

THE POTENTIAL OF A RUIN

Conceptual design of an abandoned high-rise building in Belgrade

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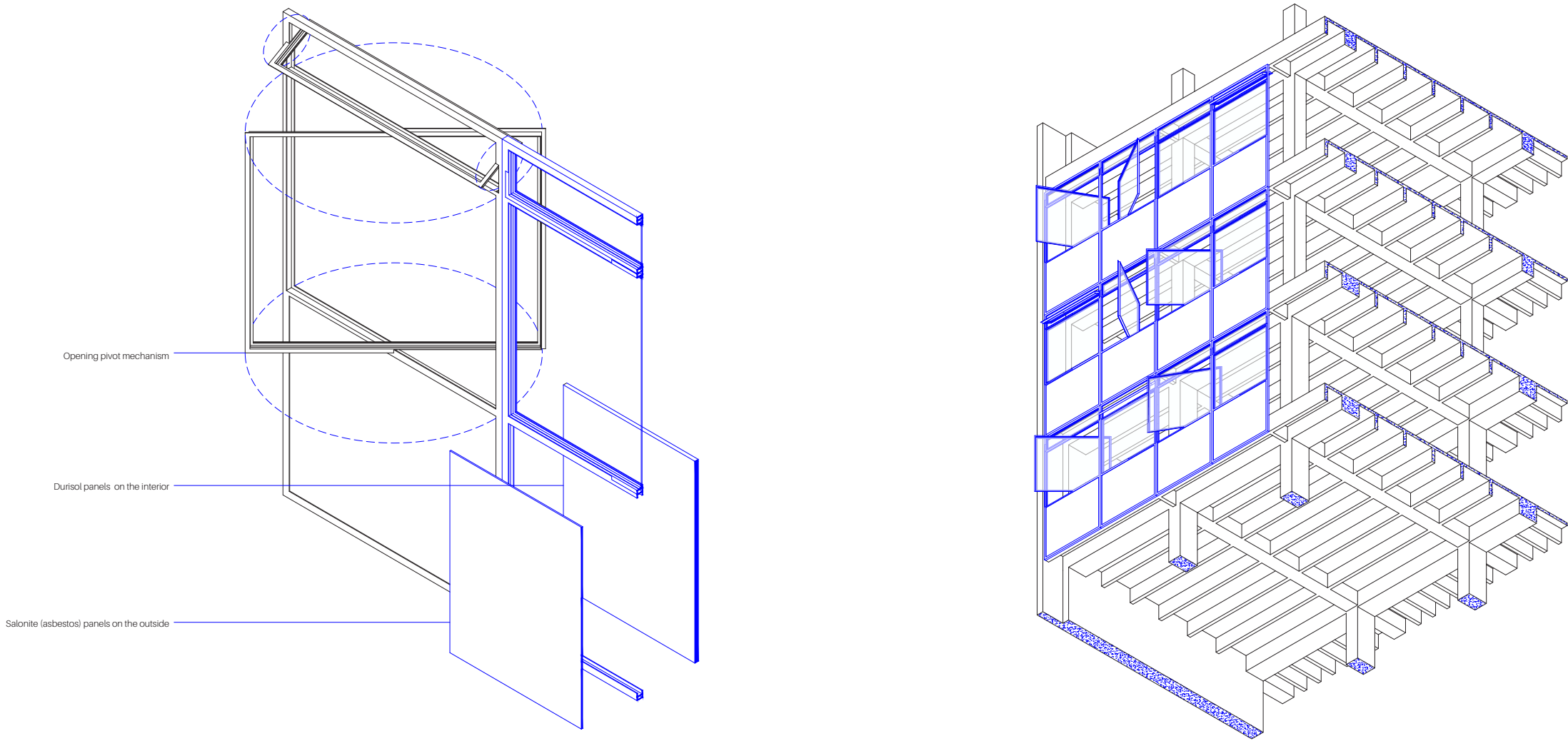
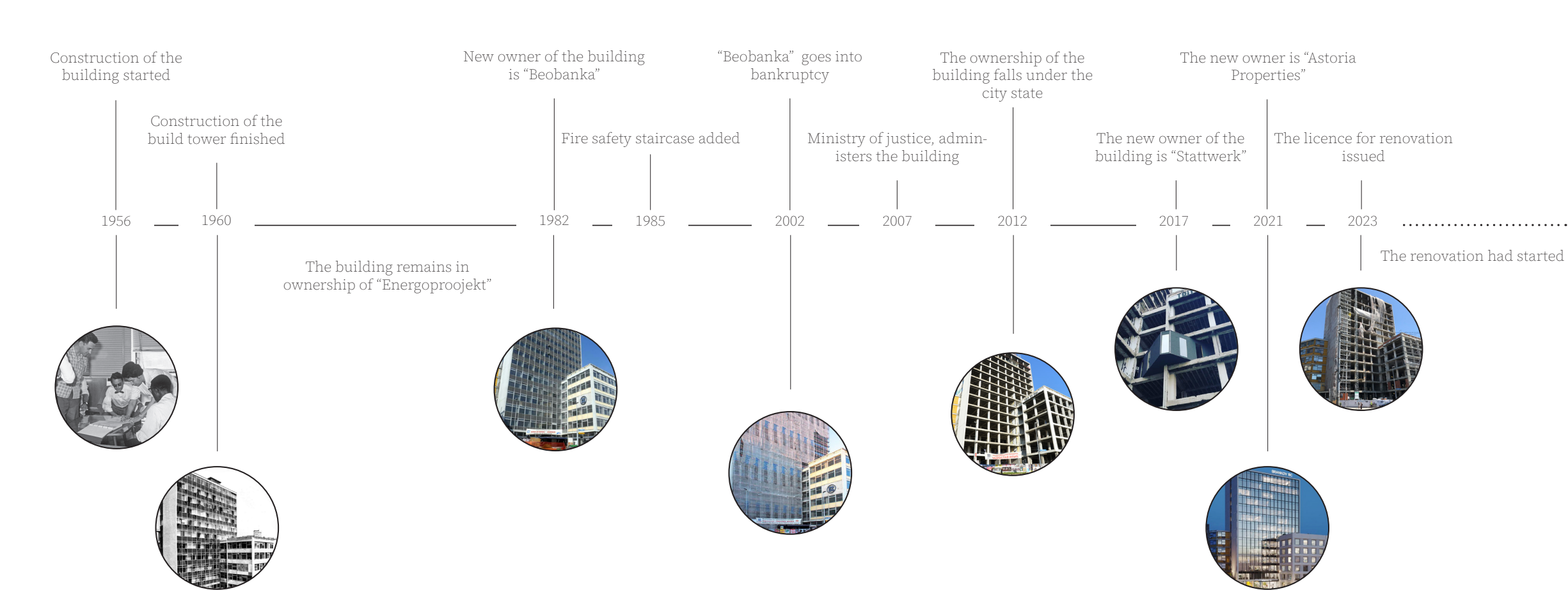
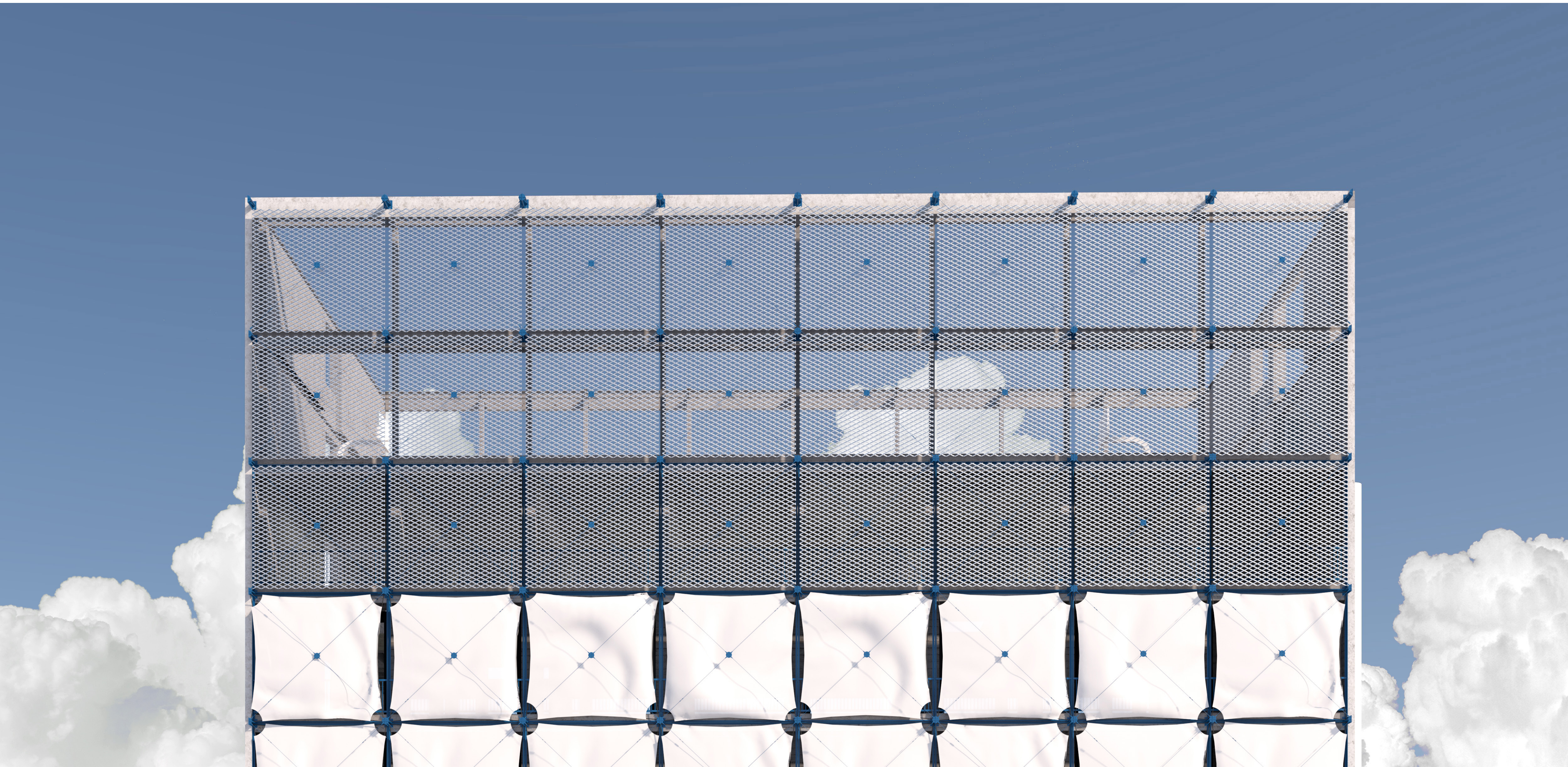
The city of Belgrade has been dramatically transforming it's cityscape in the past years. In the city's center, in a part known as Zeleni venac, stands a structure, once a prominent building today a ruin, known as Beobanka. The building has been obsolete for the past 20 years and has been subject to speculation.

