

# THE ODD COUPLE

## An educational microcosm of Belgium

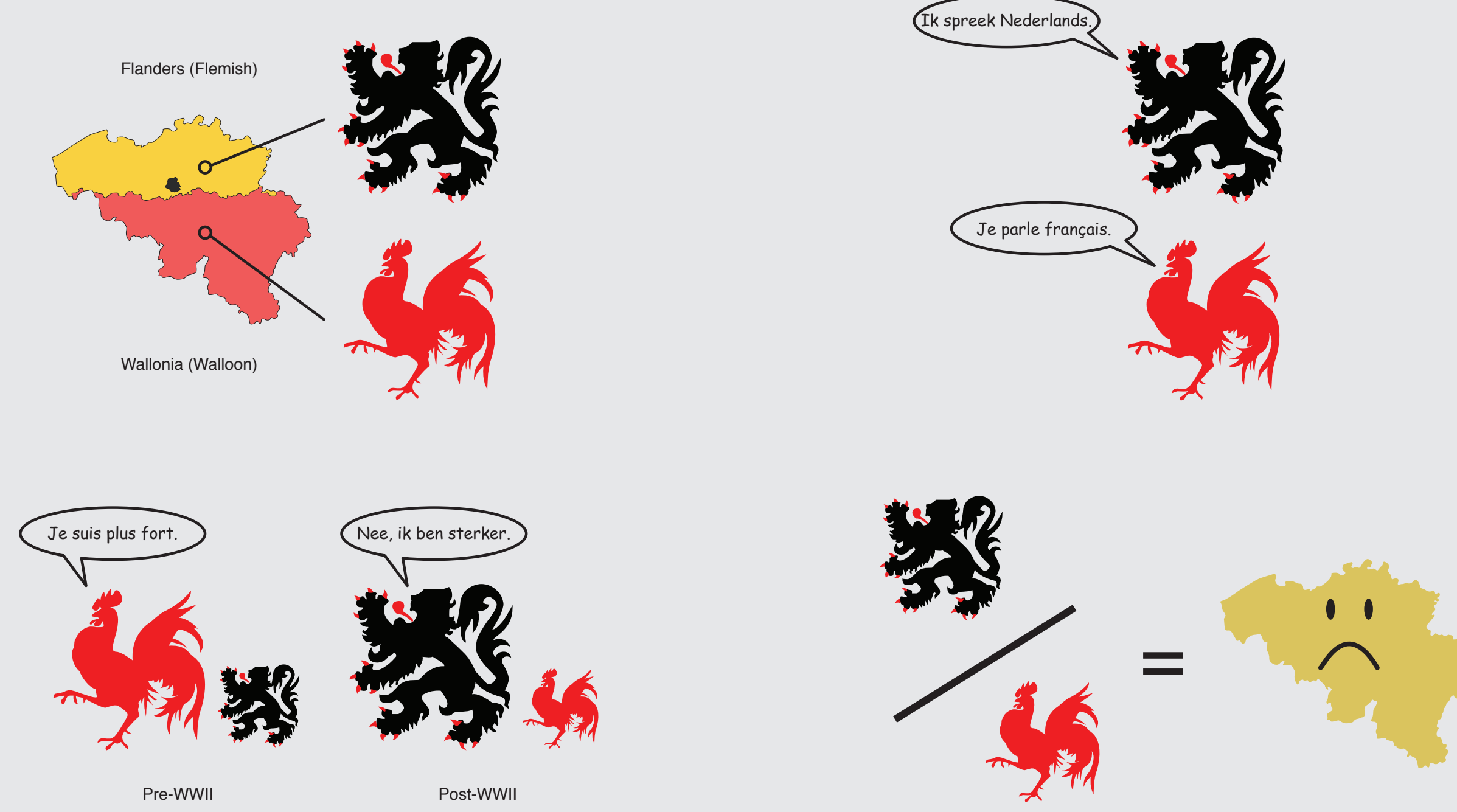
Nobody misses the irony that the country which is headquarters to the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and whose national motto is "Unity makes Strength" is itself, on the brink of breaking up into independent states.

Belgium has a long history of internal social, political, and economic struggle that can be observed through the scope of language. Belgium is ethnically divided into four groups: the Dutch-speaking Flemings in the north, Francophone Walloons in the south, small German cantons in the east, and the bilingual capital of Brussels.

