

chasing a phantom border

a landscape strategy for a still
existing wall

Master Thesis P5 Presentation

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first mentor Prof.ir. E.A.J. Luiten

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exam committee Ir. I.J.J. Cuperus

Flowscales - Systems and Composition

Landscape as Palimpsest (LAP)

Landscape Architecture Principles Lab #2

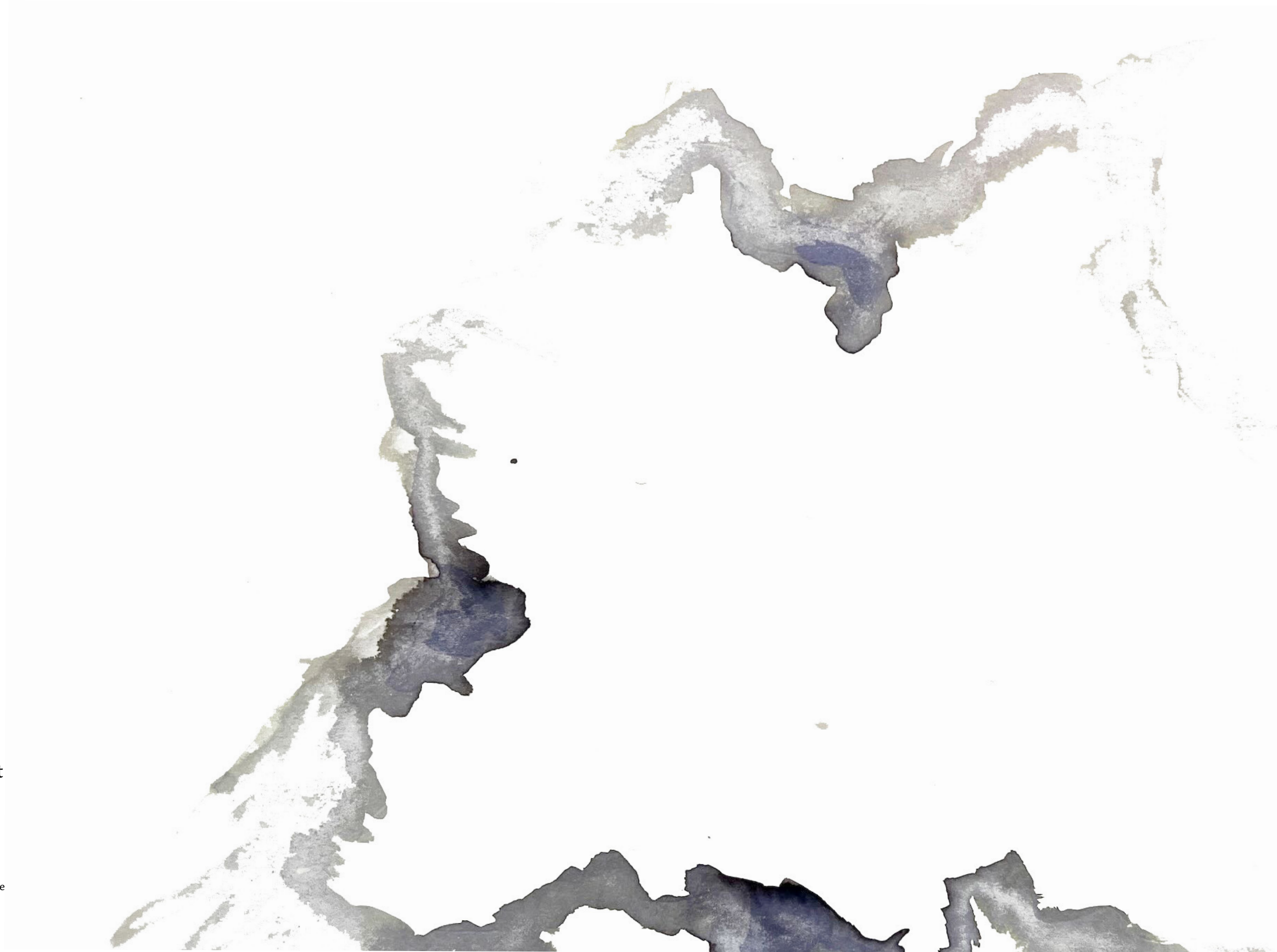
Delft University of Technology

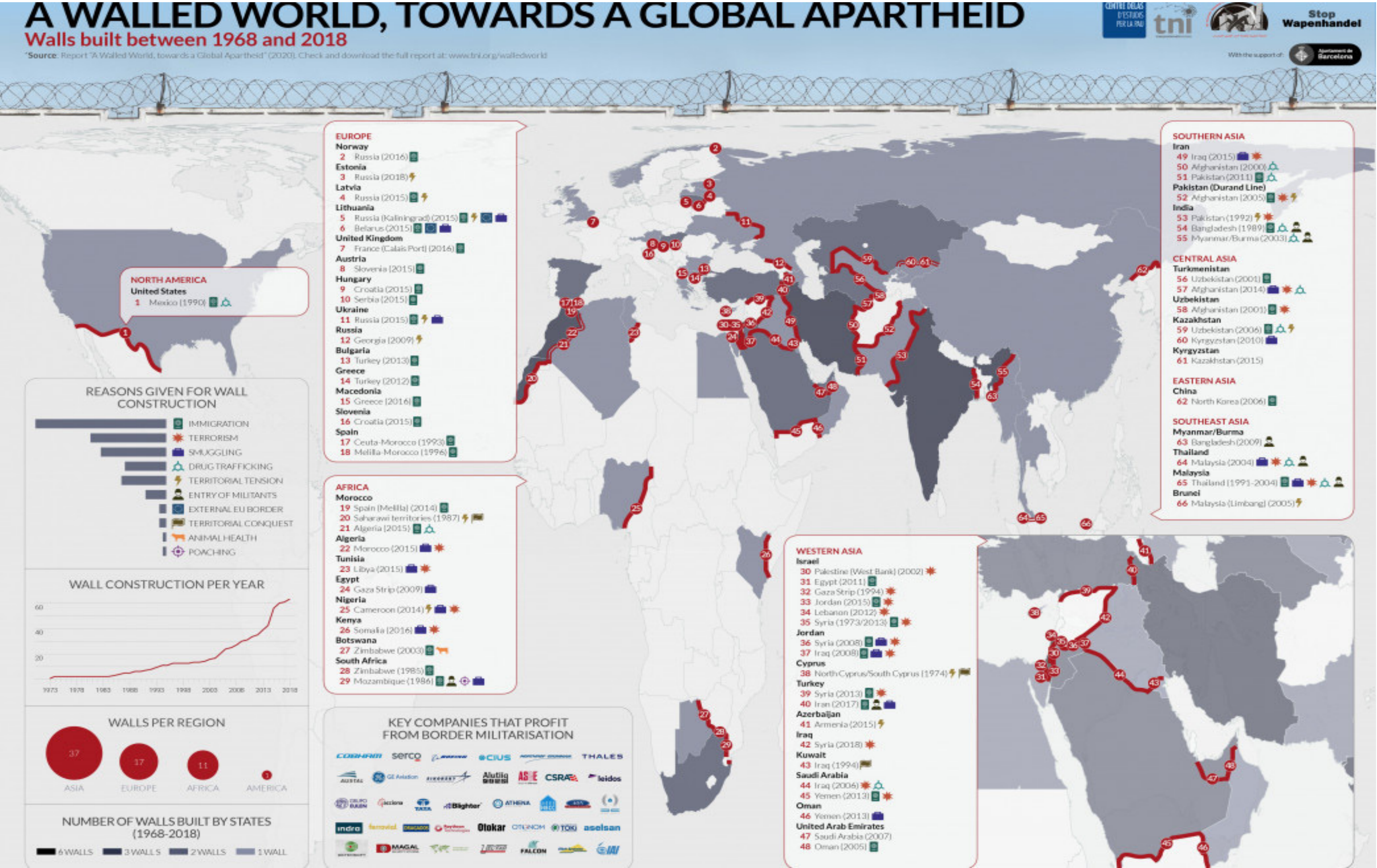
Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment

Delft, The Netherlands

June 20th, 2025

All images included in this thesis are the work of the author, unless otherwise state





(Brunet, 2025)

Introduction

Problem field





Introduction

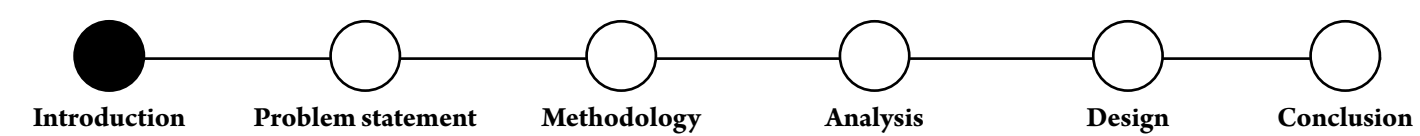
Problem field





Introduction

Research location

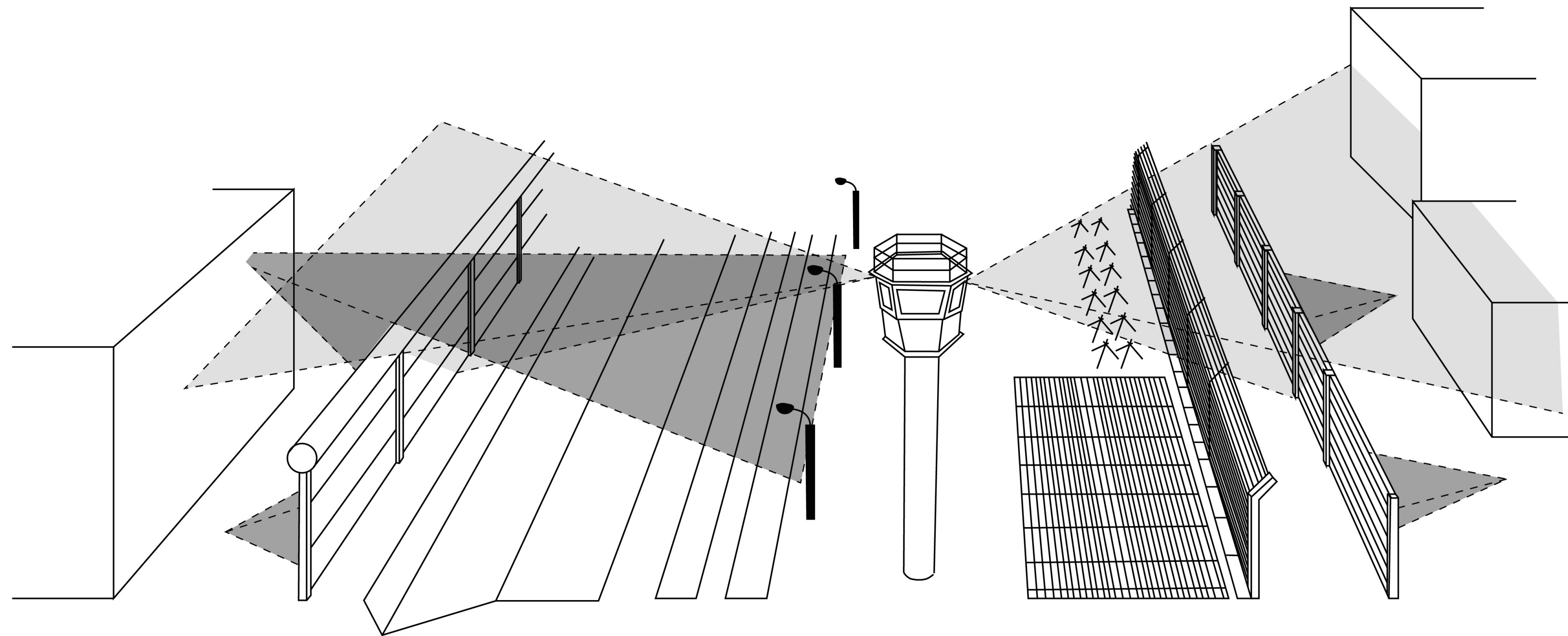




Introduction

Research location





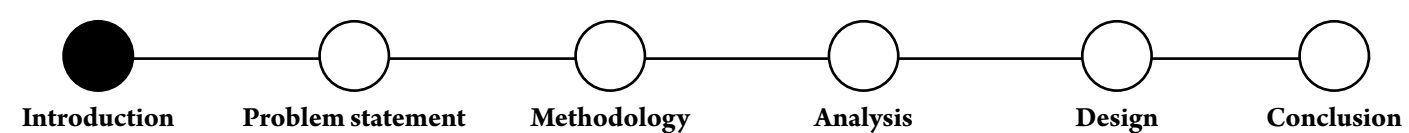
West-Berlin

162 km of front barrier element (Berlin wall) 92 km of car barrier 165 km of control strip 172 km of road 177 km of light street 190 observation towers 19 km of dragons teeth and 38000 road blocks 148 km of border signal fence 68 km of hinterland wall

East-Berlin

Introduction

Research location



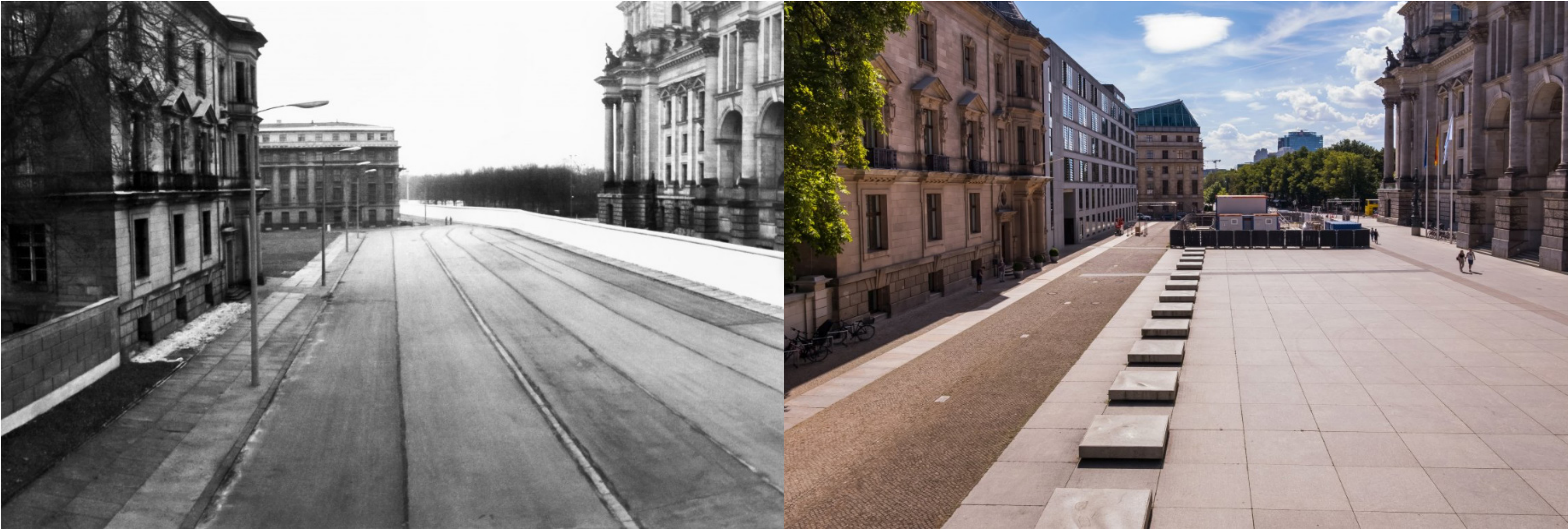


fig. 28 (Bundeszentrale Für Politische Bildung, n.d.)

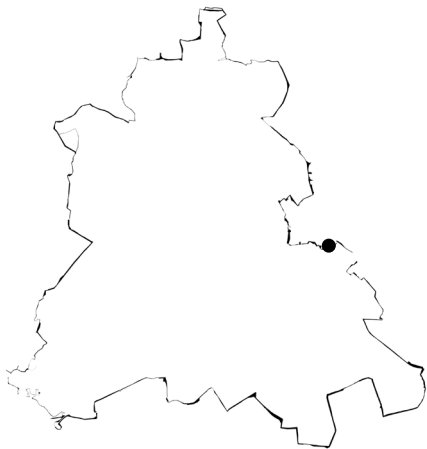


Introduction
Research location





fig. 32 (Bundeszentrale Für Politische Bildung, n.d.)



Introduction
Research location

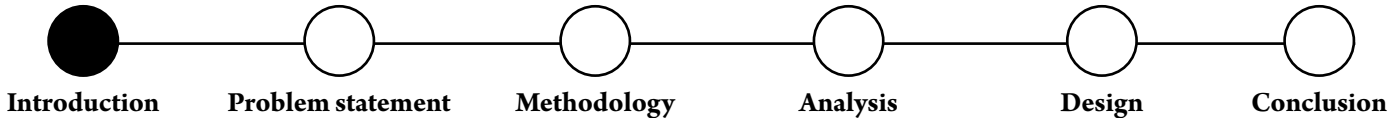




fig. 30 (Bundeszentrale Für Politische Bildung, n.d.)



Introduction
Research location





fig. 38 (Bundeszentrale Für Politische Bildung, n.d.)



Introduction
Research location



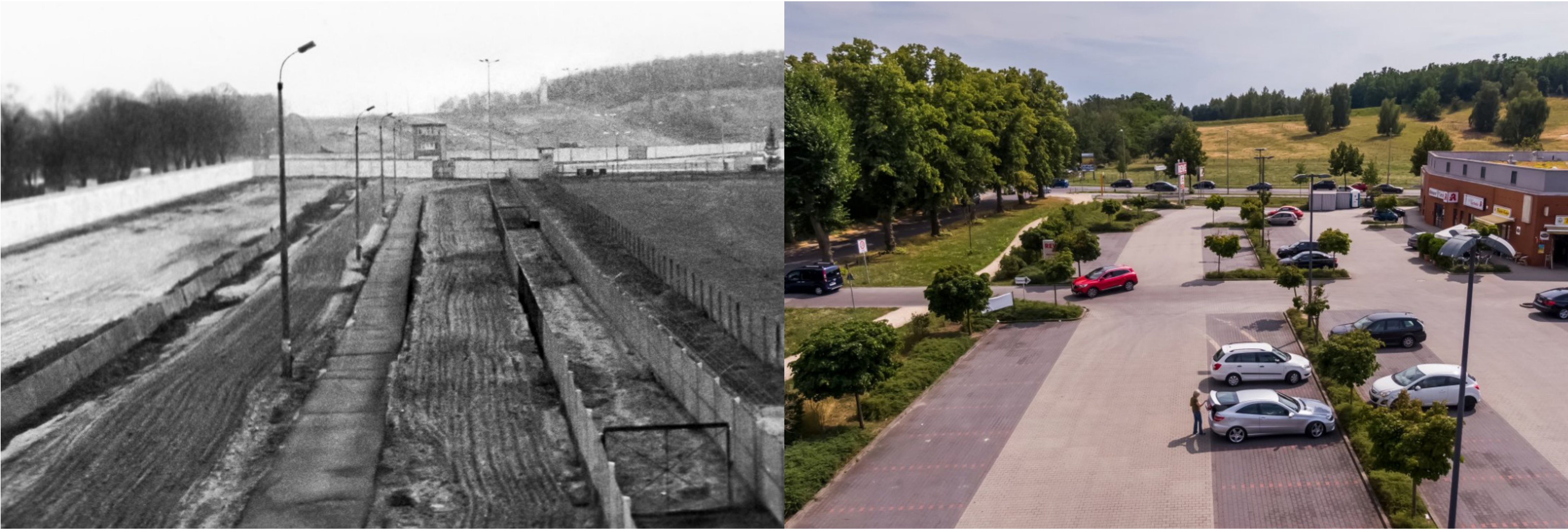
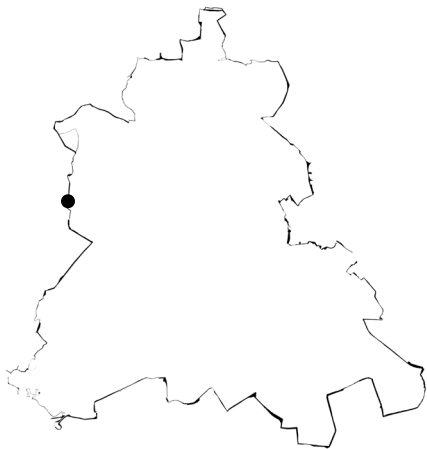


fig. 37 (Bundeszentrale Für Politische Bildung, n.d.)



Introduction
Research location





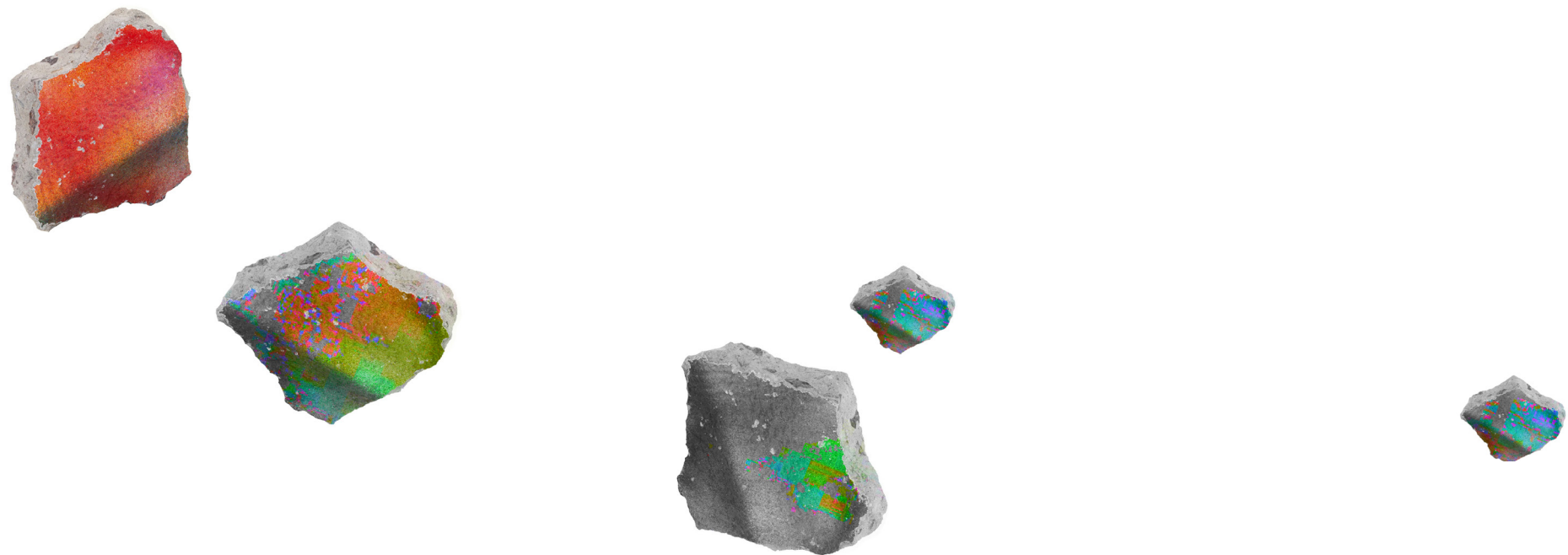
fig. 35 (Bundeszentrale Für Politische Bildung, n.d.)



Introduction
Research location



torn down, but ...



Problem statement

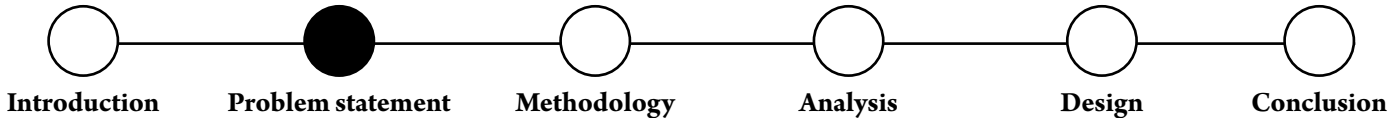




fig. 8 (Pueyo, 2024)

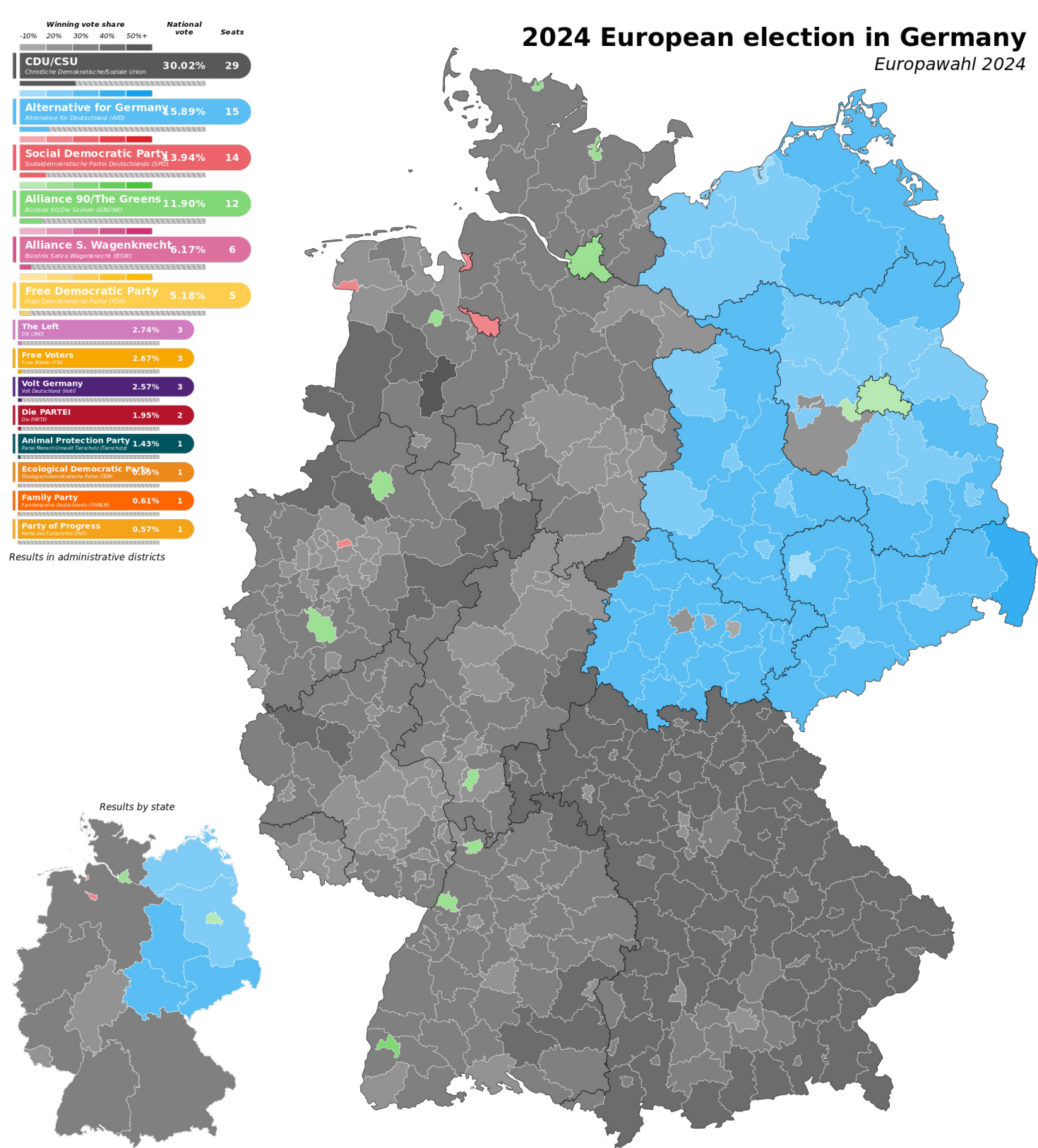


fig. 9 (2024 European Parliament Election in Germany - Results, n.d.)

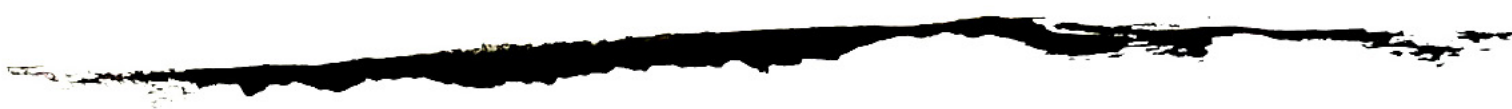
Problem statement



“Well,” says Balzer, “even people born after the Wende still identify themselves as ossi, so it exists. That whole Wall may have been torn down, but in our minds it’s still there.”

(Van Verschuer, 2021)

mental border
social-demographic border
political border
phantom border



Problem statement





35 years After Germany’s Reunification, the Lingering Consequences of the Split Drive Politics Today

A closer look at Saalfeld, a town less than 15 km (9 miles) north of the border between Thuringia and Bavaria, elucidates the history of the two Germanies...

19 nov 2024





Why German reunification is still a good idea

35 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the division between West and East Germany remains clearly visible.

4 sep 2024





Opinie | Duitsland is ongelijk verenigd – en zal dat ook blijven

Verkiezingen: Economisch en cultureel gezien liggen Oost en West nog ver uit elkaar, schrijft Steffen Mau. De relatie tussen het Oosten en...

21 jun 2024





Unresolved division: Lasting impact of German reunification on national and European identity

35th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, an event that not only unified Germany but reshaped Europe and paved the way for the formation of the EU.

3 okt 2024





Ooit was dit stadje een socialistische modelstad, nu zie je er hoe de Duitse eenwording is mislukt

Krimp in Oost-Duitsland: Na de val van de Muur liep het stadje Hoyerswerda in het Duitse Oost-Saksen leeg. Nu probeert de deelstaat er nieuw...

1 week geleden





Deutsche Einheit: Ungleich vereint?

Auch 35 Jahre nach dem Mauerfall bestehen noch deutliche Unterschiede zwischen Ost- und Westdeutschland – von der Lohnlücke bis hin zur...

17 okt 2024



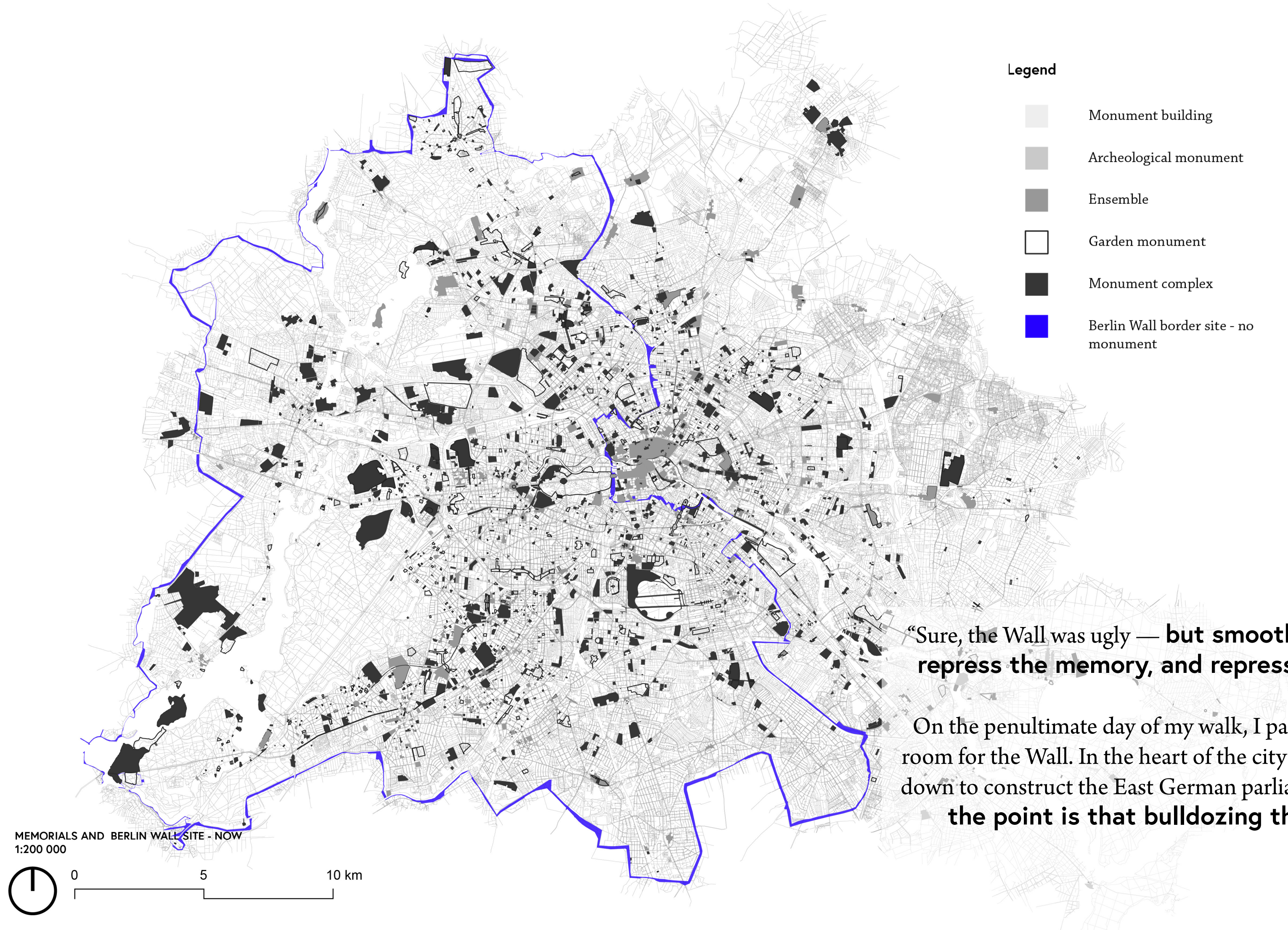
fig. 10 (Google, n.d.)

physically gone

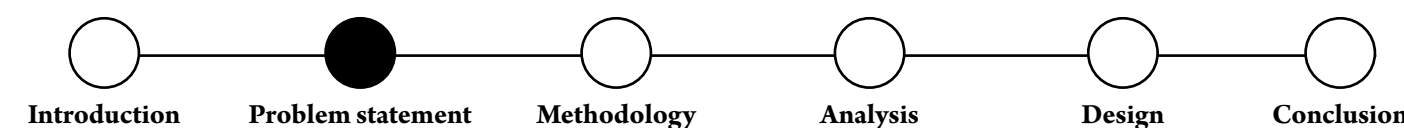
but still there

no monument

blurring line



Problem statement



paradox

blurring site on perceived level
with memory to history

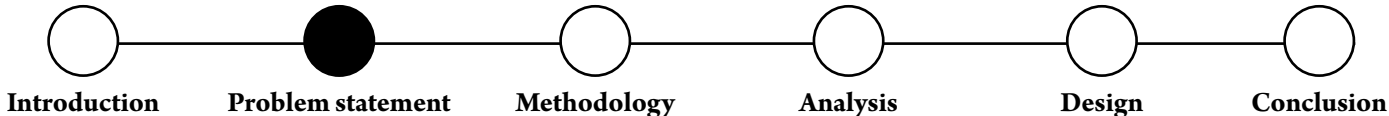
relevant border which is still there
on conceived and lived level

How to give space in the landscape
to this?



fig. 5

Problem statement
Personal fascination



Research Question

How can landscape architecture contribute to the social/cultural re-interpretation, spatial definition and future appearance of a historically contested frontier as the former Berlin Wall?

Design assignment

Develop a landscape design for the former West Berlin-GDR border site which tells the story about the ever-present wall in German society. Convey the physical and mental feeling of the impact of this wall by giving space to a layer of events in the landscape palimpsest of the site.

Problem statement

Research question + Design assignment



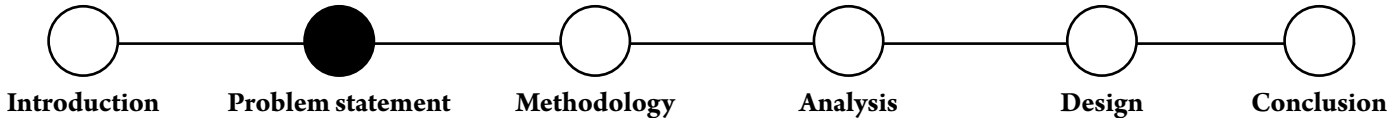
paradox

blurring site on **perceived** level

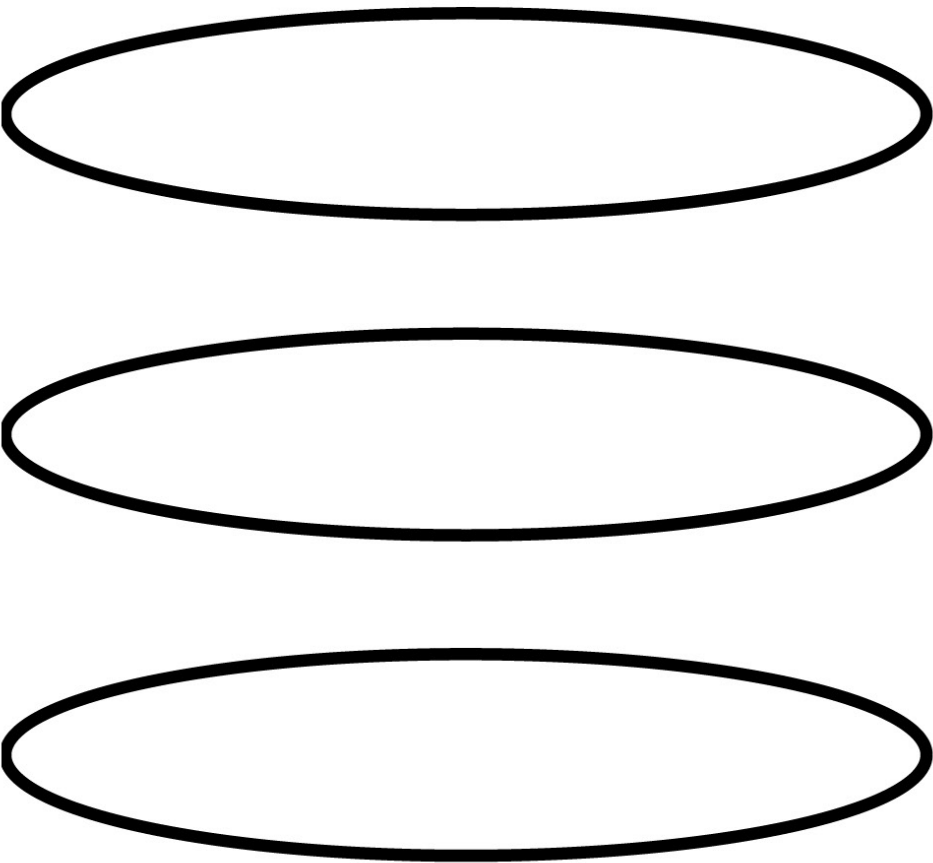
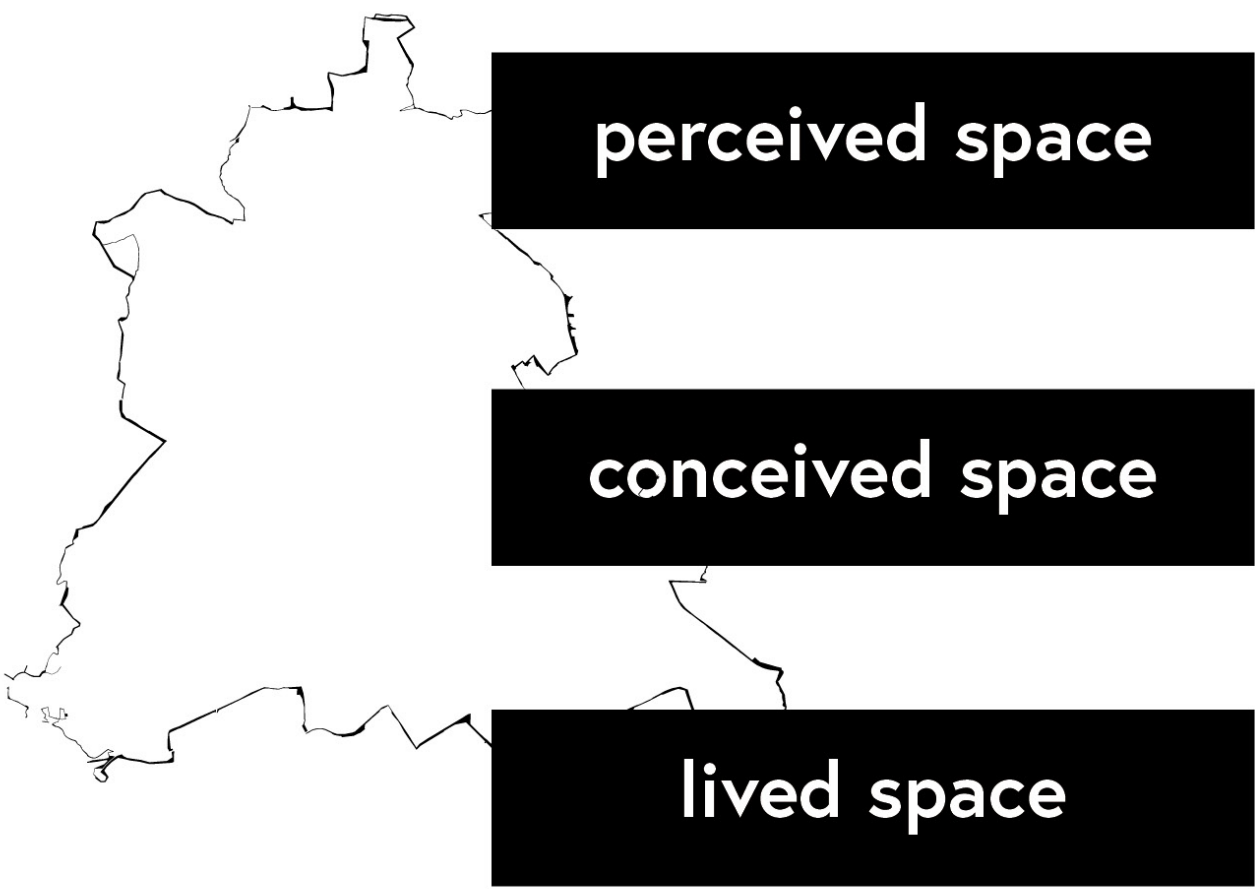
relevant border which is still there
on **conceived** and **lived** level

