URBAN REGENERATION OF PULA

IVAN ROCE

POLITECNICO
MILANO 1863

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Abstract

This thesis proposes a model of urban regeneration for Pula based on the re-activation of its 19th-century military infrastructure. The primary objective is to evaluate whether the historic fortification system can operate as a contemporary civic framework while preserving the structural identity of the city. The central component of the work is the architectural project for the adaptive reuse of Fort Monvidal. The research combines historical-structural analysis, urban mapping, and architectural design. It examines how the Naval Arsenal and defensive network shaped Pula's spatial organization and long-term develop˛vment. It also identifies the gradual weakening of civic centralities, the increasing dominance of tourism, and the neglect of military heritage structures, many of which remain abandoned and deteriorating.
On this basis, the thesis develops a strategic urban framework that interprets the existing fortifications not as isolated monuments but as latent urban elements capable of supporting new public functions. The proposal does not replace the historical layer but builds upon it, introducing a contemporary architectural intervention that extends the city's continuity rather than erasing it. Within this framework, Fort Monvidal is redesigned as a neighborhood civic center providing cultural, educational, and social functions. The thesis demonstrates that targeted architectural interventions embedded in a broader urban logic can reactivate neglected heritage structures and generate new civic centralities without compromising the historical character of Pula.

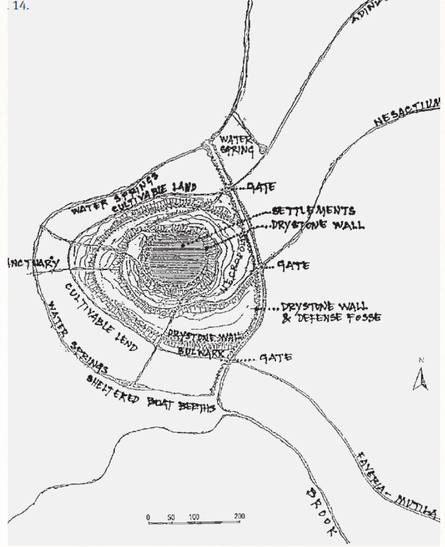
Introduction

The idea and motivation for this project started from personally experiencing the overtourism of my hometown, Pula, Croatia. Growing up there, I could observe how the city was slowly losing parts of its original identity and transforming into a place increasingly adapted to temporary tourists and their needs.
As a result, local citizens have gradually been pushed out of the city center, as more and more spaces and programs are tailored primarily to seasonal visitors. This process has created a sense of alienation and weakened the everyday civic life of the city.
With this project, I attempt to respond to that condition. The aim is to rebalance priorities and reintroduce spaces designed primarily for local life. By working with elements that are deeply embedded in the identity of Pula, I seek to revive its character while opening it more clearly and consciously to its citizens.

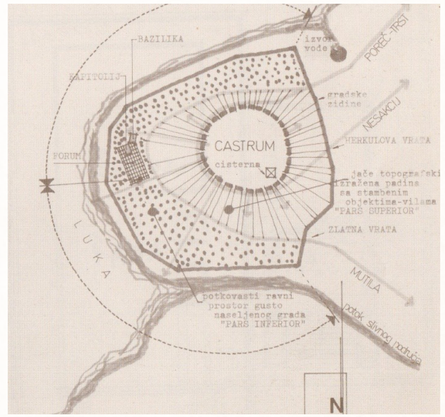
PULA
Adriatic Sea

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The development of Pula has never been autonomous. From a prehistoric hill settlement to a Roman colony, from a Venetian outpost to an Austro Hungarian naval base, the city repeatedly transformed under changing political and economic systems. Its protected bay and strategic position made it valuable across centuries, shaping its growth. Each historical period left a physical layer that remains present today.



Histrian hillfort – 1st millennium BC (A. Krizmanić, 2000)



Roman castrum – 2nd century BC (A. Krizmanić, 2000)

Pula 17th century - (P. Petronio 1681)

Prehistoric Foundations

The earliest settlement on the territory of present-day Pula emerged in the 1st millennium BC on the hill of Kaštel, above a natural freshwater source. It developed as a fortified hill settlement of the Histri, with defensive structures and a necropolis containing around 150 graves. The location was strategically chosen for control over the bay and access to water, establishing the geographic logic that would define the city's development for centuries.[1]

Roman Empire

In 46 BC, the Romans founded the colony Colonia Pietas Iulia Pola on the site of the earlier settlement. The city was structured according to Roman urban principles, organized around a forum with orthogonal street grids extending toward the harbor. During this period, Pula became an important administrative and maritime center. Monumental architecture such as the Amphitheatre (Arena), the Temple of Augustus, the Arch of the Sergii, and the city walls shaped its urban identity. The Roman layer established Pula as a fully urbanized Mediterranean city.[2]

Byzantine rule and Republic of Venice

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, Pula passed under Byzantine rule in 533 and Frankish control in 788, gradually becoming a self-governed commune while losing regional importance. In 1331, it came under the Republic of Venice, whose rule until 1797 was marked by demographic decline, plague, and economic stagnation, leaving the city significantly weakened.[3]

Austro-Hungarian Monarchy

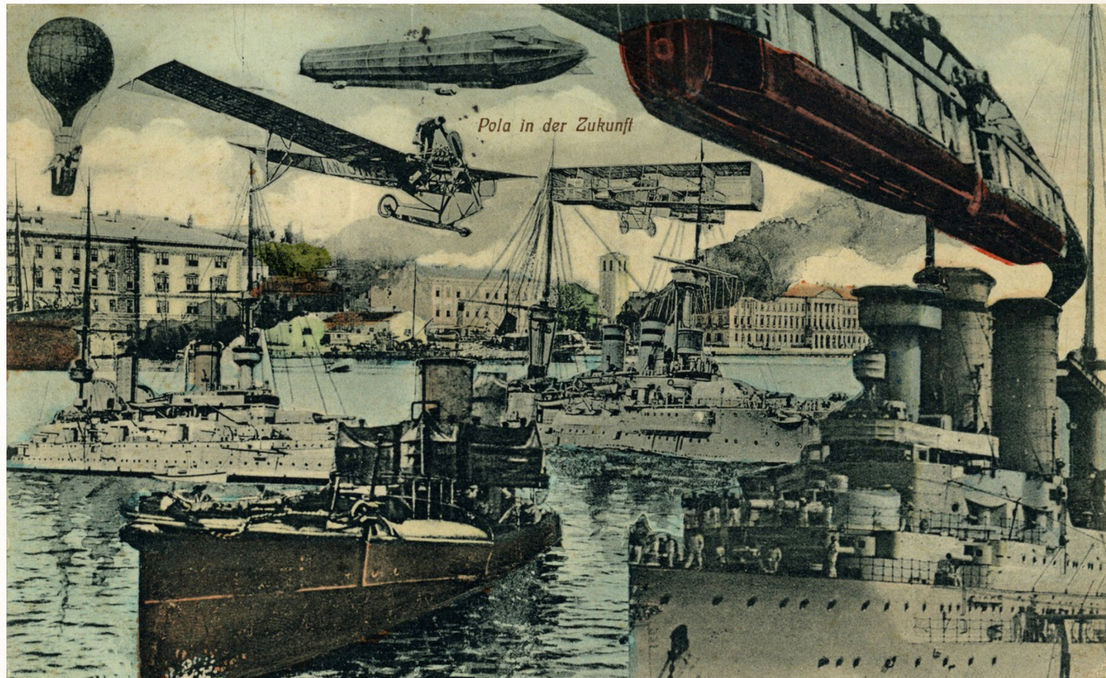
The Golden Ages of Pula

After brief French administration in the early 19th century, Pula became part of the Austrian Empire in 1813. A decisive transformation occurred in 1856, when it was designated as the main naval port of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.
The construction of the naval arsenal triggered rapid urban expansion, industrialization, and infrastructural development, including railway connections to Central Europe. Pula evolved into a multicultural and multilingual city, attracting workers, engineers, and military personnel from across the empire. This period redefined the city as a strategic military-industrial hub.[4]

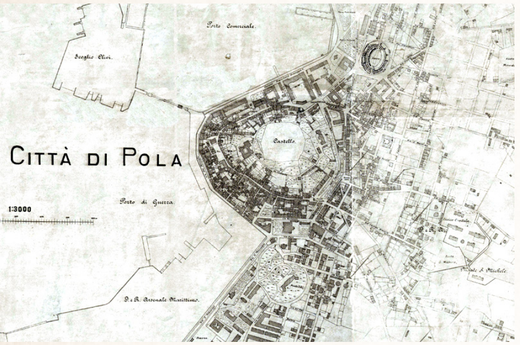
Postcard – Promenade on Monte Zaro, Pola

Postcard – Giardini (Via Circonvallazione), Pola, c. 1905

Postcard – "Pola in the Future", Austro-Hungarian period



Plan of Pula, 1900



Aerial view – bombing of Pula, 8 June 1944

Uljanik Shipyard, heavily damaged after the bombing, 1947

Italy

After the First World War and the Treaty of Rapallo in 1920, Pula was annexed to the Kingdom of Italy. During the Fascist period, policies of forced Italianization suppressed the Slavic population and restricted cultural and linguistic rights. During the Second World War, the city was heavily bombed by Allied forces due to its military infrastructure. After 1943, it was occupied by German forces until its liberation in 1945. The war caused significant destruction and deep demographic changes.[5]

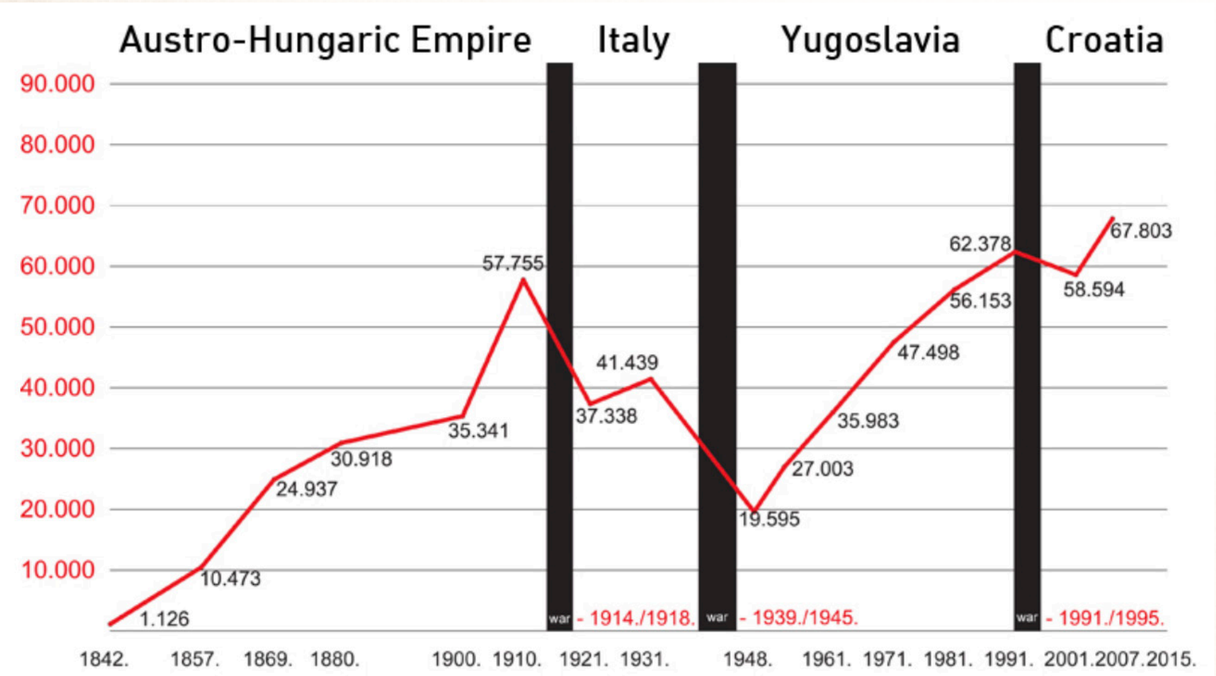
Yugoslavia

After 1947, Pula became part of socialist Yugoslavia. A large part of the Italian population left, fundamentally altering the social composition of the city. Industrialization intensified, especially through shipbuilding. New residential neighborhoods expanded outward, moving the center of gravity away from the historic core. The city grew again, but this growth was structured by industry and housing production. The relationship between everyday life and the historic center gradually weakened.[6]

Republic of Croatia

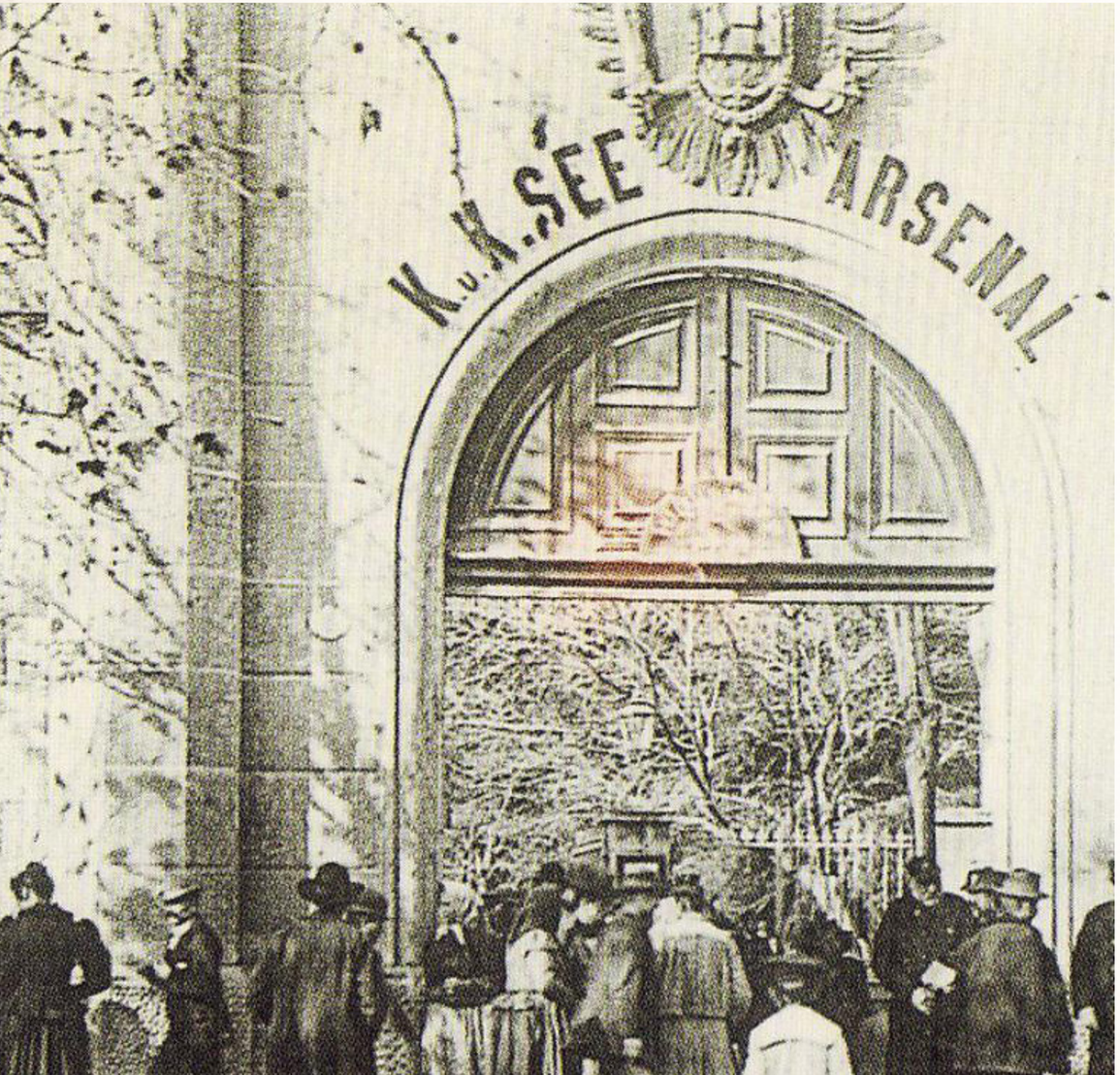
Since 1991, Pula has been part of the Republic of Croatia. The city transitioned from an industrial and military economy toward tourism and services. Its historical layers remain physically visible, Roman monuments, Venetian fortifications, Austrian infrastructure, socialist housing. Yet today, the tension lies not in military control or industrial dominance, but in the pressure of tourism. The historic center increasingly adapts to temporary visitors, while local everyday life shifts outward. The question of who the city is primarily for, its residents or its seasonal economy, has become central once again.[7]

