ATTUNING THE

CONTEMPLATION, RUINOSITY,



PREPARING CONDITIONS FO

E LIVING RUIN

AND CARE ALONG THE SCHIE



OR ATTENTION AND ATTUNEMENT

TU Delft
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Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences
Landscape Architecture Track

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Slowing down, Standing still, Attuning



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Abstract

This thesis investigates how the latent contemplative and ruinous qualities of interstitial landscapes along the Schie in Rotterdam North can be spatially framed as an armature for contemplative attunement with nature. The research starts from the observation that residual infrastructural spaces are often dismissed as leftover, unsafe or illegible, while they may contain strong ecological, atmospheric and experiential value.

Through literature research, precedent analysis, repeated fieldwork, deep mapping and design experiments, the thesis examines how contemplation, ruinosity, fourth nature, succession and tree architecture can inform a landscape architectural design attitude based on restraint rather than replacement. The Schie interstitial is read not as empty ground, but as a living ruin: a landscape already shaped by water, infrastructure, spontaneous vegetation, informal use, weathering and time.

The design proposal for Stadspark-West introduces a minimal spatial armature of routes, thresholds, tree structures, steel edges, pause moments and adaptive maintenance. Rather than producing a finished park image, the design prepares conditions in which visitors may slow down, stand still and become more attentive to ongoing processes of growth, decay and care.

The thesis argues that landscape architecture can support attunement not by controlling the interstitial landscape, but by making its existing temporal, ecological and spatial qualities perceptible.

Keywords:
interstitial landscape, contemplation, ruinosity, attunement, fourth nature, succession, Rotterdam, landscape architecture

Glossary

A

ATTUNEMENT

Attunement refers to the embodied alignment between human perception and the surrounding environment, in which space, materiality, and atmosphere actively shape awareness and meaning. Rather than functioning as a neutral backdrop, the landscape participates in how experience is formed. In this thesis, attunement operates as a counterforce to urban disconnection: the indeterminate, open-ended qualities of Rotterdam North's interstitial spaces are approached as conditions through which perceptual sensitivity and relational awareness can be restored.

C

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplation denotes a sustained state of attentive presence in which perception slows down and awareness becomes inwardly and outwardly focused. Research links contemplative environments to reduced stress and enhanced mental well-being, but contemplation also encompasses deeper existential dimensions, such as heightened sensitivity to interconnectedness and temporality. Within this thesis, contemplative experience is not treated as a decorative or symbolic effect, but as an embodied condition supported by spatial qualities such as enclosure, rhythm, elemental presence, and ambiguity. Interstitial landscapes in Rotterdam are explored as environments capable of sustaining such states through prolonged engagement rather than instant visual impact.

CONNECTION

Connection refers to a relational mode in which humans engage with the natural world through reciprocity, care, and mutual dependence rather than control or extraction. In this thesis, connection is understood as an ethical outcome of contemplative engagement: by spending time within neglected or marginal landscapes, latent interdependencies between human and non-human processes become perceptible. Interstitial spaces thus function as sites where reconnection can emerge precisely because conventional hierarchies of value are absent.

D

DISCONNECT

Disconnect describes the growing separation between people and natural environments, often resulting from urbanization, instrumental land-use practices, and predominantly indoor lifestyles. This condition contributes both to ecological degradation and to diminished experiential and psychological well-being. In this research, disconnect forms the underlying problem that motivates the exploration of contemplative design strategies in Rotterdam's interstitial landscapes.

DEEP MAPPING

Deep mapping is a multilayered method of landscape inquiry that integrates spatial data, historical traces, sensory experience, and ecological processes to reveal relational depth within a site, as described by Pearson and Shanks (2001). In this thesis, deep mapping operationalises the Reading Places methodology in Chapter 3. It allows interstitial landscapes in Rotterdam North to be analysed beyond functional or purely quantitative parameters.

F

FOURTH NATURE

Fourth nature refers to landscapes shaped by spontaneous ecological processes within abandoned, residual, or infrastructural urban spaces. Unlike designed parks or preserved wilderness, fourth-nature environments emerge without aesthetic intent. In this thesis, fourth nature frames Rotterdam's interstitial spaces as carriers of ecological and contemplative potential rather than as signs of urban failure, allowing ambiguity, decay, and succession to become active design conditions.

I

INTERSTITIAL

The interstitial is a residual urban space generated by infrastructural systems, zoning divisions, and functional separations. Often lacking a clear program or identity, they possess distinct spatial, temporal, and experiential qualities that differ from planned urban environments. In this research, the interstitial spaces of Rotterdam North form the primary field of investigation, as their openness and

lack of predetermined meaning allow contemplative experiences to emerge without being over-directed by design.

ISUMATAQ

Isumataq is a concept drawn from Inuit thought, denoting the one who creates the atmosphere in which wisdom reveals itself. It does not describe a teacher who transmits knowledge directly, but a presence or condition that makes insight possible through attentiveness, patience, and openness. Within this thesis, isumataq operates as a guiding principle for contemplative design: rather than prescribing experience or imposing meaning, the designed landscape functions as an isumataq, a spatial mediator that cultivates the conditions under which perception deepens and understanding surfaces of its own accord. Design does not produce wisdom; it holds the space in which wisdom can emerge.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Landscape architecture is the discipline concerned with shaping outdoor environments through the integration of ecological systems, spatial experience, and human well-being. Within this thesis, landscape architecture is understood as a mediating practice that operates through perception, movement, and material processes rather than fixed form. Its role lies in revealing ecological interdependencies and supporting contemplative attunement, particularly within marginal and interstitial contexts.

MORE-THAN-HUMAN

More-than-human denotes an orientation in which plants, animals, fungi, water, and other non-human processes are understood as active participants in the formation of space and meaning, rather than as passive background or resource. In interstitial spaces this becomes tangible: spontaneous vegetation colonises cracked surfaces, birds claim undisturbed edges, and hydrological processes continuously reshape ground conditions, all independent of human intent. Within this thesis, the more-than-human perspective informs both the reading of interstitial landscapes and the ethical stance of the design: rather than imposing human order onto residual ground, design is understood as a practice of attentiveness to the agencies already at work in the landscape.

R

ROTTERDAM

Rotterdam is a post-industrial port city shaped by large-scale infrastructure, water management systems, and post-war modernist planning. These forces have produced a fragmented urban fabric containing numerous interstitial landscapes, particularly in Rotterdam North. Within this thesis, the city functions not merely as context but as a condition: its infrastructural leftovers and fourth-nature spaces form the spatial framework through which contemplative design strategies are explored.

RUINOSITY

Ruinosity refers to the spatial and atmospheric condition in which processes of decay, weathering, and temporal layering become perceptible within a landscape. Rather than signifying neglect alone, it expresses the visible presence of time through material transformation such as cracking, overgrowth, and erosion. This condition evokes admiration and respect by confronting the observer with both impermanence and continuity. Within this thesis, ruinosicity operates as a mediating quality in interstitial landscapes, positioned between overly refined interventions and unreadable neglect. By maintaining legibility while allowing change, it supports contemplative experience by making time tangible and perceptually accessible.

S

SLOWING DOWN

Slowing down denotes the initial phase of contemplative experience in which movement and perception gradually decrease in speed. It is triggered by spatial conditions that interrupt habitual, goal-oriented movement and redirect attention toward the immediate environment. Rather than being imposed, it emerges through interaction with landscape elements such as thresholds, textures, and subtle changes in terrain. Within this thesis, slowing down forms the first step in the sequence toward contemplation, enabling a shift from distraction to sensory awareness.

STANDING STILL

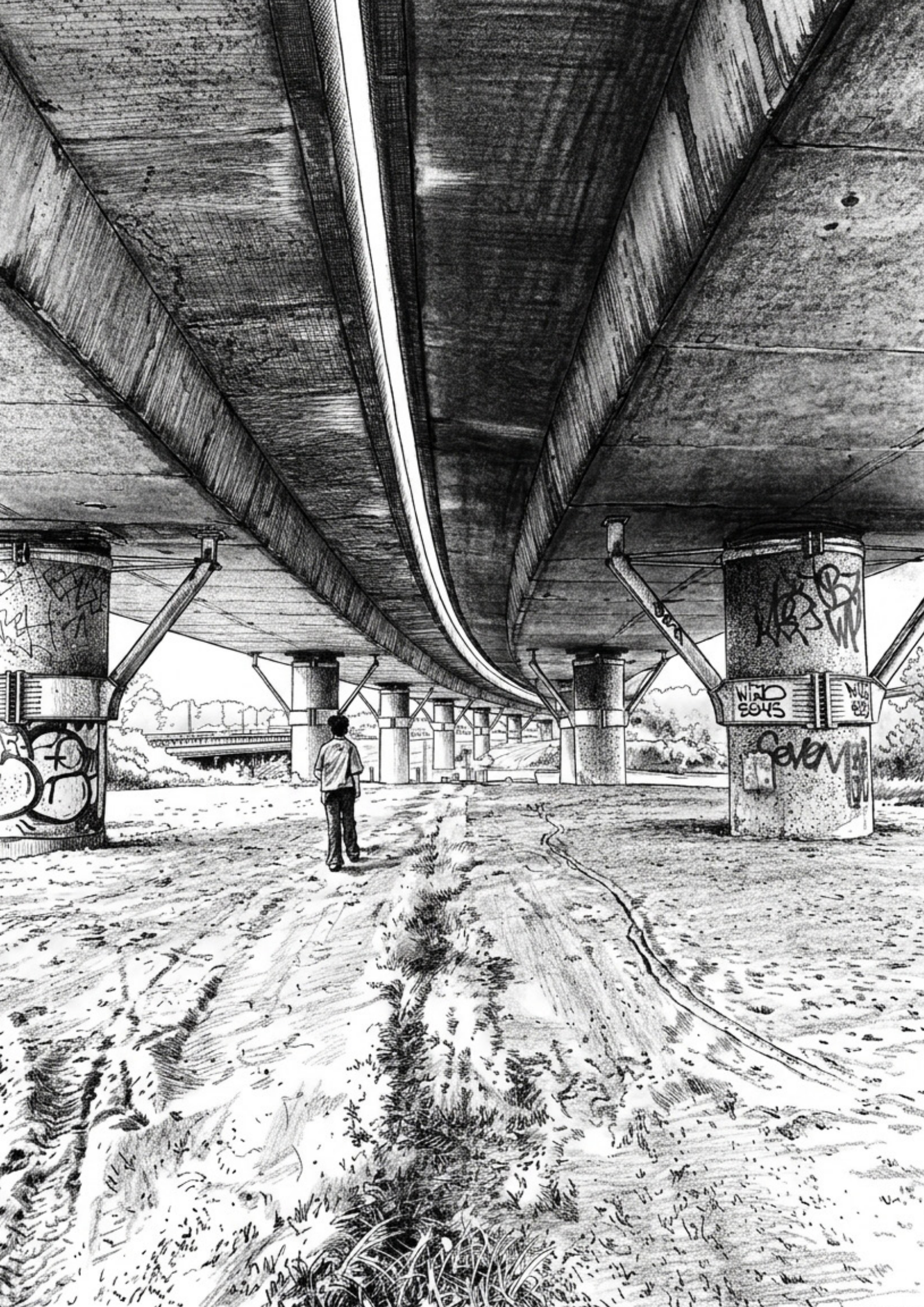
Standing still refers to the moment following slowing down in which movement temporarily ceases and attention stabilises. At this point, the body is no longer oriented toward progression but toward presence, allowing perception to deepen. In interstitial landscapes, this often occurs at moments of spatial intensity such as edges, clearings, or material transitions. Within this thesis, standing still functions as the intermediate step between slowing down and contemplation, forming a crucial hinge in the experiential sequence of attunement.

SUCCESSION

Succession denotes the gradual, self-organising process through which vegetation communities transform over time without direct human direction. Beginning with pioneer species on bare or disturbed ground, the process moves through stages of increasing ecological complexity, shifting light conditions, deepening enclosure, and continuously altering the spatial and atmospheric character of a landscape. In interstitial spaces, these transformations occur independently of design intent, generating ecologies that could not be planned in advance. Within this thesis, succession is approached not as a sign of neglect but as an active design material: by selectively steering or allowing these processes, the landscape can be guided without being fixed, making time and transformation perceptible as conditions for contemplative experience.

TREE ARCHITECTURE

Tree architecture refers to the creation of spatial conditions through the deliberate arrangement of trees rather than through constructed architectural elements. By planting trees in lines, circles, clusters, or grids, spatial qualities such as enclosure, rhythm, orientation, and threshold are produced. This approach emphasizes perception, atmosphere, and movement. Within this thesis, tree architecture functions as a subtle, landscape-based strategy for evoking contemplative experience in interstitial environments, distinct from Baubotanik's structural integration of living trees.



1.1 From Personal Encounter to Design Ambition

1.2 Disconnection from Nature and the Search for Attunement

1.3 Interstitial Space as a Condition for Contemplation

1.4 Framing the Research Direction

1.5 Research Question, Design Assignment and Sub-Questions

01 Introduction

Introduction

1.1 From Personal Encounter to Design Ambition

My fascination with this research emerges from both personal background and academic development. I grew up in a family where spiritual and mystical depth were central, cultivating an early sensitivity to introspection and meaning beyond the immediately visible. During my Q4 course, encounters with Rotterdam's interstitial spaces revealed how even marginal and unformed urban landscapes can evoke moments of reflection, stillness, and attentiveness. These spaces, often overlooked or dismissed, unexpectedly facilitated a heightened awareness of presence.

This interest deepened during a three-month stay in a Zen Buddhist monastery, where contemplative practice was inseparable from the surrounding landscape. Spatial conditions such as enclosure, rhythm, materiality, water, ruins, and trees were not scenographic or symbolic, but actively supported sustained states of attention and embodied presence. Through daily repetition and prolonged exposure, it became evident that contemplation is not an instantaneous effect, but a condition that unfolds over time through spatial consistency and care.

Alongside this experiential understanding, the project is grounded in literature on contemplative landscape, embodied perception and architectural attunement. Architectural theorist Alberto Pérez-Gómez describes attunement as a meaningful alignment between body, material and world, formed through lived experience rather than through detached visual observation (Pérez-Gómez, 2016). His work is relevant here because it frames space not as a neutral background, but as an active condition through which perception and meaning are shaped.

This position is complemented by the Contemplative Landscape Model developed by Agnieszka Olszewska-Guizzo, whose research connects contemplative experience to concrete landscape characteristics such as refuge, prospect, mystery, enclosure, vegetation, light, water and sensory coherence (Olszewska-Guizzo, 2023). Her work makes it possible to translate contemplation into spatial criteria rather than treating it as a vague atmosphere or personal state.

These sources help position my personal encounter as the starting point of the research, not as evidence in itself. The design ambition is therefore not to create meditation space as an isolated programme, but to shape spatial

First nature



"Wow"

Fourth Nature



"Yakkie"





Figure 1: Cultural valuation and instrumentalisation of nature. The diagram contrasts the cultural admiration of pristine wilderness with the rejection of spontaneous fourth nature in urban residual spaces. The lower images show that both valued and undervalued forms of nature remain vulnerable to instrumental land-use logics, from deforestation to urban redevelopment. Own work, 2026. Photograph of Amazon deforestation by Braga, 2020, Greenpeace. Photograph of housing development by Woonstad Rotterdam, n.d.

conditions in which attention can slow down, become bodily situated and open toward a more relational experience of nature.

1.2 Disconnection from Nature and the Search for Attunement

This personal motivation connects to a broader cultural condition. Contemporary urban culture often separates nature into dominant categories. First nature is valued as distant spectacle, while planned urban green space is managed as clean, safe and consumable. By contrast, the spontaneous vegetation of abandoned, residual or infrastructural land is often dismissed as messy residue.

Urban ecology offers another reading. Urban ecologist Ingo Kowarik uses the concept of fourth nature to describe spontaneous vegetation and novel ecosystems that emerge through disturbance, abandonment and urban-industrial conditions (Kowarik, 2005). Landscape architect Gilles Clément similarly frames unmanaged ground as the Third Landscape: a reservoir of biological diversity and spatial possibility that exists outside dominant systems of control (Clément, 2004). Matthew Gandy's work on marginal urban nature further shows how urban wastelands can produce alternative relations between human and non-human systems, precisely because they are not fully absorbed into conventional planning logic (Gandy, 2013).

These sources reposition the interstitial landscape from waste ground to latent field. Its value is not only ecological, but also experiential. People often observe nature as scenery or avoid it as disorder, rather than entering into a more reciprocal relation with it. This project therefore approaches Rotterdam North's interstitial landscapes not as sites to be beautified or controlled, but as existing conditions whose latent contemplative qualities can be amplified through minimal, process-based interventions.

1.3 Interstitial Space as a Condition for Contemplation

Rotterdam offers a precise context for exploring this potential. Shaped by infrastructure, post-war reconstruction and large-scale urban systems, the city contains numerous spaces that fall outside dominant spatial narratives. From a planning perspective, such areas can be read as residual or lost spaces. Urban theorist Roger Trancik describes lost space as the fragmented by-product of modern urban development,

often disconnected from public life and spatial continuity (Trancik, 1986).

Yet this reading is not sufficient for the Schie corridor. Ignasi de Solà-Morales's concept of terrain vague offers a more open interpretation of undefined urban space. Rather than seeing vacancy only as absence, he frames it as a condition of ambiguity, expectation and latent possibility within the city (Solà-Morales, 1995). This is relevant because the interstitial spaces of Rotterdam North are not empty. They contain water systems, infrastructural fragments, spontaneous vegetation, informal use, enclosure, sound and traces of decay.

This research focuses on a cluster of interstitial spaces in Rotterdam North, located at the junction of Noord, Overschie and Hillegersberg. Here, canal edges, viaducts, rail lines, sound barriers and fourth-nature growth form a continuous yet undefined landscape. The question is therefore not how to replace the interstitial landscape with a park, but how to make its existing qualities perceptible. Design is approached as an armature that engages and amplifies what is already present, while allowing the landscape to remain open to change over time.

1.4 Framing the Research Direction

From this position, the research asks how design can work with the inherent qualities of interstitial space without neutralising them. Luo identifies this as a central paradox of leftover spaces: design can disclose latent value, but it can also erase the openness and indeterminacy that make such spaces meaningful in the first place (Luo, 2021). This tension is central to the thesis. The aim is not to transform the Schie interstitial into a finished park, but to create enough spatial structure for its existing qualities to become readable.

Nassauer's concept of "messy ecosystems, orderly frames" helps define this response. Her research shows that ecologically valuable landscapes are often socially misread as neglect unless they contain visible cues of care (Nassauer, 1995). For this thesis, the armature functions as such a cue: it frames roughness, succession, wetness, informal use and decay without removing them.

Central to this inquiry is contemplative experience as a means of supporting attunement between humans and their environment. The research investigates how spatial qualities and landscape conditions, including water, vegetation, growth, weathering, decay

and succession, shape perception and can support states of slowing down, standing still and attentiveness.

Design is therefore approached not as the imposition of a new image, but as a minimal spatial armature. Through routes, thresholds, tree architecture, material edges and maintenance rhythms, the project explores how interstitial landscapes can become legible enough to enter and remain within, while still open enough to age, change and be appropriated over time.

1.5 Research Question, Design Assignment and Sub-Questions

This leads to the central research question:

" How can the latent contemplative and ruinous qualities of interstitial spaces along the Schie be spatially framed as an armature for contemplative attunement with nature? "

This thesis works from the proposition that succession, ruinosity and tree architecture can act as spatial and temporal drivers of contemplative experience. Each operates through a different register: succession introduces time and ecological change, ruinosity makes weathering and incompleteness perceptible, and tree architecture gives rhythm, orientation and spatial enclosure.

The design question translates this research into a site-specific exploration:

" How can contemplative and ruinous experiences be evoked in the interstitial space of Stadspark-West? "

The design investigates how existing conditions can be structured rather than replaced, and how spatial interventions can remain open to processes of growth, decay and change over time. In doing so, the project addresses the tension between designed intention and the uncontrolled nature of interstitial space, allowing for adaptation, appropriation and long-term transformation.

Sub-Questions

1. What defines a contemplative experience, and how can it support attunement with nature?

This sub-question establishes the conceptual foundation of the research. It clarifies contemplative experience as a distinct mode of embodied perception and relational awareness, rather than as relaxation, scenic appreciation or symbolic spirituality. Defining contemplation ensures that the central research question rests on a precise understanding of how spatial conditions can support attunement between humans and their environment.

2. Which qualities of nature, natural processes, spatial qualities, landscape elements, and conditions support contemplative experience?

This sub-question identifies the specific environmental and spatial qualities that enable contemplative experience to emerge. The research assumes that interstitial spaces contain latent contemplative potential, which can only be activated if certain qualities are present or amplified. The question therefore provides an analytical framework for evaluating landscapes and informing site-sensitive design strategies.

3. Which contemplative and ruinous qualities are present in the interstitial spaces of Rotterdam North?

This sub-question translates theoretical insights into site-specific understanding. It examines whether the contemplative qualities identified in theory are actually present within the chosen context. By identifying atmospheres, rhythms, and elemental presences already embedded in Rotterdam North, the research ensures that design interventions are grounded in the site's existing character.

4. How much spatial framing does the interstitial landscape need to make its contemplative and ruinous qualities perceptible without erasing the indeterminacy that gives them value?

This question addresses the central design tension of the project. Interstitial spaces derive their contemplative potential partly from openness, ambiguity, and uncontrolled growth, qualities that too much structure would erase, and too little framing would render imperceptible. This question builds on Luo's tension between disclosure and erasure in leftover space, and on Nassauer's argument that messy

ecological conditions require legible cues of care to be socially recognised (Luo, 2021; Nassauer, 1995). Drawing on ruinosity as an experiential condition rather than an aesthetic category, it investigates the threshold between care and neglect, and asks what minimal degree of spatial framing is sufficient to transform an overlooked landscape into one that invites sustained attention.

5. What is the role of vegetation, tree architecture, and succession in evoking contemplative experience with nature?

This question focuses on vegetation and tree architecture as temporal and living components of landscape. Through processes of growth, succession, and decay, vegetation continuously transforms spatial conditions and introduces time as an experiential dimension. Tree architecture is included here as a spatial practice that uses the placement, form, and growth of trees to shape enclosure, threshold, rhythm, and sightline, functioning as the ordered counterpart to the spontaneous processes of succession and decay examined alongside it. Together, the question examines how these processes contribute to contemplative experience by making change, duration, and transformation perceptible.

6. How can ruinosity be understood and applied as a design condition for contemplative attunement?

This question brings together the conceptual and site-based insights by focusing on ruinosity as a central condition of interstitial landscapes. Ruinosity is understood here not as the presence of ruins as objects, but as the spatial experience of weathering, incompleteness, material change, appropriation, spontaneous growth and visible care. The question explores how this condition can be engaged in design without being fixed, cleaned away or aestheticised, but instead maintained as an open and evolving framework for contemplative attention.

