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A Regeneration Strategy for Prizren`s Former Railway Area

Politecnico di Torino
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ARE YOU STILL HERE?

A Regeneration Strategy for Prizren`s Former Railway Area

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abstract

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This thesis investigates the regeneration of the former railway area in Prizren, a transport-industrial area that has remained physically present while losing its original function. Located in the western part of the city, the former railway area is surrounded by ongoing residential and commercial development. While its surroundings are changing through parcel-based investment, the railway land has remained unresolved, resulting in a fragmented condition characterized by fenced land, informal parking, unmanaged vegetation, informal pedestrian pathways, and limited public spaces.

Through historical and planning research, spatial mapping, site observation, and stakeholder analysis, the thesis investigates how the regeneration of the former railway area can be transformed into an accessible public, cultural, and spatial connector. The analysis shows that the main constraint is not only the abandonment but a lack of coordination between the railway ownership, heritage protection, municipal responsibilities, and private development. As a result, the proposal presents a phased regeneration strategy that transforms the area from fragmented into a more connected one. It presents how adaptive reuse, public spaces, and phased regeneration can work together in its future transformation as a more connected part of Prizren.

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Questa tesi indaga la rigenerazione dell'ex area ferroviaria di Prizren, una struttura legata al trasporto e all'industria che è rimasta fisicamente presente pur avendo perso la propria funzione originaria. Situata nella parte occidentale della città, l'ex area ferroviaria è circondata da uno sviluppo residenziale e commerciale in corso. Mentre il contesto circostante si trasforma attraverso investimenti basati su singoli lotti, il suolo ferroviario è rimasto irrisolto, generando una condizione frammentata caratterizzata da recinzioni, parcheggi informali, vegetazione non gestita, percorsi pedonali informali e limitati spazi pubblici.

Attraverso la ricerca storica e urbanistica, la mappatura spaziale, l'osservazione diretta del sito e l'analisi degli stakeholder, la tesi esamina come la rigenerazione dell'ex area ferroviaria possa trasformarla in un connettore urbano accessibile, dotato di funzioni pubbliche e culturali. L'analisi mostra che il principale vincolo non è costituito soltanto dall'abbandono, ma anche dalla mancanza di coordinamento tra la proprietà ferroviaria, la tutela del patrimonio, le responsabilità comunali e lo sviluppo privato. Di conseguenza, la proposta sviluppa una strategia di rigenerazione articolata in fasi, capace di trasformare l'area frammentata in una parte più connessa di Prizren. Essa dimostra come il riuso adattivo, gli spazi pubblici e l'attuazione per fasi possano operare congiuntamente per guidare la futura trasformazione dell'area.

acknowledgements

To my beloved sisters and my brother, for always being my safe place, believing in me and loving every version of me, including the loud and annoying one that somehow appears every time we're reunited. Më mërmuroni!

To my beloved parents, for never doubting me, your unconditional love, trust, and sacrifices. I will always be grateful for it.

To my friends, for every stressful day that somehow ended in laughter, every break that became a long conversation, every complaint and every memory we created together, even the ones we almost drove each other crazy.

To my supervisor Valerio, for your guidance, encouragement, and all the discussions we shared. For challenging my way of thinking and pushing me to question every decision. For never accepting an answer without asking "But why?" and never letting me get away with "I just did it". Thesis is stronger because of it. Grazie!

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01

Introduction

Scope and Context

This thesis focuses on the regeneration of the former railway area in the city of Prizren. It explores the possibilities for transforming this area which has lost its original role, as part of the changing structure in relation to its surrounding through architectural and urban design. The scope of the thesis is to explore the former railway area on spatial relationship between the built structures, open spaces, infrastructure and the surrounding.

The former railway area of Prizren is developed as part of the city's transport infrastructure, with the railway station and corridor closely linked to the industrial area for economic and transport reasons. With the decline of railway infrastructure in Kosovo this relationship weakened, as a result some parts of the site were abandoned and no longer active. Meanwhile the urban surroundings continued to change through residential construction, changes in land use and transformation of areas that were part of the industrial area. As a result, this makes the railway area an urban structure that exists but doesn't get involved in this development.

Considering this, the area can be understood as urban regeneration, specifically areas that no longer play the original function but continue to occupy a big part of the city. In this thesis, the urban regeneration is understood as a process of coordinated transformation of the whole existing urban area rather than focusing on one intervention (Bertolini & Spit, 1998). In the case of the former railway area, this means that it should include the station, railway corridor, open spaces, and existing structures.

Research Problem

The main problem in the former railway area is not only the abandonment of some parts of the area but also the fragmentation between the existing structures and urban transformation. While the surrounding parts of Prizren continue to develop, the railway land has not yet set a clear role in this transformation. Its existing structures, open spaces, and infrastructure remain as physical evidence, but they are not integrated into the urban system.

This fragmentation is becoming more evident through the individual investments in their private plots. As a result, the area is developed not as an urban structure but as isolated plots that reactivate only those specific interventions, leaving the other parts unintegrated. So, the risk is that ongoing developments will create bigger fragmentation between the railway structure and the urban surroundings.

Based on this problem, the aim of this thesis is to investigate the regeneration potential of the former railway area and develop an urban and architectural strategy that reconnects the area with its surroundings while retaining the former station as an active part of the city.

Research Questions and Objectives

The research explores the relationship between the existing structures of the former railway area and its surroundings. Within this structure, the main research question is:
How can the regeneration of the former railway area and its station contribute to the future urban development of Prizren while preserving the historical identity and responding to future urban needs?

To address this question, the research developed two other parallel concerns. The first one asks which spatial and architectural structures should be retained or transformed within the regeneration process? This shows the quality and importance of the existing site structure.

The second one asks how public space and adaptive reuse can strengthen the connection between the former railway area and the surrounding area? This shows that the whole area should be seen as an integrated urban system rather than individual interventions.

As a result, the objectives of this research are: first to identify the historical, spatial, functional and ownership conditions that have influenced the fragmentation of the area; second to evaluate the potential off the railway corridor, station and open land as the elements of a connected urban system; third to define a regeneration strategy that combines adaptive reuse, public spaces and connectivity. The research seeks to develop a regeneration framework capable of coordinating urban and architectural interventions at different times.

Methodology

This thesis methodology is used to understand the former railway area through the historical and contextual research, site analysis, interviews, stakeholder analysis, and design approach.

The first phase focused the historical and urban development of Prizren and the former railway area. Historical maps, planning documents, literature, and cartographic material were studied and compared to understand how the city developed, its urban transformation, the role of the railway area in relation to the city and what affected the current condition.

The second phase was done through site visits, field observations, photographic documentation, and spatial mapping. These methods were used to understand the land use, movement, existing structures, open spaces, barriers and how the site works in relation to the surroundings. The field observation was accompanied by a survey questionnaire, stakeholder analysis and interviews with representatives of the Municipality of Prizren and the Regional Center for Cultural Heritage of Prizren - Ministry of Culture. The survey helped in understanding people's perceptions, needs and how they use the area. The interviews provided institutional information regarding the current condition, responsibilities, planning intentions, and future for the area. In the end the stakeholder analysis relates these perspectives to the different actors involved in the area and their influence on it.

The methods were then collected, compared and translated into urban and spatial analysis. These produced constraints and opportunities that created regeneration strategy, which is approached in phases. The phase approach is used to explain how the area can be transformed over time based on ownership, stakeholder involvement, existing conditions, and future. As a result, this strategy gets translated into the urban and architectural proposal design.

Structure of Thesis

The thesis is structured into five chapters, including the introduction.

The second chapter explores the urban context of Prizren. It explains the historical and planning processes, the post-war planning system, and the main urban plans that have influenced the development of the city. It ends with the contemporary urban transformation, documenting current development supported by information from the interview with the representative of the Municipality of Prizren.

The third chapter focuses on the former railway area and its surroundings, by showing the relationship with the city and its transformation under three historical periods. It shows the existing spatial and functional condition of the area together with the actors that have influence on it. It concludes with the constraints and opportunities of the area.

The fourth chapter is the transition between the site analysis to the design proposal. It translates the site analysis into an urban regeneration strategy. It begins with the synthesis of analytical findings into a strategic matrix which then is translated into the strategic map for the transformation of its area. This transformation is organized in three phases; each related to a specific condition of a development process.

The final chapter includes the proposed masterplan and a selected area of interest, which is examined at a specific architectural scale. Attention is given to the adaptive reuse of the railway station, the new student dormitory, the public spaces between them and their relationship with the railway corridor.

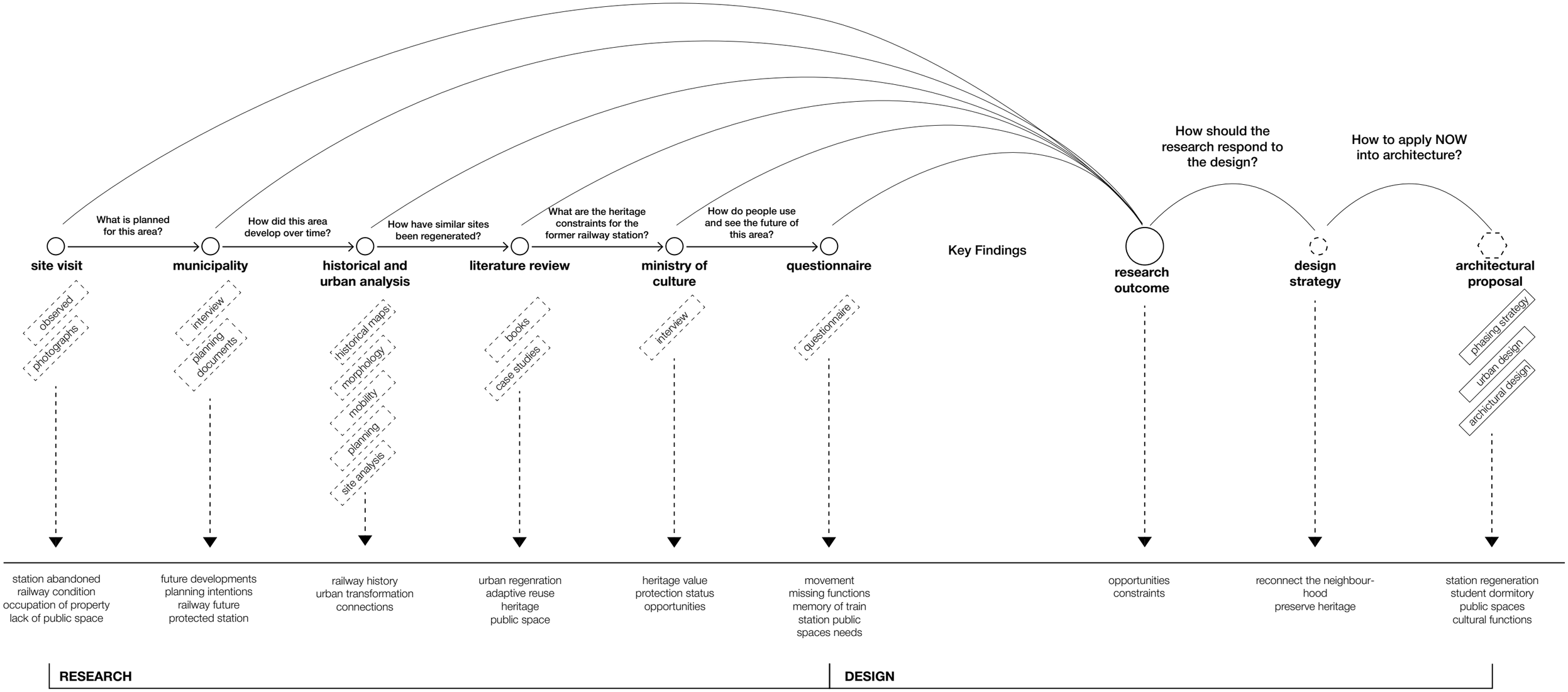


Fig 1.Research methodology framework

02

Prizren: What shaped the city?

2.1 Historical Urban Development

Prizren is Kosovo's second-largest city and one of the cultural and economic centers. Located in the southern part of Kosovo, it has historically functioned as an important node where trade routes, cultural exchange and development have shaped its urban form (MKRS & rrok, 2020,27). Prizren's urban fabric can be understood as three urban layers: the historic city, a nineteenth-century period of administrative regulation, and a later expansion shaped by industrialization. These phases produced a combination which remains visible within the contemporary city.

Prizren's early urban structure is developed through a topographic relationship. During the medieval period the city was organized between the Castle on the hillside and the flatter land along the river Lumbardhi, where the religious buildings started to develop. (MKRS & rrok, 2020,A1-2) This relationship shows that even though the city later expanded these two elements organized and defined the identity of the historic city.

Following the Ottoman period, Prizren expanded as a regional commercial and cultural center. The urban structure started to get organized through carshia and residential houses, with Shadervan as the civic point of the city. In meantime the religious buildings, schools, and fountains started to appear in the urban fabric (Jagaxhiu, 2018,39) The result was a compact organic urban system where residential, religious and, commercial buildings were interconnected spatially.

During Tanzimat reforms, the administrative buildings and new construction standards were brought to the city. Between 1868 and 1874 Prizren became the Vilayet of Prizren which increased its role in the connection with the region (Navakazi & Jerliu, 2019,74). As a result, the 19th century can be understood as the beginning of a coexistence between the organic structure and new urban regulations.



Fig 2.View of Prizren with the castle in the top of hillside



Fig 3. Narrow street within the historic urban fabric of Prizren in 1913

The most visible transformation happened after the Second World War, under socialist Yugoslavia. Its urban development is associated with industrialization and expansion towards the western and northern periphery, where the new factories were located (Goxha,2014, 201-2). This relocation changed the spatial requirements of urban development, where these factories required larger plots, an organized road network and transport infrastructure which, as a result led to the creation of a new urban structure outside the historic city.

The railway was the other new component of this industrialization. The industrial area that developed from the 60s was organized in relation to the railway infrastructure and station as a connection of industrial products (Goxha,2014,201-3). At the same time, the industrial growth created migration from rural to urban zones, employment, and new residential areas. This shows again a shift into a mix-use fabric but now concentrated around the industrial area. On the other hand, because of these changes the old city center started to change through demolition of traditional bazars and was replaced by new structures. (MKRS & rrok, 2020, A1-6). So, socialist development created a strong coordination between production and infrastructure but on the other hand began to destroy the inherited urban structure in the center.

By the late socialist period, the city became larger. It was characterized by the historic center and the new expansion known as the industrial area. This period marks the spatial relationship between these two parts of the city. The relationship began to weaken during the 90s, when the political and economic decomposition of Yugoslavia affected the institutional system. Political instability, economic deterioration, institutional exclusion and the decline of factories reduced production and limited investment in urban infrastructure (Goxha 2014, 201-3, 201-5). As a result, the city retained the physical structure produced during its socialist period but no longer had the same institutional and economic system of coordinating it.

The Kosovo war in the late 90s made the situation worse. Physical, economic and institutional damage reduced the capacity of public institutions to maintain infrastructure, regulate development and support the industrial economy. (Jagaxhiu 2018, 51). Prizren entered the post-war period with an expanded urban structure but without the same capacity for investment, industrial employment and development control. This condition helps to understand the post-war planning system and the urban development that occurred afterward.

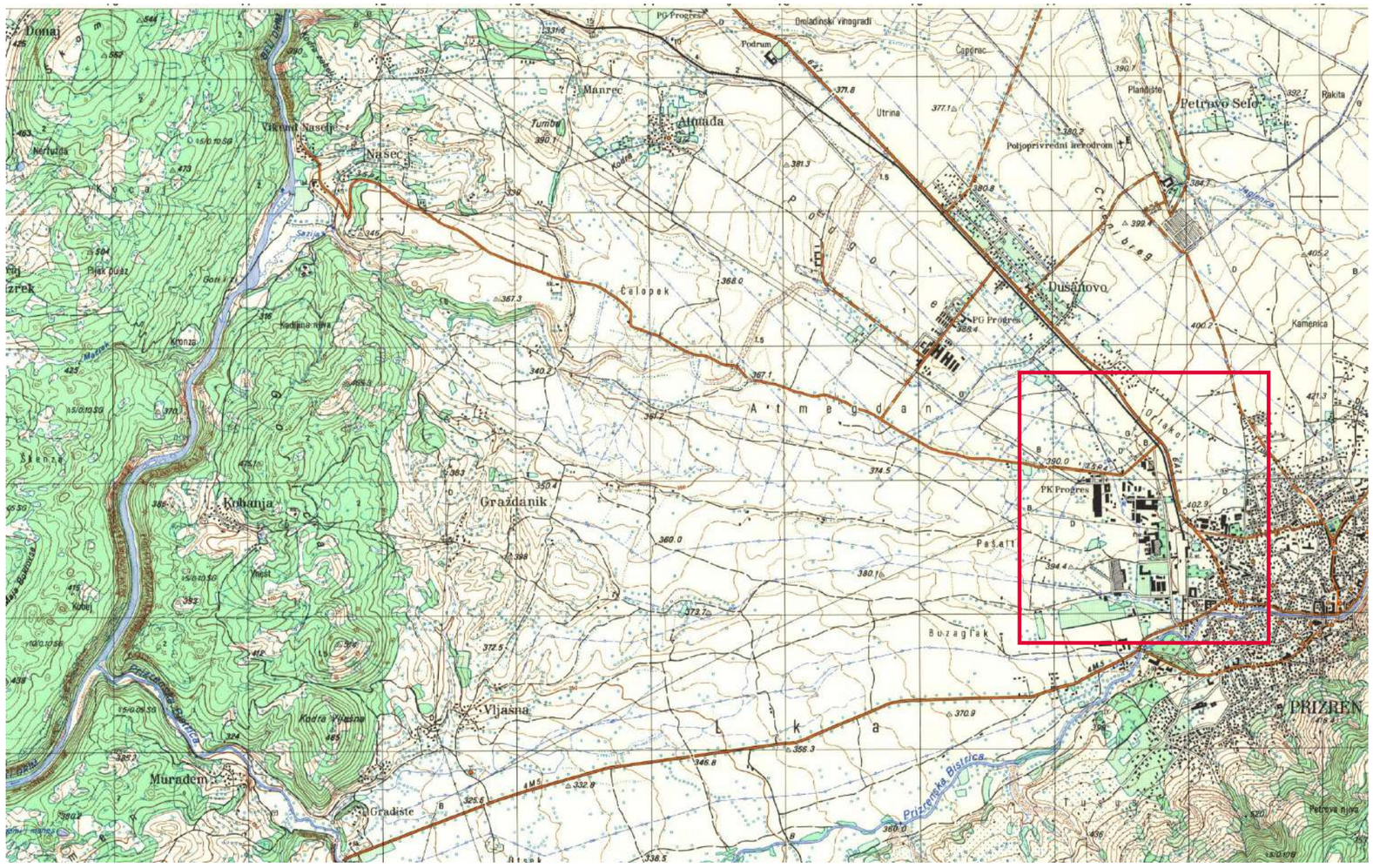
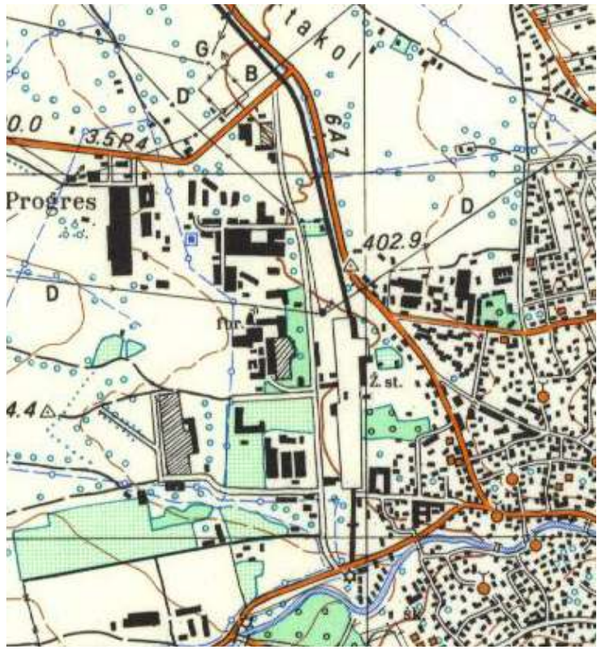


Fig 4 Topographic Map of Prizren West 1973. sheet 680-3-2



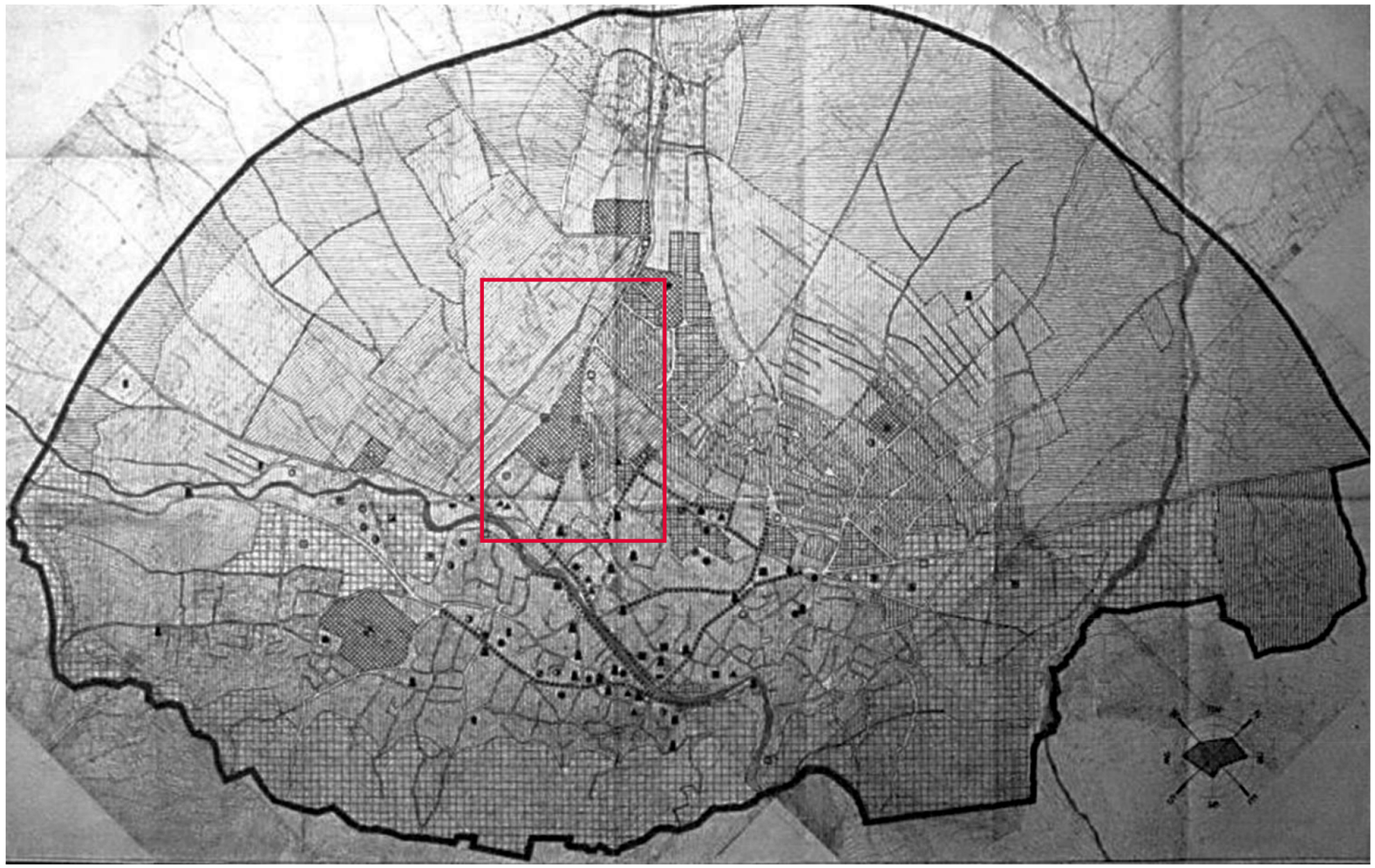


Fig 5. Existing Land use of Prizren during the late Yugoslav period, prepared for the General Plan of Prizren of 1997



2.2 Post-war Urban Development and Planning System

Post-war Kosovo entered a period where private construction grew faster public institutions construction. Housing repair, immigration, and new construction created immediate spatial demand, while planning laws did not start yet (Veliu Rexhepi, Careva & Roth-Čerina). In the post-war period, municipalities relied on inherited laws and prewar documents to maintain basic construction control, releasing construction permits even without a new planning document (Uka, 2026, 12). This provided minimal control since those were prepared for a different political, economic and regime time. Therefore, post–war planning shows a problem on how the city got rebuilt and how to regain spatial coordination while urban transformation was already underway.

