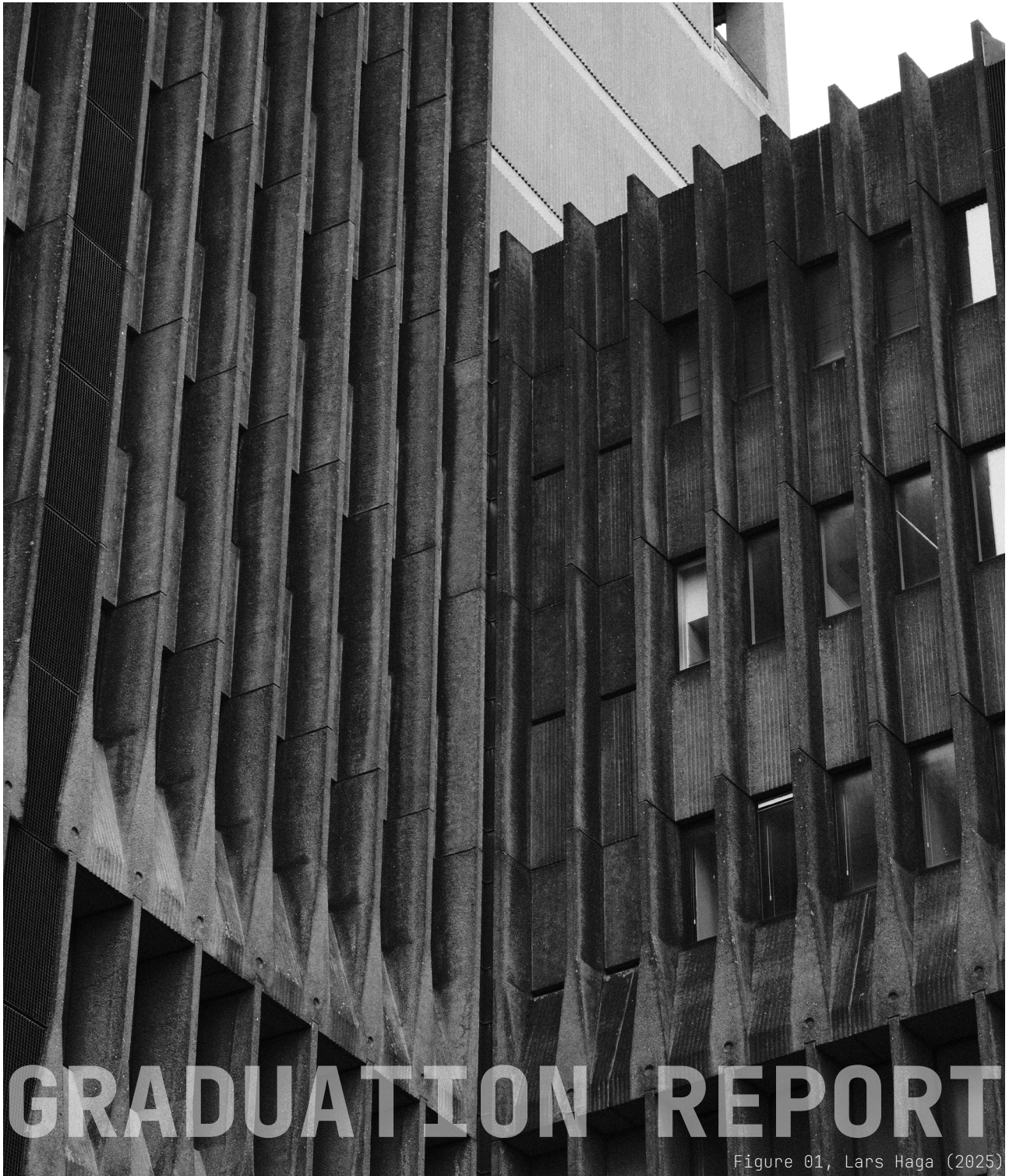


The Blakeburg Depository

Curating Time in Post-65 Transformation



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Foreword

This personal graduation report presents the research and analytical process, as well as the resulting conclusions, developed within the graduation studio Resourceful Reuse of Heritage, part of the Chair of Heritage at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, TU Delft.

The studio focuses on the critical analysis of post-1965 Brutalist architecture and the strategies available for its reuse. Many buildings from this period are not considered as heritage, often due to their dominant use of concrete and brick, combined with a strict and minimalist architectural language. As a result, these buildings frequently suffer from poor maintenance, negative public perception, or are threatened by demolition.

Brutalism is used here as an overarching term; however, the buildings studied do not all strictly conform to Brutalist stylistic principles and often overlap with movements such as Functionalism and Structuralism.

Reading guide

The analytical process began with a collective screening phase, in which a longlist of 22 buildings was gradually narrowed down through comparative analysis. This resulted in a selection of six buildings that were studied in greater depth, each leading to an individual strategy focused on renovation, transformation, or disassembly and reassembly.

This document is structured in three analytical phases, preceded by an introduction to the central theme.

- *Phase 1* consists of an exploratory study of 22 post-1965 office buildings.
- *Phase 2* focuses on a more detailed investigation of 12 selected buildings.
- *Phase 3* presents an in-depth analysis of six buildings, culminating in a strategic proposal aimed at giving renewed relevance to post-1965 office architecture.

Blakeburg is the primary case study discussed in this report.

Part 01. Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

The central question guiding this research is how post-1965 architecture, particularly Brutalist office buildings, can be approached today, and whether these buildings can and should be considered heritage. Despite their architectural ambition and material innovation, many of these buildings are undervalued, poorly maintained, or face demolition due to negative public perception and changing functional demands.

Blakeburg, located along the Blaak in Rotterdam, exemplifies this tension. Although architecturally expressive and technically innovative, the building currently suffers, among other things, from a lack of engagement with its context, vacancy and a mixed public image. These conditions raise a spatial and architectural challenge: how can such a building be meaningfully adapted without losing the qualities that define its identity?

1.2 Relevance

This research contributes to the broader discourse surrounding late twentieth century office architecture, particularly buildings in which concrete functions not only as a structural material but also as an important expressive element.

A significant portion of the Dutch post-1965 building stock consists of this type of architecture. The relevance of the topic becomes increasingly apparent through the prejudice these buildings often face, as they are frequently evaluated through the lens of deterioration rather than transformation. Now that much of the post-1965 building stock has reached an age of approximately fifty to sixty years, the effects of time are becoming increasingly visible. Due to the material and structural expressiveness of many of these buildings, processes of ageing are often highly exposed and legible. This ageing, however, is frequently interpreted as failure rather than as a meaningful layer of architectural development (Schmidt, 2020).

Because many post-1965 buildings are not yet formally recognised as heritage and are often absent from monument registers, these negative perceptions regularly result in inadequate interventions and short sighted decision making (Remøy, 2014), including:

- Poor management
- Poor preservation

- Premature renovation
- Loss of architectural value

Addressing this issue is therefore highly relevant for architects, heritage professionals, and policymakers confronted with questions concerning the preservation, transformation, or demolition of post war architecture.

By combining architectural analysis with material research and perceptual studies, this project aims to propose a more nuanced framework for decision making that moves beyond the simplified opposition between preservation and demolition.

1.3 Objective and Motivation

Through a series of case studies, buildings are examined with a focus on materiality, spatial qualities, and perception. These analyses form the foundation for an architectural design process in which existing buildings are reinterpreted through strategies ranging from minimal intervention to more invasive transformation, with the aim of making them future-proof.

For Blakeburg specifically, the objective is a renovation and transformation strategy. At the end of Phase 2, three personal motivations for selecting Blakeburg were identified and subsequently explored in depth during Phase 3. These motivations translate into the following architectural and technical ambitions:

- *Facade preservation and conservation*
The shockcrete (schokbeton) facade is the most characteristic element of Blakeburg. Its rhythmic composition, inspired by musical principles, gives the building its identity. The aim is to preserve this composition while carefully cleaning and conserving the facade, partially maintaining its dark patina while safeguarding the material integrity of the concrete.
- *Improvement of daylight conditions*
The project explores interventions to bring daylight deeper into the building, including spatial reconfiguration, the strategic use of reflective surfaces, and reconsideration of the interior layout. These interventions are combined with the ambition to reintroduce the building's retro aesthetic and embrace its darker spatial qualities.
- *Enhancing interaction and safety at plinth level*
The ground floor currently lacks social interaction and perceived safety. By re-evaluating parking requirements, reducing blind walls, and introducing public or semi-public functions, the plinth can become more active and welcoming.

Reinstating the once-representative entrance hall plays a key role in this ambition.

My personal interest in Blakeburg stems from its current absence within the urban experience. Living near Rotterdam, I passed the building many times without noticing it. Through repeated visits and analysis, however, I developed a growing fascination with its detailing, rhythm, and latent potential-qualities that become visible only through close observation.

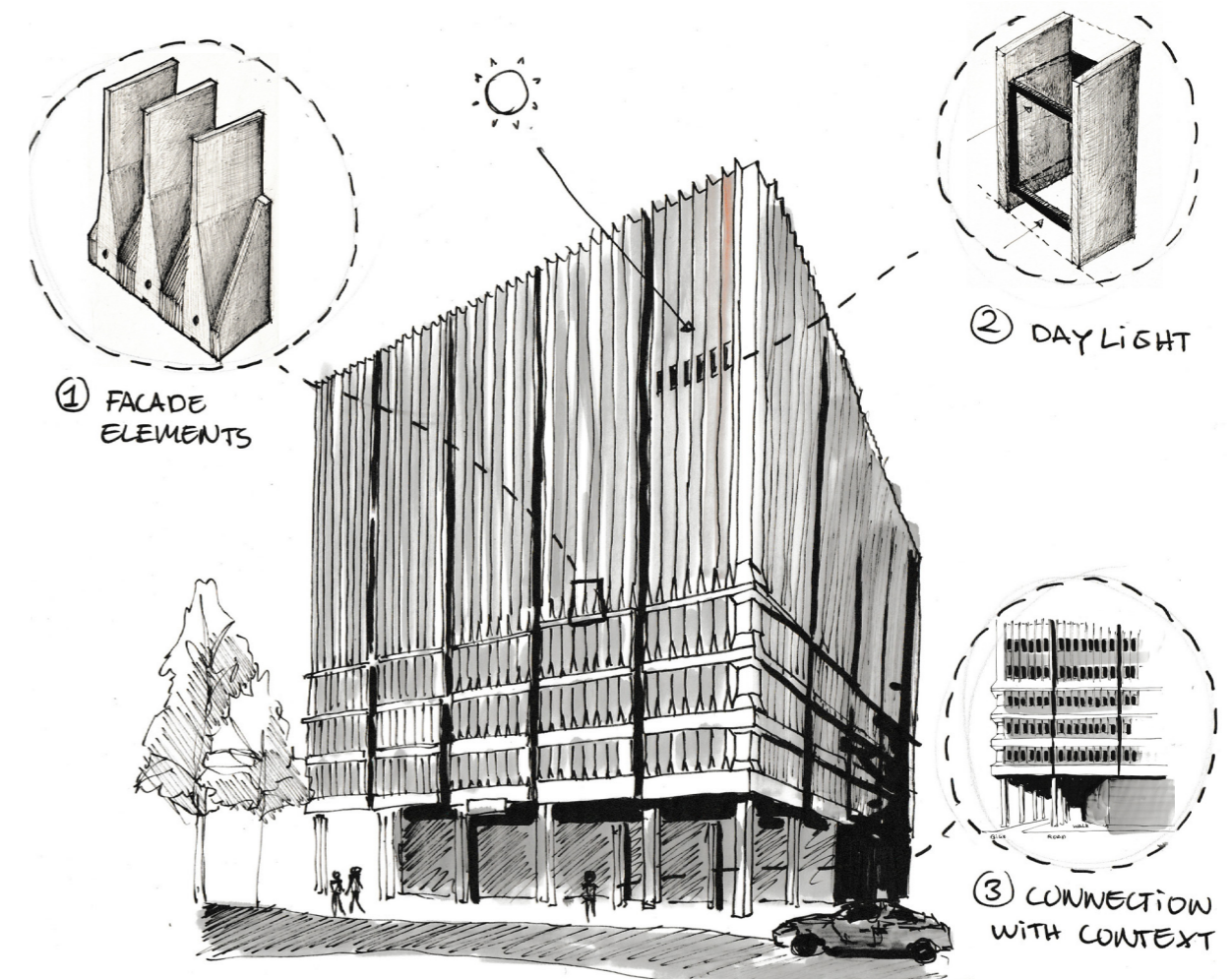


Figure 02 - The three personal motivation concluding phase two (Lars Haga, 2025)

1.4 Research and Design Questions

These ambitions lead to the following main research question:

How can renovation and transformation contribute to improving the perception and spatial experience of Blakeburg while preserving its architectural identity?

This question is addressed through the following sub-questions:

1. How can the shockcrete facade elements be conserved and renovated without losing their aesthetic qualities?
2. How can Blakeburg be spatially reorganised to optimise daylight use while reintroducing its retro character?
3. Which future function or functional mix best suits the architectural and urban context of Blakeburg?
4. How can interaction with the surrounding urban context and social safety at plinth level be improved?

1.5 Scope

Blakeburg is located along the Blaak, in the centre of Rotterdam, a highly accessible area in close proximity to public transport, cultural landmarks, and commercial activities. Originally developed as part of a business district, the area has gradually shifted towards a more mixed-use character, particularly at ground-floor level.

Although Blakeburg is highly specific in its location and architectural character, it exemplifies a set of challenges that are common to many post-1965 buildings. Issues such as negative public perception, material ageing and vacancy, are shared by a broader group of buildings from this period.

The research and analysis presented in this report can therefore be understood as a case-based model for addressing similar buildings and conditions. Rather than offering a one-size-fits-all solution, the project demonstrates a transferable method of analysis and strategic thinking that can be adapted to other post-1965 office buildings facing comparable technical, spatial, and perceptual challenges.

Moreover, this study of Blakeburg forms part of a larger academic framework established within the studio, in which a range of buildings of similar age, style, and function were collectively examined. Through comparative analysis of their strengths and weaknesses, this broader research context situates Blakeburg not as an isolated object, but as one representative example within a wider architectural and cultural condition.

Part 02. Approach

2.1 Methods

Research Strategy:

The research approach combines material-technical investigation with spatial and perceptual analysis.

The first research track focuses on the conservation and renovation of Blakeburg's shockcrete facade. This is grounded in diagnostic and condition assessment methodologies, followed by conservation techniques for architectural precast concrete as described by Thomas Jester (2014). Although the exact concrete composition of Blakeburg remains uncertain, the known production techniques of shockcrete (Quist, 2021) allow for the formulation of a reliable hypothesis framework.

No records of previous facade renovations were found, making on-site observation and informed judgment essential. Initial site visits revealed biological growth (lichens and higher plants), graffiti deposits, and general soiling. While this patina contributes to the building's aesthetic character, it also raises concerns regarding carbonation and long-term material degradation.

Cleaning strategies therefore prioritise minimal intervention, starting with the least aggressive methods and testing their impact on small sample areas before full application (Jester, 2014). Where repairs are necessary, they must be structurally sound and visually compatible, with careful attention to curing time, colour matching, and material behaviour.

Ultimately, this research aims to propose a conservation strategy tailored specifically to Blakeburg, supported by drawings, diagrams, and on-site testing where possible.

Design Strategies:

Two main design strategies follow from the research:

1. *Interior and daylight strategy*

This involves spatial analysis of the interior, photographic documentation, and exploration of original fixtures and fittings. Design experiments and models are used to test daylight interventions and spatial reorganisation, informed by historical research into the building's original interior language.

2. *Plinth and urban interaction strategy*

Interventions at ground level are explored through site visits,

photography, modelling, and design iteration. Particular attention is given to scale, safety, and interaction, potentially informed by informal feedback from users of the surrounding area.

Within the design process for Blakeburg, this design approach was further evaluated and expanded. Design strategies one and two remained relevant and continued to inform the project, but a third strategy was introduced. This additional strategy focuses on preserving the character of Blakeburg by treating accumulated qualities and building specific characteristics as active design tools within the renovation and transformation process.

These accumulated layers are categorized under the overarching term deposits. This concept describes the accumulation of both tangible and intangible layers that have developed over time. The deposits are divided into five categories: social, material, spatial, ecological, and technical. The accompanying diagram illustrates a selection of individual deposits, each positioned within one of these categories.

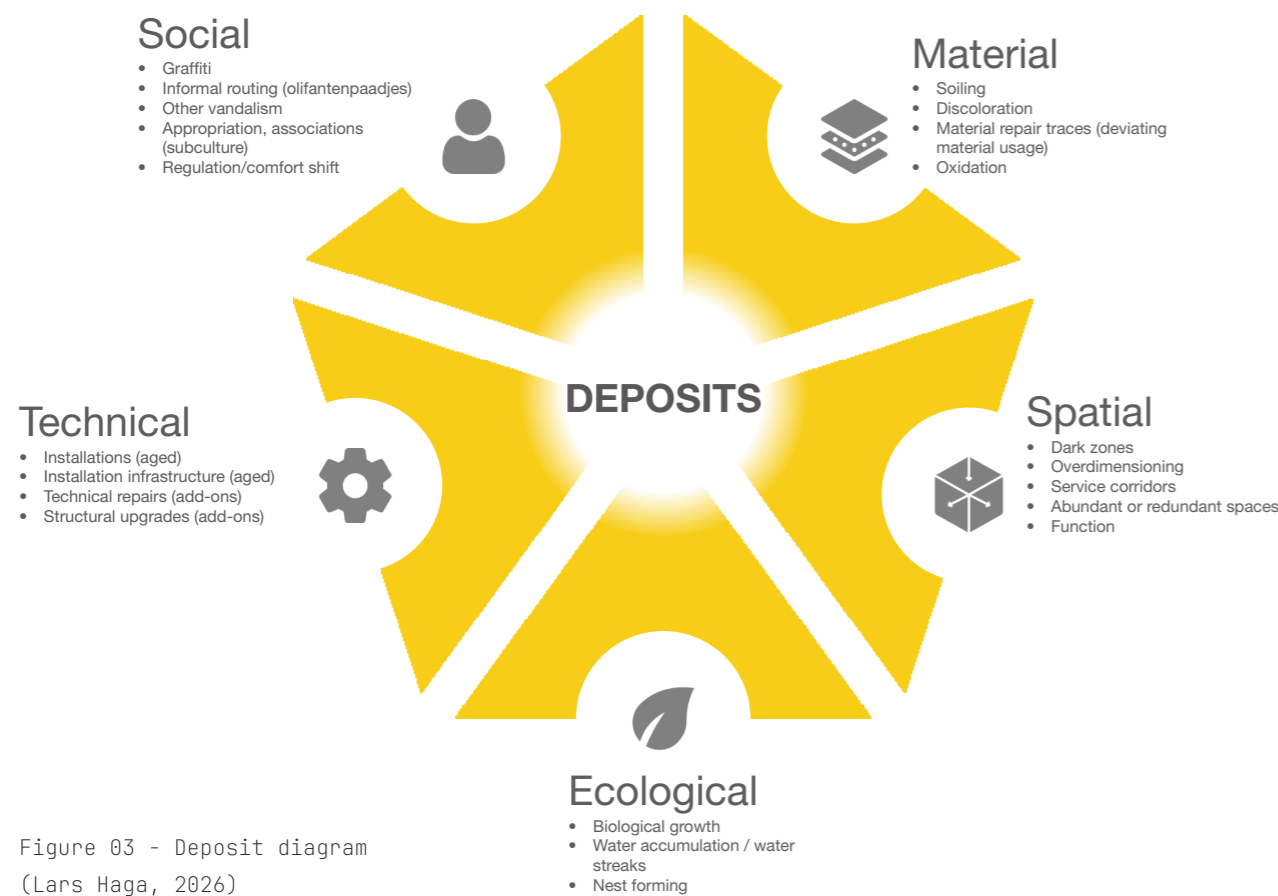


Figure 03 - Deposit diagram
(Lars Haga, 2026)

It is important to acknowledge that many more deposits could be identified and categorized. However, in order to avoid unnecessary complexity within the scope of this thesis, and to maintain

the analysis as a concise evaluative framework rather than an exhaustive inventory, the presented diagram is considered final for this research. Furthermore, the study deliberately focuses on deposits that architects, developers, or other stakeholders might instinctively judge negatively and therefore seek to remove or alter without further reflection or justification.

