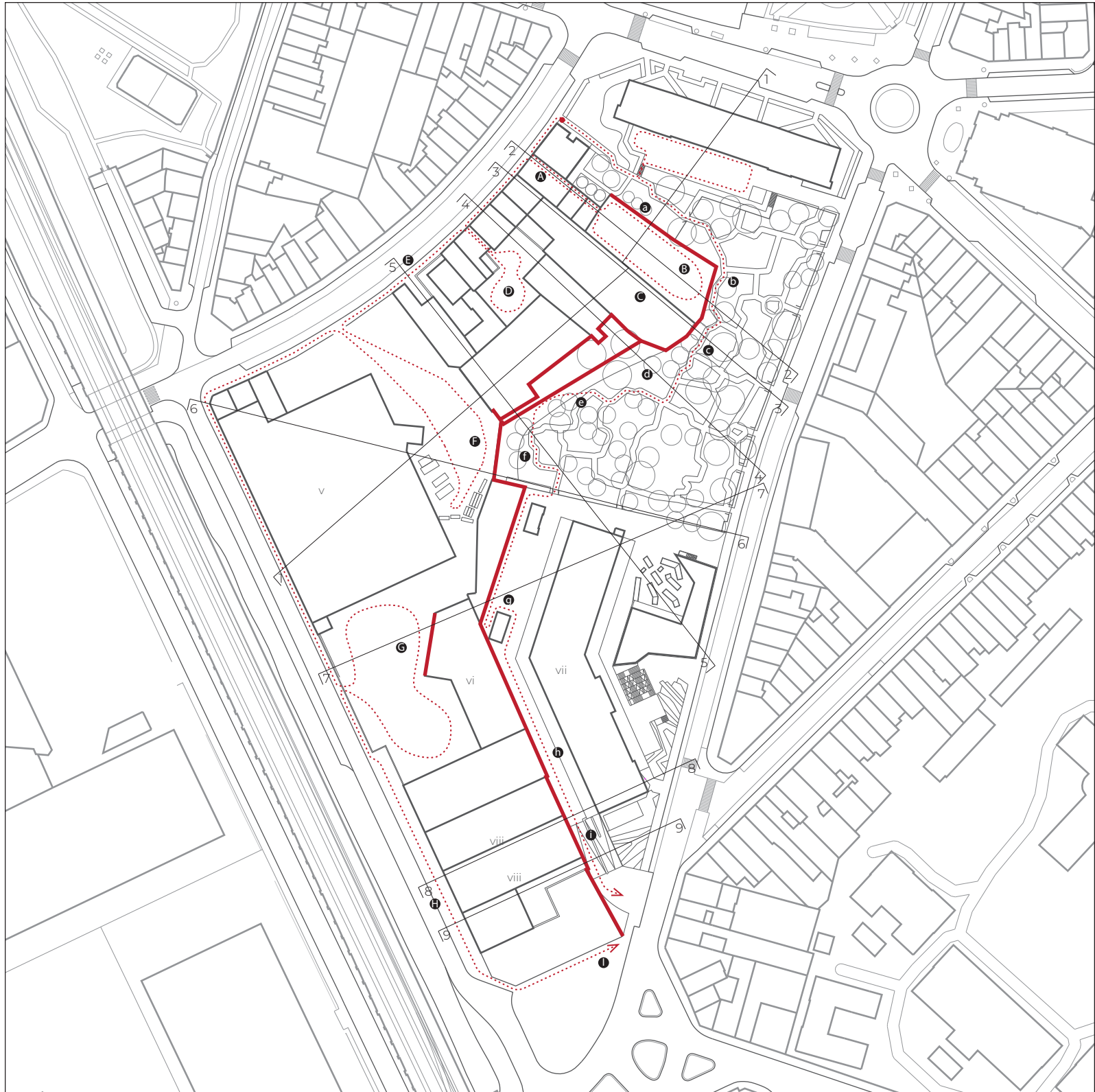
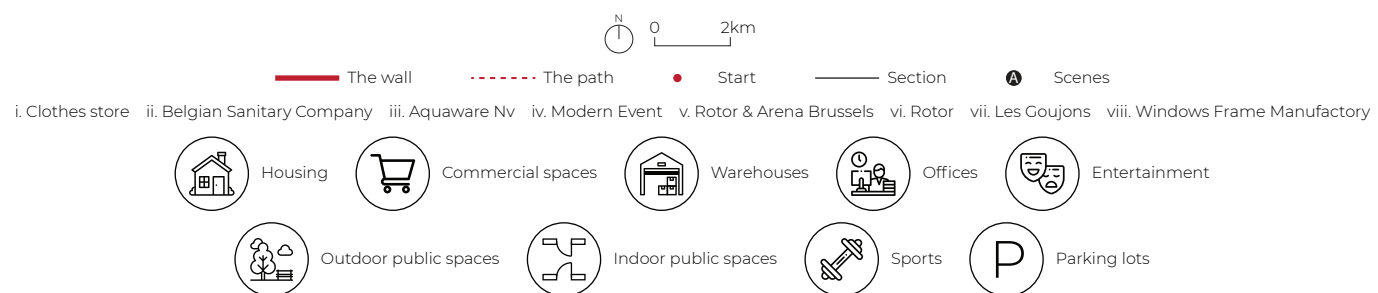


A journey along the wall:
the collective memory of the Senne

Yanwen Zhu
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Map of a journey along the wall



A journey along the wall: the collective memory of the Senne

Collective memory in architectural discourse

In the history of architectural theories, the word, 'memory' was discussed and redefined constantly. In *The architecture in the city*, Aldo Rossi suggested establishing a city on the layers of memories. (Rossi, 1984) The memories are revealed on buildings as the signals, symbols and cautions, which Rossi called 'scars'. As time passes by, the 'scars' evolve into certain forms of the buildings which somehow create the characteristics of the building, the neighbourhood, the district and eventually the city. All different characteristics constitute the identity of the city. If the 'scars' and even the traditional constructions are removed, the city will quickly lose its own identity. Therefore, carefully dealing with the memories of the city are vital to architectural discourse.

However, as previously mentioned, the definition of memory varies between architects. My interpretation of memory comes from sociology. Memory is a sociological term describing the result of the interaction among actors, events and places. (Halbwachs, 1992) Actors are those who act; events are the activities that the actors conduct; places provide the spaces for the events. According to Halbwachs, collective memory is defined as the collection of all individual memories of a social group. Although the clustered memories are about the same actors, events and places, they vary with each spectator. As the actor moves and conducts the event, the spectator also records the movement of space in the dimension of time, which in architectural discourse, forms the individual memory of spatial experiences. In this way, extracting and collecting spatial experiences from individual memories help to compose collective memories in architecture.

The memory of the site

The site is located in-between the city centre and the suburban area in Brussels. Through the analysis of the history and development of the block, the river, Senne catalysed the formation of a twisted wall running through the whole block and segregating the two sides. The Senne existed before the origin of Brussels and significantly influenced the urban development of the whole city. Due to sanitary problems, the river was partly covered during the 19th and 20th Centuries. Although the river was no longer there, the wall represented the memory of the river and the ghost of Senne. The Senne was one of the essential memories of the site. In order to deal with its memory, I specified my research question as how the wall formed the memory of the site, in other words, how the wall created the spatial experiences of the site.

Montage as a tool of narration

In order to investigate the spatial experiences of the wall, I referred to a tool of narration, montage. Montage was derived from the French word, 'montage', which originally meant combining smaller parts into a work. During the 19th Century, montage was largely applied to the field of films. Instead of filming one long shot, the directors composed a movie by merging several fragmented shots. Based on the complete story, montage breaks down the whole into a series of small pieces and recomposes the story by repositioning the fragments. (Eisenstein, 2010)

The idea of montage in the field of films inspired the study of the wall. The research started with a walk along the wall. The two sides of the wall served for different spaces and some parts of the wall were inaccessible. To present the spatial experiences, I made serial visions to show how people approached the wall and how the wall composed different spaces. The wall was constituted by parts from several buildings and the surrounding was changing when people moved along the wall. Through montage, I divided the wall into pieces based on the material and surrounding environment during the process of making serial visions. Since the wall solidly separated the two sides and there was no way to cross the wall, I aimed to contrast the two sides and explore how the wall specifically led to the feature of segregation. So I made the cross-sections of the wall with notes depicting the function and spatial quality on both sides. In the end, I recomposed all the results into a story of an architecture student exploring the wall, a journey along the wall. The final configuration aimed to emphasise the lively lives and differences between two sides of the wall.

Conclusion and design

The theme of the studio is 'spolia', a term from archaeology. It means the remnants of a building which are placed in a new environment. Additionally, the concept of 'spolia' can exceed mere physical objects and be expanded to notions, styles, motifs, etc. (Meier, 2014) The research helped me to specify the collective memory of the Senne and identify 'spolia' for my design. The 'spolia' in this case refers to both the wall itself and the segregated spaces the wall created, which will be kept, altered and placed in the same location but new surroundings.