By going trough the buildings history and analyzing the current situation the thesis provides an alternative approach to refurbishment and adaptation. The thesis is structured in three main parts.

Beginning with 'The Past', I touch on the theme of woman in architecture and Milica Sterić as the architect behind the building. By explaining the buildings history, I write about the International Style, the dominant trend in the architecture of the 60s. I also go over the facade and the structure as two separate topics.

The second part is 'The Present'. Here the city's current housing issue is being put forward, after which the topic of speculative development and it's affect on the city is being examined.

To conclude the second part, I speak about an alternative approach to housing, that being the cooperative. Two case studies are given as contrast. The third and final part, 'The Future', I write about hybrid buildings and the idea of incremental growth, and how it can be applied to the building. Also the future program and how it is superimposed in the structure. The potential of the new facade and how it enables the buildings use. Finally the load-bearing structure and how it's going to be altered for future use.



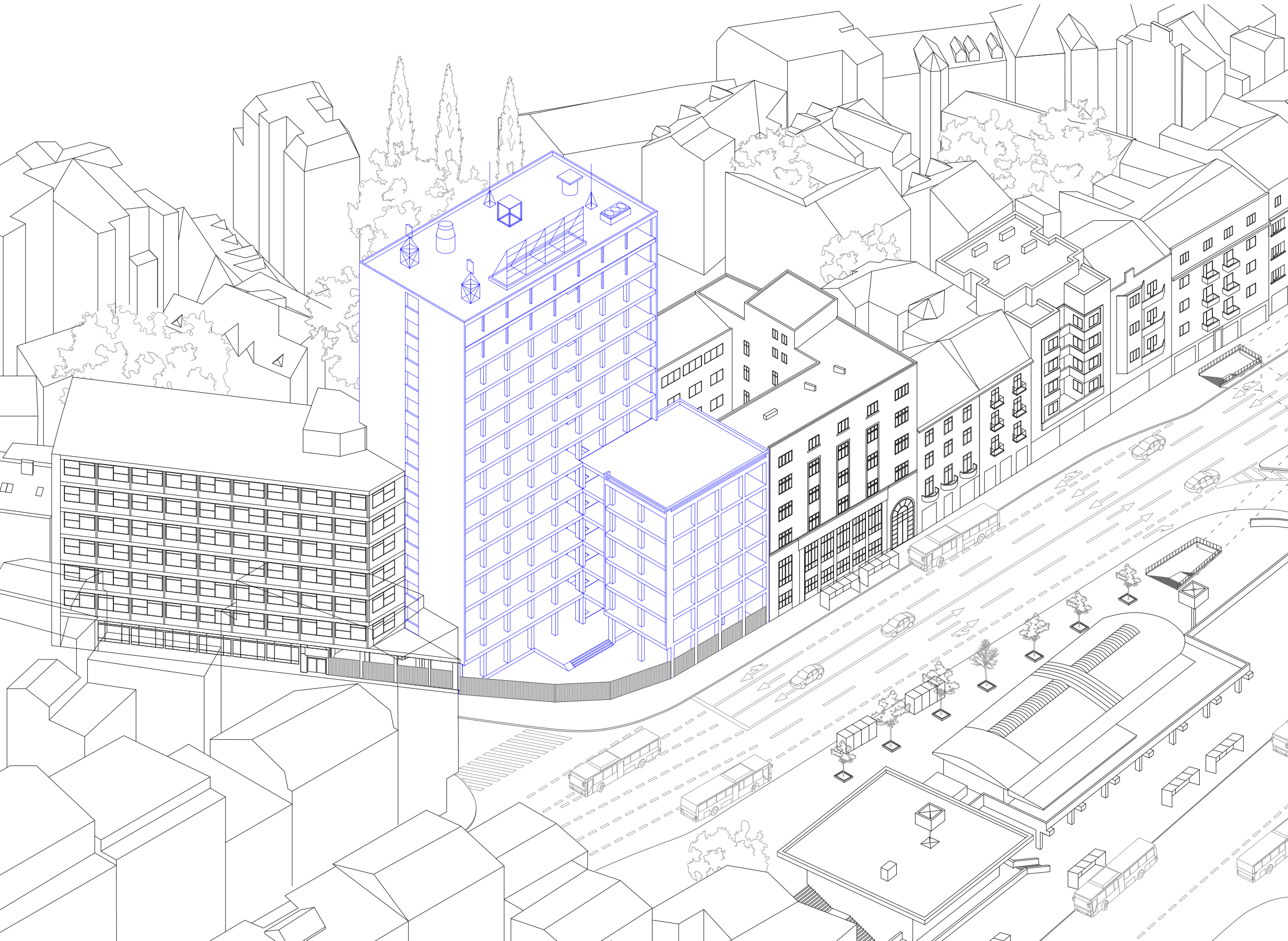
The "Energoprojekt" building that started construction in 1957 and finished in 1960, was designed purely on the ideas of the International style, or more precisely, the Miesian style.