- perceived** physical and material space as it is perceived and used in everyday life
- conceived** mental and abstract space as it is designed, planned, and imagined by technocrats, architects, planners, and policymakers
- lived** space as it is experienced, felt, and infused with meaning, memories, symbolism, and emotions

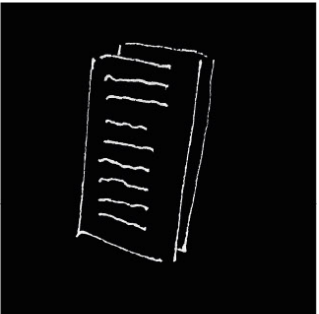
Problem statement



The Production of Space, Henri Lefebvre



stage



written script

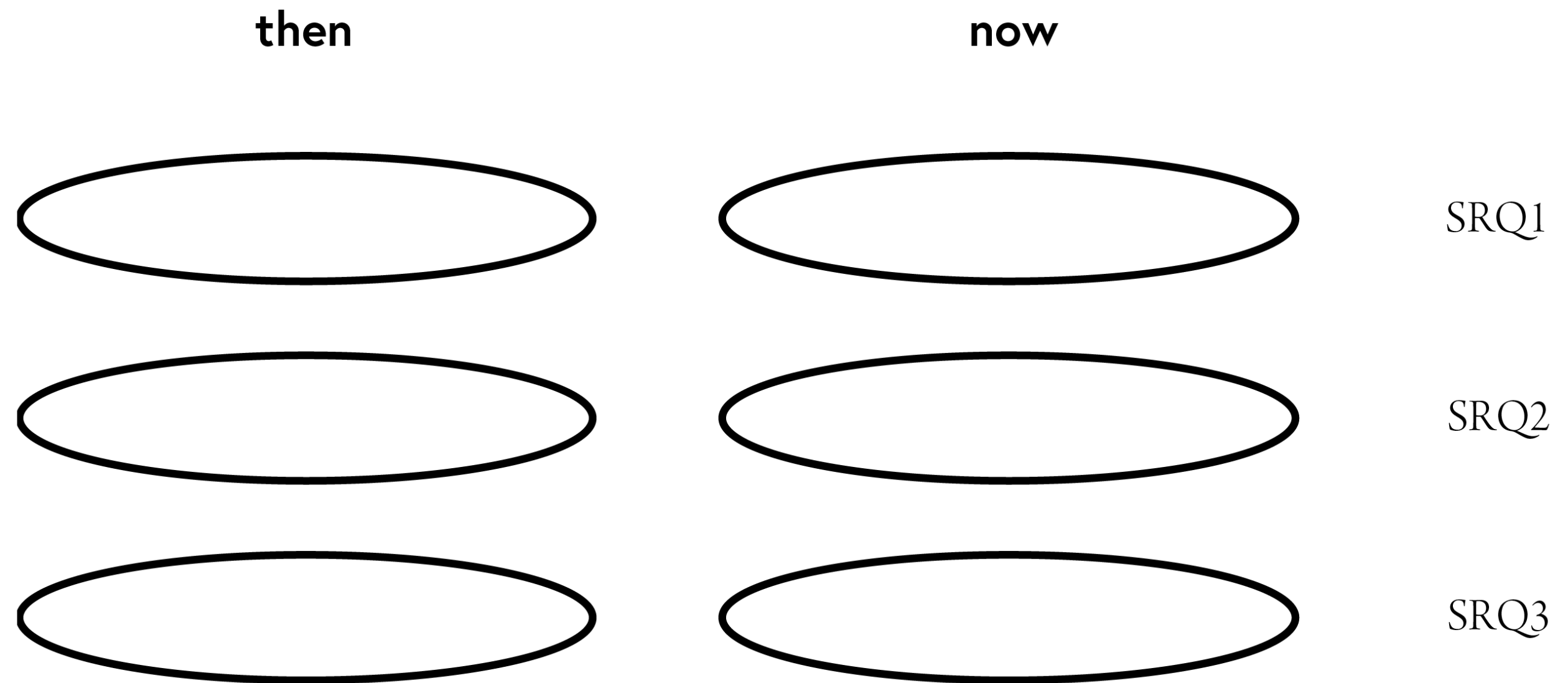


played script

Methodology

Theoretical framework





SRQ1 How have the physical and experiential qualities of the Berlin Wall site evolved over time? (perceived space)

SRQ2 How has the Berlin Wall site been planned, represented, and conceptualised over time? (conceived space)

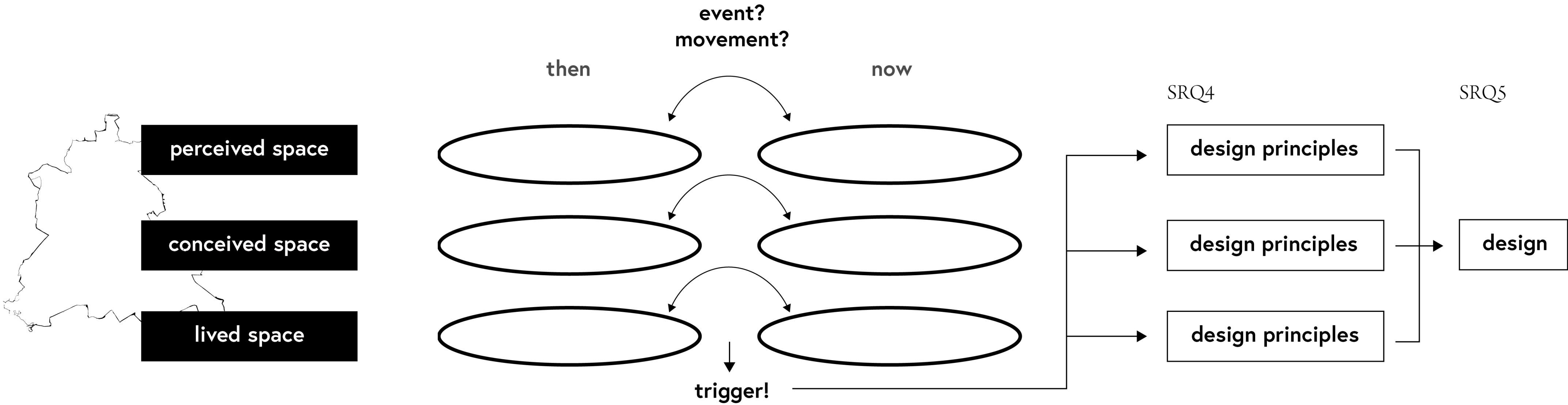
SRQ3 How have personal experiences, cultural meanings, and collective memories shaped the identity of the Berlin Wall site over time? (lived space)

Methodology

Theoretical framework



The Manhattan Transcripts, Bernard Tschumi

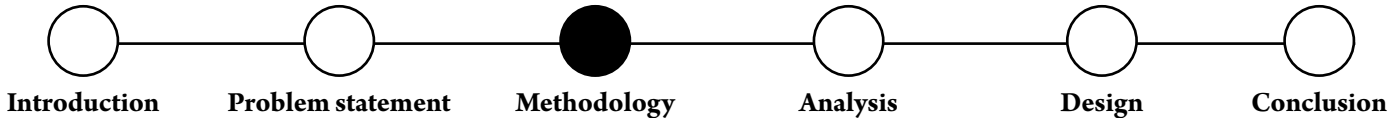


SRQ4 What design principles can effectively address the narrative, legacy and relevance of the Berlin Wall border space in German society?

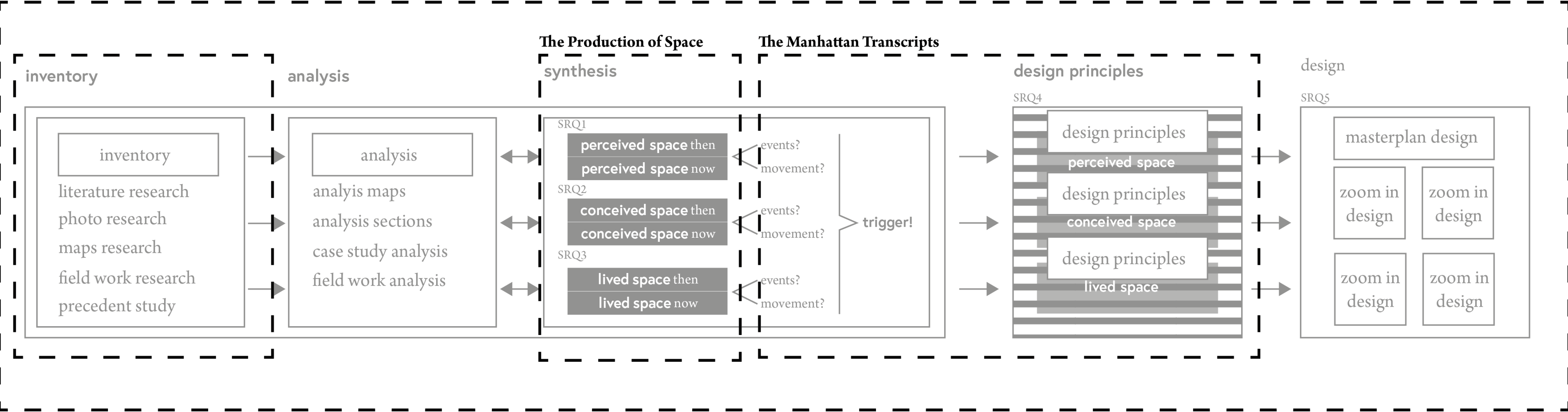
SRQ5 How can landscape interventions be developed based on the proposed design principles for the former West Berlin-GDR border site?

Methodology

Theoretical framework



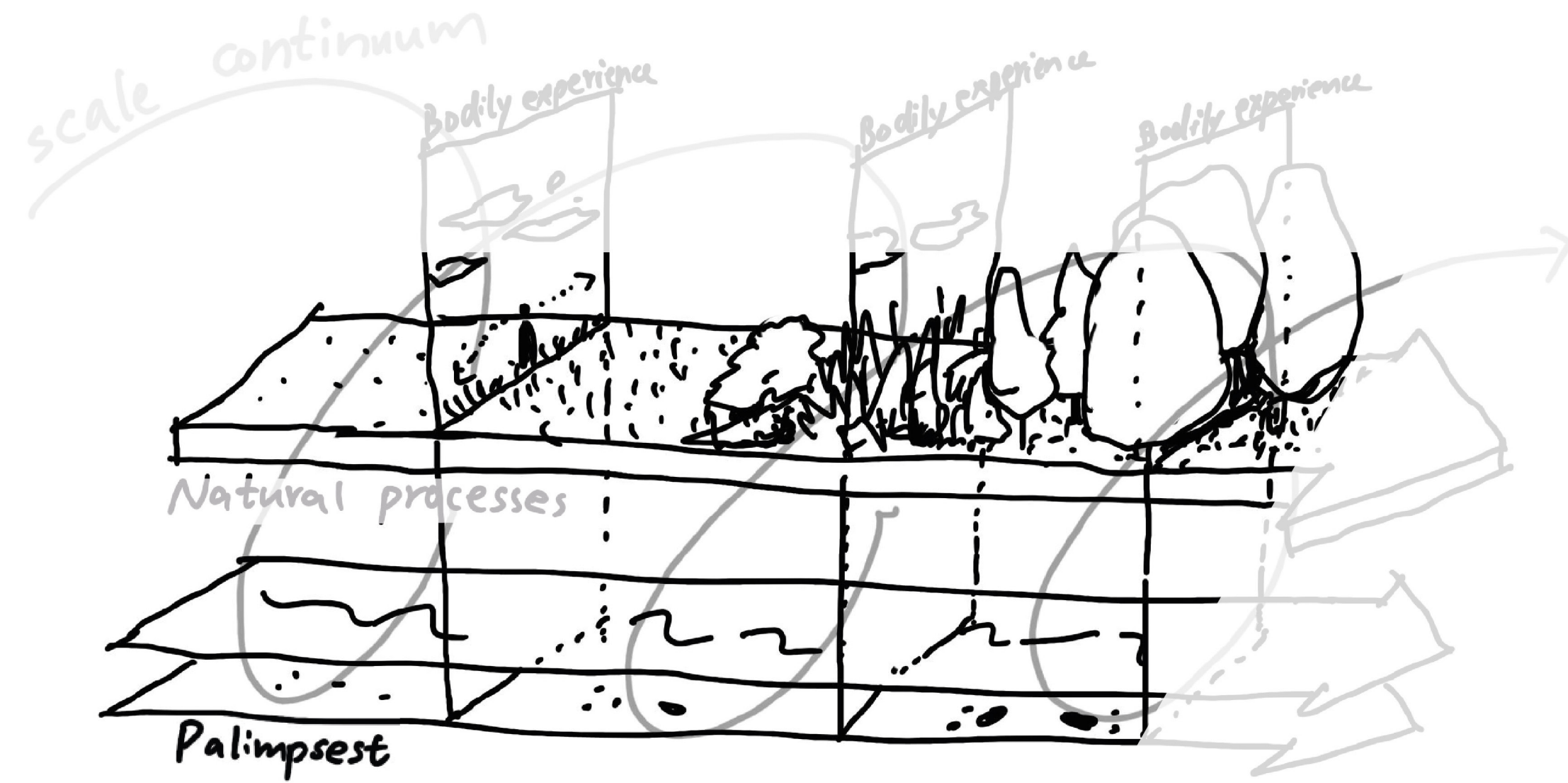
Landscape Architectural Perspectives as Agent for Generous Design
(Landscape as Palimpsest)



Methodology

Theoretical framework



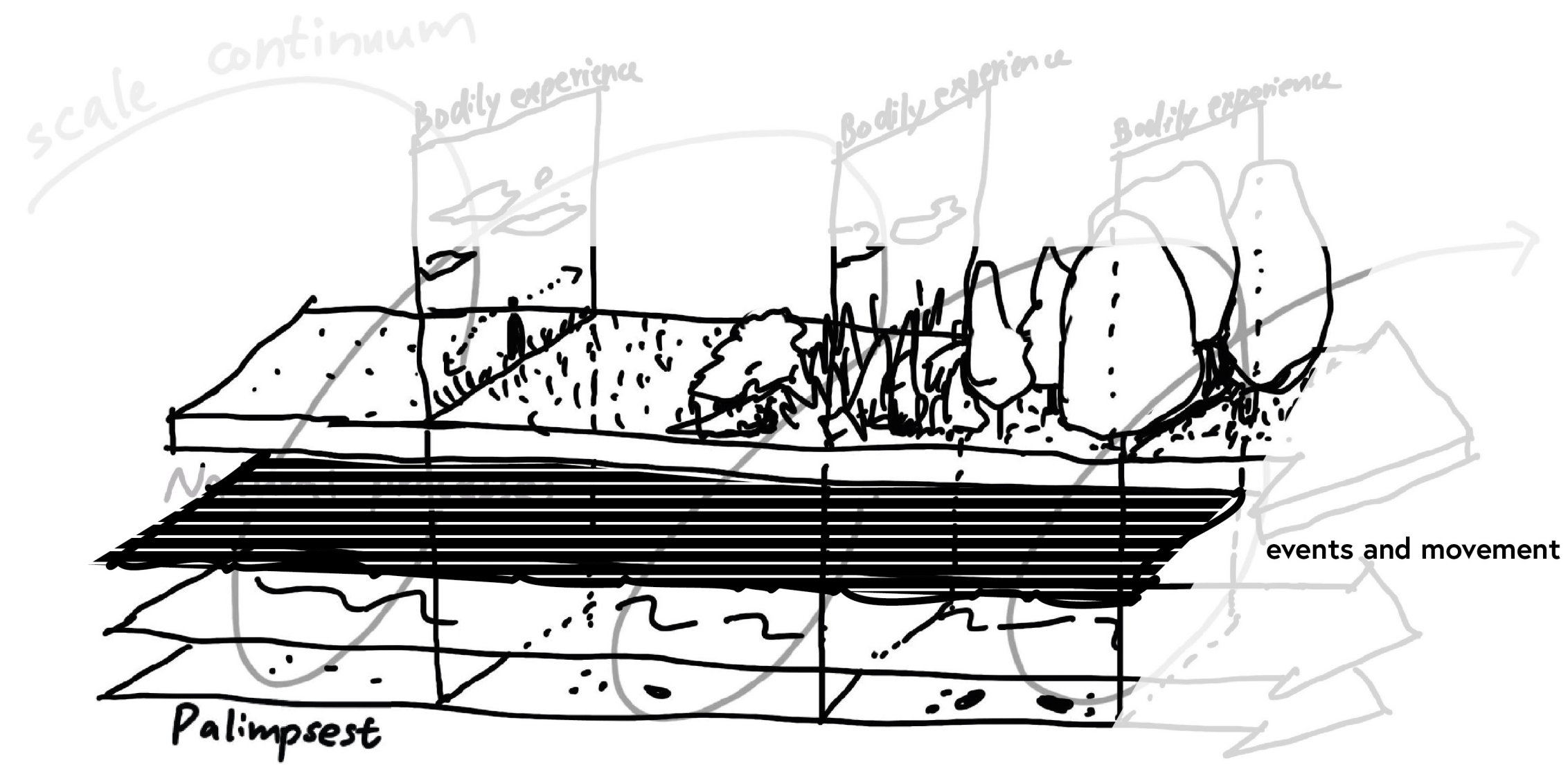


(Zhang, 2024)

Methodology

Theoretical framework





“I always felt that architecture was as much about spaces as about the events that take place in those spaces...”
 - Bernard Tschumi, The Manhattan Transcripts

Methodology

Theoretical framework

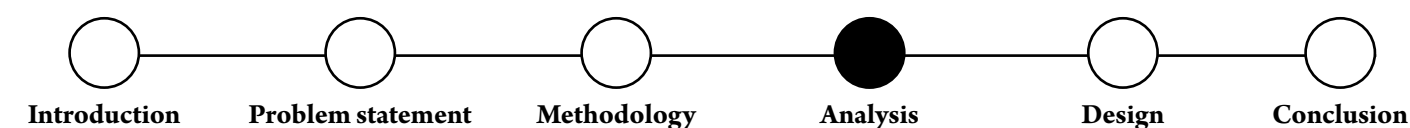


analysing the paradox

blurring site on **perceived** level

relevant border which is still there
on **conceived** and **lived** level

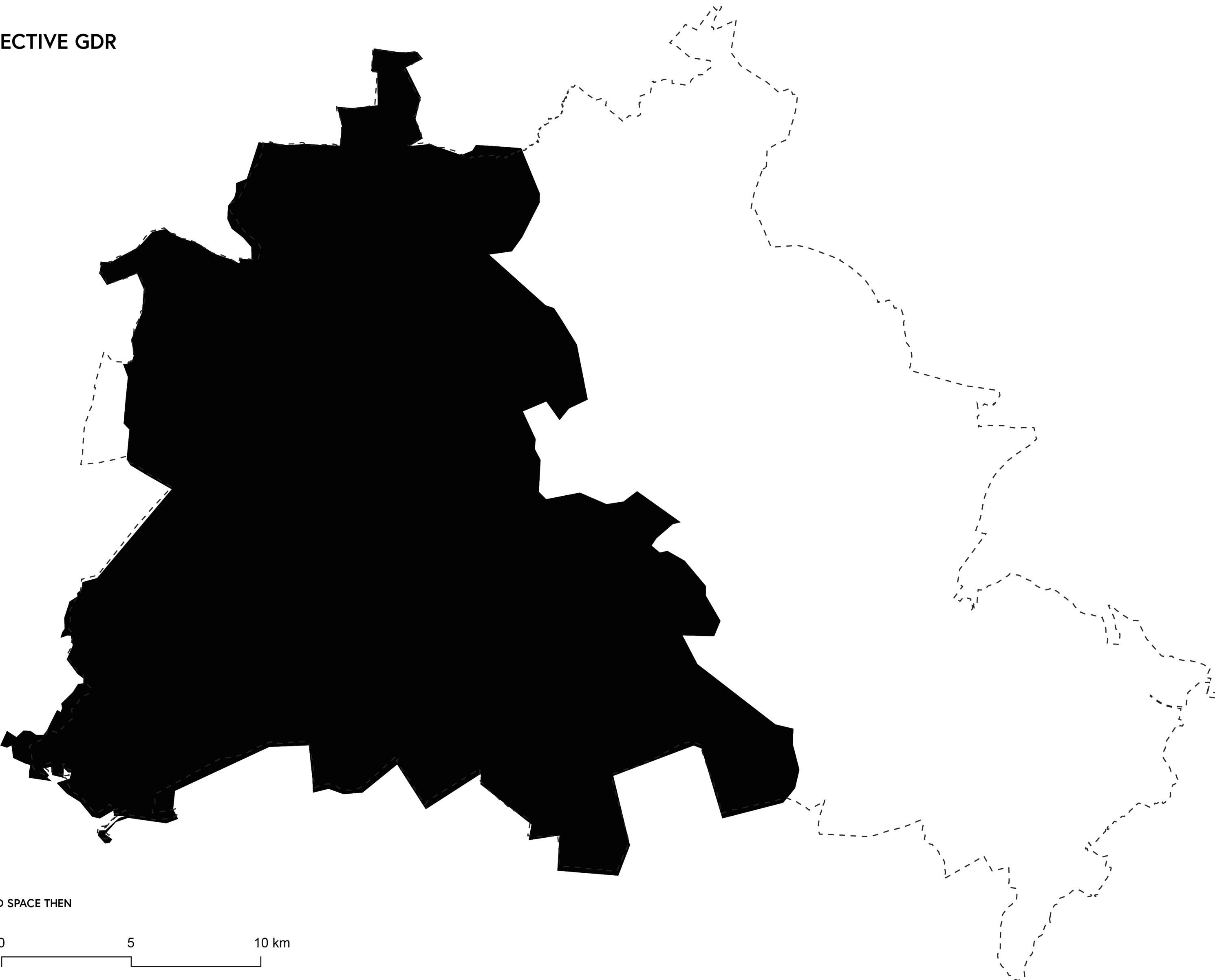
Analysis



conceived

then

PERSPECTIVE GDR



CONCEIVED SPACE THEN
1:200 000

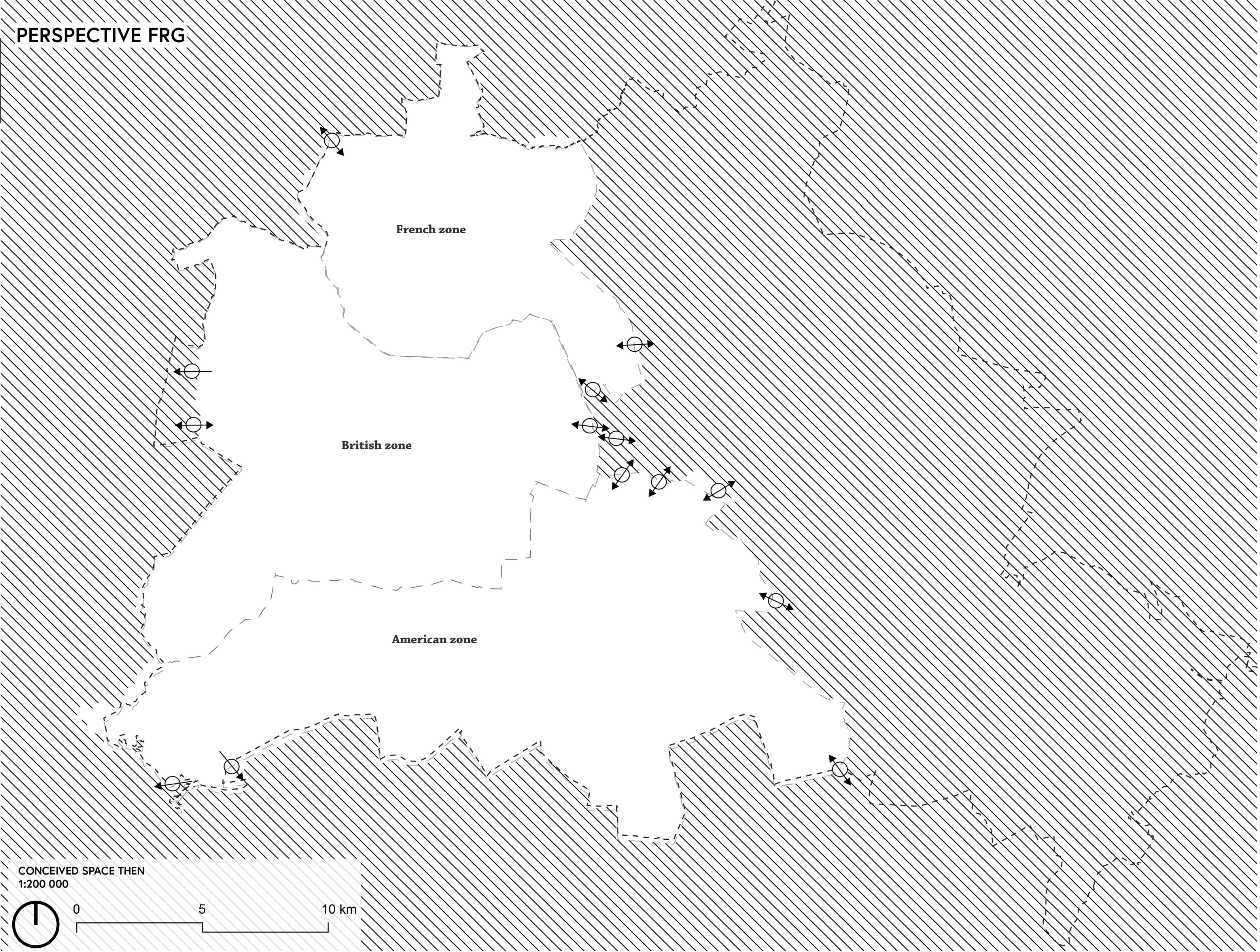


0 5 10 km

Analysis



conceived
then



Analysis



conceived
now

lived
now

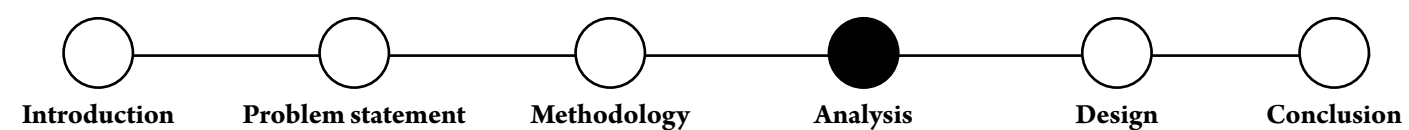


Analysis

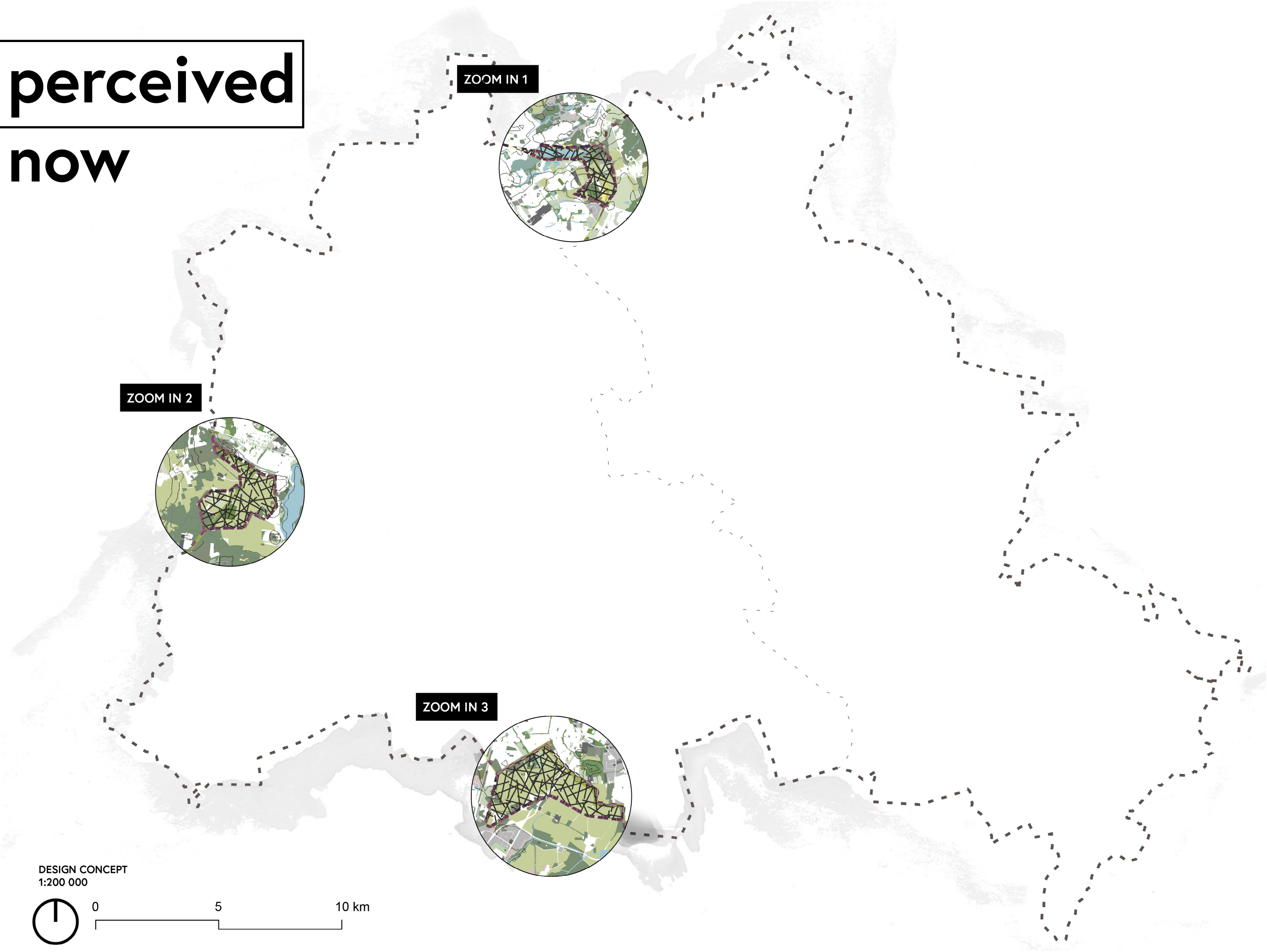




Analysis

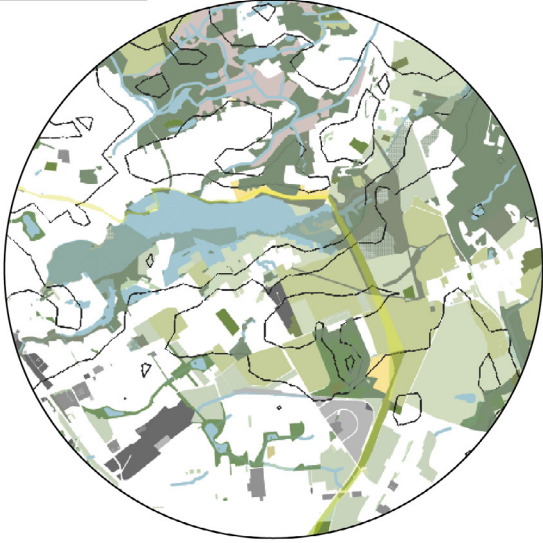


perceived
now



ZOOM IN 1

Westbarnim (Tegeler Fließ)



ZOOM IN 2

Königswald mit Havelseen und Seeburger Agrarlandschaft
Kingswood with Havel Lake & Seeburg Agricultural Landscape



ZOOM IN 3

Diedersdorfer Heide und Großbeerener Graben
Diedersdorfer Heath und Großbeerener Graben



Analysis
Field analysis



perceived now

ZOOM IN 1

Westbarnim (Tegeler Fließ)



ZOOM IN 2

Königswald mit Havelseen und Seeburger Agrarlandschaft
Kingswood with Havel Lake & Seeburg Agricultural Landscape

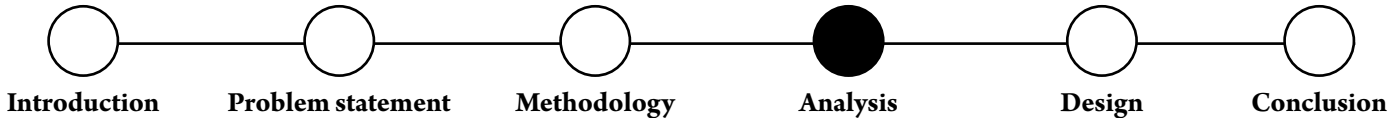


ZOOM IN 3

Diedersdorfer Heide und Großbeerener Graben
Diedersdorfer Heath und Großbeerener Graben



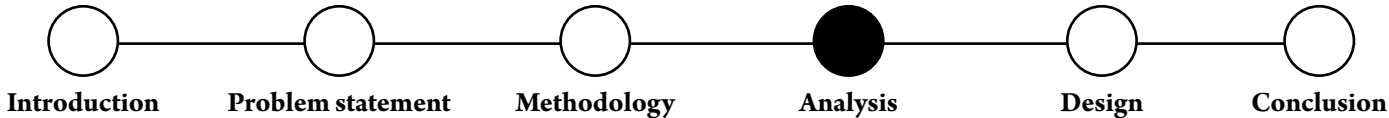
Analysis
Field analysis



perceived
now



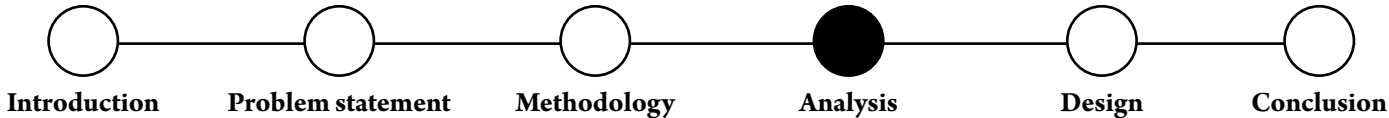
Analysis
Field analysis



perceived
now



Analysis
Field analysis



perceived
now



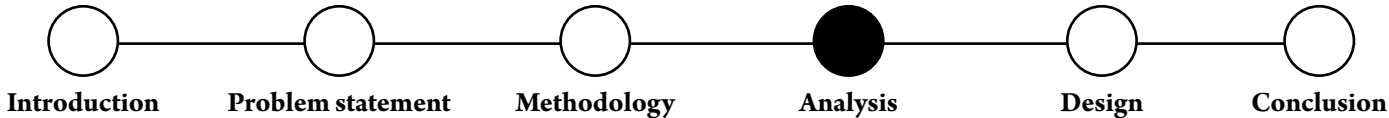
Analysis
Field analysis



perceived
now



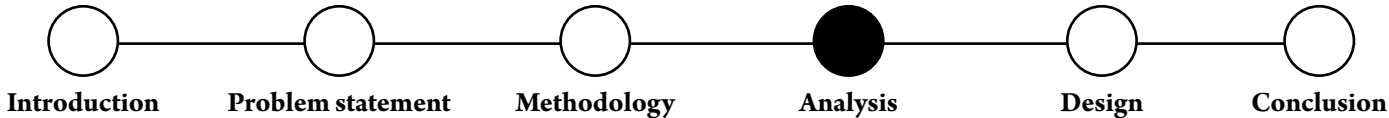
Analysis
Field analysis



perceived
now



Analysis
Field analysis



perceived
now



Analysis
Field analysis



perceived

now

1953



(Google, n.d.)

Analysis



perceived
now

2002



(Google, n.d.)

Analysis



perceived
now

2022

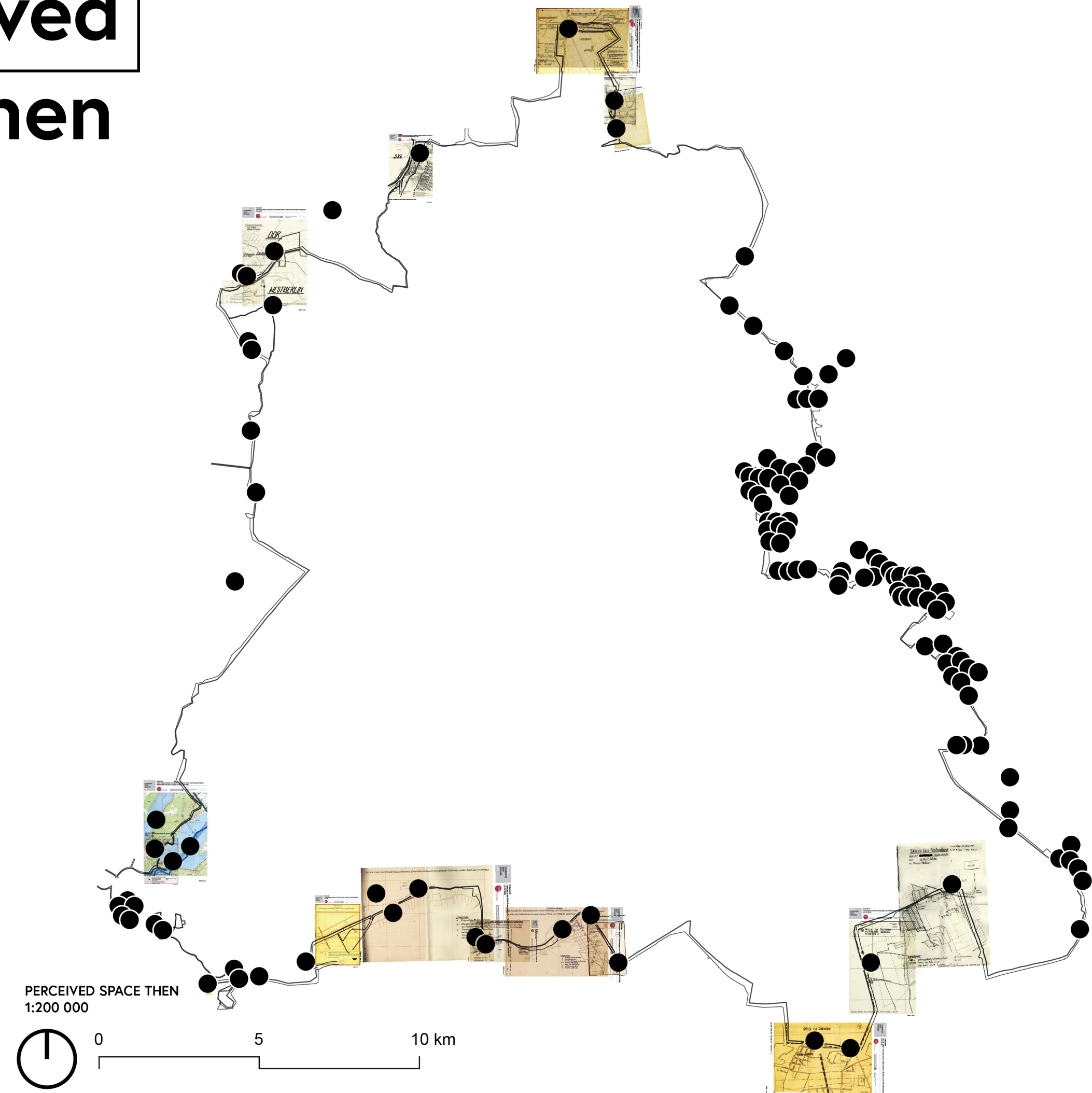


(Google, n.d.)