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6. Rossi, A. (1984). *The architecture in the city*. Cambridge, United States: The MIT Press
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EMMA WAS A STUDENT STUDYING ARCHITECTURE. RECENTLY, SHE WAS STUDYING THE INFLUENCE OF THE RIVER, SENNE ON THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT OF ANDERLECHT, THE NEIGHBOURHOOD IN WHICH SHE LIVED. THERE ARE ELEMENTS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD DISTORTED BY THE RIVER. AND ONE OF THEM AROUSED EMMA'S INTEREST. SHE NOTICED A TWISTED WALL NEAR HER HOME FOLLOWING THE CURVE OF THE SENNE. SHE STARTED INVESTIGATING THE WALL BY A JOURNEY ALONG THE WALL.

SINCE IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO SEE BOTH SIDES OF THE WALL AT THE SAME TIME, EMMA TOOK TWO WALKS EXPLORING EACH SIDE AT ONE TIME.

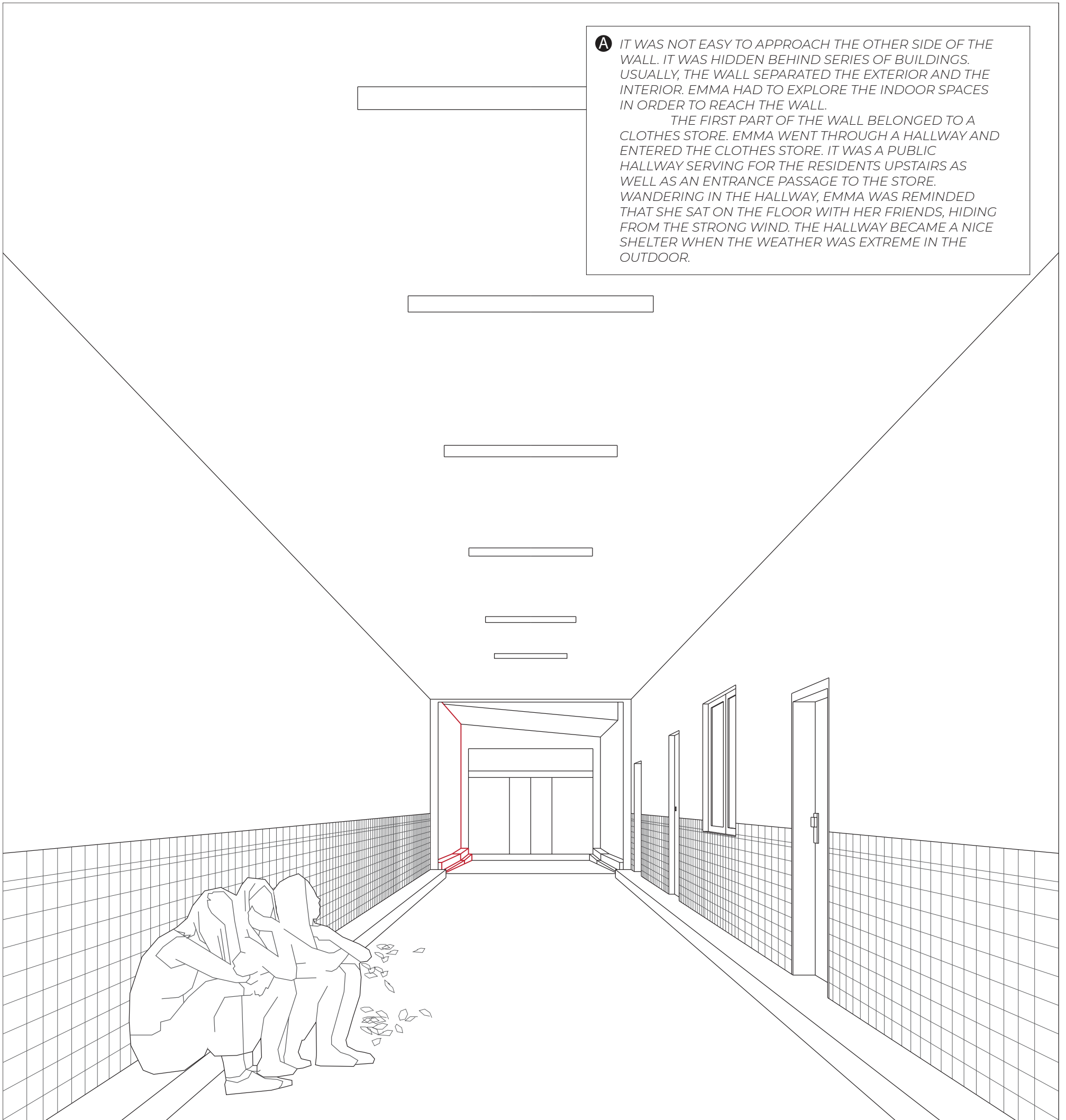


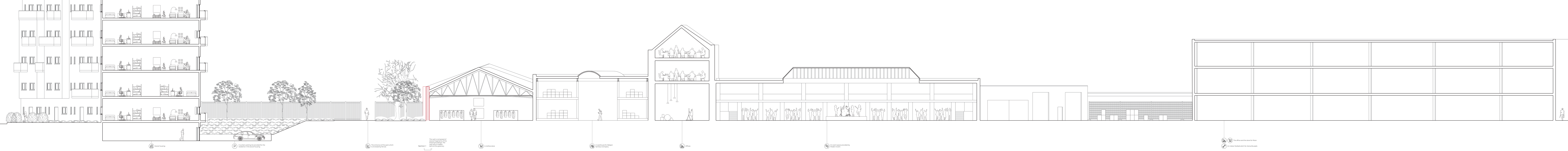
a EMMA BEGAN HER JOURNEY WALKING FROM NORTH TO SOUTH. REVISITING THE PLACE SHE WALKED BY EVERY DAY BUT FROM A SPECIAL PERSPECTIVE, SHE FOUND IT AS A NEW TRIP.

IN THE BEGINNING, THE LINEAR WALL WAS LEADING HER WAY. TREES WERE PLANTED BESIDE THE WALL, DECORATING THE COLOURLESS CEMENT WALL.

A IT WAS NOT EASY TO APPROACH THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL. IT WAS HIDDEN BEHIND SERIES OF BUILDINGS. USUALLY, THE WALL SEPARATED THE EXTERIOR AND THE INTERIOR. EMMA HAD TO EXPLORE THE INDOOR SPACES IN ORDER TO REACH THE WALL.

THE FIRST PART OF THE WALL BELONGED TO A CLOTHES STORE. EMMA WENT THROUGH A HALLWAY AND ENTERED THE CLOTHES STORE. IT WAS A PUBLIC HALLWAY SERVING FOR THE RESIDENTS UPSTAIRS AS WELL AS AN ENTRANCE PASSAGE TO THE STORE. WANDERING IN THE HALLWAY, EMMA WAS REMINDED THAT SHE SAT ON THE FLOOR WITH HER FRIENDS, HIDING FROM THE STRONG WIND. THE HALLWAY BECAME A NICE SHELTER WHEN THE WEATHER WAS EXTREME IN THE OUTDOOR.





Ⓜ Social housing

P A sunken parking lot provided for the residents in the social housing

Ⓜ The entrance of the park which is enclosed by fences

Section 1
The wall is composed of several fragments of the existing buildings. The wall here is hidden behind the greenery.

