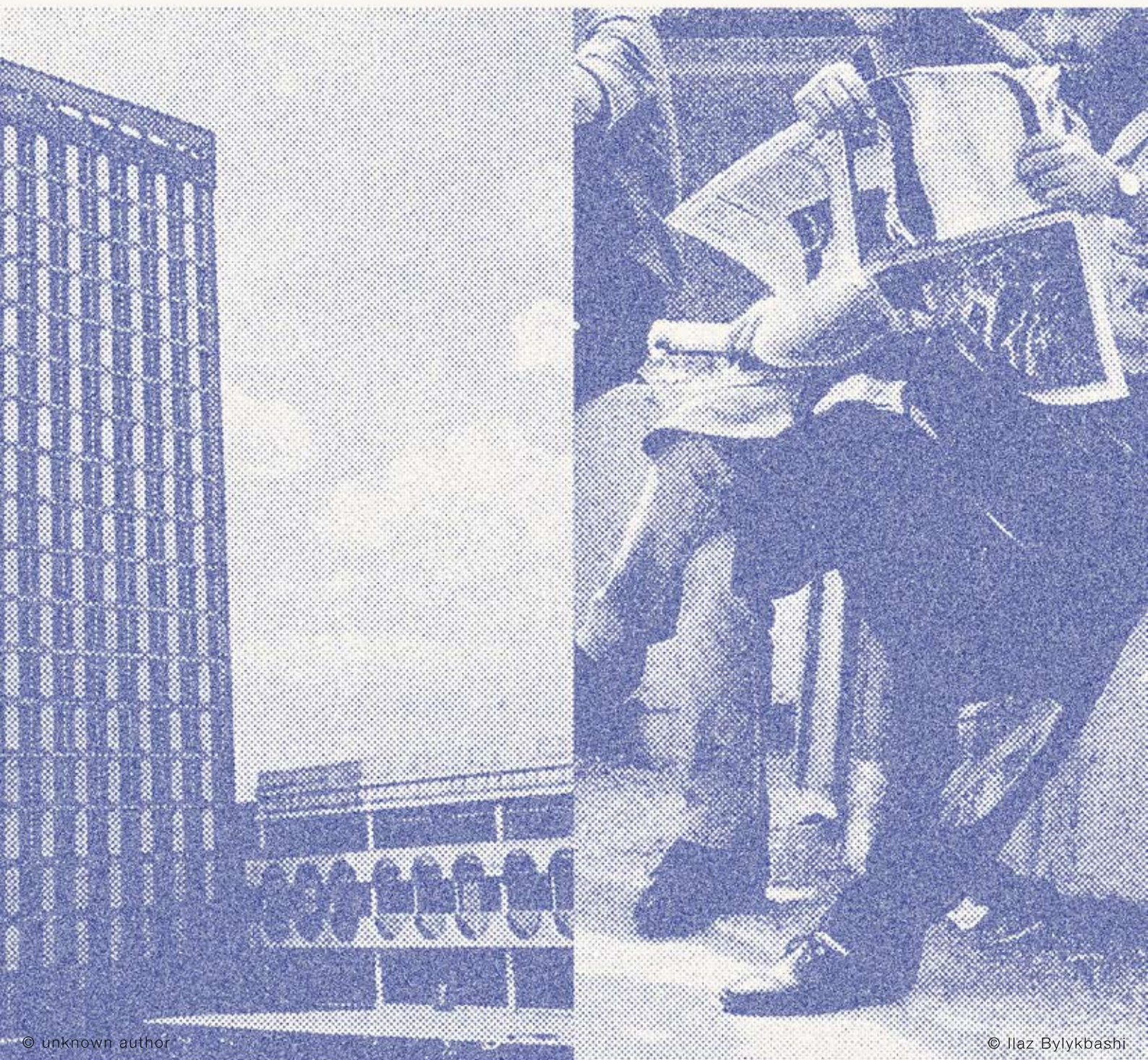


Second-hand encounters
with the Rilindja Press Palace

Summer School

01.09 - 07.09.2026

Prishtina, Kosovo



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KU LEUVEN



RESTORING BROKEN JOURNEYS

Context

In many post-conflict cities, people continue to live alongside buildings that once played a central role in shaping collective cultural and social life, even though these buildings are not formally recognised as heritage. Such sites are not necessarily monumental, nor officially commemorated, yet they are part of the collective memory of the city. When excluded from reconstruction or reuse programs, they risk abandonment, transformation, or erasure altogether. The absence of institutional recognition also contributes to a gradual process of collective oblivion. This raises a central question:

how do people relate to buildings that continue to hold cultural value, yet remain outside formal heritage frameworks?

The Rilindja Press Palace, 1970
© Ilaz Bylykbashi



Case study

The summer school investigates this question through the case study of the **Rilindja Press Palace**. *Rilindja* was Kosovo's largest newspaper and publishing house for the second half of the 20th century, playing a vital role in shaping Albanian cultural, linguistic, and intellectual life. Its home, the Rilindja Press Palace, is a 50,000 m² brutalist complex in central Prishtina, once employing more than 2,000 workers. Today, in stark contrast, large parts of the structure stand empty and abandoned, while other sections have been fully renovated, without any traces of its original architecture. Although Rilindja as an institution disappeared in post-war Kosovo, its name continues to resonate widely across generations.

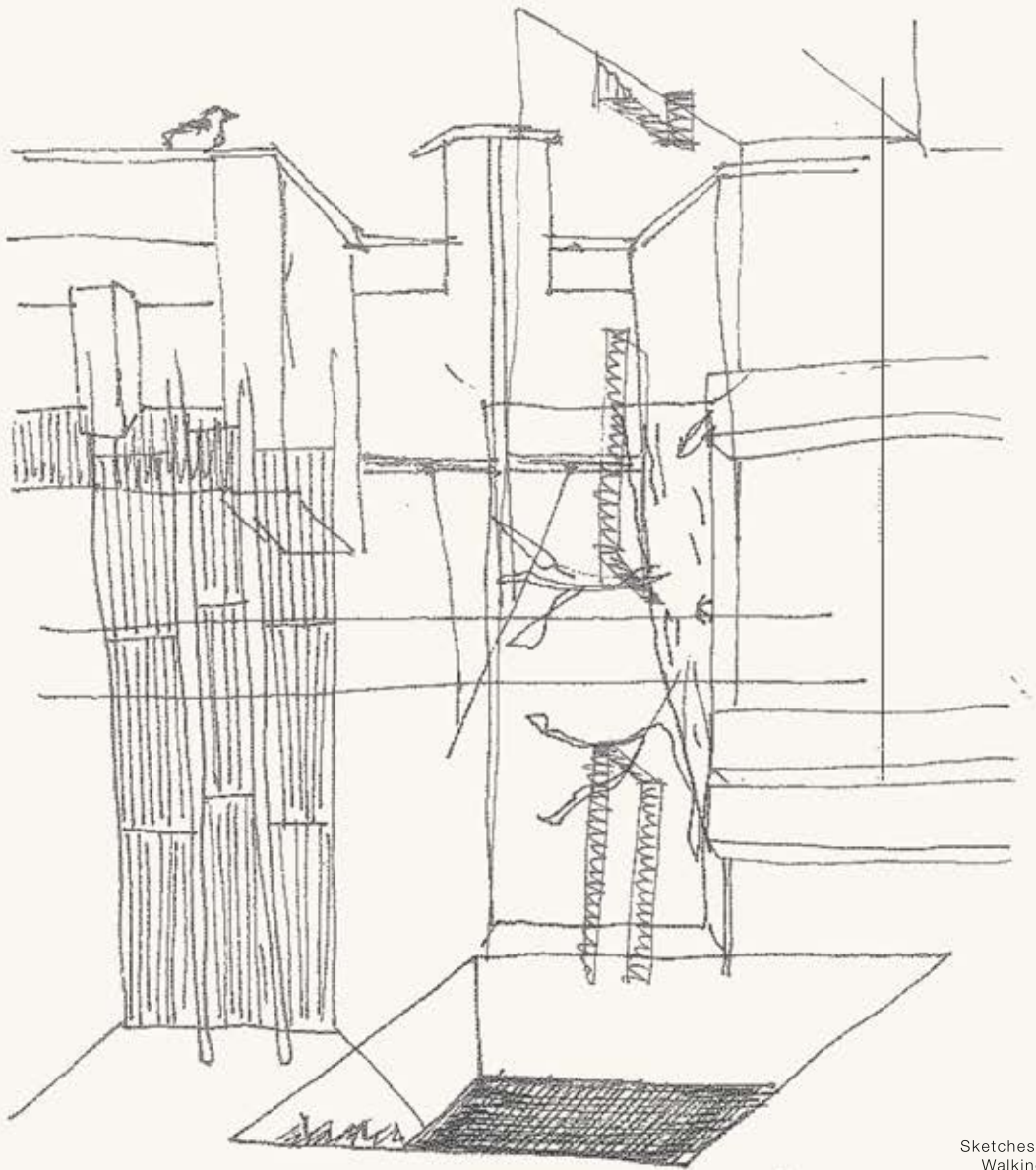
In recent years, several initiatives have focused on documenting the memory of Rilindja through testimonies of former workers, including *Arkivi Rilindja 1945-1999* and *Arranged in Lead: Letter by Letter*. Together, these efforts have established a strong foundation for understanding Rilindja as both an institution and a workplace, revealing the place-attachment (and disruption of place-attachment) of its former workers.

