Solvitur Ambulando

Going beyond the fast-paced Schaerbeek



Unveiling post-industrial urban leftovers to enhance community connection and suburban lifestyles through walking in Brussels' Friche.

To my family,
Elisa, Luciano, Sara, Sara Linde, zia Anna, zio Enzo

Contents

06 (Chapter 1) - Nature and escapism
54 (Chapter 2) - Walking as a method
92 (Chapter 3) - Wastelands and leftovers
110 (Chapter 4) - Bridge and square
150 (Chapter 5) - Solvitur Ambulando

Solvitur ambulando



"Camminando si risolve"

"It is solved by walking"

(Diogenes of Sinope)



Nature and Escapism

(Chapter 1)

CASTELLI ROMANI

The south-eastern part of Rome developed around the Volcano Laziale and the area of Castelli Romani region, were my activity of strolling in the nature started, gave me inspiration for this research.



Aerial view Castelli Romani



Horses and Volcano Laziale's crater



Vegetation in the crater



Lake Albano from the crater



Undergrowth and paths

ESCAPISM AND EXPLORATION

After Covid-19 restrictions people understood the real importance of open-air spaces, and to explore the nature surrounding, as a family experience of reconnection with each other as well as with the nature.



Family activity looking for chestnuts



Luciano moving leaves and bushes



Sensorial experience with nature



Collecting blackberries and exploring the back-gardens



Walking with animals



Strolling the paths



Trees' log piled along the path



Parco degli Acquedotti

NATURE IN BETWEEN

Nature divides the different patches of our cities in development and architectural features connect and bring people inside this nature to guide people and let them explore this unknown landscape.

The world is too much with us,
William Wordsworth,
Poems, in Two Volumes,
1807

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND CITIES

Painters and poets described and reported how European cities, starting from the Industrial Revolution, started looking like steamy, hectic and cold environment without any sign or presence of nature in the urban fabric.



Rain, Steam, and Speed,
Joseph Mallord William Turner,
1844



Arrival of the Normandy Train,
Gare Saint-Lazare
Claude Monet,
1877



Industrial Landscape,
L.S. Lowry,
1934-55

PASTORAL GENRE AND IDEALISED NATURE

The pastoral genre depicts an idealised form of the shepherd's lifestyle. The target audience was typically an urban one and was aiming to let the people escape from the stressful cities and imagine a reconnection with the nature.



Landscape,
Asher Brown Durand,
1850



The Course of Empire,
The Arcadian or Pastoral State,
Cole Thomas,
1834



Pastoral Landscape,
Alvan Fisher,
1854

IMPRESSIONISM AND CITIES DEVELOPMENT

In response to the previous artistic movements, most of the artists from the Impressionist movement rapresented how in their cities the industrial world started blending with the nature creating a new hybrid landscape.



Bathers at Asnières,
Georges-Pierre Seurat,
1884



Factories at Asnieres Seen from
the Quai de Clichy,
Vincent Van Gogh,
1887



Afternoon. Porta Romana's Workshops,
Umberto Boccioni,
1909-10

Attention restoration theory

The Attention Restoration Theory (ART) is a psychological framework proposed by Rachel Kaplan and Stephen Kaplan in the 1980s. It suggests that exposure to nature, particularly natural environments rich in certain features such as greenery, water, and natural light, can restore mental fatigue and improve cognitive functioning.

ART posits that the constant demands of urban environments, with their high levels of stimuli and attentional focus, can lead to mental fatigue and diminished cognitive performance. However, spending time in natural settings allows individuals to engage in effortless or involuntary attention, which promotes restoration by providing a restorative experience for directed attention.

Walking in natural or green spaces, according to ART, offers a particularly effective way to restore attention and cognitive function. The rhythmic movement of walking combined with the sensory input from the natural environment creates an ideal condition for attention restoration. In architectural design, incorporating elements of nature and providing opportunities for walking in green spaces can enhance the restorative potential of built environments, promoting mental well-being and cognitive revitalization.



Natural sights in Schaerbeek



Urban sights in Schaerbeek

Environmental psychology

The Environmental psychology is a branch of psychology that explores the interplay between people and their built and natural surroundings. It examines how physical environments influence human behavior, emotions, and well-being, and how individuals perceive, interact with, and adapt to their surroundings.

Environmental psychology provides valuable insights into the ways in which built environments impact people's experiences and behaviors, including their walking patterns. Researchers in this field investigate factors such as spatial layout, lighting, color, noise, and natural elements, and how these elements affect individuals' mood, stress levels, cognitive functioning, and social interactions.

By understanding the principles of environmental psychology, architects and urban planners can design spaces that promote health, safety, and psychological well-being, including pedestrian-friendly environments that encourage walking. Incorporating elements such as green spaces, pedestrian pathways, wayfinding cues, and opportunities for social interaction can enhance the walking experience and contribute to a more vibrant, livable, and sustainable urban environment.



Station Evere's platform



Station Evere access point

FRINGE MODEL

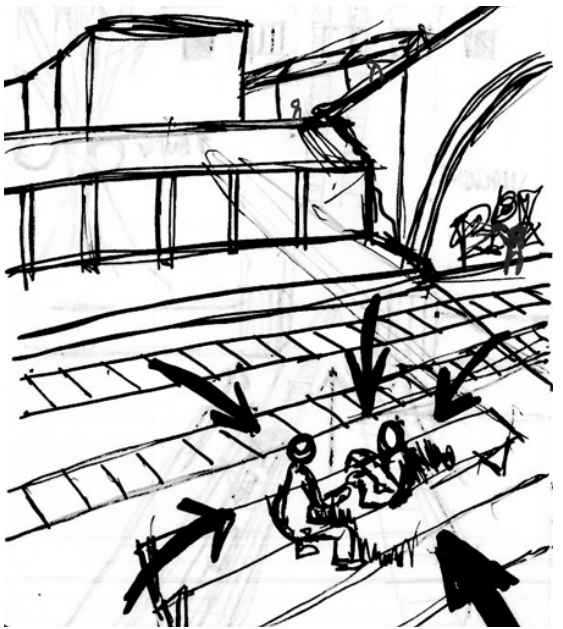
During our P1 we analysed the infrastructure of the station Meisier in which nature and urban environment are divided by a huge concrete element creating a tension between the two elements.



Fringe model

Walking as a method

(Chapter 2)



"THROUGH THE ACT OF WALKING, INDIVIDUALS NOT ONLY NAVIGATE PHYSICAL LANDSCAPES BUT ALSO TRAVERSE THE DEPTHS OF THEIR OWN CONSCIOUSNESS, FORGING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SELF, SPACE, AND THE BROADER ECOSYSTEM."



Exploring the Wasteland

Discovery mode

The discovery mode embodies a purposeful yet open-ended exploration of space, where walkers engage with heightened attentiveness and without a predetermined goal. This mode of walking facilitates perception, with movement serving as a catalyst for heightened awareness.

Flow mode

The flow mode represents a state of intuitive exploration where walkers allow their thoughts to wander freely, following their instincts rather than a predetermined path. In this mode, walking and awareness blend seamlessly, integrating individuals into the landscape. Csikszentmihalyi describes flow as a state of alignment between body and mind, characterized by positive emotions and a sense of harmony with surroundings.

Reflective mode

The reflective mode involves a process of introspection and exchange of perspectives, as walkers seek to make sense of their experiences. They engage in reflection, distilling their observations and translating implicit knowledge into tangible expressions through words and images. This mode can be pursued individually or in group discussions, providing opportunities for diverse viewpoints and interpretations.

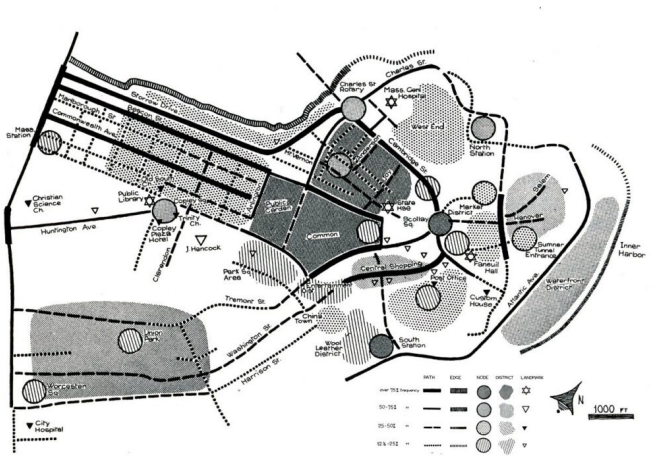
Walking therapy

Walk and Talk Therapy is a novel therapeutic approach where individuals discuss personal issues with a therapist while walking. It's gaining popularity for its effectiveness and convenience, offering an alternative to traditional talk therapy. The goal is to promote physical activity, reducing sedentary behavior linked to mental health problems. Benefits include physical, emotional, and mental well-being, as walking in nature can reduce stress and anxiety.

Kevin Lynch

His book, “The Image of the City,” published in 1960, introduced the concept of mental mapping and cognitive mapping in urban design.

Lynch’s research focused on how individuals perceive, navigate, and make sense of urban environments. He identified five elements—paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks—that contribute to the legibility and coherence of a city’s spatial structure. His findings highlighted the importance of pedestrian experience in shaping the identity and functionality of cities.
Lynch’s work emphasized the significance of walking as a mode of exploration and understanding of urban spaces.

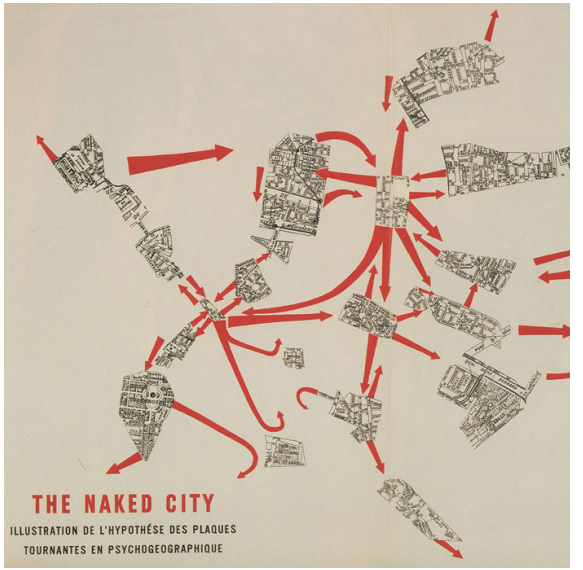


The Image of The City - Kevin Lynch

Guy Debord - Situationists

Central to his work is the concept of “dérive,” or drift, which he explored in his 1956 essay “Theory of the Dérive.” The dérive is a technique of spontaneous urban exploration, where individuals wander through cities guided solely by their instincts and the terrain, rather than traditional maps or predetermined routes. Debord saw the dérive as a means of challenging the alienating effects of modern urban life and reclaiming the city as a space for authentic human experiences.

