

# MOBILITIES OF EQUALITY

HOW TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE CAN ACT AS A SPATIAL EQUALIZER

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## FOREWORD

*I was always deeply interested in how architecture can facilitate social encounters, any type of building restricts or permits people coming together. Each corner is a space where people gather or are pushed away. For me architect's have a responsibility to ensure that all sides of their building are humane and encourage socialization, no dead spaces and no places that feel unsafe. The boundary where urban fabric meets the envelope is the most crucial part to solve . Furthermore, architecture can exclude certain users. Although I am aware that a lot of this exclusion has to do with sociological and political aspects it is still a fact that architecture plays a part in this relationship. Tourists also are a part of global mobilities and the problems of overtourism and tensions with locals must also be adressed. i would like to encourage the reader to postulate how can these issues be helped by design, but also keep a realistic boundary of what architecture can do as often good ideas without the social and political support can fall flat on its face and create results which are the opposite of its ambitions.*

# INTRODUCTION

# Problem statement

## Ter apel: extraction, identity, and reparation

Ter Apel's identity shifted as infrastructure and local economies morphed through the years. First, it was its monastery in the east. Then during peat extraction and factory era, canal infrastructure was developed, and the center shifted west. Eventually a NATO base was built, which later turned into the refugee infrastructure in 1996 (Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers, n.d.) . After the departure of NATO locals were promised that jobs would be replaced by the new refugee center, but during my visit to municipality it was revealed this was not the case. The village is haunted by negative media preception of refugees (Maatje, 2023) .

Ter Apel is in a province of Groningen that has been exploited in the past. The extraction of natural gas in Groningen did not result in the prospering of the local communities (Nij Begun, 2024) . Instead, it followed an extractive economy where most of the capital flowed to corporate and state levels. The physical toll manifested through human-induced earthquakes, which damaged infrastructure and cast distrust of government actions in the area (Nij Begun, 2025). Nij Begun represents the first meaningful admission of these extractive practices. It is a 30-year commitment and strategic roadmap designed to revitalize the region through investments that serve as a form of social and economic reparation (Nij Begun, 2025). A central pillar of this revitalization is the promotion of sustainable tourism, to create a flow of capital in the region (Nij Begun, 2025). Westerwolde the municipality of Ter Apel also seeks to bolster tourism (Gemeente Westerwolde, 2024).

Nedersaksenlijn a planned train route, connecting Emmen with Stadskanaal and Groningen, will pass through Ter Apel. Historically, new infrastructure has always forced the village center to migrate. The railway offers a chance for Ter Apel to grow and reinvent itself. A report estimates 15000 jobs, 10000 houses and 5000 people passing through the Ter apel per day (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2024b). Ter apel is a small village of 10000 inhabitants that experiences global flows and a lack local agency. The train station as the node of arrival creates an opportunity to ensure coexistence between the different users moving Ter Apel beyond the refuge crisis.

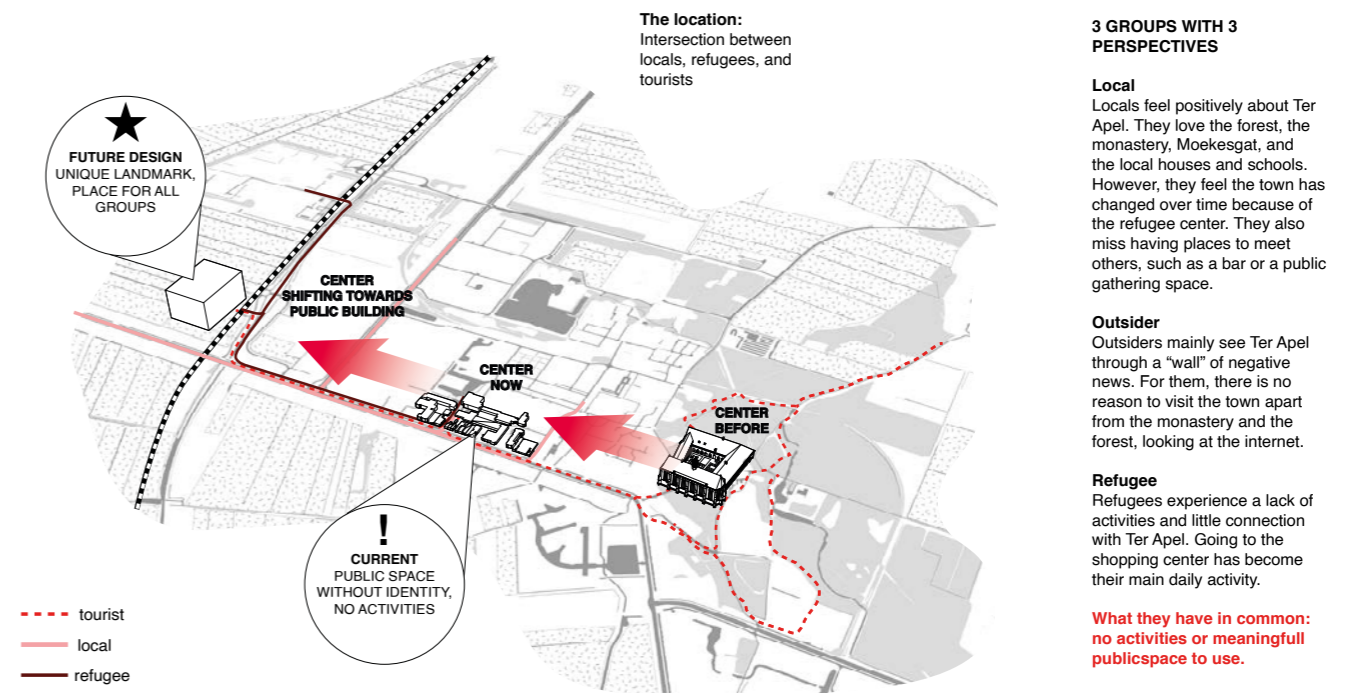


Figure 1 Drwing summarizing conclusions of group research

## The bottleneck of migration infrastructure

Ter Apel serves as the mandatory registration funnel for the Dutch asylum system. Every refugee that crosses the border must come here to begin their registration (RefugeeHelp, 2025). After the registration process is complete refugees stay in Ter Apel or are moved to one of the other AZC locations in the Netherlands. While the Ter Apel refugee center capacity is roughly 2,000 people (Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers, n.d.-b), historical peaks have seen numbers rise drastically, leading to a collapse in living standards for refugees and heightened national tensions (NOS, 2022). The system is still overburdened as backlogs of asylum cases are piling up (Asylum Information Database, 2024). Ter Apel is the node where the failures of national immigration policy become visible. Because the system prevents distribution of migration flows evenly, the funnel gets stuck and the responsibility is held by this single village, which is aggressively reported in the media.

Common reporting on the AZC focuses heavily on petty crime, such as shoplifting (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2024c). While statistics may show higher crime rates among refugees compared to Dutch citizens, researchers emphasize that these numbers are rarely corrected for age, gender, or socio-economic status, factors that usually equalize the disparity (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2024c). COA cites that while most AZCs do not increase local crime, Ter Apel is an exception. This is often linked to the low likelihood of getting approval for asylum, which leads to a loss of hope (Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers, n.d.-b). A study focusing on refugee crime in the Netherlands indicates multiple factors as catalysts for unwanted behavior (Staring et al., 2025):

- **Temporal locations:** Moving between facilities of the system prevents the development of long-term social bonds between staff and residents.
- **Administrative issues:** The difficulty in obtaining a Citizen Service Number (BSN) prevents refugees from working, even if they are willing.
- **Lack of activity:** There is a profound absence of daytime activities, leading to frustration and boredom.
- **Lack of mental health care:** A lack of infrastructure for mental health care and addiction was highly stressed.

The Dutch government is attempting to distribute asylum seeker flows more evenly across the country (VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, 2022). Similarly, the EU is attempting to spread migration flows through the continent too. (European Commission, n.d.). As the current location for the new Nedersaksenlijn's station is next to the bottleneck of the Dutch migration infrastructure, it must address the issues of lack of activity and mental health care for refugees to reduce unwanted behaviour and increase quality of living of the asylum seekers.

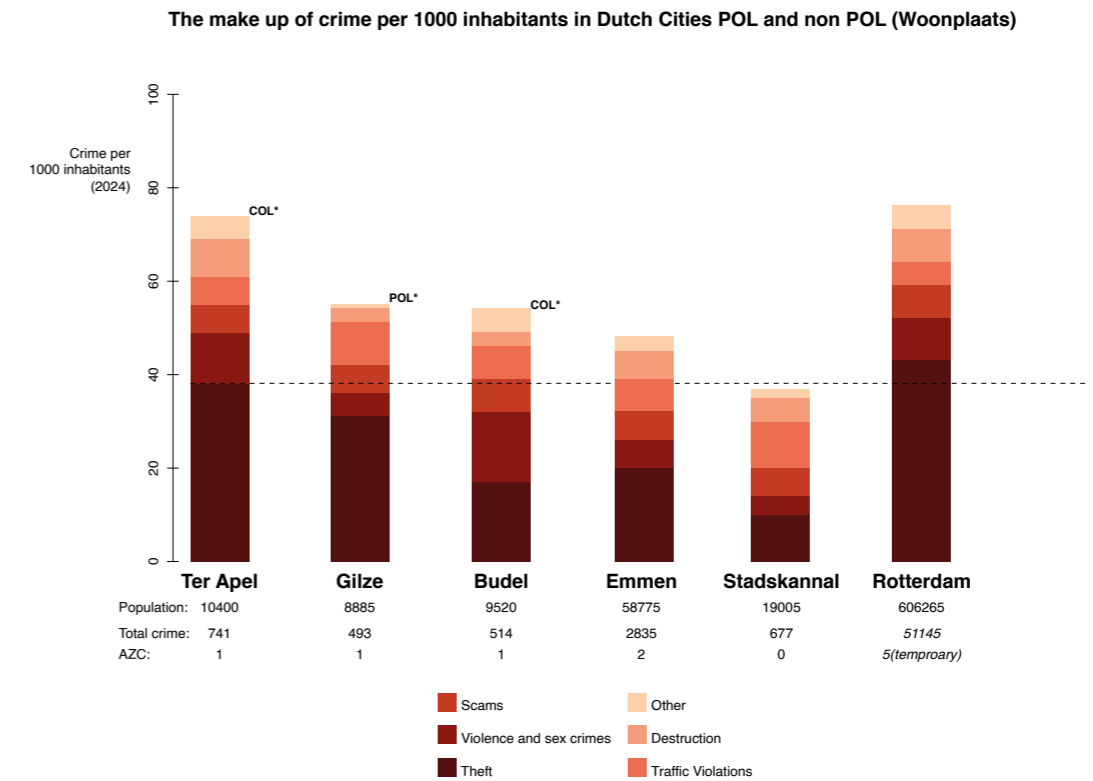


Figure 3 Comparing crime data between other POL'S and Dutch cities

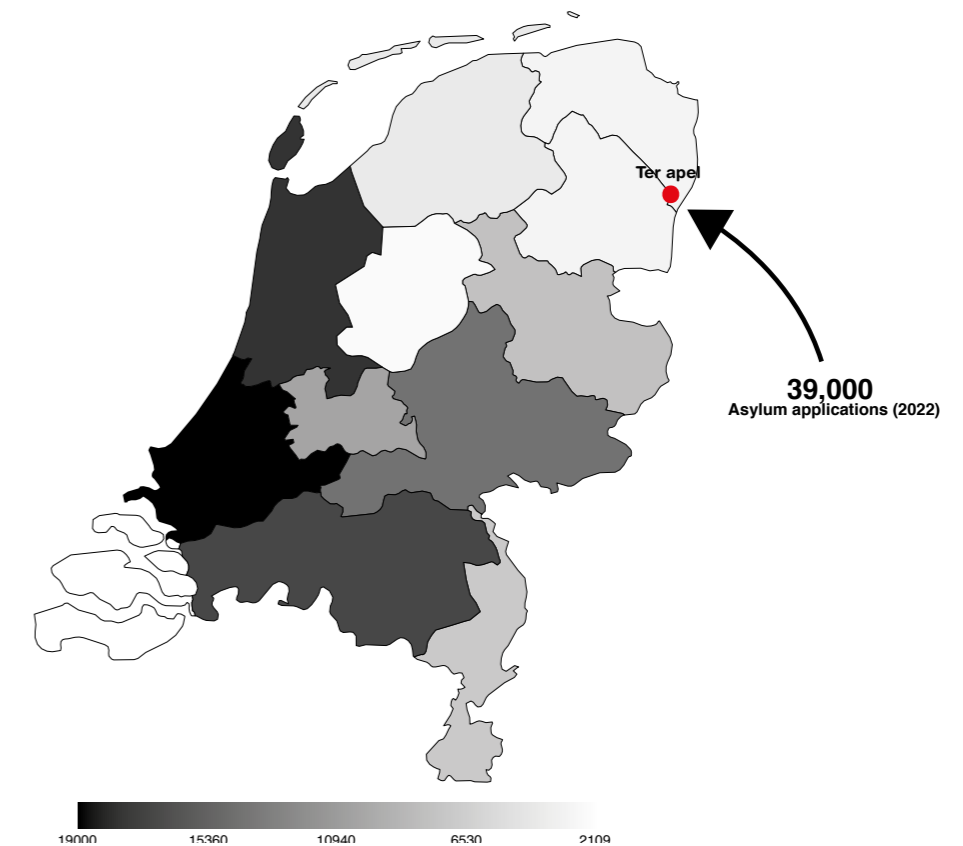
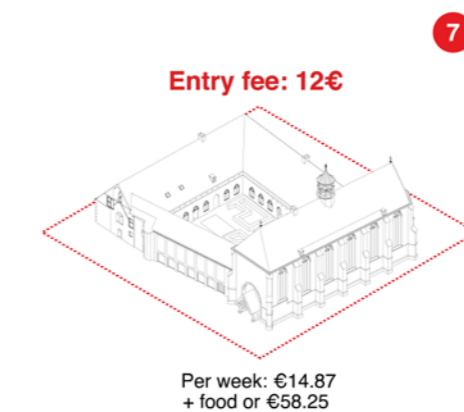
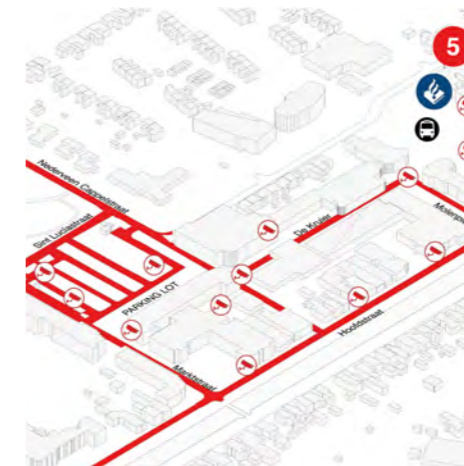
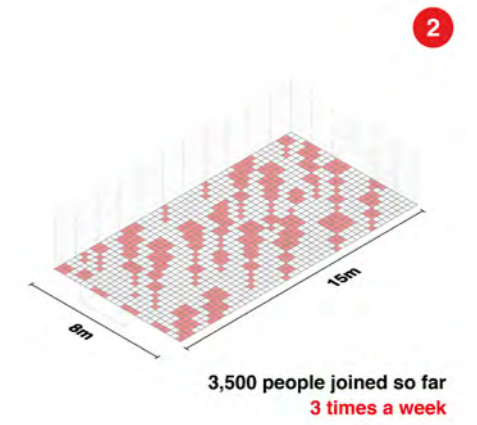
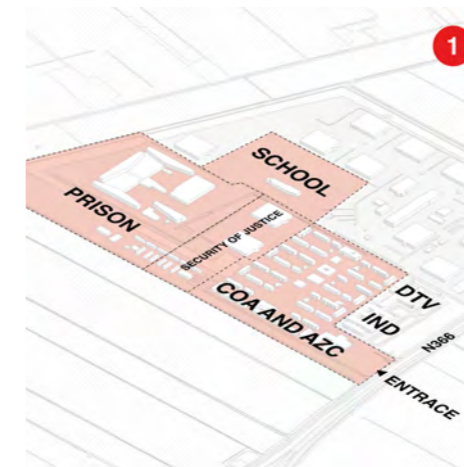




Figure 5 Memory map depicting different refugees stories found online



# Nuisance and Asylum Seekers

Most municipalities see **little or no increased nuisance and crime** due to the AZC in their neighbourhood.

Arrival of a COA location is **not accompanied by changes in neighborhood crime**.

**Some municipalities do experience nuisance**, especially theft and harassment:

**Ter Apel and Budel** - registration centres which are located close to **where many people stay** and are filled with asylum seekers **with little chance of an asylum permit**

**2024, around 3%** of the approximately 106,065 residents who stayed in the asylum shelter for some time will appear in the suspect registrations.

