

**Re-Space**

Re-Set

Re-Think

Re-Start

Master Thesis Project  
Laura Rokaite





**“The need for housing is urgent, but just as urgent is the need  
for new ideas and reliable approaches to integration.”**

*Making Heimat*



Starting point: European migrant crisis (2015), the largest movement of people since the Second World War

## **Personal interest & the importance of the topic**

I have a strong interest in post-disaster and post-war situations and how architects, as professionals, can contribute during and after very complex post-disaster and post-war processes. As a result of disasters and wars, large numbers of people become displaced, they are forced to leave their homes and seek for a refuge in other countries.

A current reality in Europe is such that since 2015 it is facing a severe migrant crisis, the largest movement of people since the end of the Second World War. Millions of people fled their homes due to violence and persecution in the Middle East, with the largest numbers being from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq and sought asylum in the EU countries. However, some European countries (such as Italy, Greece, Germany, France, Sweden and the UK) have hosted the largest number of refugees up until now, while Eastern European states have taken only 1,600 refugees by the end of 2017. There was a quota scheme set up by the EU at the height of the migrant crisis stating how many refugees each EU country has to accept in order to help the countries that are struggling with the huge numbers of newcomers. It can be said that this problem will most likely become even greater in the near future – with more people coming in – especially since some countries, such as Germany, for example, are claiming that they cannot take in anymore refugees.



Huguenots



Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis



Refugees during the Prague spring



## Europe & Europeans

As Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Commission, said: "We Europeans should remember well that Europe is a continent where **nearly everyone has at one time been a refugee**. Our common history is marked by millions of Europeans fleeing from religious or political persecution, from war, dictatorship, or oppression. Huguenots fleeing from France in the 17th century; Jews, Sinti, Roma and many others fleeing from Germany during the Nazi horror of the 1930s and 1940s; Spanish republicans fleeing to refugee camps in southern France at the end of the 1930s after their defeat in the Civil War; Hungarian revolutionaries fleeing to Austria after their uprising against the communist rule was oppressed by the Soviet tanks in 1956; Czech and Slovak citizens seeking exile in other European countries after the oppression of the Prague Spring in 1968."

Ivana McGowan, the head of Amnesty International's EU office, said: "The response by the EU member states has been woefully inadequate and it's also been very misguided. Migrant policy over the last number of years has done away with evidence-based policies that have worked and been very cruel in the way it's left people already fleeing persecution and war literally out in the cold. We're deeply critical of Europe's response to what is a global refugee crisis. The numbers rising in Europe compared to the capacity and population of Europe was not in itself a crisis. **But the political response was left lacking. <...> there has not been enough solidarity, leadership and, frankly, more strength.**"

Founded in 1989

No. 5 - 6 (157 - 158) July - September 2010

Newspaper of the Jewish Community of Lithuania

# JERUSALEM



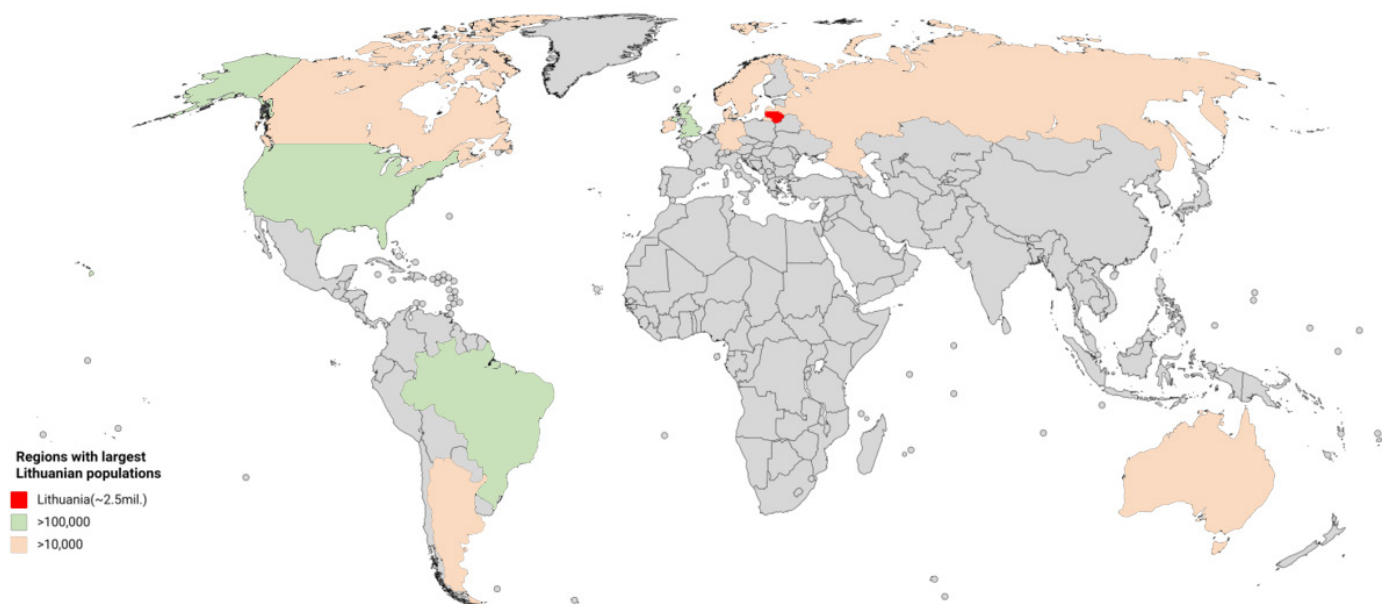
*of Lithuania*

## History: refugees in Lithuania

My home country Lithuania had around 160,000 Jewish people before the start of the Second World War. After Vilnius was returned to Lithuania from Poland in 1939, the number of Jewish people increased to 250,000. Hence, due to the Jewish influence Vilnius had been often referred to as 'Jerusalem of the North'.

After the outbreak of the war, Lithuanian politicians expressed a strong disapproval of the antisemitic policy coming from Nazi Germany. Hence, Lithuania accepted thousands of Jewish refugees coming from Poland and before that thousands of refugees arriving from Memel, which at that time belonged to Germany.

Despite the Lithuanian policy, after the country was occupied by the Nazi Germany, the Holocaust was started there as well. There were quite a few Lithuanian people during this period who were hiding the Jews even though they were risking their own lives. During the Nazi occupation there were approximately 2500-4000 Jews who were helped and hidden by around 25,000 Lithuanian people. However, despite all the efforts to resist the cruel regime, around 96% of Lithuanian Jews were killed during the Holocaust, which is the largest massacre in Lithuanian history in a very short period of time.





## History: Lithuanian diaspora

In 1940 Lithuania along with the other Baltic nations was annexed by the former USSR. It is estimated that Lithuania lost approximately one million people as a result of the war. The survivors ended up in many nations across the world as a result of the post-war Lithuanian diaspora.

Prior to the Nazi invasion of 1941, an opportunity presented to many Lithuanians to escape the Soviet repression. Consequently, around 40,000 Lithuanians fled into Germany. Later on in 1944 when it became apparent that the Russians were going to come back to Lithuania yet again, many fled the oncoming Soviet invasion. They tried to make it to Sweden, but only a few hundreds succeeded. Some of them made it to Norway, Denmark, France, Italy and even Yugoslavia. The vast majority of Lithuanians (around 70,000) successfully made it into Germany.

In addition to escaping to other European countries, many Lithuanians went to the United States. Approximately 30,000 DPs went to the US cities in the East and the Midwest; around 20% of all Lithuanian refugees settled in Chicago, which up to this day is called the largest Lithuanian diaspora. Other Western nations including Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the UK as well opened their arms to the Lithuanian refugees.

The stories of their resettlement in new nations are fascinating tales of hope. A great number of Lithuanians became successful or paved the way of success for their children in their new homes. They have achieved dreams and hopes which had never been possible in war-torn Lithuania at that period of time.



EU refugee quota per country

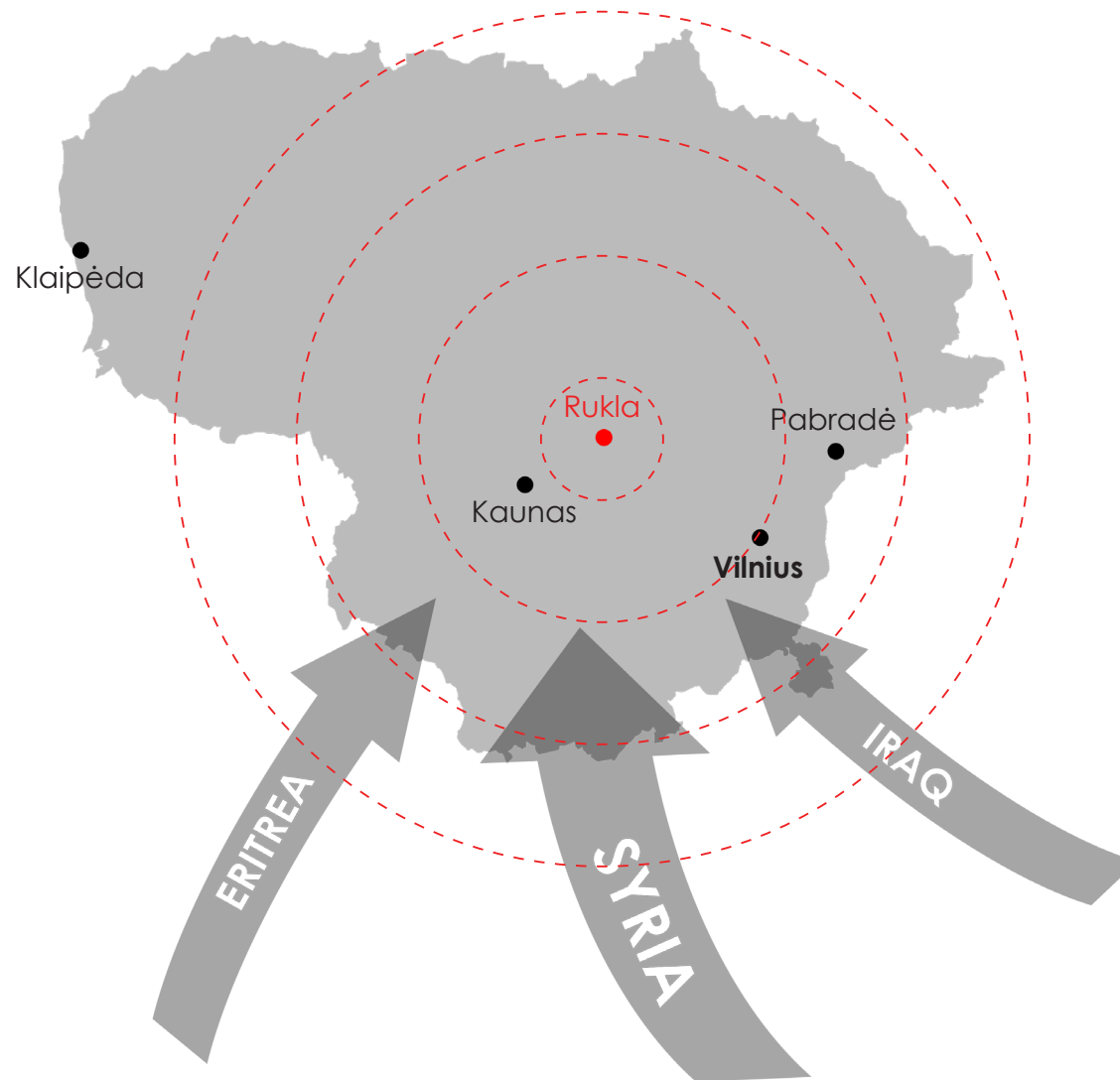
## **Location: Lithuania**

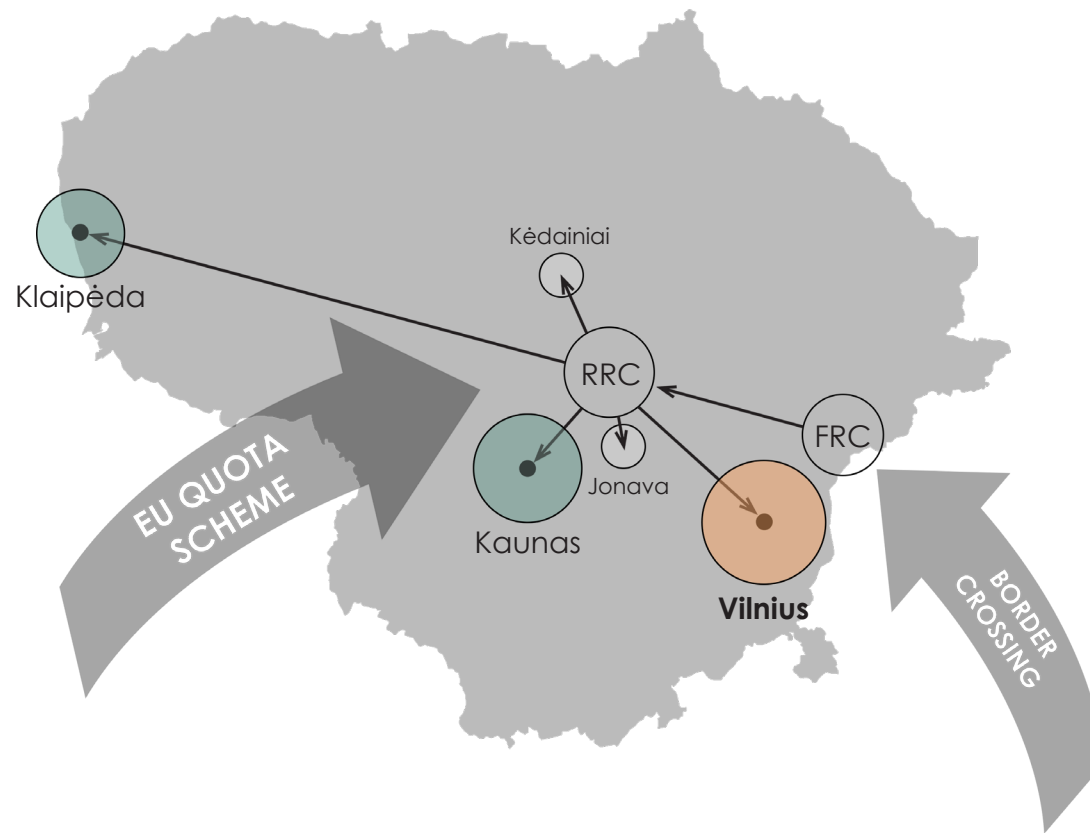
Being a member of the European Union, Lithuania received a quota to accept 1,283 refugees by the end of 2017. Majority of the people were planned to be relocated from Greece and Italy and a small number from Turkey. However, up to this day Lithuania has hosted less than half of the required number - only 468 refugees and thus has not contributed to the migrant crisis substantially. The EU rules dictate that once refugees get asylum in any EU country, they can freely move around and stay in the Schengen Area for up to 6 months. However, refugees are forbidden from working or from claiming a refuge in any other member state than the one to which they were initially assigned.

**“If everyone who wanted to move were allowed to do so, the world would be twice as rich.”**

*The Economist*

## Main citizenships of asylum seekers in Lithuania





RRC - Refugee Reception Centre

FRC - Foreigner Registration Centre

supervision by Caritas

supervision by the Red Cross

supervision by the municipalities

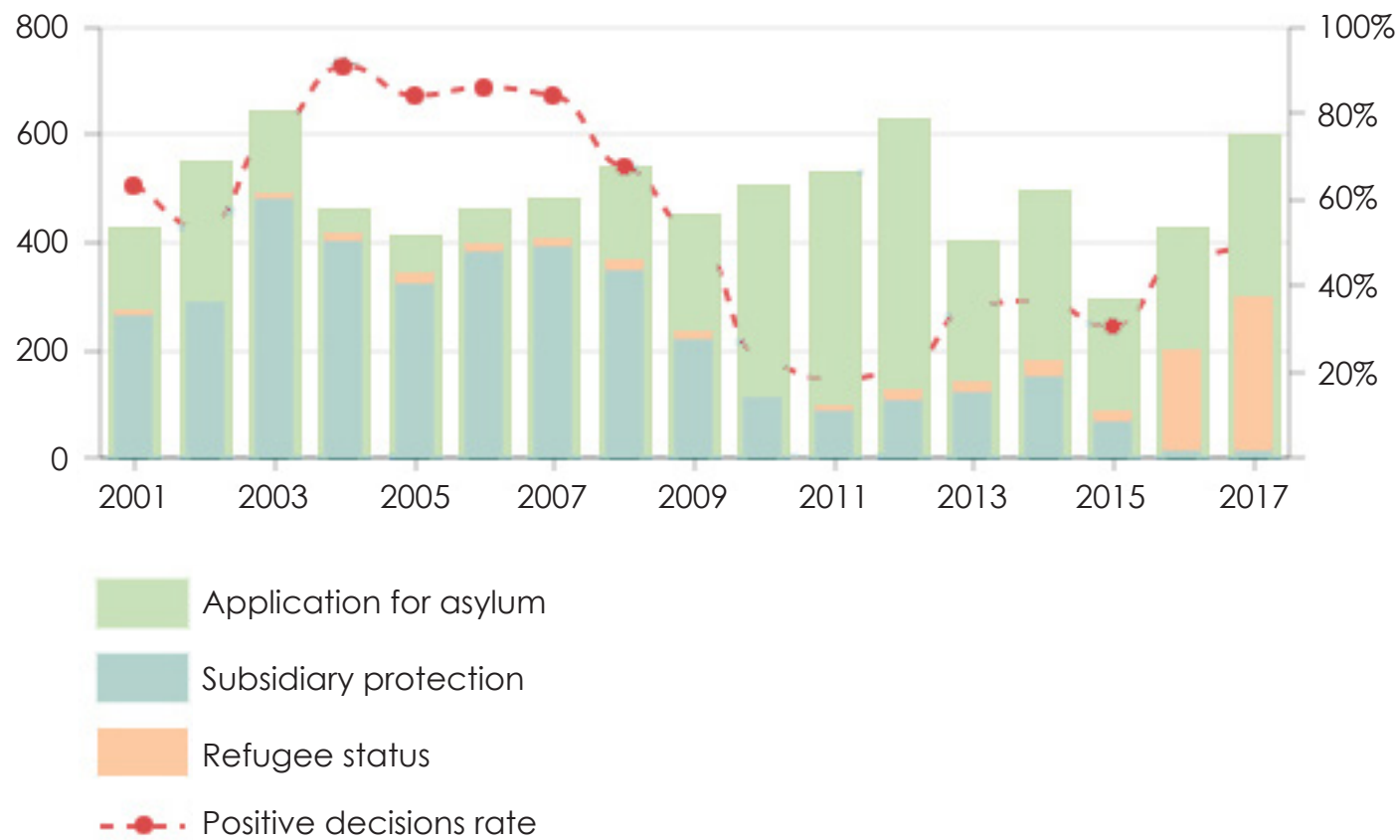
## **Arrival, distribution and supervision**

At this very moment there is a lack of a clear structure when dealing with immigrants and refugees in Lithuania. There is an institution called Foreigner Registration Centre (FRC) in Pabrade, where people who cross the Lithuanian border without a permission are temporarily held. The second place (also the place where refugees from Italy and Greece where transferred to according to the EU quota scheme) is called a Refugee Reception Centre (RRC) in Rukla. Rukla is a very small town in the middle of Lithuania and also in the middle of nowhere, which is located 100 kilometres away from Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, and 50 kilometres away from Kaunas, the second largest city in the country. Currently this is the only place where refugees can stay a bit longer, even though still temporarily - up to 3 months (up to 6 months under more difficult circumstances). During the time in Rukla they sort their documents out, start learning Lithuanian language and receive asylum in Lithuania. Afterwards, refugees are transferred to different municipalities accross Lithuania where they can start building their new lives. In Vilnius they are taken care of by Caritas, while in two other biggest cities - by the Red Cross.

