



ELENA DIMITROVA | Y5 | STUDIO 07 | 5A

Reimagining Shumen



To regenerate the forgotten part of the town center –
the Revival street and its surrounding area

Design Studies | 5A
Studio 07 | Experiment
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Declaration

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and has been composed by myself. It contains no unacknowledged text and has not been submitted in any previous context. All quotations have been distinguished by quotation marks and all sources of information, text, illustration, tables, images etc. have been specifically acknowledged.

I accept that if having signed this Declaration my work should be found at Examination to show evidence of academic dishonesty the work will fail and I will be liable to face the University Senate Discipline Committee."

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ABSTRACT

Abstract

Bulgaria has a long history of more than 13 centuries. It is believed that the country commenced from the lands of Shumen, owing to the adjacent location of the first two Bulgarian capitals. Over the centuries, the town was an important cultural, political and military center. Today, located in the north-eastern Bulgaria, Shumen is the tenth largest town in the country, the economic capital of Shumen Province and an important administrative and cultural center. It has rich cultural heritage which covers many historic periods and offers a variety for tourism and exploration.

Nevertheless, there is a number of socio-economic and urban issues in the town. The economic is affected by decline in the population and rise in emigration among young people. The overall urban environment is unmaintained. Also, despite the diverse historical cultural legacy, Shumen is not a renowned destination and lacks publicity.

The past of Shumen is associated with the Revival Street. It was where many important events took place. It was 'a street with a soul'. Situated in the west of the main central pedestrian street, today the place is in a run-down and neglected state. Most of the buildings on the street and its surrounding area are listed as architectural cultural heritage. However, a rare sight is one in a good condition – many of them are empty, in poor quality, slowly and dangerously collapsing.

So, the intent of this thesis is to regenerate this forgotten area of Shumen, preserve its heritage and restore the once vibrant public life and its cultural values.

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MIND MAP | What is the issue?

Mind map

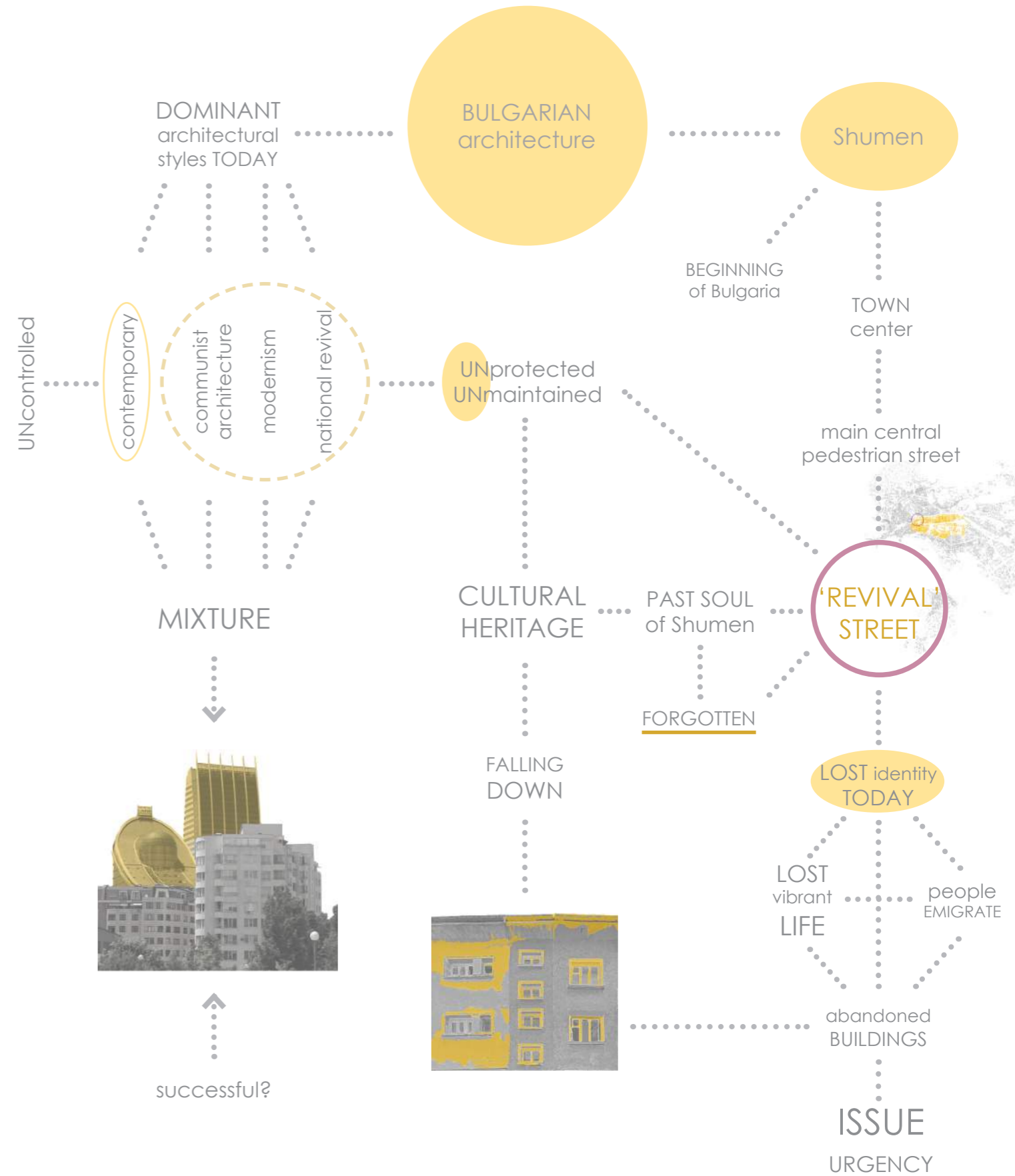


Figure 1: Mind map



Shumen (Yuzéir, 2020)

chapter one:
Bulgarian Architecture

BULGARIA | Background

Established in 681 AD, Bulgaria is one of the oldest countries in Europe with more than 13 centuries of history. It is situated in the south-eastern part of the continent and is part of the Balkan Peninsula. Its location is strategic, as it is at the crossroad of important historic routes (Dimitrov, 2020). Before the Bulgars arrived and founded the Bulgarian country, this land had belonged to the tribes of the Thracians and, later, the Slavs, as well as the Romans. However, the tribe of the Bulgars quickly mixed with the local Slavic people and consequently, they formed the Bulgarians (VisitStrandja, 2020).

The First Bulgarian Kingdom lasted until 1018, when Byzantium conquered it (History, 2020). In 1185, the Second Bulgarian Kingdom was founded after a successful uprising of the Bulgarians. For a time, it became the largest in Europe, but it was followed by a decline up until the arrival of the Ottoman Turks in the 14th century (Daskalo, 2020). In 1396, after years of continuing severe battles, the Turks took over Bulgaria, which marked the start of a 500-year long foreign domination (VisitStrandja, 2020).

These were dark times for the Bulgarians – death, starvation, high taxes, change to Muslim religion by force. Even though people made a few attempts to rise up against their dominator, all of those were without any accomplishment. Nevertheless, what the Bulgarian population managed to do successfully was to preserve themselves, their language, culture and traditions (VisitStrandja, 2020).

However, the Ottomans became more tolerant to their inferior nations in the late 18th century. In 1762, a Bulgarian scholar wrote a very important book that described the Bulgarian history, which marked the beginning of the Bulgarian

Renaissance, i.e. National Revival (VisitStrandja, 2020). This period was associated with economic, political, cultural and architectural progress. Bulgarians developed different crafts and trades, and subsequently, started moving out from the villages to towns and cities (VT-Today, 2013).

In 1878, the liberation of Bulgaria was finally achieved with the help of Russia. During the first years of the new Bulgarian country, its fate was strongly dependant on Western Europe and their decisions regarding its territories. Later, the period from the Balkan Wars (1912-13) through to the WW1 (1914-18) and WW2 (1939-45), none of which brought success to the Bulgarian state, caused political issues and halt in the economic development (VisitStrandja, 2020).

In 1944, Bulgaria became People's Republic and the communist regime began. It had a strong Russian influence. The ruling communist party nationalised all private businesses and properties, industrialised the whole country and controlled the public life entirely. The intelligent part of the population was the communists' enemy, which led to the killing of more than 100 000 people. The rest were fooled by attractive promises and yet, those who did not agree with the ruling party would 'disappear'. The economy was in stagnation (VisitStrandja, 2020).

Undoubtedly, that period had a significant impact on the country. The communist era lasted until 1990, when the party's leader was arrested. Then, a time of inflation, strikes, high unemployment rates, reduced social services followed. However, with the start of the 21st century and the reconstruction of the economy, Bulgaria has been slowly improving, as well as the life of the Bulgarian people (Dimitrov, 2020).



Figure 2: Map of Europe | Bulgaria

BULGARIAN ARCHITECTURE | Background

The Bulgarian architecture is divided into seven periods (figure 3). However, from the first two – which include architectural pieces built until the establishment of the Bulgarian country and during the Middle Ages, just a tiny part of the once great temples, palaces and fortifications is left and preserved today. Similarly, during the (third) period of Ottoman rule, when the Bulgarians were culturally suppressed and did not have many rights, they were able to build only churches and small residential houses, often one-story high and dug into the ground (Forma-1 Architects, 2020).

