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Group Research

Past-Present-Future

Development of land
Showing development from peat fields to farmfields to living area

1815 1836 1815 1836 1925 1930 1933 1961

General history of Ter Apel
Showing the most relevant events

1465 1594 1615 1619

A Monastery start being built **B** Siege of Groningen **C** Semslinie is set **D** Groningen annexes Ter Apel

1856 1879 1915 1924-35 1938 1940-45 1984


E Connection with Groningen (Ter Apelkanaal) **F** Ago dorp is built **G** Station Ter Apel **H** Burgemeester Beinsdorp is built **I** War period **J** Opening Navo depot **A** Mor...

Development of the economy and its people
Showing the main economical influx


Channel diggers Peat extractors Potato farmers Military perso

Development of transportation
Showing the different ways of transportation throughout time

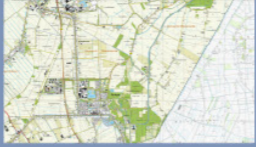
Trekschuit Steamboat Horsetram Steamtram Train Bus



1979



1987





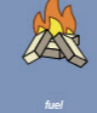
2025

Peat

Peat has played a major role in the development of Groningen, especially the province. Due to the Bourtangter Moor, the largest peat bog in the world, they had plenty of resources to extract.

From the 1500's this became more of a systemic extraction process, with the city of Groningen getting heavily involved in the 1600's. Land was rented out and taxes were put on the shipping peat through the canals.

This peat mostly served as fuel after it was dried and turned into these blocky shapes.

A: Ter Apel Monastery is a former fifteenth century monastery in the village of Ter Apel in the province of Groningen in the northeast of the Netherlands. It was founded around 1465 by the the Order of the Holy Cross and stood along an old trade route between Münster and Groningen, where it offered hospitality to travelers and pilgrims.

Today the complex is the only remaining medieval rural monastery in the Netherlands that is still largely intact. The buildings house a museum for monastery and church history and for religious art, and since 1992 the site has been included on the Dutch UNESCO Top 100 list of most important monuments.

B: In 1594 the city of Groningen was captured by the army of Prince Maurice, an event known as the Reduction of Groningen. This victory ended Spanish rule and brought the city together with the surrounding Ommelanden as the new region Stad en Lande, fully part of the Dutch Republic.

For Groningen and its hinterland, including the route toward Ter Apel, this meant more political stability, safer trade and roads, and the start of a new period of rebuilding under a Protestant city government.

C: The Semslinie is the dead straight border line between the provinces of Groningen and Drenthe, laid out in 1615 by surveyor Johan Sems through the vast Bourtangter peat bog. It was created to end disputes over peat digging and taxes and to decide which side places like Ter Apel belonged to. The clear border opened the way for large scale peat extraction, canals and new villages, shaping the landscape that visitors still see today along the route between Groningen and Ter Apel.

D: In 1619 the city of Groningen bought Westerwolde with Ter Apel and its monastery. The city governed it as a country estate and helped to preserve the monastery and the surrounding woods. This is why visitors today can still experience Ter Apel as a quiet monastery village in a green landscape.

E: From the eighteenth century the city of Groningen had a canal dug toward Ter Apel to open up the high peat of the Bourtangter bog. By 1856 the Ter Apel canal reached the village and a long ribbon shaped settlement of skippers, peat workers and shops grew along the water, shifting the centre of Ter Apel toward the canal.

In 1879 this canal was linked from Ter Apel to the Drenthe Compasuumkanaal, so peat and later farm produce from southeast Drenthe could be shipped through Ter Apel toward Groningen.

For Ter Apel the canals meant a change from quiet monastery village to busy transport route, and today they still shape the straight village streets and offer a scenic waterway for visitors by boat, bicycle or on foot.

F: AGO village, or Agodorp, is a small garden village just outside Ter Apel, built in the early twentieth century for the workers of the AGO factory. The name comes from "Aardappelen, Groenten en Ooft". Later the company changed to wood processing for the textile industry. The factory buildings are still there today, but they no longer belong to AGO and have a new use. Agodorp is a compact cluster of workers' houses and a few former directors' villas along the Ruiten Aa Canal, surrounded by forest, where visitors can still experience a historic company village in a green setting.


G: Ter Apel gained a railway station in 1924 on the new line from Stadskanaal toward the German border. Passenger trains stopped here only until 1935, so the railway era in Ter Apel was very short. The main station has gone, and the site is now the Heemborgh senior residence, but a smaller former railway building still survives as a house and reminds visitors of this brief time when trains reached the monastery village.

H: Burgemeester Beinsdorp, often called BB village, is a small workers village just south of Ter Apel, built in the nineteen twenties and thirties to rehouse families from poor homes, caravans and houseboats along the peat canals. The neighbourhood is named after mayor Frederik Adolf Beins of the former municipality of Vlagtwedde and lies at the seventh lock of the Ter Apel canal. Today it is a quiet strip of simple brick houses along the water where visitors can see how Ter Apel expanded from a monastery village into a twentieth century workers community.


I: During the Second World War Ter Apel lay right on the German border and close to the Emsland camps, so the village lived in the shadow of the war. Today visitors can see remains of bunkers in the surrounding fields, the village war memorial from 1948 and the Jewish monument that recalls the deported Jewish families. Near Ter Apel there is also a small memorial at the crash site of an American bomber, a quiet place that marks the cost of the air war in this border region.

J: The NATO depot at Ter Apel was built in the nineteen eighties as a large storage site for American army equipment. It brought many new jobs, which some locals welcomed, but it also sparked peace demonstrations by people who feared more weapons in the border region and worried that Ter Apel might become a military target.


After the end of the Cold War the depot closed and the terrain fell empty, until the Dutch government chose it in the nineteen nineties as a place to receive asylum seekers. In 1996 a departure centre opened on the former NATO grounds, and in 2001 this grew into the national reception and registration centre with a large asylum seekers centre beside it.



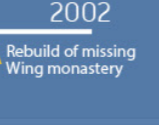
1988



1995



1996






2002

Monastery

The monastery first started out as a vestige point between the swampy peat fields of the Bourtangter Moor. It sat on a 'sand ridge', and was thus a safe haven between the tricky swampy areas.

From its formation in 1465 up til 1594, before the Siege of Groningen, it was a catholic monastery in the order of 'Groeniers' or 'Kruisbroeders'. After 1594, it became protestant and served as a 'regular' church.

In 1988 it became a museum.

Monastery transformed to heritage centre and museum

Closing Navo depot

Navo depot transformed to asylum seeker centre




Rebuild of missing Wing monastery


Economy

Peat also played a major role in the general economy of Groningen. Due to the extensive network of canals, this peat could be sent throughout the entirety of the Netherlands.


After large parts of the peat had been extracted, the leftover land was perfect for growing crops such as potatoes and beets. This led to a rise in potato starch production factories. Between 1860-1900, 31 potato starch factories were founded in Groningen.

Now, most Ter Apeler's work government (COA) and healthcare jobs.








personal



COA workers






Museum workers

Transport

Due to its location at the border of Groningen, Drenthe and Germany, Ter Apel has always been an important location to pass through. In 1850 the 'Stadskanaal' was finished, connecting Ter Apel to the rest of Groningen, soon after a canal was finished to connect Ter Apel to Drenthe.

After boat sizes increase and truck traffic catches on, shipping transport decreases quickly.

In the meantime, Ter Apel has also seen transport through trams, buses and trains.

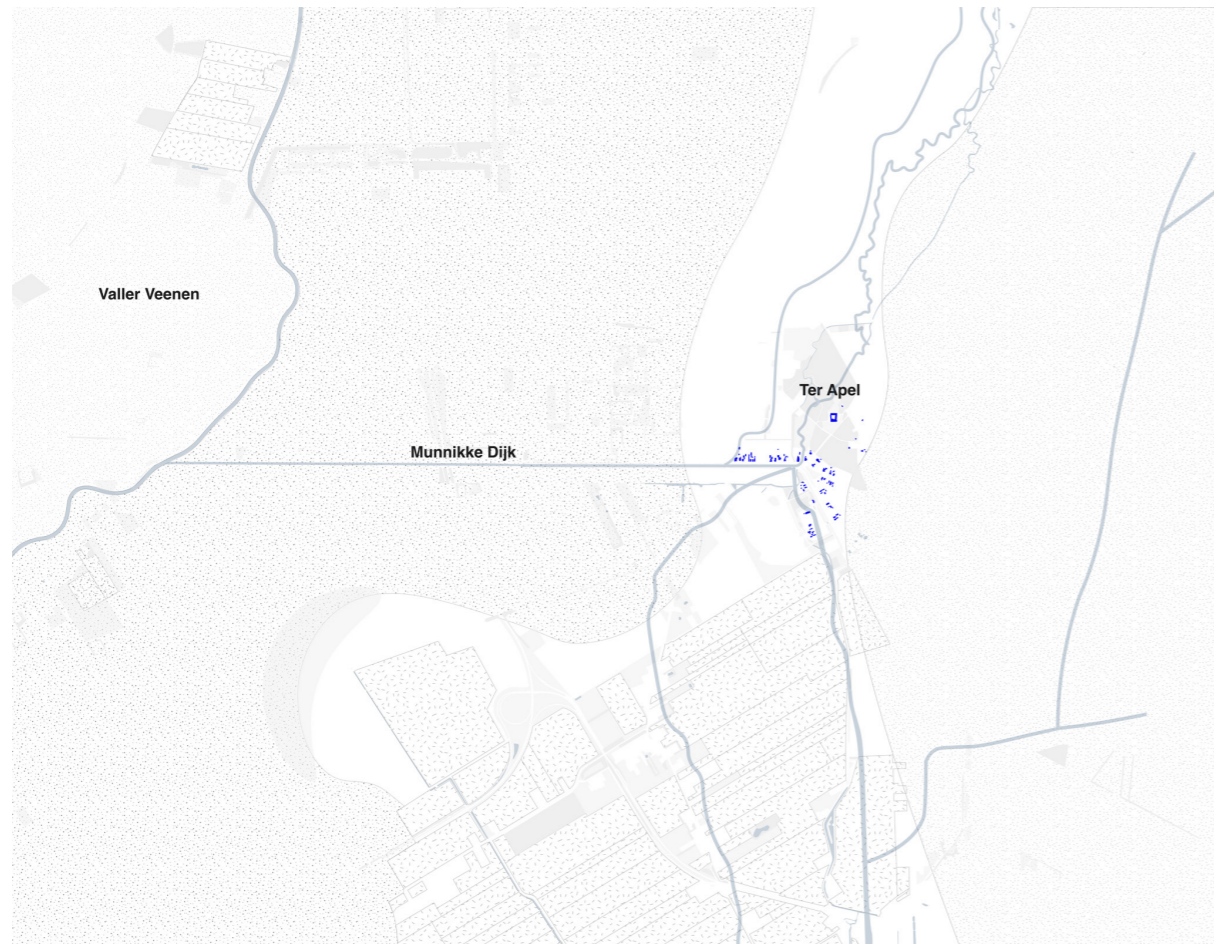




1815

Untouched Pre-Development Landscape

In 1815, Ter Apel was still a quiet and undeveloped area. Large bogs, wetlands, and wild forests covered most of the land. Only a few small clearings showed early human activity. There were almost no roads, buildings, or signs of a village, making the landscape feel empty and remote.

Topotijdreis: 200 jaar topografische kaarten. (1815). Topotijdreis. Retrieved December 6, 2025, from <https://www.topotijdreis.nl/>

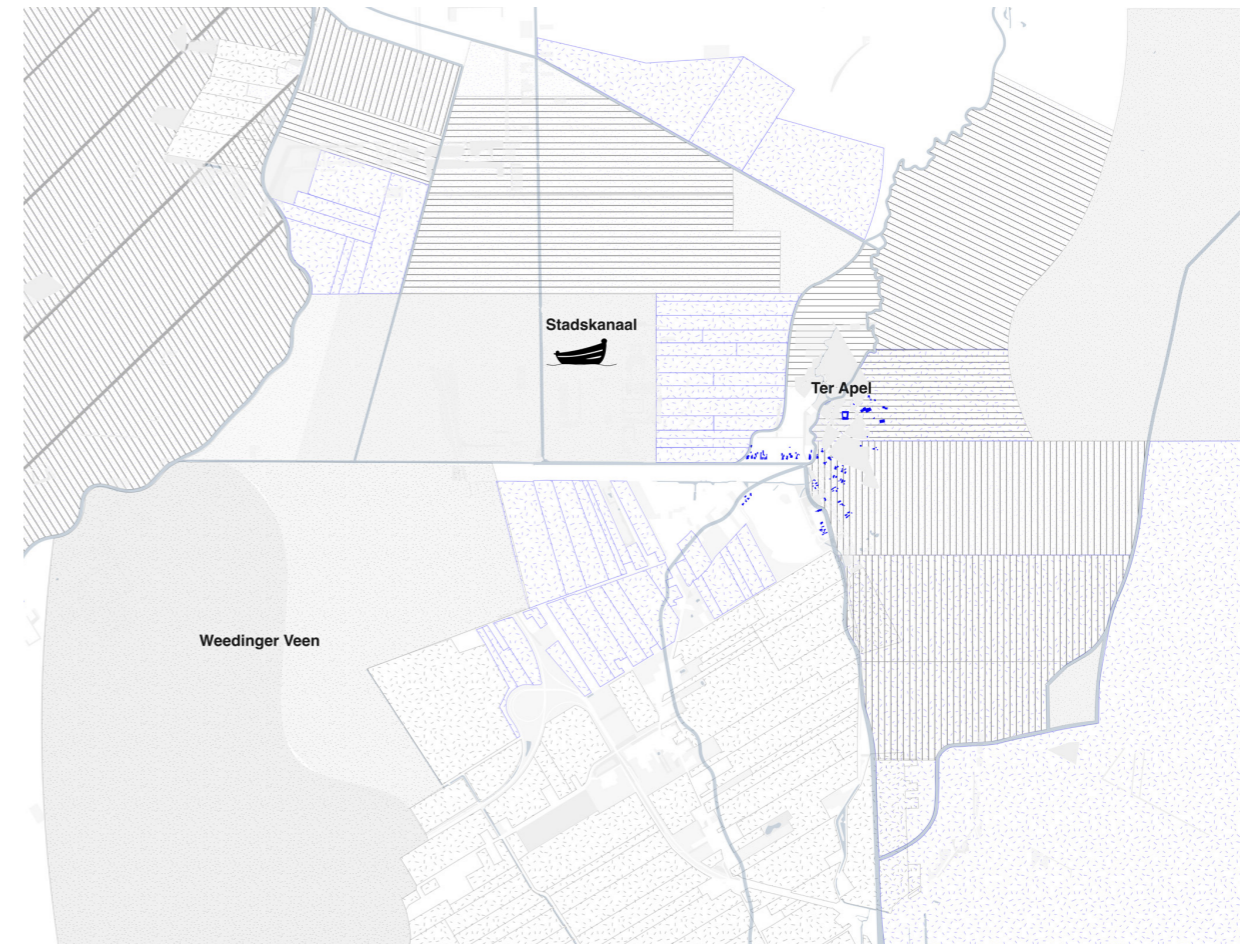


1850

Beginning of Peatland Development

By 1850, the landscape around Ter Apel was beginning to change. Large parts of the peatland were divided into straight plots for early farming. The first drainage canals and the Stadskanaal appeared, making the area more accessible, while the village remained small and surrounded by open fields.

Topotijdreis: 200 jaar topografische kaarten. (1850)). Topotijdreis. Retrieved December 6, 2025, from <https://www.topotijdreis.nl/>

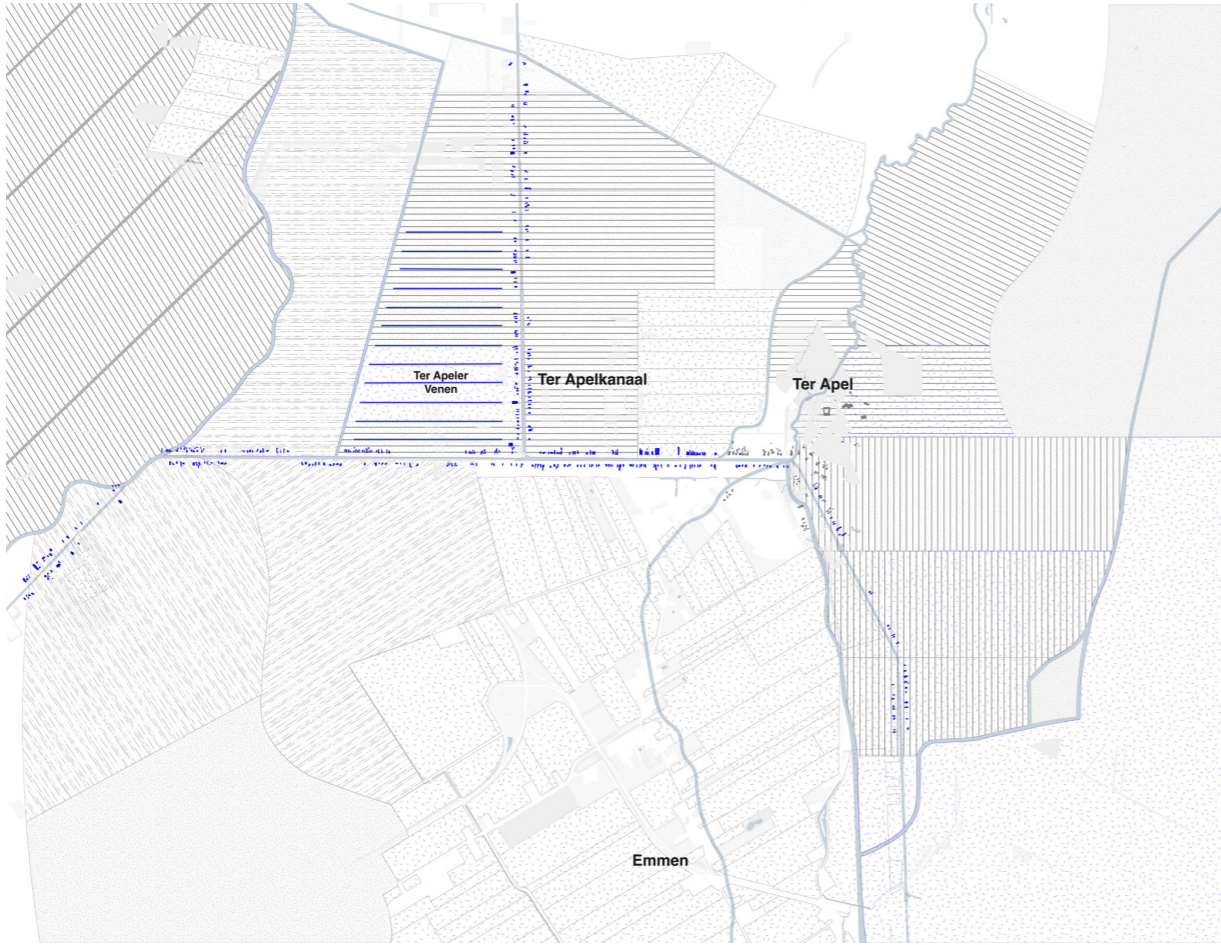


Past-Present-Future

1905 (Landscape) Peatland Transition and Canal Settlement

In 1905, the Ter Apeler Venen were partly developed but still not fully horizontal or evenly defined. Peat extraction created long, narrow parcels and many canals. More houses appeared along the Ter Apel Kanaal, shaping a clear linear village, while farmland slowly expanded around the settlement.

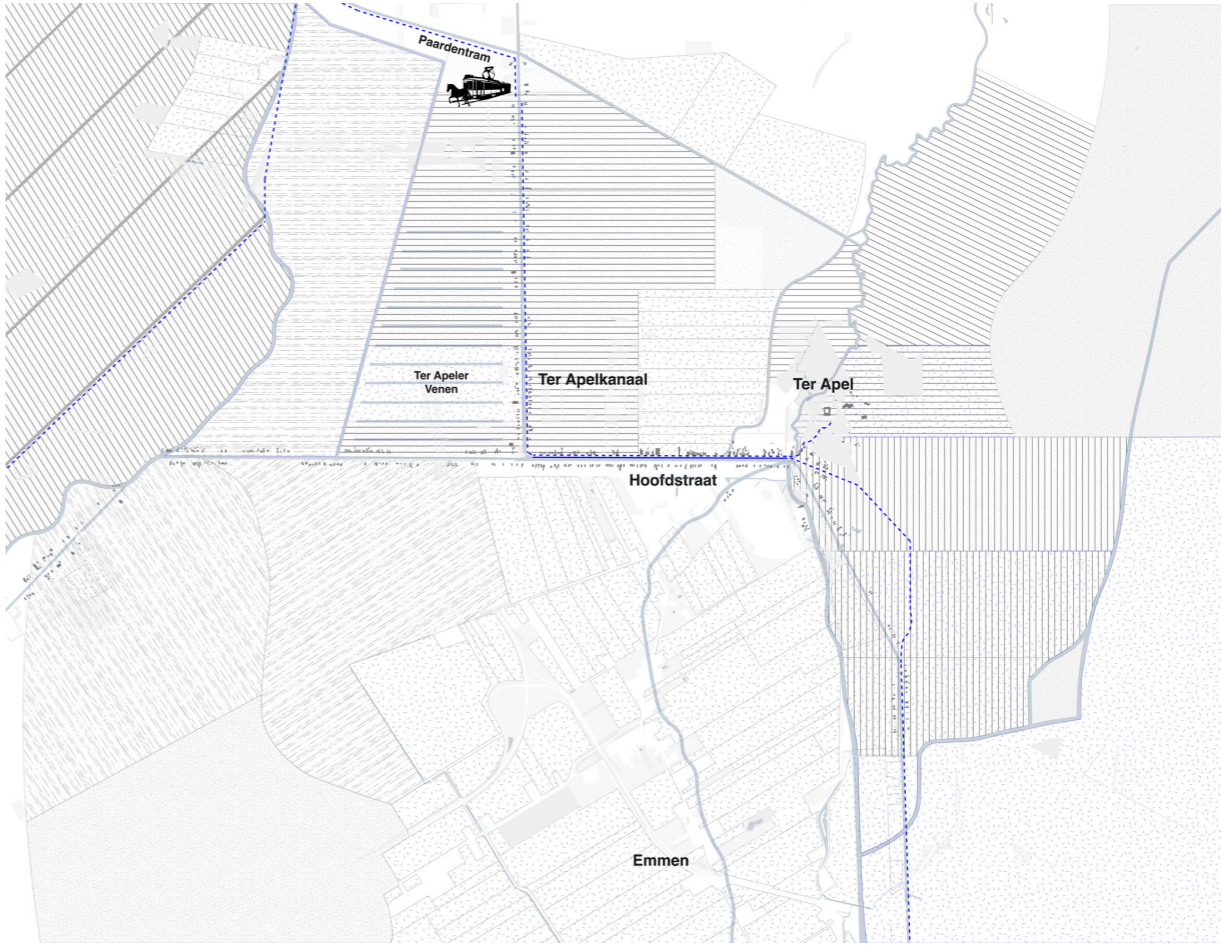
Topotijdreis: 200 jaar topografische kaarten (1905). Topotijdreis. Retrieved December 6, 2025, from https://www.topotijdreis.nl/



1905 (Infrastructure) Horse Tram Connectivity

In 1905, Ter Apel's infrastructure was shaped mainly by its canals and the developing tram system. The horse tram of the Eerste Groninger Tramway-Maatschappij provided an important connection between rural settlements, making the region more accessible while other forms of transport remained limited.

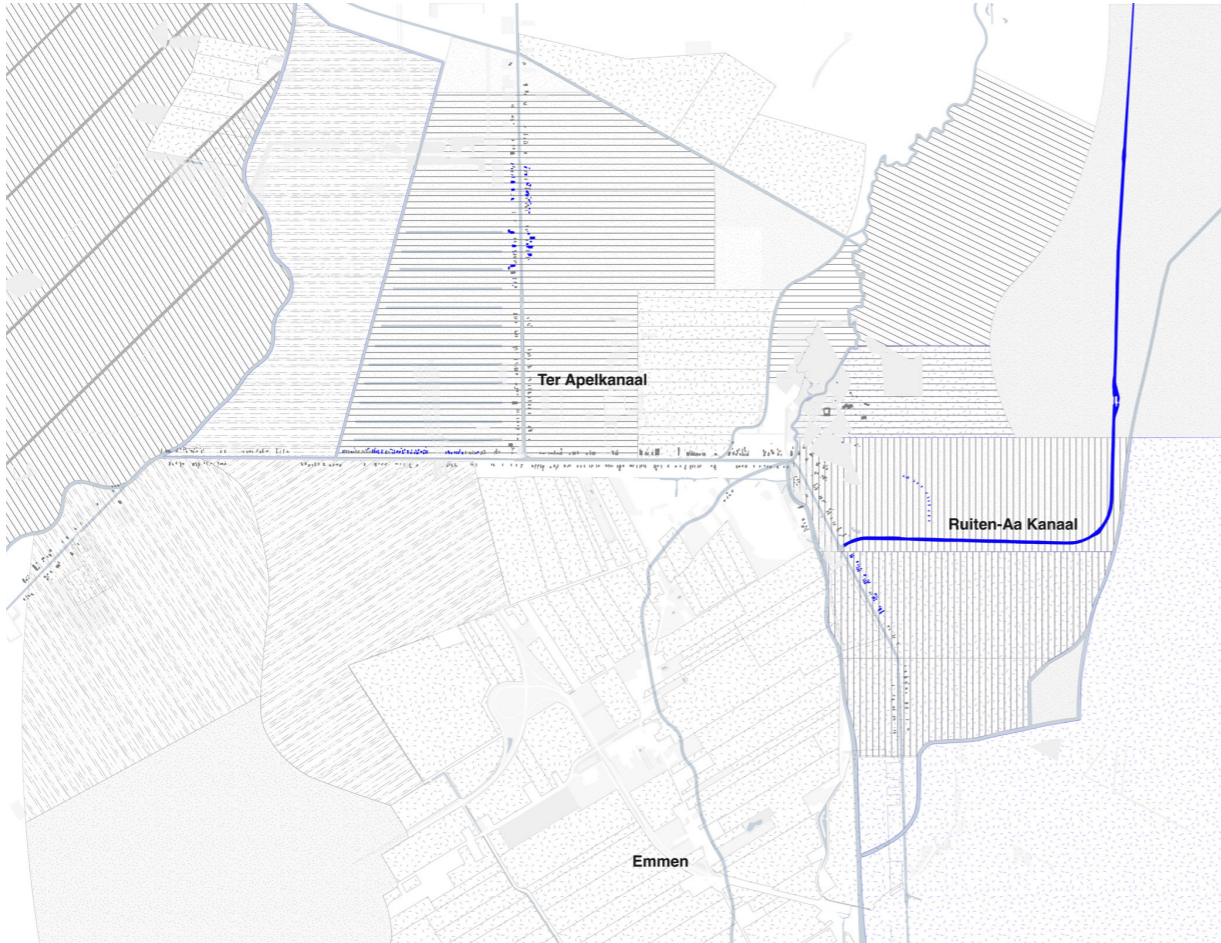
Paardentrams in Nederland. (n.d.). Retrieved December 6, 2025, from https://www.kusee.nl/paardentram/11-gr-egtm.php Topotijdreis: 200 jaar topografische kaarten (1905). Topotijdreis. Retrieved December 6, 2025, from https://www.topotijdreis.nl/



● 1950 (Landscape)
A Managed Farmland Landscape

By 1950, the landscape around Ter Apel was fully transformed by peat reclamation. Block-shaped fields replaced earlier peat patterns, while the Ruiten-Aa Kanaal structured the area with straight water lines. New forests and farmland surrounded the village, marking a clear shift to a managed, agricultural landscape.

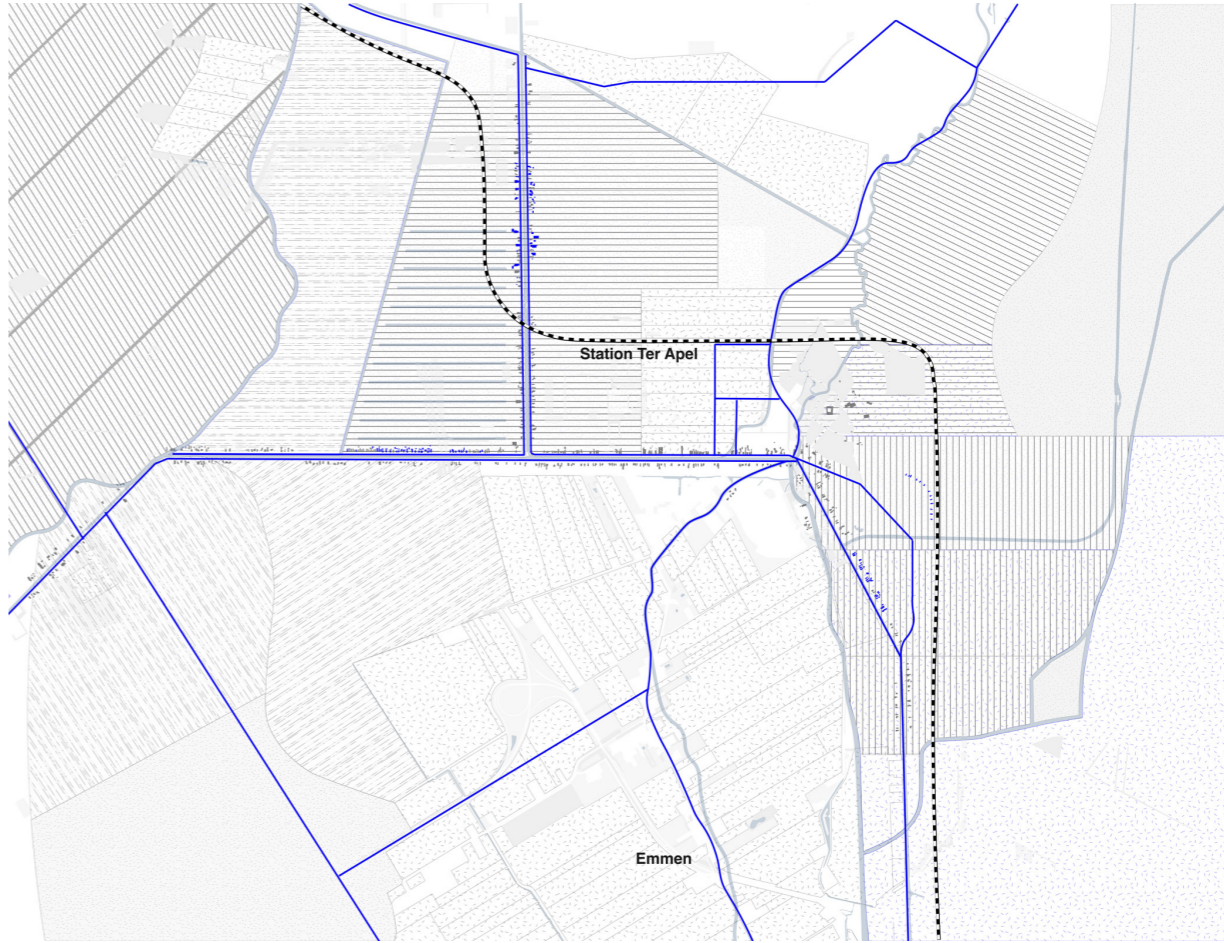
Topotijdreis: 200 jaar topografische kaarten. (1950). Topotijdreis. Retrieved December 8, 2025, from <https://www.topotijdreis.nl/>



● 1950 (Infrastructure)
Roads and Rail Shape the Village

In 1950, roads and the railway became the main ways to travel in and out of Ter Apel. The new Station Ter Apel improved access to other towns, while paved roads replaced most canal-based transport. Together, they connected the village more strongly to the region.

Topotijdreis: 200 jaar topografische kaarten. (1950). Topotijdreis. Retrieved December 8, 2025, from <https://www.topotijdreis.nl/>



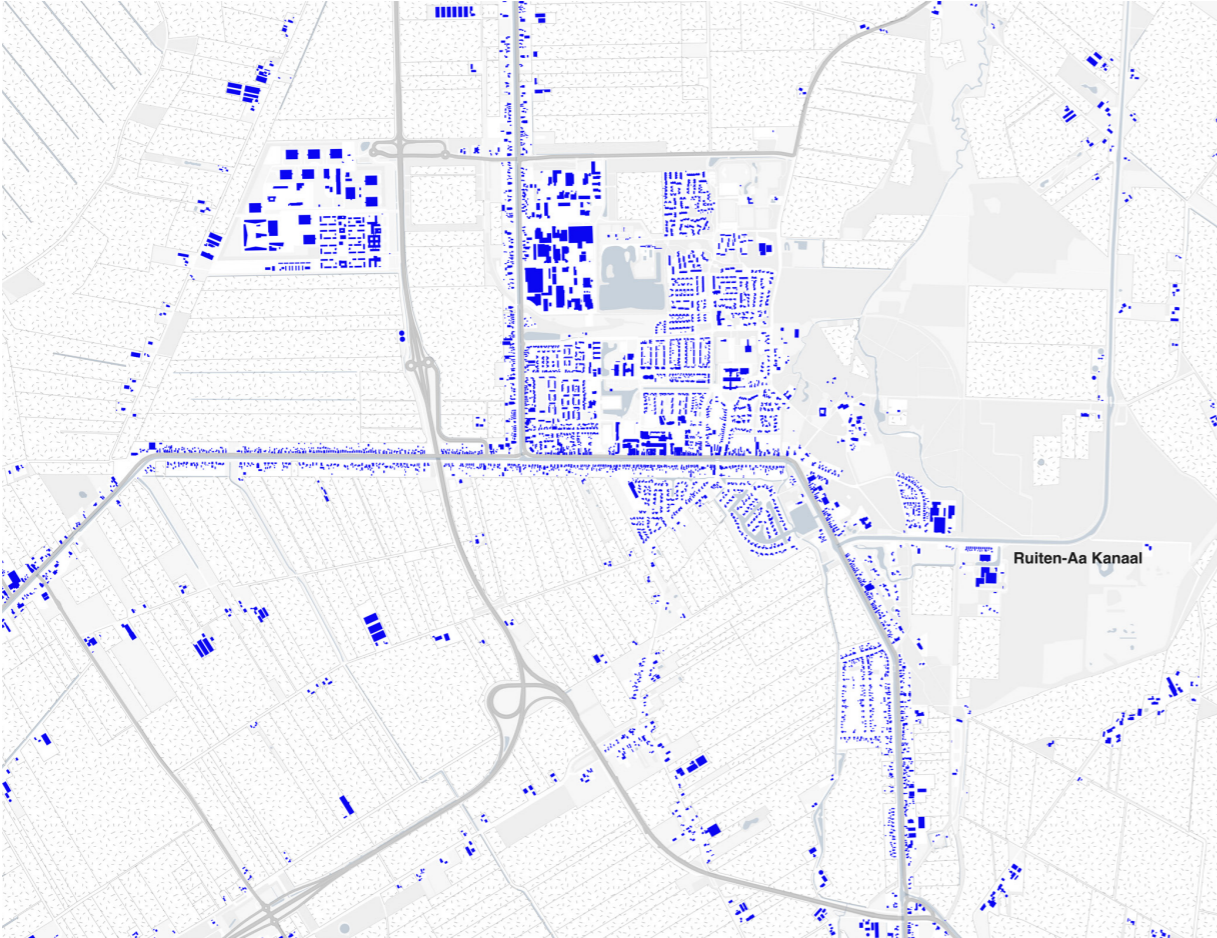
Past-Present-Future

2025 - current situation (Landscape)

A Developed and Structured Landscape

In 2025, Ter Apel has a fully developed landscape with stable farmland, planned forests, and new urban growth. The AZC site has become a major element in the area, adding large buildings and paved areas. The surrounding fields and forests remain, giving the village a mix of rural and built spaces.

Ter apel. (n.d.). OpenStreetMap. Retrieved December 9, 2025, from https://www.openstreetmap.org/

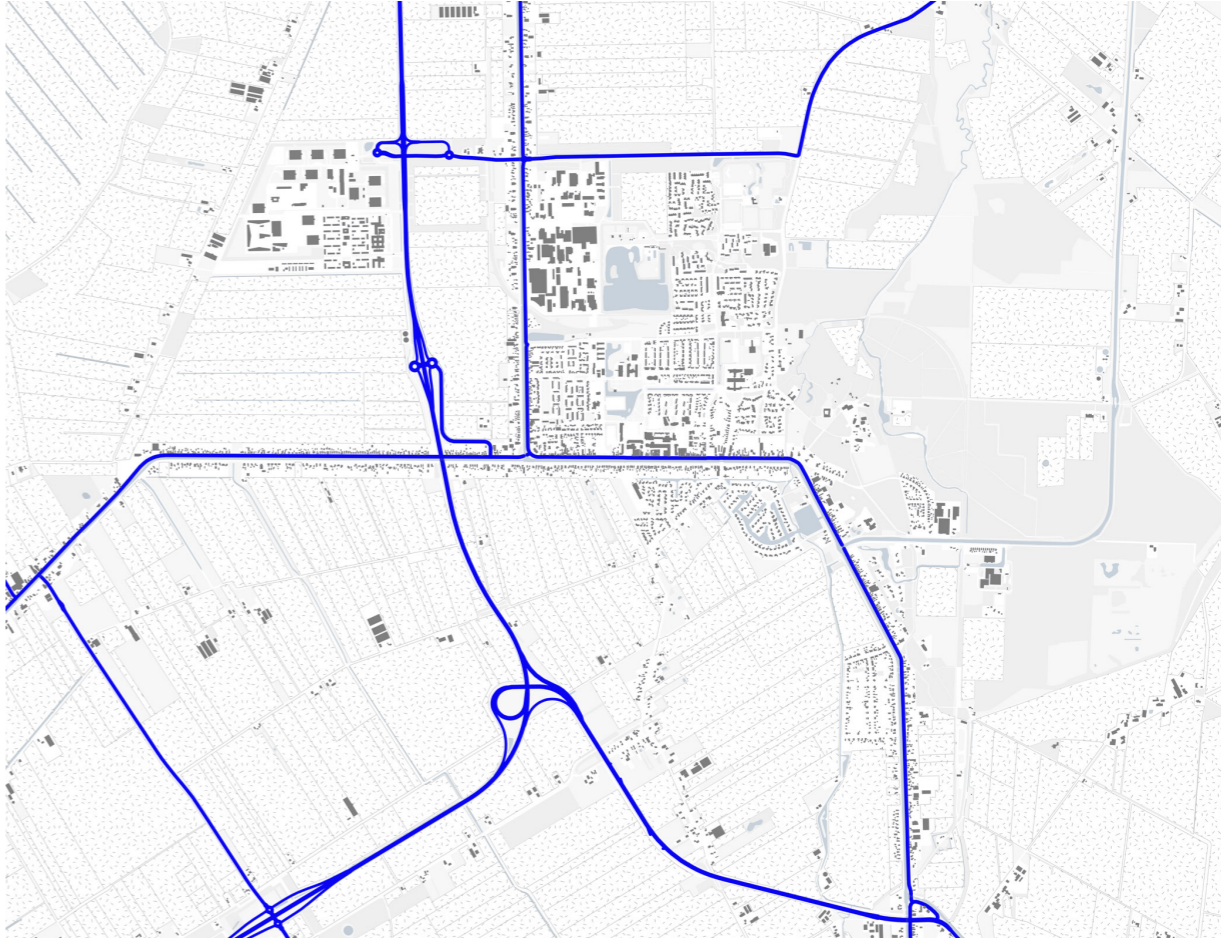


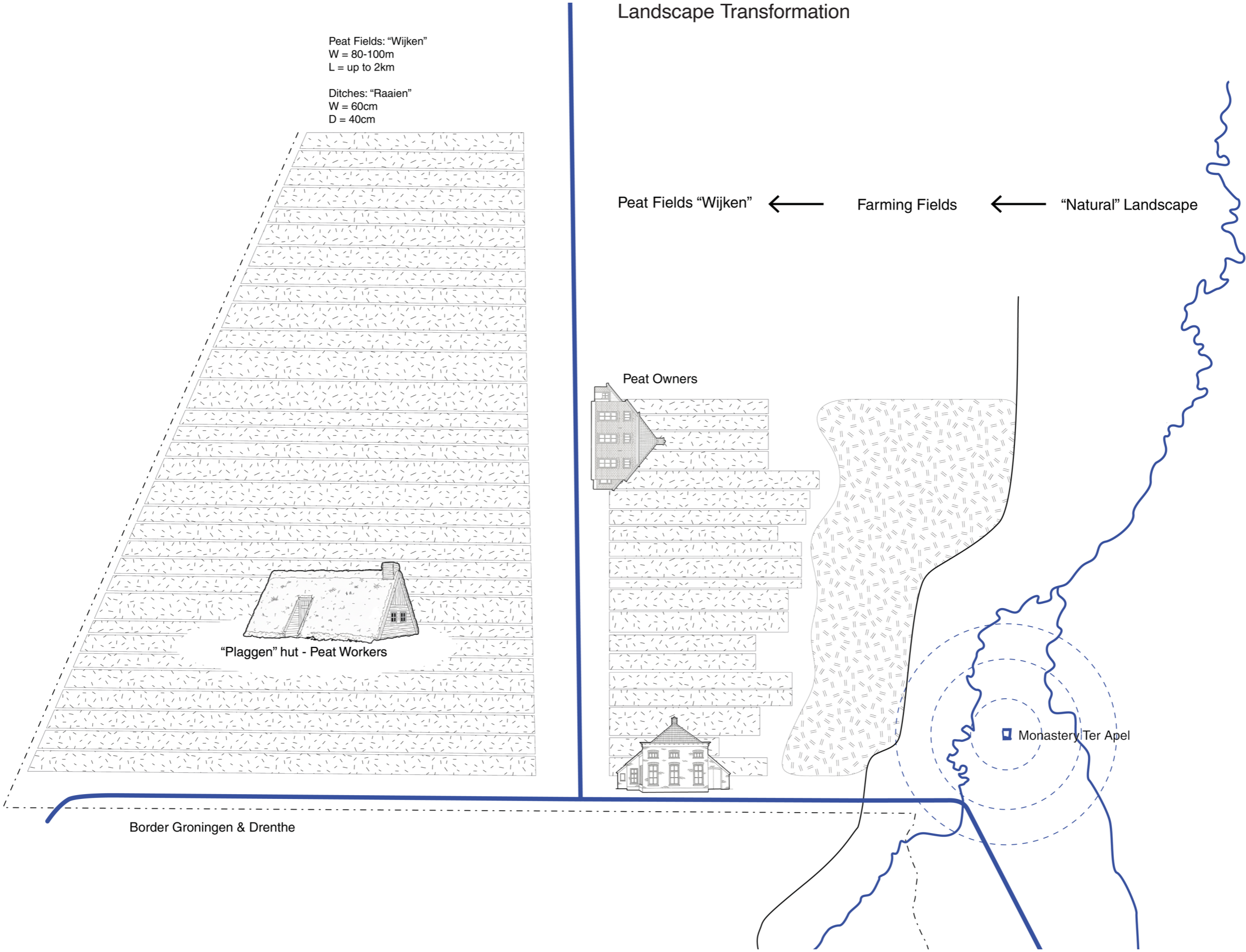
2025 - current situation (Infrastructure)

Modern Roads and Public Transport

In 2025, Ter Apel is connected through a network of modern roads, roundabouts and bus routes. The main roads support regional traffic, while bus services link the village with Emmen and Groningen. Canals now play a minor role, as road-based mobility has become the dominant form of transport.

