

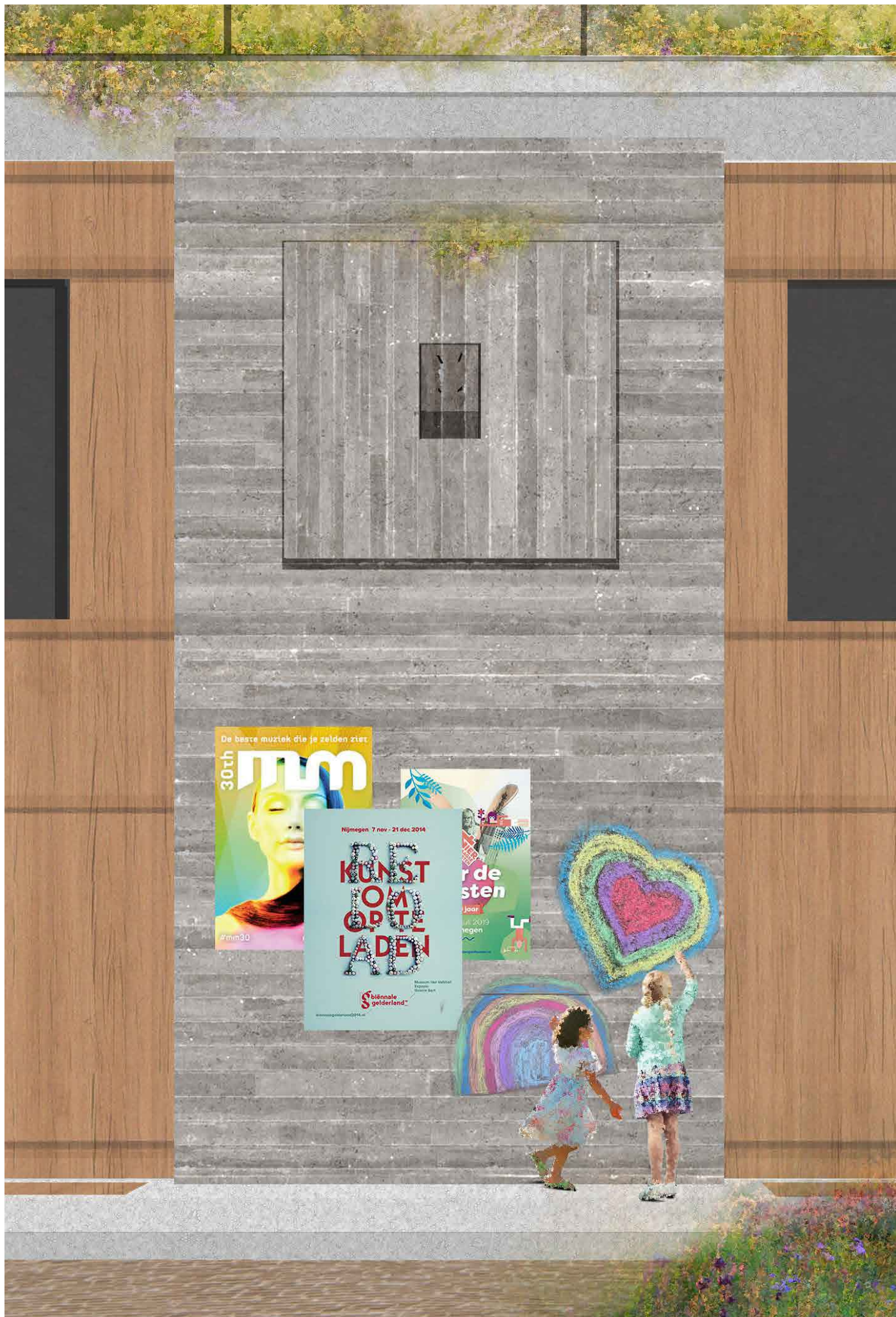
# Re-creating Molenpoort

## Research Book

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Msc 4 - Urban Architecture, Studio Bricolage









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# Introduction





Ground floor plan 'De Molenpoort'



## Introducing 'De Molenpoort'

In my opinion, the primary goal of a piece of architecture should always be to connect to the people of a certain place, by tapping into the history and specificities of that place. This necessity is put into words and understood only because of the existence of the opposite. The graduation year has brought this problematic to the surface in a way that is potent, tangible and relevant to this present day. As a consequence, the research that was done during the graduation year makes clear why it is important to have an architecture that is rooted in its place and history, which method might be used to implement this and how this method can be applied in practice.

The object of our investigation has been Shopping Center 'De Molenpoort'. In its architecture and functionality it is a clear representative of an era of modernity. Herein, it brings questions to the surface on modernity, its place within the built environment and the topic of reconstruction. The shopping center is of a monumental scale and

basically takes up a whole city block. Its main entrances are at the Molenstraat and the Ziekerstraat. Both streets are busy shopping streets and the Molenpoort tries to form an extension to them and connect them through the use of passages. Although the entrances are somewhat theatrically announcing its presence in the city, the connection with the city disappears once inside. The atrium is large, but it does not function as a point of orientation and the spatial quality is felt only on the first floor at the poorly visited café. When standing on the ground floor, the volume that carries the café disrupts the spatial quality. The atrium is also visible from the roof. The roof is one of the most surrealistic spaces of the shopping centre. It is enormous: with its more than 8.000 square meter surface it is larger than the average football field and on the roof a panoramic view of the city unfolds. One arrives at the roof using the large ramp which is the façade of 'De molenpoort' at tweede walstraat.



## Defining 'De Molenpoort'

In order to start the design process it is important to first understand the building and define what it represents. The initial question therefore is:

- *How to define 'De Molenpoort'?*

The qualities of the shopping center, for instance the disorientation that one experiences inside and the general theme of the 70s shopping center, seem to fit within the debate on place/non-place. The term is first coined and described elaborately by Marc Augé: 'If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place'<sup>1</sup>. More specific, according to Augé, a place exists as the sum of three components<sup>2</sup>:

- The fact that people who are related in some way assemble there to communicate.
- The singular or unique character of a place.
- Its potential for memory.

In 'De Molenpoort', with the exception of occasional choir lessons on the mezzanine under the atrium, the shopping center has no function of assembly. The roof is incidentally used as a place to consume the sedative which can be bought around the corner - it does not become a place of informal, multi-dimensional interaction. In general, people use the shopping center for a quick visit to the supermarket or to buy general house-utensils. As a result, the relationship between the users of the building can be defined as one dimensional. Namely, the identity of its users is temporarily either customer or seller.

Some elements of the shopping center, the atrium, the ramp, the roof, can absolutely be considered unique. The spaces, however, do not reach their full potential as a part of the generic infrastructure of lowered ceilings, plastic, shiny materials and franchise shops. The roof singularly functions as a parking deck. Its potential is therefore underused.

Memories might center around the encounters that have taken place between the shopowners and their customers, and for instance the choir lessons that have taken place on the mezzanine under the atrium. It might, however, be difficult to root these memories as they exist against the backdrop of generally generic spaces.

It should be said that there is no such thing as a pure non-place or a 100% place. The truth will always be somewhere in between. However, evidently we can conclude that shopping center 'De Molenpoort' generally qualifies as a non-place.

1. Augé, M (1992), *Non-Places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, Le Seuil, p. 77, 78  
2. Avermaete, T. (2001). *Capsulair Places. Analysis and Therapy of the Public Space*. Re: Generic City,



## Evaluating 'De Molenpoort'

In order to qualify the value and implications of a non-space, it seems essential to examine the case in its wider context.

Nijmegen as a whole is a city that is truly shaped by modernity and by applying the thinking that was dominant after the Second World War.

The history of the city dates back to the Roman Times. The Romans established 'Noviomagus' as a trading outpost at the limes (boundary) of the empire. In the late middle ages Nijmegen received city rights and became an important center of the region. Its size remained stable until the industrial revolution, when it started to expand beyond its walls.

During the Second World War a disaster, in the form of a brutal airstrike, occurred leaving the inner city largely shattered. Whereas the city could previously be described as a complex collage which evolved gradually over thousands of years, a sudden event equaled the field radically. The changes that occurred were both architectural and functional. The buildings that were realized on this resulting tabula rasa were of a larger scale than what was there before. These buildings were often constructed by larger commercial parties for whom efficiency, a similar appearance around the nation and the use of materials in bulk is of the essence. In these years the function of shopping was seen as central element in the reconstruction efforts. In the late 20th century, shopping was seen as a means to compete with neighboring cities. As a consequence, the city center has become mainly commercial in function.

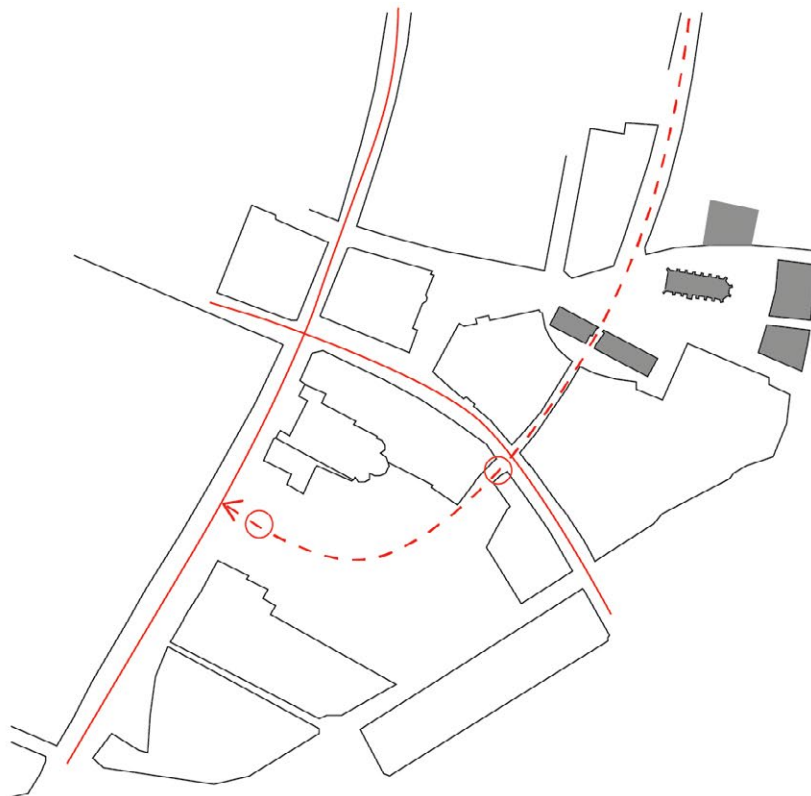
This shift had a radical impact on its layout. As the shops needed to be reachable for the outskirts of the city, and the wider region, the city needed to be prepared for the mobility of the future: the car. As a result, the new layout of the inner city was dominated by the car.



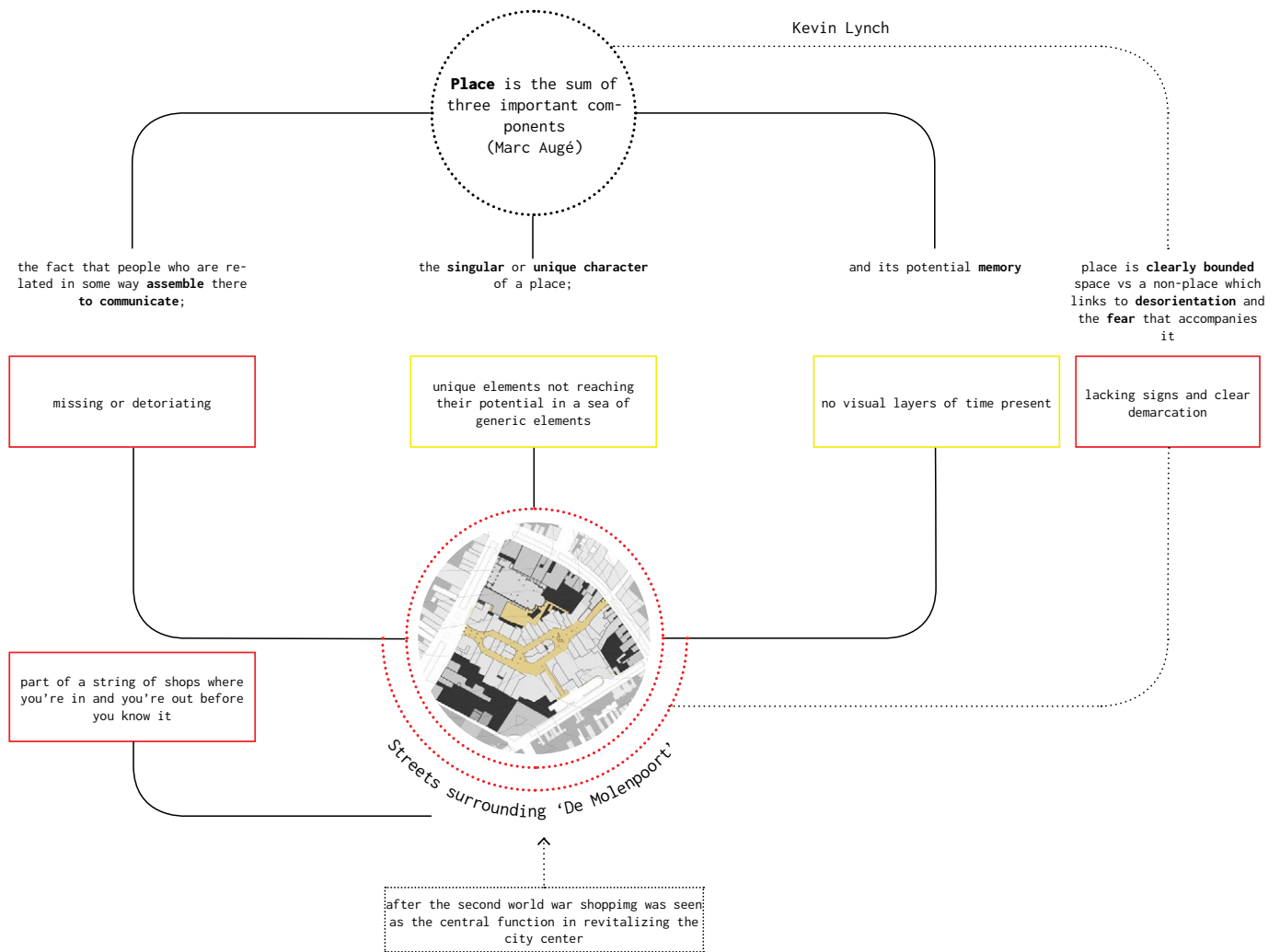


In the urban fabric around 'De Molenpoort' this is clearly visible. There is a string of shops leading towards, through and around 'De Molenpoort'. The Molenstraat and the Ziekerstraat are the busiest shopping streets. The circuit of shops is completed with the axis leading from the Burchtstraat through the Marikenstraat towards 'De Molenpoort', which forms an extension mainly to this sequence of streets. Auré distinguishes the non-places from anthropological places in the fact that the users of non-places become anonymous. A non-place mediates 'a whole mass of relations, with the self and with others which are only indirectly connected with their purposes'. In the case of the shopping streets around 'De Molenpoort', the ability of the users to take out their card and buy goods is the sole thing that they have in common. Therefore, their sole identity in that moment can be described as 'shopper' or 'customer'.

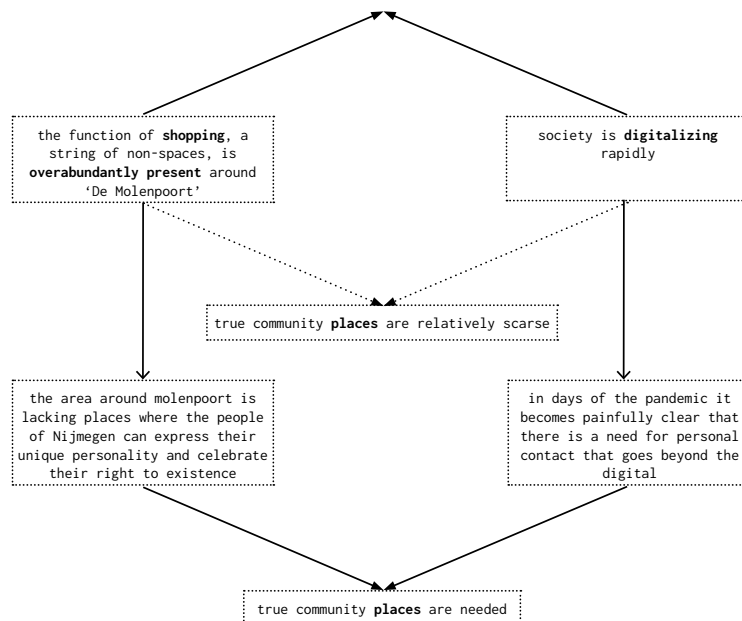
Society is individualizing, digitalizing and globalizing in rapid pace. In the context of the pandemic, it has become painfully clear, however, what the importance is of physical contact with on a level of the everyday, the general meeting of people and the exchange of ideas. The streets around 'De Molenpoort', on the other hand, host anonymous movement due to the overabundant function of shopping. As I believe these non-spaces will fundamentally not fulfill the described needs of society, it is not desirable for the urban block of 'De Molenpoort' to remain a part of the existing string of shops. On the contrary, there seems to be an apparent need for true community spaces.



