

hangARts museum

MUSEOSYSTEM

GRADUATION REPORT - APPENDIX

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THEORY RESEARCH

Museosystem: symbiosis between artist, curator and audience

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Abstract

The aim of the project is to create an ecosystem between the artist, curator and audience. All three can directly profit from each other in a 'biome': a community existing in the same environment. By doing this I strive to bring the three parties closer together in their interaction and relationship.

The presence of a creative industry in the neighbourhood can have a big economic and social impact on the attractiveness of an area. The "Museosystem" could be the centre of creativity on our site, making it the cultural place-to-be of the area. Moreover, by inviting local artists and artists with the same background as the migrated populace the art museum could make use of the high social cohesion to engage the local population, creating a meeting and social point within the museum. However, the current problem in urban planning for artists is that they are being used as a temporary solution for vacant buildings. The cities use art districts as a gentrification method to activate a neighbourhood they want to improve, but as soon as the neighbourhood got enough attention from potential buyers they are being pushed out to be replaced by residential buildings. The Museosystem is a solution that uses the idea of the art district to improve both the neighbourhood and the situation of the artist.

By including the artist, the museum becomes a self-sufficient exhibition space that produces its own art. Instead of purchasing collection, the museum can use its budget to provide workspace and opportunities for the artist in return for their artworks. The artist gets a more stable career, and the museum does not have to worry about the purchase of collection.

Furthermore, when the artist's workplace is in the museum, the audience gets to experience first-hand the process of an artist, and thus bringing them socially closer. Concurrently, the audience could be the direct funder for the artist and museum by buying artworks they are interested in.

The inclusion of the artist within immediate environment of the museum also means that they are closer to the curator. This allows them to obtain a more direct relationship with the person handling their art. There is more chance for cooperation in the design of the exhibition and more opportunities for the artist and the curator to understand each other and their roles. This revised and enhanced relationship between the artist and curator could lead to a more personal and optimised exhibition display.

To understand the parties I will do qualitative research on the curator and the artist in the form of interviews and case studies. There will also be research about what artists and curators think what their role encompasses. To clarify the current situation there will be qualitative and quantitative research on case studies of art districts, and quantitative research on the funding of museums and types of audience in the form of statistics and reports.

The goal of the research would be to create a self-sufficient art museum which has artist workspace functions and room for auction. In return for their artworks the artist gets an atelier, opportunities and a name for themselves. Furthermore, I want to create a solid starting point for the artist to continue on his own feet after the residential contract.

Keywords:

Museosystem, art district, art museum, artist, curator

Word Count: 4639

1. Introduction

The art industry is known as ‘niche’: a world that can only be understood when the mindset is either understood or shared. People not within this industry see people from the art industry as different, whether it is their way of thinking or their fashion style. This alienation caused the artists to turn into themselves, creating communities for likeminded people to find kindred and understanding.¹ When certain urban neighbourhoods went through deindustrialisation and many vacant buildings became available, it turned out to be the perfect place for the settlement of the community. The requirement of space to produce art and the low income of most artists allowed vacant buildings to be suited vessels for an artist’s studio, which – in combination with this sense of community – spawned the occurrence of art districts.²

The place where (the work of) the artist meets with common population is either the artist’s studio (private location) or the art museum (public location). Even though they are both spaces in which the art of an artist reside, the two locations differ from each other in many ways. While an artist’s studio is property of the artist in which the art is displayed with a commercial and economical goal, the art museum is an institution – a “non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.”³ The artist’s studio also offers a personal connection and conversation to the visitor, whereas the art displayed in an art museum is far removed from that personal connection, except for the occasional interview event.

The biggest problem with the art museum is the stigma around it: some believe that the museum is not a place to be for ‘people like them’. This causes the museum to have a very specific audience even though the art museum is supposed to be for every audience: out of all types of museums, art museums have the smallest and the highest educated audience.⁴ It relates

to the fact that there is a pressure to understand art, and some believe they do not. However, this audience is attracted to the liveliness that an art district creates because of its aesthetics and interaction.⁵ To heighten the understanding and enthusiasm of the audience something must change about the institutionalised art museum to allow more interaction and informality.

The statement is that the art museum need more interaction and clarity to attract a broader audience. This is where the ‘Museosystem’ comes in: the Museum Ecosystem. There is the artist, a party that is present only on paper in the average art museum. Then the main creative party within the art museum, the curator, is shrouded in mystery; most people do not even know such a profession even exists. Finally, there is the audience: the informal criticisers that spend money on a ticket to enter the institution. In this theory, these three parties play the main roles in the Museosystem environment where they share a symbiotic relationship. By bringing the parties closer together the system strives to provoke more interaction, more personal connections and more sharing of knowledge. The Museosystem encourages the flourishing of a community not only between the artists, but also including the curator and the audience. Instead of curating artworks, the curator chooses the artists who make the artworks; the collection for the exhibitions will be provided by these artists and will therefore not need more funding.

There are a few things I would like to address in this research paper to support the idea of the Museosystem. First, I will go into the emergence of art districts, their requirements and their effect. After that, I will look into the role of the artist and curator and how they see themselves. Lastly, I will go over quantitative research about the museum collection and audience numbers.

2. Art districts and their relevance

To understand the emergence of art districts more, I will go into two historical case studies: SoHo, New York and Hoxton, London. SoHo was one of the first occurrences of the art district, but even in this period (the 1960s) it was known that the creative industry is an important asset within urban development. What SoHo did however, was showing the evidence and the results of having a thriving art district. After artists outside the United States saw how much success it could have, artists started taking the risk more often to start living illegally in vacant buildings.⁶ This is what happened in Hoxton: Richard Smith, artist part of the British pop art movement, has had lived in the industrial quarters in South Houston and saw the similarities in this neighbourhood in London. He among others started this trend to move to Hoxton. Therefore, it can be concluded that the gentrification of Hoxton was an indirect consequence caused by the success of SoHo.

It is assumed by many that the artists were the catalysts for the boom in SoHo. While this is mostly true, there were specific circumstances in this area that allowed this change to happen. Back when SoHo was still called South Houston in the 1950s, the neighbourhood was in reclamation; deindustrialisation caused a relatively high vacancy and the population was predominantly non-native and non-skilled.⁷ During deindustrialisation the vacant spaces began to be illegally occupied by artists due to the cheap rents and abundant space. However, the problem with this period was the urge from the City Planning Commission (CPC) to redevelop the neighbourhood which would cause rebuilding and higher rent for higher classes. To fight this crisis many artists banded together in many associations to protest and fight this legally. It had been a slow process with small wins that initially did not mean a lot in practice.⁸ The associations started small, but along the way they got more and more public attention which earned them powerful supporters. They provided deep connections within CPC to the biggest

party, the SoHo Artists Association (SAA), and relevant input on the value of artists. The report on this stated the following:

[Artists'] economic value lies not only in the volume of trade and employment in the art industry—some \$100 million worth—but also in the fact that their presence contributes to making the City an attractive place to be. This 'glamour' attracts, among others, the office and executive elite, whose exodus would disintegrate the healthiest elements in the City's economic structure.⁹

It was at this point that they managed to get bigger wins and more news publicity, but this also raised expectations for the art districts. This is where the artists proved what their worth in a neighbourhood could be: the SAA organised a three-day festival during which more than 100 artists opened their doors to show the general public their lofts and work. The festival also housed events such as concerts, shows and readings and above all, admission was free. The amount of people and publicity this festival attracted was great, and their feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The success of this event convinced the CPC to give in to their demands and announced the start of legal residency for artists in SoHo.