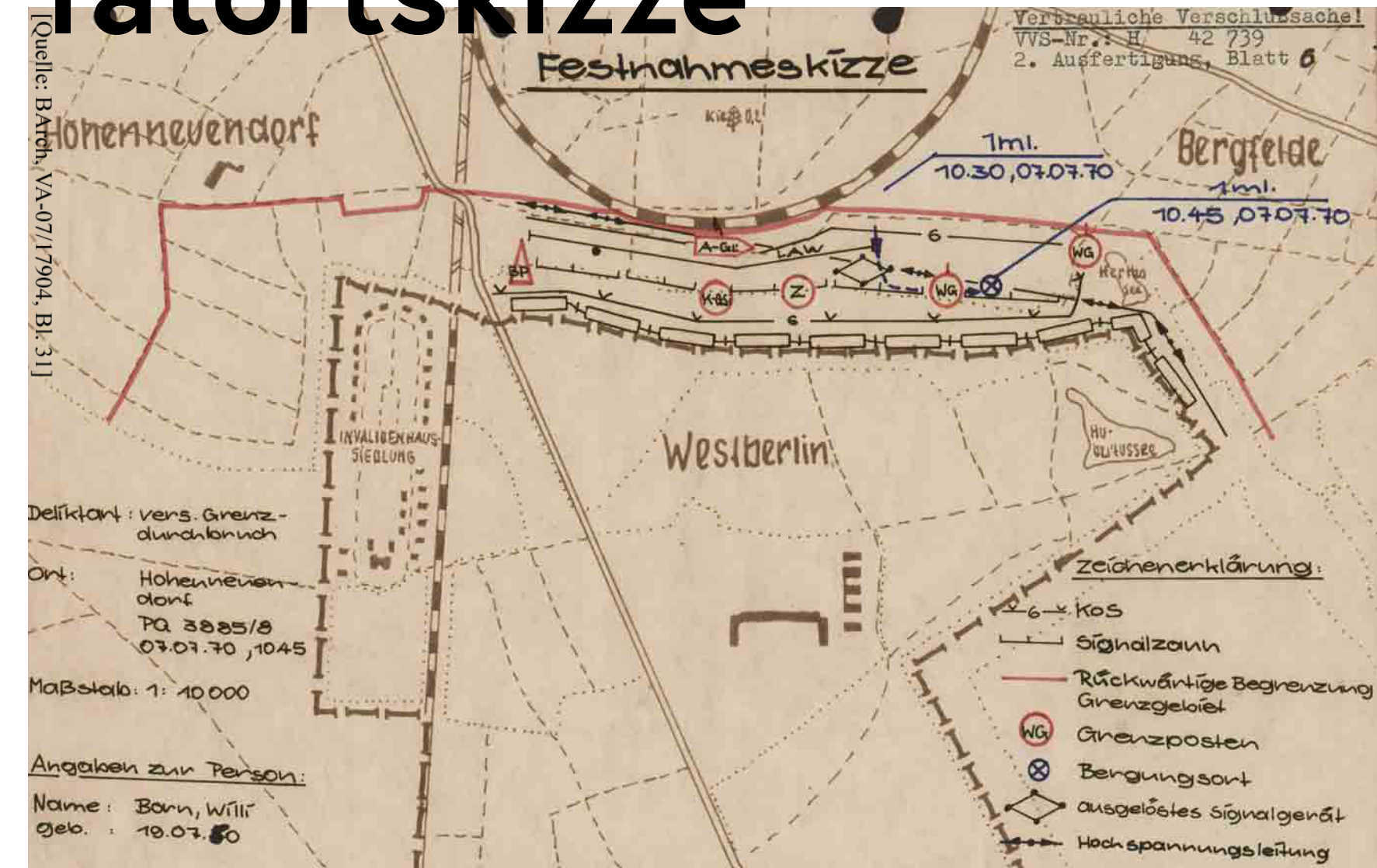
Analysis



lived
then



Tatortskizze

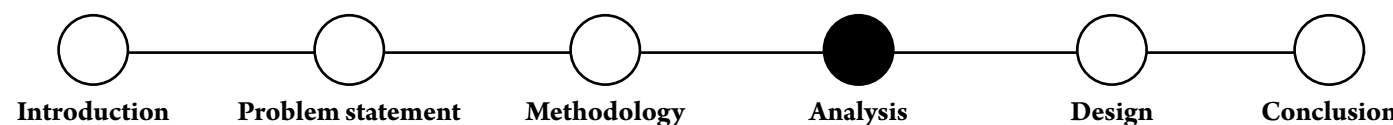


Legend

● victims Berlin Wall



Analysis



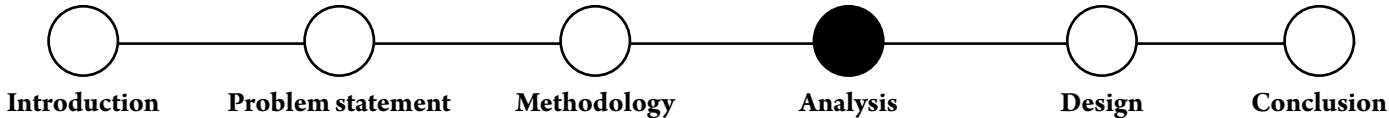
paradox

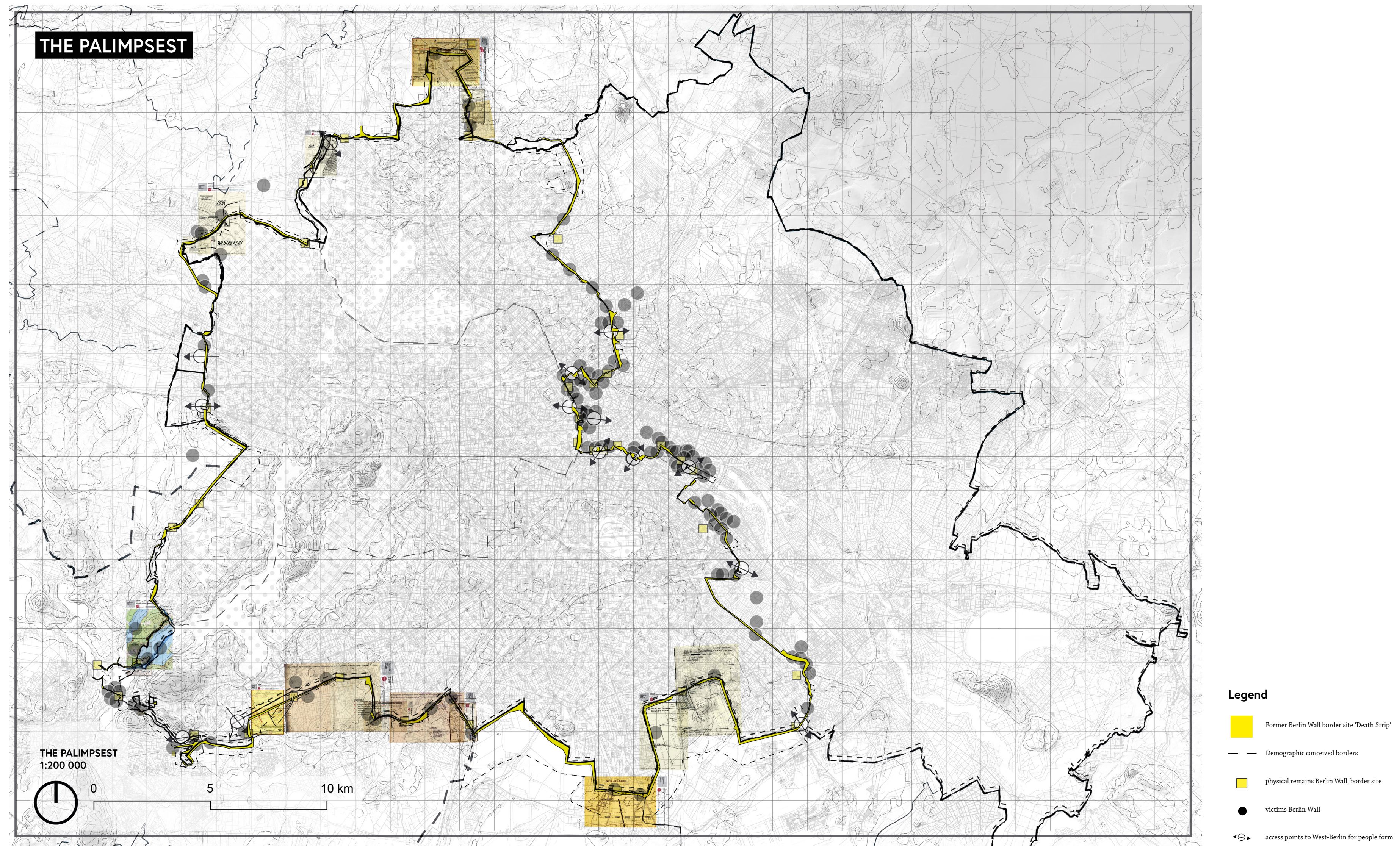
blurring site on **perceived** level

relevant border which is still there
on **conceived** and **lived** level

then	now	
perceived	perceived	still visible, but blurring former border landscape
conceived	conceived	former German-German border coincides with current conceived and lived berlin-brandenburg border
lived	lived	the border is characterised as a reflection of personal trauma and emotion

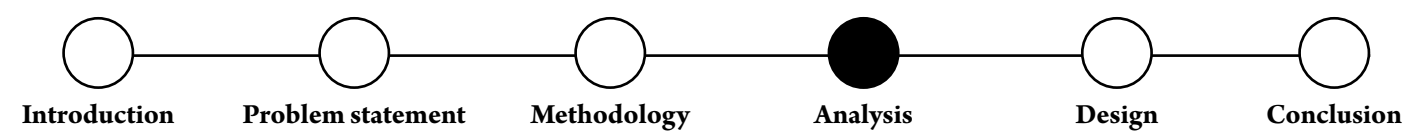
Analysis
Conclusion





Analysis

The Palimpsest



former German-German border through city centre Berlin

3

East Side Gallery/Park an der Spree



fig. 43 (East Side Gallery, n.d.)

4

Kirschblütenallee Teltow



fig. 44 (インゴ, 2021)

7

Mauerpark



fig. 47 (Tripadvisor, n.d.)

8

Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer

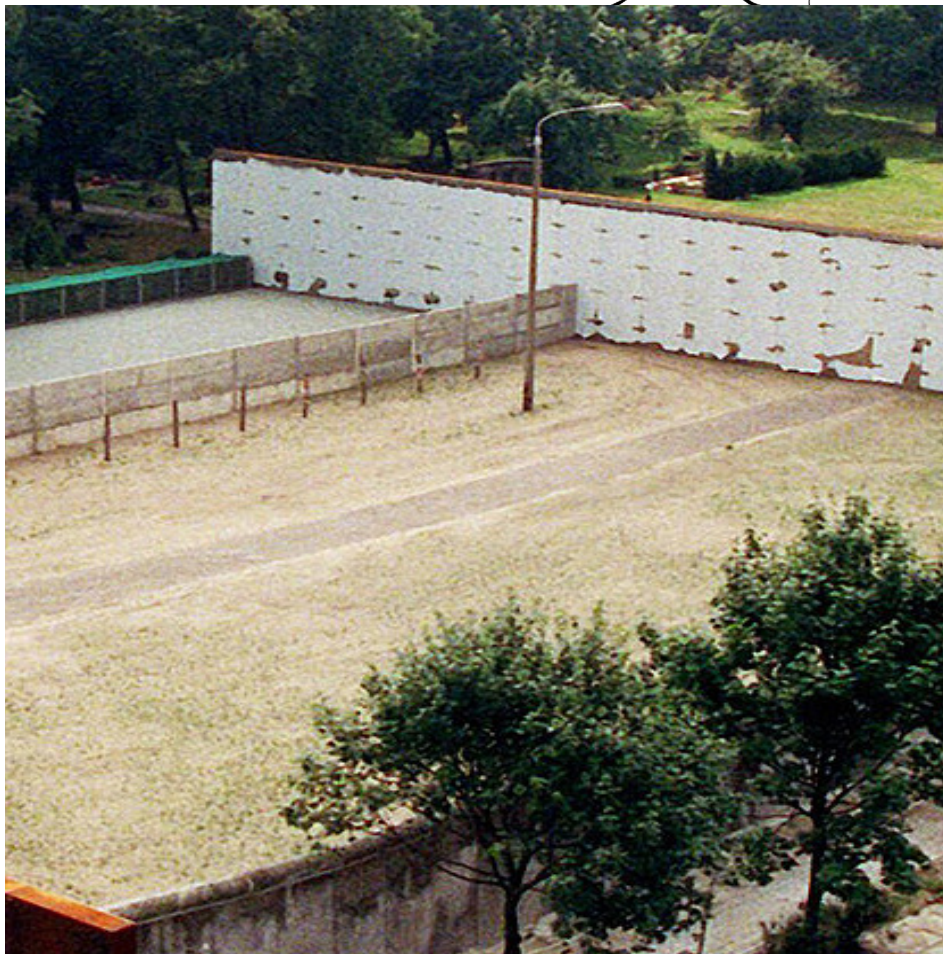
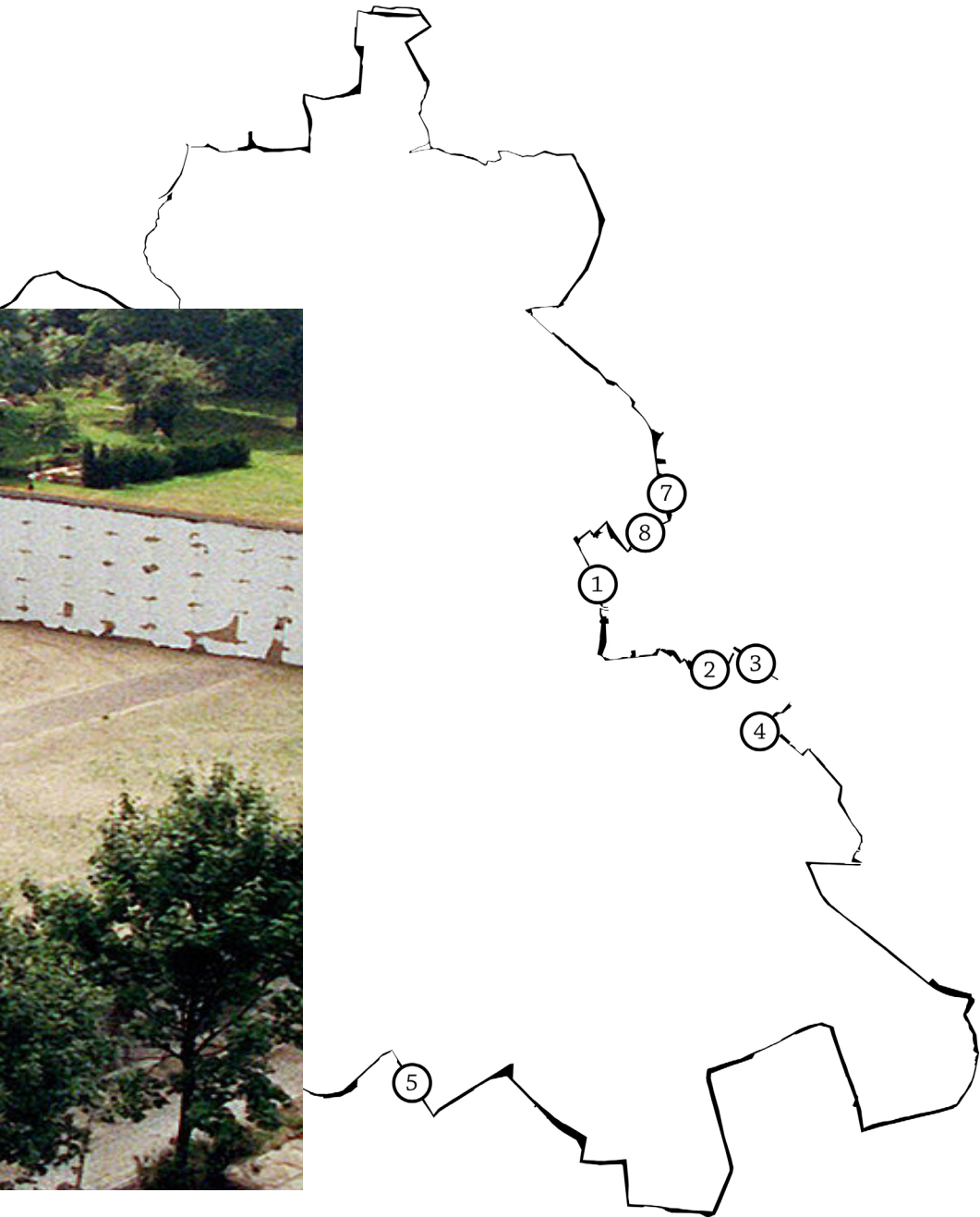
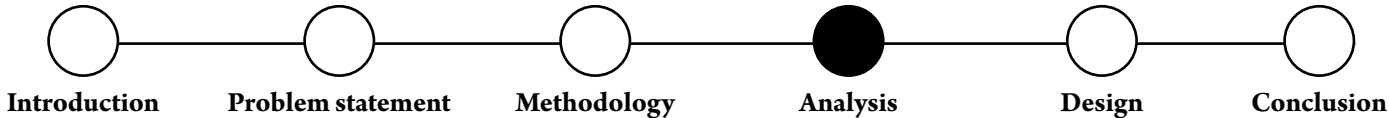


fig. 48 (Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer, 2025)

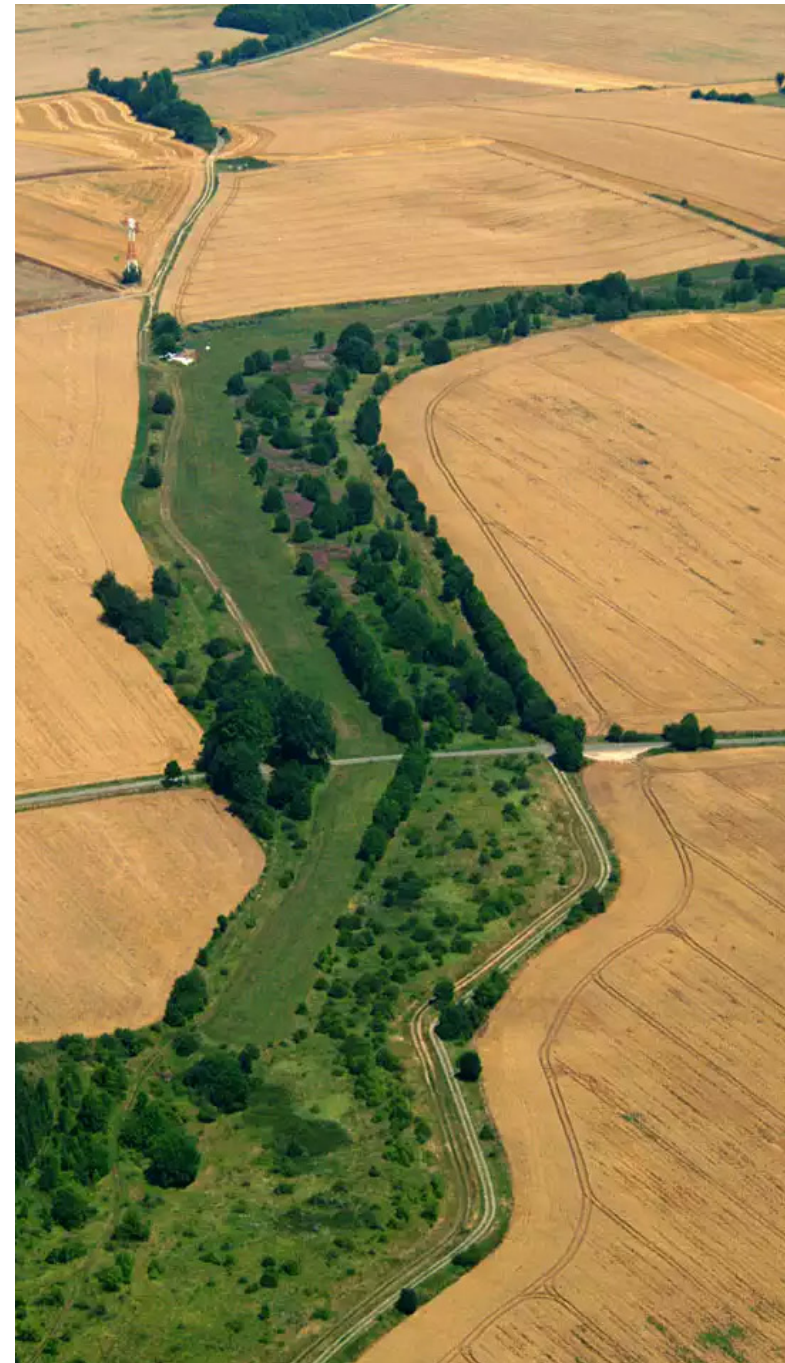


Analysis
Precedent study



borders around the world

Grünes Band Deutschland



(Paxmann, 2018)



(File:Thüringer Warte Grünes Band.jpg - Wikimedia Commons, 2013)

Killing Ground, John Huddleston



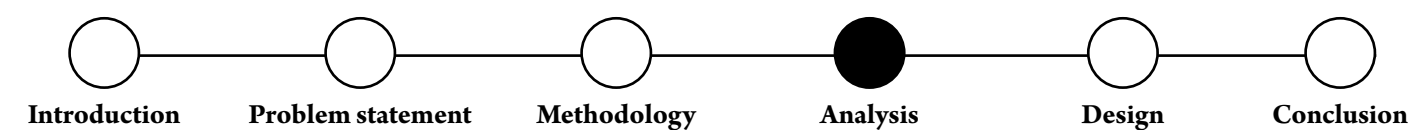
(Tursi, 2022)

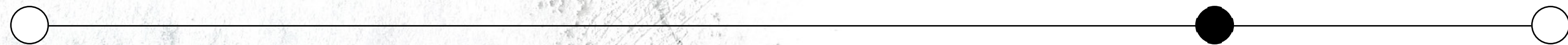
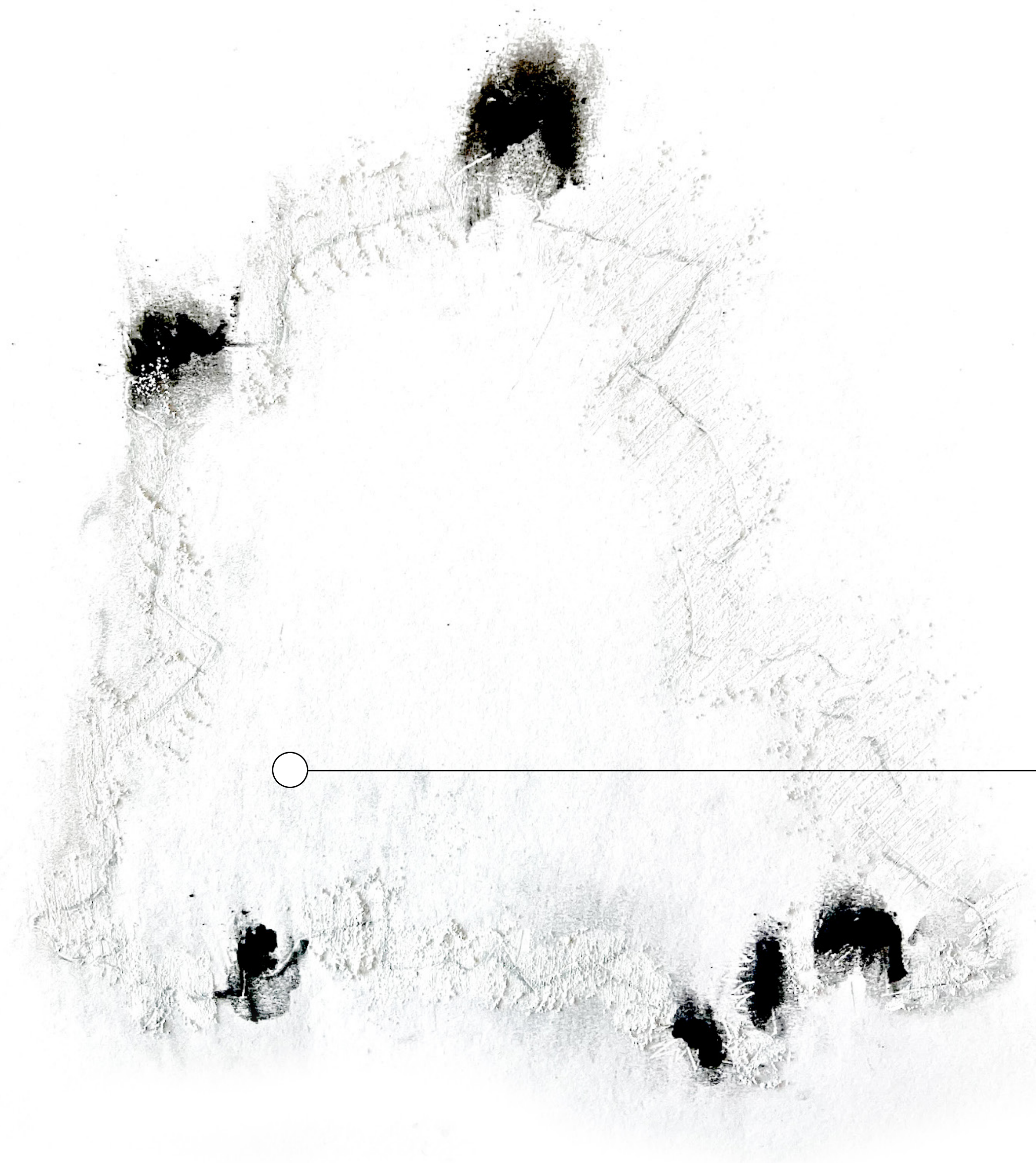
permanent scar

healing the scar

Analysis

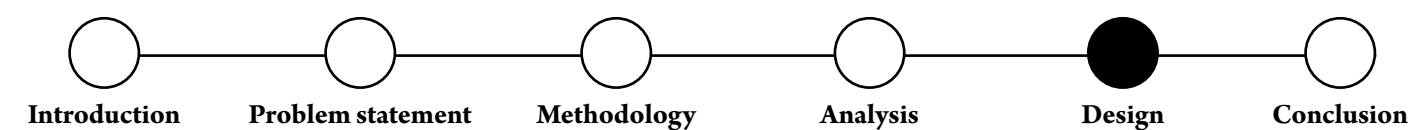
Precedent study

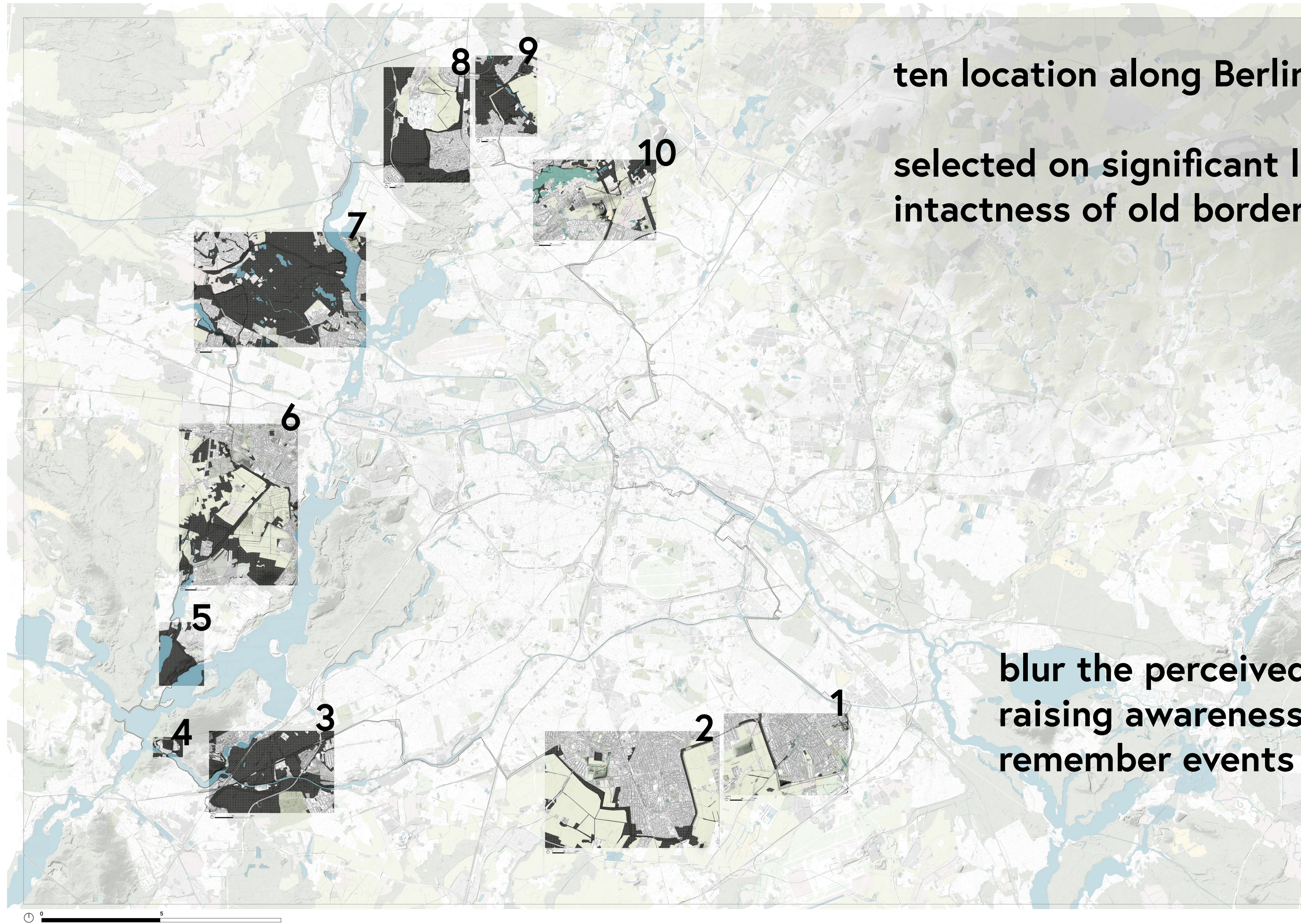




blur the perceived border space
raising awareness conceived border space
remember events of lived border space

Design
Concept





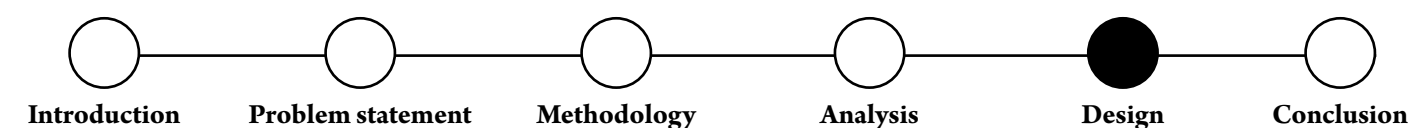
ten location along Berlin-Brandenburg border

selected on significant landscape potential
intactness of old border strip, no new developments

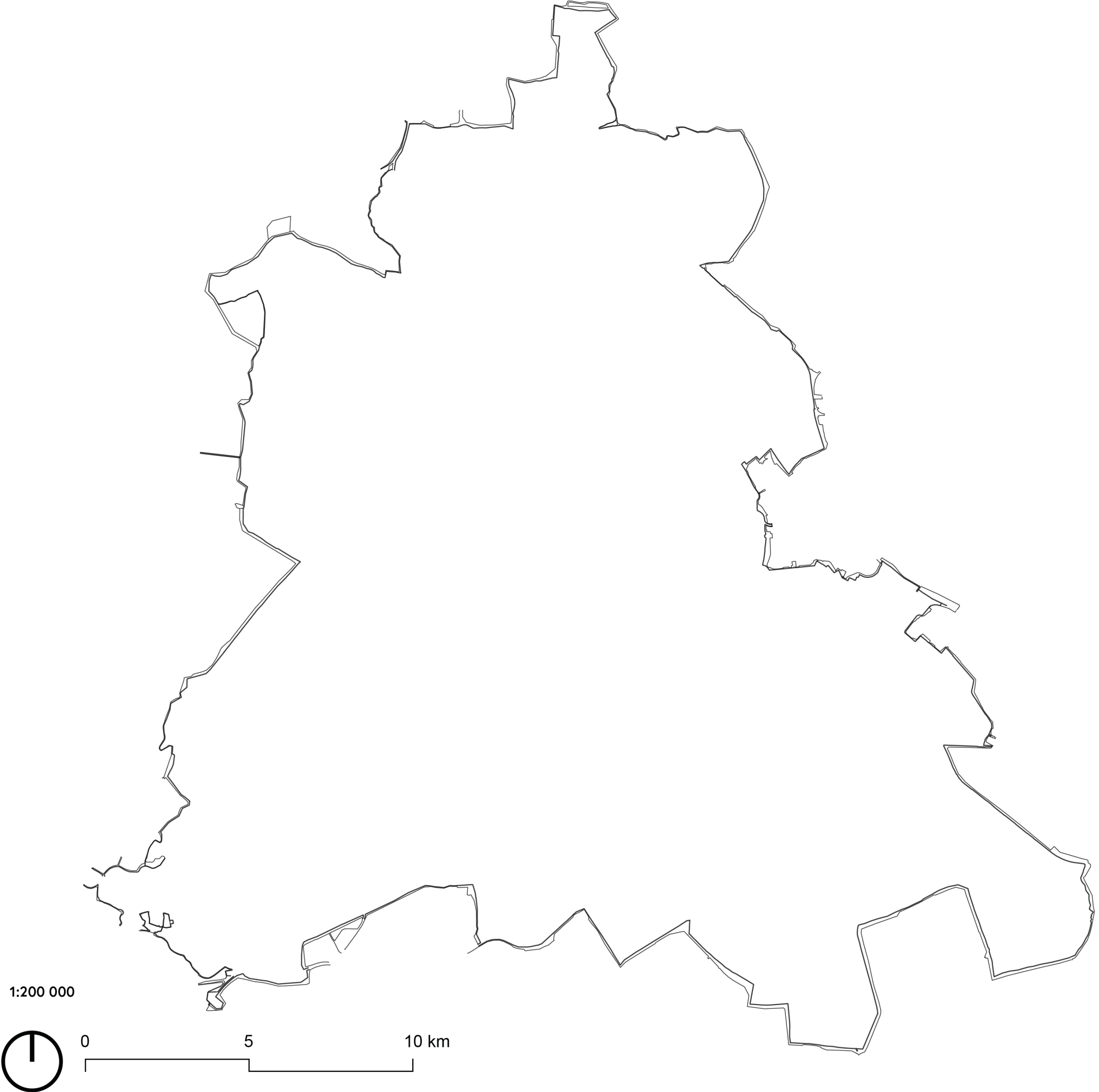
blur the perceived border space
raising awareness conceived border space
remember events of lived border space

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|--|
| ① | healing the scar | by blurring the perceived border |
| ② | evoking the 'Death Strip' | by accentuating the old perceived border on places of events of lived border space |
| ③ | tracing the border | making the conceived border space physical to raise awareness |

blur the perceived border space
raising awareness conceived border space
remember events of lived border space



