



The Mediator

Connecting polarities to frame a cultural ecosystem

Ferdinand Aull

According to the sustainability directory a **cultural ecosystem** is the **interwoven relationship between human culture and the natural environment.**

<https://climate.sustainability-directory.com/term/cultural-ecosystems/>

Groningen & Winsum through the lens of the tourist

Designed by Ariel Tam, Eylül Aksoy, Ferdinand Aull, Francini Schuh, Georgina Giakoumelou, Jan Pieter Lanzing, Joost Prickaerts, Juliana Lueb, Juliët Langelaar, Maribel Rizk, Thijmen van Kooij, Zoe Hemel

Legend:

Groningen Map

- Train
- Roads
- Pieterpad
- Radial distances
- Wadden sea
- Reitdiep river: main fresh water connection
- main fresh water distributor zones
- Future water network
- Current water network
- Polder Landscape
- Reitdiep future landscape

Winsum Map

- Pieterpad
- Faster route
- Ideal route
- Extended ideal route



Cultural ecosystem of Groningen

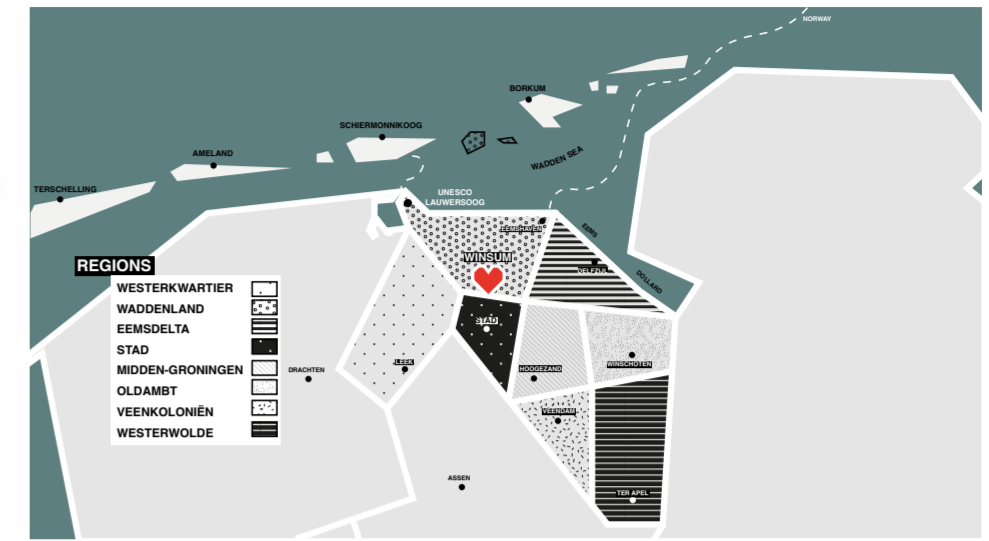
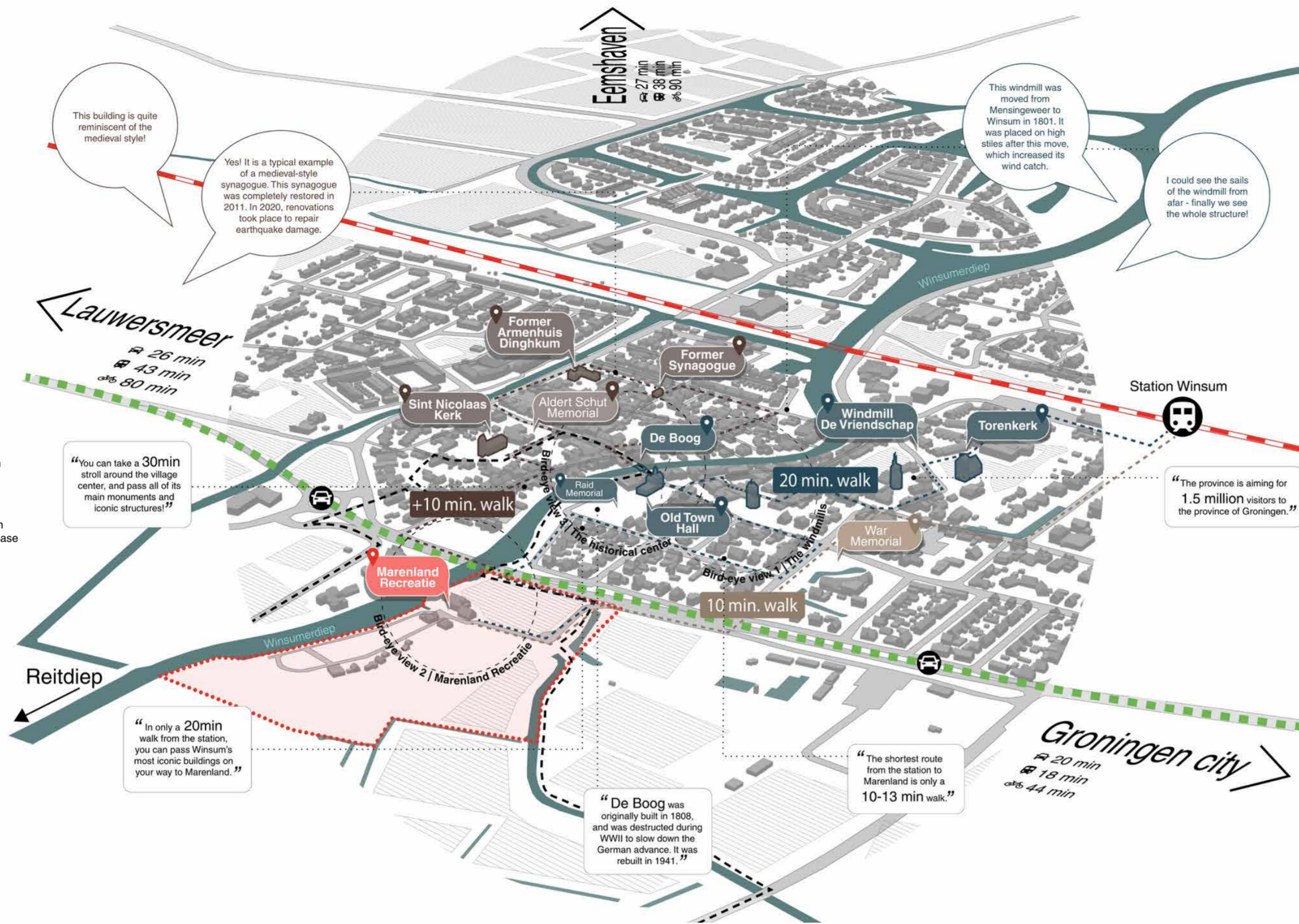
Groupwork

Ferdinand Aull

Your Journey starts in Winsum!

Your journey starts in Winsum! Winsum is the place to discover Unesco Lauwersmeer, party city Groningen and its variety in heritage landscape in just a few days. It is just the place to be to discover the North!

- 1.8 days** The average length of stay in Winsum
- 7525 residents** The population of Winsum
- 11% growth** The Province of Groningen recorded the highest increase in overnight visitors in the Netherlands in 2024
- 1.5 million** The ambition to increase visitors annually



- 1 Walfriduskerk, Bedum**
This Romanesque-Gothic church from the 13th century is famous for its leaning tower, which is even more crooked than the Tower of Pisa. The church forms a historic centerpiece for the village of Bedum and offers an exceptional view of the Groningen wierden landscape.

3 Museum Wierdenland, Ezinge
This museum shows life on mounds, which are artificial hills that offered protection from the sea. Ezinge is one of the best-researched mounds in the Netherlands. Archaeology, landscape, and cultural history come together here.

5 Museum Verhildersum Estate, Leens
Historic landscape, with manor house, farm and museum. Provides an insight into aristocratic life and daily existence in the Groningen countryside through the centuries. The museum displays historic interiors, art and utensils.

7 Wadden Sea World Heritage Centre (WEC), Lauwersoog
This interactive visitor centre is dedicated to the Wadden Sea UNESCO World Heritage Site. Discover the dynamics of the tides, birds, marine life and the relationship between humans and nature through interactive exhibitions about this dynamic and vulnerable nature reserve. The centre offers a unique opportunity to see a seal up close.

9 Menkemaborg, Uithuizen
A beautiful 18th-century manor house with formal gardens. This manor house shows how the Groningen elite lived, surrounded by art, architecture and landscape. The manor house now functions as a museum and offers a glimpse into aristocratic life in North Groningen.

2 Petruskerk, Pieterburen
This characteristic 14th-century village church stands on a mound. It is known as the starting point of the Pieterpad walking route. The church also reflects the long history of settlement and religion in the northern coastal region.

4 Art centre 'De Ploeg', Wehe - Den Hoorn
This art centre is dedicated to the artists' collective 'De Ploeg', from the early 20th century. The artists were inspired by the Groningen landscape and everyday life. The centre also connects modern art with the unique landscape of North Groningen.

6 Fishing village, Zoutkamp
An authentic fishing village with a historic harbour on the Fieldiep. Zoutkamp tells the story of fishing, shipping and life on the water, where the sea and the inland meet. The characteristic warehouses are a reminder of this history.

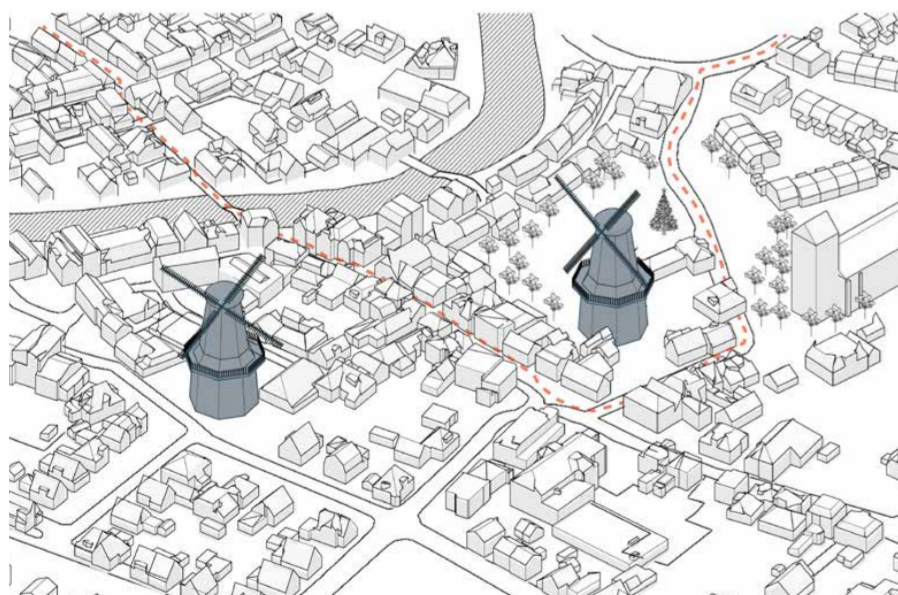
8 Openluchtmuseum Het Hoogeland, Warffum
Museum village with historic buildings from Groningen. Provides an insight into how people lived and worked in the Hogeland region in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Shows how the landscape determined the way of life in the Hogeland by highlighting crafts, agriculture and social relations.

10 Observationtower, Warhuizen
This observation tower offers a panoramic view of the open mound landscape. It is an ideal place to experience the spaciousness of North Groningen and the interplay of land, water and sky.
- FAUNA SPECIES**

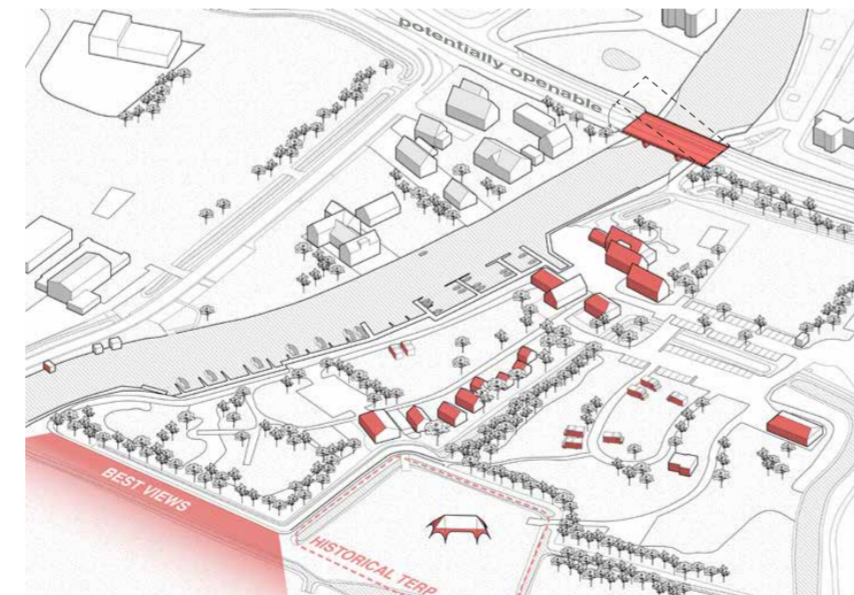
 - Zeehond
 - Slechtvalk
 - Torenavalk
 - Tureluur
 - Velduil
 - Veldeuwerik
 - Visdief
 - Zeearend
 - Zilverplevier
 - Zwarte ruit
 - Kluut
 - Rosso grutto
 - Scholekster
 - Kleine karekiet
 - Kieviet
 - Kokmeeuw
 - Rietzanger
 - Gestreepte strandloper
 - Grauwe franjepoot
 - Goudplevier
 - Grutto
 - Usvogel
 - Kemphaan
 - Kanoet
 - Brandgans
 - Roodhalsgans
 - Bergeend
 - Bonte strandloper
 - Blauwe kiekendief
 - Bruine kiekendief
 - Buizerd
 - Slobeend

FAUNA

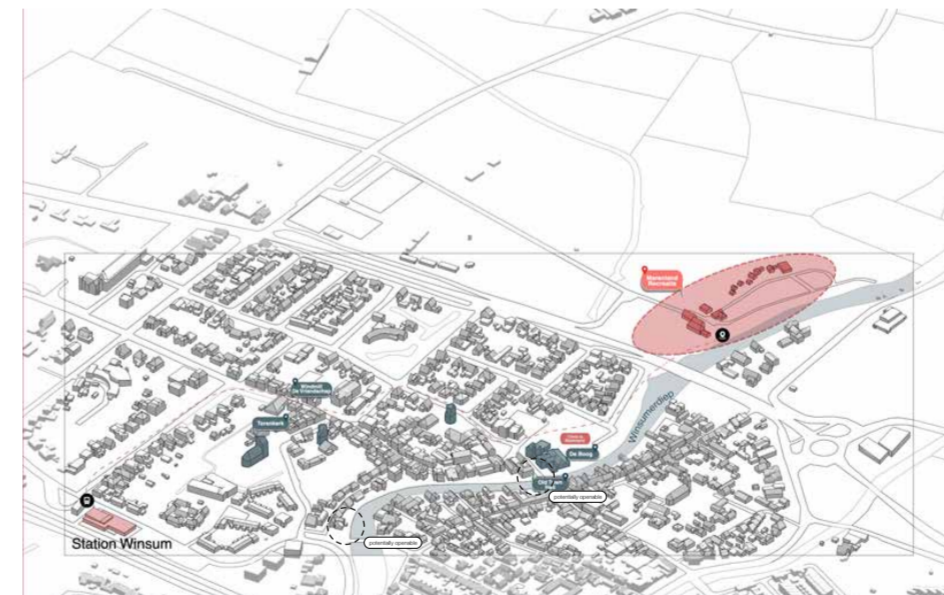
 - Spindotterbloem
 - Knoopkruid
 - Kattendoorn
 - Gele morgenster
 - Paarse morgenster



Bird-eye view 1 | The Windmills



Bird-eye view 2 | Marenland Recreatie



Bird-eye view 3 | The historical center



Spatial separation between Marenland and the cultural ecosystem

Isolation offers The Mediator the opportunity to establish a symbiotic relationship with the existing Marenland campsite



<https://media0.faz.net/image/w1200h900/20b325a34012/w2000h1500x500y250/202405/19744247/unter-dem-motto-sagen-wirwebp>



<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cp8d87l6lpio>

Tourist place pressure on social life and public spaces

Problem globally

Ferdinand Aull



As 'overtourism' swamps Amsterdam, Dutch capital pushes back

Originally published December 11, 2017 at 5:26 am | Updated December 11, 2017 at 5:43 am



1 of 12 | In this May 11, 2016 photo, graffiti reading "Go Home" is sprayed on a map of bicycle paths at the entrance to Amsterdam's Vondelpark, a popular spot for tourists to ride their rental bicycles. "If the only... (AP Photo/Peter Dejong) More ▾

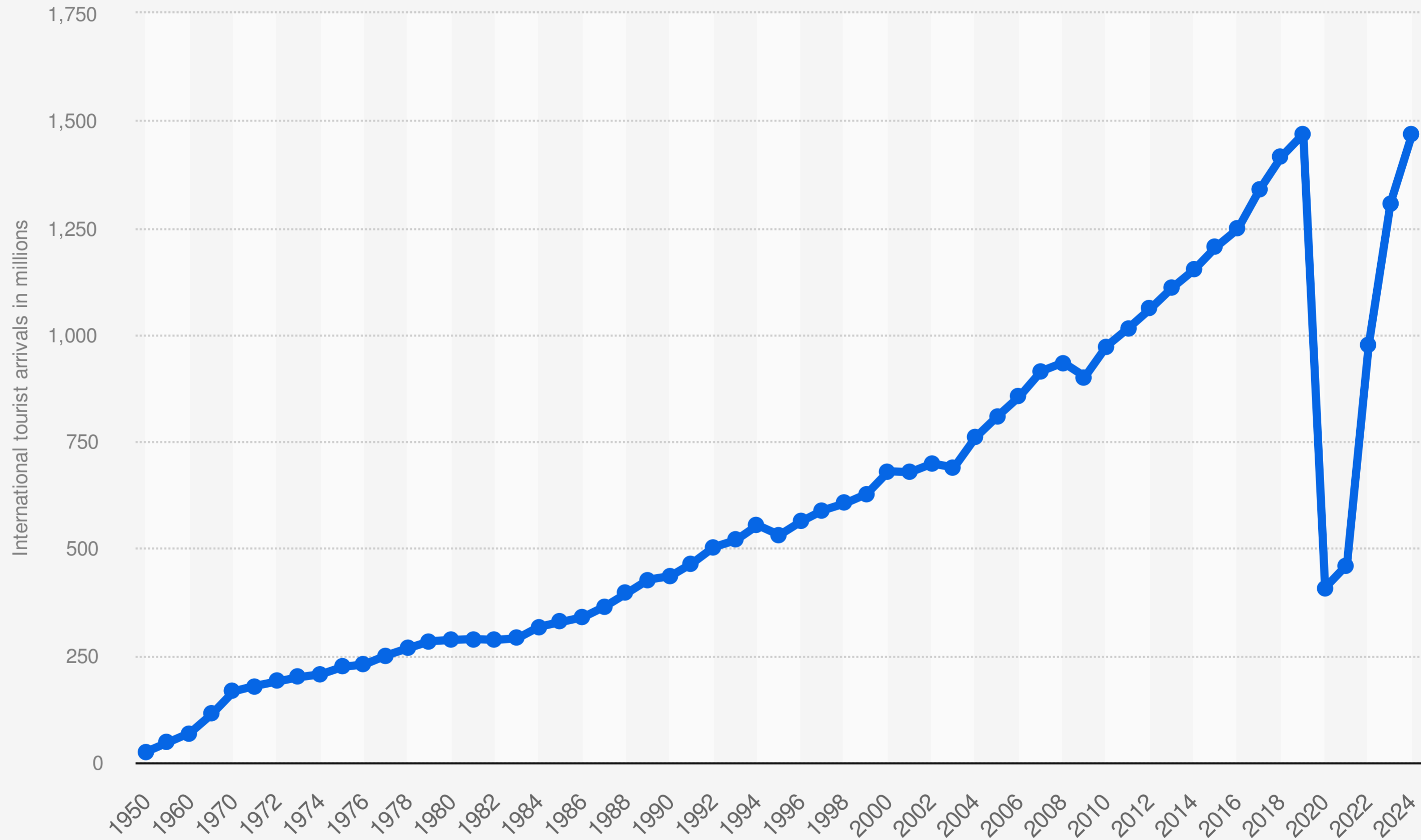
<https://apnews.com/general-news-travel-c95b74b3a2d54d5fac5f72256a21da06>

Growing tensions between locals and tourists

Problem in the Netherlands

Ferdinand Aull

Number of international tourist arrivals worldwide from 1950 to 2024 (in millions)



Sources

World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism);
Worldwatch Institute
© Statista 2026

Additional Information:

Worldwide; World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism); Worldwatch
Institute; 1950 to 2024

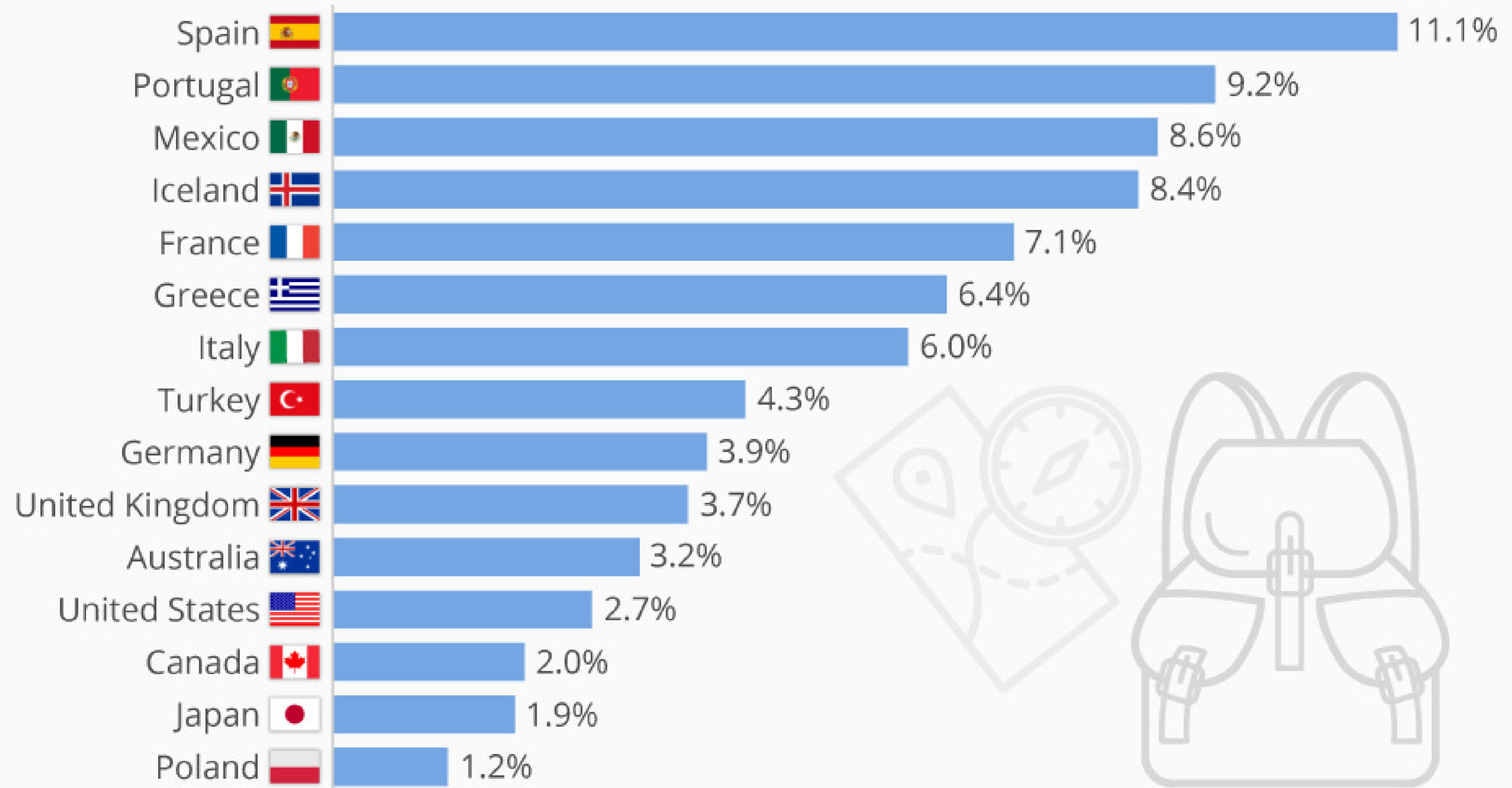
<https://www-statista-com.tudelft.idm.oclc.org/statistics/209334/total-number-of-international-tourist-arrivals/?srsltid=AfmBOooAdO2fnD-uGrE9wGLsc9pbvFNUB6mGiqJ7ooow6vWQaJkDGfBI>

1.47 billion tourist arrivals without benefits for the local community

Destinations are attracting so many tourists that the quality of life for locals is deteriorating

Where Tourism Gives The Biggest Economic Boost

Tourism as a percentage of GDP in selected OECD countries (2016)*



* Data for Spain includes indirect impact, data for France refers to internal tourism consumption



