



Eurasia · 40°N, 49°E



Eurasia · 40°N, 49°E



Apsheron Peninsula · Caspian shore

Azerbaijan sits at the eastern edge of the South Caucasus, between the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus mountains, on the historic axis between Europe and Western Asia. With an area of 86 600 km², its territory carries twenty-three centuries of continuous statehood, from Atropatena and Caucasian Albania to the present Republic.

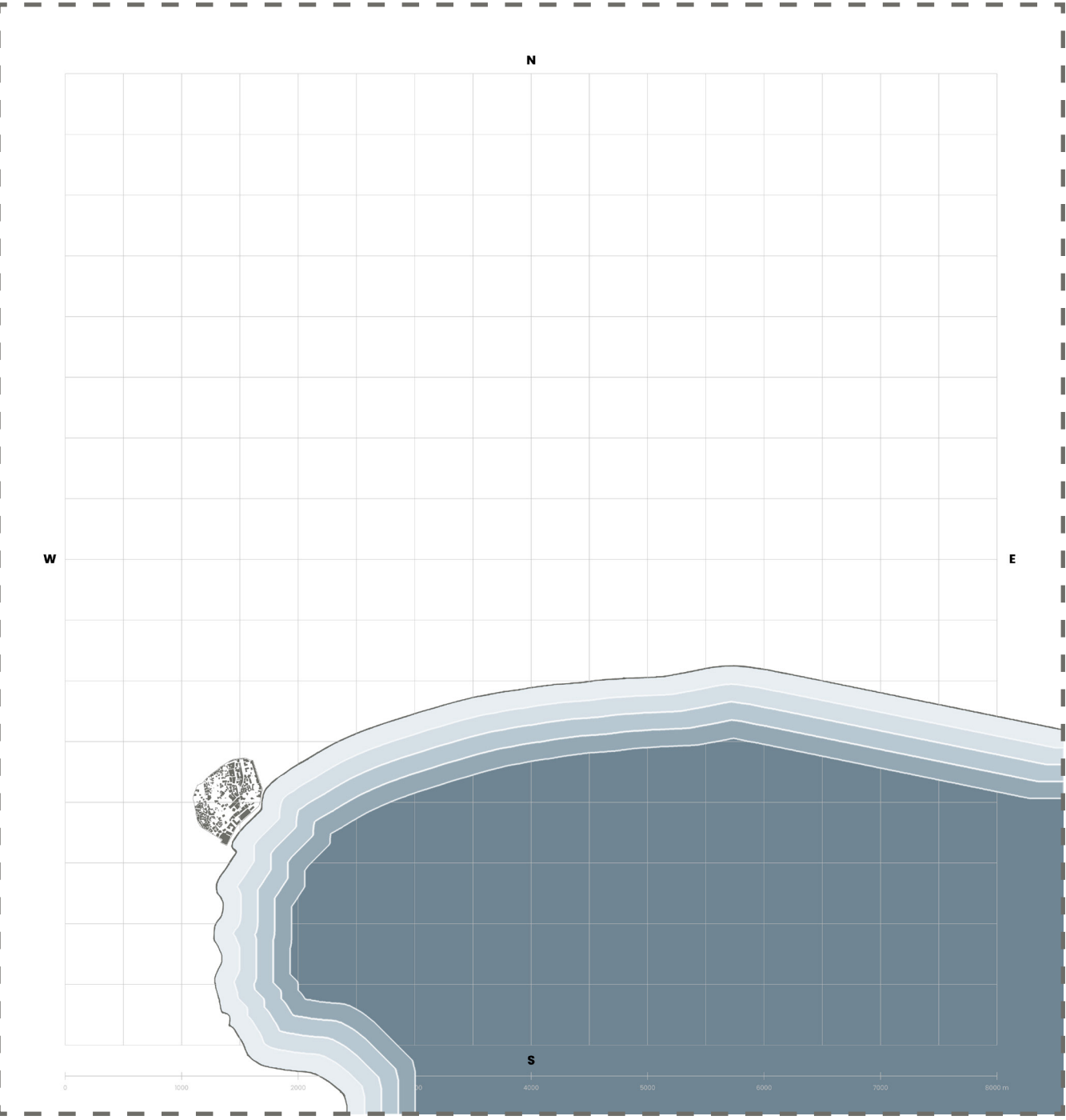
Baku occupies the southern half of the Apsheron Peninsula, forming a crescent around a seven-kilometre bay on the Caspian shore. The contemporary urban field below maps the monuments of every period that survive in this footprint — medieval, Shirvanshah, oil-boom, Soviet, and contemporary — all visible at the same scale and in the same plane.

BAKU · MAPPING THE LAYERED CAPITAL



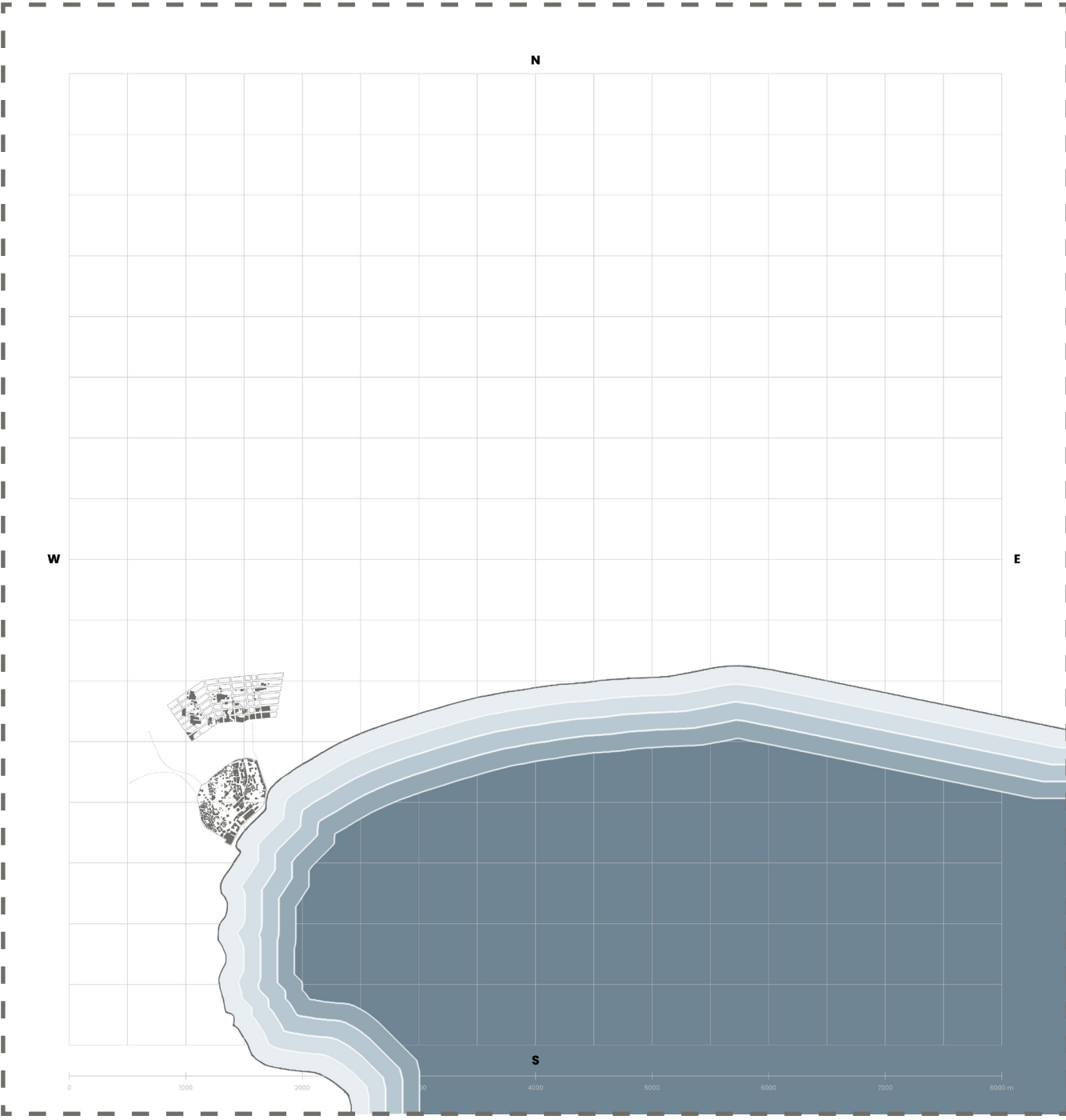
Baku grew from a walled medieval enclave of twenty-two hectares to a metropolitan area of more than twenty-two thousand hectares – a thousandfold expansion compressed into two centuries. Each frame below shows the territorial extent of urban fabric at that moment, redrawn from Fatullayev’s archival research and contemporary OpenStreetMap data.

