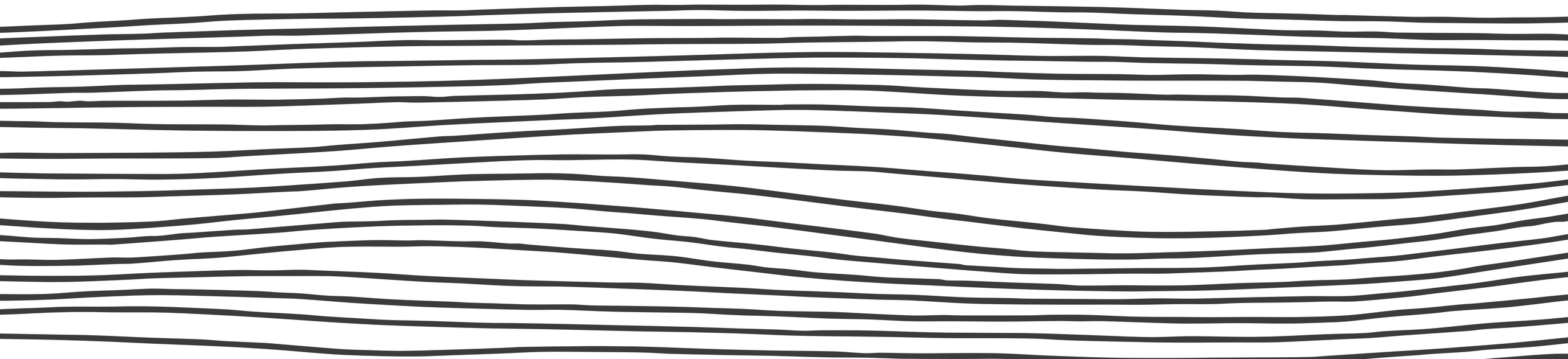
The coastal environment as a laboratory

Architecture and embodied experiences

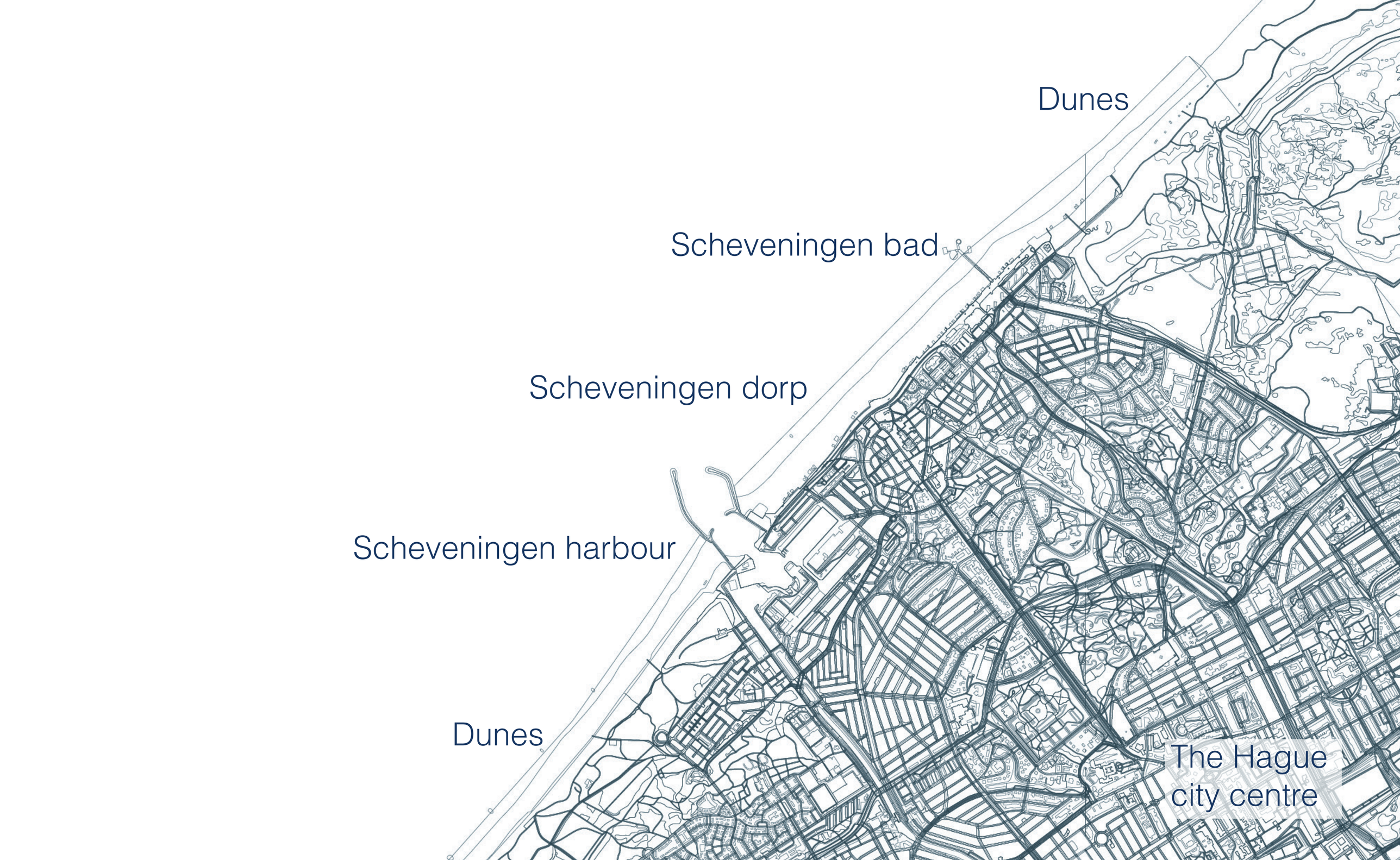
P5 Presentation - Marah Wagner
Main Mentor: Leontine de Wit
BT Mentor: Freek Speksnijder
Research Mentor: Klaske Havik

13th of September 2021



SCHEVENINGEN

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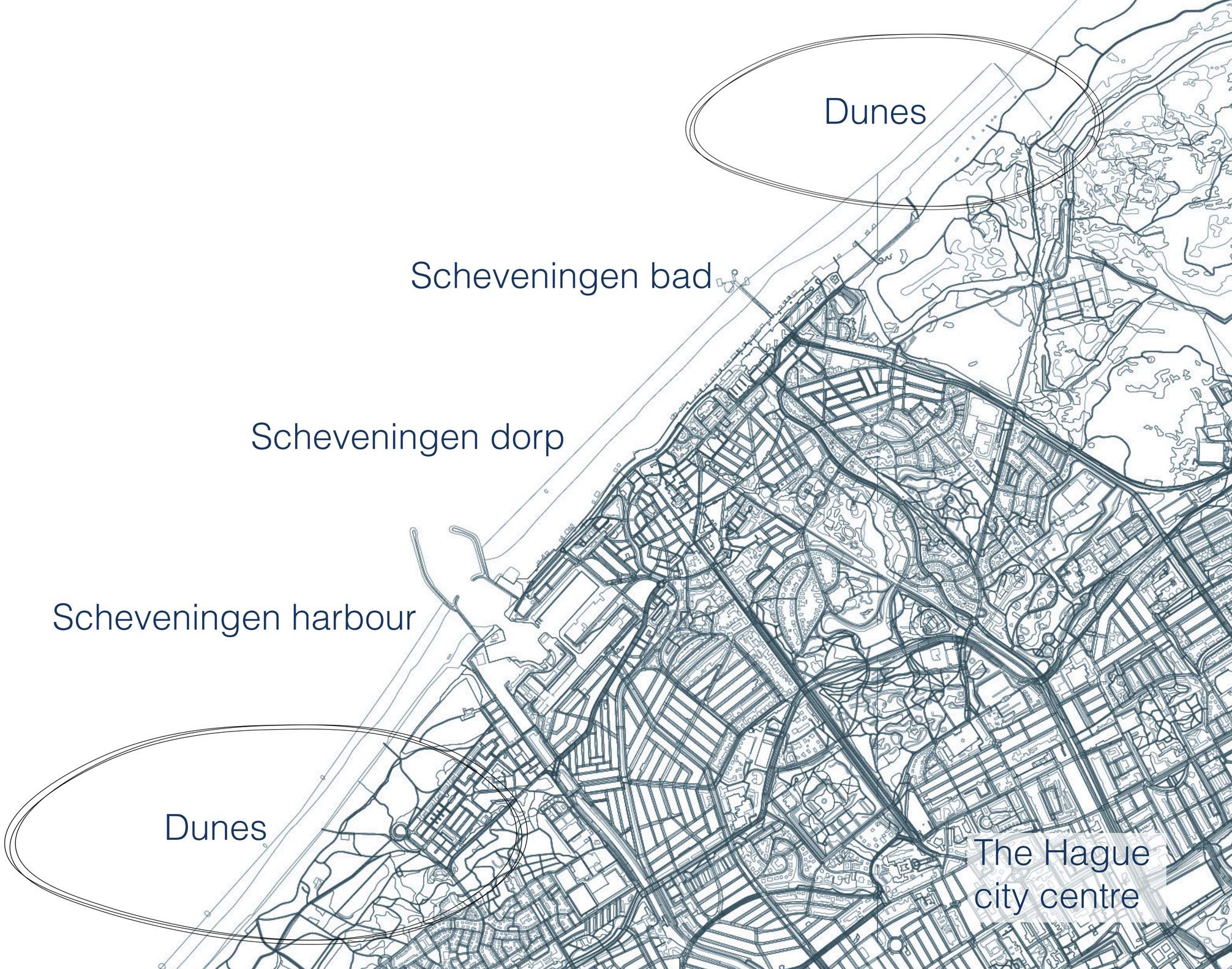
Scheveningen bad
Scheveningen dorp
Scheveningen harbour
Dunes
The Hague
city centre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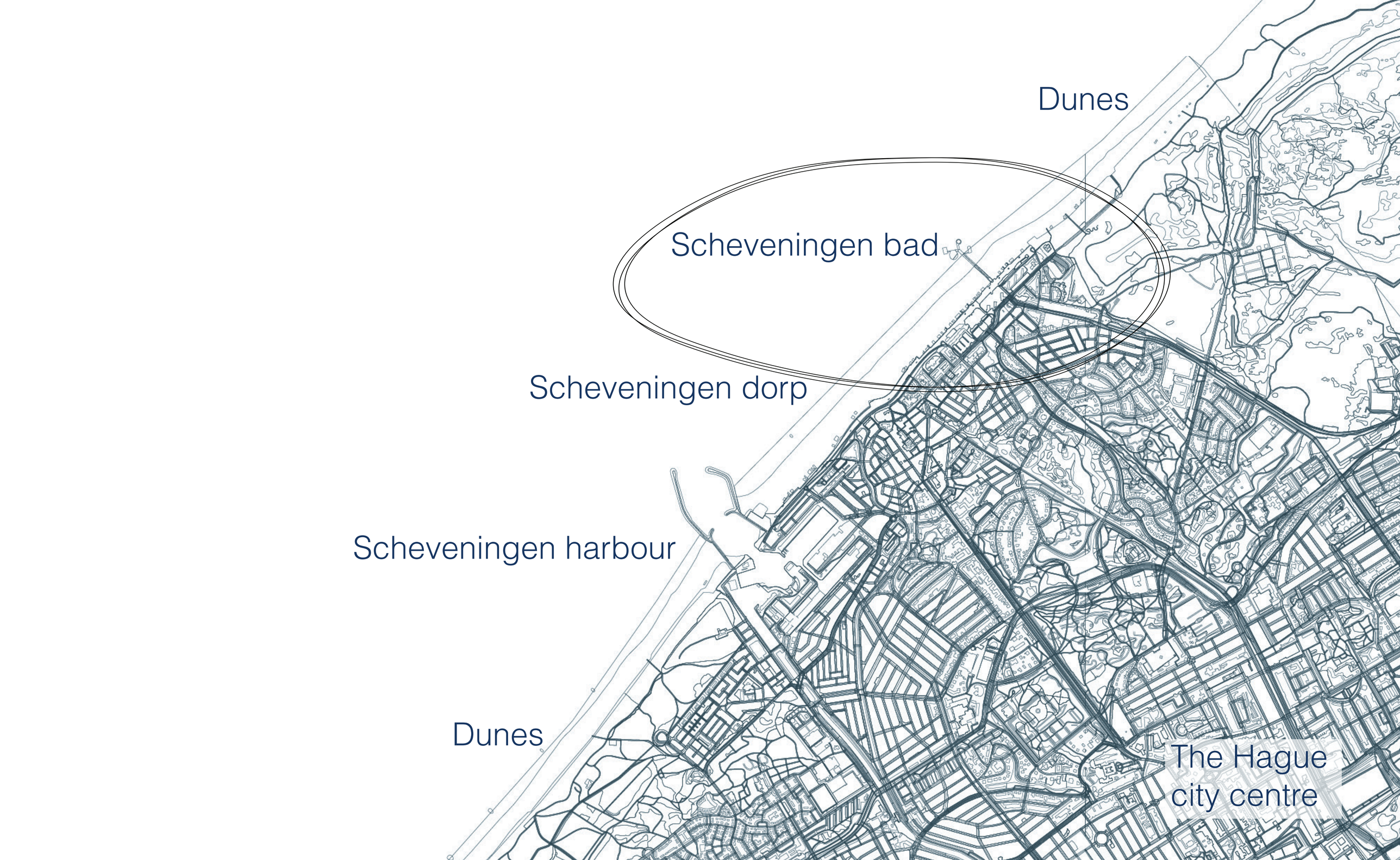
The Hague
city centre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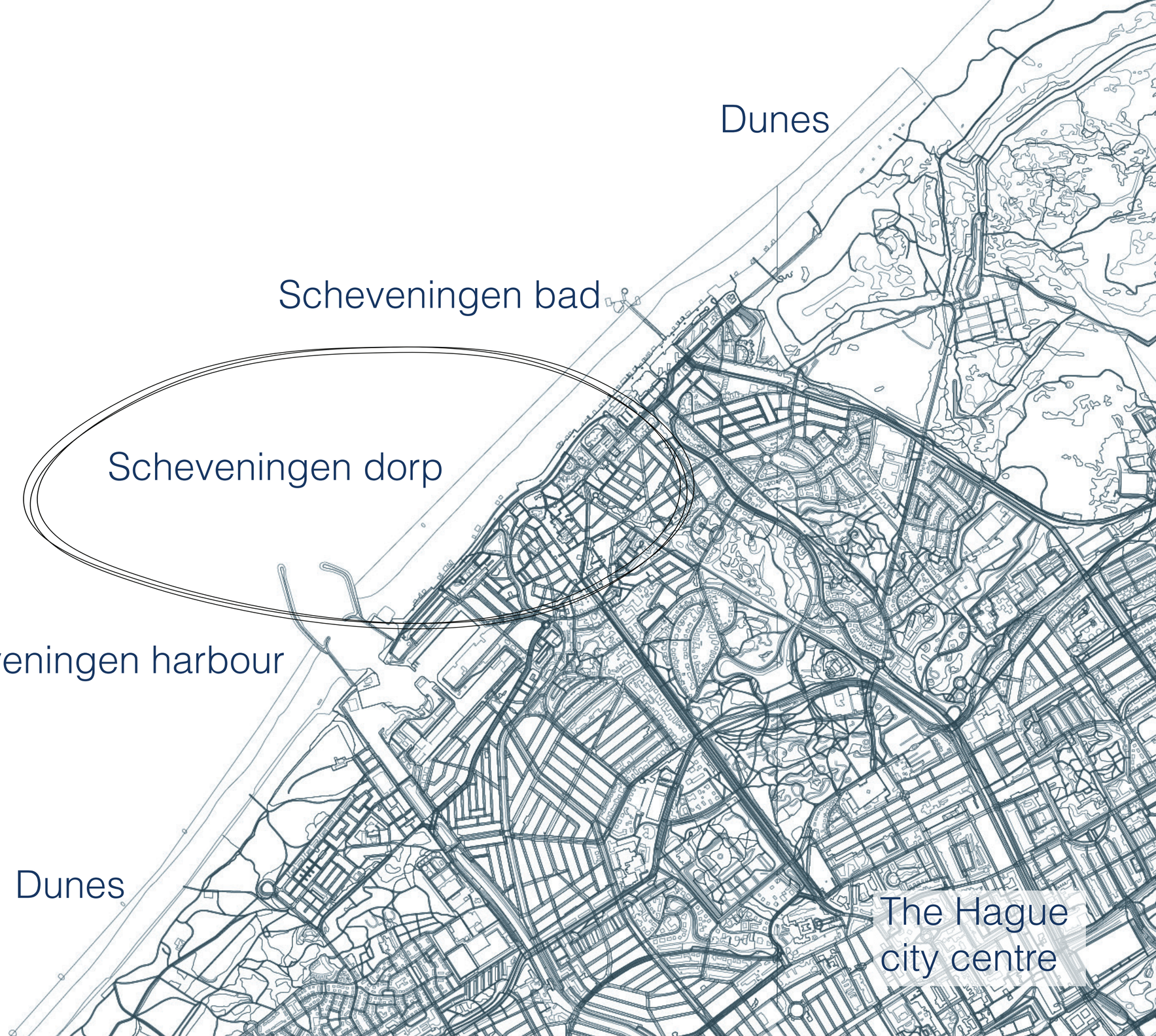
city centre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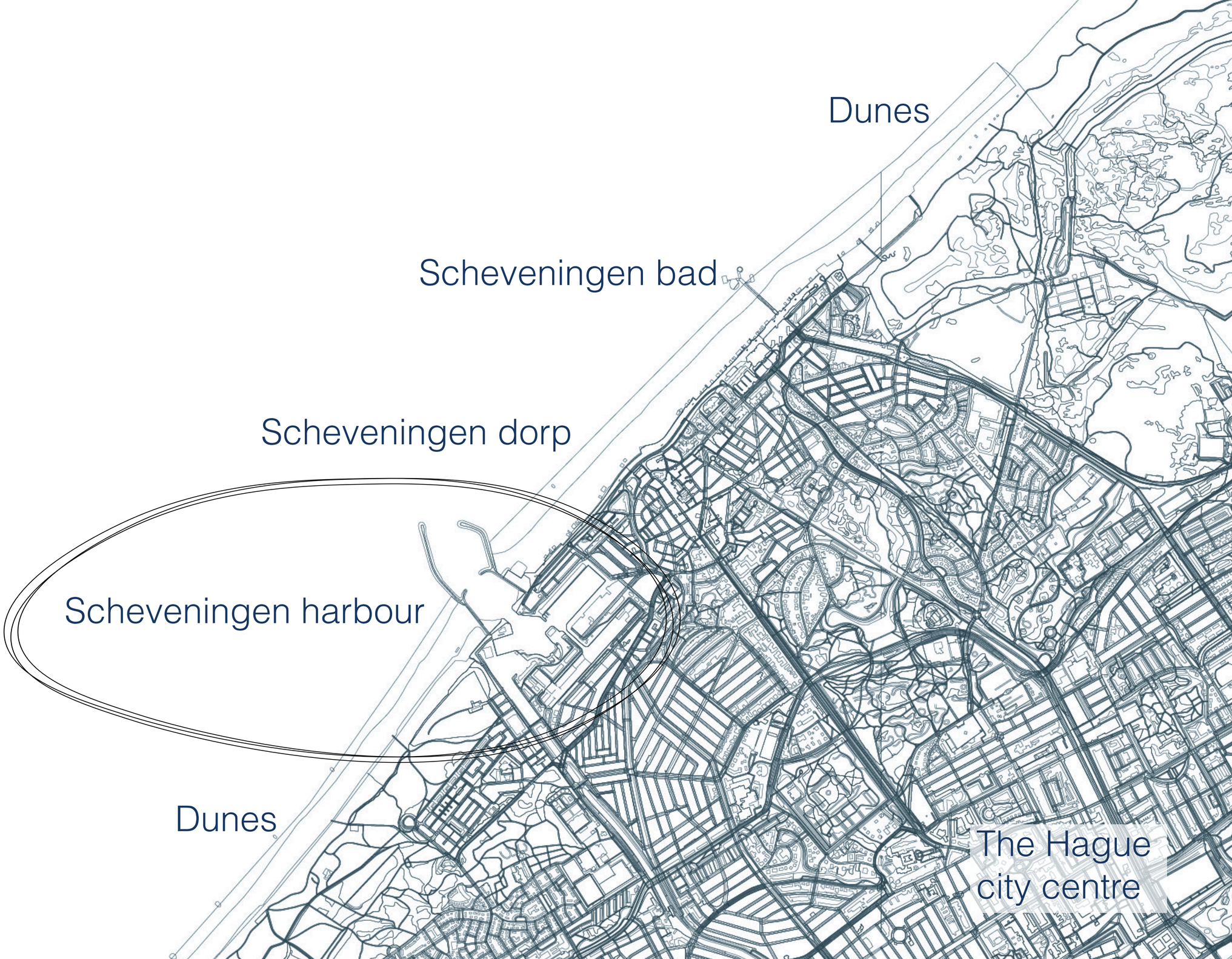
The Hague
city centre


Dunes
Scheveningen bad
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Scheveningen harbour
Dunes
The Hague
city centre


SCH 97
15


ZEEZEILSCHOOL.NL
SCH-236
OXCHARTERS


Clubhuis 't Sp






STRAND
ZOUT
WATER
ZEE
MAAN
DUIN
SCHELP
WIND

How can a new building preserve and enhance the experiences of the coastal environment around Scheveningen harbour?