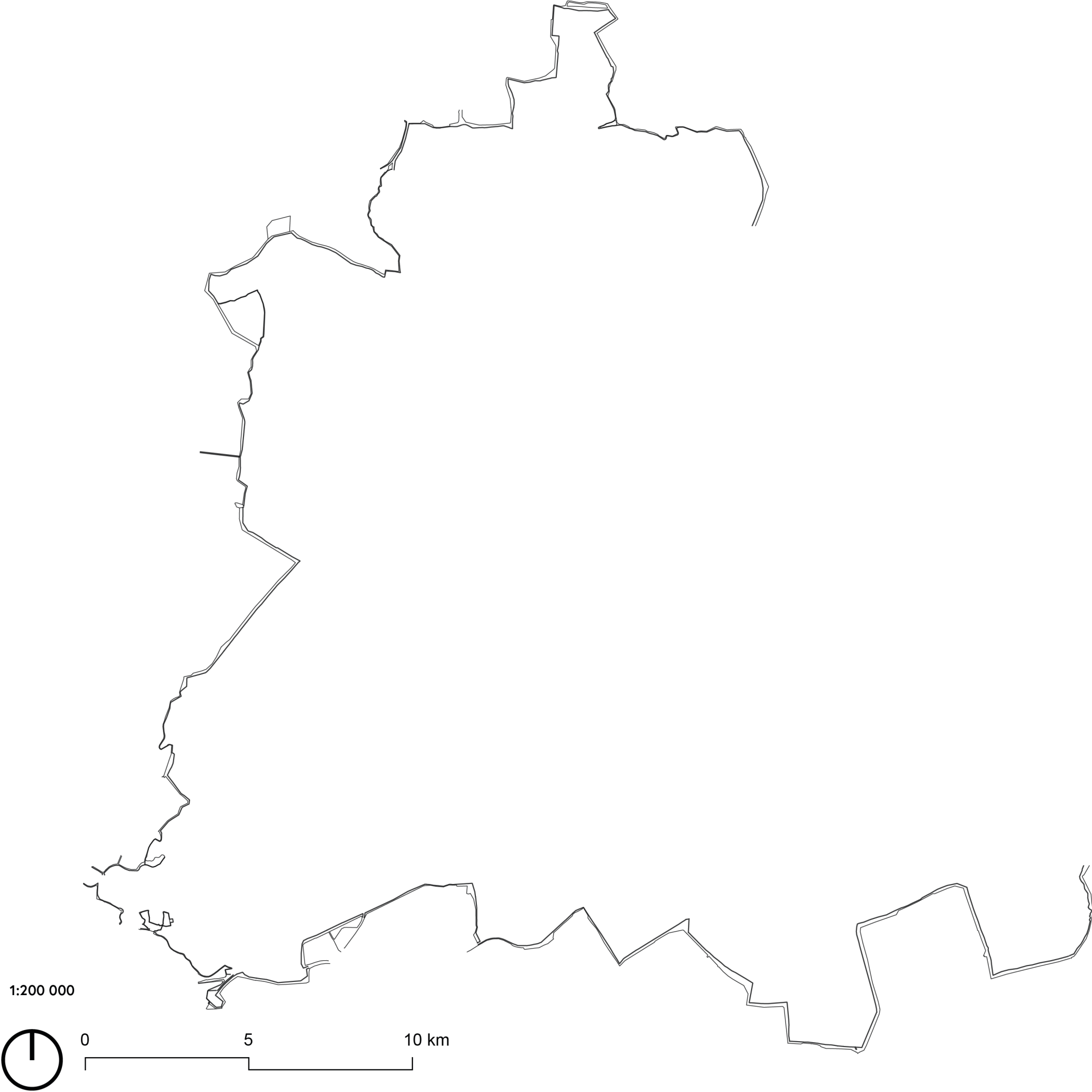
former border strip



Design
Concept strategy



looking at Berlin-Brandenburg border



Design
Concept strategy



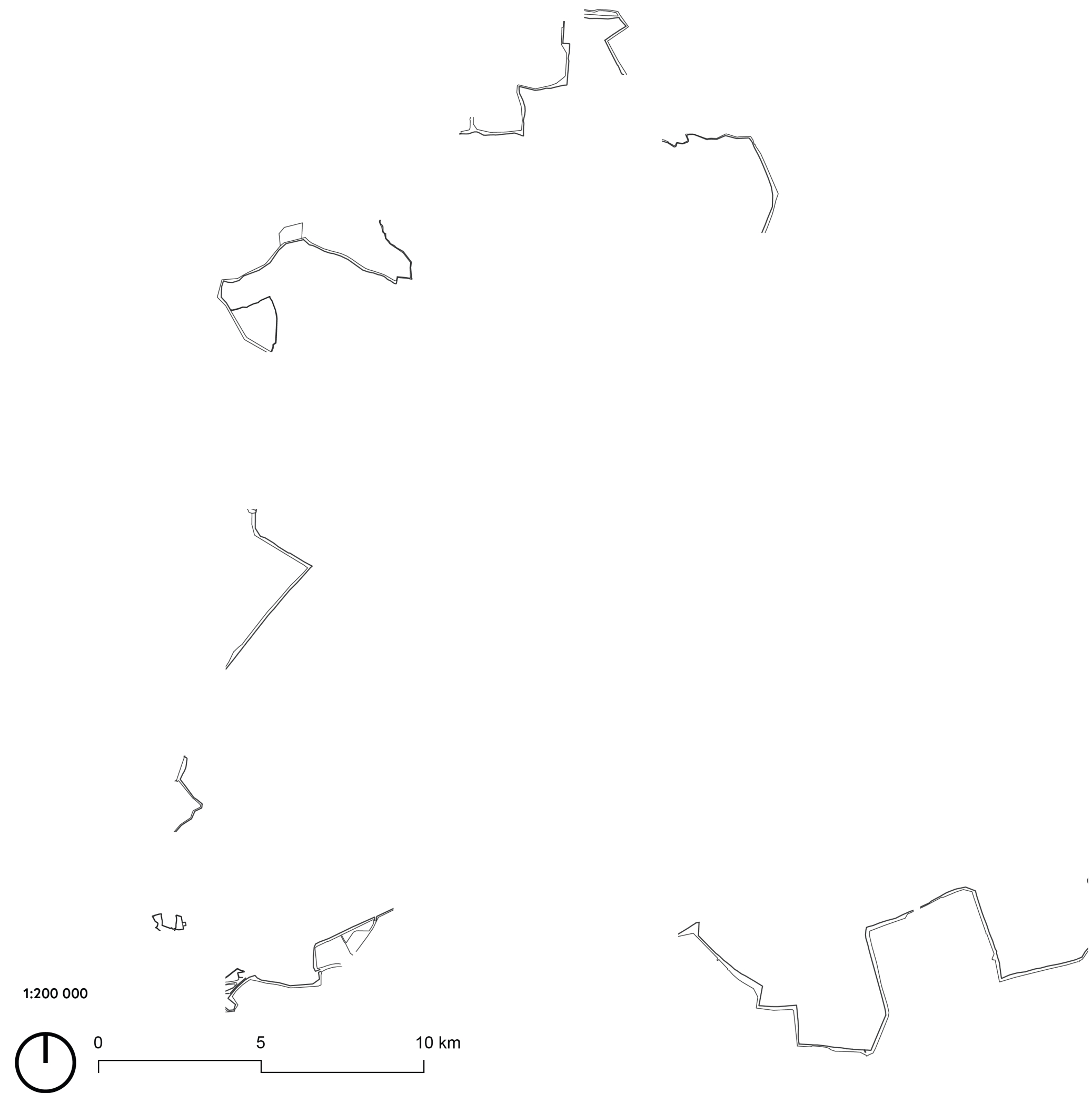
looking at Berlin-Brandenburg border



Design
Concept strategy



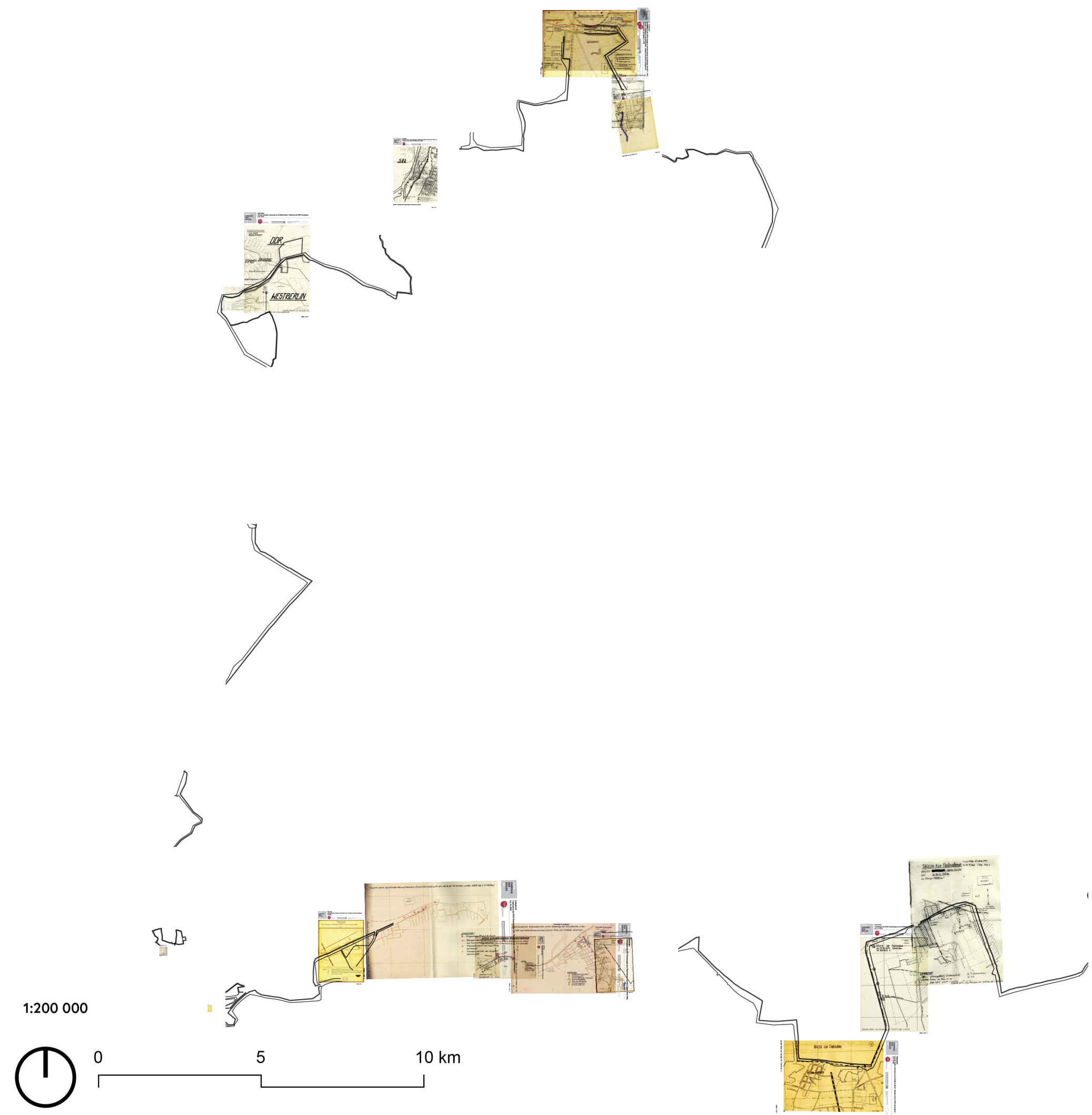
intactness of old border strip



Design
Concept strategy



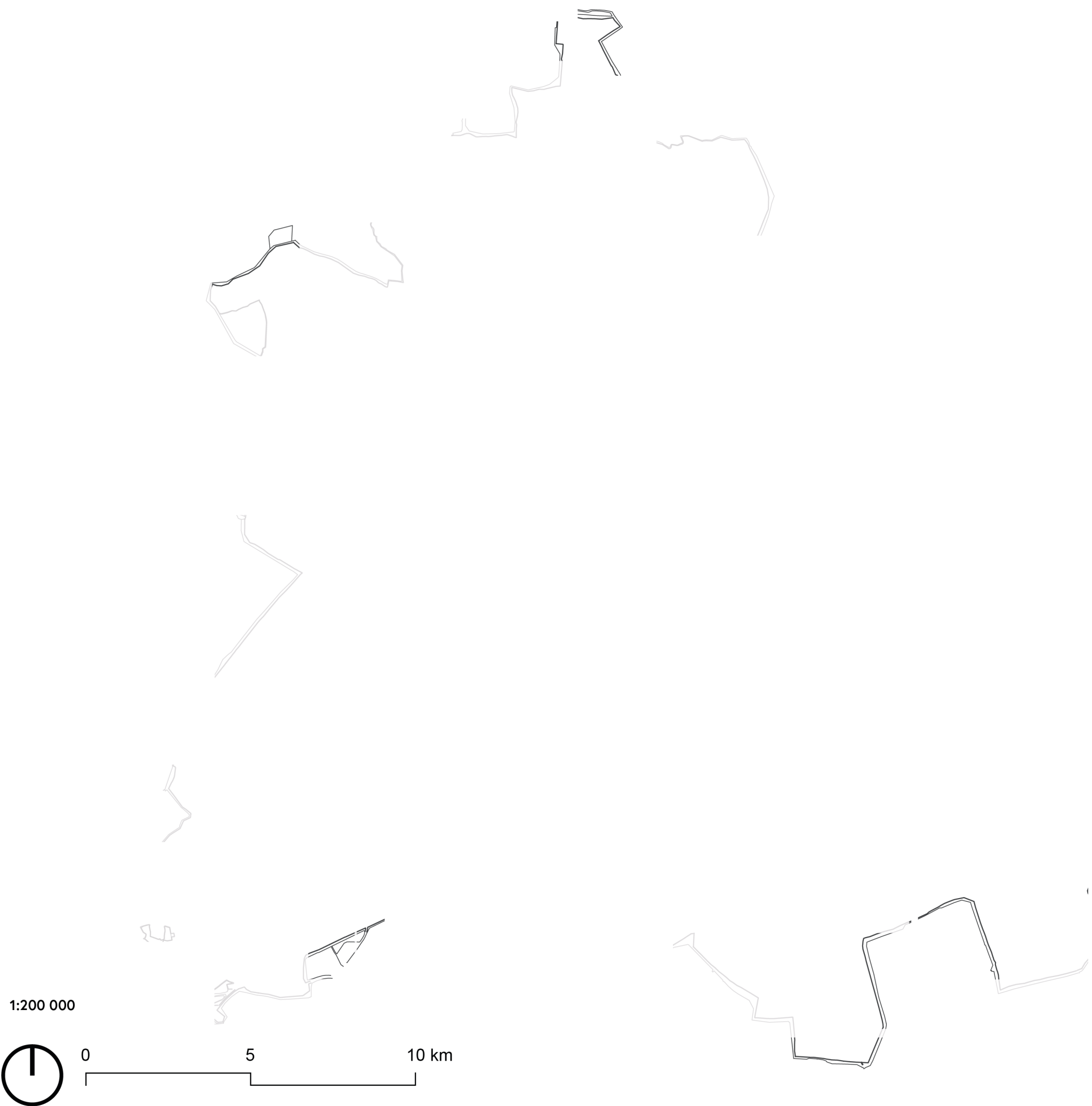
layer of events



Design
Concept strategy



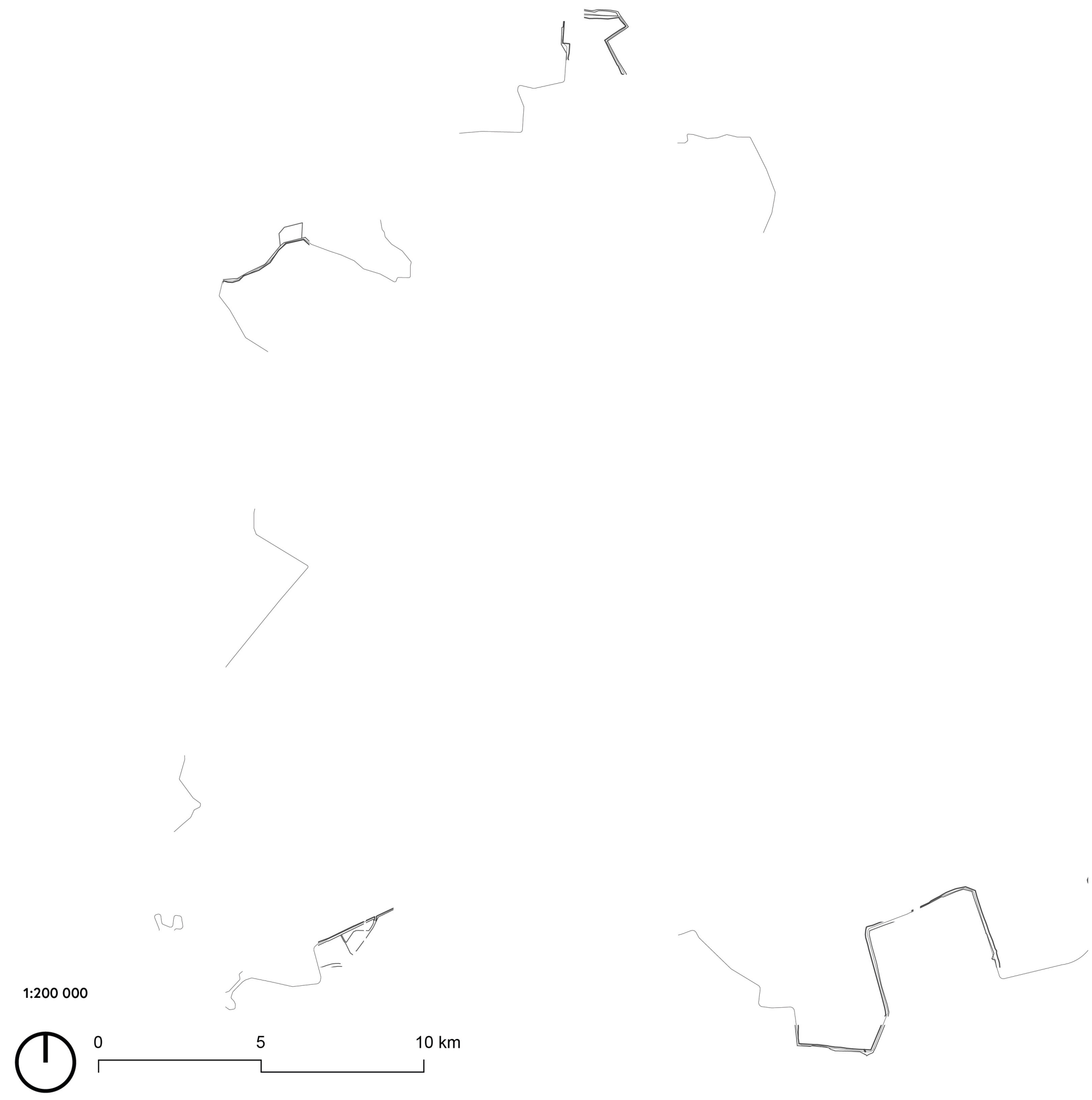
new memorials
not physical monuments like city centre
but personal stories from the lived space



Design
Concept strategy



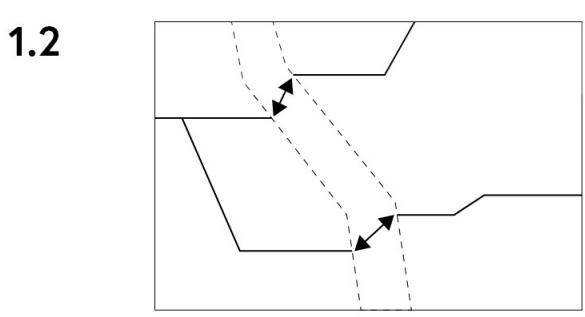
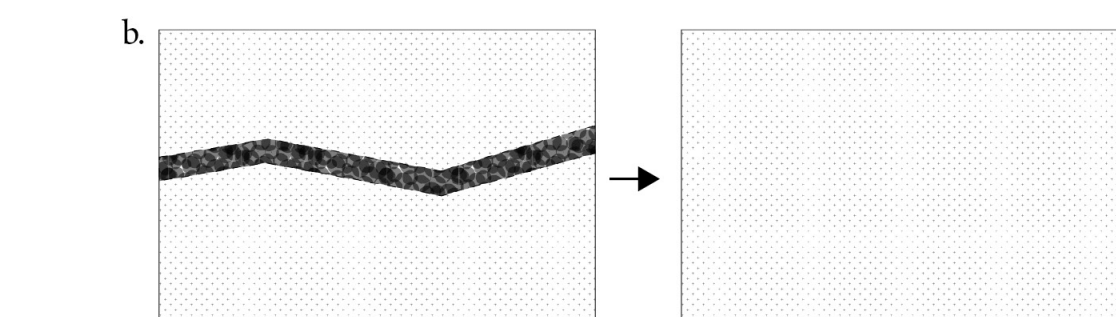
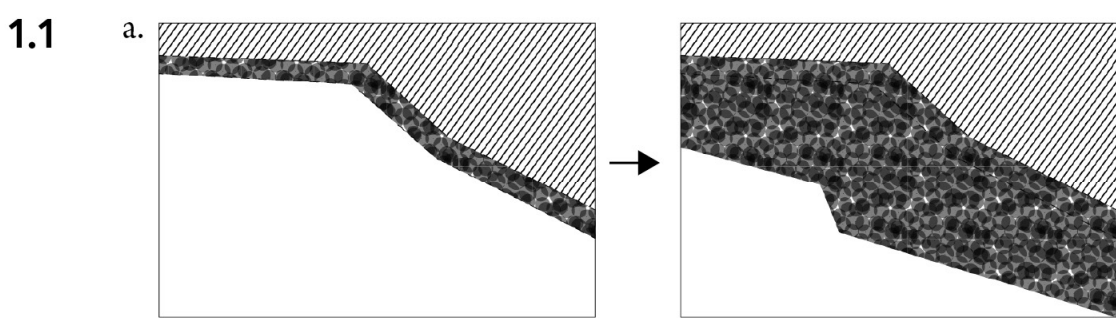
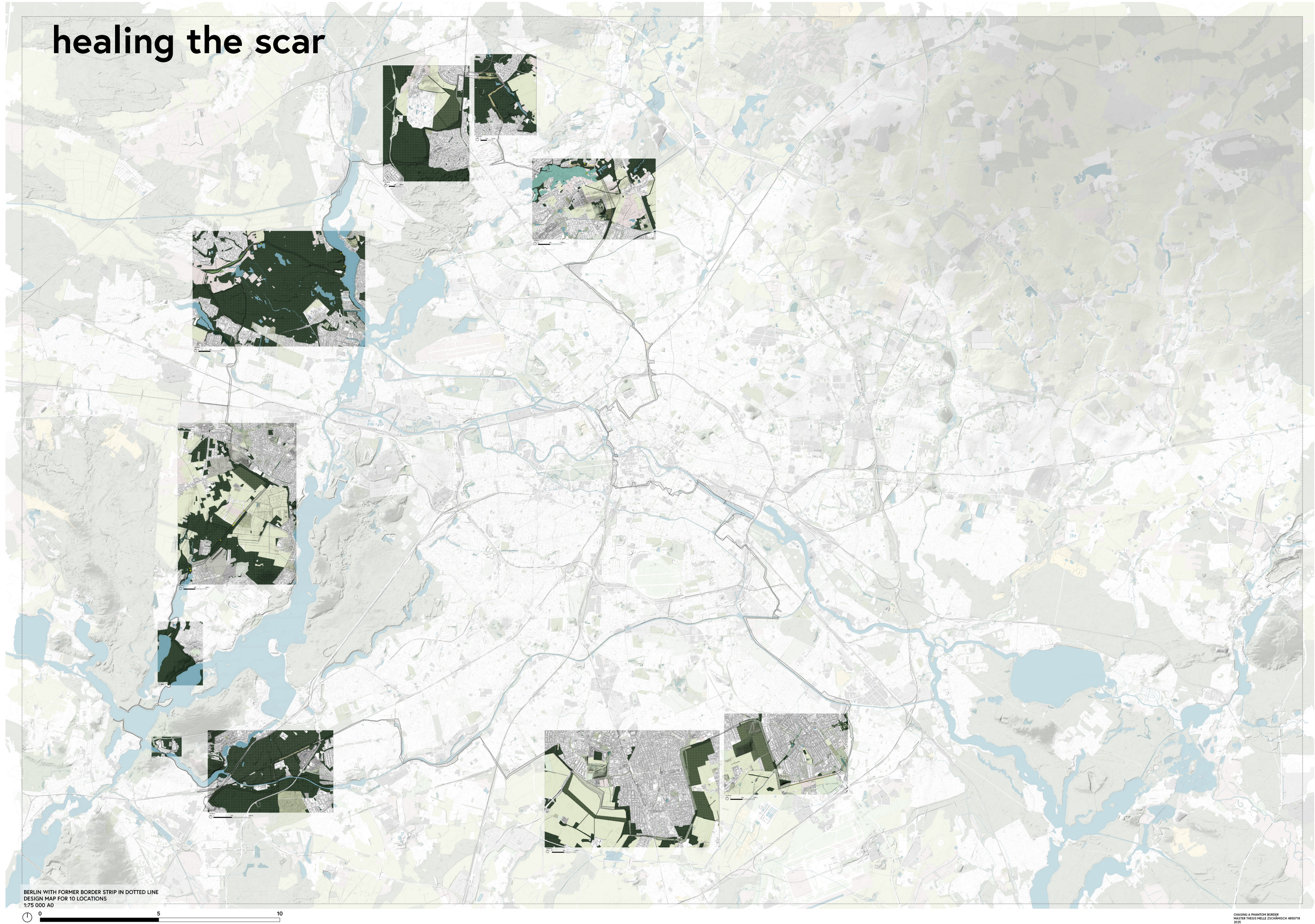
element to raise awareness of the still existing border



Design
Concept strategy



1



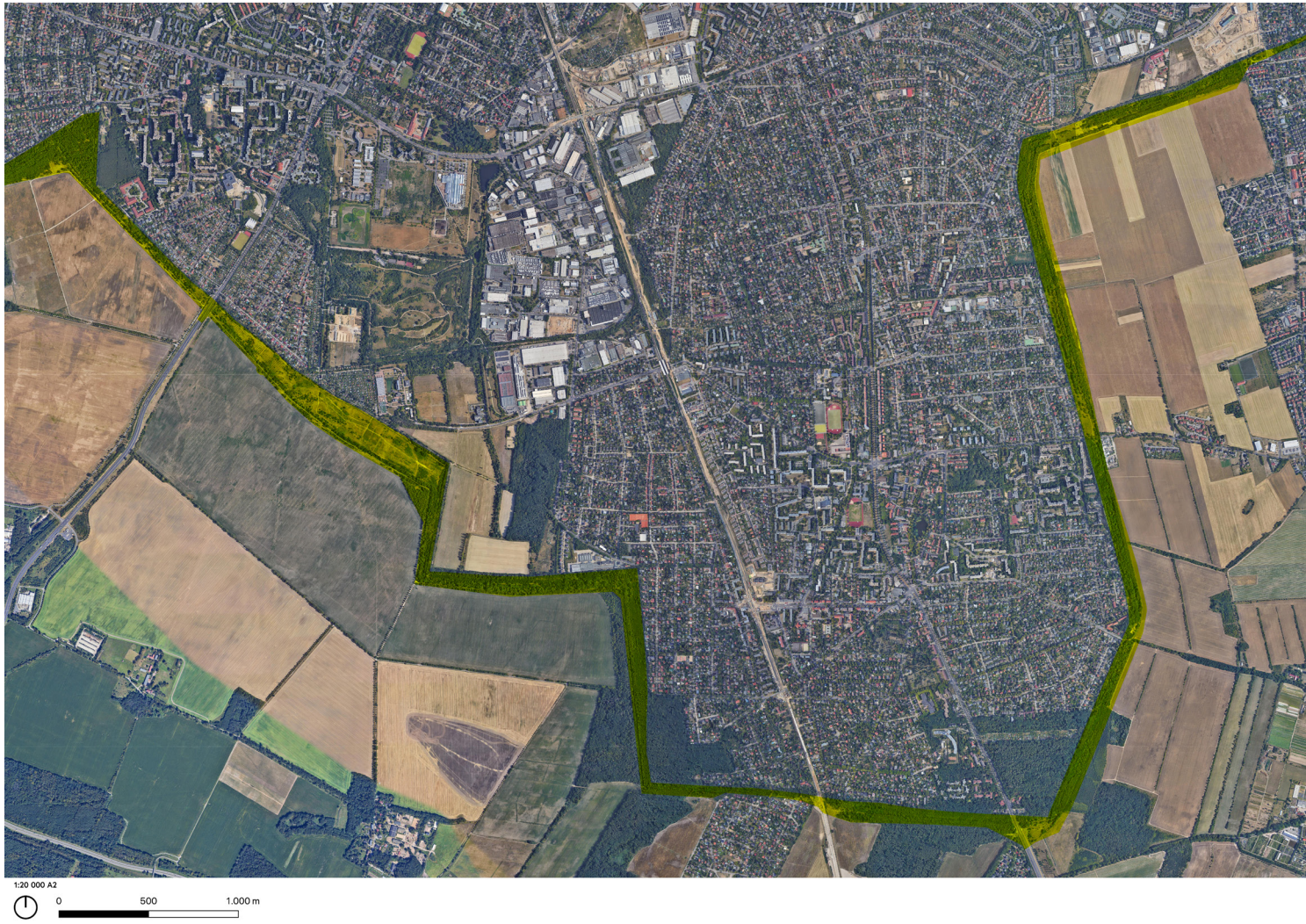
1.1 Making the former border traces blend into the existing landscape

- a. Adjust land use of the area to match the land use in the current situation of the border strip
- b. Adapt the land use of the former border strip to match the land use of the surrounding area

1.2 Connecting the still disrupted infrastructure networks

1

healing the scar



satellite image with yellow marked former border strip

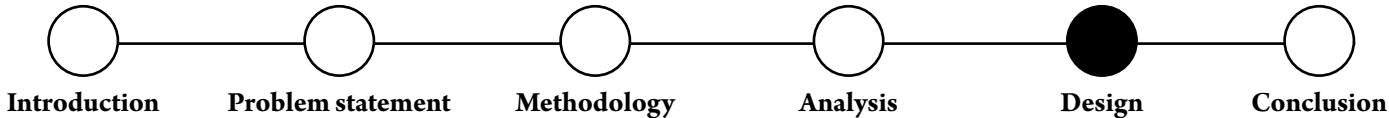


current



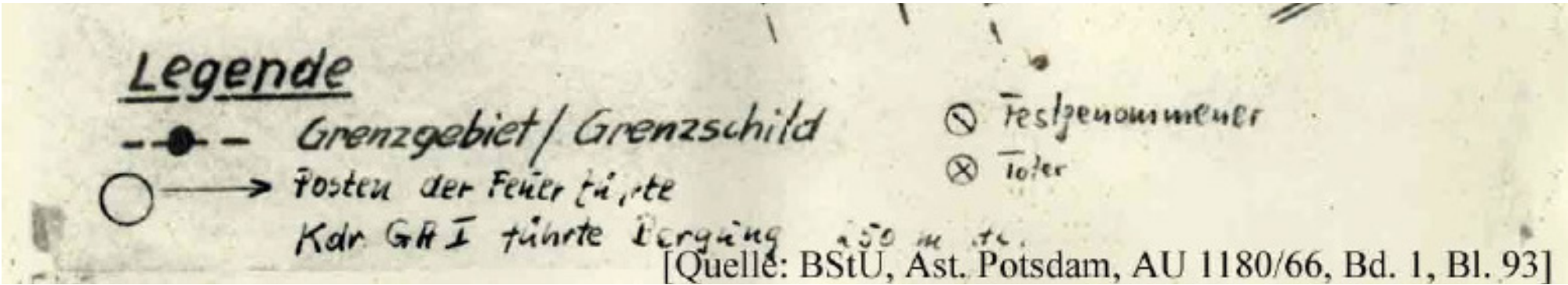
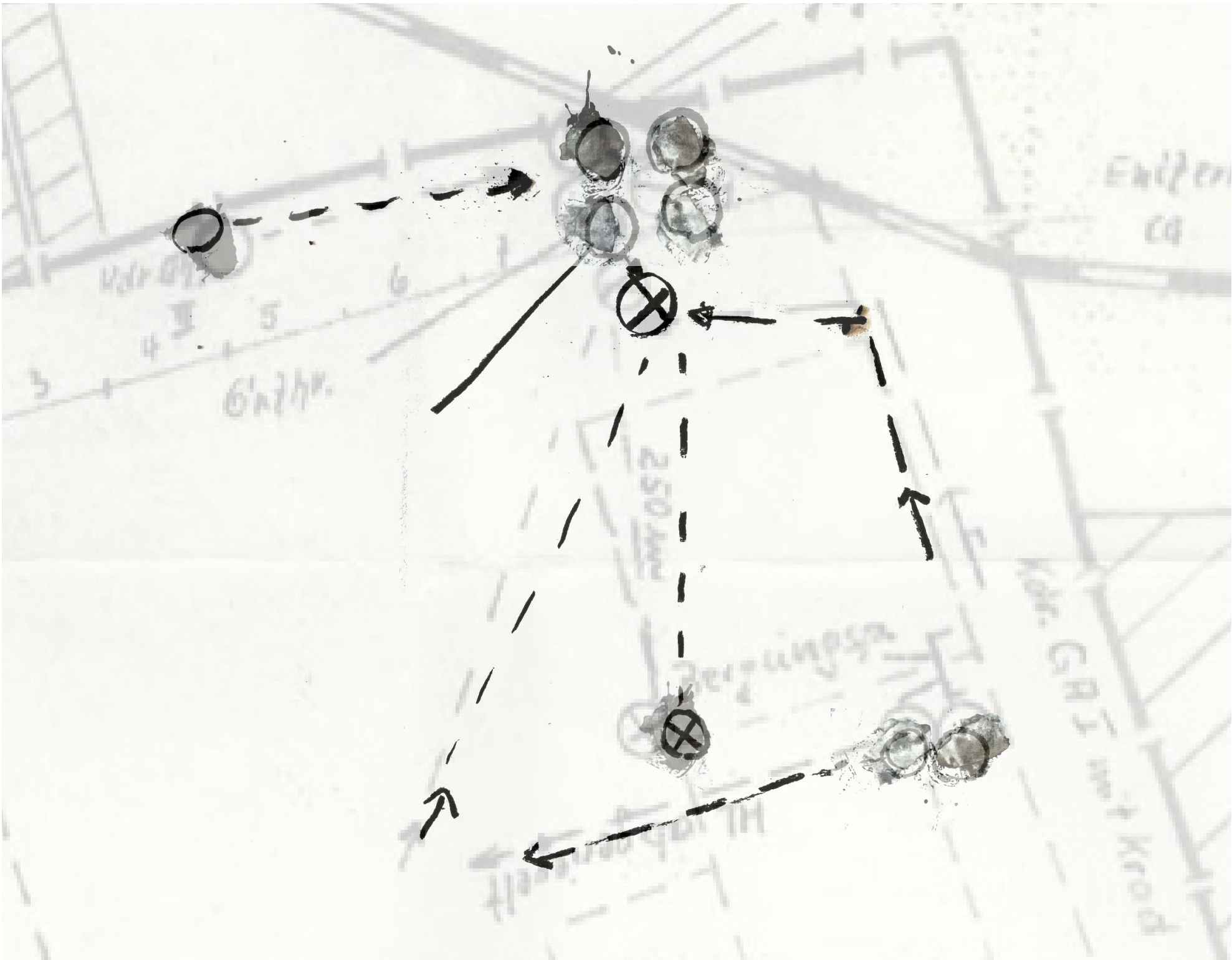
situation after design implementation

Design



2

evoking the 'Death Strip'



2 Evoking the Death Strip

2.1 Evoke the former border strip landscape at location of escape attempts aligned with projected crime scene sketches on the map, to make the former border strip visible in the landscape

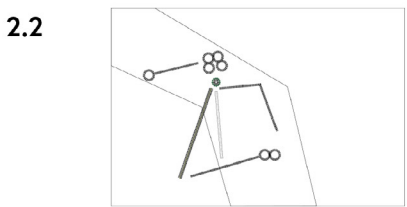
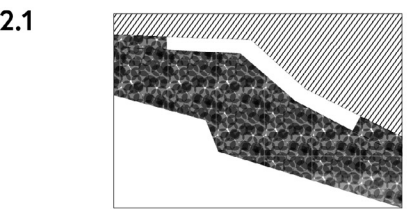
2.2 Creating landscape design elements out of the sketch shapes

- a. Standplace border guards: half open paving out of burnt wood elements in same shape as drawn on sketch
- b. Movement of border guards half open paving out of burnt wood elements following the path as drawn on sketch
- c. Line of shot: inaccessible fenced landscape in same shape and following the path as drawn on sketch made by burnt wooden tree trunks
- d. Movement of victim: Line of silver birch trees with burnt wood paving on both sides following the path as drawn on sketch
- e. Location of the crime: formation of silver birch trees in same shape as drawn on sketch with burnt wood paving inside
- f. Location of former border walls: concrete elements in width of the wall to create edges

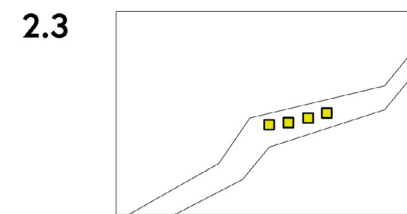
2.3 Keep existing remains of the former border strip intact

Let pioneer succession vegetation take over the non-designed excavated border landscape, the designed elements remain open spaces through the paving

2 Evoking the Death Strip

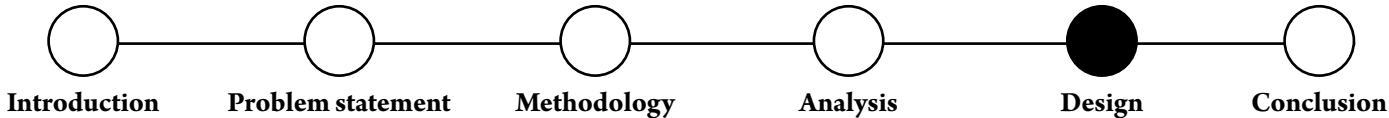


- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.



Design

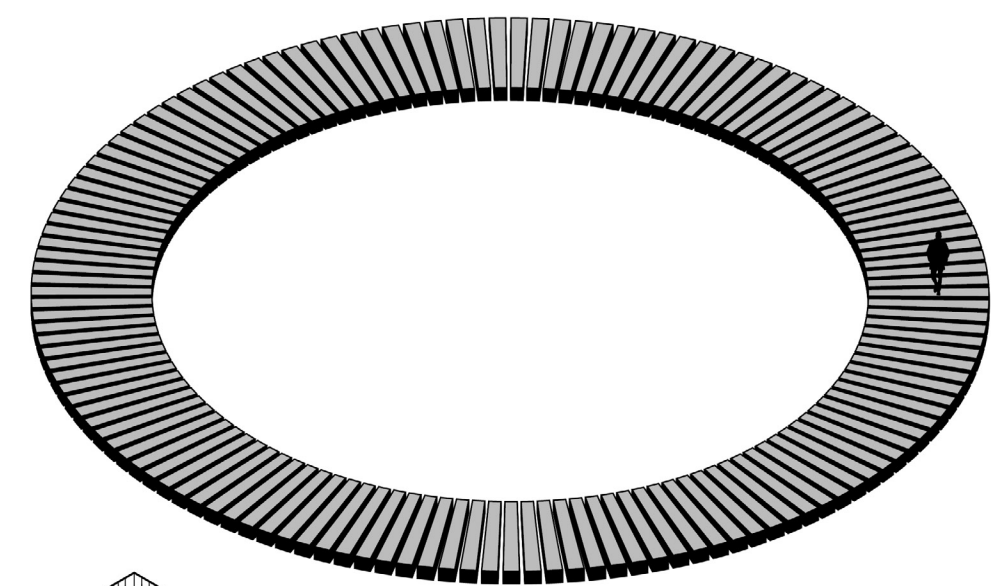
Design principles



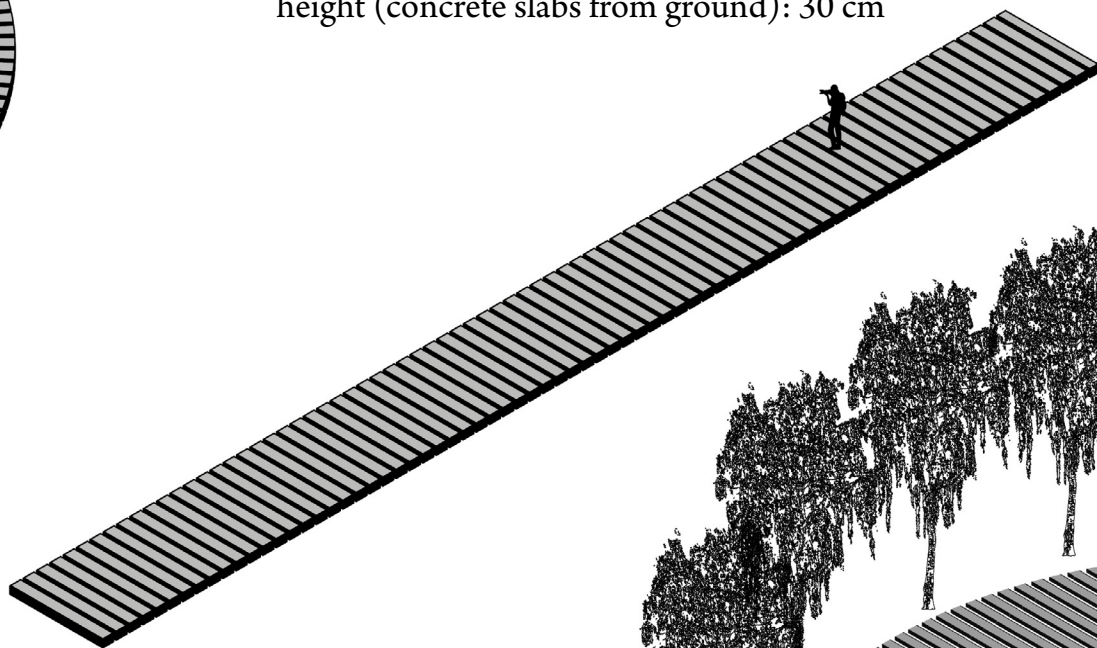
2

evoking the 'Death Strip'

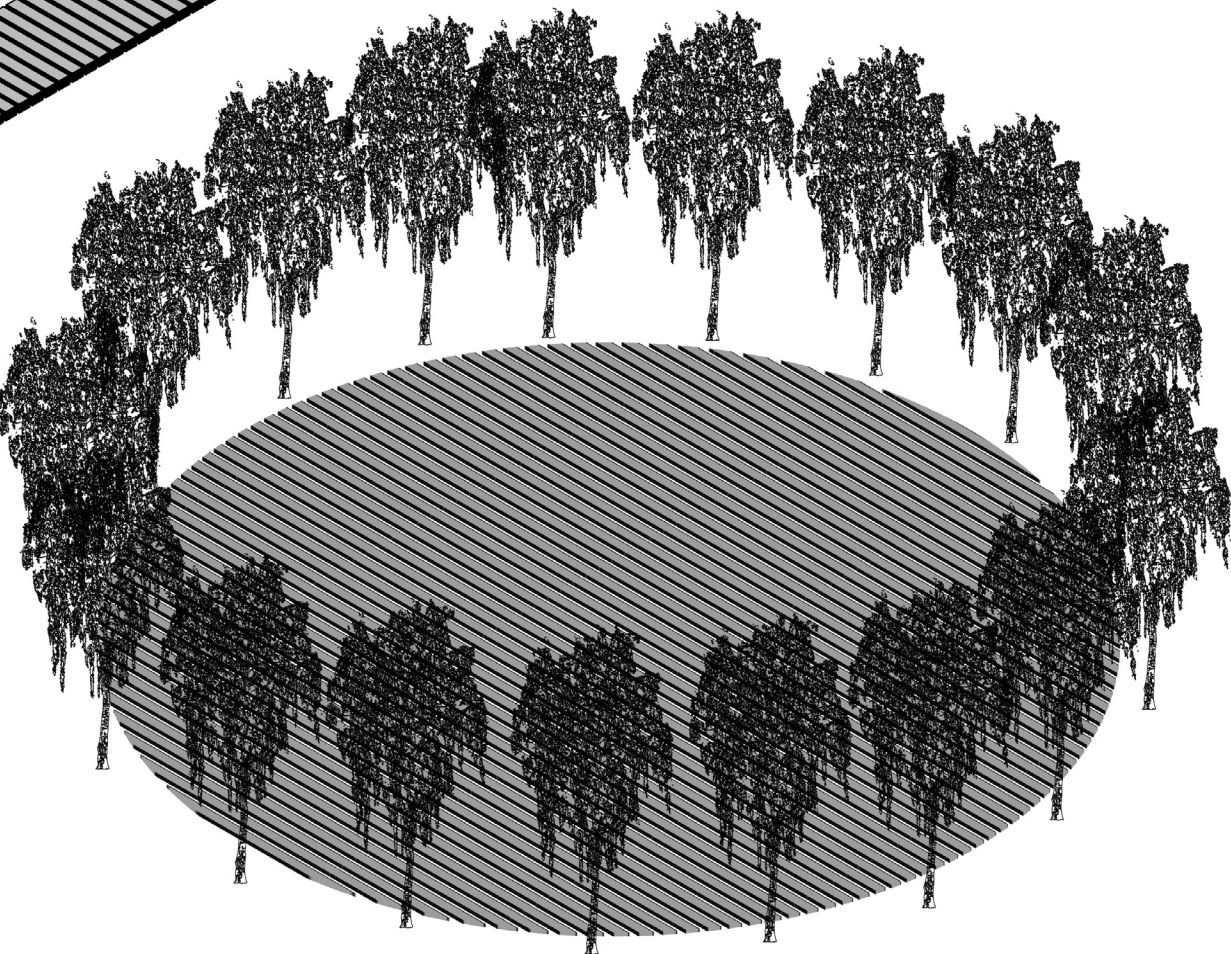
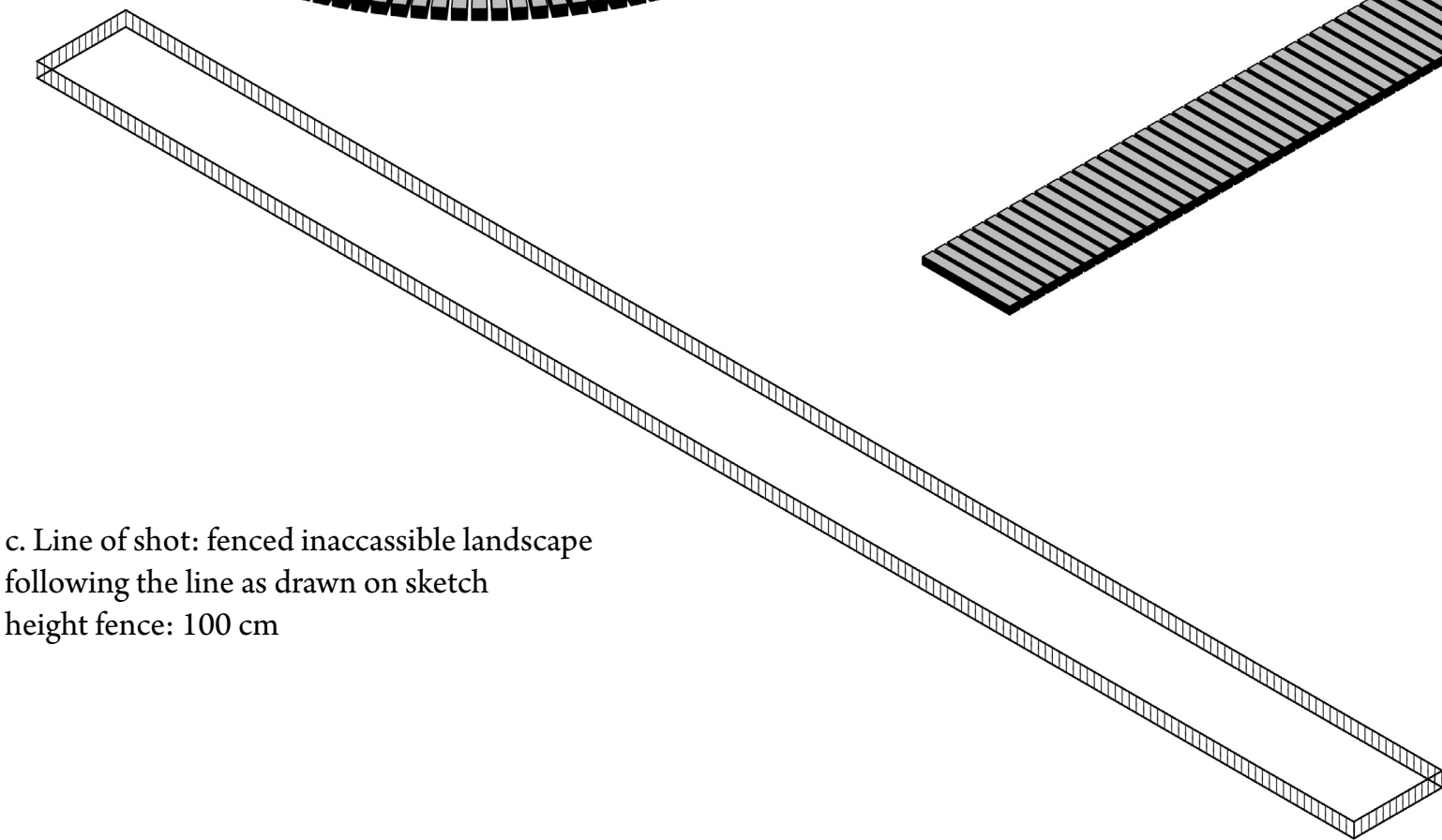
a. Standplace border guard: half open stone paving in same shape with same proportions as drawn on sketch
height (concrete slabs from ground): 30 cm