## How to define molenpoort? Is molenpoort a non-place?



## Should the status of a non-place be sustained?



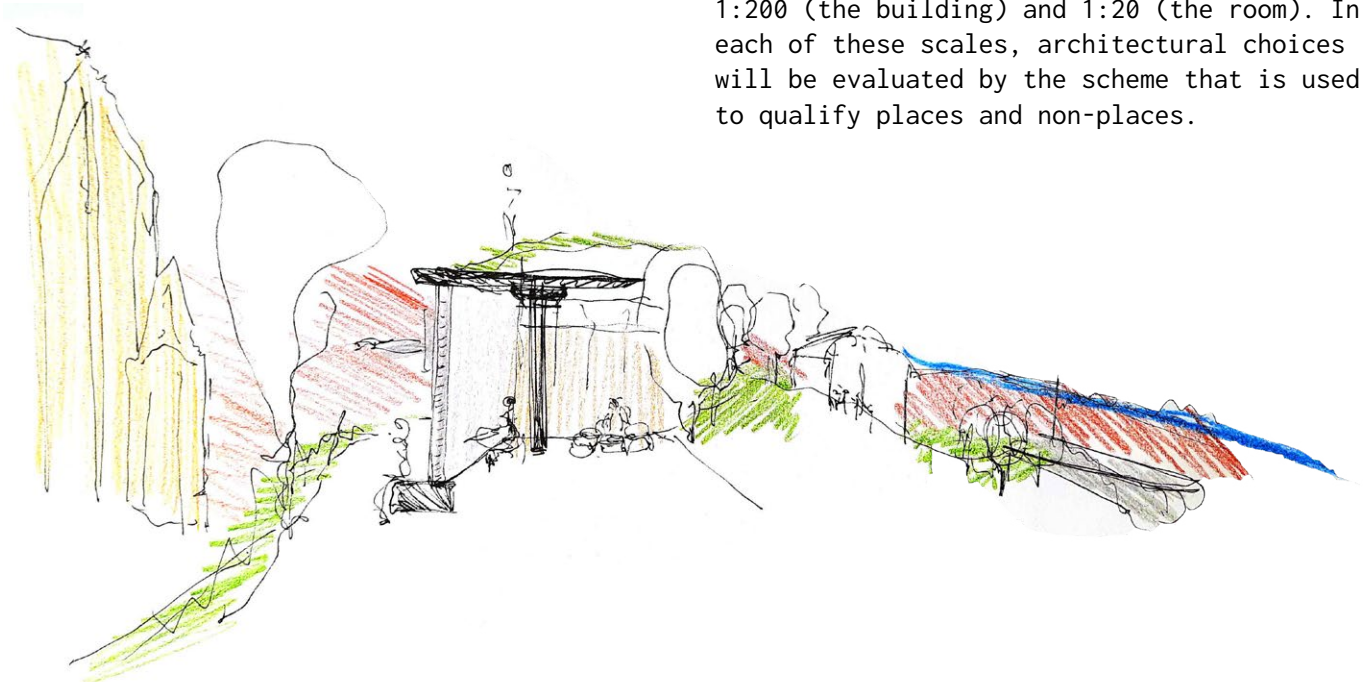
## Method and research set-up

In a destroyed city, there is no trace of the past, only the blank page and the future. Forgetting the past and aiming for the future has since been the dominant mindset in Nijmegen. The physical result of this mindset is often demolition, rather than adaptation. Although every building effort should be directed at the future, valuable memories will be lost in the process. In order to create a place, it is essential to address the present layers of time and therefore anticipate the potential memory of a place.

An alternative to the approach of pure demolition might be the attitude of the gardener as it was described by Marc Augé. *'Remembering or forgetting is doing gardeners work, selecting, pruning. Memories are like plants: there are those that need to be quickly eliminated in order to help the others burgeon, transform, flower. Those plants that have in some way achieve their destiny, those flourishing plants have in some way forgotten themselves in order to transform'*<sup>3</sup>

A method that translates this attitude more toward the architectural realm might be the method of Bricolage, as it was formulated by Irene Scalbert. In his essay 'Bricolage', he describes a dichotomy as it was sketched by Claude Levi Strauss: the engineer versus the bricoleur. The engineer would subordinate all the materials that he needs, for a project that is drawn entirely from the mind. The bricoleur, on the other hand, departs from what he finds at the site and uses the materials that are at hand and uses them supporting to his need. Scalbert clarifies this concept by proposing a metaphor. In the figurative person of Robinson Crusoe he finds someone who is fundamentally compelled to work with what is at hand. Robinson is shipwrecked at an island and only has the resources of the island to appropriate. Therefore, this is to him the ultimate bricoleur.<sup>4</sup>

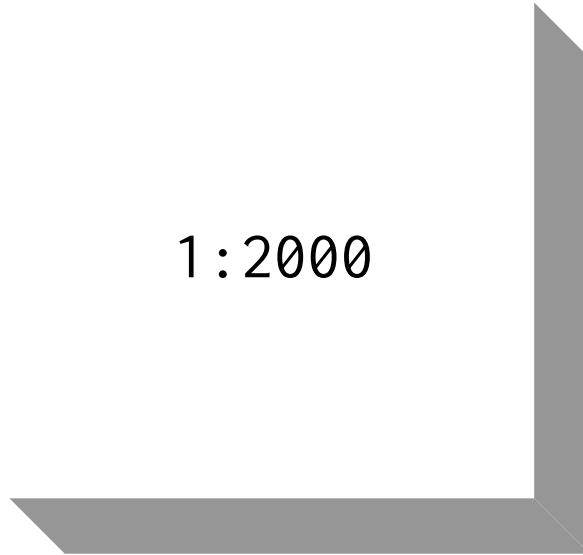
Bricolage seems a method that is especially sensitive to place and to 'what is'. In order to fulfill the components that together form a true place, a multidimensional approach is needed, transcending one single scale. Therefore the chosen setup that portrays the design process and the choices that were made, is through a number of different scales: 1:2000 (the city), 1:500 (the block), 1:200 (the building) and 1:20 (the room). In each of these scales, architectural choices will be evaluated by the scheme that is used to qualify places and non-places.



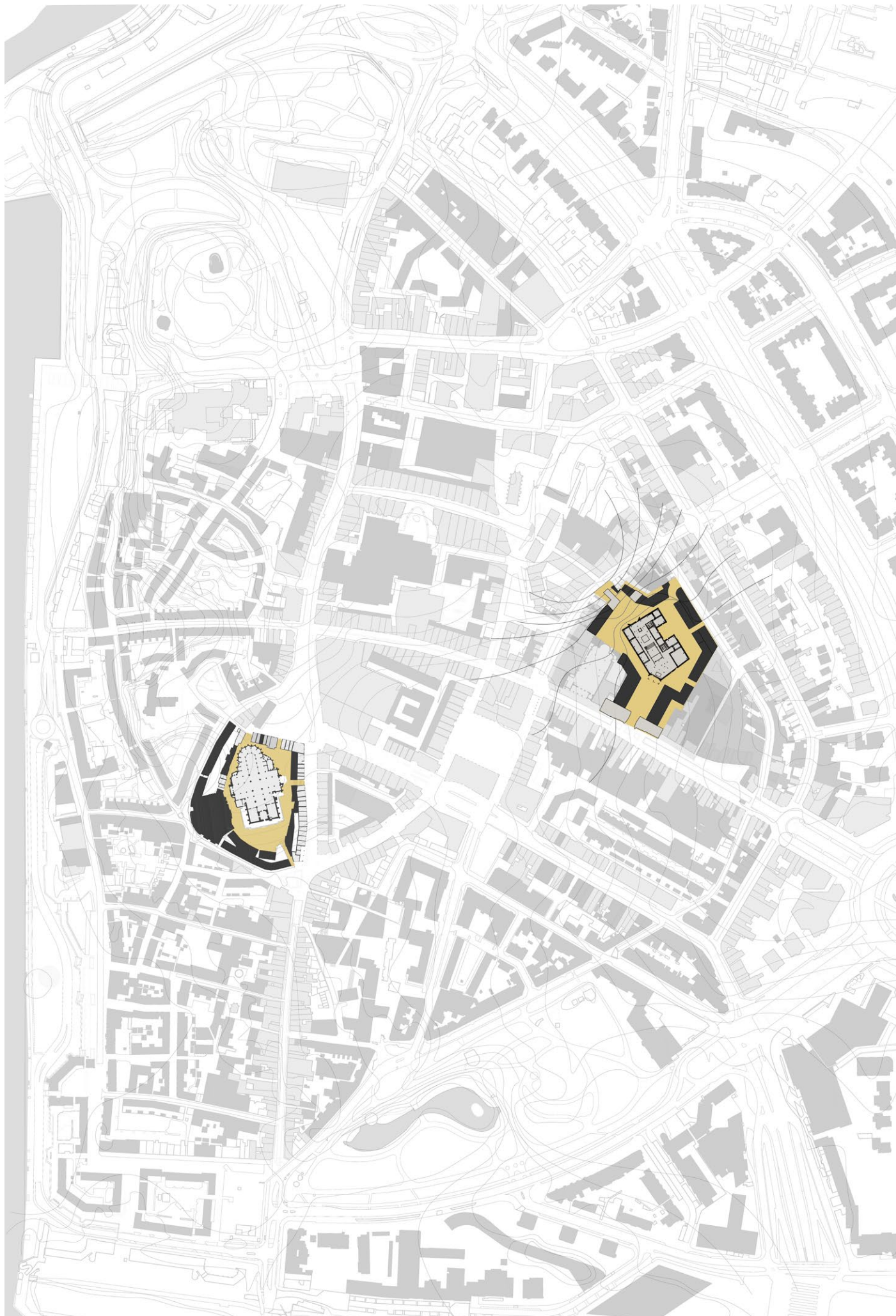
3. Augé, M (2004), *Oblivion*, University of Minnesota Press, 17.

4. Scalbert, I. (07/2011), The Architect as Bricoleur. *Journal for Architectural Knowledge*, 04, 69-88.

1:2000







## Block analysis

The shopping center is of an enormous scale - the floor plans of both the Stevenschurch (5) and the City Hall (3) fit inside of 'De Molenpoort'. This is also visible in the 1:2000 plan. On its own the shopping center takes on an entire urban block and can therefore also be analyzed in that way.

There is a large variety of urban blocks in terms of typology and morphology. Additionally, an important theme in the city block is its strategy on its backsides. The city block of Scholenhof (2) follows the street pattern but continues the linear volumes into the block, to create a small square. The backsides of the existing houses around and the internal houses are thereby facing each other.

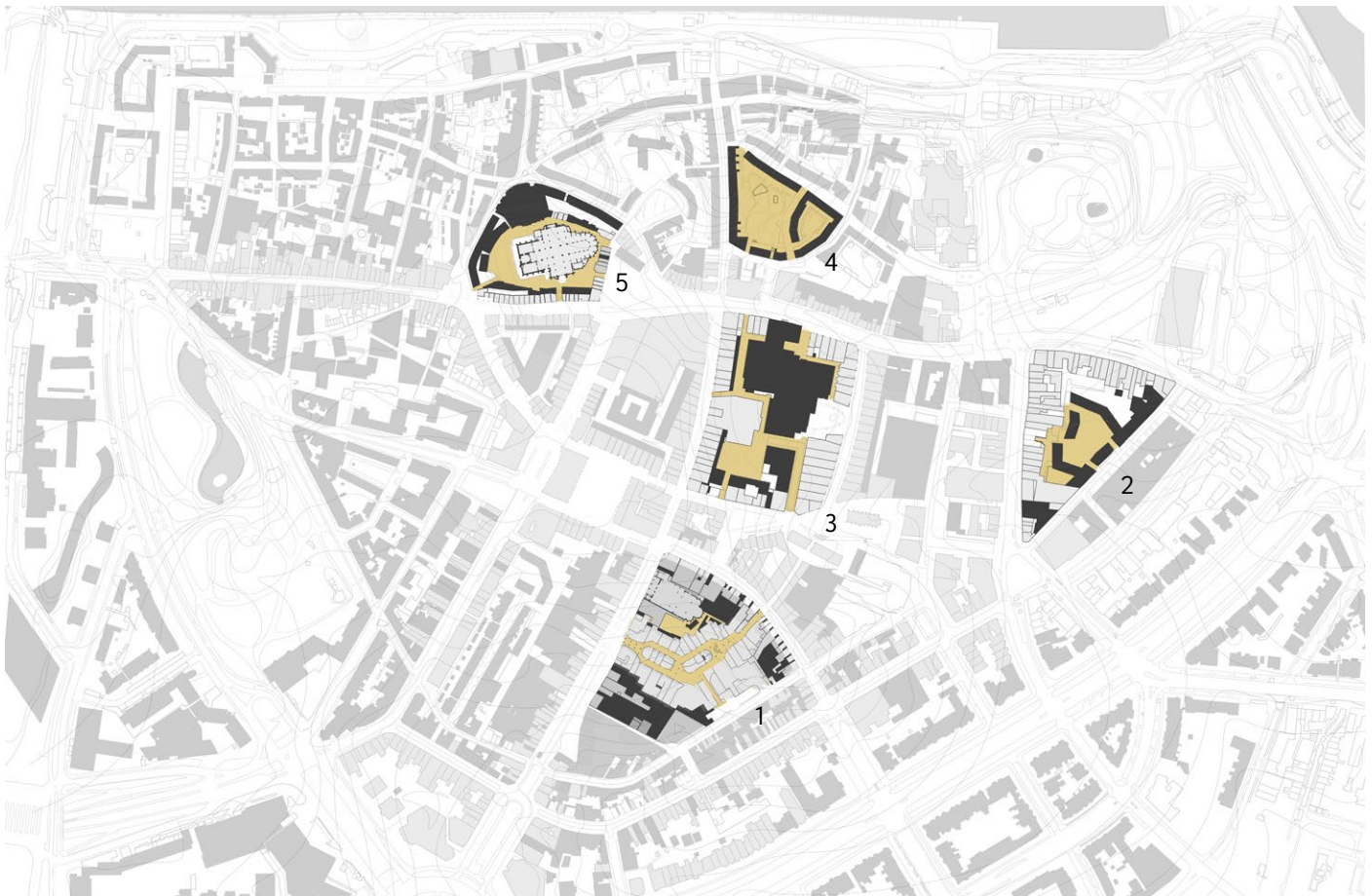
The City Hall basically occupies the whole block, reaching into the city streets while the entrances are set-back. By this gesture, small squares are created on the north and

the east side of the building, giving urban space back to the city.

The street pattern defines the block of Benedenstad (4). Since there are no buildings inside the block, an internal void is formed which is faced by all backsides. This gives an informal character to the space and the interior space is appropriated by the inhabitants of the block.

The Stevenschurch is the point of gravity of its urban block. It forms the central object in this arrangement. There is a ring of back to back houses, one ring oriented towards the church, the other ring towards the city.

Comparing to these urban blocks, 'de Molenpoort' remains quite undefined. You pass through the block without noticing the scale of it. Every form of orientation is lost inside, as there is no connection to the context when inside.



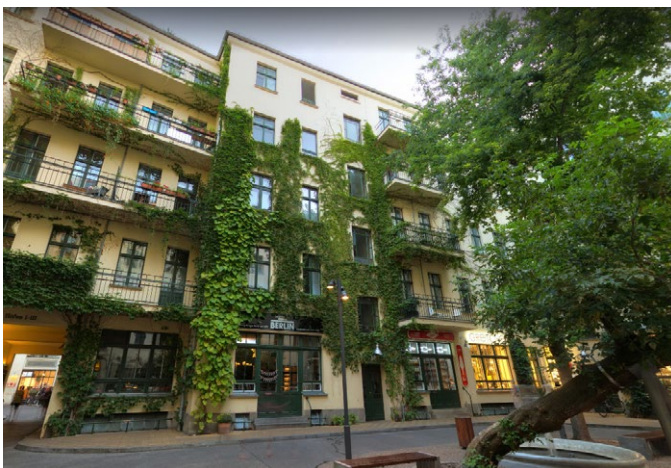
Molenpoort (1), Scholenhof (2), City Hall (3), Benedenstad (4), Stevenschurch (5)



In order to understand the scale of the plot better and to research the possibility of making small openings in the existing building fabric, Hackesche Höfe proved an interesting reference. The project is in the city center of Berlin and is in this city the most famous example of a building project with connected courtyards. In total there are 8 courtyards which range from a highly public character (near the street), to a more residential character towards the edges. The project is a good example of how a mix of residential, work and leisure can go together in a densely built area.



Hackesche Höfe in Molenpoort



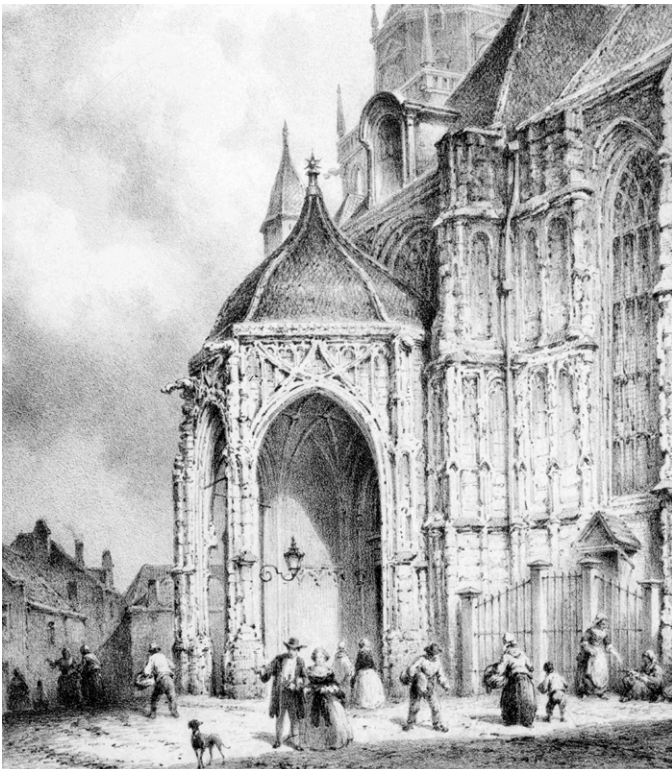
Hackesche Höfe courtyards in Molenpoort

## The anatomy of place

A conclusion to the previous chapter is that there seems to be a need for a true anthropological place in the inner city of Nijmegen. In the creation of place it seems important to look to the past and to the future.

*- What are the characteristics of a place, embraced by the people of Nijmegen, and how is it set up?*

It is easy to locate a precious, historical, anthropological place in the city center of Nijmegen: the Stevenschurch. Where other churches have been demolished after the bombardments in the second world war, the Stevenschurch was quickly to be repaired and restored to its original state. The church has always been in the background of the daily life of the inhabitants of the city. With its bells, it dictated its rhythm to the city. The church, and the urban area around it, took a central place in daily life as a place where people met each other, where people sat together, celebrated together and commemorated together.



Stevenschurch against the background of everyday life

The urban layout is telling the same story. The church is tucked in, into its own urban bubble, but the few sightlines into the block are focused on the church explicitly and give a sense of direction. One inside, the church is in the center, its direct and indirect environment is organized around it. The visitor and the dwellings orient oneself to the church, not to the city. The positive space that comes into existence because of it, is everywhere different and therefore recognizable and unique.

