

-BRUSSELS- A MANIFESTO

TOWARDS THE CAPITAL OF EUROPE

A Berlage Institute Project

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The following people took part in the *Brussels Capital of Europe – Urban Form, Representation, Architecture* project: Bernardina Borra, Weerapaat Chokedeetaweeanan, Joachim Declerck, Cristina Garcia Fontan, Hiromi Haruki, Bart Melort, Alexa Nurnberger, Konstantinos Pantazis, Marc Ryan, Heng Shi, Pier Paolo Tamburelli, Martino Tattara, Niklas Veelken, Dubravka Vranic, Tom Weiss and Zhiyi Yang.

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DRY ON CITY

Brussels – A Manifesto

007	1	Introduction
015	2	Europe as Pattern
026	3	Europe as Project
033	4	The City as Political Form
043	5	Capital City
055	6	Brussels
067	7	The Political
073	8	The Formal

Towards the Capital of Europe

081	9	Constitution of the Project
106	A	The European Quarter
120	B	The European Parliament
132	C	The Canal Quarter
140	D	The Carrefour de l'Europe
146	E	The European University Centre
152	F	Mundaneum
158	G	The Josaphat Quarter
164	H	The Bockstael Housing Pole
168	I	The Gate

Edited by
Pier Vittorio Aureli
Bernardina Borra
Joachim Declerck
Agata Mierzwa
Martino Tattara
Tom Weiss

A Theory on the City

177	Thinking Europe Mario Tronti
185	Architecture after Liberalism Pier Vittorio Aureli
205	Brussels-Europe: An Aporia? Géry Leloutre and Iwan Strauven
225	For A New Monumentality Elia Zenghelis



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The European Parliament

At the western extreme of the Institutional Promenade, the Parliament of the European Union is constructed in the Tour & Taxis area, a former goods train station. The now vacated area is extremely wide and empty and has formed a large isolated hole in the city fabric since the very beginning of its development. Situated along the canal, between the Royal Palace in Laken and the axis to the Koekelberg Cathedral, the area is surrounded by activities related to the port of Brussels. This project aims to see the construction of the institution that accommodates the gatherings of the representatives of more than 400,000,000 Europeans as a means to reinsert this area into the city without erasing the potentials offered by its vastness. A new, big building will be used as a "tool" that is able to show the dimensions of the area and to give these dimensions back to the city. We imagine an extremely repetitive, flat building in the form of an irregular cross, able to measure the distances and the different conditions at its margins through its very regular structure. The flat building literally crosses the area, trying to define new links with the neighbouring regions. The southern end of the building meets Picard Street at the crossing of the canal (a new public space is planned between the new building and the canal),

the western end of the building stops in front of the artificial valley that once brought trains to Tour & Taxis (the valley is transformed into a public garden), the northern end faces Claessens Street and the eastern end lands on the opposite side of the canal at Place des Armateurs. The parts of Tour & Taxis that are not covered by the flat building will be occupied either by new housing developments or by the already existing industrial buildings. In the centre of the plot, the existing train station will be kept and drastically restored. The building will host a public gallery with shops and small services for the quarter such as kindergartens, schools, a market and indoor sport facilities.

The new housing region southwest of the flat building facing Picard Street is made of four-storey row houses (2,500 units). The row houses are arranged in 120-m-long, 45-m-wide blocks that are oriented east-west, with private gardens in the middle. The houses are slightly higher than the flat building. Another residential area is located to the northwest of the flat building. North of this settlement, the existing storage facilities are reorganized and expanded in connection with the new port infrastructures placed in the northern part of the flat building. The definition of a regular street pattern provides a common organization to both existing and new industrial buildings.

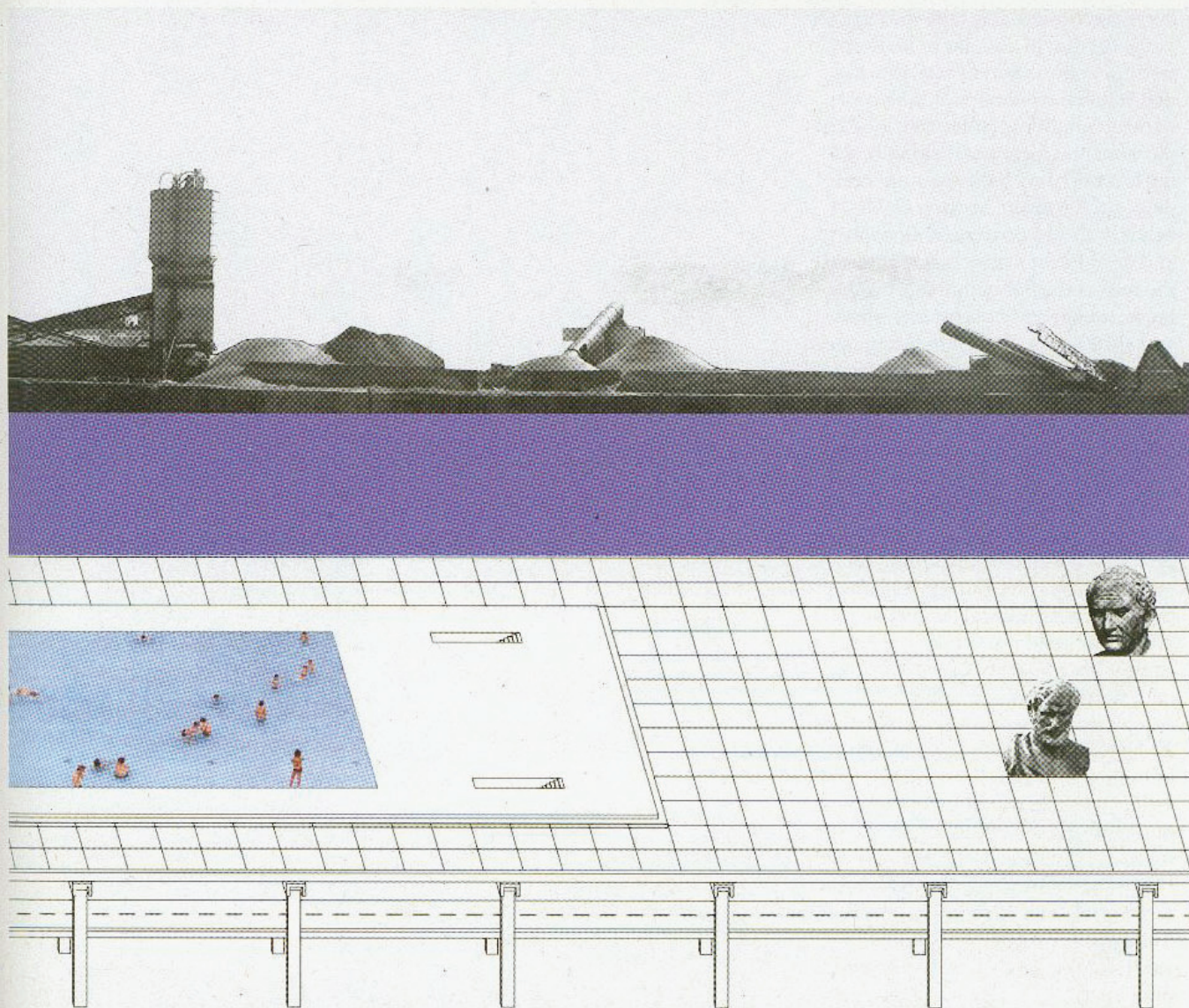
The flat building is 10 m high, 1150 m long (north-south) and 850 m wide (east-west). It contains the offices, assembly halls and archives of the European Parliament, a car park with 2,000 parking places, the station of the Metro Circuit, storage and offices related to port activity, a public swimming pool with gyms and other sports facilities, restaurants, clubs and discos. The flat building has a wide public roof (182,500 m²) collecting the entrances to the very different facilities hidden below. The roof of the flat building is easily accessible via ramps and escalators placed along its borders. Cars can access the roof from the slope facing Picard Street. Due to a difference in height, the flat building can be directly accessed at roof level at its western