🛒 A clothes store

🏠 A warehouse for Belgian Sanitary Company

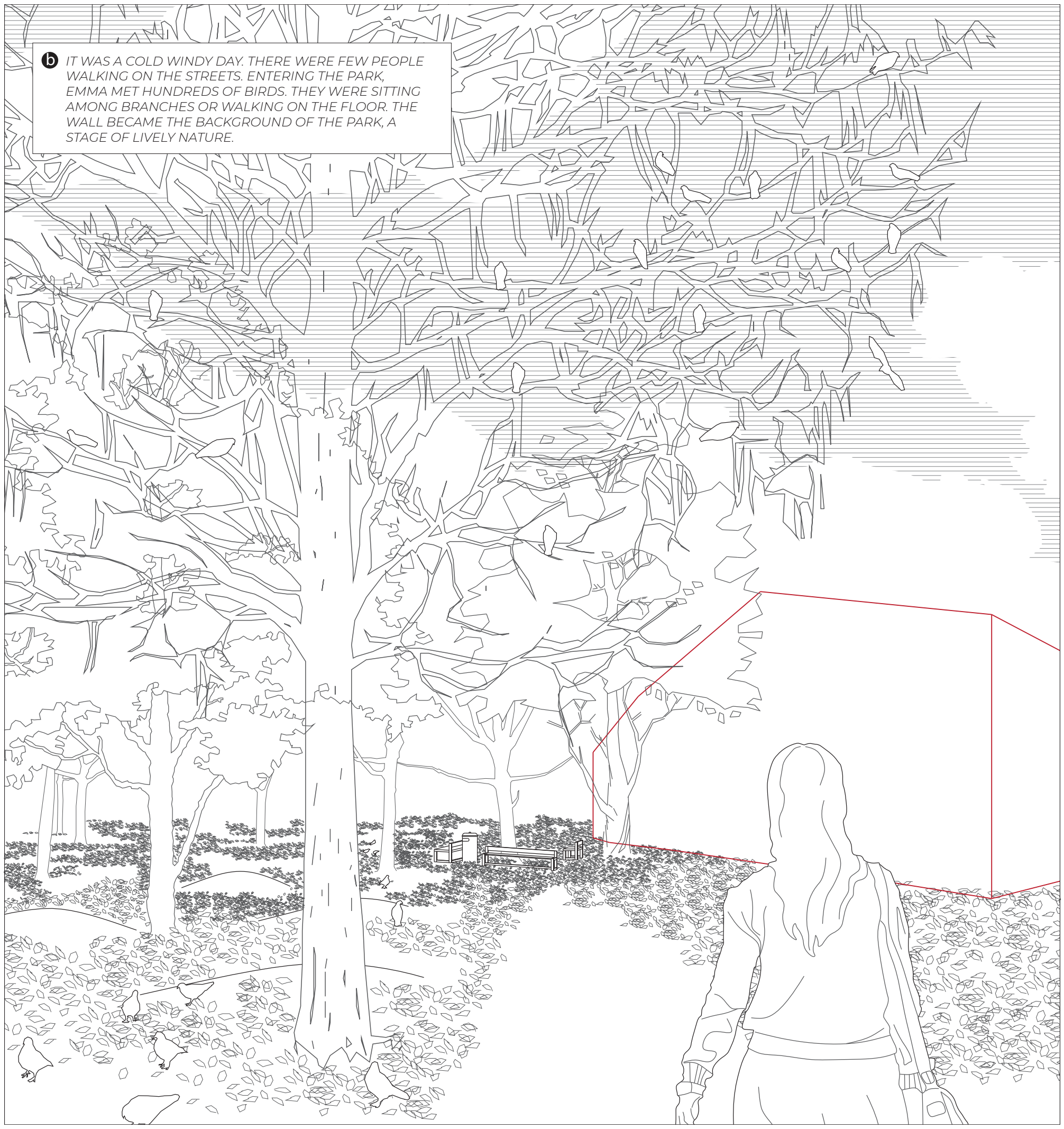
🏢 Offices

Ⓜ An event space provided by Modern Event

Ⓜ The office and the store for Rotor

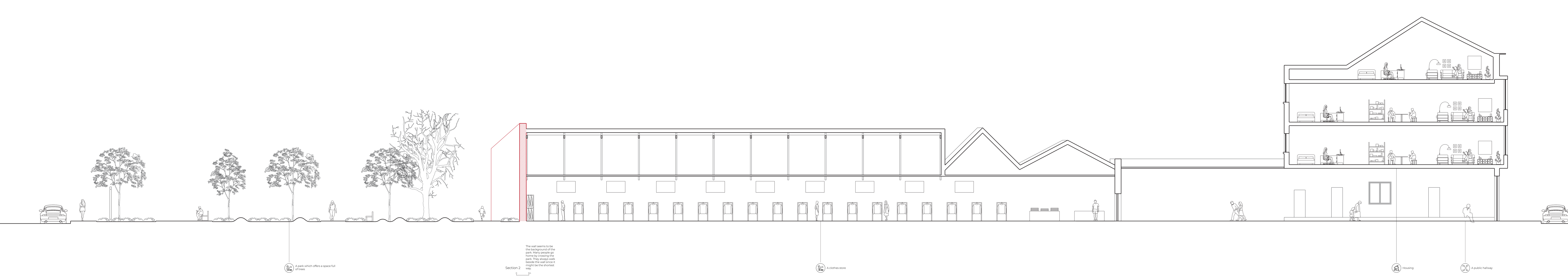
Ⓜ An indoor football pitch for Arena Brussels

b IT WAS A COLD WINDY DAY. THERE WERE FEW PEOPLE WALKING ON THE STREETS. ENTERING THE PARK, EMMA MET HUNDREDS OF BIRDS. THEY WERE SITTING AMONG BRANCHES OR WALKING ON THE FLOOR. THE WALL BECAME THE BACKGROUND OF THE PARK, A STAGE OF LIVELY NATURE.



B IT WAS HARD TO FEEL THE CONTINUITY OF THE WALL IN THE CLOTHES STORE. EMMA COULD NOT IMAGINE THE WELL-PAINTED WHITE WALL WAS THE SAME WALL AS THE ONE STANDING IN THE WILD NATURE. THE STARK CONTRAST IMPRESSED EMMA.





A park which offers a space full of trees

The wall seems to be the background of the park. Many people go home by crossing the park. They always walk beside the wall since it might be the shortest way.

