

MASTER

Expressing Dutch identity

Bonavita, G.

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EXPRESSING DUTCH IDENTITY

Giuseppe Bonavita

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Graduation committee:

ir. M.H.P.M. Willems

ir. S.P.G. Moonen

dr.ir. A.H.J. Bosman

Author:

Giuseppe Bonavita | 0874406

Architecture, Building and Planning, TU Eindhoven

Introduction

The graduation project combines two main themes: the aesthetic of sustainability and Dutch identity.

The main question of the first theme was “What does sustainable look like?”. During the M3 each member of the studio made a research on a specific subject related with this topic.

This is how we had the possibility to research about the social, functional, technological and historical aspects related with the aesthetic of sustainability.

For the second theme the main question was: “How is Dutch identity viewed from abroad and how to express national identity in design?”.

Both themes were the starting point for the final assignment: the design of a Dutch embassy in Norway.

The research question

The main question which came across the design process was how to design an embassy with a strong public character.

The idea is that the embassy should both reflect the hospitality and openness of the Dutch and answer to the security requirements of an embassy.

The result is an innovative embassy where the public character takes a predominant role in the building.

Social and theoretical relevance of the project

In an age of globalization and fading boundaries it's hardly possible to talk about national and cultural characteristics in architecture.

Nevertheless some buildings still require to represent a National Identity. Embassies are one of these.

The relevance of the project is that it investigates the cultural, social, political and economic ambitions of the Netherlands.

Moreover the national identity must be expressed by taking into consideration the cultural values of the country where the project will be realized.

M3 research

The Aesthetic of sustainability

The first assignment related with this topic started with a consideration regarding the "Iconologia" from the Italian iconographer Cesare Ripa: in his work Ripa makes allegories of virtues like dignity, prudence, charity and so on.

Our task was to make an allegory of sustainability. It implies the research of the main characteristics of sustainability in order to express them in a metaphorical way. For this assignment I decided to represent the allegory in a modern way, where the features that I take into consideration are related to the actual situation.

Through the information that I found I decided to represent sustainability as an old pregnant woman.

During my research I discovered that the term "sustainability" seems missing in the past but even then there was knowledge on how to build sustainable.

In the book "De Architectura" from Vitruvius we can see for example descriptions of how the sun would cast shadows at different inclinations depending on the orientation of the site, and how to organize the different spaces in a building through these information. This sustainable approach was related both on the design of individual buildings and in the planning of cities.

After the industrial revolution things changed: while the Industrial Revolution was the seed of many positive changes in the modern world, there is no question that it has contributed to a significant amount of environmental disasters.

During 1960s the side-effects of industrialization and advanced technology started to become matters of concern by society,

Much attention is now being given again to sustainability.

So even if sustainable approach was already present in the past, now it's having a new birth: like an old lady the society is giving birth to a new sustainability.

Metaphor of sustainability.
The main image is the cover of "New York magazine", issue 50 October 2010, edited on Photoshop.
<http://nymag.com/news/features/mothers-over-50-2011-10/>



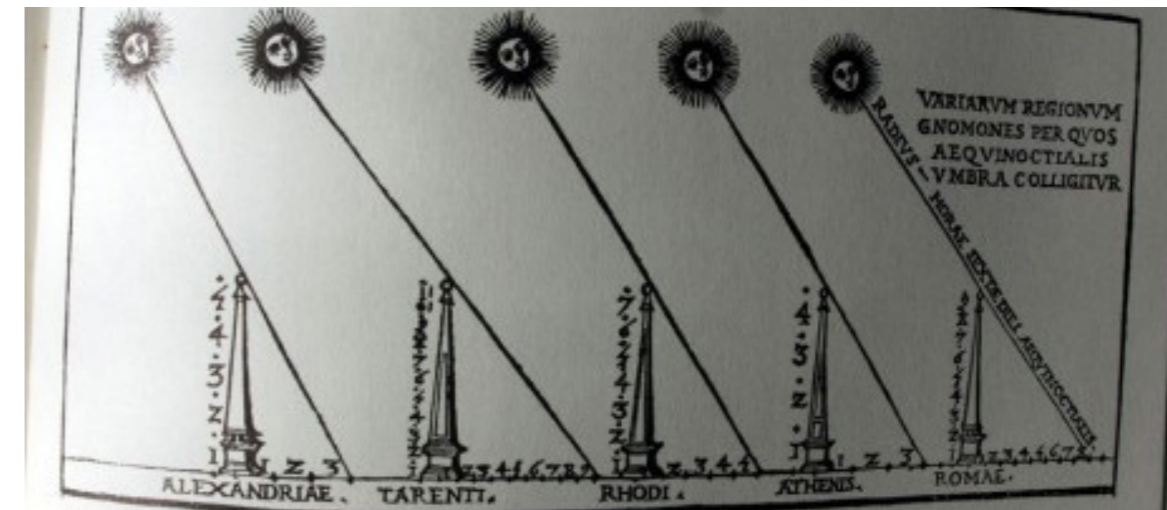
The second assignment was to write an essay about the aesthetic of sustainability in architecture.

Since the topic can be interpreted on broad and diverse points of view, the studio decided to split the main topic in different themes. I decided to write an essay about digital revolution in architecture and how new digital tools are affecting the aesthetic of sustainable architecture.

I started from the birth of parametricism with Luigi Moretti, and how the aesthetic of architecture has been rigidly related to mathematical algorithms which express the efficiency of a building. Even if the parametric design was not directly related with the intention to create a new aesthetic Patrick Schumacher, talking about the "Parametric City", says that parametricism is gathering momentum to become the first new global, unified style that can and must replace Modernism as credible epochal style. Moreover the aesthetic principles related with digital tools have been by Greg Lynn underlining how organic architecture couldn't be possible without the use of computer-aided design programs.

For my final I decided to describe the UNstudio design process analysing the Raffles City project. Ben Van Berkel explains how design process has been transformed through the advent of digital tools making deeper the interrelation between aesthetic and sustainability.

My conclusion for this essay is that digital tools mainly improve the adaptability of the project both on an aesthetic and a sustainable point of view increasing the possibility to design in an holistic way.



From De Architectura: the sun position in various cities

Dutch identity

The assignment for Dutch identity was to make a Dutch gift.

The main idea is that the gift should represent three aspects of the Dutch culture: hospitality, innovation and tradition.

For this reason I realised the "WindGift" project.

The WindGift is a process to make a stroopwafel can. In typical stroopwafel cans Dutch culture is represented.

They can be metallic or in ceramic and are usually decorated with a Delft blue colour.

Instead of making an object I decided to design the process for making the stroopwafel can.

One of the main features of the Netherlands is the wind. My intention was to use it in order to make the gift.

The first idea was that a person who visits the Netherlands could record the amount and the intensity of the wind during his activities.

At the end of the trip the recorded data can be processed, translated and 3d printed in a ceramic stroopwafel can.

When the gift will be given to a friend it becomes a pleasant occasion to talk about the activities made. The WindGift becomes in this way a personalized object which brings people to talk about the Dutch culture. More than the object itself, the active role of human interaction makes the object promoter of the Dutch identity.

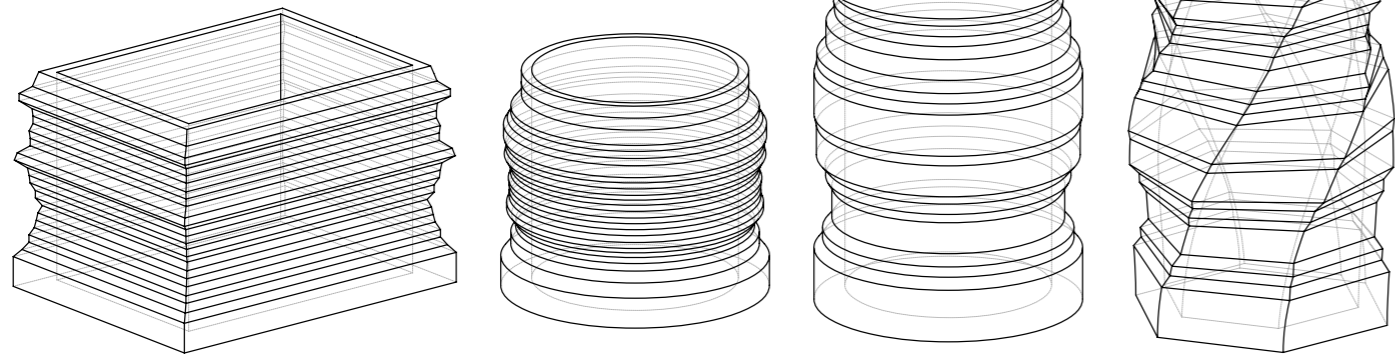
For making this project I used a computer fan and Arduino Uno in order to record the wind intensity. For translating the wind data into shapes I used Grasshopper.

For some tests I blew through the computer fan, but what I found interesting is that I had the possibility to record data doing any activity which had the movement of the computer fan involved.

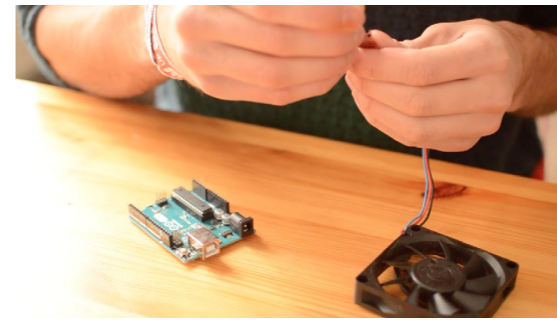
Thanks to the adaptability of the digital tools I had complete freedom to choose how to record the wind.



Typical stroopwafel can representing a windmill



Adaptability of digital tools: different shapes made by the same recorded data



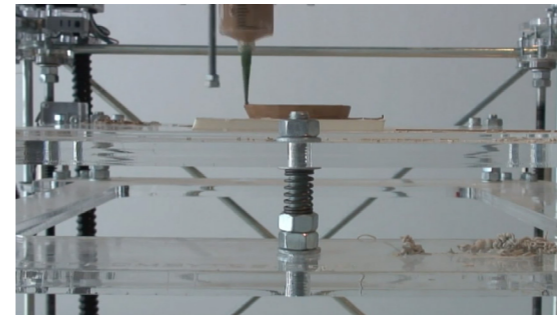
Making of WindGift: The tools used are a computer fan and Arduino UNO



Making of WindGift: Data has been processed through Grasshopper using the plug-in Firefly



Making of WindGift: From data to shape.



Ceramic 3d printer. Picture from Unfold, "L' ARTISAN ÉLECTRONIQUE",



Making of WindGift: Final result.

The Dutch embassy in Oslo

Understanding the new requirements for a new embassy

Having the task of designing a Dutch embassy in Oslo I first wondered about the embassy role in another country.

Generally the embassy is a country diplomatic affairs hub within the borders of another nation, serving as headquarters of the chief of mission, staff and other agencies. An embassy is usually located in the capital city of a foreign nation; some consulates may also be located in provincial or regional cities.

Besides the main tasks that all embassies have to perform, it is interesting to notice that every single embassy plays a different role in each country according to the interests of both nations.

The building

During the talk we first had some information about the urban context and the building where the embassy is currently located. The district where the embassy is situated has been built during 1860s and the intention then was to create a new suburb for the new middle class.

The embassy has been realised in 1868 by the architect Andreas Friedrich Wilhelm von Hanno. All buildings in this area are in a palladian style which was influencing the architectural style of Northern Europe in that period. The building has been owned by the Dutch state since 1951 and it became the Dutch embassy that very year. The ambassador's residence is in another building.

Even if most of the meetings are in the embassy itself, the residence is used during special meetings and ceremonies.

The representative spaces of the embassy are also used by other organizations usually when they want to be represented by the Dutch country.

As a consequence, the way of representing and designing an embassy radically changes according to the intentions of the nation in that country.

For this reason I found really important the conversation that we had in the Dutch embassy of Oslo. Thanks to it we received information about the actual embassy building, the main tasks of the diplomatic mission and the features that a new embassy should have to answer the office requirements.

The conversation has been transcribed and it's possible to read it at the end of the report.

The main tasks of the embassy

Economic department

The main task of the embassy is to help Dutch enterprises to export goods to Norway.

There is a lot of trade mostly in the maritime industry which goes on since the golden age. The import of goods is mostly related with energy issues (oil and gas).

Usually small and medium Dutch companies require the support of the economic department to start their enterprise in Norway. Another task of the economic department is to analyse on which direction the energy policy of Norway is going.

Security issues

Differently from other countries, thanks to the well structured Norwegian security, the embassy doesn't require special security measures in the building.

The security guards are not constantly patrolling the embassy and intervene only during alert situations.

Visibility

The other important task of the embassy is to create a positive image of the Netherlands.

The Diplomatic mission wants most of all to attract people and create business possibilities promoting Dutch trade and culture.

For this reason the building should have more exposure.

The strongest features for promoting the Netherlands are openness and innovation.

One way to express the intentions of the embassy could be to follow the example of the Greek embassy in Norway which rents offices for start-ups.

If we look at the social aspect Norway is a very traditional and conservative country. This also influences the relationship between the two countries.

The office

Usually in the embassy people work on different tasks.

Nevertheless there are projects where people need to work in teams.

The problem of the actual embassy is that it requires more office layout



The Embassy building is located at Oscars gate 29 in the Homansbyen district. The architect of the original house was Wilhelm von Hanno.

flexibility in order to have the possibility of reorganising it and maximising the space use. In the actual situation the building has not enough space to provide start-ups temporary offices.

Extrapolating informations

The conversation in the embassy has been interpreted like a talk with a customer and it influenced all the design process. I understood that the current embassy doesn't represent enough the economic interest and the Dutch identity. Moreover the actual office space doesn't answer to the necessity of flexibility that the embassy requires.

Given the great economic interest of the Netherlands in Oslo, it is vital for the Dutch embassy to distinguish itself. The new location should not only be functional, but also representational. These aspects are tools for promoting the Dutch activities and

diplomatic duties. The appearance of the embassy should reflect the hospitality and openness of the Netherlands. It is interesting to notice how the necessities of visibility are in strong contrast with the necessities of the embassy itself: while the embassy needs to be "close" and to ensure security requirements, the Dutch culture brings to represent the embassy as an open and hospitable building. Moreover the building should promote the business activity. For these reasons the embassy requires to be innovated and the public function should take a predominant role in the building.

The Ambassadors residence is located in the Gyldenløvesgate in Oslo, right across the main entrance of the world-famous Vigeland Park.



Building a nation (identity)

Case studies

Dutch embassy in Addis Ababa

Bjarne Mastenbroek and Dick Van Gameren architects

The Royal Dutch embassy in Addis Ababa by Dick van Gameren and Bjarne Mastenbroek architects is an astonishing example of regionalism which reveals a careful sustainable approach, taking natural conditions as a tool. In this project the intention was to take the Ethiopian culture as a starting point and implement the new building to incite respect to local people. The compound of the Dutch Embassy consists of a five-

hectare wooded area that slopes steeply towards the city. The design task was to situate the five individual buildings in the compound while retaining and enhancing the quality of the landscape site. Concrete pigmented walls are the same red colour as the earth in the region, while rough texture resembles the texture of the dry ground. These features are a clear link with traditional Ethiopian churches which

are carved out from the rock and represent vernacular Ethiopian approach. The strict horizontal volume of the main building cuts the sloping terrain naturally, the building is divided into two programmatic units: the ambassador's residence and the chancellery. The building orientation is defined in order to benefit from natural solar and thermal processes and to minimize the necessity of mechanical heating/cooling

The main entrance has a strong jutting cantilever



and ventilation systems.

The Embassy roof is a shallow pool, an element that combines Dutch tradition in water management and landscape technology, with the natural craggy countryside of Ethiopia.

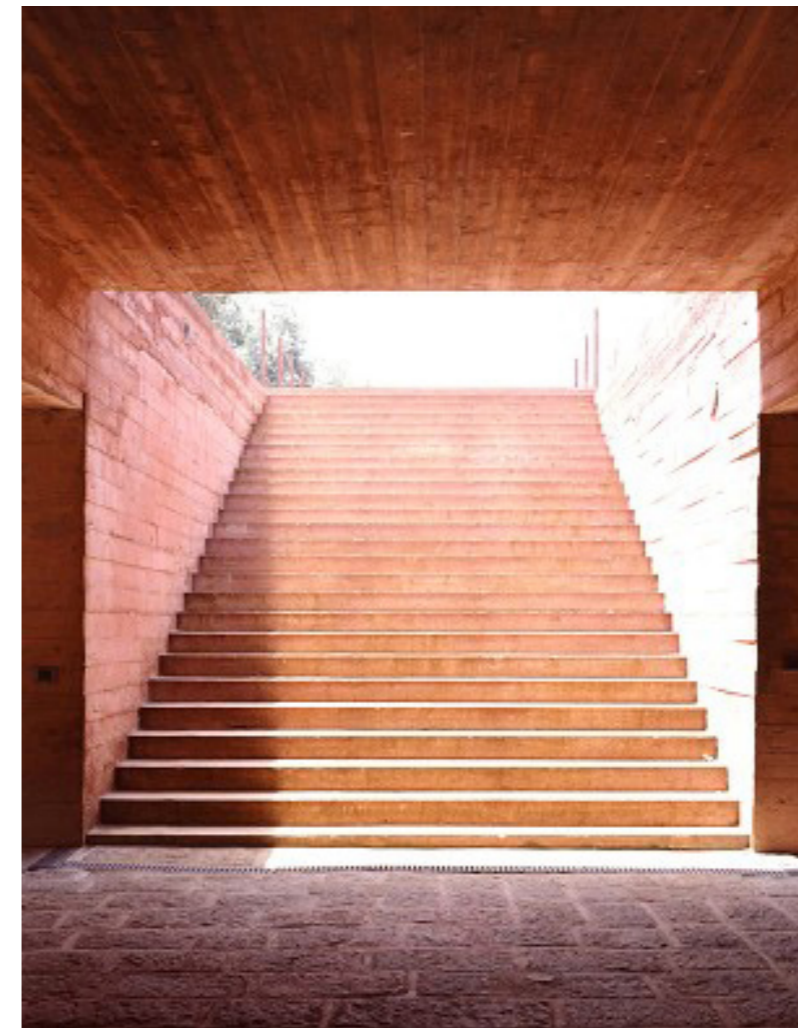
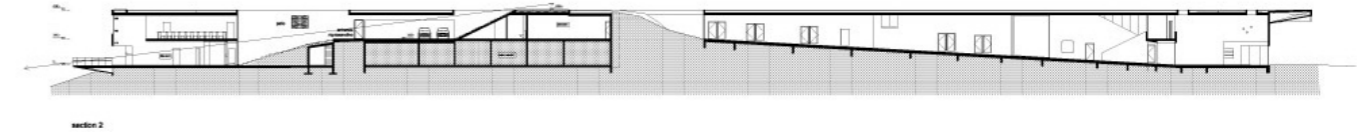
It is not just an aesthetic reminder but a sustainable approach to deal with rain water. The building is visible at both ends and as the landscape slopes gradually upwards it disappears temporarily, transforming into a pool among the eucalyptus trees.

Closed corridors with earthy tones walls and texture with combination of natural light accents give a feeling of protection and remind of cultural Ethiopian heritage

In this project the combination of attention to the context, culture and traditions combined with modern techniques resulted into a contemporary structure which fully engages

with the local environment.

The architects realised a building which is really respectful towards the country. The Ethiopian culture has been the real starting point of the design process. Nevertheless the building brings in itself features of the Dutch culture and innovation.