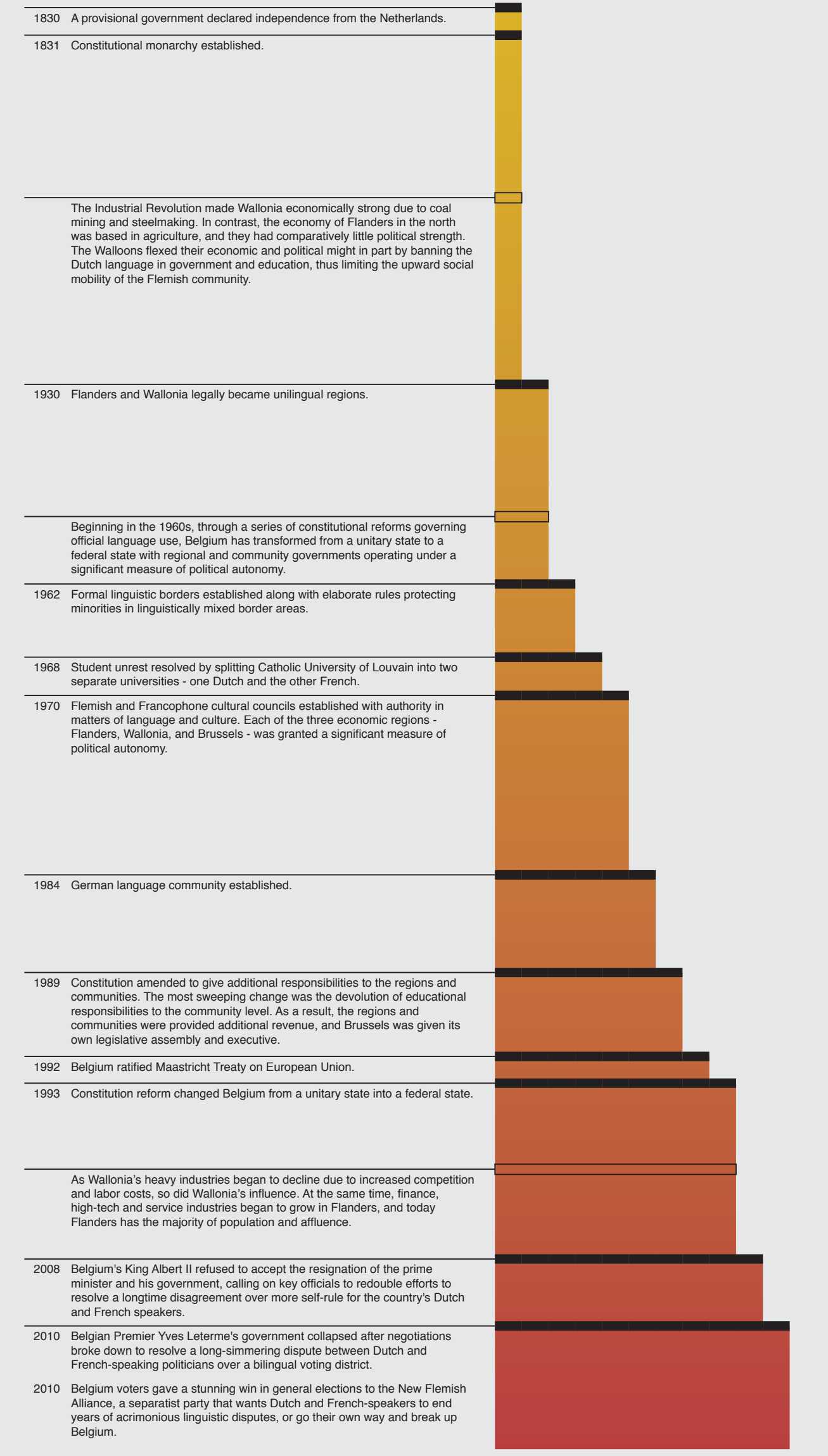
The socio-political structure of Belgium, a whole containing disparate parts, serves as the catalyst for The Odd Couple: two individual secondary schools in Brussels, one Dutch-speaking, the other French-speaking, sharing the same site. The common element shared among the two schools is the public realm. Rather than shunning the public, the public is encouraged to actively engage in activities within the building. In this way the common spaces throughout the building take on the role of serving the needs and desires of both schools and the public, resulting in the necessity for dialogue and cooperation. By filtering program through a socio-political lens, a "school" typology emerges that emphasizes interaction and extramural learning.



Belgium is home to the EU and NATO, but may itself cease to exist in the near future...



This is largely due to animosity and competing interests.