Demographic change in Pula (Jurcan, 2008)



At the beginning of the 19th century Pula had fewer than 1,000 inhabitants. By 1910 the population reached 58,562, increasing nearly sixtyfold during Austrian rule. Entire new neighborhoods developed around the industrial and military core, and the Arsenal became the main driver of demographic growth and spatial expansion.[1]

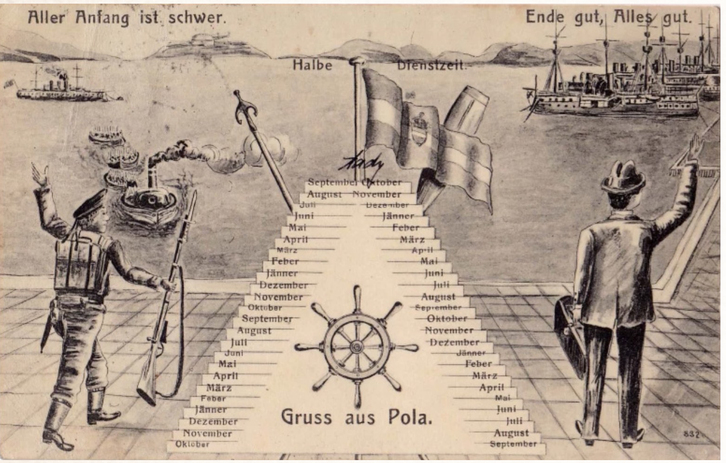
Austro-Hungarian Arsenal of Pula



MAIN NAVAL PORT

The establishment of the Naval Arsenal marked the decisive shift in the development of Pula. In 1853 the city was declared the main war port of the Empire, primarily due to its protected bay, naturally enclosed by hills and shielded by the Brijuni islands. The location allowed safe naval operations in all weather conditions, making it one of the most strategic natural harbors in the Adriatic.[1]

Austro-Hungarian postcards (I, II)

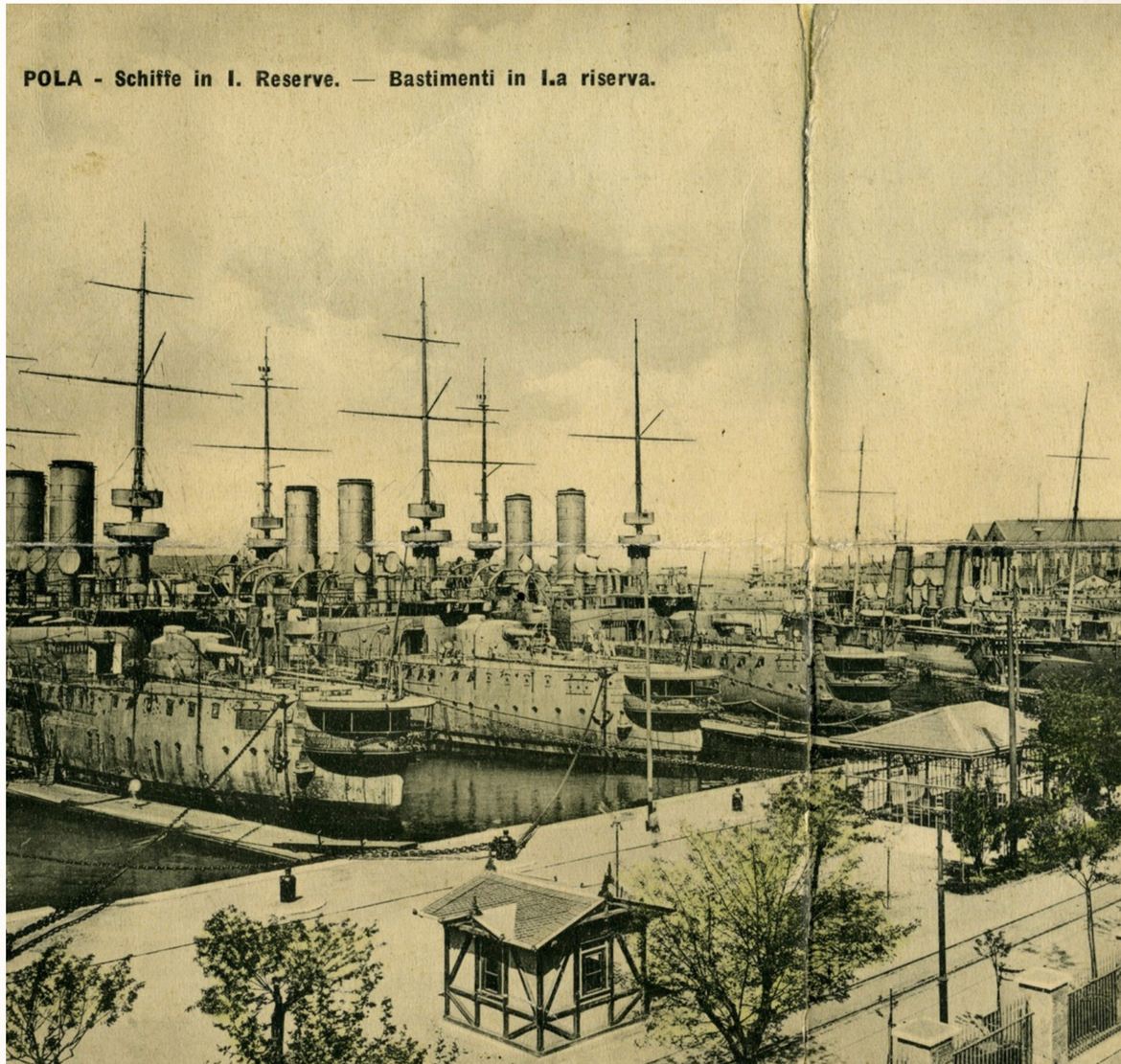


I

II

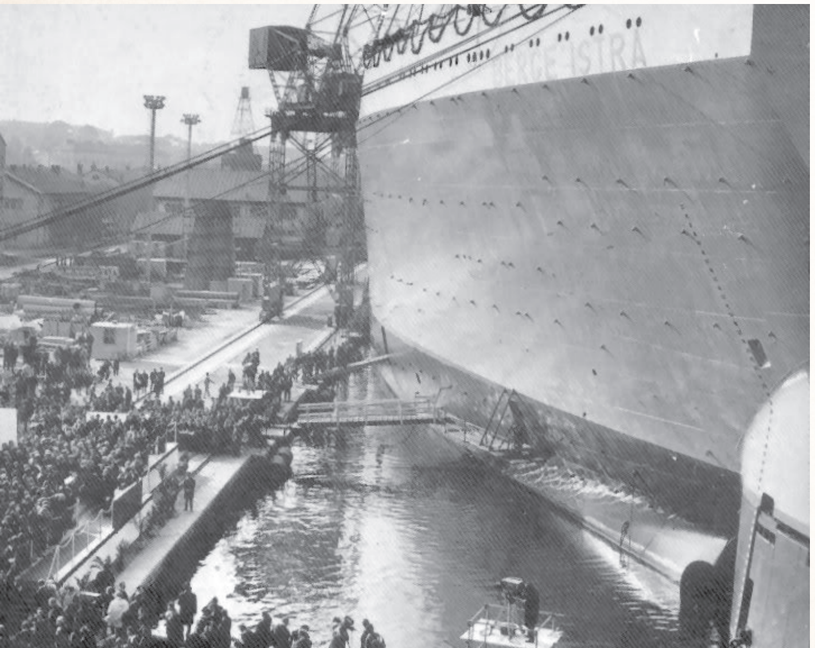
Construction began in 1848 and intensified after 1856, when Empress Elisabeth laid the foundation stone of the Arsenal. Between 1856 and 1867 the complex was built in its main outlines. The coastline was extended by reshaping Monte Zaro, new workshops and dry docks were constructed, and the island of Uljanik became fully integrated into the shipbuilding system. By the end of the 19th century, the Arsenal included mechanical workshops, foundries, torpedo and artillery departments, floating docks, railway infrastructure and steam-powered machinery. It functioned as one of the most advanced naval-industrial systems of its time.[8] In 1858 the first battleship, Kaiser, was launched. Shortly after the Battle of Vis in 1866, iron replaced wood as the primary construction material, and steam propulsion replaced sail. The Arsenal adapted to these technological transformations, reinforcing its central role within the Austro-Hungarian navy.[1]

Austro-Hungarian Arsenal of Pula



Brodogradilište Uljanik (I, II)

I



II

After the collapse of the Monarchy, the shipyard operated under Italian administration as Cantiere Navale Scoglio Olivi, focusing mainly on repairs and dismantling. During the Second World War it functioned as a German naval base and was heavily bombed in 1944 and 1945, leaving approximately 70 percent of the complex destroyed.[2]
In 1947 Yugoslavia, the shipyard was purchased from Italian owners and resumed work as Brodogradilište Uljanik. The first new building was delivered in 1951. In the following decades it developed into a vertically integrated industrial system, combining shipbuilding, diesel engine production and electrical manufacturing.[2]

Josip Broz Tito visiting Brodogradilište Uljanik

From 1947 to the early 2000s, Uljanik delivered 201 ships with a total capacity exceeding six million DWT to clients worldwide. It specialized in tankers, bulk carriers, container ships and car carriers, later expanding to technologically complex vessels such as dredgers and offshore units. At the beginning of the 2000s the group employed around 3,000 workers and operated under international ISO standards, collaborating with numerous European shipping companies and regional subcontractors.[2]

During the second half of the 20th century, Uljanik became the dominant industrial employer in Pula and the wider Istrian region. Several generations of families were directly or indirectly connected to the shipyard, making it not only an economic structure but a social framework embedded in everyday life.

Today, Uljanik is in bankruptcy. The interruption of shipbuilding activity that began in 1856 marks not only an economic shift, but the end of a long industrial continuity that fundamentally structured the spatial and social history of Pula.

Brodogradilište Uljanik today (I, II)

I

II

PULA FORTRESSES

Fortification of Pula began systematically in the 1820s, shortly after the decision to transform the city into the main naval base of the Austrian Empire. From 1823 onward, the city gradually developed into one of the most complex defensive systems on the Adriatic. During the 19th century, more than 40 major forts, batteries and defensive structures were constructed, together with numerous auxiliary military objects, arsenals, barracks, magazines and underground infrastructure. The system was not built at once, but developed in phases, following technological progress in artillery and changes in military doctrine.

Description of the defensive area of the Naval Port of Pula during the First World War, with marked defensive structures (V.A. Bačić)

Pula fortresses plan – 1870s (Didelot, C.)

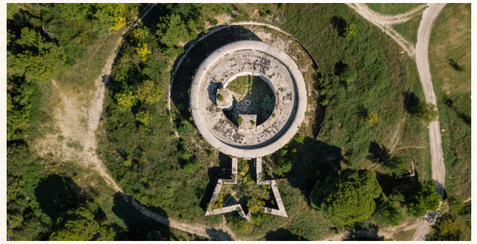
Initially, the defense was concentrated close to the harbor and urban core. Over time, the system expanded outward into concentric rings, eventually forming a multilayered defensive landscape composed of:

- a first ring protecting the harbor and arsenal
- a second ring on surrounding hills
- a coastal artillery system controlling maritime access
- island fortifications on the Brijuni archipelago

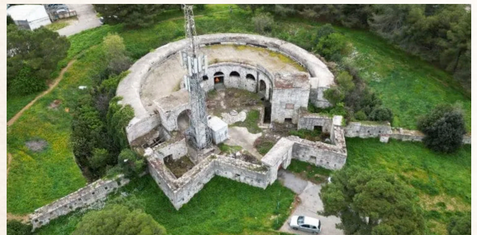
Fort Casoni Vecchi

Fort Bourguigion

Fort Grosso



Fort San Giorgio

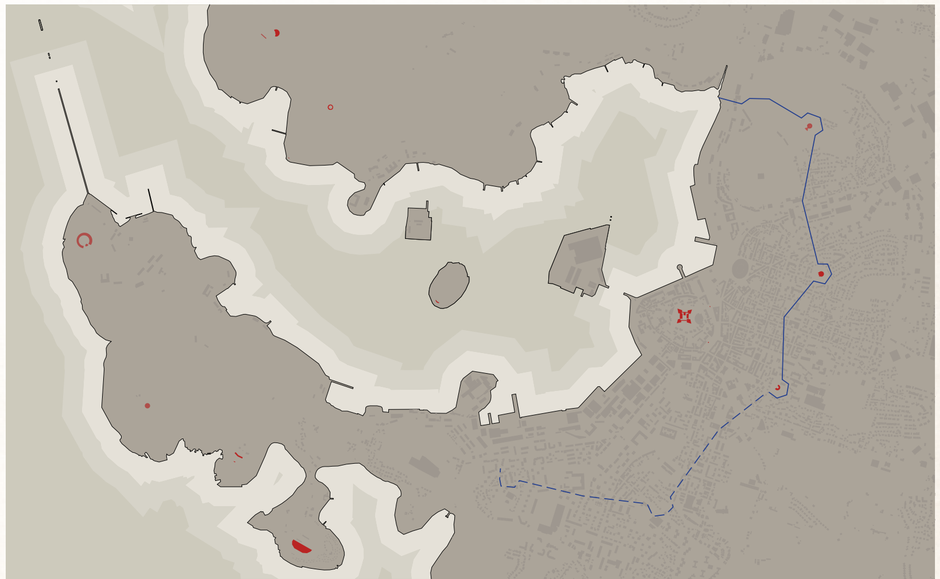


Fort Monvidal

First ring fortifications, 1823–1860s

The first defensive phase focused on protecting the naval harbor and the immediate urban perimeter. Early structures were relatively close to the city and primarily controlled direct access to the bay. These fortifications followed traditional masonry typologies, including circular and semi-circular towers, bastioned forms and exposed artillery positions. Their purpose was to secure the port basin and the developing Arsenal. The defensive logic was still centralized. Forts were conceived as dominant architectural objects placed on strategic elevations near the harbor. This phase corresponds to classical artillery warfare, before the introduction of high-explosive shells.[9]

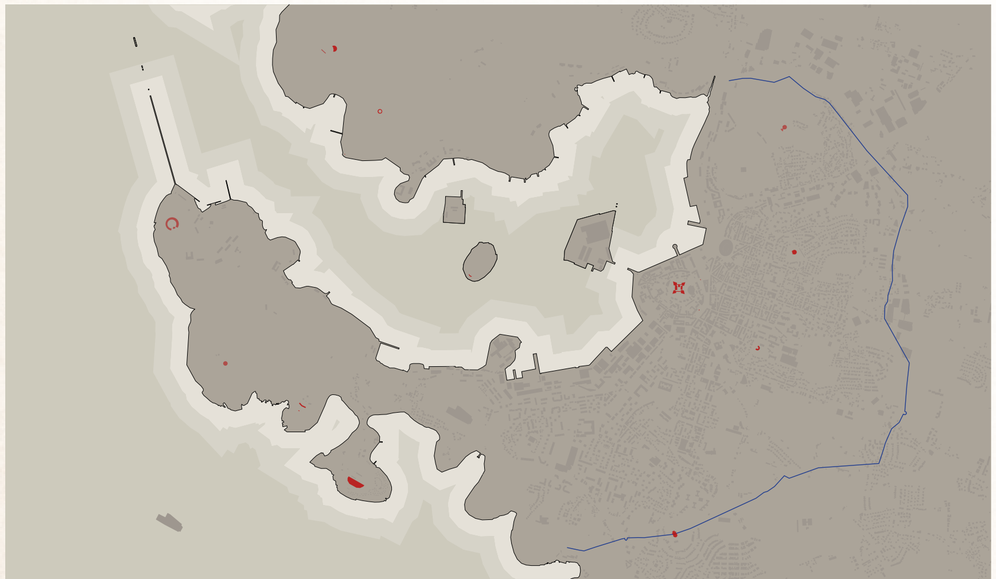
First ring fortifications map



Second ring fortifications, 1860s–1880s

With the rapid development of artillery technology and increasing strategic importance of Pula, the defensive perimeter expanded outward. A second, wider ring of forts was established on the surrounding hills. This ring formed a continuous defensive belt around the city, allowing overlapping fields of fire. The forts were positioned to control both maritime and land approaches.[10]

Second ring fortifications map



Fort Verudella

Fort Punta Christo

Fort Paravia West

Fort Kaštelir

After 1880

A major technological shift occurred. The introduction of more powerful naval artillery and explosive projectiles rendered tall masonry forts vulnerable. As a response:

- forts became lower and more compact
- structures were partially buried into terrain
- thick earth embankments replaced exposed walls
- armored cupolas and casemates were introduced
- The system became more dispersed and integrated into the landscape rather than visually dominant.[11]

Maritime and island fortifications

Parallel to the land-based rings, a strong coastal artillery system was developed. The coastal forts were strategically oriented toward long-range naval engagement. Many were equipped with heavy-caliber guns and, later, armored artillery positions. Their purpose was to prevent enemy fleets from entering the Pula harbor.