RESEARCH

DESIGN

RESEARCH

RESEARCH

Literature research

experience of place

phenomenology

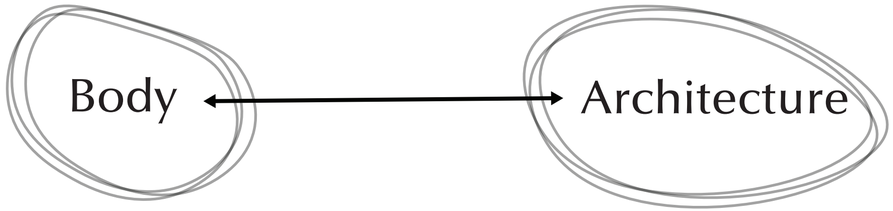
phenomenology

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Embodied experience

Architecture







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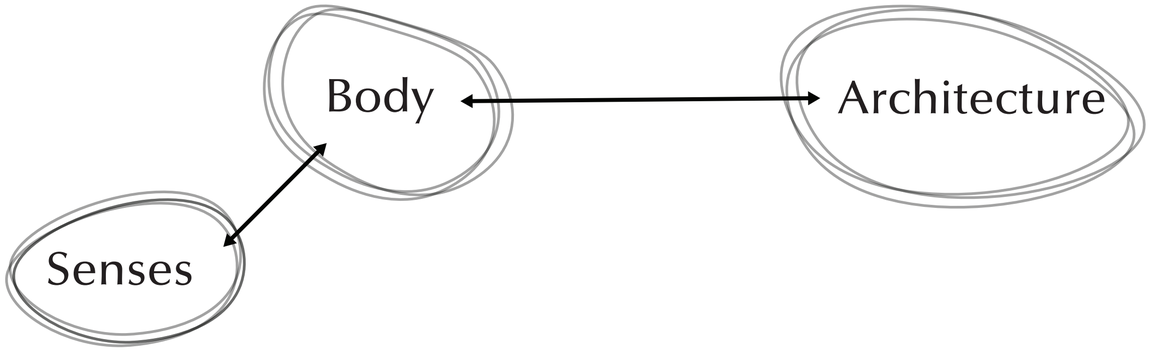
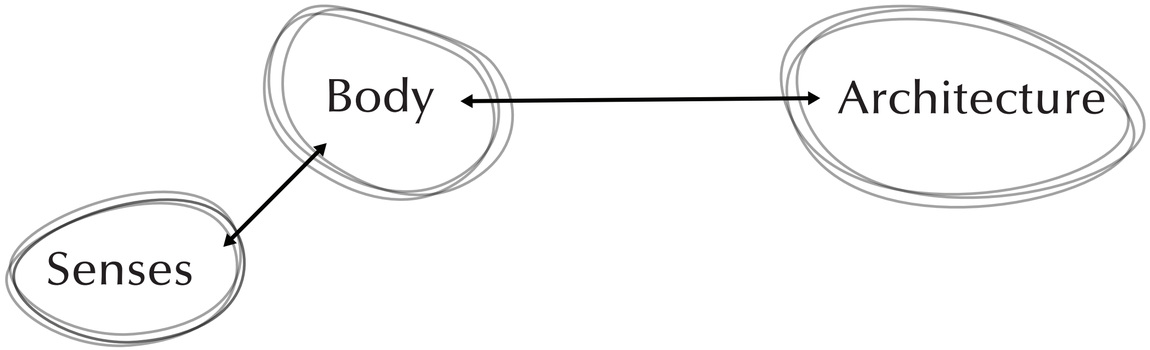

Body
Architecture
Senses




Body
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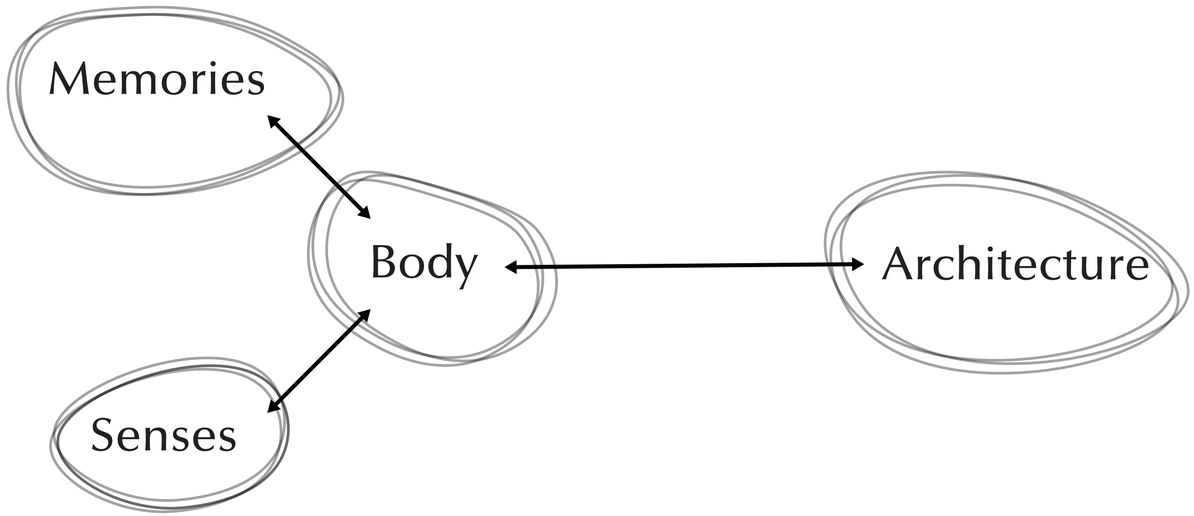
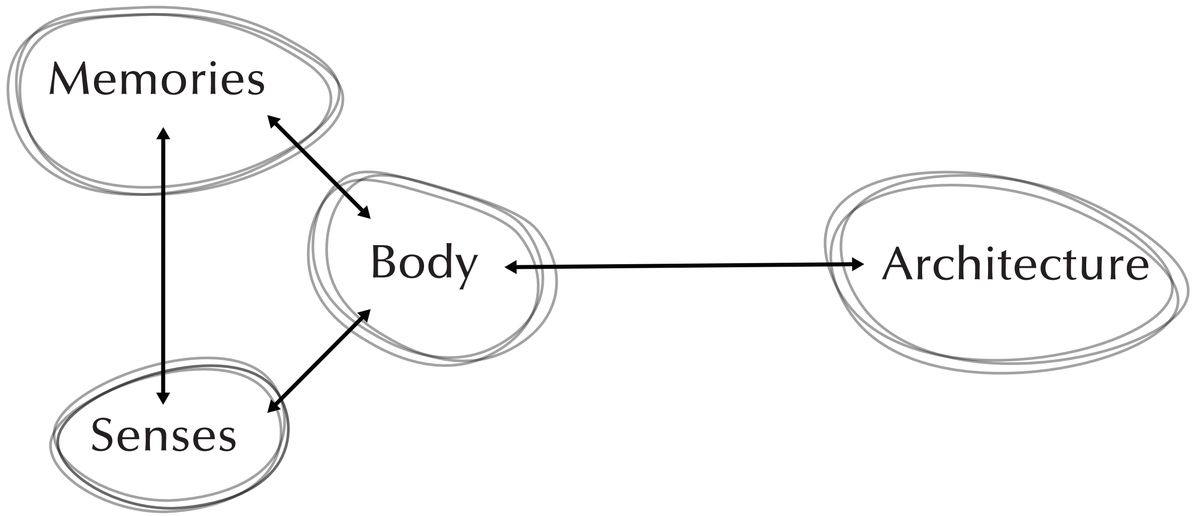
Senses




Memories
Body
Architecture
Senses




Memories
Body
Architecture
Senses



Subjective

RESEARCH

Literature research

RESEARCH

Literature research

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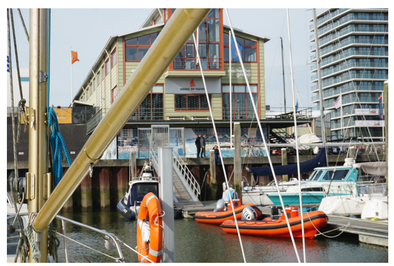
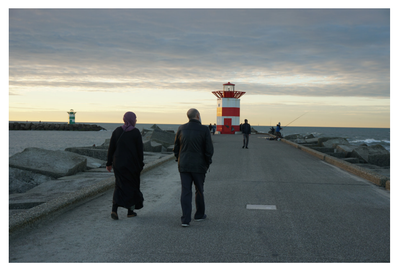
On-site research

Observations

Observations


Photography

Observations








Photography







Informal meetings

Observations








Photography



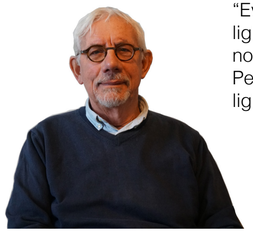




Informal meetings



“The Hague’s South Beach is where I go when I want to experience space and tranquillity.“



“Every night the light of the lighthouse would fell into my room, now it doesn’t shine anymore. People now don’t even know the light”



“Although The Hague is advertising itself with a surfer imago, they are granting building permits to developpers who are aiming for a different target group”



“Nettenboeten, I have done it since I was young, I still make the nets for Rijkswaterstaat’s samples on all rivers and seas of The Netherlands”

In-depth interviews

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RESEARCH

Literature research

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On-site research

RESEARCH

Literature research

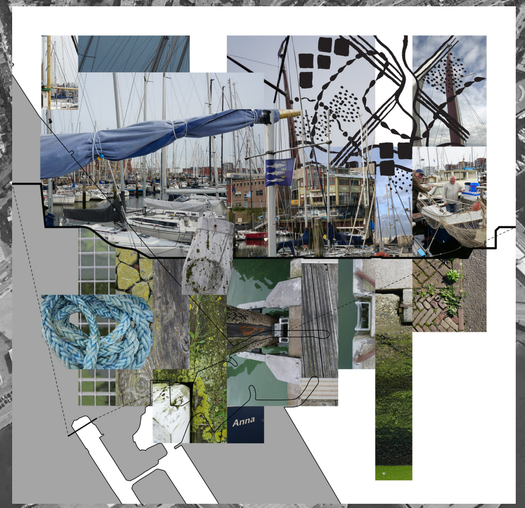
↓

On-site research

↓

Synthesis




Anna


EEUW
SCHELP



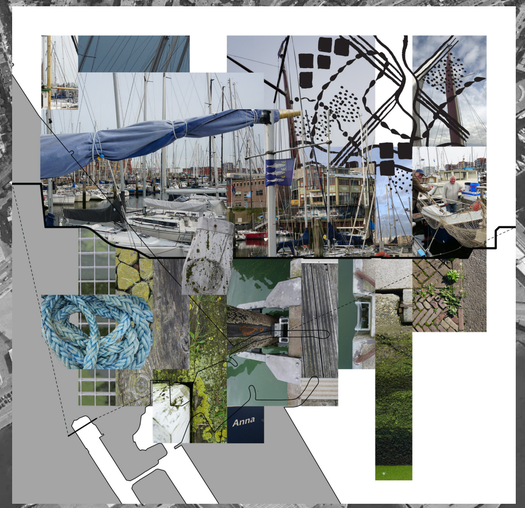

DEN HEVER
GARNALEN
KUIPERLI










Anna


DEN HEVER
GARNALEN
KUIPERIJ




EEUW
SCHELP



Traces of work



Multiplicity of tranquility



Imperfection as perfection

RESEARCH

DESIGN

How can a new building preserve and enhance the EMBODIED EXPERIENCES of the coastal environment around Scheveningen harbour?