The primary objective of this approach is therefore to encourage designers and decision makers to critically reconsider such elements, to justify their interventions more carefully, and to explore whether deposits initially perceived as problematic can instead be employed in positive and creative ways. In this way, the ageing of a building is approached as a potential design driver rather than as an obstacle.

The following deposits were identified within the Blakeburg case study. They are organized according to the categories introduced above and supported by visual documentation.

- Social deposits
 - Graffiti
 - Associations, including connections to Gothic subculture
 - The nickname “The Radiator”
 - The existing office function
- Material deposits
 - Surface soiling and weathering
 - The newer northern ground floor façade
- Spatial deposits
 - Dark zones, including the northern overhang and surrounding streets
 - Overdimensioned construction in the lower wing of the building
 - A shift in comfort standards, where deep floor plans and small windows are no longer well suited to office use
 - Redundant or misplaced spaces
 - The existing atrium
- Ecological deposits
 - Moss growth along the roof edge
 - Higher vegetation located behind the rainwater drainage grates
 - Lichens on façade elements
 - Water streaks on the circulation towers
- Technical deposits
 - Renovated installations, including the air handling unit renovation by Blygold in 2017
 - Existing installation infrastructure, such as lowered

ceilings containing ventilation ducts
 - The transformer building



Figure 04 - Graffiti



Figure 05 - Soiling



Figure 06 - New ground floor facade



Figure 07 - Office function



Figure 08 - Moss



Figure 09 - Higher plants



Figure 10 - Lichens plants



Figure 11 - Water streaks

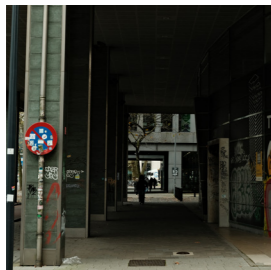


Figure 12 - Dark zones



Figure 13 - Atrium



Figure 14 - Lowered ceiling with vents



Figure 15 - Transformer building

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework employed in the preceding research is structured around the three disciplinary lenses that also form the backbone of the Phase 3 analysis: perception, materiality and technical fabric, and space and typology.

Perception

To analyse perception, a wide range of sources was consulted in order to capture the diverse opinions, narratives, and representations surrounding Blakeburg as expressed by different stakeholders. These sources are listed in the reference section of the back matter and are categorised into news articles and online platforms, policy documents and heritage-related texts, organisations and contextual sources, and archival material.

This broad selection allows for a layered understanding of how Blakeburg is perceived both publicly and institutionally, and how these perceptions have evolved over time.

In order to systematically analyse and structure this qualitative data, The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers by J. Saldaña (2021) was adopted as the main theoretical framework. From this publication, inductive coding was selected as the primary analytical strategy. This approach allows themes to emerge directly from the data itself, rather than being imposed beforehand. In the case of Blakeburg, the dataset consisted of material that was readily available online. Through iterative coding, this data was grouped into recurring themes, which were subsequently translated into conclusions and conceptual directions relevant for the design phase.

To further refine this process, the tangible and intangible attribute categories as defined by Lin (2025) were applied.

Tangible attributes	(contents)
Setting	Visual/spatial setting
Location	Siting, lot, footing, layout
Form	Scale, size, height, mass, dimension, proportion, density, rhythm
Style	Decoration, appearance, character of the period
Surface (building elements)	Patina, colour, signage, hidden marks, natural elements, vertical vegetation
Structure	Principle structure
Materials	Colour, texture, material pattern
Fixtures and fittings	Furniture, lighting, facilities for services, non-structural elements
Intangible attributes	(contents)
Use and functions	Services, circulation, practices, activities, ritual, other
Design	Design
Craftmanship and techniques	Workmanship, manual skills
Manage system	The process of managing, type of strategies, approach
Process	The process of layering, development or evolution (instead of the result)
Relation	Other senses or associations (sounds, smells, feelings etc)

Figure 16 - Tangible and intangible attribute categories (Lin, 2025)

These attributes were assigned to the identified perception themes, enabling a distinction between physical, material-related perceptions and more abstract or symbolic associations. This additional layer of categorisation helped to cluster perceptions around comparable themes.

Materiality and Technical Fabric

Background information on the materiality and construction of Blakeburg was primarily obtained through the Rotterdam City Archives, which provided access to general documentation on the building's materials, detailing, and original construction context. This archival material forms the basis for understanding the intended material expression and technical ambitions of the building at the time of its completion.

For the classification and terminology of observed damage to the concrete facade, the Monumental Diagnosis and Conservation System (MDCS, 2023) was used. This system offers a structured and standardised method for identifying and naming forms of material deterioration, enabling a clear and communicable assessment of the facade's condition.

Further insight into the composition, production process, and historical development of schokbeton was derived from *From Imitation to Acceptance to Worldwide Production of Schokbeton* by Quist (2021). This source provides essential technical and historical context for understanding the specific qualities of the precast concrete elements used in Blakeburg. Strategies for cleaning, repair, and conservation of architectural precast concrete were subsequently informed by *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation* by Jester (2014). This publication serves as the principal reference for conservation approaches, particularly in relation to post-war concrete architecture and its long-term material performance.

Space and Typology

The theoretical framework for space and typology is primarily grounded in archival research conducted at the Rotterdam City Archives. They form the reference point for analysing how the building's typology has evolved over time and how its spatial structure can be reinterpreted or adapted in future design interventions.

Part 03. Results

For the third part of the report, the outcomes of the research questions formulated in Part One are evaluated in relation to the strategies developed in Part Two. This chapter is divided into the results produced for the A2 presentation (3.1), followed by the final outcomes and design proposal developed for the A3 presentation (3.2).

The A2 results are structured into thematic sections, each corresponding to one of the previously defined sub-questions.

3.1.1 Transformation into a 'Dark' Hotel

Choice of concept

Following the A1 presentation, two concepts were presented. The first proposed the transformation of Blakeburg into a hotel embracing a dark and weathered aesthetic. The second retained the office function while restoring the facade to a cleaner and more representative appearance reflecting its former status.

The hotel concept was selected. Several motivations informed this decision. First, personal ambition and architectural interest played an important role. The accumulated soiling on the facade elements and the overall dark appearance of the building created a strong impression for me and generated associations aligned with my own perception of the building. Working with this darkness rather than removing it presented an engaging architectural challenge.

Secondly, the urban context of Blakeburg indicates a growing relevance for a hotel programme. The demand for office buildings in the surrounding area is decreasing as the existing stock improves in quality and vacant buildings are transformed (Rubio, 2025). A study of nearby hotel facilities demonstrated that the number and scale of hotels remain relatively limited in relation to the cultural landmarks and entertainment venues in the vicinity. This suggests a clear opportunity for an additional hotel function (see image on the next page).

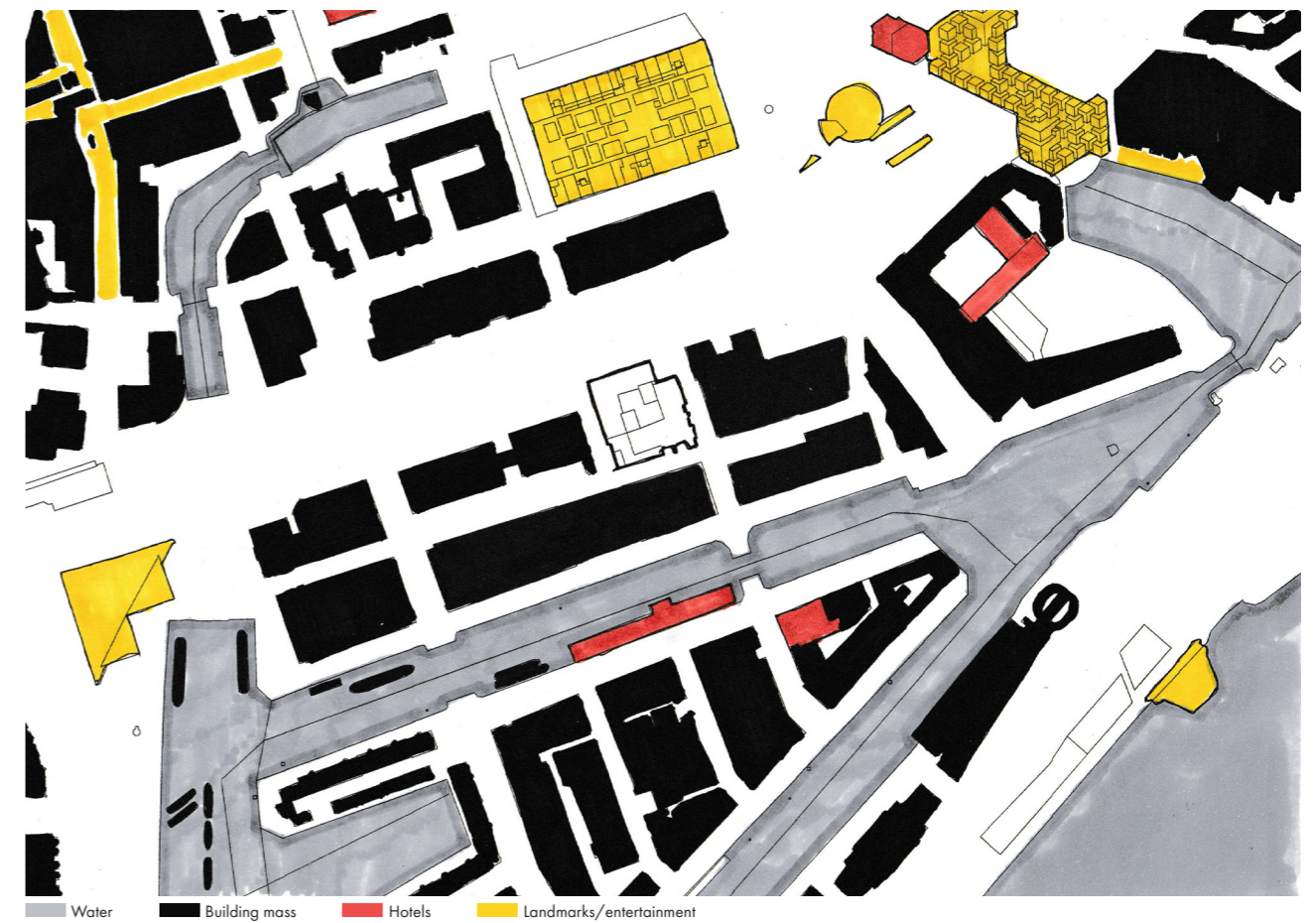


Figure 17 - Proximity to hotels and landmarks/entertainment around Blakeburg 1:2000 scaled down (Lars Haga, 2025)

Finally, further study into the transformation of Blakeburg's existing layout into a hotel program suggested that this function, in my view and supported by the project's argumentation (like the poor daylight conditions), is more appropriate today than continued office use. The building already contains lowered ceilings that accommodate ventilation ducts. These zones can be reinterpreted as circulation corridors, allowing hotel rooms to be organized alongside them while simultaneously connecting each room efficiently to building services (see image below).

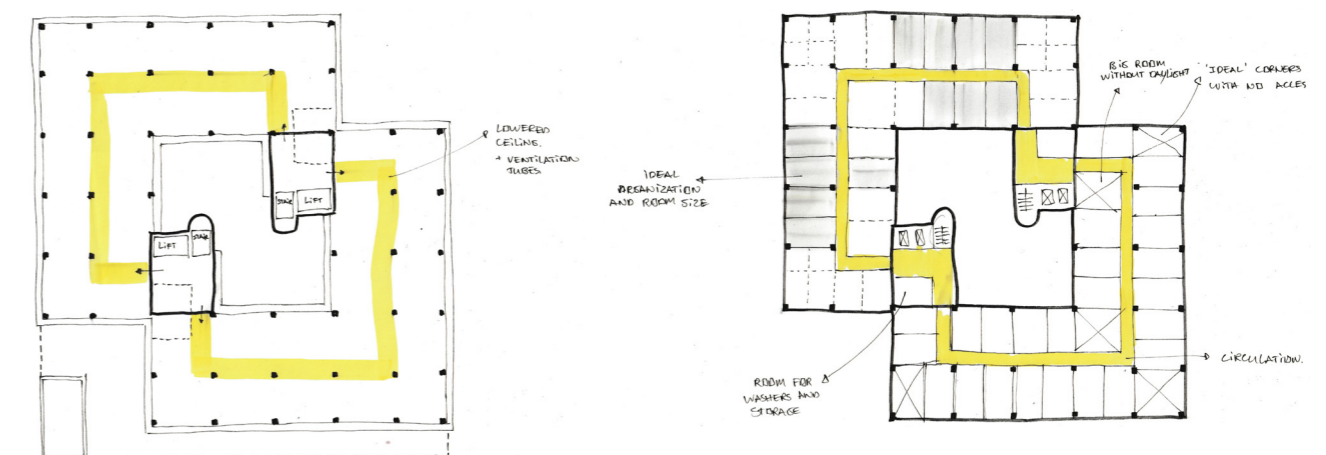


Figure 18 - Reuse of lowered ceiling and adjacent layout concept (Lars Haga, 2026)

A subdivision of the structural grid, measured from column to column, combined with a circulation corridor of approximately 1.5 meters in width, results in an average room size of 20 to 21 square meters, which aligns well with contemporary hotel standards. Corner conditions and spatial exceptions within the grid provide opportunities for larger rooms or suites.

Forming of my position

The selection of the hotel concept established the foundation for an overarching design position and approach that informs the following chapters. Rather than attempting to restore the building to its original bright and neutral state as designed by Hoogstad, the renovation and transformation approach takes the existing conditions and deposits of Blakeburg as a conceptual starting point. This includes its darkness, accumulated patina, weathering, and the associations formed over time by both myself and the public.

The intention is therefore to work with Blakeburg's accumulated layers of time instead of erasing them. The project approaches transformation as a continuation of the building's narrative rather than a return to an idealized historical condition.

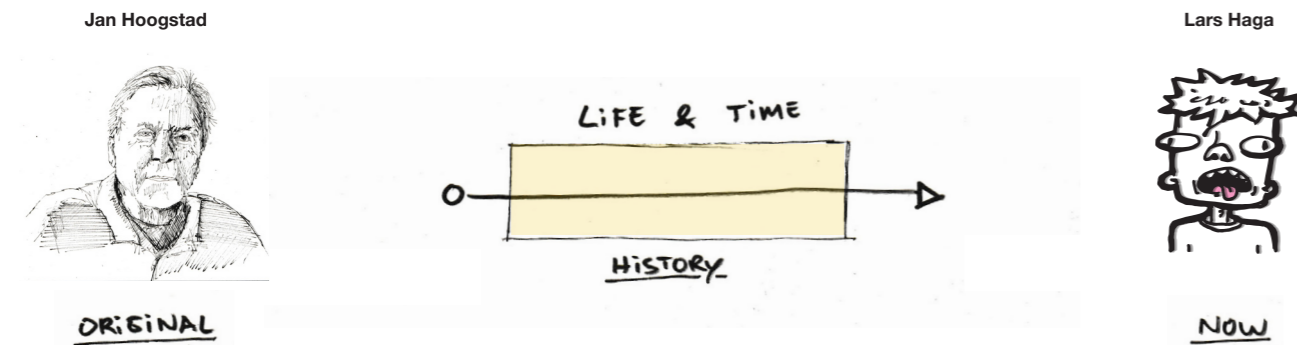


Figure 19 - Approach diagram (Lars Haga, 2026)

Gothic associations

An association that emerged both from personal observation and from the perception study is the recurring comparison of Blakeburg to the notion of the Gothic. Within this project, the term Gothic operates on two interconnected levels.

The first refers directly to Gothic architecture and historical art forms. The second reflects a contemporary cultural interpretation of Gothic as an aesthetic position that embraces darkness, melancholy, and forms of expression that deviate from dominant societal norms. This broader understanding becomes equally important as a conceptual reference.

To investigate these associations, an extensive reference board was developed (see image on the following page), bringing together

ideas and visual references drawn from film and art. These references ultimately informed the formulation of three design principles, which now serve as the central framework guiding the design research.



Figure 20 - Gothic reference board (Lars Haga, 2026)

Design principle - Silhouette

The first principle positions Blakeburg as a silhouette within its context. The building's dark mass contrasts strongly with the surrounding urban environment, which is increasingly defined by glass, transparency and repetitive neutrality. Blakeburg therefore becomes a statement about renovation, permanence and monumentality. Its apparent mismatch with the contemporary environment it once belonged in reinforces themes of individuality and creative autonomy.

Design principle - Serenity

The second principle is serenity. Blakeburg provides shelter and concealment from the movement and noise of the surrounding city. The massive facade absorbs light and sound, functioning as a protective barrier and marking a clear transition from exterior intensity to interior calm.

Design principle - Half-light

The third principle is half-light, strongly influenced by 'In Praise of Shadows' by Junichirō Tanizaki. Tanizaki argues that the beauty of materials, textures and human presence becomes more visible in soft indirect light. This idea forms the basis for the interior atmosphere, where light and shadow operate as active design elements contributing to comfort and spatial experience.

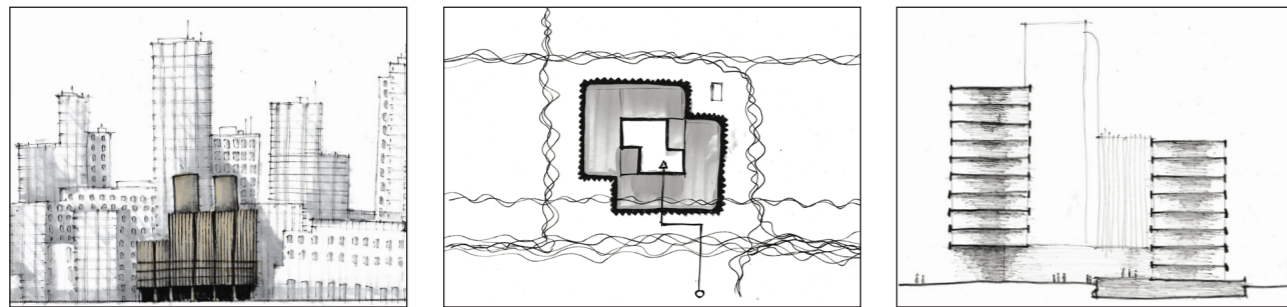


Figure 21 - Design principles: Silhouette, Serenity and Half-light (Lars Haga, 2026)

3.1.2 Conserving the Schokbeton facade

Preservation of the soiling

The decision to preserve the soiling on the facade elements directly follows from the selected hotel concept and its dark aesthetic. The patina gives the building a sense of age, weight and monumentality that the design seeks to embrace rather than erase.

Although primarily aesthetic, this approach offers additional advantages. The weathered character aligns well with a hotel identity that communicates history and authenticity. Furthermore, preserving existing conditions reduces the need for extensive interventions, resulting in financial and material benefits.

Argumentation for age-preservation

To support this position, theoretical arguments were drawn from John Ruskin's *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and Alois Riegl's *Der Moderne Denkmalkultus* (1903).

Ruskin argues that age provides moral value and that patina reveals the truth of time. He emphasizes that "Better the rudest work that tells a story or records a fact, than the richest

without meaning. There should not be a single ornament put upon great civic buildings, without some intellectual intention", stating that architectural meaning does not necessarily lie in ornamentation, but often in the raw expression of construction and material reality.

Riegl similarly introduces the concept of age value, describing how traces of decay and transformation evoke awareness of the natural life cycle. According to Riegl, removing signs of ageing risks destroying precisely the qualities that modern society values in monuments. These arguments strongly reinforce the adopted conservation strategy.

Cleaning biological growth and graffiti

While soiling is preserved, biological growth in the form of moss is present along parts of the facade. Because moss can negatively affect concrete surfaces (MDCS, 2023), it will be removed. Steam cleaning appears to be the least invasive method, softening the growth before gentle brushing removes it (Lubelli, 2026). Pressure washing remains a possible alternative.

Graffiti is also present at ground floor level. Despite my ambition to work with Blakeburg's accumulated time, this graffiti expresses vandalism rather than historical layering and contributes to perceptions of neglect and vacancy. Given the intended hotel programme, which requires a sense of safety and care, removal is justified.

A sacrificial anti-graffiti system is proposed. This temporary and visually unobtrusive treatment allows future monitoring of the Facade elements that remain or are reused, to see if vandalism persists with increased social surveillance while the hotel is in use, before deciding on a permanent solution.

