

THE WILD PLANT LIBRARY

Approaching the urban wilderness

Gabriela Chuecos / 4736958

Tutors: Armina Pilav / Ferry Adema

Contents:

- Lexicon -

Part I: About the city, plants and ruins

Part II: Acting on the site

Part III: Design proposal

Lexicon

coexistence

The fact of living or existing together at the same time or in the same place.

decay

To become gradually damaged, worse, or less.

disturbance

The interruption of a settled condition.

hybrid

Anything derived from heterogeneous sources, or composed of elements of different or incongruous kinds.

non-human

A creature or living organism that is not a human being

unfamiliar

Not known or experienced; strange.

urban wilderness

The ecosystem formed by spontaneous plants on urban areas once human occupation has ceased, growing over the remains of previous activities and usually happening on ruined, disturbed or abandoned land.

Part I:

About the city, plants and ruins



“California poppies (Eschscholtzia californica), giant hogweed (Heracleum antegazzianum), tibetian rhubarb (Rheum paluratum), japanese knotgrass (Fallopia japonica). Carried by the wind, by animals or on the soles of our shoes, these vagrant plants have conquered with boldness and vitality our gardens, our embankments, our neglected spaces.”

Gilles Clement, *In praise of vagabonds*

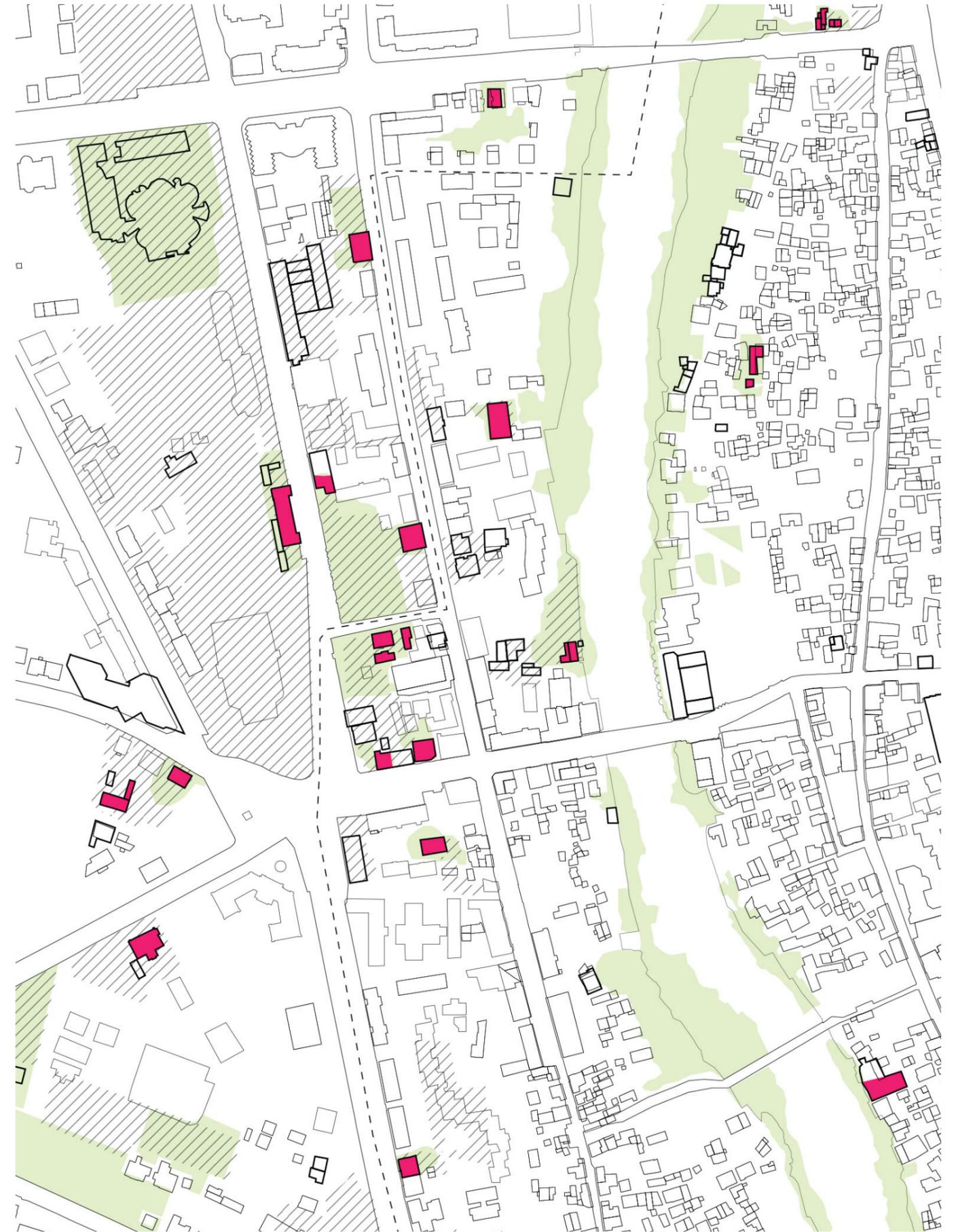


wild plants taking over the city

abandoned areas 

wild nature 

ruin - nature 





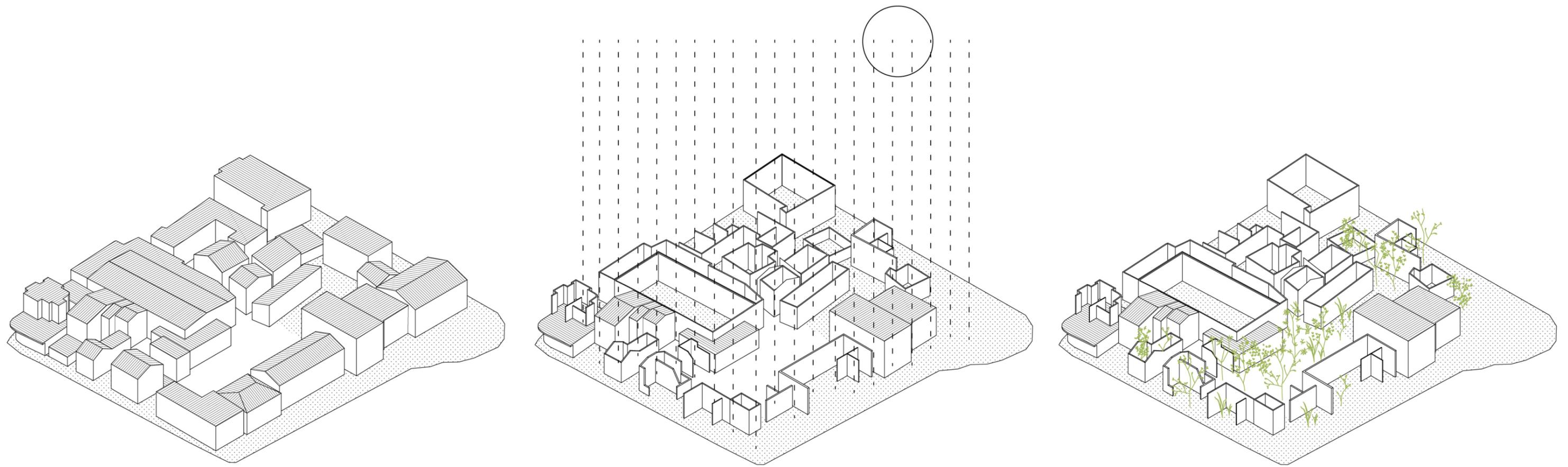
The site, c. 1990

sources: Centar za mir i multietničku saradnju Mostar



The site, c. 1994

sources: Centar za mir i multietničku saradnju Mostar



Transformation of the block: From the building to the scattered rooms in the wild



urban wilderness - disturbance

“As spaces that have become unpoliced and are no longer regularly cleansed to minimize non-human intrusions, plants and animals show their adaptability to the opportunities which arise in the city. It also showcases the agency of insects, birds, mammals, fungi, shrubs, flowering plants and trees (Cloke and Jones, 2012) in the constitution of the urban, despite their wrongly assumed absence.”

Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality*

Plants inhabiting the ruin



hybrid 1: access blocked by accumulation of soil and debris



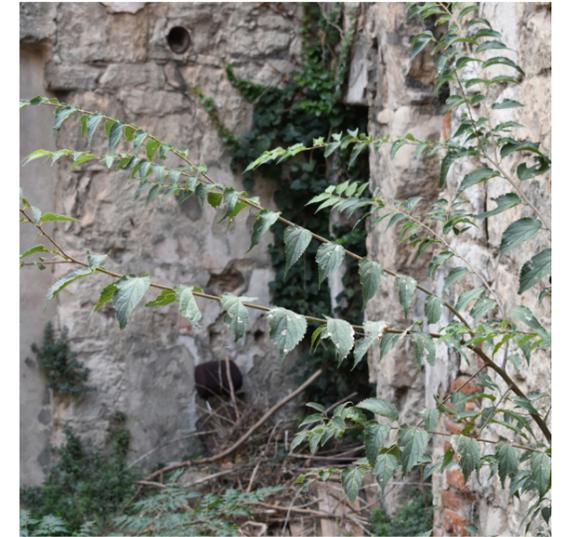
hybrid 2: plants growing between rubble



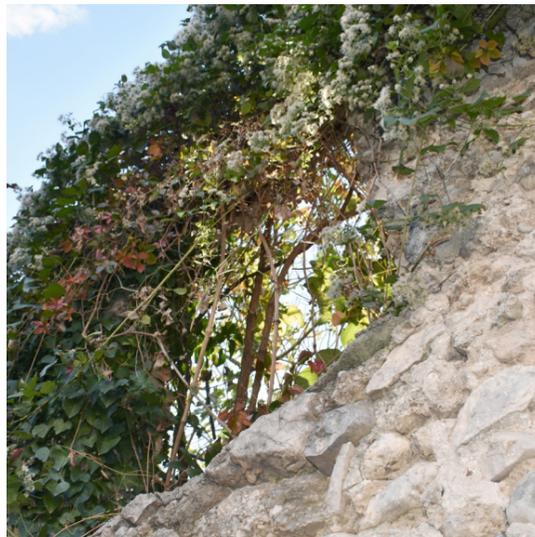
hybrid 3: plants growing in cracks in the pavement



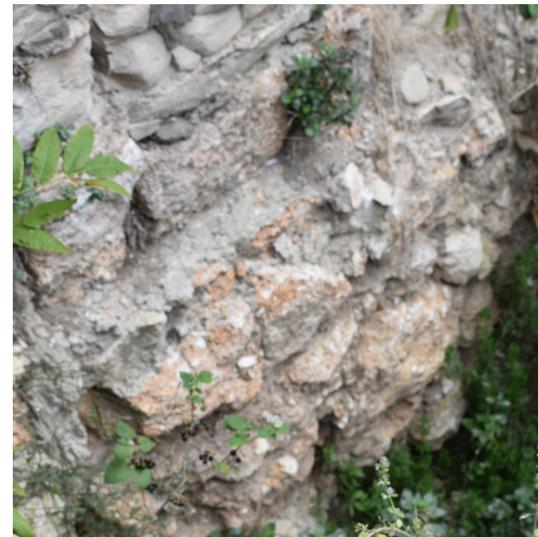
hybrid 4: plants and debris inside buildings



hybrid 5: plants growing in the interstices between wall and pavement



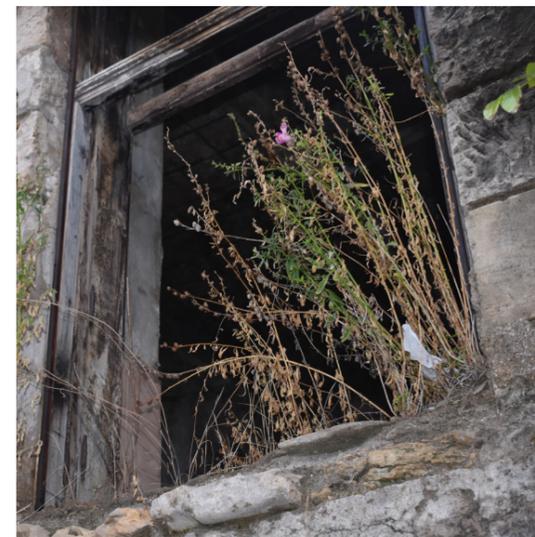
hybrid 6: climbing plants on walls



hybrid 7: plants growing from walls



hybrid 8: plants growing in ventilation ducts



hybrid 9: plants growing on window frames



hybrid 10: plants breaking through doors



Value of “invasive” species

taraxacum officinale
dandelion

native to Europe and Asia
perennial
grows up to 50 cm tall
thrives in full sun to partial shade and
moist soils

weed edible
ruderal medicinal



Value of “invasive” species

taraxacum officinale
dandelion

native to Europe and Asia
perennial
grows up to 50 cm tall
thrives in full sun to partial shade and
moist soils

weed edible
ruderal medicinal

Added value of the urban wilderness

source of new experiences
interaction with spontaneous nature
space for biodiversity
storm water buffer
reduce heat in the city

the urban wilderness as
voids in the city

- used buildings 
- ruins 
- programatic voids 





source: Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins*

unfamiliar - incomplete - disordered

“The dark side of ruination and dereliction – danger, deprivation, fear and anxiety – is not erased by their latent creative potential. Cupers and Miessen (2002) acknowledge that while the ‘void’ can be considered a ‘domain of unfulfilled promise and unlimited opportunity’ (p. 83) it may also be associated with ‘an existential and sociological experience of loss’”

Tim Edensor, *Reckoning with Ruins*



Empty space in the city

“Debris, like rubble, returns buildings to their surrounding nature, but unlike theories of ruins and their inherent fantasies of the Picturesque, debris also mutates its surroundings. Because it is often unrecognizable in its original form, and because it often refers to social disasters, debris signifies not only the return of society to nature, but it exists as a type of latent hybrid nature in its own right.”

David Gissen, *Subnature*

How can we let spontaneous plants grow in the city while making the areas they colonize attractive for humans, creating spaces where humans and non-humans can coexist, learn and benefit from each other?