Dutch embassy in Berlin

OMA - Rem Koolhaas

The Dutch Embassy in Berlin is a disciplined cube with equally disciplined irregularities which aims to facilitate a better understanding of Berlin, contrasting divergent ideas about how the city should be built. Traditional planning guidelines of the former West Berlin demanded that new buildings in the neighbourhood (the Roldandufer in Mitte)

reflect the local 19th century architectural style. Planning officials in the former East Berlin were more open to innovation. As a result, OMA combined an obedient approach (strictly fulfilling the block's perimeter) with a disobedient one (building an isolated cube). The embassy cuts the single, contiguous structure implied by Berlin's regulations into two parts: a cube

accommodating offices, and a wall - the same height as the cube (27m, as regulations dictate) and completely semi-opaque - surrounding the cube on two sides, accommodating embassy residences, and creating a protected internal courtyard. Four pedestrian bridges span the courtyard and link the cube with the wall at varying levels. Inside the cube, the sense of



Interior views of the embassy

security and stability required for an embassy co-exists with the free circulation provided by a 200m path that zigzags up through the eight storeys, determining the arrangement of the building's spaces.

From the entrance, the trajectory of the path leads to the library, on to the meeting rooms, skirting the offices, leading up to the fitness area and finally to the restaurant on the roof terrace. This trajectory also distributes fresh air drawn from the double plenum façade to the work spaces (the areas that the path has carved out of the cube). At one point the path escapes the constraints of the cube and cantilevers over the courtyard. The regularity of the cube's glass and steel facade is disturbed where the path grazes the exterior, visible from the outside and providing strategic views of the Spree river, and the television tower.

Building in Oslo

Norway

Norway stretches farther North than any other European country except Russia. It is long and narrow, and goes from North to South through 1750 km of land.

The most of its landscape is dominated by forest and mountains, but fjords are one of the landmarks of this country. They are mainly located on the Western coast, where they constantly cut out the shore creating breathtaking views on the surrounding glaciers and mountains.

The Norwegian climate is unexpectedly mild if we think of the geographic position of this country. This is due to the warm moist Gulf Stream air, which improves the coastal areas climate and ensures ice-free harbours even in winter. There is a big difference between the coastal and inner climate: the first one has temperate winters, fresh summers and heavy rainfalls year-round, while the second is drier with colder winters and warmer summers.

Norway is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democratic system of governance. The real political power of the King is very small, but fulfils a fundamental symbolic function as the Head of State and official representative of Norwegian society and industry.

Norway is one of the countries with the highest level of quality life and also one of the richest countries in the world; as a matter of fact Norway was ranked from 2001 to 2004 at the top of the UNDP Human Development Index over national



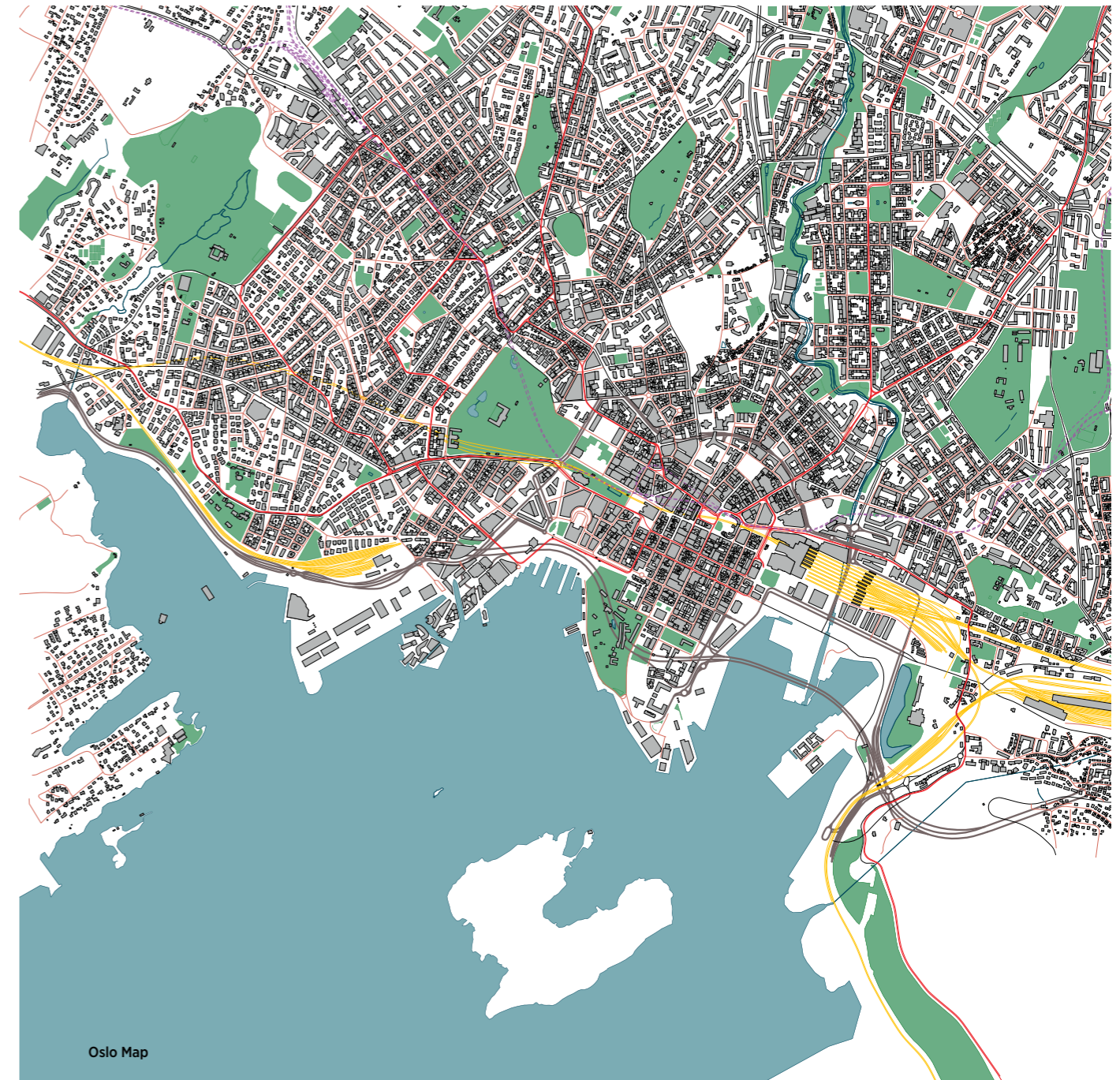
living conditions.

The GDP per capita is high and wealth is well distributed among the population. Moreover there is a large degree of gender equality at all society levels.

In order to keep this high level welfare orientation, Norway has implemented a universal, public health service. This service is

financed by taxes and a national insurance scheme. It applies to all residents and citizens, and provides a host of social benefits.

The high level of material wealth in Norway is partly due to an abundance of natural resources, and partly due to Norway inclusion in the industrialisation of Western Europe, as a result of its close proximity to the major markets.



Since the 1970s, the off-shore oil industry has played a dominant role in the Norwegian economy.

Oslo

The capital city of Norway is Oslo. It is a relatively big city with its 500.000 inhabitants, number which, summed up together with the surrounding municipalities of the county of Akershus, goes up to

one million inhabitants. The region of Oslo has nearly one quarter of all the people living in Norway. The city features a mix of old and new architecture, parks, hills, museums, monuments, lakes, woodland areas and fjords. During the 17th and 18th centuries the town economic development was mainly based on domestic and foreign trade. The huge amount of forests, brought the timber trade to play an important role in this

development. The population has seen a constant growth, especially after 1814 when the town became again the capital of Norway, which at the same time, entered into union with Sweden. Oslo experienced a strong political and financial upswing. The industrial revolution that took place at the end of the 19th century brought to an even greater growth, especially in the Eastern portion of the town and in the Northern part

along the banks of the Akerselva river. Since 1988 Oslo has been divided into 25 districts, each consisting of a district council and a district administration under the direction of a district director. The main task of the districts is to supervise, organize and maintain social and primary health care services, including measures targeted especially for children and young people.

The new development

The reason for the recent decades urban developments in Norway must be seen in the political, economic and technological changes that took place since the 1970s. Before that, the city environments planning was an integral part of Norwegian planned economy. Norwegian

social democracy had produced a set of institutions, regulations and practices within which city planning had to take place. These institutions have gradually collapsed as the planned economy has given way to market forces and new political practices.

The Fjord City plan

The issue of planning the waterfront in Oslo has become more and more important in the last decades. As a matter of fact in 2000 the Oslo City Council passed a resolution declaring that the basis for additional waterfront planning would be "the Fjord City strategy". The intention of the strategy was that Oslo container ship terminals would have to be moved out of town to a new regional port. Simultaneously the central port areas were to be

developed for residential, business and recreational use.

The Fjord City plan is divided into 13 areas defined by their ownership type, geography, neighbourhood, current usage and other factors. The overall area counts 225 hectares and almost 10 km width, from Ormsund in the East to Frognerkilen in the West. It consists in large measure of landfills and industrial piers with asphalt or concrete surfaces. Within Fjord City the construction has already taken place in three areas: Bjørvika, Pipervika and Sjursøya.

Bjørvika

A city within the city

The Bjørvika area is one of the major urban transformations in Oslo. The new district will host a new commercial business district.



One million square metres of residential, cultural, commercial, and office spaces have been planned at the Eastern part of the Oslo fjord out of the old industrial port area of Bjørvika and into a thriving new centre. This is one of the biggest waterfront projects developed in Europe at the moment. The National Opera and Ballet House, completed in April 2008, is the first big mark of the waterfront renewal. A new development will be the completion of a huge new commercial business district behind the Opera House known as the Bar Code because of the long, narrow plots of land and staggered eaves of the buildings. Within the next eight years, up to 16 buildings in the Opera Quarter

will house 10,000 workplaces, 450 apartments integrated among the buildings, and 20,000 square metres of restaurants and shops, the single largest collection of living and working space in Oslo. There will be offices, apartments, museums, parks, restaurants, shops, kindergartens, new schools, and underground parking systems. The previous highway system which divided the central station from the seaside has been re-directed into the new underwater tunnel that connects the Western part of the city to the East. The urban plans already include the construction of : the Munch Museum, Stenersen Museum, and the Deichmanske Main Library, residences and offices. At the end of the construction,

5,000 new apartments and 20,000 workplaces in the entire Bjørvika area should be available. The renovation of Bjørvika has as a primary goal to create a living community with a mix of housing, offices, art and cultural institutions that will attract locals, national and international visitors.

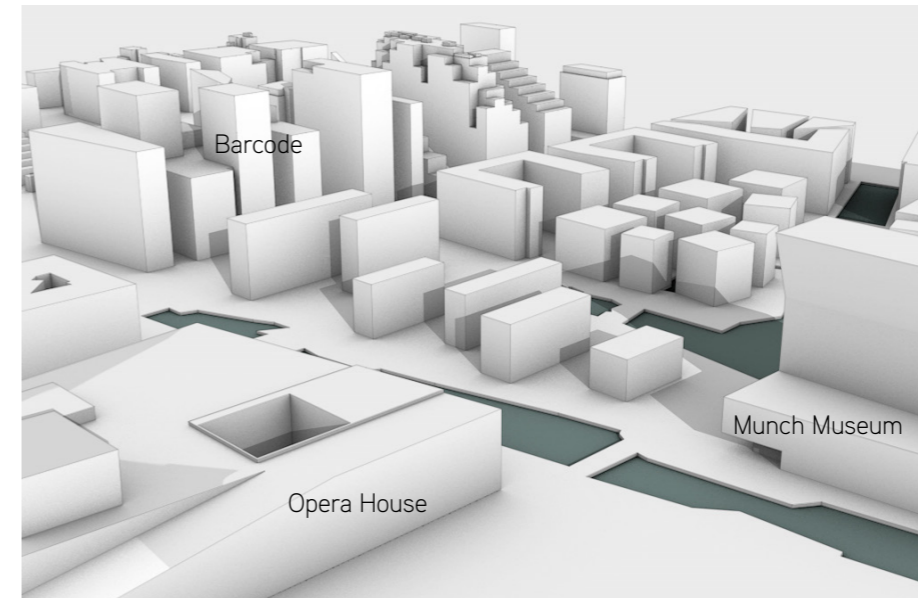


The Fjord City plan

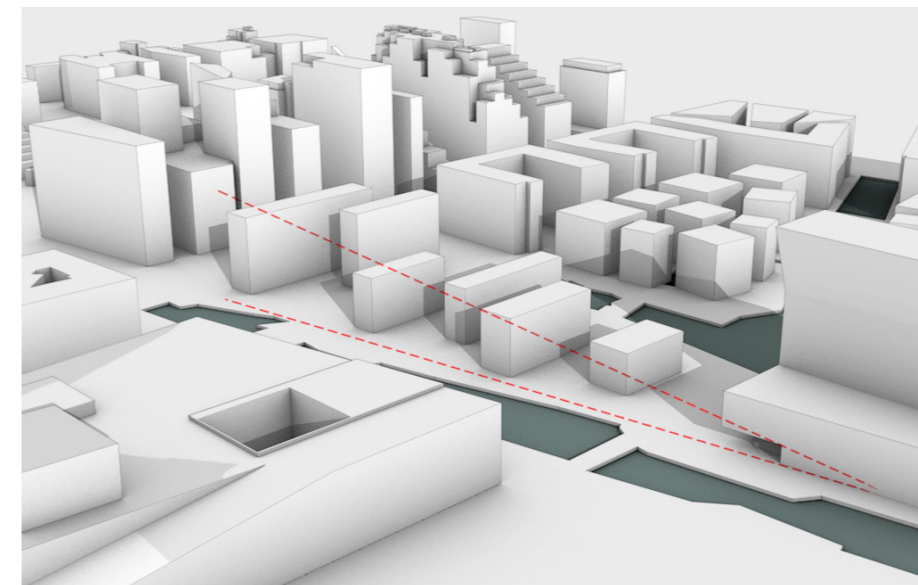


A new embassy in Bjørvika

Analysing the new Oslo urban plan and comparing the features that a new embassy requires, I found really interesting to include the building in the new development of the Bjørvika area .
 In this way the embassy can clearly suggest the idea of an innovative diplomatic building, located in a public environment but with a strong economic attitude.
 As a matter of fact the new economic pole of the city has been moved in Bjørvika and is represented by the completion of the huge new commercial business district: the Barcode.
 Moreover the area is still under construction and will be finished in the next few years. Being part of the new development it makes an exclusive opportunity of visibility for the embassy.
 At this moment in Bjørvika the Barcode construction process is almost finished. Nevertheless there are already plans for the new residential area on the East side of the commercial buildings.
 It already received the name of “New Venice” due to the intention to spread the constructions on the water



The area where the plans are not totally defined yet is the “peninsula” behind the Opera House.
 For that area different visions have been made to hypothesize what should be built and how.
 The vision I found more interesting is the Herros Arquitectos’ one, the studio that designed the Munch museum.



In this vision the volumetric boxes of the hypothetical buildings gradually reduce the height while they get closer to the end of the “peninsula”.



In this area the most valid spot for building the Dutch embassy is the one behind the Munch Museum.
 The reasons are: the strong visibility in its surroundings and the volumetry which is close to the space requirements of the embassy.

Design process

Research question

The main question which came across the design process was how to design an embassy with a strong public character.

The question generates an Hegelian dialectic fight between two conflicting principles: openness vs. security, public vs. private.

But how can they meet together? How is it possible to find a harmonious synthesis of this conflict?

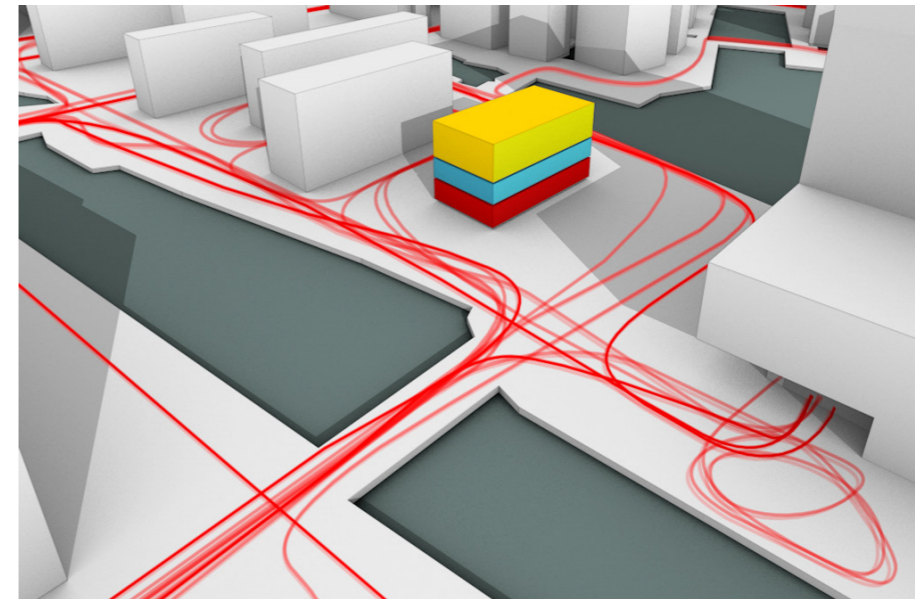
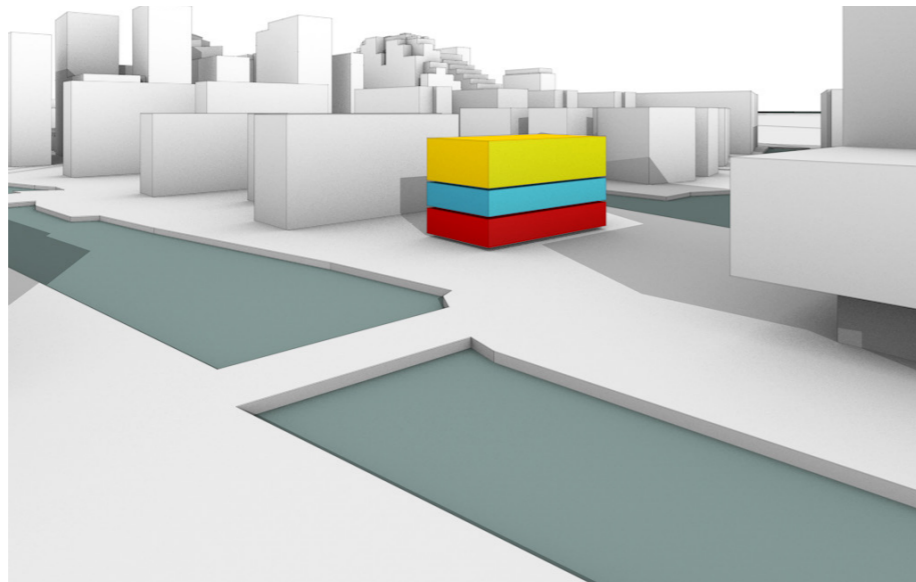
The main concept for the embassy has been to divide the building in three main functions. The first is the **public function** where in addition to the consulate, I decided to integrate a representative public exhibition, where people can discover the Dutch identity (the project area is meant also as a cultural space by the urban development).

The second function is the **office space** for start-ups.

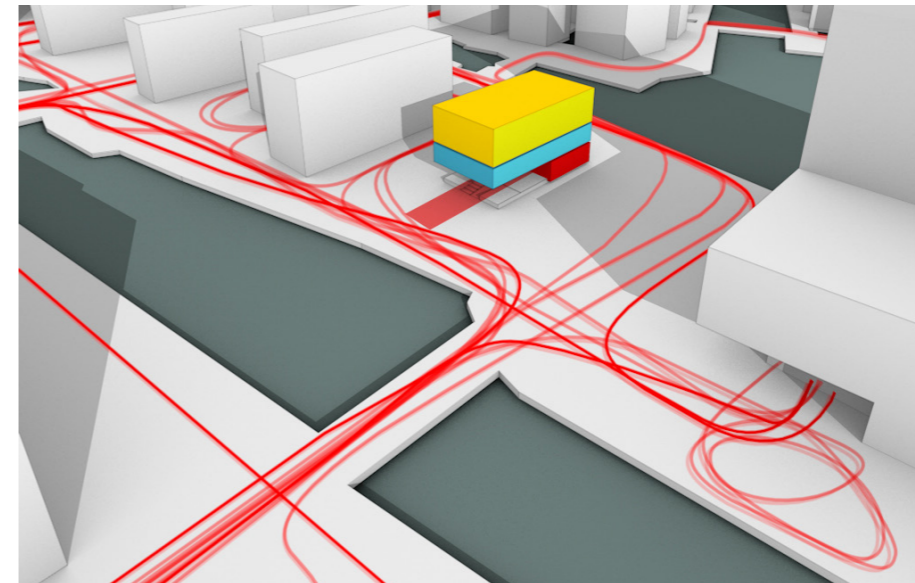
The idea is that Dutch companies can rent an office in the embassy to start new businesses in Oslo. It becomes a positive factor for companies which can use the visibility of the embassy and on the other hand the new embassy can show its interest on promoting Dutch trade and activities in the country.

