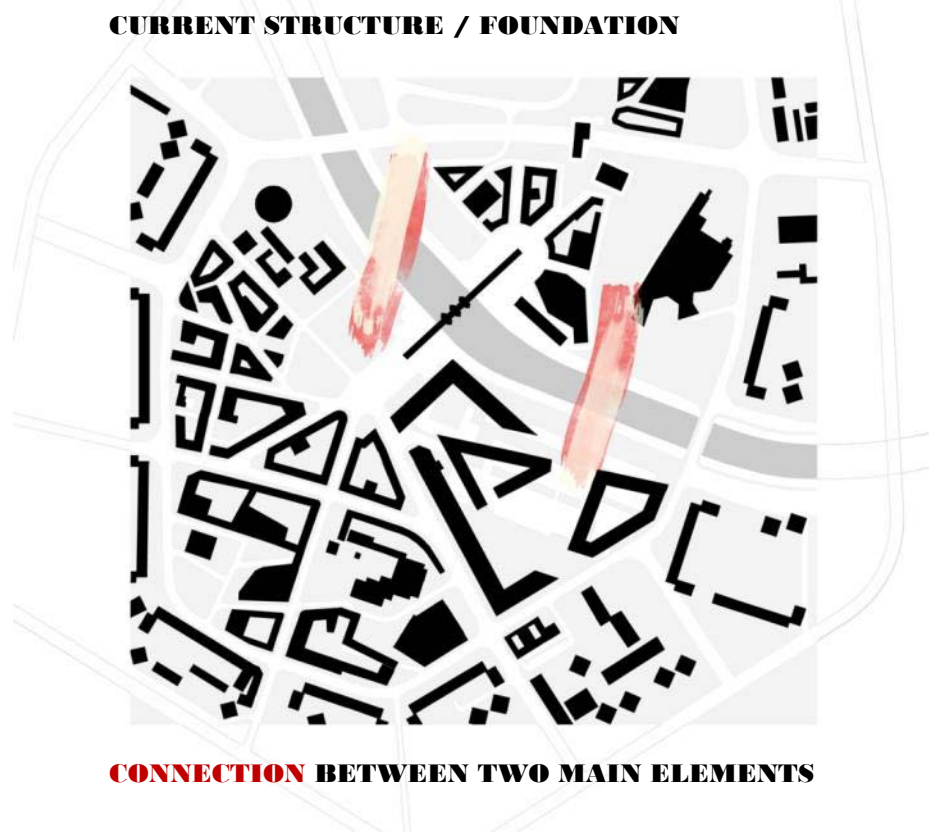
On the other hand, the new typologies which appear on the left side are fragmented into several objects according to the scale of the surrounding structure. In some parts, they adapt to the appearance of the basic surrounding elements and on the other hand, on the site near the border, they evolve as contrasting structures which follow the new concept of disturbed border elements.