Part II:
Acting on the site

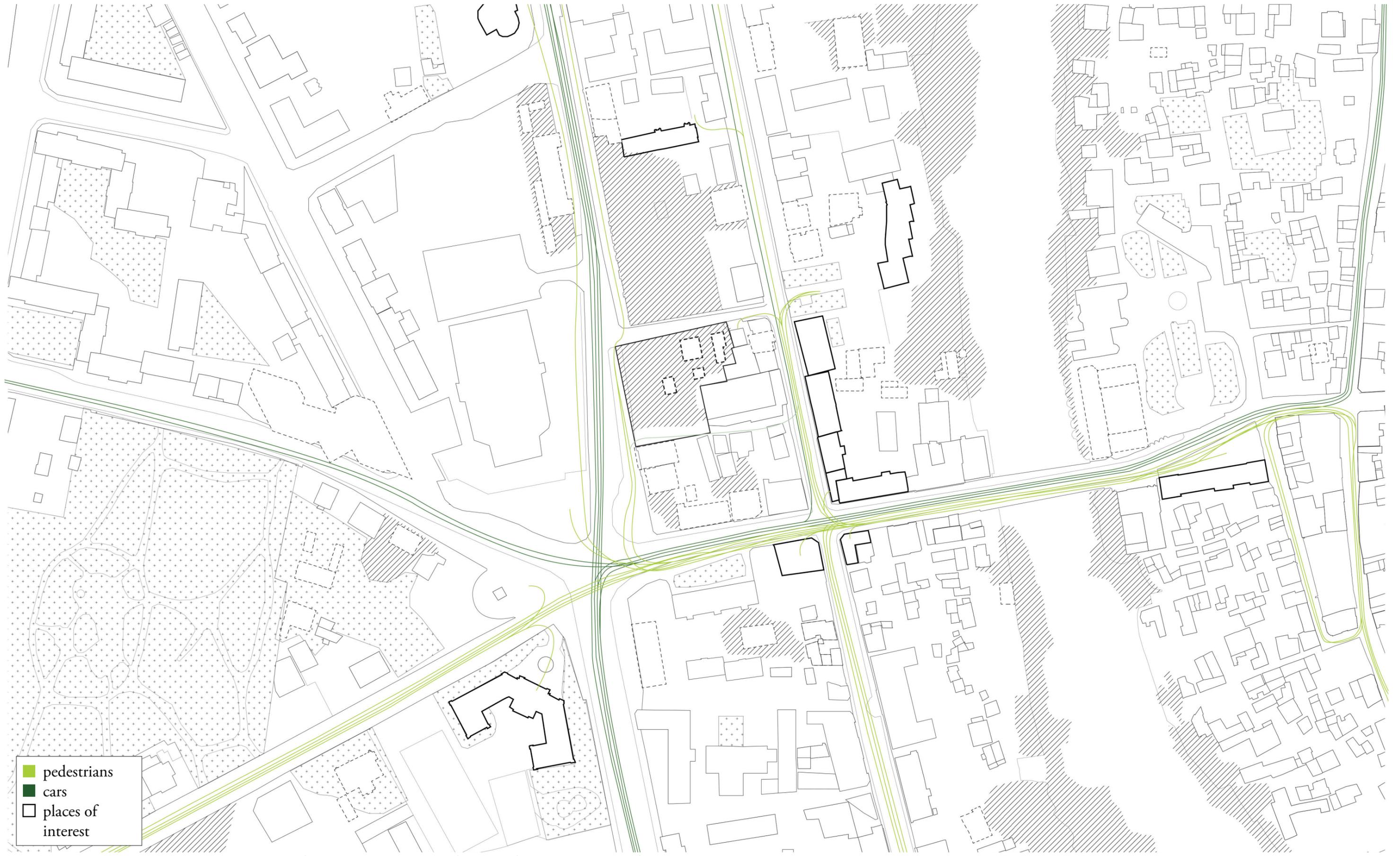


The site, autumn 2018

photograph: Anna Saracco



- residential
- commercial
- institutional
- cultural
- educational
- religious
- leisure
- ruined
- ▨ no programme



- pedestrians
- cars
- places of interest

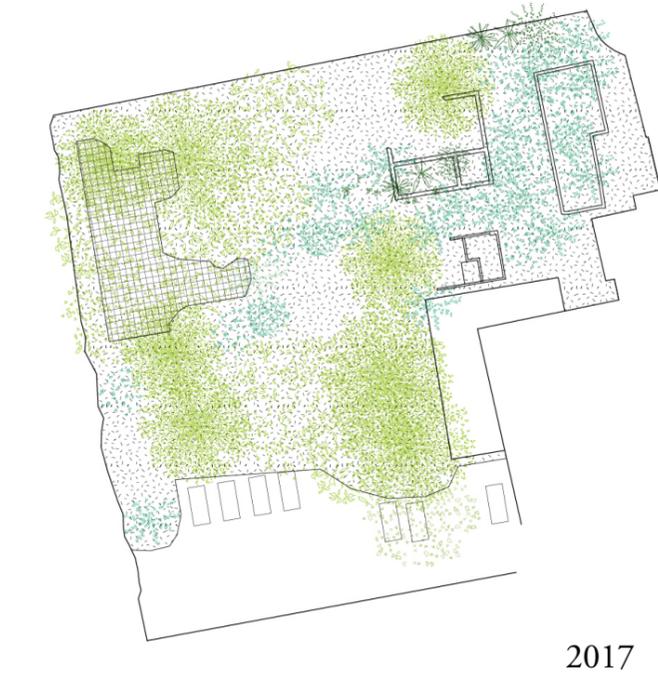
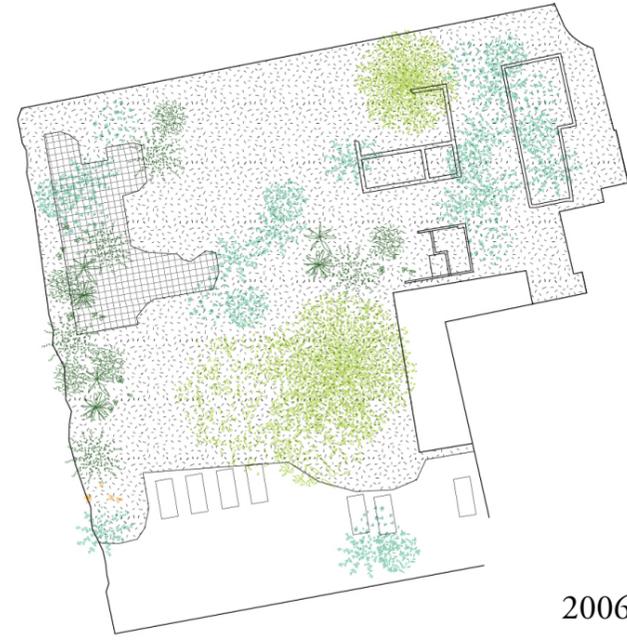
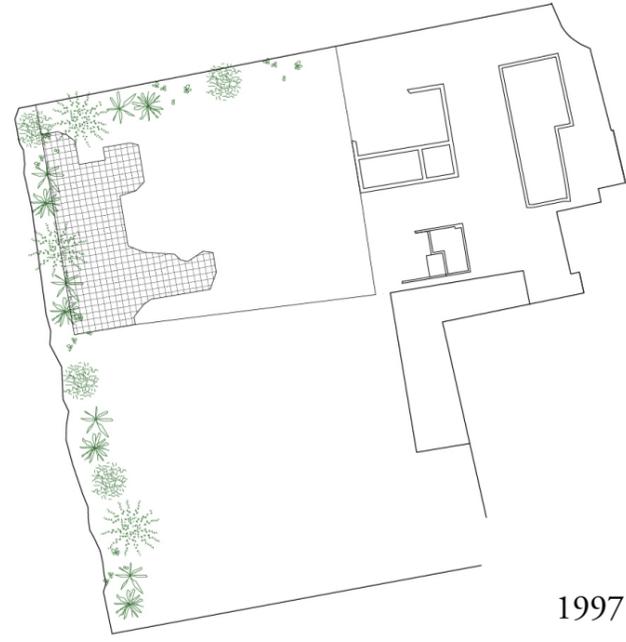
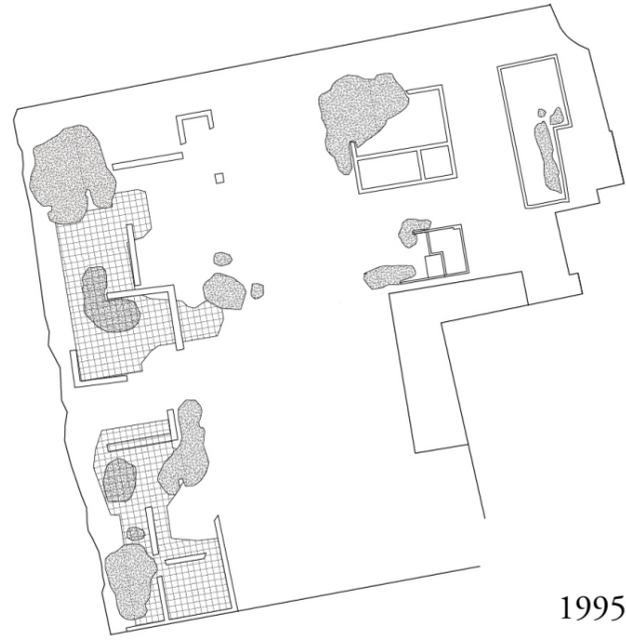


The site, spring 2019
photograph: Niels van Hasselt



The site, c. 1990

From urban to forest in 20 years





The site, 2018

Remains of the past in the site



Room 1:
 date of construction: 2008
 former use hypothesis:
 residential
 condition: unfinished (no
 doors/windows)
 remains: entire building
 area: 40 m² each floor
 users: none

Room 2:
 date of construction:
 Austro-Hungarian period
 former use hypothesis:
 residential
 condition: ruined, heavily
 damaged, no roof
 remains: outer walls
 enclosed area: 79 m²
 users: trees, climbers

Rooms 3, 4, 5:
 date of construction:
 Austro-Hungarian period
 former use hypothesis:
 commercial / public
 condition: ruined, heavily
 damaged, no roof
 remains: 2 facades, inner walls
 enclosed area: 50 m²
 users: trees, plants, climbers

Room 6:
 date of construction:
 Yugoslavian period
 former use hypothesis:
 residential
 condition: heavily damaged
 remains: three outer walls,
 inner walls, part of roof
 covered area: 17 m²
 users: rubble, plants

Traces:
 date of construction: Aus-
 tro-Hungarian period
 former use hypothesis: com-
 mercial / residential
 condition: heavily damaged,
 demolished
 remains: pavement