border; from the valley in the north, people can enter the wide public space contained in the western wing at ground level.

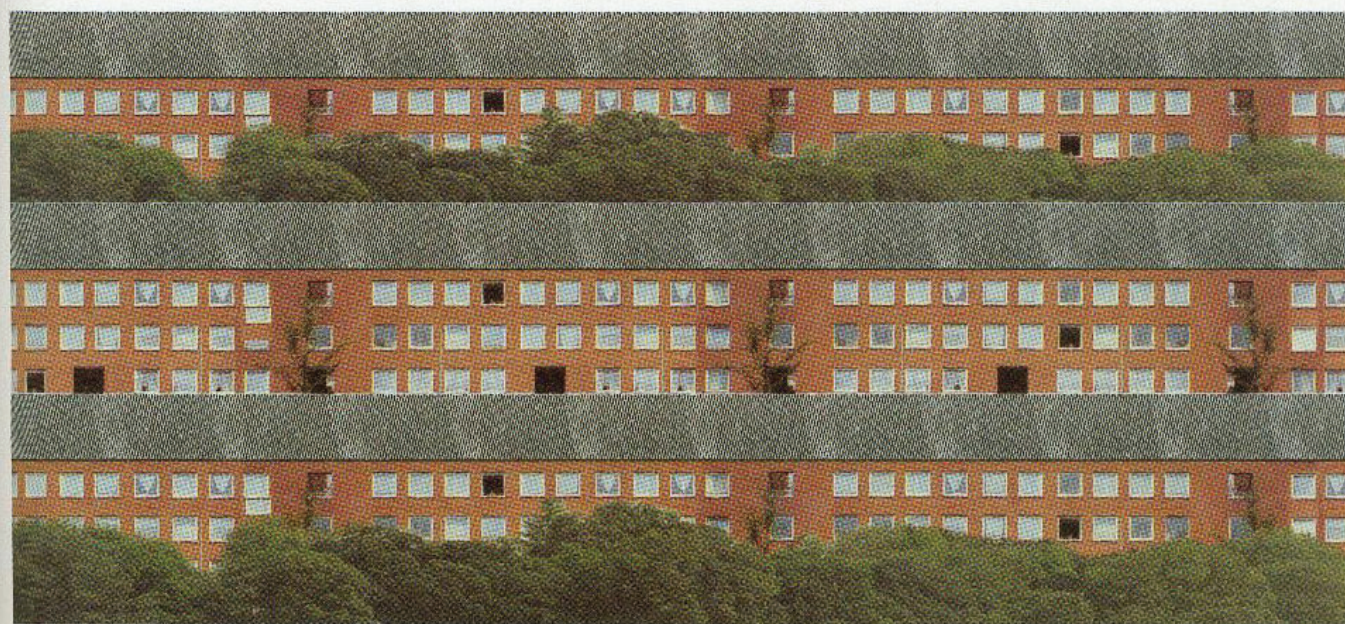
The building is flat to the point of disappearance. It is a receptacle for public space – an artificial field for metropolitan experience. More than 40 per cent of the building surface is public space. The building shows itself as a product of reasonable, yet highly questionable, decisions. The architecture shows its responsibility towards the institutions it hosts by exposing the artificial, abstract, political nature of the arguments that define its form. For this reason, the first duty of the building is to show that there is no necessity for it: the building is not natural, it is not obvious. Its architecture can be understood, and therefore refused.

The flat building is a monument. A monument in which there is no spectacle to be seen except for the behaviours of the observers themselves. A monument with nothing to express, nevertheless an explicit monument: a rational attempt to imagine and expose a project of civilization, to define a common ground for its different visitors. In this sense, the flat building is a monument for the multitude: it provides and juxtaposes spaces for highly formalized political events and spaces for everyday activities. It offers a complex spatial sequence, and acts as a machine to record emptiness and congestion; it defines a multiple, yet common landscape. As architecture, the flat building shows an understanding of multiplicity that does not immediately coincide with a useless collection of quarrelsome minorities. On the contrary, the architecture of the flat building involves the definition of a common field for the exchange of experiences; it suggests and imagines the possibility for the multitude to share a common political project.

