USE the existing space

Urban Architecture



A possibility by Kaan Smits

USE the existing space

Urban Architecture

Urban Architecture studies medium-size urban sites that are inaccessible for the regular tools of urbanism, and where expectations of urban design can only be fulfilled by architecture. We do not focus on the blanks to be filled in within an urban plan, but on sites where the urban plan falls short. We acknowledge that designing a building in these circumstances means affecting its surrounding environment. Building thus means simultaneously articulating public, private and collective realms, in full awareness of how the structure to be designed relates to existing structures, how it intervenes in the city's different scales, how it establishes material kinship, and how it acquires social relevance. For this, we advocate an architecture that anticipates uses and fosters experience. Its novelty is fed by memory. Its multivalence embraces character, its economy avoids austerity, its specificity refuses arbitrariness.

Therefore, sites require wide-ranging interpretation and assessment. Urban Architecture is a cultural practice of collecting, composing and re-using. Resources on and near the site include shapes, features, techniques and materials, as well as social networks and practices of occupation and habitation. Taking notice of them is key; subsequently they can be adopted, referenced, altered or discarded: a dialogue can take many turns. Inspirational buildings, on site or elsewhere, intact or disassembled, mundane or exceptional, realised or imagined may suggest critical design possibilities. Originated under different conditions of place and/or time, they challenge our contemporary biases. During their life span, they may have undergone adaptations to societal change and so inspire us to develop new versatile structures or, even more so, to add to their biography other versions of themselves. Accordingly, whether to demolish and how to re-use are considered vital questions.

Urban architecture both results from and augments daily interactions, social patterns, opportunities for collective and personal fulfilment. It expresses social relationships and cultural significance. It plays its part in the immense challenges of our time, such as climate disturbance, resource exhaustion and ecological depletion, for better or for worse. Since in contemporary cities chances are unevenly distributed, our studio prefers to intervene in those areas where 'the right to the city, as Henri Lefebvre has put it, is under stress.

11 A possibility
73 The architect and people
99 Warmth
131 Unfinished blocks
167 Defining the space
219 A new public

249 Reflection

253 Rencontres a Heyvaert
264 What stays, what goes

A possibility

People should be able to use their own space. Feel safe and secure within. Be able to build a strong foundation for daily living. The architect has the power to showcase this possibility.

Heyvaertwijk in Anderlecht, Brussels, is unfairly treated. At first glance, the area seems to only focus on accommodating business. Large industrial halls filled with cars in between the strong smell of food. Men on the corners of the street discussing trade and observing. Safe, usable and green public space is barely present.[1] Is there space for residents?

Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday the abattoir hosts a market. It is filled with residents from Anderlecht and further. It is alive and active, people meet. The space is accessible and has become a part of the neighbourhood. Yet

when the market is gone, this feeling shifts. It becomes a large empty space encircled by closed facades, far from watchful eyes. Ironic when compared. Why hold it back from being active?

This book gives a glimpse of the alternative. A possibility in which residents can claim and build upon their space through simple architectural intervention. It moves through the area by foot, through photographic observation and direct encounter, listening. Seeking to understand the reality of living in Heyvaertwijk before proposing what is possible.

This journey is structured around intermezzos. Each one opens with a short text, followed by images from the site. Gradually this shifts, as the images make way for drawings, moving on from what exists to what could be.


GRAND AFRICAN MARKET
INGANG
ENTRÉE


CULTUREGHEM
CULTIVATING
URBAN
SPACE

< An empty Abattoir, Ropsy Chaudronstraat



Traffic jam by export truck, Ropsy Chaudronstraat



Karim Export, Heyvaertstraat



Ropsy Chaudronstraat



Car storage, Waskaarsstraat


NASSAU

Police closure December 2025, Heyvaertstraat

Fadi export, Heyvaertstraat




2 HMV - 052
PROMOTIO
JANTES & PNEUS A PRIX IMBATT BLE


PNEUS EN PROMOTION
20€
25€
30€
35€
40€
45€
GEOMETRIE
GK TIRES
JANTES - PNEUS - AUTO - CAMIONETTE - 4X4
ENTRETIEN MÉCANIQUE
IMPORT & EXPORT
PNEUS NOUVEAU & OCCASION
02 393 77 63
0493 43 53 91

< Intersection for gathering, Heyvaertstraat





The notorious square, Lemmensplein Broyèrestraat


2h
s jours
3,5 kg
SOUS SURVEILLANCE
SECHOIR
C
E
D
F


MACHINE A LAVER

< Laundrette, Zeemtouwersstraat



Ropsy Chaudronstraat


MECAR SPRL









Nijverheidskaai



Lemmensplein



Once a street library, Scheikundigestraat


ZONE
Payant
excepté carte
de stationnement
Betalend
uitgezonderd
parkeerkaart
SALO
44
BU90EL


ON LAVOIR
Speed Queen
SALON LA
SALON LAVOIR
OUVERT 7/7
6.00 - 22.00
TELLEMENT PÉTILLANT
TELLEMENT LIPTON
Lipton
Lipton

< Checking the post, Schipstraat



The Abattoir peaking in, Heyvaertstraat



Mama Africa, Ropsy Chaudronstraat



Exotic Master, Ropsy Chaudronstraat

Ropsy Chaudronstraat


79



The front of the Abattoir, Ropsy Chaudronstraat


Four Seasons
2·HGO·872


RESTAURANT
LA MAISON DU MOUTON


BEAUTY MASTER
TEL 02 527 12 57

< Store drop-off, Ropsy Chaudronstraat



Market preparation, Ropsy Chaudronstraat



Heyvaertstraat





Ropsy Chaudronstraat

Ropsy Chaudronstraat





Ropsy Chaudronstraat


AU COQ
NEW
Frites
Plantains
KING


GT
GTWORLD
OF BEAUTY

< Plum salesmen, Ropsy Chaudronstraat



Abattoir, Ropsy Chaudronstraat



Abattoir Hall, Ropsy Chaudronstraat >




SECA
1960 - 2000
40 YEARS



Market stall goods, Ropsy Chaudronstraat


Cent
10 +2 Gratis Gratuits
Milka
Melo Cakes
Donas
MANDUL
Knoppers
n&m's
CÔTE D'OR



Abattoir, Ropsy Chaudronstraat

mutzy



Abattoir, Ropsy Chaudronstraat



Abattoir facades, Ropsy Chaudronstraat >

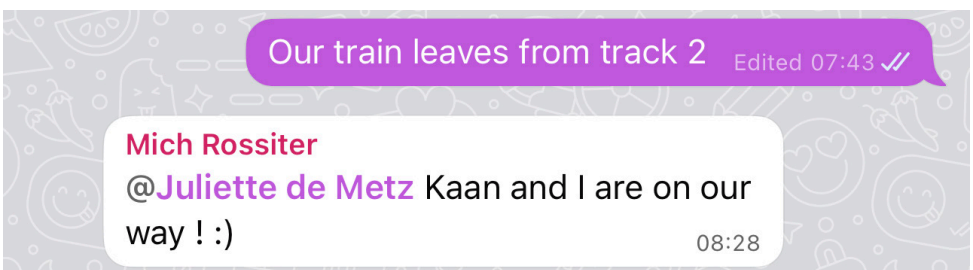



Merci pour votre visite
et à bientôt

The architect and people

The architect has a responsibility that cannot be met with distance. Housing, climate, public space and inclusivity are not abstract problems. They are lived by people in specific places, and it is there that the architect must begin.

This means stepping outside the studio. Engaging directly with the people you design for. Through conversation, observation and presence, an understanding develops that a brief cannot provide. It uncovers how people use space, what they need from it, and what they have already built without the architect's help. It shows respect and includes them within the process. We just need to listen.






2011

< Neighbourhood tournament trophies, Parc de La Rosée



Conversation with Karim, Parc de La Rosée


FIFA
WORLD CUP
2024
FACOM



Jean showing us around WAQ, WAQ



Living room, WAQ


Lidl lohnt sich.


3+
ADULTE
+3 ans
3+

Donation closet, WAQ



Kids toilet, WAQ

Classroom, WAQ




Induction


Touch
control
KOENIC

< Weekly friday crêpes, Gilbard





Food for film night, Gilbard

Workshop for the kids, Gilbard



Setting up film night, Gilbard



The film night, Gilbard


EAGLE







Lunch from market leftovers, Cultureghem



Ketmet, Cultureghem



Warmth

Everyone is welcomed with open arms at the spaces for residents. It is safe, they help, give a listening ear and organise events. Weekly football tournaments, crêpes on Fridays, a community kitchen on Wednesdays and parties. Plenty of opportunities where anyone can become a part of the community.

People will proudly tell you about their neighbourhood. Karim from La Rosée would speak about how kids of the neighbourhood have now become guardians for the park. Jean at the WAQ would passionately talk about how he and his colleagues are able to help the women and kids.

Yet behind this warmth, the conditions are difficult. When delving further, local actors describe a neighbourhood marked by social vulnerability, monetary poverty, exclusion and neglect.[2] As a district of arrival, Heyvaertwijk is shaped by residents with limited literacy, limited French and unfamiliarity with the administrative systems of Brussels. This creates dependency and exposure to exploitative agreements. Poor housing conditions are common: overcrowding, small units, improvised constructions and lack of maintenance. Safe, usable and green public space is barely present, while the existing is

plagued by unclear waste collection, informal trade and drug-related activity. It is not surprising that residents often describe a feeling of being left to their fate.[3]

	Aandeel <55m²	Aandeel 55-84 m²	Aandeel 85-104m²	Aandeel > 104 m²	Gemiddelde grootte/woning	Gemiddelde grootte/inwoner
	2001	2001	2001	2001	2001	2001
BHG	34,72	29,09	19,8	16,39	74,39	35,58
Heyvaert	51,35	24,32	14,77	9,56	62,74	22,72

Tabel: grootte van woningen. Bron: IEB, 2014.

Average living space per person in Heyvaert compared to BHG. IEB.

It leaves one to wonder what the neighbourhood could become if further supported. The residents have already built something real, a community that welcomes, that organises, that cares. Yet the city remains more focused on attracting capital than investing in the people already here.[4] What if housing was encouraging residents to stay in the neighbourhood? What if the public realm could again be claimed by its residents? It is clear how much they care for it.


MISSIONS 17/12
- préparer boissons :
- cacao
- grenadine
- eau
- accueil : 2 personnes
- distribution pralines
1 ou 2 personnes
- jeux en bois : 1/2 personnes
- gilbord / student
- grimage : 2 pers
Aya
Kerbia


Horaire 17.12
14h : arrivée / activités
ouverture buffet / boissons
15h : gnawa > 20 minutes
+ discours
Q&A
15h15 : fin ateliers
+ gnawa
15h20 : lancement cadeaux
= Chuit + Keslia
lancement "boum" =
musique + boule à
facettes
JVC



Setting up the music and food, WAQ




LE ROBINET SVP

Tea making, WAQ



Handing out food, WAQ


BIENVENUES





< The children getting ready, WAQ





The people of Gilbard joined, WAQ

Jean showing how to use the camera, WAQ



Chaos is unfolding, WAQ



Chaos is unfolding, WAQ





A tutorial before the game starts, WAQ



Its busy at the food stall, WAQ



Music starts playing, WAQ





< Traditional Morrocan dance by the residents, WAQ



The people of WAQ thanking the residents for the support, WAQ





The handing out of gifts, WAQ


SORCIER



Last pieces of food left, WAQ



Unfinished blocks

Only active when given the opportunity. The Abattoir is a centre within Brussels. First built for the selling of cattle for slaughter, the European hygiene laws in 1980s forced it to change.[5] It has now developed into a market of all things. Items from all different cultures can be found here. People are loud. Yet, when the market is gone, the space is barely alive.



1. Grande Plaine de Bruxelles 2. Marché couvert 3. South Market 4. North Market 5. Zone logistique 6. Abattoir urbain 7. Entrepôt trois
8. Erasmus yard 9. Entrepôt quatre 10. Entrepôt cinq 11. Auvent

6 >> POSITION DU PROJET DEVELOPPEMENT GLOBAL

2009 Abattoir masterplan. Projet De Developpement Global Abattoir “Le ventre de Bruxelles”.



Anderlecht's abattoir in January 1972. Belga Photo Archives.

The 2009 Abattoir masterplan planned to change that. The focus is to make the Abattoir a defined urban plaza that opens itself through clear sightlines to bordering neighbourhoods. Currently it is only aligned to the axis of Heyvaertwijk, with its back to the town.[6] New programs need to reinforce the market while ensuring the site remains active when the stalls are gone.



Physical model july 2011.

A key entry point is the east side. Sergeant De Bruynestraat emerged following the construction of the metro line. It functions as an extension on market days and brings people to and from the Abattoir. At the end is the Clemenceau metro stop. The future Kleine Zennepark will connect through the empty plot in the middle and towards the new Foodmet. In contrast, the south side remains empty and the north side of the street is closed as the urban blocks orient themselves exclusively towards Ropsy Chaudronstraat.





site_1933.png
4.960×3.507



site_1944.png
4.960×3.507



site_1953.png
4.960×3.507



site_1961.png
4.960×3.507



site_1971.png
4.960×3.507



site_1977.png
4.960×3.507



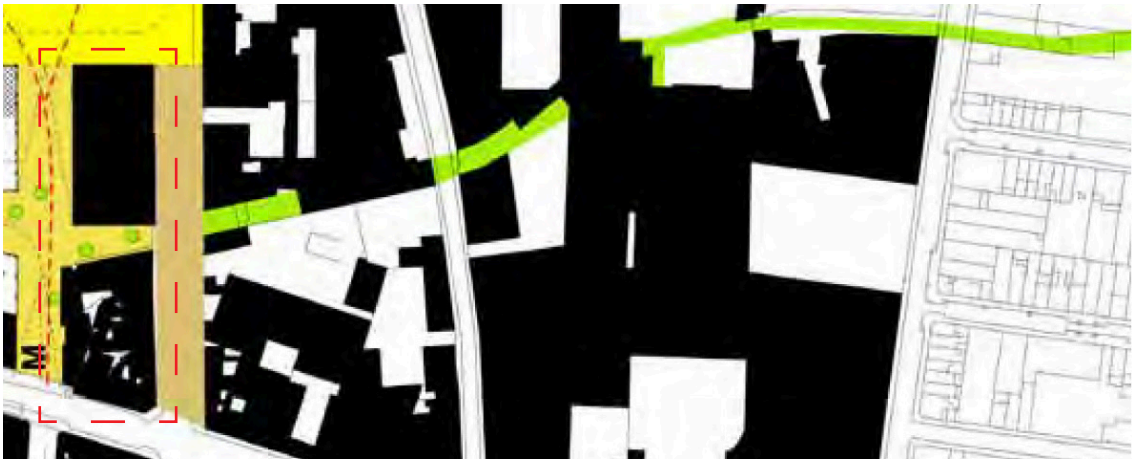
site_1987.png
4.960×3.507



site_1996.png
4.960×3.507

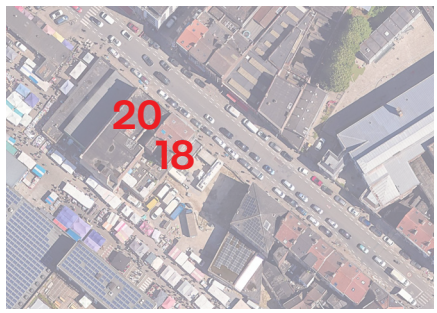


site_2004.png
4.960×3.507



Zoom in site 2009 Abattoir masterplan. Dotted line around site.

These urban blocks need to be finished, as proposed in the masterplan. Program should be placed along the route to serve both existing and new flows, while the empty plot in the middle grants the opportunity for a new public space. To finish the blocks, the existing building needs to be transformed. They should be understood and cherished.



Ropsy Chaudronstraat 18 and 20 form a single urban block. In the masterplan, a volume is

added on the north side to further define the edge of the Abattoir. 18 is a 1912 art nouveau townhouse of four-and-a-half storeys, its south facade and rear extension entirely without openings. 20 was built in 1924 as a cold storage facility for meat in the art deco style. It rises four storeys, with housing and offices at the front and storage behind. The building is defined by its structure, a pure column-and-beam system, with the first floor acting as a four-part beam to achieves a large span for the ground floor. To the street, it presents itself as an unbroken wall, with only openings in the front.



Ropsy Chaudronstraat 18. ARCHistory.



Ropsy Chaudronstraat 20. ARCHistory.



Ropsy Chaudronstraat 14 sits at the end of its urban block. Built in 1897 as an inn with restaurant and large banquet hall to the rear, which was later demolished and transformed into storage. The building is immediately recognisable by its pyramid roof. Unlike its neighbours, the west and south facades have openings, yet these are not accessible.

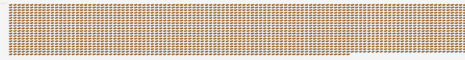


Ropsy Chaudronstraat 14. ARCHistory.

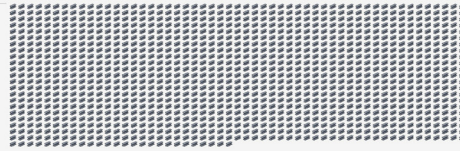
These buildings are not to be demolished. Their material presence is too embedded in the street to discard. They are to be celebrated through transformation, becoming part of the future public space.



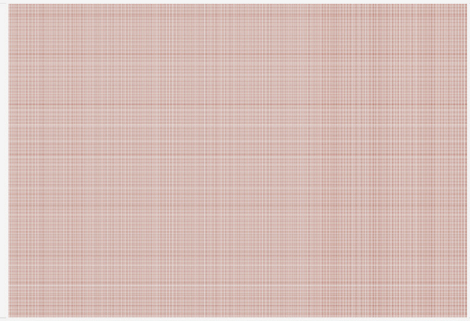
		KG	X 6m 50x200	KG CO2	EUR
**	Timber	67,995	2,267	31,278	74,795

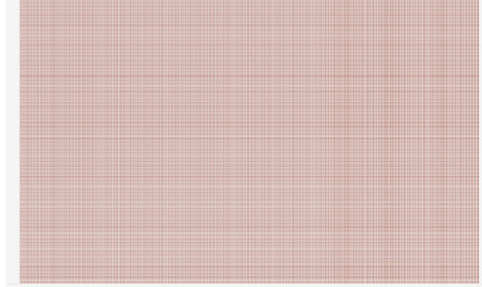
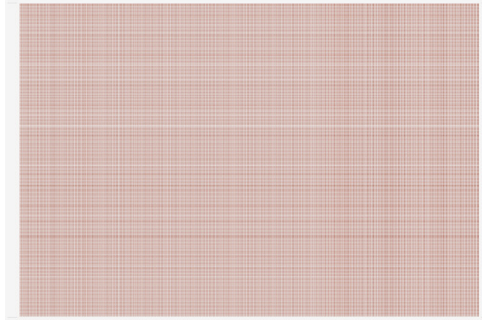
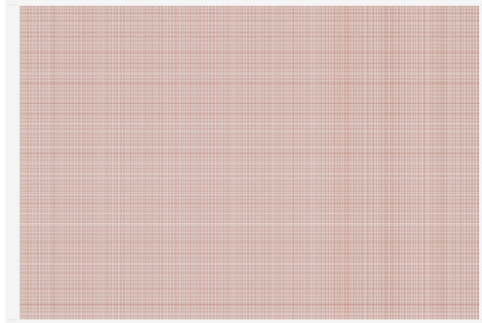
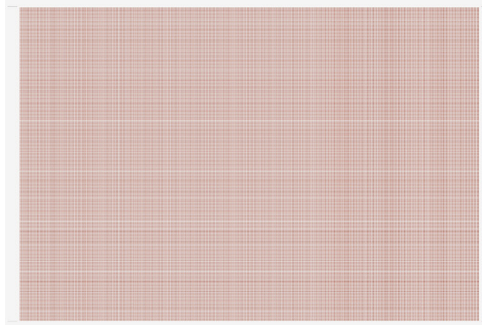
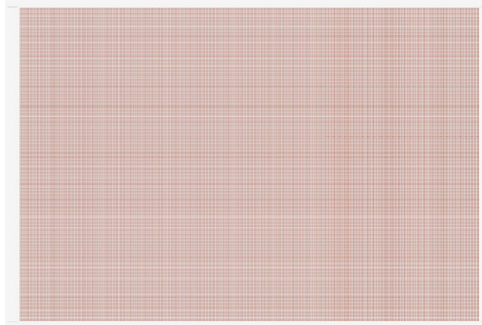
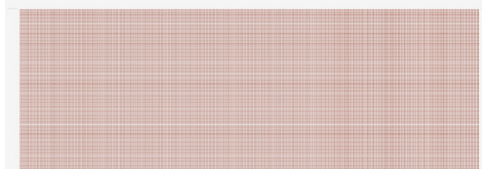


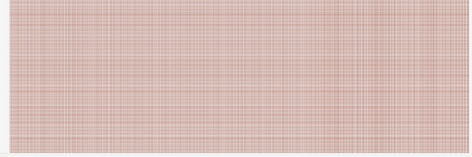
		KG	X 6m, IPE 200	KG CO2	EUR
**	Steel	179,042	1,194	245,287	128,910

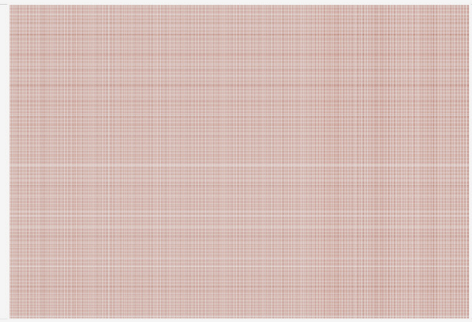


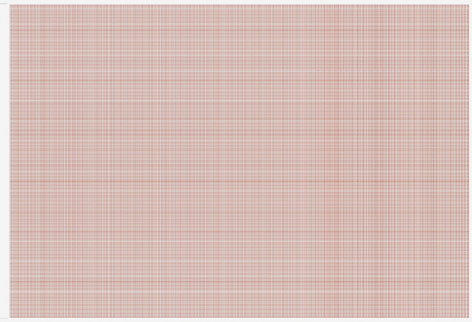
		KG	X	KG CO2	EUR
**	Bricks	3,861,263	1,544,505	926,703	926,703

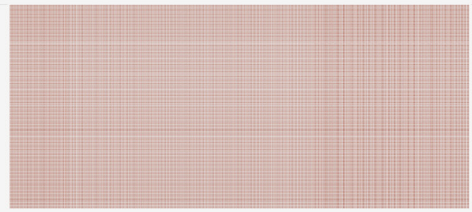


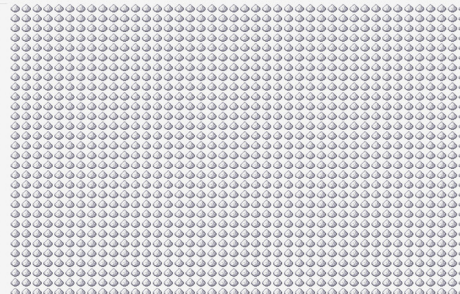


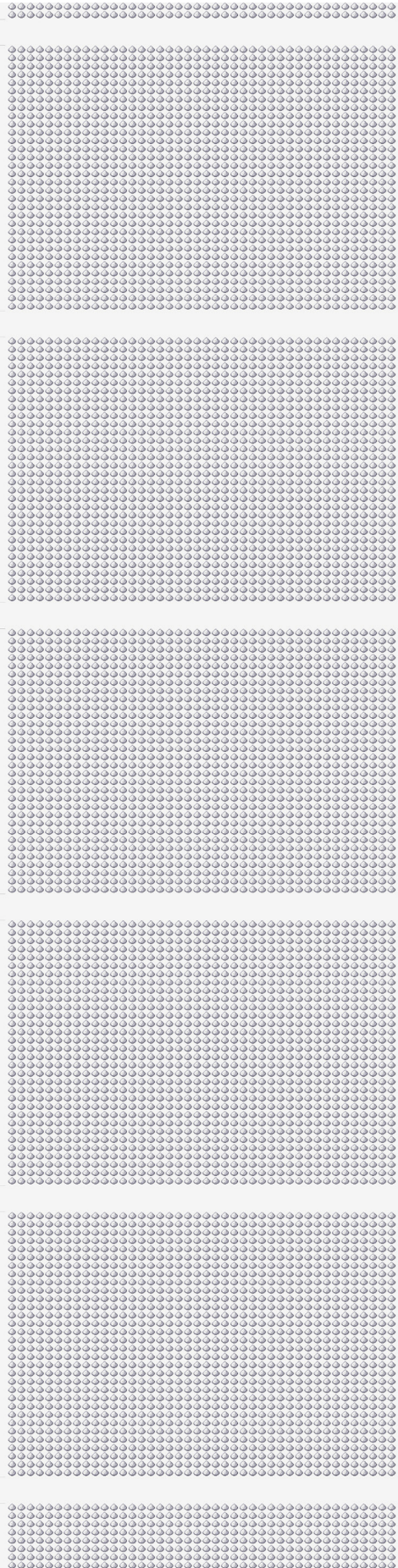


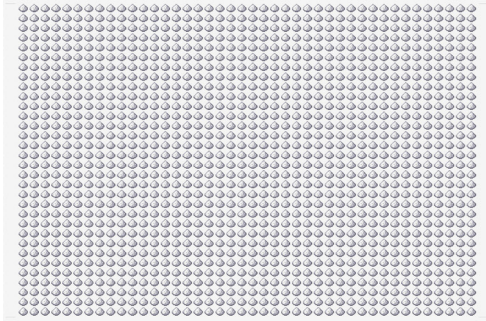
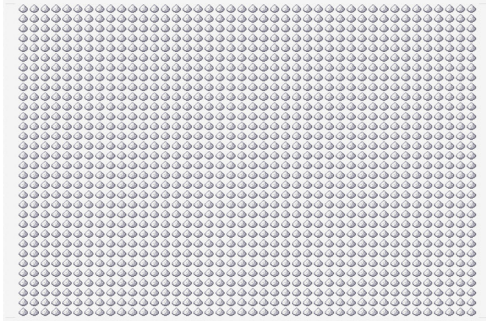
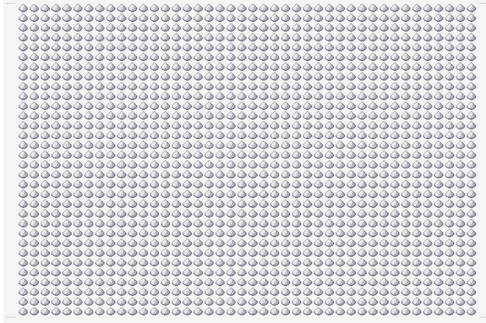
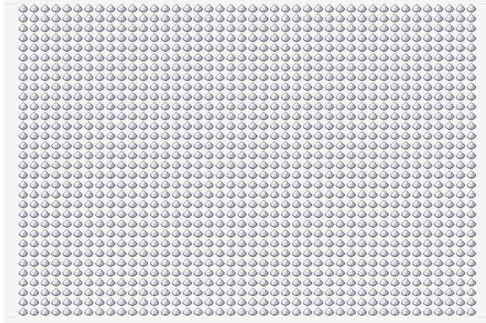
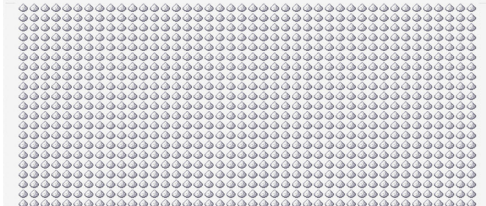