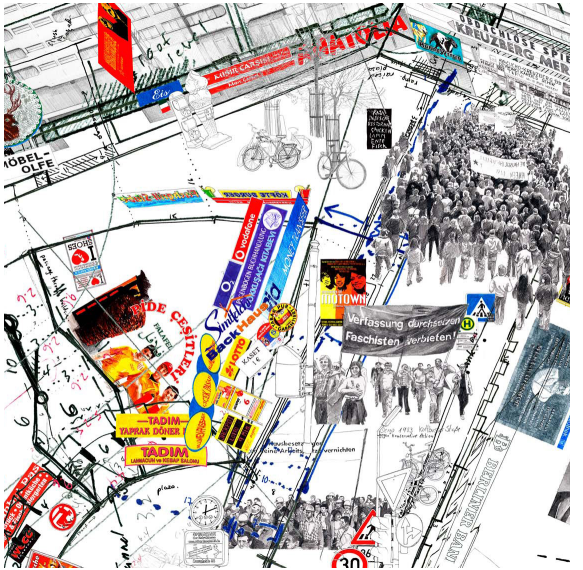
It has been influential in understanding how people engage with the built environment and the importance of pedestrian experiences in urban design.



The Naked City - Guy Debord

Larissa Fassler

Larissa Fassler's uses walking as a critical tool for observing and understanding city spaces. Through her detailed mappings and sculptural installations, Fassler documents the sensory and social dimensions of urban life—its rhythms, flows, and interactions—revealing layers of human activity often overlooked in architectural planning. By walking and immersing herself in the city, Fassler captures the nuanced dynamics between people and places, emphasizing how architecture shapes, and is shaped by, everyday movement and behavior. Her approach encourages architects to view walking not just as transit but as a means to engage deeply with the spatial and social realities of our cities.



Larrissa Fassler

Anna and Lawrence Halprin

Their work emphasized the role of walking as a transformative act within the urban environment. Lawrence's designs, such as the Sea Ranch in California and the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, D.C., incorporated elements that encouraged pedestrian movement and interaction, fostering a sense of connection between people and their surroundings.

Anna's "RSVP cycles" (Respect, Support, Value, and Play) and "movement workshops" integrated dance and movement principles into urban planning processes, promoting inclusive and participatory design approaches.



Anna and Lawrence Halprin

Barbican on solitude

Barbican in Solitude explores the Barbican's architectural landscape through walking, using movement as a lens to understand urban complexity. This project investigates how walking transforms the perception of space within the Barbican, from its monumental concrete forms to its quiet pathways and hidden corners. Walking becomes a method to experience the scale, texture, and rhythm of the architecture, highlighting how these qualities shape interactions, solitude, and community within the city.

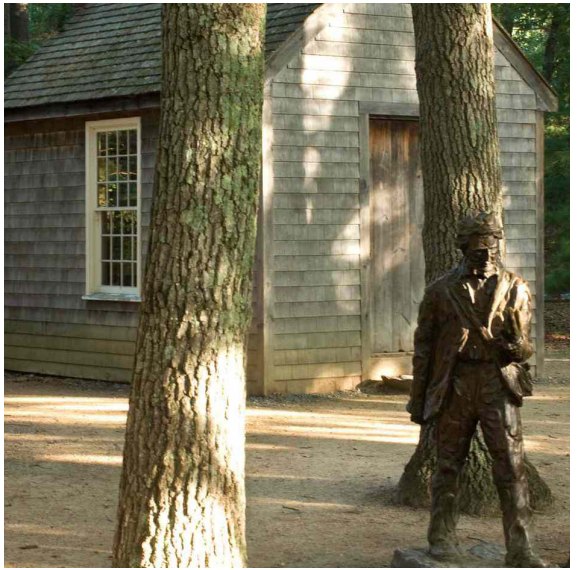


Collage from Barbican in Solitude's project

Henry David Thoreau

His most famous work, “Walden,” documents his experiment in simple living, where he spent two years living in a cabin near Walden Pond, reflecting on the virtues of a minimalist lifestyle and the interconnectedness of humanity with the natural world.

Thoreau’s philosophy celebrated the act of walking as a means of spiritual and intellectual exploration. He saw walking not only as a physical exercise but also as a way to tune oneself to the rhythms of nature, to find solace and inspiration in the wilderness, and to gain a deeper understanding of one’s place in the universe.

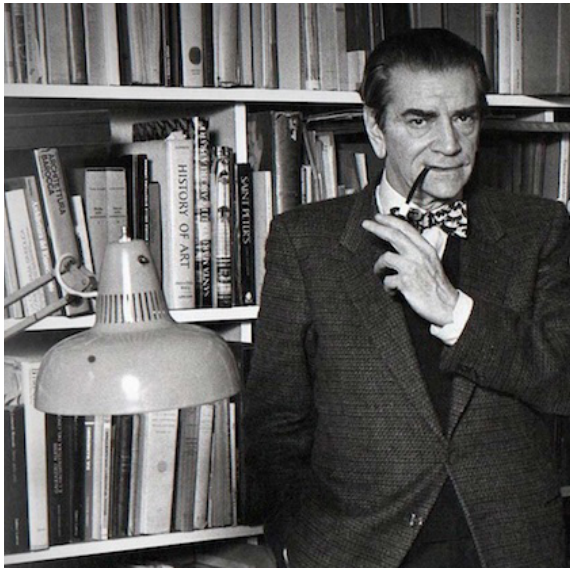


Thoreau’s house

Bruno Zevi

Central to his thinking was the idea of the "temporality of space," which he explored in his writings and teachings.

Zevi's theory posited that architecture is not static but rather inherently dynamic, evolving over time through the experiences and interactions of its users. He argued that the perception of space is not fixed but fluid, influenced by factors such as light, movement, and human activity. In this view, walking becomes a fundamental aspect of architectural experience, as it allows individuals to engage with and inhabit space in a way that reveals its temporal dimension.



Bruno Zevi

Dadaists

The Dadaists started explorations of the city as an interactive, unpredictable experience, connecting art, architecture, and urban life.
By wandering aimlessly through Paris, they subverted conventional city navigation, treating walking as a tool for discovery rather than transit. These dérives, or "drifts," allowed them to encounter the city's architecture in spontaneous, unfiltered ways, revealing layers of meaning in the built environment that routine paths often obscure. This approach laid the groundwork for viewing walking as a method of urban analysis—an invitation to understand cities experientially, appreciating how spaces provoke emotional and sensory responses that inform architecture's role in everyday life.

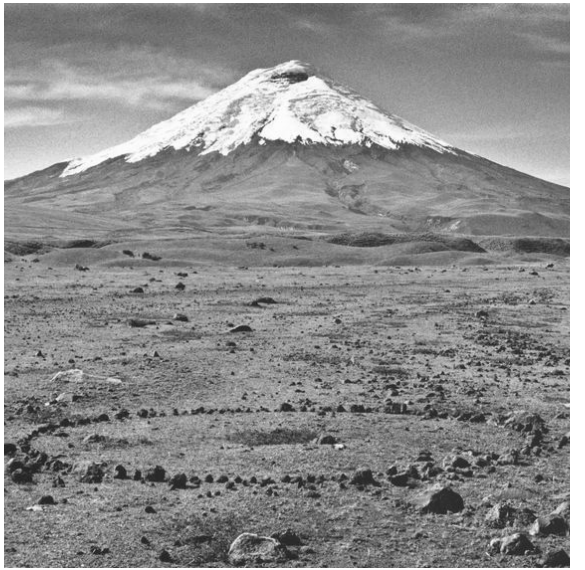


Dadaists' walk around Paris

Richard Long

Richard Long's work emphasizes walking as an art form, reshaping how we view landscapes. Through his "walking sculptures," he documents the traces of his paths—lines, patterns, and impressions left on the natural environment—inviting us to consider how movement through space creates meaning.

By moving through a city in similar ways, architects and urbanists can capture the subtle interactions between people, architecture, and space, observing how movement influences perception, form, and connection within the urban fabric.



Text to copy

Michel de Certau

"The Practice of Everyday Life," introduced the concept of "walking as a tactic" within the context of urban navigation.

De Certeau argued that pedestrians, through their daily movements, enact a form of resistance and creativity within the structured grid of the city. according to him planners and architects, who impose order and rationality upon urban spaces, pedestrians experience the city at ground level, where they negotiate and subvert established routes and meanings.

For de Certeau, walking is not merely a means of transportation but a way of appropriating space, of turning the city into a lived experience filled with personal narratives and interpretations.

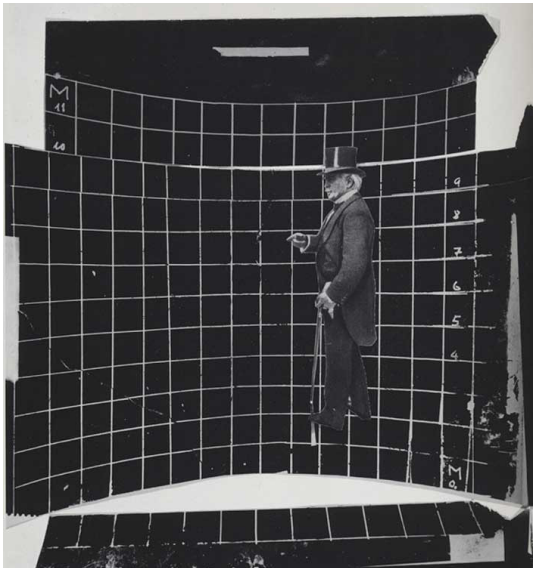


De Certau

Berthold Brecht

Central to Brecht's theatrical theory was the concept of "Verfremdungseffekt" or "alienation effect," which aimed to encourage critical thinking and emotional detachment in the audience.

The act of walking in architecture can be seen through a Brechtian lens as a means of disrupting habitual perceptions, encouraging individuals to see familiar spaces in new ways, and prompting them to question the social, political, and economic forces that shape the built environment. Walking becomes a form of "epic theater" in which individuals actively engage with their surroundings, uncovering hidden narratives and challenging dominant ideologies.