The roof of the flat building is punctuated by circular skylights. The monotonous series of circles reduces the surface to a translucent blanket covering the complicated metropolitan belly. The repetition of circular holes reduces the complexity of the programme of the building to a kind of Morse alpha-



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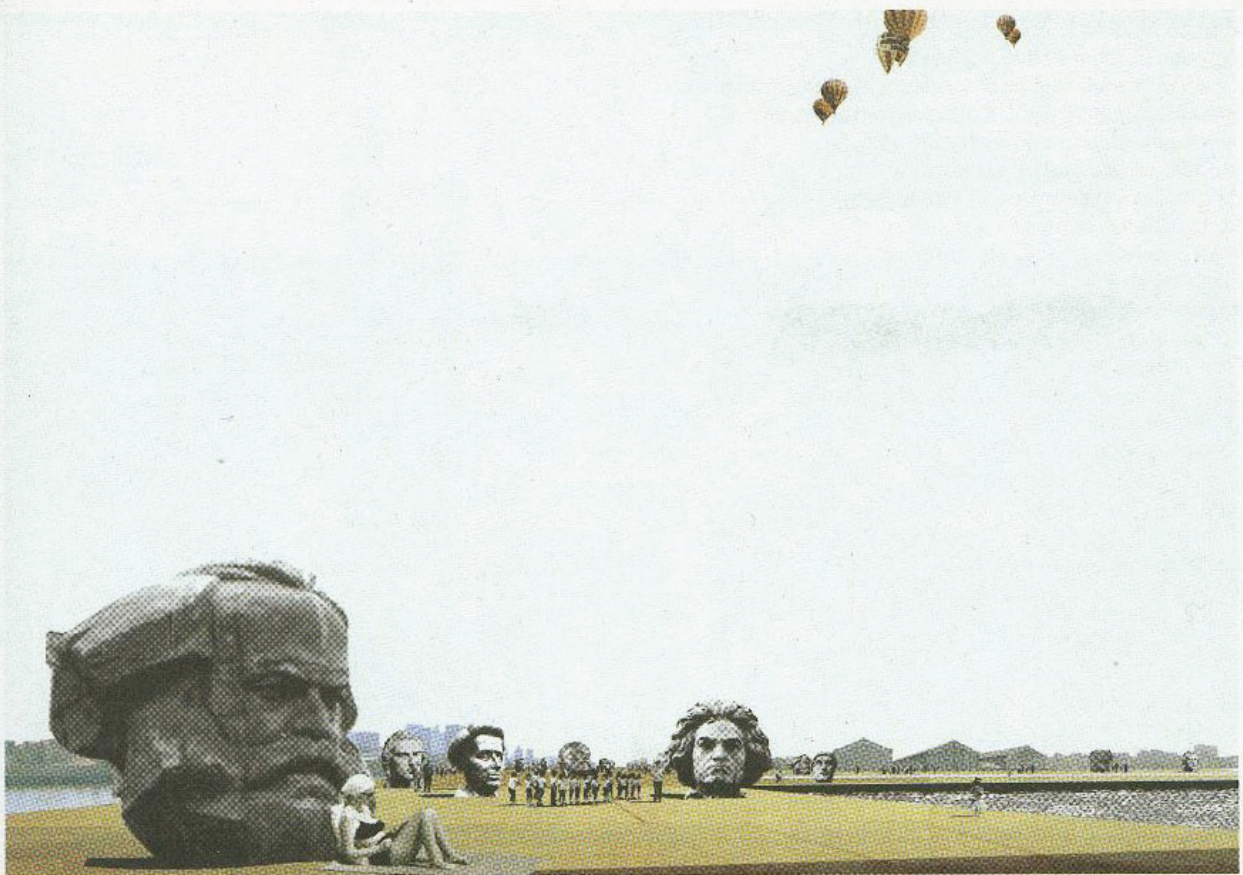


The juxtaposition of housing, the European parliament, the canal and the harbour

bet transcription. It is only the changes in the rhythm of circular holes that testifies to the different activities hidden below the public roof. The roof of the flat building collects all kinds of monumental furniture; the flat building is covered with the monumental debris of European history. Colossal heads of dead European philosophers and dead European musicians crowd the roof of the flat building. By reducing its architecture to extreme silence and abstraction, the flat building opens up an unpredictable possibility for a popular, figurative representation of Europe. By absolutely denying any possibility of an *architecture parlante*, the flat building prepares a field for iconic gymnastics. The emptiness of the flat building faces Europe with the problem of its iconic definition, the gigantic heads face Europe with the problem of its cultural definition.

The flat building couples the icy equilibrium of a Leonidov platform with the massive iconic power of Mount Rushmore's Presidents' Heads. The flat building has the childish purity of both: it is as simple as a white, icy artificial beach; it is as naïve and generous as the gigantic heads carved in the rocks of North Dakota.

The flat building has no style; innocent as a carrier, silent as the desert. The architecture of the flat building vanishes, thanks to its reduction to pure plan.