		KG	X M³	KG CO2	EUR
**	Concrete	5,347,742	17,826	3,743,420	267,387





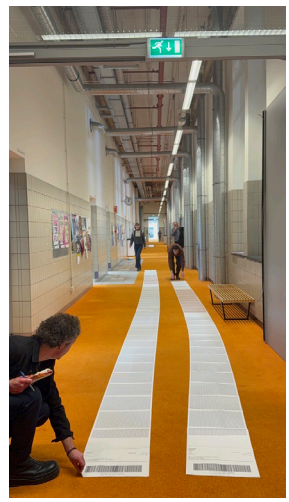







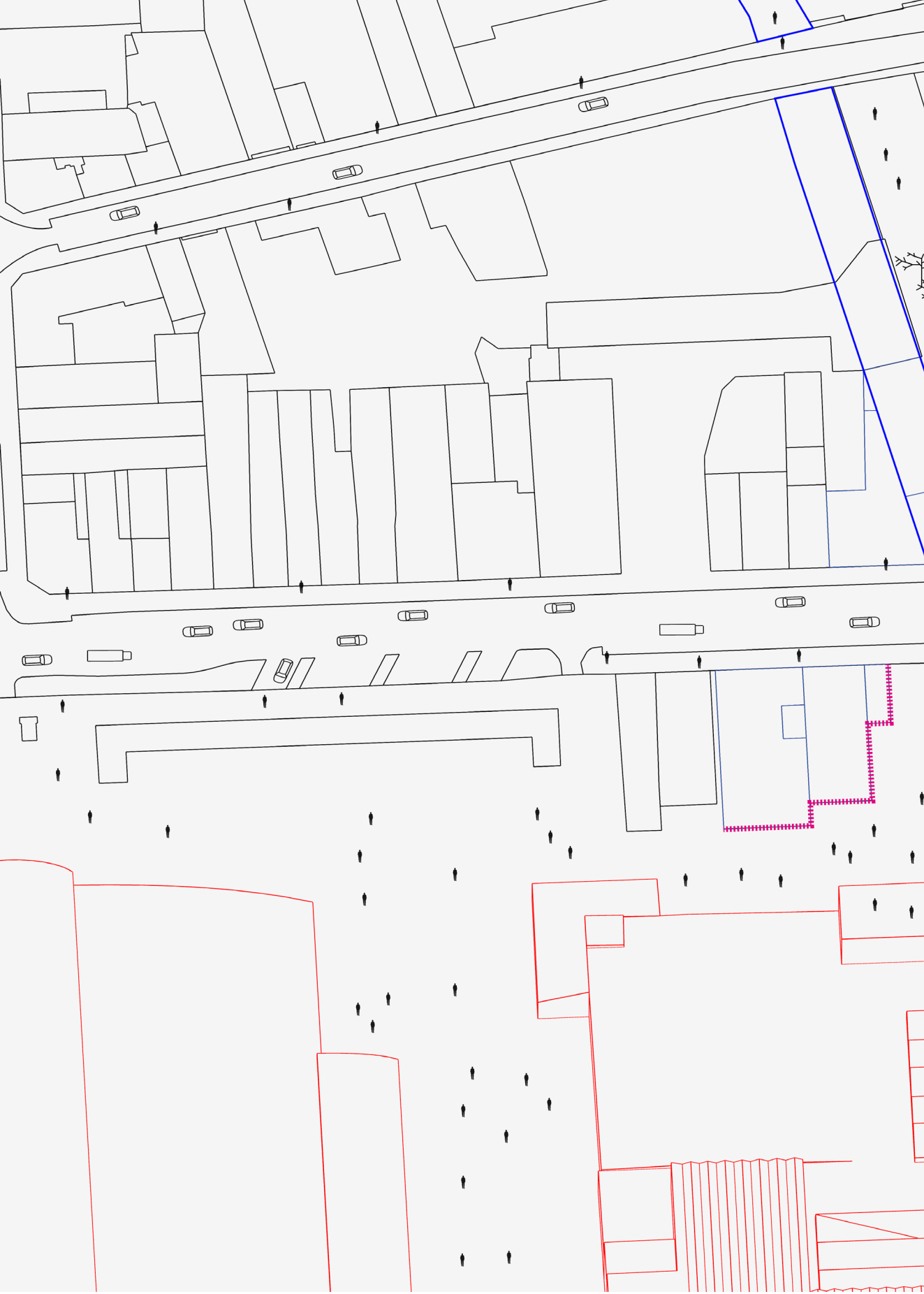
VISA DEBIT
Payement
Date: 20/02/2026 11:01:57

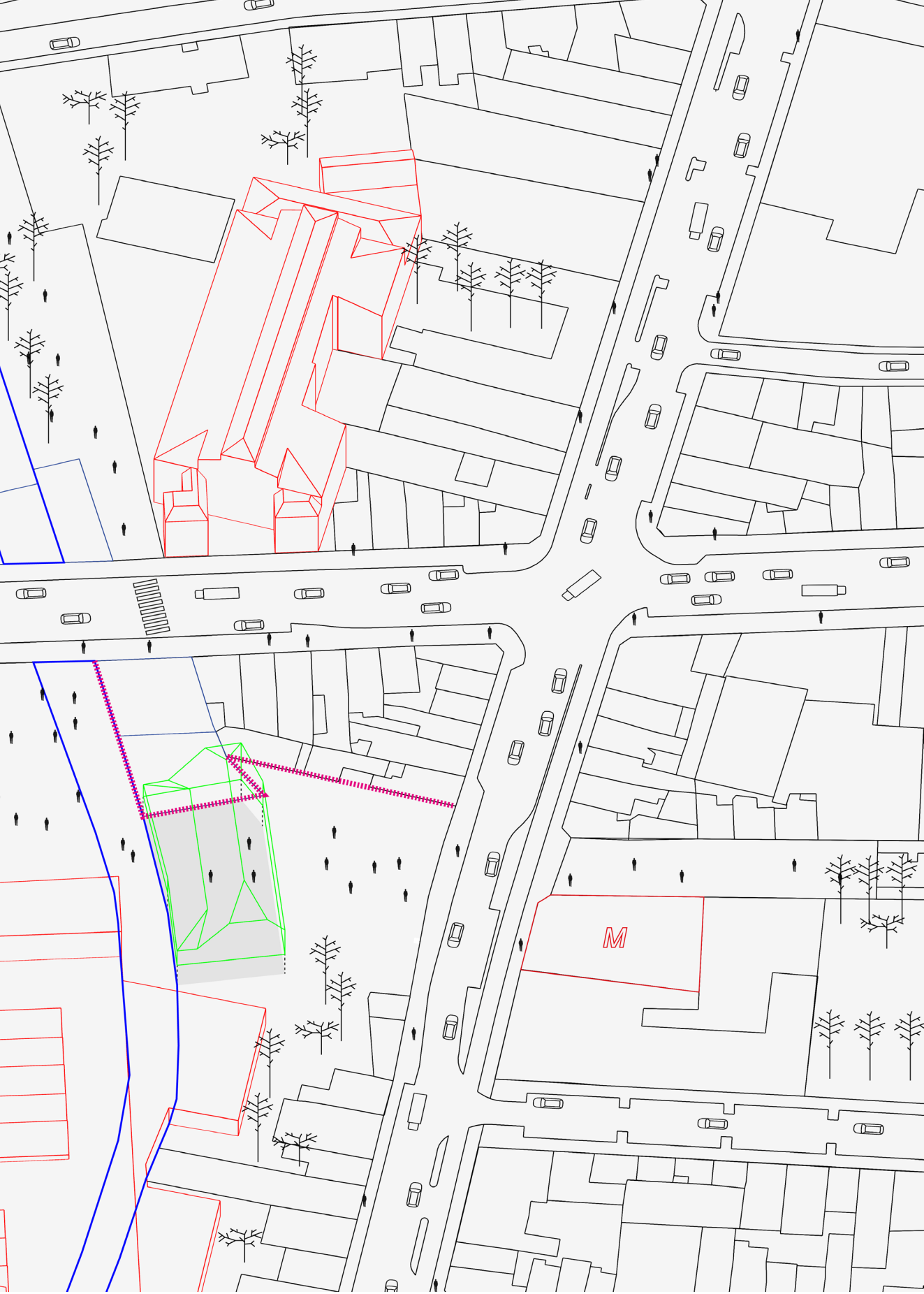
Total: 1,397,795 EUR
No contact

Want to exchange or return an item?
Only upon presentation of the receipt
10 years from 1900
****

We appreciate your feedback!
Thank you for your attention!





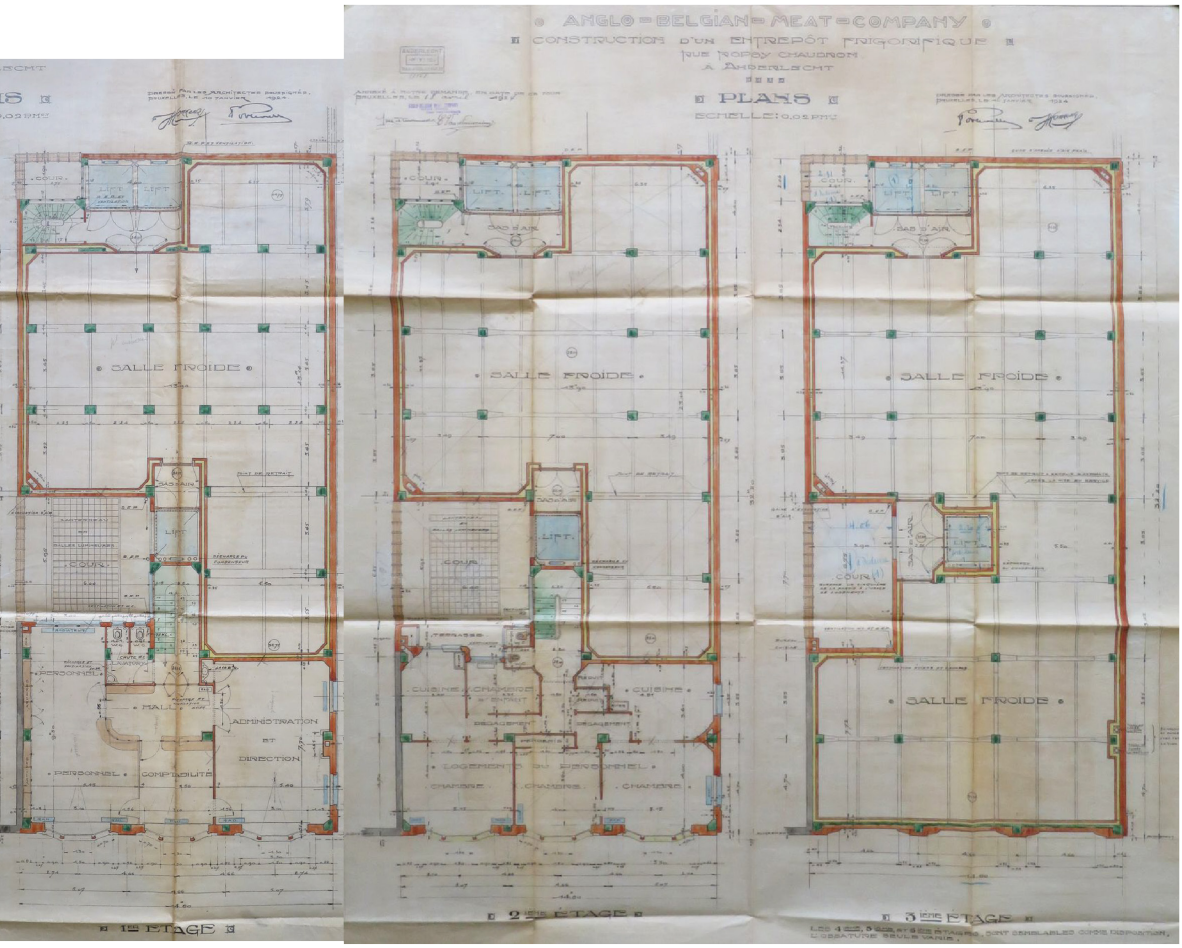

M




CULTUREGHEM
CULTIVATING
URBAN
SPACE
SGSA



Archival plans 18 and 20 (1:400)


ANGLO-BELGIAN-MEAT-COMPANY
CONSTRUCTION D'UN ENTREPÔT FRIGORIFIQUE
RUE NOPPEN CHAUDRON
A AMERSLSCHT
PLANS
ECHELLE: 0,02 P.M.
SALLE FROIDE
SALLE FROIDE
SALLE FROIDE
COUR
COUR
COUR
LIFT
LIFT
LIFT
BAS D'AIR
BAS D'AIR
BAS D'AIR
CUISINE
CUISINE
CHAMBRE
CHAMBRE
CHAMBRE
ADMINISTRATION
ET
DIRECTION
PERSONNEL
COMPTABILITE
MAILLOT
1ER ETAGE
2ÈME ETAGE
3ÈME ETAGE



The side of 18 and 20


EXOTIC MASTER
2-JFA-010
308 SW



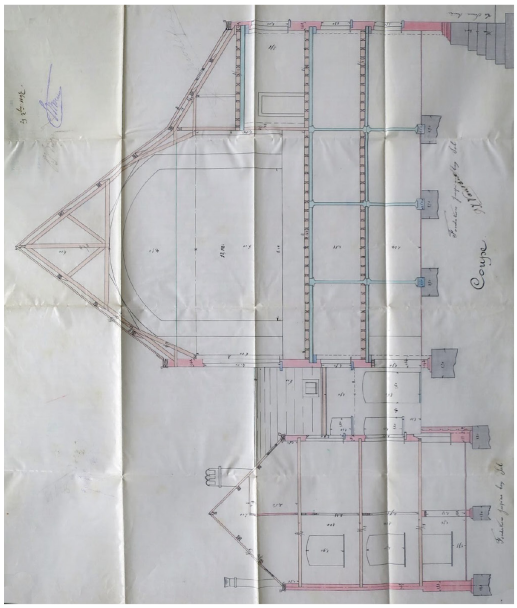
The back of 18 and 20 with 14 peaking behind

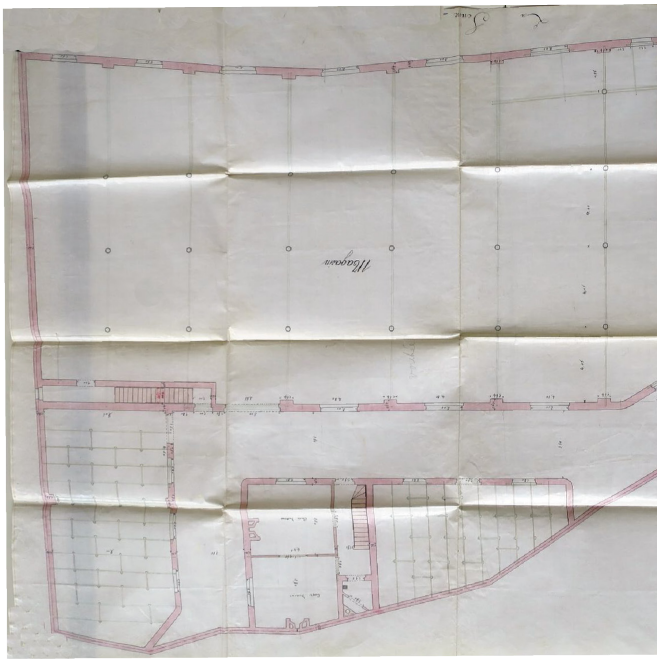



1€
ARIEL
PREMIUM PLANTAINS

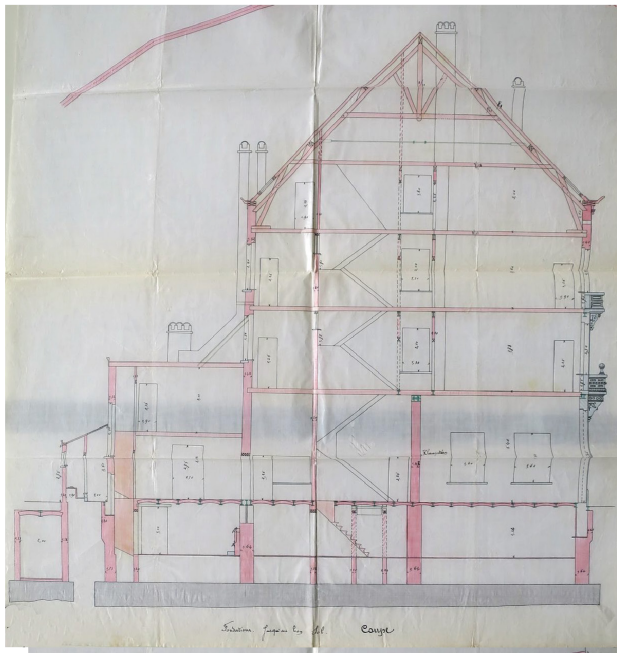


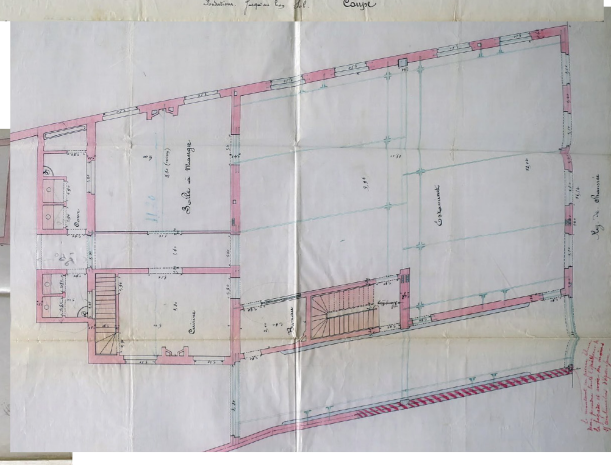
The part of 14 facing the market

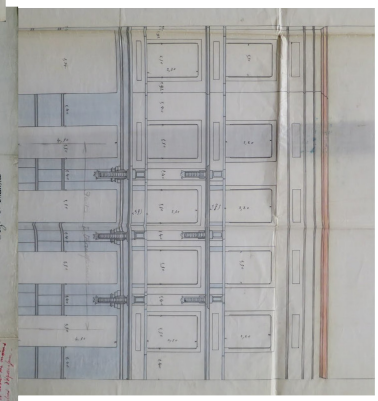




Archival plans 14 (1:400)


Coupe


Salle à Manger
Cabinet




Rue de Chaussée





West facade of 14


MADE IN CHINA
MK002293 WHT B0931 CAE



The back of the urban block of 14

The view from the metro >


ABATTOIR
Soyez les bienvenus
ABATTOIR
Welkom
odoo
Facturation électronique


BRCELOA



Defining the space

The project has two main ambitions: to give Heyvaertwijk safe and usable public space, and to provide housing that gives existing and new residents stability. One cannot exist without the other. Four programmes are proposed: housing, a homeless hotel, a communal dining hall and commercial space.

Public space feels safe when there is life surrounding it. Eyes on the street, people coming and going at different hours, a reason to be there when the market is not. This is what the program is built around.

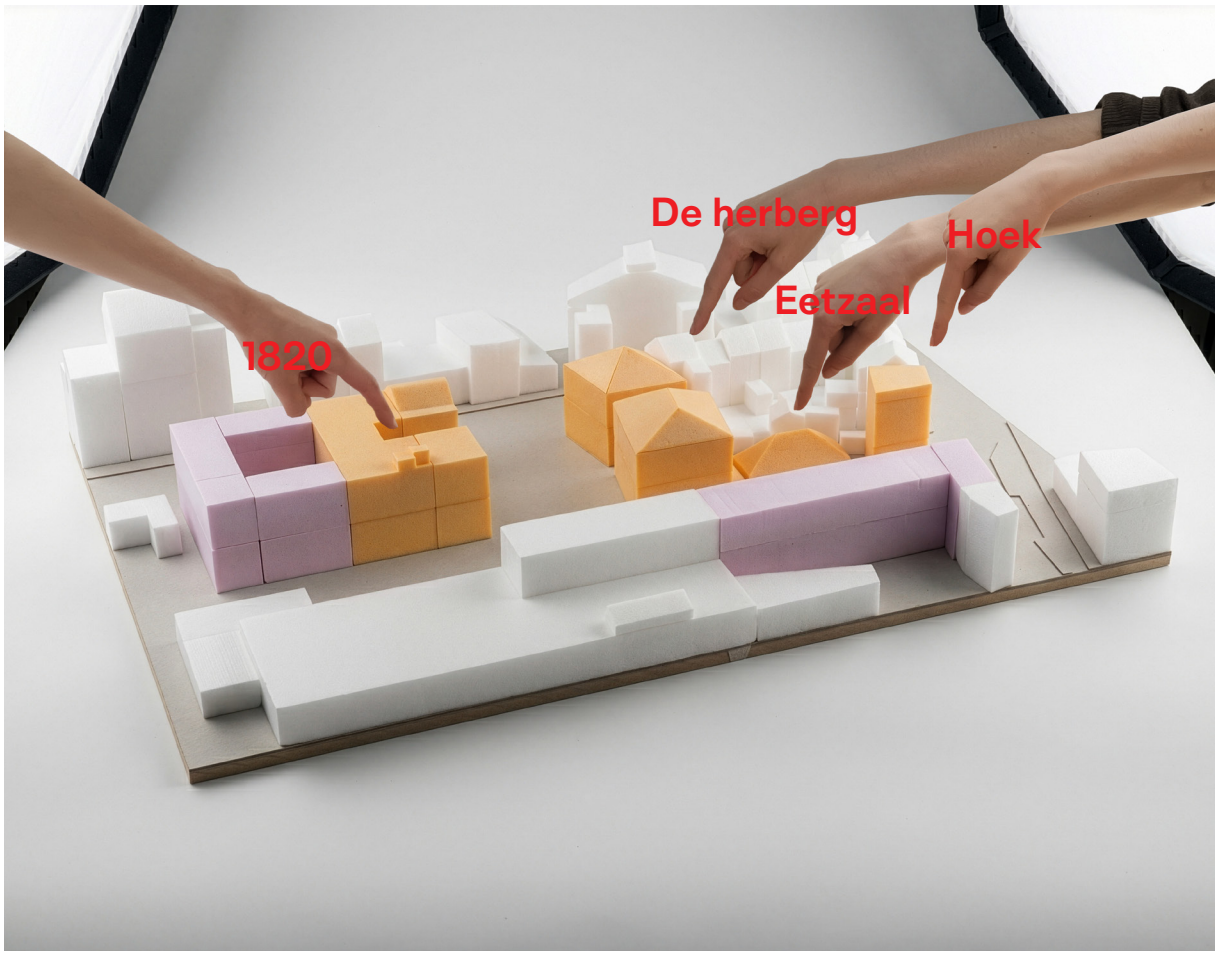
Housing addresses one of the most pressing conditions in Heyvaertwijk. Poor housing pushes people out of the neighbourhood they have built their lives in, breaking social cohesion. By adding quality housing in different sizes, people are given the opportunity to stay and move within the neighbourhood.

The homeless hotel works with the same logic. Those with the least means should not be pushed to the edges of the city. A place within the neighbourhood, rather than outside of it, allows them to remain part of the community.

The communal dining hall and commercial space complete the picture. They draw people

in at different moments, extending the social life of the Abattoir beyond market days. The dining hall strengthens social cohesion within the neighbourhood, while the commercial space brings life to Sergeant De Bruynestraat at street level.

These four programmes take shape in four buildings: Hoek, Eetzaal, 1820 and De Herberg.