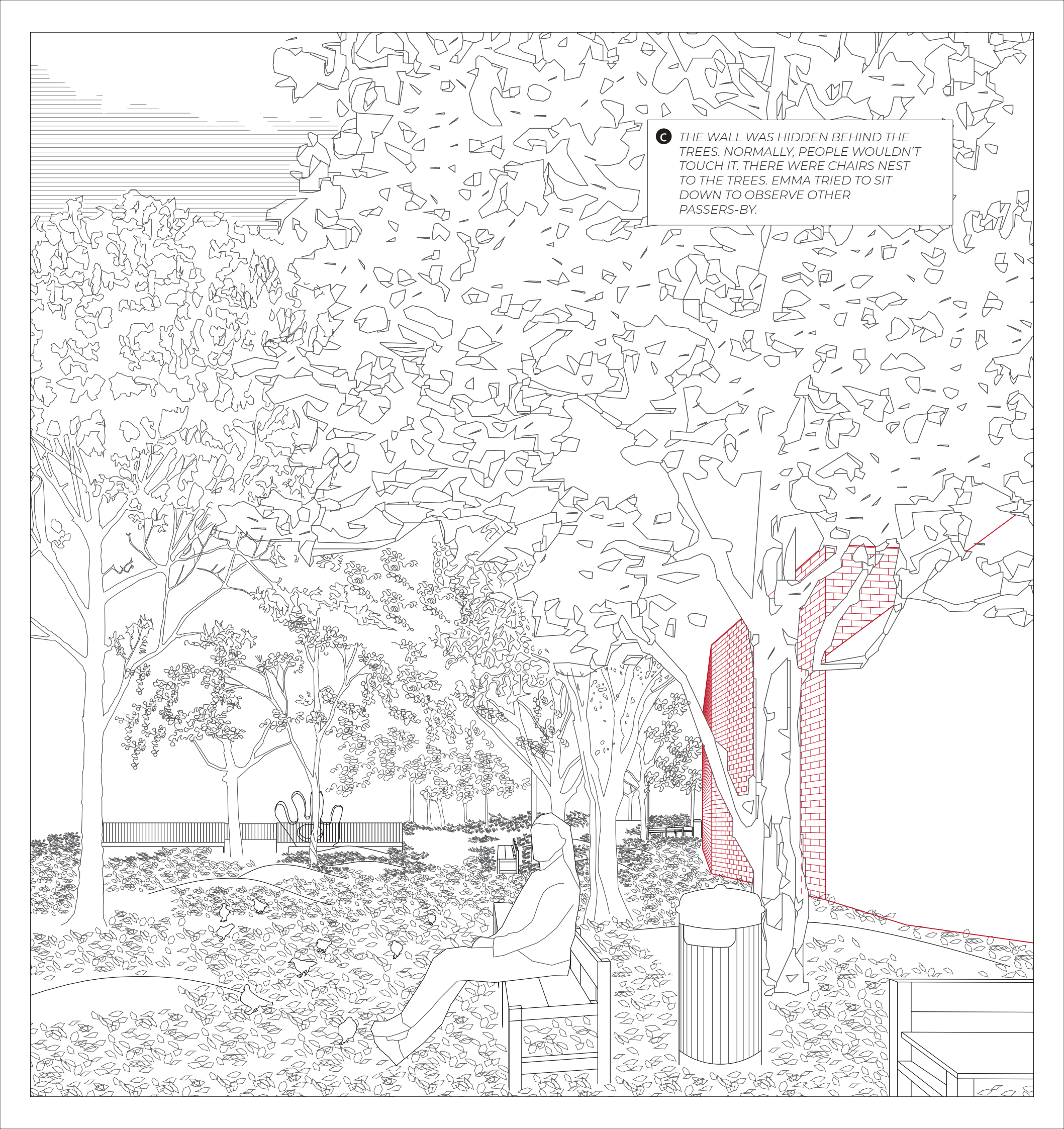
Section 2

0 1m

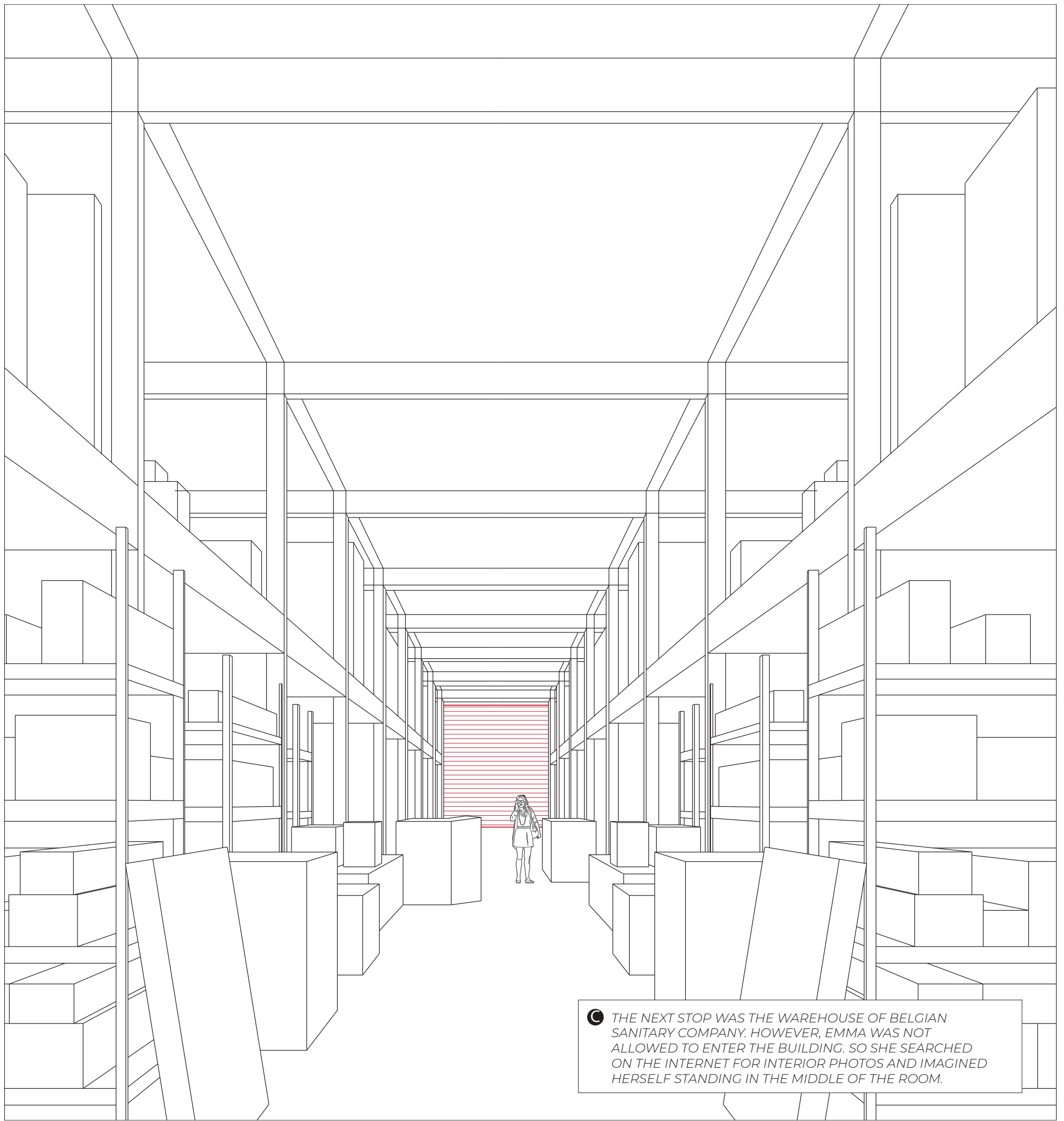
A clothes store

Housing

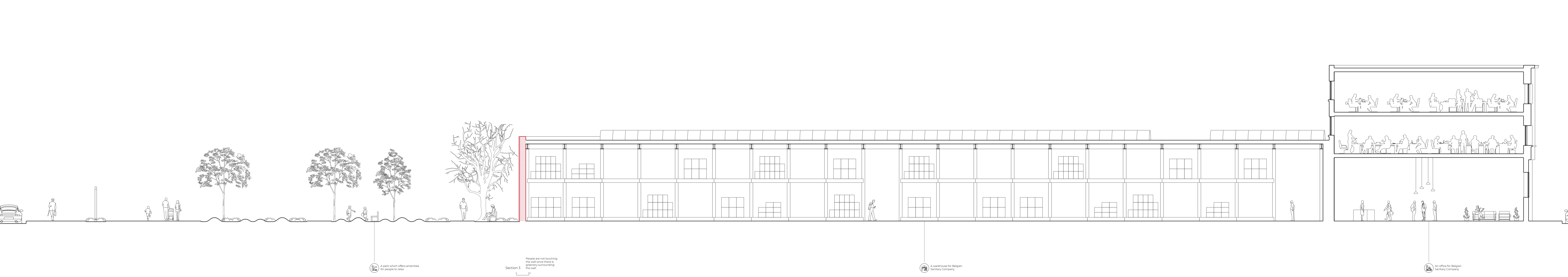
A public hallway





C THE WALL WAS HIDDEN BEHIND THE TREES. NORMALLY, PEOPLE WOULDN'T TOUCH IT. THERE WERE CHAIRS NEST TO THE TREES. EMMA TRIED TO SIT DOWN TO OBSERVE OTHER PASSERS-BY.



● THE NEXT STOP WAS THE WAREHOUSE OF BELGIAN SANITARY COMPANY. HOWEVER, EMMA WAS NOT ALLOWED TO ENTER THE BUILDING. SO SHE SEARCHED ON THE INTERNET FOR INTERIOR PHOTOS AND IMAGINED HERSELF STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM.




 A park which offers amenities for people to relax

Section 3
 0 1m

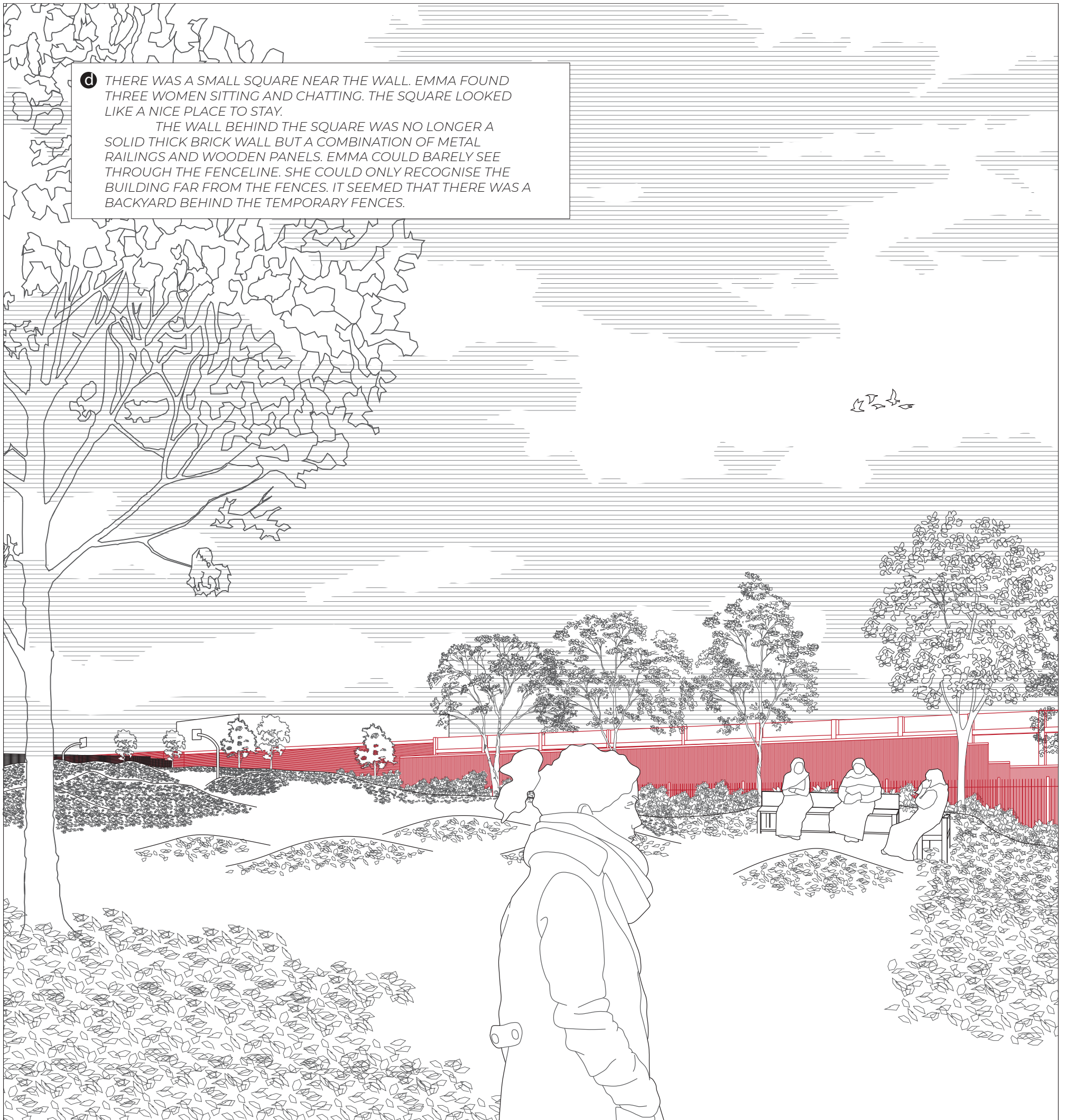
People are not touching the wall since there is greenery surrounding the wall.