01 12TH CENTURY
«Icherisheher» (The walled city) only



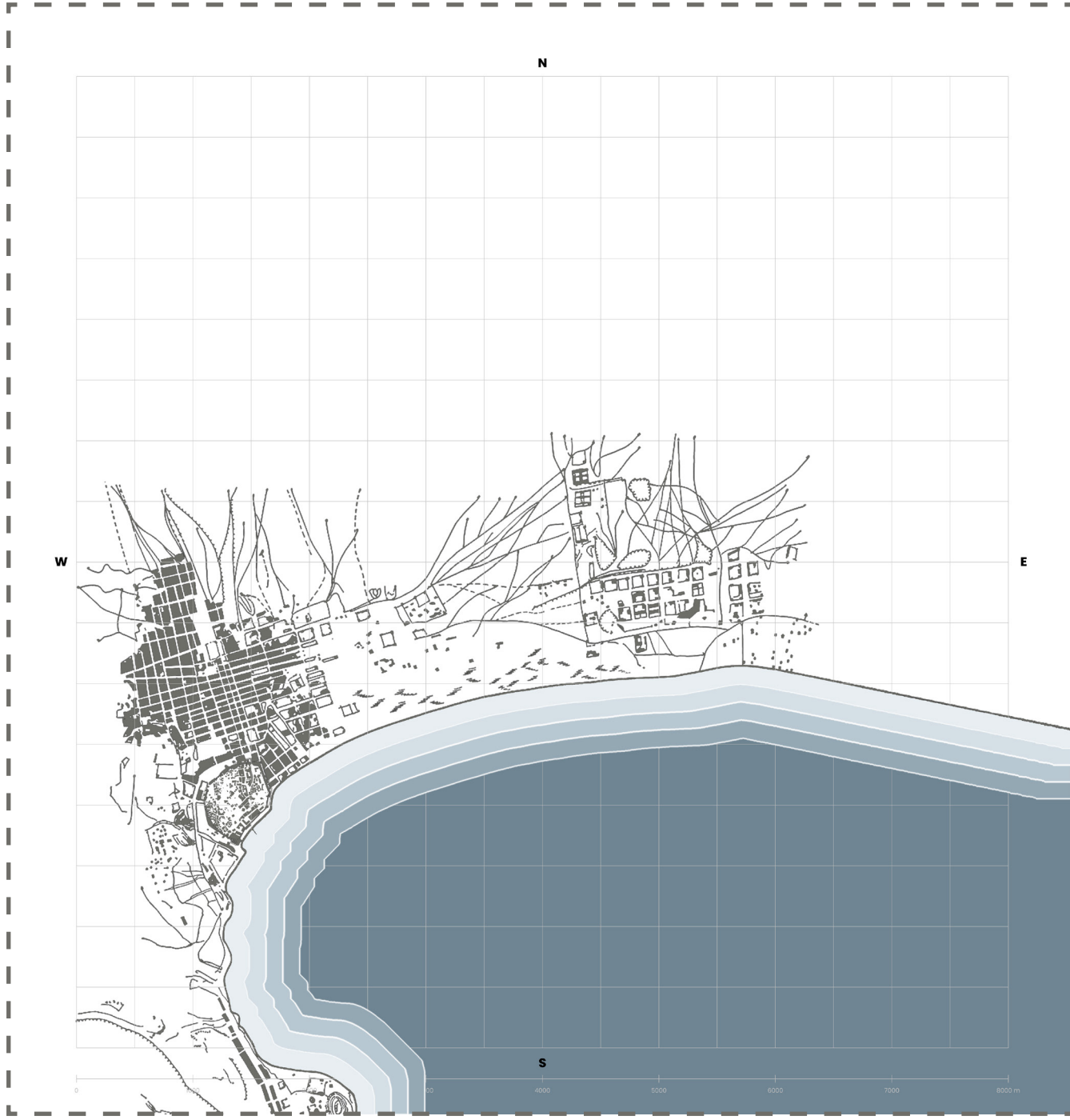
A compact walled town of about twenty-two hectares occupies a low rise above the bay. Inside, a dense fabric of stone and narrow lanes; outside the walls, nothing yet – the surrounding land is undeveloped. The walls meet the sea directly along the southern edge, and the urban form is entirely contained within them. The relationship between settlement and territory is one of clear demarcation: a single dense fragment standing alone against the coastline.

02 1822
Forshtadt projected northeast



After Russia annexes Baku in 1806, the walled core is left intact. A first forshtadt grid is projected on the slopes immediately to the north-east – orderly, rectilinear, and clearly distinct from the medieval fabric below. The two systems sit side by side without merging, separated by the line of the walls and by an underlying difference in logic. The territory beyond remains open. The map records a moment of tentative beginning rather than a coherent urban expansion.

03 1878
Oil-boom expansion



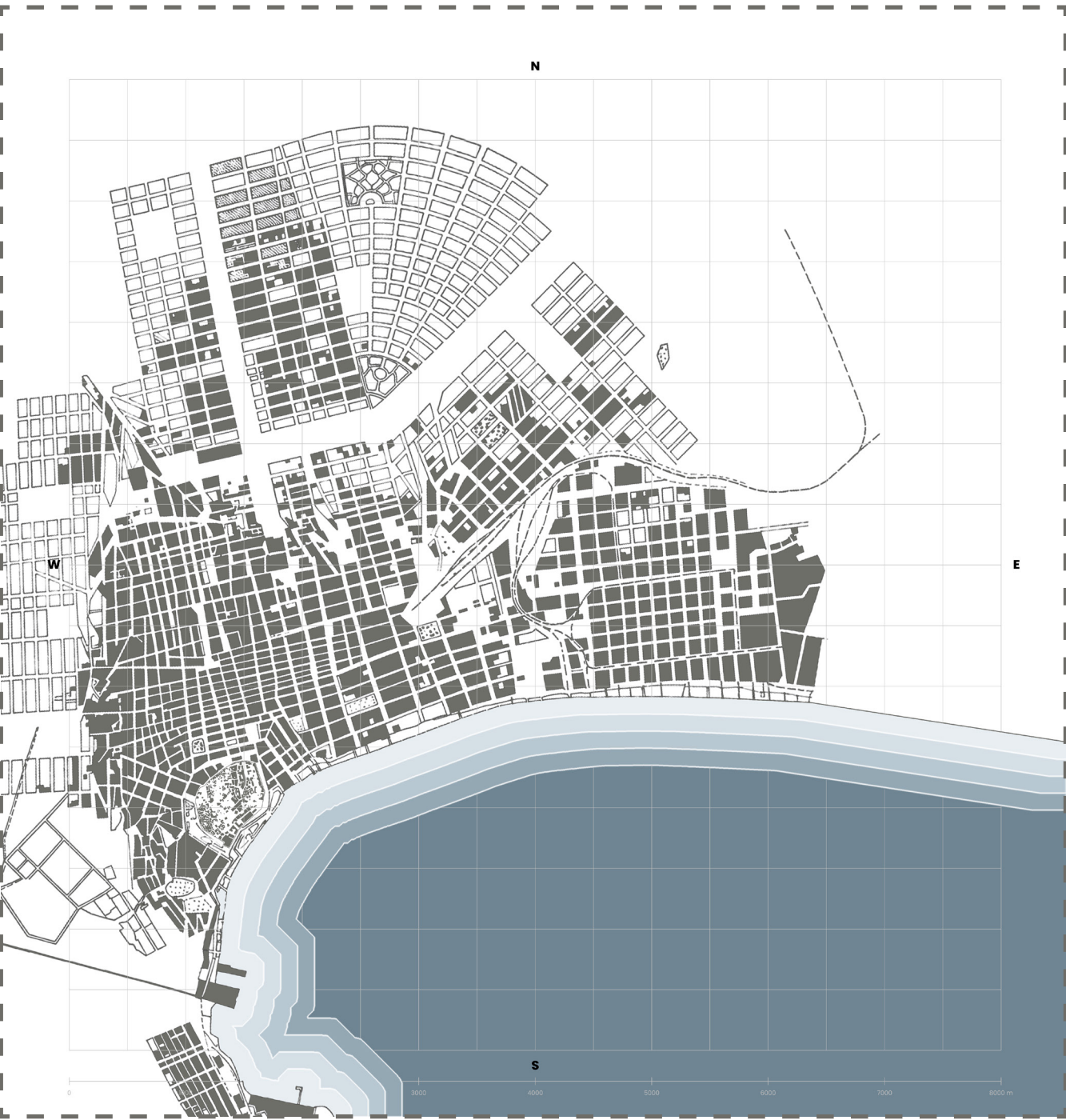
The first oil boom drives rapid, unplanned growth. Streets multiply in every direction, following the topography of the slopes rather than obeying any single plan. New fragments appear to the north and east, where industrial activity concentrates around the emerging port. The walled core remains visible as a denser, more regular fragment within a now-much-larger and far more irregular urban field. Growth happens faster than planning can catch up with it.

04 1898 – 1900
Von der Nonne masterplan



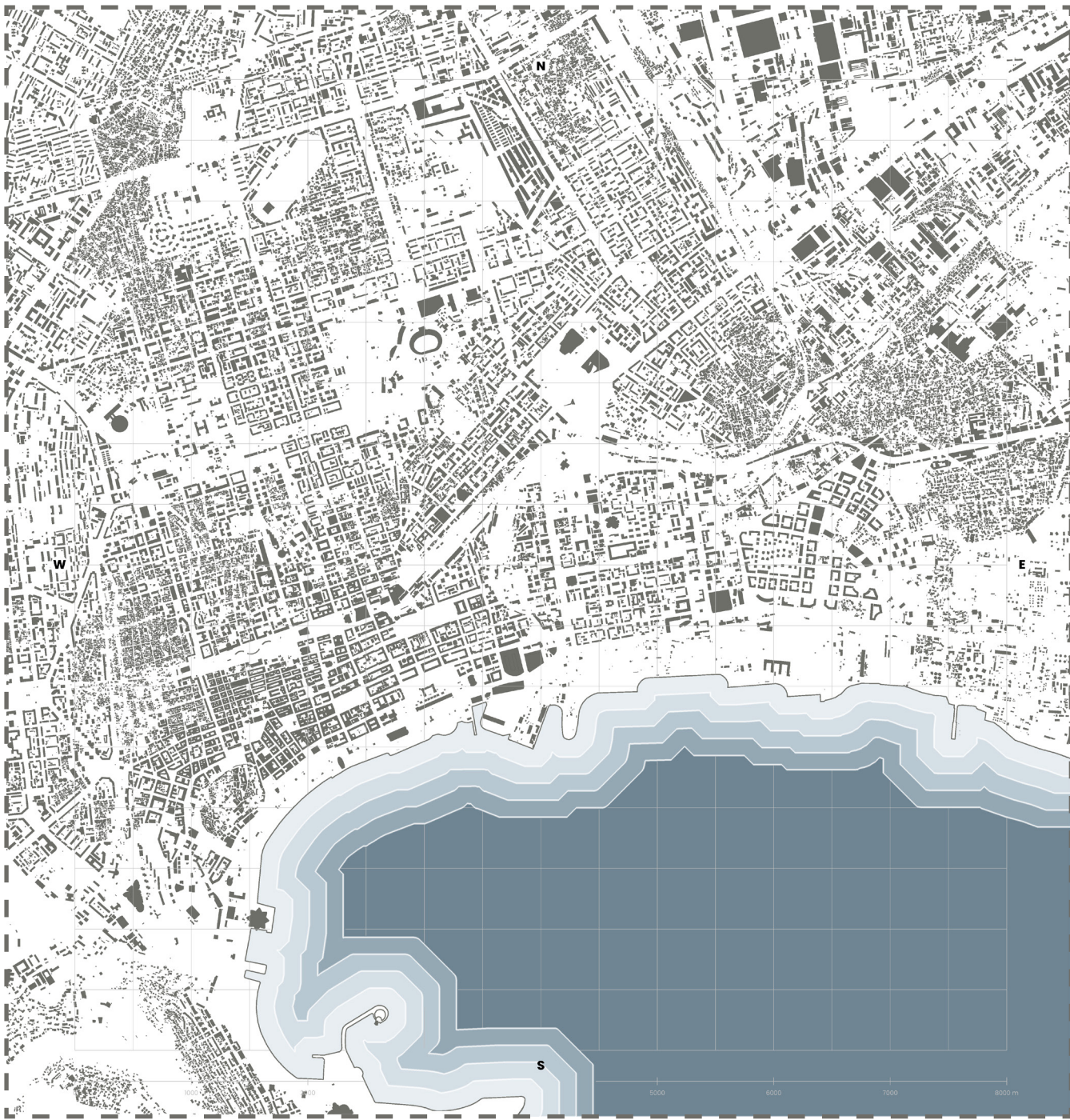
The chaotic growth of the previous two decades is finally reorganised into a coherent grid. Wide boulevards radiate outward from the medieval core, rectangular blocks fill the slopes, and a continuous waterfront promenade begins to take shape along the bay. The plan brings a clear formal language to what had been an unplanned expansion. For the first time the city reads as a single urban project rather than a collection of fragments.