The third function is the office space for the **embassy** itself. These three functions bring different features to the diplomatic building.

As first step of my design process I decided to split the main volume in three parts, each representing a function: the public space on the ground floor, the office for start-ups in the centre and the embassy on top of it. In this way each volume can be manipulated adapting to the requirements of that specific function and manifesting a special identity.

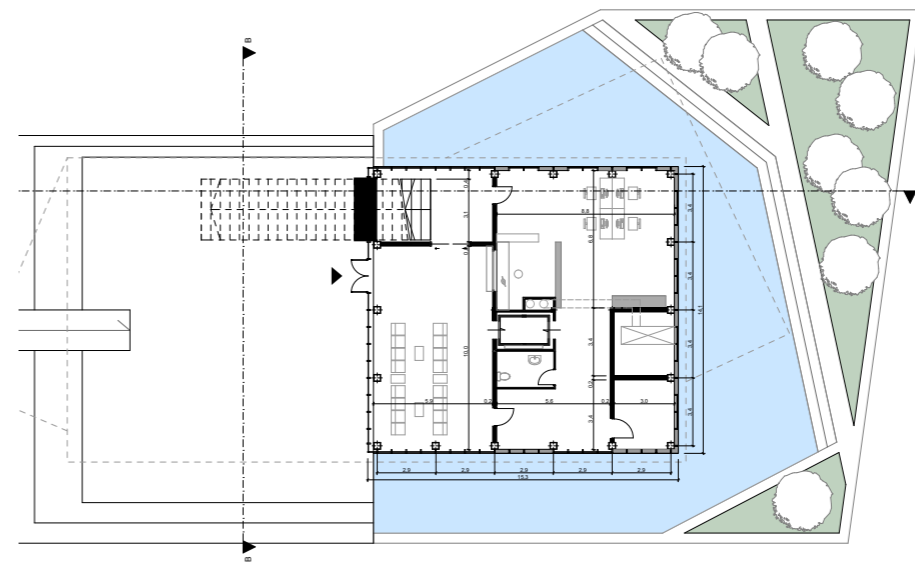


The first manipulation has been made to the public space on the ground floor. The embassy must have a visible entrance on the busiest side of the building. Analysing the possible flows of people on the surroundings I decided to create the main entrance on the West side of the building. The volume of the public function has been pushed inside of the building. In this way the cantilever of the upper floor provides a grand entry to the building.



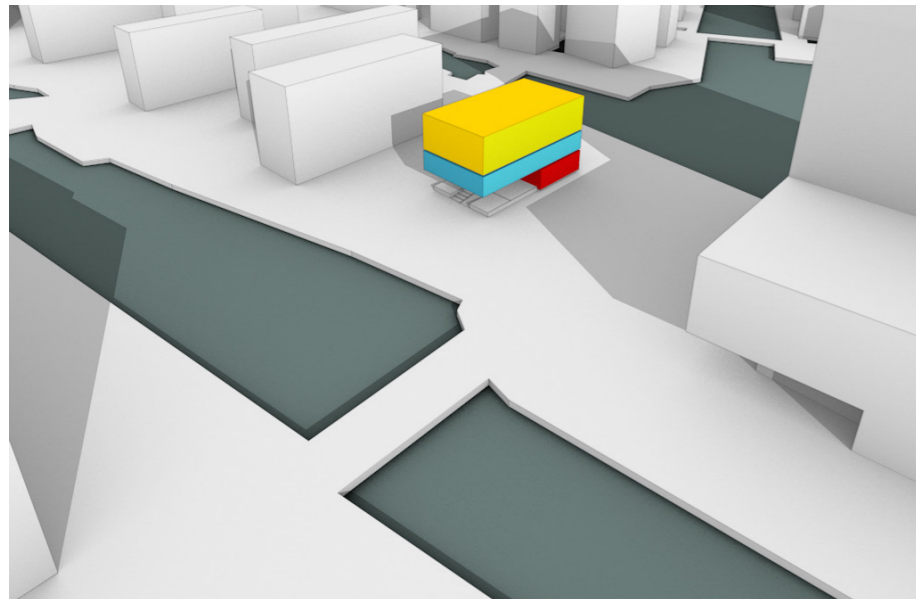
A podium elevates the building and emphasizes the spatial qualities of the surroundings. The embassy can use the area outside to celebrate national events with the Dutch community living in Oslo.

Furthermore it would attract local people making possible the interaction between Dutch and Norwegian cultures.

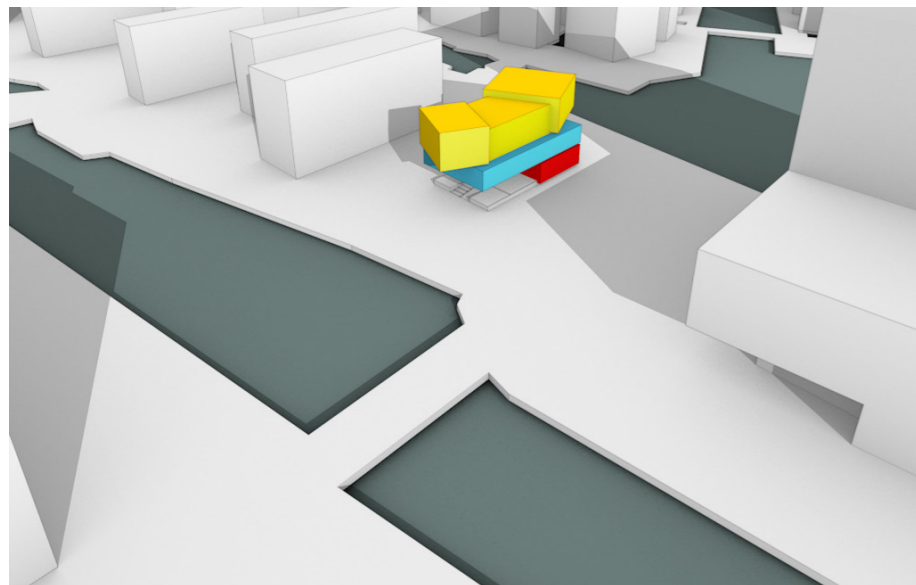


On the other sides a pool surrounds the building. Like the Hofvijver in Den Haag, the water is used to keep the building closed and safe. This avoids the use of fences and creates a pleasant environment.

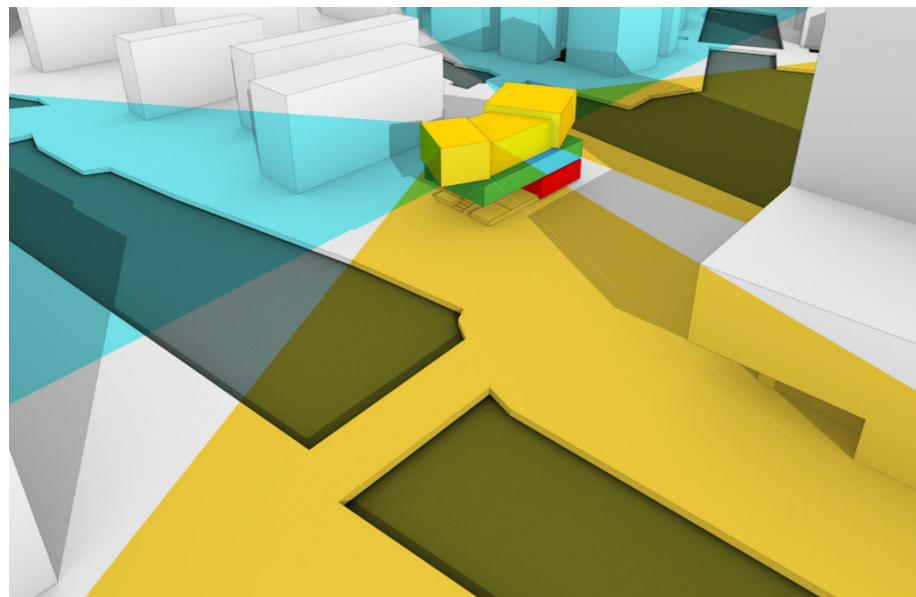
On the East side a small park is designed for pleasure and recreational use.



The office space must represent the logic of efficiency and maximization of space. Therefore the start-ups office maintains the shape of the maximum volume possible and the rigid shape of a box.



The embassy space has been deconstructed in three different sub-functions represented through different volumes: the representative space, the office space and a recreational space. Through this deconstruction it has been possible to shape and move these sub-functions based on specific requirements. Therefore the representative space (which comprehends the meeting space and the ambassador's room) has been moved on the West side of the embassy. Moreover it has been oriented in order to have a better view on the landscape on one side and on the Opera House on the other.



Similarly the office space moves and rotates for better view on the landscape and it creates a visual link between the office and the new commercial area of the Barcode. These different volumes orientations give the idea that the embassy is projecting itself in the surrounding representing the cultural idea of openness. On the other hand these rotations increase the building exposition on the South side gaining more light and solar energy.

The promenade

The link between Norwegian surroundings and Dutch culture

During the visit in the current Dutch embassy in Oslo, we had the opportunity to walk along the corridors of the building. I was positively impressed on how artworks and pictures of Dutch artists made me experience the life and culture of the Netherlands. Unfortunately in the present building these works are not valued

enough: they are closed inside private spaces and they can't be accessed by public visitors. Why not opening the embassy and show the Dutch culture through a visit in the corridors of the embassy? By looking at the surroundings of the project area it's interesting to notice that each view from the

building has a special role: there are views on the Norwegian landscape, on the Opera House, on the Munch Museum, on new residential and economic buildings. The first manipulations made in the public space of the embassy don't give the possibility to benefit of these views by possible visitors. For this reason it was necessary to



think how to extend this representative space and how to integrate it in the building in order to use these views in a better way.

One way to extend the public space could be to implement the ground floor: this would allow a 360° view on all the surroundings, of course this could be problematic because some views could be obstructed by possible architectural or physical barriers.

Another possibility would be to extend it by creating a vertical space on one side of the building. It would solve the problem of the possible obstacles by giving the opportunity to have exterior views on different heights, but it doesn't give the potentiality to benefit of a 360° view.

Another way to extend the public space is to use the same logic that Neutelings Riedijk Architects used for the design of the Museum Aan de Stroom (MAS) in Antwerp.

The City Museum of Antwerp is situated in the heart of the old harbour, close to the city centre. It is a 60 metres high tower of stacked exhibition spaces. Each level is twisted of 90 degrees to form a giant spiral. On the upper floor are situated a restaurant, a conference room and a sky deck. The square, docks and the tower are designed to form one continuous space for exhibitions and events.

In this building the public glazed space runs in a spiral and guides the visitors to the top of the building with constantly changing panoramas of Antwerp.

Through this logic I decided how to organise the vertical connections of the embassy.

One is a fast connection through elevators placed in the core of the building for embassy workers.

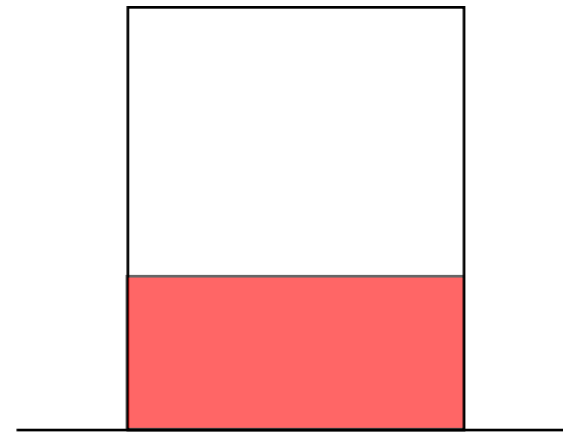
In addition to it a slow vertical connection made by stairs and corridors which evolves around the building takes advantage of the interesting views of the surroundings.

This becomes a promenade for exhibitions which promotes the Dutch culture. The promenade is open to workers and visitors even from outside.

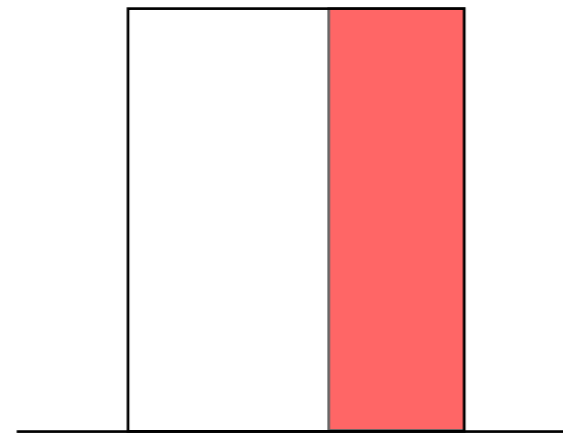
The expositions are in relationship with the views outside.

The exposition area has been subdivided in 5 different subjects in relation to the main features of the views:

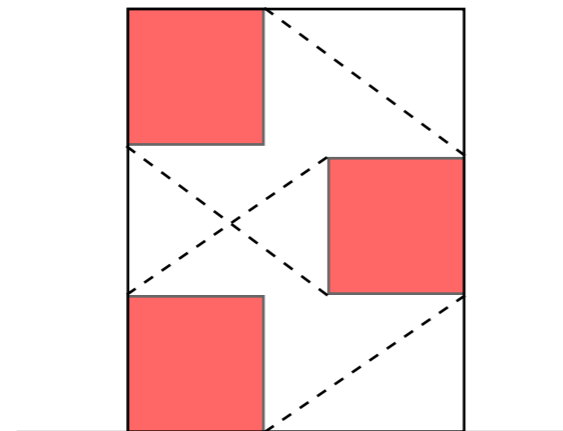
1. **Art & Design** will be located on the Opera House view.
 2. **Landscape** will be located on the landscape views.
 3. **Culture** will be located on the Munch museum view.
 4. **Architecture and housing** will be located on the new residential buildings view.
 5. **Business and innovation** will be located on the North with the view to the Barcode and the new business area.
- This is how the embassy becomes the filter for better understanding the Dutch culture in relationship with the Norwegian one.



360° view
1 level



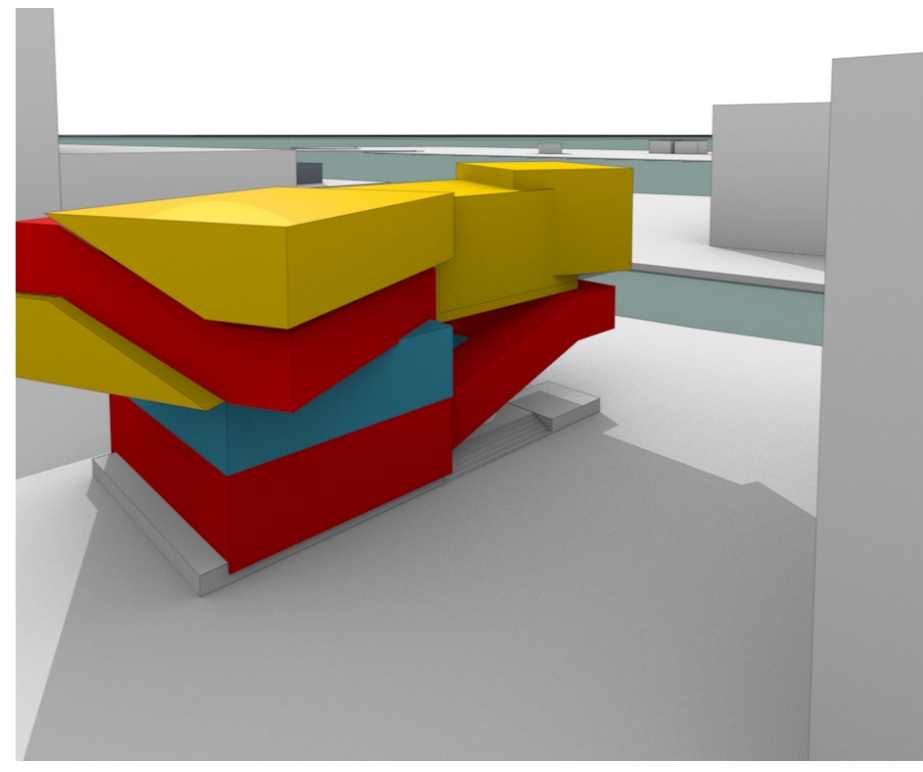
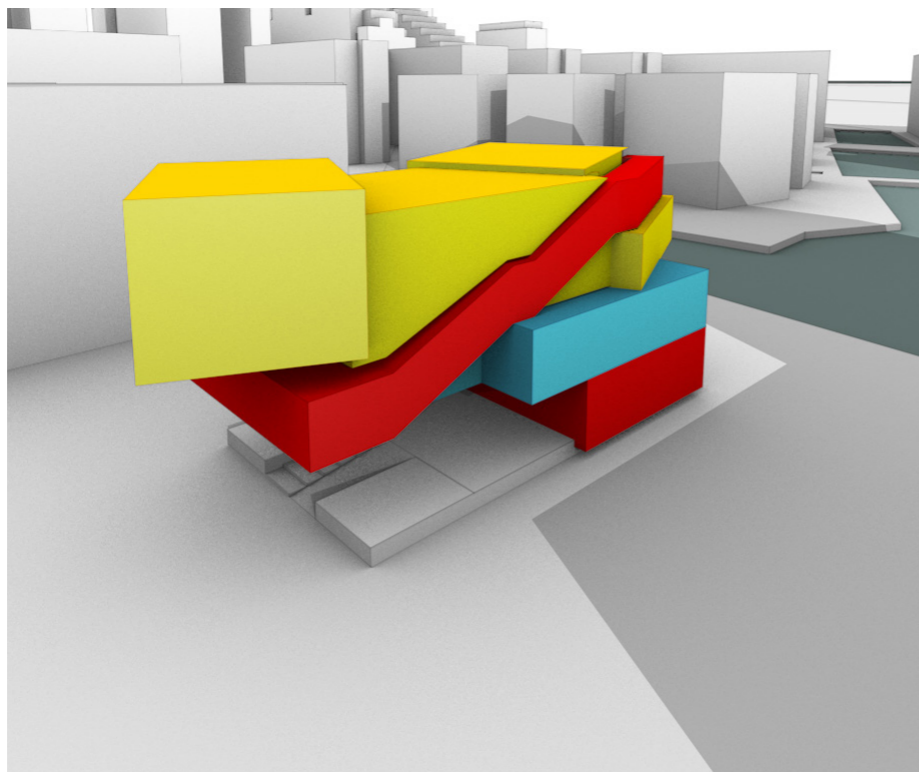
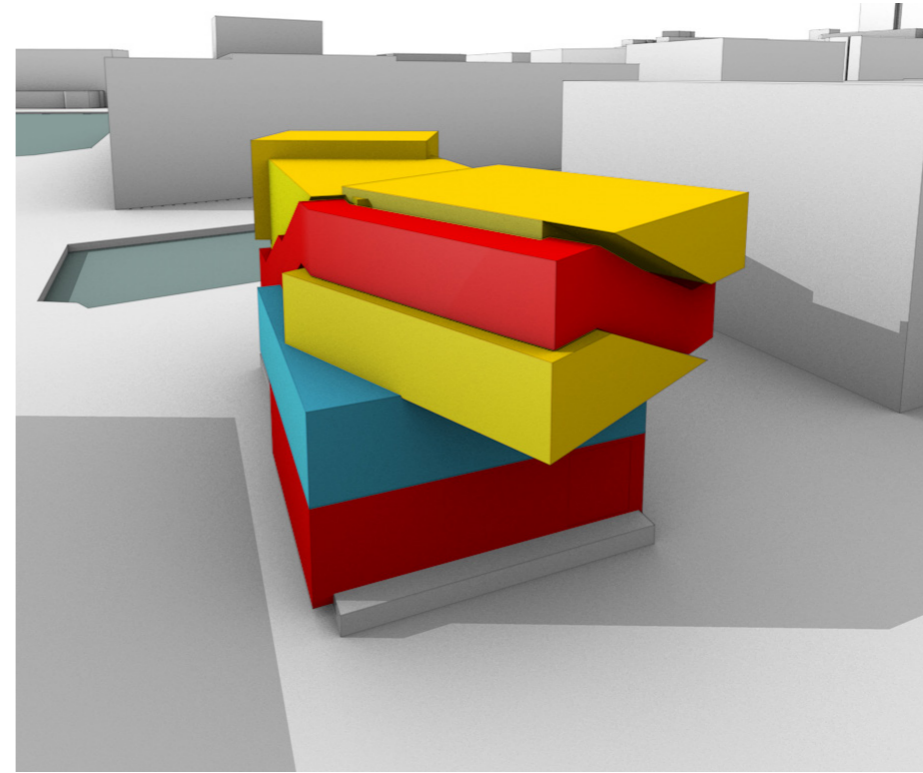
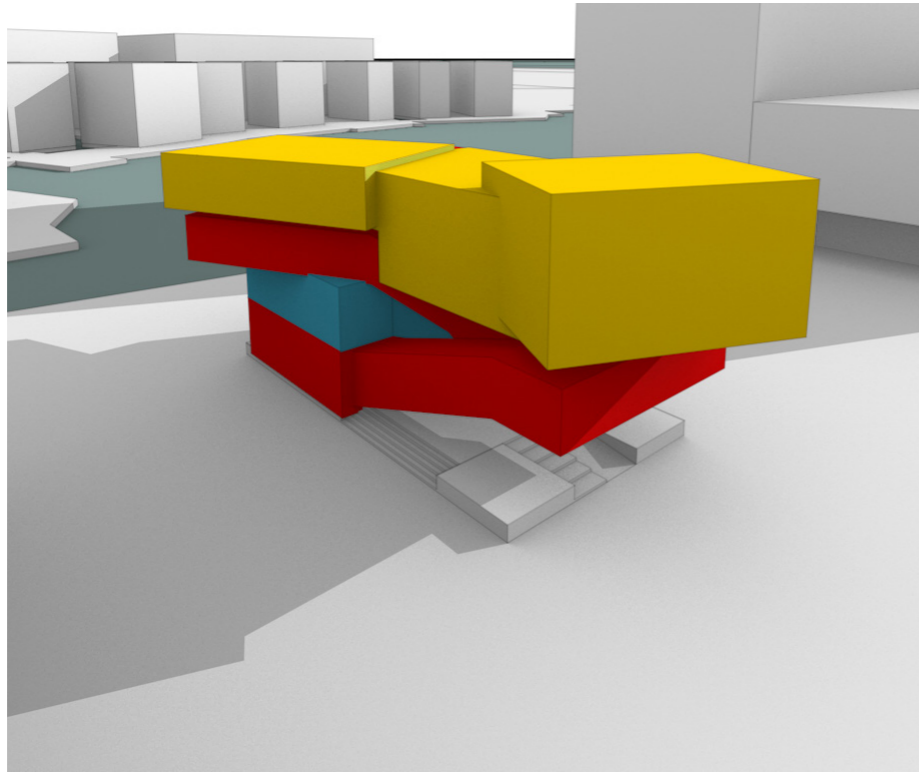
1 view
multiple level