The Law on Spatial Planning 2003, is the first post-war planning framework in Kosovo. It included two planning levels: the central level and the local one, where the Municipal Development Plans, Urban Development Plans and Urban Regenerator Plans become the main tools for future planning (Uka, 2026,12). In this way the General Urban Plan of Prizren 2003-2013 was the first attempt to organize the post-war city.

These plans became the direction of the future urban growth while responding to construction and land use changes that already had begun. It promoted growth around the four outer parts of the city, incorporating new residential areas through a mixed-use development accompanied by schools, health facilities, public spaces, and commercial functions. (Municipality of Prizren and Nixha & Partners 2003, CH-3, 8).

This plan attempted to organize the residential growth together with new services that the city needed, and to reorganize a wider organization of transport. It defined the western peripheral part of the city as a new terminal and industrial-free zone and a possible new relocation of the railway station which would have the role of a to a future connection with Albania. (Municipality of Prizren and Nixha & Partners 2003, CH-3, 11). Based on this the intention was to change the land use of the industrial area and release it for a new one.

Implementing the plan revealed a more complicated mechanism. The General Urban Plan stated that it could create development opportunities but could neither oblige development nor appoint the public funding required to realize them. This meant that the urban growth was planned collectively, but the implementation depended on individual development initiatives.

The road network, parks and public institutions require a coordinated land and funding while the private buildings could proceed through a specific parcel, investor, and permit. (Municipality of Prizren and Nixha & Partners 2003, CH-12, 1-2). This change meant that the building production of wider urban structure depended on different actors and resources. When these processes failed to remain synchronized, planned urban growth became more fragmented while individual projects were arranged with different development procedures.

The later Municipal Development Plan 2013-2025 extended this attempt at coordination from the city to the entire municipality. However, after a decade the problems that were identified were the same ones that the planning system had already attempted to manage. It showed uncontrolled urban expansion, conversion of agricultural land for construction, inadequate road network and weak technical infrastructure as the main challenges (Municipality of Prizren 2013, 256). This repetition was important because it showed that the city was having consequences after the post-war period between construction, expansion and infrastructure. Private investment remained part of urban development, while infrastructure and other interventions required a broader implementation.

The Municipal Zoning Map 2022-2030 brought other regulations, different from the other strategic plans, that showed a long-term direction. It provides rules closer to the scale of individual land and construction decisions defining zoning categories and development conditions including the whole municipal territory. (Municipality of Prizren 2022-2030, 17-22). However, a more detailed regulatory plan does not by itself demonstrate a successful implementation. A zoning tool defines the construction rules at the parcel level, but roads, public spaces, and infrastructure still depend on implementation beyond the parcel.



illegal construction, 2003
urban mixed-use proposed expansion 2003–2013
urban mixed-use proposed expansion 2022-2030
agricultural / undeveloped land 2003
historical city

Fig 6. Post-war existing urban condition of Prizren in 2003 and its planned expansion through the General Urban Plans, 2003–2030

The changing role of Prizren's industrial area is a clear example of how the planning implementation works. The decline of industrial activity after 90s, brought privatization of socially owned land affecting the industrial zone (Goxha,2014,201-6). This transformation was connected not only to planning decisions but also to a change in the economic and property system where industrial area was managed.

According to General Urban Planning 2003-2013, the former industrial area was redefined as an area of trade and small industry, while a new industrial/free zone and relocation of the railway services were proposed towards a new railway station on the western side of the city. This aimed to redistribute the productive and transportation functions within a changing urban structure.

By the Municipal Development Planning 2013-2025 the old industrial buildings were described as abandoned or used as warehouses, while the former industrial area was identified as a regeneration area and a first-level commercial center. In contrast, new industrial, storage and facilities areas were proposed towards areas better transport infrastructure access. This change concerns the previous relationship between productive land, railway infrastructure, and large industrial plots being organized into a more differentiated urban geography.

The later Municipal Zoning Map 2022-2030 shows that the former industrial area is transforming not only into a commercial one but into a mixed-use area, while the new industrial area is now proposed on periphery, now in smaller area. This means that the industrial area was not only getting relocated, but it shows a gradual change in the role of productive territory within Prizren. The land that before was associated with industrial production became part of a broader urban economy of commercial, service, and other development functions, but at the same time the productive area was planned in more peripheral locations with better access to transport infrastructure.

In this context, post-war Prizren is not a city that developed without planning. It is more a city where planning and urban transformation have repeatedly interacted without operating at the same scale. The General Urban Planning 203-2013 attempted to organize reconstruction and future growth, the Municipal Development Planning 2013-2025 extended this into a wider framework, and the Municipal Zoning Map 2022-2030 introduced a more direct rules for land and construction. As a result, this does not show only a contrast between a planned and an unplanned city, but also a coordinated relationship between individual parcels and the city scale.

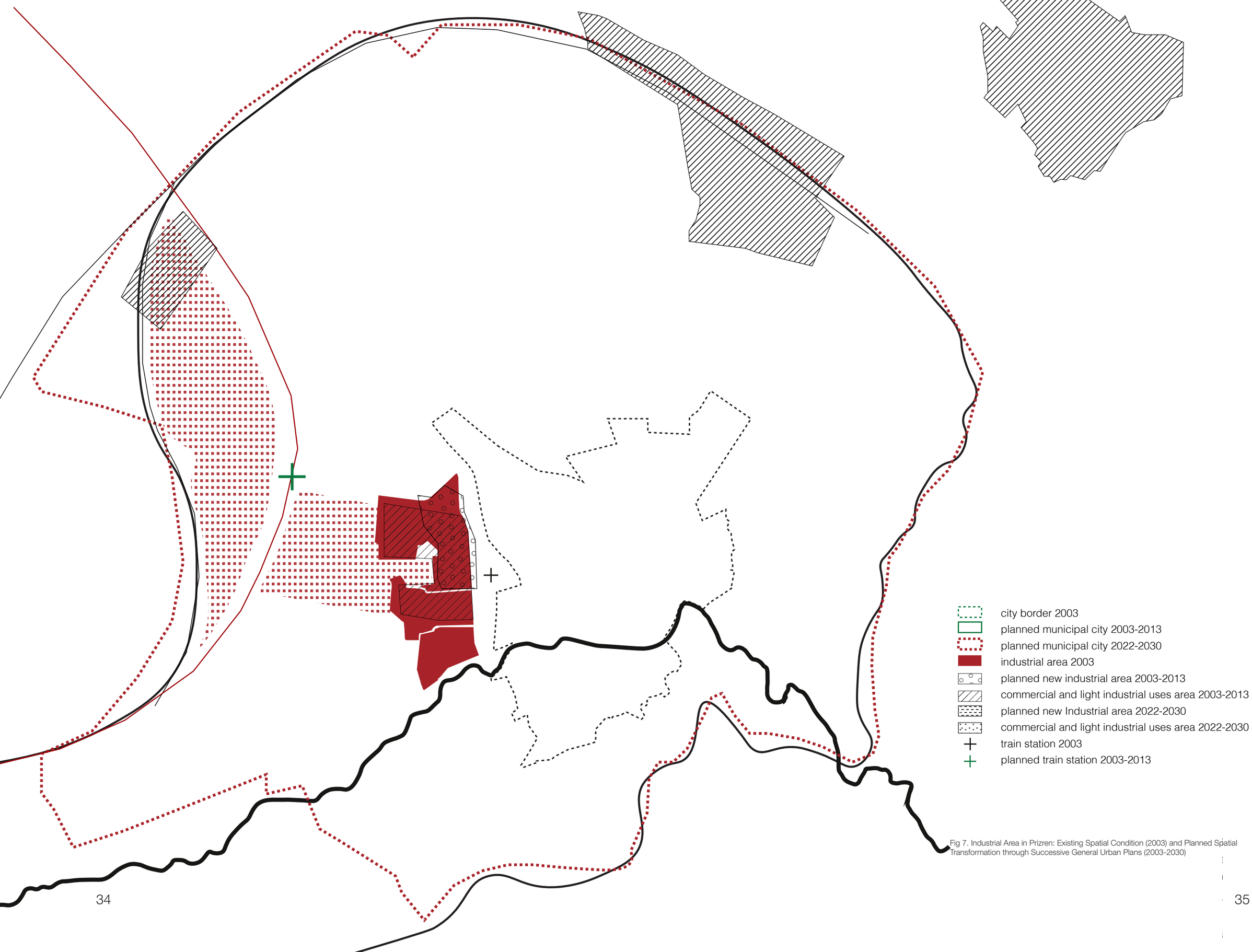
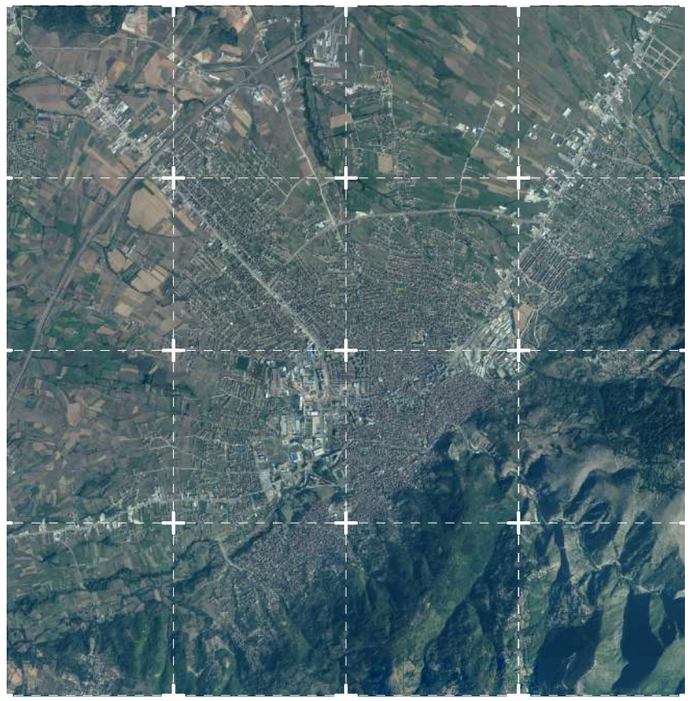


Fig 7. Industrial Area in Prizren: Existing Spatial Condition (2003) and Planned Spatial Transformation through Successive General Urban Plans (2003-2030)



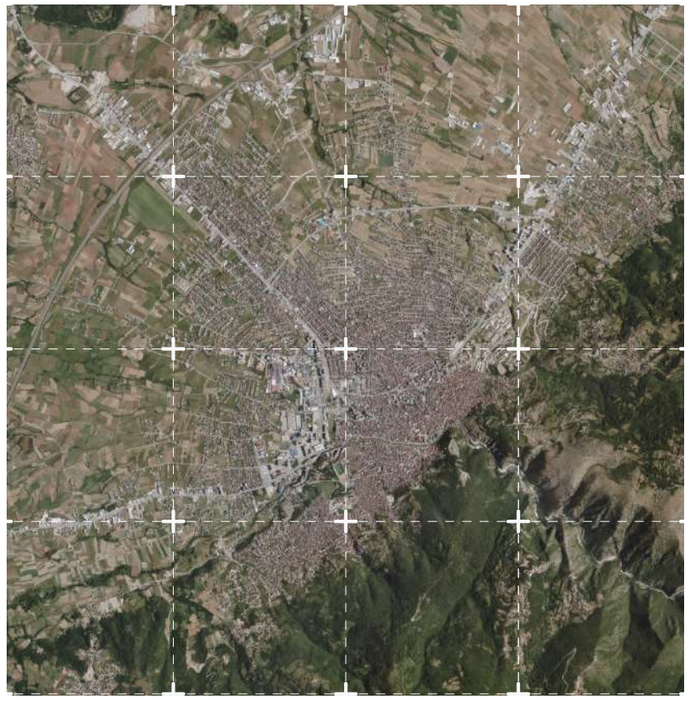
2001



2018



2009



2024

Fig 8. Orthophotos of Prizren

2.3 A City in Transition: Current Urban Transformation

Prizren's transformation is visible not only through a rapid construction but how this urban development is being formed. During the last decade the city is expanding toward the suburb areas, becoming denser and converting areas that once had agricultural or industrial function. The question is not why Prizren is growing, but why is this growth taking this direction?

The direction of this growth is not accidental. Spatial analysis comparing the city between 2014 and 2024 shows a marked increase in built up surfaces all around it while development has continued to extend along major transport corridors and into former agricultural landscapes (Gashi, Sinjari & Shemsedini, 2024, 41). The combination of accessible land and development potential explain why growth is concentrated in that part of the city.

This urban development is associated with a market-oriented model in which private investors, developers and individual property owners have become the reason of this production of urban space. The process itself is not a problem, because it produces housing, distribute commercial activities and activates underused lands. The problem is the risk of consuming the ecological and agricultural valuable land separating the city from the neighbourhood settlements and the infrastructure capacity where urban structure does not occur at the same speed.

This irrelevance is shown at the individual parcels. Development begins from the individual property before the surrounding neighbourhood get the street network, schools or other facilities services. The consequences are visible when planned street profiles remain incomplete and existing roads does not have the capacity to handle these changes and flow. The relevance of this mechanism is greater than the replacement of one house into an apartment building. At the scale of the parcel, redevelopment may be rational between the owner and investor but in a neighbourhood scale this changes the relationship between population, building volume and the street. A small number of households using individual entrances now it gets replaced by a much larger number of apartments, commercial unit and parked vehicles while the dimensions of the public network remain the same.

At the same time, as reported by Kosovo 2.0 the transformation of individual houses and smaller plots into apartment buildings it's a mechanism seen in the last decade not only in Prizren but in Kosovo's housing market. This allows an agreement between the landowners and developers to put a value of the parcel which will be exchanged for a percentage of floor area of the future building.

Fig 9.New mixed-use development under construction, 2026

This redistribution of land use has a positive urban consequence by brining everyday functions closers to residential areas helps in removing the separation between housing and commerce. Yet these mixed-use buildings do not automatically produce a well-connected neighbourhood. Commercial activities bring more people and parking demand and considering the existing structure the city gains functional intensity without necessarily gaining equivalent urban capacity.

This tension is also noticed by municipal officials. In an interview with the official worker stated that many of the recent developments as large private investments while admitting that the existing road network is relatively narrow which is creating the traffic problem [1]. At the same time, she clarifies that the municipal officials understand their role primary as implementing parameters already established through approved planning system.[1]

This is important because it tells that the contemporary development is not simply a lack of planning control, but a problem that appears in relationship between approved development parameters, private investments and the physical capacity of existing city.

The scale of recent residential development raises another question: does the amount of new construction is corresponded to the number of people permanently living in the city? The 2024 census places Prizren among the municipalities with the largest housing stock in Kosovo, while a considerable number of dwellings remain unoccupied (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2024,79). However, the unoccupied should not be understand as abounded or unnecessary because some of them are on sale or rent, used periodically by people from diaspora.

Prizren's transformation can be understood not only as "uncontrolled growth", but an unequal urbanisation process. Private investment is increasing housing supply, changing land use and creating commercial activities while the surrounding struggles with not following the same speed and rhythm. This leads to question not whether Prizren should continue to grow, but what kind of city is being formed when the principal transformation is the individual development parcel?

Interview with the Directorate of Urbanism – Municipality of Prizren
Urban Architect: Gjejlane Gjini

How does the planning system works, who approves and what is the role of the municipality on it?

" During the preparation of the plan, meetings were held with the consulting company responsible for the project and representatives of the Ministry of Planification also participated. Once completed, the plan is submitted to the Ministry responsible for planning, where it is approved."

What do you think about the new development of the city?

" I believe that many of the new buildings are too tall. However, the Municipality is required to implement the approved planning documents. The planning parameters were established during the planning process and approved by the competent authorities. Our responsibility is to implement those approved regulations."

Do you think that the road network capacity works with this development that is occuring?

" These are large private investments. Investors would not invest several million euros if they did not believe that the projects were financially viable. The existing road network is relatively narrow and this creates traffic and circulation problems. However, the road network and the building lines were defined in the approved planning documents. Our responsibility is to implement those planning regulations."

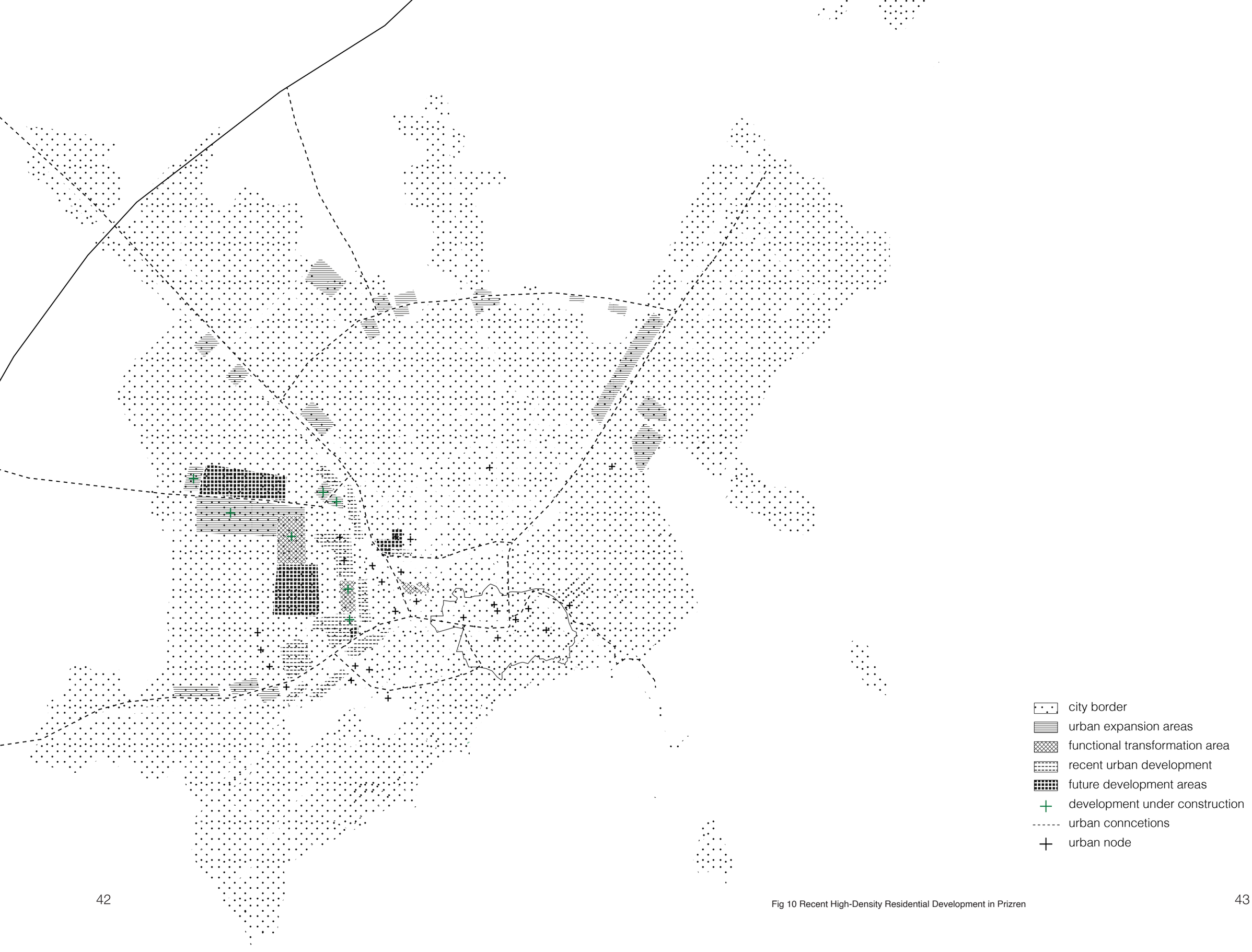


Fig 10 Recent High-Density Residential Development in Prizren

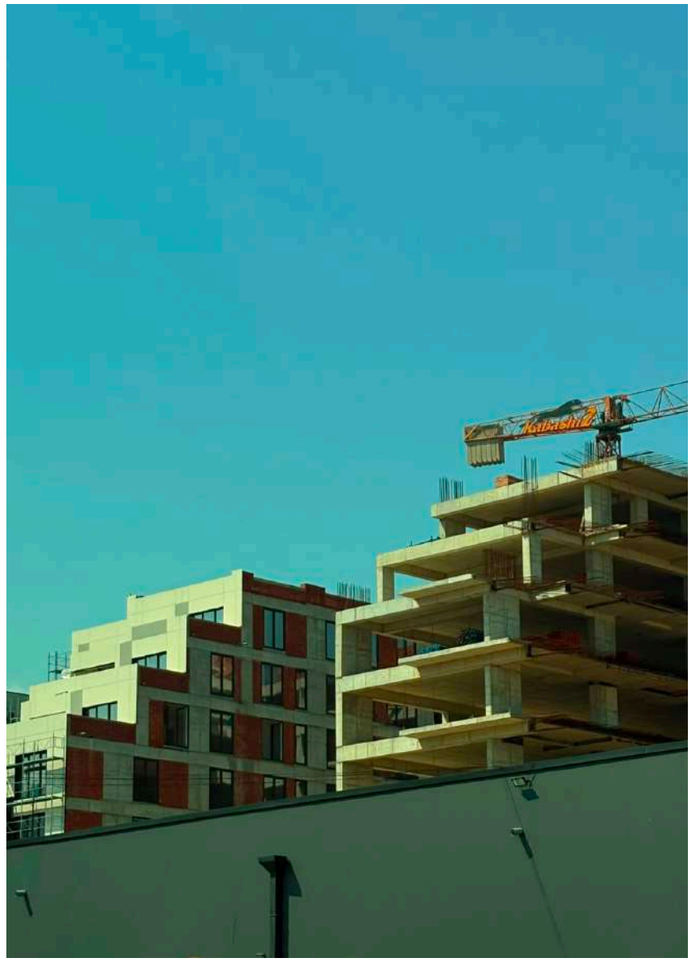














Fig 11 Recent residential construction in the city
Fig 12 Recent residential construction in periphery of the city/former agricultural land

03

Site Analysis: Prizren Former Railway Zone

3.1 Site and Urban Context

The former railway area is located on the western side of Prizren, approximately 1.5 km from the historic center and near the former industrial area. The former railway corridor remains the dominant longitudinal element in the study area. Its approximately 760-meter geometry continues across the study area. Originally, it was developed as part of the city's peripheral transport and industrial area, while today it is surrounded by residential neighborhoods and commercial activities. The expansion of the city changed the function of this area and its role in it.

The formation of this area is connected to the economic and industrial development of the city during the Yugoslav period. The construction of the railway station in the 1960s (Kizolli, Dedaj, Çadraku & Selim, 2024) and its position within the industrial area made this area an important component of the city's economic development, supporting trade and regional connectivity. Around this transportation infrastructure, warehouses, service buildings, and other railway-related facilities gradually formed a distinct urban area whose identity was closely linked to mobility and industry. This area then became a territorial system in which the other part of Prizren was organized.