05 1918
Pre-Soviet city complete



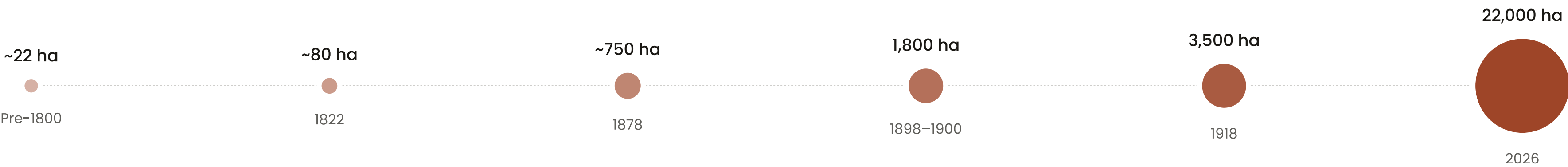
The city reaches its pre-Soviet configuration. The grid now extends in every direction across the slopes, and a continuous industrial belt stretches eastward along the shoreline. The walled core sits embedded within an urban tissue more than thirty times its size, no longer a separate town but a small dense node within a much larger formation. This is the mature configuration on the eve of Soviet rule – a fully formed nineteenth-century European city wrapped around a medieval core.

06 2026
Contemporary metropolitan

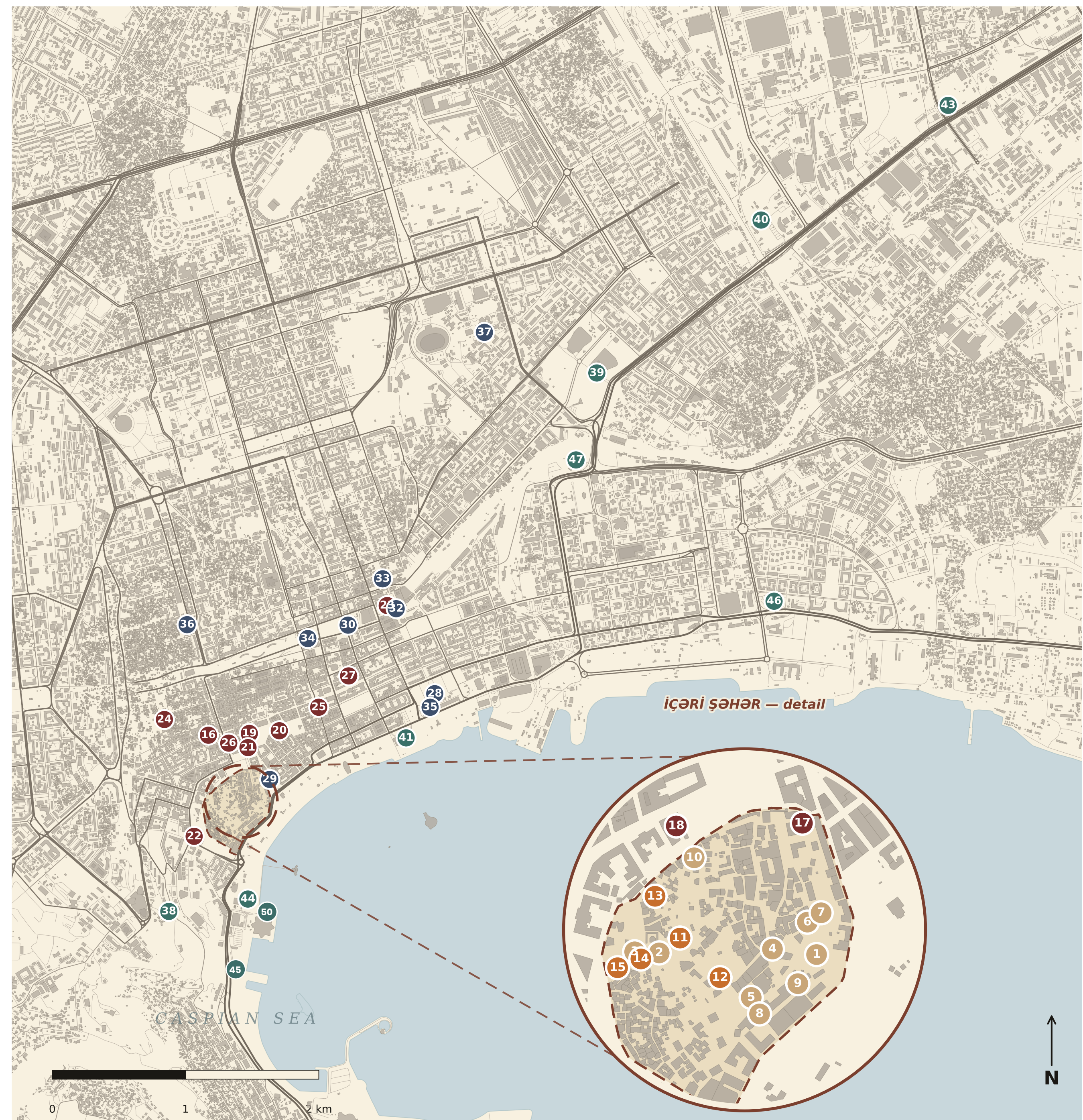


The contemporary footprint is more than fourfold the 1918 city. Post-1991 development has sprawled far beyond the historic core into the former periphery, filling the slopes and the inland plateau in a pattern that no longer reads as a coherent plan. The layered structure that had defined earlier phases of growth – medieval core, oil-boom grid, industrial belt – is now embedded within a much larger and less ordered fabric. Pressure on the historic layers is constant

Approximate urban extent through time



This synoptic map plots the principal monuments of Baku, colour-coded by the historical layer to which they belong – medieval, Safavid–khanate, oil-boom, Soviet, and post-Soviet. Together they compose a single archaeological plane where every stratum of the city coexists in view.



PRINCIPAL MONUMENTS OF BAKU
ACROSS HISTORICAL LAYERS

FIGURE 6.0 Synoptic map of major architectural landmarks from the medieval period to the contemporary city

LEGEND — BY HISTORICAL PERIOD

- MEDIEVAL (12th-15th c.)
- SAFAVID-KHANATE (16th-18th c.)
- OIL BOOM (1870-1920)
- SOVIET (1920-1991)
- POST-SOVIET (1991-present)

MEDIEVAL

- 1 Maiden Tower (Qız Qalası)
- 2 Palace of Shirvanshahs
- 3 Shirvanshah Family Mausoleum
- 4 Muhammad Mosque (Syniq Qala)
- 5 Juma Mosque
- 6 Bukhara Caravansera
- 7 Multani Caravansera
- 8 Small (Khan) Caravansera
- 9 Two-Storeyed Caravansera
- 10 Quadrangular Tower (Donjon)

SAFAVID-KHANATE

- 11 Murad's Gate (1585)
- 12 Beyler Mosque
- 13 Ashur Mosque
- 14 Shah Mosque
- 15 Underground Bathhouse