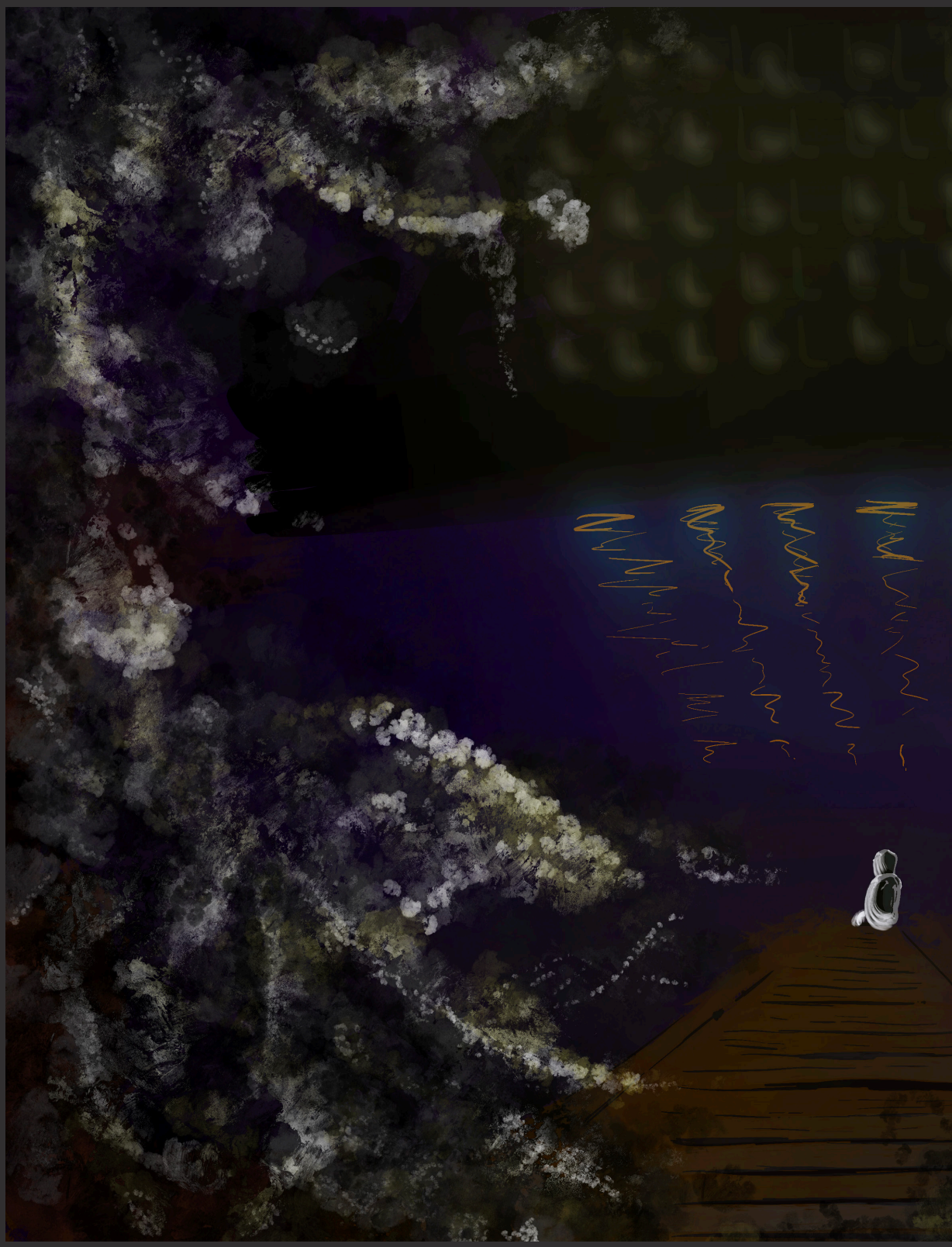
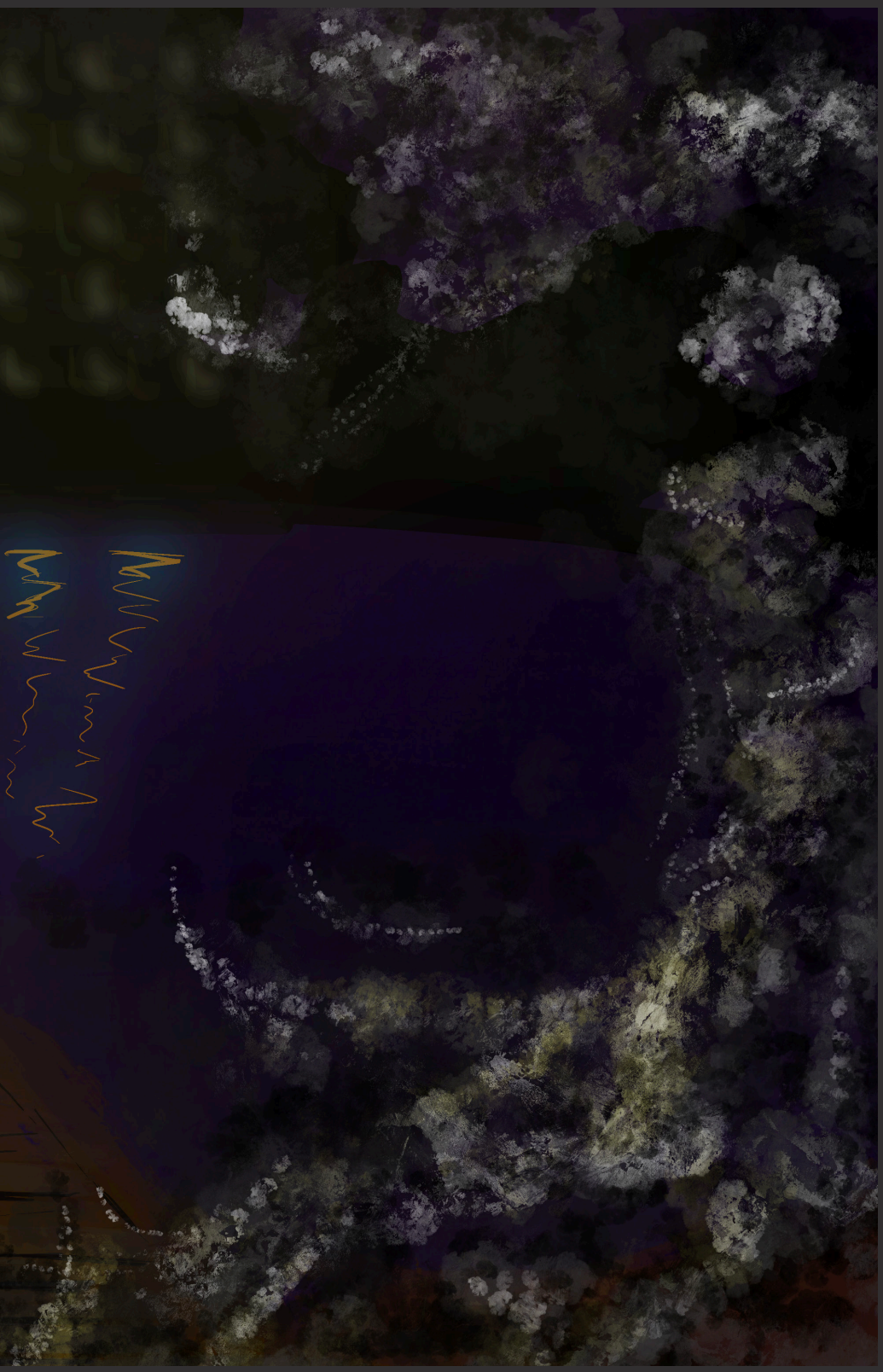


Figure 2. Origin moment of the research. This drawing reconstructs the n
banks, reflected hospital light and a half-broken jetty produced a mom
as the experiential starting point from which the thesis question on spati



octurnal encounter in Rotterdam North where uneven ground, overgrown
ent of stillness after movement. The image is not used as evidence, but
al attention, ruinosity and attunement emerged. Author's drawing, 2026



2.1 Literature Research

2.2 Precedent studies

2.3 Site analysis

2.4 Design Experiments

2.5 Position

02 Methodological Framework

Methodological Framework

This research is grounded in an intensive, embodied and iterative engagement with the interstitial landscapes of Rotterdam North. Rather than approaching the site as an object of detached analysis, the methodology is based on prolonged bodily presence and direct spatial experience. The landscape is visited multiple times per week over an extended period. Routes are deliberately never repeated; movement is guided by curiosity, deviation and chance. Walking, pausing, climbing, cycling and prolonged staying become primary tools for accessing and understanding spatial conditions that remain invisible in plan alone.

Through this process, the site reveals itself as a dynamic and relational field rather than a fixed entity. Each visit produces a different reading: spaces shift in atmosphere, accessibility and meaning depending on time, weather and state of mind. These variations are not treated as inconsistencies but as essential knowledge. This approach aligns with practices of deep mapping, where layered, subjective and experiential readings of landscape are constructed over time. Corner describes mapping as an active practice that reveals relations rather than merely recording fixed conditions, while Least Heat-Moon's PrairyErth demonstrates how a place can be understood through accumulated fragments, narratives and observations over time (Corner, 1999; Least Heat-Moon, 1991).

Design interventions are first imagined and tested in situ, by moving through the landscape as if they already exist. Drawings, models and sections follow only afterwards, functioning as reflective tools that generate new questions for subsequent site visits. This establishes a continuous cycle of observation, interpretation, testing and return, in which the site itself becomes an active agent in the design process. The act of meandering that emerges from this process is therefore not only a method, but also a spatial quality to be preserved and amplified.

Alongside repeated site visits, a parallel practice of daily meditation became an important methodological tool in the research process, not as evidence in itself, but as a reflective practice that sharpened attention, receptiveness and the ability to observe subtle spatial conditions. This emerged from a simple but necessary question: how can a contemplative landscape be designed without cultivating contemplation in the designer's own way of seeing and working?

Daily meditation is therefore not treated as a private ritual separate from the

project, nor as a spiritual claim for the thesis. Its methodological role is to make the designer's own mode of attention explicit. It supports observation, drawing and site-based experimentation by sharpening receptiveness to rhythm, enclosure, threshold, silence, distraction, material texture and bodily tempo. In this way, contemplation is investigated not only as a spatial condition, but also as an embodied mode of attention that guides the design process itself.

The methodological framework is structured into five interrelated components: literature research, precedent studies, site analysis, design experiments and position. Each component is continuously informed by this embodied practice, forming an iterative research-through-design process in which theory, fieldwork and design inform each other.

2.1 Literature Research

Literature research functions as a reflective layer that sharpens and articulates insights emerging from direct engagement with the site. Rather than operating as a top-down framework, it provides conceptual language and depth to experiential observations, allowing concepts from literature to be tested against the specific conditions of the Schie interstitial.

The first body of literature concerns contemplation, attention and embodied perception. Pérez-Gómez understands attunement as a meaningful alignment between body, material and environment, formed through lived experience rather than detached visual observation (Pérez-Gómez, 2016). Olszewska-Guizzo's Contemplative Landscape Model translates contemplative experience into concrete landscape characteristics such as refuge, prospect, mystery, vegetation, water, light and sensory coherence (Olszewska-Guizzo, 2023). These sources help define contemplation as spatial attention rather than as a vague atmosphere or isolated mental state.

The second body of literature frames interstitial and residual landscapes as sites of latent value. Clément's Third Landscape describes unmanaged ground as a reservoir of biological diversity and spatial possibility outside dominant systems of control (Clément, 2004). Kowarik's concept of fourth nature describes spontaneous urban ecosystems that emerge through disturbance, abandonment and urban-industrial conditions (Kowarik, 2005). Gandy further shows how marginal urban nature and wastelands can produce alternative relations between human and non-human systems

(Gandy, 2013). These sources allow the Schie strip to be read not as empty land, but as a field of existing ecological and experiential potential.

The third body of literature concerns ruinosity, temporality and material change. Braae's work on post-industrial landscapes shows how traces of use, decline and transformation can become design resources when their temporal depth remains legible (Braae, 2015). Edensor reads industrial ruins as spaces of disorder, sensory experience and informal practice that challenge the polished order of the contemporary city (Edensor, 2005). DeSilvey's concept of curated decay shifts care away from preservation as fixing, toward a practice of allowing change and material transformation to remain visible (DeSilvey, 2017). Koren's writing on wabi-sabi adds a sensitivity to impermanence, incompleteness and weathering, not as a visual style, but as a way to value temporal change (Koren, 1994).

The fourth body of literature concerns time, movement and process. Ingold understands space through lines of movement, growth and becoming, rather than as a static container (Ingold, 2015). This is relevant for a project in which paths, roots, water, vegetation, graffiti and informal occupation all operate as lines through time. Together, these sources position the site as an ongoing process rather than a finished object.

The role of literature in this thesis is therefore not to prescribe design solutions. It contextualises observations, clarifies concepts and provides criteria for evaluating design moves. Theoretical sources are continuously tested against fieldwork, precedent analysis and spatial experiments. In this way, literature supports the design process without replacing the site as the primary field of knowledge.

2.2 Precedent Studies

Precedent studies function as comparative tools to investigate how contemplative qualities can be spatially constructed within complex and often post-industrial environments. Projects are selected based on their engagement with conditions similar to those found on site: ruinosity, spontaneous vegetation, ambiguity and the tension between intervention and preservation.

Projects such as Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord demonstrate how industrial remnants and ecological

succession can be actively framed without being erased, making it a relevant precedent for working with ruinosity and public access (Latz + Partner, n.d.). The Woodland Cemetery and the Green Cathedral demonstrate how tree architecture can structure contemplative sequence and shape spatial experience over time, while the Eco-Cathedral of Louis Le Roy illustrates how a design attitude of restraint and withdrawal can allow non-human processes to become co-authors of space (Land Art Flevoland, n.d.; Nieuwe Instituut, n.d.; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d.).

The analysis focuses on experiential and spatial mechanisms: sequencing, thresholds, degrees of enclosure, material expression and temporal change. Insights are continuously cross-referenced with site observations, ensuring that precedents inform rather than dictate design decisions. Where precedents were visited directly, the analysis combines embodied observation with published project documentation. Where direct fieldwork was not possible, the analysis is based on project descriptions, photographs, plans, design statements and secondary sources. In both cases, the precedents are not used as visual examples to imitate, but as spatial arguments: each one helps test how threshold, sequence, material weathering, planting structure or selective maintenance can support contemplative attention within complex landscape conditions.

2.3 Site Analysis

Site analysis emerges directly from embodied and iterative engagement with the landscape. Rather than functioning as a detached or purely cartographic exercise, it is the result of prolonged presence, repeated observation and movement through the site.

Through extensive walking, cycling, pausing and exploration, the interstitial landscapes of Rotterdam North are understood as a layered field of spatial, ecological, social and atmospheric conditions. This process aligns with deep mapping practices, in which multiple readings of a place accumulate over time and reveal relations that are not visible in conventional mapping alone (Corner, 1999; Least Heat-Moon, 1991; Pearson & Shanks, 2001).

The analysis identifies latent spatial structures and experiential qualities: thresholds between urban intensity and withdrawal, rhythms of compression and release, spontaneous vegetation and ecological succession, informal occupation, traces of care and neglect,

and atmospheric conditions produced by light, sound, season and time of day. Particular attention is given to moments where ruinous conditions and fourth nature already produce something close to contemplative atmosphere without any design intervention.

These insights are documented through sketches, photographs, notes, route scores, sections and layered mappings. The aim is not only to register physical conditions, but also to understand how the site is entered, avoided, occupied, sensed and misread. In this way, site analysis produces knowledge that is spatial, experiential and temporally grounded.

2.4 Design Experiments

Design experiments form the generative core of the research. They translate insights from literature, precedents and site engagement into spatial propositions. In this sense, design is used as a mode of inquiry rather than only as an outcome. This follows Schön's understanding of design as a reflective conversation with the situation, in which each design move produces feedback and reveals new questions (Schön, 1983).

Rather than following a linear process, the experiments operate iteratively and across scales. Spatial ideas are first tested mentally and physically within the site itself, by imagining and moving through possible interventions. Drawings, models, sections and mappings then function as testing instruments. They are used to examine spatial effects, expose contradictions, test proportions and generate new questions for subsequent site visits.

What works in imagination does not always hold in drawing, and what works in drawing does not always hold on site. This friction is productive. It prevents the design from becoming a purely visual composition and keeps it accountable to bodily experience, material conditions and the actual behaviour of the interstitial landscape.

The experiments focus on minimal and process-based interventions: tree architecture, ruinous growth, threshold conditions, surface friction, material edges, pause pockets, and subtle manipulations of sequence, rhythm and enclosure. The aim is not to impose a finished form, but to intensify existing qualities and reveal latent potentials within the landscape.

Each experiment feeds back into observation, literature and design positioning. Each experiment feeds back into observation, literature and

design positioning, creating an iterative loop between site reading, theory and spatial testing.

2.5 Position

In this project, I position myself as a landscape architect between intervention and restraint. This is not only a design preference, but a methodological position. It determines how the site is read, what is considered valuable, and how much design is allowed to intervene.

I do not understand landscape architecture as a discipline that can solve all ecological, social or spiritual problems. Its power is more specific: it can make relations visible, give spatial form to neglected processes, and create conditions in which humans and more-than-human life can encounter each other differently.

Stadspark-West and the Schie corridor ask for this careful position. The site is not empty land waiting for design. It is already occupied by water, trees, graffiti, informal users, birds, roots, decay, sound and time. Therefore, the task is not to overwrite the site, but to listen to its existing language and amplify what is already latent.

This position stands between total formalisation and passive abandonment. Too much design would erase the openness that gives the interstitial landscape its value. Too little design would leave its spatial, ecological and contemplative qualities unreadable and easily dismissed. Clément's Third Landscape supports the value of unmanaged spaces as reservoirs of ecological possibility, while Nassauer shows that messy ecological conditions need legible cues of care if they are to be socially recognised rather than dismissed as neglect (Clément, 2004; Nassauer, 1995).

My role is therefore not to control the living ruin, but to construct an armature for attention. Through routes, thresholds, tree architecture, material edges and maintenance rhythms, the design invites people to slow down and perceive ongoing processes of growth, decay and care. Its limitation is equally important: the design cannot guarantee contemplation. It can only prepare spatial conditions in which attunement may occur.

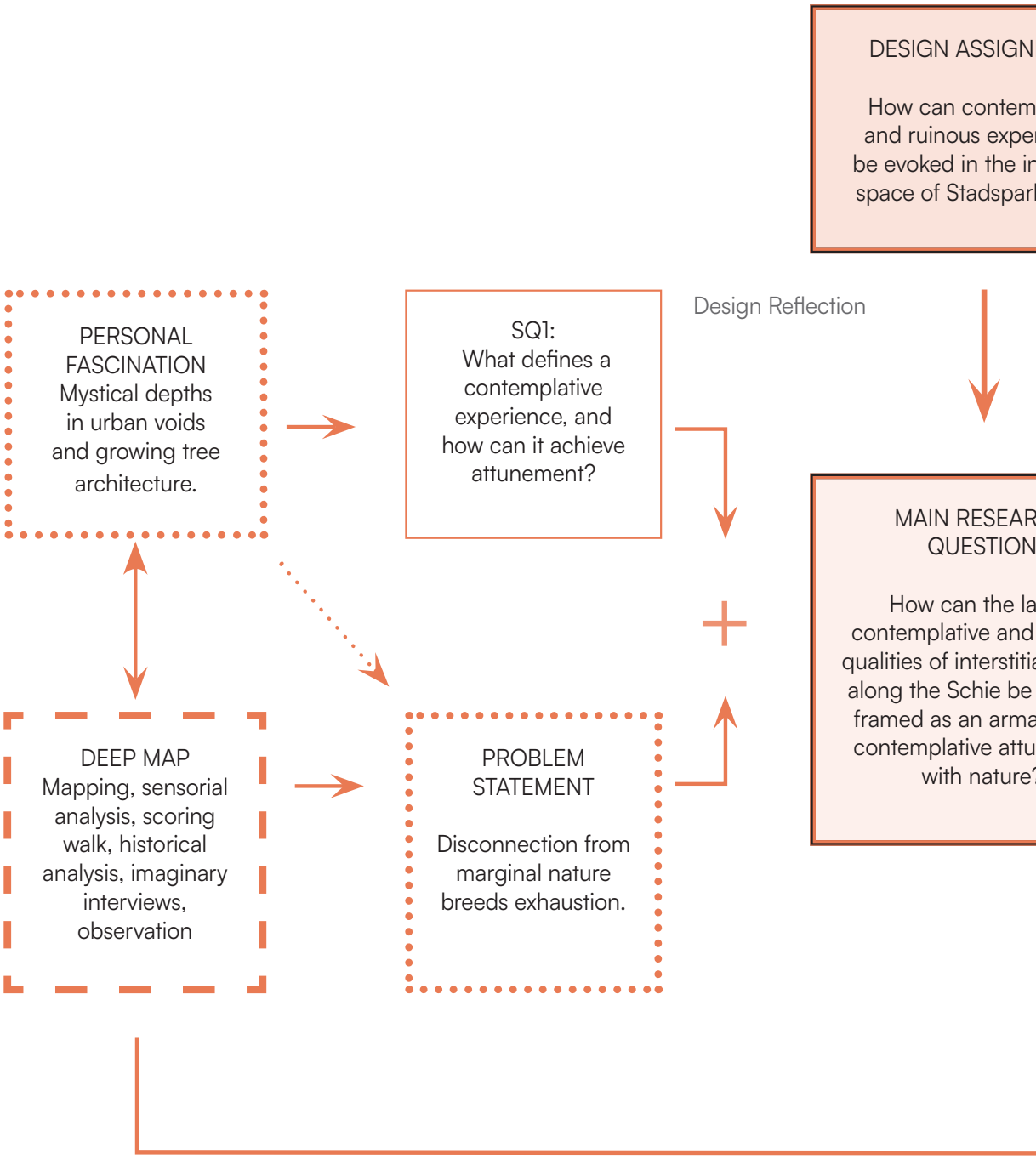
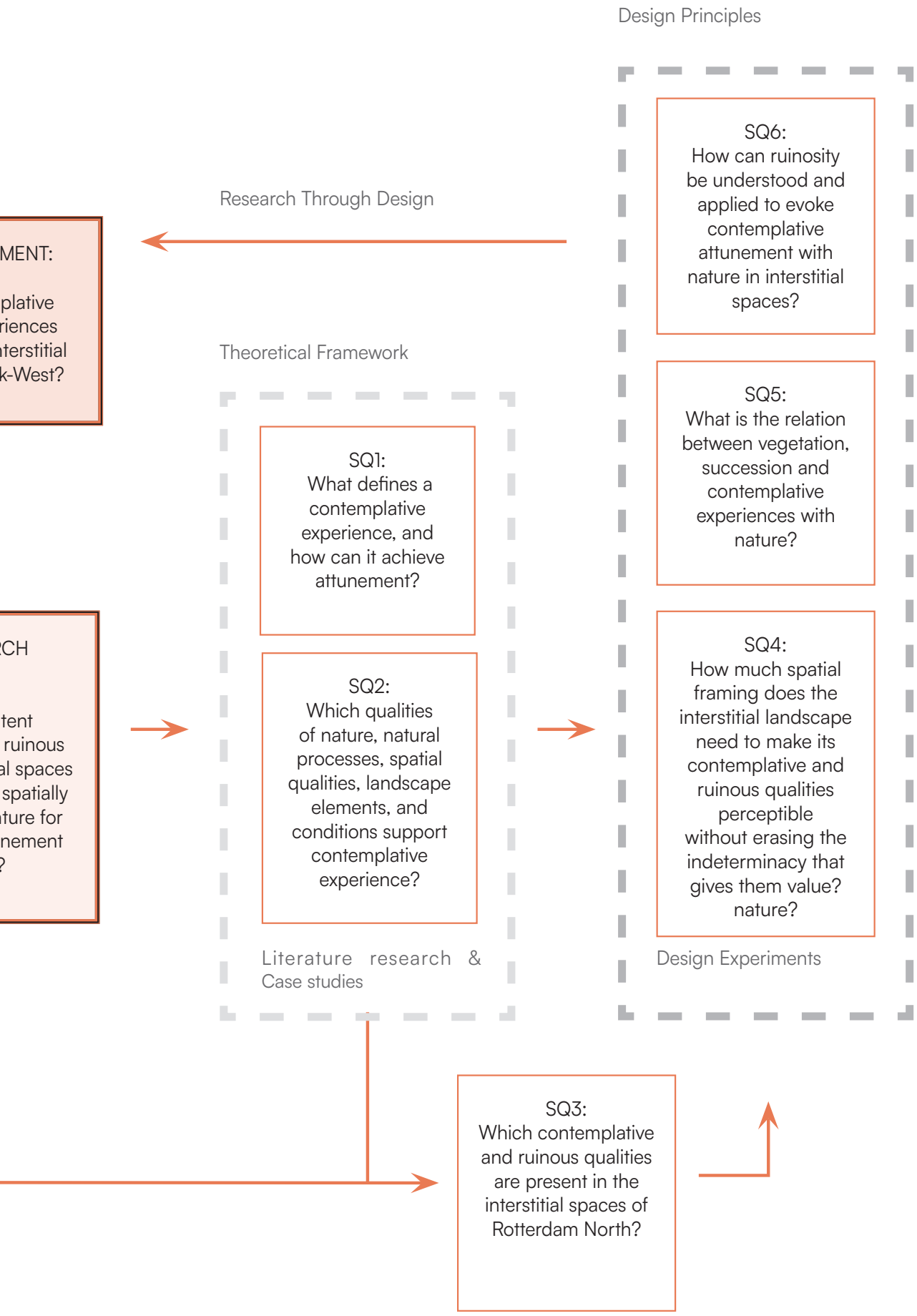
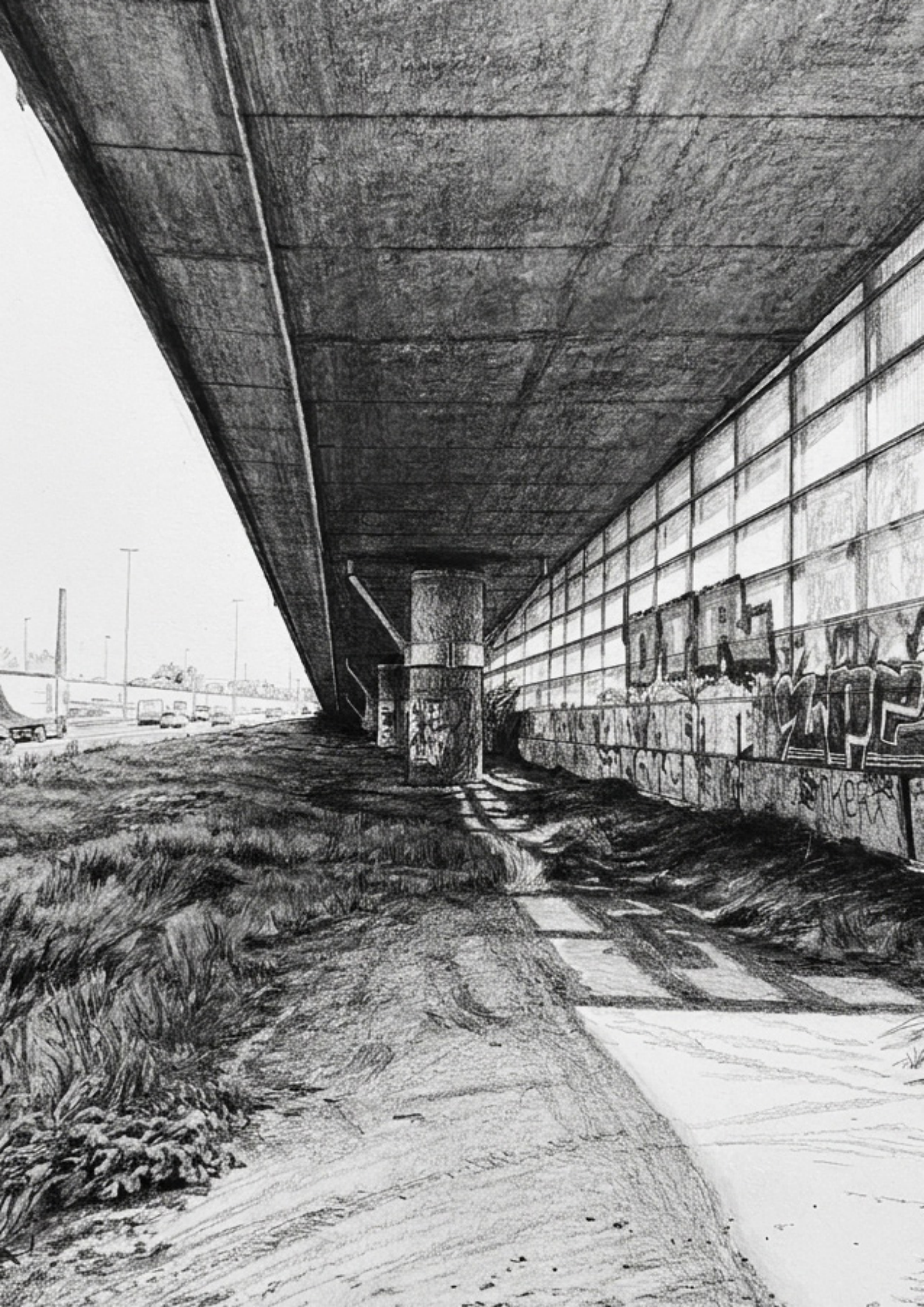