Brecht's Verfremdungseffekt

Boris Sieverts

Boris Sieverts' work redefines how we experience cities by guiding participants through unexpected urban landscapes, often bypassing iconic landmarks in favor of overlooked, peripheral spaces. Through his carefully curated walking tours, Sieverts reveals hidden layers of urban fabric—forgotten industrial zones, neglected alleyways, and transitional spaces that exist between planned architectures. His practice demonstrates how walking can be an analytical tool, uncovering the informal, dynamic aspects of city life that traditional architectural studies might miss.



Boris Sieverts' walks

Stalker - Osservatorio Nomade

The Osservatorio Nomade-Stalker is an interdisciplinary research and urban exploration group based in Italy.

At their core is the practice of “stalking,” which involves walking aimlessly through cities, observing and documenting the hidden, overlooked, or marginalized aspects of urban life. Through their explorations, the group seeks to reveal the layers of history, culture, and social dynamics embedded within the urban landscape.



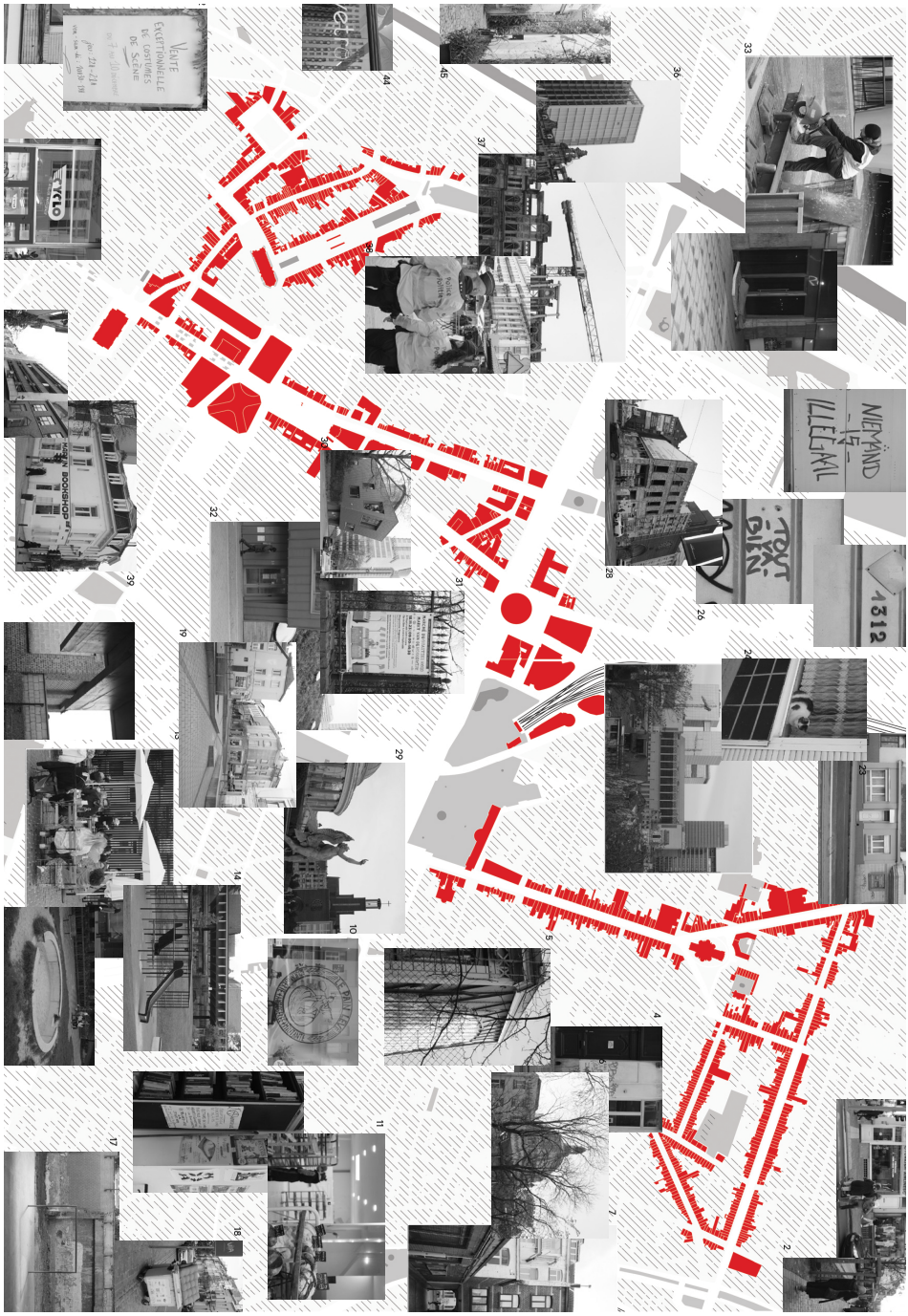
Osservatorio Nomade

WALKING AROUND THE CITY

Our research on the city of Brussels started from the analysis of the urban fabric thanks to the walking act that brought us through the different patches of the city.



Liedts square


VENTE EXCEPTIONNELLE DE COSTUMES DE SCÈNE
ACCO
BOOKSHOP
NIEMAND IS ILLEGAAL
TEXT BIJN
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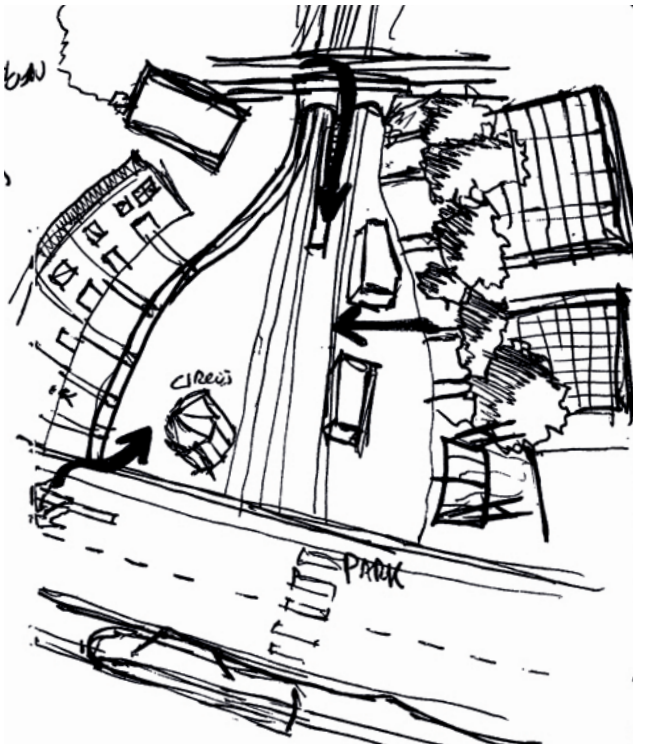
How does walking influence both the walkers and their perception of space?

In today's fast-paced society how beneficial is walking as an escape?

Research questions)

Wasteland and Leftovers

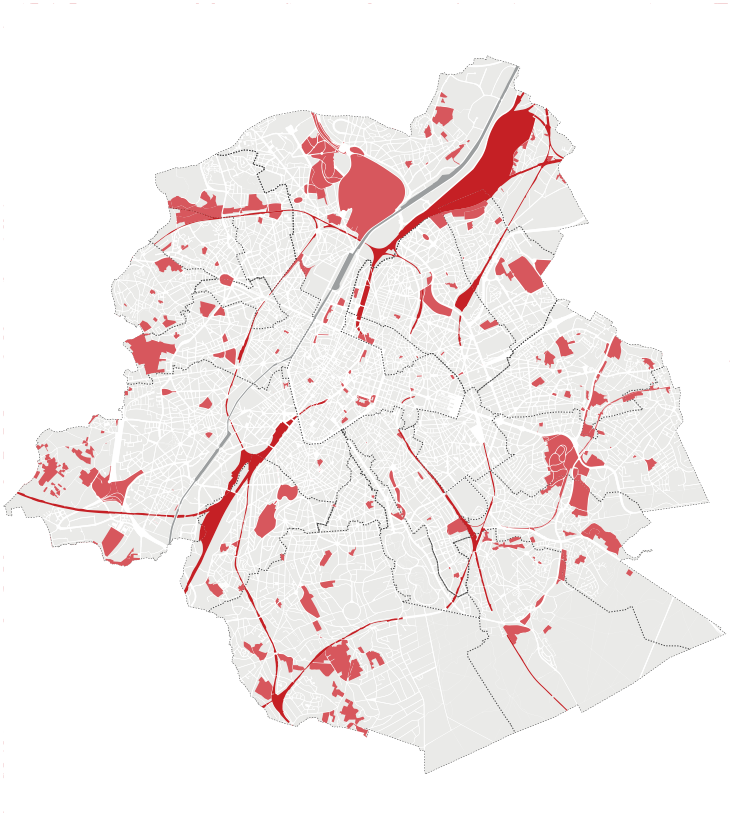
(Chapter 3)



Leftovers
Meadows
Productive
Park
Canal
Blocks

LEFTOVERS

The leftover green is related to wasteland and residual green space of the post-industrial city that are not accessible for the inhabitants of the city and cuts through all the layers of the evolved and sprawled landscape.