## Refugee Reception Centre in Rukla







## Refugee statistics in Lithuania

- Lithuania receives on average 490 asylum applications per year.
- The number of applications has grown twice since 2015.

### **Lithuania has 3 types of asylum:**

1. Refugee status (permanent)
2. Subsidiary protection (granted for 2 years with the possibility to be prolonged)
3. Temporary protection (it can be granted by the government if there is an increased number of people asking for asylum)

## Problems that Lithuania is currently facing



## Contribution to the economy

As a member of the EU Lithuania had to participate in solving this large scale migration crisis. In addition to that, it will sooner or later be affected by the process of globalization even though currently immigrants make only 1% of the population. The media in Lithuania is painting such a picture that **“we will need to live with immigrants, who will later become citizens, and who will look different to what we were used to seeing at the end of the 20th century.”**

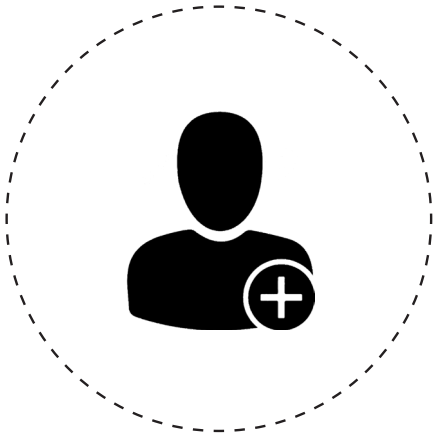
Currently Lithuania is experiencing a demographic decay. According to the reports from the European Union Commission Lithuania's population decline was the steepest in the EU since 2016 and it reached 25% followed by Latvia, Bulgaria and Greece. As a result, the government of Lithuania approved a list of those professions that require both high qualifications and workers that the country is currently most lacking.

Consequently, as Lithuania continues to depopulate, immigrants and refugees could help to sustain local businesses and contribute to the economy of the country. One of quite a few successful examples of employing refugees is a barber shop in Vilnius operated by Vilius Leveris. He employs most of his new staff for the barber shop from the Refugee Reception Centre. Since Leveris opened his business four years ago, he has taken on employees from Turkey, Libya, Syria, Morocco and Colombia. He says: “I couldn't find anyone here. Even getting a wet shave is a completely new thing... Now, if a refugee who was a barber at home arrives to Lithuania, the refugee centre calls me at once.”

**“<...> research demonstrates that they [refugees] can offer tangible economic benefits to their adopted countries if given the right to work and education.”**

*Alexander Betts & Paul Collier*

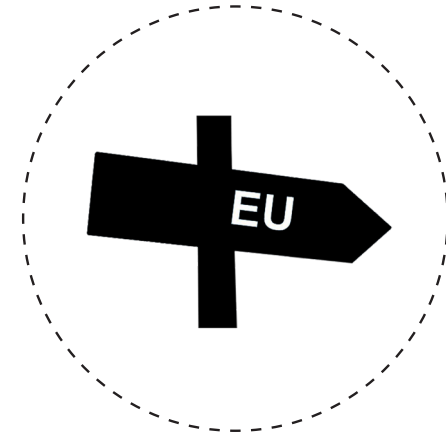
## Why is taking in refugees beneficial to Lithuania?



Raising up the decreasing number of inhabitants



Contribution to the economy  
(filling gaps in the job market)



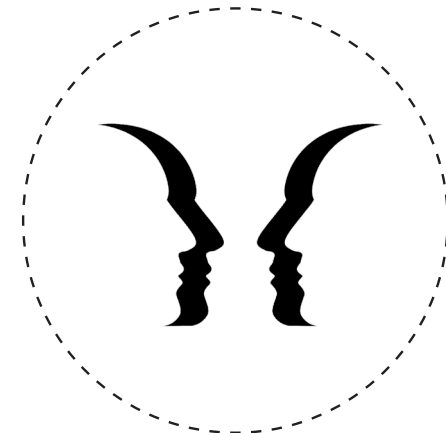
Supporting the values  
declared by the EU



Evolving into a more mixed-up  
and open-minded society



New ways of thinking  
and new skills

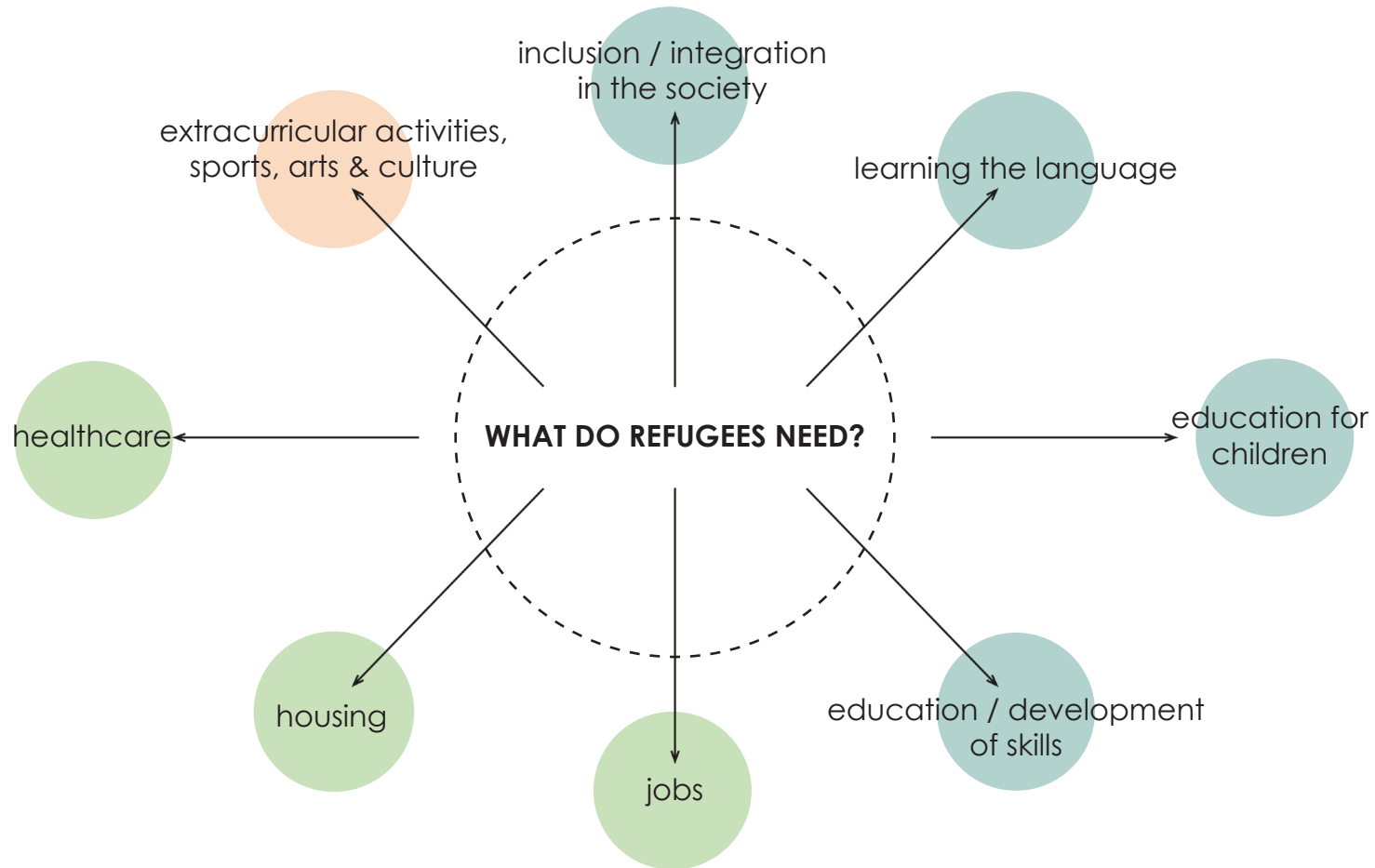


Cultural enrichment




In order to be able to proceed with the development of the project, it was necessary to look at not only what is beneficial to the country, but also at what refugees need. This has been done in relation to Maslow's hierarchy of needs.



## What do refugees need?



### Maslow's hierarchy of needs

- basic needs 
- psychological needs 
- self-fulfillment needs 

Looking at different possible design scenarios and their possibilities directed the programme of the building being related to jobs and education.

## Possible design scenarios



Housing



Jobs and education

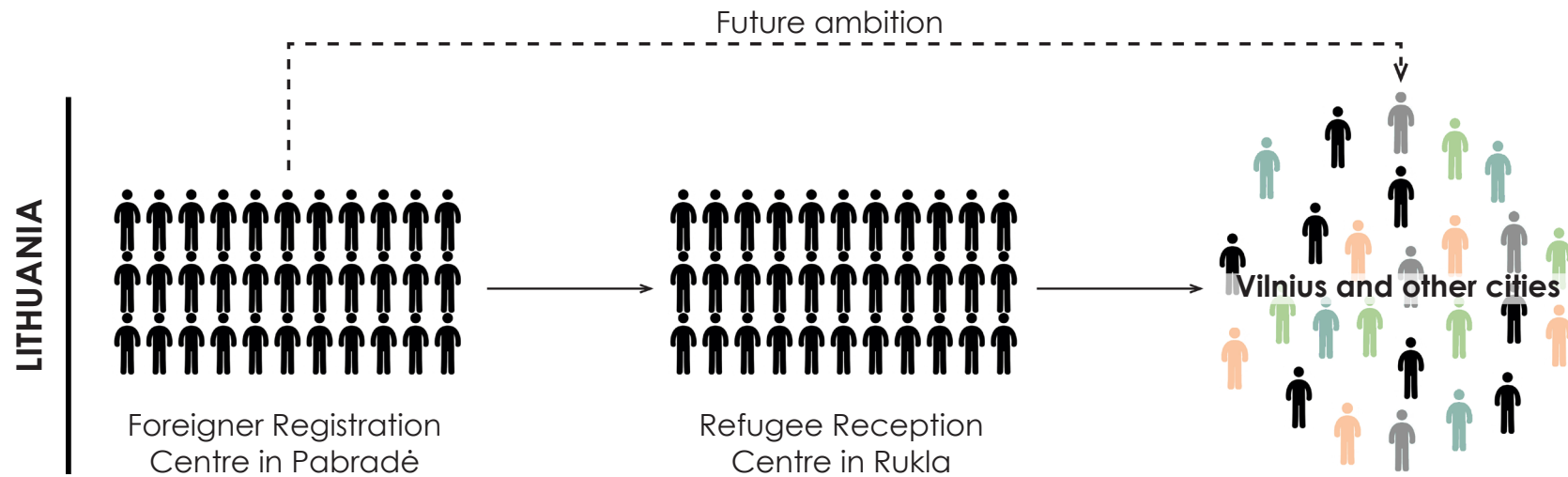


Extracurricular activities

One of the most important ideas in relation to integration is inclusion versus separation. Currently asylum seekers move from one centre to another where they are not mixing with the locals before they can start settling down in cities. The future ambition is to minimize the amount of steps from them entering the country and starting a normal life in cities and in such a way starting the inclusion process as soon as possible.

## Approach to integration

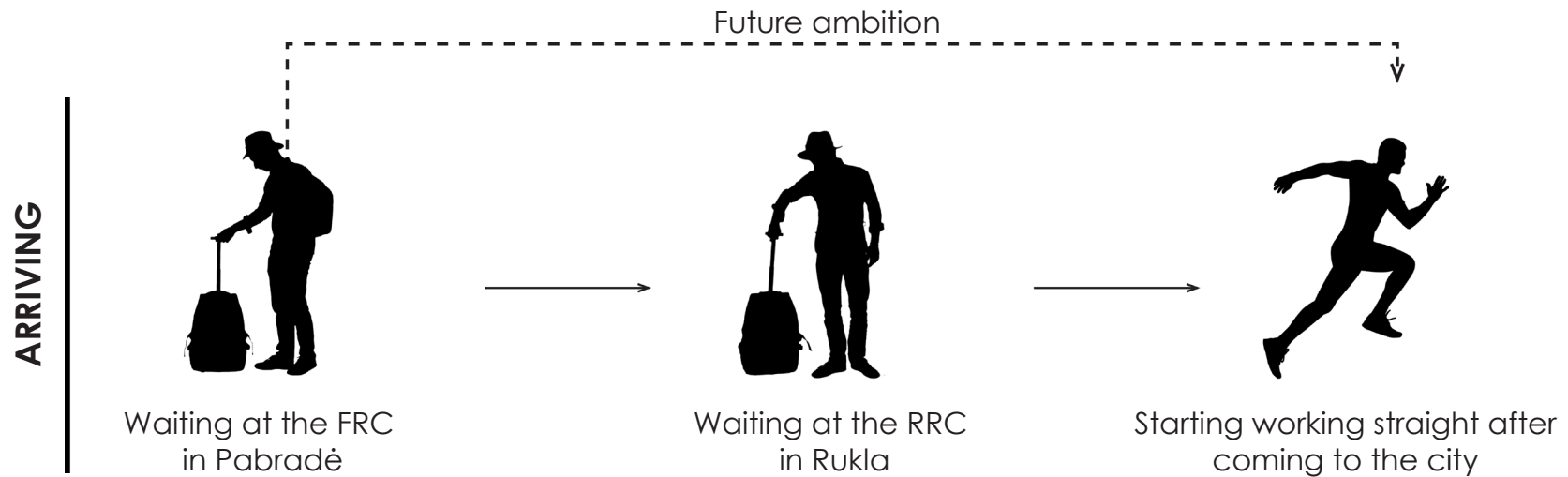
Inclusion vs separation



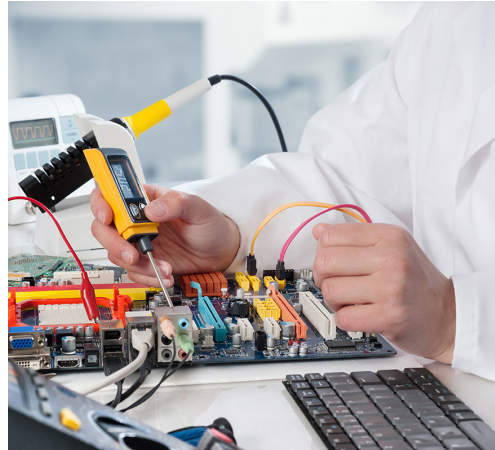
**“For working-age adults, entering the workforce as soon as possible is critical for integration.”**

*Bruce Katz, Luise Noring & Nantke Garrelts*

## Immediate start

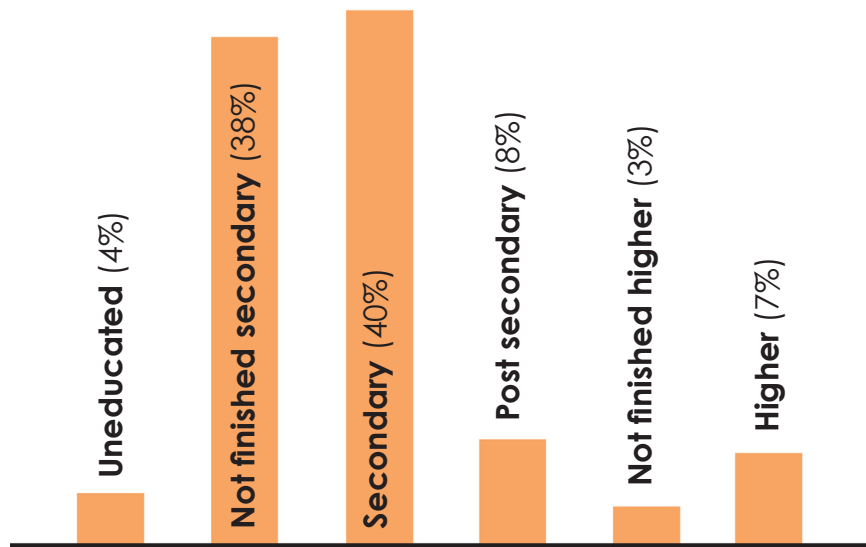








## Starting with the potential of the people their talents, skills and experiences



Education: Out of 468 people that came to Lithuania 253 (54%) were of working age, 93% of which do not hold a higher education degree



Working with hands



**Everyone can do their job whatever their profession is**

## Design

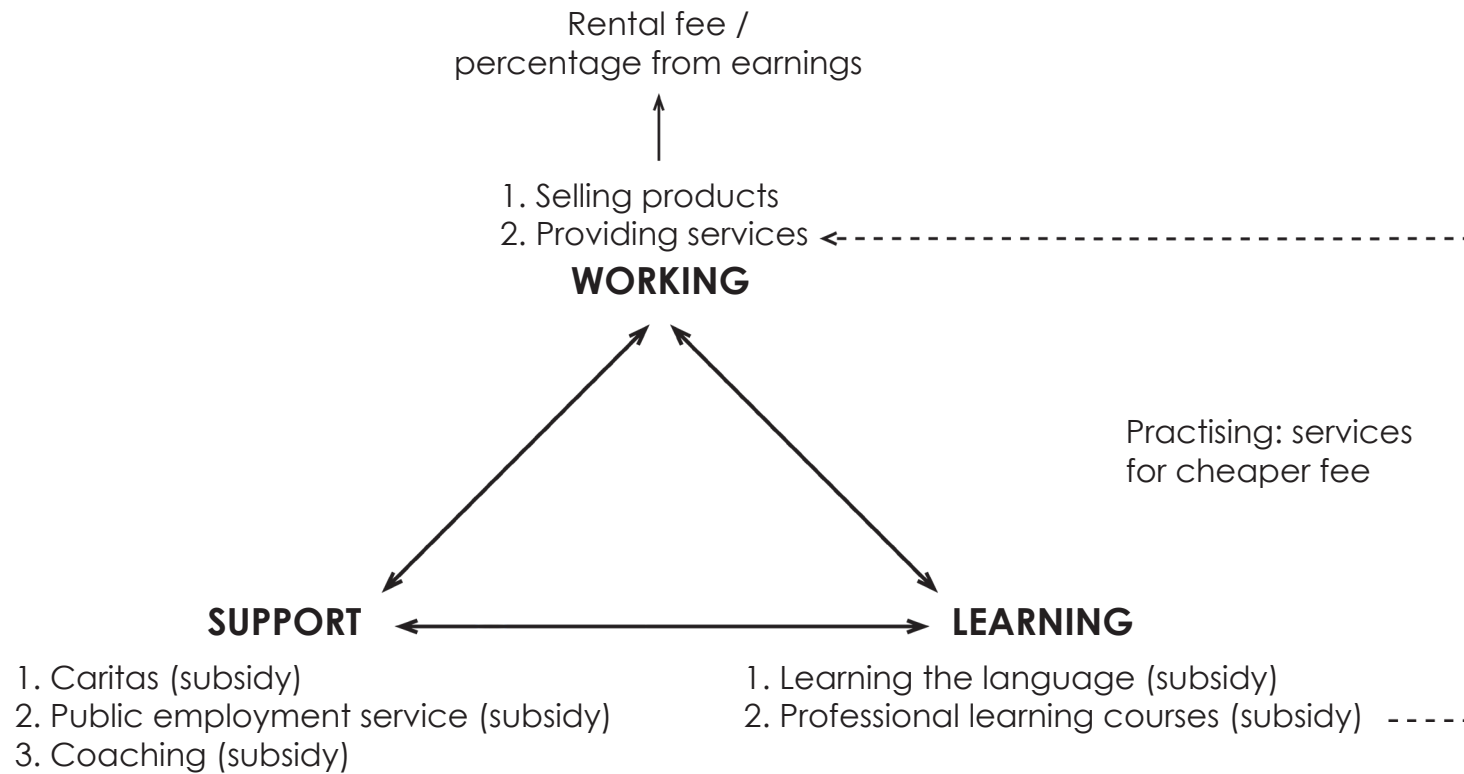
Re-Space is a building for those who are starting up in Vilnius. It is a building for refugees, migrants and also for Lithuanians. It is for young people and start-ups, but also for people who have not worked for a long time or would like to start over. It is this missing link, this first and sometimes very difficult step into the working life.