**16,200 incidents** happend inside COA's in 2024 (verbal/non-verbal aggression, violence, and self-destructive actions)

*Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers (COA). (n.d.). Is het waar dat een asielzoekerscentrum altijd voor overlast zorgt? COA. <https://www.coa.nl/nl/lijst/het-waar-dat-een-asielzoekerscentrum-altijd-voor-overlast-zorgt>*

*Noyon, S. M., Barsegyan, V. M., Vink, M. E., & Pluymaekers, T. P. N. (2025).*

*Incidenten en misdrijven door bewoners van COA- en tgo-locaties 2017–2024 (Cahier 2025-04). WODC. <https://repository.wodc.nl/handle/20.500.12832/3460>*

Refugees from top 10 most common countries of origin in the Netherlands (2019-2023)

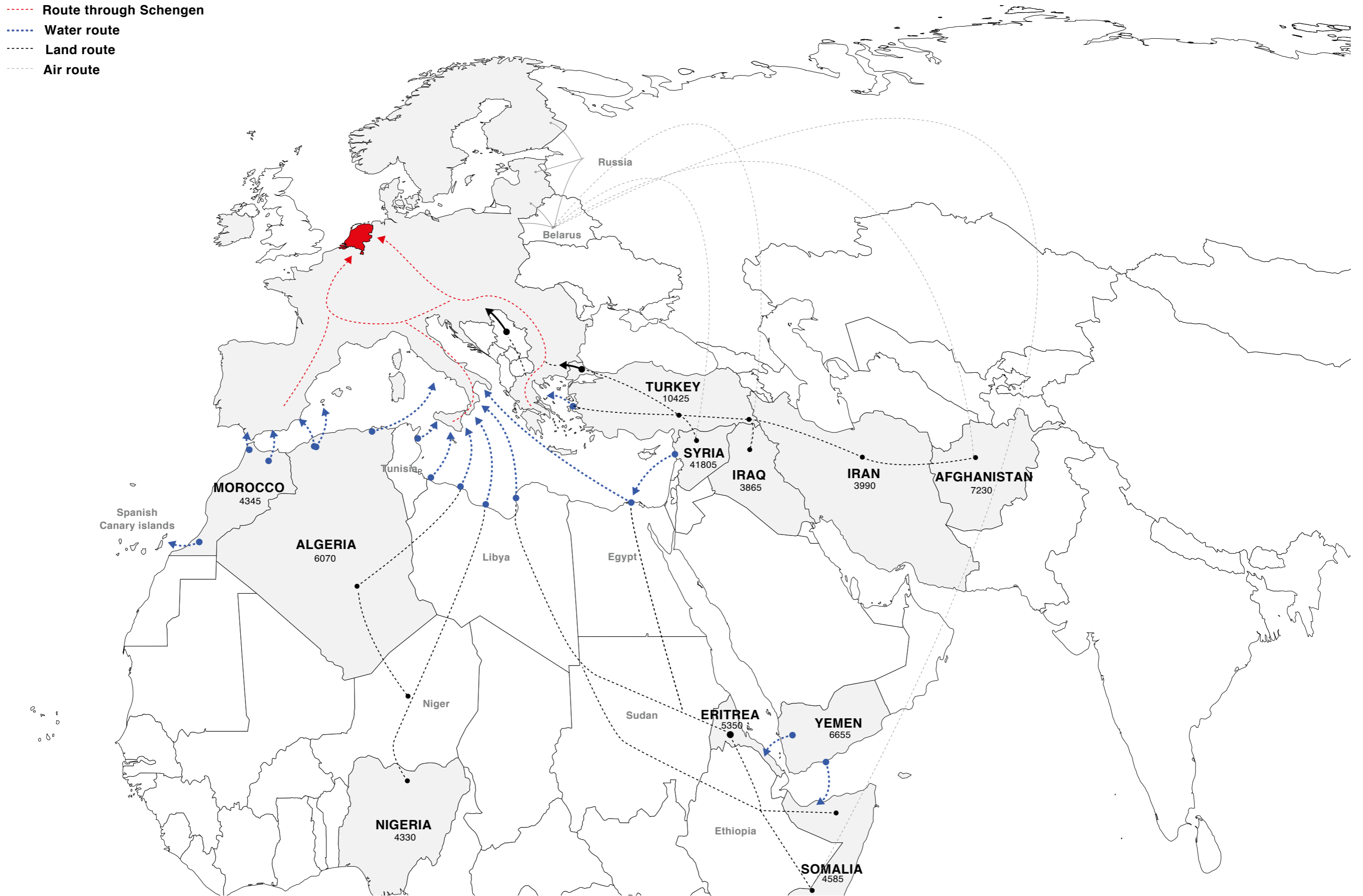


Figure 14 A map of refugee routes to the Schengen zone and the Netherlands

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6. Telegraph Media Group Holdings Ltd. (2015, September 29). *\*Fleeing Syria for Europe: Safaa's fatal journey\**. The Telegraph. [<https://s.telegraph.co.uk/graphics/projects/safaas-journey/index.html>](<https://s.telegraph.co.uk/graphics/projects/safaas-journey/index.html>) ([Telegraph][3])
7. Sienos Grupė. (2022). *\*Context of the ongoing Belarus–EU migration crisis\** [Submission]. OHCHR. [<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/SienosGrup%C4%97Submission.pdf>](<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/SienosGrup%C4%97Submission.pdf>) ([OHCHR][4])
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9. Human Rights Watch. (2015, June 19). *\*Why people flee, what EU should do: a human rights crisis at the southern border\**. HRW. [<https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/06/19/mediterranean-migration-crisis/why-people-flee-what-eu-should-do>](<https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/06/19/mediterranean-migration-crisis/why-people-flee-what-eu-should-do>)
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# Ter Apel by most common crime committed

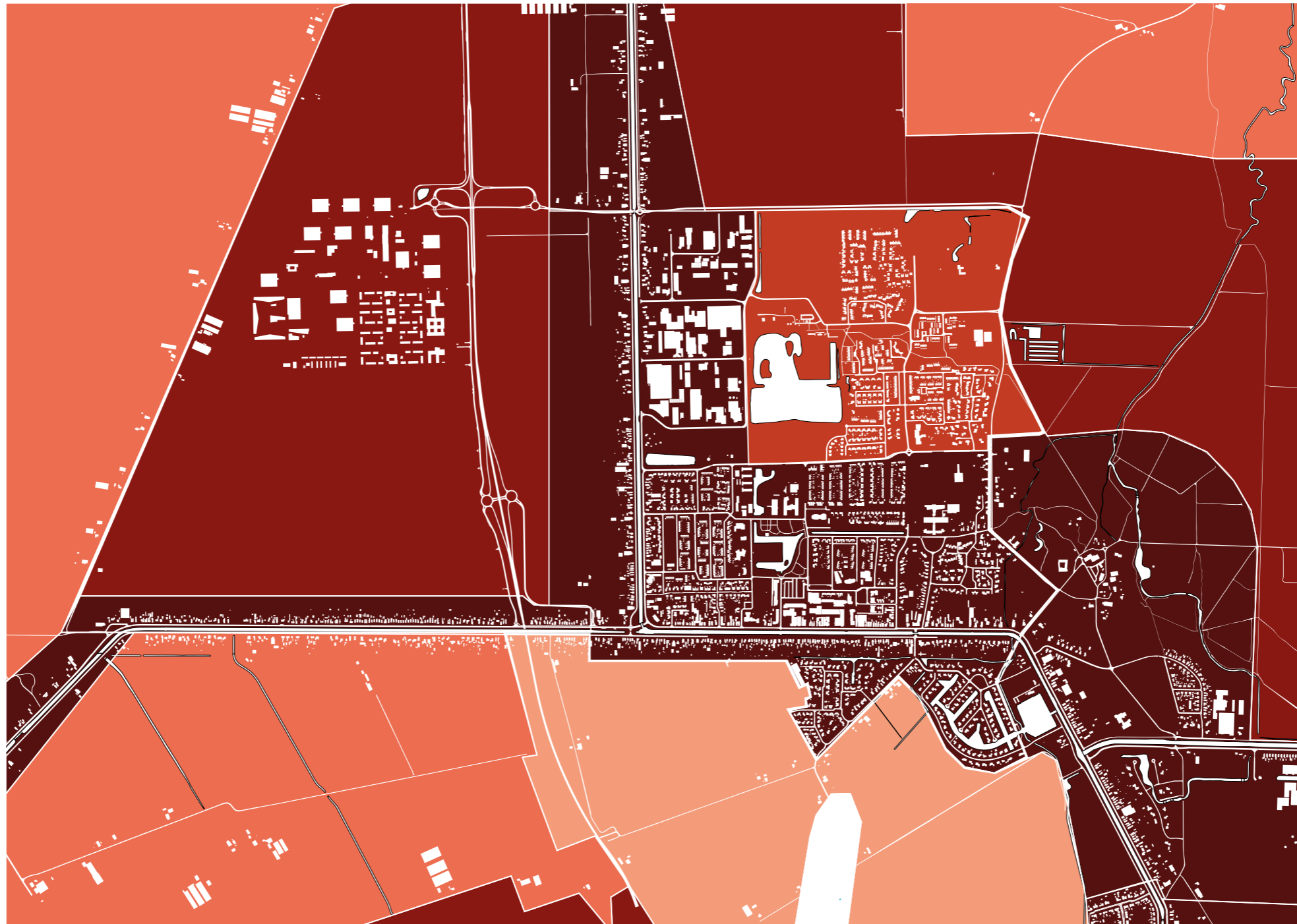


Figure 7 A crime map of Ter apel

# Crime rates and types in Ter Apel

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AlleCijfers.nl. (2025, December 4). Woonplaats Ter Apel (gemeente Westerwolde) in cijfers. <https://allecijfers.nl/woonplaats/ter-apel/>

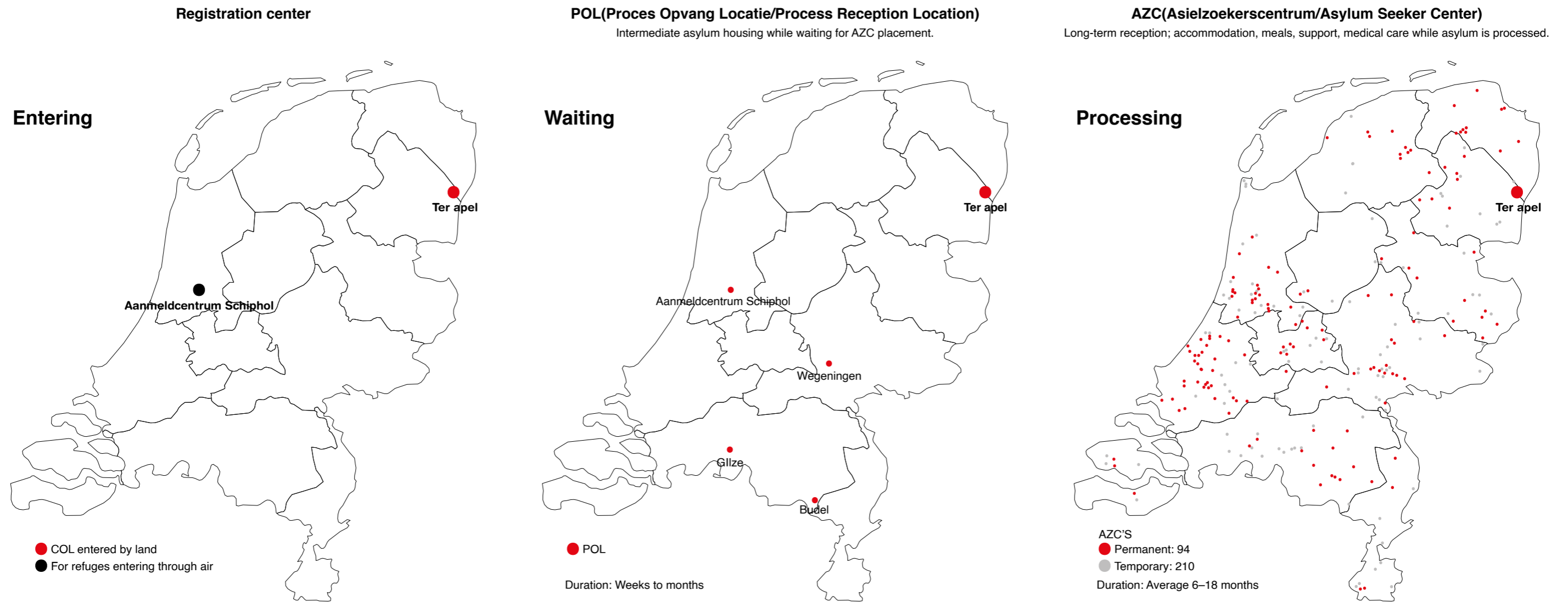


Figure 8 The different stages of asylum seeking process and their facilities in the Netherlands

## Stagnation of Tourism

While the asylum infrastructure is in overflow, Ter Apel’s tourism sector experiences the opposite: flow atrophy. Groningen is one of the least visited provinces in the Netherlands just behind Flevoland (Statistics Netherlands, 2024). However, Westerwolde makes up about 40% of East Groningen tourism (Gemeente Westerwolde, 2023). The westerwolder province is pushing to double visitors by 2030 aligning with the “Nij Begun” strategy (Gemeente Westerwolde, 2023).

Westerwolde is reinforcing existing infrastructure to create unique, authentic experiences aligned with Cittaslow - a philosophy emphasizing slow tourism, quality of life, and local heritage (Gemeente Westerwolde, 2024). The target demographic for the region is those seeking: peace, quiet, or sport adventure (Gemeente Westerwolde, 2024). The municipality is trying to diversify from only traditional camping and marinas to also include more luxury sectors and holiday parks, while maintaining its authentic character (Gemeente Westerwolde, 2024). Central to this strategy is the Ruiten Aa waterway-a green artery for hikers and kayakers. The municipality published a SWOT analysis indicating: authenticity, demand for agro tourism, demand for luxury in nature, health and relaxation, sustainability, low prices, aging population and the German market as opportunities, while highlighting bad image, lack of accommodations and personnel as weaknesses (Gemeente Westerwolde, 2023). Furthermore the municipality stresses multiplicity of experiences as opposed to single attracting objects. Tourism of Westerwolde should not only challenge you, but also enrich your senses, such as: hearing, touch and smell, through multiple experiences as most tourists don’t come for a single night stay (Gemeente Westerwolde, 2022).

Currently, Westerwolde wants to transform Ter Apel into the “Gateway to Westerwolde,” due to its close proximity to Ruiten aa. Yet it is not truly integrated into this tourism system. The monastery remains as the most important attraction. Last year, it saw an increase in visitors (primarily aged 50+) who valued the tangible history and tranquility of the site (Museum Klooster Ter Apel, 2024).

## Hiking trails

Westerwolde already has strategy for a tourism. Westerwolde was named one of the bests municipality in the Netherlands for hiking (Couwenbergh, 2020). The region’s biggest strength is the Ruiten Aa landscape used for flat hiking trails (Couwenbergh, 2020). Future market trends further support this direction. By 2040, tourists over the age of 55 will account for 65% of all tourism spending in the EU, reaching a total of €369.5 billion (Gaušas et al., 2025). Although hiking is traditionally associated with mountains, the future European market will be dominated by the elderly. For this group, flat trails for hiking and biking are major attractors, provided that facilities are

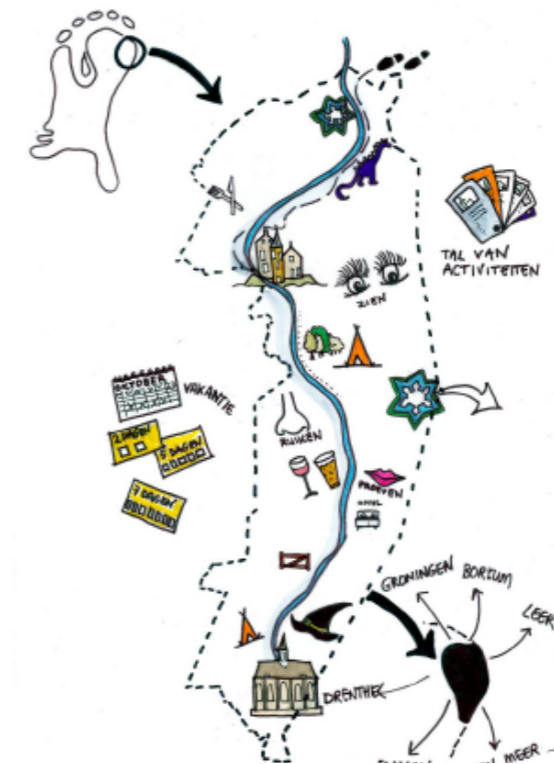


Figure 9 Drawing from Westerwolde’s municipality depicting the tourism network. (Gemeente Westerwolde, 2022)

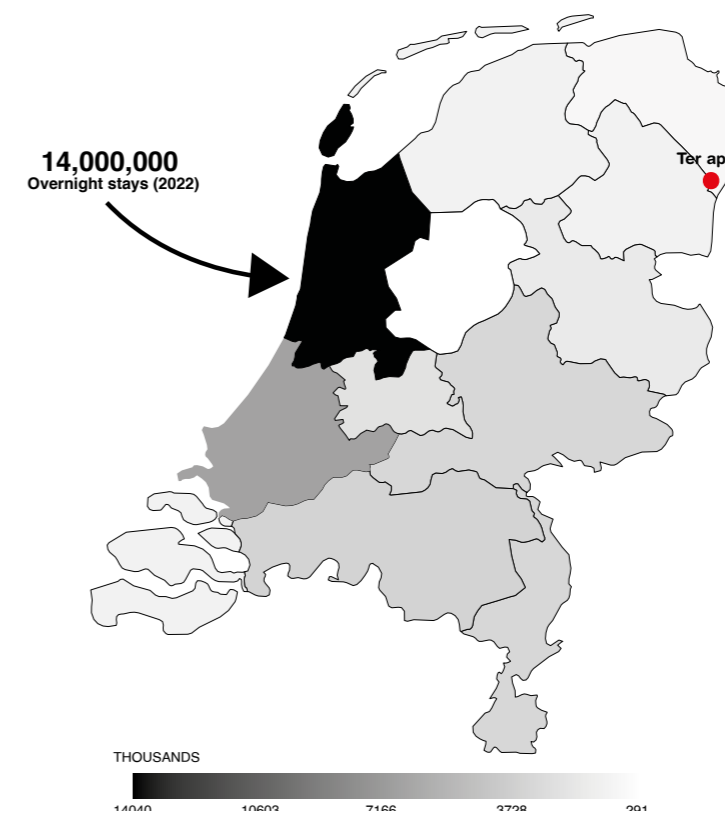


Figure 10 Overnight stays and guests in different dutch provinces data from (Statistics Netherlands, 2024)

at ease of access and available in bulk (Li et al., 2023). A successful East-Belgium model uses intuitive marking systems that make it easier to plan and change routes. In this model, each node is connected to a broader network of different hiking trail difficulties and every node is integrated into the local economic model (East Belgium Tourist Agency, 2025). Furthermore, this Belgian system allows the town to offer a flexible grid of trails that cater to all fitness levels. (East Belgium Tourist Agency, 2025). A dense network with many different hiking trails ensures a balanced spread of tourist flows. It directly targets the older population, which is both the current base and the majority of the future tourism market. Softlanding facilities and amenities for hiking are also incredibly important. To maximize tourism, the town must act as a gateway, capturing pedestrians within a 2 km radius and cyclists within 4 km of the transport node (Senes et al., 2025). It must also offer a possibility to easily stop and continue the route later, which could be possible if the Nedersaksenlijn was seen as a network of landing pads. Moreover, the Nedersaksenlijn represents a major opportunity to connect to the native and German tourist markets, which are the two most common visitor groups in Westerwolde (Gemeente Westerwolde, 2023). The station should serve as a gateway to a broad range of experiences closely tied to the Ruiten AA hiking trails. Finally with the Cittaslow philosophy in mind, the tourists should be encouraged to create a bond with the locals, establishing a tight connection between leisure, social responsibility, and sustainable tourism.

