

NURTURE IN NATURE



Contributing to childhood development in
Bressoux & Droixhe by strengthening
nature connectivity

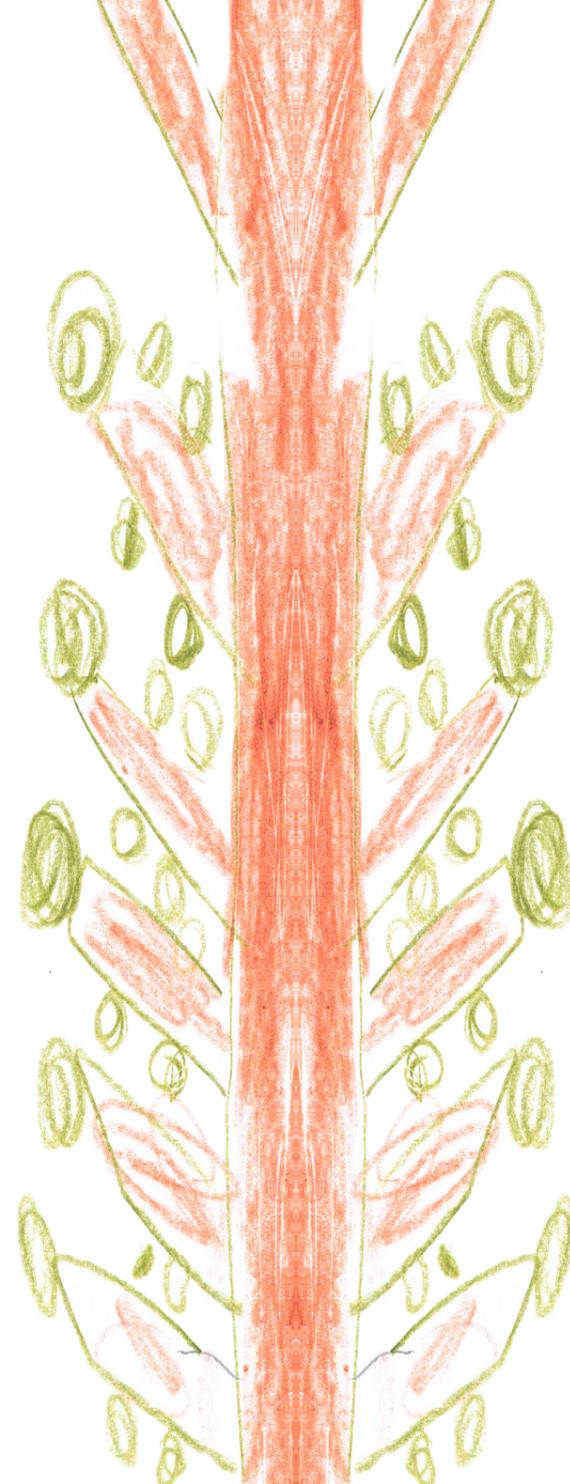
Jasmijn Ooijevaar

Graduation Book
Urban Architecture
2022 | 2023
“The Scarred City”



MSc Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences
Track Architecture
Delft University of Technology





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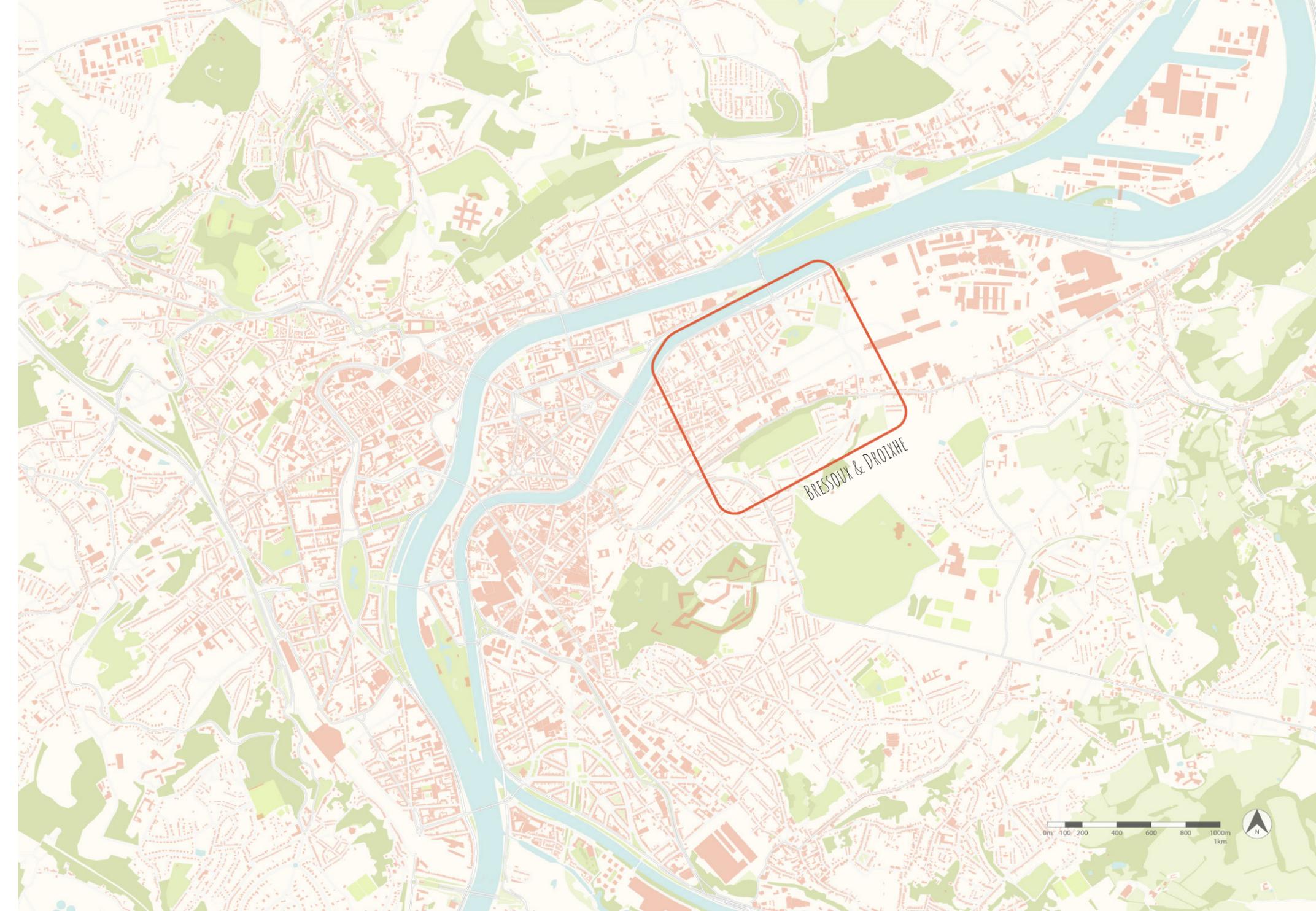
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Nurture in Nature

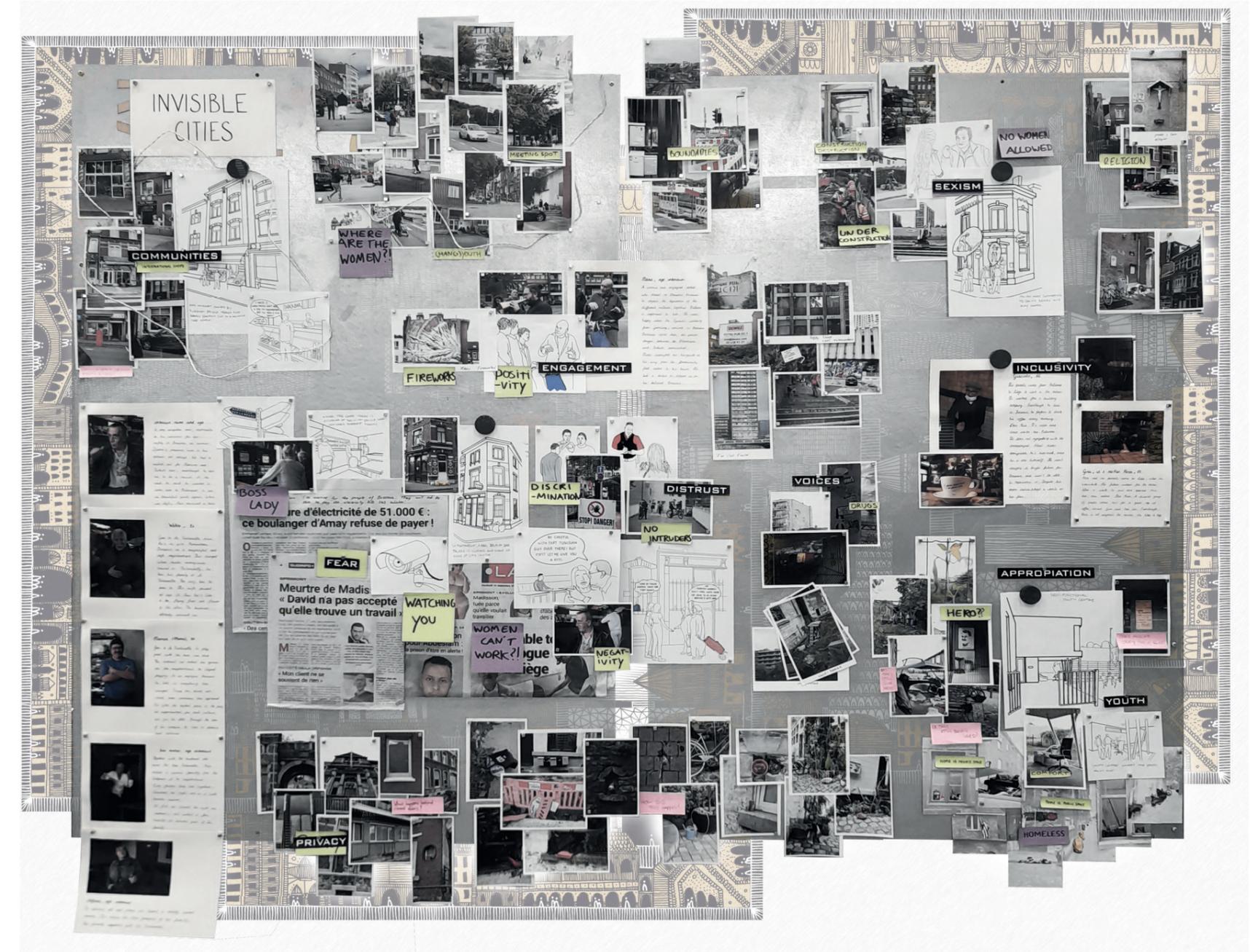
Before you lies my graduation book showcasing research, process and design within the context of Droixhe and Bressoux, two neighbourhoods in Liège (Belgium). The studio theme 'Scarred city' was translated into a project aiming to contribute to the development of the younger generation. Since this neighbourhood faces issues such as drug abuse, violence, low maintenance and on top of that there is a sense of the neighbourhood being looked down upon by the municipality and not getting the same attention and development opportunities as other areas in Liège. Seeing that there only 3 playgrounds in the total site area and little to know youth hangouts, the lack of investment in social amenities seems also true for the young generation. During my process the importance as well as the current absence of nature became apparant and took on a large role in the project. Theories on psychological development related to nature connectivity entered the research and showed potential to help the starting aim of the project. This resulted in the finalized aim to contribute to childhood development in Bressoux and Droixhe by strengthening nature connectivity



Invisible cities

For the exhibition during P1 we, as a group of 5, researched the hidden socio-cultural parts of the neighbourhood Droixhe/Bressoux. Aiming to bring as many stories, lives and hidden social structures to the light as possible. During this process of interviewing, visiting the area, observing and participating we documented our progress and findings in a growing collage of themes, photos, character sketches and news stories.

The board gave us the freedom to re-organize our informatino constantly, thus finding different ways of looking at our outcomes and spotting relations. This Board was eventually translated into a large model showing the facades of important buildings in our research where behind every facade the story, experience or interview was depicted. Making the invisible visible, but only when one dares and puts in the effort to look beyond the facade.



Invisible cities collage
The stories of Bressoux and Droixhe
- part of the 'black hill city' exhibition