 A warehouse for Belgian Sanitary Company

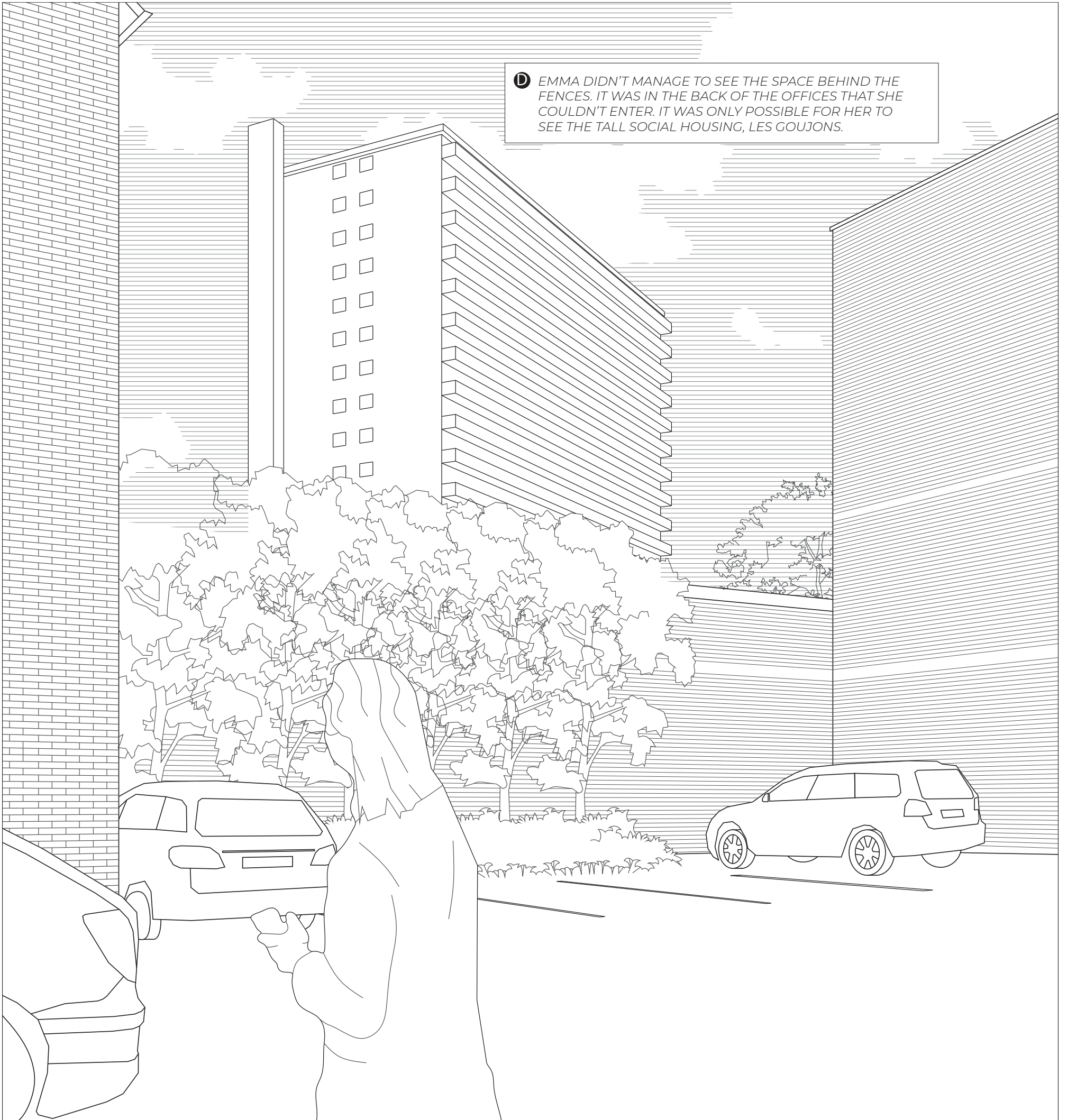
 An office for Belgian Sanitary Company

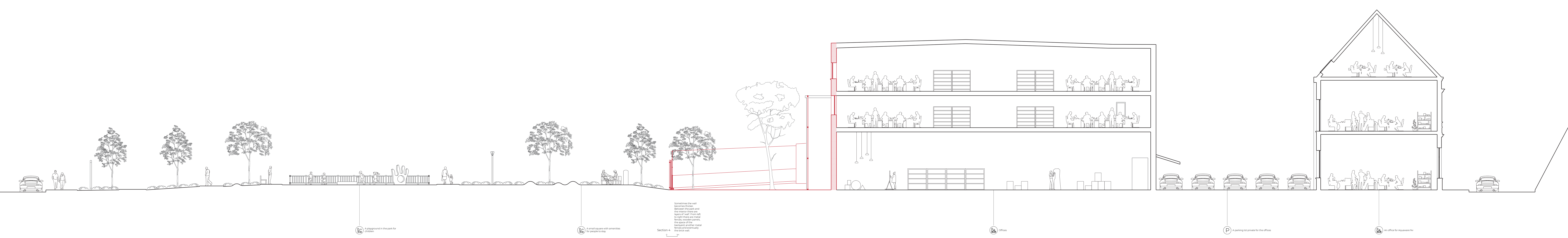
d THERE WAS A SMALL SQUARE NEAR THE WALL. EMMA FOUND THREE WOMEN SITTING AND CHATTING. THE SQUARE LOOKED LIKE A NICE PLACE TO STAY.

THE WALL BEHIND THE SQUARE WAS NO LONGER A SOLID THICK BRICK WALL BUT A COMBINATION OF METAL RAILINGS AND WOODEN PANELS. EMMA COULD BARELY SEE THROUGH THE FENCELINE. SHE COULD ONLY RECOGNISE THE BUILDING FAR FROM THE FENCES. IT SEEMED THAT THERE WAS A BACKYARD BEHIND THE TEMPORARY FENCES.



D EMMA DIDN'T MANAGE TO SEE THE SPACE BEHIND THE FENCES. IT WAS IN THE BACK OF THE OFFICES THAT SHE COULDN'T ENTER. IT WAS ONLY POSSIBLE FOR HER TO SEE THE TALL SOCIAL HOUSING, LES GOUJONS.





A playground in the park for children

A small square with amenities for people to stay

Section 4

Sometimes the wall becomes thicker. Between the park and the interior there are layers of 'wall'. From left to right there are metal fences, wooden panels, the space of the backyard, another metal fences and eventually the brick wall.

Offices

A parking lot private for the offices

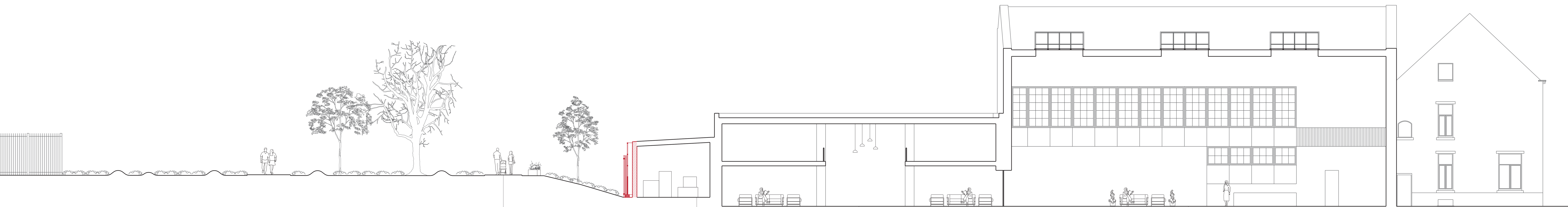
An office for Aquaware Nv


e FOLLOWING THE LINEAR FENCES, EMMA WAS AWARE OF THE HEIGHT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PARK AND THE BUILDINGS BEHIND THE WALL. IN THE PARK, THE FLOOR BECAME HIGHER AND HIGHER AS SHE WALKED FROM NORTH TO SOUTH. THUS, EMMA TOOK OUT HER PHONE AND TRIED TO RECORD THE SITUATION.

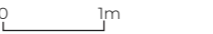





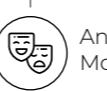
E SAME THING HAPPENED WHEN EMMA TRIED TO APPROACH THE WALL IN THE BACKYARD OF MODERN EVENT. 'MAYBE THERE ARE SOME PHOTOS ON THE INTERNET.', EMMA THOUGHT.