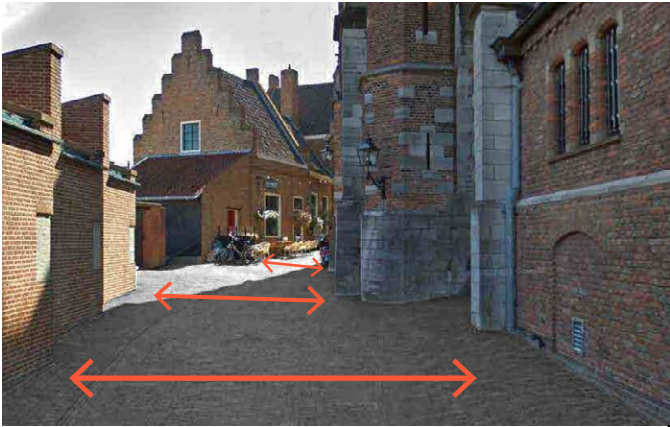
Inside the urban ensemble orientation is somewhat difficult because the paths that lead to the city are relatively small. However, there is a clear relationship between the more publicly oriented space and the semi-public space in the block. The largest openings into the ensemble are from the busy shopping street of the lange hezelstraat (2) and through the 'kerkboog' (church-arch) from the grote markt, the central square of the city. These entrances are all on the south side of the block. When entering from these sides, the attention is drawn to the entrance of the church, which dramatically extends and differentiates from the rest of the building.

The north side of the square is of a more semi-public nature. This side faces the residential area of the benedenstad and features smaller stairs and tighter spaces between the buildings and the church. The entrances are less evident on this side and when one has entered the plot on the south side, the urban space always narrows toward the north side until the width of an alleyway. This area is also of a more semi-public nature because of the large open space in the western part of the plot. This space has a residential character because residents have actively appropriated the public space here. Although it is the largest space around the church, people are led past it because the main entrance of the church is not anymore here, but located on the south side.

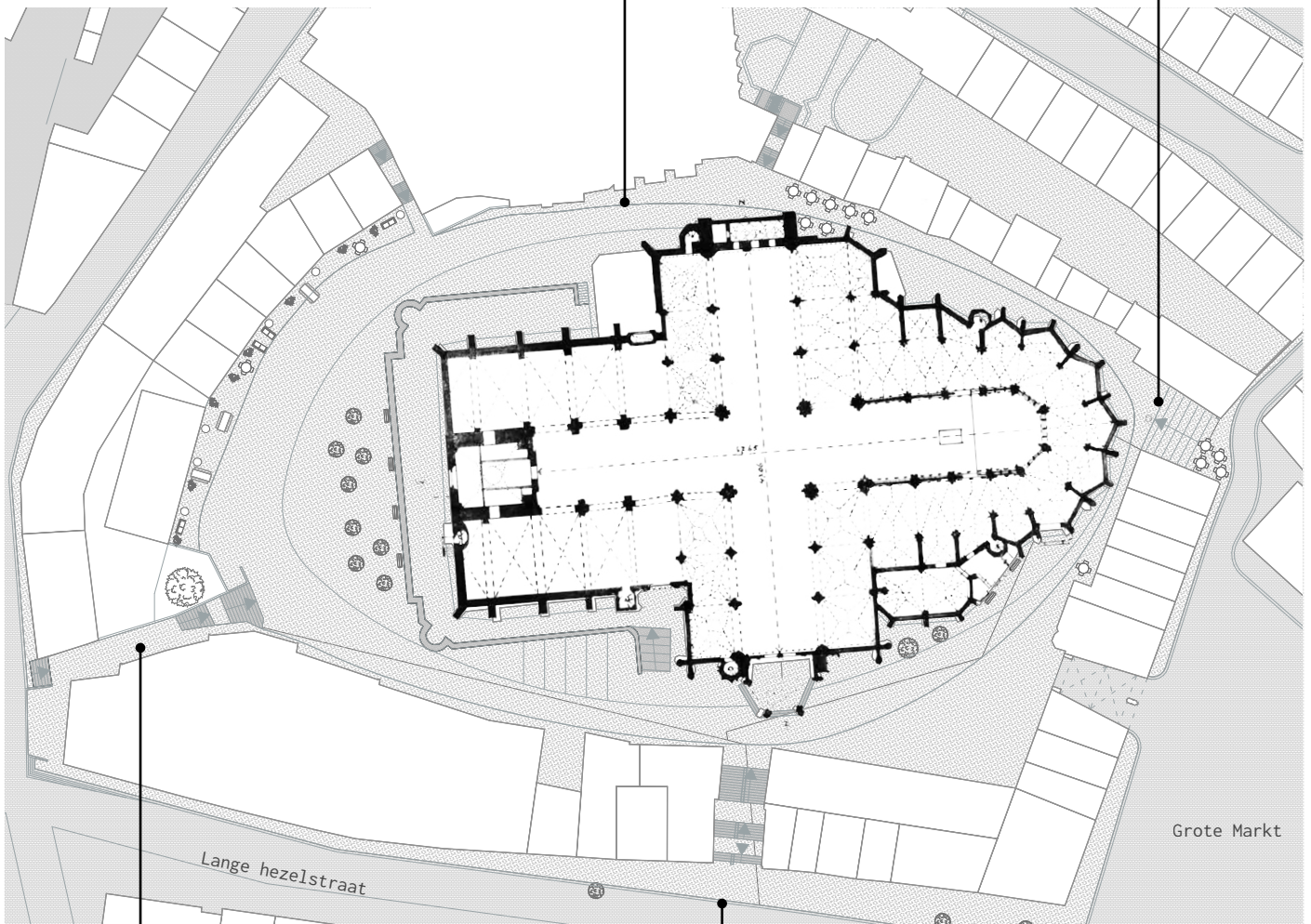
The previous analysis is illustrated on the coming pages. First the more general impression of the plot is given and then showing the difference between the more public and semi-public oriented spaces.



Always the residential relating to the church



Always the residential relating to the church



Sightline to the church



Sightline to the church



Narrowing path to residentially appropriated area



Sightline 'waag' & narrowing path



Clear sightline and direction toward entrance



Clear sightline and direction toward entrance

In the new infrastructure of modernity, *'the ancient places and rhythms'* are not obliterated by modernity but pushed to the background<sup>5</sup>. This is also visible in the city center of Nijmegen. The inner city, with all its shopping, is constructed for day-tourists and its function in the daily lives of its inhabitants is marginalized. The Stevenschurch awaits a similar fate. The places of history, the Stevenschurch being one of them, are separated from the everyday life by making it a monument. Consequently, the church becomes the 'main attraction' for the city of Nijmegen in the tourist guides books, which gives its previous meaning a level of abstraction. The church hereby also becomes non place.

Nevertheless, lessons can be learned from its presence and its history. It portrays a community that is organised around something that they all share. The question that naturally follows therefore is:  
*- How can a place accomodate the needs of the people of Nijmegen in the future and form the center of the community?*

## Stevenskerk



●●●●● 269 • [Nr. 4 van 56 bezienswaardigheden in Nijmegen](#) • Bezienswaardigheden & bijzondere plaatsen • Kerken & kathedralen  
[Nu open](#) • 10:30 - 17:00 [Website bezoeken](#) [Bel](#) [E-mailadres](#)

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Stevenschurch as tourist attraction



## Place in current times

There are multiple ways to fill the void that was left by religion and the church in society. It is essential, however, that the proposed function allows the people of Nijmegen to express their unique personality and celebrate their right to existence. According to Herbert Marcuse, by looking at or practicing art, one has the ability to see an alternative version of the world and themselves. Ramsey Nasr explains this etymologically by reflecting on the word 'recreation' in his essay on art in times of the pandemic. Herein he refers to the epilogue of Decamerone where is explained that *'re-creation was for the 14th century Florentine a way to re-pair something in yourself. Recreation and art were in that sense connected, as well as devotion and citizenship, death and life.'*<sup>6</sup> Recreation can only be achieved as an active pursuit. Therefore, in order to give an urban expression to what is to be considered important in the society of the coming future, I envision the performance of art, in the form of music, dance or theatre, as the new fresh center of the community.

The proposed is in essence is a new way for a society to organize itself. This is something that demands an urbanistic expression as well. In order to do that it is important to distinguish the plan from the streets that surround it as the function is quintessentially different. By doing this, the senses are awakened when one arrives at this very different place than they were before. Through this contrast, a renewed attention for the surrounding streets occurs as well. A central building truly creates a bounded place in the center of the plot and defines the urban spaces around it. This central building is surrounded by the new residential buildings and leisure functions of the block. In this way, the building is literally embraced by the community around it, providing a feeling of shared ownership to it. Consequently, this urban setup is symbolizing the urban relationship that the Stevens church used to historically have with the city.



'A tale in decameron' by Waterhouse

6. Nasr, R. (2020-03-31). In tijden van corona bidet kunst houvast door mee te wankelen. NRC Handelsblad. Retrieved from: <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2020/04/01/in-tijden-van-corona-biedt-kunst-houvast-door-mee-te-wankelen-a3995570>

# How to make a place? What is a good example of a place?

Kevin Lynch

**Place** is the sum of three important components (Marc Augé)

the fact that people who are related in some way **assemble** there to **communicate**;

the **singular** or **unique character** of a place;

and its potential **memory**

place is **clearly bounded** space vs a non-place which links to **desorientation** and the **fear** that accompanies it

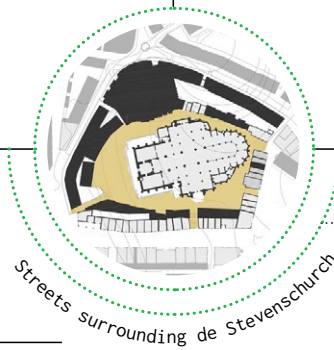
role in everyday life, people sit together, celebrate together, commemorate together

central, truly defined, landmark

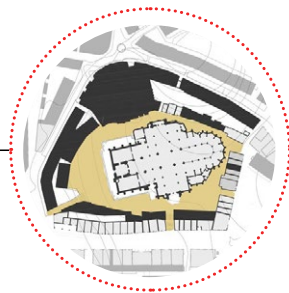
moments of life and death  
history in the materials and objects

center of the community

People live around the church and their contact is always mediated by its presence



function in the everyday lives of the community is lost



## Place in the current times

should be possible for the people of Nijmegen to express their unique personality and celebrate their right to existence.

in days of the pandemic it becomes painfully clear that there is a need for personal contact that goes beyond the digital

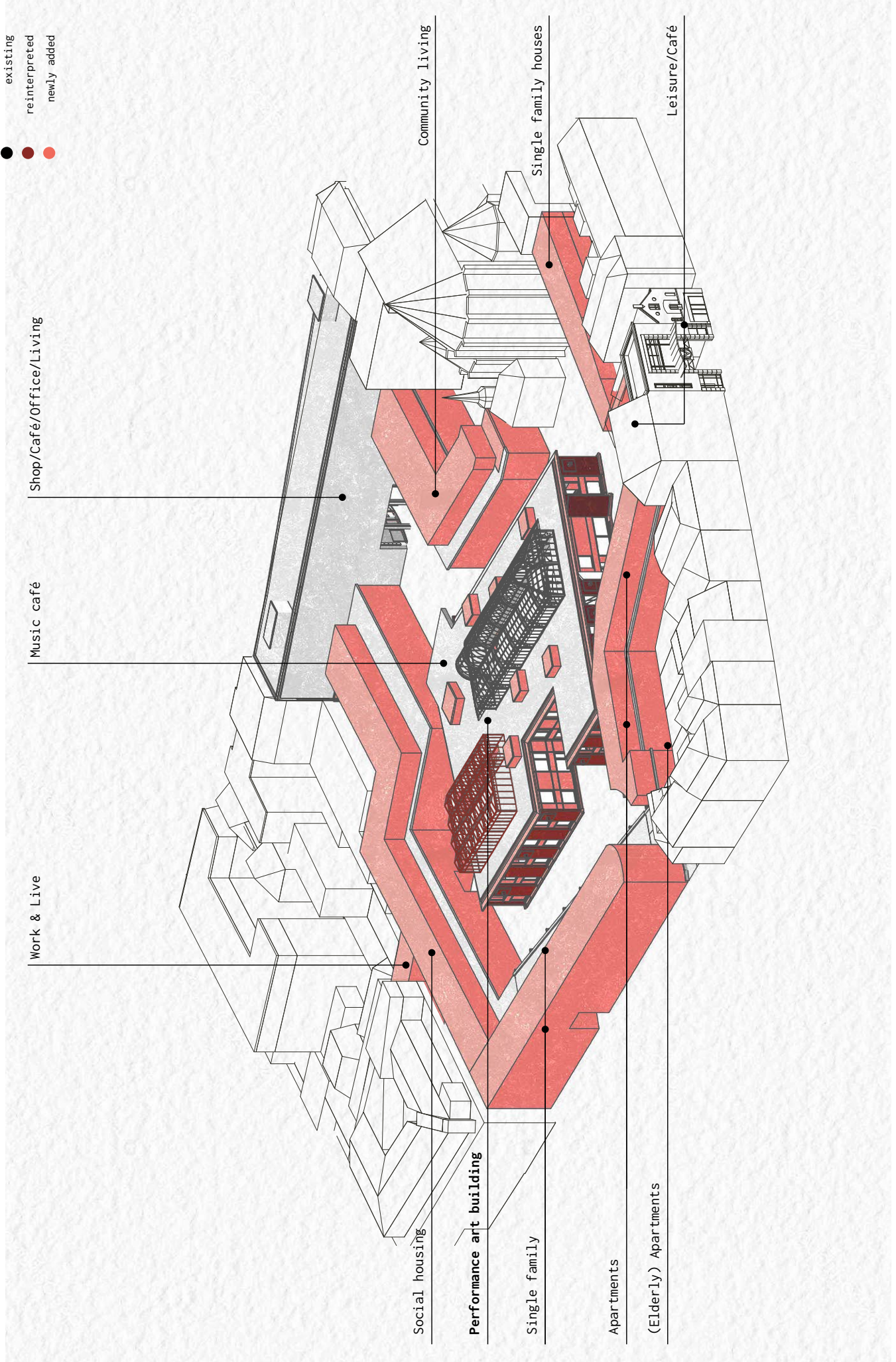
in order to give an urban expression to what is to be considered important in the society of the coming future, I envision the performance of art, in the form of music, dance or theatre, as the new fresh center of the community.

New way for a society to organize itself needs to be expressed urbanistically

According to Herbert Marcuse, by looking at or practicing art, one has the ability to see an alternative version of the world and themselves. (other than 'customer' or 'shopper' .

're-creation was for the 14th century Florentine a way to re-pair something in yourself. Recreation and art were in that sense connected, as well as devotion and citizenship, death and life.'

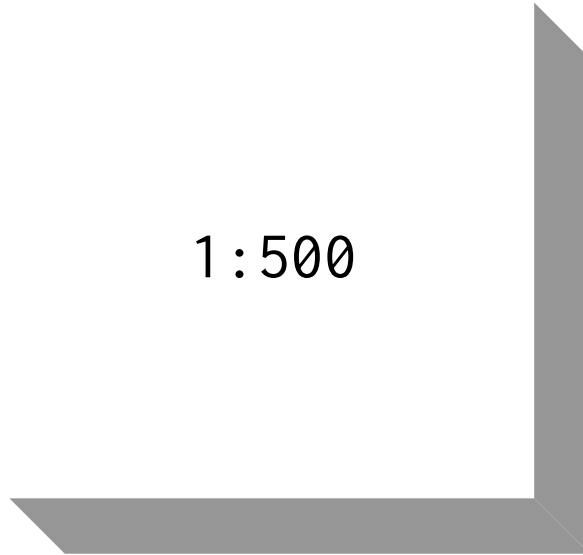




Program: community organized around central building



1:500





existing  
reinterpreted  
newly added



Urban plan



## Post-war building tradition

These images give an impression of the strategy that was usually used by the city in renewing its urban areas. This example concerns the developments around the Marienburg chapel from the 1960s until the late 1990s, which is in size and location very comparable to 'De Molenpoort' shopping center.

After the war, the municipal government realized the buildings for social services and police department on the tabula rasa after the bombings. 20 years later, the previously public owned ground was sold to developers, as was being done in multiple areas around the city.

Demolishment of these buildings, together with a number of residential buildings at the burgstraat, followed. The policy of architects and the city has been to demolish rather than to work with what is existing. This example is not unique. The citizens and leadership within the city of Nijmegen grew up in a city where everything was built up from scratch, as a large portion has been demolished after the second world war. A tendency to demolish and start with a clean slate potentially evolved on this basis.

The financier decides on a program that should bring revenue within at maximum five years - basically a shopping center. The shops have been designed by experts on shop-architecture that work within the bank. Franchise stores (the only stores that are able to pay the rent) are not allowed to make changes or evolve over time. This makes the occupation relatively static and non-specific to the context of the city.

In the design process, the role of the architect has been to design the facade.

This method is now generally applied to the redevelopment of areas within the city. This approach often disregards what was there before and thereby also the valuable memories that are connected to this area. The projects are mostly financed and realised by large developers. The local inhabitants are therefore less invested and involved with their close surroundings.

I took it as a starting point to depart from what exists rather than outright demolish.

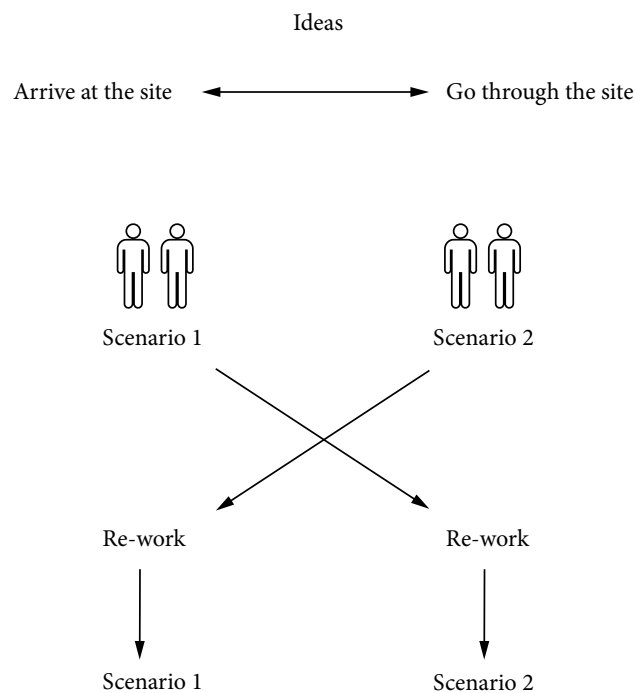




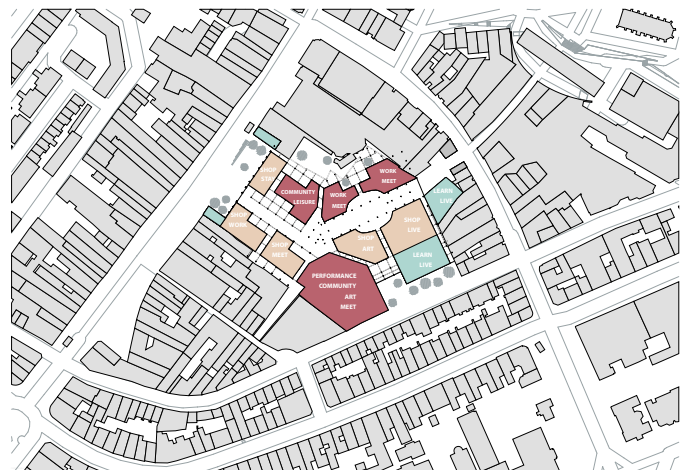
## Urban plan development

The development of an urban plan has been a group effort. Although the general thoughts and starting points on the plan were similar (reuse focused, appreciation of what is, urban analysis based design), each group member envisioned the concrete intervention differently. We decided to work together, developing two distinct scenarios in order to see multiple options but both worked out to an acceptable degree. Afterwards, both scenarios would be reworked by the other group members.