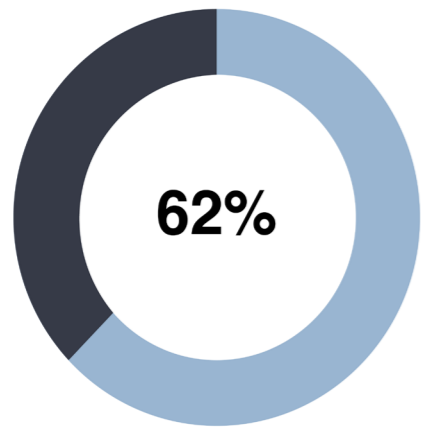
Ter apel. (n.d.). OpenStreetMap. Retrieved December 9, 2025, from https://www.openstreetmap.org/





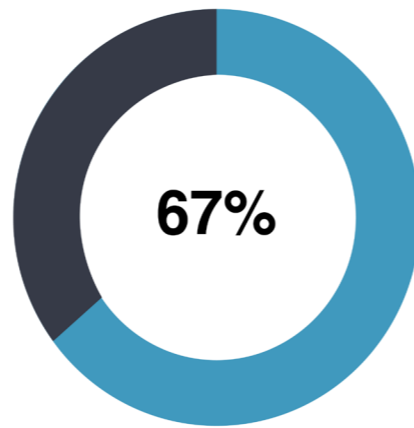
Ter Apel Labour participation rate (2023)

Employed population: 1.660



Groningen Labour participation rate (2023)

Employed population: 65.795



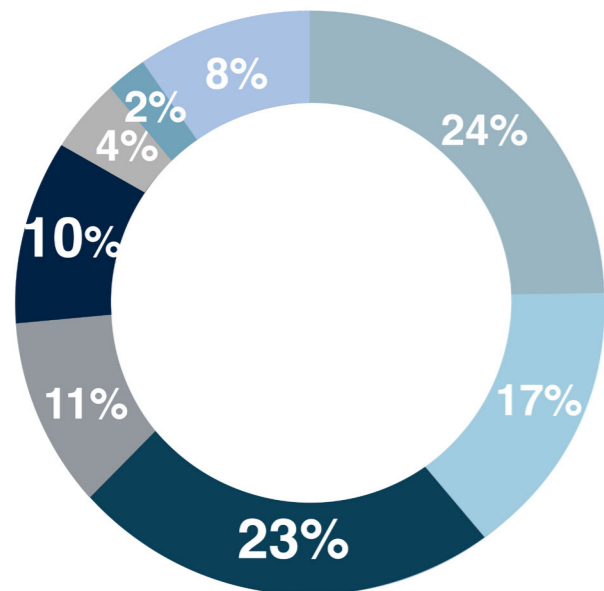
Ter Apel and Groningen share the same economic sectors, but differ significantly in scale.

In Ter Apel, a relatively large share of the population is economically active, while the number of businesses and jobs remains limited, resulting in an economy that is primarily organised at the regional level. Tourism cannot function as an independent economic sector here, but can strengthen existing services as a small-scale, landscape-embedded activity.

Inkomen & Bedrijven. (2025a, December 4). AlleCijfers.nl. <https://allecijfers.nl/provincie/groningen/>
Inkomen & Bedrijven. (2025b, December 4). AlleCijfers.nl. <https://allecijfers.nl/ buurt/ter-apel-westerwolde/>

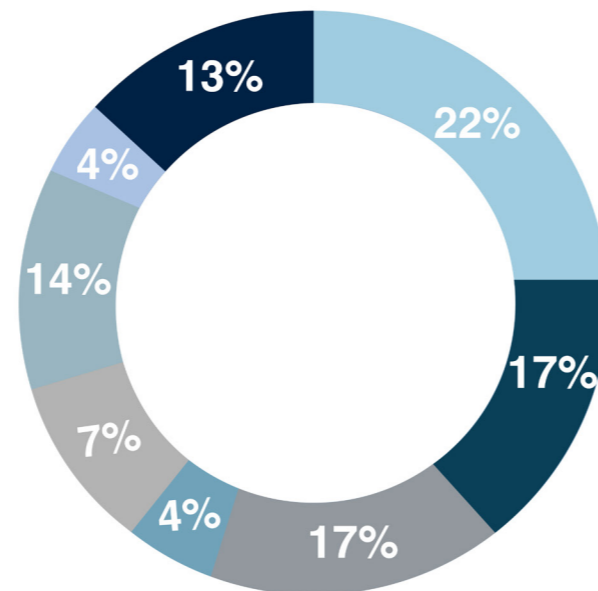
Economic Structure Ter Apel (2024)

Total businesses: 455



Economic Structure Groningen (2024)

Total businesses: 69.435

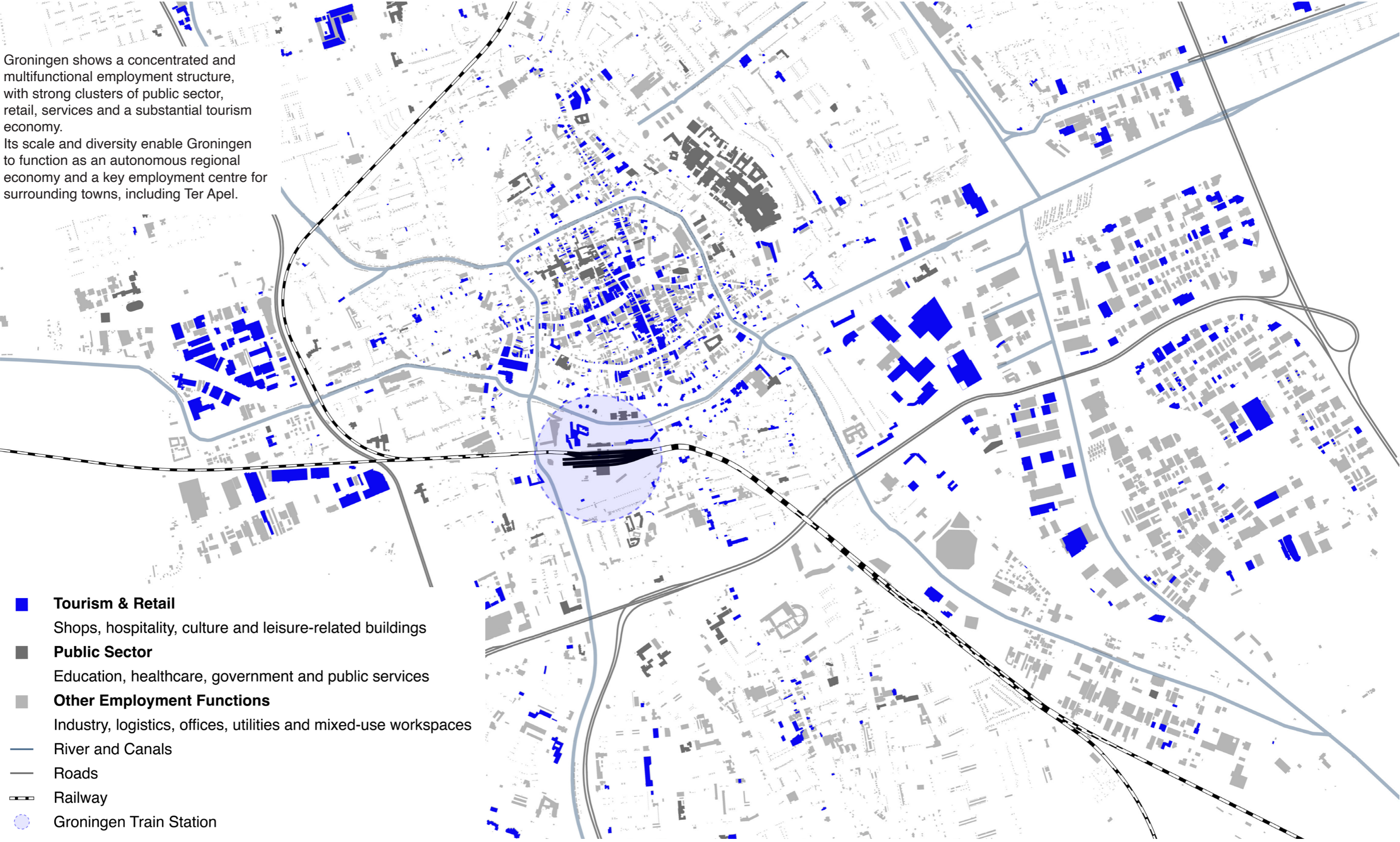


- Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries
- Industry & Energy
- Trade & Hospitality (tourism-related)
- Transport, Information & Communication
- Financial Services & Real Estate
- Business Services
- Government, Education & Health
- Culture, Recreation & Other Services (tourism-related)

Past-Present-Future

Groningen Employment Map

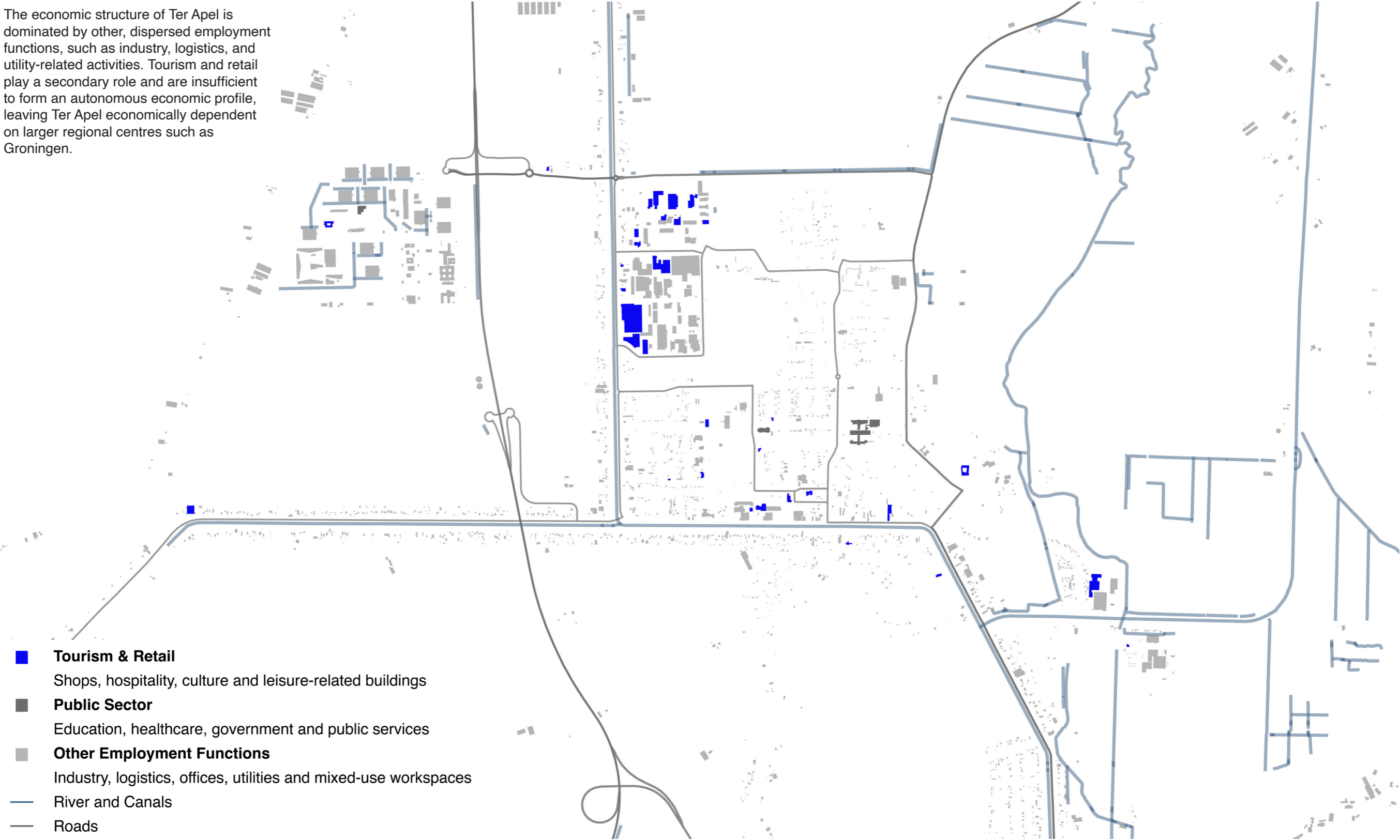
Groningen shows a concentrated and multifunctional employment structure, with strong clusters of public sector, retail, services and a substantial tourism economy. Its scale and diversity enable Groningen to function as an autonomous regional economy and a key employment centre for surrounding towns, including Ter Apel.



Past-Present-Future

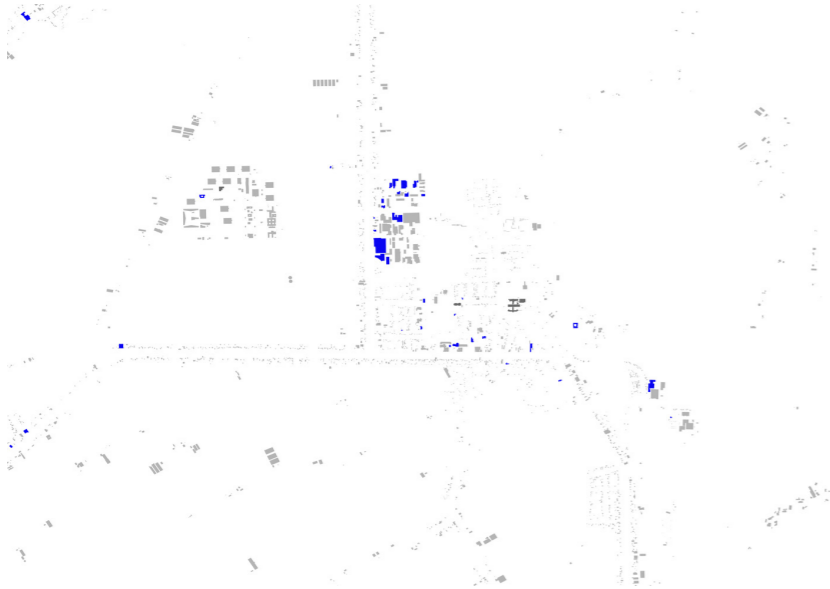
Ter Apel Employment Map

The economic structure of Ter Apel is dominated by other, dispersed employment functions, such as industry, logistics, and utility-related activities. Tourism and retail play a secondary role and are insufficient to form an autonomous economic profile, leaving Ter Apel economically dependent on larger regional centres such as Groningen.



Conclusion Economy

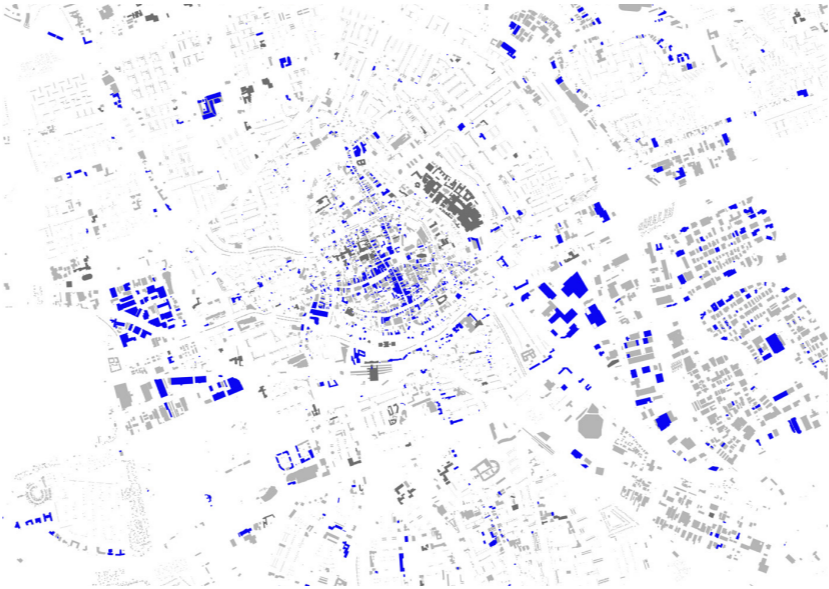
Ter Apel



1. Dispersed

The economic structure of Ter Apel is dominated by dispersed and small-scale employment functions, mainly industry, logistics and utilitarian services. Tourism and retail are present but remain secondary and fragmented, lacking the scale to form a strong employment cluster. In Ter Apel, employment is spread out in small, separate locations.

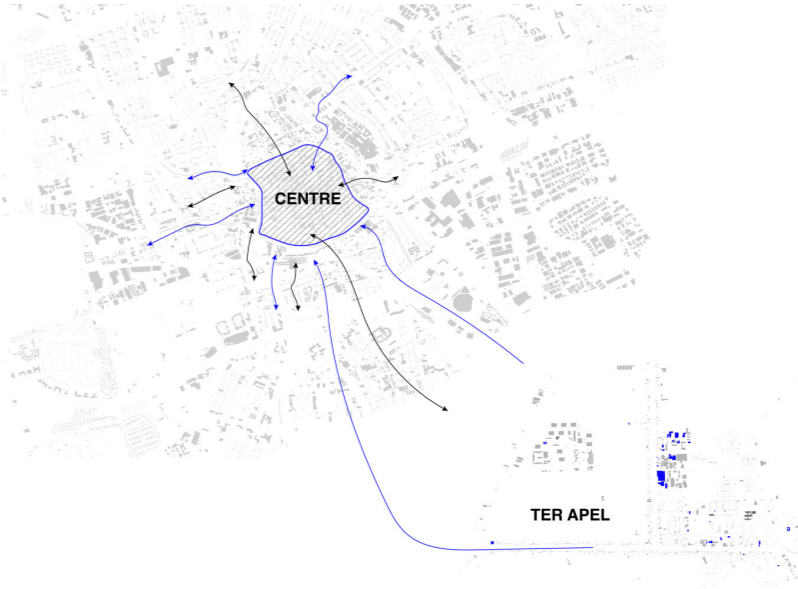
Groningen



2. Concentrated

Groningen shows a concentrated and diversified employment structure, supported by urban scale, infrastructure and regional accessibility, with substantial public sector, business services and tourism employment. In Groningen, employment is concentrated in a core with larger clusters.

Regional Centre

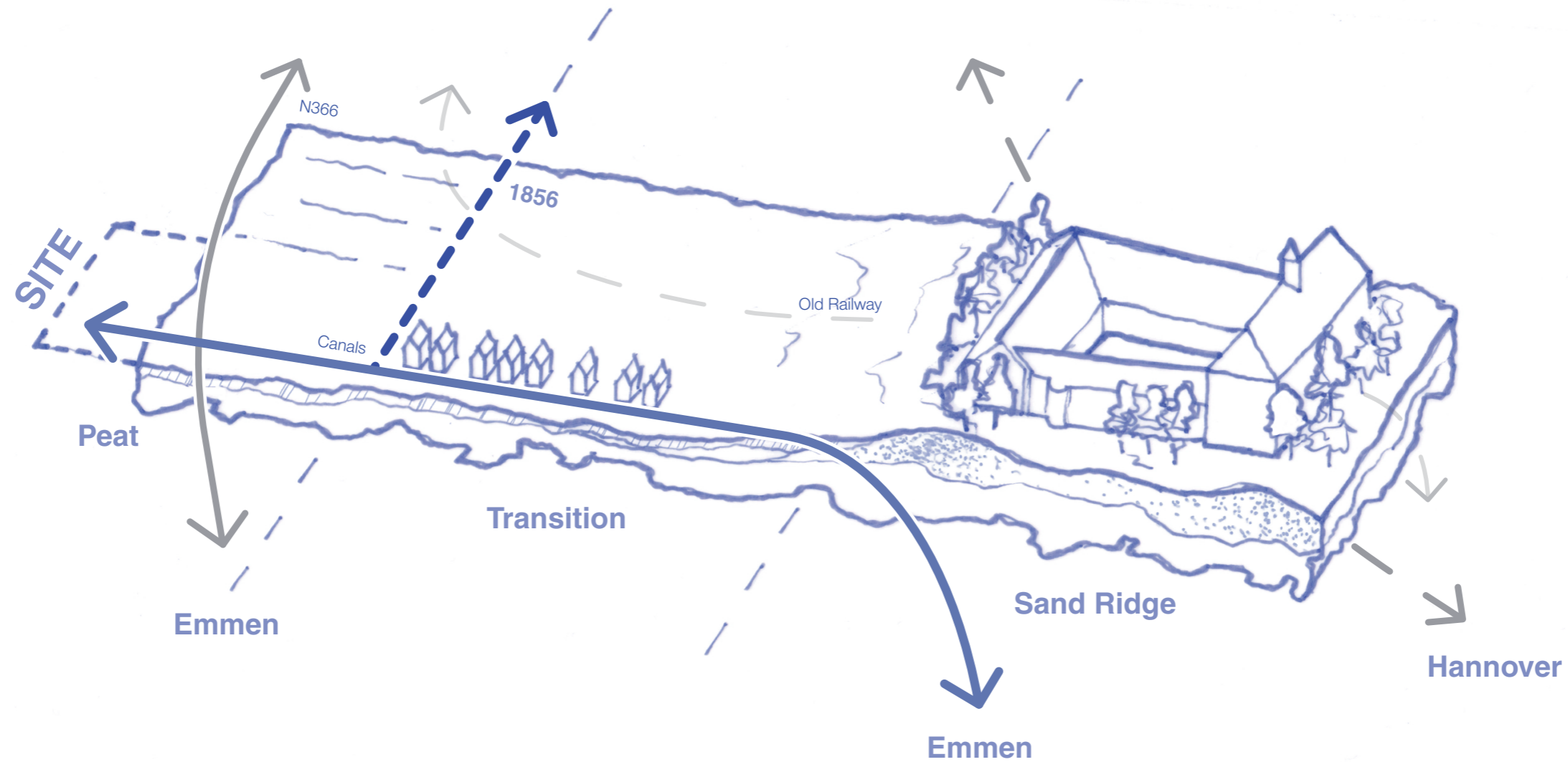


3. Regional Position and Dependency

This diagram illustrates the economic relationship between Ter Apel and Groningen. Groningen acts as the regional center, concentrating jobs, services, and infrastructure. Ter Apel relies on Groningen for employment, services, and economic opportunities. Rather than developing its own economic core, Ter Apel is structurally connected to and dependent on the regional center. This shows that Ter Apel operates within a dependent regional system rather than as an independent economic hub.

Groningen

Connectivity as a Measure
 for Ter Apel's Prosperity



“All roads lead to Groningen”

Ter Apel has always been isolated, mostly due to its landscape: a sand ridge situated within the largest peat bog in the world.

Only after it received its canals, especially the Ter Apelkanaal in 1856, it became somewhat prosperous.

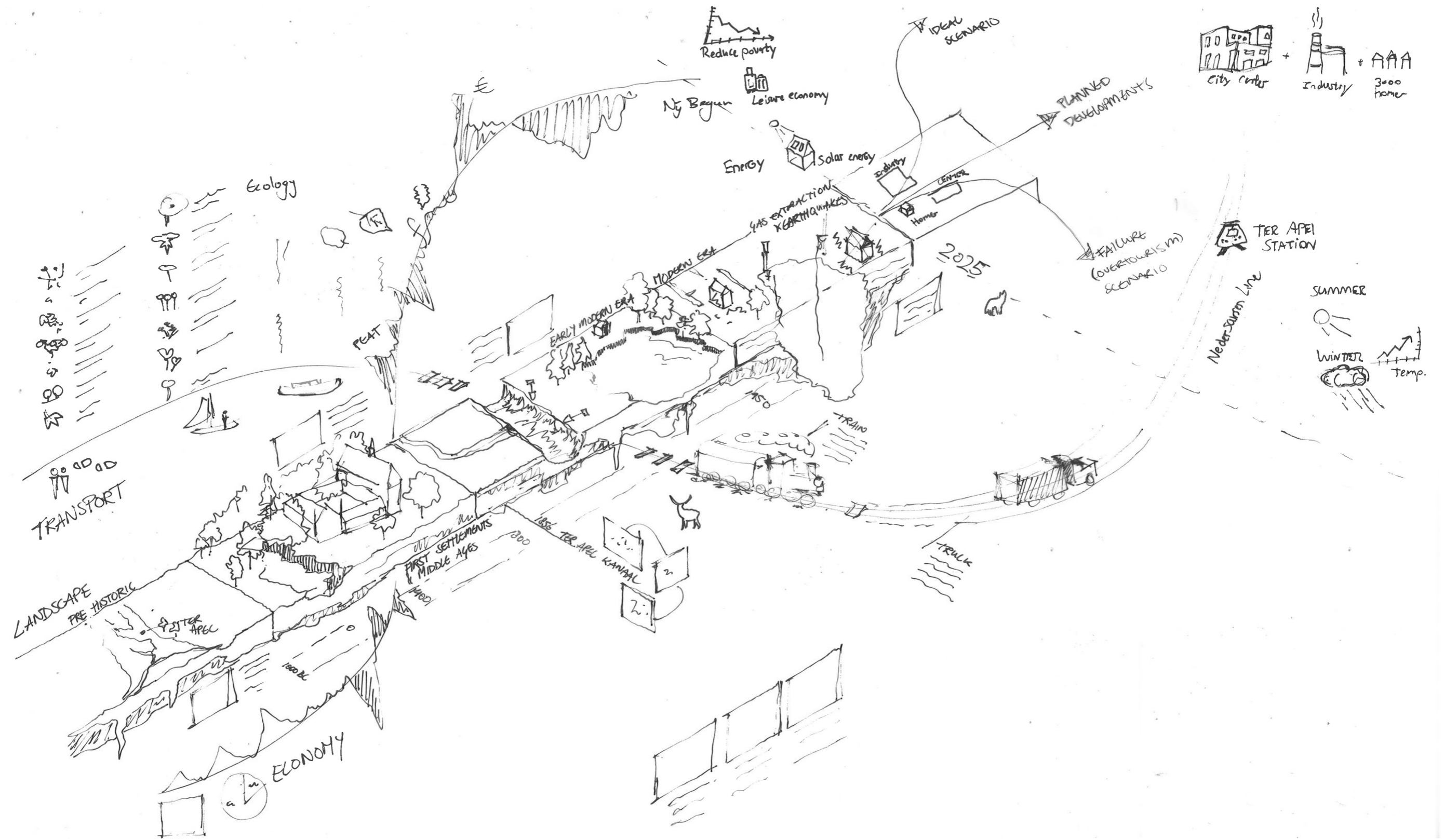
Because of its isolation, it has always ‘lagged’ behind the rest of the province. It only started extracting peat over 100 years after towns like Veendam and the Pekela’s, while the ‘industrial’ period also started later with the last potato-starch company being built in Ter Apel in 1917.

The connection to Groningen, and in some effect Drenthe and Germany, has been an indicator for success. This success has never lasted though, since this connectivity always came relatively late due to Ter Apel’s isolation from the rest of the province.

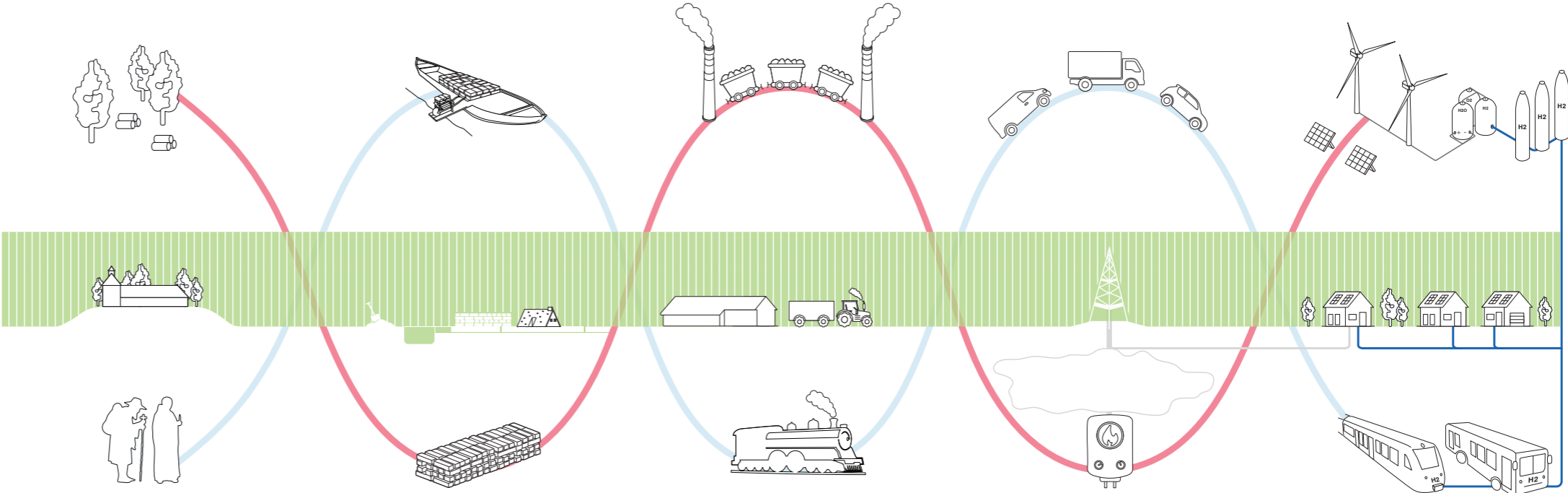
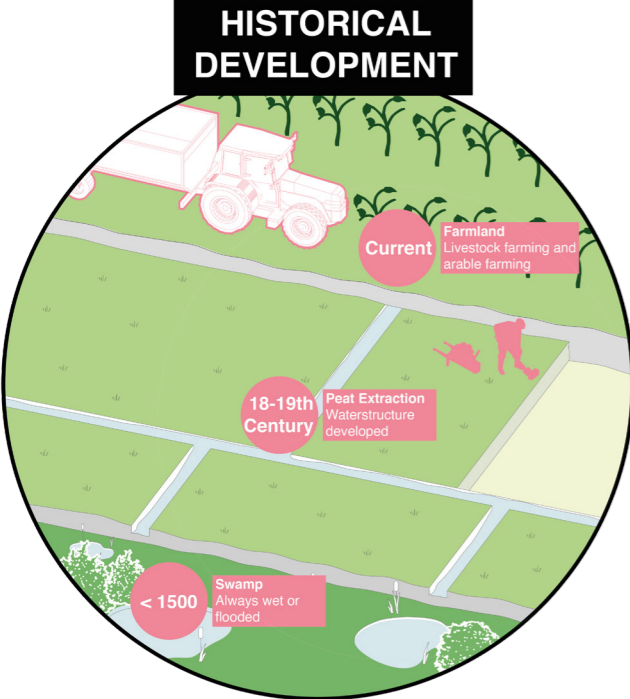
In the future, with the new Nedersaksen line and the new Tourism Hub, it is of the essence that this connectivity pioneers a new form of industry or economic activity. Something that lasts and connects and shows Ter Apel isn’t lagging behind anymore, but has also become a pioneer.

Group Research

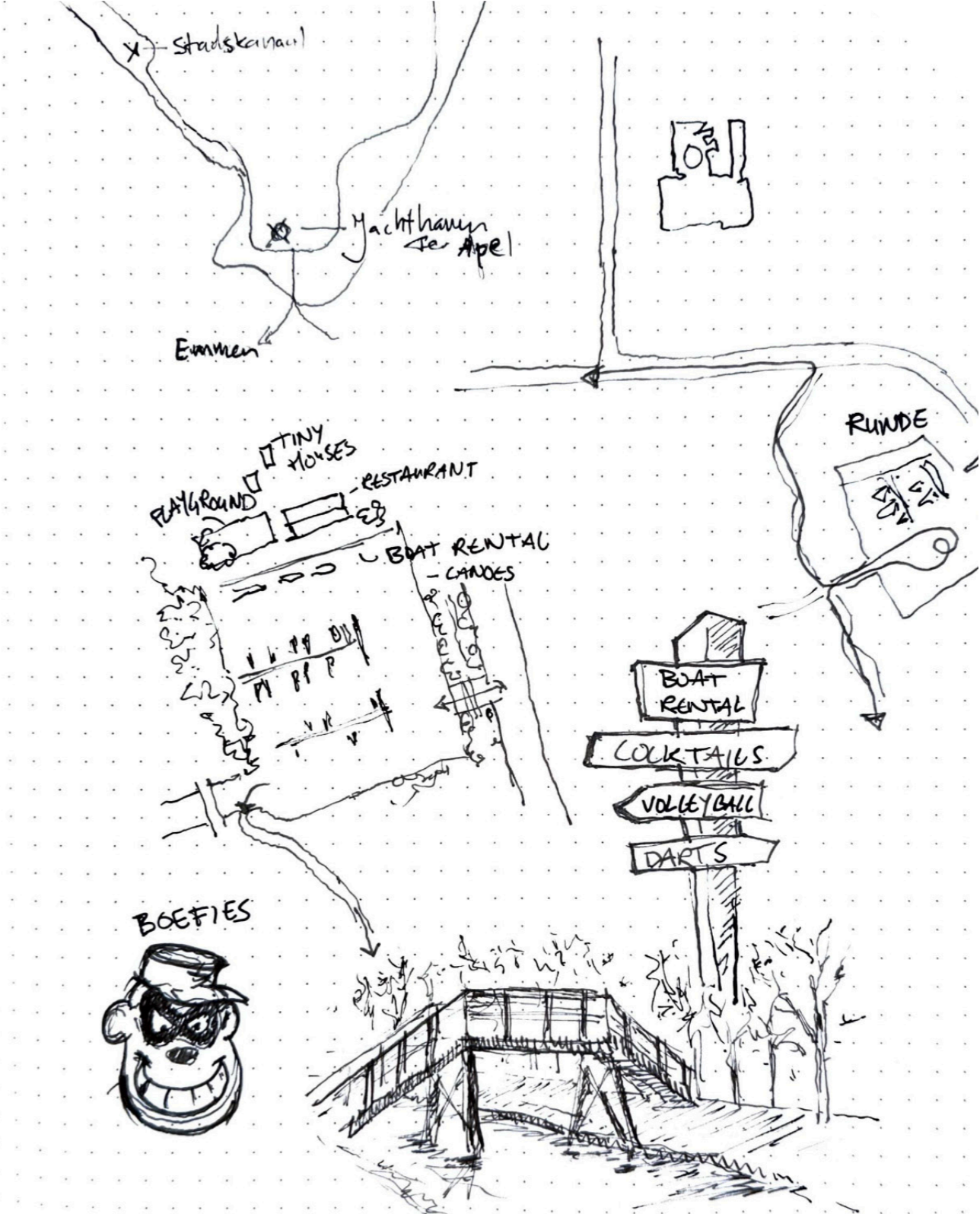
Touristic Map Sketch



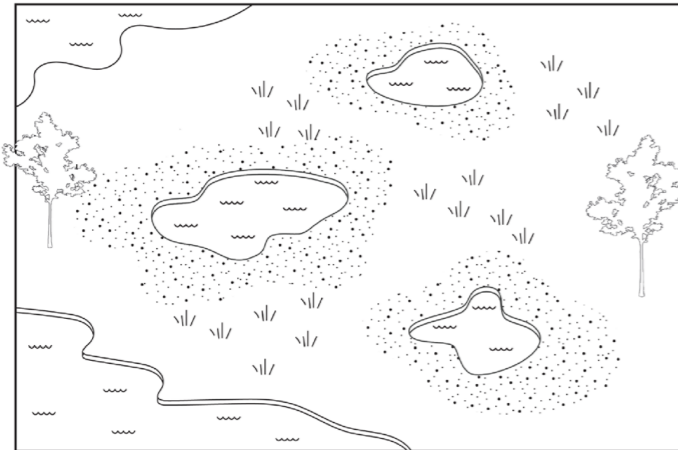
Touristic Map 'Bubble' & Timeline



Group Research
Fieldtrip



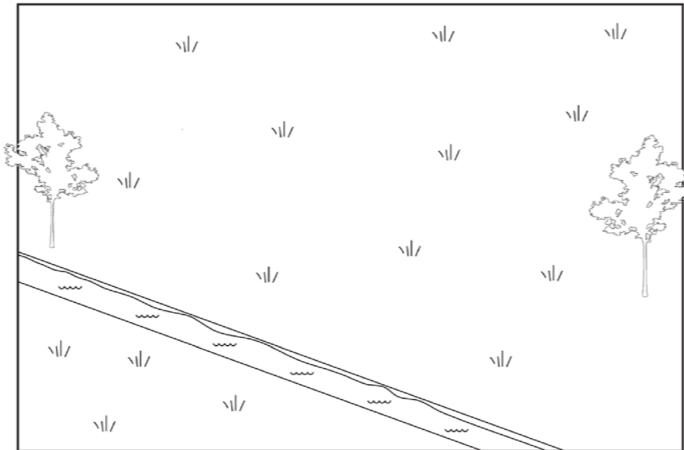
Peat Extraction Process



“Natural” Landscape

Buck Wheat

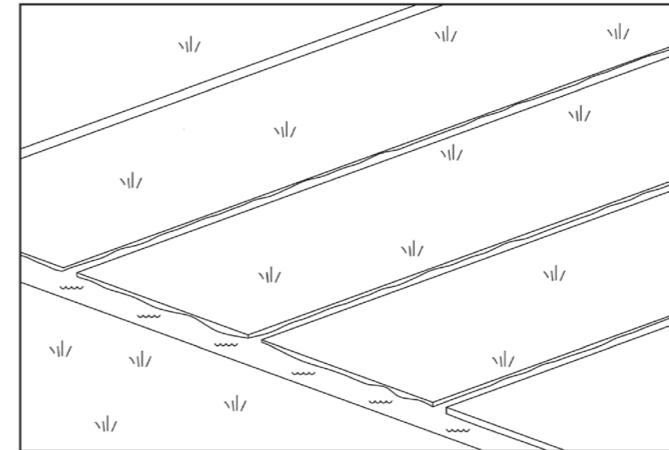
The landscape before the peat extraction period began largely consisted of acres where Buck-Wheat was being grown. Hidden below this sat the ‘rauwwveen’ (raw peat).



Preparing the Landscape

Drainage, “Raaien”

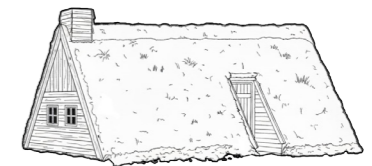
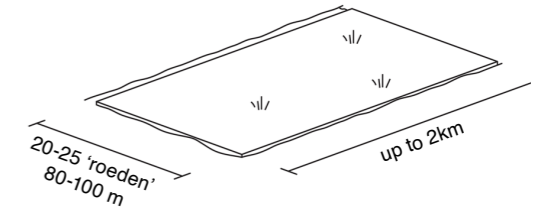
The first step in preparing the landscape for peat extraction was the ‘Raaien’ or ‘Gruppen’. This consisted of digging main water channels and ditches to allow the land to drain.