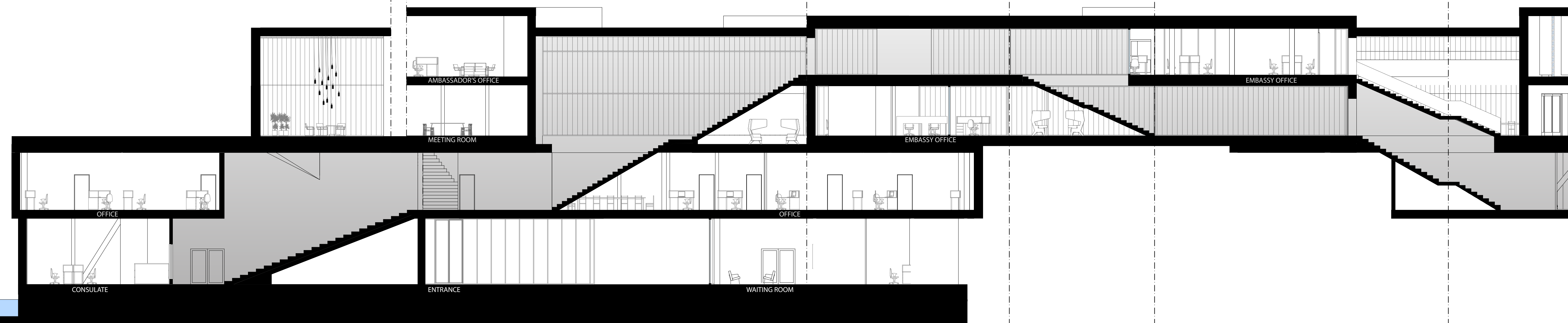
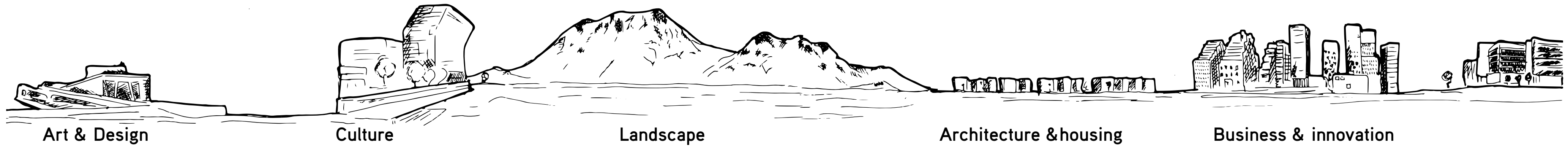


360° view
multiple levels

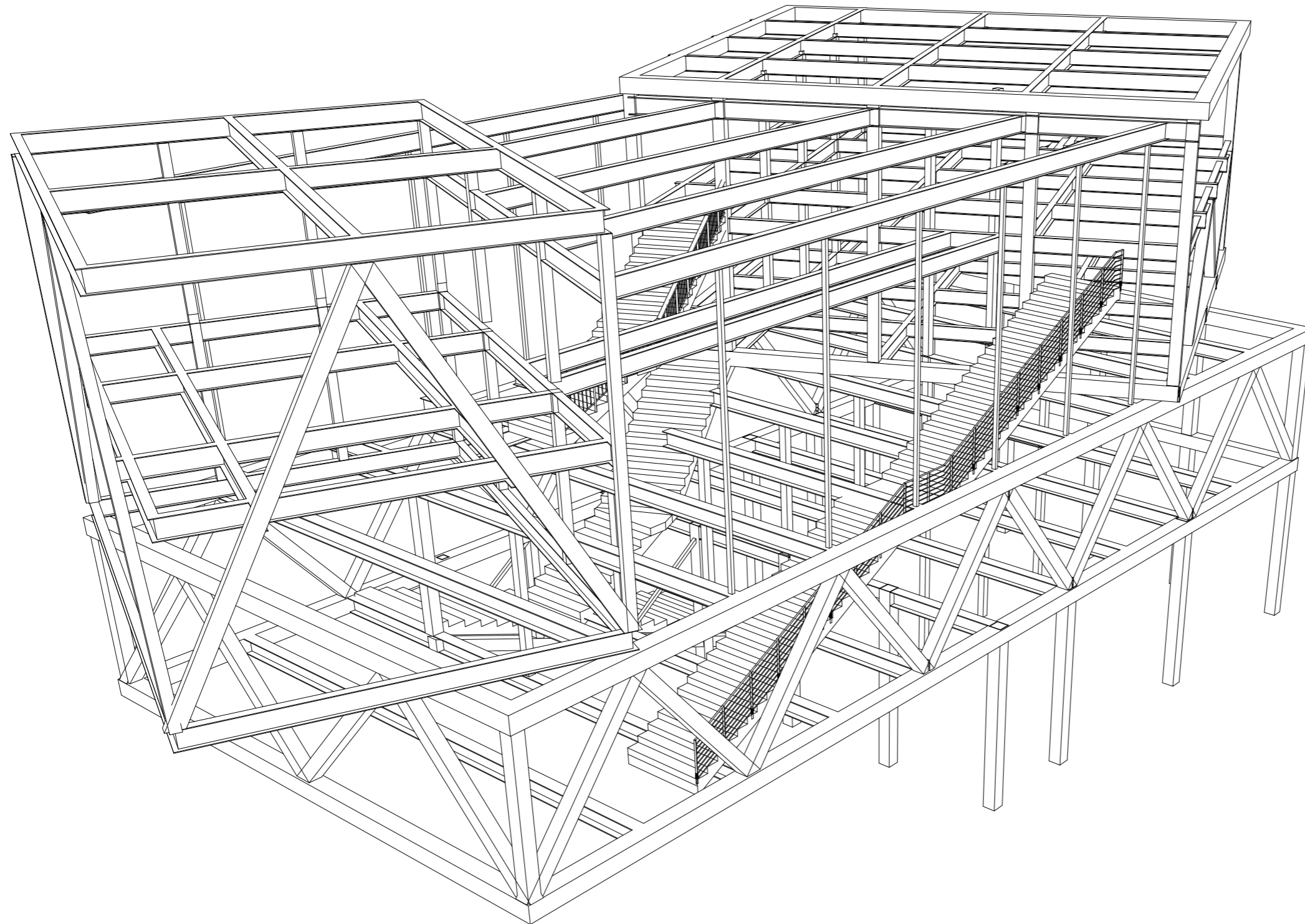


MAS (Museum aan de Stroom), Antwerp
Neutelings Riedijk Architects





The structure



The location of the project influenced also the construction process of the building.

The new embassy will rise near to the Bjørvika coast. This facilitates the transportation on site of the building elements through shipping.

For this reason except from the foundations (including the podium) the building can be prefabricated, transported and assembled on site.

The use of prefabricated elements is favourable because it reduces the presence of labour on the construction site, the time and costs of construction. Moreover it reduces the environmental impact, the energy necessary during the construction process and it makes easier during the demolition process to disassemble and reuse the construction elements at the end of the life cycle of the building.

The building has been designed entirely with a steel structure.

The two main volumes of the embassy, and especially the volume of the offices extrude from underlying structure using huge cantilevers.

Especially on the offices volume and in the representative volume of the embassy trusses run behind the facade and assume a dominant role from the outside characterising the aesthetic of the building.

The sustainable strategy

The promenade

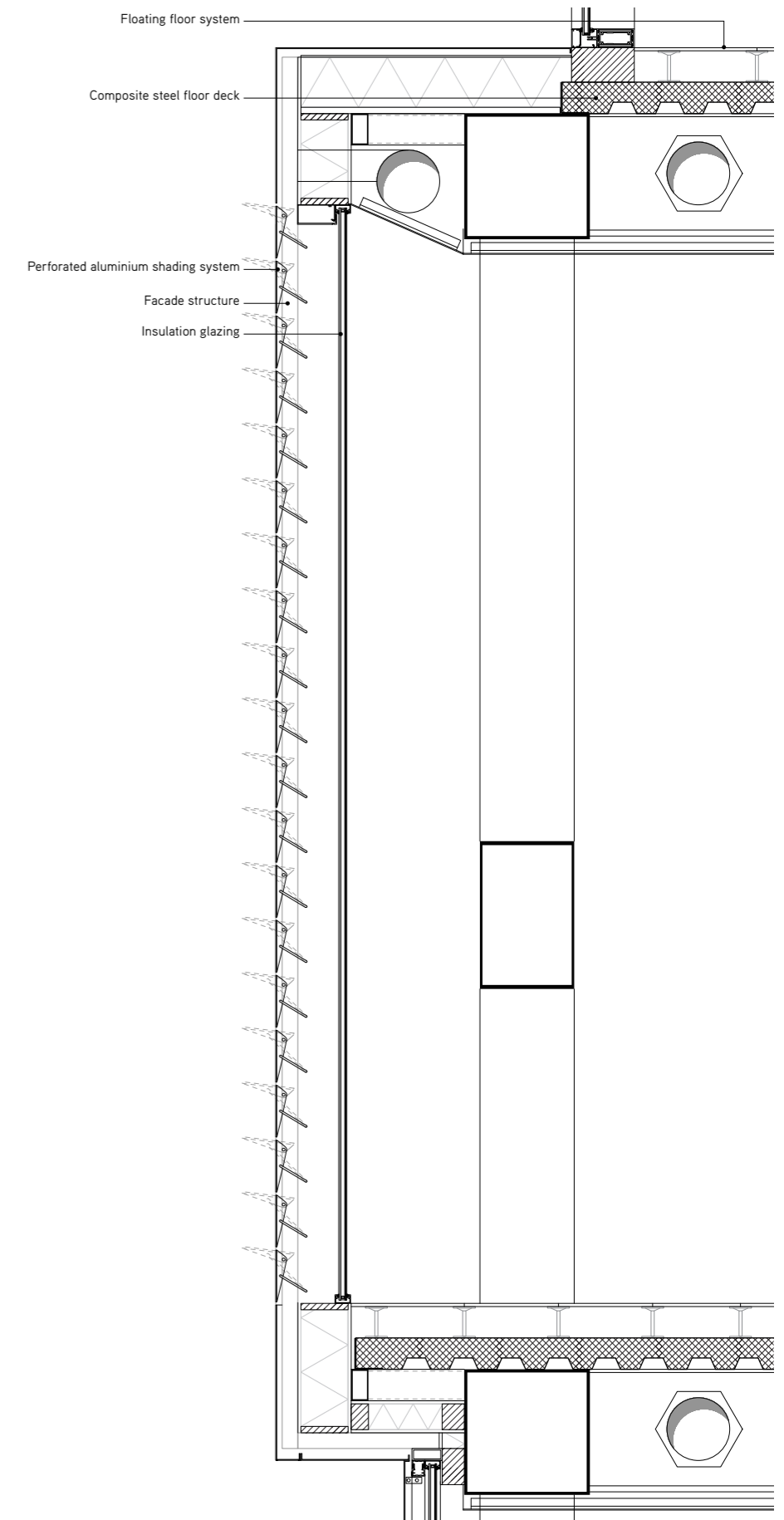
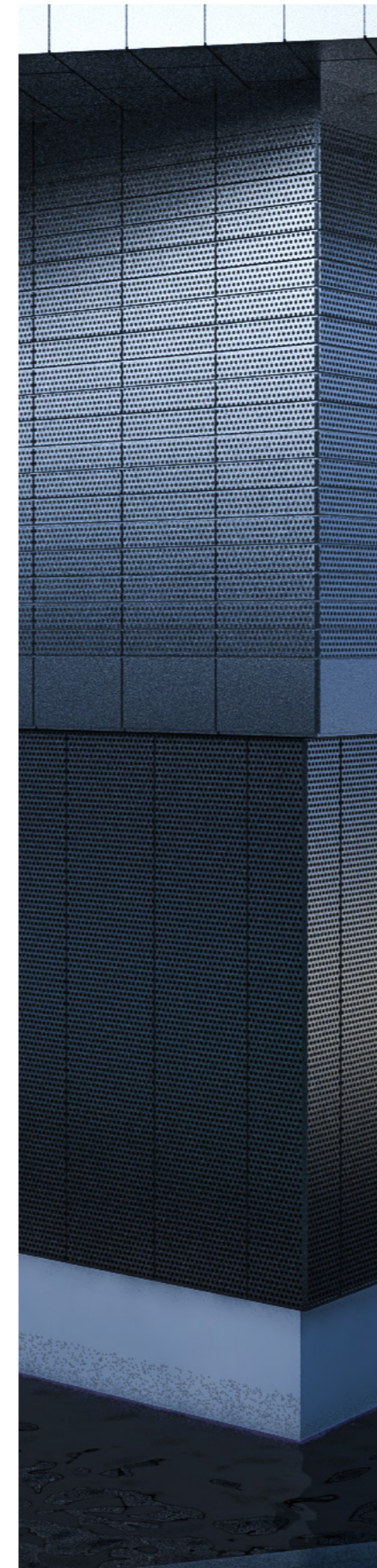
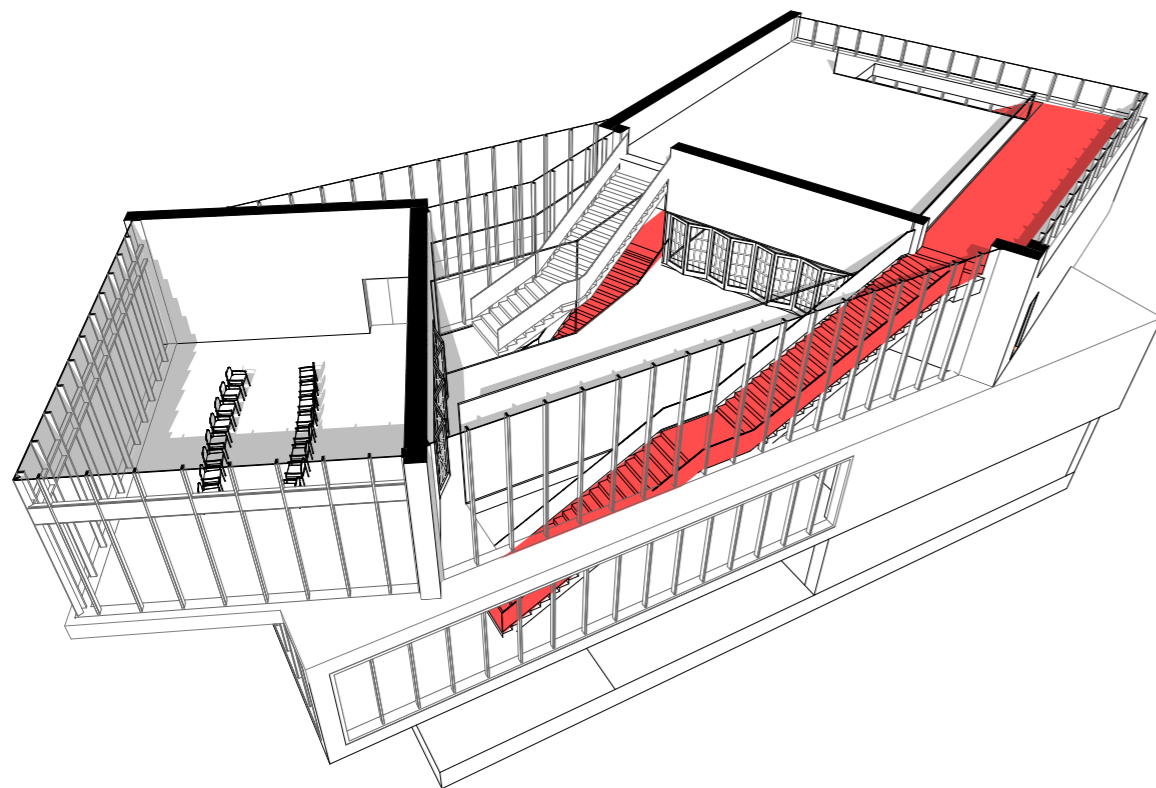
The first step to make the building sustainable has been made by twisting the volumes of the building and emphasizing the South exposition. The other sustainable strategy has been made through the organization of the spaces. The promenade which circulates along the facade becomes a transition zone which requires a lower thermal comfort than the office spaces behind.