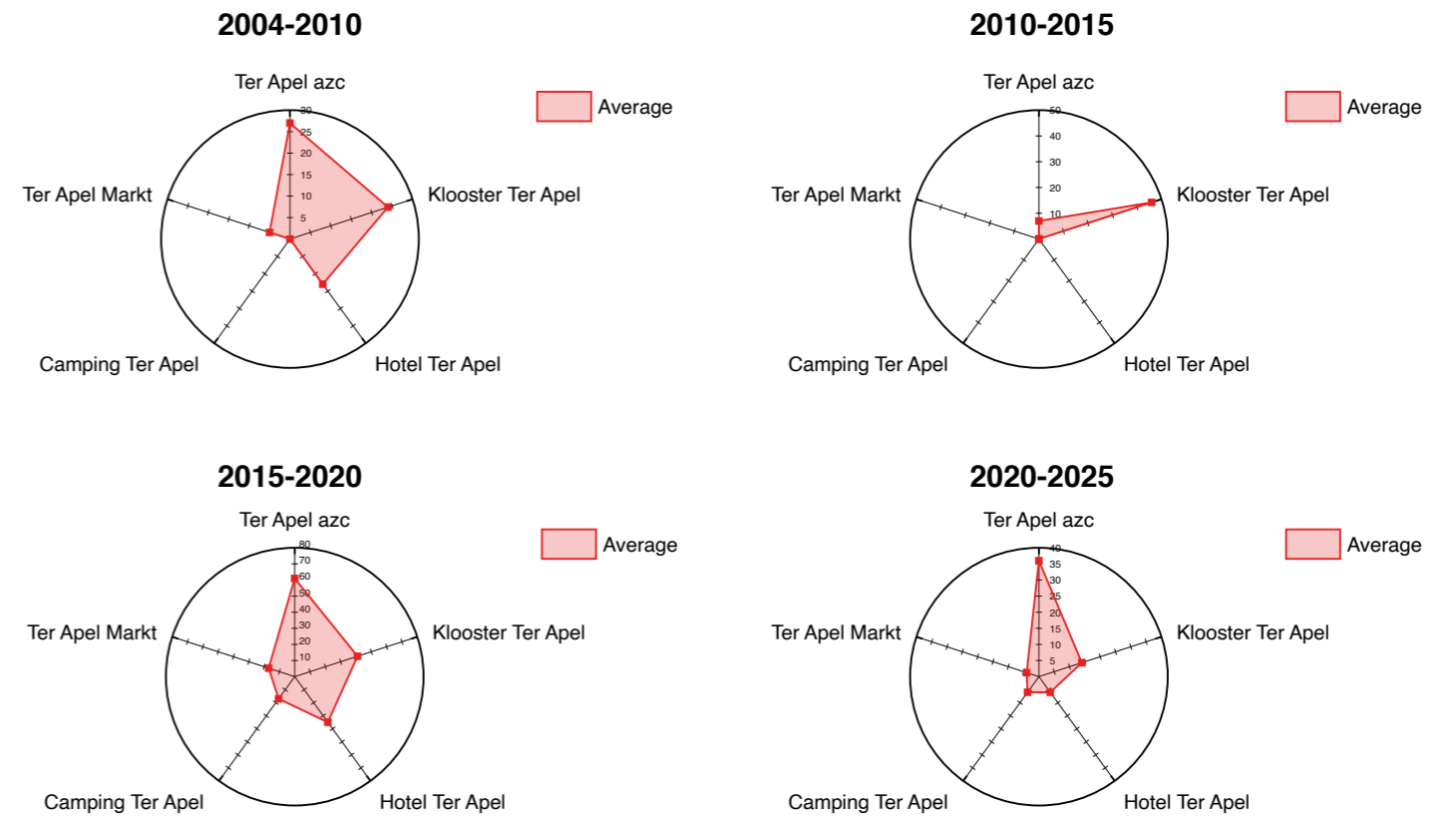


Figure 11 Comparing Google trends search results between different years

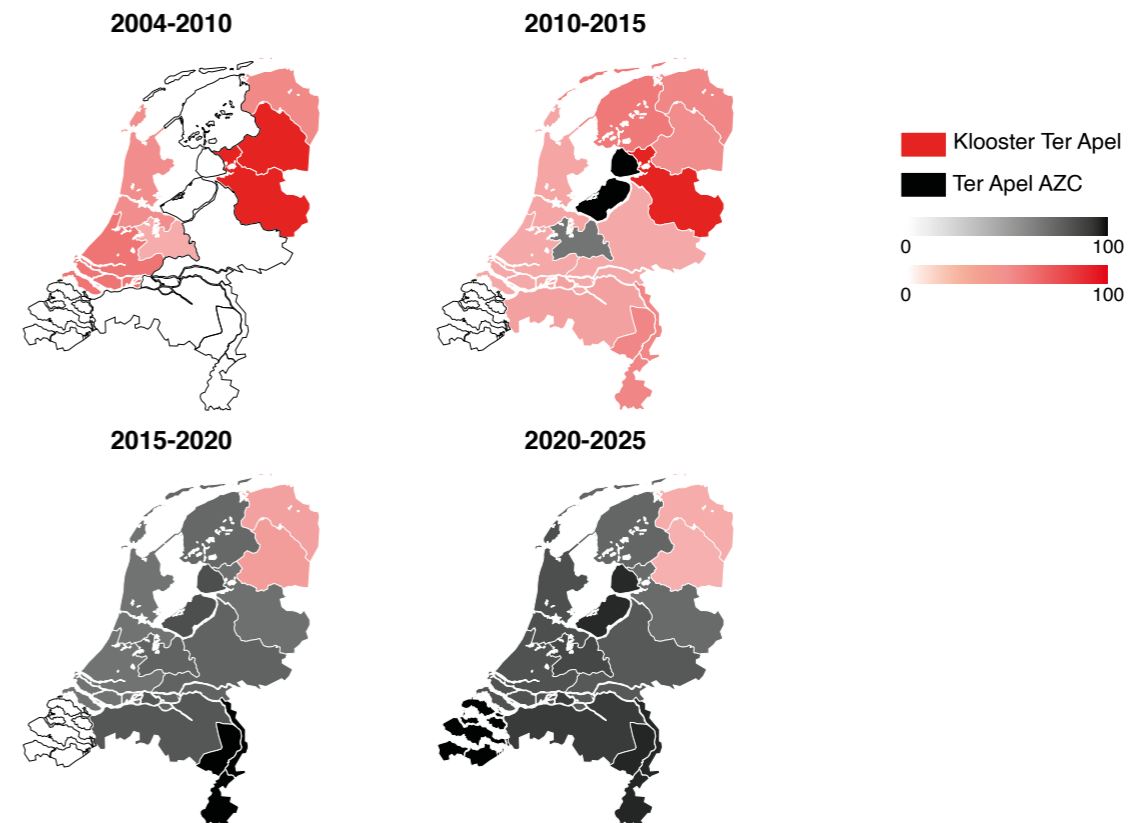


Figure 12 Google trends search results based on different dutch provinces

# Ter Apel's Image in Media

## Heritage Ter Apel (c. 1465–1980s)

Ter Apel is remembered as a quiet monastery village in the forest, built around the 15th-century Kruisheren Klooster "Domus Novae Lucis", a place of religion, hospitality and later museum heritage walks.



## Departure centre "back door" (c. 1996–2000)

From 1996, the former NATO site is remembered as a Vertrekcentrum for rejected asylum seekers, the "back door" of the Dutch asylum system where people stayed just before enforced return.



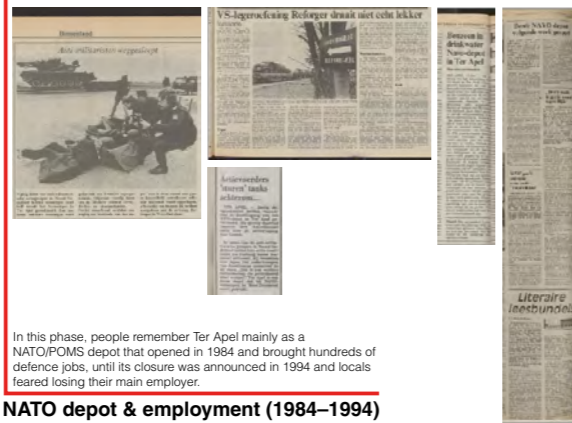
## "Asylum capital" of the Netherlands (c. 2015–2021)

In these years, Ter Apel lives in Dutch memory as a permanently overcrowded asylum hub – news about "full shelters", nuisance and political tension, a place that functions as a barometer for national migration pressure.



## Structural crisis & court fights (2023–present)

From 2023 onwards, Ter Apel is remembered as a structurally unsafe and overfull site, with inspection reports speaking of a "very serious safety situation", emergency regulations and court cases about exceeding the 2,000-person cap.



In this phase, people remember Ter Apel mainly as a NATO/POMS depot that opened in 1984 and brought hundreds of defence jobs, until its closure was announced in 1994 and locals feared losing their main employer.

## NATO depot & employment (1984–1994)



After 2001, Ter Apel is remembered as the national front door: the IND registration centre where almost all asylum seekers first report, are fingerprinted and interviewed, with a large COA centre attached.

## National "front door" (c. 2001–2014)



Summer 2022 fixes one brutal image in people's minds: hundreds of asylum seekers, including families, sleeping outside the gates in Ter Apel, with UNHCR and Artsen zonder Grenzen calling the situation inhumane and stepping in.

## 2022 reception crisis & sleeping outside (2022)

Figure 13 Newspapers reporting on Ter Apel

## The flows of winners and losers in a globalized world

Ter Apel can be seen as the epicenter of liquid modernity and global mobilities. In this village, tourists and the refugees exist as temporal guests their stark contrasts reveal inequalities of mobility. The mobility of the winners often occurs at the expense of the immobility of the “losers” (Bauman, 1998). While some people can enjoy the global flow of capital and follow it, others are left behind scrambling to get ahead. The station presents a possibility to bridge the gap between these distinct levels of freedom, incentive, and vulnerability. Here in Ter Apel precarious relationships between global flows and local politics creates a systemic failure. Zygmunt Bauman describes the current state of modern life as liquid. The solidity of previous decades has vanished in favor of a liquidity that allows the flow of capital and power past the concept of nation state and rooted life. However these political institutions are kept solid without much agency Gane, N. (2001). This is of course the problem Ter Apel is facing currently as the funnel of asylum seeking infrastructure, when lack of capital and labor create the image of crisis.

The presence of the refugee acts as a reminder to the local host of these liquid instabilities, instigating fear. Meanwhile, the tourist represents a class that can seamlessly cross the boundaries of global dynamics. Exploring flows through the lens of integration can be the only solution. Research indicates that both tourists and refugees are similar in their capacity to create opportunities or cause nuisance, and the most ethical solution is to discover the “convenience and desirability of using facilities designed originally for these populations” Russell (2003).

However, a significant tension exists in how these groups are perceived. As noted by Tsartas et al. (2020), the media is important in this relationship. The appearance of a refugee crisis, amplified by mass media, can negatively impact a destination’s image and deter tourism. In Ter Apel, social media trends create a negative image, linking the village exclusively to the AZC crisis. Our research of Google trends shows how fluid form of information can broadcast the image of refugee crisis without even visiting or presenting Ter apel. Manuel Castells, a Spanish sociologist describes the flows of information and explains how digital spaces takes precedent over actual physical space. Information travelling with speed of light disrupts identities and images of local solid places. In case of Ter apel the power of the image sits at the hand of mass media . Finally, Giorgio Agamben and his idea on state of exception reflects how a crisis can be used in order to bypass human rights and democracy in order to create a sense of security,. Sighting of security personel in the center of Ter Apel, patrolling the streets as if it’s a war zone is a stunning example of such government overreach that I personally witnessed during my site visit. Moreover, security can create barriers and segregation in spatial design as to avoid nuisance or in the name sake of security. The loss of the “Agora“ also contributes to this image crisis. Zygmunt Bauman believed that the shrinkage of public spaces where private problems can be vocalized as public matters has turned the landscape into a series of non-places that discourage

settlement through frictionless, consumer-driven design Gane, N. (2001). Ter apel’s city center can be seen as such non place aswell. Consequently the so called clashes between locals, refugees and potentially tourists happen here as shoplifting distrubrs the sense of security created through consumption in the liquid state of the world. A more solid agora like structure would provide a better flow mixing ground than a mall. With a 2,000-refugee capacity and a local population of 9,914, the encounter potential in Ter Apel can be estimated using the Interaction Index. Since specific location movement data is unavailable, this calculation treats the entire village as a single unit. However, as Massey and Denton (1988) emphasize, this approach assumes an even population distribution. Ter Apel is geographically segregated, these figures likely overestimate actual physical contact. Based on the Interaction Index formula, (Bell, 1954), locals have a 17% chance of encountering a refugee, while refugees have a 83% chance of encountering a local.

## Synthesis

The research concludes that the Ter Apel station must be reimagined as a spatial equalizer, a site of where mobilities of global and local flows are equalized. While modern flows operate at the speed of light, this design grounds global flows in local social spaces, forcing an encounter between different people to build a resilient community. Encouraging the identity of Ter Apel to move beyond the refugee crisis, enabling a network of hiking tourism and providing refugees with a space for meaningful daily activities.

**Refugees:** The design provides cost-free anchors for daily habits. These spaces allow asylum seekers to build emotional connections to their temporary location, fostering a sense of belonging that mitigates the tensions of displacement and encourages positive social behavior.

**Tourists:** As a gateway to a regional slow tourism hiking network, the station disrupts the passive visitor experience. It orchestrates meaningful interactions with the East Groningen landscape and its people, transforming tourists into socially responsible participants rather than mere consumers.

**Locals:** The station is reclaimed as the village’s civic heart creating a common space Agora. This shifts Ter Apel’s identity from a site of crisis to one of integrated coexistence.

# Relevance

Geopolitical conflicts escalate and drive waves of migration in the age of Globalization. People seeking both refuge from instability and better economic opportunities. Similarly, while tourism surged as borders dissolved, cities like Paris and Barcelona are now turning inward as residents struggle with the friction of overtourism despite a total economic dependence on it. So far, the political trends of deglobalization have failed to resolve these tensions. This inward turn often breeds further conflict, as the economic cost of decoupling from global flows is unsustainable for communities already integrated in it. My research explores how architecture and design can mediate a functional coexistence between these flows. Moving beyond a naive embrace of globalization, the goal is to design interventions that minimize the inevitable negative outcomes of global mobility while stabilizing the positive social and economic

# Objective and motivation

The objective of this project is to design a train station in Ter Apel that serves as a common ground for coexistence, transforming the transit hub from a site of friction into a humanized civic heart. As the world reacts to globalization by retreating into localized spheres of influence, communities often find themselves trapped between a desire for autonomy and an inescapable economic dependency on global flows. By using parallels in the needs of refugees and tourists, this project provides shared spaces that foster mutual utility and social interaction. The motivation lies in shifting Ter Apel's identity away from a "site of crisis" towards hospitality that supports the regional tourism economy while actively seeks to equalize the inequalities inherent in globalized mobility. Ultimately, the train station design utilizes architecture as a mediator at the intersection of global and local flows to create a more stable and inclusive community.

# Research questions

How can a transit hub be designed to create coexistence between locals, tourists and asylum seekers in the age of globalized flows?

How can architecture provide un-commodified spaces that integrate the free daily activities for refugees with the leisure infrastructure required to boost the local tourism economy?

How can the design of shared tourism infrastructure orchestrate meaningful interactions that humanize the "refugee" and shift the public image of a Ter Apel?

How can the architectural design of a transit hub utilize shared social infrastructure to facilitate slow tourism and social responsibility of visitors?

# Scope

The scope includes a Station with 2 sided tracks, a covered waiting area, and a 150-bike parking facility. A central Connection Point features a lobby, community service desk, and tourist information. Social interaction is orchestrated through Cultural Anchors, including a 75-seat cinema, a café/restaurant (50-75 seats), and outdoor areas. Domestic and Economic layers consist of ten guest accommodation units 30 m<sup>2</sup> each, a kiosk for groceries, and space for local retailers or travel agencies.

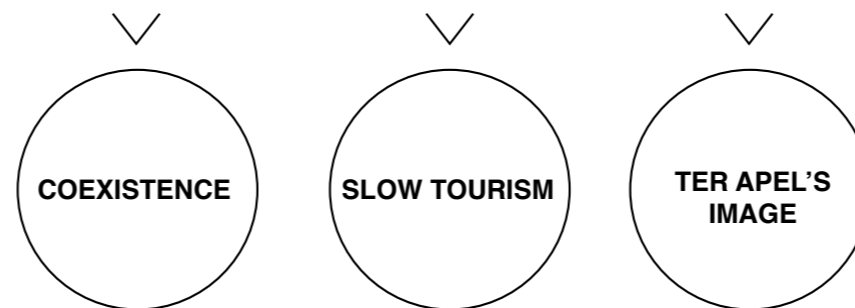
By housing these overlapping programs ranging from mobility and staff offices to shared leisure the station functions as a regional gateway. It shifts Ter Apel's identity from a "site of crisis" to a humanized civic heart, ensuring equality of mobility and providing infrastructure necessary for guests and residents.

# APPROACH

**How can a transit hub be designed to create coexistence between locals, tourists and asylum seekers in the age of globalized flows?**

USERS	SUB QUESTIONS	THEORY
Asylum seekers	How can architecture provide un-commodified spaces that integrate the free daily activities for refugees with the leisure infrastructure required to boost the local tourism economy?	Liquid Modernity
Ter Apel locals	How can the design of shared tourism infrastructure orchestrate meaningful interactions that humanize the "refugee" and shift the public image of a Ter Apel?	Manuel Castells Giorgio Agamben
Hiking tourists	How can the architectural design of a transit hub utilize shared tourist infrastructure to facilitate slow tourism and social responsibility of visitors?	Nij begun and Cittaslow

**GENERAL GOALS**



**DESIGN TOOLS**

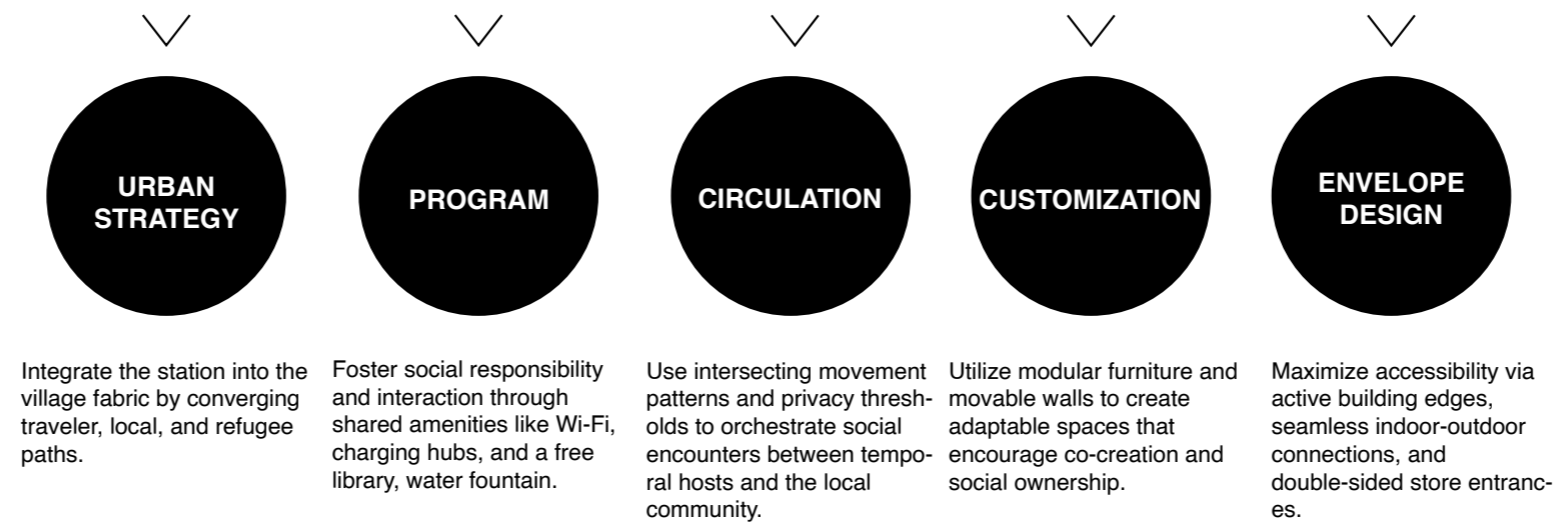


Figure 15 Flowchart of my research questions

# Methodology

## Research through design:

This research employs a Research by Design methodology, combining the act of designing and the creative process as the primary means to explore research questions and produce insights through architectural ideation. This strategy adopts a multi-disciplinary perspective that dissolves the separation between a preliminary analysis phase and a subsequent design phase. Instead acts of researching and designing are intertwined, allowing each design iteration to lead to new findings. It will involve the mapping of flows between different mobility groups and mobility types, model making, drawing, digital models, diagrams and iterative design process to create insights. This approach will be used as overarching method to answer all the subquestions and questions, posed by my research.