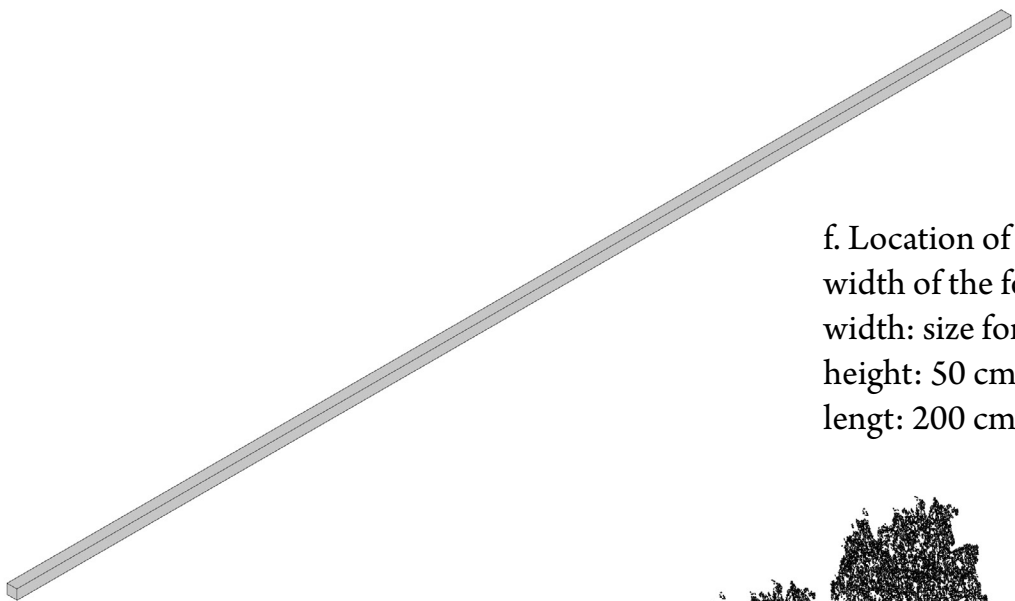
b. Movement of border guards: half open stone paving following the line as drawn on sketch
height (concrete slabs from ground): 30 cm



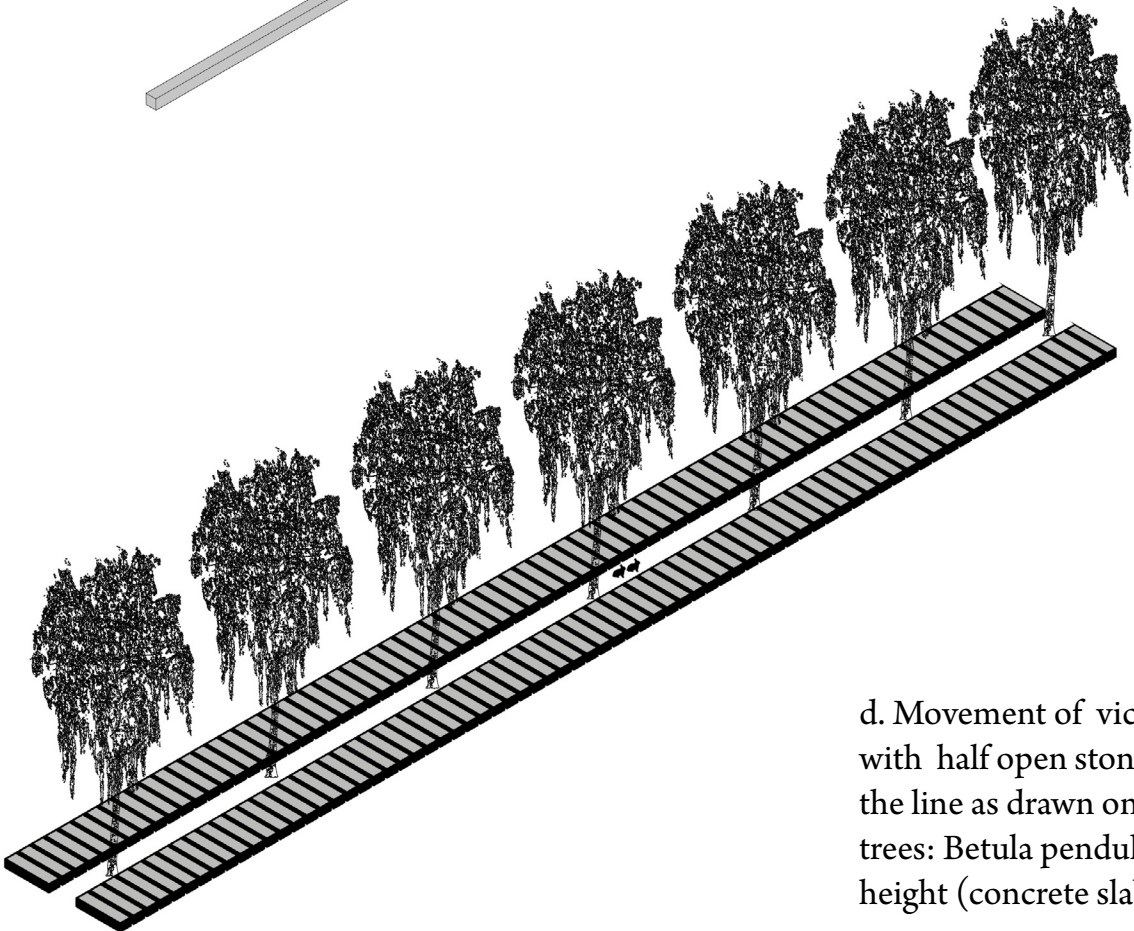
c. Line of shot: fenced inaccessible landscape following the line as drawn on sketch
height fence: 100 cm



e. Location of the crime: formation of silver birch trees in same shape and proportions as drawn on sketch, half open paving of concrete slabs in de middle.
trees: Betula pendula (silver birch)
height (concrete slabs from ground): 30 cm



f. Location of former border walls: concrete slabs in width of the former wall
width: size former wall
height: 50 cm
lengt: 200 cm laid together



d. Movement of victim: row of silver birch trees with half open stone paving on both sides following the line as drawn on sketch
trees: Betula pendula (silver birch)
height (concrete slabs from ground): 30 cm

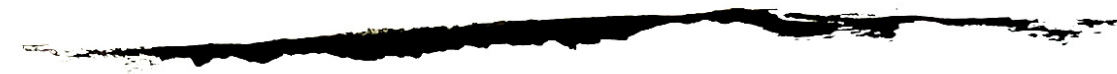
Design

Design principles



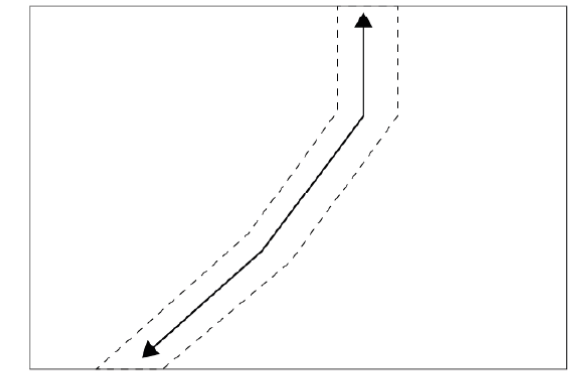
3 tracing the border

mental border
social-demographic border
political border
phantom border



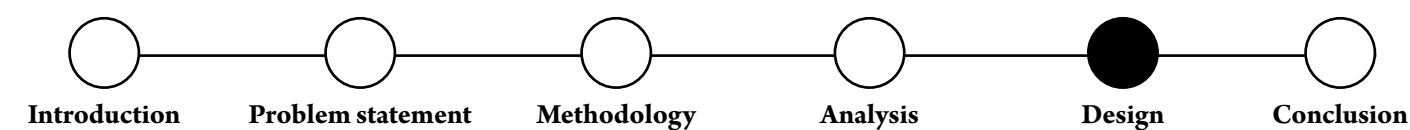
3.1 Creating a biking path in the border strip for the connection in between symbolising the ever-present border that can be bridged

3.1



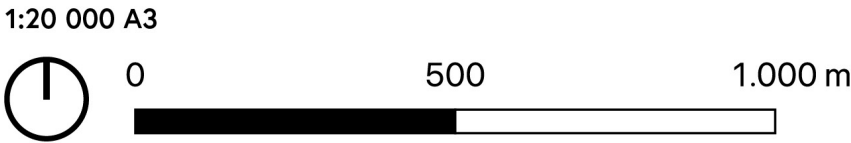
Design

Design principles





location 1

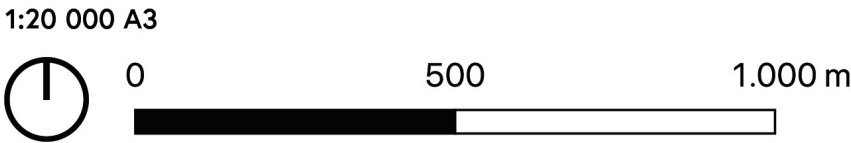


Design





Legend
existing forest

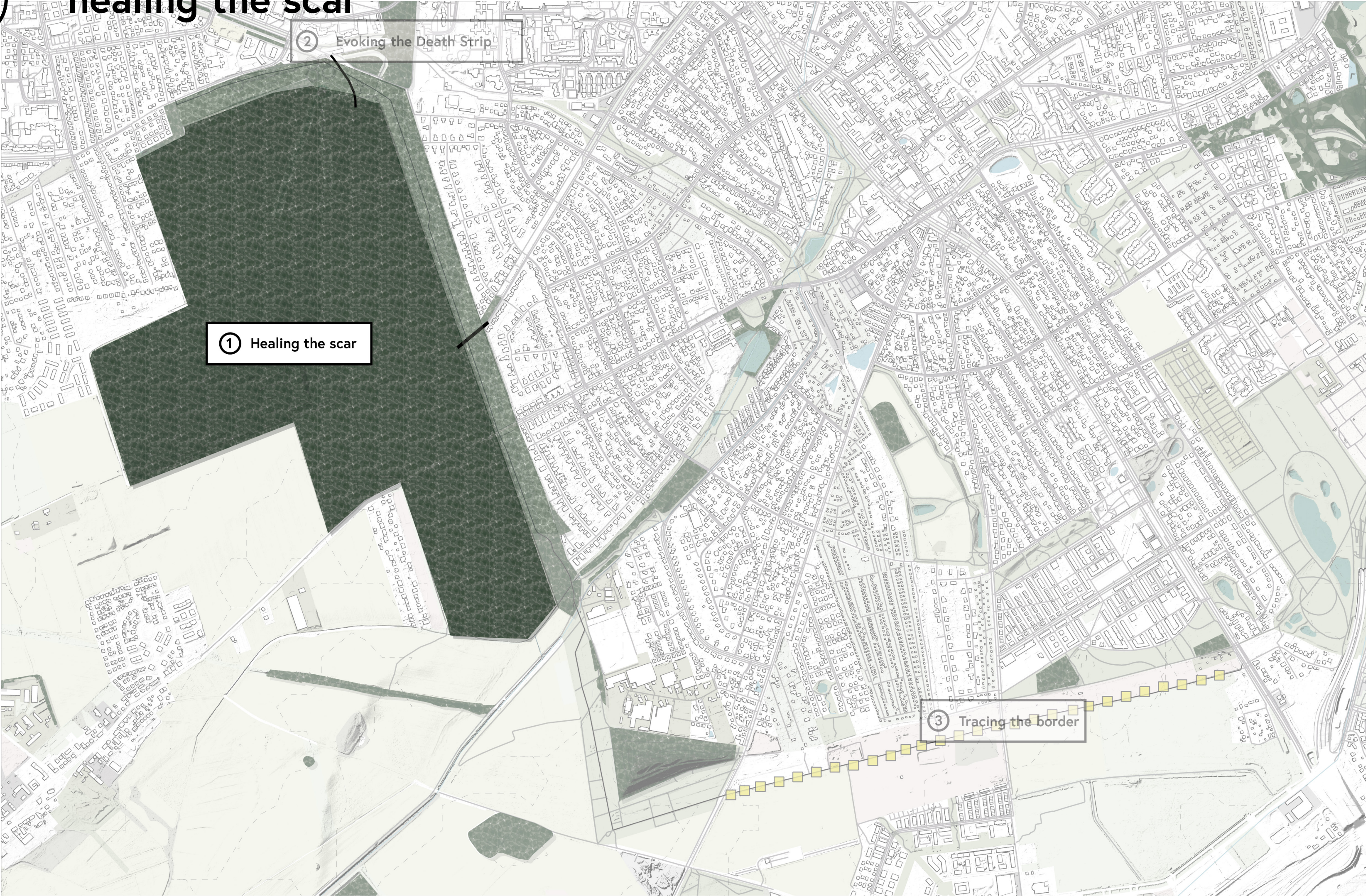


Design



1

healing the scar



3 Tracing the border
3.1 Creating a biking path in the border strip for the connection in between symbolising the ever-present border that can be bridged

2 Evoking the Death Strip
2.3 Keep existing remains of the former border strip intact
2.2 Creating landscape design elements out of the sketch shapes

2.1 Excavate the former border strip landscape at location of escape attempts aligned with projected crime scene sketches on the map, to make the former border strip visible in the landscape

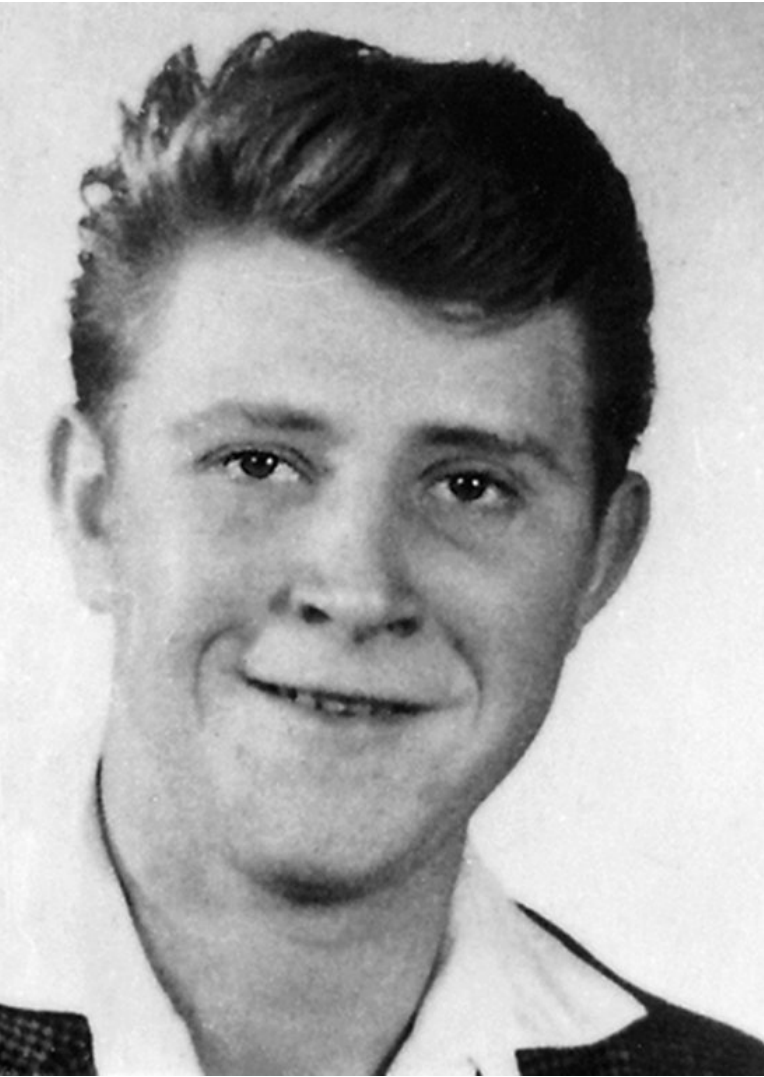
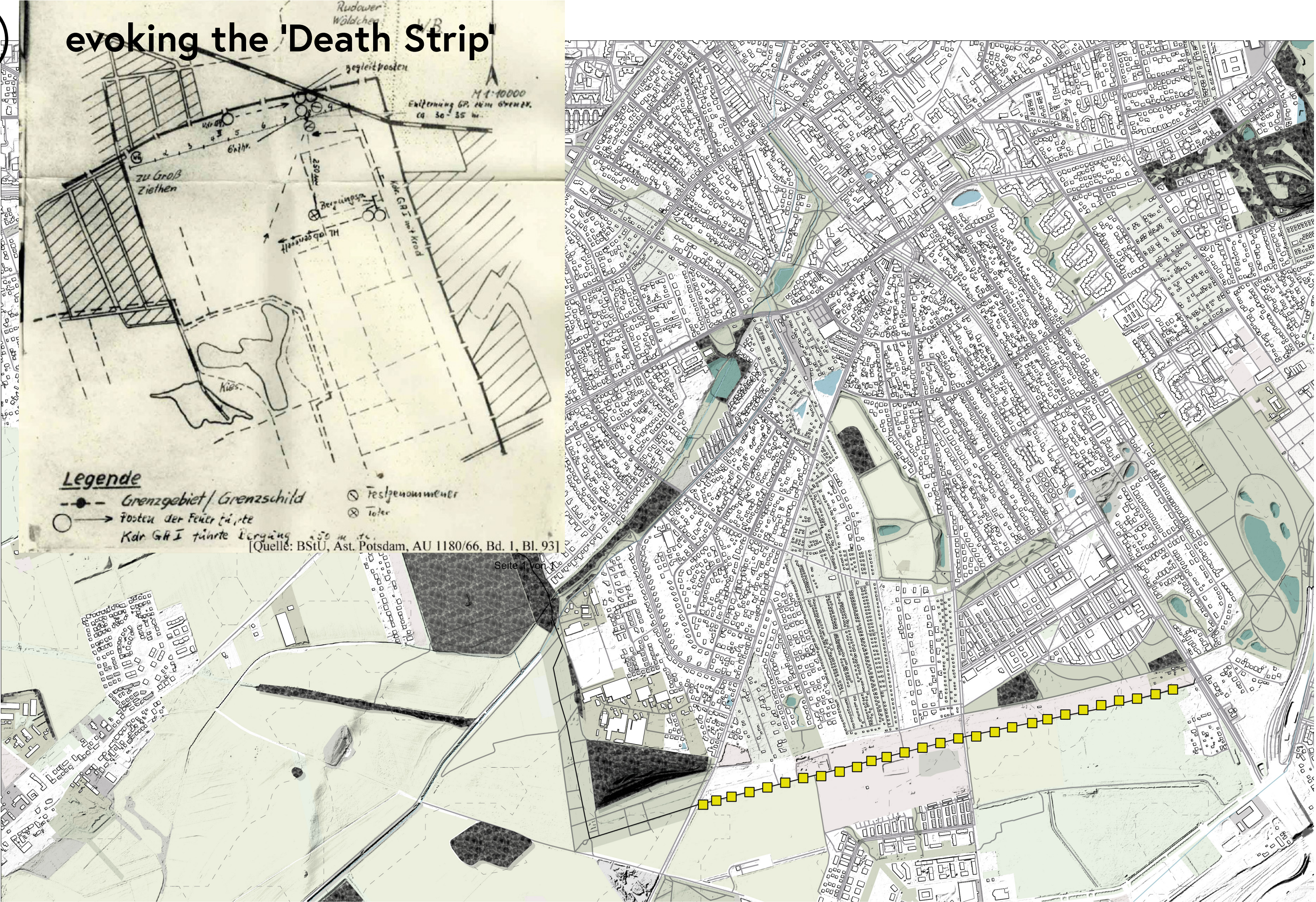
1 Healing the scar
1.2 Connecting the still disrupted infrastructure networks
1.1 Making the former border traces blend into the existing landscape
a. Adjust land use of the area to match the land use in the current situation of the border strip

Design



2

evoking the 'Death Strip'



Eberhard Schulz
born on March 11, 1964
shot dead on March 30, 1966

lived in Brusendorf, just south of Berlin

Schulz was shot by East German border guards.
Witnesses reported that the guards opened fire without warning
Schulz was hit in the face and throat and died on the spot.

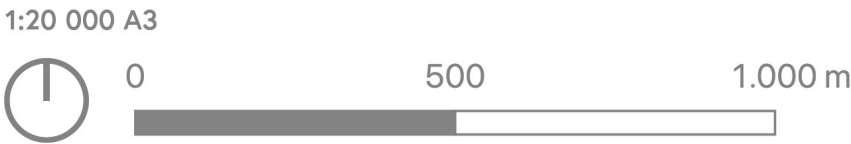
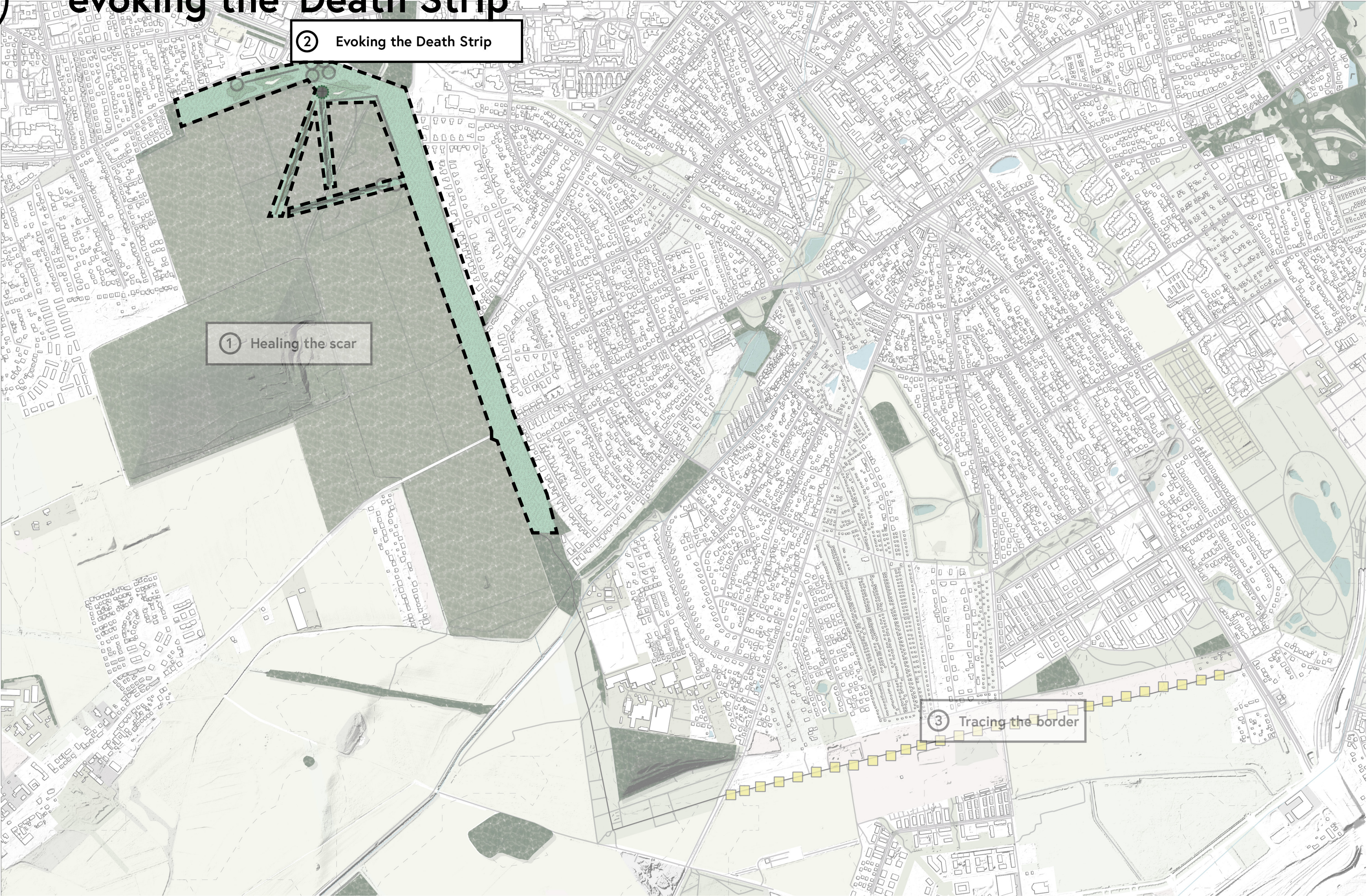
Eberhard was 20 years old when he died.

palimpsest layer of event

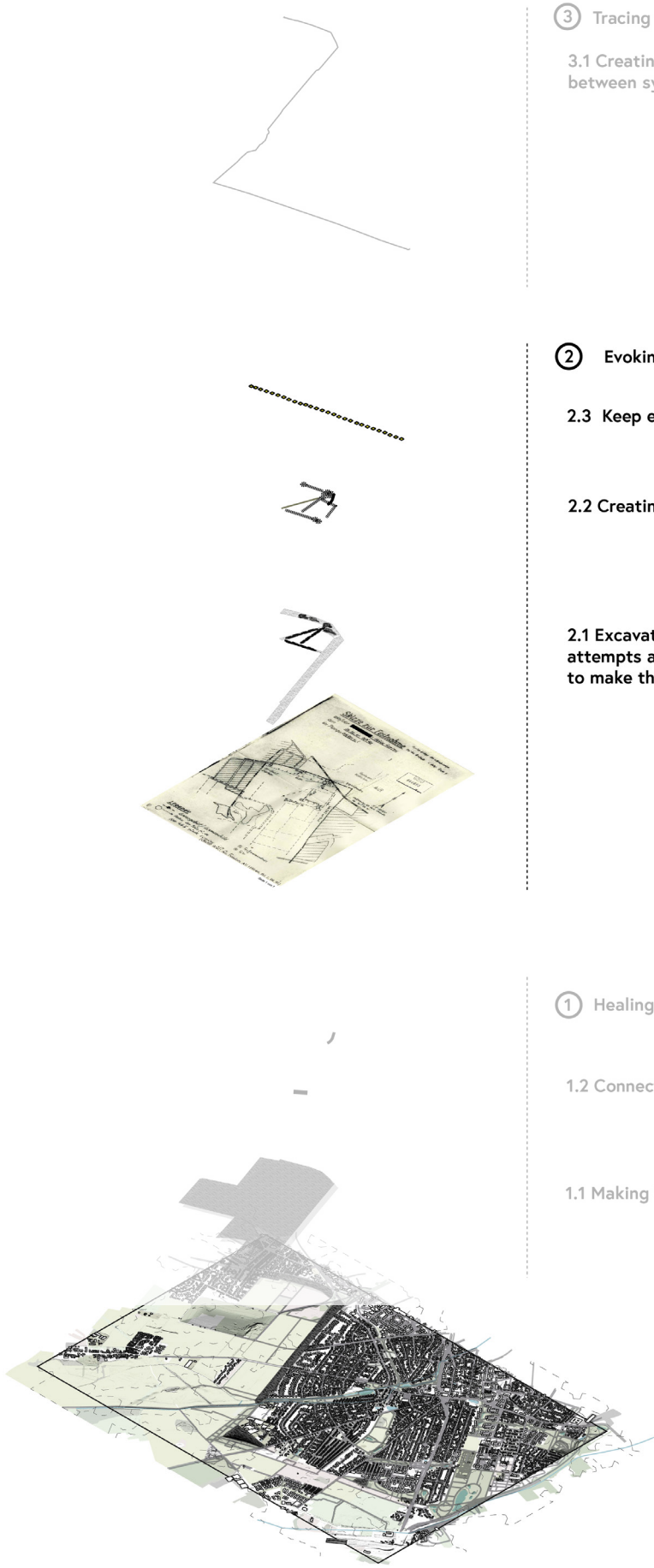
Design



evoking the 'Death Strip'



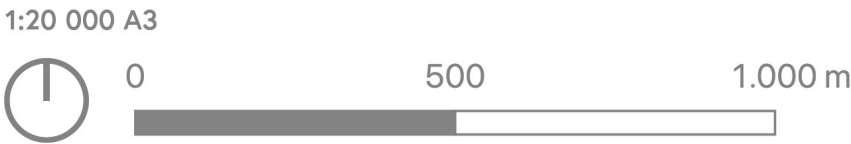
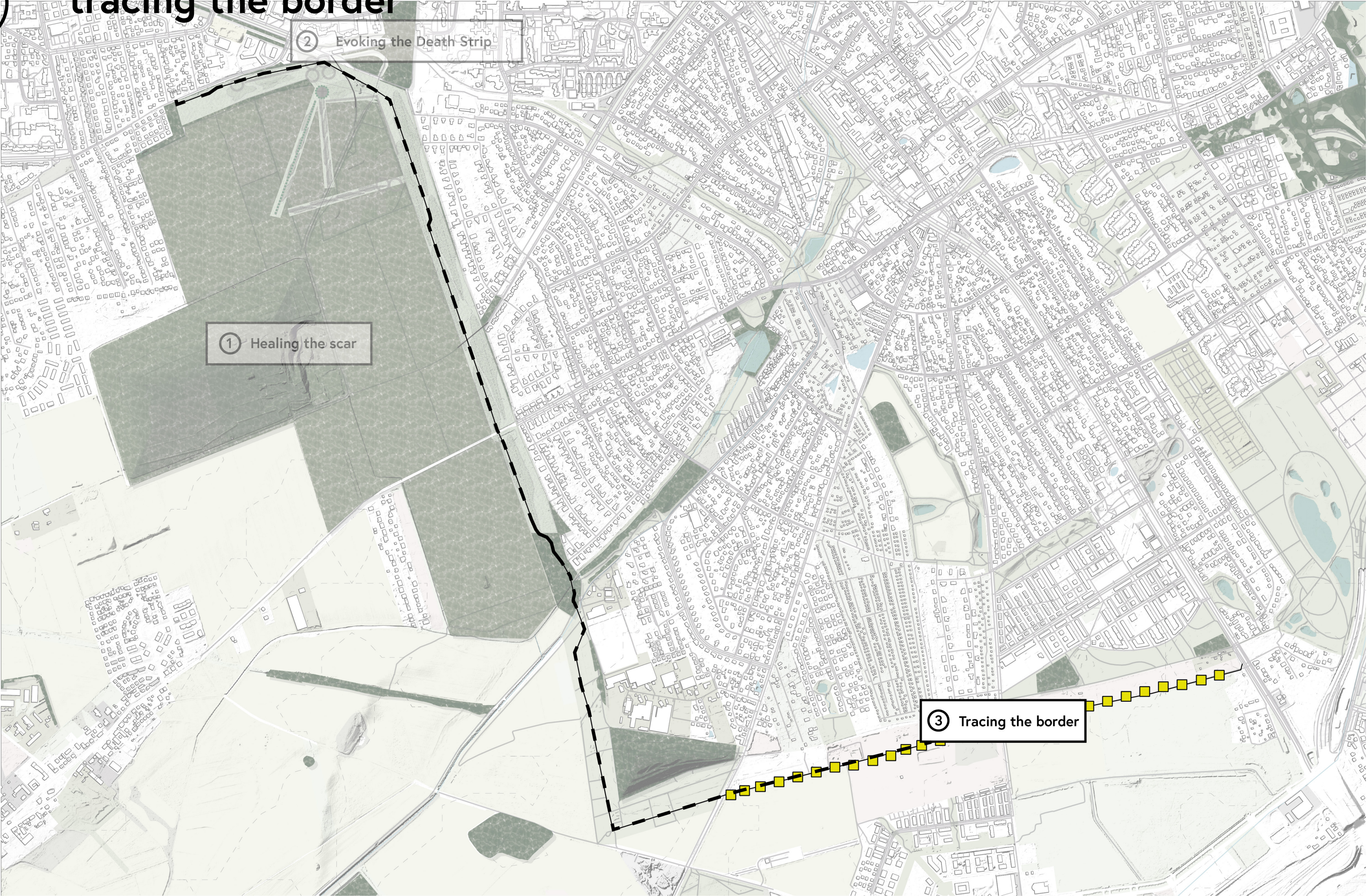
Design



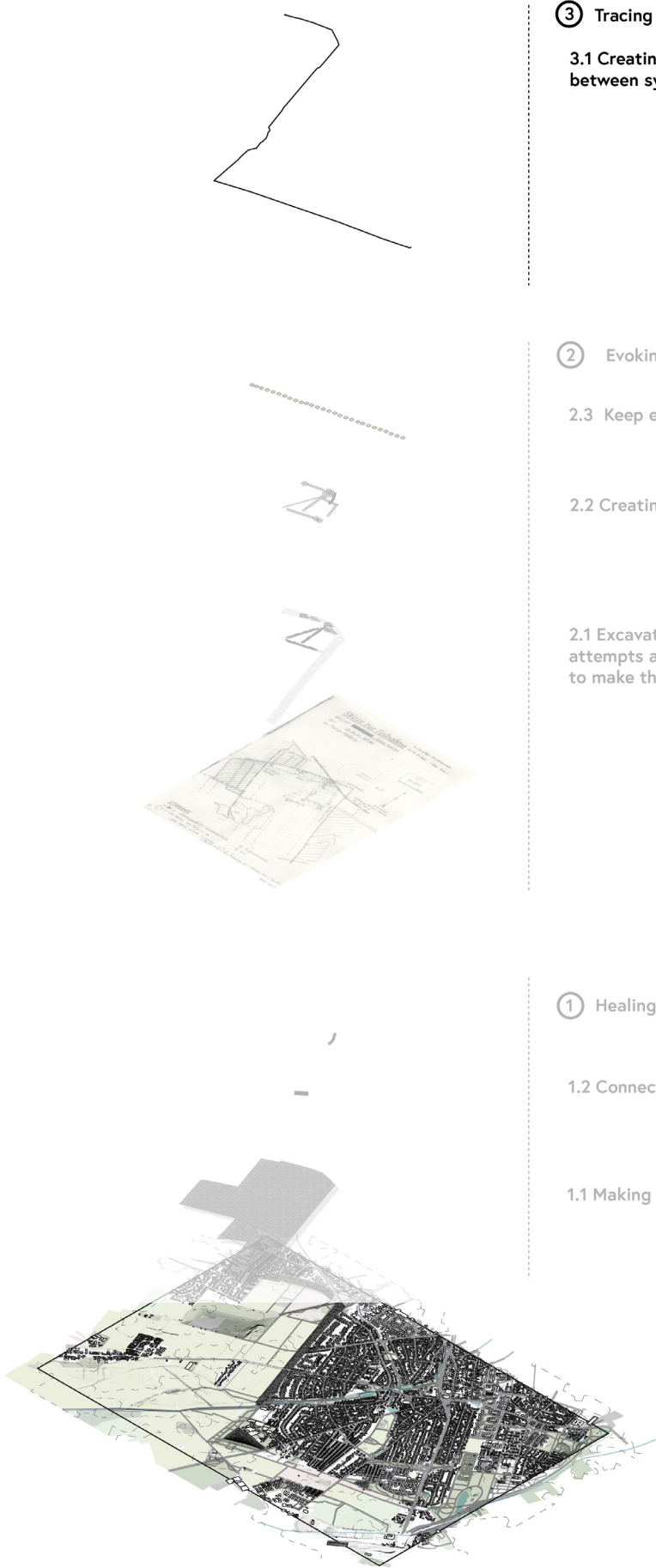
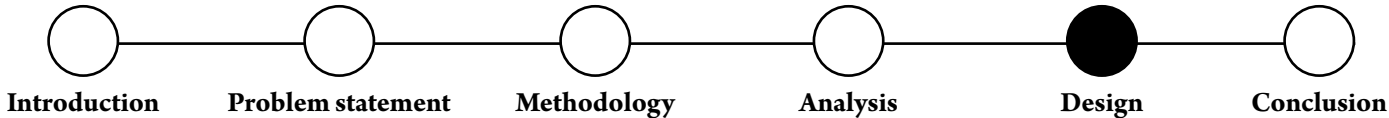
- 3 Tracing the border
 - 3.1 Creating a biking path in the border strip for the connection in between symbolising the ever-present border that can be bridged
- 2 Evoking the Death Strip
 - 2.3 Keep existing remains of the former border strip intact
 - 2.2 Creating landscape design elements out of the sketch shapes
 - 2.1 Excavate the former border strip landscape at location of escape attempts aligned with projected crime scene sketches on the map, to make the former border strip visible in the landscape
- 1 Healing the scar
 - 1.2 Connecting the still disrupted infrastructure networks
 - 1.1 Making the former border traces blend into the existing landscape
 - a. Adjust land use of the area to match the land use in the current situation of the border strip

3

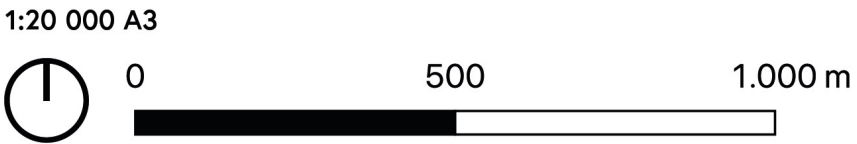
tracing the border



Design



- ③ Tracing the border
- 3.1 Creating a biking path in the border strip for the connection in between symbolising the ever-present border that can be bridged
- ② Evoking the Death Strip
- 2.3 Keep existing remains of the former border strip intact
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- ① Healing the scar
- 1.2 Connecting the still disrupted infrastructure networks
- 1.1 Making the former border traces blend into the existing landscape
- a. Adjust land use of the area to match the land use in the current situation of the border strip



Design



1

healing the scar



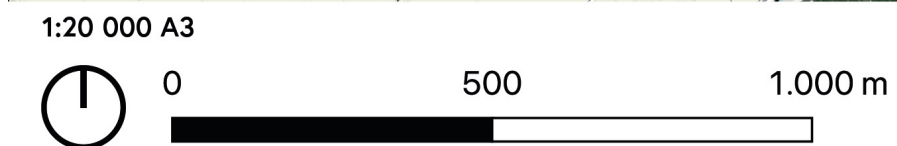
process through time



Design

section aa'

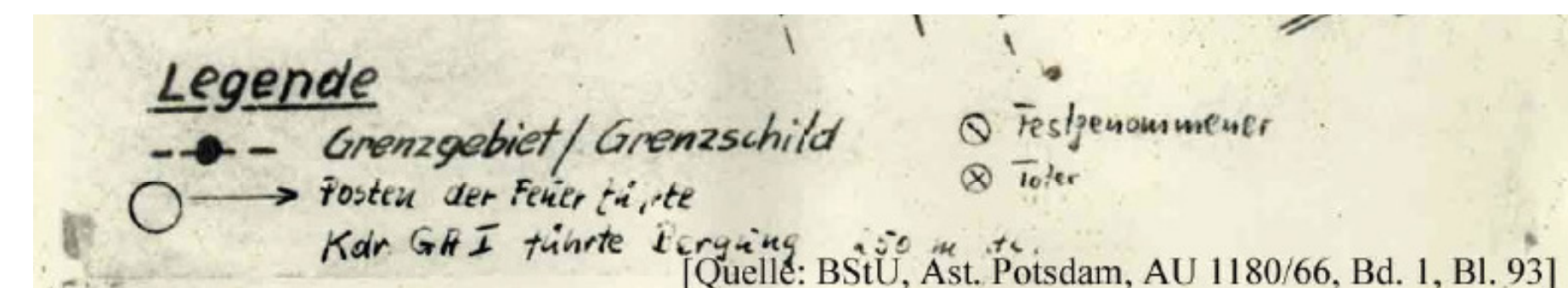
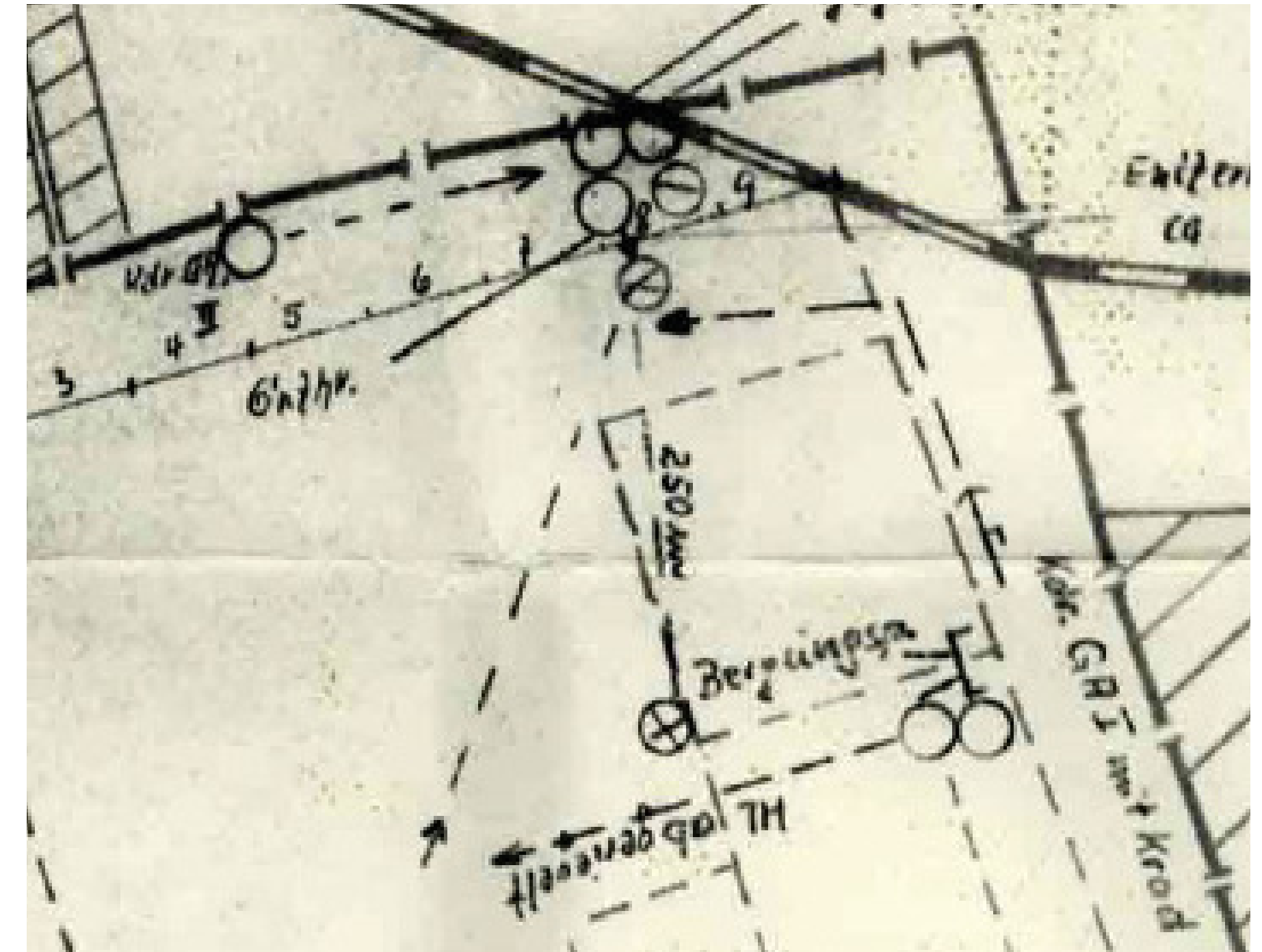
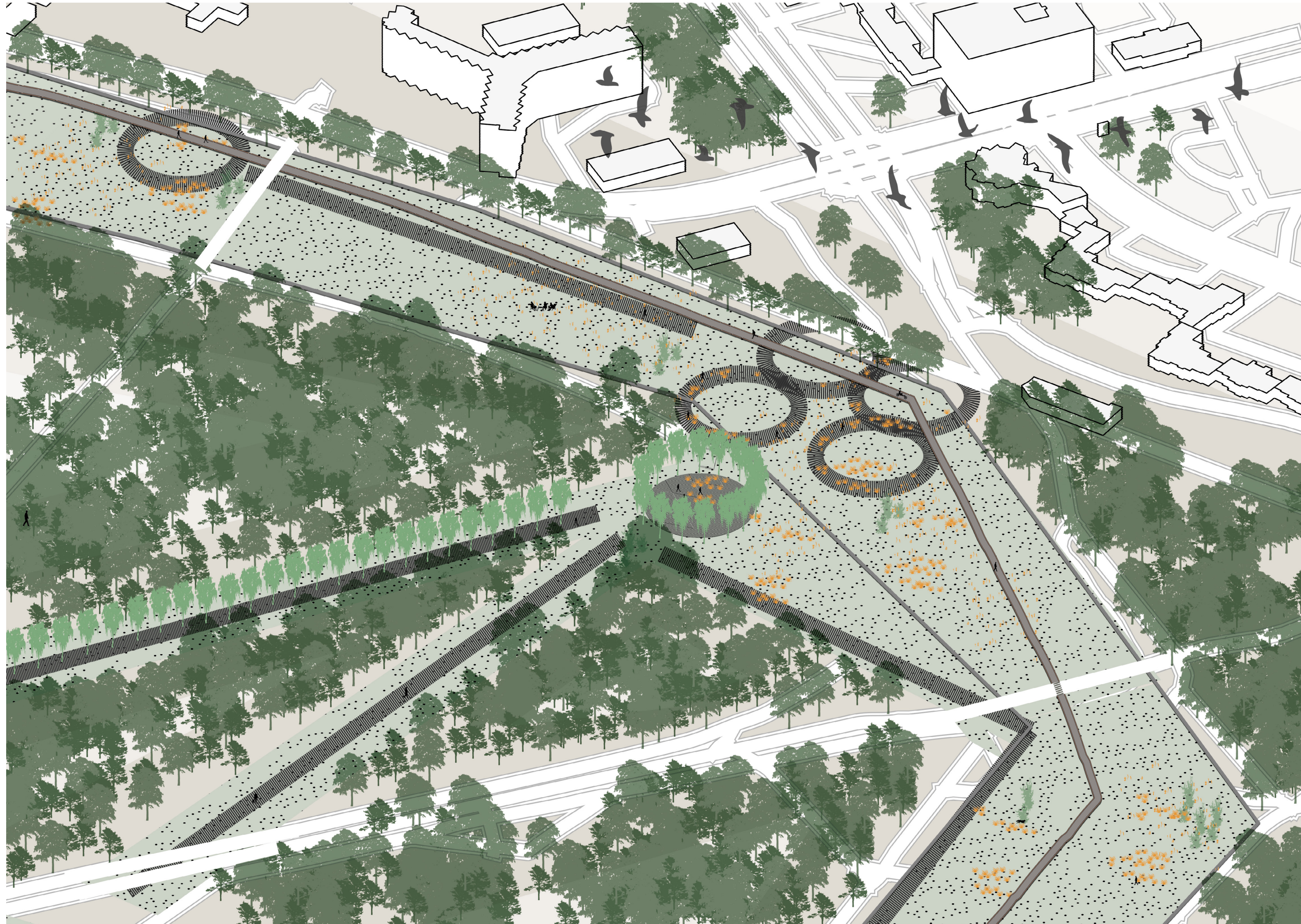