SITE









Traces of work

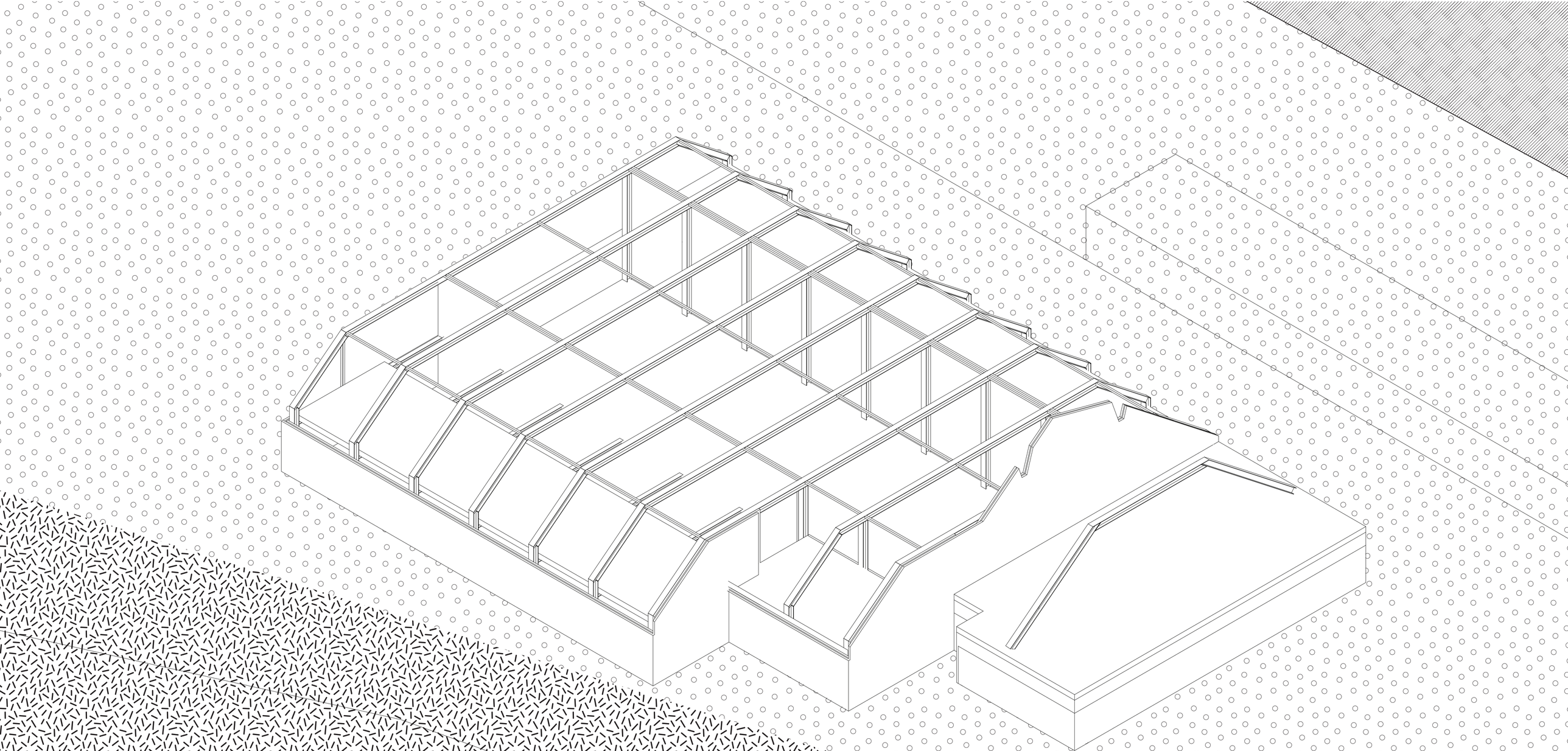
PROGRAM

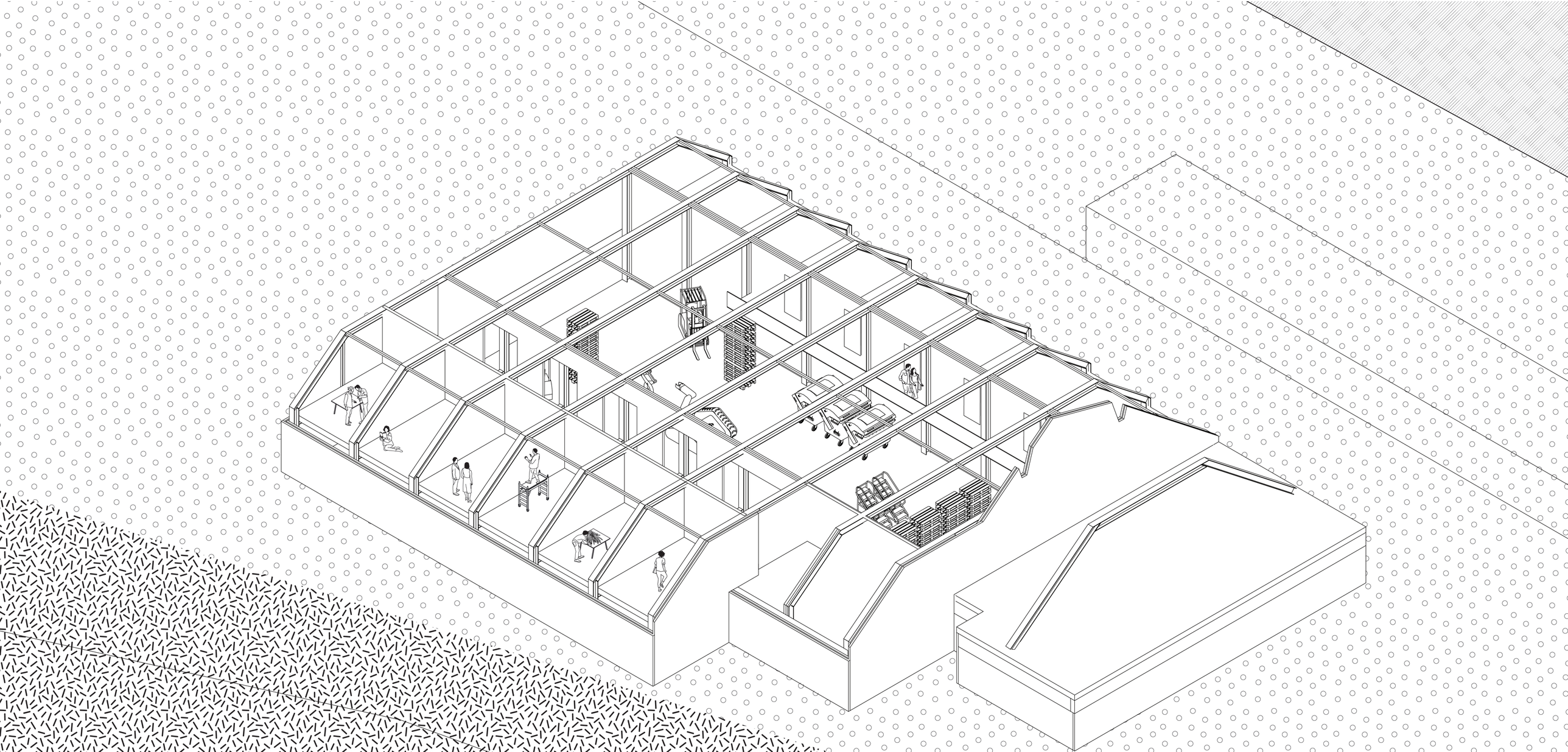


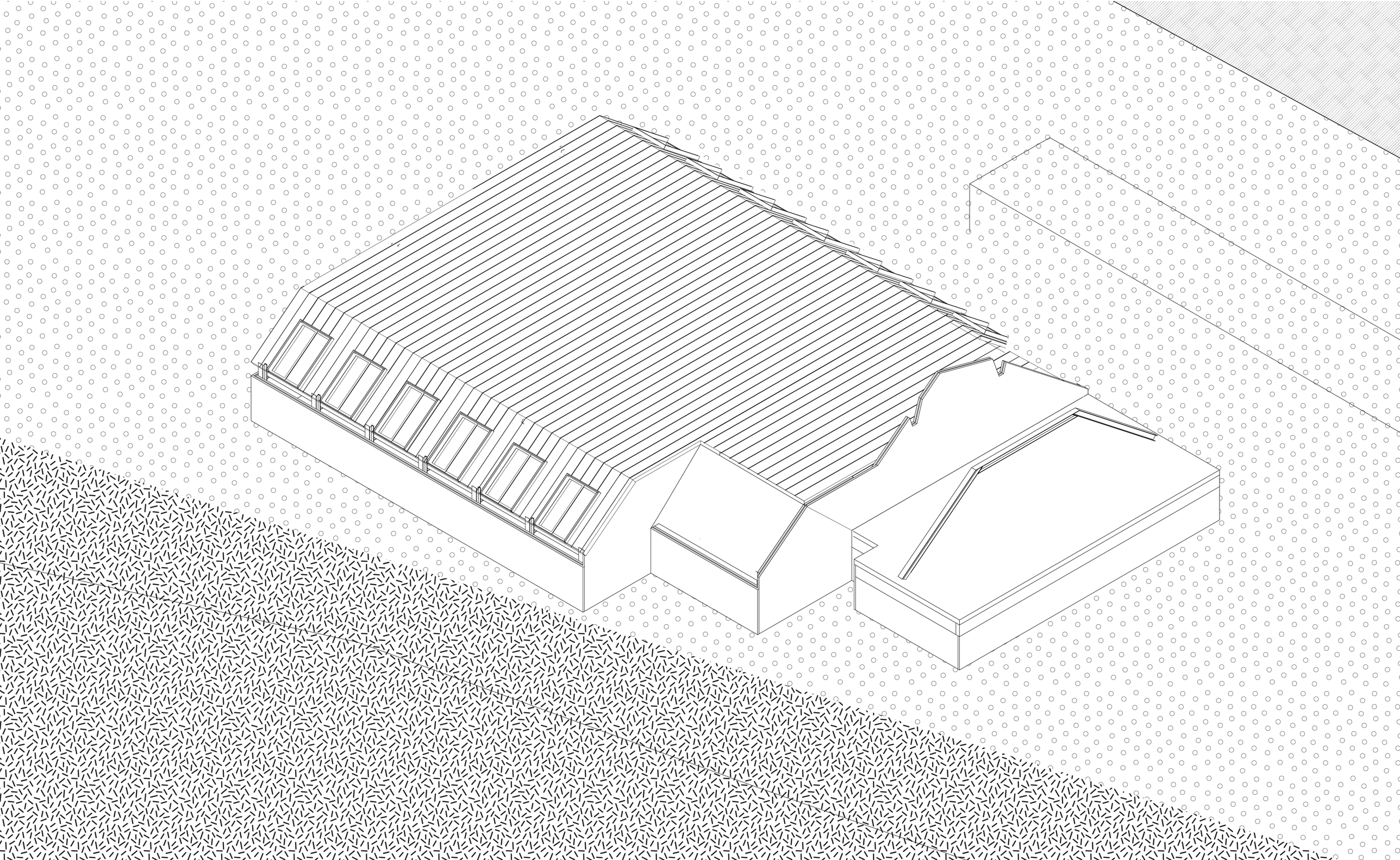


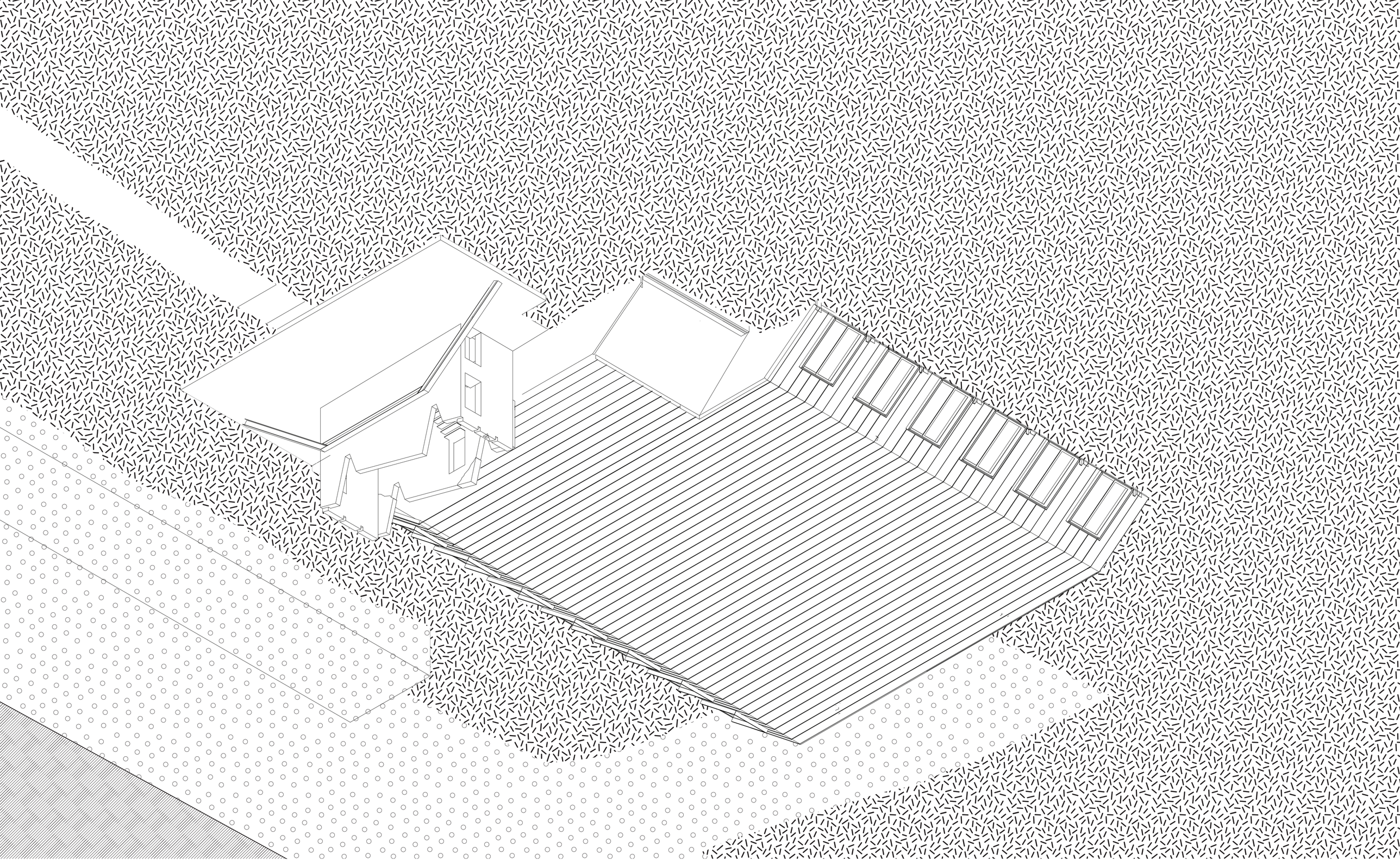

630
3
2

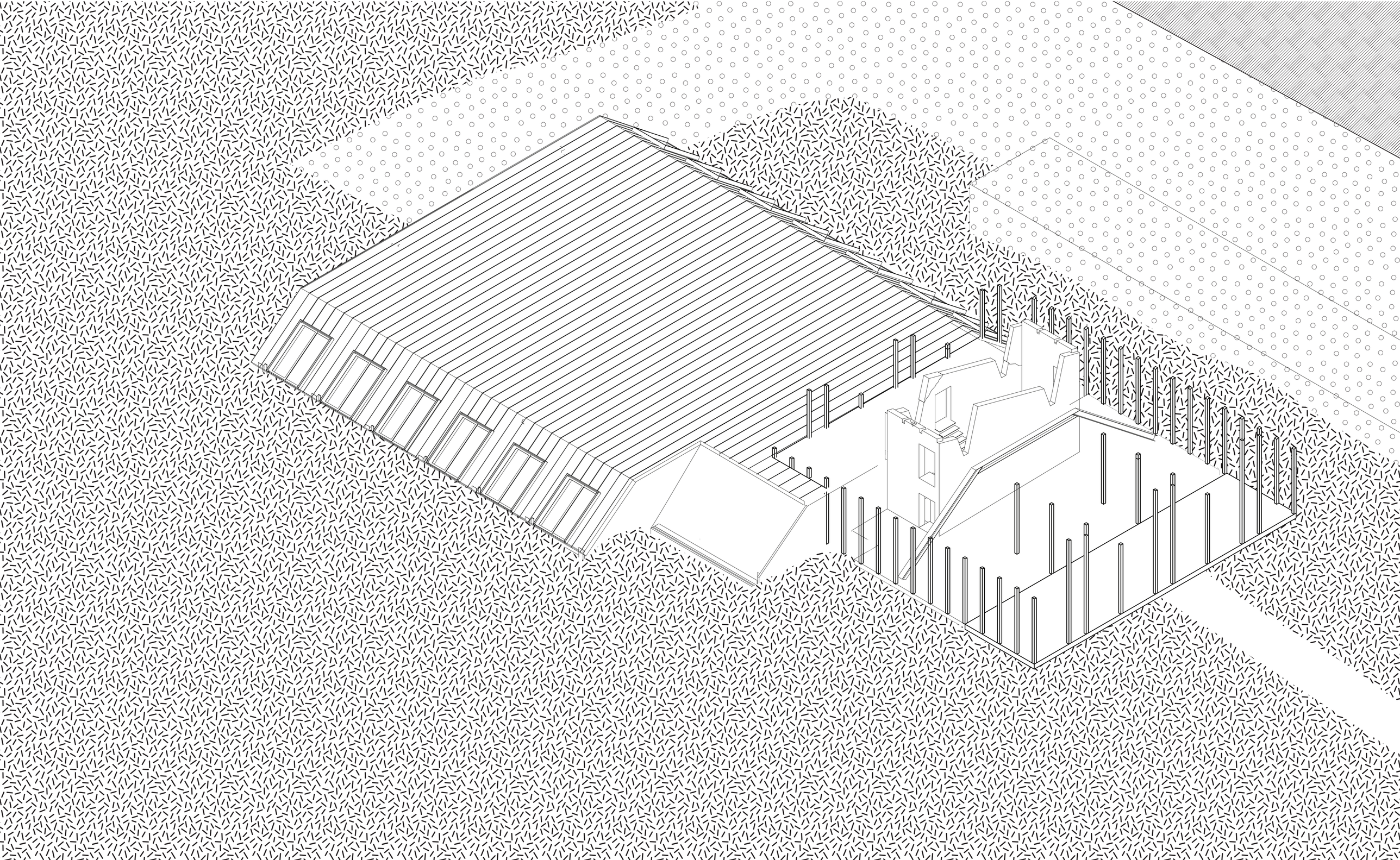

HEATERBOX
600
9-KNR-08
96-XTB-2

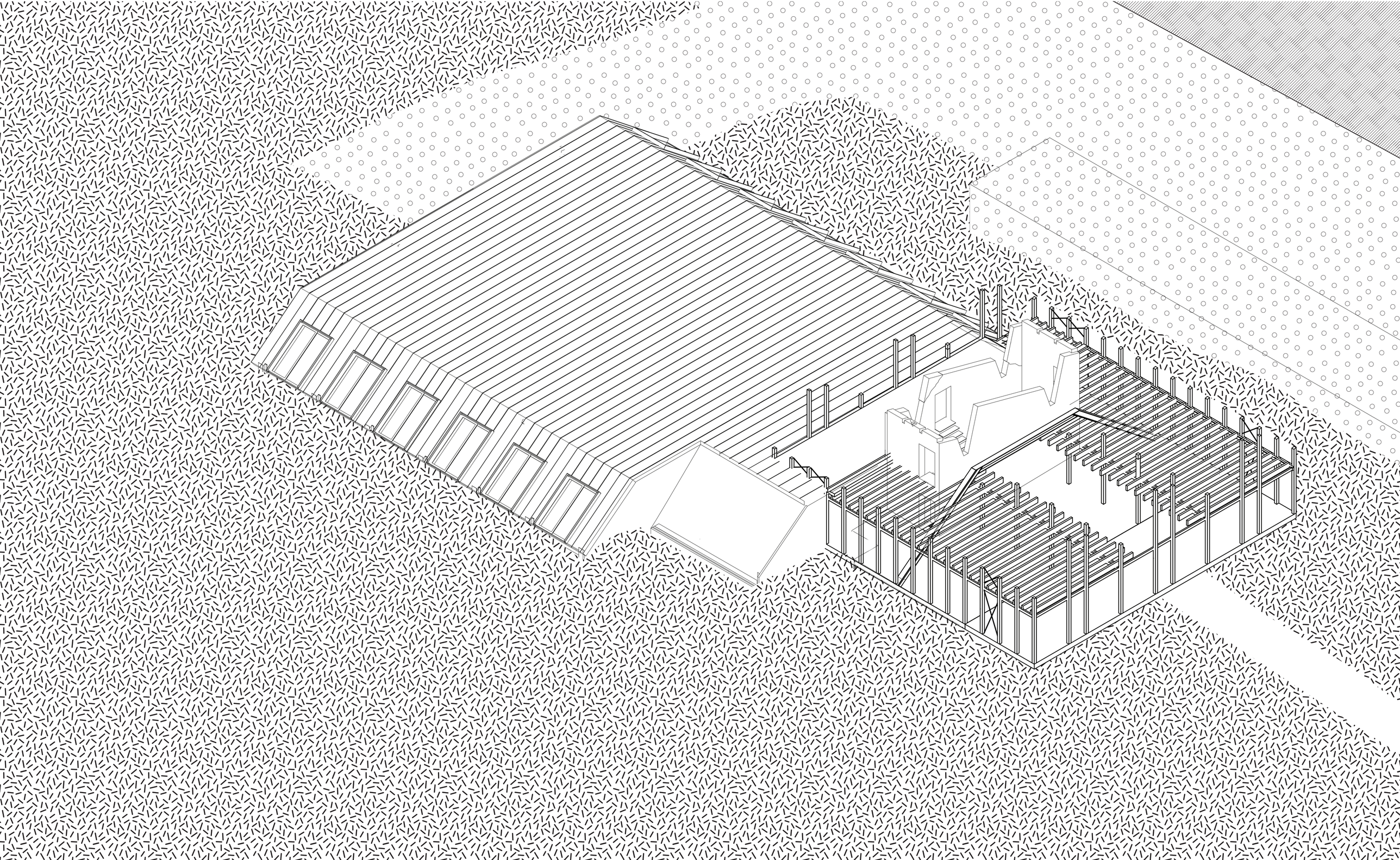


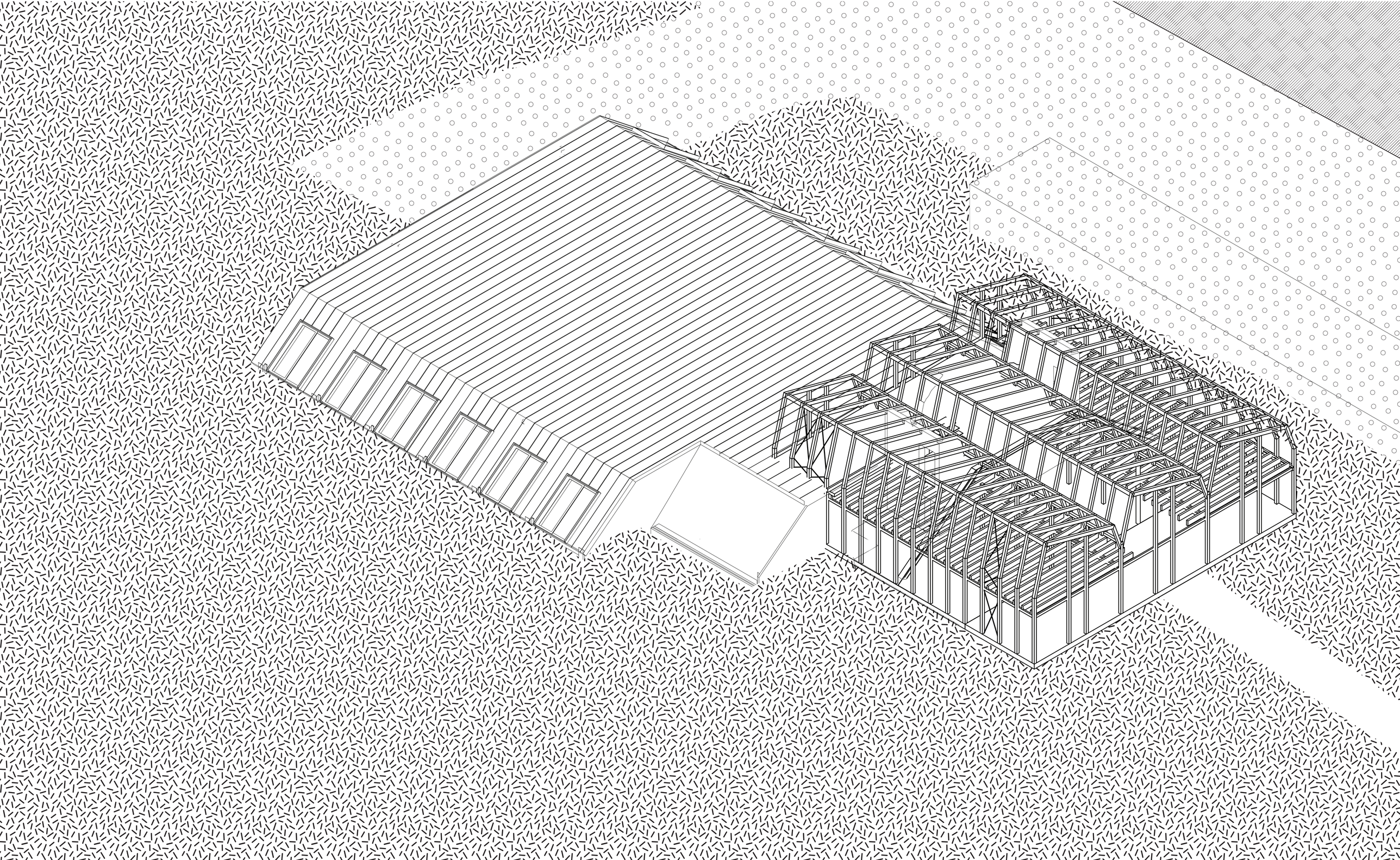


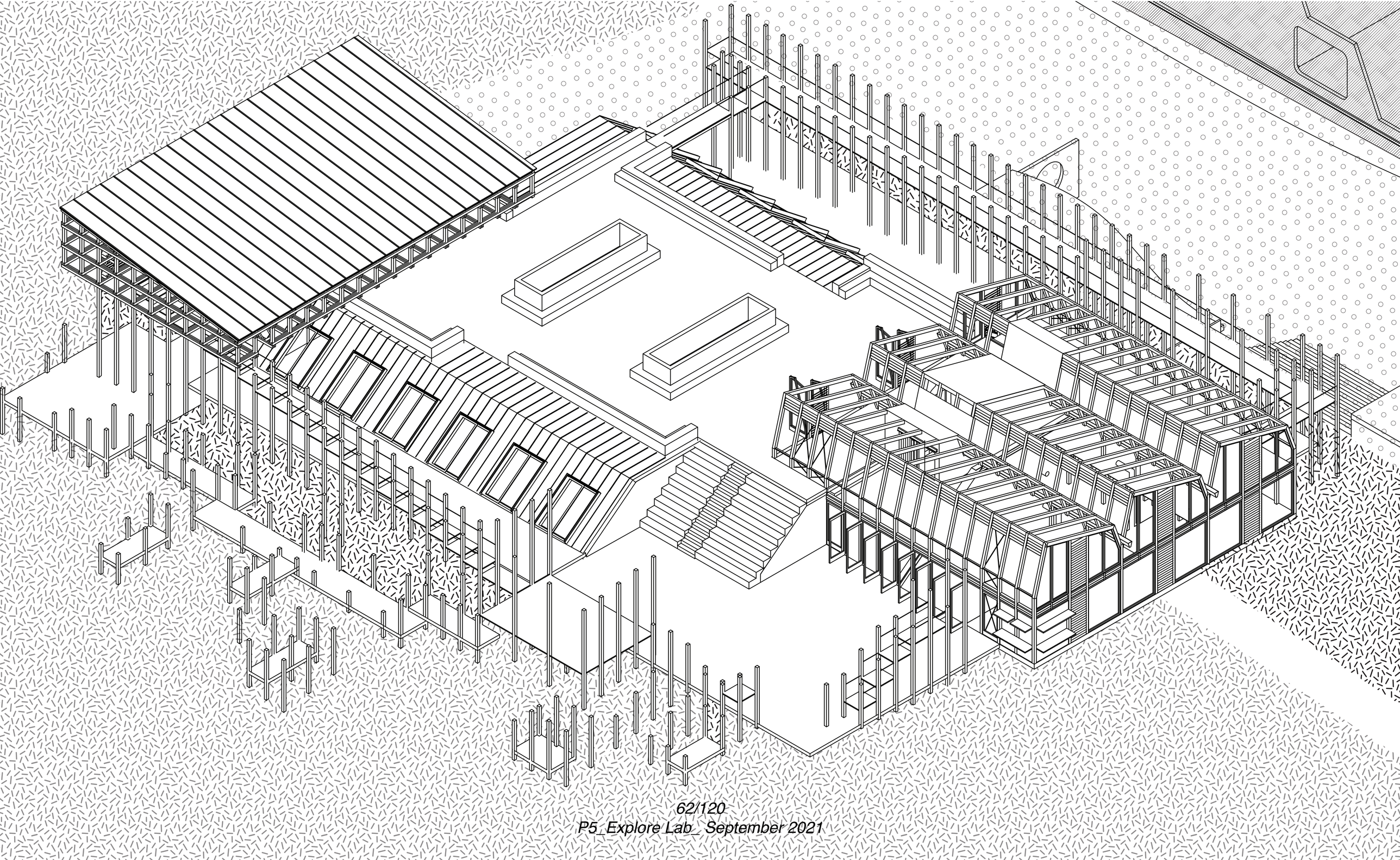


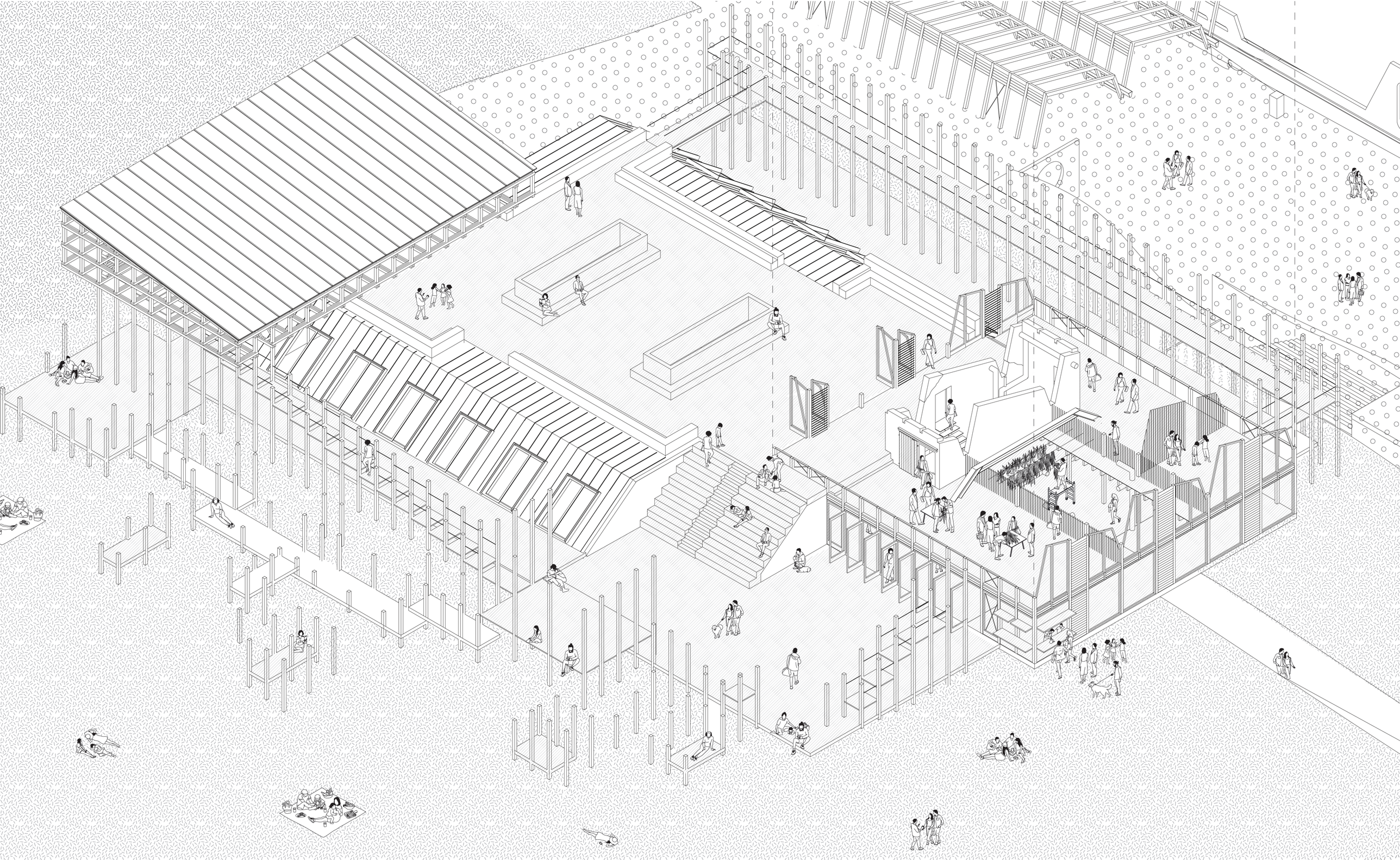


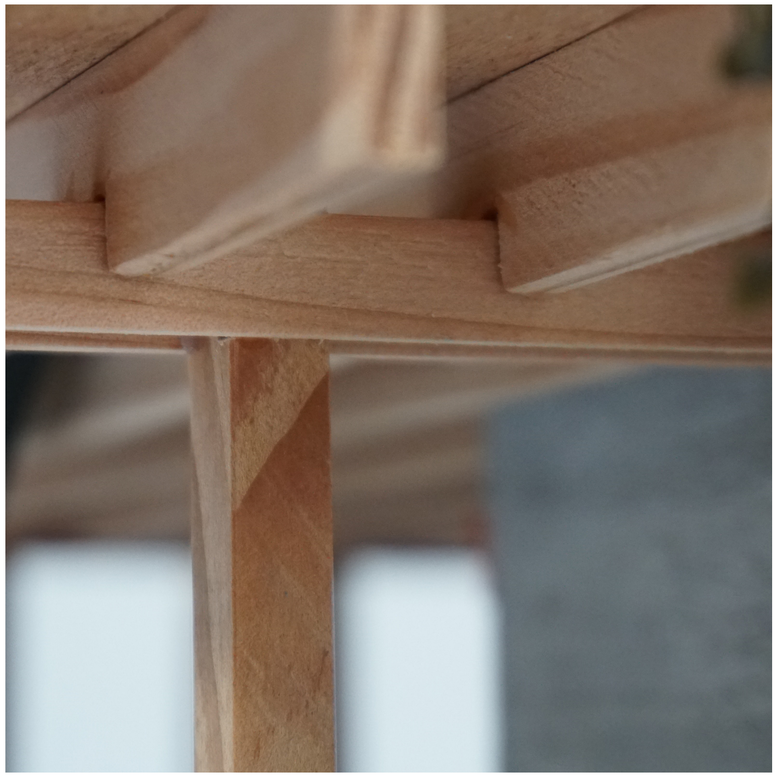






















Multiplicity of tranquility







Reduction





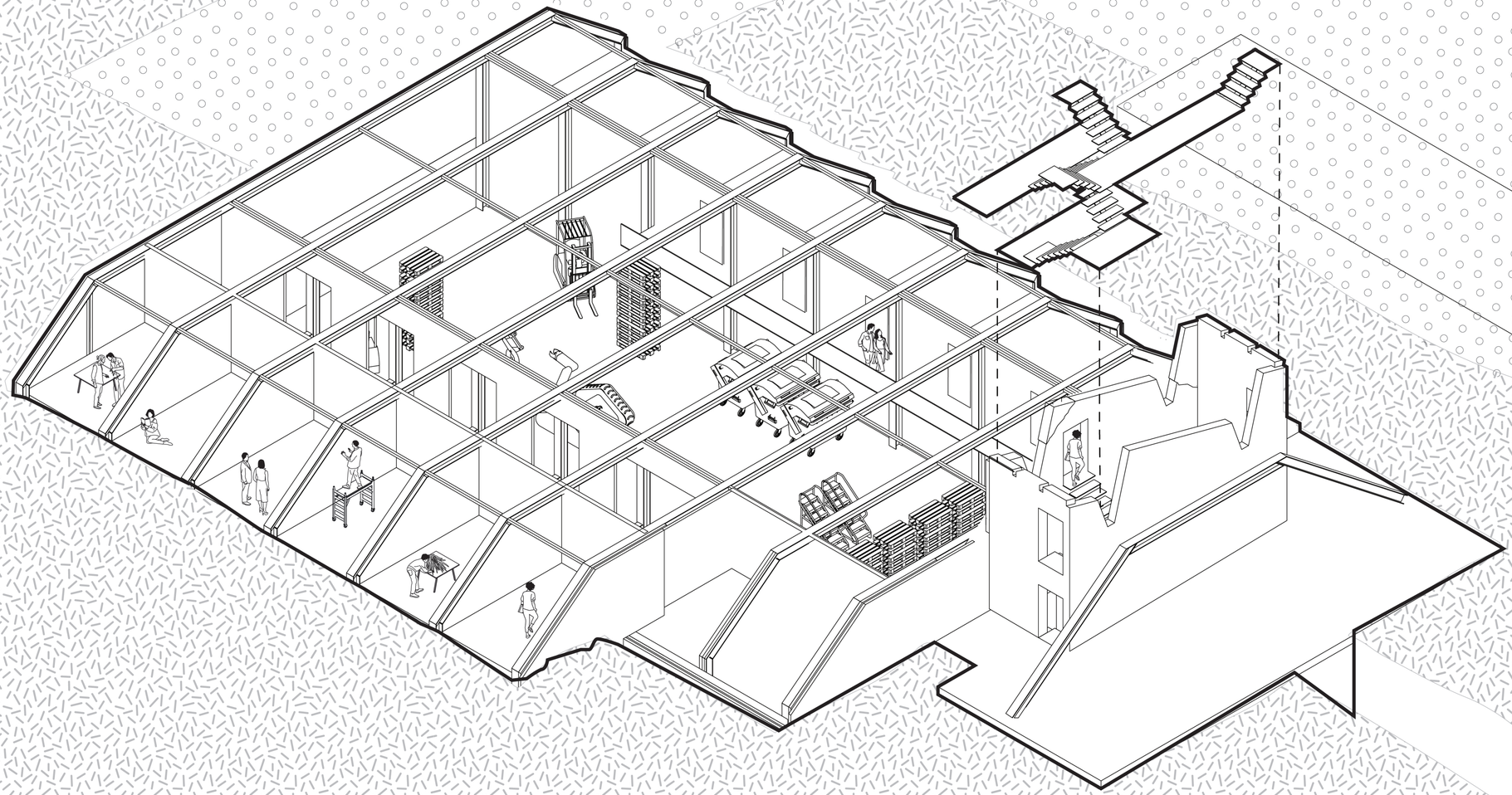
Enhancement

Enclosure