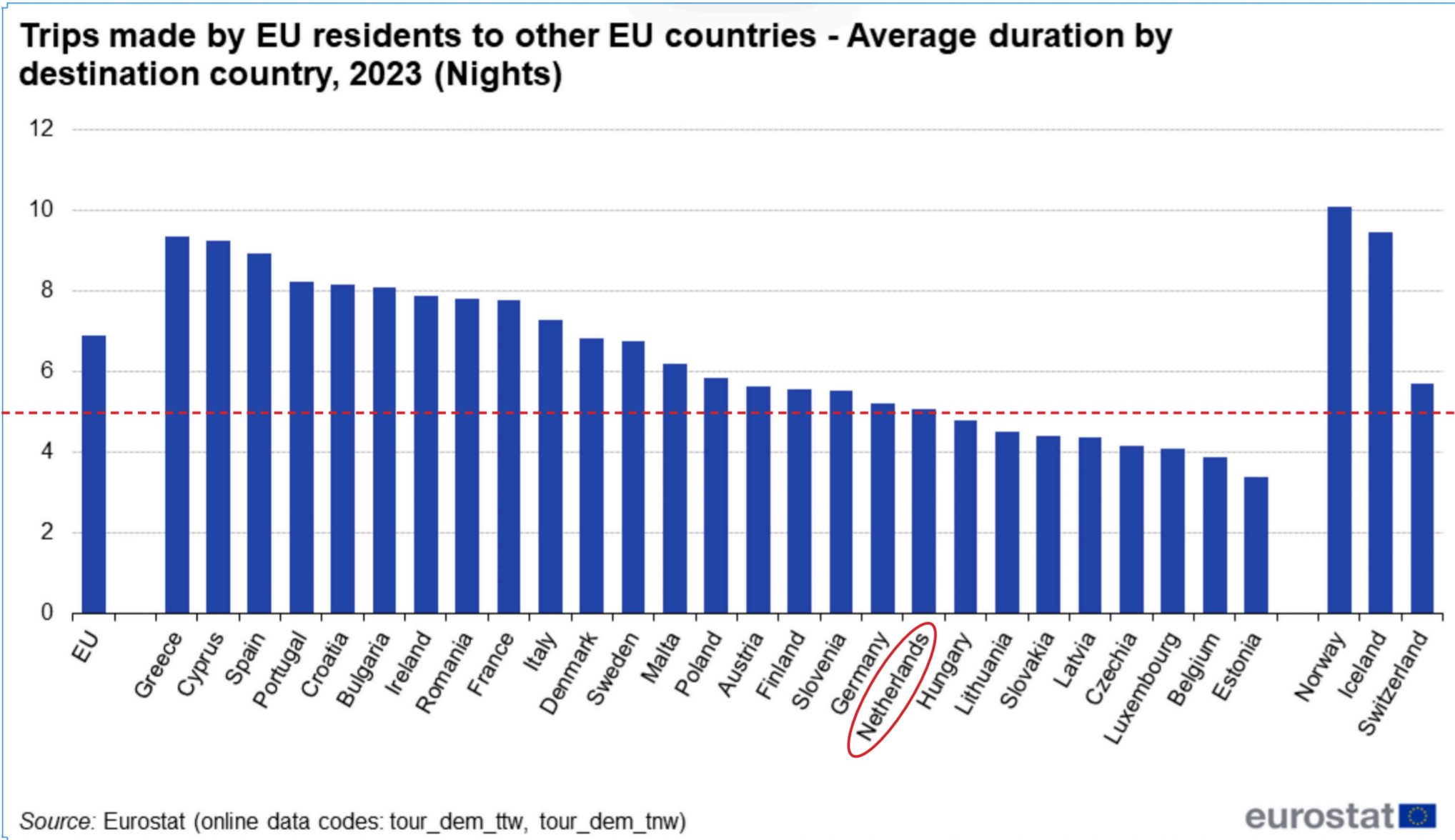
Source: OECD



<https://www-statista-com.tudelft.idm.oclc.org/chart/13829/where-tourism-gives-the-biggest-economic-boost/?srsltid=AfmBOopp5vq40A0U7BpG00xKF6MAMLweqD5flmTwID0-OtCjama-rFz>

At the same time stays are becoming shorter, which limits the local economy to generate benefits

Tourism infrastructure priorities efficiency and consumption over longer engagement



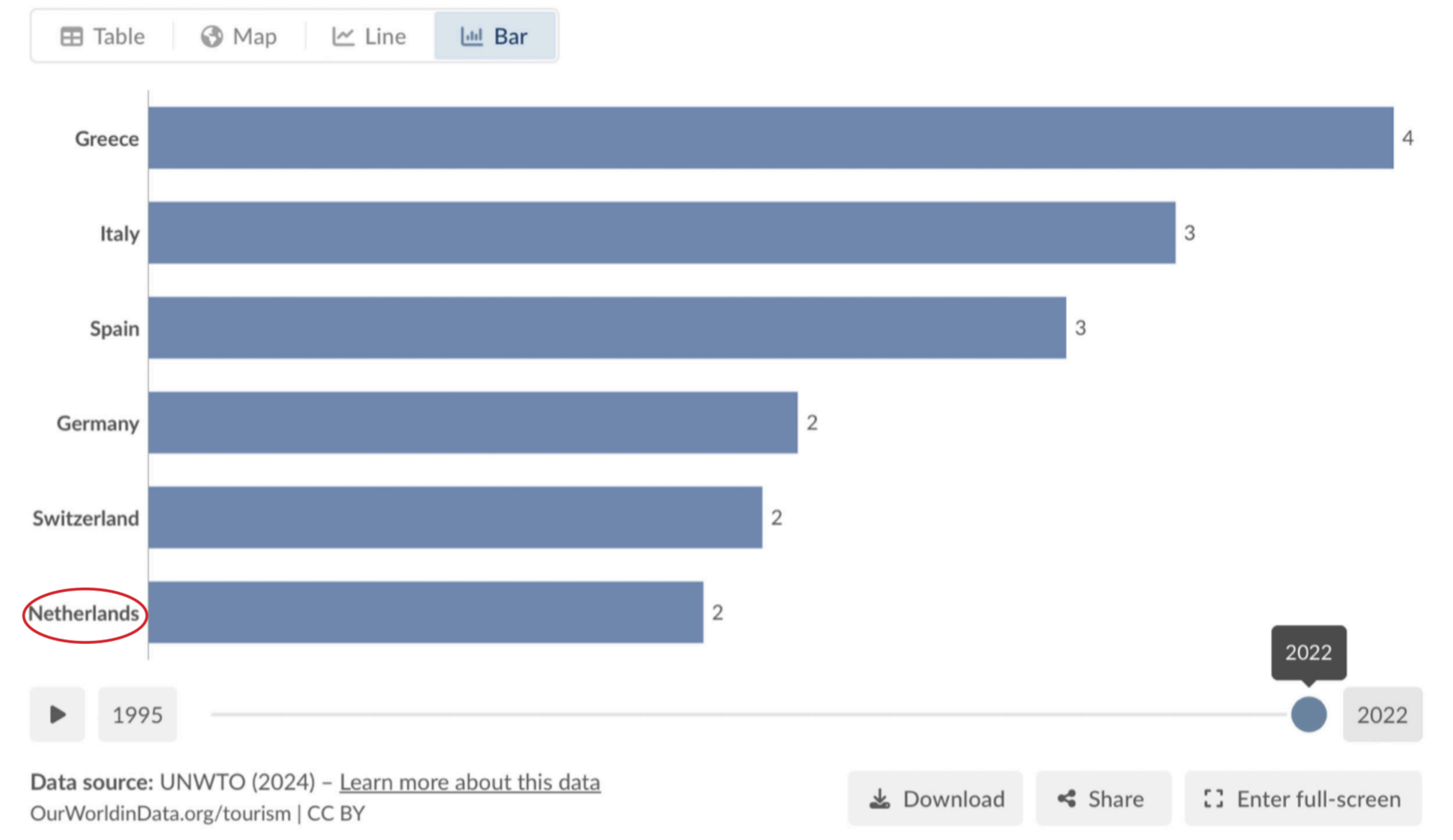
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Tourism_statistics_-_intra-EU_tourism_flows

Average length of stay of European visitors is **5 days**

Average length of stay of international visitors, 2022

Our World in Data

Number of nights in both commercial and non-commercial accommodation services.



<https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/average-length-of-stay?tab=discrete-bar&time=latest&country=NLD-ESP-ITA-GRC-DEU-CHE&mapSelect=NLD-ESP-ITA-GRC-DEU-CHE>

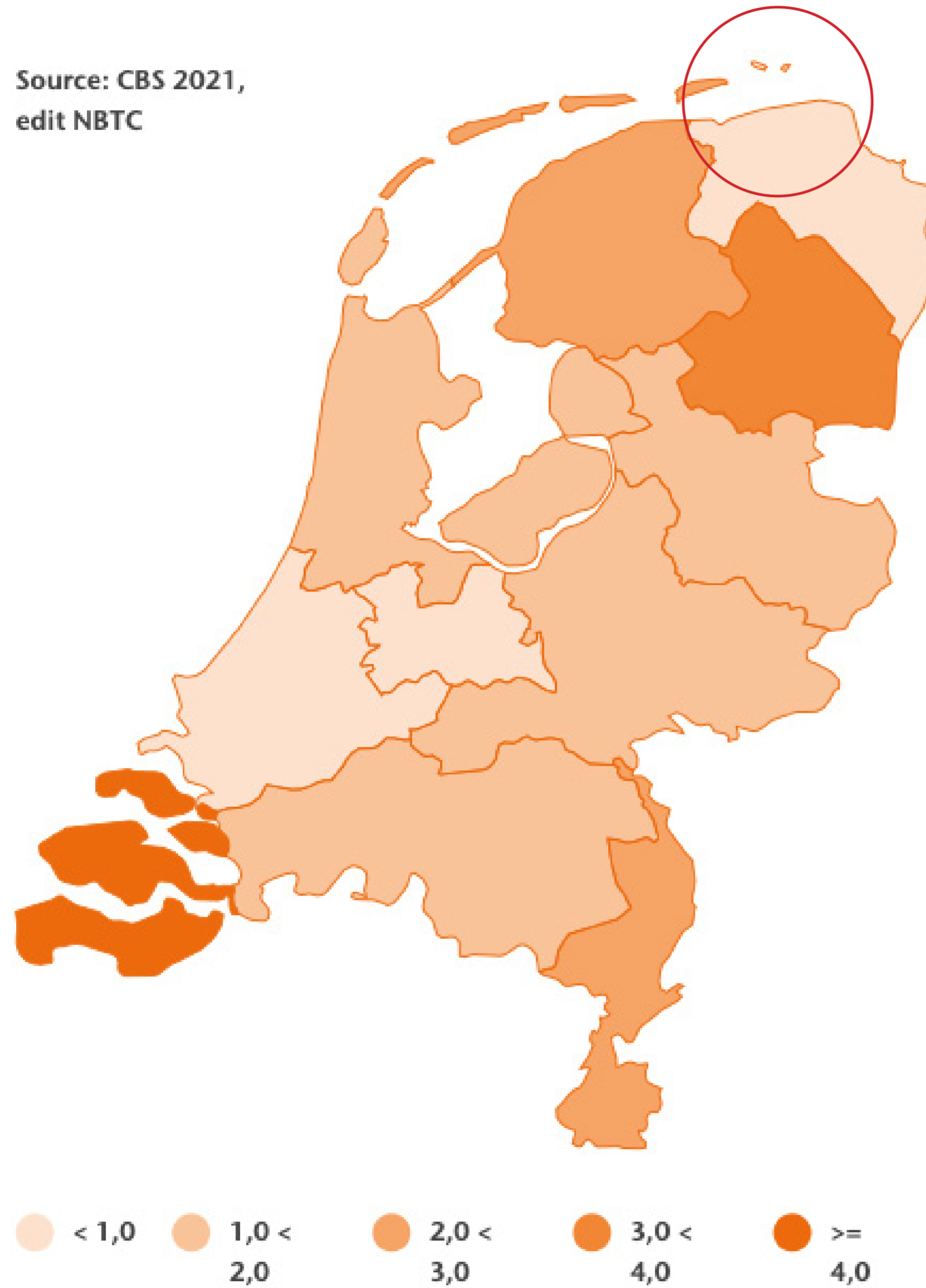
Average length of International visitors is **2 days**

No economic profit without longer stays

Netherlands | Mentioned by Nij begun

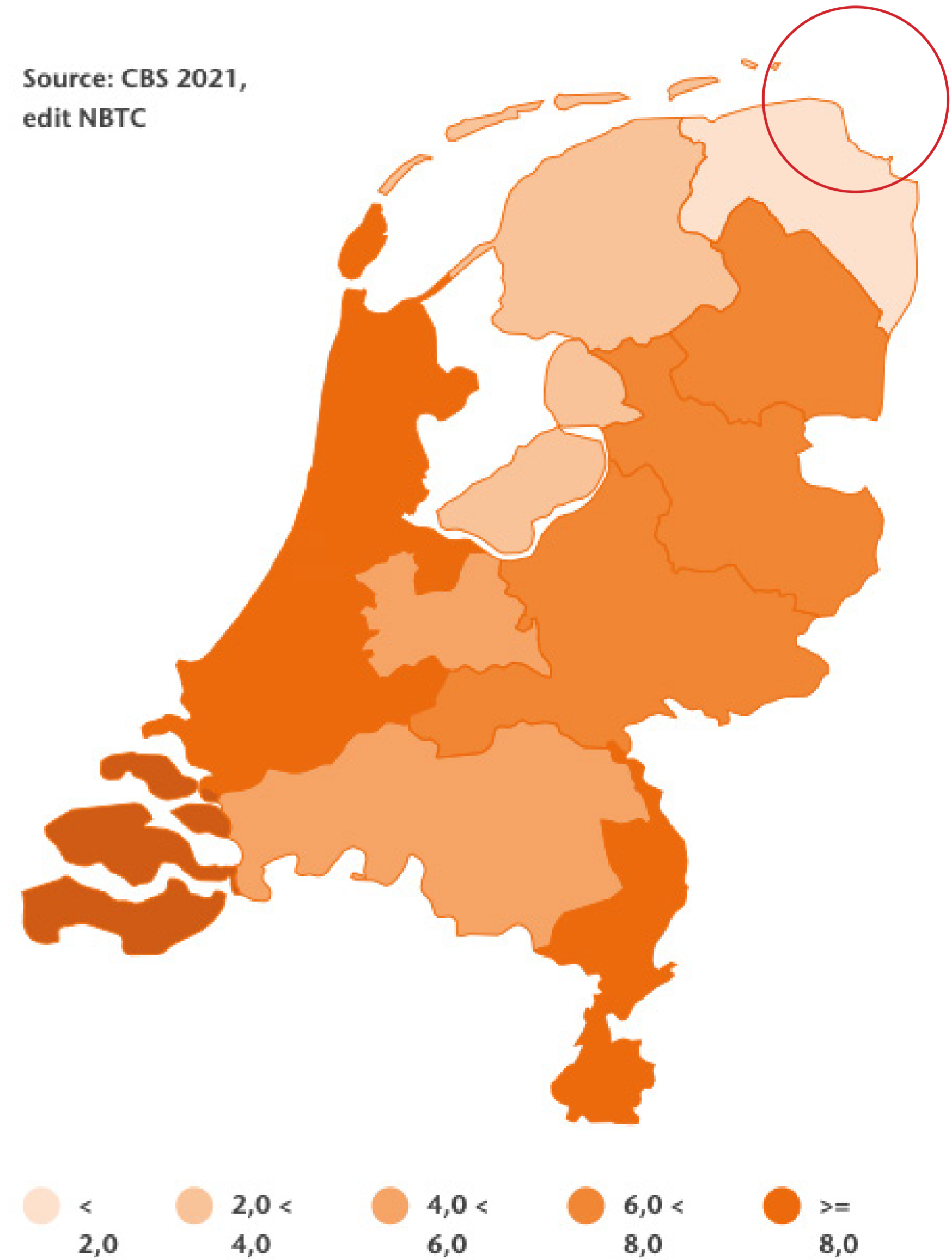
Intensity - Regional differences Overnight stays per day per 100 inhabitants.

Source: CBS 2021,
edit NBTC



Density - Regional differences Number of overnight stays per day per km²

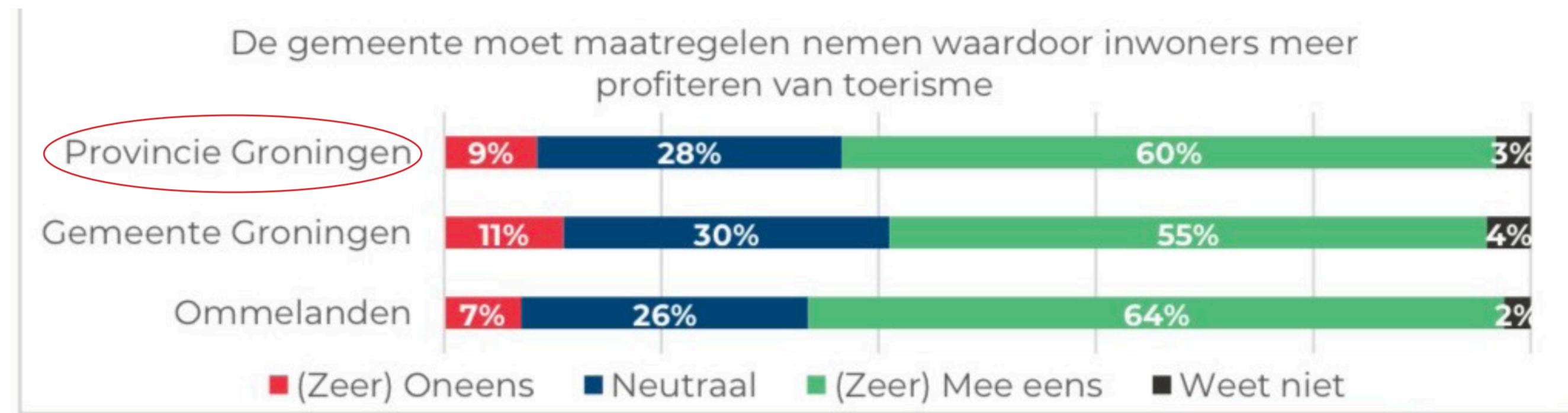
Source: CBS 2021,
edit NBTC



https://www.celth.nl/uploads/2024/6/valuable-tourism-is_43517.pdf?utm_source

Average stay in Winsum is 1 day

Netherlands, Province of Groningen, Winsum | Mentioned by Nij begun



https://www.provinciegroningen.nl/fileadmin/user_upload/Documenten/Beleid_en_documenten/Documentenzoeker/Werken_en_ondernemen/Toerisme/Rapportage_Onderzoek_Vrijtijdseconomie_provincie_Groningen_februari_2025_WCAG.pdf?

60% of inhabitants want to profit from tourism

Locals want to benefit without careful architectural design tourism risks becoming a form of exploitation

Rather than a source of long-term regional benefits

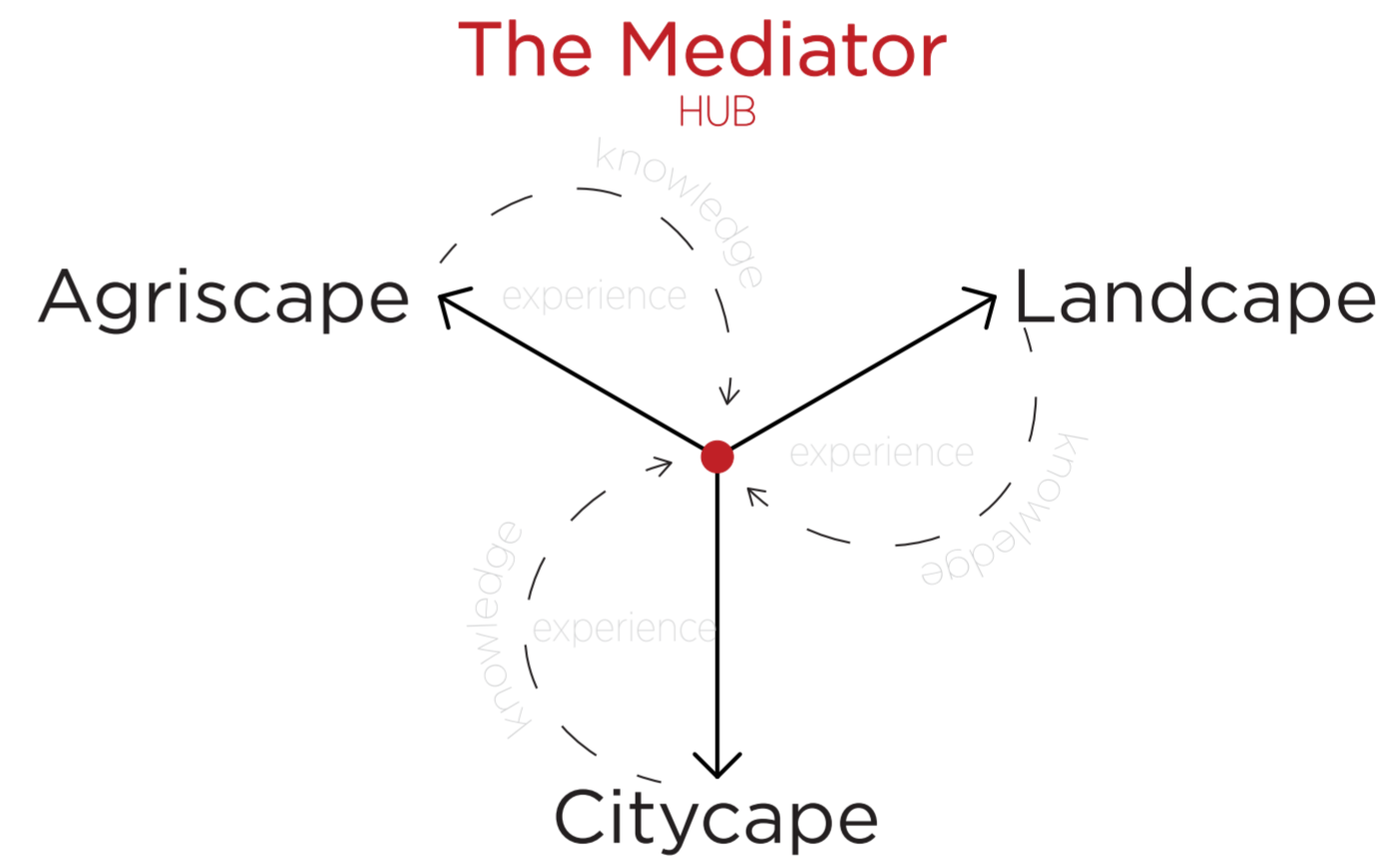


<https://marenland.nl/eten-drinken/barbecueen/>

Temporary overload of tourists at the Marenland campsite | Conversation with Owner