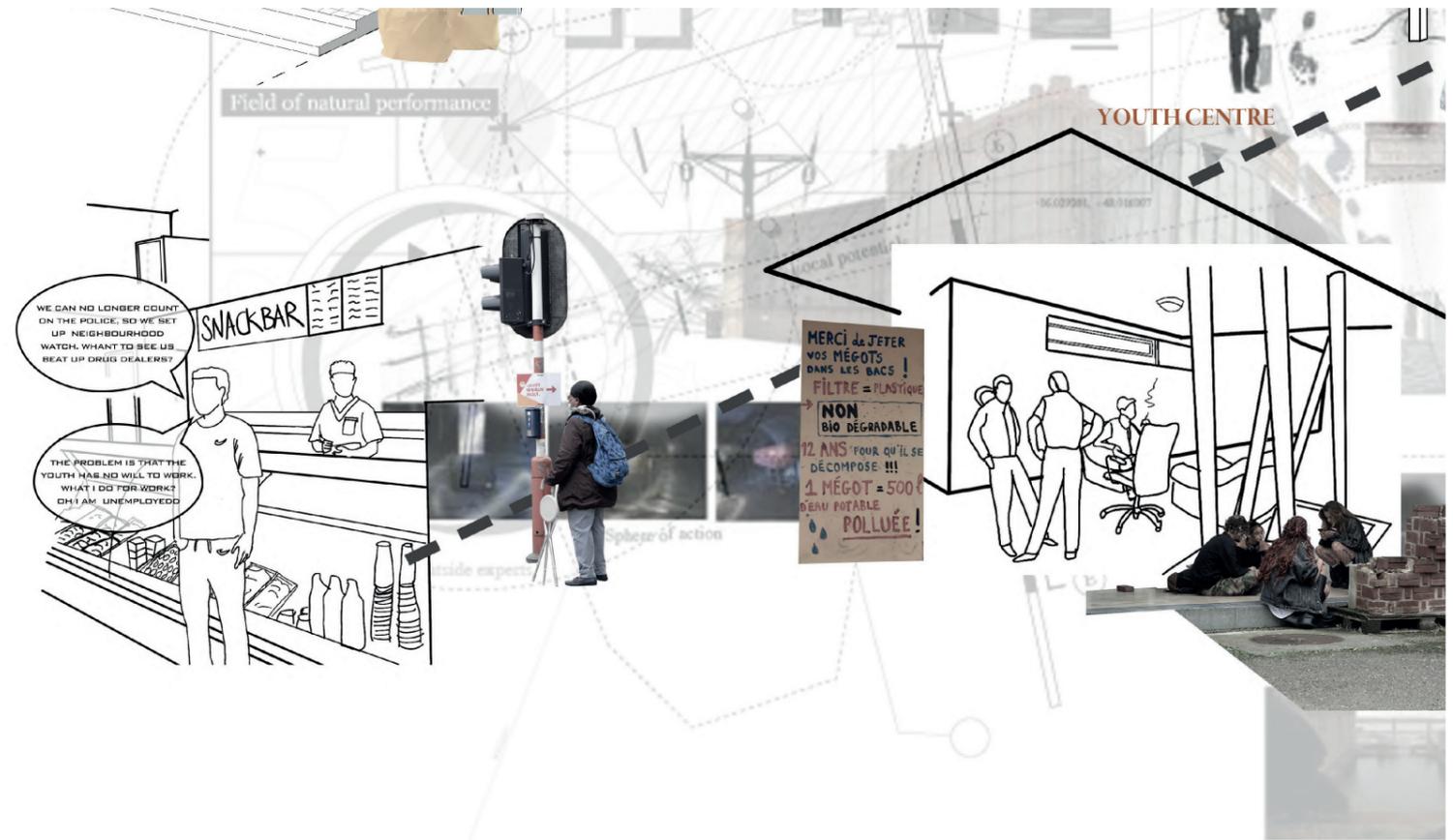


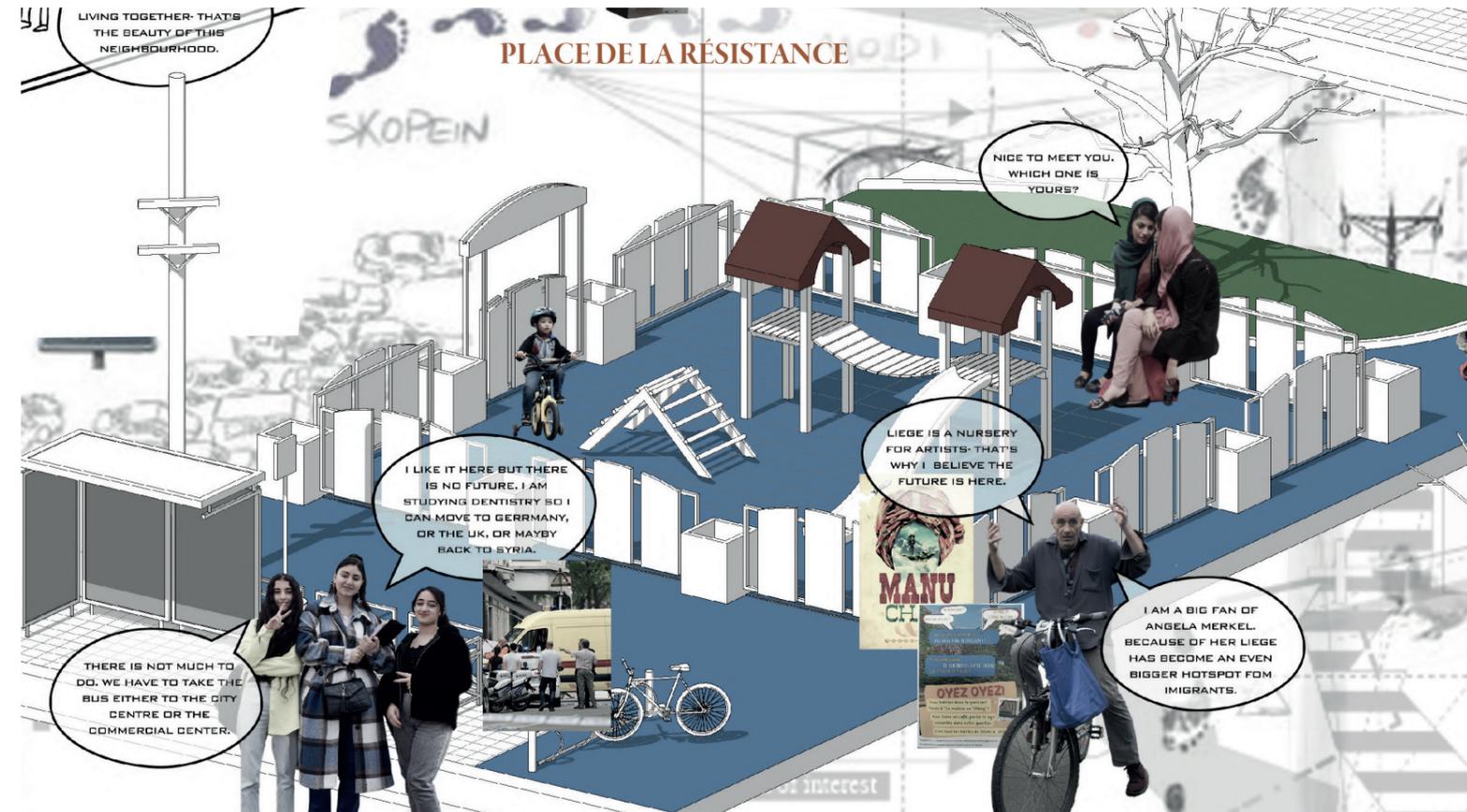




Closed down youth centre - Droixhe

Need for spaces (to appropriate), for all youth





Place de Résistance - Bressoux

one of the few (paved) playgrounds where (mostly) mothers meet



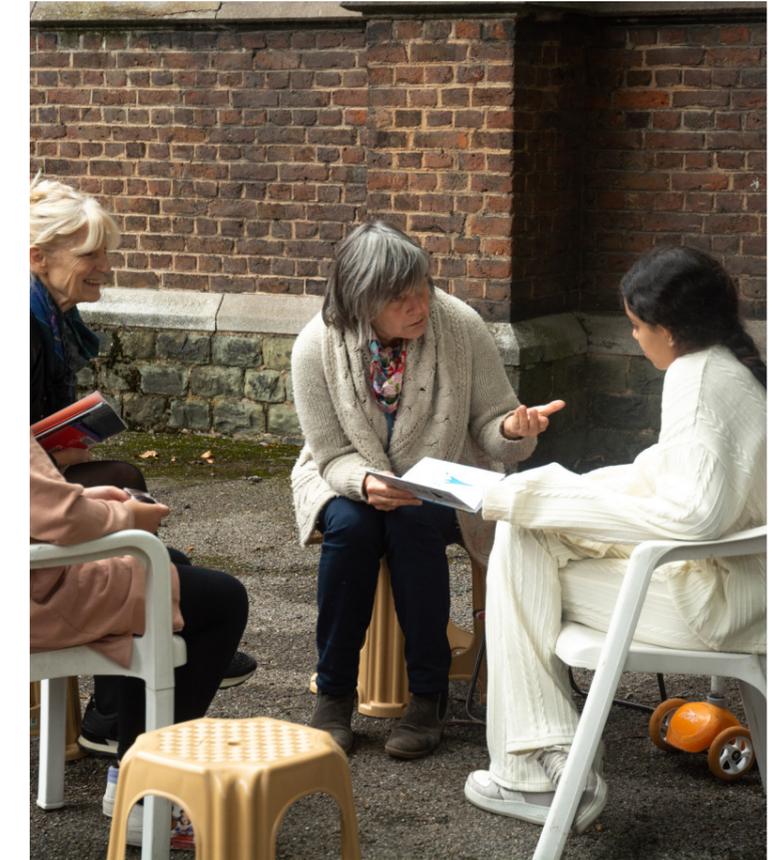
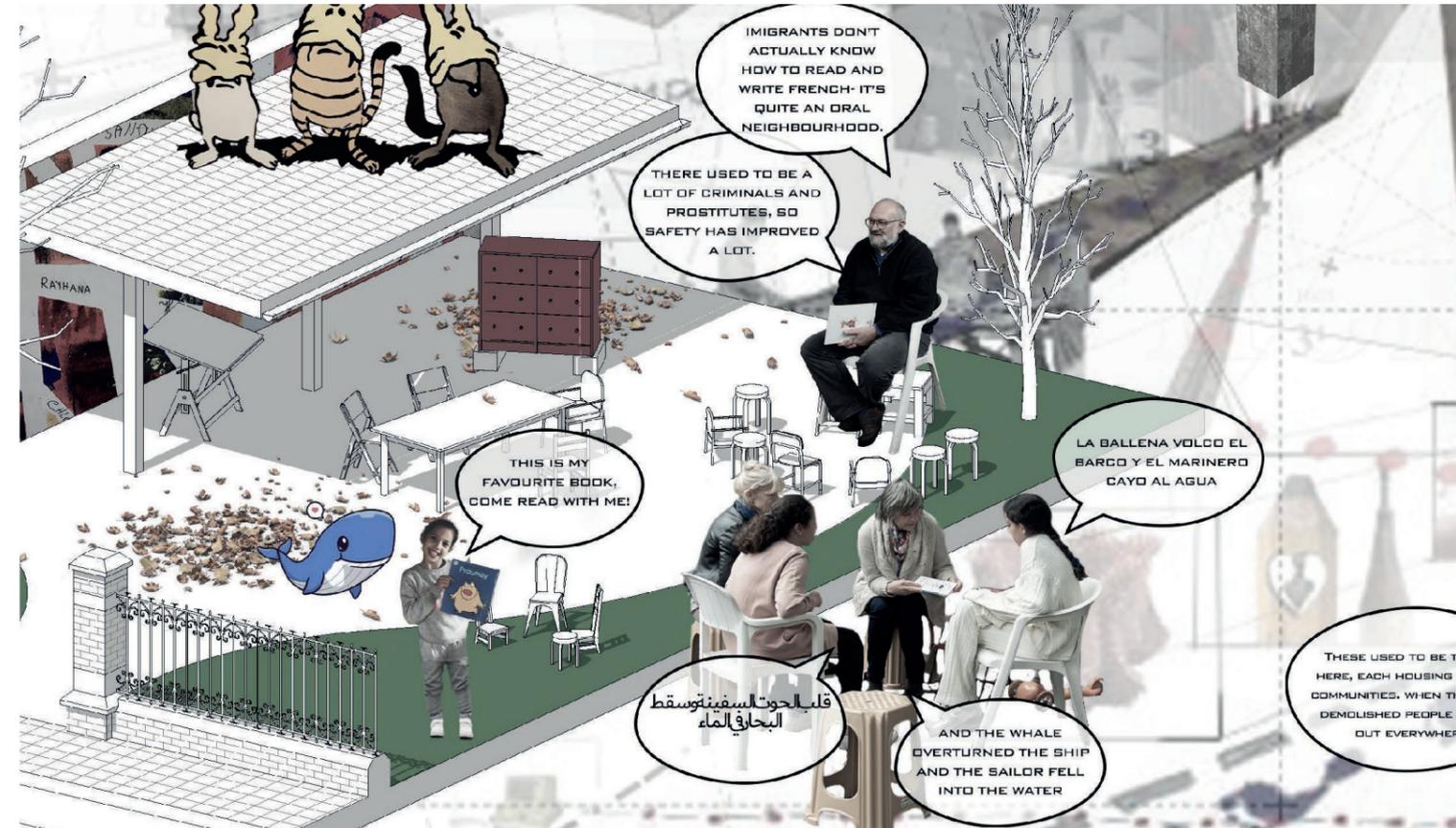


Mosque - Bressoux

Pride and importance towards the development of children

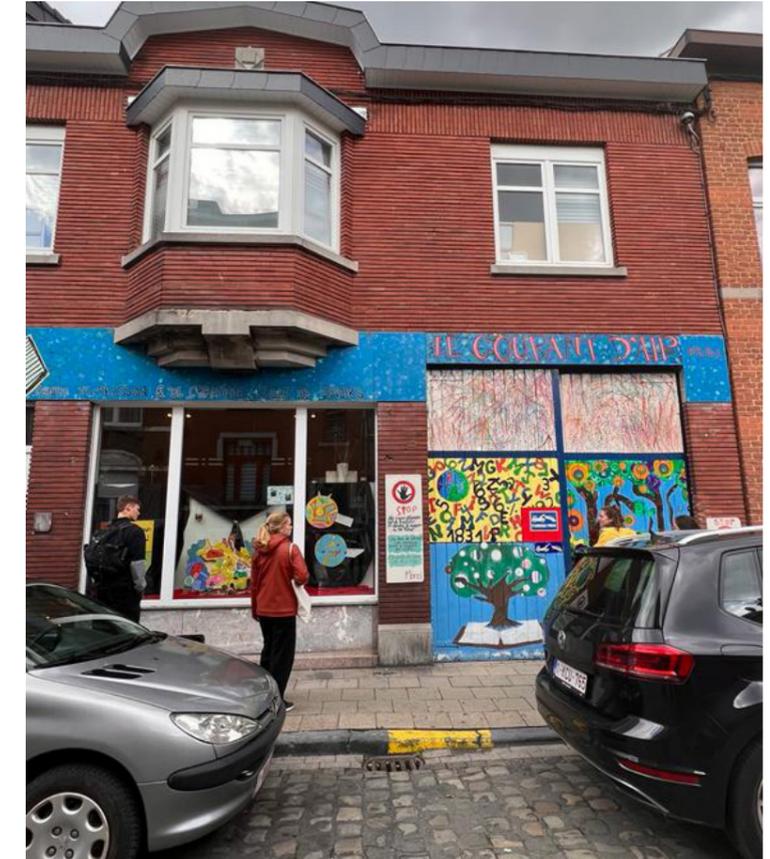
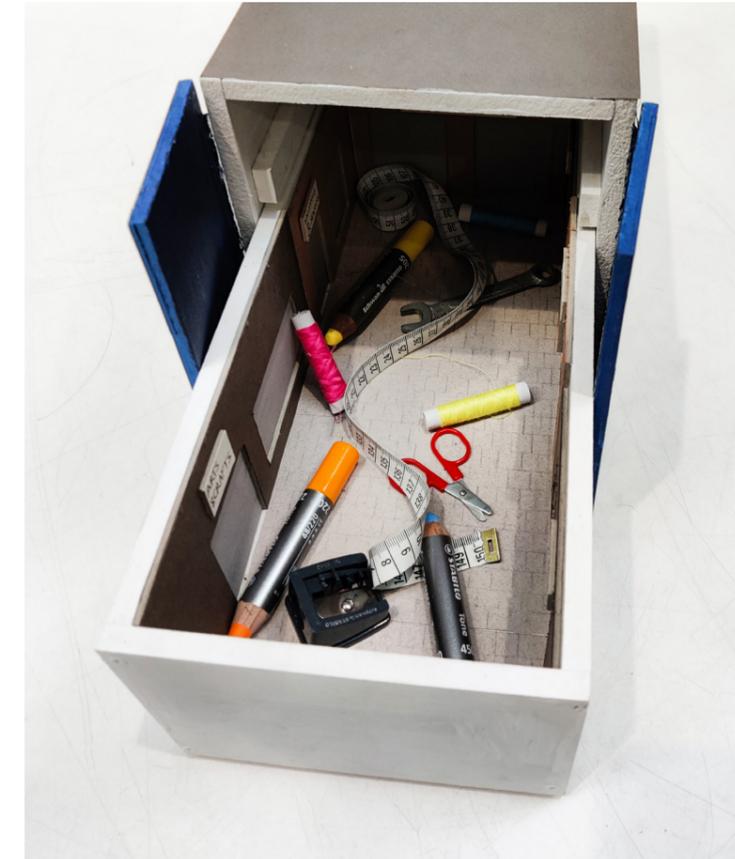


Helping children from low income households to read and understand books better



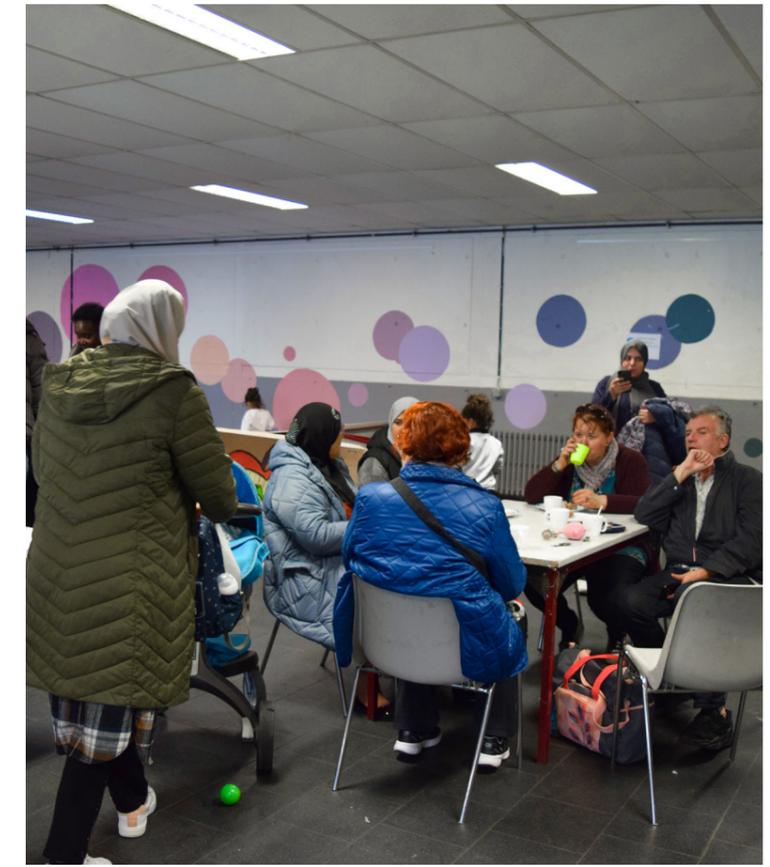
A.S.B.L. Courant d'Air - Bressoux

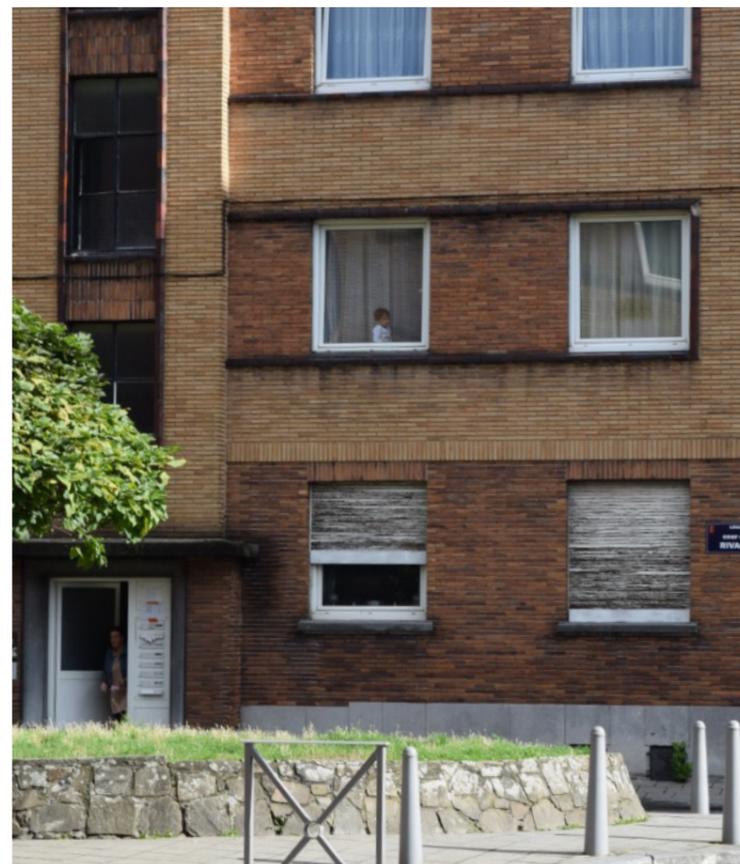
Organizing activities for children from low income households