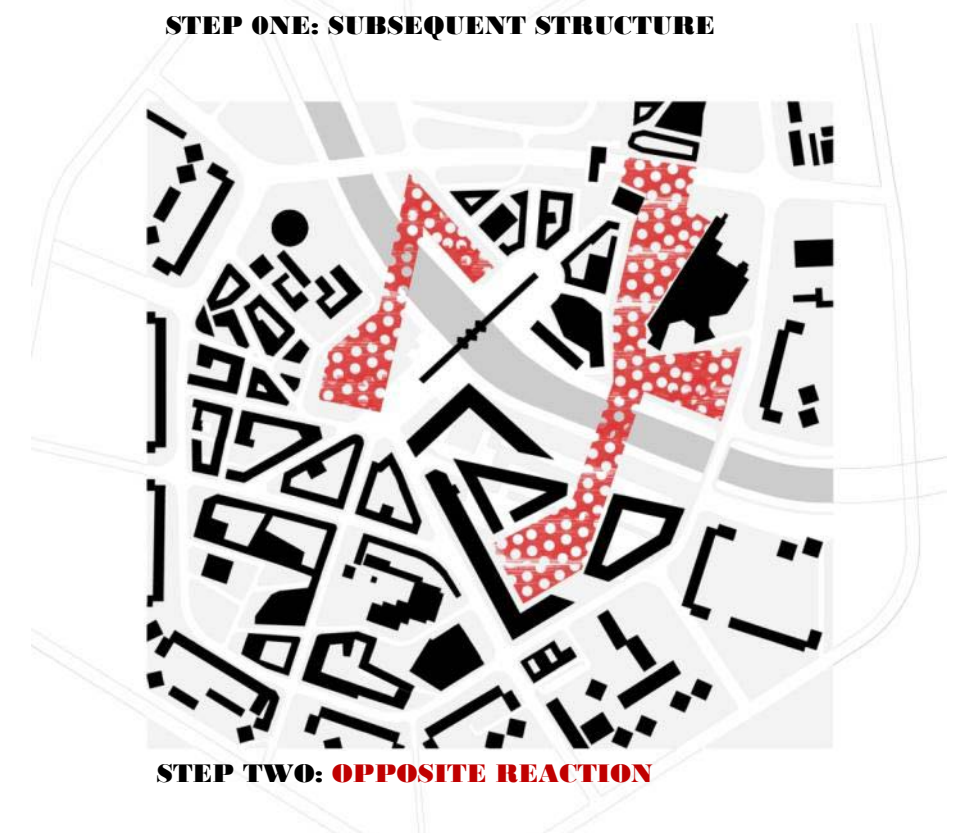
CURRENT STRUCTURE / FOUNDATION



STEP ONE: SUBSEQUENT STRUCTURE



CONNECTION BETWEEN TWO MAIN ELEMENTS



STEP TWO: OPPOSITE REACTION



DISTURBING THE BORDER



COMBINING THE ELEMENTS OF CONCEPT

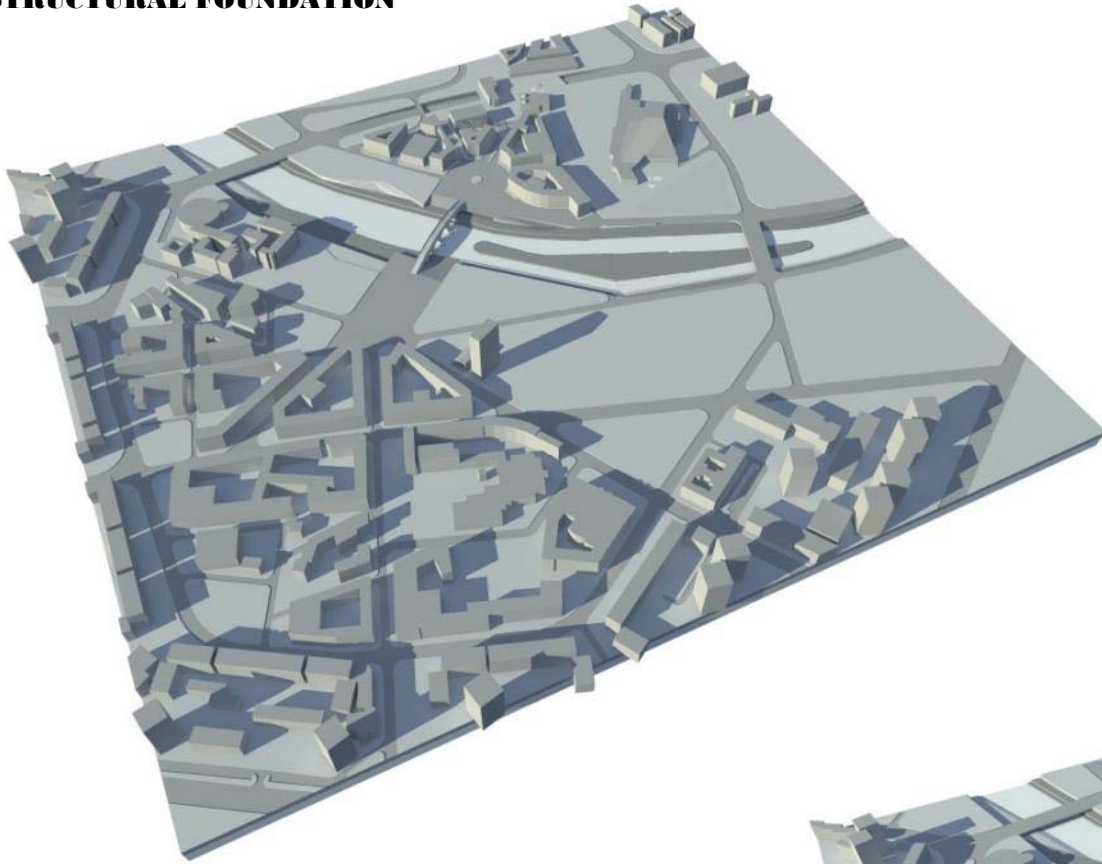


FRAGMENTISATION

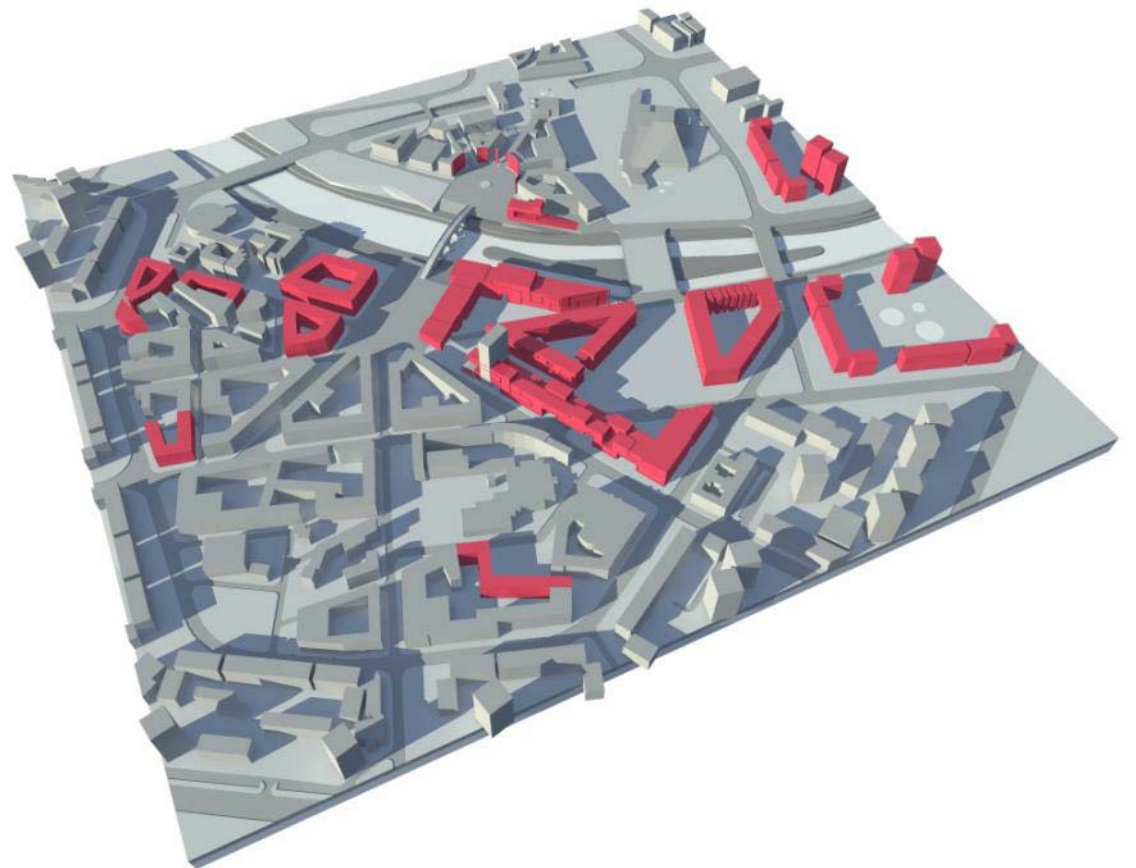


ADAPTATION TO THE BASIC STRUCTURE

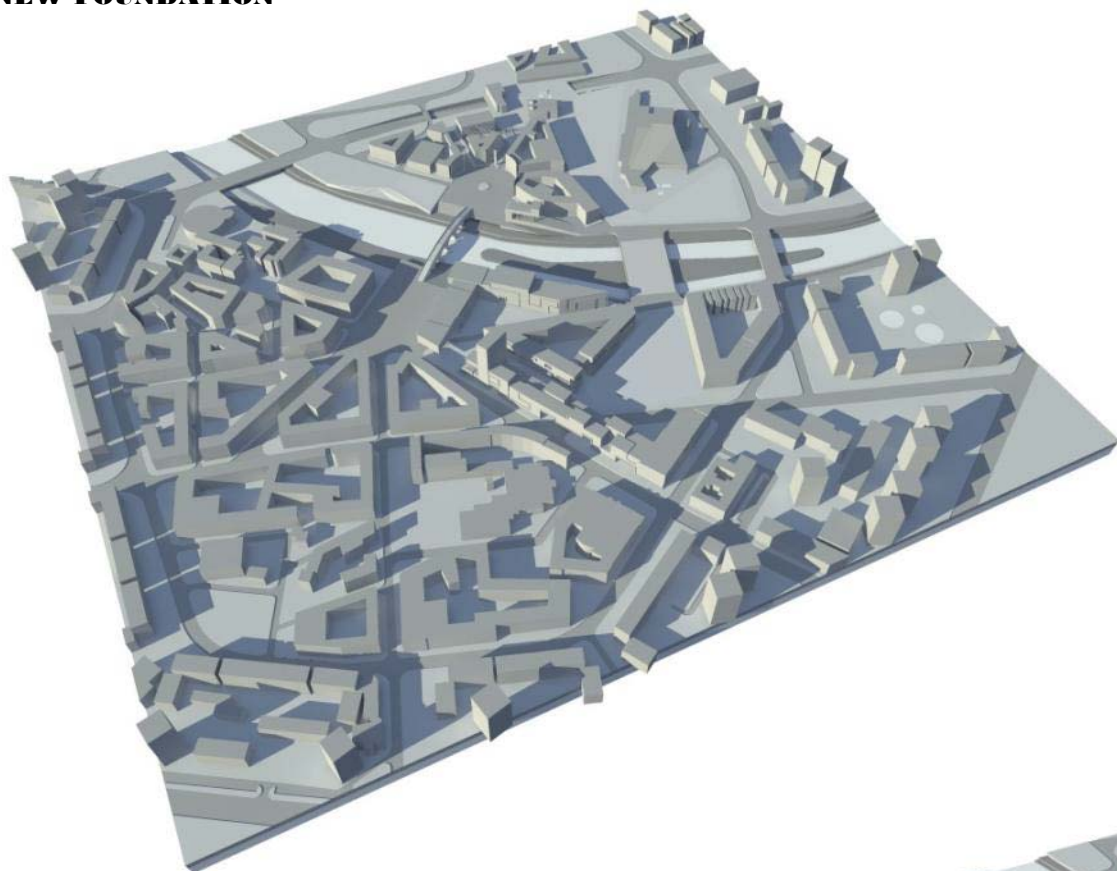
STRUCTURAL FOUNDATION



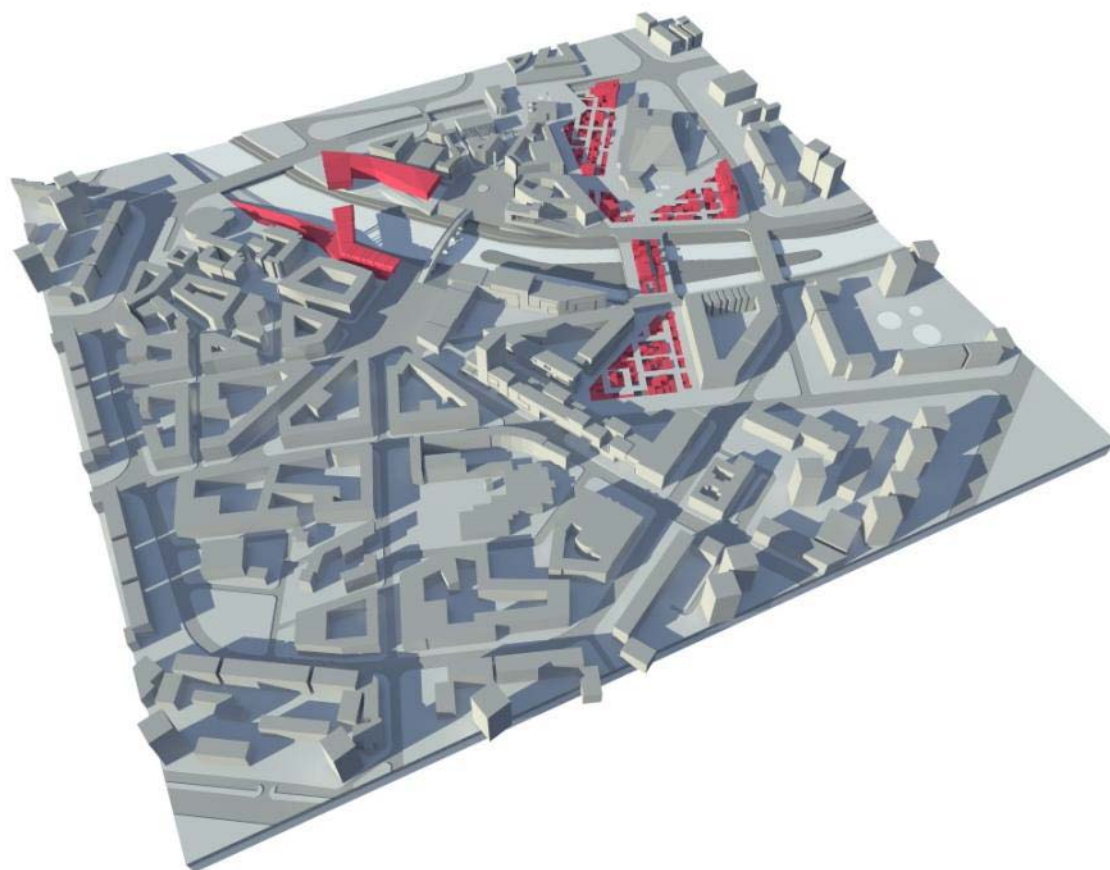
SUBSEQUENT STRUCTURE



NEW FOUNDATION



OPPOSITE REACTION



2.3 Urban reconstruction of the city centre

2.3.1 Situation plan 2008 shows the actual state of the city center and its most important features, before any activity taken in the project.

1. STONE BRIDGE



2. OPERA HOUSE



3. CITY WALL COMPLEX



4. THE POST OFFICE BUILDING



5. MUSEUM DAUT PASIN AMAM _old Turkish spa



6. HOUSE OF PARLAMENT

7. MODERN OFFICE BUILDINGS

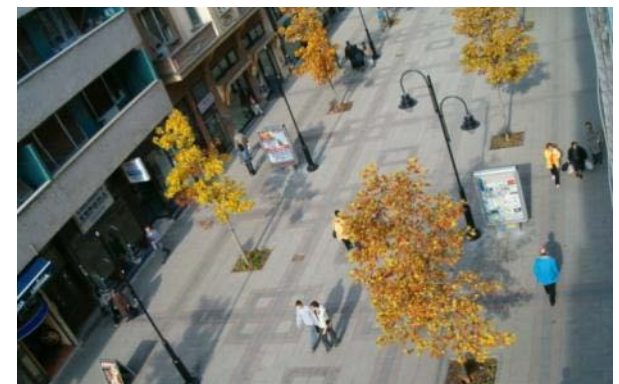


8. HOUSE OF THE ARMY

9. CITY HOSPITAL

10. MAIN SQUARE

11. STREET MACEDONIA



12. CITY TRADE CENTRE



2.3.2 Urban transformation

The first urban reconstruction phase of the city center, shown in this graphic illustration, begins with the displacement of certain urban elements i.e. built structures which no longer contribute to the vision of urban rejuvenation of the future European city center. This demolition process takes into consideration the already mentioned large-scale shopping mall and its complicated surroundings which have lost their residents and visitors as well. Also there are some other small dysfunctional old houses which are being removed as well. For the new created voids to gain purpose, the need of redefinition of the space in matters of physical restructuring and adaptation of the existing structures to the new surroundings appears. Through developing new connections and opening new spaces the large scale sites are being fragmentized to smaller units on which new structures of finer scale would appear. For the center to become more attractive and to offer improved public areas it starts to orient itself more to the water, through designing the vicinity along the river banks, with opening the spaces towards and over the river, as well as spreading the river bed and implementing a long island with urban greenery.

_removed elements

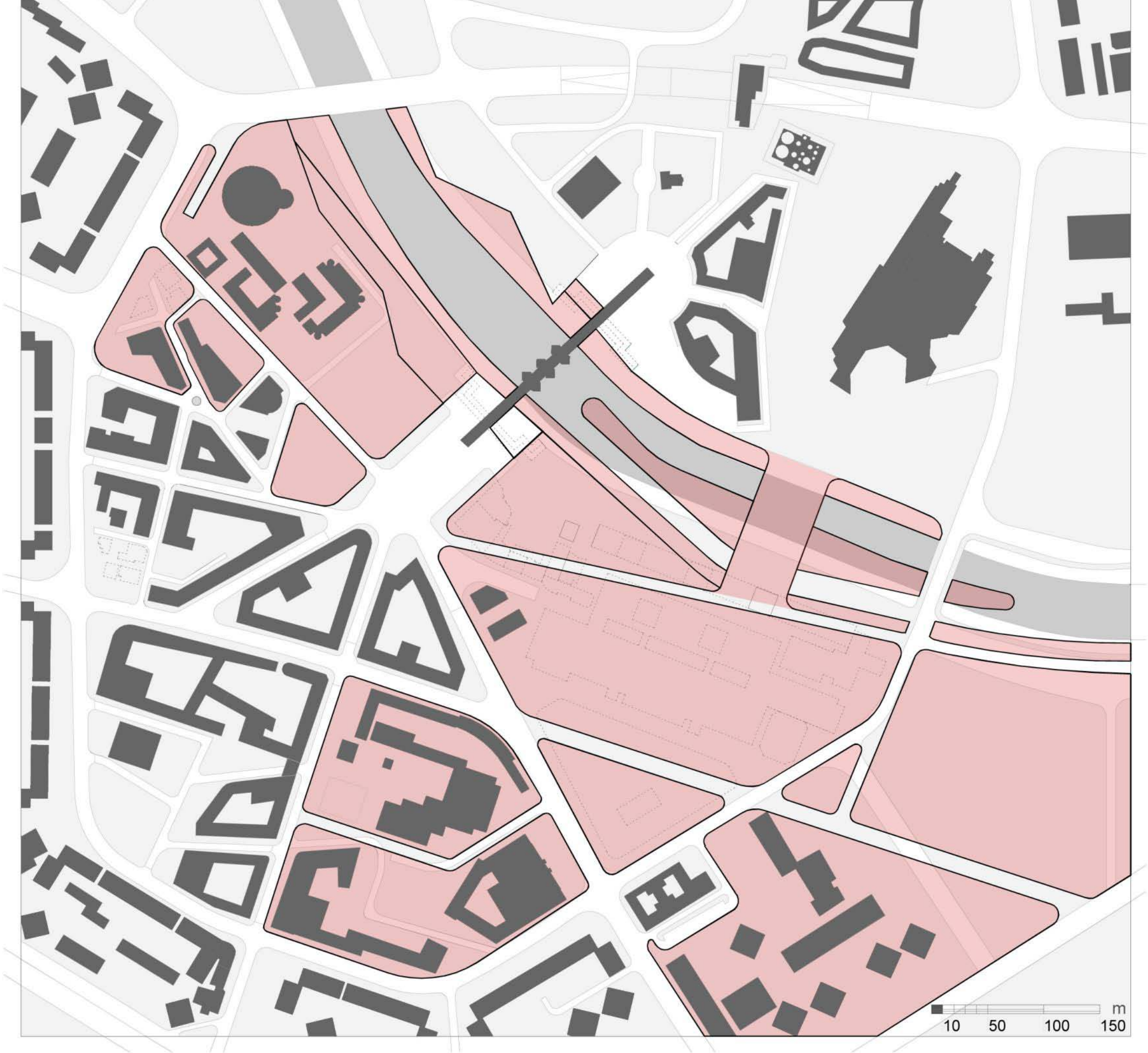


_new formations



_preserved surroundings





| **In order to define the street as an urban entity and to carefully adapt the contemporary architecture to the surroundings, the new buildings that appear, are being positioned at the borders of the sidewalks and basically follow the formal expressions of the neighboring structures. However, they never completely follow this classical urban development with closed city blocks, but through dividing the structure on the ground floor in smaller entities with empty spaces in between, the city block house remains unbolt and provides pedestrian and in some cases also traffic circulation.**

The other buildings that shape the central area have generally different architectural expressions, to separate each ones importance from the other and to avoid a unified appearance of a region built in only one phase and style. It is to imagine that every new structure has a different creator and in that way tells a different story to the viewer. The only unification is their same height and depth similar to the city block houses that surround them.