## Literature review:

The research begins with a comprehensive literature review to establish a firm foundation regarding the asylum-seeking process in the Netherlands, specifically within the context of the Ter Apel. This is combined with research into regional strategies such as Nij Begun and the tourism development plans for Westerwolde. Furthermore, a deep understanding of the local history and the future infrastructure plans for the region is established. Moreover, existing academic literature concerning the intersections of tourists, refugees and host communities will be examined. A broad understanding of literature on the topics of global flows, liquid mobility, arrival infrastructure and common space are essential as it will allow to reveal the underlying systemic issues of global mobilities. This will help to create a base of knowledge on which design options will be iterated to understand how design can orchestrate meaningful interactions between different people, which can pave the way for coexistence, humanization and create a space to repair Ter apel's image

## Case study examples:

Furthermore, the methodology incorporates the analysis of existing case studies focusing on coexistence, public space ownership, and the creation of common spaces . These examples are analyzed within their specific contexts to provide a understanding of how architecture can foster coexistence. By synthesizing these qualitative insights with speculative design variants, the research seeks to define a new architectural typology that serves as a spatial equalizer for the village of Ter Apel. The case studies will provide a realistic understanding of the complex social and economical issues at hand. As case studies can reveal which design practices work as intended and if they really create coexistence. Furthermore, it will reveal if certain tourism strategies actually positively influence developments of local economies. The case studies

will provide a critical lense on how design actually works with real complex human interactions, capital flows and political bacground

# Theoretical framework

The theoretical foundation of this project is rooted in Zygmunt Bauman's concept of Liquid Modernity. Bauman describes a shift from solid modernity, characterized by stable institutions and rooted communities, to a liquid state where capital, power, and information flow across borders with total fluidity. In this globalized state, the agency of local political institutions becomes increasingly fragile. Ter Apel serves as an epicenter of this liquidity. The national funnel for asylum seekers in the Netherlands, is a site where global mobilities are forced to clash with locals creating a tension where global flows are fluid, but local infrastructure remains rigid and unable to adapt. Furthermore, this project addresses the shrinkage of public space in liquid modernity, where the Agora has been replaced by consumer-driven non-places like shopping malls. In Ter Apel, this lack of solid public space reduces interactions to negative encounters amplified by media. Manuel Castells, a Spanish sociologist's work on flows and networks also explains, how the image of Ter apel is distorted through speed of light networks, where time and reality brakes down as physical spaces become less important than digital. In his view the flow of information takes precedent over the node itself and space of places deteriorate. Finally Giorgio Agamben and his idea on state of exception represent how the depiction of crisis can suspend rights of people. Under these circumstances low living standards in the refugee camp can be accepted as normal and required, despite the fact that the crisis has been caused due to systemic failure. Furthermore, certain spaces such as air ports or in this case stations can prevent human encounters and humanization through design of speed gates segregation and splitting. These theoretical frameworks will enhance public building, not just a space for gathering, but as space where different flows interact and represent the realities of today's mobilities. It will help me to adress what a civic space means in the age of globalization and produce multiplicity of experiences and intersections to enable public to represent itself physically in space.

# RESULTS

# Adventure tourism

As discussed previously, Westerwolde already has a developed and strong hiking trail infrastructure. However, this could be hybridized, and similar experiences can be offered to cyclists and kayakers. The Niedersachsen cuts Westerwolde at its very corner, so Ter Apel becomes a gateway to these exploration routes. Physical activity, Nature and local culture are the core of adventure tourism. By using existing strengths of Westerwolde the station can become a facilitator of mobilities for these different types of adventures. Adventure tourism relies heavily on sustainability which works with the CittaSlow ideals. Adventure tourists usually spend most of their money on local produce which works with Nijbegun locals first tourism strategy as tools for reparation. Adventure tourism is also further divided into soft adventure and hard adventure. Soft adventure usually relies on less risky activities and has a broader target group. as can be seen on the table.

Soft Adventure Activities	Hard Adventure Activities
<p>Definition: Low-risk, widely accessible, limited skill required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bird watching</li> <li>• Boat trips</li> <li>• Camping</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Cycling</li> <li>• Ecotourism</li> <li>• Fishing</li> <li>• Food tourism</li> <li>• Hiking, walking</li> <li>• Horseback riding</li> <li>• Hot air ballooning</li> <li>• Kayaking/canoeing</li> <li>• Safaris/off-road 4x4 driving</li> <li>• Scuba diving</li> <li>• Snorkelling</li> <li>• Swimming</li> <li>• Volunteering</li> <li>• Zip-lining</li> </ul>	<p>Definition: Higher-risk, demands specialised training/equipment, physically demanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abseiling/rappelling</li> <li>• Caving</li> <li>• Climbing (mountain/rock/ice)</li> <li>• Diving</li> <li>• Jungle survival</li> <li>• Kite surfing</li> <li>• Land sailing</li> <li>• Marathons/ultra marathons</li> <li>• Mountain biking</li> <li>• Paragliding/hang gliding</li> <li>• Skiing</li> <li>• Trekking</li> <li>• Whitewater rafting</li> <li>• Wind surfing</li> <li>• Yachting/sailing</li> </ul>

Figure 16 Adventure tourism activities(CBI, 2026)

Another strength of this strategy is that the target groups are really broad, and they can be accommodated easily. Furthermore, the two biggest nationalities in Europe that partake in adventure tourism are the Netherlands and Germany, which matches the current tourism profile. Finally, food and wine, nature, walking tours, festivals, and fairs are things that already exist in Westerwolde, and they are exactly the most common activities of these tourists.

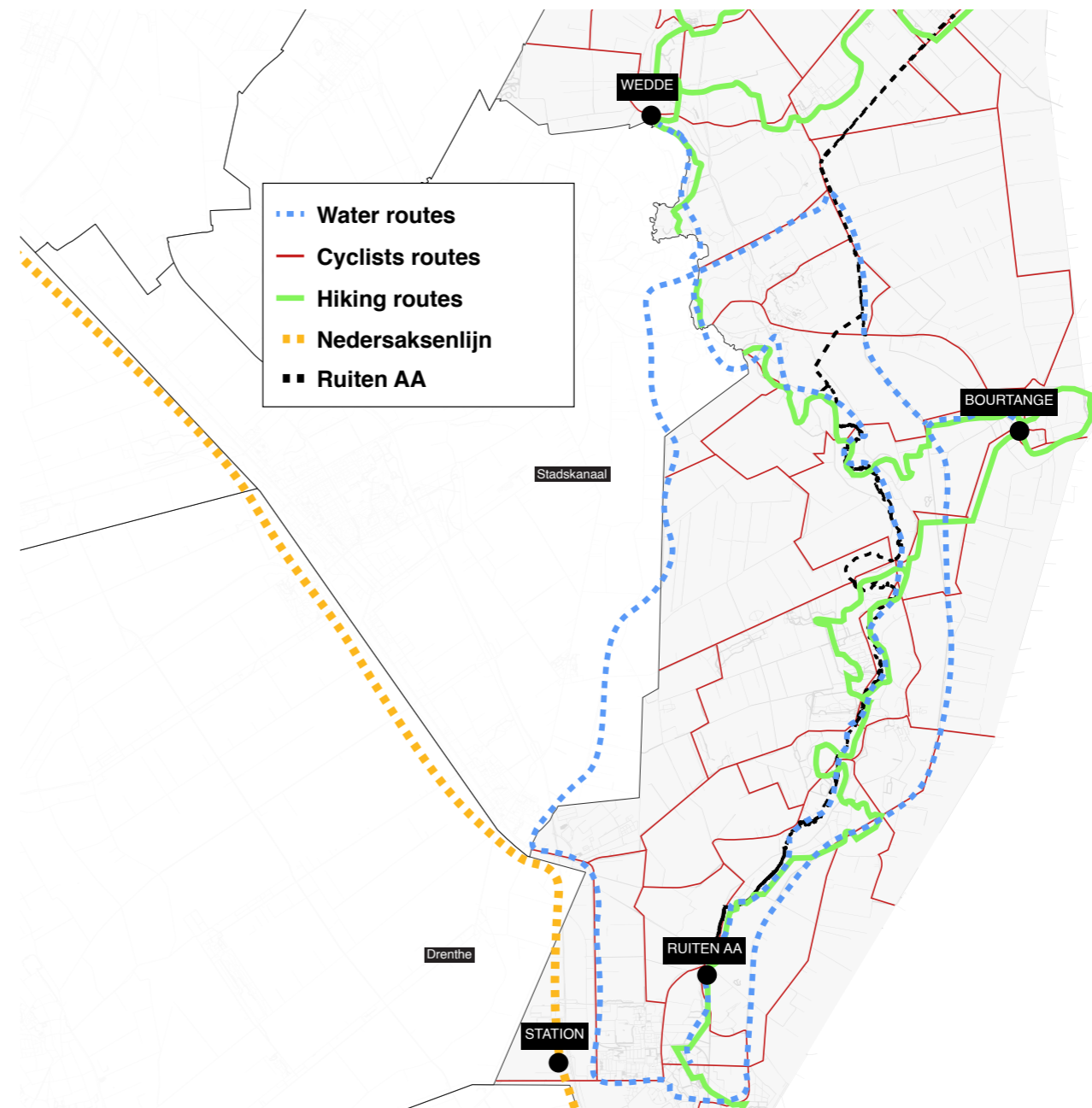


Figure 17 Mobility map of Westerwolde

	Backpackers	Fully independent travellers	Small group travellers
<b>AGE</b>	14-45	30-80	30-80
<b>BUDGET</b>	Low budget Time rich	Mid budget Time rich	Mid/Luxury budget Time poor
<b>WHO</b>	Gap year students	Friends, Couples, Family	Small groups, on tours

TOP MARKETS IN EUROPE: Germany 63%, Netherlands 48% , United Kingdom 43%

Figure 18 Adventure tourism target groups (Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI, 2026)

This research resulted in different types of accommodation being designed for the three main user groups of adventure tourists. Two double units are intended for small group travelers, allowing multiple couples to reside in the same housing. Backpackers have access to cheap dorm rooms, and fully independent travelers have four single units available for couples.

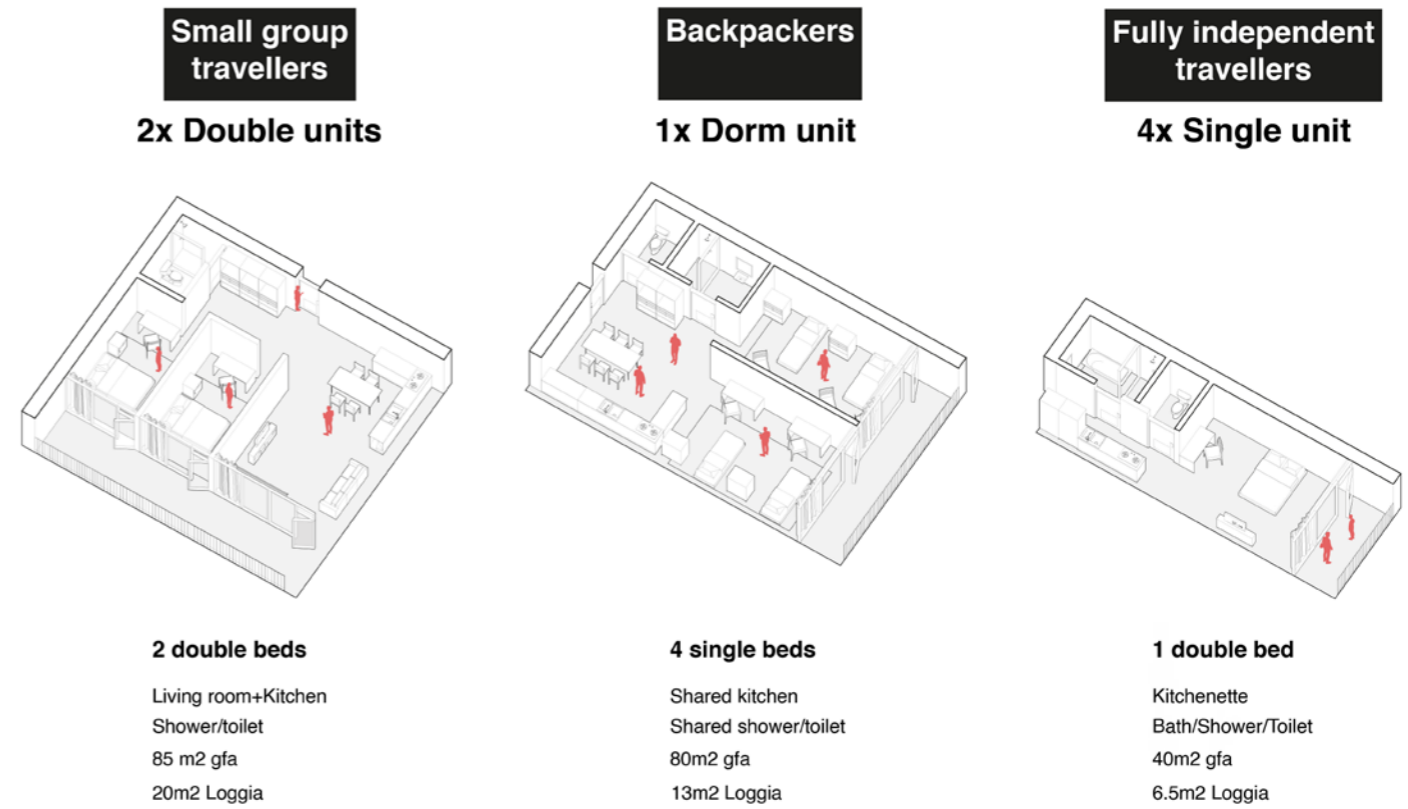


Figure 19 Room axonometrics

8 nights average stay      Average trip 3000\$      76% of total trip cost is spent local suppliers      277\$ spent on local souvenirs

Figure 9: Adventure activities undertaken by Dutch outbound tourists in 2024 and 2025

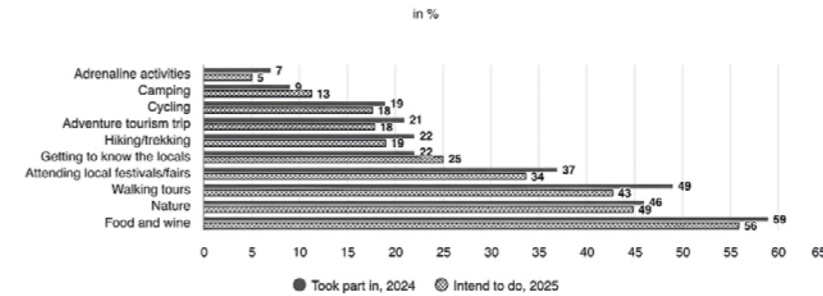


Figure 4: Adventure activities undertaken by German outbound tourists in 2024 and 2025

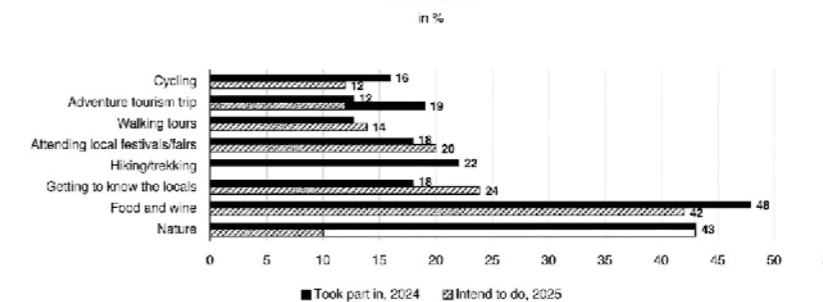


Figure 20(Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI, 2026)

# Urban strategy

The site was researched by creating a tourism map in a group setting, trying to explore as many different research topics as possible. I further developed this research by mapping the potential flows of different user groups, overlaying them together, and picking the exact location of the building based on flow intensity. A viaduct is needed for the train to cross the canal. This need is used as the main concept for the building by dividing the building into three parts: the leisure plaza, the viaduct station, and the rooftop garden.

The leisure plaza was designed by pinpointing the flow intersections within, a grid inspired by the historical peat landscape. Here, meeting spaces for locals and free daily activities for refugees were placed at the intersections of flows. The leisure plaza acts as a mediator between the AZC center, the Ter Apel center and local housing. By carefully placing tourist functions next to these intersection, prevents certain spaces from being designated as tourist only areas, establishing local ownership of common space, and slowing down tourists with local flows.