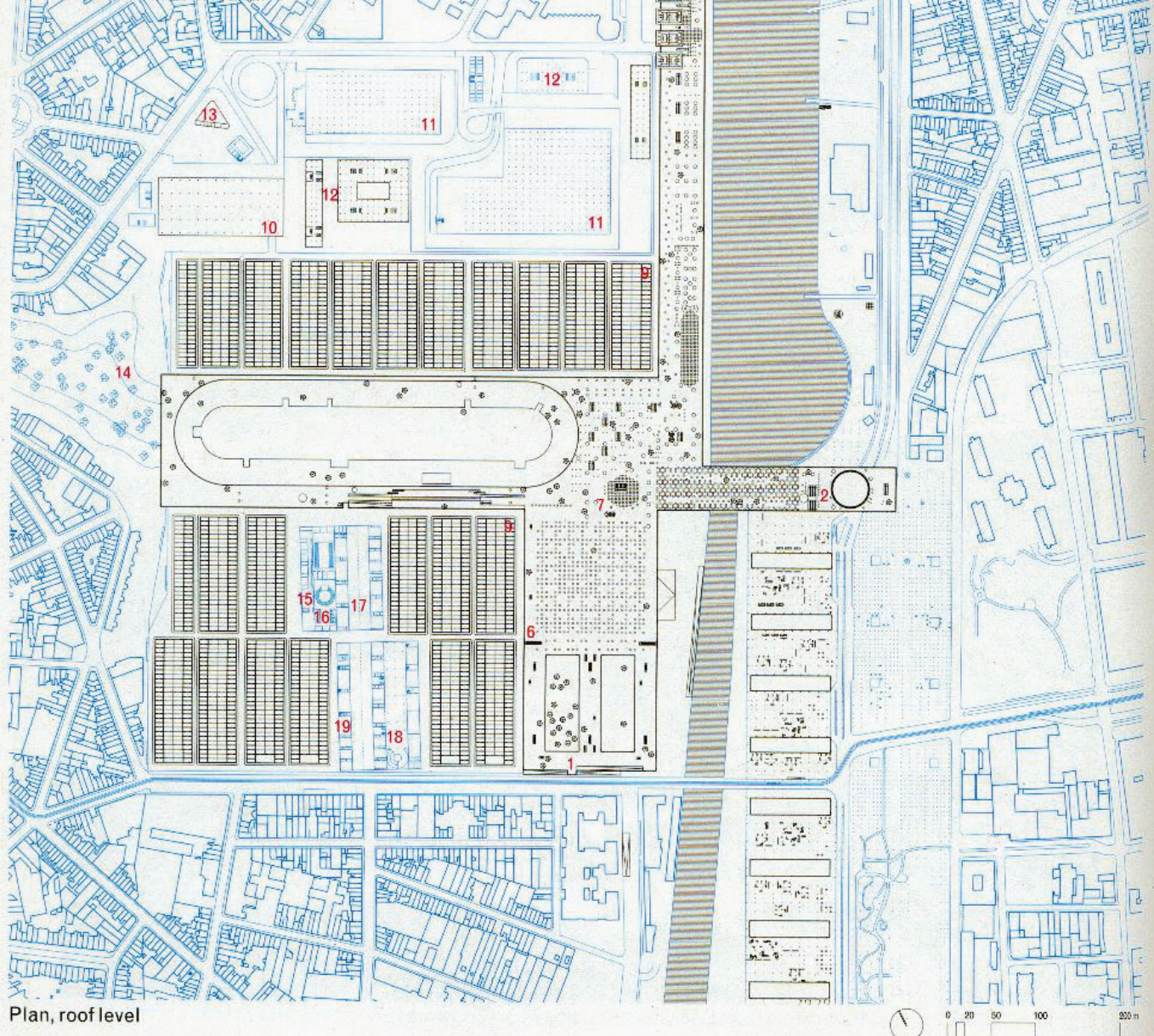


Without Rhetoric! (colossal heads of European thinkers on top of the Parliament roof)



Entrance to the European Parliament from Bockstael Housing Pole (Entrance to the Circo Massimo)

- 1 Ramps leading to Rue Picard
- 2 Access to Quai de Willebroeck
- 3 Open air swimming pool, overlooking the canal area
- 4 Basketball/volleyball/5 players football court
- 5 Access to indoor sports facilities
- 6 Access to the roof by escalators
- 7 Entrance to the European Parliament
- 8 Metro Circuit Station
- 9 Row houses with private gardens
- 10 New warehouses
- 11 Existing warehouses
- 12 New administrative building
- 13 Gas station
- 14 Valley. Public park in former railway trench
- 15 Kindergarten
- 16 Circus company
- 17 Passage with shops and cafés
- 18 Car park, 482 places
- 19 Ateliers
- 20 Existing industrial enterprise
- 21 Public access to canal