Political, economic, and infrastructural changes during the post-war period weakened this relationship. The gradual decline of railway infrastructure in the late 90s left the railway station together with the railway infrastructure out of operation (Goxha 2014, 2–3). However, the disappearance of railway activity did not result in physical changes. The station building and its corridor remain among the few elements of the city's heritage, while the surrounding area continues to expand. The current condition is shaped by two processes: the gradual loss of former transport-industrial land and new urban residential development.

This results in the area having a heterogeneous urban fabric. Small-scale houses remain in the eastern and south-eastern edges, while the residential buildings constructed in the last decade are characterized by larger volumes and ground-floor activities. The former industrial area is changing in the same way as individual investment and new functions. So, the railway corridor stays in the middle of a part where older urban fabric, recent construction, former industrial area, and infrastructure coexist by forming separate zones.

At the scale of the city, the railway area is relatively close to the city center and several important urban functions. At the local scale, however, it does not correspond with the connection. As a result, the site is closely related to the functioning of the surrounding city but does not operate as an integrated part of it; this condition results from a gradual transformation that occurred in the post-war period and continues today. This position of the study area within the city and its limited connections with the surrounding area is important to understand the current relationship with the city.

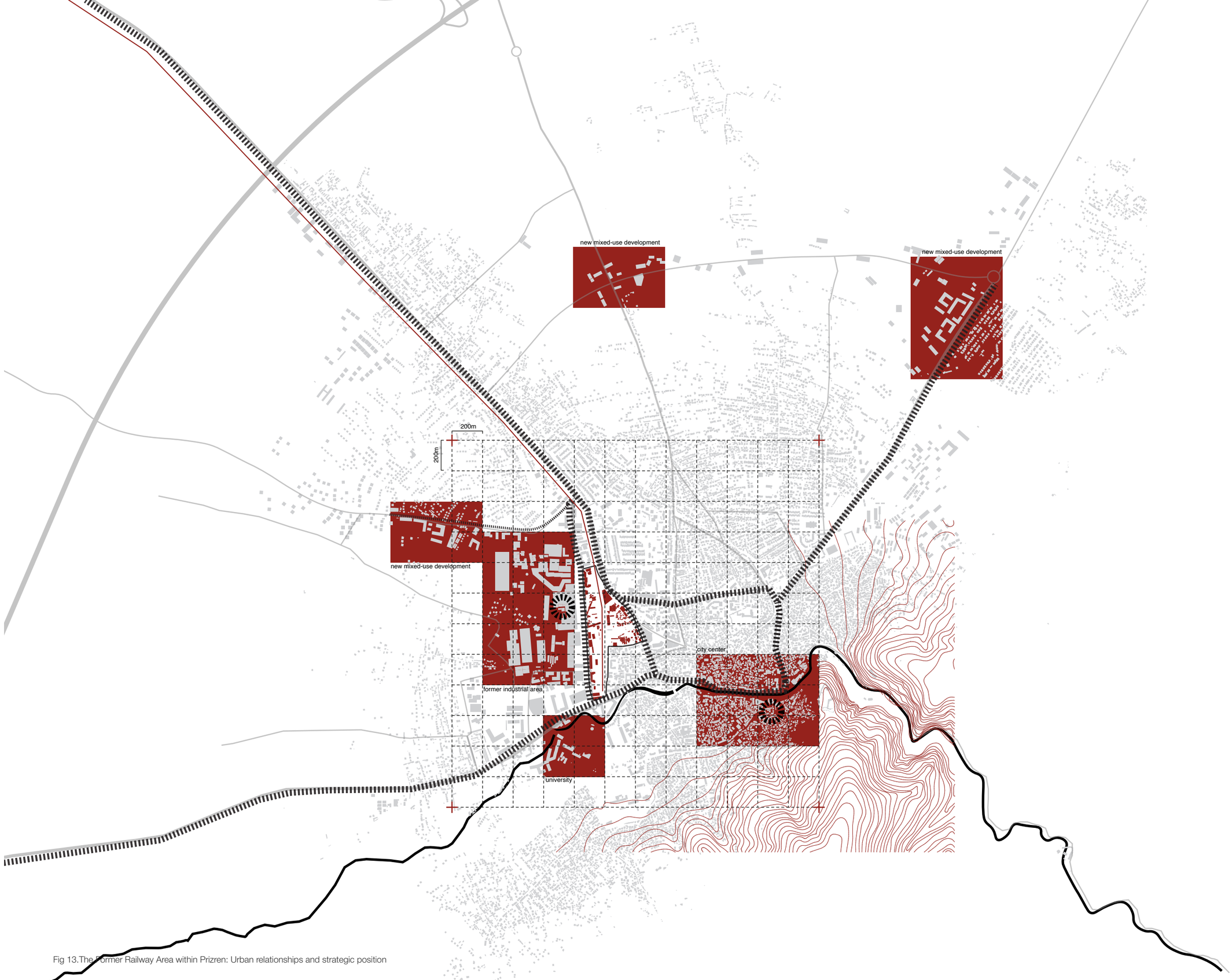


Fig 13.The Former Railway Area within Prizren: Urban relationships and strategic position

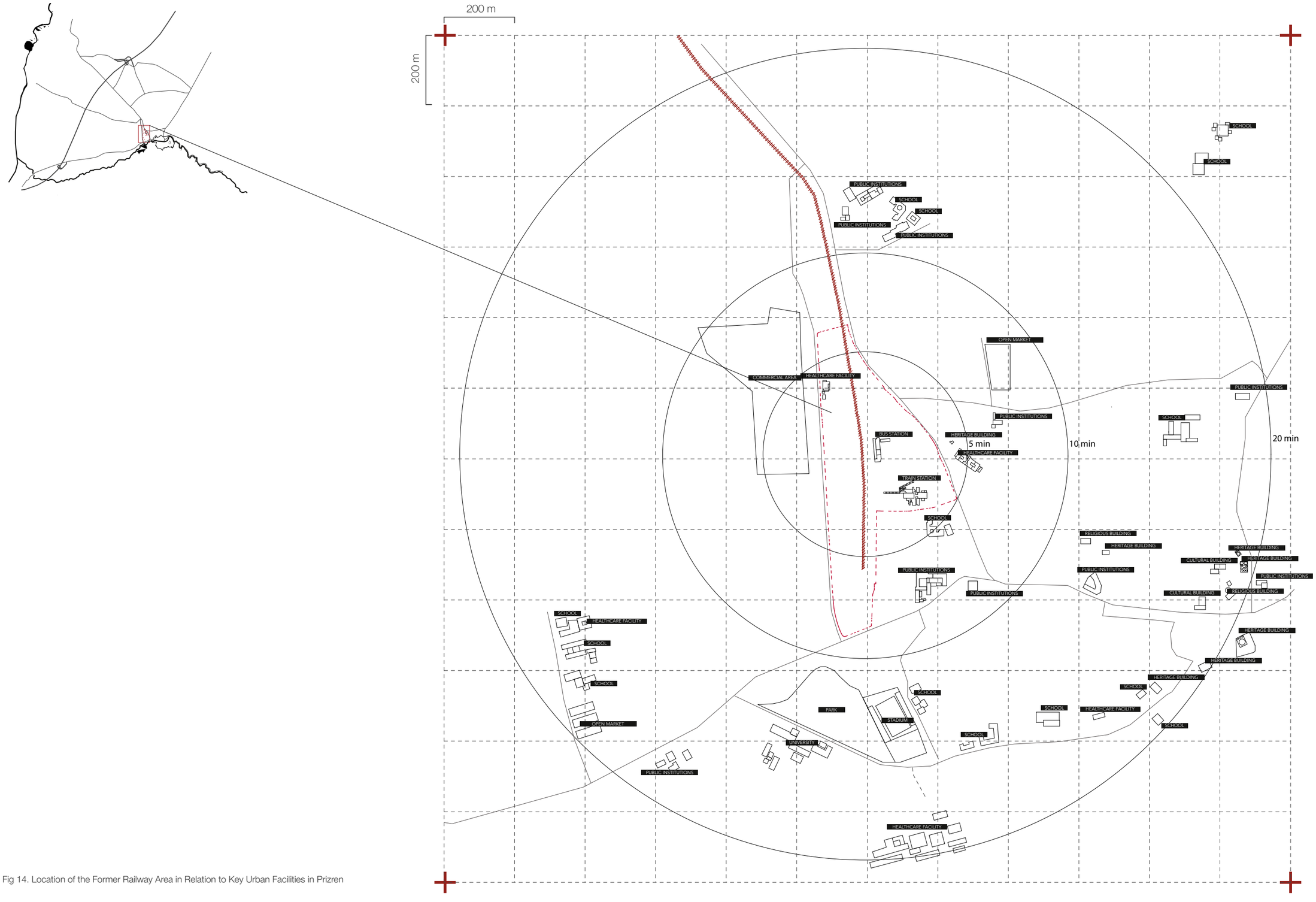


Fig 14. Location of the Former Railway Area in Relation to Key Urban Facilities in Prizren

3.2 Urban Fabric Transformation

The present condition of the study area cannot be explained as abandonment. The decline of the railway was followed by a gradual transformation of spaces and buildings in the area. Some structures lost their function, some parts of the railway land got occupied, and development continued at the edges.

The historical transformation of the area is documented through three comparative maps representing its conditions in 2003, 2012 and 2025. These periods were selected because they represent the phases in the transformation of the area as a key moment in the post-war planning of Prizren. Together they show how the site gradually shifted from a legible railway industrial area to a fragmented urban condition shaped by abandonment, demolition, decline, ownership and surrounding constructions.

2003 Post-war period

The 2003 map shows the early post-war condition when the relationship between the railway and industrial area was still comparatively evident. Although the railway activity had declined, the physical structures continued to occupy the biggest part of the area. These conditions demonstrate that the present fragmentation did not result from a complete disappearance of the railway system. Instead, it belongs to a longer period in which infrastructure remained physically present while gradually losing maintenance, use and importance.

The surrounding industrial area on the other hand, was still operating. Warehouses, factories and their large plots were still present even though some were declined or abounded. As this relationship between these two operating areas weakened, the transformation began as a loss of functional systems first and later as building structures.



Fig 15. The Former Railway Area and the Industrial Area in Prizren the Post-War Period 2003

2012 Transitional Development Period

The 2012 map shows the transitional phase. By this period, the railway infrastructure had declined, and it showed a lack of maintenance and vegetation, while the surrounding industrial area started to change through demolition, changes in land use, ownership, and new developments.

Changes in ownership over a decade played an important role in the transformation. Former industrial buildings and land were passed to new owners without a deal to continue their last role. Privatization contributed to breaking the area with the new interventions mostly into mixed-use buildings rather than adapting the old ones.

The General Urban Plan 2003-2013 identified small-industry functions rather than maintaining the old condition. By 2012, the physical transformation included hypermarkets, commercial buildings, mixed-use construction, and partially the old warehouses. The new residential mixed-use buildings that appeared around the corridor were the first step in the railway area transformation. This resulted in individual parcel investment while the other part of railway land that did not get privatized and was under Infrakos remained without a new function.

Therefore, the changing character of the area started to occur first because of new ownership and parcel-based investment rather than being started by an urban planning system of the city.



Fig 16 The Former Railway Area and the Industrial Area in Prizren in 2013

2025 Contemproray Urban Area

The 2025 map represents when the transformation became more evident and the neighborhoods became more affected by residential growth. Residential mixed-use and commercial developments have become more dominant along the northern, western and southwestern parts of the study area. Additional warehouses and former industrial buildings have been demolished, while the train station and the railway corridor remain present but not incorporated into the new development.

As a result, the industry was not only replaced by housing, but also by a new urban fabric next to the small-scale houses in the eastern part and commercial activities that occupy the ground floor of the new building. The area no longer reads as an industrial neighborhood, but neither as a new coherent urban structure. The Municipal Development Plan 2013-2025 planned the area as a regeneration and commercial area.

In 2025, this area was mostly commercial on the ground floor and residential on the upper floors, without enough public and green spaces that each investment is supposed to have. Meanwhile, the railway land still stands as neglected and unintegrated into the new developments. What once formed part of an integrated relationship between production and transport now exists as a trace within a different urban context.

The comparison between these three periods shows that the railway-industrial area has not changed in a linear way from industry to a new urban condition. But what gradually disappeared created the new fragmented urban fabric. The issue here is not only the fragmentation, but how it happened. Parcel-based development advanced faster than the reorganization of collective spatial structure leaving the area with a functionally transformed but spatially unresolved problem.

Meanwhile according to the Municipality New Zonal Plan 2022-2030 the railway area falls into the ZB4 zone. This zone is shown as residential development that can be accompanied by commercial and other facilities. This means that the area is no longer planned according to its former railway infrastructure role but as part of a new residential mixed-use development. However, it is still uncertain whether this transformation will develop in the way the municipality planned. As for the present, things are changing mainly through individual parcels while the railway land remains unresolved. The question here is how this new urban condition will take form in the area, with Infrakos as landowner.



Fig 17 The Former Railway Area and the Industrial Area in Prizren in 2025

3.3 Existing Functional and Spatial Conditions

The railway corridor remains the dominant longitudinal element. Its geometry has acquired independent forms of occupation according to activities, accessibility, and levels of maintenance. The result is a territory that remains continuous in form but fragmented in use.

The bus station forms the strongest organized concentration of activity in the area. It remains operational and continues to generate regular pedestrian and vehicular flows. Renovation work on the bus-station building began in 2025 while its transport function remained active. However, the Municipality has also indicated a future intention to relocate the station towards a rural area. This creates a condition of uncertainty in which an active function is maintained in the present while its longer-term role remains unresolved.

The former railway station remains the main structure of the railway area. After railway services declined, the building remained without any public program and was occupied for a period. In 2025, the previous occupants left and the Ministry of Culture secured its immediate perimeter through fencing, but no reconstruction or new use had begun at the time of the site investigation. Field observations indicate deterioration of exterior surfaces and architectural elements; however, its current condition cannot be explained only through its physical condition. Fences, parking, and localized occupations now weaken the sequence between the station and the surrounding neighborhood.

A limited number of former warehouses remain at the edge of railway land, some of which have gradually accommodated small businesses, workshops, and storage activities. Their present use is no longer directly related to the railway, but the continued occupation of these structures maintains small-scale productive and commercial activity within parts of the area.

The coexistence of these conditions prevents the study area from being understood simply as an abandoned railway site. The bus station remains active, travel agencies depend on its current transport function, some former warehouses have been adapted to small-scale economic activities, and the railway station retains its architectural presence without active use. Together with residential and commercial development along the edges, these different conditions show how the former transport-industrial area has gradually acquired a more heterogeneous functional structure.



Fig 18 Existing condition of the Former Railway Area



Fig 19 Railway station building - eastern street-facing facade

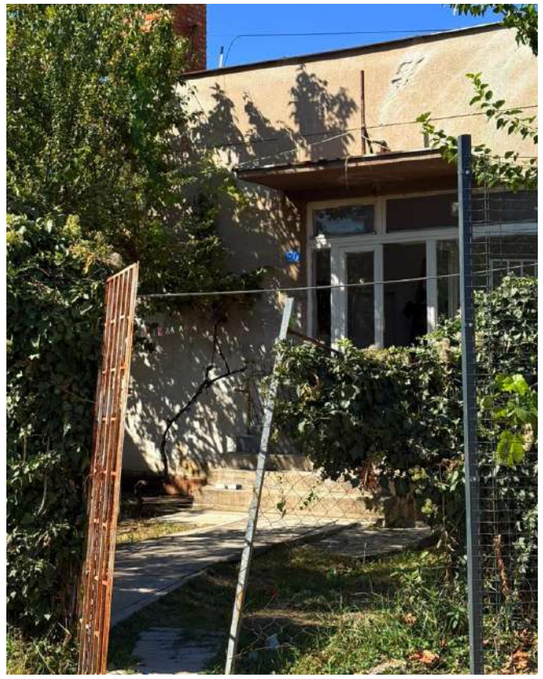
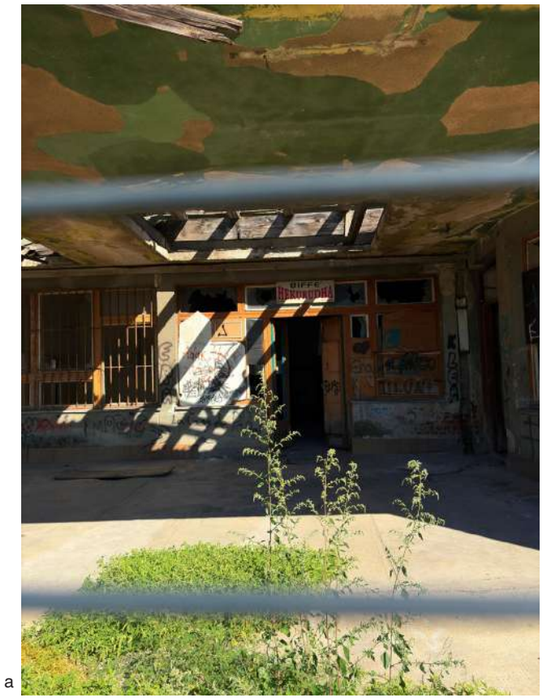


Fig 20 Section of the building previously occupied



a



b

Fig 21 Building condtion (a) Western facade - main entrance toward the tracks, (b) southern facade



a



b

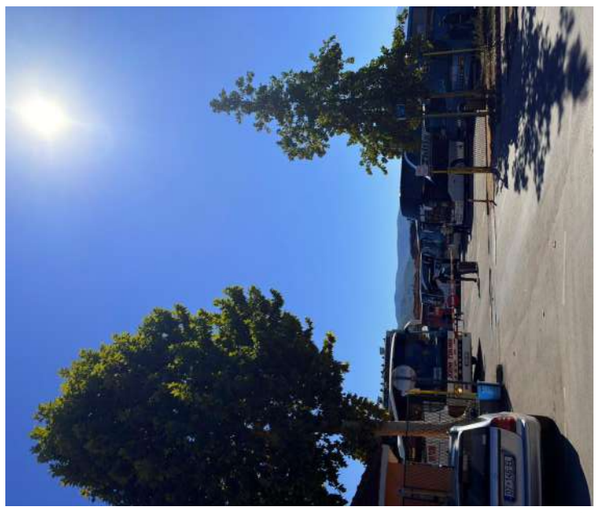


c

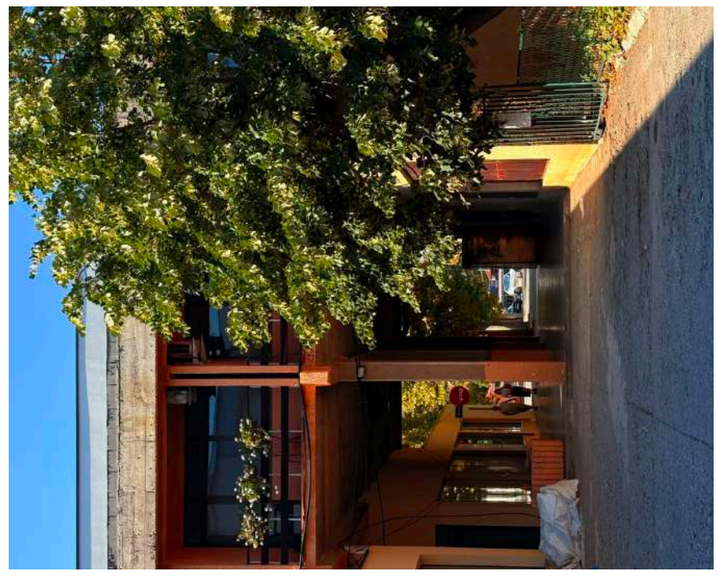


d

Fig 22. Existing Interior Conditions of the Former Railway Station: (a–d) abandoned and deteriorated interior spaces.



b



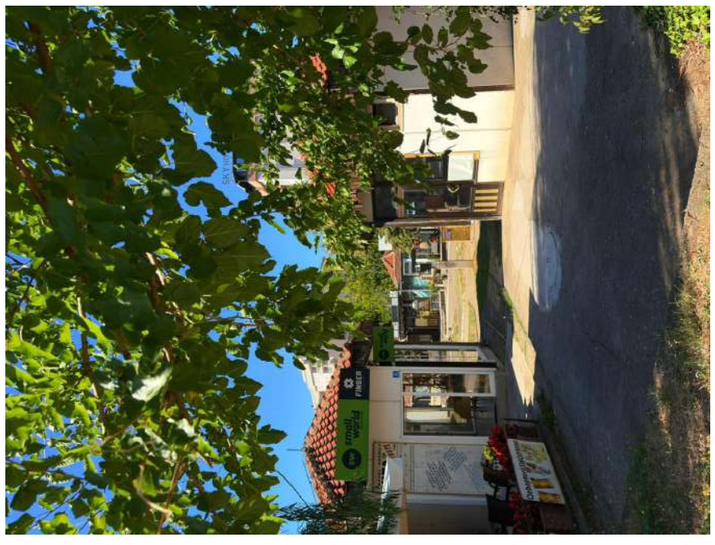
c

Fig 24 Flow activity around the bus station a-c



a

Fig 23 Small buildings by travel agencies



The first spatial map identifies the relationships that structure the corridor and the individual uses occupying its ground. Thresholds, nodes, institutional and commercial buildings, the former railway station, fences, and access conditions are mapped together to understand where the relationship between the railway land and the surrounding urban fabric changes.

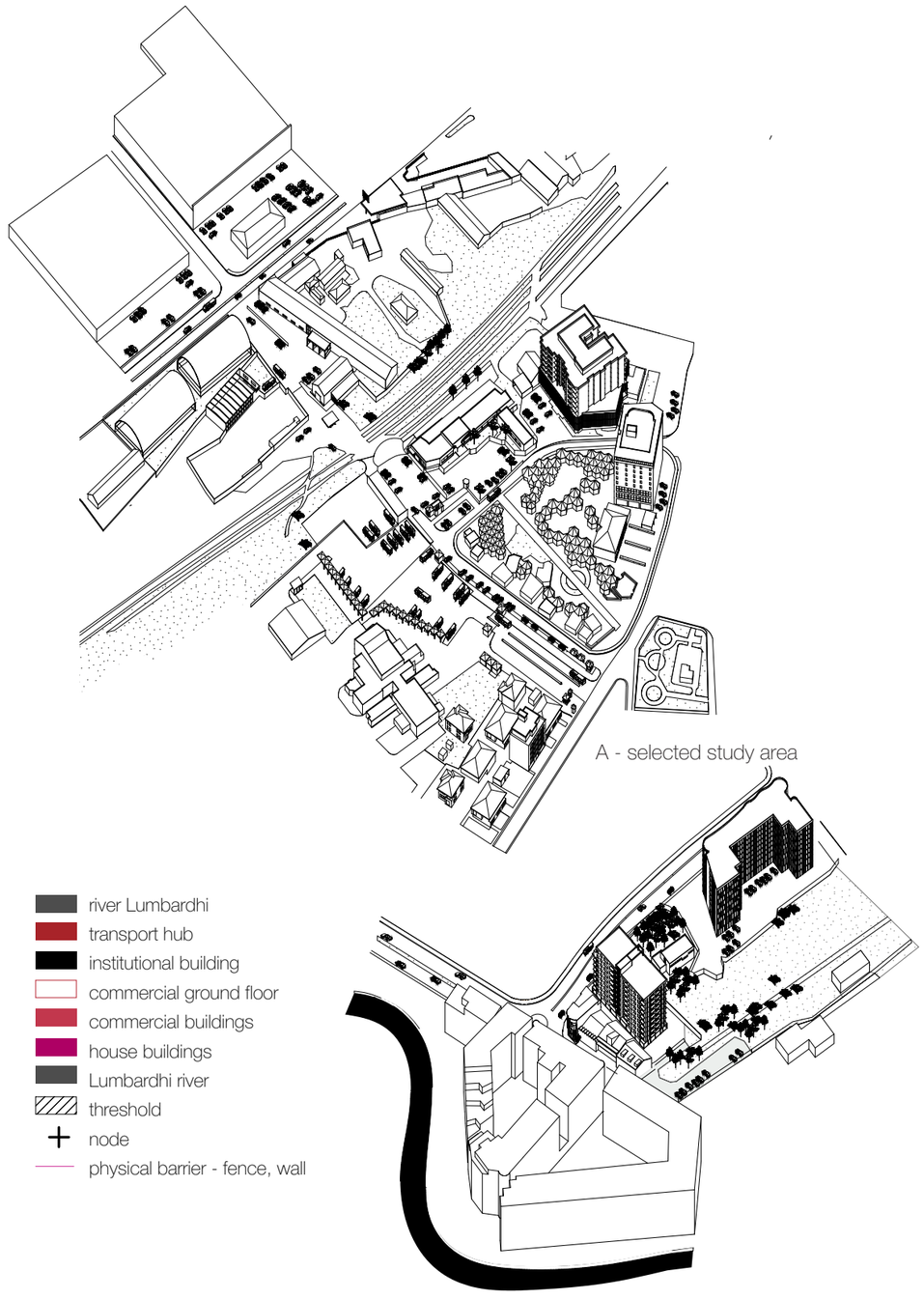
The thresholds are not shown as a main function. Instead, they identify locations where different spatial conditions meet: where surrounding streets reach railway property, where a fence interrupts movement, where active building edges meet open railway land, or where the accessibility of the corridor changes. Some thresholds are accessible and already crossed in everyday use, while others remain physically restricted.