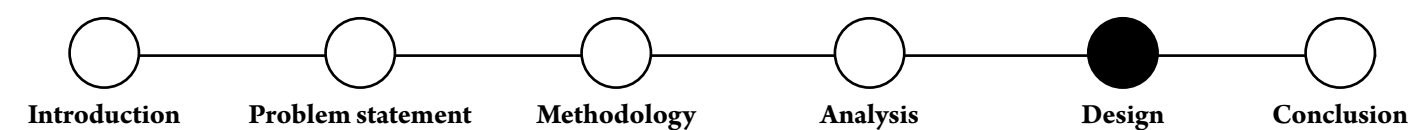
Design



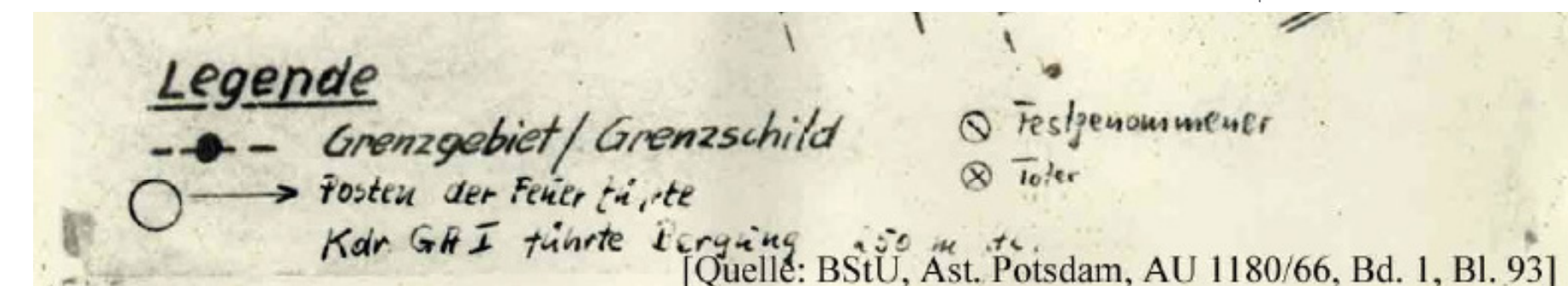
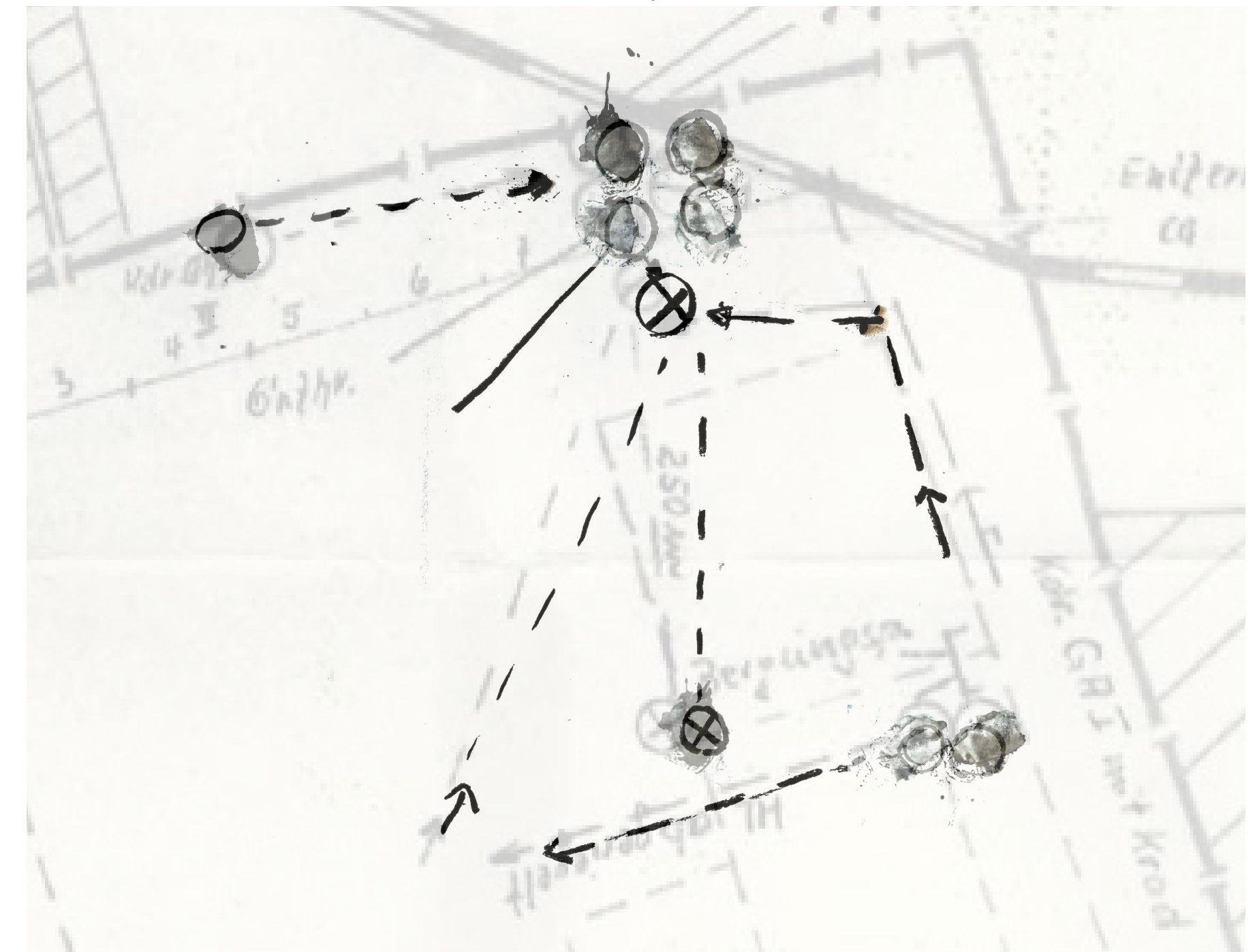
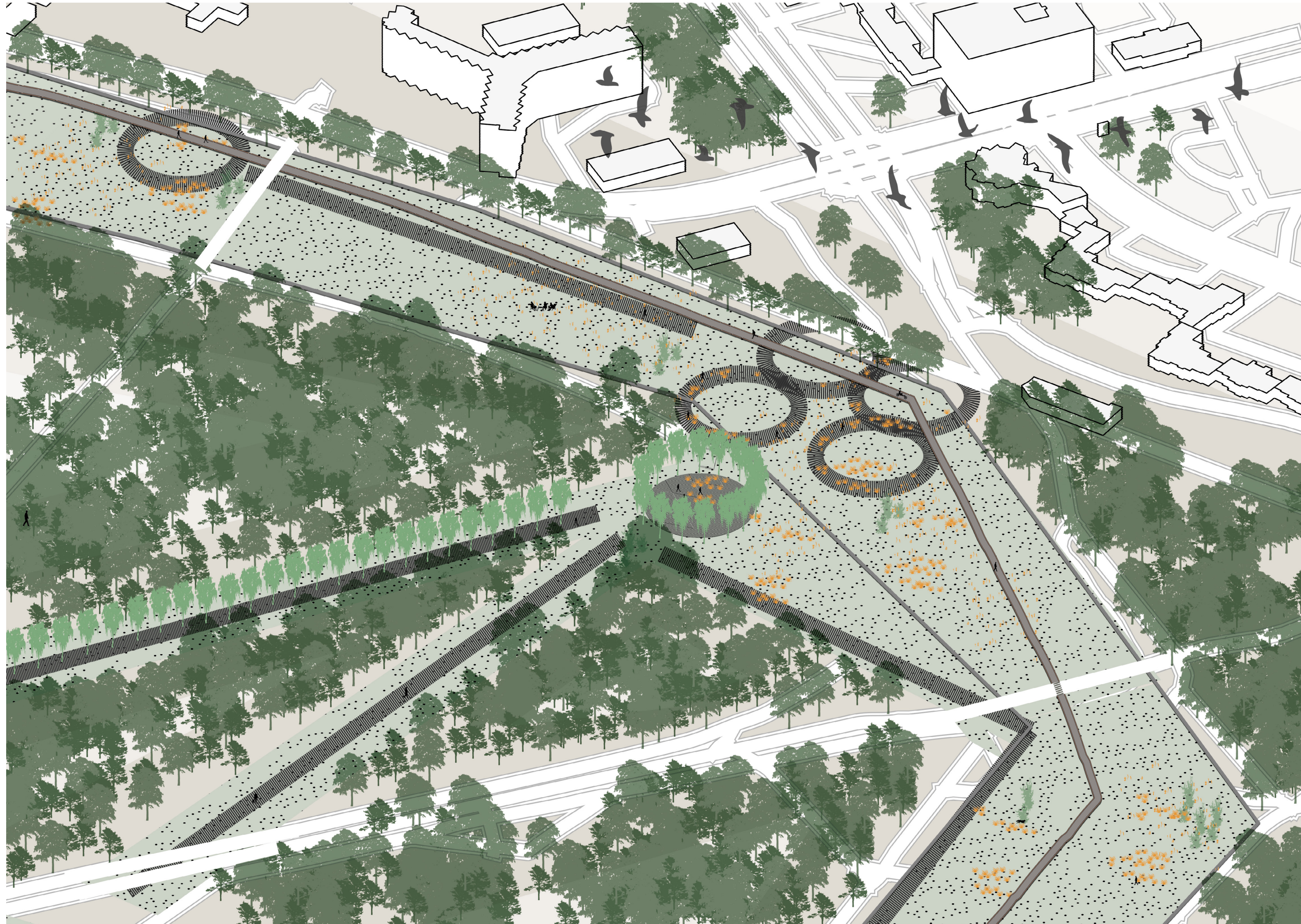
place of event



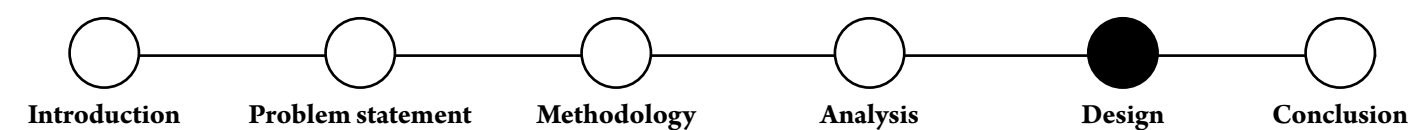
Design



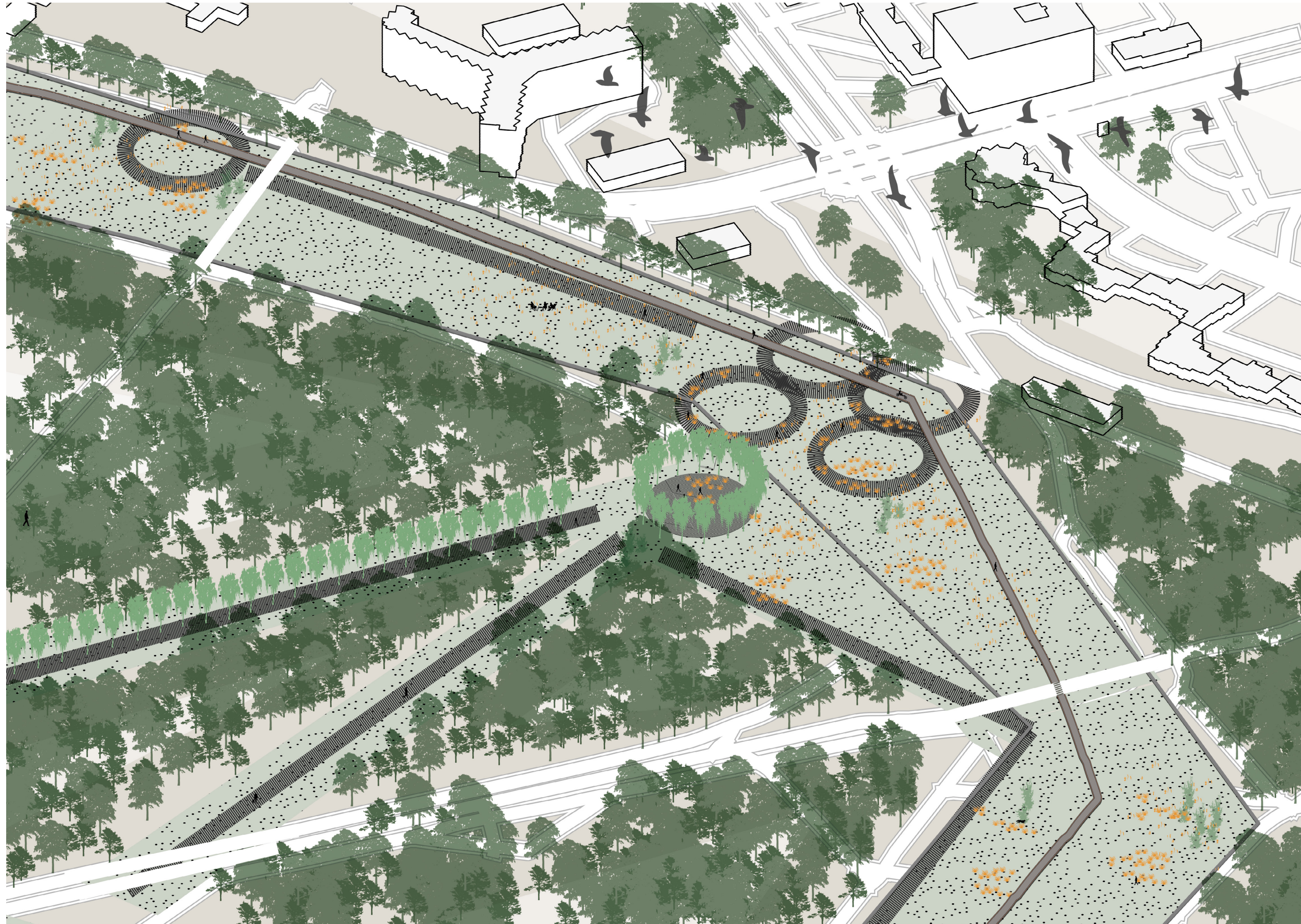
place of event



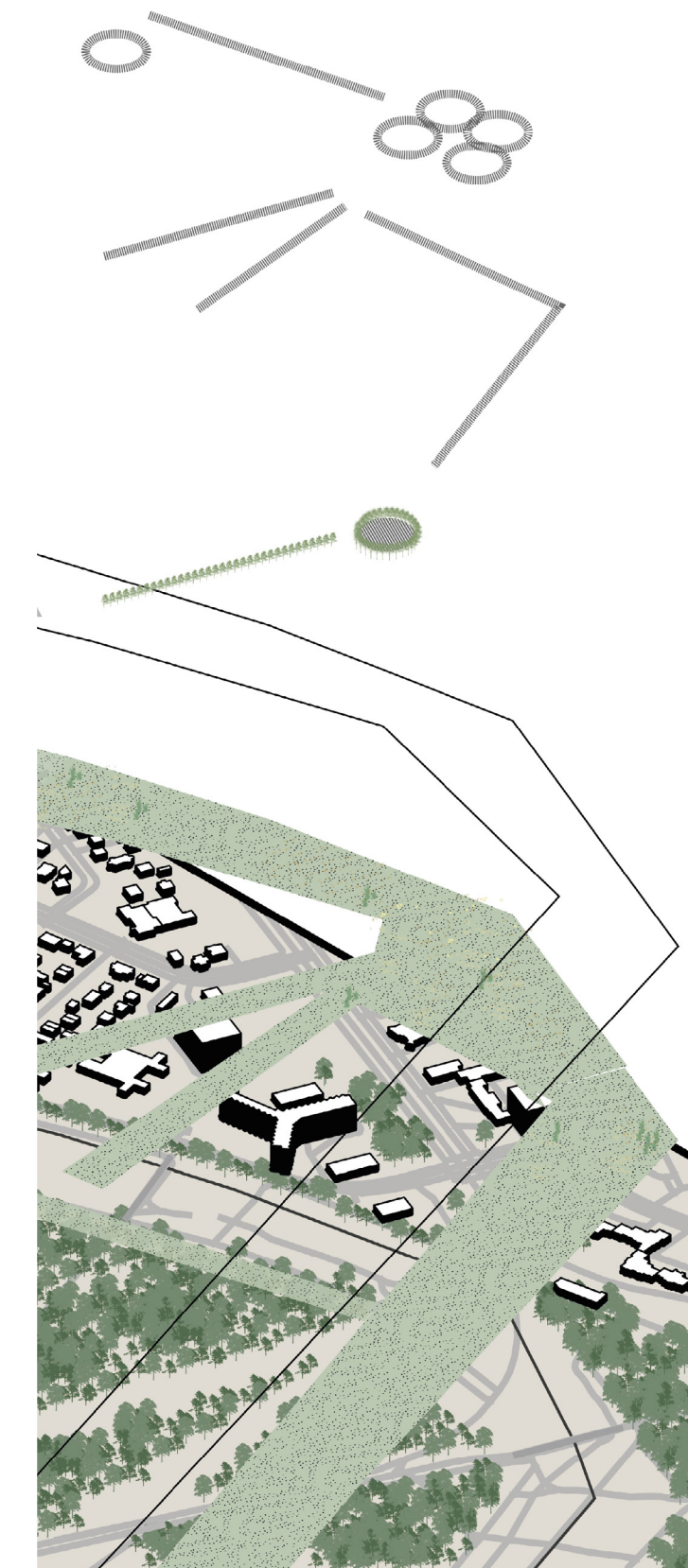
Design



place of event



② Excavating the Death Strip



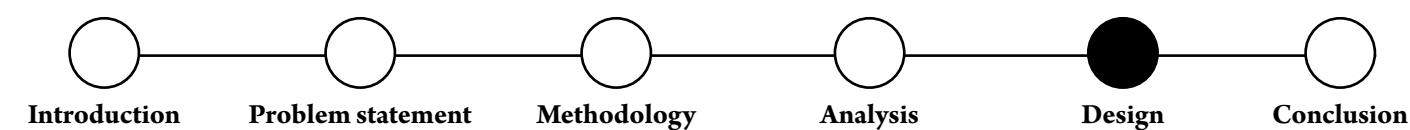
2.2 Creating landscape design elements out of the sketch shapes

- a. Standplace border guards: half open stone paving in same shape as drawn on crime scene sketch
- b. Movement of border guards: half open stone paving following the path as drawn on crime scene sketch
- d. Movement of victim: Line of silver birch trees with half open paving on both sides following the path as drawn on crime scene sketch
- e. Location of the crime: formation of silver birch trees in same shape as drawn on crime scene sketch, with half open paving inside
- f. location of former bordel walls: paving in width of the former wall to create edges

2.1 Excavate the former border strip landscape, making the former border strip visible in the landscape

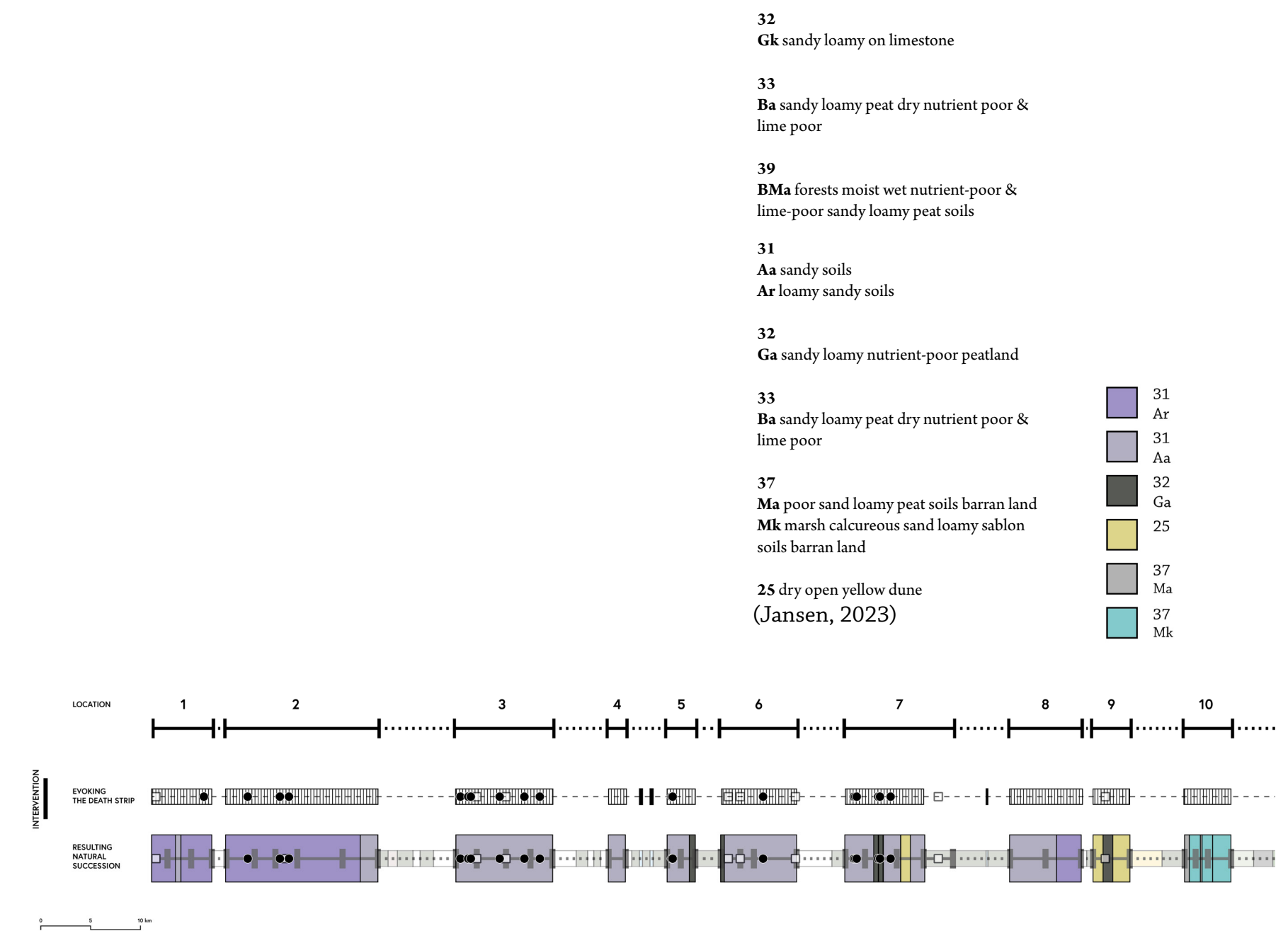
Let pioneer succession vegetation take over the non-designed excavated border landscape, the designed elements remain open spaces through the paving

Design

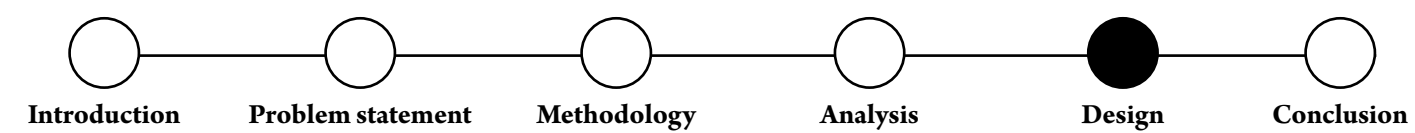


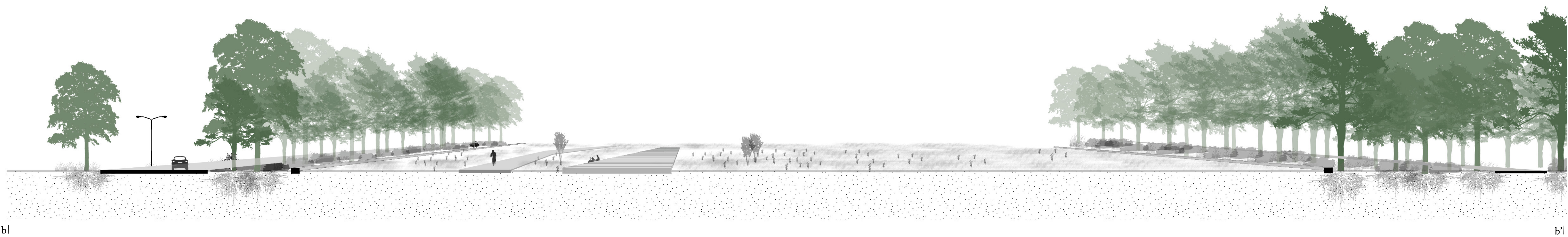
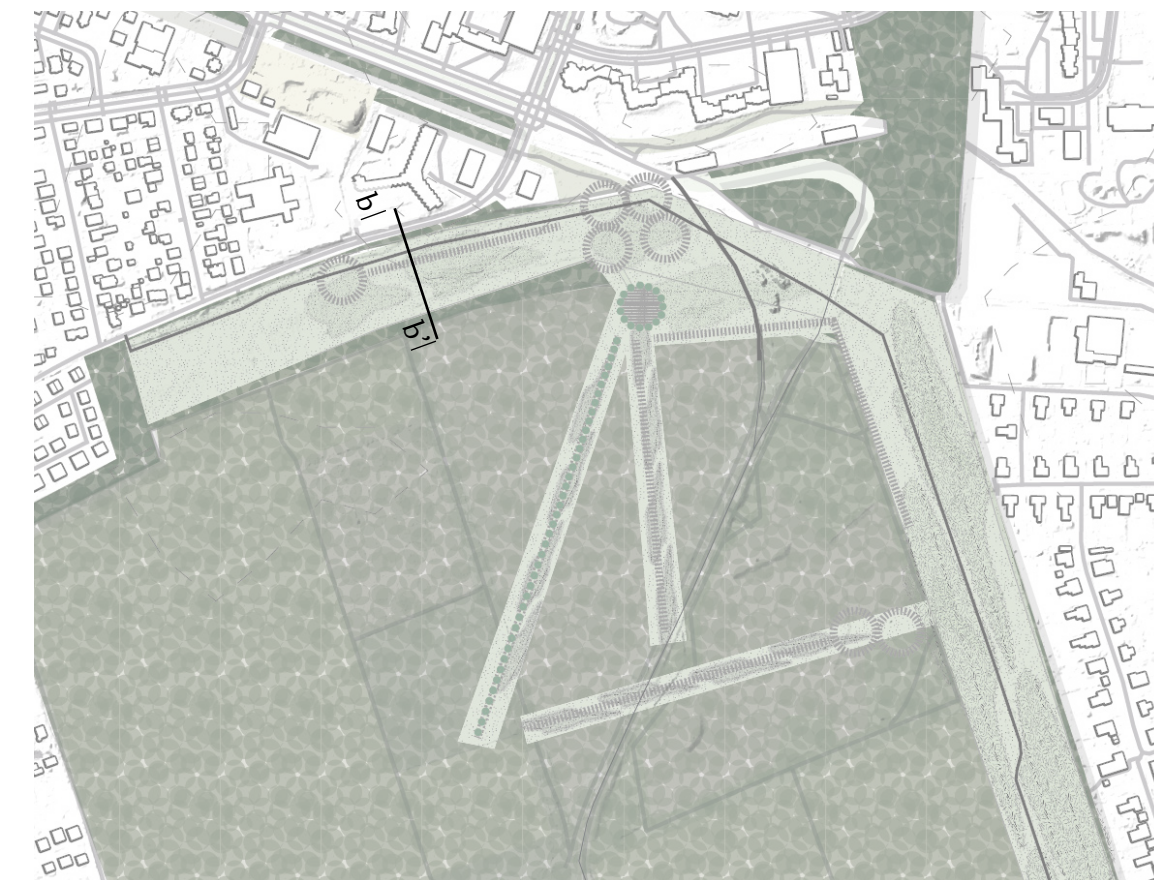
place of event

process through time



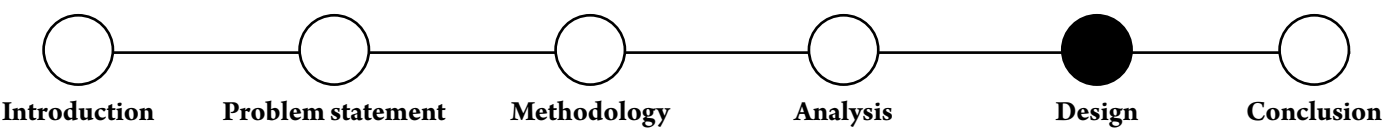
Design

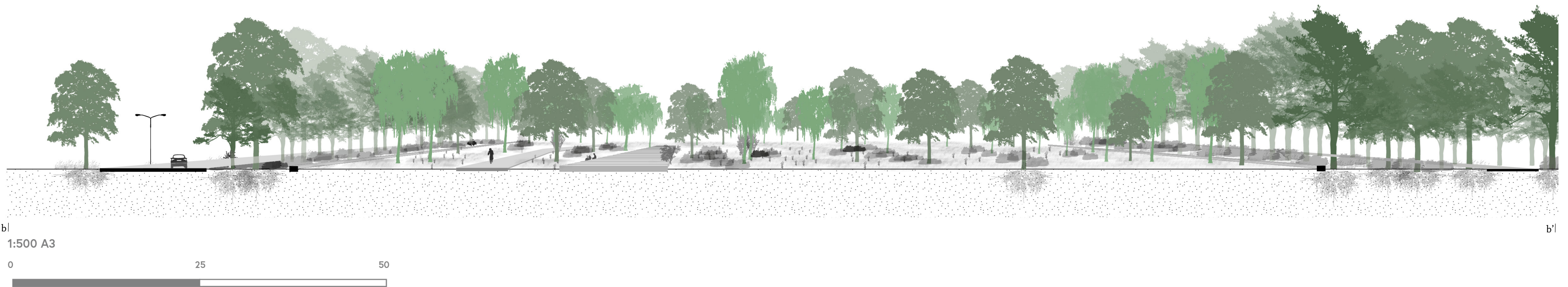
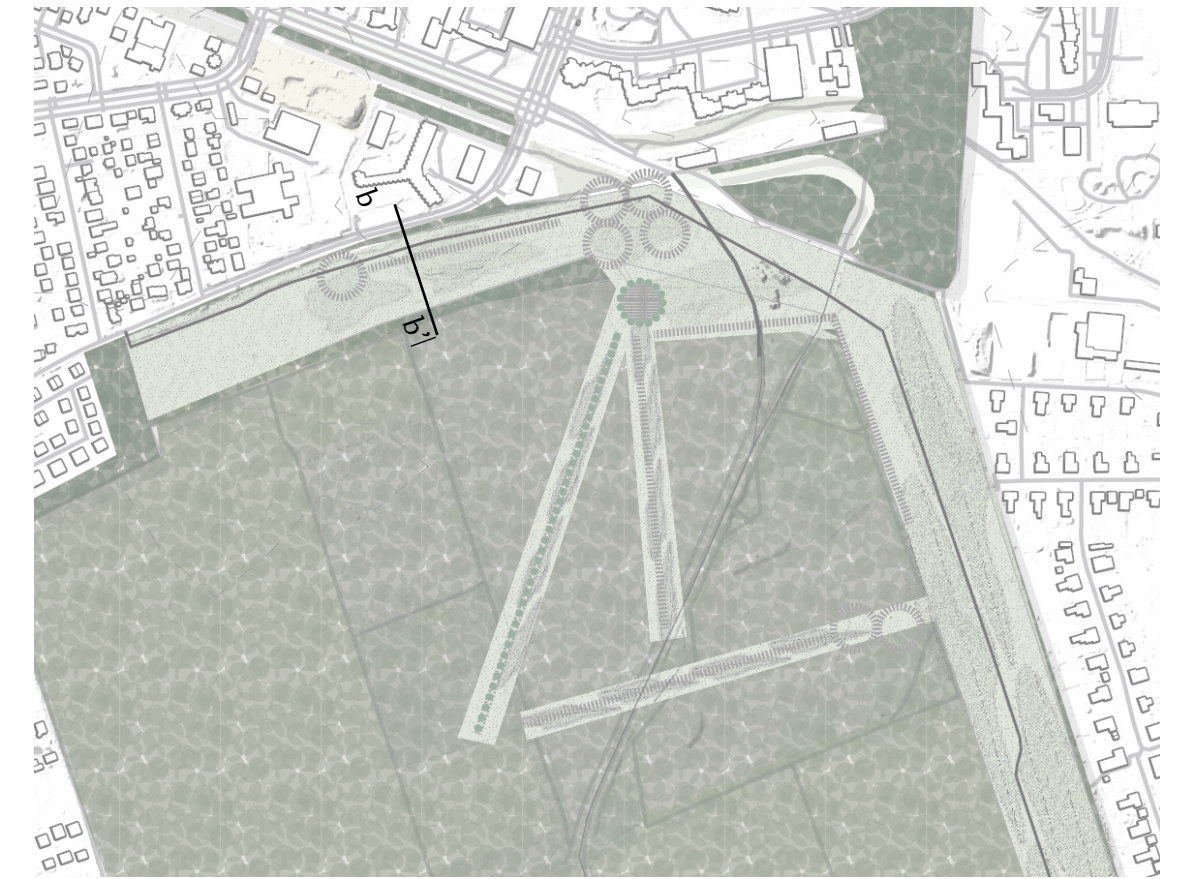




b|
1:500 A3
0 25 50

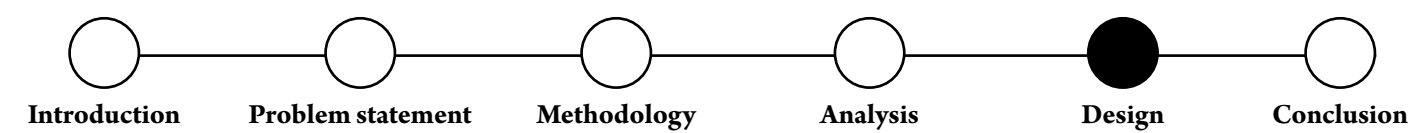
Design
section bb'

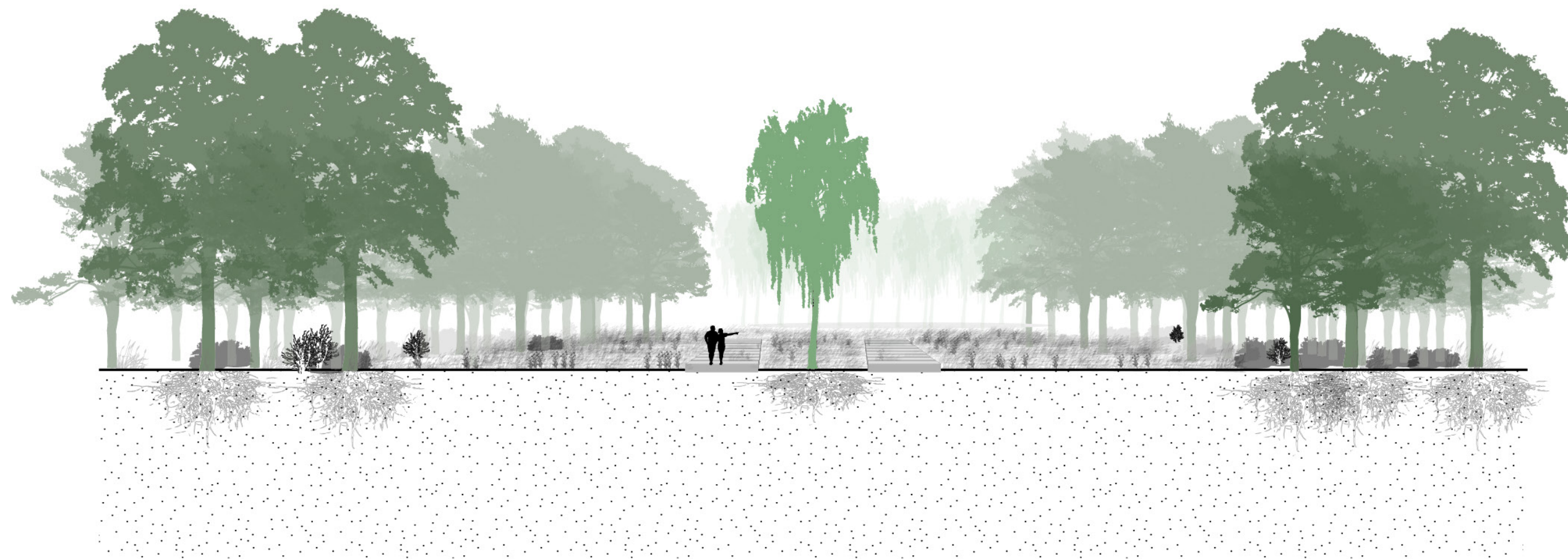
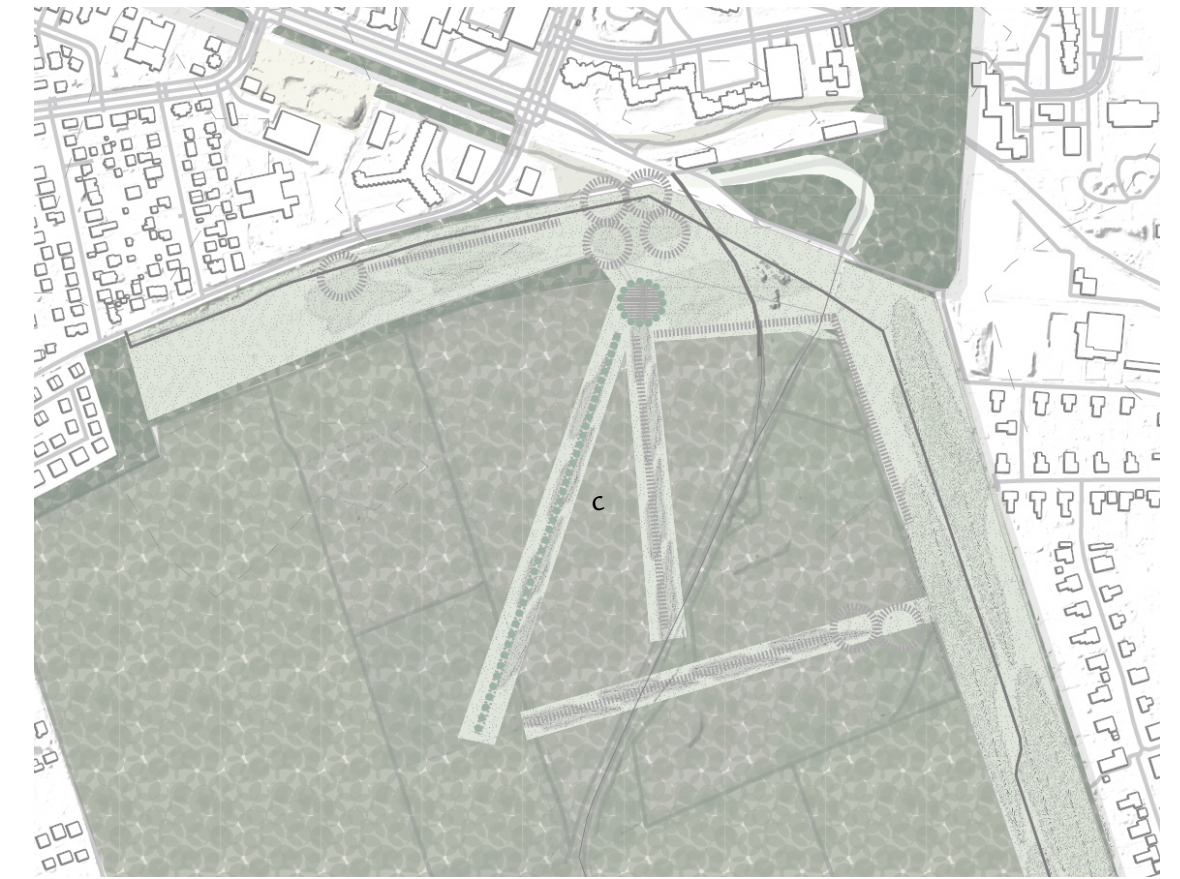