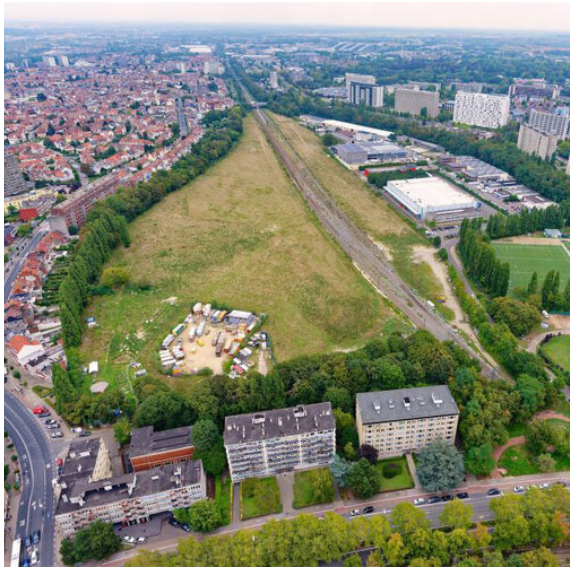


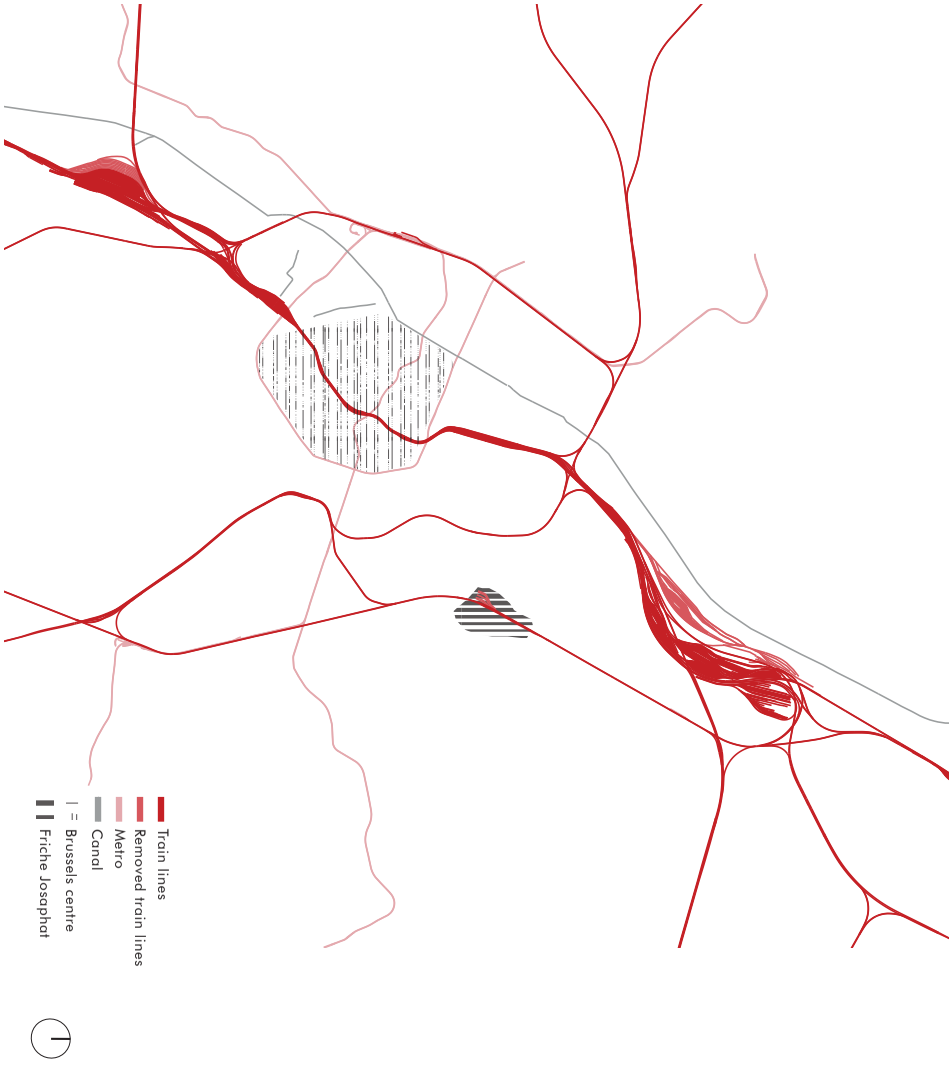
Brussels North 97



FRICHE JOSAPHAT

The friche Josaphat was an old marshelling yard for the trains entering in Brussels from the north-eastern side. It still has its enclosed nature and preserve its detachment from the city's chaos.

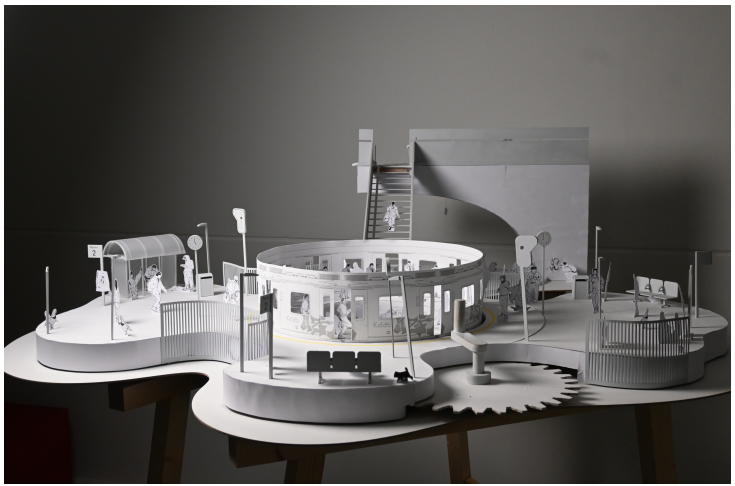




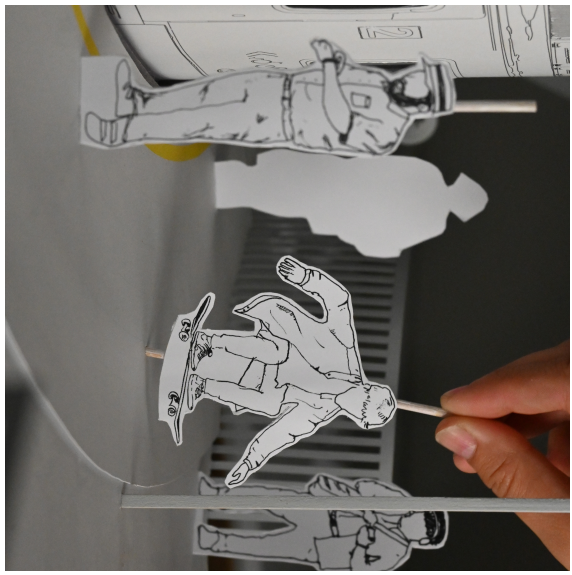
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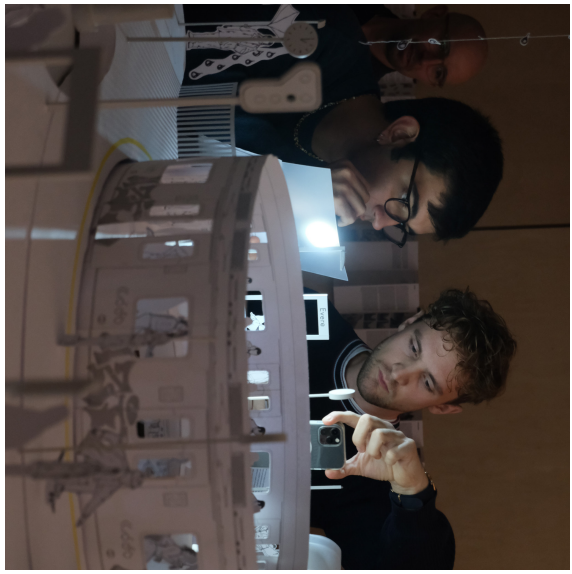
Trainlines situation 2023

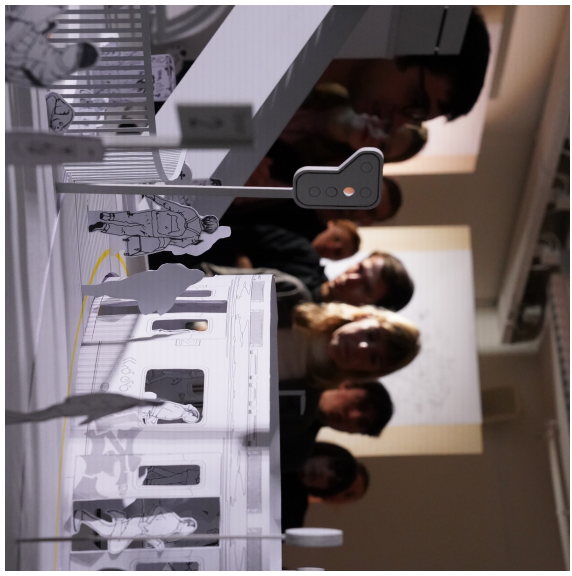
People are on the move throughout the day and the train station is the place where the movement of different people intersect. Each person carries their unique story, their own purpose to travel, and their own reason to be at a specific place at a particular time.
Our final model responds on this strong visual connection between the platform and the nature in front. The distinct boundaries separating them, are translated into the notion of a stage, detached from nature.