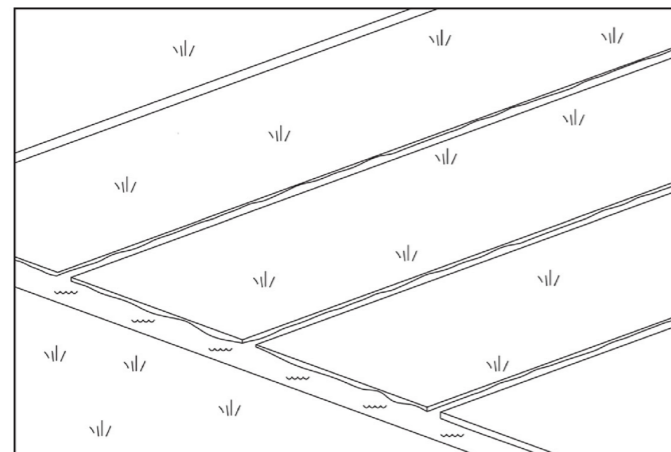
Dividing Plots

Dividing into “Plaatsen”, “Opsplitting”

The next step consisted of digging smaller ditches of around 3 ‘veenvoeten’ (peat feet) wide; 60cm. These ditches divided the landscape into ‘plaatsen’ (plots) of 20-25 ‘roeden’ wide; 80-100m.



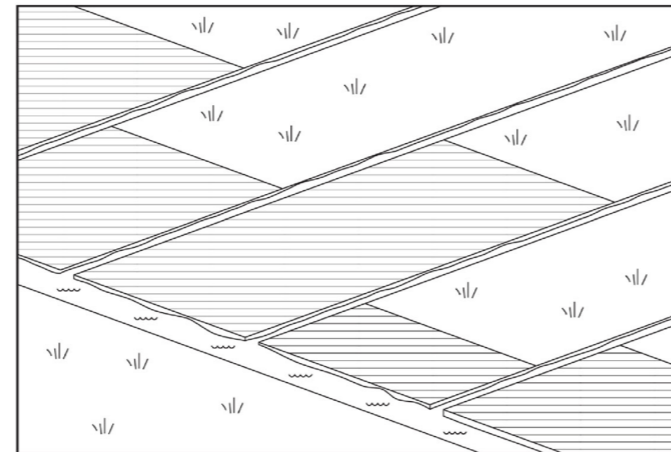
“Plaggenhut”
Small house constructed of wood and grass patches. Residence of peat workers



Drying Phase

2 - 10 years

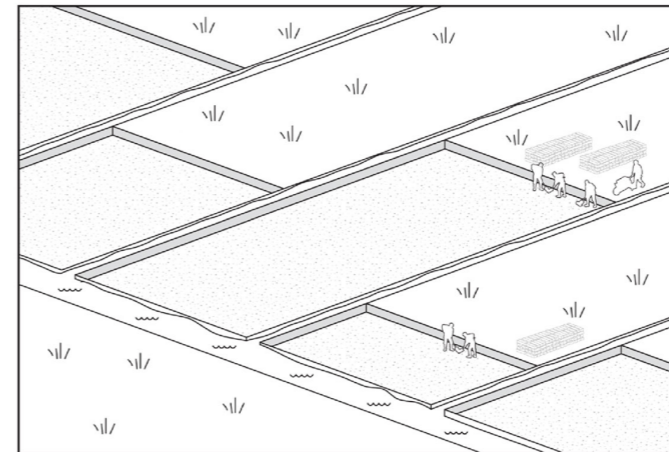
Depending on the water levels, the peat ‘plaatsen’ had to fully drain and dry up. During this process, others fields were prepared and peat was extracted.



Taking off Top Layer

“Bonkaarde”

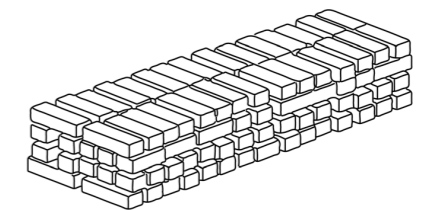
The first 50cm of ‘bonkaarde’ (unusable soil), was removed and spread on top of the yet to be extracted fields. This served as a good base for the extracted peat to dry on.



Extracting Peat

“Turfgraven”

The final phase consisted of actually extracting the peat. This was often done in teams of 6 (max 9). With a special device the peat was extracted into the rectangular shape. It was then stored on the nearby field and left to dry.



Stacking of the extracted peat. This was done in low, rectangular streaks. The peat was stacked loosely to allow air to pass through and dry them quicker.

Source: Gerding, M.A.W., (1995). *Vier eeuwen turfwinning: de verveningen in Groningen, Friesland, Drenthe en Overijssel tussen 1550 en 1950.*



Clergy & Pilgrims
1465 - 1594

The first real residents of Ter Apel were clergy working in the monastery. Due to the reformation and political changes the monastery was closed in 1594. The monastery served as a refuge and stop for travelling pilgrims. When the monastery closed, pilgrims also decreased in number.



Farmers
1000 - Now

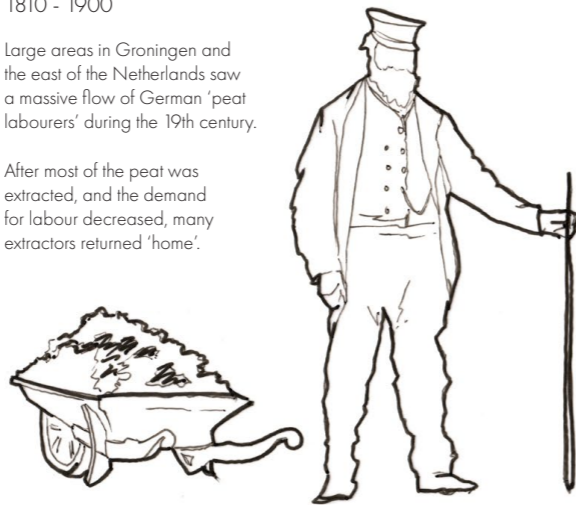
Small-scale farming started on the higher, sandy areas in Groningen. They grew crops.

During peat extraction in the 19th century, many farms were either transformed into 'peat-farms' or expanded into other areas.

Peat Extractors 1810 - 1900

Large areas in Groningen and the east of the Netherlands saw a massive flow of German 'peat labourers' during the 19th century.

After most of the peat was extracted, and the demand for labour decreased, many extractors returned 'home'.



Military
1940 - 1945

During the Second World War, Germans were stationed and positioned in Ter Apel.

Polish troops liberated Ter Apel and were invited back several times in remembrance.



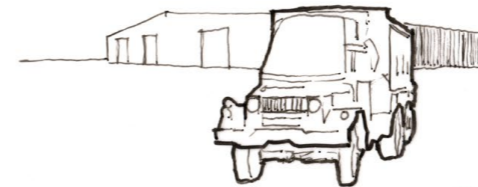
Businessmen
1900 - 1930...

Due to peat extraction, general economic growth, and the arrival of a brand new train station in 1924, several businessmen were able to own successful businesses. These ranged from shipping and transport, material industry, to crop processing factories.

These businesses sometimes still remain, yet Ter Apel has not seen so much economic growth since then.

Nato Storage Depot 1984 - 1994

Several towns in the east of the Netherlands stored military weaponry and other items during the Cold War. After the collapse of the USSR most of these depots were phased out. This meant the leave of military personnel and the loss of many jobs.



Asylum seeker's centre 1996 - Now

Since 1996 a 'departure centre' is realised for 'procedurally finished' asylum seekers.

In 2001 the function of 'registration centre' is added onto this.

In 2002 the COA is opened and the centre expands to a 'reception location' for over 2000 asylum seekers.

Many of these asylum seekers don't spend more than a couple weeks in the centre, yet they do pass through Ter Apel and come into contact with its inhabitants.



Ter Apelers >2025

The current population of Ter Apel consists of descendants of peat extractors, businessmen, farmers and other sources; a diverse bunch.

They now work local jobs and a significant part of the village works within the centre. (security, government official, service, etc.)

Despite their diverse roots, it's simple to divide the Ter Apeler's in two groups.

Those for the AZC, and those against.



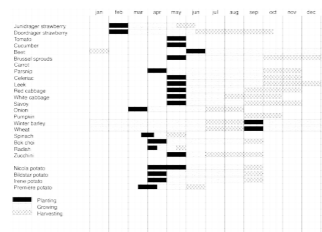
Analysis Conclusions



Group A: Memory & Identity

Need for a collective, public space for activities and events.

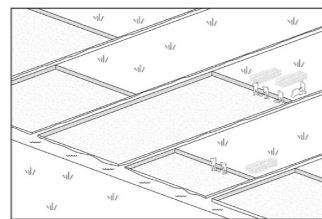
A space that doesn't divide, but unites the different identities.



Group B: Tourism & Ecology

Design for the "Active Peace Seeker". A specific type of tourist.

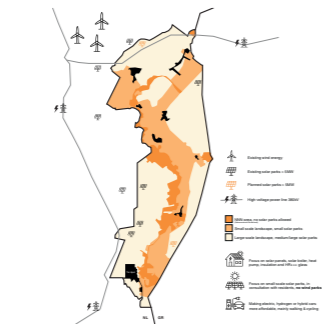
Design in mind of the seasonal changes in the landscape.



Group C: P/P/F & Adaptability

Ter Apel's isolation has kept it lagging behind. Be a pioneer and keep the value local.

Peat Extraction has dictated sizing, scale, etc. Play into that.



Group D: P/P/F & Accessibility

The goal of 100.000 tourists is unachievable with the current accommodations and facilities.

Connect to larger energy and mobility network.

Architectural Consequences

Event Space
Conference Space

Space that inspires peaceful interaction.

A place for retreat, introspection.

Integrated with a farm/crop landscape.

A tourist hub that signifies (local) innovation.

A building that adjusts its size and dimensions to the peat process and history.

Create unique and high quality accommodation.

Connect to Natuurnetwerk Nederland. Invest in local material and energy.

References



Teshima Art Museum - Ryue Nishizawa (2011)

Open space connected with the outside, room for events.



House of Grain - Reiulf Ramstad (2020)

Activity-based-learning



House of Grain - Reiulf Ramstad (2020)

Building concept and shape formed through landscape



Station Driebergen Zeist - ARCADIS (2020)

Station area that feels calm and practical

Individual Research

Infrastructure

Option A

Passage along old railway

- + passes through 'heart' of Ter Apel; opportunity for a more central centre
- + connects to old railway and greenery
- + quicker access to village

- doesn't pass 'historic' village centre
- misses out on boulevard along water channel

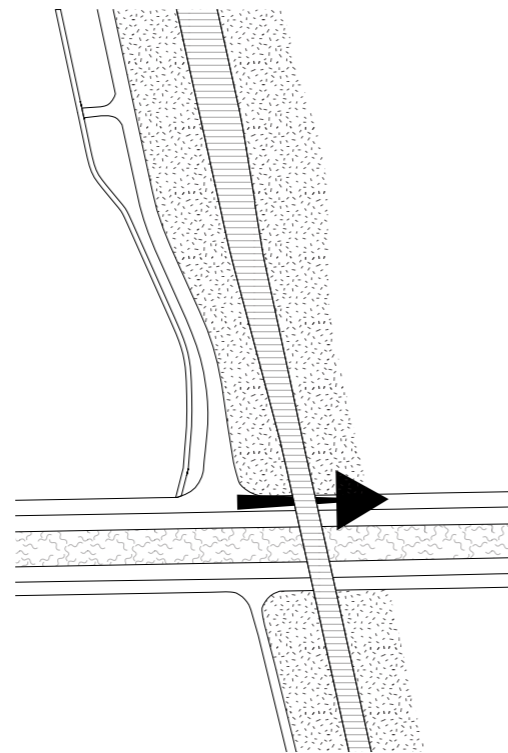
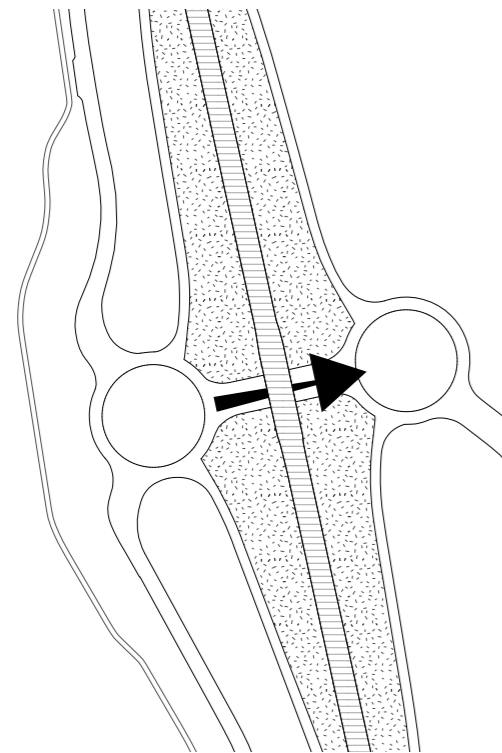


Option B

Passage along traditional route

- + follows historic canals and walkways
- + doesn't require any not-yet-existing infrastructure

- takes more time to village centre
- adds onto 'unbalanced' village 'activity'



City Development Plans

Main Goals

- Revitalising the **Centre**
- Redesign **Greenery**
- Create more space for **Industry**

"Connecting Ter Apel spatially in terms of landscape, ecology, and recreation, but especially in terms of regional economics and social issues."

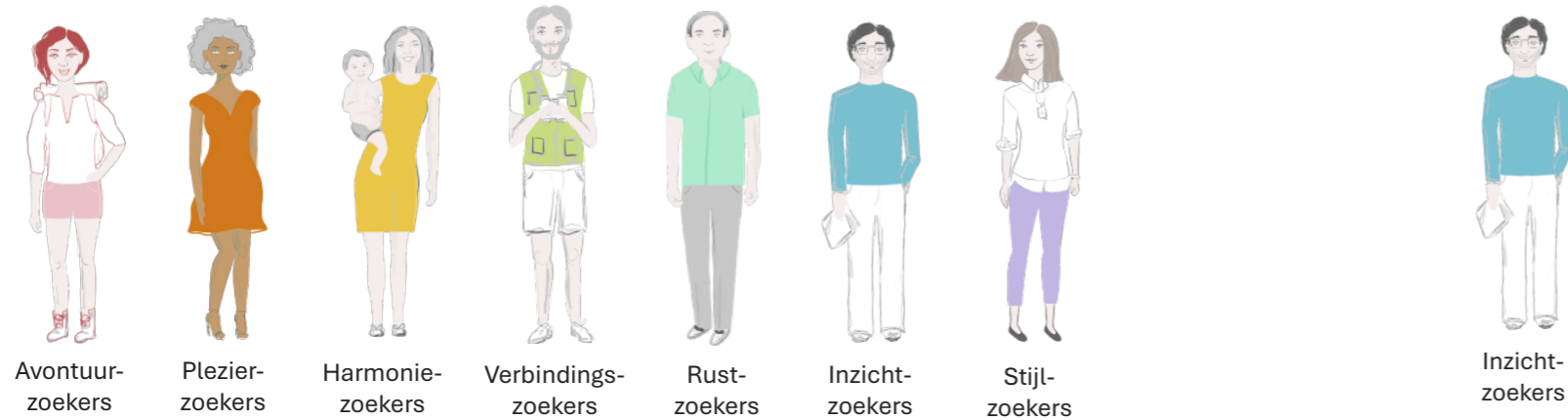
Municipal Development Vision for Ter Apel 2040

Ontwikkelvisie Ter Apel - Okra Landschapsarchitecten



Individual Research

Tourism Research



'Insight Seekers'

(13% of population)

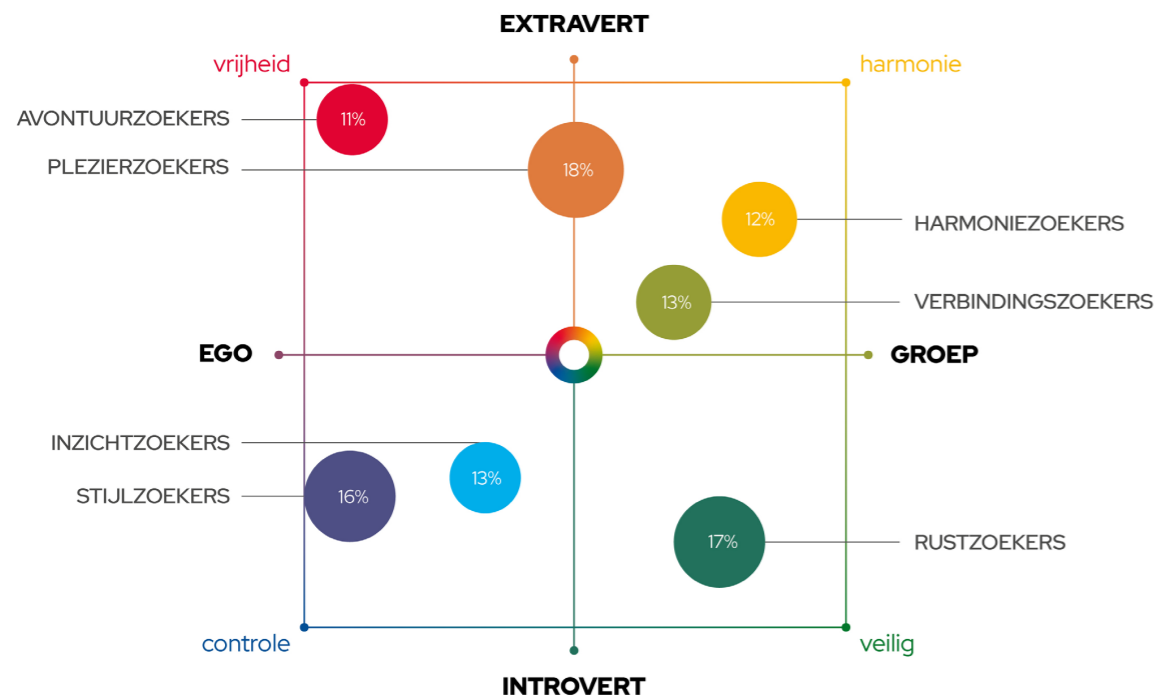
>60 year olds

Free time is spent somewhere with deeper meaning.

Gap Year: 18-30 year olds (or any age)

People who are unsure in their studies, career or in life; looking to reflect and rediscover themselves and their surroundings.

Most likely tourist profiles for 'modern monastery' are *peace-seekers*, *thoughtfulness-seekers* & *attachment-seekers* - Leefstijlvinder



Tourist Profiling based on 'BSR' (Brand Strategy Research) Model - Leefstijlvinder



'Connection Seekers'

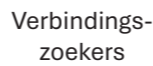
(12% of population)

>50 year olds

Free time is spent somewhere helping communities.

Community Building: Any Age

People who want to participate in community initiatives such as language classes, gardening, etc.



'Peace Seekers'

(17% of population)

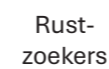
60-69 year olds

Free time is spent somewhere calming or in nature.

Retreat: Any Age

People who experience stress, anxiety or need to 'unplug'.

People who are in a burn-out, people who want to write a book, people wanting concentration.



Source: Leefstijlvinder. (2026). *Doelgroepen*
Retrieved on 2026-01-12, from <https://app.leefstijlvinder.nl/info>

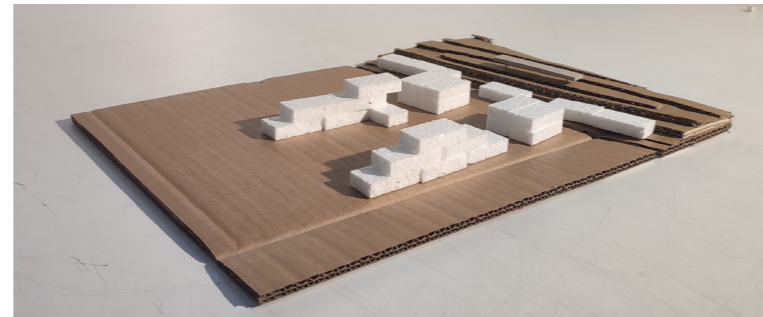
Individual Research

Model

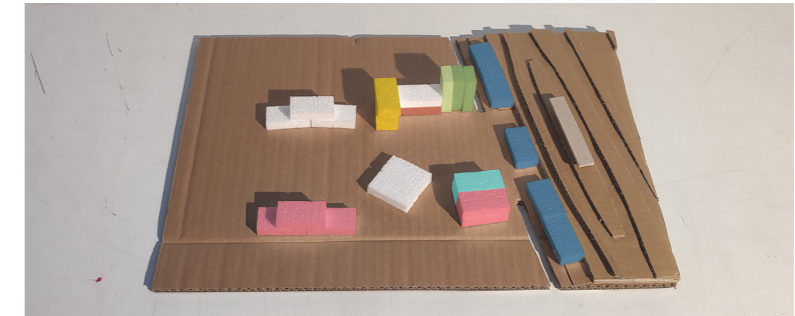
Sketch Model

Volume Testing (1 Block = 100m²) - 25 Blocks Total = 2500m²

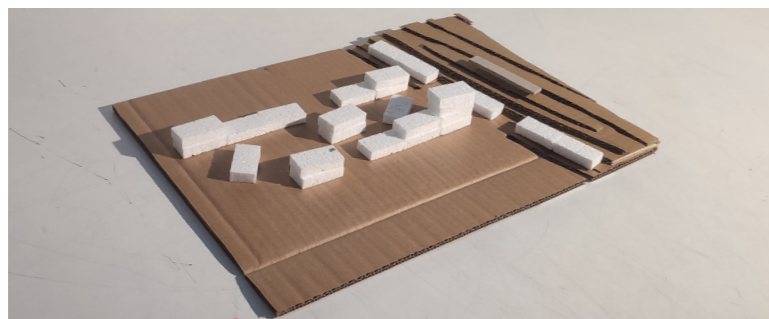
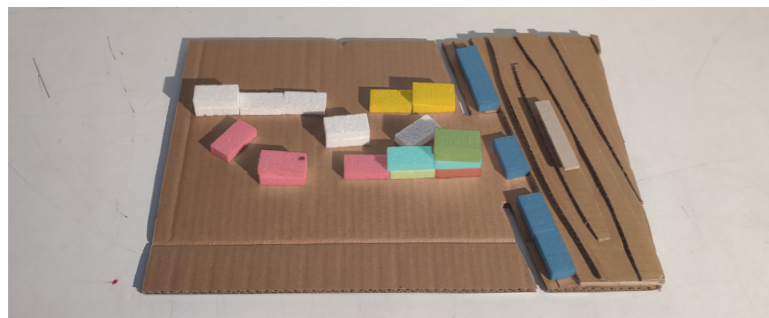
- Bike Storage & Rental**
450-750m² - 5 Blocks
- Office & Staff**
100-150m² - 2 Blocks
- Theater/Kino**
100-150m² - 2 Blocks
- Kiosk**
50-100m² - 1 Block
- Cafe/Restaurant**
200-250m² - 3 Blocks
- Travel Agency**
50-100m² - 1 Block
- Guest Accomodation**
10 x 30m² - 3 Blocks



'Entertainment' Blocks



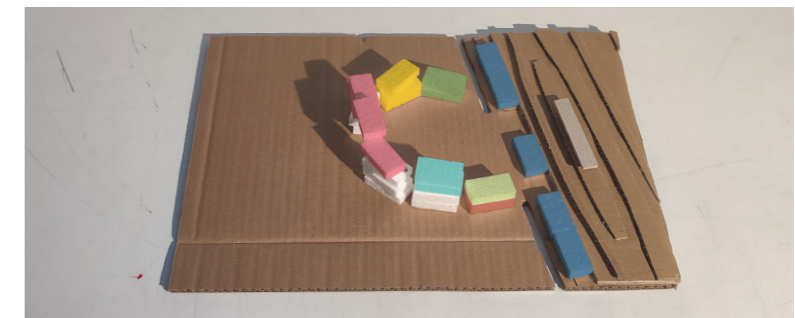
'Entertainment' Block



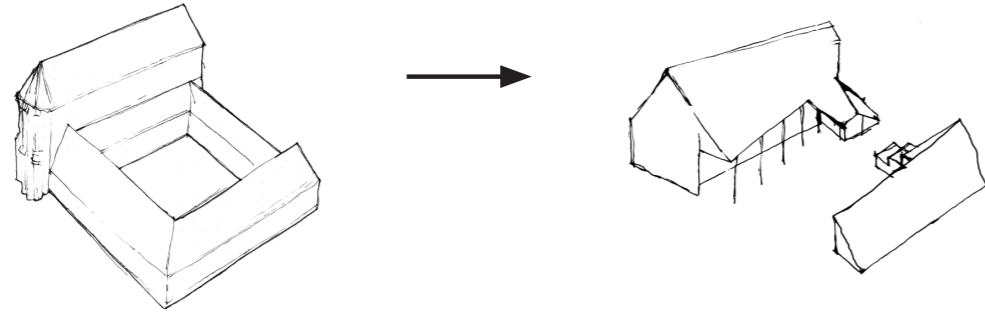
Straight Lines



Total Separation



Gradient Circle



A Herald for Change

Ter Apel's 'old' monastery signified the start of a new town: Ter Apel.

Ter Apel's 'new' monastery or 'island of refuge' will herald a new phase in Ter Apel's history.

Main Research Question

"How can the presence and historic influence of the crozier monastery *Domus Novae Lucis* in Ter Apel serve as a design catalyst for a tourism hub that embraces Ter Apel's monastic heritage and its values?"

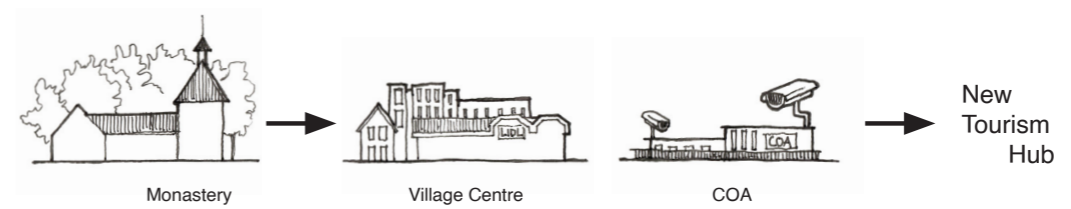


Activate old Values

Ter Apel's 'old' monastery serves as a look into the past; the visitor doesn't actively engage.



Ter Apel's 'new' monastery will embrace and reactivate values of the old monastery.



Monastery as Catalyst for Improvement

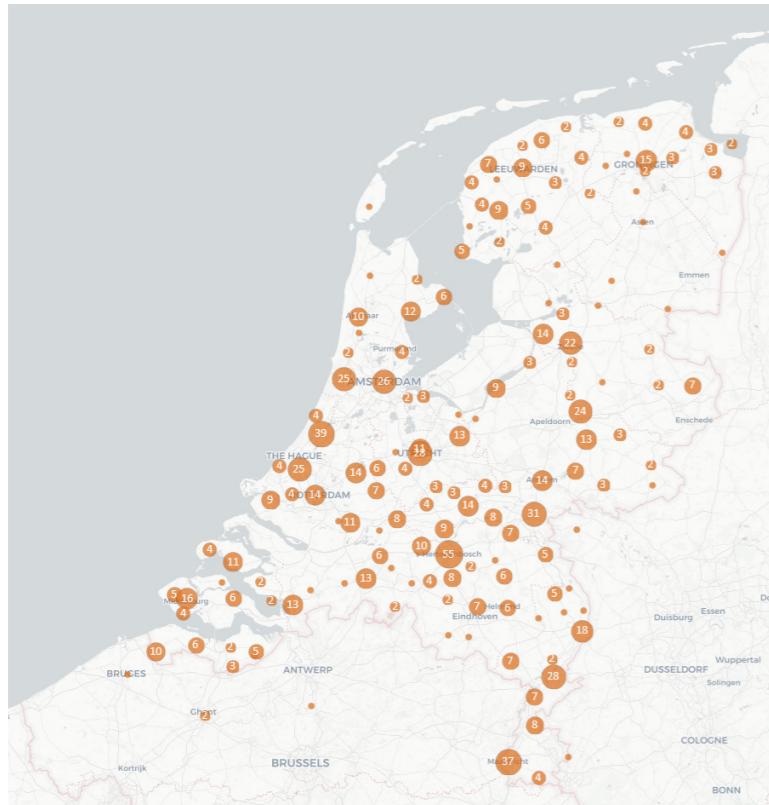
Problem Statement

Ter Apel faces an identity crisis, both in its urban and architectural context, as well as its national image and identity. How can the idea of refuge be turned into something positive and connecting, instead of negative and dividing?

Historically, monasteries took care of visitors, formed communities and cultivated the landscape.

This new island of refuge serves as a (literal) blank slate to deal with Ter Apel's current issues.

All Monasteries & Abbeys ever built in the Netherlands (until 1800)



Source: Goudriaan, K. (2021). *Kloosterkaart en Kloosterlijst* [Data set]. Retrieved on 2026-01-12, from <https://geoplaza.vu.nl/projects/kloosters/>

Total = ca. 800

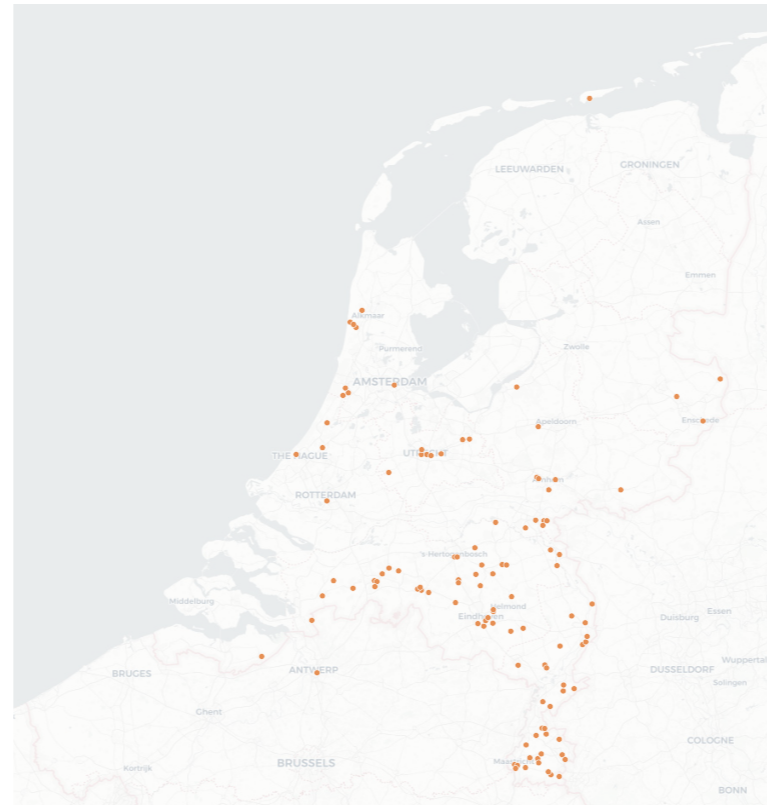
This list contains all monasteries (and closely related convents, houses, etc.) from the Middle Ages until 1800.

From the 12th and 13th century the typology of a monastery was introduced to the Netherlands.

At the end of the 15th century, however, the revolt against Spain meant that catholicism was no longer welcomed, and instead Protestantism was to be the national religion. Monasteries were closed and the buildings were repurposed. This was especially the case in the Northern Provinces; the South still saw some catholic activity; over 70 monasteries south of the major rivers survived.

After 1814, monastery life started again.

Active and Registered Monasteries & Abbeys in the Netherlands (2026)



Source: KNR (2026). *Leden*. Retrieved on 2026-01-12, from <https://www.knr.nl/leden/>

Total = 157 officially registered with address

This list contains (nearly) all registered religious orders and congregations in the Netherlands. These are managed through an 'umbrella' organisation called KNR: *De Konferentie van in Nederland gevestigde Religieuzen*.

There is a clear cluster of active monasteries in Limburg and Noord-Brabant. The further north you go, the fewer active monasteries are present. There is especially a glaring lack of active monasteries in Friesland and Groningen.

(Former) Monasteries & Abbeys with option for Retreat & Stay



Source: Beziningsvakanties.nl (2023). *Alle kloosters in Nederland op een rij*. Retrieved on 2026-01-12, from https://beziningsvakanties.nl/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Klooster-brochure-Nederland-Beziningsvakanties.nl_.pdf?

Total = 36

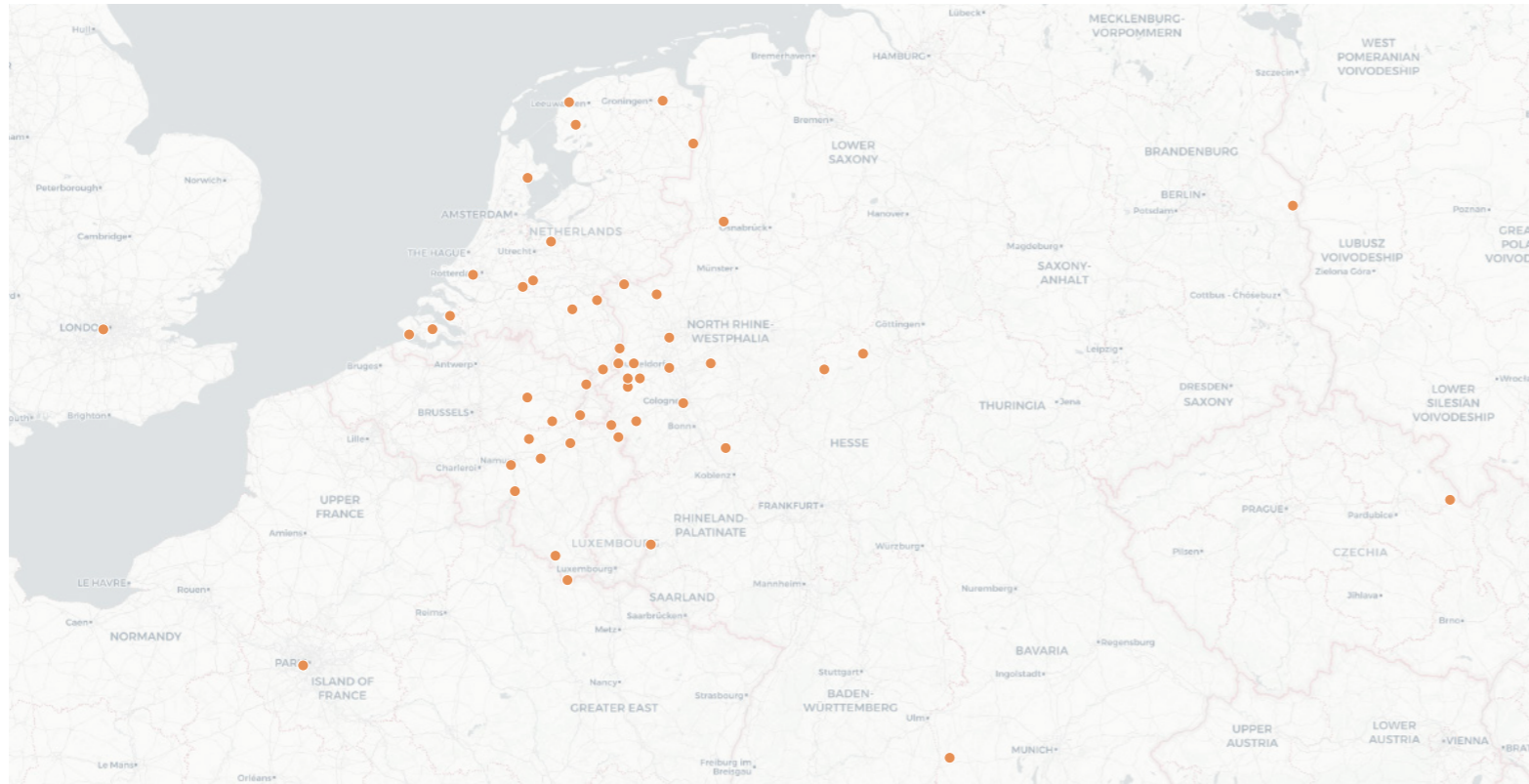
Of all total active monasteries and abbeys, only a fifth of them allow visitors. These visits are structured around living with and similar to monks and sisters; a specific, daily rhythm.

Looking at the locations of these monasteries, it is clear that there is a lack of retreat options in Groningen and Friesland, at least when it comes to visiting (former) monasteries.

This map does not contain other retreat centres though, which might be present in Groningen and Friesland.

Individual Research

Monastery



Source: Germania Sacra. (2026). *Klosterdatenbank*. Retrieved on 2026-01-19, from <https://klosterdatenbank.adw-goe.de/>

Huy, Belgium (1211-1797)	Uden, The Netherlands (1467-1800)
Namur, Belgium (1200's-1779)	Bühle, Germany (1468-1527)
London, England (1249-?)	Woudrichem, The Netherlands (1474-1572)
Paris, France (1254-?)	Maaseik, Belgium (1476-1797)
Liège, Belgium (1272-1796)	Sief, Germany (1477-1784)
Suxy, Belgium (1286-1797)	Brüggen, Germany (1479-1802)
Wuppertal, Germany (<1298-1804)	Viersen, Germany (1479-1802)
Erkelenz, Germany (1302-1802)	Ritthem, The Netherlands (1481-1536)
Cologne, Germany (1309-1802)	Emmerich, Germany (1482-1811)
Asperen, The Netherlands (1314-1566/1578)	Asbach, Germany (1486-1812)
Langerwehe, Germany (1340-1802)	Helenenberg, Germany (1489-1802)
Virton, Belgium(1341-1797)	Scharmer, The Netherlands (1489-1594)
Solnice, Czech Republic (1359/1409-1443)	Dinant, Belgium (1490-1778)
Cuijk, The Netherlands (1371-present)	Wickracht, Germany (1491-1802)
Aachen, Germany (1372-1802)	Glindfeld, Germany (1499-1804)
Venlo, The Netherlands (1399-1797)	Sint Annaland, The Netherlands (1499-1523)
Roermond, The Netherlands (1422-1784)	Wegberg, Germany (1639-1802)
Goes, The Netherlands (1429-1578)	Amersfoort, The Netherlands (1952-1999)
Osterberg, Germany (1431-1633)	
Falkenhagen, Germany (1432-1596)	
Kerniel, Belgium (1432-1796)	
Maastricht, The Netherlands (1436-1796)	
Bentlage, Germany (1437-1803)	
Düsseldorf, Germany (1443-1802)	
Schiedam, The Netherlands (1443-1572)	
Dingden, Germany (1444-1806)	
Duisburg, Germany (1454-1814)	
Hoorn, The Netherlands (1457-1572)	
Sneek, The Netherlands (1464-1464)	
Ter Apel, The Netherlands (1465-1594)	
Franeke, The Netherlands (1466-1580)	

Around 90 total convents & monasteries in its history.

(49 on this map)

Germany	21
The Netherlands	17
Belgium	08
France	01
Czech Republic	01
U.K.	01

This is the most comprehensive list I was able to construct, using a databank covering all the monasteries that were ever present in the Holy Roman Empire. By filtering for 'Kreuzherren' I was able to find 48 monasteries. (Germania Sacra, 2026).

Other sources mention there being around 90 total built monasteries dedicated to the Crosiers, of which around 19 were present in the U.K. (Yzermans, 1908). Because I wasn't able to find their proper locations I haven't included them. The same goes for several possible monasteries in Italy.

The first Crosier monastery in the Netherlands was the monastery is Asperen, a town relatively close to Rotterdam. Some time after, the monastery St. Agatha in Cuijk was built. It is the oldest monastery in the Netherlands still existing, and celebrated its 650th birthday in 2021.

The Northern Netherlands saw crosier monasteries being built around the 1460's. Only the monastery of Franeke and the one in Ter Apel actually built 'new monasteries', Sneek and Scharmer moved into already existing monasteries. (Bouma, 2022.)

Based on this collection of monasteries, I would like to analyse the monasteries Bentlage, Ter Apel and Amersfoort. The monastery in Bentlage, Germany, because it is the 'mother' of the monastery in Ter Apel and the monastery in Amersfoort because it is the most recent addition. By comparing the architectural elements of these monasteries with the monastery in Ter Apel, I hope to extract specific elements I can translate into my future design.