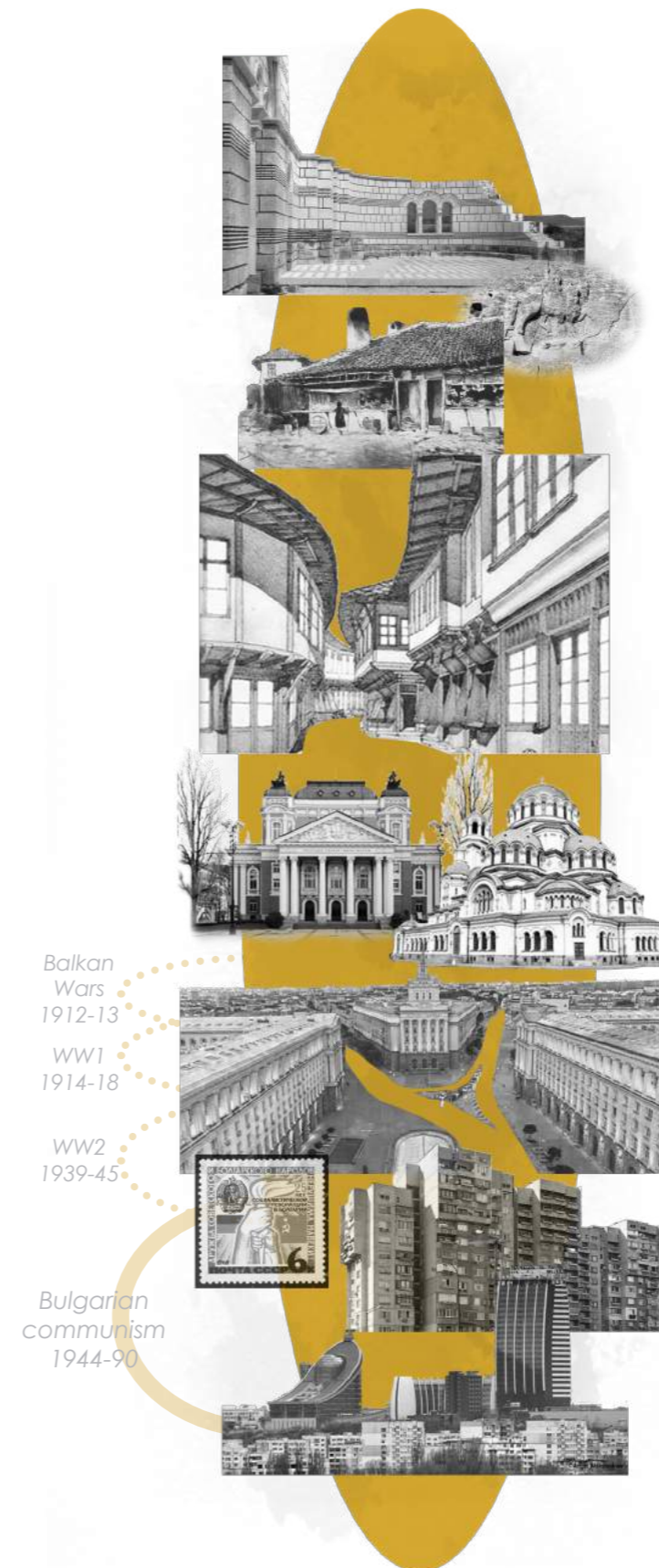
However, with the end of the 18th century the Bulgarian National Revival era commenced. Together with the cultural and economic growth, architecture was revived as well. Due to the development of various trades and crafts and the migration of the population from rural to urban settings, the urban landscape went through a gradual transformation towards non-geometrical, organic town plans. All the trades and crafts workshops were located on or around a main street, called 'bazaar' (VT-Today, 2013). Moreover, there was a change in the architectural style in the housing construction (Forma-1 Architects, 2020). There was no more 'anonymous' building, too, and famous builders started to put their names on the walls of the buildings (VT-Today, 2013). The traditional Bulgarian house was considered as a unique piece of art. In harmony with nature, built from local materials (mainly timber), decorated with ornaments, a typical house expressed high artistic and architectural value through the combination of arts, crafts, architecture and Bulgarian traditions – folklore, songs, dances, clothing (Trekking BG, 2015).

After the liberation of the country, the Bulgarian architecture started to integrate the European trends during that time. By the end of the 19th century, it was swiftly synchronised with Western Europe and Russia (Koeva, 2003). This was a result of the fact that initially most buildings were entirely work of foreign architects, until the first generation of Bulgarian architects appeared in

the 1910s. All of them had gained their higher education abroad because of the lack of architectural school in the country. This period is characterised with mainly modernist, classical, secession and neo-baroque buildings (Sofia Guide, 2012).

Between the wars, the practicing architects in the country were already mostly Bulgarians. If the previous period was considered as 'copying from the Europeans', then they began to seek the native traditional architecture and tried to include it in their projects (Karakolev, 2020). After the WW2 ended, the progress of Bulgaria was holistically delayed. With the beginning of the communist regime, all private architectural offices were banned and the architectural profession was used as propaganda. Thus, many architects stopped working, either by their will or that of the government (Chukurliiev, 2020). Moreover, as part of the nationalisation, private properties became governed, while the rapid urbanisation caused housing shortage (Dimitrov, 2020). So, fast residential construction was needed and many prefabricated concrete blocks quickly arose. Nevertheless, some emblematic large-scale public buildings also appeared, influenced by the party's socialist realism (Sofia Guide, 2012). Later, brutalism came to the country, leaving behind many concrete structures and monuments as a reminder of the soviet past (Vasileva, 2019).

Although the communist era came to an end and, since 1990, the architectural life commenced again, the development of the traditional Bulgarian architecture was interrupted. Suffering from the gap of almost 50 years, a tradition in designing was missing (Chukurliiev, 2020). This leads to the last period – the contemporary architecture in Bulgaria and its inherent unregulated and aesthetically bizarre buildings. There is a common unsuccessful mixture of styles – socialist architecture, on the one hand, and decorated revival, on the other (Ognyanova, 2020). Additionally, architects also try to follow the current global trends in the field (Forma-1 Architects, 2006).



1 XIII c. BC-VII c. AD

UNTIL THE FOUNDATION OF BULGARIA

Historical architectural monuments linked to the Thracians, later, the Romans.

2 VII-XIV century

MIDDLE AGES

Fortifications, palaces, temples. Influenced by local people and Byzantium.

3 1396-1878

OTTOMAN RULE

During the five-century Ottoman rule, Bulgarians were culturally isolated. Delay in economic, cultural and architectural development. Mainly construction of churches and small houses.

4 1780s-1877

BULGARIAN NATIONAL REVIVAL

At the end of the 18th century, the National Revival period began. Economic, political and cultural progress. Development of different crafts, trades and architectural styles. Timber houses, built from local materials, decorated with ornaments - exterior and interior.

5 1878-1944

AFTER LIBERATION

European influences. Firstly, public and residential architecture was mainly work of foreign architects. In 1910s, first generation of Bulgarian architects, who had studied abroad. Modernism. New public and commercial buildings, larger houses.

6 until 1980

AFTER WWII

Bulgarian post-war architecture. Russian influence. Communist period. Brutalist architecture. Concrete. Prefab housing blocks.

7 1980-today

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

Mixture of styles. Unregulated. Aesthetically bizarre buildings. Follows global trends in contemporary architecture of the 21st century.

Figure 3: Bulgarian Architecture | Timeline



Transformers in Shumen (Karanikolov, 2019)

chapter 02:
Architecture in Shumen

SHUMEN | Background

The establishment of the Bulgarian country took place in the area of Shumen. In 681, khan Asparuh, a ruler of Bulgars, and his people settled in the nearby place called Pliska. He is well known for thrusting his sword into the ground and announcing the words: 'Bulgaria will be here', which sets the foundation of the First Bulgarian Kingdom with capital Pliska. Later, the capital town was moved to another close-by town, Preslav. Hence, it is believed that the Bulgarian country commenced from these lands (Shumen Municipality, 2017).

The earliest signs of population in the area precede the 6th millennium BC. There is a concentration of remains from the Thracians, such as fortifications and numerous tombs. The old town of Shumen, the Shumen Fortress, dates back to the 1000s BC, which the Thracians, then, the Romans and Byzantines used to occupy. During the two Bulgarian Kingdoms, it was a cultural, political and military center – old Bulgarian inscriptions show that the town was an important cultural settlement and different crafts and trades were well developed (Shumen Municipality, 2017).

In 1388, Shumen was captured by the Ottoman Turks. Although in 1444, during the Second Crusade of Varna the fortress was seized by the Hungarian-polish army. So, the Turks moved the settlement to a new location and turned it gradually into an important market town (Shumen Municipality, 2017).

Shumen made a great contribution to the Bulgarian National Revival period (figure 7, pages 24-25). During that time, the town was famous for its lively bazaars (i.e. main streets), numerous trades and crafts workshops. Locally produced goods were sold at market fairs all around the Ottoman Empire and even abroad (Shumen Municipality, 2017).