The facade

The exterior of the building must accomplish different tasks. In addition to represent the dialectic contrast between the openness of the public function and the closeness of the office spaces, it must be a sustainable facade. Starting from the logic to create a prefabricated facade I decided to use a curtain wall system.

The public space and the promenade will be totally transparent through a completely glazed facade. For the office spaces two typologies of panels have been designed. These two typologies will have the same appearance on the outside in order to give continuity to the facade. They are made from perforated aluminium panels. The metallic elements will be semi-reflective. In this way the facade will blend with the environment catching the atmosphere and giving the impression of lightness.

In the first typology the metallic panels are fixed and behind them a highly insulated wall panel is placed. In the second typology a window stands behind the metallic panel. Even if the perforation already allows the entrance of natural light, the metallic panels of the second typology are a movable shading system which can rotate to ensure a good visual comfort.



The facade has been panellized through different modules. The first main subdivision has been made so that the module follows the structure behind.

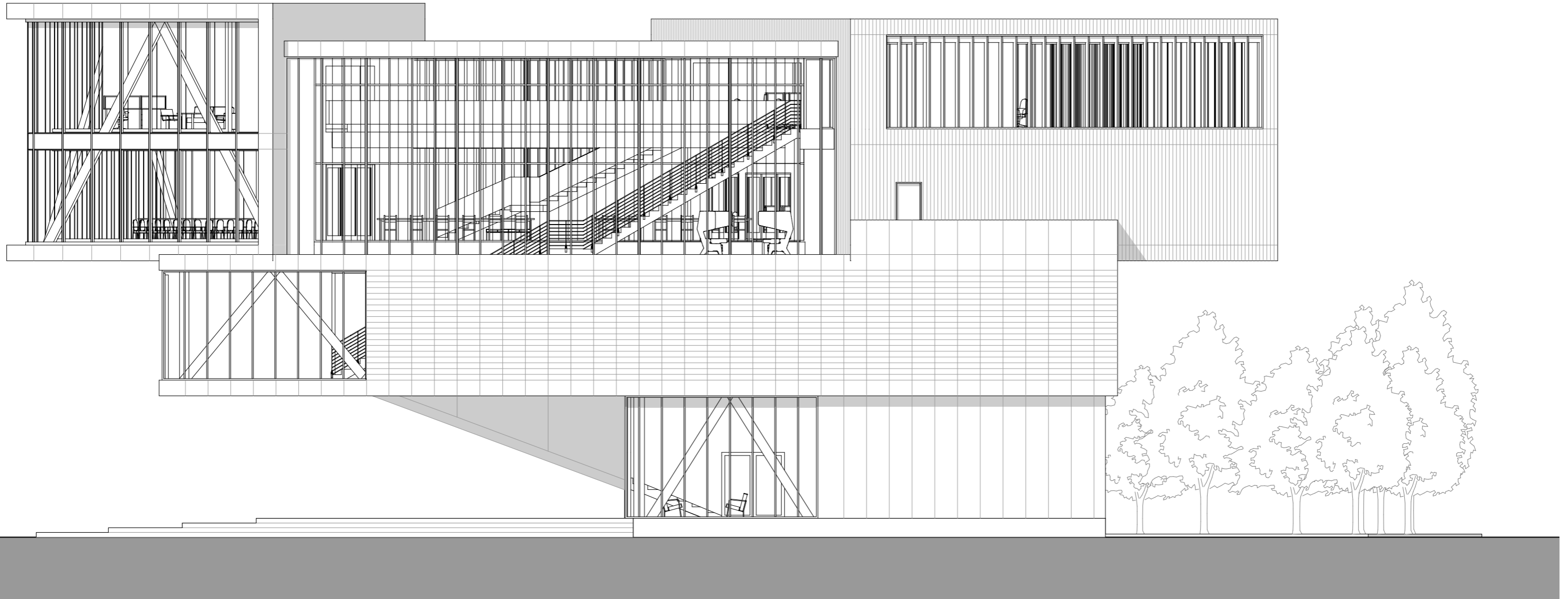
In addition the module has been further subdivided in order to differentiate the three general spaces: each module makes a special perception of the view.

Effectively the panels of the consulate on ground floor have almost the same rhythm of the steps of a walking person (70x390 cm).

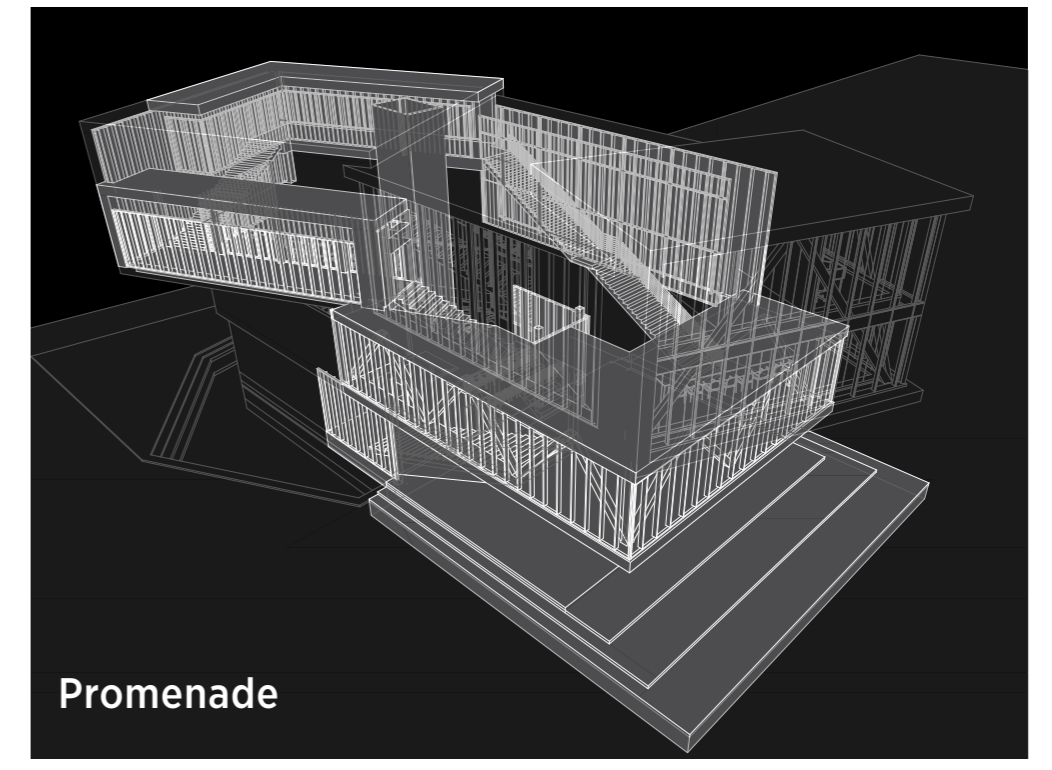
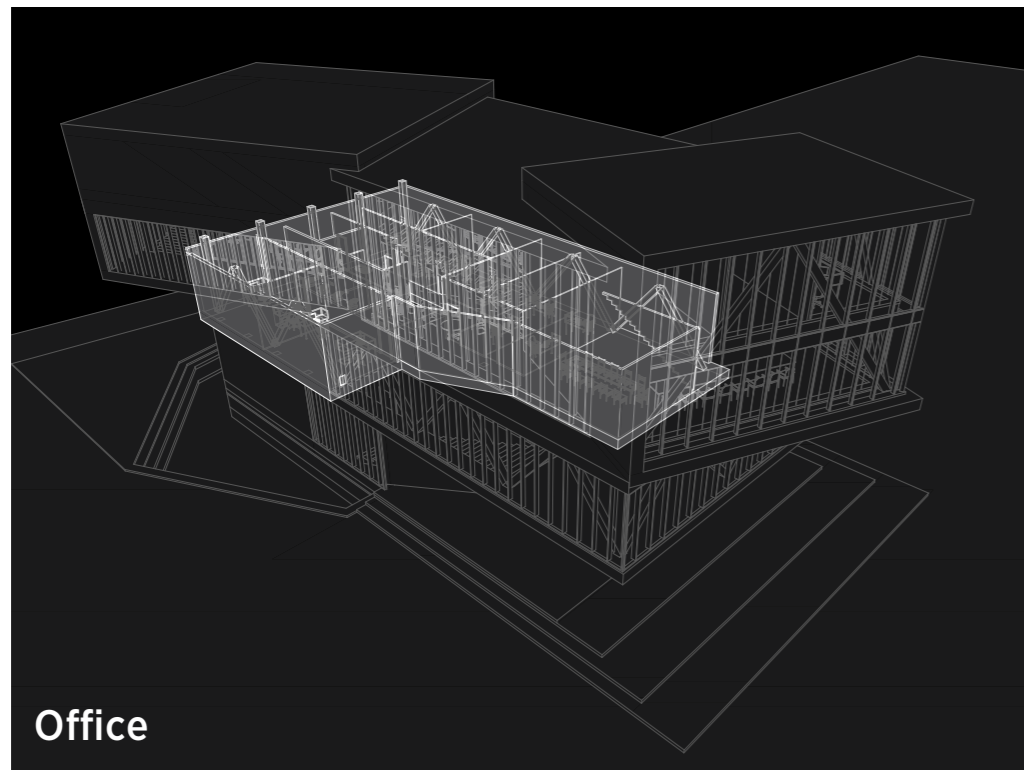
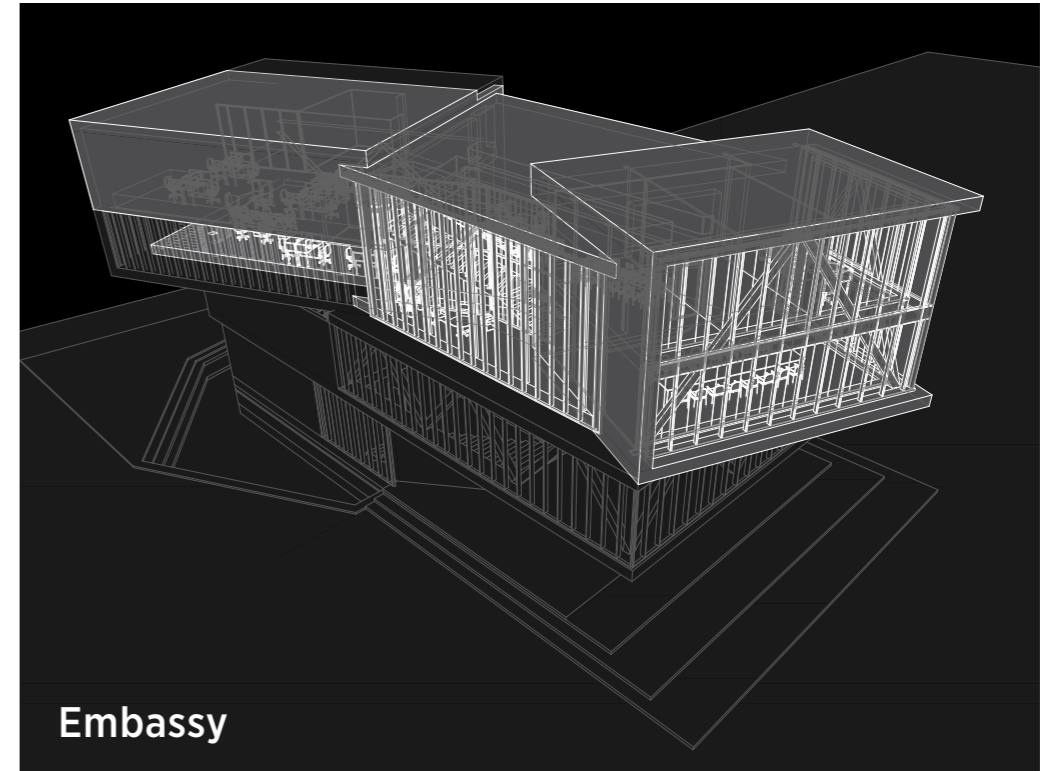
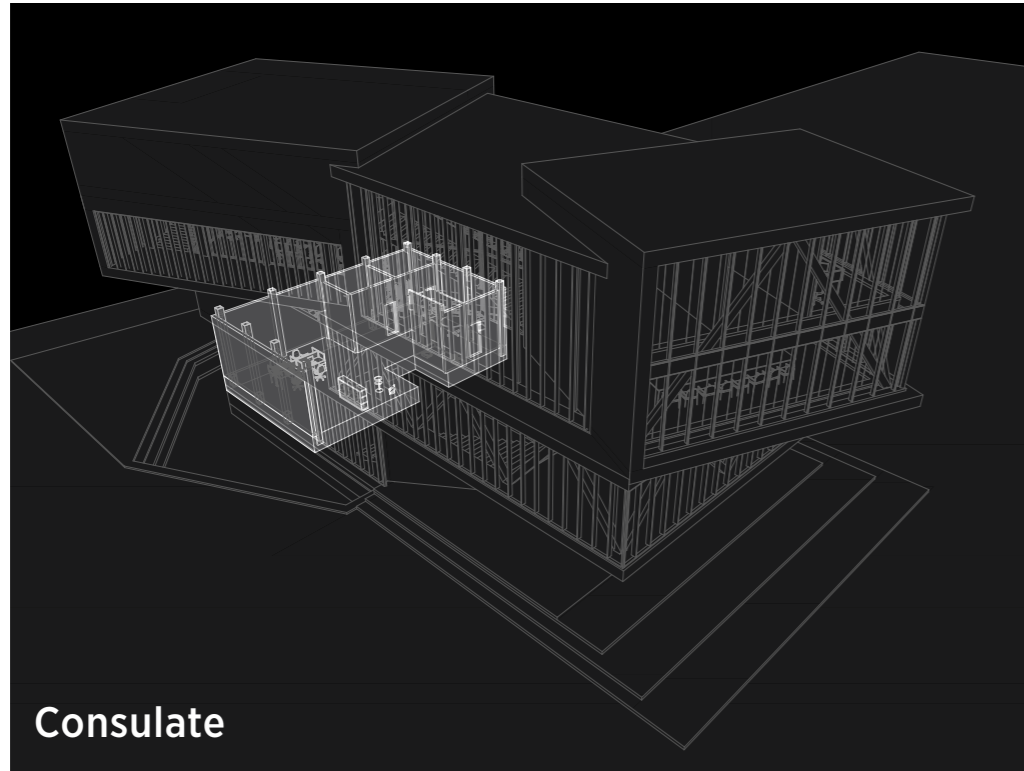
The office space panels have been further subdivided on their height making a strong horizontal mark (18x70 cm). In this way it emphasizes the extrusion of the

cantilever and gives the perception of speed.

The embassy building is the highest volume on top of the others. In this case the panels have been divided in high and narrow elements (10x360 cm) to emphasize the verticality of the volume.



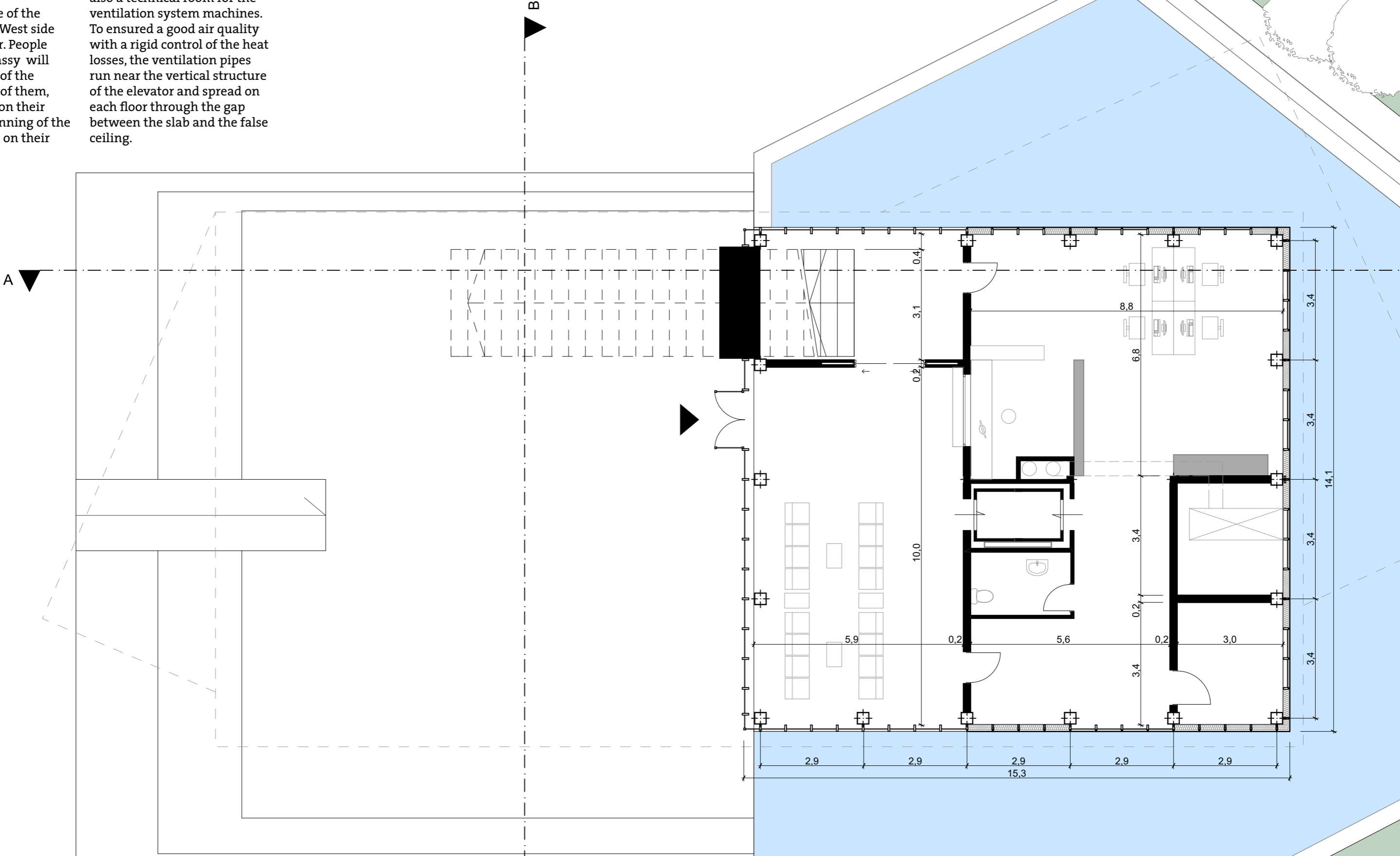
The interior layout of the embassy



Ground floor

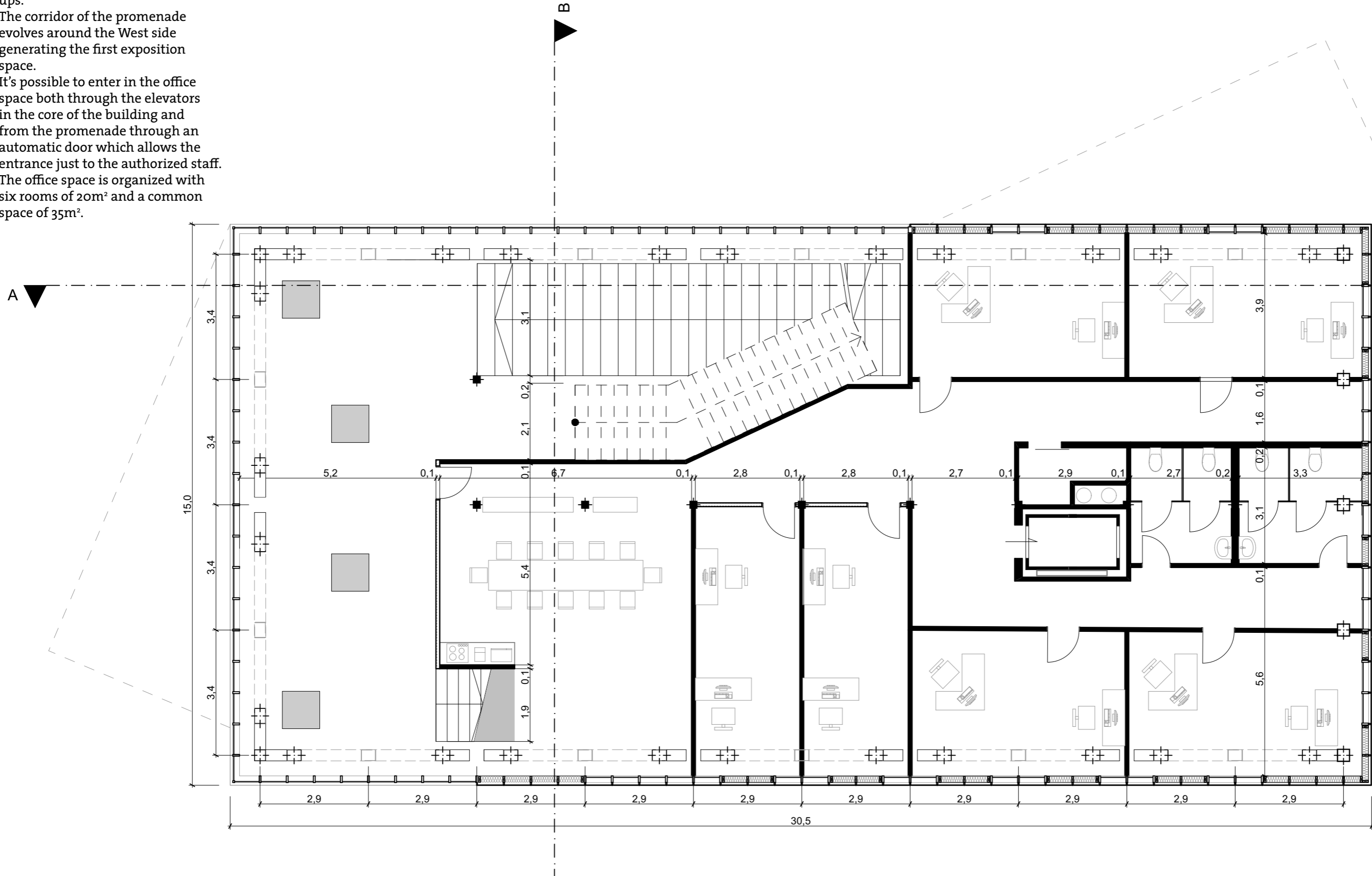
As previously mentioned the embassy has been divided into volumes which hold specific functions. The main entrance of the building is on the West side of the ground floor. People entering the embassy will find the info-desk of the consulate in front of them, the waiting room on their right and the beginning of the public promenade on their left.