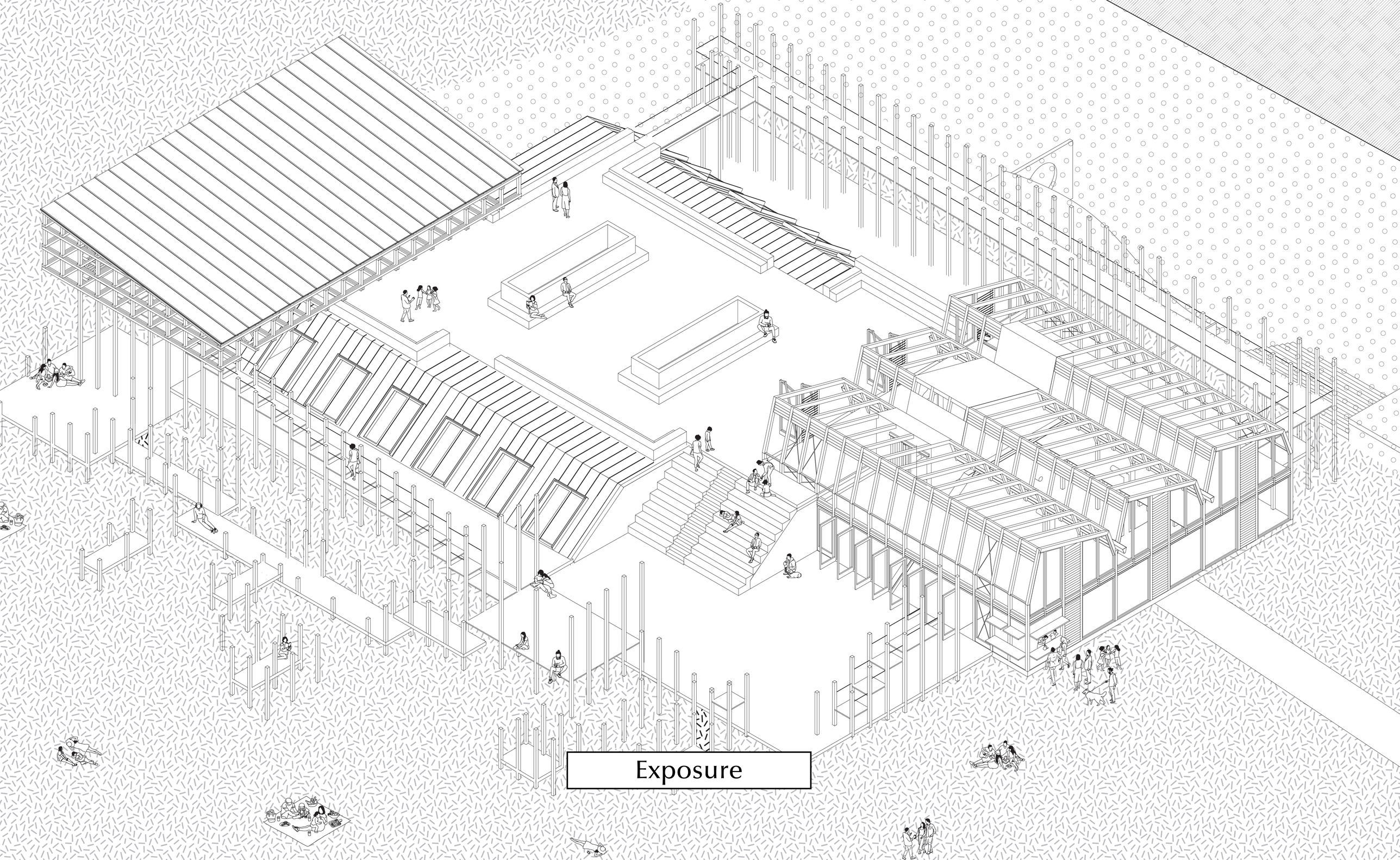


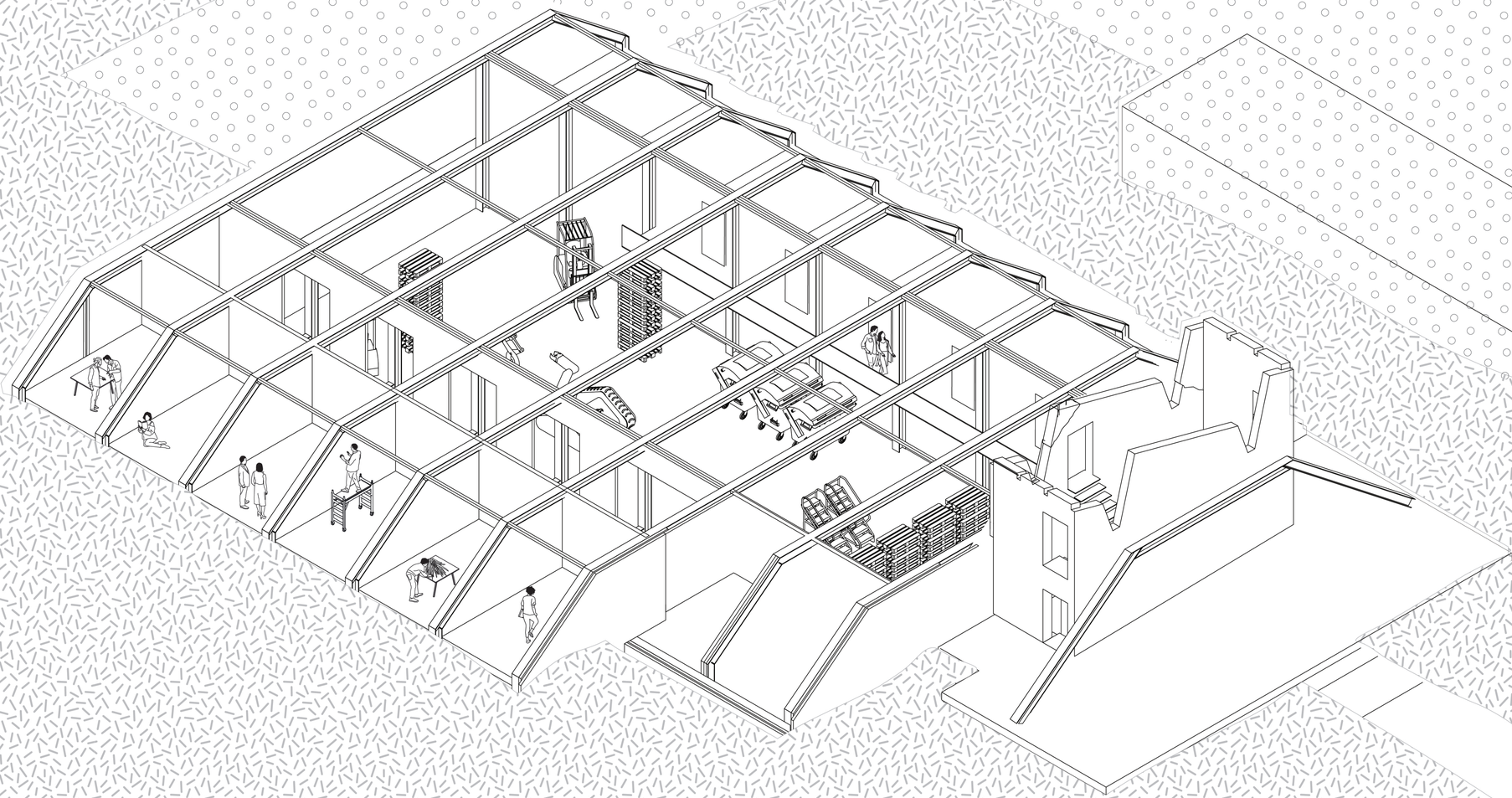


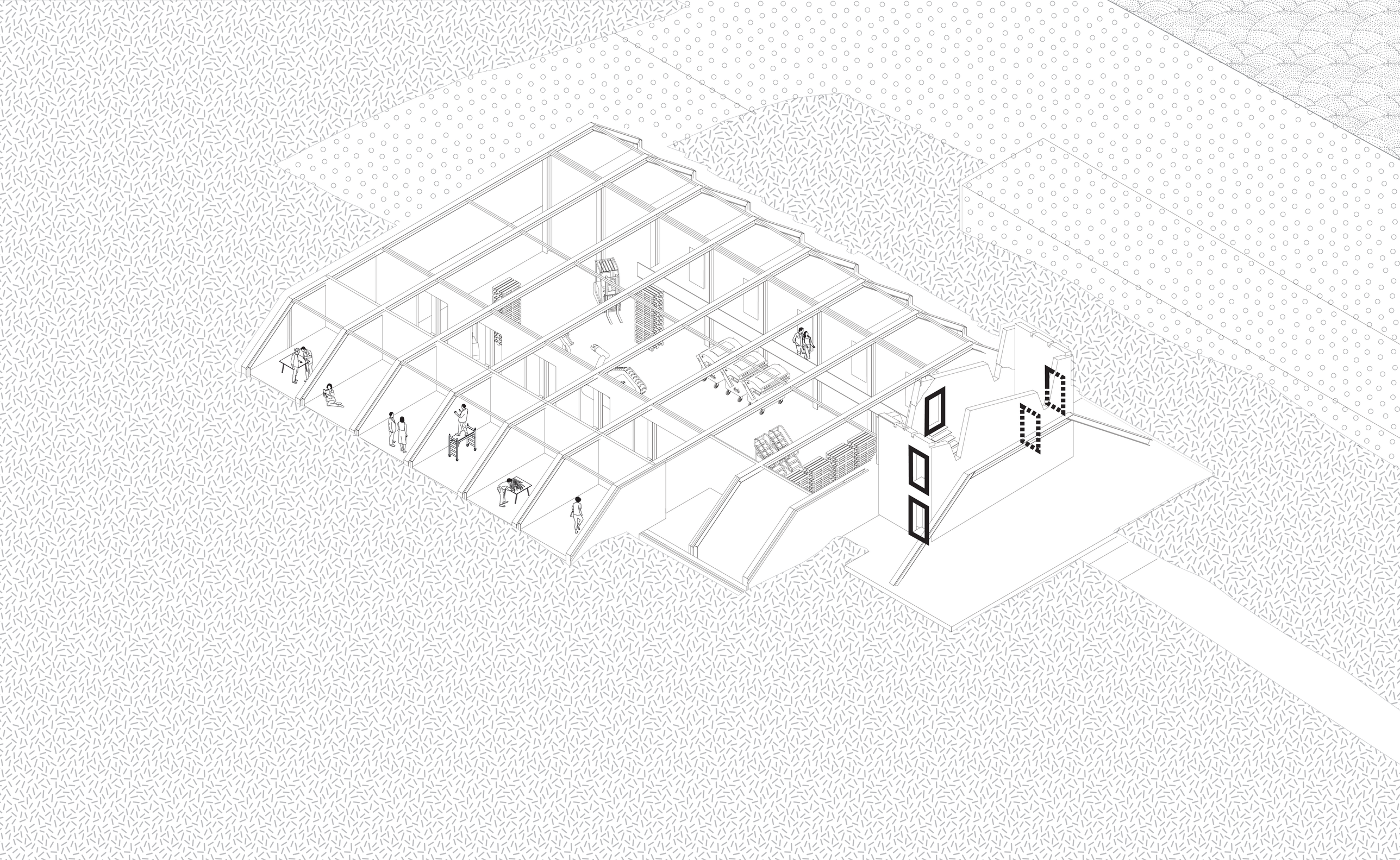
Exposure

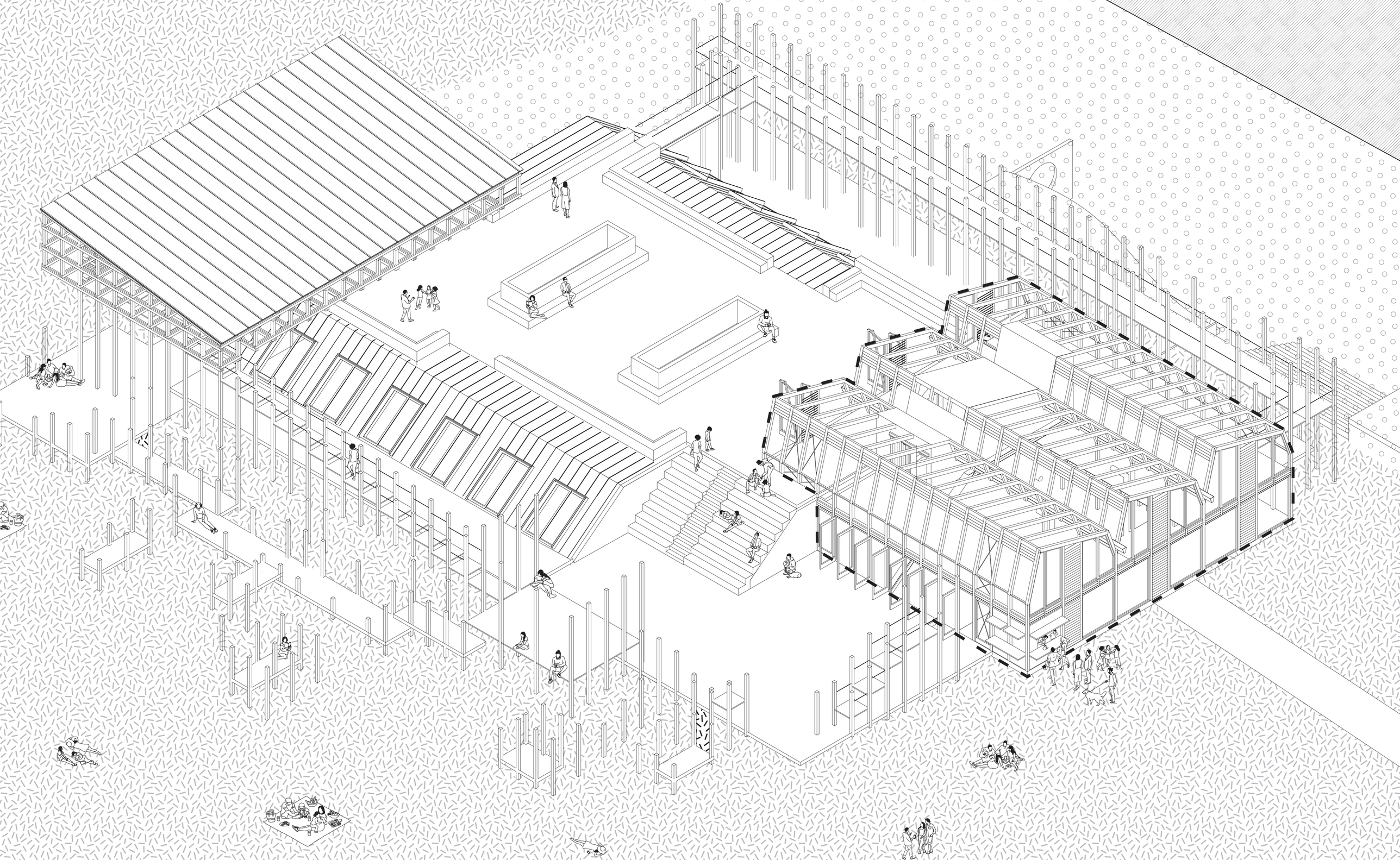


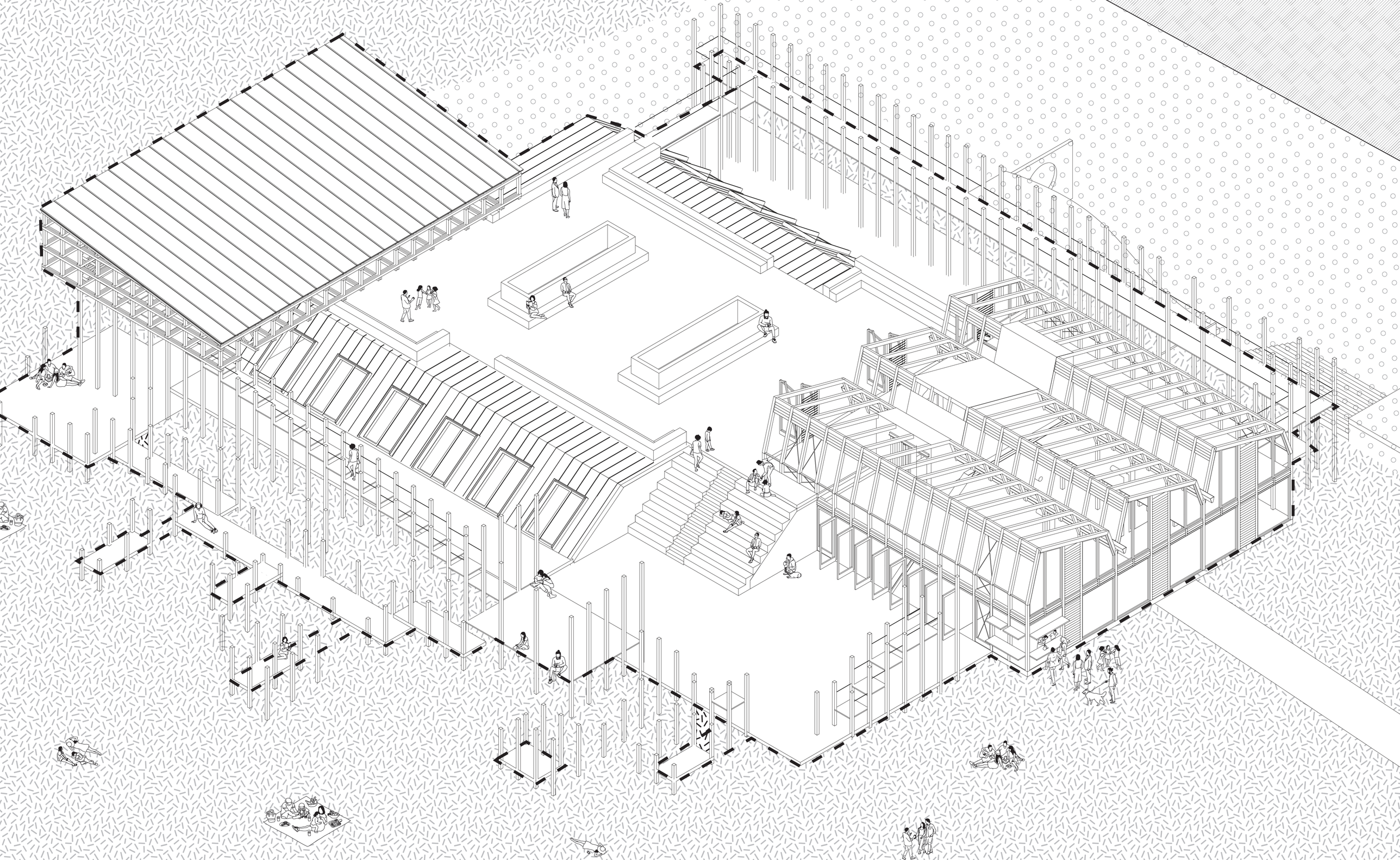
Enclosure


Exposure





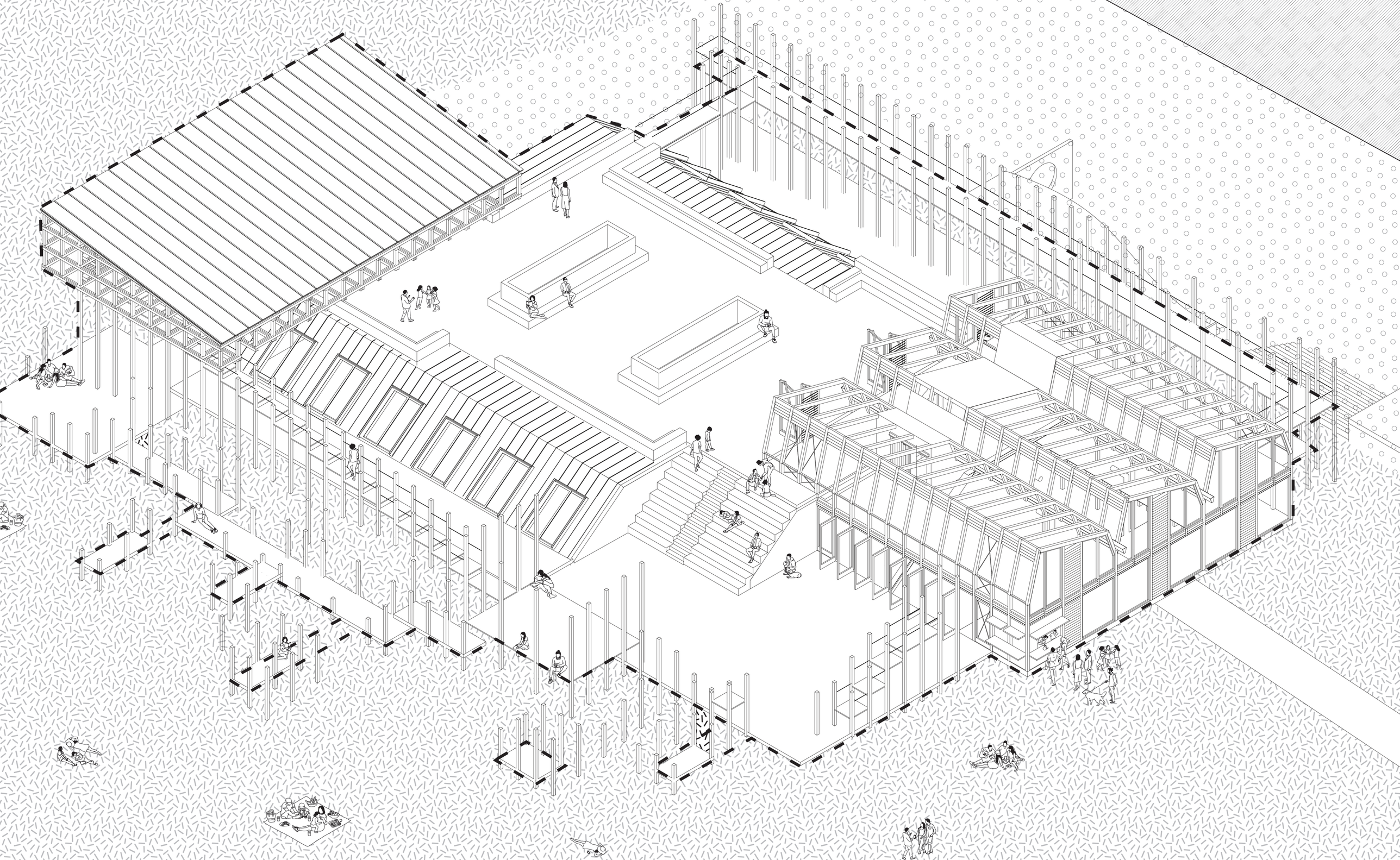


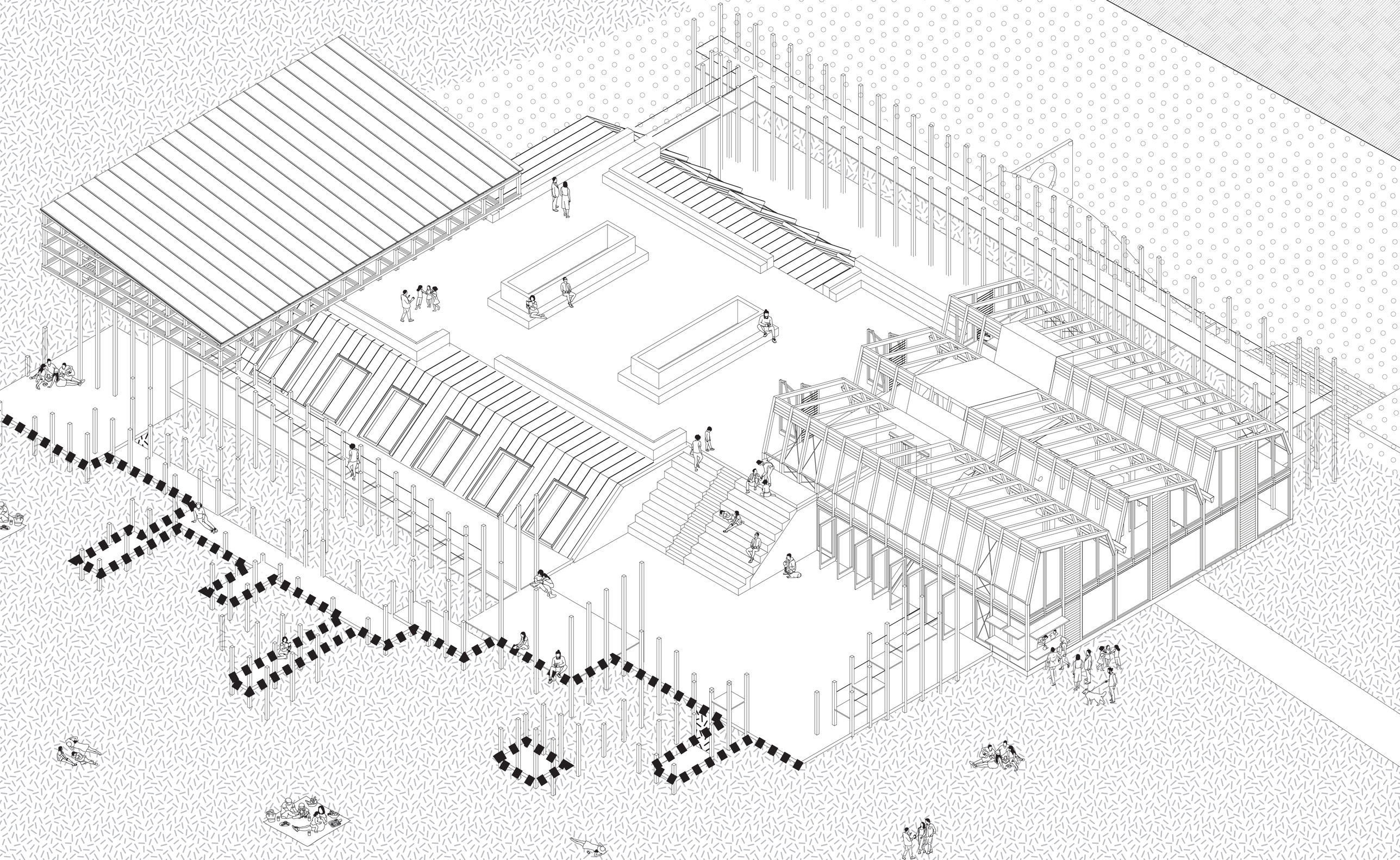


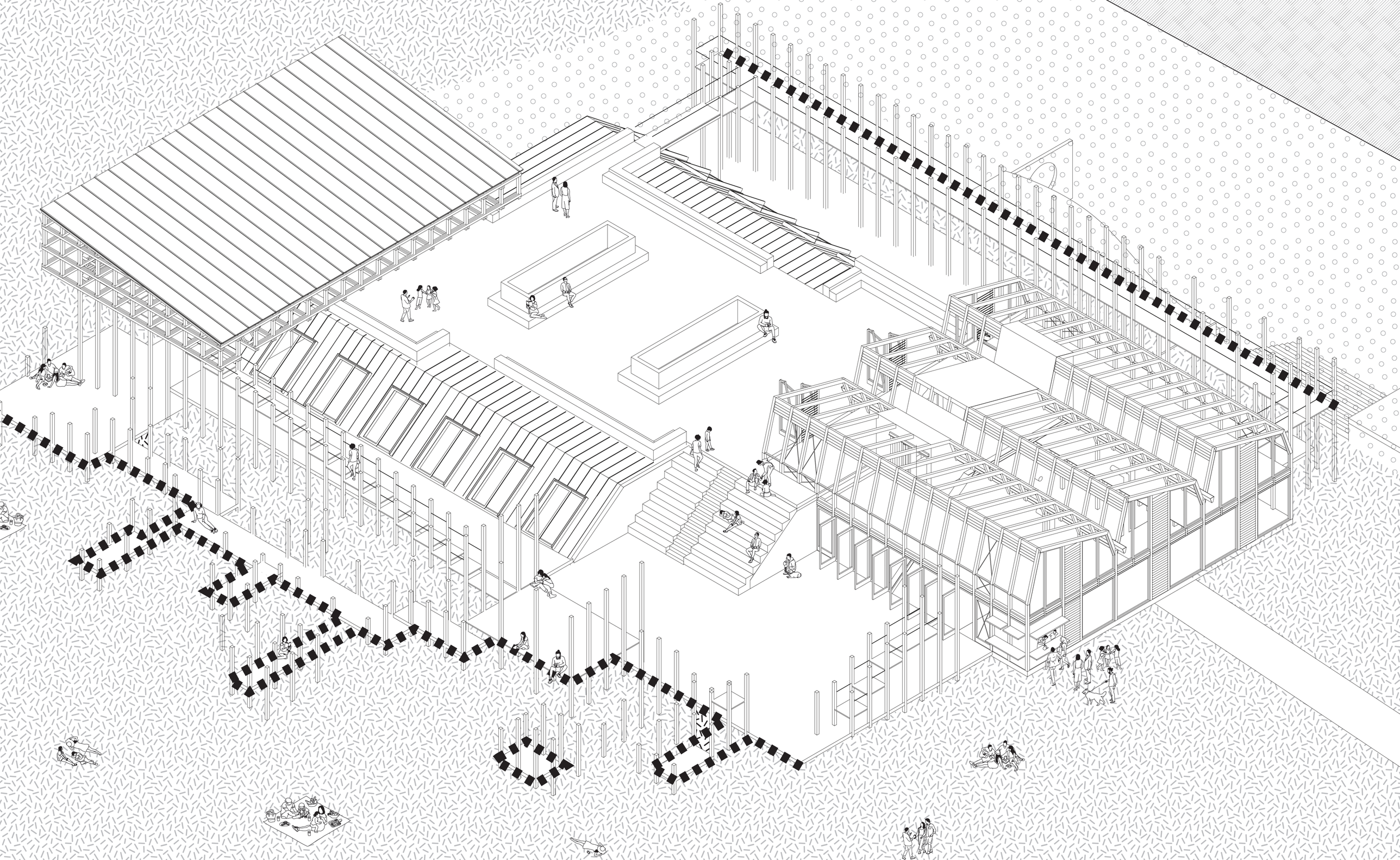



adidas



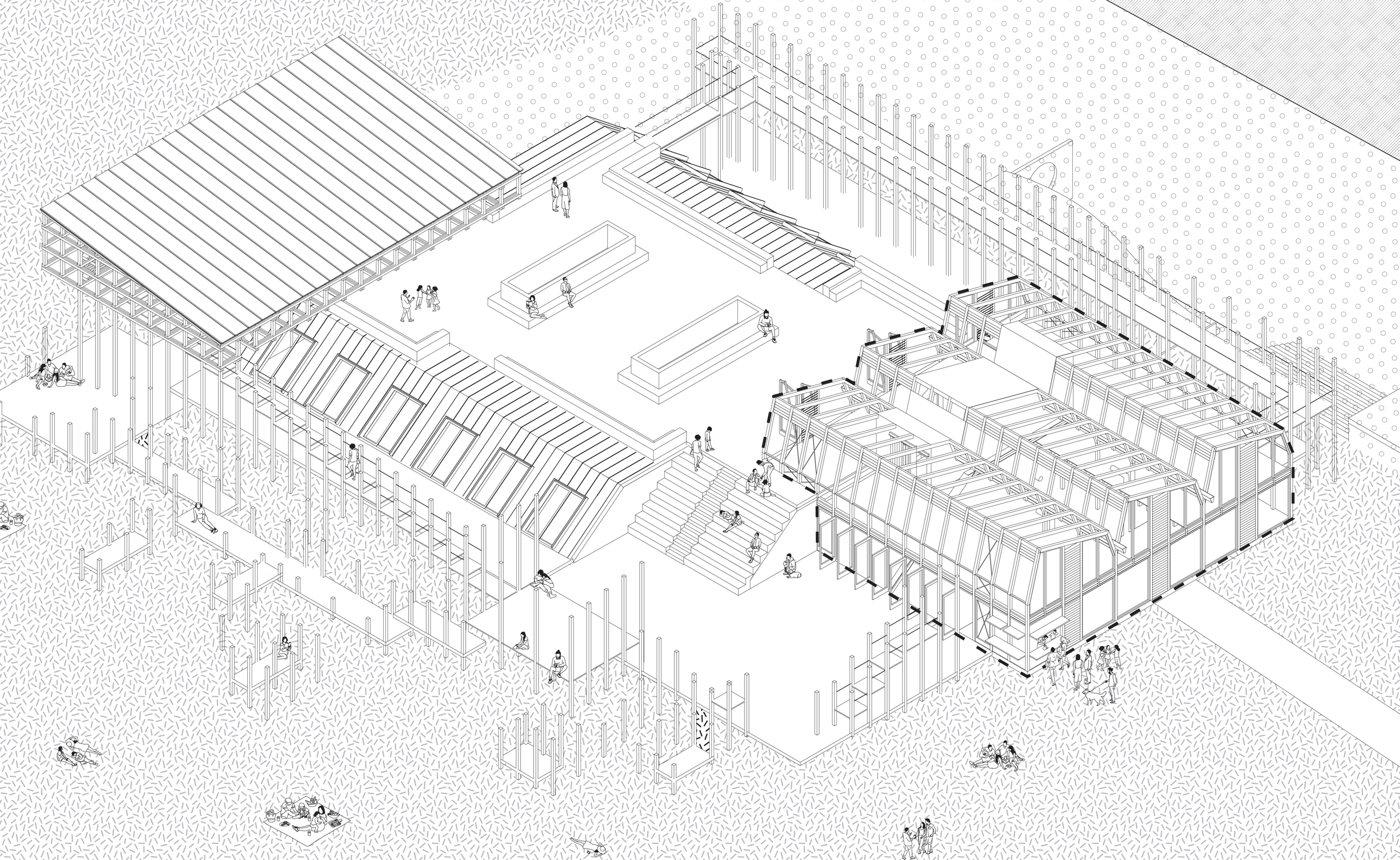


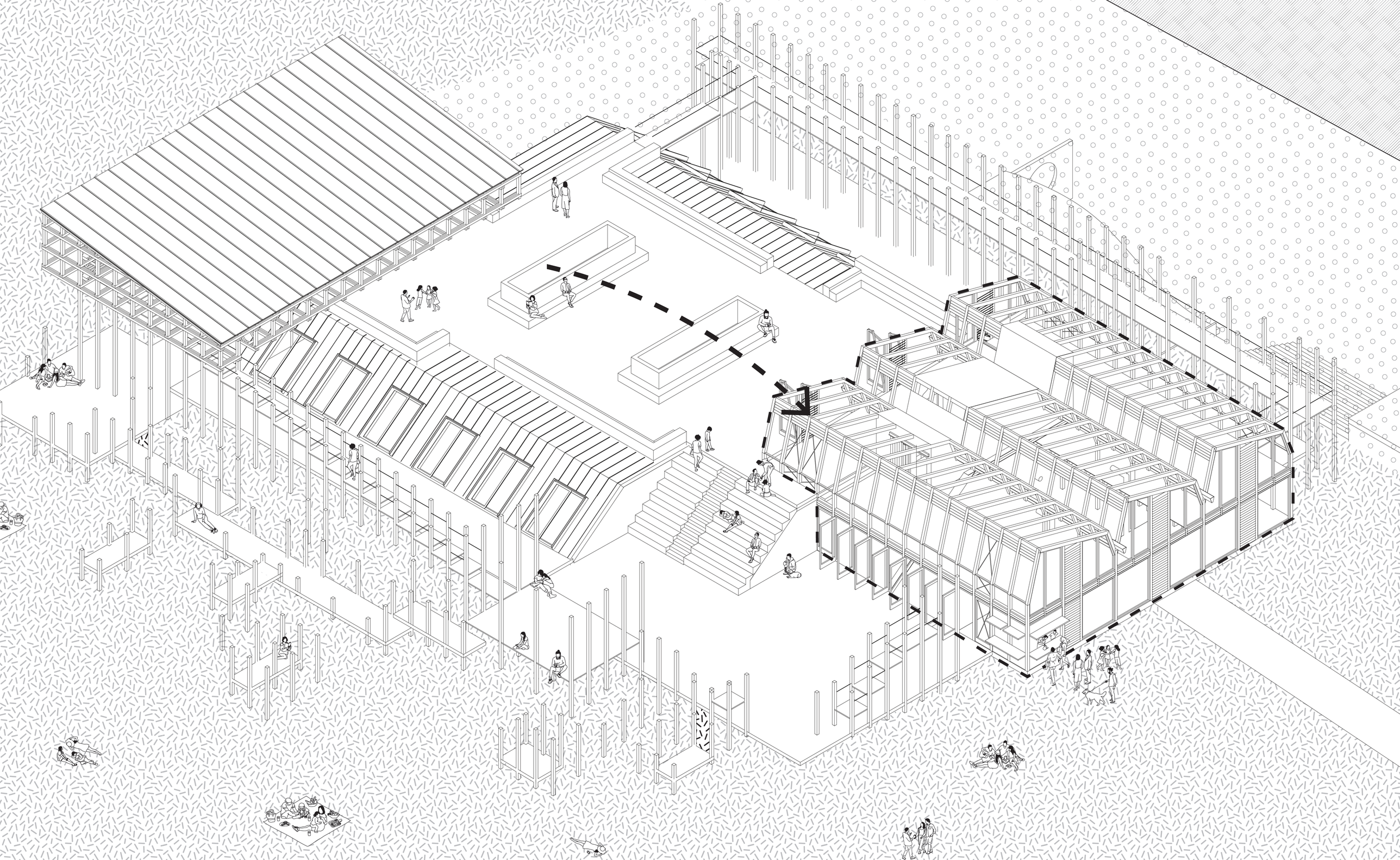




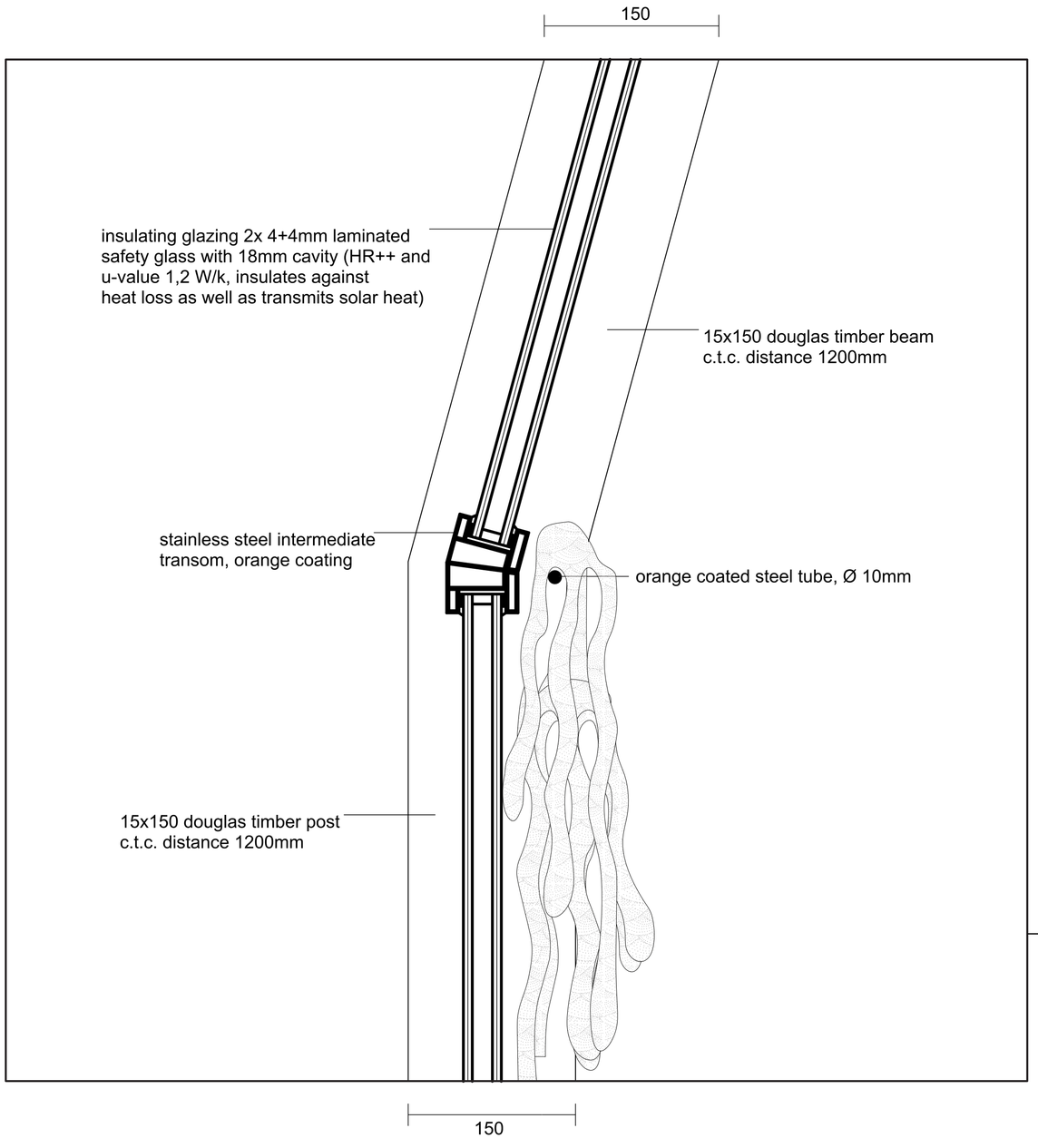


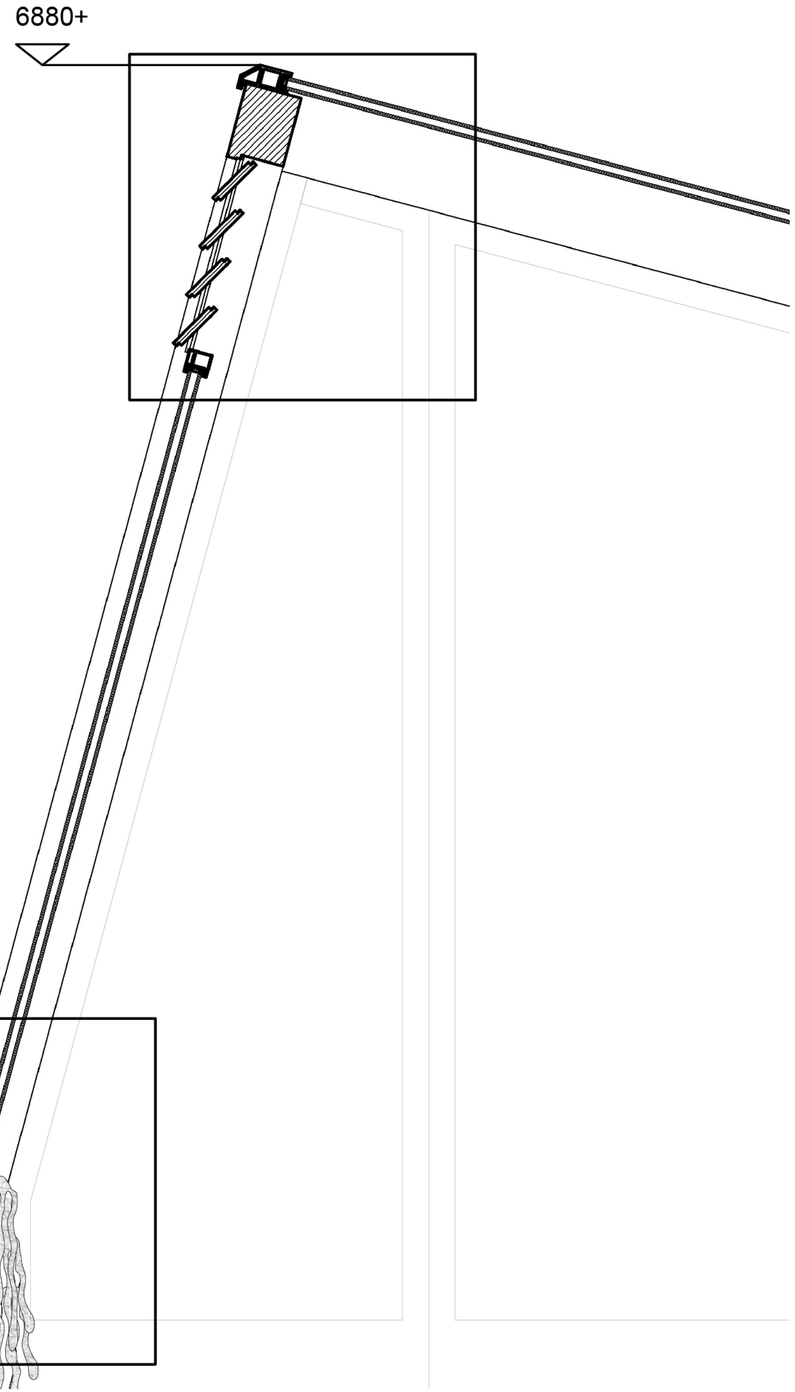









150
insulating glazing 2x 4+4mm laminated
safety glass with 18mm cavity (HR++ and