These series of events clearly show the persistence and desperation of the artists in the neighbourhood, but also that the situation could have only turned out like this because they were pushed into a corner. As the president of the SAA said: "Artists aren't organization people so the association is primarily a crisis group."¹⁰ If the artists were not in as bad as a crisis as they were, there is a scarce chance that the artists would have gathered like they did. The festival had such success because the outsiders had no idea what artists could do and the event was there to give the opportunity to the audience to get to know the artists. However, once SoHo got popular the gentrification began. The publicity created non-artist interest to live there and the SAA stated it was impossible to keep that in check. The lofts became very attractive after the artists' reworks: as the demand rose the prices rose with it. Commercial functions saw

opportunities and settled in SoHo as well. The rent and worth kept rising and the poorer artists – for whom it was meant initially – had to move out as it became too expensive. In the end, the popularity ruined the original artist studios after all.

What happened in Hoxton, London was heavily inspired by the early stages of what happened in SoHo. The arrival of artists in Hoxton started in the 1980s, corresponding with when the number of art galleries saw a threefold increase and art education in Great Britain expanded.¹¹ The first artists that moved into the vacant buildings saw the same opportunity to create a similar situation: one in which they could live cheaply as a result of deindustrialisation. The second wave of incoming artists happened in the 1990s, which was the actual period where artistic Hoxton prospered. The newcomers were mostly new graduates who already knew each other from college, and this connection was the basis for a socially strong community consisting out of 50 to 60 individuals. The group took advantage of the lack of association of Hoxton with visual arts, and became the first cultural producers in this area appealing to the art dealers, collectors and galleries. They advertised themselves as new, exciting and alternative, different from the traditional art centres and open to change.¹² The neighbourhood started to set an art movement in motion – urban pastoral – that attracted a lot of attention to the area, and made Hoxton the epicentre of the movement. The community of the art district made their presence known by annual street fairs organised by Joshua Compston, a cultural impresario. This successfully generated media exposure and put Hoxton on the cultural map.

London got hit hard by the deindustrialisation: Hoxton was not the only area with obsolete vacant buildings, so why was it specifically Hoxton that had this significantly bigger influx of artists in the 1990s? As interviewed artists living in the area stated, Hoxton already had the credentials: the first group that arrived in the 1980s held impromptu galleries, parties and gatherings and thus established the area. Furthermore, it was a location that was secluded so the community could flourish, and this effect was hard to find anywhere else in London.¹³

These conditions allowed the residents to create deep connections with this neighbourhood and it served as a source of inspiration as well.

The gentrification that started after Hoxton got famous was – in contrast to SoHo – intentionally promoted by the artists. They purposefully used the media coverage to popularise the urban pastoral art movement and the neighbourhood, even though it is not clear if this outcome was intended. They most likely just wanted to promote this form of art, but in this process they made the area too ‘cool’ for them to afford it economically. The gentrification itself however was not as prominent as SoHo. There was no direct commercial and residential redevelopment present in Hoxton, but the gentrification happened more in social and cultural histories.¹⁴ The neighbourhood became an idyllic district where they secluded themselves and kept living in nostalgia of the pre-industrial character.

The relevance of the art districts do not lie in the districts themselves: it is the community that makes the art districts lively. If there is no community the districts falls apart into individuals. The festivals are also what makes the art district relevant. They attract the audience, but they also function as an adhesive for the community; the events allow the artists to step out of their studios and experience the works of others in a public setting. The two case studies also showed that the flourishing of an art district needed a key ingredient: organisation, whether that is done by an association (SAA) or one person (Joshua Compston). In both cases these conductors paved the way to allow the districts to thrive. The community, festivals, and conductors are all key elements that support the growth and liveliness of a creative area and will be needed if one wants to reproduce one.

3. Museosystem: artist and curator

The idea of the Museosystem is to bring artist, curator and audience closer together by putting them in the same environment with direct contact to each other. The requirements for a lively environment are described above, but what do the artist and curator need to make them feel at place? To answer this question we first must consider who they are, what their respective roles are and their intentions.

Artists are considered to be individuals who “have the talent and the skills to conceptualise and make creative works.”¹⁵ They are people who want – and need – to express their creative mind in the form of art. The artworks that are the products of the expression are what artists present to the public. They have a curiosity that allows them to access their creativity, and this curiosity is what pushes them to explore boundaries of their art form and role. The existence of the many different art movements is partly if not mostly thanks to their search for their form of art expression. As Walter Benjamin noted: “One of the foremost tasks of art has always been the creation of a demand which could be fully satisfied only later.”¹⁶ This implies that the art created by the artist hints at an upcoming art movement that can only be realised by exploring these possibilities. This curiosity that the artist possesses makes it hard to set up boundaries for them, as they will go above and beyond. Artists such as Marcel Duchamp felt bound by the very idea of art and being an artist at that moment, and broke the boundaries to express themselves. As stated before, they are also not organisation people, but that does not mean they cannot be organised. This was evident in SoHo and Hoxton, where in both cases the art districts held social events and festivals promoting the neighbourhood with help of a conductor. The artist’s eventual intention is to show to the public their art which expresses their creativity and concept, whether that is in a formal (art museum, galleries) or informal (street art) way.

The curator is for many shrouded in mystery; most people have no idea what the curator’s role is since most of the time they work behind the scenes. Hans Ulrich Obrist’s book *A Brief History of Curating*, published in 2008, was one of the first books actually going into the history of curating, while curating had by that time already existed for decades if not centuries. Even Christophe Cherix, chief curator of MoMA New York, wrote in the book’s introduction:

“The curator’s true *raison d’être* remains largely undefined. No real methodology or clear legacy stands out in spite of today’s proliferation of courses in curatorial studies. The curator’s role [...] appears already built into pre-existing art professions, such as museum or art centre director, dealer, or art critic.”¹⁷

As he continues, it becomes apparent that even though curation has existed for a long time, it only started to progressively gain professionalisation in the early 1920s when modern art museums started to appear. It was in this period that exhibitions have become *the* medium to show art with. Since curators are the designers and organisers of exhibitions, they are the ones who decided the way to present art to the public. Thus, what the audience sees in the museum is a combination of the work of the artist and the curator. As Venzislavov suggested, the curator is an artist that uses artworks from other artists as material to create its piece.¹⁸ An example of this is Pontus Hultén, a Swedish curator and museum director. Niki de St. Phalle, artist and lifelong friend of Hultén, once said that “he has the soul of an artist, not of a museum director.”¹⁹ Especially installations such as *HON - en Katedral* where they designed a woman’s body as the host for the exhibition showcased the creativity that curators could also supply.