Activity is concentrated mainly along the edges of the railway territory rather than within the corridor itself. Commercial ground floors, larger commercial facilities, the bus station, and other active functions generate local concentrations of movement, while less active railway surfaces remain between them. Nodes are identified where several of these conditions overlap, and are accessed as activities or movement crosses.

The former railway station is the most important architectural structure in this area. Its position along the tracks and its relationship with surrounding streets make it a recognizable point within the corridor, yet fencing and the absence of an active program currently limit its role as a public destination. The station therefore operates simultaneously as a spatial reference and as an inaccessible element, revealing the difference between architectural presence and contemporary urban use.

The map identifies two locations as area of interest but they do not have the same role within the thesis. The first is the selected focus area around the railway station and the central part of the study area, where the station, railway land, surrounding functions, access points, and several thresholds are concentrated. The second is at the end of the railway corridor, where the alignment approaches the river. This corridor–river interface is not developed as a second detailed intervention area, but it is identified because the end of the railway establishes a wider spatial relationship with the river that may become relevant to the long-term continuity of the corridor.





river Lumbardhi
transport hub
institutional building
commercial ground floor
commercial buildings
house buildings
Lumbardhi river
threshold
node
physical barrier - fence, wall

A - selected study area

B - interface of railway with the river Lumebardhi

Fig 25 Threshold map of the former railway area, Prizren

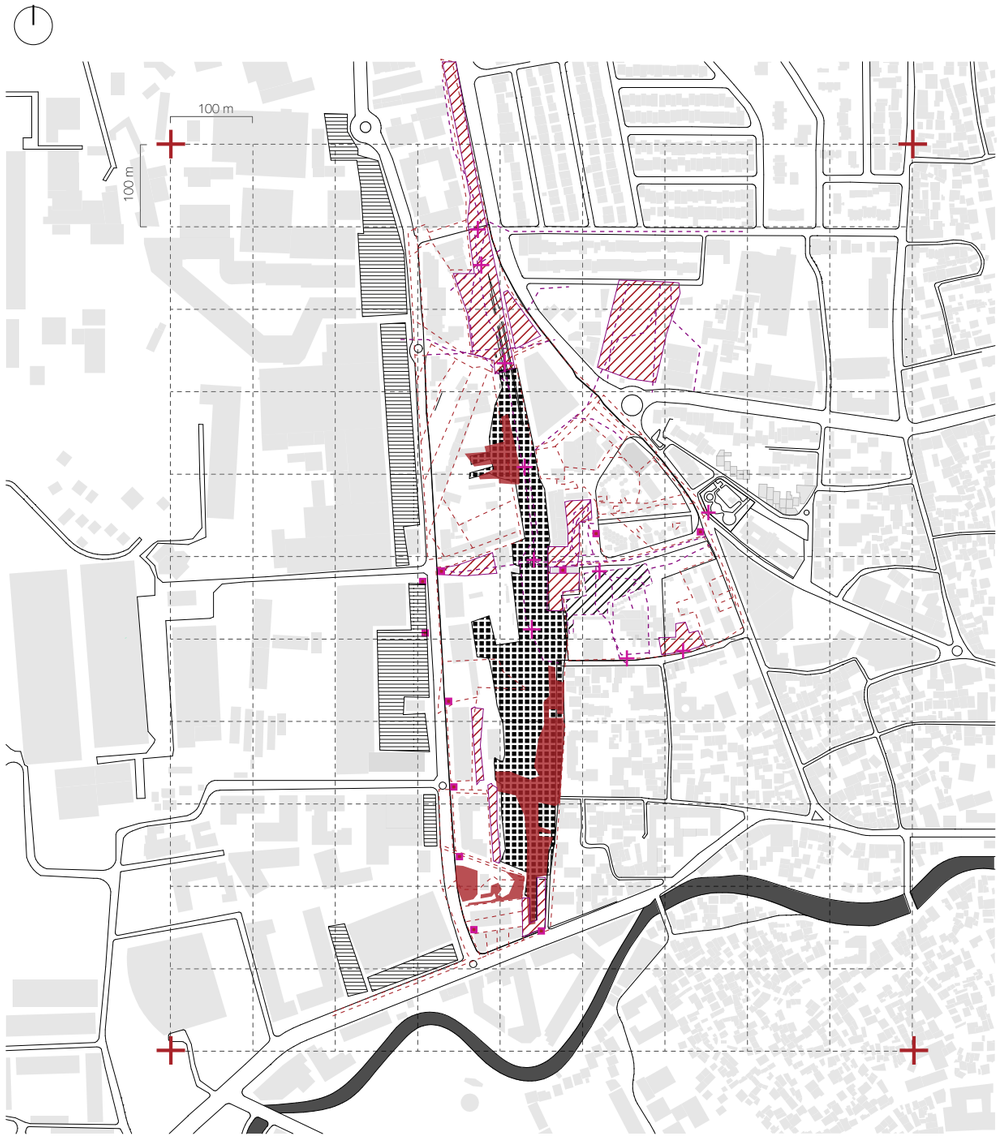


Fig 26 Vacant and Underused Land within the Former Railway Area

Approximately 80% of the total study area remains unbuilt. However, this high percentage of unbuilt land does not translate into public open space. Most of these areas are occupied by unused railway infrastructure, parking areas, unmanaged vegetation, and paths formed by daily movement across them. The problem is not the lack of physically open terrain, but a lack of spatial organization, access, and functions through which undeveloped land can function as part of the public fabric of the surrounding urban structure.

The physical condition of the ground changes along the corridor. Tracks remain visible in some areas, while elsewhere they are partially covered by soil and vegetation. Former platforms, changes in level, and residual infrastructure further divide the territory into spaces with different degrees of accessibility. Vegetation has expanded mainly in areas where people do not pass, although it does not create a significant green presence since it is not organized as an accessible landscape system. Its current form reflects a wild vegetation occupation in abandoned infrastructure.

Pedestrian movement continues through this fragmented ground. Field observations and questionnaires show that people cross the railway territory because it provides a shorter route between surrounding streets, residential areas, and transport facilities. These movements have produced informal paths, but they do not constitute a continuous pedestrian network. Their usability depends on local openings, vegetation, parked vehicles, fences and ground conditions. This is particularly evident in the relationship between longitudinal and transversal movement. The railway alignment establishes a strong longitudinal direction, but no continuous pedestrian route follows it till the end. Their use is transitory: people move through these areas, but there are no spatial conditions that support gathering or recreational activity. So, the area is physically permeable at several points but remains weakly legible as a public circulation system.

Informal parking has become one of the most visible contemporary uses of the railway land. Portions of InfraKos property are occupied by vehicles of nearby residential and commercial activities, despite not being formally designated for this purpose. This condition is linked to the recent transformation of the surrounding parcels. New residential and mixed-use buildings occupy a large proportion of their plots, leaving limited exterior space for greenery, shared open areas, and parking. As a result, the railway land is being occupied to accommodate functions that are not provided within the plots of these new residential buildings. This shows how the railway land is being used to compensate for the spatial pressure produced by recent development in the surrounding area.

These conditions become clearer when we compare the two maps. The thresholds identified in the first map are connected to, or respond to, everyday use shown in the second. Where surrounding streets end or reach the railway property, for example, vehicular access extends into the corridor and is accompanied by informal parking and pedestrian movement. In other locations, fences restrict this relationship and the railway ground remains less used. The thresholds therefore differ not only in their physical configuration but also in the activities occurring around them.

This comparison is done to show that the railway corridor cannot be described as uniformly abandoned or inaccessible. Its current condition changes along its length according to the relationship between surrounding streets, active building edges, physical barriers and railway land. Parking, pedestrian shortcuts and vegetation are distributed differently as these conditions change, and what remains continuous is the railway alignment itself.



a



b



c



d

Fig 27 Existing Condition of Unbuilt Land along the Former Railway Tracks: (a–d) vacant and underused surfaces, unmanaged vegetation, and warehouses



a



b

Fig 28 Informal parking occupied areas
(a–d) existing parking conditions along the former railway corridor



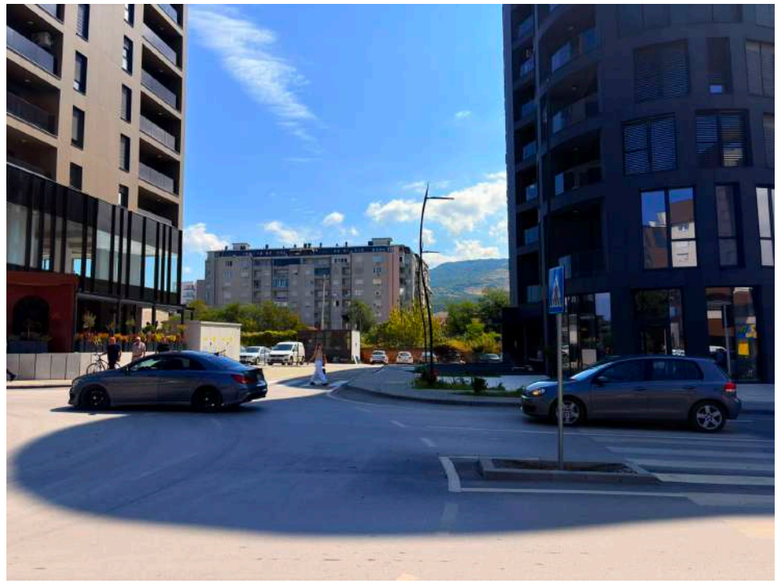
c



d



a



b

Fig 29 Existing condition at the edges of the Former Railway Area



c



d

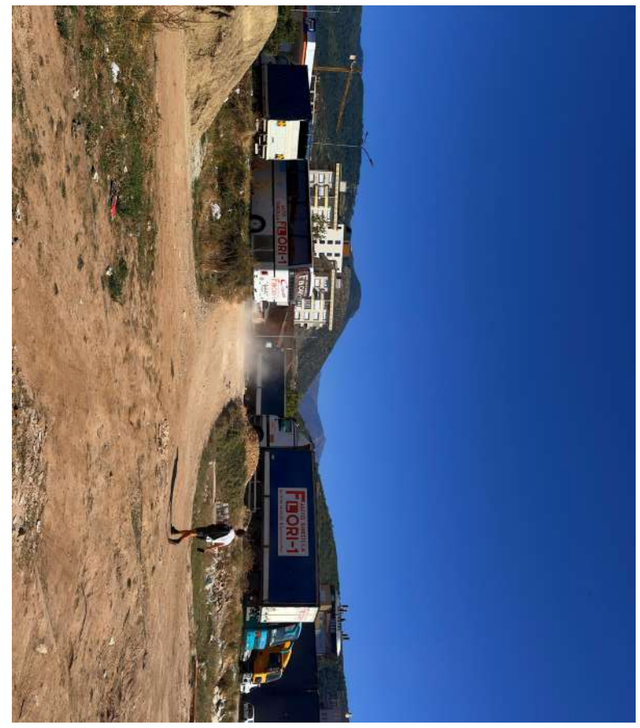
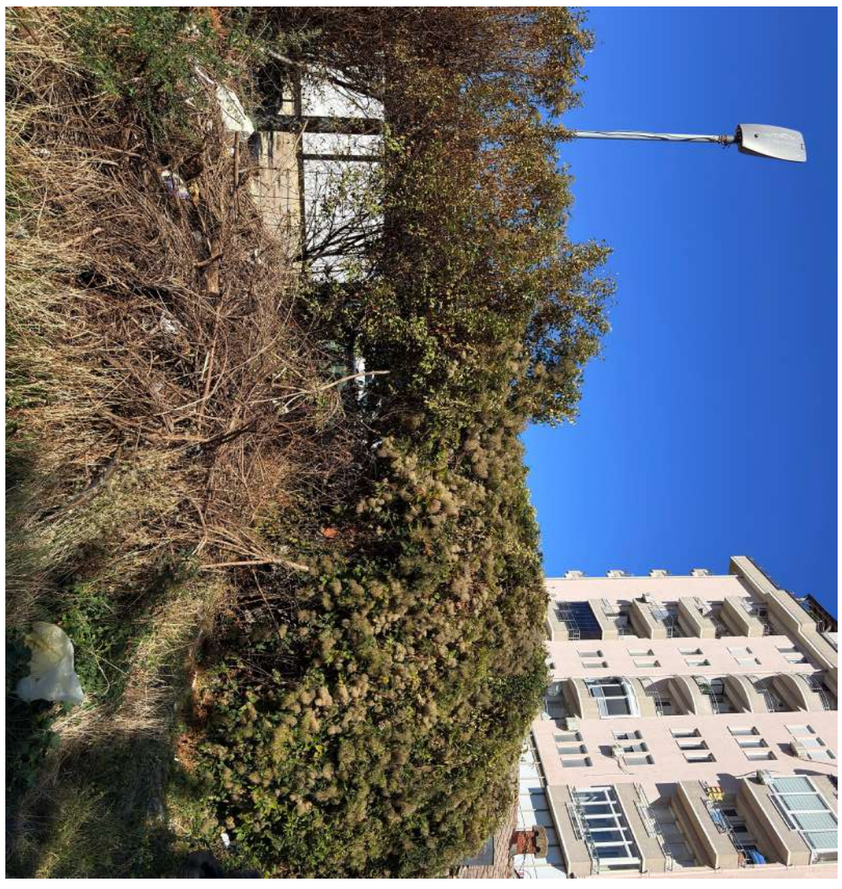


Fig 30 Informal parking at the edge of the Former Railway Area

Fig 31 Unmanaged spontaneous vegetation



3.4 Stakeholders and Institutional Framework

The railway area is affected by several stakeholders with different forms of authority, ownership, and everyday influence. Its spatial condition is closely related to the way ownership and institutional authority are divided in decision-making.

InfraKos (Railway Infrastructure of Kosovo) is the main stakeholder in relation to railway land and infrastructure. Its ownership gives the formal authority over the corridor and railway station, including areas that are no longer active. This means that the Municipality cannot treat the railway land the same as it controls streets and public spaces. Any action affecting the property requires institutional coordination beyond the local planning level.

Heritage protection is another issue. According to Cultural Heritage of Prizren – Ministry of Culture, the former railway station and railway infrastructure are under heritage protection, and interventions involve them as the relevant authorities. Therefore, the ownership and authority do not correspond with each other: InfraKos as the main actor on its land and the Ministry as heritage protector.

The municipality, on the other hand, has other responsibilities including urban planning, local roads, municipal infrastructure, planning, and development control. Its authority becomes more limited when municipal development meets railway property. What becomes important here is the changing function of this area by Urban Plan 2022-2030. It states that this area will be a residential area, while the surrounding parcels can develop. This creates a contradiction with what is planned and a heritage-protected building that requires parts of the former railway structure to remain.

The preventive interventions of the train station carried out in 2025 by the Ministry of Culture show the importance of the protection of the building. An interview with municipal and heritage representatives confirms that there is not yet a clear plan for what will happen to the station and railway since they don't have any deal with InfraKos.

Meanwhile, private developers have influence through the transformation of open parcels. Their investments have increased the residential density, but their authority and responsibility end at the boundaries of individual plots. As a result, they can contribute to the changing of the urban context without controlling the railway corridor or addressing it in their parcels.

Existing businesses remain part of the current condition. Some small former industrial buildings continue to operate as storage or small-scale economic activities. This means that their need is related to access and continuity to use those spaces or get replaced somewhere else.

As a result, the stakeholder analysis shows that fragmentation is also a result of disagreements. No single actor corresponds to the area the same, while several decisions affecting the site depend on overlapping forms of authority. Therefore, any further transformation must be done in relation to the ownership, heritage protection, municipal responsibilities, private development, and everyday users

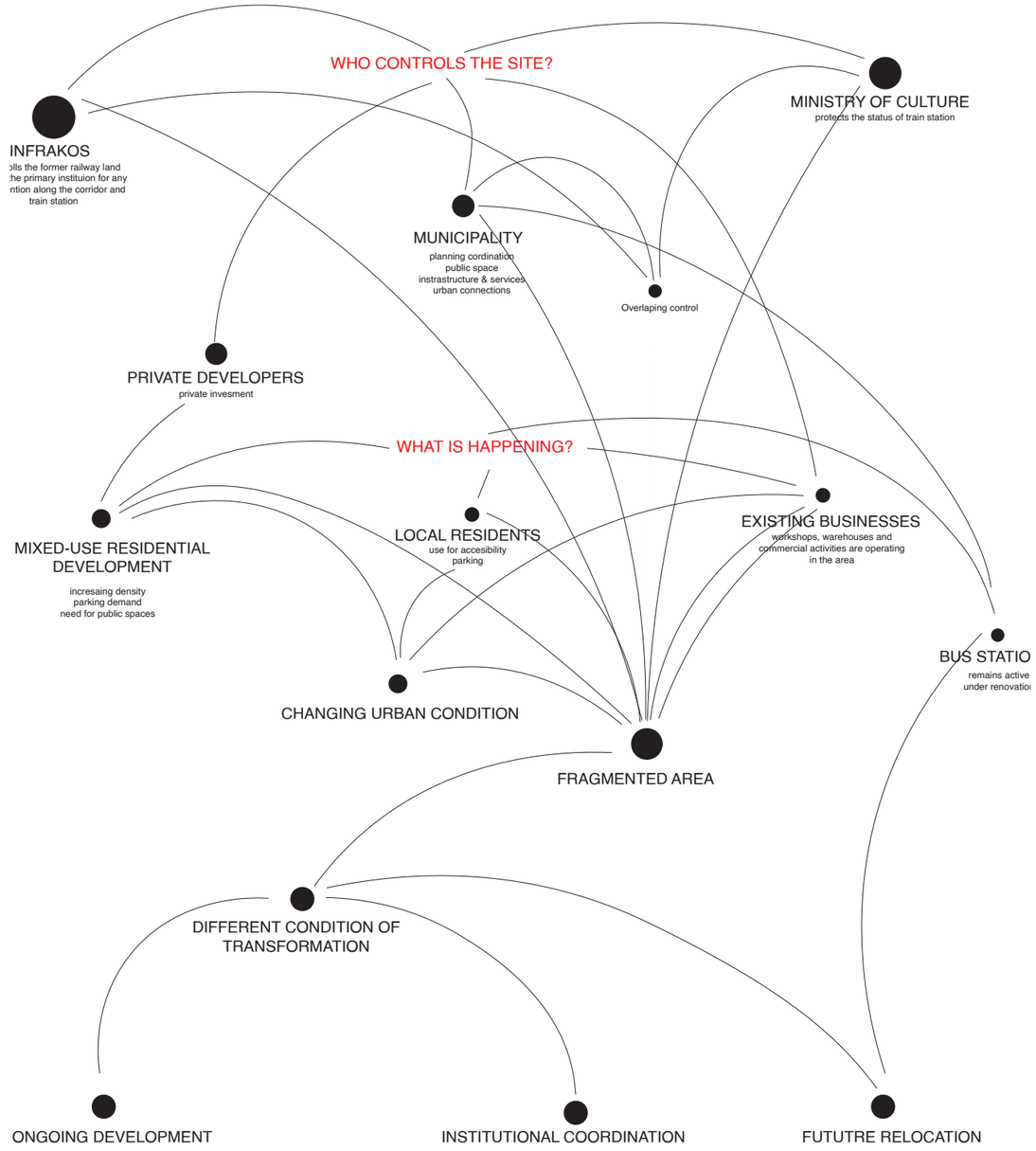


Fig 32 Stakeholder Analysis of the Former Railway Area, Prizren

Interview with the Directorate of Urbanism – Municipality of Prizren
Urban Architect: Gjejlane Gjini

What is the role of the Municipality regarding the railway station and railway land?

“The Municipality does not manage the railway property directly. The railway infrastructure and the station are under other institutions, so we cannot plan or intervene there independently.”

Can the Municipality renovate or change the function of the former railway station?

“No, we cannot do that by ourselves. The station is a protected cultural monument. If there is a request for restoration, reuse or another intervention, it has to be sent to the responsible Ministry for review. Only after their approval can something be done.”

Has there been any proposal or request for the restoration or reuse of the station?

“So far, there has not been any request for restoration or reuse.”

Will the building continue to function as a railway station?

“No, it will not continue with the same function. The future use has not yet been defined.”

What is the status of the area around the railway in the current urban plan?

“The area around the railway is part of Zone ZB4, which allows mixed uses such as residential, commercial and service functions. There are already several new residential and mixed-use developments being built in this area.”

Interview with the Regional Center for Cultural Heritage of Prizren - Ministry of Culture
Ing. constructive: Ismail Ahmeti
Architect: Rexhep Kerkezi

Who owns and controls the railway land and infrastructure?

“InfraKos is responsible for the railway property. If something is done on that land, permission has to come from them.”

Is the railway station protected, and does the protection also include the tracks?

“Yes. The station is under protection, together with the railway tracks. It cannot be demolished. If there is an intervention, it has to go through the procedures for protected heritage.”

Is there any concrete plan for what will happen with the railway and the tracks in the future?

“No, there is no concrete plan at the moment. As far as I know, there is no plan for the train to pass through this area again.”

If the station is restored, can changes or an extension be proposed?

“It can be proposed, but it would have to be discussed with heritage experts and architects. Because the building is protected, you cannot just intervene however you want.”

If there is investment in the station, would it concern only the building or also the surrounding area?

“You cannot invest only in the building and not think about what happens around it. I believe the surrounding area would also have to be treated.”

What is the role of the Municipality in relation to the railway area?

“The Municipality can deal with the surrounding roads and local infrastructure, but when it comes to railway property it cannot decide alone. There has to be coordination with the institution responsible for the railway land.”

What happens when private uses, such as parking or other activities, occupy railway land?

“If something is on railway property, it needs permission. Without permission, it is not considered an authorized use.”

3.6 Perceptions, Constraints, and Opportunities

An indicative survey involving 28 respondents was used to complete the field observations and analysis. Its value lies in identifying perceptions and examining the spatial issues recognized by them.

The responses confirm that the railway area remains part of everyday movement patterns. Most of them indicated that they pass through the area regularly to go to work or to commercial areas. These results raise the interpretation of the railway corridor as a transit space rather than a destination for social or recreational activity and confirm that abandonment has not produced complete inactivity.

People continue to use the site where its position offers convenient connections or for parking. The main problems identified through the survey were the lack of spatial organization, greenery, safe ty, and activities. These issues were not perceived as separate absences, but as related aspects of an environment without public function. On the other hand, a majority supported the preservation of its architectural character and its integration into the future development of the area.

This suggests that the building is not perceived only as a forgotten building, but as a part of the collective identity of the railway area. This survey was understood as evidence of concerns and priorities rather than as a direct point for a predetermined intervention. The existing constraints can be understood through a connected sequence.