OIL BOOM

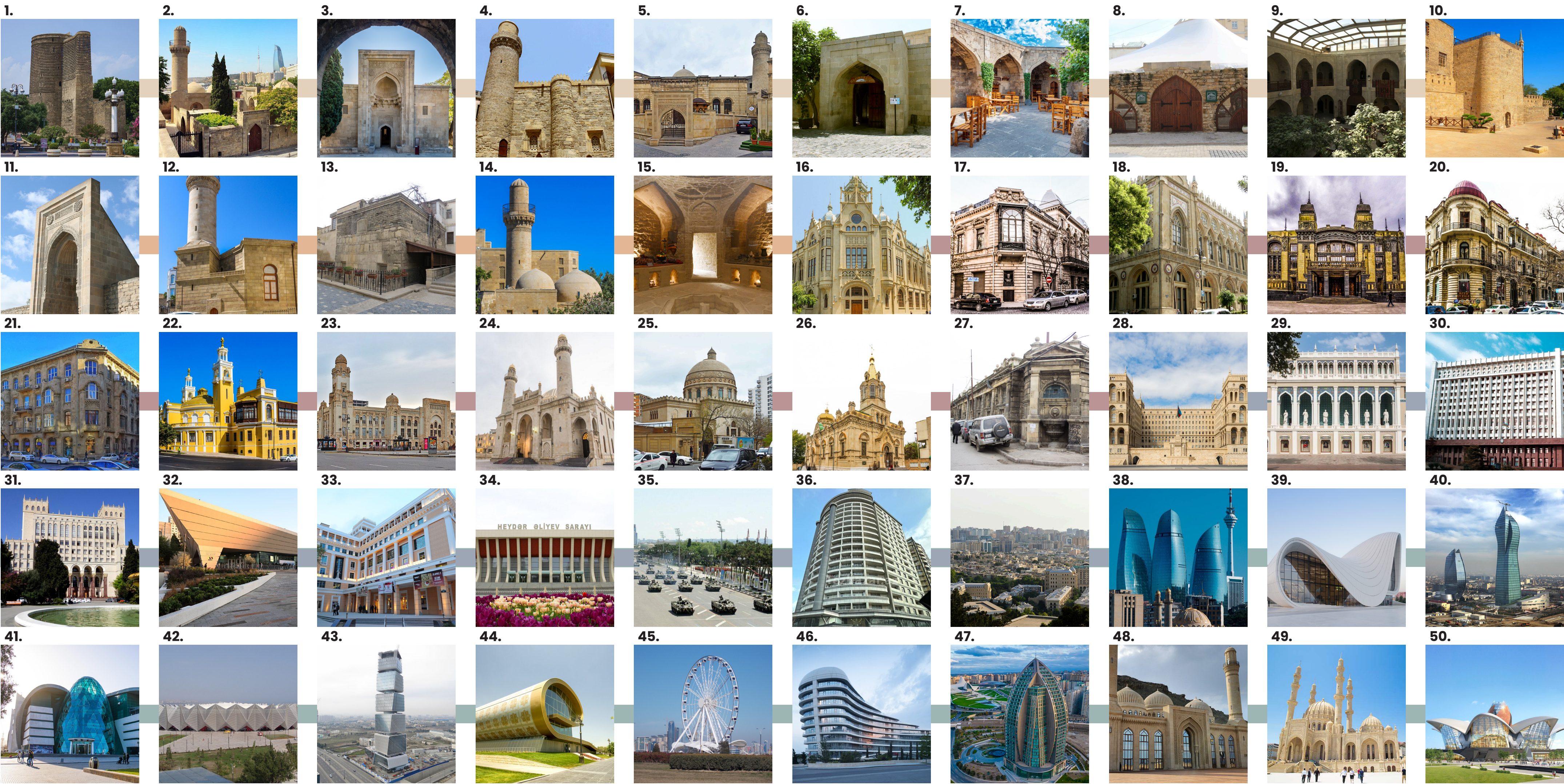
- 16 Mukhtarov Palace
- 17 Taghiyev House (Nat. Museum)
- 18 Ismailiyya Palace
- 19 Mailov Theatre (Opera)
- 20 Asadullayev House
- 21 Naghiyev House
- 22 Philharmonic Hall
- 23 Baku Railway Station
- 24 Taza Pir Mosque
- 25 Ajdarbey Mosque
- 26 Holy Myrrhbearers (demol. 1936)
- 27 Sovetsky core (demolished)

SOVIET

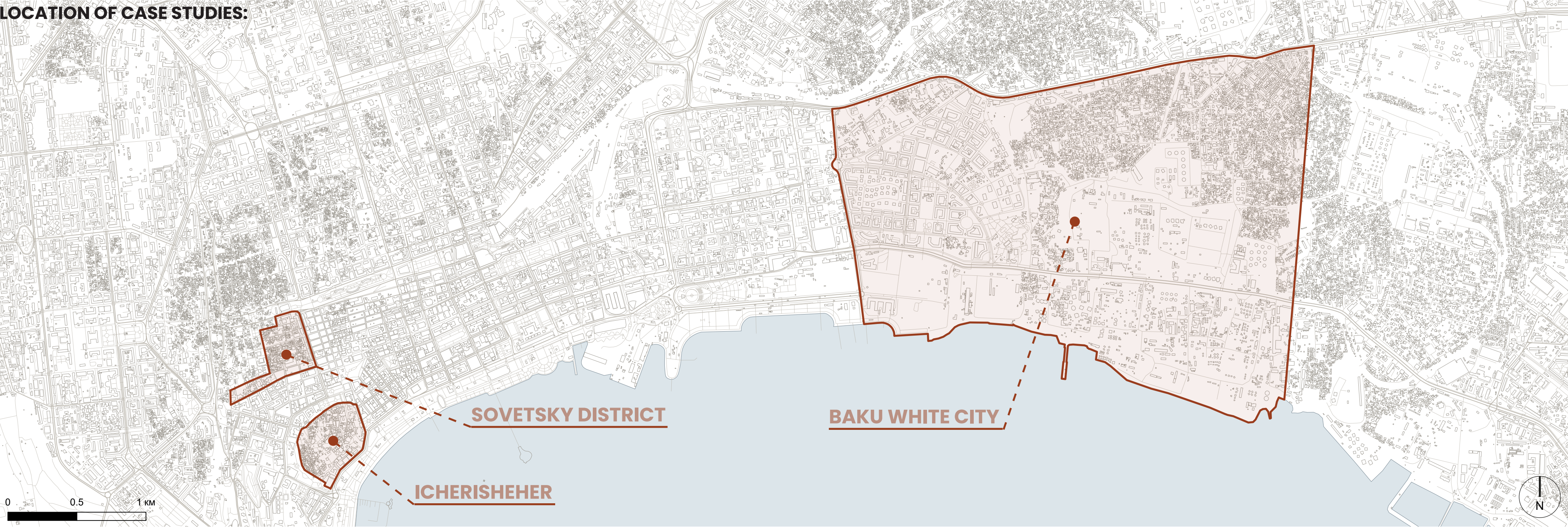
- 28 Government House (Dom Soviet)
- 29 Nizami Museum
- 30 Republic Palace
- 31 Academy of Sciences (ANAS)
- 32 Baku Metro 28 May station
- 33 Nizami Cinema
- 34 Heydar Aliyev Palace
- 35 Azadliq Square
- 36 Nizami Mall (Stalinist)
- 37 8th km Microregion

POST-SOVIET

- 38 Flame Towers (2012)
- 39 Heydar Aliyev Center (2012)
- 40 SOCAR Tower (2016)
- 41 Park Bulvar Mall (2010)
- 42 Crystal Hall (2012)
- 43 Baku Tower (2020)
- 44 Carpet Museum (new, 2014)
- 45 Baku Ferris Wheel (2014)
- 46 White City development
- 47 Trump Tower / Ritz-Carlton
- 48 Bibi-Heybat Mosque (1997)
- 49 Heydar Mosque (2014)
- 50 Deniz Mall



The map locates the three case studies discussed in this thesis — Icherisheher, Baku White City, and Sovetsky. The comparison below sets Icherisheher against Baku White City: two opposite responses to inherited urban fabric on the same coast, less than four kilometres apart. Sovetsky is treated separately on Board 05.



ICHERISHEHER



A twenty-two-hectare walled medieval town on a low rise above the bay. Preserved as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2000, continuously inhabited for nine centuries.

WHITE CITY



A 221-hectare master-planned district on the site of the former Black City refineries. Launched in 2007 with the Atkins masterplan, joined by Foster+Partners — a full replacement of the industrial fabric.



ICHERISHEHER

preserved

The walled medieval core, continuously inhabited for nine centuries.

12th century

core formation

pre-existing Iron Age settlement

22 ha

UNESCO core

UNESCO World Heritage Site
inscribed 2000

PRESERVATION

protect what is there

900+ years

continuous inhabitation

medieval · Shirvanshah oil-boom
low-rise, walled

Maiden Tower
Shirvanshahs Palace
caravanserais · mosques

Icherisheher Reserve Administration
since 2005

ESTABLISHED

PREDECESSOR

AREA

STATUS

STRATEGY

TIME DEPTH

CHARACTER

LANDMARKS

AUTHORITY

BAKU WHITE CITY

replaced

A new master-planned district built on the site of demolished oil refineries.

2007

master plan adopted

Black City refineries
(Nobel era · 1860s–2000s)

221 ha

ten times larger

private commercial-residential development
state-backed, private

REPLACEMENT

build what was not

20 years

of new construction

contemporary glass-and-steel
high-rise, open

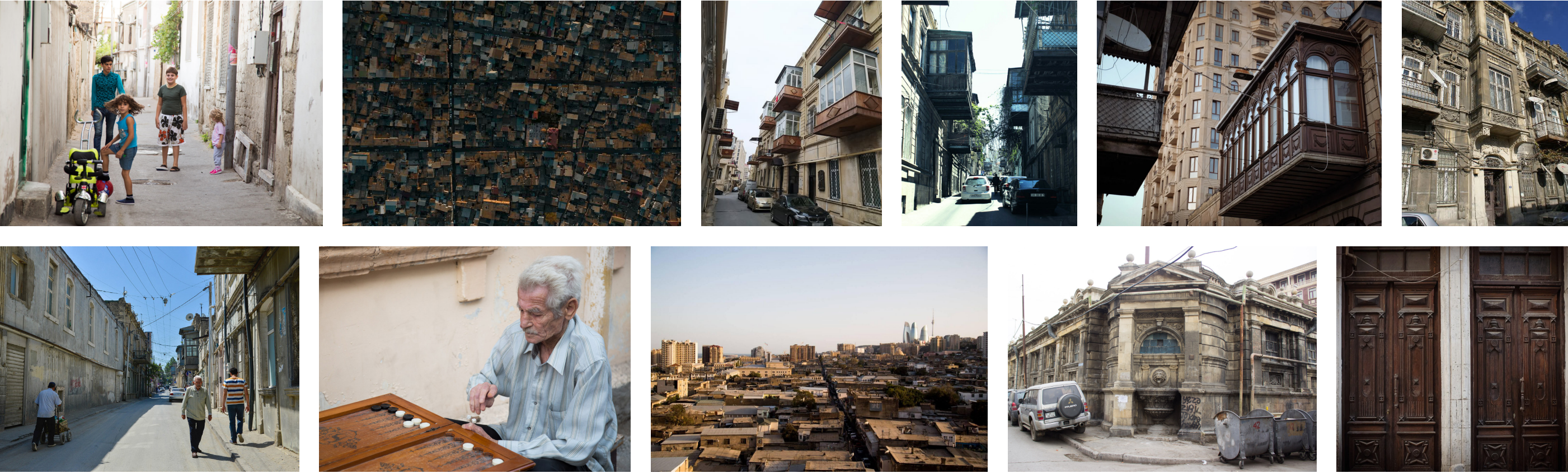
Foster+Partners
Atkins masterplan
new boulevard

private developer + city authorities
no heritage filter



The Sovetsky quarter — a 36-hectare late nineteenth-century oil-boom neighbourhood immediately north of Icherisheher — was demolished between 2014 and 2016 without prior heritage assessment. This board reconstructs the physical erasure through six satellite frames, alongside the Cabinet of Ministers inventory of 2001 that catalogued what was lost.