Re-Space offers an immediate start without any waiting from the very first day in the new city. It provides spaces for everyone to do their job, whatever their profession may be. It is a place for creation of social networks, sharing stories and experiences, and for meeting people with similar interests. Re-Space together with the Municipality of Vilnius offers professional training courses and workshops for improving different skills and obtaining qualifications as well as learning Lithuanian language. In addition to that, it is possible to get support from Caritas, who takes care of refugees in Vilnius, and the public employment services that can help with finding a job in the city.

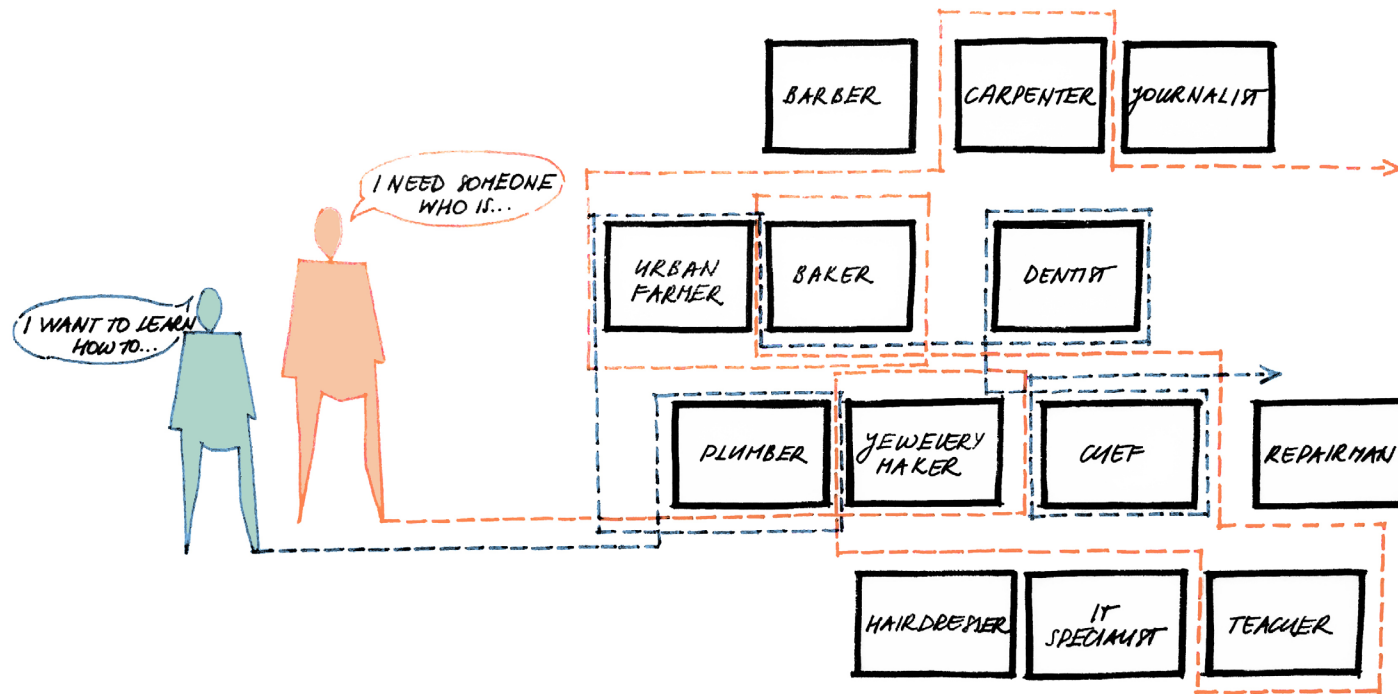
Re-Space is about inspiring everyone to be open to people with any background and to contribute to their integration. By being a part of this concept and a user of this building one can significantly contribute to a more accepting society. Whether that is by getting a haircut from a man that comes from Syria or buying a piece of jewellery from someone from Eritrea, because even the longest journey starts with a single step. Social and economic independency is crucial for everyone and what can be better than working towards it together in a relaxed environment in the heart of Vilnius?

The programme of the building consists of three main functions - working, learning and getting support. Financially it would mostly function because of the rental fee or the percentage from earnings received from the people working there in combination with the subsidies coming from the government.

## Mechanism: work-machine



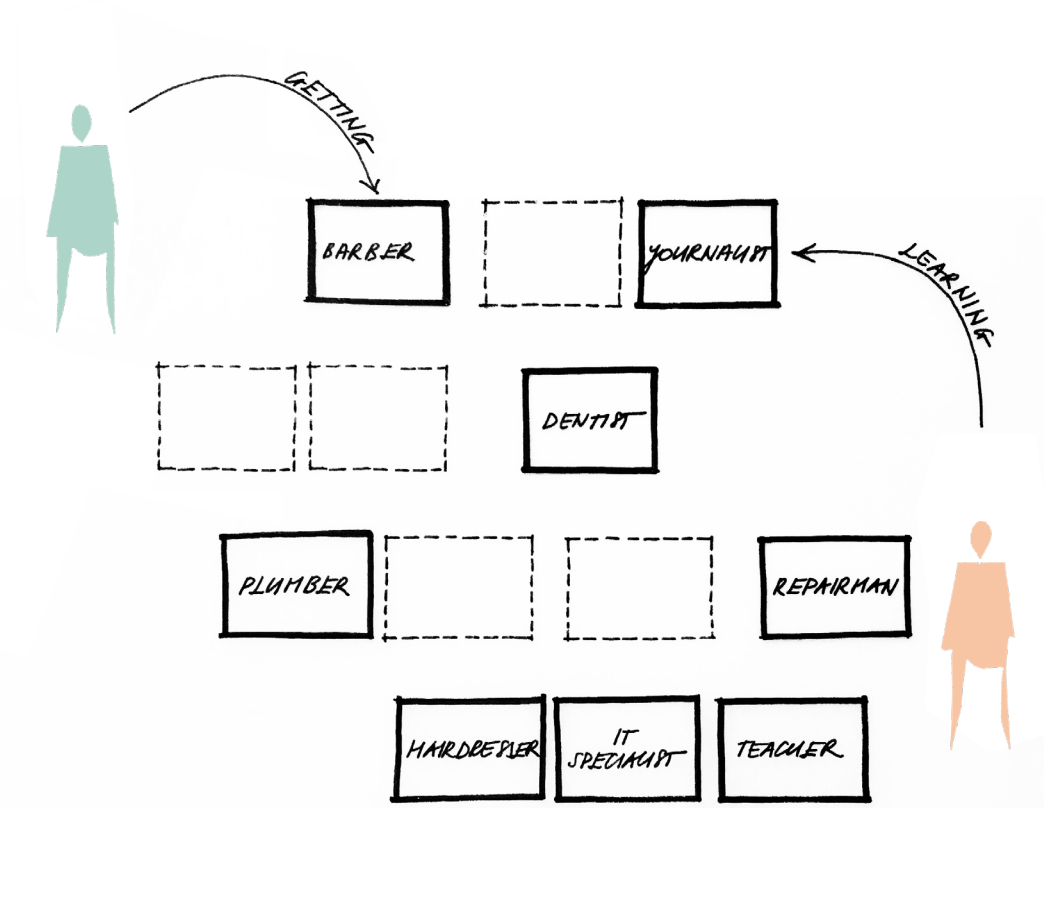
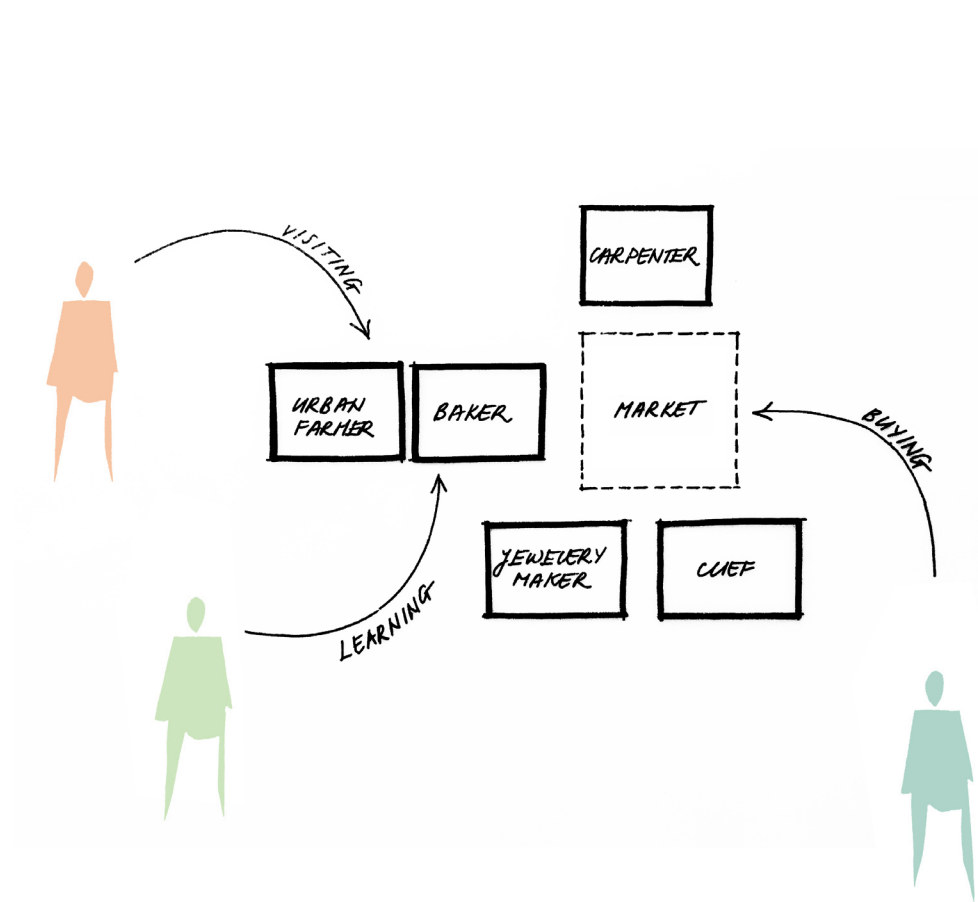
## Products and services





Skills —→ making products

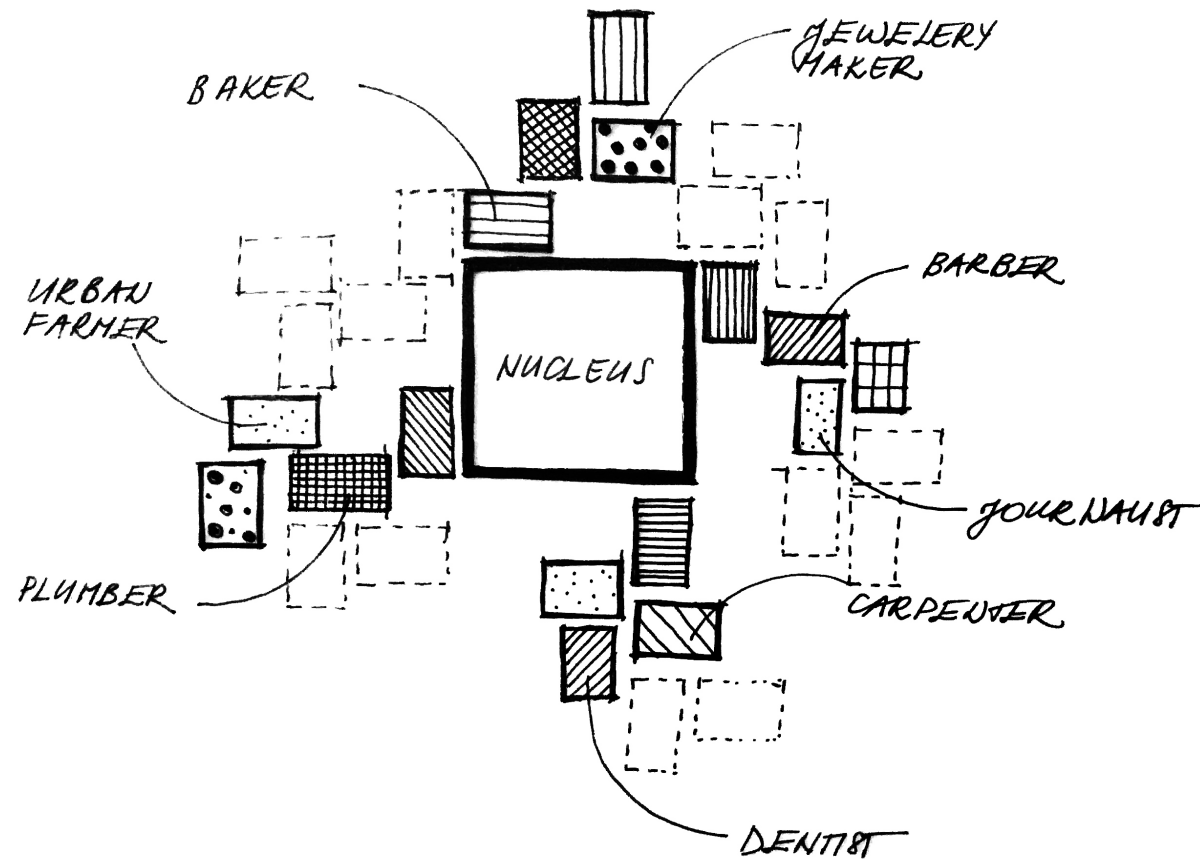
Skills —→ providing services



It is a structure that has a stable nucleus - programme that is always there  
- and flexible spaces which can be changing and adapting depending  
on the needs of the users.



**Dynamic structure**  
with stable and flexible spaces



**“To make a good life in a new city <...> refugees must connect with those outside their national or ethnic group.”**

*Mimi Kirk*

## Target groups



People who are **starting up**  
(refugees & migrants & Lithuanians,  
young people, start ups)

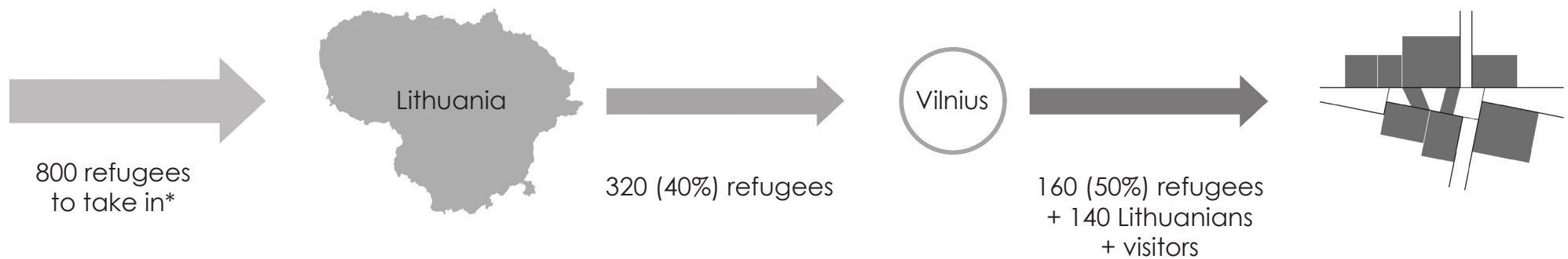


People who are **starting over**  
(have not worked for a long  
time, have to change jobs, etc)



People who want to  
**expand their social network**, make  
new intercultural connections

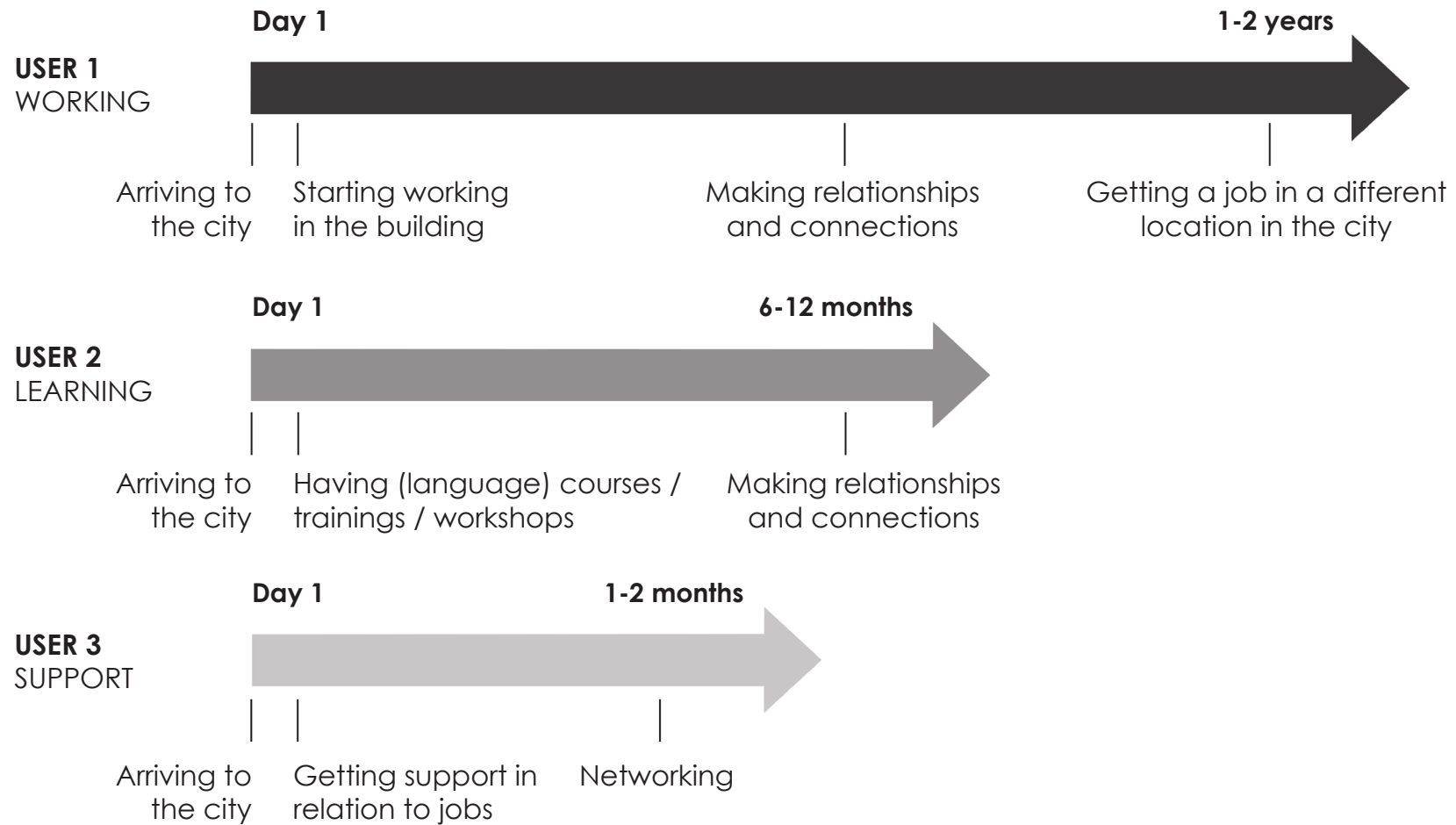
**Number of users**  
300 people + visitors



\* in relation to the EU quota scheme

## Changing users - adaptable structure

Starting working life in the city



## **Location: Vilnius**

The building is situated in the very city centre of Vilnius, nearby to its Unesco Heritage Old Town. Its location is in close proximity to many important sites which are within a walking distance. It is very well connected to any part of the city including the major transport hubs – Vilnius International Airport as well as the Central train and bus station.