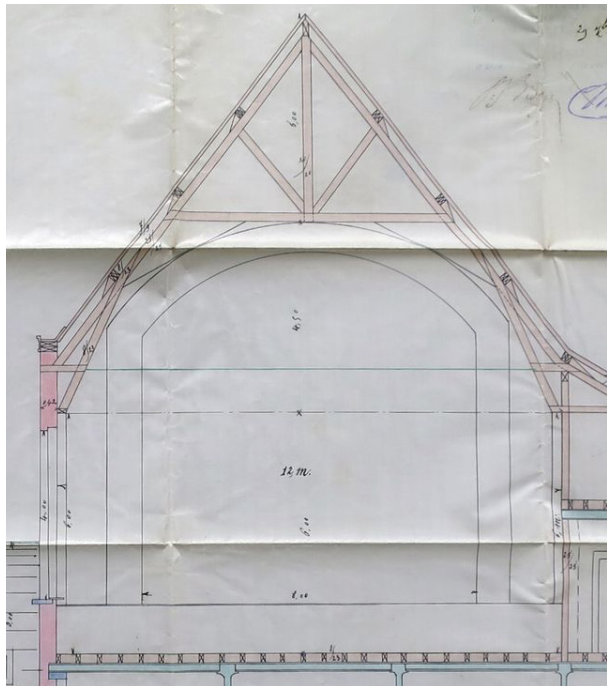


Hoek as its name insinuates, sits at the corner of the street. It completes the urban block and opens up with commercial area on the ground floor. Above are housing, that is entered through the red spiral staircase. Its structure is exposed as its built with a self-supporting brick and a light wood skeleton on the inside for insulation.



Self-supporting brick. BLAF.

Eetzaal is the communal outpost. People, not only residents of the area, are invited to eat together, or to simply be in each other's company. The space is flexible. The demolished banquet hall is brought back in its original place, topped by its dramatic roof.



Demolished banquet hall section. erfgoed.brussels.

1820 is the merging of two neighbours. To define the street and the block, a new volume is added. At the plinth, it hosts commercial space for the existing exotic master store, and space for new. Above is housing: 2-person apartments within 18, 5/6-person apartments with work studios within 20, and 3/4-person apartments within the new volume. To access the apartments, residents can enter through two corridors on opposite ends of the building to go to their respective staircase. At the end of each corridor lies a communal courtyard. At

its centre, a grand staircase serves the larger apartments above, alongside a communal living room. Depending on the program of the future north block, this living room can open up to the prospective courtyard.



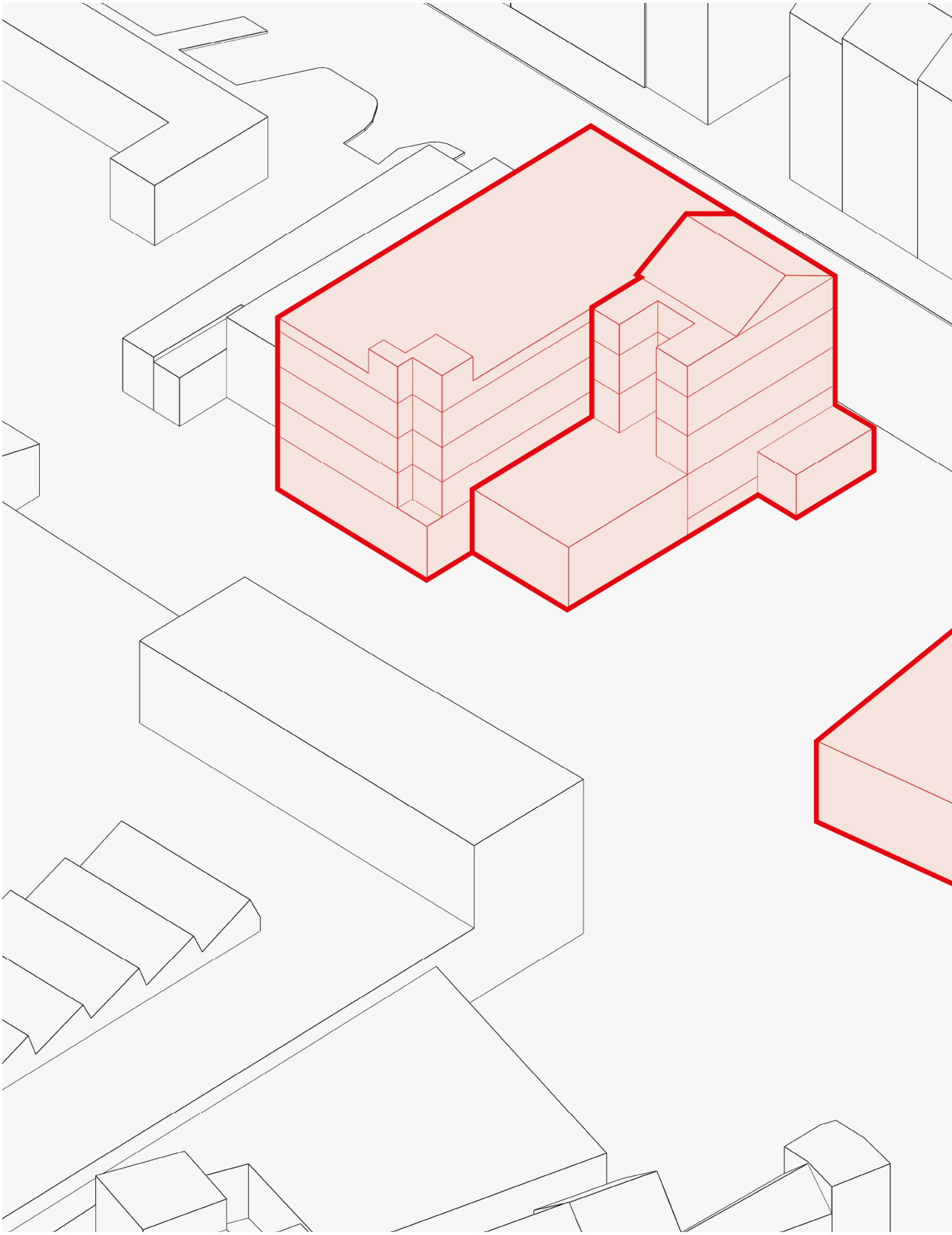
Sign exotic master store. Google reviews.

De Herberg sits at the centre of the public space, yet it does not try to impose. Within, the homeless are given a place of stability. On the ground floor is a walk-in, a restaurant and store front which residents can help run. Above is housing. The volume is mirrored to embrace the public space. It is split in two by a central atrium with a grand spiral staircase and shared courtyard, to protect its residents. The existing building is for families, who can also access the building from a separate entrance.

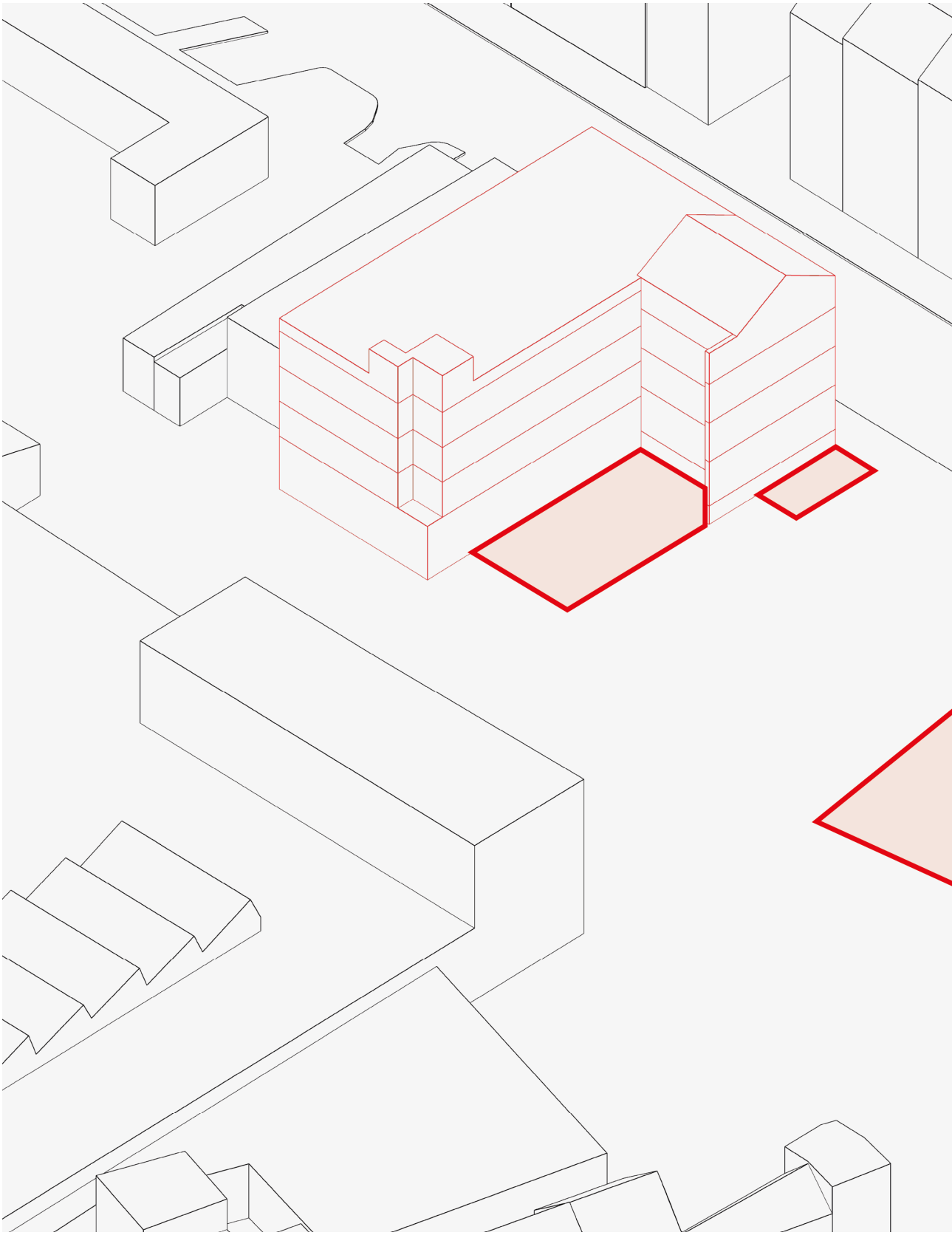
The new volume is for singles and couples. Typologically, the buildings also mirror each other. Communal areas are placed on opposing ends, with housing at the other. At the centre of each lies a space that refers to the Venetian Portego: grand in its dimensions, unassigned in its functions as intended. Residents can choose to do what they want with the space.



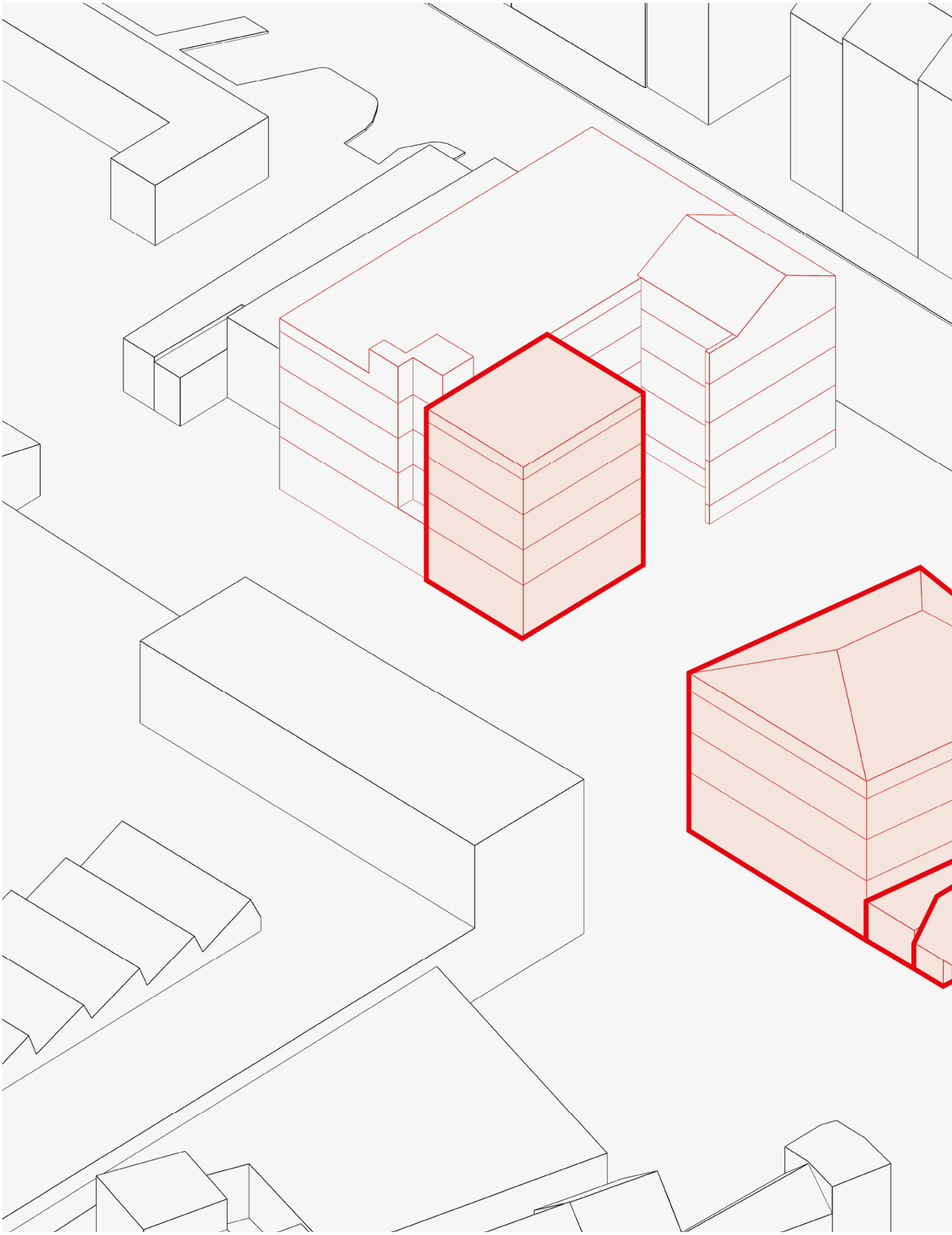
Portego in Palazzo da Mosto, Venice. Mark E. Smith.