BEFORE DEMOLITION :



IN THE PERIOD OF DEMOLITION :



AFTER DEMOLITION :



INVENTORY OF LOSS

Sovetsky district · Cabinet of Ministers inventory
No. 124 — 2 August 2001

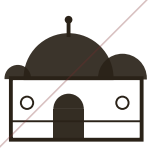
OF LOCAL VALUE

demolished 2014 – 2016



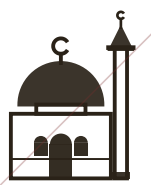
200+

RESIDENTIAL HOUSES
1872 – 1920 · oil-boom courtyard dwellings



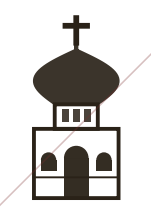
9

BATHS
1872 – 1920 · traditional public hammams



4

MOSQUES
1872 – 1920 · oil-boom era



1

CHURCH
1845 · Russian Orthodox

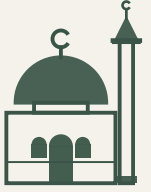


10

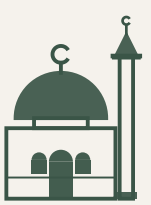
SCHOOLS & HOSPITALS
1872 – 1920 · philanthropic foundations

OF NATIONAL VALUE

3 surviving · spared from demolition



Taza Pir Mosque
principal Friday mosque
of central Baku



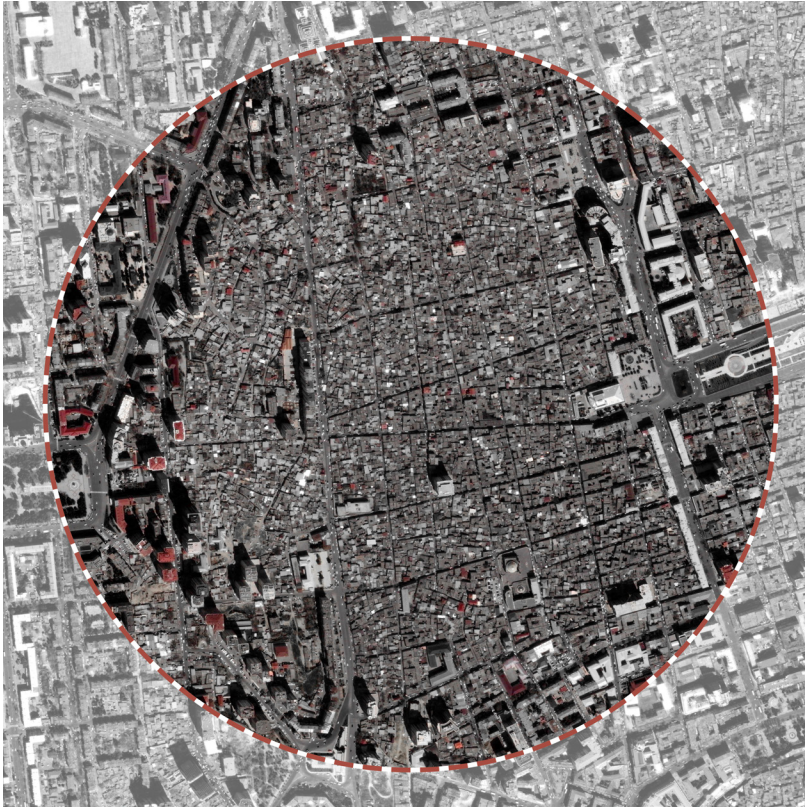
Haji Sultan Ali Mosque
religious landmark of
the late nineteenth c.



Union of Architects
civic landmark
of Azerbaijan

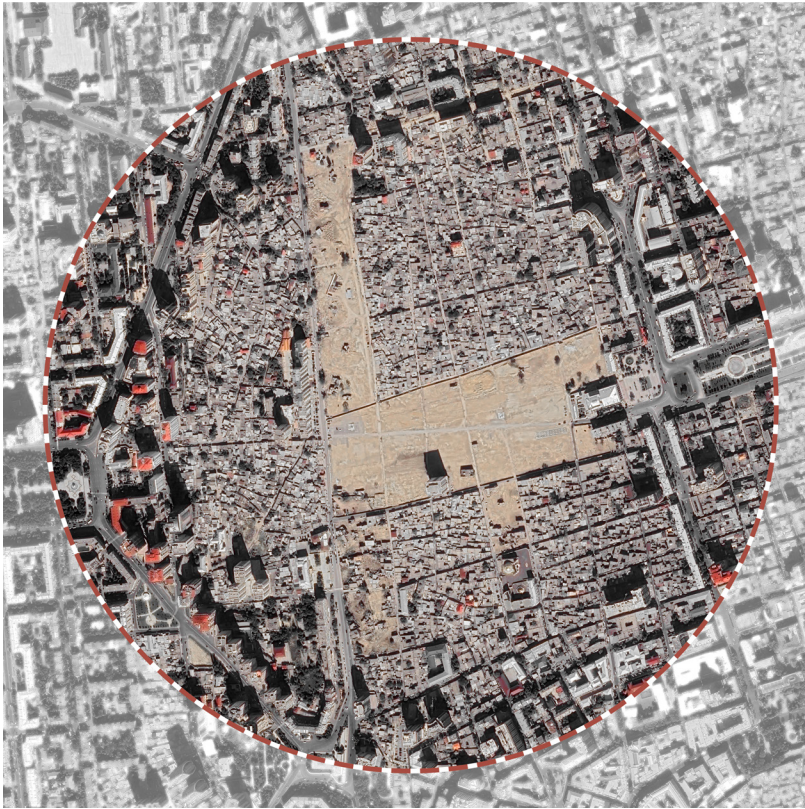
2014

Intact fabric on the eve of the demolition campaign. The Cabinet of Ministers inventory of 2001 had catalogued over 224 monuments of local value within this perimeter.



2016

Northern half largely demolished. The final evacuation order (Cabinet decree, 27 July 2015) triggered the main clearance campaign.



2018

Central quarters cleared. Fake facades were reported at the perimeter to conceal ongoing demolition from public view.



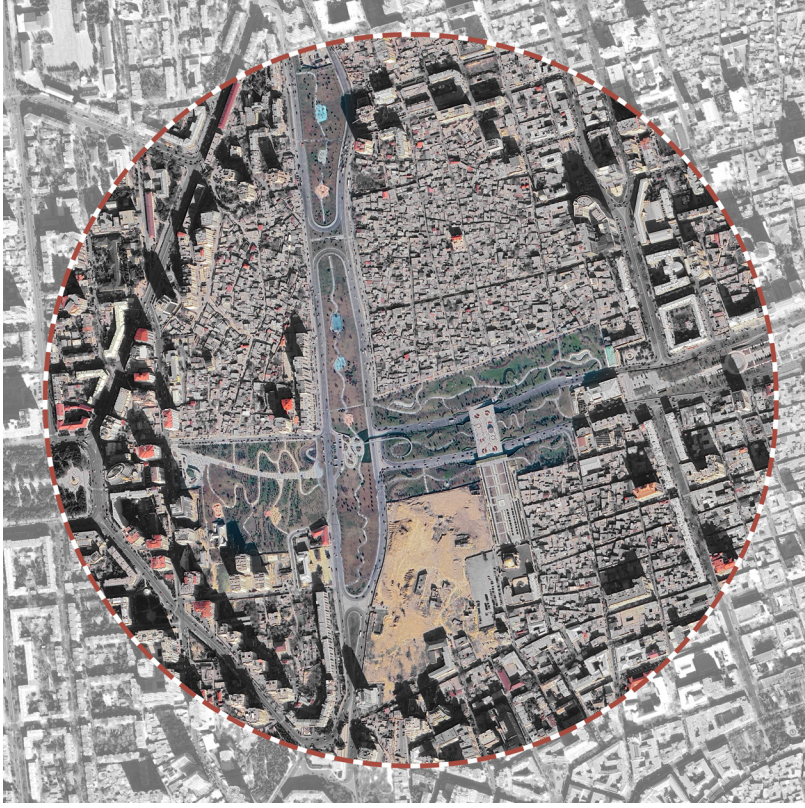
2020

First phase of Central Park opens on the cleared land (22 May 2020). Southern portions of the perimeter remain undeveloped.