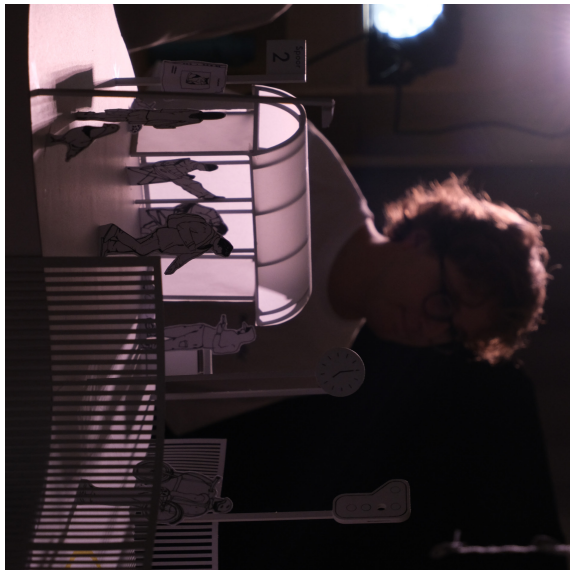


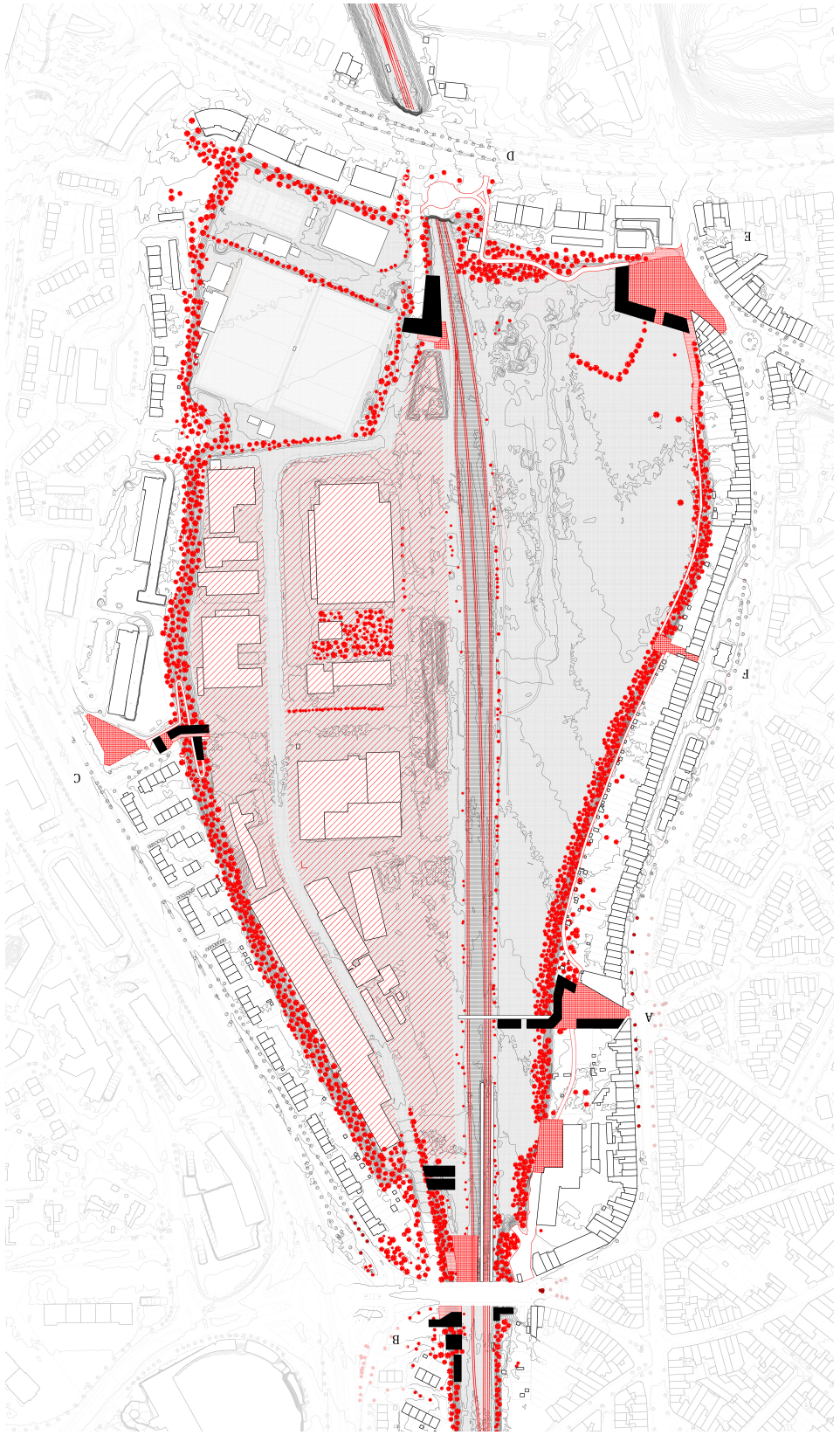
Station to station
Model analysis Station Evere
Angeli Gianluca, Meindertsma Jara Massimo,
Naik Harit, Vissers Bo, Wierikx Daan











Masterplan 111

How does walking influence both the walkers and their perception of space?

In today's fast-paced society how beneficial is walking as an escape?

Considering the Friche Josaphat as a leftover space of the post-industrial city, as most of the green areas surrounding the city centre of the most important European cities, what could those spaces generate and host to accommodate the inhabitants of the suburbs?

Research questions)

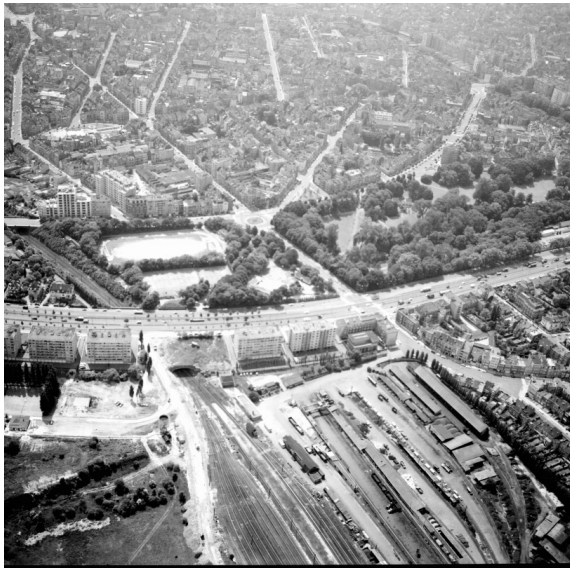
Bridge and Square

(Chapter 4)



SOUTH-EASTERN ENTRANCE

The site of the friche choose as a project location is the south-eastern entrance, thanks to its direct connection to the city and the proximity to infrastructural nodes, easily reachable walking and the links with a populated residential area.



1960s aerial view on the Friche

1930-1935

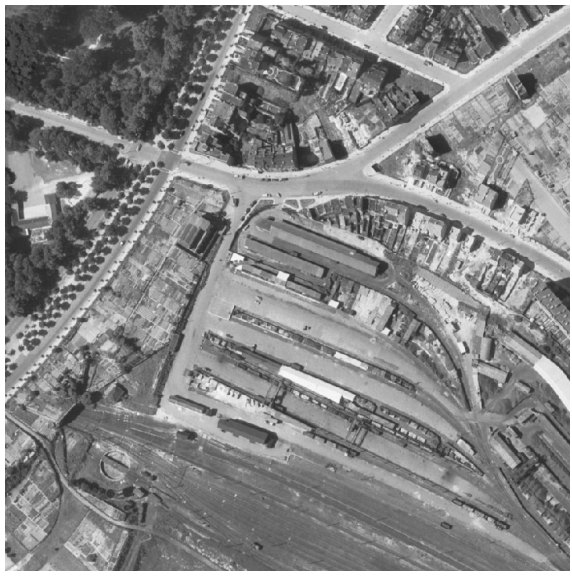


1944



Historical aerial pictures (1930-44)

1953



1961



Historical aerial pictures (1953-61)

1971



1977



Historical aerial pictures (1971-77)



1987



1996



2004



2012



2017

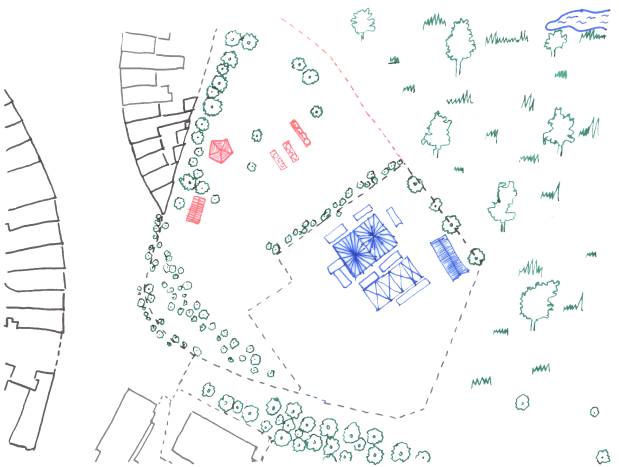


2024

City and Nature are devided by an in-between area and they never enter in contact.

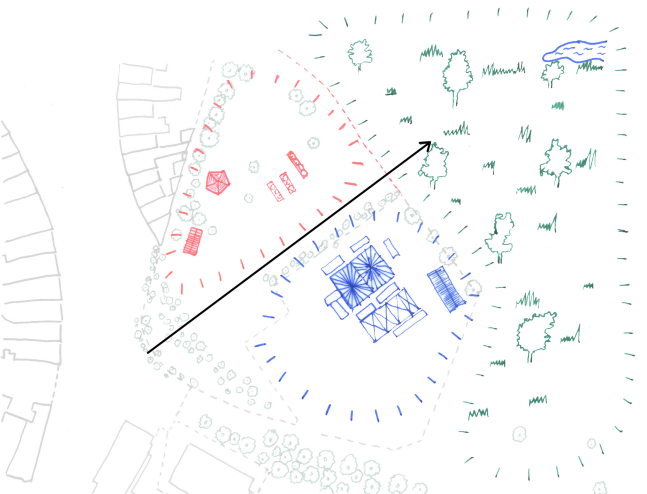
City - Nature

In this in between find their place two activators, the theatre “Les Nouveaux Disparus” and the “Commons Josaphat”. The nature of the Friche is the third entity that needs to be activated still.



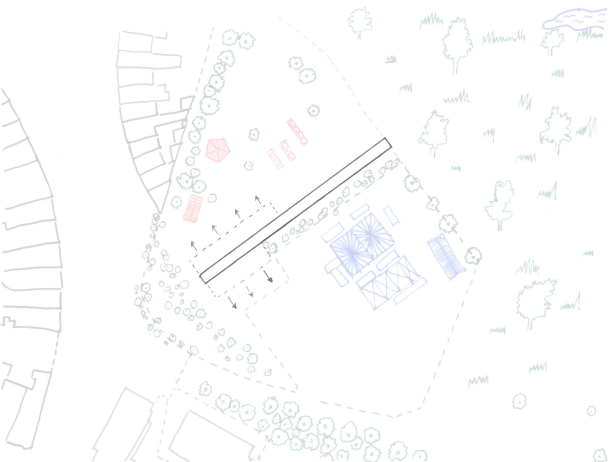
In-between
Commons - Les Nouveaux Disparus

Using the attractiveness of the two already existing activators and creating a clear connection that passes through them and reaches the nature.



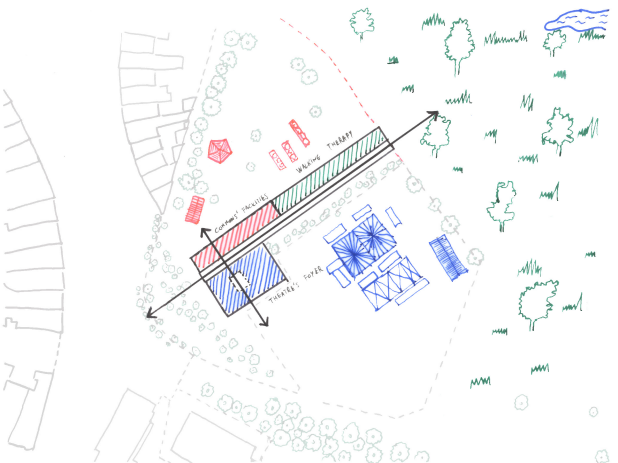
Activators and Connectors

The bridge is created and the two activators find their own space in the project.