u-value 1,2 W/k, insulates against
heat loss as well as transmits solar heat)
15x150 douglas timber beam
c.t.c. distance 1200mm
stainless steel intermediate
transom, orange coating
orange coated steel tube, Ø 10mm
15x150 douglas timber post
c.t.c. distance 1200mm
150


6880+

insulating glazing 2x 4+4mm laminated safety glass with
18mm cavity (HR++ and u-value 1,2 W/k, insulates against
heat loss as well as transmits solar heat)

stainless steel edge profile

6880+

lamminated glass louvres
in stainless steel side system,
weatherstrips at four sides

200

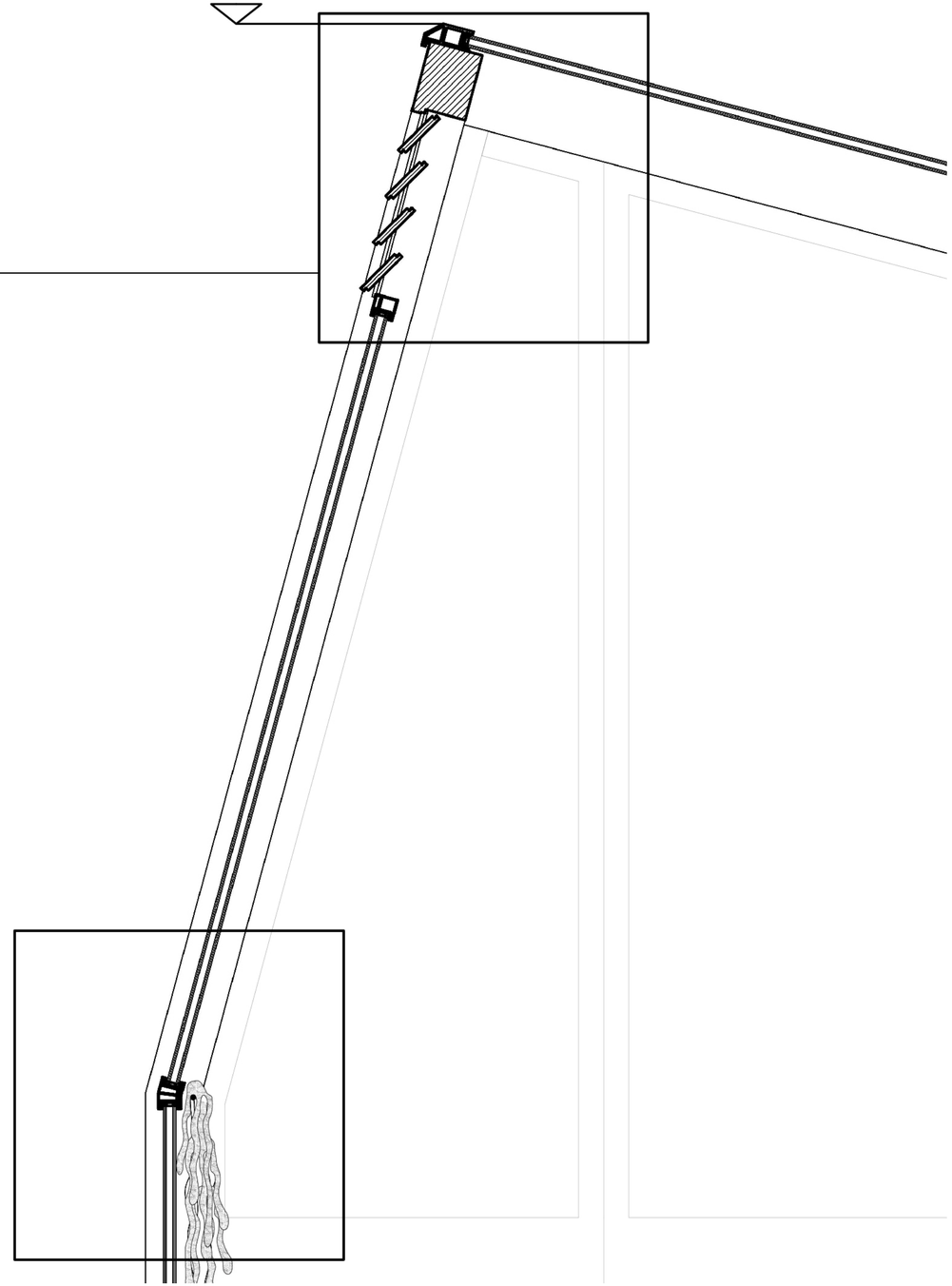
200x150 douglas timber beam
c.t.c. distance 1200mm