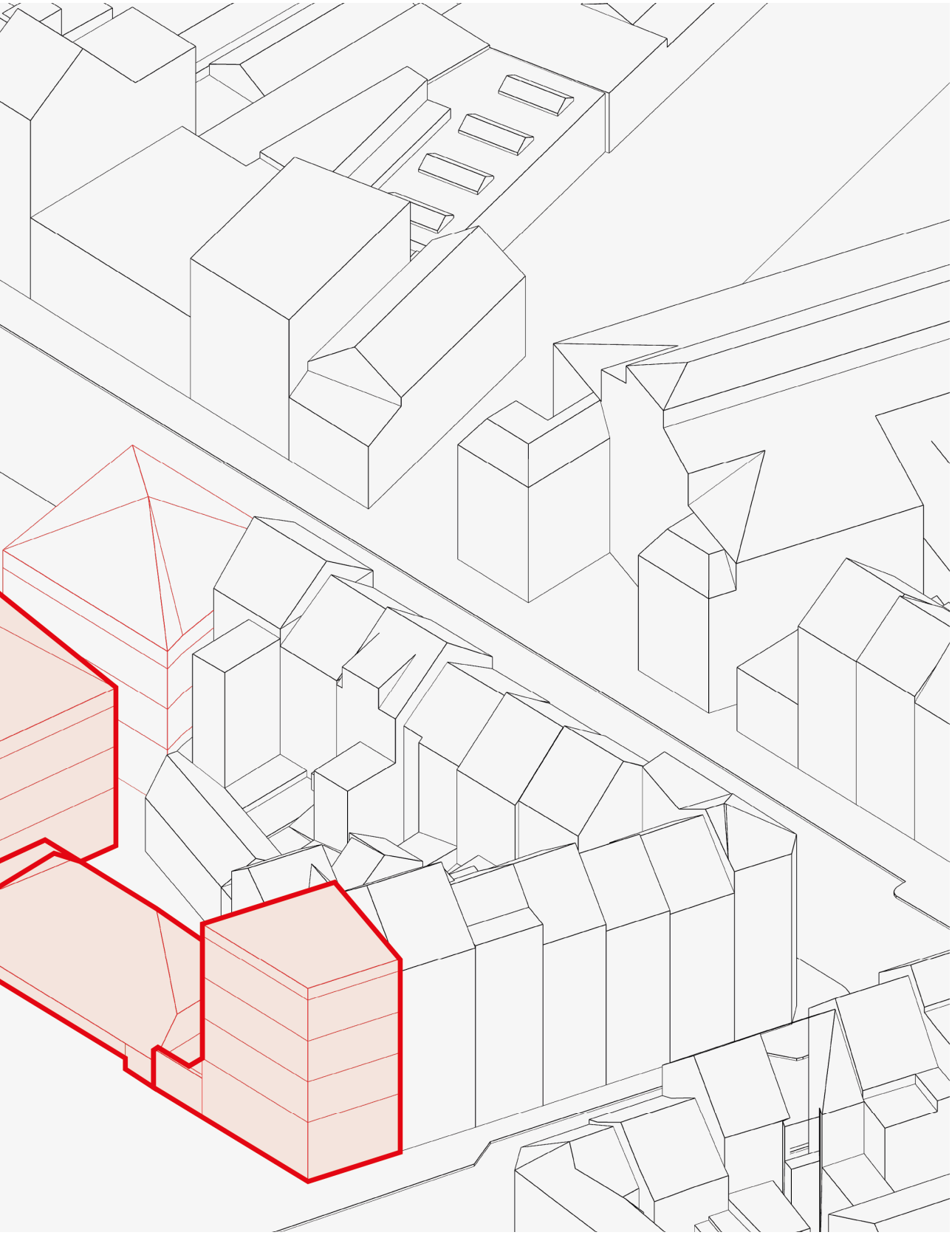


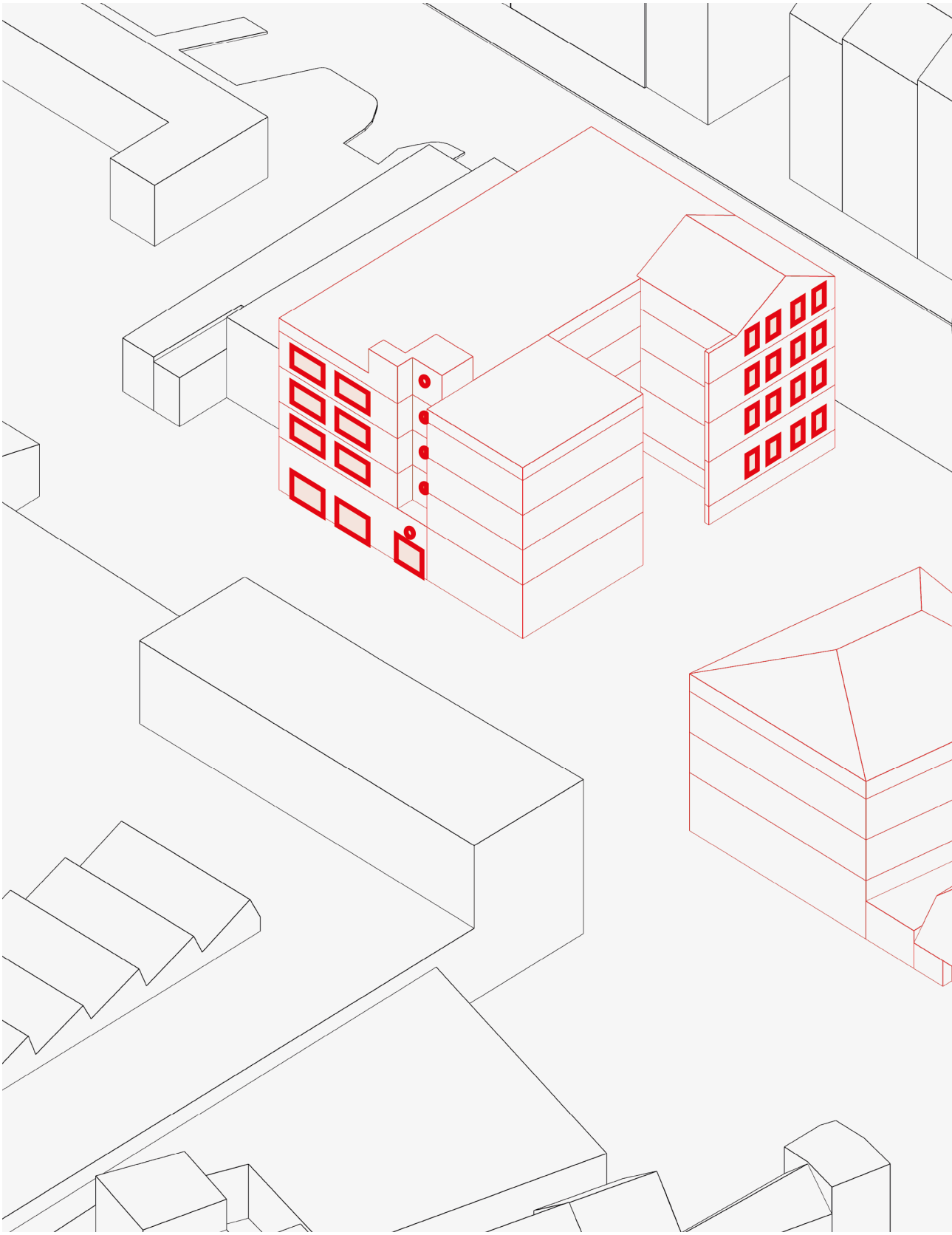






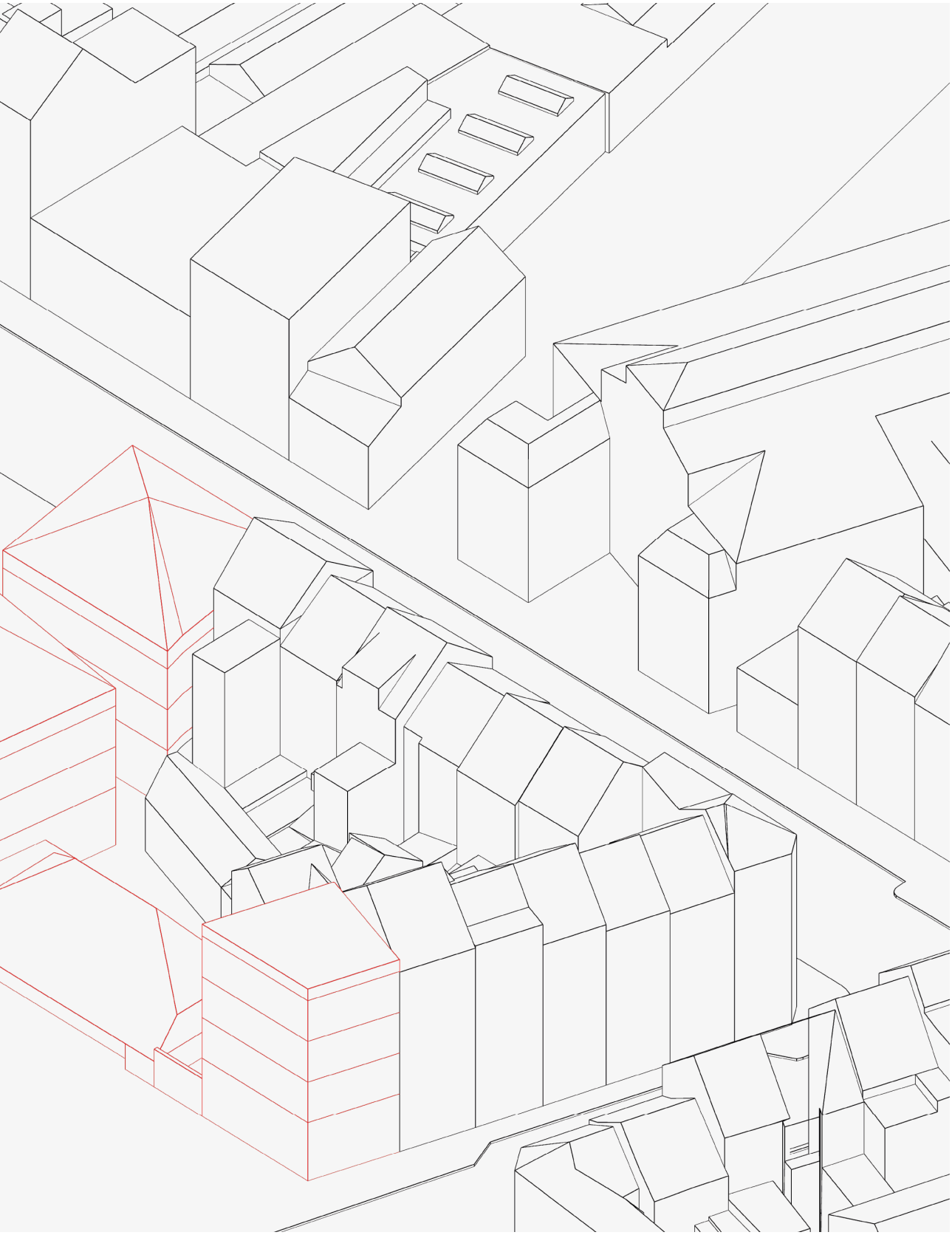


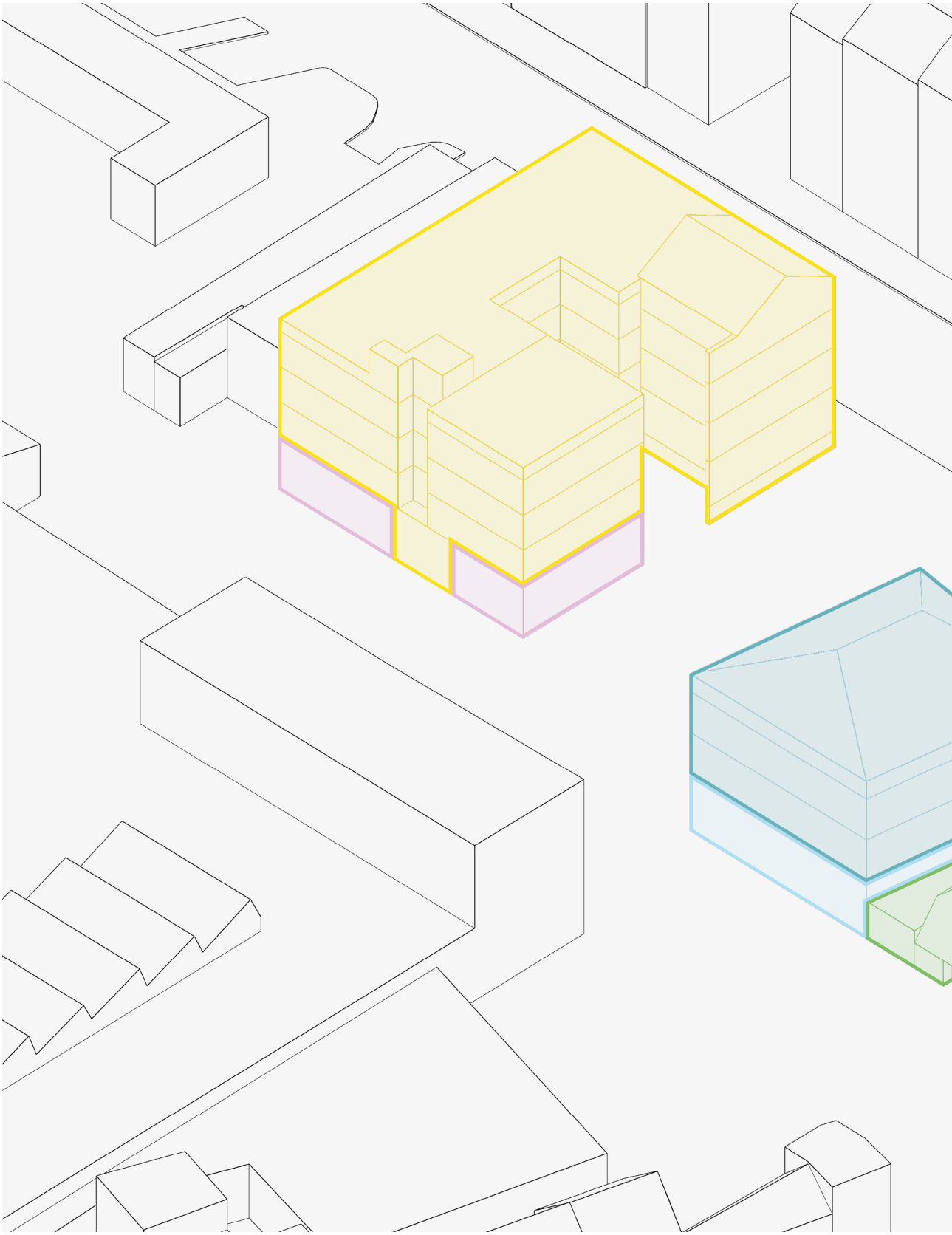


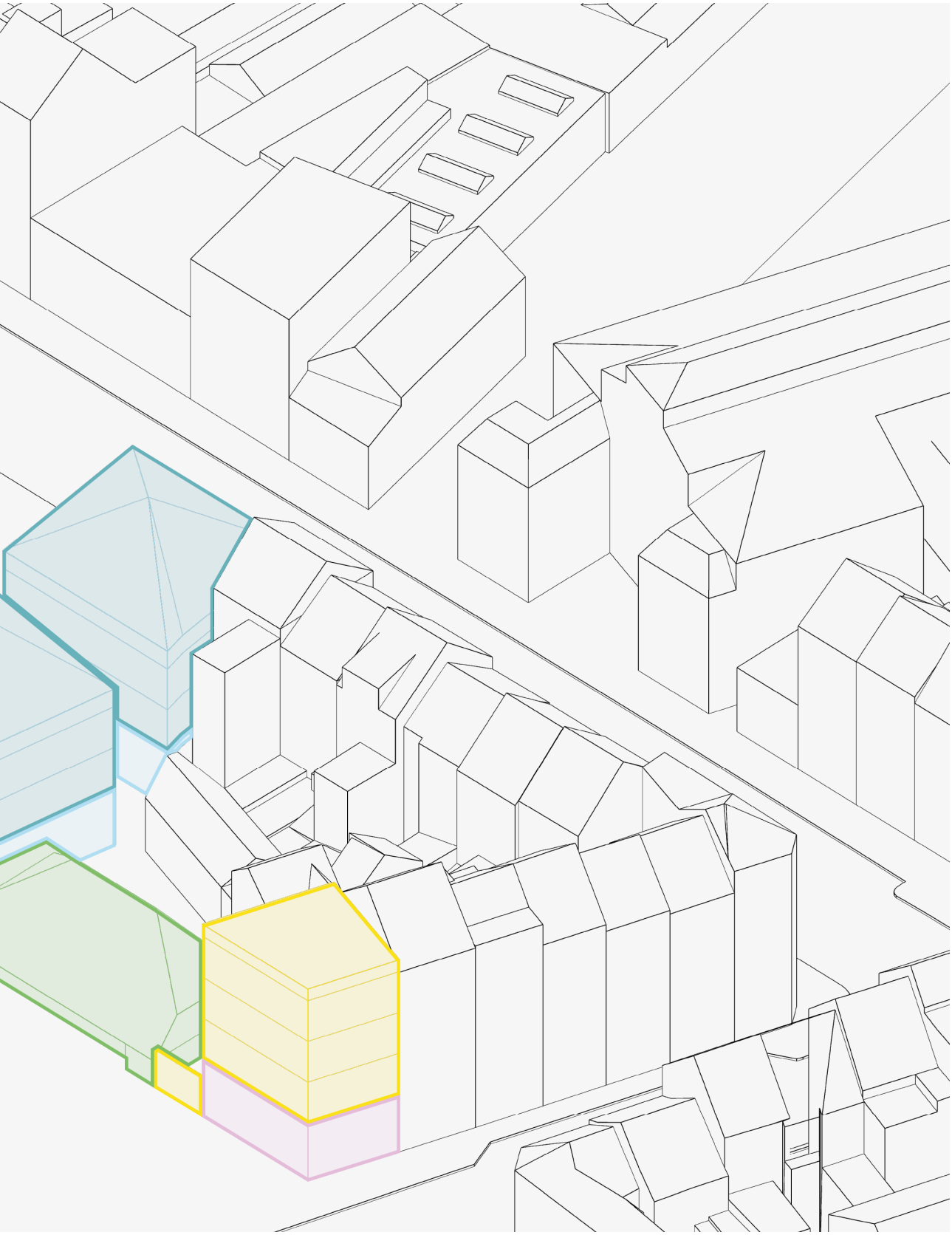


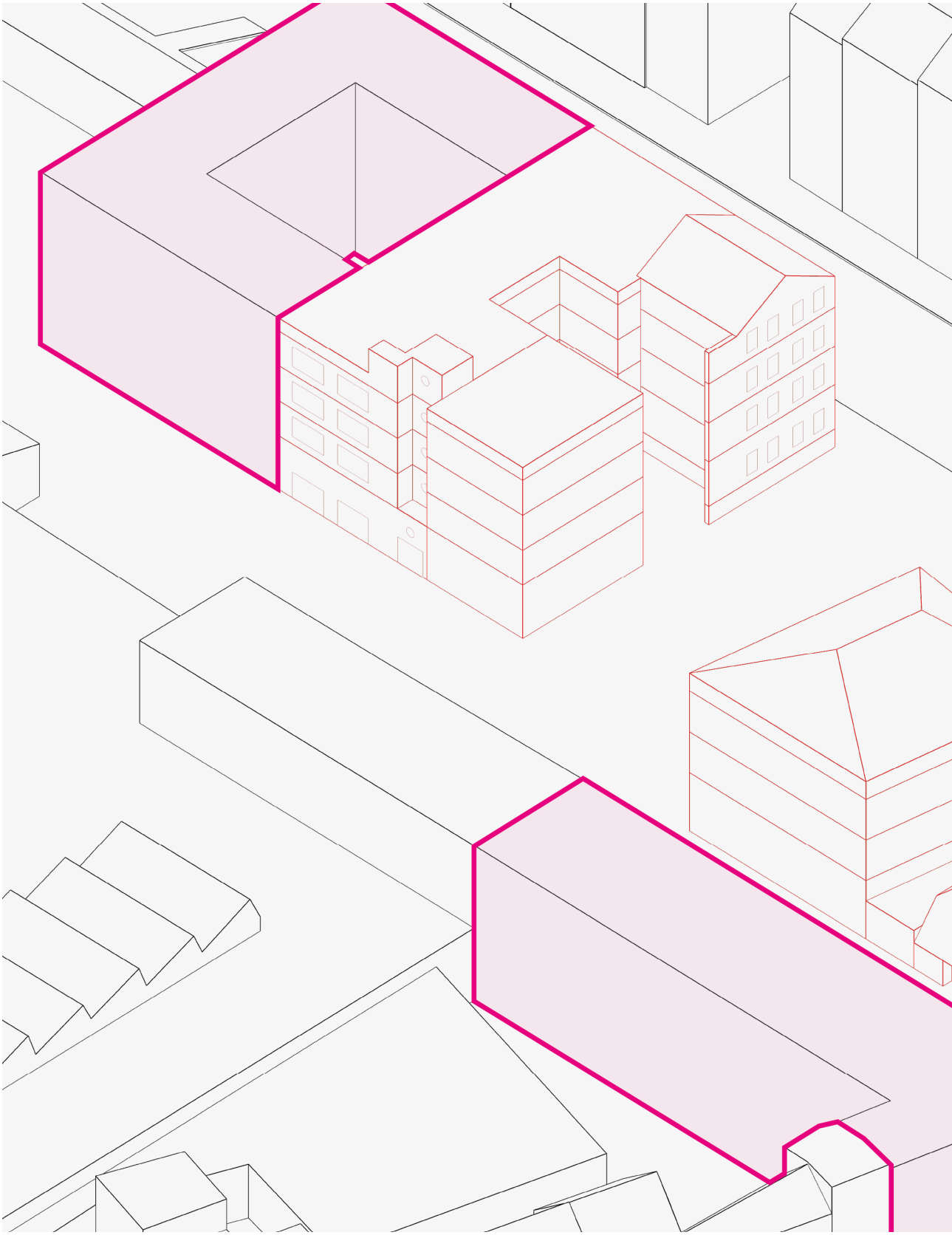


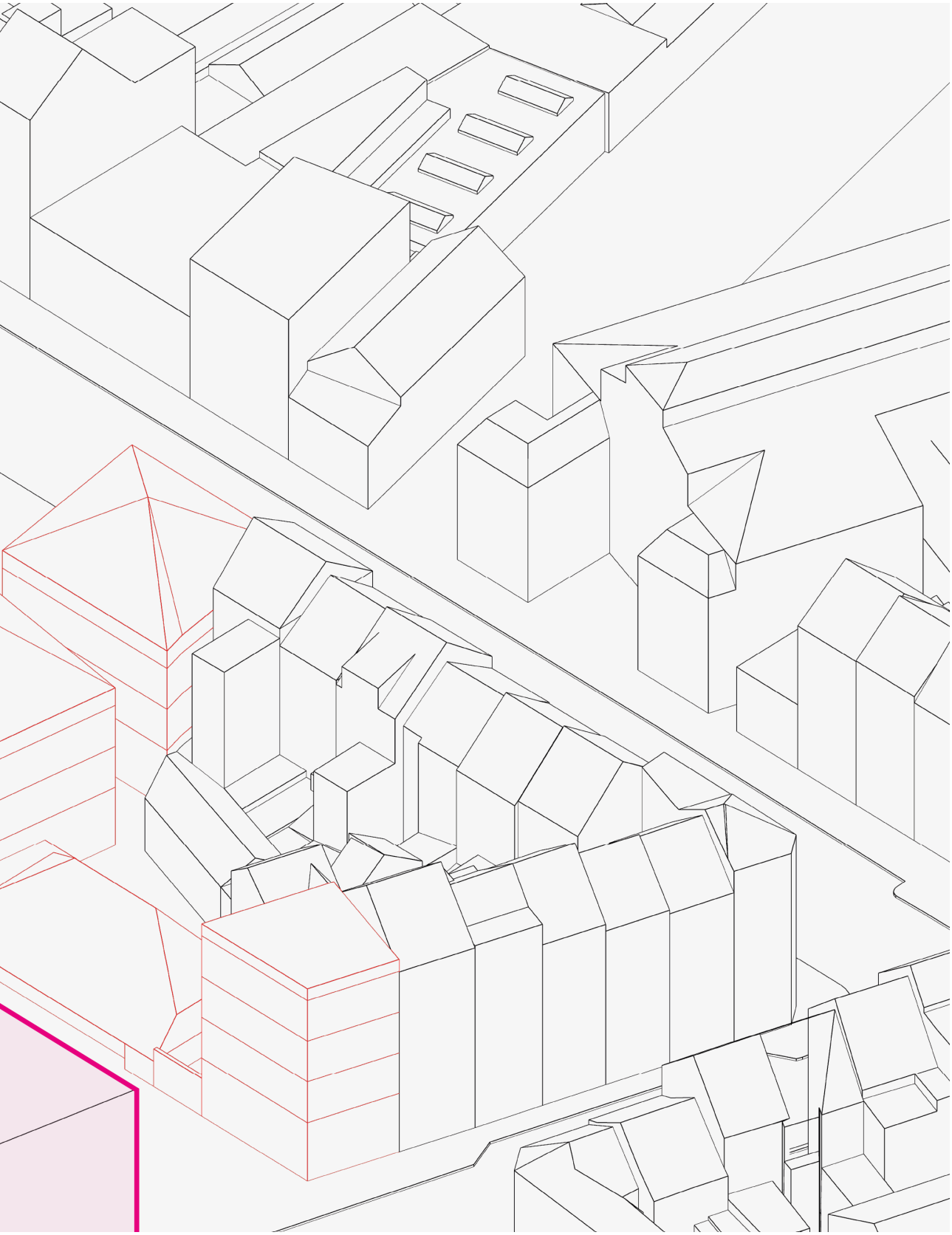


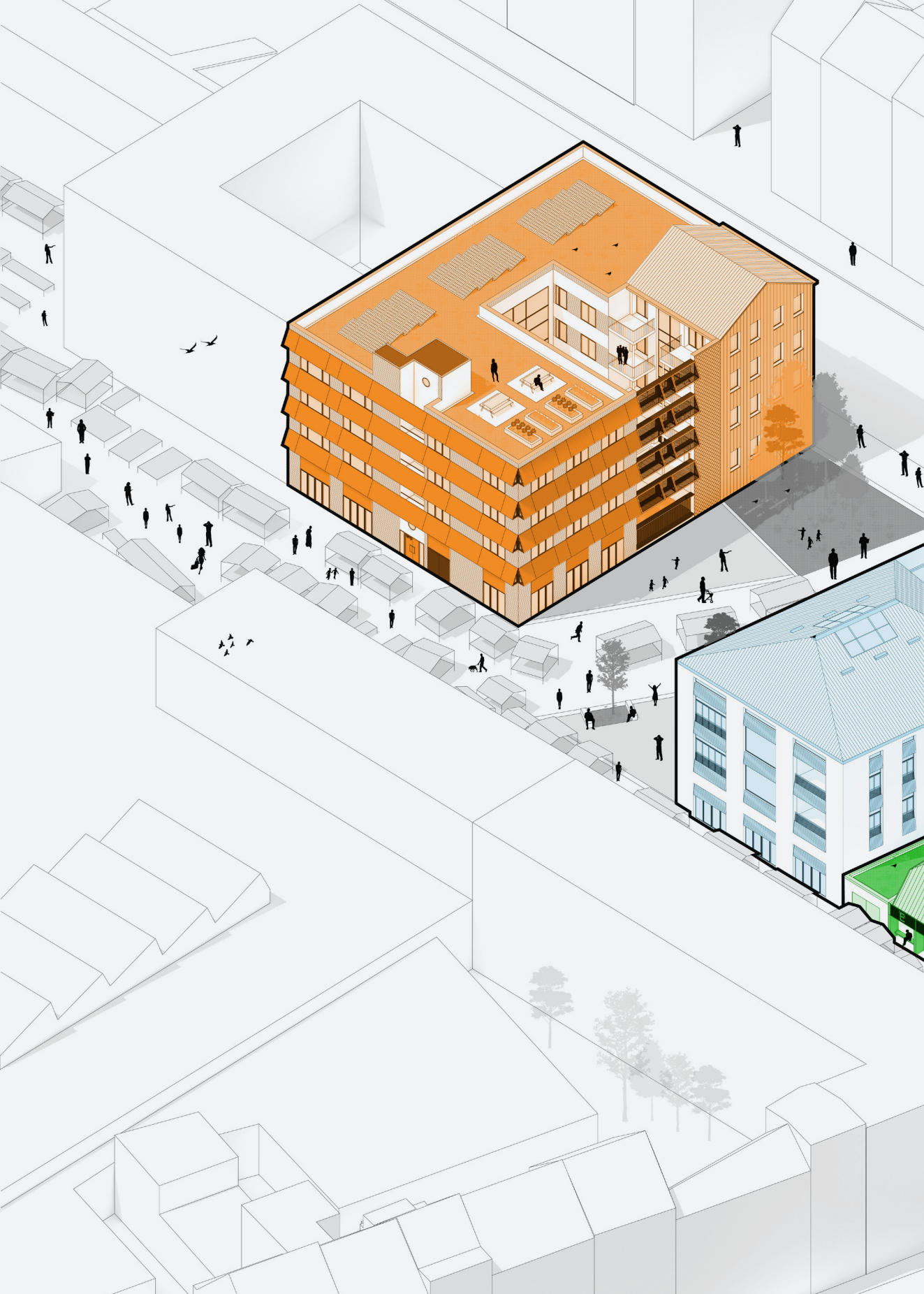


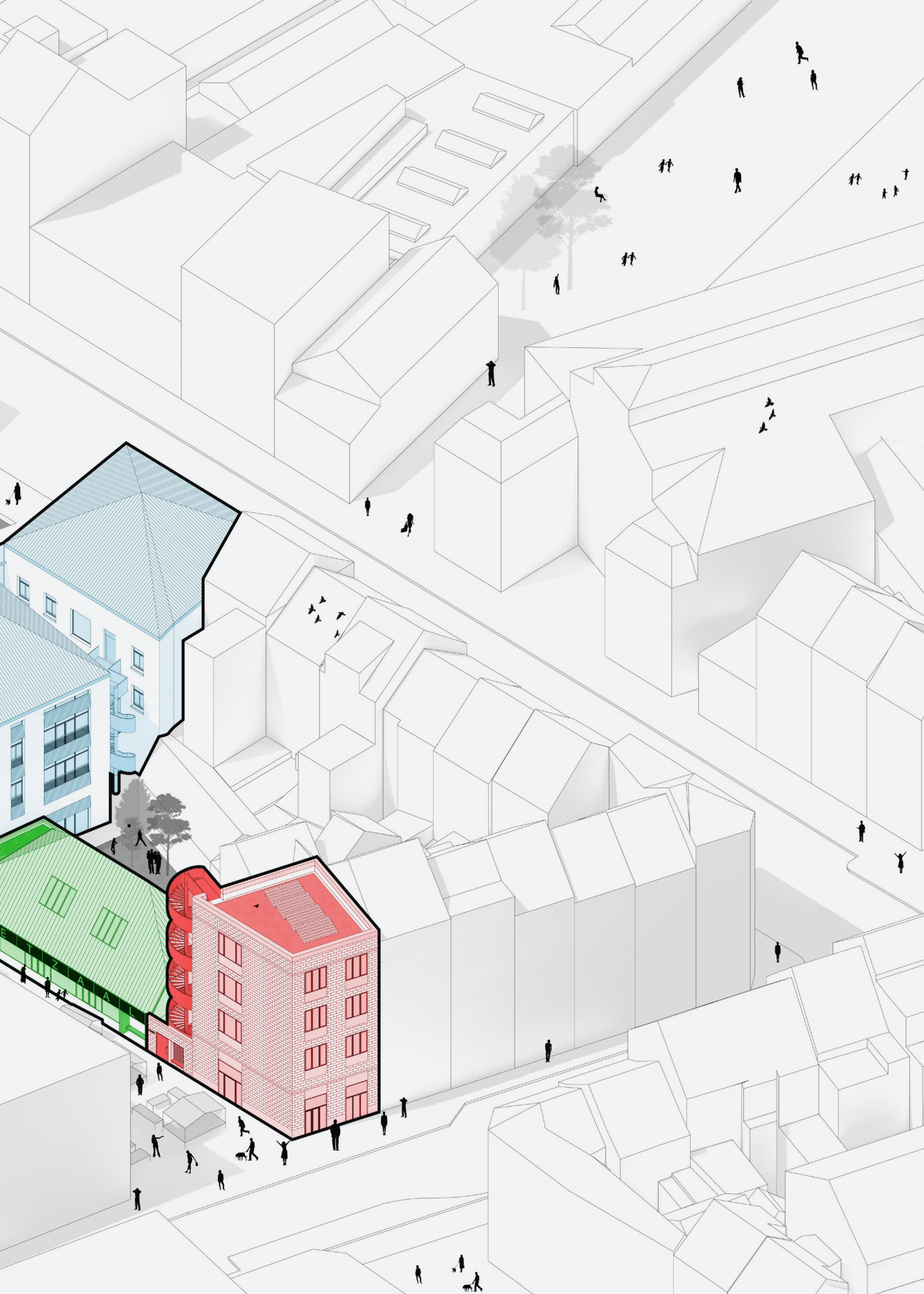






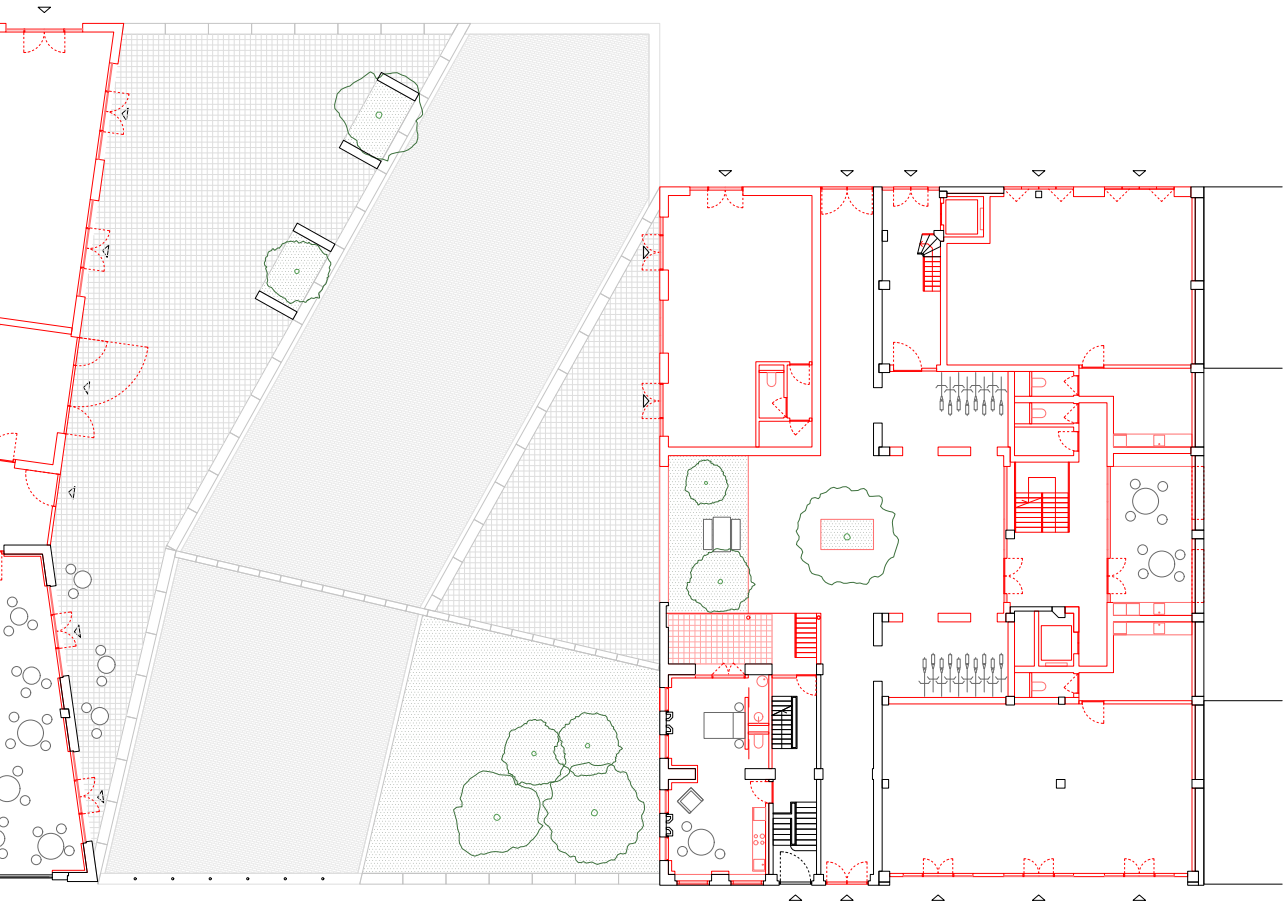








Ground floor 1:100 (scaled to 1:350)