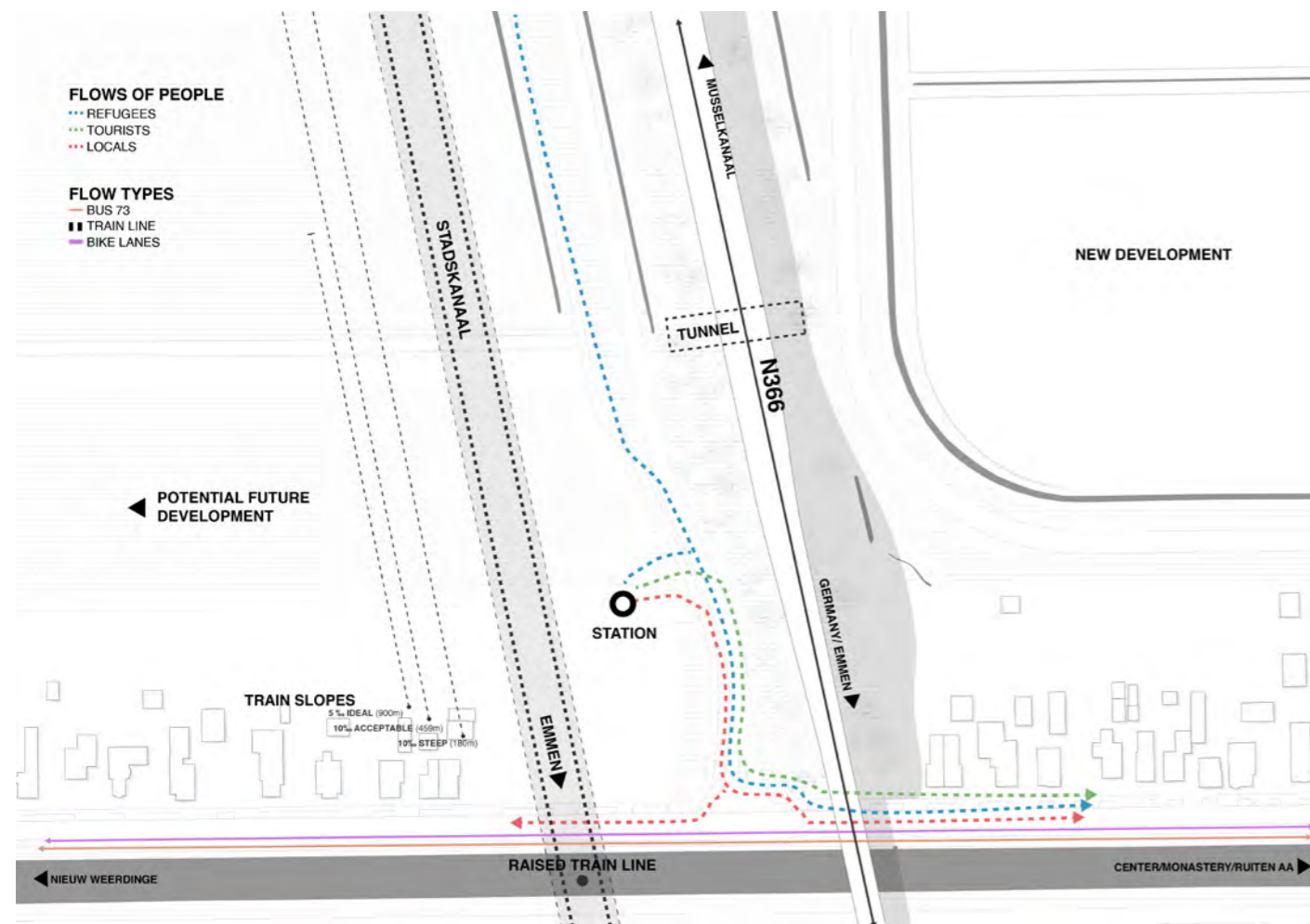


Figure 21 Sitemap with speculative flows of three user groups

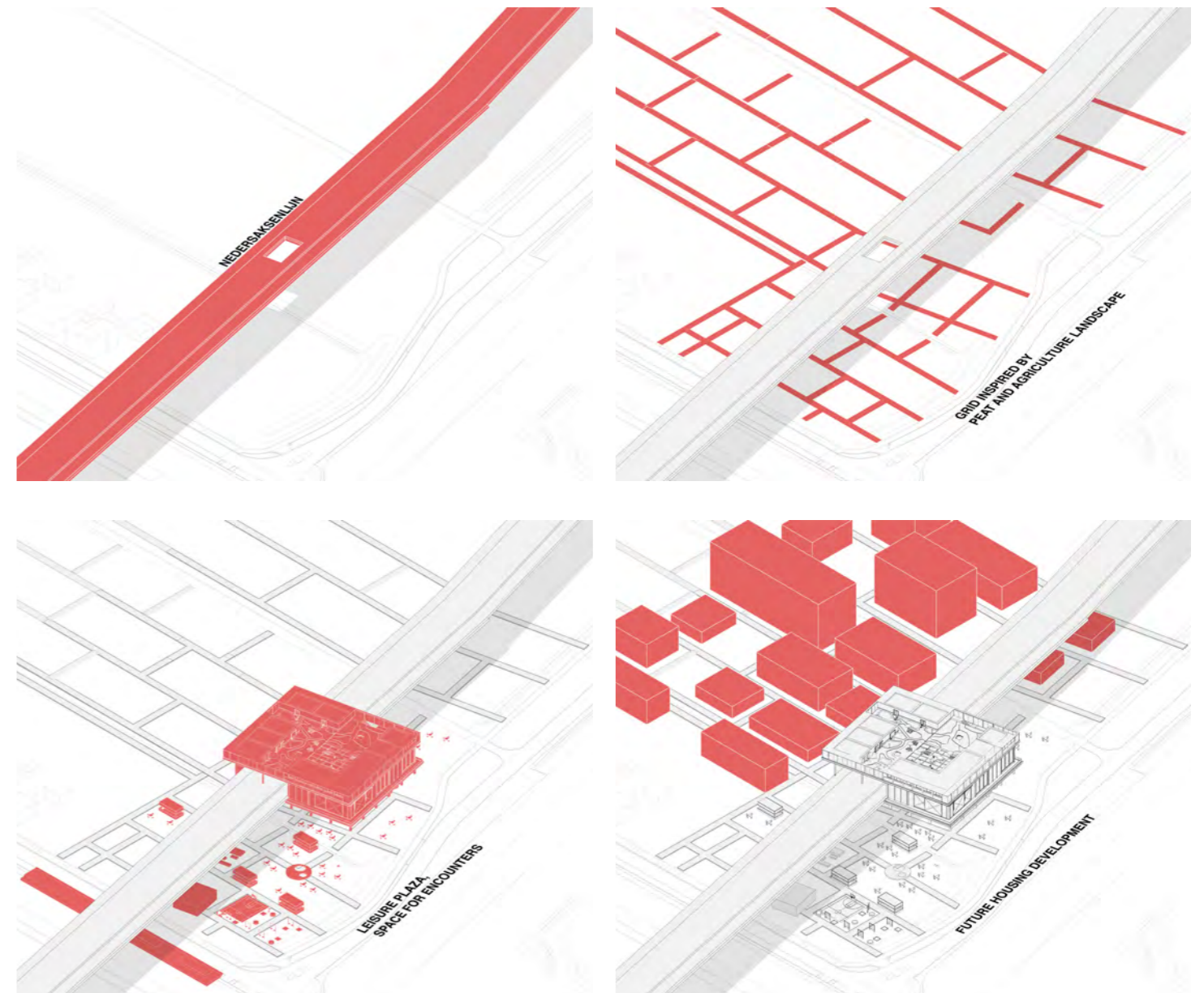


Figure 22 Axonometric concept diagrams

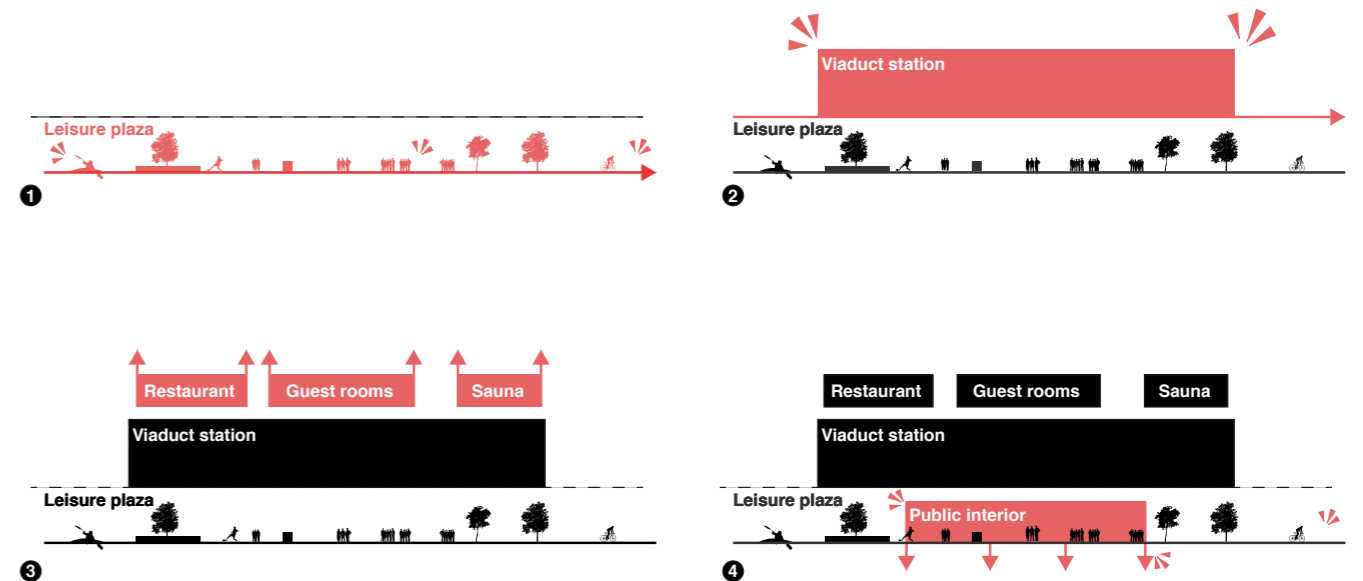


Figure 23 Three layers concept section

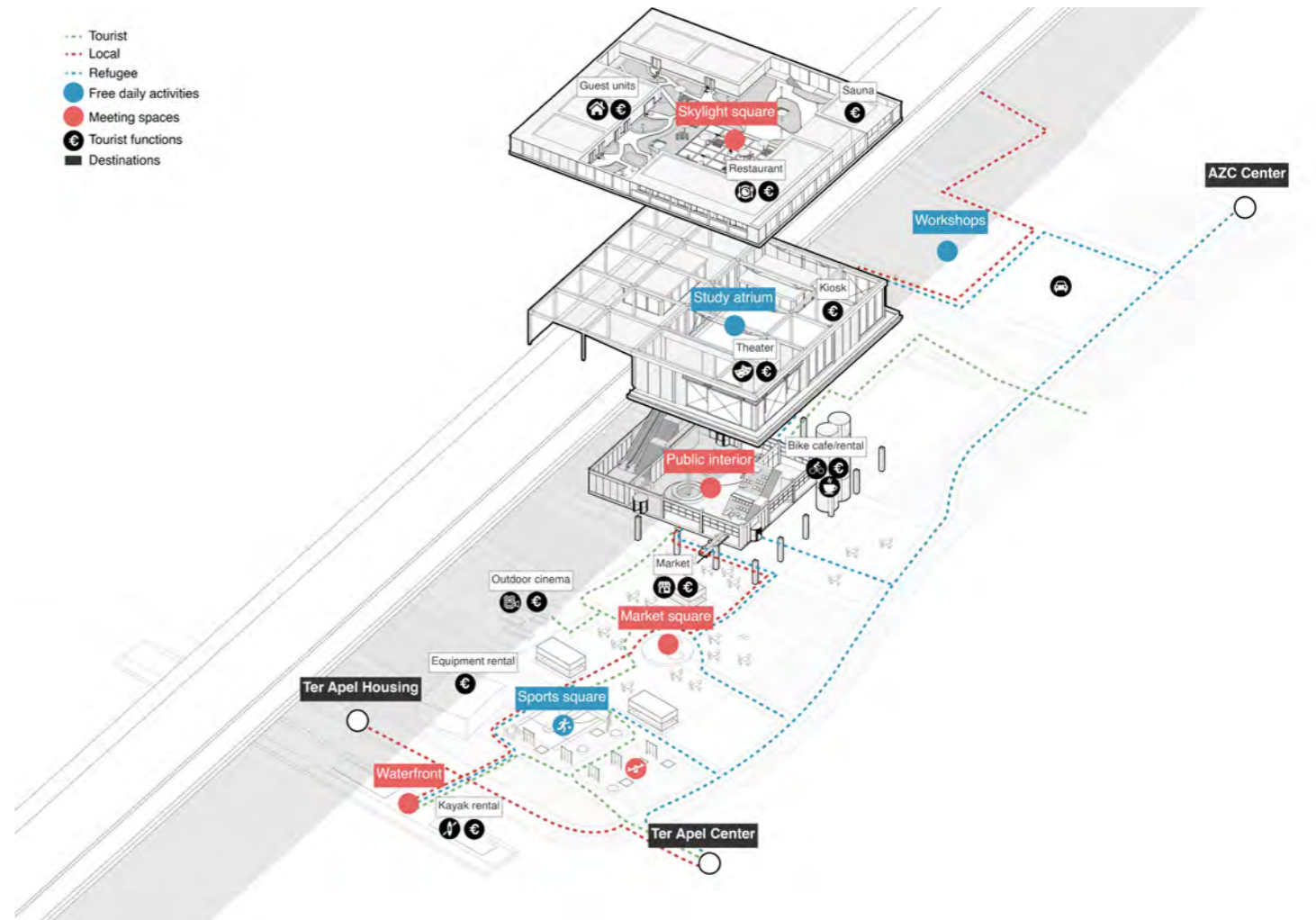
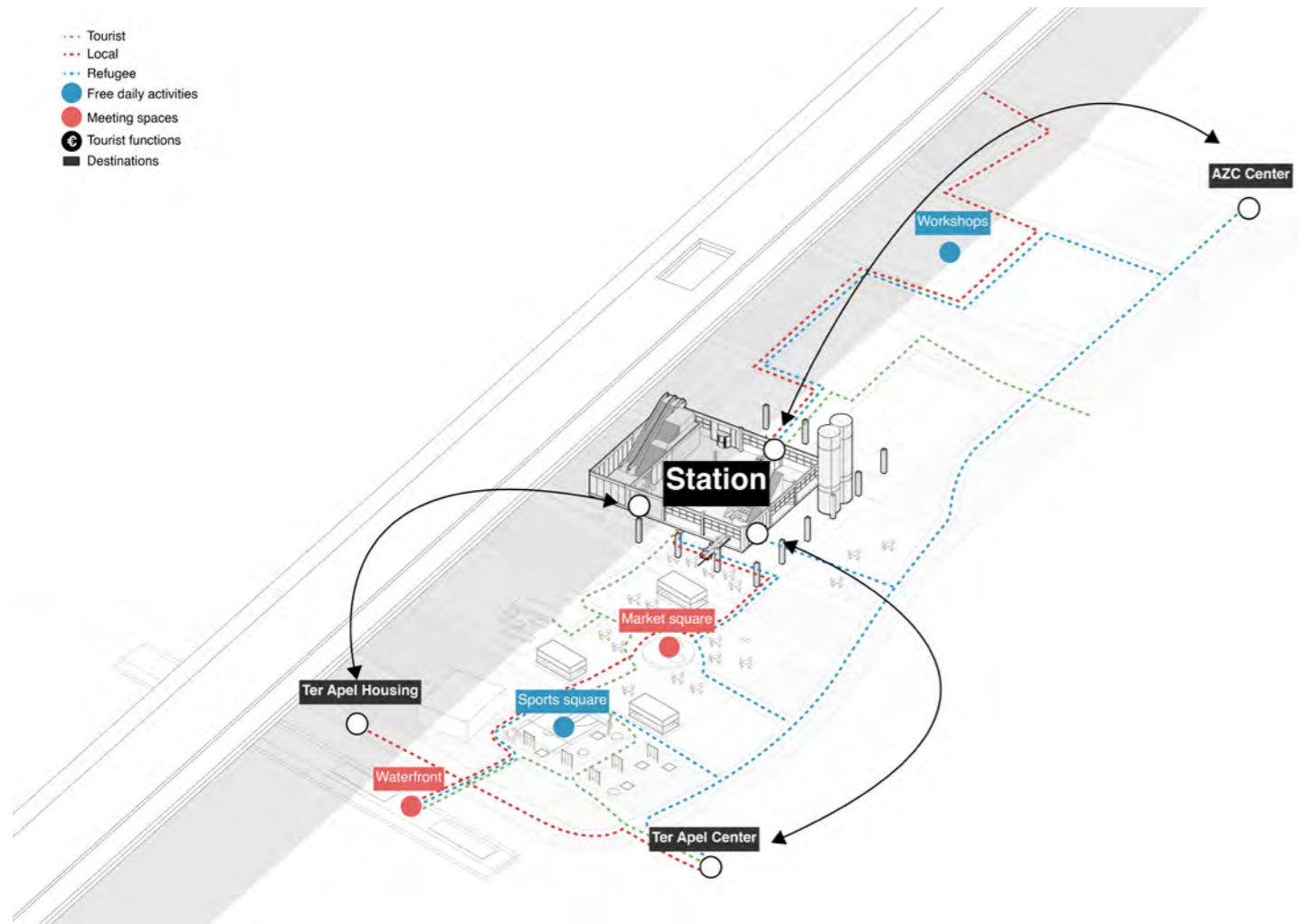