After the Liberation, the town kept its place among the important economic, administrative, cultural and political centers in the country. In

1915, Shumen took part in the WW1 (Shumen Municipality, 2017).

In the late 20th century, closer to the end of the communist regime, the town was in the Government's list for reconstruction of the central parts of the bigger cities in the country. Part of the historic heritage was destroyed in order to make place for a number of new projects. Though some were finished and others were not, because of the unexpected change of the ruling party. There are few examples which are still standing unfinished and abandoned up to the present day (Goranova, 2020).

Today, located in the north-eastern Bulgaria, Shumen is the tenth largest town in the country, the economic capital of Shumen Province and an important administrative and cultural center. The town has a rich cultural heritage and offers a variety for tourism and exploration. Green spaces take up one fifth of the town area. Also, within the town boundaries, on the southwest, part of the Shumen Nature Park is situated. The industry is well developed – the manufacturing sector is leading, followed by trades and services, agriculture, construction and transport. Most common are the micro enterprises, 71,3 percent, after which are the small and medium businesses (OPRD, 2013).

Nevertheless, there is a number of socio-economic and environmental issues in the town. The economic is affected by the decline in the population and the rise in migration among young people. Despite the diverse cultural and historical legacy, Shumen is not a renowned destination and lacks publicity. However, the heritage is not always kept in a good condition – many historic buildings are in poor quality, others are falling down. The overall urban environment is unmaintained – most properties are obsolete and need restoration (OPRD, 2013).

Shumen's townscape is analysed in detail in the following pages.

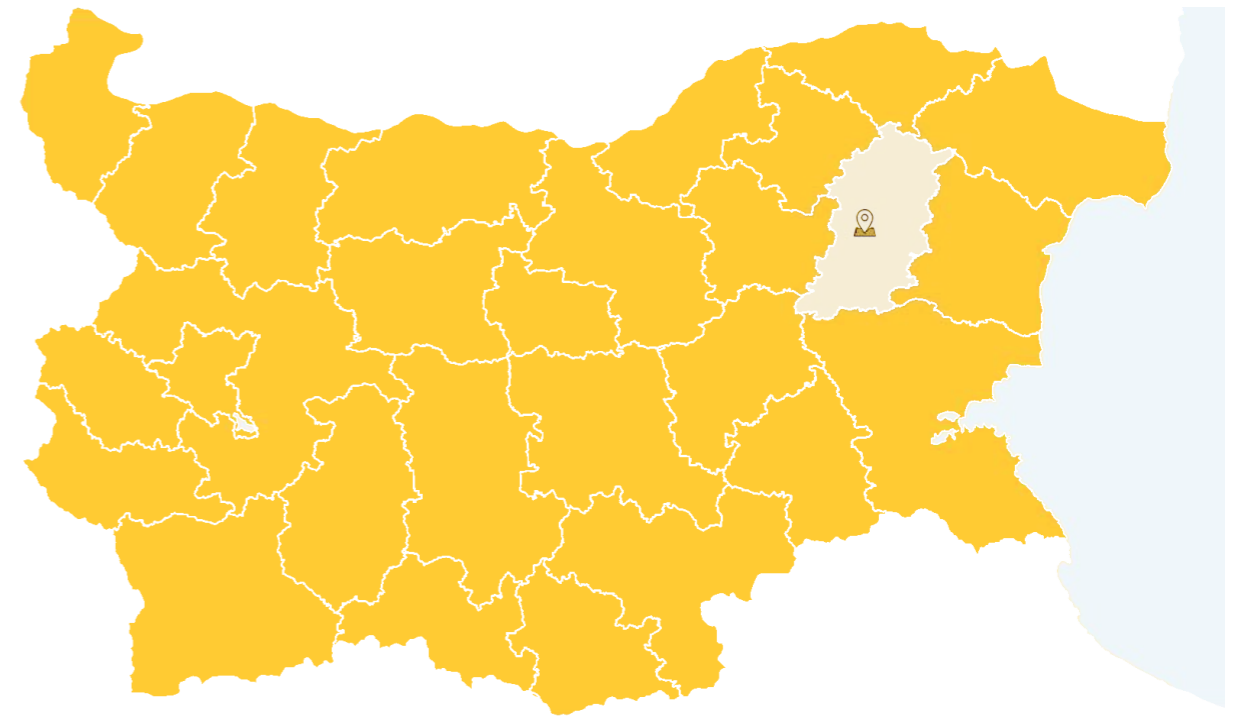


Figure 4: Map of Bulgaria | Shumen Location



Figure 5: Shumen | Town view

SHUMEN | Historical timeline



2 Външен и вътрешен вход, XIV в.

6000s BC

Historical links to a village nearby traced to early Iron Age. Shumen Fortress. Owned by the Thracians in the 5th century BC.

7th-10th c.

AD

First Bulgarian Kingdom. Part of a system of fortifications providing defense of the two nearby capitals. Shumen as a cultural and religious center.

12th-14th c.

Second Bulgarian Kingdom. Shumen as a political, administrative, military and economic center.

1388

Captured by the Ottoman **T u r k s** . An important market town.

1444

Destroyed and moved to its present location.

1878

Capitulated to the Russians and became part of the new independent Bulgaria.

19th c.

Important center of the Bulgarian National Revival.

1915

Took part in WW1.

1944-

1990

Communist regime.

2020

10th largest town in Bulgaria - important administrative and cultural center; economic capital of Shumen Province.

Figure 6: Shumen | Historical timeline

SHUMEN | Important events during National Revival



1813

First civil celebration of the 'Day of Bulgarian Education and Culture and Slavonic Literature'. First Bulgarian theatre.

1846

First school examination in the country.

1850

First Bulgarian orchestra for 'European' music. First Bulgarian students' chorus and orchestra.

1856

First girls' school was opened. First community center was established, called 'Arhangel Mihail'. First Bulgarian comedy.

1882

First Bulgarian Brewery was founded, named 'Shumensko Pivo'.

1914

First Bulgarian operette theatre.

1921

Shumen's wireless station started receiving radio telegrams for press from Moscow, Lyon and other telegraph agencies.

1927

First test of electric lighting on the entire street city network was performed.

Figure 7: Shumen | Revival events

SHUMEN | Socio-economic overview

According to the National Statistical Institute (2020), there has been a steady decline in the population of Shumen, with a number of 75 442 people in 2019 (figure 8). This comes as a result of the main demographic trends in low fertility rates, ageing population and rise in migration. Some of the key factors are insufficient financial security, unemployment, lower life standard and mental attitude towards creating smaller families (Ivanova, 2018).

Due to the continuing economic crisis in the recent years, many people have lost their jobs. However, since 2017, the number of the unemployed is on the decrease, although it is much higher than the average figure in the country. Albeit the town is one of the main economic and business centers in the north-eastern part of Bulgaria, the economic development is restricted and challenged by the ageing population and the relatively unfavourable amount of well-educated people in working age. In 2017, only 24 percent of the population in Shumen had gained higher education. On the other hand, the quality of overall education in the town is quite low (IME, 2018).

Since 2016, there has been a slight increase in GDP per capita and the average salary. Yet in 2017, there was almost no change in the already low household income, which influenced the poverty level. Moreover, the number of people who depend on income from pensions is continuously rising, which affects those living in deprived conditions, especially minority ethnic groups (IME, 2018).

Another problem is that there is shortage of the variety of jobs on offer. Consequently,

more and more young people, aged up to 27, move to the bigger cities, such as Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna, or abroad, in order to seek better education and opportunities. Thus, this causes a rise in the share of older population, which in turn, has a negative impact on the birth rates and the economic processes in town (Ivanova, 2018).

The cultural life in Shumen is considerably weakly developed. Particularly, visits to cinemas and theatres are quite low because of the lack of cultural institutions – there is only one theatre, whereas the cinema is not a proper cinema facility, but instead a concert hall with mixed use. Still, people show high interest in the local museums and libraries (IME, 2018).