Source: Yzermans, H. (1908). *The Crosiers*. In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved on 2026-01-19 from <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04516a.htm>

Source: Bouma, H. (2022). *Middeleeuwse Kloosters in Friesland en Groningen*. R.U.G. Retrieved on 2026-01-19 from <https://www.rug.nl/research/kenniscentrum-landschap/voor-studenten/masterscripties/2022-mascr-kloosters-friesland-groningen-h-bouma.pdf>



Individual Research

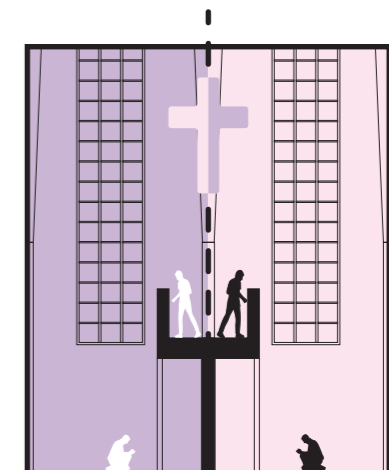
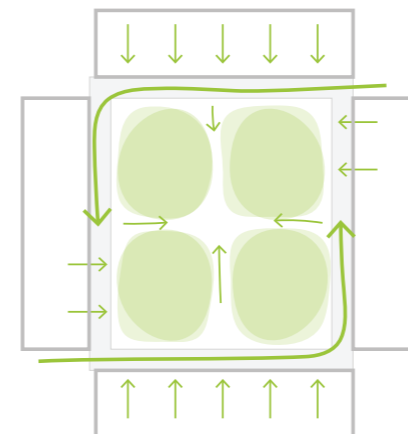
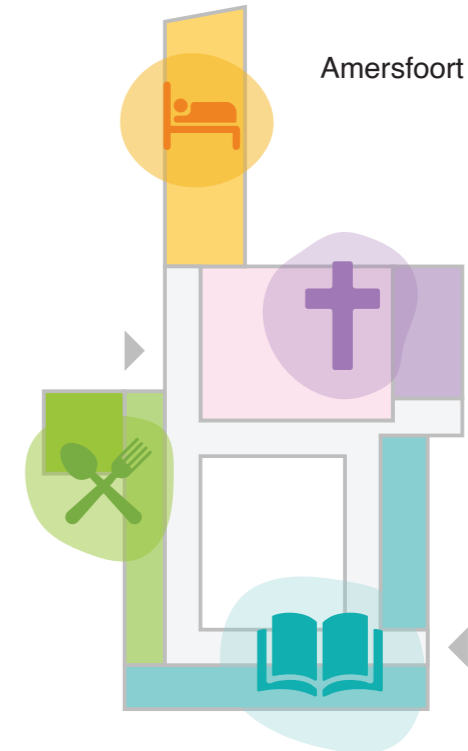
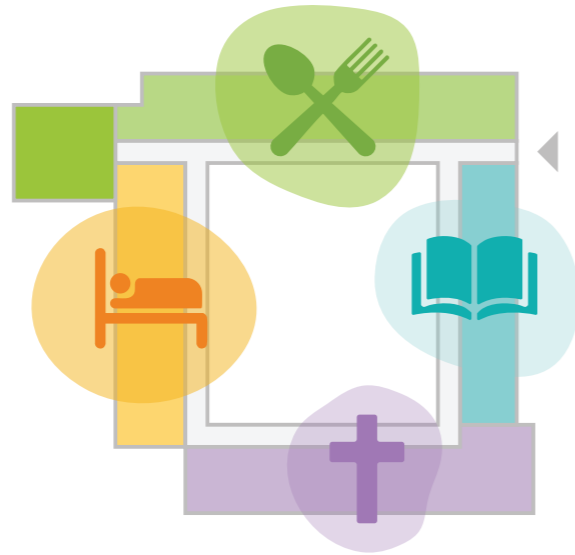
Monastery

Monastery Bentlage (1437-1803)

Monastery Ter Apel (1465-1594)

Monastery Amersfoort (1952-1999)

-  Guest Rooms
-  Kitchen
-  Refectory
-  Church (Monks)
-  Church (Public)
-  Other Funct.



PRINCIPLES

Grouping & Orientation

Ter Apel and Bentlage are very similar; church to the south, public areas to the west, and monk-life on the east.

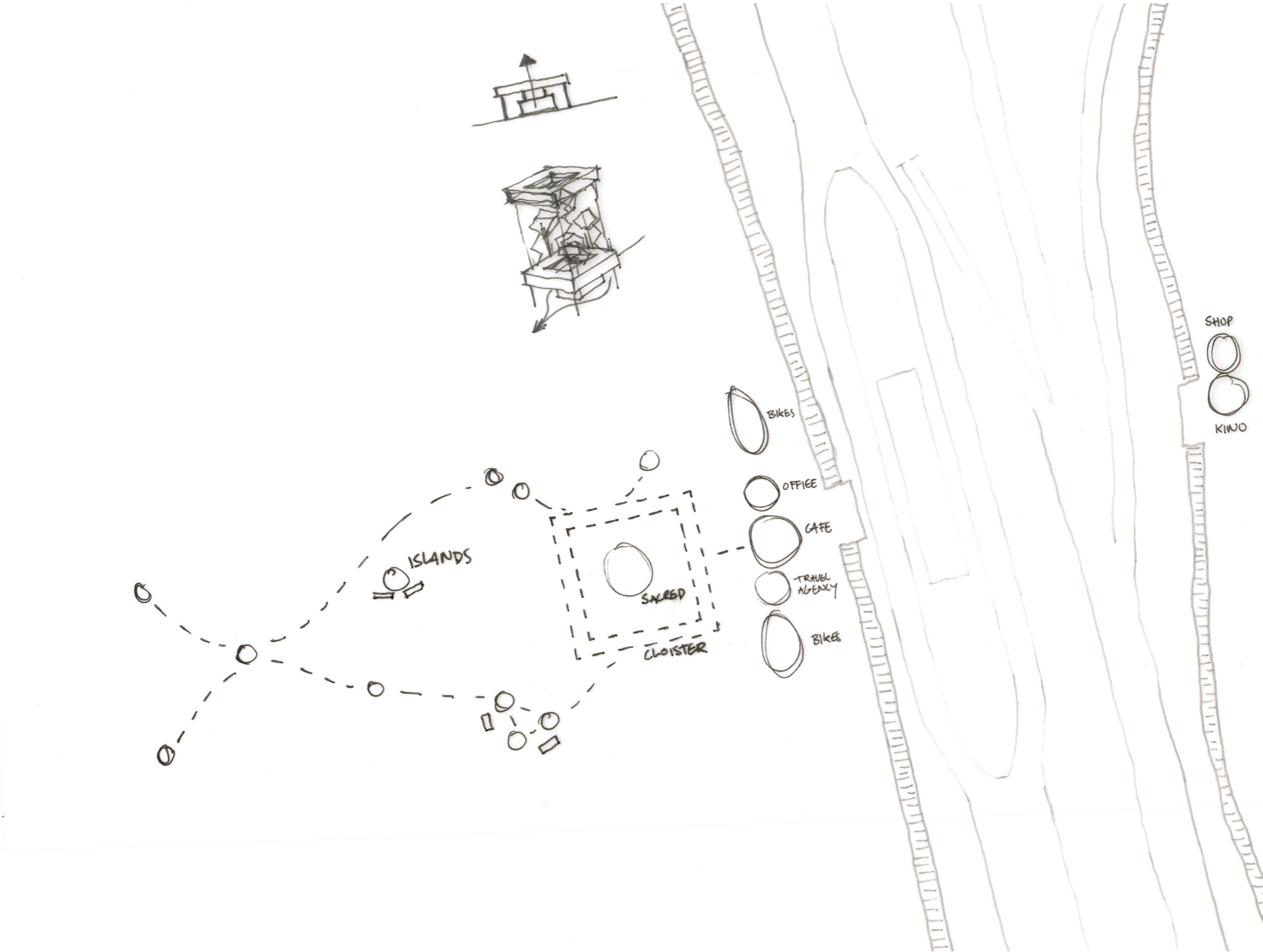
Movement & Rhythm

Despite being relatively closed off from the outside, one central hallway (cloister) connects all spaces; public and private.

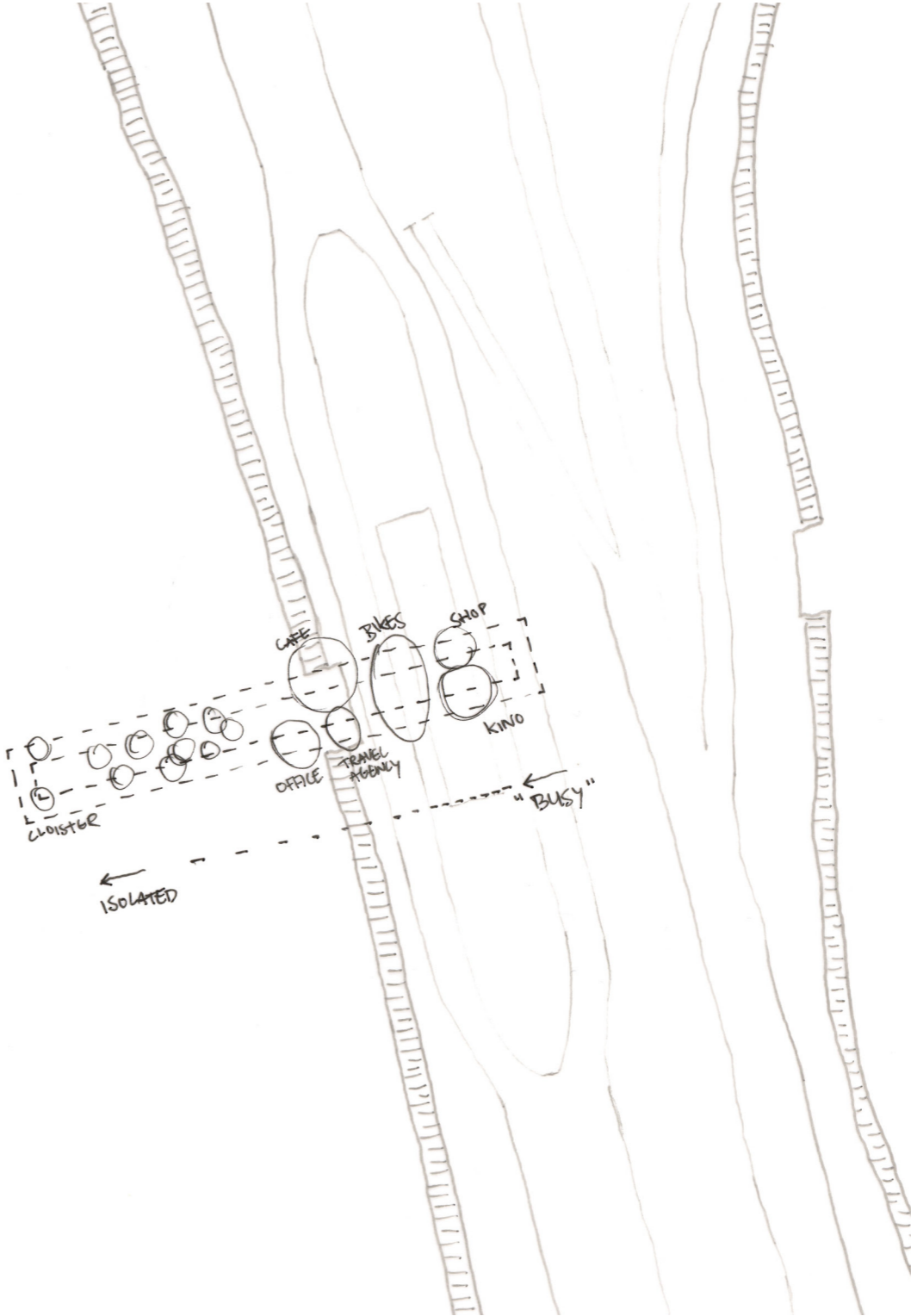
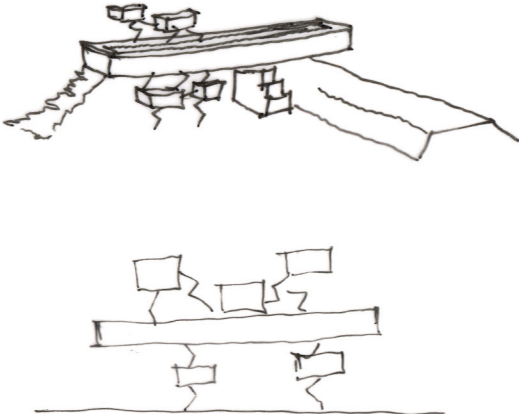
Sacred & Secular

A clear division between what's accessible to visitors and what's not. Isolation & accessibility based on 'sacredness'

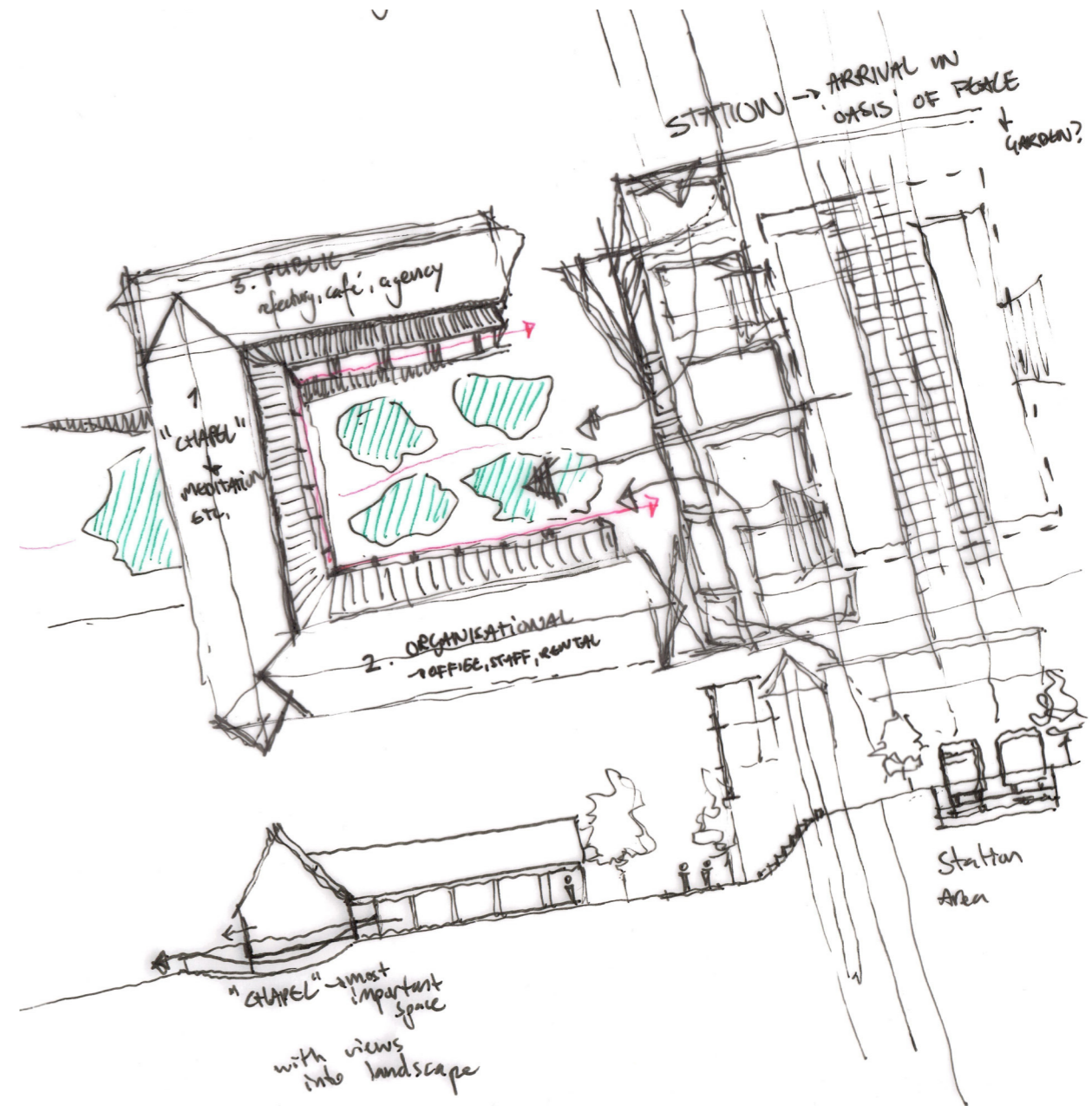
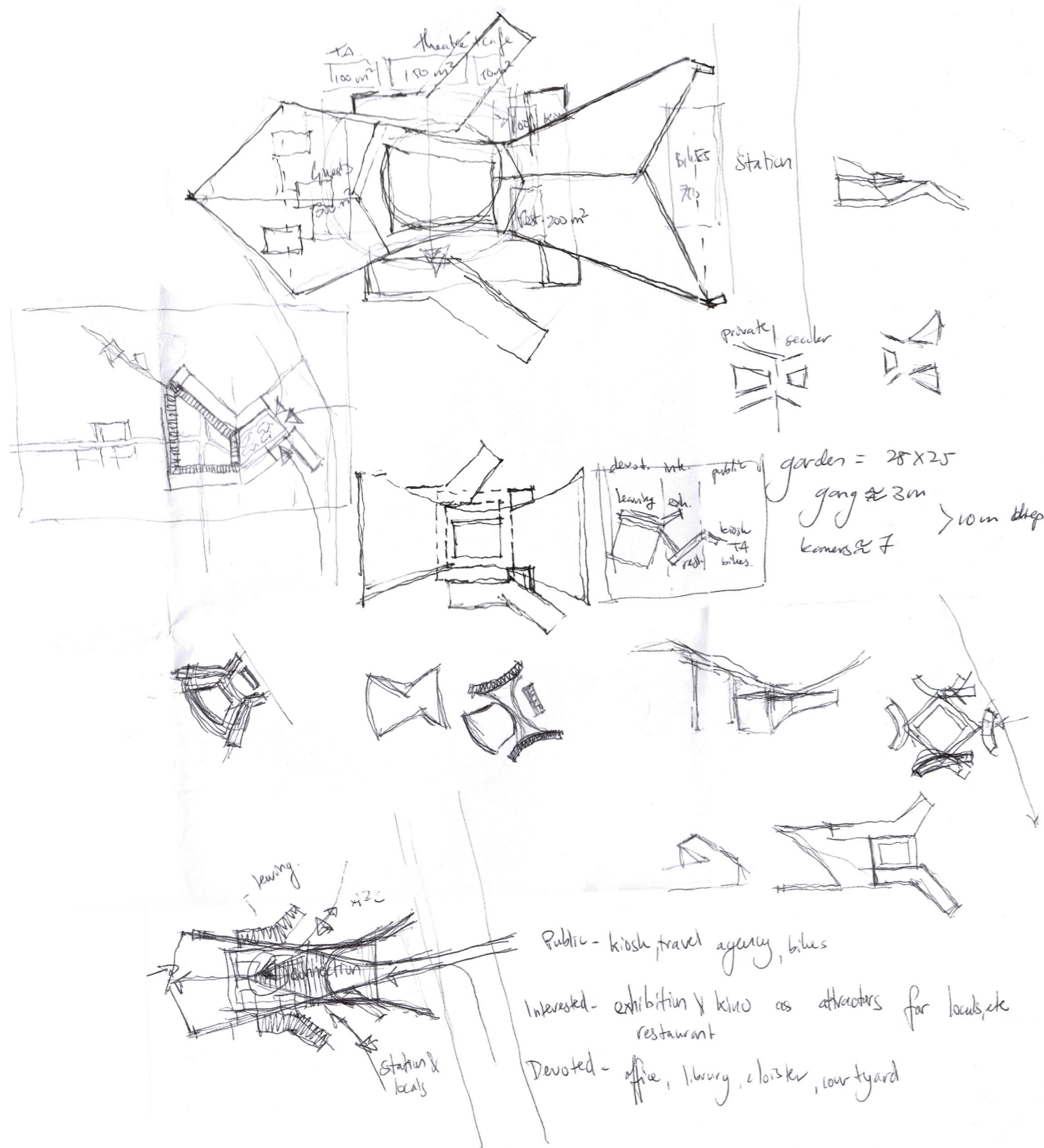
First Plans



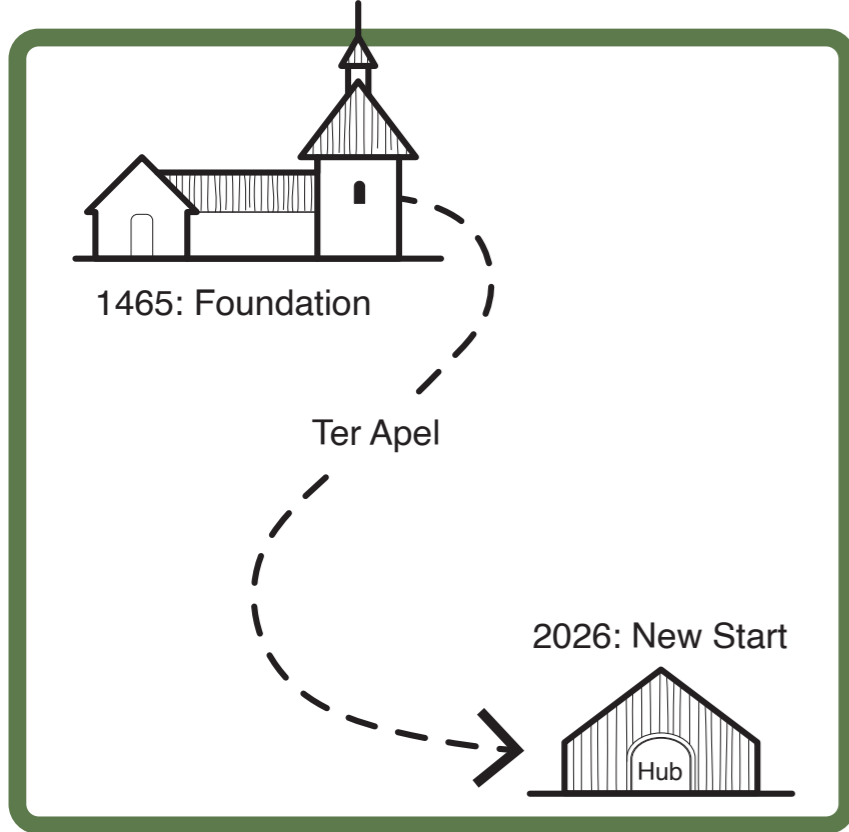
First Plans



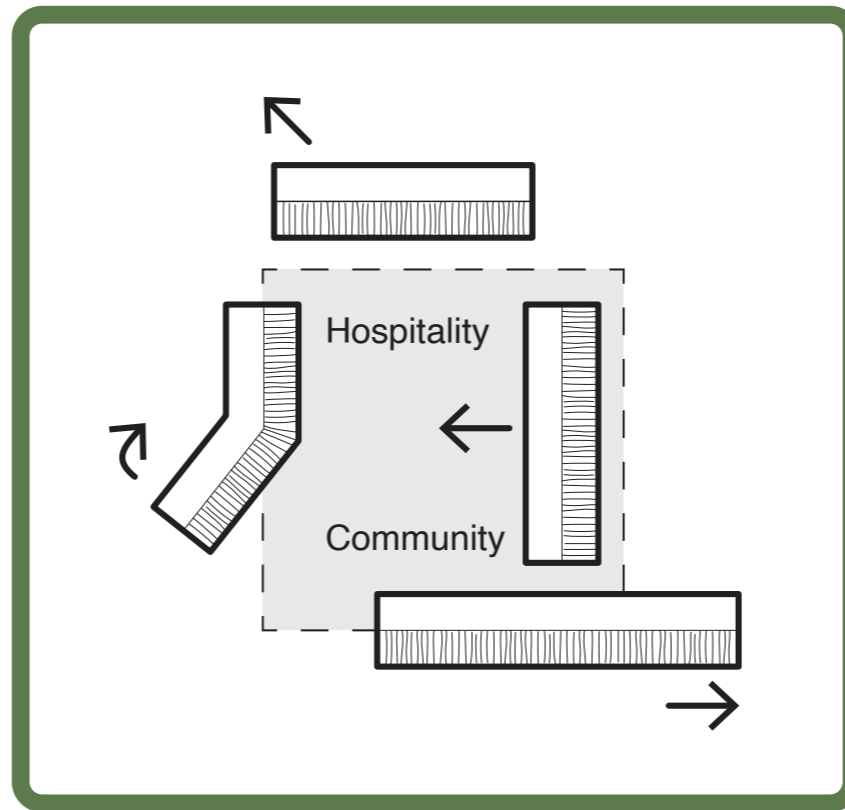
Other Sketches



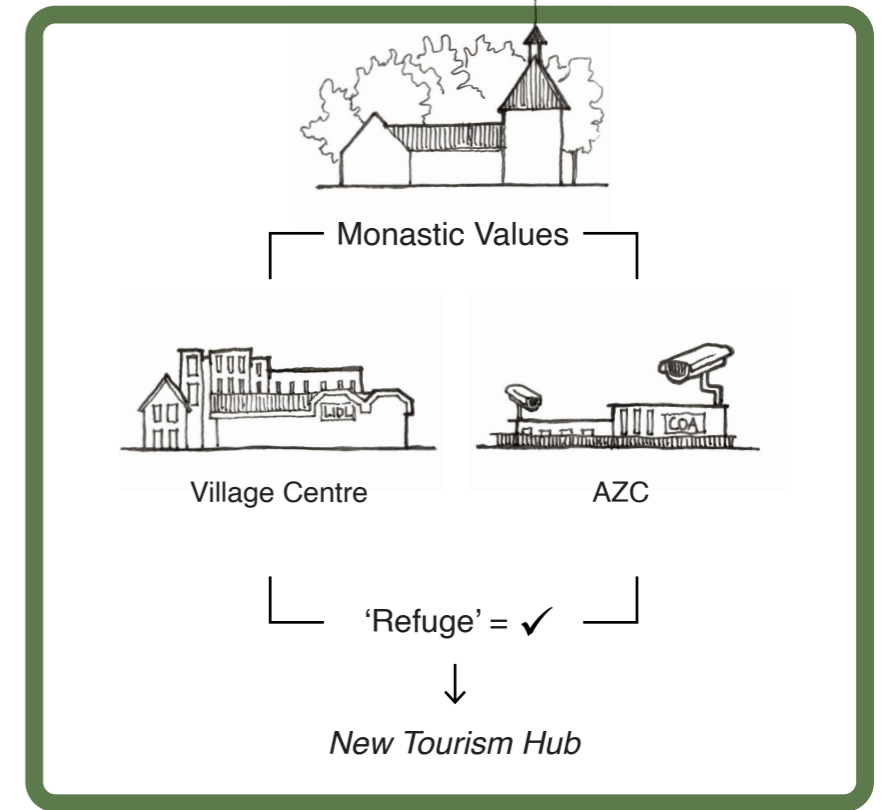
Herald for Change



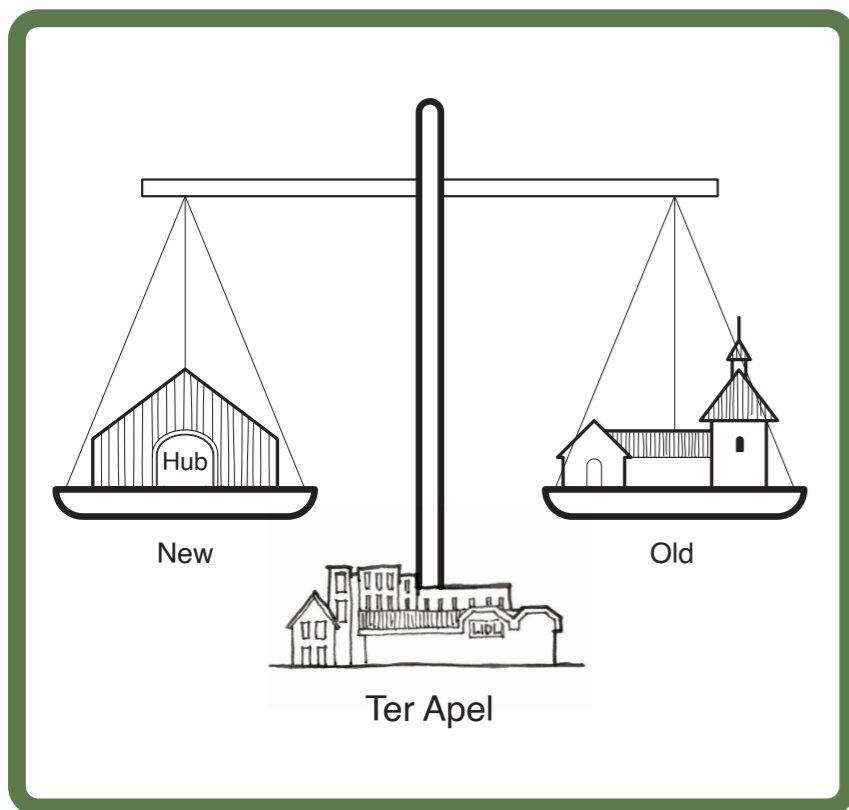
Re-activate & Re-invent Monastery



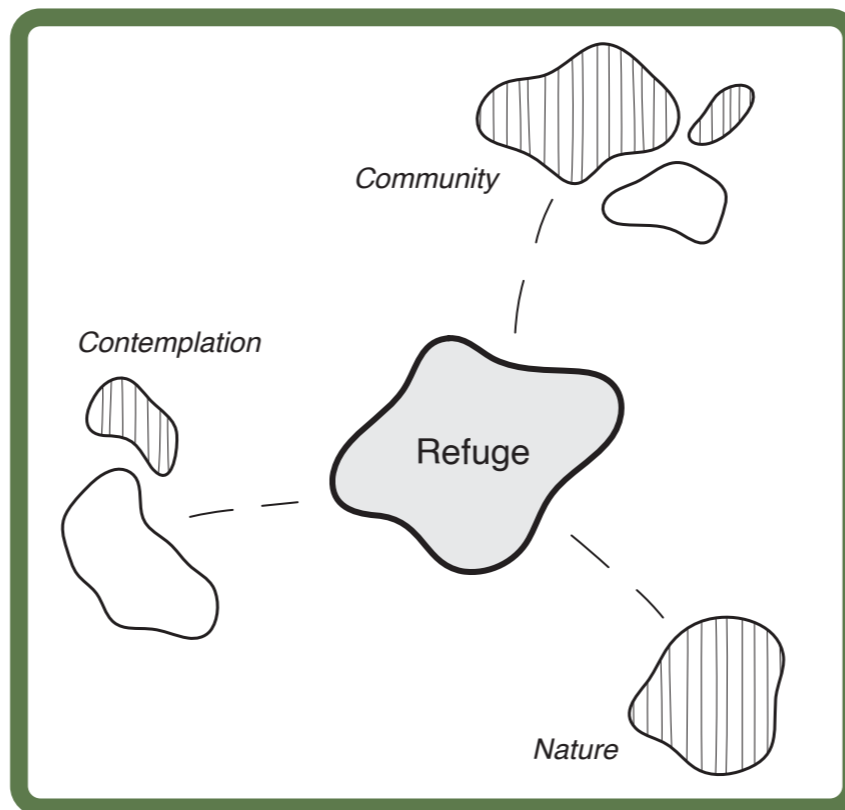
Change the Narrative around 'Refuge'



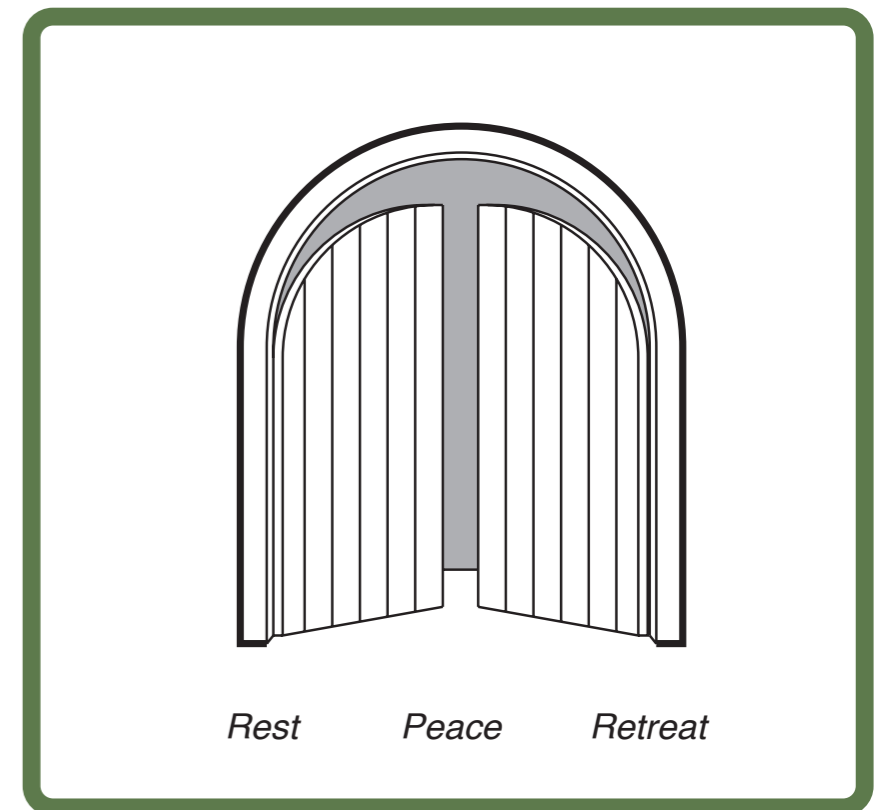
Dialogue 'Old' and 'New' Monastery



Network of Self-Sufficient Islands



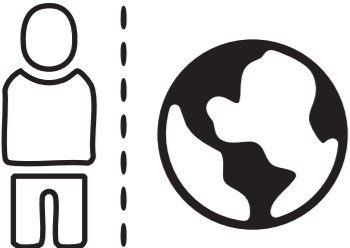
Connect with Tourists



General Monasteries

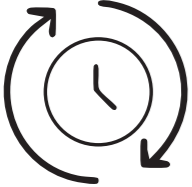


Devotion to God



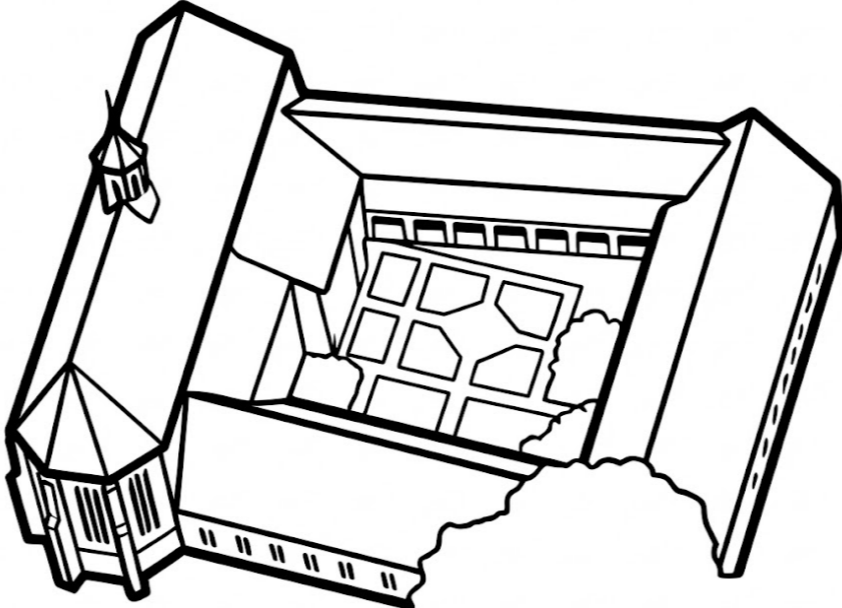
Withdrawal from Society

Union with God



Ora et Labora
(Pray and Work)

Daily Rhythmn

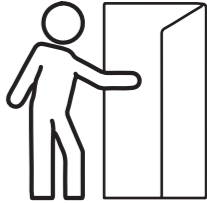


Ter Apel Monastery

Order of the Crosiers

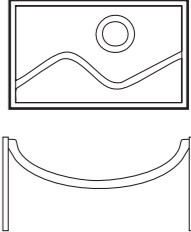


Hospitality & Community

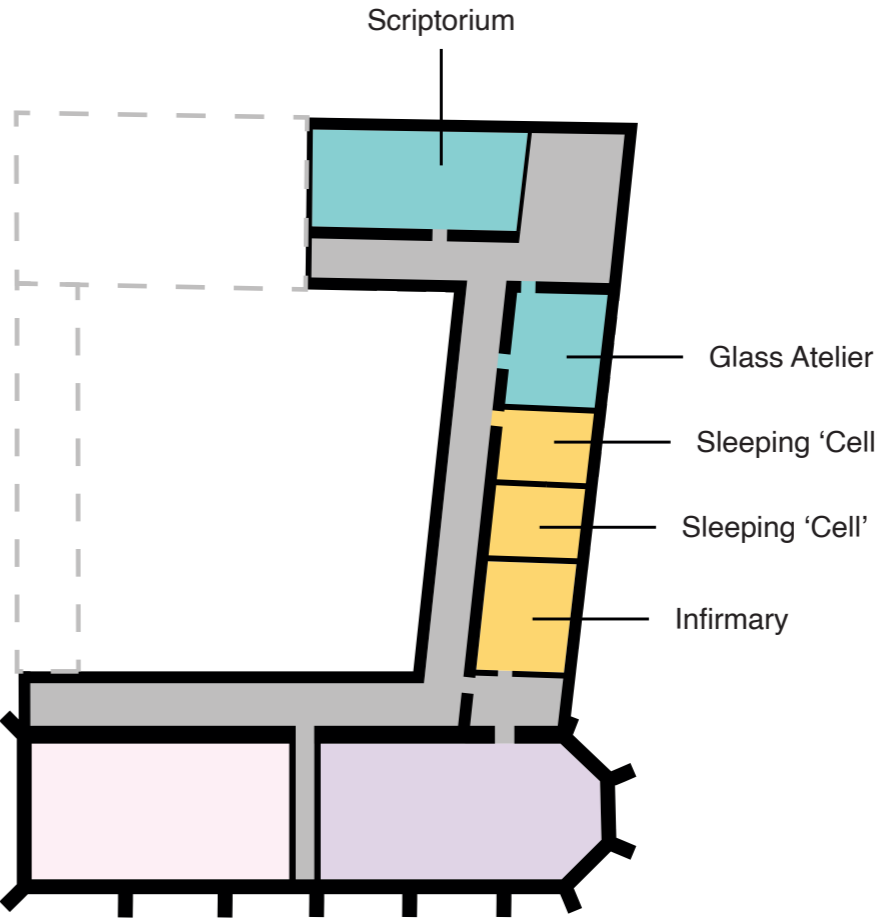
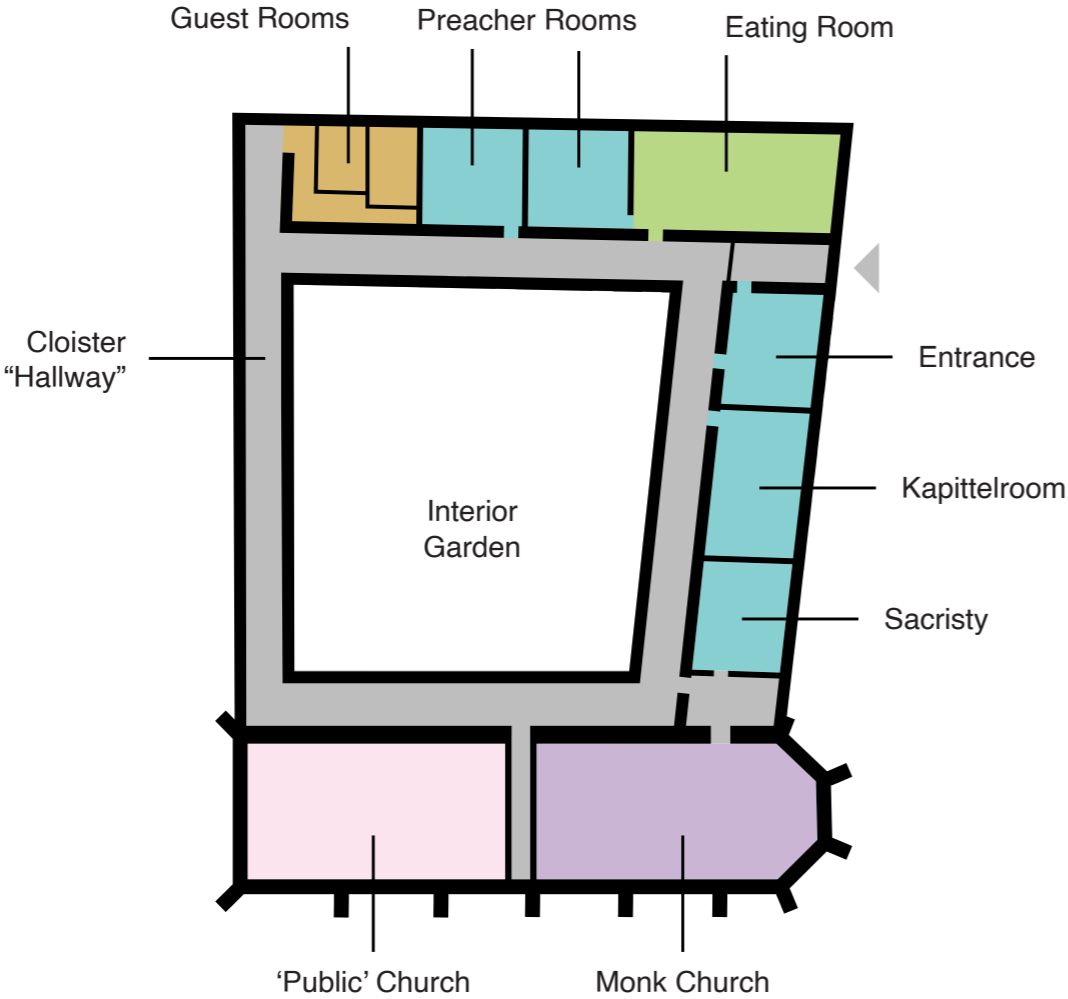