This approach proved fruitful because it showed the qualities of both options. In the end it allowed me to choose for a scenario that featured a central building, while also applying the principle of the courtyards around the edges of the plan.



Scenario 1



Scenario 2

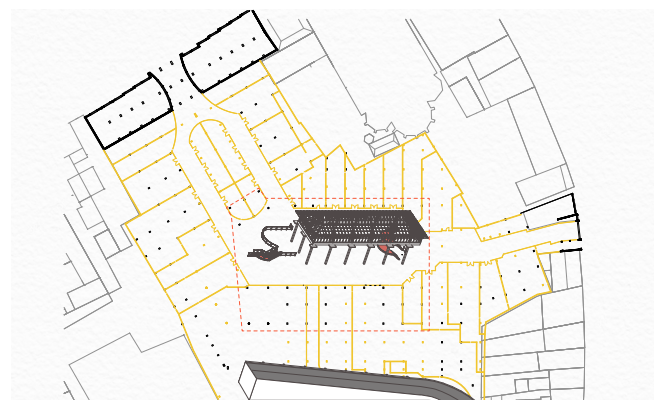
## Bricolage of spaces

The workshop with one of our visiting teachers, Renaud Hearlingen (Rotor DC), in February, broadened my perspective on the issues and scope of the concept of bricolage as well. Haerlingen emphasized that one should always appreciate the as found together with its spatial implications. A funny shaped floor or, specifically, a ramp, should be considered as 'free' assets. Besides the material component as discussed in the essay by Scalbert, there seems to also be a strong spatial component to bricolage. Sticking with the chosen metaphor of Robinson, you could say he does not only value the materials in his treasury, but also evaluate the spaces on the island. A cave might be a good place for sleeping and the beach might serve as a workshop space.

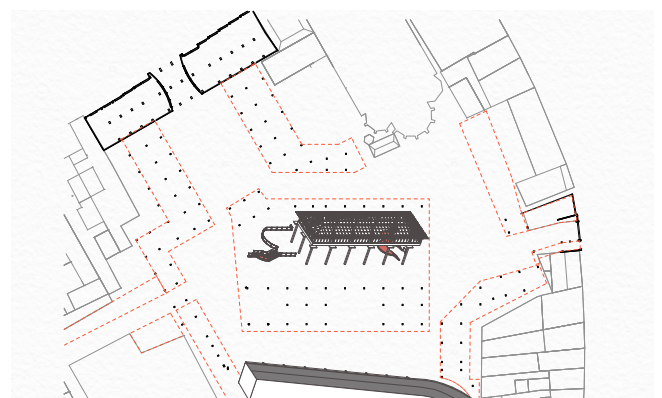
As a consequence, the existing spaces of 'De Molenpoort' need reinterpretation as well. When doing this, the existing started to lead the urban plan instead of the other way around. The atrium became the central space around which the second building would orient itself. The existing first floor, with its curved geometry and mezzanines, brings interesting spaces into being that can be used to differentiate spaces from each other in the music building. The reinterpretation of spaces offers unintended surprises, as the setup of the new building is, with a nave, a choir and a narthex, similar in setup as the adjacent church. In that sense, it has truly become a sister of the Petrus Canisius Church and the Stevenschurch.



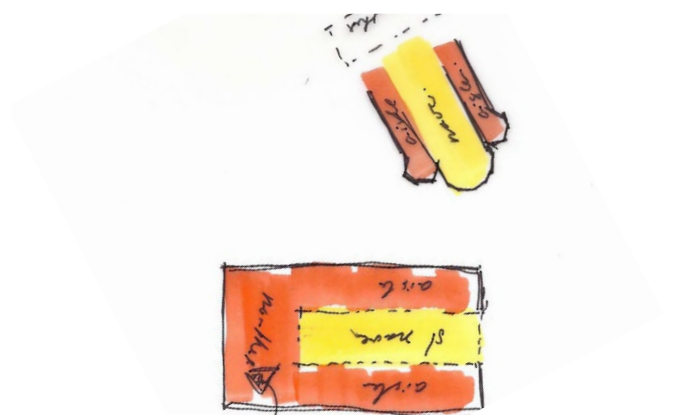
Urban plan P2



Building **around** what is valuable



Clearly defined central building



Commonalities church and central building



The ramp



The existing atrium





The atrium as central space in the building

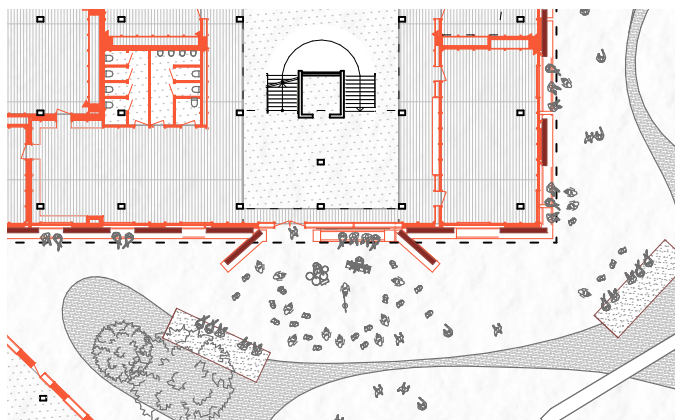
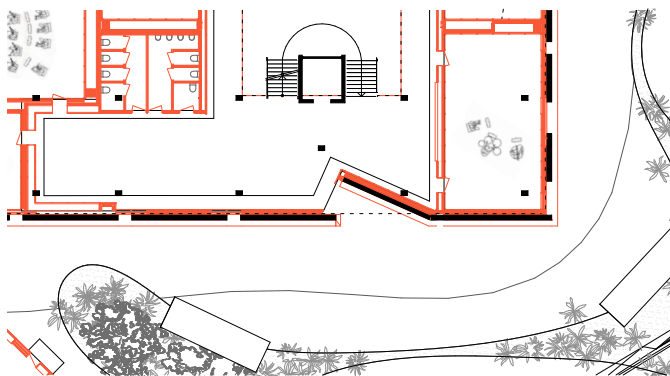


## Assembling of people

In the program, a balance was sought between providing the users of the building with a good amount of privacy in order to feel comfortable with exposing themselves, while also being open to the neighborhood. A significant critique after P4, however, was the fact that the central building was too closed to its surroundings. The main objective of the building is to become a central building to the community, so its architecture should actively invite people in.

In the redesign of the building I sought to do more than invite people in, but bring the meeting of people and the activity from inside, towards the street. An important reference in this matter was, again, how the architecture of the church achieved this effect.

This is achieved by reassembling the facade panels. As opposed to the initial idea, a cave-like entrance to enter a safe space for creative endeavors, the redesigned entrance represents a reception with open arms and reaches out to the community.



Main entrance from relatively closed to a 'warm welcome'

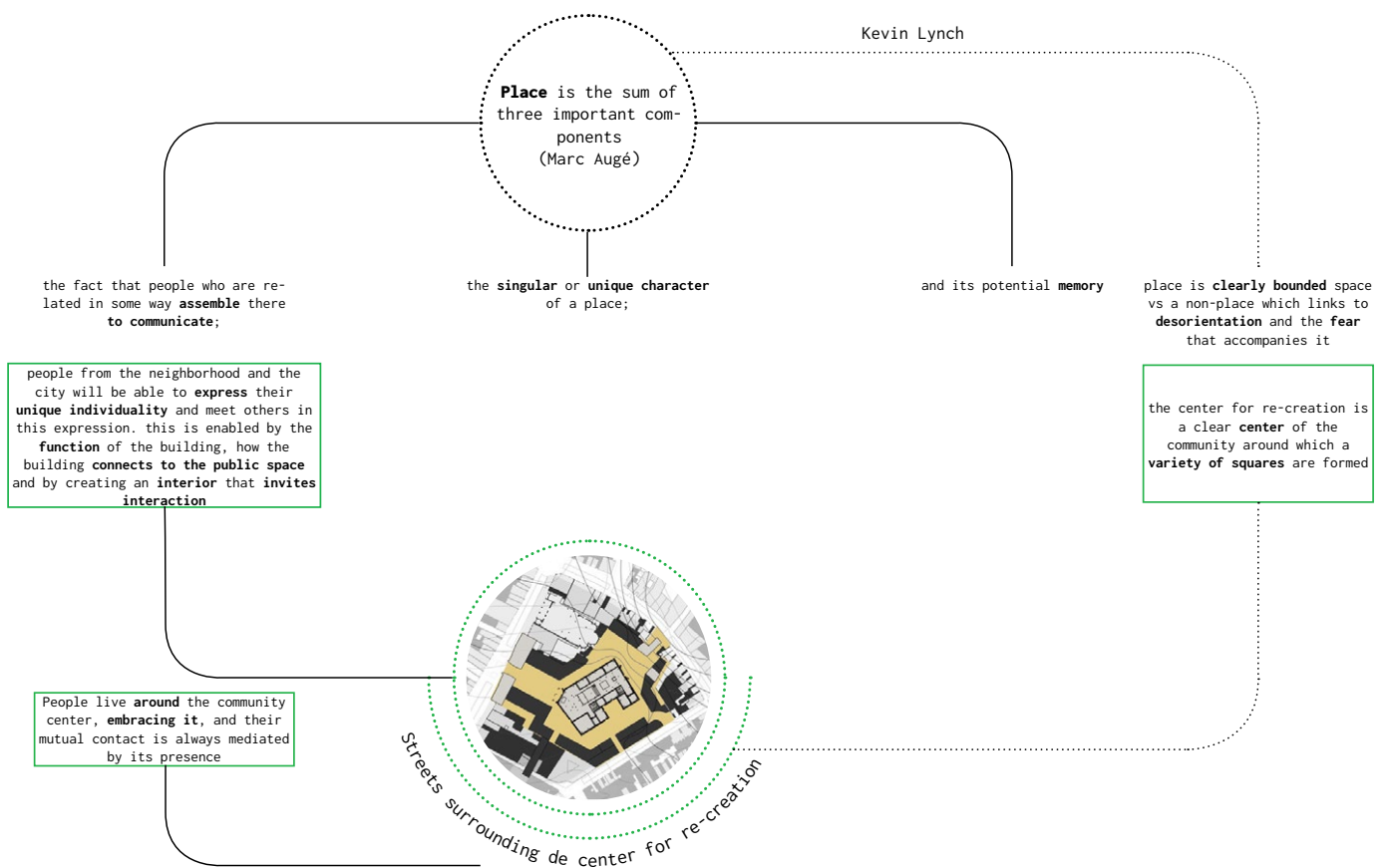


The preaching of St. Gery, unknown painter, (ca.1400)



Café entrance provides a public threshold space between the building and the city

## How to make 'De Molenpoort' into place?





## Reconnecting topographically

The process of reconnecting the non-place, 'De Molenpoort', back to its direct environment (the city and its inhabitants) touches on a general theme that has been brought up by Kenneth Frampton in his essay 'Towards a Critical Regionalism'. He quotes Paul Ricoeur, who addresses a paradox: *'how to become modern and to return to sources: how to revive an old dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization.'*<sup>7</sup> In solving this paradox, Frampton states that the fundamental strategy of Critical Regionalism is *'to mediate the impact of universal civilization with elements derived indirectly from the peculiarities of a particular place.'*<sup>8</sup>



Height difference in the inner city of Nijmegen  
(map by topography group)

Topography is a good example to the peculiarities of a certain place, especially when discussing Nijmegen. Nijmegen is characterised by large height differences as the city is located on several hills and slopes down to the river in steep fashion.



Snapshot from the movie 'Climbing Nijmegen'  
(movie by topography group)

As we have seen, this results in an infrastructure of stairs, ramps and meandering paths. It is a display of working with the height difference rather than against it and has become important to the identity of the city.

An other characteristic to the landscape of the city are the small public gardens and flowerbeds that weave organically through the city. Precious open areas that used to be paved streets are appropriated by inhabitants of the local community, made green and maintained collectively with great care.



Example of a collectively maintained garden

7. Frampton, K. (2019). Towards a Critical Regionalism. Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance. Critical Regionalism . Revisited, OASE, (103), 11-22. Retrieved from <https://www.oasejournal.nl/en/Issues/103/TowardsaCriticalRegionalism>

8. Frampton, Critical Regionalism, 21.

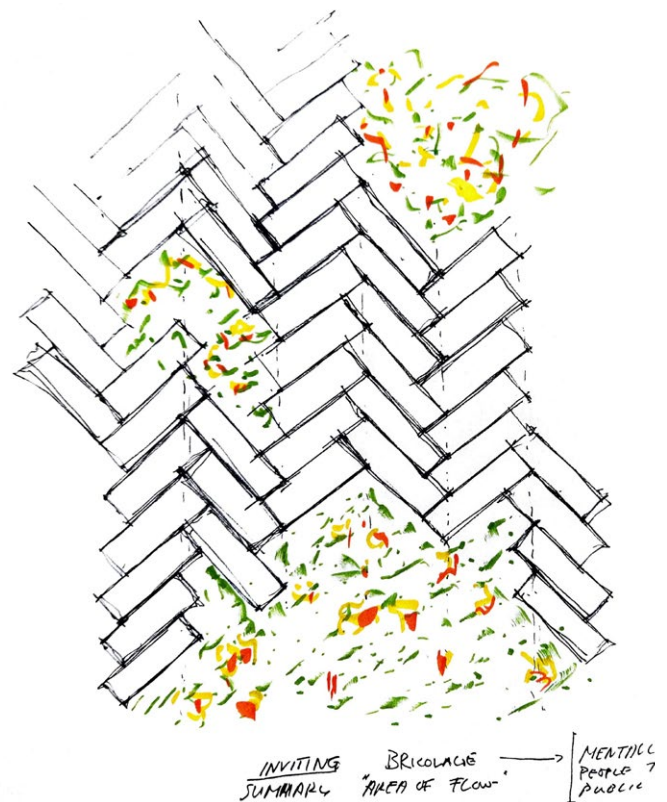
As is the case around the Stevenschurch, some areas of the plan are characterized as public and others as semi-public. This has been taken into account when designing the landscape design of the area.

In terms of topography, the site of 'De Molenpoort' is a good example where the universal clashes with the natural topography. Although there is a gradual height difference around the site, the ground floor is entirely leveled, with the exception of a steep ramp at the ziekerstraat. Therefore there is no (conscious or unconscious) link with the city, while inside.

In the more public areas of the plan it is proposed to reconnect with the gradual height difference around the plot and develop this into an area of flow and change. The vegetation meanders uphill and guides the visitor through the plot.

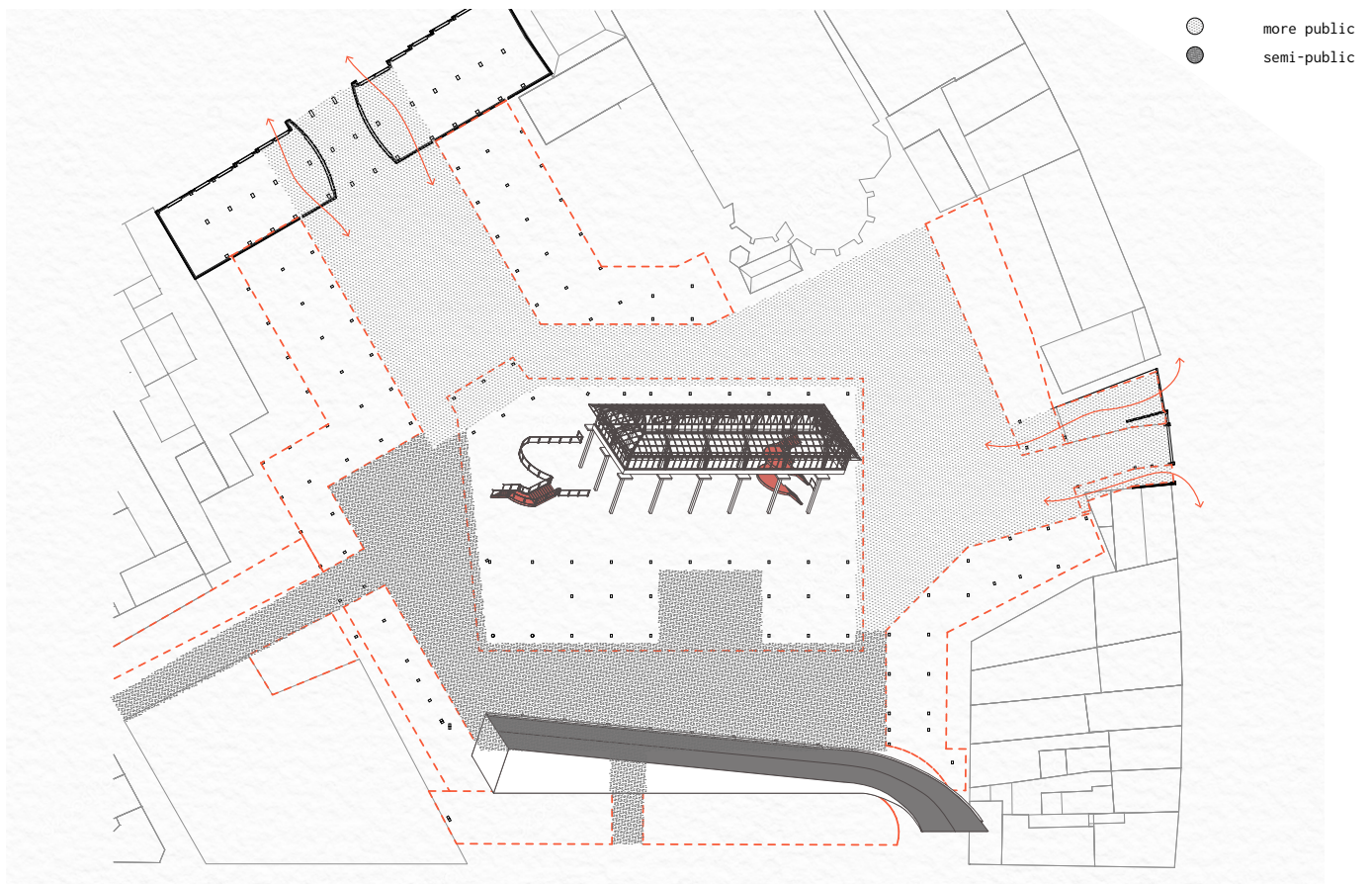
For the landscape design of the more semi-public areas, the Flemish beguinage has been an important reference. These areas are set-up as to slow down and consist of a number of vegetable gardens. These gardens are free to be appropriated by the neighborhood inhabitants and might form a basis of a good relationship between the neighbors.