When construction was finished, it represented architecture that was ahead of its time. A step forwards both in terms of technology as well as design. Through simple geometric forms, the building achieves rationality and neutrality, as well as structuralism evident on the building's facade. The building itself is an example of how modernist principles were used in order to fill in the historical urban block of Belgrade dating back to the 19th century.

Consisting of 3 different volumes, located on the corner of two prominent streets, the "Energoprojekt" building, by interpolation, adapts to its surroundings.

The two smaller buildings, one being more longitudinal alongside Carice Milice Street (GF+6) the other more cubic towards Zeleni Venac Street (GF+5) both following the height of the existing buildings, allow for the composition to be integrated into the urban block.

While the third takes advantage of the corner positioning and dominates the surroundings with its verticality (GF+11). It later receives two more floors (GF+13). By pulling the tower away from the street, space is being freed, which allows for a small "piazzetta" to appear. A gesture more clearly seen at Meis Van der Rohe's Seagram building.



The Building

The approach to the building "Beobanka" is pretty straight forward, enabling the building. Taking advantage of the current situation that the building is in, rather than viewing it as a disadvantage. Because, dysfunction always carries the potential for functionality. In my opinion, turning attention to the issues of the day, responding in design to dwindling resources, climatic threats, and new living needs is how certain architecture should be practiced.

Referring to the idea that the building is a body that can have many souls, sheds light on a different perspective. At the moment, the building is soulless, so instead of giving it one soul that will define it, I give it many. That makes the building less defined and more resilient to socio-economic changes in the future. It helps to understand the building as a capable structure, able to hold a variety of different activities. This undoubtedly leads to the concept of the hybrid building.

Combining the hybrid building concept with the idea of incremental growth results in a concept that is more strategic, responsive, and resilient. This allows for the project to be seen as an ongoing process, rather than a finished product. Incompleteness is therefore inseparable from the concept of incremental growth, where the rawness of the structure is there to be shown. This is a more utilitarian approach to building, meaning that it's being designed to be useful and practical, rather than attractive.

The Skin

Milica Steric's design for the facade of the Energor-jetki building represented an innovation, both aesthetically and in terms of materiality, in the period in which it was created. It was intended to respond to the use of the building at that time. Current plans for the use of the building require alterations in the interior, meaning that certain spaces will change during a certain period of time. Consequently, a single facade can not respond equally to the needs of the whole building.

As the facade started to be seen as a separate element from the building, like a skin, its ways of interpretation started to take different paths. From the standpoint of the idea that the facade is a skin, it can be interpreted as an ever-changing element endlessly responding to the needs of the interior. As the function of the skin varies throughout the body, so should the facade perform different tasks at different parts of the building.

Nevertheless, one of the main functions of the new facade would be to enable the building. By retrofitting the building with a new facade system, the first and most important step in enabling the building will take place. The building will become safe for usage, therefore becoming publicly accessible.

In order to create a facade that will answer to the different needs of the interior, it has to be reduced to its simplest form. It then becomes a module. The module represents the basic element, that when combined creates the facade as a whole.