_ preserved surroundings



_new structures

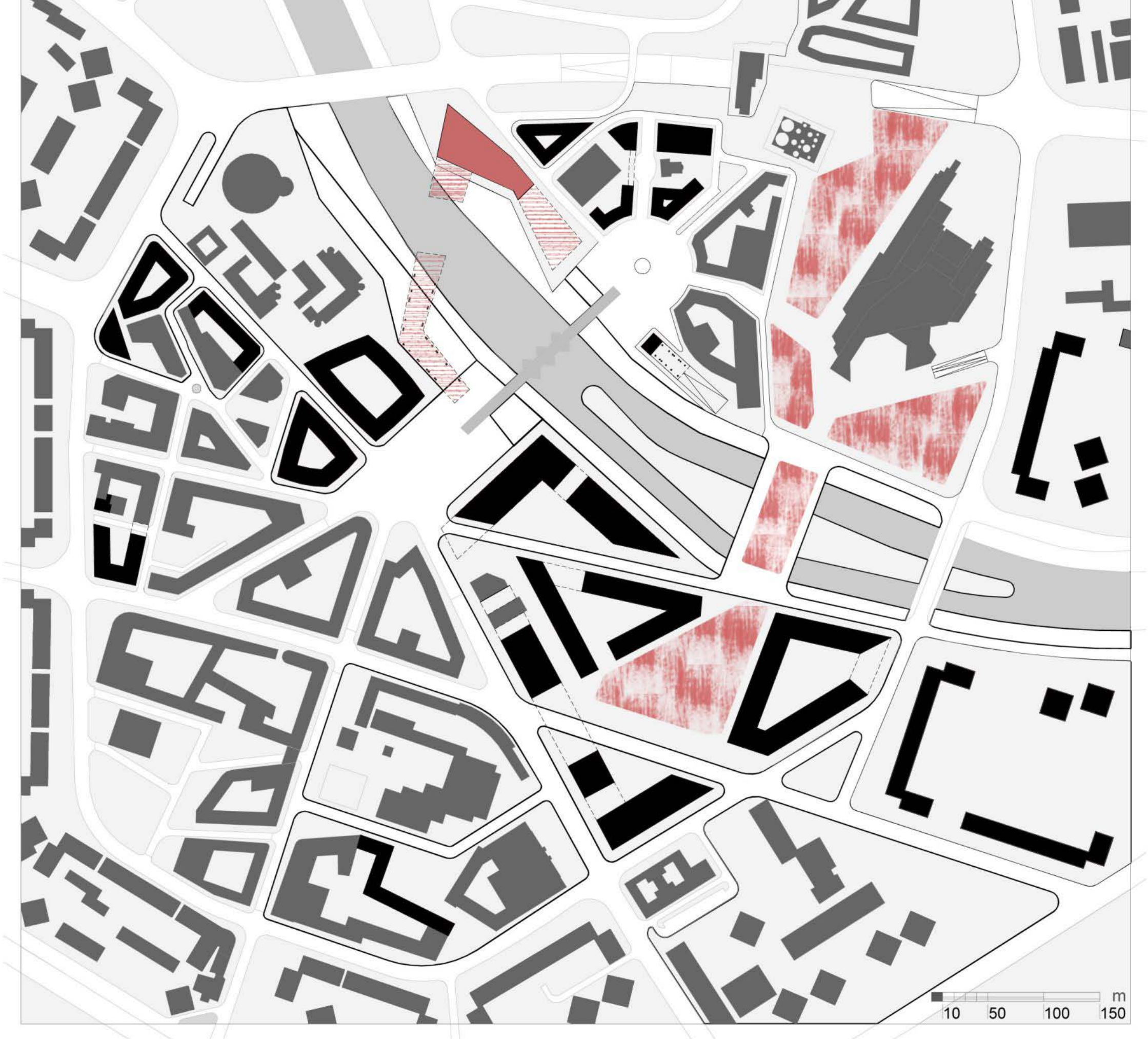


_floating structures



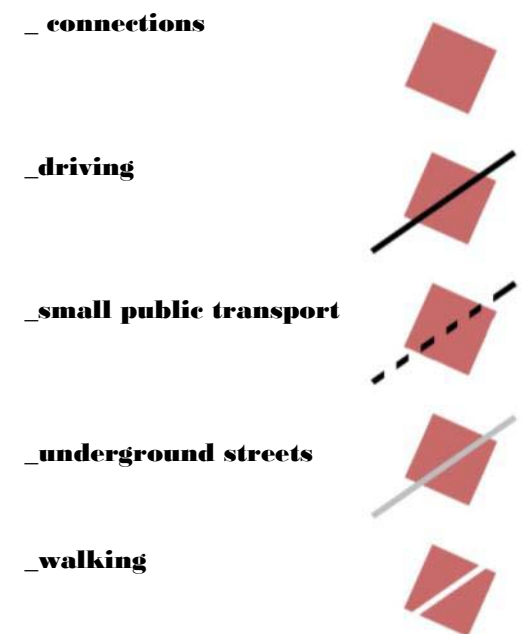
_subsequent structures





2.3.3 New traffic and pedestrian communication

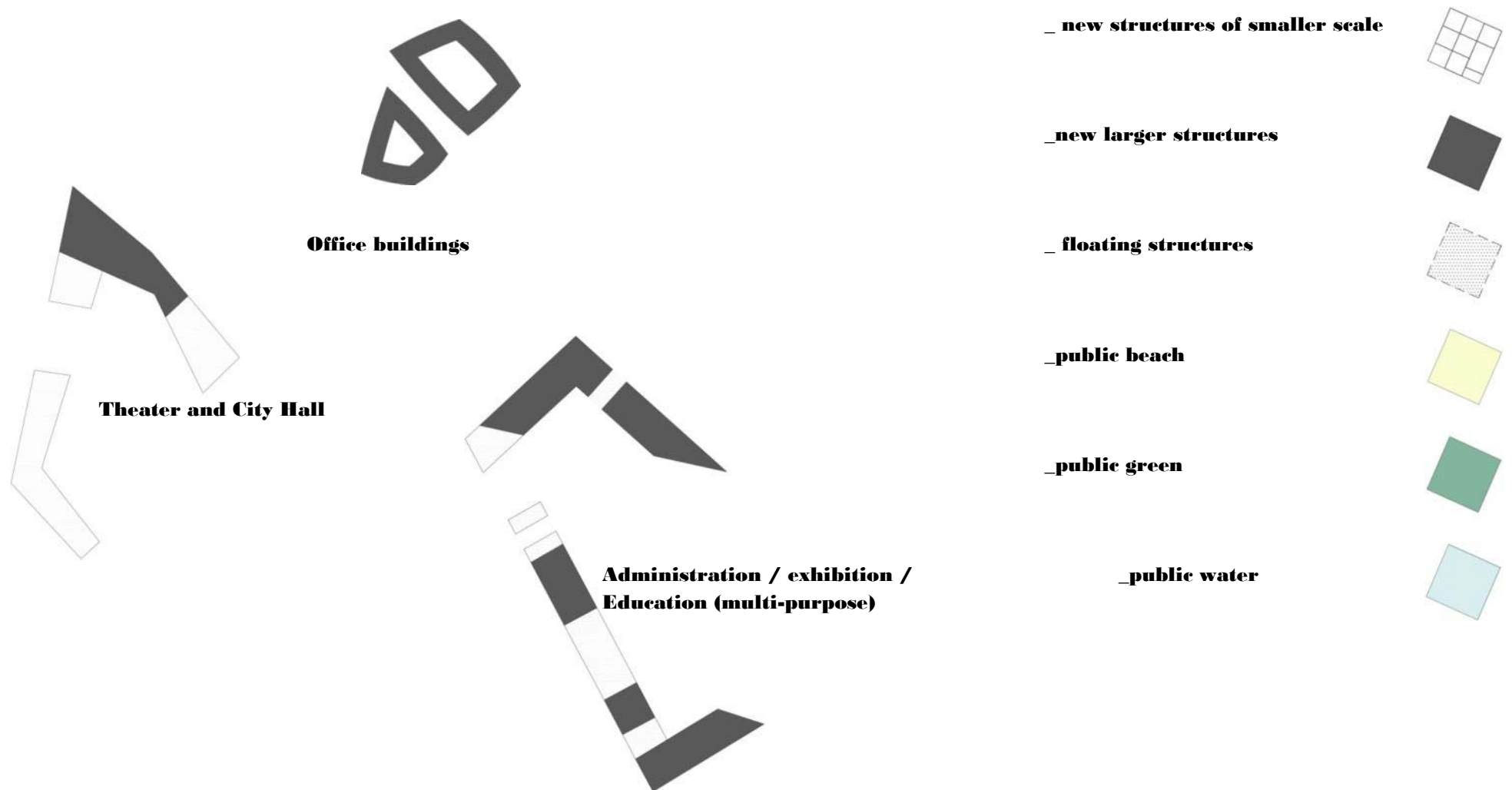
As Skopje's central area slowly turns into an exciting destination and a place to have fun, there are more people to be expected to come to visit it. People who would live there, work there, or simply drive by and see what's happening in the city. To be able to provide those visitors and vehicles a safe crossing and no stress, there is a need to expand the existing driving and walking routes and of course to make them more interesting. Apart from the so called Small Ring that surrounds the city center, there are two other streets that admit car and public traffic streaming through its inner area. One of them is a reconstruction of an old street with the same purpose, and the other one is an underground communication which provides quick passage, or inclusion to the underground parking lots. Due to the length of the underground passage, there are openings designed in the ground above the street, which would provide air fluctuation and natural lightning. There is another small street planned on the left river bank which admits only small public transportation so that the walking through the cultural and entertainment sites towards the old town would not be stressfully interrupted. The main walking route gains another course which leads to the same directions but through a totally different surrounding, depending upon requirements.