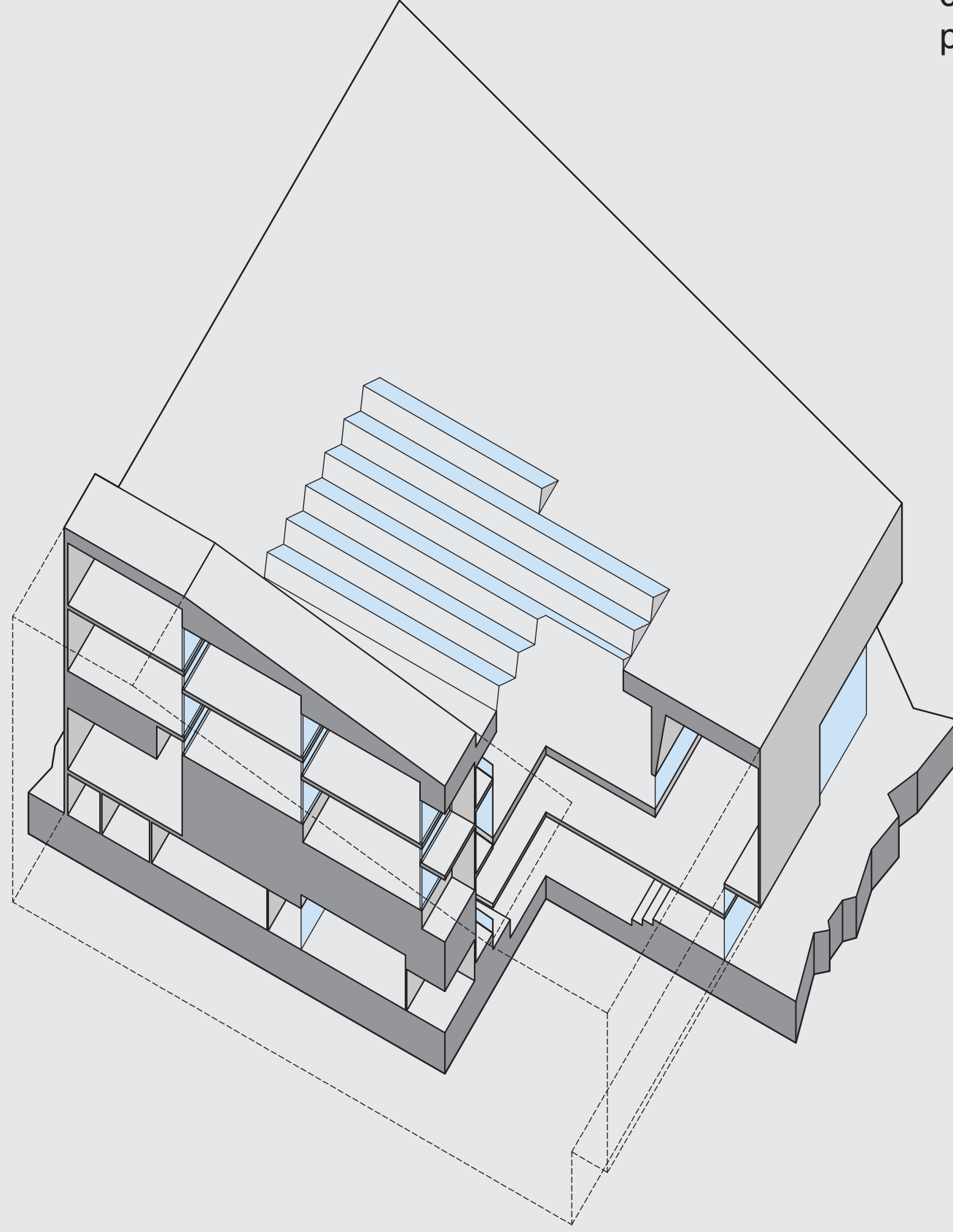
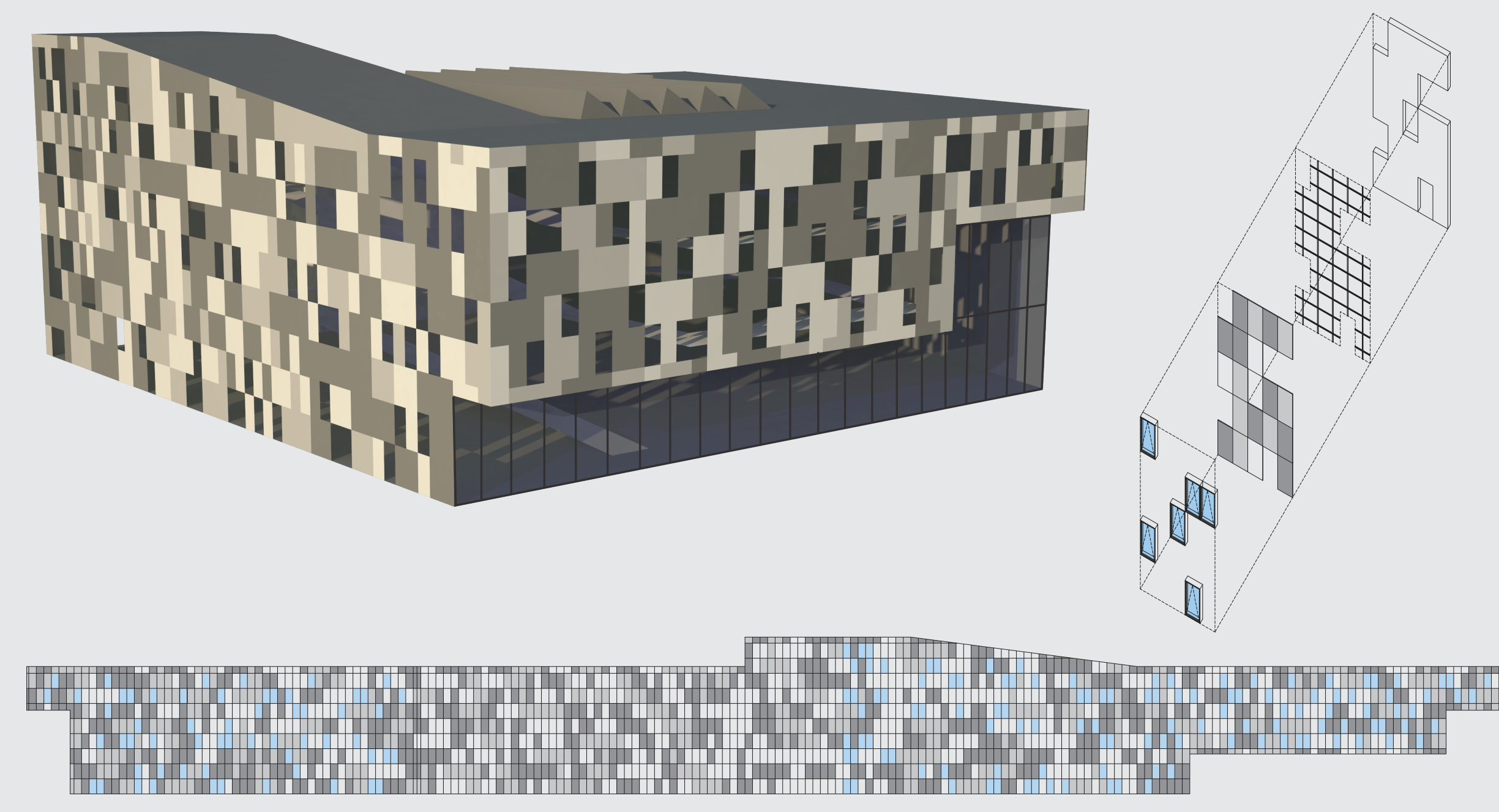
Over time regional autonomy has been encouraged.



