



MENDEL SQUARE: MULTILAYERED HISTORY SITE

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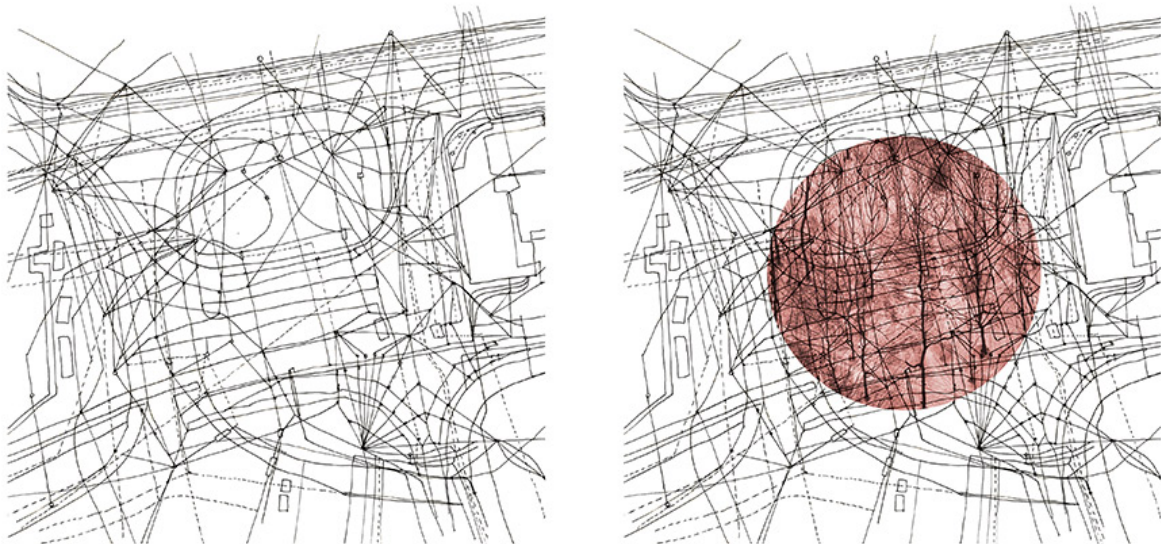


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Authorship: Proposal by CHYBIK+KRISTOF.

Mirroring much of Brno's thousand-year-old architectural patrimony, Mendel Square had foregone its historical significance to become one of the city's primary transportation hubs. It was increasingly sidelined by the city's inhabitants as it fell into gradual deterioration. Active advocates for the preservation of architectural heritage, CHYBIK + KRISTOF reaffirm their longstanding engagement, as their new design for the site adds the restored Brutalist heritage landmark, Zvonarka Bus Terminal, to the studio's list of architectural protection initiatives. An homage to the area's multilayered history, their proposal engages with distinct periods of its past, reflected in the surrounding monuments, all-the-while situating the square as the marker of a new chapter in Brno's historical and sociocultural narrative.