Figure 24 Axonometric public space diagrams

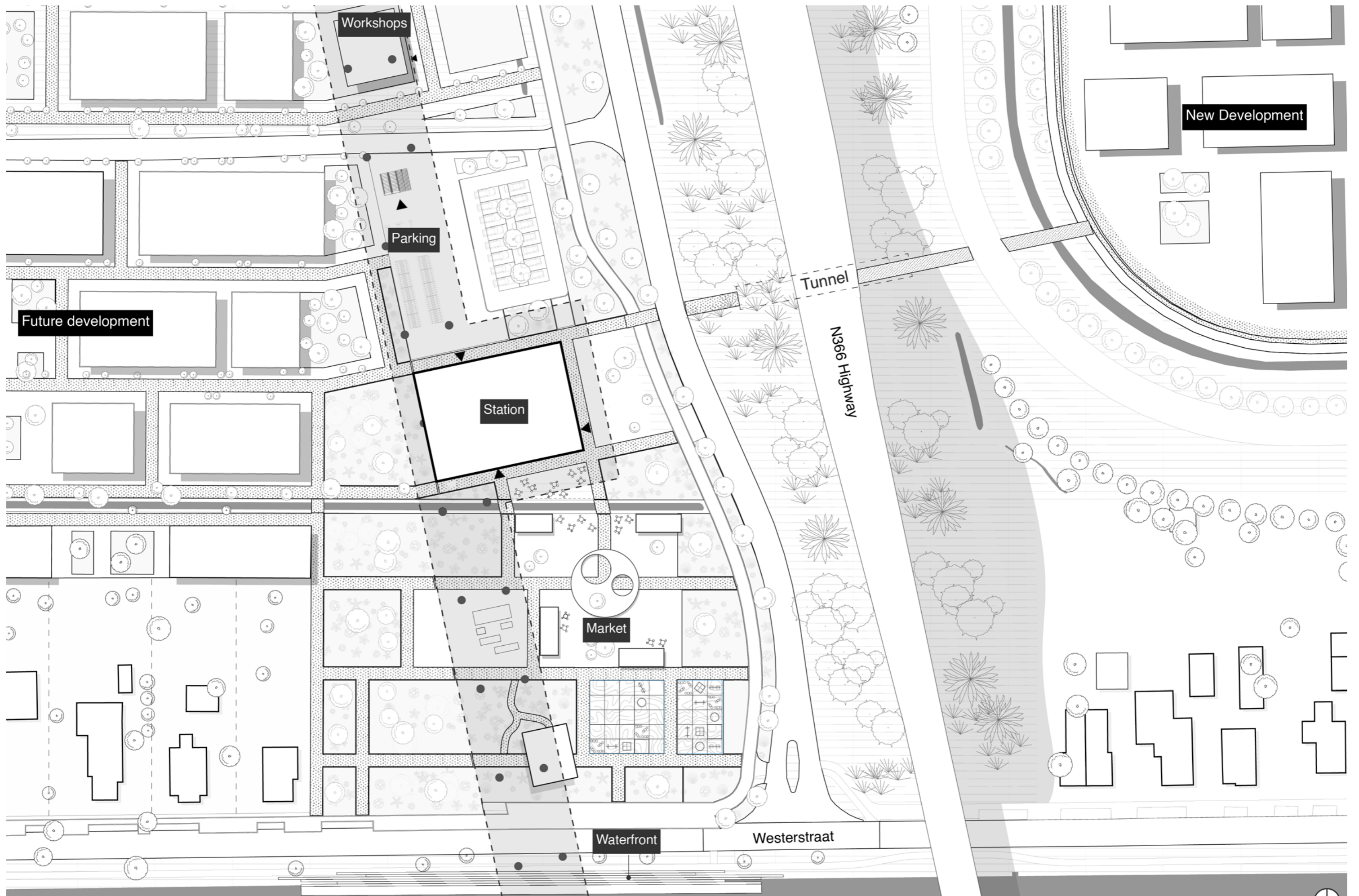


Figure 25 Siteplan of the area

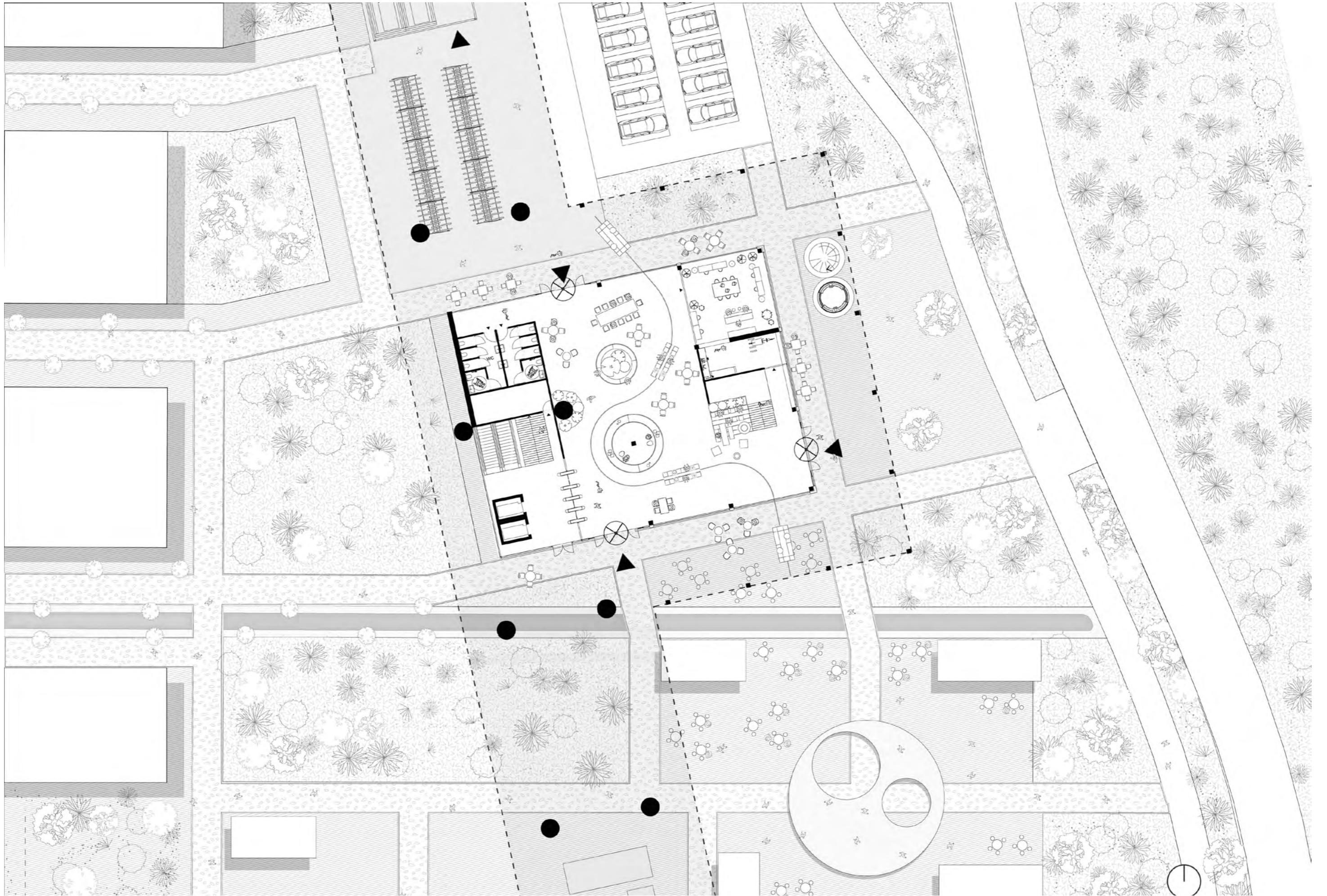


Figure 26 Ground floor and siteplan

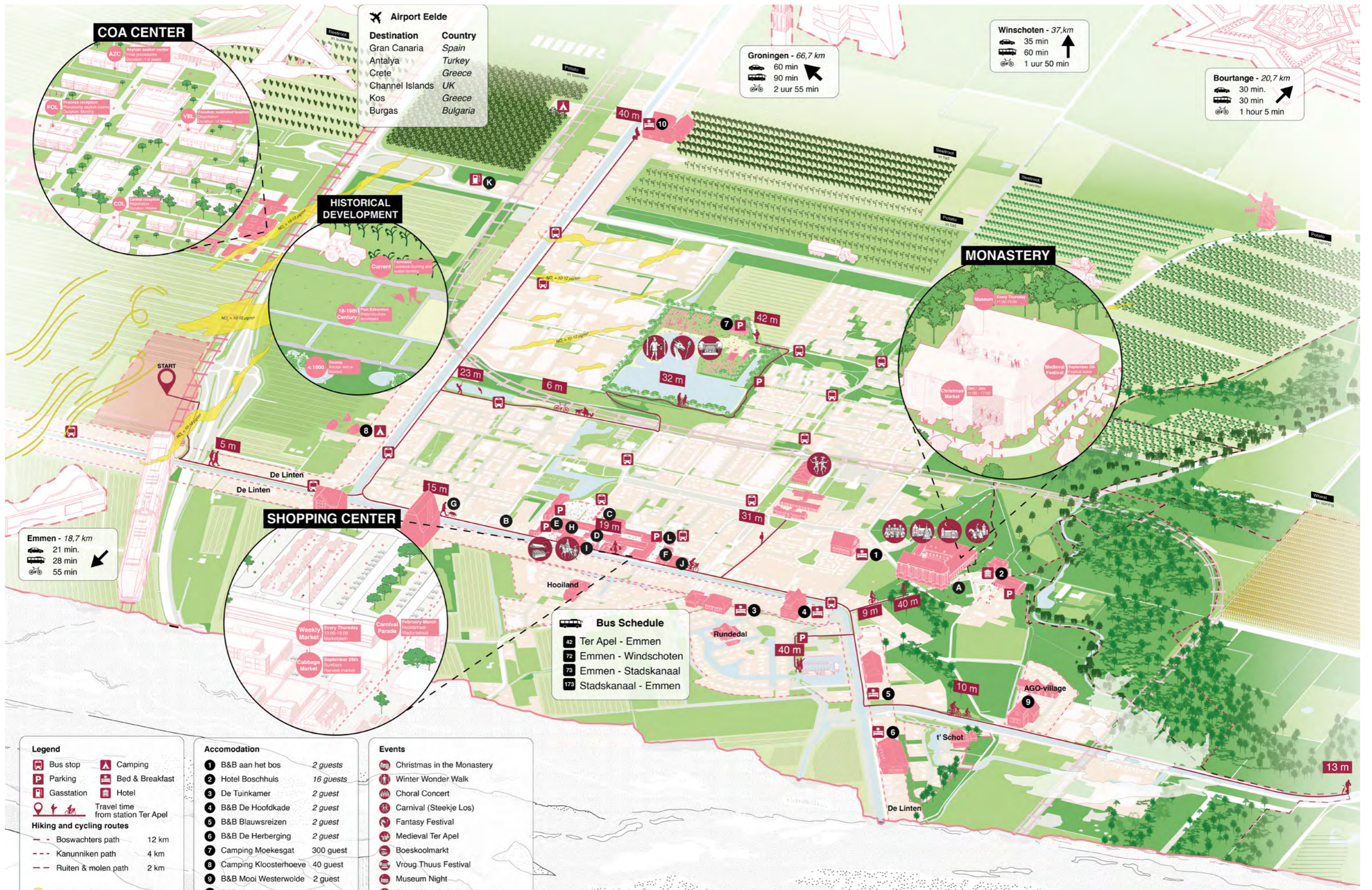


Figure 27 Tourism map

# Spatial equalizer

The building plugs itself into the viaduct and creates two more layers above the leisure plaza, creating a building that is 16 meters high with a ground floor attached to the minimum height required for the fire truck to pass the viaduct at 4.5 meters. Public spaces are placed inside and surrounded with tourist functions, following the same principle as the urban strategy. The ground floor is fully public, the first floor is semipublic, and the rooftop is private, mostly for hotel guests and restaurant visitors, creating a gradient from public to private. These three layers are visually connected with a void and a set of openings. Furthermore, a massive slidable window, a walkable skylight, and windows are designed to connect different functions and encourage social encounters between user groups. The ground floor uses garage doors to ensure that during summer, the ground floor completely melts the inside-outside threshold and becomes part of the leisure plaza. The facade and structure follow the three-layer concept, with the ground floor being completely concrete like the viaduct, the first floor being glulam for the public interior, and the third layer blending with the sky using stainless steel and aluminum. The result is a building with a multiplicity of experiences, spaces for encounters, and civic hearts.