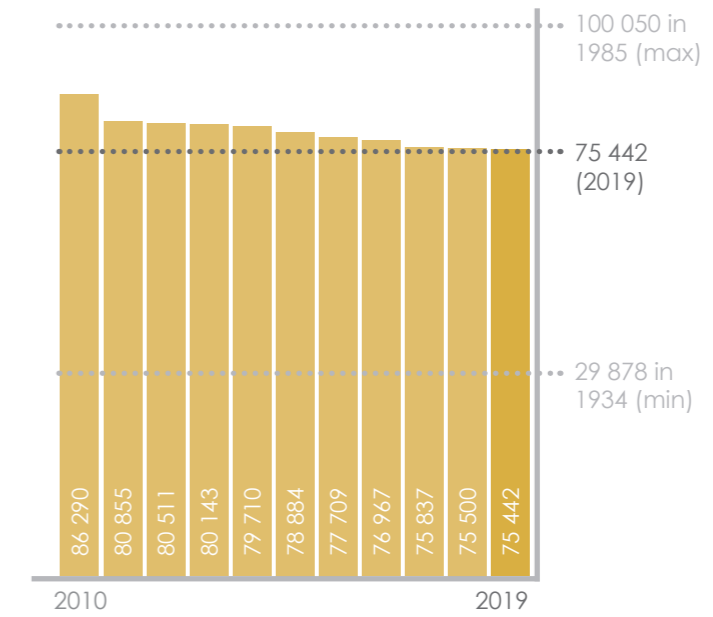


Figure 8: Decreasing population | 2019

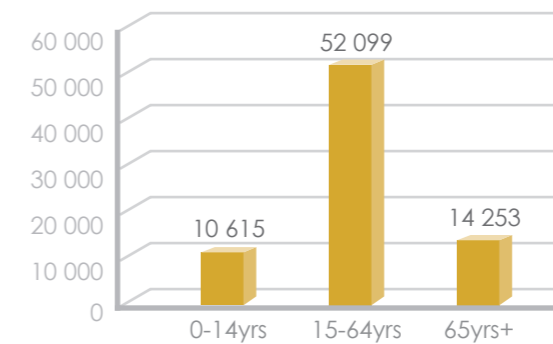


Figure 9: Age groups | 2016

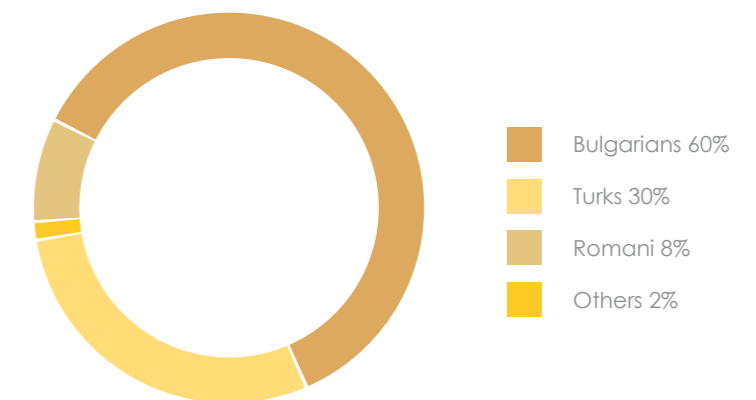


Figure 10: Ethnic groups | 2011

SHUMEN | Townscape Analysis

Shumen sits at the foot of the Shumen Plateau in the southwest – part of the Shumen Nature Park, which offers great places for recreation and walks in the nature. A river crosses through the middle of the town, which has very low volume of water and, unfortunately, at some parts it is used for disposal of wastewater. There is also an artificial lake, used only for fishing and not for water supply (OPRD, 2013).

Shumen is considered as a middle-sized town. In terms of travel distance, all neighbourhoods are within short time travel, owing to the fact that the town area is not huge. The transport infrastructure covers quite well almost all parts of the town, though there are issues with the street pavement everywhere on a regular basis.

The town is separated into three main zones – commercial and administrative, residential and industrial. While the manufacturing processes are concentrated in the southeast, almost all administrative and main commercial institutions are located in the central part, and all the rest are residential areas. Most of the latter are built up with multifamily apartment prefabricated panel blocks and complexes, usually between 6-8 up to 12-14 floors high. Single-family houses take up the areas around the edge of the town. Also, one of the biggest neighbourhoods is separated from the main town to the south by a high ridge of the plateau.

The multi-ethnicity has led to the establishment of neighbourhoods with population of a particular ethnos. For example, the Romani people live in the northern parts of the town, while the majority of the Turks – to the west. Whereas, the central areas are populated with Bulgarians or a mixture of Bulgarians and Turks.

The building fabric in Shumen is getting relatively old, which is a major problem concerning the low quality of the built environment, especially

multifamily housing blocks and small family houses with historical value. Furthermore, nearly one fourth of the buildings in Shumen are not occupied, caused by the emigration of the population. The majority of the buildings were built between 1946-1992. Those, constructed before that are located mainly in the central area. In the last twenty years, however, there were very few new-builds. In respect of building materials, masonry is most frequently used in construction (OPRD, 2013).

Regarding the overall building heights in Shumen, it is divided into three types: low-rise (1-4 floors), mid-rise (5-12 floors) and high-rise (above 13 floors). The first two types are the most common, around 34% and 65% accordingly (OPRD, 2013). While there is only one high-rise building placed in the town center, which will be reviewed at a later stage.

As already mentioned, Shumen's historical heritage covers a long period of time. There are many emblematic monuments from different periods – Thracian, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, Revival and modernist, which are symbolic for the town. Most of the examples are situated in the central area of the town (figure 13, p. 32-33).

A dominant part of the architecture in Shumen covers the periods of the Nation Revival, post-liberation modernism, post-war modernism and brutalism. Unfortunately, not many of them are preserved and well maintained. Even though some are listed as architectural heritage, they are in bad condition and need to be renovated. In addition, the small number of the new contemporary architectural projects very often include irrational usage of architectural elements and mixture of styles, which add to the holistic poor urban aesthetics. A comparison between 'good' and 'bad' architectural examples will be made at the end of this chapter.