The vegetation in the entire landscape design is formed in an organic way and harvests a large variety of plants in order to form a welcome environment for people, as for insects and other animals. Celebrating the cultural attitude towards city green and in order to form a certain connection to the ground where one lives, the vegetation is free to be appropriated by the people who live in the new Molenpoort community.

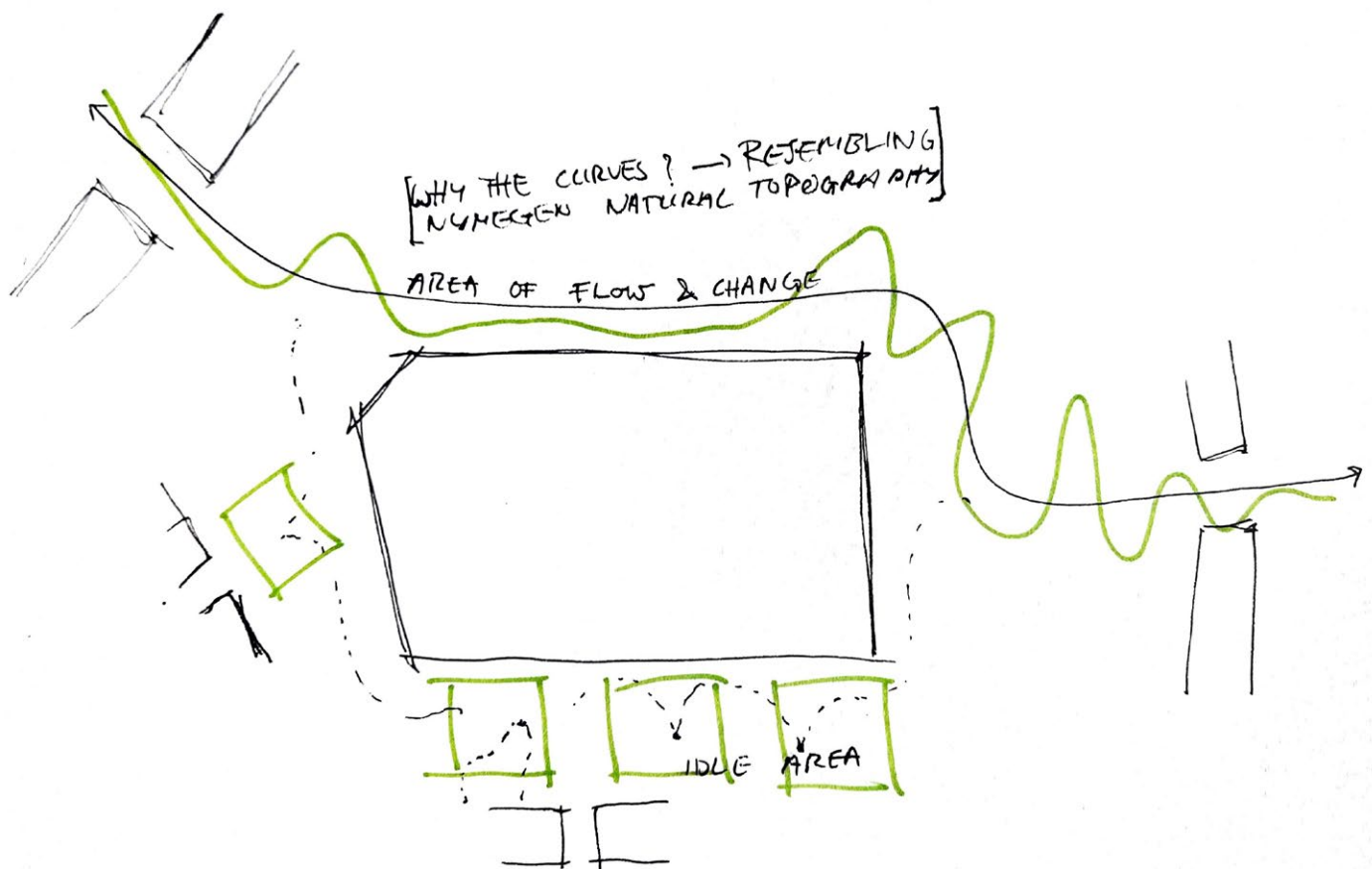


A low key way to extend the amount of vegetation through means of appropriation





Difference in the plan between public and semipublic spaces



Landscape design reacting on different character of the urban spaces



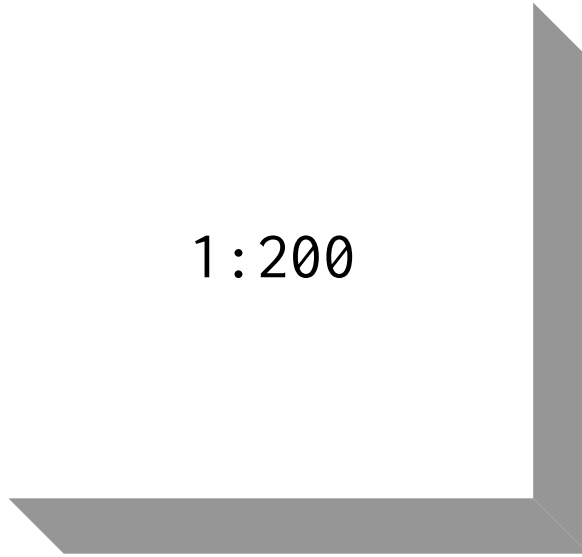
Assembling of people and the meandering topography

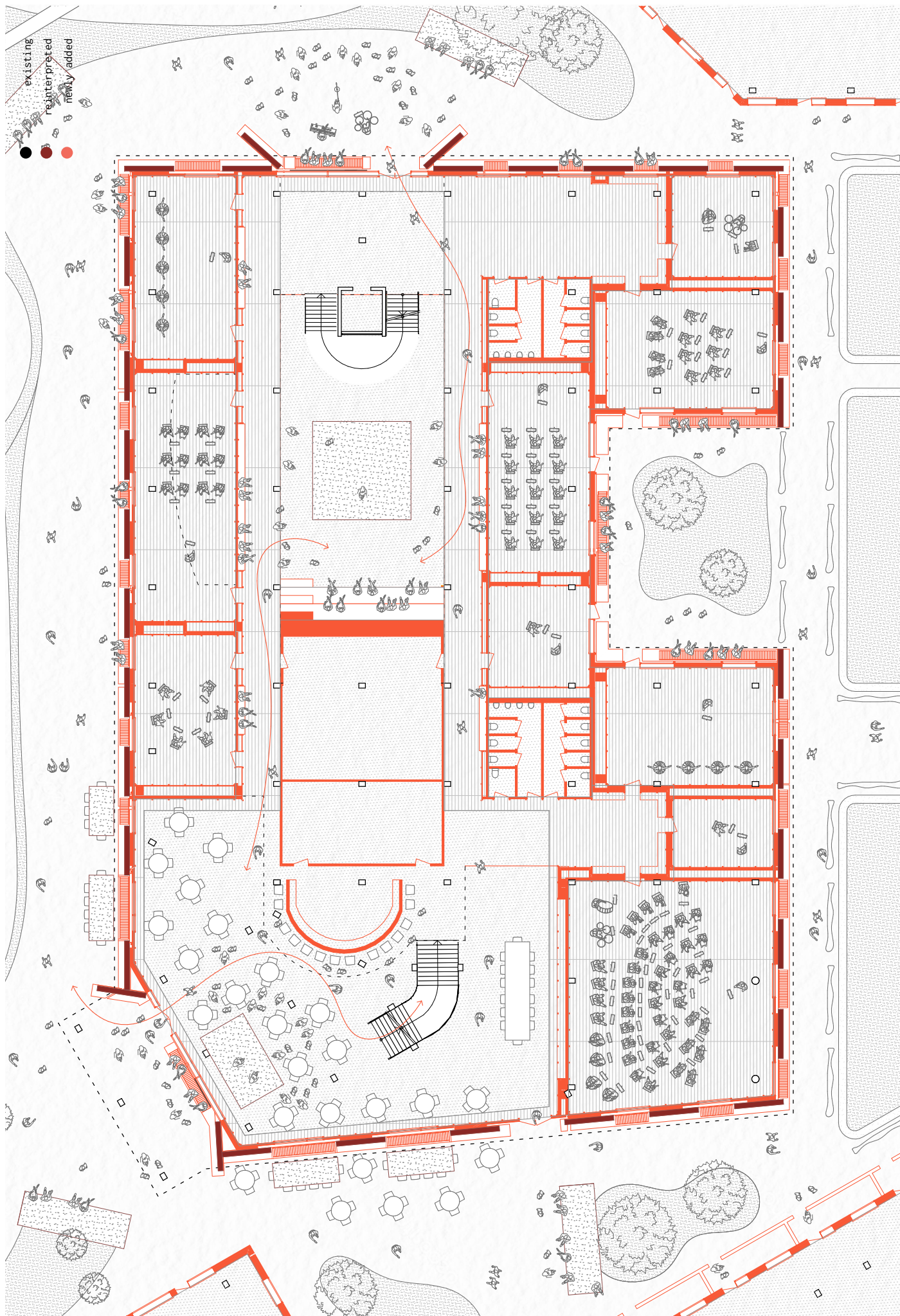




Waterpump in the beguinage of Hoogstraten

1:200





Ground floor plan

Through the use of scales in telling the story of this project, the point of gravity gradually shifts from a theoretical angle, to its practical implications. As the 1:200 is the scale of the building, its materialization becomes of great importance. The material component is also central to the method of bricolage. Scalbert, for instance, interprets bricolage through the lens of materiality: the bricoleur forms an inventory, or treasury, of materials and uses these components as he sees fit.<sup>8</sup>

This attitude is highly relevant for the building industry in the close future as it faces incredibly large challenges in relation to climate change. The act of building is currently and historically a highly polluting activity. In the close future, however, more buildings are needed. Rather than always opting for the new – a mental remnant from the previous century – a big part of the solution is lying in front of us: the reservoir of empty and not functioning buildings that stem from the 20th century. This research is a modest step to understanding how to actively work with these existing buildings and give new meanings to their materials.

Initially, therefore, the materials of 'De Molenpoort' formed a central place in the research. When the treasury is complete, the materials need to be assessed. The act of bricolage, or, the science of the concrete, is an act of logic.

A basic question to ask is therefore:

*- Is this material worth keeping and what is the function it can still perform?*

In the case of 'De Molenpoort', many of the materials that are present in the building (lowered ceiling, shiny tiles, plastics) are often associated with junkspace, a term first formulated by Rem Koolhaas. A challenge in this process, therefore, is to look beyond its cultural meaning and tracing its pure material value in order to see if it can be reinterpreted. The process of reinterpretation and the placing of a certain material outside of its usual context might raise consciousness on the material that would otherwise remain unnoticed. This can only be done in a process of 'untaming the mind', as Claude Levi Strauss remarks in his work 'The Savage Mind'.<sup>9</sup> The value in this process has also been described in Jencks and Silver's 'Adhocism'. The attitude and motto that is used is '*Everything can always be something else*'. Jencks makes the case that this attitude might break us loose from the stereotypes of an industrial society and gives us a new fresh look at these materials. An example that Jencks names is Buster Keaton's short film 'The Scarecrow', in which for instance a door would become a tool to pull a tooth.