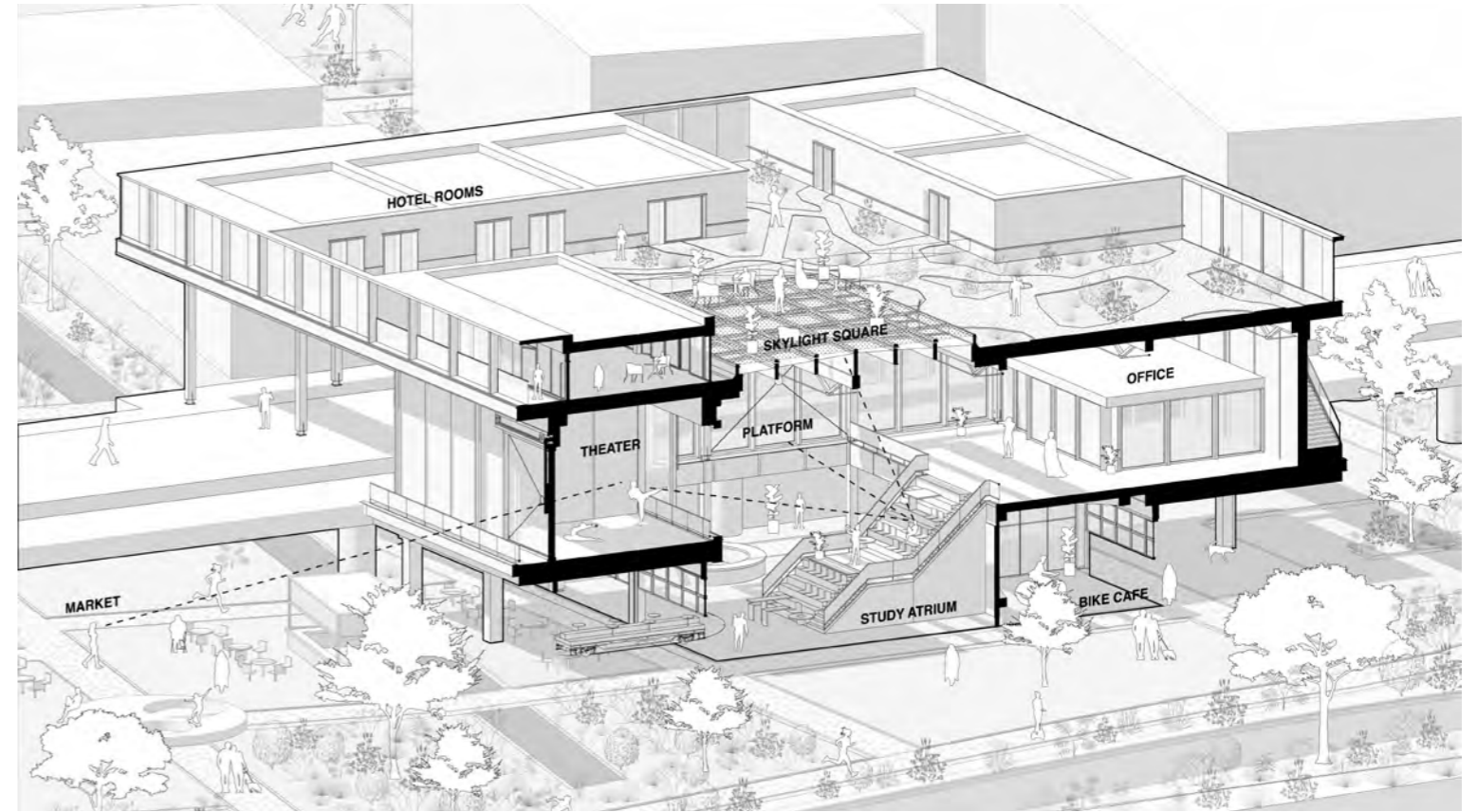


Figure 32 Axonometric section

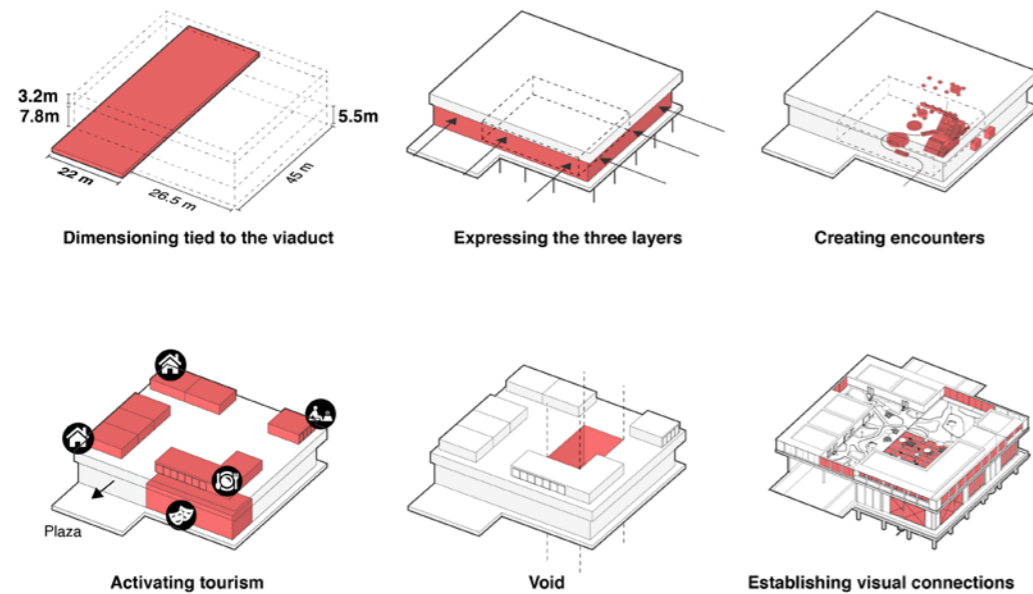


Figure 31 Axonometric building diagram

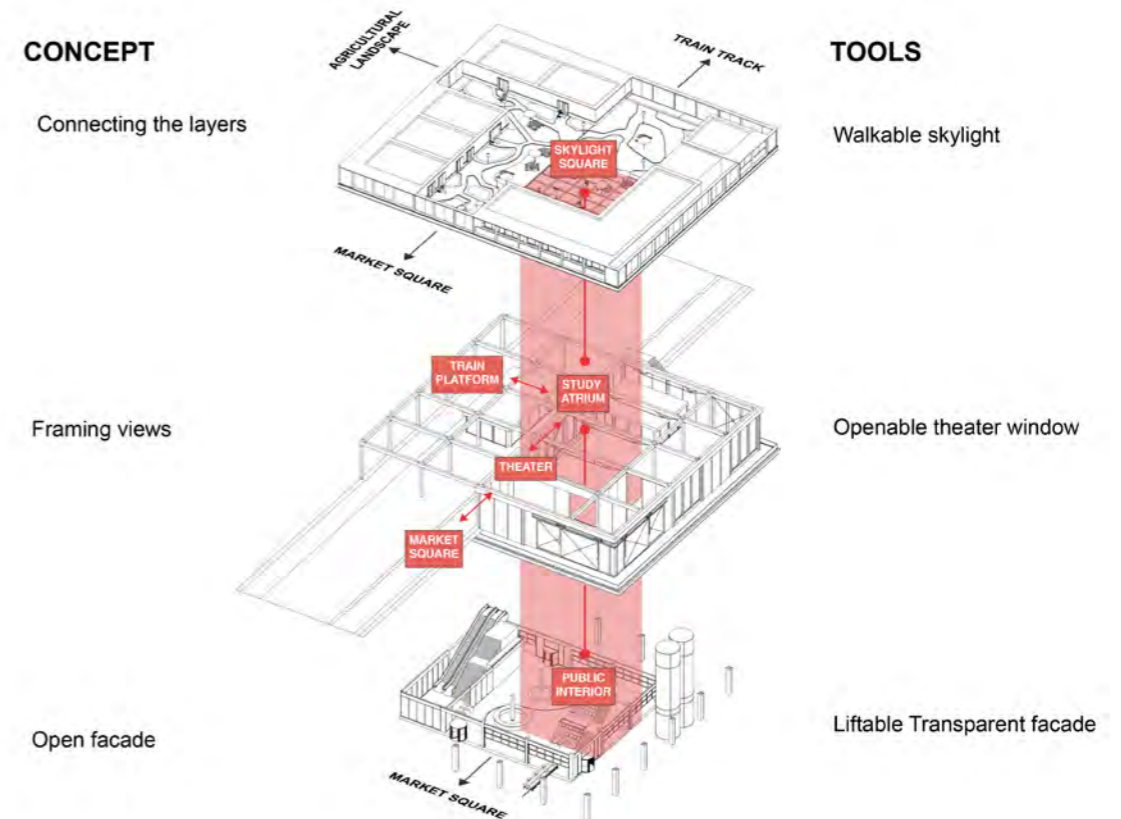


Figure 33 Visual connection diagram



Figure 34 Section from North-Sotuh

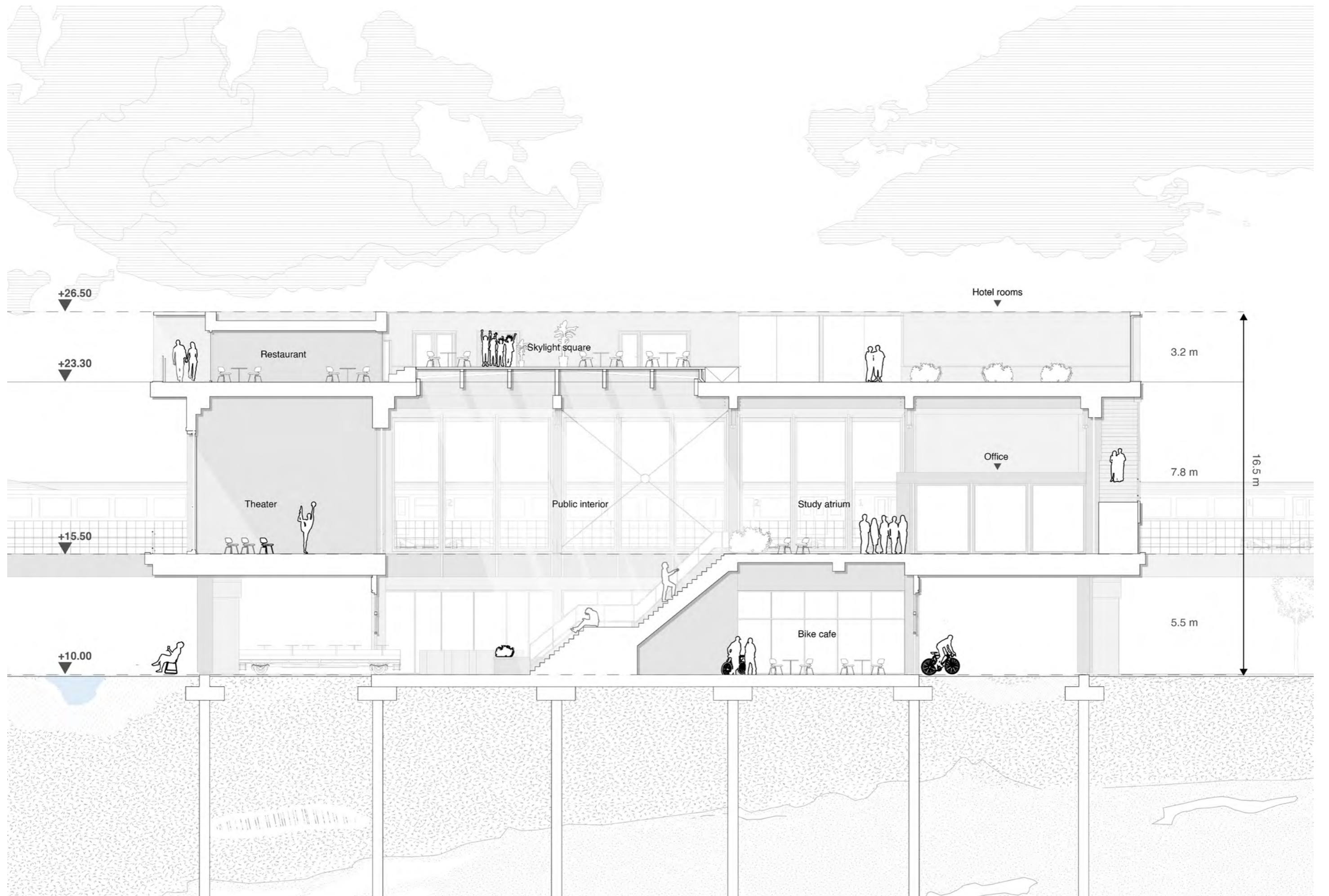
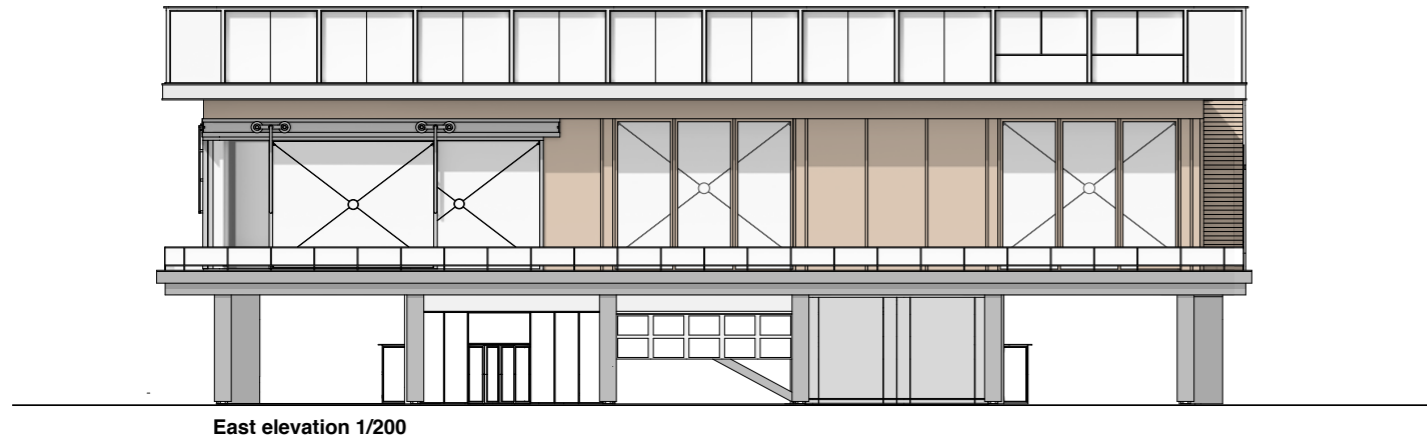
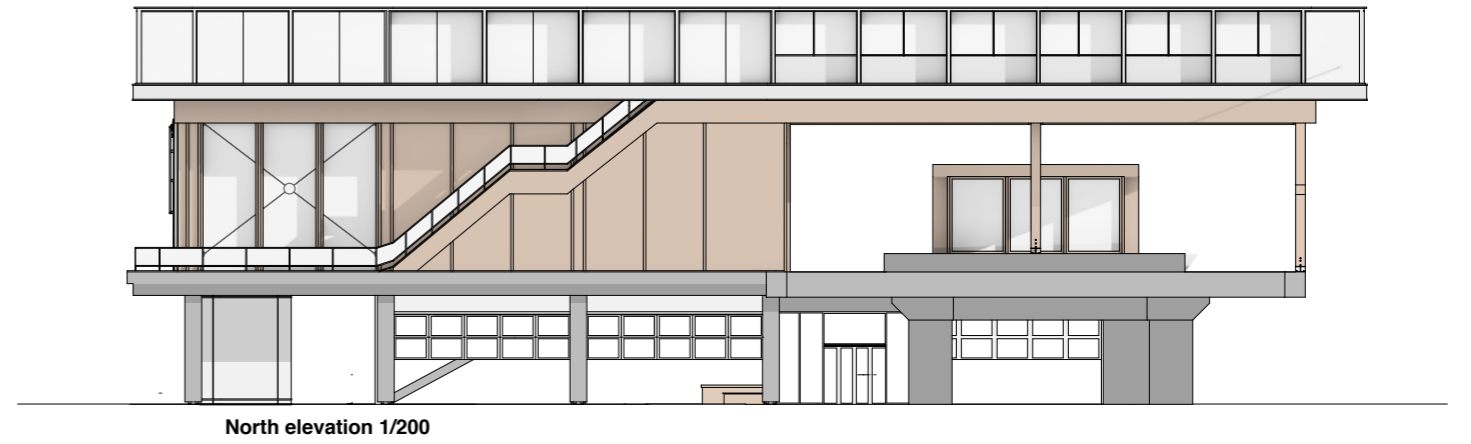