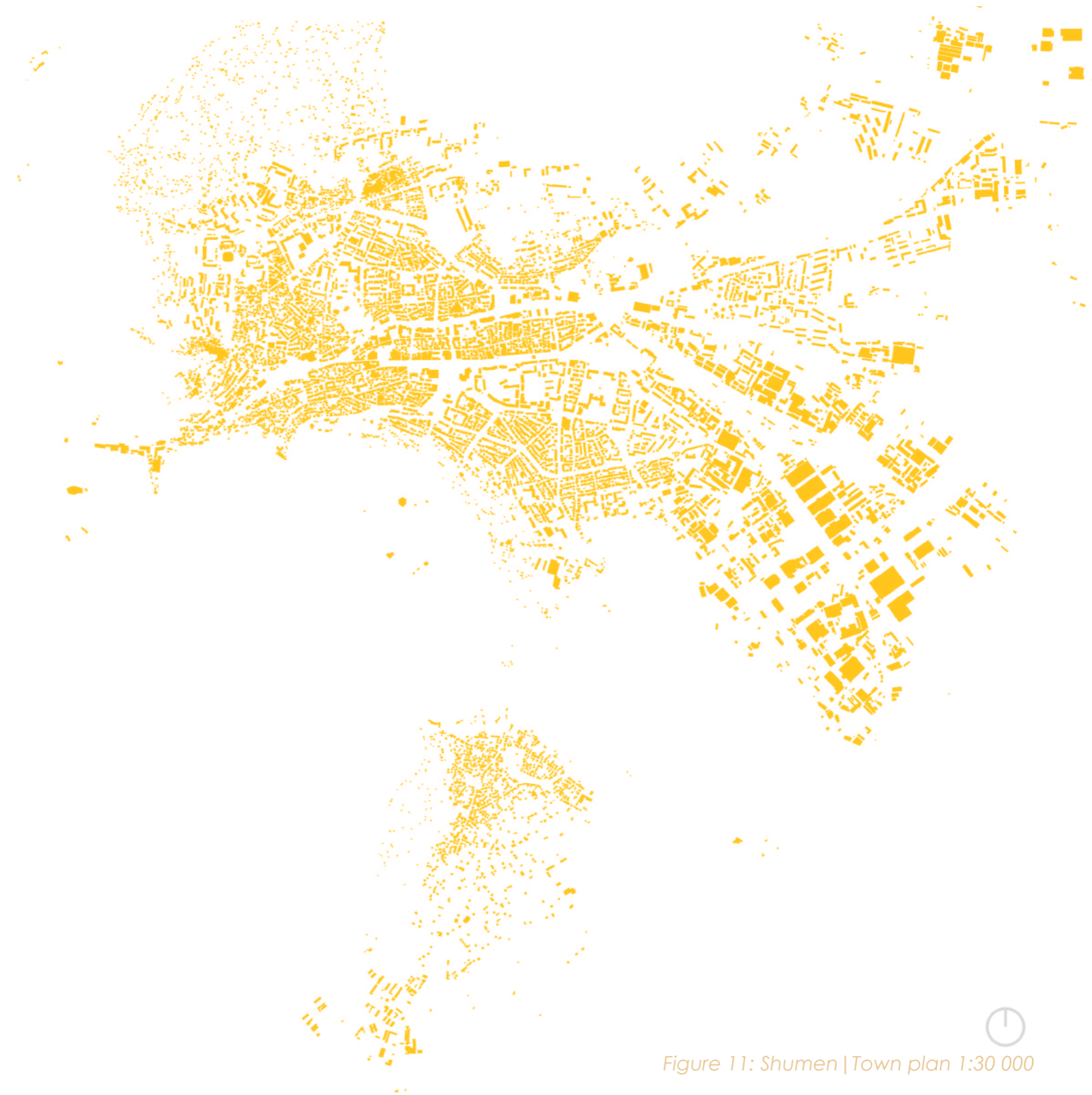


Figure 11: Shumen | Town plan 1:30 000

SHUMEN | Townscape Analysis

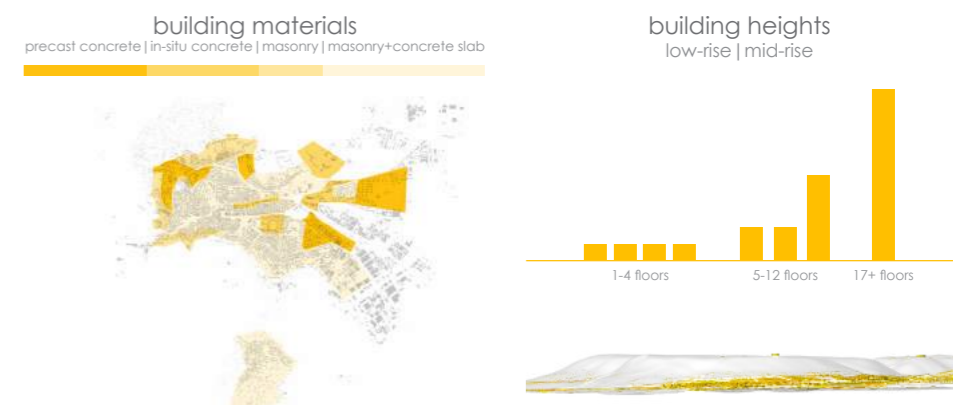
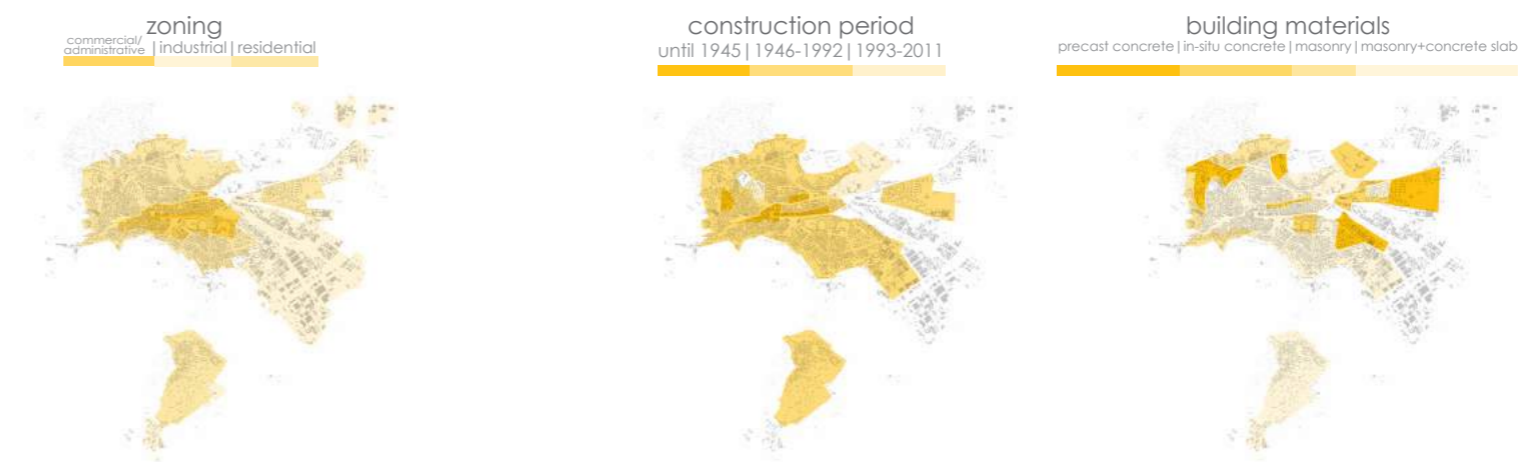
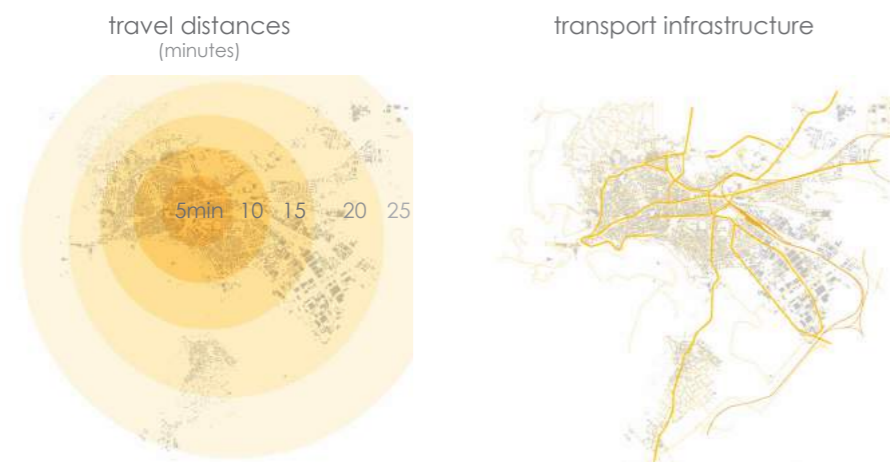
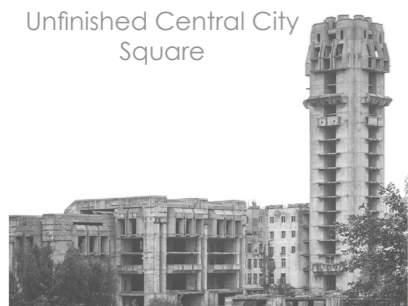


Figure 12: Shumen | Townscape analysis



Unfinished Central City Square



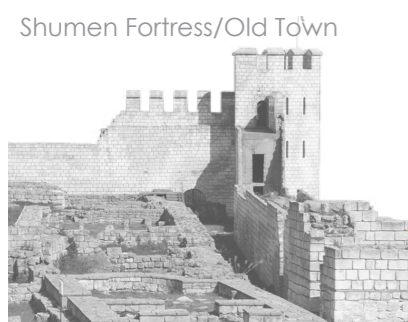
Police Station | Hotel Madara



Grand Hotel Shumen



Sherif Halil Pasha Mosque



Shumen Fortress/Old Town



Monument 1300yrs Bulgarian State



Fire Station Clock Tower



Regional Court



Municipality | Military Club



Performing Arts Theater



Arena Shumen Sports Complex



D. Voynikov Community Center



D. Voynikov House Museum



Regional Historical Museum

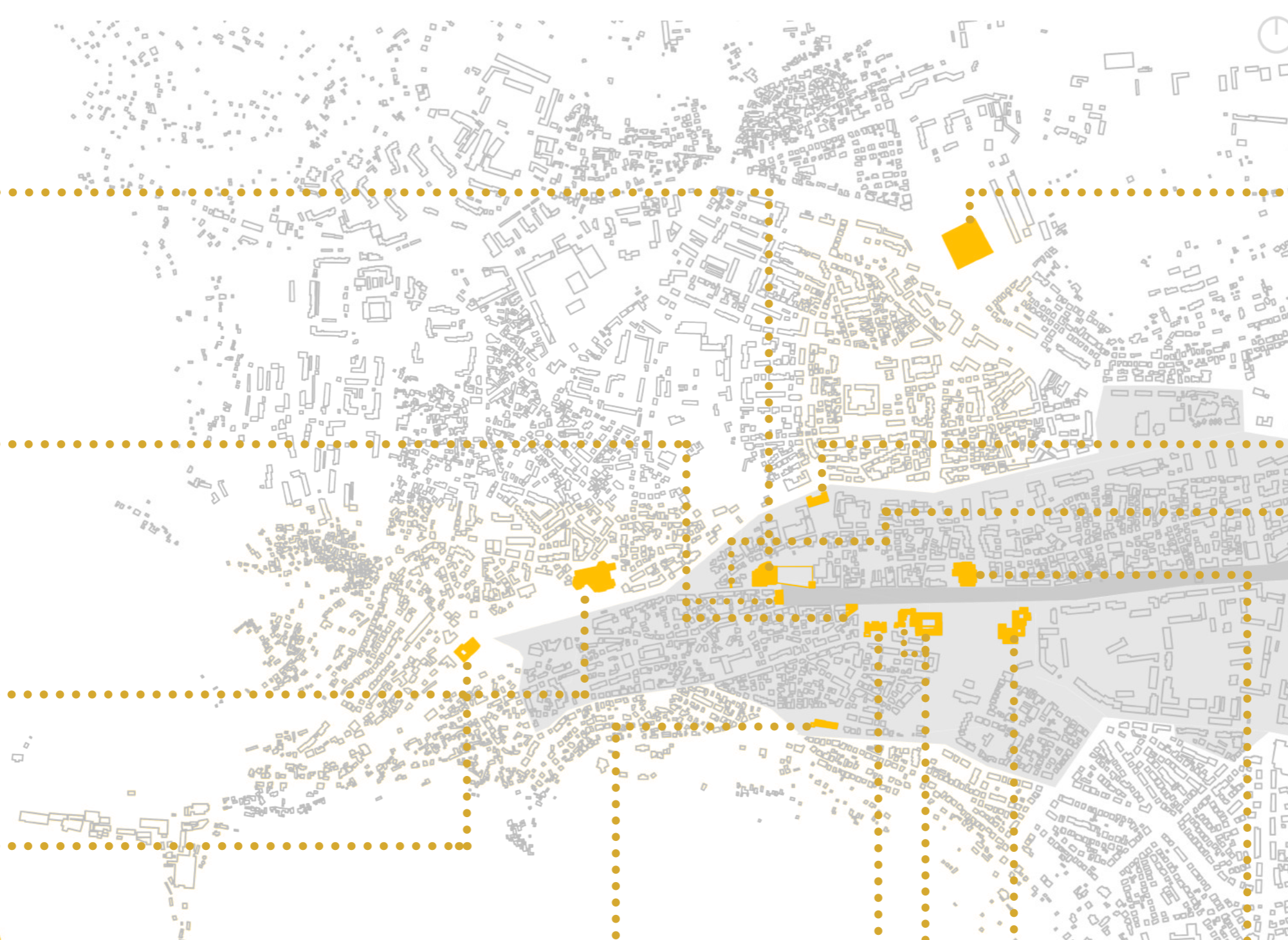
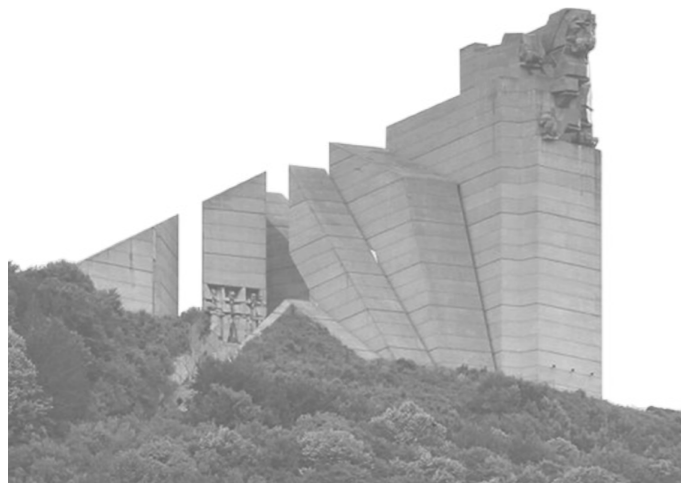