Figure 3: *Research approach diagram showing the relationship between personal field experience, theoretical framing, precedent study, site analysis and design testing. Own work, 2026.*


Design Principles
SQ6:
How can ruinosity be understood and applied to evoke contemplative attunement with nature in interstitial spaces?
Research Through Design
MENT:
plative
riences
terstitial
k-West?
Theoretical Framework
SQ1:
What defines a contemplative experience, and how can it achieve attunement?
SQ5:
What is the relation between vegetation, succession and contemplative experiences with nature?
RCH
tent
ruinous
al spaces
spatially
ture for
nement
?
SQ2:
Which qualities of nature, natural processes, spatial qualities, landscape elements, and conditions support contemplative experience?
SQ4:
How much spatial framing does the interstitial landscape need to make its contemplative and ruinous qualities perceptible without erasing the indeterminacy that gives them value?
nature?
Literature research & Case studies
Design Experiments
SQ3:
Which contemplative and ruinous qualities are present in the interstitial spaces of Rotterdam North?



3.1 Diving into the Site

3.2 Entering the Interstitial

3.3 Inside the Interstitial

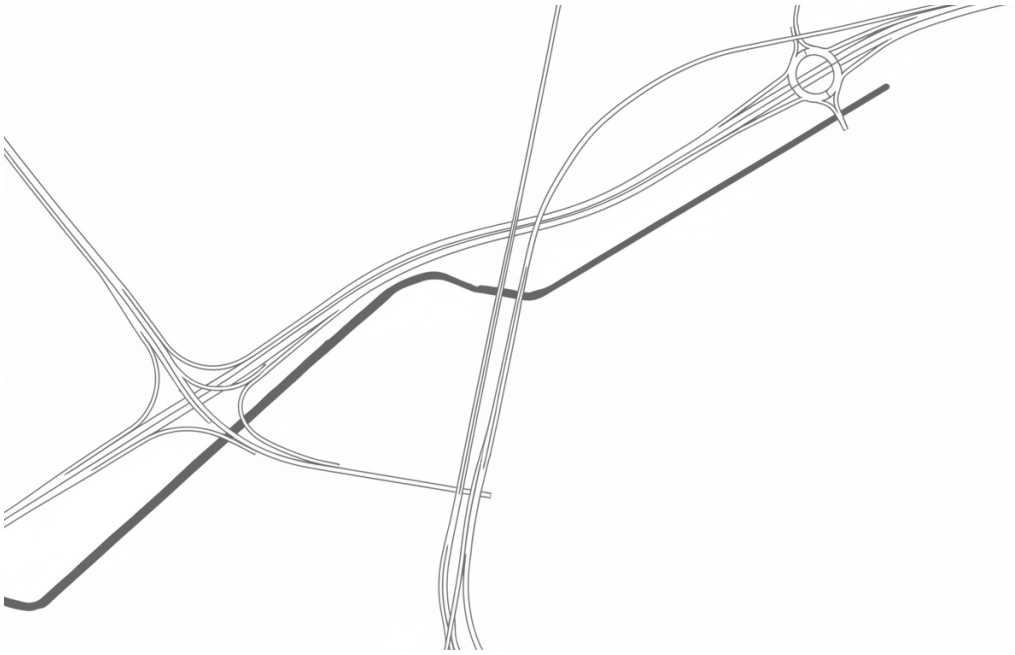
3.4 The Interstitial Strip

3.5 Present but Not Available

3.6 The Interstitial Multifold

03 Exploring the Interstitial Landscape

3.1. Diving into the site



This chapter translates the embodied methodology of Chapter 2 into a spatial reading of the Schie interstitial. It moves from distant overview to bodily entry, showing how a residual infrastructural strip becomes legible through walking, mapping, photographing and repeated field observation. The project area occupies a residual strip in Rotterdam North, wedged between the Schie canal corridor, the infrastructural knot of Kleinpolderplein, and the larger green framework of Stadspark-West. It is not a continuous park but a fractured ground condition shaped by canal embankments, viaducts, rail lines, sound barriers, maintenance routes and spontaneous woodland.

From above, this strip reads as leftover land: a residual space produced by infrastructure and maintenance rather than by deliberate public space design. In Trancik's terms, it could be understood as lost space, a fragmented by-product of modern urban form (Trancik, 1986). Yet from within, this reading becomes insufficient. The site is low and wet, rooted in former polder logic. Soft clay soils, shallow phreatic groundwater and poor drainage keep the ground damp for long periods. Elevated infrastructure introduces constant sound, wind exposure and abrupt enclosure.

The site therefore exists between absence and intensity. It appears empty in plan, but becomes dense through bodily encounter: water, traffic, electricity, informal use, dumped material, spontaneous vegetation and sound all overlap. This chapter explores that contradiction by moving from distant reading to embodied entry.

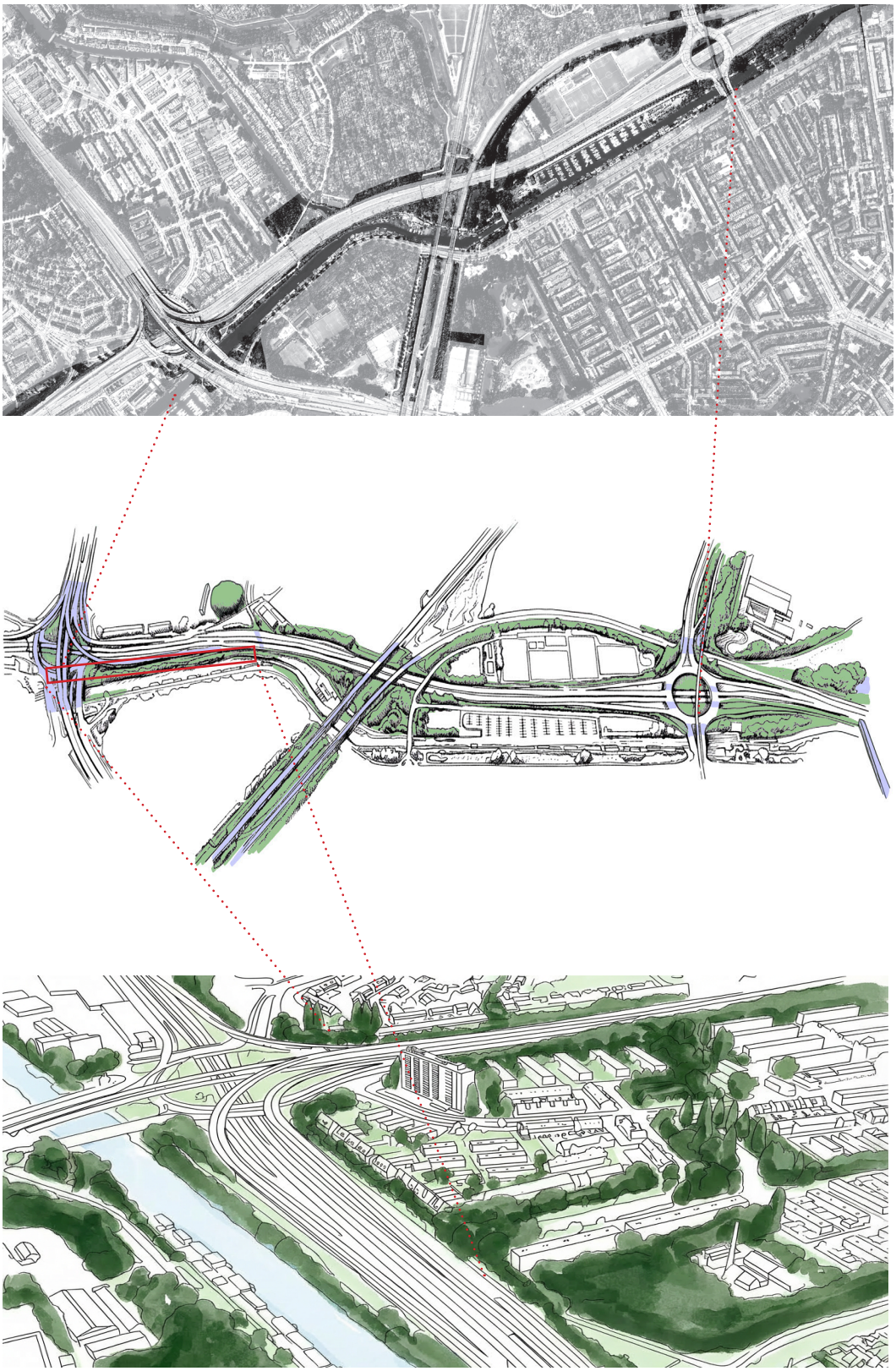
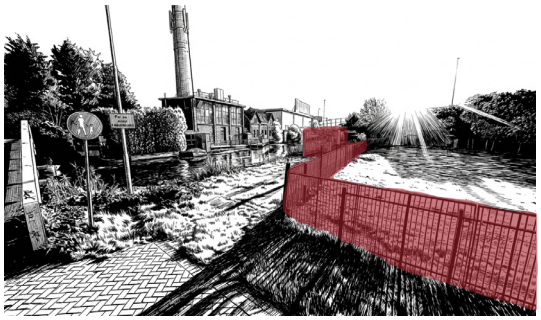


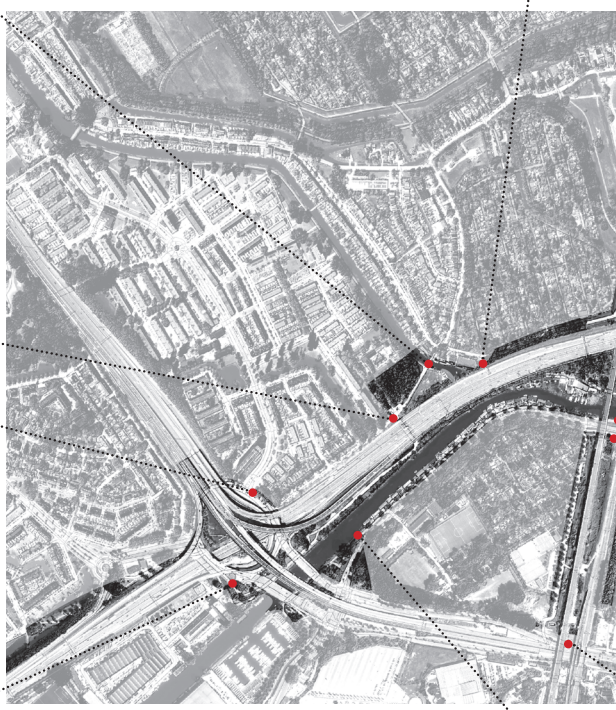
Figure 4: *Schie infrastructure knot. The map, line drawing and axonometric view show how the Rotterdamse Schie, highway, rail infrastructure and residual green spaces form a fragmented interstitial strip rather than a continuous park condition. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*

3.2. Entering the interstitial









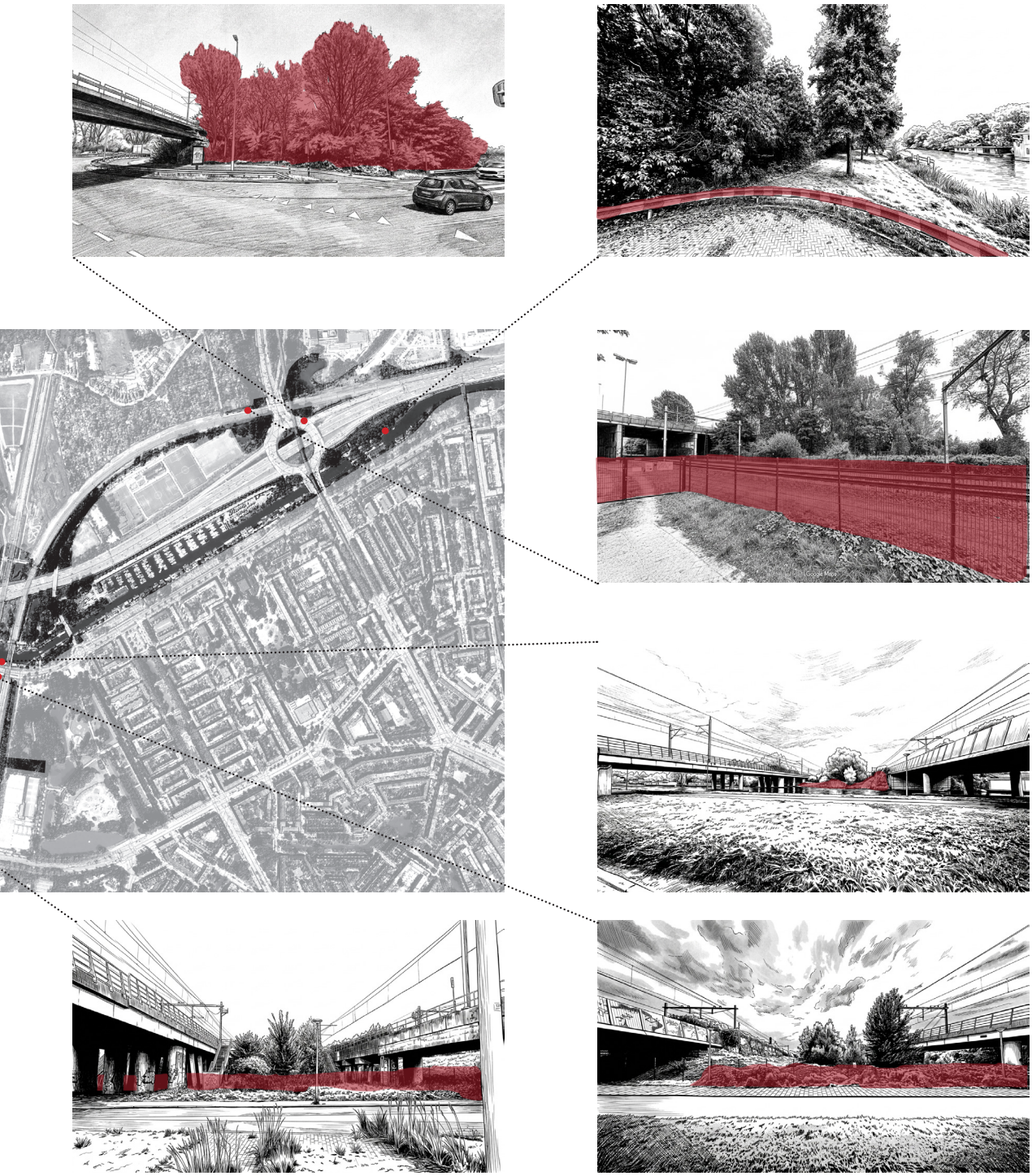






To truly encounter this space requires entry. Walking along its edges, the site first appears leftover, uneven and almost reluctant. What appears from above as a simple background becomes, on foot, a sequence of distinct but connected spatial situations: narrow passages beside sound walls, muddy openings near the water, wooded pockets behind barriers, and undercrofts beneath overpasses where grass, reed, willow, poplar and dumped material meet.

The space is not one space but many.



Its boundaries are confused. Some thresholds are invisible; others are brutal, made by concrete, fencing or infrastructure. This unstable threshold condition relates to Solà-Morales's understanding of terrain vague as a space of ambiguity and latent possibility, neither fully outside nor fully absorbed by the city (Solà-Morales, 1995). Entering means accepting that you do not fully see what lies ahead. Each step narrows the view while opening another.

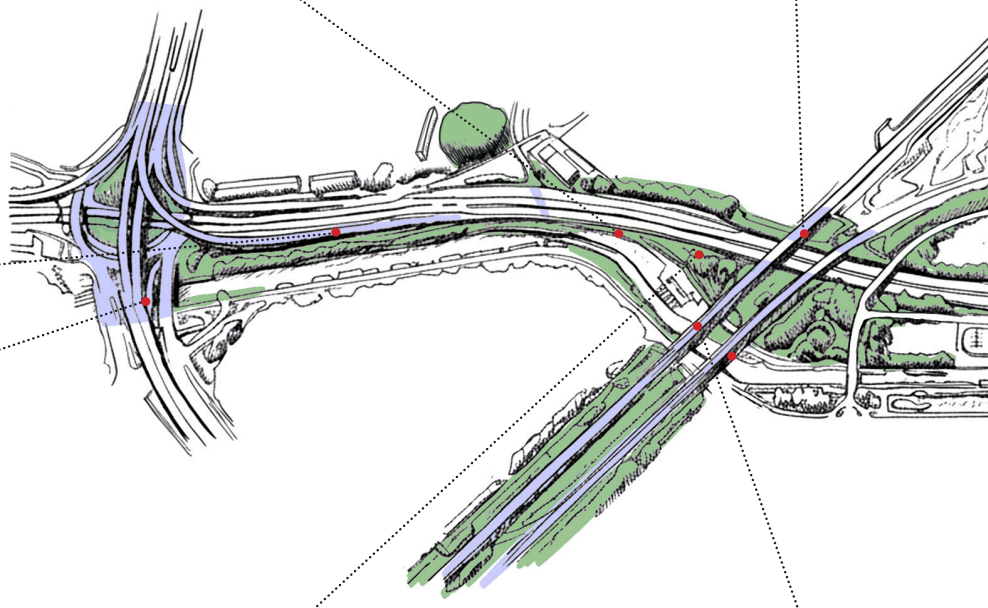
Figure 5: *Entering the interstitial. The photo sequence maps possible approaches, barriers and edge conditions around the Schie strip, showing how access is suggested, interrupted and often left unresolved. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*

3.3. Inside the interstitial



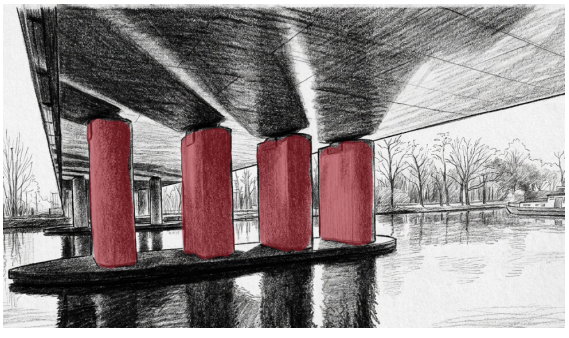












From inside, the interstitial no longer reads as one residual zone. It becomes a sequence of overlapping conditions: exposed infrastructural edges, enclosed vegetation pockets, wet margins, graffiti surfaces, informal shelters and uncertain routes. Its value lies in this overlap, not in a single clear identity.