The analysis shows that the main constraint of the former railway area is the transformation that is happening near it. The surrounding fabric has continued to change while the railway land has remained outside this process. As a result, the main constraint lies in the gap between the rapid transformation and the limited capacity that the area has.

A second constraint is fragmentation; the area is divided between different owners, responsibilities, and uses. Railway land, protected heritage, municipal responsibility, and existing activities are part of the area that make it difficult to treat the whole area as one process.

At the same time, the area shows several potentials for future transformation. The continuity of the railway land and its position between areas under development and inherited historical structure give the area an opportunity to transform differently from the others. A large amount of unbuilt land and the existing informal paths show that the site is already being used as a connection.

The surrounding development of new residential buildings, commercial ground floors, and existing businesses increases the number of people using the area and generates movement throughout the day. According to all this, the area shows a great capacity for change despite the constraints.

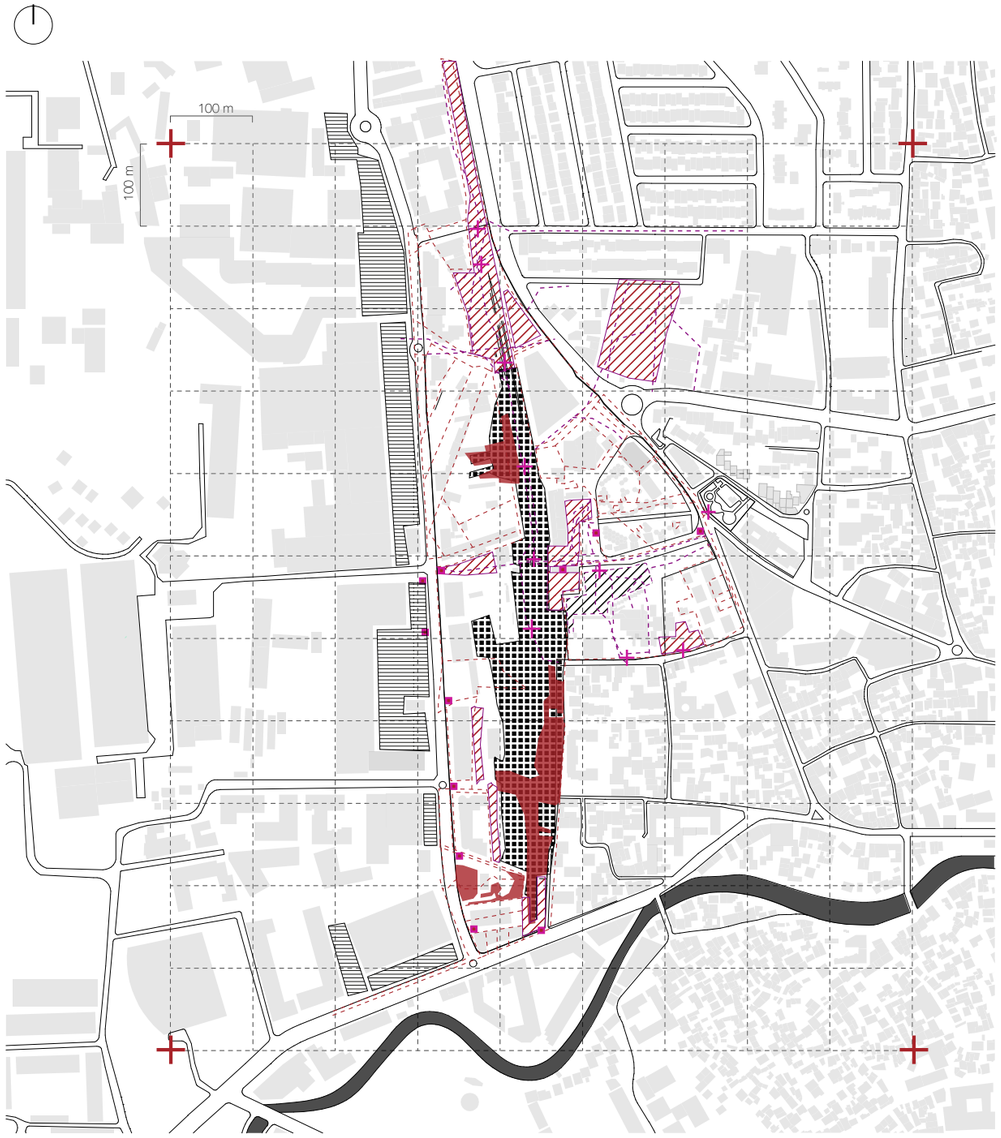
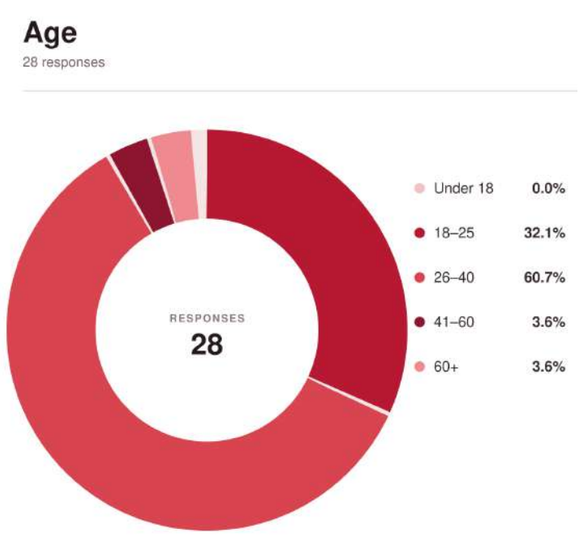
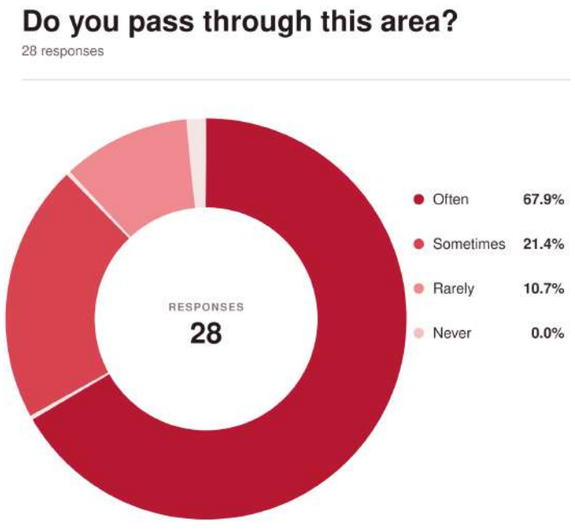
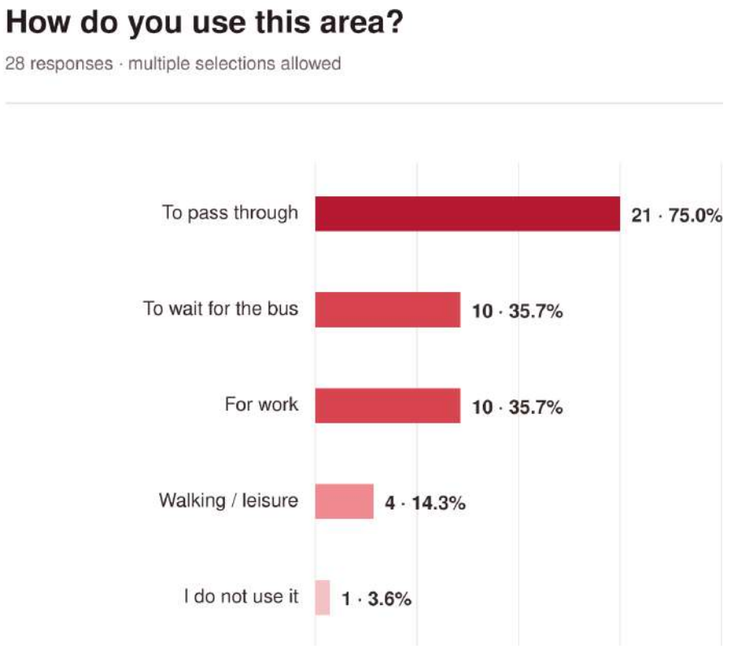


Fig 33 Map of opportunities and constraints within the Former Railway Area







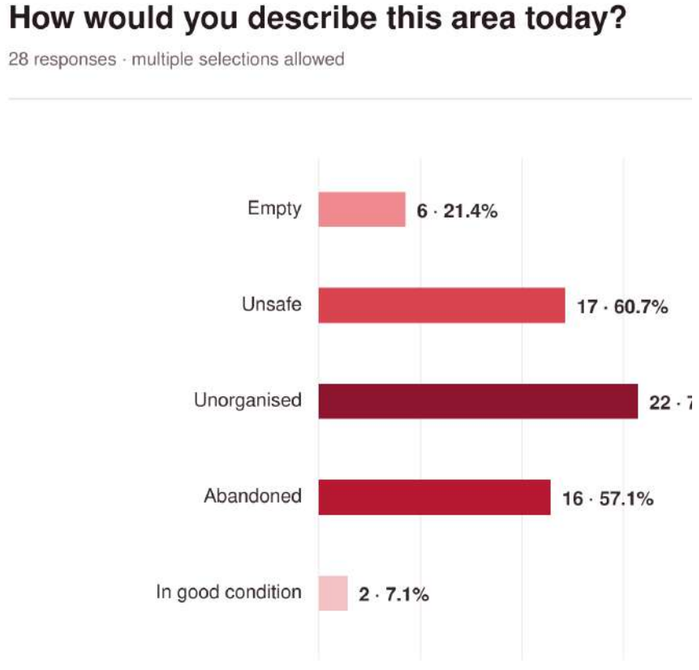
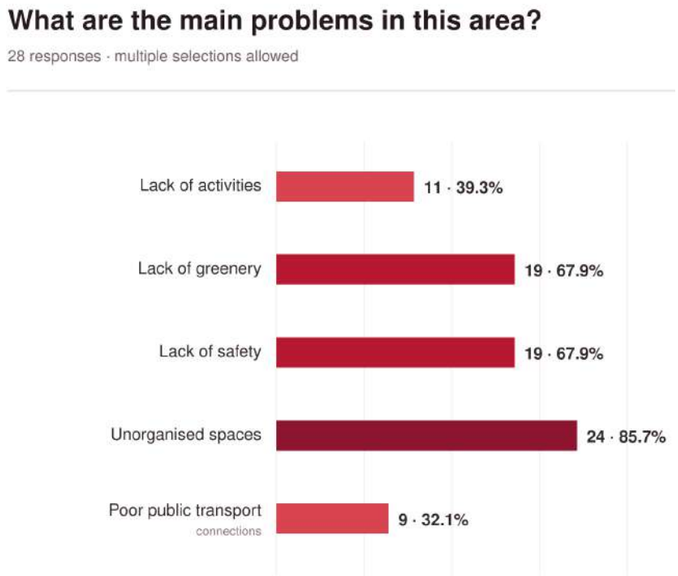
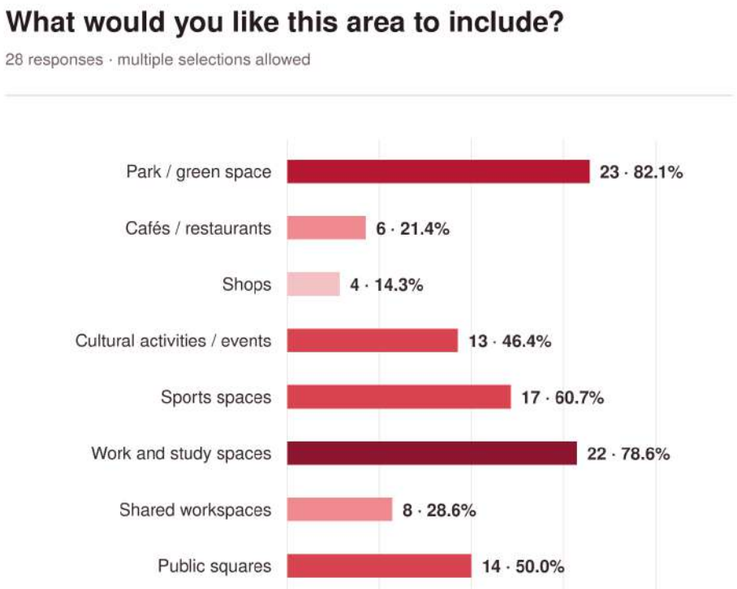


Fig. 34 Survey results on the perception and use of the Former Railway Area





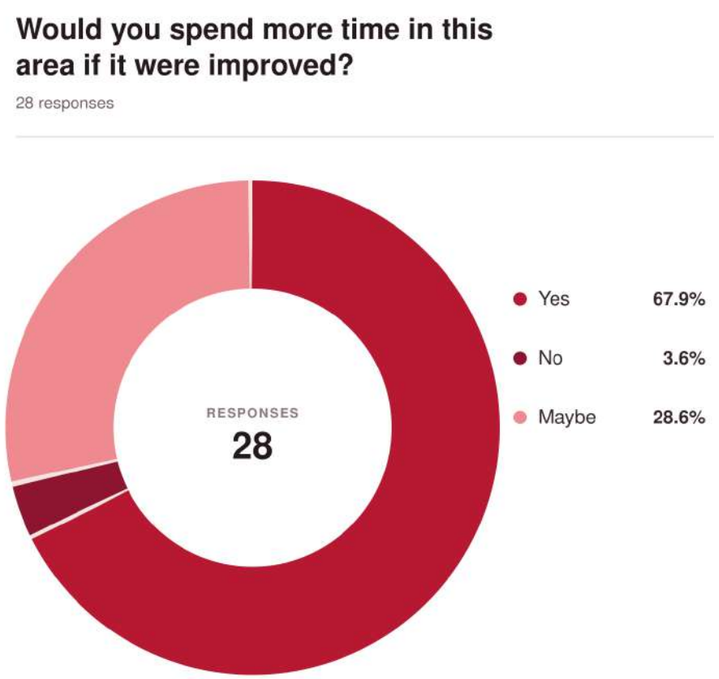


Fig. 35 Preferred future uses for the Former Railway Area

Still HERE

04

Design Regeneration Strategy

4.1 From Analysis to Strategic Framework

The strategic framework is organised through a set of spatial elements that respond to several objectives simultaneously rather than operating as independent interventions. The matrix illustrates the relationship between each strategic objective and the elements proposed within the framework, distinguishing between direct, supporting and indirect contributions.

This allows the strategy to be read as an interconnected system in which continuity, permeability, civic centrality, public-space provision and the integration of future development are achieved through the combined role of the public spine, transversal connections, nodes, hinges and potential development areas.

The longitudinal public spine establishes the principal structure of the strategy, supporting continuity along the former railway corridor while also contributing to public-space continuity and the integration of the surrounding urban fabric. Strategic transversal connections complement this longitudinal structure by increasing permeability and linking the corridor to the existing and future street network.

The primary node, centred on the former station, gives the framework a civic focus, while secondary nodes and public hinges reinforce connections at a more local scale. Potential public open spaces and development areas introduce a more flexible component, allowing the framework to accommodate future transformation without weakening its overall spatial logic.

This matrix does not define a final physical solution. Instead, it demonstrates how the different strategic elements work together to support the objectives that guide the regeneration. These relationships are translated spatially in the Strategic Framework Map.

strategic objective	longitudinal public spine	strategic transversla connections	primary node	secondary node	potential public hinge	potential public open space	potential development area
longitudinal continuity	●	○	◦			○	
transversal permeability	○	●	○	●	●	◦	◦
street network integration	○	●	○	●	●	◦	○
station reactivation	○	◦	●	◦	○	○	
civic centrality	○	○	●	○	○	○	◦
public space provision	●	○	○	◦	○	●	○
public space continuity	●	○	○	◦	○	●	○
residential integration	○	○	◦	○	●	●	●
public realm integration	○	○	○	○	●	●	●
development coordination	○	◦	◦	◦	●	○	●
urban fabric integration	●	●	○	●	●	○	○
development adaptability	●	○	◦	○	○	○	●
phased transformation	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
future flexibility	○	◦	◦	◦	●	○	●

● direct relationship

○ relevant / supporting relationship

◦ weak / indirect relationship

blank - no significant relationship

Fig. 37 Relationship between Strategic Objectives and Spatial Elements

The strategic map shows the objectives of the regeneration into a spatial framework for the former railway area. It contains the main relationships that future interventions should reinforce.

The former railway corridor is treated as the principal longitudinal public spine, providing continuity through the study area and creating a common structure between parts of the city that are currently developing independently. Its position also allows the regeneration to connect with wider urban directions, including the city center, the University of Prizren and areas of continuing expansion toward the north-west.

The longitudinal structure is reinforced by a series of transversal connections that link the corridor with the existing and planned street network. Their role is not only to improve access to the railway area, but to reduce its condition as a separating edge and establish stronger relationships between neighborhoods on both sides. At key intersections, nodes and potential public hinges identify locations where movement, public activity and surrounding development can be brought together.

The former railway station occupies the most important of these positions and acts as the main node of the framework, where the longitudinal spine and transversal connections converge. The strategy also identifies potential public open spaces and development areas in relation to these connections rather than as independent parcels. This is particularly important where recent residential expansion is approaching the former railway territory. Instead of preventing this development, the framework seeks to guide its relationship with the public realm by preserving connections, introducing shared open spaces and maintaining continuity along the corridor. In this way, the map creates a structure capable of coordinating existing urban fabric, current development and future transformation



Fig. 38 Strategic Spatial Framework for the Regeneration of the Former Railway Area

4.2 Actors and Conditions of Transforamtion

The spatial strategy, cannot be considered independently from the land owner condition. The study area does not have a single actor, the former railway land is characterised by overlapping responsibilities and different form of control. Thats why the interventions identified in the strategic map cannot be implemented together or as the same process.

When translated into implementation terms, these two relationship produce different conditions of transformation. Some interventions can respond to processes underway, while the other require coordination between actors or remain dependent of later decisions. Therefore the strategy uses phases to repsond the different levels of dependency for transformation.

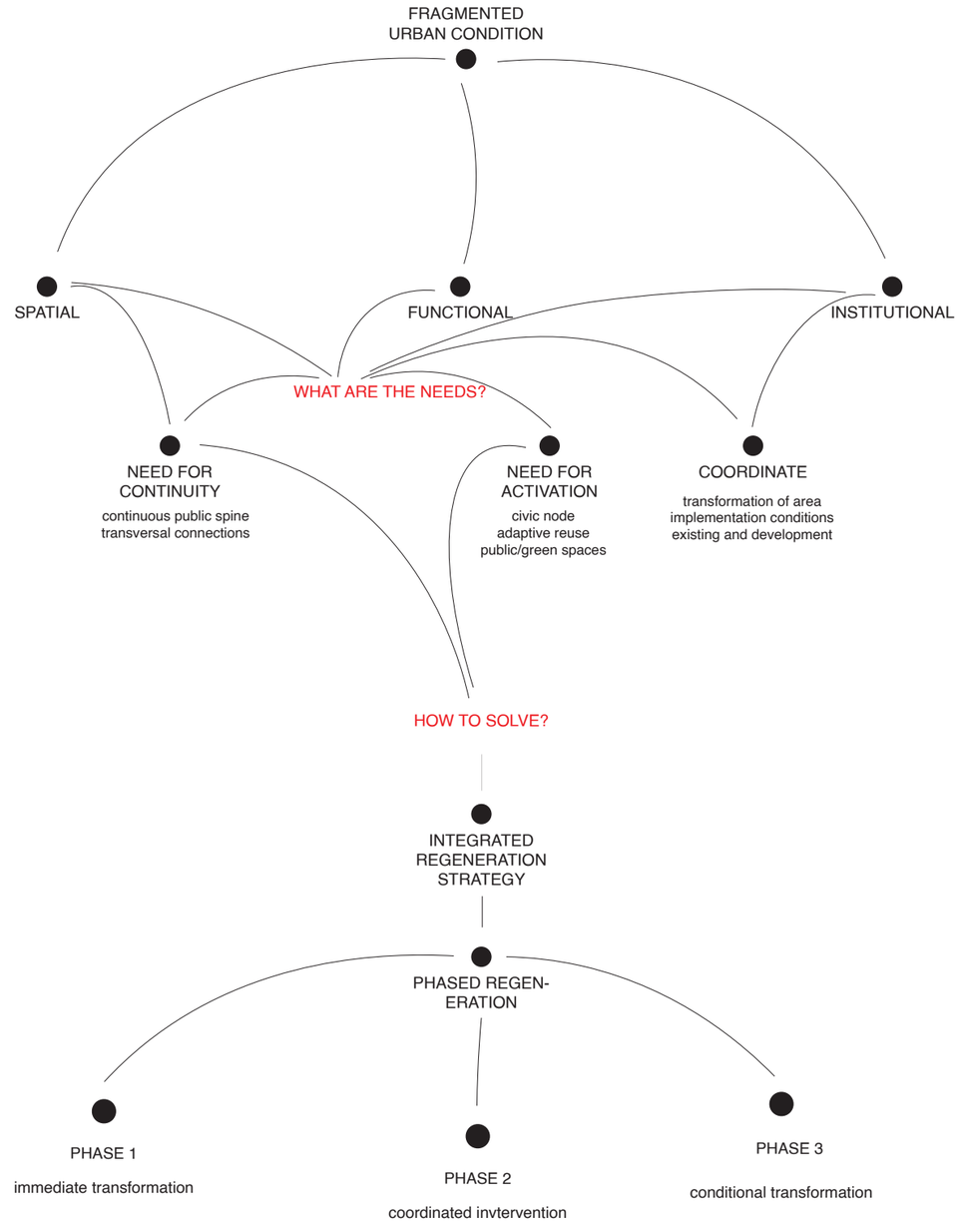


Fig. 39 Stakeholder roles across the Strategic Regeneration Phases

4.3 Phased Urban Regeneration

The regeneration strategy is organised through three phases in order to avoid treating the former railway area as a single project that must be realised all at once. The phases are not defined only as a construction sequence, but as a way of directing transformation according to different levels of immediacy, complexity and uncertainty. Each phase is therefore expected to function independently while also preparing the conditions for the following one.

This allows the regeneration to begin where intervention can have an immediate effect, while more complex or uncertain parts of the site can be incorporated progressively. Different parts of the site are subjects to different development pressures, ownership conditions, existing uses and private investments. Some areas are already changing rapidly, while others remain dependent on institutional decisions or possible future relocation of existing functions. For this reason, phasing is treated as a fundamental part of the regeneration strategy.