Design

section bb'





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0

25

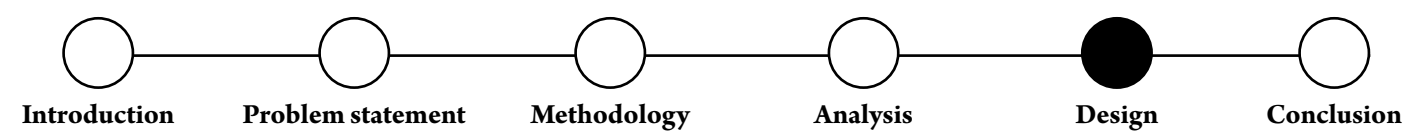
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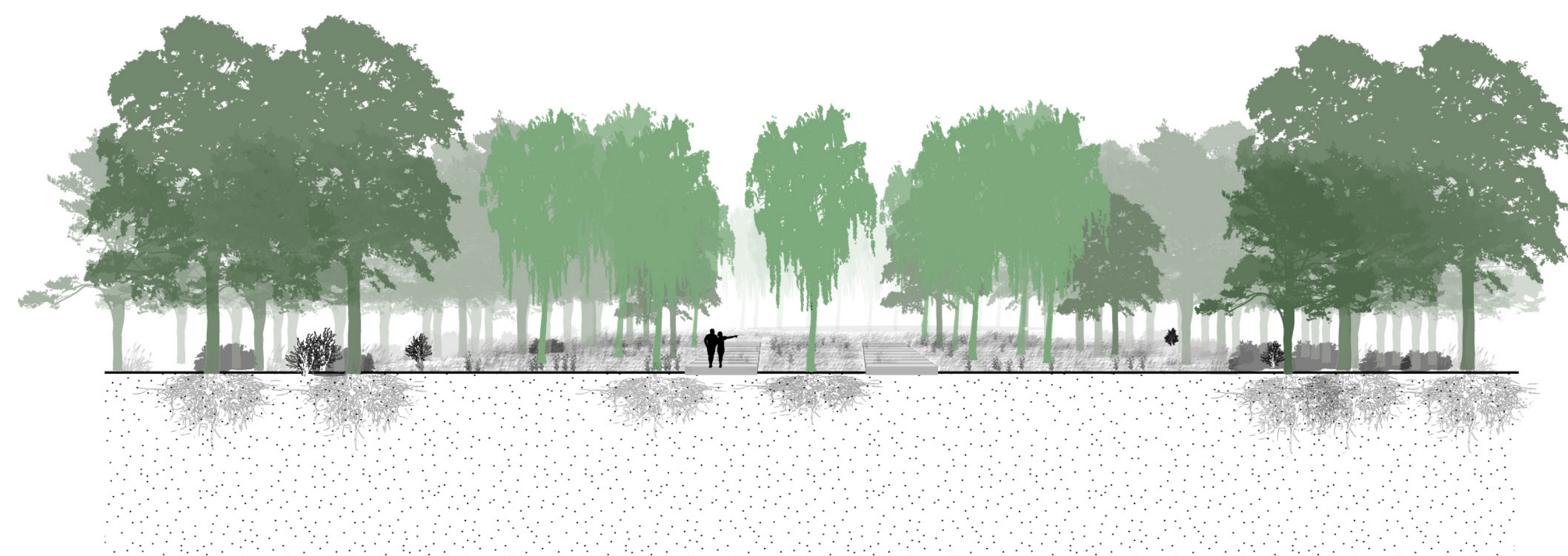
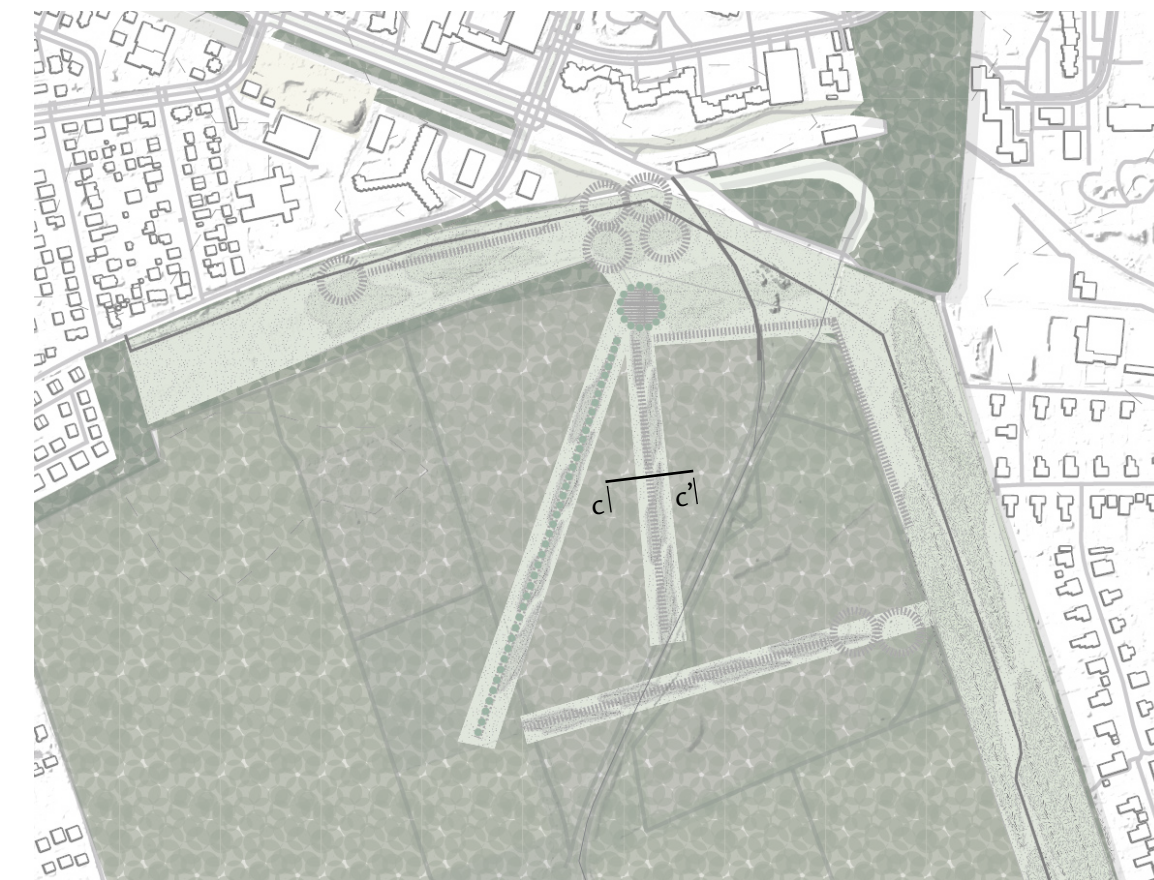
c|

c'|

Design

section cc'





1:500 A3

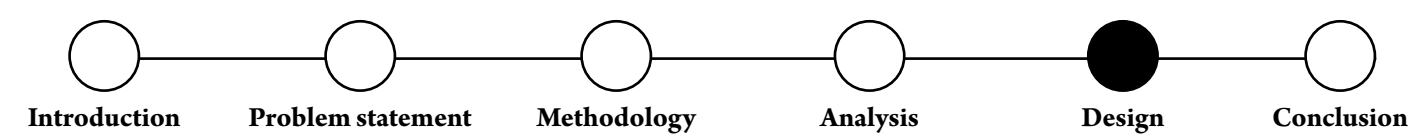


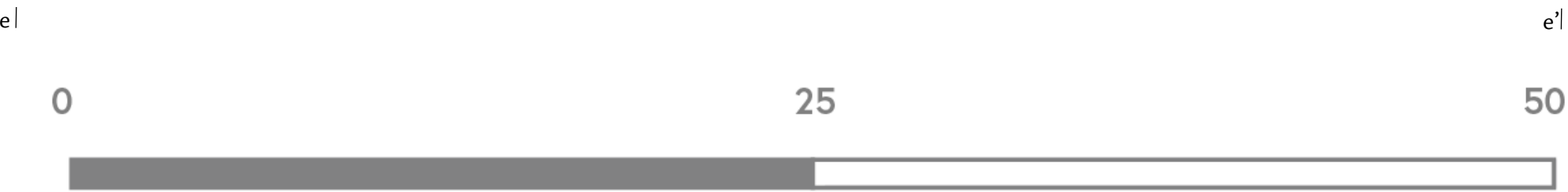
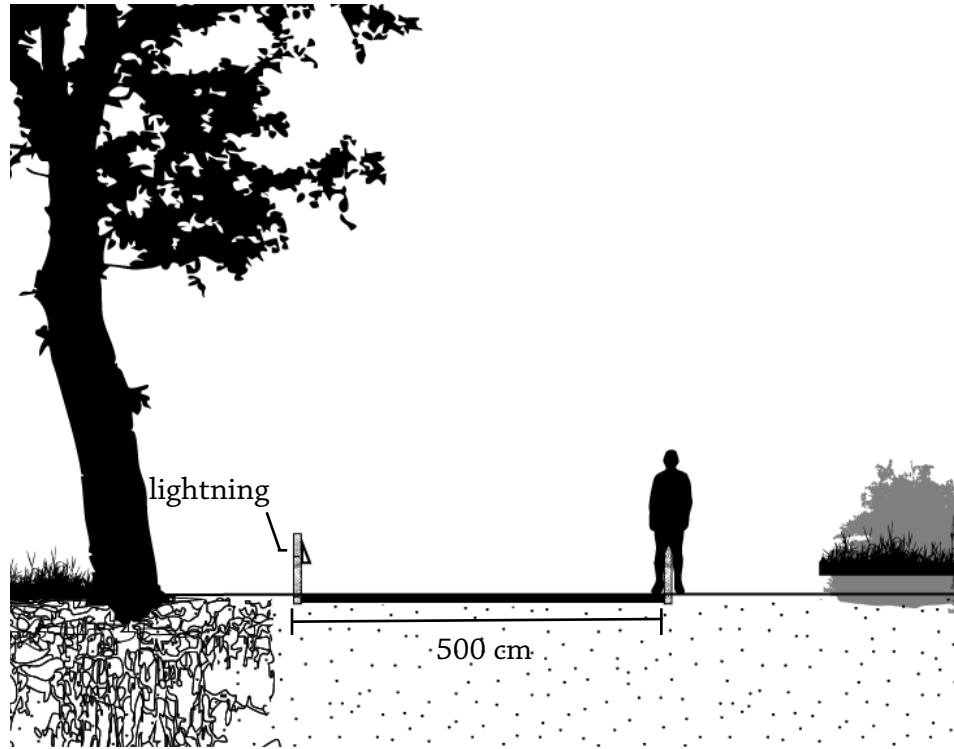
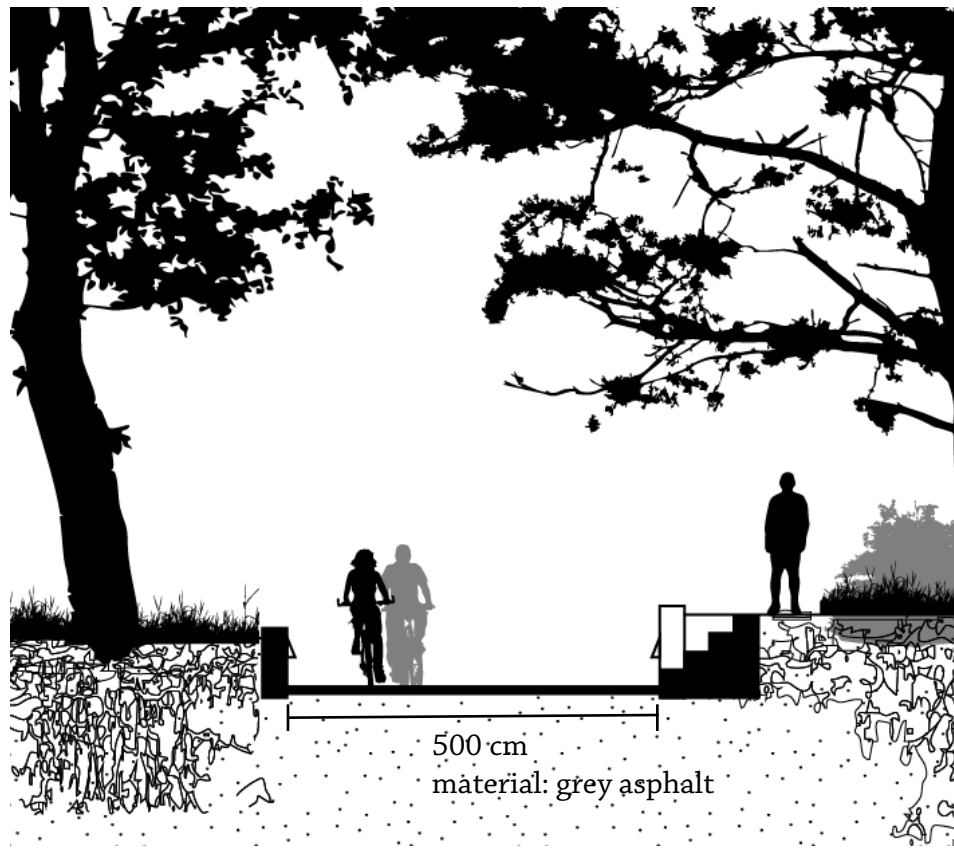
c|

c'|

Design

section cc'

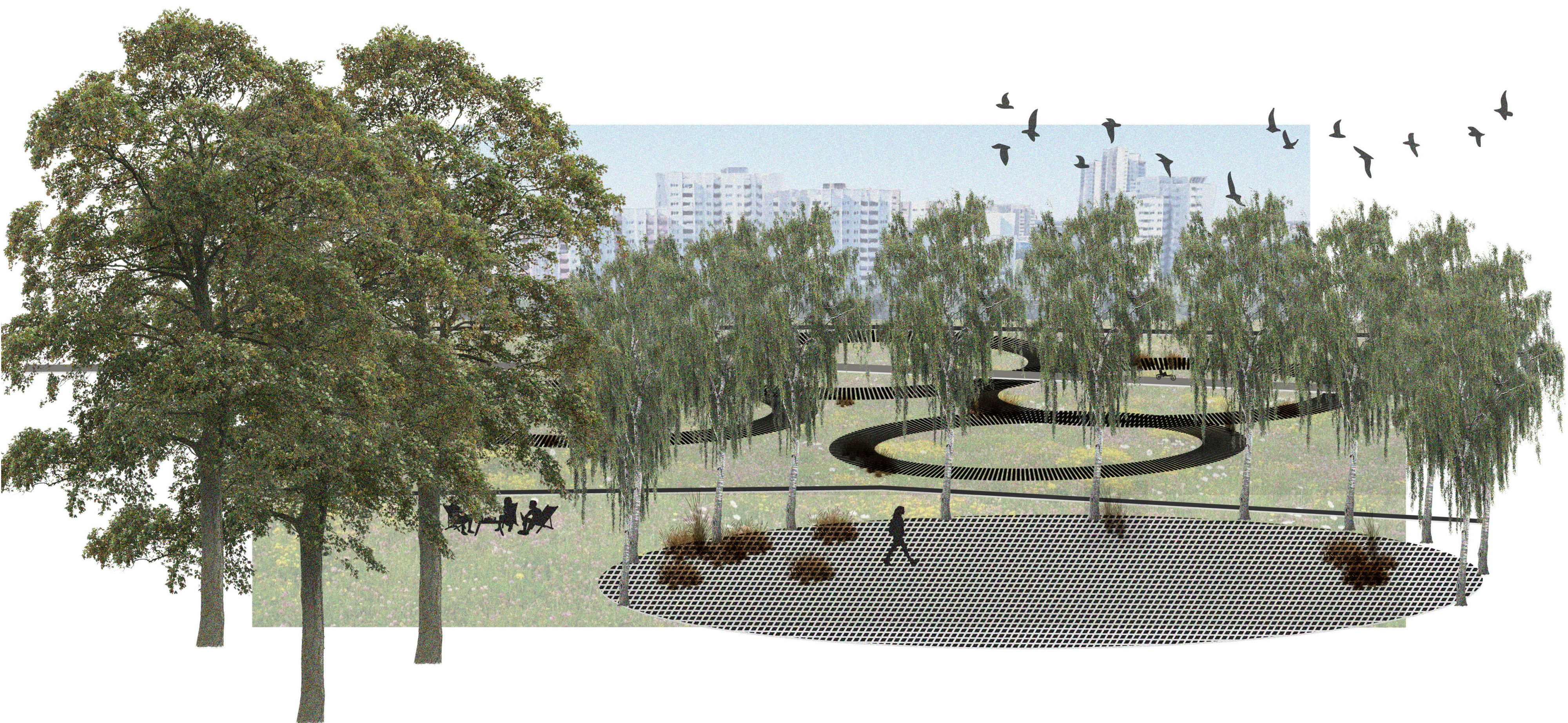




Design

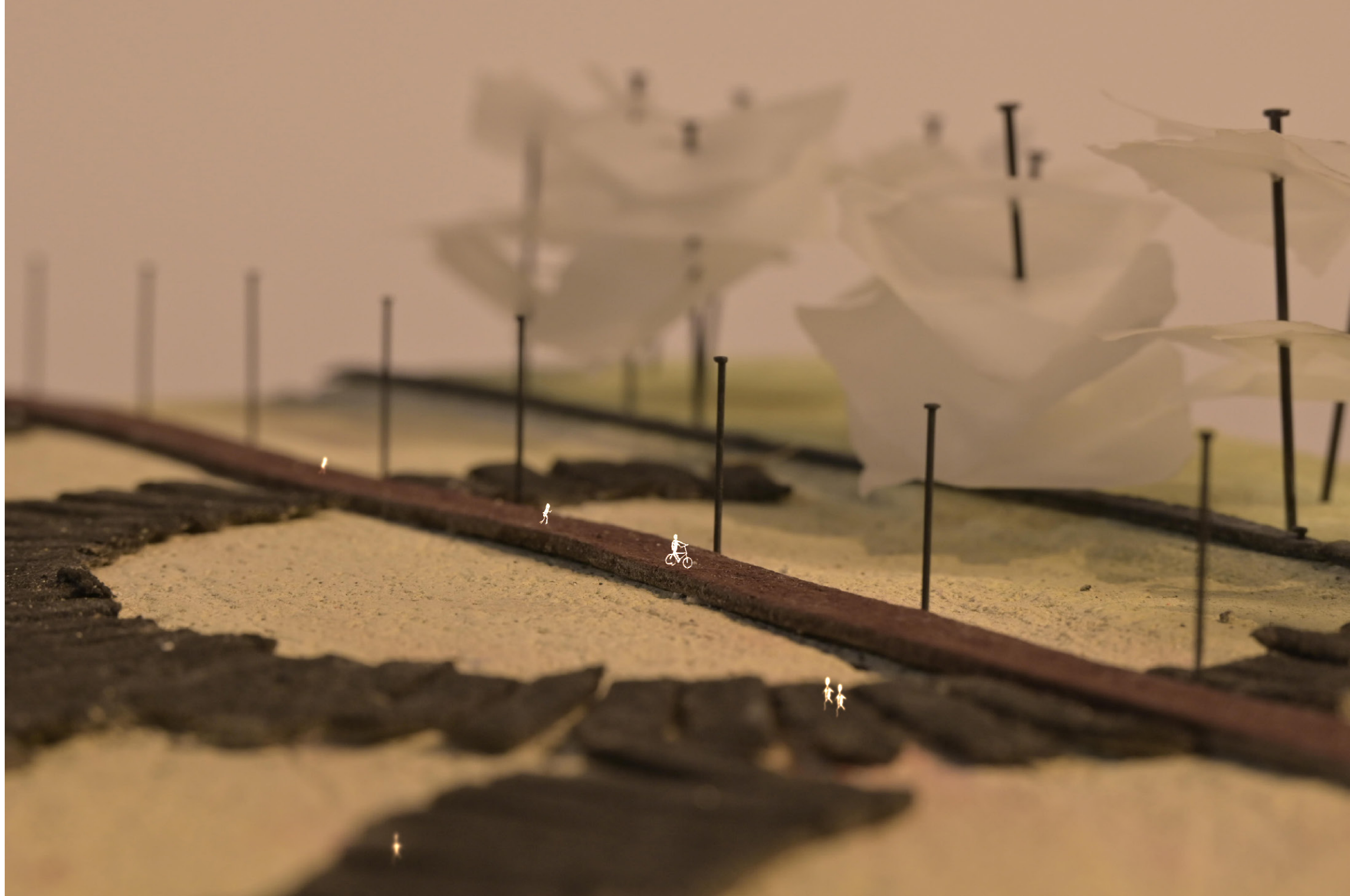
section dd'





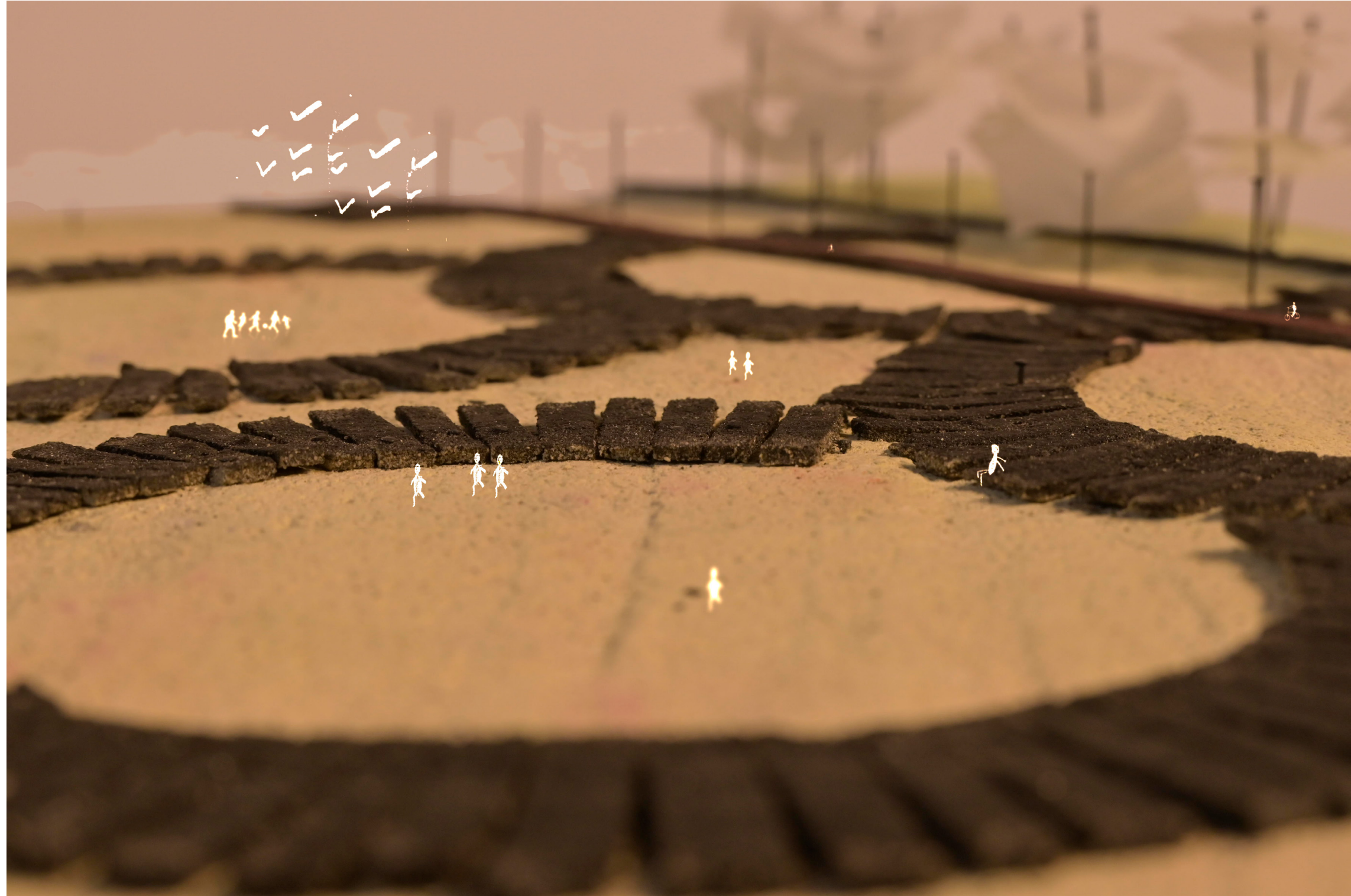
Design



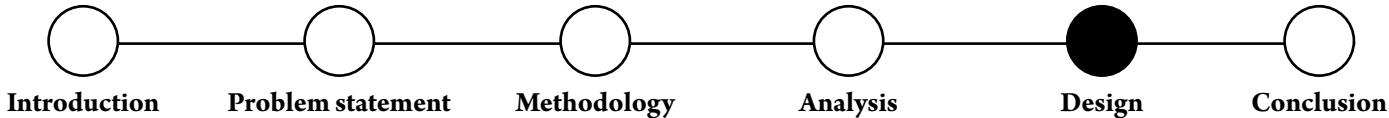


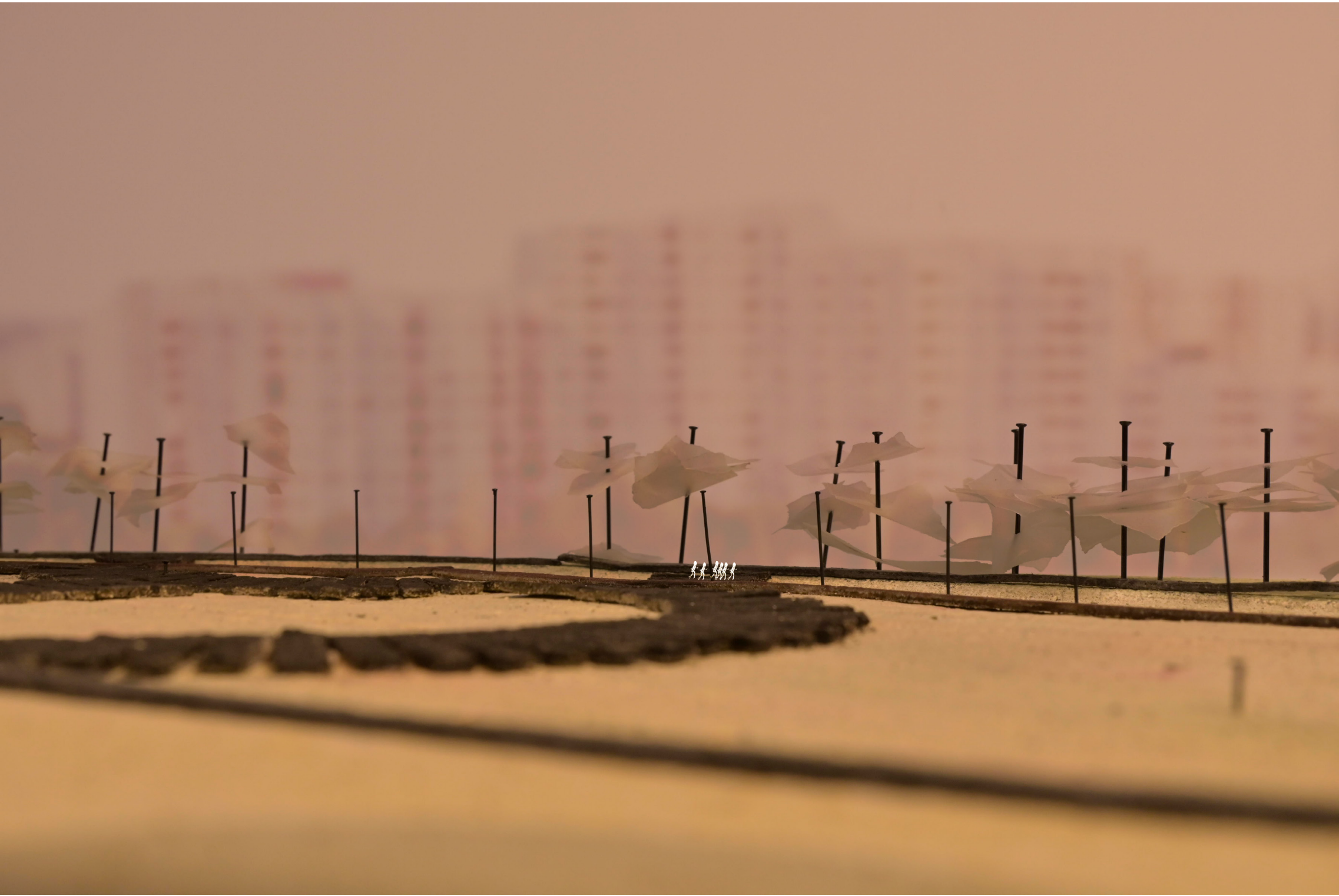
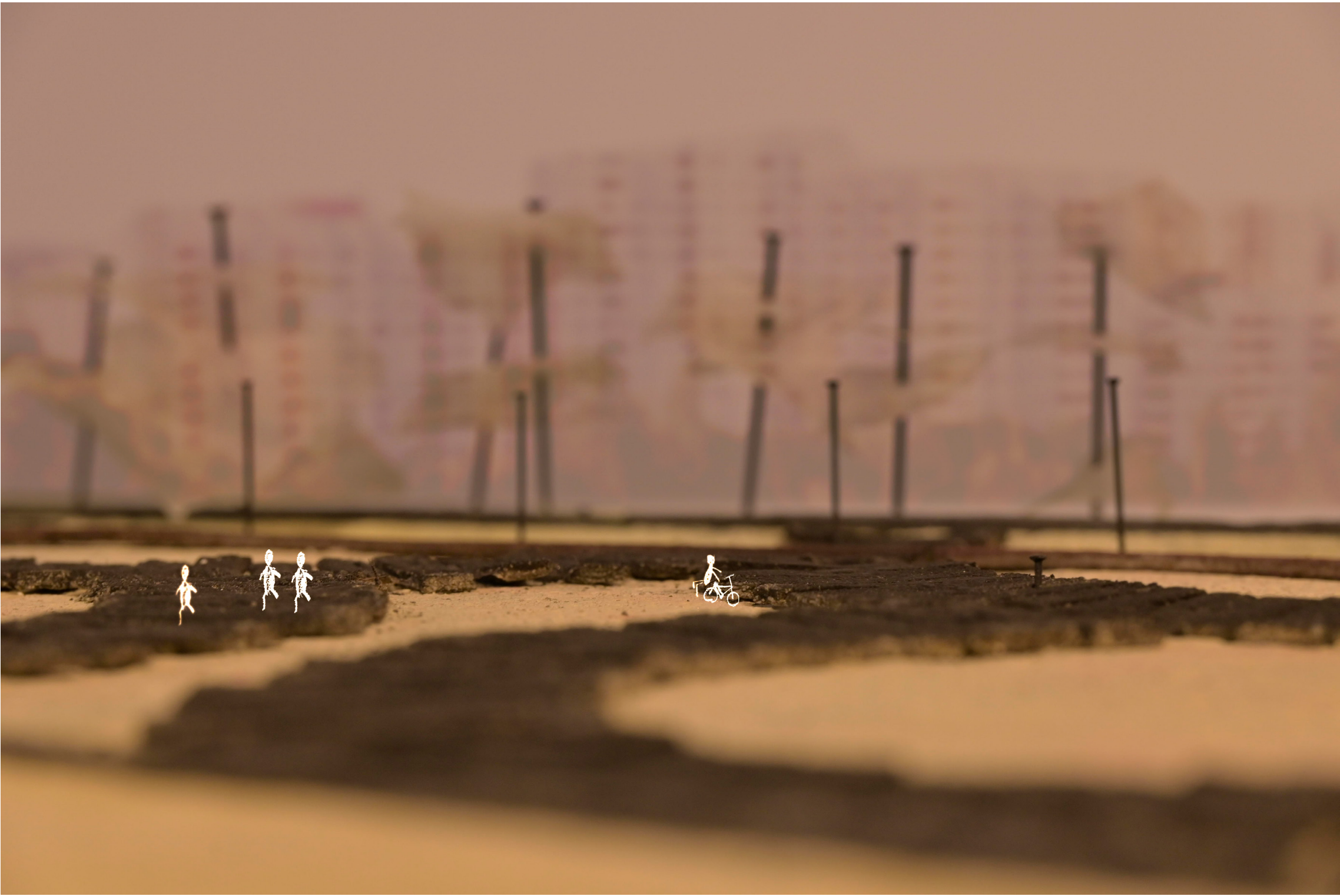
Design





Design





Design





Design



location 9



Design



2000



(Google, n.d.)

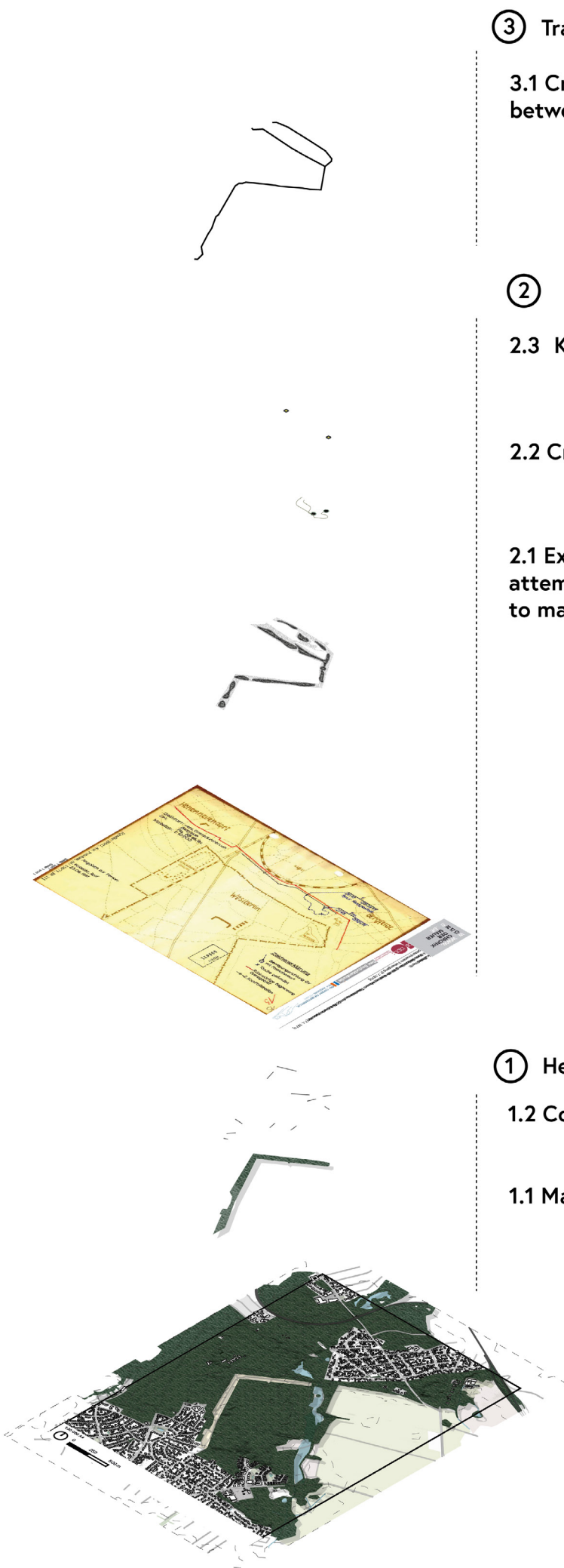
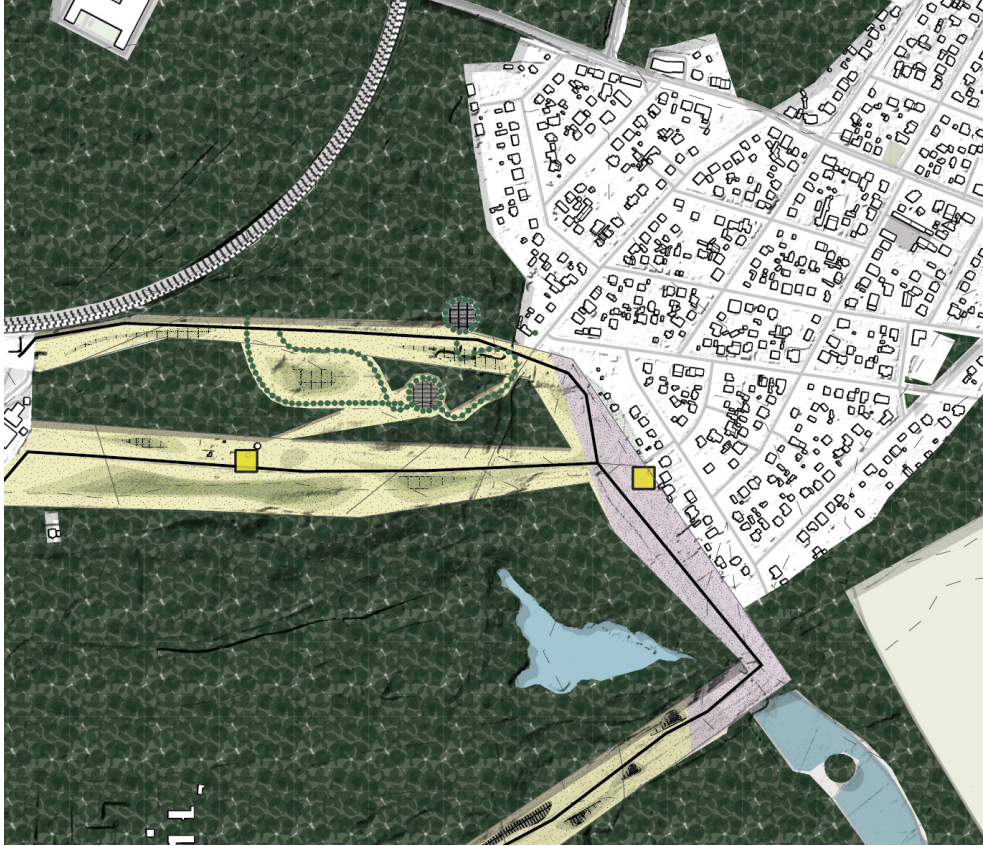
2024



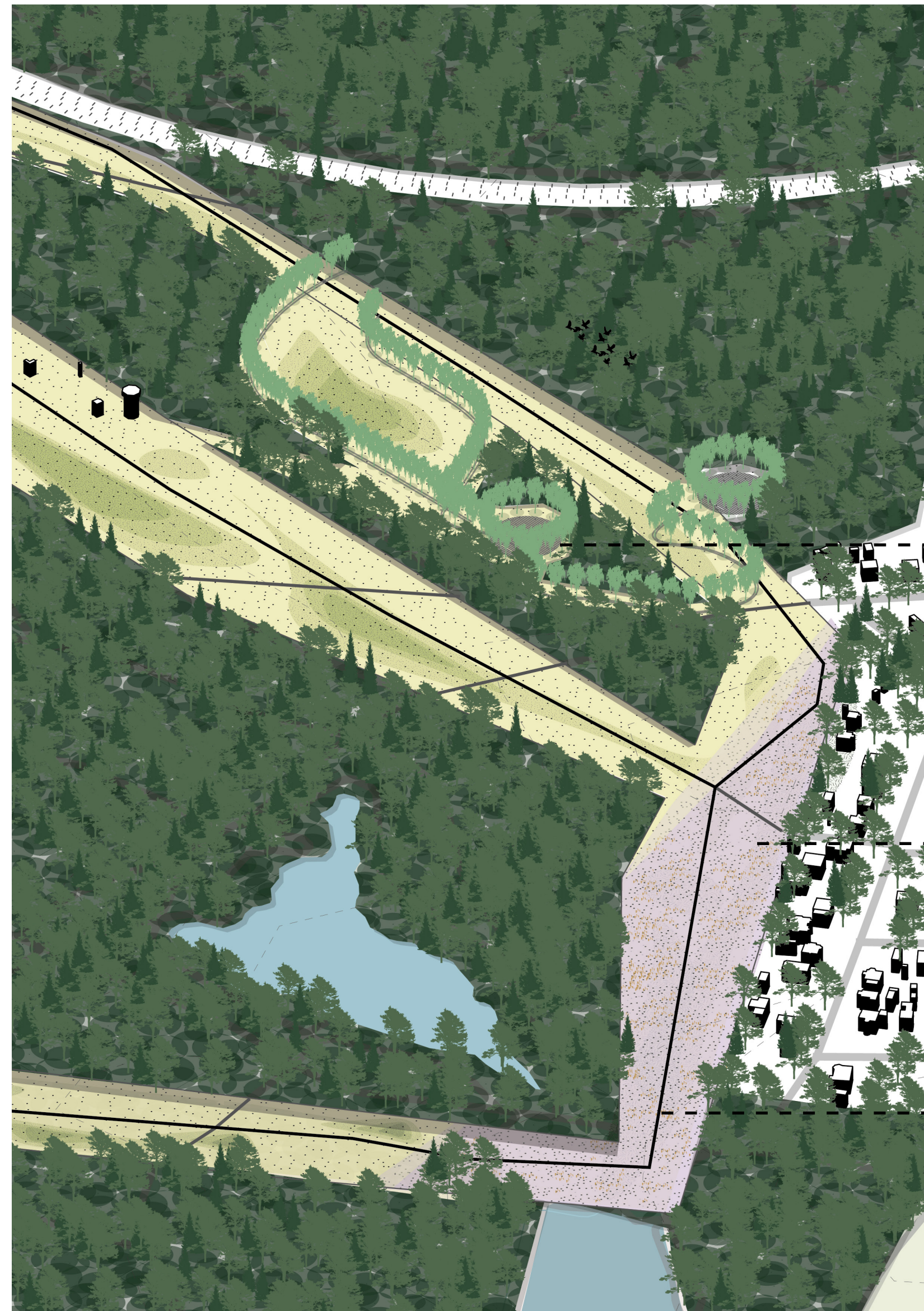
(Google, n.d.)