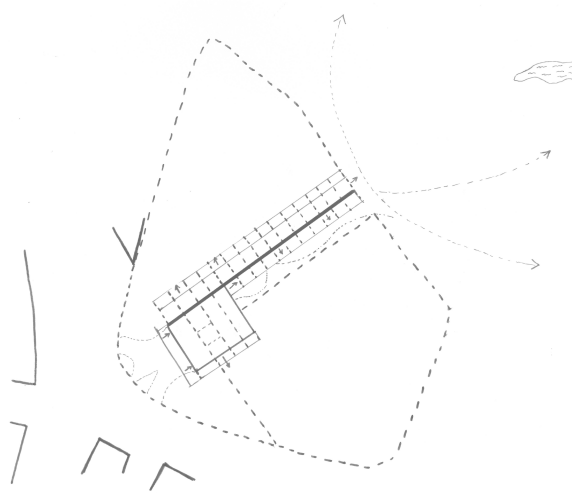
Concept

The programme divided leave space to all the activators and aims to connect them to each other and to bridge between the city and the nature.



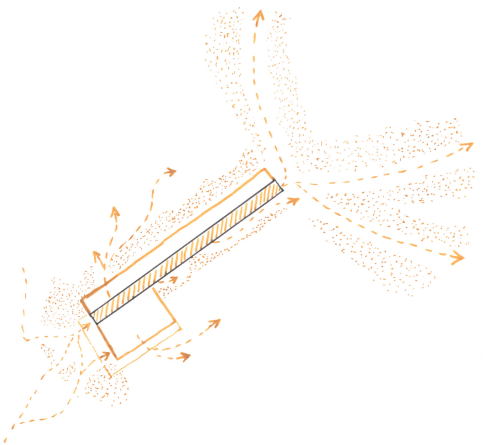
Programme

The rhythm of the structure gives a pace to the walk and invites the people inside the Friche.



Rhythm and Direction

People can stroll around the different areas of the project and finally, once reached the Nature they can admire the calmess of the site detached from the chaotic urban environment.



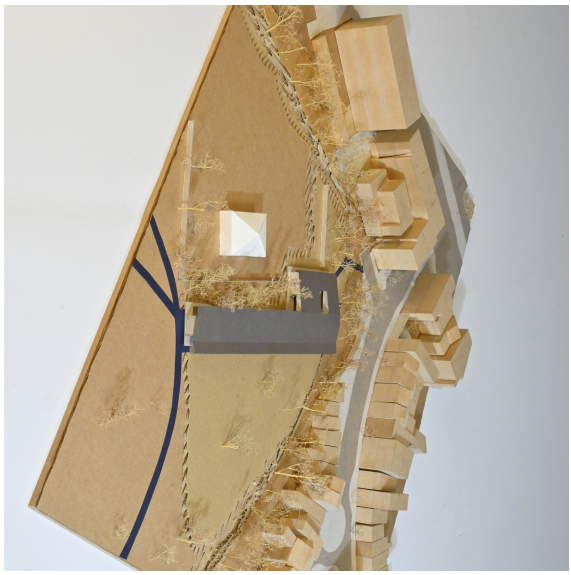
Flows and Nature

SITE MODEL

The urban fabric hosts in its void the bridge bringing the inhabitants of Schaerbeek inside the plot. The volume hides in the nature and doesn't emerge fromm the building surrounding it.



Site model 1.333





Site model 1.333

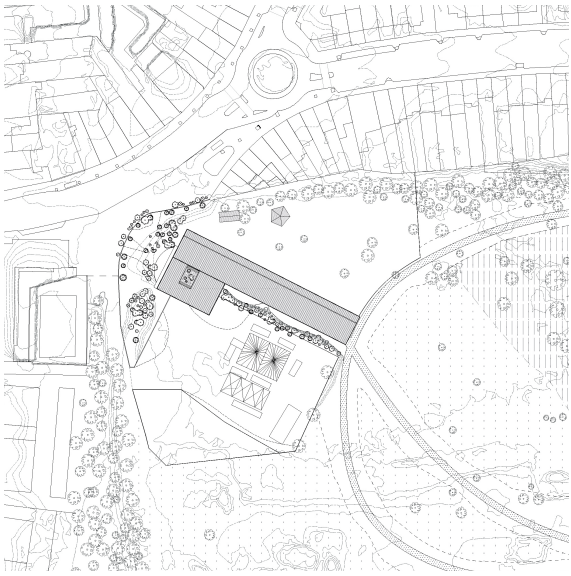


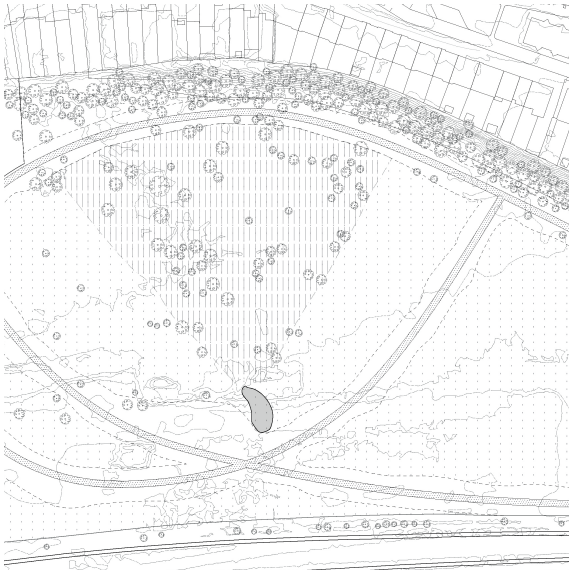


URBAN PLAN

The Friche is crossed by different paths that connects the main accesses of the site and the most important spots - lake, trees, train tracks.