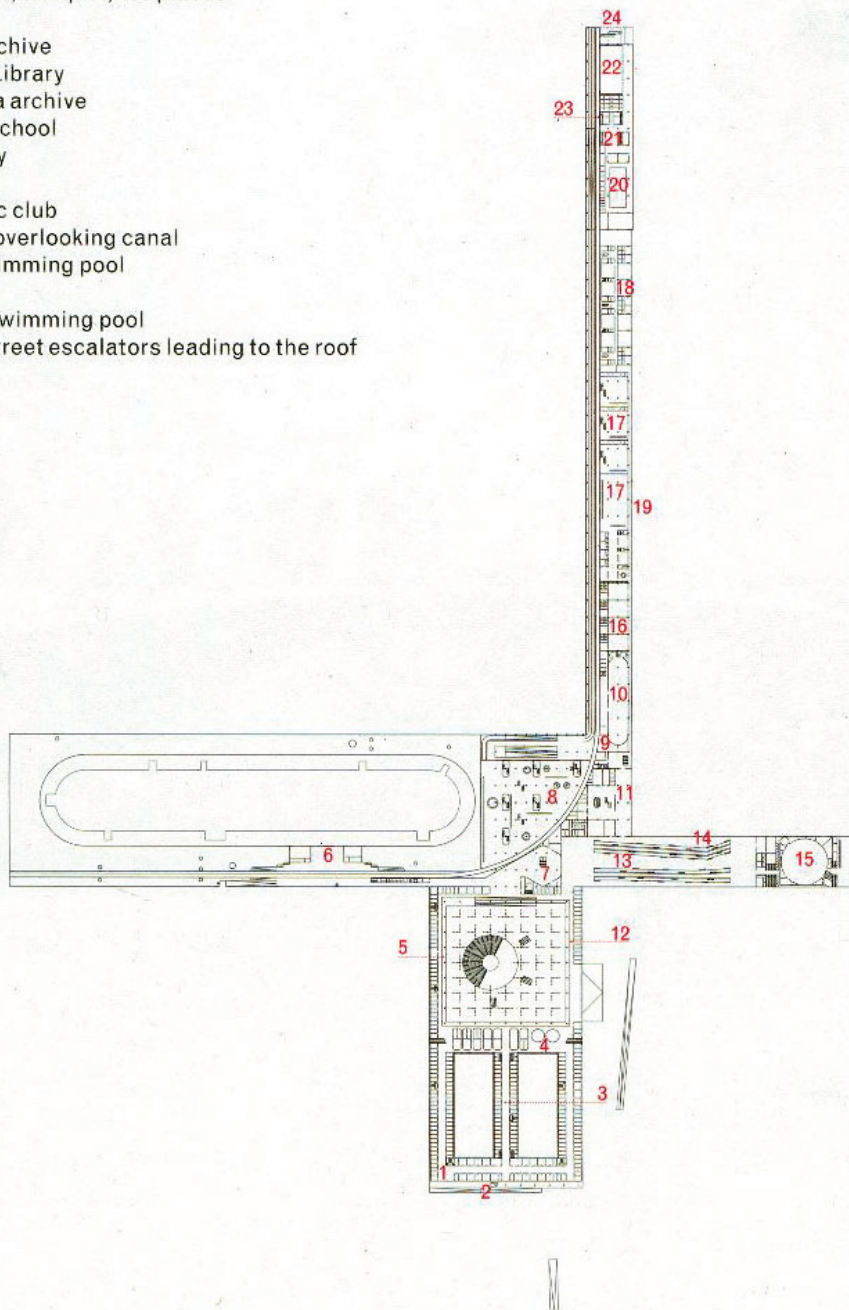




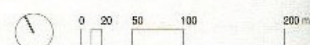
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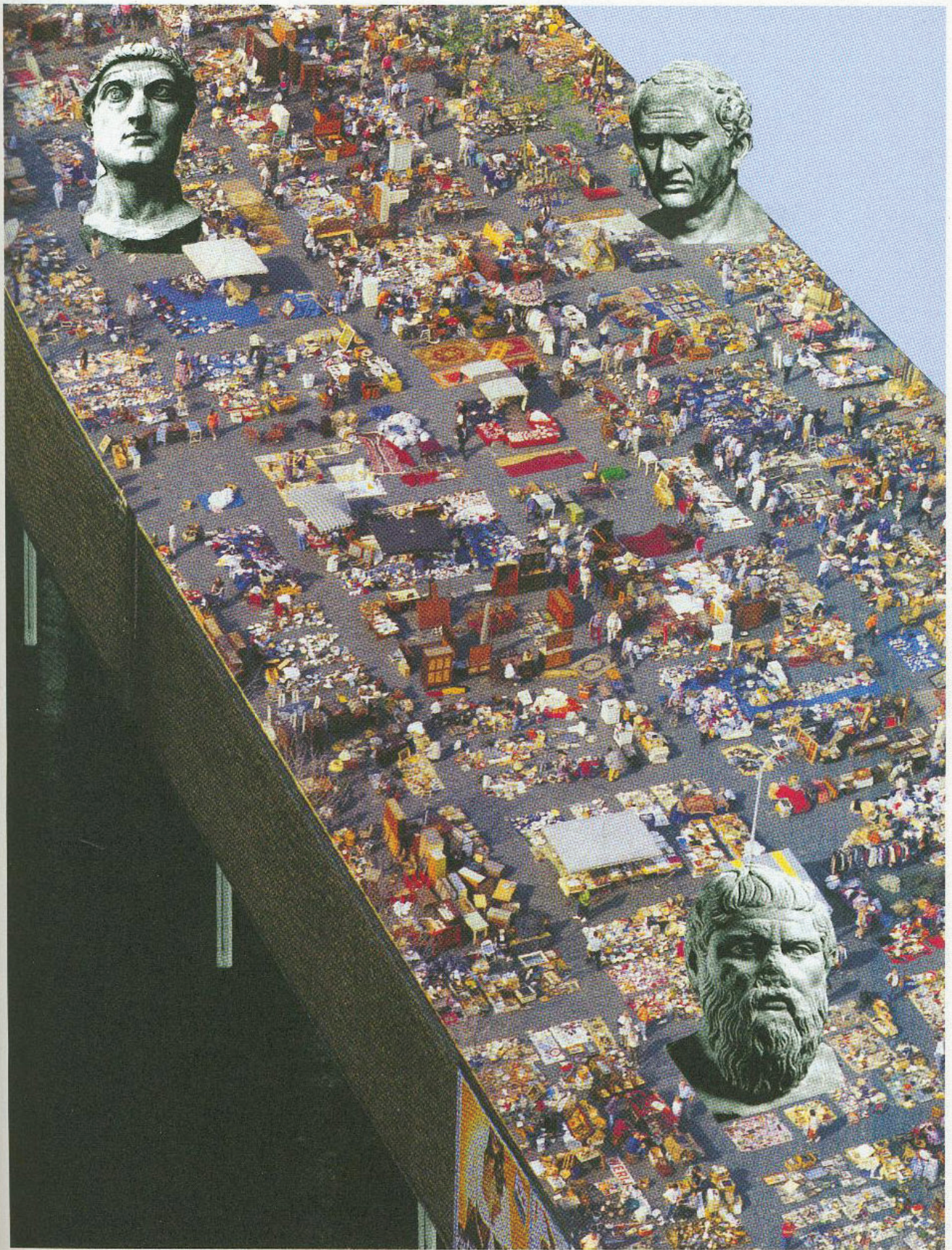
Demos versus Kratos (view from the public roof of the Circo Massimo and the North Quarter)

- 1 Entrance to Rue Picard
- 2 Wide ramp leading to roof, accessible to cars
- 3 Offices for staff
- 4 Offices for the members of parliament, two per member
- 5 Small meeting rooms
- 6 Metro Circuit Station
- 7 Formal entrance to parliament
- 8 Discotheque
- 9 Kitchen
- 10 Restaurant, banquet, 400 places
- 11 Lobby
- 12 Offices archive
- 13 Archive/ Library
- 14 Study area archive
- 15 Dancing school
- 16 Art gallery
- 17 Club
- 18 Gymnastic club
- 19 Walkway overlooking canal
- 20 Indoor swimming pool
- 21 Sauna
- 22 Outdoor swimming pool
- 23 Internal street escalators leading to the roof