This system included:

- coastal batteries positioned along the southern and western shoreline
- fortified points on headlands and capes
- defensive installations on Veliki Brijun and Mali Brijun
- artillery positions controlling narrow sea passages[12]

Fort Minor, Brijuni

Fort Forno

Today, the Austro-Hungarian fortifications of Pula no longer serve a military purpose, but they remain an important part of the city's spatial identity. Several forts are used as summer stages for theatre performances, concerts and music festivals. One of them has been transformed into a public aquarium, adapting former military architecture to a new educational and cultural role.

Fort Forno, summer stage

Fort Minor, summer stage

Fort Punta Christo, music festival

Fort Verudella, Aquarium Pula

Map of Pula Infrastructure - Early 20th century

OTHER MILITARY INFRASTRUCTURE

Alongside the ring of forts, the Austro-Hungarian military developed an extensive network of supporting infrastructure. The city functioned as a major naval base, which required logistical, sanitary, industrial and supply facilities integrated into the urban fabric. These structures formed a parallel layer of military organization that shaped the spatial development of Pula beyond its fortifications.

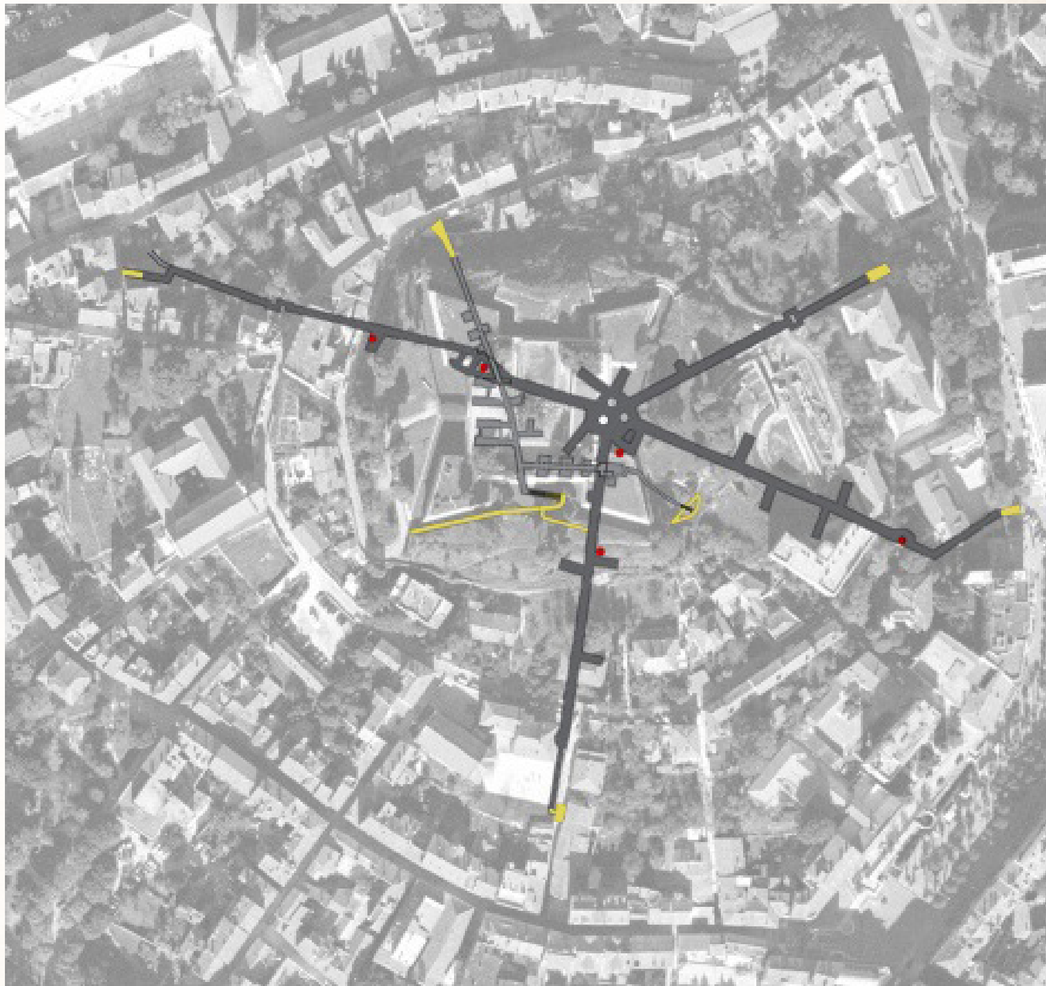
ZeroStrasse, underground tunnels today

ZeroStrasse, underground tunnels today

Underground System

Beneath Pula's hills an extensive network of underground tunnels and shelters was constructed, particularly between 1912 and 1916. These passages connected key military sites such as Kaštel and Monte Ghiro and extended below important buildings and institutions. Originally intended for protection, storage and communication, the tunnels were designed to function during wartime attacks and could accommodate thousands of people. Some systems were built on multiple levels, with wide corridors, natural ventilation and stable interior temperatures throughout the year.[13]

ZeroStrasse, underground tunnels map



Supply and Sanitary Infrastructure

In addition to tunnels, Pula contained numerous military supply and service facilities. Large storage complexes, such as the provisions depot at Monte Ghiro, ensured food distribution for naval units. The city also had military slaughterhouses, warehouses, industrial buildings, and a steam mill. A significant sanitary system included the Naval Hospital and additional medical facilities organized to treat wounded soldiers during wartime. Together, these structures reveal that Pula was conceived not only as a fortified city, but as a fully operational military organism, where defense, logistics and daily life were spatially interconnected.[14]

k.u.k. Proviant-Magazin, depot and supply warehouse

today: Italunion wholesale store

Marine school

today: Karlo Rojc Cultural Centre

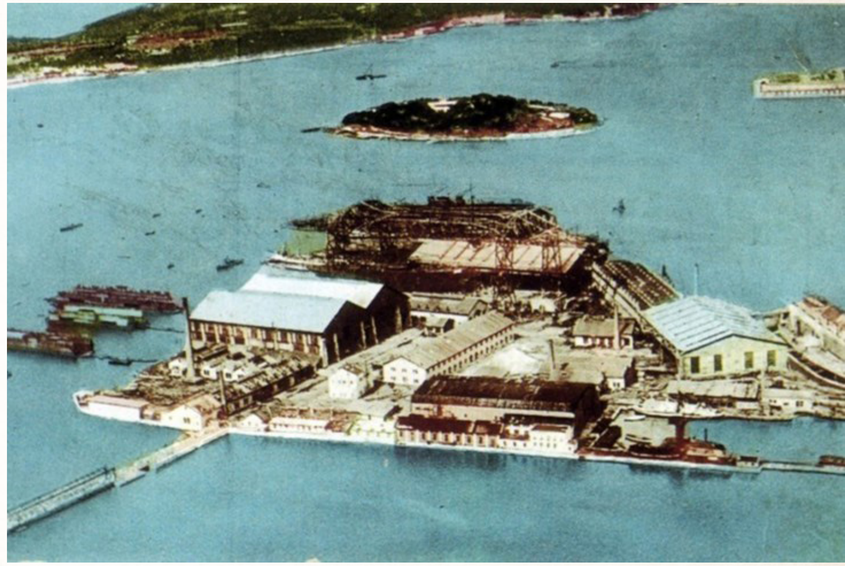
Naval hospital

today: student campus

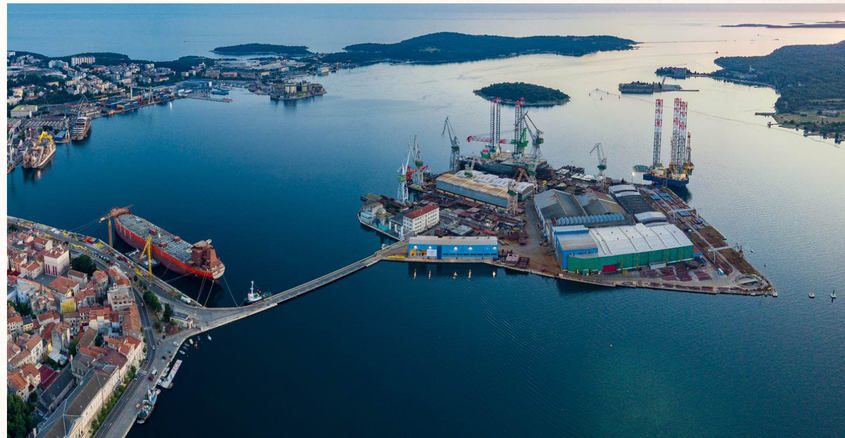
MILITARY IDENTITY

When the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy declared it the main naval port in 1856, the town had only a few thousand inhabitants. Within less than sixty years, the population multiplied several times, reaching around sixty thousand on the eve of the First World War. This was one of the fastest urban growth rates in the Adriatic region. **The construction of the Naval Arsenal became the engine of this expansion.** Around it, entire neighbourhoods were developed. Infrastructure followed quickly, rail connections, water supply systems, hospitals, schools, technical institutes. Economically, the city depended almost entirely on the navy. Thousands of jobs were directly linked to the Arsenal and the fleet, while secondary services, trade, housing, entertainment, all revolved around the military presence. Pula became one of the most technologically advanced cities in the region at the time, equipped with modern urban services earlier than many larger cities on the eastern Adriatic coast.[15]

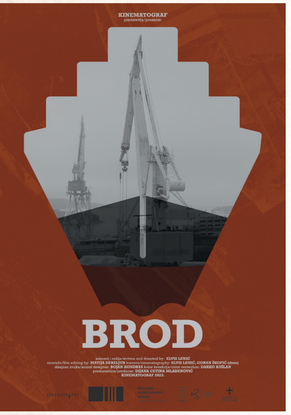
Austro-Hungarian Arsenal in Pula, 19th century



Brodogradilište Uljanik in Pula, 21st century

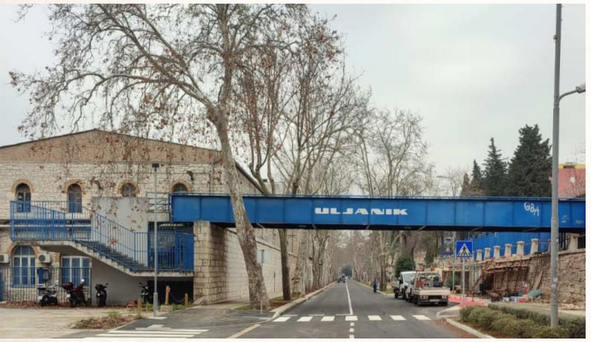


Brod (2023) **by Elvis Lenić, film about Brodogradilište Uljanik**



Berge Istra (2020) by Dražen Majić, **film about Berge Istra ship**

Arsenal street in Pula with Uljanik bridge



Athletic stadium "Uljanik" in Pula

Football club "Uljanik"

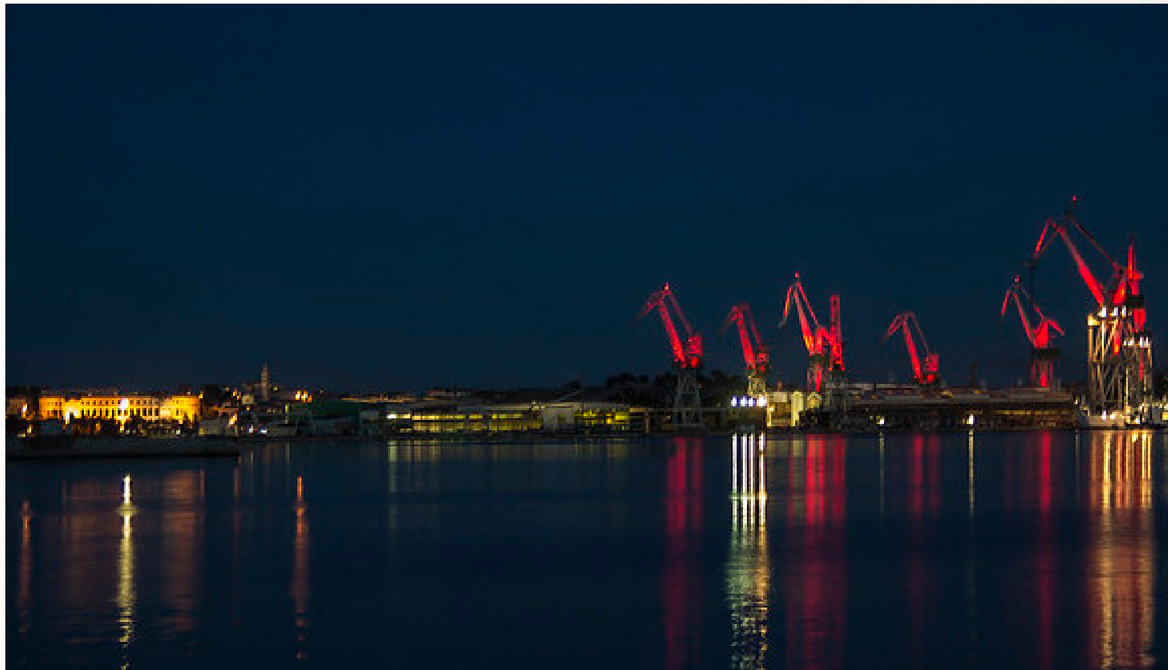
The Arsenal as an Identity Generator

Founded in 1856 as the Imperial and Royal Naval Arsenal, the complex in Pula began as a military-industrial facility of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. From its establishment, it never ceased to operate. After 1918, the Arsenal did not disappear, it transformed. Its function shifted from a naval military base to a civilian shipyard, Brodogradilište Uljanik, adapting to changing political systems while preserving spatial and industrial continuity.