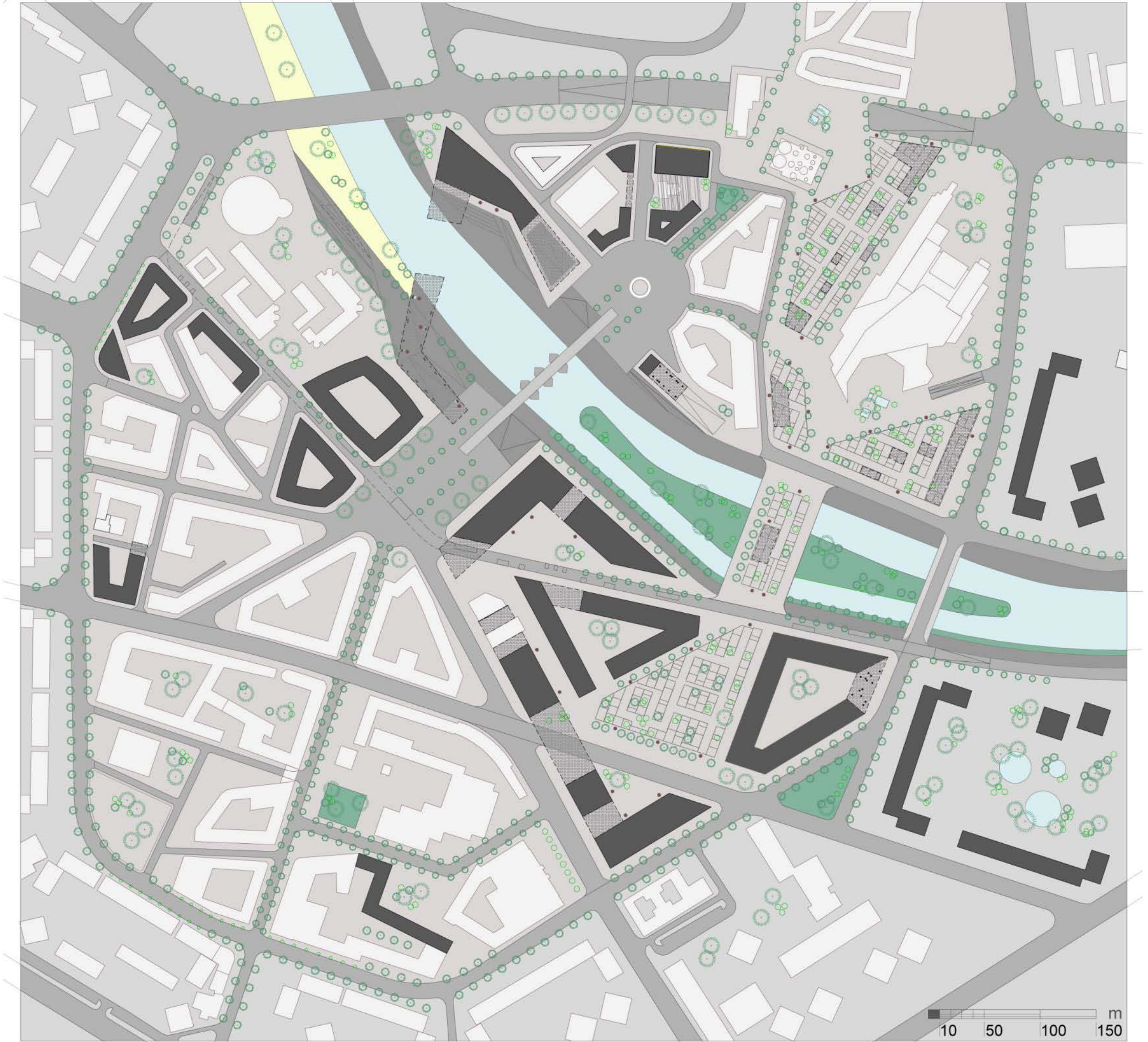




2.3.4 New structures and functions

| As we slowly approach the final outlook of the new urban plan, it is important to mention that revitalizations were needed as well in the north-west side near the river, where the office area despite the high frequency of visitors has become chronically empty over the decades. Here, according to the functions of the surrounding buildings on the left side, a new theater construction appears whose design follows the character of its parcel, and the nature of the riverside below it. Directly on the right side where office and institutional functions take place, followed by the expressive line of the theater, the new Skopje City Hall building takes form. Floating spaces, significant longitudinal formations which need complicated engineering signalize the imperative city region, an important part of every capital city. Under the floating buildings, the river banks destruct from their simplicity into overlapping paths and shapes that bring life to the river banks with pedestrian walking zones, beaches and cafés.





2.4. Designed areas

There is a common belief that we are experiencing a time of so called “profound transformation”, not only in a country like Macedonia, whose transformations from one to another type of social life and society required drastic changes in all spheres of human behaviour. It seems that today’s life itself is subjected to a lot of changes all around the world,. As we move away from industrial society, away from the family, away from the age pyramid as well as from stabile working conditions, and other conventional circumstances, we approach a new era of global culture, power of information and knoweledge, single life and over ageing. It is more than natural that a city, being a reflection of the social i.e. urban life and culture, experiences that transformation, not only in its material substance but in the way we use this substance and addapt it to the needs of the new consumers of that space.

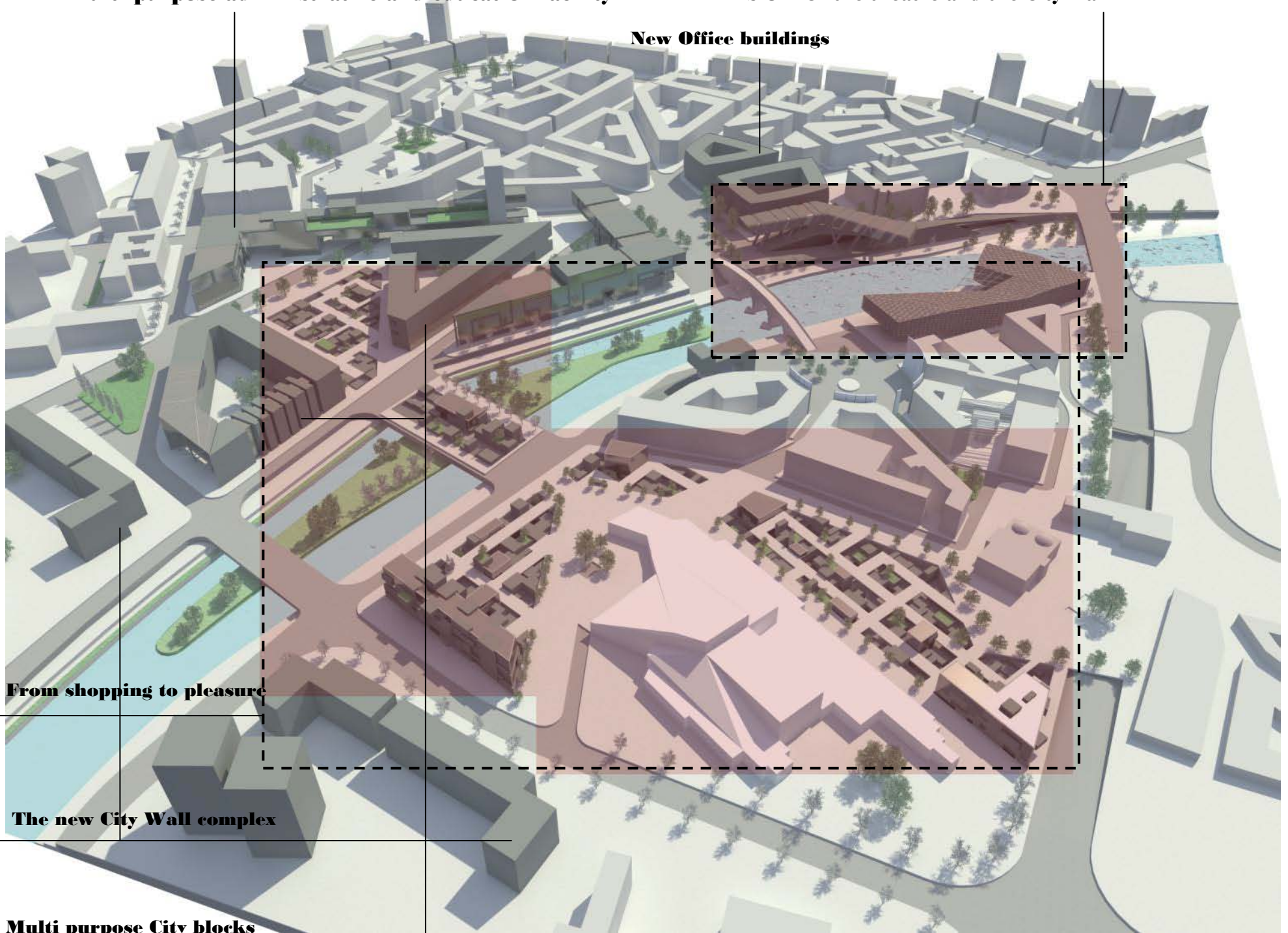
The urban redevolpment of the european city is a process that occurs in many societies, initially as an ecological redevelopment as well as preservation and reconstruction of the traditional city. There are also many areas that have lost their function which inevitably need to be put under conversion and adjustment, especially for those areas with large scale monofunctional spaces. The characteristics of the redeveloped city are the relatively high dencity of the new buildings, a new system of networked public spaces, a functional and architectural mixture as well as a hierarchical growth of the city with an accent put to the city centre as the natural highlight.

To be able to apply these issues to a clever conversion over the Skopje region, one schould start a complexed analysis of the whole site and explore all different aspects of urban reconstruction such as traffic issues, new technologies, and new ecological measures. However the city center would still be the most significant and interestig part of the project as it is the heart of the city and the center of public interest. The new center according to many, schould be a place of constructed history, a destination for tourism (not only long-distance tourism but also a local, suburban one), a place of attractive public spaces and cleverly thought out a range of high culture, entertainment and rare goods. However it schould also be a home for many who would like to live there including the elderly population. Approaching these visions for the center of Skopje several major ideas for the design appeared, such as primarily the development of consumer areas, in this case mixed with culture, leisure and living, then shifting the centre towards the water and adapting this space into a destination for relaxing and pleasure, and finally the construction of attractive buildings implanted within the historical ones which would symbolize future perspectives. The accent on this project is put on the two major zones, both growing around the river banks, left and right from the Stone Bridge. This in relation to the consumer area with small-scaled structural boxes that are spreading on the empty spaces around large scale constructions, and to the two structures on the other side of the bridge which represent the attractive institutional and cultural monuments of the new era i.e. the new theater and the city hall.

Multi-purpose administrative and education facility

A vision for the theatre and the City Hall

New Office buildings



From shopping to pleasure

The new City Wall complex

Multi purpose City blocks

2.4.1 from shopping to pleasure

After the displacement of the large scaled shopping mall and the physical restructuring of the area around it, it is to be expected that a lack of shopping destinations appear in the center of the city, even though there are some shopping malls around the center already built or in construction at present time. However the small stores are expected to be back in the ground floors of the old buildings which are now over flown with restaurants and simply too many cafés that occupy most of the space around the center. So now, shopping being a function is to be decentralized and spread all over the center, but clearly concentrated along some attractive streets, or preferably along the new walking zone which is to be designed on the space of the former shopping mall and spread over the river towards the old Çarsija.

The basic idea for the development of this walking zone / shopping area was to destruct the classical air conditioned shopping city, to convert it to the old fashioned consumption approach, represented with smaller outdoor stores placed around small streets, and to combine these functions with public spaces which offer culture and lifestyle. It is to be imagined as a hybrid space where people would live, work, consume and relax. In order to express a unified outlook of the whole area, the functions are being situated in box-shaped units, which could be used either as one space or a combination of several as a bigger composition. The idea for the geometrical structure of the floor plan was developed after the existing structure of the old Çarsija as a combination of its urban fabric and the pattern of the old stone pavements the so-called "Caldrma". The stones themselves represent the new structural units. At some parts, the units combine and grow into real sized buildings where every unit is designed as a small apartment or room for a student dormitory. The height and position of the bigger structures are defined according to the urban surroundings.