The East side of the ground-floor is the consulate working space. On this floor there is also a technical room for the ventilation system machines. To ensure a good air quality with a rigid control of the heat losses, the ventilation pipes run near the vertical structure of the elevator and spread on each floor through the gap between the slab and the false ceiling.



First floor

The first floor is the space for start-ups.
 The corridor of the promenade evolves around the West side generating the first exposition space.
 It's possible to enter in the office space both through the elevators in the core of the building and from the promenade through an automatic door which allows the entrance just to the authorized staff.
 The office space is organized with six rooms of 20m² and a common space of 35m².

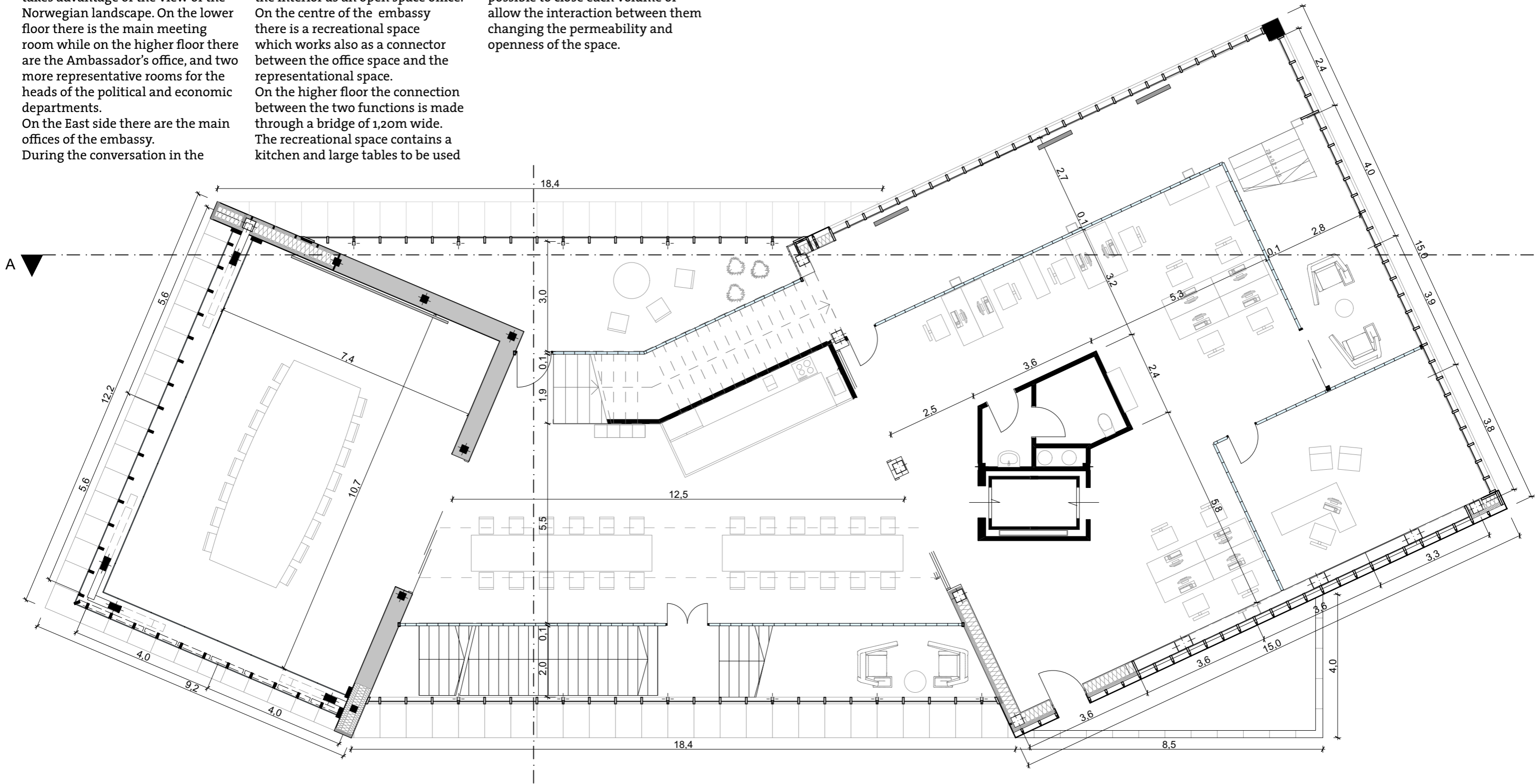


The embassy office

The embassy office is on the last two floors of the building. The space has been organised in 3 main functions. The representative spaces are on the West side of the building which takes advantage of the view of the Norwegian landscape. On the lower floor there is the main meeting room while on the higher floor there are the Ambassador's office, and two more representative rooms for the heads of the political and economic departments. On the East side there are the main offices of the embassy. During the conversation in the

embassy, the necessity to have a more flexible office was required in order to adapt the layout on different needs. For this reason I decided to organize the interior as an open space office. On the centre of the embassy there is a recreational space which works also as a connector between the office space and the representational space. On the higher floor the connection between the two functions is made through a bridge of 1,20m wide. The recreational space contains a kitchen and large tables to be used

both by workers during their break and for receptions during events. Another feature which makes these volumes more flexible are the huge sliding doors. Through them it's possible to close each volume or allow the interaction between them changing the permeability and openness of the space.



It was necessary to put identity into spatial forms also in the embassy interiors.

The huge sliding doors already provide a reference to the dialectic conflict between openness and closeness.

On the South of the embassy office, a 6m high translucent insulated wall, metaphor of the Dutch openness, separates the promenade from the recreational space providing a great amount of light. In contrast to the cold metallic facade of the exterior, the interior has a warm and comfortable environment.

A source of inspiration has been the

interior designs of Jurgen Bey.

One of the particular features of Bey's works is to create pieces of furniture which hold different tasks in once.

The embassy is provided of small intimate areas where it is possible to have informal and confidential talks.

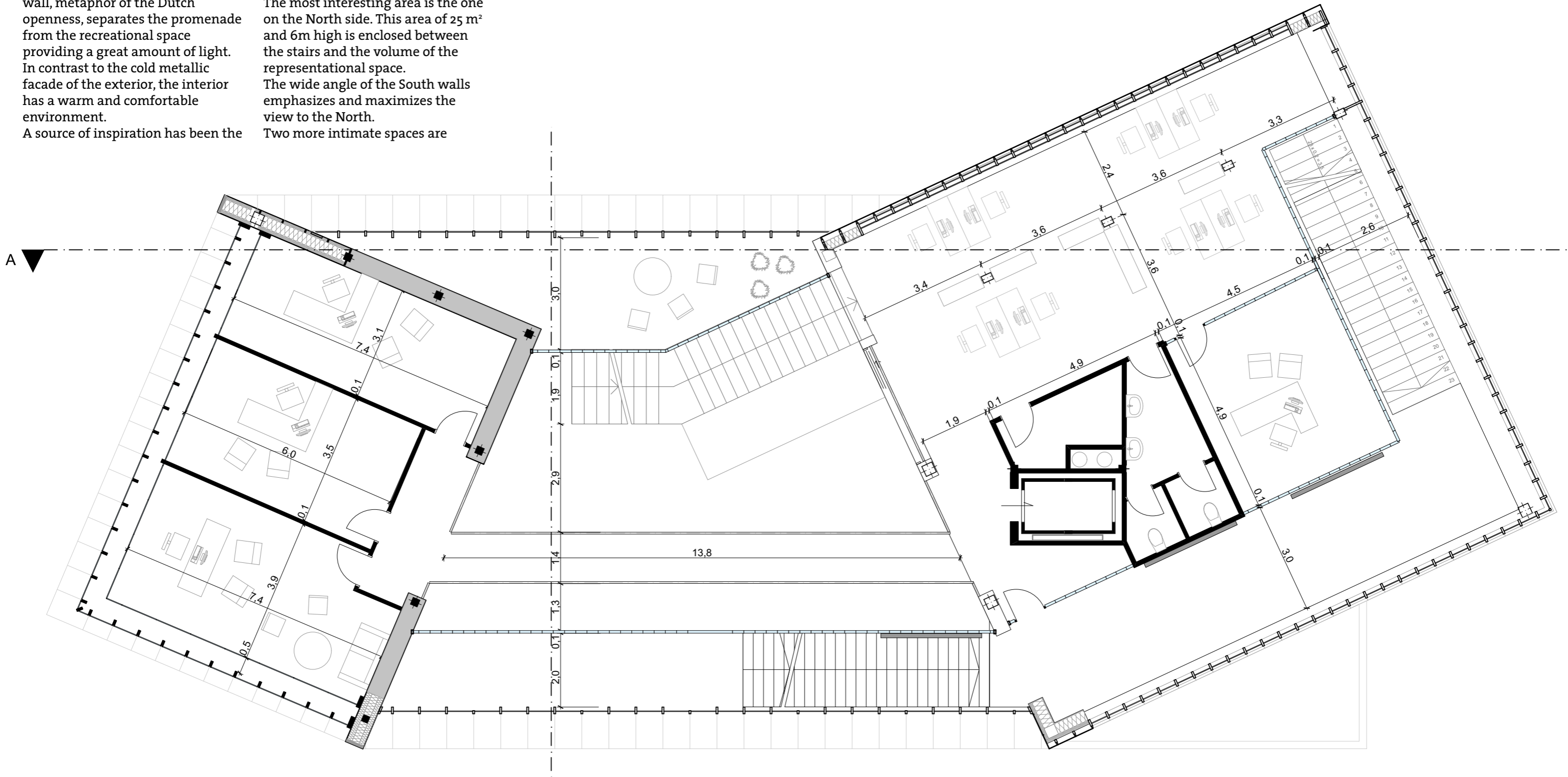
The most interesting area is the one on the North side. This area of 25 m² and 6m high is enclosed between the stairs and the volume of the representational space.

The wide angle of the South walls emphasizes and maximizes the view to the North.

Two more intimate spaces are

organised on the East side in the office space and on the South side in the recreational space.

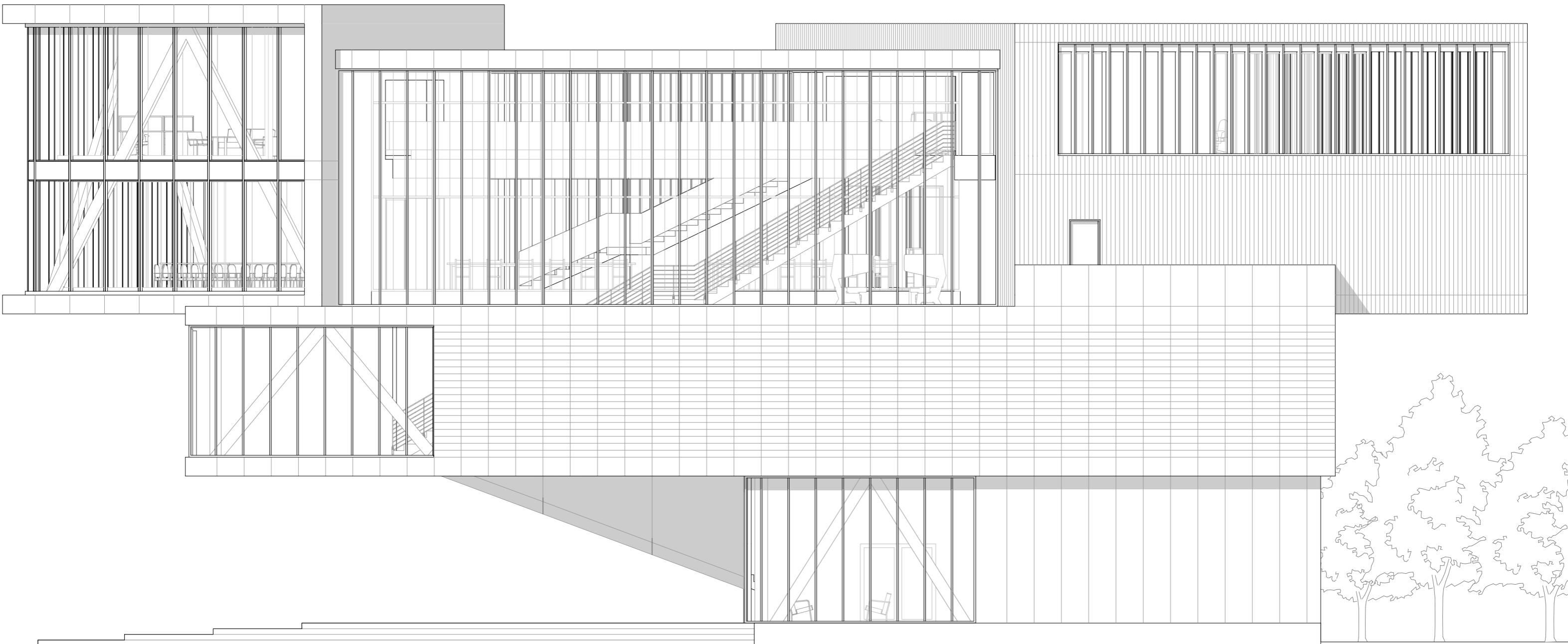
In these small areas the exaggerated wings of the Ear chairs, designed by Jurgen Bey, provide surprisingly intimate chat spaces without the need of partition walls.