Design





- ③ Tracing the border
 - 3.1 Creating a biking path in the border strip for the connection in between symbolising the ever-present border that can be bridged
- ② Evoking the Death Strip
 - 2.3 Keep existing remains of the former border strip intact
 - 2.2 Creating landscape design elements out of the sketch shapes
 - 2.1 Excavate the former border strip landscape at location of escape attempts aligned with projected crime scene sketches on the map, to make the former border strip visible in the landscape
- ① Healing the scar
 - 1.2 Connecting the still disrupted infrastructure networks
 - 1.1 Making the former border traces blend into the existing landscape
 - b. Adapt the land use of the former border strip to match the land use of the surrounding area



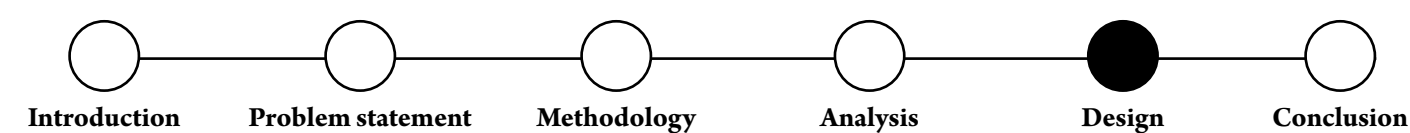
place of event

evoked death strip by
clearing forest

resulting in two new landscape
vegetation types

biking path

Design

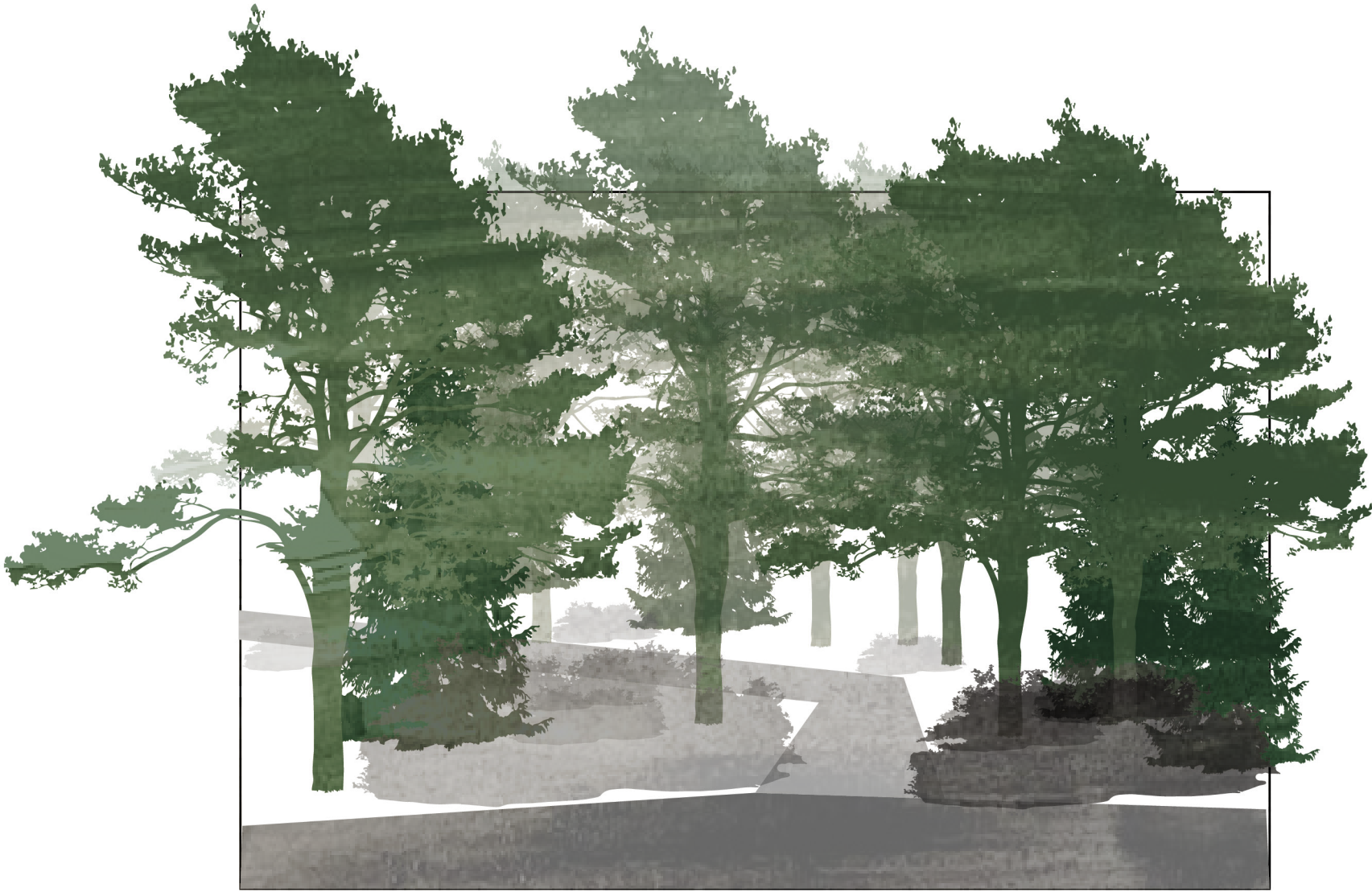




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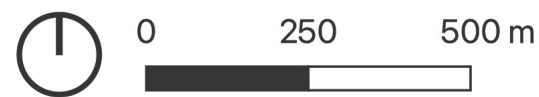


Design

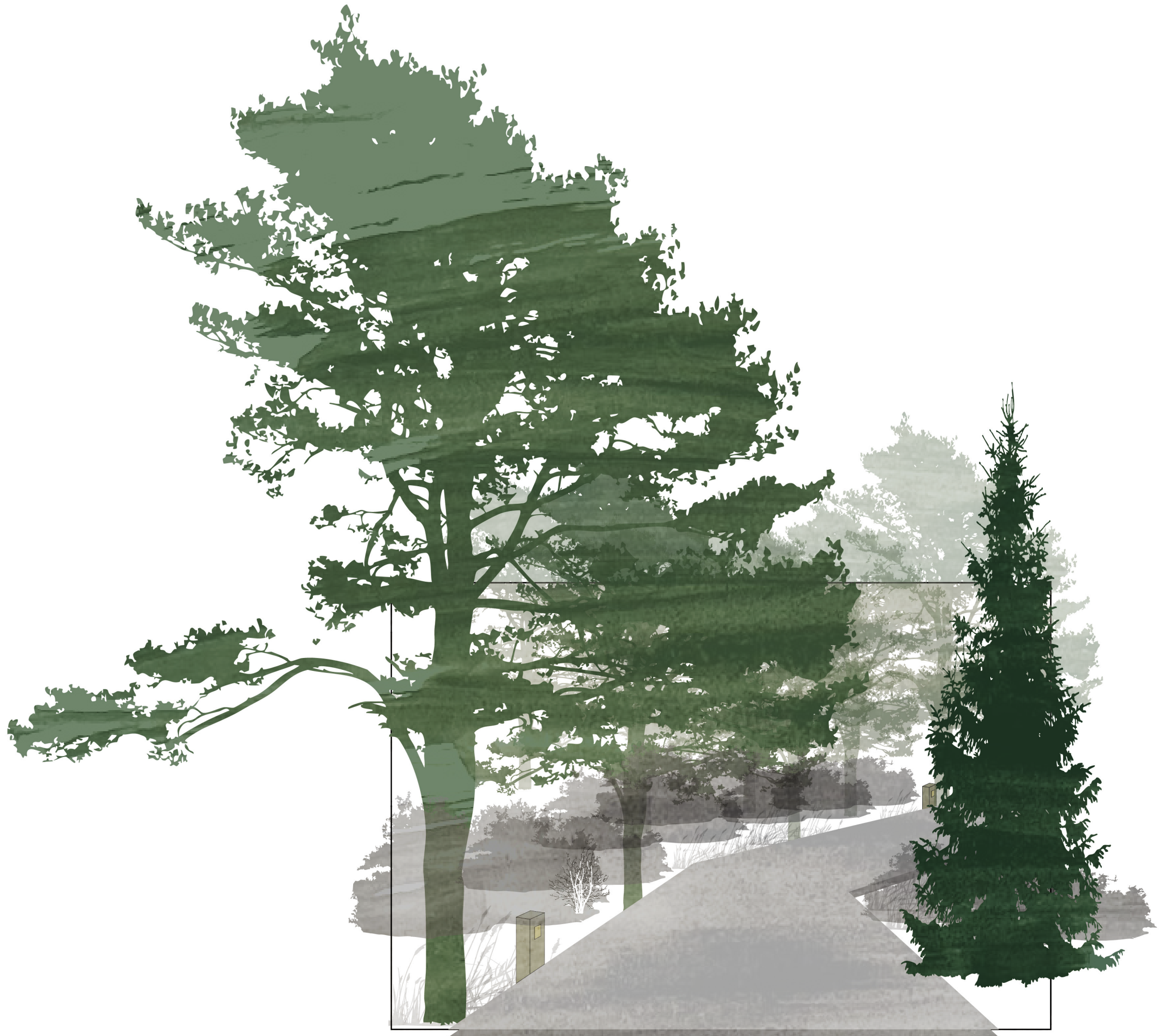
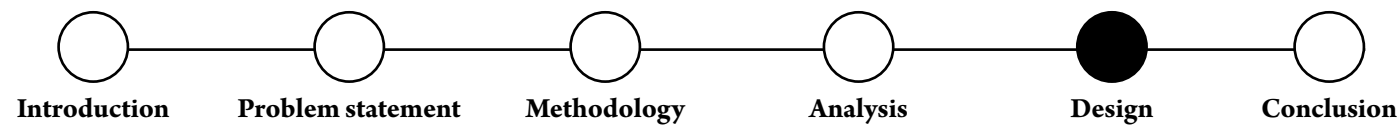




1:20 000 A4



Design

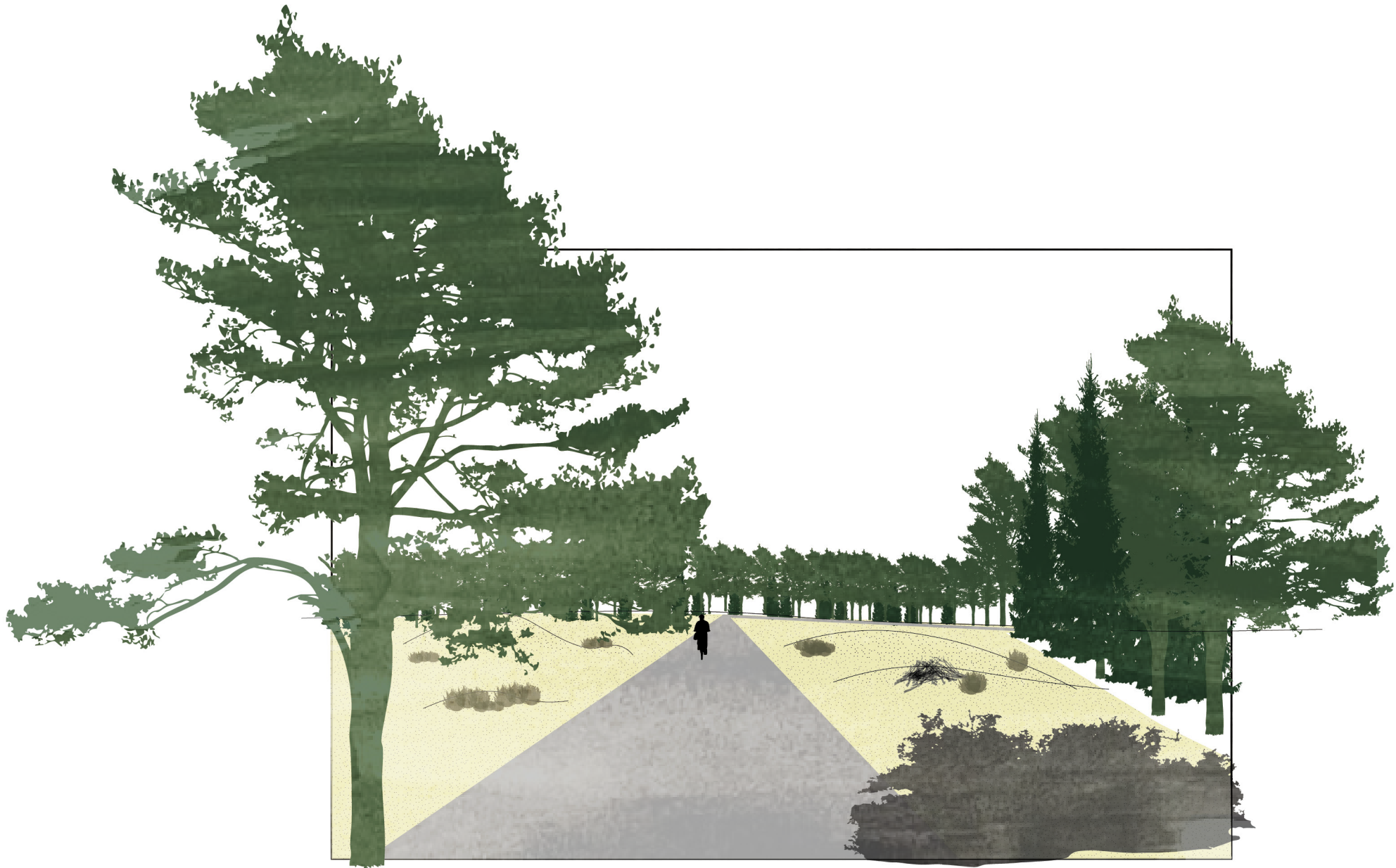


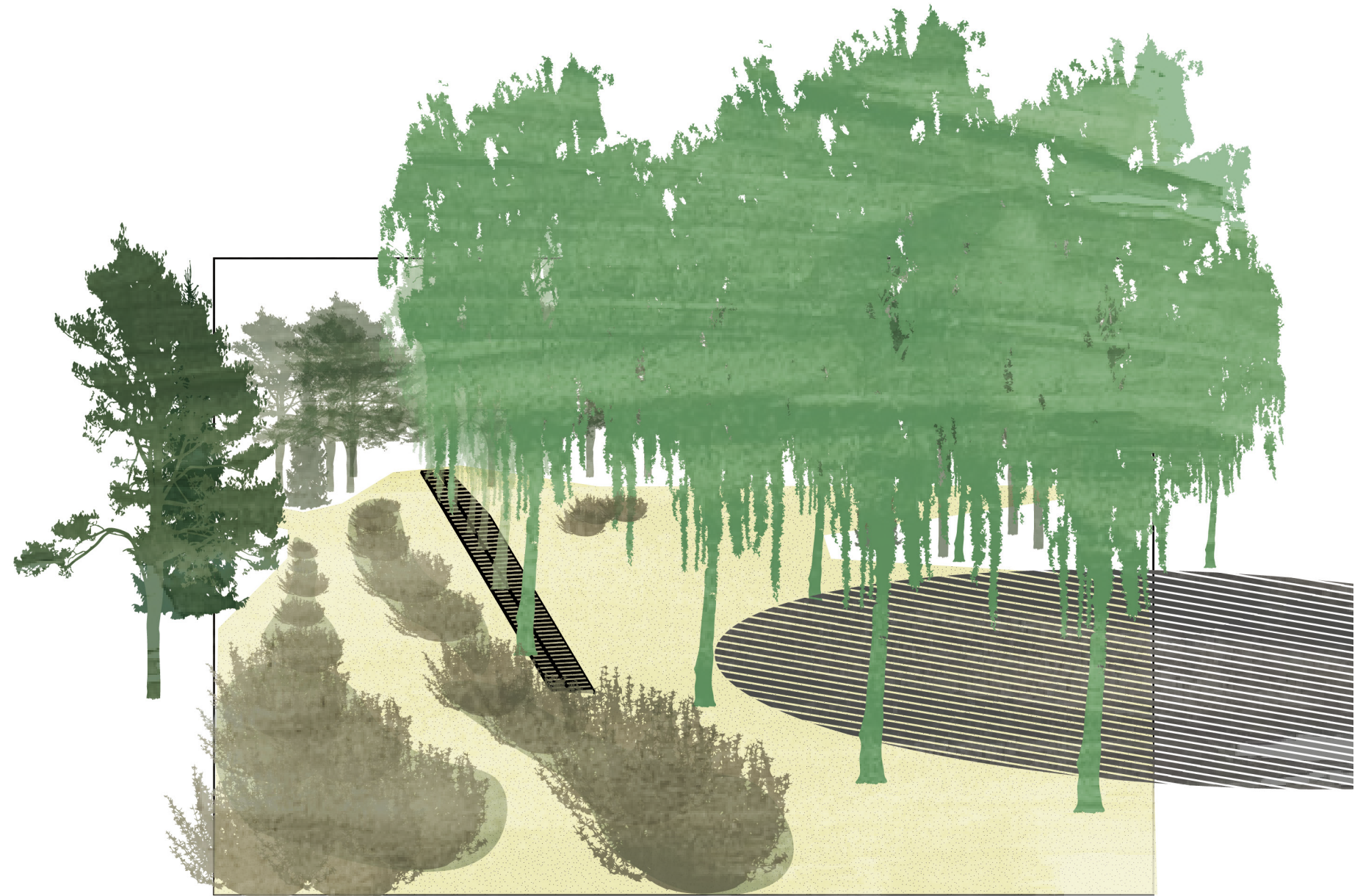


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Design





Design

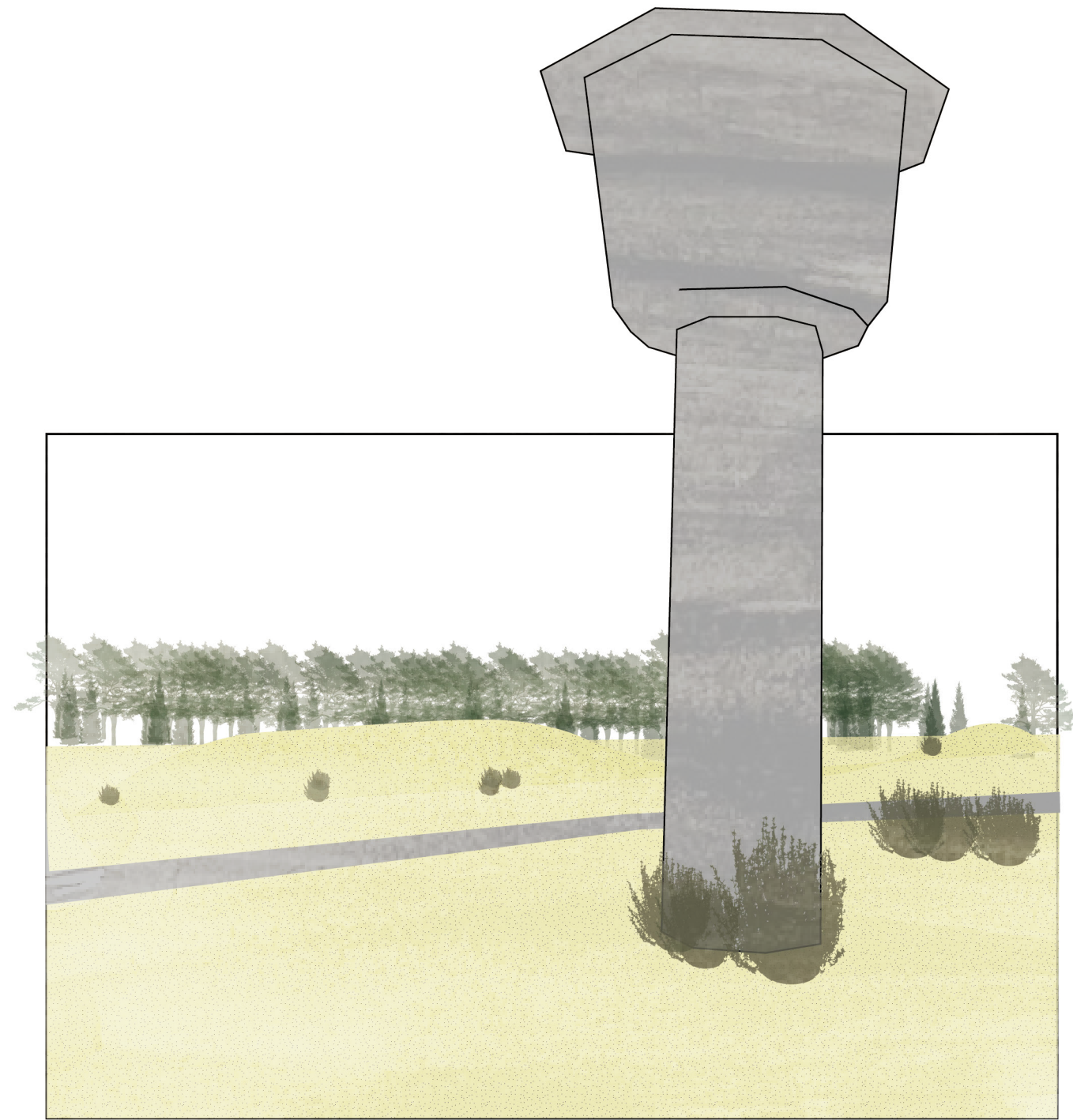
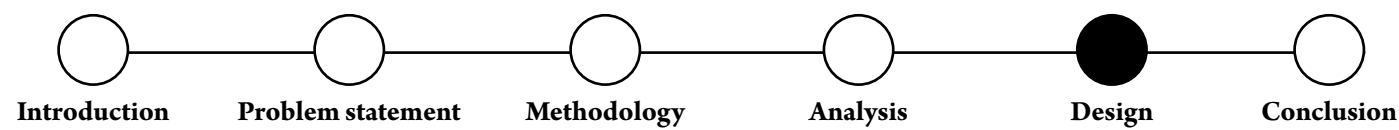




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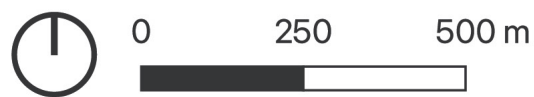


Design

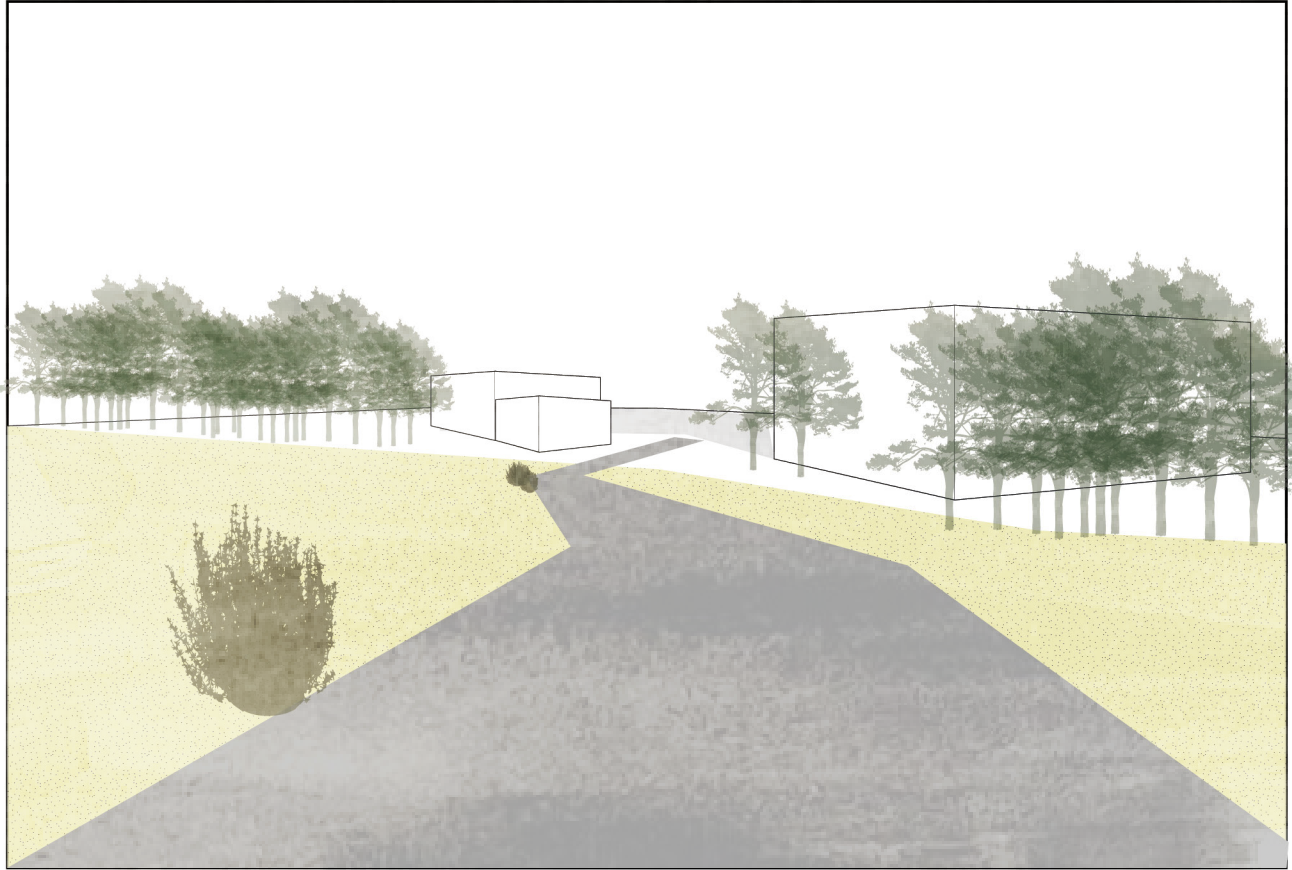


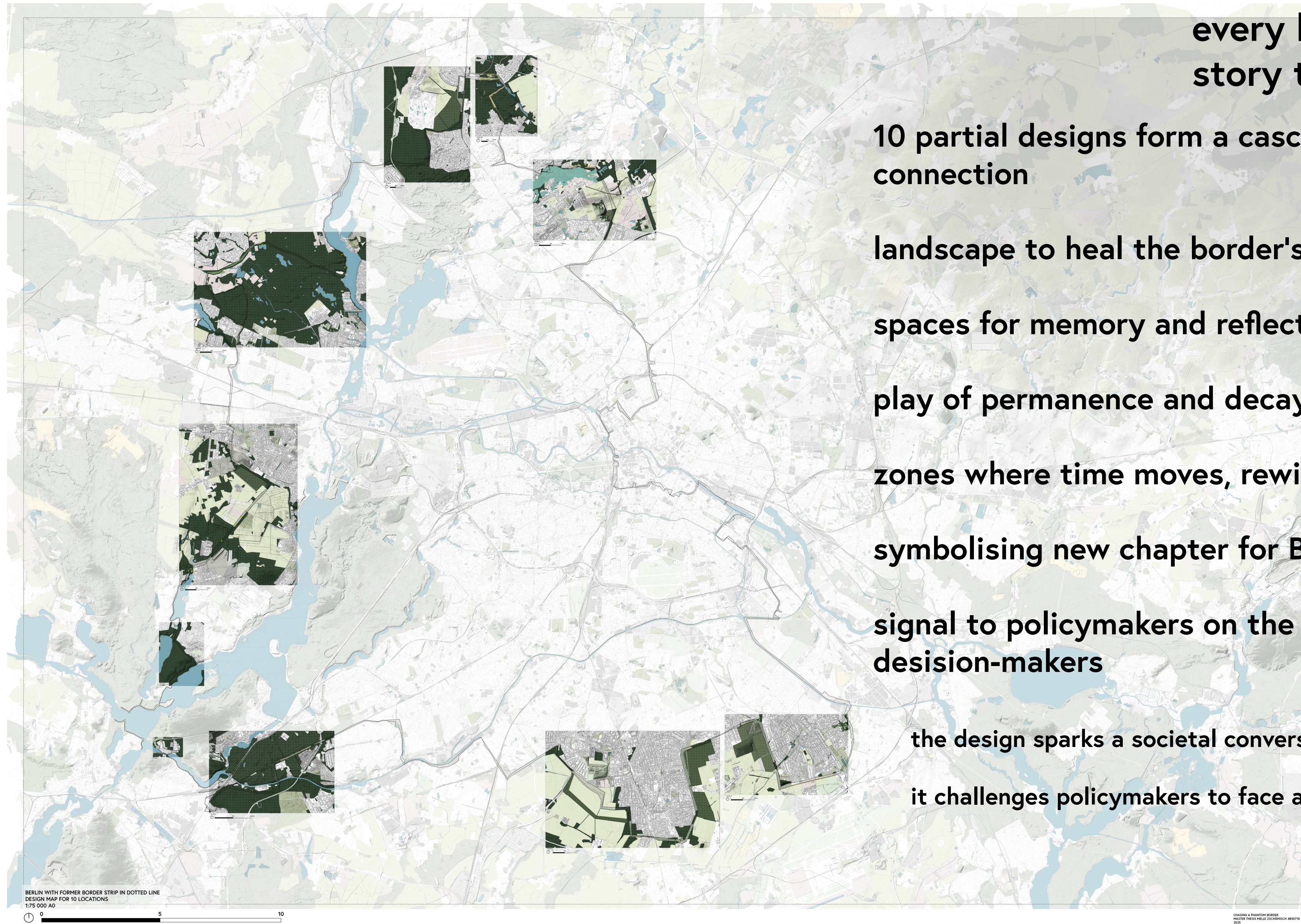


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Design





every location has its own story to tell

10 partial designs form a casco for Berlin, from separation to connection

landscape to heal the border's wound, across generations

spaces for memory and reflection keep the past alive

play of permanence and decay mirrors memory and history

zones where time moves, rewinds, or stands still

symbolising new chapter for Berlin, Germany, and Europe

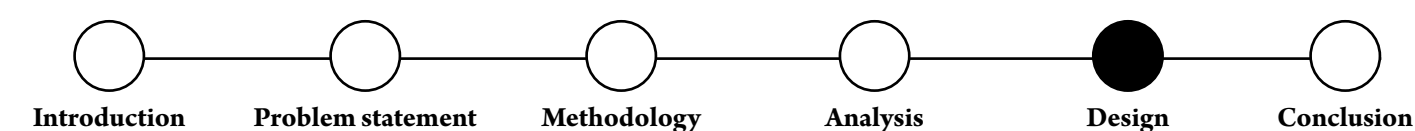
signal to policymakers on the edges of the capital with political decision-makers

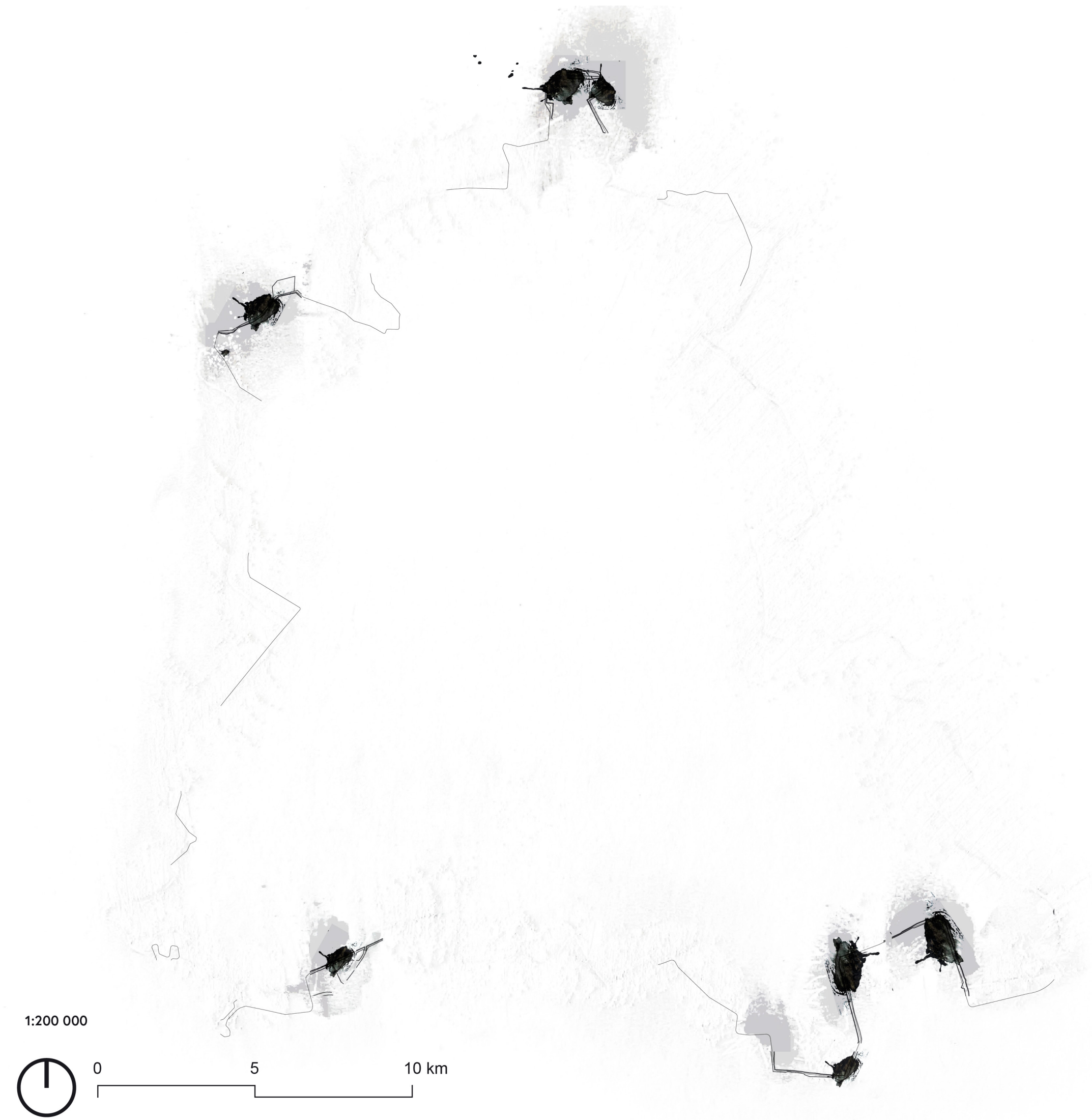
the design sparks a societal conversation about borders and collective memory

it challenges policymakers to face a broader, socio-demographic issue

Design

Conclusion



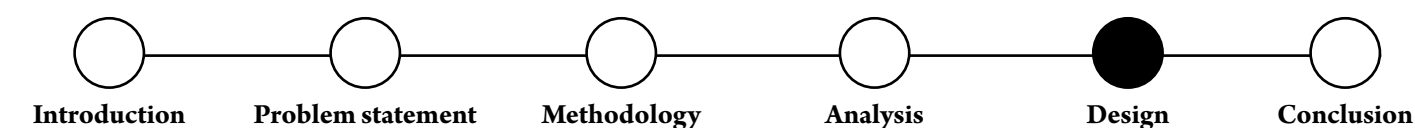


**10 locations have been identified where urban development has not yet blurred the former border
offering space to confront both the conceived and lived border, present and past**

in these places, the perceived border has been intentionally softened to enable future-oriented urban growth, while keeping space for awareness.

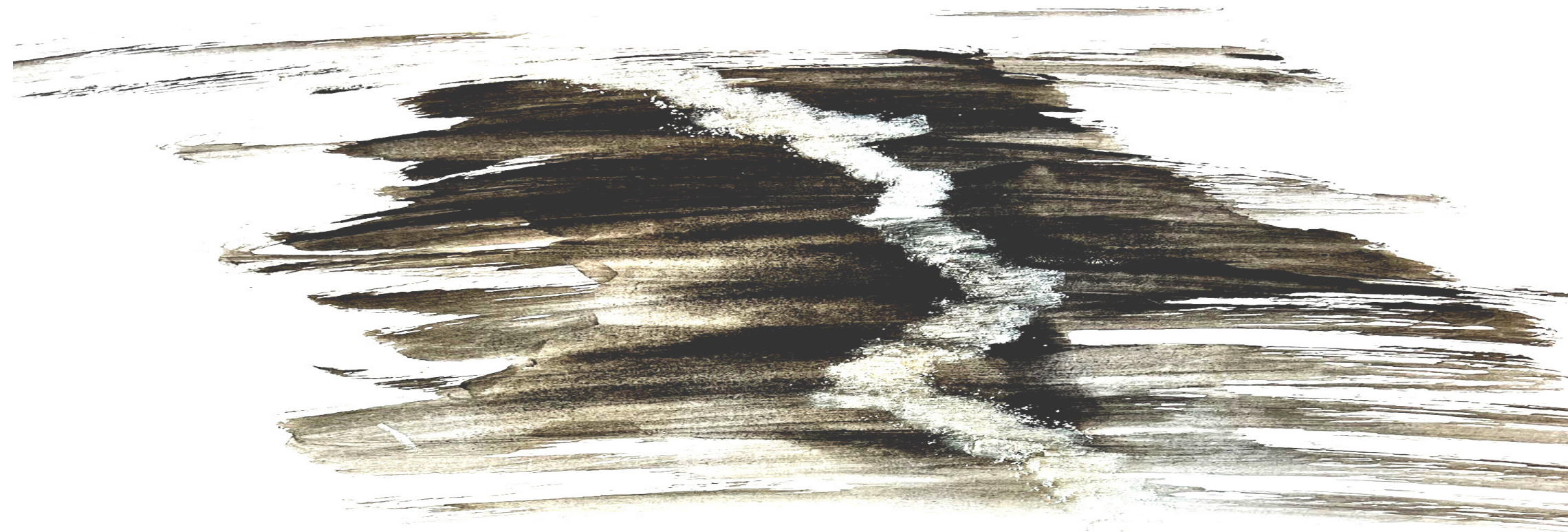
6 additional sites are designated as new monuments, not physical objects as monuments like in the city centre, but landscape-based memorials to personal and emotional trauma, honouring lived space instead of built form

Design
Conclusion



Research Question

How can landscape architecture contribute to the social/cultural re-interpretation, spatial definition and future appearance of a historically contested frontier as the former Berlin Wall?



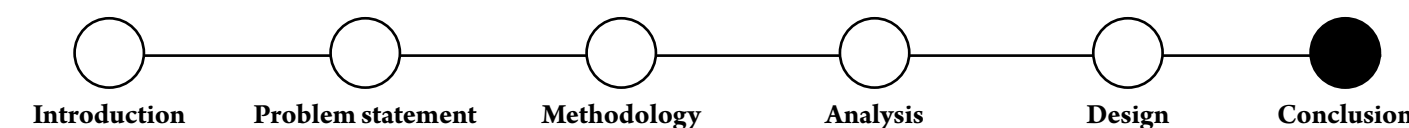
landscape analysis goes beyond the physical, into the mental, into the layer of events

observations from this analysis are translated into physical, landscape-architectonic elements

the landscape architect creates a casco, a framework, and designates spaces for reflection based on story and memory

makes a design to spark a societal conversation about a broader topic

Conclusion

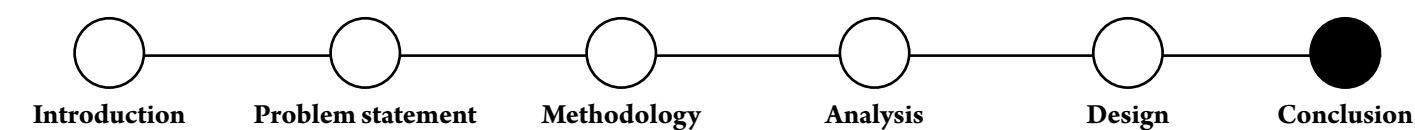


chasing a phantom border

a landscape strategy for a still existing wall



Conclusion





(Gerhard Richter | Grünes Feld (Green Field) (1969) | MutualArt, 2023)

“If the abstract paintings show my reality, then the landscapes and still-lives show my yearning.”

— Gerhard Richter