Winsum during Corona Pandemic

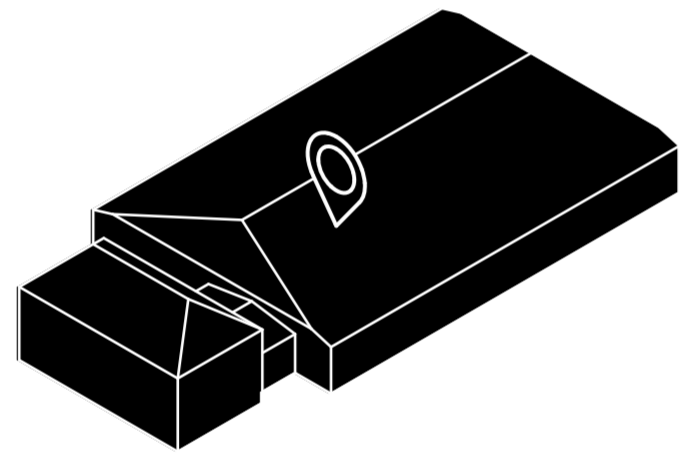
Ferdinand Aull



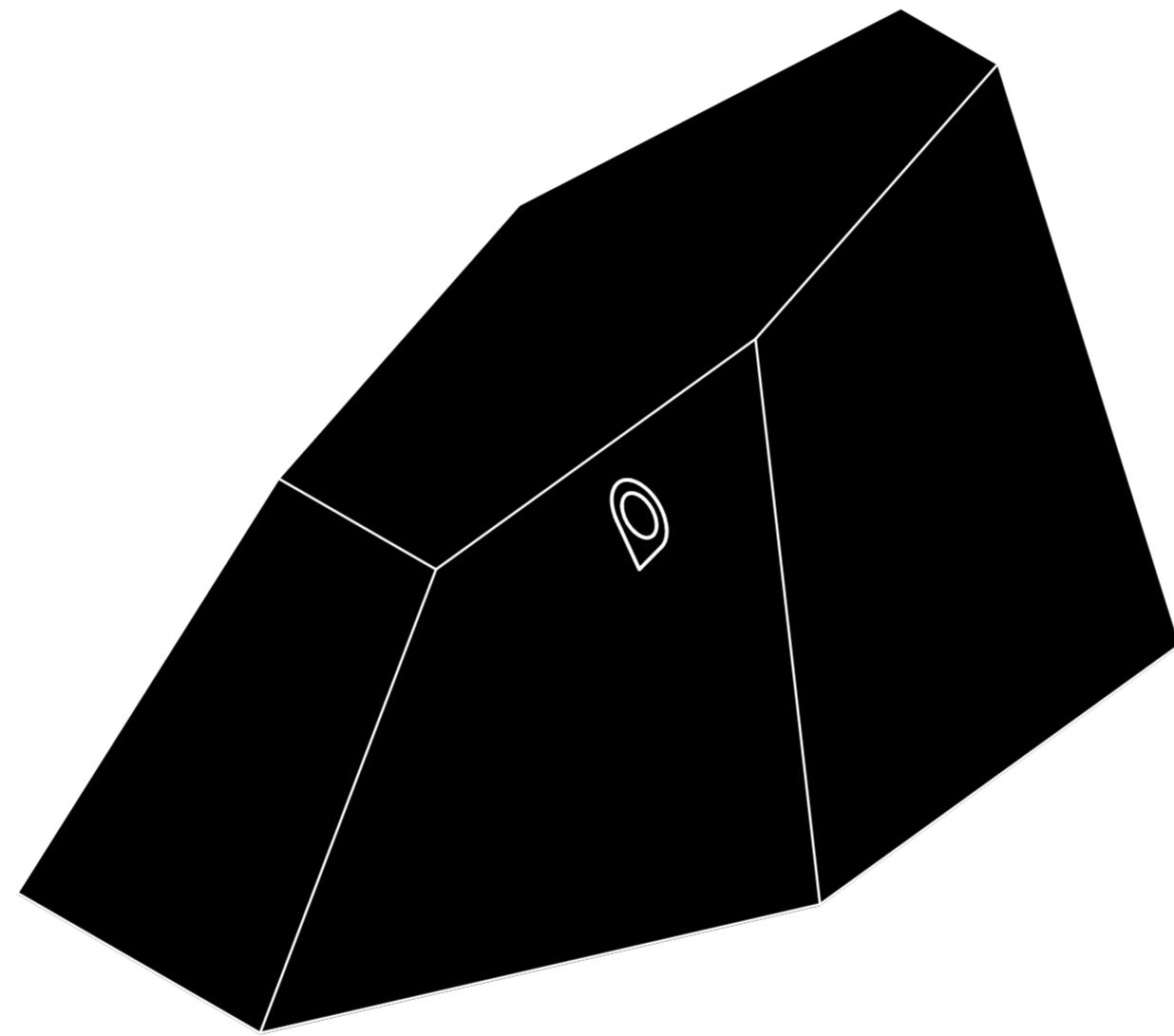
Connect visitor to the cultural ecosystem

Mediates between the landscape, agricultural land and city life

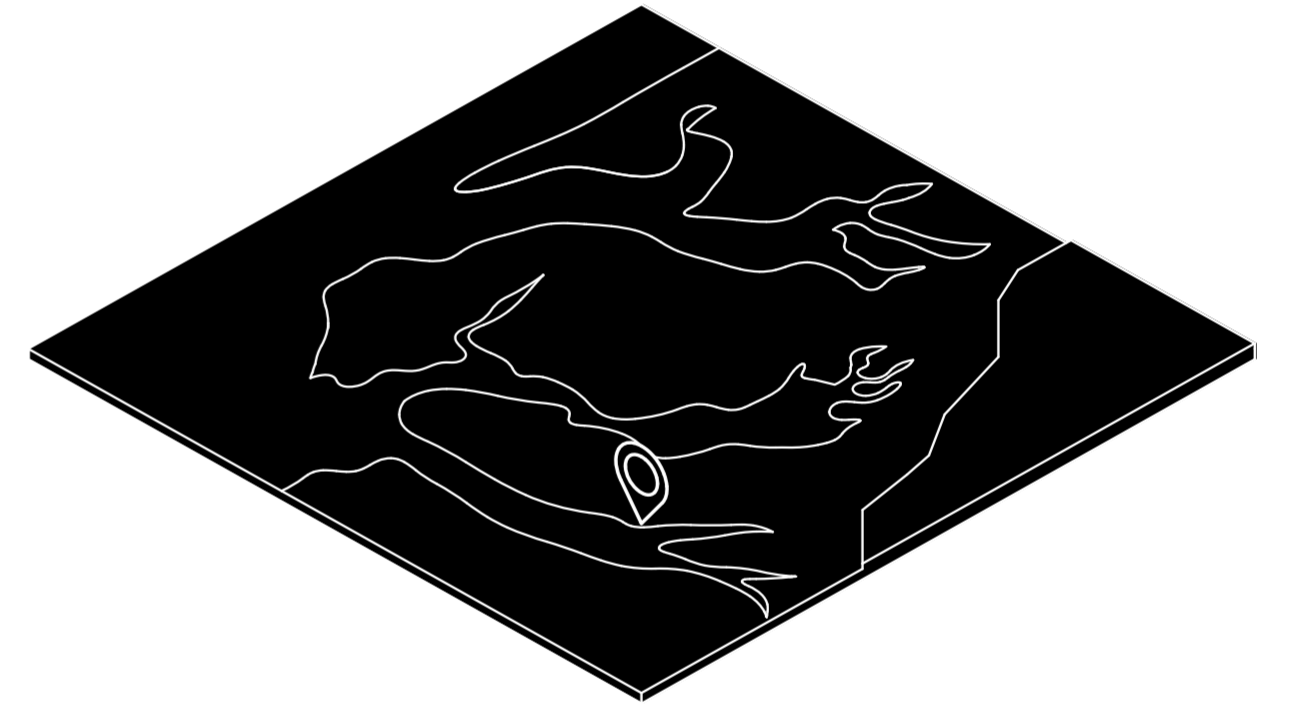
Without reproducing the extractive logic that shaped the province in the past



Educational Tourist



City|Cultural Tourist



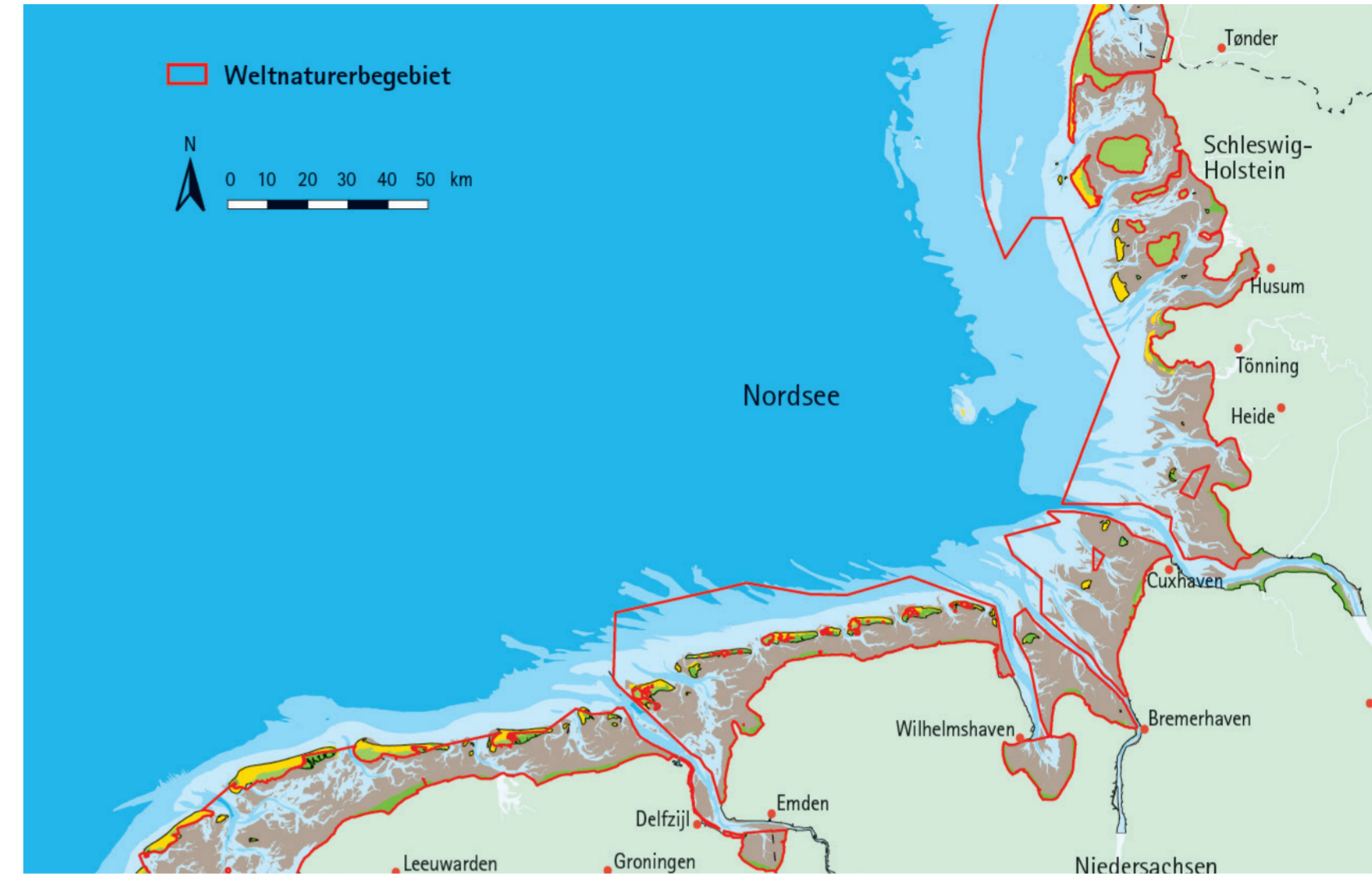
Hiking Tourist



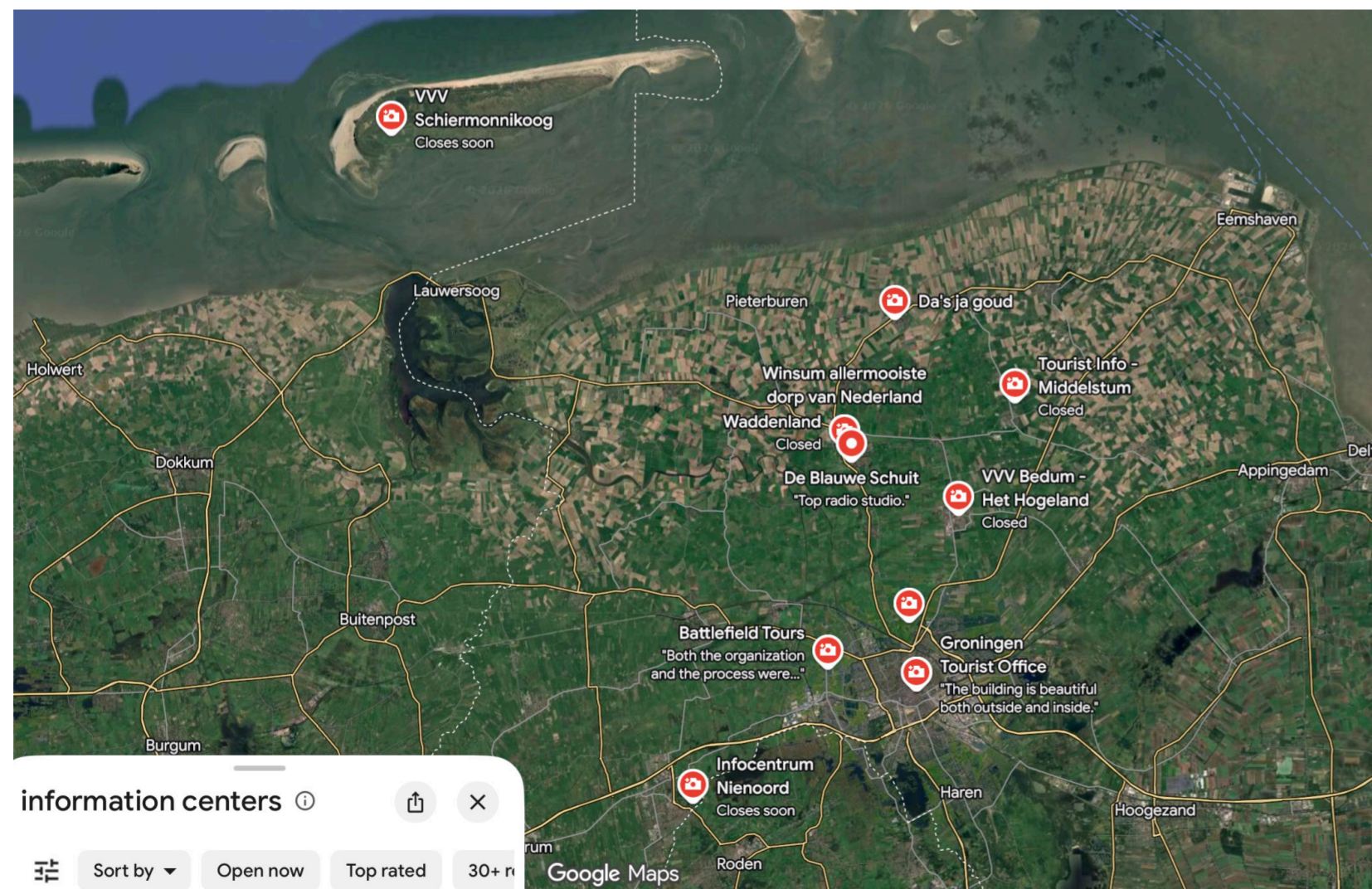
3 tourist types



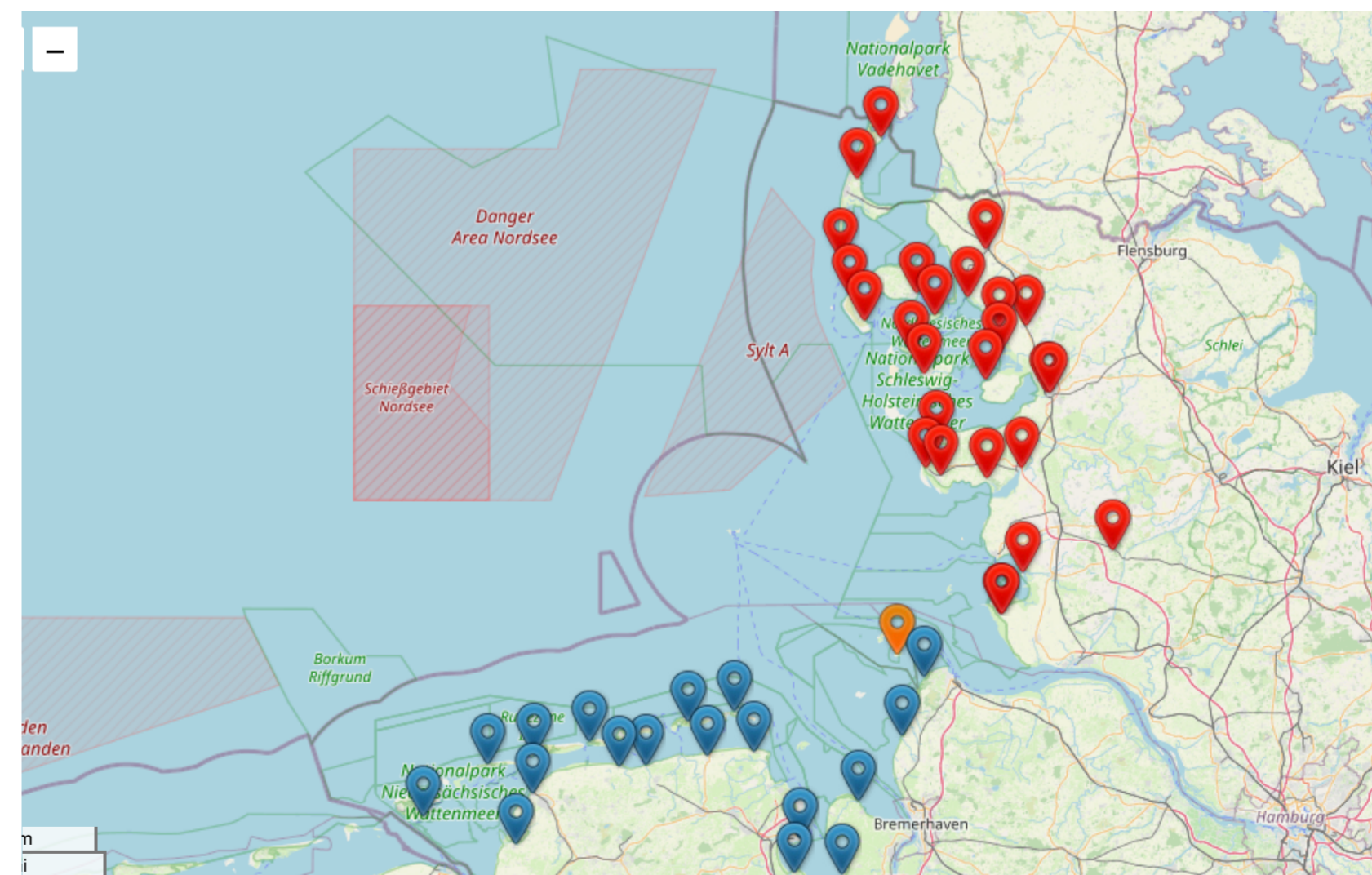
<https://itdreamlan.nl/omgeving-lauwersmeer/>



<https://www.nationalpark-wattenmeer.de/schuetzen/weltnaturerbe/steckbrief/>

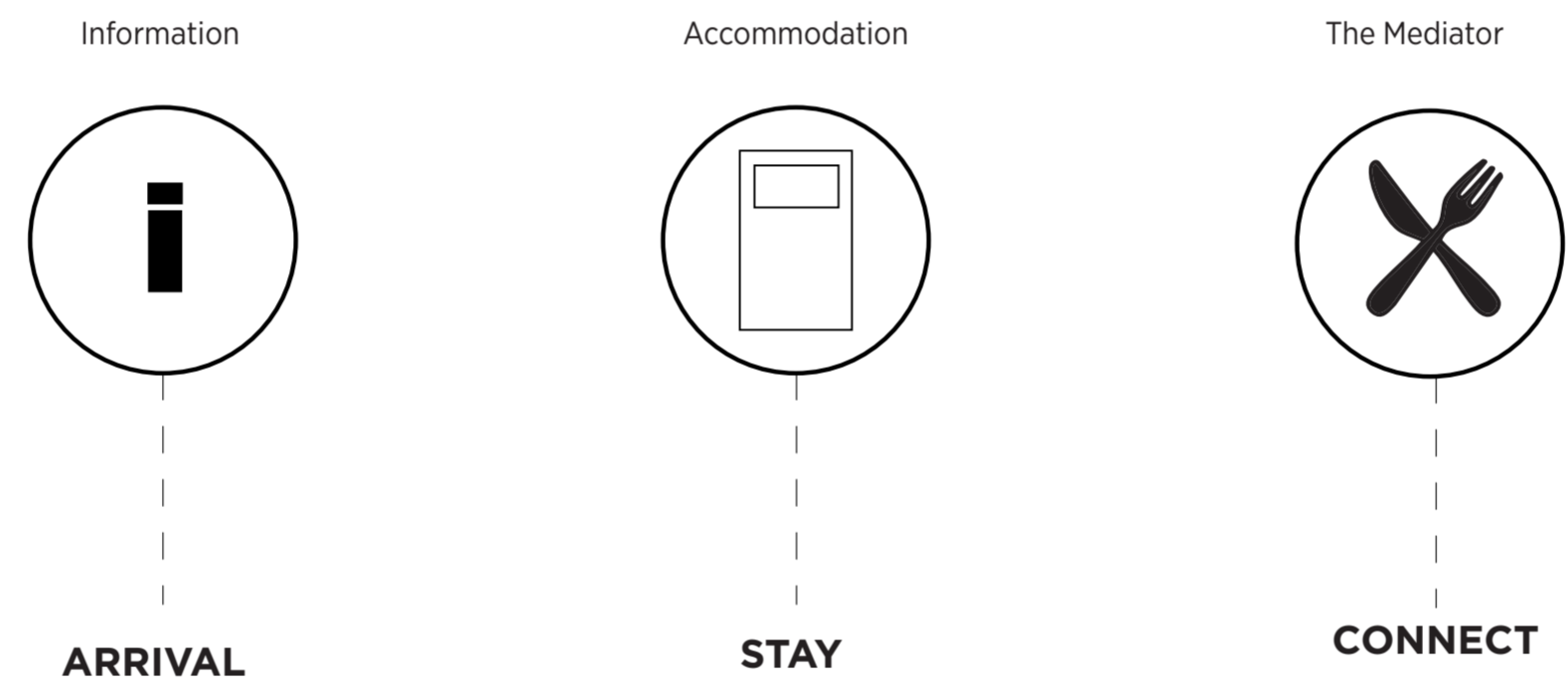
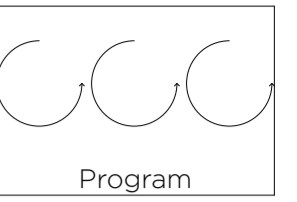


https://www.google.com/maps/@52.8410551,4.8212132,9z/data=!4m2!1m12sJ85dQ57EQ461ZfwEAvAYjw?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI2MDEy4wIKXMDSoASAFQAw%3D%3D