 A park which has height differences with the surrounding buildings

Section 5


 A warehouse for Modern Event

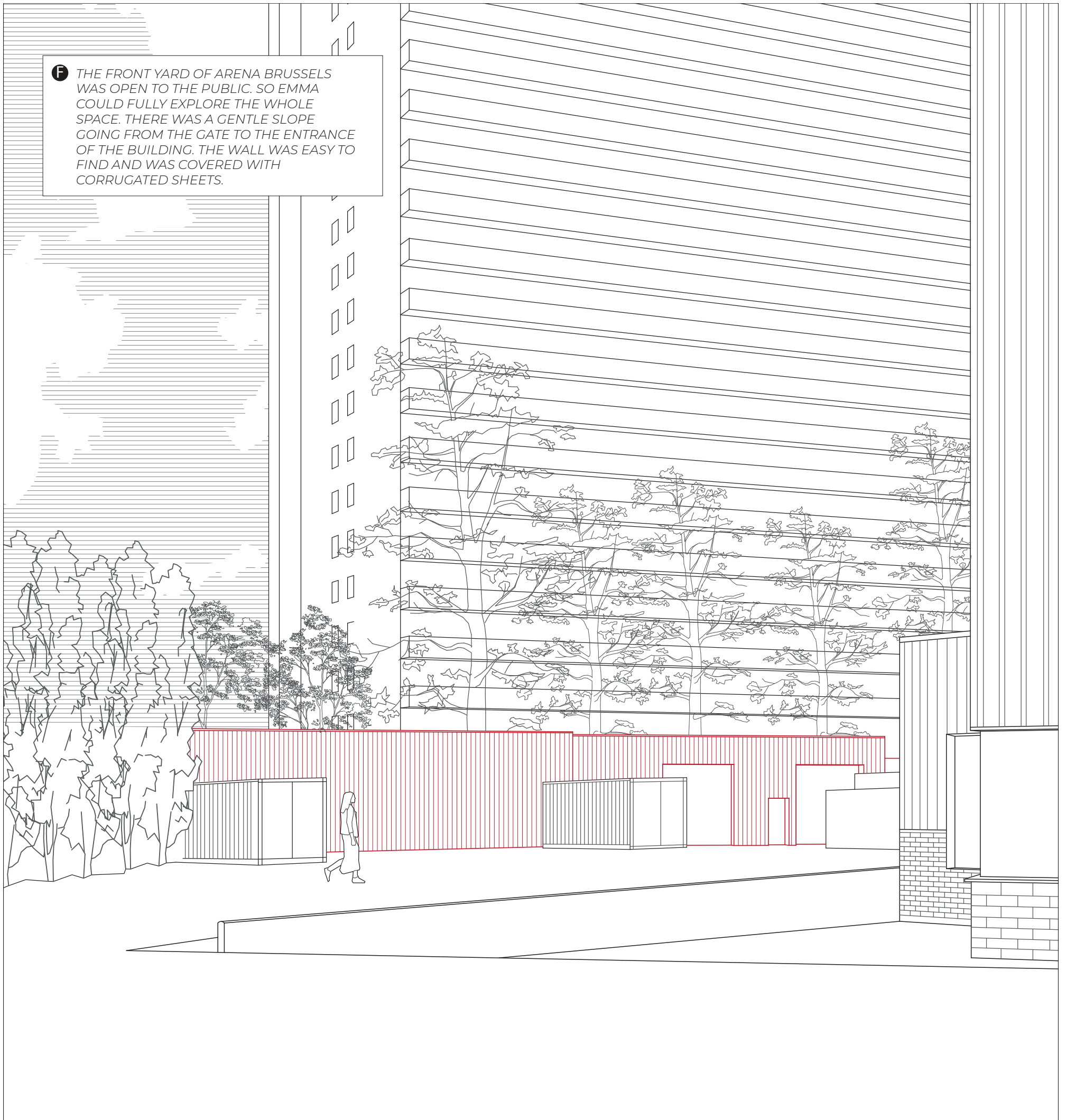
 An event space provided by Modern Event

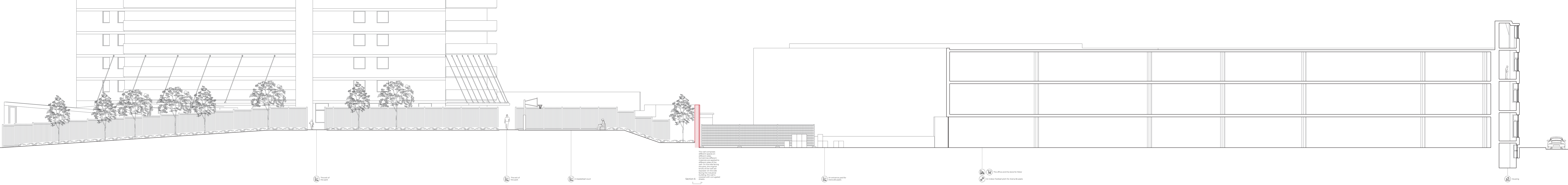
 An office for Modern Event



i THE FENCES BUMPED INTO A SOLID BRICK WALL. EMMA DISCOVERED SOME GRAFFITI ON THE WALL.

F THE FRONT YARD OF ARENA BRUSSELS WAS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. SO EMMA COULD FULLY EXPLORE THE WHOLE SPACE. THERE WAS A GENTLE SLOPE GOING FROM THE GATE TO THE ENTRANCE OF THE BUILDING. THE WALL WAS EASY TO FIND AND WAS COVERED WITH CORRUGATED SHEETS.





The exit of the park

The exit of the park

A basketball court

Section 6

An entrance yard for Arena Brussels

The office and the store for Rotor

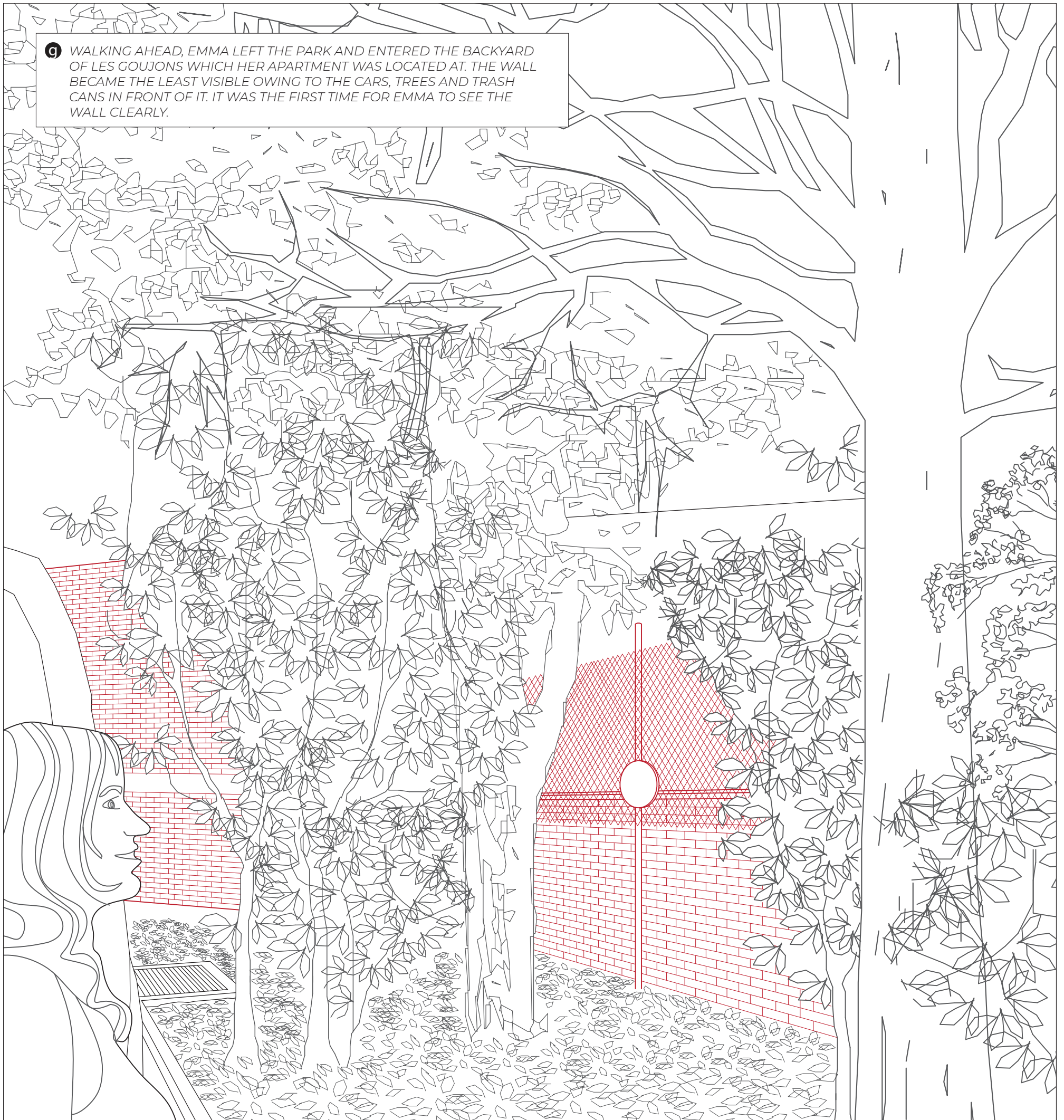
An indoor football pitch for Arena Brussels