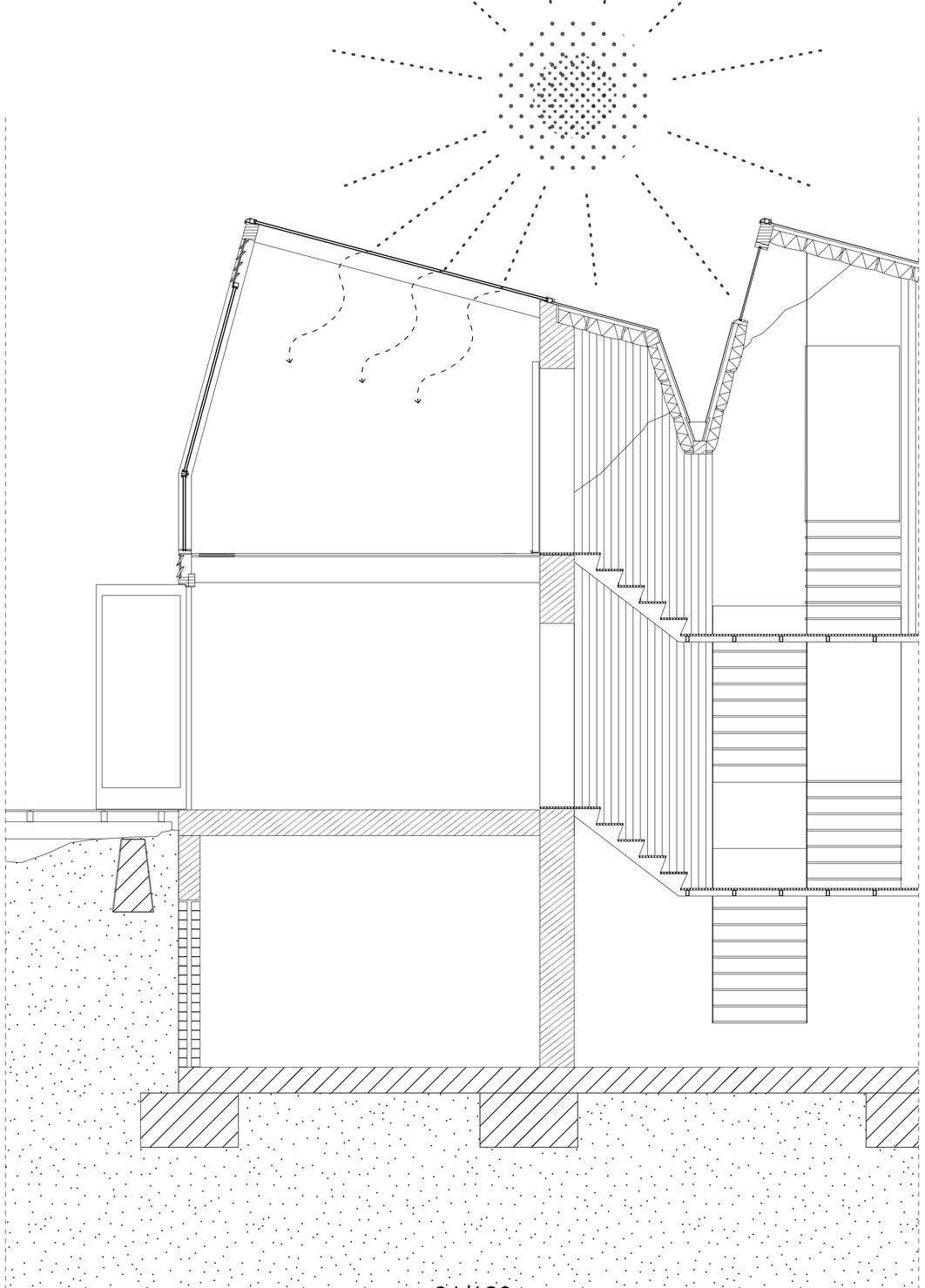
15x150 douglas timber beam
c.t.c. distance 1200mm

stainless steel curtain wall frame, connecting louvres to window

150

6880+





SUMMER

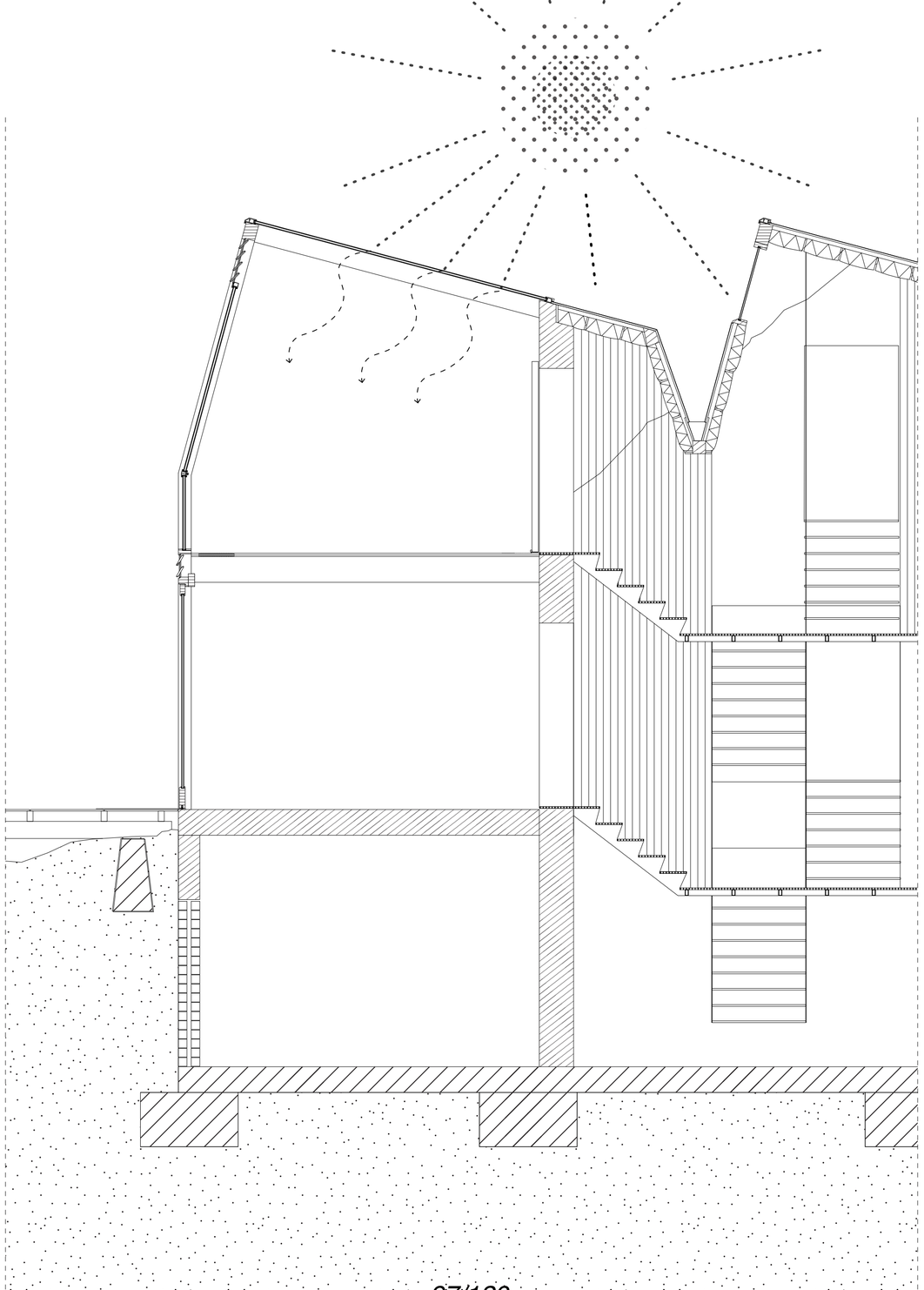




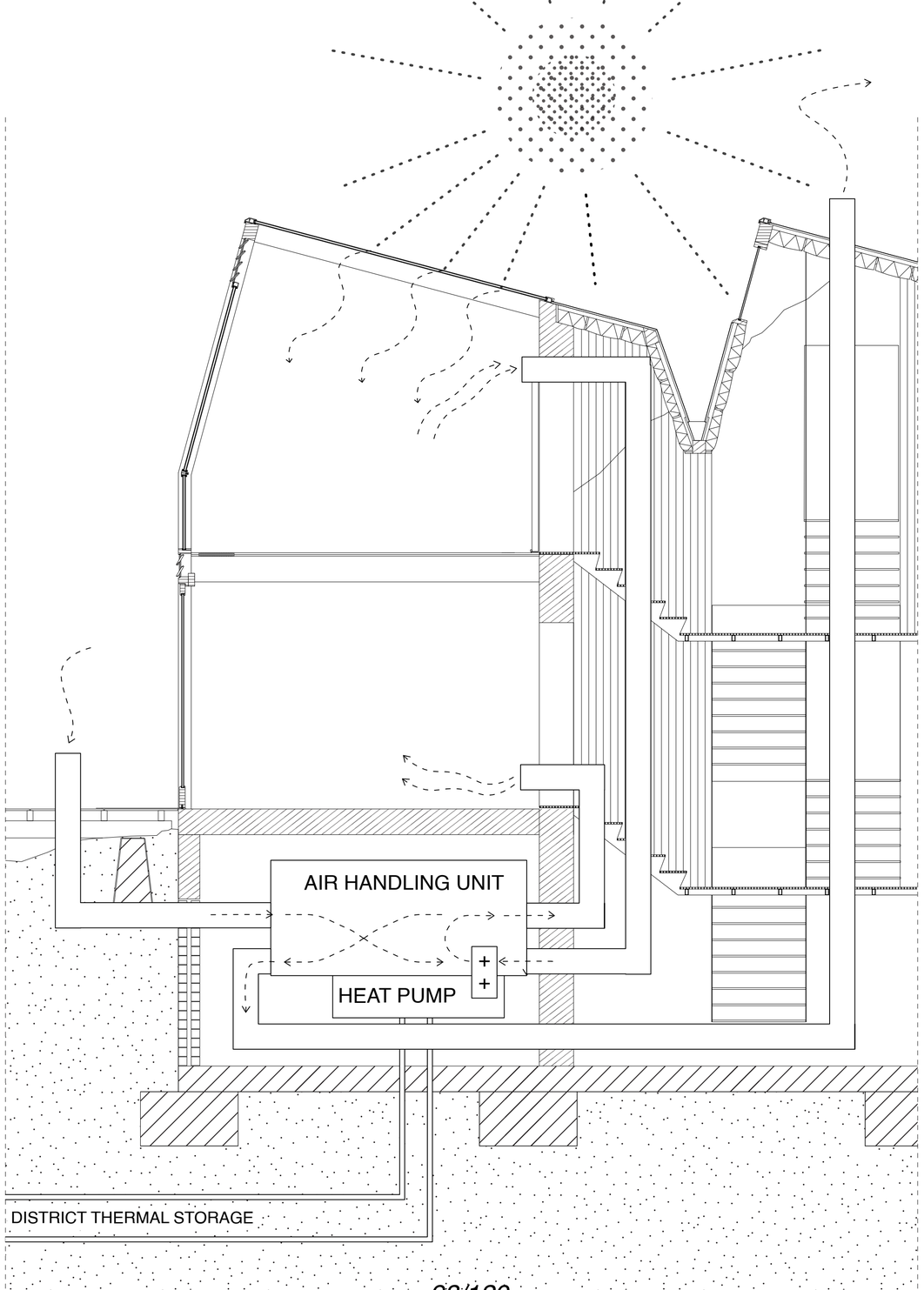




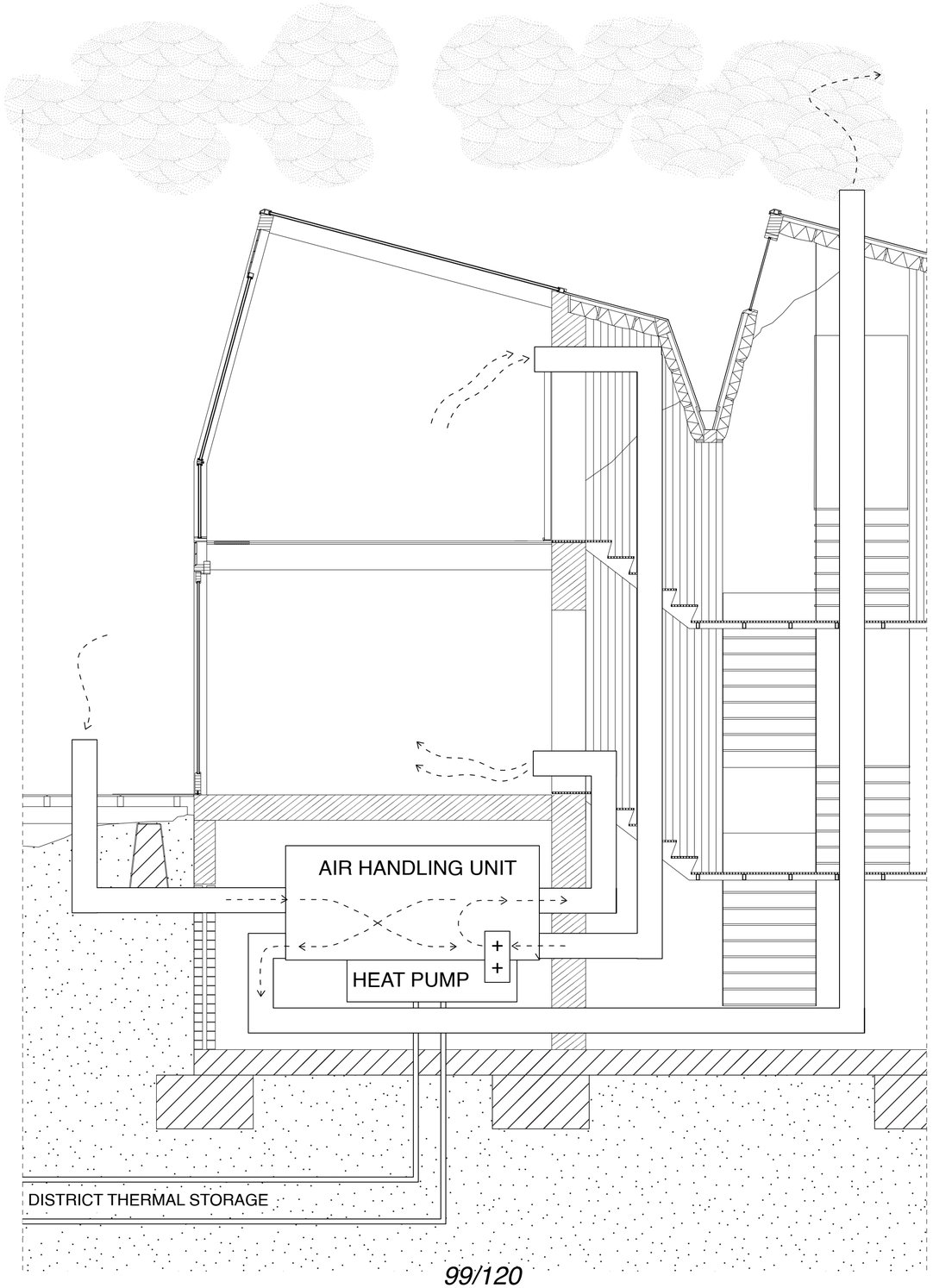




SPRING / AUTUMN



SPRING / AUTUMN


AIR HANDLING UNIT
HEAT PUMP
DISTRICT THERMAL STORAGE







Imperfection as perfection





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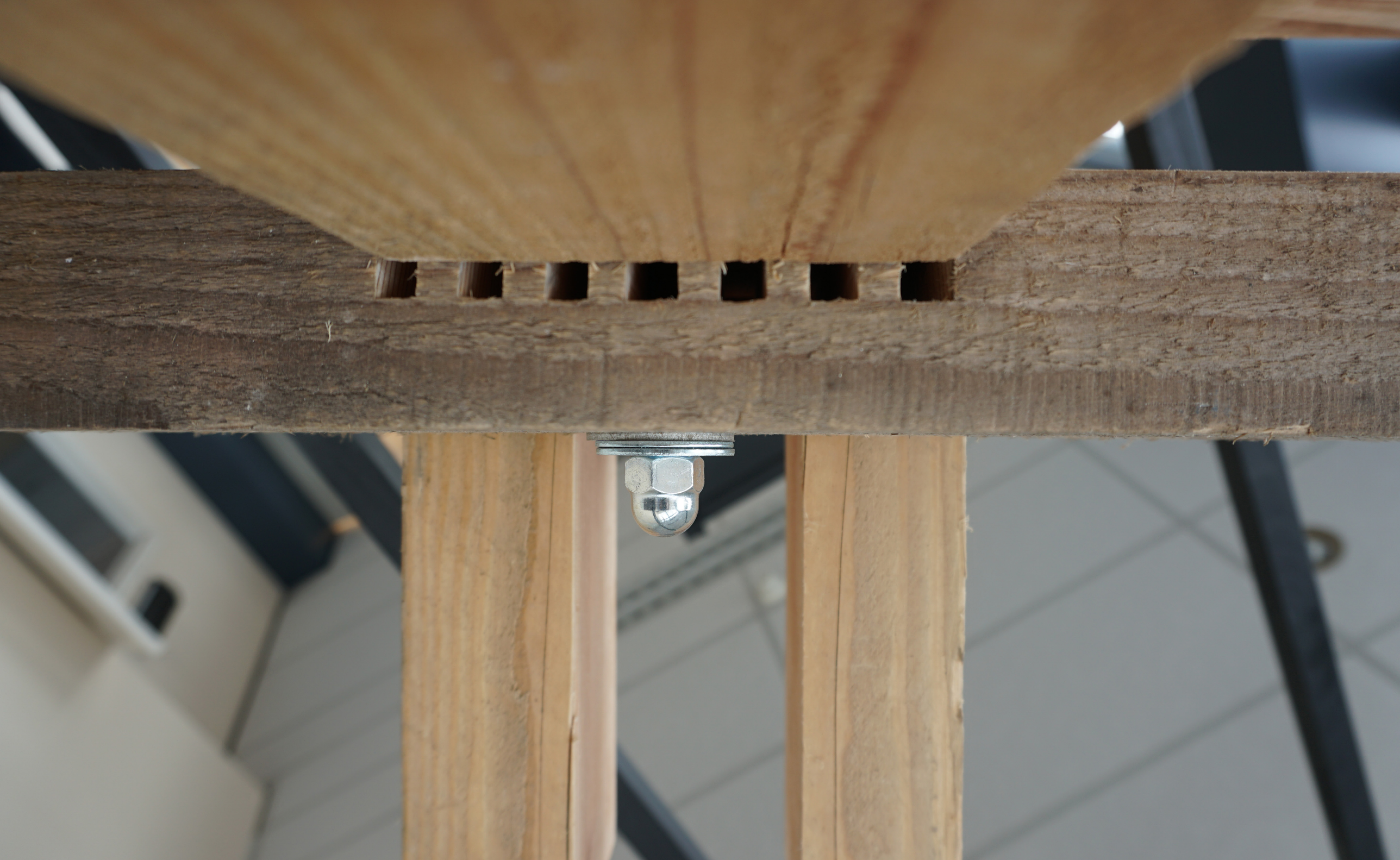