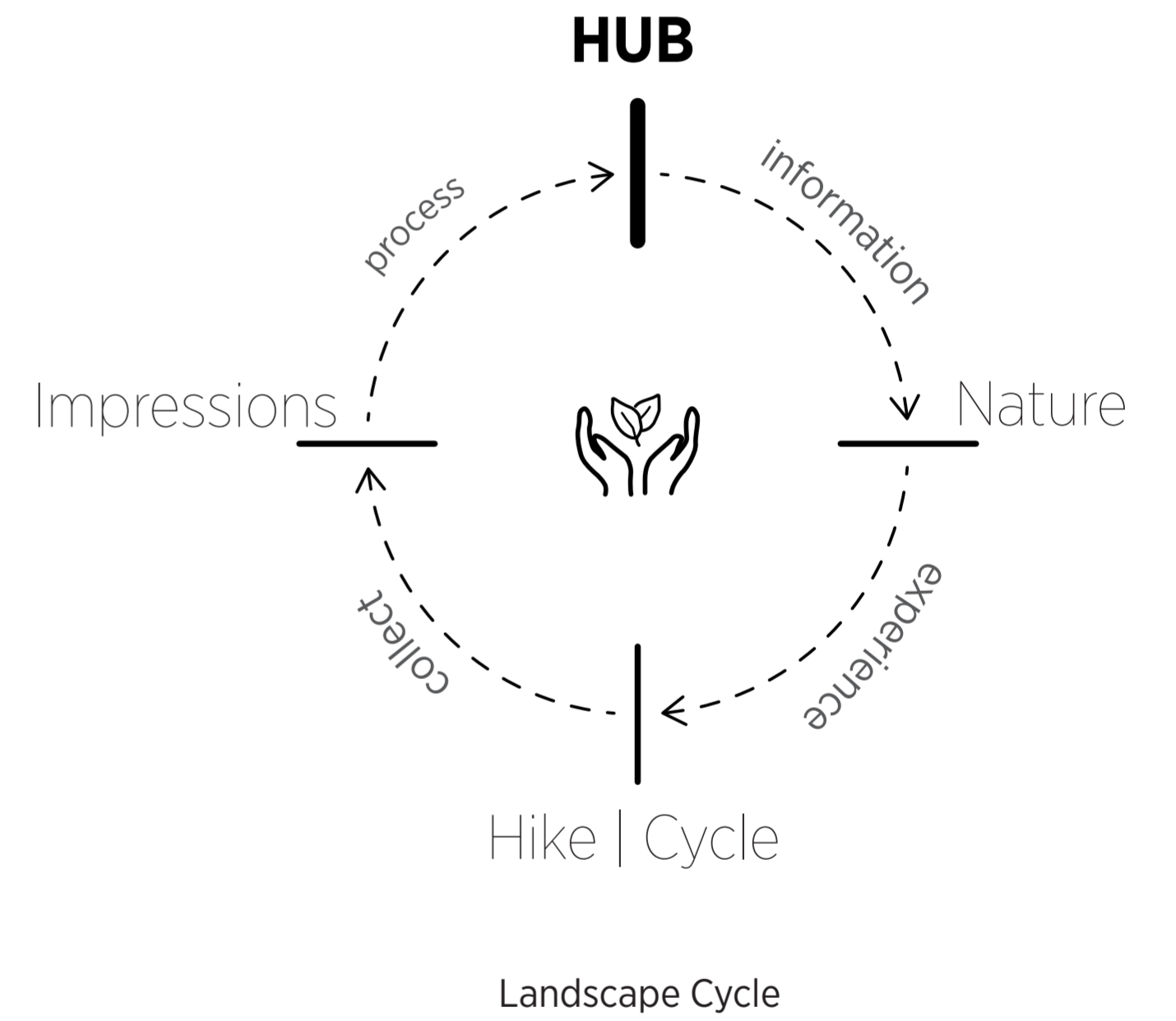
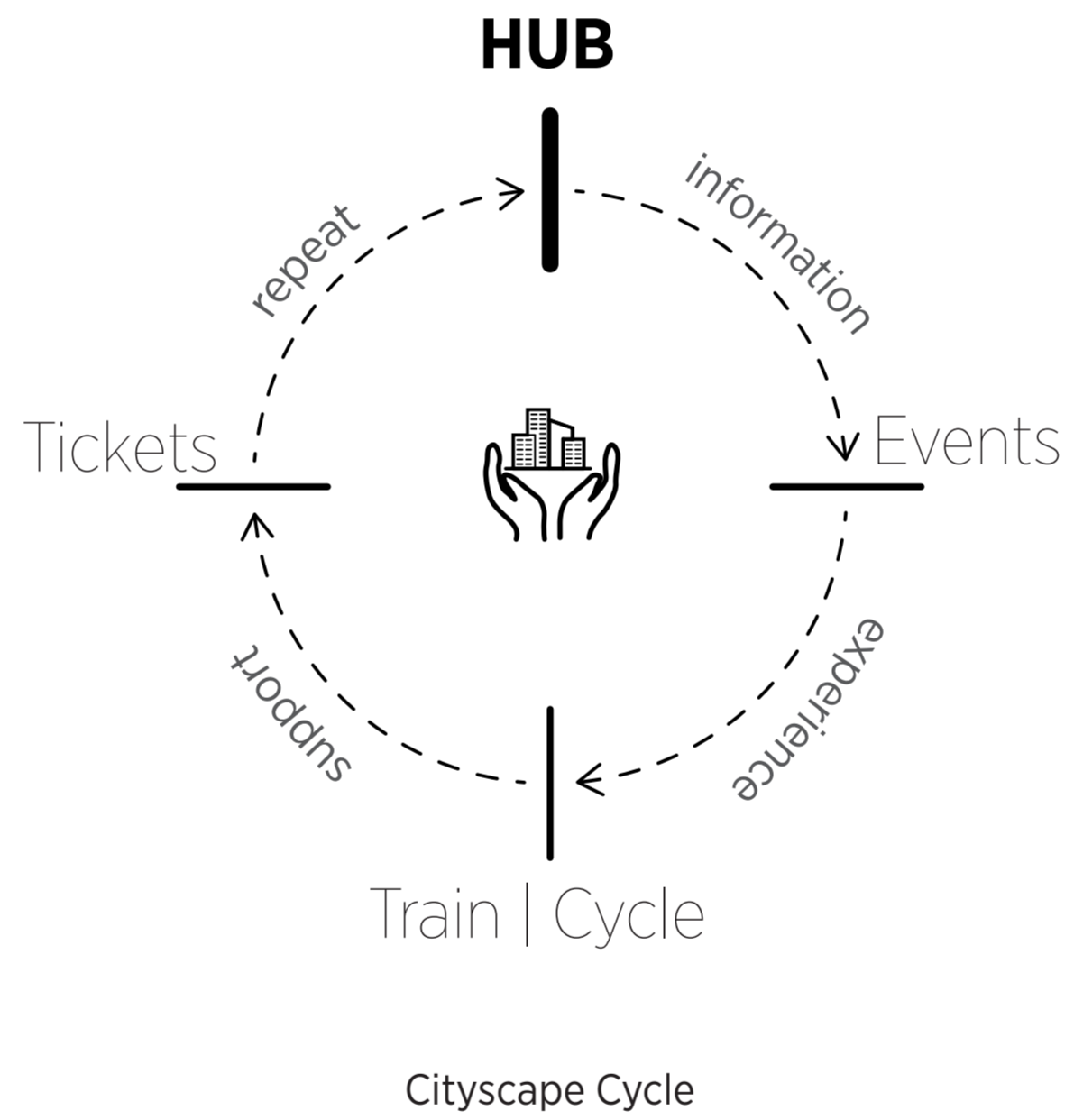
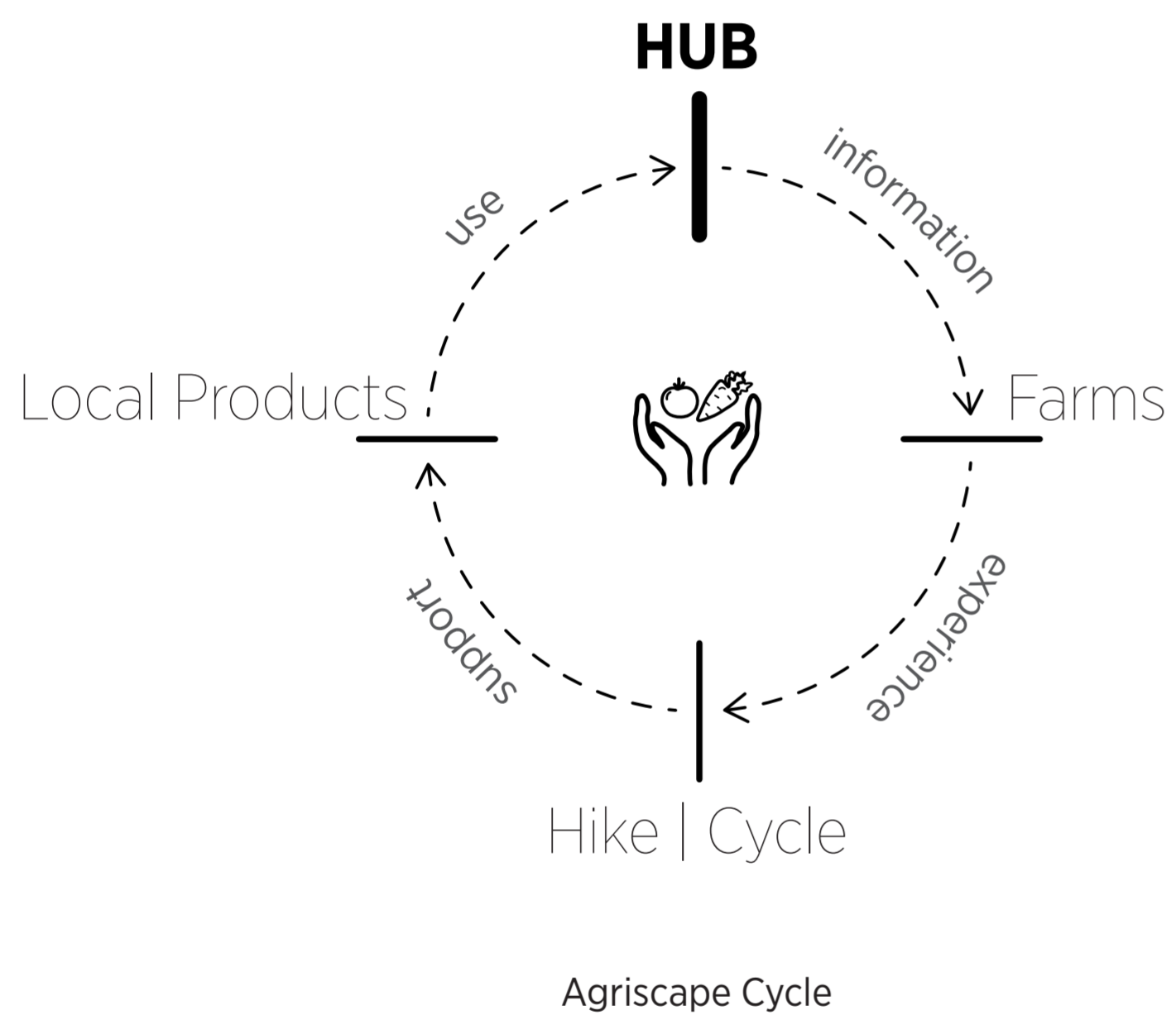


<https://www.nationalpark-wattenmeer.de/besuchen/infozentren/>

Making the cultural ecosystem visible

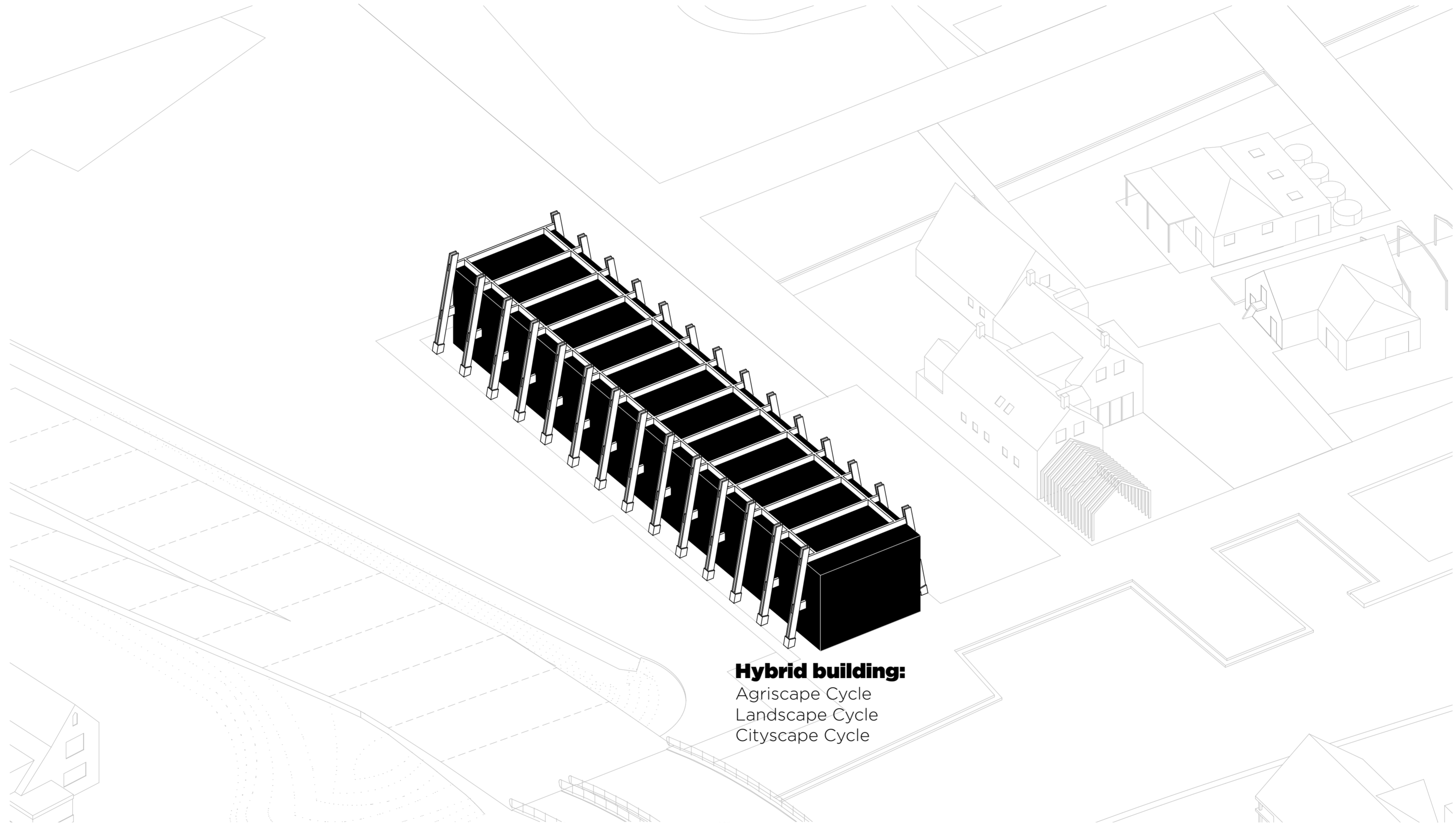


Provide ongoing engagement with the region



The Mediator serves as a point of arrival, return and departure

Promote longer stays | Benefits for locals and the local economy



Hybrid building:
Agriscapc Cycle
Landscape Cycle
Cityscape Cycle

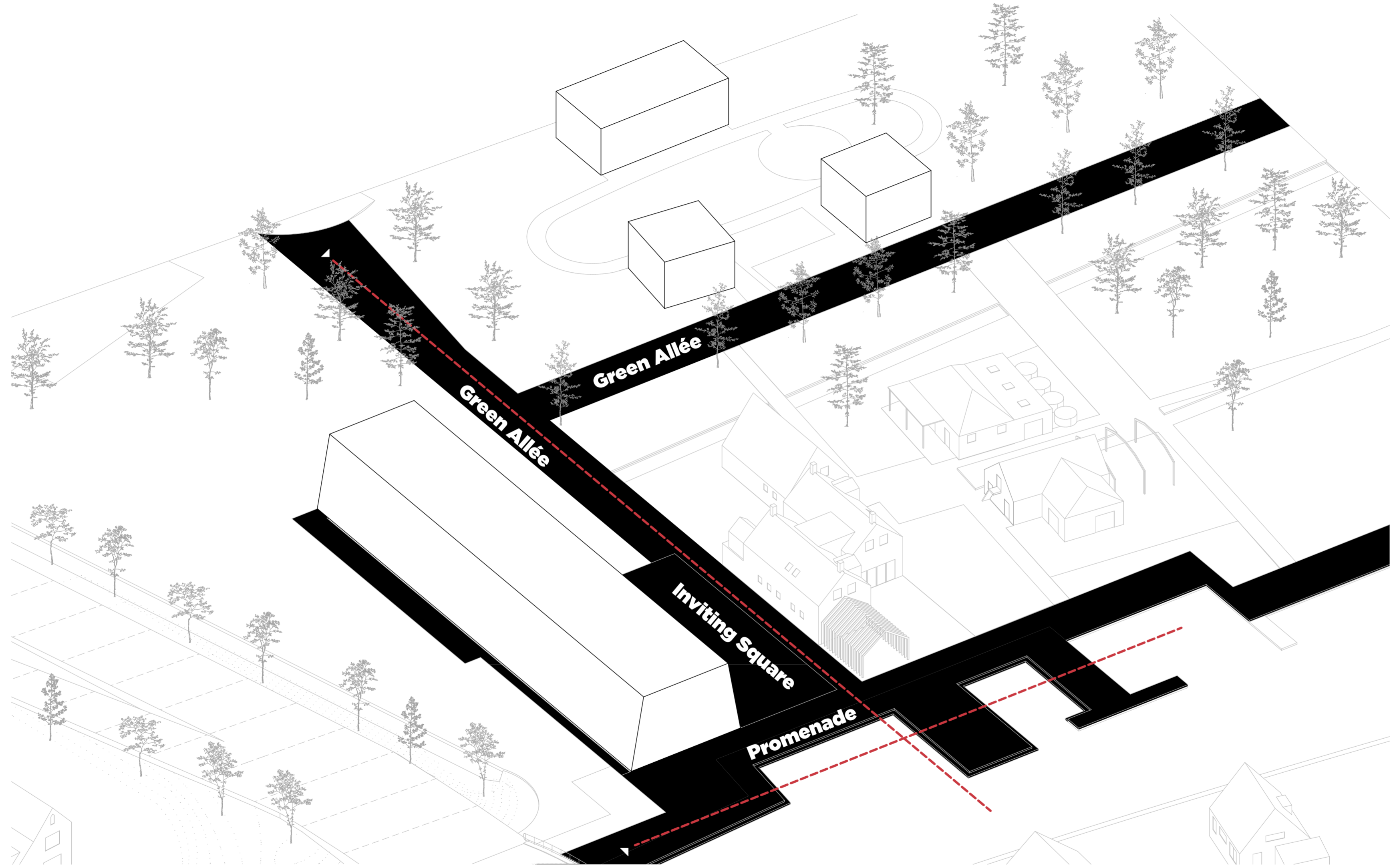
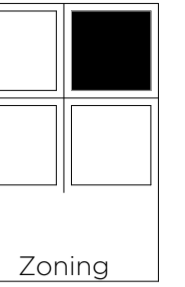
Connect the three cycles without eliminating their differences = by connecting polarities

Hybrid building offering multiple opportunities to explore the region



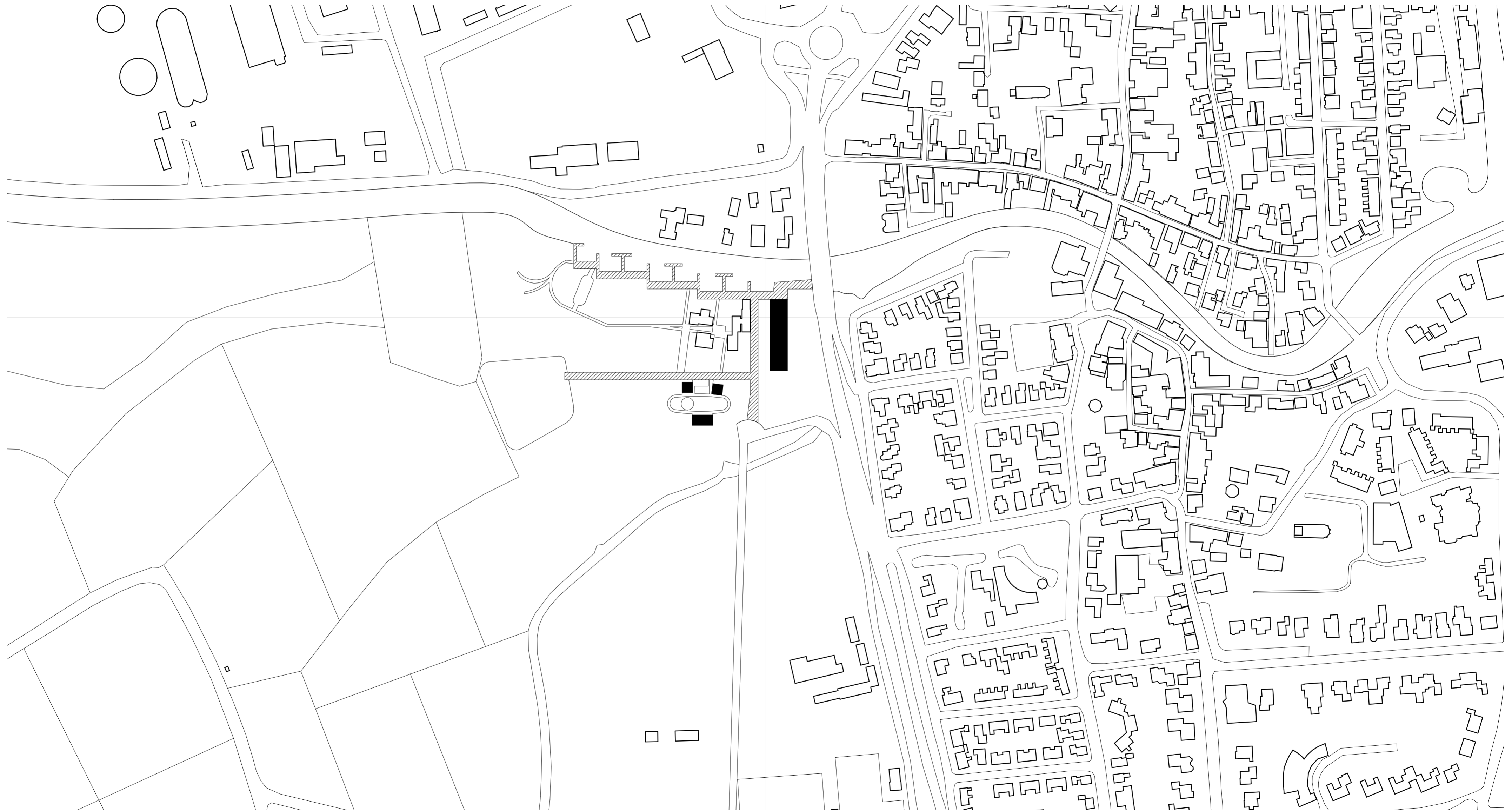
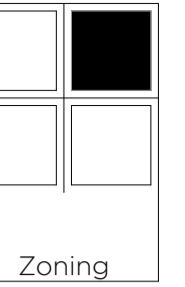
Spatial separation between the Marenland campsite and Groningen`s cultural ecosystem

Movement encourages movement through Winsum rather than engagement

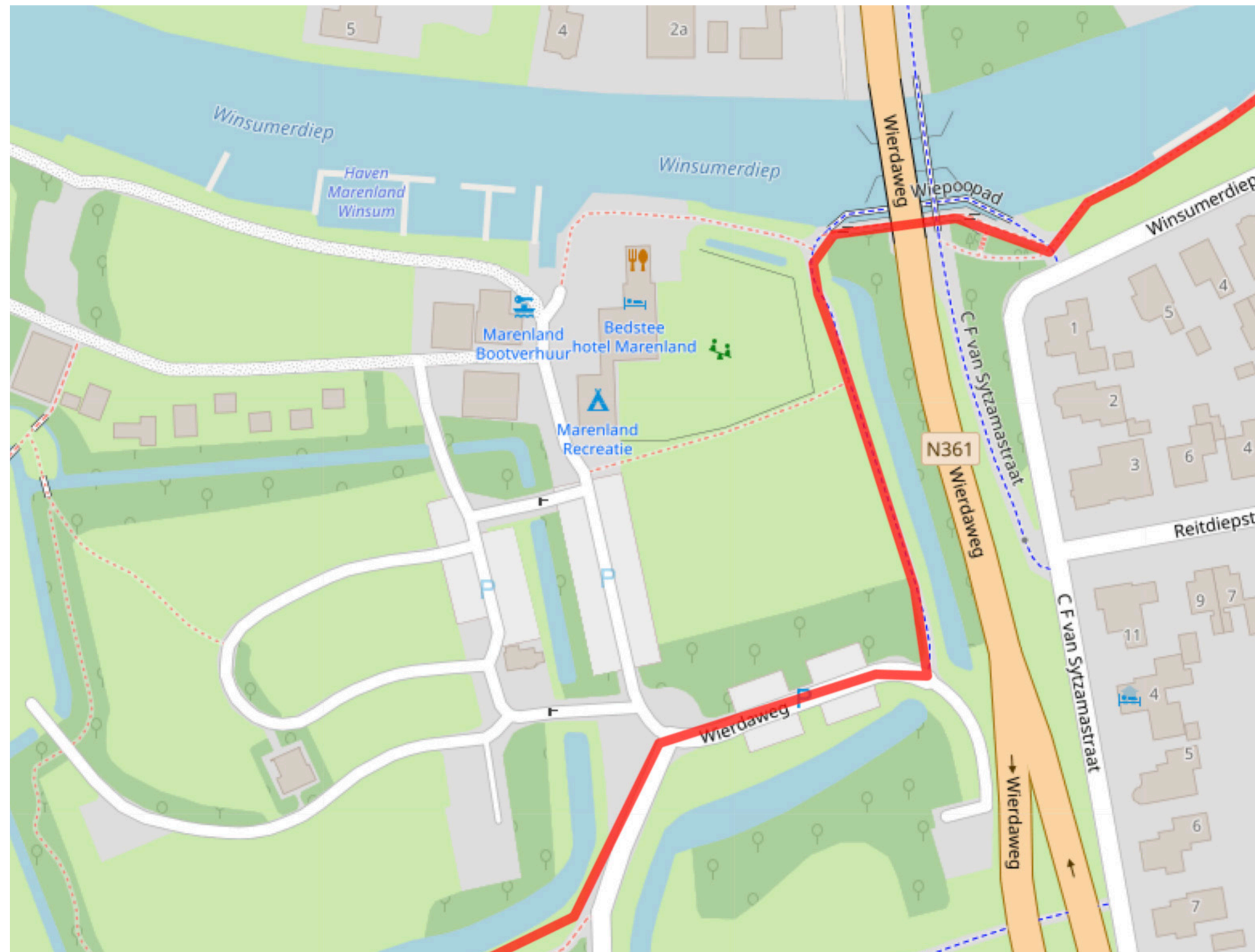


Redesign of access and circulation for arriving departing and returning to Winsum

Organise and structure the overall composition

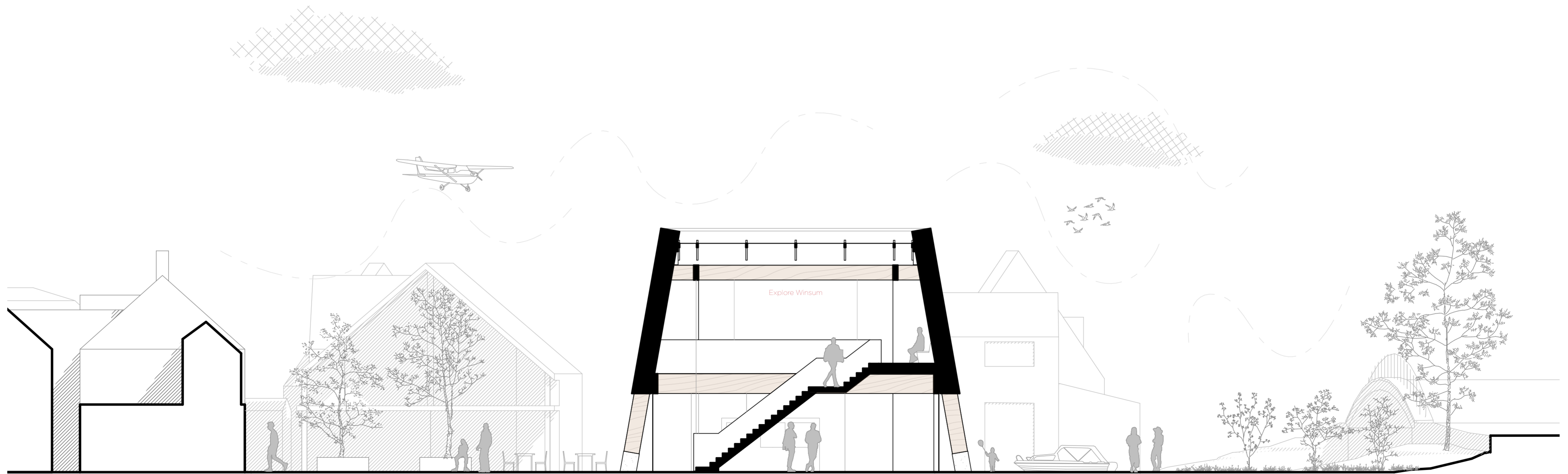
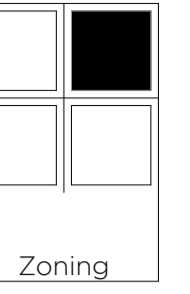