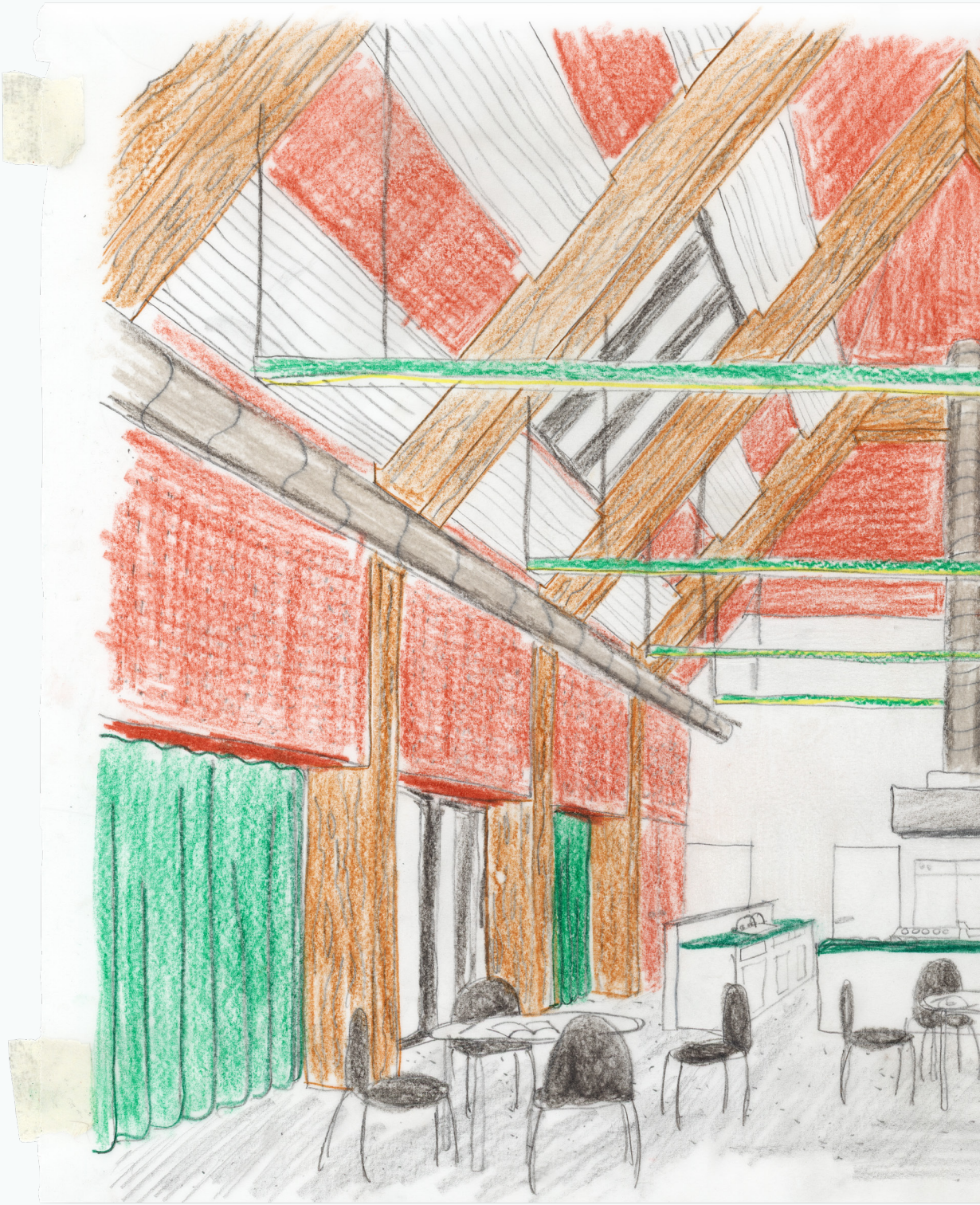




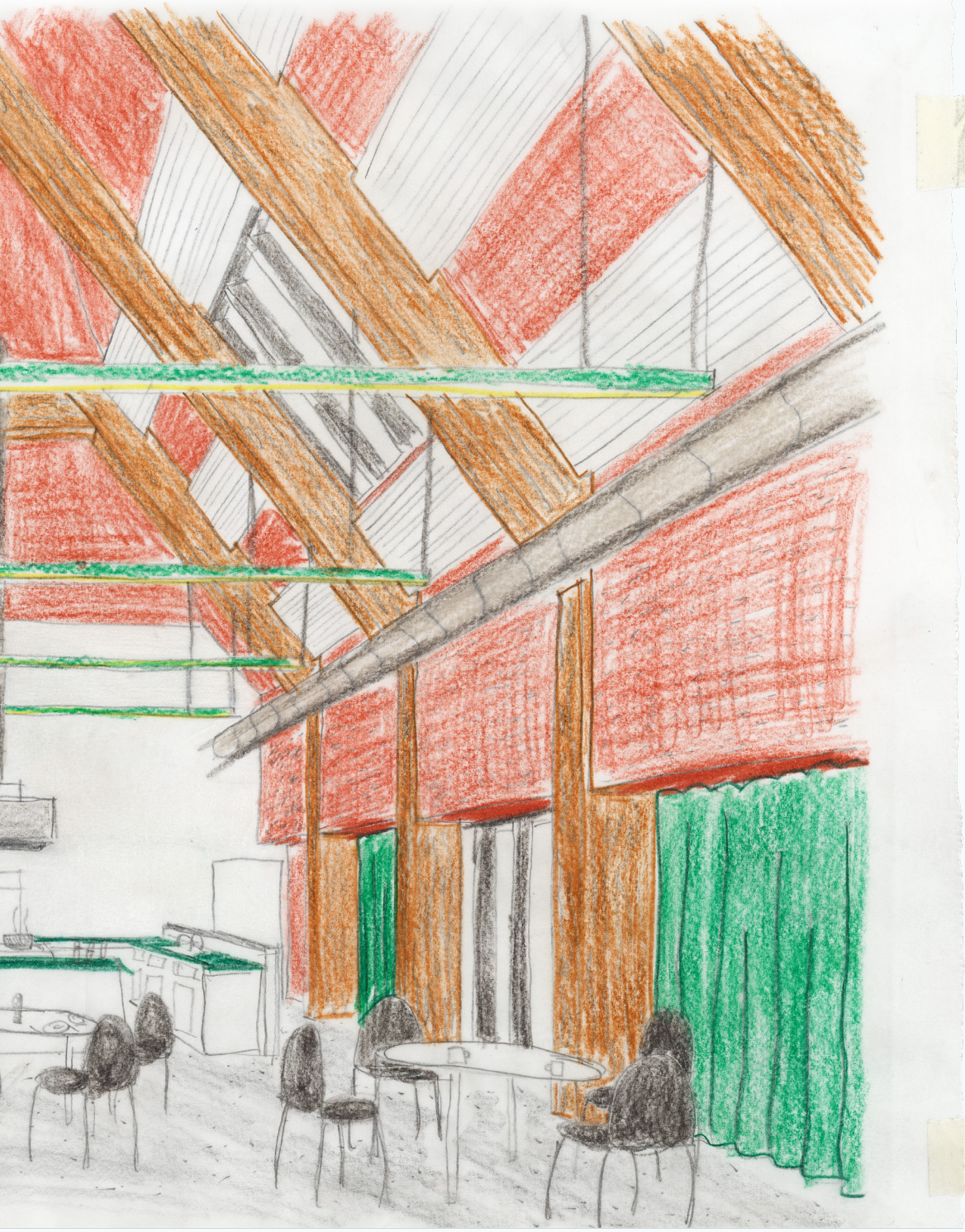
Staircase De Herberg



Staircase 1820



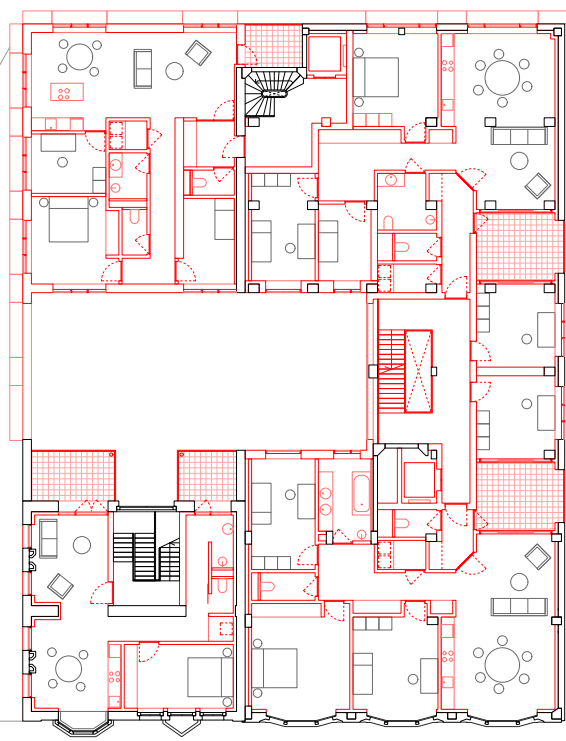
The hall within Eetzaal





First floor 1:100 (scaled to 1:350)





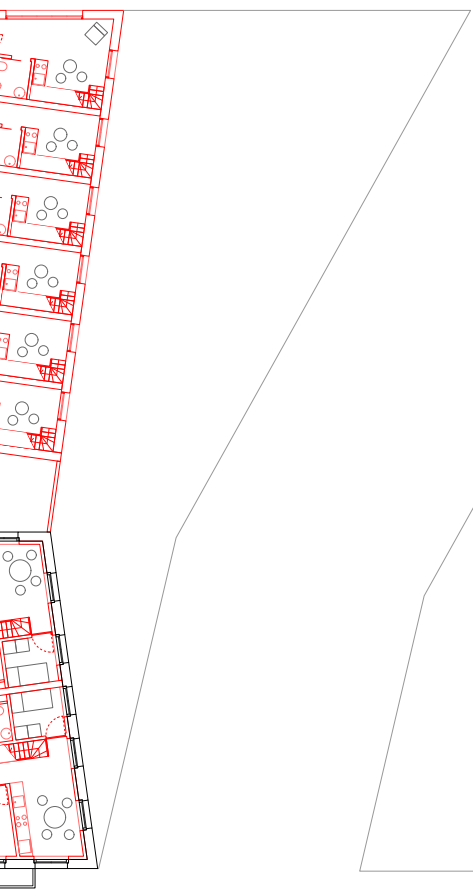


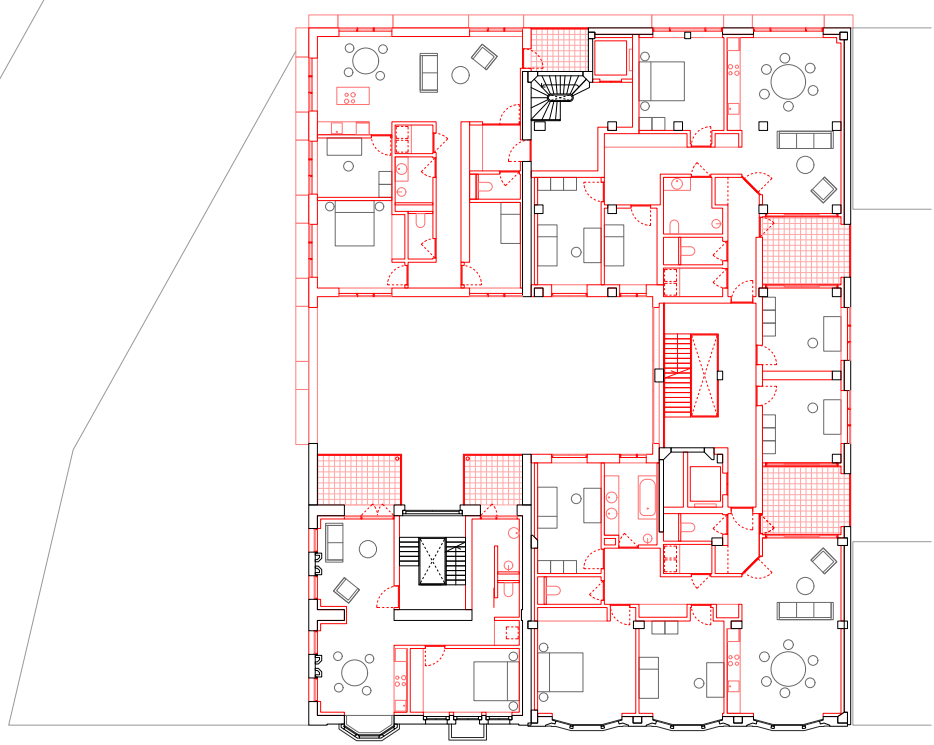
The portego in De Herberg





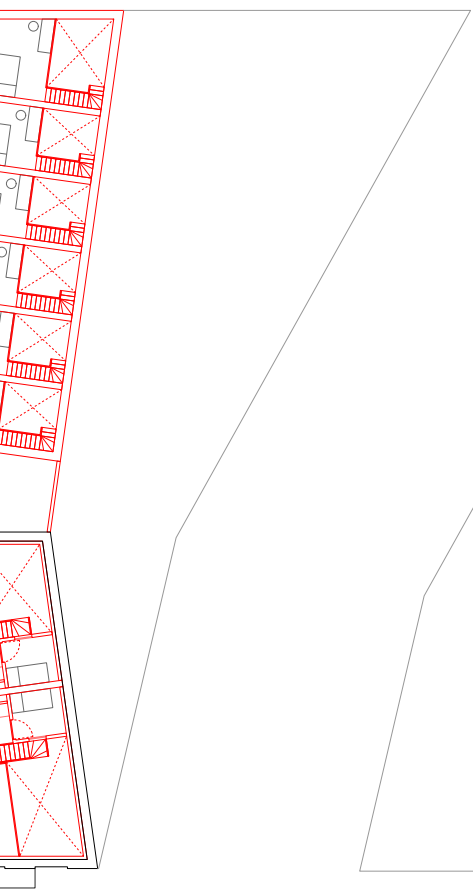
Second floor 1:100 (scaled to 1:350)

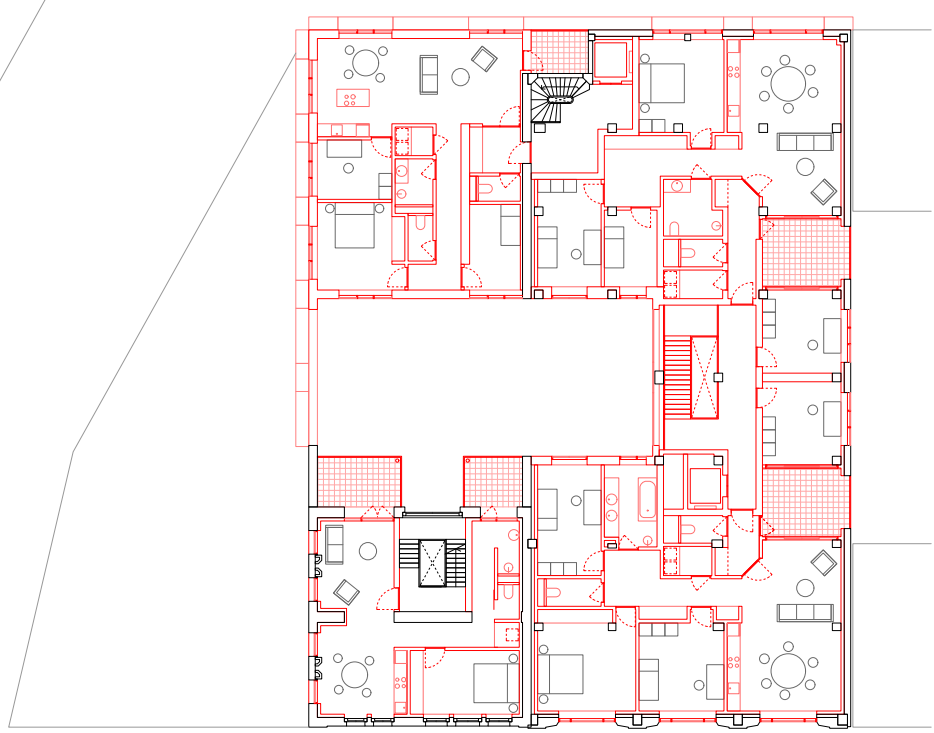


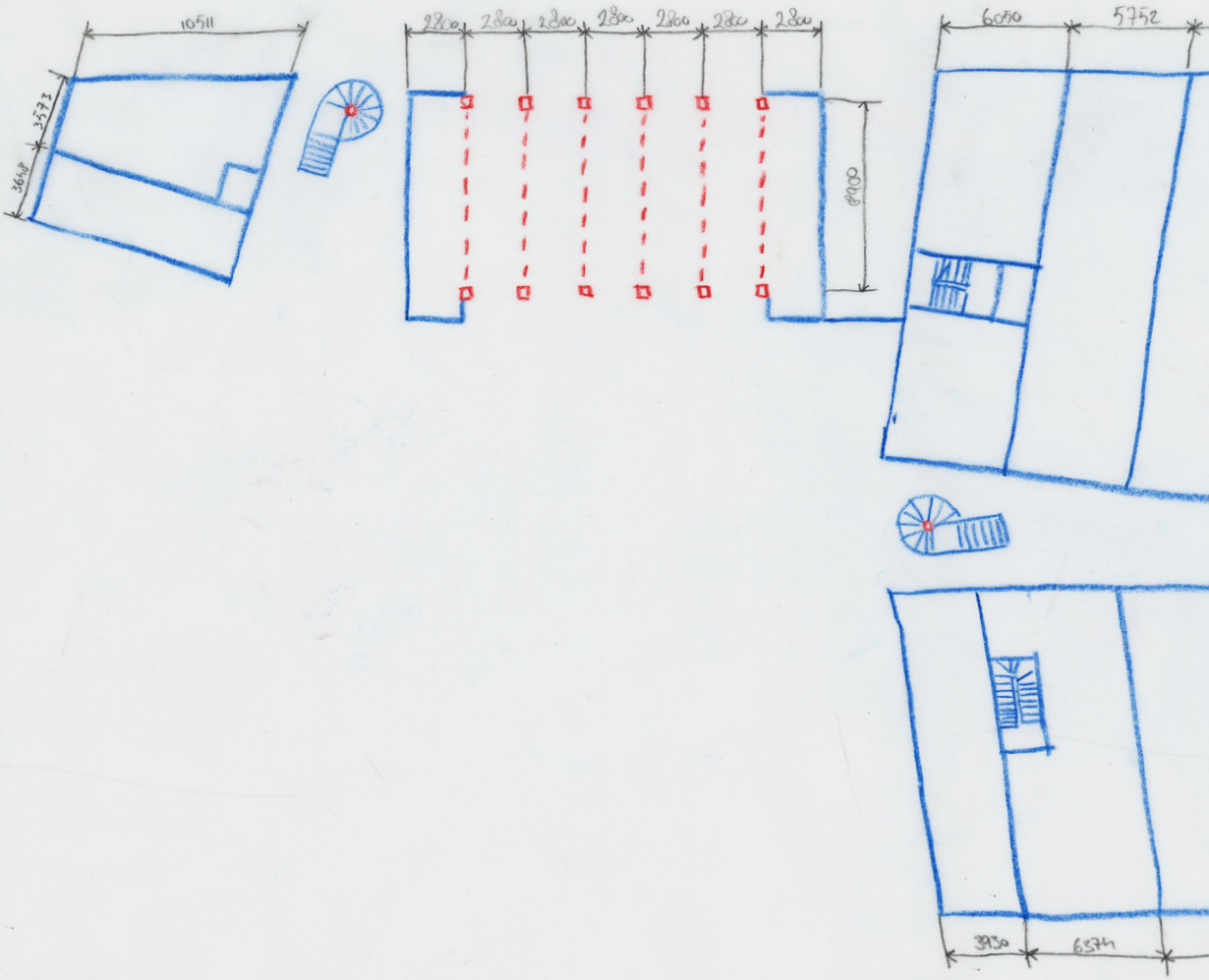




Third floor 1:100 (scaled to 1:350)

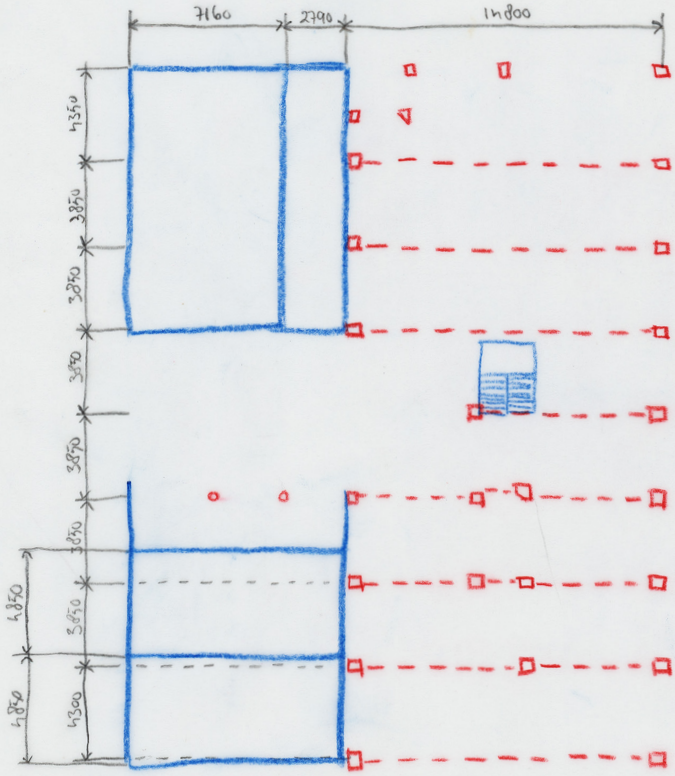


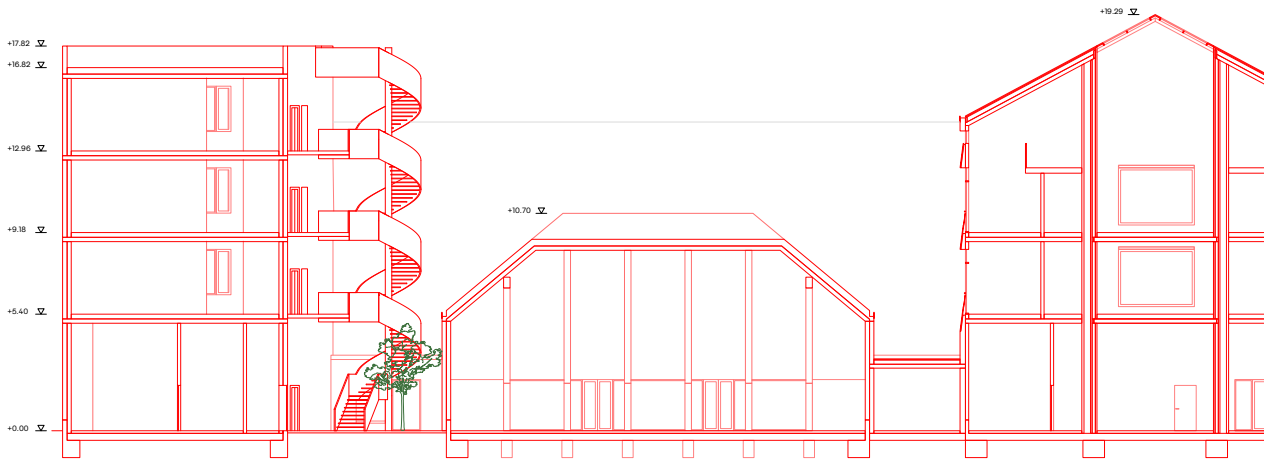




Grid and load-bearing structure

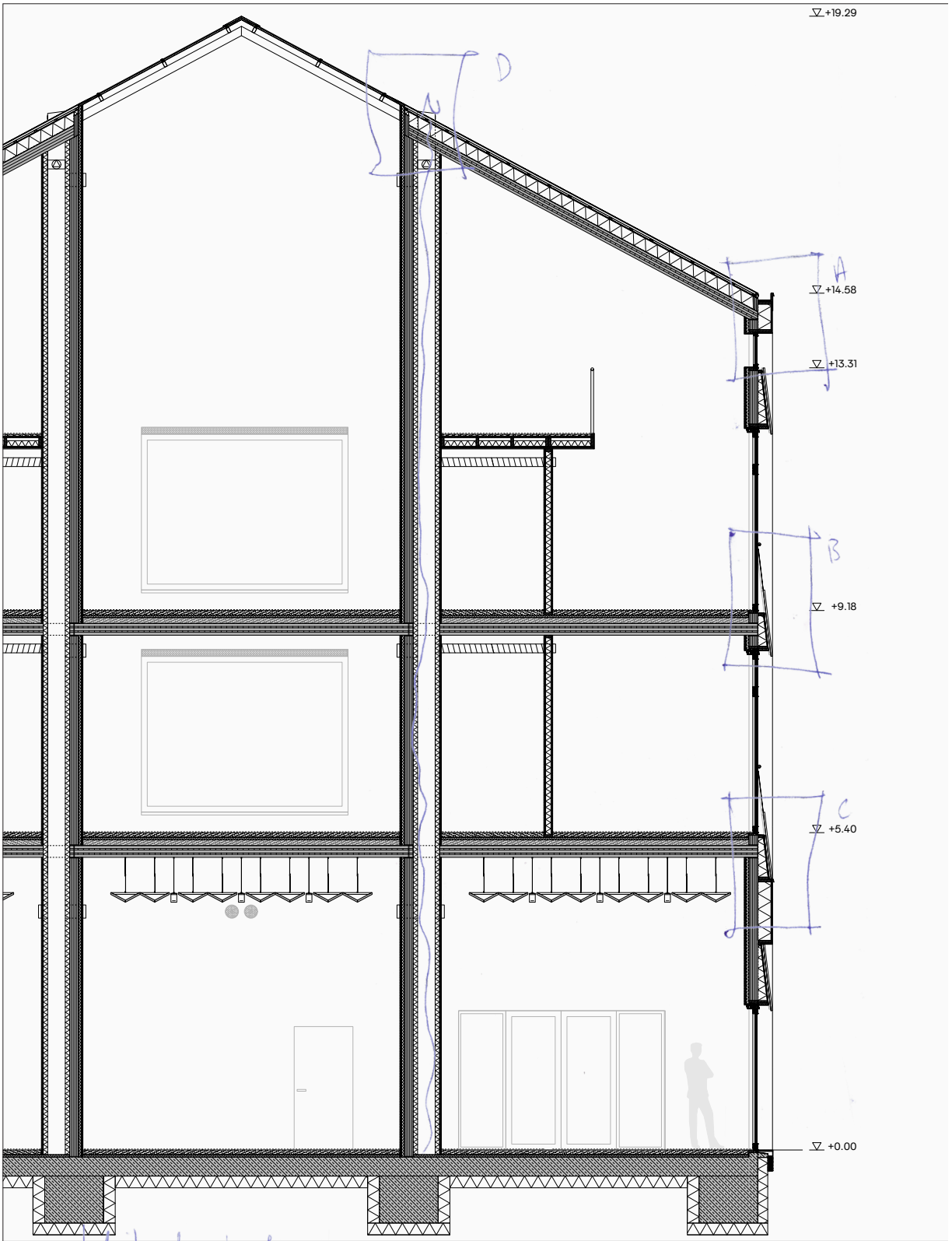

6050
20670
7600
7660
6080


7160
2790
14900
4350
3850
3850
3850
3850
3850
4850
3650
4850
4300



Section 1:100 (scaled to 1:350)