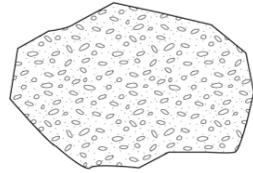


Inside/outside defined by ruins and plants

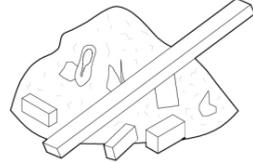
photograph: Niels van Hasselt

The spatial language of the urban wilderness

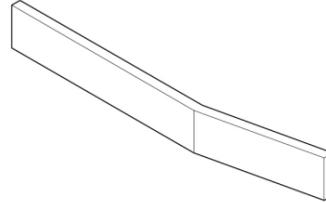
Surface



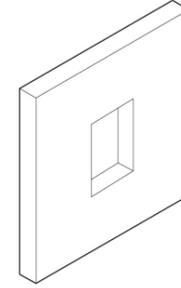
Object



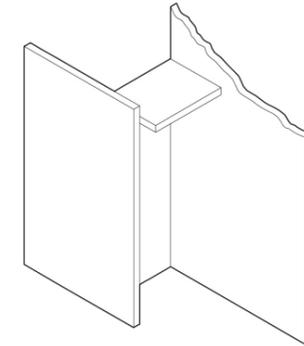
Plane



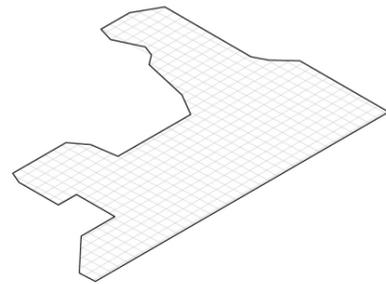
Variation



Cover



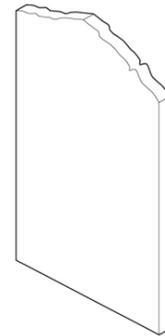
soil



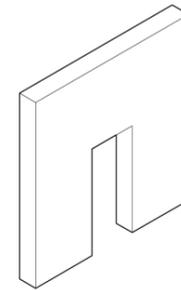
excess matter



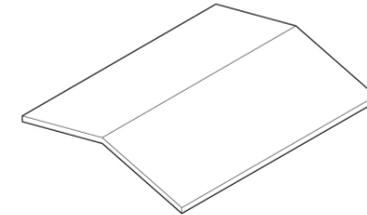
boundary



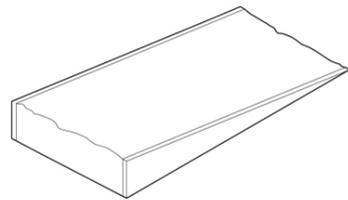
opening



elevated surface



pavement



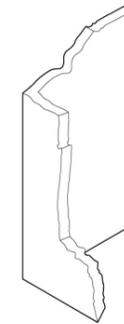
grass



wall



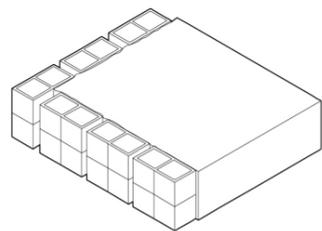
access



roof



ramp



plant



tree



corner



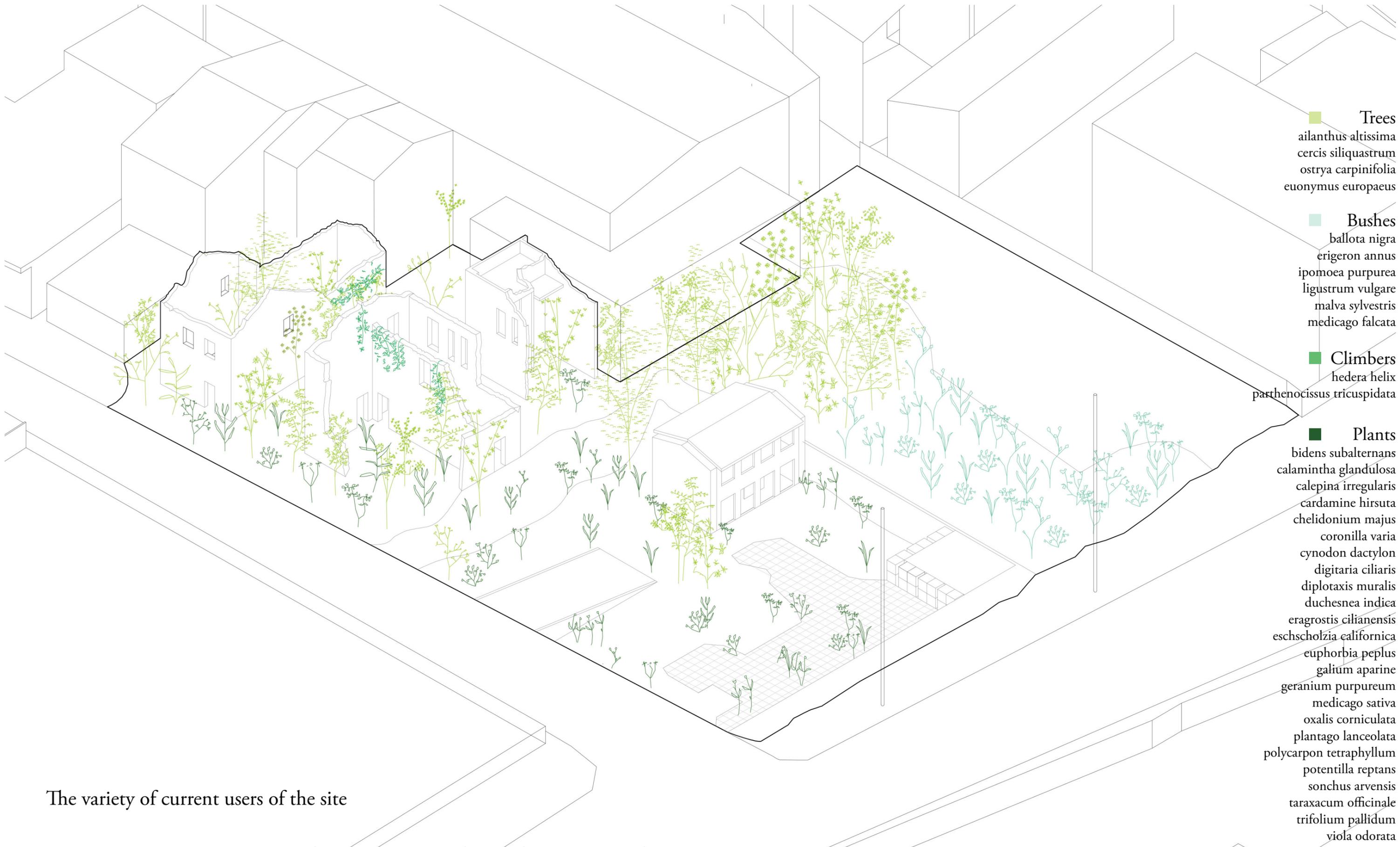
canopy

platform

bush

line

mass



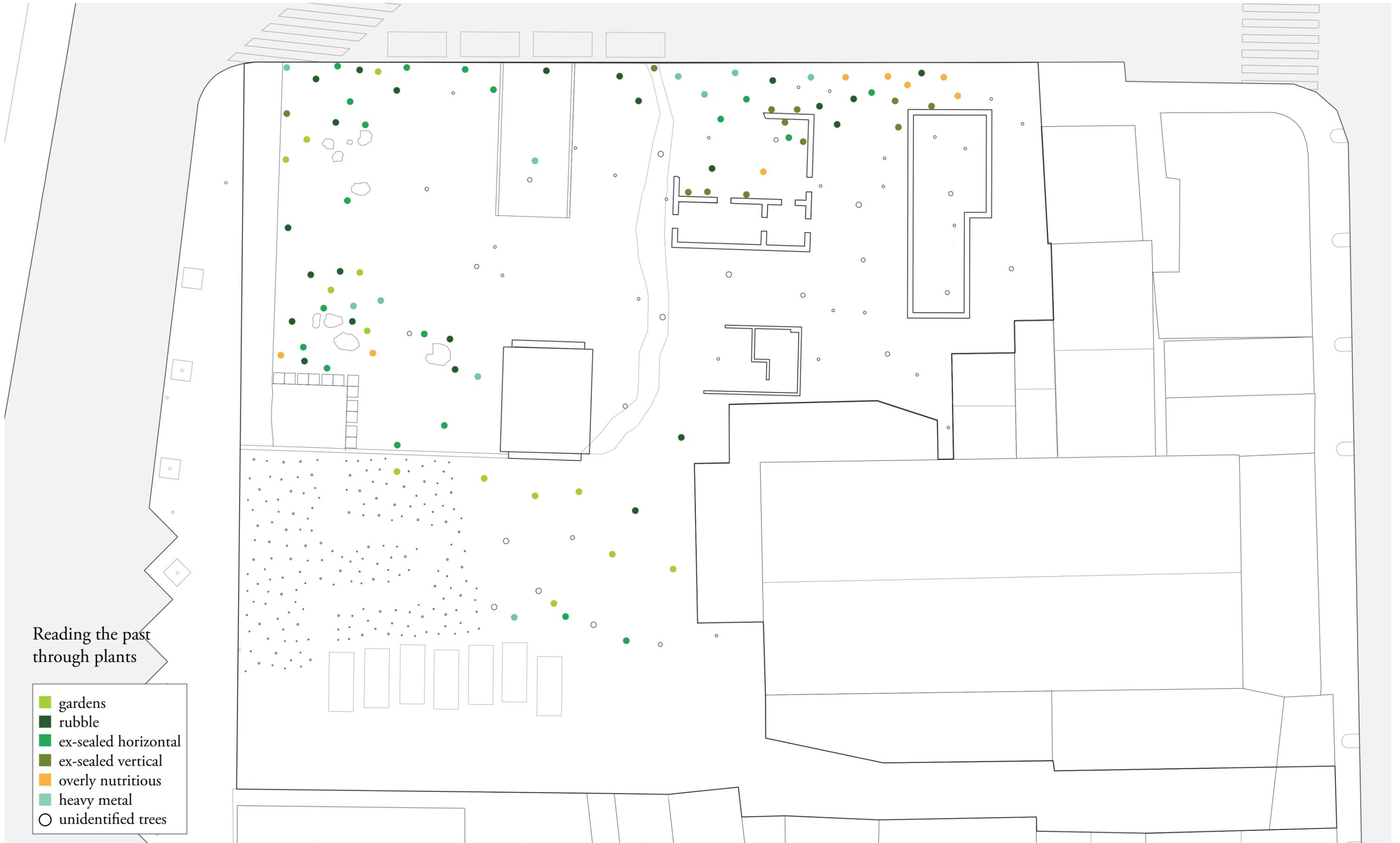
Trees
 ailanthus altissima
 cercis siliquastrum
 ostrya carpinifolia
 euonymus europaeus

Bushes
 ballota nigra
 erigeron annuus
 ipomoea purpurea
 ligustrum vulgare
 malva sylvestris
 medicago falcata

Climbers
 hедера helix
 parthenocissus tricuspidata

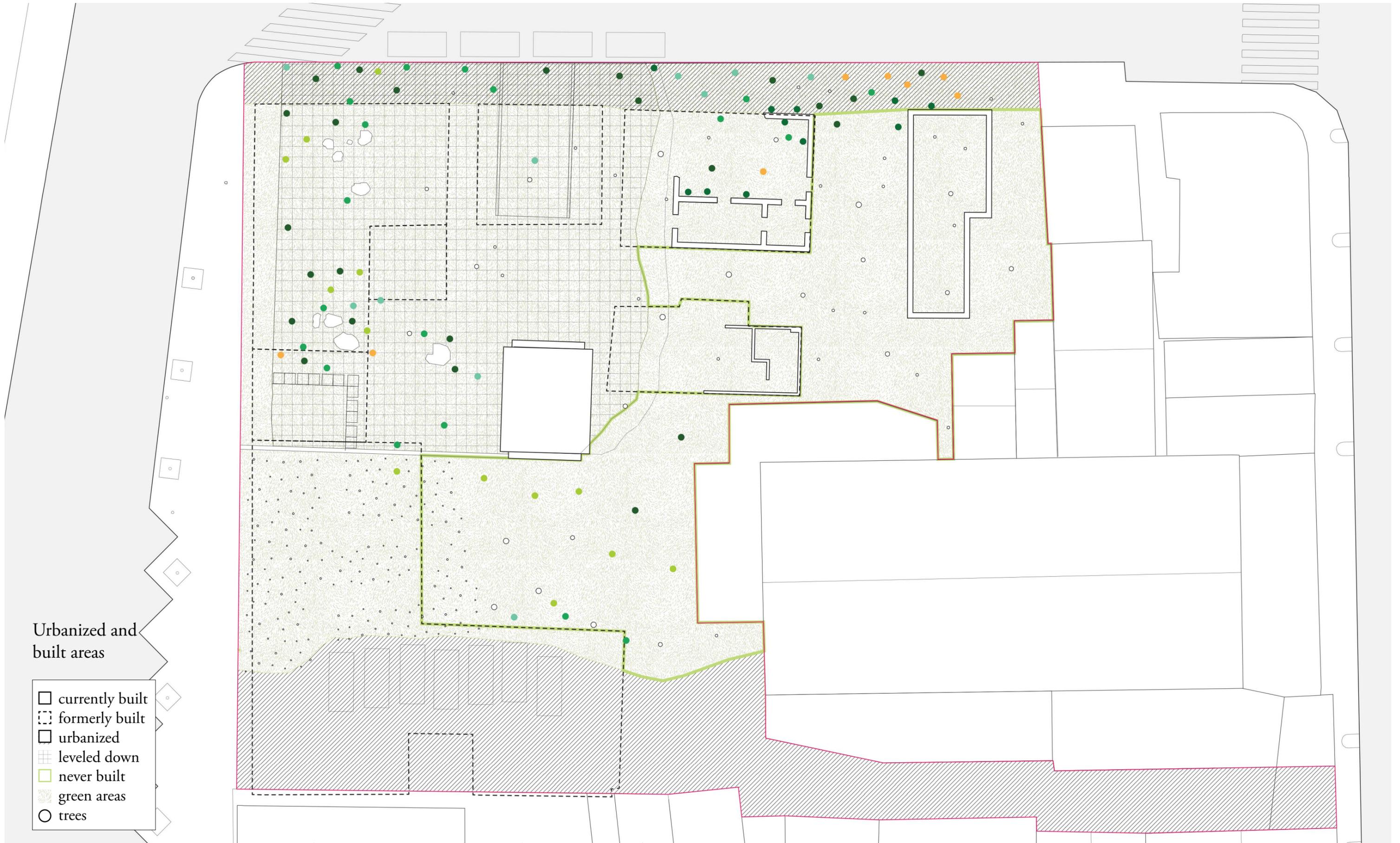
Plants
 bidens subalternans
 calamintha glandulosa
 calepina irregularis
 cardamine hirsuta
 chelidonium majus
 coronilla varia
 cynodon dactylon
 digitaria ciliaris
 diplotaxis muralis
 duchesnea indica
 eragrostis cilianensis
 eschscholzia californica
 euphorbia peplus
 galium aparine
 geranium purpureum
 medicago sativa
 oxalis corniculata
 plantago lanceolata
 polycarpon tetraphyllum
 potentilla reptans
 sonchus arvensis
 taraxacum officinale
 trifolium pallidum
 viola odorata

The variety of current users of the site



Reading the past
through plants

- gardens
- rubble
- ex-sealed horizontal
- ex-sealed vertical
- overly nutritious
- heavy metal
- unidentified trees



Urbanized and built areas

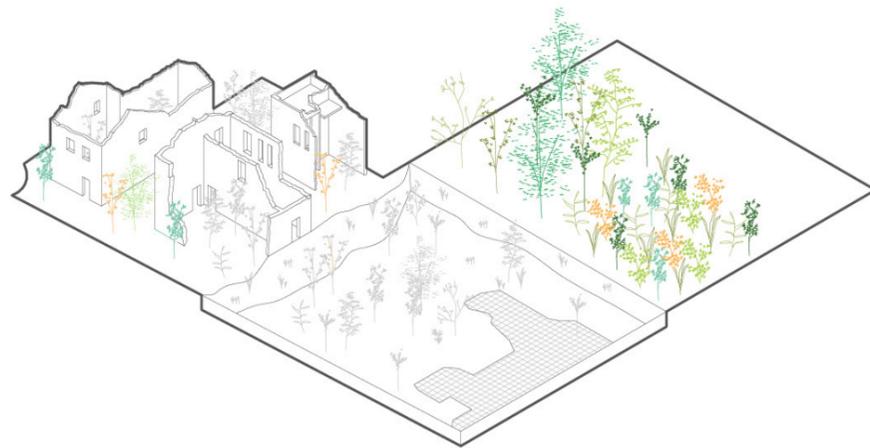
- currently built
- formerly built
- urbanized
- ▤ leveled down
- ▤ never built
- ▤ green areas
- trees