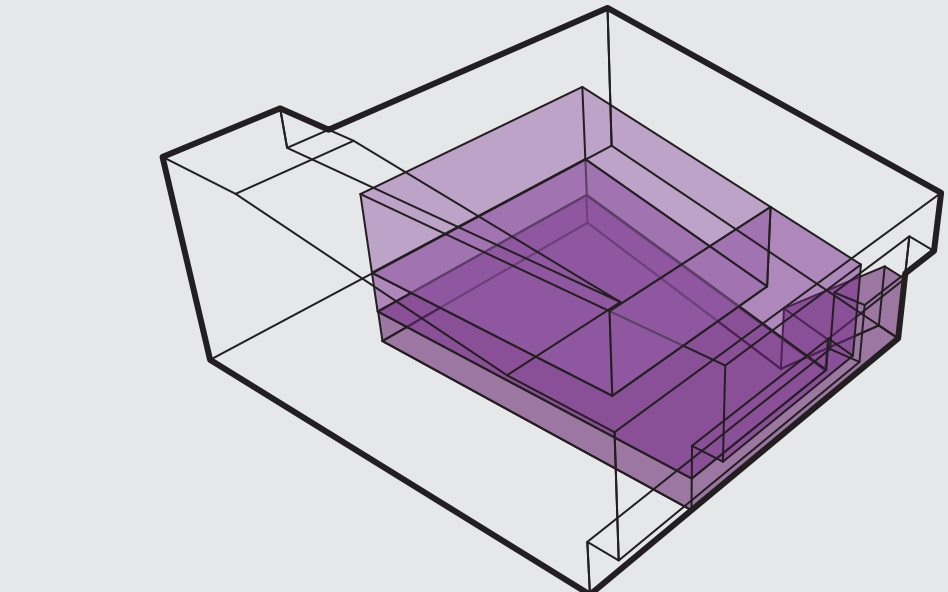
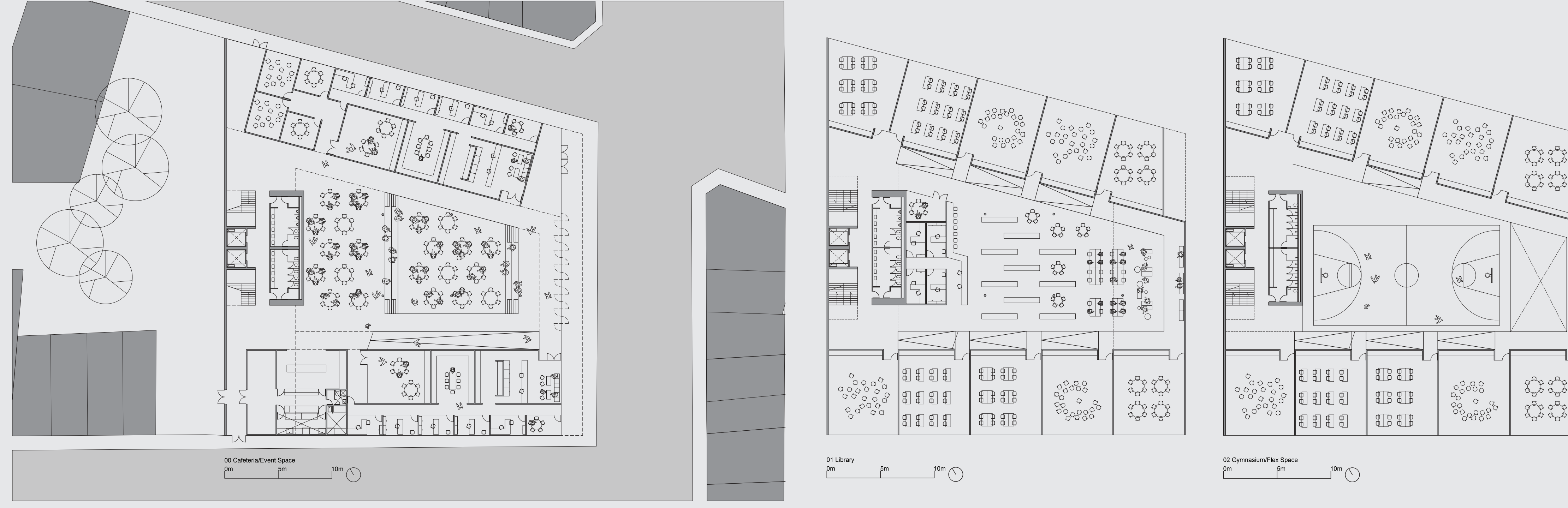
The project takes place in Brussels, Belgium.