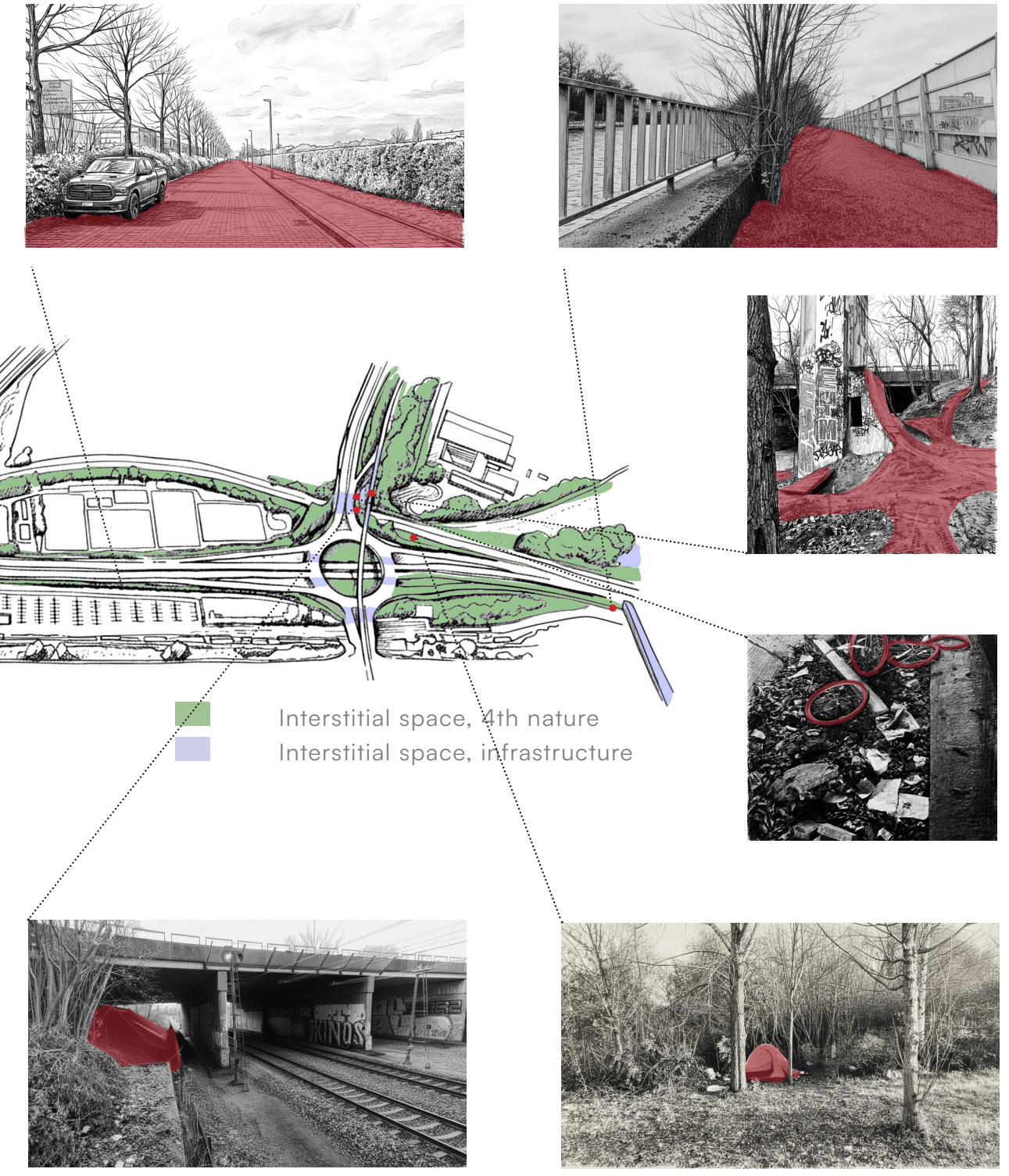
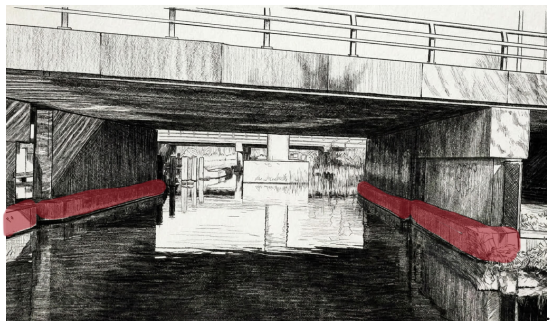


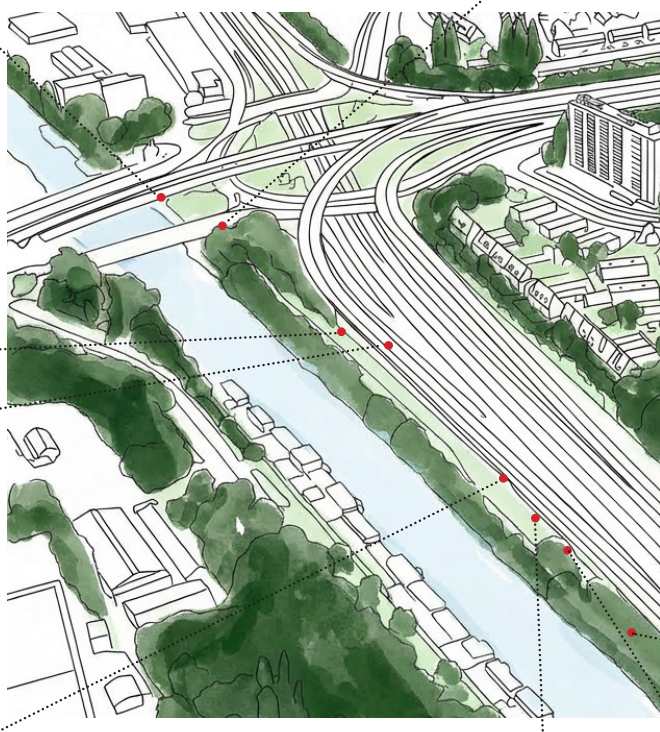
Figure 6: *Inside the interstitial. The drawing and photographs show how the Schie strip is experienced from within as a sequence of infrastructural spaces, fourth-nature pockets, informal occupations and hidden thresholds. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*

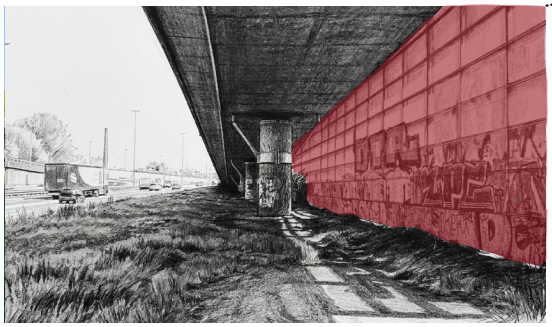
3.4. The Klein Polder pad strip







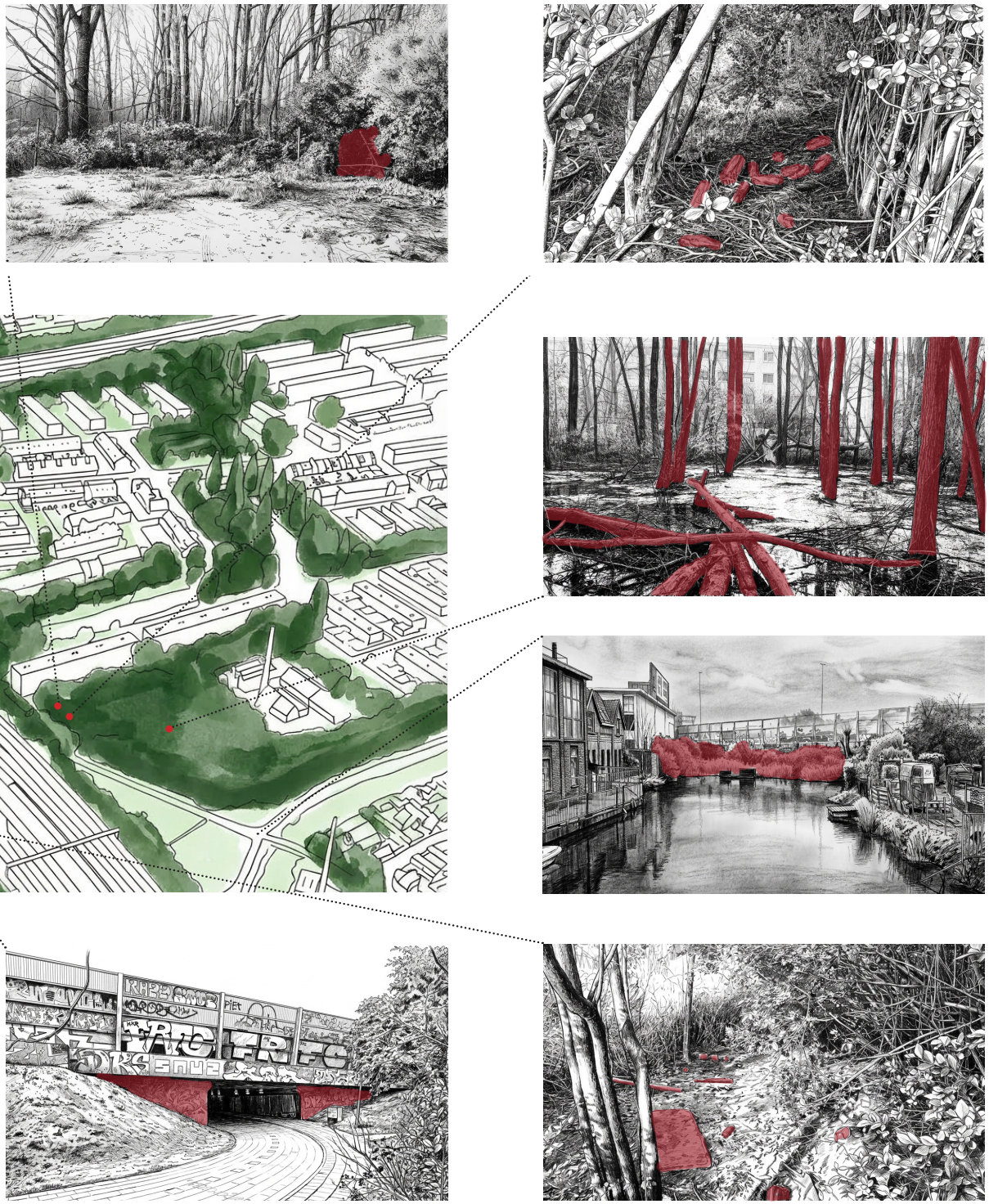








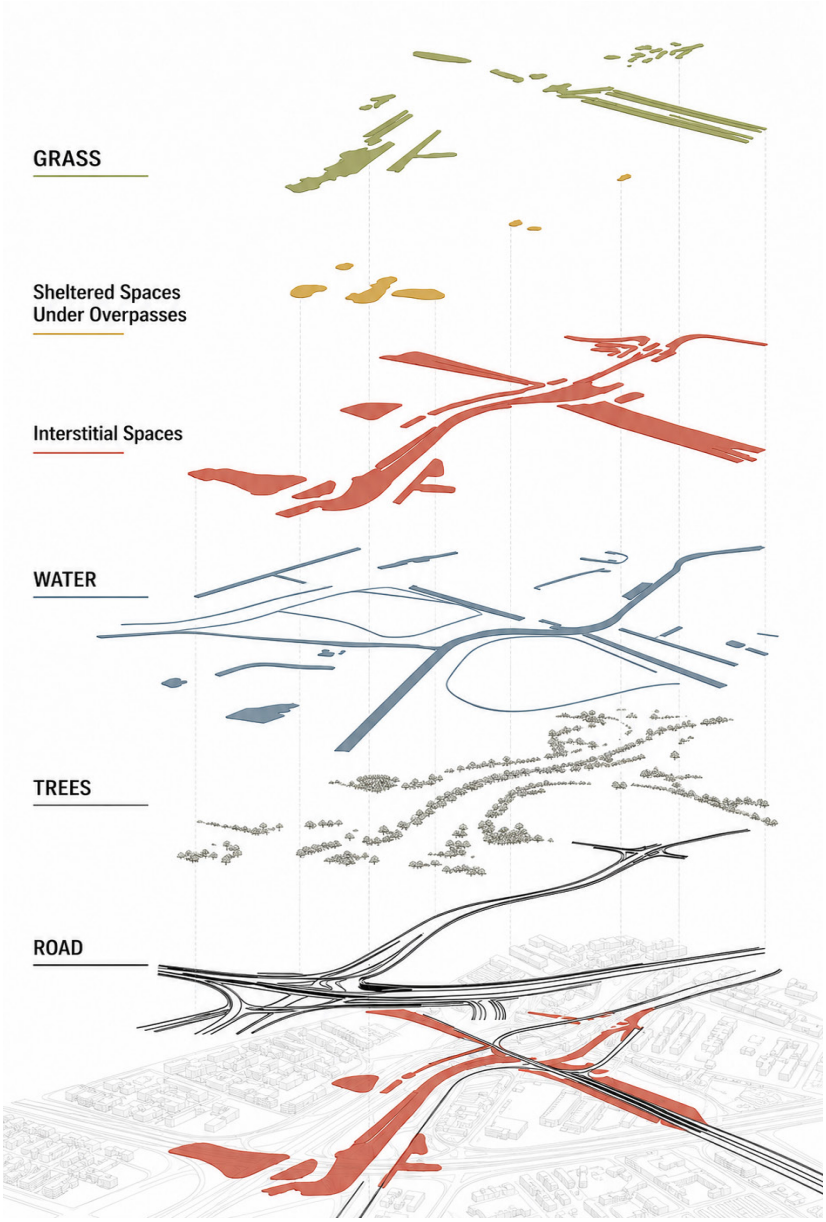
The strip is linear only in plan. In experience, movement is repeatedly compressed, redirected or interrupted by bridges, fences, wet ground, vegetation and infrastructural edges. This discontinuity becomes important for the design: the later contemplative path does not impose a new route on



empty ground, but connects existing fragments into a sequence of attention.

Figure 7: *The interstitial strip. Site photographs and axonometric drawing show the relation between the canal, viaducts, rail infrastructure, sound barriers, spontaneous vegetation and hidden access points. The strip appears linear from above, but is experienced as a fragmented sequence of pockets, edges and thresholds. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*

3.5. Present but not available



The layered axonometric reveals the infrastructure's dominance over the site. The internal structure of the Schie strip consists of residual spaces that exist precisely because of surrounding infrastructure: narrow strips between canal embankment and sound wall, the undercroft beneath Kleinpolderplein viaduct, wooded pockets behind the rail line, and wet hollows where spontaneous vegetation colonises dumped material.

Pedestrian presence in the interstitial strip is surprisingly low. Although surrounding neighbourhoods generate foot traffic, most people remain on designed paths, near sculptures, or along large movement axes leading to bridges and Stadspark-West. Very few

Figure 8: *Layered axonometric of the design site. The drawing separates grass, sheltered spaces, interstitial voids, water, trees and road infrastructure to show how the Schie strip is produced by overlapping spatial systems rather than by one coherent park structure. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*

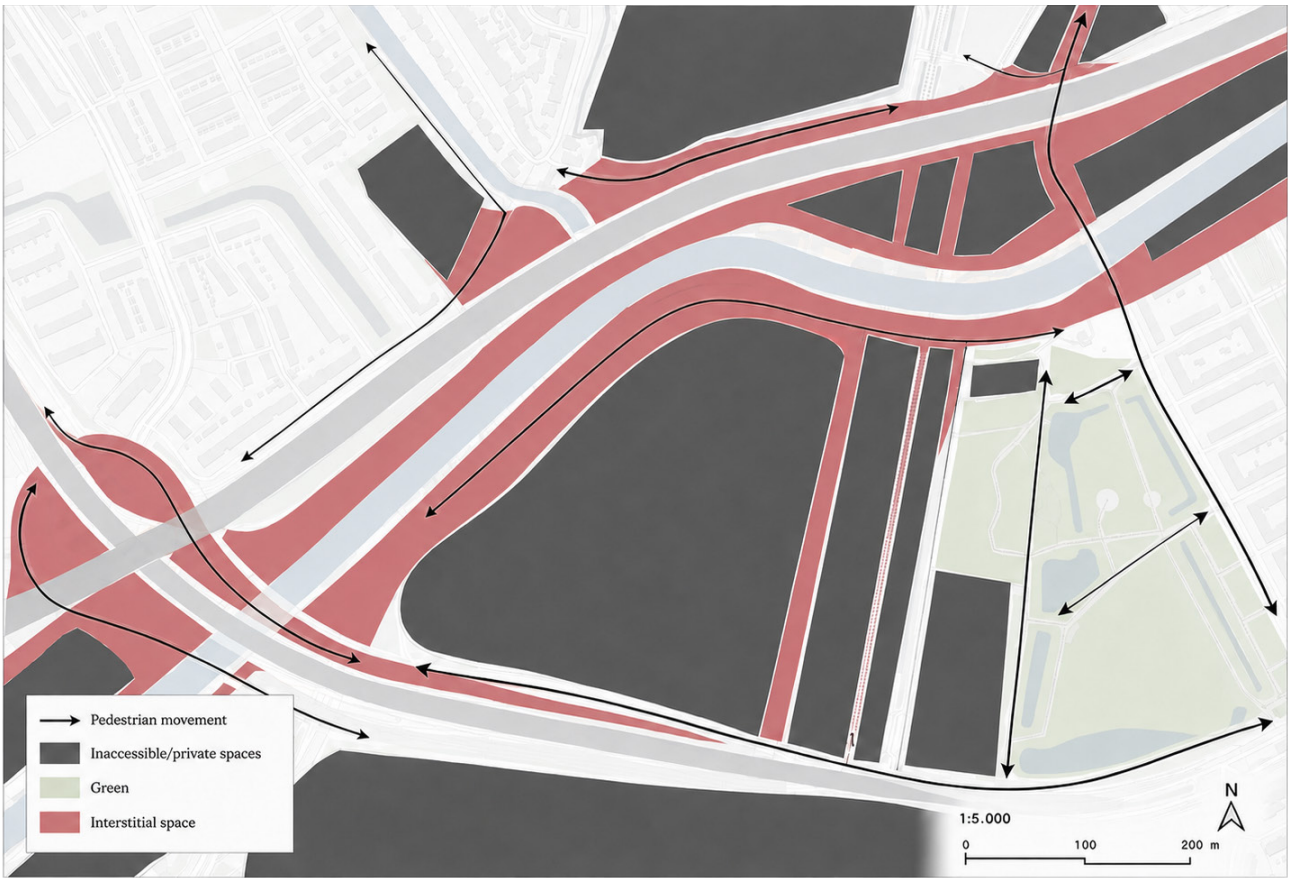


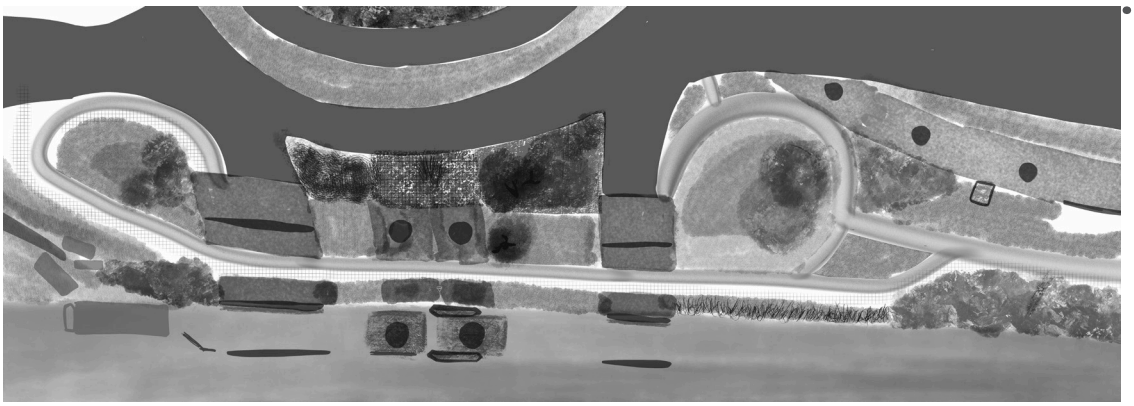
Figure 9: *Movement and accessibility analysis. The map contrasts pedestrian movement with inaccessible or private areas, showing that the Schie strip is more often passed by than entered. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*

enter the interstitial pockets themselves. This avoidance is not caused by an absence of value, but by a lack of spatial invitation and readability.

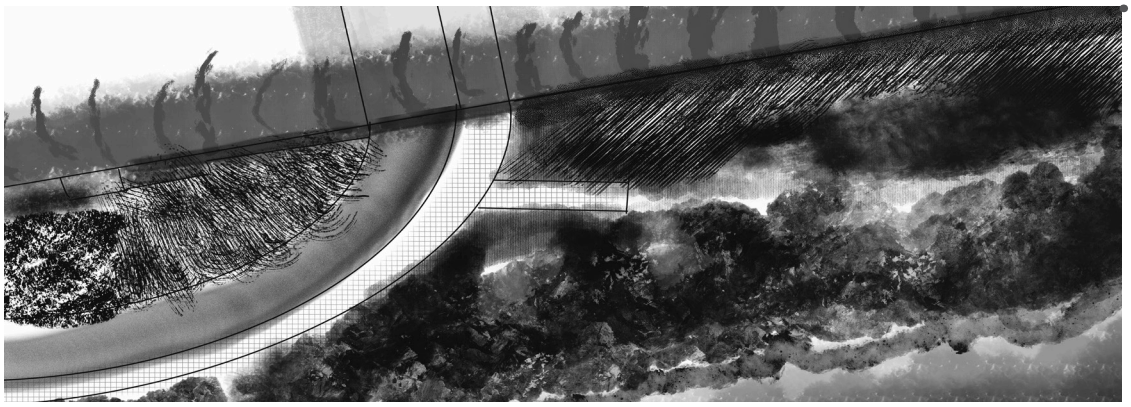
The interstitial therefore contains conditions that could support slower movement and reflection, yet these remain hidden, fragmented and difficult to access. Luo describes this as a central problem of leftover spaces: they may contain latent value, but without careful disclosure they remain socially and spatially unavailable (Luo, 2021). The design task is therefore not to add meaning from outside, but to make existing conditions enterable and legible without destroying the multiplicity that gives them value.

Spatial Mind Map

Four bridges area



Graffiti tunnel and informal shelter edge



Willow swamp

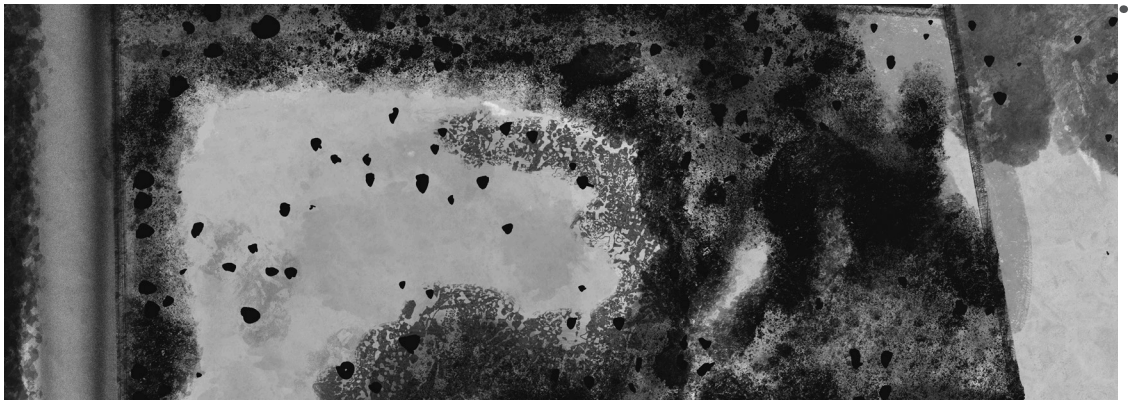
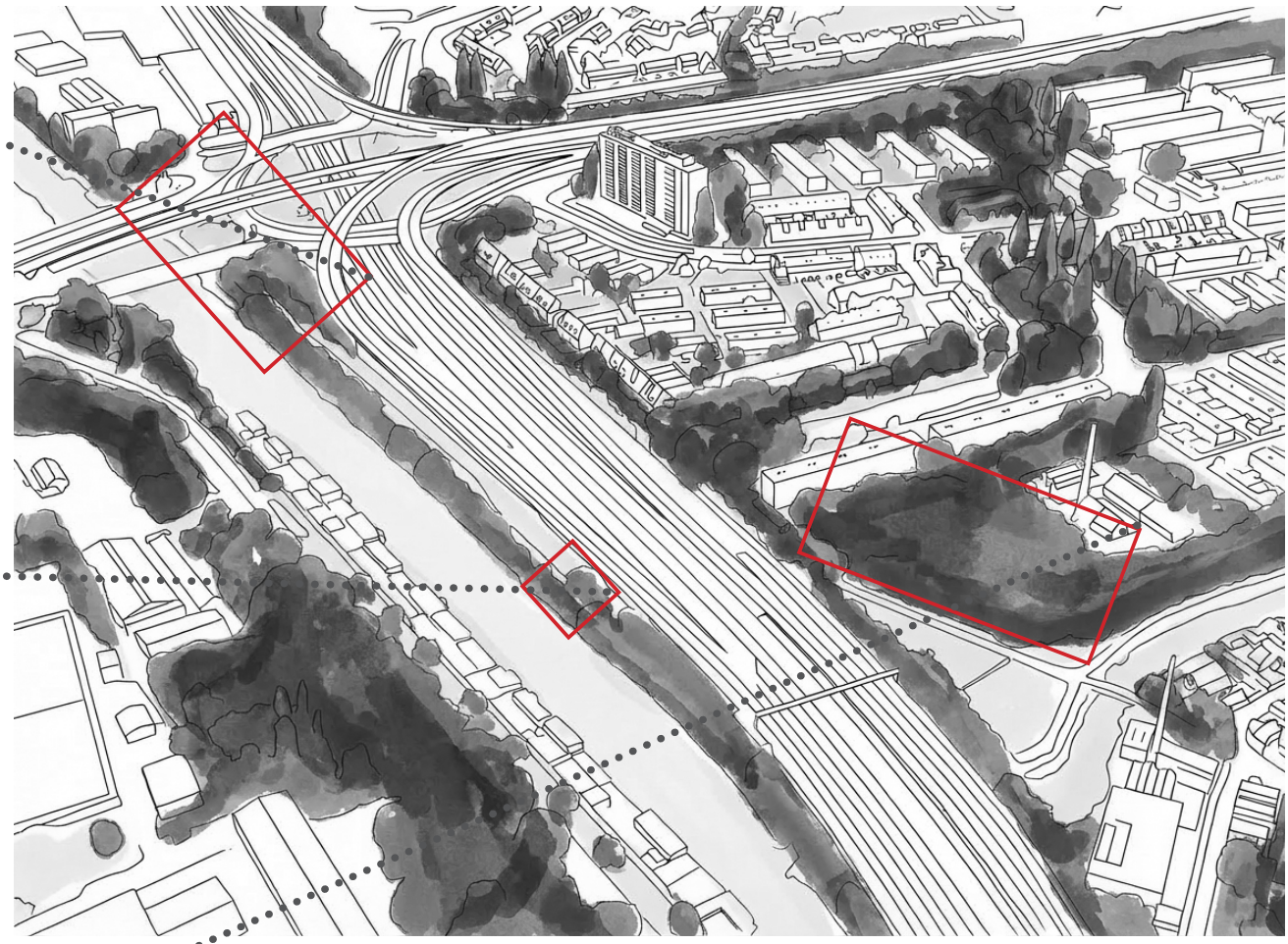


Figure 10: *Spatial mind map of the Schie interstitial. Aerial fragments and close-up drawings identify three key pockets where infrastructure, access, water, vegetation and hidden occupation overlap. These pockets form the analytical basis for the later design moments. Own work, 2026.*



The spatial mind map translates field observations into selected pockets, showing where the interstitial condition becomes most spatially and atmospherically intense.