Plan, first floor

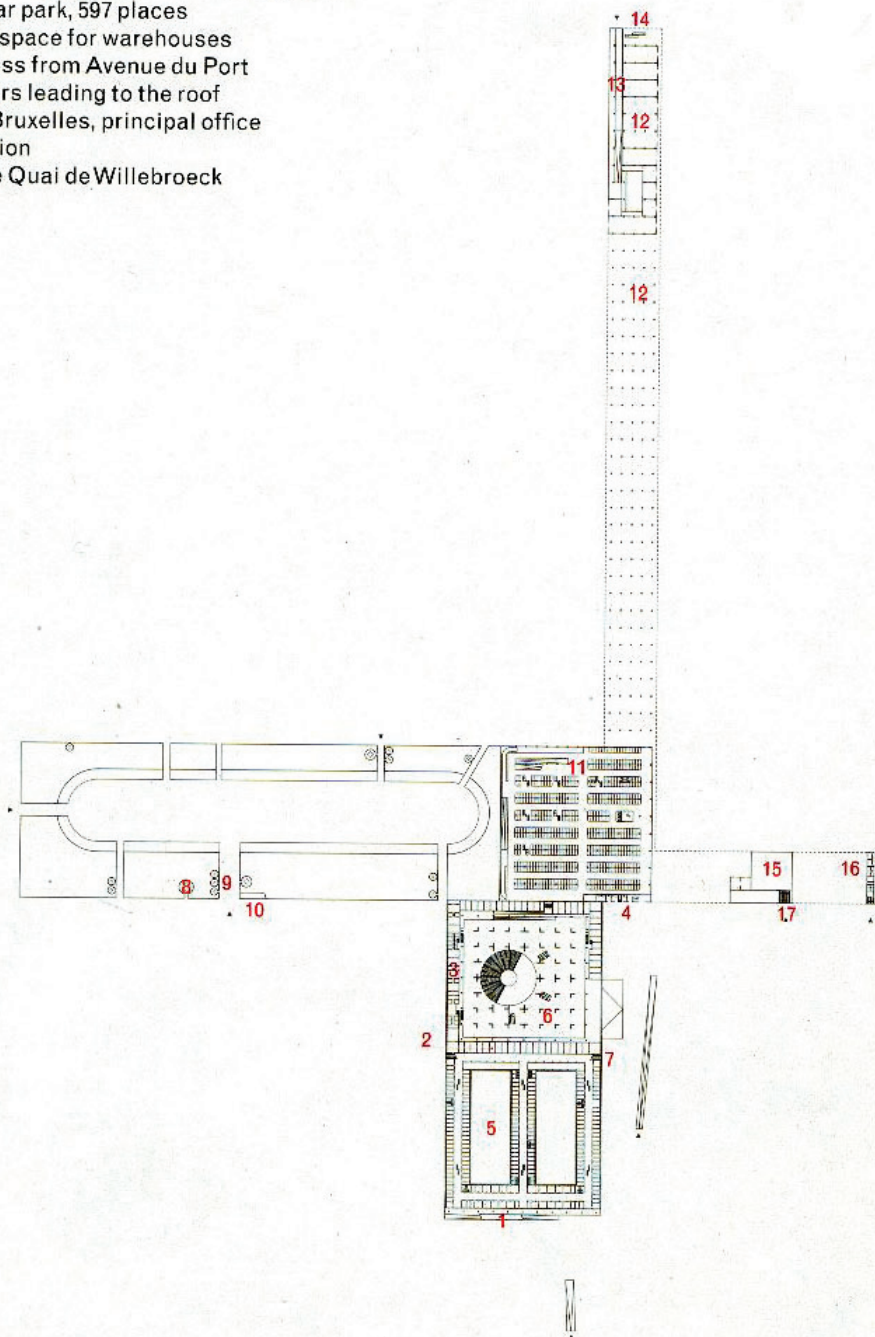




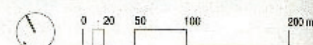
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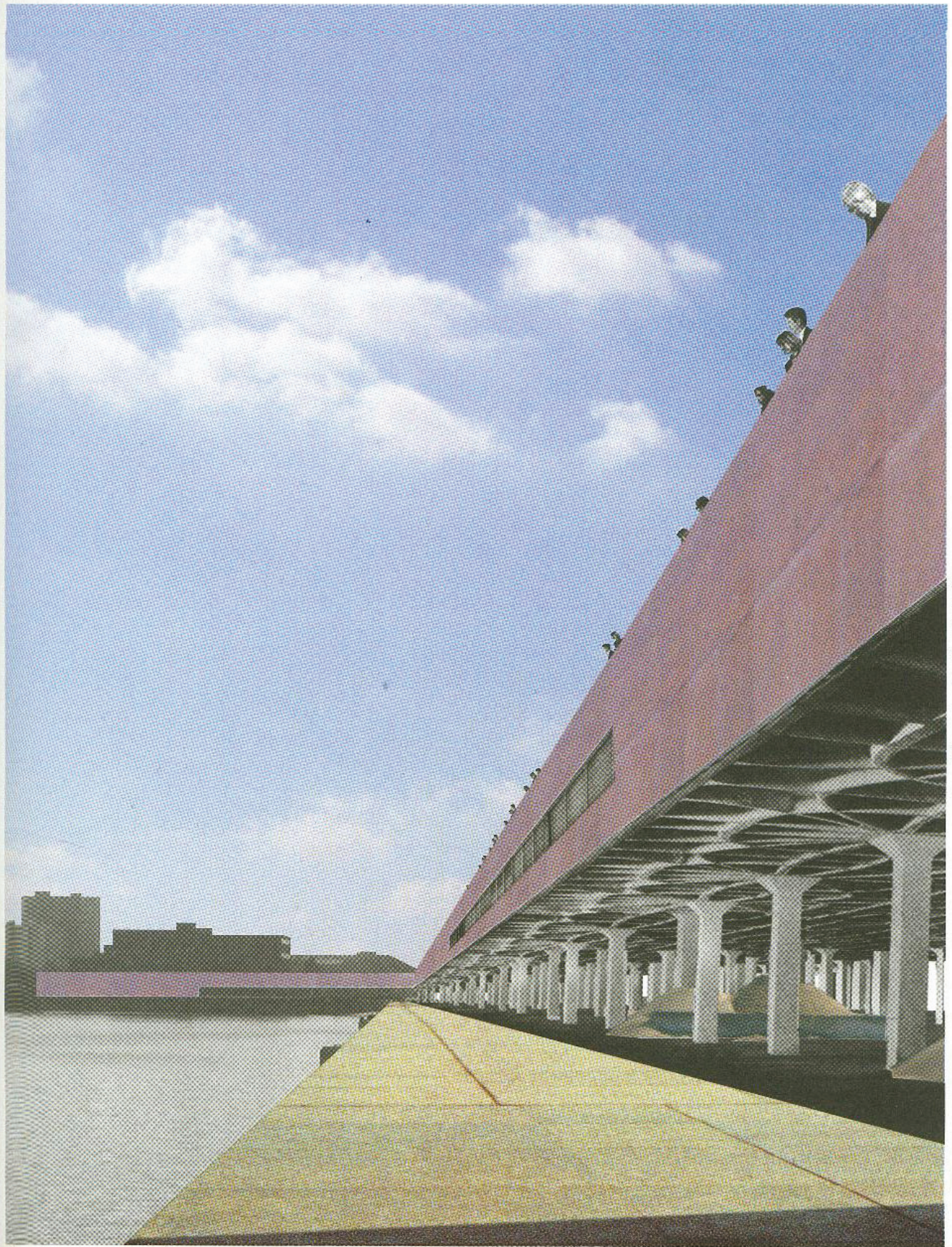
Rituals on the parliament's roof