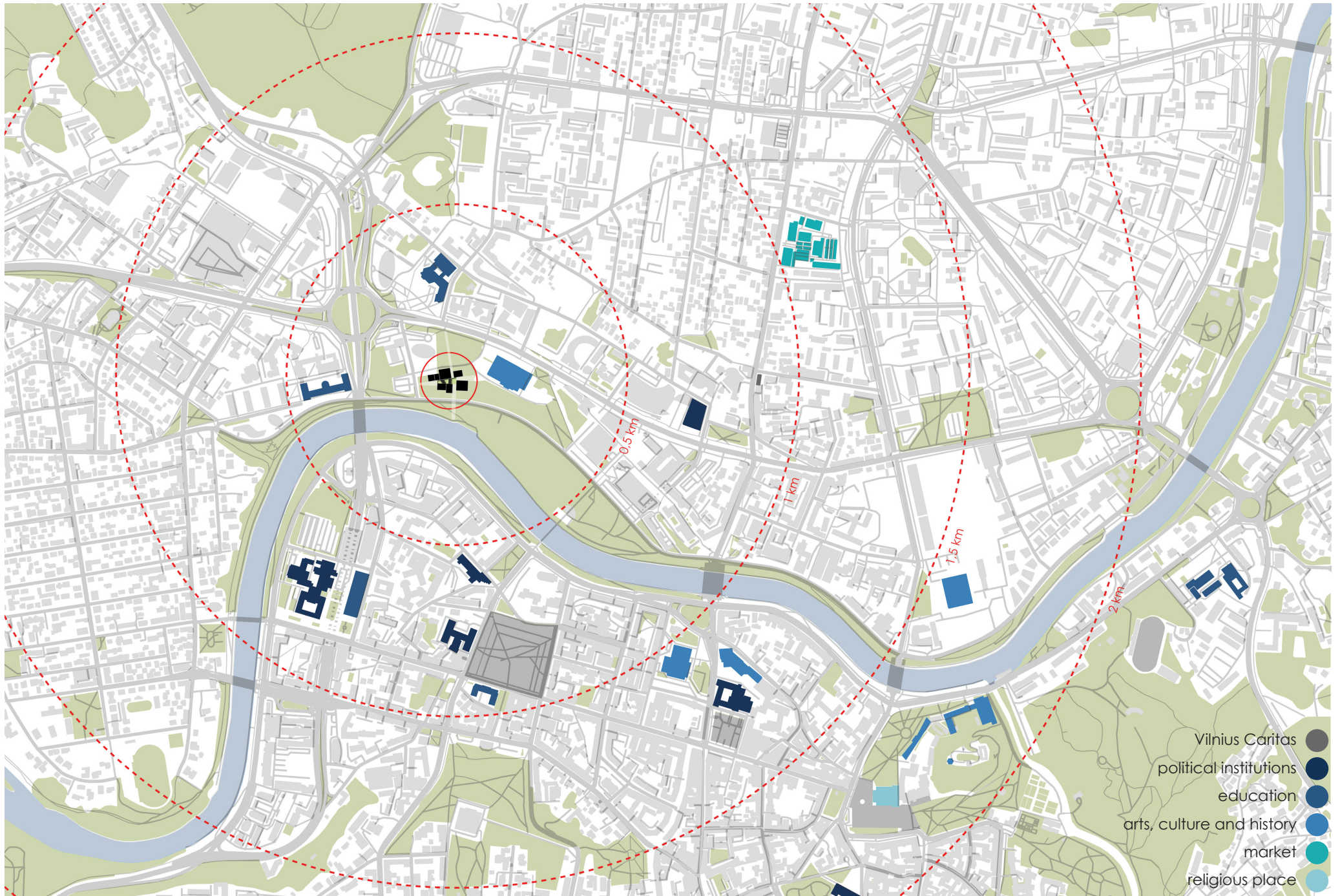




Next to the National Art Gallery of Vilnius and a park of sakuras

Sloping site overlooking the river Neris





## Historical metaphor

**Chiune Sugihara** (1900-1986) was a Japanese government official who served as a Vice Consul for the Japanese Empire in Lithuania. During the Second World War he helped around 6000 Jewish refugees fleeing from German-occupied Western Poland and Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland, as well as the residents of Lithuania. He issued them transit visas so that they could travel through the Japanese territory, which a lot of the times was not complying with the instructions and policies of Japanese Foreign Affairs. In 1985, the State of Israel honoured Sugihara as one of the Righteous Among the Nations - he is the only Japanese national to have been so honoured. Year 2001 marked 100th birth anniversary of C. Sugihara and 200 sakura trees were planted for his memory on the right bank of Neris river, right next to the location of the building.





## Neighbourhood: Šnipiškės

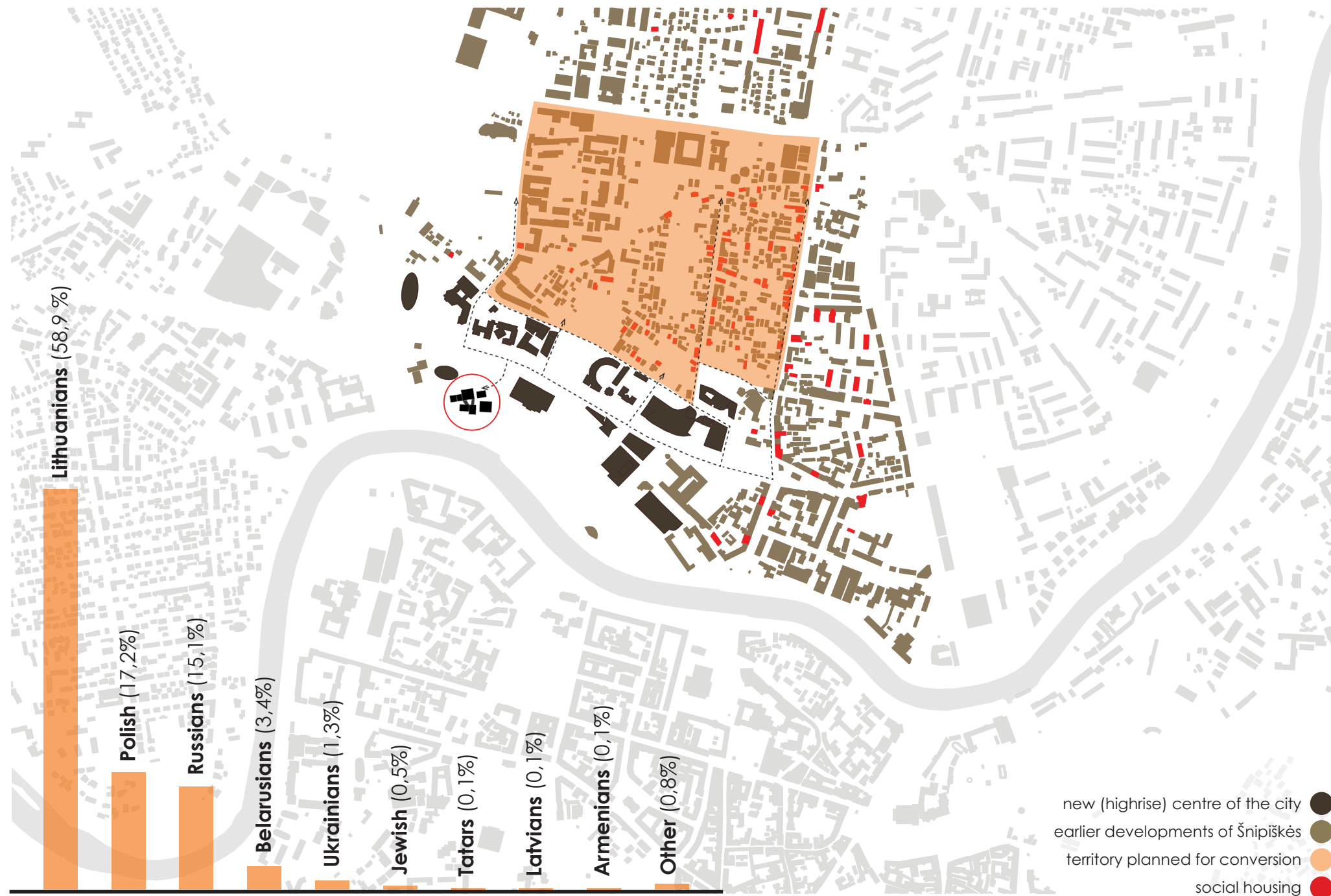
The building is located in one of the oldest neighbourhoods of Vilnius called Šnipiškės. It originated in the 16th century after the first bridge over the river Neris was built, connecting its right bank with the Old Town of the city. Throughout history Šnipiškės was known as the craftsmen place in Vilnius. It is the place where Lithuanian industry started, when the first glass manufacturing factory was built. It was one of the most important areas for ceramics in the 17th and 18th centuries and also it had a number of brick and tile-maker workshops as well as many blacksmiths



## Social feasibility

Currently it is mostly known for its commercial and business centre. It is a building strip in the south part of the district, situated along Konstitucijos avenue, very nearby to the river. It consists of a number of high-rise towers housing corporate offices, banks, hotels and shopping malls. However, Šnipiškės actually is a very dual district due to in the north laying much earlier developments, including houses dating back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This part looks like a village in the middle of the city, often called Shanghai of Vilnius. Small scale often slightly run-down wooden family houses largely contrast with shiny high-rises in the background. Šnipiškės has around 20,000 inhabitants which make up a very multinational community with 40% of people being originally not Lithuanians. Even though now it looks like the district, especially the river front, is almost fully dominated by this anonymous business centre and suited people walking on the main avenue, behind it the reality is quite diverse with a mix of people with different social backgrounds, a number of which are living in social houses. Therefore, one of the aims of my design is to stimulate interaction between different social groups and keep the river front accessible for everyone.





Around 20,000 inhabitants - multinational community, with more than 40% non-Lithuanians

**Duality of the area: new highrise centre...**





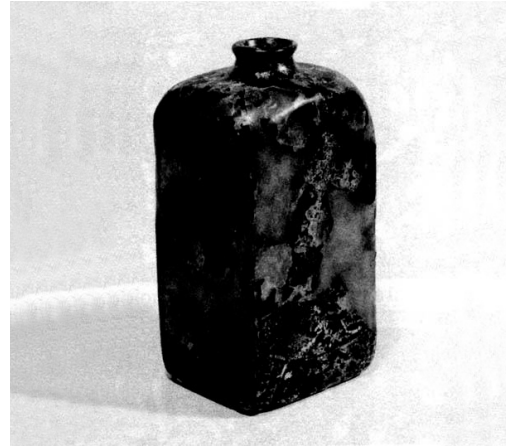
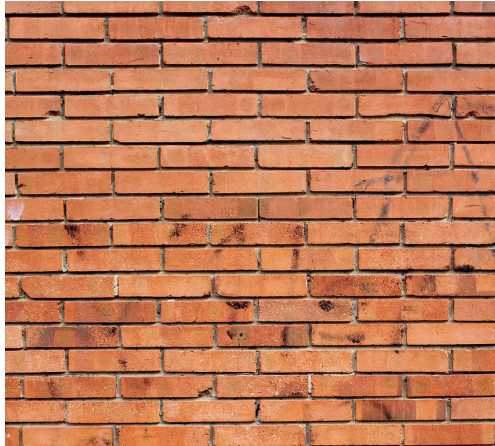
**... contrasting with the 19-20th century village in the  
middle of the city called Shanghai of Vilnius**