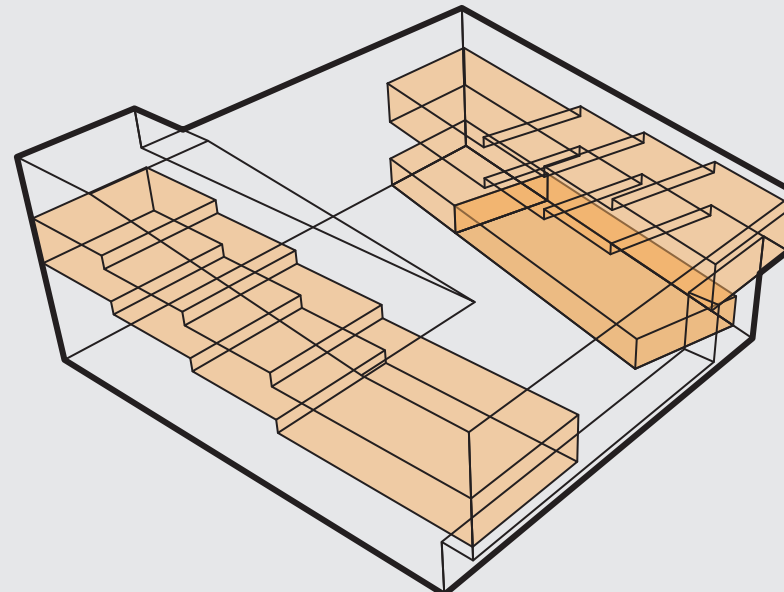
The facade is conceived as a pixelated curtain that lifts up to form an entry and allow the public generous views inside. The random pattern allows for windows to occur where dictated by the constantly changing levels inside. A single unit dimension is adopted for both the panel system and punched openings to ensure maximum flexibility.