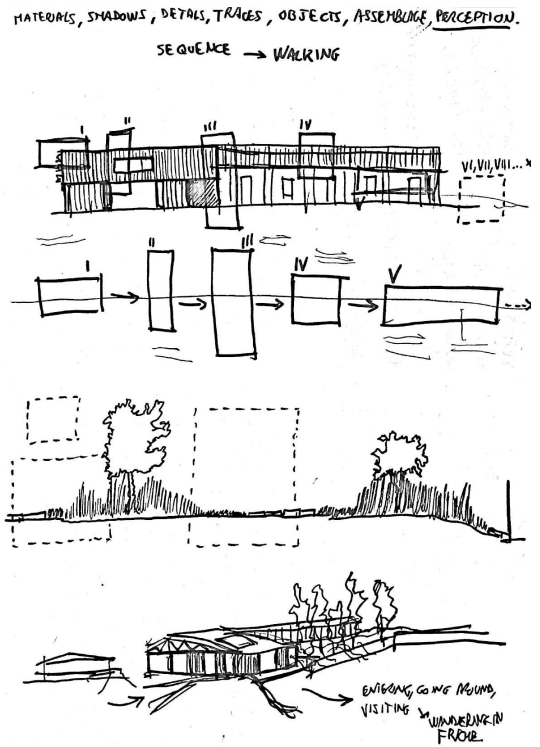






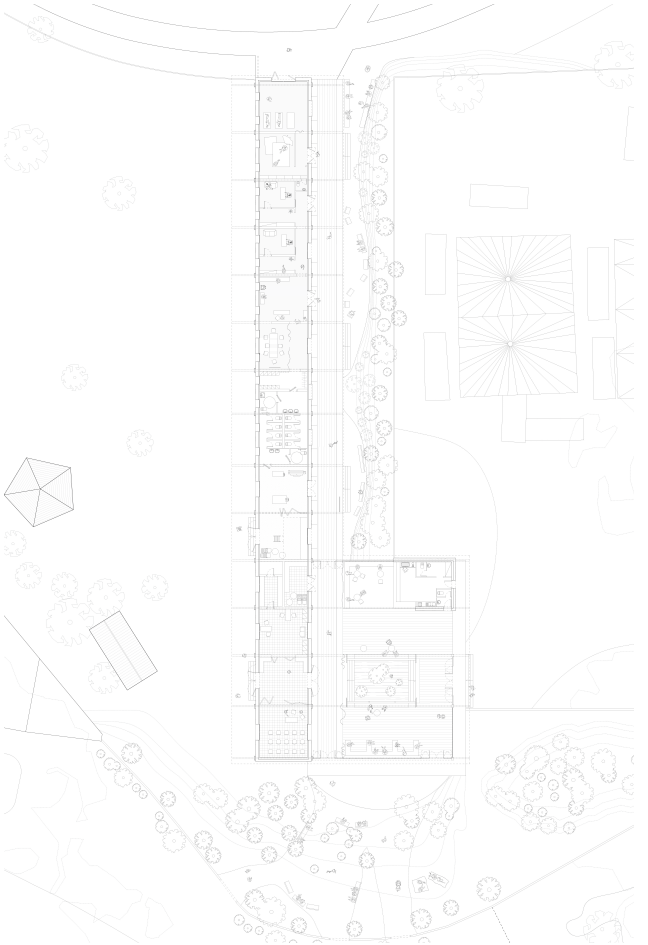
Solvitur Ambulando

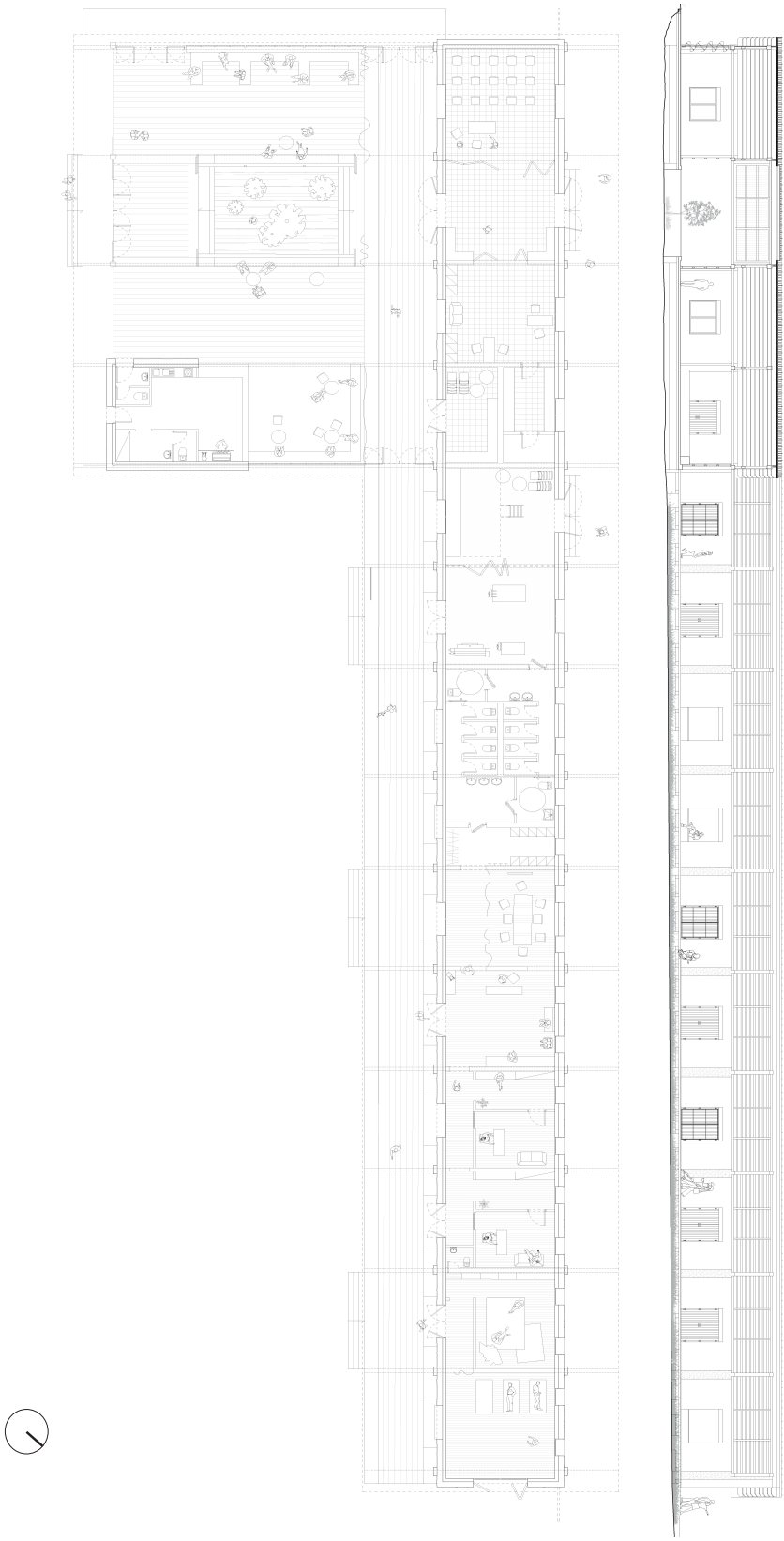
(Chapter 5 - part 0)



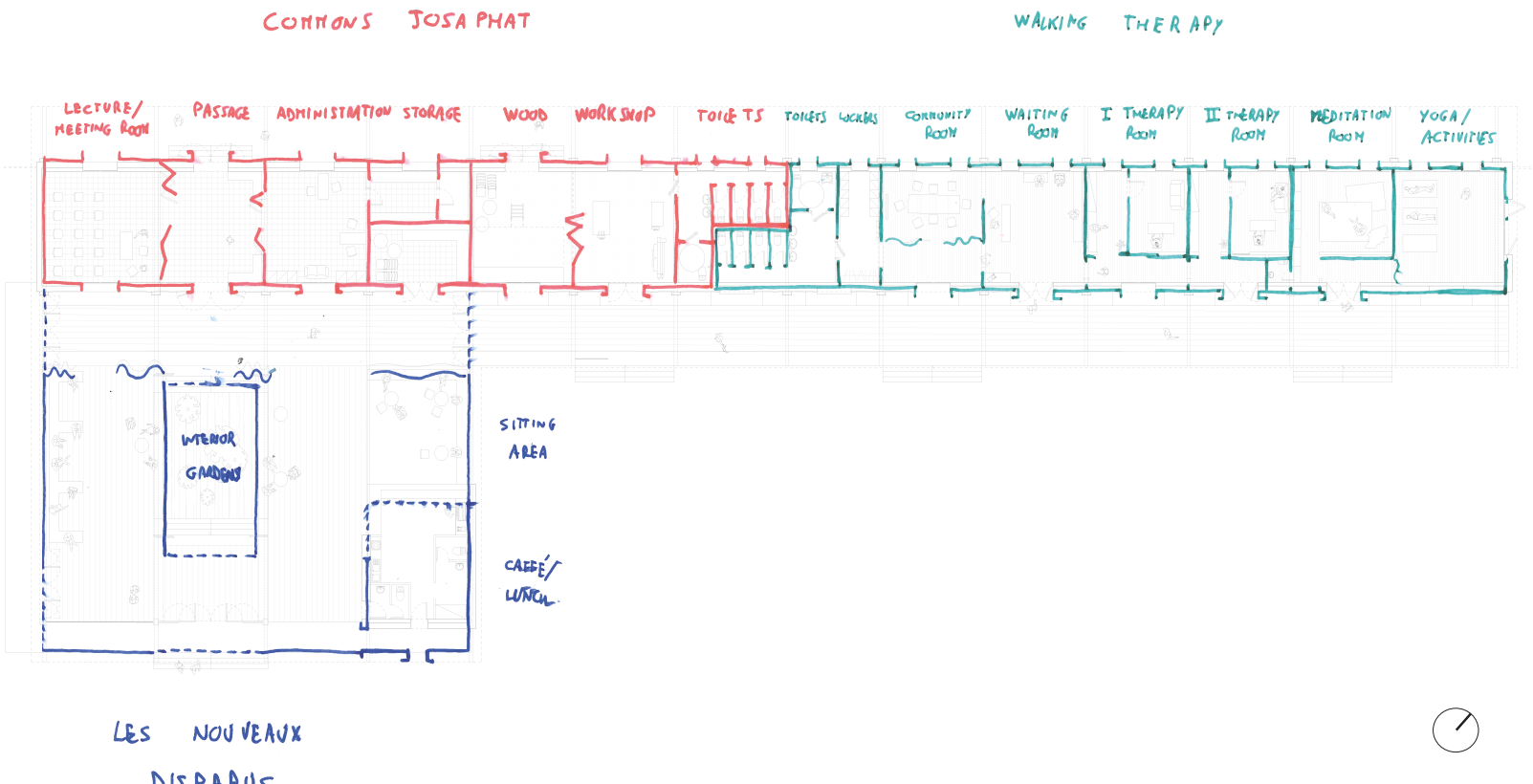
FLOORPLAN

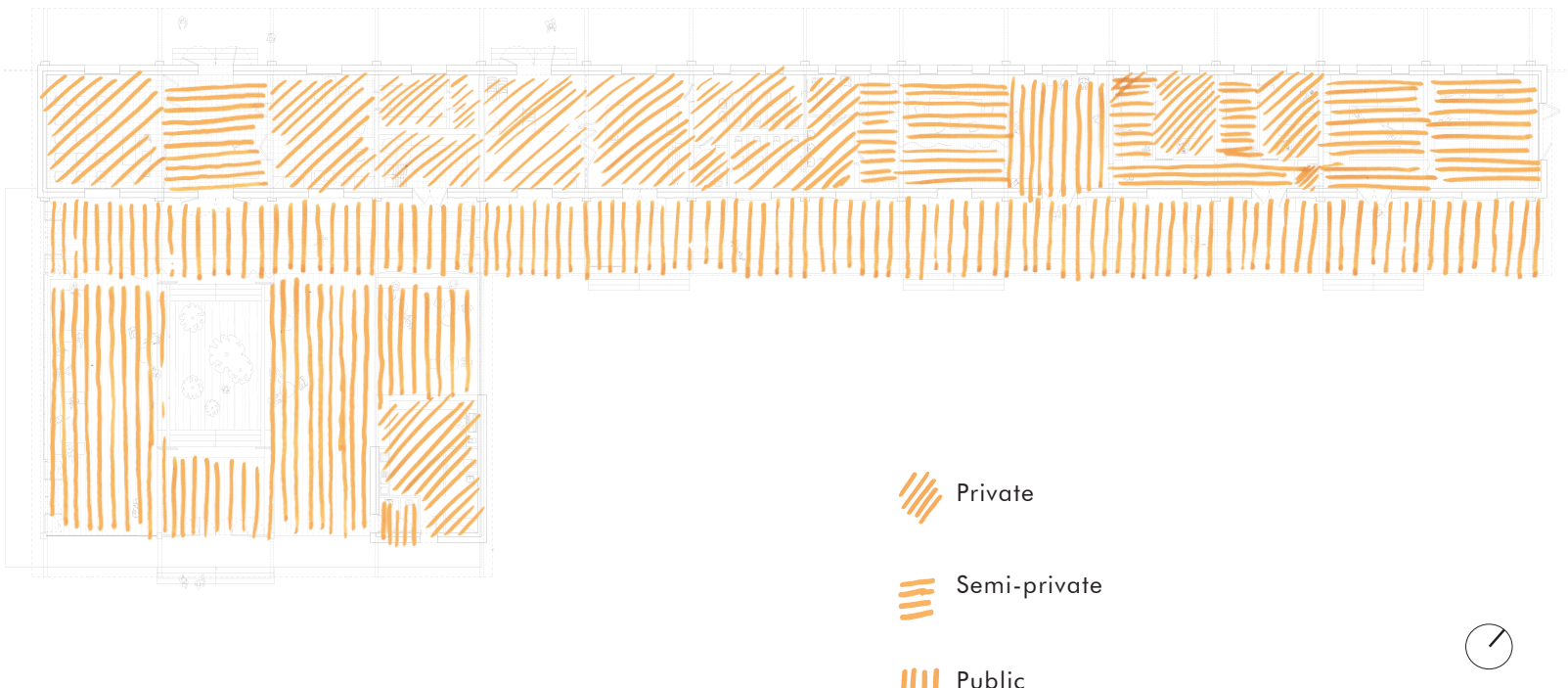
The floorplan aims to give a clear direction with its straight path and bridging the city to the nature, creating a moment of meeting and connection between the different activators.





