

Alexander von Branca Raiffeisenzentralbank (DG Bank), Augsburg 1978-1983

Semesterarbeit von Concetta Maria Casagrande
im Rahmen des Seminars
'Architektur sammeln, dokumentieren und präsentieren -
Der Architekt Alexander von Branca - Signature: bra-204,
161 Zeichnungen im Archiv des Architekturmuseums'
des TUM im Sommersemester 2019



Site analysis

The Raiffeisenzentralbank is a project built by Alexander von Branca from 1978 until 1983. It is a building designed to be the headquarter of a bank and for this reason is developed on four floors and is organized into a series of spaces dedicated to offices. The east elevation, the main one, overlooks Schießgrabenstraße while the entire project is included within a closed site and is therefore surrounded by three other buildings. The project is made entirely of reinforced concrete and in fact from the outside has a full and impressive appearance. It is entirely plastered in white and even if is only three floors in height is able to stand out within the context in which it is placed. The only element that is an exception in this complex almost completely covered to the outside is the main entrance of the building, unique in its kind,

since it is located in the north-east corner and placed inside a completely glass facade that gives air and lightness to the entire building.



Fig 1. Aerial view



Fig 2. External view

Project

The project at first sight is composed of a single block developed on several levels. The architect has always been sure of the appearance that the bank's headquarters should have had. In fact, it is possible to understand it already from the first drawings and sketches made to give a general idea of the project placed in the context. The sketch of the building seen from the main street already shows the general impression that the architect wanted to get and, comparing this view with what was actually achieved, it is possible to see that he really got what he initially imagined. The project is in harmony with the environment in which it is located and even if it develops considerably in height, it is not invasive, rather, it fits well into the existing landscape but never going unnoticed. The project, as it was conceived by von Branca, is still in existence today and performs the function for which it was commissioned.



Fig 3. External view



Fig 4. Sketch



Fig 5. External view

First studies

Von Branca initially had to start designing this new project by facing an existing lot with buildings already located in it. He initially had a site that was larger in size than the one actually used. This is possible to be seen from the first study drawings of the project area in which is clear how the initial idea of von Branca provided not only the building actually built and still existing, but also a second block located south of it and smaller in size. Of this project just a few graphic drawings are today available. Probably the architect began the design but did not bring it forward from the earliest developments as he was informed of the change in size of the project area. Instead is evident that from the beginning the design of the main building was already clear in the architect's mind and that during the development of the project it remained almost completely unchanged from the beginning.