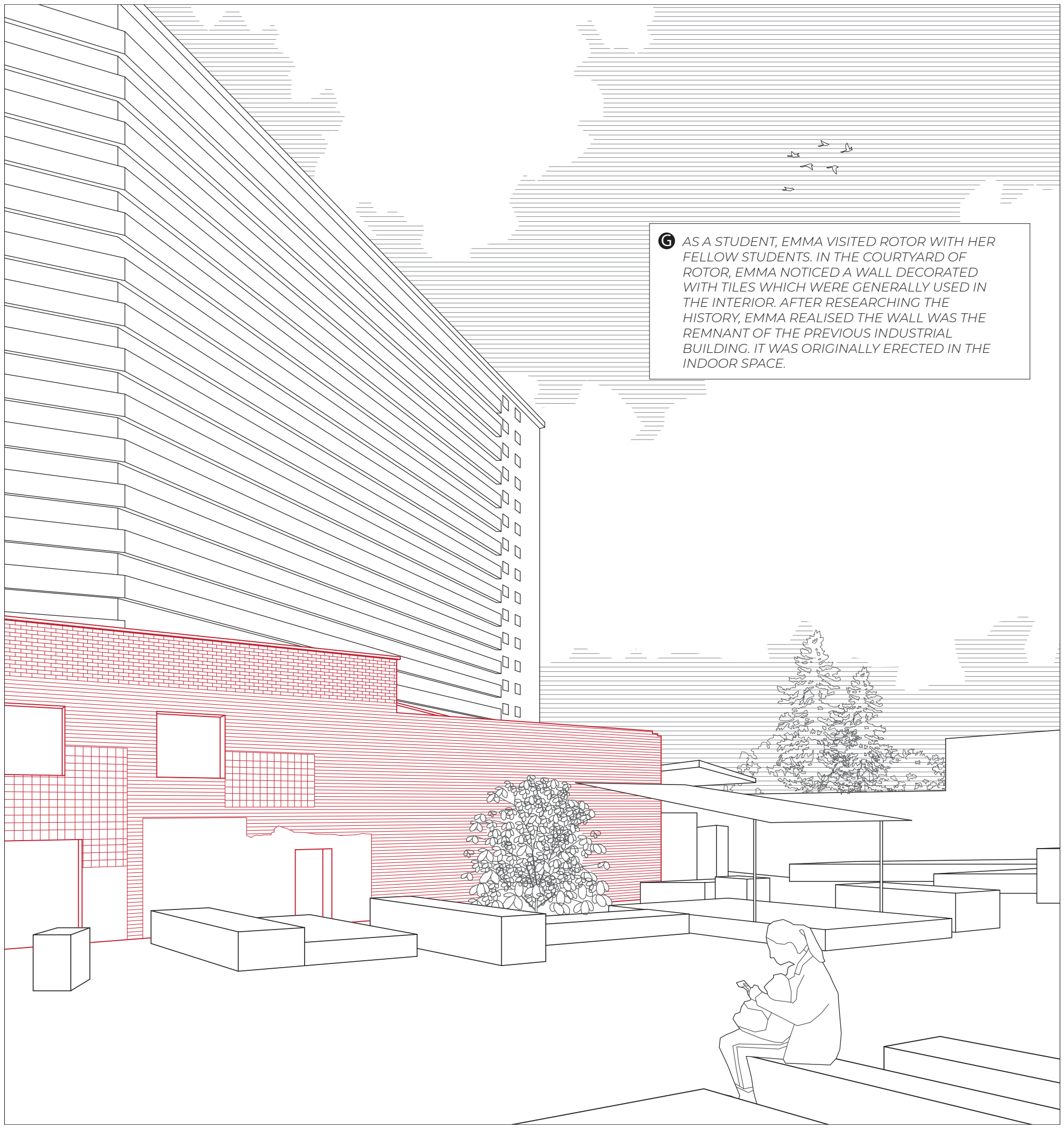
Housing

The wall composes different spaces on different sides. Sometimes different materials are applied to different sides of the wall. On the side facing the park, the original bricks of the wall are exposed. On the side facing the industrial building, the wall is covered with corrugated sheets.

0 5m

g WALKING AHEAD, EMMA LEFT THE PARK AND ENTERED THE BACKYARD OF LES GOUJONS WHICH HER APARTMENT WAS LOCATED AT. THE WALL BECAME THE LEAST VISIBLE OWING TO THE CARS, TREES AND TRASH CANS IN FRONT OF IT. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME FOR EMMA TO SEE THE WALL CLEARLY.





G AS A STUDENT, EMMA VISITED ROTOR WITH HER FELLOW STUDENTS. IN THE COURTYARD OF ROTOR, EMMA NOTICED A WALL DECORATED WITH TILES WHICH WERE GENERALLY USED IN THE INTERIOR. AFTER RESEARCHING THE HISTORY, EMMA REALISED THE WALL WAS THE REMNANT OF THE PREVIOUS INDUSTRIAL BUILDING. IT WAS ORIGINALLY ERECTED IN THE INDOOR SPACE.



1 Social housing, Les goujons

2 The backyard of Les goujons with some greenery where people park cars, bikes and motorcycles

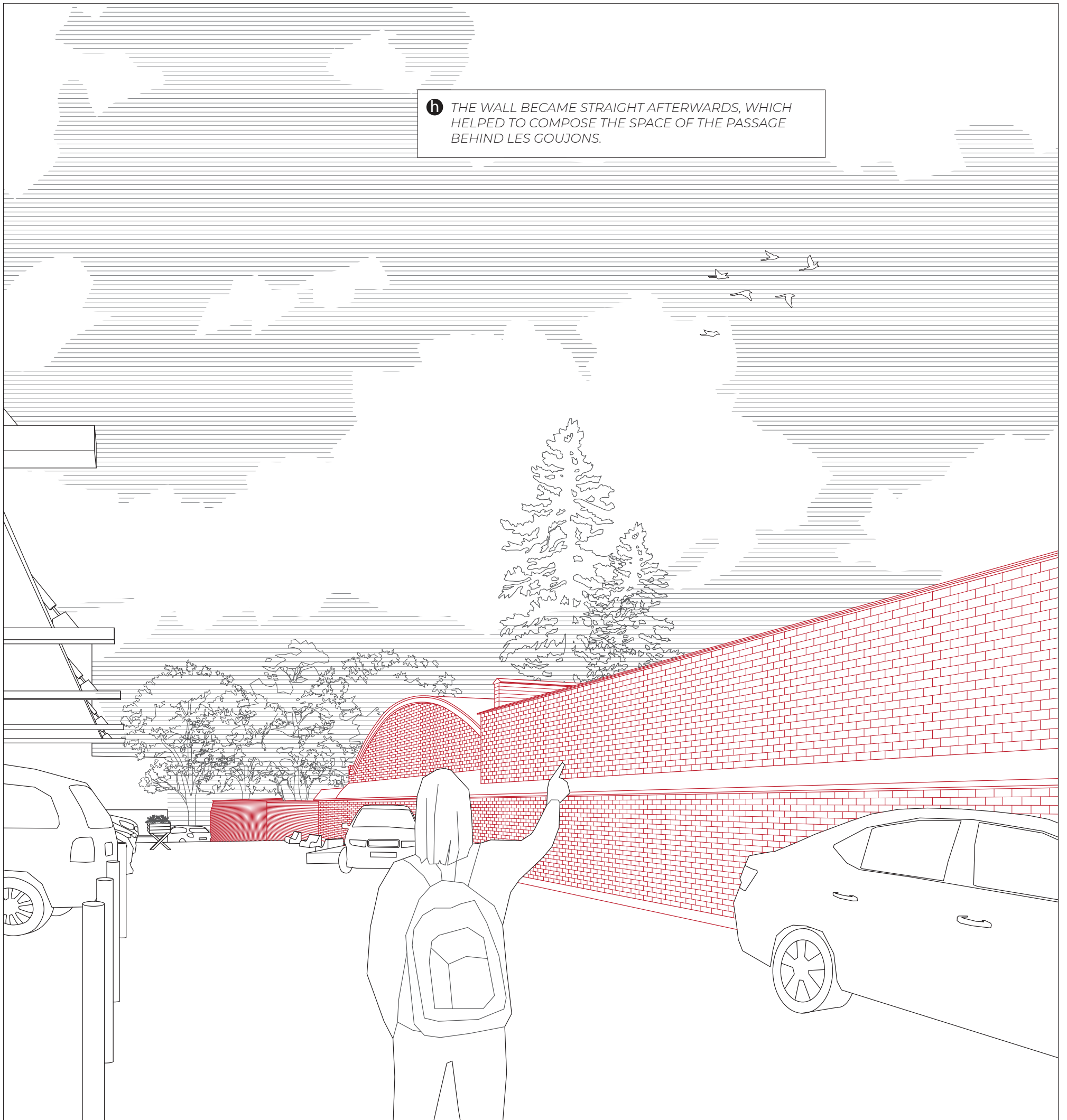
Section 7 The wall is short and not obvious enough. It is hidden behind greenery and cars.