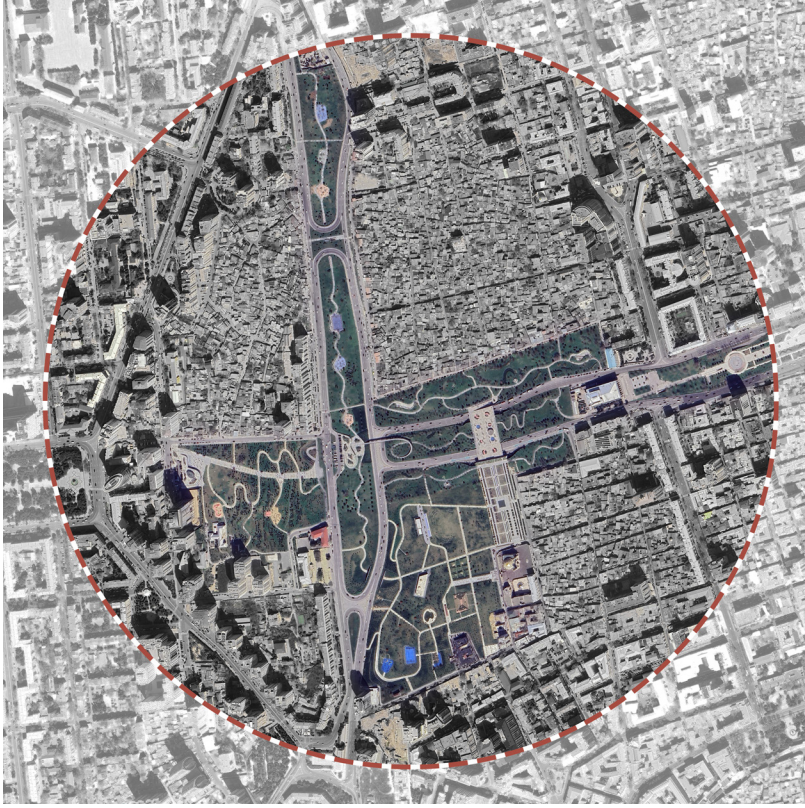
2024

Improvised programming: partial parking lots and sports facilities. No coherent replacement plan for the demolished residential fabric.



2026

Fragmented condition — a decade after clearance. The scheduled 40-hectare Central Park is planned for completion by 2030.



224+

catalogued monuments

0

heritage assessments performed before clearance

~800

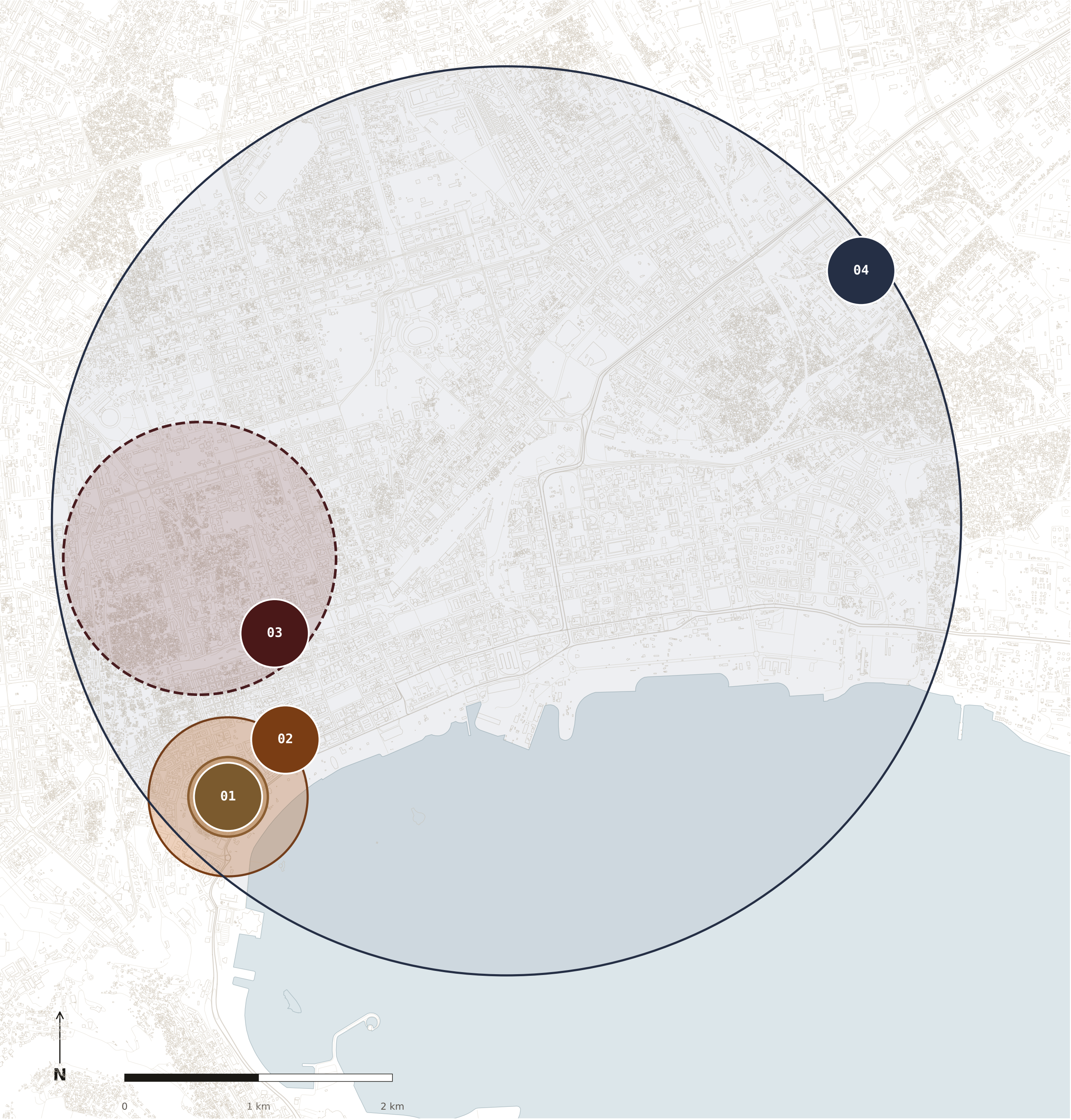
USD per m² compensation (1 500 manat/m²)

06

MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK & GOVERNANCE

Four protection zones, seventeen institutional actors, and a unified plan for the Sovetsky perimeter

The management plan proposed for the Sovetsky perimeter establishes a coherent regulatory framework for the late nineteenth century city. It adapts the protection model developed for Icherisheher (2005, 2011) to the morphology and current physical condition of the surrounding ring, and identifies the institutional actors required to operate it.



Four zones of protection —

a proposed fourth ring.

Three protection zones exist today; this thesis proposes a fourth — a transitional heritage-aware zone covering the demolished Sovetsky perimeter, north of Icherisheher.

- 01

CORE PROPERTY

Icherisheher

inviolable historical-architectural reserve

UNESCO WHL 2000 / national reserve since 1977

22 ha · ~3,200 residents
- 02

BUFFER ZONE

of Icherisheher

visual & structural protection of the property

Cabinet of Ministers Decree, 2011

≈ 80 ha · special construction regime
- 03

PROPOSED

Sovetsky perimeter

transitional heritage-aware development zone

new municipal designation — this thesis

≈ 130 ha · former Sovetsky district
- 04

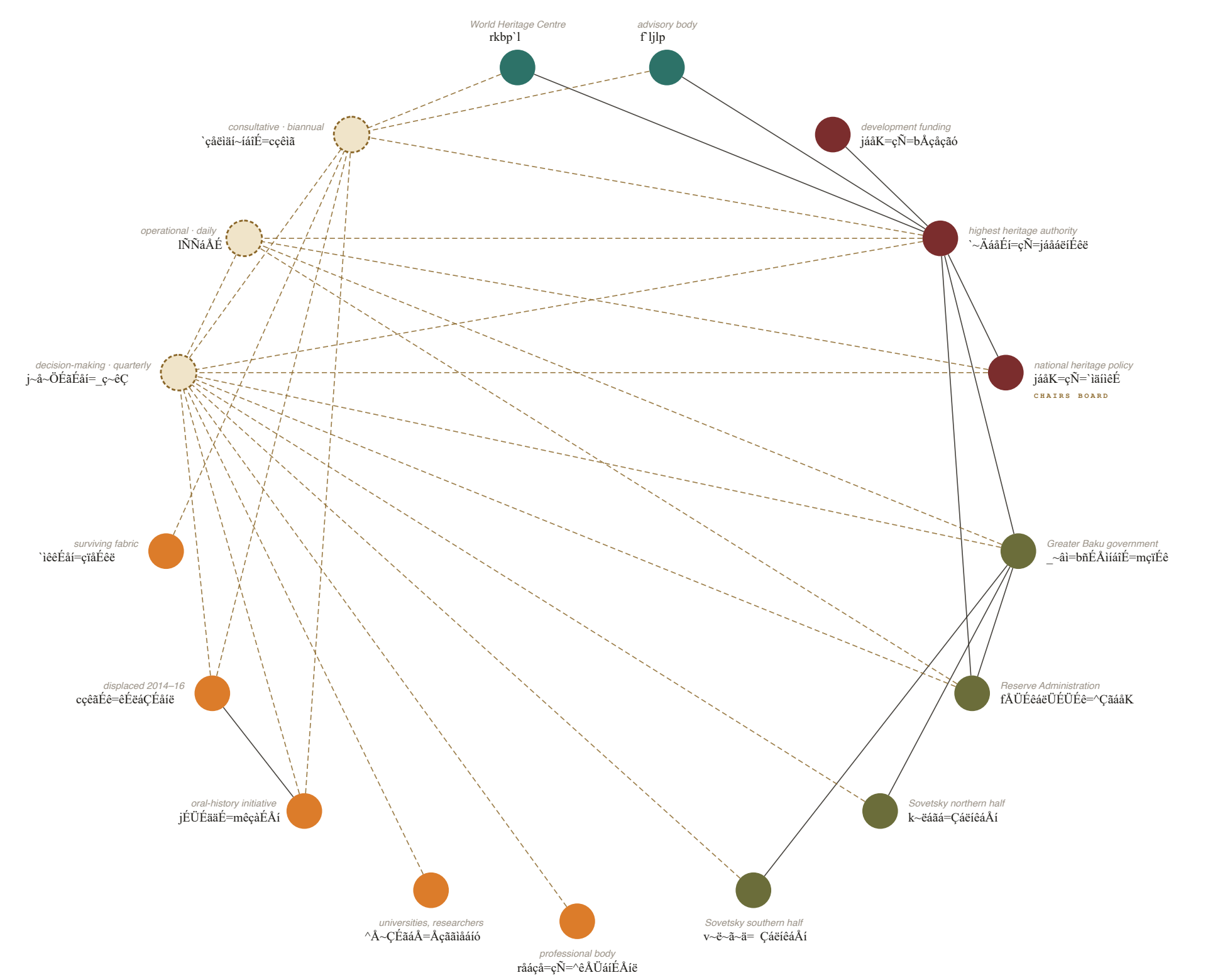
CITY FABRIC

Greater Baku

general urban planning regime

Greater Baku General Plan

ongoing transformation, no heritage filter



A mycelium of authority,
with three new buds.