Strategic position next to the Marenland campsite, and along the Pieterpad hiking route



<https://pieterpad.nl/etappes>

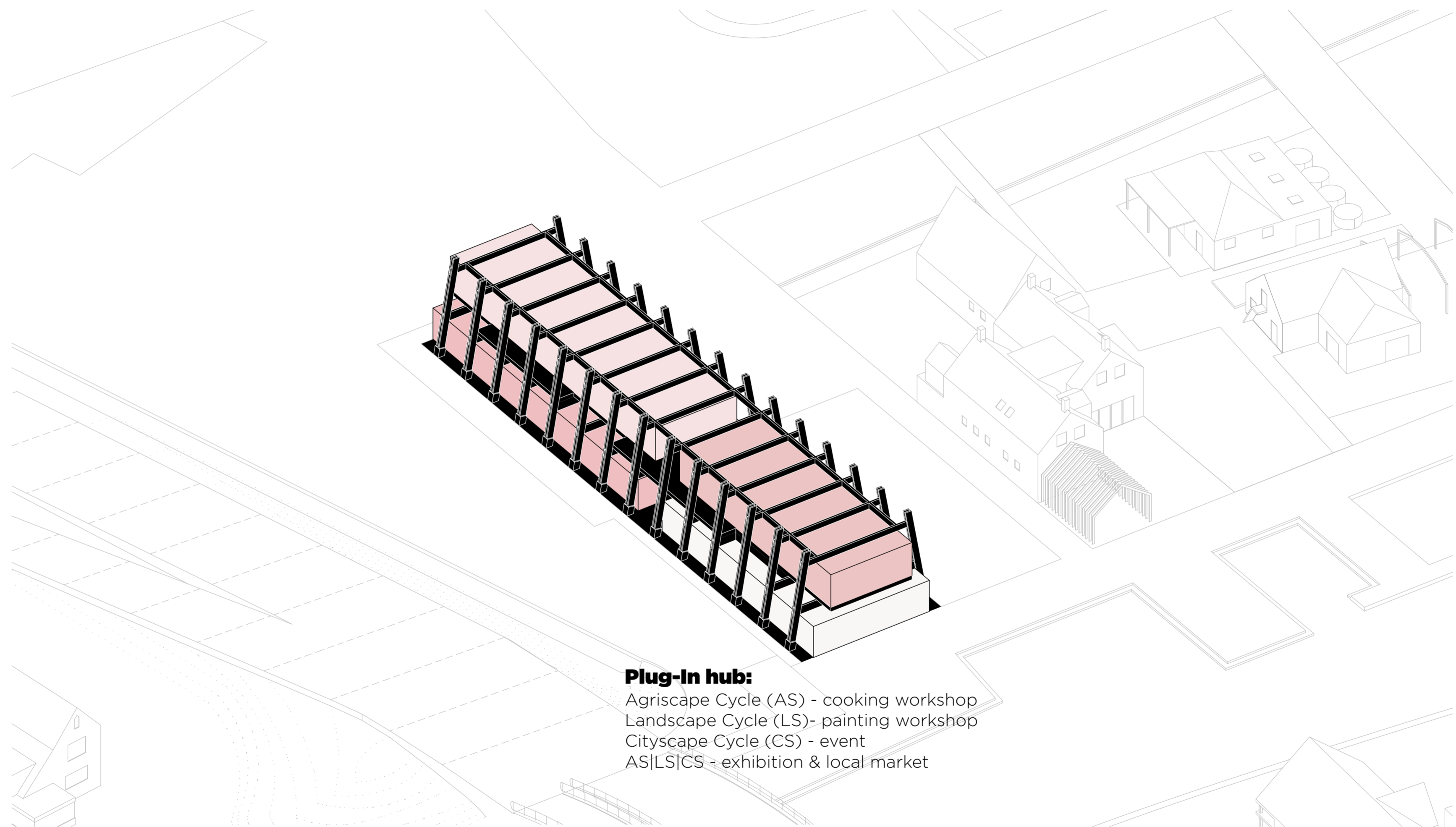
Pieterpad as physical access to the cultural ecosystem



Circulation as inviting gesture for visitors

Urban Section 1|200

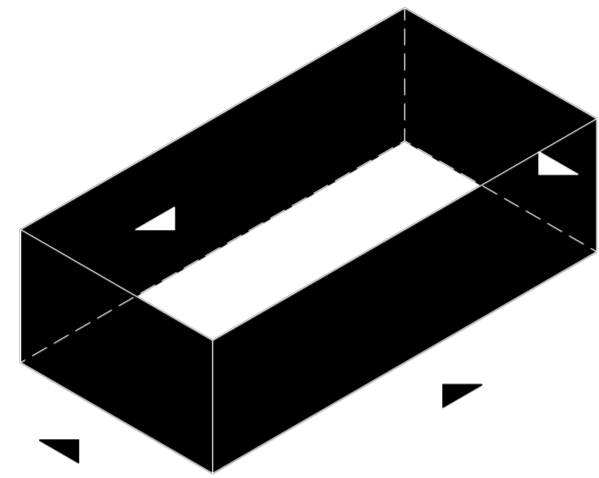
Ferdinand Aull



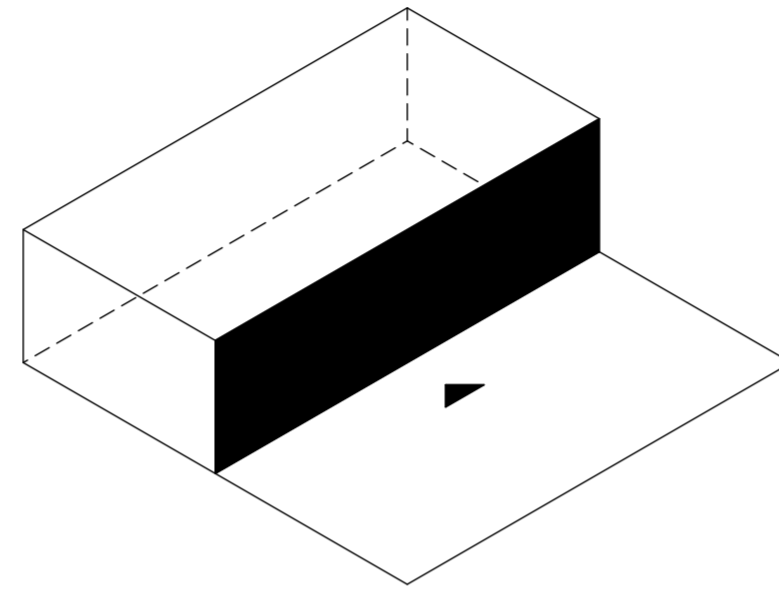
Plug-In hub:

- Agriscapc Cycle (AS) - cooking workshop
- Landscape Cycle (LS)- painting workshop
- Cityscape Cycle (CS) - event
- AS|LS|CS - exhibition & local market

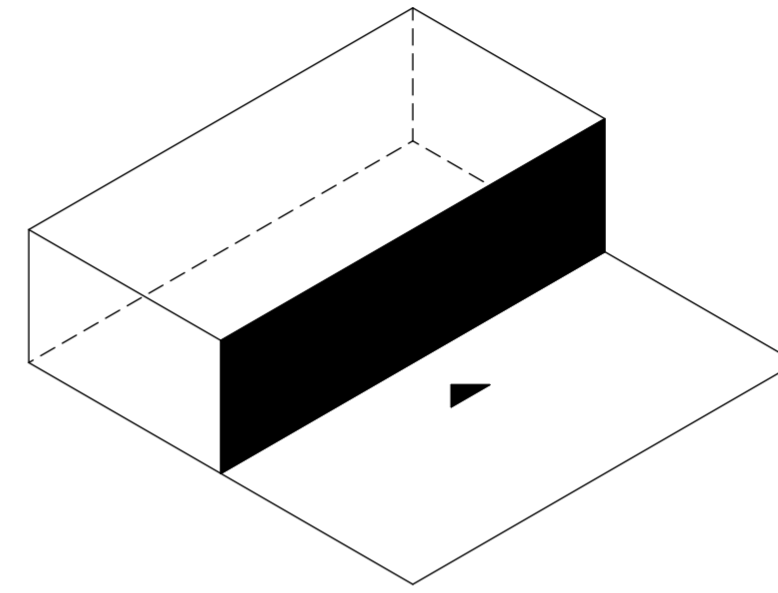
Cycles translated into programme that structure the visitors engagement



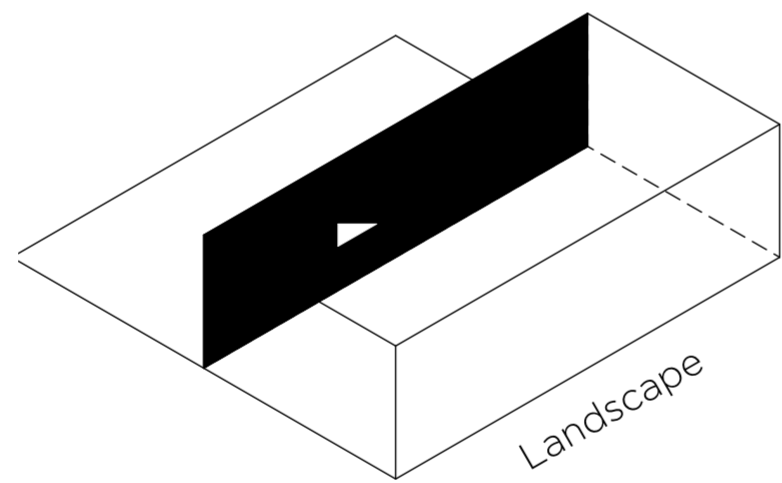
Local Market
- Access from all sides



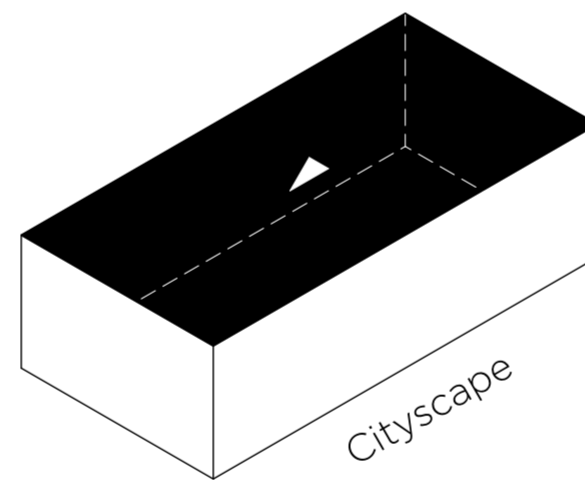
Exhibition
- View from square



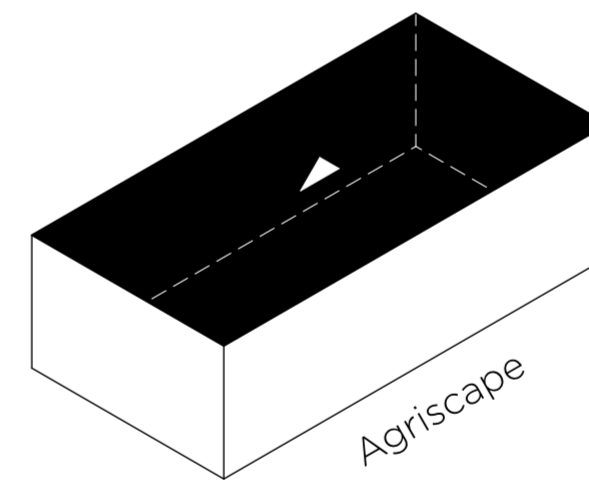
Information
- Access from square



Art workshop
- View towards park



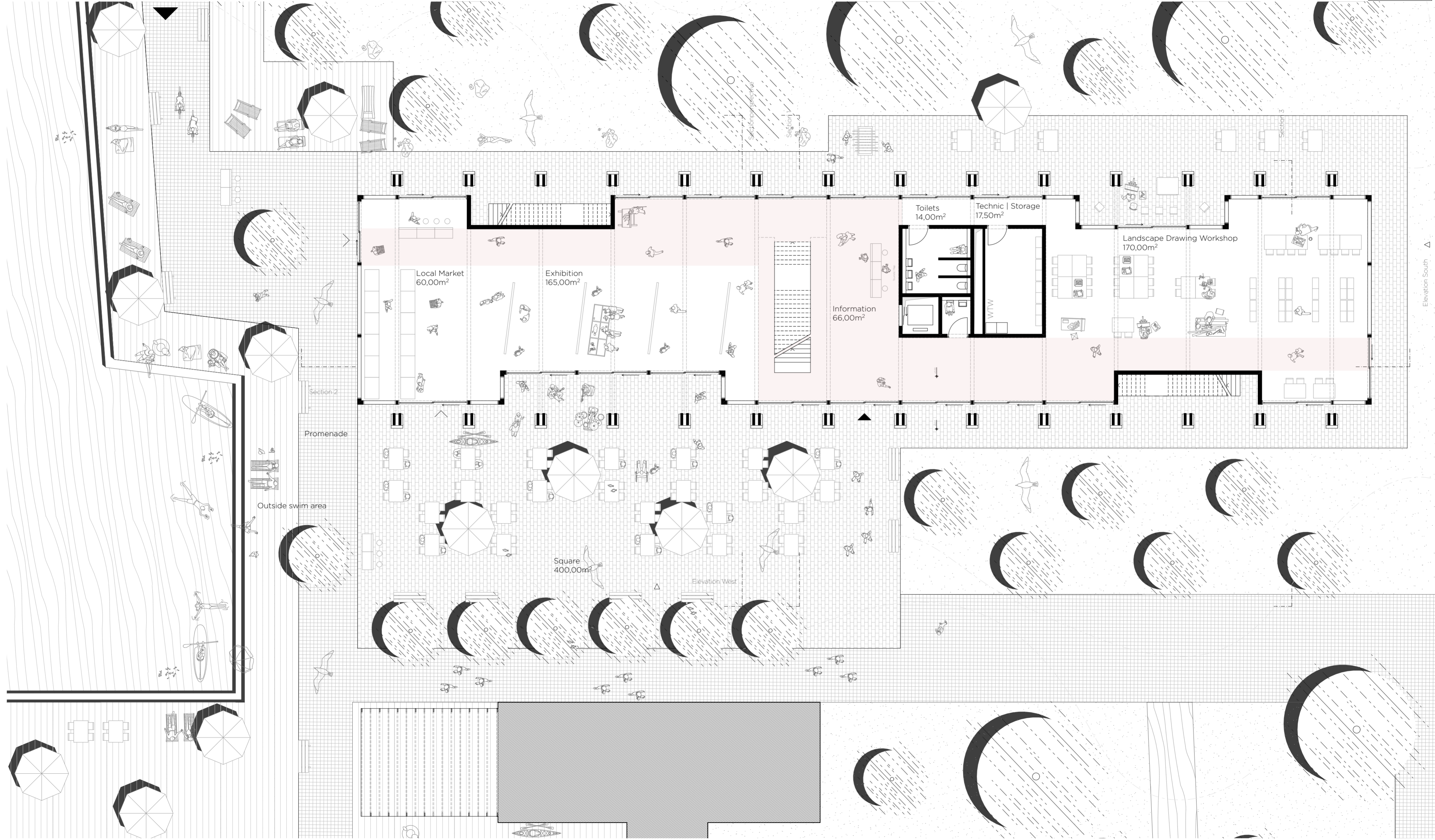
Event
- Focus on the lecture



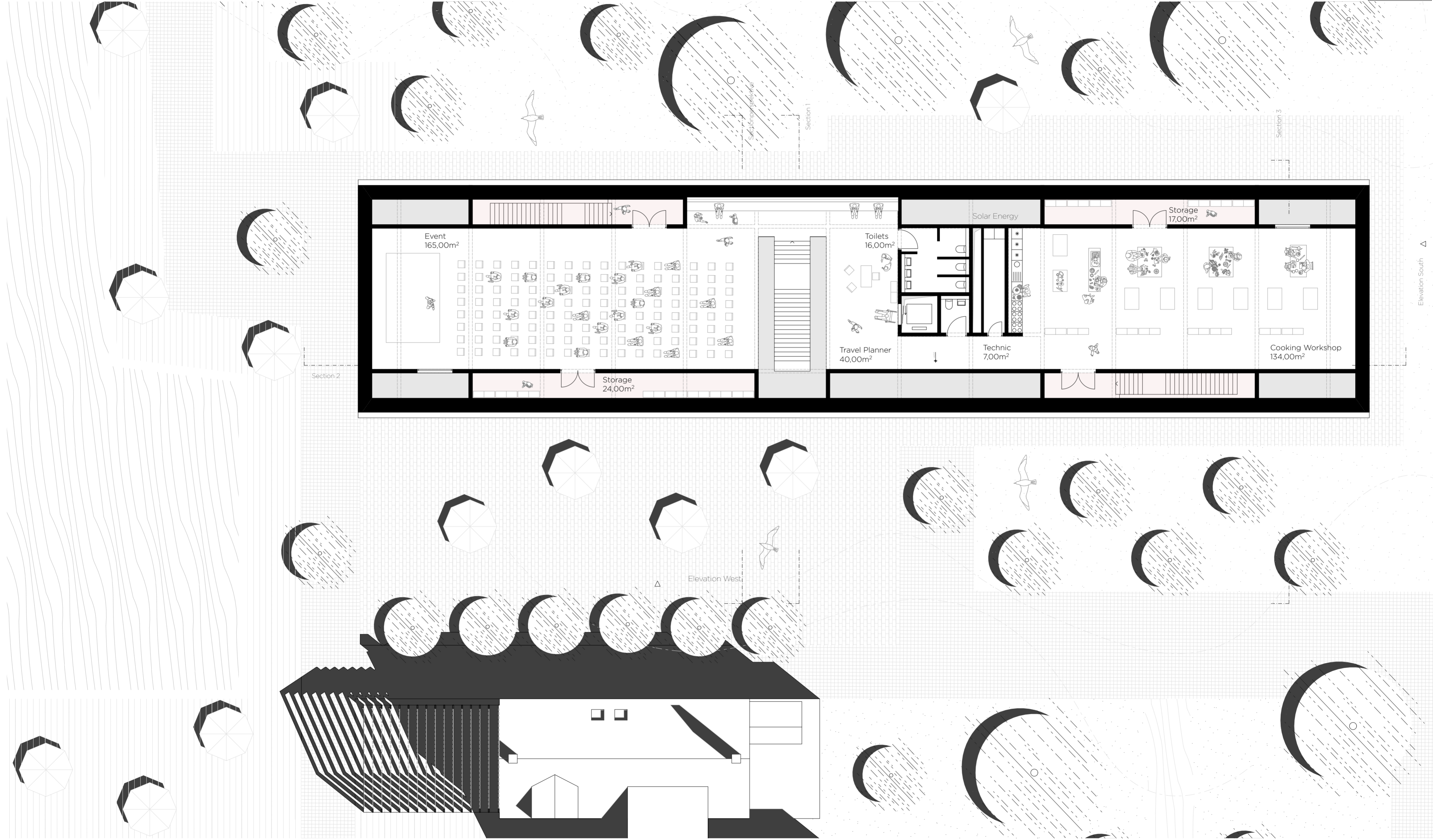
Cooking workshop
- Focus on the Craft

From Consumption to Engagement

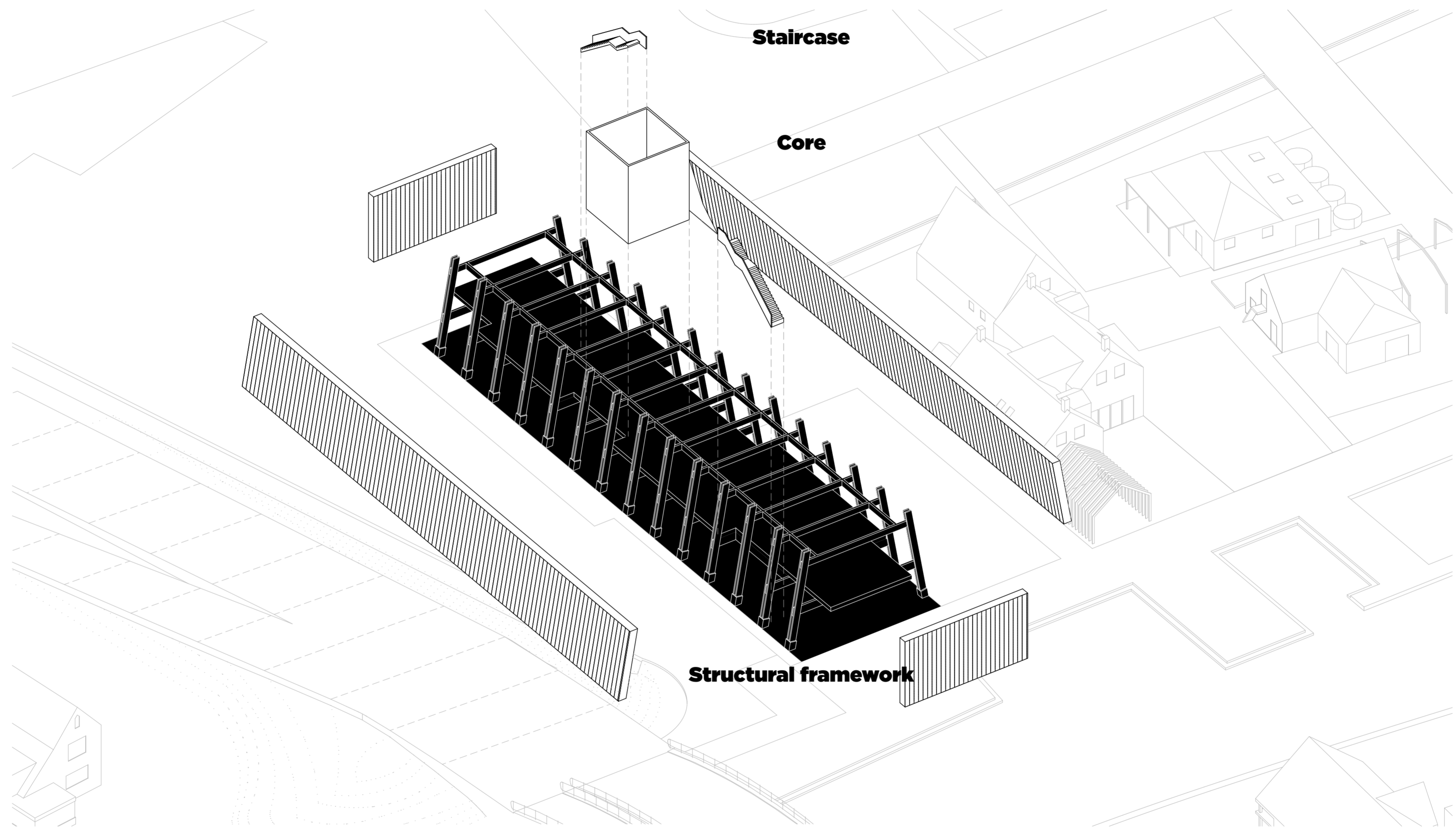
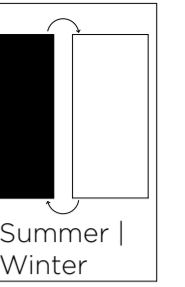
Each programme possesses a distinct character while remaining part of a larger system