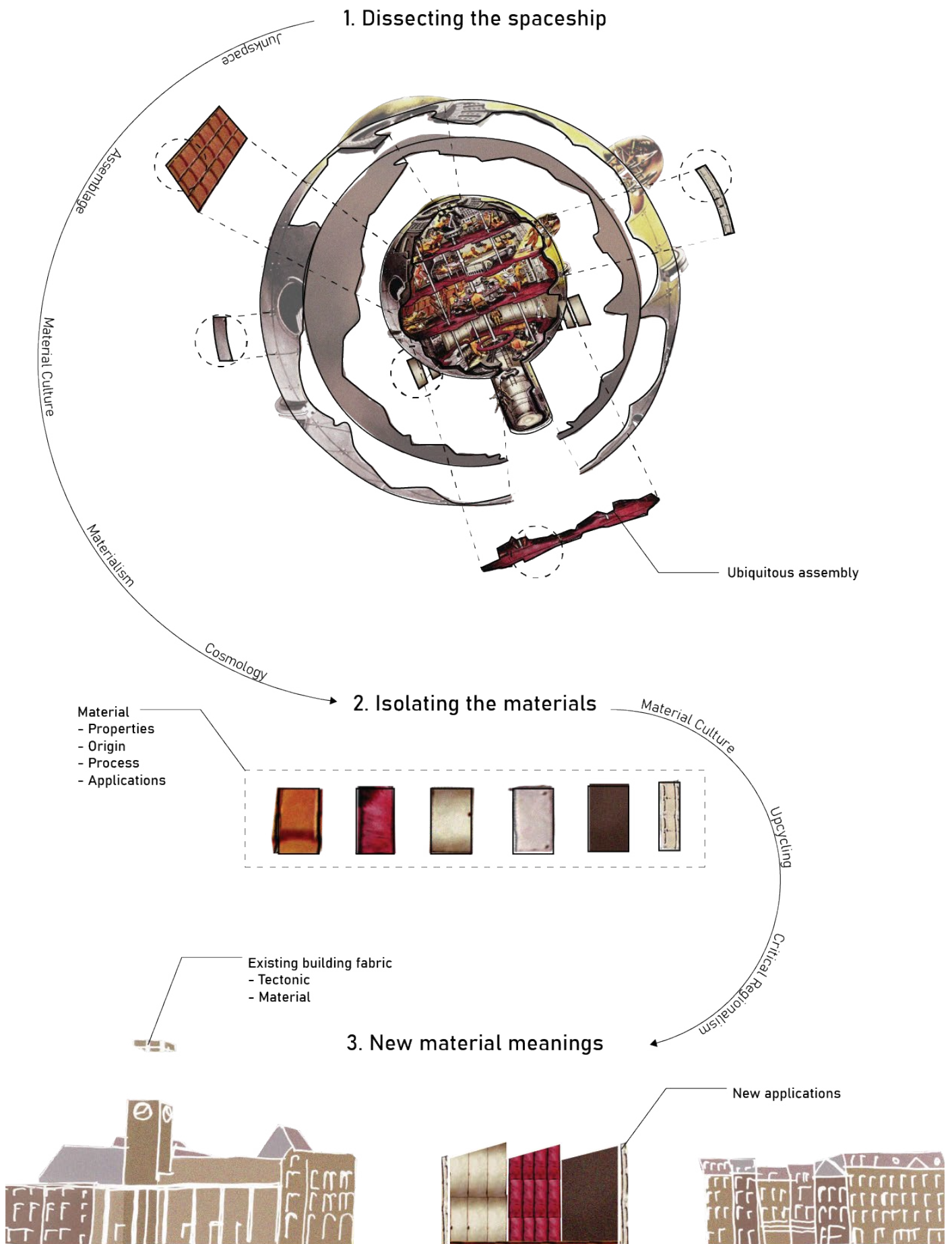


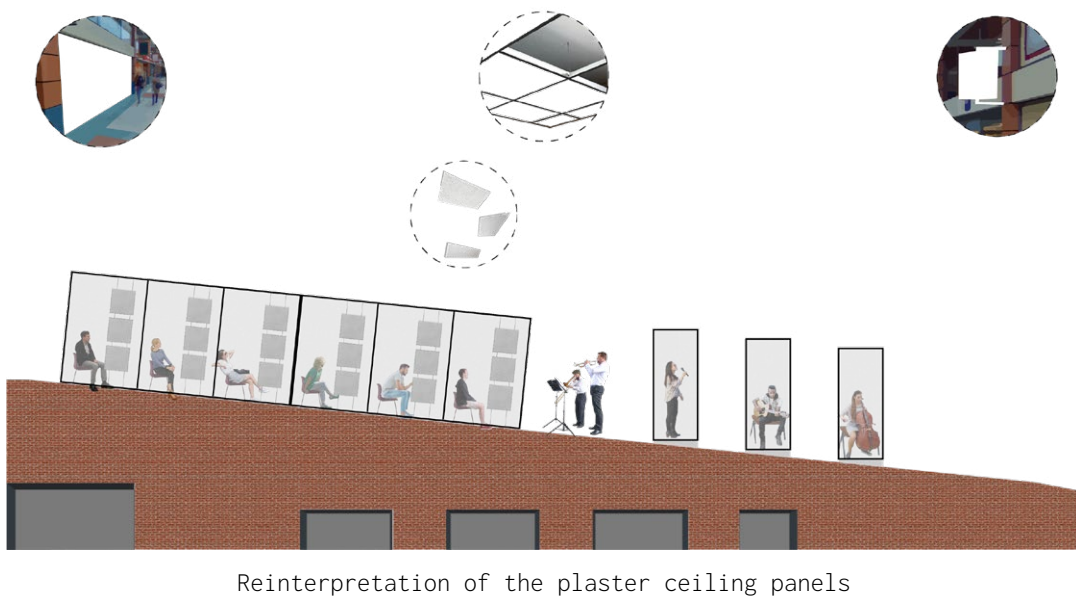
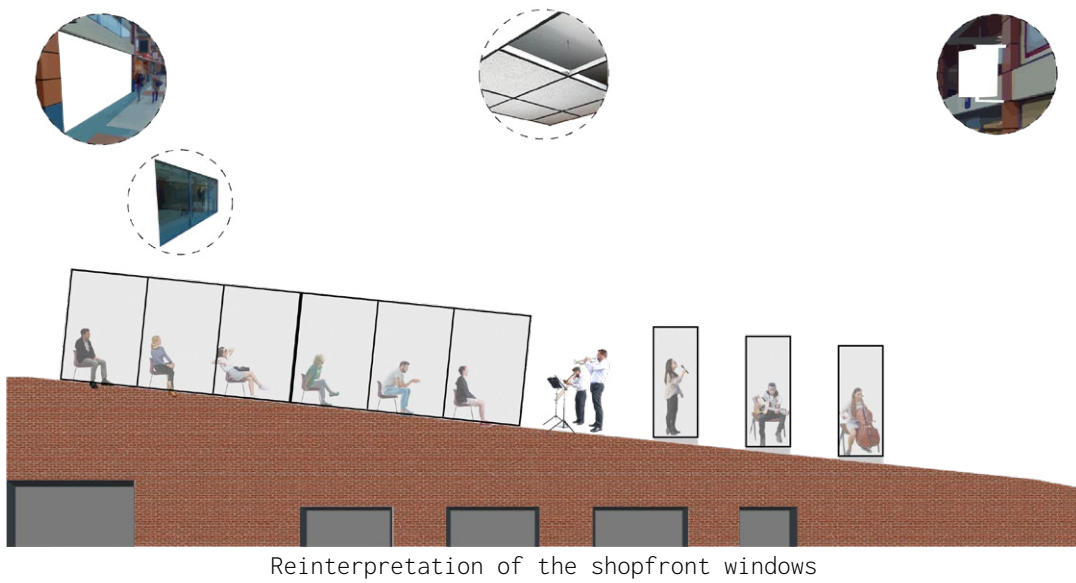
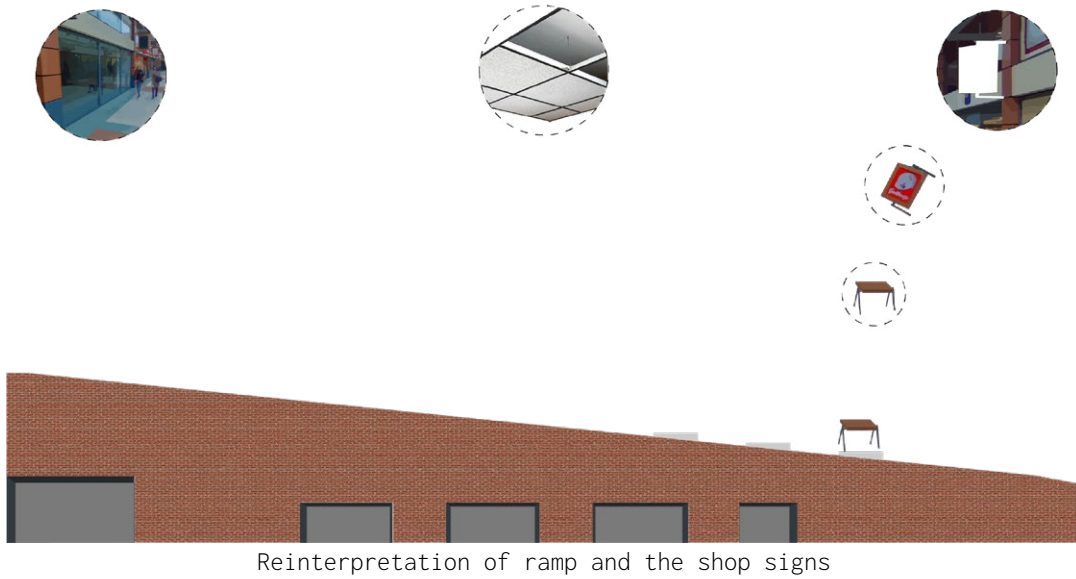
Scene from Buster Keaton's 'The Scarecrow'

8. Scalbert, The Architect as Bricoleur, 73.

9. Scalbert, The Architect as Bricoleur, 71.



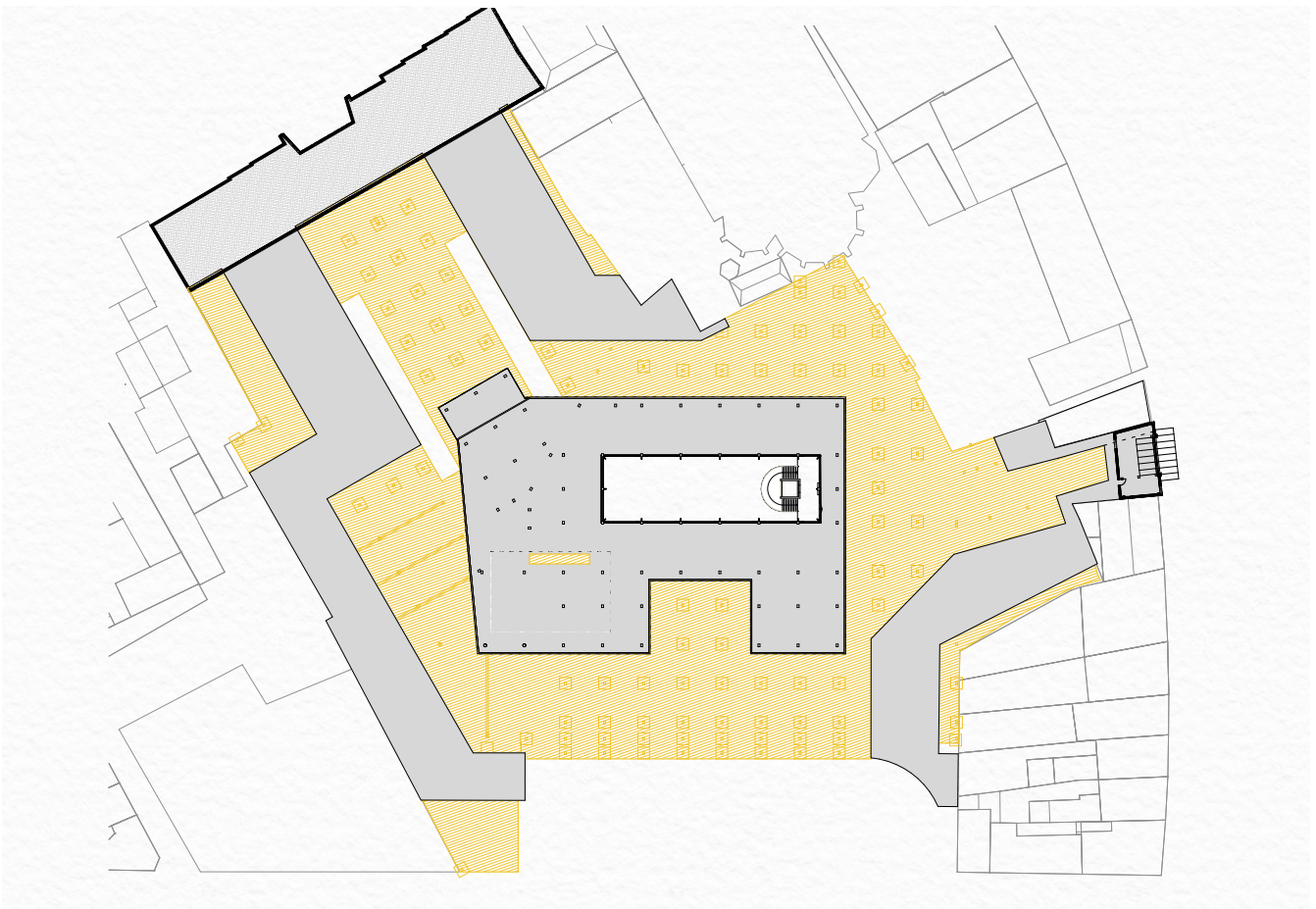




Reinterpreting a material, however, might transcend a purely functional reason. Material is key to the experience of the built environment and is a practical representative of its history. A second, more profound, question therefore could be:

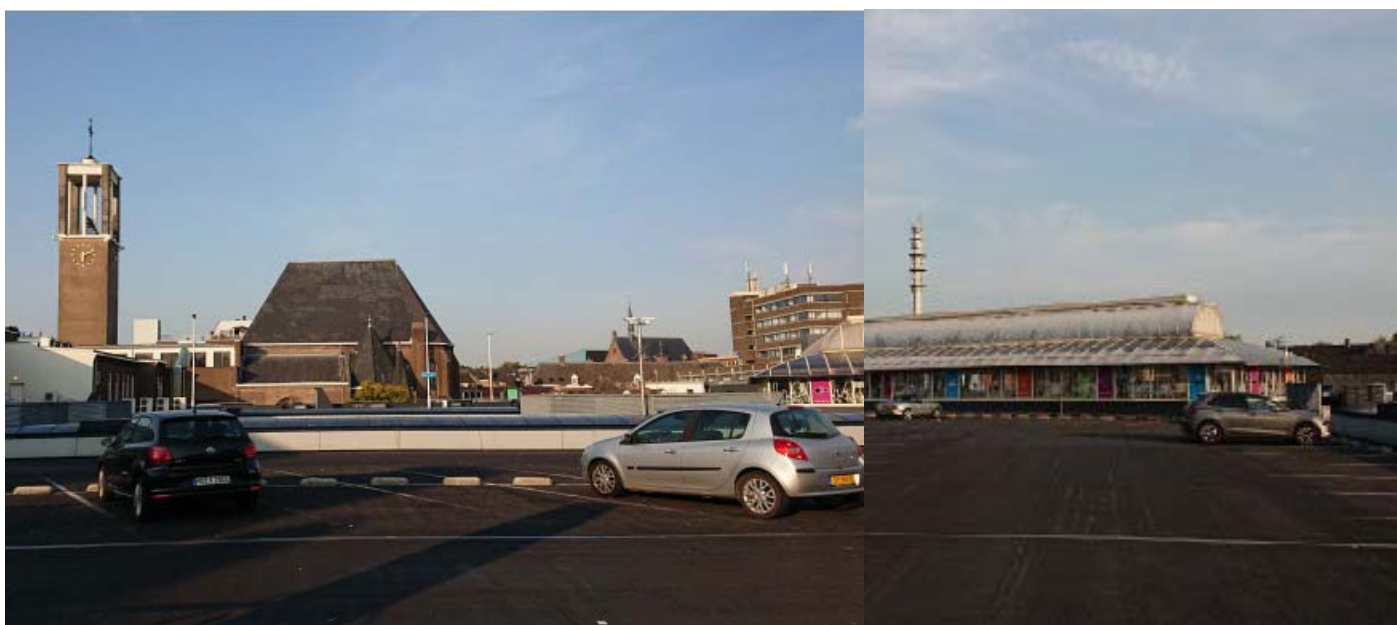
- *which message would this material convey?*
- *does this material represent the memory of the previous building and its function?*

An element of 'De Molenpoort' for which it might be remembered is its large parking deck on top. Its heaviness together with its enormous surface area is a striking symbol of the strangeness of the building. In order to make the urban plan work, certain parts of the roof will need to be removed. The act of drawing a demolition plan brought to attention the large amount of concrete that was to be taken away. The process of dismantling (in drawing) also disconnected the material from its original function as a (static) roof, to being solely a very even piece of thick concrete. This conceptual disengagement inspired the reinterpretation of the material to take place.



Roof demolition plan

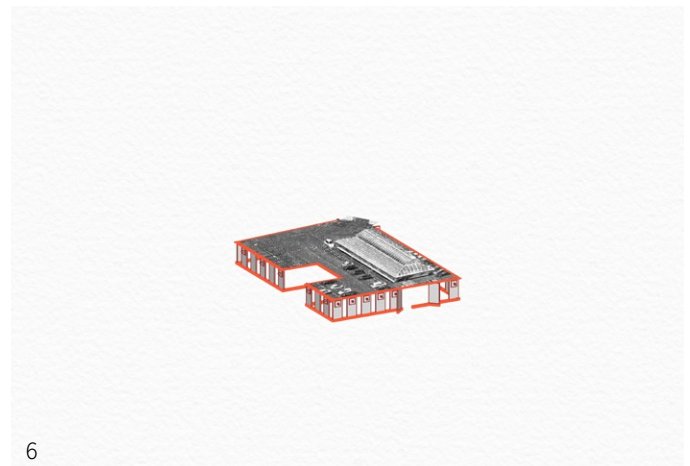
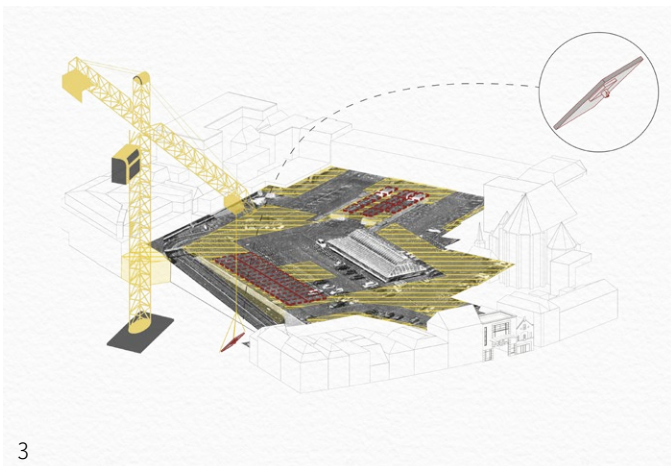
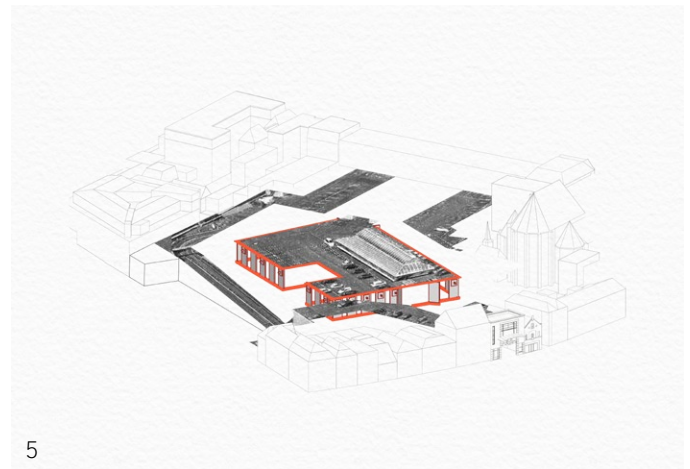
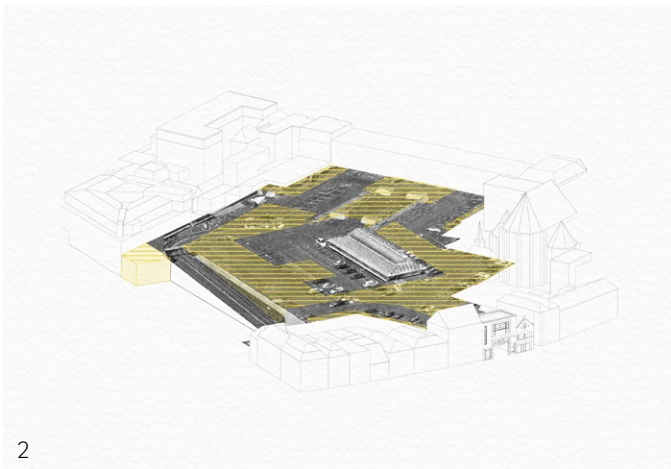
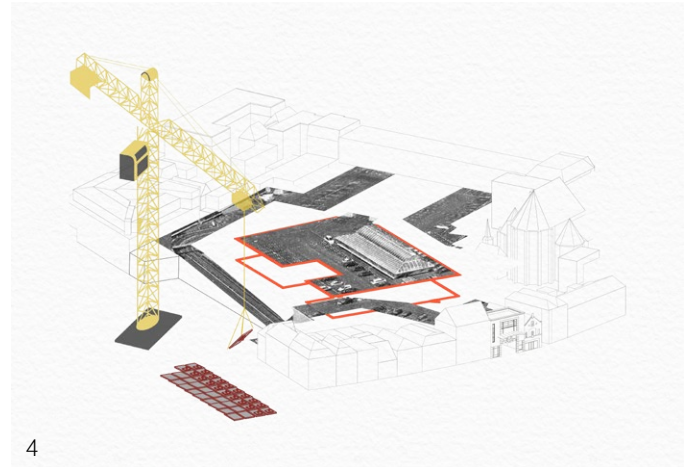
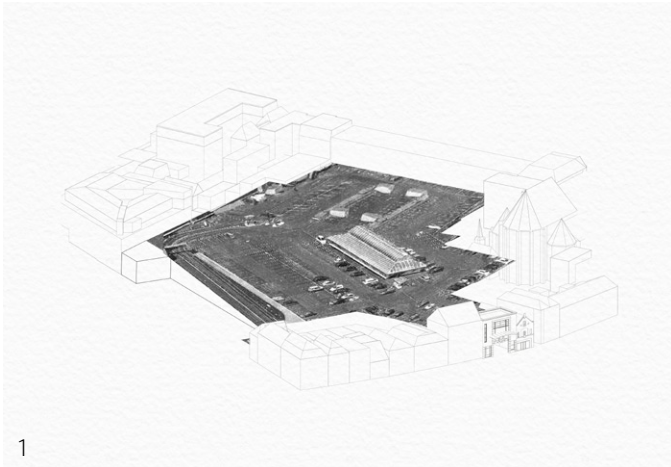




The parking deck of 'De Molenpoort' with its characteristic atrium and view

By removing the roof, the structures are in need of a façade for the first time. The removed piece of concrete seems an interesting solution to this problem. The slab can be cut into pieces and thereby expresses the weight and character of the former roof (and the shopping wall with it) in a tangible way.

This makes it clear that demolition can also be a chance to bring to attention that which fully expresses the character of 'De Molenvoort' and simultaneously to look at a certain material from a different angle.