This continuity represents one of the longest industrial trajectories in the Adriatic region. Only in 2018 was this historical line interrupted. Following prolonged financial instability and unsuccessful restructuring attempts, bankruptcy proceedings marked the first definitive halt of production since 1856. The closure therefore signified not merely the collapse of a company, but the end of more than 160 years of uninterrupted industrial activity that had fundamentally shaped Pula's economic and urban identity.[16]

The 2018 State Aid decision of the European Commission concerning Uljanik d.d. demonstrates the structural importance of the shipyard for Pula. The fact that its restructuring required supranational evaluation and involved extensive state guarantees confirms that Uljanik was not a peripheral company, but a systemic economic pillar. Its potential collapse was considered significant beyond the local scale, reflecting its deep integration into the city's economy, employment structure, and collective identity.[17]

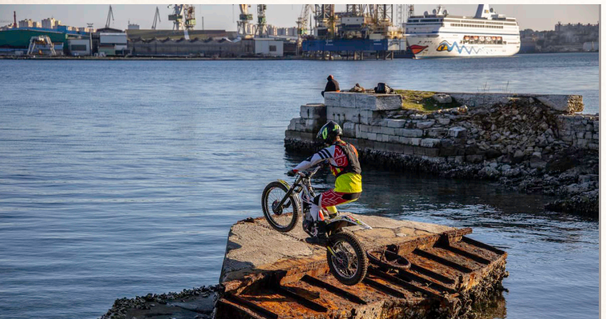
Pula skyline with Roman amphiteater and Uljanik



Mushrooms cultivation in Austro-Hungarian abandoned underground shelter

Aquarium Pula in Fort Verudella

Vallelunga



The Quotidian Identity

In Pula, military identity is embedded in everyday life. The legacy of fortifications, bunkers, tunnels, and defensive landscapes is so seamlessly interwoven with the urban fabric that it often becomes almost invisible. Some underground shelters are repurposed for agricultural use, such as mushroom cultivation. Beachgoers sunbathe on former bunkers and coastal fortifications without necessarily reflecting on their original function. The former military zone of Vallelunga has become an informal promenade and recreational path for residents. Even the cannons next to Kaštel Fortress are casually used as benches. In this way, military infrastructure has shifted from strategic defense to quotidian backdrop.

Leisure time on military objects (I, II, III)

I

II

III

City Identity Change: new project of riva with Austro-Hungarian buildings in the background

THE EROSION OF IDENTITY

The official development vision of Pula defines the city as green, innovative, resilient, digital, circular, inclusive and productive. The strategic framework is structured around contemporary policy concepts such as "zero-waste society," digital transformation, green urban mobility, circular economy and innovation-driven growth. While these priorities align with broader European agendas, they remain relatively generic and conceptually broad, applicable to almost any contemporary city.[18]

What is striking, however, is the limited explicit reference to Pula's existing structural identity, particularly its military-industrial heritage and long-standing productive landscape. The development narrative appears oriented toward new and forward-looking fields, yet without clearly articulating how these ambitions relate to the city's historical layers. This creates a gap between strategic abstraction and the tangible identity that has historically shaped Pula's spatial and social reality.

The Condition of Military Fortifications

Fort Casoni Vecchi

Fort San Michele

Fort San Giovanni

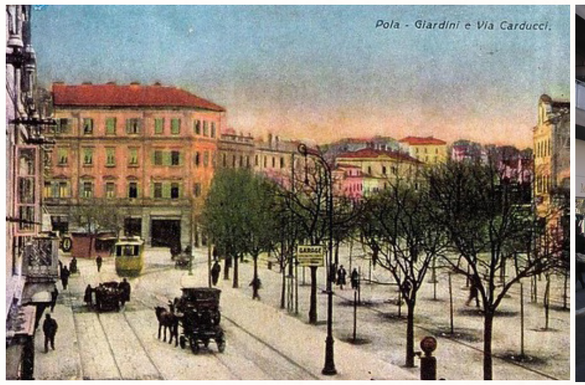
Fort Valmaggiore

The Condition of Civic Infrastructure

Riva

Riva and Hotel Riviera

Giardini



Market

Local perception of Pula

Research conducted by Nataša Urošević (2012) shows that local residents perceive Pula with a mixture of pride and ambivalence. While they strongly value the city's historical depth and cultural distinctiveness, they are also aware of the insufficient strategic use of these identity assets, the underdeveloped potential of cultural tourism, and the city's continued seasonal economic dependence. This reveals a clear tension between a robust, internally shared sense of identity and its weak institutional articulation in development policies. Furthermore, residents recognize Pula as culturally specific and historically layered, yet increasingly exposed to homogenizing tourism models. There is an implicit concern that mass tourism reduces the city's complexity to a limited set of recognizable icons, primarily the Arena. Within this dynamic, the industrial layer, including the Arsenal and the shipyard, remains symbolically significant in local perception, but largely underrepresented in the city's external branding and strategic narratives.[19]

Hiking around fortresses

Local residents initiatives for maintaining the Forts:

“We did not receive any assistance from the City, nor did we ask for it, because for all 24 years up to now we have financed ourselves with our own funds.”

-Darko Dabić for *Regional Express* about **Fort Punta Christo** (2024)

Maintaining of Fort Punta Christo

“A few years ago, I was walking around here and noticed the outline of some kind of structure. I went closer and couldn’t believe it! I had no idea there was a fort here! What won me over — besides the fact that it’s beautiful, of course — is that from it you can see Šijana, Vidikovac…My goal is that one day events will be held there, and that together with it, Pula will develop culturally.”

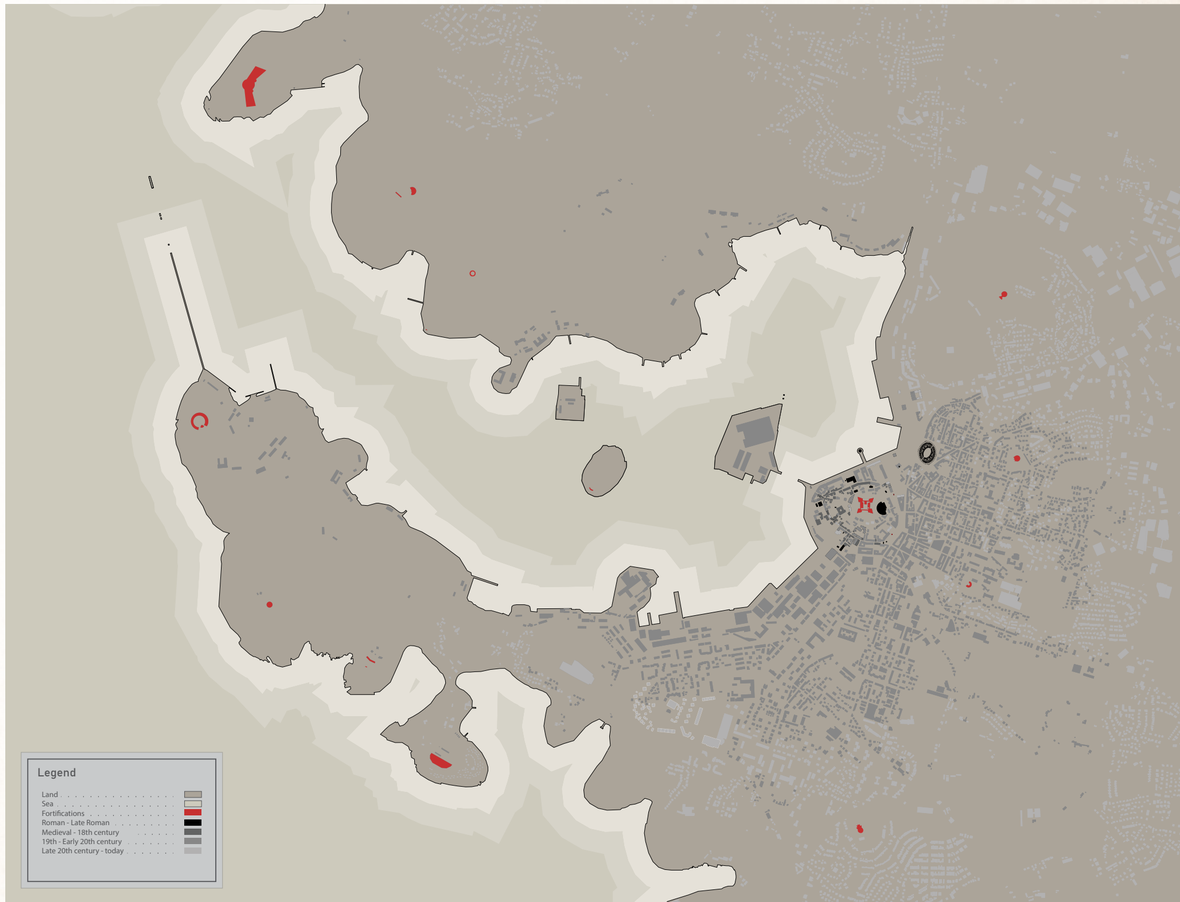
- Valent Hrvatin for *Istra24* about **Fort San Giorgio** (2025)

Maintaining of Fort San Giorgio

U R B A N
REGENERATION

The development of the Monvidal area is directly linked to the expansion of Pula following the construction of the Austro-Hungarian Arsenal in the mid-19th century. It triggered the city's first major expansion beyond its medieval walls between 1850 and 1875, introducing new residential quarters and military infrastructure. During the second phase of expansion, from 1875 to 1918, rapid demographic growth driven by shipyard workers and military personnel led to the formation of suburban neighborhoods such as Monvidal. These areas accommodated workers and their families, reflecting the transformation of Pula into a military-industrial center. Although urban growth was often chaotic due to tensions between military and civil planning, Monvidal emerged as part of the broader modernization process that reshaped Pula's spatial structure, social composition, and architectural identity.

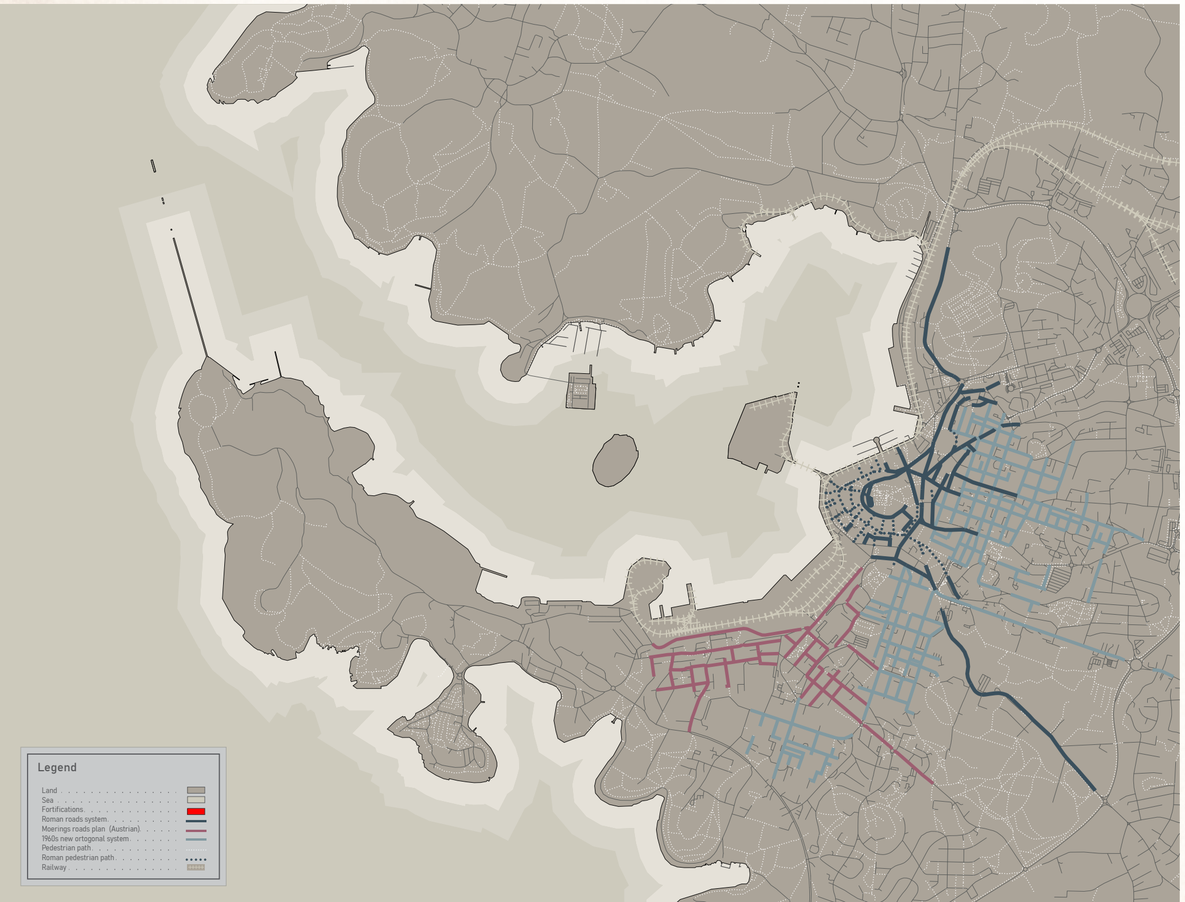
History treshold of Pula analysis



Byzantine rule and Republic of Venice

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, Pula passed under Byzantine rule in 533 and Frankish control in 788, gradually becoming a self-governed commune while losing regional importance. In 1331, it came under the Republic of Venice, whose rule until 1797 was marked by demographic decline, plague, and economic stagnation, leaving the city significantly weakened.

Traffic infrastructure analysis



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Geomorphology analysis

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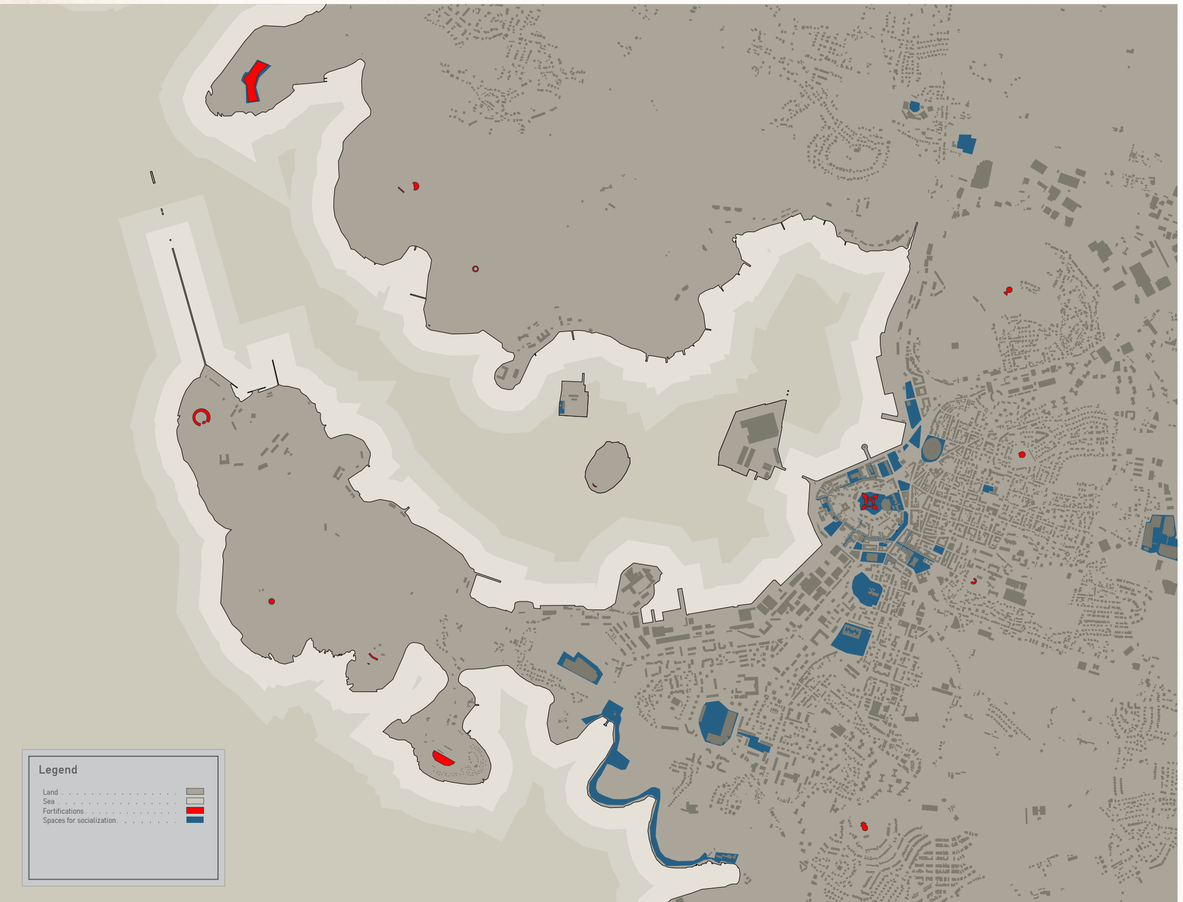
Spaces for socialization analysis