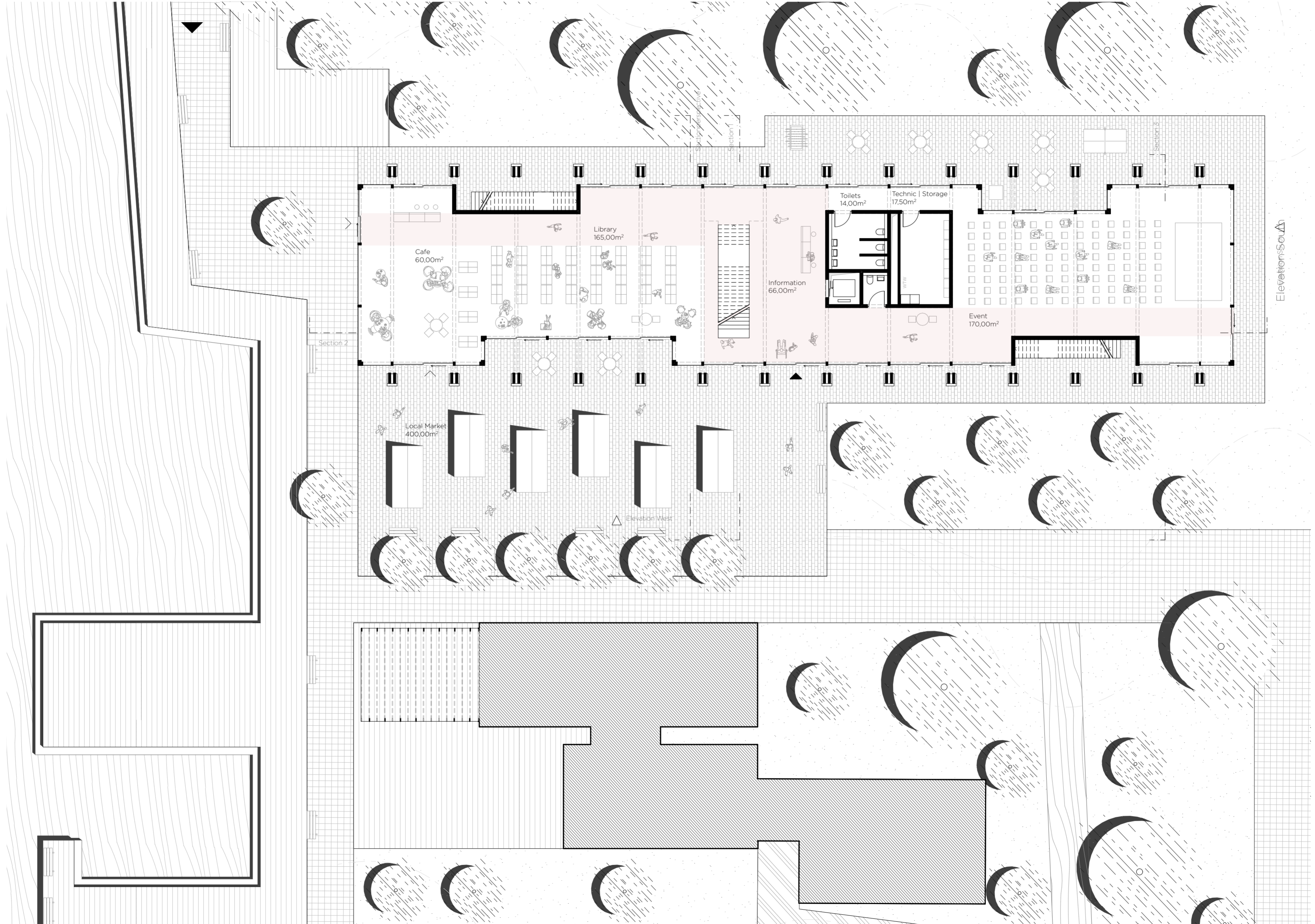
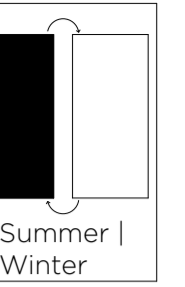
Inviting programme for orientation



Programmes for further reflecting | engaging with the cultural ecosystem

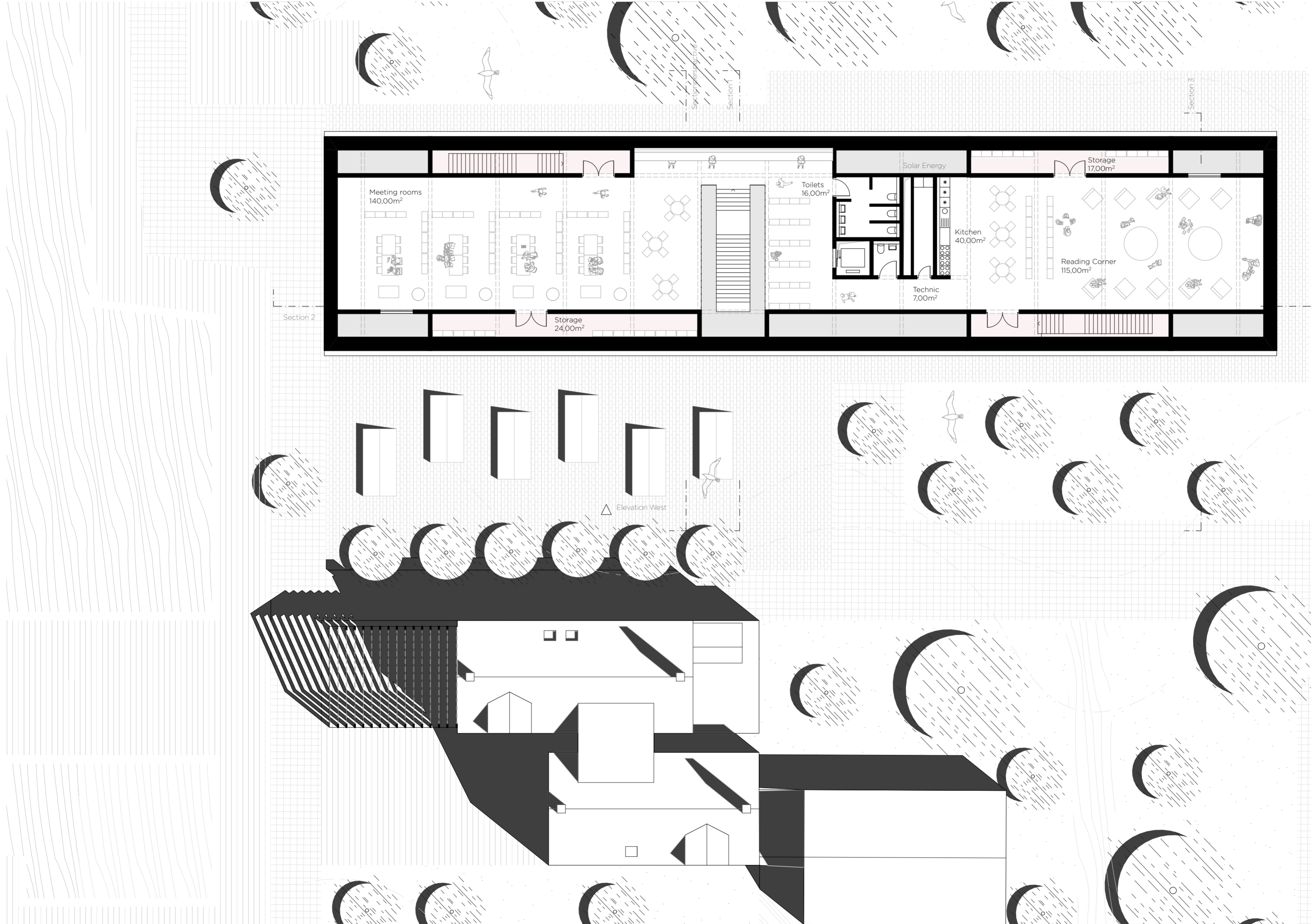
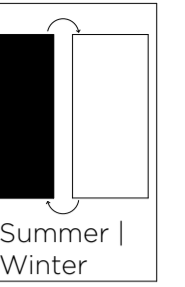


Framework for adaption



Winter use - Library

Flexibility Floorplan 1|200

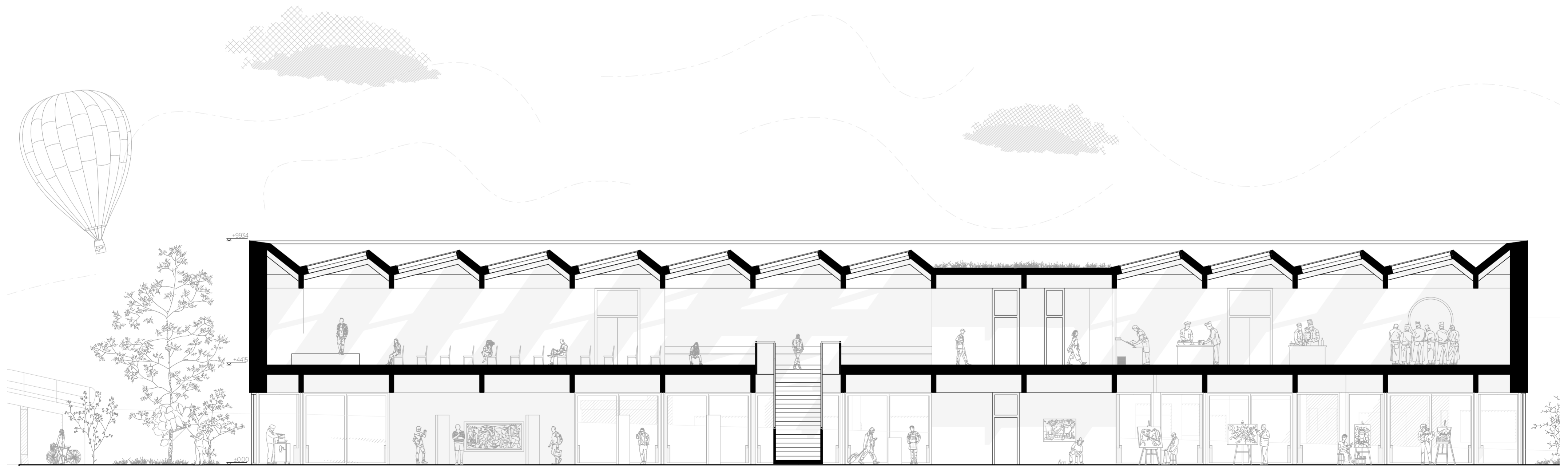


Winter use - Work

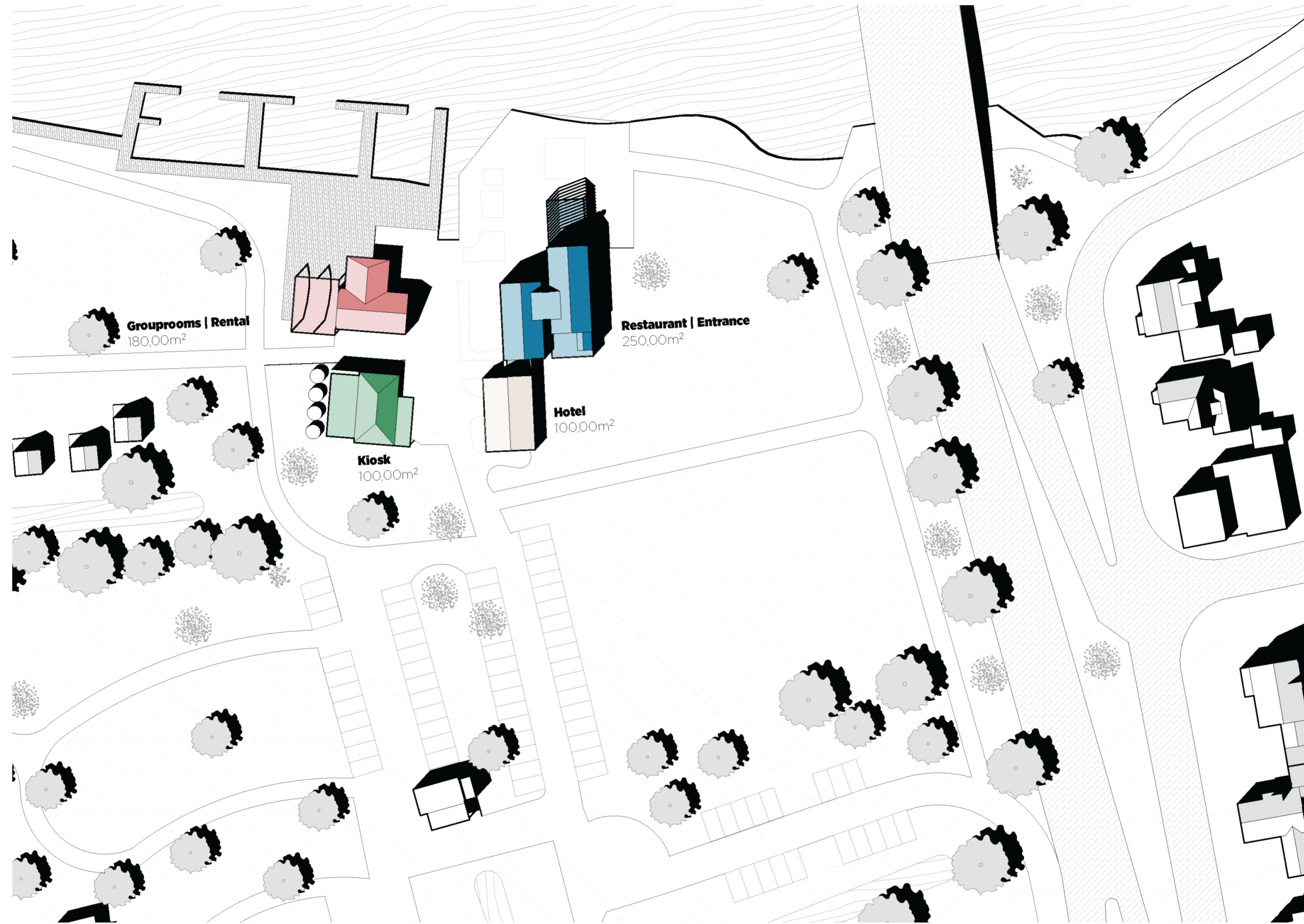
Flexibility | Floorplan 1|200



Character of Programme



Diversity of the cultural ecosystem



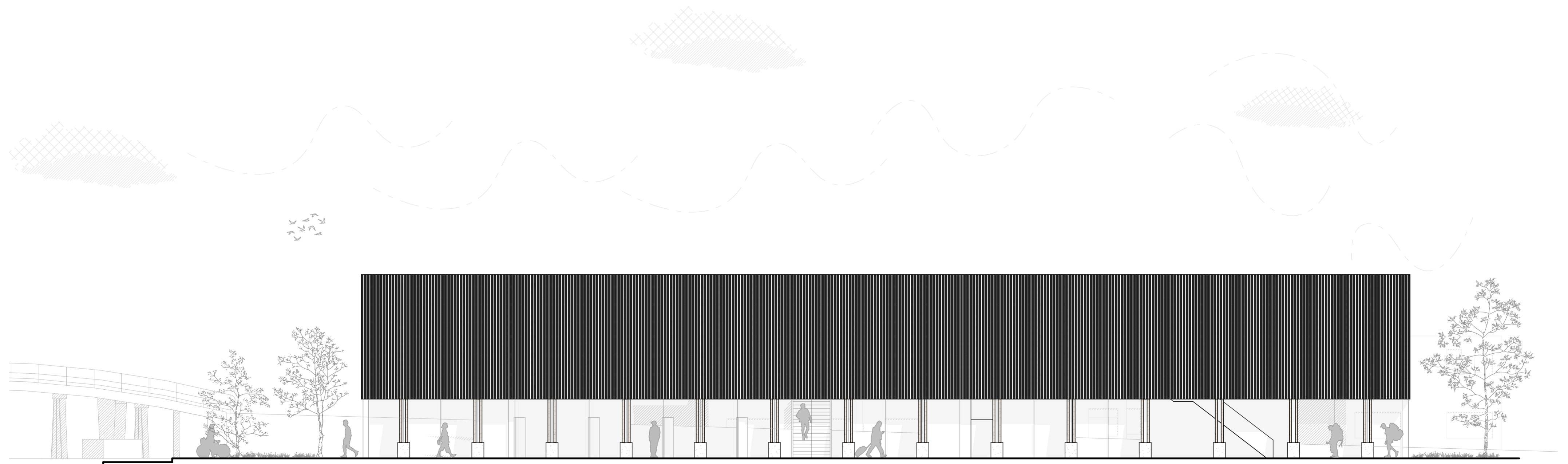
Symbiosis with existing Marenland campsite

Material on Site



Creating a symbiotic relationship through visual connection

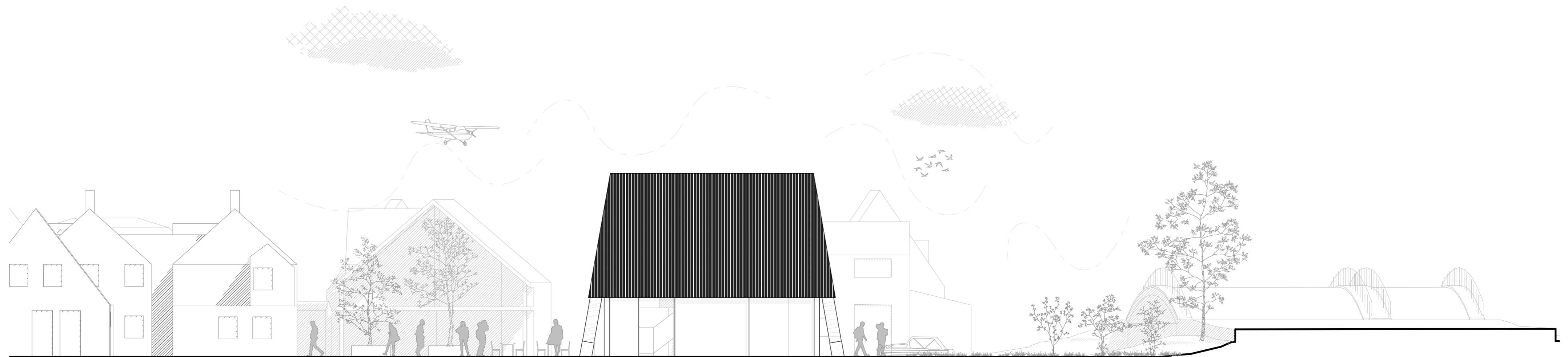
Material on Site



Polarity to express the diversity of Groningens cultural ecosystem

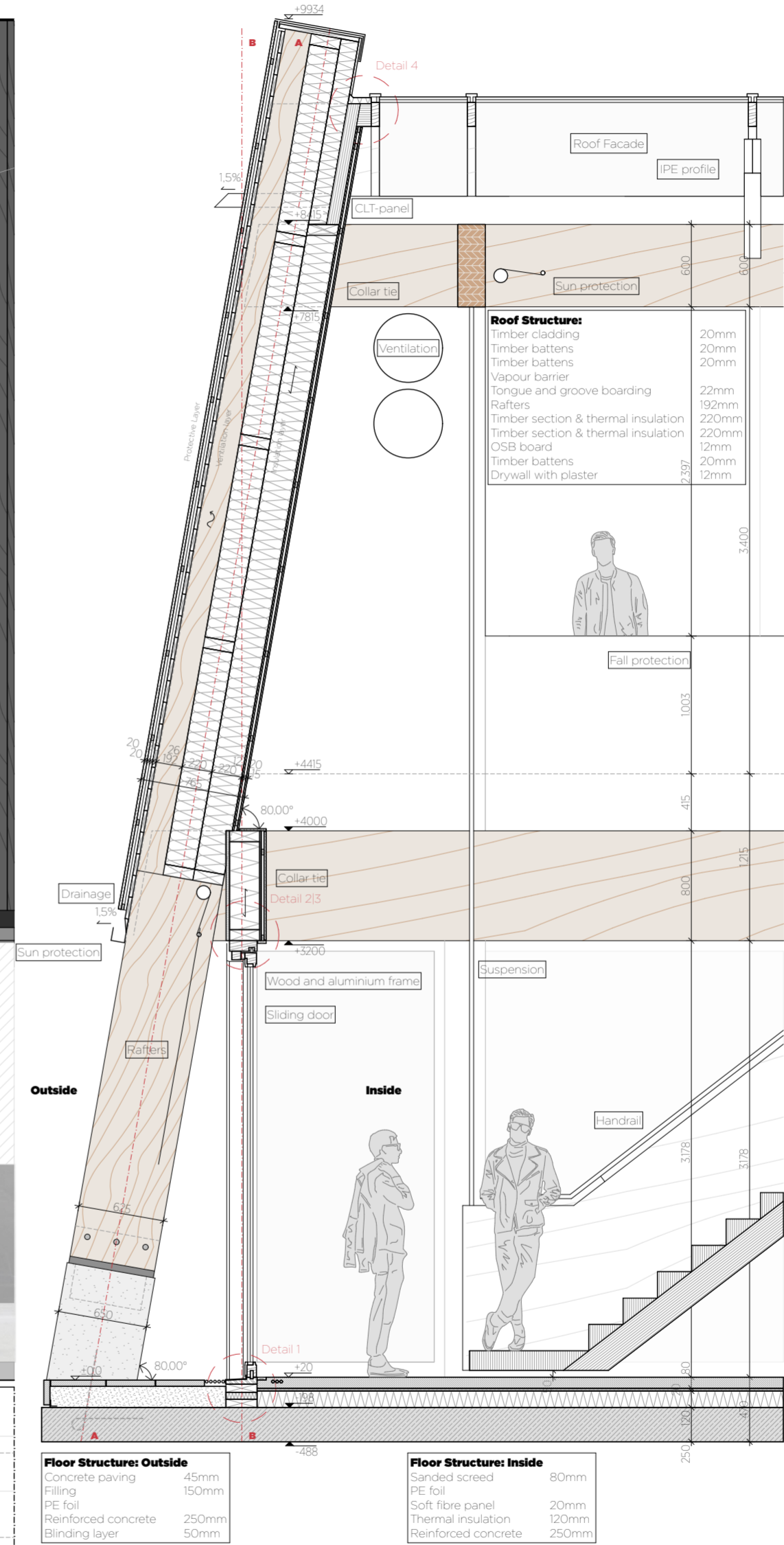
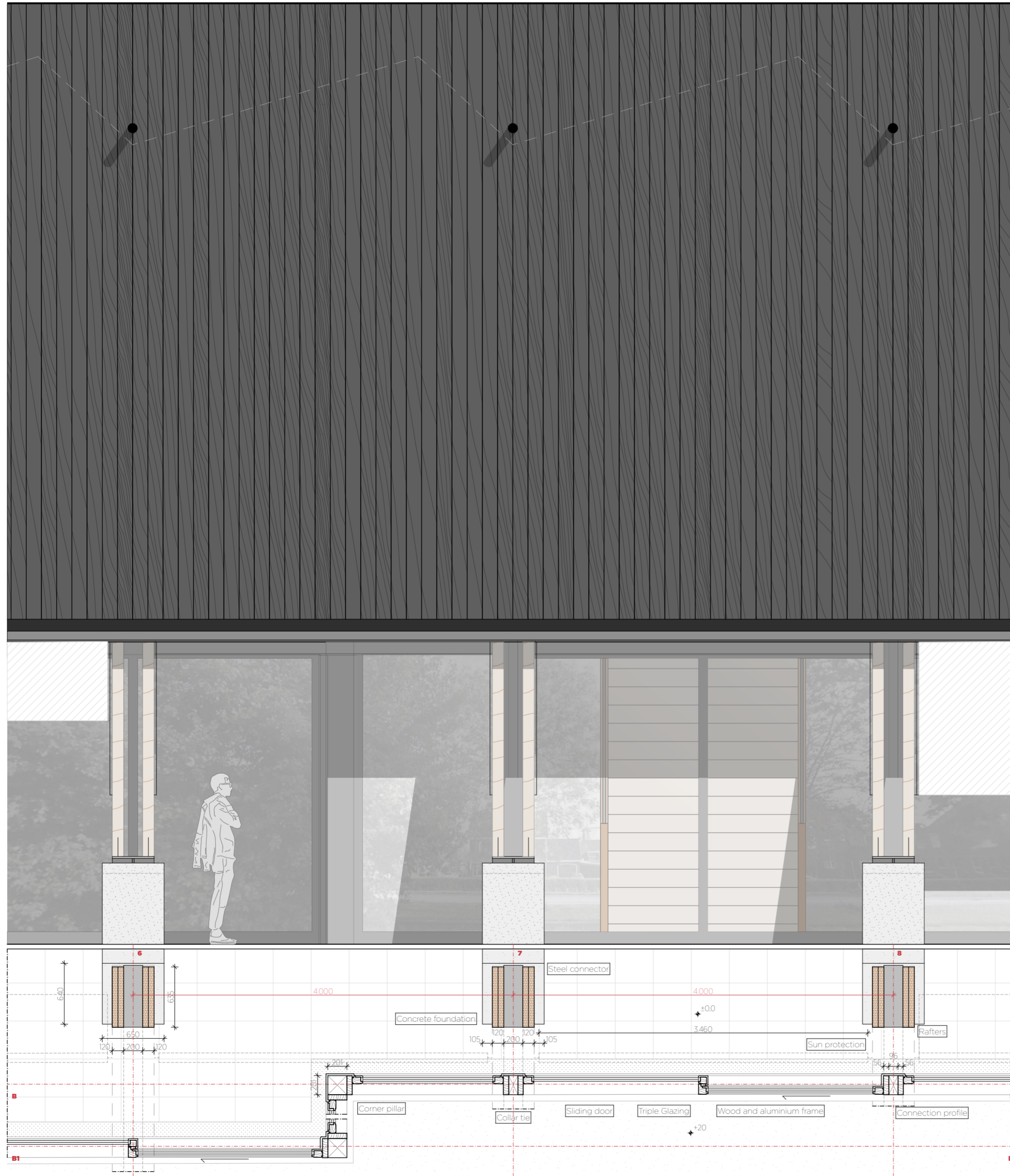
Oppositions are not resolved | Mediate