- 1 Wide ramp leading to the roof, accessible to cars
- 2 Offices for the members of parliament, two per member
- 3 Offices for political groups and committees
- 4 Shops
- 5 Courtyard
- 6 Void
- 7 Escalators leading to the roof of the building
- 8 Kiosk
- 9 Public toilets, facilities
- 10 Ramp leading up to Metro Circuit Station
- 11 Public car park, 597 places
- 12 Storage space for warehouses
- 13 Car access from Avenue du Port
- 14 Escalators leading to the roof
- 15 Port de Bruxelles, principal office
- 16 Gas station
- 17 Entrance Quai de Willebroeck



Plan, ground floor





Against Smoothness (the Parliament accommodating the harbour along the canal)

Assembly level

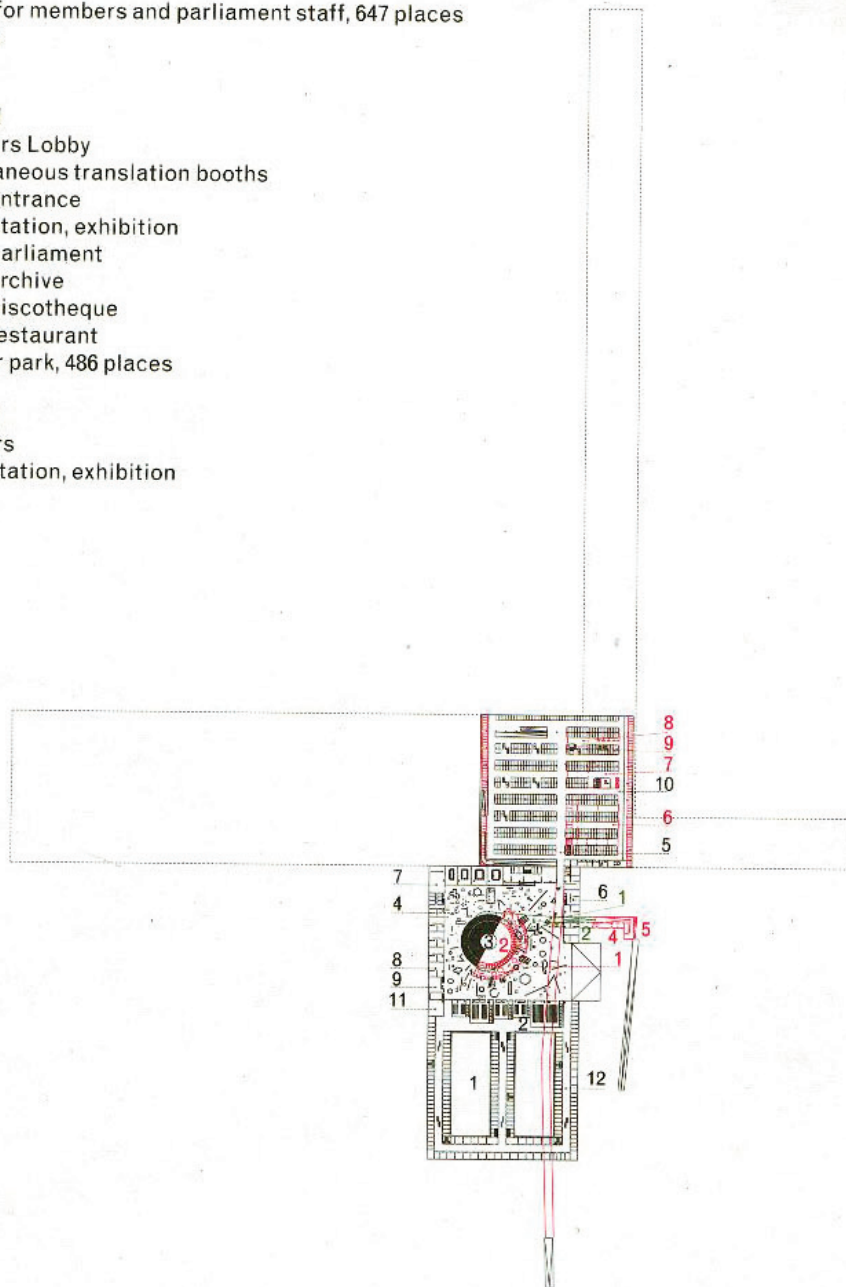
- 1 Courtyard
- 2 Meeting rooms for political groups and committees, equipped with simultaneous translation booths
- 3 Assembly of the European Parliament
- 4 Small meeting rooms
- 5 VIP drop off
- 6 Press center
- 7 TV studio
- 8 Radio studio
- 9 Print room
- 10 Car park for members and parliament staff, 647 places
- 11 Cafeteria
- 12 Offices

Parking level

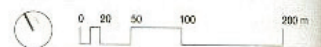
- 1 Translators Lobby
- 2 27 simultaneous translation booths
- 3 Visitors entrance
- 4 Documentation, exhibition
- 5 Storage parliament
- 6 Storage archive
- 7 Storage discotheque
- 8 Storage restaurant
- 9 Public car park, 486 places