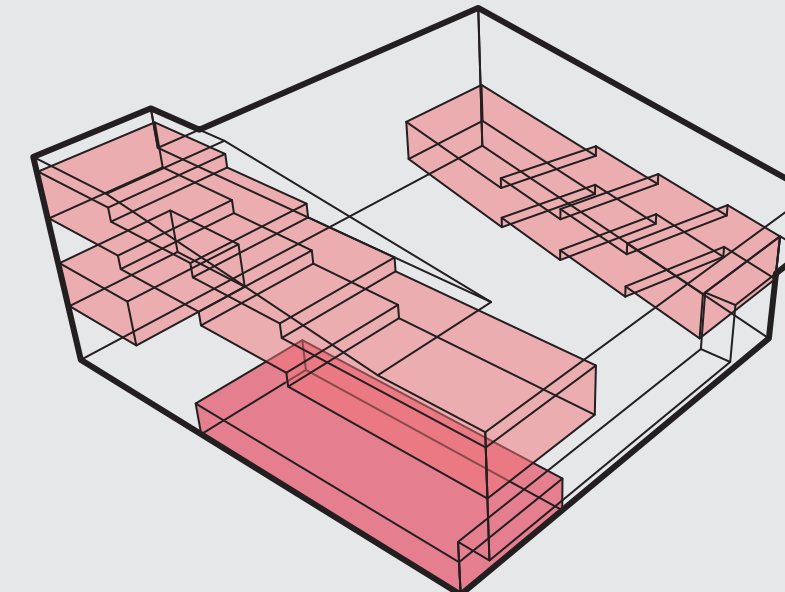
The classrooms are arranged in a manner to allow for indirect views to spaces above and below.



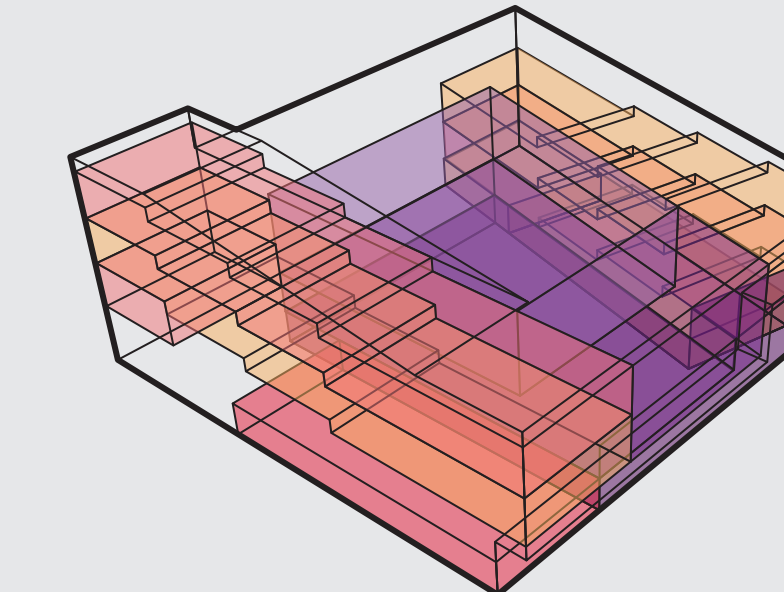
Common spaces shared with the public: Cafeteria/event space, library and gymnasium/fitness space