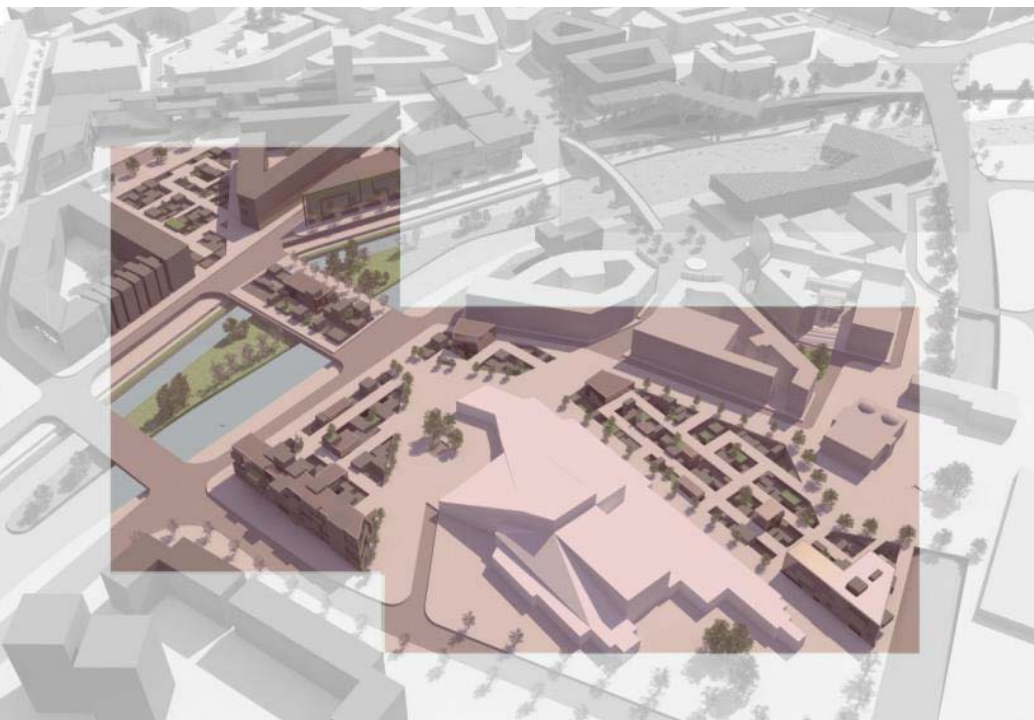
Streets in the old Turkish Bazaar i.e. the Çarsija

Old stone pavements i.e. "Caldrma"





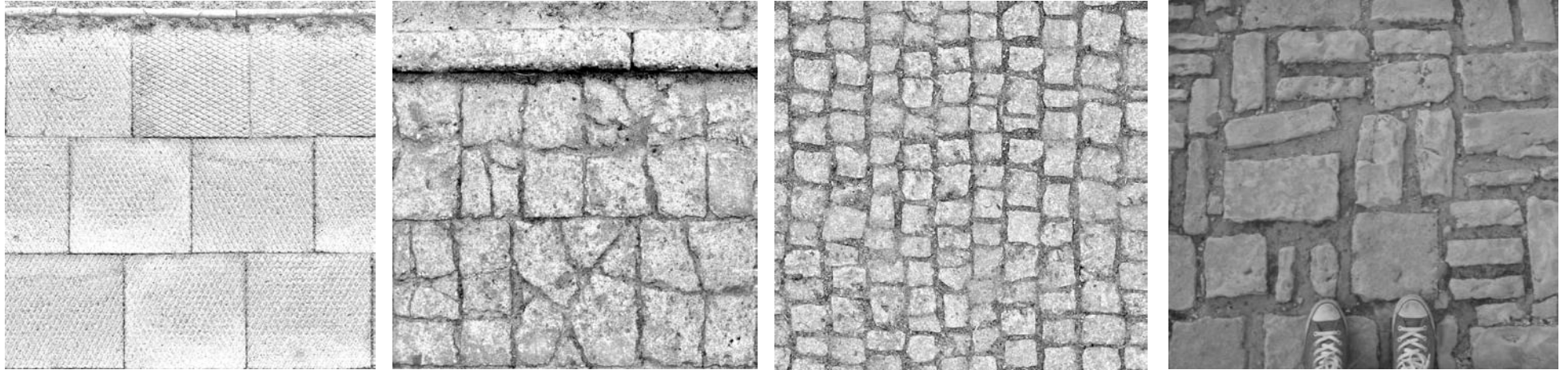
The structure of the old Turkish Bazaar in Skopje



The structure of the new developed shopping area

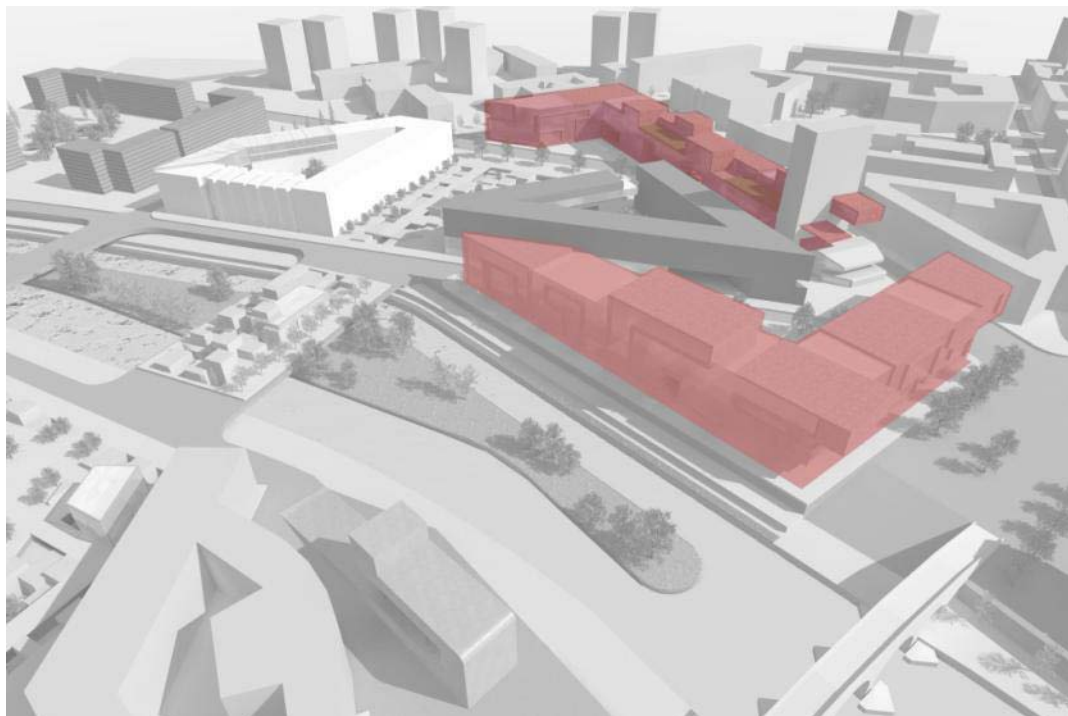
Concerning the concept of the new walking trace / shopping zone, and with the objective for it to properly serve its multi-purpose, it would probably not be enough to only place the structures in the new surrounding and to expect them to function as planned or evolve by themselves in the future. Such public communities have proven to be difficult areas to control and have regularly been targets of “ghettoisation” or dysfunction in the past. In order to avoid similar problems and in the same time to provide necessary additions and logistics for the whole area, a new administrative complex should occur, shaping the area as a border line separating it from the conventional houses of the rest of the center. The new spaces offer administrative functions for the complex, larger exhibition or event spaces for indoor activities, as well as entertainment and educational facilities for casual visitors, buyers, students or the elderly. Nevertheless, it is imagined as a public residence which gathers people, opinions, culture and information together. The structure does not entirely enclose the area from its surroundings; on the contrary, there are many passages under the built structure that grant access to the walking zone.