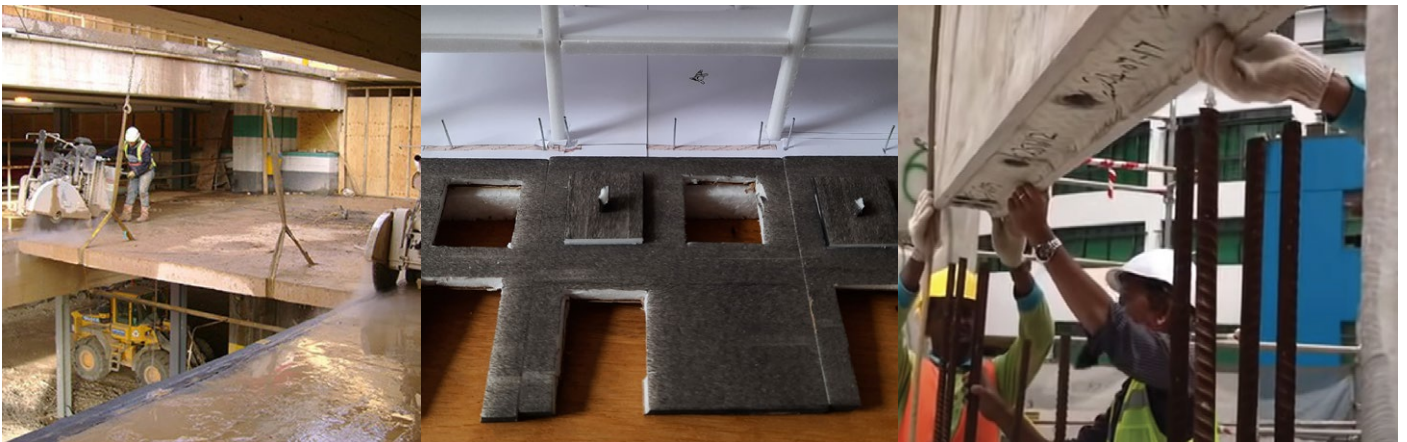


## Experiments on material reuse

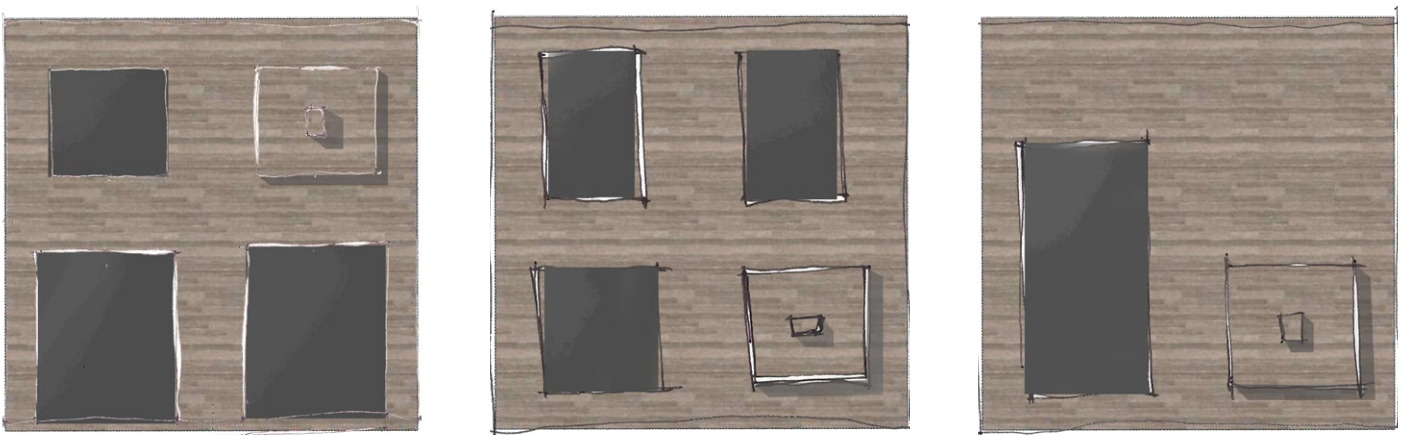
As the method of Bricolage is in its core 'hands on' and 'working with what is at hand', the design research was also conducted in this way. Often this included model making in order to see the potential of materials and their spatial possibilities.



How is concrete cut and what are the design possibilities?



What are the constraints and how are things connected?



How to fill in the panels?

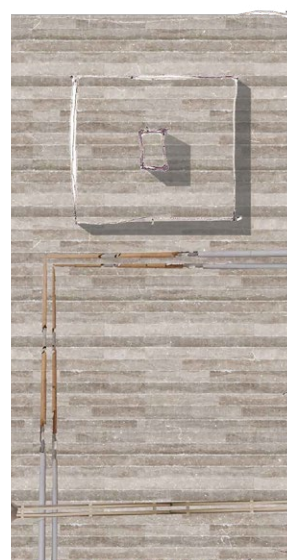




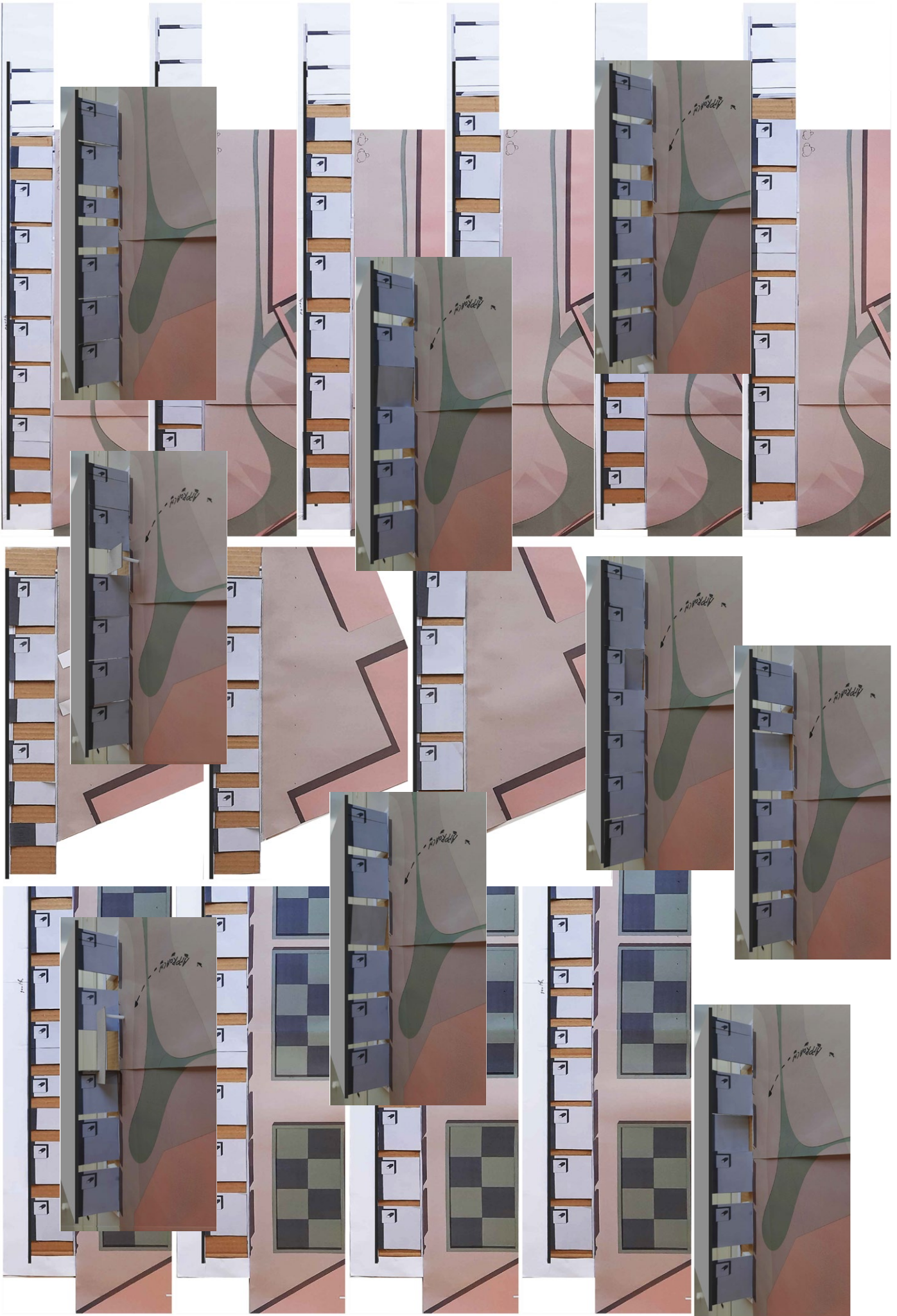
Do the panels need to be filled in at all?



The concrete panels are a remnant of what used to be the big, massive, parking deck. In order to stay true to its original morphology, the panels should remain untreated/unfilled. In this way, its character is presented in its full integrity.

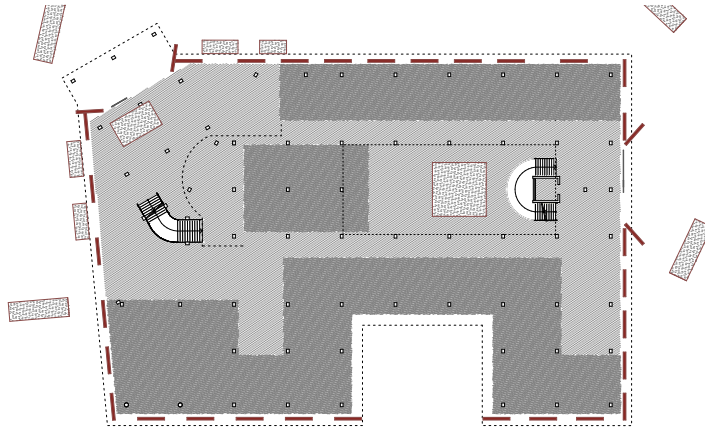


In a later phase, the decision was made to cut the roof in pieces of 3000 by 6000, instead of 6000 by 6000. This creates two different, more slender, concrete elements. By doing this there is more flexibility, different rhythms can be created along the façade and most importantly, more light can penetrate into the building.

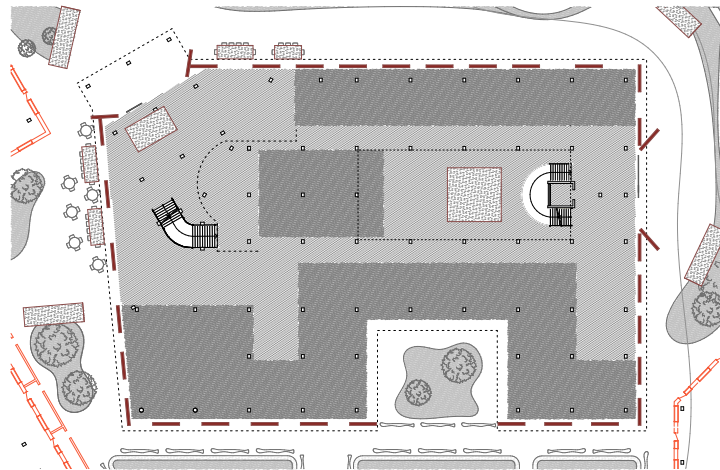


Arranging the panels

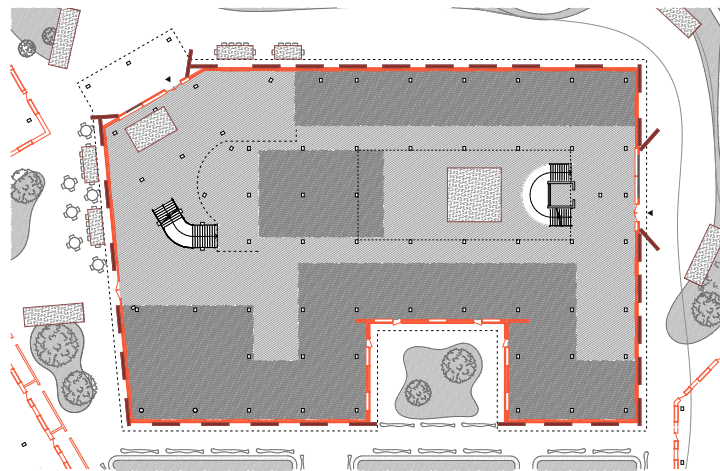




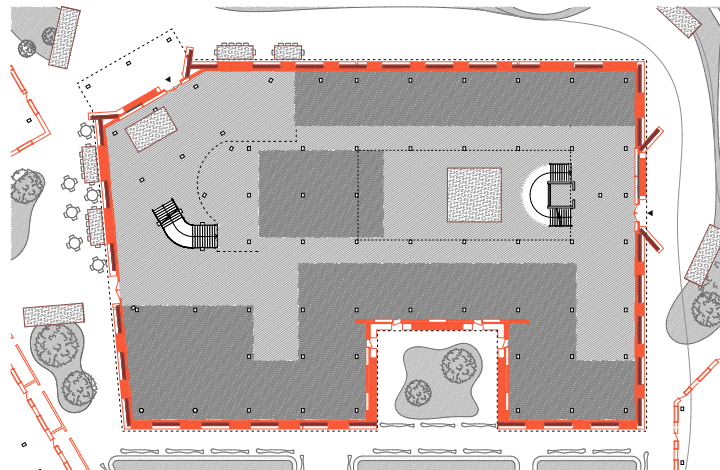
Panel arrangement



According to the urban plan



Placement of the openings



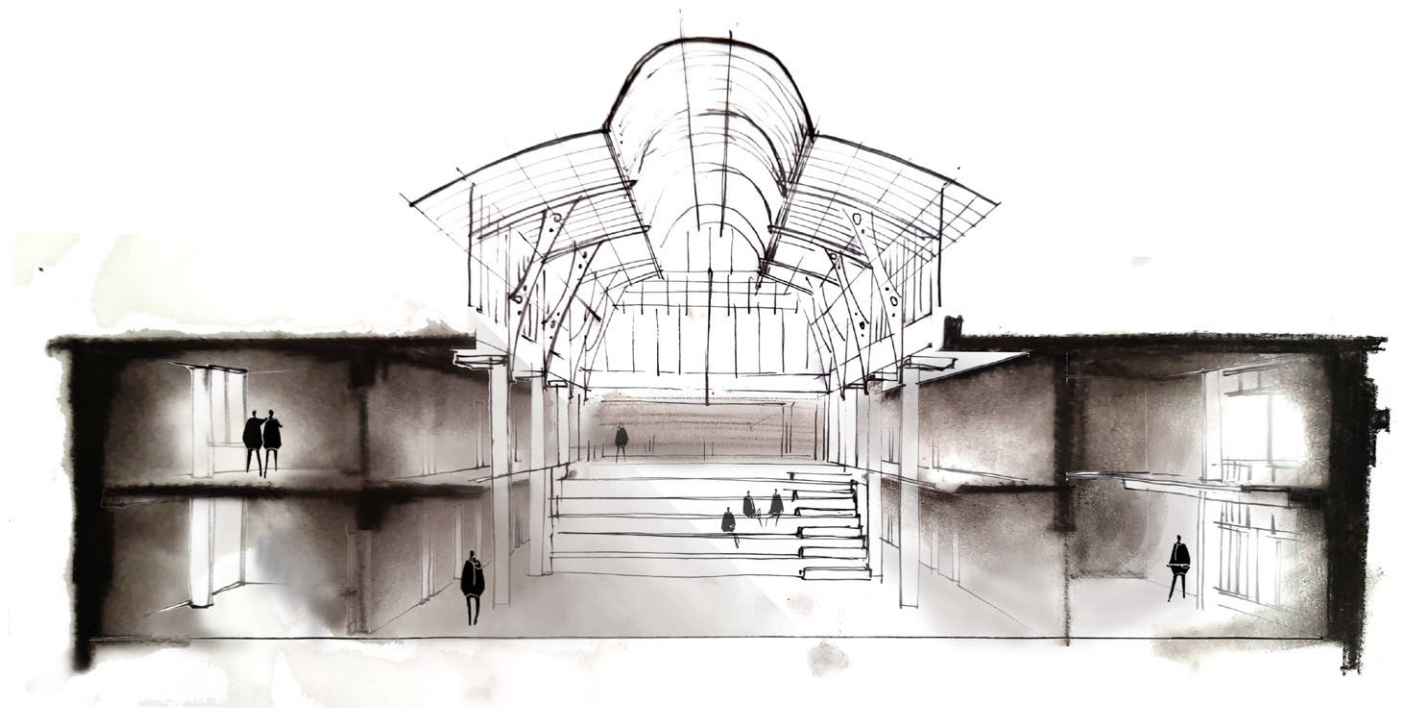
Placement of seating in between the panels



## Light and shelter

In the shopping center the use of light contributed to a certain flatness and sameness, as all rooms (shops) were lit with the use of the same artificial light. In the new building a contrast comes into existence. The atrium is the bright center of the building while the rooms are softly lit with light from the atrium and are provided with accent light that shines through the cavities of the concrete panels. Through the distribution of light, the spatial syntax becomes logical and natural. One moves from the public space in the open air, into a light interior, and lastly continues into the darker, more private, practice rooms.

I believe that the implications of a conceptual resemblance with a cave are very appropriate in combination with the program of a performance art building. The cave provides a feeling of shelter and safety - elements that are very much demanded for the creation of music as well.



Contrast between the inner and outer rooms

## Appropriation and difference

*“..., the role of the architect slightly shifts: he no longer produces fixed spatial configurations, but strives to put in place the necessary conditions for users to participate and to engage through action.”*<sup>10</sup>

Not only the static expression of the building that will go on until eternity, but the expression of the people that inhabit it. As this project is bricolage, the process of change does not come to a standstill after the building has been realized. Where the engineer would consider the building a finished product, the bricoleur would see it more as an evolution.

*“Being at once designer, builder, and user, the bricoleur is central to the process of making things. The distinction between conception, construction, and living is not one that in his terms is particularly significant.”*<sup>11</sup>

As the goal of this building is to become rooted in its community, the period *after* construction, when it starts being used, is just as important. In that sense, the design and built process is only a small part of its existence.

The concrete panels, with their rough and untreated aesthetic, might invite for appropriation. In this way, the building itself could become an archive of the activities that have been taking place in the neighborhood, kids might spend time drawing or artists might be allowed to show their talents on the panels. The active social control, as the building is literally central in the neighborhood, might prevent vandalism.