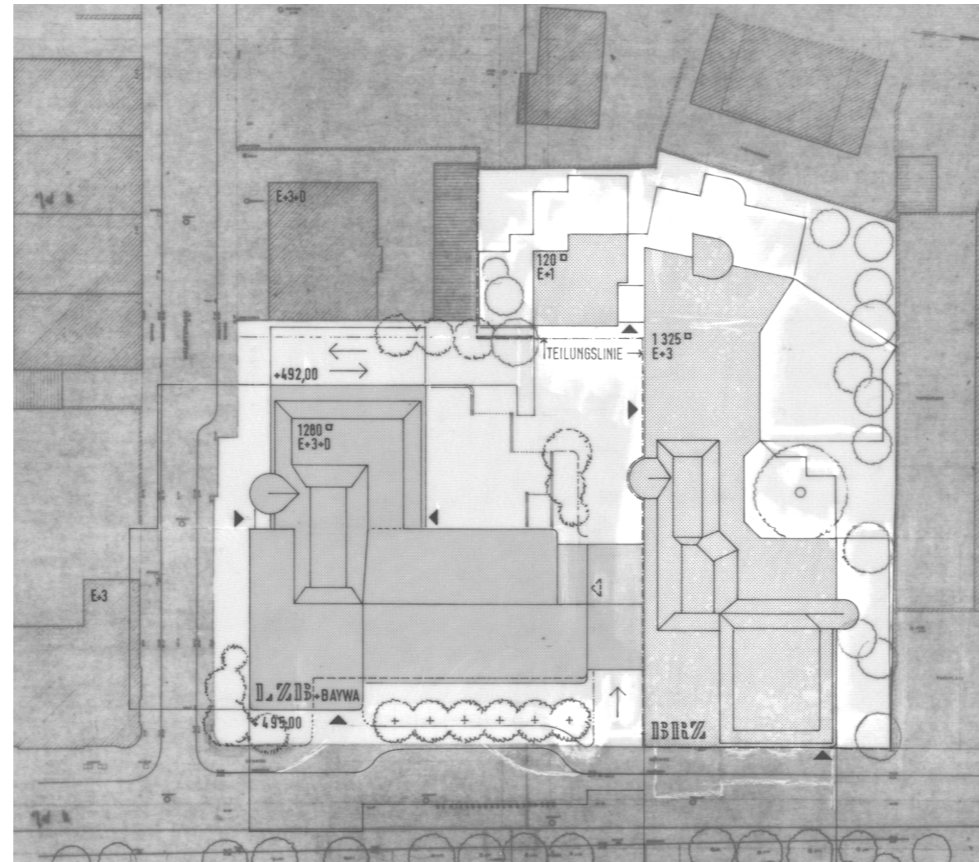


Fig 6. First site analysis - 1

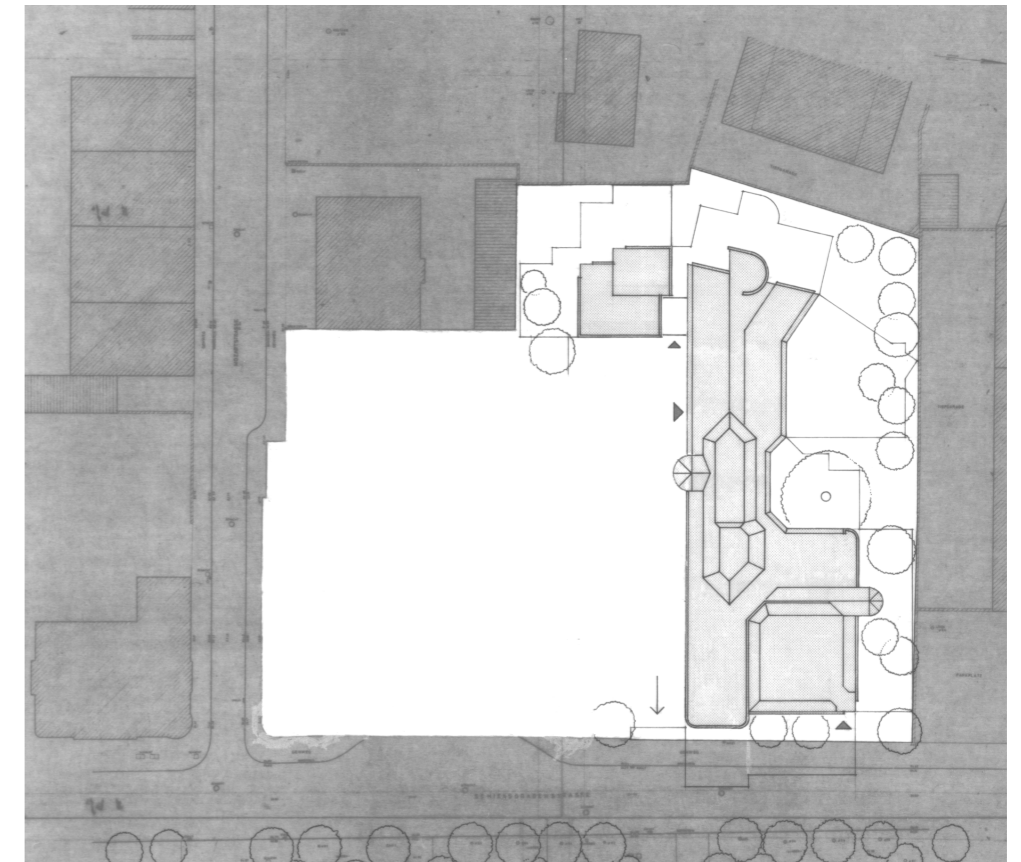


Fig 8. First site analysis - 3

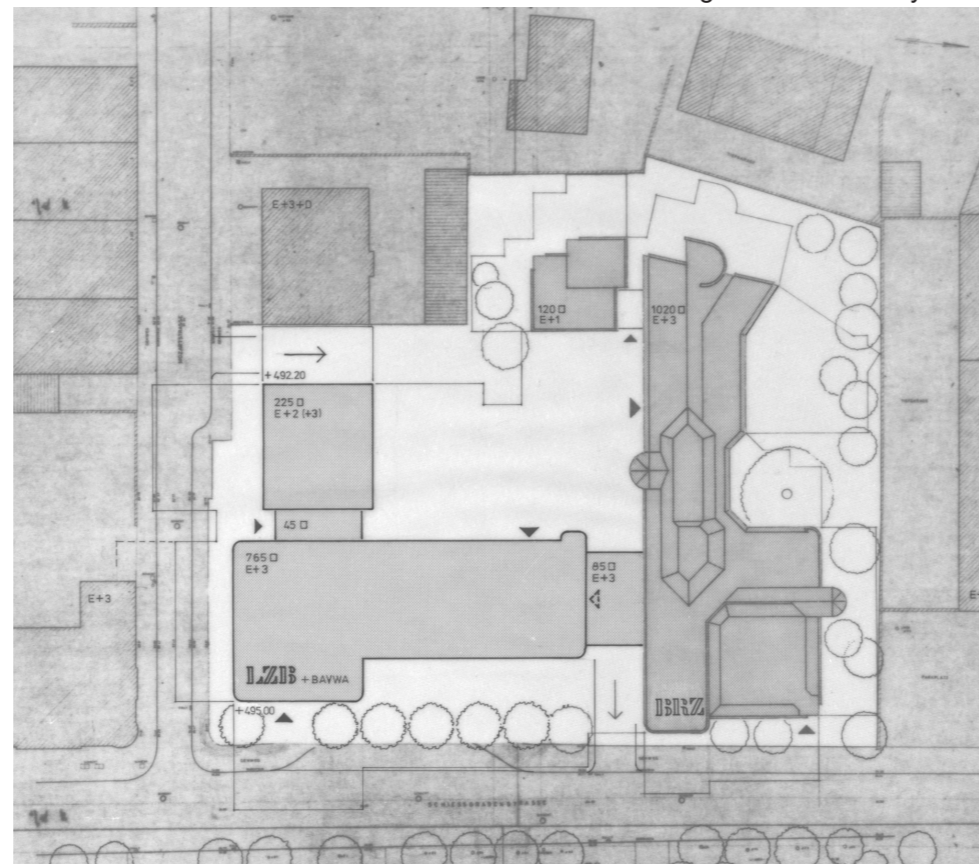


Fig 7. First site analysis - 2

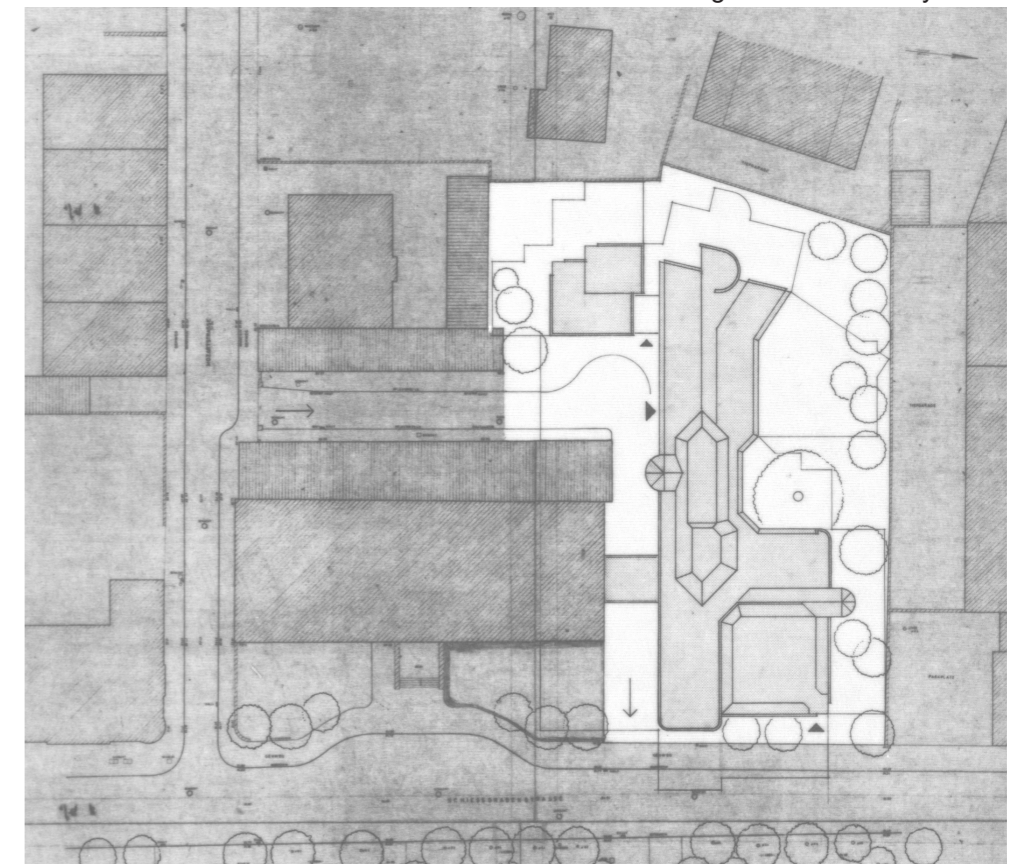


Fig 9. First site analysis - 4

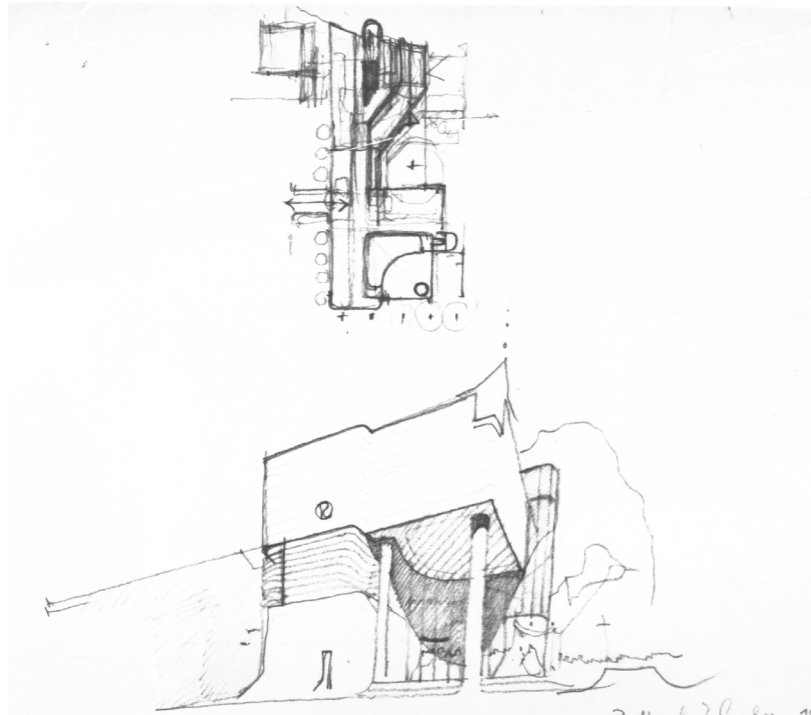


Fig 10. First project sketch, 1978

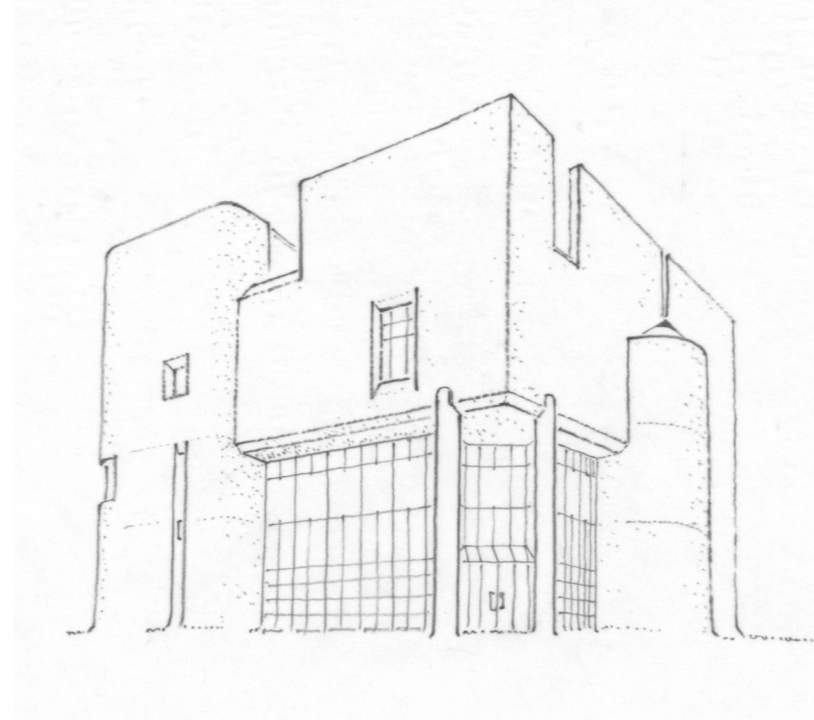


Fig 11. First project sketch

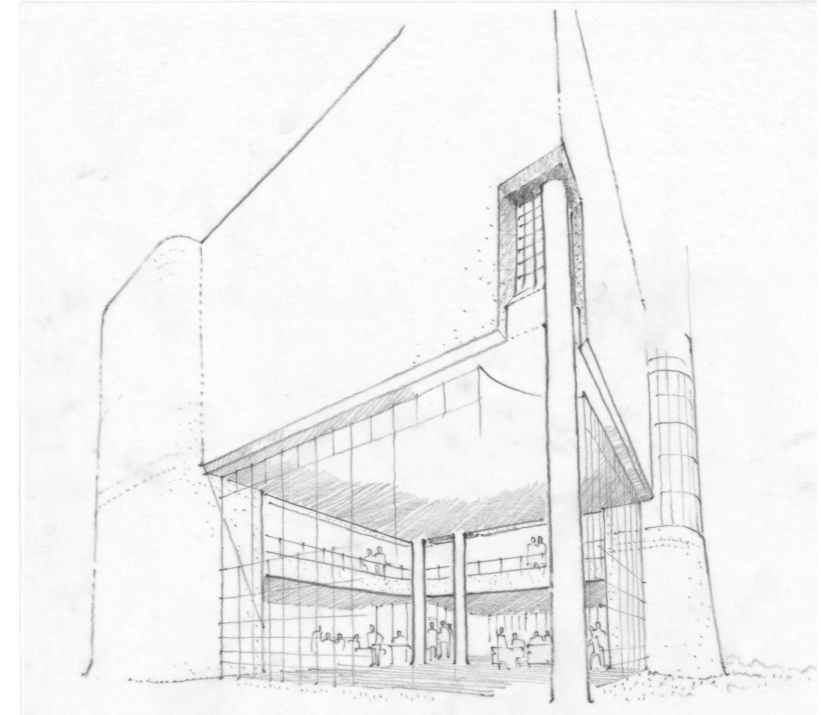


Fig 12. First project sketch

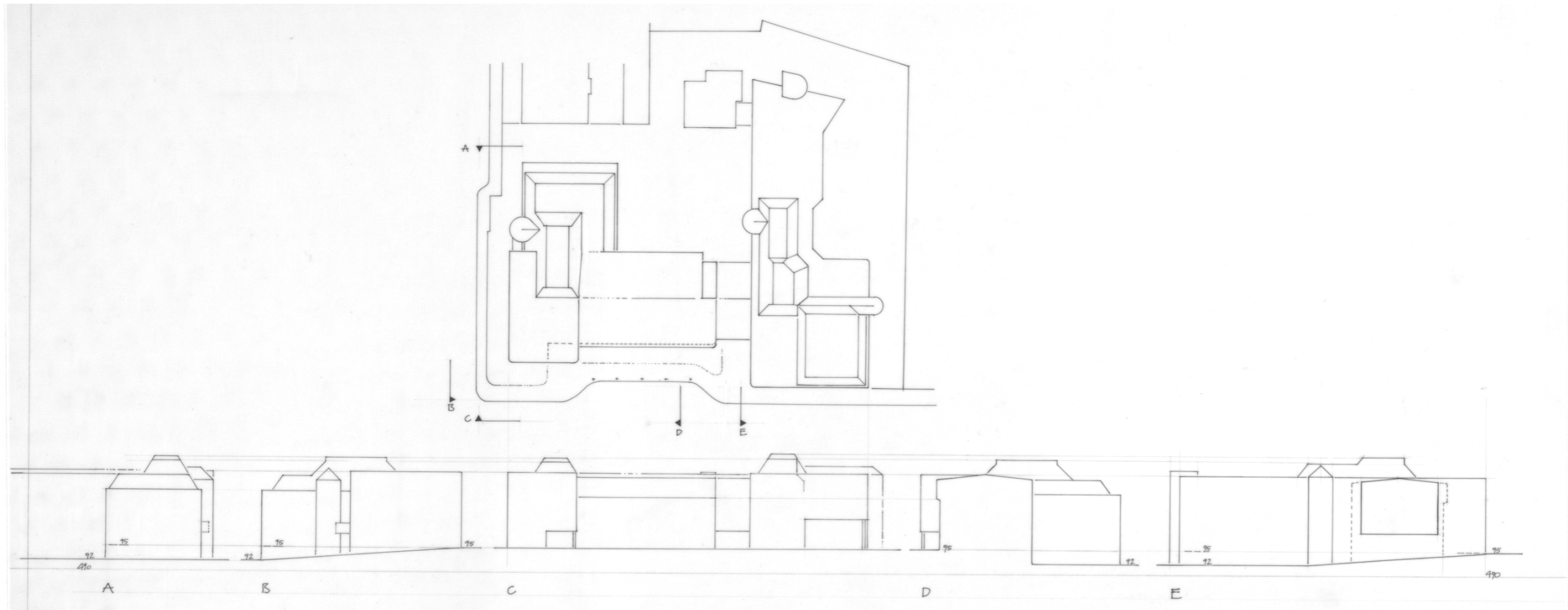


Fig 13. Site analysis , 1979

Initial idea

The initial project provided also a smaller building next to the bank. Despite the minimum that was designed is possible to see how the secondary block was realized on four levels but, as it was soon erased from the general project, it was never deepened. In fact, in the plans it is possible to see only a first organizational approach of the internal spaces. The two buildings were designed to be in communication with each other by means of a raised connecting bridge located at the first floor. The bridge was then removed from the final design. Regarding the organizational space inside the main building, it is clear that the spaces are immediately well defined in anticipation of the purpose that the complex would have to perform. The only change is actually in the number of floors, which from the initial three became four above ground plus three below ground.