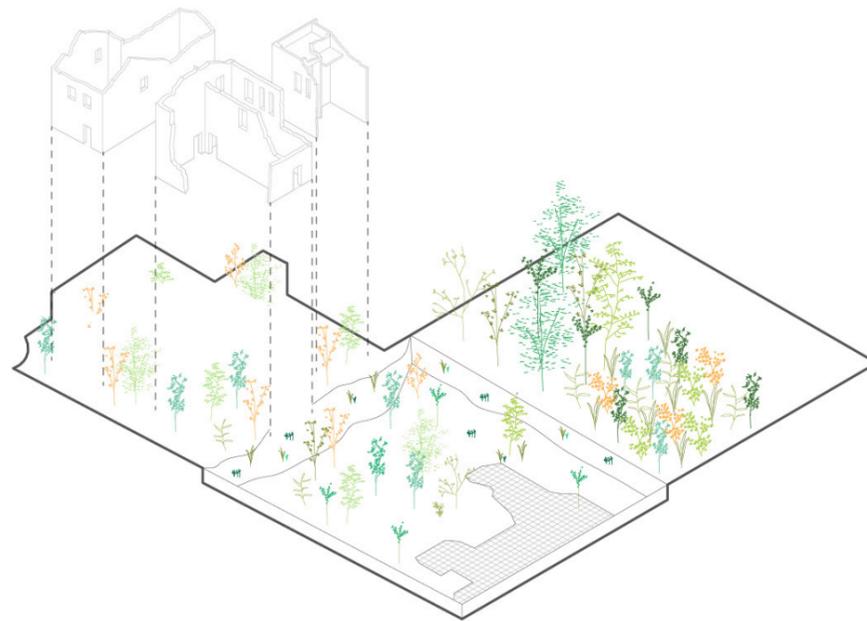
Elements to preserve in each area



3 areas with different characters



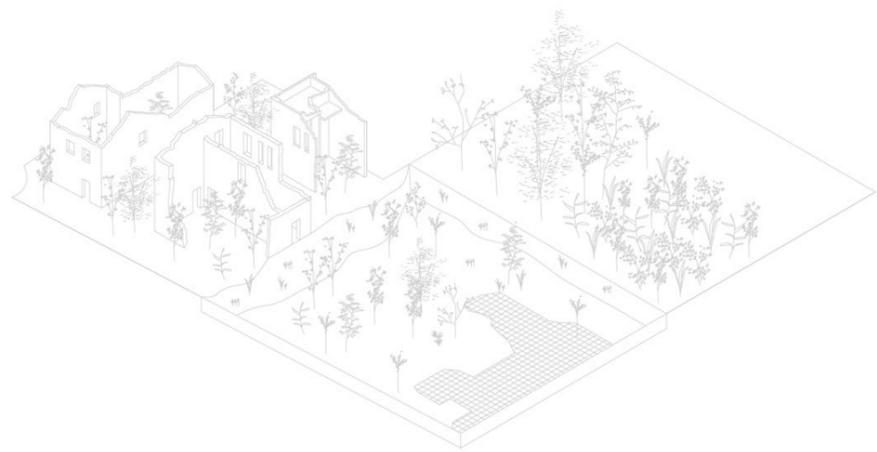
taming nature



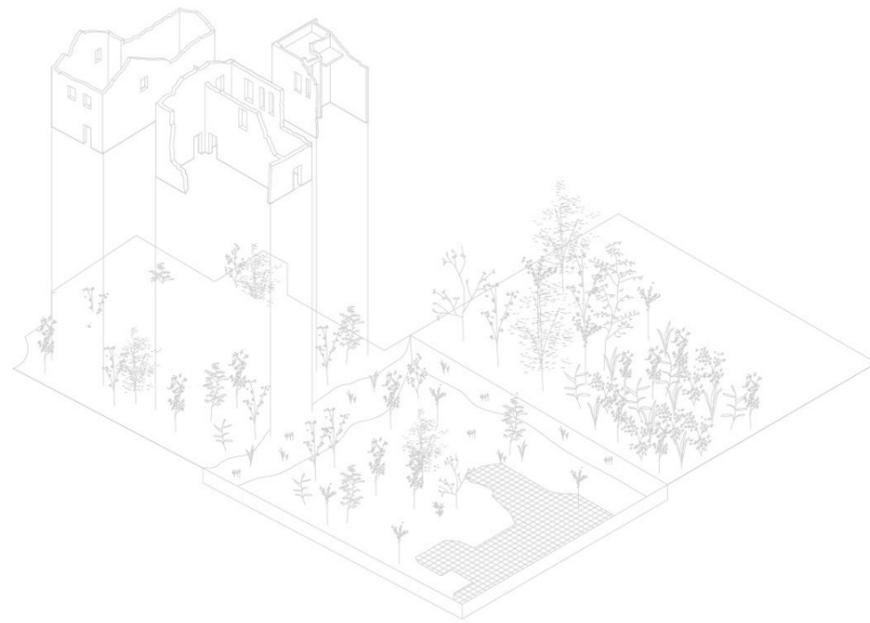
removing the ruin



letting them coexist



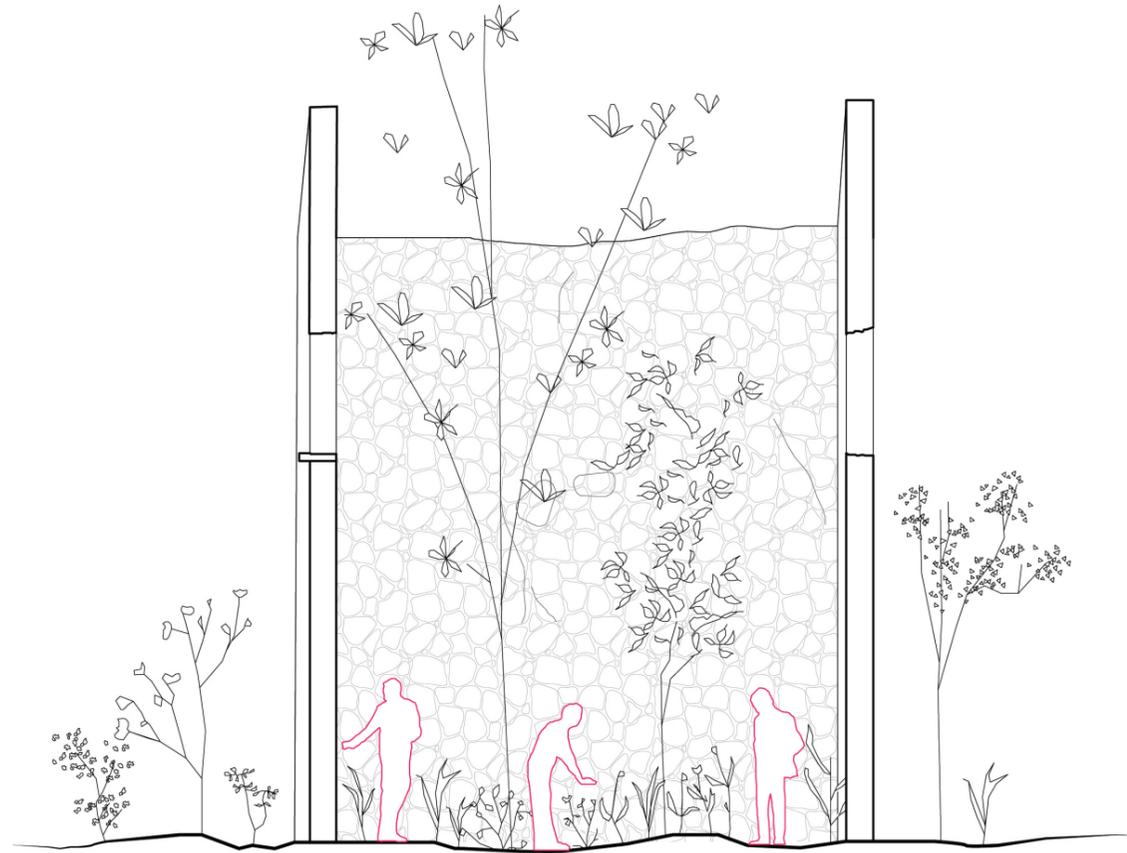
taming nature



removing the ruin



letting them coexist



Mediating the contact of humans with the urban wilderness as a way to highlight and preserve its value, understood as a haven for a nature rarely seen in the city, as a programmatic voids that encourage the introduction of new, often spontaneous/unplanned uses and as places for the entanglement of things and species.

Part III:
Design proposal





Residential

Educational
primary school
high school

overgrown
recreational

Cultural
theater

Recreational
park

Residential

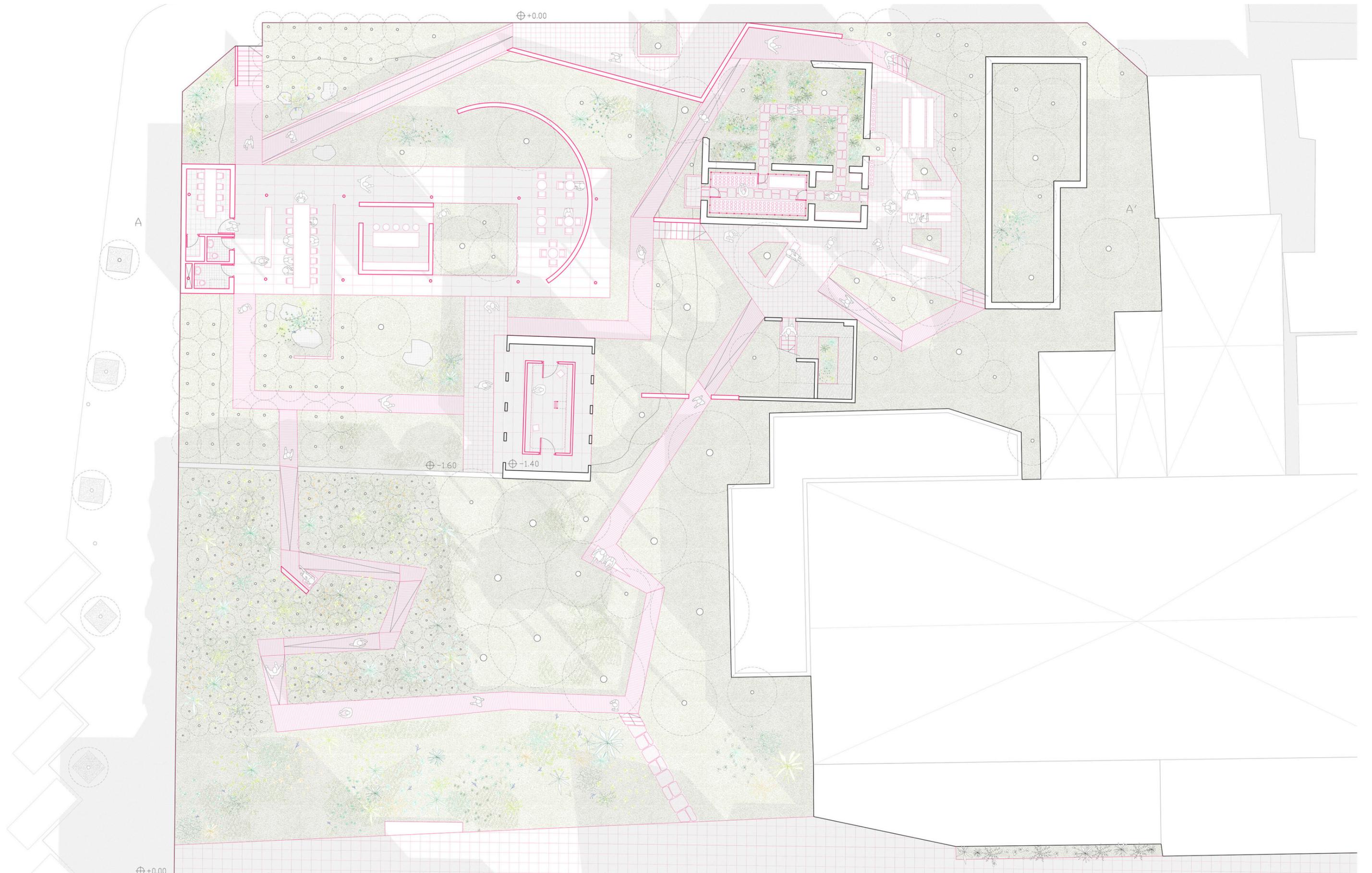
Educational
high school
united world college

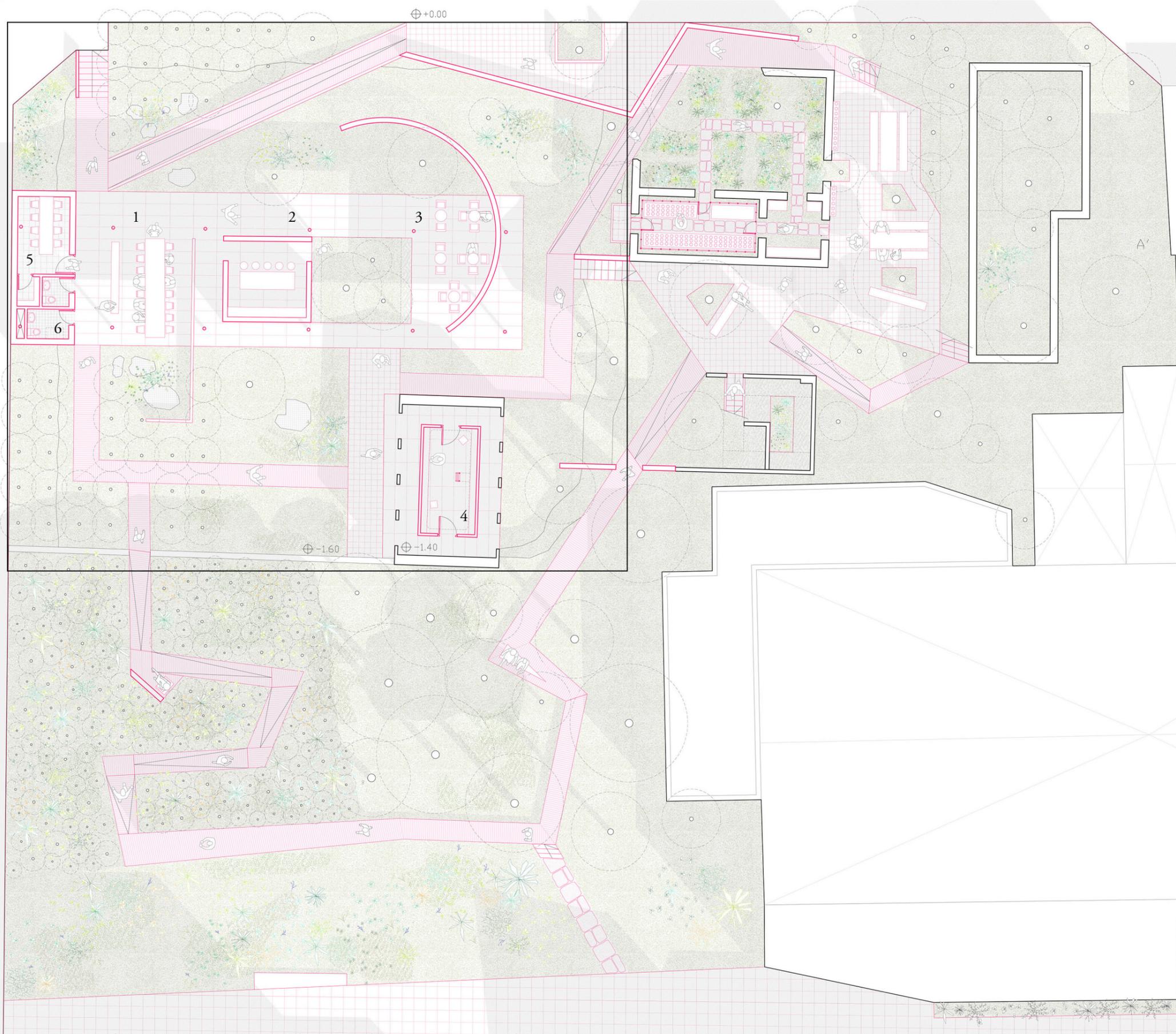
Relating to the surroundings



Acting on the block

Transformation of the (scattered) block through the connection and intervention of the remaining pieces, creating new arrangements that enhance and preserve the particular qualities given to the site by the diverse natural and man-made elements accumulated in it over time.





the plant library

material - botanic library

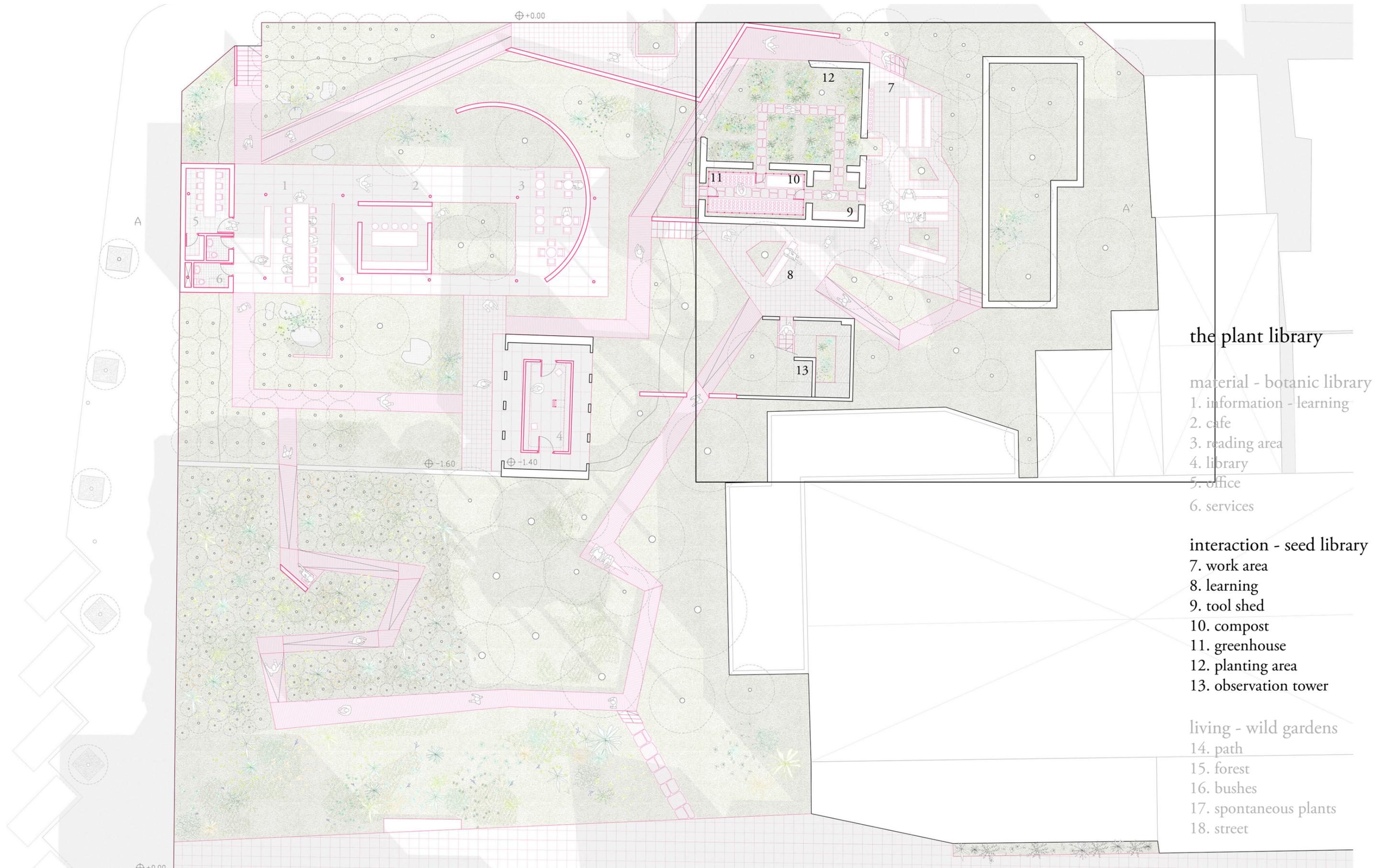
- 1. information - learning
- 2. cafe
- 3. reading area
- 4. library
- 5. office
- 6. services

interaction - seed library

- 7. work area
- 8. learning
- 9. tool shed
- 10. compost
- 11. greenhouse
- 12. planting area
- 13. observation tower