## Programmatic feasibility

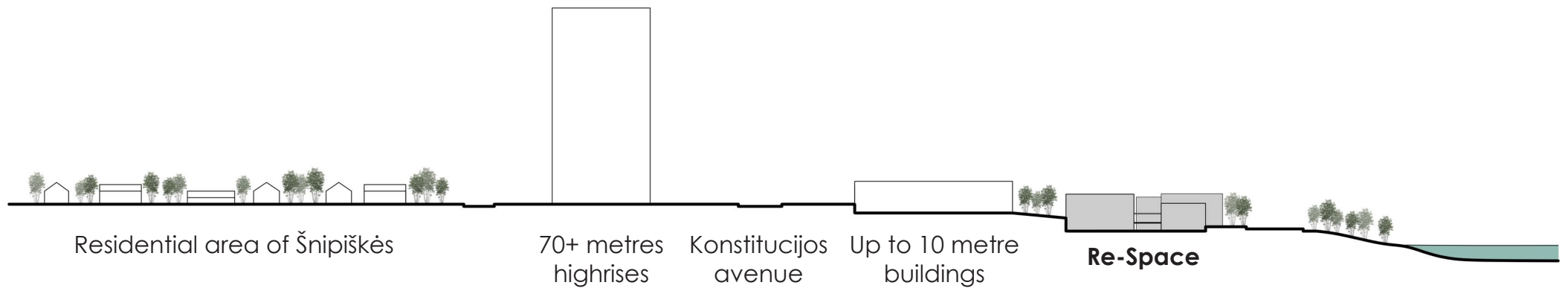


Craftsmanship tradition in Šnipiškės originated in the 16th century

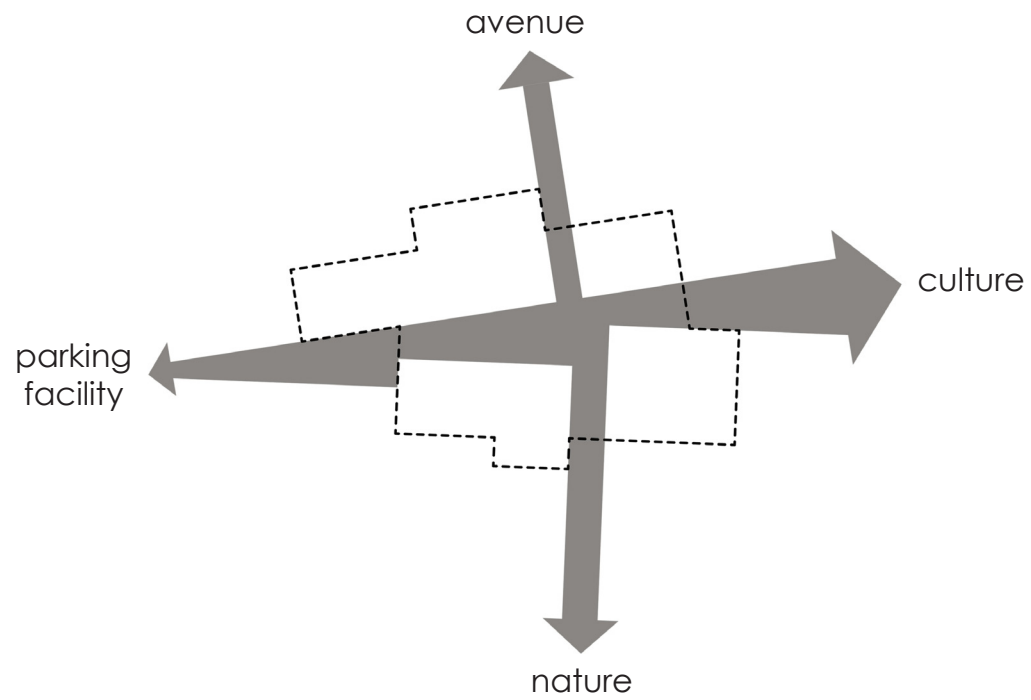


Acting as a catalyst for craftsmanship in the city

## Contextual section

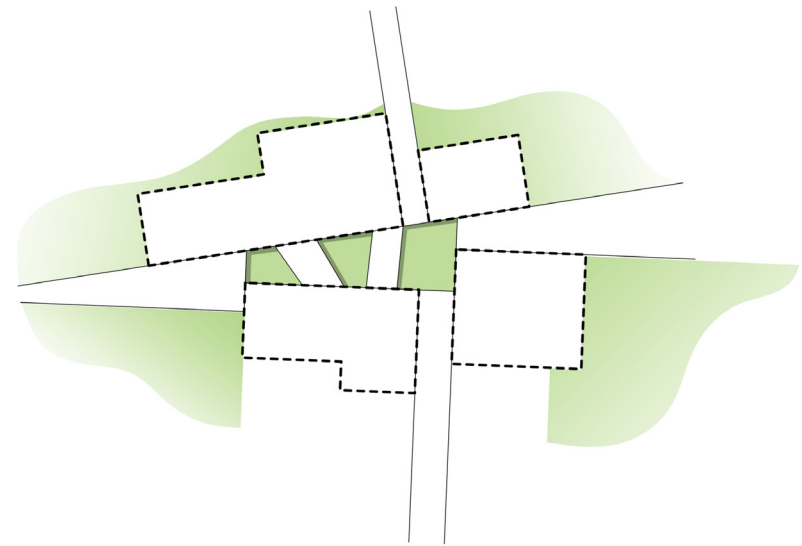


## Urban axes



## Mass and void

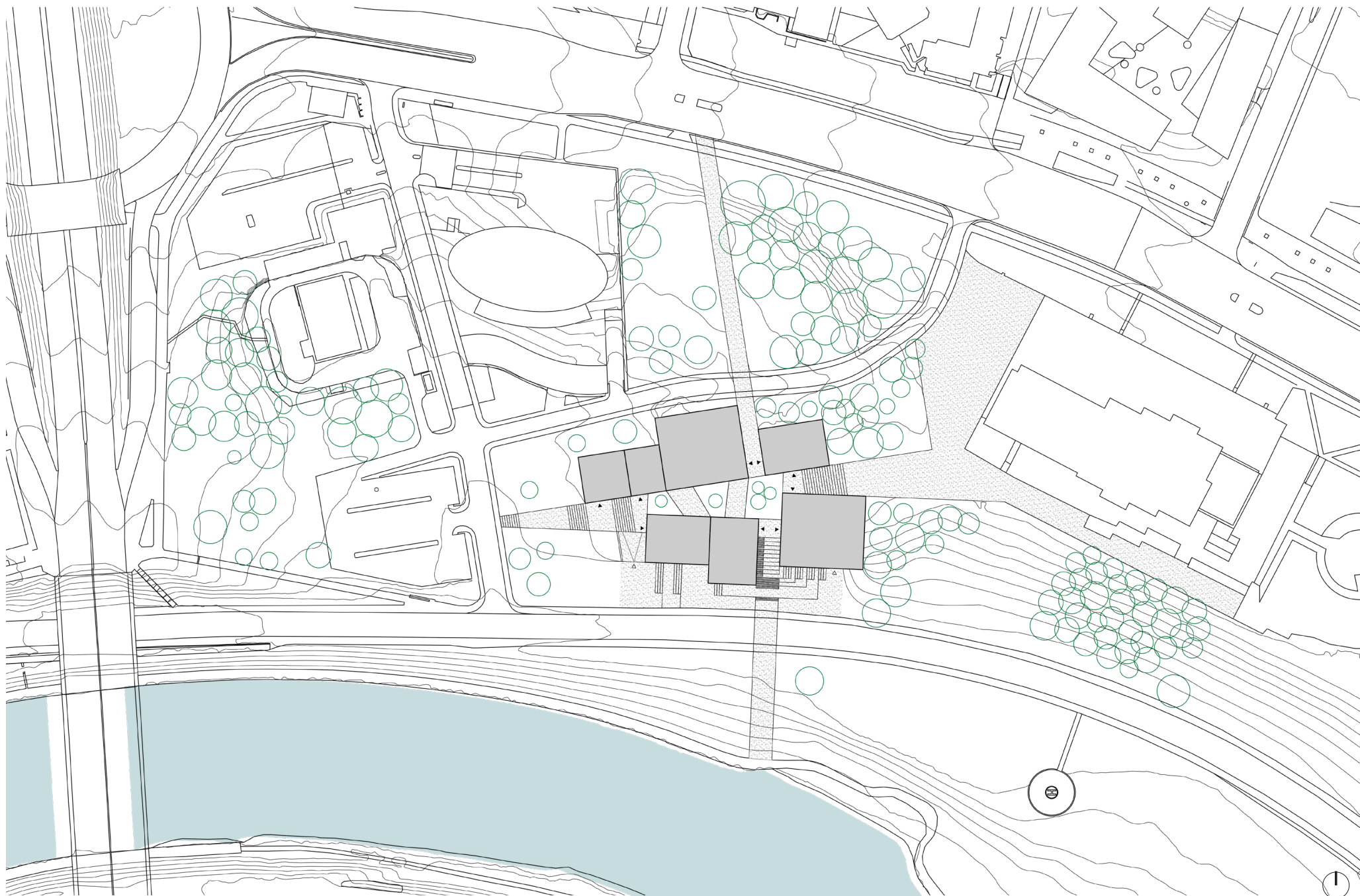
Green entering the building



## **Relation to the context: situation and entrances**

There are two main urban axes going through the building - one is a newly introduced pedestrian path from the avenue to the river and the other one is reinforcing an already existing path down the hill, connecting the museum and the parking facility. The building can be entered from every side and the main idea is such that people can see their direction, where they are going, but they are encouraged to move through the inside of the building.

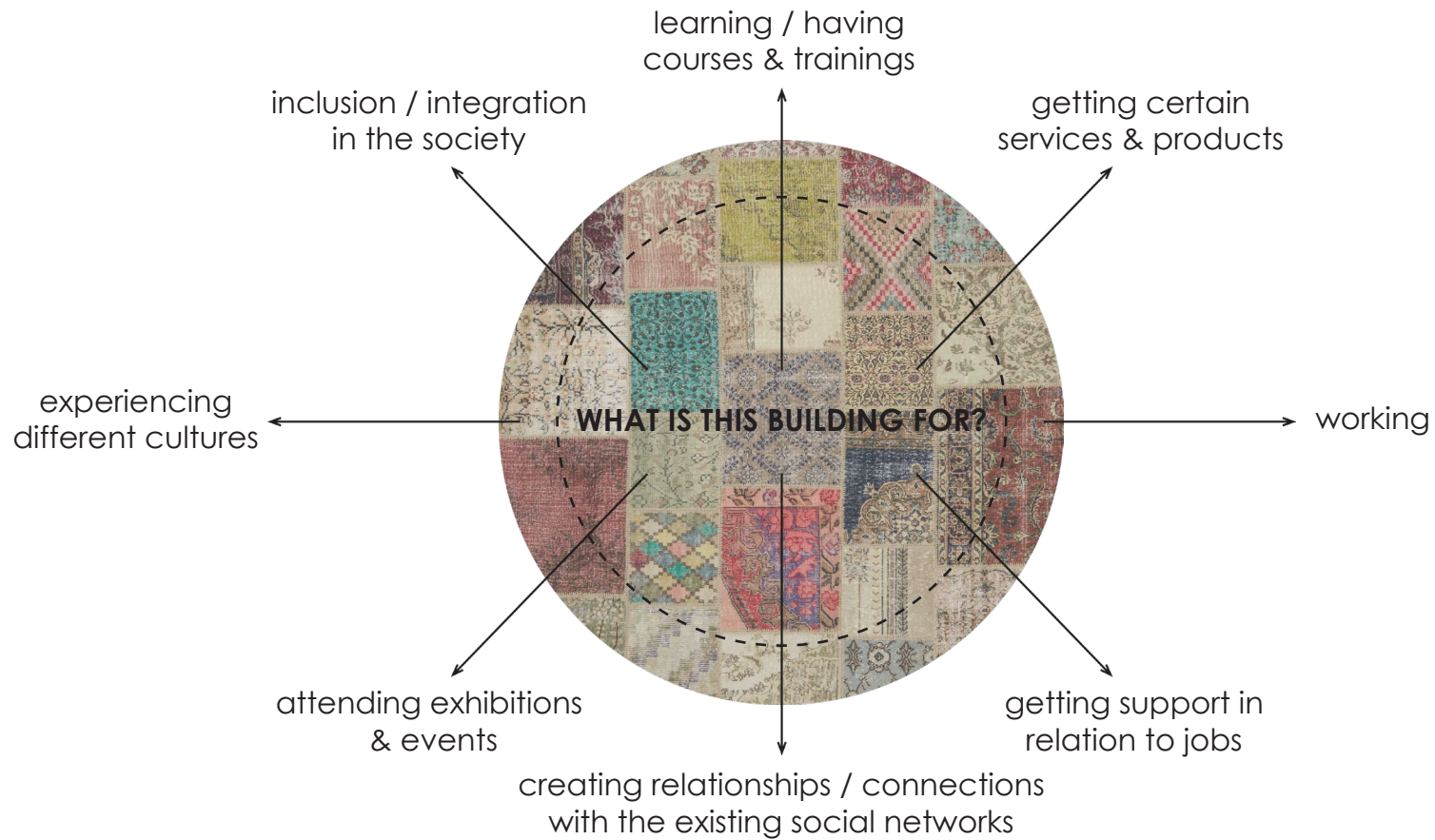




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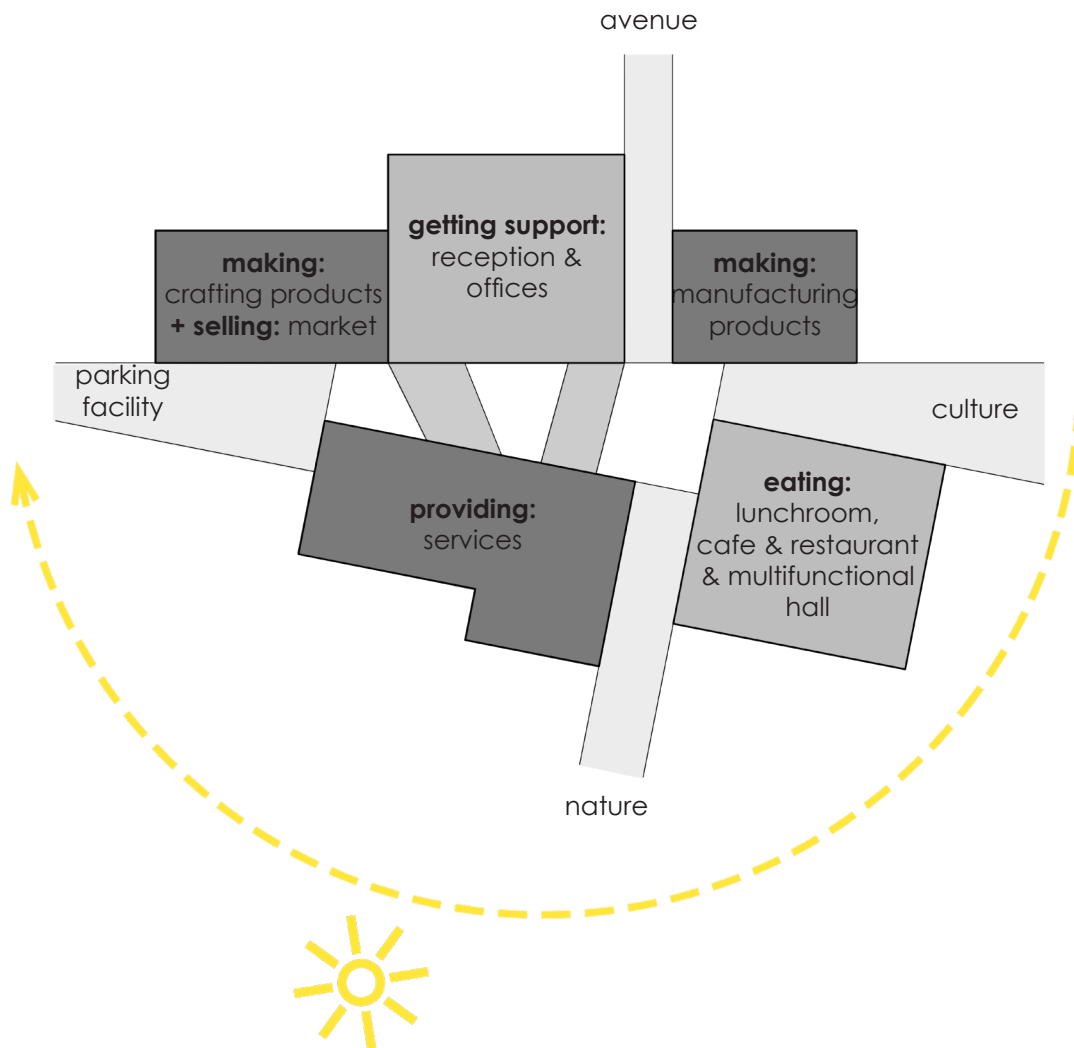
## Function

Patchwork of people, activities, cultures and professions



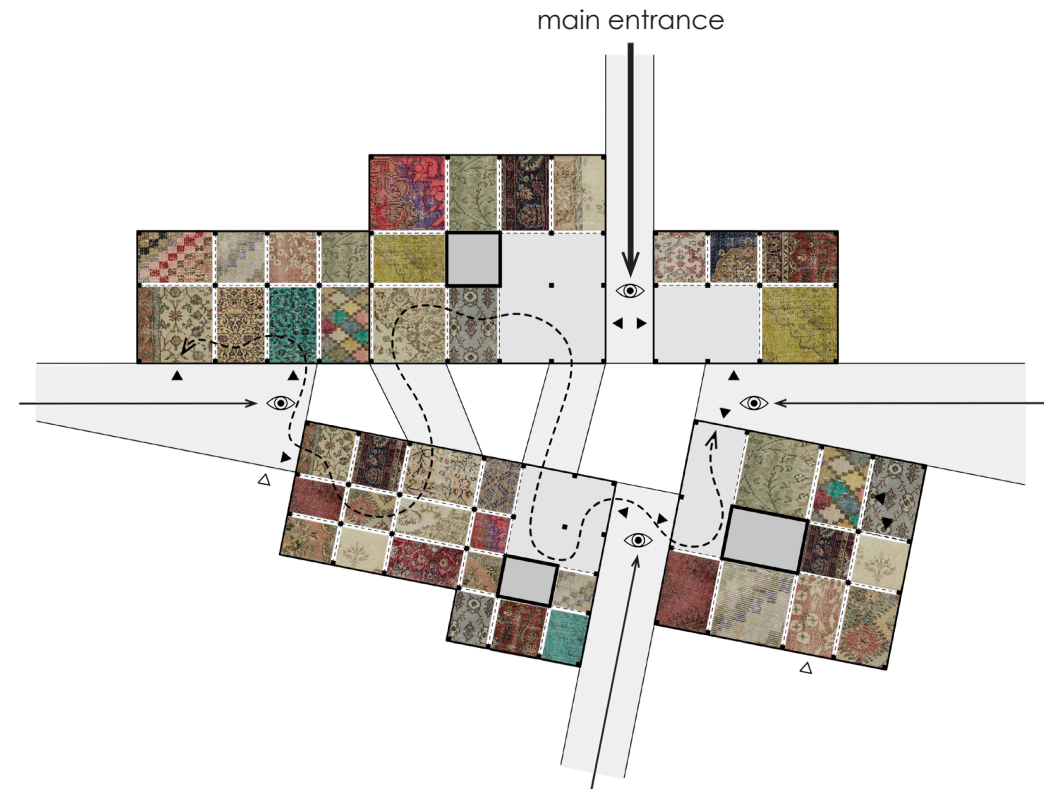
## Programme

Working & learning + public programme



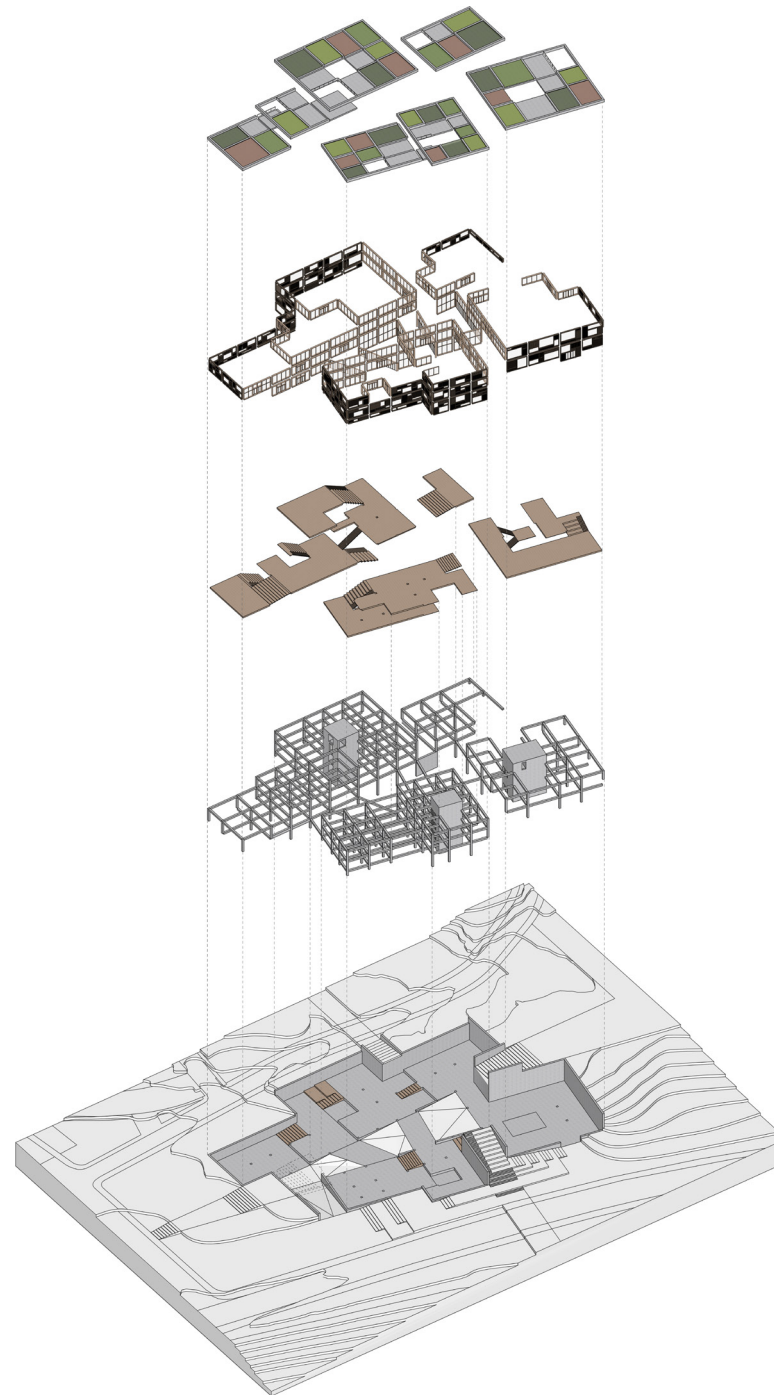
## Entrances and routing principle

Seeing direction, but moving from space to space



## Layers of the ~~landscape~~ building

The building consists of five layers: subterrain level, structure, ground level, facade and roof level. It sits in the landscape and the floors are following the slope of the hill. Some of the elements such as the subterrain, the concrete structure and the roof are always there, while others - floors and wooden facades - can be taken out and replaced, which provides flexibility and a possibility for a change of programme and use in the future.