Active from 1465 - 1594

Now a Museum



Monastery Layout



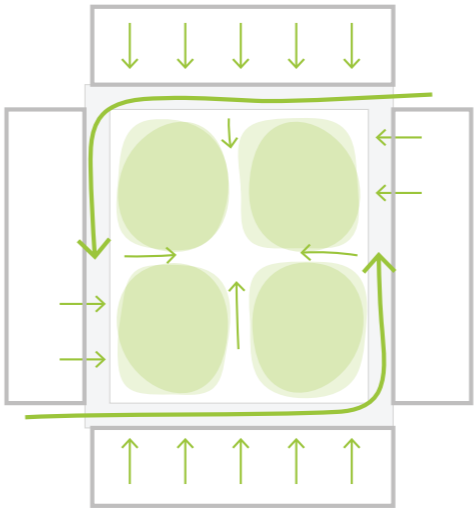
Monastery Principles

PRINCIPLES



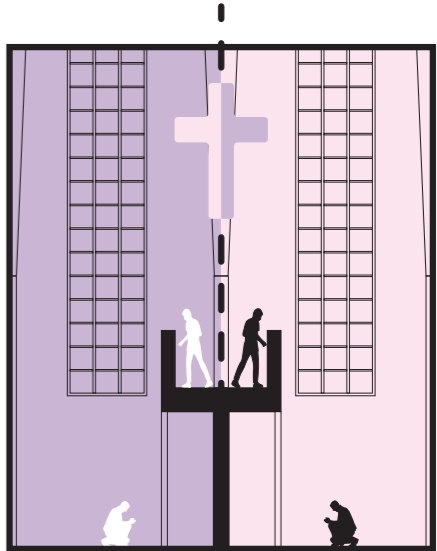
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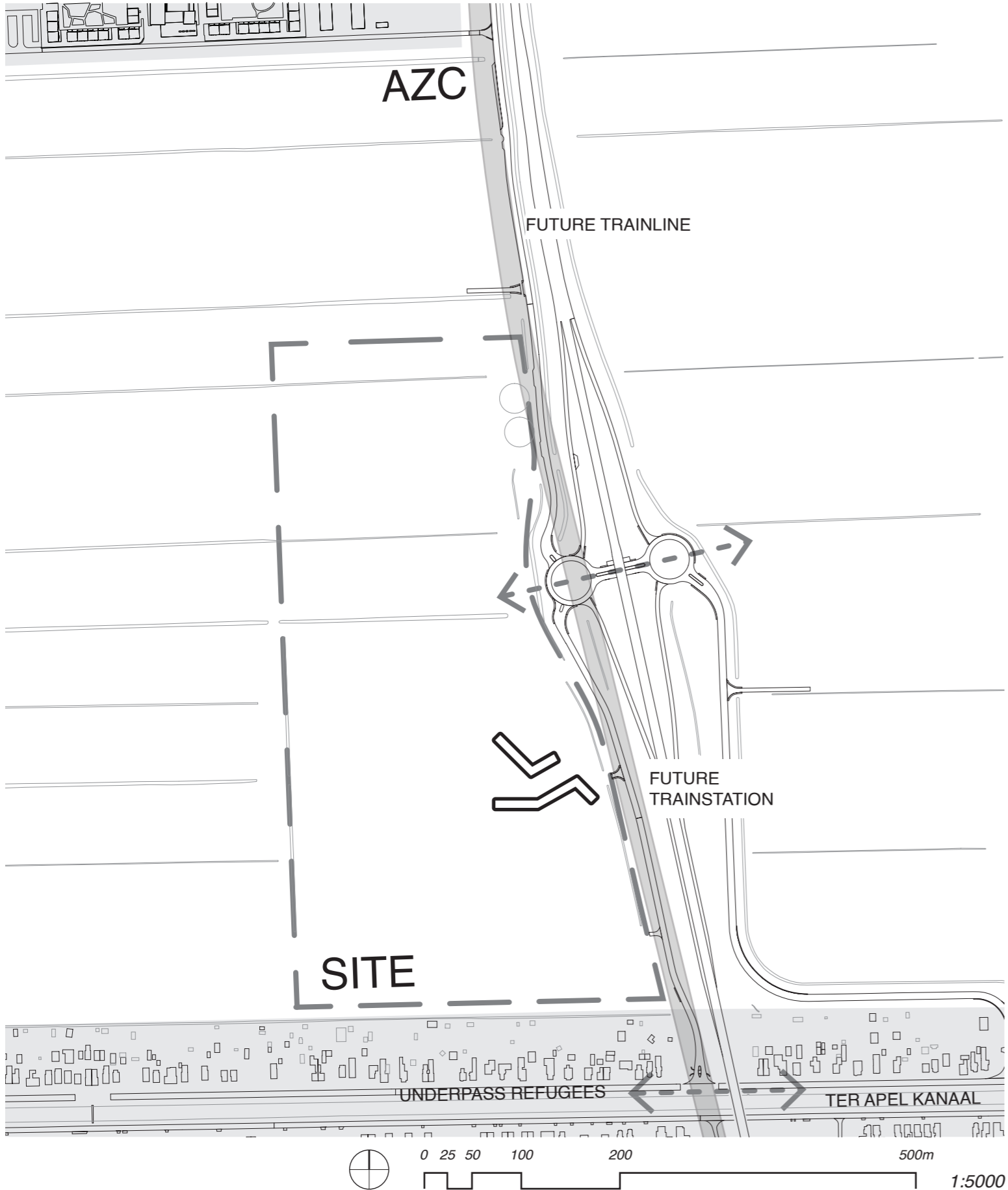
Movement & Rhythm

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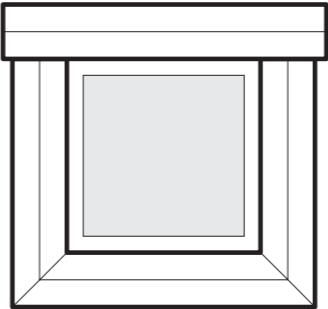


Sacred & Secular

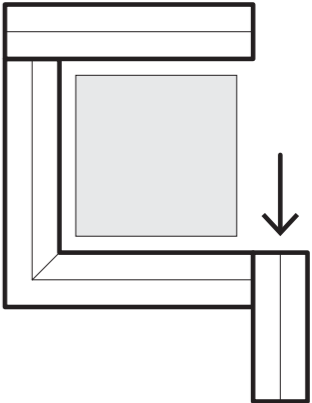
A clear division between what's accessible to visitors and what's not. Isolation & accessibility based on 'sacredness'



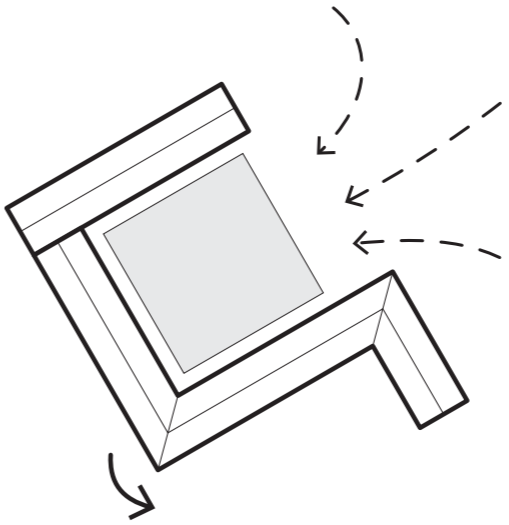
1. Starting Point



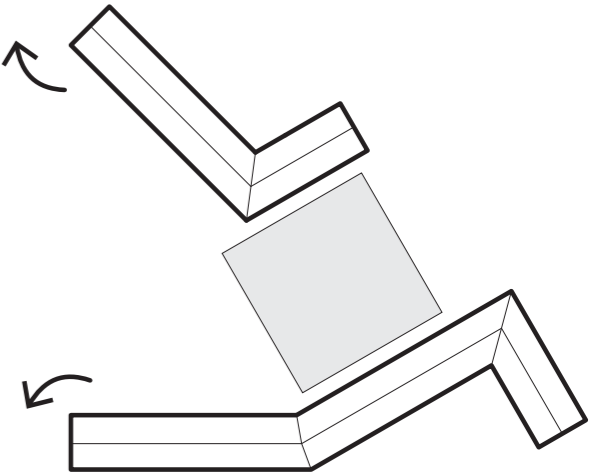
2. Entrance



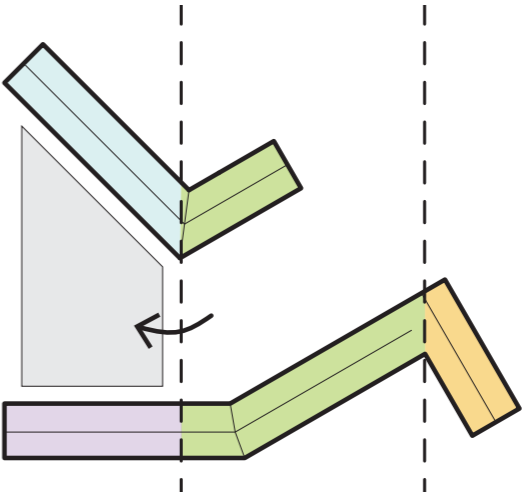
3. Aligning with Site



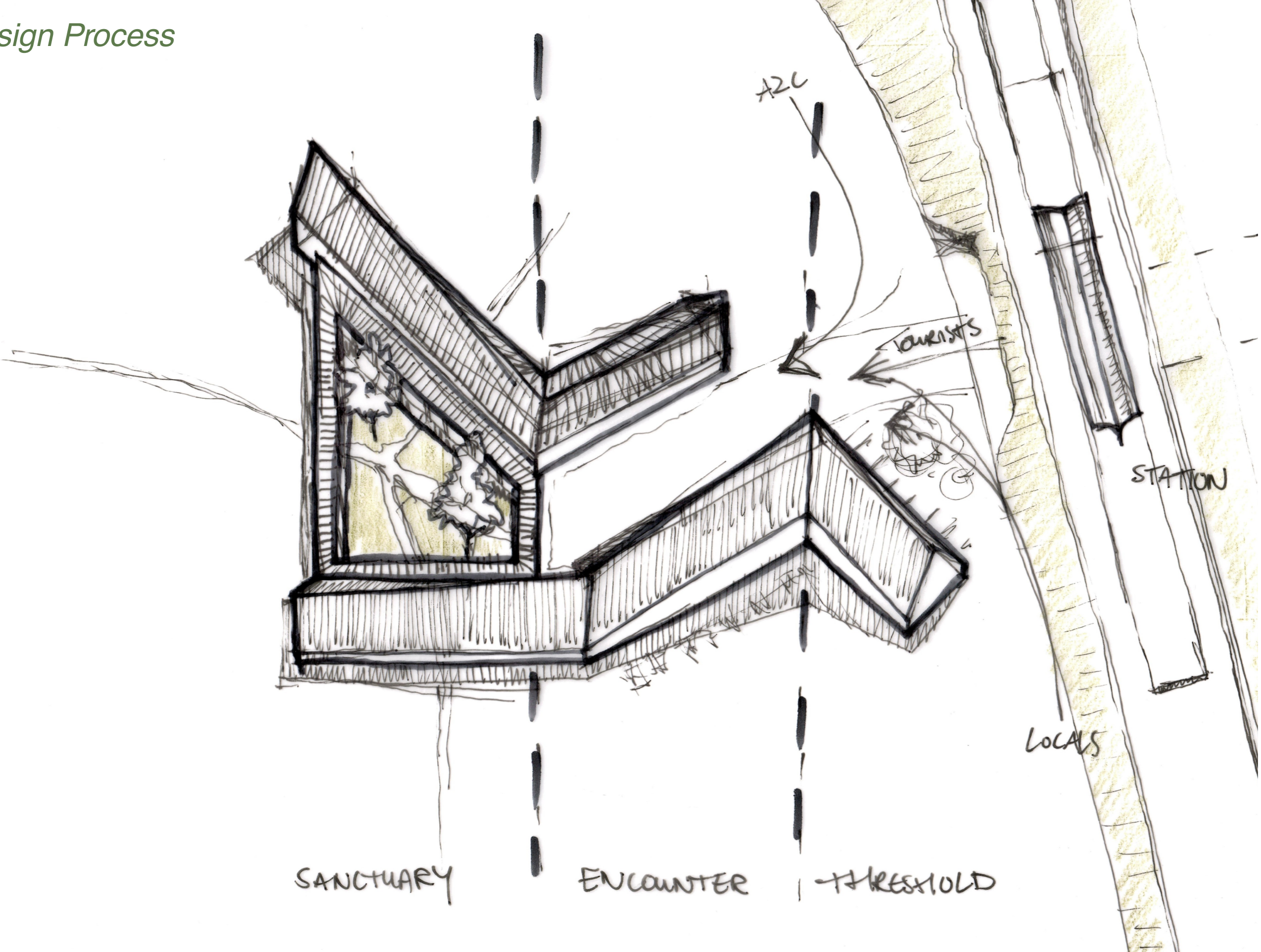
4. Opening up to Landscape



6. Divide and Organise Spaces & Courtyard



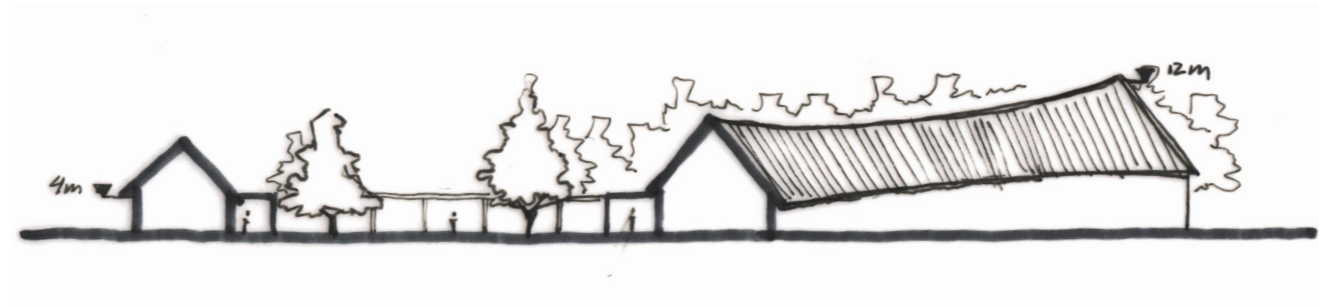
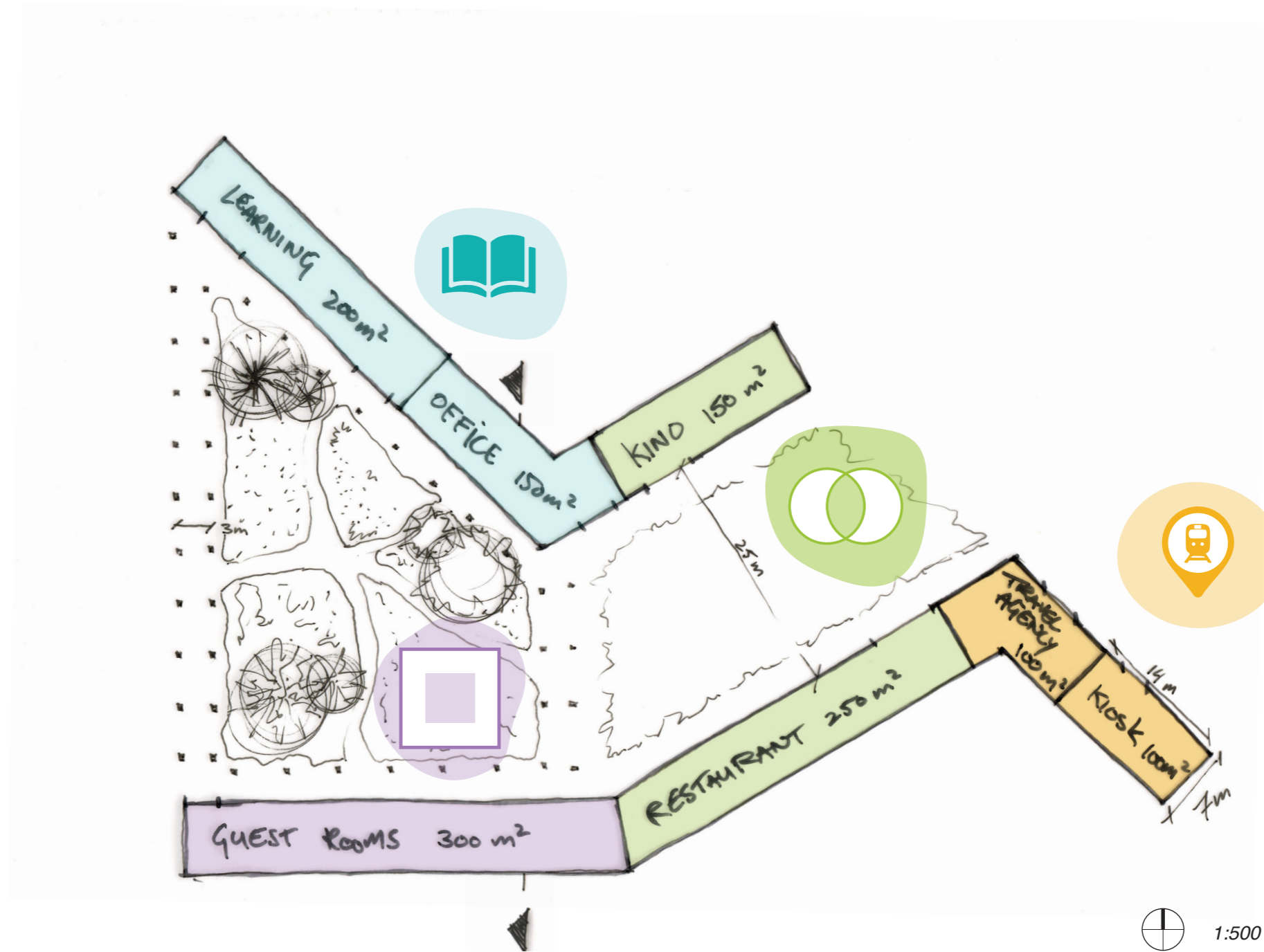
Presentation
Design Process



Presentation

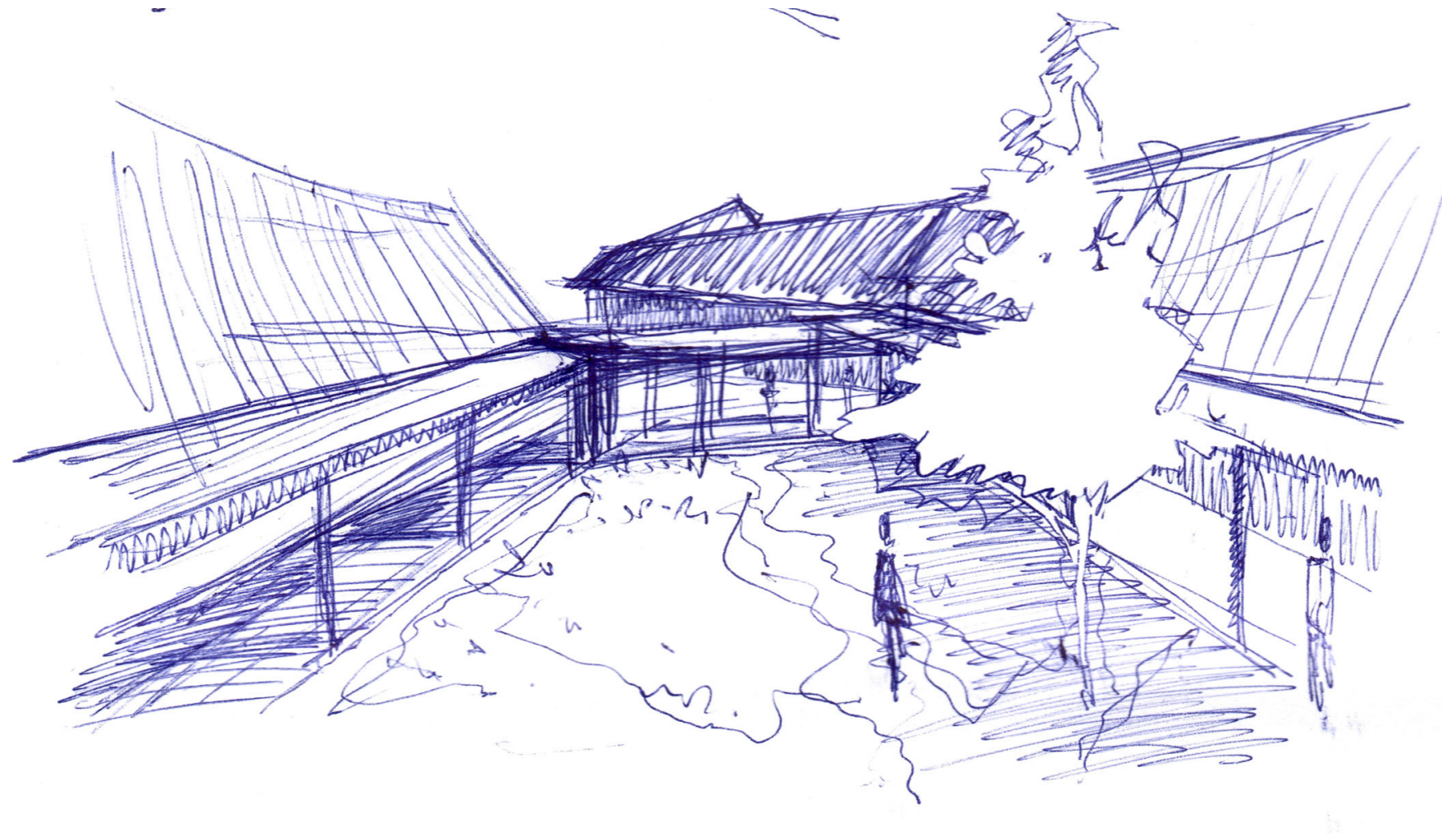
Design Process

-  Public/Threshold
-  Encounter
-  Learning
-  Sanctuary

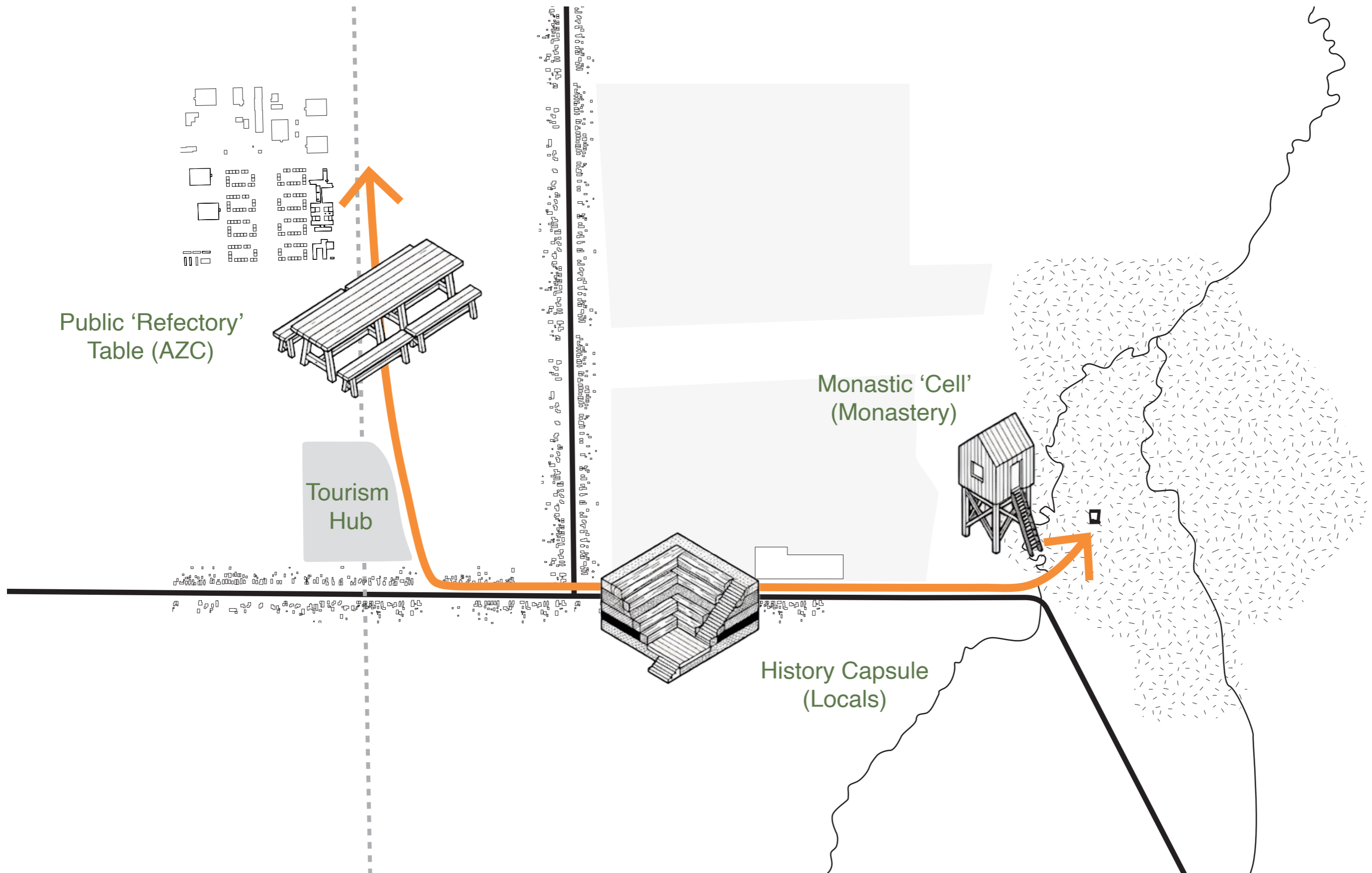


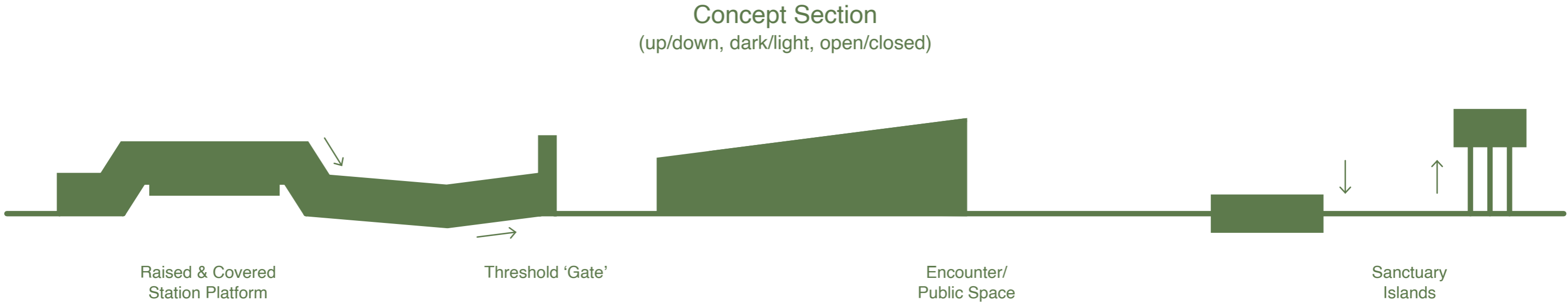
Presentation
Design Process

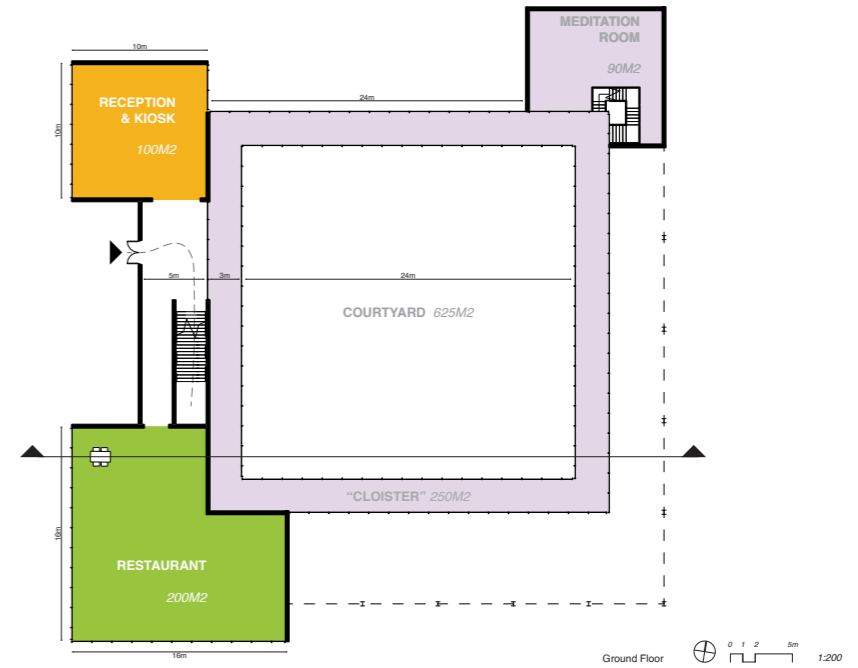
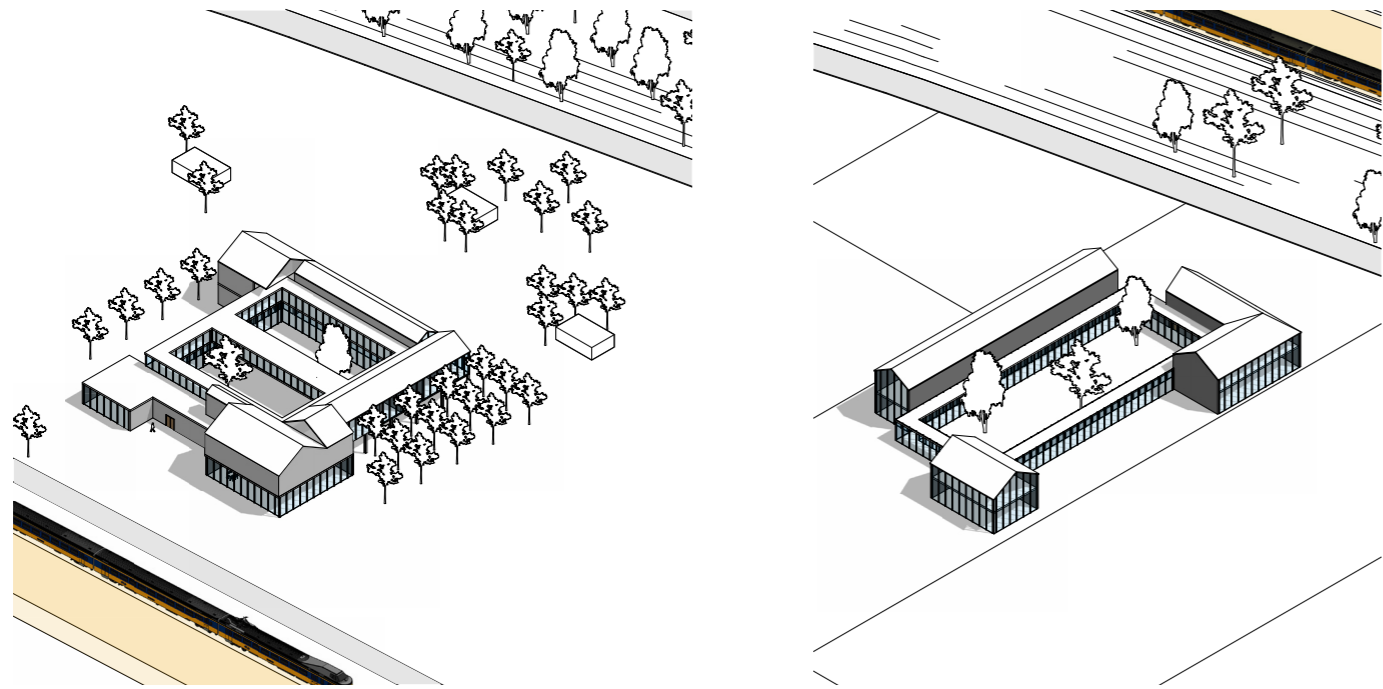
Chris van der Maas



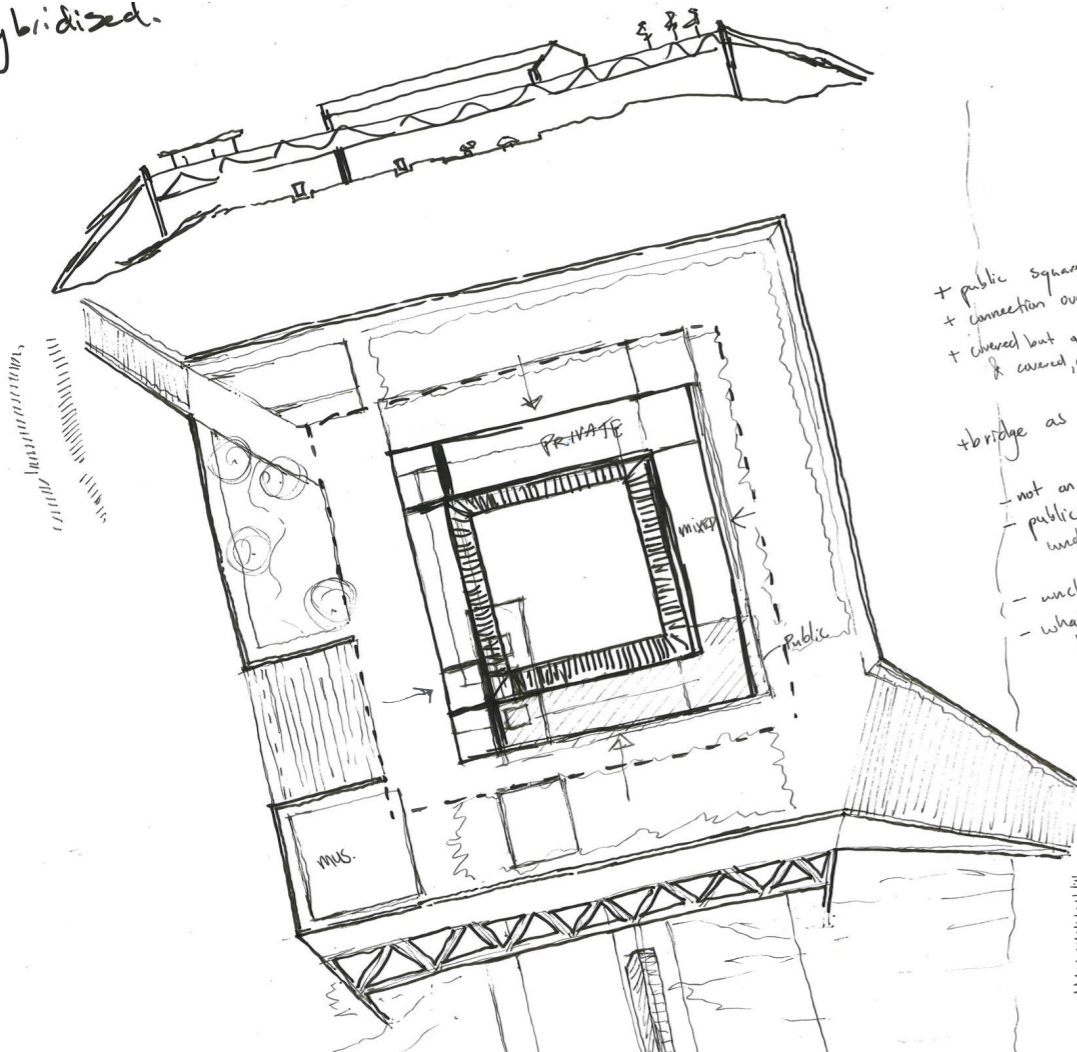
A2



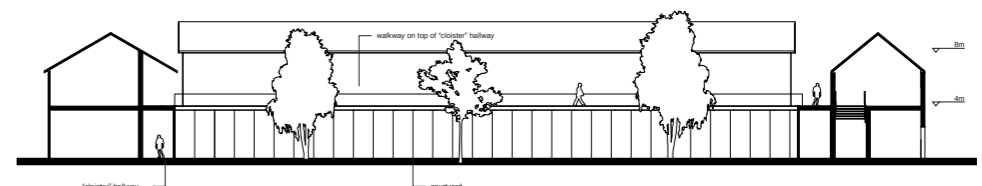
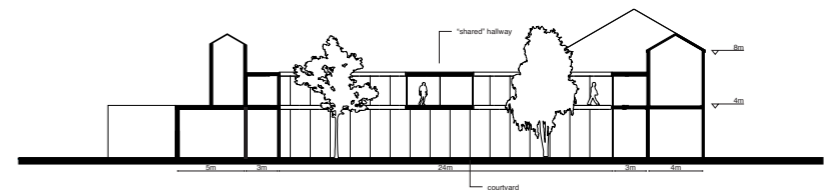
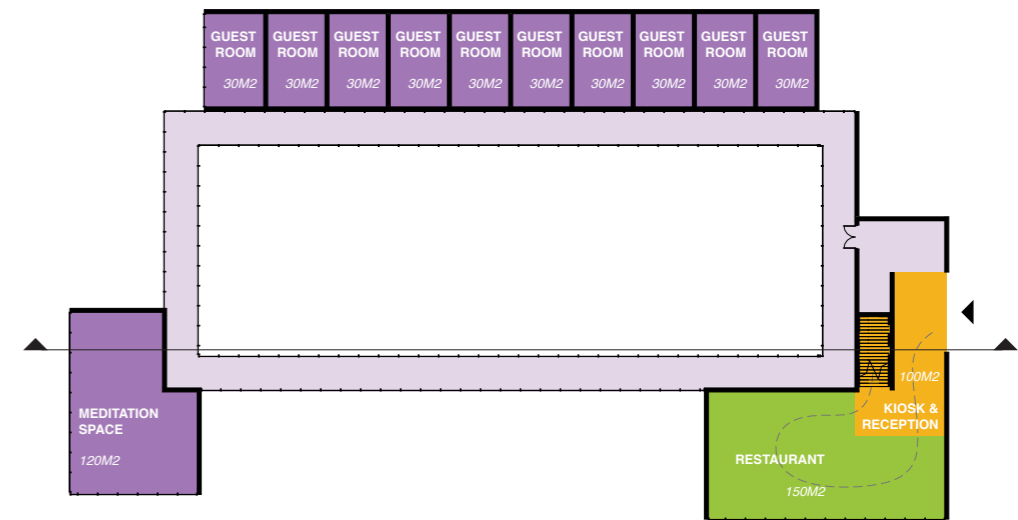




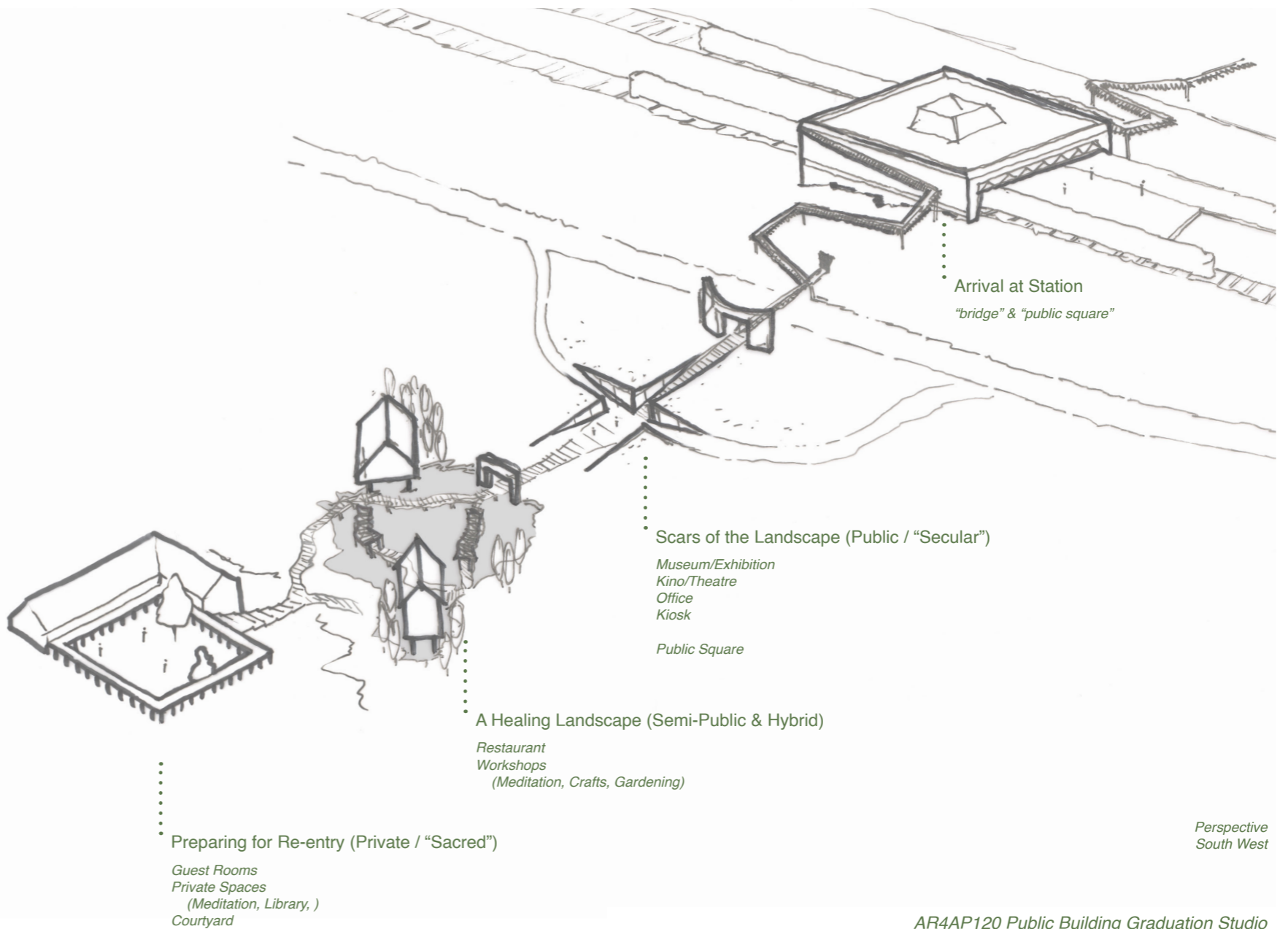
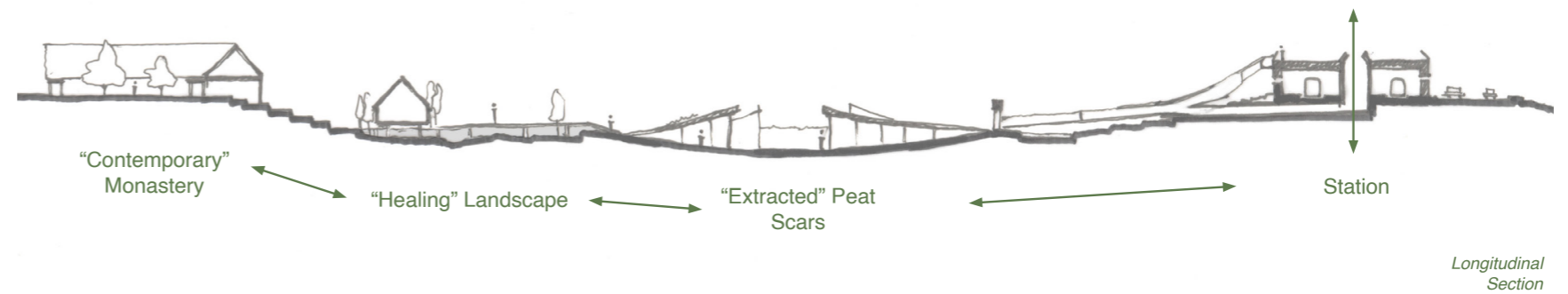
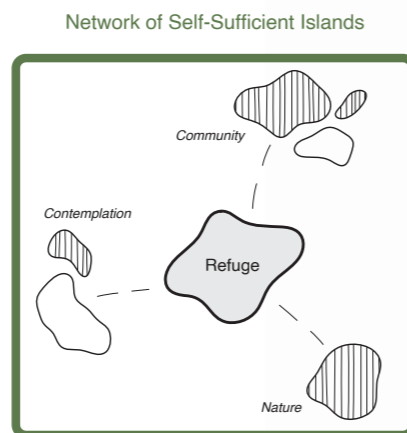
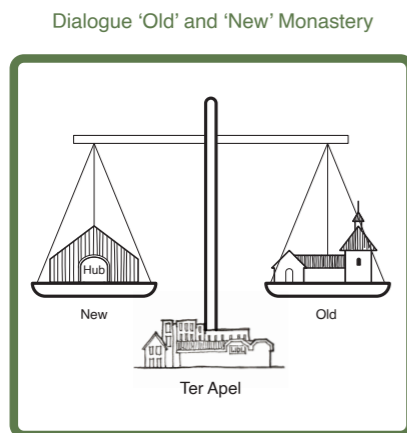
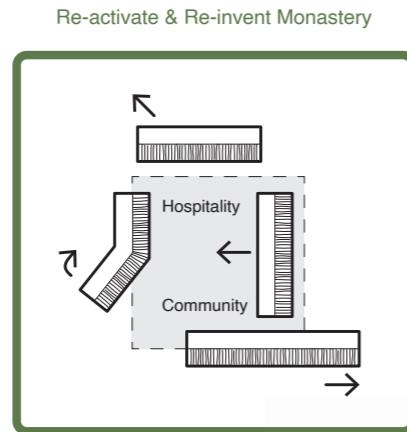
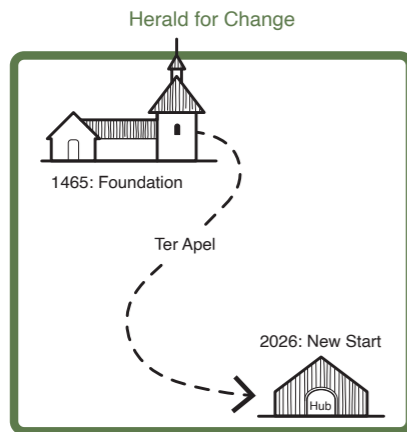
Hybridized.