Elevations & sections

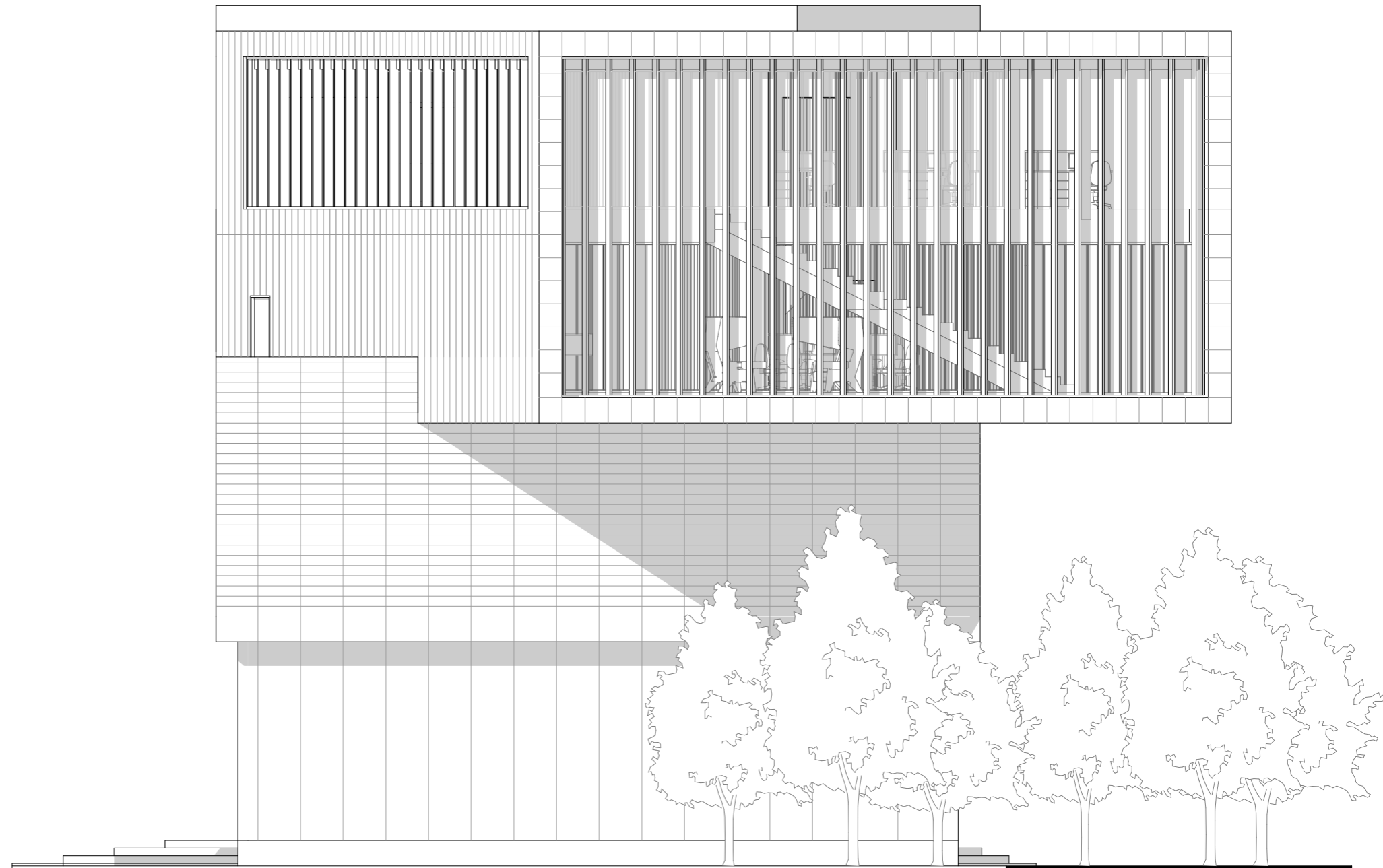
South elevation

scale 1:100



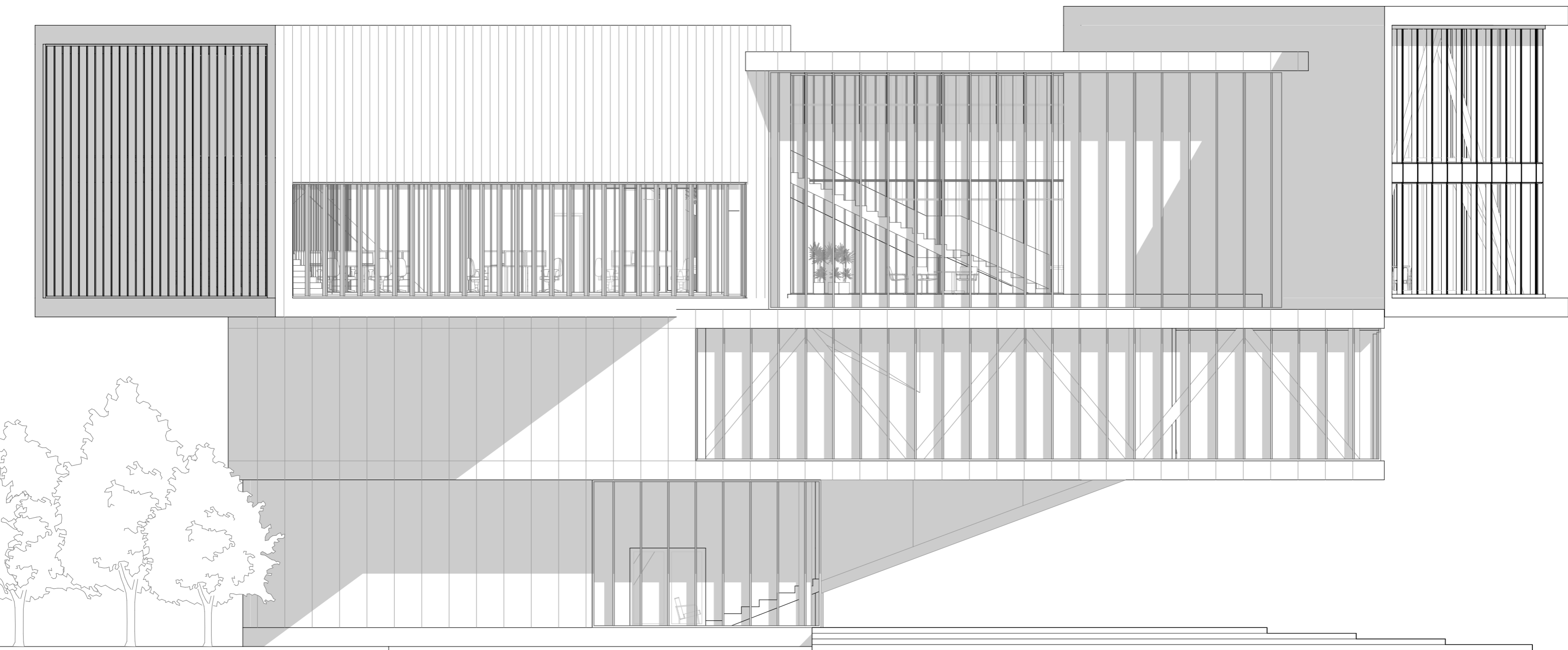
East elevation

scale 1:100



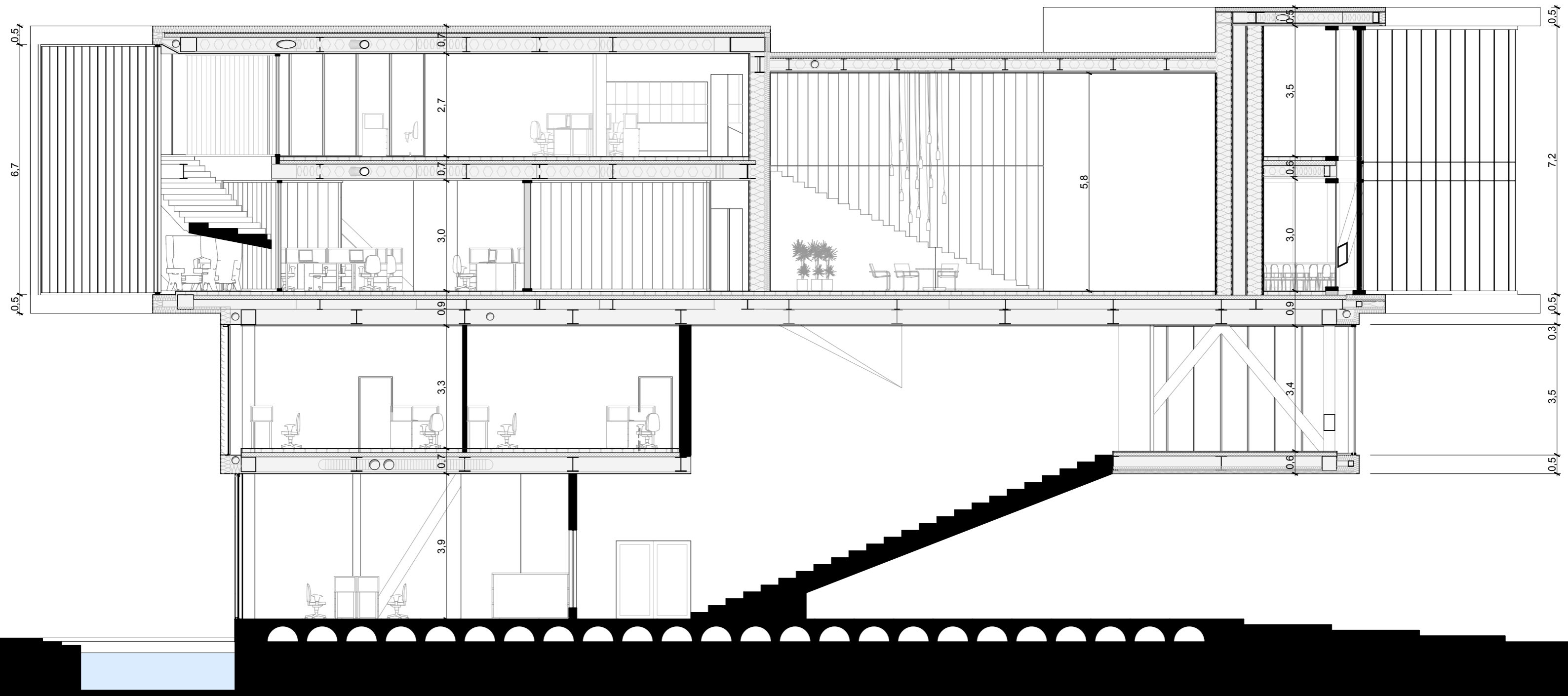
North elevation

scale 1:100



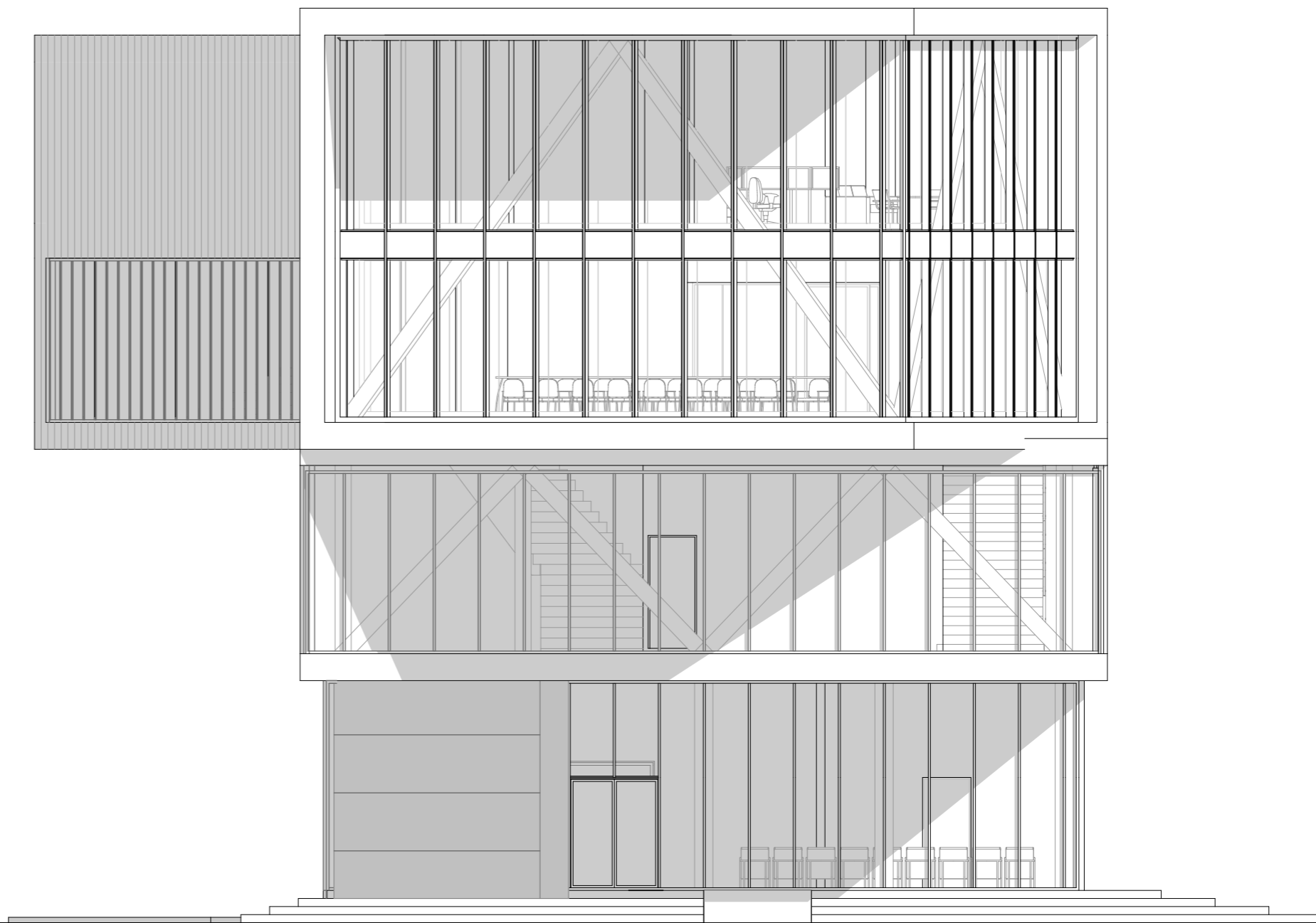
Longitudinal section

A-A' scale 1:100



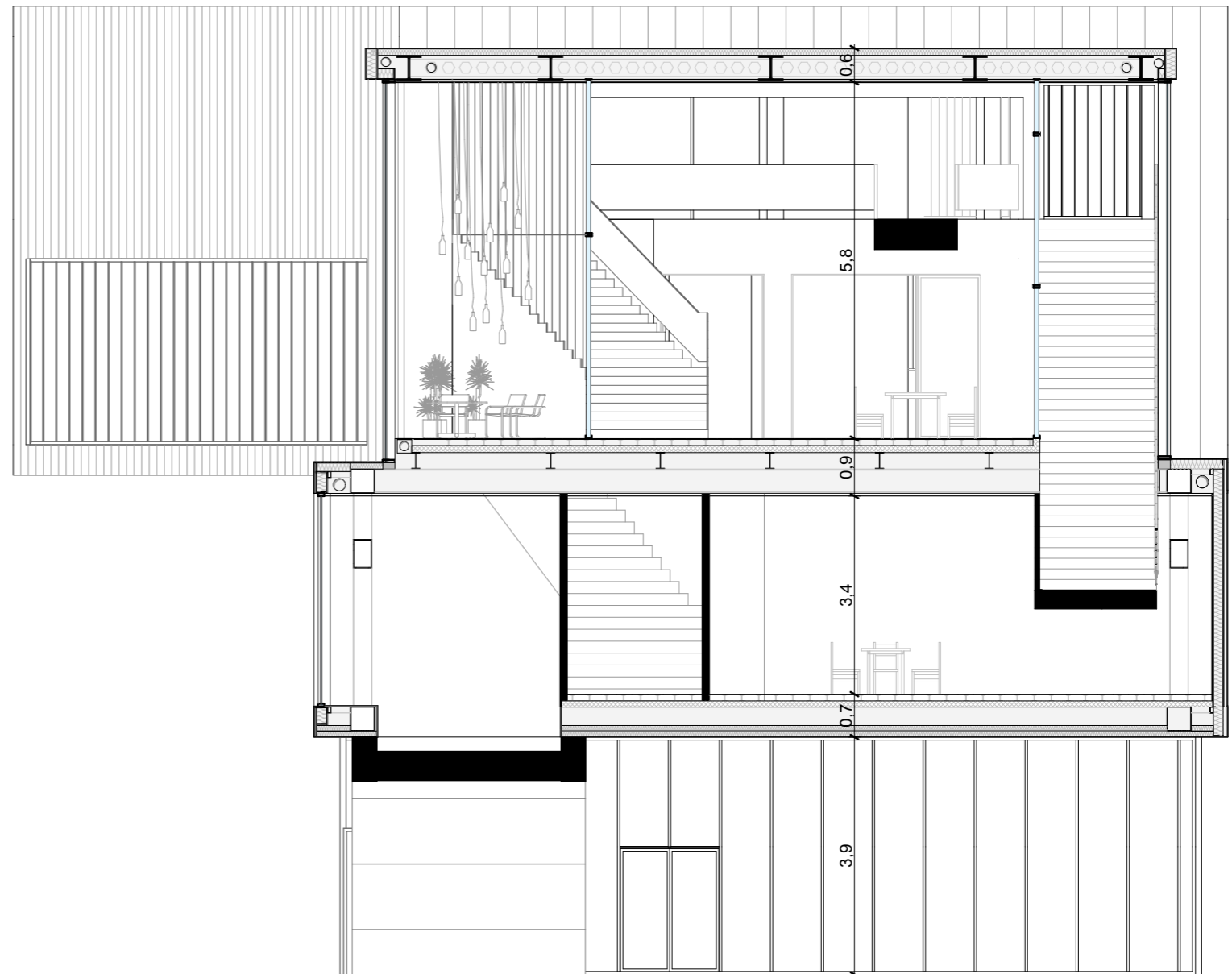
West elevation

scale 1:100



Cross section

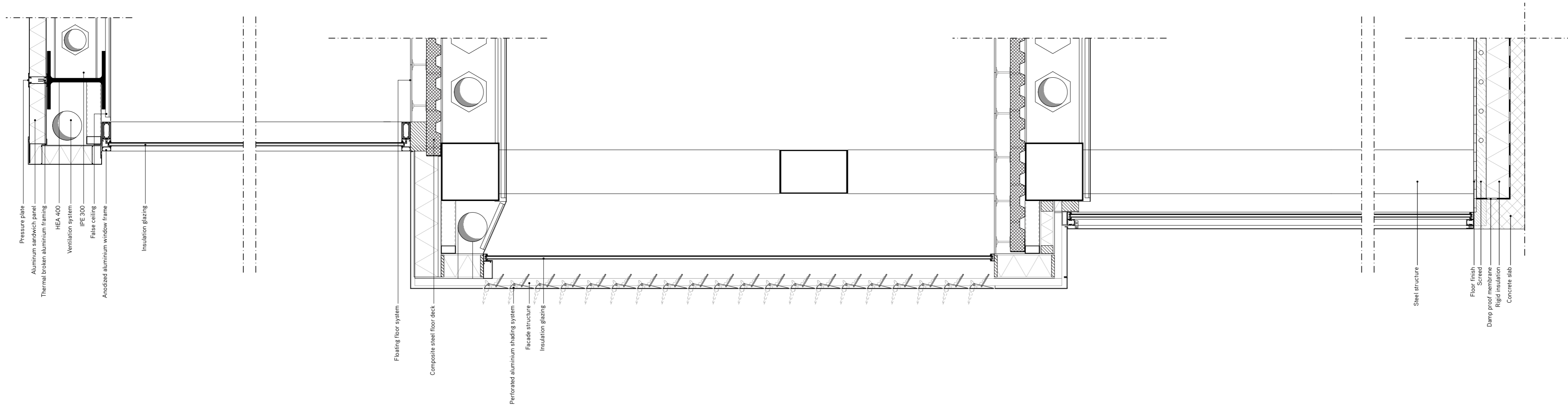
B-B' scale 1:100



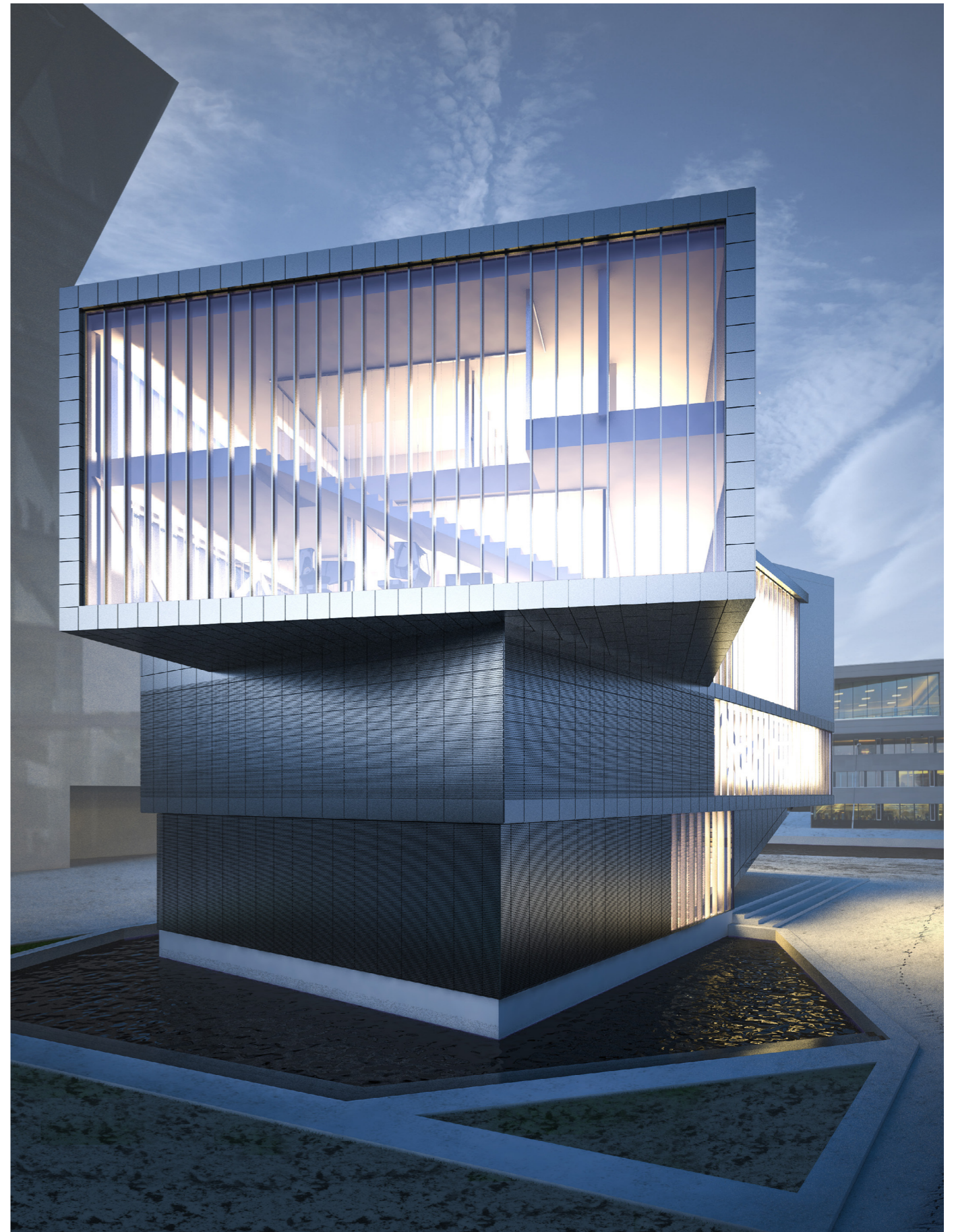
Detail

West elevation

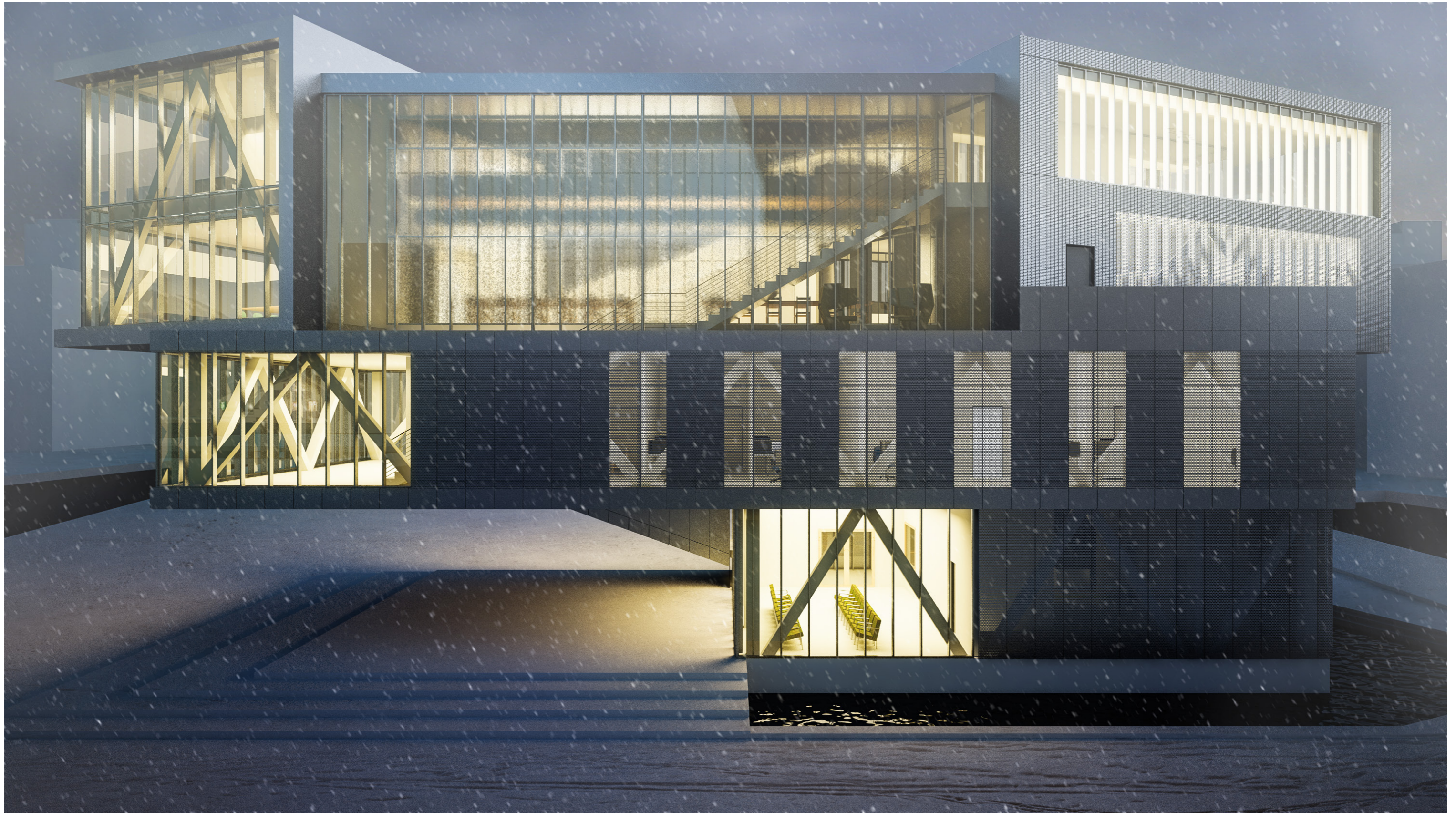
scale 1:20

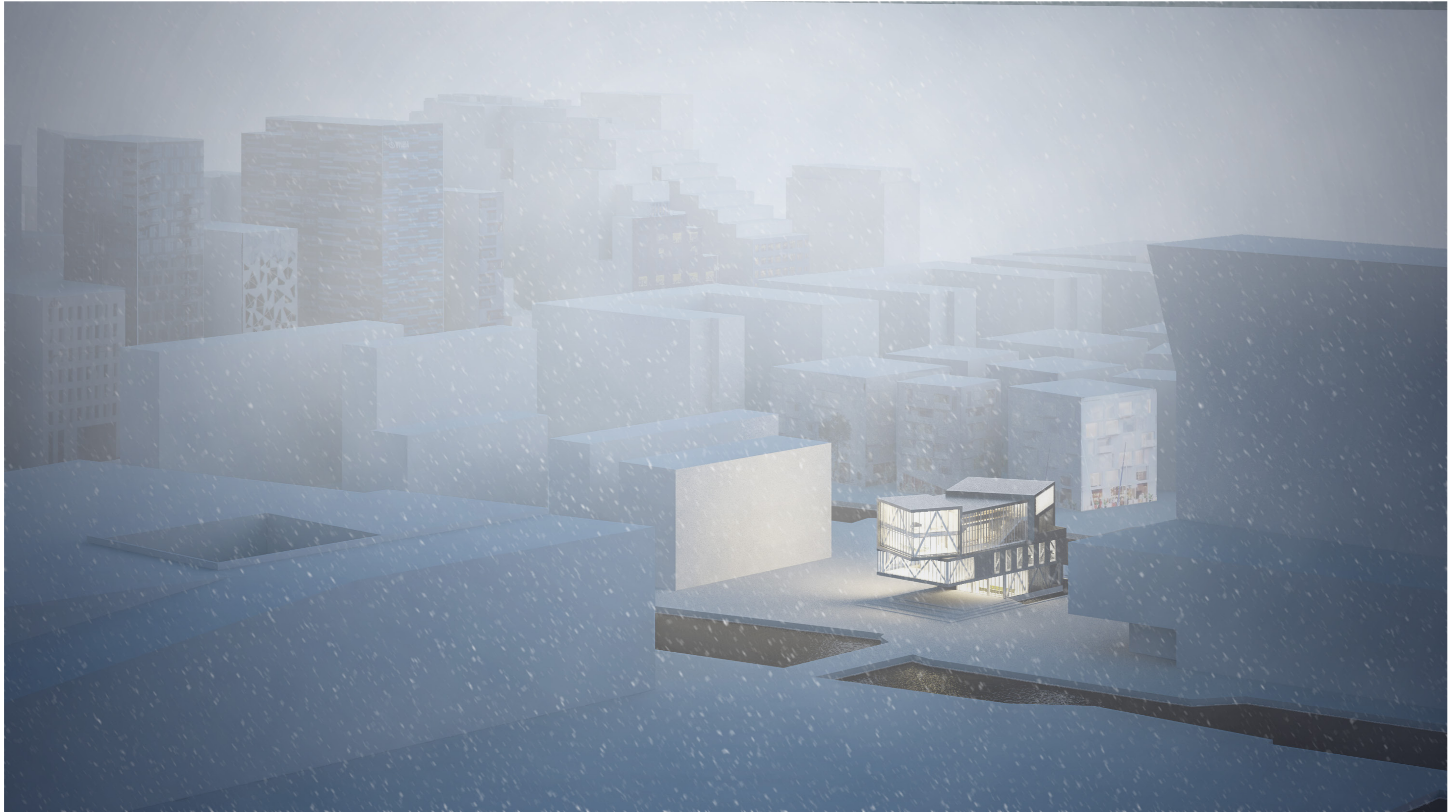


Renders









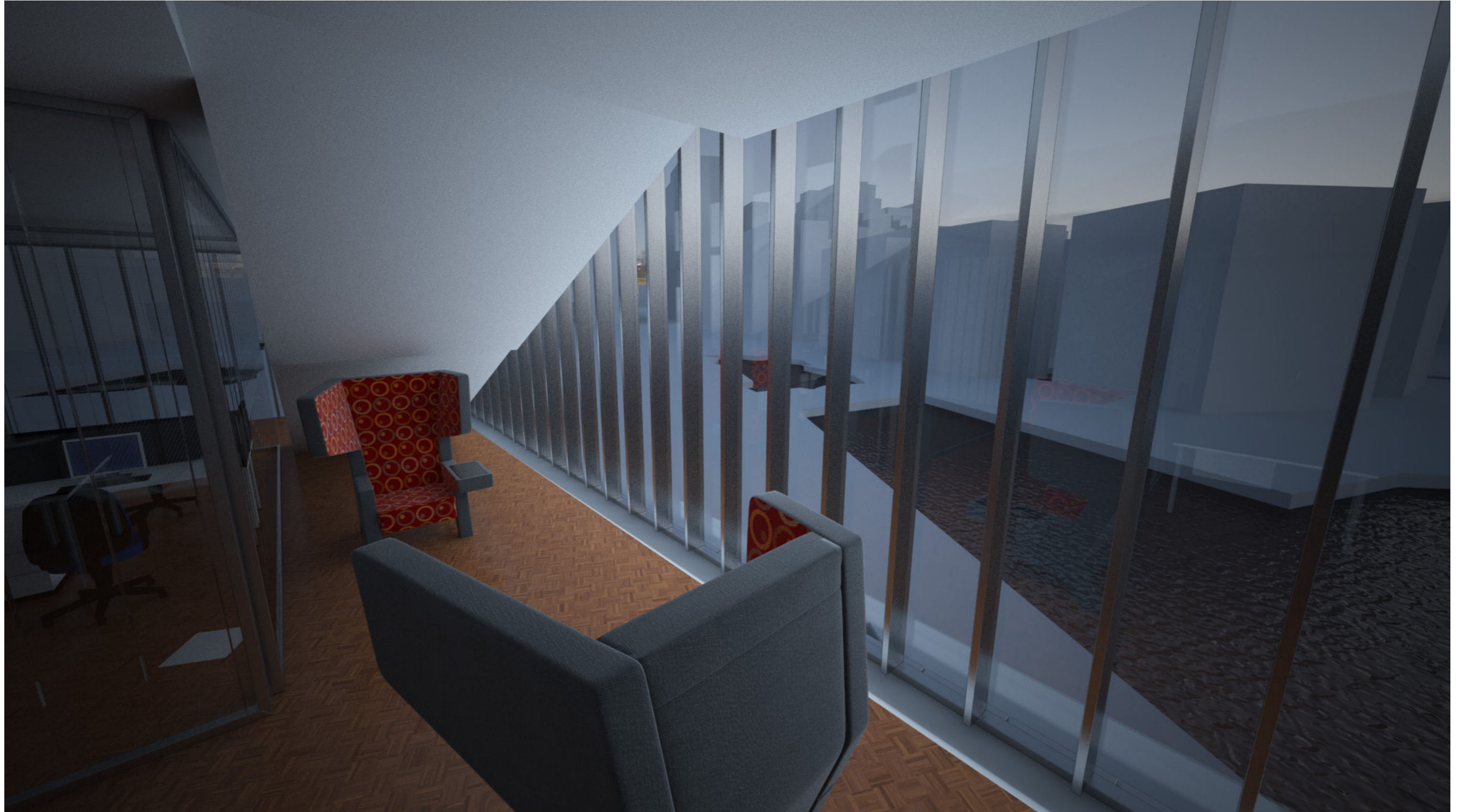












Conclusions

An embassy which could really represent the Dutch identity and culture has been the aim for this project. The main leading question during this project has been: “How is it possible to design an embassy with a strong public character?”

Because of the great economic interest of the Netherlands in Oslo, it was necessary to design an embassy that promotes the Dutch activities expressing the hospitality and openness of the Dutch.

Nevertheless the embassy needs to be “closed” and to answer security requirements. As a consequence the necessities of visibility and expression of national identity are in strong contrast with the necessities of the embassy itself.

The result of the design process is an innovative embassy, where a public promenade inside the building shows the Dutch culture through an exposition space that moves around the embassy along the corridors and stairs which connect the different floors of the building. The promenade runs around the facade creating a strong relationship between the exposition and the views outside.

I think that in the social and political context of Norway the research question has led to a strong transformation of this building typology, especially on its concept.

During the design process, the research question has been the premise to architecturally express a contrast between openness and closeness. This concept is revealed in an explicit way on the layout both of the building functions and facade.

Moreover this contrast has further implicit allusions in the office space of the embassy through huge sliding doors which change the permeability and openness of the space and through the translucent walls that separate the promenade from the embassy office.

It's evident that this project must be related with the political and social characteristics of the country where it is made and it can't be interpreted as the ideal strategy for making Dutch embassies all over the world: as a matter of fact the embassy can be seen as a hybrid building which adapts the expression of its national identity according to the interests of both nations.

The talk in the embassy

Astrid Jansen: I want to present a bit of the actual embassy and give some information of the building itself.

The district where the embassy is located now has been built during 1860s and the intention was to create a new suburb for the new middle class. The houses have gardens surrounding the building. The building of the embassy has been built in 1868 and the first living here was the architect who designed the building: Andreas Friedrich Wilhelm von Hanno. Many architects who designed this district had German origins because of the architectural style which was decided during the urban plan. All buildings in this area in fact are in a palladian style which was influencing architectural style of Northern Europe in that period. In 1951 the building has been owned by the Dutch states and became the Dutch embassy. In 1952 the Dutch state bought also a residence which is used by the ambassador for living but also as a representative place for dinners, receptions and meetings.

Studio member: Is the representative place used also by other organizations or just from the embassy?

A.J.: Yes, that's a new development that we've done also with other Scandinavian countries that want to show that we are trade minded so we host companies related with the Dutch trade and we invite them to use the residence. So the residence can be used as a symbol by the company to be attached to the Netherlands.

S: Is it possible to combine the residential building into the embassy?

A.J.: Yes, it is very possible, there are other embassies also in Oslo that combine office and residential in one building.

S: Is it a choice of the ambassador to live or not in the embassy?

A.J.: The ambassador can influence this choice but the final choice is also related to financial reasons. But through the knowledge that we have on how Norwegians are we can use it to know how would be more appropriate to use the residence in this country. That of course happens in every country with cultural differences.

S: Is the residence used just for business purposes?

A.J.: Not only, also for meetings with other ambassadors, or if you have meetings with political tasks.

S: But for business purposes do they go to the residence or they can come to the embassy also?

A.J.: They can come also in the embassy. I'm working in the trade department for example, and if someone would like to talk to me about business opportunities in Norway then I'll just see them here in the meeting room or in my office depending on how many they are. But for big events with food or drinking involved we use the residence.

S: Do you have contact with the other embassies in the neighbourhood?

A.J.: We have meetings with my trade colleagues and we try to work together or we try to learn from each other through the experience

of people that have been here for many years. The ambassador has regular meetings with all ambassadors for example and they want to know and tell about things that are changing in politics.

S: So having a neighbourhood of embassies, does it change your work or not.

A.J.: Usually ambassadors have their own driver so it's not a problem between embassies to reach each other and find contacts, but it's now very convenient if you are close to the ministry of foreign affairs for example.

S: Do foreign affair have personal contacts and which type of meetings do you have?

A.J.: Most of the time there are seminars being organized, where Norway try to show to the world through the embassies how they think about a theme like sustainability, or changing of regulations. But it's also a bit Norwegian that they are quite functional as Dutch as well, so meetings happen just if we need to talk about something. In other places there are meetings or lunch with ambassadors just to keep a good relationship.