**Roof level**  
with terraces and plants

**Facade**  
Timber with infill

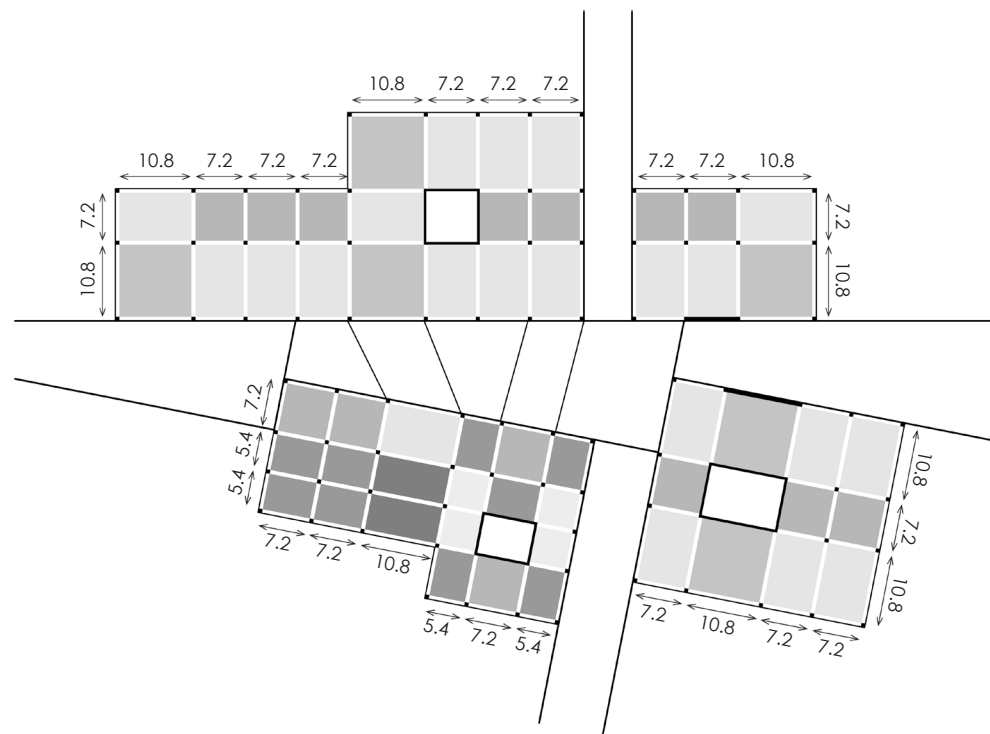
**Ground level**  
Lignatur timber floors and stairs

**Structure**  
Concrete columns, beams and cores

**Subterrain level**

## Tartan grid

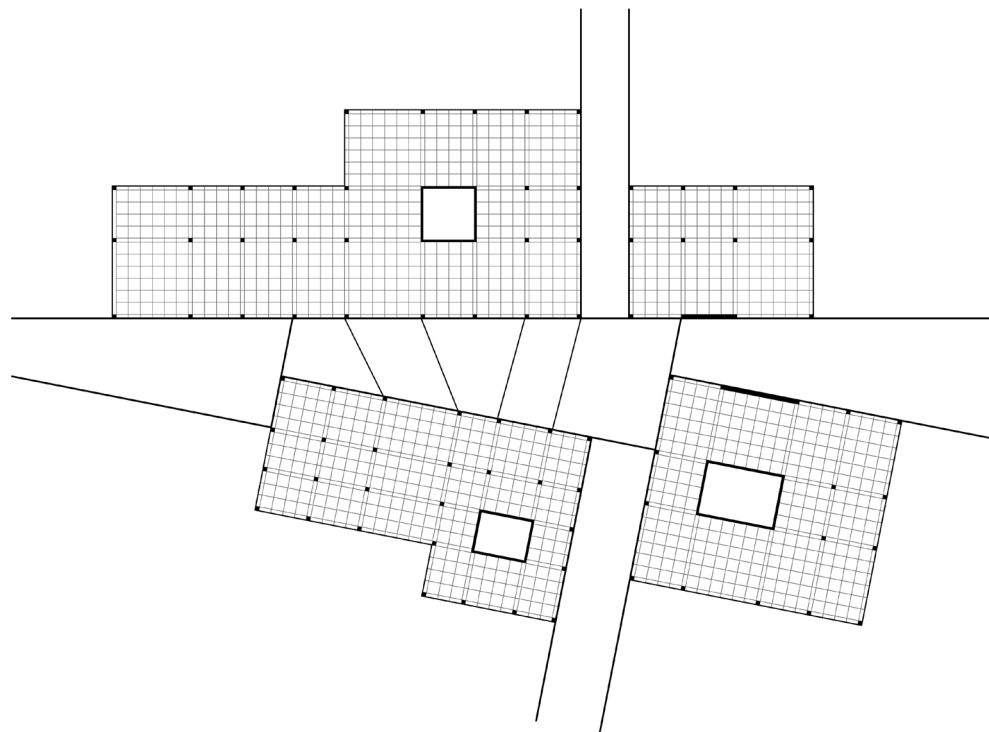
Providing different sizes of spaces for different activities



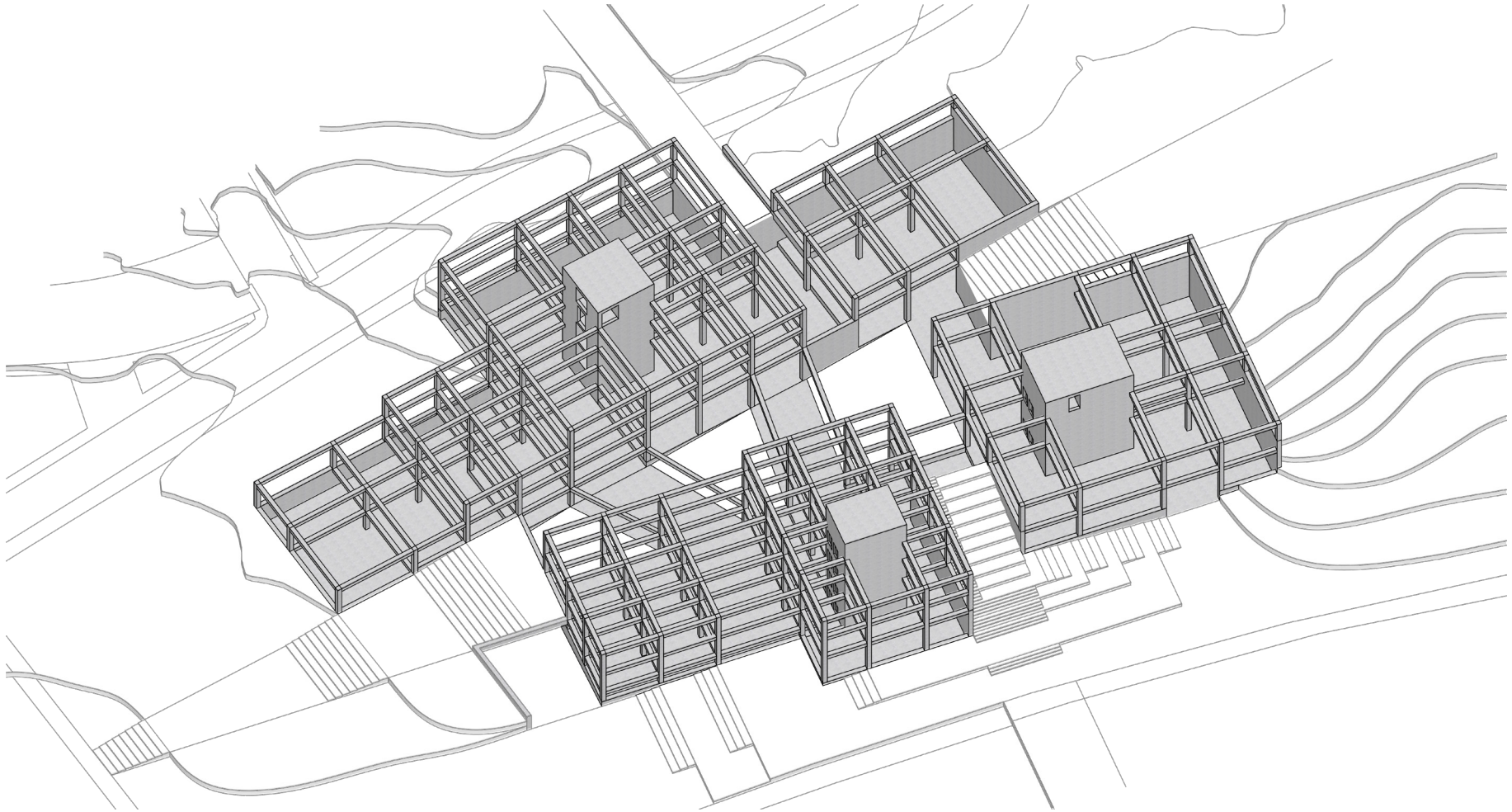
Distances in metres



## 1.8 m multiple grid in-between the columns



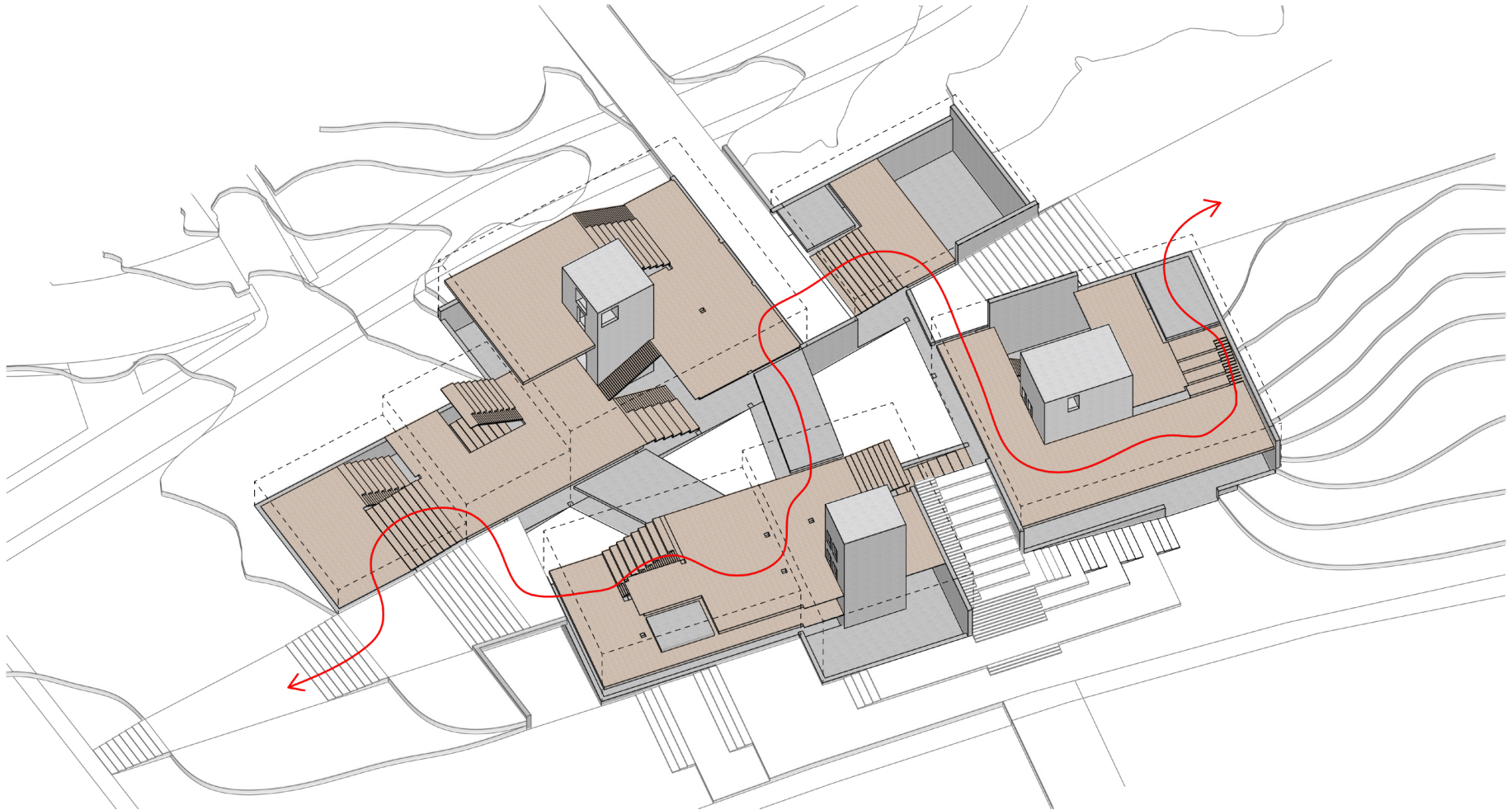
## Concrete structure





## Routing through the building

Encouraging interaction between people

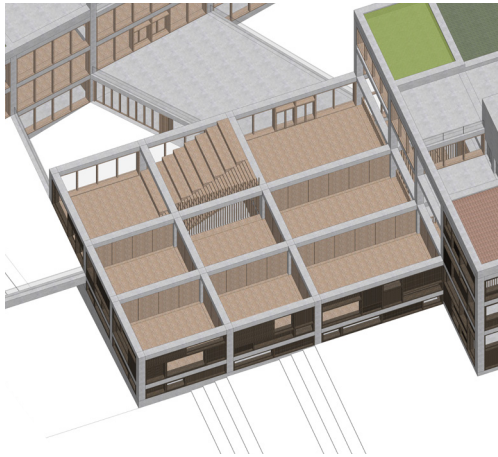


Sliding walls provide flexibility on a daily basis, since spaces can be divided into smaller or larger depending on the needs of the users.

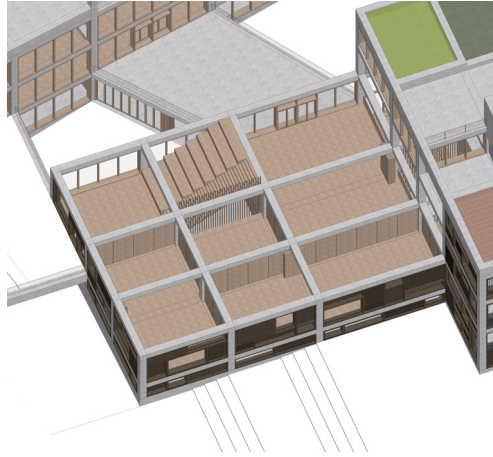
## Flexibility of spaces

Larger and smaller spaces depending on user needs

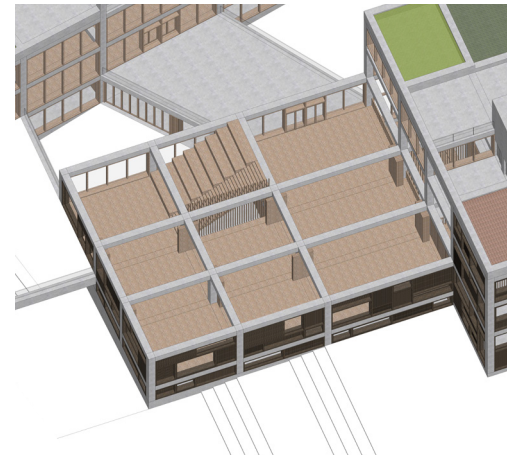
1. Closed sliding walls:  
separate spaces



2. Open and closed sliding  
walls: combined spaces



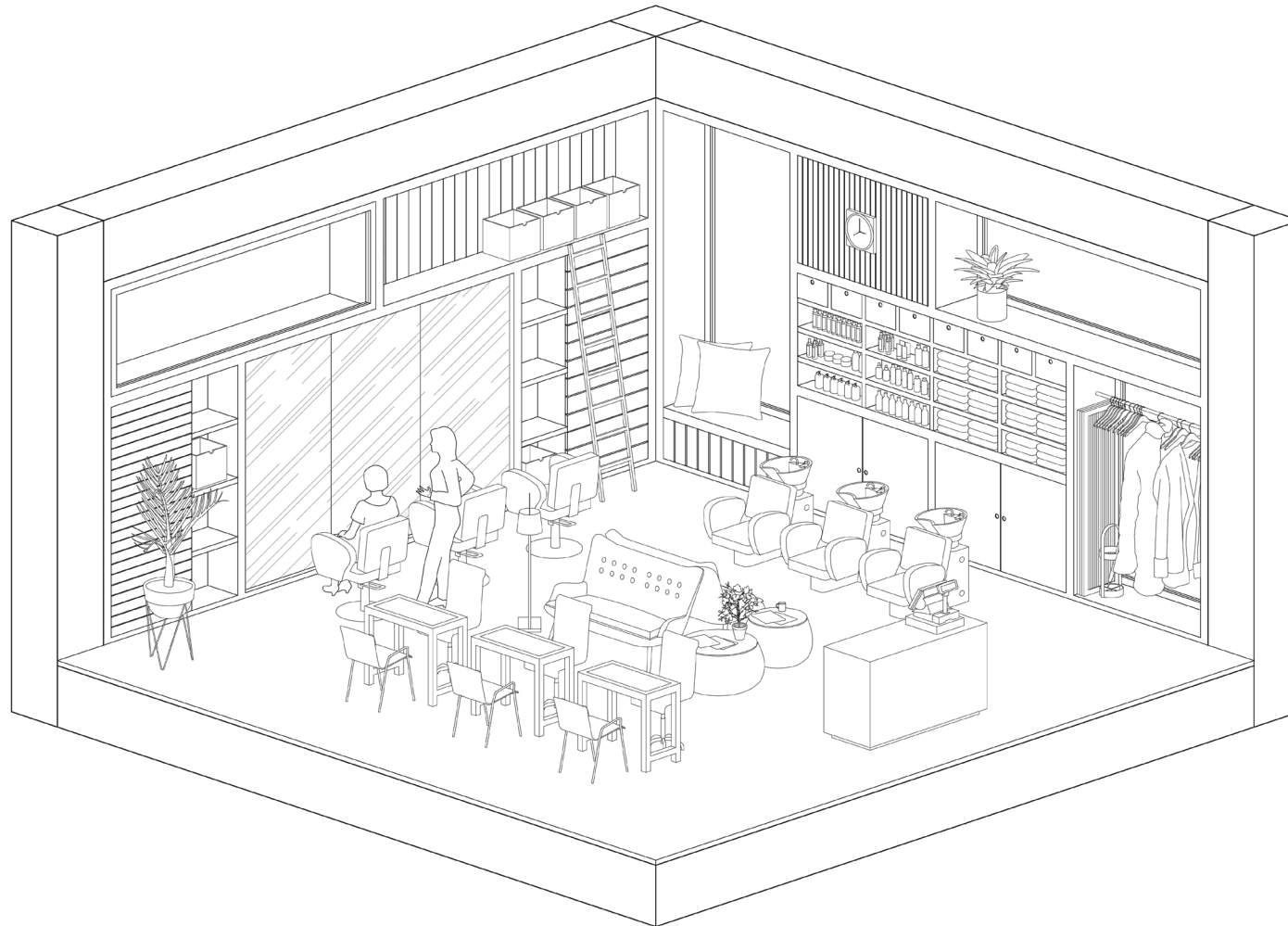
3. Open sliding walls:  
one large space