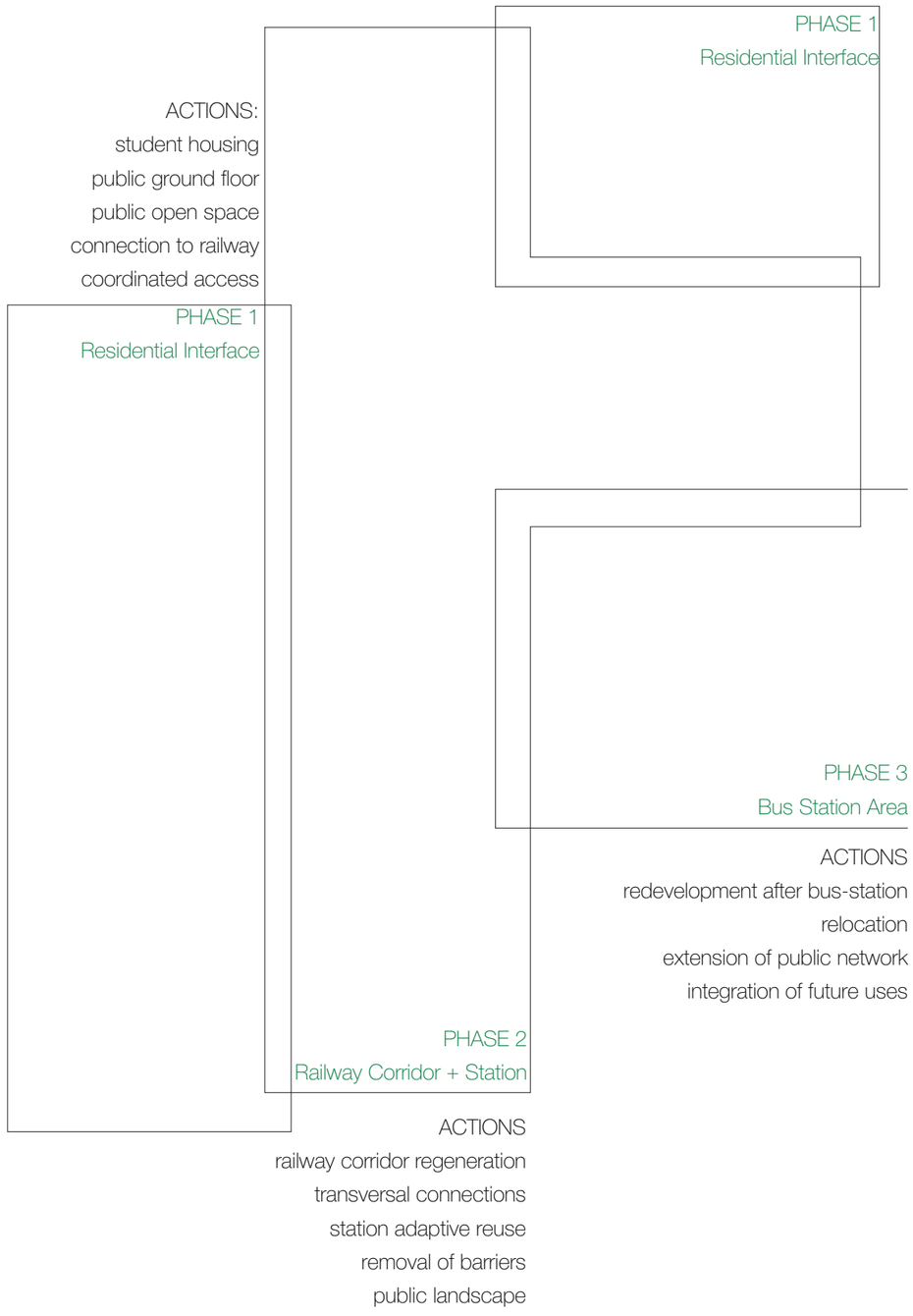


Fig. 40 Implementation phases and key actions of the strategic regeneration

Phase 1- Residential Development

The first phase is focused on the edges of the railway corridor. It starts from the existing parcel structure, and the most influenced actors associated with it are private parcel owners. Most of the land included in this phase is privately owned, while the railway corridor remains under Infrakos ownership and is therefore kept outside the area for this phase of intervention. The Municipality of Prizren has a coordinating role in relation to public space, access and the planned street network, while private owners and developers remain the main actors in the transformation of individual parcels. This feature allows the first phase to operate independently from the institutional and ownership conditions required for the later transformation of the railway land.

Within the private parcels, the strategy keeps the existing buildings that are selected according to their present role and their relationship with the ongoing transformation of the surrounding area. Recent residential development and active buildings that can remain within the proposed structure are retained, while underused structures and temporary light structures are removed where they prevent the formation of a more coherent spatial arrangement. A different condition is represented by low-rise buildings, commercial structures and construction yards located within areas already affected by redevelopment pressure. Their removal is proposed selectively where their position conflicts with the spatial structure of the phase, rather than on the assumption that their current use has become obsolete. In this way, demolition becomes a operation that releases specific areas for redevelopment while maintaining those that can continue to function within the new configuration.

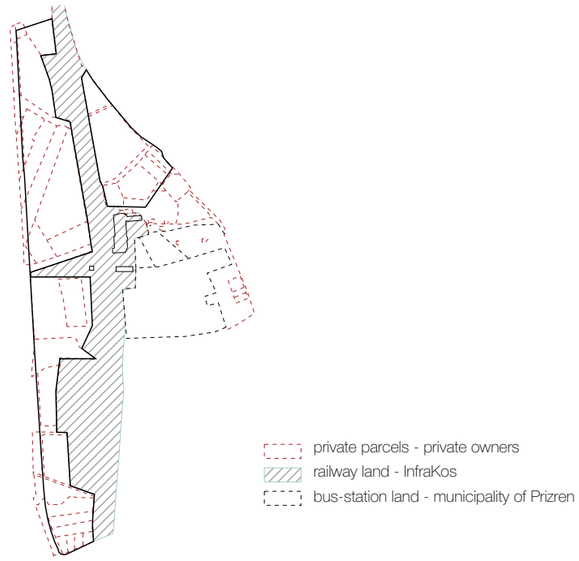
The spaces released through these interventions are organized through the network of connections and public spaces before new building volumes are proposed. Existing streets remain the primary points of access, while new pedestrian routes extend through the redevelopment parcels and establish a more coherent structure between them. Where these routes reach the boundary of the railway land, they end as future connection points rather than extending into the corridor during this phase.

The planned street extension identified by the urban plan is similarly acknowledged but not implemented as part of the first phase. Its alignment is followed within the spatial structure so that development during this phase does not interrupt its later continuation across the railway corridor.

Public and green spaces are positioned in relation to this movement network rather than as residual areas between new buildings. Public nodes are introduced where pedestrian routes, building programs and existing or future connections merge, while permanent green spaces provide local open space within the new residential buildings. Other spaces are proposed as temporary uses where their long-term use depends on the transformation of the railway corridor. This feature allows phase 1 to create usable public space from the beginning without fixing areas whose role will change once the second phase is implemented.

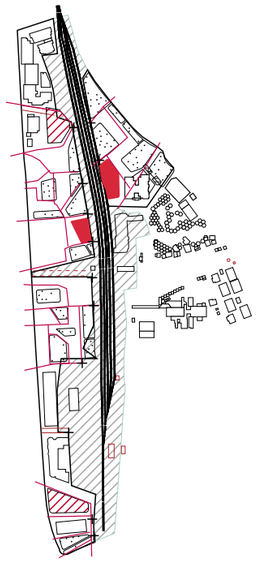
Only after this spatial framework has been established are new programs included. New residential development follows the scale and orientation defined by the surrounding urban condition, while the student dormitory and kindergarten provide for the needs of this expansion. Parking required by the new residential development is incorporated within its redevelopment parcels. Where permanent access depends on infrastructure that will only be completed in a later phase, temporary surface parking provides an intermediate solution. Existing parking occupying the railway land remains in use during the first phase rather than designing as an intervention on Infrakos property.

The resulting condition is a completed first stage rather than a fragment of the final masterplan. New buildings, public spaces and pedestrian routes can function with the existing street network, while the railway corridor remains physically unchanged. Therefore, the first phase does not anticipate the railway transformation through premature design interventions on the corridor, but through the organization of the adjoining parcels so that their redevelopment does not reproduce the existing fragmentation.



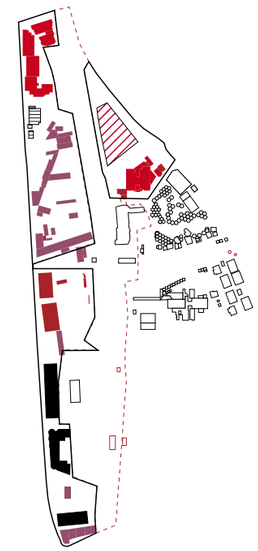
private parcels - private owners
railway land - InfraKos
bus-station land - municipality of Prizren

ownership of parcels



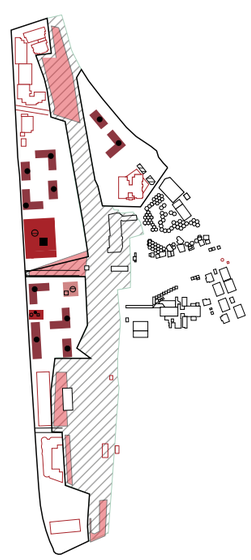
existing streets
planned street extension
proposed pedestrian paths
future connection points
proposed public spaces
proposed green public spaces
temporary public space
railway corridor - no intervention

connections and public space structure



recent residential development - retained
existing active buildings — retained
public building — retained
light / temporary structures - propose demolition
low rise buildings under redevelopment pressure - proposed demolition
commercial building under redevelopment pressure - proposed demolition

retain, transform and remove



existing buidings
proposed mixed-use residential buildings
proposed student dormitory
proposed kindergarten
temporary surface parking
existing parking on railway land - use them

actors invloved:
private investors
municipaity
university
public kindergarten operator

programme and use

Fig. 41 Phase 1- Implementation process: from existing conditions to proposed intervention

Phase 2 - Railway corridor and Former Train Station

Phase 2 is implemented as a coordinated transformation of the railway corridor and former station area. Because the intervention takes place primarily on Infrakos land and includes the reuse of the railway station, implementation begins with coordination between Infrakos, the Ministry of Culture, and the Municipality of Prizren. This establishes the land and institutional conditions required before physical transformation of the corridor can begin.

The first physical intervention is the selective removal of elements that prevent the railway land from functioning as a continuous public space. Fences and unnecessary barriers are removed, existing informal parking is gradually cleared or reorganized, and selected structures that conflict with the proposed public-space system are removed. The railway station and relevant railway traces are retained and incorporated into the new spatial structure.

Once the corridor is opened, the transversal connections are established. Pedestrian routes prepared during the first phase are extended into and across the railway land, connecting separated parts of the surrounding neighborhoods. The planned street extension is implemented according to the wider urban plan and integrated with the new public-space network. These interventions create the main access points and crossings before the corridor is developed as a continuous landscape.

The longitudinal public spine is then introduced along the former railway alignment. A continuous pedestrian and green route connects the different sections of the site and links the new transversal crossings. Existing railway traces and retained elements are incorporated where they contribute to the legibility of the former infrastructure. The geometry of the route widens at selected intersections and program locations, allowing the circulation system to generate public spaces rather than functioning only as a path through the site.

These widenings form a hierarchy of public nodes along the corridor. The main node is developed around the former railway station, where the longitudinal route intersects with transversal movement and the public spaces are established between the station, the student dormitory, and the surrounding neighborhood. Smaller nodes are included at other crossings to support local activity, resting and access to adjacent development.

The adaptive reuse of the railway station is implemented as part of this public-space structure. The building is converted into a library and gallery, while its immediate surroundings are opened and connected to the linear park. Its activation gives the central node a permanent public program and establishes the station as the civic anchor of the regenerated railway corridor.

Parking and vehicular access are subsequently consolidated according to the new circulation structure. Parking that remained on the railway land during the first phase is removed from the public-space areas and relocated or reorganized in designated locations. Temporary parking introduced during the first phase can also be replaced where the new access allows these surfaces to become permanent green or public spaces.

So the second phase produces a continuous public corridor rather than a collection of independent interventions. The sequence moves from securing the conditions for transformation, to opening and reconnecting the railway land, establishing the longitudinal public spine.



phase 1 completed
phase 1 temporary public space
railway land - InfraKos
protected station building - Ministry of culture
existing railway tracks

institutional coordination



shared courtyard formed inside the small reused buildings
pedestrian spine parallel to the tracks
public space
proposed green public spaces
planned streets extension
connections continue from phase 1
linear planting
pedestrial pathways

connections and public-space structure



protected station building - retained and adapted
railway tracks - retained
active travel-agency spaces to be relocated - retained
poorly conditioned small structures - proposed demolition
fence - remove
occupied parkings - remove

retain, adapt and remove



existing buidings
station reuse: library and gallery
tech / creative hub, co-working and coffee
shared courtyard
linear park
public open space
actors invloved:
infrakos
private investors
municipaity
university
ministry of culture
tech-hub operator

programme and use

Fig. 42 Phase 2- Implementation process: from existing conditions to proposed intervention

Phase 3 - Long-term Bus Station area Transformation

The third phase is dedicated to the long-term transformation of the bus station area since it is dependent on the future relocation of the bus station. Nowadays, the bus station occupies a large parcel of this area. While this function remains active, the strategy allows the first two phases to function independently while preserving the possibility of incorporating this area later.

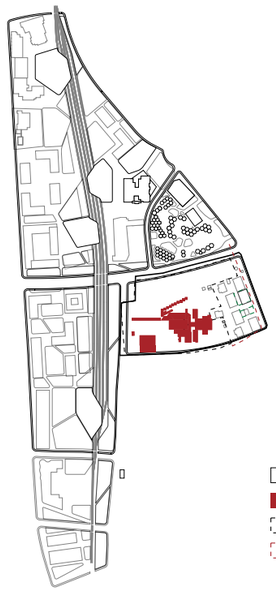
Once the bus station is relocated, the site allows us to reconsider the area for a wider regeneration that includes a mixed-use extension that will include the whole area, not as single buildings. This responds to the development pattern of the construction that occurs today: individual parcels without coordination for public spaces and green areas. Repeating the same model on the former bus station would risk producing another internally fragmented development. As a result, the proposal's intention is to create a common spatial framework in which the buildings are organized in relation to the pedestrian paths, public spaces and green areas, allowing the individual investments to contribute to a larger urban structure.

The proposal is a visualization as a spatial development framework rather than a definitive masterplan. The new building volumes indicate the possible scale, distribution, and the relationship between built and open spaces, while allowing future development to adapt within this overall structure. The scale and form of the proposed buildings are informed by the surrounding existing urban fabric. Along the edges facing the smaller-scale buildings, the new volumes are kept and broken into smaller masses rather than forming a continuous large block. This reduces the difference in scale between the new development and the existing one, by creating a gradual spatial transition across the street.

Based on this, the building arrangement should respond not only to the development capacity but also to the dimensions and rhythms of the existing fabric. Since the future ownership and development of the site is not defined yet, the proposal does not depend on land sale.

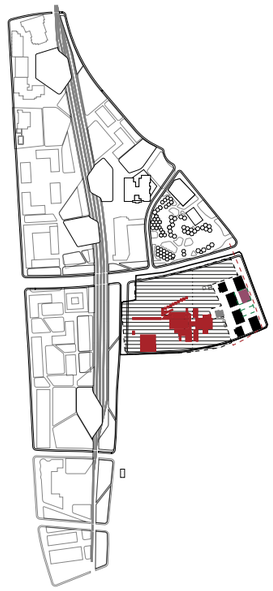
The implementation of this phase would require coordination between the Municipality of Prizren, the landowner, and future development actors. The municipality has the main role in deciding the redevelopment framework and keeping the continuity of the public space and pedestrian system, while on the other hand the individual buildings may be implemented over time by public or private actors depending on the future of the landowner and development arrangements.

n this way, phase 3 completes the regeneration strategy by integrating the former bus station area as an area that will develop over time, by remaining consistent with the surrounding relationship. Its aim is to prevent this area from developing into another fragmented part of the city.



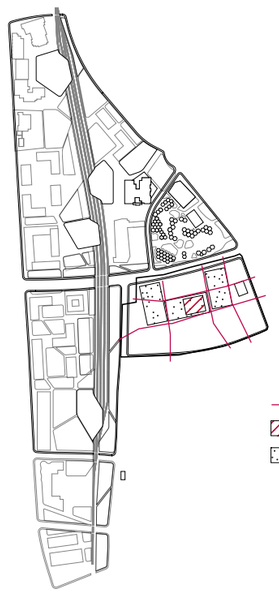
phase 2 completed
planned bus station relocation
bus-station land - municipality of Prizren
private parcels - private owners

municipal ownership
and relocation



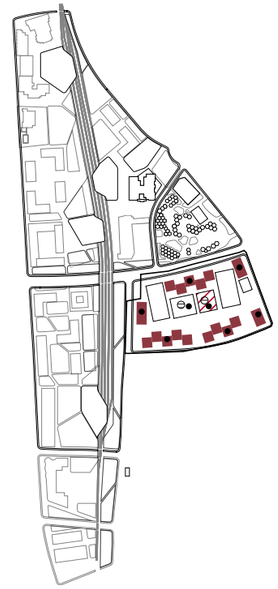
bus station buildings - proposed demolition follo
bus yard - proposed removal after relocation
municipal land released for redevelopment
existing active buildings — retained
low rise buildings under redevelopment pressure

retain, transform and remove/demolish



pedestrial pathways
public open space
proposed green public spaces

connections and public space structure



proposed mixed-use residential buildings
public open space

actors invloved:
future private investors
municipaity

connections and public space structure

Fig. 43 Phase 3- Implementation process: from existing conditions to proposed intervention

05

Design Proposal

5.1 Masterplan

The masterplan brings together the spatial conditions through the regeneration strategy. It proposes a connected urban framework in which housing, collective facilities, public space and the former railway landscape form a continuous structure. The project transforms the existing fragmented condition into a neighborhood organized around shared movement, open space and everyday public use.

The former railway corridor becomes the main organizing element of the masterplan. Before, it functioned as a physical barrier between different parts of the area; now it is planned as a linear public landscape that connects the surrounding residential fabric. A continuous pedestrian and green strip follows the former railway alignment, while new transversal paths create connections between the neighborhoods on both sides of the corridor. In this way, movement is not treated only as access to individual buildings, but as a public structure that allows the site to operate together.

The public-space system is organized as a sequence of different spatial conditions rather than one homogeneous park. The linear landscape expands at important crossings and creates public spaces for meeting, resting and everyday activity. The central public space around the former railway station forms the civic focus of the proposal. Positioned between the station and the student dormitory, this space brings together pedestrian movement, cultural activity and collective life. The retained railway traces remain visible within the landscape, allowing the former infrastructure to continue to shape the identity and legibility of the site.

Existing and new buildings are arranged in relation to this public framework. New residential buildings extend the ongoing urban growth of the area, while collective programs such as the student dormitory and kindergarten bring facilities that serve the neighborhood population. Public ground-floor uses are positioned along key pedestrian routes and public spaces in order to create active edges rather than a closed residential ground floor. The former railway station is reused as a library and gallery, giving the central public space a permanent cultural program and establishing the building as a civic anchor within the new neighborhood.

The masterplan also responds to the different scales of the existing urban fabric. Larger new volumes are positioned where they can support the density and program of the new development, while along the edges facing smaller existing buildings, the proposed masses are broken down into smaller elements. This creates a more gradual transition between the existing low-rise fabric and the new mixed-use residential area. Open spaces, planted areas and pedestrian paths are integrated between these volumes, ensuring that the future development is structured by a shared public system rather than by individual building plots alone.

The former bus station area completes this framework as a long-term mixed-use residential extension. This allows future development to respond to changing ownership, investment and housing conditions without losing the continuity of the public realm. Active ground floors facing the public spaces support local activity, while residential uses above contribute to the everyday population of the area.

Therefore, the masterplan has to be understood as not a fixed final image, but as a spatial framework capable of guiding future transformation. Its main contribution is the creation of a coherent relationship between the former railway corridor, the reused station, new residential development and the future bus station area. By placing public space and pedestrian continuity at the center of the proposal, the project ensures that future growth contributes to a connected neighborhood rather than reproducing the fragmented development pattern already visible around the site.



Fig. 44 Masterplan of the Former Railway Area: Integrated Outcome of Phases 1, 2 and 3

5.2 Architectural Proposal

Although the regeneration strategy addresses the former railway area as a whole, a specific part of the site was selected for more detailed architectural development. The selected area includes the former railway station, the adjacent section of the railway corridor, the proposed student housing, and the public space between the two buildings.

This area was chosen because several of the key strategic actions identified in the previous chapter converge here, making it an appropriate place to test the broader urban strategy at a more detailed architectural scale.

The selected area brings together interventions related mainly to the first two phases of the regeneration strategy. The proposed student housing forms part of the transformation of the residential sector, while the adaptive reuse of the former station and the development of the linear public space are part of the regeneration of the railway corridor. Because of their proximity, these interventions can support one another rather than operate as separate projects.

The student housing has a continuous everyday presence and a new community of residents, while the reused station brings public and cultural programs to the area. Between them, the railway corridor becomes a shared public space where residential, public and cultural activities can meet and overlap.

Working between these two conditions allows the project to connect an inherited urban structure with new development rather than treating them as separate layers. The intervention acts as a spatial hinge between the existing neighborhood, the regenerated railway corridor and the future transformation of the wider area.