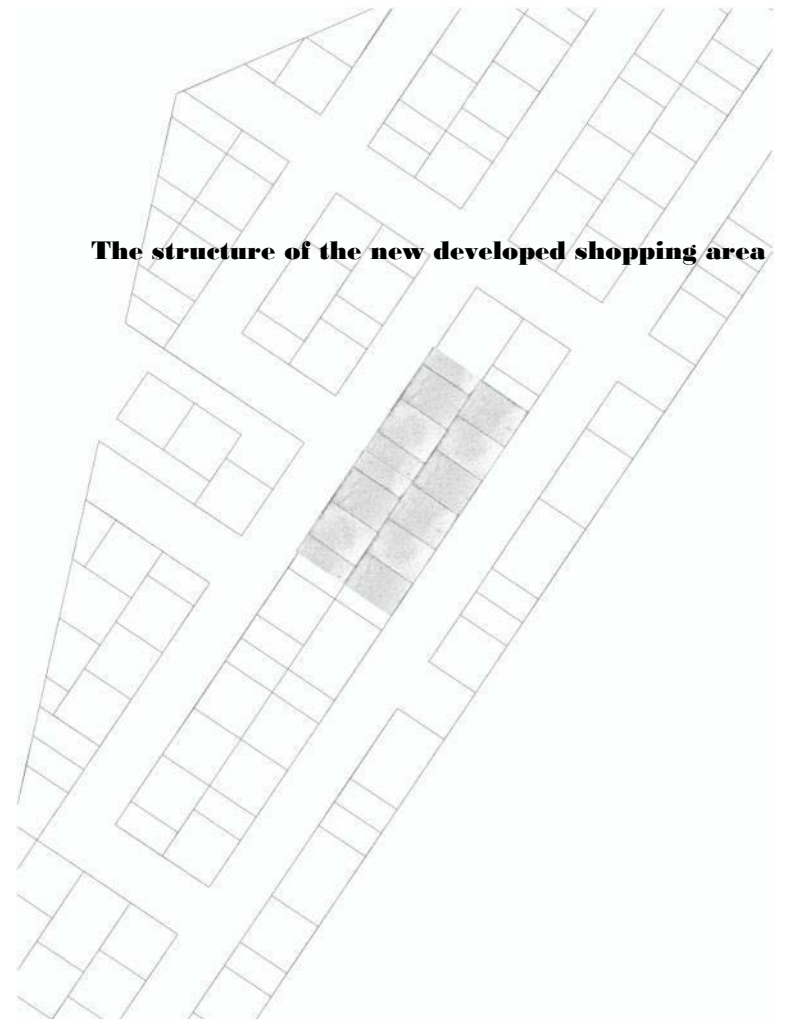


TEXTURES FOR STONE PAVEMENTS

The administrative structure surrounding the walking trace / shopping zone



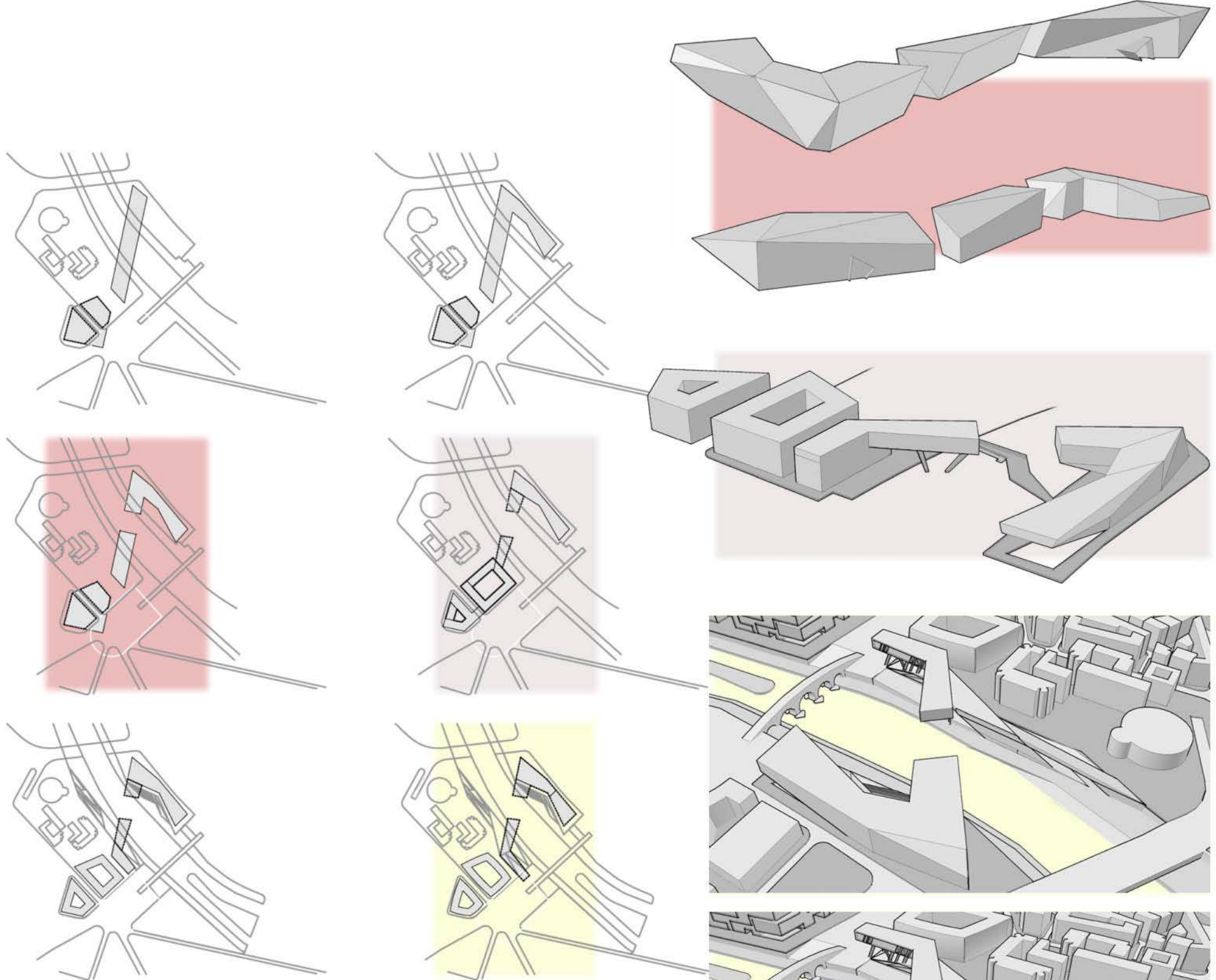
The structure of the new developed shopping area



2.4.2 A Vision for the theater and City Hall

The idea to bring these two functions in the central area of the city is nothing new for city planning or for Skopje at least as it has already been mentioned many times by the public opinion or propagated by the city government. In fact, the site where the City Theater appears is the actual location where Skopje's old theater used to be, before it was destroyed by the earthquake in 1963. On the other hand, Skopje's present City Hall does not actually exist as a permanent object, but its facilities are placed in a post-earthquake temporary settlement located in the city park region. The two buildings are being illustrated in the project on the left side of the stone bridge, placed according to their functions on both sides of the river, the theater on the side intended for culture, the City Hall on the side with institutional and office buildings, one in front of the other. The reason for such an arrangement of the two structures comes from an earlier idea for bridge-like structure floating over the river and connecting the two banks and the two functions into one. After further experiments with the form, the object de-evolved into two structures which follow the same contour and "communicate" with each other, but at the same time make a clear statement of their different purposes. In addition to this goal, the objects were given different materials for their façades and different finishing lines of the shapes. As the city hall floats above the river, the theater structure rises from it, and as the theater reflects the mater of the water the City Hall objects it with its artificial landscape. The two opponents attract each other and in this way they create an intense space, where different activities could take place.



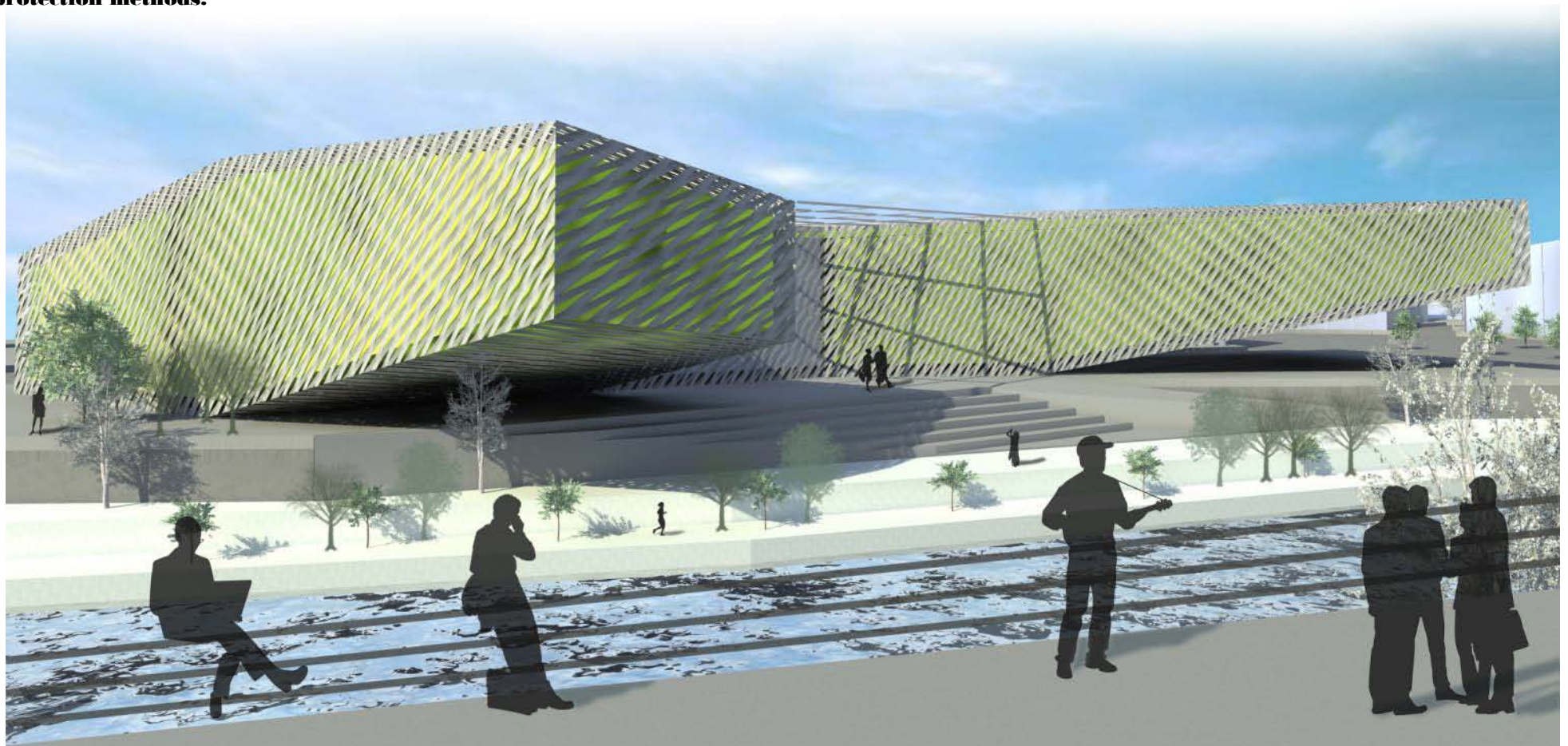


Shaping the outlook of the riverside with the two major structures and their relation to the main city square The initial intention of the design was to develop two functions in one structure floating like a bridge over the river. The specific location and the views from it, transform the major idea into a more realistic one, as well as the reviewed concept of two structures that “communicate” with each other, tending towards becoming one.