What Pontus Hultén also established were strong relationships with the artists, which in my opinion strengthened his work even more. He talks very fondly about his scholarly monographs of Jean Tinguely and Sam Francis, recalling them as few of his favourite works that he did in close dialogue with the respective artists.²⁰ For him, they marked the great moments he had in their friendship. The mutual understanding that these exhibitions

demonstrated heightened the experience for the audience as well, as one can see in its success. This example portrays friendship and mutual understanding that could happen between an artist and curator which would enhance both exhibitions and audience experience.

In the end, both the artist and curator show a tendency to interchange between the two roles. An artist's curiosity motivates them to explore the boundaries, and sometimes even crossing them. They feel limited when the boundaries are too prominent and they thus result in fighting it, taking part in other roles such as curatorial practices to break the 'barrier'. When speaking of curators, they prove to be multidisciplinary: the curators especially interviewed by Obrist admit that they never had in mind to become curator, and were instead originally in other art disciplines. Some curators still see themselves as artists after they started curating. These two parties like to mingle in each other's professions, meaning they can better relate to each other since they know about each other's role. If the two roles can come together in understanding and the artists allow themselves to be conducted by the curator, it will have a positive effect on the art museum.

4. Museosystem: the audience and collection

This chapter will go into quantitative research on the type of audience and the facts around collection in Rotterdam, and explore what had been suggestions in the past to change these numbers. This is to find out what needs to be done to attract audience, and to see if the Museosystem will have a benefit to collection costs.

Apparent from research done by the Municipality of Rotterdam and year reports from individual museums, the percentage of people visiting museums substantially rises when education level is higher.²¹ It also shows that people between the age of 45 and 64 visit museums slightly less than the other age groups, which can be explained by both working hours and family duties overlapping with opening hours of museums. When looking at the overall number, 46% of the Rotterdam population at least visited one museum in Rotterdam. When

comparing this to the attendance to festivals, which was 64%, the museum visits is lower by 18%.²² Perhaps if festivals were happening more often in combination with museums, it could raise the percentage of museum attendance. Back in 1966 when Pontus Hultén wanted to attract more audience from the working class, he changed the museum opening hours to be open from 12:00 to 22:00 which successfully attracted his target audience.²³ This allowed the working class to visit after office hours, combining a cultural visit with dinner at the restaurant.

For collection analysis, I took the year reports of 2018 of the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen and Kunsthal to analyse the budget of museums with and without collection, respectively. Both museums received budget subsidy: it was 34% of the total income of Kunsthal and 46% of the Boijmans. Furthermore, the Boijmans receives extra subsidies due to the many connections and its size. Kunsthal used at least 30% of its total income to pay for exhibition costs, which also entails the costs for the loan of artworks since Kunsthal does not own a collection. The Boijmans spent 2.6 million euros on collection research and restauration, and used 3.3 million euros on acquisition of new works. The total of approximately 6 million euros is also around 30% of the total budget of 2018. In both cases, roughly one-third of the museum's budget goes to collection. This money can be used more effectively in the Museosystem: if the museum invests in facilities and materials for the artists and the artists in return supply the collection, the museum acquires material for exhibitions while also cultivating the artists and the curator. The Museosystem becomes an incubator for the growing artist.

5. Conclusion

What this paper has described are all either requirements or opportunities for the Museosystem to work. The success that art districts had in becoming popular can be applied artificially with the right stimulation. The festivals and events on those two locations appeared to be successful solutions of bringing the artist, curator and audience closer together, which is exactly what the Museosystem needs. It also showed some of the requirements that artists have to move in: big spaces and community are the most prominent.

The analyses of the roles of the artist and curator revealed that they both tend to take on the other role, interchanging between the two disciplines. This shows that the individuals are actually quite similar and could create deep relationships with this affinity at its base. The curator can function as the conductor of the art and ideas of the artist with both having input on the final product.

The population visiting art museums has considerably more individuals with higher education even though museums are meant for the general public. The people within the age group of 45 and 64 had a lower attendance than all the other age groups, most likely due to work and family responsibilities. From the year reports of 2018 of Kunsthal and Museum Boijmans van Beuningen can be concluded that roughly one-third of the budget is spent on obtaining and preserving collection. This high amount makes the idea of investing in the residence of the source of the collection – the artist – more viable and profitable since it will not only provide collection, but also enhance the art museum with their presence.

The Museosystem in mind is one where the participation threshold is low, community is strong, and art exposure is in abundance. The main characters – the artist as the producer, the curator as conductor, and audience as the recipient – are the ones who will make this happen.

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Notes

¹ Petrus. "From Gritty to Chic: The Transformation of New York City's SoHo, 1962-1976," p. 71.

² Ibid., p. 66.

³ ICOM, "The vote on a new museum definition."

⁴ Silver. "The Art Museum and Its General Public," p. 208.

⁵ Petrus. "From Gritty to Chic: The Transformation of New York City's SoHo, 1962-1976," p. 72.

⁶ Harris. "Art and Gentrification: Pursuing the Urban Pastoral in Hoxton, London," p. 229.

⁷ Petrus. "From Gritty to Chic: The Transformation of New York City's SoHo, 1962-1976," p. 56.

⁸ Ibid., p. 66.

⁹ Simpson, *SoHo*, 178-179.

¹⁰ Petrus. "From Gritty to Chic: The Transformation of New York City's SoHo, 1962-1976," p. 80.

¹¹ Harris. "Art and Gentrification: Pursuing the Urban Pastoral in Hoxton, London," p. 229.

¹² Ibid., p. 230.

¹³ Ibid., p. 230.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 236.

¹⁵ Tekippe et al. *Introduction to Art - Design, Context, and Meaning*, p. 8.

¹⁶ Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," p. 16.

¹⁷ Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*, p. 6.

¹⁸ Ventzislavov, "Idle Arts: Reconsidering the Curator," p. 87.

¹⁹ Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*, p. 32.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 47.

²¹ Gemeente Rotterdam, "Cultuurparticipatie van Rotterdammers, 2015," p. 24; Kunsthal, "Jaarverslag 2018," p. 9.