living - wild gardens

- 14. path
- 15. forest
- 16. bushes
- 17. spontaneous plants
- 18. street



the plant library

material - botanic library

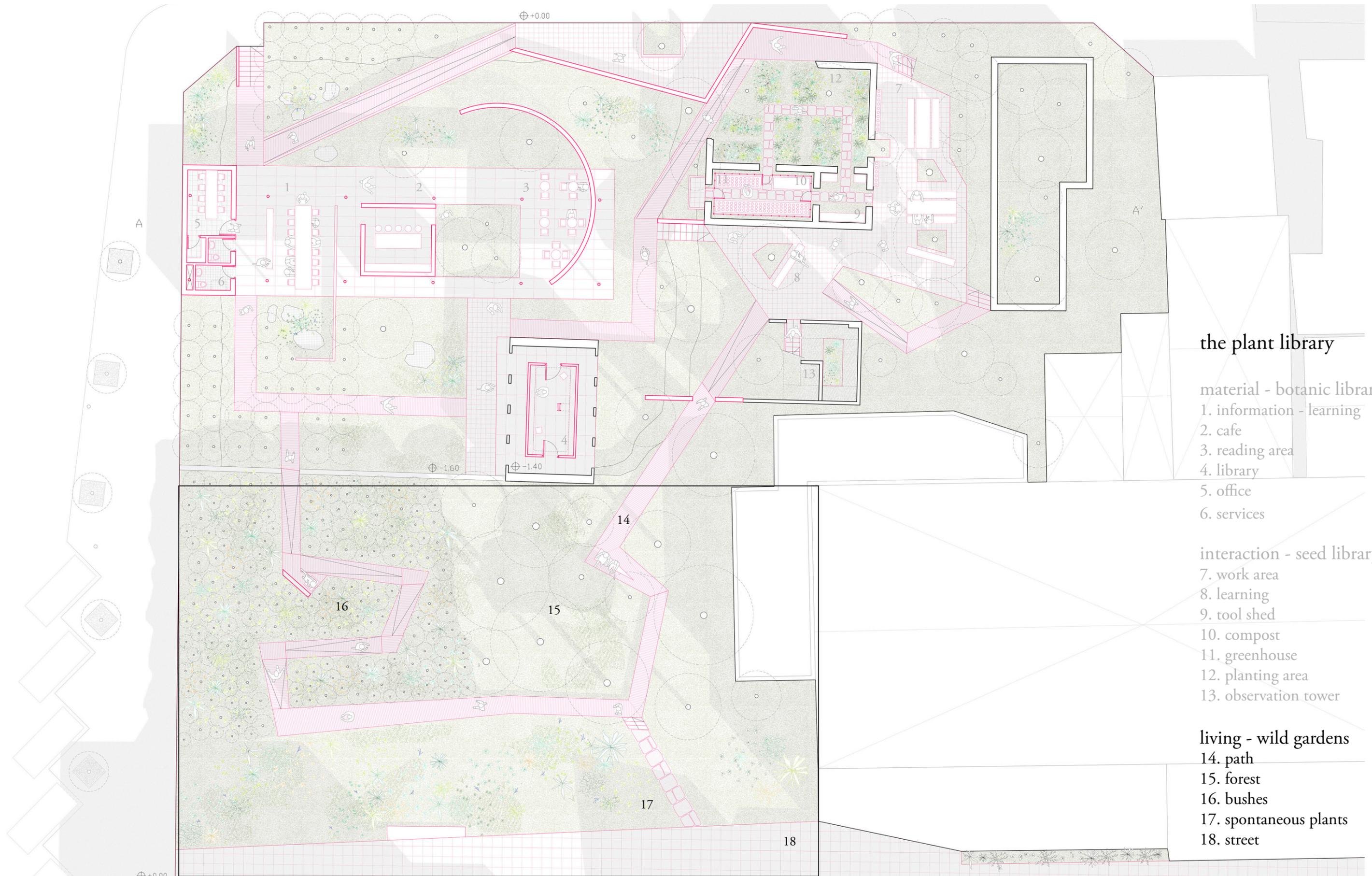
- 1. information - learning
- 2. cafe
- 3. reading area
- 4. library
- 5. office
- 6. services

interaction - seed library

- 7. work area
- 8. learning
- 9. tool shed
- 10. compost
- 11. greenhouse
- 12. planting area
- 13. observation tower

living - wild gardens

- 14. path
- 15. forest
- 16. bushes
- 17. spontaneous plants
- 18. street



the plant library

material - botanic library

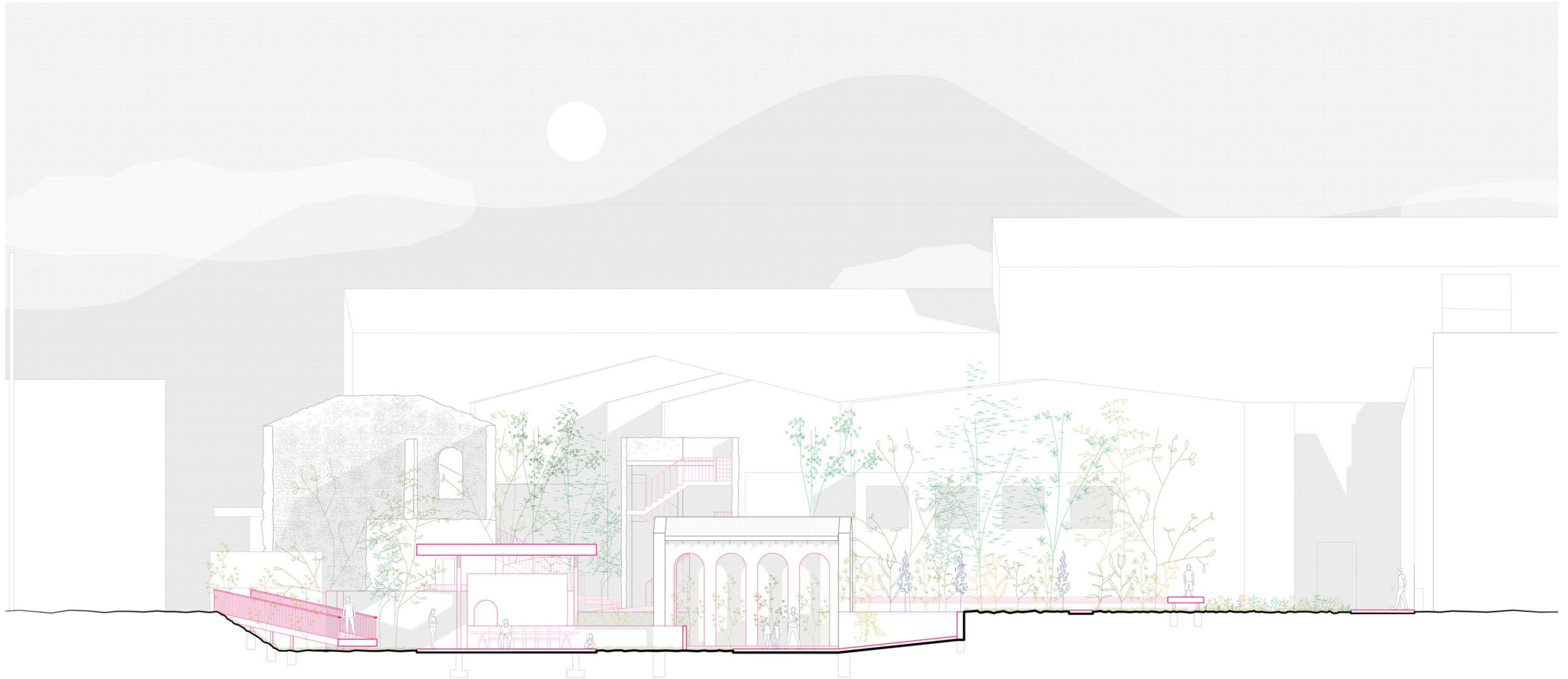
- 1. information - learning
- 2. cafe
- 3. reading area
- 4. library
- 5. office
- 6. services

interaction - seed library

- 7. work area
- 8. learning
- 9. tool shed
- 10. compost
- 11. greenhouse
- 12. planting area
- 13. observation tower