However, an important dimension remains largely unexplored: the relationship between the Rilindja site and the wider public. While Rilindja as a newspaper and publishing house, had an irreplaceable role in shaping the cultural and social identity of Kosovo across generations, the spatial dimension of this relationship has received little attention. Thus, the participants of the summer school will examine the site from the perspective of those who encounter the building indirectly: as readers, passers-by, neighbors, or urban dwellers.

Through the case of the Rilindja Press Palace, the summer school addresses questions related to broader issues such as:

- *How can a building resonate with people who never occupied it?*
- *Does the building's institutional legacy extend into spatial attachment even in the absence of direct access?*
- *How do people perceive the transformation of the building and its state of being physically stripped of its memory?*





Sketches, the Interactive
Walking Method, 2025
© Vanesa Orana

Methodology

The summer school introduces students to an adaptation of **the Interactive Walking** as a research methodology for tracing spatial memory and meaning in the built environment. By gathering on-site information in collaboration with the local community, students will combine various representational mediums as knowledge-supporting objects, including drawings, models, and other forms, into 'objects of speech'.

Organization and collaboration

The summer school is a collaboration of KU Leuven, Faculty of Architecture and the University of Prishtina, Faculty of Architecture. Architecture students from both universities will participate in mixed groups of two to three students, ensuring representation from both institutions. This structure supports both practical communication with local communities and increases international academic collaboration.

The summer school will be led by Njomëza Mulhaxha, with close organizational support and supervision from Gisèle Gantois and Peter Vermeersch, together with professors from the University of Prishtina. Selected guest lecturers whose work engages with heritage and post-conflict contexts will present their work during the program.

Language

English

*Albanian - Students from the University of Prishtina will help to bridge communications between KU Leuven students and local communities.

Target group

Open to:

- Master students of University of Prishtina, Faculty of Architecture

- 1st Master students of KU Leuven, Faculty of Architecture (Architecture, Interior Design, Urban Design and Spatial Planning Programmes)

Participants should have an interest in social dynamics and be willing to actively engage with local communities.

To apply

Send a **short motivation letter** by email no longer than **30.05.2026** to arkitektura@uni-pr.edu

The selection of students will be made based on the originality of the motivation letter and academic performance during the studies, with a special focus on subjects related to the theme and objectives of the summer school.

Students who successfully complete the summer school will receive a certificate signed by both Institutions.



Prishtina, Kosovo
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