**Exterior determined by interior:  
facades resulting from the interior needs**

## Providing: services

### Hairdresser

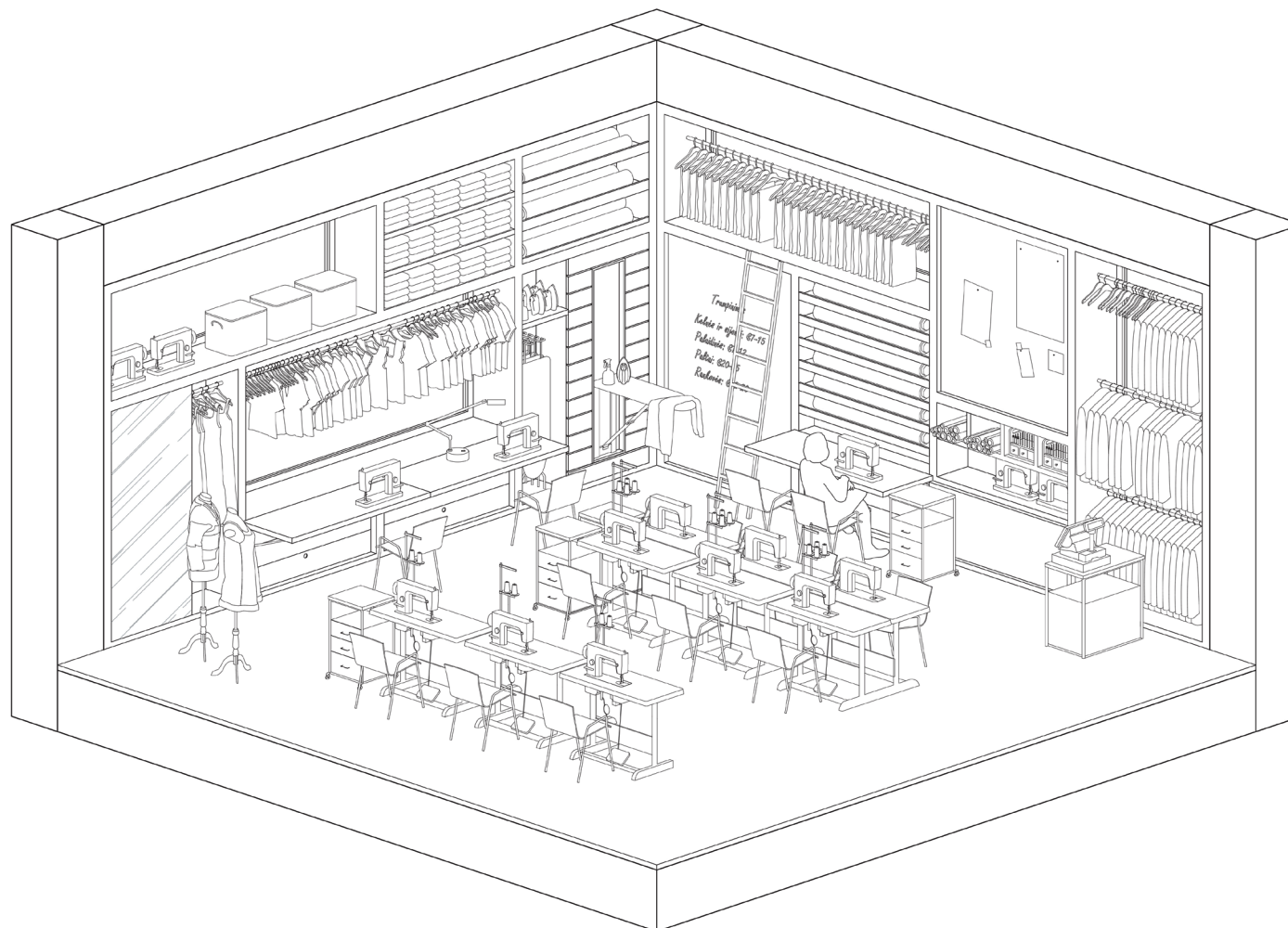


**Exterior determined by interior:  
facades resulting from the interior needs**



## Making: crafting products

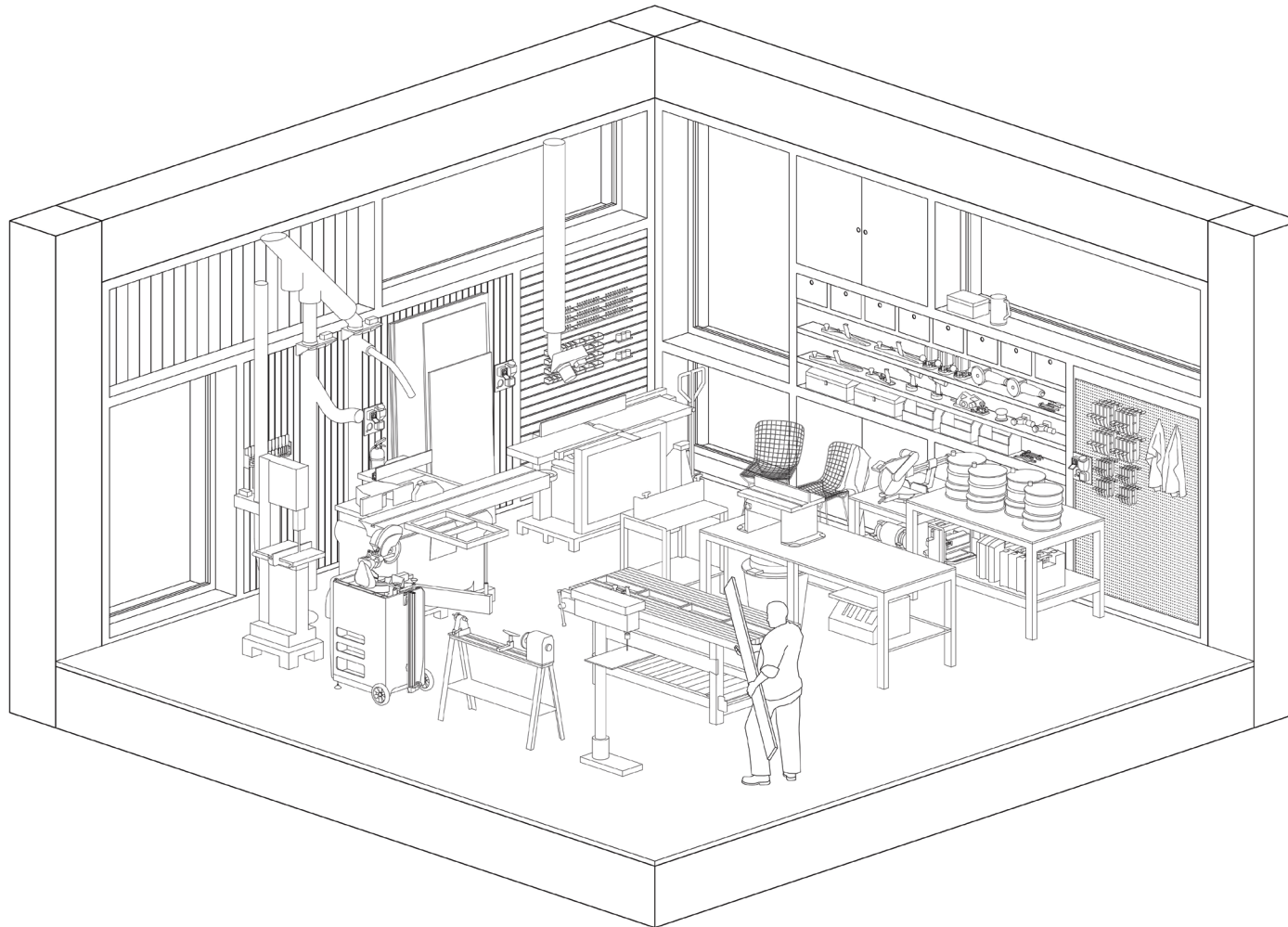
### Tailor



**Exterior determined by interior:  
facades resulting from the interior needs**

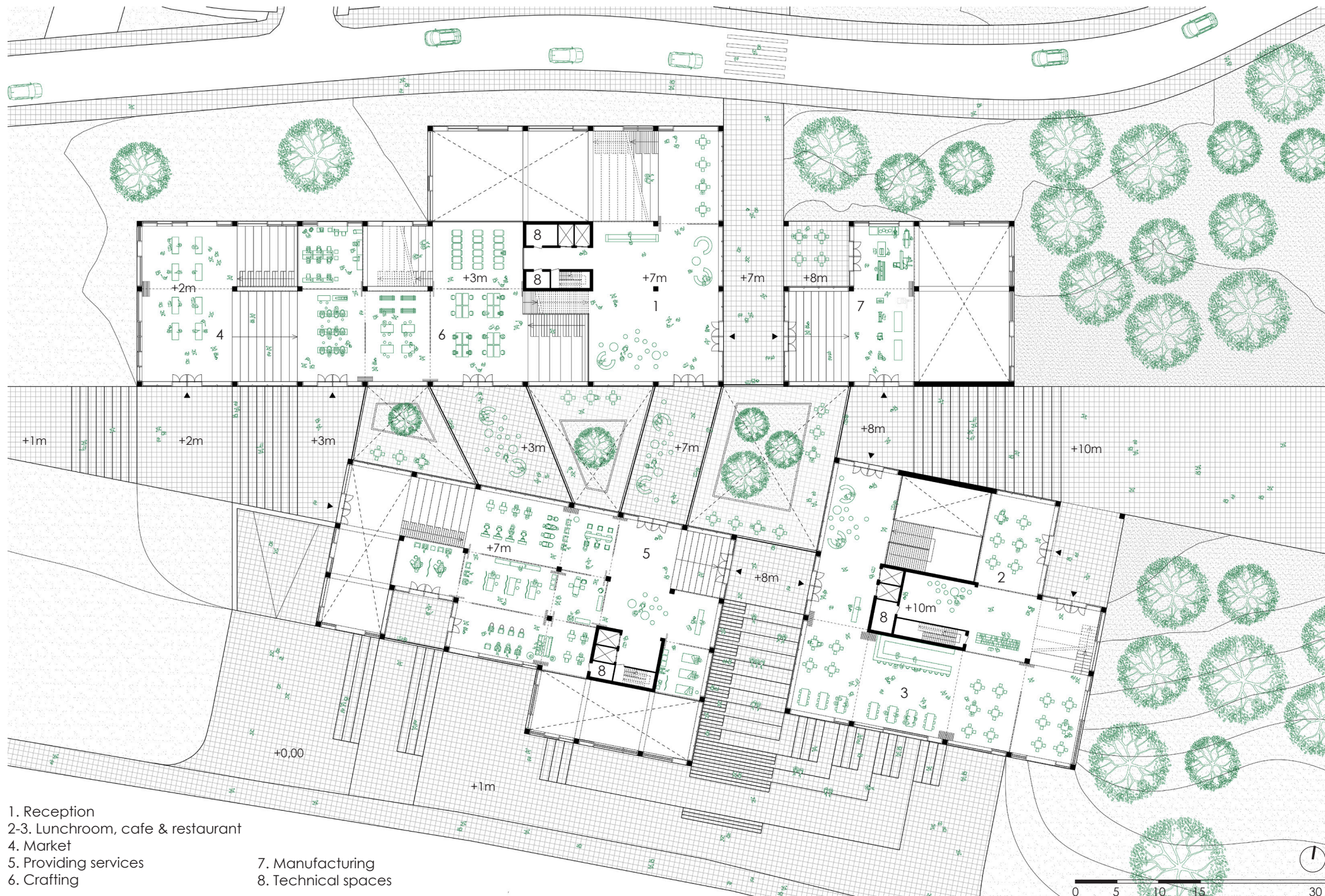
## Making: manufacturing products

### Carpenter



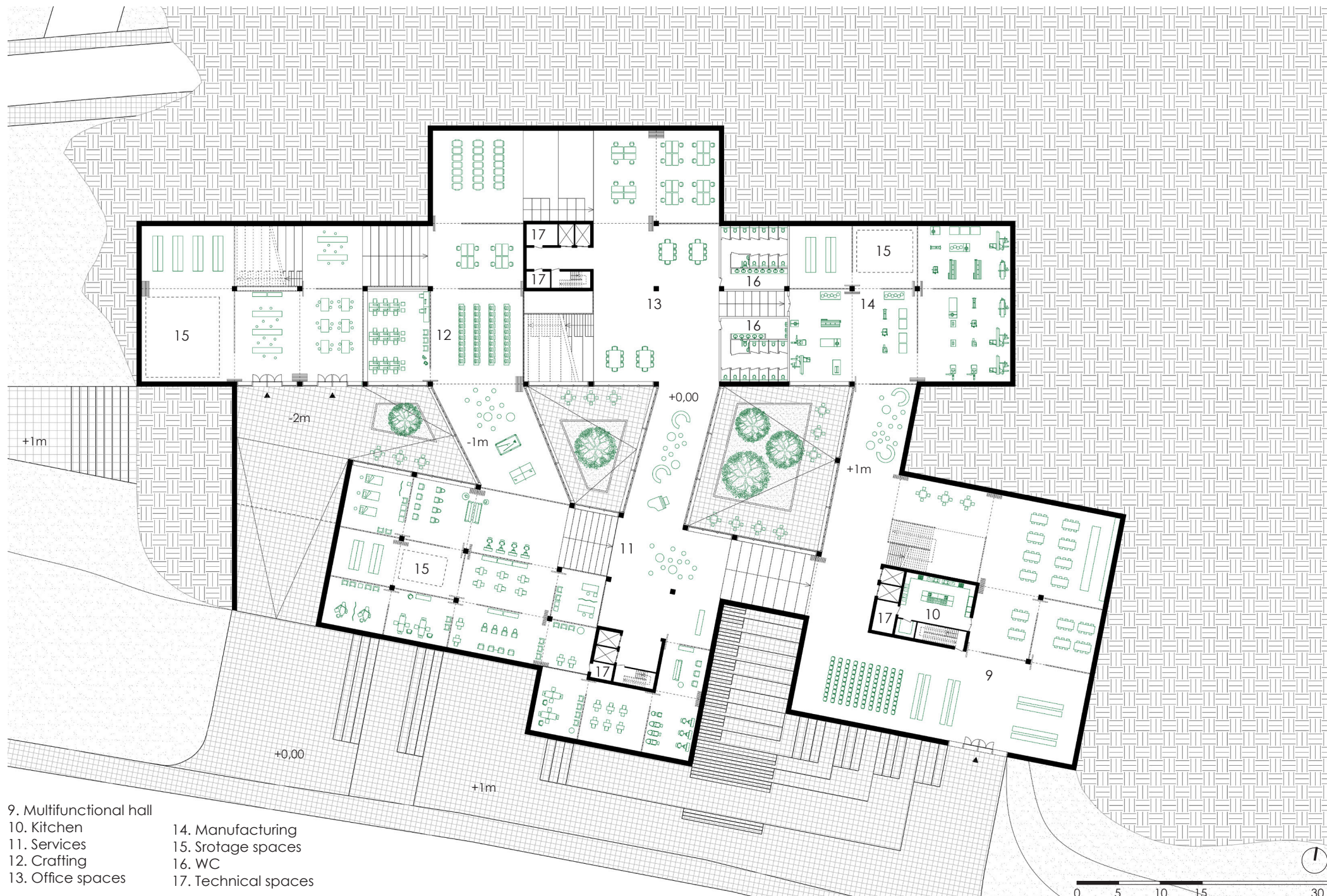
**Ground level**





**Subterrain level**

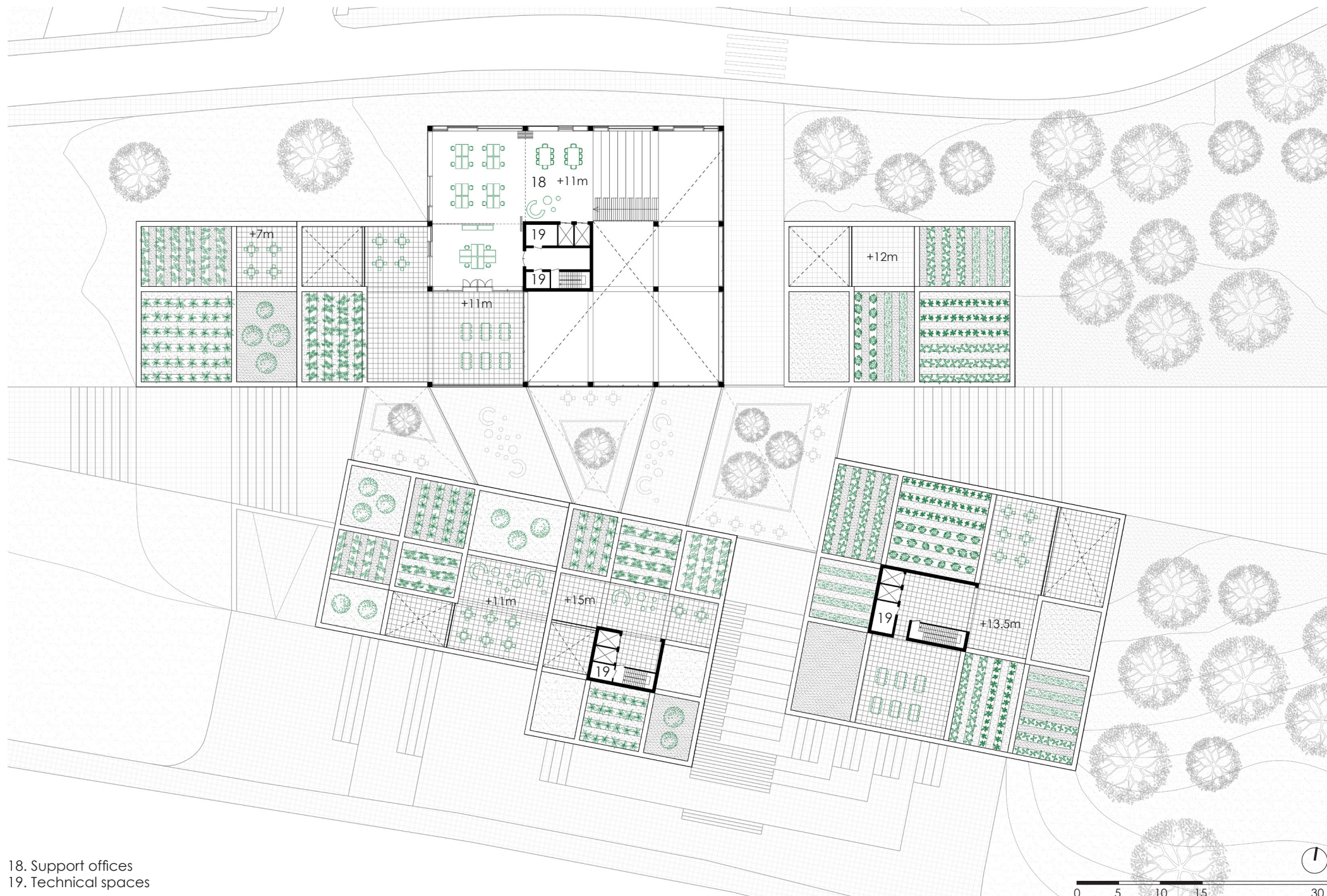




0 5 10 15 30 m

**Support offices & roof level**

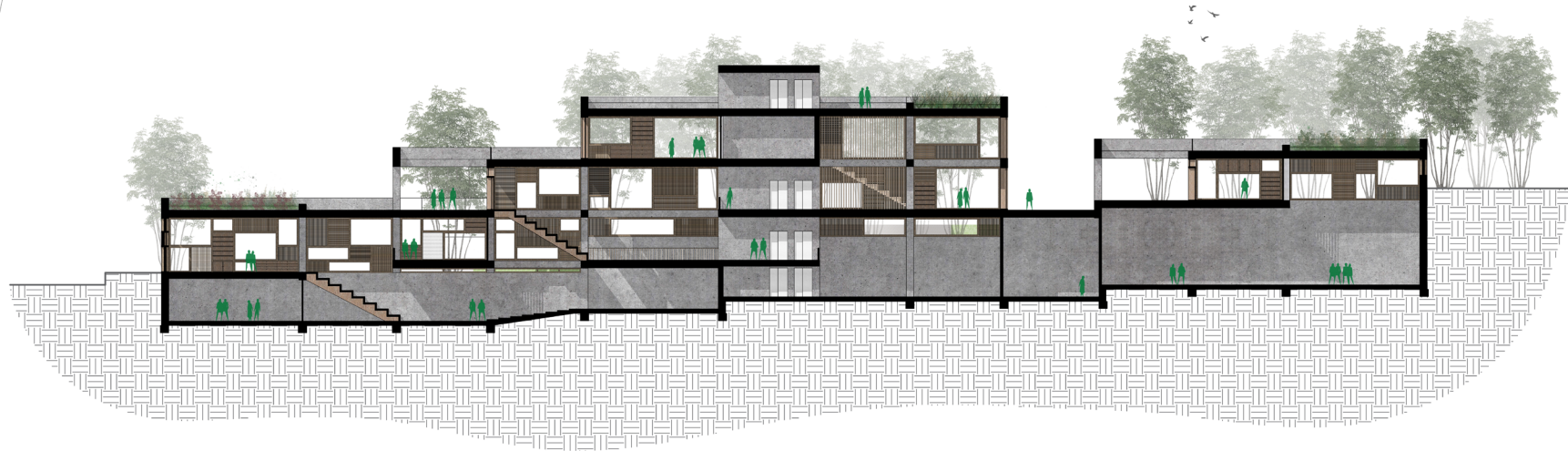
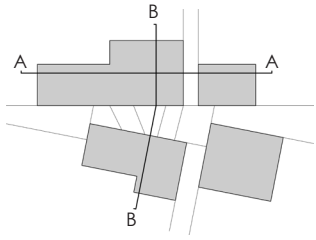