²² Ibid., p. 22 & 27.

²³ Antille, "'HON—en Katedral': Behind Pontus Hultén's Theatre of Inclusiveness," p. 73.

DETAILS

A. roof

sedum substrate		40 mm
filter layer		
drainage layer		25 mm
bitumen		4 mm
thermal insulation (Rc = 7 m²K/W)		160 mm
vapour barrier		
multiplex		20 mm

B. structure
laminated timber portal frame; span = 24 m

C. exterior wall

cork panels		40 mm
timber slats		20 mm
HSB construction		160 mm
thermal insulation (Rc = 4.7 m²K/W)		110 mm
ventilation shaft		
felt layer		10 mm
perforated timber panel		25 mm

D. glass facade

MHB corten steel profile		w = 100 mm
triple glazed glass		4-6-4-2-4 mm

E. opening
hinge double doors in sliding doors

F. floor

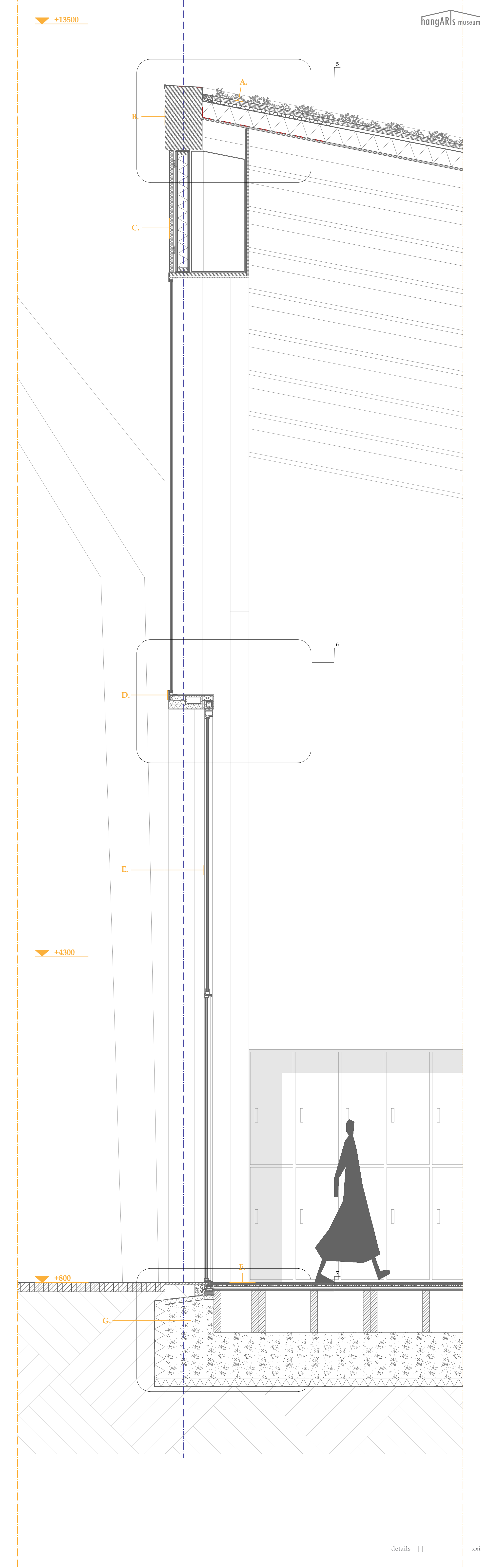
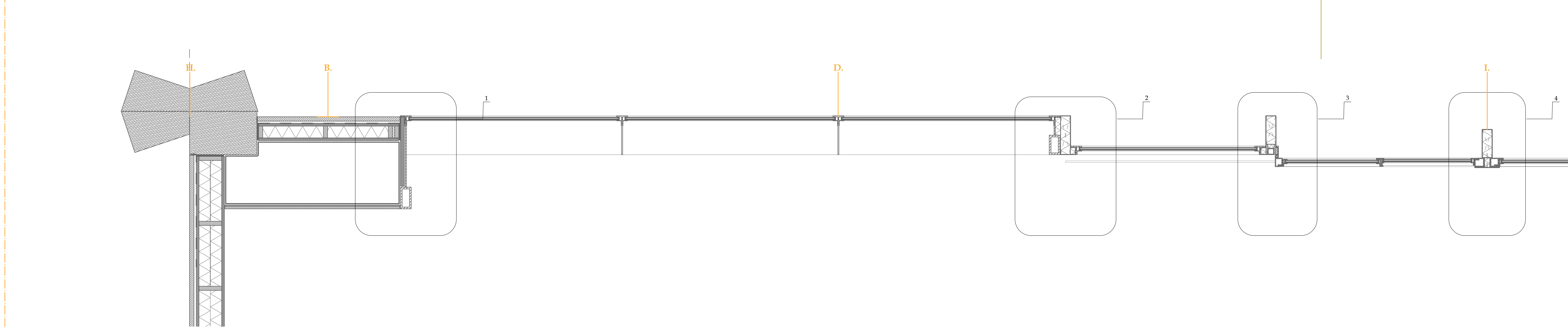
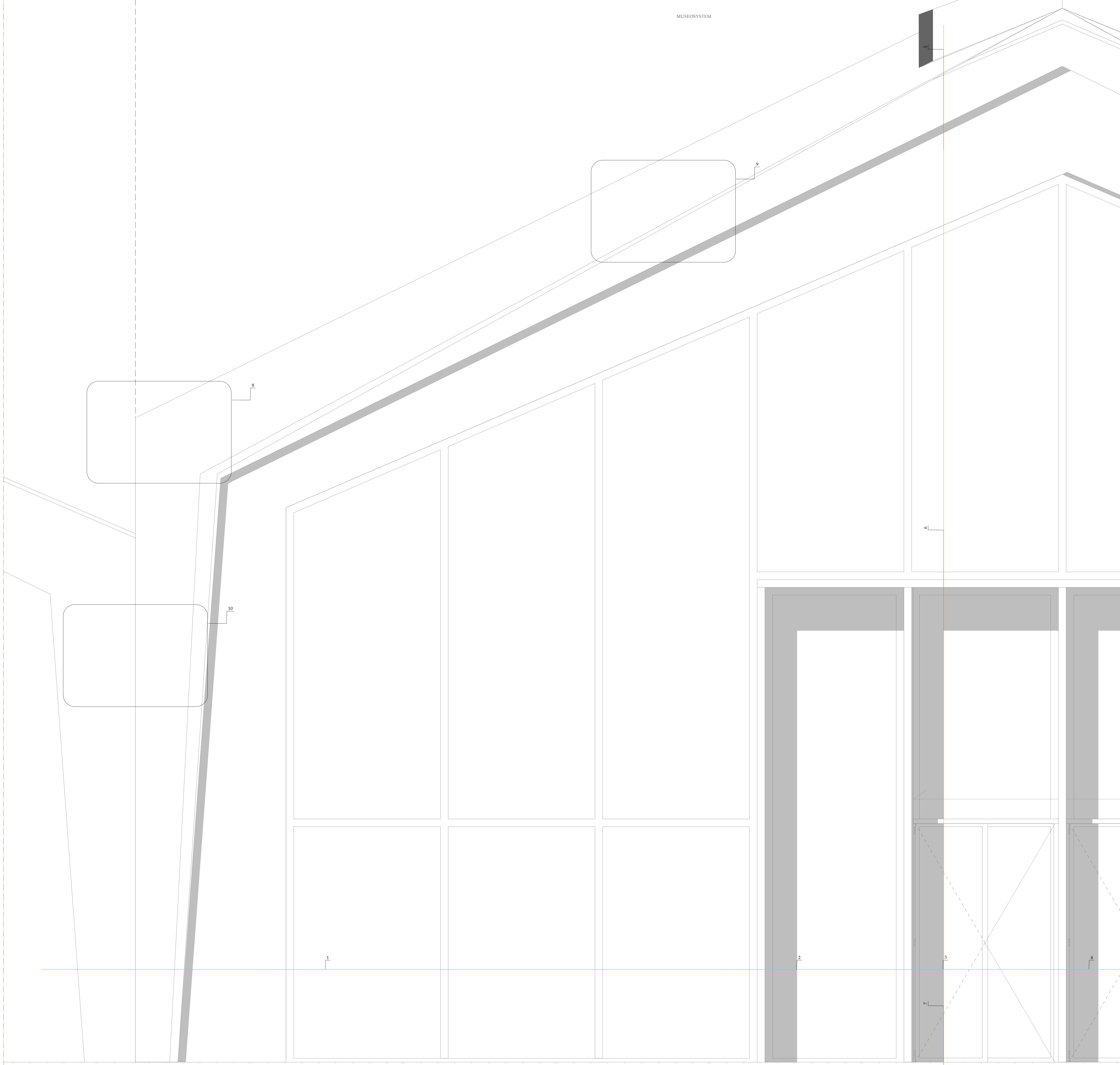
floor finish: timber		25 mm
milled gypsum boards with floor heating		20 mm
Kerto Ripa open timber floro slabs		450 mm
slab foundation cast-in-situ concrete		500 mm
thermal insulation (Rc = 4 m²K/W)		80 mm