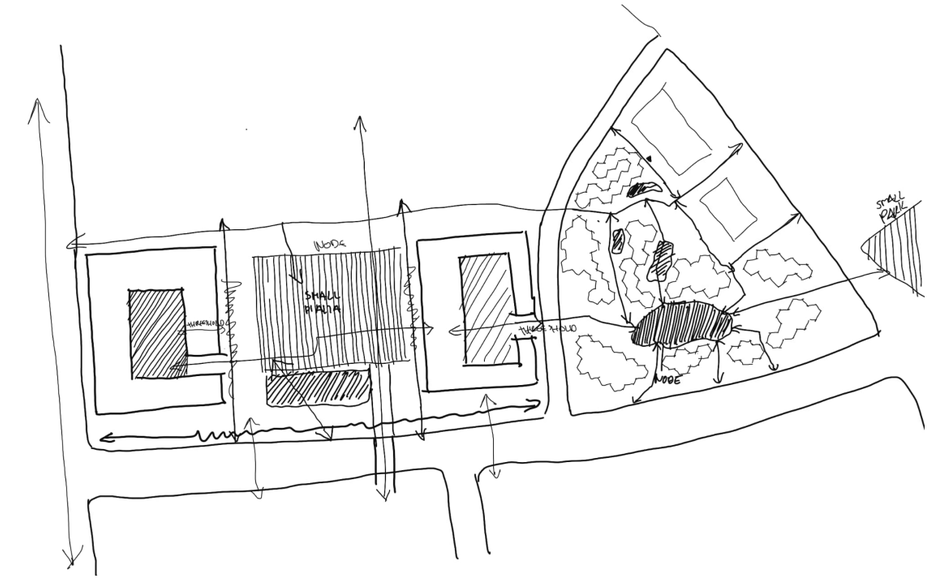


Fig. 45 Ground-Floor connectivity concept for the selected intervention area

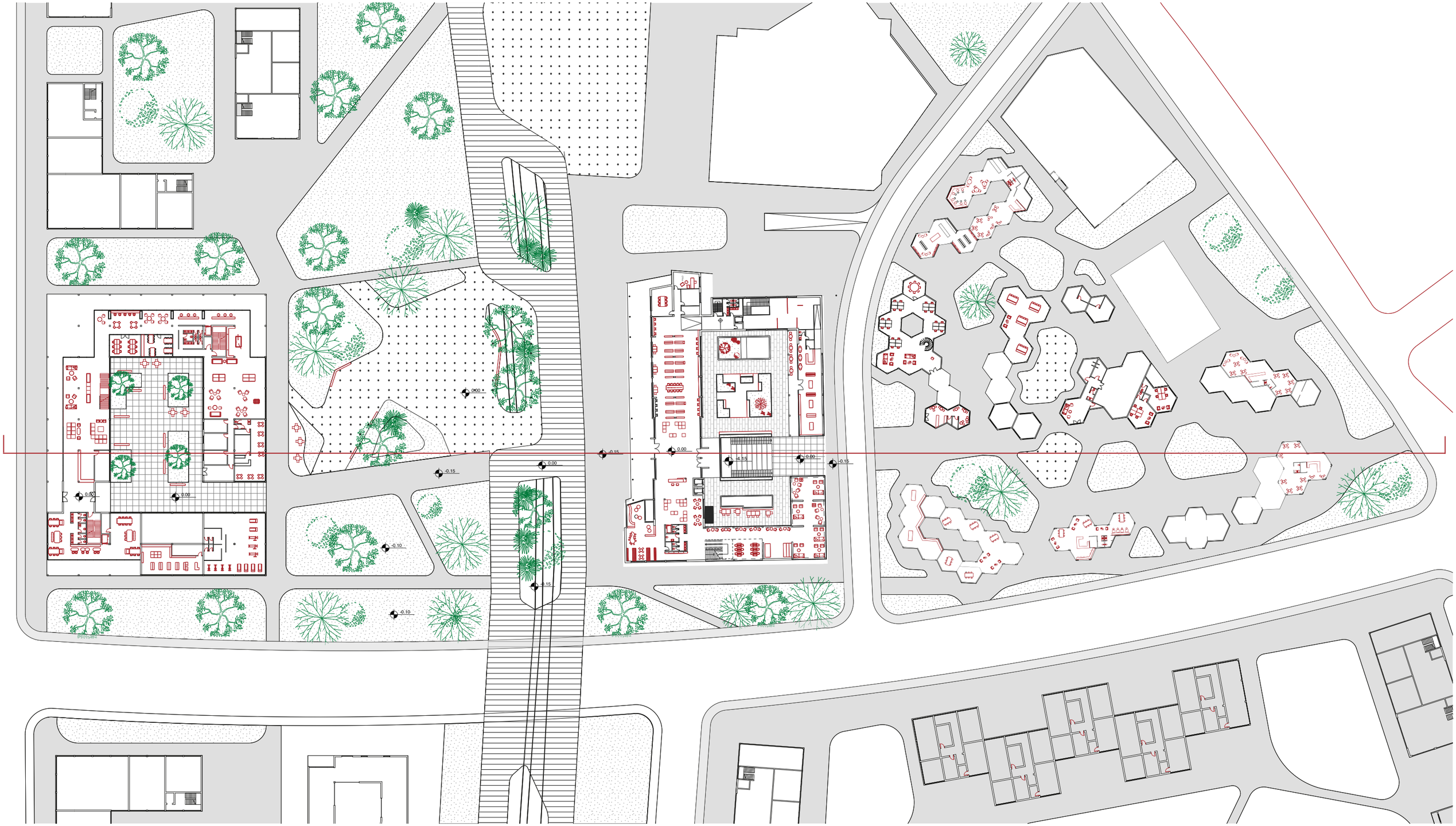


Fig. 46 Ground-Floor plan of the selected intervention area

5m 10m

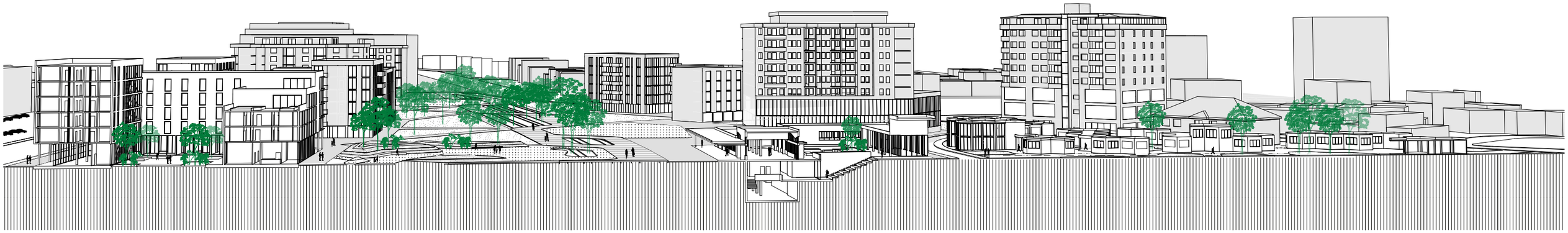


Fig. 47 Section through the selected intervention area

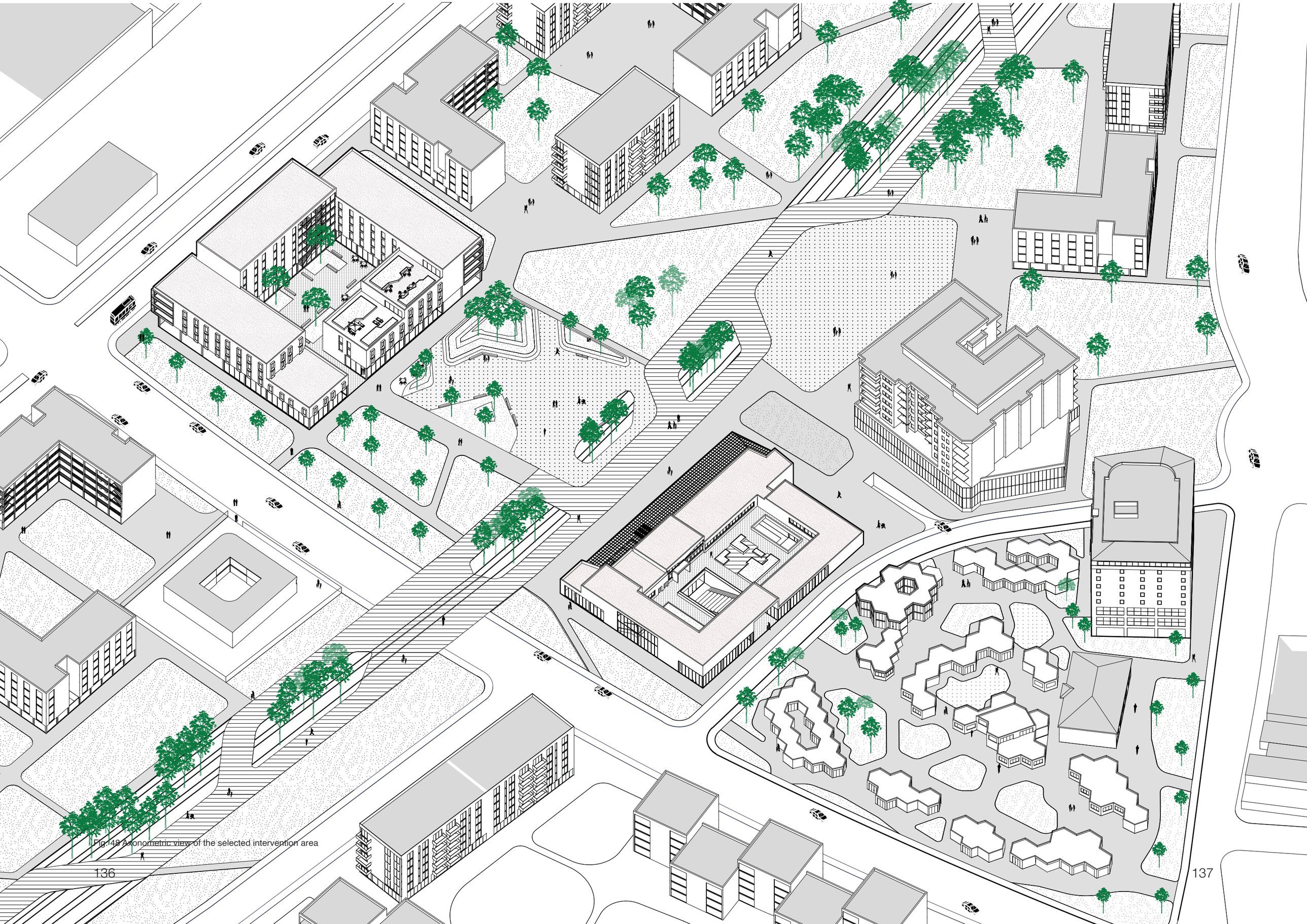


Fig. 48 Axonometric view of the selected intervention area

5.2.2 Adaptive Reuse of the Former Railway Station

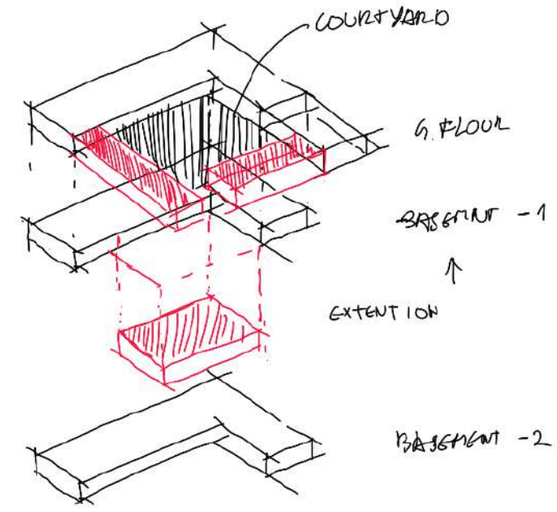
The former railway station is retained as the main inherited structure within the selected area. Its value depends on its former function, its protected status and the capacity to become a public building within the new neighbourhood. Therefore, the project reuses the building as an active part of the new public-space system, allowing its existing architectural character to remain visible while giving it a new civic role.

The proposed programme combines a public library on the ground floor with a contemporary art gallery in the existing basement levels. This combination responds to the different spatial qualities already present in the building. The ground floor is directly connected to the street, courtyard and public space of the former railway corridor, making it suitable for a transparent and accessible library. The lower levels, are more enclosed and are used for gallery spaces, where controlled light and a more immersive spatial order can support temporary exhibitions and contemporary installations.

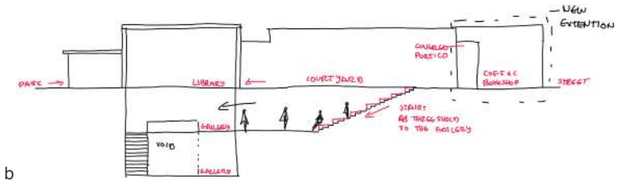
The intervention is organised around the principle of retaining the existing structure while introducing new elements only where they are necessary for use, accessibility and spatial connection. The original building is complemented by a new L-shaped extension along the street edge. Together, the existing and new volumes define a courtyard that acts as an intermediate space between the public street, the library and the gallery below. This courtyard becomes part of the public sequence, bringing light, visibility and movement into the centre of the intervention.

The ground floor of the extension is treated as a transparent public layer, allowing the exisitng facade to be seen and activity of the library to be visible from the street and courtyard. Above it, the new upper level is limited to the library wing, while the main entrance area remains open in order to preserve the existing façade and the generosity of its entrance space. The new façade is differentiated from the existing building through vertical fins and recessed glazing, creating a contemporary addition that does not imitate the former station but remains in dialogue with its scale and rhythm.

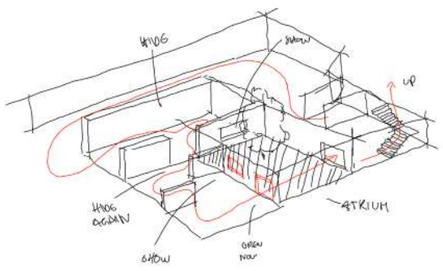
So, the adaptive reuse of the station establishes a relationship between memory and new use. Its former role as a point of arrival is translated into a new civic function: a place of access to knowledge, culture and public life. Connected to the linear park, the dormitory and the central public space, the station becomes more than a reused building. It becomes the public focus through which the wider regeneration strategy gains an architectural and everyday presence.



a



b



c

Fig. 49 Conceptual development of the adaptive-reuse proposal for the former railway station:
(a) existing building and extension of the L-shaped building; (b) formation of the public courtyard; (c) integration of atrium

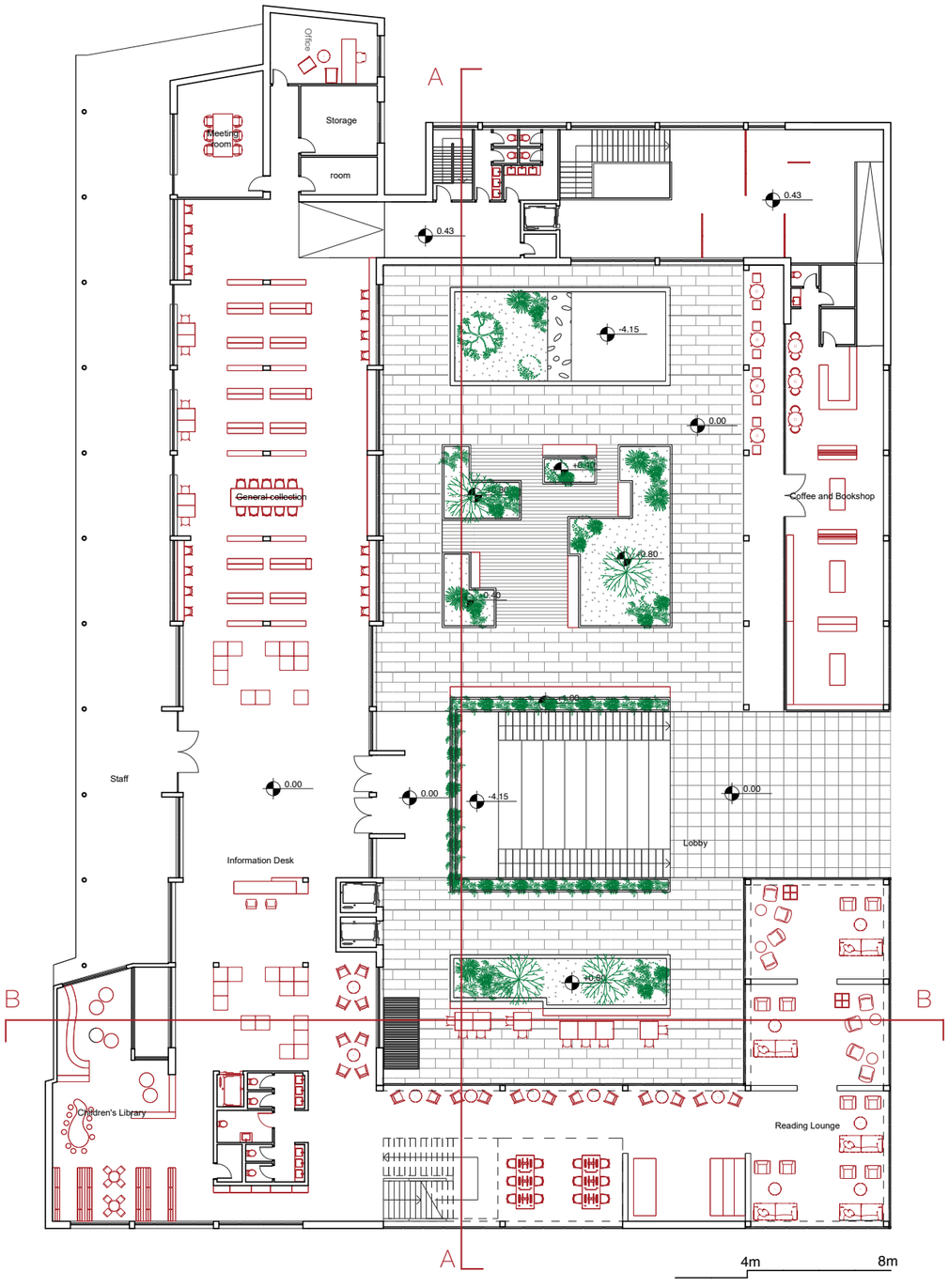


Fig. 50 Ground-Floor Plan

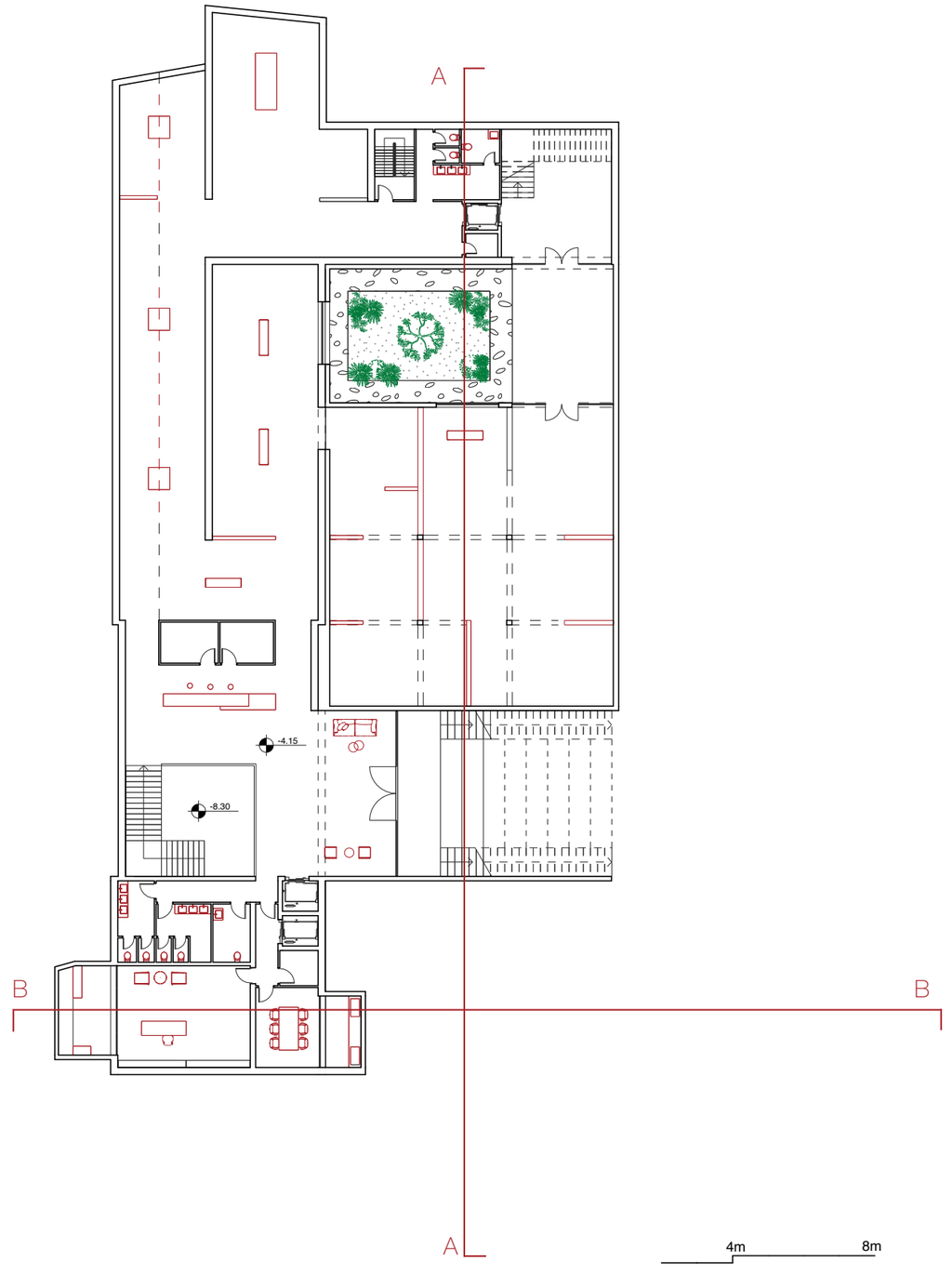


Fig. 51 Basement Level –1 Plan: Gallery

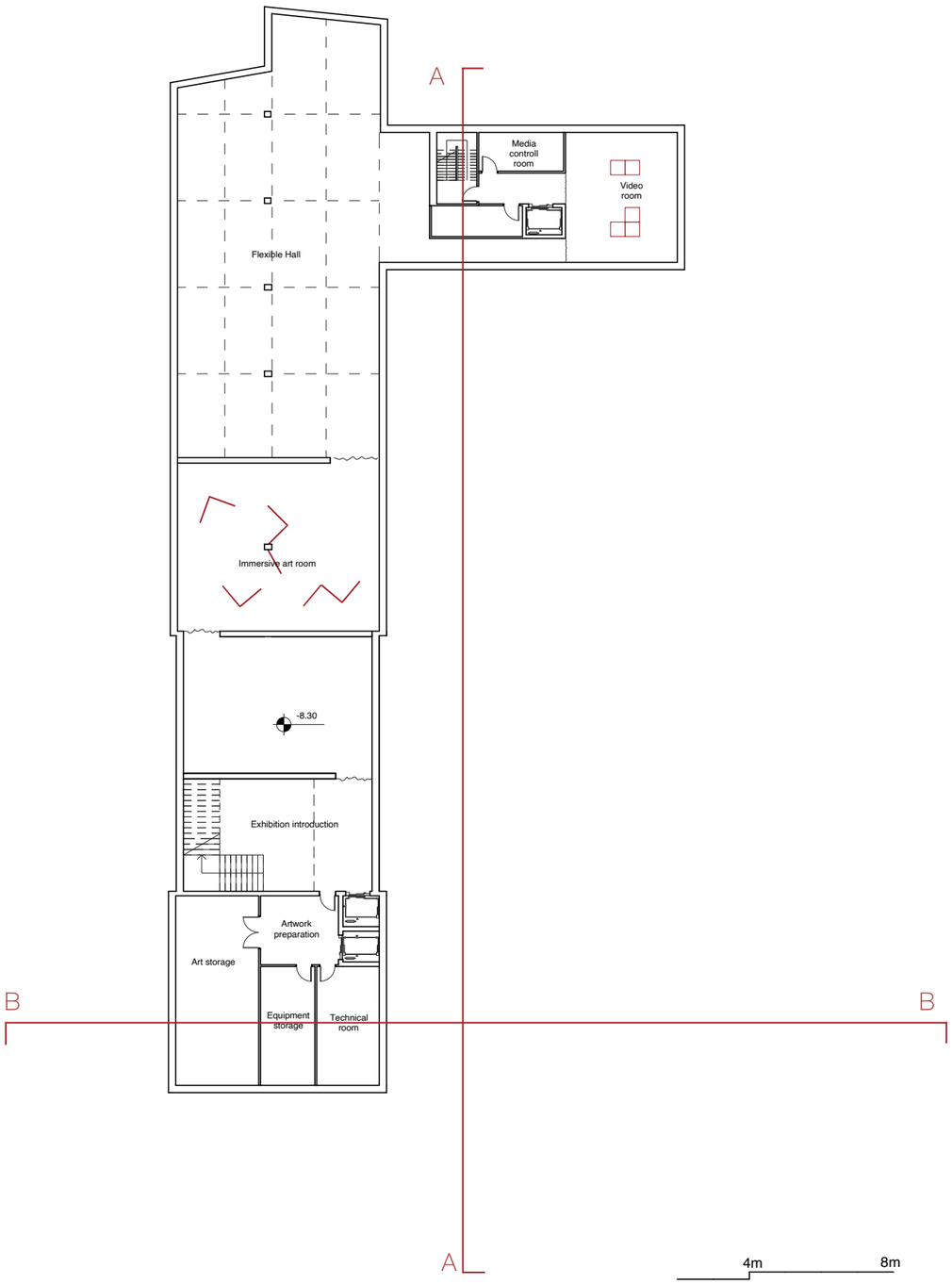


Fig. 52 Basement Level –2 Plan: Immersive Gallery

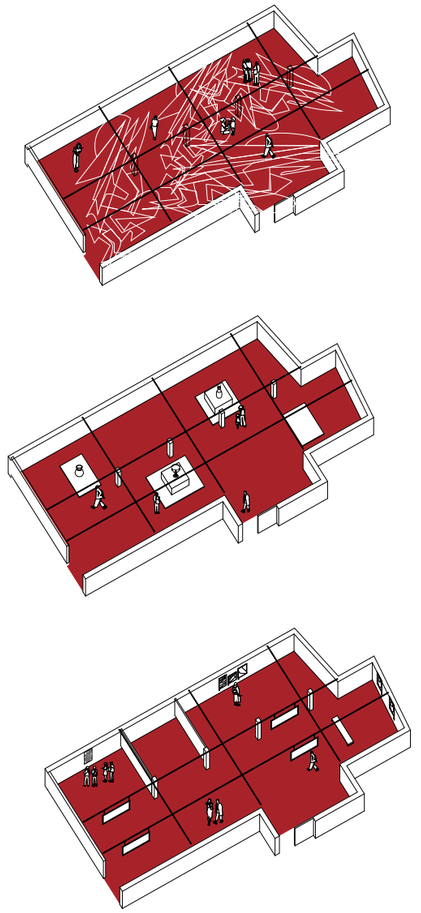


Fig. 53 Flexible Hall: Alternative scenarios

The second basement is conceived as the darker and more immersive part of the gallery. Not being part of the natural light, it provides a controlled setting for video, projection, sound, light-based, and installation artworks. Within this level, a flexible dark exhibition hall accommodates larger or changing temporary works. Its open configuration allows different exhibition layouts and spatial atmospheres without changing the overall character of the basement as a dark and immersive gallery environment. Rather than being divided into fixed rooms, the space remains largely open, allowing its layout, lighting, and exhibition sequence to be adapted according to the program.