18. Support offices  
19. Technical spaces

## Sections





Section AA

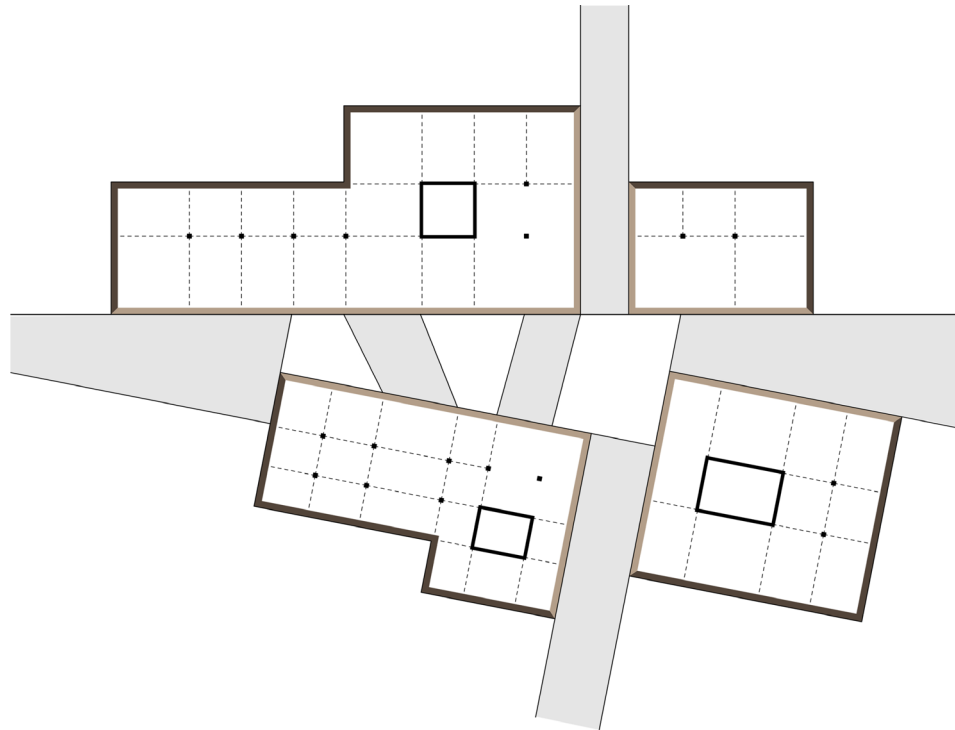


Section BB



## Facade development

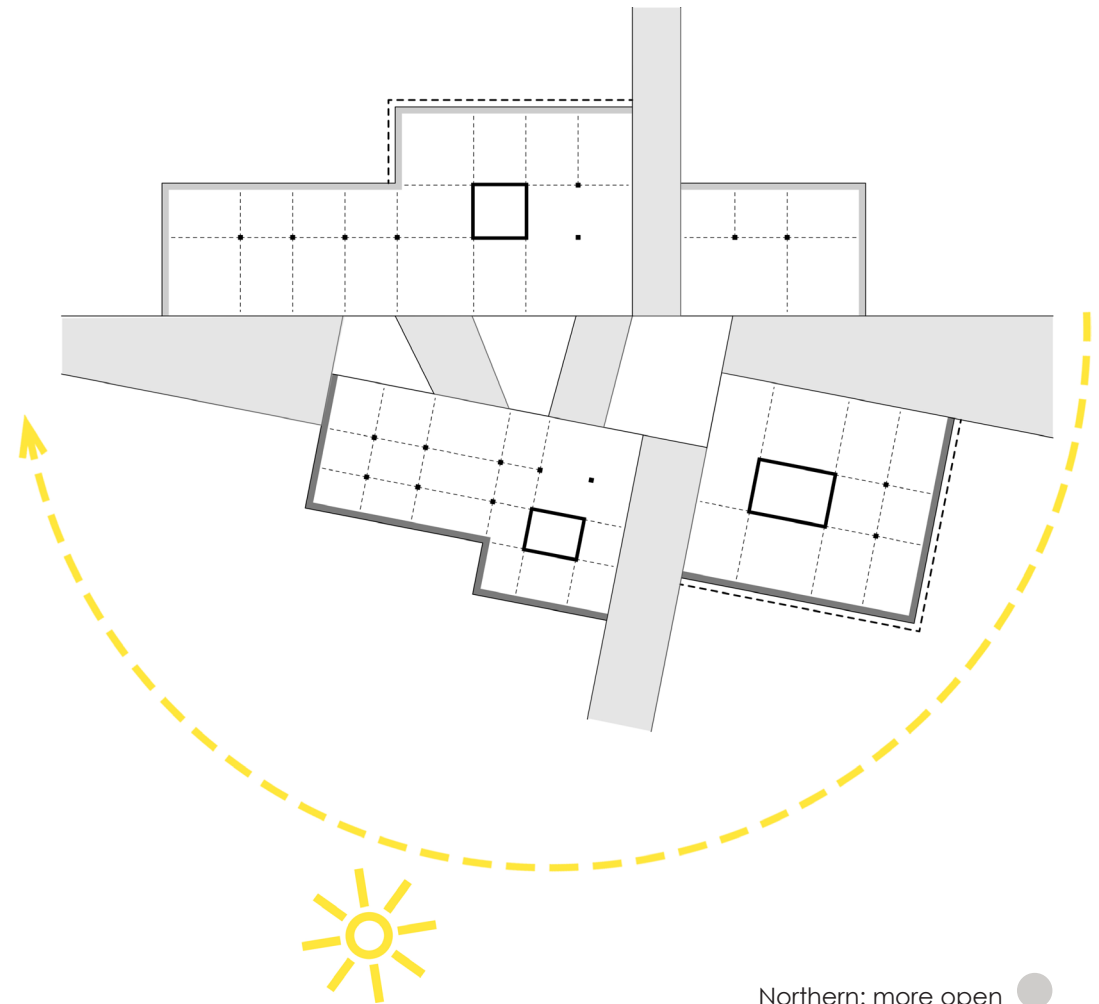
## Inner and outer worlds



- outer facade
- inner facade

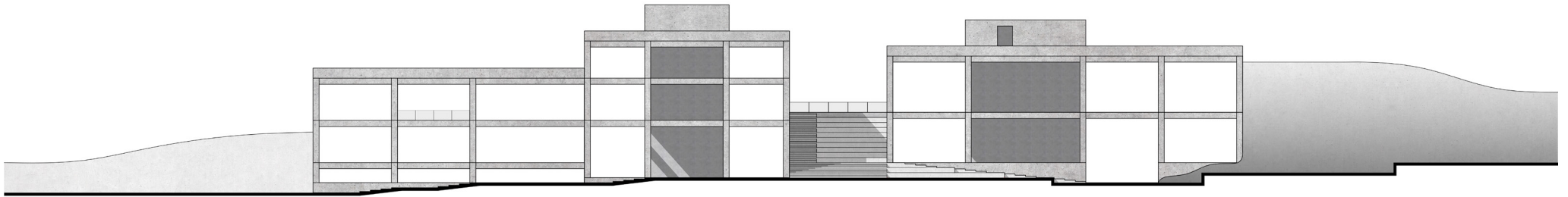
## Outer facade: closed and open

Depending on programme and orientation



- Northern: more open ●
- Southern: more closed ●
- public functions: larger openings ---

## Structure without infill



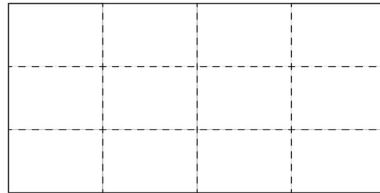
## Outer facade build up

Different scale patchwork

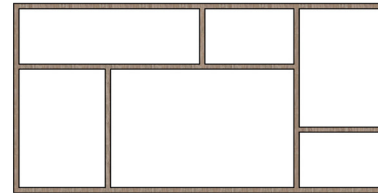
1. Framework



2. Grid (1.8 m verticals)



3. Wooden structure



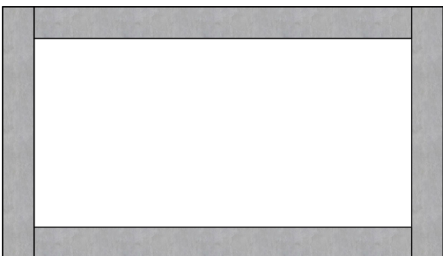
4. Glass and wood infill



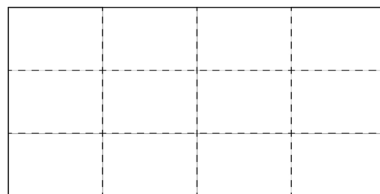
## Inner facade build up

Uniform facade

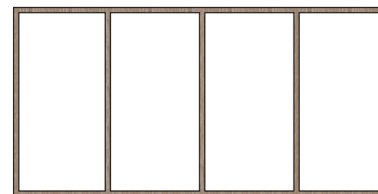
1. Framework



2. Grid (1.8 m verticals)

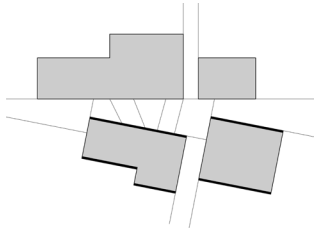


3. Wooden structure



4. Glass infill



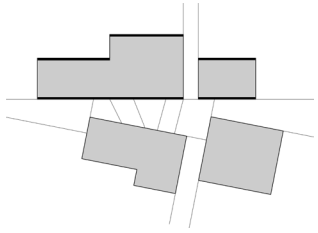


Southwestern outer (river) facade



Northern inner facade



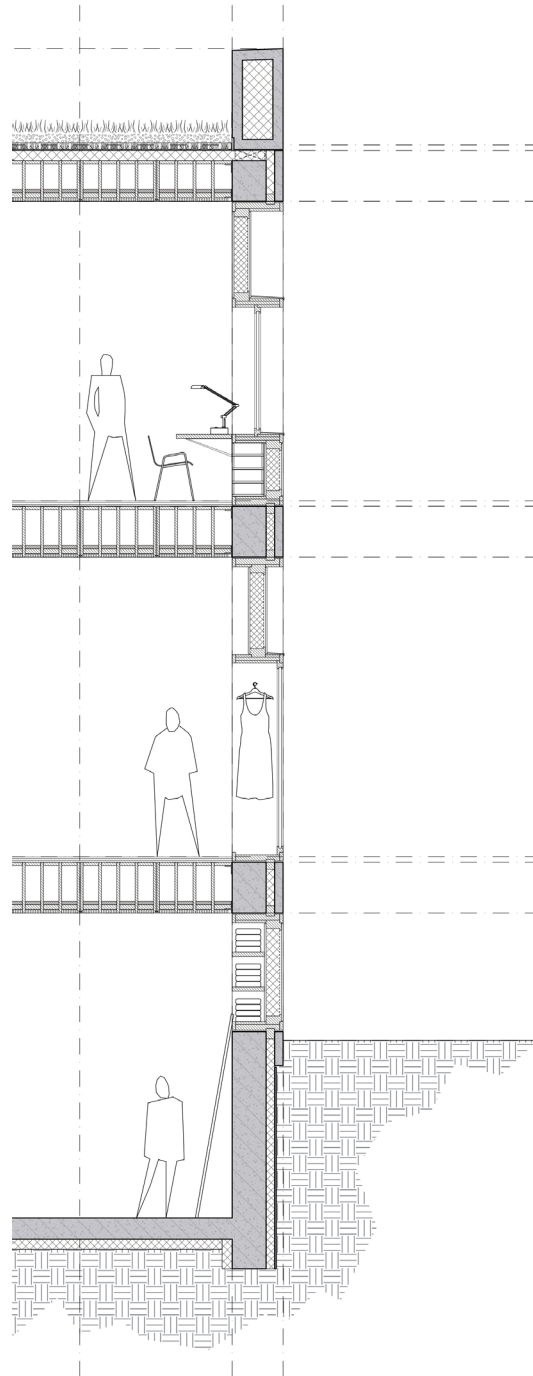


Northern outer (avenue) facade



Southwestern inner facade

## Fragments



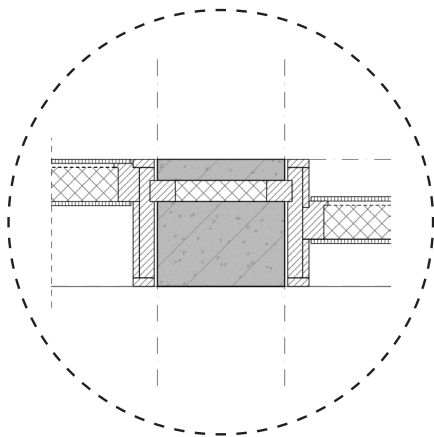
#### Retention roof

- Substructure: Lignatur floor with acoustics, chip-board, sound insulation and space for installations
- Insulation
- Waterproof membrane
- Water retention box
- Gravel
- Vegetation

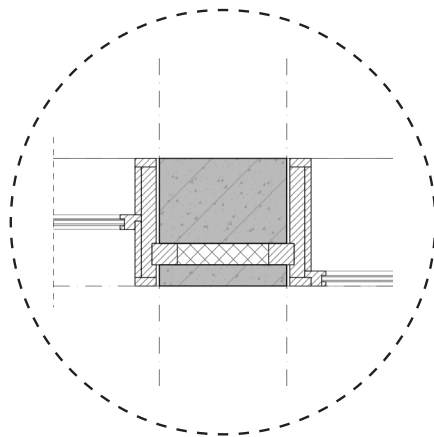


## Details

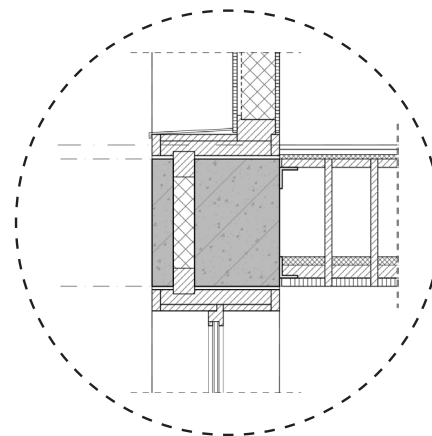
Horizontal facade detail  
with closed panels



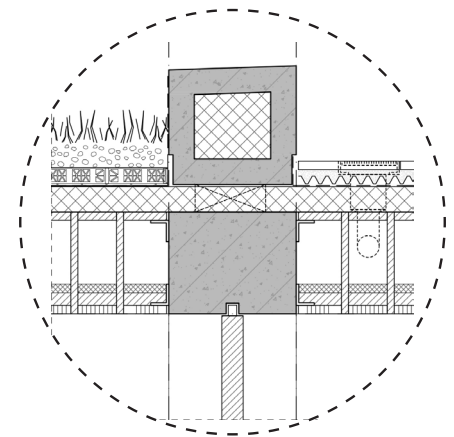
Horizontal facade detail  
with windows



Vertical outer facade  
detail



Roof detail with plants  
and tiles





**Restaurant waiting area**



**Communal areas**





## **Working and learning spaces**





**Everyone can do their job whatever their profession is**







## Street view





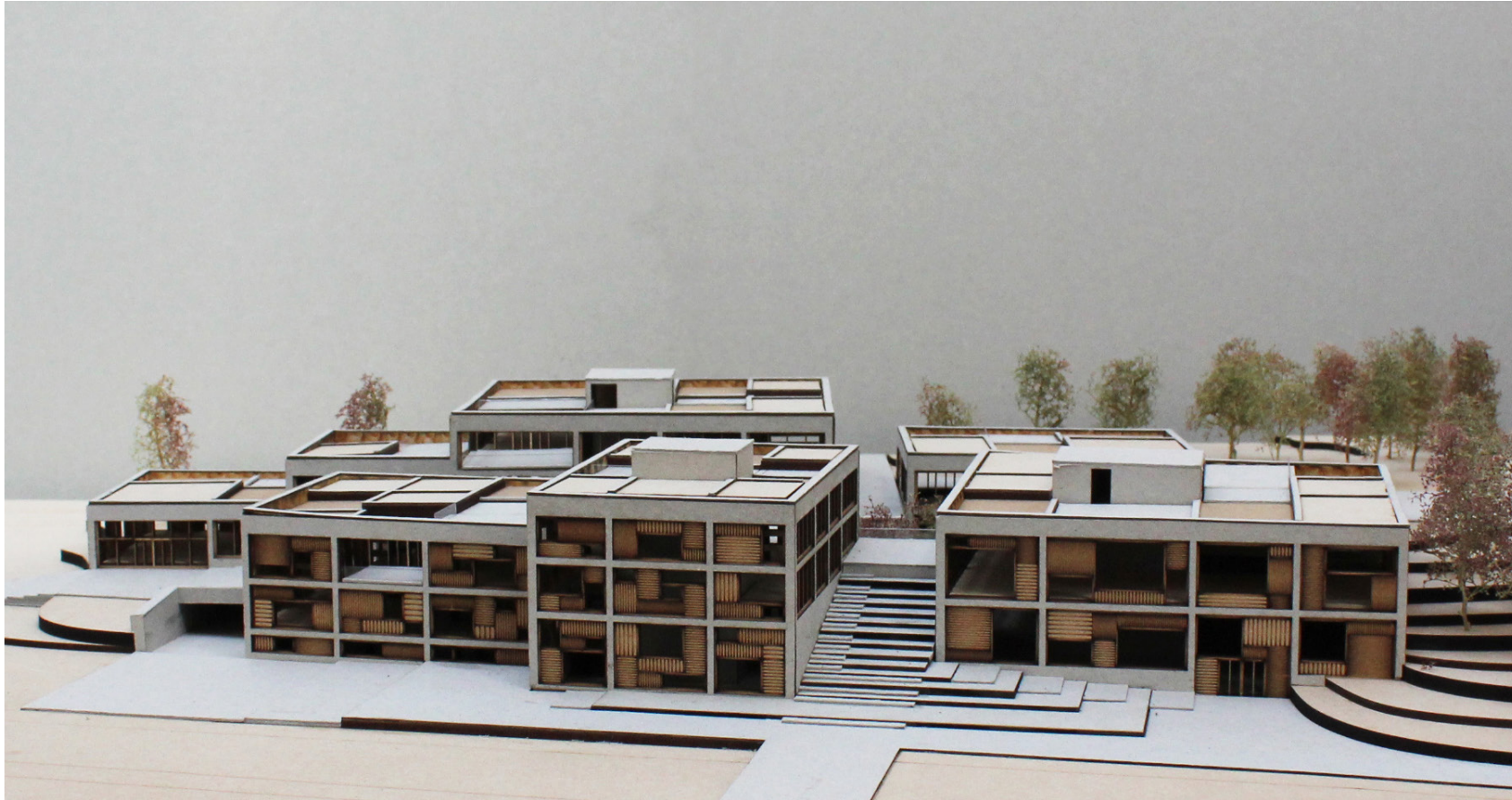




**Model**  
Scale 1:200













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