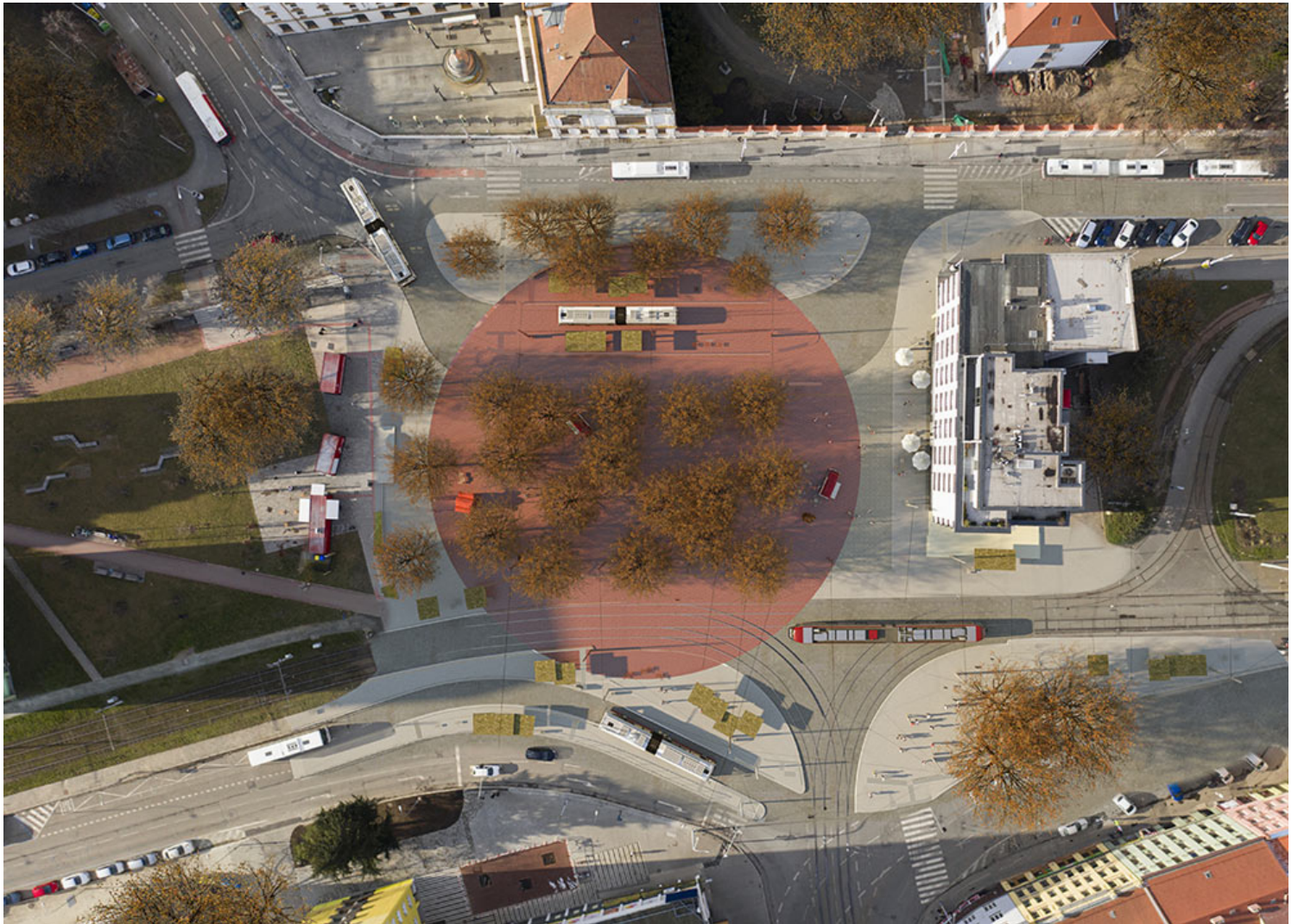
THE RED CIRCLE CENTERS THE SQUARE AROUND PEDESTRIANS CREATING A NEW SPACE FOR CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Reflecting the studio's analysis of the area's social dynamics, Mendel Square is conceived as a user-centered public space: accessible and functional. The transformation of the square was first initiated by Brno's chief architect Michal Sedlacek in 2018. After an in-depth study of the area, Sedlacek and his team proposed a series of adjustments for a comprehensive reconstruction, which, following a

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local public competition, was awarded to dílna. Working with local authorities and practitioners, including landscape specialist Zdenek Sandler and transportation engineering firm PK Ossendorf, CHYBIK + KRISTOF and dílna propose a multifaceted platform that can respond to public needs, supplementing the transportation hub with a sociocultural dimension that has come to characterize many of the studio's innovative and versatile designs. Adopting a holistic social and technical approach, they reconnect the square with the city and its inhabitants, affirming its ties with the past while ensuring its relevance for both contemporary and future living.