Figure 35 Section from South-North



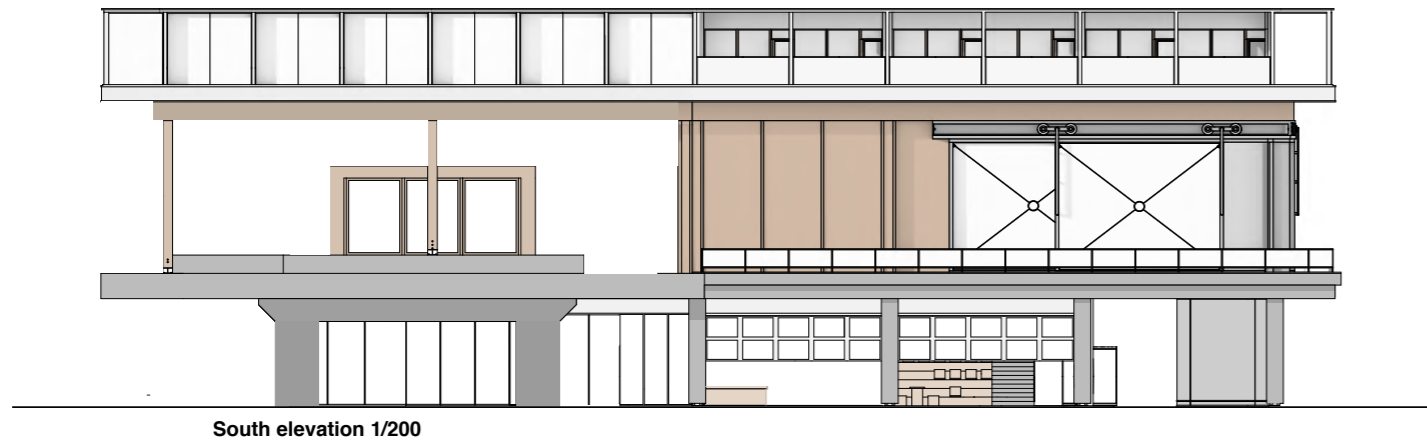
East elevation 1/200



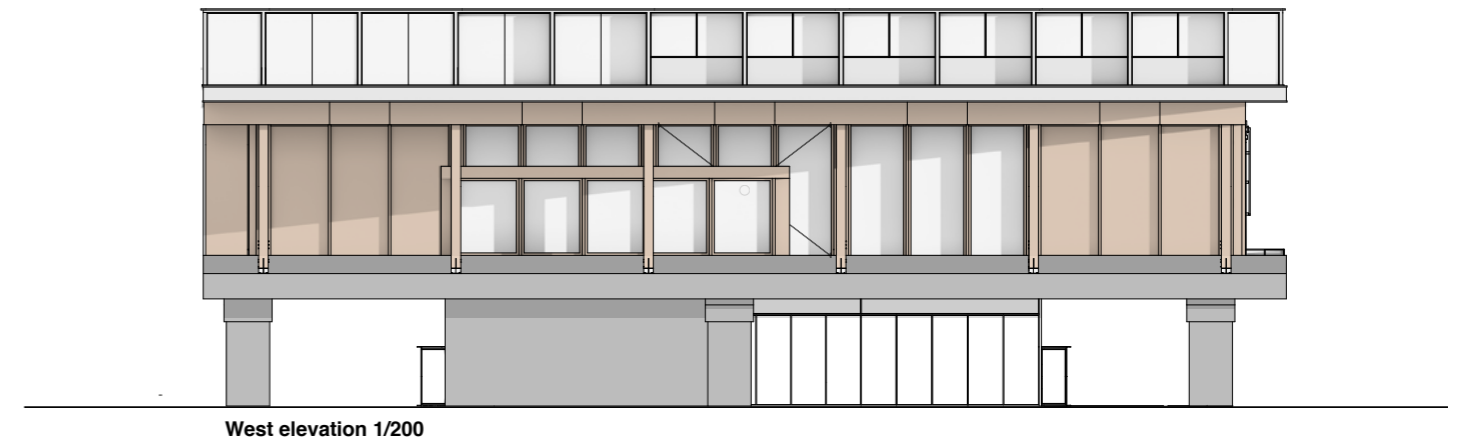
North elevation 1/200

East elevation

North elevation



South elevation 1/200



West elevation 1/200

South Elevation

West elevation

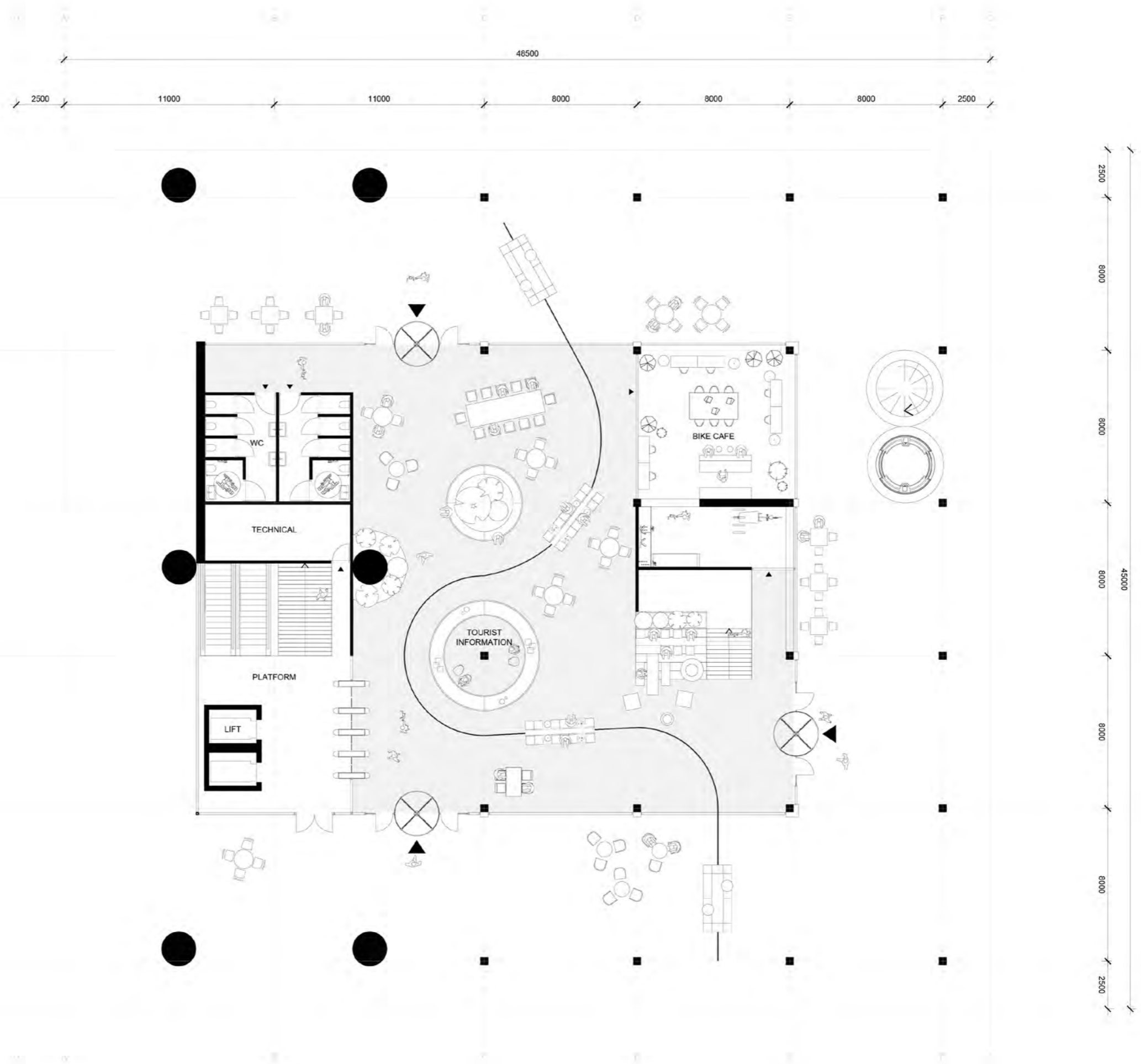


Figure 40 Groundfloor plan

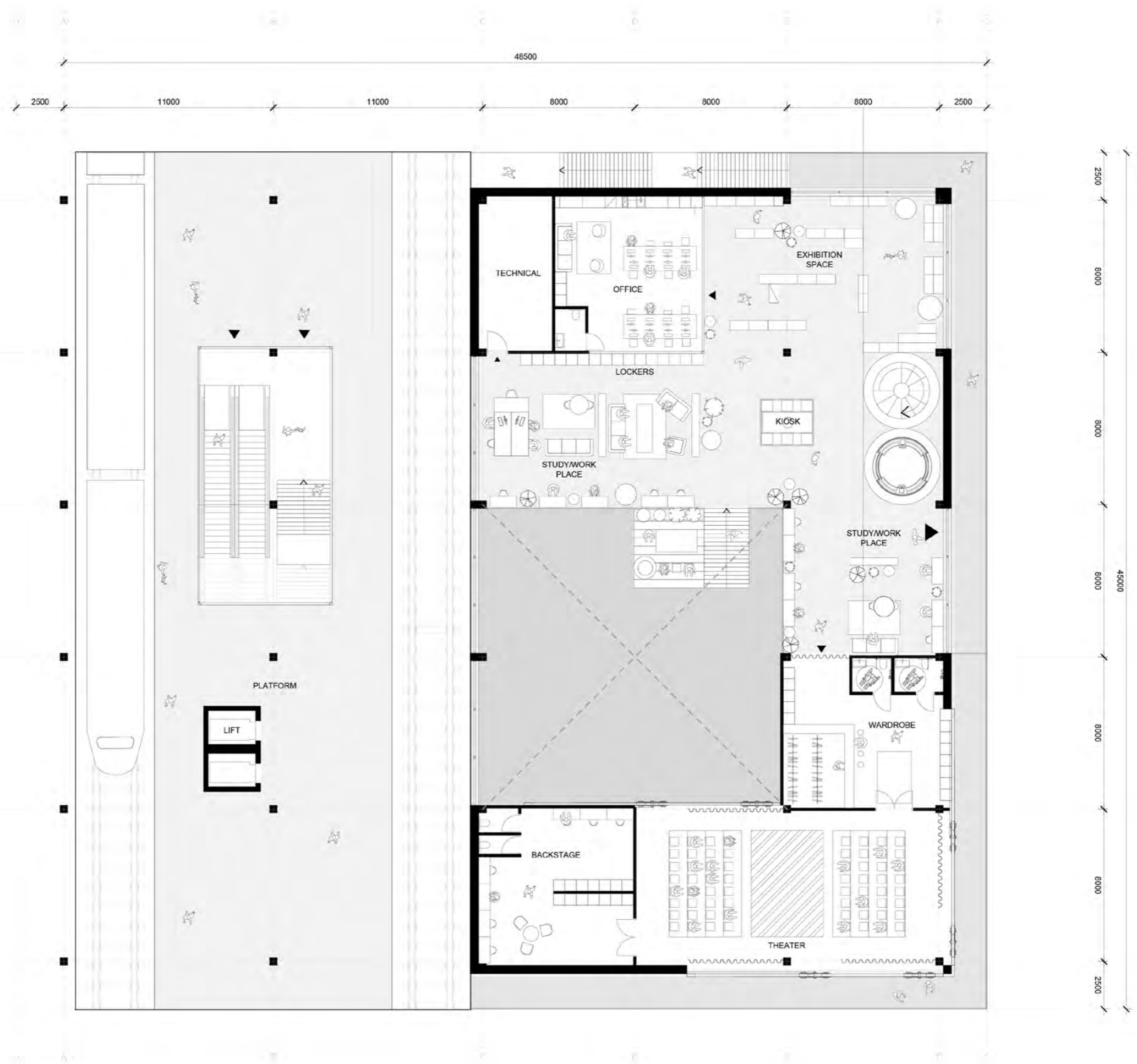


Figure 41 1st floor plan

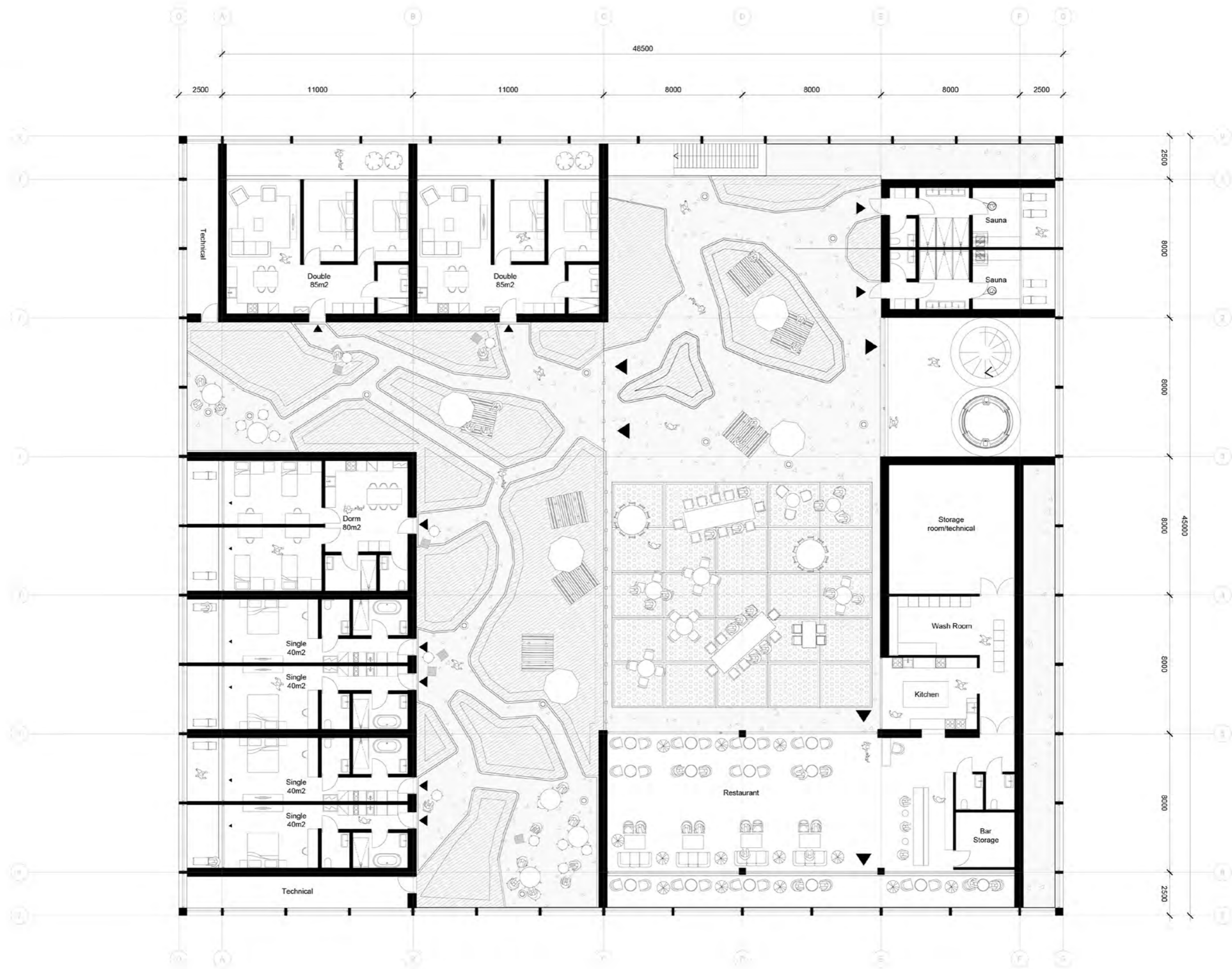


Figure 42 Rooftop plan



Figure 43 Perspective render from the canal



Figure 45 Perspective render from groundfloor



Figure 47 Perspective render from the rooftop

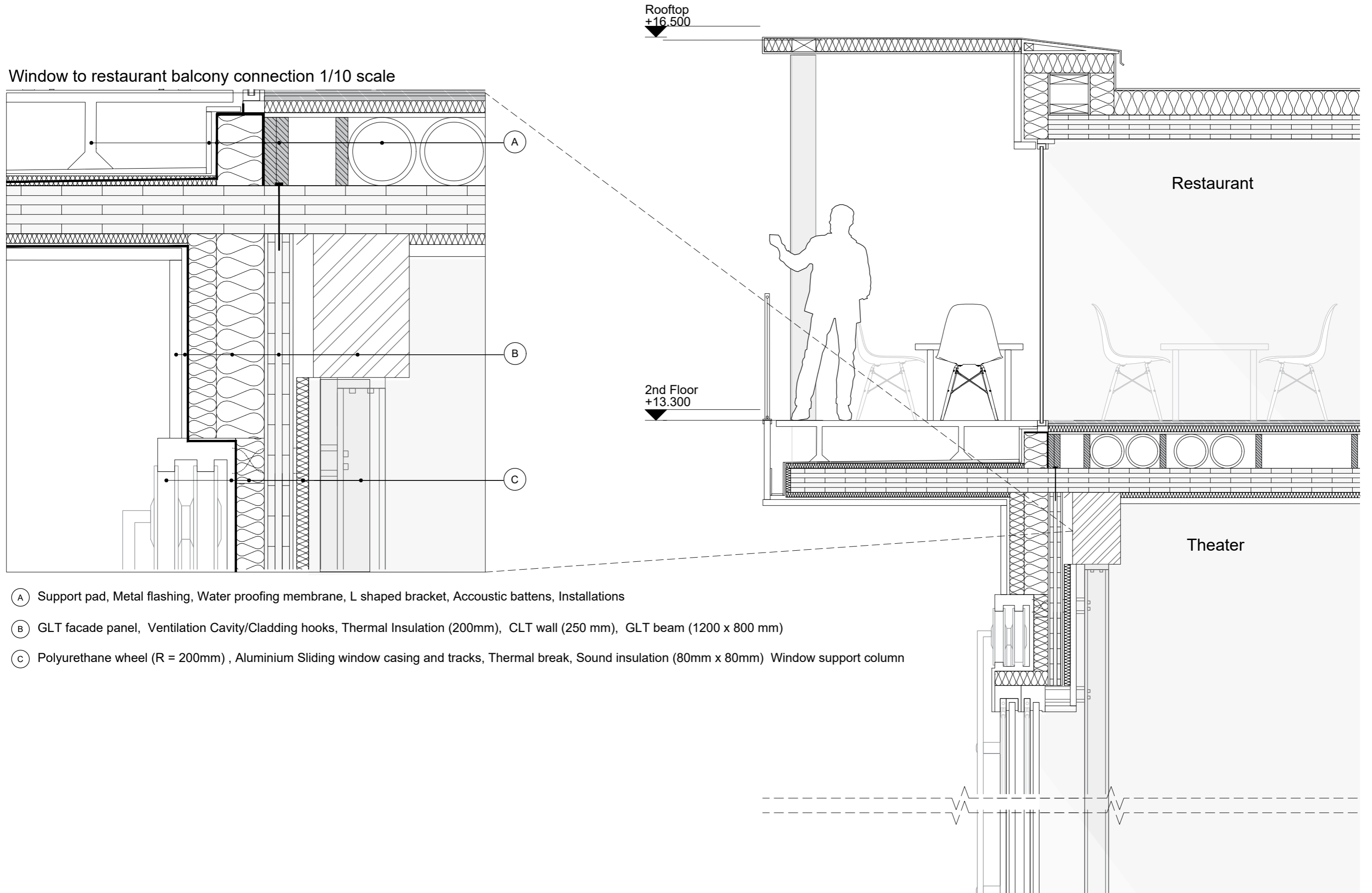
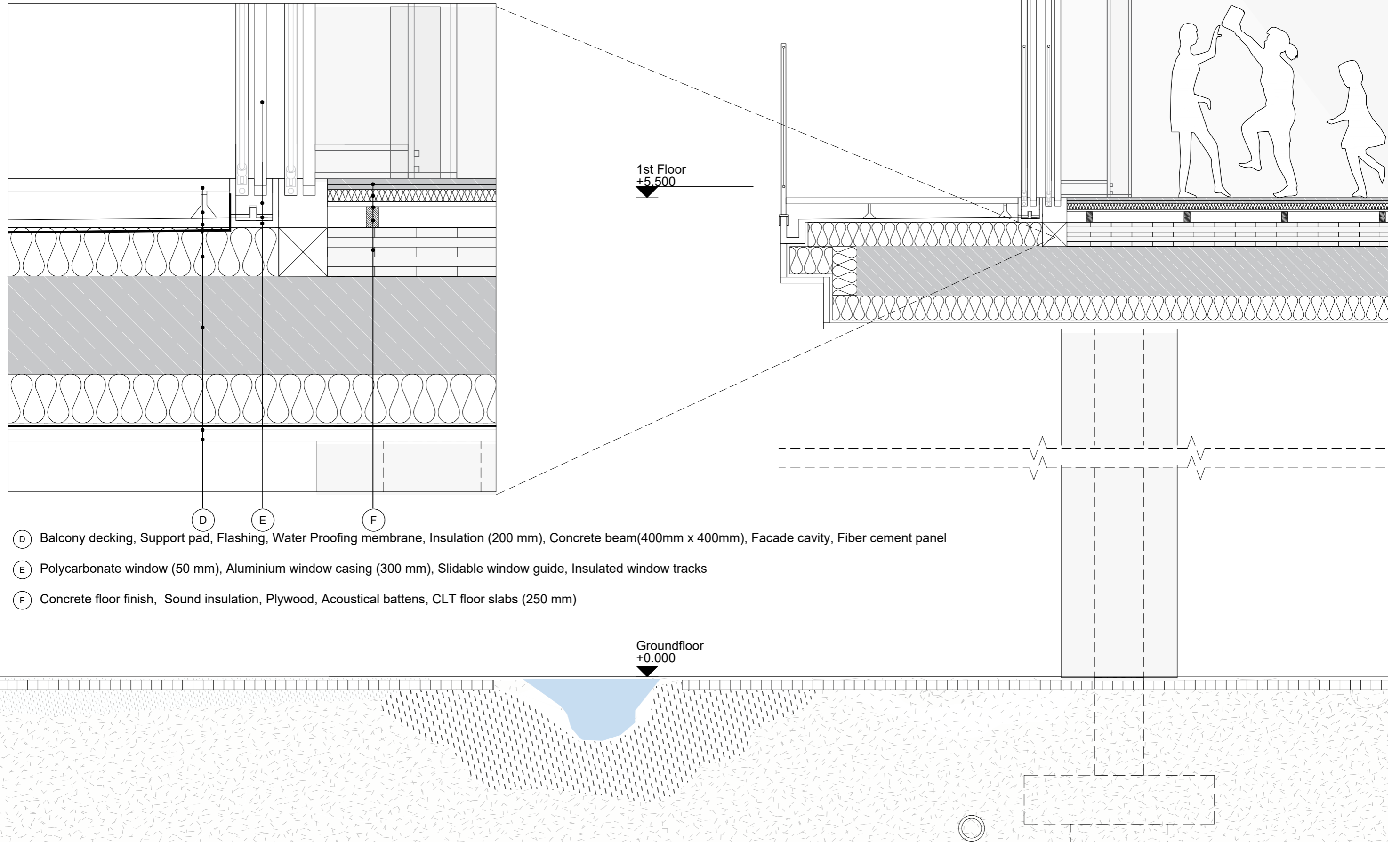


Figure 49 Bottom facade section detail

Window to theater balcony connection 1/10 scale

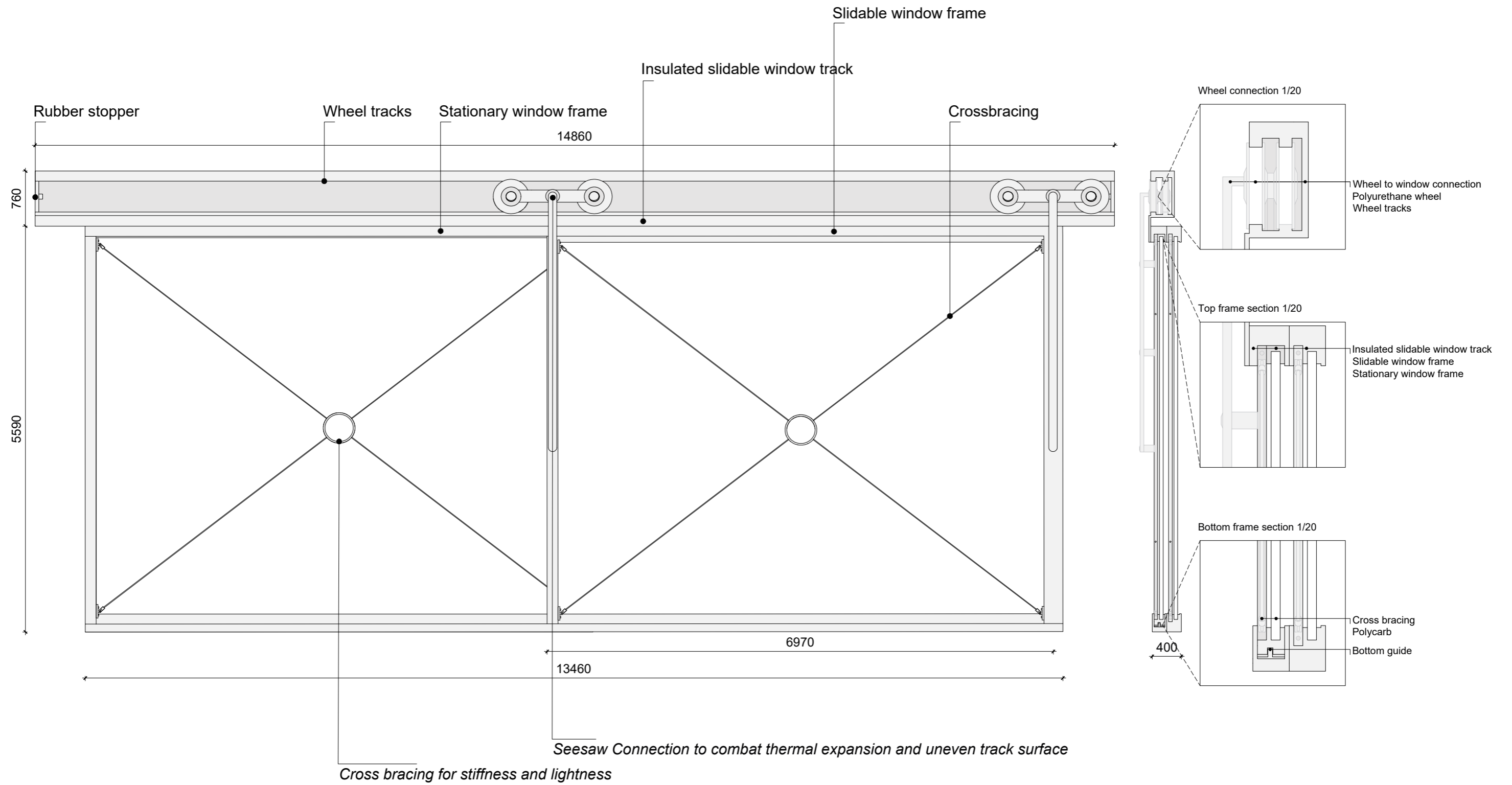


Ⓓ Balcony decking, Support pad, Flashing, Water Proofing membrane, Insulation (200 mm), Concrete beam(400mm x 400mm), Facade cavity, Fiber cement panel

Ⓔ Polycarbonate window (50 mm), Aluminium window casing (300 mm), Slidable window guide, Insulated window tracks

Ⓕ Concrete floor finish, Sound insulation, Plywood, Acoustical battens, CLT floor slabs (250 mm)

Figure 50 Bottom detail facade section



Polycarbonate mass =  $40 \text{ m}^2 \cdot 2.6 \text{ kg/m}^2 = 104 \text{ kg}$   
 Steel mass =  $0.5 \text{ m}^3 \cdot 2.7 \text{ kg/m}^3 = 149 \text{ kg}$

Target push force required: 25 KG force  
 $F = cmg$ ,  $c = 0.1$  (Polyurethane wheel on aluminium)  
 $F = 0.1 \cdot 253 \cdot 9.81 = 250 \text{ N} = 25 \text{ KG force}$

Figure 49 Bottom facade section detail

# CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

# Conclusion

During my thesis I made multiple conclusions. Daily activities, common spaces, and commercial tourist functions can be integrated. Focusing on long term users, specifically locals, is important because they have the incentive to maintain these spaces. Scattering tourism functions throughout public spaces encourages interaction between the three groups. Coupling each tourist facility with a public function boosts the local economy while keeping common spaces - public and locally owned. Coexistence is a strong tool for changing the image of Ter Apel.

By creating spaces with daily activities for refugees, meeting points for locals and tourist attractions, the image changes from crisis to coexistence. Instead of hiding bad publicity, actively engaging with these challenges highlights the positive changes taking place. Tourism infrastructure offers a great opportunity to create common spaces and humanize refugees. Mitigating negative tourism effects and promoting responsible travel is possible through encounters as visitors remain aware of the local way of life. Furthermore, building on the existing strengths of Westerwald allows tourism to use current structures instead of creating large, unsustainable developments. Finally, answering the main research question: How can a transit hub be designed to foster coexistence between locals, tourists, and asylum seekers in the age of globalized flows? Global flows are unlikely to stop soon, so the key strategy is integration. While these flows can create negative impact, channeling them correctly creates opportunities and new possibilities. The Nedersaksenlijn will bring more temporary residents - tourists. Prioritizing locally owned public spaces empowers its users but also brings economic benefit when coupled with careful placement of tourist function. This integration minimizes the drawbacks of global flows and maximizes benefits for everyone involved, outweighing the negative aspects.

# Implications and Recommendations

This project shows how important it is to integrate infrastructure, flows, and different user groups in architecture. It poses a building as a small part of a bigger development and tries to negate the negative aspects of tourism and overcrowded asylum centers. Further research could be done on the psychological aspects of refugees and tourists, exactly pinpointing the spatial tools that design can offer to negate unwanted behavior. Furthermore, architecture can impact flows and direct them in ways that create positive

outcomes. This could also be researched further, as new tools could be developed to enhance the precision of the flow prediction, creating a more scientific way of analyzing different groups and walkability patterns. This project can act as a reference to building built at the intersections of global flows. Both tourists and refugees are temporary citizens of place, which can clash with local needs. By using the methodology of tracking flows from different user perspectives combined with additional research on user needs can achieve positive effect on the built environment and tensions between different users

# Reflection

During the thesis, I improved my approach to architectural methodology. By using tools such as mapping, drawing and data collection, I learned that the process of making a drawing is a key element in understanding the local site. I also learned how economics, global mobilities, and energy extraction influences communities and the built environment. I realized that solving complex intersections of users needs careful consideration of users. In the beginning, balancing locals, tourists, and asylum seekers seemed difficult. However, the research showcased that when permanent residents are prioritized and asylum seekers and tourists are integrated into the equation, the resulting design creates a space tailored to every user.

I learned that tourism infrastructure can be a spatial strategy to create encounters, spatial equality, and improve local life through boosting the economy. Furthermore, the media image of a place impacts tourism. A negative image of a place can be turned on its head when the main issue is addressed rather than ignored, changing a problem into an opportunity. The thesis showcases that while infrastructure inevitably generates global flows, using these flows through carefully crafted, locally owned public spaces can make them into local benefits.

Ultimately, this project strives for coexistence, friction between user groups is inevitable. Designing spaces where these clashes become visible and contained is a critical aspect of real coexistence and global flows.

# BACK MATTER

Section A. General considerations	yes	no
<p>1. Is the graduation project conducted as part of an internship (at a company), or as part of a research project at TU Delft?</p> <p>If a student's graduation project is conducted at a company or as part of a research project at the university, questions of data ownership and intellectual property rights need to be addressed in a written <a href="#">graduation or internship agreement</a> before the project begins. Student and supervisor should consult the <a href="#">Intellectual Property Rights of Students webpage</a>. Additional information can also be found in the <a href="#">Extended Personal Research Data Workflow</a>. If applicable, complete the <a href="#">Confidentiality Agreement</a>.</p>		✗
<p>2. Does the project involve conducting (part of) the research outside the Netherlands?</p> <p>Students who intend to travel abroad (even to other EU countries) for study, exchange, research, internship, or graduation project purposes need to follow the <a href="#">Travel Safety Protocol</a>. This includes attending a mandatory Travel Safety Training Session: see the <a href="#">Disclaimer</a>.</p>		✗
<p>3. Will the research involve processing data from humans, such as running a survey, conducting interviews or workshops, collecting data through social media or internet forums, or re-using existing datasets about humans provided by a third party? (If 'yes', see follow-up questions 4 to 13 in Checklist B.)</p> <p>Students who work with data from human participants must complete the next section and apply for and receive ethical approval from the <a href="#">Human Research Ethics Committee</a> (HREC) before conducting the research.</p>		✗

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