Floorplan 159


COMMONS JOSA PHAT
WALKING THERAPY
LECTURE/ MEETING ROOM
PASSAGE
ADMINISTRATION
STORAGE
WOOD WORKSHOP
TOILETS
TOILETS
LOCKERS
COMMUNITY ROOM
WAITING ROOM
I THERAPY ROOM
II THERAPY ROOM
MEDITATION ROOM
YOGA / ACTIVITIES
INTERIOR GARDEN
SITTING AREA
CAFÉ/ LUNCH
LES NOUVEAUX DISPARUS


Private
Semi-private
Public

Summer situation (Jun-Sep)

Bruxelles
Jun 20.8 °C - Jul 22.5 °C - Aug 22.1 °C - Sep 19.2 °C

b. Cross ventilation

Air entering from S-side and coming out from high windows on the N-side

c. Shading

Hanging roof is avoiding the sun rays to touch the facade

Max sun elevation (Jun Solstice): 62 °

a. Earth air tunnel

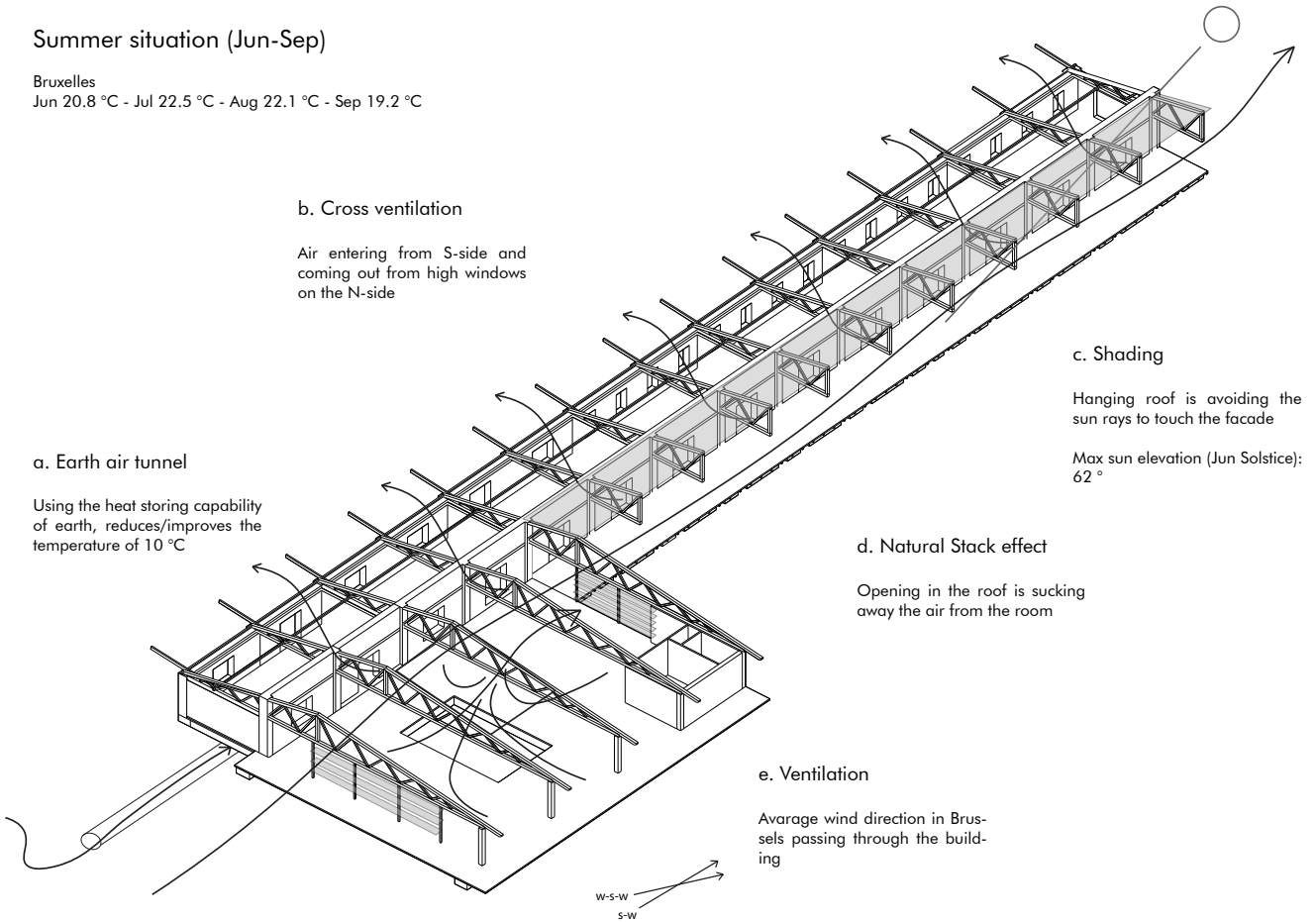
Using the heat storing capability of earth, reduces/improves the temperature of 10 °C

d. Natural Stack effect

Opening in the roof is sucking away the air from the room

e. Ventilation

Avarage wind direction in Brussels passing through the building



Winter situation (Dic-Mar)

Bruxelles
Dic 4.8 °C - Jan 3.8 °C - Feb 3.8 °C - Mar 6.4 °C

b. Heat exchanger

High insulation from the hemp and earth bricks walls and heat exchanger on the windows to reduce the heat loss

a. Earth air tunnel

Using the heat storing capability of earth improves the temperature of 10 °C and provides warm air to the room, togheter with the Duco top vent elements

c. Thermal mass

Hanging roof is repairing from the rain and allowing the solar rays to touch the facade

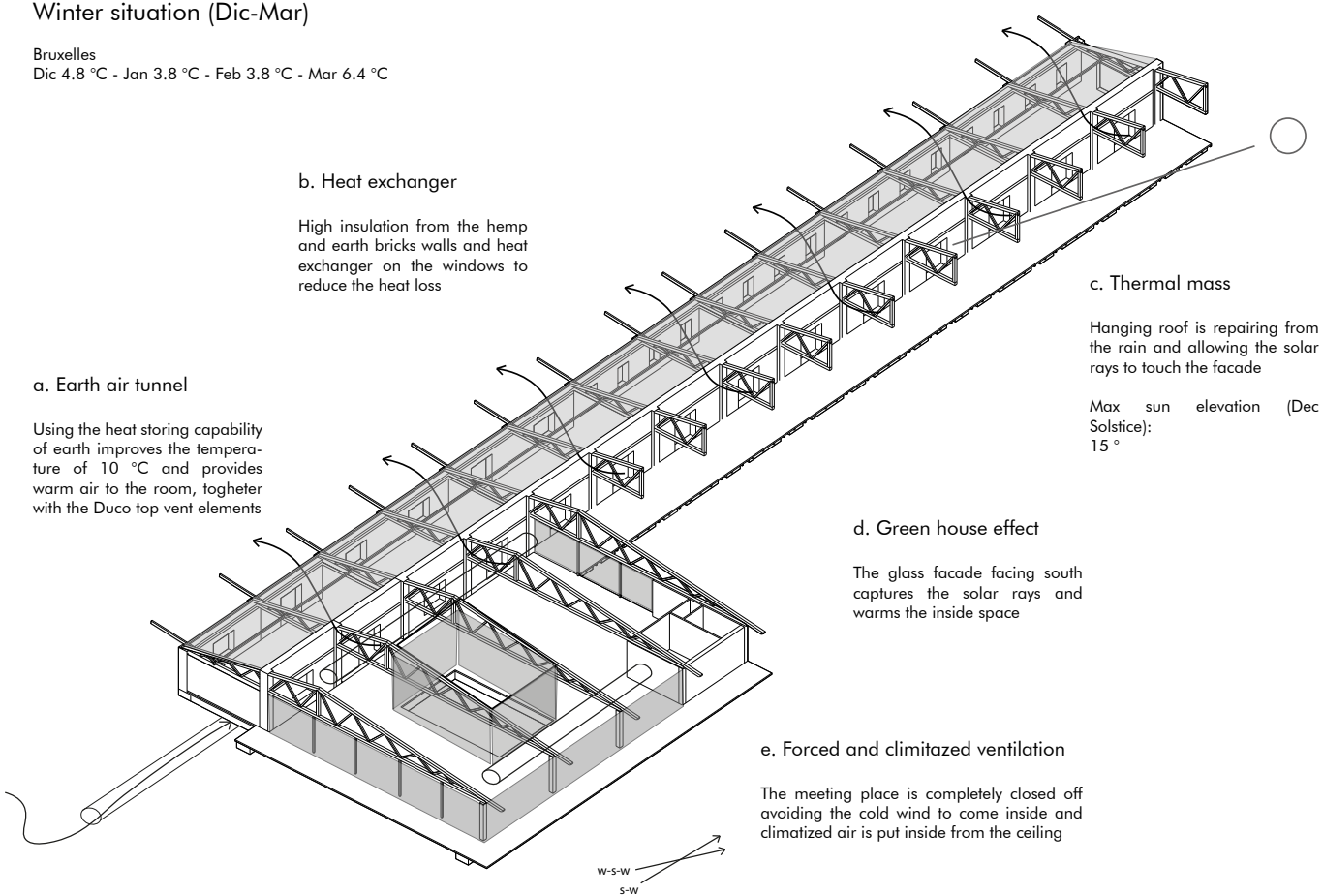
Max sun elevation (Dec Solstice):
15 °

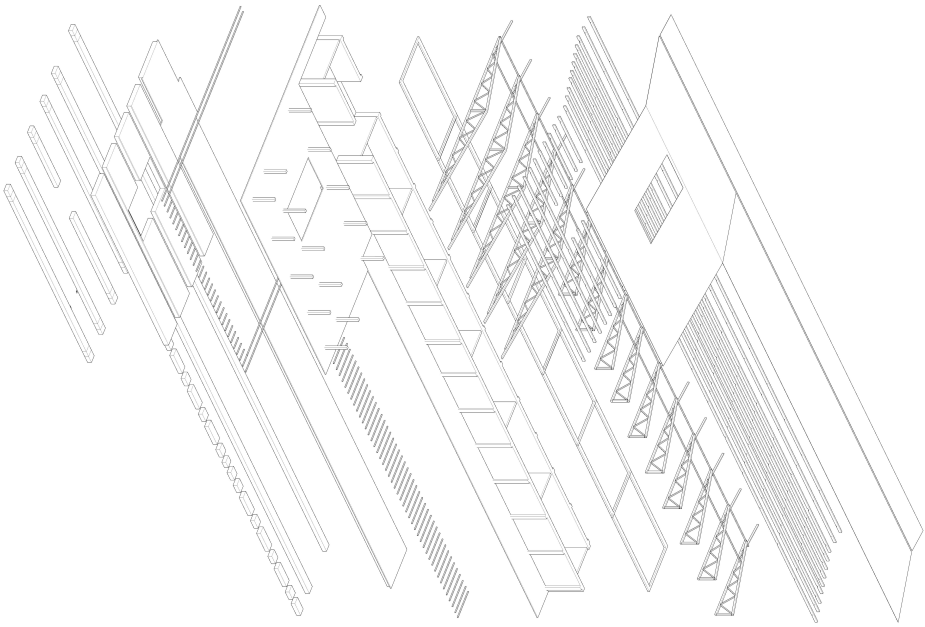
d. Green house effect

The glass facade facing south captures the solar rays and warms the inside space

e. Forced and climitazed ventilation

The meeting place is completely closed off avoiding the cold wind to come inside and climatized air is put inside from the ceiling









Model 1.33