+18.10
+15.87
+11.45
+8.20
+4.95
+0.00



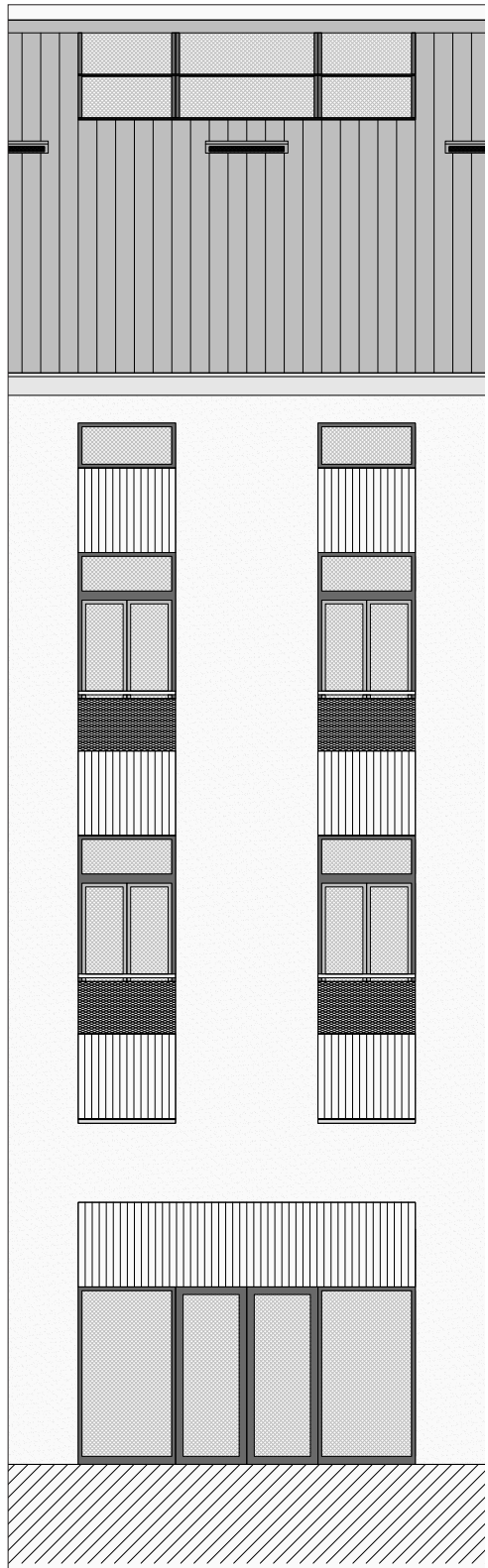
Opmerking: detail de herberg

Urban architecture Julianalaan 134, 2628 BZ Delft
Tel 015 278 9805 Fax 015 278 9807

Tekening voor:
Adres:

Ref ontwerp:
Urban Arch 19/05/26

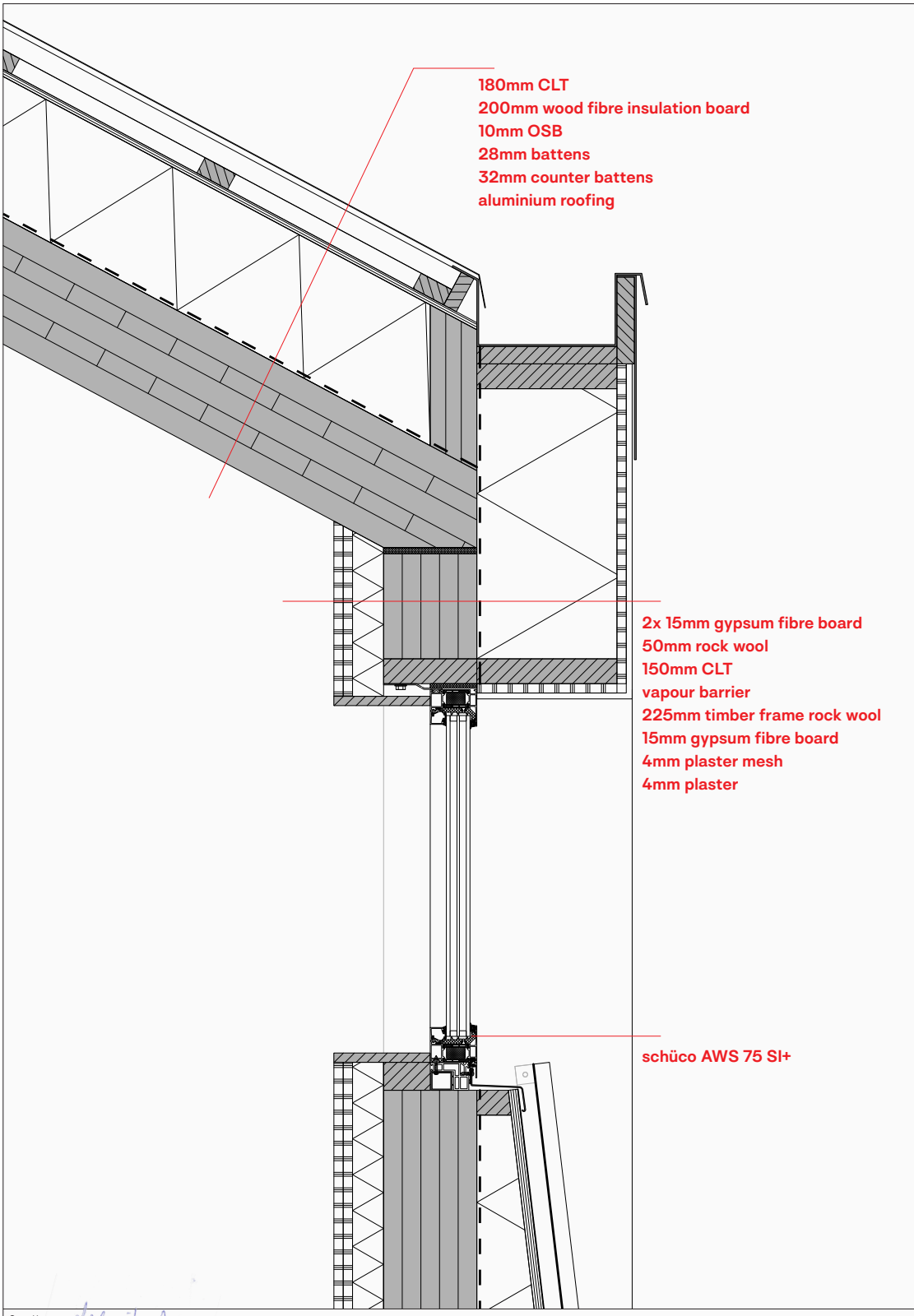
Fragment De Herberg 1:20 (scaled to 1:100)



Opmerking:

Urban architecture Julianalaan 134, 2628 BZ Delft
Tel 015 278 9805 Fax 015 278 9807

Tekening voor:
Adres:



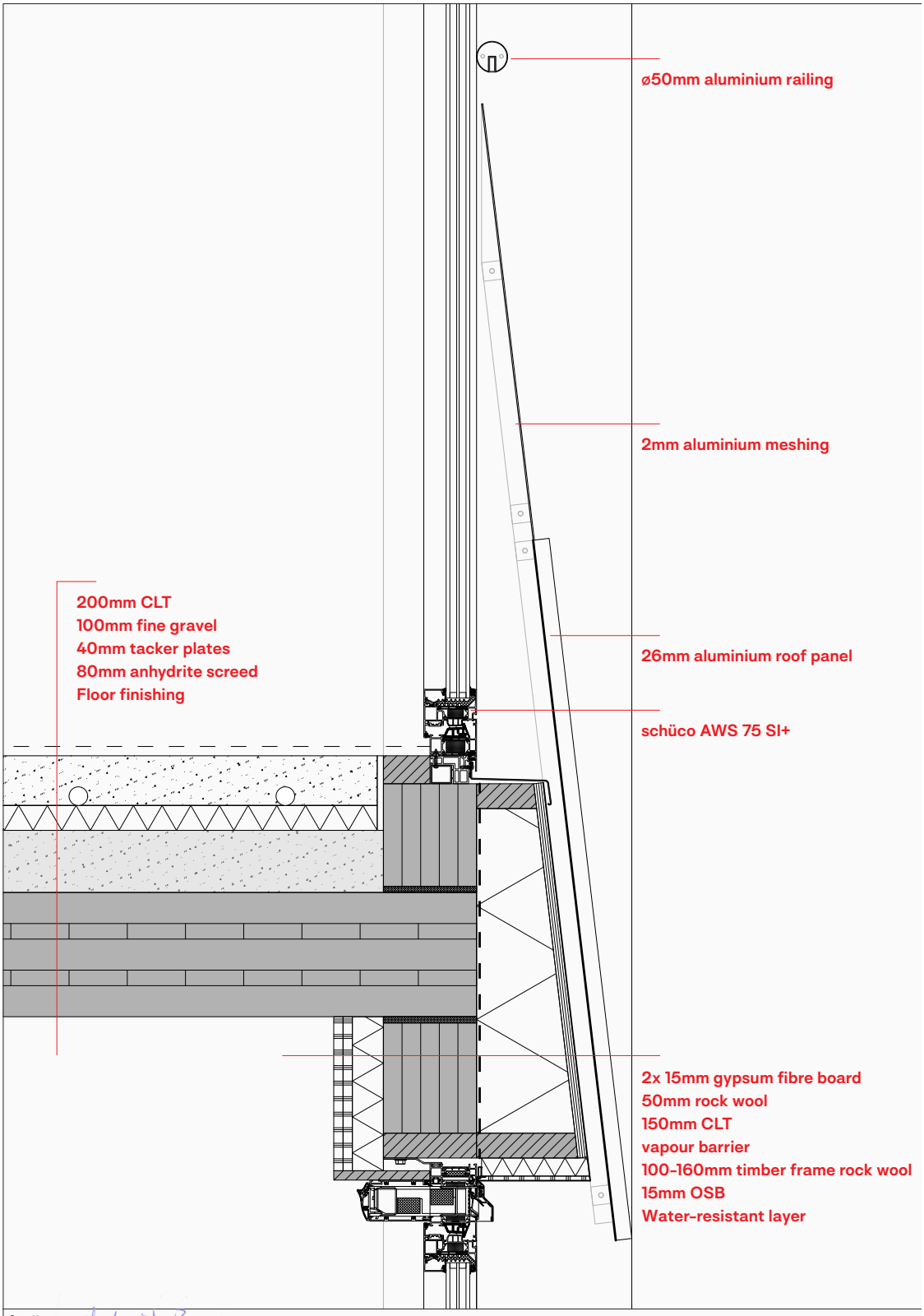
Opmerking: detail A

Urban architecture Julianalaan 134, 2628 BZ Delft
Tel 015 278 9805 Fax 015 278 9807

Tekening voor:
Adres:

Ref ontwerp:
Urban Arch 19/05/26

Detail A 1:5 (scaled to 1:10)



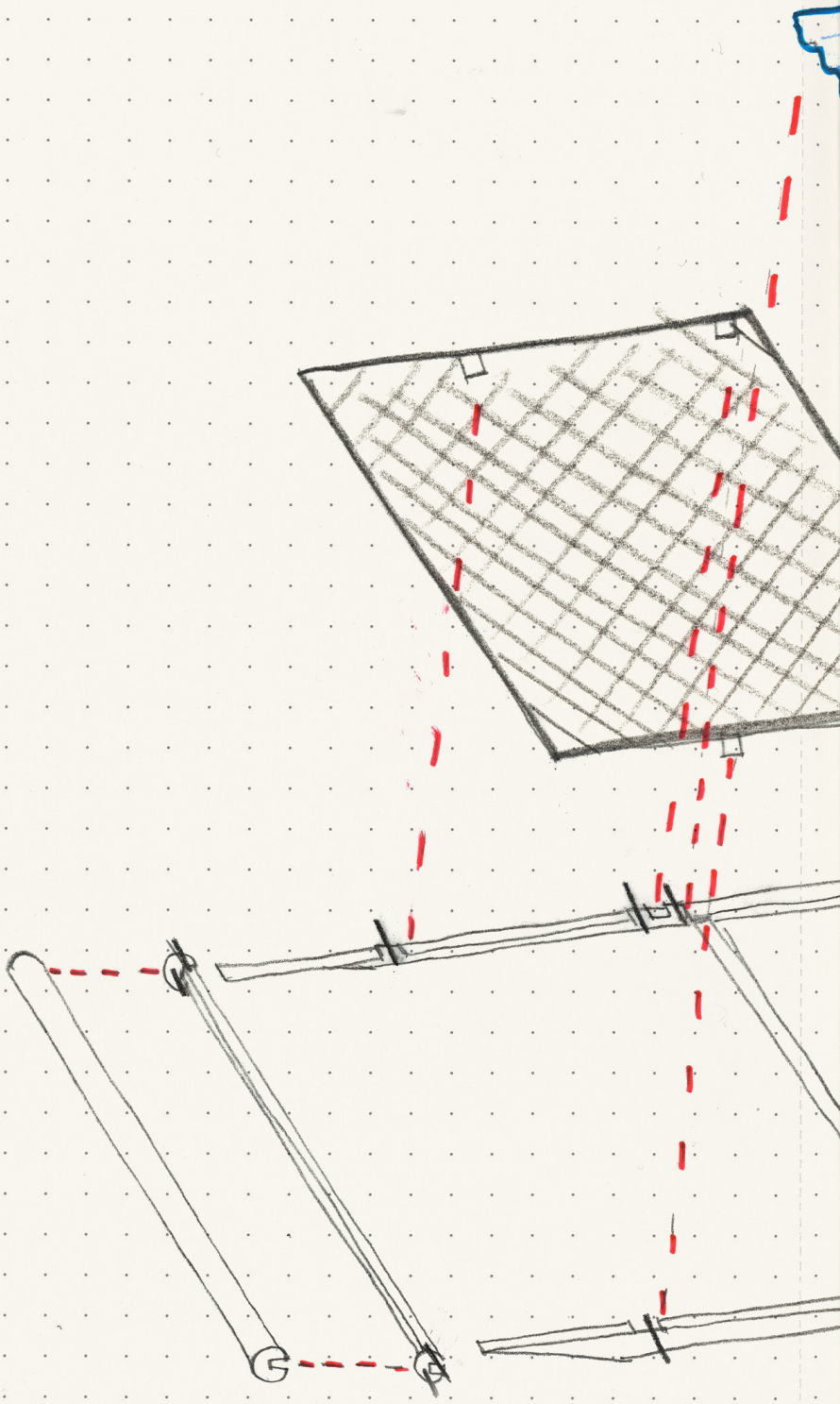
Opmerking: detail B

Urban architecture Julianalaan 134, 2628 BZ Delft
Tel 015 278 9805 Fax 015 278 9807

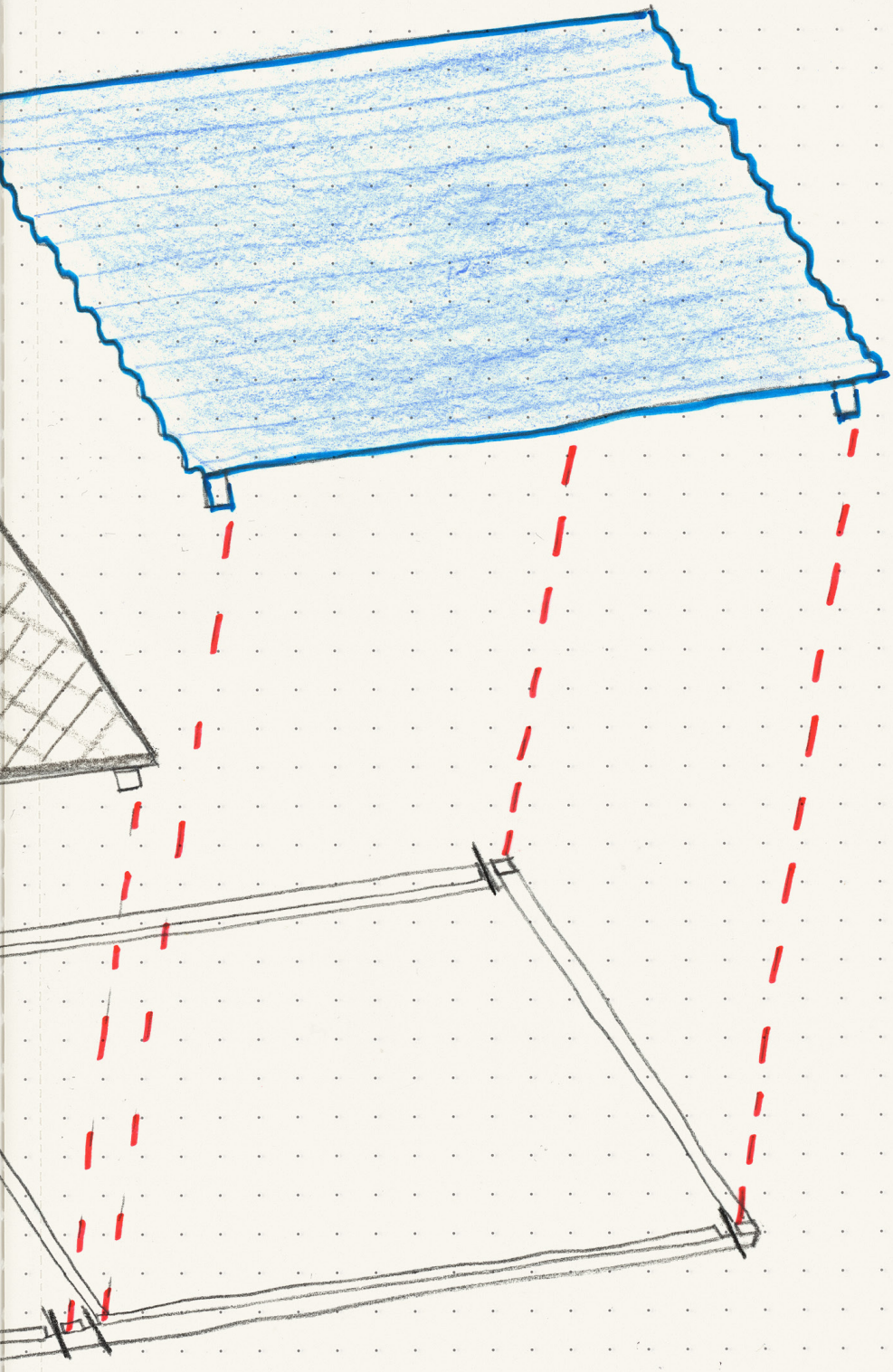
Tekening voor:
Adres:

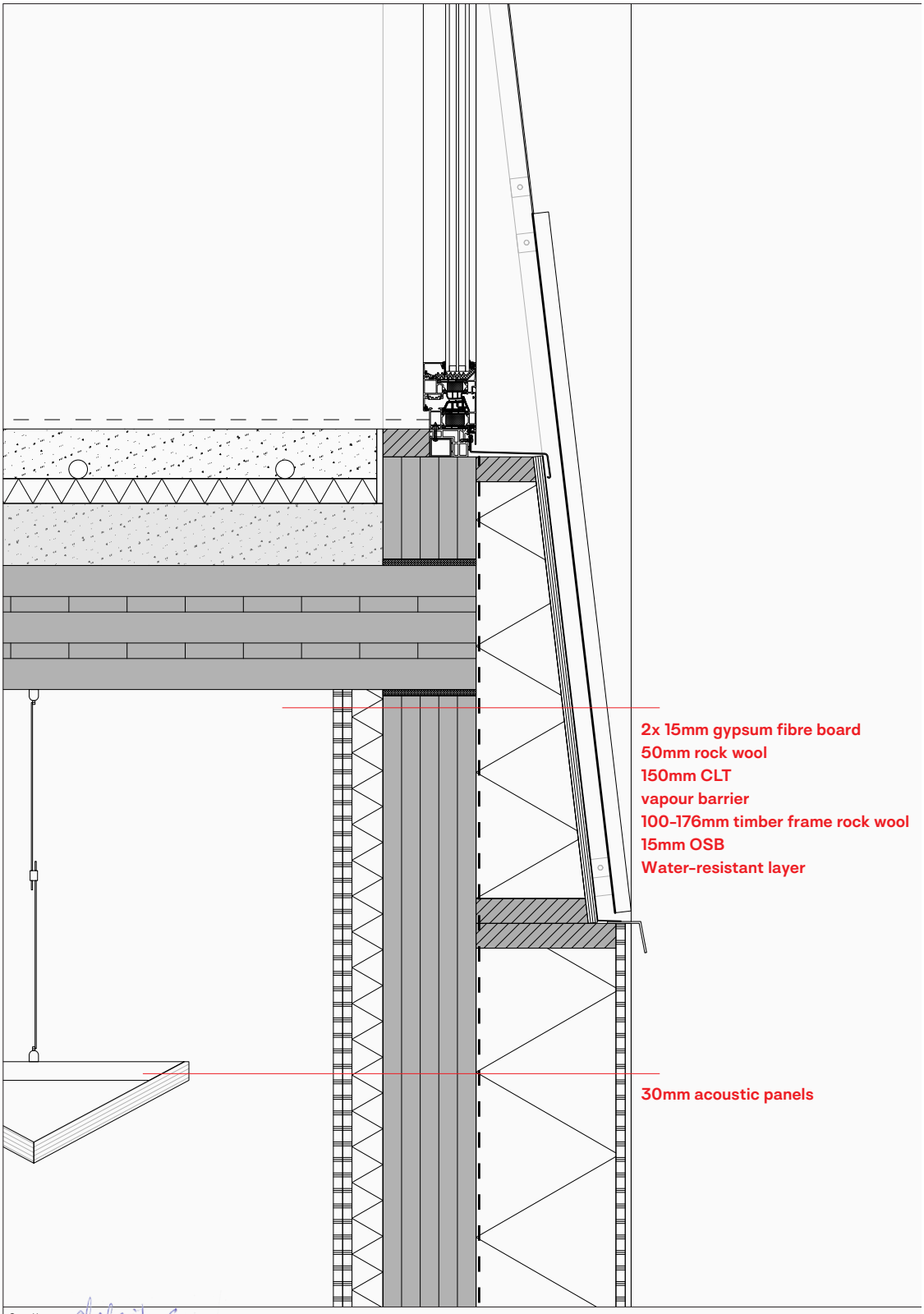
Ref ontwerp:
Urban Arch 19/05/26

Detail B 1:5 (scaled to 1:10)



Balcony railing principle drawing





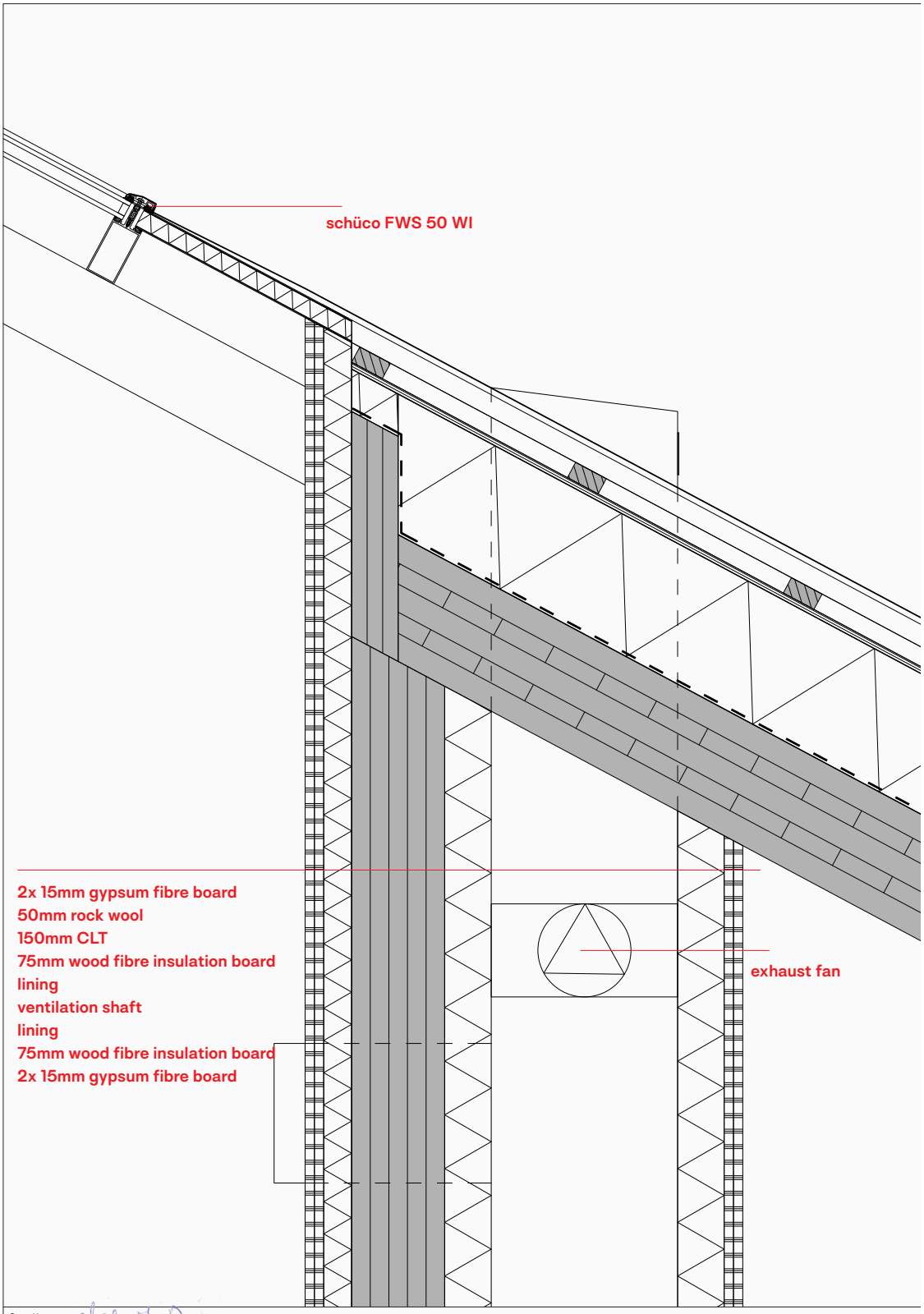
Opmerking: detail C

Urban architecture Julianalaan 134, 2628 BZ Delft
Tel 015 278 9805 Fax 015 278 9807