Why this strip?
This strip was chosen because it concentrates the main tensions of the wider Schie interstitial within one walkable field. It contains infrastructural pressure, canal edge, wet ground, spontaneous vegetation, graffiti, informal shelter, hidden access and low pedestrian presence at the same time. These conditions are not exceptional fragments, but a compressed section of the larger Rotterdam North interstitial system.

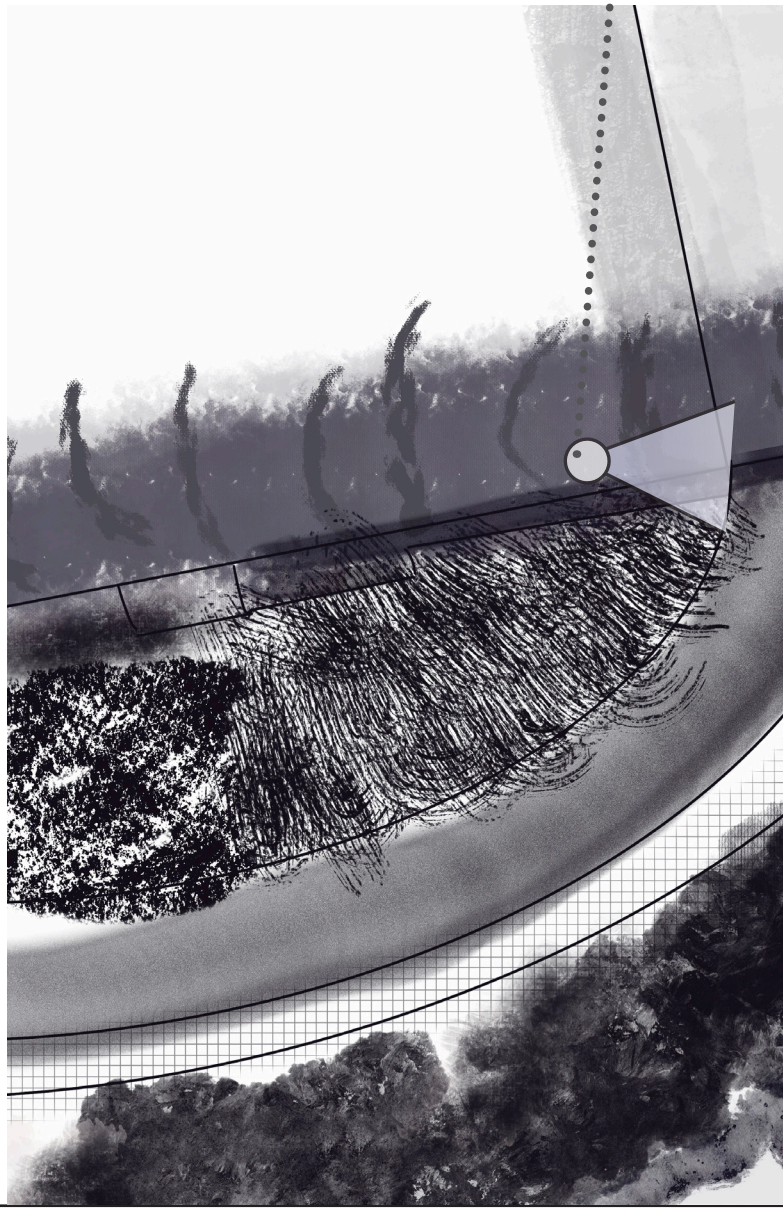
The strip is therefore specific enough to design, but complex enough to stand for the wider condition. It allows the thesis to test how latent contemplative and ruinous qualities can be made readable without turning the interstitial landscape into a conventional park.

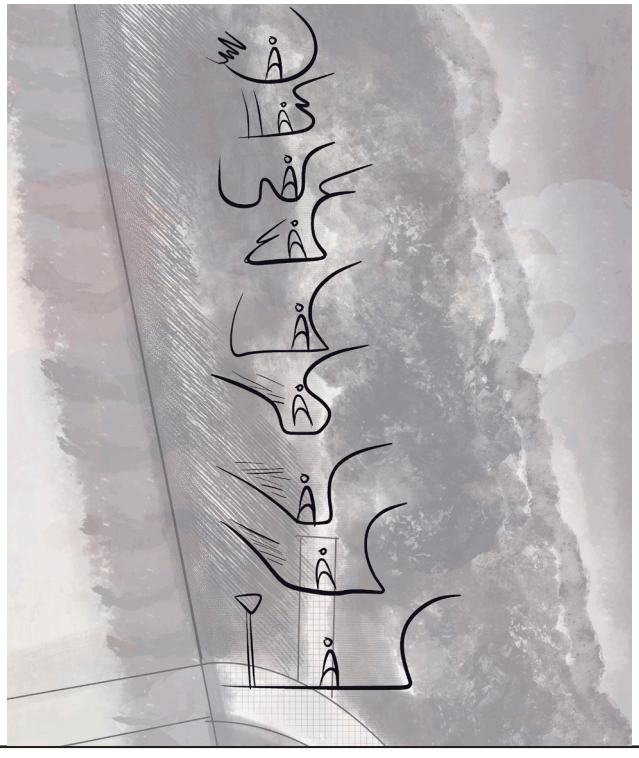
Graffiti Tunnel and Informal Shelter Ed

Zooming into the site, the deep map reveals the succession of spaces and the small additions that shape experience: mown edges, the graffiti tunnel, the broken fence that suddenly allows entry into a hidden corner, and a narrow path that invites entry before revealing itself as a temporary shelter used by others.

Found objects, cut branches and self-seeded vegetation mark both human and non-human occupation. These micro-decisions, turning here, hesitating there, avoiding the saturated ground, form the lived grammar of the interstitial. Following Corner's understanding of mapping as an active and speculative practice, the drawing does not only register the site. It reveals relations between access, obstruction, informal occupation and atmosphere, and begins to suggest where design might carefully intervene (Corner, 1999).







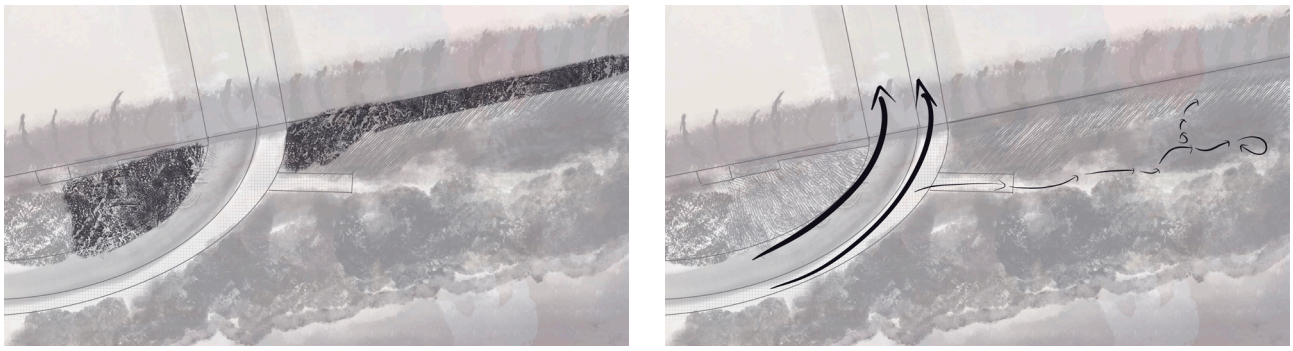
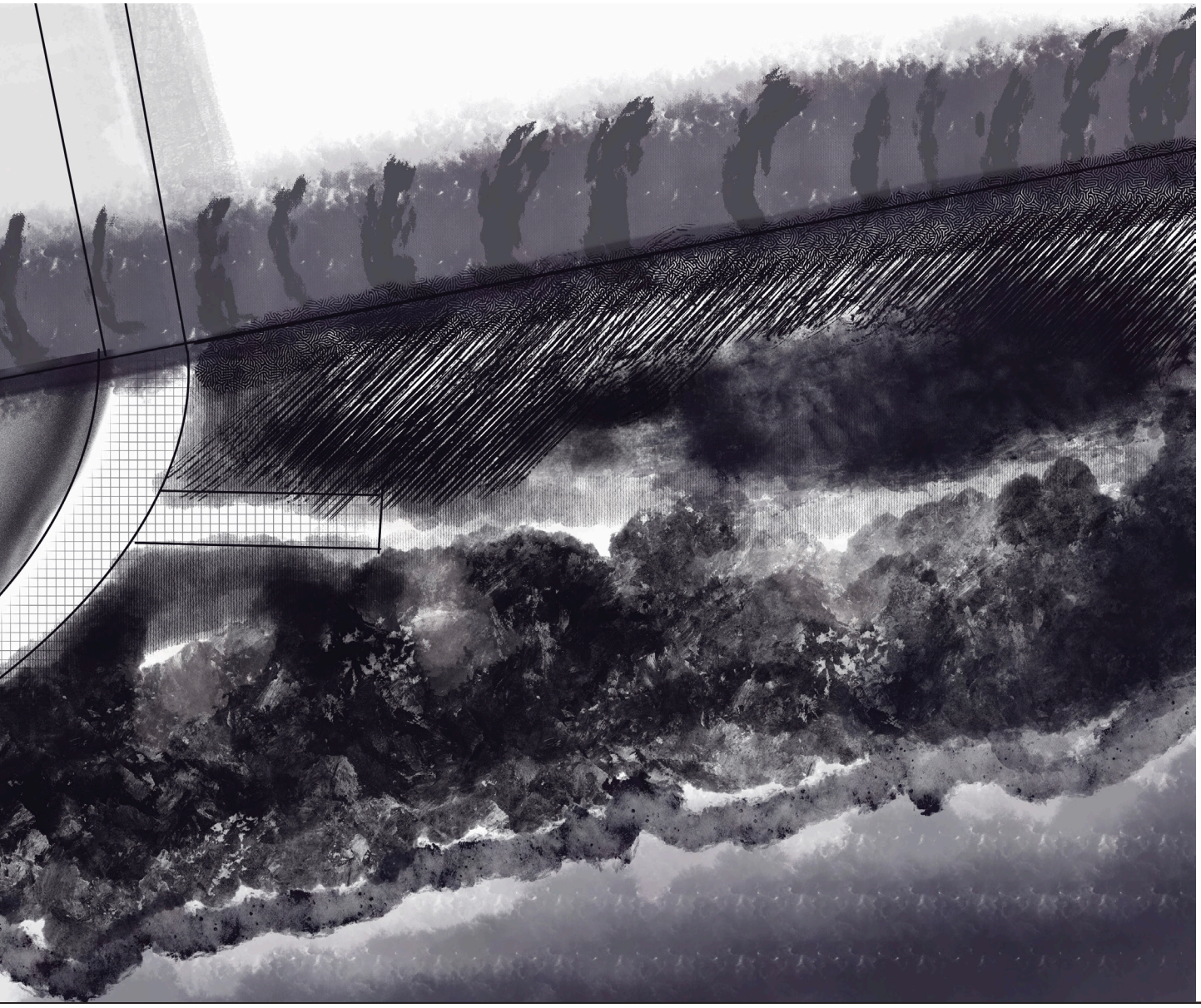


Figure 12: *Deep map detail of the interstitial strip. Plan drawing, atmospheric rendering and route sequence are combined to register spatial thresholds, hidden pockets, informal paths and shifting conditions of access. The drawing reads the site as a lived field rather than as a fixed plan condition. Own work, 2026.*



Graffiti Tunnel and Informal Shelter

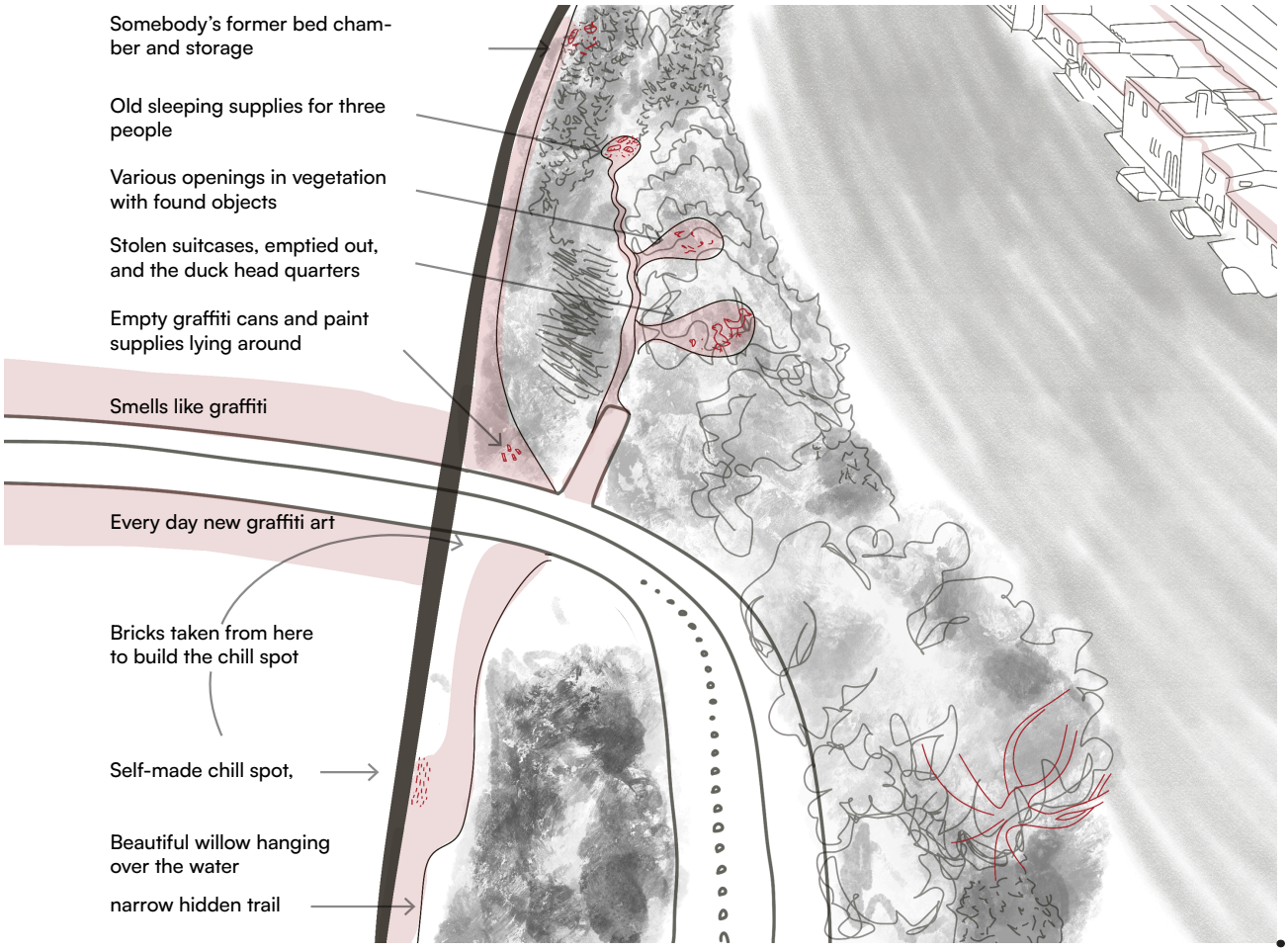


Figure 14: *photographic sequence of the graffiti tunnel and informal shelter edge. The small images register changing light, enclosure, material traces and informal occupation along the route. Own work, 2026.*

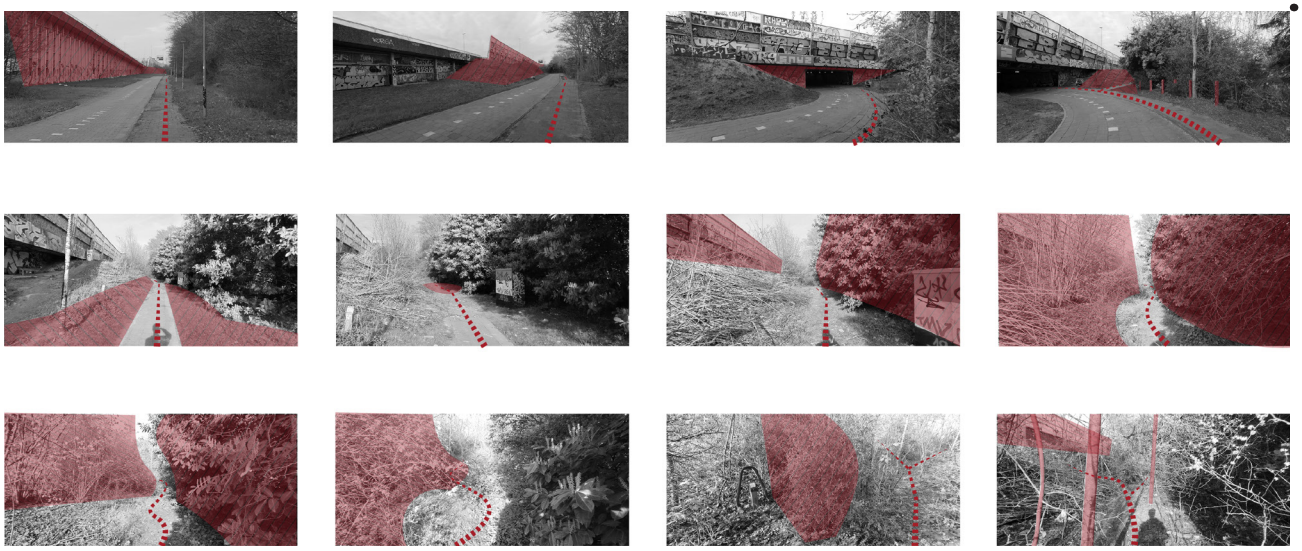


Figure 13: *Route score and annotated plan. The drawing documents bodily movement, thresholds, informal occupation, graffiti traces, vegetation edges, sound, smell and moments of compression and release. It shows how the interstitial is produced through repeated use as much as through physical form. Own work, 2026.*

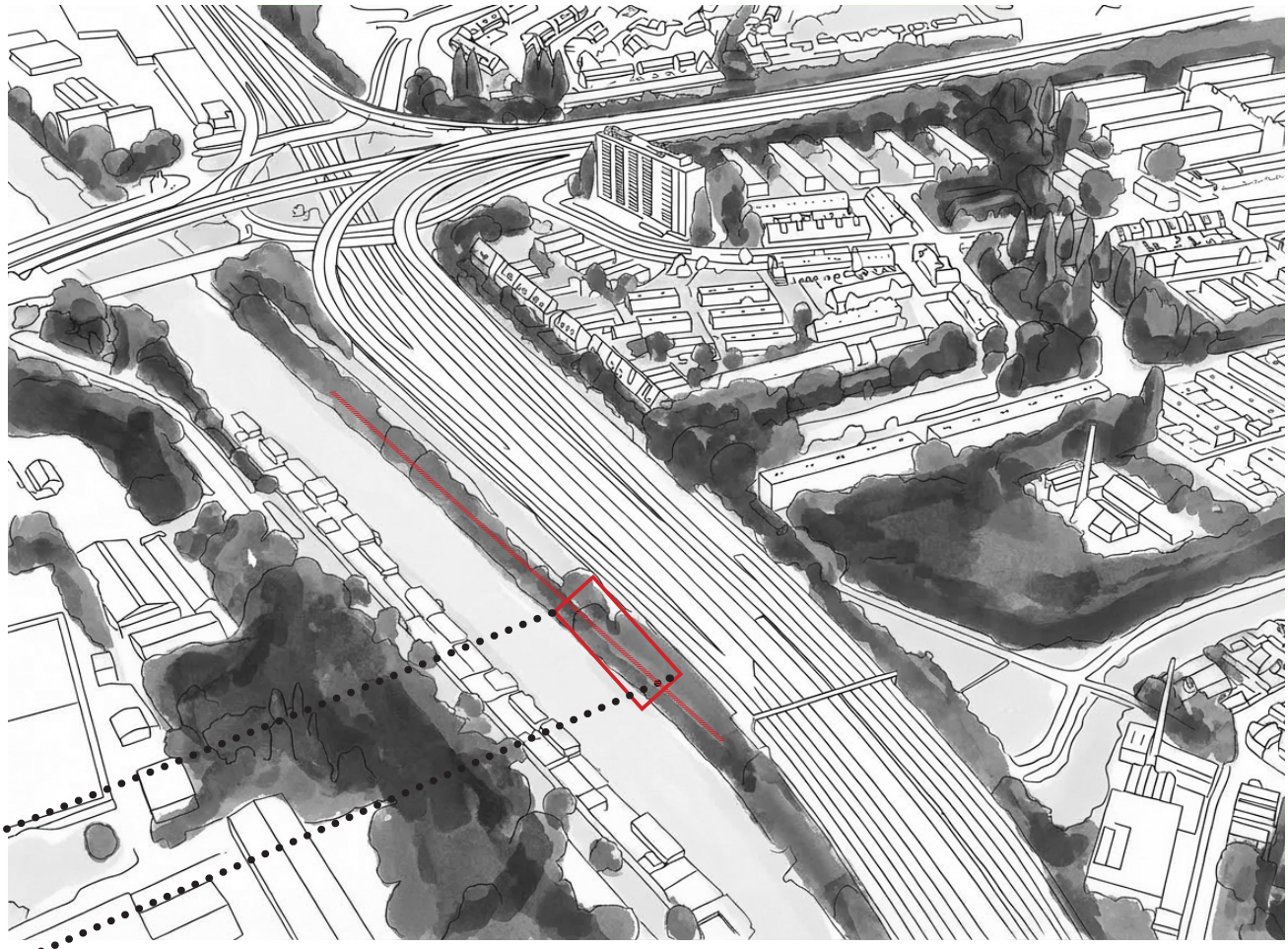


Figure 15: *Lived grammar of the graffiti tunnel and informal shelter edge. The drawing shows how graffiti, informal shelter, BMX traces, animal occupation, willow, water and dense understorey overlap along one passage. Own work, 2026.*

The route score traces one specific passage through the site, highlighting each spatial element that directs movement: openings, obstructions, changes in terrain, light, sound and material. The accompanying drawing layers different uses of the same space: graffiti, informal shelter, BMX traces, animal occupation, willow overhanging water and dense understorey.

The space is never neutral. It is continuously interpreted, occupied and reworked by multiple human and more-than-human users. These overlapping claims do not need to be removed from the design argument. They show why the interstitial must be approached with restraint: it is already used, already marked and already alive.