G. foundation

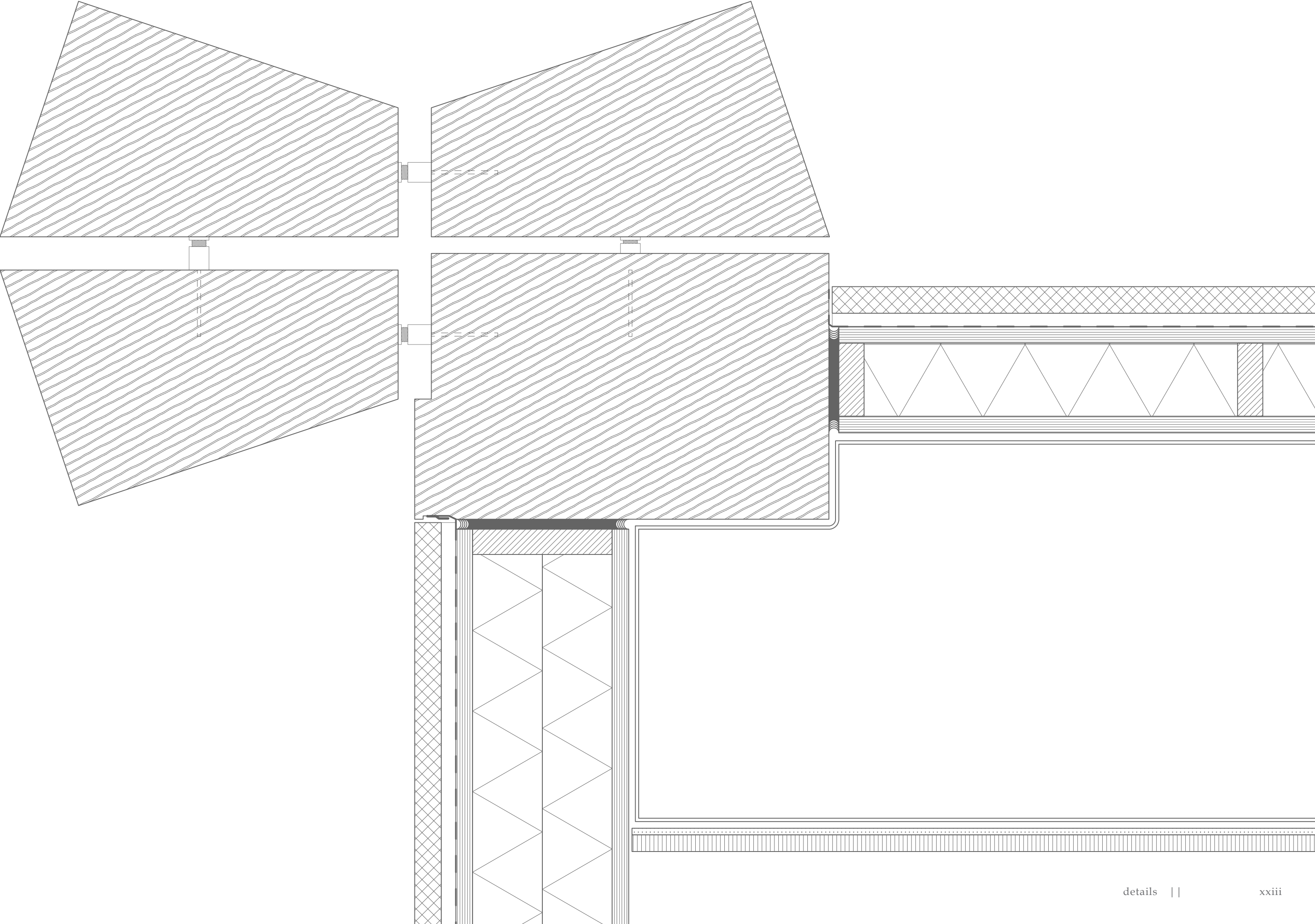
thermal insulation (Rc = 4.7 m²K/W)		110 mm
concrete beam cast-in-situ on slab		525 mm