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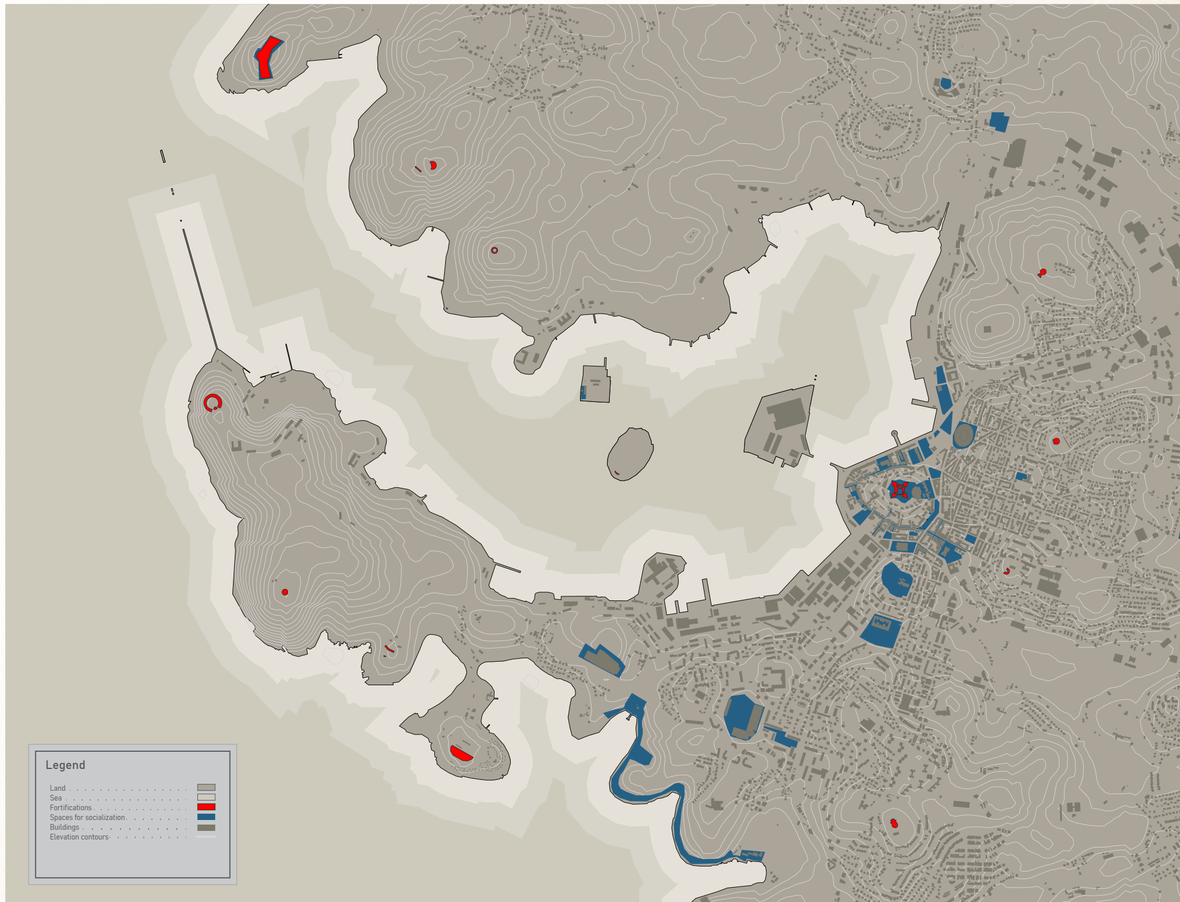
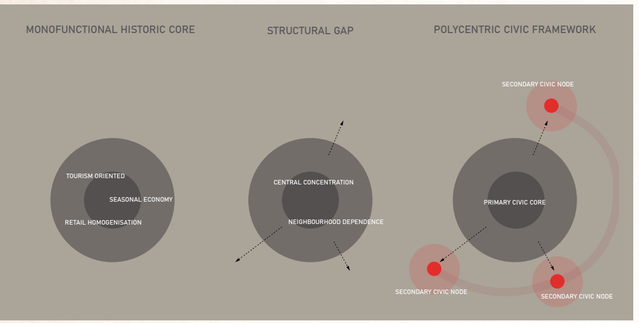
Key elements analysis



Polycentric civic framework



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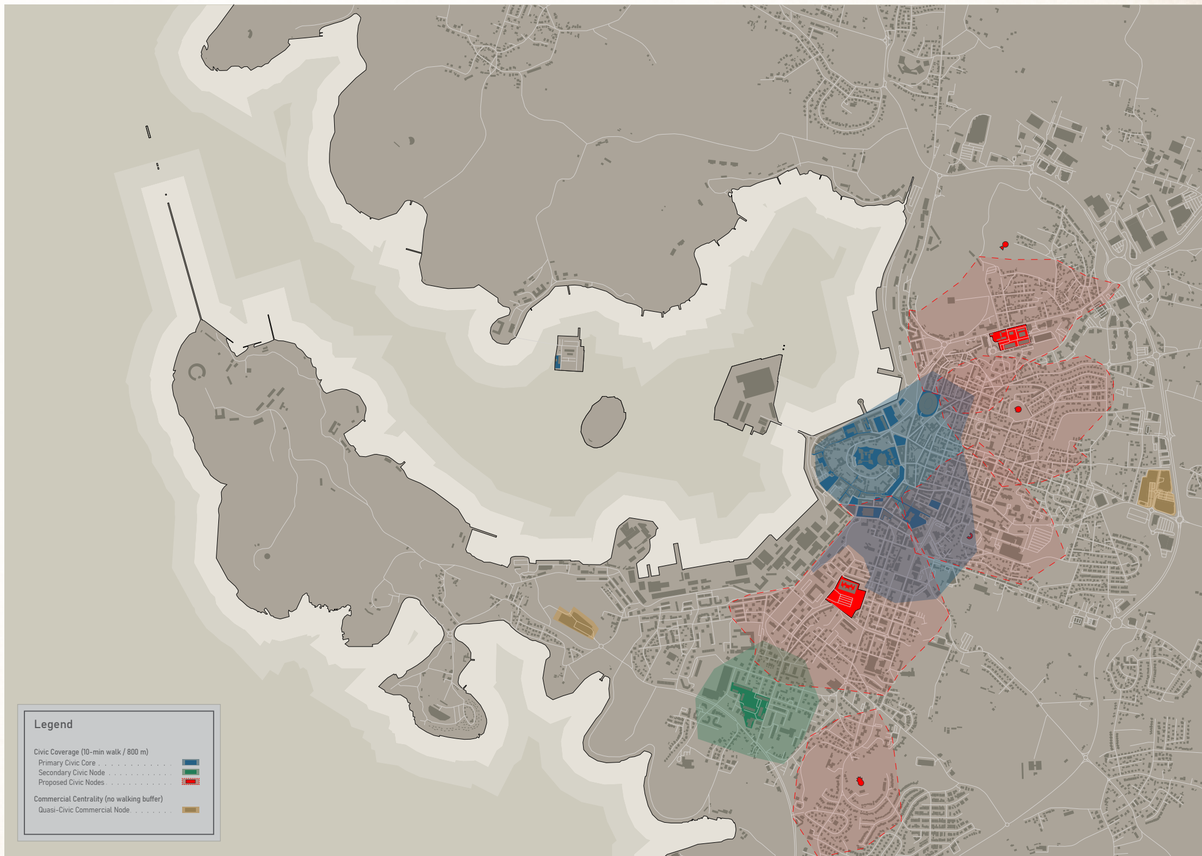
Civic voids and proposed nods



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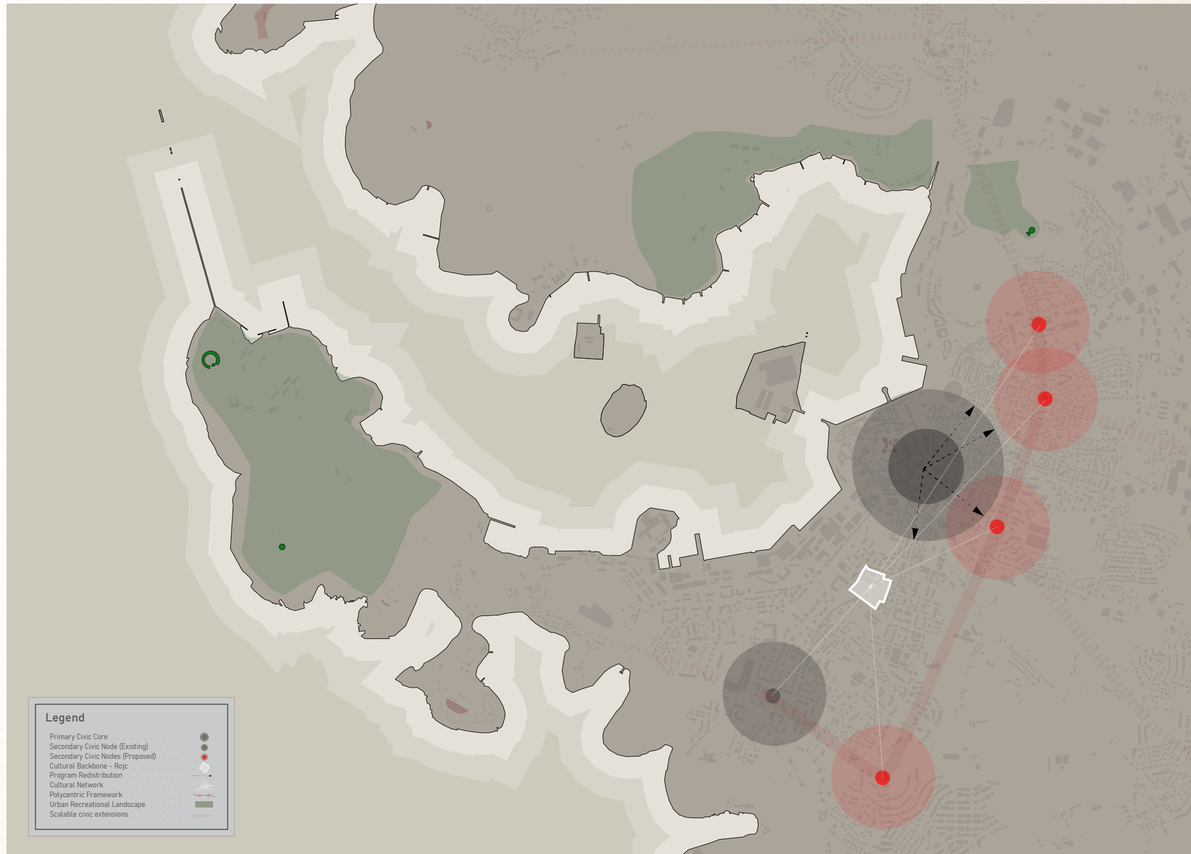
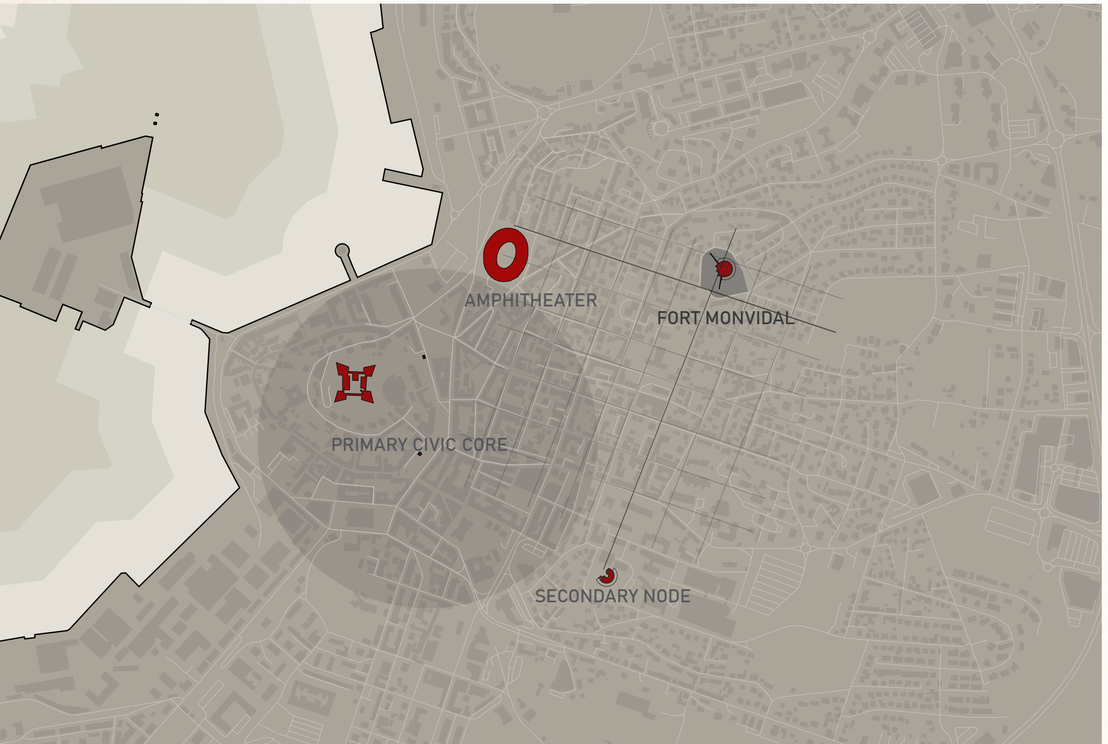
Civic regeneration structure



CASE STUDY FORT MONVIDAL

Monvidal in the urban structure analysis



The development of the Monvidal area is directly linked to the expansion of Pula following the construction of the Austro-Hungarian Arsenal in the mid-19th century. It triggered the city's first major expansion beyond its medieval walls between 1850 and 1875, introducing new residential quarters and military infrastructure. During the second phase of expansion, from 1875 to 1918, rapid demographic growth driven by shipyard workers and military personnel led to the formation of suburban neighborhoods such as Monvidal. These areas accommodated workers and their families, reflecting the transformation of Pula into a military-industrial center. Although urban growth was often chaotic due to tensions between military and civil planning, Monvidal emerged as part of the broader modernization process that reshaped Pula's spatial structure, social composition, and architectural identity.[20]