l'Amis de l'Étang - Droixhe
Organizing community events and gatherings

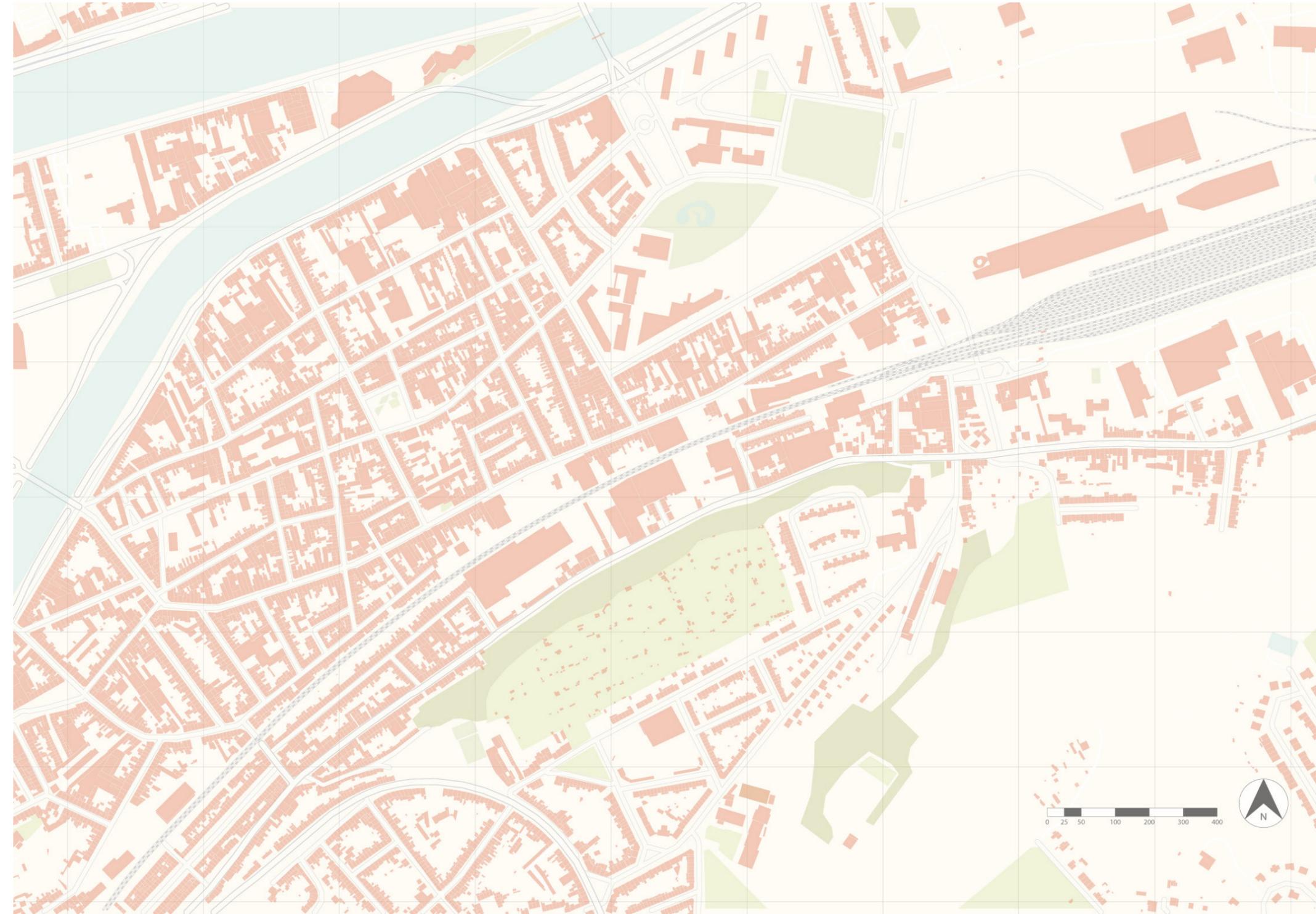




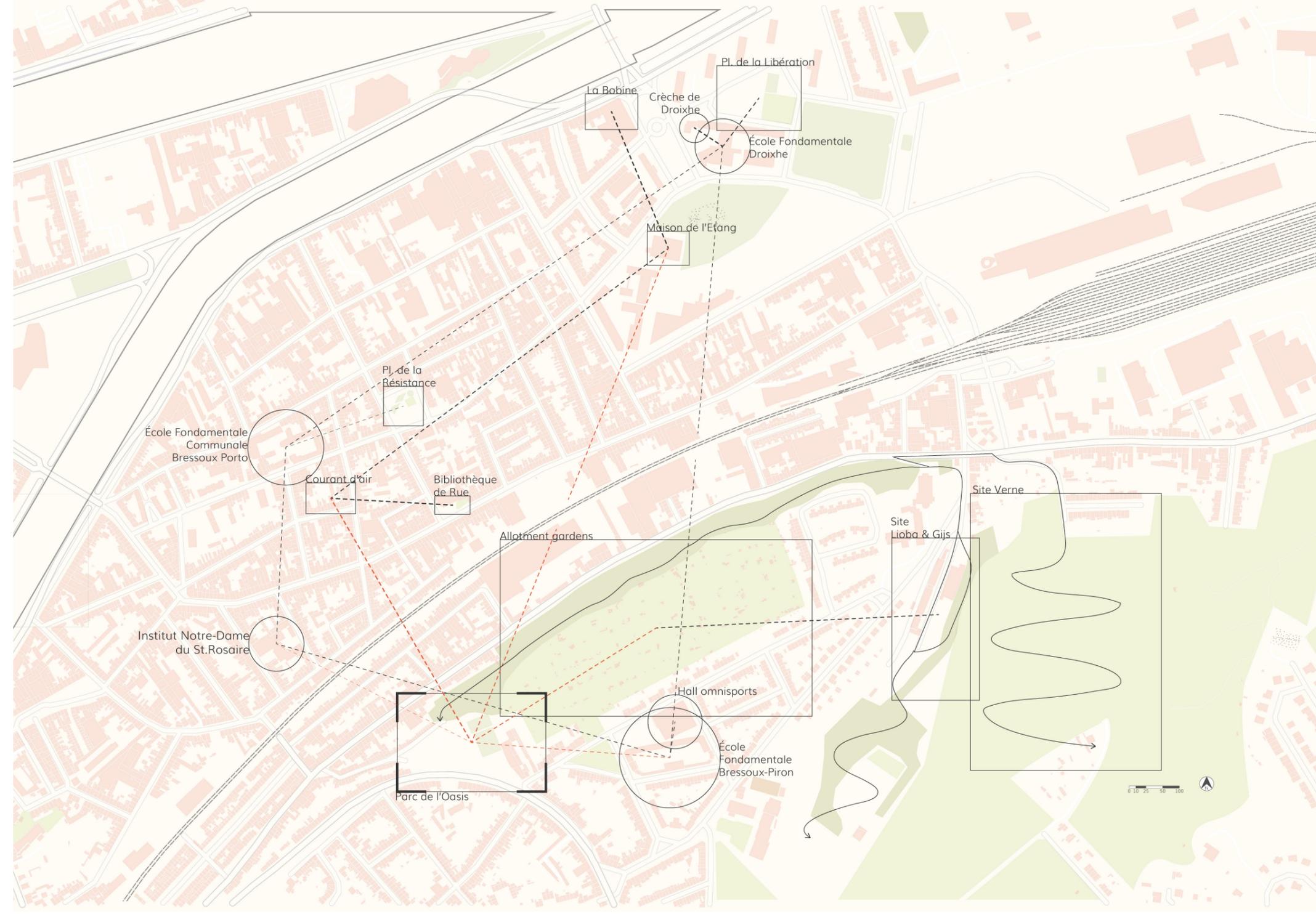
Goal:

Create a safe gathering/leisure space for the younger generation of Droixhe and Bressoux where they get opportunities to develop themselves aside from home and school

Overview Bressoux and Droixhe

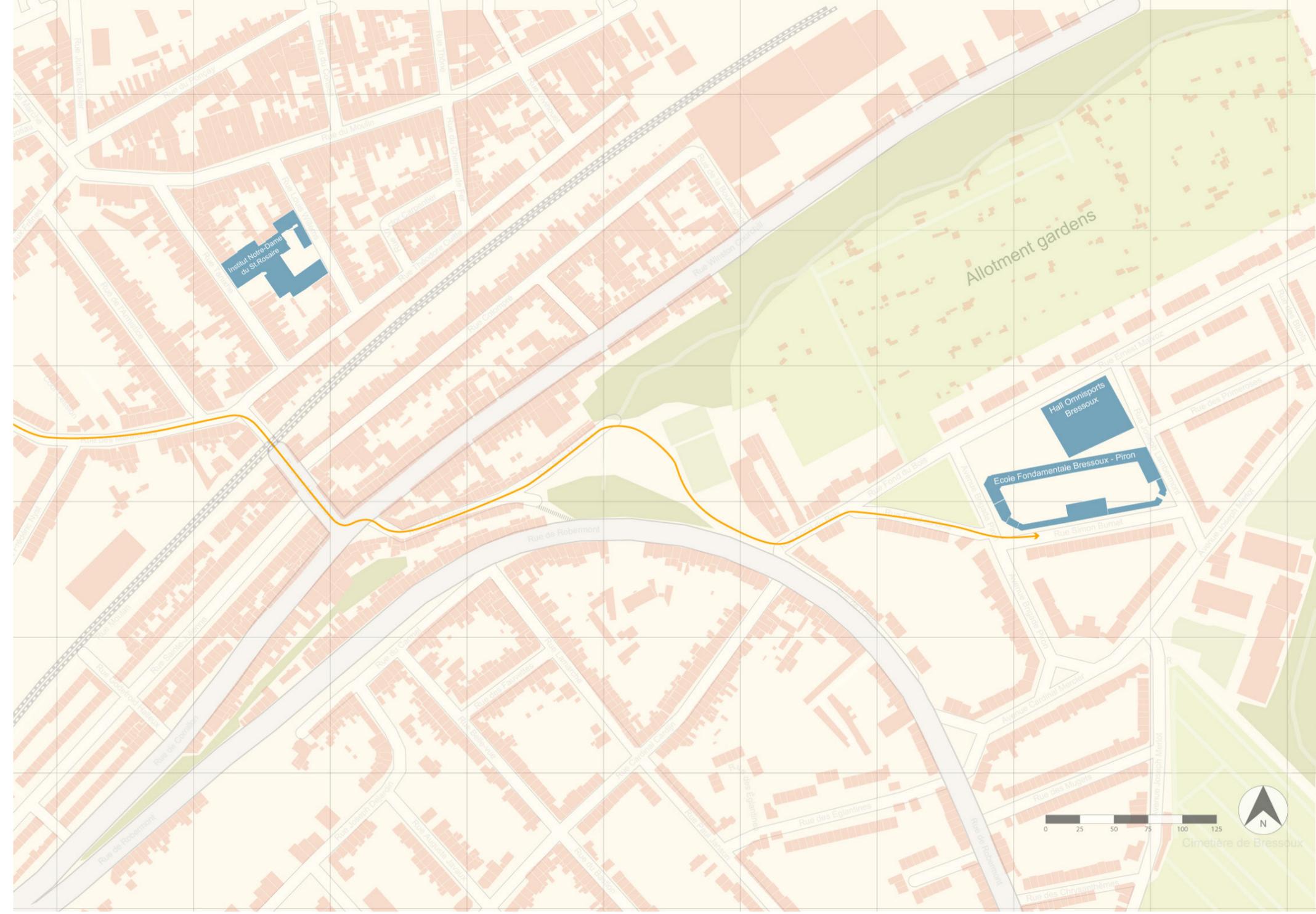


Socio-spatial connections and future possible connections in relation to the site



Direct routing and functional relations

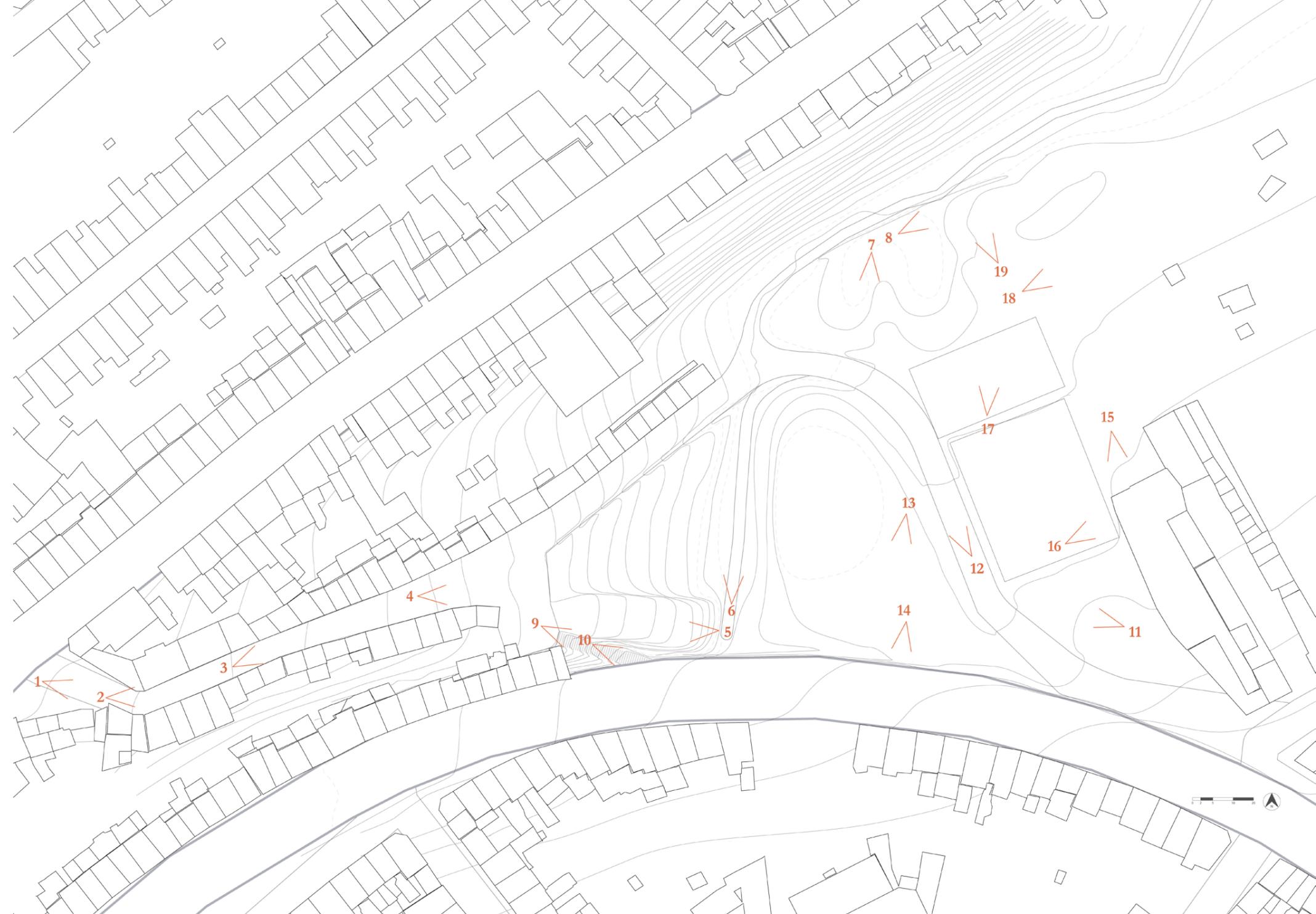
Project site



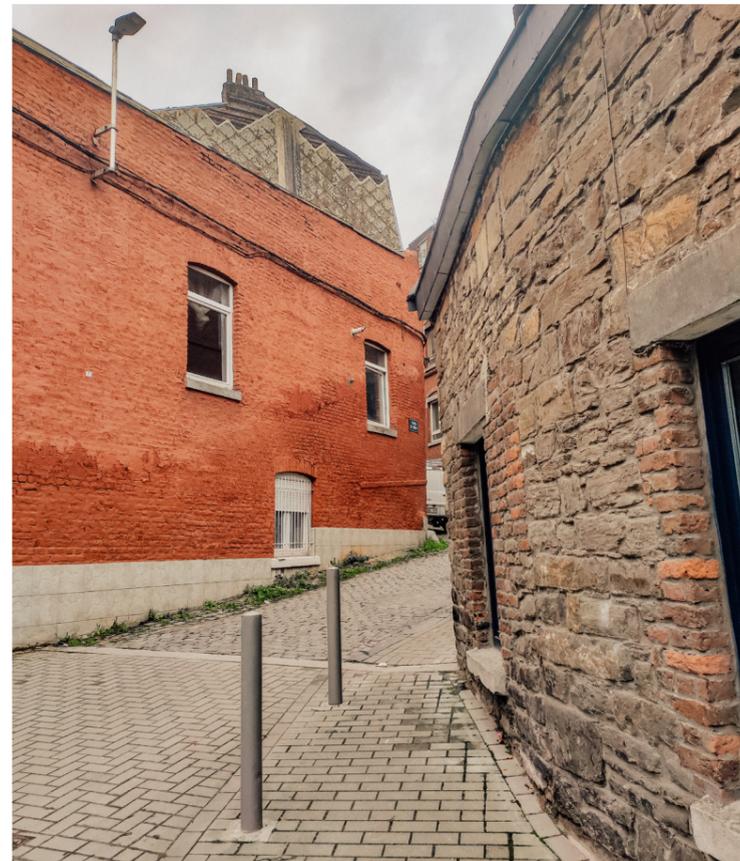
Close-up site 'Parc de l'Oasis'
Heightlines, existing structures and natural environment



Photo reportage
Parc de l'Oasis



1



2

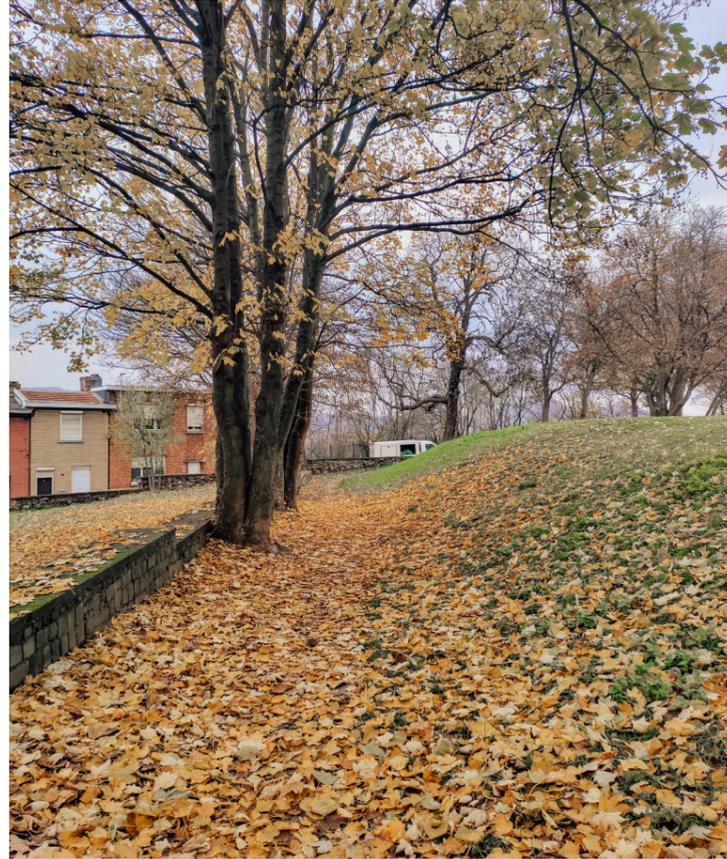


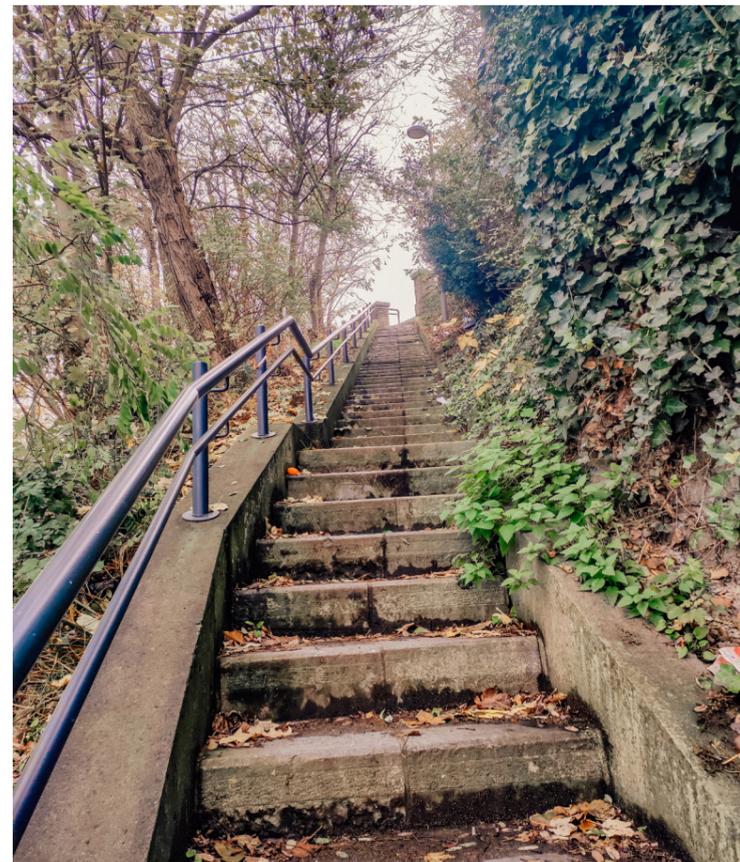
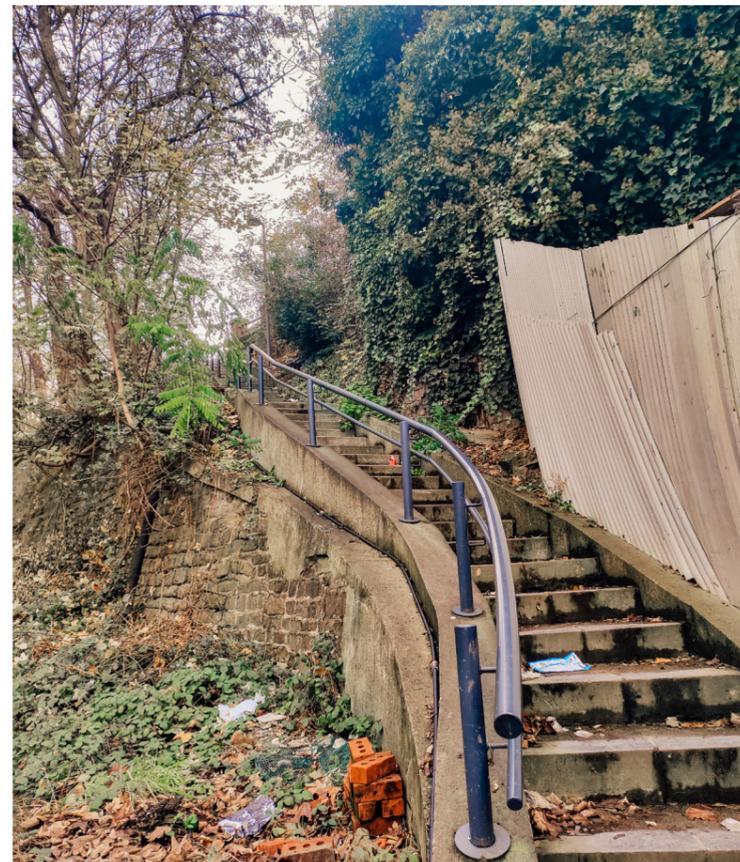
3