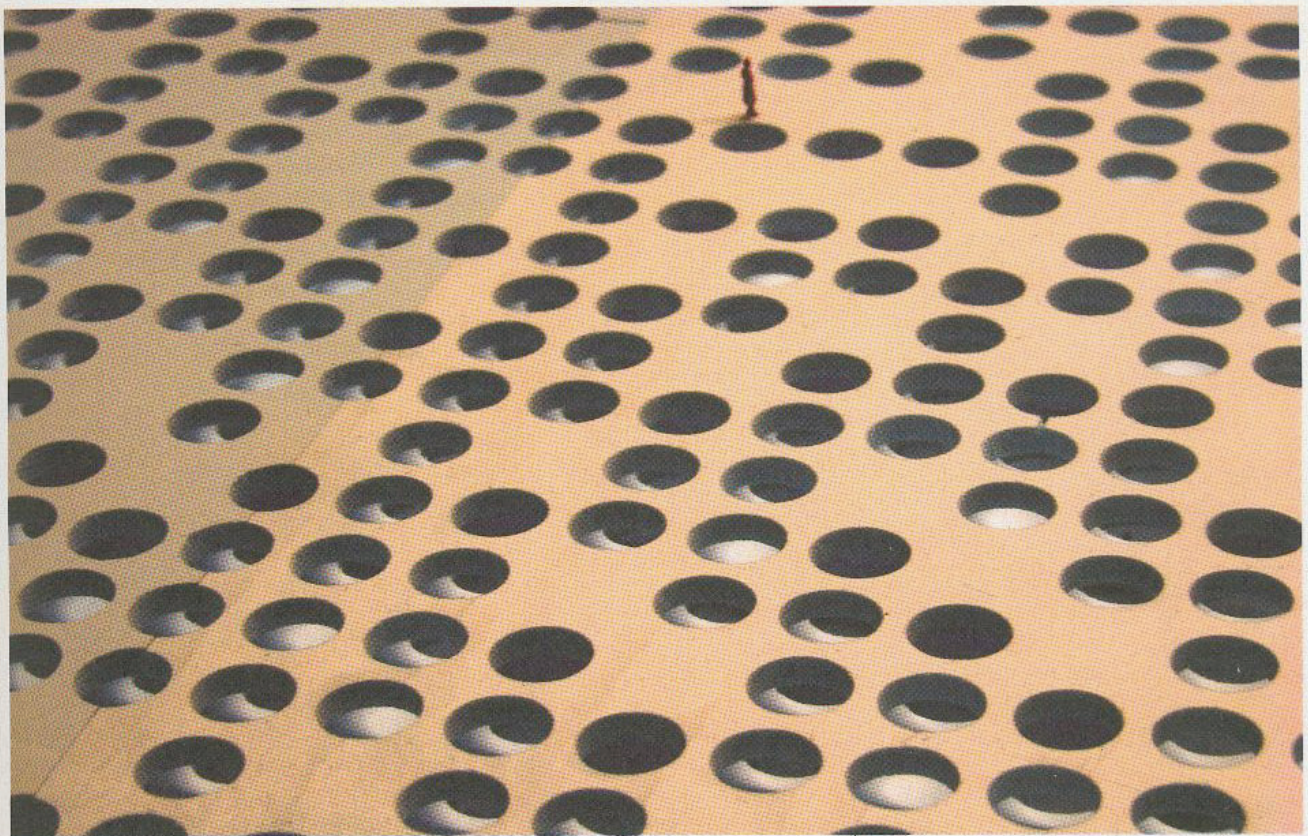
Visitors level

- 1 Spectators
- 2 Documentation, exhibition

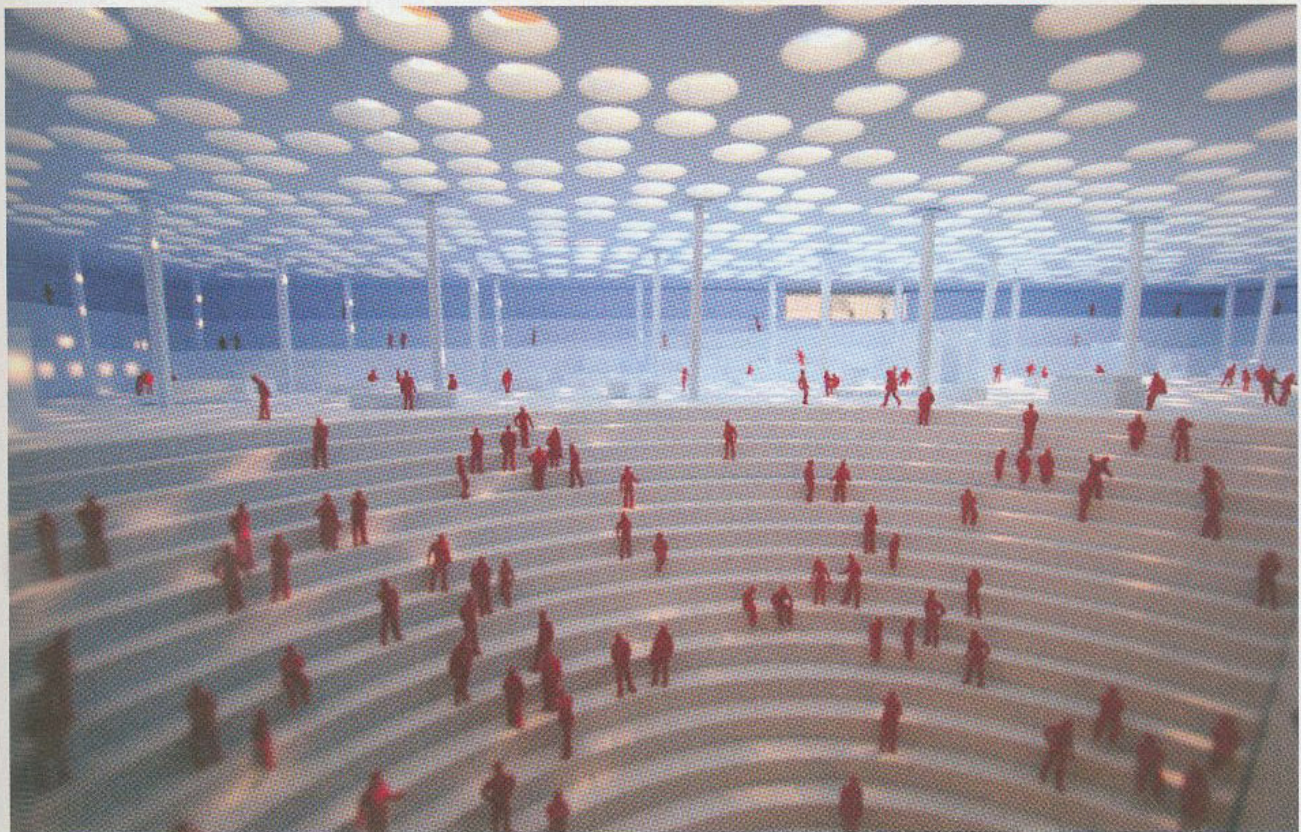


Plan, assembly level, parking level, visitors level





Public roof



Assembly hall