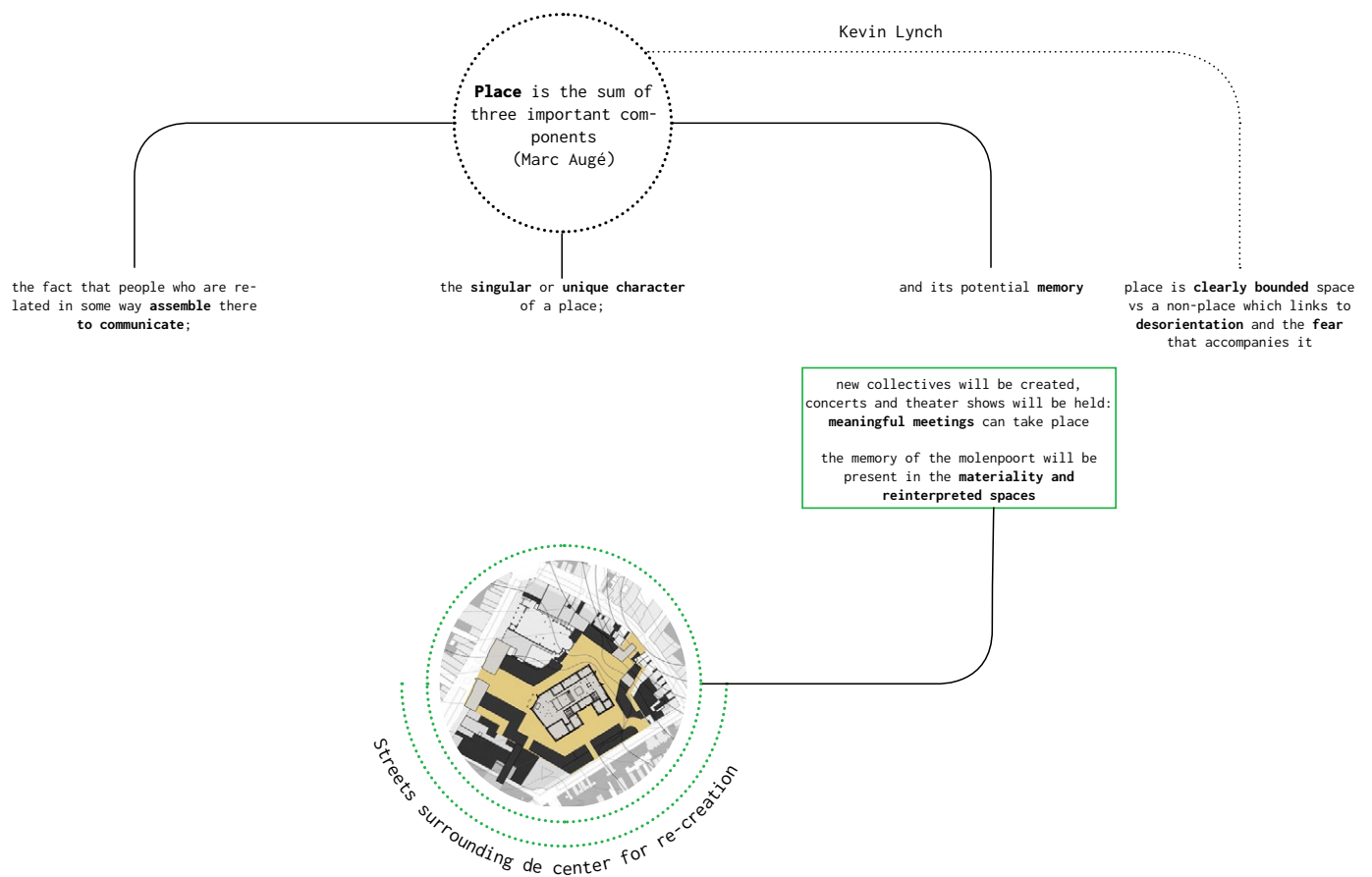
In this way, in its diversity, the facade will become an adequate expression of the activities that take place inside while also becoming the visible expression of the community of its inhabitants.



10. Dionne, C. (2016). A Leap of Faith in the Realm of the Possible . Social Poetics . The Architecture of Use and Appropriation, OASE, (96), 73-76. Retrieved from <https://oasejournal.nl/en/Issues/96/ALeapOfFaithInTheRealmOfThePossible>

11. Scalbert, The Architect as Bricoleur, 71.

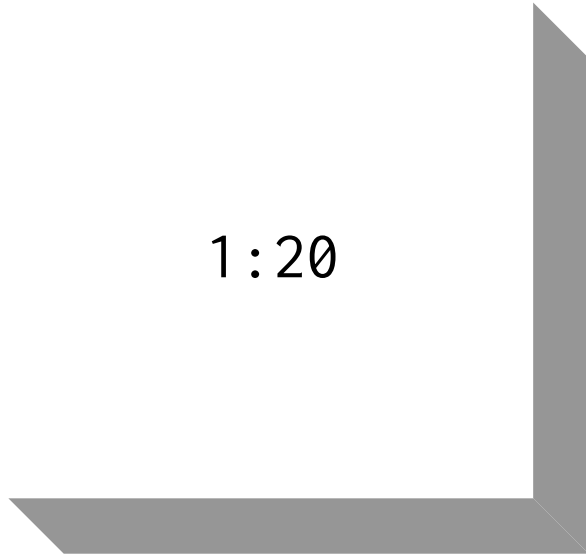
## How to make 'De Molenpoort' into place?

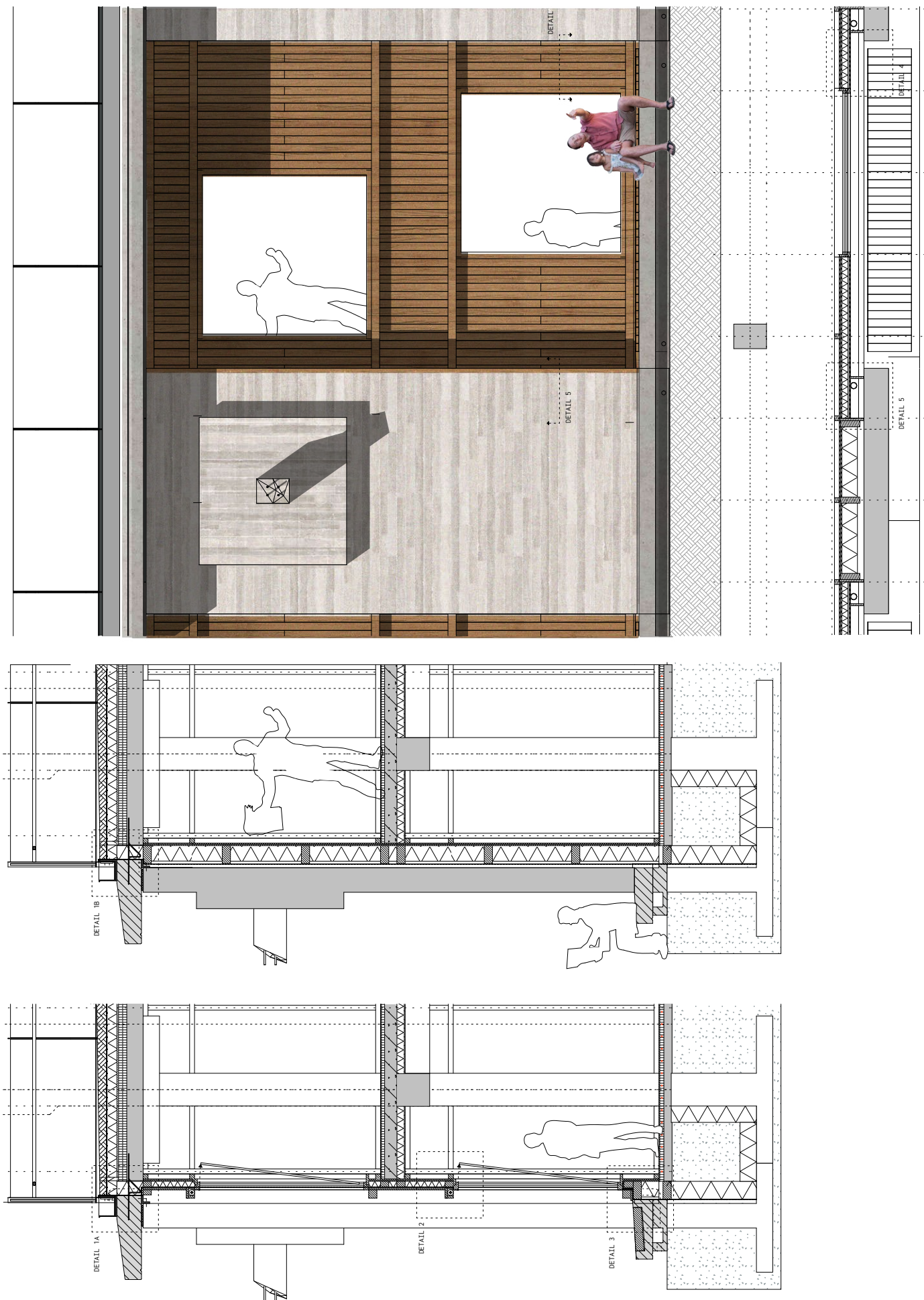






1:20





Characteristic building section



## Hierarchy of elements

The final scale to consider in the process is the scale of the room. This is the scale where all the (reused) materials and spaces come together. The formulation of an order is necessary for all the elements to find their place. Dom Hans van der Laan has created an expansive body of knowledge on this subject. In finding an order he distinguishes a major element from a minor element, and major pieces from minor pieces. This distinction has helped to formulate a certain hierarchy within the building.

The elements 'as they are found' formed the starting point in this respect. The bricoleur is knee deep in reality and adapts his moves accordingly. The single most important 'major element' within the building is the atrium. Naturally, the system of measurements of this central space within the building has come to decide the rhythm of the whole. Herein exists a more rigid 6 by 6 meter grid (the columns), containing a more intricate 1 by 1 meter grid (the windows). The system of measurements has served to make a distinction between large spaces (accommodating more people) and smaller spaces (accommodating fewer people).



A more rigid, 'major' grid of the columns, to a more fine, 'minor' grid of the rooms



Sketch model connecting facade to the practise rooms and the practise rooms to the atrium

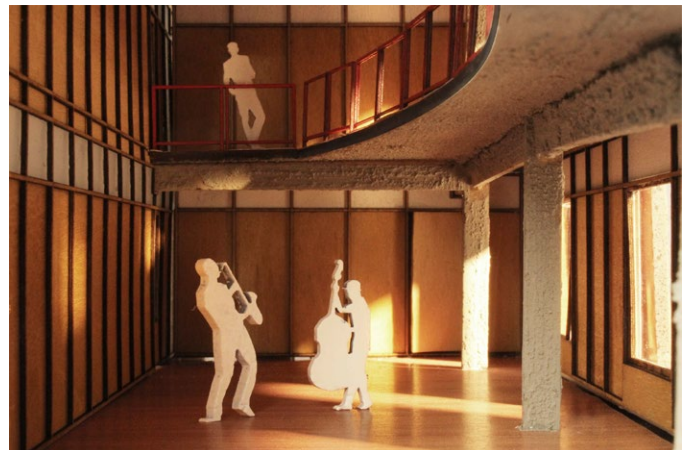
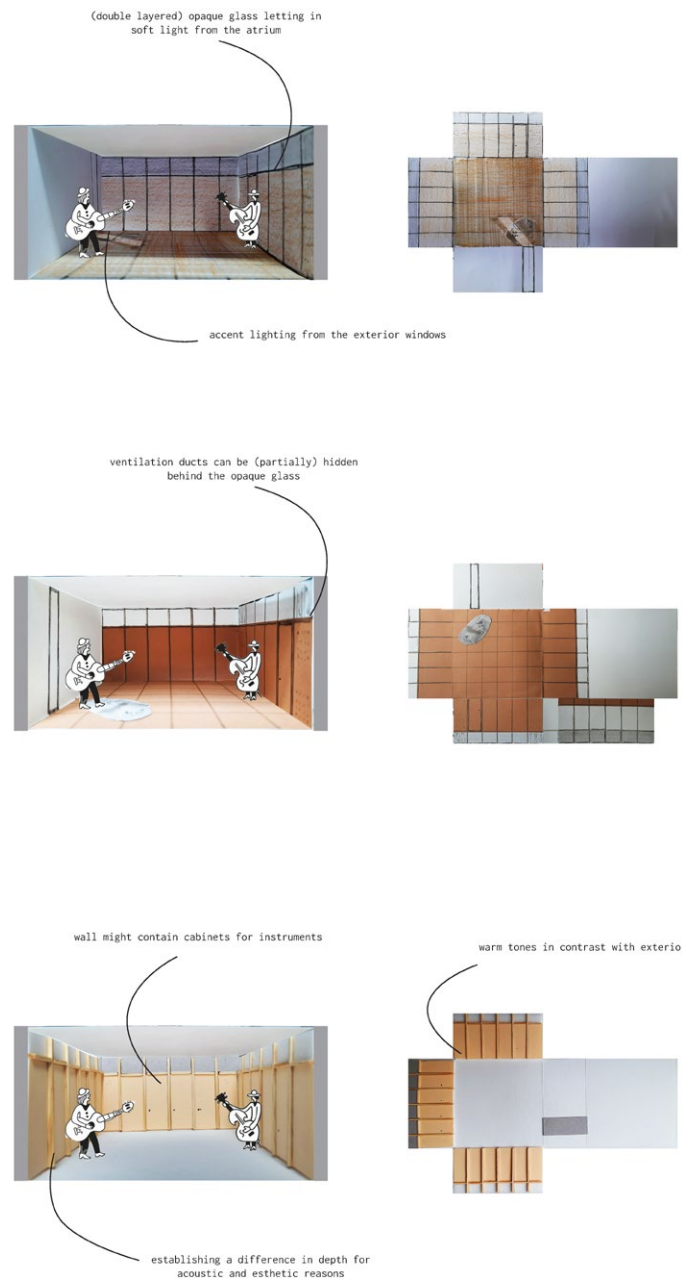
## Scale of the room

Bricolage is a hands on business. Therefore it was only logical to experiment with models to come to understand the space and the challenges involved in the process of making. Working with paper is a low-key way to quickly come to variations.

In this model, the materiality and experience of the space are the most important. It shows how a choice of reusing the roof, but also reusing more subtle and smaller elements (ceiling panels), have its implications in the atmosphere of a room. Wood as a material has been chosen for its warmth and its acoustic performance. The depth in the walls also serve to break the sound effectively. Although the materials and the order of elements is the same in every room, all rooms are different. The existing building provides single height spaces, double height spaces, double height spaces with enormous beams and curved mezzanines. Further variation is found in the allocation of the windows and the exact placement of the concrete panels. In this way, every room is a new experience.

This model explains how all these elements and choices come together. Whereas the atrium and the facade are large and massive, the rooms have a more human scale to create a good environment for personal creative development.

In the presentation model, the existing and the new come together. The new is fine and detailed, accentuating the roughness of the existing concrete structure. By doing this, one might realize that the facade stems from the original building.







Double height practise room, showing how the light comes in and the relationship between old and new

## Improvising and communicating bricolage

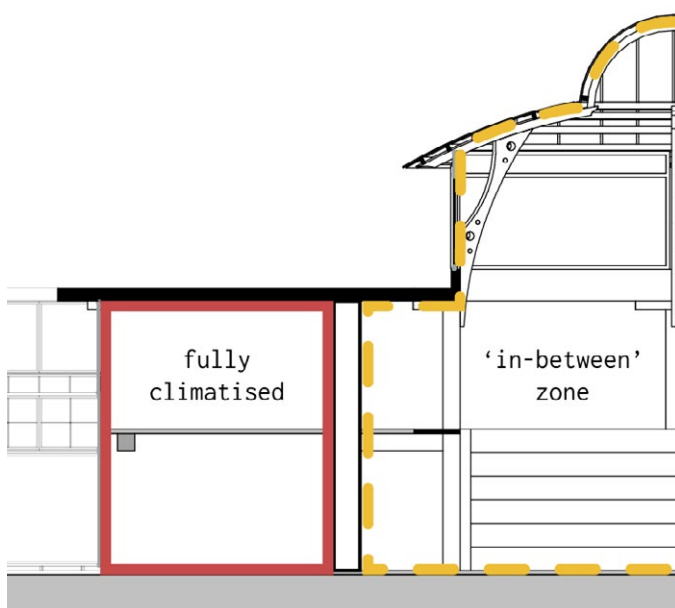
*'bricolage is shrewd and cunning' & 'the science of the concrete'* <sup>12</sup>

I am taking the freedom to potentially misinterpret this quote by Irinee Scalbert. There are two strategies for isolating this existing building. For practical reasons, option 2, placing a layer of isolation on top of the roof, is the preferred option. Here, ceiling height will be sufficient and, more aesthetically, the bare concrete of the roof and its mushrooms will be visible. The layer of isolation, however, needs to be continuous which demands the usage of an isokorf and the addition of a cornice. In this way, the cornice mimics the 'cut' roof in a continuous way, while giving quality to the interior. Bricolage is also a form of improvisation and working with what is found. The clear-cut quality of the roof is shown, while bringing an old building to its modern standards.

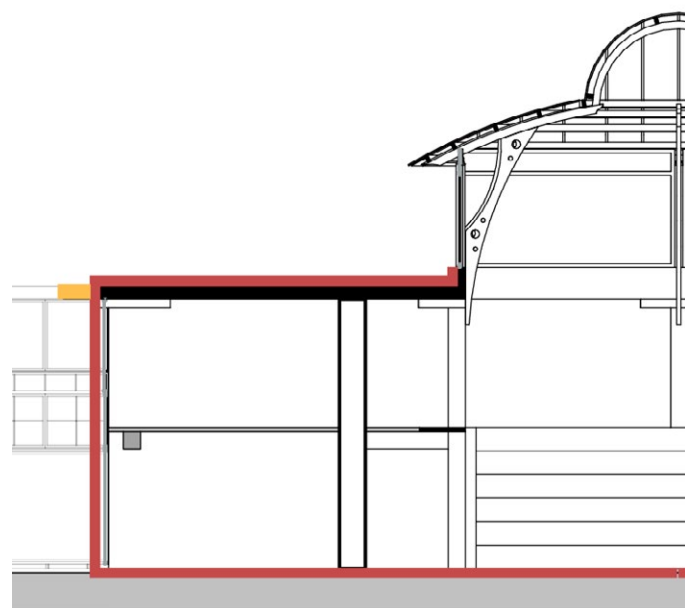
The application of a cornice also speaks to the topic of communicating bricolage. The creation of an order opens the possibility to sometimes do the opposite - placing some element outside of the order to highlight its importance. With this in mind, the large reused concrete panels are allocated freely according to the spaces that it faces in the urban plan. The application of a cornice and a plinth serve to contain the concrete elements and consequently emphasize their importance even further. This might allow for people to realize the meaning and background of this intervention.

The importance that is given to the concrete panel on the exterior extends into the interior, by using the panels as podia and thereby distinguishing the place of performance from the place of the viewer.

In the façade, it is chosen to make use of two separate planes. The first plane constitutes of the concrete panels, providing a protective layer between the interior and the exterior. The purpose of the second layer is rather to mediate between the exterior and interior in its materiality and measurements. The second layers is made of wooden slats, with the same dimensions as the wood in which the concrete panels have been cast and thereby also reference the process of making.



1. Clear cutting the roof - interior isolation



2. Adding a cornice - isolation on roof

12. Scalbert, *The Architect as Bricoleur*, 71.





The concrete panels, and the secondary layer of wood and windows, contained by a plinth and a cornice.