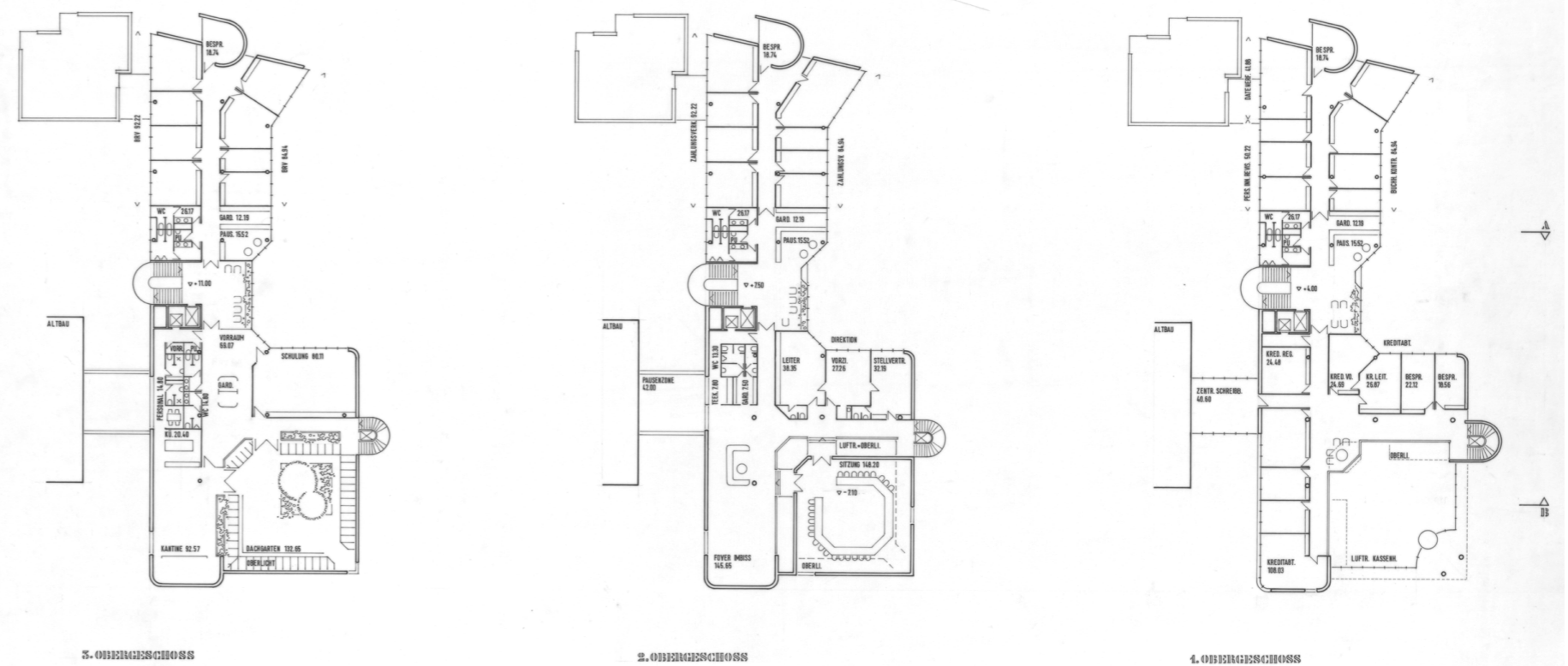


Fig 14. First plan drawings

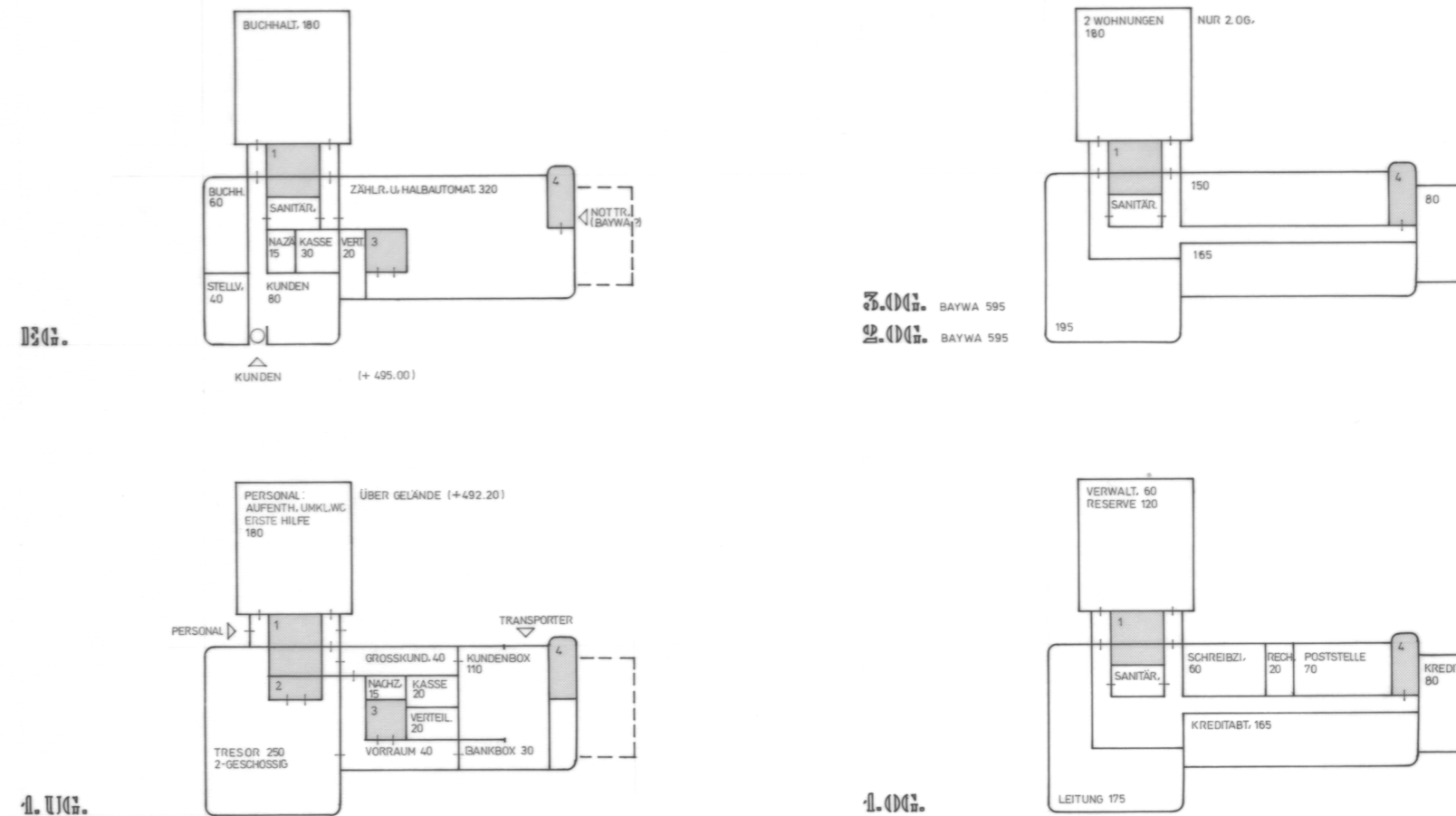


Fig 15. Secondary building plan drawings



Fig 16. East elevation



Fig 17. South elevation

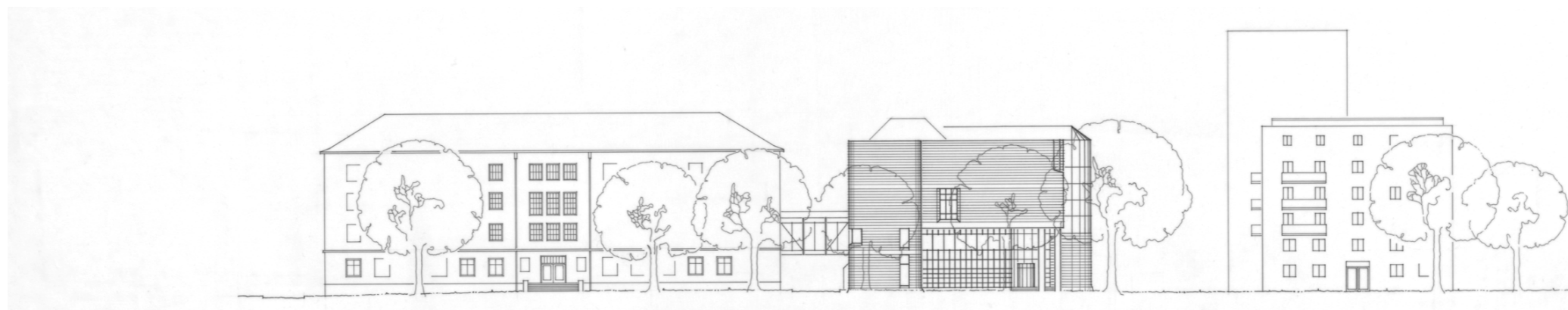


Fig 18. East elevation

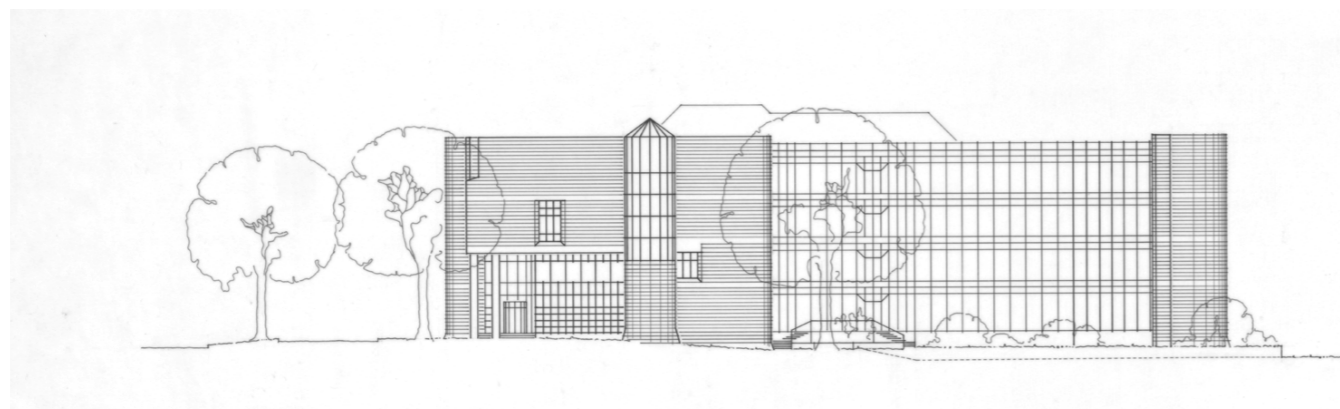


Fig 19. North elevation

Plans

In the interior the project is developed on four floors. The first three occupy the entire volume while the fourth provides an outdoor side as it was designed as a roof garden. There is actually, as it is possible to see in section B (Fig. 24), the presence of a fifth level which in reality has a poorly developed plan and seems to be not accessible to the public, probably used only as a deposit. Therefore the main floors are the ground floor and the first floor as they are also in communication with each other through a large area built in double height that corresponds to the waiting room of the bank's customers. The remaining part of the floors is very dense and provides numerous offices and areas reserved for the tasks to be carried out in the bank. The first floor is instead a little less dense and the spaces become less suitable for the public and more private, just available to employees, also having spaces for common meetings.