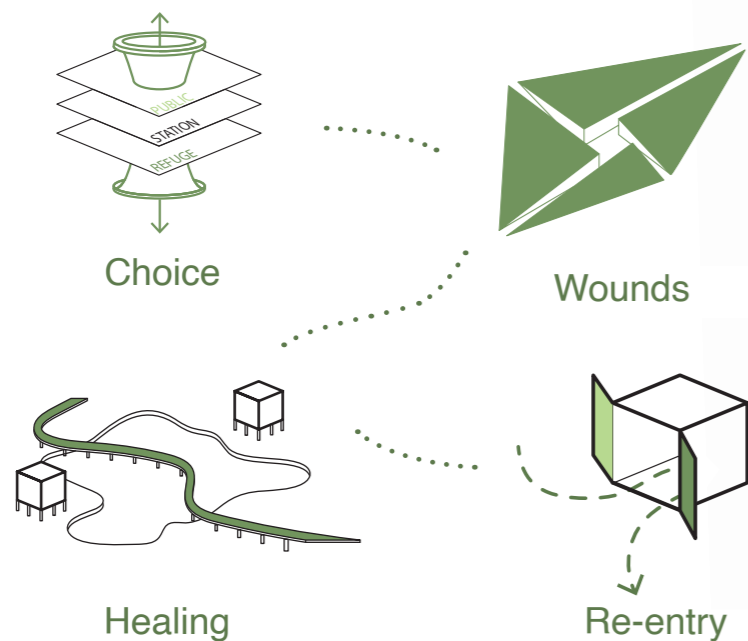
- + public square
- + connection over railway & highway
- + covered but open (secular)
- & covered, closed (sacred)
- + bridge as a square (hybrid)
- not an landscape
- public square function
- unknown urbanistic concept
- unclear where to go
- what does left side have to offer now?



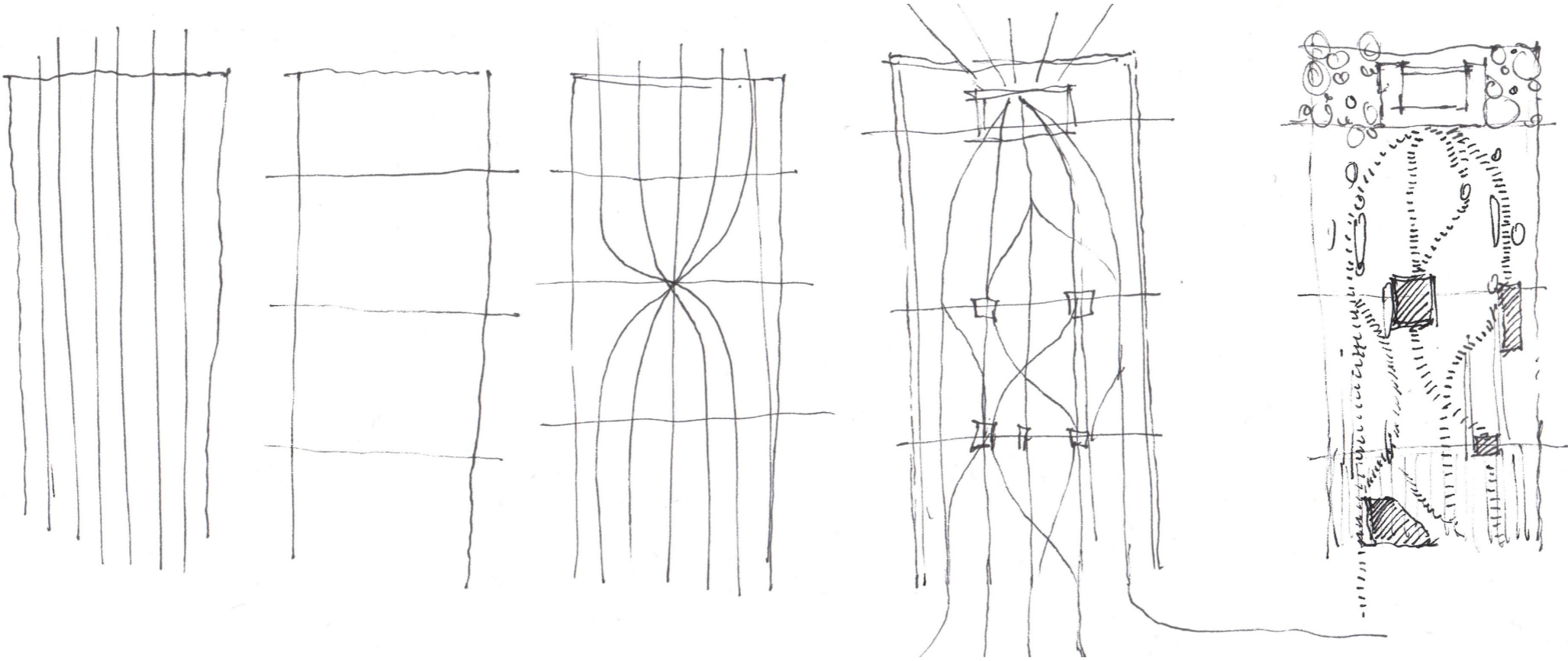
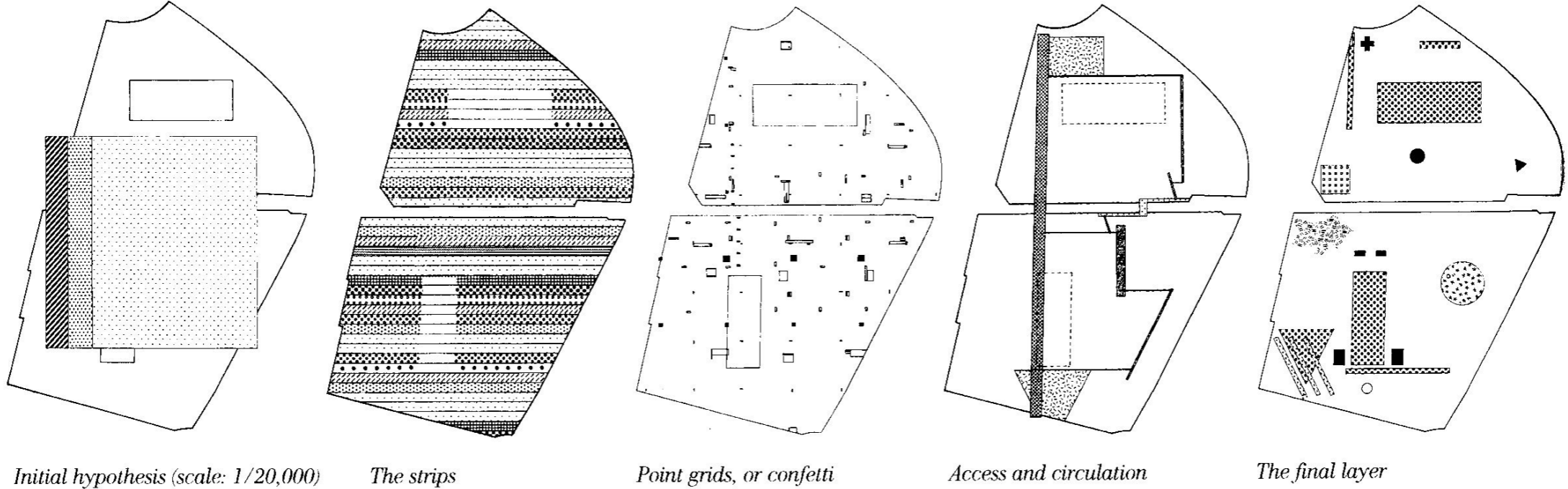
Ambitions



Architectural Concept: Journey towards Healing/Refuge

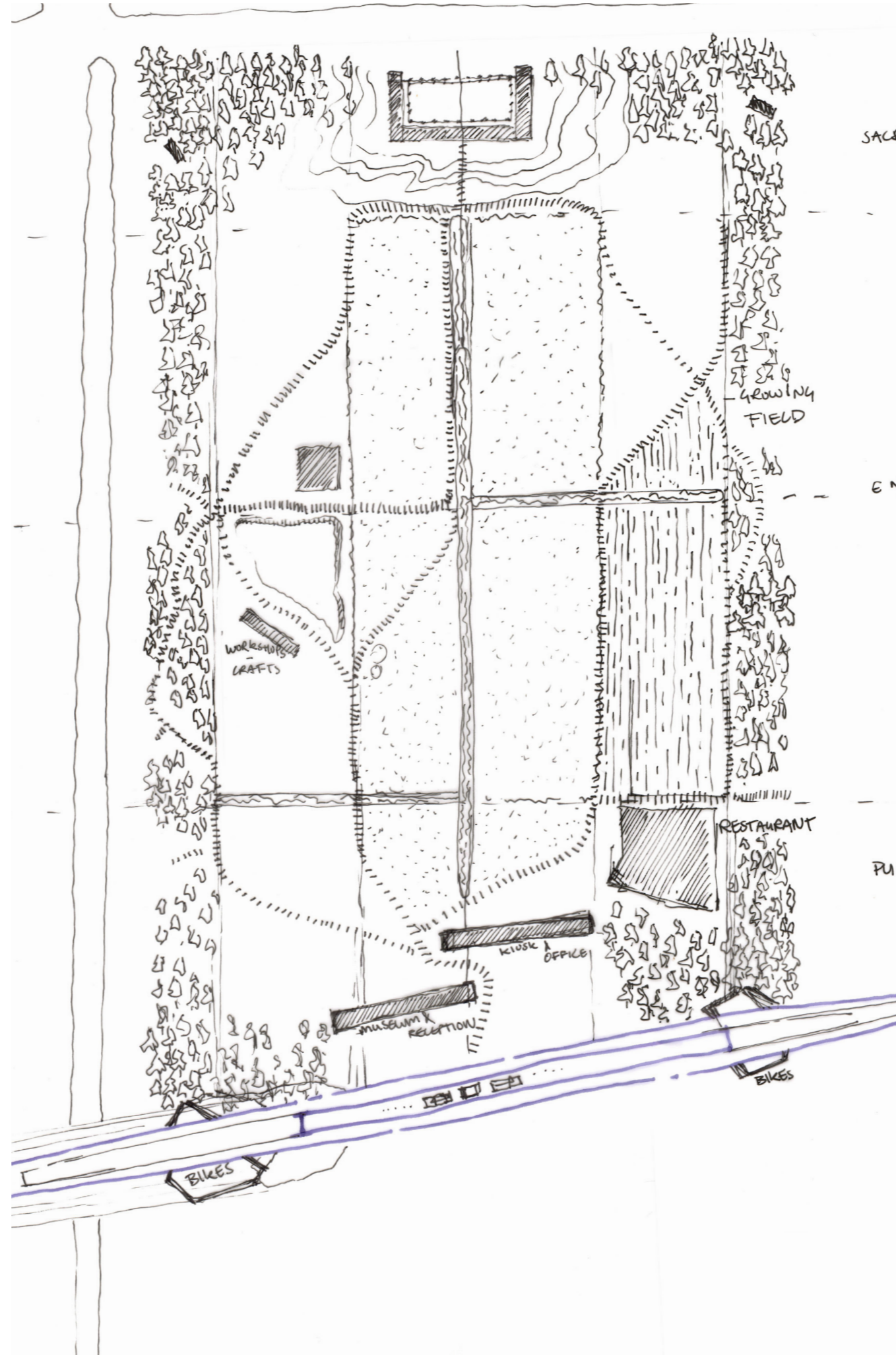


AR4AP120 Public Building Graduation Studio

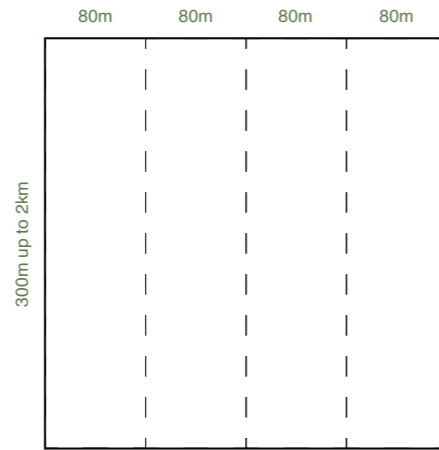


Process
Week 4

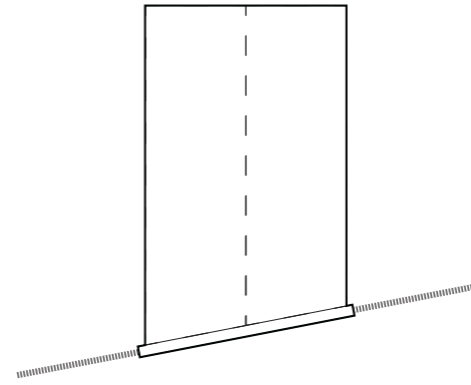
Chris van der Maas



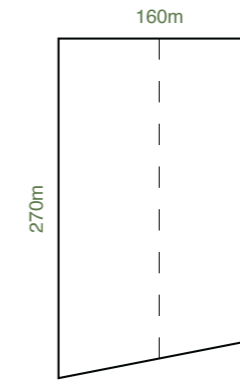
Process
Week 5



Site Defined by Peat Grid



Station Width corresponds to 2x peat field



Final Site



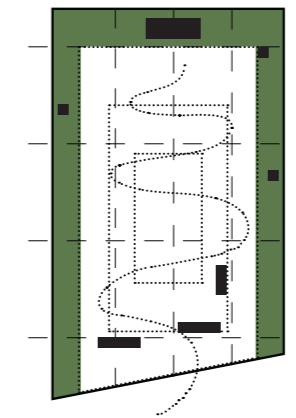
Dividing site into different strips / landscapes



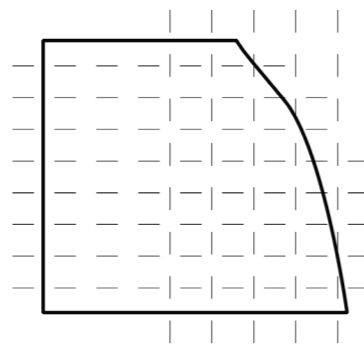
Dividing site into different Sequences



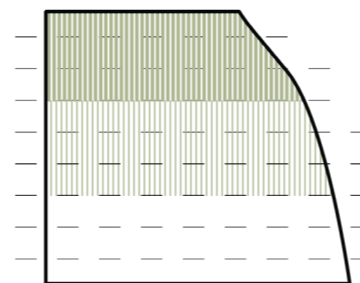
Enclosing the Site "Monastery as a Landscape"



Routes, Moments, Islands and Architecture



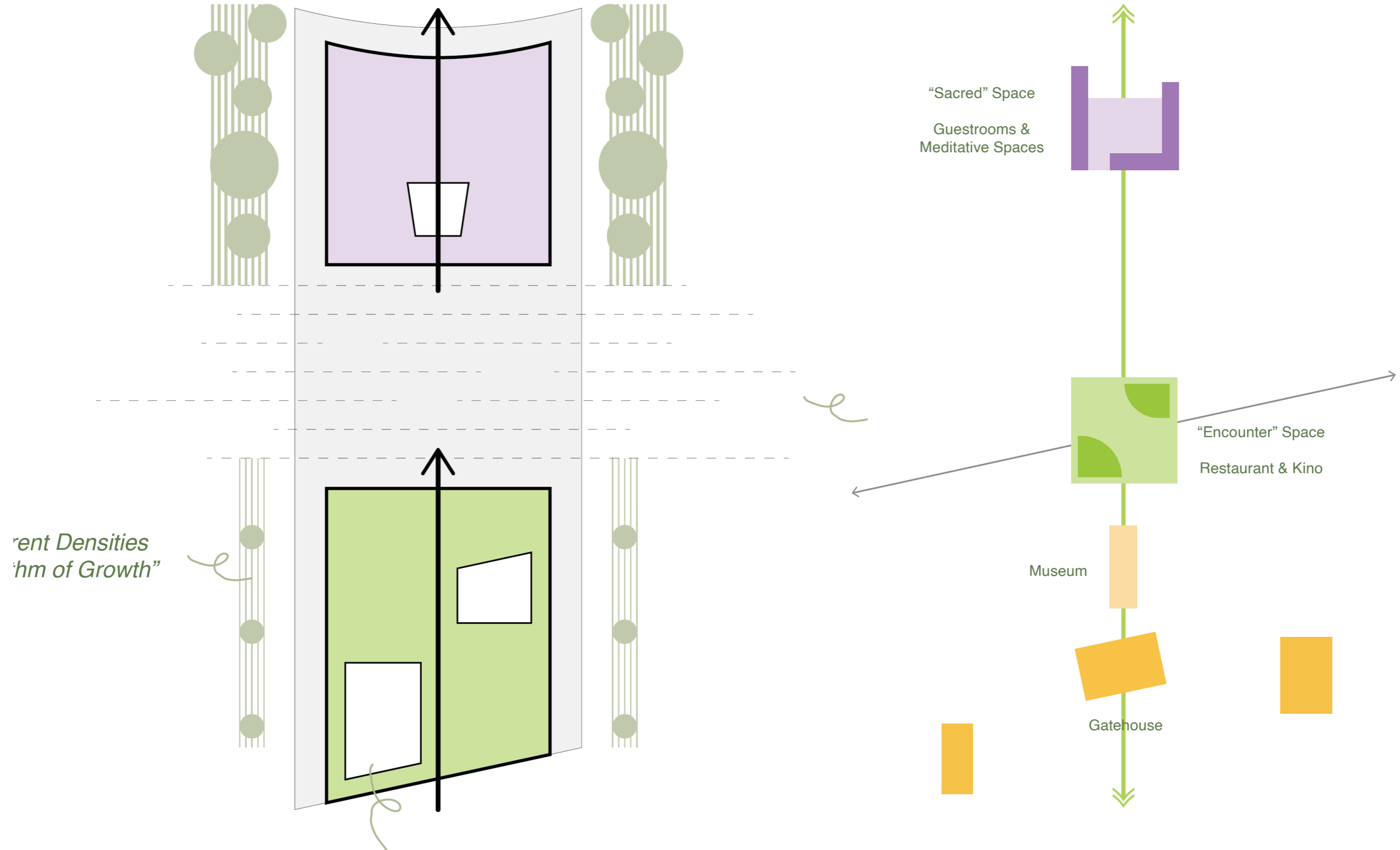
Different Directionalities



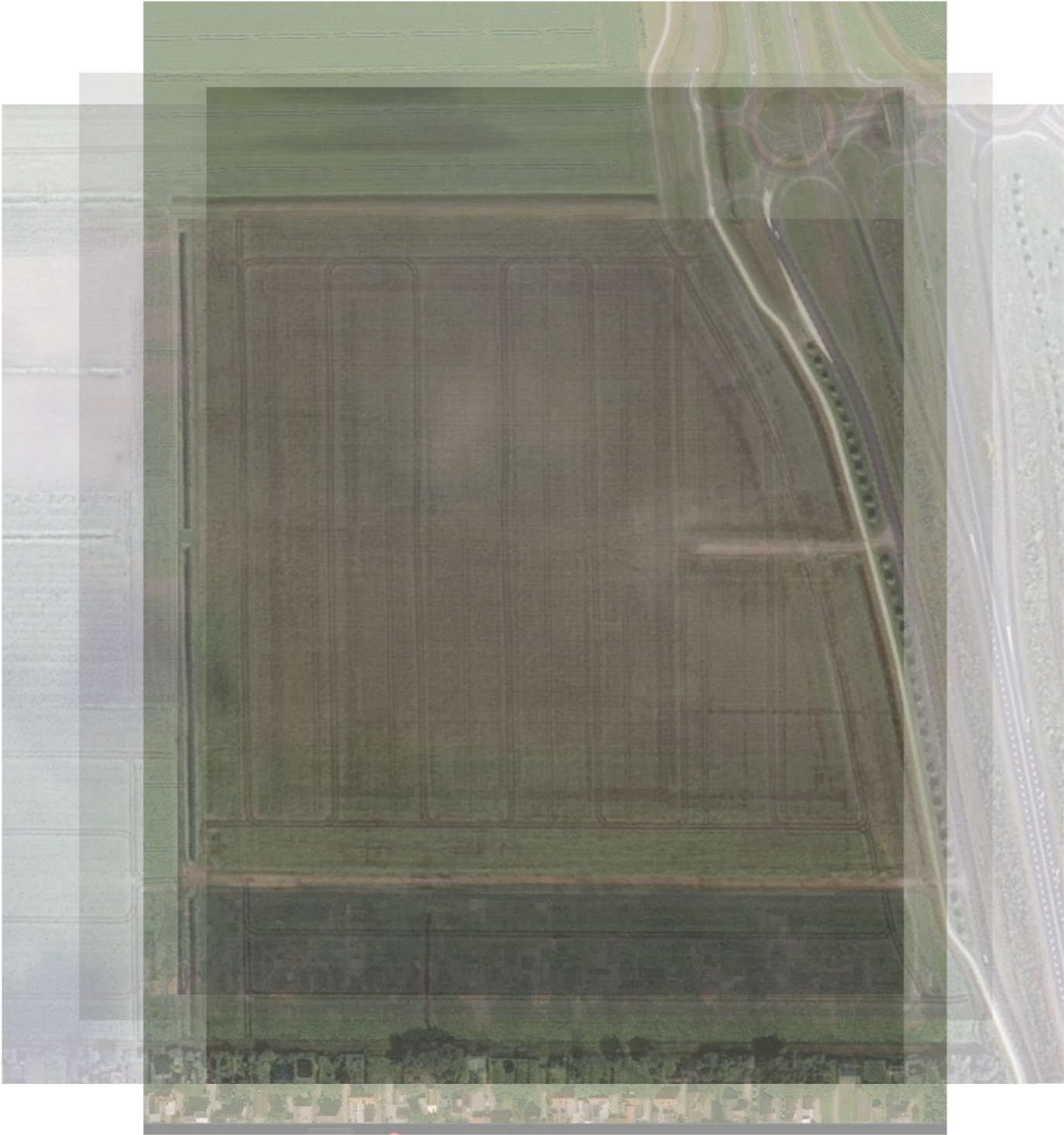
Cyclical Rhythm of Growth



'Anomalies'



Process
Week 6



March,
2023



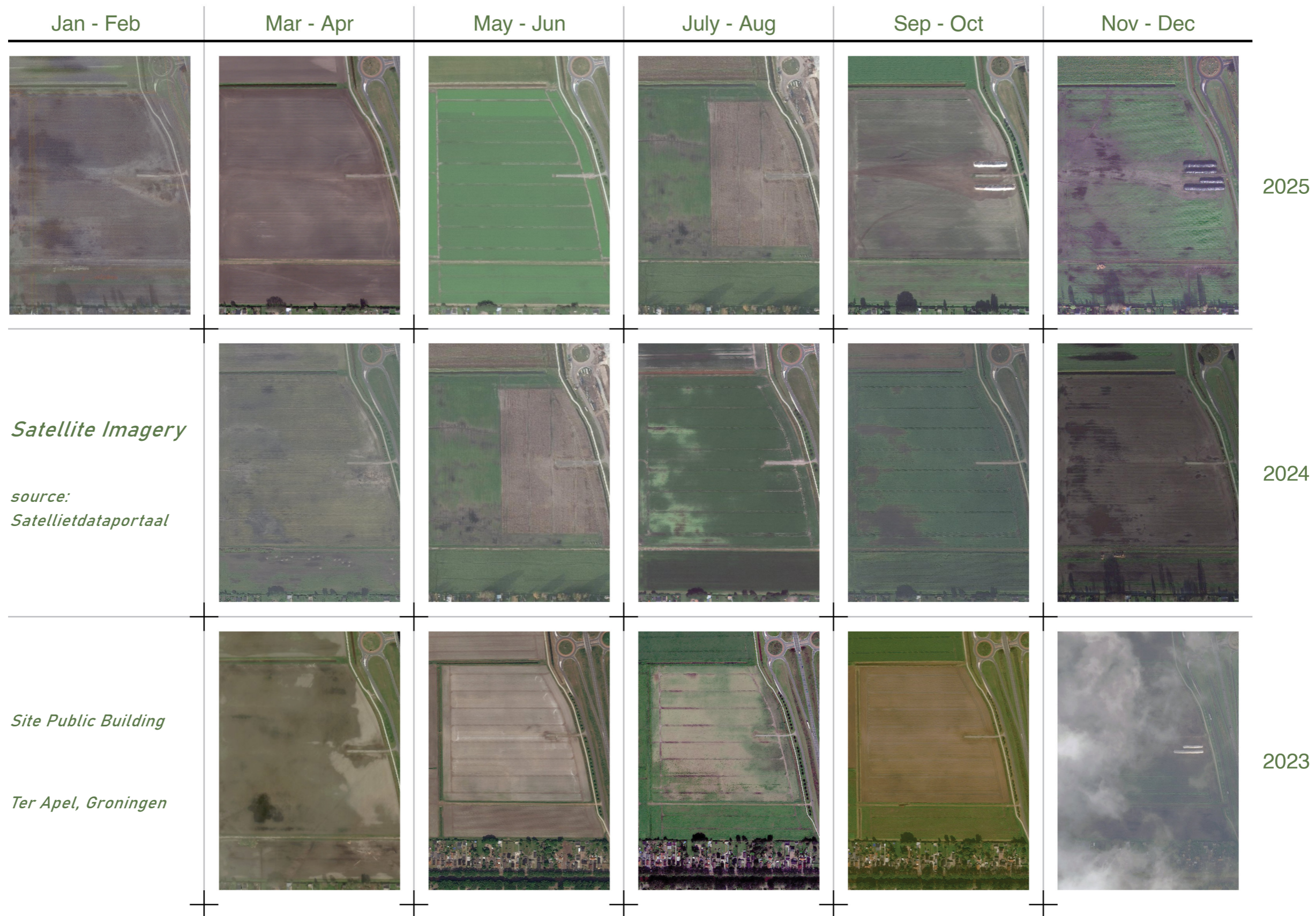
November,
2022

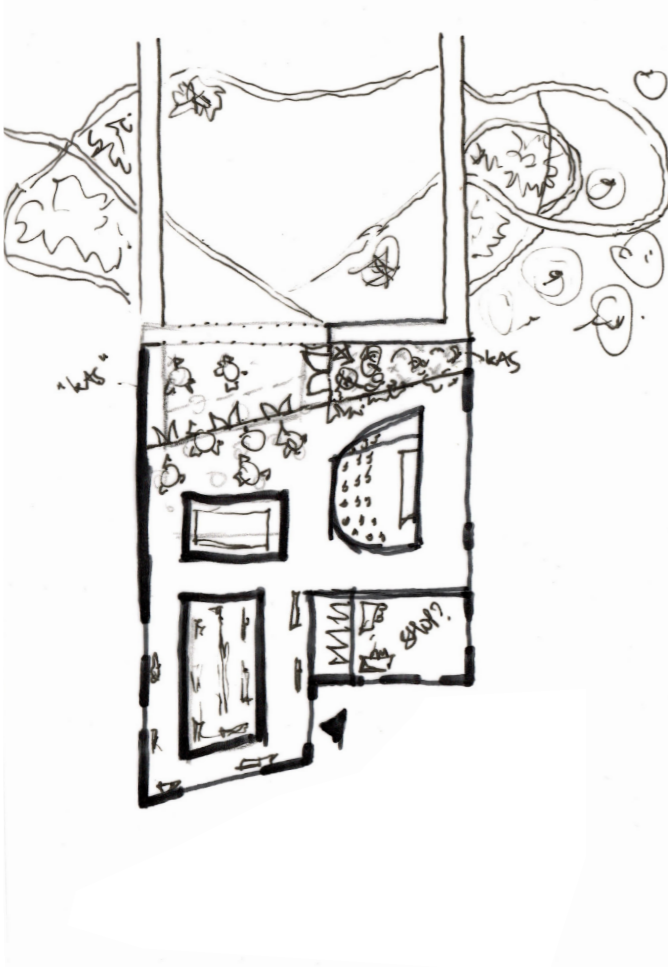


November,
2025



June,
2024

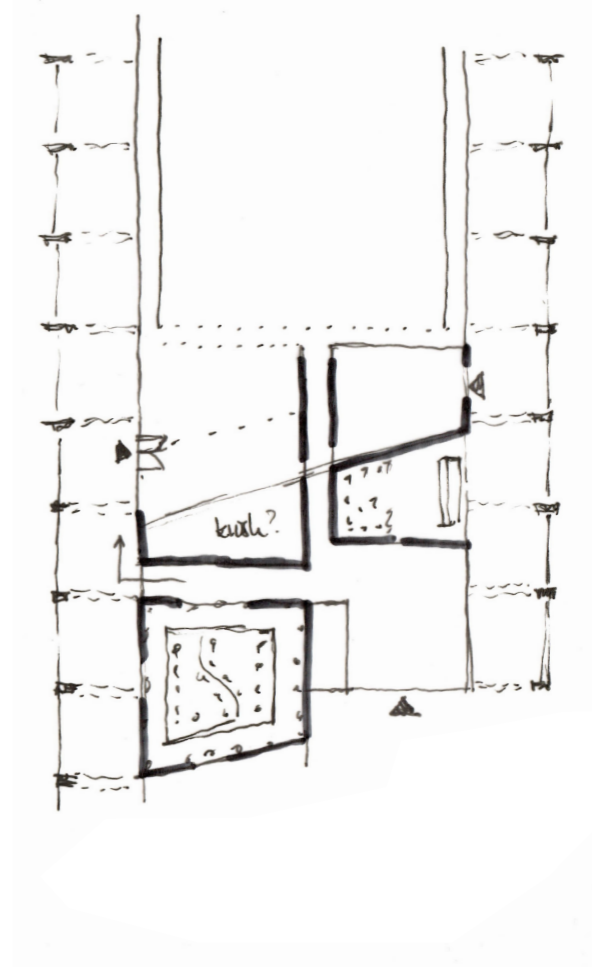




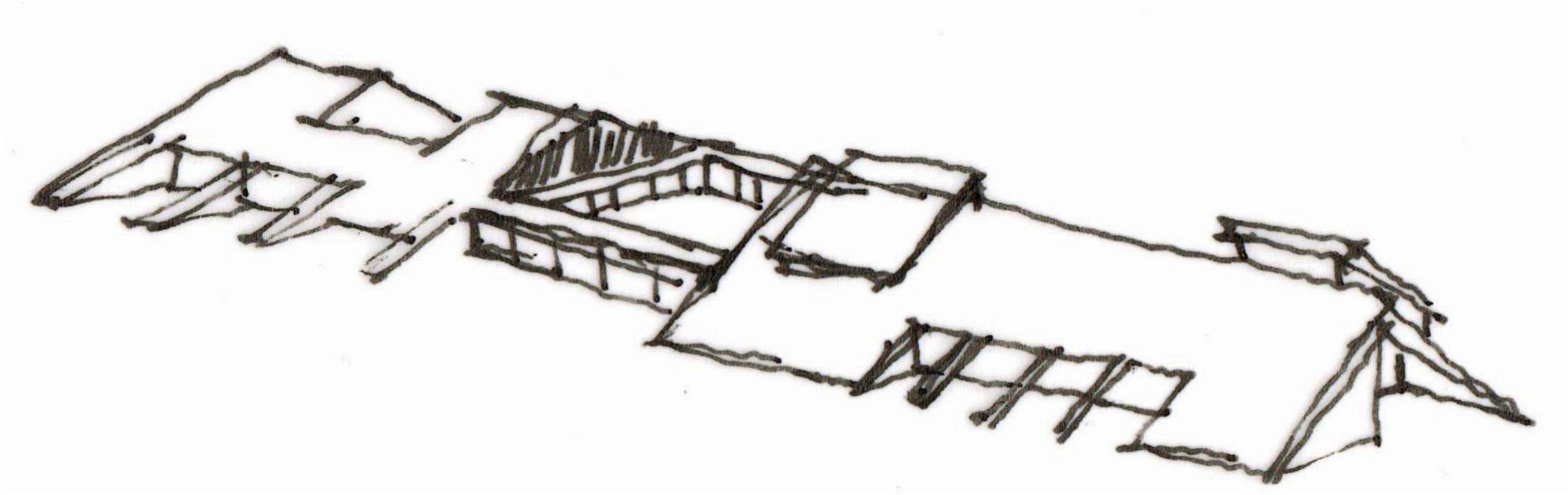
Islands



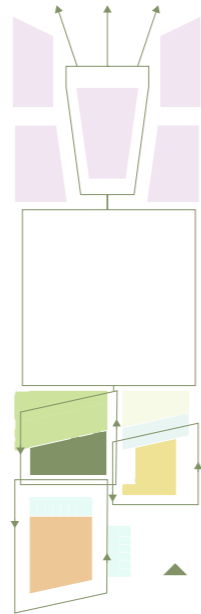
Framed Views



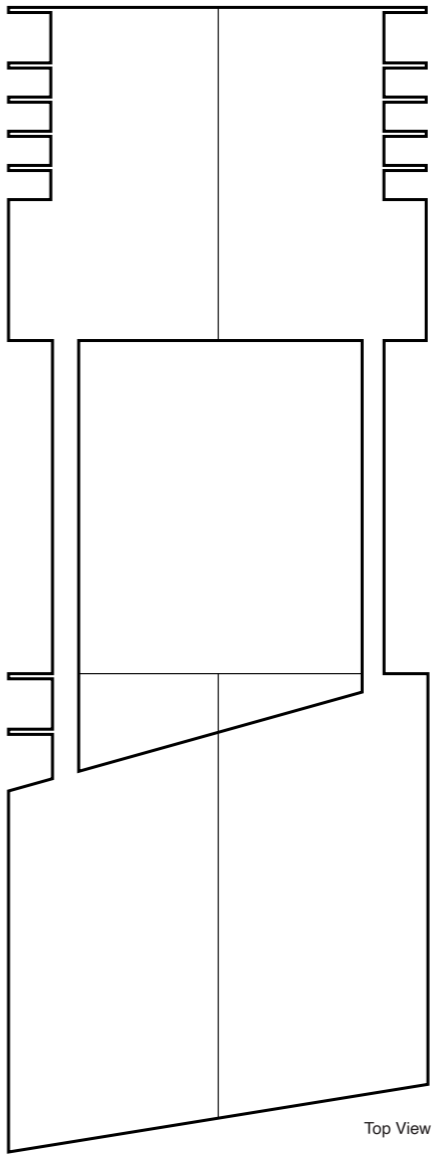
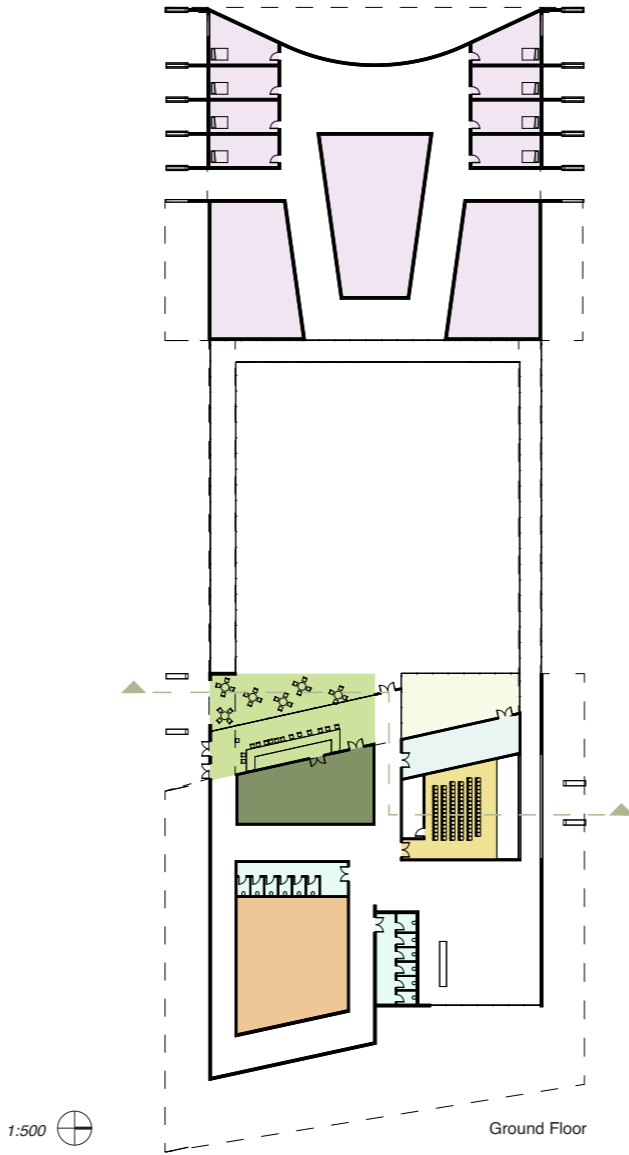
Outside Accessibility