Four bridges area

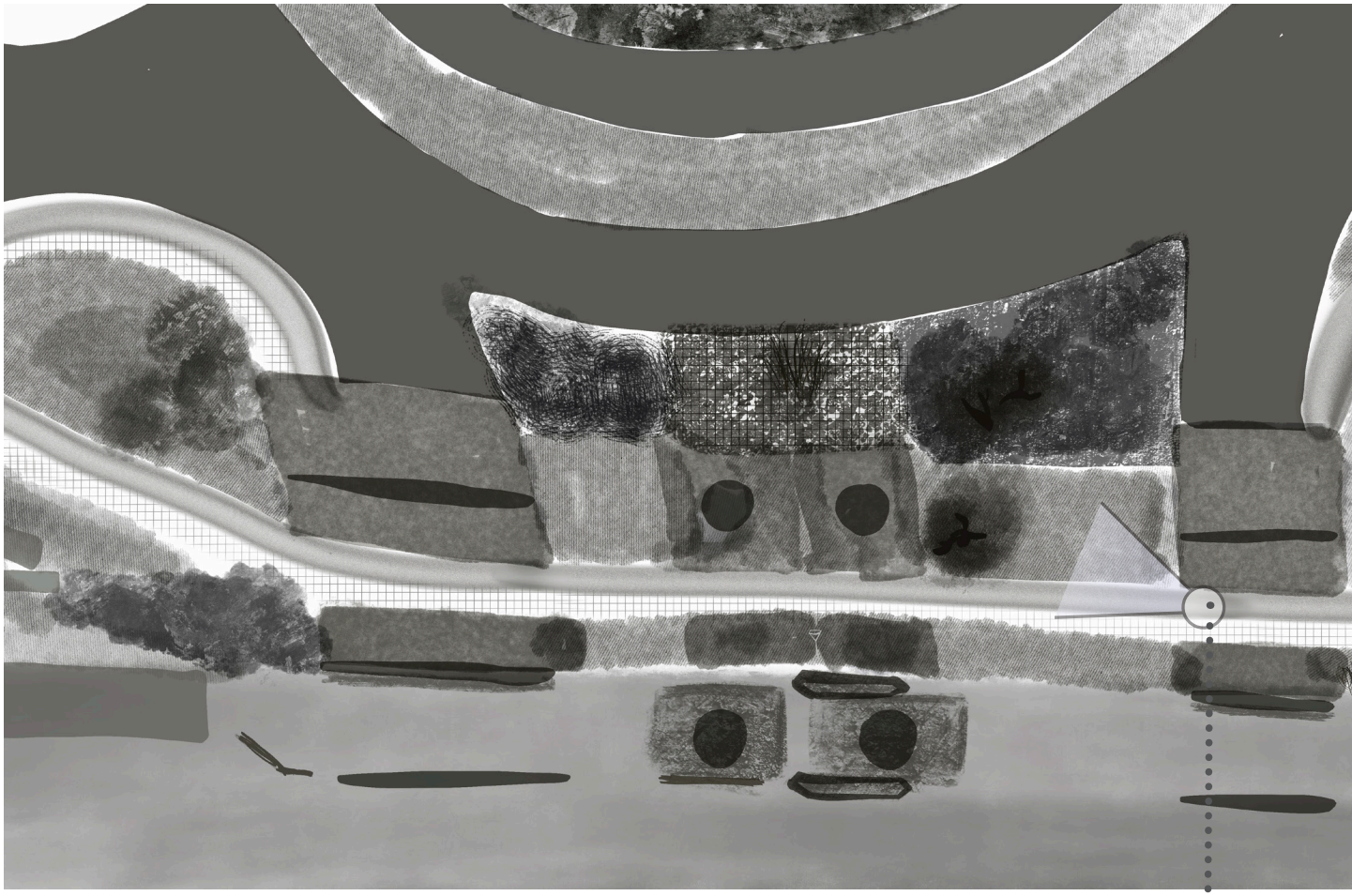
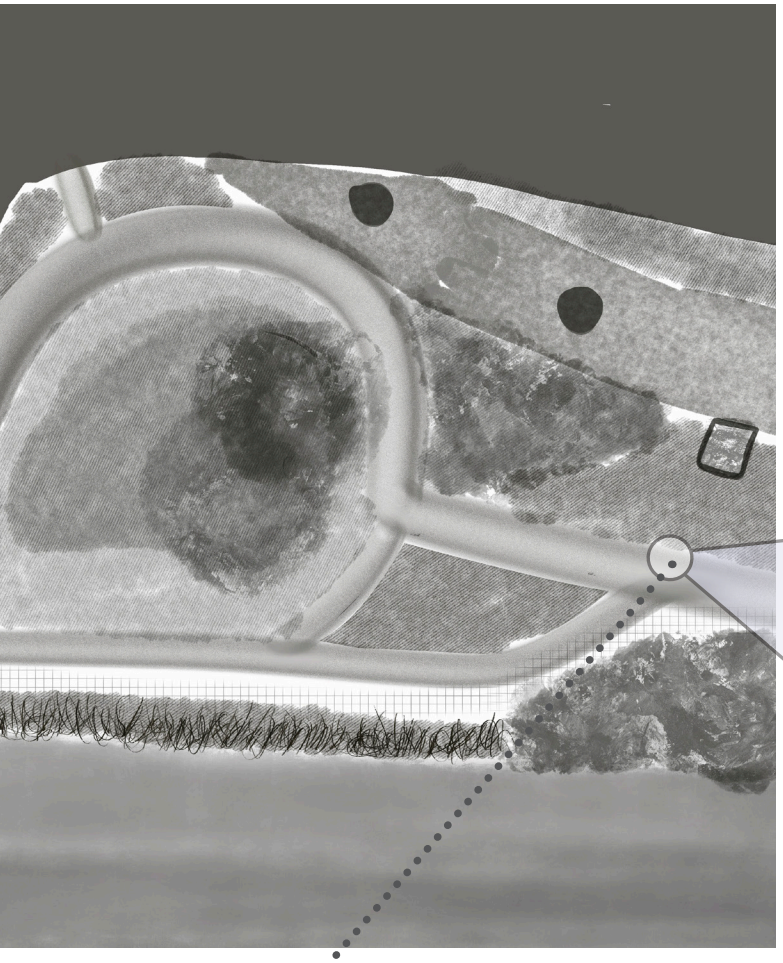


Figure 16: *Four bridges area from above. The aerial fragment locates the open infrastructural pocket where bridges, grass, water and movement lines overlap.* Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.



Figure 17: *Underpass condition at the four bridges area. The photograph shows the maintained open ground beneath the bridge where infrastructural cover creates shelter without full enclosure. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*



Beneath the overpasses the atmosphere is maintained, open and legible. The space is grassy, accessible and visually continuous, yet it remains strongly shaped by infrastructure. A single tree works as a spatial anchor, while the bridges above provide shelter and rhythm.

This pocket is important because it shows that contemplative potential does not only emerge in hidden or overgrown places. It can also appear where infrastructure creates cover, repetition, distance and a slower relation to water. Noise remains present, but it becomes part of the background condition rather than the only experience of the place.

The underpass therefore functions as a legible infrastructural shelter: open enough to enter, framed enough to pause, and still connected to the pressure of the city.



Figure 18: *Four bridges area as legible infrastructural shelter. The image shows how open grass, bridge rhythm, water proximity and a single tree anchor create a pause condition within a hard infrastructural field. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*

Willow swamp

For months the dense willow thicket behind the broken fence remained unnoticed. It is not directly announced from the main path. Entry happens through a sequence of small decisions: following the edge, passing the graffiti tunnel, noticing an opening, crossing uneven ground and accepting that the route becomes less clear.

Once entered, the thicket opens into a surprising marsh-like woodland. The canopy lifts, light filters through, and the atmosphere shifts. Yet car-wrecking yard debris lies only metres away. This pocket is important because it holds contradiction: repulsion and revelation, waste and beauty, shelter and uncertainty.

The route score shows that this contemplative potential is not only located inside the pocket, but also in the process of reaching it. The experience depends on threshold, hesitation, detour and partial concealment.

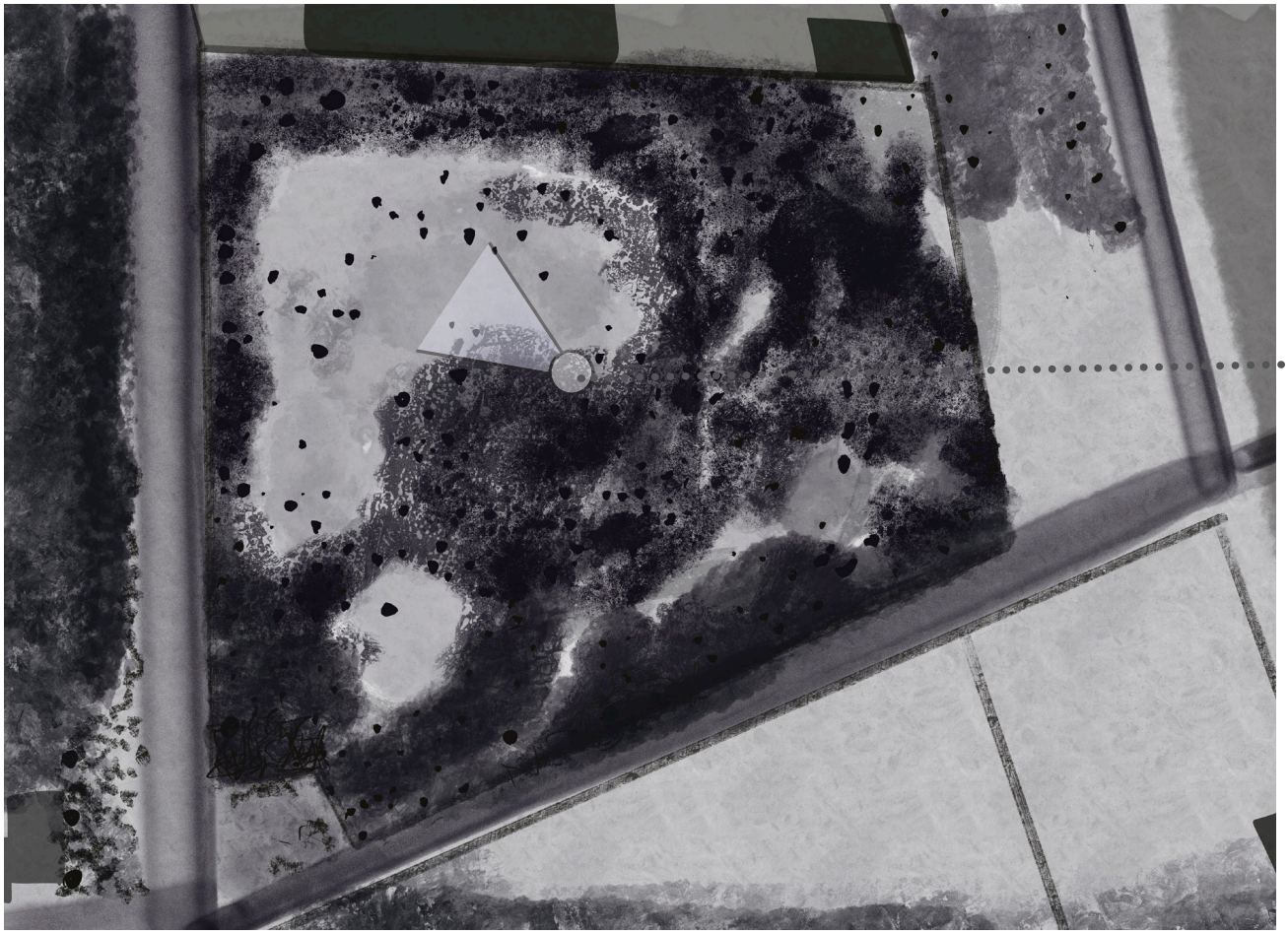


Figure 19: *Hidden willow swamp as threshold condition. The image shows the concealed wet pocket behind the broken fence, where willow canopy, debris, partial access and enclosure produce a condition between shelter, uncertainty and revelation. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*

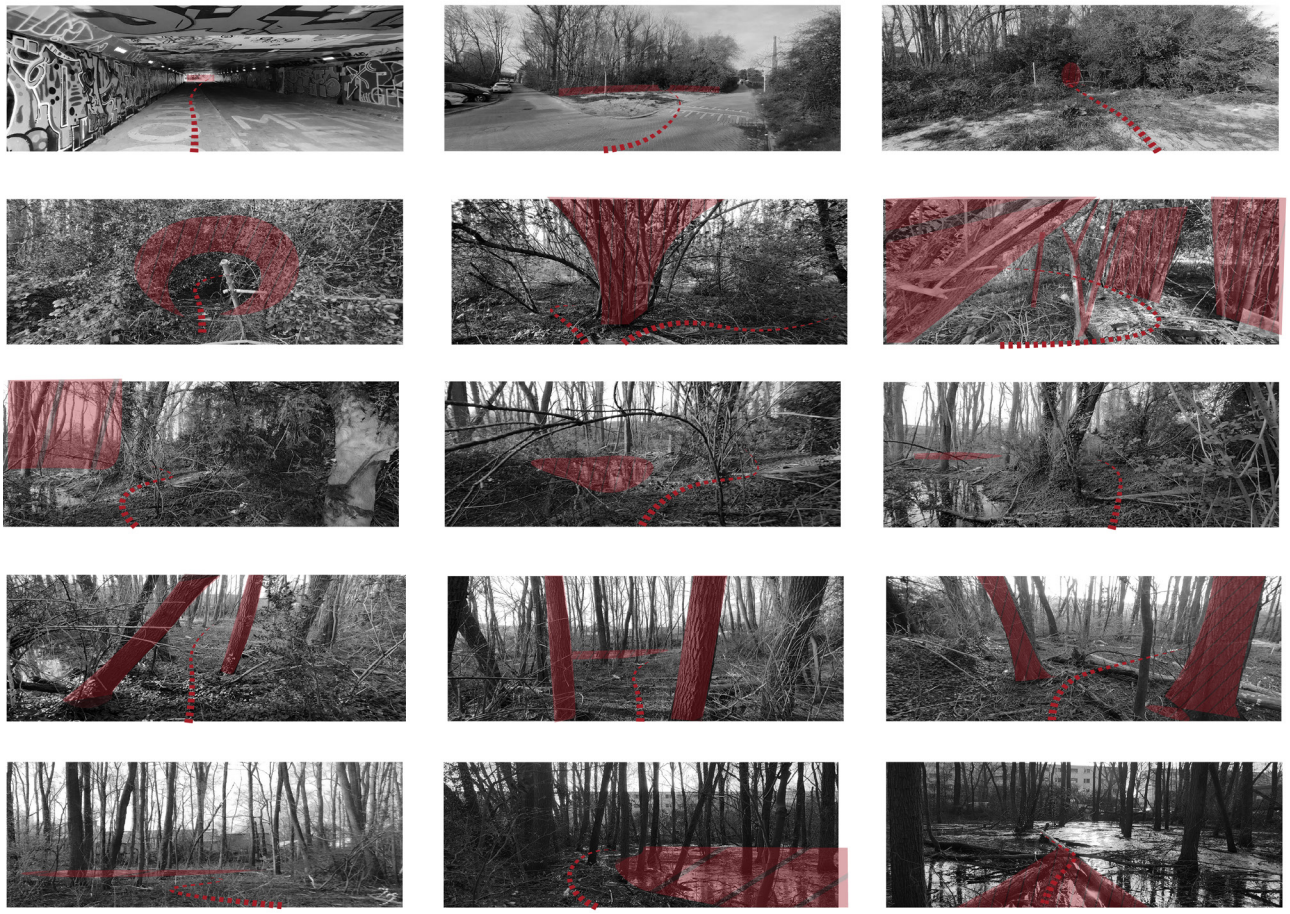


Figure 21: *Entry sequence into the willow swamp. The drawing shows how the hidden pocket is reached through fence, tunnel, narrow opening and wet ground rather than through a formal entrance.* Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.



Figure 20: *Route score, picture and annotated plan documenting bodily movement, thresholds, informal occupation, graffiti traces, vegetation edges, sound, smell and moments of spatial compression and release. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*

These drawings shift the analysis from separate observations toward design material. The Schie interstitial is not treated as an empty strip to be filled, but as a set of existing conditions that can be connected, framed and intensified.

The willow swamp, graffiti tunnel, informal path, wet reed ground and infrastructural pockets each carry different forms of latent value. Some are ecological, some social, some atmospheric, and some spatial. Together they show that the design should not introduce a completely new landscape logic. It should work with what is already present.

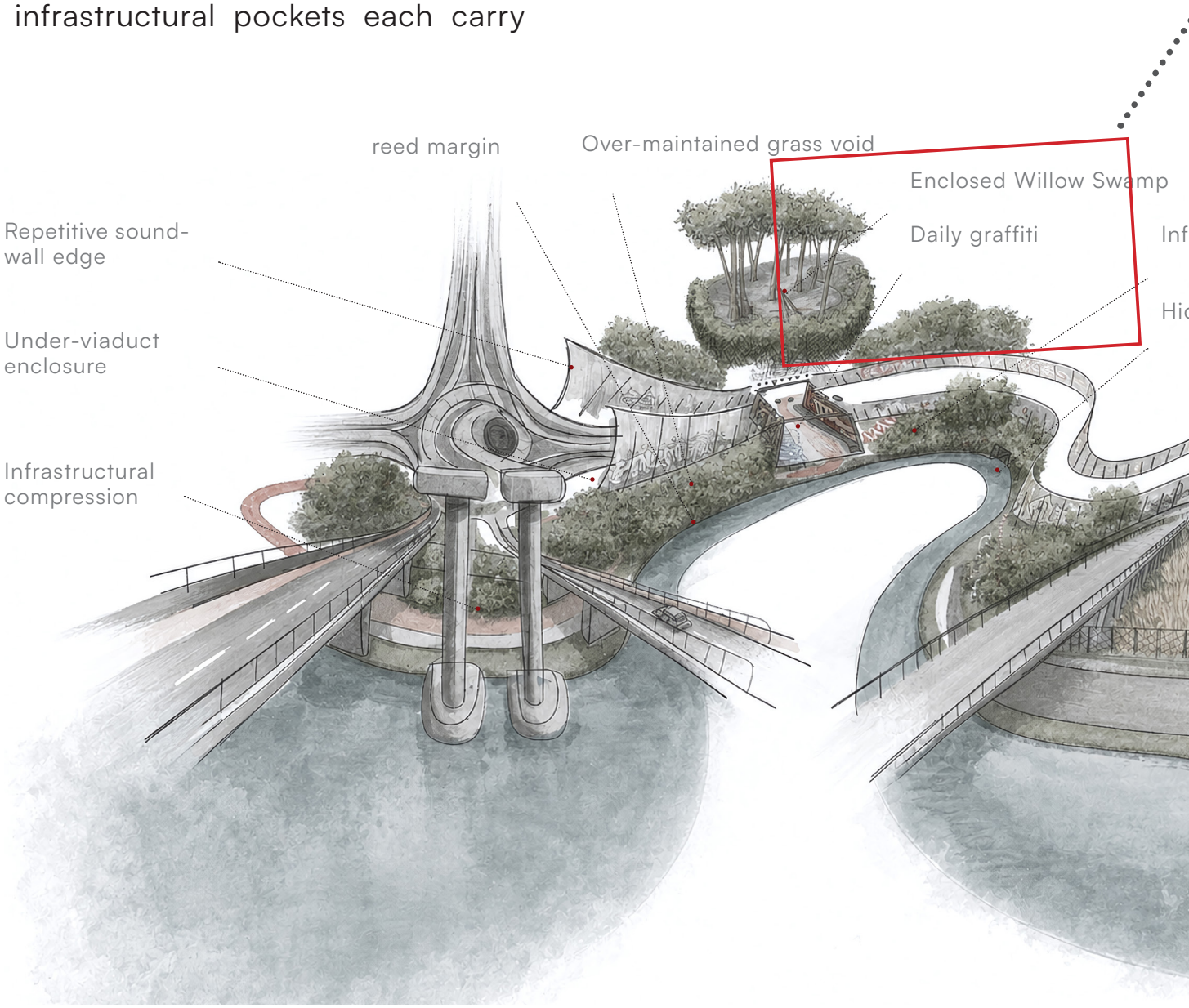


Figure 22: Synthesis axonometric of the Schie interstitial. The drawing brings together willow swamp, graffiti tunnel, informal path, wet reed ground and unused infrastructural pockets as existing material for the design. It translates site analysis into the first logic of a possible route. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

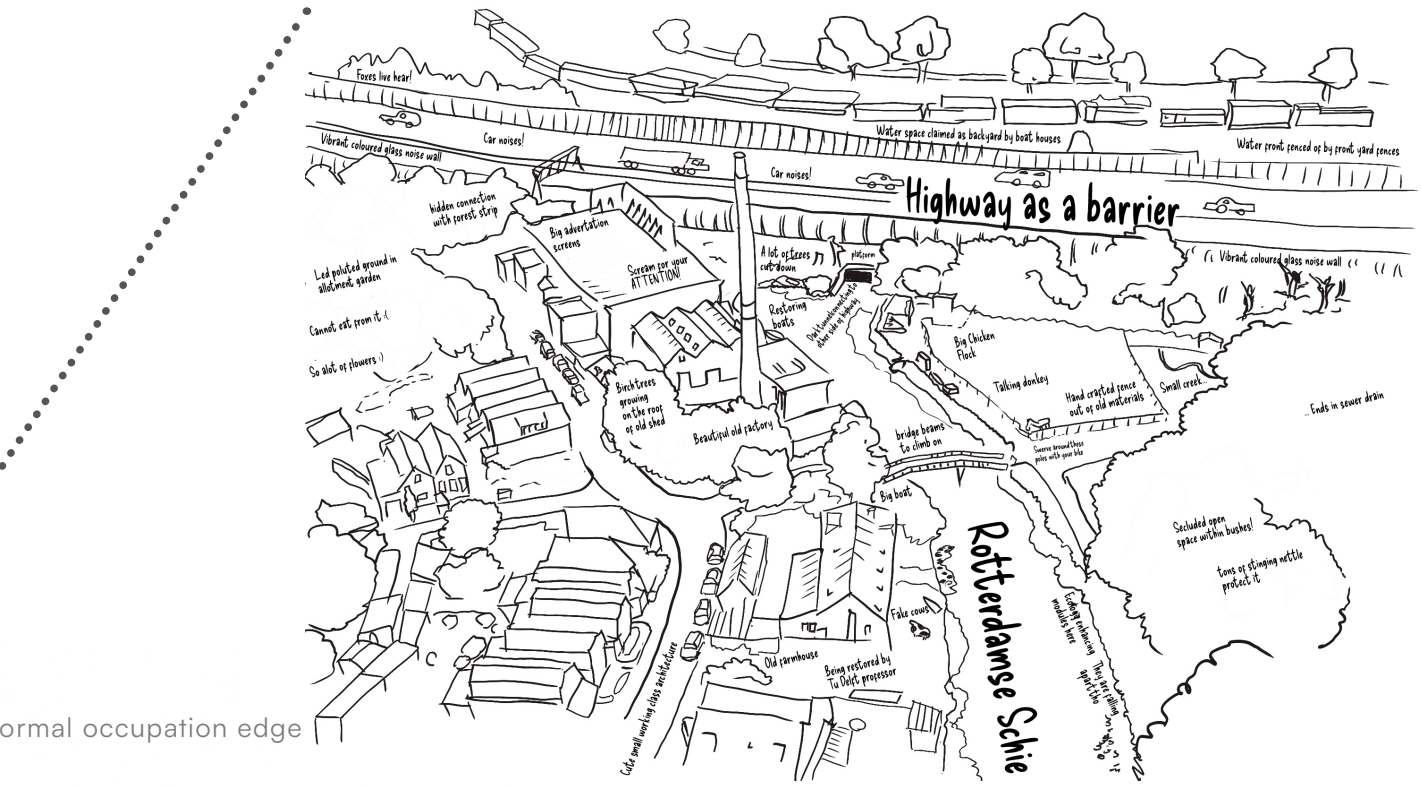


Figure 23: *Wider infrastructural context. The sketch shows how the Schie, highway, rail line, surrounding neighbourhoods and Stadspark-West act as spatial forces that compress and define the interstitial strip. Own work, 2026.*



The field reading identifies three forms of interstitial value: ecological and more-than-human value, informal occupation, and spatial ambiguity. These values are not treated as problems to be cleaned away, but as latent conditions that the design later frames through route, threshold, vegetation and maintenance.

Ecological and more-than-human value



Figure 24: *Interstitial condition between canal and viaduct, where infrastructure, water and spontaneous vegetation overlap. Own work, 2026.*

Interstitial spaces in Rotterdam North appear in many different forms. They are the spaces between places: between canal and viaduct, between rail line and sound barrier, between maintenance track and spontaneous woodland. They lack a single clear programme or destination, yet they are never empty. Their ambiguity is what unites them: blurred borders, informal use, messy aesthetics, ecological succession and a constant state of becoming. In Trancik's terms, they can be read as residual urban fragments, but in Solà-Morales's reading they also hold openness, expectation and possibility (Solà-Morales, 1995; Trancik, 1986).

In this specific strip, the interstitial condition is produced by overlapping infrastructural systems that leave behind pockets of unclaimed ground. These pockets vary in scale, enclosure

Informal occupa



Figure 25: *Intercellular pocket within shelter and small-scale appropriation.*

and character, yet each atmosphere. I use the te site-specific descriptor within the larger infra where informal shelter, and more-than-human value lies not in formal relations they hold.

Three qualities become First, ecological and m spontaneous vegetation, wet ground occupy spa has left undefined. Seco and shelter: graffiti, hi resting places and foun site is used outside offi ambiguity of form and m neither park, wasteland,

tion and shelter



the strip, showing informal occupation. Own work, 2026.

n carries its own micro-
rm intercellular here as a
for small pockets hidden
structural body: places
spontaneous vegetation
occupation coexist. Their
clarity, but in the fragile

e central for the thesis.
nore-than-human value:
, water, birds, insects and
ces that formal planning
ond, informal occupation
dden paths, temporary
nd objects show that the
cial programmes. Third,
neaning: the landscape is
infrastructure nor nature

Ambiguity of form and meaning



Figure 26: *Terrain vague condition along the open edge, where vacancy, infrastructure and ambiguous use coexist. Own work, 2026.*

reserve, but a shifting condition between them.

These qualities are not evenly distributed. They emerge only in specific locations and under particular atmospheric conditions. This chapter therefore does not conclude that the entire interstitial strip is contemplative. It concludes that the site contains latent conditions for contemplation: enclosure, uncertainty, elemental presence, roughness, rhythm, hiddenness and temporal change.

The next chapter asks how these conditions can be understood more precisely as contemplative experience. The design task will then be to make selected qualities legible without erasing the ambiguity, informality and ecological openness that give them value.