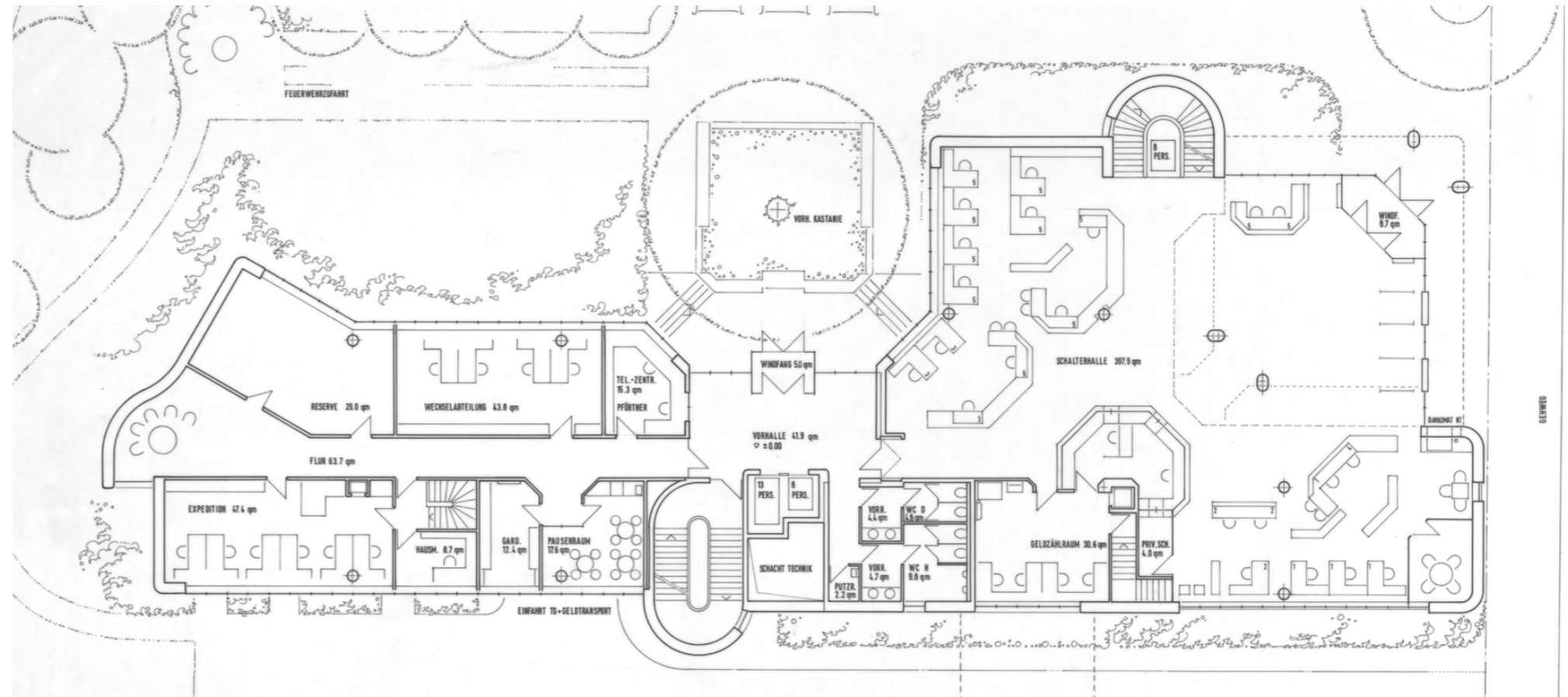


Fig 20. Ground floor plan, 1981

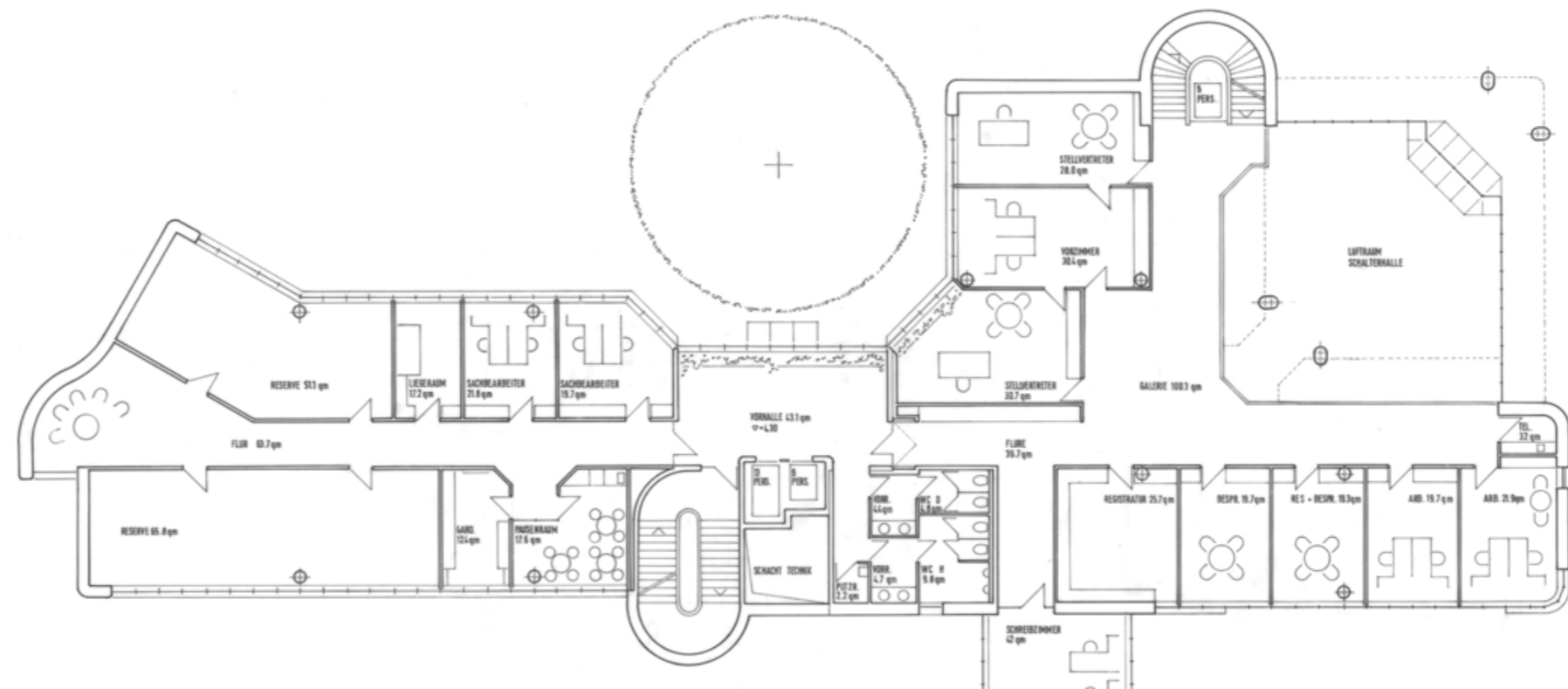


Fig 21. First floor plan, 1981

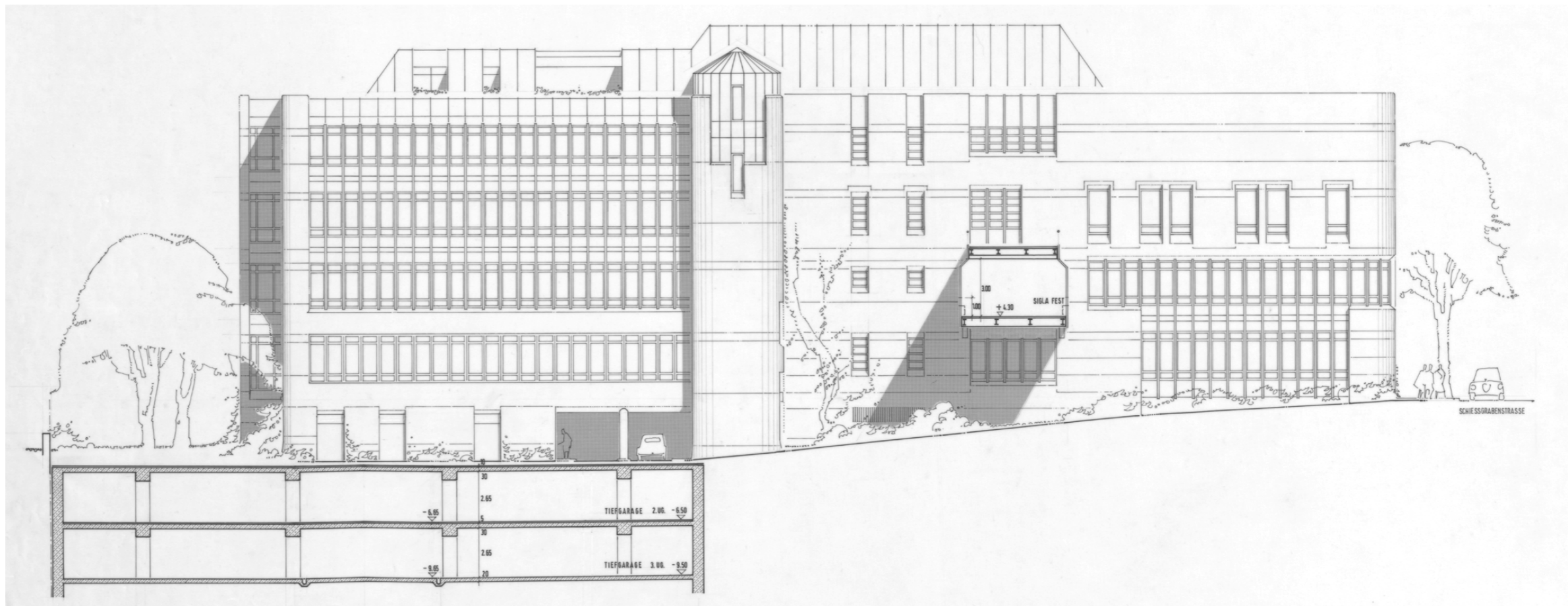


Fig 22. South section, 1981

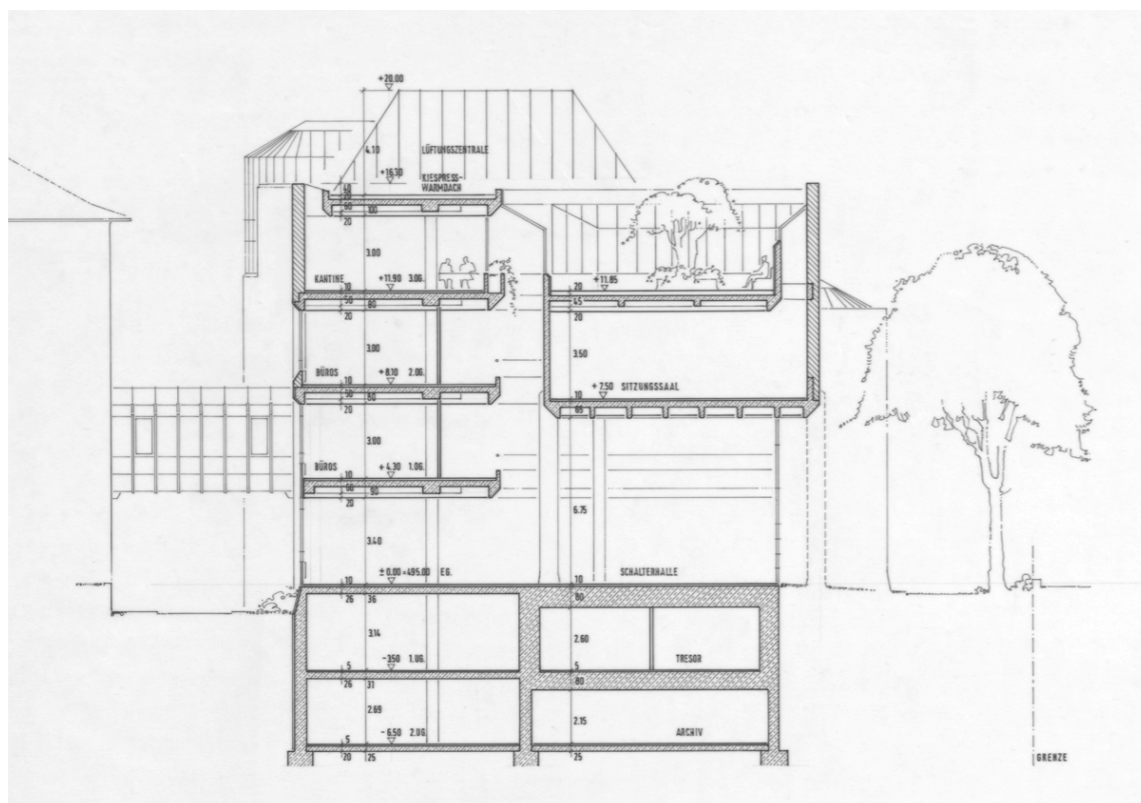


Fig 23. Section A, 1981

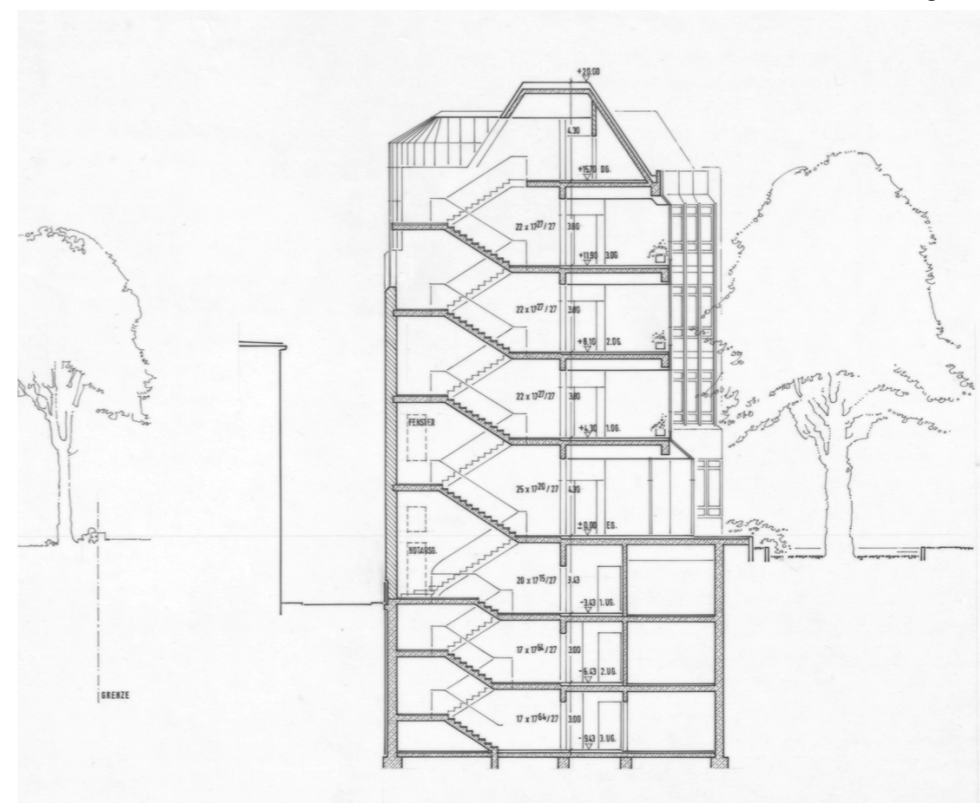


Fig 24. Section B, 1981

Corner facade

The real heart of the project seems to be the service hall that occupies a large part of the building and is spread over two heights. Being this