3.1.3 Light vs Darkness

Within the hotel concept, the interplay between light and darkness forms a central design theme. This relationship is embedded across all three design principles, where light is interpreted and applied in different spatial and experiential ways.

Wayfinding

Light functions as a wayfinding element. It directs movement, highlights entrances and guides visitors through circulation spaces. This strategy becomes essential at the building entrance, the reception area and throughout the internal circulation routes.

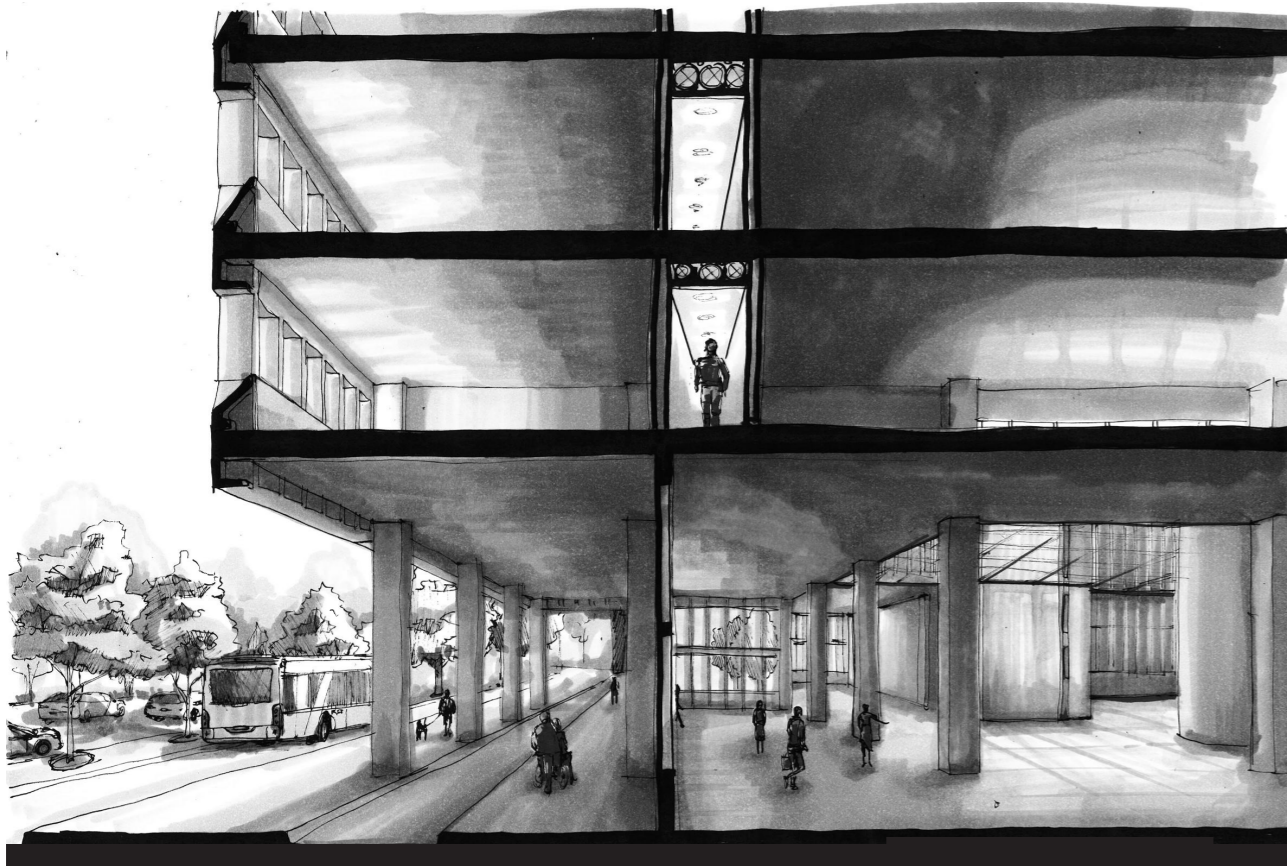


Figure 22 - Perspective section highlighting wayfinding and transition space (Lars Haga, 2026)

Public and private spaces

The contrast between light and darkness also helps articulate boundaries between public and private domains. Light expresses openness, accessibility, and collective activity, while darker atmospheres suggest intimacy, calmness, and retreat. This principle translates into a lobby where the entrance and reception are strongly defined by light, reinforcing their public character. In contrast, spaces such as the restaurant and bar are intentionally more subdued, relying on shadow and atmospheric lighting to create a sense of comfort and enclosure.

Transition space

A key aspect of the design lies in the implementation of both pronounced and subtle transitions between light and darkness. A strong transition occurs along the northern side of the building, where darkness mediates the passage from the bright exterior environment into the interior atrium. This spatial sequence reflects the experiential and psychological shift from urban intensity outside to a quieter and more calm interior condition.

In contrast, a more gradual transition is introduced within the hotel rooms. Here, diffuse daylight slowly diminishes as one moves deeper into the building. The intention is that the interior organization of each room responds to these varying light conditions, allowing different functions and atmospheres to emerge along this gradient between light and shadow.



Figure 23 - Public vs private impression: Outside and atrium as public, with the internal ceiling rendered in shadow offering privacy and lowered lighting offering intimacy (Lars Haga, 2026)

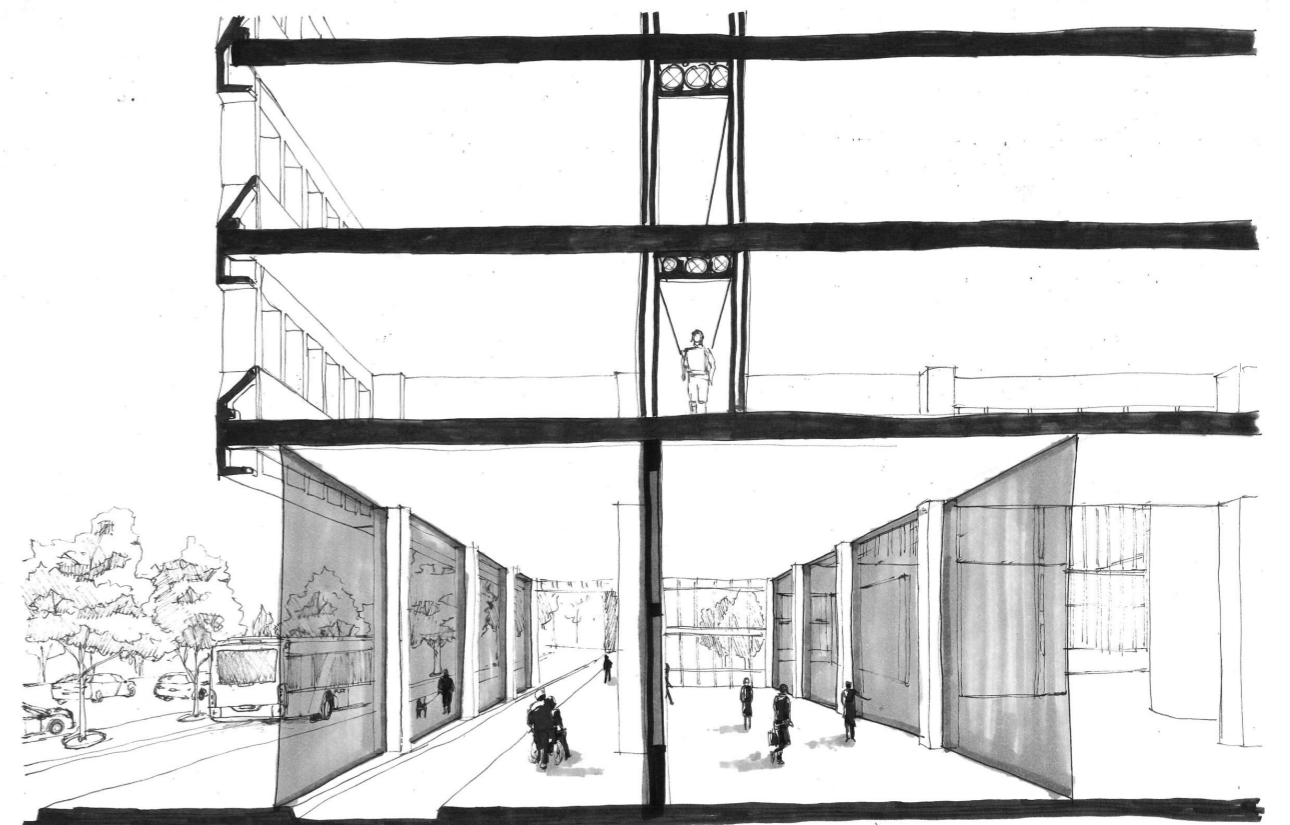


Figure 24 - Perspective section with figurative 'barriers' highlighting the transition space: between the barriers darkness, outside light (Lars Haga, 2026)

3.1.4 Connection with context

The final sub-question addresses Blakeburg's problematic relationship with its surroundings. The strategy focuses on interventions at ground floor level and within the immediate urban context.

Ground floor

The first step of the design process focused on programmatic transformation at ground floor level. Earlier analyses (see collective booklet, period 1) demonstrated that the ground floor was largely dominated by parking functions, resulting in façades that were predominantly blind and inactive (see image below). The proposal therefore argues for a significant reduction of parking spaces at street level.

New functions are introduced in relation to the hotel concept and aim to stimulate interaction while providing natural surveillance of the surrounding context. These include a lobby with reception located beneath the atrium as the primary point of arrival, a bar with intimate seating areas, and a medium sized restaurant (see image below).

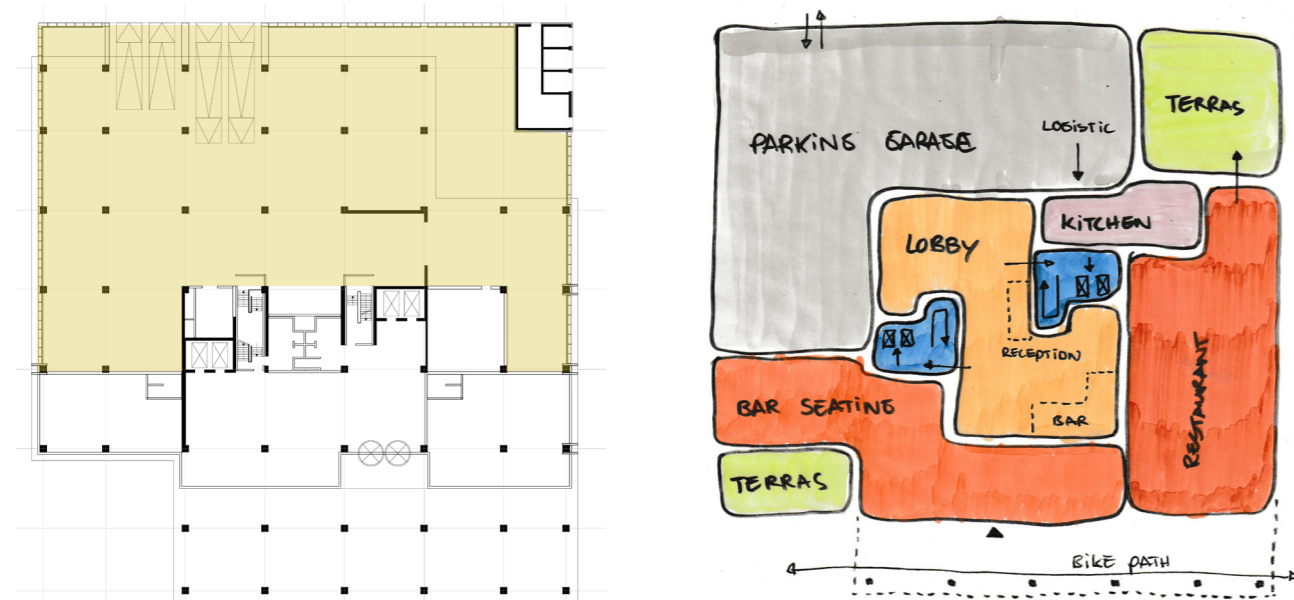


Figure 25 - Old (yellow=parking) vs new ground floor plan layout (Lars Haga, 2026)

In line with the ambitions concerning light and darkness, the ground floor is redesigned as a predominantly double height space. The area behind the original entrance already possessed this spatial quality, and this condition is now extended across all non parking areas of the ground floor. This decision is also rooted in the poor spatial quality of the existing first floor, particularly beneath the atrium. By removing portions of the first floor slab, the atrium can be reactivated. Light penetration is currently

limited, and opening the space allows daylight to reach the ground floor directly. The increased presence of light strengthens spatial orientation and intuitively guides visitors into the building, improving the experience of arrival. At the same time, the redesign enables experimentation with varying degrees of semi transparency within the new atrium structure.

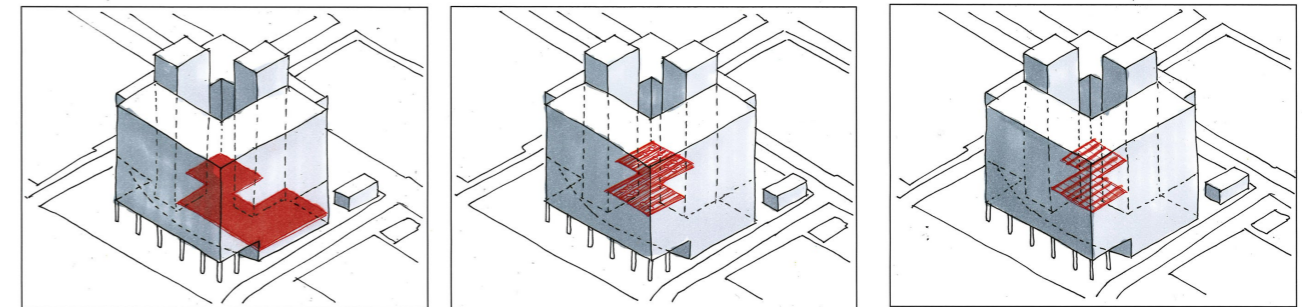


Figure 26 - Ground floor interventions: removing first floor, removing current atrium, adding a new atrium (Lars Haga, 2026)

The drawings below present the new double height ground floor together with an initial exploration of climatic ambitions intended to support the functioning of these spaces. The relocation of the transformer unit to the parking garage is also illustrated. This move maintains all required technical accessibility while freeing outdoor space adjacent to the restaurant. This area has the potential to function as a terrace, particularly because it receives relatively high levels of sunlight. Previously, this exterior zone accommodated only a limited number of parking spaces despite its generous dimensions. The proposal therefore encourages a reduction of parking capacity in favor of spatial quality and public use.

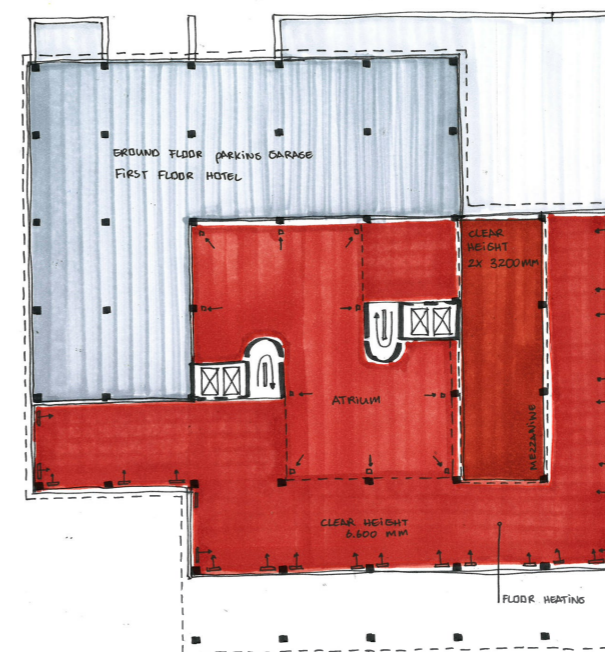


Figure 27 - New double height ground floor with a mezzanine. Ventilation floor grills in inner edge of facade, natural draft trough atrium and underfloor heating (Lars Haga, 2026)

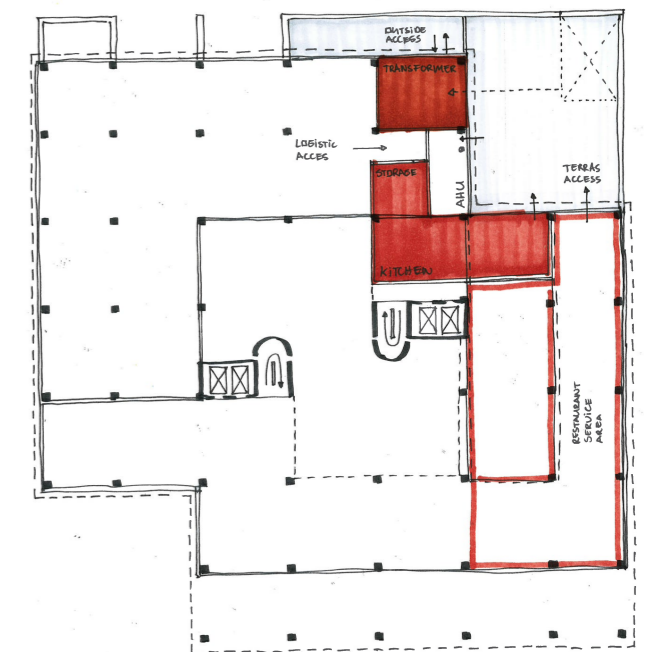


Figure 28 - Separate AHU for kitchen, transformer and logistical access in parking garage, access to outdoor area and terrace (Lars Haga, 2026)

The programmatic transformation is accompanied by an alteration of the ground floor façade. The existing northern façade is not original and has thus been modified over time. Its rounded geometry and material expression conflict with the architectural character of the building. In addition, the materials show significant weathering and do not support the second design principle in which the northern façade is intended to function as a spatial barrier.

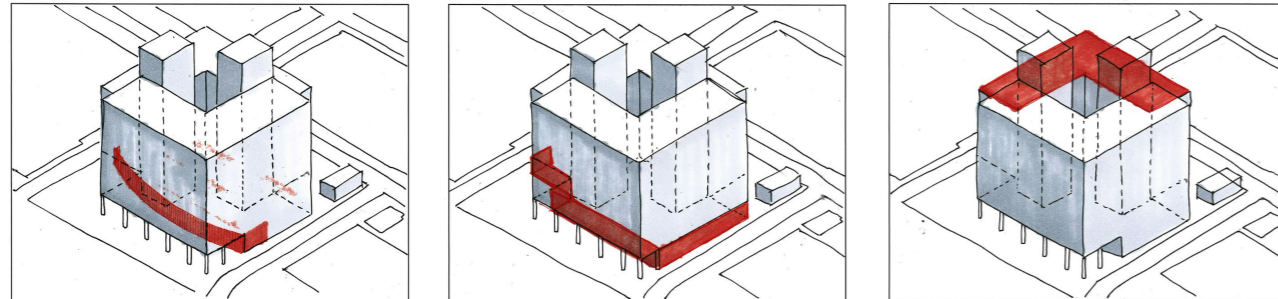


Figure 29 - Ground floor facade interventions: removing current facade, adding a new facade, adding a new green roof (Lars Haga, 2026)

Experiments therefore focus on reintroducing elements derived from the original façade language, with vertical ribs forming the central design strategy. These elements create a sense of enclosure when viewed from an oblique angle while maintaining visual permeability when approached frontally. The façade line is also shifted slightly northward, reducing the existing overhang and minimizing underused residual space beneath it. This concept will be further developed and evaluated in the coming weeks.



Figure 30 - New facade experimentation: using original facade elements (Lars Haga, 2026)

Surroundings

Attention is also directed toward the immediate surroundings of Blakeburg. Earlier analyses (see booklet) revealed that the surrounding street network plays a major role in limiting the connection between the ground floor and the public realm. Interventions within the building alone are therefore unlikely to achieve sufficient improvement.

A critical evaluation of the surrounding streets and their functional necessity was conducted. Molstraat emerged as largely redundant within the urban structure. The street lacks meaningful interaction with adjacent buildings, is not required for loading or service activities, operates as one way traffic, and primarily functions as on street parking, which negatively affects the spatial quality of the streetscape. Traffic circulation can be accommodated adequately by the remaining surrounding streets.