8 A warehouse for Rotor

9 A wall which used to be the interior partition of the original industrial building

10 The courtyard of Rotor for storage


h THE WALL BECAME STRAIGHT AFTERWARDS, WHICH HELPED TO COMPOSE THE SPACE OF THE PASSAGE BEHIND LES GOUJONS.





H THERE WERE MANY WAREHOUSES ALONG THE WALL AND MOST OF THEM WERE INACCESSIBLE.




 Social housing, Les goujons


 A passage for Les goujons

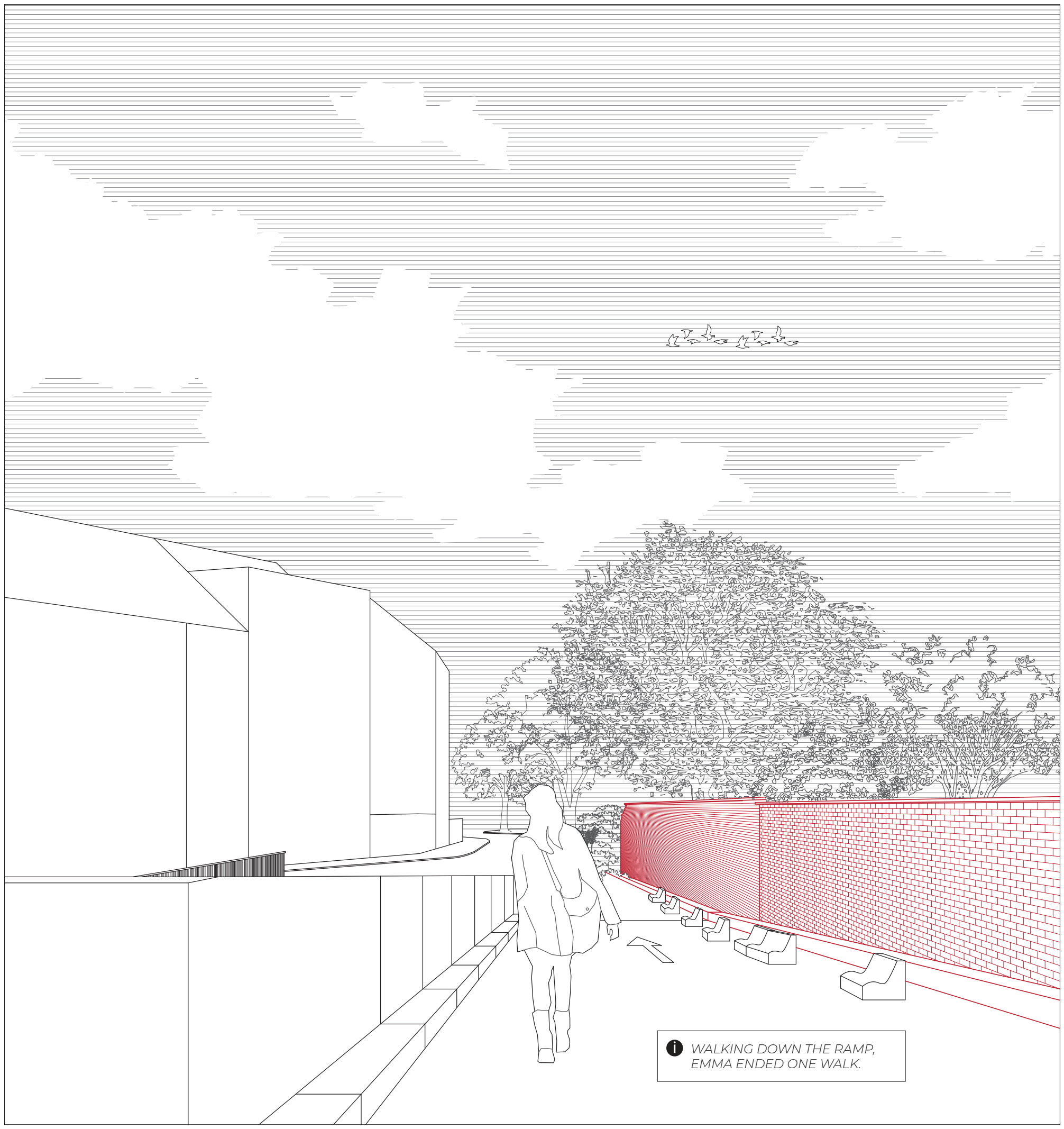
Section 8

The wall is short so people can see the courtyard of Windows frame manufactory behind the wall.

0 1m

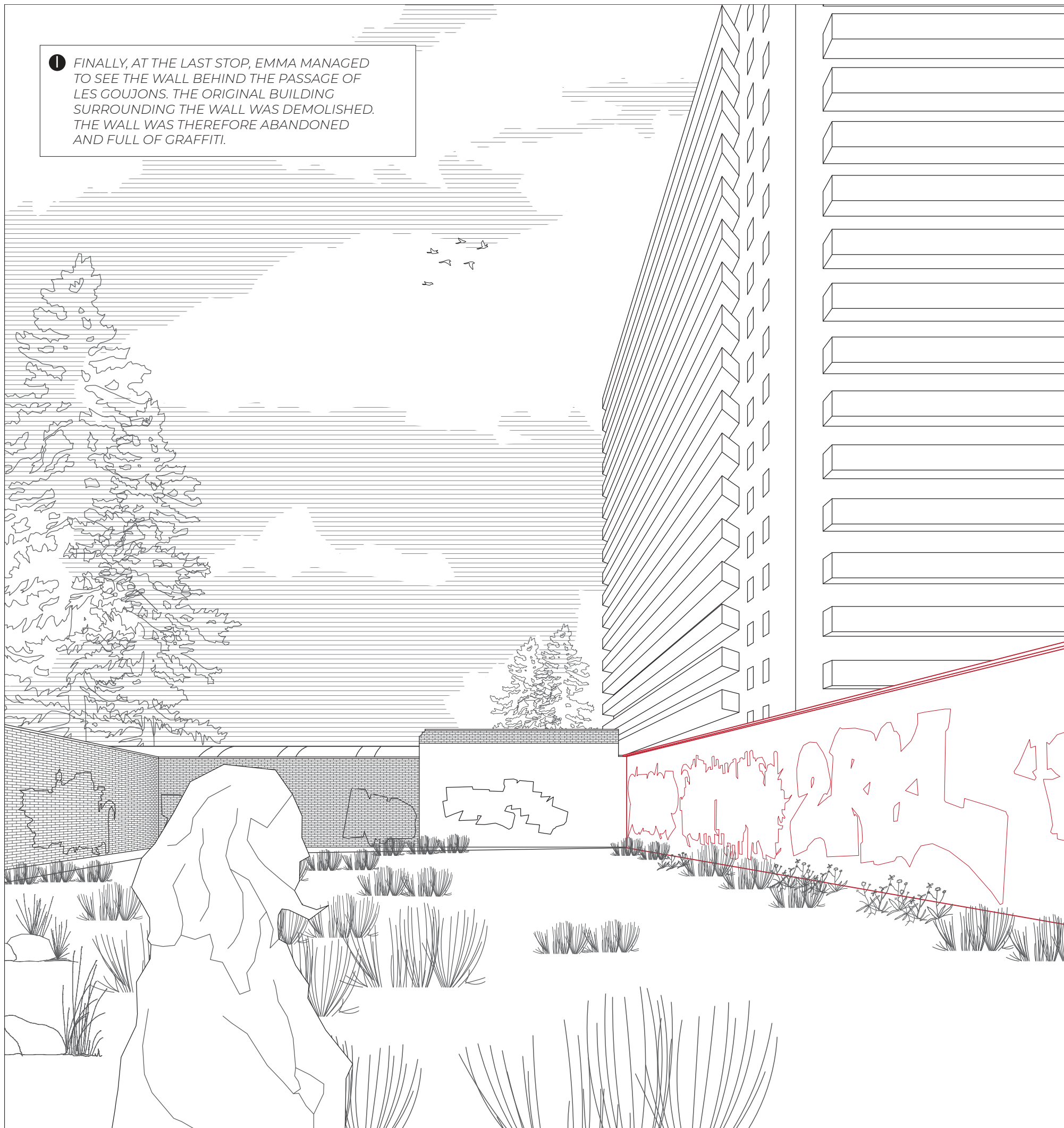
 The courtyard of Windows frame manufactory for parking

 An office for Windows frame manufactory





i WALKING DOWN THE RAMP,
EMMA ENDED ONE WALK.


1 FINALLY, AT THE LAST STOP, EMMA MANAGED TO SEE THE WALL BEHIND THE PASSAGE OF LES GOUJONS. THE ORIGINAL BUILDING SURROUNDING THE WALL WAS DEMOLISHED. THE WALL WAS THEREFORE ABANDONED AND FULL OF GRAFFITI.





 A small garden with greenery and amenities

 A passage towards underground parking lot for Les goujons

 A passage for Les goujons

Section 9

Some buildings are demolished and the wall becomes abandoned and graffitied.

0 1m

 Offices