area so important, the architect decided to enhance it as much as possible by characterizing it with a facade made entirely of glass that makes it unique and different from the entire building plastered in white. This facade is very peculiar because it does not join forming a right angle, but creates a third side corner which is used as the entrance to the bank.

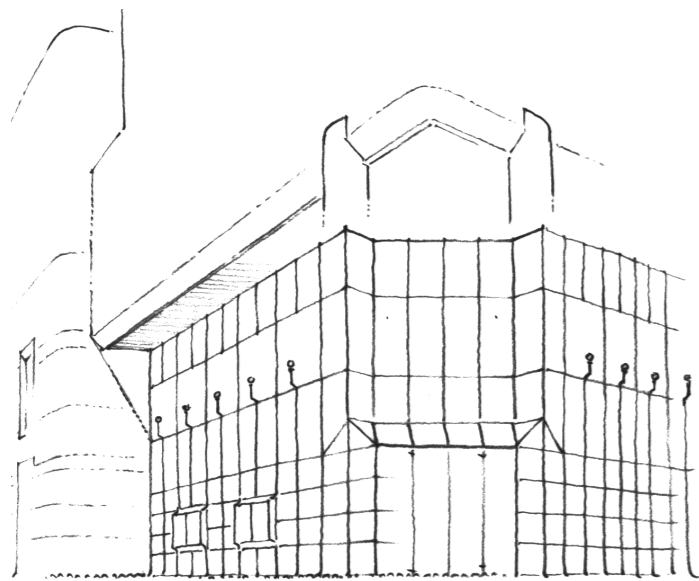


Fig 25. Perspective, 1981

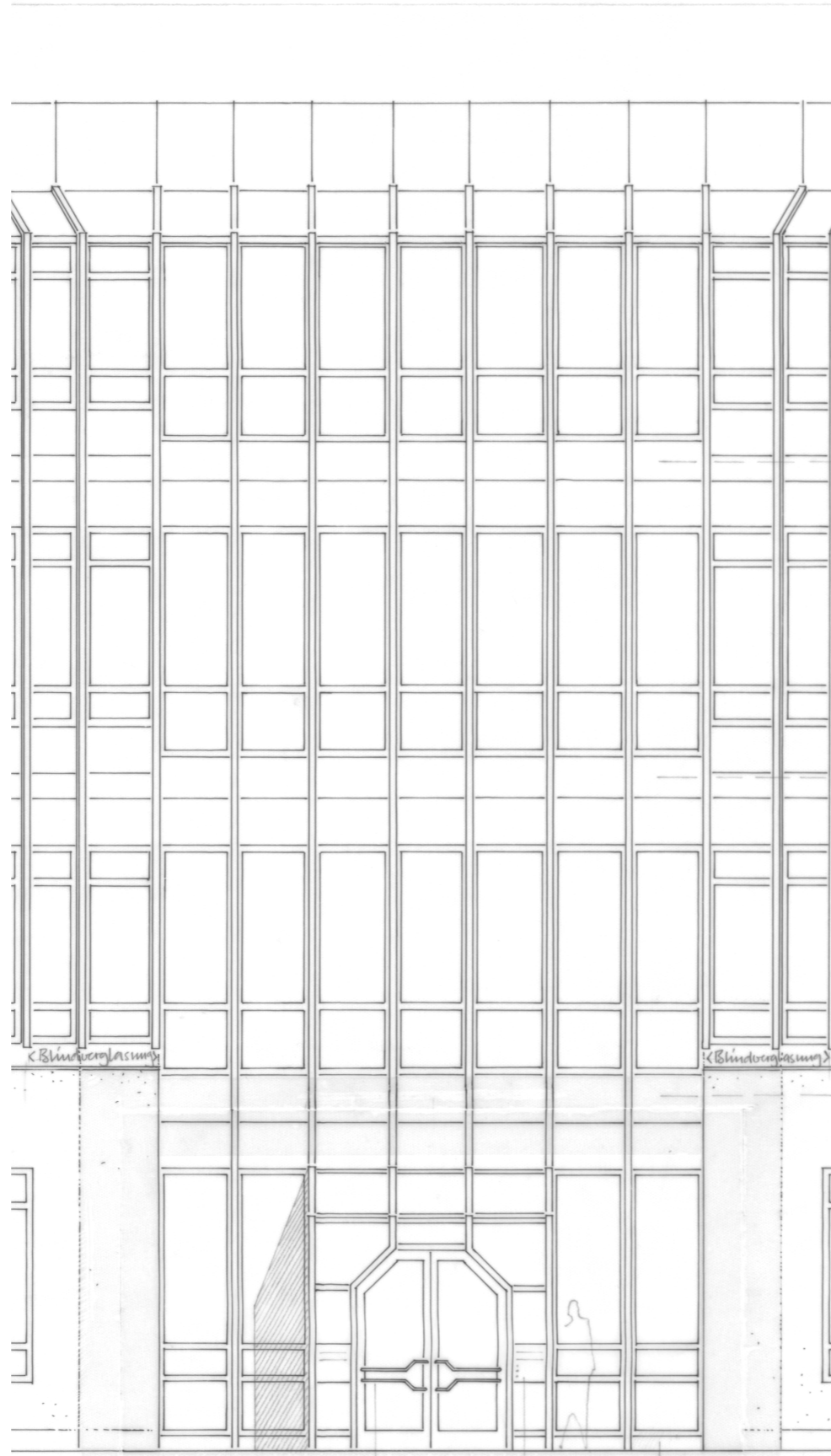
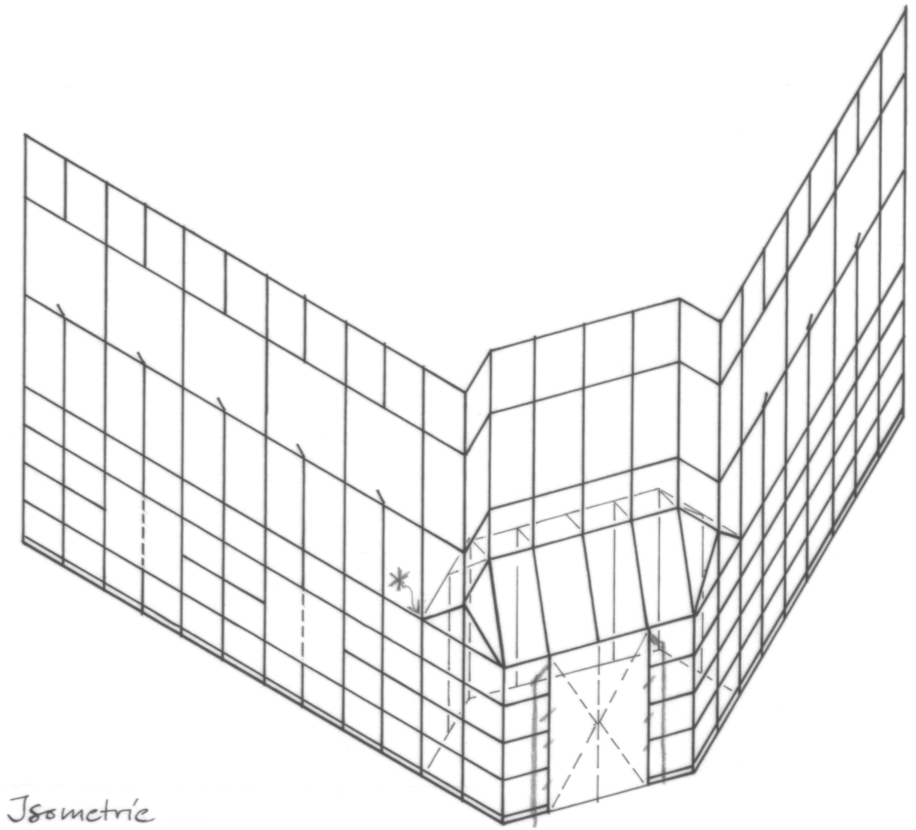