Removing this road creates the opportunity to establish a direct relationship between the restaurant and its environment. The released space could accommodate a park or other recreational programs. Together with the relocation of the transformer unit, the south western corner of Blakeburg becomes activated, resulting in a more pleasant and usable outdoor environment.

Finally, the street space on the northern side of the building is reconsidered. Improvements in both accessibility and pedestrian safety are required. A reorganization of traffic flows involving cars, buses, cyclists, and pedestrians will therefore be explored. These adjustments will be directly connected to improving the accessibility and visibility of Blakeburg as a whole.

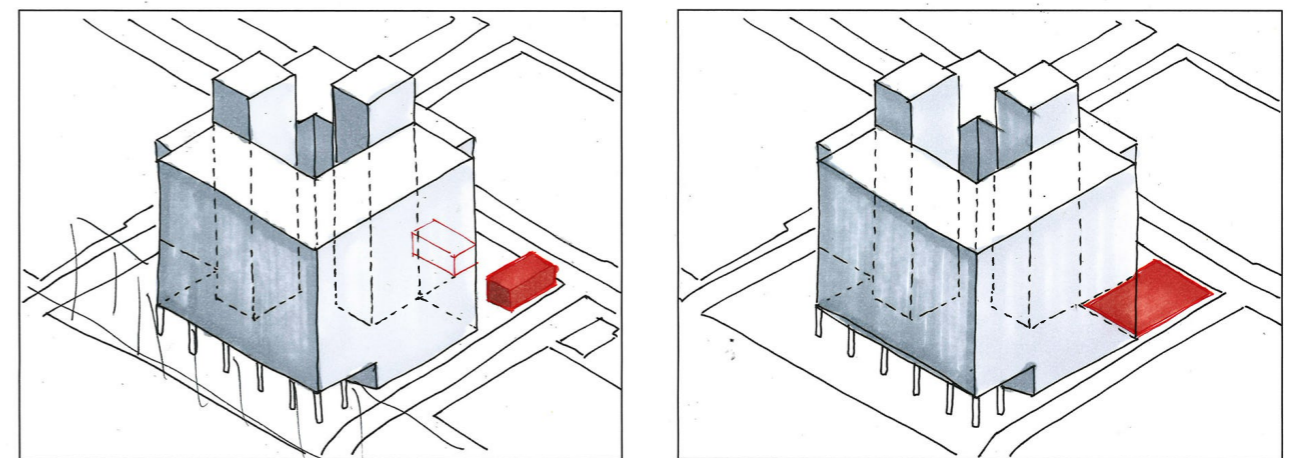


Figure 31 - Surrounding interventions: relocating transformer building, removing parking spaces and adding terrace (Lars Haga, 2026)

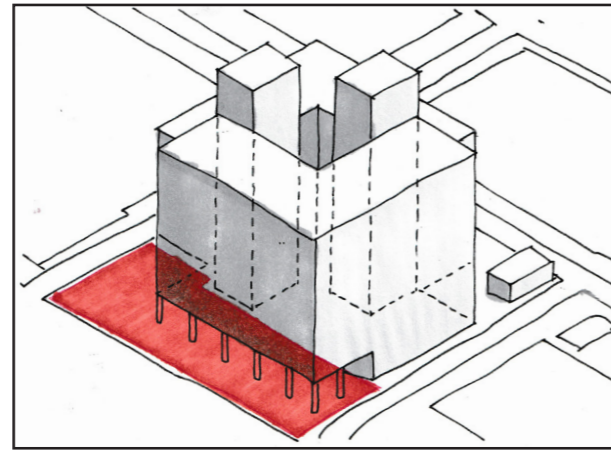
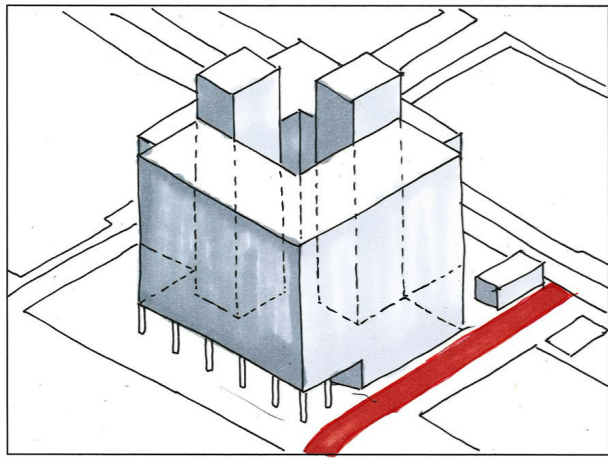


Figure 32 - Surrounding interventions: removing the Molstraat, reorganize northern street space (Lars Haga, 2026)

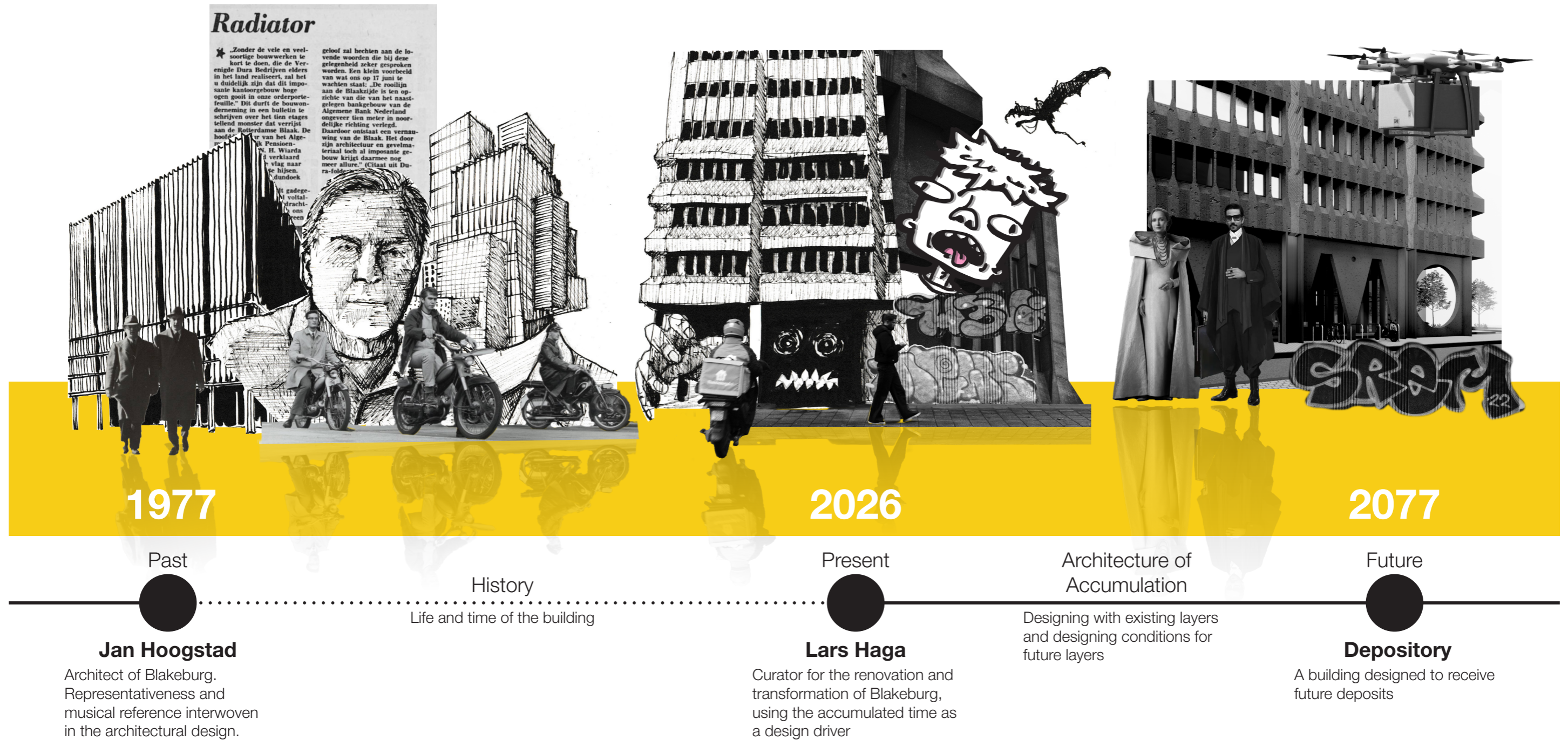


Figure 33 - Blakeburg (Lars Haga, 2026)

3.2.1 Philosophy: Designing with time

In the second half of the results chapter, the outcomes that together form the final proposal for the A3 presentation are presented. This chapter begins by reinforcing the position previously established in Section 3.1.1: the intention is therefore to work with Blakeburg's accumulated layers of time instead of erasing them.

This position is further developed by approaching ageing itself as a design driver and by understanding Blakeburg as a deposit landscape: designing a new condition in which time can continue to settle within and onto the building. This position is illustrated in the timeline above.

3.2.2 Spatial organization: Two temporal speeds

It was important that the use of deposits would not occur arbitrarily, but instead operate according to a clear direction and purpose. The first theme guiding the use of deposits is therefore the spatial organization of the building. Blakeburg is divided into two temporal regimes.

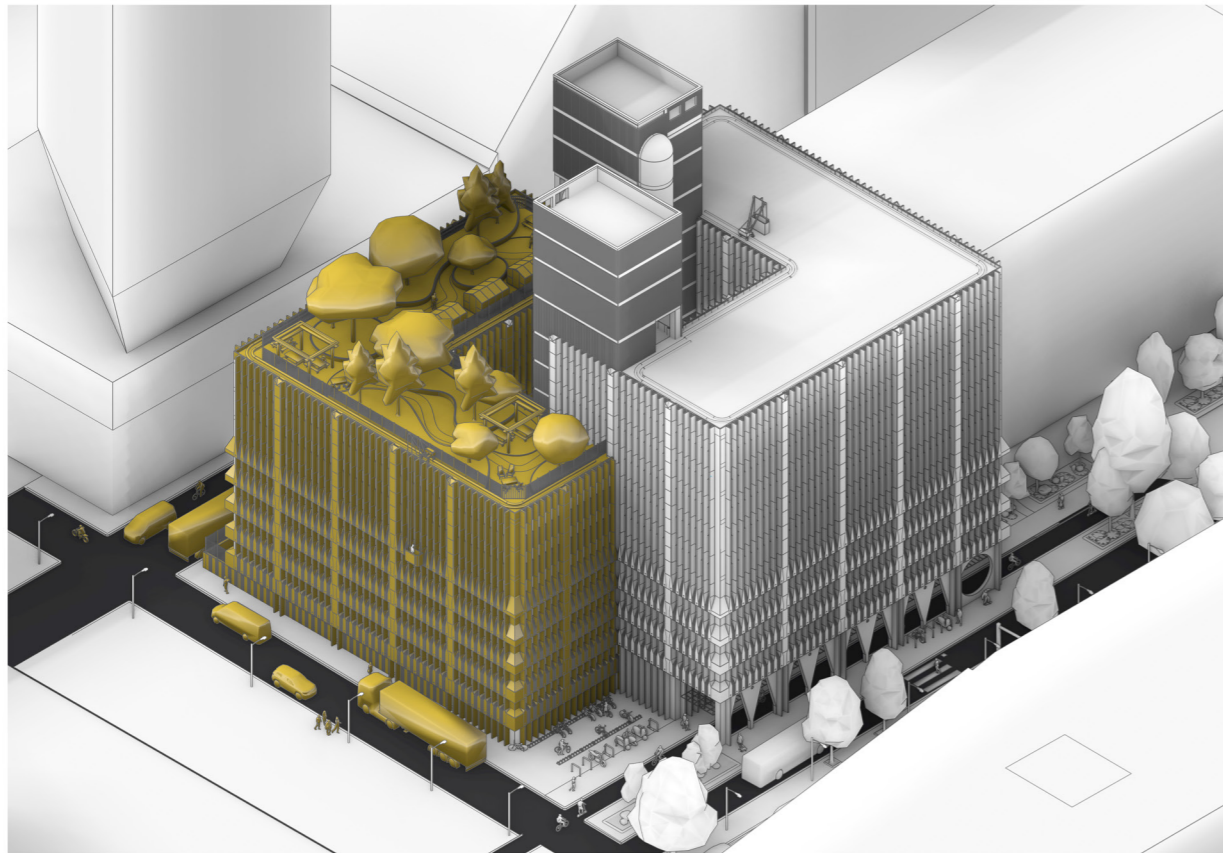


Figure 34 - Logistical side: slow time behaviour (Lars Haga, 2026)

The first is the logistical side, characterized by a slow time behaviour, where interventions are infrastructural, permanent, and robust in nature.

The second is the social side, centred around a fast time behaviour, where interventions are adaptive, temporary, and capable of change over time.

Through this division, the use of deposits gains both structure and intention. The choice for this theme is also grounded in the existing conditions and challenges of the building itself. Blakeburg requires stronger connections with its urban surroundings through interventions such as the removal of Molstraat, the introduction of a public park, a restaurant, a bar, and an open lobby.

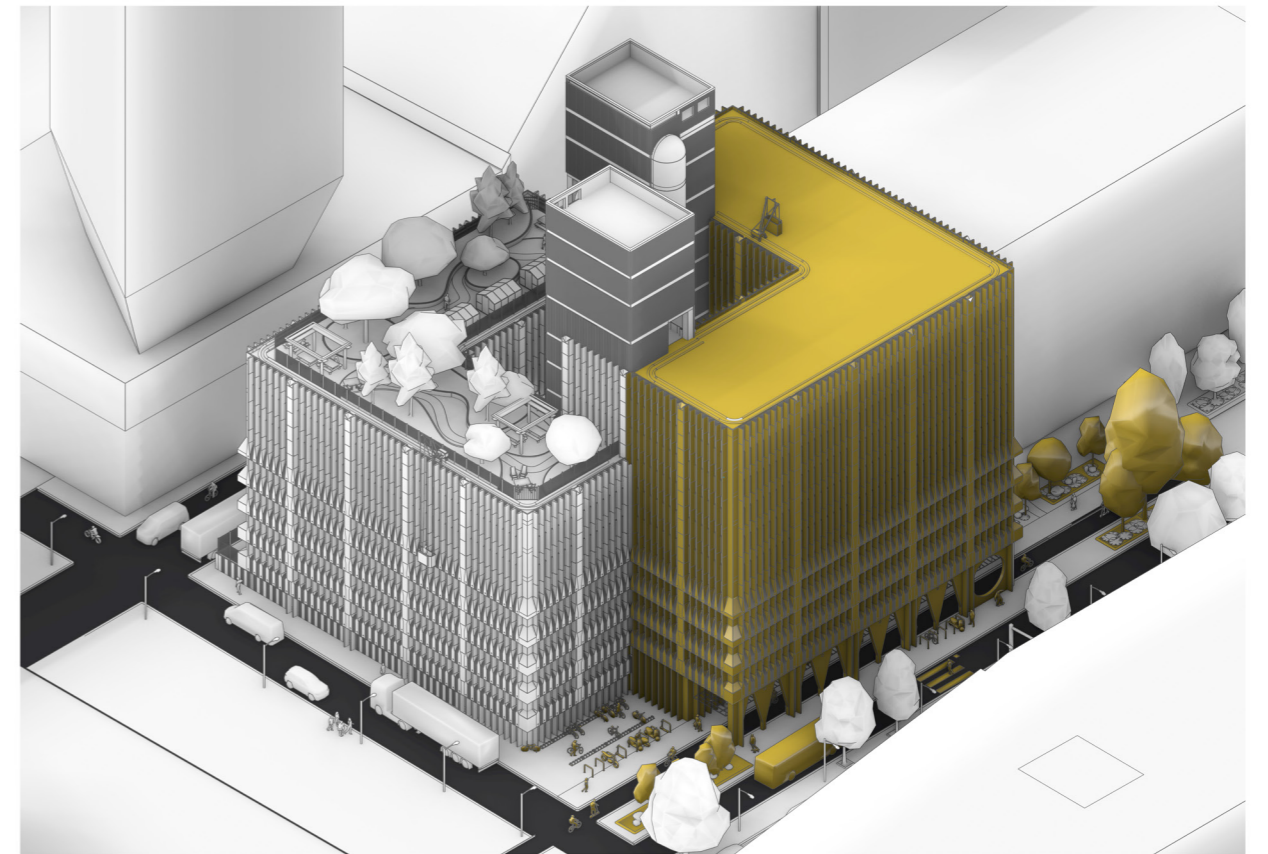


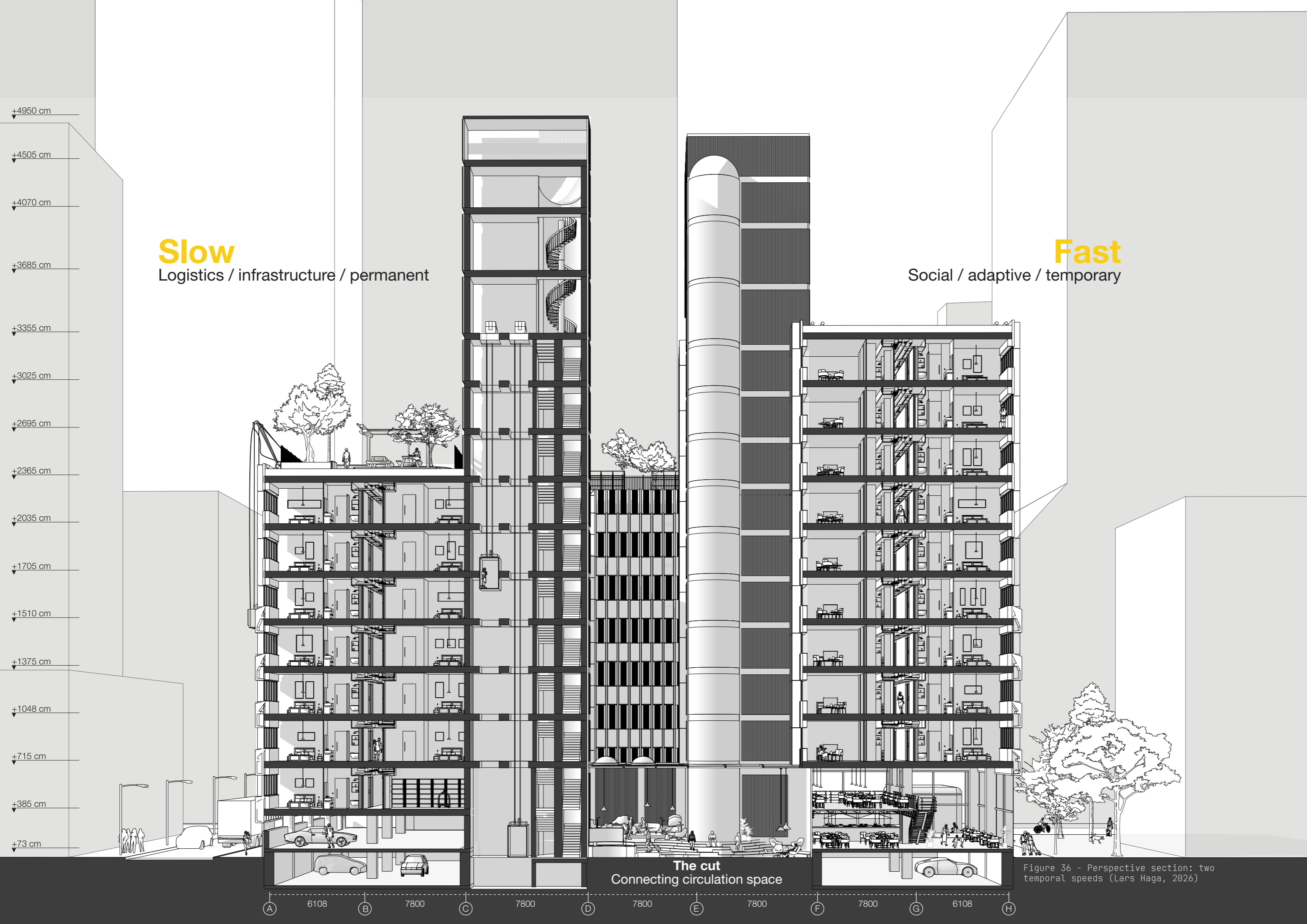
Figure 35 - Social side: fast time behaviour (Lars Haga, 2026)

At the same time, the building depends on supporting logistical functions, including a parking garage, a loading dock, waste collection areas, restaurant storage and kitchen facilities, an additional air handling unit for the newly introduced kitchen, a technical space for the floor heating system, and the already existing transformer building.