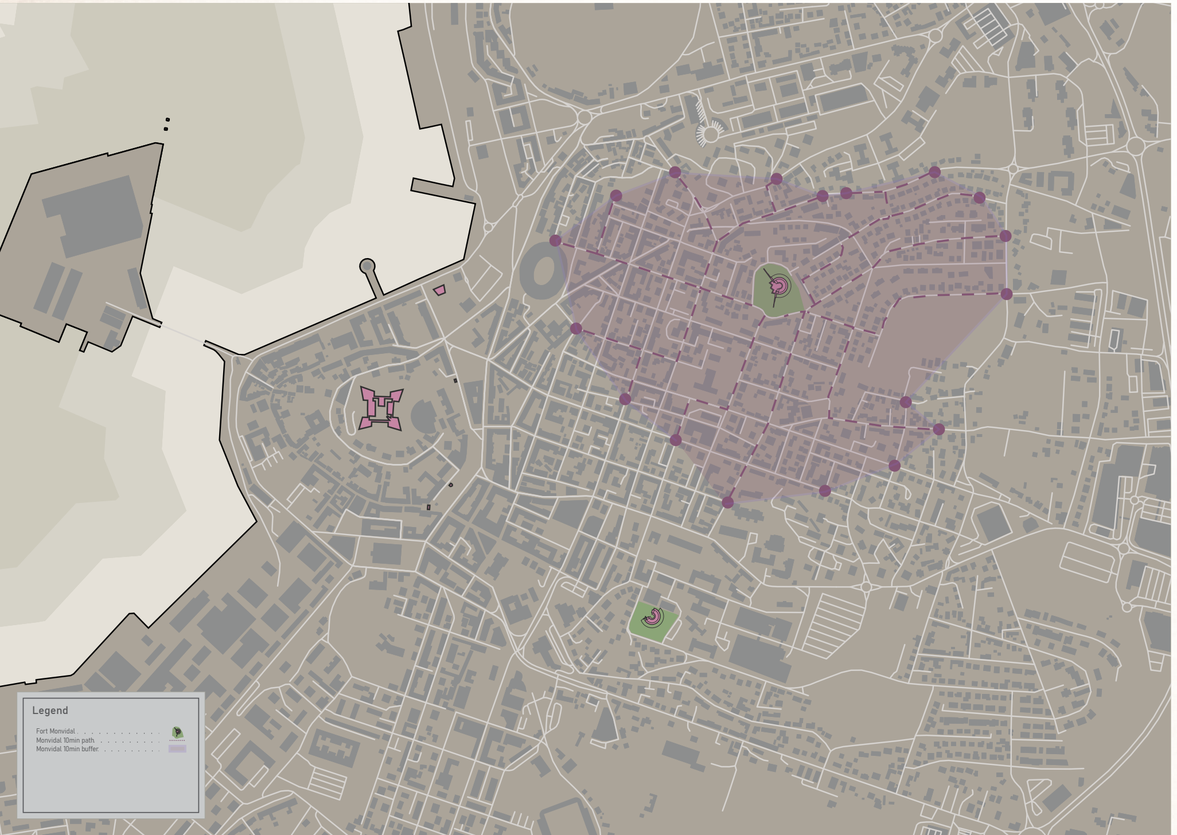
Site Selection: Fort Monvidal

The selection of Fort Monvidal as the case study is based on its unique urban position and unrealized civic potential. Unlike many Austro-Hungarian fortifications located on the city's periphery, Monvidal is embedded within the existing neighborhood fabric and it is surrounded by housing and everyday life. The Monvidal neighborhood lacks a defined public center. There are no squares or designed communal spaces. For instance, social events often take place in parking lots between residential buildings. This absence of shared space highlights the need for a local civic center. Monvidal is relatively well preserved compared to other potential fortifications and requires less radical intervention. Its scale and position make it suitable for transformation into a neighborhood center rather than a tourist-oriented attraction. Choosing Monvidal therefore represents an opportunity to convert a former military structure into a space of community, culture, and everyday urban life.

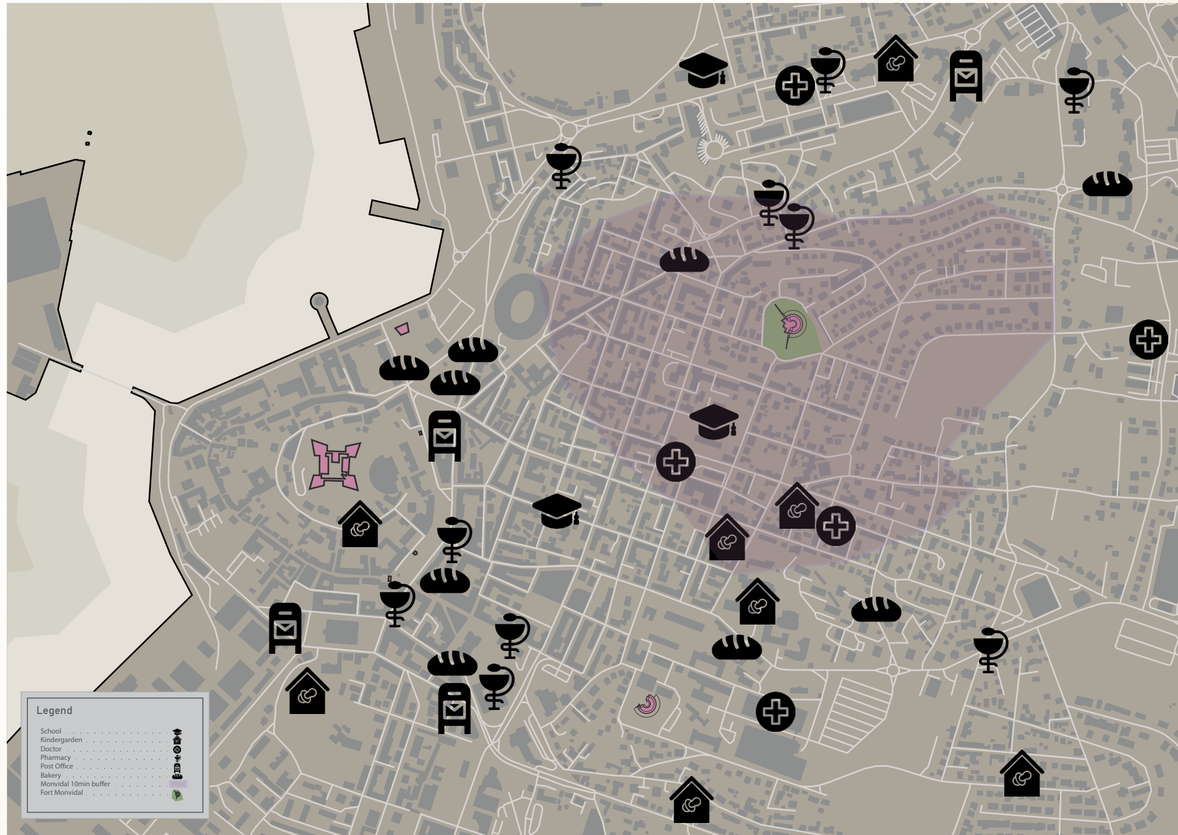
Fort Monvidal context

Monvidal neighborhood social event

Monvidal pedestrian buffer area analysis

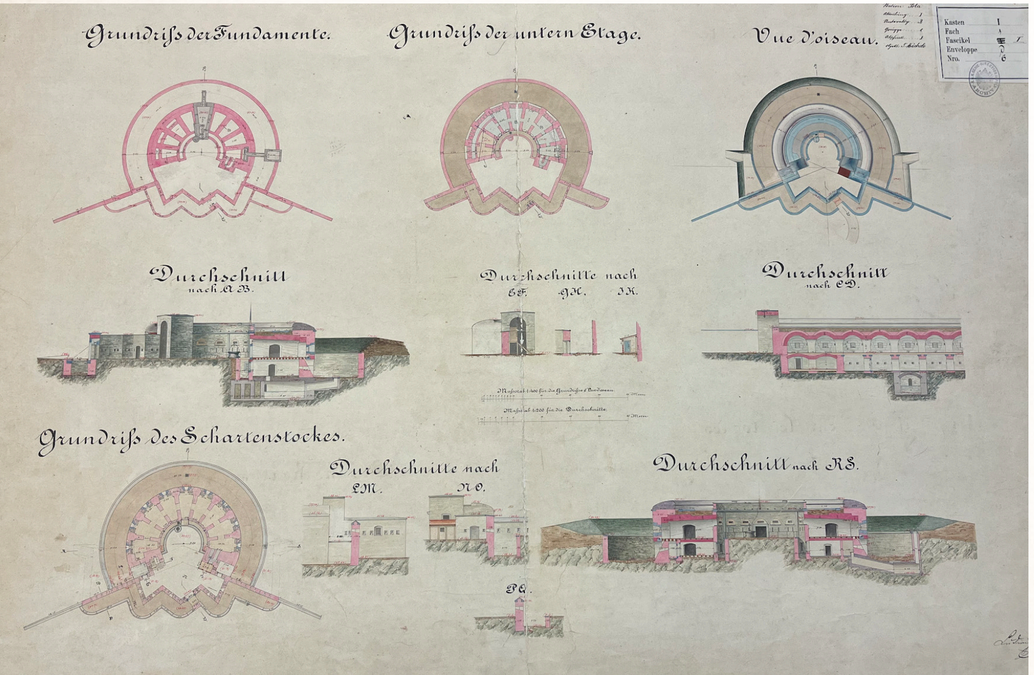


Monvidal civic infrastructure analysis



Fort Monvidal

Fortress technical drawings



Defence district: I
Location: Pula, Monvidal – Monte Movidal – 48 m above sea level
Class: Artillery tower
Type: Horseshoe-shaped
Dimension: Ø approx. 37 m
Year of construction and improvements: 1852–1854; 1914 [21]

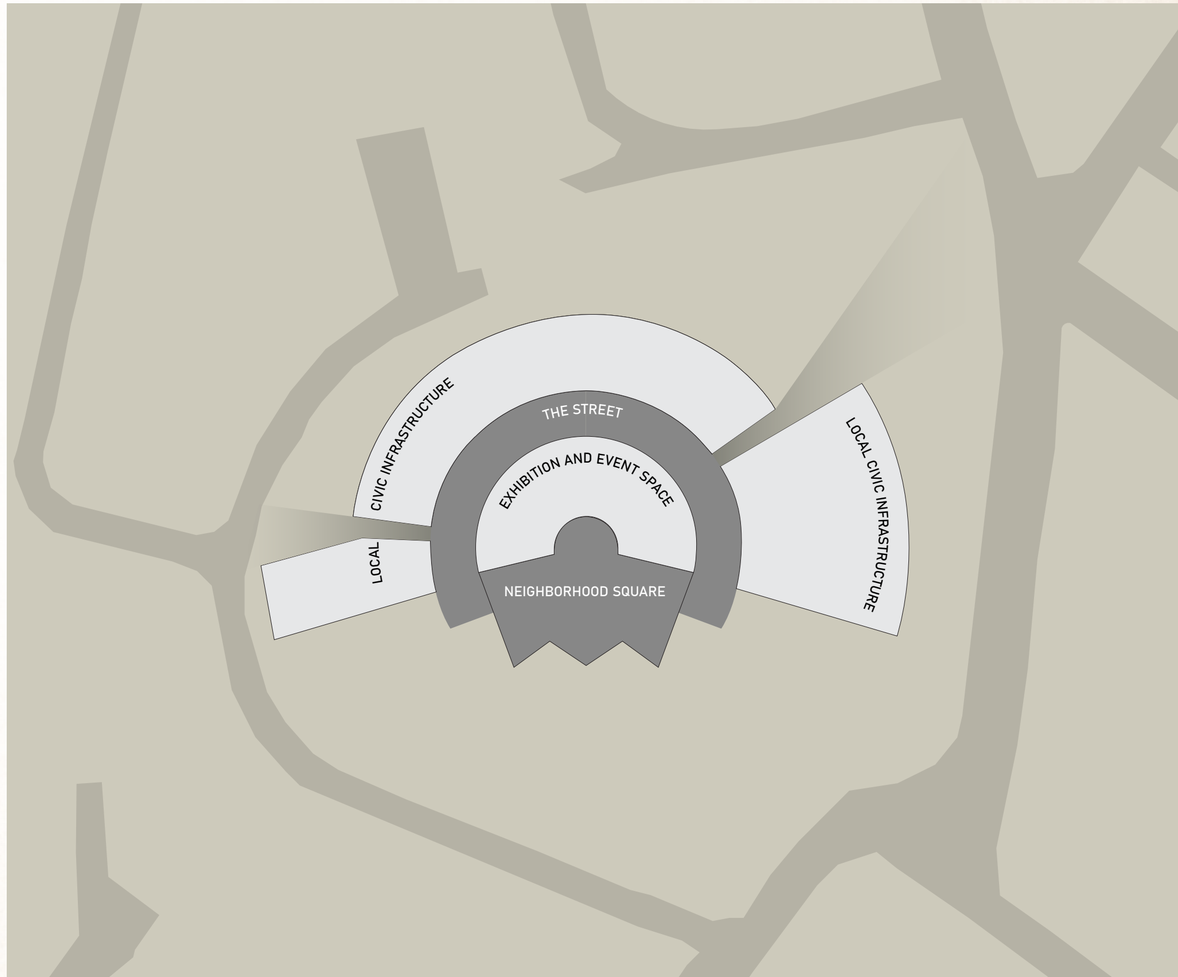
About: Fort Monvidal was part of the first modern defensive ring protecting Pula's naval arsenal and land approaches. Built into the hillside with compact stone masonry, its horseshoe form allowed controlled artillery positioning while reducing exposure. Modified in 1914 to meet new military requirements, it primarily served logistical and storage functions. Its later civilian reuse and eventual abandonment reflect the broader transformation of Pula's former military infrastructure.[22]

Current Condition of Fort Monvidal

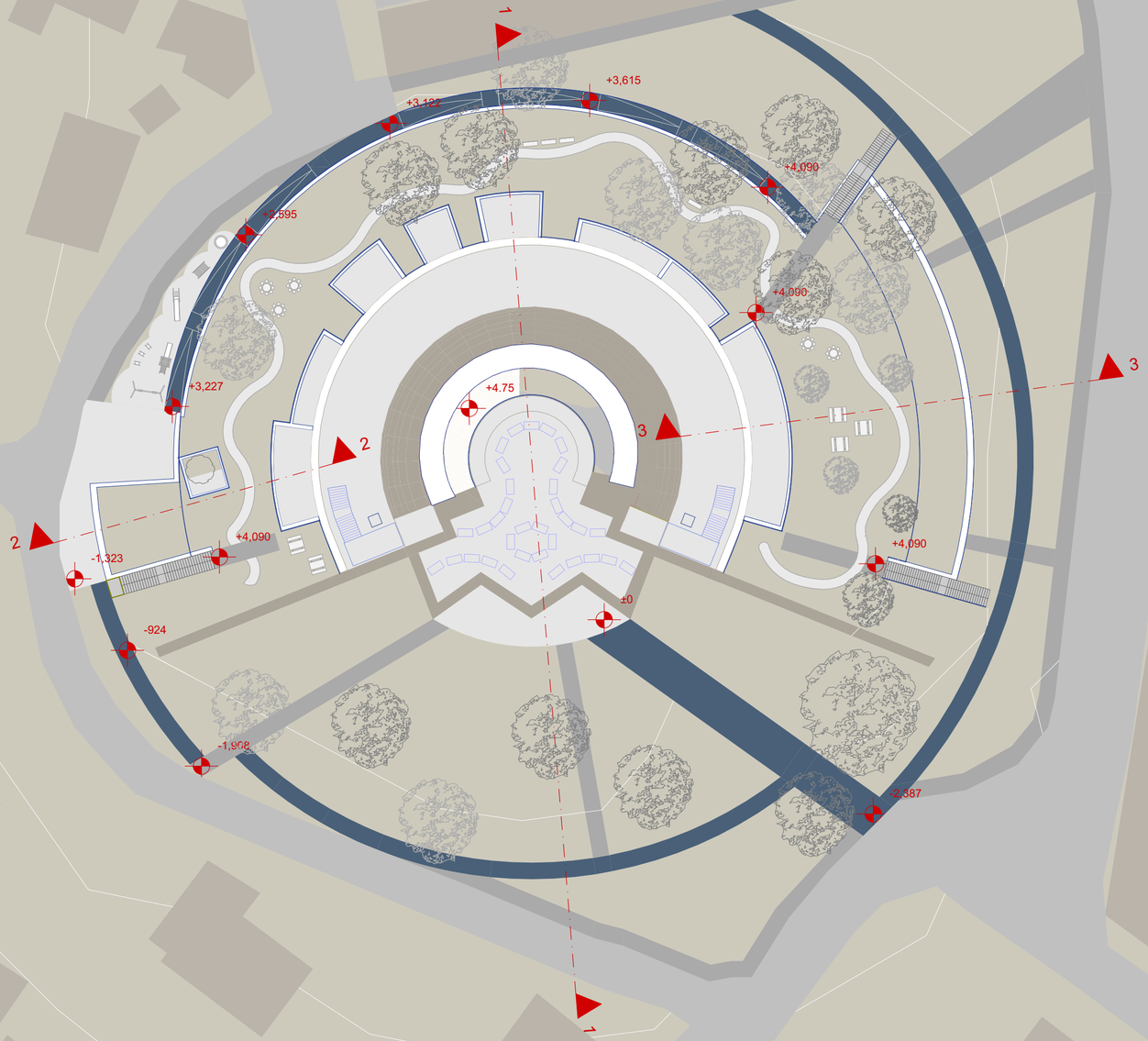
ADAPTIVE REUSE OF FORT MONVIDAL

The adaptive reuse of Fort Monvidal transforms a former military structure into a civic condenser for the neighborhood. The project introduces a public square at the center of the fort, redefining the once defensive core as an open space for gathering, events, and everyday social life. The existing interior spaces are adapted into a flexible exhibition environment, capable of hosting various types of cultural programs. Beneath the fort, the underground level becomes an informal neighborhood social hub, combining leisure, learning, and meeting spaces within a protected and intimate atmosphere. The former defensive trench is reinterpreted as a pedestrian street, a new “corso” that activates the perimeter and connects the fort to the surrounding urban fabric. Through these spatial transformations, the project shifts the logic of defense into a logic of openness, continuity, and collective use.