Fig 26. North facade, 1981



Isometrie
 * Ansatz der Schrägen in der Höhe geringfügig verändert; siehe Blatt 27a!

Schema-Grundriss 1:100
 mit Draufsicht und Gefälle-
 angabe des Windfang-Glas-
 dachs,

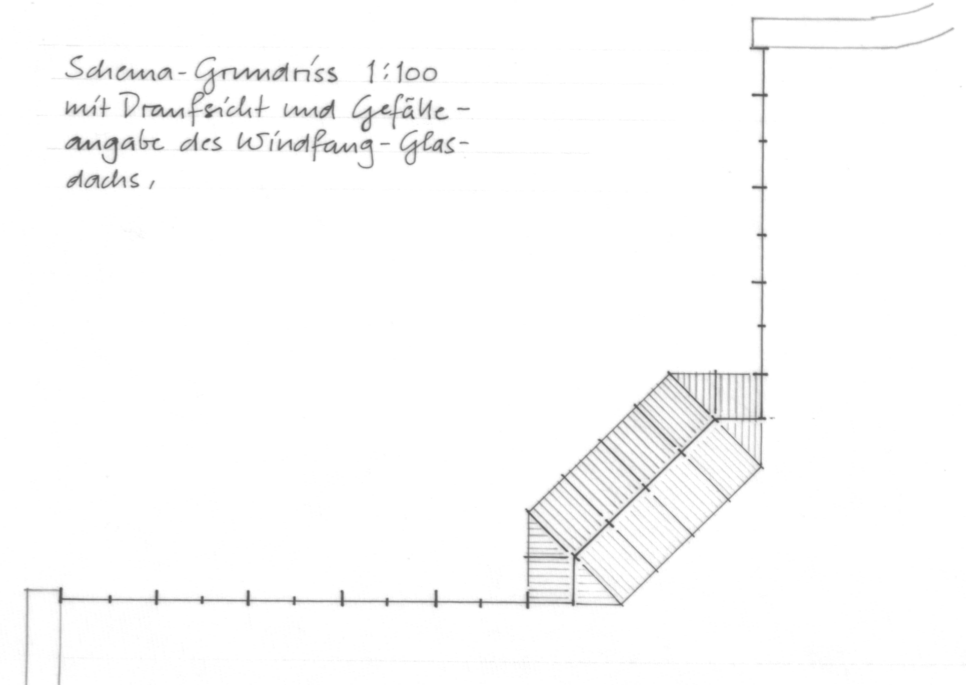


Fig 27. Isometry and Ground floor scheme, 1981



Fig 28. Interior view



Fig 29. Interior view

Corner space

Protected by a corner window, there is therefore the bank's waiting area. This is a large, welcoming area which, thanks to the large windows surrounding it, is very spacious and airy. However, this part of the building is not only important for the waiting area, but it also corresponds to the garden roof on the upper floor. This zone is really characteristic of the project and makes it unique. As a matter of fact, it is not very common to have access to a raised green area within a bank building. It becomes clear that this area is the heart of the entire project and that it is the cornerstone of the interaction between the customers and the employees. So, even if it is developed on a considerable area, it is compact and functional. The entire building evolves itself around this double height that also acts as a filter between public and private allowing to have a cozy space but also large enough to receive the customers of the bank.