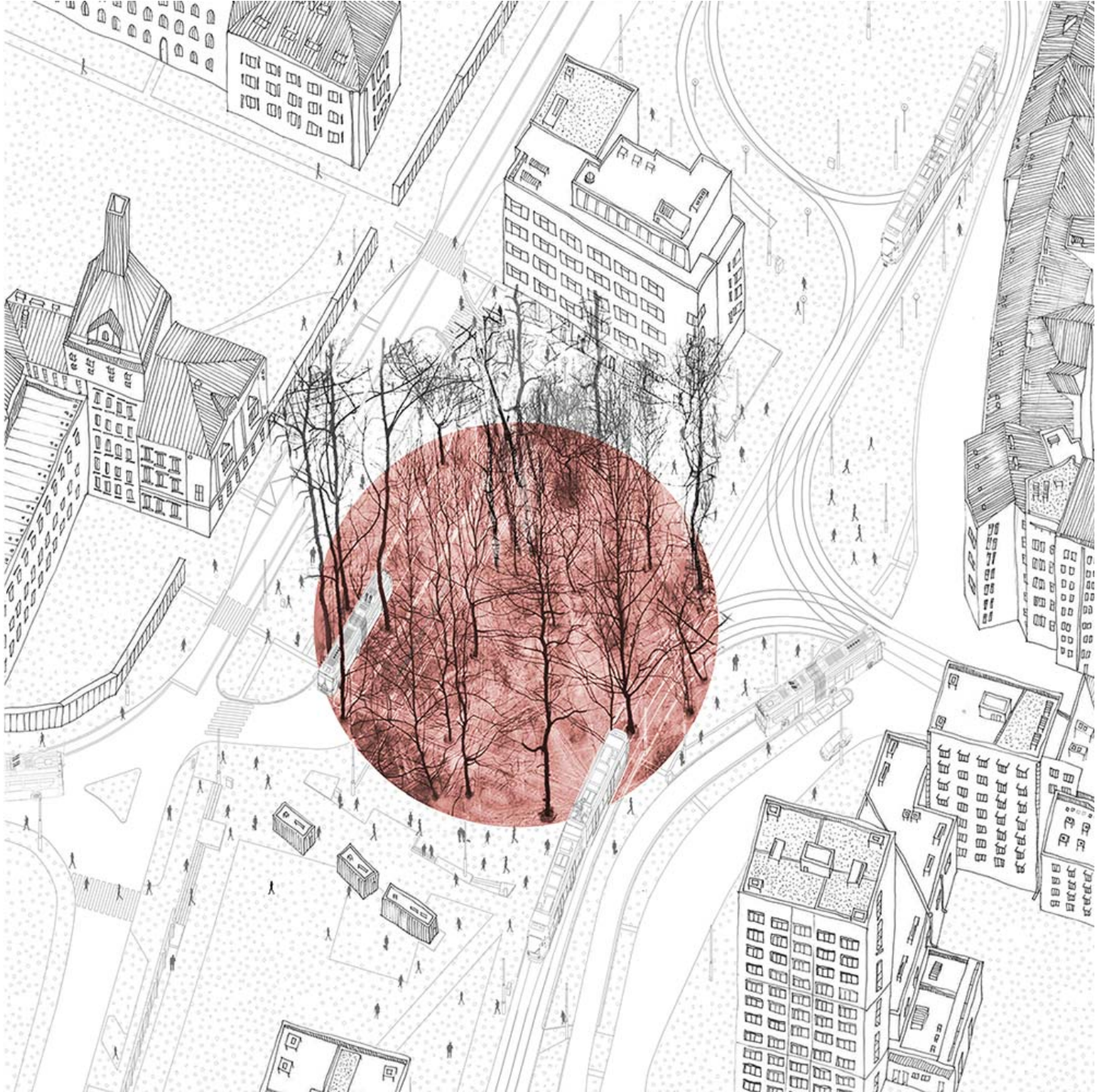


Located in the heart of Stare Brno, the oldest part of the town, Mendel Square sits at a cultural

crossroads for the area. Looking out onto the 14th-century Basilica of Assumption of Our Lady, considered one of the Moravian region's jewels of Gothic architecture, the square is bordered by the centennial Starobrno brewery and adjoins the city walls, leading up to the towering Spilberk Castle. With deep ties to the adjacent Abbey of Saint Augustin, the square owes its name to Gregor Mendel, an Augustinian friar who used the monastery's greenhouse from 1856 to 1863 for the experiments that lie at the origins of modern genetics. Drawing on the history and scientific legacy of the site, CHYBIK + KRISTOF and dílna extend their revival of the original greenhouse to that of the eponymous neighboring square. Originally used as a public park, the square was damaged by air raids during the Second World War. Rebuilt in the 1960s, but shunned by the decades-long Communist regime, it became used for multimodal transport, adding onto its atypical typology composed of a 1930s Modernist solitaire building, postmodern structures from the 1970s, neoclassical city blocks, and forgotten landmarks. Soon losing its historical value, it fell prey to gradual and irrecoverable decay.

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Responding to the square's primary use as one of Brno's primary public hubs, the design team reconnect the site with its past function as an integrated public space. Reorganizing the areas allotted to public transport and the residual green space from the previous layout, CHYBIK + KRISTOF and dílna revive and foster thriving social capital. Centered around a vast circular area, the square is entirely barrier-free, accessible from all sides and visible from all angles. Using exclusively sustainable, reusable materials, they position new stops that ensure a fluid transition from tram and trolleybuses to municipal and regional bus lines. By creating a walkable, inclusive space, the dynamic of the square shifts from a place dominated by public transportation and cars to a safe center for pedestrians, in turn redefining the flow for the rest of the square.



Engaging in a vibrant dialogue with the historic surroundings, the designers foster recreational uses and cultural observation of the city's assets as the focal point for their design. The urban furniture installed is modular in layout, with movable benches that allow for various arrangements of the space. Harking back to Brno's signature aesthetics, the paved circle's red hues reflect that of the bricks that adorn the neighboring Basilica and monastery, surrounded by grey tiles that evoke the dominant granite color in the rest of the city. And, honoring this pillar in the city's cultural history, a new statue of Gregor Mendel stands at the very heart of the square.

Their nature-friendly design, like that of the revived Mendel Greenhouse, references the scientist's contributions. Planting specifically bred tree species that retain more water while providing shade, they envision the square as a new green lung for the city, revisiting the greenhouse's regulative properties and sustainable scheme. A water reservoir below the pavement ensures the flow between the roots, thereby supporting this new green community.

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Fusing transportation and cultural functions, CHYBIK + KRISTOF and dílna's multifaceted design gives prominence to the notion of fluidity, both within the square and as it relates to the rest of the city.

Cofounding architects Ondrej Chybik and Michal Kristof explain:

"Our new design brings a contemporary relevance to Mendel Square, transforming it from an underperforming transportation terminal into a functional public space. This site plays a central role for the area and for the interactions within it. Rather than opting for a typical four-sided structure, we unify all functions in a central, inclusive paved circle that redefines the space. Not only is it more

intelligible, but it also considers the needs of all possible users: locals and foreigners, passengers and visitors, young and old alike."