S: Another question about people working in the embassy. Do you need to interact a lot with each other or do you do a lot of work on your computer.

A.J.: This is a small office and each one of us has his little "shop", so I'm responsible for economics, culture and communication, and there are people responsible for other tasks. But in a bigger embassy you have more people dealing with specific

trades, and then you will need more interaction. On the other side people have to do projects so sometimes it's necessary to work in teams.

S: Do you think that it is relevant to promote the Dutch culture through the embassy. Is there a big cultural difference between Norway and the Netherlands and do you think that it's important to show it?

A.J.: There is a lot of similarities in culture between Norway and the Netherlands so it would be interesting but it's not the first issue. So it would be nice to promote the Dutch trade first and then the culture.

S: Are there people working home?

A.J.: It is possible because we have the equipments but it's not happening a lot in this embassy.

S: What do you think about sharing the embassy building with other nations? Do you think it would help?

A.J.: We've been thinking about it. Before there were 20 people working here, and every space was used, and now we are just 10 so we thought to invite other embassies but then there are so many bureaucratic layers involved that it became too complicated.

S: What's the most important interaction with Norway?

A.J.: There is a lot of trade going on most of all for the maritime industry which goes on since the golden age, and Rotterdam was the distribution centre of goods. I work with a lot of Dutch companies that would like to establish in Norway, mostly small and medium businesses.

S: If you would have some rooms left, could you provide them to young start-ups?

A.J.: That's what is happening in the Greek embassy, they are not providing space in the embassy itself but they are involved in starting Greek industries to help the economy. So it would be interesting to have space that start-ups can use as temporary office to begin the business in Norway.

S: Do you have in the office local workers?

A.J.: Yes

S: What's your personal feeling of this embassy.

A.J.: It fits in this environment and it gives a good feeling for an embassy but at the same time it is very old fashion most in the interiors. I like the elegance of the exteriors because it's in total harmony with the surroundings but it doesn't represent what we want to tell of the Netherlands.

S: What do you think are the functional requirements for a new embassy?

A.J.: We need most of all flexibility of the space because 20 years ago we had 20 persons working in the embassy, now 10 and a flexible office space would be very useful to reorganise and maximise the use of the building.

S: I would like to talk about the security measurements in the embassy and the residence.

A.J.: I would like to invite my colleague **Harry de Wit** to talk about security and more about the diplomatic part, like why are we here for example and why do we have a mission.

Harry de Wit: I'll start telling you something about the embassy itself: we consider ourselves as a satellite of the ministry of foreign affairs but not only, we are representing also

the parliament. We concentrate ourselves in this embassy in helping Dutch enterprises to export goods to Norway first of all and importing goods most related with energy issues (oil and gas). We can also deal with the state but our relationship with the state now is really good. So most of all our task is to help small and medium companies to start their enterprise. Of course the other main task is to make ourselves visible. We want to attract people and create the possibilities to meet each other. We are in the business of compelling people. The most of the companies here in Norway are big. Here we analyse on what direction the energy policy of Norway is going. What is also important is the defence department which is cooperating with the Norwegian defence. The other important task is to show of being here, show our flag, and also see what they are doing here about social and political aspects. We are a facility for Dutch people. First of all through giving passports but also assisting Dutch people who have serious problems in Norway. If we look at the social aspect Norway is a very traditional and conservative country. It also influences our relationship with them. Talking about security: we are representing a country and that's why we need security outside. We are visible and we want to be visible and the most visible person in the embassy is the ambassador. Is there a danger of attacks? I don't think so in Norway. The security outside is just to prevent possible risks. The guards are not constantly in the embassy but they come just when they are alarmed. Unlike other countries thanks to the well structured Norwegian security we don't need special security in our building.

S: If the embassy would be relocated, do you think that it would be better to have a lot of visibility or do you prefer to have more privacy?

H.W.: It depends, but I would like to have more visibility because this is what an embassy is for. So the building should have exposure. In other countries probably you don't want to be that visible.

S: From the embassy point of view what are the strongest features of the Dutch identity to promote in Norway

H.W.: I think that it is our openness, our willingness to get in contact with persons and express our views, which sometimes it can be considered rude but that for mostly is seen to be positive because it shows our willingness to trade and to act in a direct way. The other feature which is relevant is the innovativeness

S: The open and "opportunistic" Dutch mindset would suggest that you could earn money through the embassy is it something that can be taken into consideration for the design of a new embassy?

H.W. It is interesting but it must be related with our mission here, like in the case of the Greek embassy which rents offices for start-ups. But being an embassy is really much creating a positive image of our country.

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