Seventeen actors arranged in a single ring, grouped clockwise by tier. The three new bodies (top-left arc) translate the wider network into Sovetsky decisions.

	2006 Baku—IAMAP Icherisheher, Azerbaijan World Bank / IZUD	2010 Bukhara Uzbekistan UNESCO + national	2013 Samarkand Uzbekistan UNESCO + national	2006 Riga Latvia Latvia Law + Plan	THIS THESIS 2026 Sovetsky this thesis proposed Cabinet decree
PARAMETER 01 Scope	22 ha core only	216 ha + 339 ha buffer	1123 ha WHs property	438 ha historic centre	36 ha perimeter
PARAMETER 02 Legal basis	World Bank advisory no statutory force	UNESCO + national protection law	Management Plan 37th WHC, 2013	Latvia Law 2003 Plan adopted 2006	Cabinet decree proposed
PARAMETER 03 Buffer mechanism	informal	formal buffer	1,389 ha buffer	1,574 ha buffer	dedicated perimeter
PARAMETER 04 Community	minimal	consultations	scientific board	city architect	Board + Forum
PARAMETER 05 HIA requirement	not formal	required	required	required	mandatory
PARAMETER 06 Monitoring	periodic review	UNESCO state report	UNESCO state report	state inspection	Office ☐ Board quarterly

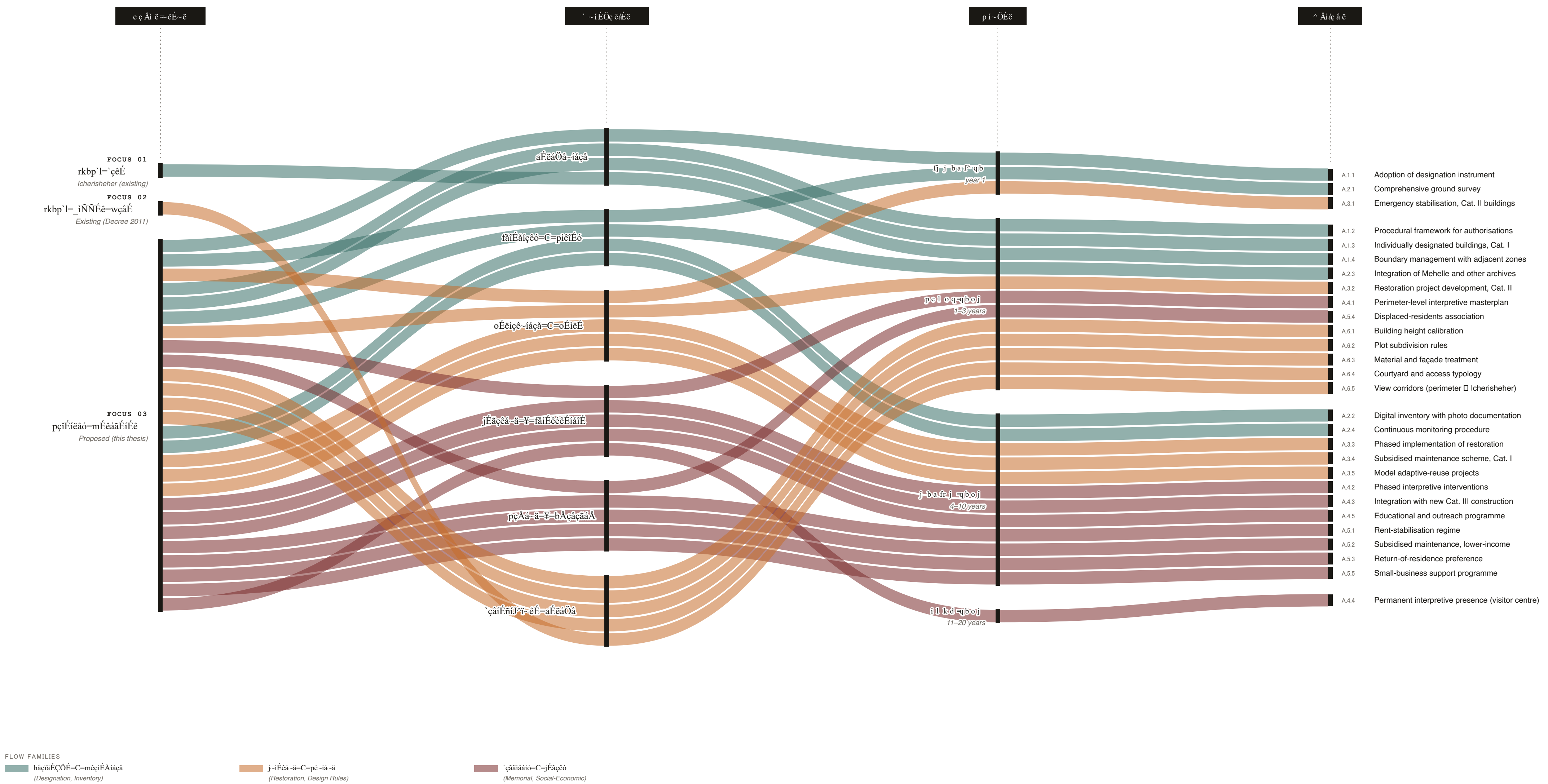
Where the Sovetsky plan
Borrows.

Bukhara provided the formal bufferzone mechanism. Samarkand brought the integrated management-plan structure (37th WHC session, 2013). Riga offered the closest typological precedent. The Sovetsky proposal recombines these instruments at a smaller scale (36 ha).

TWENTY-EIGHT ACTIONS

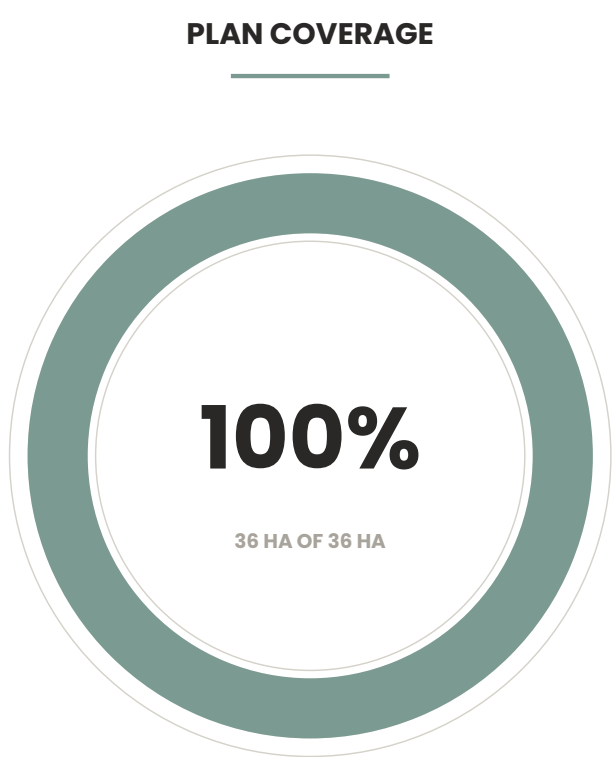
Six instrument groups × three time horizons · a phased plan for the Sovetsky perimeter

The management plan proposed for the Sovetsky perimeter is structured as twenty-eight actions distributed across six instrument groups – designation, inventory and survey, restoration and reuse, memorial and interpretive, social and economic, and context-aware design – and three implementation horizons: immediate (year 1), short-term (1–3 years), and medium-term (4–10 years). Each action is anchored to a specific paragraph of the thesis.

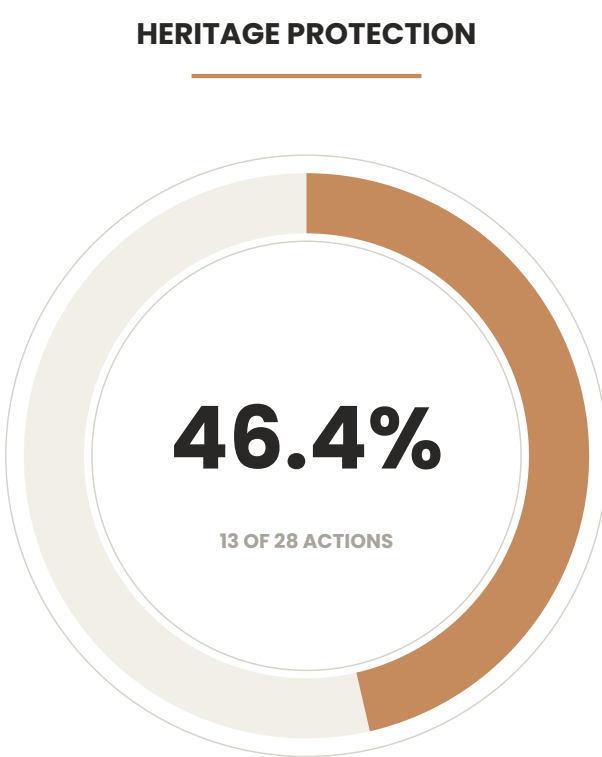


TWENTY-EIGHT ACTIONS · IN NUMBERS

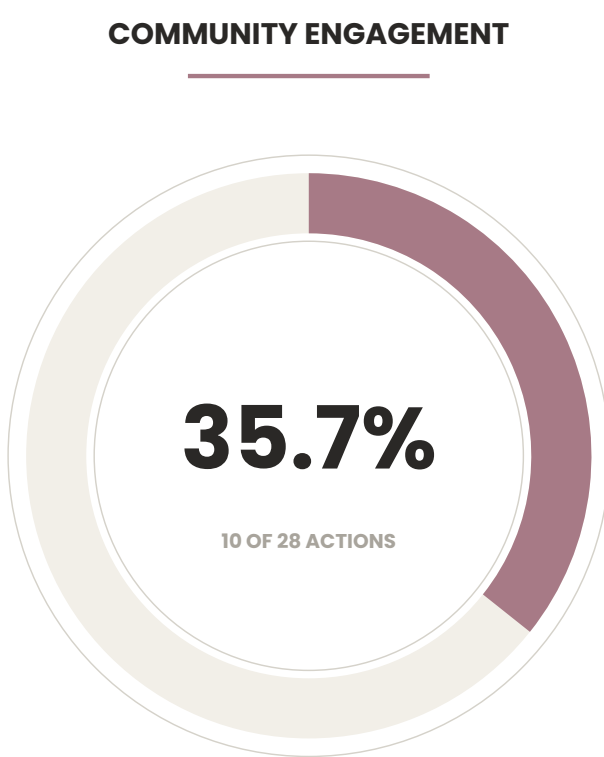
Six verifiable indicators that characterise the proposed management plan