Tekening voor:
Adres:

Ref ontwerp:
Urban Arch 19/05/26

Detail C 1:5 (scaled to 1:10)



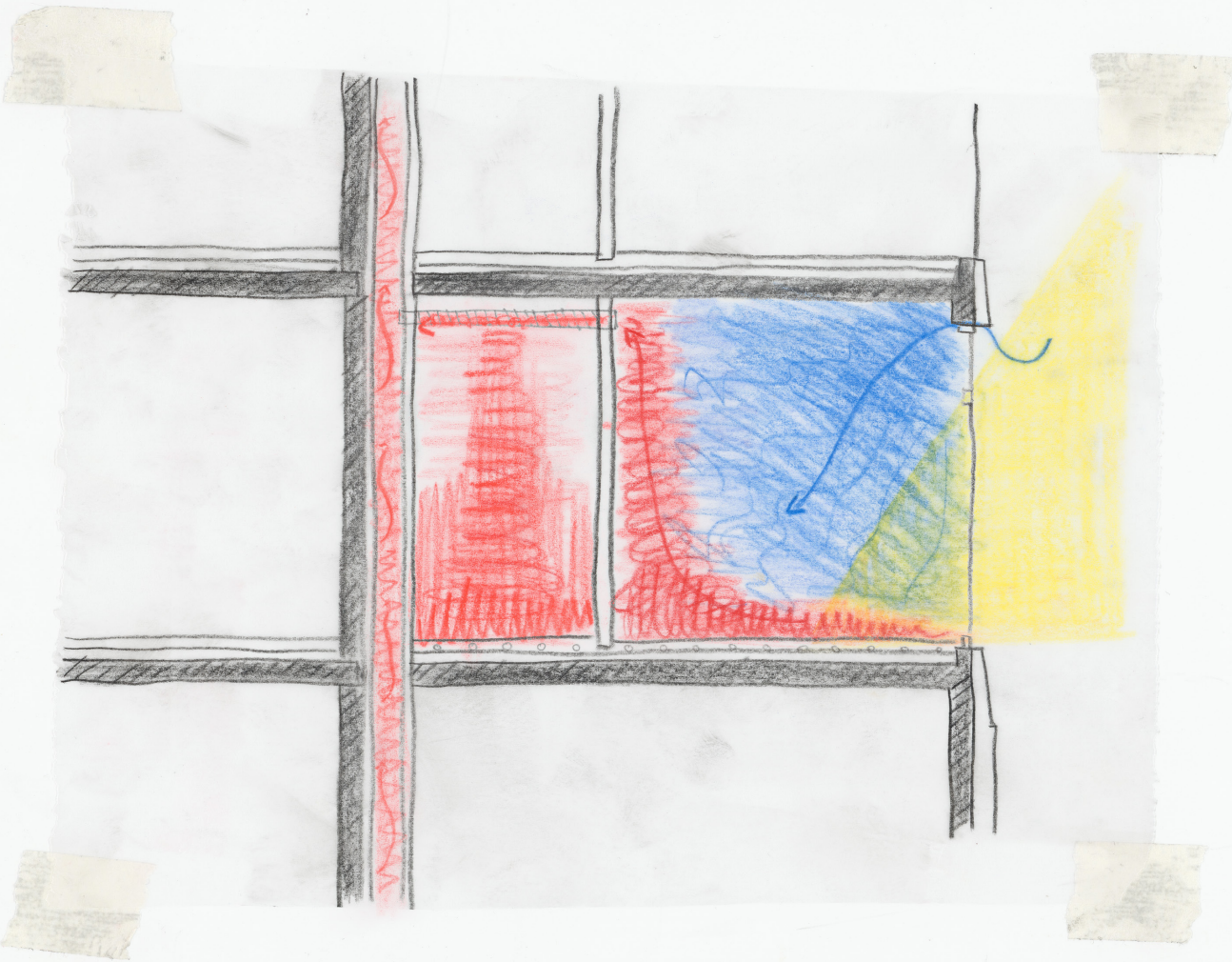
Opmerking: detail D

Urban architecture Julianalaan 134, 2628 BZ Delft
Tel 015 278 9805 Fax 015 278 9807

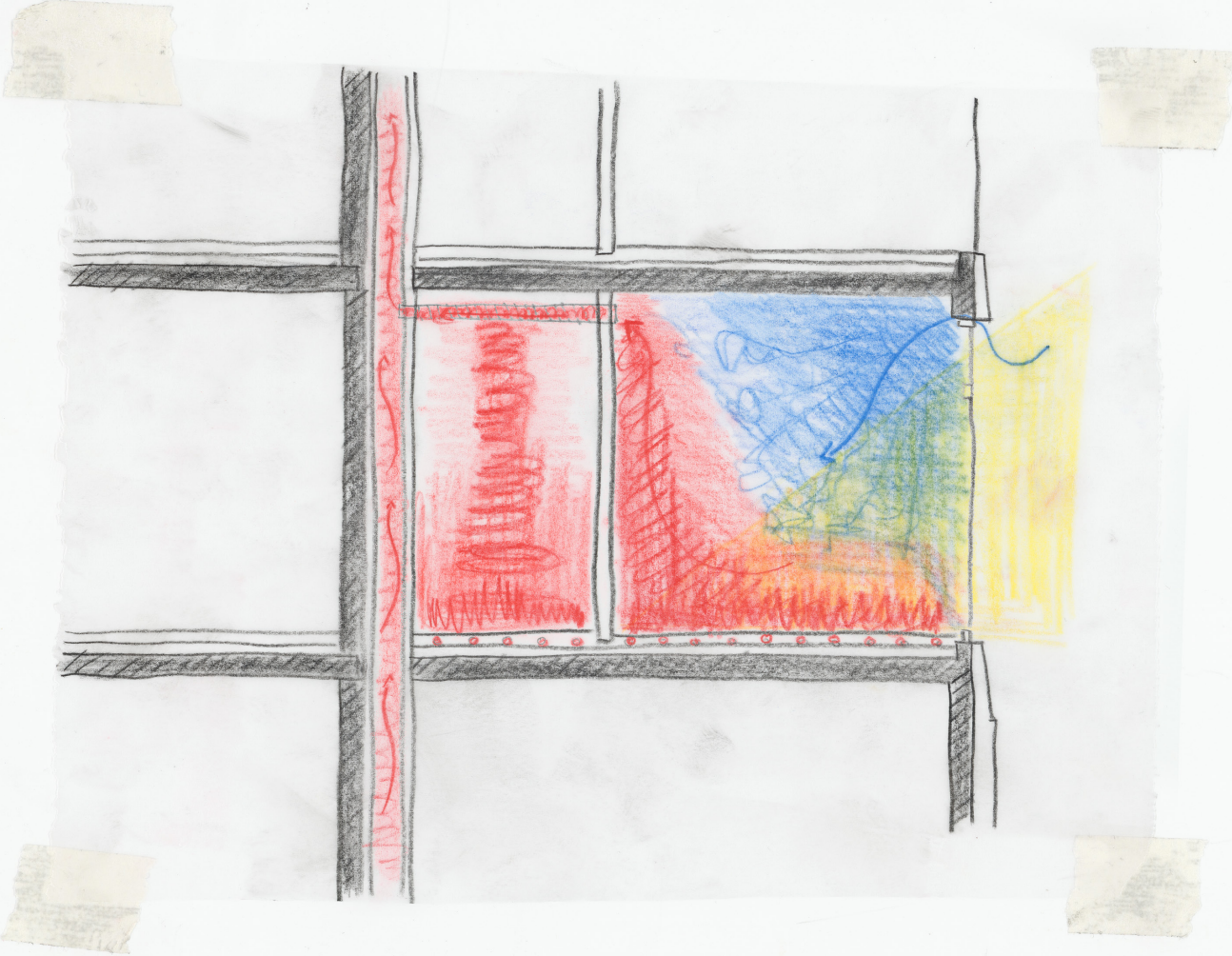
Tekening voor:
Adres:

Ref ontwerp:
Urban Arch 19/05/26

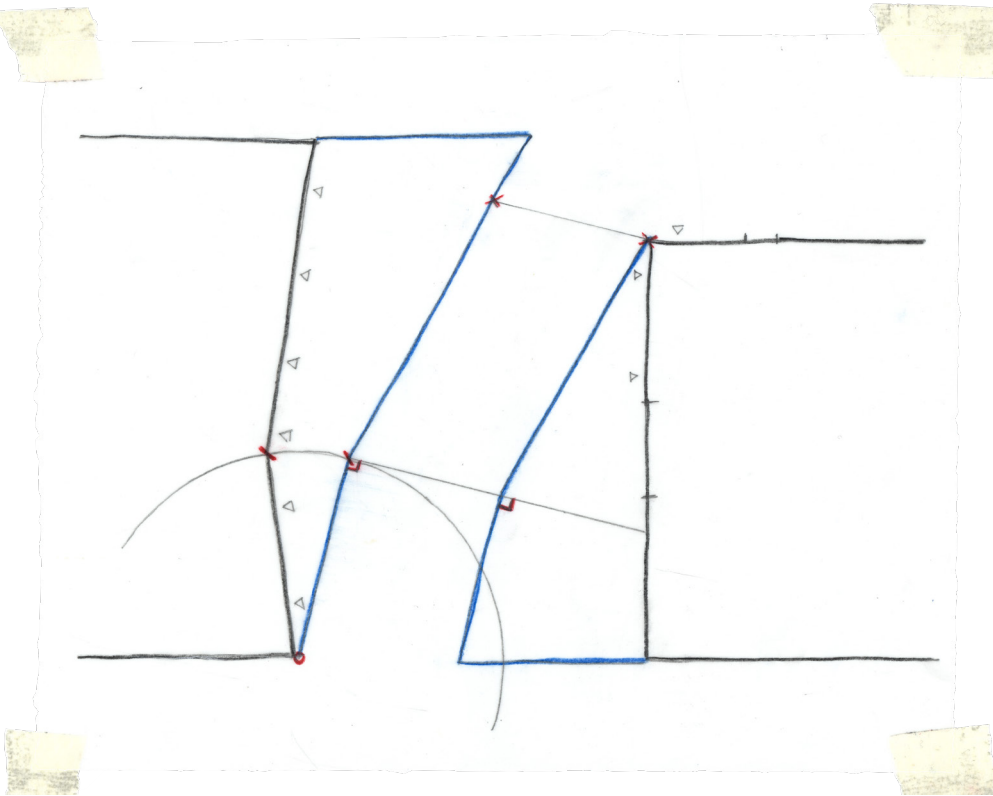
Detail D 1:5 (scaled to 1:10)



Summer climate principle

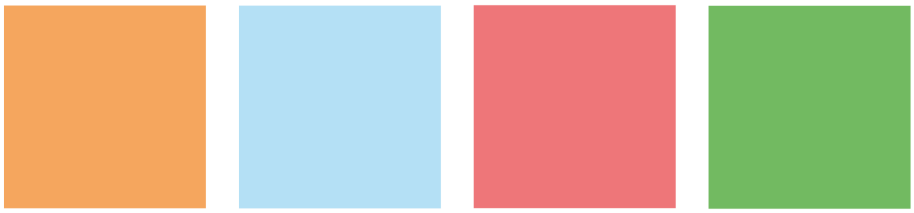


Winter climate principle

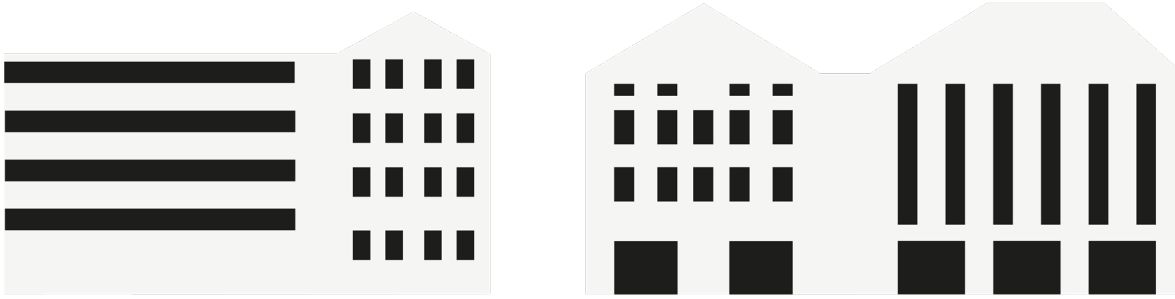


A new public

The new buildings define the now public space through their presence. Their openings ensure there are always eyes on the street. Along the street, large parts of glass are placed where the buildings engage with the public realm. Openings are introduced into facades that were originally closed. Each building is given an identifiable colour derived from its material or function to strengthen readability.



Of all the buildings, those facing the new square are the most defining. The private 1820 and the collective De Herberg. The old and the new can be distinguished through the language in their facades. 1820 is mainly horizontal, guided by the structural grid of 20 and reinforced by the louvres across the south facing facade. To the west it presents itself as a unified whole, while to the south, where it meets the vertical 18, the facade becomes more permeable, to clash. De Herberg is vertical, its rhythm taken from the existing building it mirrors. Broken in the middle to signify entry, the vertical rhythm continues through the french balconies of the units, their railings copied to the existing. At the plinth, these verticals come together, marking the public ground floor.



A new square is made in the middle. Formed by the lines of the blocks, it's a space that most people will pass through, but that also invites them to stay. The pavement clearly establishes a route from the Kleine Zennepark to the Abattoir, but it does not force. The changing materiality in the tiles still allows users to decide their own routing. The placement of greenery responds to both circulation and program. A garden is introduced along the facade that has housing raised on a half floor. All other programs open directly onto the public space. Their doors swing outward to reinforce the relation to the square.

This could be a possibility. One in which residents can claim and build upon their space.







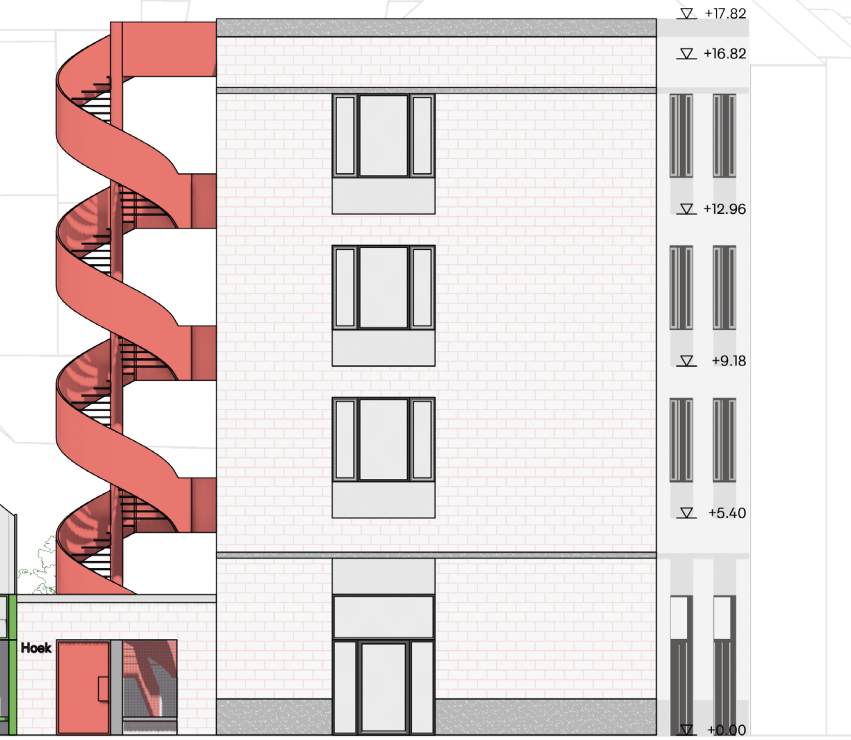




Elevation south 1:100 (scaled to 1:250)


+19.29
+14.58
+13.31
+9.18
+5.40


+10.70
E E T Z A A L


+17.82
+16.82
+12.96
+9.18
+5.40
+0.00
Hoek



Eetzaal and Hoek meeting


Hoek



Elevation 1820 south 1:100 (scaled to 1:300)



1:33 elevation 1820 south

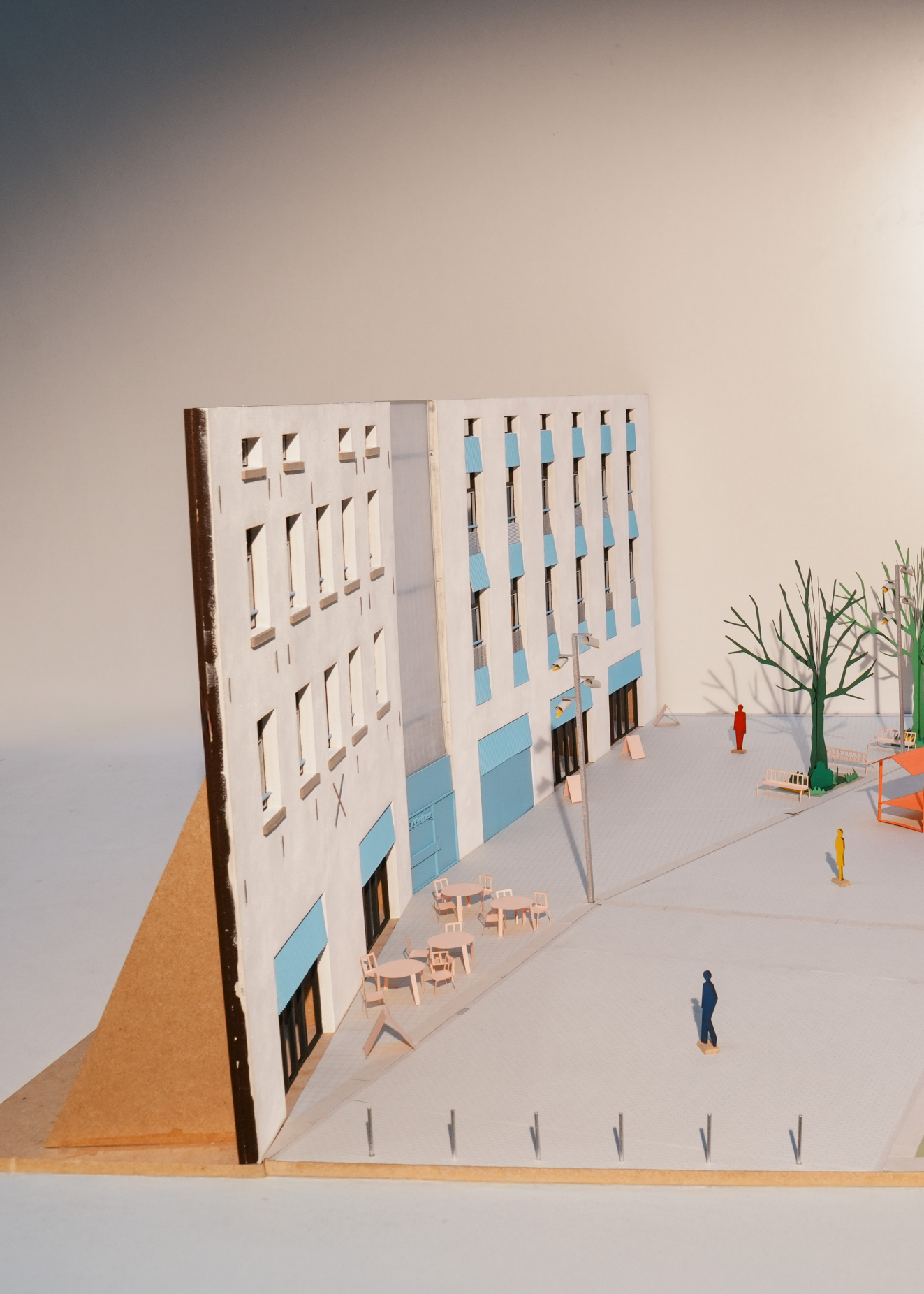


Elevation De Herberg west 1:100 (scaled to 1:300)



1:33 elevation De Herberg west

1:33 of the square >






De Herberg




De Herberg

1:33 Entrance De Herberg

Notes

1 Federale politie, 2024, Veiligheidsmonitor 2024. https://www.politie.be/statistieken/nl/veiligheidsmonitor/veiligheidsmonitor-2024; IBSA (Perspective Brussels), 2025, Monitoring des quartiers. https://monitoringdesquartiers.brussels/; Urban Brussels, 2025, BruGIS. https://gis.urban.brussels/brugis/#/

2 SAAMO, 2025, Omgevingsanalyse van de Heyvaertwijk voor het project Nieuwe Stek, pg 63

3 SAAMO, 2025, Omgevingsanalyse van de Heyvaertwijk voor het project Nieuwe Stek, pg 64

4 SAAMO, 2025, Omgevingsanalyse van de Heyvaertwijk voor het project Nieuwe Stek, pg 64

5 Abattoir, Our history. https://www.abattoir.be/en/our-history; Claudel, Philippe & Scohier, Claire, 2014, Heyvaert: vers une transformation?. Inter-Environment Bruxelles https://ieb.be/IMG/pdf/etude-heyvaert-oct14.pdf

6 Abattoir, 2013, Projet De Developpement Global Abattoir, pg 46. https://www.abattoir.be/sites/files/content/page/fields/downloads/ABATTOIR_update%20Juin%202013_FR_small_0.pdf

Reflection

Pushing myself out of my comfort zone is something I actively pursue. In both my personal and professional life. I do it to learn, to challenge, to experiment. If I don't, I start questioning why I am doing any of this in the first place.

This project was an opportunity to do exactly that. I went in open-minded, looking forward to new methods of researching and designing. There were moments of scepticism along the way, but I almost regret having had them.

Being given the time to experiment, to document and to interact with the people of Heyvaertwijk brought me closer to something that was, in part, new to me. In the past my projects mostly consisted of me behind a computer, occasionally a sketch if my notebook got lucky. Here, we went into the neighbourhood, speaking to the people that make it. We didn't arrive with a set of prepared questions. We went in just wanting to talk, to meet and to get to know. The way people spoke about their neighbourhood made it immediately clear how proud they are of it. That's a feeling I could not discover behind a computer.

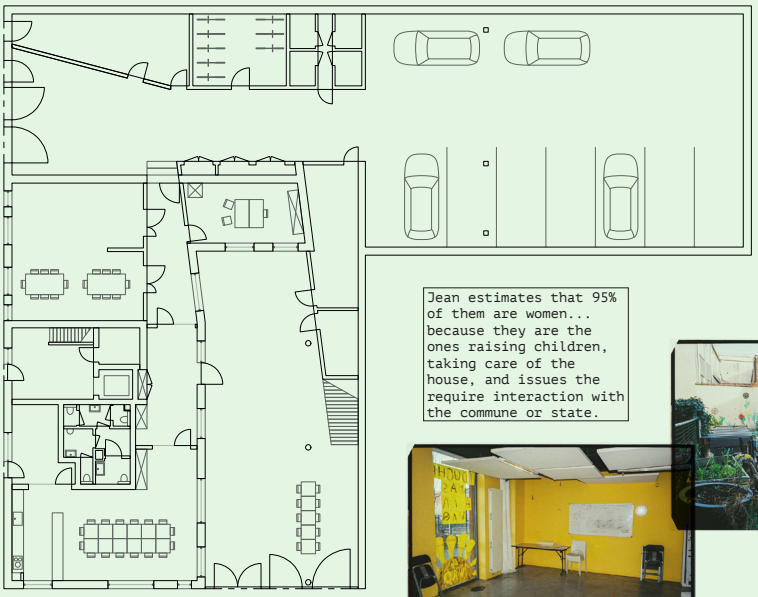
The hard part was translating this into a tangible design. I struggled more than I expected. In the middle of the design phase I got too stuck in conceptual decisions, which held the design back. Understanding how to show the relationship between the new, reuse and transformation in the facades took considerable time. And putting it all into a narrative that carried the work undertaken was its own challenge. The design that existed at the start is different from what it became. The program stayed, but the massing and the way it is told have changed. Four buildings now define a new public space along Sergeant De Bruynestraat. A new green public space that can be safe for residents to gather and move through, while the program creates a greater variety of housing to address the housing issues within the neighbourhood and strengthens social cohesion.

What this project confirmed is that the architect has to be participative, both in the field and at the desk. Willing to listen, to adjust, to collaborate. The guidance of Elsbeth and

Leeke, but also the conversations with Karim and Jean were all part of shaping the project. Architecture cannot be made alone.