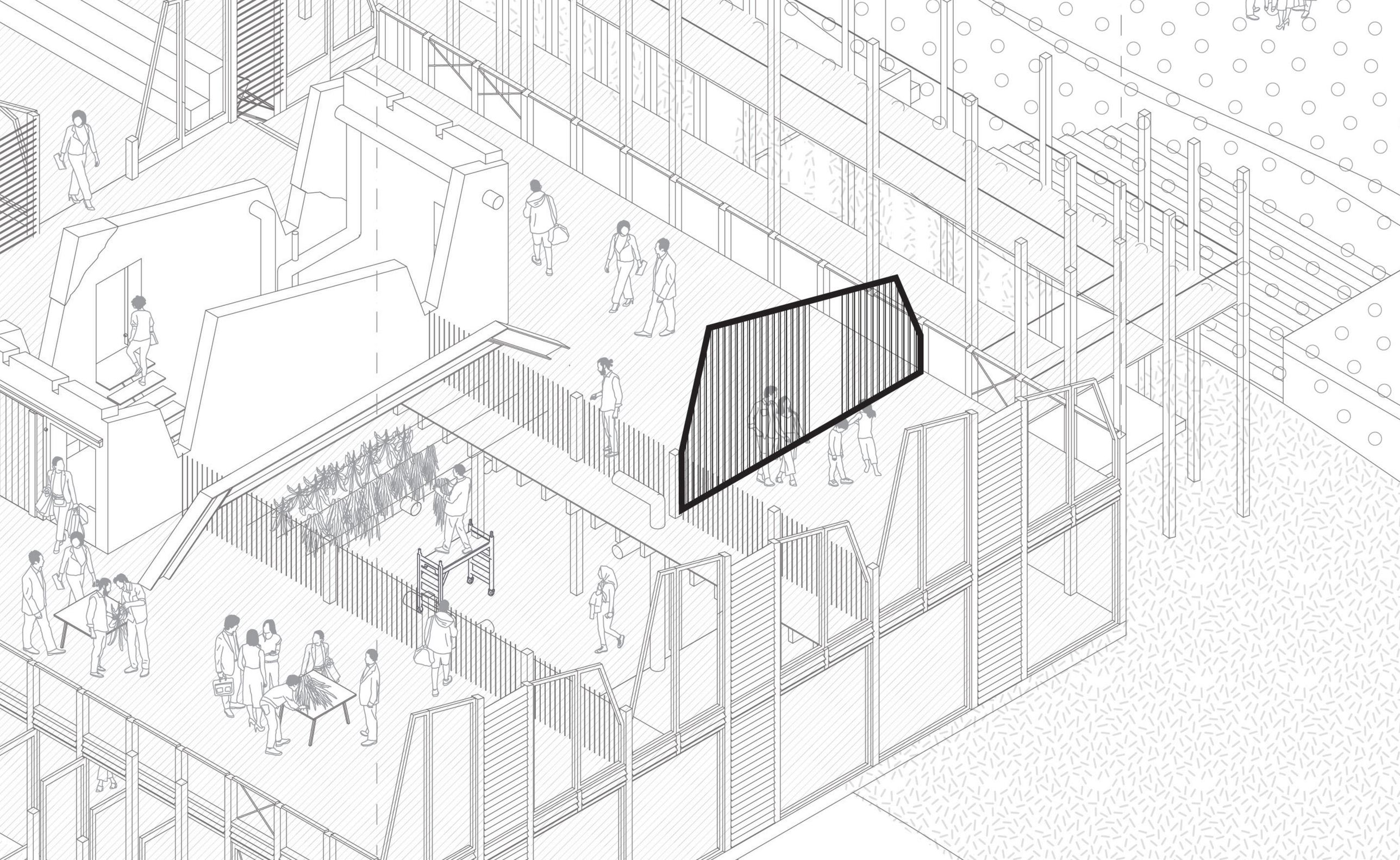

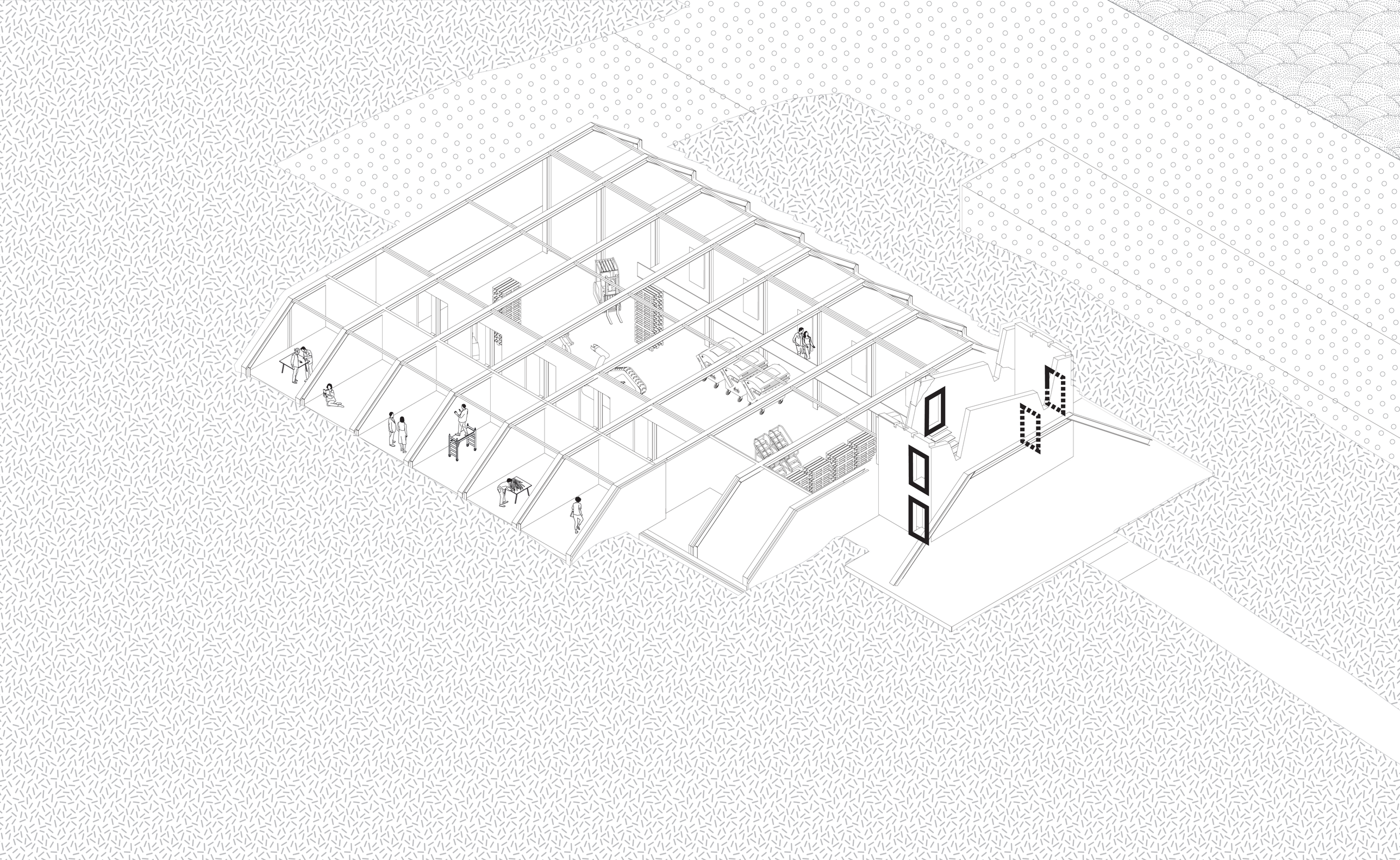



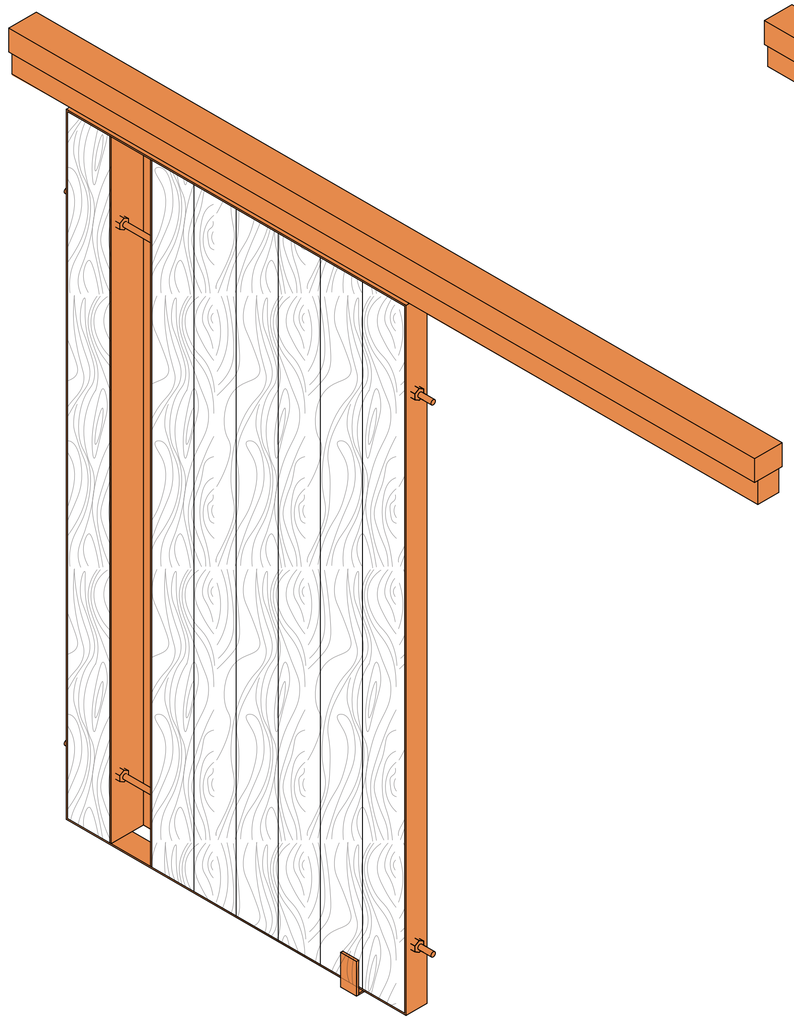

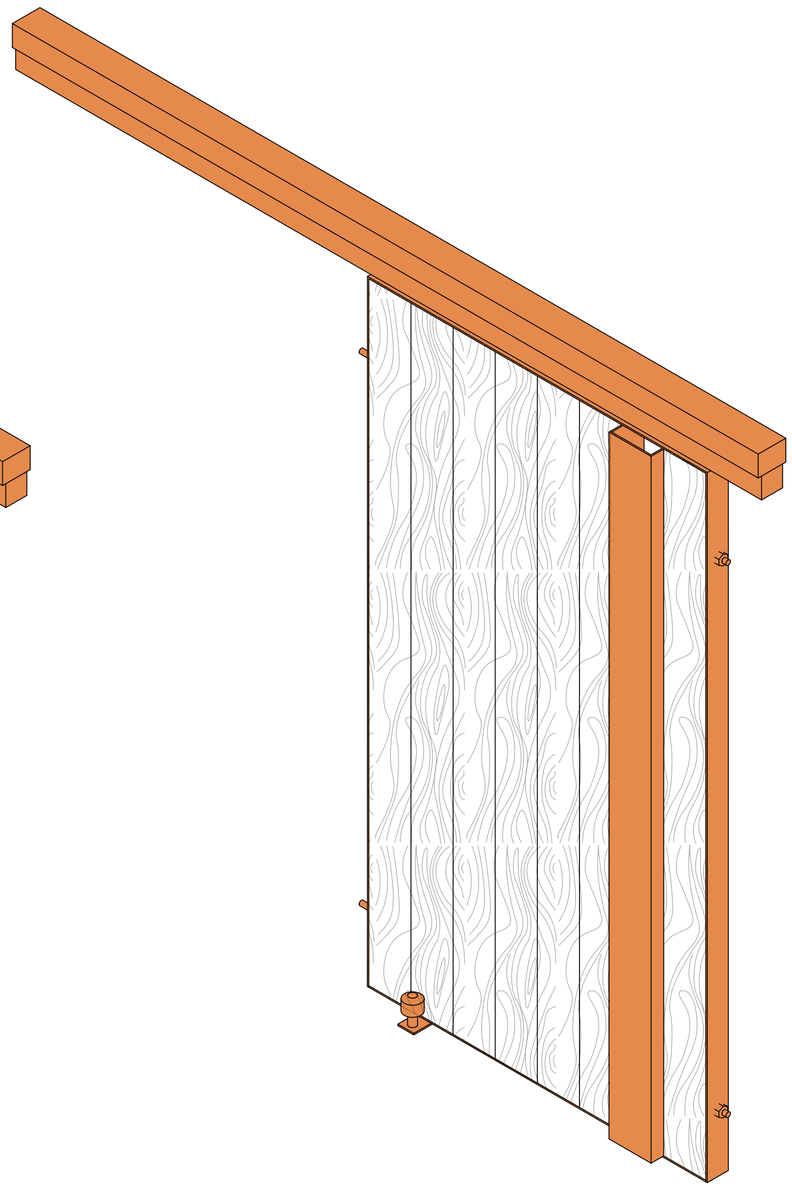





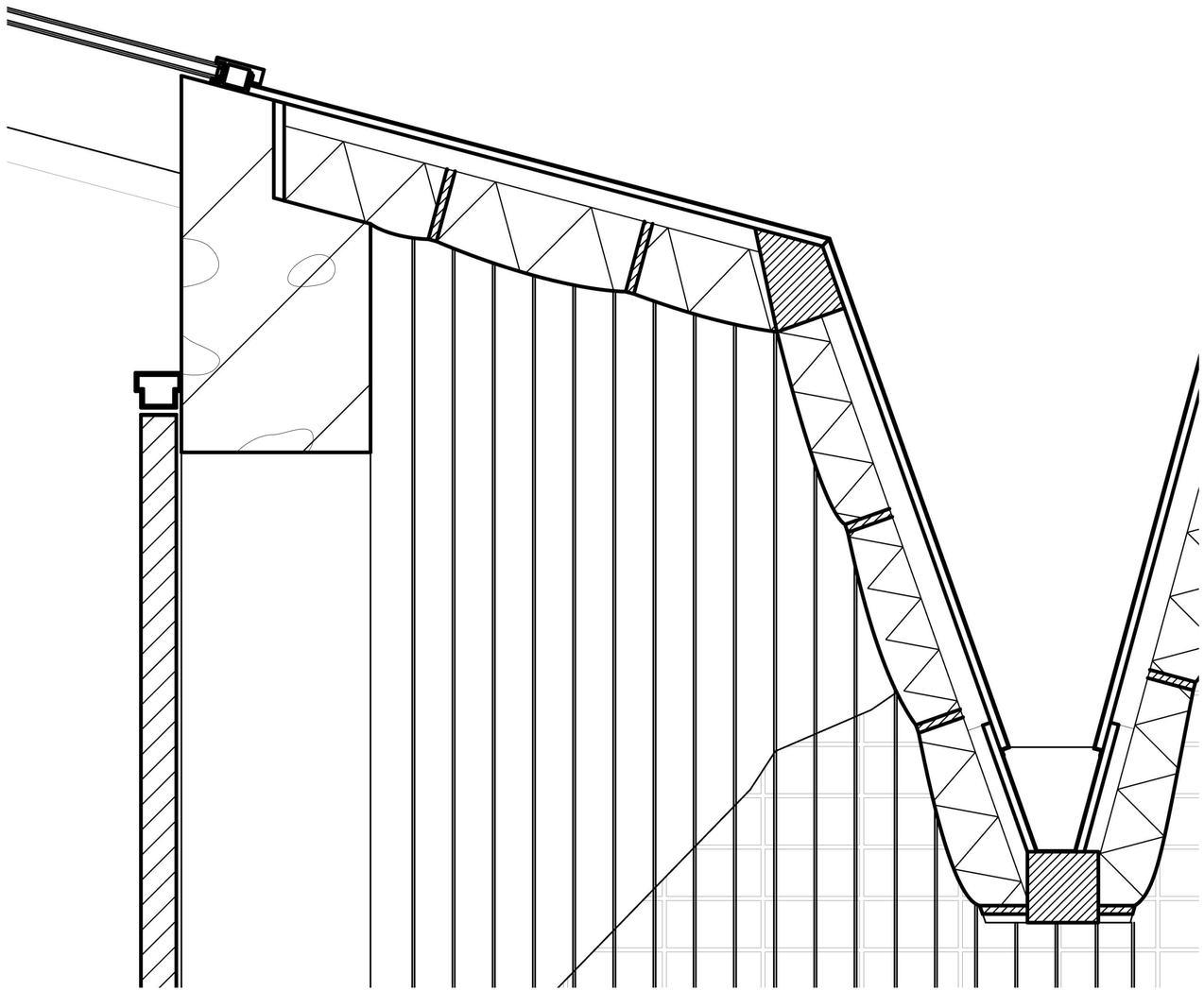


CORNELISSENS BV
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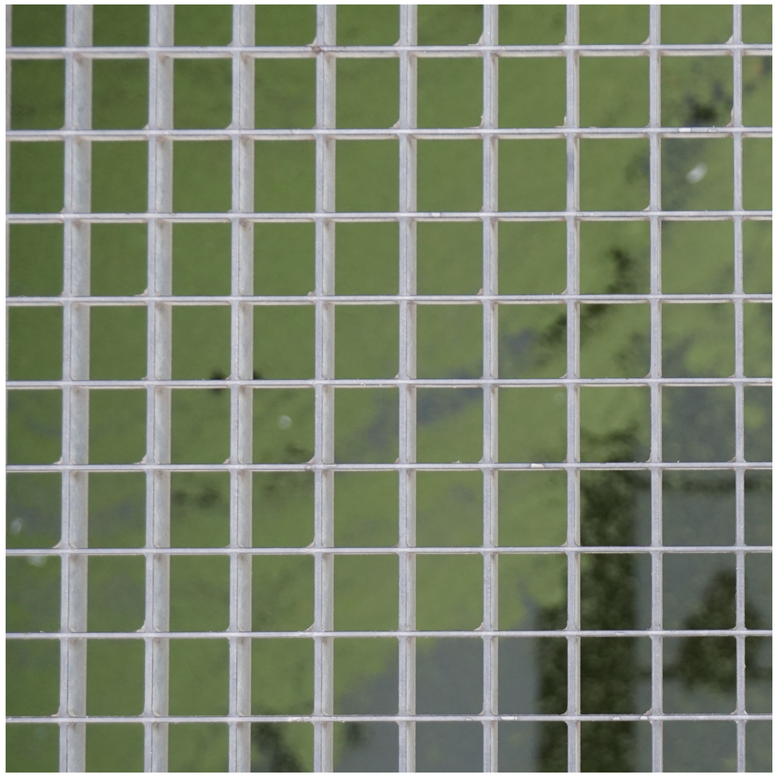
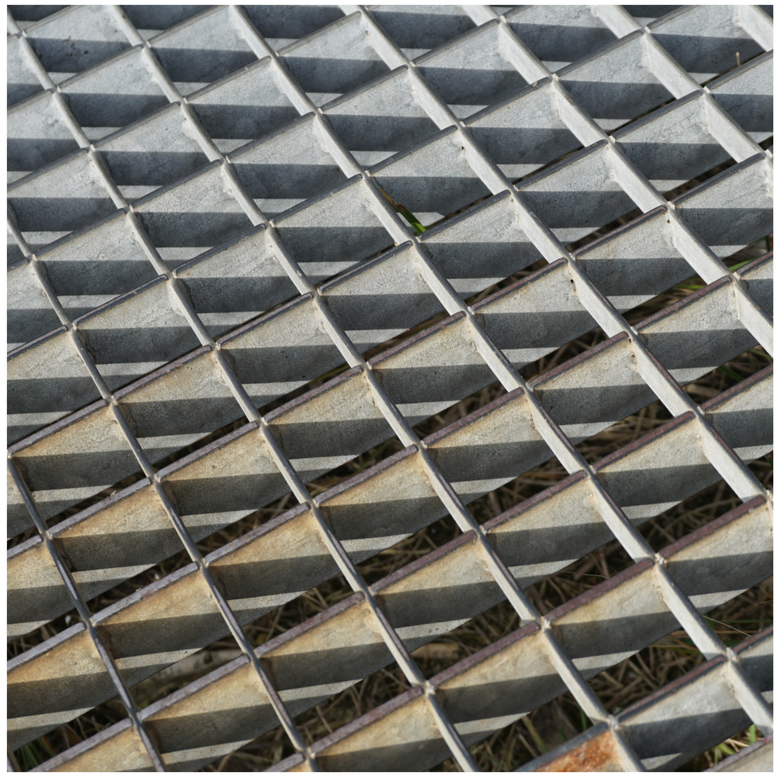
JLG