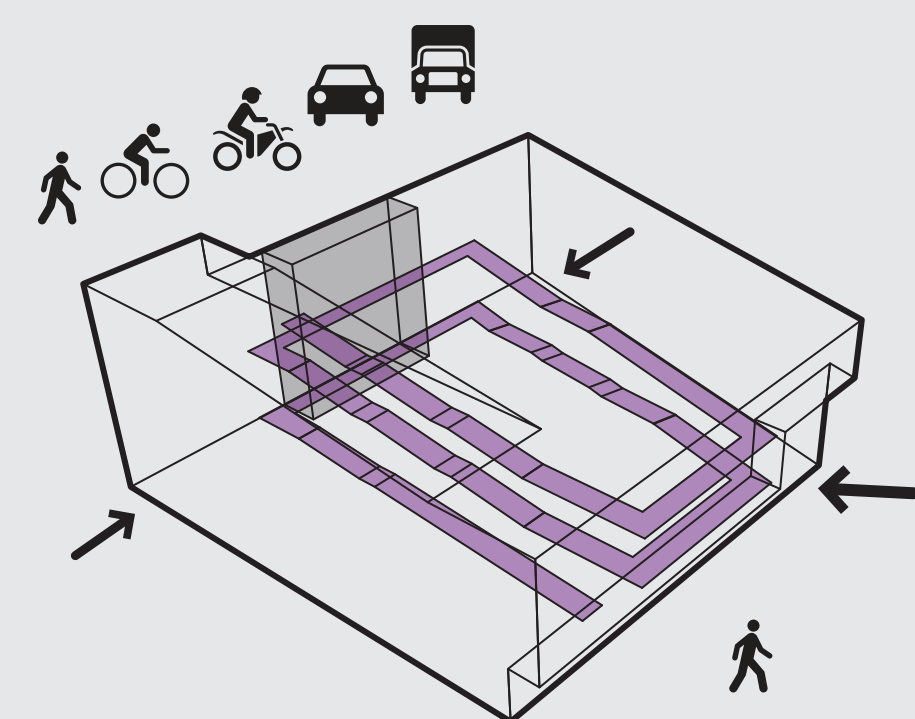
Classrooms and administration



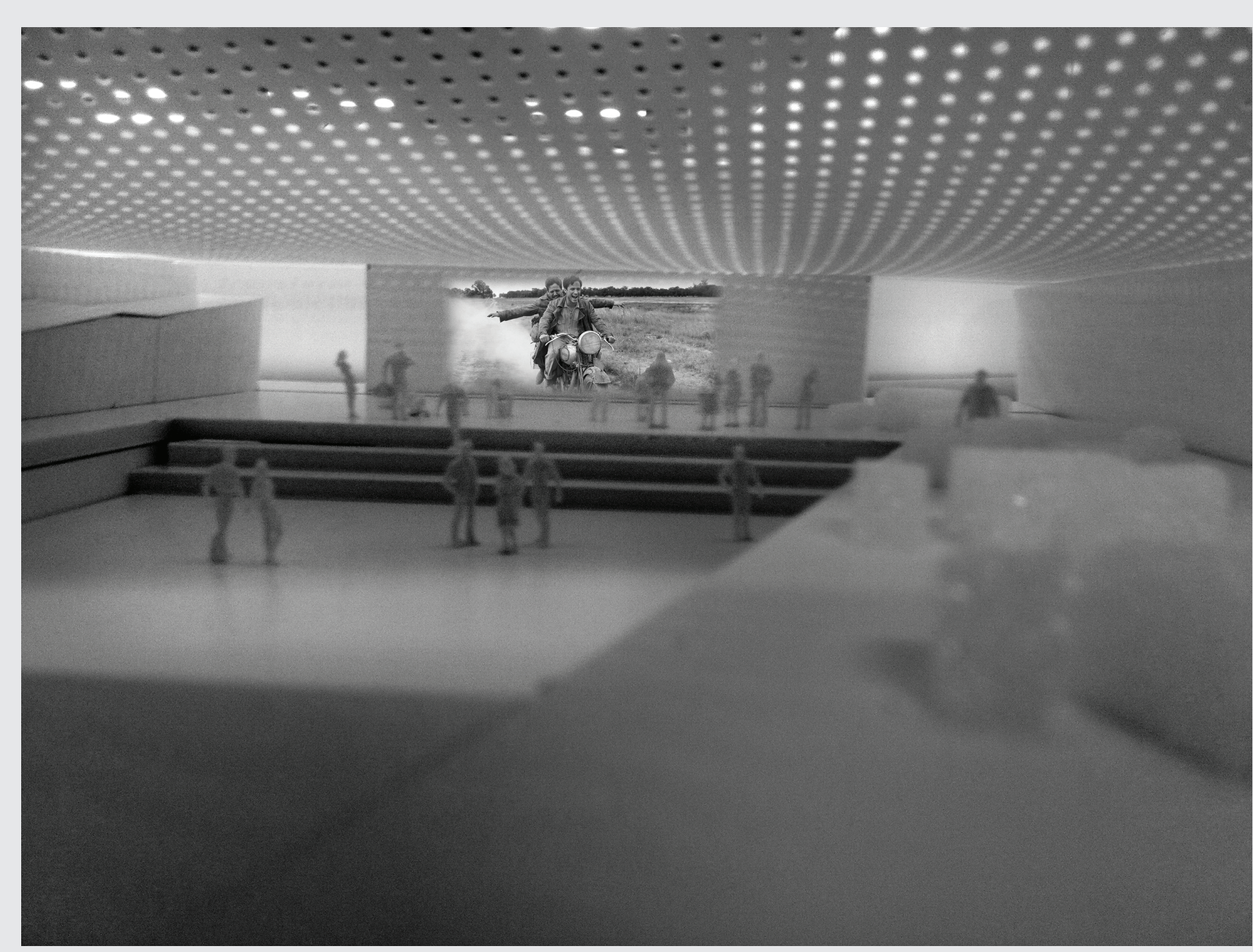
More classrooms and administration



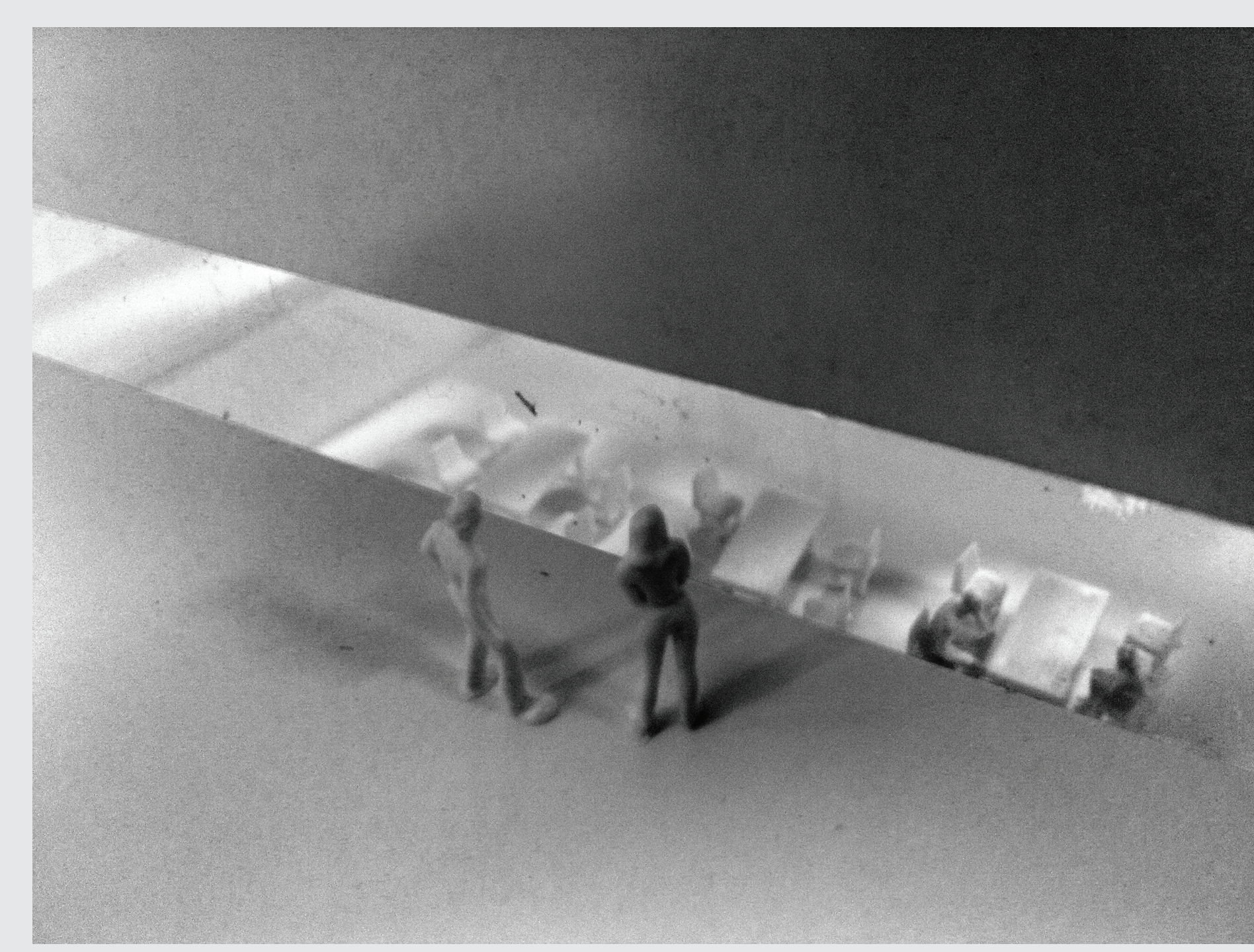
The spiraling nature of the classrooms accommodates change over time should the size of one school change in relation to the other.



Upon entering, there is a choice between fast circulation with stairs and elevators, or slow circulation that wraps around the common spaces.



The cafeteria opens to the street and may also accommodate other activities such as film screenings or live music.



The gymnasium sits above the library and may be used for large scale art installations in addition to school-wide dodgeball tournaments.



The library's reading room.



The library's reading room.