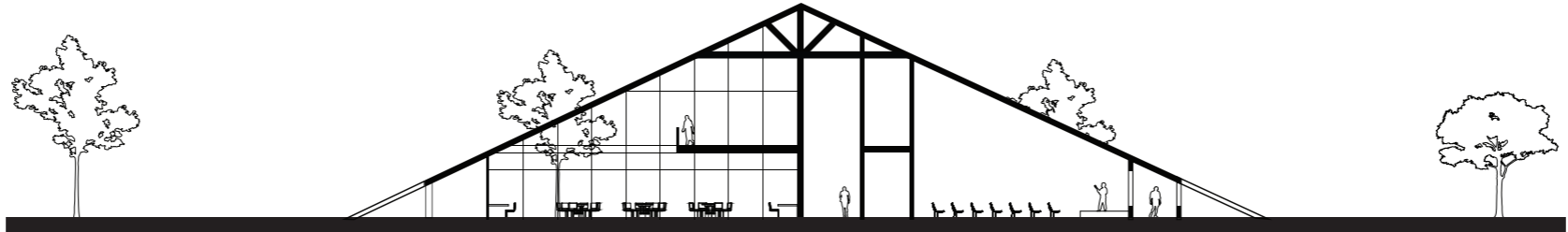
Design Option
Islands



AR4AP120 Public Building Graduation Studio

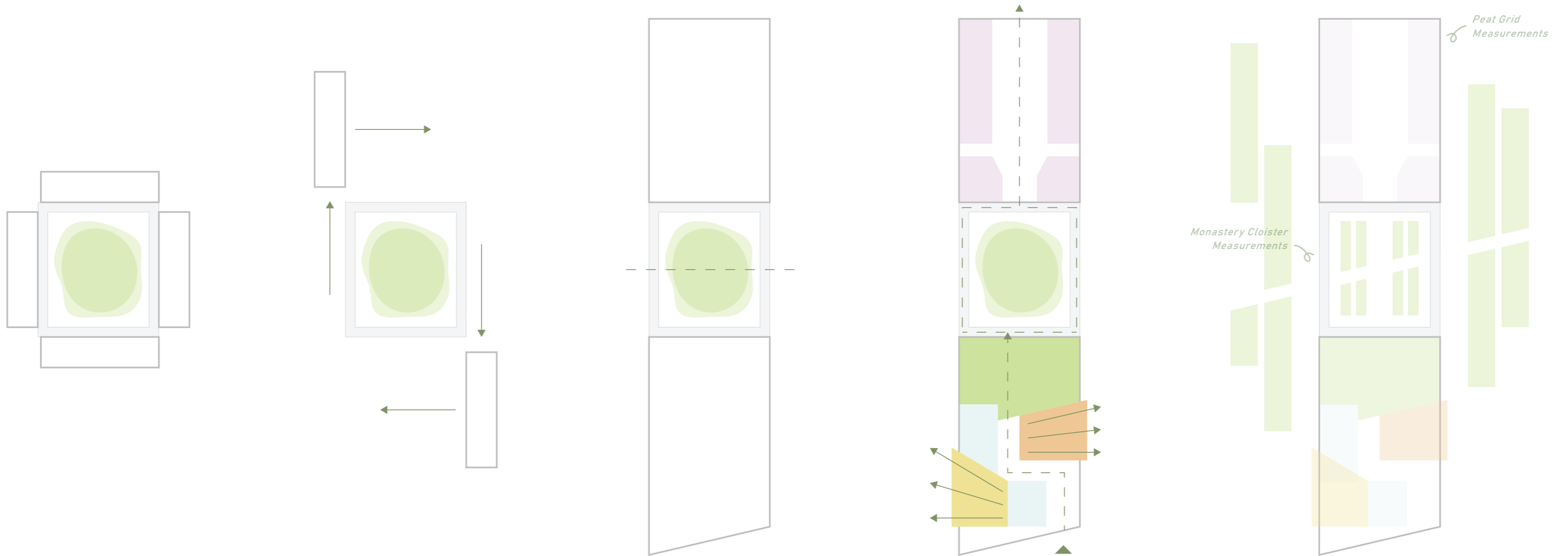


Islands of Refuge



Presentation

Design Process



The Monastery as a Starting Point

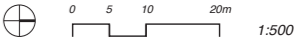
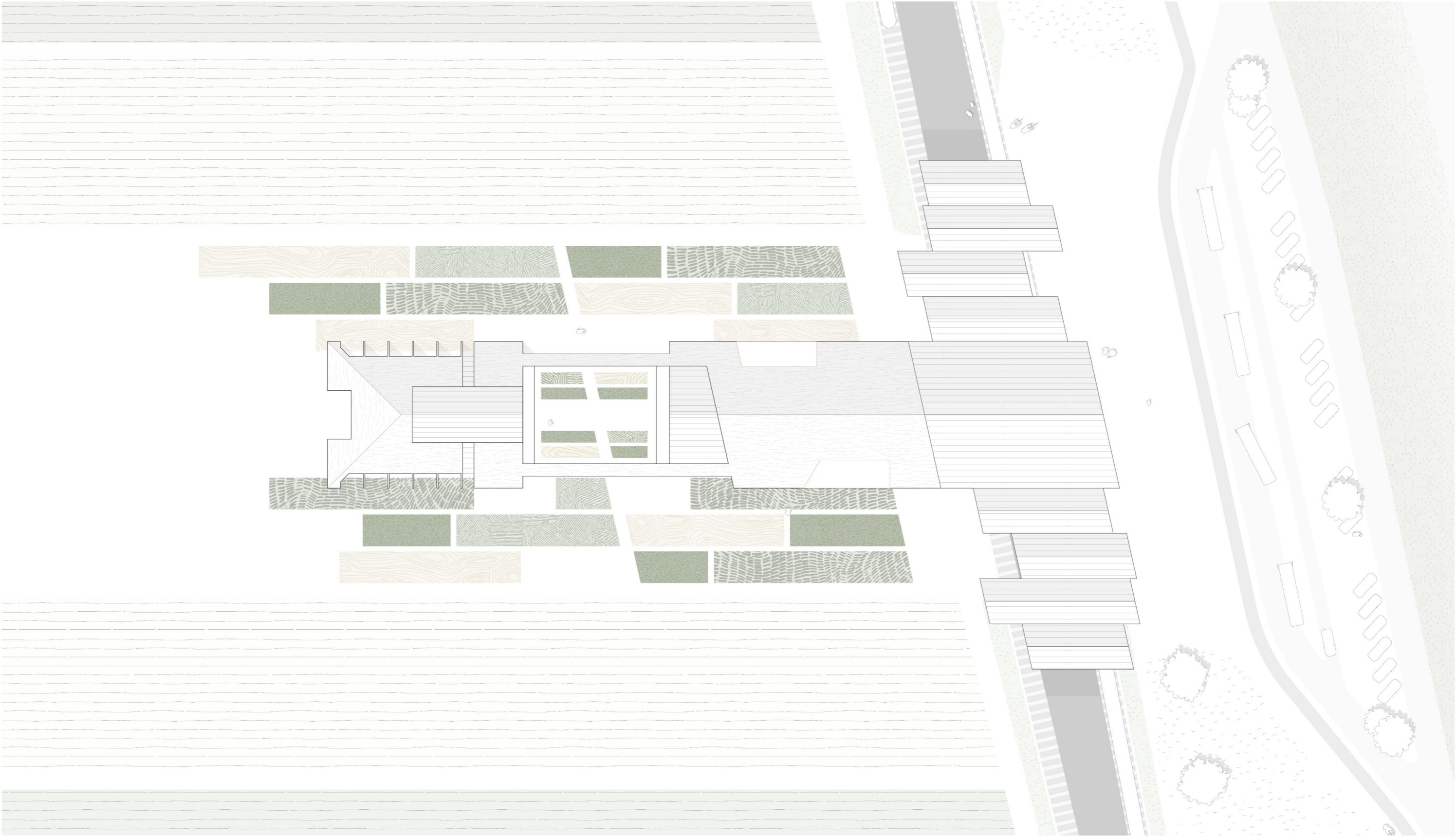
Pulling Apart & Re-arranging

Separation "Sacred" & "Secular"

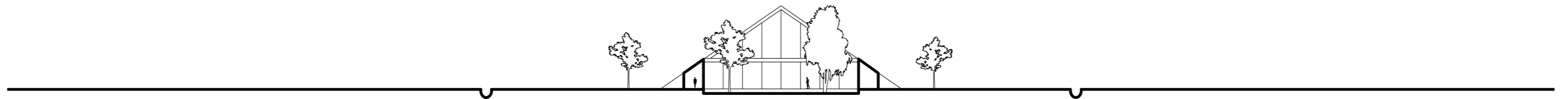
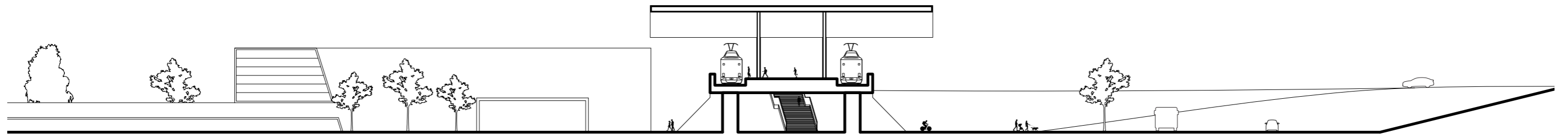
Spaces & Views

Integration into Landscape

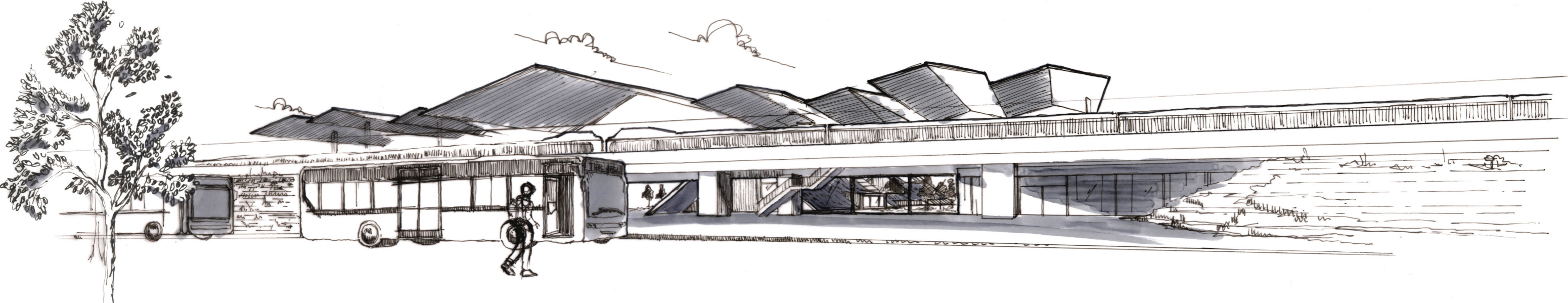
Site Plan



Site Integration Sections



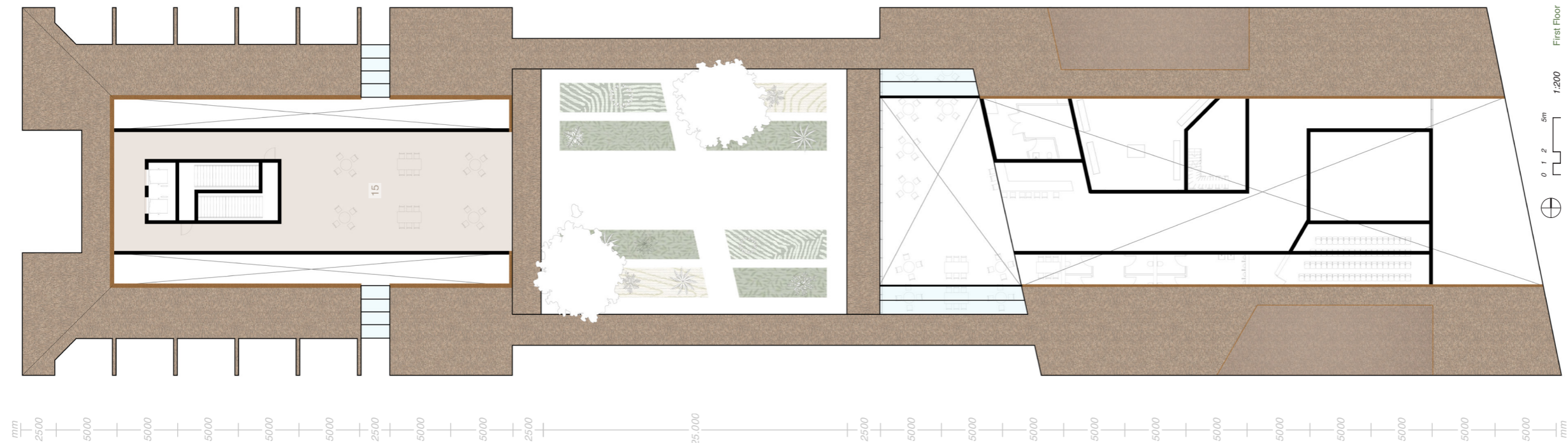
Presentation
Station Entrance



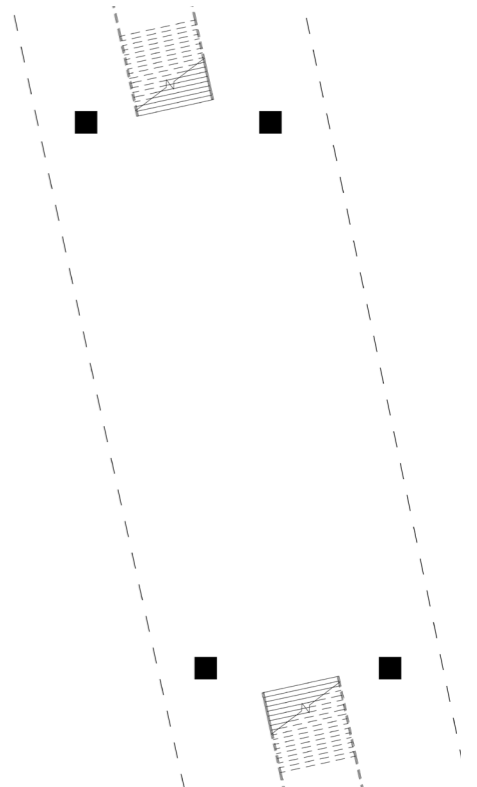
Presentation

Floor Plans

Chris van der Maas



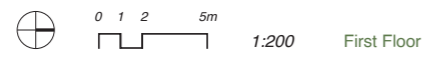
- 01 Reception & Office
- 02 Theatre
- 03 Museum/Exhibition
- 04 Toilets Men
- 05 Toilets Women
- 06 Bar
- 07 Kitchen
- 08 Restaurant
- 09 Cloister/Hallway
- 10 Courtyard
- 11 Reception
- 12 Atelier/Workshop
- 13 Library & Study
- 14 "Hotel" Rooms
- 15 Refectory



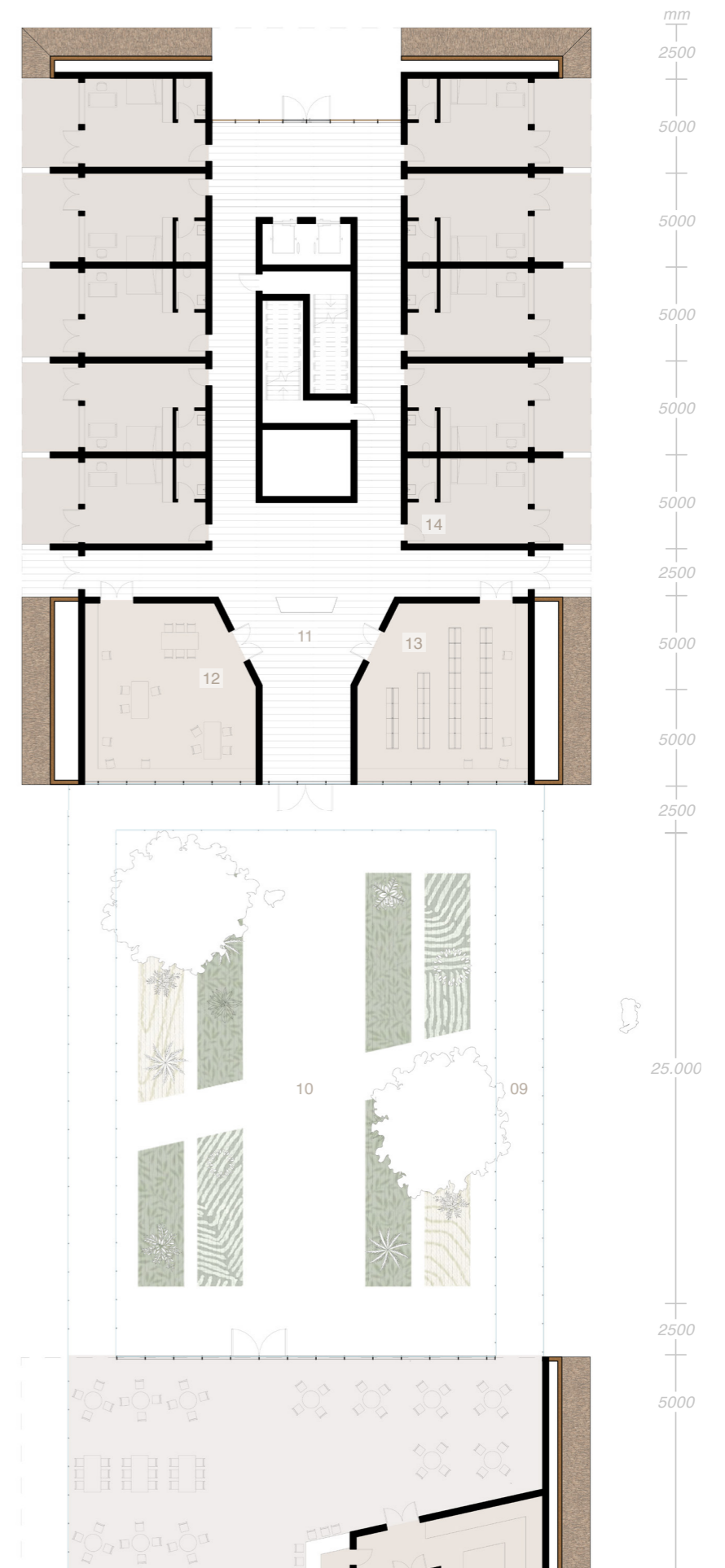
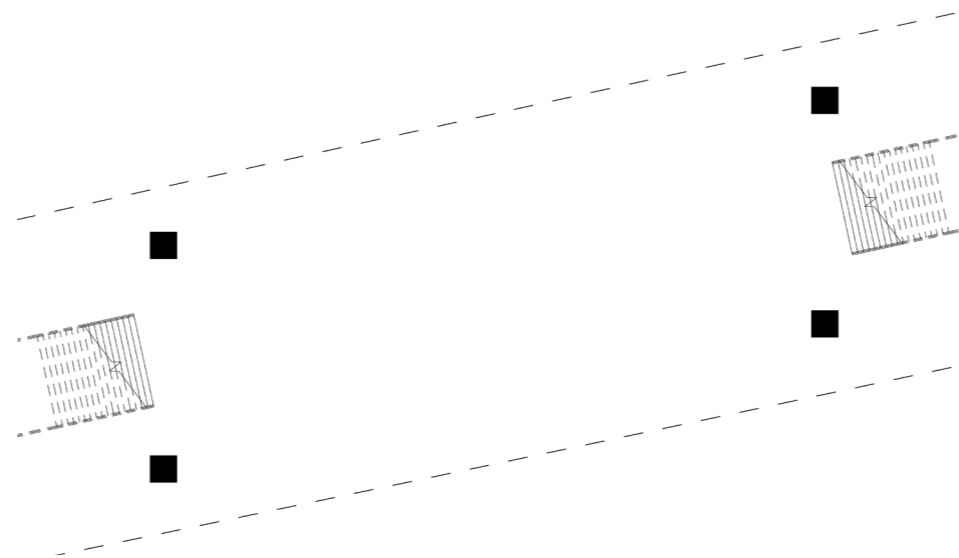
Presentation

Floor Plans

Chris van der Maas

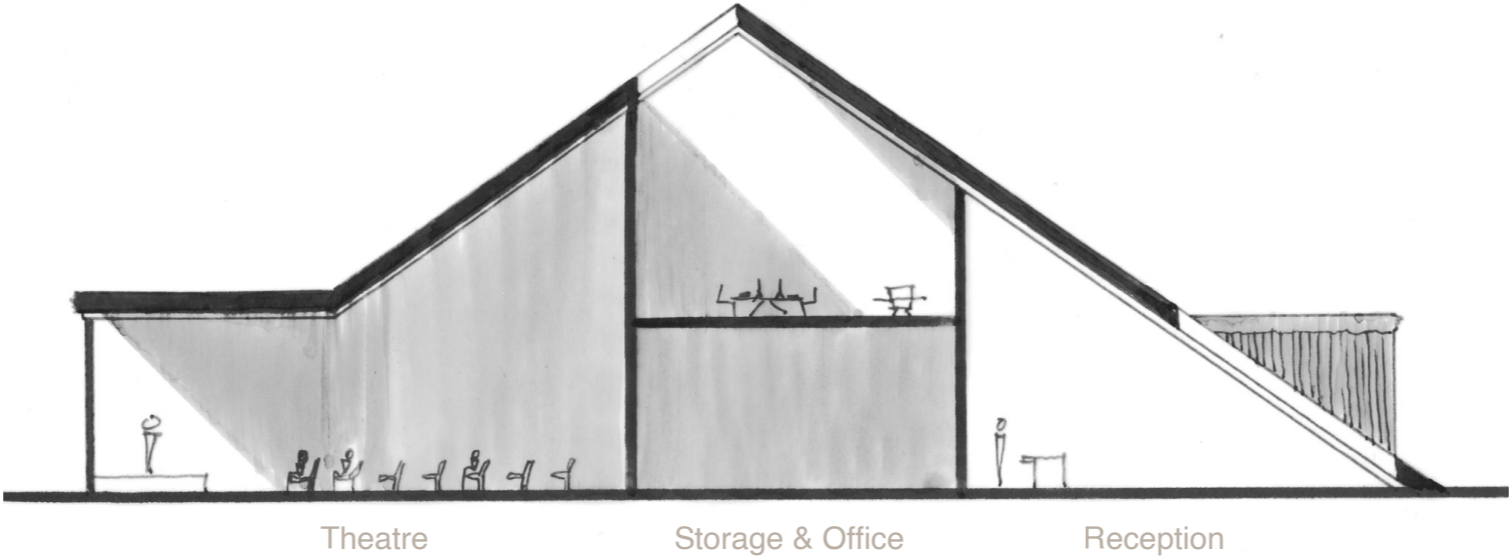
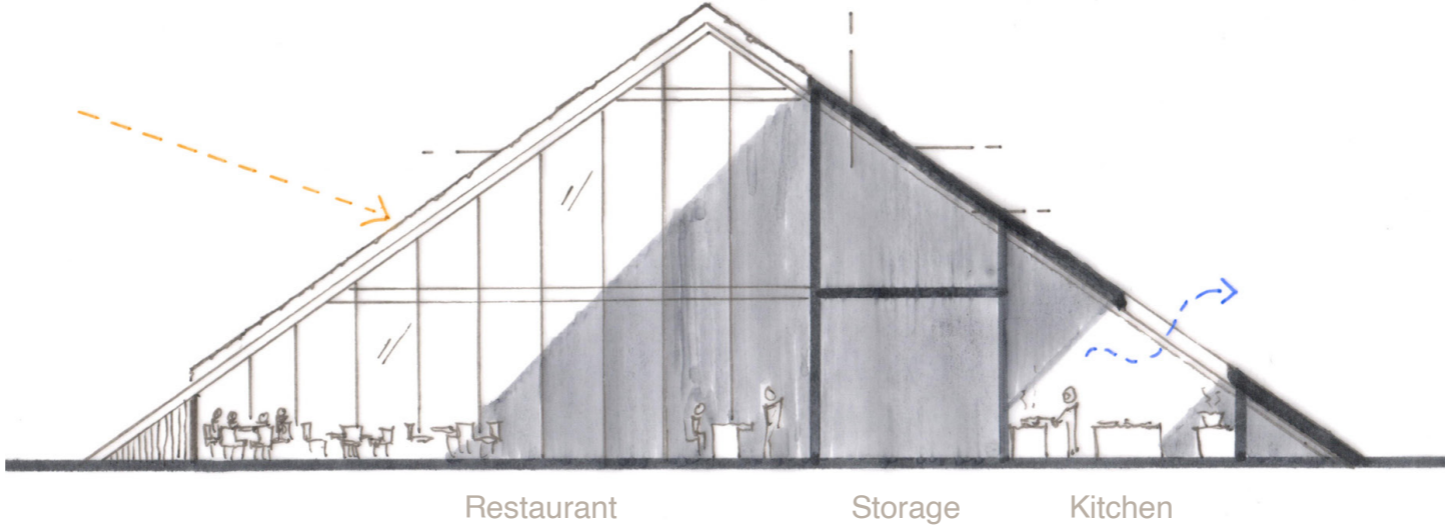
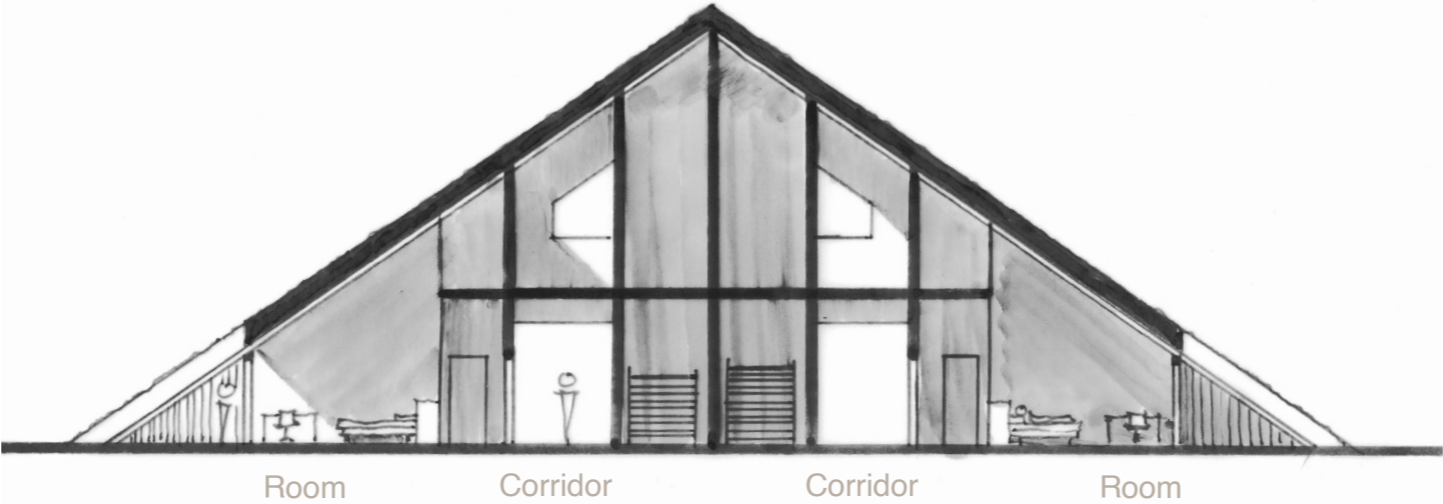


- | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 01 Reception & Office | 08 Restaurant | 13 Library & Study |
| 02 Theatre | 09 Cloister/Hallway | 14 "Hotel" Rooms |
| 03 Museum/Exhibition | 10 Courtyard | 15 Refectory |
| 04 Toilets Men | 11 Reception | |
| 05 Toilets Women | 12 Atelier/Workshop | |
| 06 Bar | | |
| 07 Kitchen | | |