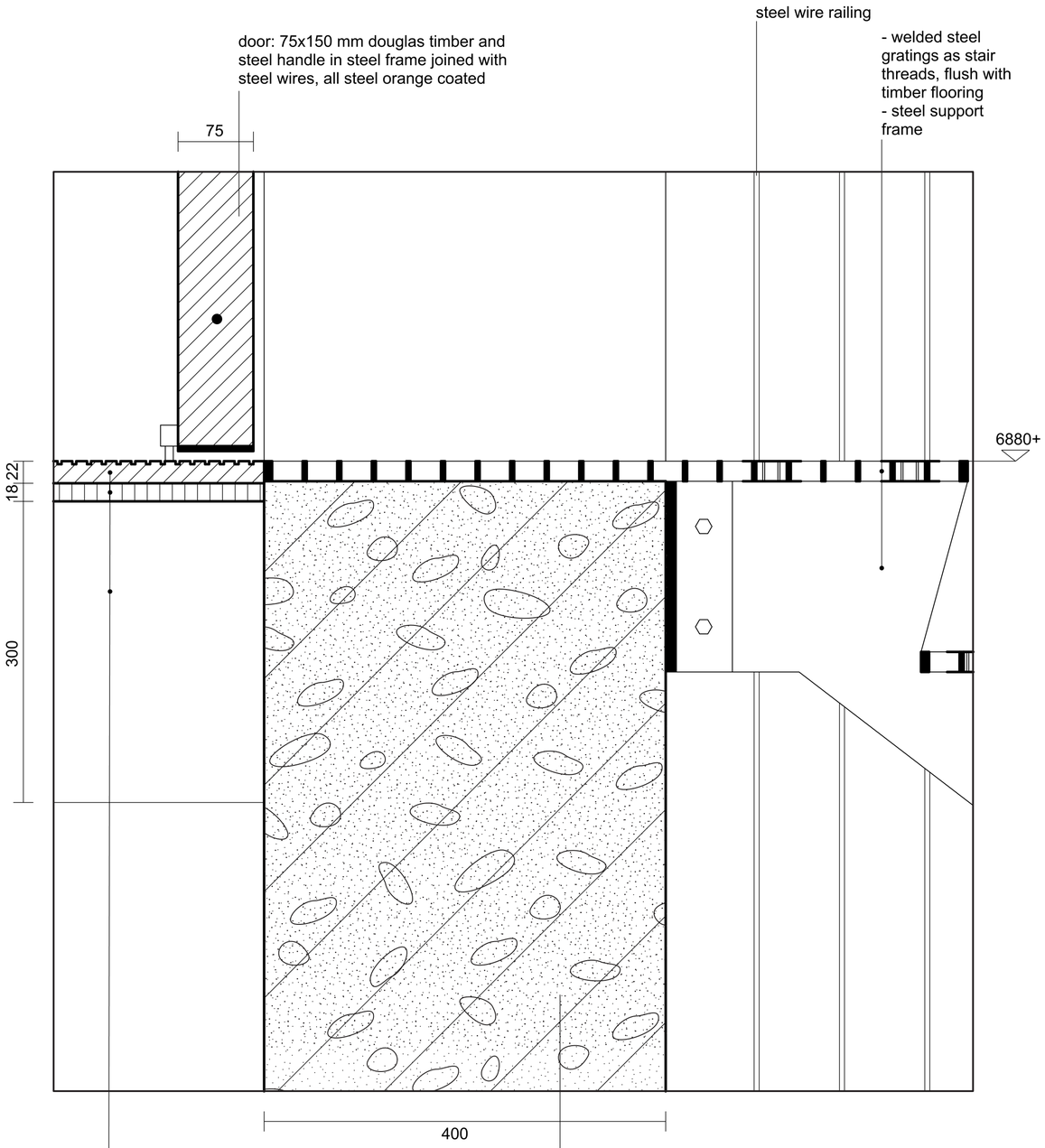


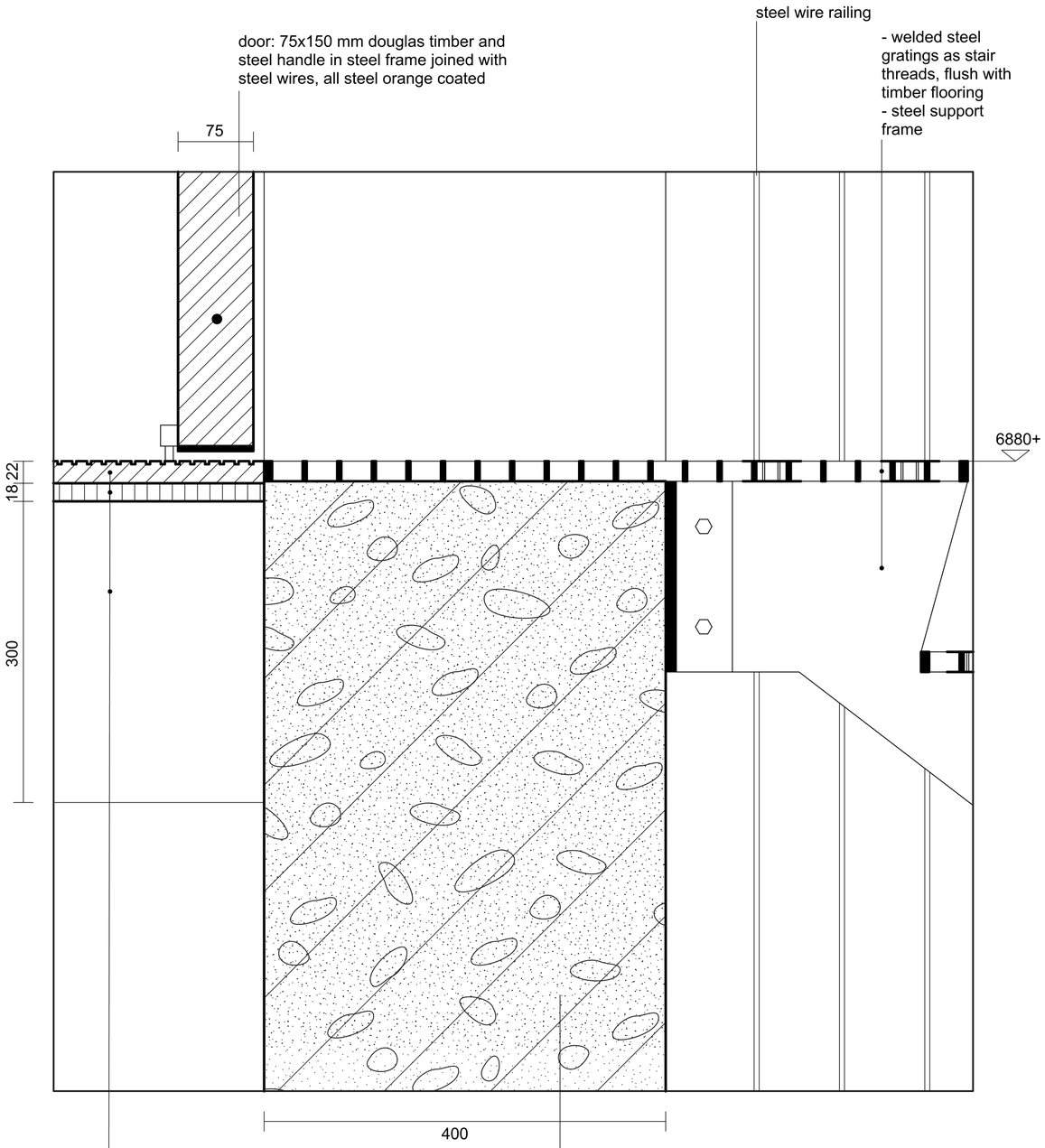









door: 75x150 mm douglas timber and steel handle in steel frame joined with steel wires, all steel orange coated
steel wire railing
- welded steel gratings as stair threads, flush with timber flooring
- steel support frame
75
6880+
18
22
300
400
- 22 mm douglas timber flooring, HK lazuur finish
- 18 mm plywood panel
- 100x300 mm douglas timber floor joists c.t.c. distance 600mm
400 mm reinforced rammed concrete, recylcled aggregate from on-site demolished concrete.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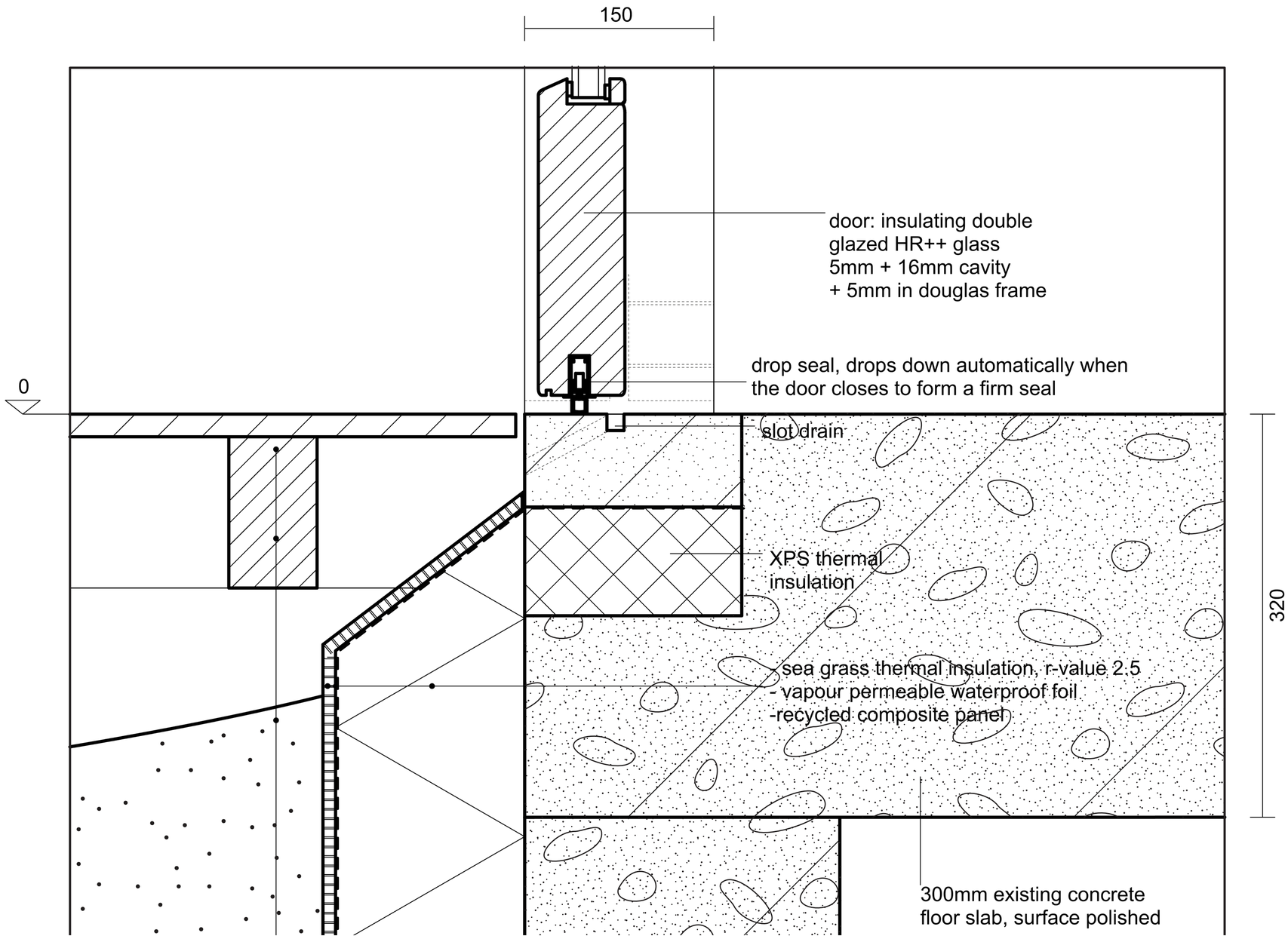
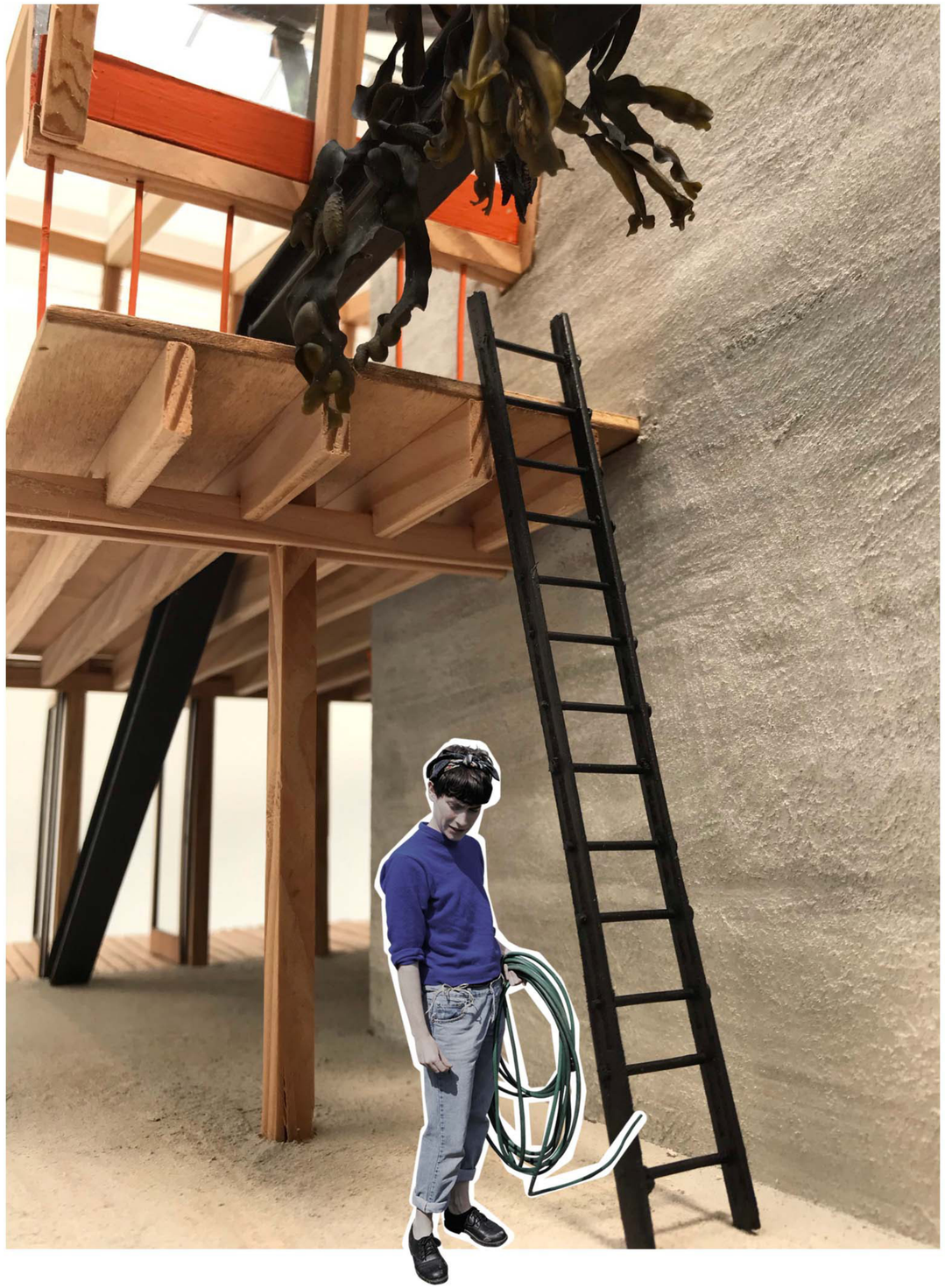
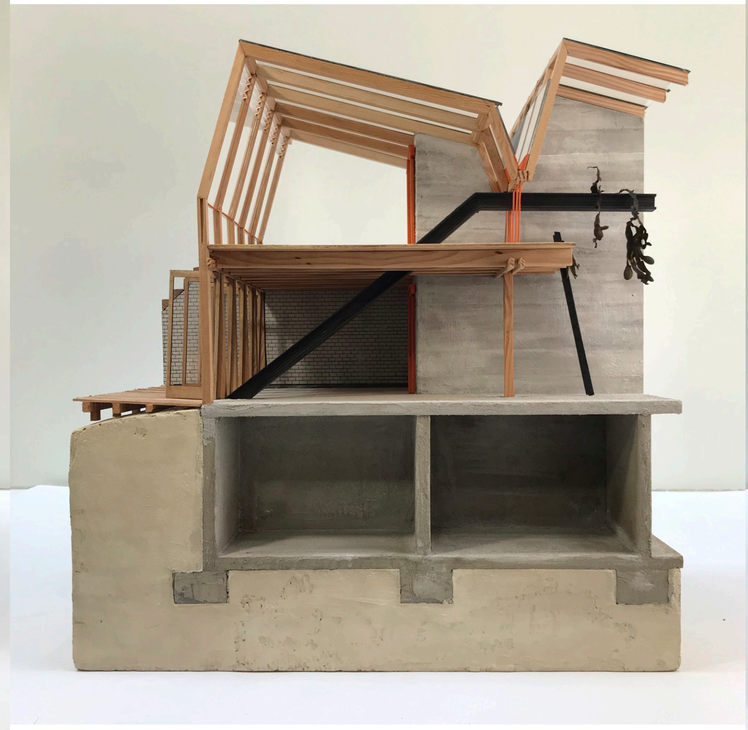

150
door: insulating double
glazed HR++ glass
5mm + 16mm cavity
+ 5mm in douglas frame
drop seal, drops down automatically when
the door closes to form a firm seal
0
slot drain
XPS thermal
insulation
320
sea grass thermal insulation, r-value 2.5
- vapour permeable waterproof foil
-recycled composite panel
300mm existing concrete
floor slab, surface polished











127/120
P5_Explore Lab_ September 2021

The coastal environment as a laboratory

Architecture and embodied experiences









Thank you!

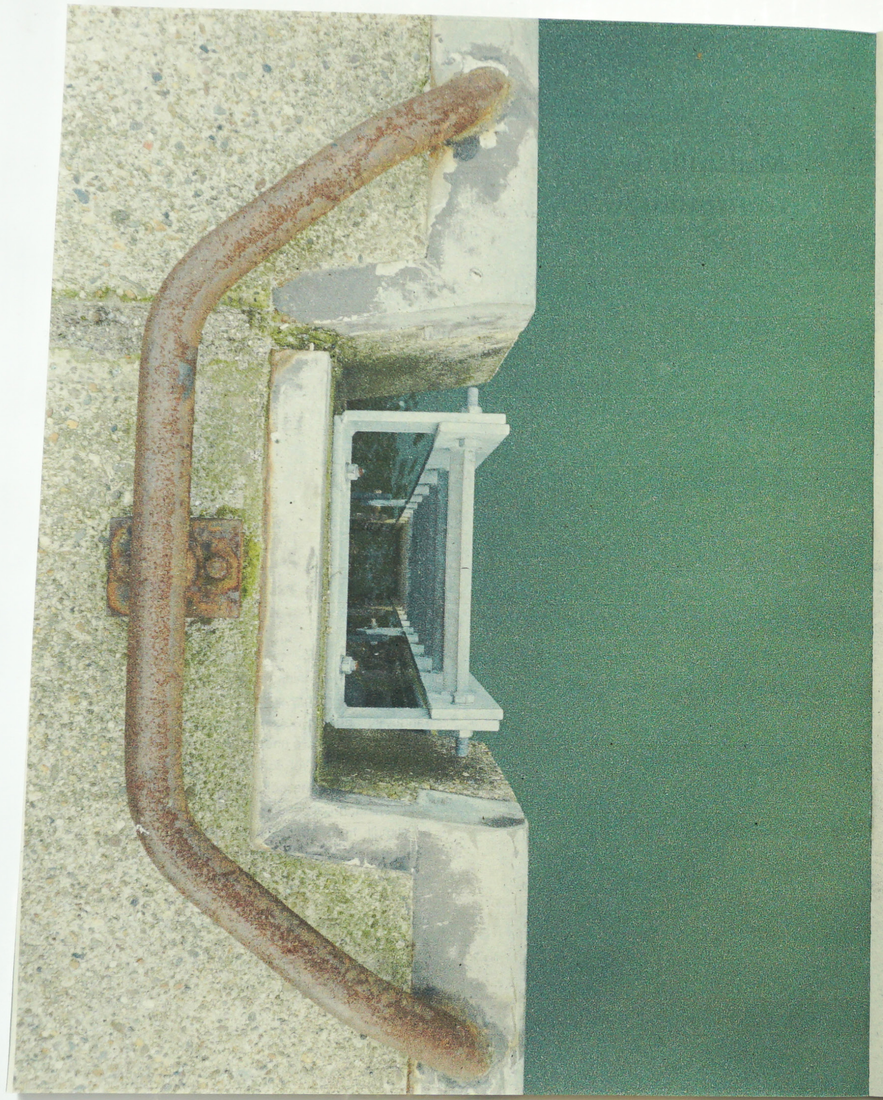
128/120
P5_Explore Lab_ September 2021



Designing to bodily experience

Multiplicity of tranquillity

Often when we think about calming or relaxing environments, we think about silence, tranquillity and the absence of details. This would be logical if we understand the working of mirror neurons. Yet, is it ever quiet on the beach? The way the coastal environment of Scheveningen calms is not through absence of stimuli from spatial characteristics, but through the multiplicity of stimuli. There is often wind, which is not only constantly stimulating the haptic sense of the skin/body but might also let the body feel colder or could provide a flash of sand spray in the face. The coastal environment is not particularly comforting in that sense, yet it calms us down.



Designing to bodily experience

Unconscious to conscious

The sensory experiences in the coastal environment often unconsciously feed the awareness of the body. Often, after a visit, when arrived at home, a moment of awareness occurs. All the sensory stimuli has changed the tactility of the body. Delving into the spatial characteristics in the coastal environment can, therefore, help to create a stronger connection to the body. In words of Camilla Stig Boccardi Christensen:

Disembodiment is a mental state that, I think, a lot of people are suffering from. You feel like you can solve every problem through your intellect and the body is just completely forgotten. Sensory experiences are in this way barely noticed. I think we really need to push to create an awareness. You know how clever and how smart and how amazing our body is as a tool to create. I think that, you know, if we start using our bodies to understand the work that we do, I think that it can prevent people from a lot of stress and anxiety (C. Stig Boccardi Christensen, personal communication, 12 October 2020).



Traces of work

The brightly coloured ropes in the harbour are an example of a trace of work. When seeing fisherman repairing the nets or loading and unloading ships, mirror neurons mirror these activities in such a way that you understand these physical activities. This is a bodily reaction. However, it is not only those activities but also the prime object which reminds of such activity and which awakens bodily response. This can also be said about the craft of architecture and details. According to Kuma this is the case in architectural elements of dimensions that can be handled by an individual person (Kuma, 2016b, p. 32):

"Each [stone] is small enough to be lifted and set in place by human effort. No matter how big the building, those dimensions mediate between us and the whole structure, so that even the largest mass does not seem oppressive" (Kuma, 2016a, p. 14)

"The [architectural] work interacts with the body of the observer; the experience mirrors the bodily sensations of the maker. Consequently, architecture is communication from the body of the architect directly to the body of the person who encounters the work, perhaps centuries later" (Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 71).

"In an embodied way, we touch what we see, and what we feel is not simply the materials but how they are joined" (Mallgrave, 2018, p. 130)

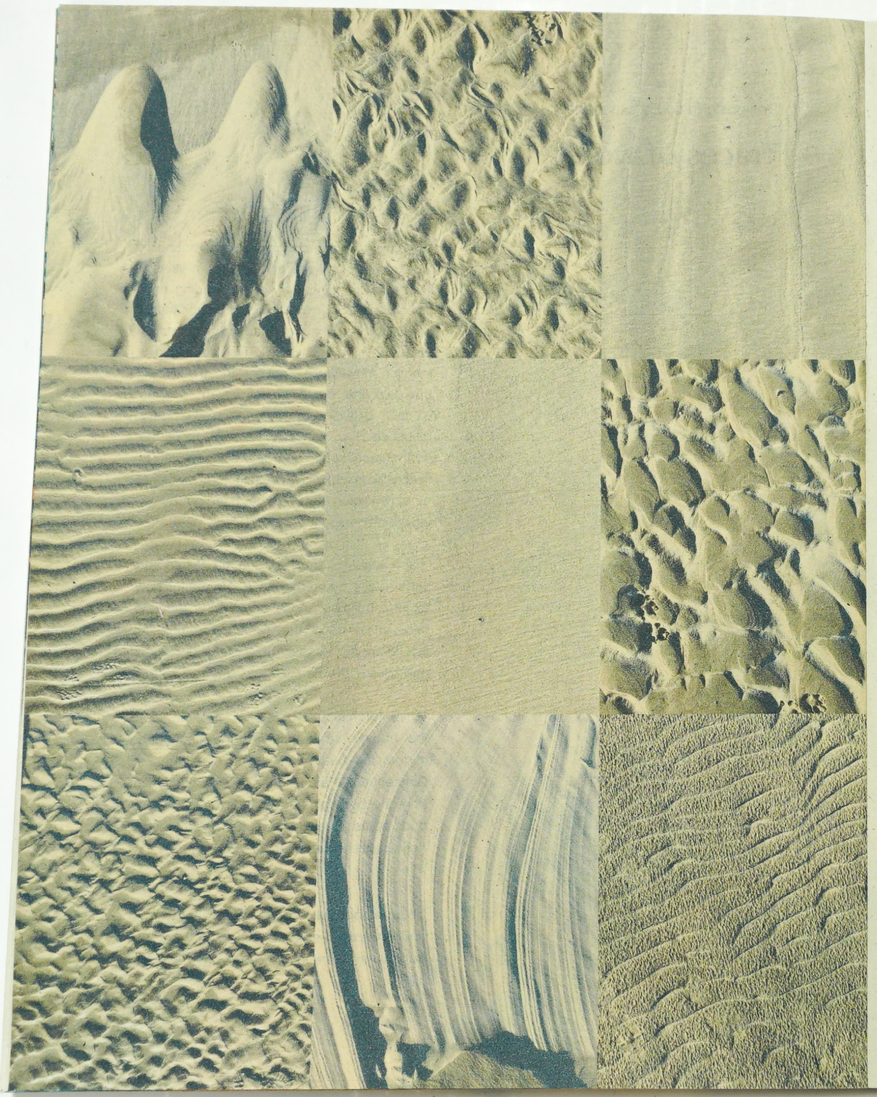


Designing to bodily experience

Imperfection as perfection

We can become familiar with the landscape of the beach, yet this does not mean that this landscape is always the same. Weather, with its wind speed, cloudiness or cloudlessness, the brightness and the position of the sun and temperature fluctuations make no moment the same. "How is it possible that nature can create such a perfect thing as a seashell?" This is what Paul Valery questions in his essay "Sea shells" (Valéry & Manheim, 1998). He argues that we might not want to explain it with knowledge and science but just let the aesthetics speak for themselves. Just like the landscape of the beach, there is not one formula for its spatial perfectness.
Although a shell is not perfectly symmetrical nor are the stripes not perfectly parallel, it is something beautiful in its completion. Kuma concluded the same for his project for an art event in Anyang "How marvellous [...] to learn that seemingly random or scattered elements might actually be stronger. The project confirmed my suspicions that things too neat and orderly might be hiding fundamental flaws" (Kuma, 2016b, p. 56)

Pallasmaa goes as far as to say that the result of the contemporary fear of deadness is the loss of appreciation of imperfection. "Buildings of this technological era usually deliberately aim at ageless perfection, and they do not incorporate the dimensions of time, or the unavoidable and mental significant processes of aging". (Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 34).



Designing to bodily experience

The interaction of materials

Mallgrave takes the example of a person's neurological response as if it's his own skin when watching a movie of a tarantula crawling across someone else's skin. "If we respond neurologically to the touch of animate or inanimate objects that we observe, would we not also respond to architectural materials and forms touching one other?" (Mallgrave, 2018, p. 67) He goes on to show that neurological studies have shown that even inanimate objects touching activates the same neural circuits as when animate bodily parts touch (Mallgrave, 2018, p. 127).

Water and sand, sun and sand, wind and water, wood and sand and wind. The list of materials interacting with each other in the coastal environment of the Scheveningen harbour area is endless. Wind here complements gravity. "Water naturally seeks to spread [...] and the ceaseless motions across its surface – larger movements causing waves, breezes inducing ripples, ever changing light reflections, which surely no one would tire of looking out onto" (Kuma, 2016a, p. 9). The specific materials with specific environmental conditions create textures, movements, rhythms, colours. The natural process in which these often occur add to the bodily tactility it evokes.



Designing to bodily experience

The long line and the detail

The coastal environment is filled with long lines, they lead the continuous pace when walking. Also the openness of it strengthens the realisation of the absence of any physical boundaries make us experience the smallness of the body's physical size. However, when we stand still and focus, details will appear. The endless volume we call the beach, shows itself as tiny grains, the sea as wet droplets, the dunes as long green to beige stems. It's the change of peripheral vision to focussed vision that reveals details that your body starts reacting to - on a smaller scale. Colours appear to change, water bubbles pop, colours get textures, and this forces your body to react.

Openness is strongly linked to Scheveningen: Willem Ment Den Heijer: The harbour used to be very open, very wide, you could see the sea already when standing next to the canal which led to the harbour. It's a shame for the atmosphere of the harbour that it's full of buildings now (W. M. den Heijer, personal communication, 18 November 2020).

Wim van Loo: I remember very well; as a small boy of 8 years old, I was put on a boat for the first time and we went out on the sea until we could not see the shore anymore. Something happened inside of me that moment. What happened inside of me that day made me later decide for a career as a coxswain on large vessels (W. van Loo, personal communication, 17 November 2020).



Designing to bodily experience

Rhythms

The seasons: summer comes, tourists appear, autumn reappears, rest returns. High tide and low tide. Tides bring soft sand and hard sand to walk on. The sound of the waves and the movement of the waves. The wind through the lines of the ships produces jingles and whistles in a rhythm, like music.
Rhythms are everywhere in Scheveningen and our body easily reacts to them. They make us dance, make us walk slower, make us run faster, makes us feel calmer.

"There is something mysterious about the stimulating effect of rhythm. You can explain what it is that creates rhythm but you have to experience it yourself to know what it is like. A person listening to music experiences the rhythm as something beyond all reflection, something existing within himself. A man who moves rhythmically starts the motion himself and feels that he controls it. But very shortly the rhythm controls him; he is possessed by it. It carries him along. Rhythmic motion gives a feeling of heightened energy." (Steen Eiler Rasmussen, 1959, p. 140)