Both the social and logistical aspects are essential and dependent on one another, yet they require fundamentally different design approaches. The concept of two temporal speeds therefore directly informs how deposits are treated architecturally.

This distinction manifests not only in programme, but also in materiality and spatial expression. The social side employs larger openings, temporary structures, adaptive materials, and a greater emphasis on greenery and permeability. In contrast, the logistical side adopts a more enclosed appearance, exposing structural systems, visible installations, and heavier, long lasting materials.

Perspective section on the following spread shows the interplay between these speeds.



Slow

Logistics / infrastructure / permanent

Fast

Social / adaptive / temporary

The cut
Connecting circulation space

Figure 36 - Perspective section: two temporal speeds (Lars Haga, 2026)

+4950 cm
+4505 cm
+4070 cm
+3685 cm
+3355 cm
+3025 cm
+2695 cm
+2365 cm
+2035 cm
+1705 cm
+1510 cm
+1375 cm
+1048 cm
+715 cm
+385 cm
+73 cm

A 6108 B 7800 C 7800 D 7800 E 7800 F 7800 G 6108 H



Figure 37 - Ground floor (Lars Haga, 2026)

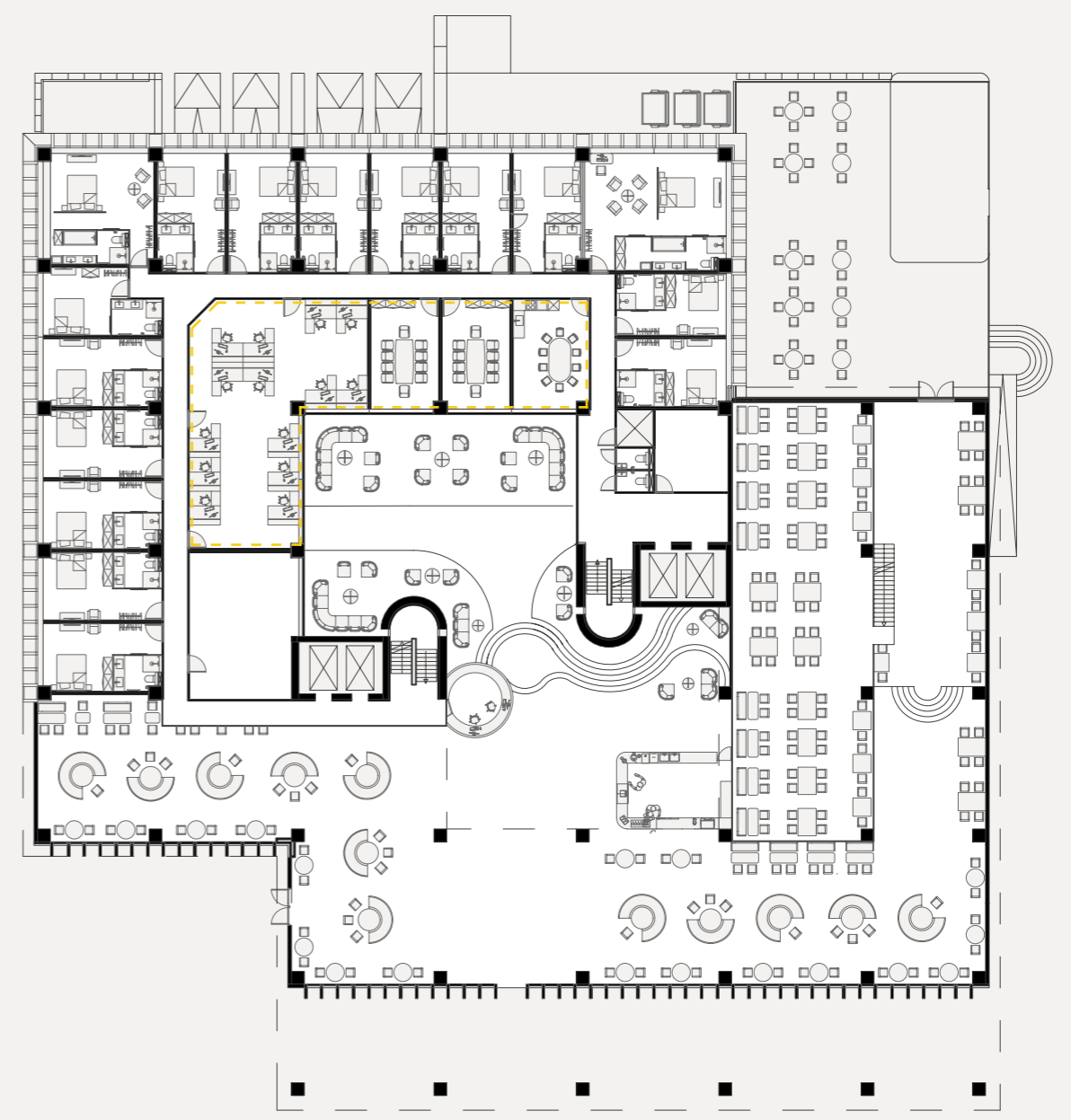


Figure 38 - First floor (Lars Haga, 2026)

Finally, the following floor plans illustrate the division between logistical and more closed private functions on one side, and public social functions on the other. In the ground floor, the rear side of the building, facing south, is primarily used for garage access and logistical purposes. Part of the existing parking garage has been transformed into a loading dock in order to facilitate the restaurant's supporting functions, including the additional air handling unit, freezer storage, and general storage spaces. The logistical sequence concludes at the kitchen area, including the dishwashing section and staff facilities.

The division is further expressed throughout the floor plans. On the first floor, the rooms on the inner side of the building that are still under the atrium, are used as office, meeting and staff space. On the second to the seventh floor, rooms located within the social wing are equipped with connecting

doors, allowing multiple rooms to function together as family suites. More importantly, the 8th floor demonstrates how the roof above the logistical side has been transformed into a rooftop garden. Although this intervention represents a substantial infrastructural operation, the roofscape itself remains flexible and capable of accommodating changing functions over time.

Within the social wing on the same level, additional adaptable room typologies are introduced, including larger suites overlooking the rooftop garden toward the south.



Figure 39 - Second to seventh floor (Lars Haga, 2026)



Figure 40 - Eight to tenth floor (Lars Haga, 2026)

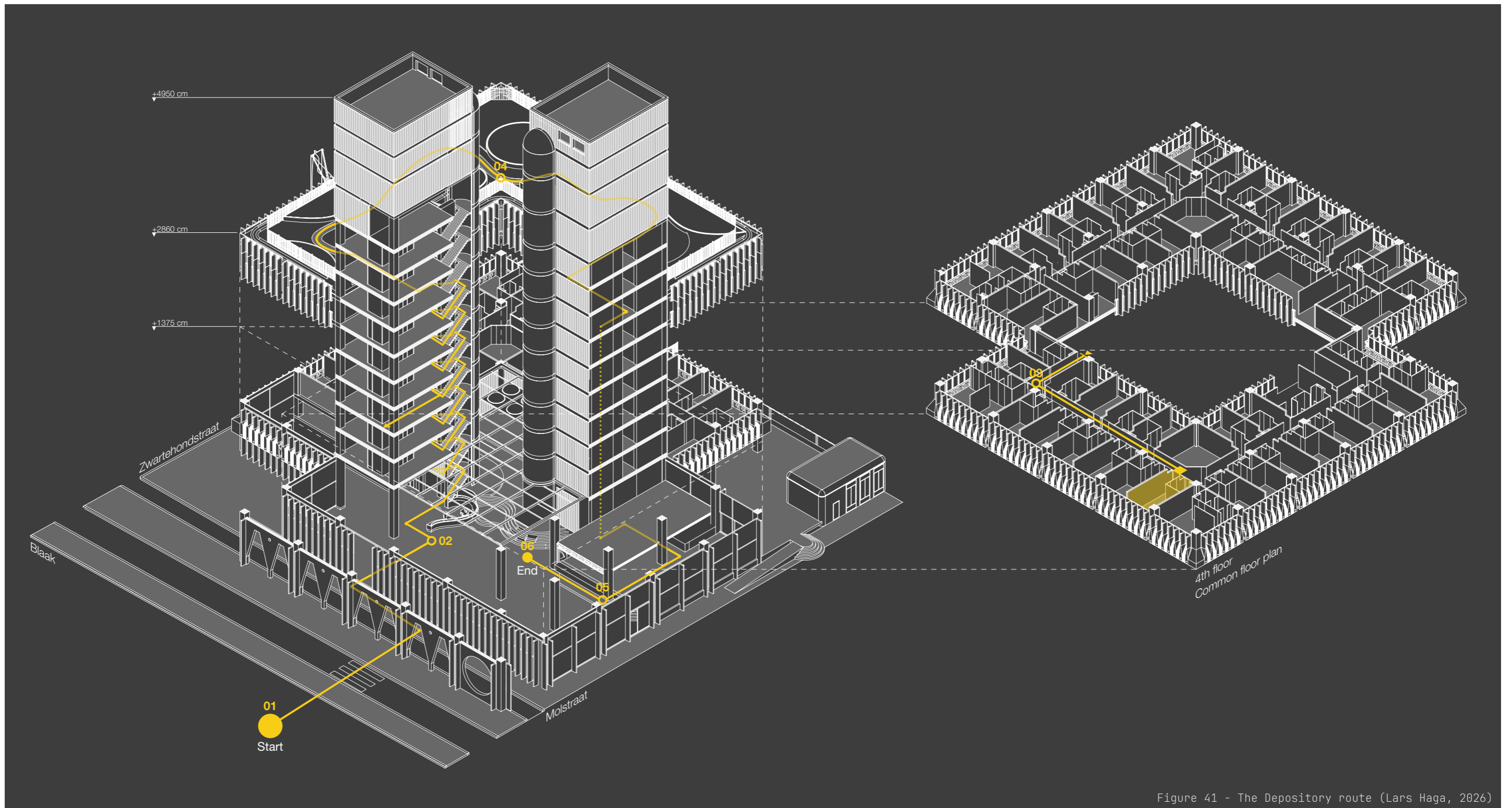


Figure 41 - The Depository route (Lars Haga, 2026)

3.2.3 The depository route

The following design theme that structures the approach toward deposits is the Depository Route. This route forms the central sequence through the building: the primary experiential path composed for visitors in order to fully engage with Blakeburg. Along this route, significant deposits are made visible, not as museum exhibits, but as operational and inhabited infrastructure.

The route guides visitors through spatial environments, social spaces, technical circulation zones, and ecological conditions. It becomes a journey through time in which layers are not removed when they conflict with one another. Instead, the project adopts the position that curation is a process of selection rather than cleaning. The route is illustrated in the drawing above, where the curated deposits selected for preservation and activation are identified and numbered. The course of this paragraph guides you along the route.



Figure 42 - View 01: Approaching Blakeburg (Lars Haga, 2026)

The experience begins from the street, where the designed soiling deposit gives the building a sense of monumentality, age, and depth. Lichens remain visible on the façade and further reinforce this atmosphere. The building appears dark, brutal, and somewhat Gothic in character. This Gothic association is strengthened by the arches introduced beneath the overhang. Rather than reproducing conventional arches, these elements are angular and abstracted, echoing the geometry and detailing of the façade elements themselves.

As the visitor moves beneath the overhang, they enter a darker atmosphere. Low hanging lighting creates intimacy and a sense of safety, while the ceiling remains fully dark in order to emphasize the existing dark zone deposit.



Figure 43 - View 02: Lobby (Lars Haga, 2026)

After passing through the narrow light opening marking the entrance, the visitor moves further through these darker transitional zones before arriving in the lobby. Here, the original floor tiling of the entrance hall has been extended throughout the lobby space. Visitors stand beneath the existing atrium, which has been renovated to improve daylight penetration. The characteristic domes are already visible from below. The atrium creates a strong contrast between light and darkness in relation to the surrounding atmospheric spaces.

The visitor then arrives at the reception desk, where the original counter has been reused.



Figure 44 - View 03: corridor (Lars Haga, 2026)

From there, the visitor is directed toward the existing circulation towers and arrives at the appropriate hotel floor. Here, the suspended ceiling has been exposed, revealing the infrastructural systems and ducts servicing the hotel rooms. These visible installations guide visitors toward their destination.

Lighting within the corridors is motion activated and illuminates only when visitors pass through. The hallways themselves remain dark and atmospheric, allowing the light to appear almost candle like, guiding movement through the darkness toward the hotel room. This strengthens the overall spatial atmosphere. The walls are finished with rough plaster, providing a textured surface onto which light and shadow can interact dynamically. In this way, even limited illumination produces rich spatial depth and intrinsic shadowing.

The hotel rooms are furnished with retrofuturistic and Gothic inspired furniture. Lighting is warm, dim, and atmospheric rather than purely functional. The walls again contain relief and texture, maximizing the effect of the relatively limited daylight conditions.



After settling in, visitors are guided toward the rooftop garden. Here, the oversized structural system is used to create space for elevated planting areas and greenery. The garden functions as a private and calm landscape positioned above the intensity of the city. Visitors can enjoy panoramic views afforded by Blakeburg's central location.

For safety, protective fencing has been incorporated using the same language already present in the building's current condition. The existing window washing installation also remains visible as part of the building's technical identity.

The roof garden is organized through a contrast between low vegetation and elevated planting areas containing larger vegetation. Pine tree species are introduced in particular, as their horizontally growing root systems are well suited to the available spatial conditions. In addition to their ecological qualities, they contribute a sensory atmosphere through scent and associations with serenity.

Spaces for eating, drinking, working, and socializing are integrated throughout the rooftop landscape. Greenhouses are also introduced, allowing the restaurant to cultivate ingredients while simultaneously offering visitors opportunities to participate in maintenance and care. From the rooftop, visitors gain an even clearer view of the building's soiling deposits and water streaks along the façade and circulation towers.



After moving through the rooftop garden, the visitor descends through the other circulation tower and arrives within the restaurant. Here, the atmosphere becomes distinctly public and open, encouraging creativity, permeability, and interaction. Space is deliberately reserved for graffiti both inside and outside the building, allowing this deposit to continue evolving over time.

Inside, graffiti is applied to temporary partition walls, while outside it occupies solid façade surfaces and the transformer building. The transformer building remains in place for logistical reasons and functions as a visible deposit within the visitor experience.

The restaurant itself is organized using a temporary demountable steel mezzanine structure. Large windows and doors can open fully, strengthening interaction between the restaurant interior and the new park introduced on the former Molstraat site.



After dining, visitors return through the lobby, where they may remain for drinks or social interaction. The lobby and surrounding dark zones visually blend together, while low hanging lighting creates intimate coves of light within the otherwise dark and atmospheric environment. Here, the Depository Route comes to an end.

3.2.4 Designing for future time

The final chapter focuses on designing for the future. Through a series of detailed interventions, the project demonstrates how architectural decisions can create space for future deposits to emerge over time. The details also illustrate several sustainability interventions, particularly regarding insulation performance. However, technical sustainability is not the primary aspect emphasized within these drawings. Since the project largely preserves the existing structural system and façade elements, the technical detailing itself is relatively conventional. Instead, the details primarily communicate the broader architectural approach and spatial impact of designing with future ageing and accumulation in mind.

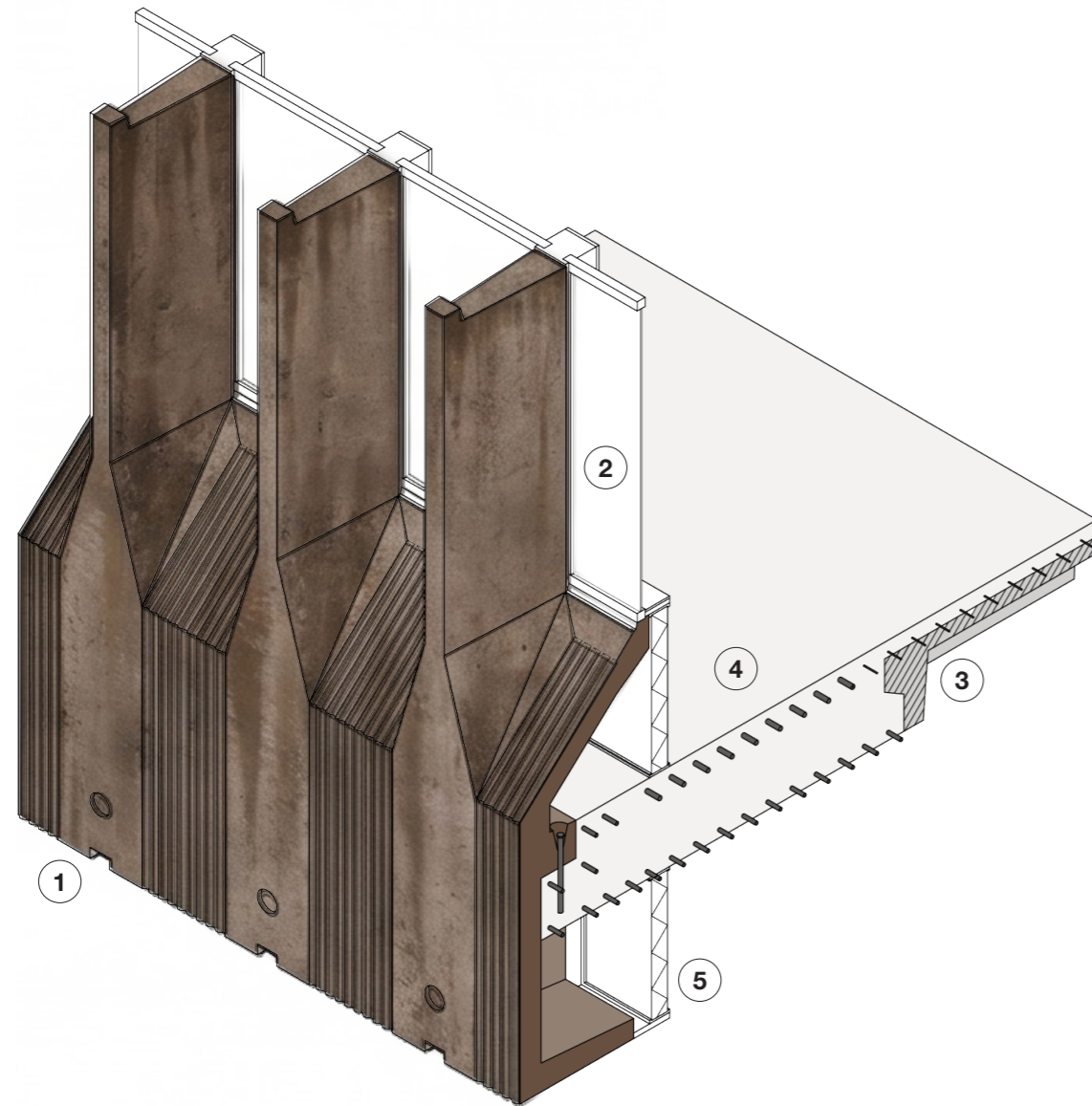
Facade soiling details

Current

2026

Distributed soiling deposit

Discredits the depth and architectural beauty of the facade element.



- ① Schokbeton facade element
- ② Thermopane windows
- ③ Prefab TT-floor element
- ④ Cast-in-situ concrete
- ⑤ Styrofoam insulation (~50mm)

Figure 49 - Facade soiling detail 01 (Lars Haga, 2026)

The first set of details addresses façade soiling and is presented through an axonometric drawing of a façade element. Specifically, the illustrated component is a middle façade element from the second floor, identified as element R200, which occurs nineteen times throughout the building.