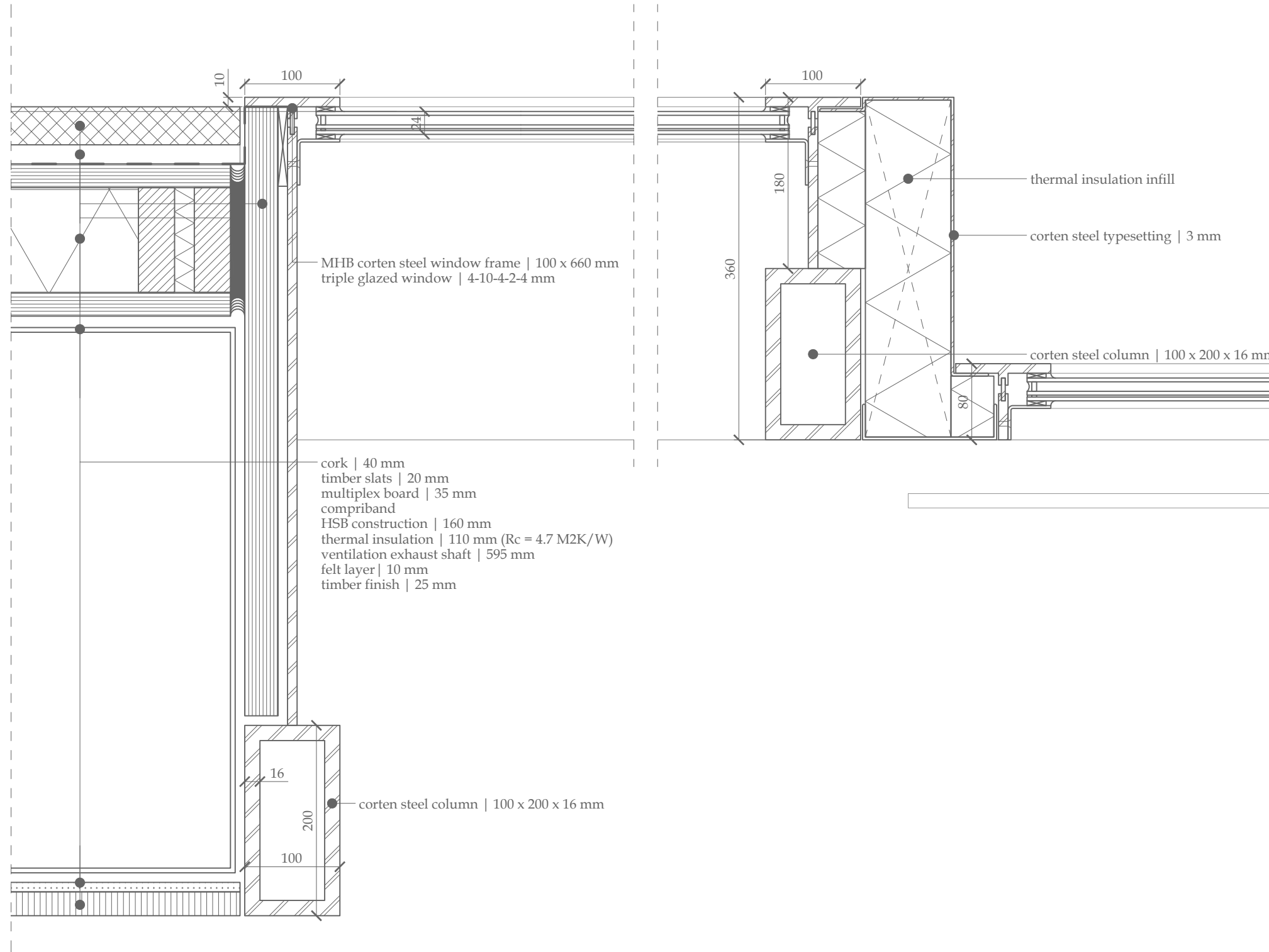
H. structure
outdoor portals
laminated timber portal frame

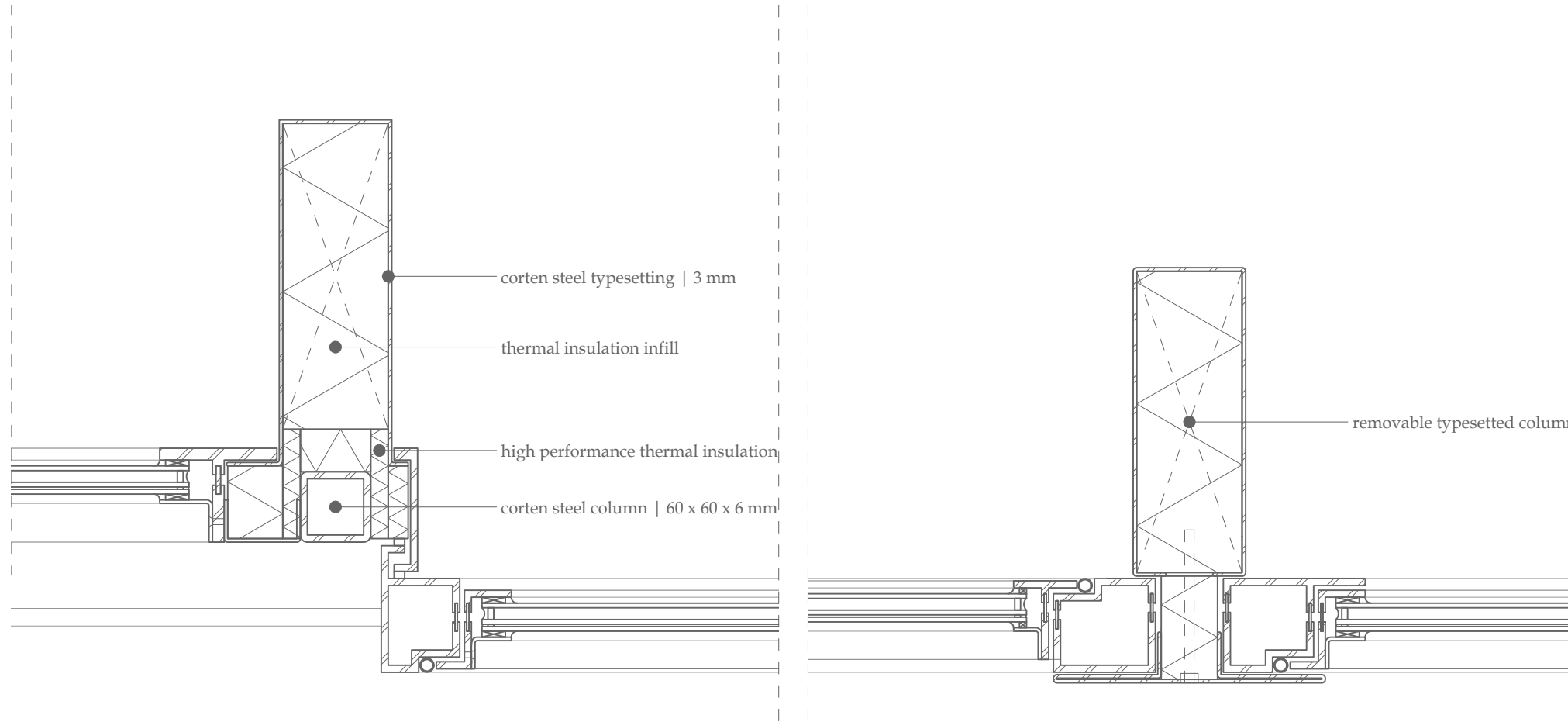
I. sliding door connection
typesetted corten steel with insulation infill
(removable when sliding doors open)