4











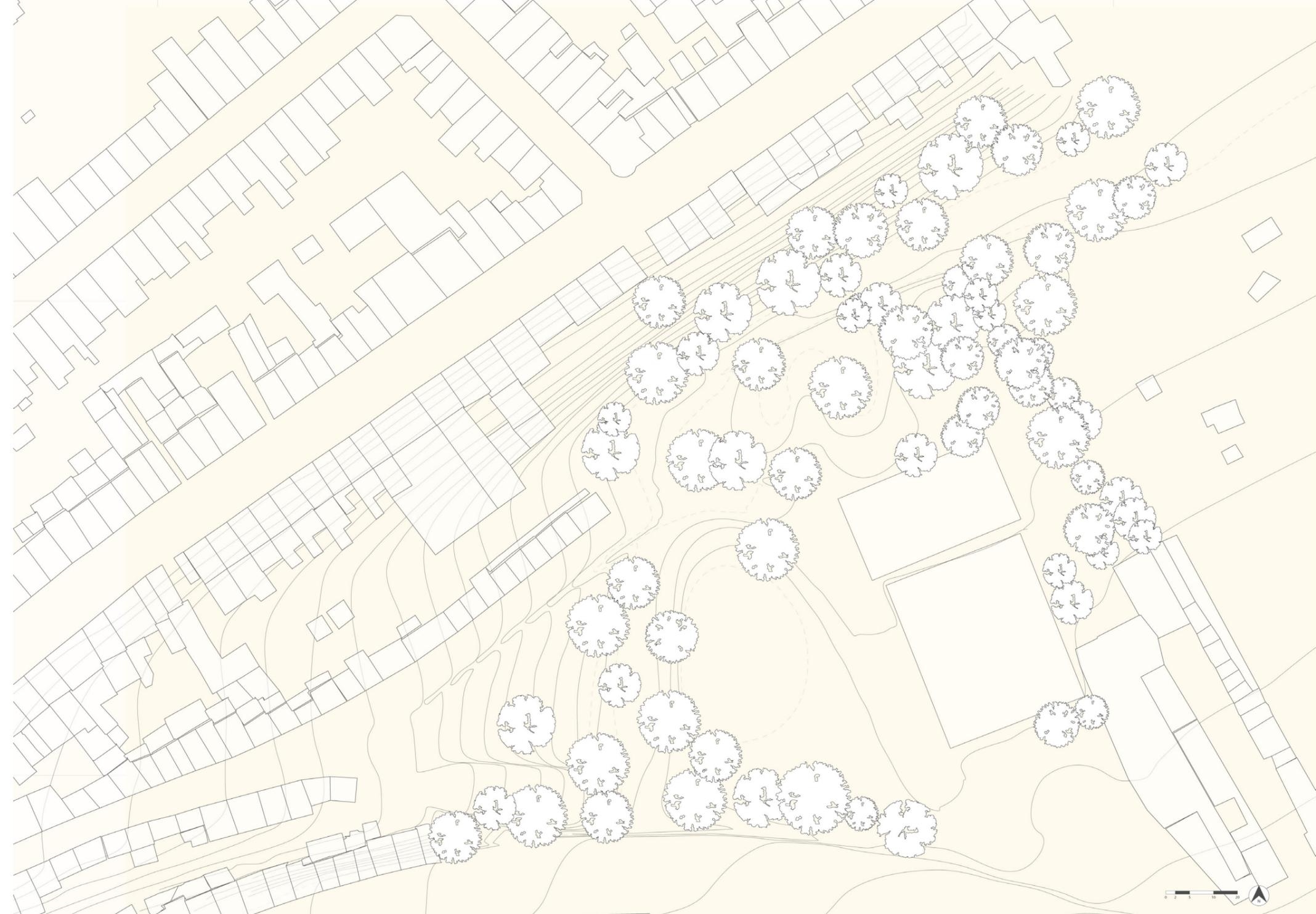


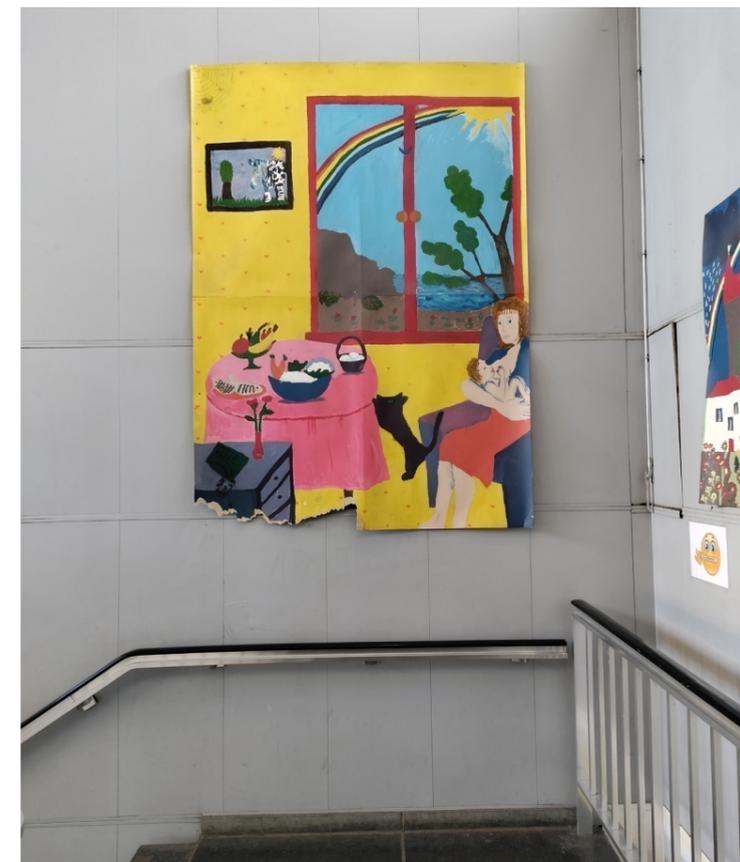


Existing green spaces
- Bressoux & Droixhe



Existing trees
- Parc de l'Oasis





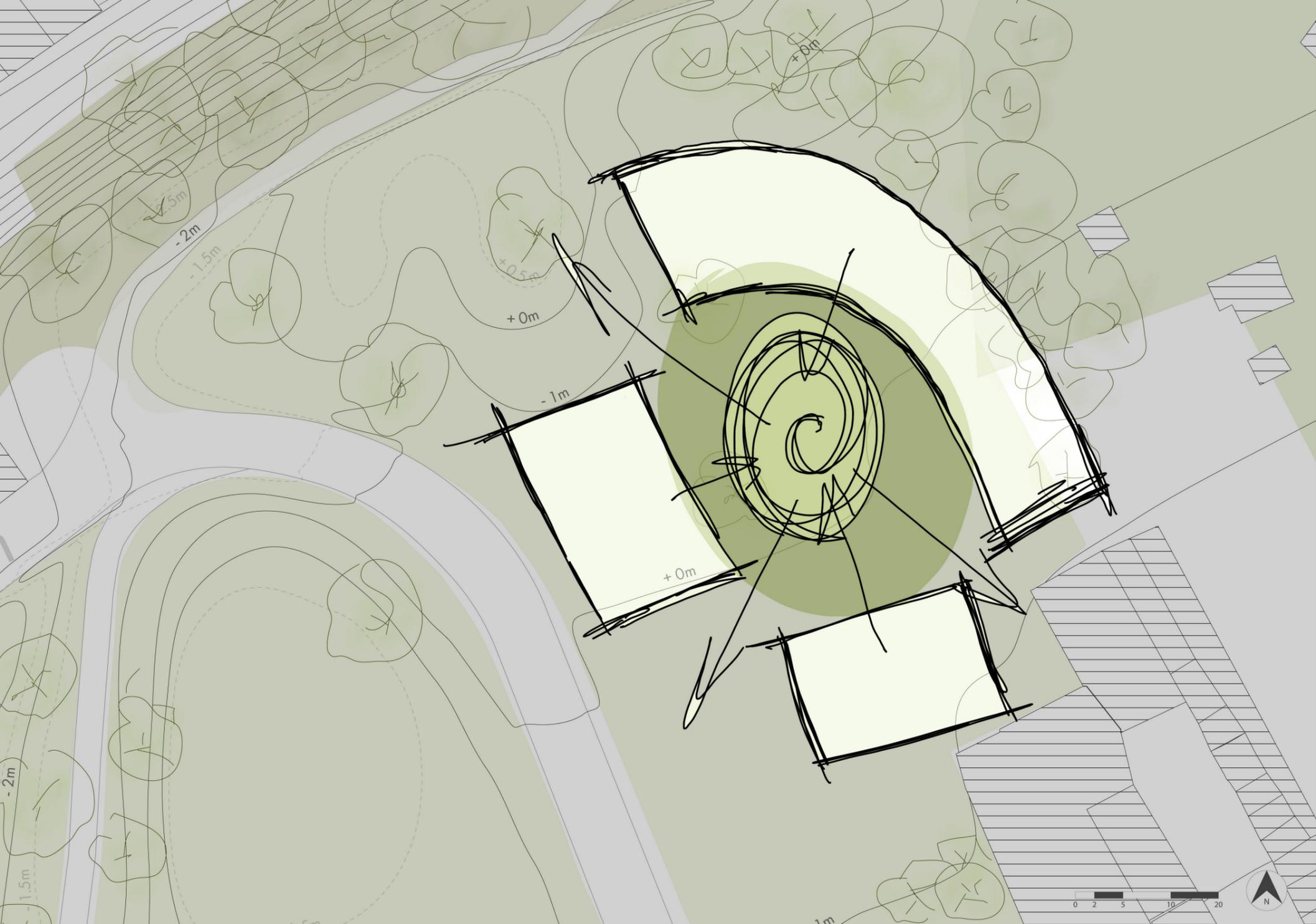
Workshop 'What is nature?'





Building

P2
the courtyard





Total estimated surface area (inside area or roofsurface) **+/- 2.065 m²**

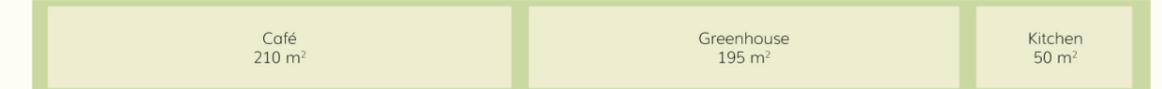
Creative cluster +/- 460 m²



Sports +/- 395 m²



Food cluster +/- 455 m²

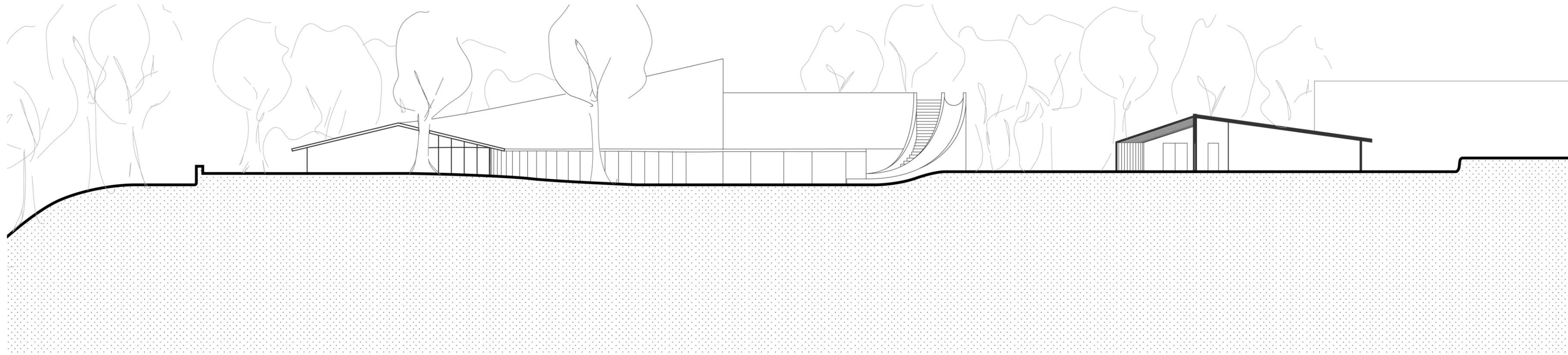


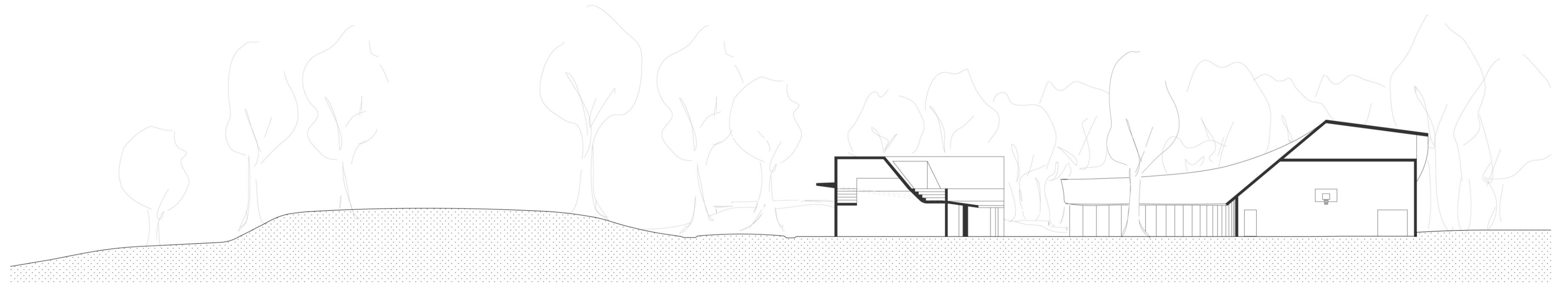
circulation, services and extra spaces +/- 390 m²

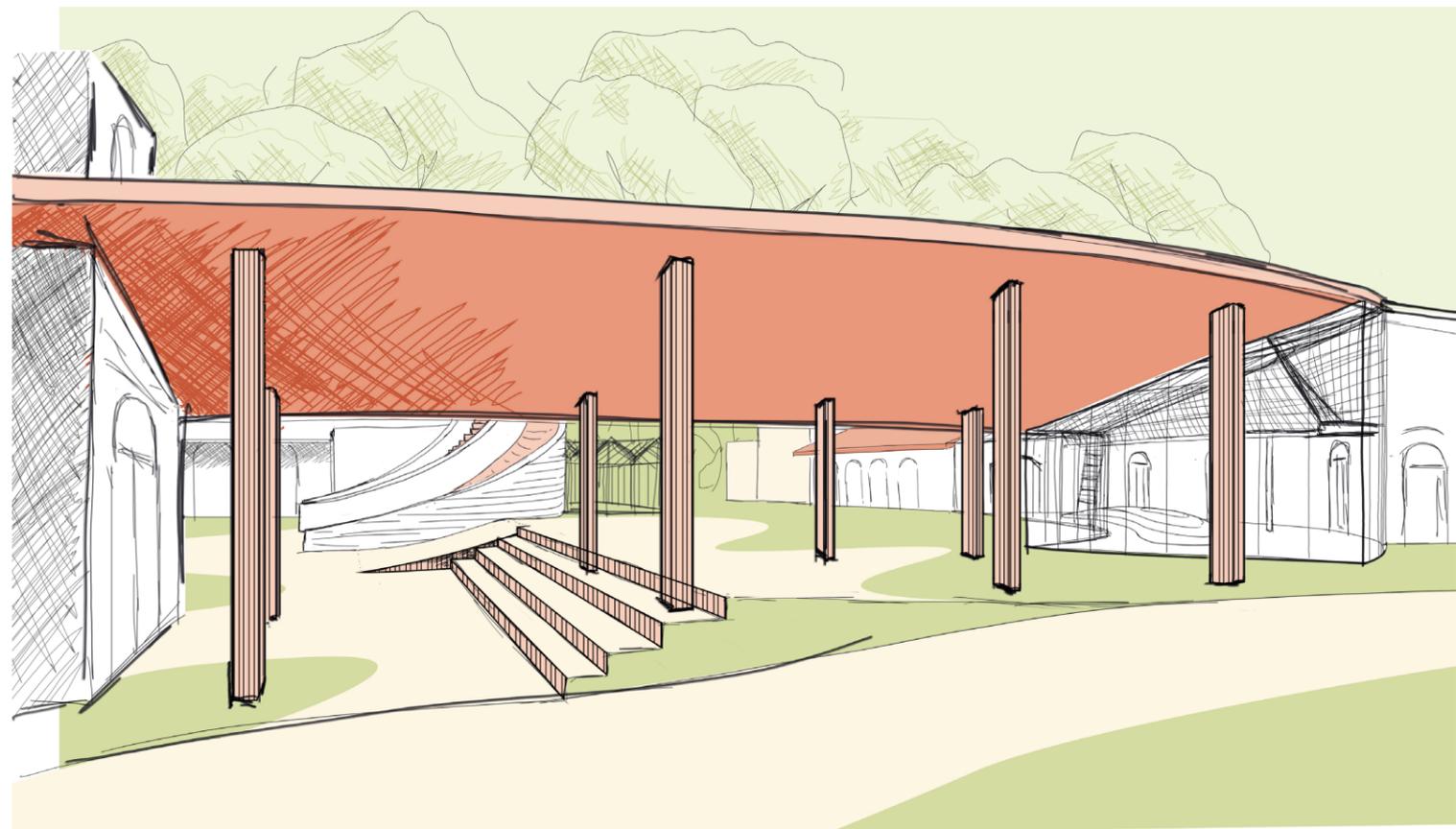
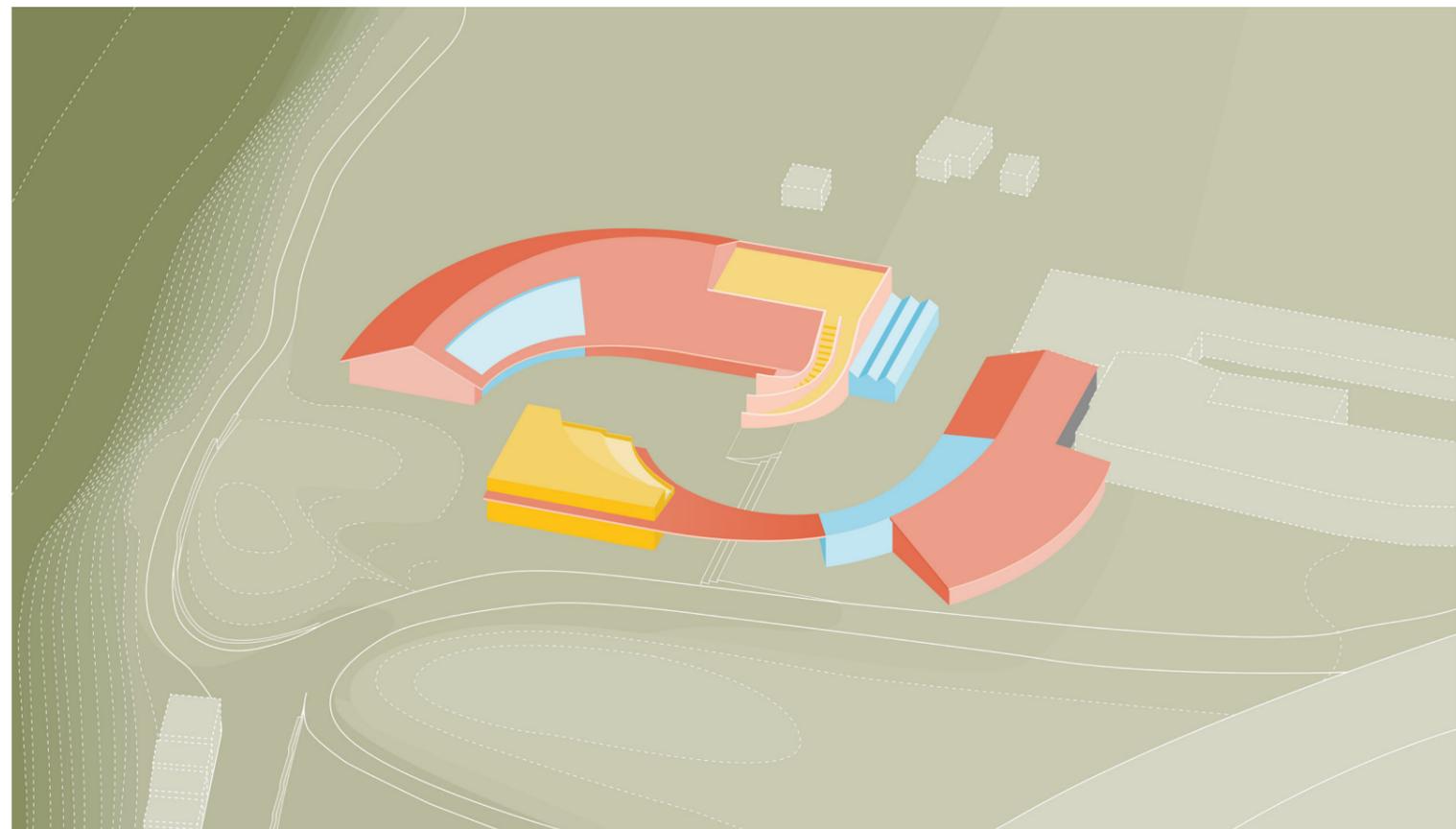