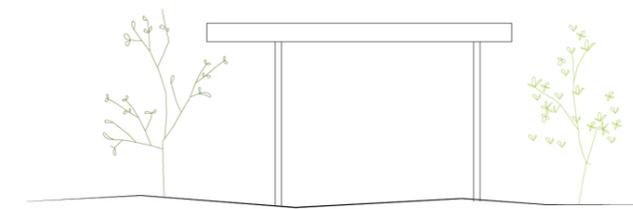
living - wild gardens

- 14. path
- 15. forest
- 16. bushes
- 17. spontaneous plants
- 18. street

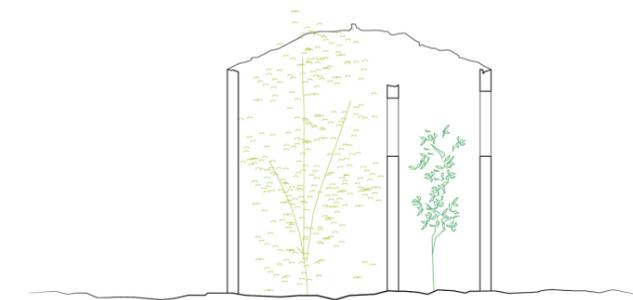




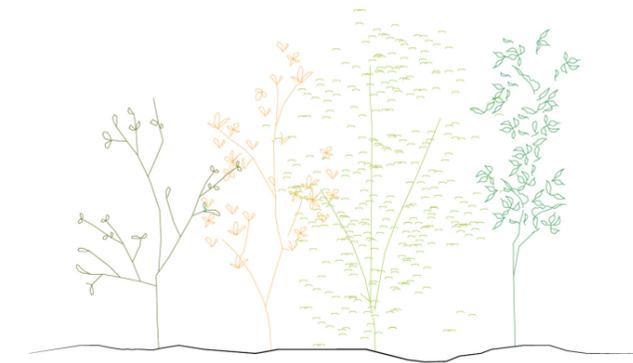
Experiencing the site with the path



1. man-made



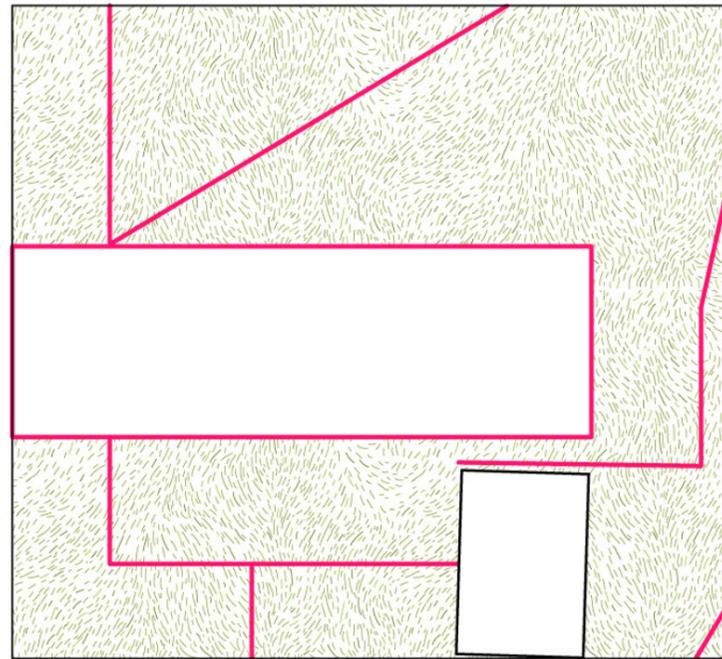
2. man-made decaying



3. natural

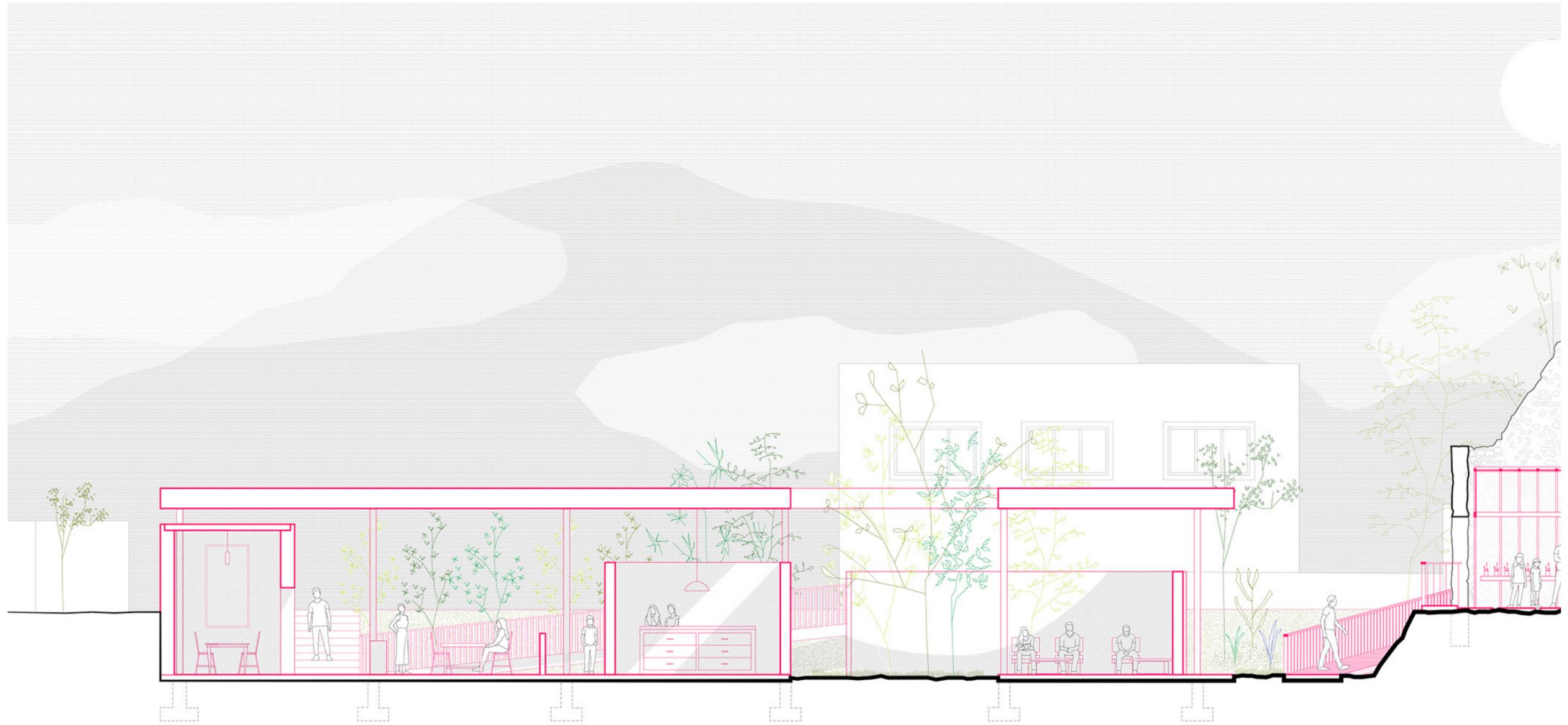


Finding traces of the past



Area 1:
About humans / the man-made