Ferdinand Aull



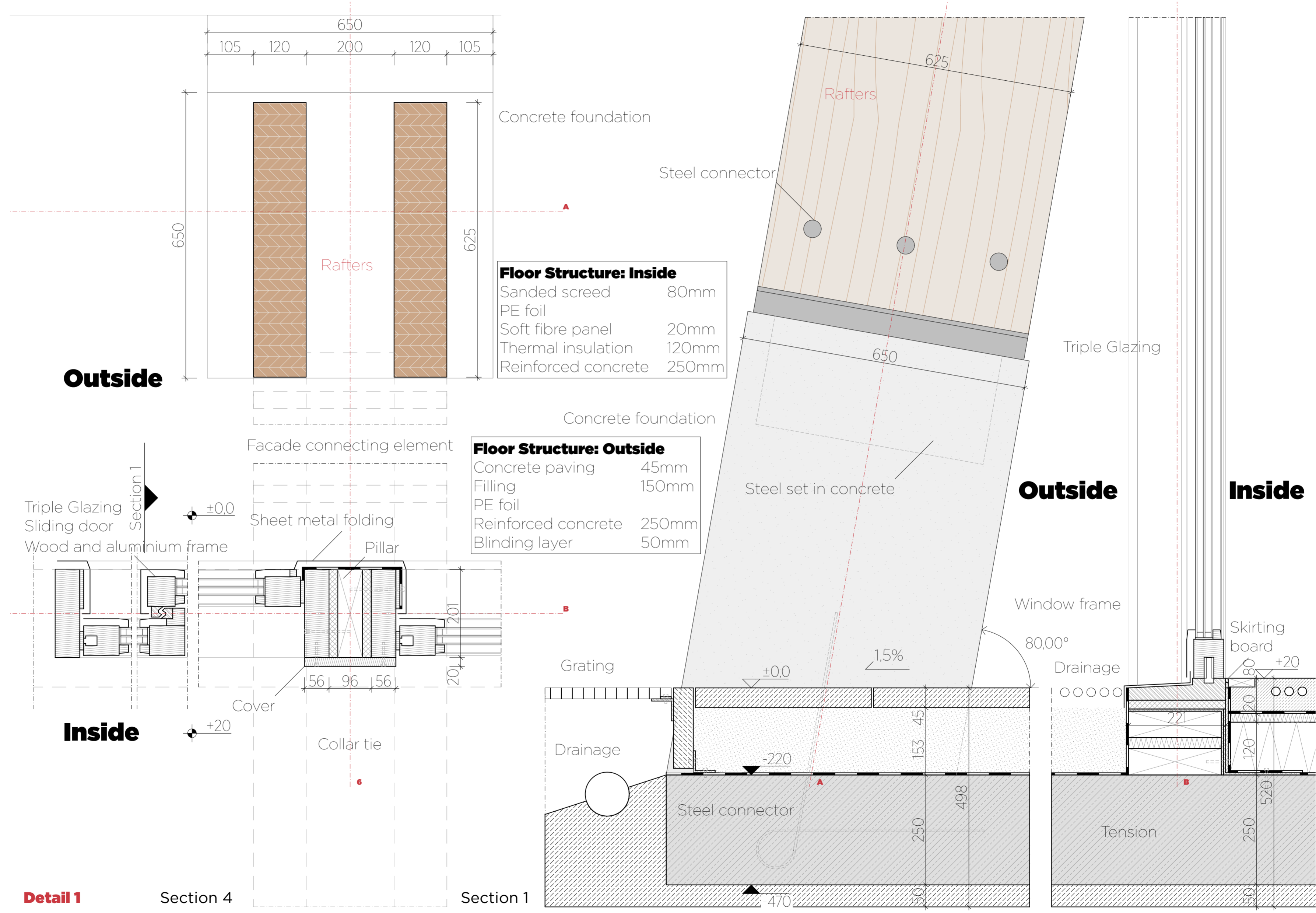
Polarity to express the diversity of Groningens cultural ecosystem

Enrich the architectural experience and showcase the variety already present in the region

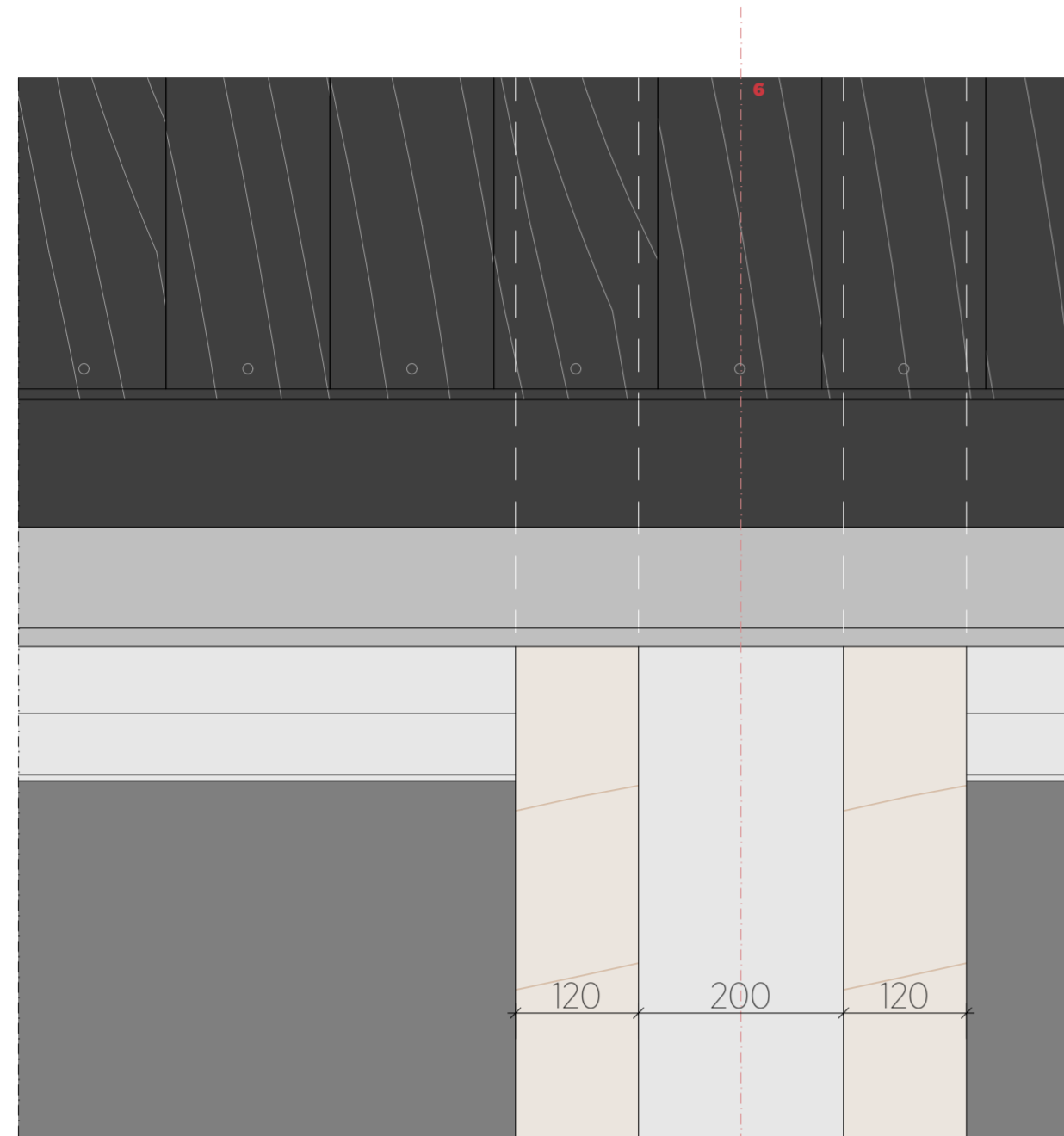
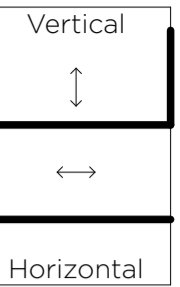


Framework Zoom-In

Open framework for future changes | Facade section 1|20



Celebration of connecting

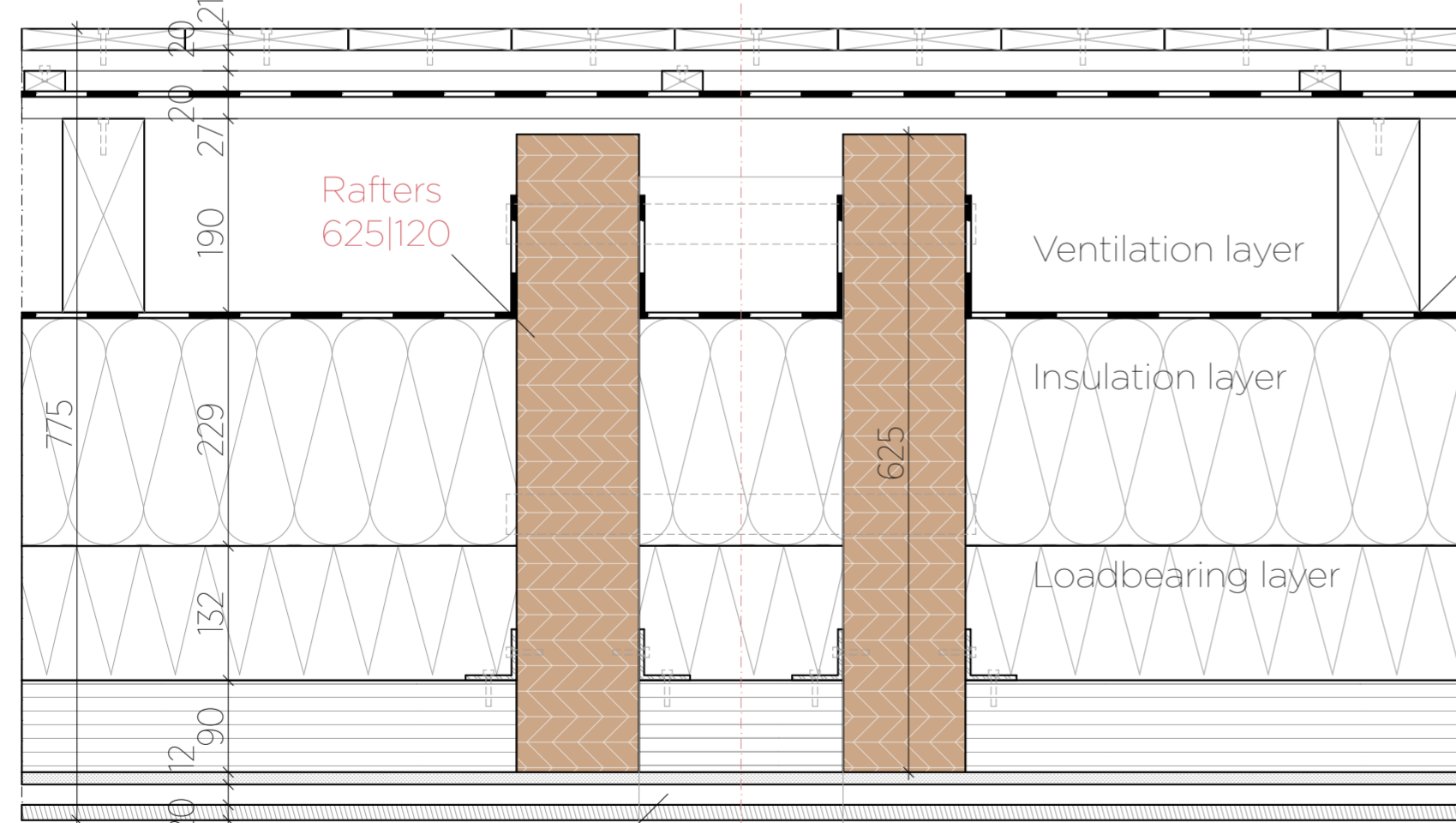


Roof Structure:

Timber cladding	20mm
Timber battens	20mm
Timber battens	20mm
Vapour barrier	
Tongue and groove boarding	22mm
Rafters	192mm
Timber section & thermal insulation	220mm
Timber section & thermal insulation	220mm
OSB board	12mm
Timber battens	20mm
Drywall with Plaster	12mm

Outside

Elevation 1

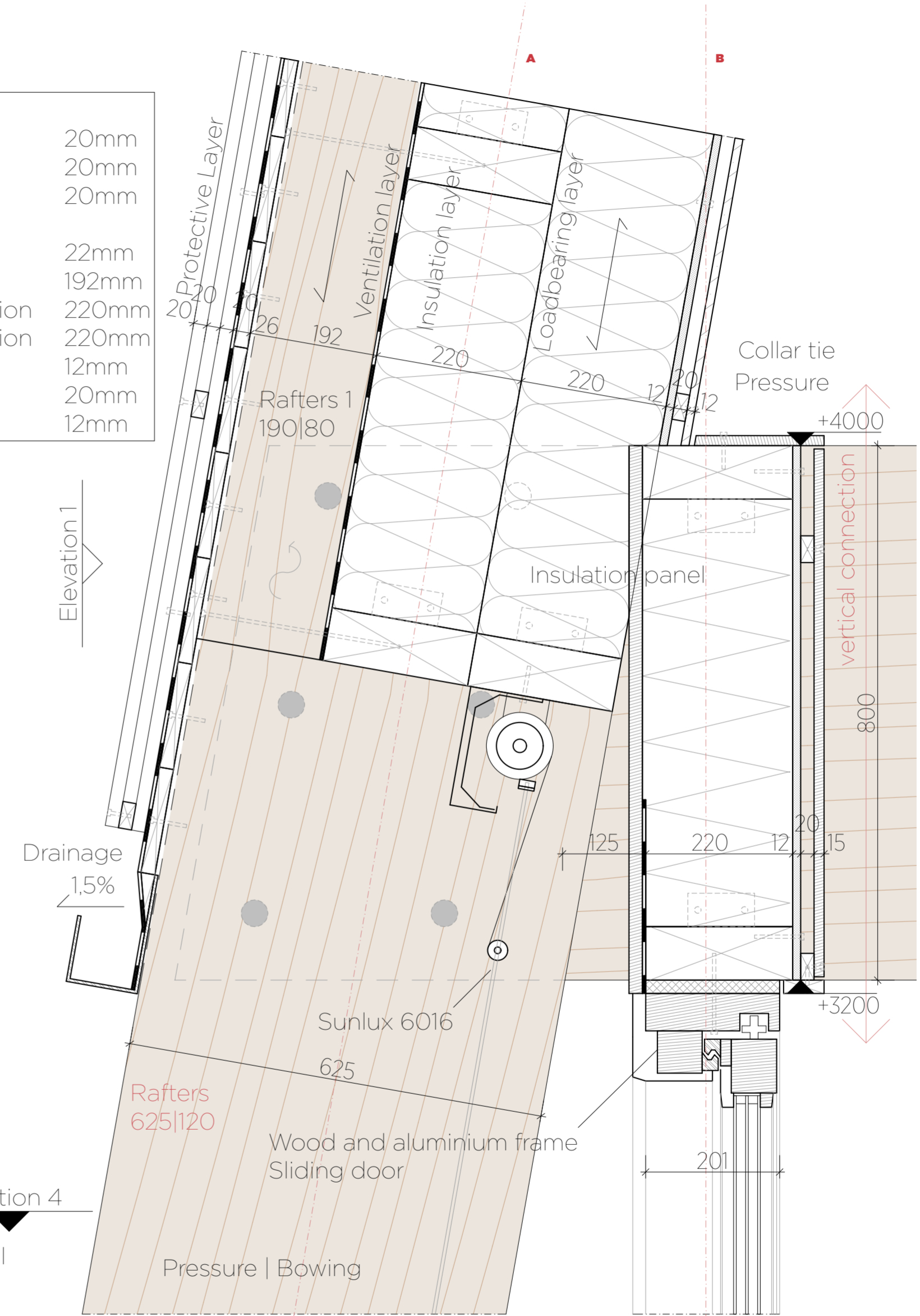


Section 5

Detail 2

Collar tie
200|600

Inside



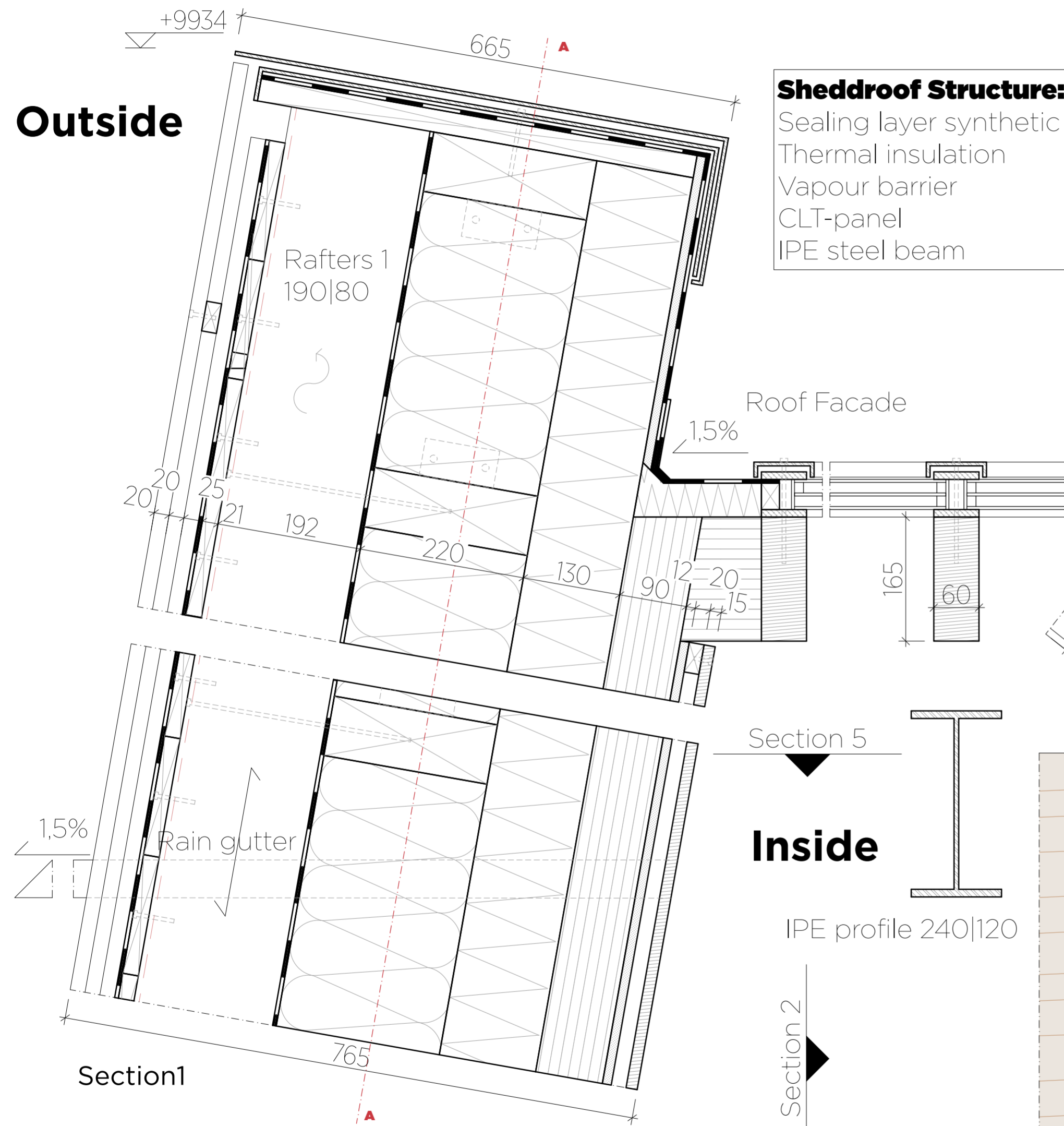
Section 4

Section 1

Inside

Showcase the connection

Outside

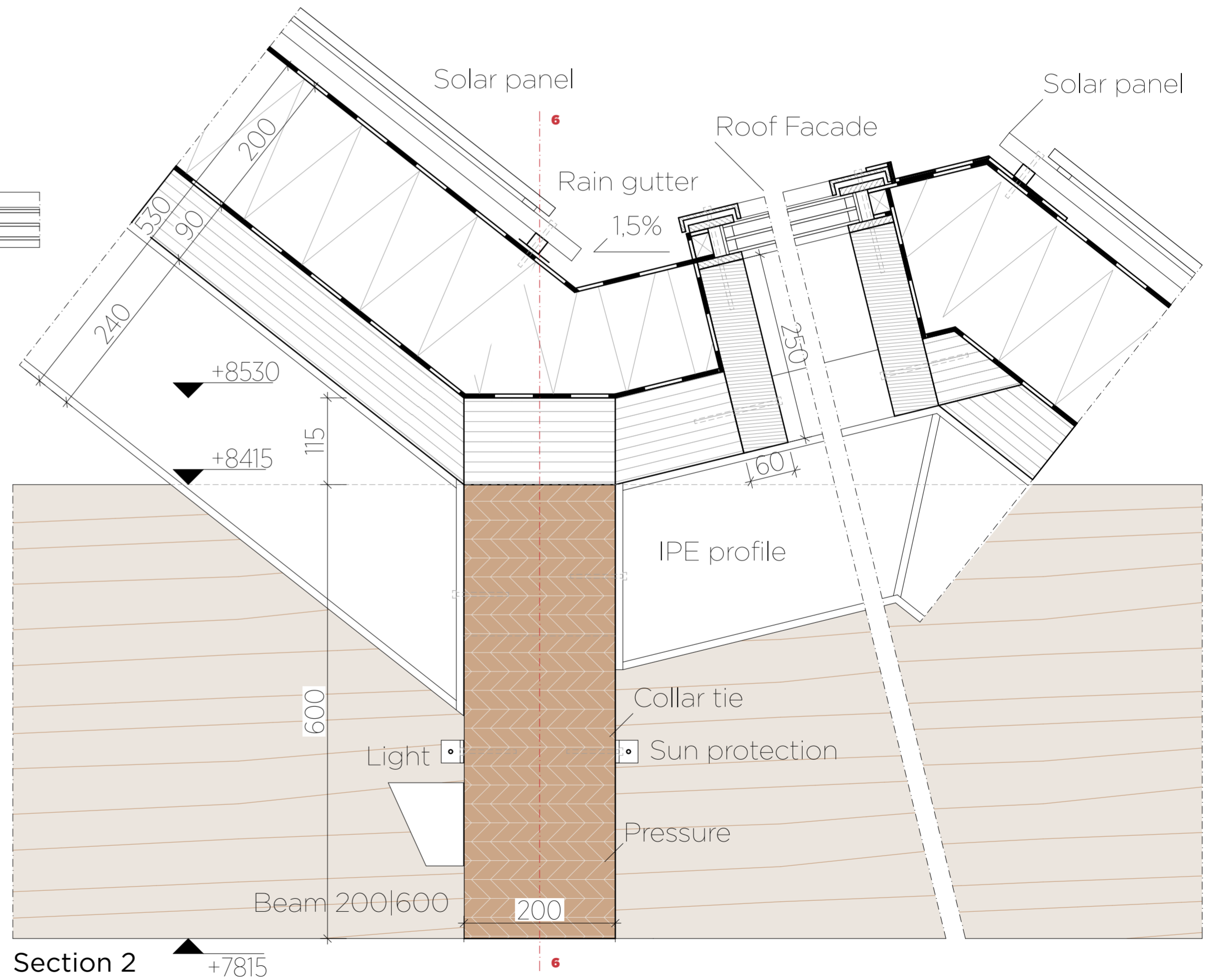


Sheddroof Structure:

Sealing layer synthetic roofing foil	
Thermal insulation	200mm
Vapour barrier	
CLT-panel	90mm
IPE steel beam	240mm