4.1 Contemplation as spatial attention

4.2 Precedent I: Plum Village

4.3 Contemplative characteristics in interstitial Rotterdam

4.4 Conditions hindering contemplation

4.5 Precedent II: Optical Glass House

4.6 Precedent III: Observatorium Nieuw-Terbregge

4.7 Design conclusion: rules for contemplation

04 Contemplation

4.1. Contemplation as spatial attentior

From urb

Contemplation is used here as a spatial and embodied condition, not as a detached mental state or religious practice. It describes a shift in attention: from hurried, goal-oriented urban movement toward slower awareness of ground, sound, enclosure, light and distance.

This definition is grounded in three bodies of literature. Rachel and Stephen Kaplan's Attention Restoration Theory explains how certain environments can reduce directed mental effort and allow attention to recover. They identify qualities such as being away, soft fascination, extent and compatibility as conditions that allow attention to rest without becoming passive (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989).

Jay Appleton's Prospect-Refuge Theory clarifies the bodily relation between exposure and shelter. Landscape experience is shaped by the possibility to look out while feeling partly protected (Appleton, 1975). This is relevant because many interstitial spaces in Rotterdam North already contain partial enclosure, underpasses, edges and hidden views.

Overloaded urban attention



Jumping from topic to topic

Finally, Olszewska-Guizzo's Contemplative Landscape Model translates contemplative experience into spatial characteristics such as refuge, prospect, mystery, vegetation, water, light and sensory coherence (Olszewska-Guizzo, 2023). Together,

ban speed to contemplative attention



these sources allow contemplation to be translated into design terms. In this thesis, contemplation means situated attention: a bodily state in which the visitor slows down and begins to read the interstitial landscape as an active field of relations.

Figure 27: From overloaded urban attention to situated contemplative attention. The drawing translates Attention Restoration Theory into three states: scattered attention, restored calm and site-specific bodily attention. Own work, 2026.

4.2. Precedent I: Plum Village

Walking, rhythm and ordinary attention

Plum Village is a Buddhist mindfulness practice centre near Bordeaux in southwest France, founded in 1982 by Vietnamese Zen teacher, writer and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh. It is not a landscape design precedent in the conventional sense. Its relevance lies in the way ordinary paths, bells, thresholds, vegetable gardens, tree canopies and daily routines support repeated moments of attention (Plum Village, n.d.).

During my visit, the place was experienced less as a scenic retreat than as a landscape of rhythm. Walking, sitting, eating and listening were not separated from daily life, but spatially anchored through simple routes and pauses. The lesson for Rotterdam North is therefore not to copy a religious atmosphere, but to understand how repetition, slow movement and small thresholds can make ordinary surroundings attentive.

For this thesis, Plum Village provides a language for reading contemplation as spatial practice. Because I visited the place myself, the precedent is used partly through direct experience and partly through written sources. The lesson for Rotterdam North is not to copy its atmosphere, but to understand how repeated walking, partial enclosure, simple thresholds and elemental presence can turn ordinary surroundings into conditions for attention.

1. Ambiguity and incomplete readability

Spatial situations that resist instant understanding and invite slower interpretation.

In the landscape, recognizable as:

- Filtered sightlines that tease partial views.
- Overlapping layers of vegetati and structure.
- Paths without clear endpoints, branching into uncertainty.
- Spaces that unfold gradually, revealing themselves step by step.



Figure 28: *Path without a clear endpoint. The informal route uses soft enclosure, limited visibility and gradual surface change to shift walking from direct movement toward slower attention. Own work, 2025.*

2.Spatial shelter and transition

A balance between enclosure and exposure, allowing bodily ease without full isolation.

In the landscape, recognizable as:

- Edges, verges, woodland fringes offering subtle cover.
- Undersides of tree canopies for dappled intimacy.
- Subtle height differences that cradle or elevate.
- Spots between infrastructure and open fields, poised on the cusp.

3. Elemental presence

Direct contact with water, wind, soil, vegetation, light, scent and sound.

In the landscape, recognizable as:

- Flowing or still water, pooling or trickling unbidden.
- Rustling vegetation stirred by breeze or footfall.
- Mud, shadow, reflections that shift with light.
- Scents, temperature gradients, tactile contrasts underfoot.



Figure 29: *Tree canopy as shelter. The low canopy creates shade, enclosure and bodily refuge, turning an ordinary edge into a temporary condition for pause. Own work, 2025.*



Figure 30: *Still water and reflected light. The water surface creates a contemplative condition through reflection, distance and reduced movement, making the surrounding infrastructure appear slower and less direct. Own work, 2025.*

4. Temporality and change

Visible traces of growth, decay, weathering, seasons and repeated use.

In the landscape, recognizable as:

- Spontaneous vegetation overtaking planned lines.
- Weathering materials, softening with patina.
- Seasonal water levels, rising or receding unpredictably.
- Marks of human and nonhuman activity, layered over time.

5. Rhythm and repetition

Patterns that structure movement without becoming monotonous.

In the landscape, recognizable as:

- Rows of trees marching in quiet cadence.
- Watercourses threading repetitive, meandering lines.
- Infrastructural rhythms, like fence posts or gravel seams.
- Shadow patterns dancing across ground in cycles.



Figure 31: *Overgrown car as a temporal trace of abandonment, occupation and fourth-nature succession. Own work, 2026.*



Figure 32: *Row of trees creating rhythm, direction and repeated vertical structure. Own work, 2026.*

Synthesis

Together, these characteristics frame contemplation as an embodied rhythm of unresolved edges, elemental presence, temporal change, repetition, friction and bodily adjustment. They translate the literature on restoration, refuge and contemplative landscape characteristics into concrete design criteria for the Schie: preserve ambiguity, work with thresholds, let elements lead, embrace temporal open-endedness, cultivate rhythm, engage friction and confirm presence.

6. Friction and in-between space

Tension between systems, uses and scales, where no single order fully dominates.

In the landscape, recognizable as:

- Nature clashing with infrastructure, edges unpolished.
- Managed versus unplanned growth, coexisting messily.
- Accessible versus inaccessible zones, blurring boundaries.
- Silence punctured by distant hums or rustles.

7. Bodily positioning and movement

Spatial invitations to slow down, shift posture, pause or move with intention.

In the landscape, recognizable as:

- Thresholds that demand a shift in stance or stride.
- Perch spots without overt purpose, like a low ledge.
- Narrowings and widenings that compress then release.



Figure 33: *Managed and unmanaged edges meeting within one landscape condition. Own work, 2026.*



Figure 34: *Narrowing path condition where vegetation and edge pressure begin to slow the body. Own work, 2026.*

4.3. Contemplative Characteristics

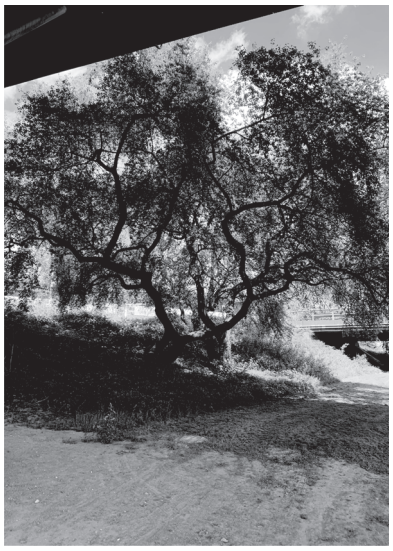
Via the Contemplative Landscape Model, Attention Restoration Theory and Prospe



Soft enclosure
+
informal path
:
gradual transition from movement to pause.



Still water
+
reflection
:
layered distance fostering spatial calm.



Mystic tree
+
dim enclosure
:
withdraws attention to elemental presence.



Repetitive
+
reflected
:
rhythmic emptiness tha

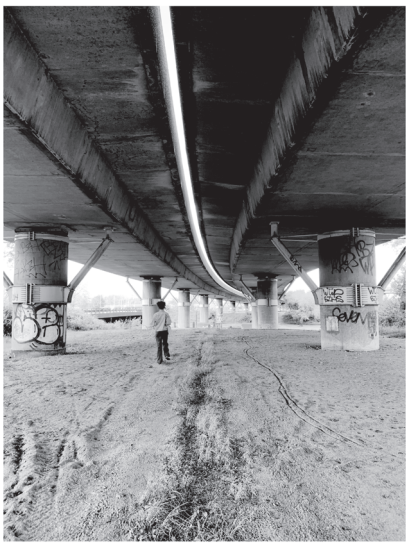
Figure 35: *Seven contemplative conditions in interstitial Rotterdam. The photo repetitive beams and filtered light as existing site conditions that can slow perc*

These characteristics translate the literature into site-specific design criteria.. Kaplan and Kaplan provide the attentional framework of restoration and soft fascination, Appleton clarifies the spatial relation between exposure and refuge, and Olszewska-Guizzo identifies landscape characteristics that can support contemplative states (Appleton, 1975; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Olszewska-Guizzo, 2023). These theories are not applied as a checklist. They are tested against field observations in Rotterdam North, where contemplation appears locally through enclosure, partial views, still water, material roughness, repeated structures and bodily slowing. The site already holds several contemplative qualities, but they appear locally and unevenly. They are not distributed as a continuous atmosphere. They occur in specific pockets: behind willow thickets, along narrow strips between wall and woodland, beneath viaducts, beside still water, or in damp hollows where movement slows automatically.

These are not scenic viewpoints in



beams
light
at slows perception.



Reduced light
+
linear enclosure
:
urban traces shift into silent narrative.



Decay
+
exposure
:
coherence within eroding human control.



Strong enclosure
+
exit light
:
intensified awareness through compression and release.

ographs register soft enclosure, informal paths, still water, reflection, dim canopy, ception. Own work, 2026.

the classical sense. Their value lies in interruption. A filtered sightline, a dark underpass, a soft enclosure of reed, a repetitive beam structure or a sudden reflection can temporarily remove the body from urban speed. The visitor does not leave the city, but the relation to the city changes.

In Rotterdam North, contemplation is therefore local, conditional and fragile. It depends on the coincidence of enclosure and openness, sound and distance, roughness and accessibility. The photographs on this spread document where these conditions are most pronounced.

The design should not import a contemplative atmosphere from outside. It should reveal and connect what is already present: hidden pockets, soft edges, filtered sound, still water, reduced light, repetitive structures, traces of decay and routes where the body is forced to move more slowly.

4.4. Hindering Contemplation

Present qualities, weak access

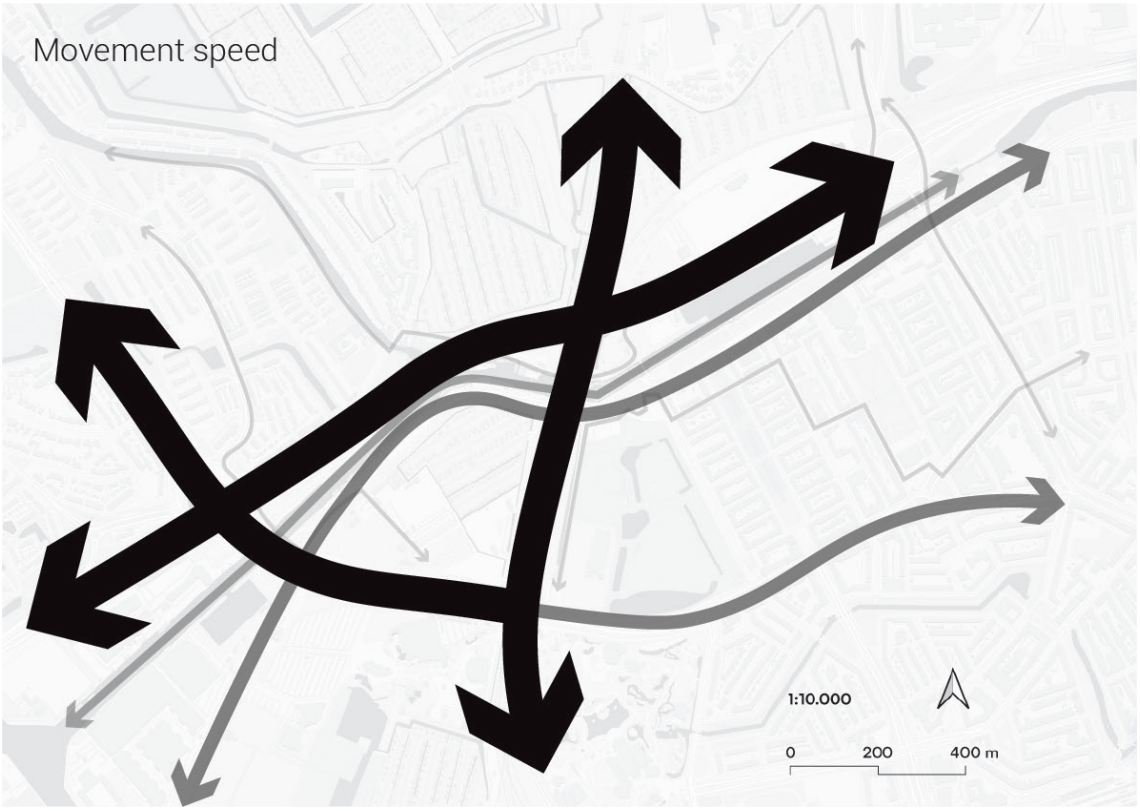
Pedestrian presence inside the interstitial strip is surprisingly low. Although the surrounding neighbourhoods, bridges and cycling routes generate continuous movement, most people remain on the formal paths near the sports fields, bridges and paved edges. Few enter the pockets themselves.

This does not mean the interstitial landscape has no value. It means its value is spatially difficult to read. The pockets are hidden behind vegetation, infrastructure, wet ground, unclear entrances and perceived barriers. The site contains conditions that can support slower movement and withdrawal, but they remain fragmented and hard to access.

The issue is therefore not the absence of contemplative potential, but the absence of invitation. The site already has enclosure, roughness, sound filtering, water edges and informal paths. What is missing is a minimal spatial structure that makes these qualities legible without over-designing them.

The design task that follows from this chapter is to create an armature: a light spatial framework that connects existing contemplative pockets, slows movement, clarifies entrances and allows the rough interstitial character to remain intact.

Figure 36: *Map of movement speed across the design area, contrasting fast arterial flows with slow or absent pedestrian movement in the interstitial pockets. Own work, 2026*



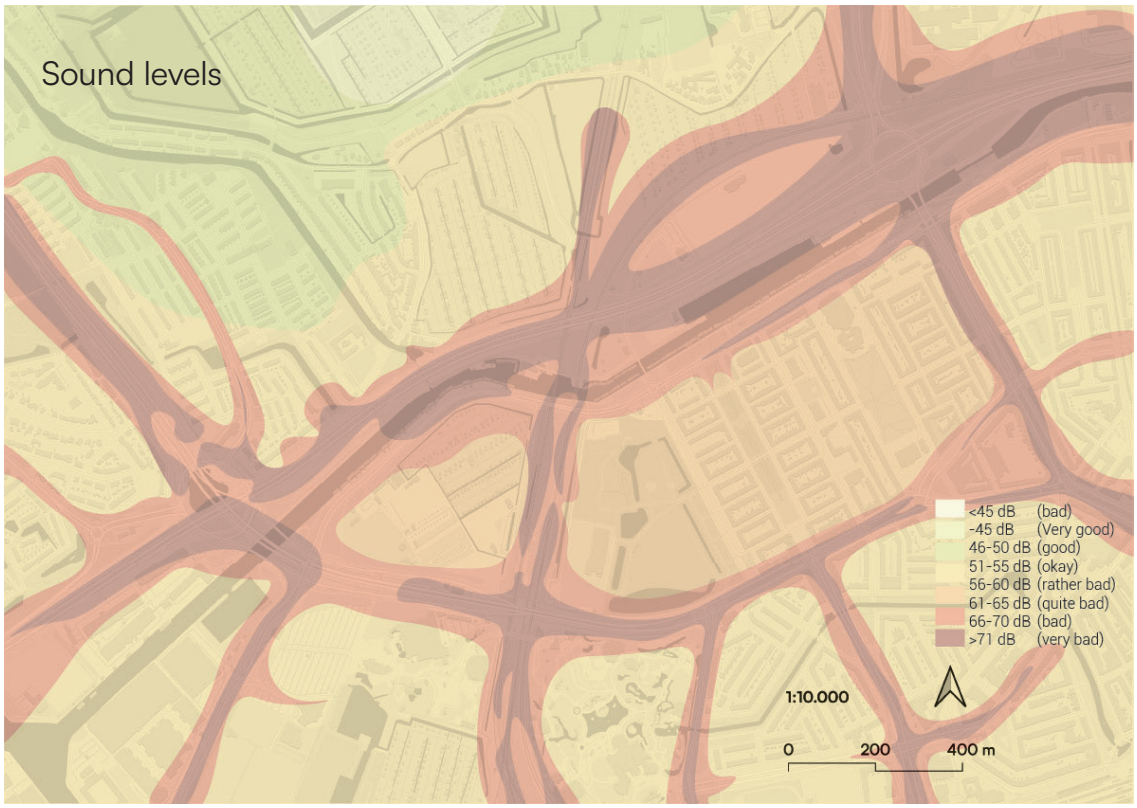


Figure 37: *Movement speed and contemplative availability. The map contrasts fast infrastructural flows with slow pedestrian movement, inaccessible edges and pockets where movement can shift toward pause. Own work based on fieldwork and P-dok base-map data, 2026.*

4.5. Precedent II, Contemplation

Filtered urban presence



Figure 38: Interior courtyard of the Optical Glass House, where the urban facade becomes a visual filter rather than a hard separation. Hiroshi Nakamura & NAP. (n.d.). Optical Glass House [Photograph]. Hiroshi Nakamura & NAP.



Figure 40: Optical glass facade detail, t the city. Hiroshi Nakamura & NAP. (n.d.). Nakamura & NAP.



Figure 39: Street elevation of the Optical Glass House, showing the glass-block facade as a luminous threshold between traffic and domestic interior. Hiroshi Nakamura & NAP. (n.d.). Optical Glass House [Photograph]. Hiroshi Nakamura & NAP.

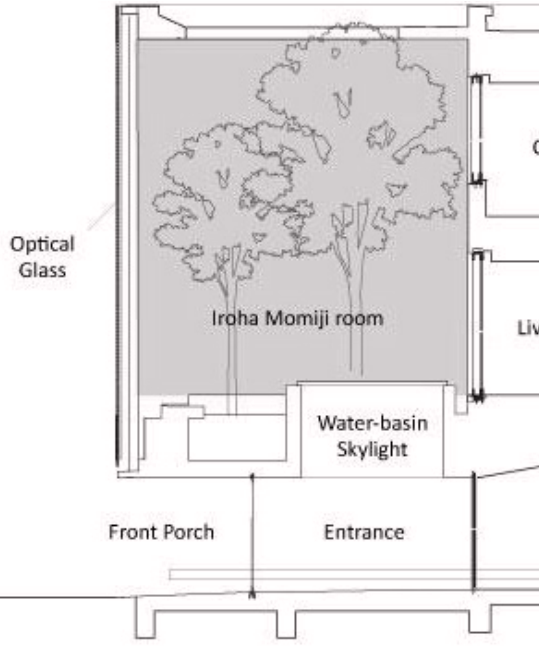
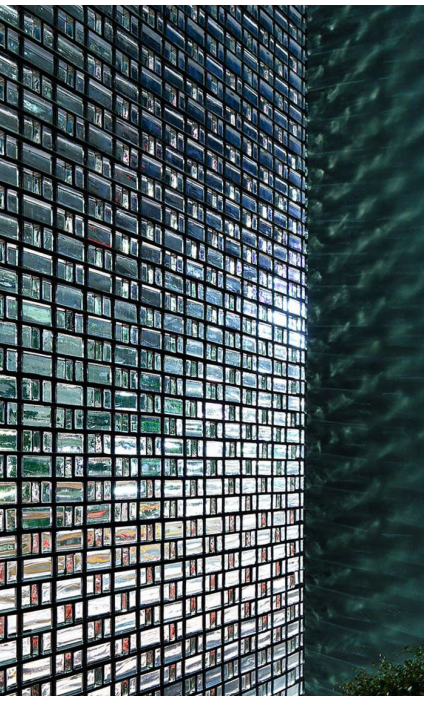
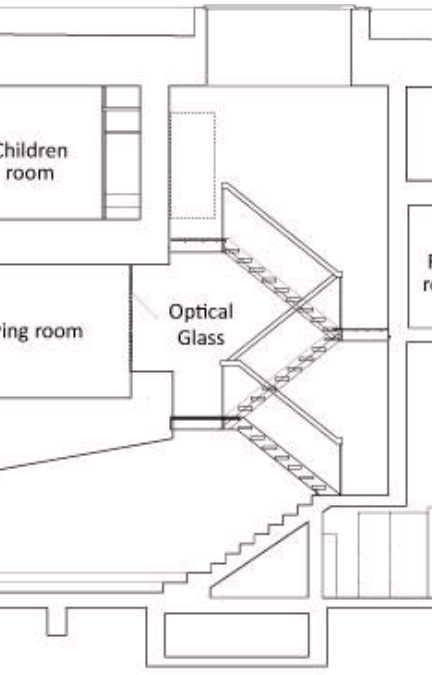


Figure 41: Plan fragment of the Optical Gl glass layer as a mediating threshold. Hiro House [Plan drawing]. Hiroshi Nakamura &



filtering light, sound and movement from Optical Glass House [Photograph]. Hiroshi



lass House, showing the garden and optical shi Nakamura & NAP. (n.d.). Optical Glass & NAP.

Optical Glass House, Hiroshima

Optical Glass House in Hiroshima was designed by Hiroshi Nakamura & NAP. The house is located along a busy city street with cars and trams passing directly in front of it. Instead of withdrawing completely from this urban condition, the project places a garden and an optical glass façade between the street and the interior rooms (Hiroshi Nakamura & NAP, n.d.).

The design does not erase the city. It filters it. The glass façade softens movement, sound and light, while still allowing the presence of traffic to remain visible. The garden becomes a mediating layer between public speed and domestic stillness. The visitor does not escape the city, but perceives it differently through reflection, translucency, vegetation and delay.

For Rotterdam North, the lesson is direct. The interstitial landscape cannot become silent or separate from infrastructure. Highways, rail, bridges and sound walls will remain present. The design should therefore not hide the city, but filter and reframe it through vegetation, thresholds, underpasses, edges and changes in light. Contemplation emerges through mediation, not removal.

4.6.Precedent III ,

Rough material and bodily attention



Figure 43: Public occupation of Observatorium Nieuw-Terbregge. The platform turns the infrastructural edge of the A20 into a place of gathering, pause and bodily exposure. Observatorium. (n.d.). Observatorium Nieuw-Terbregge [Photograph]. Observatorium.



Figure 44: Aerial view of Observatorium project as a threshold between highway, infrastructure becomes a spatial condition r (n.d.). Observatorium Nieuw-Terbregge [Ae



Figure 42: Broken asphalt surface at Observatorium Nieuw-Terbregge, making the ground uneven, tactile and attention-demanding. Observatorium. (n.d.). Observatorium Nieuw-Terbregge [Photograph]. Observatorium.

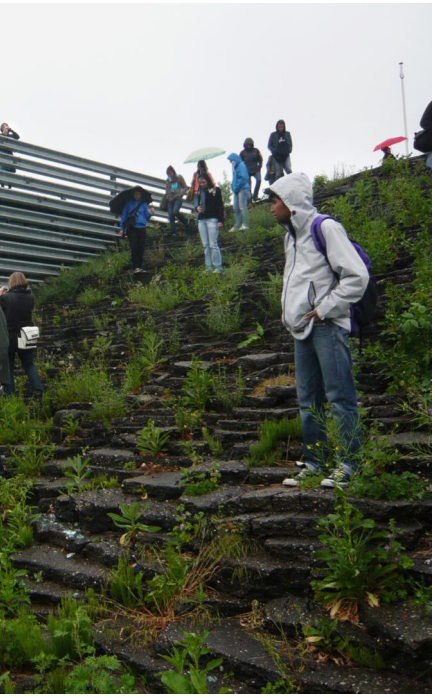


Figure 45: Public use of the Observatori sound barrier. Observatorium. (n.d.). Obse Observatorium

Observatorium Nieuw-Terbregge



Nieuw-Terbregge. The image shows the neighbourhood and sound barrier, where ather than only a boundary. Observatorium. erial photograph]. Observatorium.



um Nieuw-Terbregge platform on the A20 ervatorium Nieuw-Terbregge [Photograph].

Observatory, Rotterdam

Observatorium Nieuw-Terbregge is an artwork and public structure on the sound barrier along the A20 in Rotterdam, designed by the artist collective Observatorium. The project uses infrastructural materials, especially guardrails, to create a pavilion, platform and asphalt garden between the highway and the adjacent neighbourhood (Observatorium, n.d.; BKOR, n.d.).