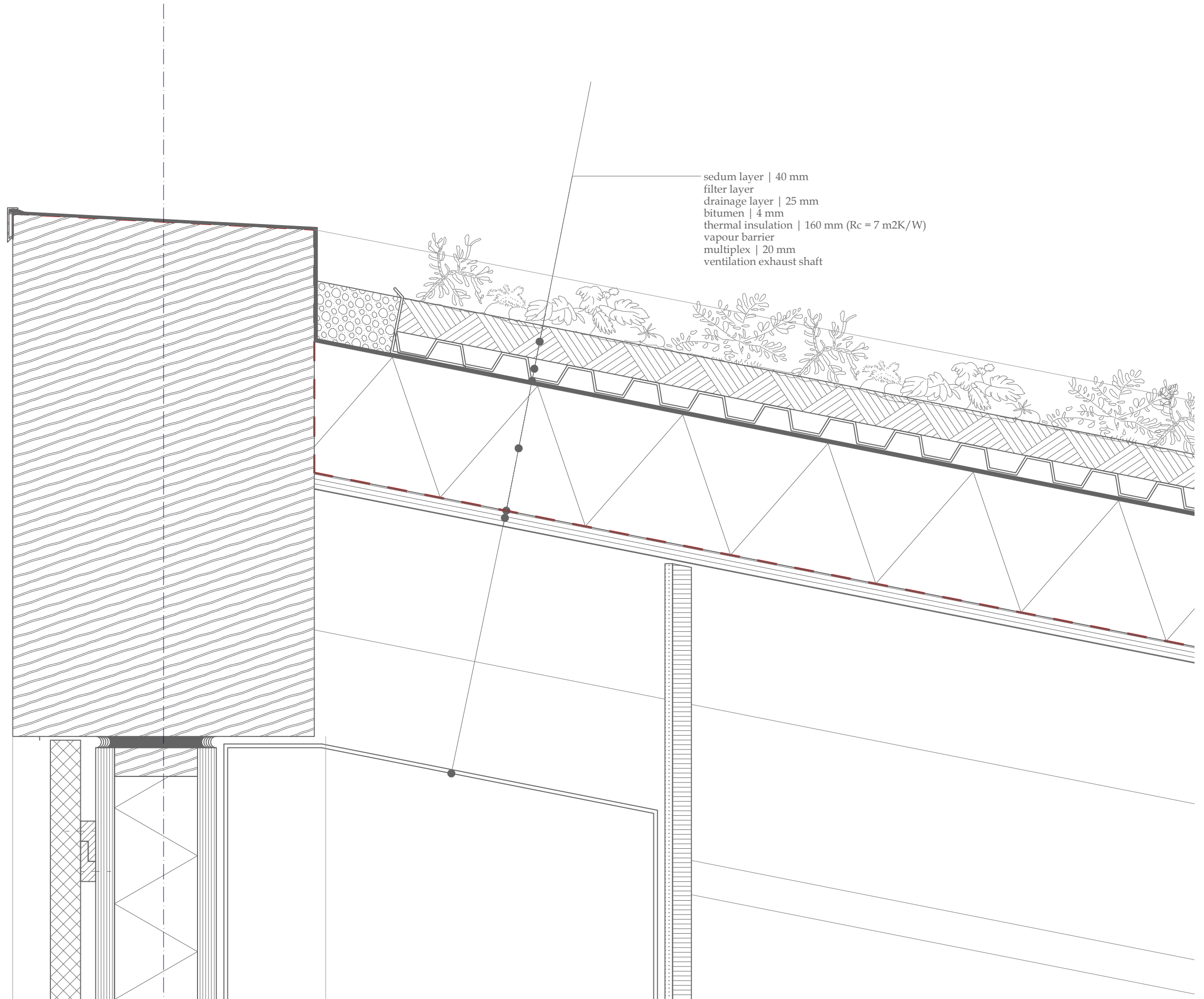


detail 1



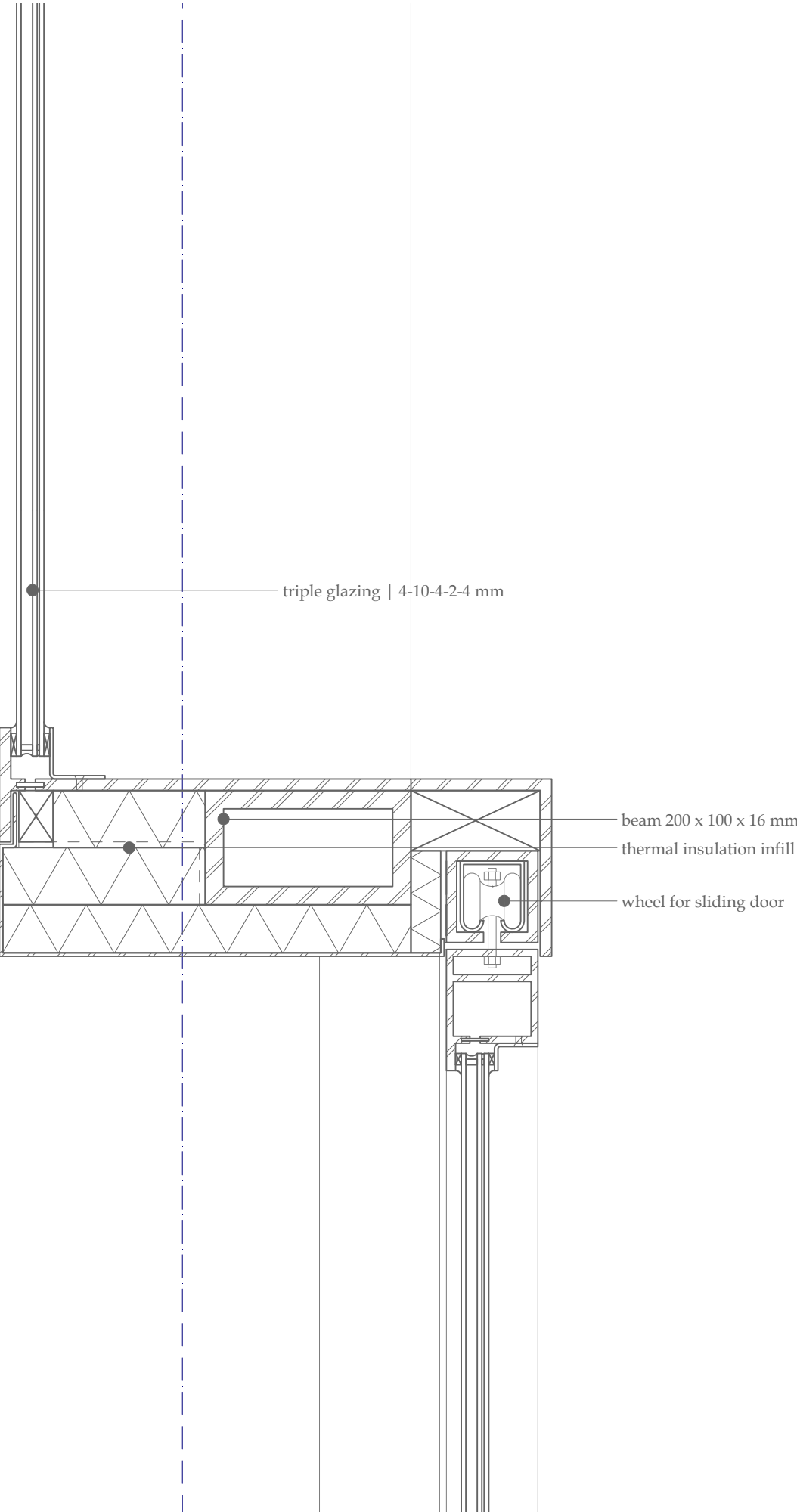




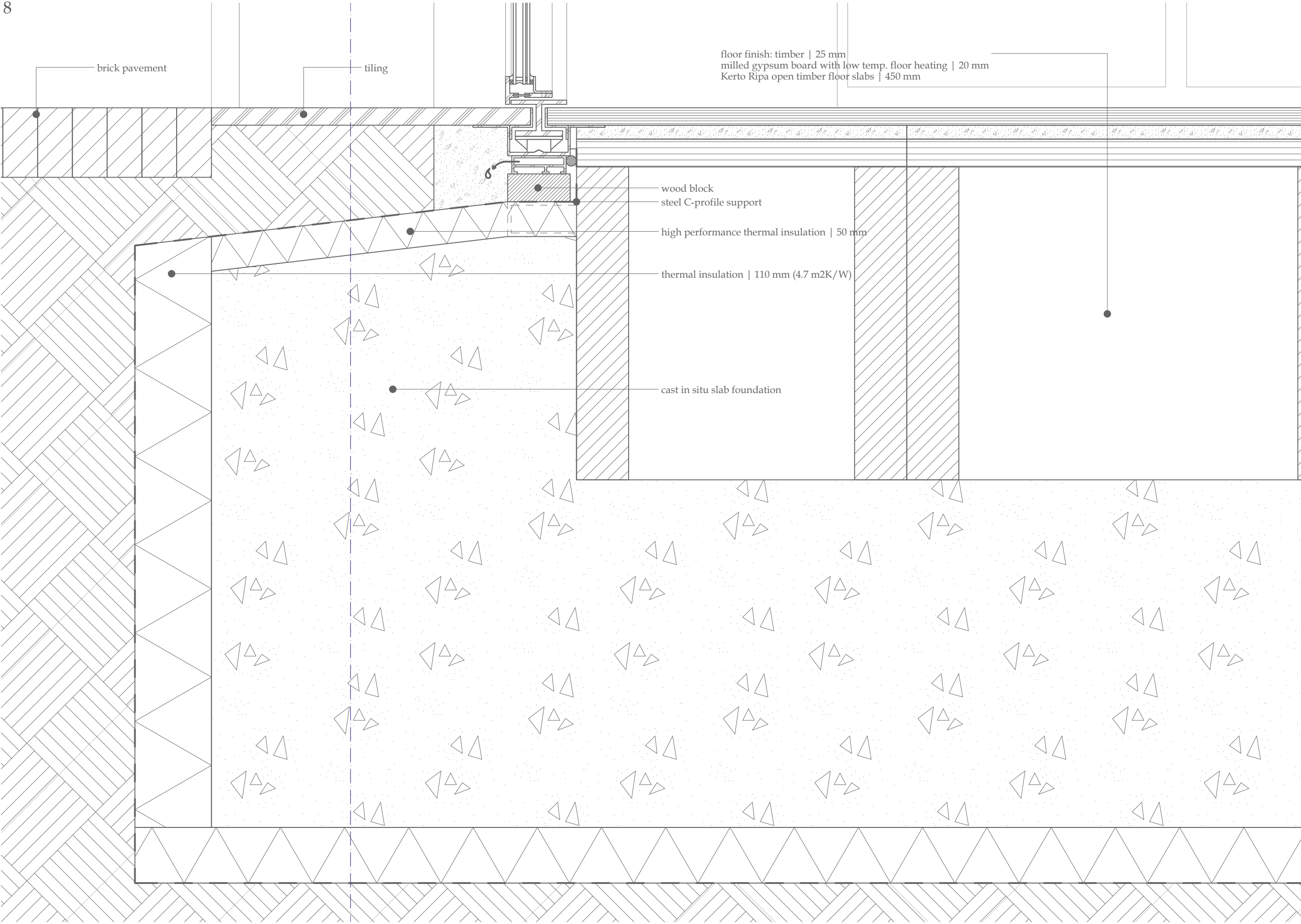


sedum layer | 40 mm
filter layer
drainage layer | 25 mm
bitumen | 4 mm
thermal insulation | 160 mm ($R_c = 7 \text{ m}^2\text{K/W}$)
vapour barrier
multiplex | 20 mm
ventilation exhaust shaft

detail 7



detail 8



floor finish: timber | 25 mm
milled gypsum board with low temp. floor heating | 20 mm
Kerto Ripa open timber floor slabs | 450 mm

wood block
steel C-profile support
high performance thermal insulation | 50 mm
thermal insulation | 110 mm (4.7 m2K/W)
cast in situ slab foundation

detail 9

sedum layer | 40 mm
 filter layer
 drainage layer | 25 mm
 bitumen | 4 mm
 thermal insulation | 160 mm (Rc = 7 m2K/W)
 vapour barrier
 multiplex | 20 mm

cork | 40 mm
 timber slats | 20 mm
 waterproof membrane
 HSB construction | 236 mm
 thermal insulation | 210 mm (Rc = 4.7 m2K/W)
 vapour barrier
 felt layer | 10 mm
 perforated acoustic panel | 25 mm