Architecture concept



Site plan

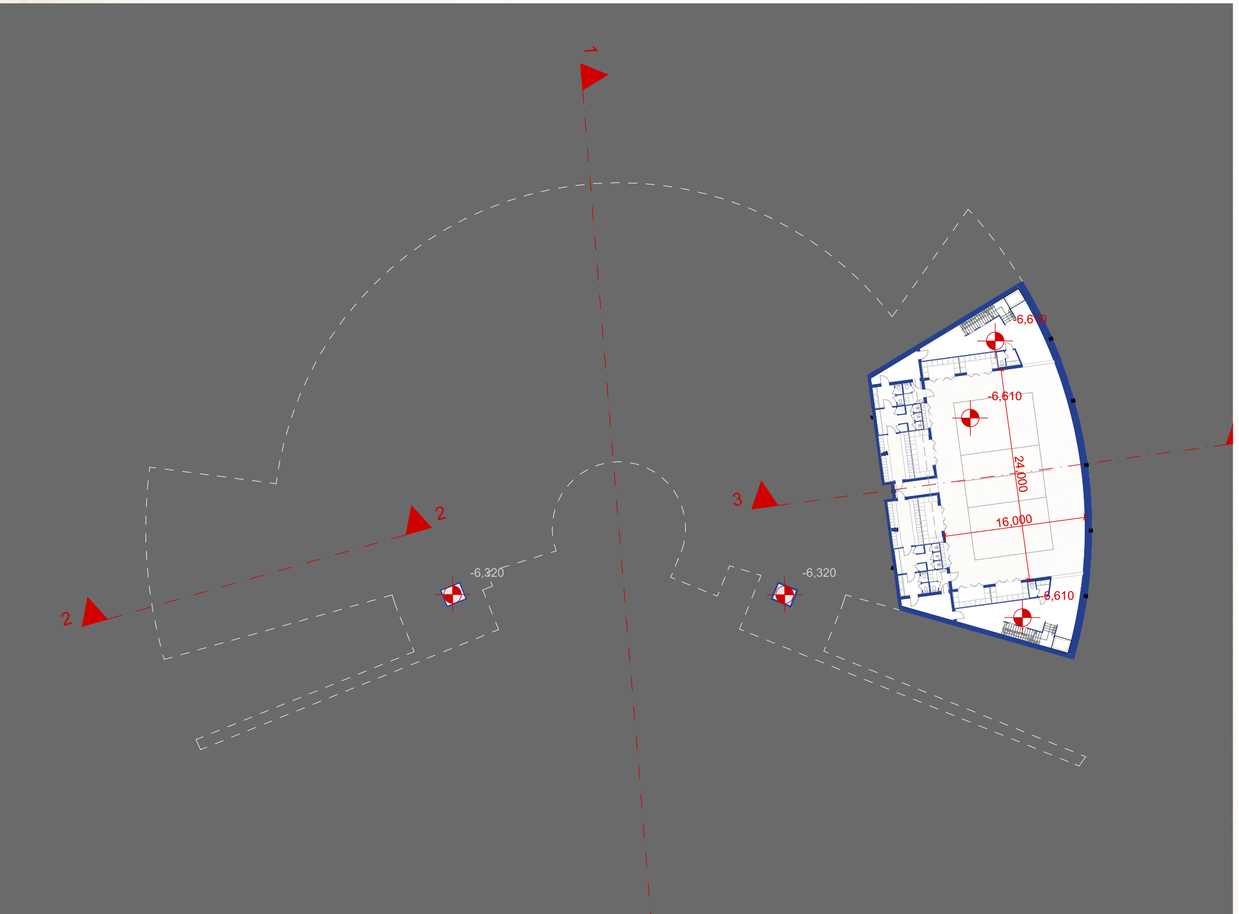

1
+3,615
+3,122
+3,595
+4,090
+4,090
+3,227
+4.75
3
2
3
2
+4,090
-1,323
±0
+4,090
-924
-1,908
-2,387
1

Axonometry

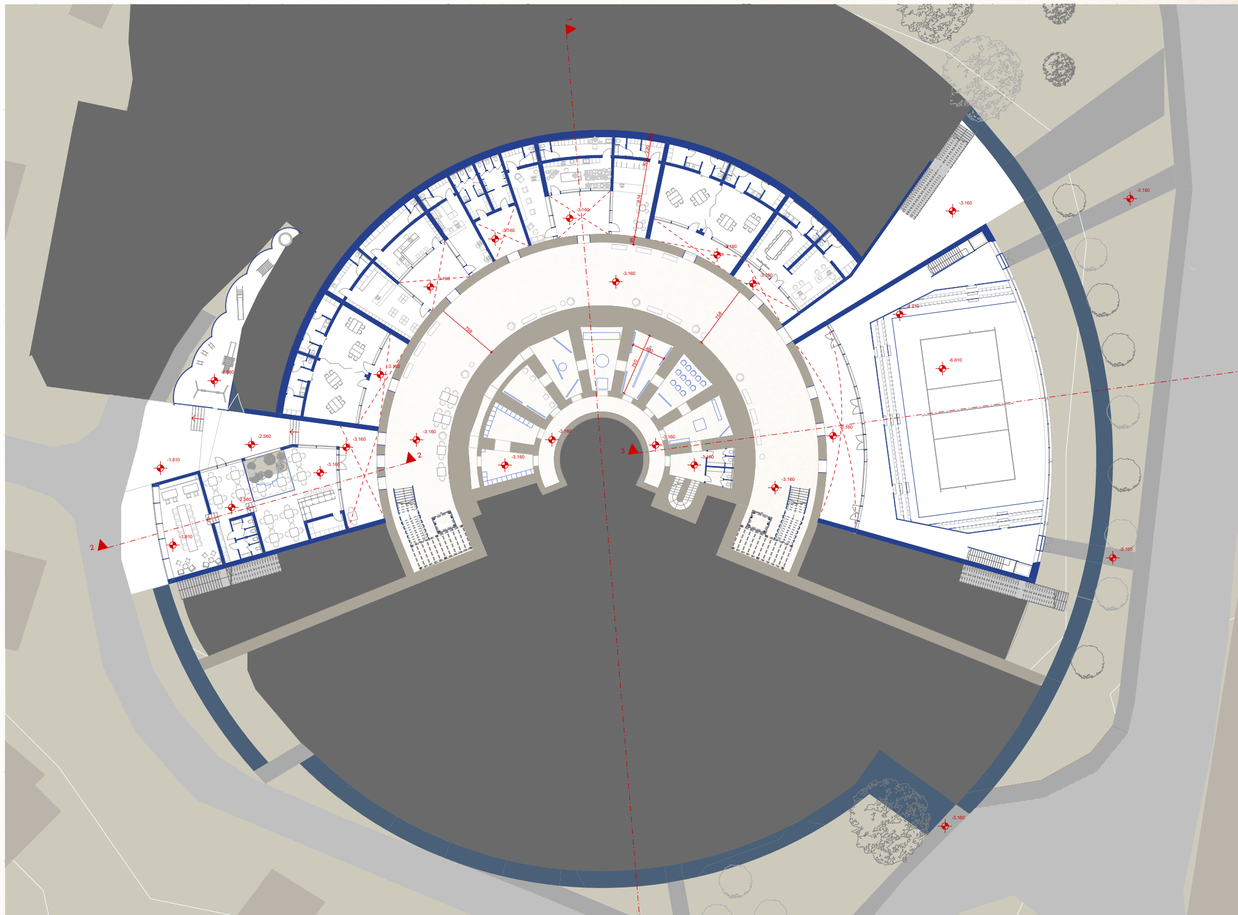
New uses - underground

The underground level introduces spaces dedicated to informal gathering and everyday interaction, anchored by a local café with an open learning area accessible to everyone. Along the new pedestrian corso, a sequence of small-scale local services is proposed, such as post office, print shop, pharmacy, and flower shop. These are complemented by adaptable classrooms designed for workshops, courses, and community programs. The promenade concludes with spaces for the local committee and a neighborhood sports hall.

Floor -2



Floor -1



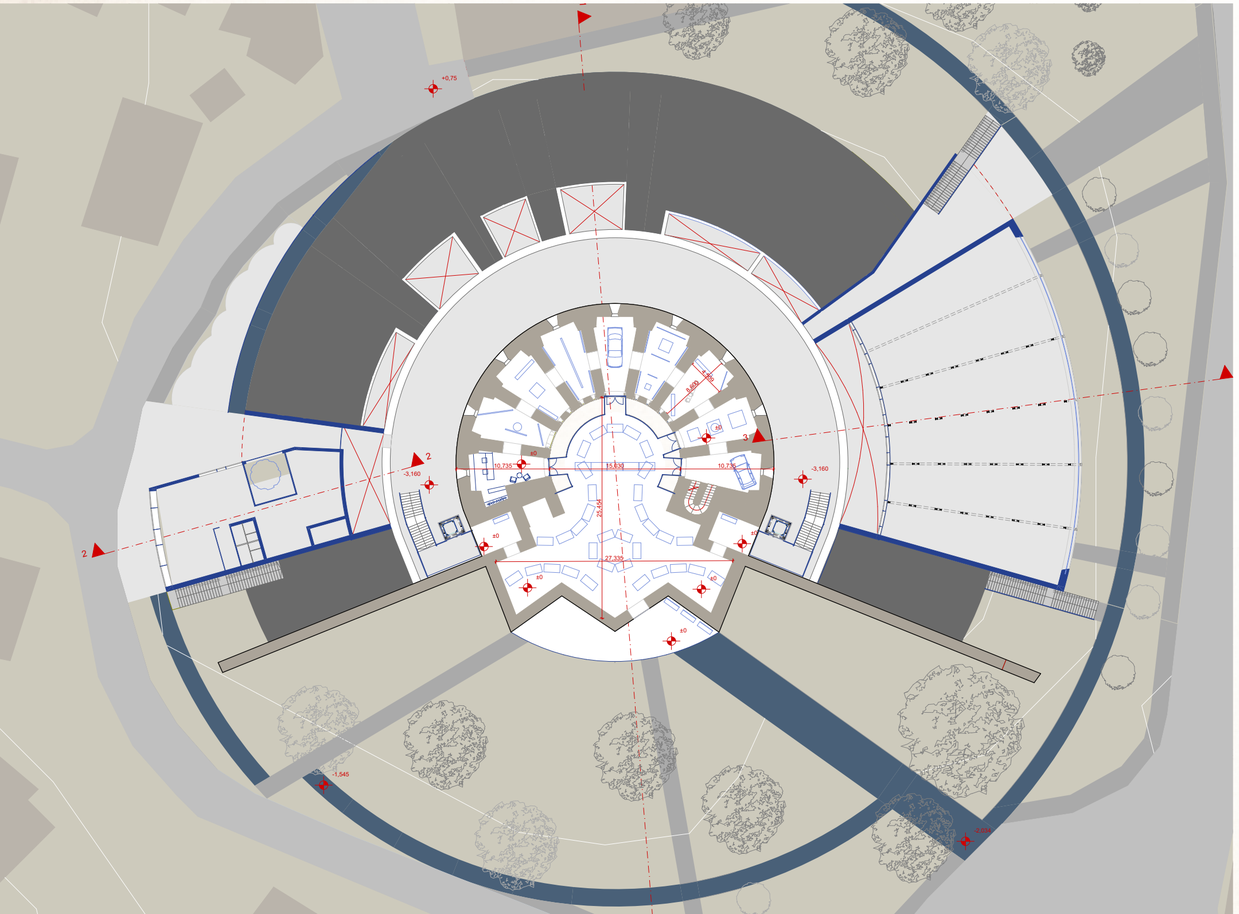
New uses - ground floor

The ground floor transforms a closed courtyard into a new neighborhood square designed as a flexible outdoor space for markets, events, and daily gatherings. From the square, visitors enter in the fortress, now converted into an adaptable exhibition space that follows the geometry of the courtyard.

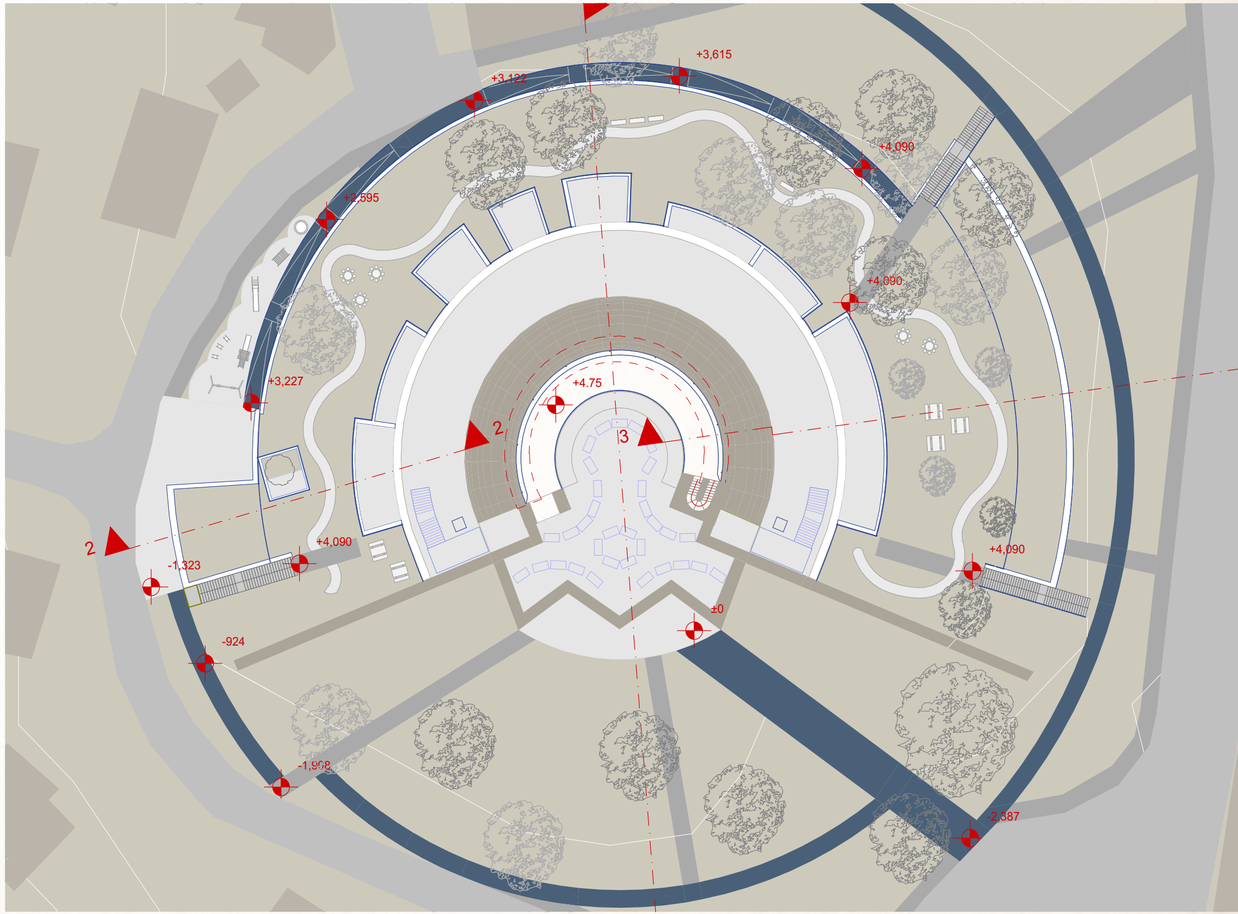
New uses - rooftop

The rooftop is reimagined as a leisure-oriented green space. It includes park benches, a promenade walkway, and a jogging path, offering residents a place for relaxation and everyday recreation. From this elevated level, open views extend toward the city and the sea, connecting the fort with its wider landscape.