Figure 13: Shumen | Emblematic buildings

SHUMEN | Symbols of the town



Monument to the Founders of the Bulgarian State 1981, i.e. 1300 years Bulgaria

In the 1970s, Bulgarians started the preparations for the celebration of the 1300th anniversary of the Bulgarian country which was to take place in 1981. Concerning some political matters, the communist party made a decision that this celebration would not just be a one-time event, but instead would include a large-scale cultural program that would be happening throughout the whole year.

The organisation started with filming some of the most famous Bulgarian films, planning various exhibitions – both in the country and abroad, as well as with the construction of impressive monuments, which are still some of the most massive structures in Bulgaria. Such is the monumental complex to the Founders of the Bulgarian State, which sits on top of the Shumen Plateau and can be seen from approximately 30km away. Its chosen location is owing to the town's proximity to the old Bulgarian capitals (Bulgarian History, 2016).

The construction of the Shumen's monument took four years and was opened in 1981. Its impressive length reaches 140 meters, while it is 70 meters high and is reached by climbing 1300 stairs, which start from the town center. There are two groups of concrete forms with small spaces in-between. The complex contains the largest outdoor mosaic triptych in Europe (a mosaic panel painting, divided into three sections), which presents key moments from the establishment, to the development and the rise of Bulgaria from 7th to 10th century. In addition, there are 21 sculptures that represent the rulers of the Bulgarian Kingdom, including khan Asparuh and the famous scene of him proclaiming the creation of the country by thrusting his sword into the ground (figure 14, middle image) (Bulgarian History, 2016).

Nowadays, many people believe that those celebrations back in the days were wasteful grandiosity in a period of financial difficulties. Nevertheless, they are still the greatest cultural events that occurred as part of the new Bulgarian history (Bulgarian History, 2016). Undoubtedly, Shumen's grand monument is a famous tourist attraction. Also, its excellent acoustics provide a unique space and atmosphere for concerts performances.



Figure 14: Shumen Monument 1300 years Bulgaria

SHUMEN | Symbols of the town

The Unfinished Central City Square project, 1988

During the 1980s, every regional city with a neglected city center in Bulgaria was on the government's list for reconstruction. The reason for this was because the infamous head of the leading communist party expected foreign diplomats to visit the country, so he did not want the Bulgarian towns to look 'ridiculous' in front of them. On the contrary, the guests should have gotten the impression that the party was ruling and developing the country more than well (Vasileva, 2011).

Shumen's town center was on that list, too, although at the very end due to its alphabetical order. The foreign delegates' visit was anticipated to take place in 1990. Two years earlier, in 1988, the project design was completed and excavation works began. Many houses were demolished and as a replacement their owners were given flats in the multifamily housing panel blocks in the suburbs. Unexpectedly, when the concrete was poured, on 10th November 1989, the government was overthrown from power and the construction was left incomplete (Vasileva, 2011).

The misfortune of the massive project is still evident today. It is considered as the largest abandoned monument from the socialist times. According to the design, the project included a very ambitious number of public spaces – a trading house, concert hall, bank, post office, hotel, restaurant, coffee shop, underground parking, ice rink and square with fountains. Also, this huge complex was supposed to resolve the problem that some main parallel central streets were disconnected from one another. There would have been a connection both above and underground for people, cars and public transport (underground trolleybuses) (Vasileva, 2011).

Currently, the unfinished buildings are a massive problem for the town. Although the site is fenced in order to prevent access, it is known for being a dangerous and criminal place which shelters homeless people and drug addicts, and where children have lost their lives, too. Furthermore, the ownership is in the hands of private companies which are on the lookout either to sale the properties or for investments from third parties, so far without any success. So, today the tower rises up as the infamous communist symbol of Shumen (Goranova, 2020).

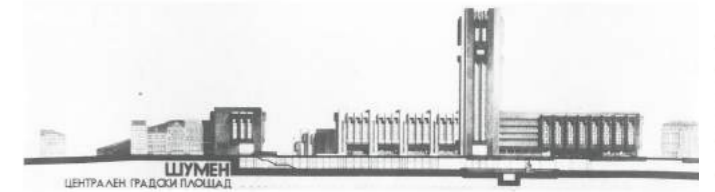


Figure 15: Unfinished Central City Square project

ARCHITECTURE IN SHUMEN | Good examples

BULGARIAN NATIONAL REVIVAL ARCHITECTURE

influenced by European and Ottoman Baroque, wooden houses, community buildings, high artistic and architectural value, symmetry, special attention to decoration, ornaments, use of overhangs



POST-LIBERATION MODERNISM /POST-WAR BRUTALISM

synchronised with architectural trends in Western Europe and Russia/ massive concrete structures, monolithic concrete blocks - residential, administrative buildings



BULGARIAN CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

two types - interpretation of traditional revival architecture & global contemporary architectural trends



Figure 16: Shumen | Good architectural examples

ARCHITECTURE IN SHUMEN | Bad examples

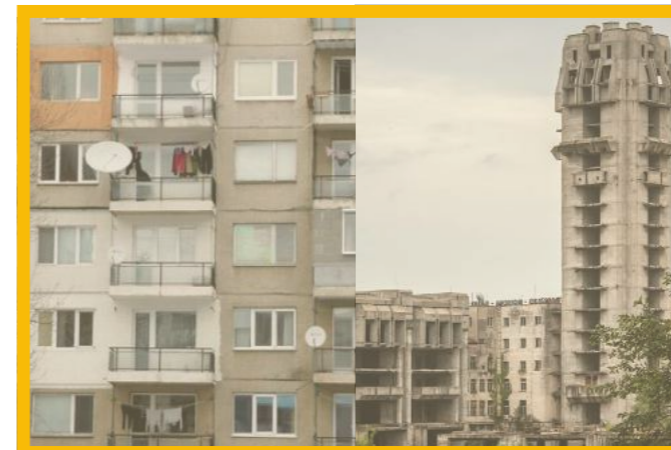
BULGARIAN NATIONAL REVIVAL ARCHITECTURE

unmaintained, left to fall down, lost cultural value, dangerous for passers-by, vandalised, no initiative to improve buildings condition



POST-WAR MODERNISM /BRUTALISM

abandoned, dangerous, lost value due to upgrading, alteration, destruction of original features or adding new ones that are indifferent to the architectural style



BULGARIAN CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

mixture of architectural styles, unsuccessful usage of architectural elements, no architectural value



Figure 17: Shumen | Bad architectural examples



Shumen houses (Shumen, 2018)

chapter 03:
Shumen town center

SHUMEN TOWN CENTER | Analysis

Shumen's town center is an area of great public importance. It is a where almost all administrative, commercial and social services are concentrated, as well as the main part of the cultural and architectural monuments. Conveniently, everything in the zone is within a fast and easy reach – from five up to 15-20 minutes on foot.

The town center is associated with the main central pedestrian street, along which various commercial units are placed on the ground floor. However, a significant space is dedicated to military services – a vast area in the middle, in which citizens are not allowed. In addition, the key health care and religious buildings, hotels and school are positioned in the central part. All the remaining are residential blocks and houses.

The listed cultural heritage is approximately entirely on or near the central pedestrian street. More specifically, there is one street which contains the most buildings with historic value – it is the so-called Revival street with great examples of the Bulgarian National Revival period.

Generally, however, the building fabric is in a bad state and in need of restoration. The buildings along the central pedestrian street were built before 1945, making them more than 70 years old. The rest – during the communist period between 1946-1992 and just a small number of projects has been constructed afterwards, until the present day.

There are vast vacant spaces in the central zone as well, which are considered as a significant matter for the town and the population. Some, commercial places, have been changing

their owners and each new business has been unsuccessful in regenerating the sites. Others have been unused for many years, standing as abandoned dangerous monuments, where homeless people or drug addicts gather or live.