Kindergarten +/- 365 m²



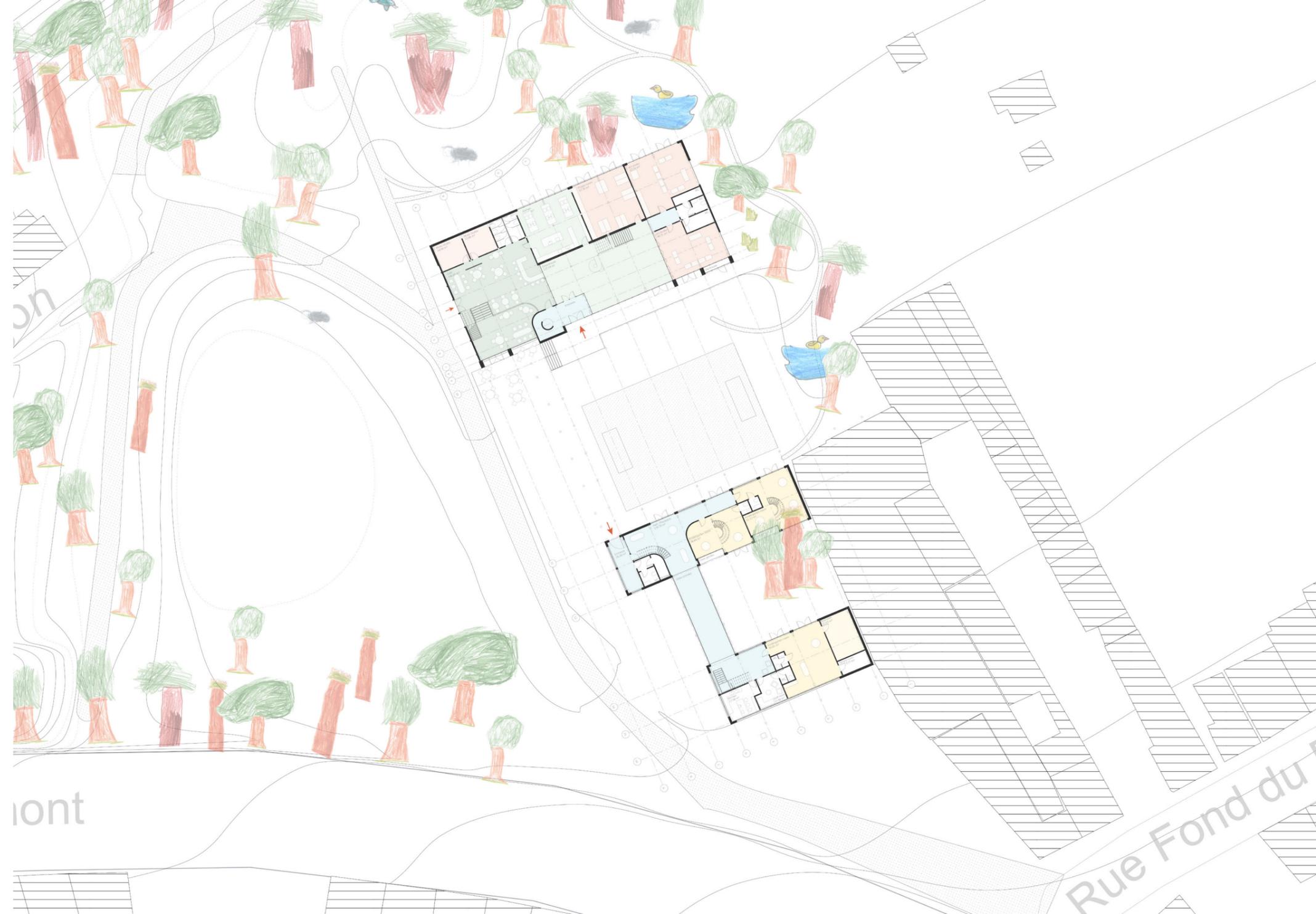


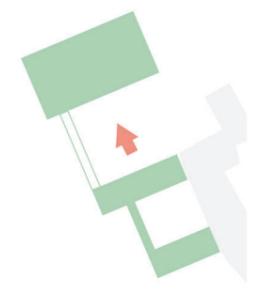


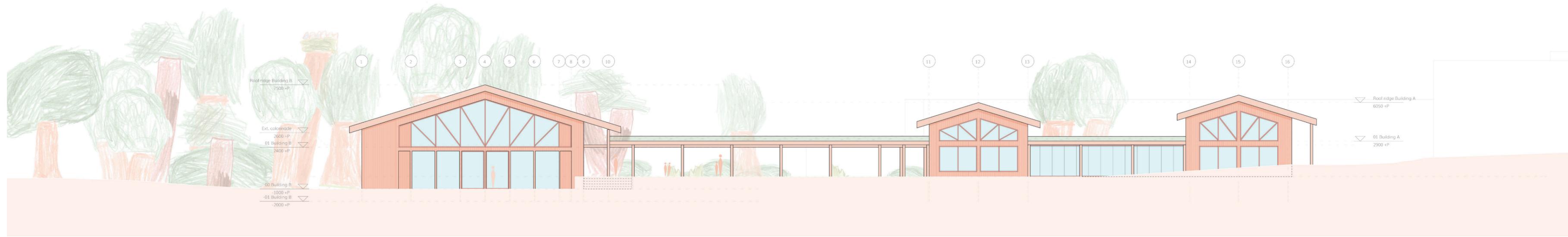


P3
Repositioning

Ground floor plan



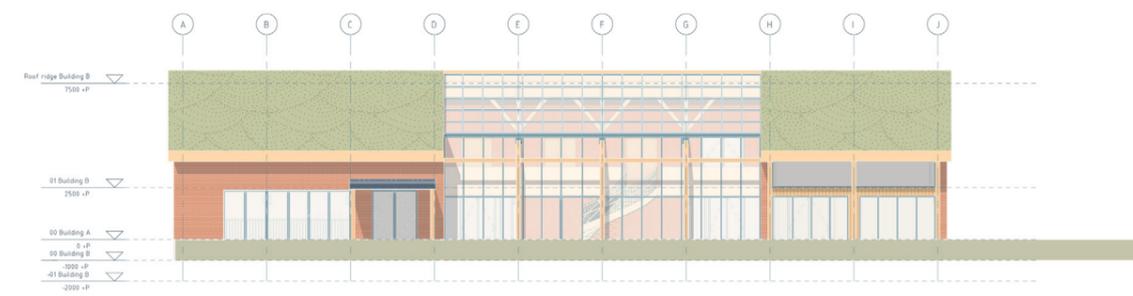
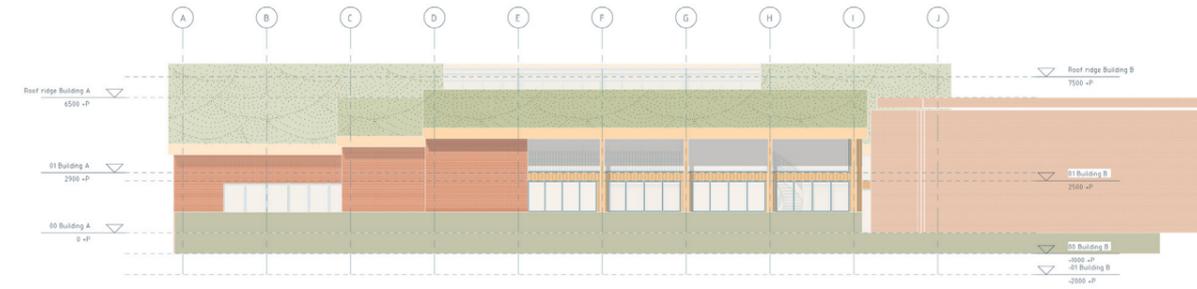
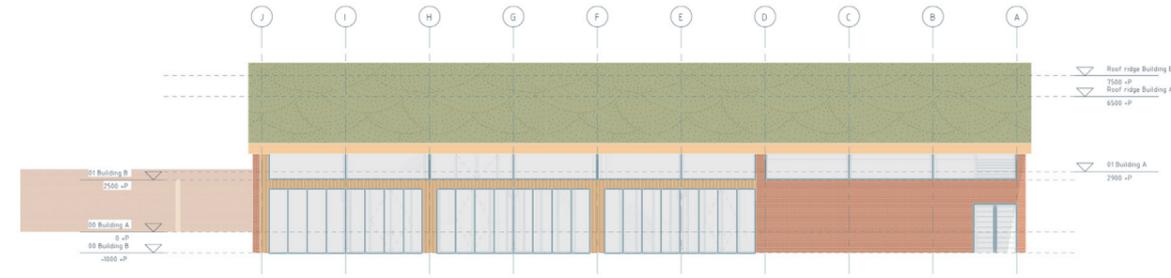




Final design
'Nurture in Nature'



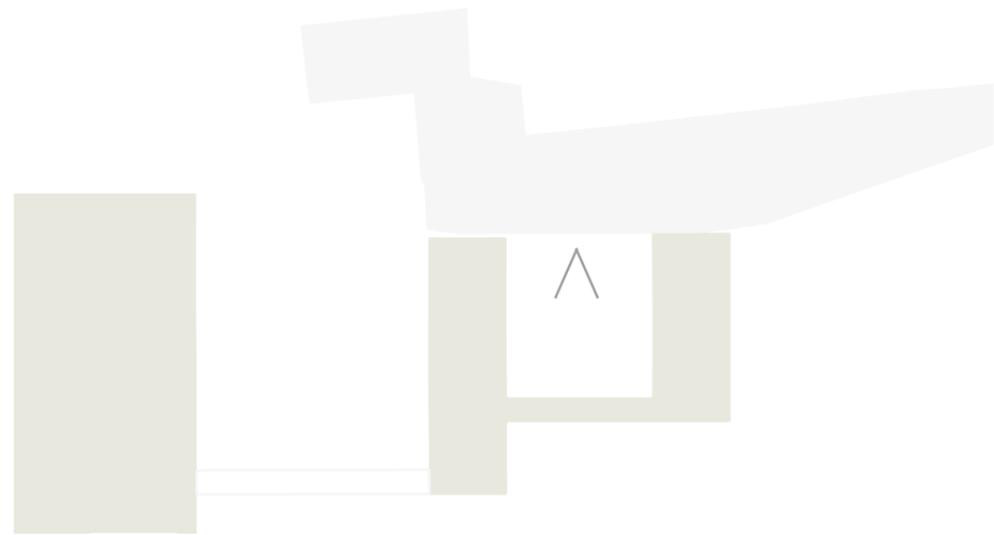


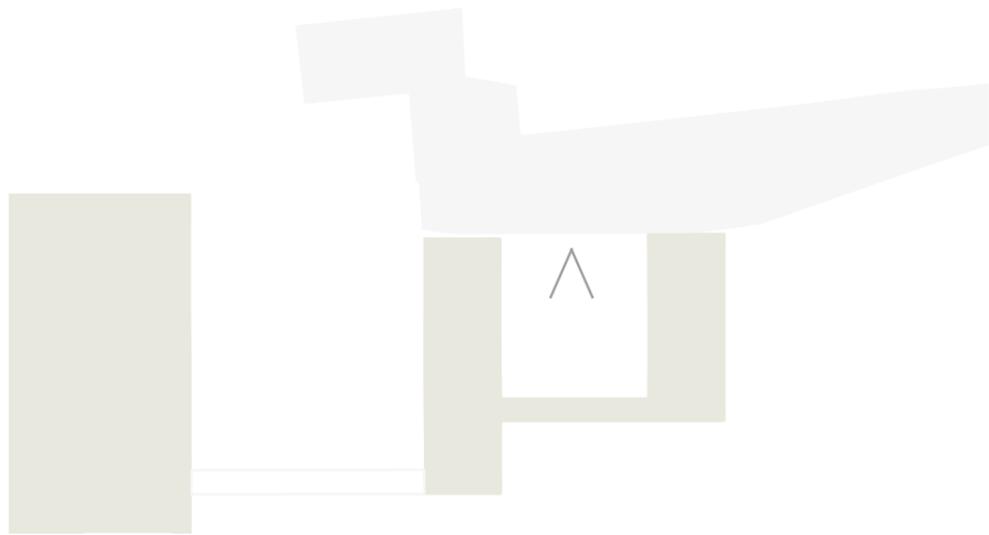






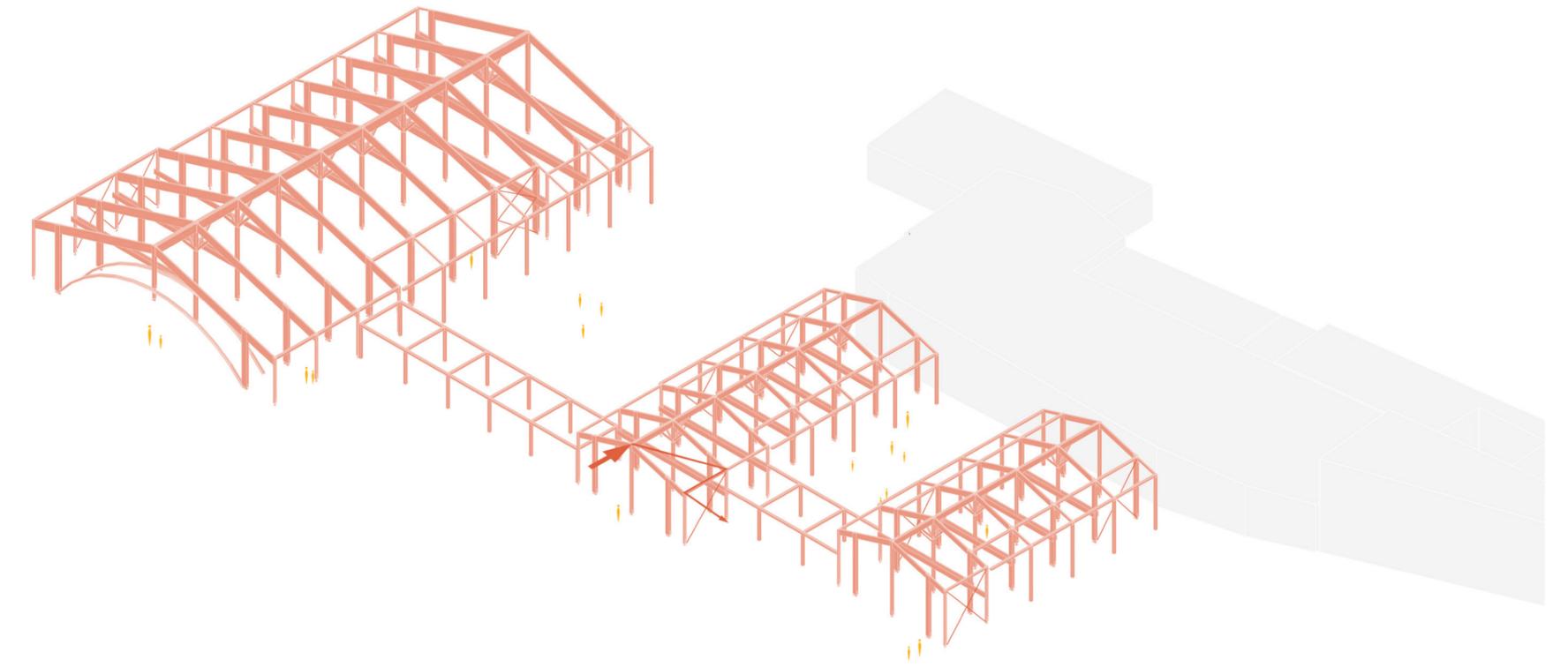
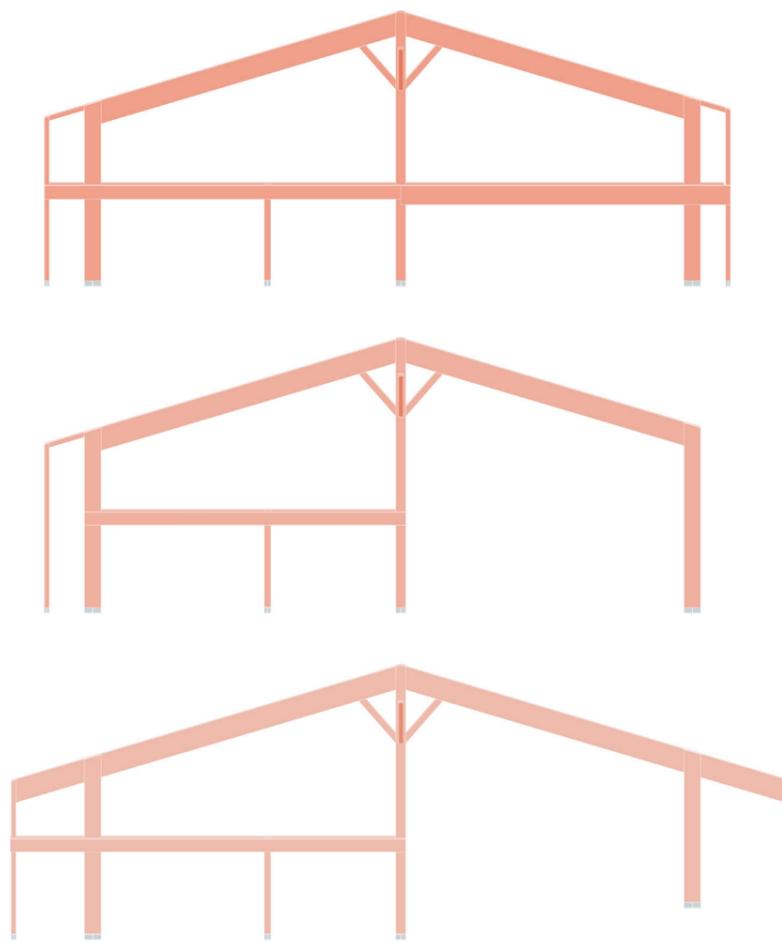