Inside

IPE profile 240|120

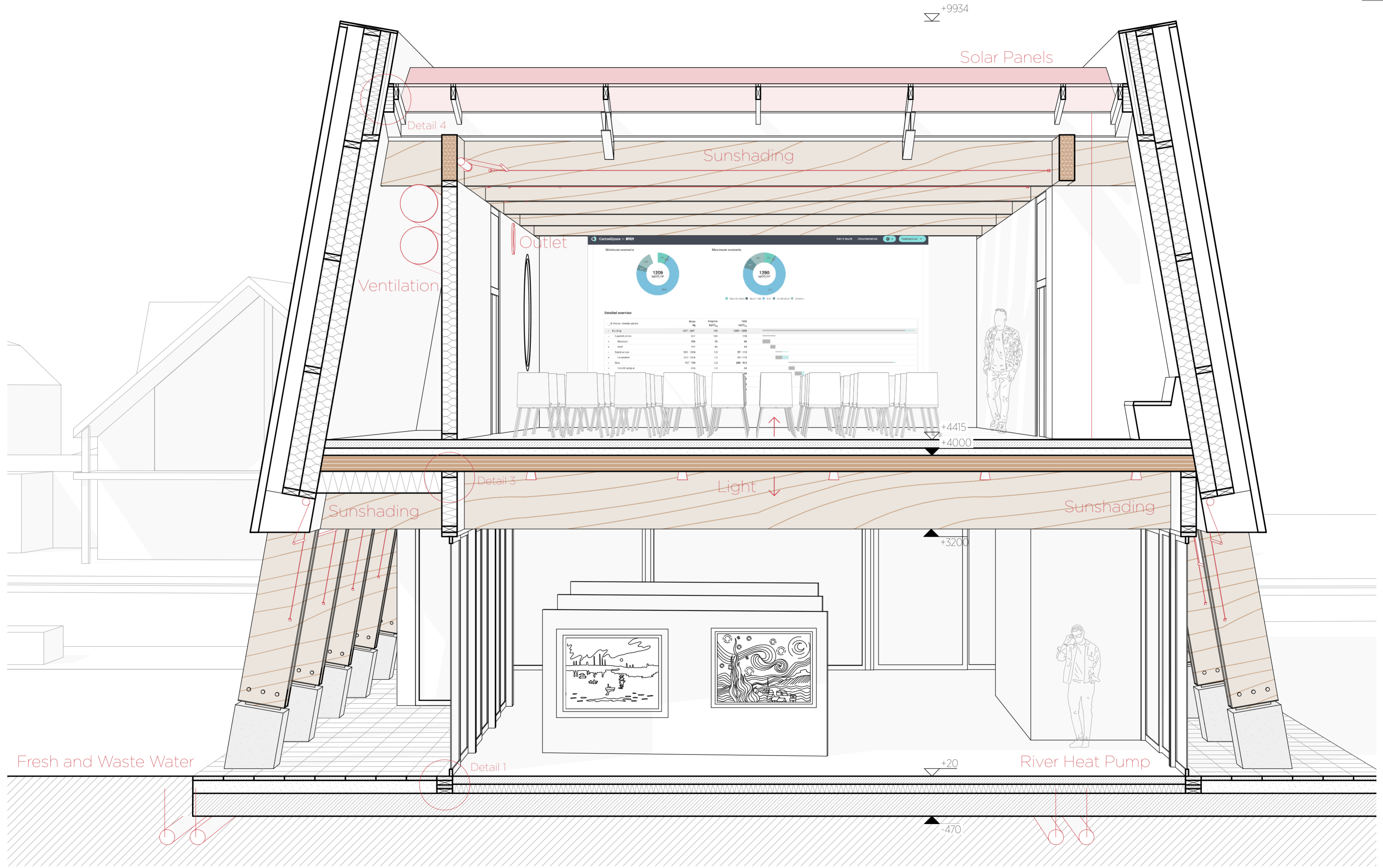
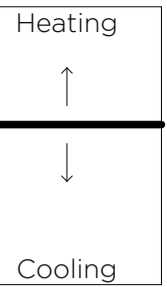


Section 1

Detail 4

Contemporary interpretation

Hidden to highlight roof geometry | Detail 1|5



Sustainable Tourism Supported by Renewable Energy Systems

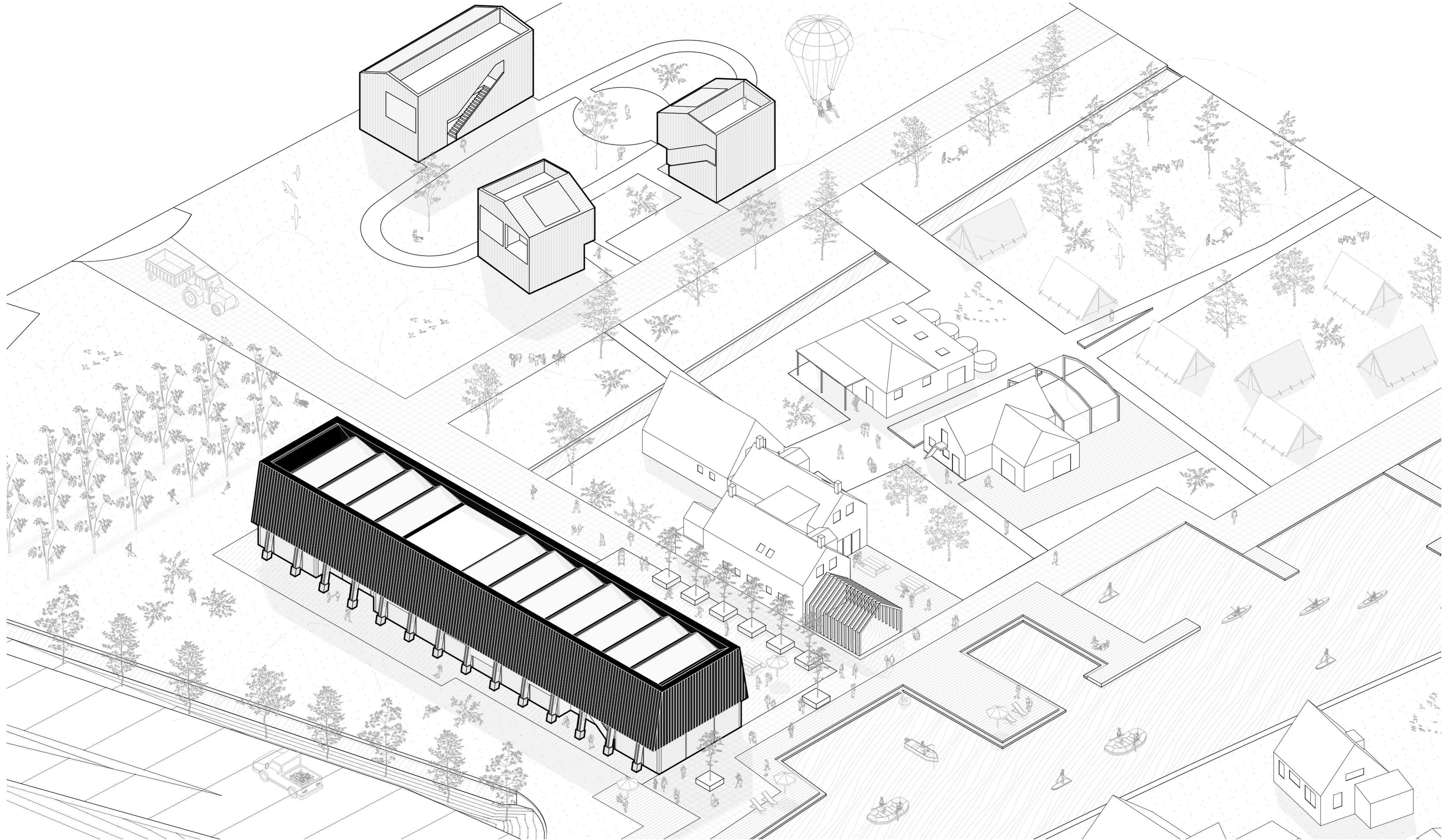


Inviting character (extroverted)

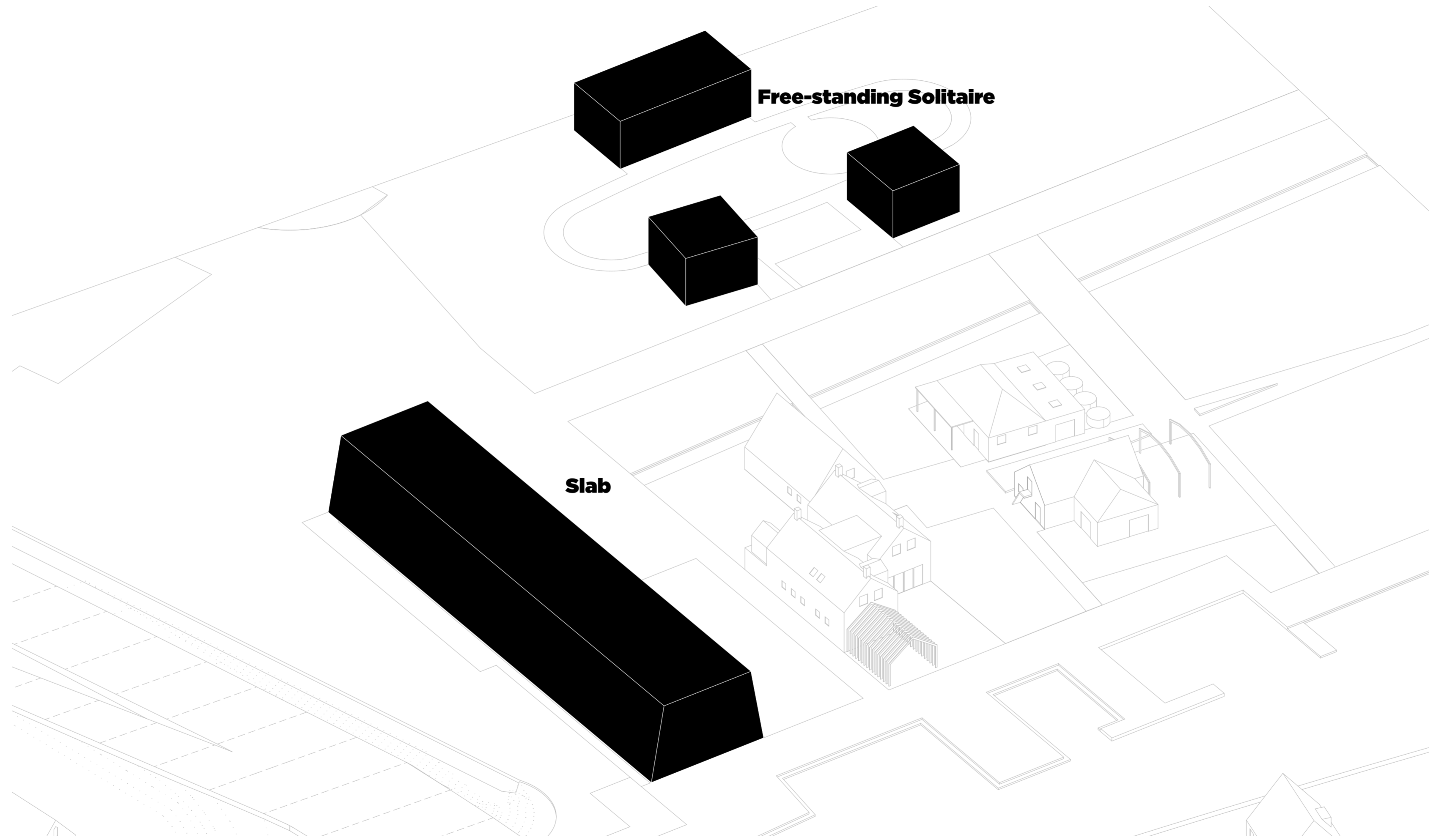
Render



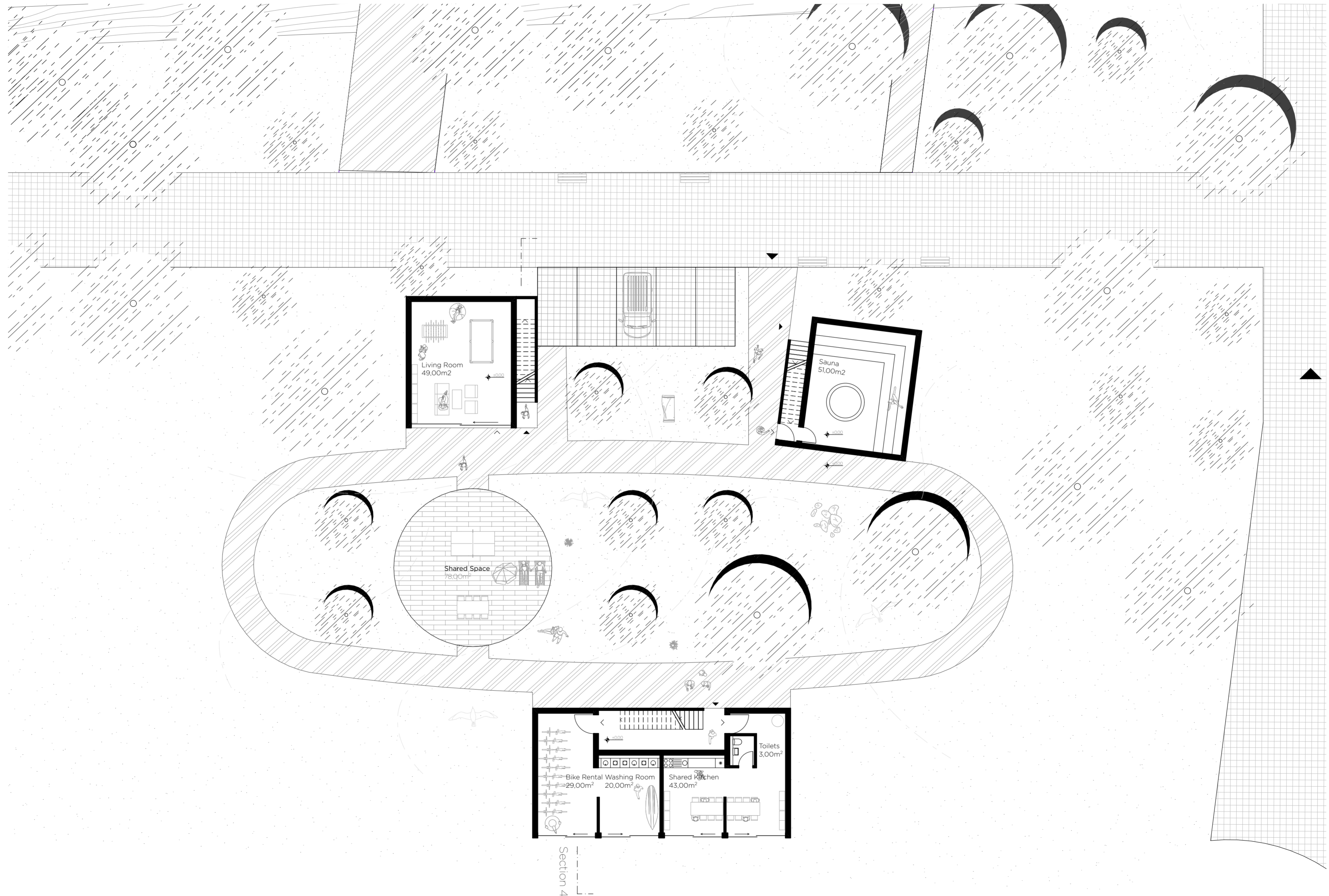
Exploring character (introverted)



Accommodation to extend a stay of a tourist

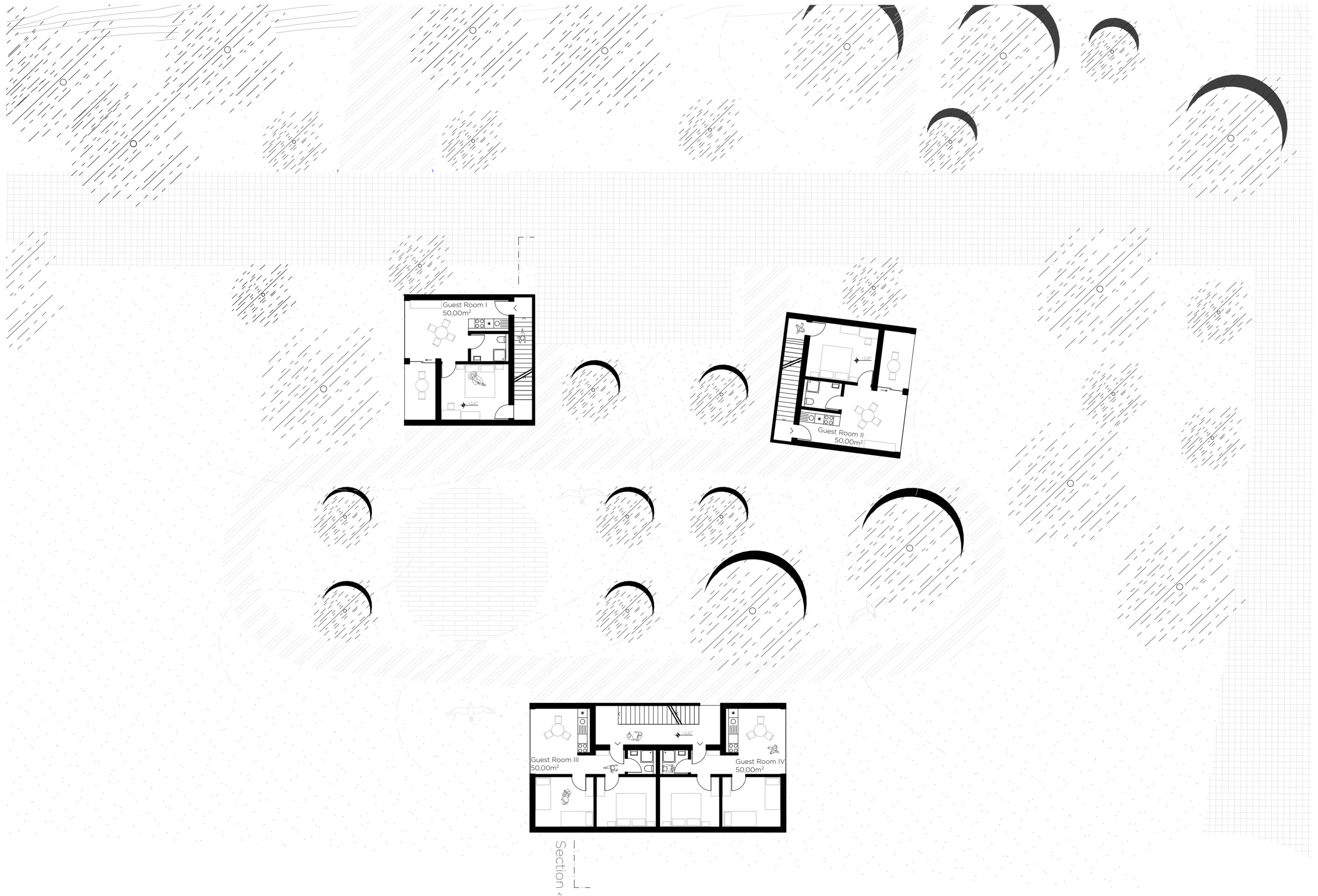


Mediation between typologies



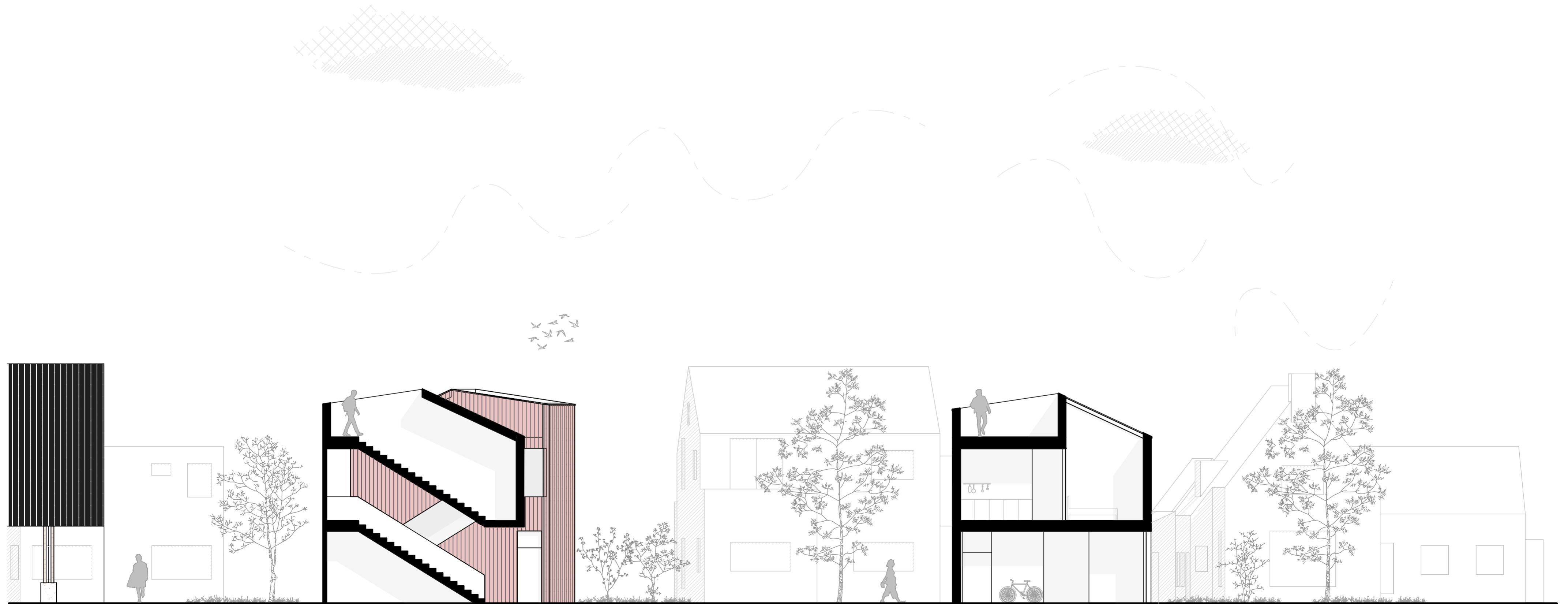
Public - Private spaces

Groundfloor Scale 1|200



Public - Private spaces

First Floor Scale 1:200

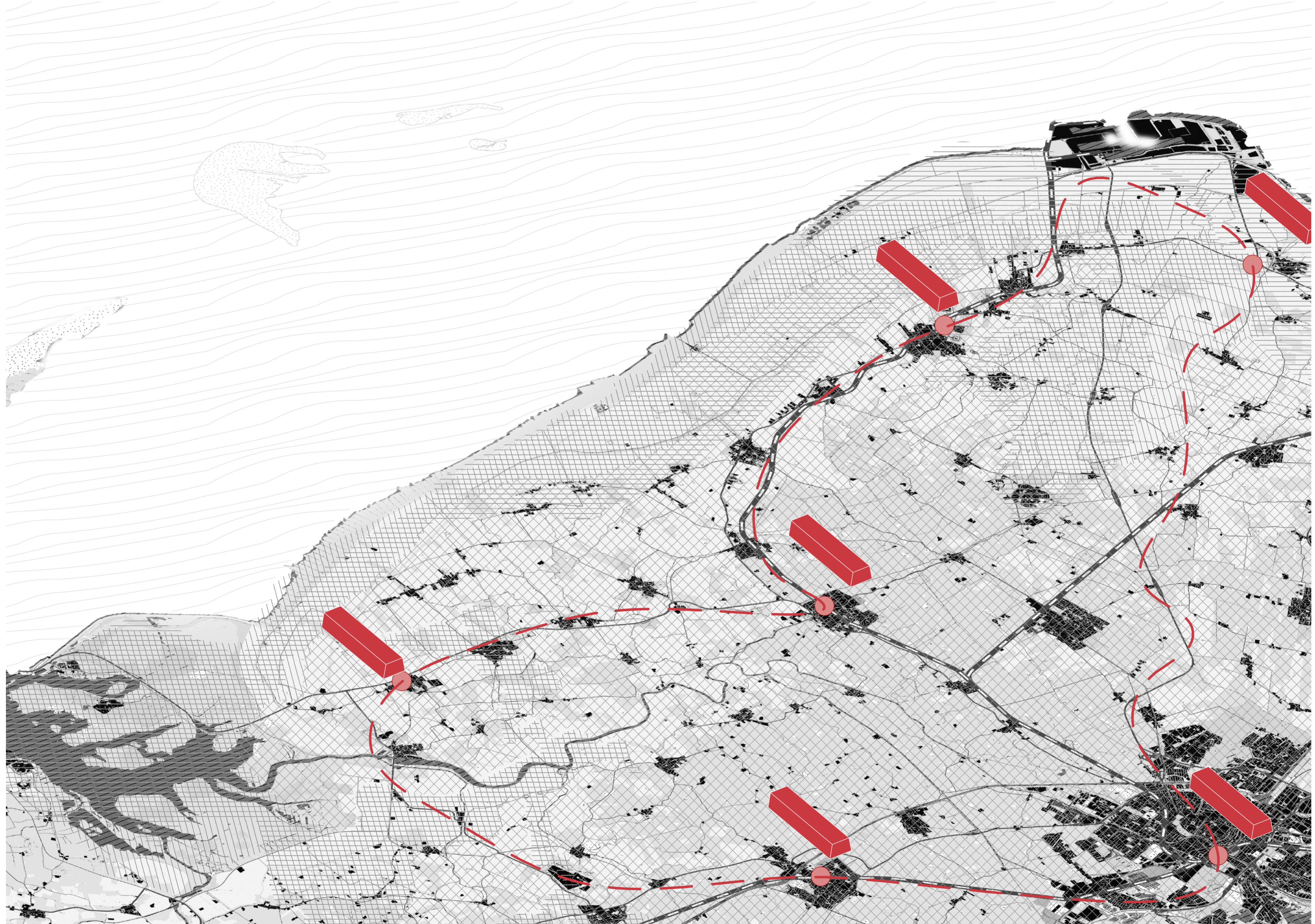


Connection to cultural ecosystem

Section Scale 1|200



Solitaire typology allows additional units to be added during seasonal peaks



Adaptable Framework supporting different cultural ecosystems throughout Groningen

Prototype for the wider region



Thank you for your attention

Connecting polarities to frame a cultural ecosystem