Regarding landscape, there are quite a lot of green spaces and places for recreation. However, many of them are not in a decent condition – either unbuilt, undeveloped or barely maintained. For example, often street furniture is vandalised or missing. Also, the river is enclosed by one of the main boulevards and since it has a very low water level, its existence is frequently forgotten about.

With reference to cycling, today, there is only one cycling path in the entire town, making this a major problem on the municipality's agenda for some time now. Furthermore, the town center is associated with traffic conjunctions at main crossroads, as well as with insufficient car parking spaces, which is a serious obstacle for residents who live in the central zone.

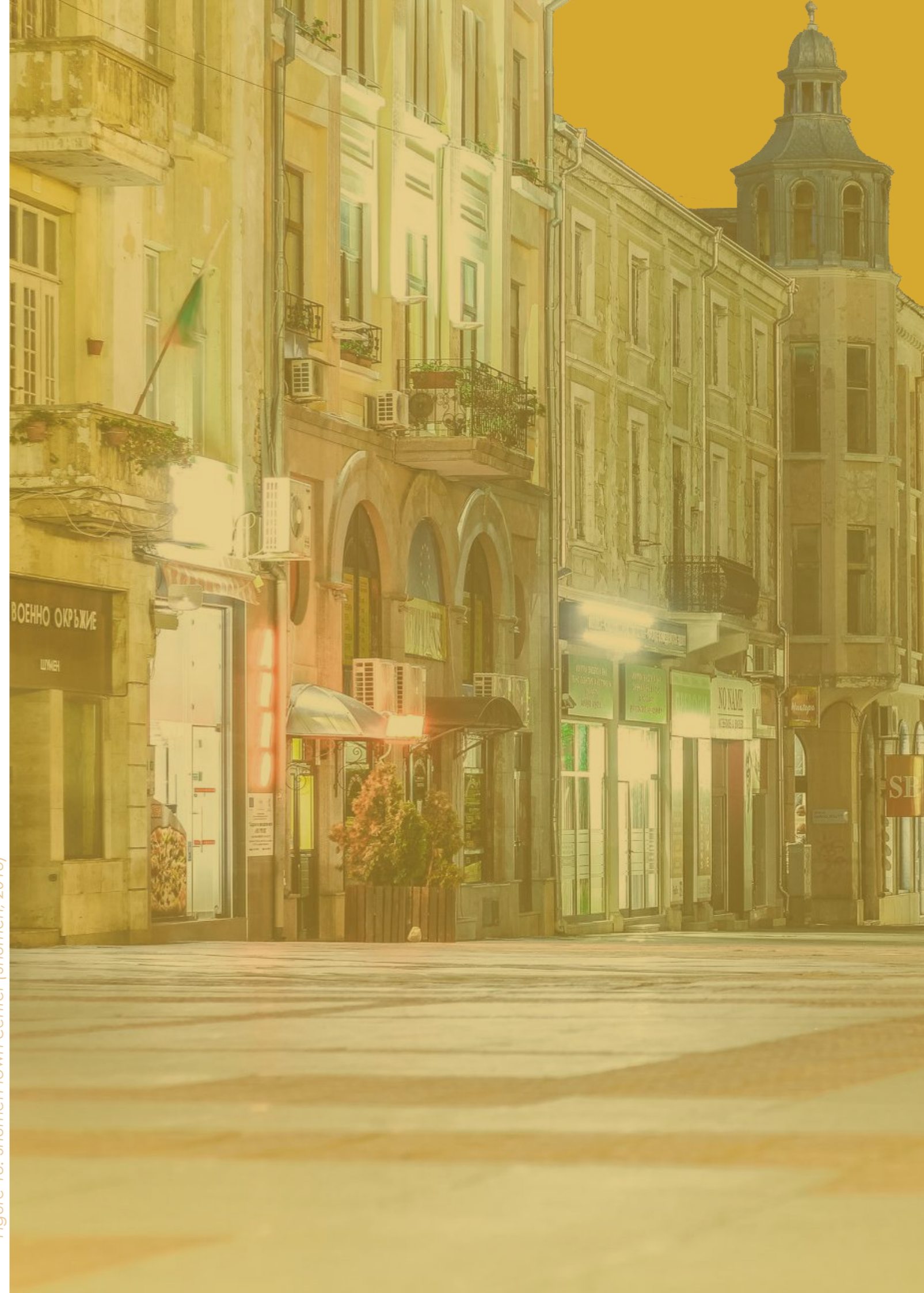


Figure 18: Shumen town center (Shumen, 2018)



Figure 19: Shumen town plan
1:30 000 | Town center boundaries



Figure 20: walking distance

- 5 min
- 10 min
- 15 min
- 20 min

TOWN CENTER ANALYSIS | 1:12 000



Figure 21: building typology

- residential
- administrative
- commercial
- military
- health care
- educational
- hotels
- religious
- main central pedestrian street

TOWN CENTER ANALYSIS | 1:12 000



Figure 22: cultural heritage

- architectural monuments
- 'revival' street
- main central pedestrian street

TOWN CENTER ANALYSIS | 1:12 000



Figure 23: construction period

- until 1945
- 1946-1992
- 1993-today

TOWN CENTER ANALYSIS | 1:12 000



Figure 24: unused spaces

- vacant buildings
- vacant land

TOWN CENTER ANALYSIS | 1:12 000






Figure 25: landscape

-  parks
-  river

TOWN CENTER ANALYSIS | 1:12 000



Figure 26: cycling & parking

-  cycle route
-  parking areas
-  central pedestrian street



Kazandjiska Street (Shumen, 2018)

chapter 04:

Revival street

REVIVAL STREET | History & analysis

The past of Shumen is associated with one of its streets, named the Revival Street. It was where many important and interesting events took place - not only for the town, but also for Bulgaria. Those include:

- First Bulgarian theatre.
- First Bulgarian orchestra.
- First Bulgarian municipality in town.
- One of the first community centers in the country.

There were also many craft workshops, bookstores, cafés, restaurants, the most modern hotels of that time, law firms. Many generations of famous and important Bulgarians and their families lived there - the wealthiest people in town, who had influence on public affairs. This was a street of entrepreneurs, traders, donors, the first theatregoers, famous pedagogues and prominent musicians and composers, mayors, ministers, revolutionaries and defenders of the Bulgarian nation. The houses they lived in are valuable examples today from the Bulgarian National Revival and the period after the liberation. Many say that it was 'a street with a soul' (Regional Library, 2019).

Nowadays, regrettably, the street's soul is not evident. The Revival Street is situated in the west of the main central pedestrian street, an area consisting of many old unused and vacant buildings. Thus, this part of the town center is not as developed and exploited as the rest of the main central street. Instead, people avoid it as a consequence of its run-down and neglected state.

Most of the buildings on the Revival street and in the surrounding area are listed as architectural cultural heritage. However, a rare sight is one in good condition. More than half of the them are in urgent need for restoration because no one is taking care of them – plaster facades, window frames, terraces or entire houses are slowly and dangerously collapsing. Indeed, the majority of the buildings were built between 1800s and 1900s, making many more than 200 years old (Regional Library, 2019).

Even though, there are many small commercial shops on ground floor, they sell low quality products and barely exist. While on the upper floors most residential buildings are empty for the reason that in most cases their owners have moved out of the town. The few left residents that live there are not authorised to make any alterations to the listed buildings – only the municipality is allowed to so, though it does not have enough financial resources and relies entirely on third party investments.

Within the area's boundaries is the abandoned communist city square project from the late 20th century.