This project has made clear what kind of architect I want to be. One that is present, that takes initiative, that engages with the problems of society rather than waiting to be asked. Not only pointing at problems, but also demonstrating what could be done about it. That is what this project tried to do. It is what I want to keep doing.


Rencontres à Heyvaert
meeting and coexisting



Jean stresses that the commune and developers are not listening to the people of Heyvaert.

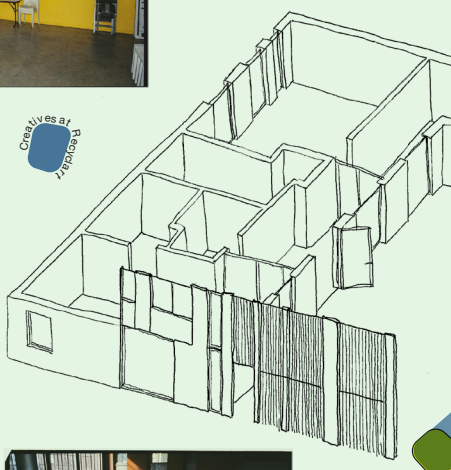


Jean estimates that 95% of them are women... because they are the ones raising children, taking care of the house, and issues the require interaction with the commune or state.





Creatives at Recyclart





Jean invites us into the kitchen space, where he offers us beverages.

People who come to WAQ live the neighbourhood.





Creatives and helpers at the Soubrette

Car dealers and workers
Car buyers
Established communities
Other notable spaces
Artists, creatives, helpers
'Bobo' Belges
Drug dealers and abusers
Car dealers and workers
Car buyers
Established communities
Other notable

Boxing club and sports hall

People find out about the WAQ by word-of-mouth, they don't use social media, only WhatsApp chats and voice notes.

WAQ's work is rooted in trust.

Local children playing under the roof of la Grande Hall

On Wednesday afternoons they hold mini-football tournaments. In the two weeks around Christmas they have food, spaces to draw and Playstation tournaments. Often they attract 12-14-year-olds.

Restaurant Idée 53 in Euclides office block

For a few months now, few people have come park. Karim describes like a death in the p like it's soul. "Le p est mort. C'est comme c'etait un être vivan repris, il y a des pa et ca devient plus ca

Car dealers and workers

Resolution Carpenters meeting public space in the air

Worshippers at Al Fath Mosque

Outside Eglise Universelle

'Bobo' Belges

Drug dealers and abusers

Car dealers and workers

Car buyers

Established communities

Other notable spaces

Artists, creatives, helpers

'Bobo' Belges

Drug dealers and abusers

Car dealers and workers

Car buyers

Established communities

Other notable spaces

Artists, creatives, helpers

'Bobo' Belges

Drug dealers and abusers | Car dealers and workers | Car buyers | Established communities | Other notable spaces | Artists, creatives, helpers | 'Bobo' Belges | Drug dealers and abusers | Car dea

People find out about the WAQ by word-of-mouth, they don't use social media, only WhatsApp chats and voice notes.

WAQ's work is rooted in trust.

Local children playing under the roof of la Grande Hall

WAQ

Boxing club and sports hall

On Wednesday afternoon they hold mini-footbal tournaments. In the tw weeks around Christmas they have food, spaces to draw and Playstatio tournaments. Often the attract 12-14-year-old

Creatives and helpers at the soup kitchen

Car dealers and workers socialise

Worshippers at Al Fath Mosque

'Bobo' Belges
Drug dealers and abusers
Car dealers and workers
Car buyers
Established communities
Other notable spaces
Artists, creatives, helpers
'Bobo' Belges
Dr

Heyvaert is a neighbourhood characterised by its diverse communities, some of which mix while others coexist in parallel worlds which rarely overlap. Following conversations with the people who work, live and love in Heyvaert, a patchwork of spaces where these people meet and dwell together has been collated. The map doesn't intend to be exhaustive, instead focusing on four key spaces which represent where the neighbourhood meets.

Juliette de Metz;Kaan Smits, Mich Rossiter
19 Dec 2025





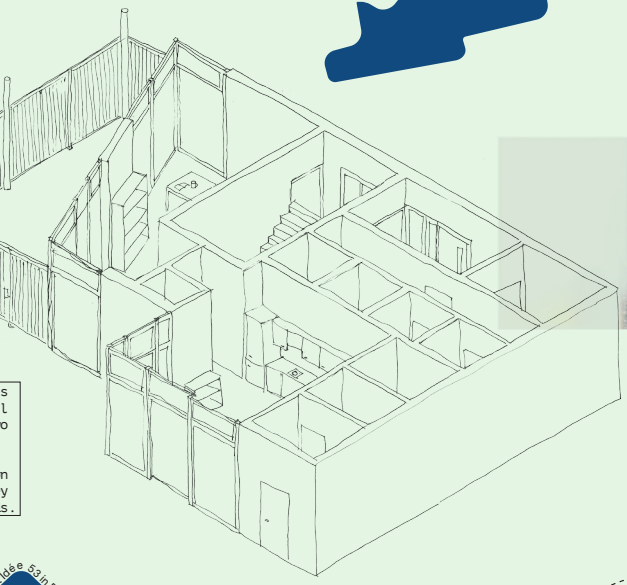




Gated community, including Flemish-speakers

Children at the sports centre

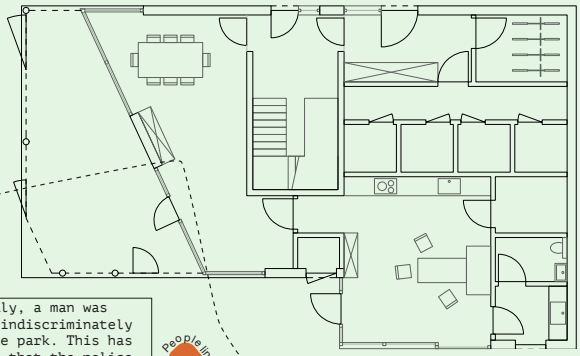
Students at the Institut des arts et métiers







Karim welcomes us into a kitchen space which overlooks the park, with frosted windows between which the 'guardiens' can see into the park without necessarily being seen.



For a few months now, very few people have come to the park. Karim describes it like a death in the park, like it's soul. "Le parc est mort. C'est comme ci que c'etait un être vivant. Ca a repris, il y a des parents et ca devient plus calme."

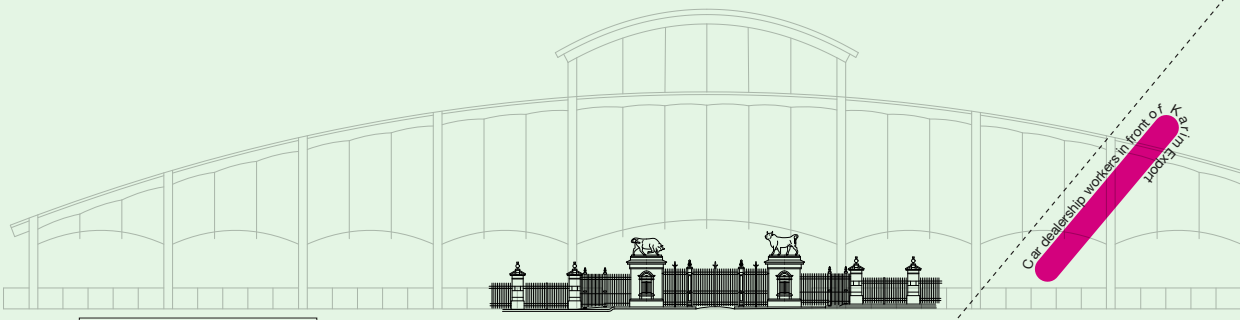
In July, a man was shot indiscriminately in the park. This has meant that the police has ordered for certain entrances to the park to be closed, to make its surveillance and management easier for the guardiens.

People dealing and abusing drugs, making people feel unsafe

People lingering outside the housing block and nursery

La Rosée

Parc de la Ros

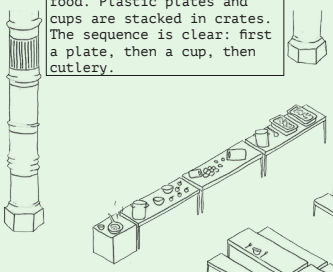


Car dealership workers in front of Atim Export

From there, we walk to a second stand to collect the food. Plastic plates and cups are stacked in crates. The sequence is clear: first a plate, then a cup, then cutlery.

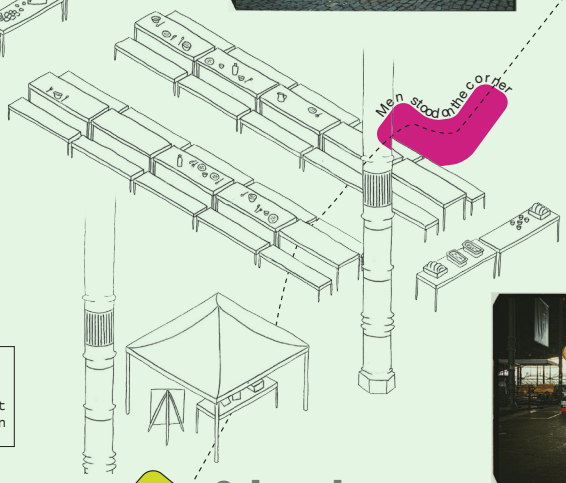


Men stood in front of Mahra restaurant



The meal consists of lentil soup, mixed rice, and a vegetable stew. All dishes are prepared using food scraps collected from the market earlier that week.

Men stood on the corner



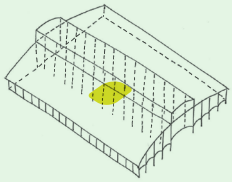




Upon arrival, we are directed to a stand to collect a coin. Payment is voluntary and based on what people can give. We pay ten euros for three people.

Many Cultureghem members a in organisational roles. S circulate through the hall benches and tables once th longer in use.

Cultureghem





Cultureghem permanent space

Simon and the team from SAMO

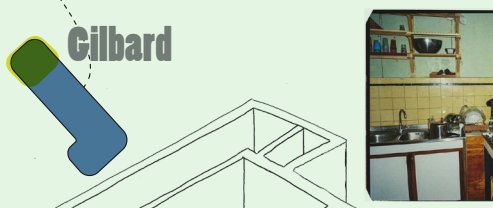
Man stood o

Men bartering and soc

Young people about Zed

La Clavette bicycle repair collective

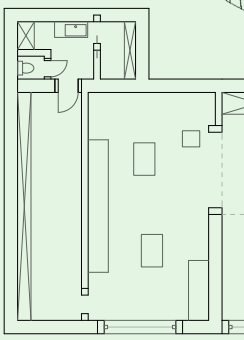
Gilbard



New residents in new gated community

Bobo Belges at the Circularium

'espace sociale'





are present
Several carts
to collect
hey are no

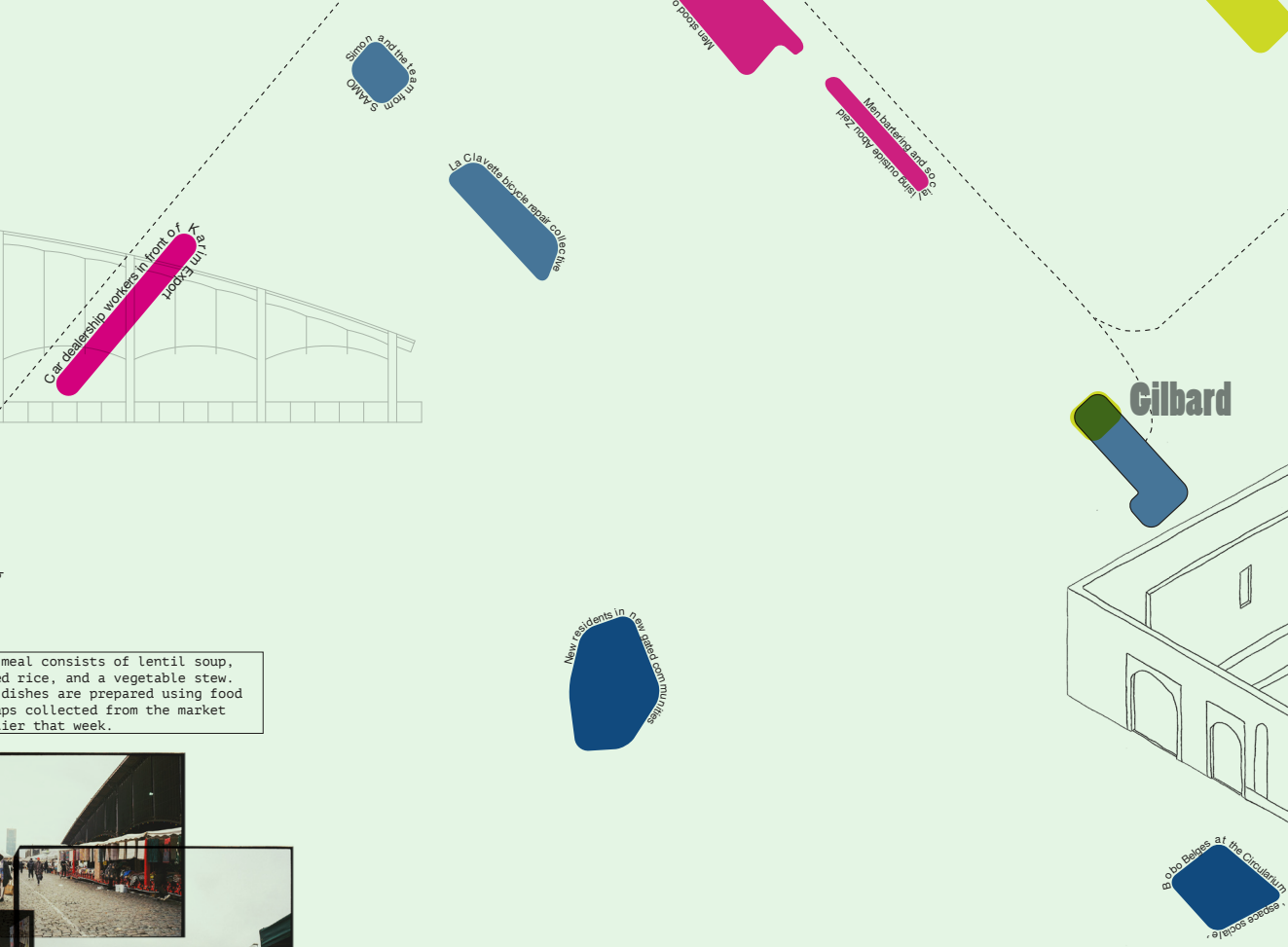
In the back of the space, personal projects continue during the events. Making food and working happen simultaneously.





The workspace operates with a points system. New members receive ten points. Materials are exchanged based on their value.

hed communities | Other notable spaces | Artists, creatives, helpers | 'Bobo' Belges | Drug dealers and abusers | Car dealers and workers | Car buyers | Established communities | Other notab



meal consists of lentil soup, ed rice, and a vegetable stew. dishes are prepared using food ps collected from the market ier that week.

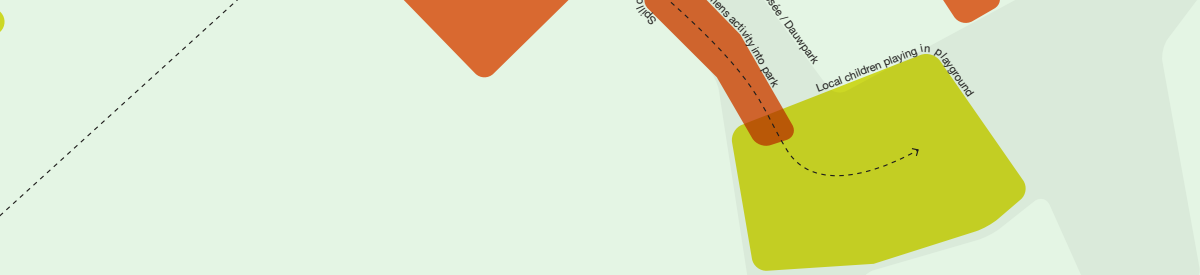
Many Cultureghem members are present in organisational roles. Several carts circulate through the hall to collect benches and tables once they are no longer in use.

In the back of the space, personal projects continue during the events. Making food and working happen simultaneously.



The workspace operates with a points system. New members receive ten points. Materials are exchanged based on their value.

s and workers Car buyers Established communities Other notable spaces Artists, creatives, helpers 'Bobo' Belges Drug dealers and abusers Car dealers and workers Car buyers

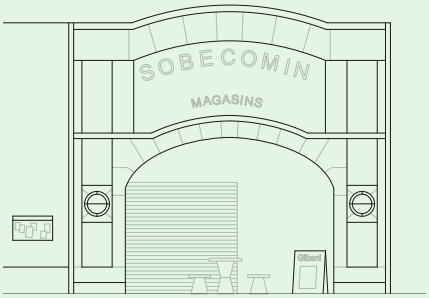






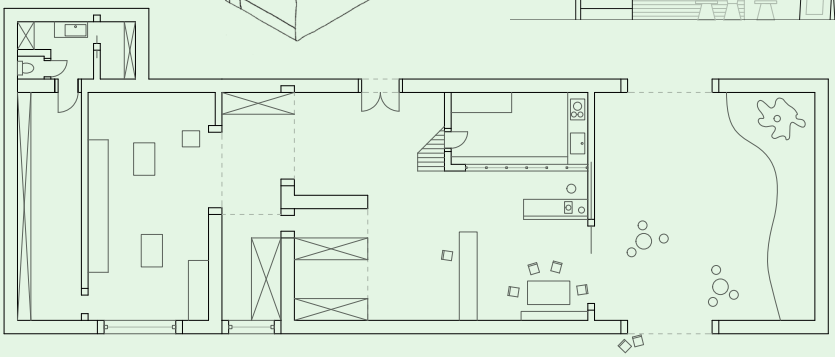


Children are present in the space.
They are often unattended.
Crêpes function as an entry point.





People are preparing a film night. There is no clear division of tasks. Everyone helps where needed.







Wooden planters and ceramic blocks are fixed with belt straps. Several ceramic blocks break under pressure. The straps are later run underneath instead of through the openings.

Many of the people involved in creative activities are French or have spent a long period in France.



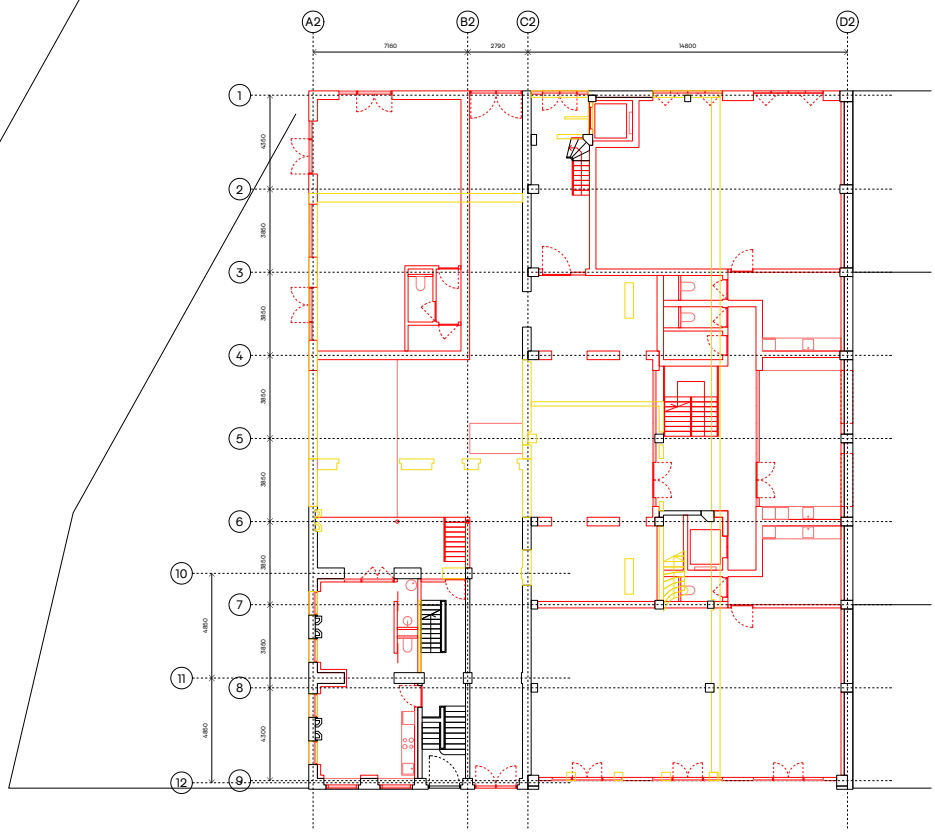
Other notable spaces Artists, creatives, helpers 'Bobo' Belges Drug dealers and abusers Car dealers and workers Car buyers Established communities Other notable spaces Artists, creatives, helpers 'Bobo' Belges Drug dealers and abusers Car dealers





Structural plan ground floor 1:100 (scaled to 1:350)


D1
6050
1
20670
2
3
7160
4
1880
5
6040
H1


A2
B2
C2
D2
7160
2790
14800
1
2
3
4
5
6
10
7
11
8
12
9
4550
3850
3850
3850
3850
3850
4850
3850
4850
4320



Structural plan first floor 1:100 (scaled to 1:350)


D1
6050
1
20670
2
3
7640
3800
4
5
6040
H1


A2
B2
C2
D2
7160
2790
14800
1
2
3
4
5
6
10
7
11
8
12
9
4350
3880
3850
3850
3850
3850
4880
3880
4880
4320



Structural plan second floor 1:100 (scaled to 1:350)

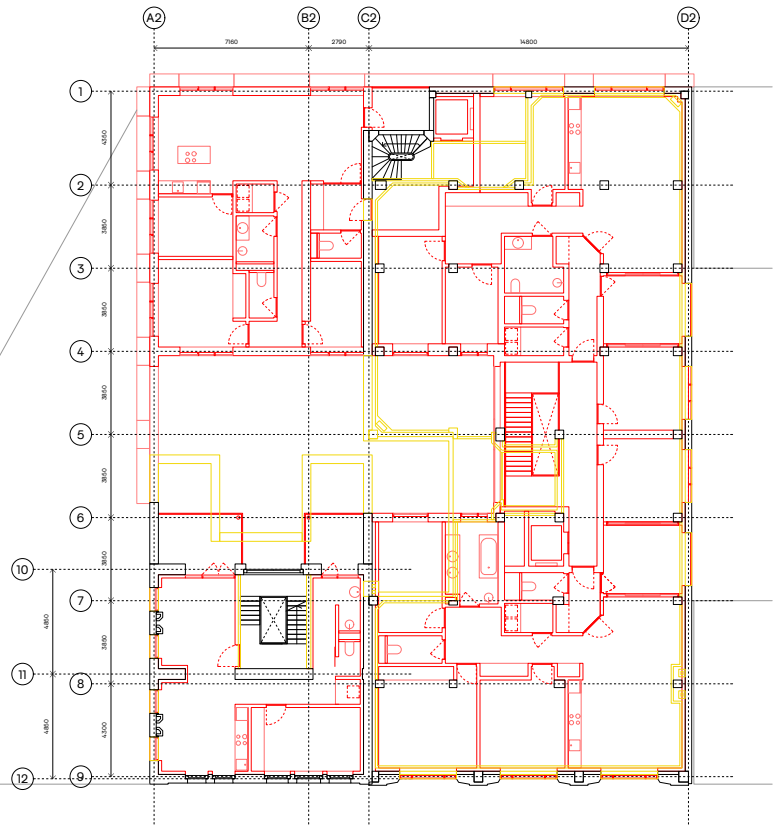

D1
6050
1
20670
2
3
7640
4
3800
5
6040
H1


A2
B2
C2
D2
7160
2790
14800
1
2
3
4
5
6
10
7
11
8
12
9
4350
3860
3850
3850
3850
3850
4860
3850
4860
4320



Structural plan third floor 1:100 (scaled to 1:350)


D1
6050
1
20670
2
3
7640
4
7640
5
6040
H1


A2
B2
C2
D2
7160
2790
14800
1
2
3
4
5
6
10
7
11
8
12
9
4350
3850
3850
3850
3850
3850
4850
3850
4850
4320

Use the existing space: a Possibility by Kaan Smits (4999975)

Studio Urban Architecture, TU Delft

Guided by Elsbeth Ronner, Leeke Reinders and Paul Vermeulen

Fonts used: Surt, Eliza and Eliza Mono

All photos, visuals and documents © Kaan Smits unless stated otherwise

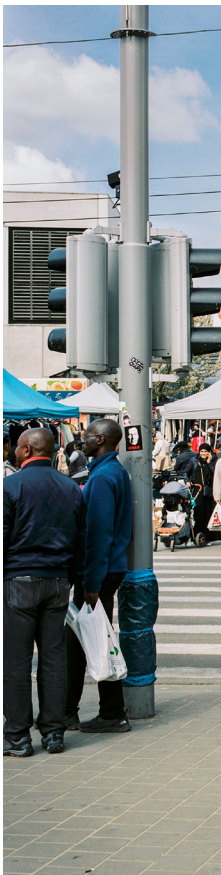
All photos are processed and scanned by Cameralisatie Rotterdam

175×245 mm
276 pages
Printed on biotop mat 120 g/m^2

I would like to thank several people. My parents for making the studying possible in the first place. My tutors, Elsbeth, Leeke and Paul for pushing me throughout the project. My groupmates, Mich and Juliette for the solidarity and the humour. Sanne for the constant motivitation, inspiration and flexibility. Agata and Huigh for making me feel at home in the workspace. Woody for challenging me to explore my photographic boundaries. The rest of the Urban studio for making it a good place to be.

Guided by Elsbeth Ronner, Leeke Reinders
and Paul Vermeulen

175x245 mm
276 pages
Printed on biotop mat 120 g/m²



TU Delft