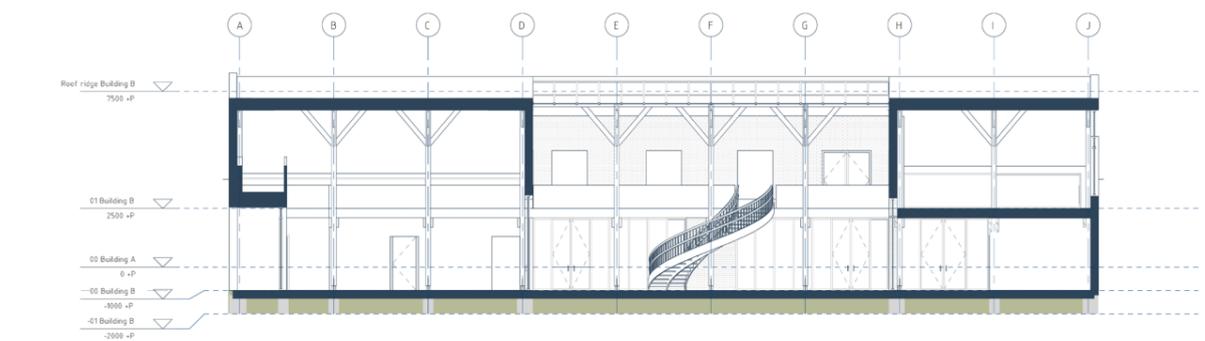
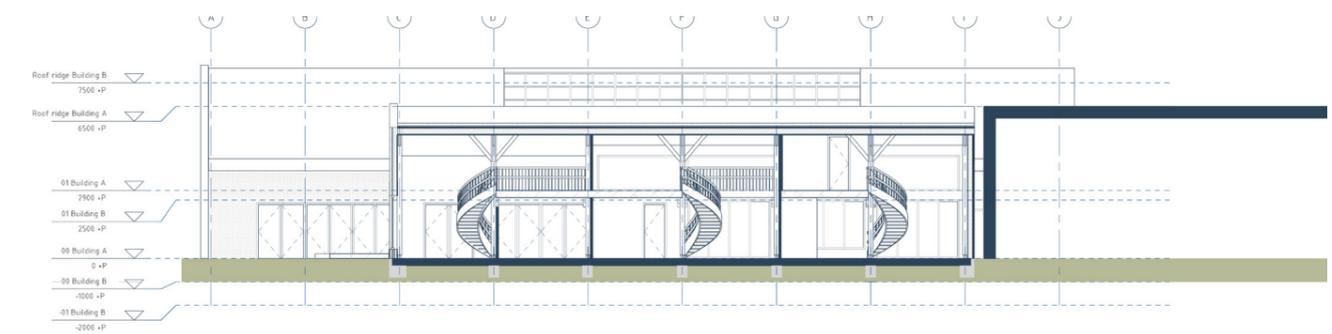
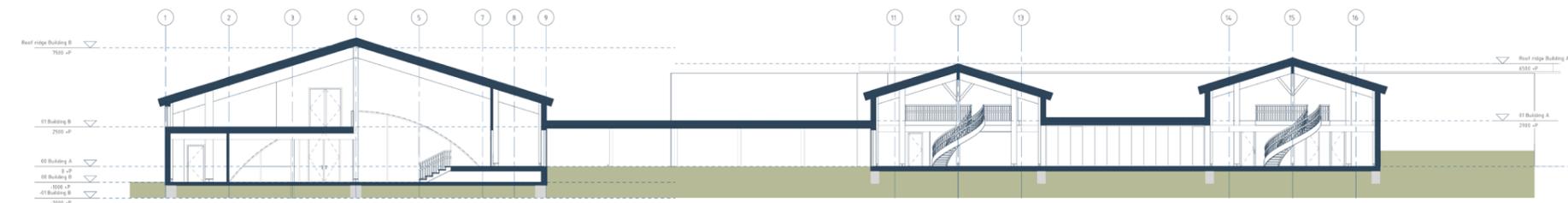


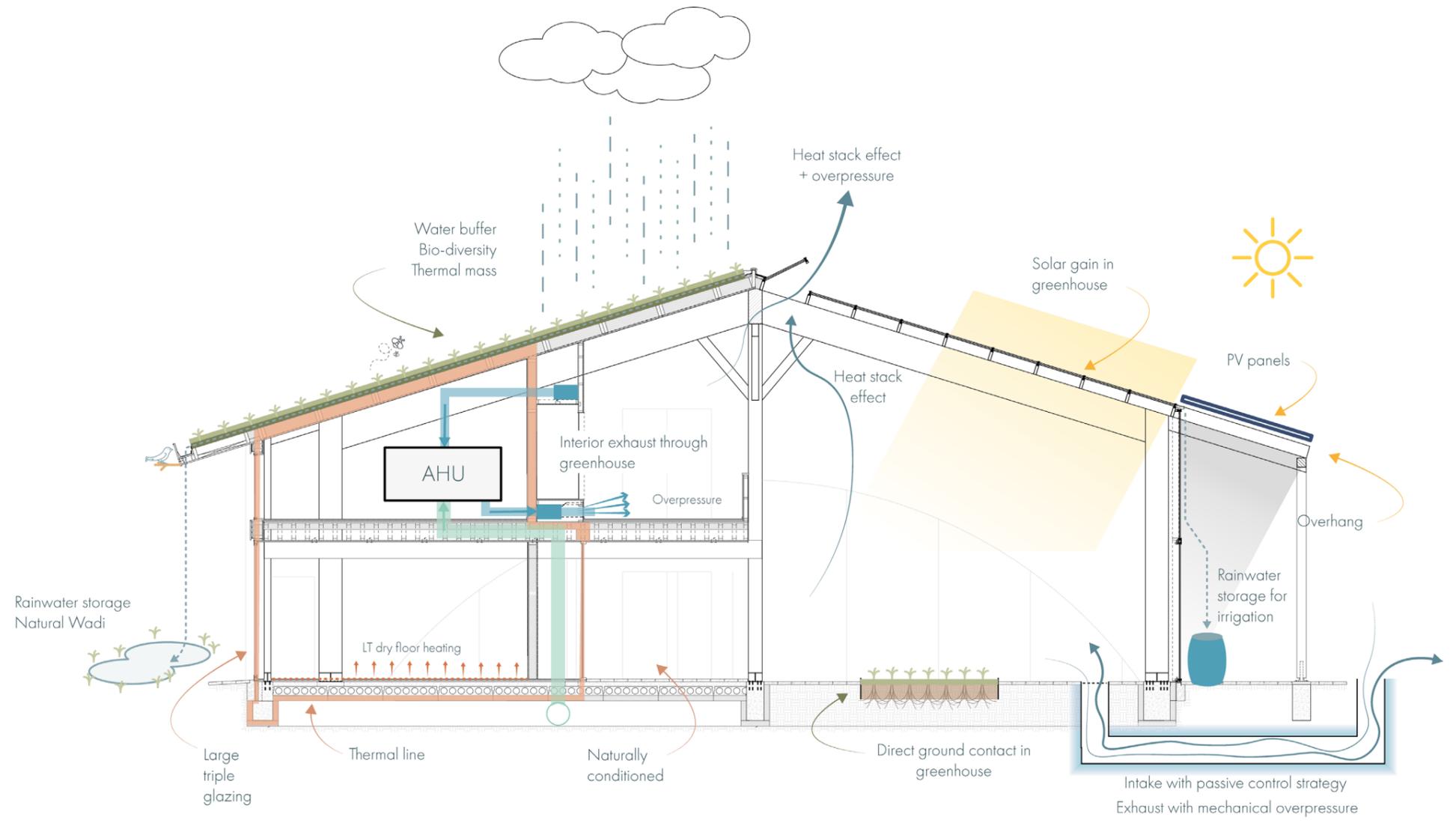


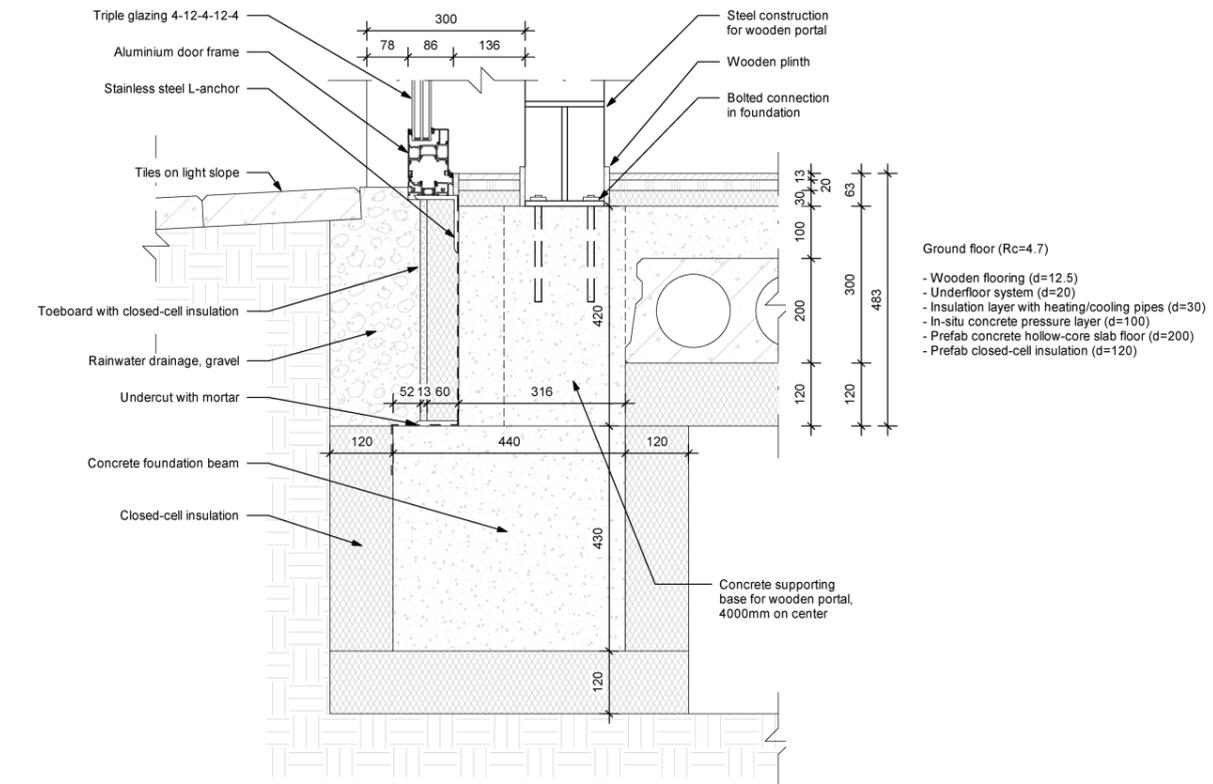
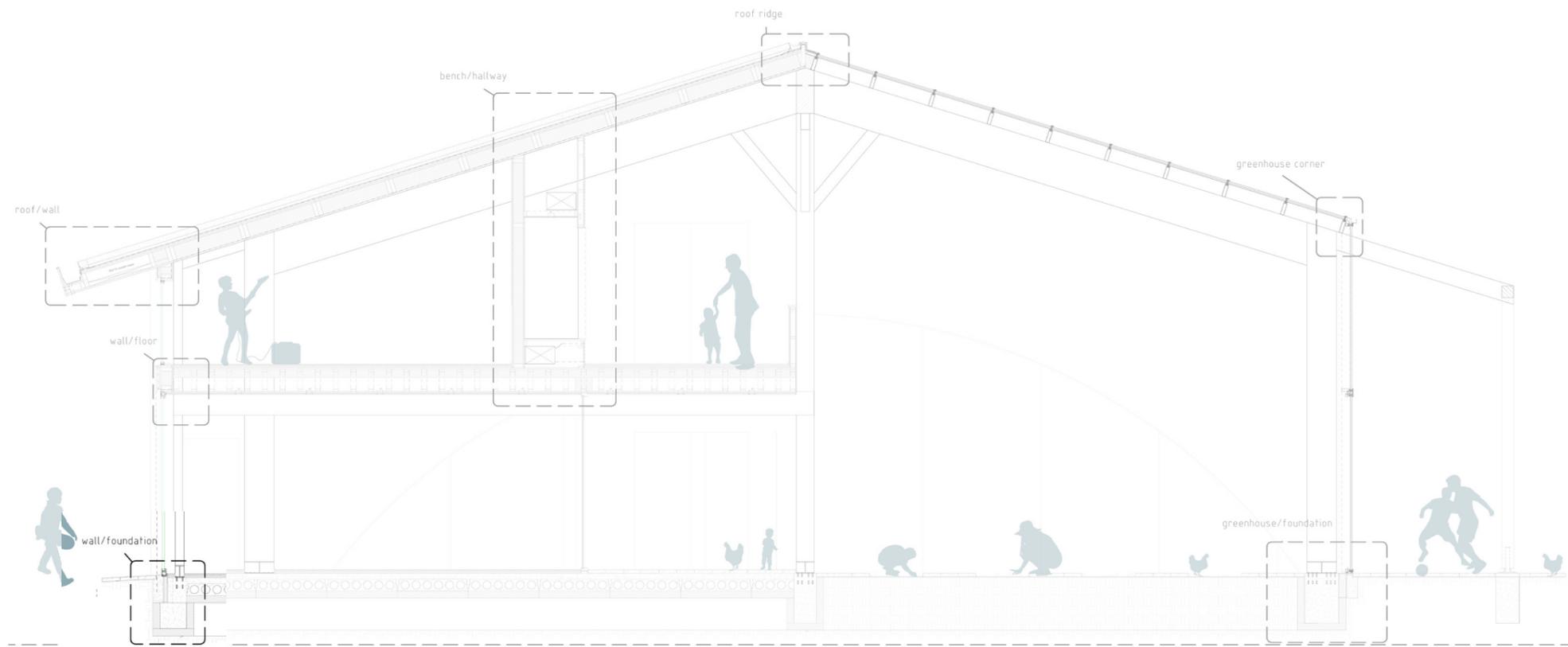


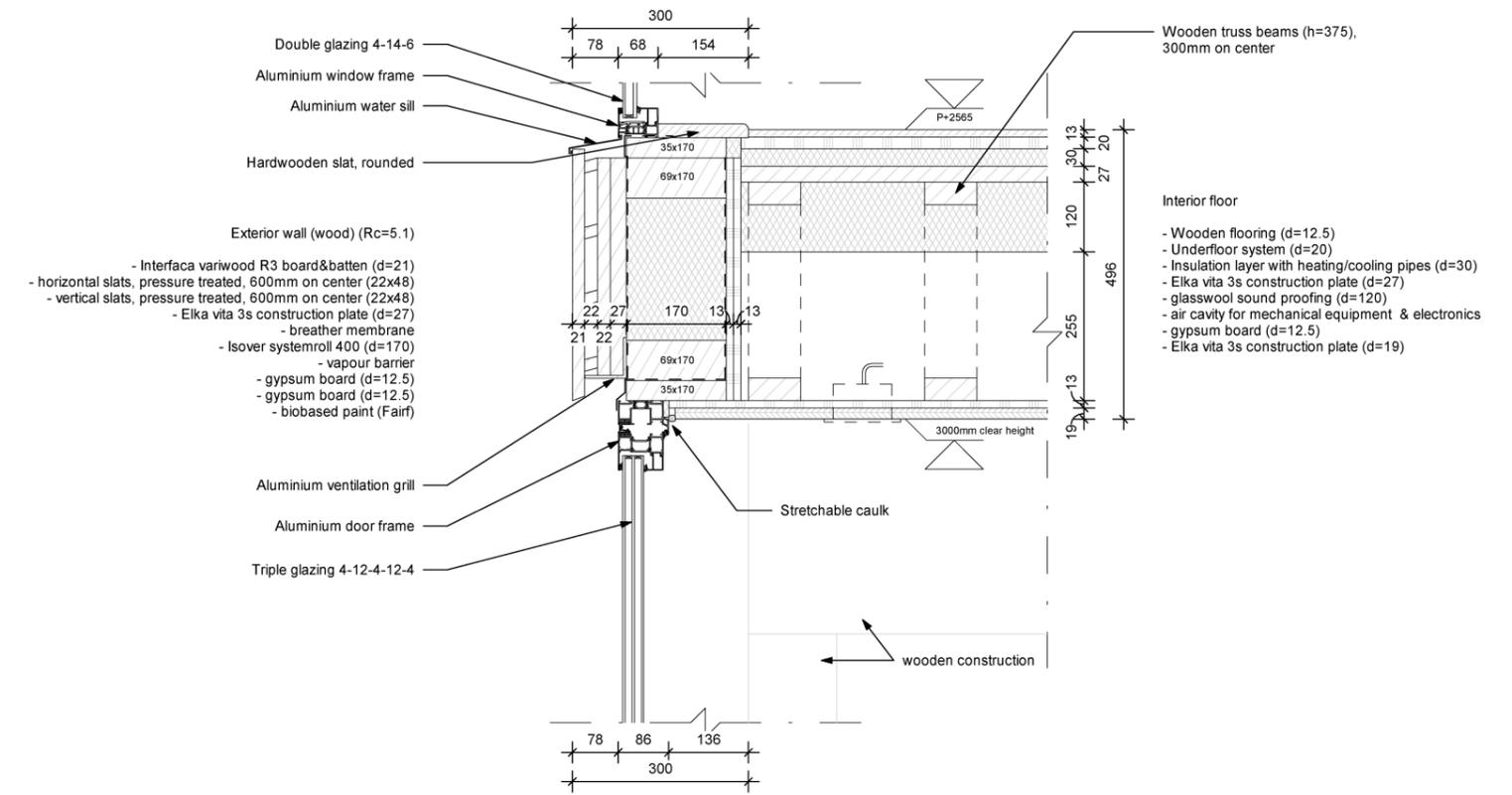
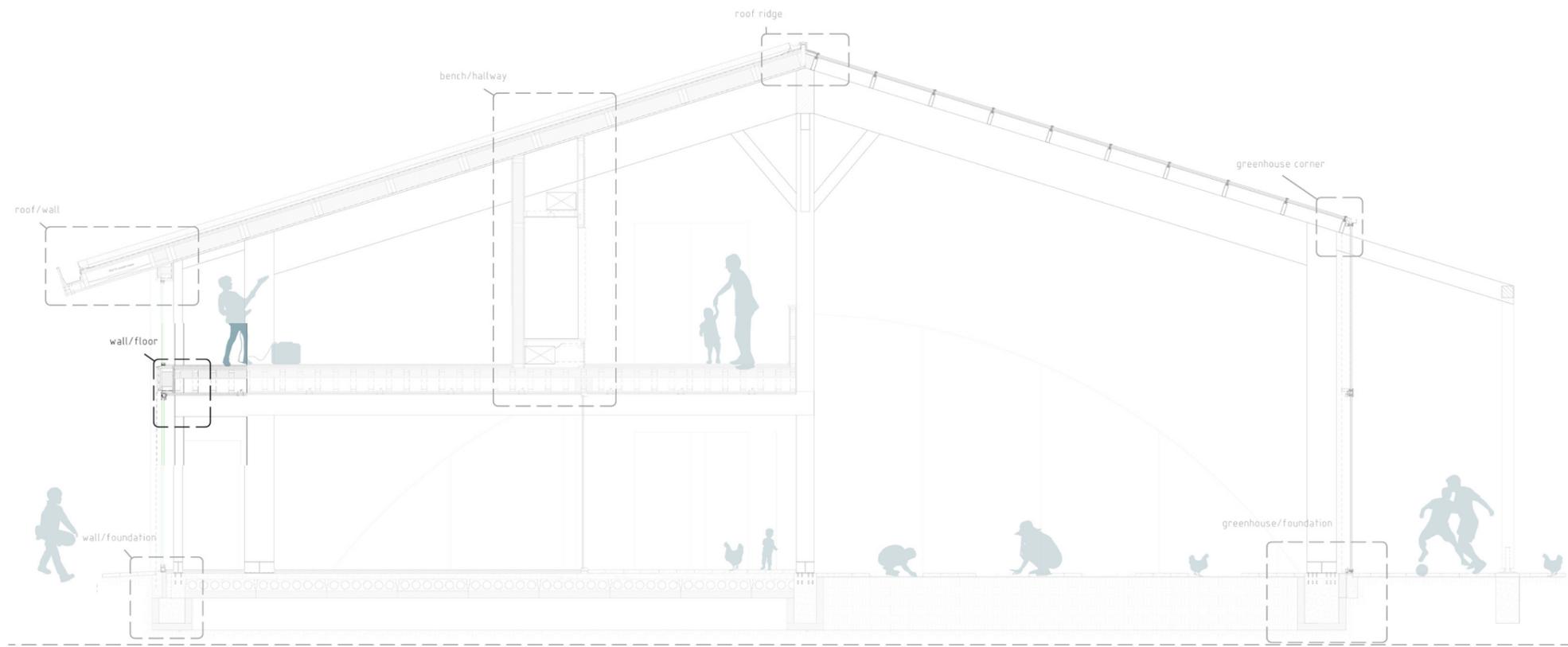