| the Theater

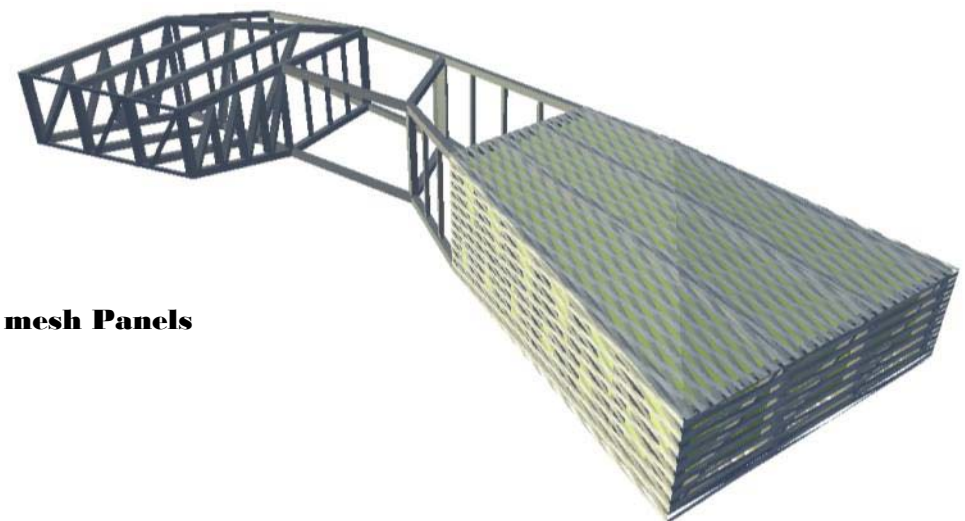
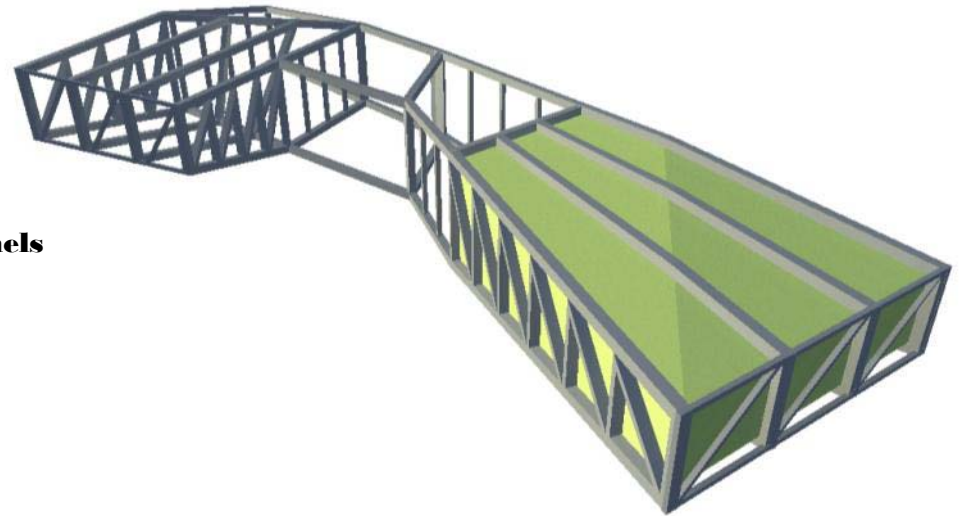
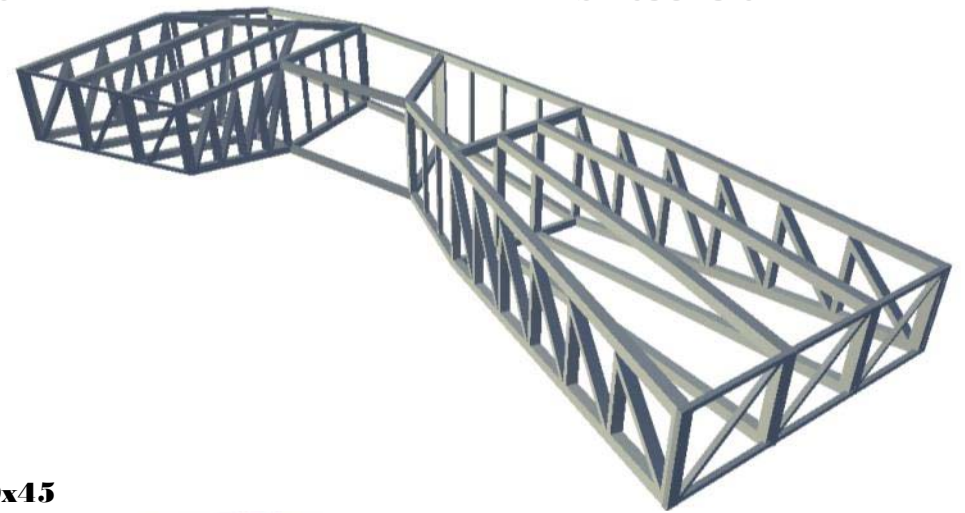
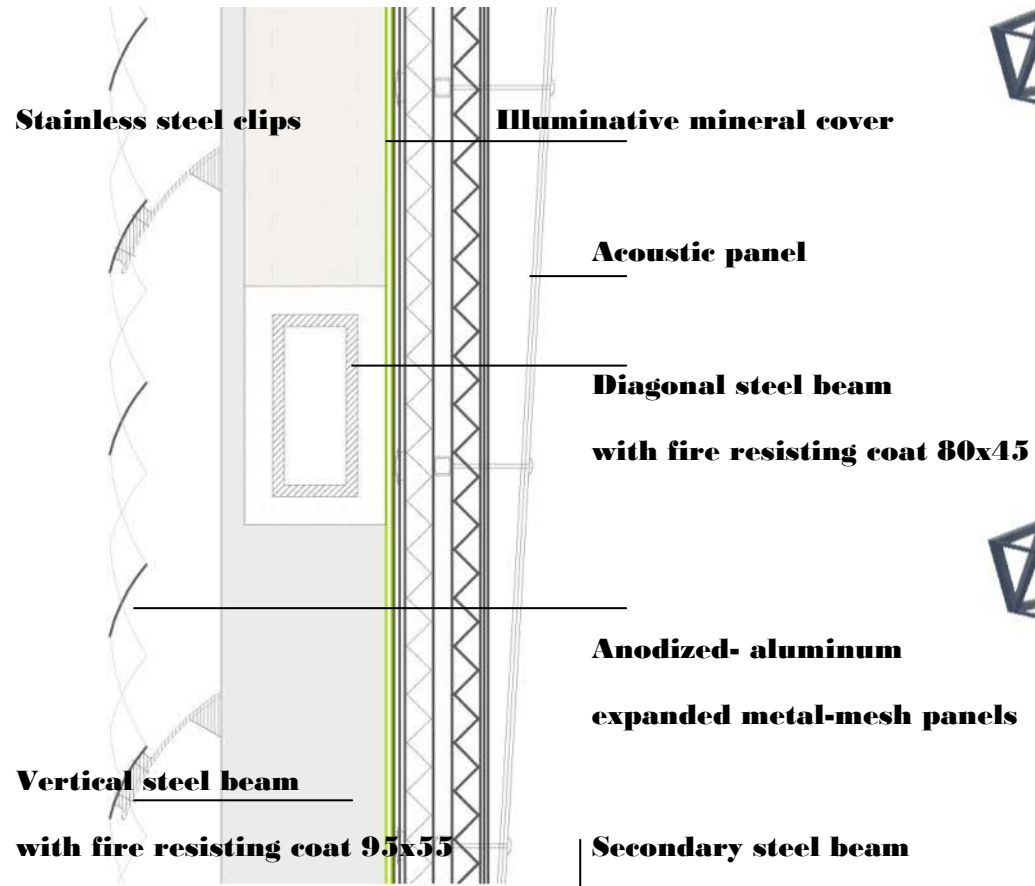
The form of the New City Theater is defined by its main function, with an outside appearance that is reflecting the arrangement of the inner occurrences in the building. The space is divided into two separate halls, a bigger one for the most important performances, and a smaller additional hall for suitable purposes. The two components are given such shapes after the model for an optimal theater hall for larger audiences. This kind of shape offers the possibility of a semi-open ground floor which was applied in this project, once to place the structure above the river bank and again to develop a summer stage under the console of the bigger audience hall which could host various outdoor events. The ejected space could also be closed in winter as a secondary foyer, an additional stage or mainly as an immediate entrance in the back of the big audience hall. Fundamentally, the design of this winter area should not oppose to the general appearance of the structure above and therefore needs to be covered with a transparent façade, preferably a structural glass cover with thin construction lines which are hanging down from the upper body of the theater and holding on to it.

In order to properly design such a bold hanging construction, without inserting many colons which may in this case contradict the open space of the theater hall and block the view towards the stage, there is a need for an exceptional construction approach, especially for an earthquake ground like the one in Skopje. Therefore the basic construction elements are uniquely designed as large scale construction frames, made of steel, that shape the hull of the building. The frames need a secondary construction, which is usually also completed from steel beams that preserve the distance between the frames and carry the roof and hull structure. The whole structure also needs strengthened foundations, because of the earthquake danger and the fact that the building stands near the water and as such, on a fragile ground. The suggestion, in this case would be a kind of foundation, constructed as two steel-concrete slabs with soft filling in between, similar to the Japanese earthquake protection methods.



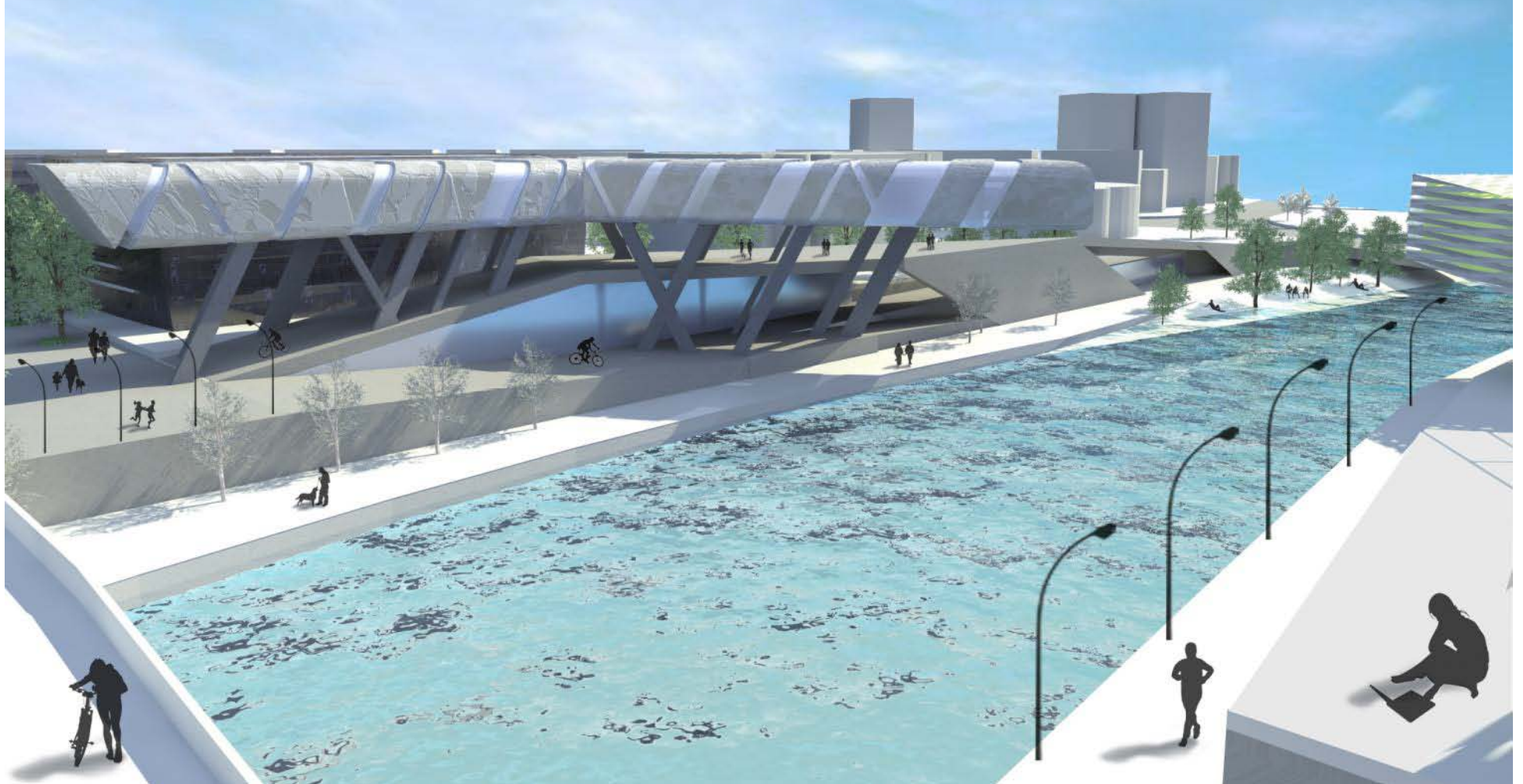
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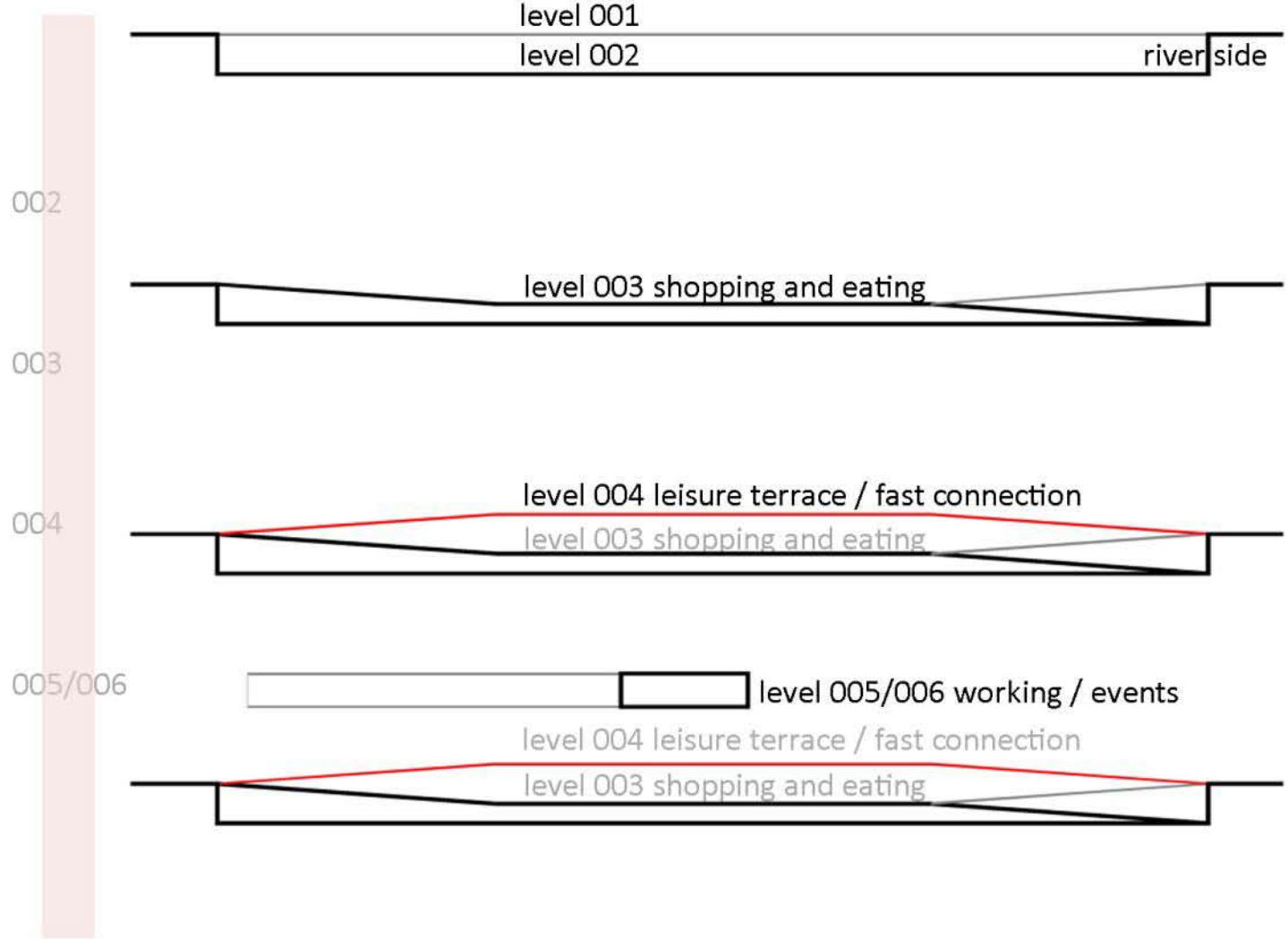
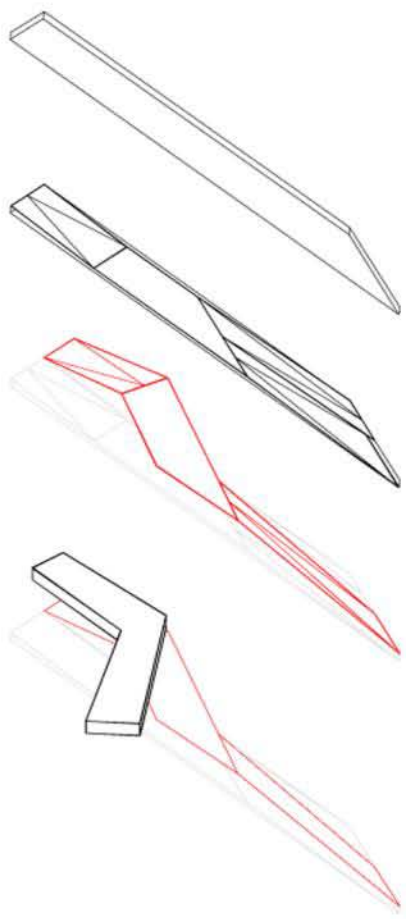
STRUCTURE