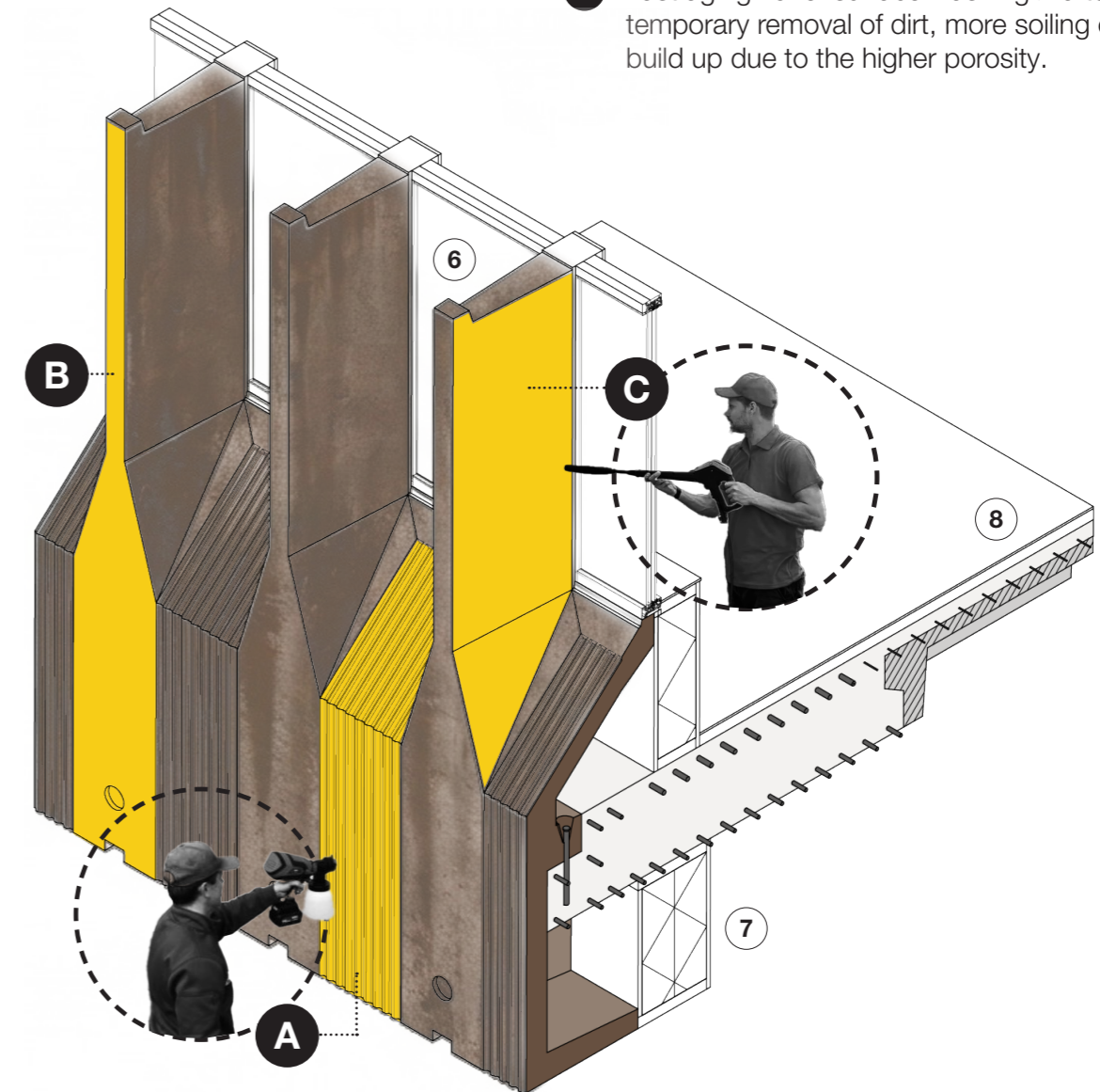
The first detail illustrates the current condition. Here, the relatively uniform distribution of soiling creates a dark yet visually flat appearance, diminishing the perceived depth and architectural articulation of the façade element.

Renovated

2027

Soiling time zones

- Ⓐ Slow aging zone: hydrophobic coating
- Ⓑ Continuous aging zone: untreated surface
- Ⓒ Fast aging zone: surface washing > after temporary removal of dirt, more soiling can build up due to the higher porosity.



- ⑥ Slim aluminium window frames (inward-tilting)
- ⑦ Timber frame with mineral wool (200mm)
- ⑧ EPS insulation boards (50mm)

Figure 50 - Facade soiling detail 02 (Lars Haga, 2026)

In the second detail, the proposed design strategy for the soiling deposit is introduced. The façade element is divided into three

different surface conditions, each corresponding to a distinct ageing zone:

Zone A – Slow Ageing Zone

Zone A functions as the slow ageing zone and receives a hydrophobic mineral coating. This treatment is applied specifically to the vertical grooves of the façade element. Under daylight conditions, these grooves create subtle shadow effects, but these qualities are currently obscured by accumulated soiling.

By applying the coating, rainwater washes off the surface more efficiently, reducing dirt accumulation and slowing the ageing process. A mineral based silicate coating is specifically selected because it chemically bonds with the substrate rather than forming a synthetic layer on top of the surface. The coating remains water repellent while still allowing vapour permeability (KEIM Commercial, 2026). Moisture can therefore escape from the material, while water penetration is reduced.

Additionally, the coating ages together with the concrete surface itself and does not result in peeling paint layers. Controlled discolouration remains possible, allowing the façade to continue ageing rather than freezing it in time. Finally, the coating possesses a matte finish, allowing it to remain visually unobtrusive on the façade elements (KEIM Commercial, 2026).

Zone B – Continuous Ageing Zone

Zone B functions as the continuous ageing zone, where the surface remains untreated. Here, soiling continues to accumulate at its existing rate, preserving the visible passage of time. This untreated condition also acts as a reference point against which the other two ageing strategies can be understood and compared.

Zone C – Fast Ageing Zone

Zone C operates as the fast ageing zone and is pressure washed prior to treatment. Because pollution accumulation is partly influenced by surface texture, washing the façade alters the surface condition and can encourage accelerated future soiling behaviour (Jonnyhough, 2025). Achieving this effect requires passing through a temporary period of visual uniformity. However, cleaning does not permanently reset the building. Instead, it recalibrates future weathering behaviour (Jonnyhough, 2025).

This approach is further supported by PCI (2013), which states that water absorption significantly influences dirt accumulation. By pressure washing the façade, the surface becomes more absorbent, allowing it to remain wet for longer periods and increasing the adhesion of airborne particles. Surface washing is therefore not employed to restore an original image, but rather to recalibrate the future absorption and weathering behaviour of the

façade.

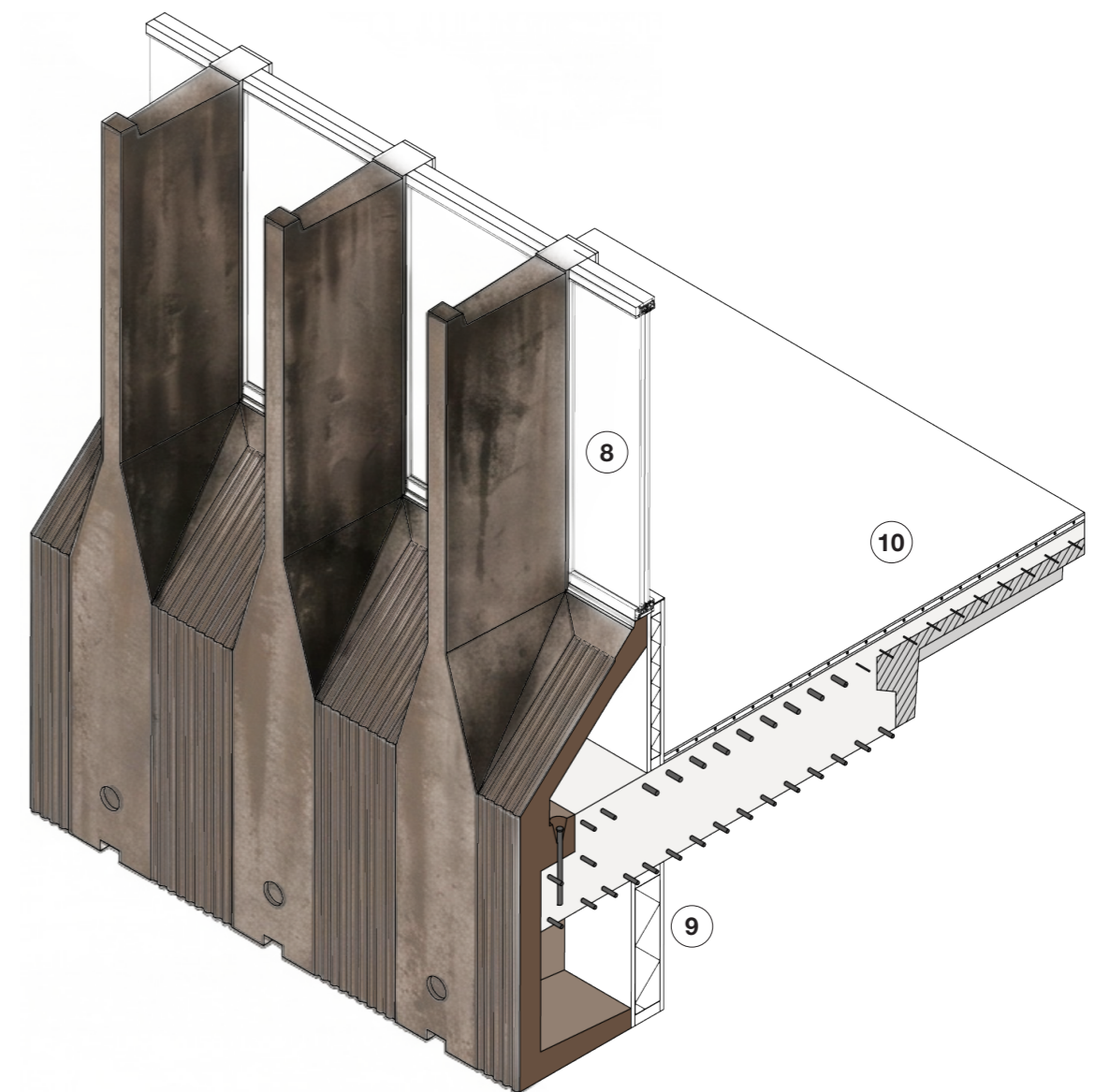
In addition to these ageing interventions, several renovation measures are introduced. The outdated windows are replaced with operable aluminium window frames, an important requirement for hotel rooms. Insulation is added both against the façade element and within the floor assembly. Although the thermal bridge created by the cast in situ concrete floor slab cannot be fully eliminated, these interventions significantly reduce its impact.

Future

2077

Effects of soiling interventions

The designed soiling deposits give depth to the facade element.



- ⑧ Vacuum windowpanes
- ⑨ Vacuum insulation (50mm)
- ⑩ Floor heating system

Figure 51 - Facade soiling detail 03 (Lars Haga, 2026)



Figure 52 - Facade fragment model 1:25 (Lars Haga, 2026)

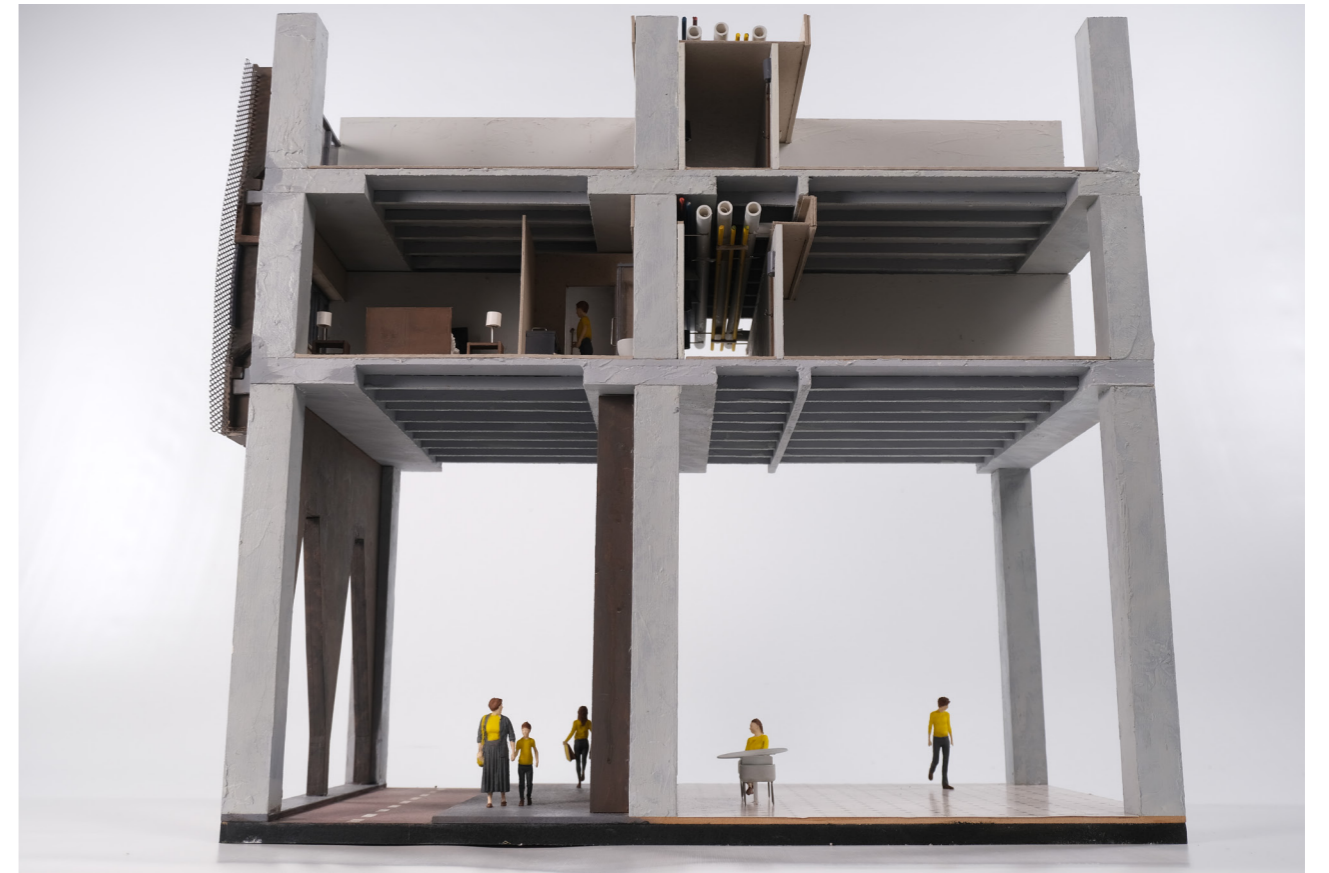


Figure 53 - Facade fragment model 1:25, showing floor composition (Lars Haga, 2026)



Figure 54 - Facade fragment model 1:25, showing facade soiling (Lars Haga, 2026)



Figure 55 - Facade fragment model 1:25, showing facade soiling (Lars Haga, 2026)

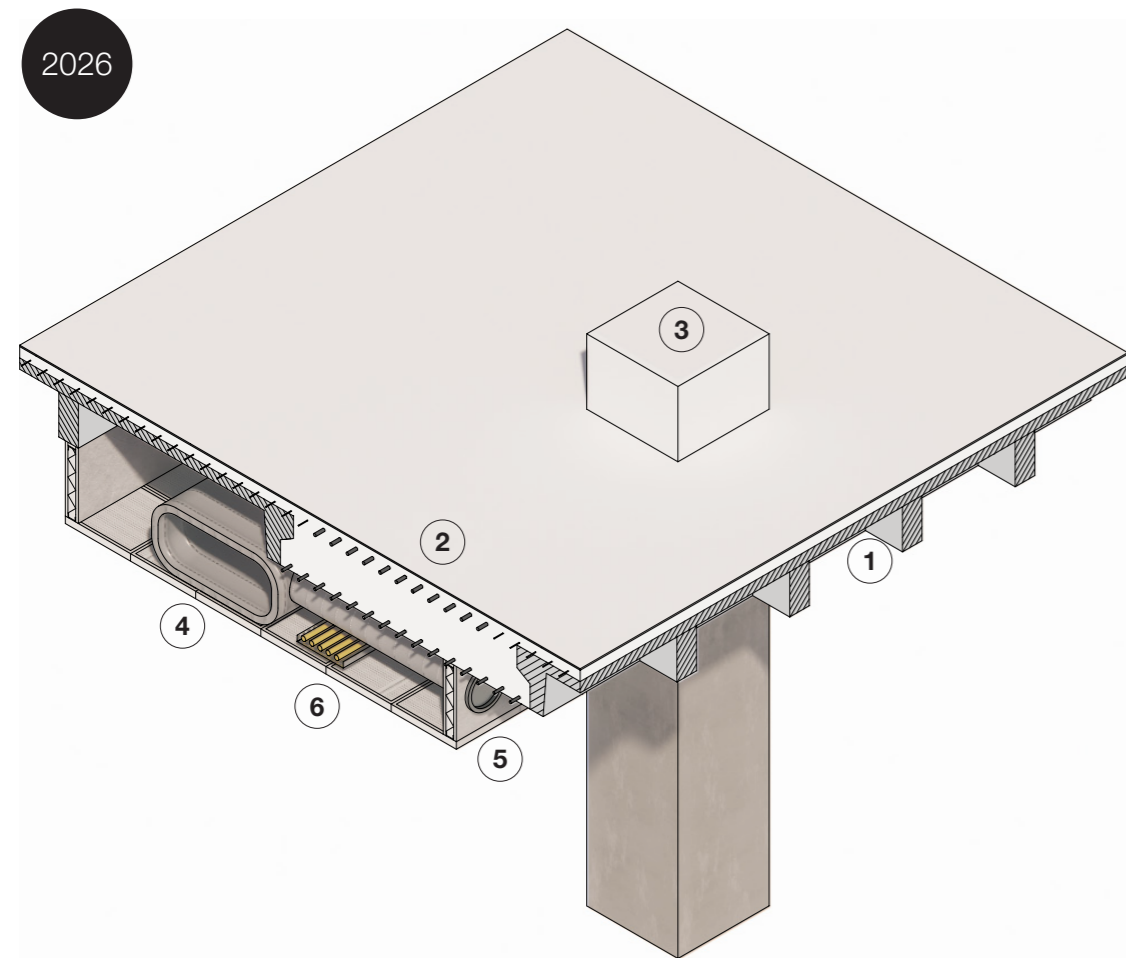
The final detail illustrates a future scenario in which the effects of the soiling interventions have become fully visible. The designed ageing process introduces greater visual depth and differentiation to the façade element.

This future scenario also presents a long term sustainability vision, including the integration of currently emerging but expensive technologies such as vacuum insulation panels, high performance glazing systems, and underfloor heating.

Corridor details

The following detail series focuses on the corridor system. The section is specifically taken through the suspended ceiling deposit, which ultimately informed the placement and organization of the corridors themselves.