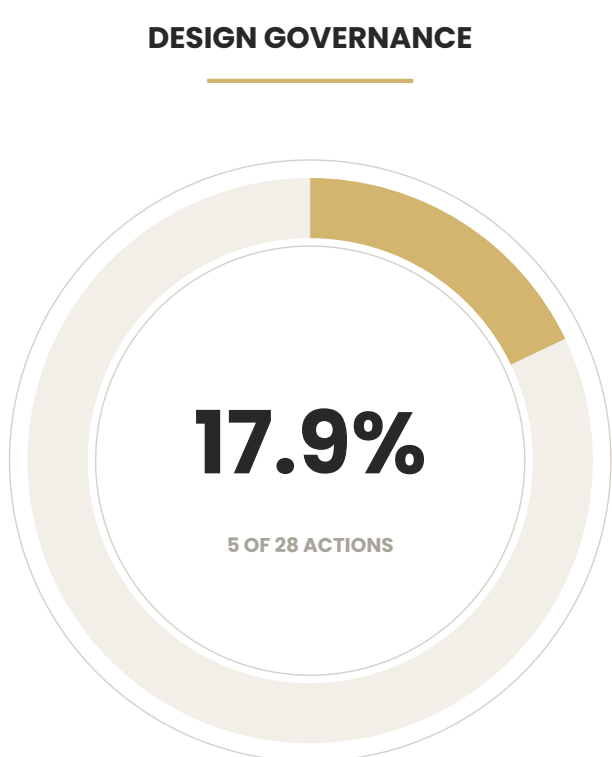
The plan addresses every block of the Sovetsky perimeter – no selective or partial protection regime.



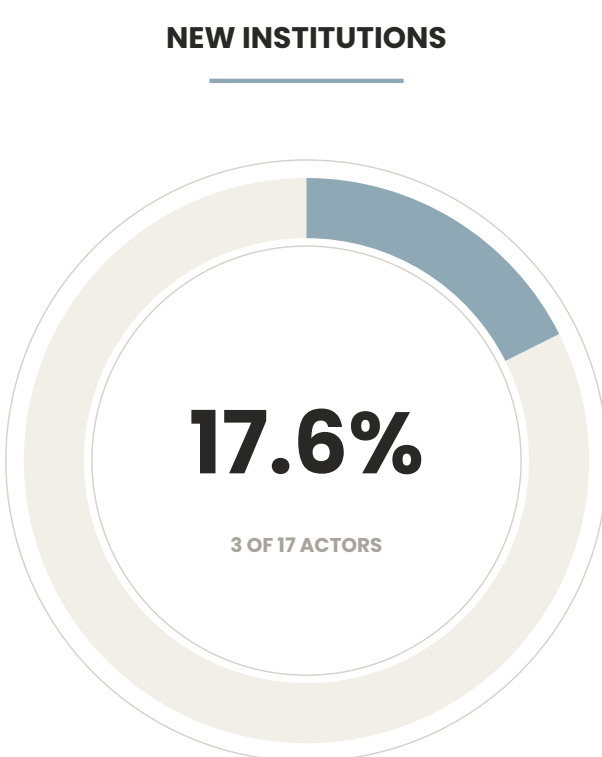
Designation, inventory, and restoration streams (A.1 + A.2 + A.3) — direct protection of inherited fabric.



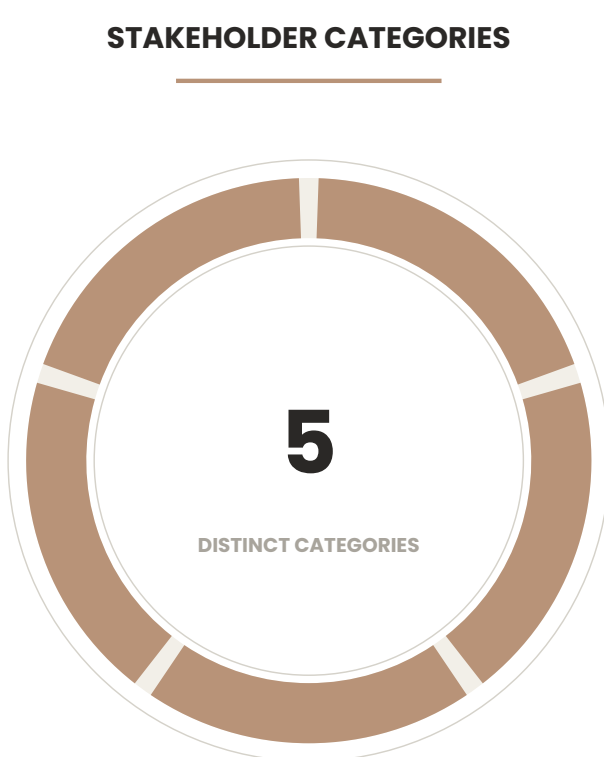
Memorial-interpretive and social-economic streams (A.4 + A.5) – addressing the displaced community and the value of memory.



Context-aware design rules (A.6) – building height, plot subdivision, material, courtyard typology, view corridors.

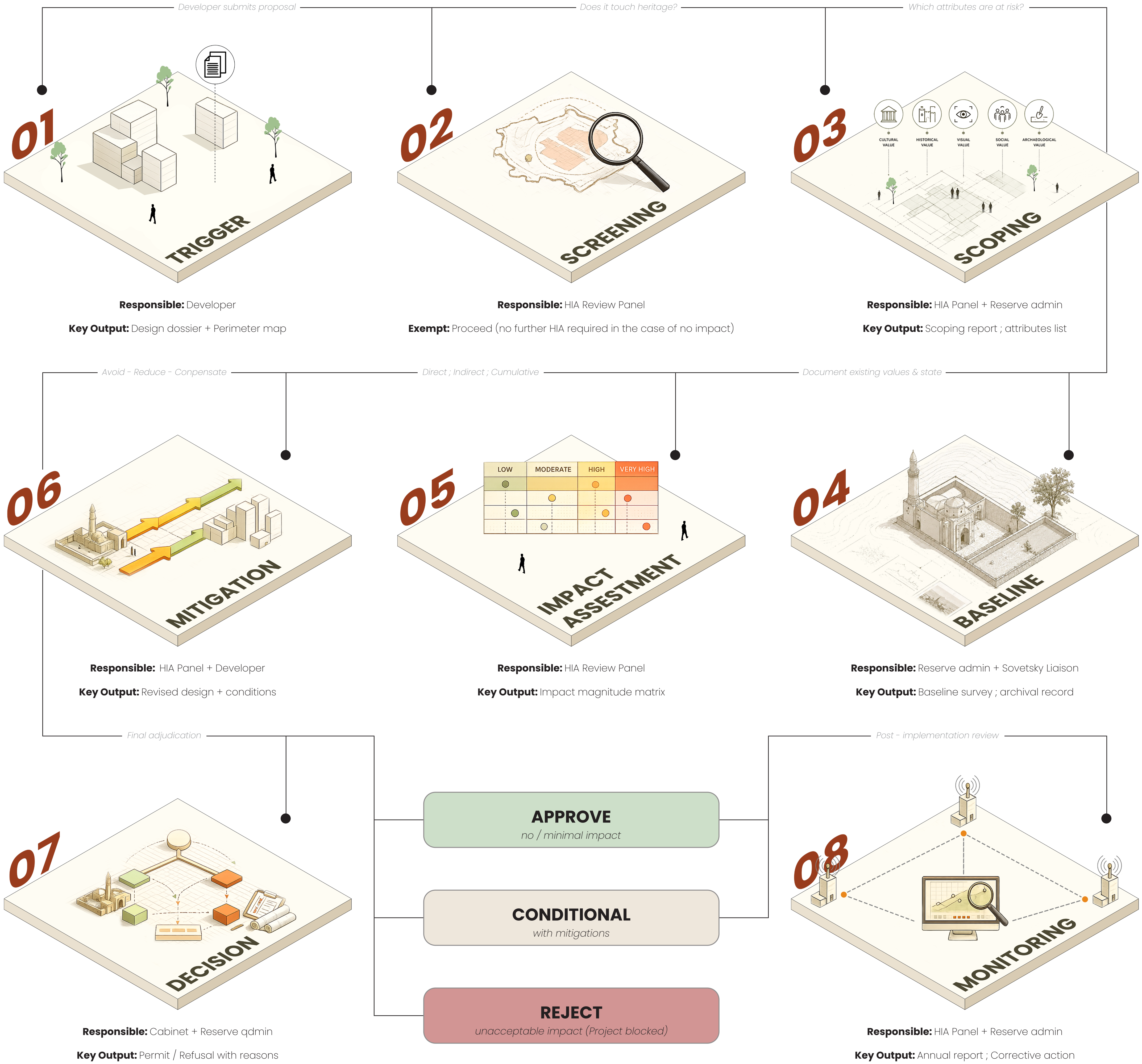


Three new bodies proposed by this thesis:
Management Board, Office, and Consultative
Forum – within the existing actor network.



Public sector · current owners · former residents · civil society · international. All five represented in the governance.

Every intervention within the Sovetsky perimeter passes through a Heritage Impact Assessment before approval. Two filter steps (Screening and Decision) block harmful interventions; four substantive steps document what is at stake and how to reduce harm. The procedure is set alongside a twenty-year implementation horizon.



02 Implementation horizon
fifty-one years of heritage policy · twenty years of proposed restoration