Floor 0

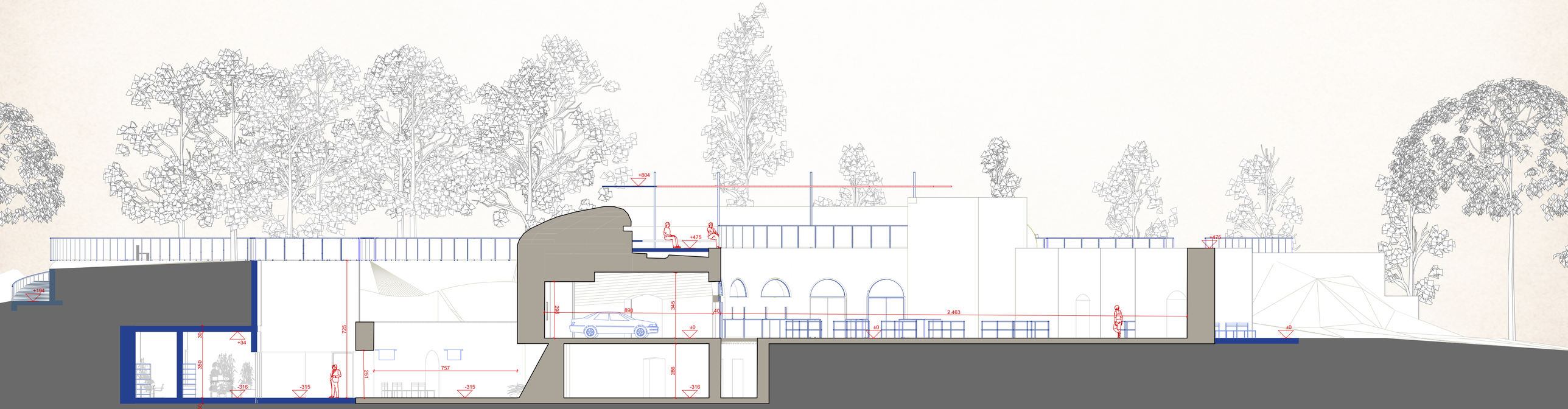


Floor 1



New uses

At the center of the new fort Monvidal, a new open square establishes a shared space for meetings, events, and daily interaction. The existing interiors are converted into a versatile exhibition area, while the underground level becomes an informal gathering place for the neighborhood. The former defensive trench is activated as a pedestrian promenade, functioning as a new corso that links the fort with its surrounding context.



Section 1-1

Exterior atmosphere 1

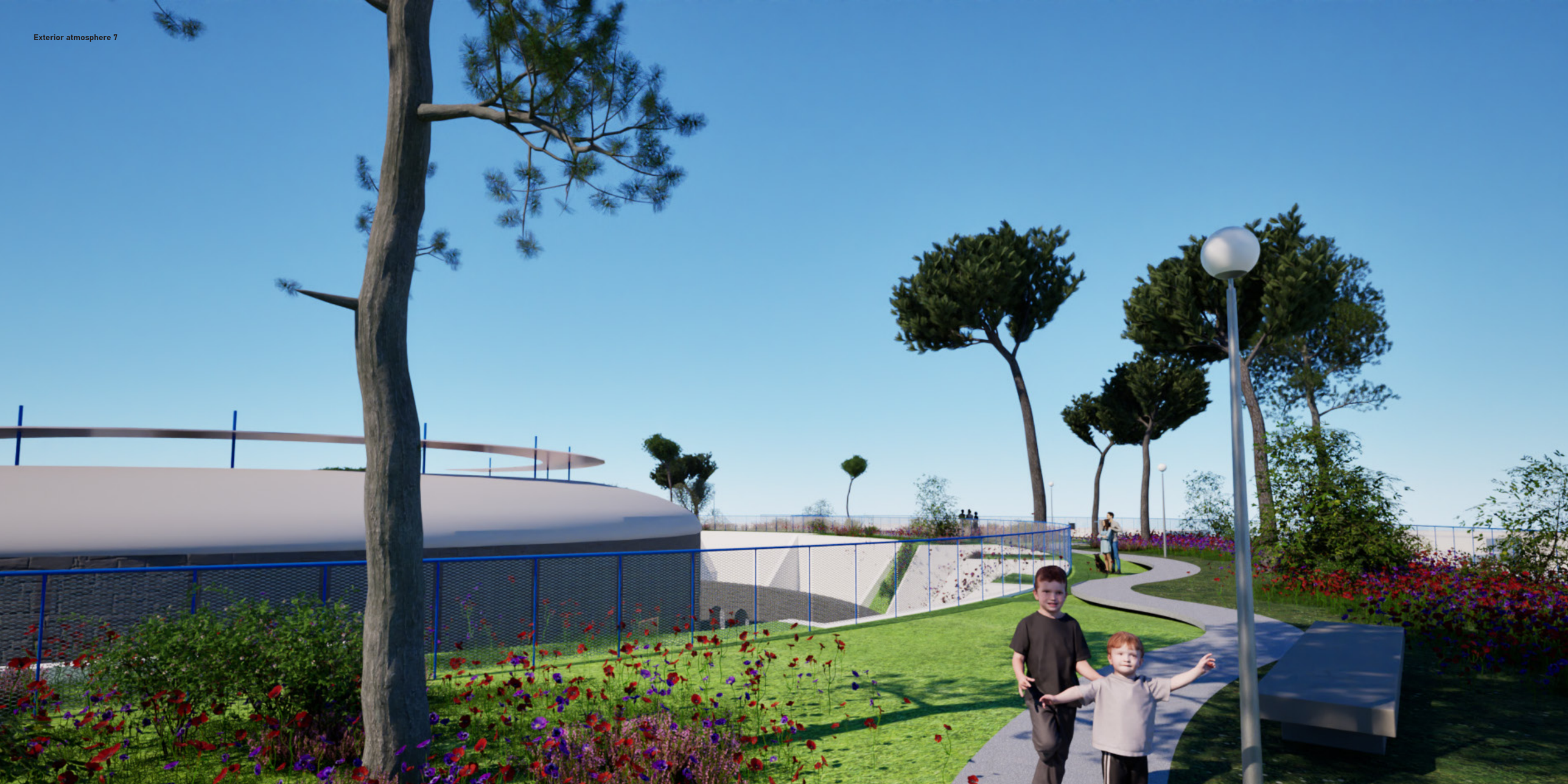
Exterior atmosphere 2

Exterior atmosphere 3

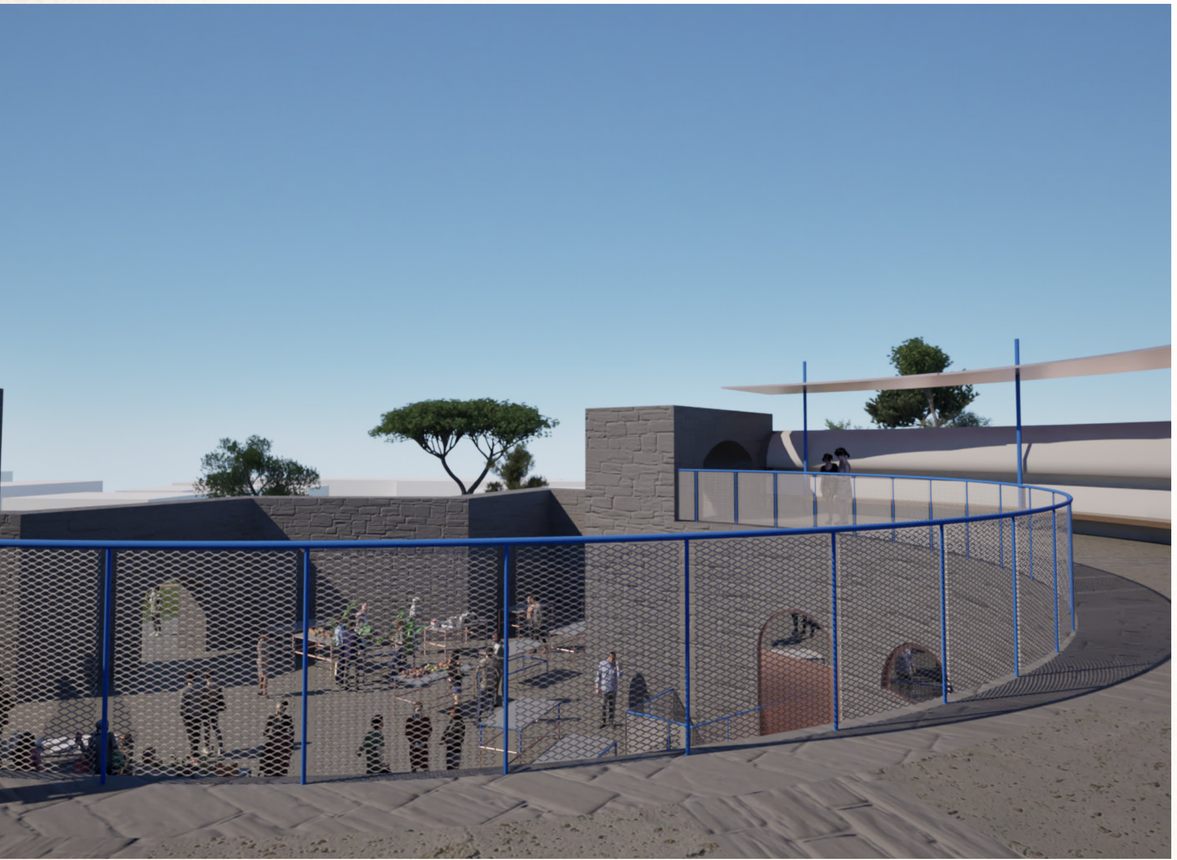
Exterior atmosphere 5

Exterior atmosphere 6

Exterior atmosphere 7



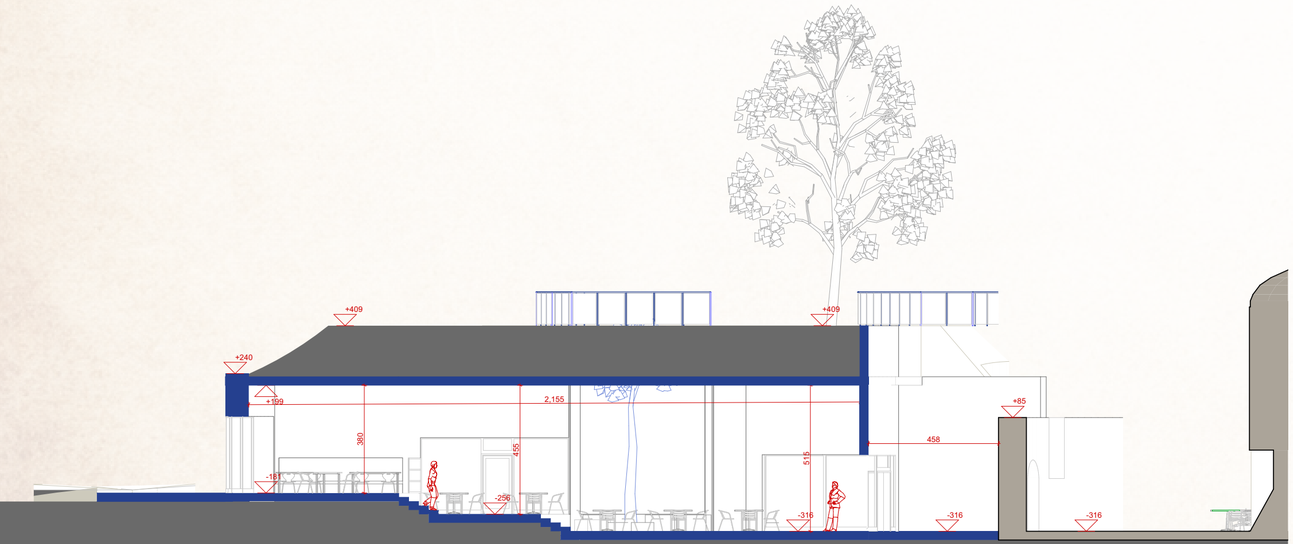
Exterior atmosphere 8



Exterior atmosphere 9

Café and learning area

The neighborhood center includes a café and informal learning space conceived as a relaxed, non-commercial environment for everyday use. Located primarily underground within the fort structure, the space opens through a large atrium that brings light and creates vertical connections. Changes in height and section generate differentiated zones for socializing, studying, and small group work, encouraging collective use without formal coworking logic.



Section 2-2

Interior atmosphere_Café 1

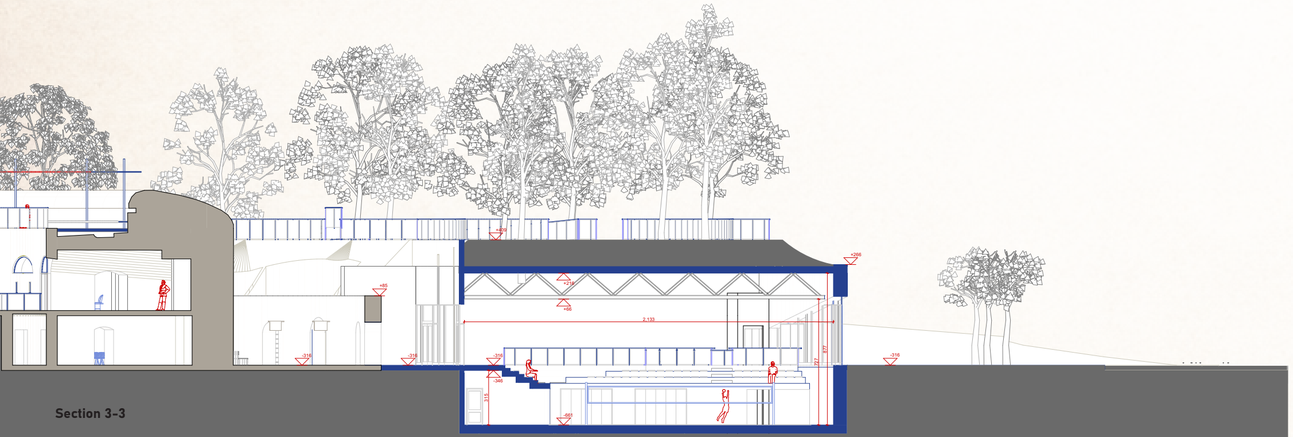
Interior atmosphere_Café 2

Interior atmosphere_Learning space 1

Interior atmosphere_Learning space 2

Sports hall

The hall is designed as a covered multi-purpose space for neighborhood events and recreational activities. Its dimensions allow for a full-size volleyball court suitable for professional play, while remaining scaled to local use. The space supports sports, community gatherings, and seasonal events. Controlled natural lighting ensures a bright and comfortable interior without compromising the spatial clarity of the structure.



Section 3-3

Interior atmosphere_Sports hall 1

Interior atmosphere_Sports hall 2

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Endnotes

1 Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, “Pula,” Hrvatska enciklopedija, online edition, accessed February 18, 2026, https://enciklopedija.hr/clanak/pula

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