Current

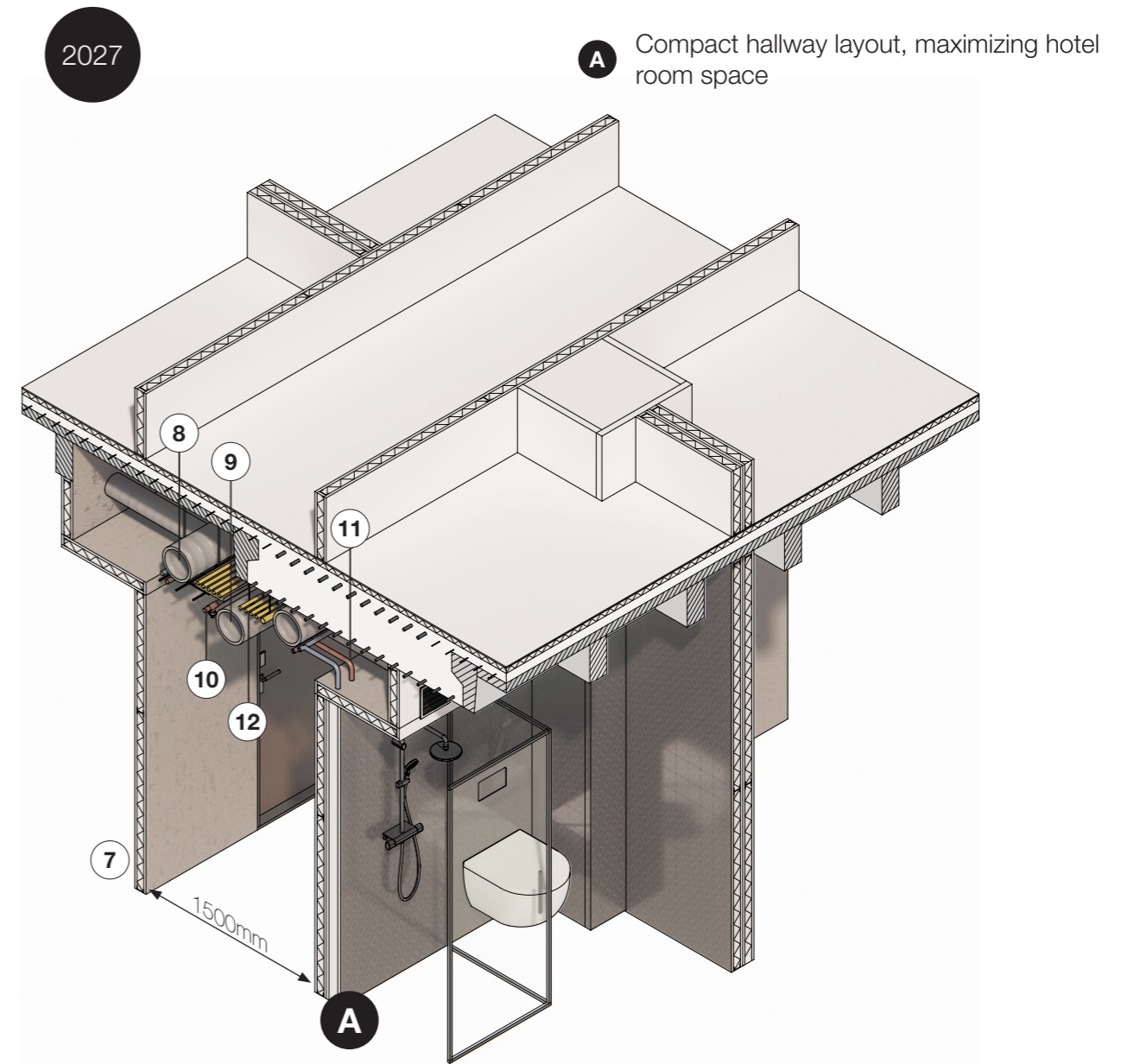


- ① Prefab TT-floor element
- ② Cast-in-situ concrete floor
- ③ Cast-in-situ concrete column
- ④ Ventilation duct
- ⑤ Ventilation grille
- ⑥ Cable tray

Figure 56 - Corridor detail 01 (Lars Haga, 2026)

The first detail illustrates the existing condition. The floor assembly supported by the structural column is visible, together with the suspended ceiling system. Within this ceiling void, a central ventilation duct distributes air toward both sides of the building. Cable trays are also present within this infrastructural zone.

Renovated



- ⑦ Metal stud wall (100mm)
- ⑧ Ventilation duct supply
- ⑨ Ventilation duct exhaust
- ⑩ sprinkler system
- ⑪ Cold and hot water supply pipes
- ⑫ Electrical conduits

Figure 57 - Corridor detail 02 (Lars Haga, 2026)

The second detail demonstrates how the suspended ceiling is reused and renovated. Although the air handling units were upgraded in

2017, many of the ventilation ducts are no longer in adequate condition. Furthermore, the original system is unsuitable for simultaneously supplying and extracting air for the newly introduced hotel rooms.

To address this, two supply ducts and one central exhaust duct are added. Since each floor is connected to both circulation towers, the duct systems can be efficiently distributed between these cores. The suspended ceiling also accommodates additional infrastructure, including hot and cold water systems, electrical cabling, and a sprinkler installation.

The detail illustrates how these systems directly service the hotel rooms. Metal stud partition walls are introduced to subdivide the hotel rooms and corridors. The corridor width is intentionally minimized in order to maximize the spatial quality and dimensions of the hotel rooms themselves.

Future

2077

Flexibility in the floor plan layout

B Broad hallway layout, using the width of the suspended ceiling

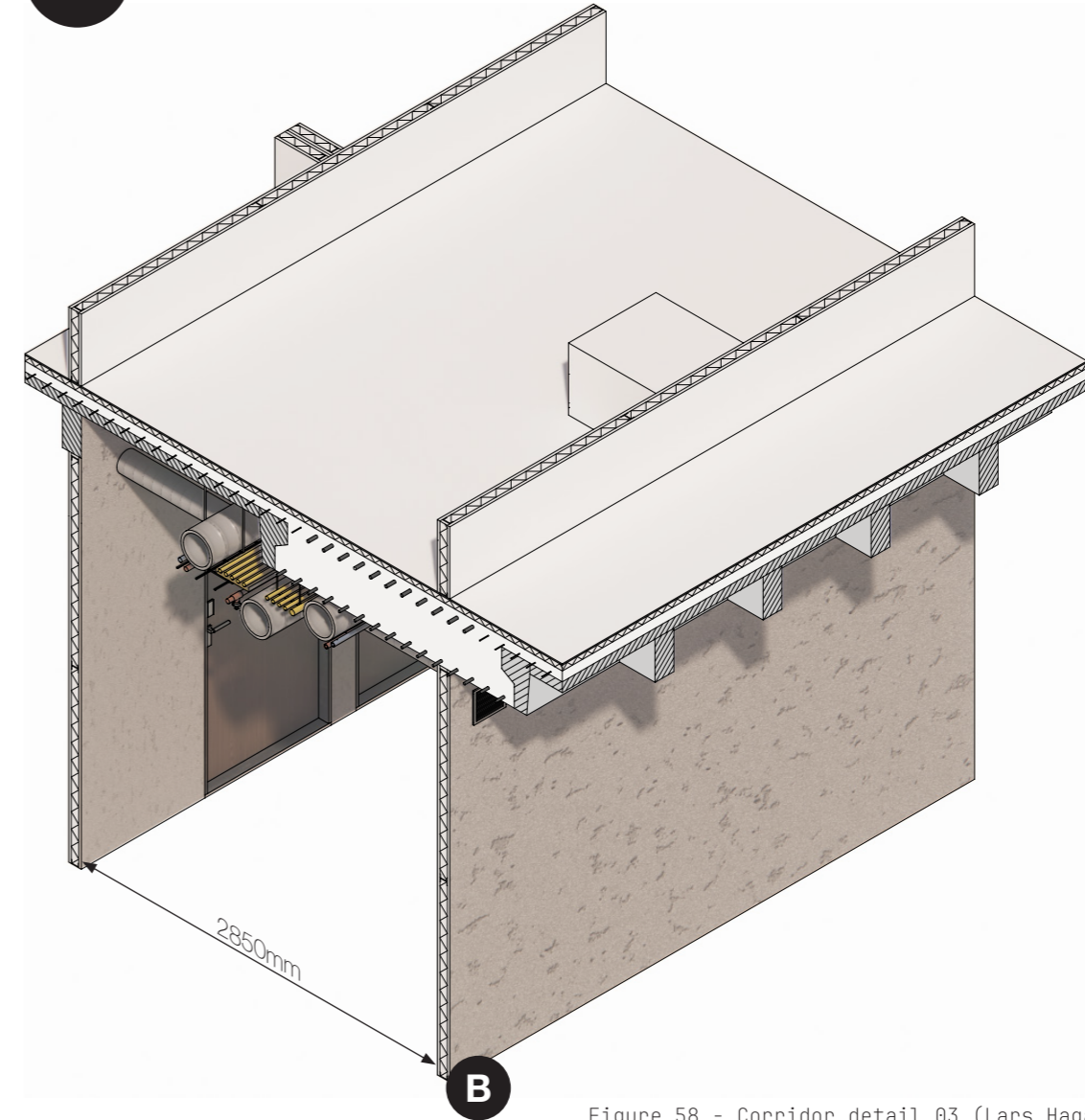


Figure 58 - Corridor detail 03 (Lars Haga, 2026)

The final detail demonstrates how this partition system can be adapted in the future to create alternative layouts and varying corridor widths. This directly supports the broader detailing concept of allowing deposits and spatial transformations to continue accumulating over time.

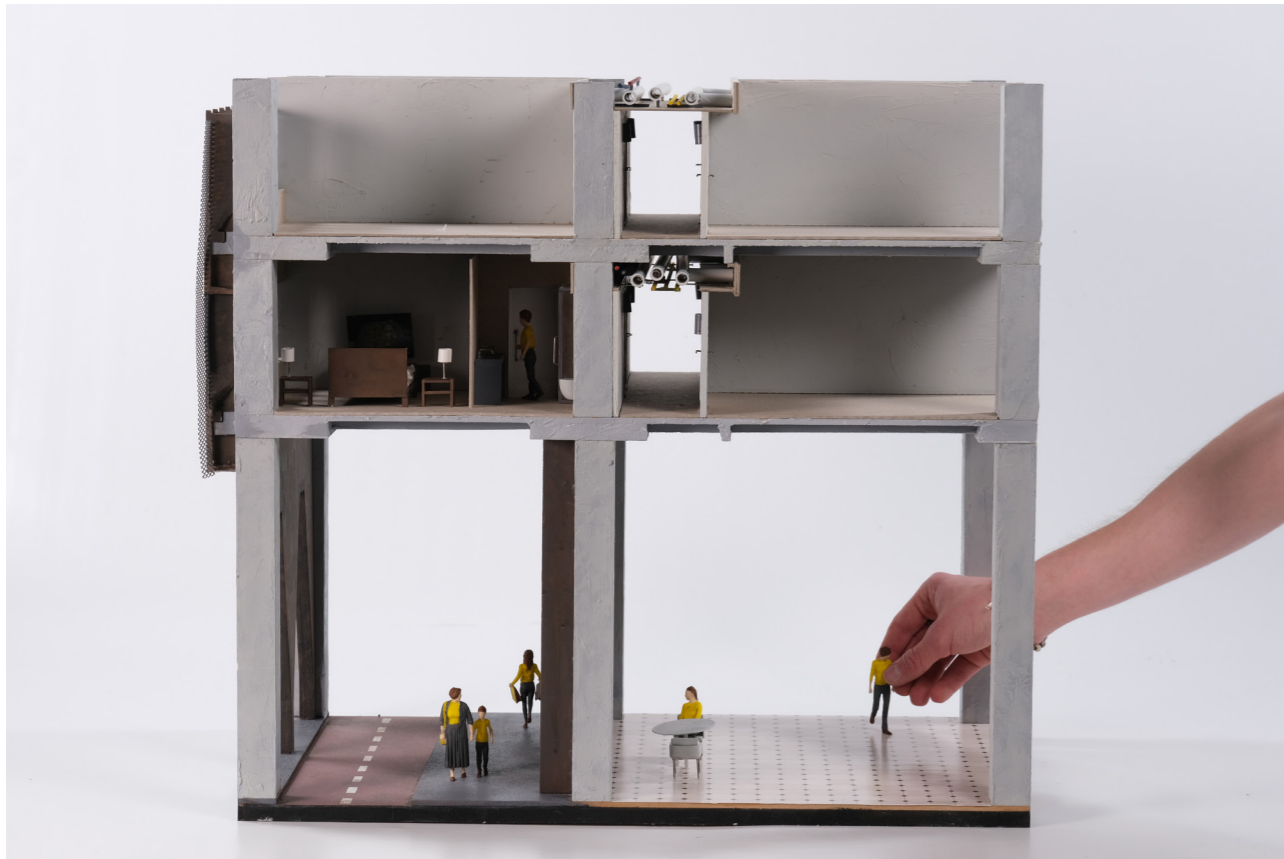


Figure 59 - Facade fragment model 1:25, showing partition system in section (Lars Haga, 2026)



Figure 60 - Facade fragment model 1:25, showing ceiling ducts (Lars Haga, 2026)

Climate section

To further support the detailing strategy of the suspended ceiling system, the following spread presents a climatic section. This drawing expands upon the earlier environmental ambitions introduced in Section 3.1.4.

Three climatic principles are highlighted within the section: solar behaviour, ventilation, and water distribution.

Solar Behaviour

The section first illustrates the sun angles across all four seasons. Both the highest and lowest solar positions are represented in order to understand the full impact of seasonal solar penetration. The drawing demonstrates that during summer conditions, daylight is able to penetrate deeply into the building through the atrium.

Ventilation

The second principle focuses on ventilation. The previous detail series extensively explained how the suspended ceiling deposits are reused as infrastructural corridors. Within the climatic section, the two existing air handling units, renovated in 2017, are visible within the circulation towers together with the connected ventilation duct systems.

An additional third air handling unit is introduced to support the ventilation requirements of the kitchen and the open ground floor spaces. For the double height ground floor, floor level ventilation grilles are integrated along the façade line, after which warm air can naturally rise and escape through the atrium. The section also illustrates how natural ventilation is supported through the operable windows of the hotel rooms.

Water Distribution

Finally, the section addresses water distribution. Once again, an existing deposit is reused: Blakeburg's connection to Rotterdam's district heating network. Water from the network passes through a Heat Interface Unit (HIU), after which it is distributed toward the underfloor heating and cooling systems on the ground floor, while simultaneously supplying hot and cold water to the hotel rooms.

The suspended ceiling infrastructure is once again utilized to accommodate and distribute these systems throughout the building.

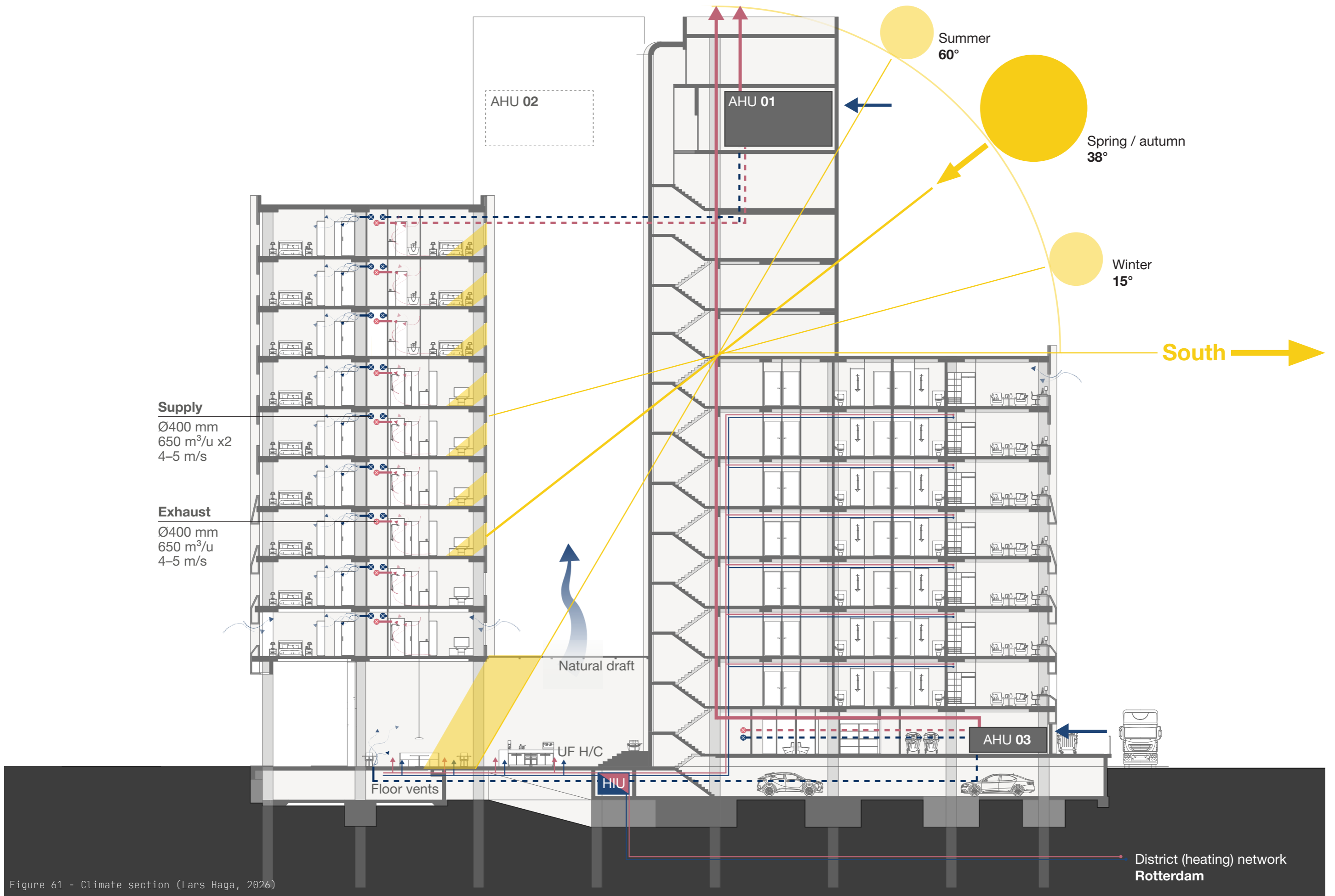


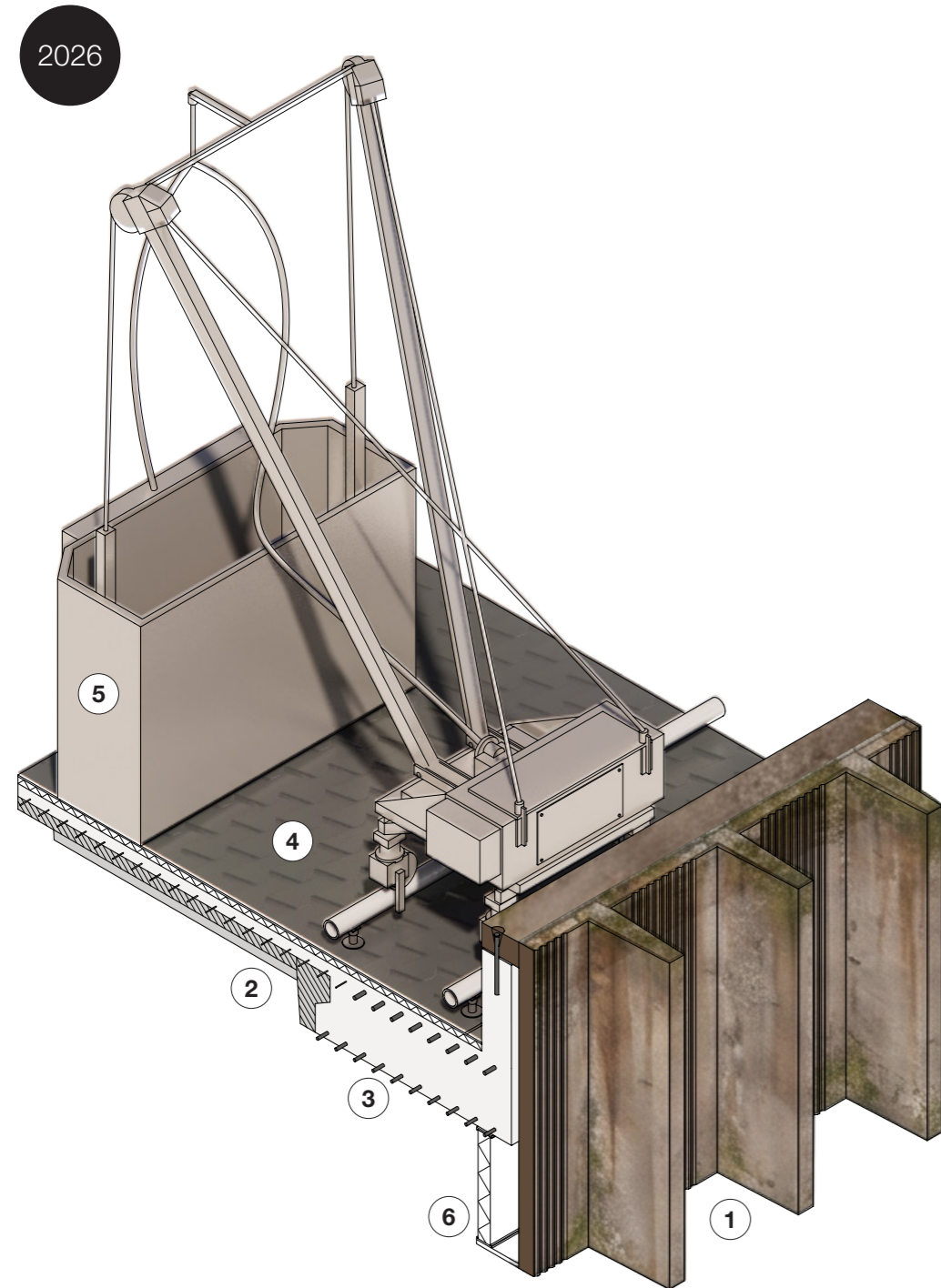
Figure 61 - Climate section (Lars Haga, 2026)

Rooftop garden details

The final detail series examines the rooftop garden. The axonometric section is taken at the roof edge, allowing both the façade element and the roof build up to remain visible simultaneously.