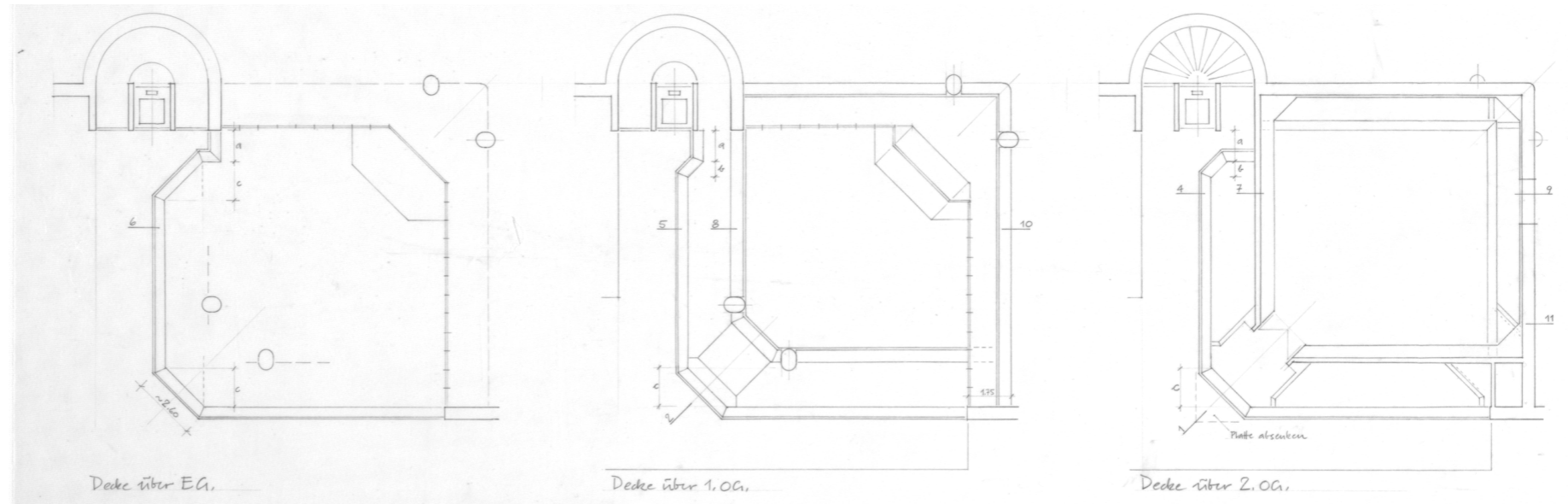


Fig 30. Corner area analysis, 1981

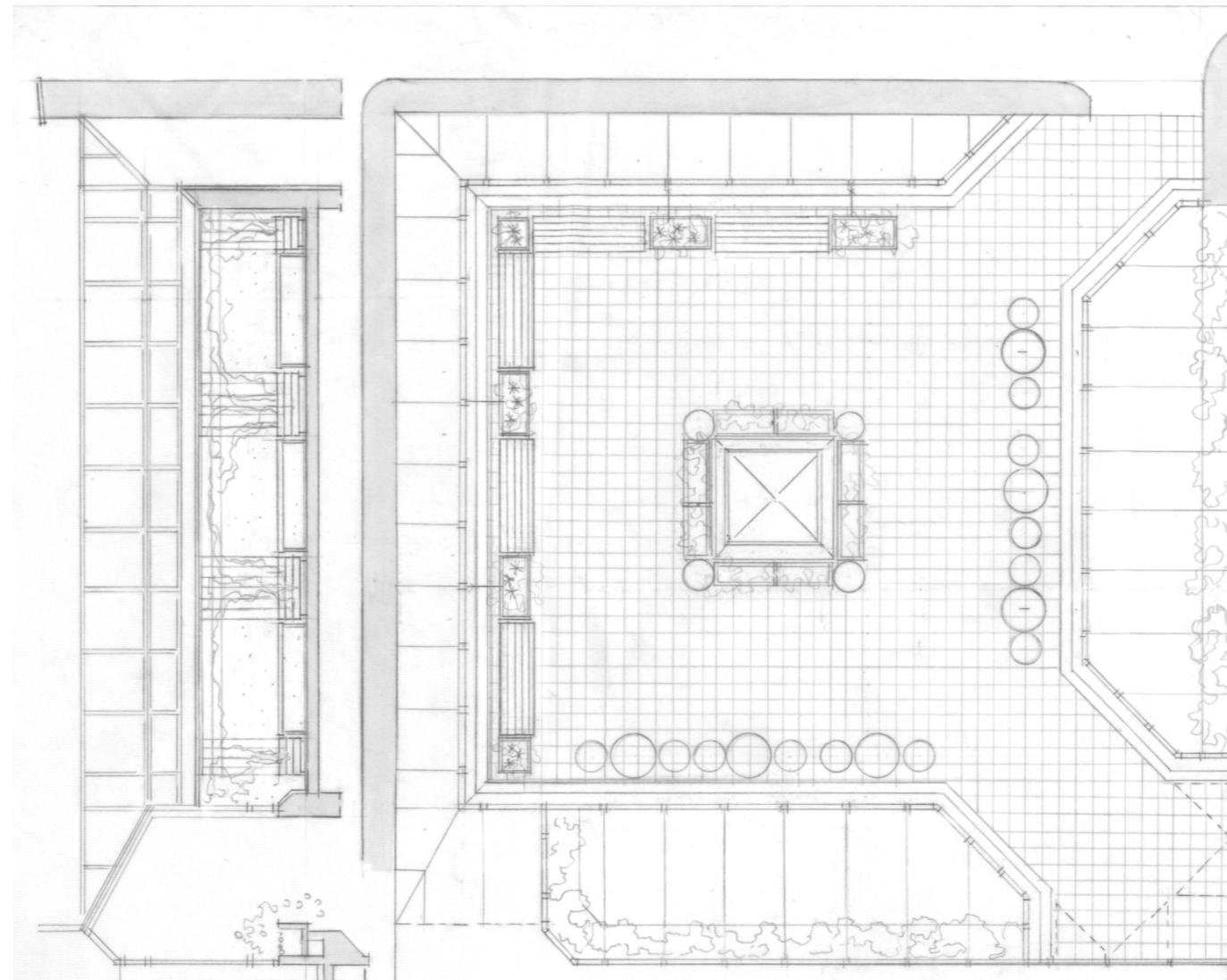


Fig 31. Garden roof plan, 1983

Project idea

If the project conceived by von Branca between the end of 1970 and the beginning of 1980 had been realized today, it would actually have been realized in almost the same way. In fact, for being a building conceived at the end of the 20th century it is very actual. This statement derives from the fact that it presents innovative elements such as the considerable part of the facade entirely realized with glazed panels, the presence of a roof garden and an interior at double height. Probably today would have presented even more innovative elements such as a different solution for the outer shell that was designed by von Branca entirely in concrete, but overall it is a rather current project. My vision of how the building could be updated actually involves the creation of a new landscape within the waiting room that is the most important area of the building. This would have been achieved by introducing more vegetation and a green area that makes the space

even more welcoming and relaxing. It would be a restricted area within the waiting zone, connected to an opening on the roof that, in correspondence with the roof garden on the upper floor, would connect the three main floors of the complex.

This opening on the roof would allow to have natural light inside but could also be closed when necessary with an automatic cover in case of unfavorable weather conditions.

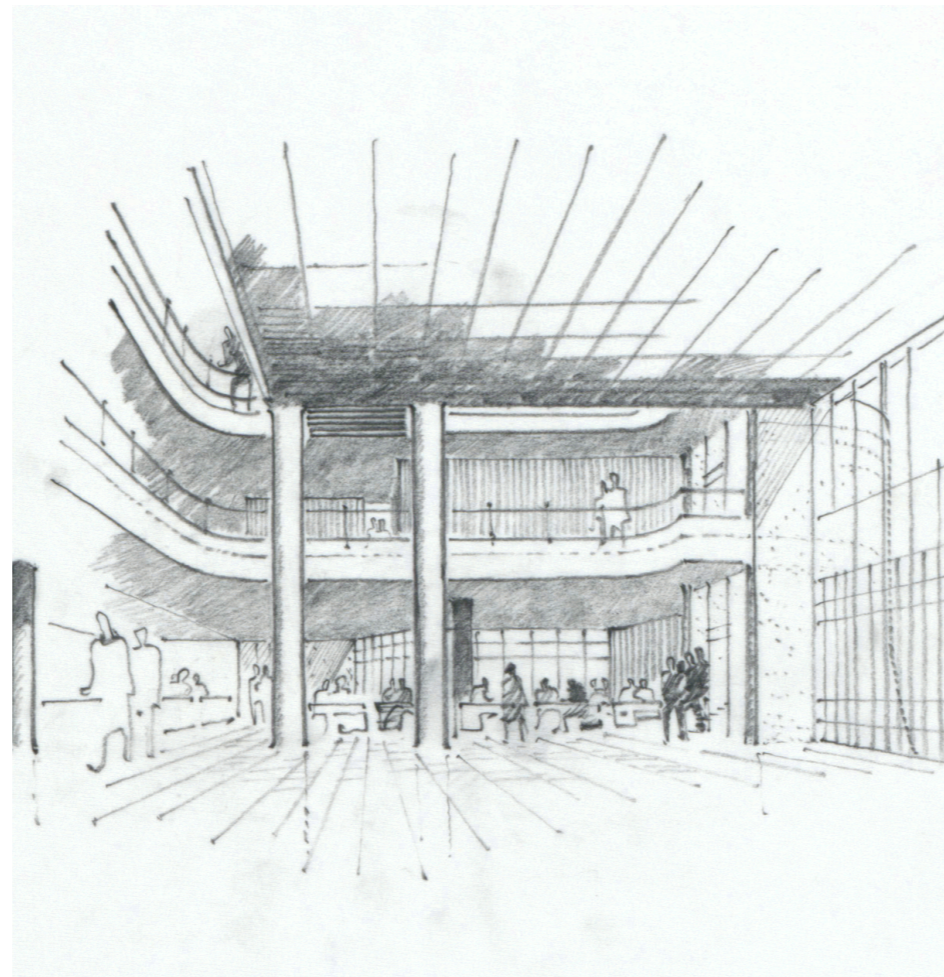


Fig 32. Sketch

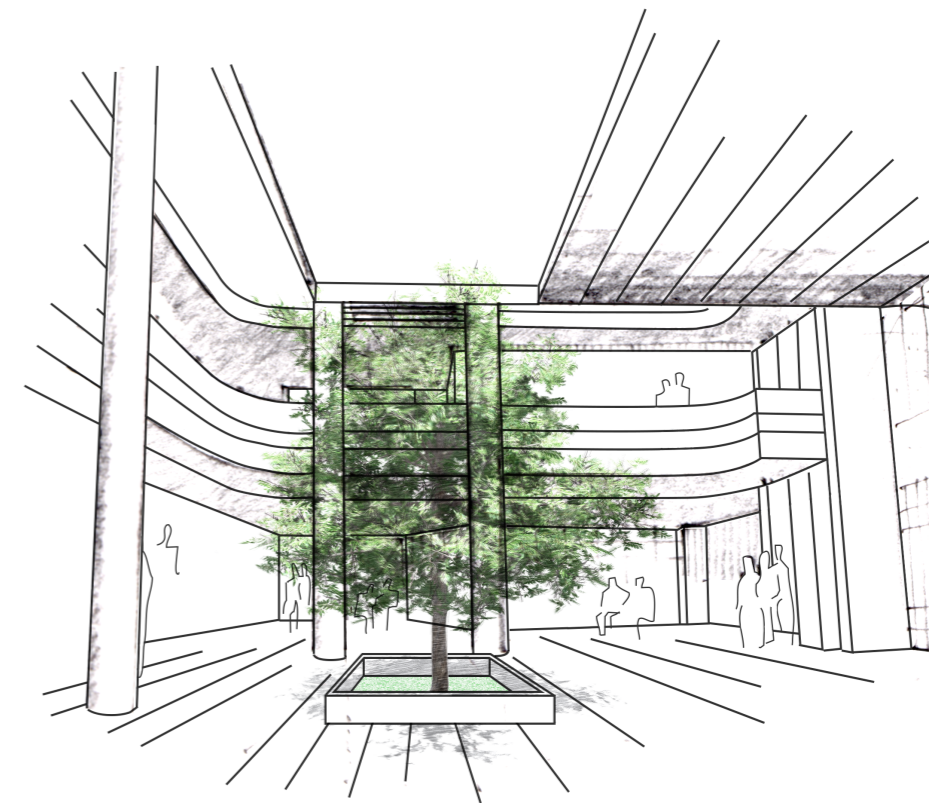


Fig 33. Design Concetta Maria Casagrande