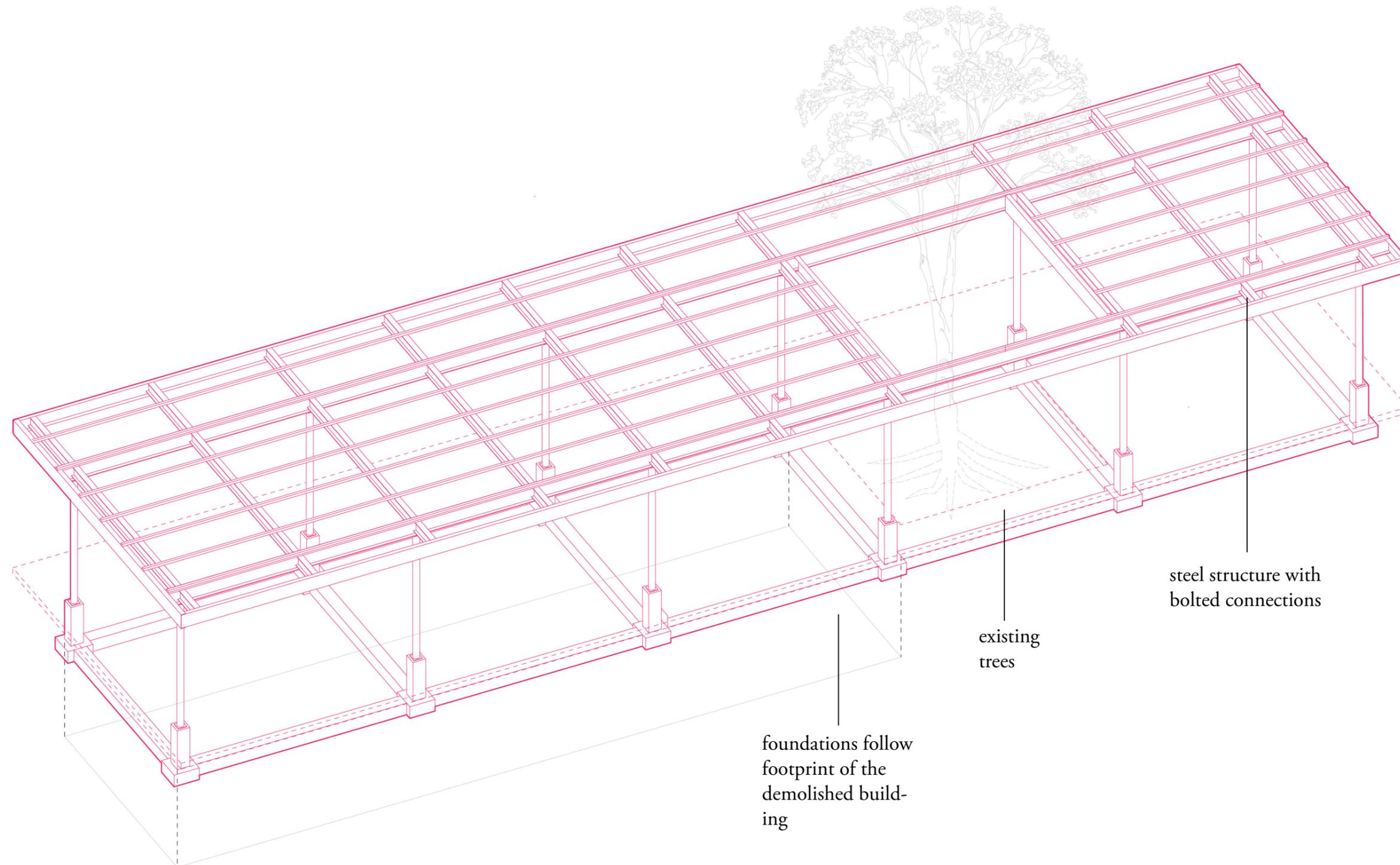


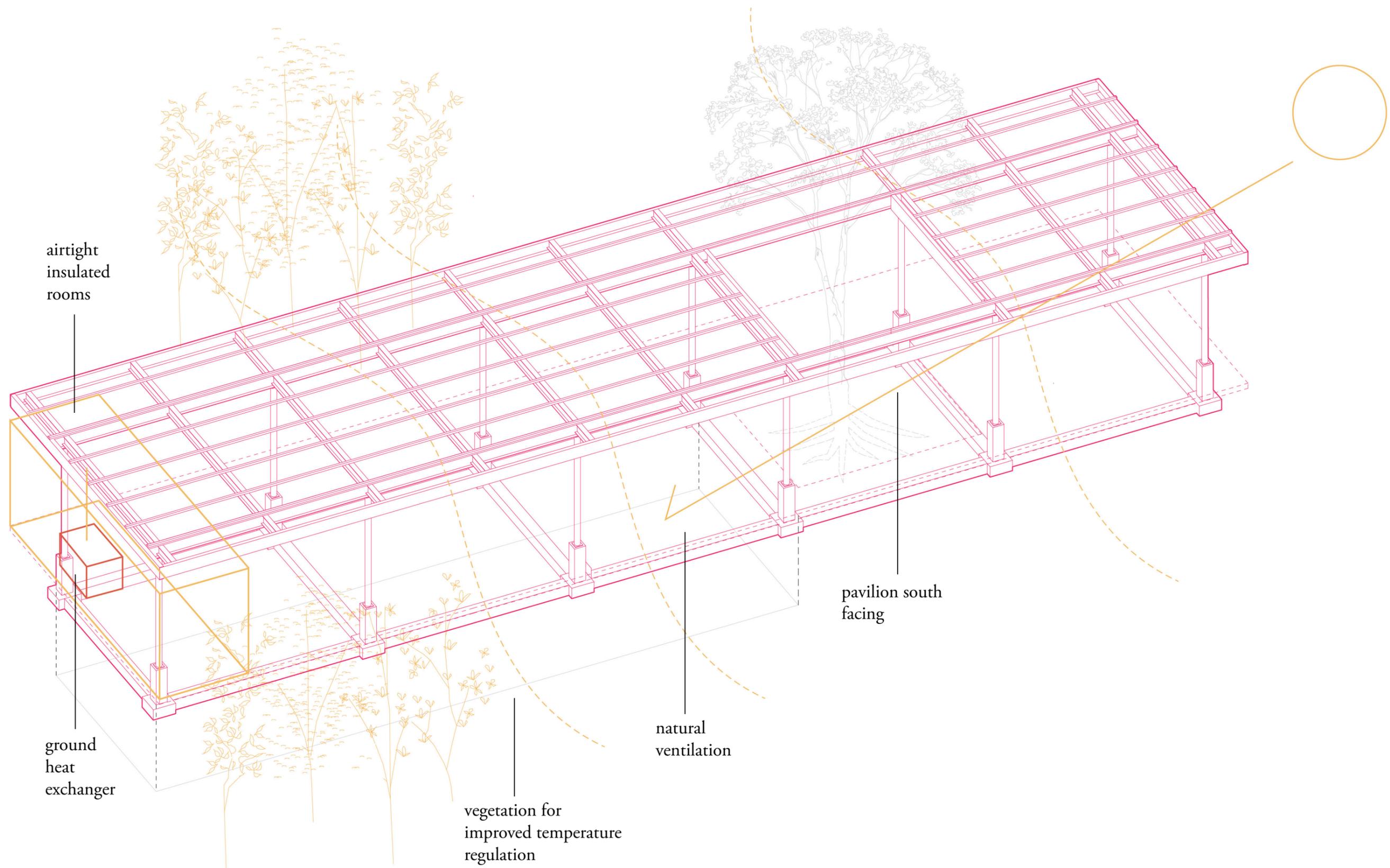
office/
services

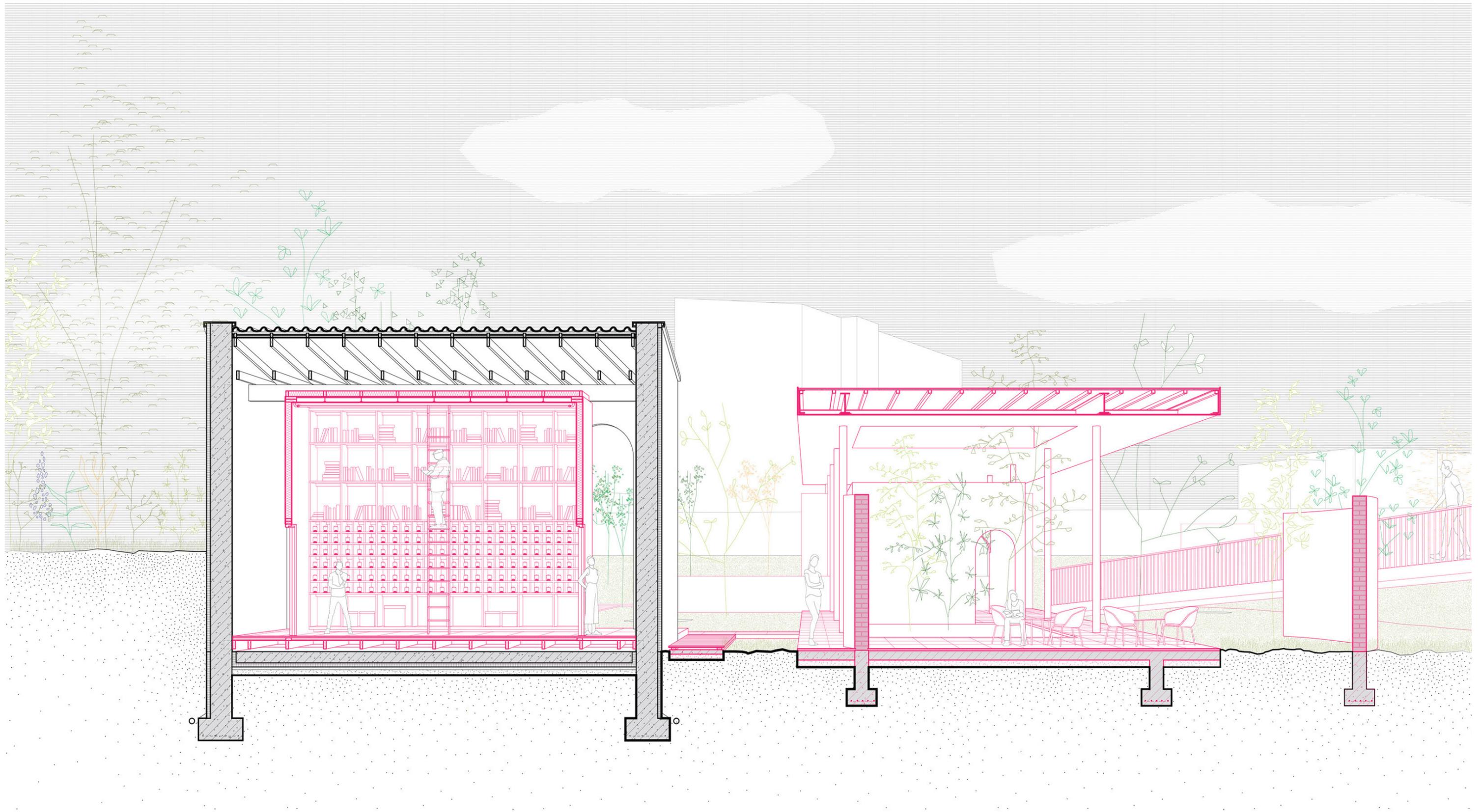
information/
learning

cafe

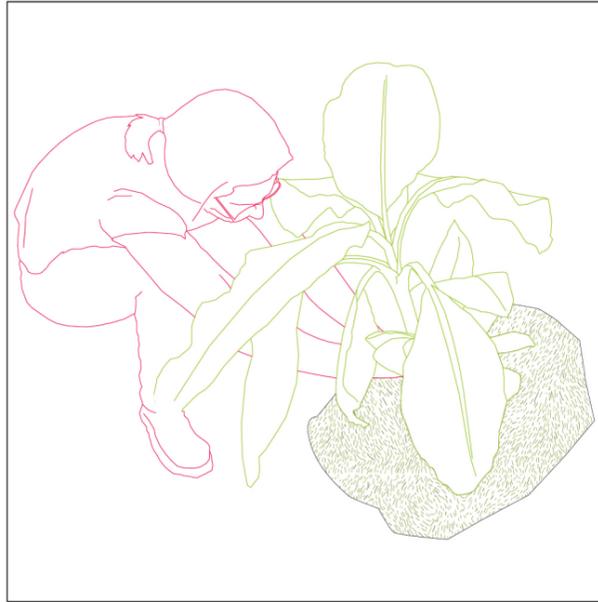
reading



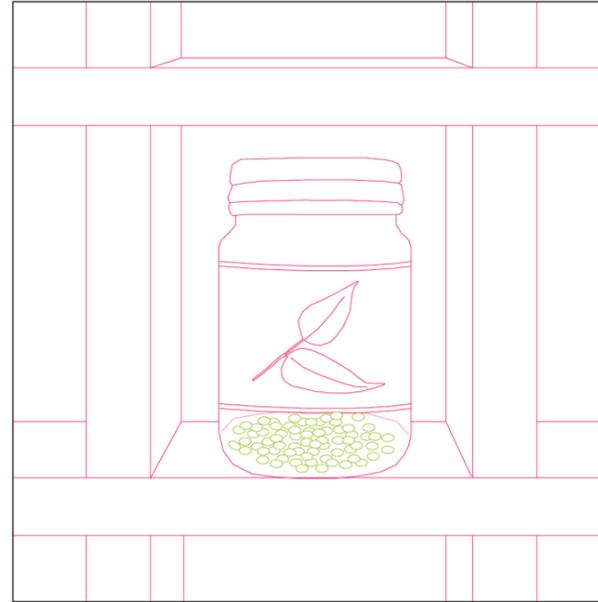




starting the seed library



pick



store



borrow



plant



harvest

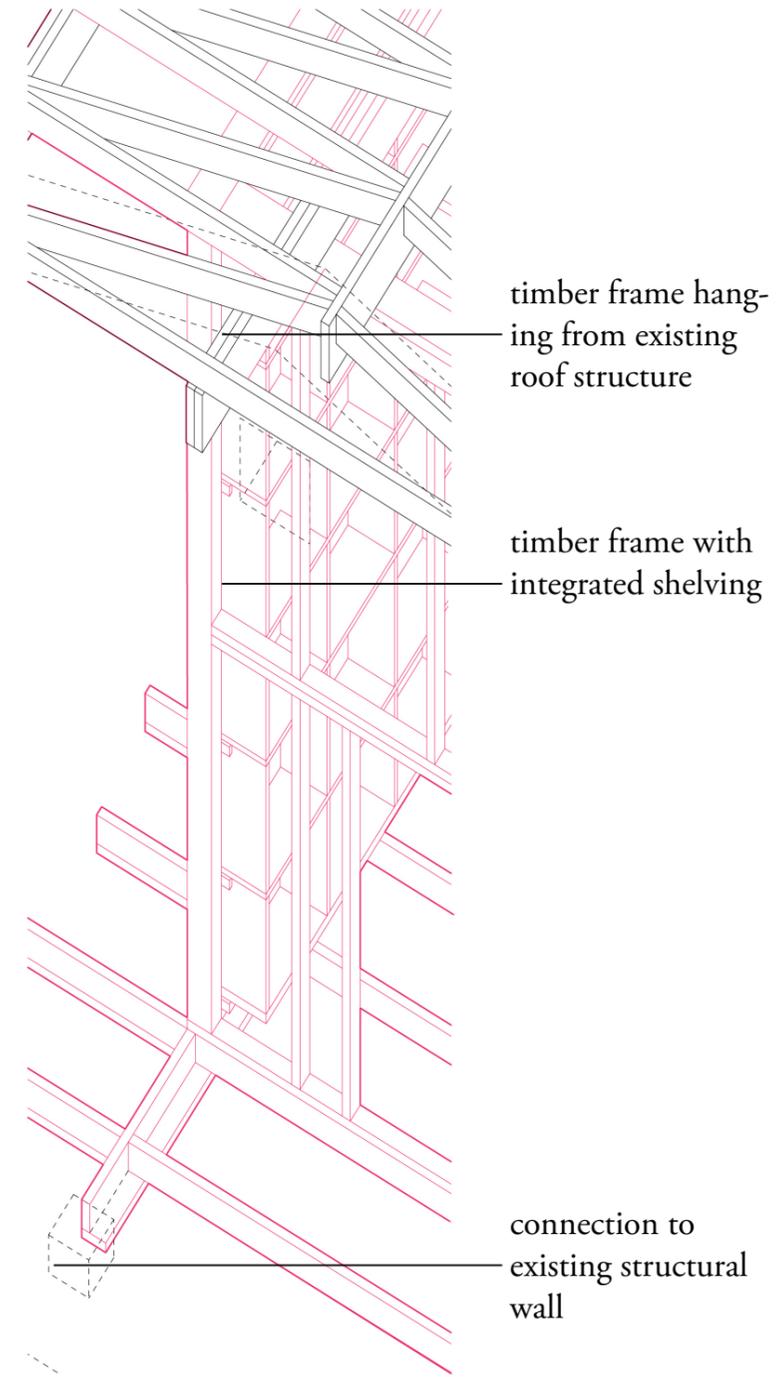
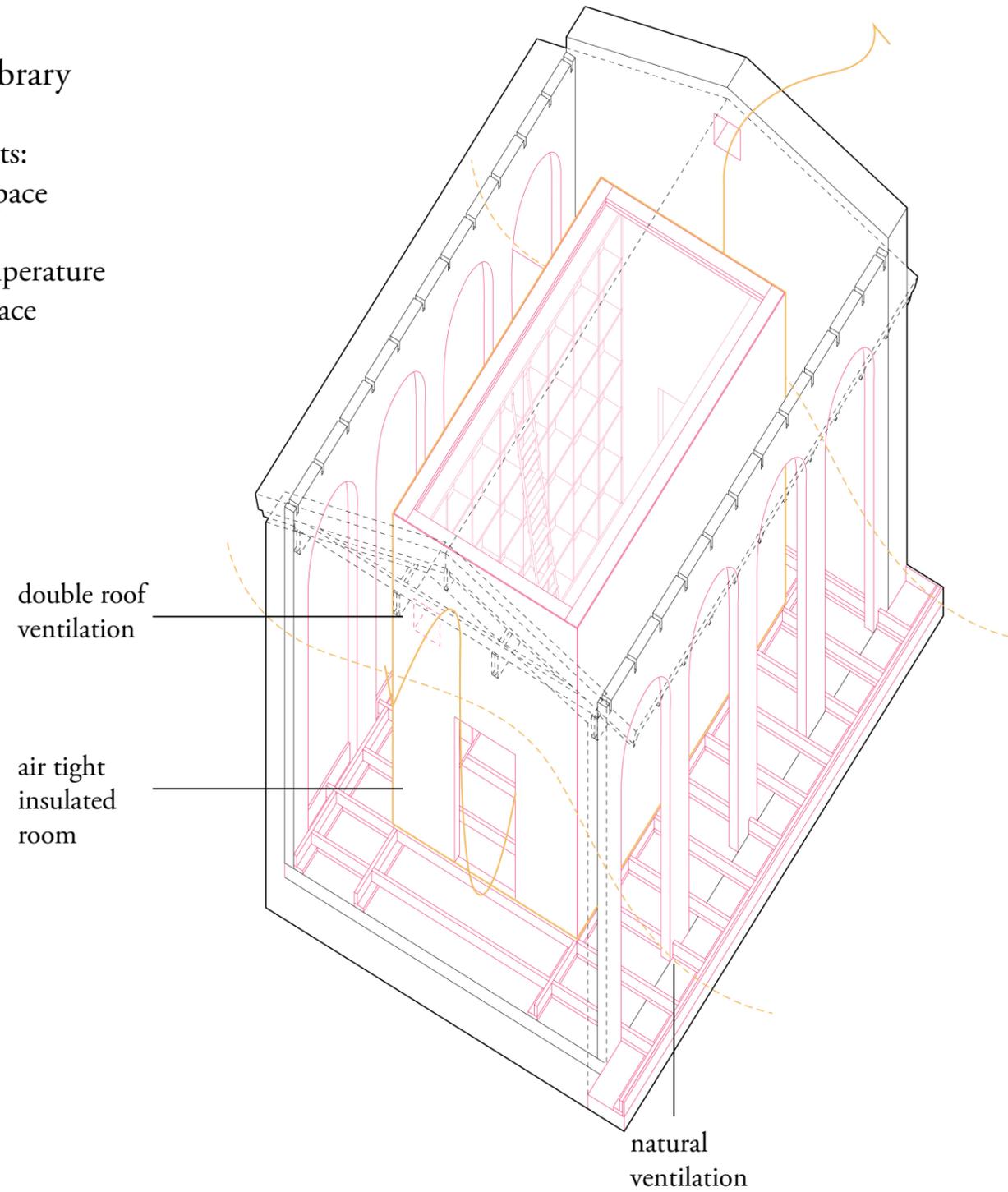


exchange

the seed library

requirements:

- enclosed space
- shade
- stable temperature
- storage space



Starting the seed library: catalog



Ailanthus altissima



Ballota nigra



Bidens subalternans



Cardamine hirsuta



Coronilla varia



Diplotaxis muralis



Eragrostis cilianensis



Erigeron annuus



Eschscholzia californica



Galium aparine



Geranium purpureum



Malva sylvestris



Medicago sativa



Ostrya carpinifolia



Potentilla reptans



Sonchus arvensis



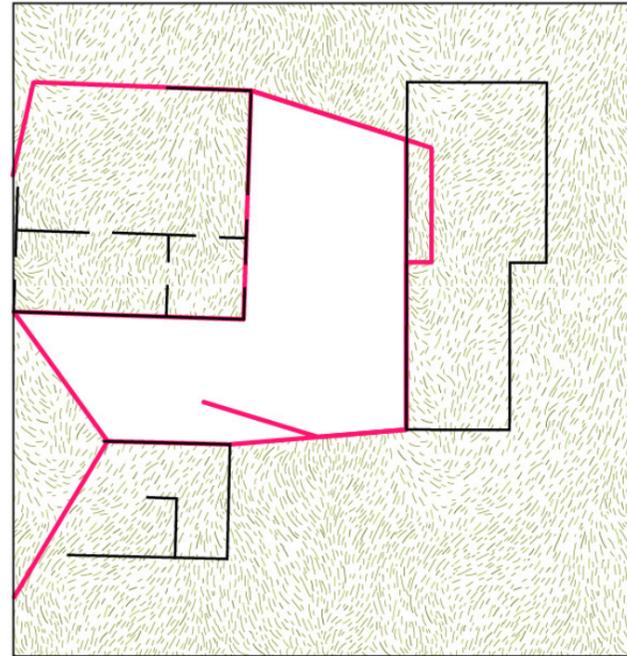
Taraxacum officinale



Trifolium pallidum



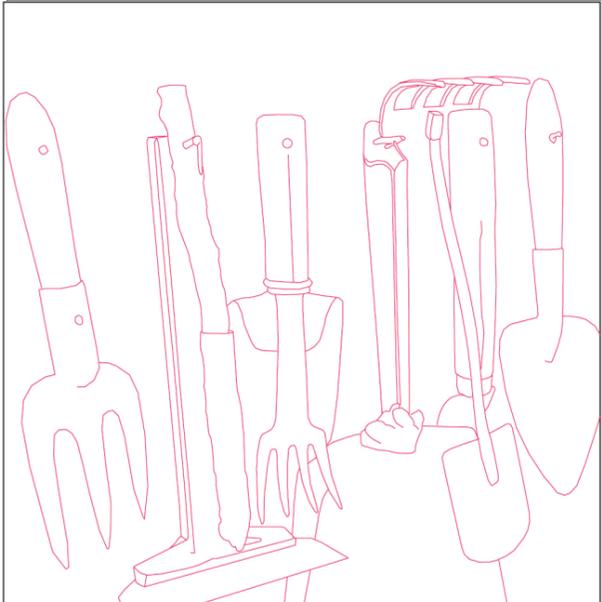




Area 2:
About interaction



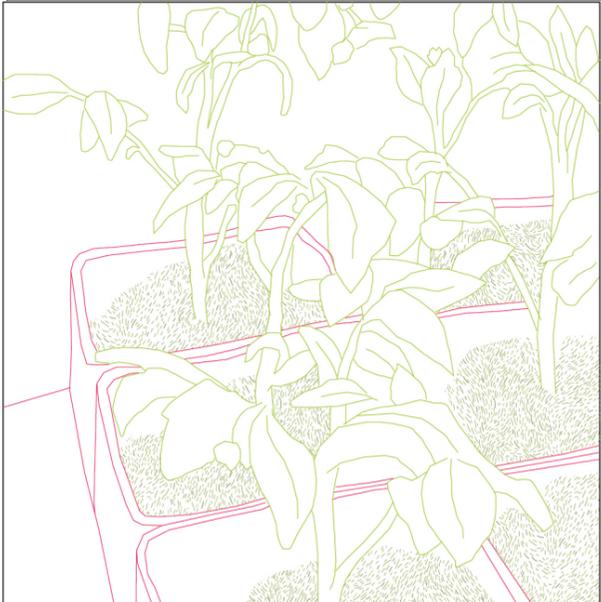
Taking care of the seeds



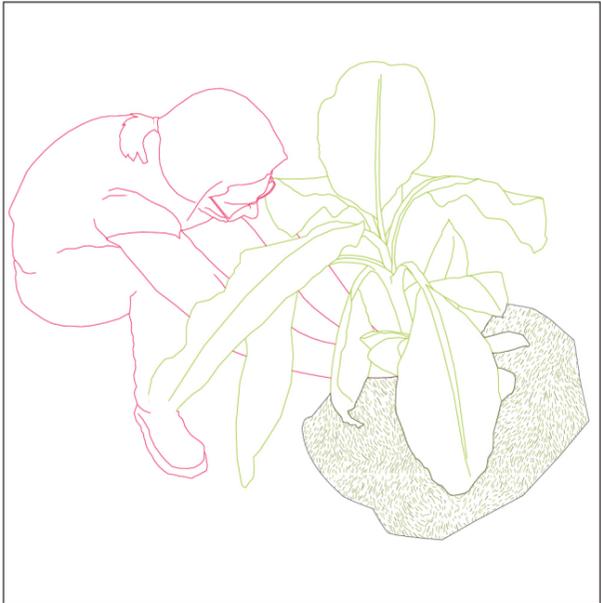
grab tools



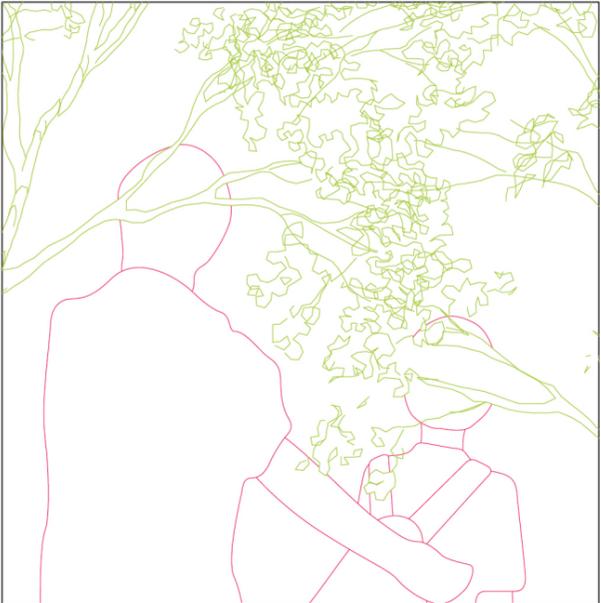
prepare seedlings



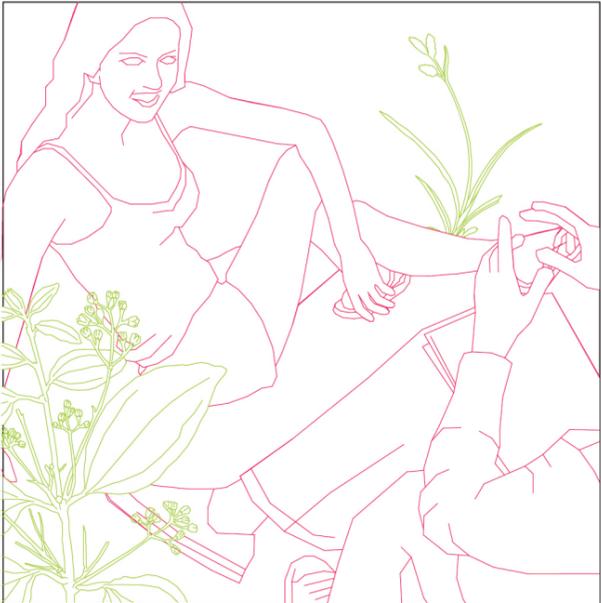
take older plant from greenhouse



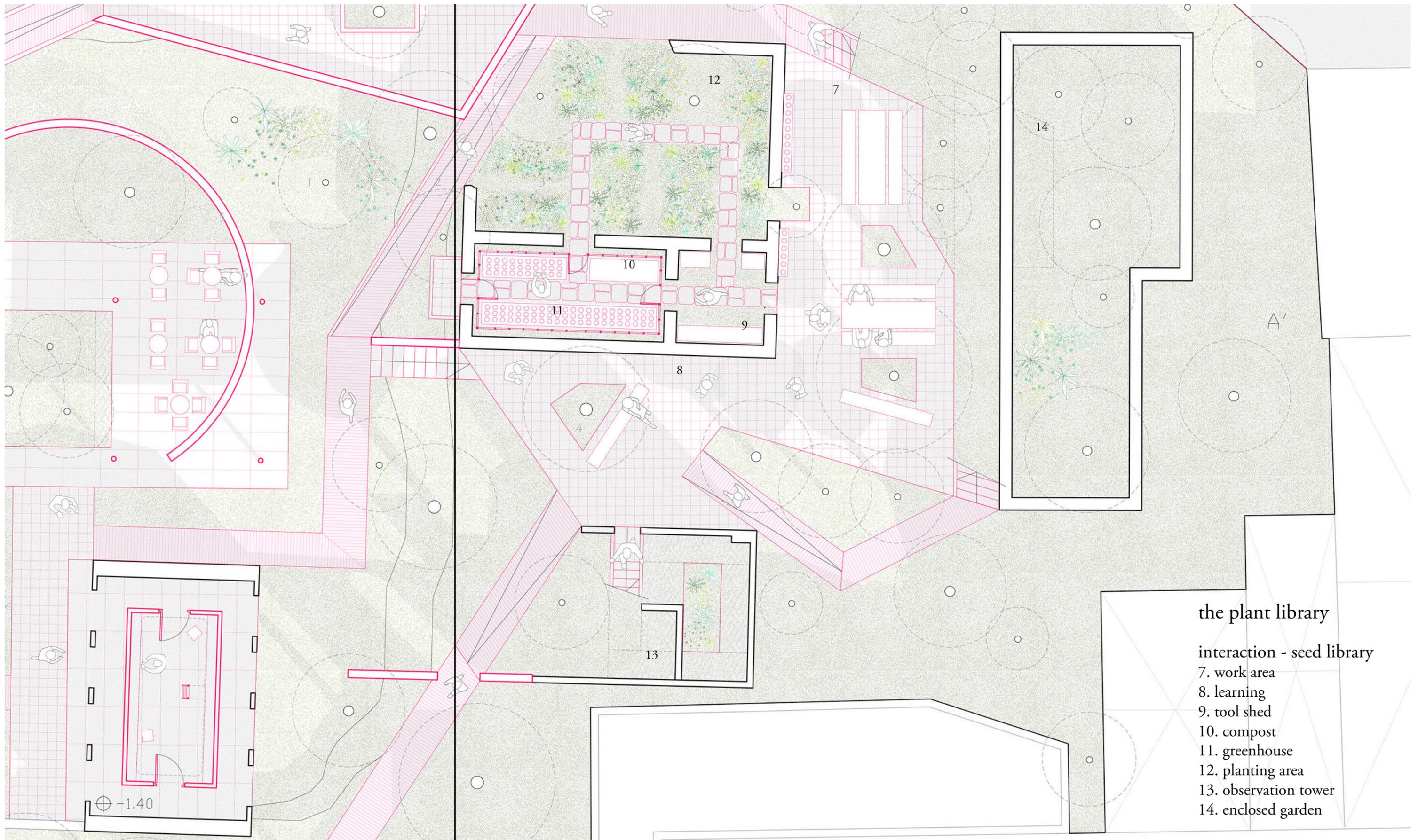
plant in the ruin



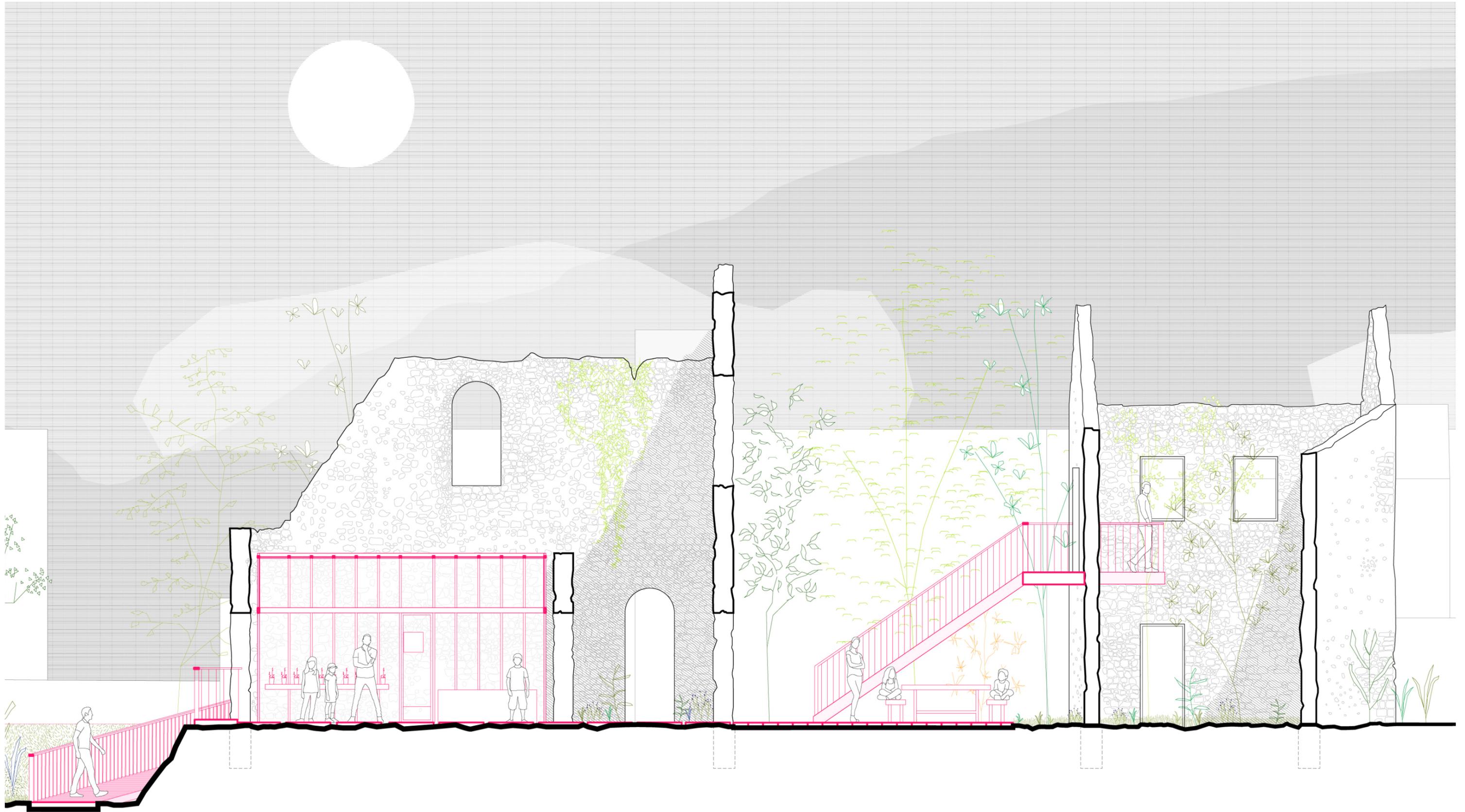
experience



learn from experience



- the plant library**
- interaction - seed library
- 7. work area
 - 8. learning
 - 9. tool shed
 - 10. compost
 - 11. greenhouse
 - 12. planting area
 - 13. observation tower
 - 14. enclosed garden



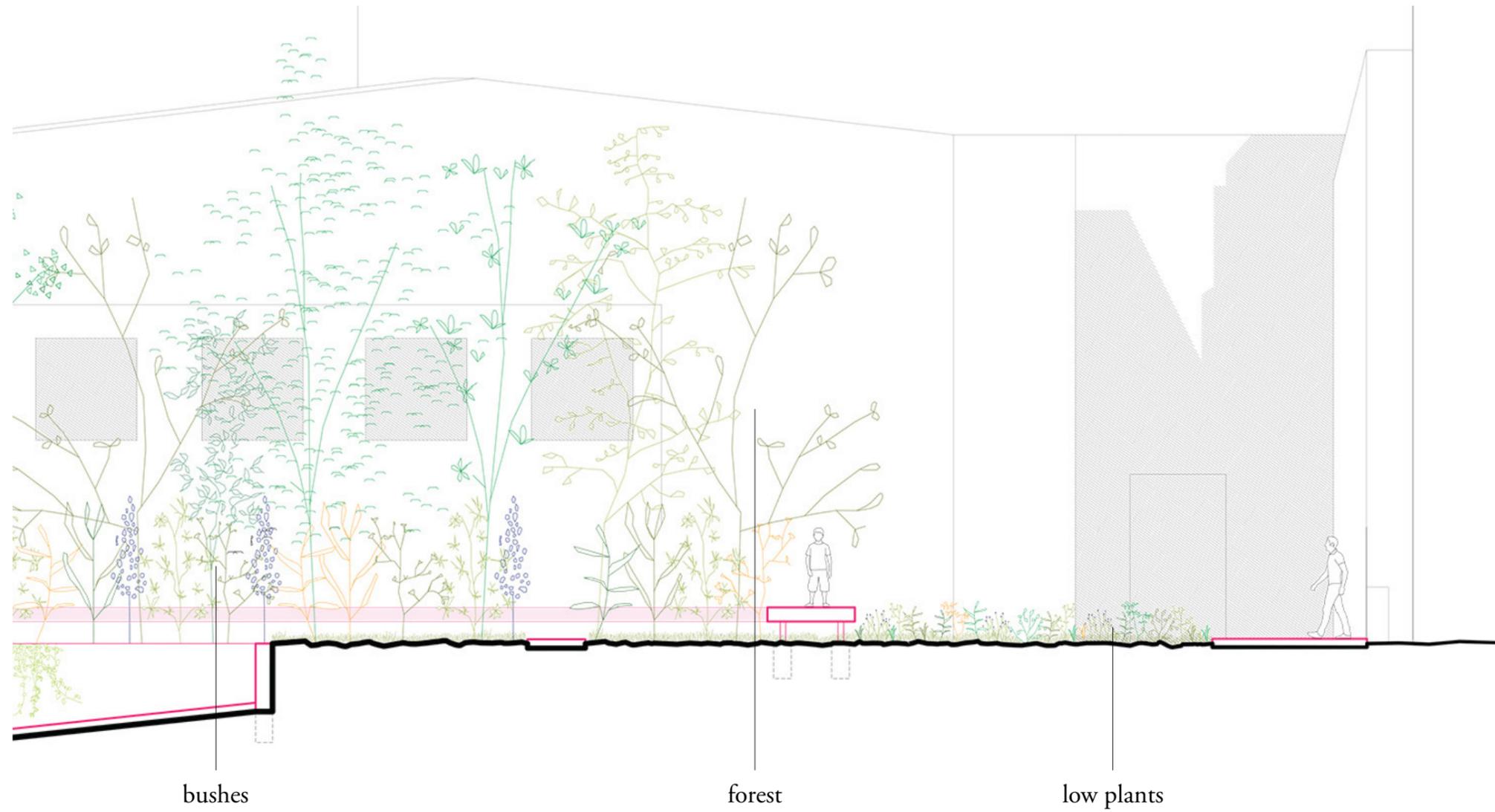




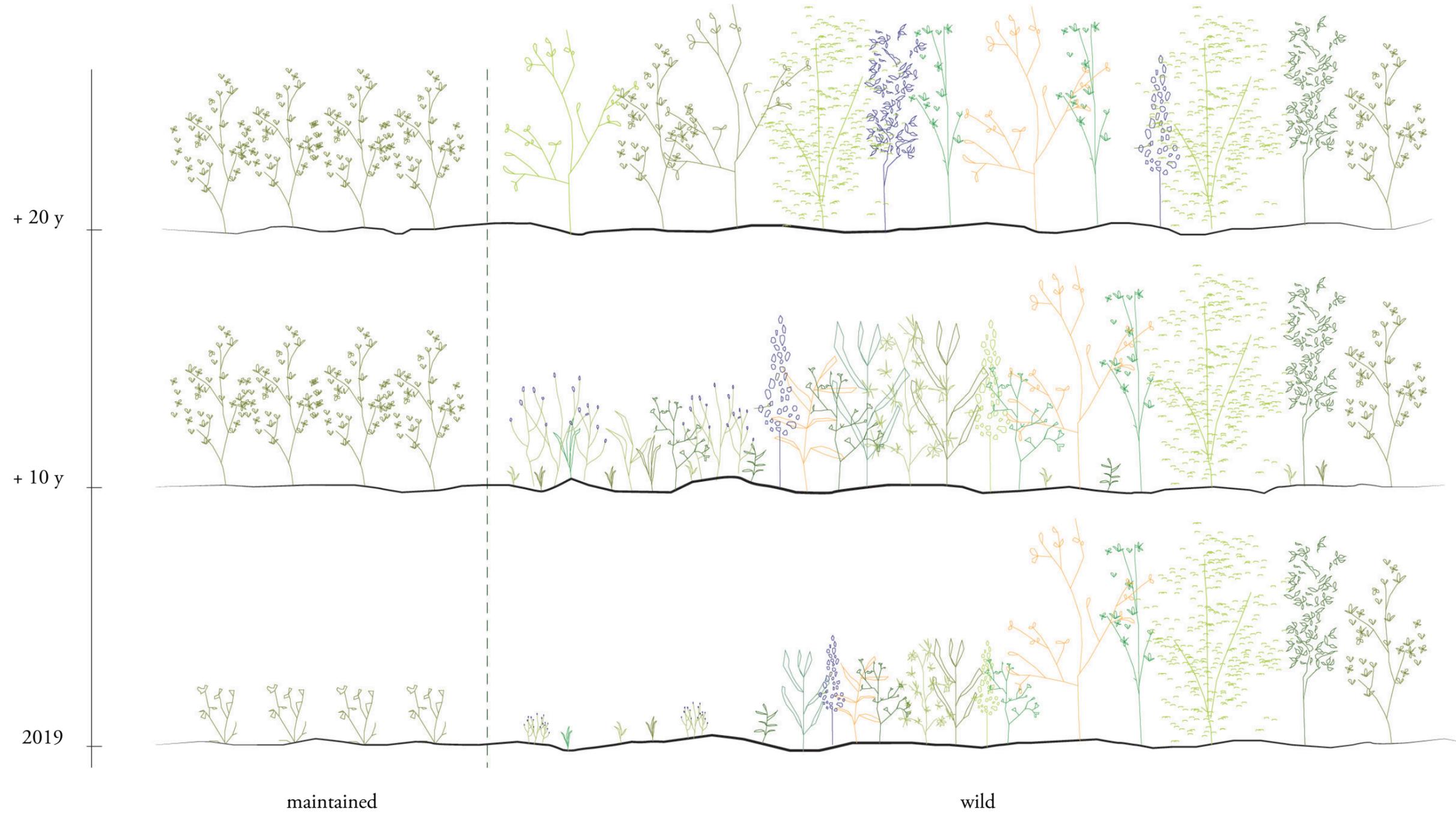


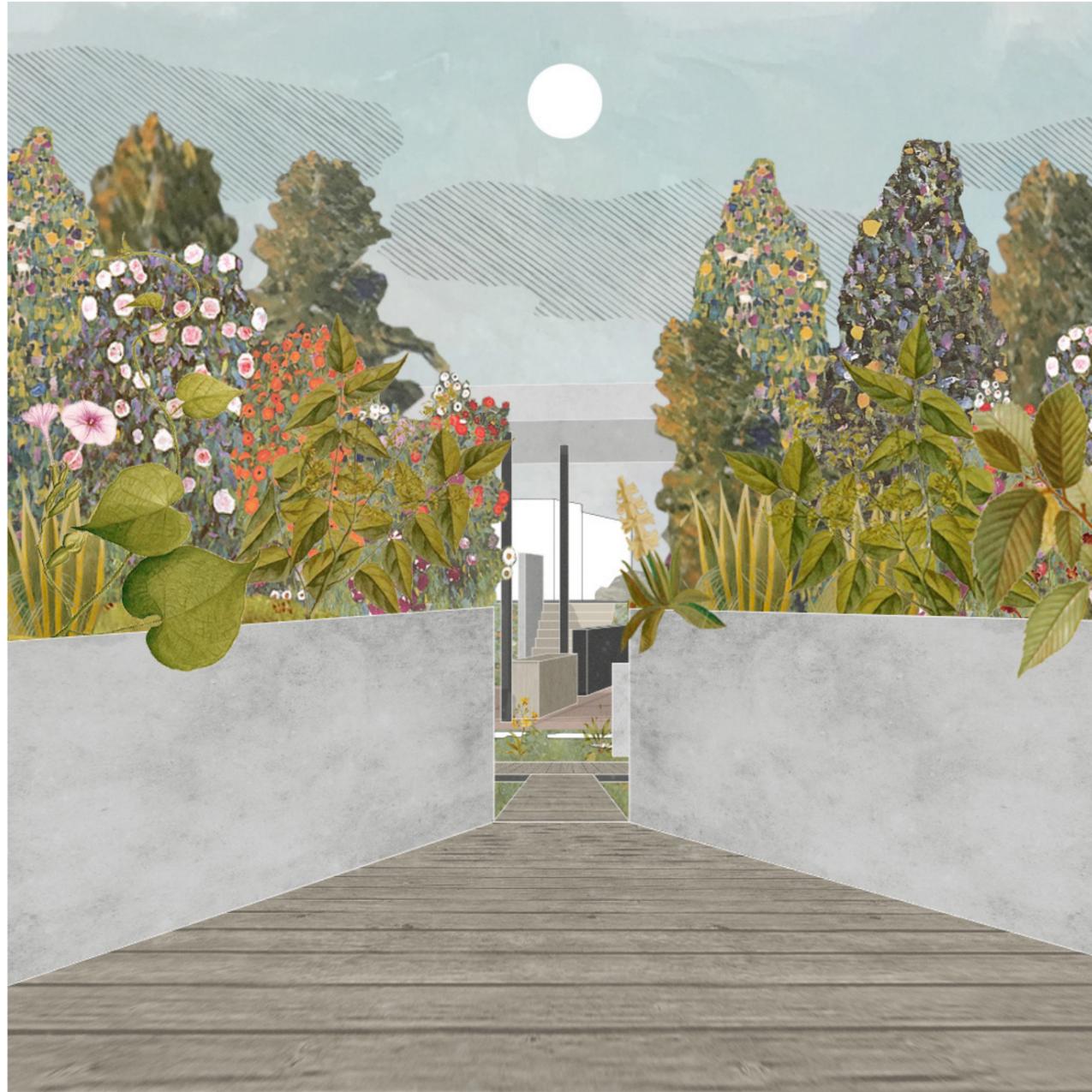


Untamed nature: starting point



Evolution of the site in time





THANK YOU