Figure 27: Revival Street | Before & today

REVIVAL STREET | Analysis

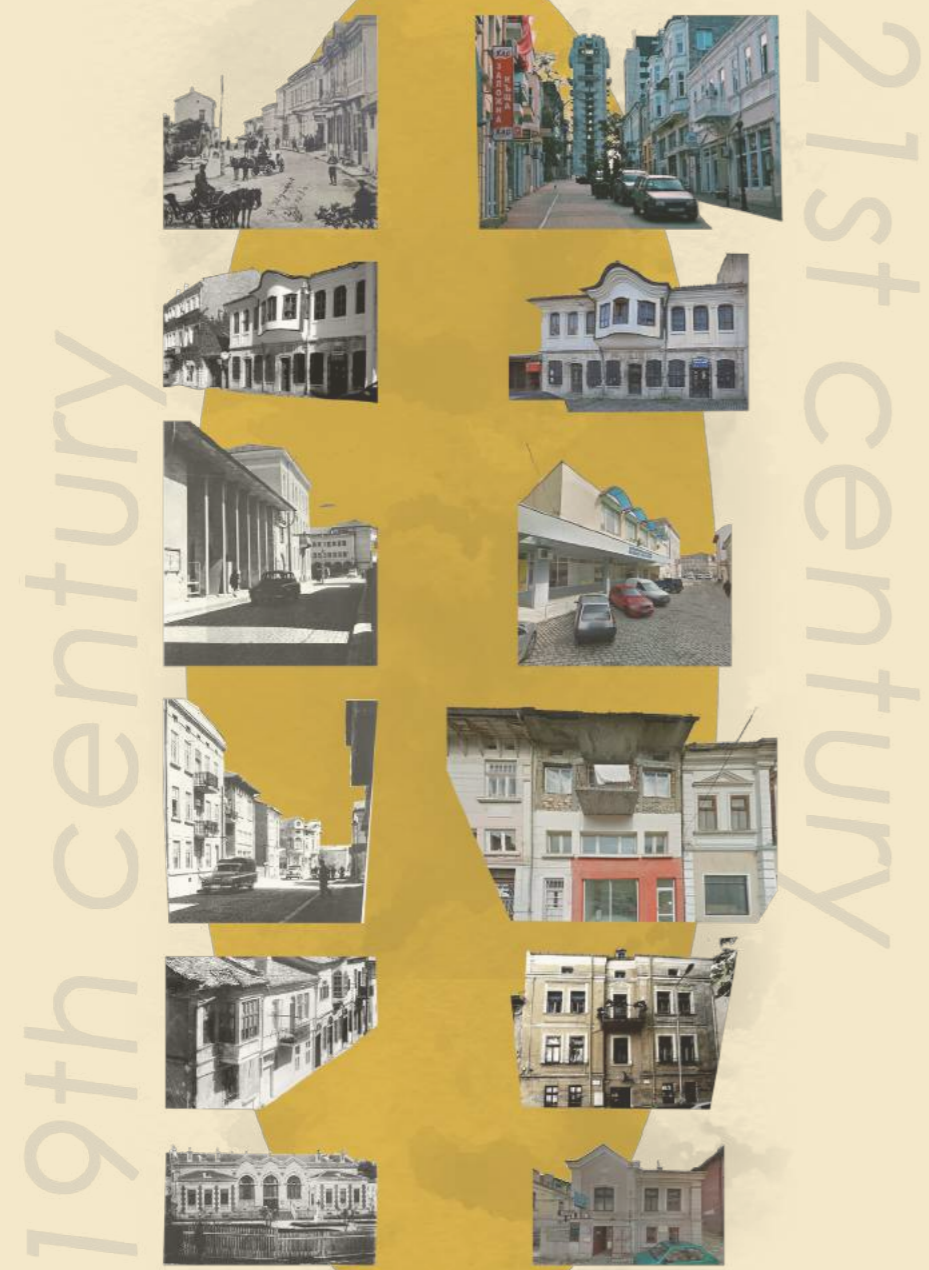


Figure 28: Revival Street | Before & today collage



Figure 29:
Revival street
& the
surrounding area



Figure 30:
architectural
cultural heritage

REVIVAL STREET | Analysis



Figure 31: buildings in bad condition



Figure 32: construction period

- 19th century
- 20th century
- 21st century

REVIVAL STREET | Analysis



Figure 33: building typology

- residential
- administrative
- commercial
- health care
- educational
- hotels
- religious
- main central
- pedestrian street
- squares



Figure 34: vacant buildings



Shumen (Mehmedov, 2018)

chapter 05:

Precedents

PRECEDENTS | Etara

There is one unique place in the central part of Bulgaria which presents the Bulgarian spirit until the present day. It is called Etara – ethnographic open-air museum, situated next to a river that flows through the town of Gabrovo. Opened in 1964, the architectural complex explores the traditional culture of the people in that region. It preserves the architectural heritage and the way of living during the Bulgarian National Revival period – Bulgarian customs, culture and craftsmanship from the late 18th century to the beginning of 20th century. It illustrates a living picture of a past era (EMO Etar, 2020).

The so-called architectural Crafts bazaar, the main street, exhibits original 19th-century houses of the region with crafts workshops, shops, cafés and homes of craftsmen and merchants. The Gabrovo traditional revival house usually has a shop on the ground floor and living spaces on the first floor. The materials used for construction are local. Typically, the houses have with stone roofs and wide eaves, plastered walls in white, copper or blue, spacious balconies and carved bay windows. For instance, the Sakova house demonstrates the life of rich residents – what is impressive is the numerous windows on the second floor, which is painted in bright blue – an unusual sight during the Revival period (figure 35, top left) (EMO Etar, 2020).

In the workshops, as it was in the past, the craftsmen themselves produce and sell their own products in front of the eyes of the visitors. 150-year-old techniques of metal, leather, wood, clay and wool treatment can be observed as well as authentic handicraft tools, devices and other pieces of equipment. There are primitive tumble washers and waterwheels – the latter are used for powering flour mills and

grinding flour, treating and softening textile. The guests have the opportunity to buy finished products such as traditional rugs, decorated fabric, copper and wooden utensils, pottery, knives, traditional musical instruments and jewellery from diverse workmen – weavers, coppersmiths, iconographers, silversmiths, potters, woodcarvers and so on (Trankova, 2017).

Also, a variety of delicious traditional Bulgarian food can be tasted – banitsa, pretzel, white jam, halva along with coffee that was brewed on sand (EMO Etar, 2020). A small confectionery shop offers homemade candies, sesame sticks and sugar peacocks (figure 35, top right), which contribute excellently to the true Revival atmosphere (Trankova, 2017).



Figure 35: Etara, Gabrovo, Bulgaria

PRECEDENTS | Prague

Dating back to the 11th century, Prague is the biggest urban historical heritage center, protected by UNESCO. The Old Town has abundant well-preserved architectural monuments from numerous architectural epochs and styles. The historic town has been continuously growing over the centuries, playing a significant role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the city (UNESCO, 2020).

The continuous use of individual listed buildings is provided by still keeping their original plots, structure and materials, architectural details and decoration. Moreover, owing to very well-regulated national system, concerning heritage care and protection, every construction project is strictly reviewed before any new design building fills in the townscape, in order to preserve the authenticity of the Old Town (UNESCO, 2020).

However, the area suffered from reconstruction during a long period of totalitarianism. Important historic houses were destroyed. Nonetheless, all forms of transport were removed and the Old Town Square was pedestrianised and landscaped (Prague City Tourism, 2020).

Today, the tourism in the historic center is greatly developed. The architectural cultural heritage attracts numerous visitors. Annual markets at the Old Town Square sell traditional Czech goods from various craftsmen such as bakers, wood manufacturers, potters, herbalists. On ground floor, buildings have commercial functions – there are many shops, restaurant, cafés, etc. (Prague City Tourism, 2020).

Prague and its Old Town will be further studied and analysed.

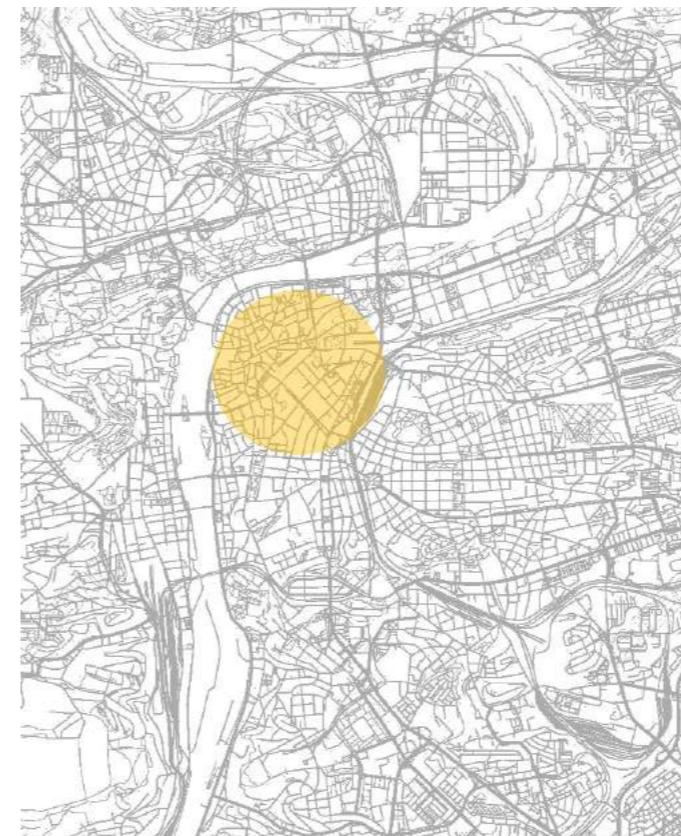


Figure 36: Prague, Czech Republic

CONCLUSION

Conslusion

The aim of this thesis is to reimagine Shumen and its unmaintained townscape by starting with the regeneration of the forgotten part of the town center – the Revival Street and its surrounding area, preservation of its cultural heritage and recovery of the once vibrant public life and its cultural values. More specifically:

- *preserve and maintain the architectural heritage buildings*
- *restore the neglected, abandoned buildings*
- *keep original aesthetics, features and details of the houses*
- *bring back the vibrant atmosphere and life to the streets*
- *introduce employment opportunities to make (young) people stay in town*
- *promote the rich cultural and historical heritage in order to develop tourism*
- *connect the Revival street to the main central pedestrian street*
- *encourage the equal use of the whole main central pedestrian street*

By reviving the area, it will improve the local community, its quality of life, the urban environment as well as the economy of the town.

Further research into the urban fabric will help to develop a new programme for the empty spaces. Also, inspiration will be taken from the precedents, reviewed in the previous chapter, and more in-depth analysis will be done.



Figure 37: Manifesto collage

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