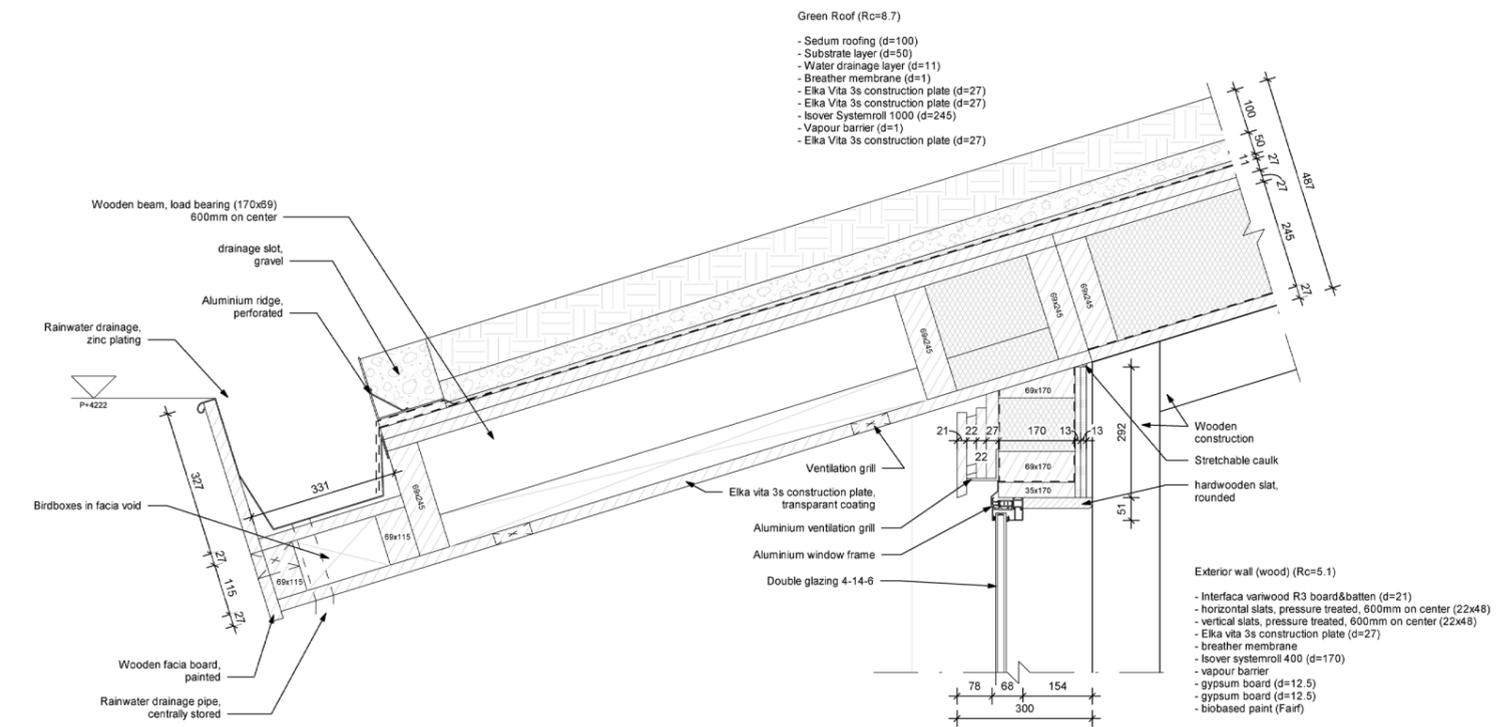
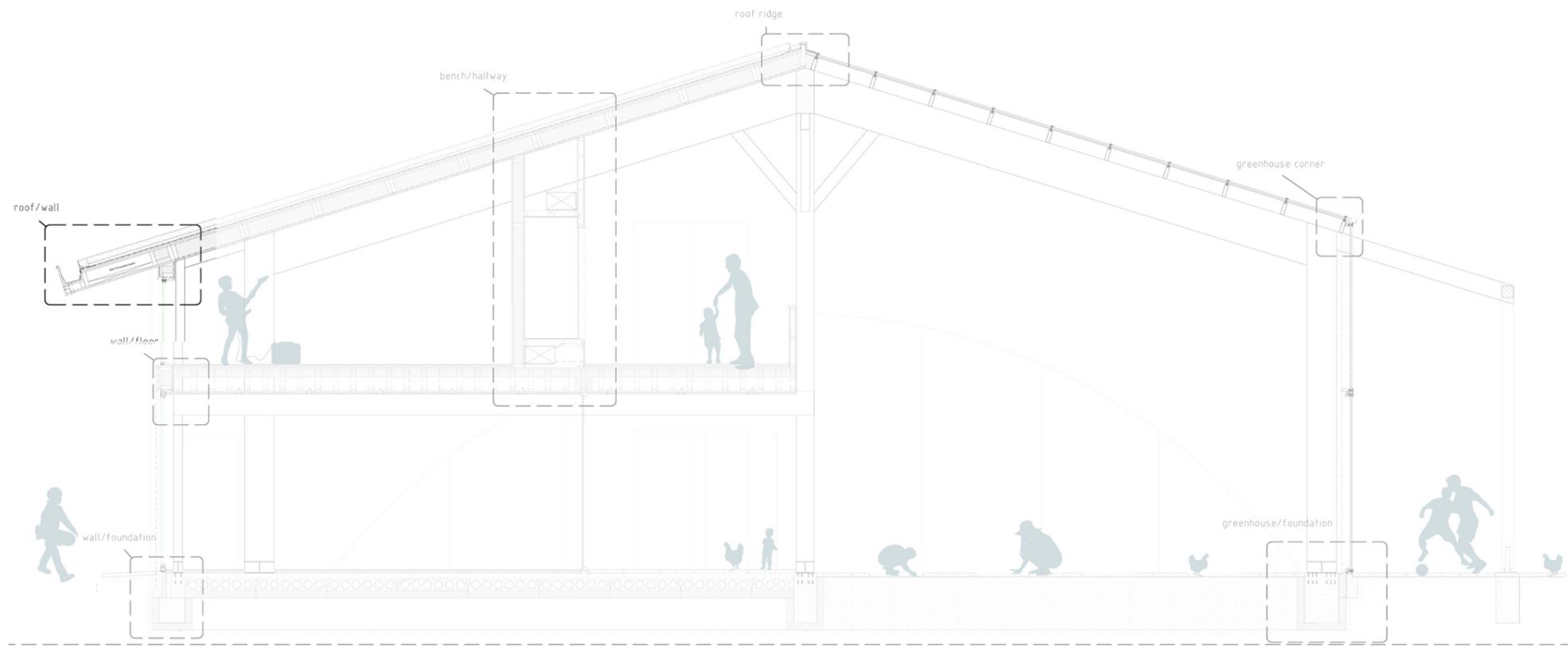


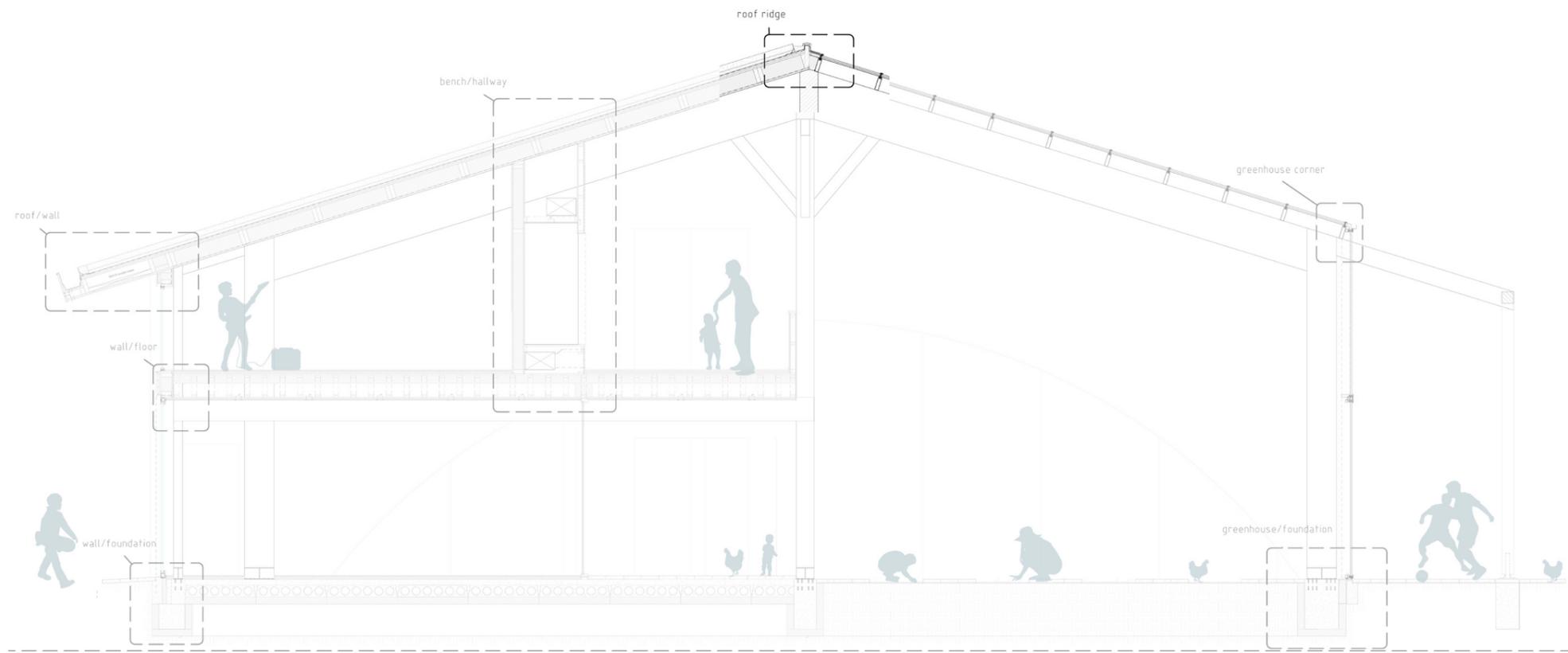






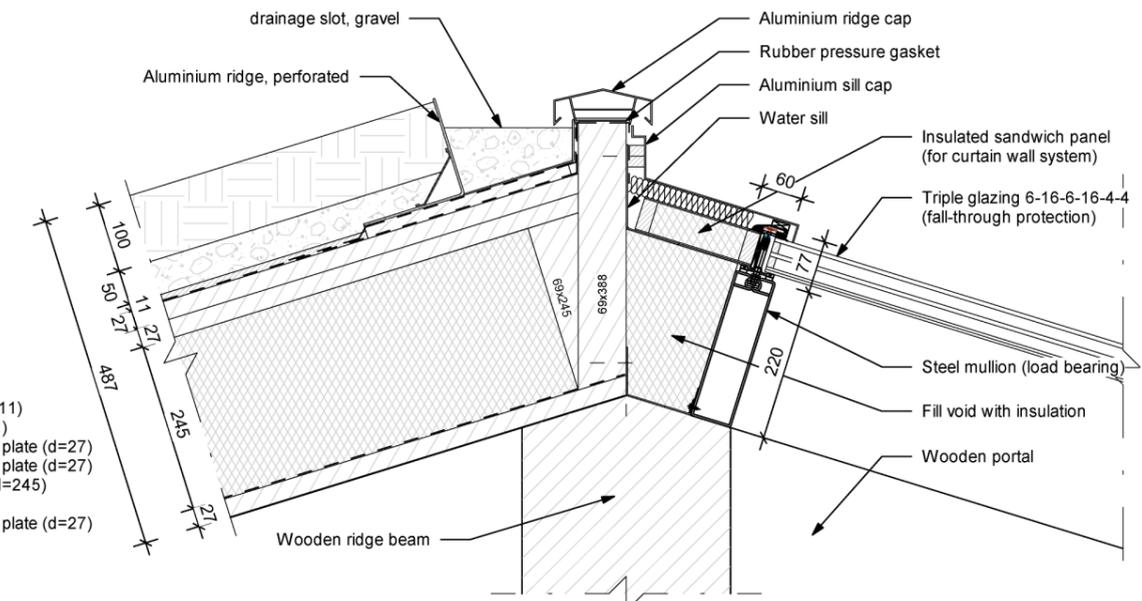


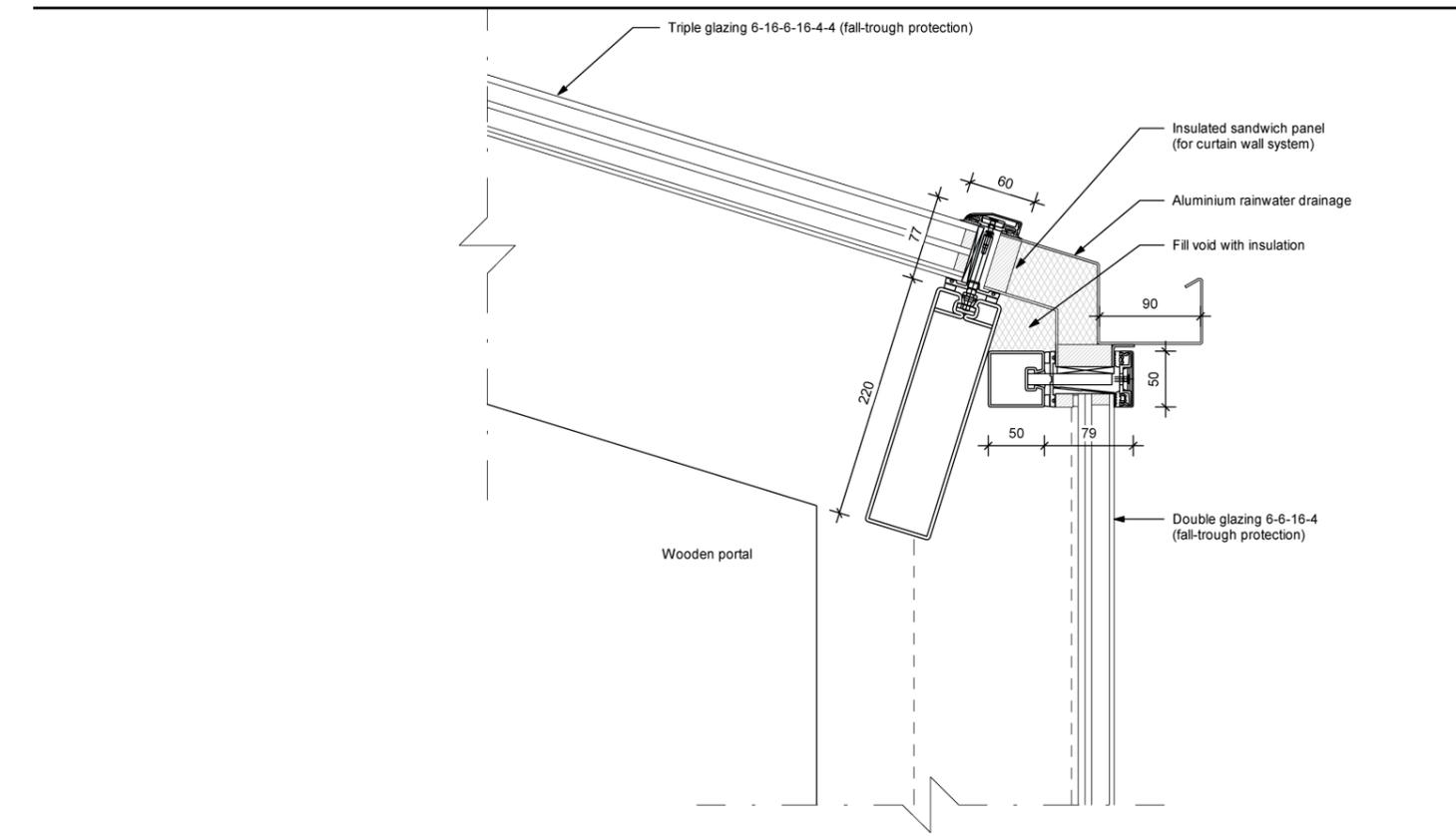
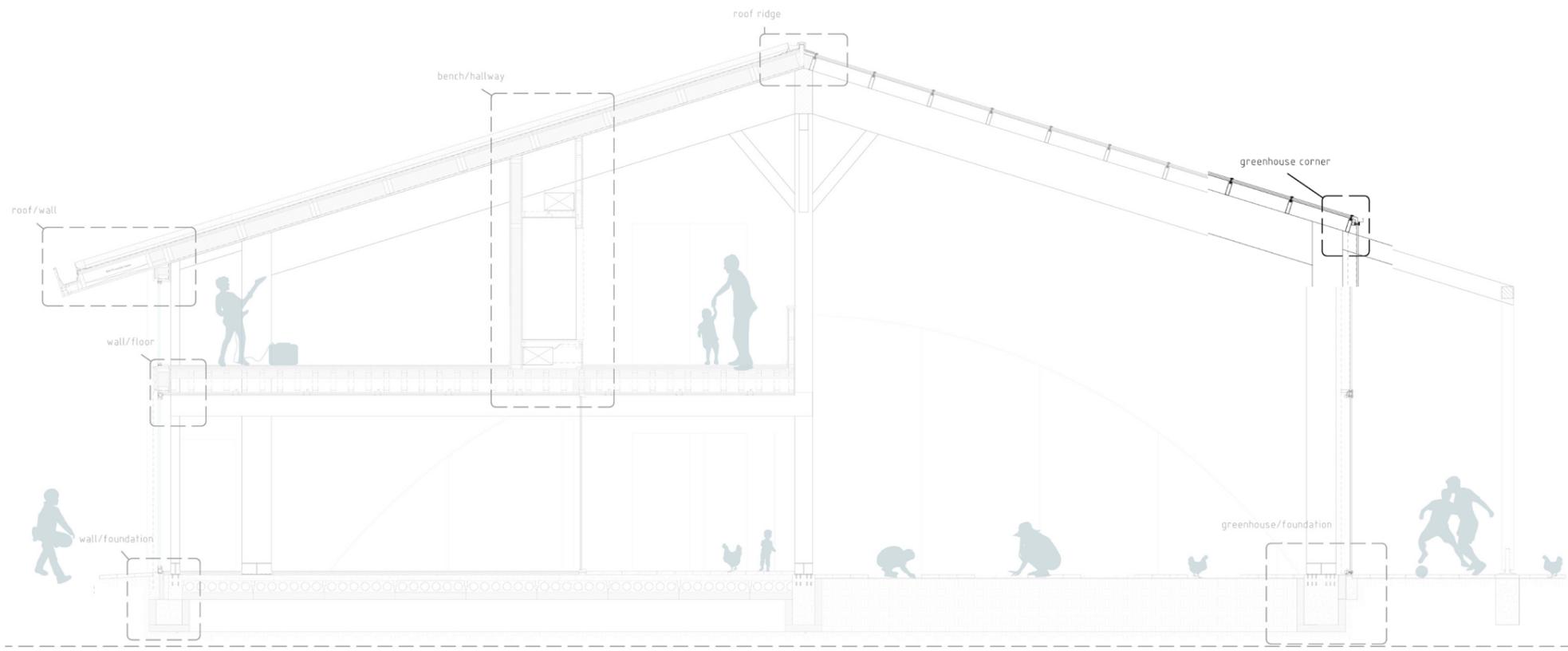