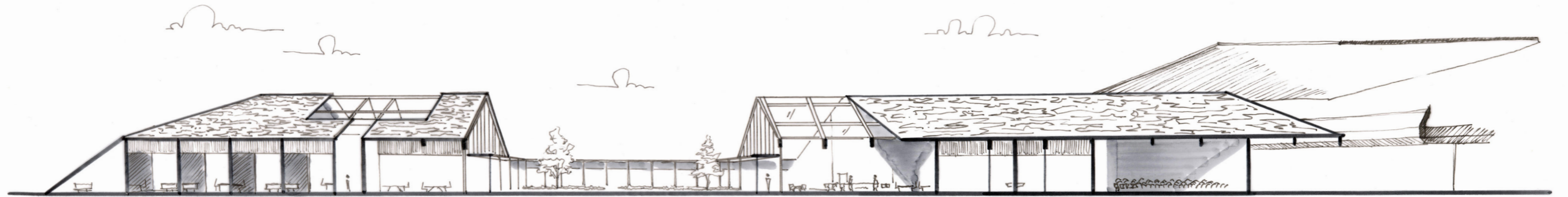


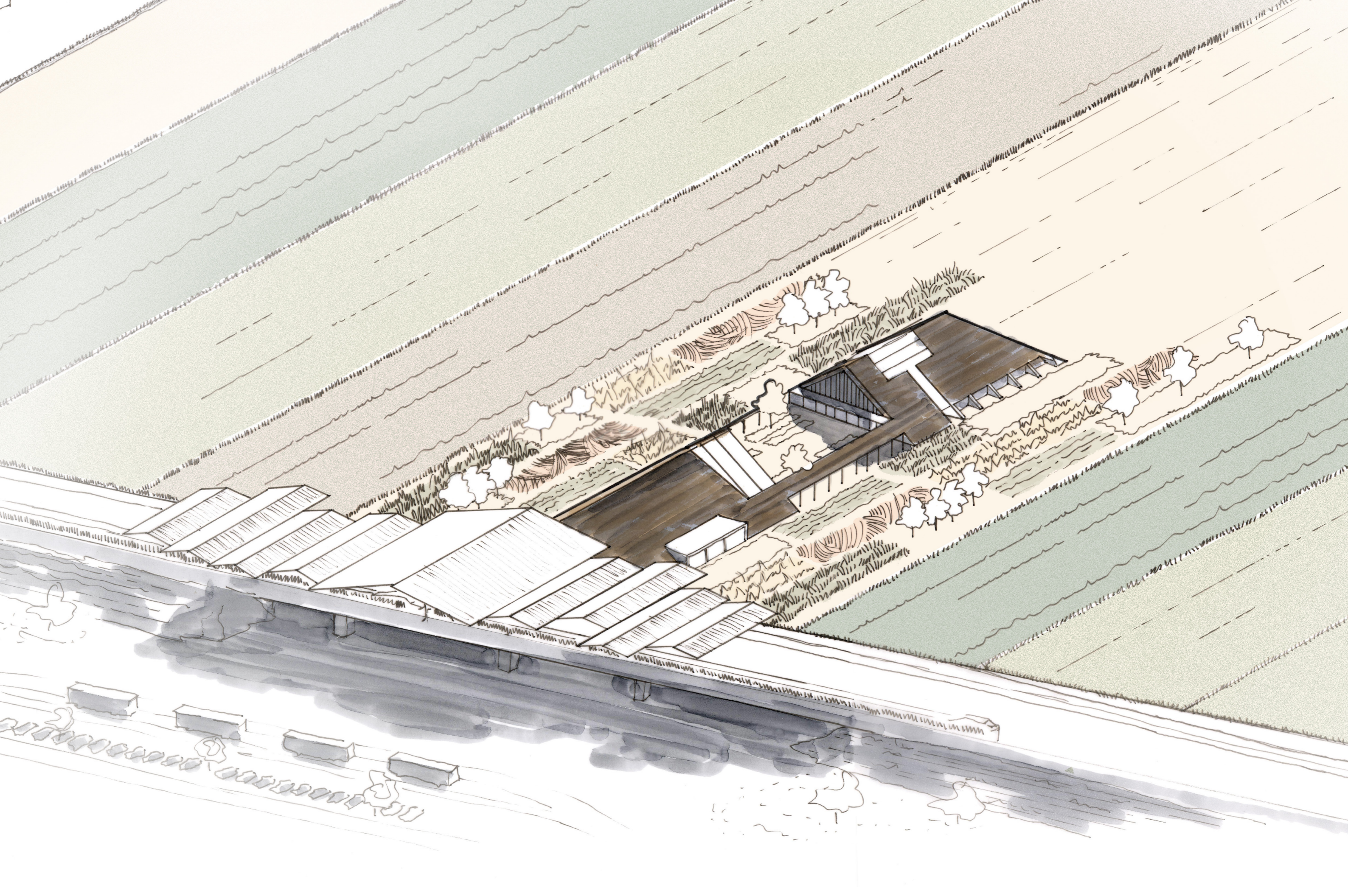
Presentation
Sections

Chris van der Maas

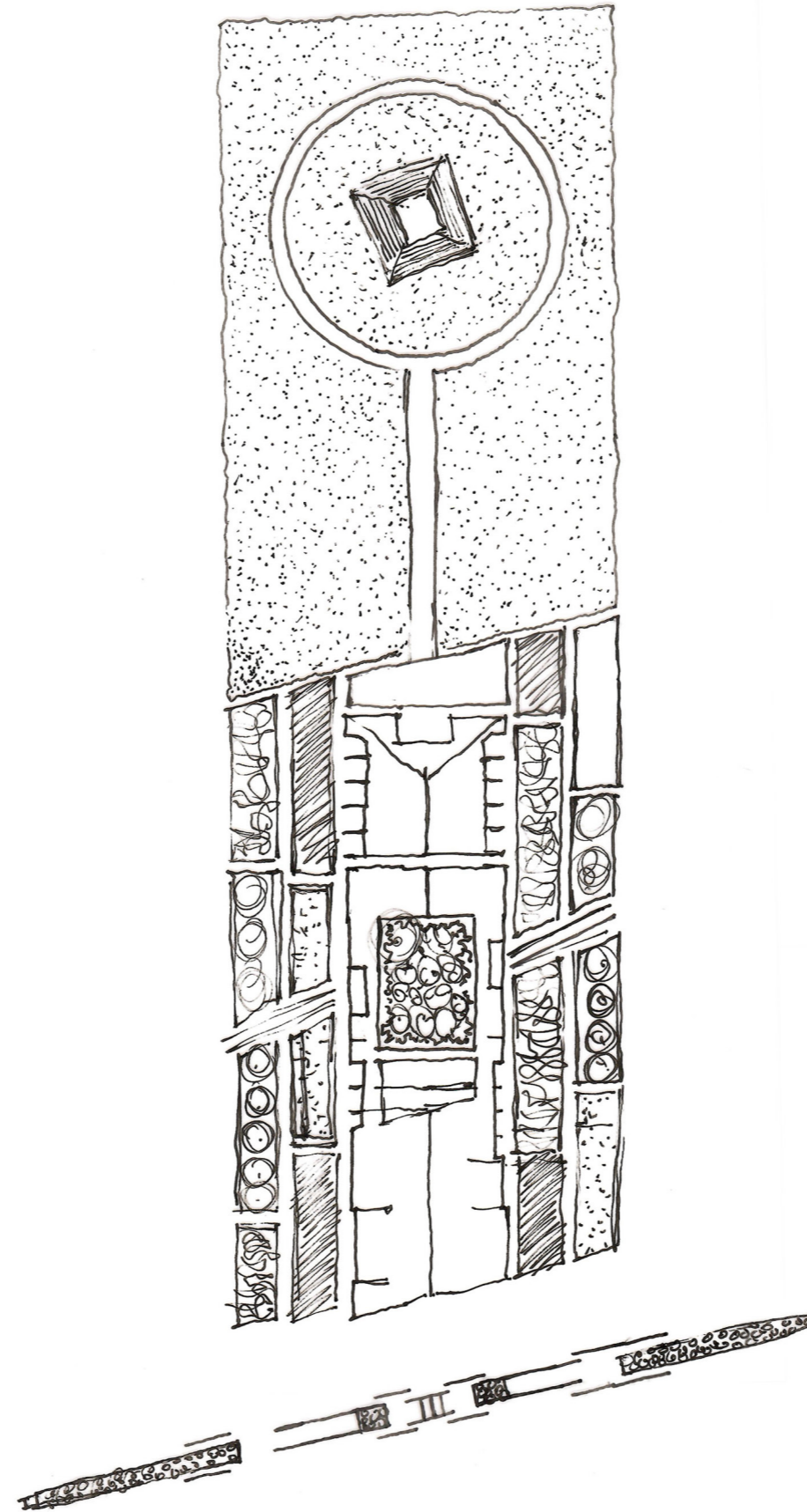


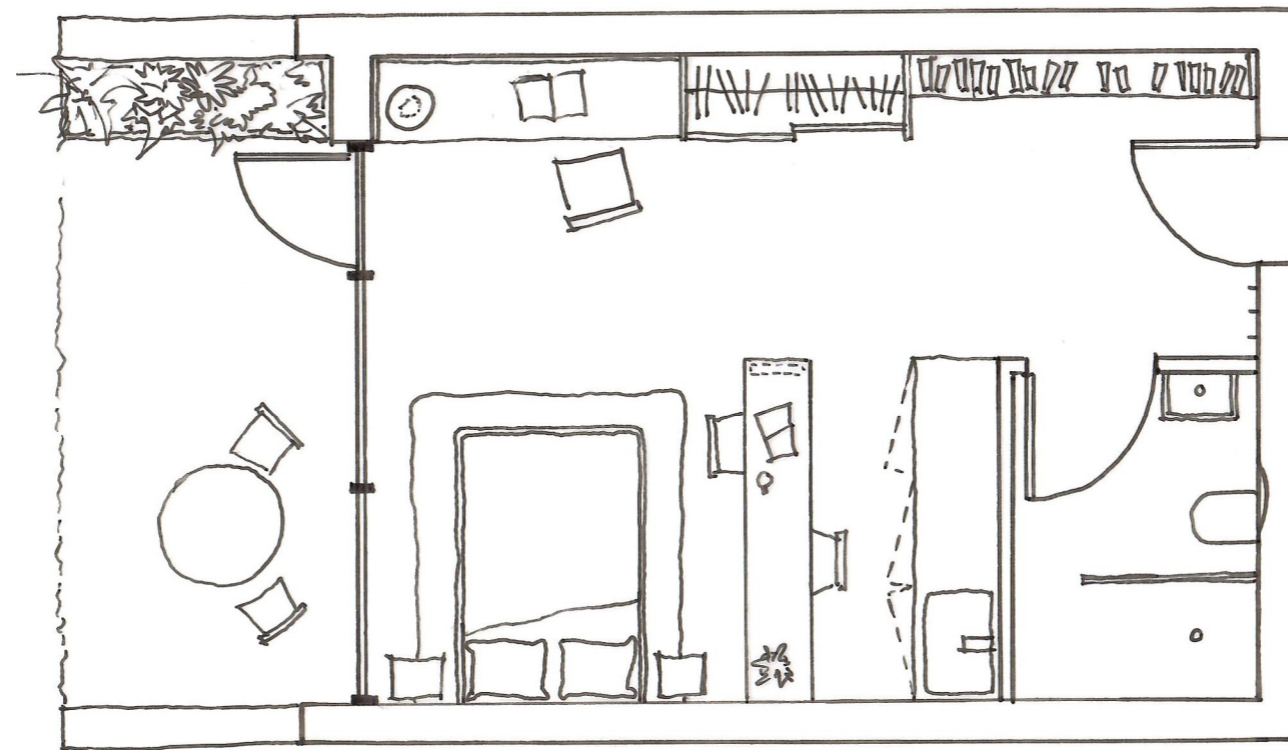
Longitudinal Section



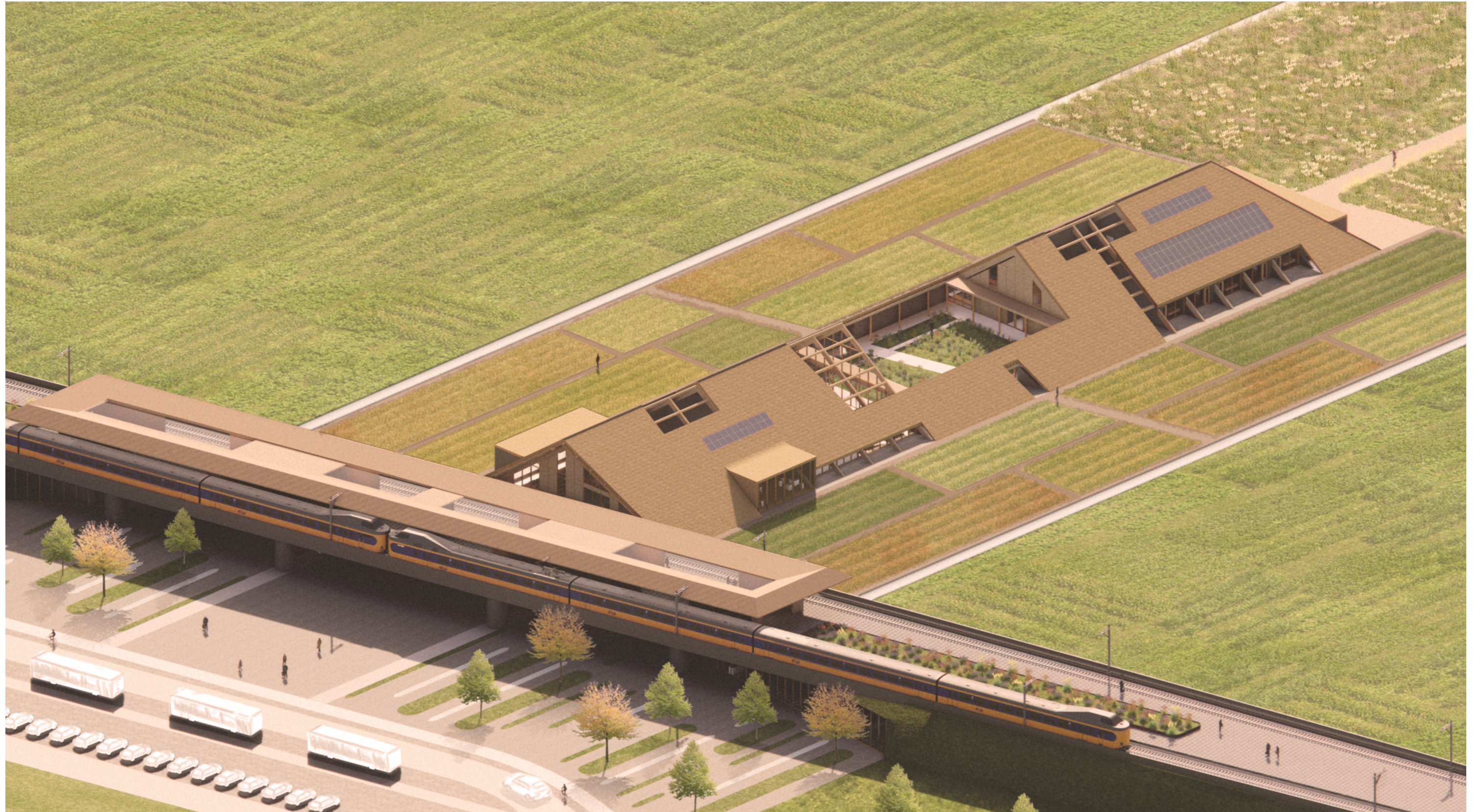


A3

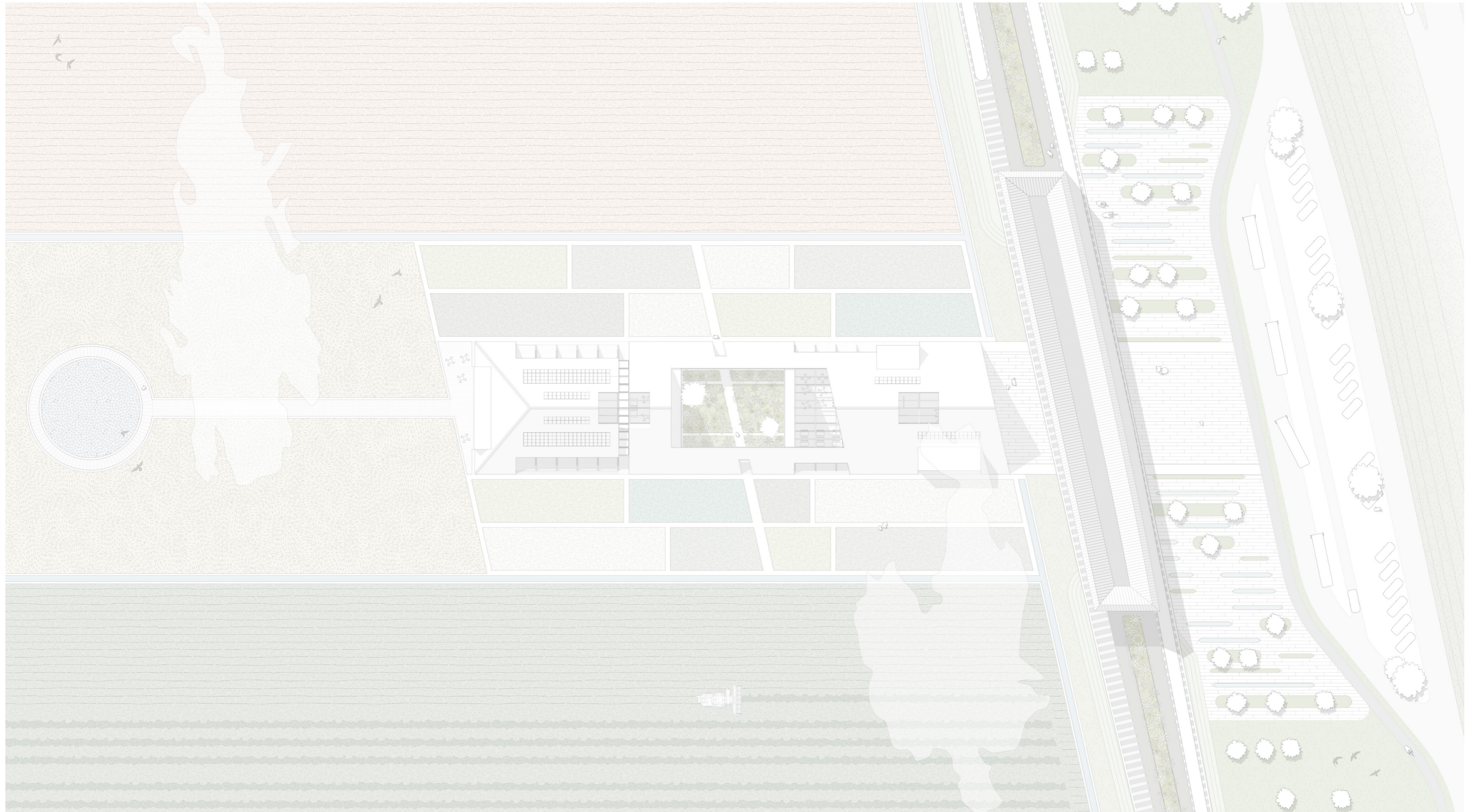




Axonometric Projection Exterior

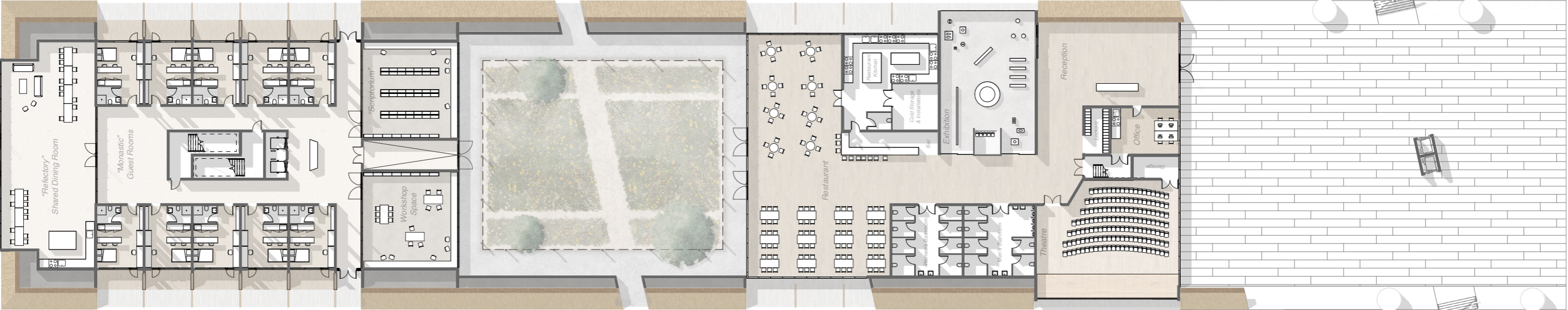


Site



Presentation

Floor Plans



Presentation
Museum Interior



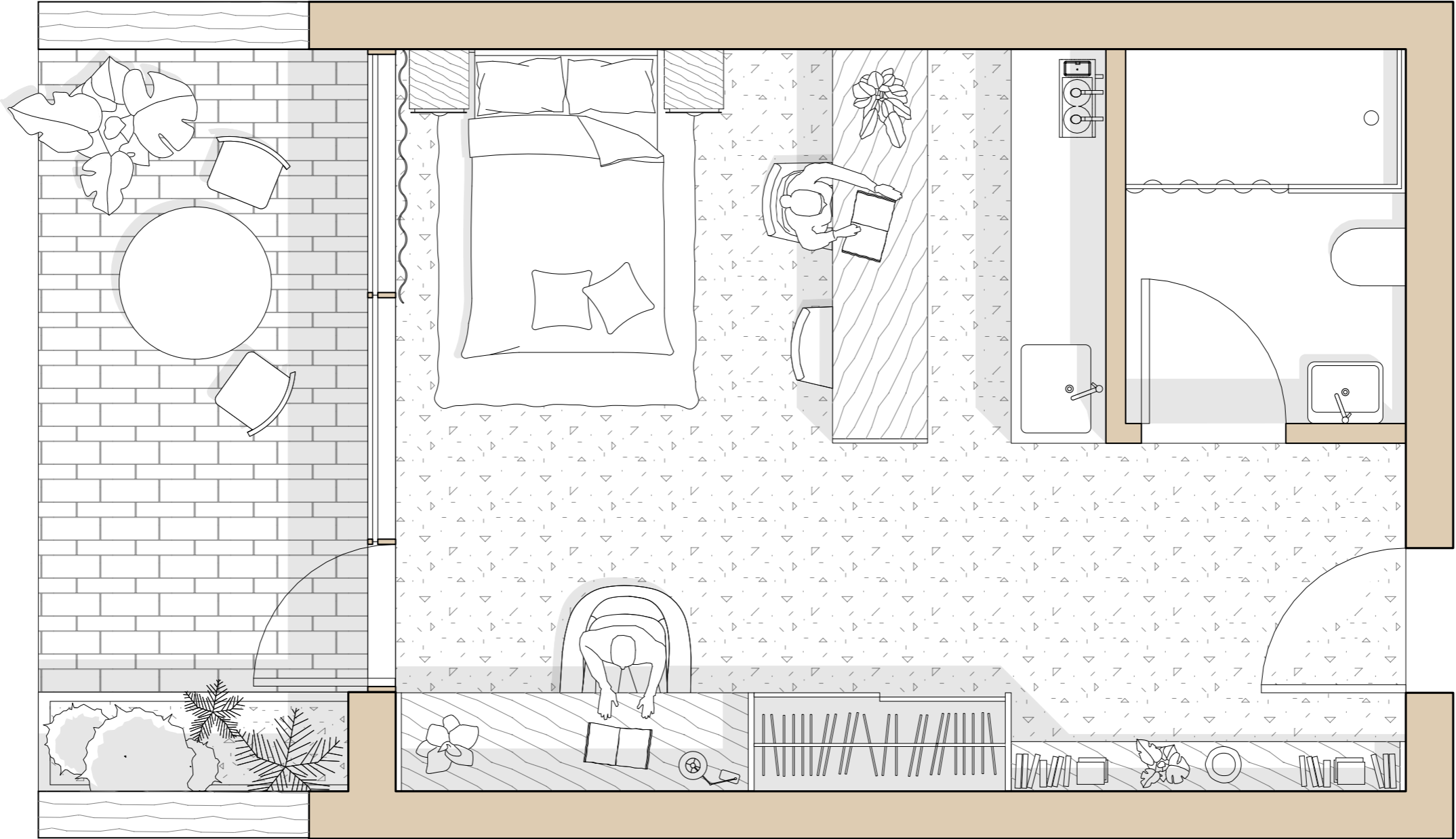
Restaurant Interior



Presentation
Garden View



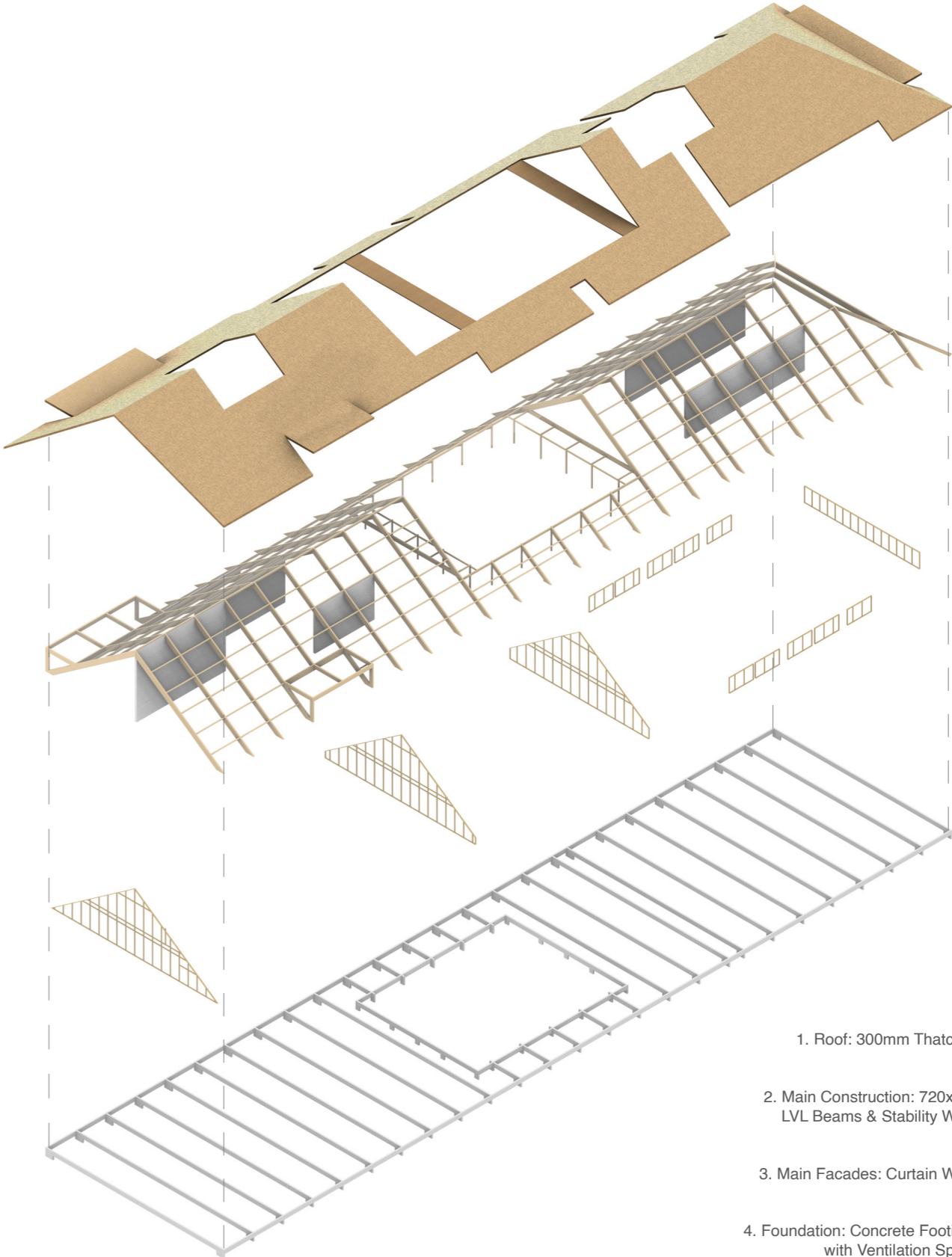
1:50 Plan "Monastic" Guest Room



“Monastic” Guest Room Interior

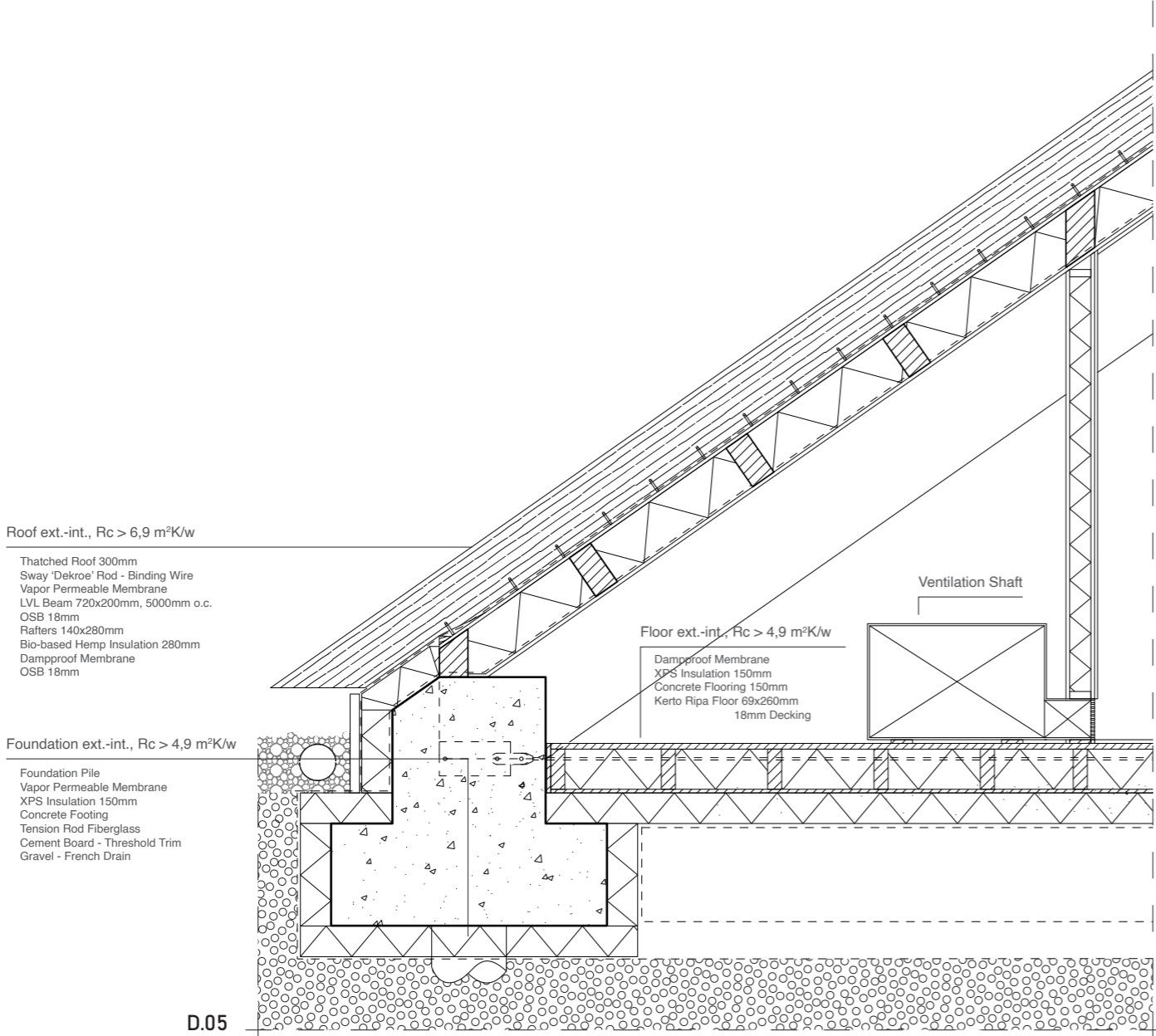


Facade Detail 1:20 and Construction

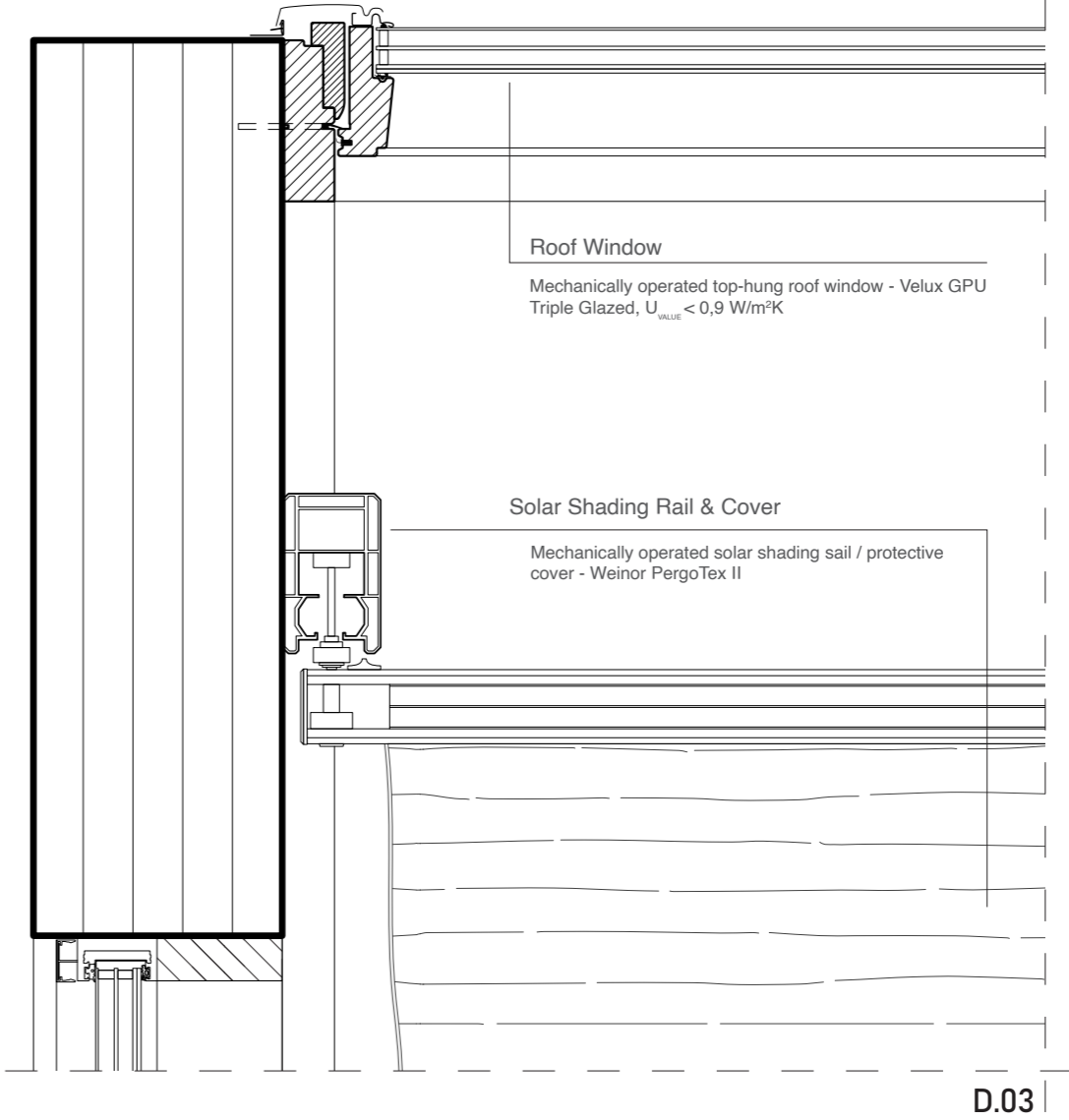


- 1. Roof: 300mm Thatched
- 2. Main Construction: 720x200 LVL Beams & Stability Walls
- 3. Main Facades: Curtain Walls
- 4. Foundation: Concrete Footings with Ventilation Space

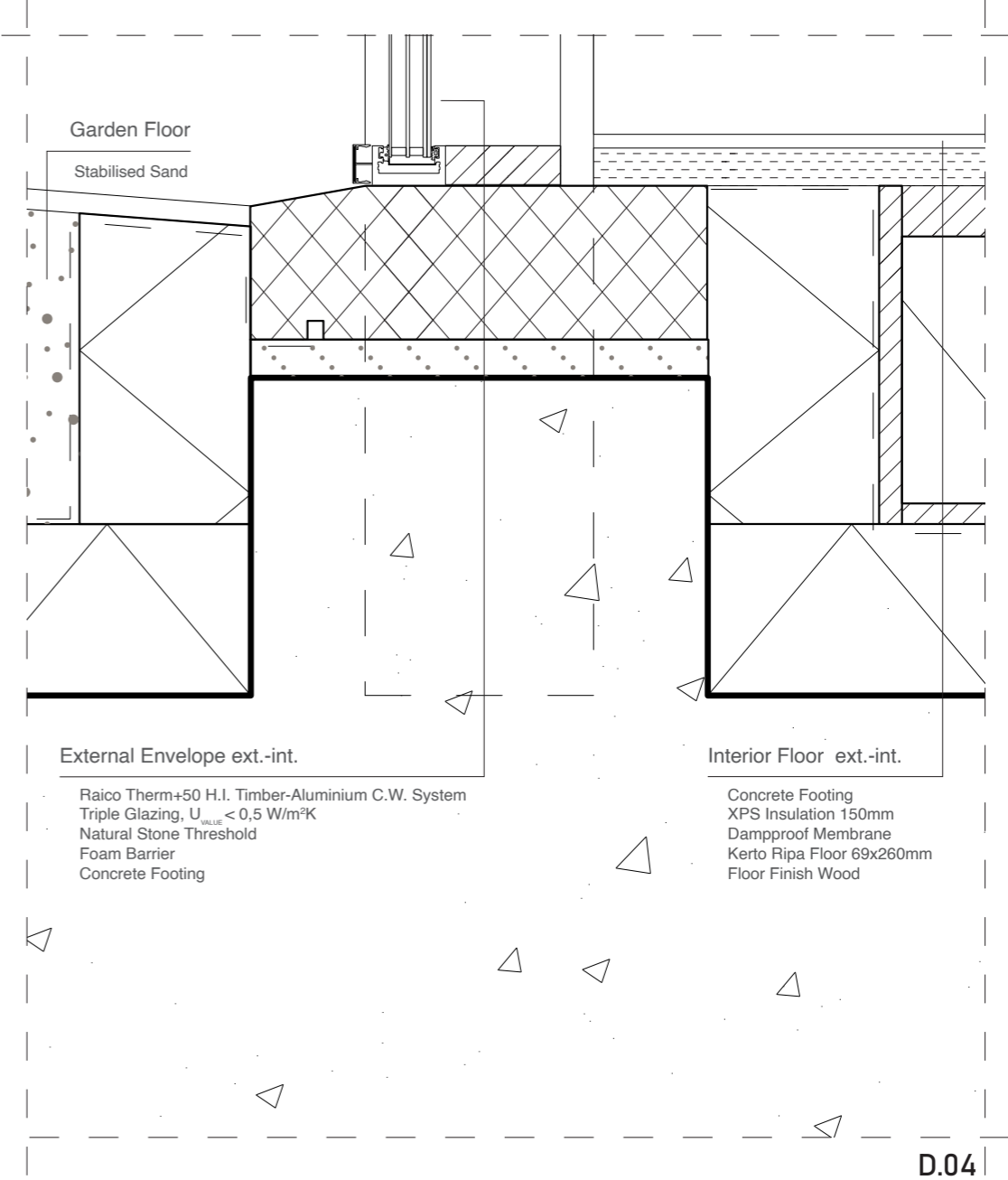
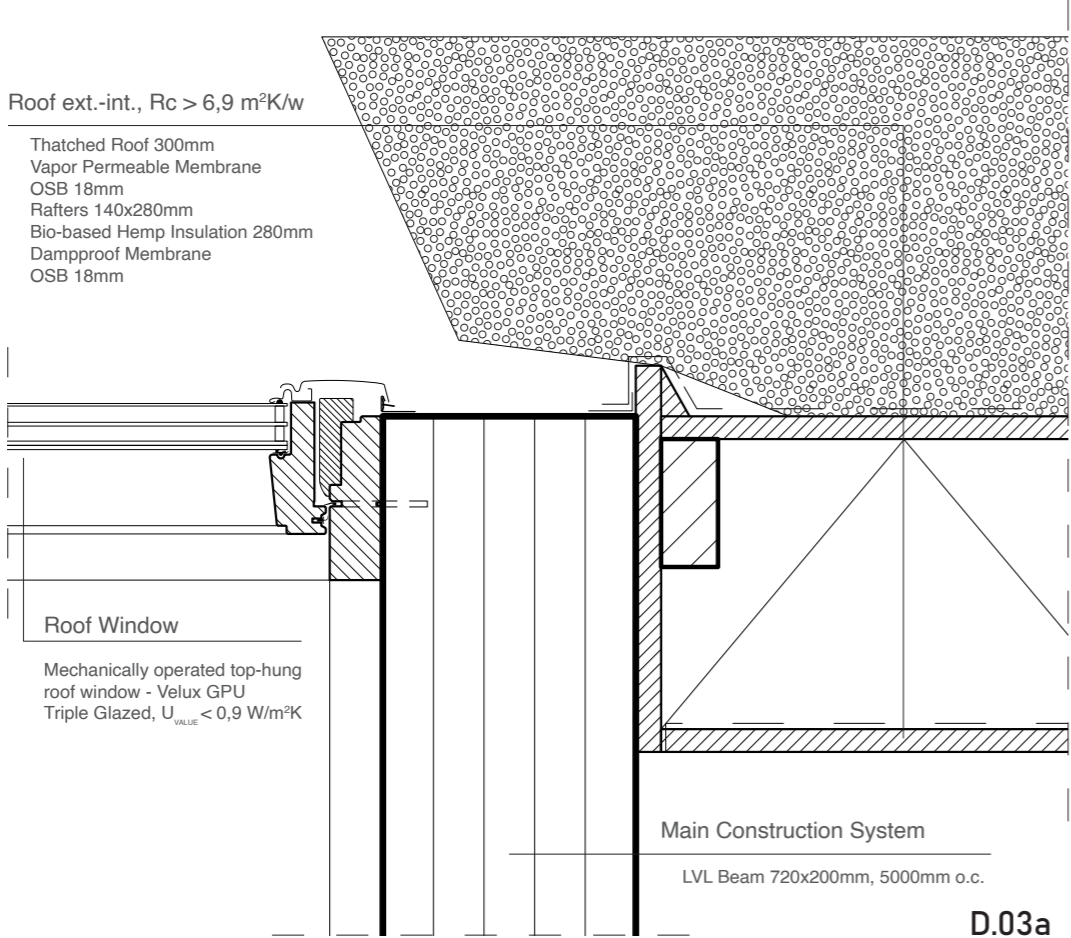
Details 1:5



Chris van der Maas
5220513, 13.06.2026



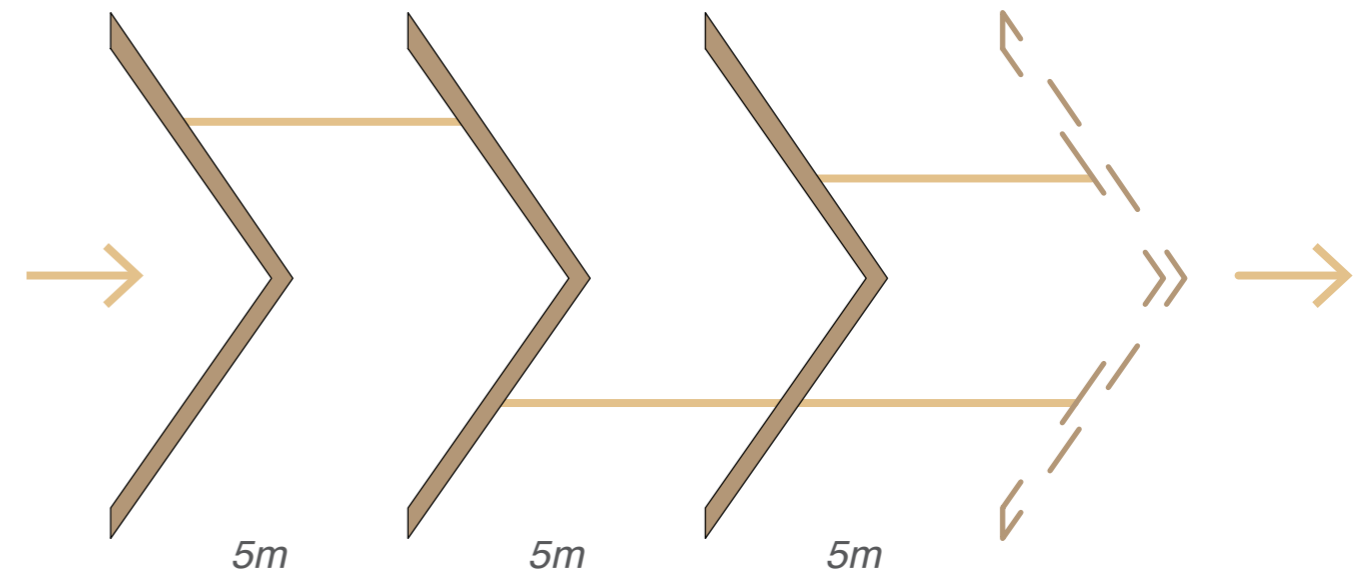
Details 1:5



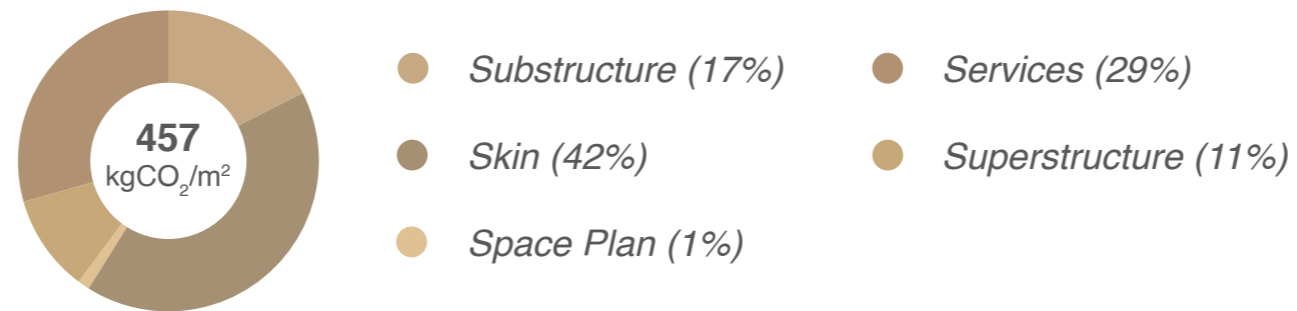
Circularity & Hybridity



Circular Materials: Thatched Roof & Timber Framing



Hybridity and Flexibility: Flexible Infill & Expandability



Presentation
Elevations

Chris van der Maas



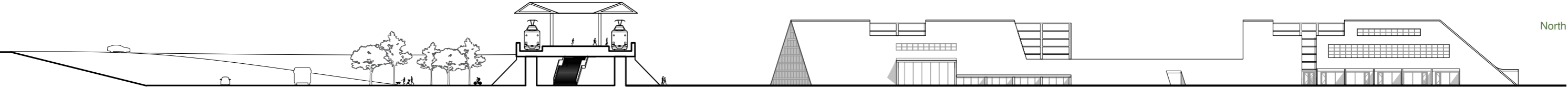
East



West

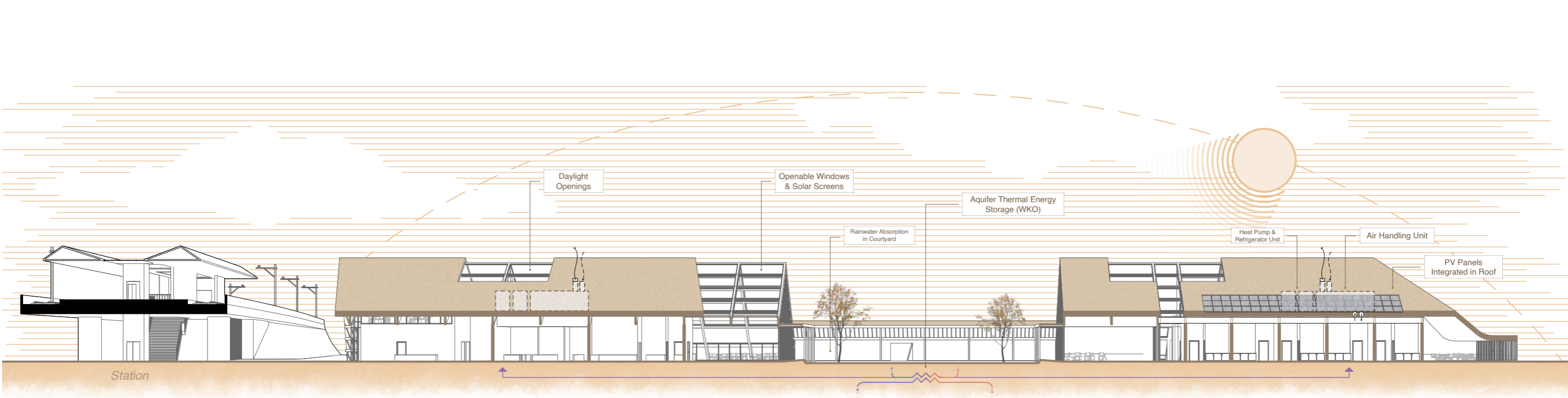


South

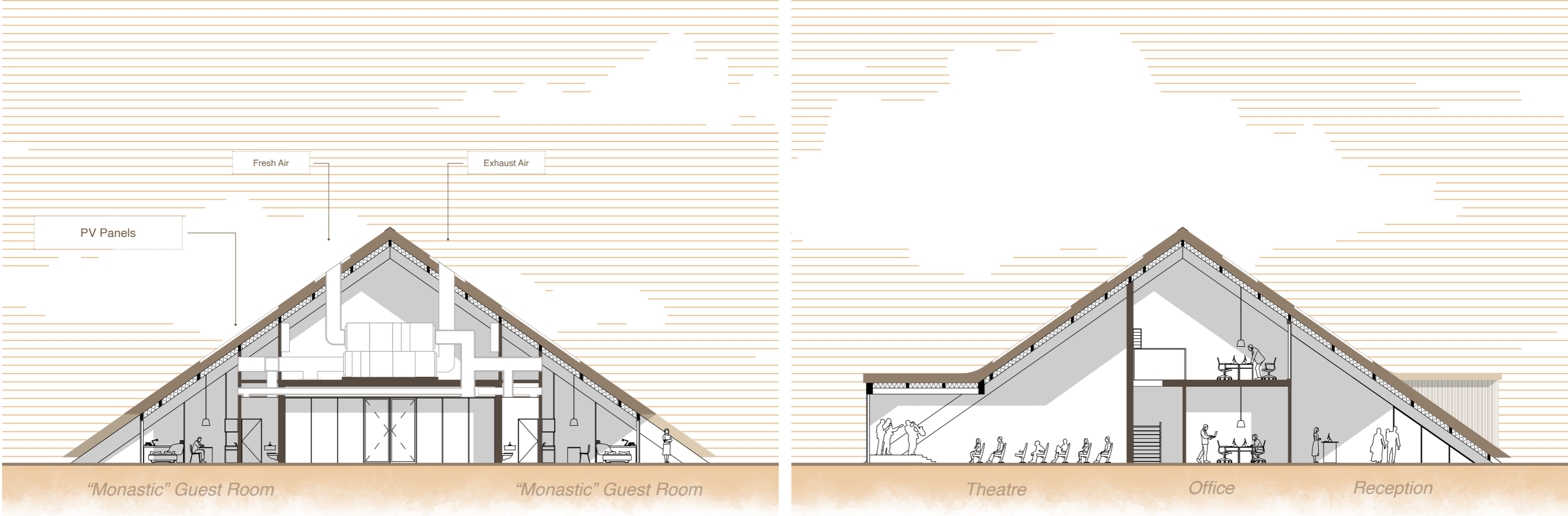


North

Presentation
Climate Section



Presentation
Sections



Presentation
Landscape View

Chris van der Maas



Islands

Of

Refuge