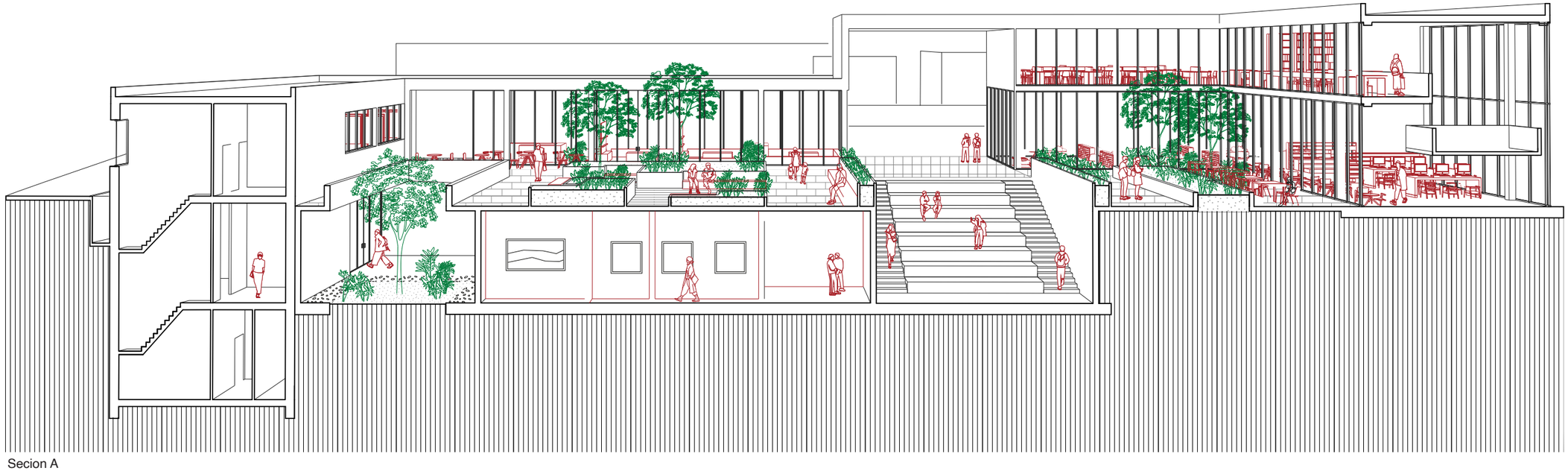




Fig. 54 Sections through the Adaptive-Reuse Proposal for the Former Railway Station



Fig. 55 East facade of Railway Station - Entrance from courtyard



Fig. 56 View from the courtyard



Fig. 57 Interior view of the reading lounge in the library



Fig. 58 View of the basement atrium

5.2.2 Student Dormitory

The student dormitory proposes a form of collective living within an area otherwise shaped mainly by individual residential development. Its role is not limited to providing accommodation. By bringing a stable population of students into the site, the building supports the everyday use of the public space, library, gallery and surrounding services throughout the day and evening. Therefore, it gives the regeneration strategy a permanent social presence rather than relying only on occasional cultural or commercial events.

The building is positioned in direct relation to the central public space and the former railway corridor. This location allows the dormitory to be integrated into the public life of the site while maintaining a clear difference between collective urban space and private residential space.

At ground level, the dormitory incorporates shared and public-facing uses that address the pedestrian routes and public space. This lower level acts as an interface between the students and the wider neighborhood, allowing the building to contribute to the activity and safety of the public realm. The residential floors above provide the quieter and more private student life, while shared internal spaces support interaction between them. Its architectural scale and massing respond to the surrounding condition by creating a clear urban edge without forming a large block. The relationship between building, entrances, public space and landscape is therefore as important as the accommodation itself. The dormitory is designed to face the civic space and the railway landscape, establishing visual and physical connections with the former station and the linear park.

Together with the reused station, the dormitory forms a complementary part of the area. While the station acts as a cultural and civic destination, the dormitory provides an everyday residential population. Their relationship activates the public space between them and transforms it into a shared setting for movement, meeting and daily use. In this way, the dormitory supports the wider ambition of the project: to turn the former railway area into a connected neighborhood rather than a sequence of separate buildings.

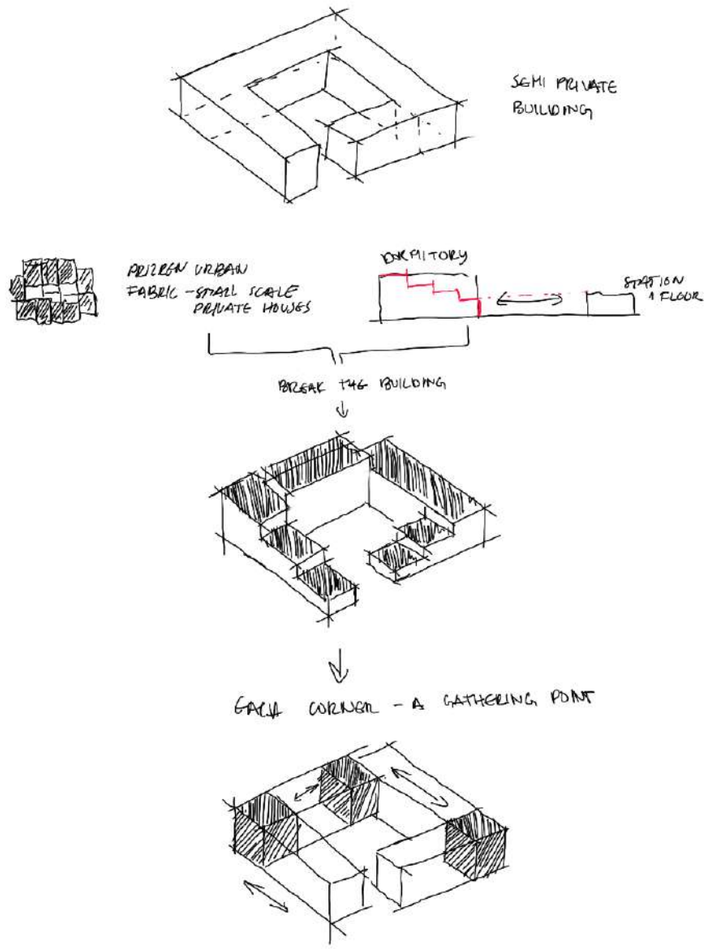


Fig. 59 Conceptual development of the student dormitory proposal

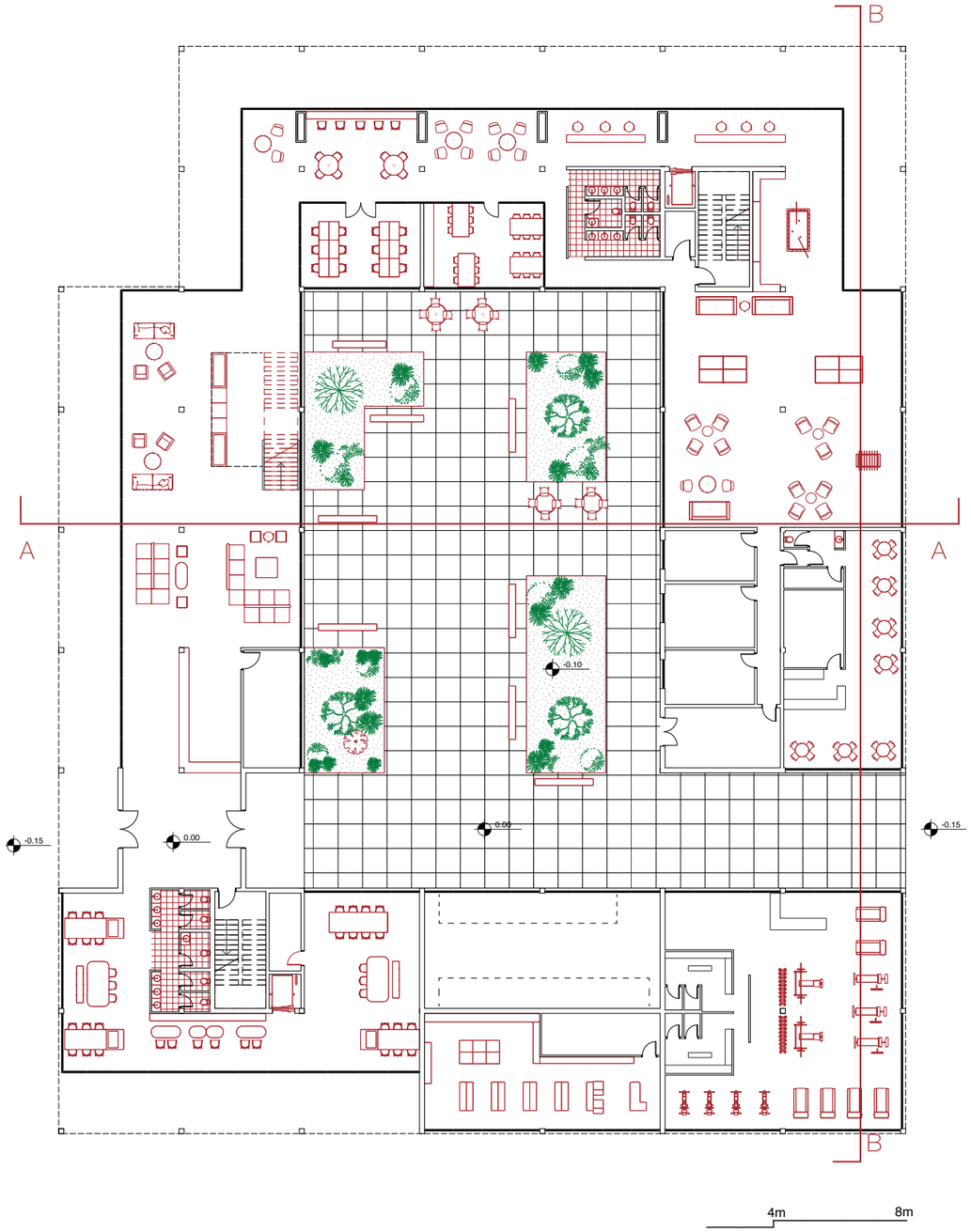


Fig. 60 Ground floor plan of the Student Dormitory

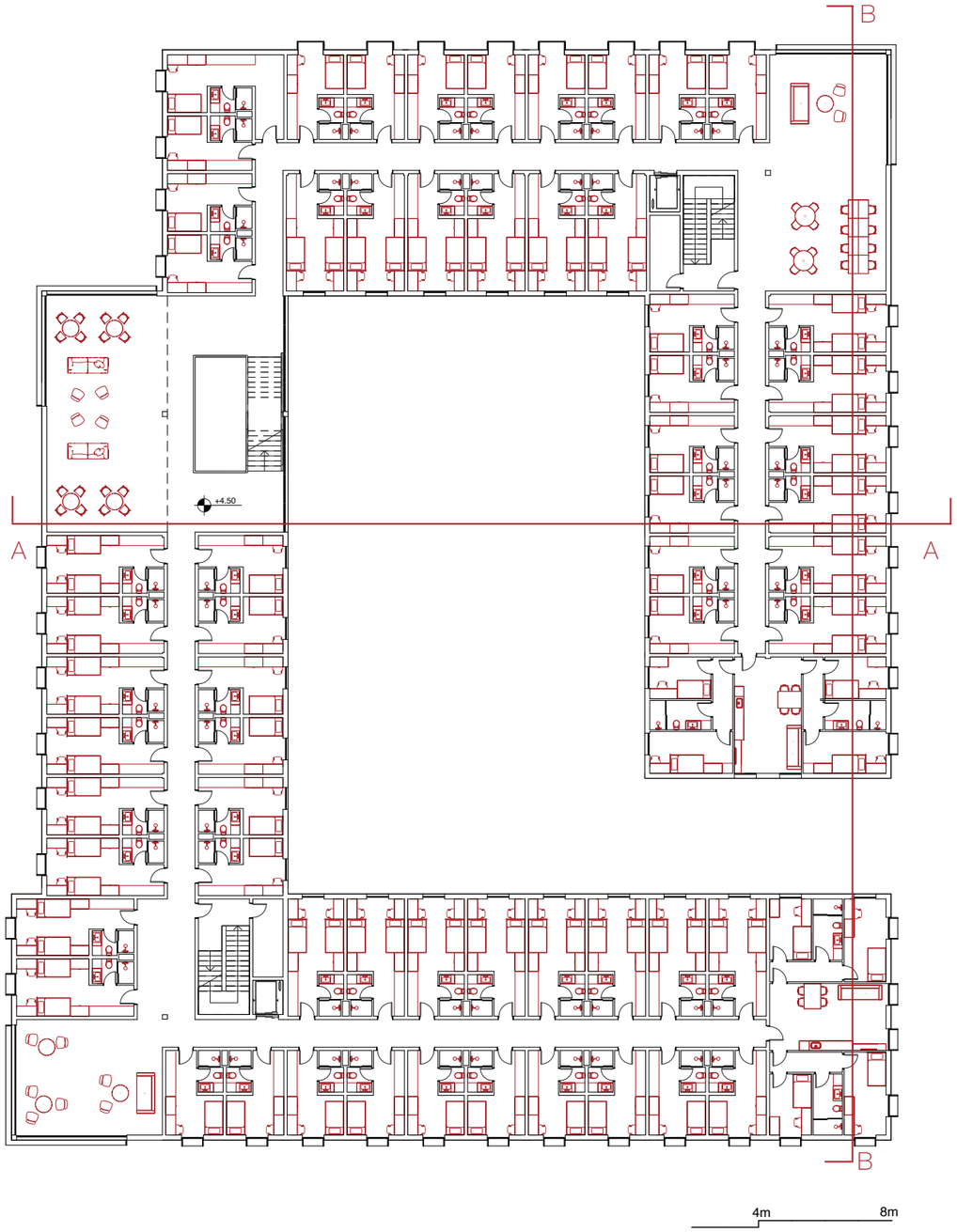


Fig. 61 First floor plan of the Student Dormitory

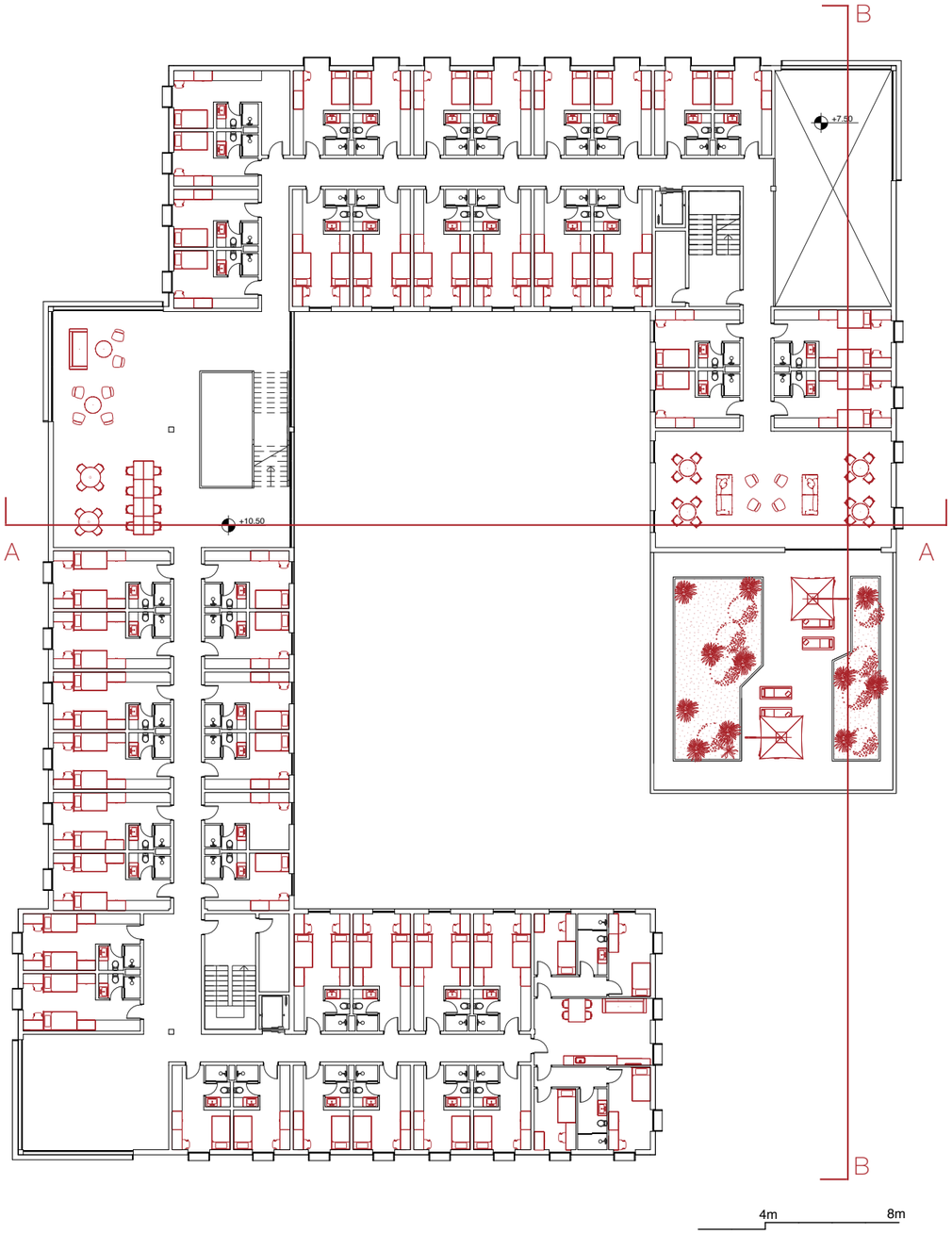


Fig. 62 Third floor plan of the Student Dormitory

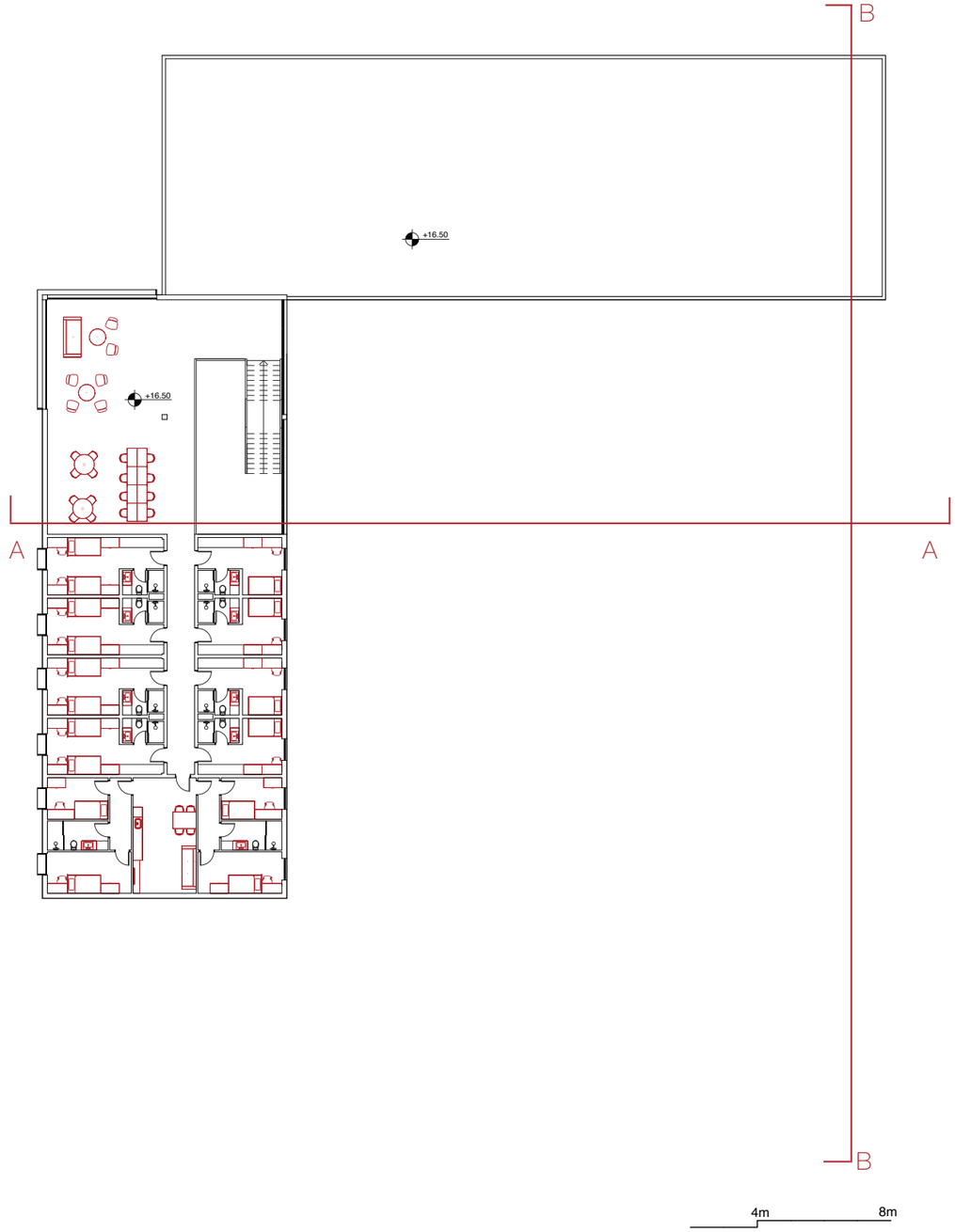


Fig. 63 Fifth floor plan of the Student Dormitory



Fig. 64 Sections of student dormitory



Fig 65. Courtyard public use



Fig 66. Main Facade - Street view



Fig 67. Interior view of the shared space and staircase



Fig 68. Student room in the student dormitory

Conclusion

The research question of this thesis can be answered by recognizing that the regeneration of the former railway area can contribute to the future urban development of Prizren while retaining its historical identity and considering that the former railway corridor is treated as a shared urban structure. Its transformation cannot be based on the replacement of an abandoned transport function with a single new development, but must relate public space, heritage, new programs and surrounding development within a coordinated framework.

The corridor becomes the framework for a linear public space, transversal connections and public nodes, allowing development on its edges to relate to a common structure rather than remain separated into individual interventions. The value of the project lies not only in adding green space or pedestrian routes, but in giving these elements a coordinating role. Public space becomes the condition that links existing urban fragments and guides future development.

The reuse of the former railway station gives this strategy an identifiable public focus. Its transformation into a library and contemporary art gallery does not attempt to recreate the former function of the building. Instead, it assigns a new role that can support both everyday use and cultural activity. Together with the student dormitory and the public space between the two buildings, the intervention demonstrates how new collective programs can support the regeneration of the corridor. Therefore, the architectural proposal is part of an urban strategy as a test of how the strategy can operate at a smaller scale.

The phased approach is the most important part of the project. It presents that the area cannot be transformed at once, because its different parts are controlled by different actors and are subject to different conditions. The first phase responds to the ongoing transformation of private parcels; the second depends on the coordination required to intervene on railway land and the protected station; and the third remains open to the future relocation of the bus station. Phasing is not presented as a simple construction schedule, but as a way of ensuring that each intervention contributes to a wider spatial structure even when implementation takes place over time.

The proposal does not claim to resolve the legal, financial and institutional conditions necessary for its realization. These depend on future cooperation between InfraKos, the Municipality of Prizren, heritage authorities, private owners and future operators. What this thesis provides is a framework for such cooperation: it identifies the spatial relationships that should be retained, strengthened or proposed if the area is to develop as a coherent part of the city. In this sense, the project demonstrates that the former railway area can become a public and cultural connector for Prizren, provided that future transformation is guided by collective spatial objectives rather than by individual development decisions.

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