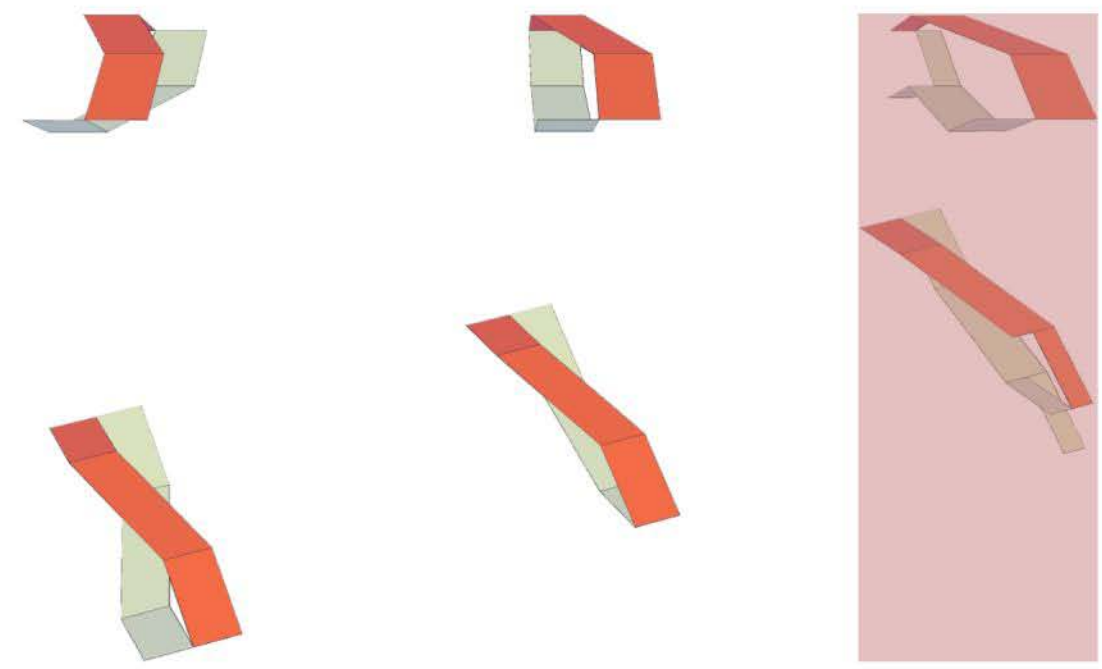
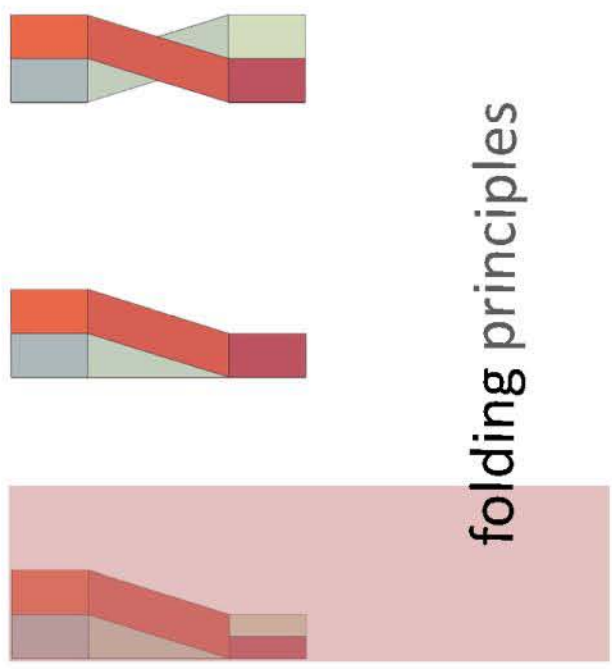
| The City Hall

The placement of the Structure of the City Hall building on the right river bank next to the main square required several formal adaptations so that the structure does not interrupt the pedestrian access from the river towards the square. It is an important route that connects several essential parts of the city and it is also an area with an exceptional view towards the fortress “Kale”, the Stone Bridge and the new Theater. Therefore the structure of the City Hall emerges as a completely floating object that leaves the ground floor open for reconstruction and additional design. The structure stands on great pillars that completely support the floating object and provide entrances in the building. The ground below becomes an attractive pedestrian connection which offers spaces for different purposes. Following the folding principle, the conventional two-level riverside transforms into a deconstructed longitudinal structure which together with the building above provides up to 6 levels with different functions or directions. The lowest level lies directly at the river and is therefore designed as a green area for leisure and relaxation with a public beach and various Cafés. The next level offers some shops and small restaurants, and above it, there is the fast connection level, where the visitors drive by with bikes or other small transportation devices. The so called streets are wide and there is enough space to just lie down and read a book without interfering with any other activities. The visitors or the employees of the City Hall are able to enter the building from both upper levels. The whole complex is imagined to be an attractive place to bring people to enjoy beautiful weather near the river and at the same time to be in the heart of the city.





folding principles



3. VIEWS / PERSPECTIVES

FROM SHOPPING TO PLEASURE

> > >



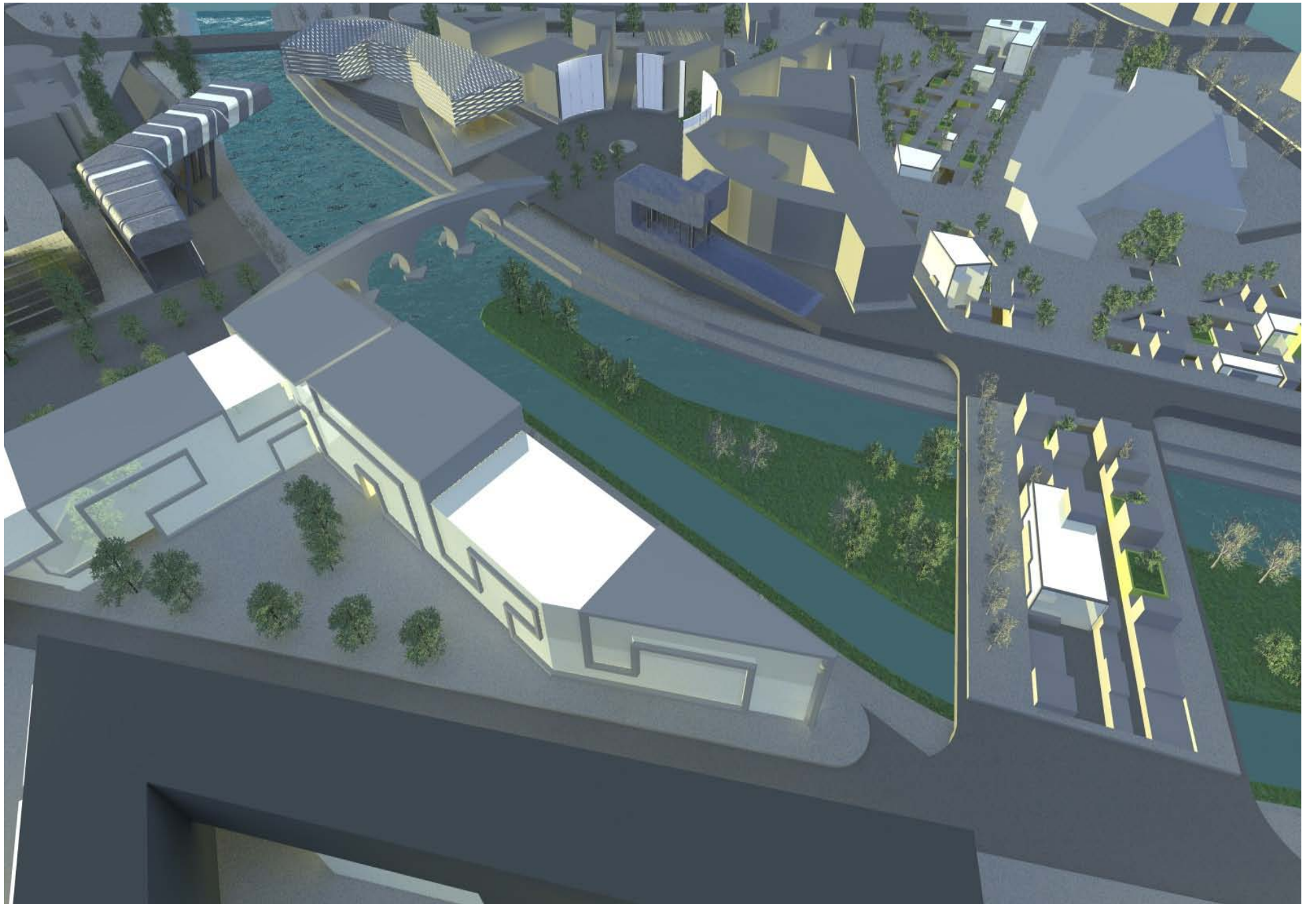
A VISION FOR THE CITY HALL

> > >



A NIGHT VISION

> > >





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Најголемо благодарам до Снеже, Младен, Владо, Даме, Есат, Ацко, Ѓоре и Мики