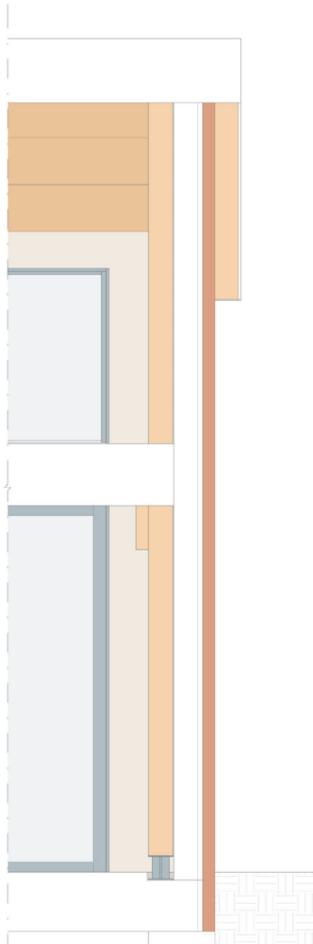
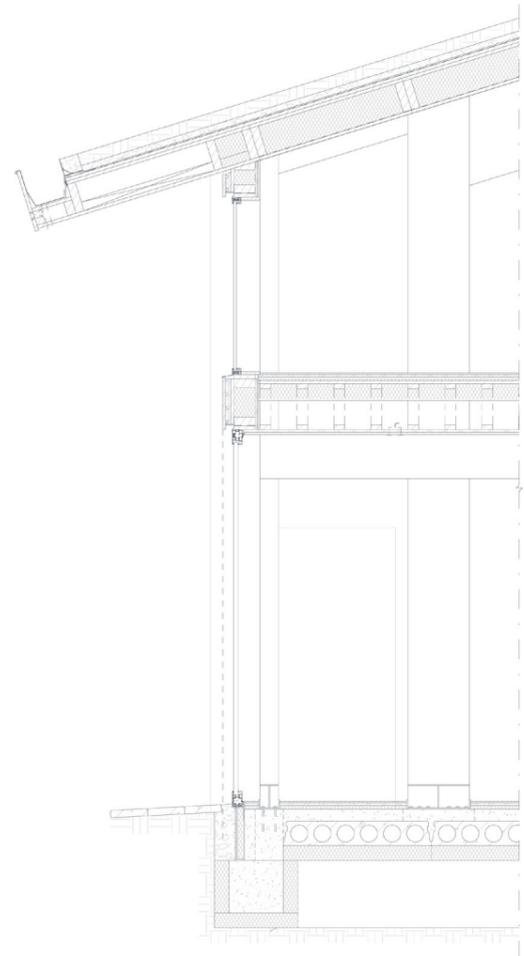
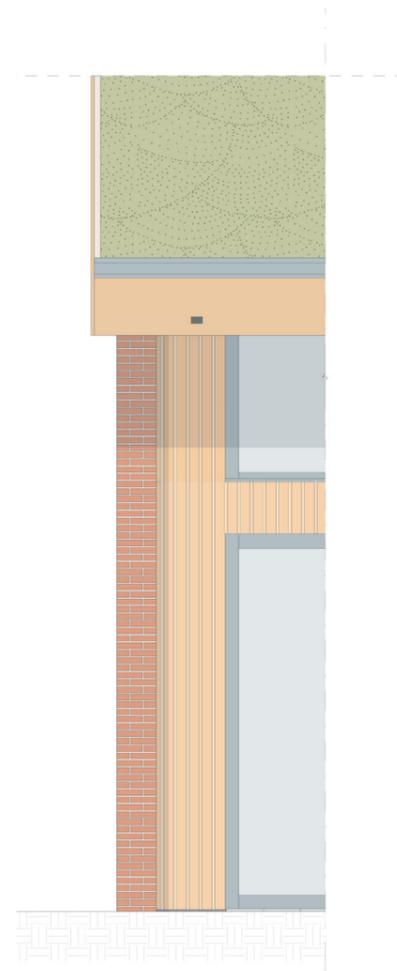


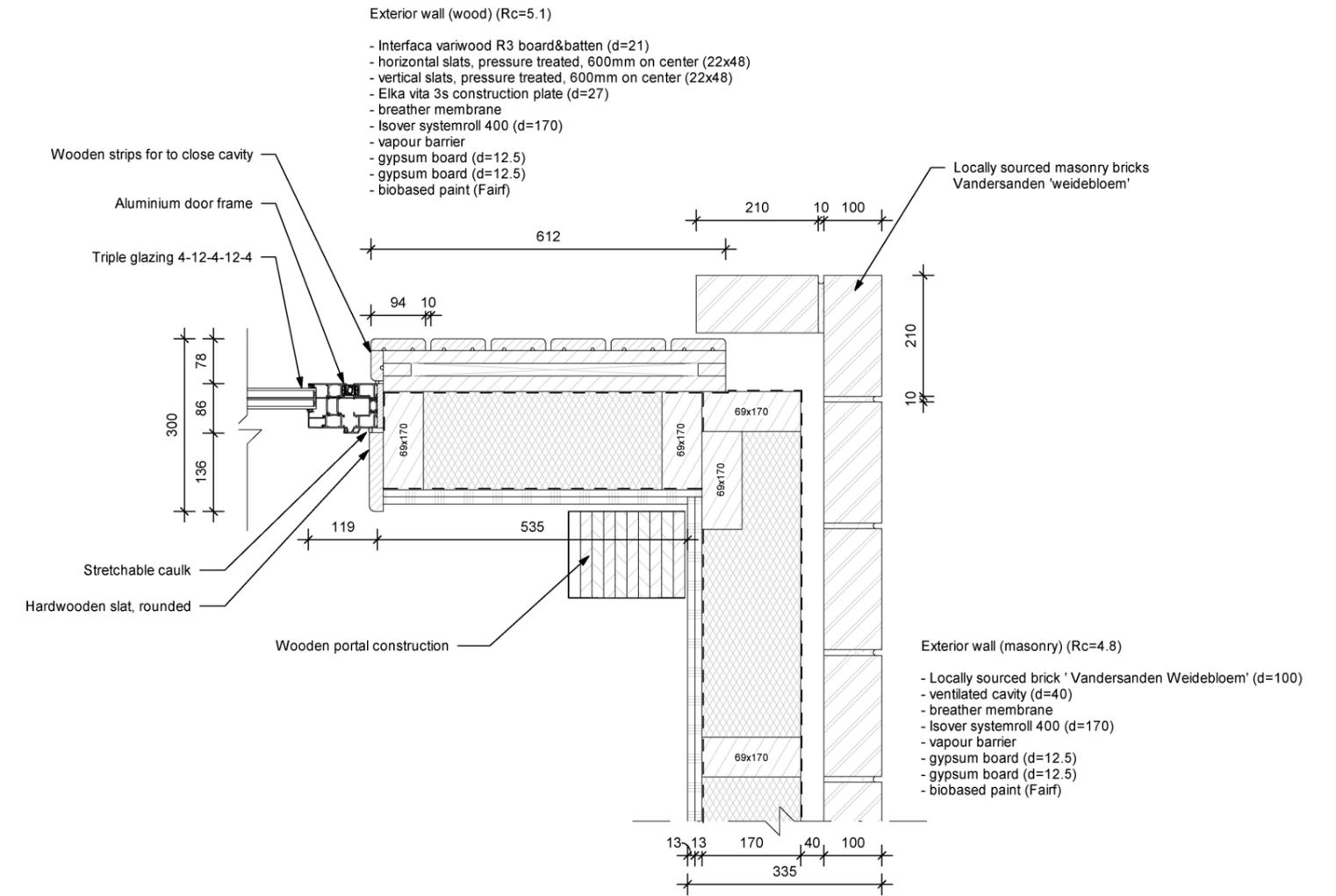
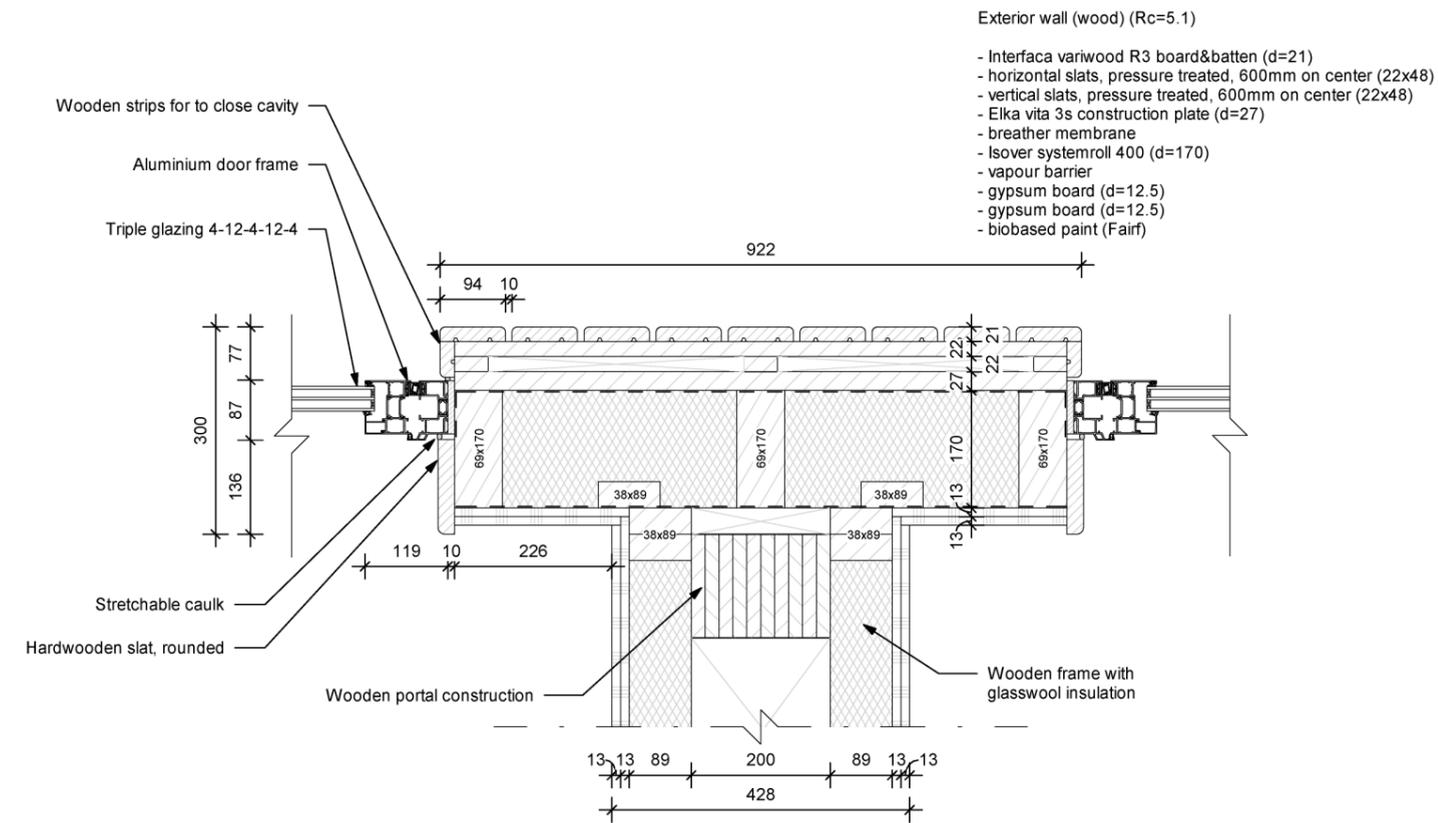
Green Roof (Rc=8.7)

- Sedum roofing (d=100)
- Substrate layer (d=50)
- Water drainage layer (d=11)
- Breather membrane (d=1)
- Elka Vita 3s construction plate (d=27)
- Elka Vita 3s construction plate (d=27)
- Isover Systemroll 1000 (d=245)
- Vapour barrier (d=1)
- Elka Vita 3s construction plate (d=27)









Reflection

Fieldwork

In the initial research period preceding P1, our focus as the invisible cities group was to gain a deep understanding of the inner social dynamics of the neighbourhood. This involved visiting the site and reaching out to residents, local organizations, and more. After the collective P1 exhibition, I embarked on a solo exploration, allowing me to delve into specific aspects of the social network that aligned with my interests and research direction: the lives and development of the younger generation in Bressoux and Droixhe. To establish connections, I contacted schools and social foundations like A.S.B.L Courant D'air, aiming to engage with children from the neighborhood. Initially, the search for connections progressed swiftly, fostering the potential for collaboration with these institutions through workshops with the students. I successfully arranged a meeting with the primary school director (Mme Serlez) in Droixhe, who agreed verbally to organize a workshop on the theme of nature with two student groups.

However, maintaining contact with the school proved more challenging than anticipated, resulting in three months of one-sided communication and ultimately leading to the cancellation of the workshops in Liège. This situation was not foreseen in my research plan, highlighting the importance of considering prolonged communication trajectories with schools for future projects involving fieldwork with children.

Recognizing the need to address this issue, I sought guidance from a pedagogics professor at the University of Utrecht. Pedagogic students often encounter similar challenges, relying on schools as the sole venue for fieldwork or research. The professor advised me to alter my approach when arranging workshops in Rotterdam, considering what value my presence could offer to the children or teachers; Could I share knowledge with the children, provide research findings to the school, or take over the class, allowing the teacher an hour of respite for other tasks? By proactively answering these questions in my approach to schools, I could generate greater interest in the project.

Initially conceived as a backup option, the nature drawing workshop in Rotterdam became the primary goal due to its closer proximity, shared language, and existing connections that facilitated organization. As time became increasingly critical, I shifted my focus primarily to Rotterdam, targeting schools with comparable demographics to the Liège site and each other. Through contacting numerous schools, including those I had previously worked with, I received invitations from two different schools in Rotterdam situated in distinct neighbourhoods.

The workshop itself revolved around the assignment of drawing “nature” at the primary schools. I prompted the students with the question, “What is nature? And don't say it out loud, just think about the answer in your head!” This approach aimed to minimize the influence of peer responses on individual drawings. The question granted the students substantial freedom, allowing them to draw anything they believed represented their idea of nature. Surprisingly, how they handled this freedom (or, in some cases, struggled with it) proved more revealing about their perception of nature than I had anticipated. Initially, I had focused on the outcome of the drawings rather than the drawing process itself. The workshops unveiled another intriguing aspect: the age group. Although I had not specified an exact age range initially (aside from primary school students), class 4 (7/8 years old) proved highly relevant to the project. These children retained the free creativity of younger years while developing a greater capacity for understanding and reasoning. Thus, their ability to reflect upon and contemplate “what is nature?” while still possessing an occasionally instinctive and unreasoned drawing skill (coupled with a genuine interest in drawing) contributed significantly to the creative results, often imbued with deeper ideas.

Following the successful organization of workshops in Rotterdam schools, I received confirmation to conduct my own activity in the church located in the park of Droixhe, in collaboration with the neighbourhood's social organization. Although such endeavours come with the uncertainty of attendance and group sizes, the ample time available and smaller groups allowed for more freedom in conducting activities and engaging in conversations with the children. This type of social research and engagement within an architectural project, particularly one of significant social importance, not only enhances an architect's understanding of the users, site, and needs but also fosters interest among potential future users. It can cultivate a sense of belonging or ownership, which proves invaluable in swiftly integrating the project into the social fabric of the community, particularly in certain neighbourhoods.

Nature, Nurture, and Architecture

The perception of nature by children was not the only important aspect of my project; my own perception of nature in relation to architecture played a crucial role throughout the design process. The theme “Nature and Architecture” encompasses a vast spectrum, and the question of how to bring these two realms closer together does not yield a conclusive or singular answer.

In the context of the nurture in nature project, the design exists within an already altered “natural” environment shaped by human intervention. Constructing within nature led me to question whether I was inadvertently invading natural elements and space. I considered what my building could offer in return. These inquiries influenced both the input and modifications in my design. For instance, during my initial site layout estimation after the first visit, I discovered a misplacement in my drawings of the existing trees during a subsequent site visit. This revelation had significant implications for the overall design composition and placement. Opting to preserve all the mature trees instead of adhering strictly to the original design required substantial changes, which were implemented a week before P2.5. Despite the challenges, maintaining the integrity of the concept and position necessitated this alteration.

Additionally, I strived to strike a balance between catering to children’s interests, avoiding overly childish gimmicks, while still designing a playful building and considering potential future uses of the building. The guidance from my tutors to stay focused and the unique perspectives shared by the children during the workshops steered me in the right direction. For example, envisioning a three-meter-high door already appears imposing to an adult, but imagine its immense size through the eyes of a six-year-old!

The Design Process

During my design process, particularly as I approached the final stages, I recognized a significant aspect of my own process: despite constantly thinking about my project and engaging in many internal thought processes, I occasionally faced challenges by failing

to achieve clarity in translating those thoughts into sketches or other tangible outcomes. This not only hindered the smooth progression of my design process but also, at times, weakened my foundation for tutoring sessions and feedback moments.

Recognizing the importance of transparently sharing my thought process, I acknowledge the need for improvement in this area. Instead of solely relying on verbal explanations or conventional sketches, I aspire to develop techniques that more accurately capture the intricacies of my thinking during the creative process. Furthermore, I intend to document my design journey more actively, capturing key moments of inspiration, critical decision-making, and significant iterations. This may involve keeping a design journal or using digital platforms to record and annotate my evolving ideas and concepts. Such documentation not only helps in clarifying my thought process but also allows for retrospective analysis and evaluation of my design decisions.

By prioritizing the translation of my inner thoughts and thought process onto paper or into visual representations, I can provide a clearer window into my creative thinking, foster better collaboration, and invite more insightful feedback throughout the design process.