Current

Overdimensioned roof as deposit



- ① Schokbeton facade element
- ② Prefab TT-floor element
- ③ Cast-in-situ concrete
- ④ Vapotherm (40mm)
- ⑤ window cleaning system
- ⑥ Styrofoam insulation (~50mm)

Figure 62 - Rooftop garden detail 01 (Lars Haga, 2026)

The first detail again presents the existing condition. As in the previous façade detail, the façade element itself is visible. Structural analysis further revealed that the lower wing of the building is capable of carrying significantly more weight than it currently supports. This is because the structural system is identical to that of the taller wing, despite carrying two fewer floors.

Renovated

Addition rooftop garden

A Facade treatment from first details



- ⑦ PIR insulation board (100mm)
- ⑧ Drainage layer (100mm)
- ⑨ Green roof soil layer
- ⑩ Timber frame with mineral wool (200mm)
- ⑪ Steel fence (existing deposit)

Figure 63 - Rooftop garden detail 02 (Lars Haga, 2026)

The second detail utilizes this structural capacity through the introduction of the rooftop garden. As described previously, the roof landscape incorporates varying soil depths, including elevated planting areas capable of supporting trees.

The same fencing language used at ground floor level is reintroduced here in order to maintain architectural continuity. The existing window washing installation also remains operational and can be used for the façade treatment strategy described in the previous detail set.

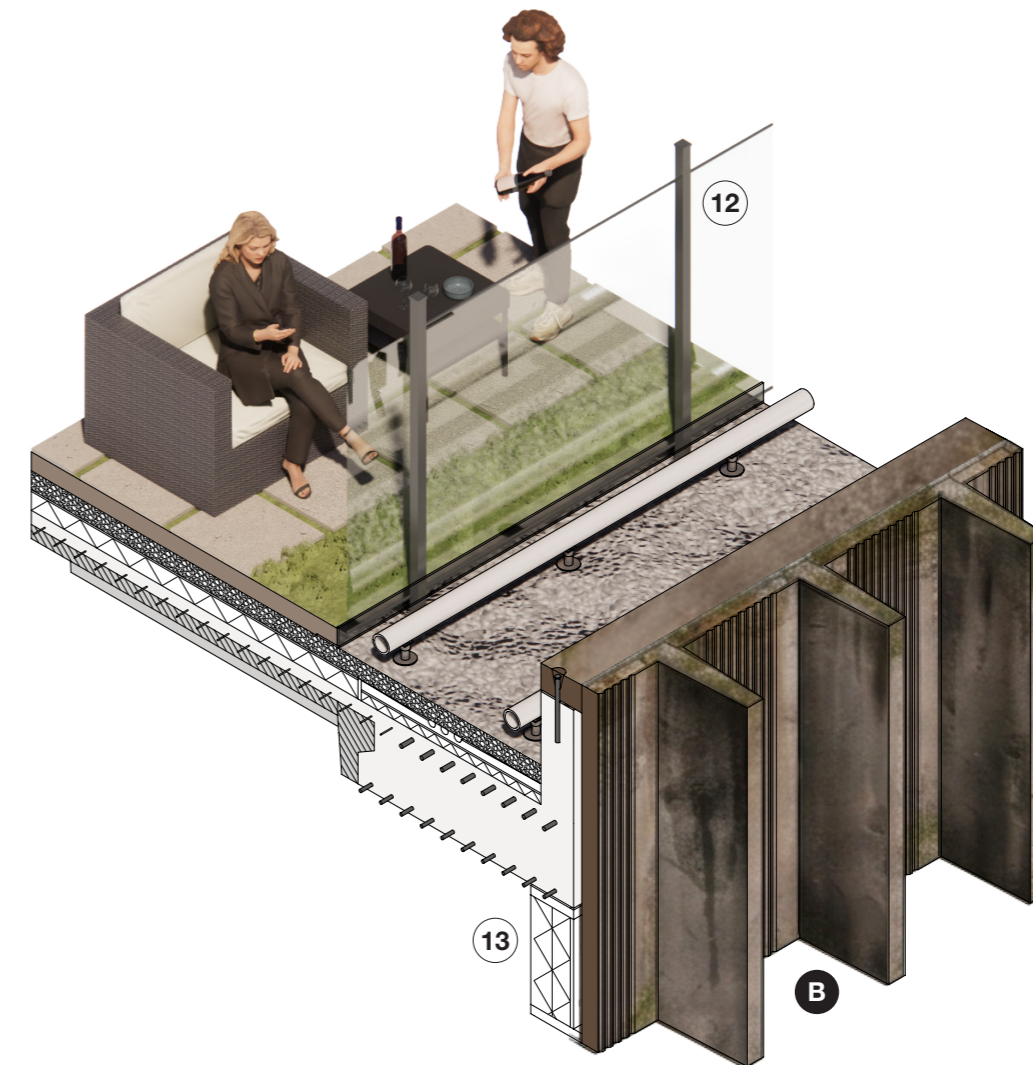
Additional sustainability interventions are incorporated through upgraded insulation layers and the integration of a drainage layer connected directly to the building's rainwater system.

Future

2077

Rooftop intervention offers opportunity for future deposits: rooftop bar

B Accumulated soiling



12 Steel fence with glazing

13 Vacuum insulation

Figure 64 - Rooftop garden detail 03 (Lars Haga, 2026)

The final detail again illustrates a future scenario. Here, the rooftop remains open to receiving new deposits and programmes over time, represented in this case by the addition of a rooftop bar.

The façade soiling strategy is again visible within this future condition. Finally, the fencing system is adapted through the addition of glazing elements combined with vacuum insulation technologies, illustrating how the building can continue evolving technologically and architecturally over time.

Part 04. Conclusion

4.1 Answering the research questions

This chapter synthesises the outcomes of the research and design development by directly addressing the main research question:

How can renovation and transformation contribute to improving the perception and spatial experience of Blakeburg while preserving its architectural identity?

The research demonstrates that improving perception and spatial experience does not necessarily require restoring a building to its original condition. Instead, renovation can operate through the recognition, interpretation, and amplification of existing qualities.

Importantly, these qualities are not always immediately visible or conventionally appreciated. Many aspects of a building that are initially perceived as problematic, outdated, or undesirable can become architectural strengths when approached critically and creatively through design. This understanding formed the basis for the development of the deposit framework, which was introduced to identify seemingly irrelevant or neglected layers and evaluate their contribution to the monumentality, atmosphere, and identity of a building.

In the case of Blakeburg, its architectural identity is strongly rooted in its façade composition, massiveness, darkness, and spatial introversion. Additional deposits can be understood as accumulated layers formed over time, and it is precisely these layers that contribute to the building's monumental value and distinctive character. Rather than treating these conditions as deficiencies, the project repositions them as architectural potential. In this approach, time itself becomes a design driver.

This position forms the core of the research. In order to answer the main question more specifically, the sub questions are addressed individually below.

Facade element renovation

The first sub question concerned the conservation and renovation of the façade. The primary goal was to preserve the aesthetic and monumental quality of the façade system. This objective depends on two essential aspects.

The first is the musical composition of the façade itself, in which each individual concrete element contributes to the

overall rhythm and articulation of the building. Preserving this composition therefore requires maintaining the façade elements rather than replacing them.

The second aspect concerns the accumulated soiling of the façade. Although this soiling plays a major role in establishing the dark and monumental appearance of Blakeburg, its current uniform distribution causes the façade to appear visually flat and monotonous, reducing the depth and sculptural qualities of the elements.

The intervention strategy presented in Section 3.2.4 therefore proposes a calibrated ageing approach through the introduction of different ageing zones. Rather than removing the soiling entirely, the strategy preserves its atmospheric and monumental qualities while simultaneously reintroducing visual depth through controlled weathering behaviour. In this way, the façade can be preserved without sacrificing the aesthetic strength that defines its identity.

Spatial reorganization

Spatial experience is improved primarily through the reinterpretation of light and darkness. Instead of maximizing brightness uniformly throughout the building, the project introduces a hierarchy of illumination. Light is used to guide movement, define entrances, and structure public programmes, while darker zones provide intimacy, calmness, and retreat. In this way, former weaknesses, such as limited daylight penetration, are transformed into atmospheric qualities aligned with hospitality architecture.

The spatial organization of functions further builds upon this principle. Public programmes are associated with openness and light, while private functions are positioned within darker and more intimate spatial conditions. Focused lighting is also employed as a method of orientation and movement. This becomes especially evident within the Depository Route, where light and shadow direct visitors through the building and intensify the overall spatial experience.

The reinterpretation of darkness therefore becomes not only an atmospheric strategy, but also a functional and spatial tool.

Blakeburg's function

The chosen hotel transformation embraces the accumulated time embedded within Blakeburg. By preserving the Schokbeton façade and its patina, the project maintains the authenticity and monumentality that define the building's identity. Theoretical perspectives on age value support this approach by demonstrating that weathering and material ageing contribute to cultural meaning

and emotional perception. Preservation therefore becomes an active design strategy rather than a passive act of conservation.

The research also demonstrated that a hotel programme is more appropriate for Blakeburg in a contemporary context than continued office use. This conclusion is related to several existing spatial conditions within the building, including its relatively small windows, deep floor plans, suitable structural grid dimensions, and introverted atmosphere. In addition, the surrounding urban context currently contains relatively few hotels despite its central location and proximity to landmarks and entertainment programmes, while demand for office space has decreased significantly.

A public plinth was therefore introduced as part of the transformation strategy. Through the concept of Two Temporal Speeds, this ground floor remains adaptable over time. Temporary and demountable structures allow future programmes to change according to evolving societal and urban needs. The relevance of this public plinth becomes particularly important in relation to the final sub question concerning contextual interaction.

Interaction with context

The redesign of the ground floor plays a crucial role in changing the perception of Blakeburg. By reducing the dominance of parking functions, introducing public programmes, and creating a double height interior connected to a renewed atrium, the building becomes socially accessible and visually inviting. Increased transparency and programme activation establish a stronger relationship between Blakeburg and its urban surroundings, directly addressing one of the primary shortcomings identified in the earlier analyses.

At the urban scale, interventions within adjacent streets and outdoor spaces further strengthen this relationship. The removal of Molstraat and its replacement with a public park create a direct connection with the western ground floor façade and activate previously neglected exterior space.

Together, these strategies demonstrate that renovation and transformation can improve perception and spatial experience through reinterpretation rather than replacement. Architectural identity is preserved not by freezing the building in time, but by allowing its existing material character, spatial logic, and cultural associations to inform a new programme and atmosphere.

Blakeburg therefore evolves from a perceived dark and outdated office building into a distinctive architectural landmark whose identity is strengthened through transformation. The project ultimately demonstrates that preservation and innovation are not

opposing forces, but complementary processes capable of generating new meaning, relevance, and experiential quality.

4.2 Implications and recommendations

This section reflects on the broader significance of the project within architecture as a profession, particularly regarding the treatment of post-1965 heritage in the Netherlands.

The significance of the project lies primarily in its approach. By identifying deposits and accumulated characteristics that have emerged over time, and subsequently using these as design drivers, the project proposes a way of preserving the monumental value and identity of buildings while simultaneously allowing them to evolve through renovation and transformation.

Throughout the research process, several attempts were made to formulate a transferable framework that could be applied to other post-1965 buildings. However, it gradually became clear that such a fully replicable system would ultimately be unrealistic. Architectural interventions are always dependent on context, programme, scale, public perception, and the specific conditions of a building. A rigid framework would therefore risk oversimplifying the complexity of transformation projects.

As a result, the research was intentionally condensed into a more fundamental architectural approach: encouraging designers and decision makers to think critically about existing conditions, to justify interventions more carefully, and to explore whether deposits that are initially perceived negatively can instead be employed creatively and constructively. In this way, the age of a building becomes a design driver rather than an obstacle.

Blakeburg as a case study possesses particular significance within this discussion. Due to its complexity, scale, and prominent urban location, the project demonstrates the potential scope of renovation strategies for post-war architecture. At the same time, Blakeburg also presents a somewhat exceptional condition. Because the building already possesses a strong architectural identity and formal power, an intervention-light approach can more easily succeed.

However, perception studies conducted during the research process demonstrated that this architectural character is not universally appreciated. Responses from both users and online commentators frequently criticised the building's dark appearance and its closed relationship with the surrounding context. Others, however, described these same qualities as powerful, atmospheric, and even cinematic, comparing Blakeburg to environments from *The Lord of*

the Rings or Gotham City from the Batman franchise.

Because the chosen hotel programme is able to work with atmosphere, intimacy, and sensory experience, this strong contrast between appreciation and discomfort becomes particularly valuable within the project. The darker spatial character can therefore be preserved and curated as part of the architectural identity. At the same time, this atmosphere would not function successfully in every context or building type. Without careful curation and spatial design, darkness can quickly become oppressive, hostile, or socially unsafe.

The project therefore demonstrates a specific architectural condition in which these qualities can operate positively through programme, lighting, materiality, and public activation. Since the interventions collectively contribute to an experiential environment, Blakeburg may also represent a somewhat exceptional case study within the broader discussion of post-1965 heritage transformation.

The design approach presented within this thesis demonstrates how such associations and perceived disqualities can be curated and transformed into architectural strengths. The challenge lies in preserving the visibility of these deposits without neglecting issues of social safety, accessibility, and urban interaction.

In this regard, I believe the project succeeds in bringing together these difficult and often conflicting themes in a meaningful and creative way.

4.3 Reflection

This final section reflects on the research and design process itself, including the methods, tools, and techniques employed throughout the graduation project.

The first ten weeks, leading up to the A1 presentation, focused primarily on collective analysis followed by an individual investigation into a selected building. During the collective phase, Excel based comparisons and analytical diagrams were used to evaluate a series of Brutalist buildings and gradually narrow down the selection pool. It quickly became apparent that comparing the projects was difficult due to the diversity of the buildings themselves and the unequal availability of archival information. At the same time, the selection of a building remained deeply personal, shaped by individual architectural interests.

Although this process was complex, it ultimately produced valuable analyses and established a strong foundation for the remainder of the project.

Within the individual analysis of Blakeburg, several research methods were employed. Technical research focused on the Schokbeton façade system and investigated methods of preservation, cleaning, and ageing behaviour. This topic proved extensive enough to form a thesis in itself, and therefore had to be carefully narrowed to remain relevant to the final design proposal.

Archival research was also conducted to understand the structural logic of the building. This process became particularly challenging due to the sheer quantity of drawings and the absence of clear categorisation within the archive. The complete Rhino model, including façade and structural systems, was reconstructed manually, dimension by dimension. While highly time consuming, this process ultimately provided a powerful design tool and a deep understanding of the building itself.

The perception study similarly became highly valuable in understanding the public image of Blakeburg. Both *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* by J. Saldaña (2021) and the tangible and intangible attribute categories defined by Lin (2025) proved effective in identifying and categorising recurring themes. Fortunately, sufficient online discourse surrounding Blakeburg was available to establish meaningful conclusions. The themes emerging from this perception research ultimately became highly influential within the final design proposal.

Throughout the project, I also deliberately focused on hand drawing as a design method. This personal strength greatly helps me understand buildings spatially and atmospherically, while also allowing me to engage more intuitively with their character and material qualities.

The second ten week period, leading toward the A2 presentation, focused primarily on design research. This phase explored ways of visualising and testing the identified qualities, disqualities, and conceptual themes. Experiments included physical model making, studies into Gothic culture both within and beyond architecture, and extensive investigations into light and darkness.

Although these studies contributed significantly to the development of the project, this period often felt abstract and difficult to structure. Personally, it sometimes felt as though the act of designing itself was temporarily being replaced by endless experimentation and analysis. As a result, the weeks surrounding the A2 presentation became particularly stressful, as the integration of the research into concrete design proposals felt rushed.

After several orientation weeks during the final phase leading toward the A3 presentation, the project gradually regained clarity and direction. The evolution of the design position played an essential role in supporting architectural decision making. The

finalisation process combined analytical and technical drawings developed in Rhino, atmospheric renders used to evaluate spatial interventions, and physical models used to study detail and scale. These methods provided a realistic and in-depth final design proposal, although very complex and time consuming in use sometimes.

Overall, I am satisfied with the final outcome of the project. I am particularly proud of the design approach and the atmospheres created throughout the proposal. After thirty intensive weeks, however, I also feel more than ready to finally bring the project to a close.

Back matter

01 Appendix

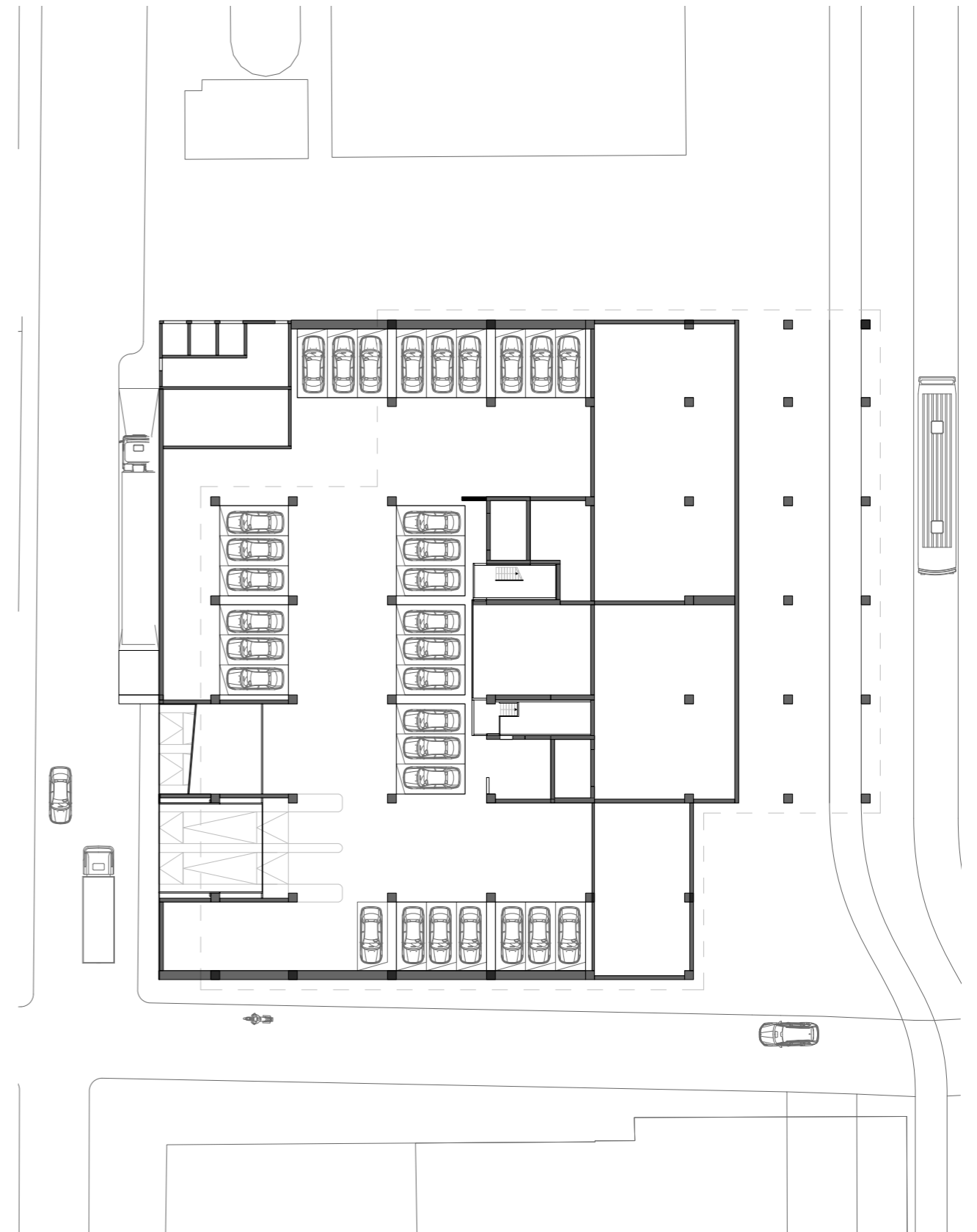


Figure 65 - Basement floor (Lars Haga, 2026)

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Images

Figure 01 - 15. Lars Haga, 2025-2026 (own image)
Figure 16. Tangible and intangible attribute categories (Lin, 2025)
Figure 17 - 65. Lars Haga, 2025-2026 (own image)