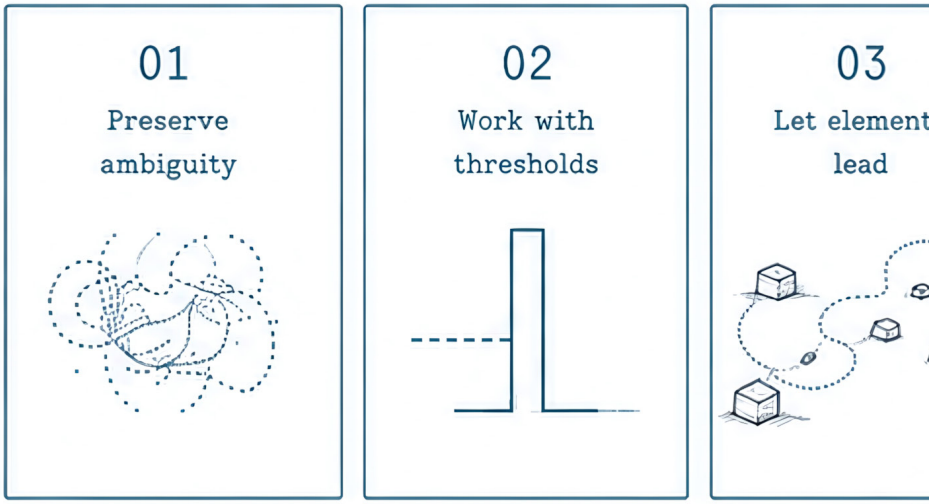
The project does not simply place an object beside infrastructure. It turns the edge condition itself into a place of attention. From one side, the visitor is confronted with the speed, noise and scale of the A20. From the other side, the structure opens toward the neighbourhood and the planted slope. The broken asphalt surface is important because it makes the ground active: walking becomes uneven, slower and more bodily.

For this thesis, the precedent is relevant because it shows how friction can produce attention. Contemplation does not arise from calmness alone, but from a precise relation between body, rough ground, infrastructure and view. The lesson for the Schie corridor is to work with the pressure of infrastructure rather than only shielding from it. A designed threshold can make the visitor aware of where they stand: between speed and pause, exposure and enclosure, movement and stillness.

4.7. Design conclusion: rules for conte

CONTEMPLATION RULES

DESIGN WITH TIME, ATTENTION, AND PRESENCE



These rules translate Chapter 4 into design mechanisms. They are derived from three sources: the literature on attention, refuge and contemplative landscape characteristics; the precedent studies of Plum Village, Optical Glass House and Observatorium Nieuw-Terbregge; and the site-reading of Rotterdam North. Together, these sources show that contemplation cannot be designed as a fixed state. It can only be prepared through spatial conditions that slow movement, filter urban pressure, hold the body, and make attention more situated.

The rules therefore do not add a contemplative theme to the interstitial landscape. They define how existing qualities, ambiguity, threshold, water, vegetation, rhythm, friction and pause, can be spatially framed so that attention has time to settle.

01 Preserve ambiguity

The site should remain partly unreadable. Filtered views, branching routes and incomplete visibility invite exploration and prevent the experience from becoming too direct or consumed too quickly.

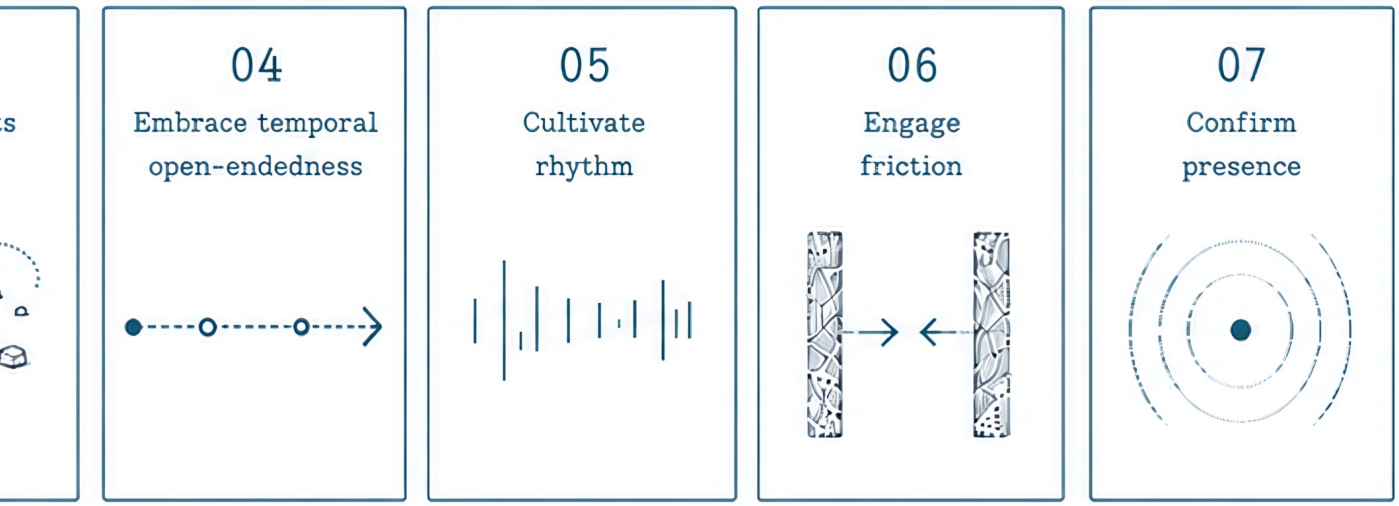
04 Embrace temporal open-endedness

The place should not appear complete at one moment in time. Growth, weathering, seasonal change and gradual occupation allow the landscape to remain open to interpretation.

07 Confirm presence

A rough landscape needs moments of re maintained opening or recognisable pause

emplation



02 Work with thresholds

Contemplation begins when the body notices transition. Edges, crossings, height differences, openings and underpasses should be treated as spatial thresholds rather than as leftover boundaries.

03 Let elements lead

Water, sound, shadow, vegetation, scent, mud and wind are active design materials. They should not be treated as background atmosphere, but as conditions that structure attention.

05 Cultivate rhythm

Repetition gives the body orientation. Tree lines, columns, edges, shadows and repeated openings create a rhythm that allows movement to slow without becoming lost.

06 Engage friction

Do not remove all resistance. Uneven ground, narrow passages, soft edges and material transitions reduce automatic movement and make the body more attentive.

assurance. A clear frame, repeated tree rhythm, visible route edge,
e confirms that the visitor is allowed to be there.


Vocs

5.1 Ruinosity as Design Attitude

5.2 Ruinous Characteristics in the Schie Interstitial

5.3 Wabi-Sabi and Temporal Perception

5.4 Between Over-Curation and Neglect

5.5 Precedent IV: Michael Singer Studio

5.6 Precedent V: Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord

5.7 Ruinous Growth

5.8 Design Conclusion: Rules for Ruinosity

05 Ruinosity

5.1. Ruinosity as Design Attitude

Between precision and wildness

Ruinosity is used in this thesis as a design attitude, not as an image of decay. It refers to the condition in which time becomes spatially perceptible through cracked concrete, rusting steel, softened edges, reed colonisation, graffiti, informal paths, wet ground, broken surfaces and vegetation growing through infrastructural remains. These traces are not treated as decoration. They are material evidence of weathering, use, neglect, occupation and ecological succession.

This position is grounded in literature on ruins, post-industrial landscapes and managed decay. Ellen Braae, a landscape architecture scholar, examines how post-industrial landscapes can be reused without erasing their temporal depth. In Beauty Redeemed, she argues that industrial remains can become design resources when traces of use, decline and transformation remain spatially legible (Braae, 2015). Tim Edensor, a cultural geographer, reads industrial ruins as spaces where disorder, bodily experience and informal practices challenge the polished order of the contemporary city (Edensor, 2005). Caitlin DeSilvey's work on curated decay is also important because it shifts care away from preservation as fixing. She argues that some places can be cared for by allowing change, entropy and material transformation to remain visible rather than restoring them to a stable condition (DeSilvey, 2017).

Leonard Koren's writing on wabi-sabi adds a smaller but useful aesthetic lens. He describes wabi-sabi as a sensitivity to impermanence, incompleteness and imperfection (Koren, 1994). In this thesis, wabi-sabi is not used as a visual style or cultural theme, but as a way to value weathering, roughness and temporal change as design conditions.

These authors define the boundary of ruinosity in this thesis. Braae and Edensor make decay spatial and social rather than merely visual. DeSilvey reframes care as the possibility of guiding change without freezing material processes. Koren adds a sensitivity to impermanence and incompleteness. Together, they support a design attitude in which rust, cracks, informal occupation, wetness and succession are not treated as failures to correct, but as conditions that require legibility, contrast and care.

Together, these sources position ruinosity as a way of reading and designing with time. In the Schie interstitial, ruinosity is already present. The site is neither untouched nature nor finished park. It is a disturbed field where polder traces, infrastructural pressure, spontaneous vegetation and informal human use overlap. This condition gives the site contemplative potential because it slows perception: the landscape cannot be read at once. The task is therefore not to design a ruin, but to design a landscape that can age, weather and be appropriated without losing spatial legibility.



Figure 46: *Ruinosity as design attitude. The image introduces ruinosity as an experiential condition between precise design and uncontrolled decay, where weathering, use and vegetation remain spatially active. Own work, 2026.*

5.2. Ruinous Characteristics in the Sch

Existing traces as design material



Partial mowing
+
leaves uneven terrain
:
maintenance slows down and leaves the ground spatially unresolved.



Hidden wet pocket
+
willow enclosure
:
succession creates shelter where access and maintenance weaken.



Self-made chill spot
+
nettle recolonisation
:
spontaneous growth reclaims hard surface after use.



Expose
+
Fracture
:
living growth reveals t
deforms fix

Figure 47: *Seven ruinous characteristics in the Schie interstitial. The site pho roots, overgrown structures, abandoned infrastructure and former shelter as co Own work, 2026.*

Ruinosity is already present in the Schie interstitial. It does not appear as one ruin, but as a field of repeated traces: uneven mowing, cracked paving, exposed roots, abandoned infrastructure, hidden wet pockets, former shelter and vegetation growing through disturbed ground.

These traces are important because they make time spatially visible. They show where maintenance slows down, where water collects, where people have entered or stayed informally, where vegetation takes over and where infrastructure begins to lose its clean technical order. In this sense, ruinosity is not an aesthetic layer added by the design, but an existing condition observed through fieldwork.

The site analysis identifies seven ruinous



ed roots
+
d ground
:
he force that gradually
ked ground.



Overgrown vines
+
fallen tree structure
:
growth turns collapse into a new spatial frame.



Abandoned rail infrastructure
+
material decay
:
technical order loosens while its linear trace remains legible.



Former shelter
+
overgrowth
:
occupation, neglect and succession become difficult to separate.

tographs show uneven maintenance, wet enclosure, cracked paving, exposed nditions through which time, use and material change become spatially legible.

characteristics that become relevant for design: partial mowing and uneven terrain, hidden wet enclosure, cracked paving and recolonisation, root pressure and fractured ground, overgrown collapse, abandoned infrastructure and former shelter. These characteristics are not problems to remove completely. They are conditions that can support slower perception if they are made legible.

The design therefore starts from what is already there. It selects, frames and intensifies specific traces without turning the interstitial into either a cleaned park or an abandoned leftover. Ruinosity becomes a way to work with the existing material intelligence of the site.

5.3. Wabi-sabi and Temporal Perceptio

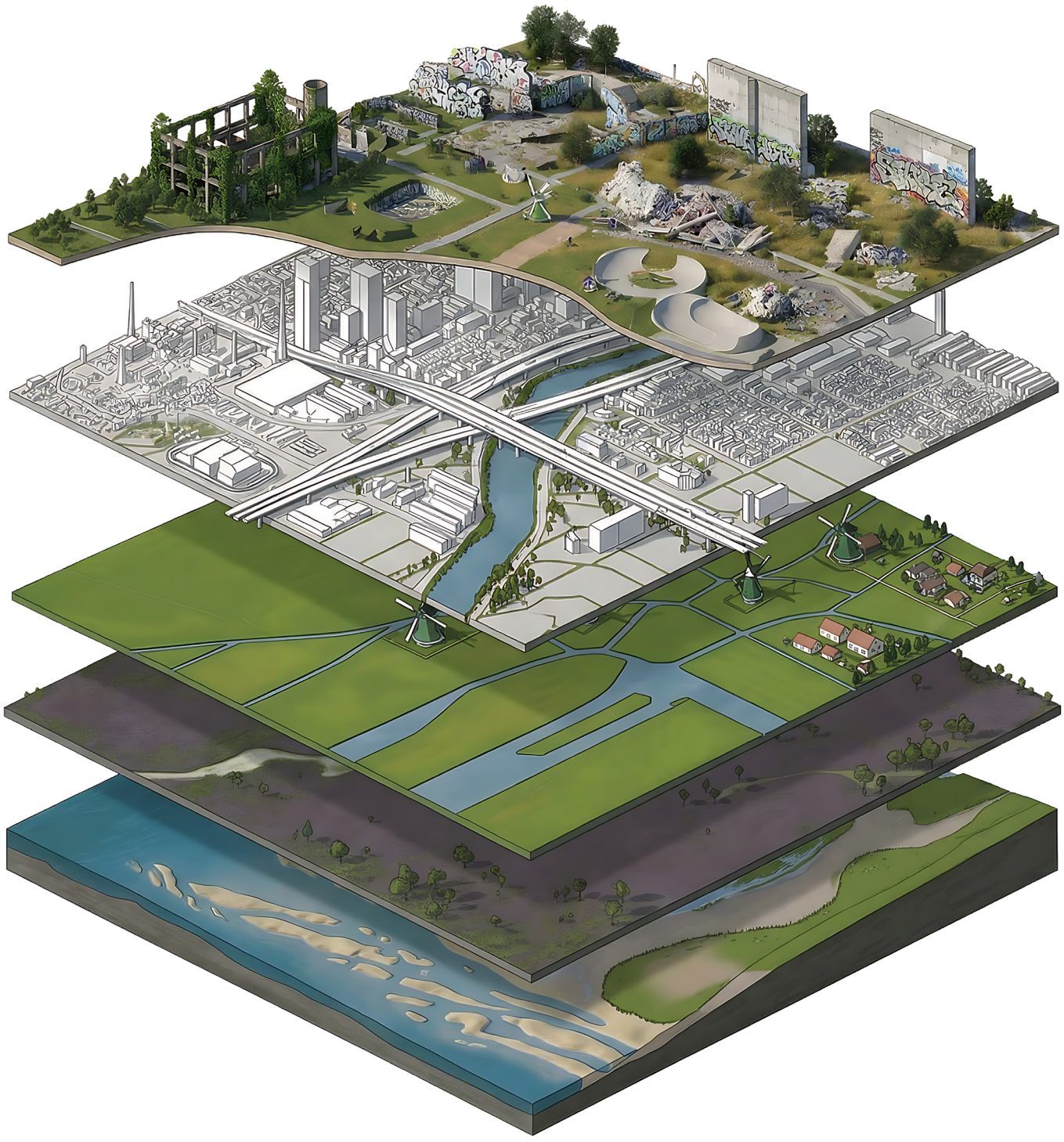


Figure 48: *Temporal overlap in the Schie interstitial. The drawing shows how polder ground, infrastructure, wet margins, informal use and spontaneous succession operate at the same time. The image is not used as a palimpsest of fixed historical layers, but as a reading of ongoing processes that remain active, unstable and unfinished. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*

5.3. Wabi-sabi and Temporal Perception

Wabi-sabi helps clarify the experiential side of ruinosity. Where palimpsest describes the visibility of different historical layers, ruinosity concerns the felt presence of ongoing time. It is not enough that older traces remain visible. They must continue to act through material change: a cracked surface underfoot, rust on steel, reed moving in wet ground, roots disturbing soil, graffiti marking repeated occupation and vegetation slowly taking over fallen structures.

Koren describes wabi-sabi as a sensitivity to impermanence, imperfection and incompleteness (Koren, 1994). In this thesis, that sensitivity is translated into landscape design. Imperfection is not used as a style. It becomes a way to read how the body encounters time. Unevenness slows movement. Rust and staining reveal exposure. Vegetation in cracks shows that the site is still changing. Informal traces show that the place is used without being fully controlled.

This is where decay becomes bodily perceptible. Decay is not only observed as rust, patina or visual trace. It is felt through the foot, balance, step length and lowered gaze when the ground becomes uneven, cracked, wet or root-broken. The body has to adjust to the material condition of the site, and through that adjustment time becomes physically present.

This distinction is important. Ruinosity is not the same as a ruin, and it is not the same as palimpsest. A ruin can be a single object. A palimpsest can show older layers. Ruinosity is a spatial condition in which weathering, use, succession and incompleteness remain active. Design should therefore not freeze the site into a picturesque image of decay. It should frame these processes so that the visitor can sense time, damage, growth and care as part of the landscape.

5.4. Between Over-Curation and Negle

Ruinosity as a third position

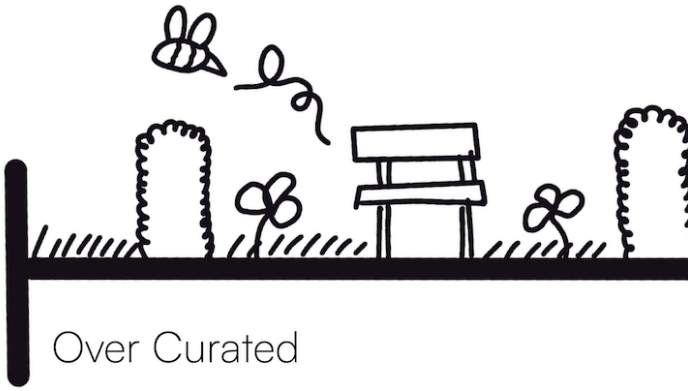
Ruinosity positions the design between two failures. The first failure is over-curation: a landscape that becomes too clean, too finished and too fragile to absorb real use. In the interstitial spaces of Rotterdam North, such refinement would quickly be undermined by wetness, trampling, graffiti, dumping, wind exposure and spontaneous growth.

The second failure is neglect: a landscape with no spatial clarity, where decay becomes unreadable and the site continues to be perceived as leftover ground. Neglect does not automatically reveal time. It can also hide value.

Ruinosity defines a third position. The design introduces clear spatial decisions, but leaves material and ecological processes active. Paths may be precise, but their edges can fray. Platforms may offer stillness, but their surfaces can weather. Walls may frame space, but they can carry moss, graffiti and shadow. Vegetation may be guided, but not fixed.

This position relates to Nassauer's argument that messy ecological conditions need visible cues of care to be socially recognised as intentional rather than neglected (Nassauer, 1995). In the Schie interstitial, these cues are not decorative. They are minimal spatial signals: a threshold, a maintained opening, a framed edge, a clear route or a place to pause.

Conventional park logic

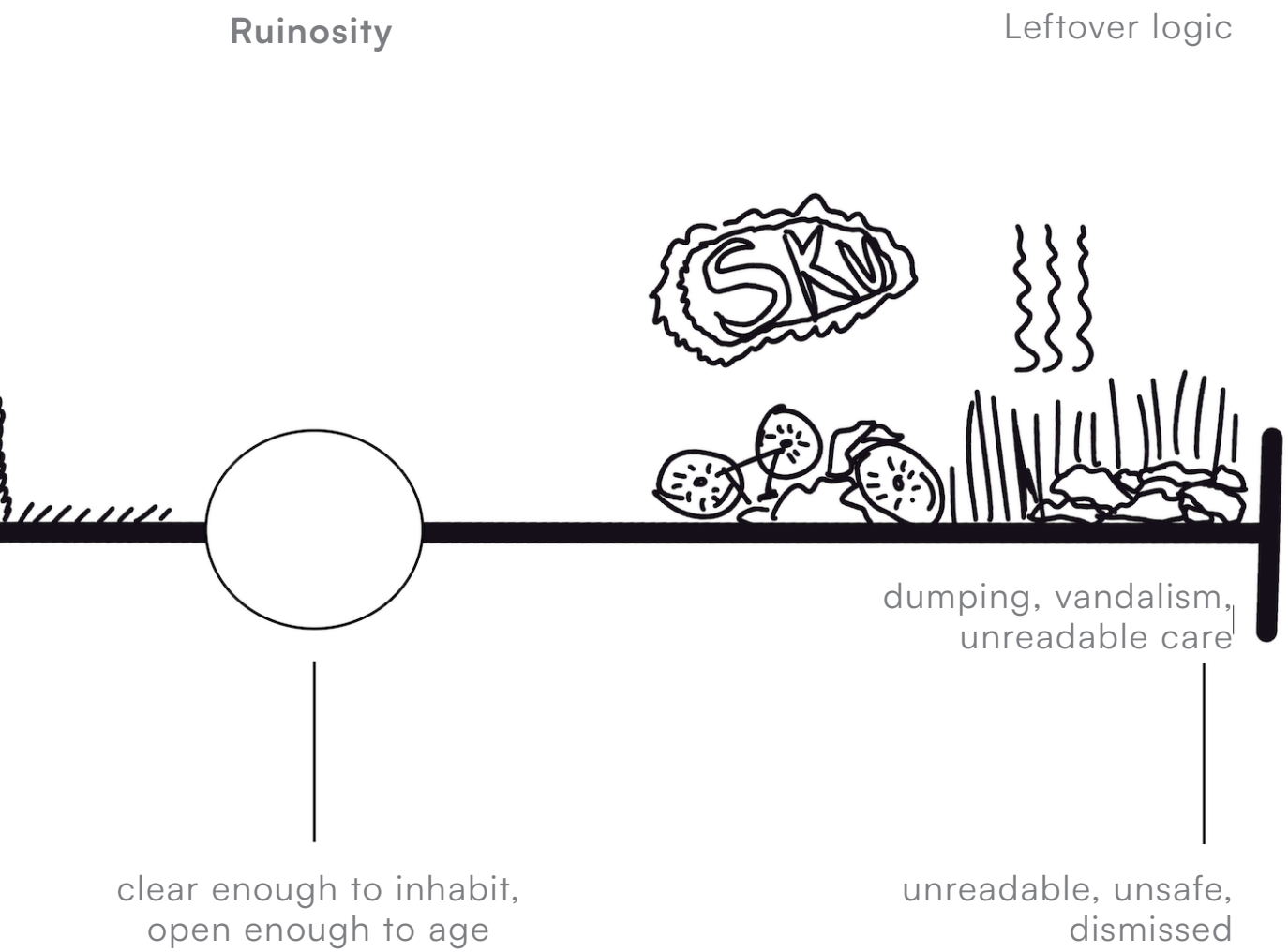


Over Curated

too clean, fragile, finished

To design the interstitial is to

The aim is not to make the site look abandoned. The aim is to make an unfinished landscape inhabitable: clear enough to enter, open enough to age.



hold a third position between over-control and abandonment

Figure 49: Between over-curation and neglect. The diagram positions ruinosity as a third condition: clear enough to inhabit, but open enough to age, weather and be appropriated. Own work, 2026.

5.5. Precedent IV, Michael Singer

Minimal structure inside living processes



Figure 50: Minimal armature in a wet landscape. The structure marks an edge and makes the landscape legible without removing its living processes. Michael Singer Studio. (n.d.-b). Select outdoor sculpture [Photograph]. Michael Singer Studio.



Figure 52: Alterra Atria Gardens. Sculptur one environmental system in which ecologi Michael Singer Studio. (n.d.-a). Alterra At Studio.

structure as marker

small interventions make edges and clearings perceptible

material as process

the frame remains open to weather, growth and decay

c

the interventi



Figure 51: Open frame for landscape process. The structure operates as a light spatial marker within vegetation and wet ground, allowing weathering and growth to remain active. Michael Singer Studio. (n.d.-b). Selected outdoor sculpture [Photograph]. Michael Singer Studio.



Figure 53: Material assembly as open fra elements can define space while remaining Michael Singer Studio. (n.d.-a). Michael S Michael Singer Studio.



ral structure, water and planting operate as
cal processes become spatially perceptible.
ria Gardens [Photograph]. Michael Singer

lesign as listening

ion follows existing site forces



me. The fragment shows how constructed
g open to weathering, growth and change.
Singer work documentation [Photograph].

Works of Michael Singer

The analysis is based on Michael Singer Studio's published project documentation and images rather than direct fieldwork (Michael Singer Studio, n.d.). The precedent is read through its spatial mechanisms: light frames, constructed edges, water systems and material assemblies that make living processes perceptible without fully controlling them.

This precedent is not one single project, but a selection of works by Michael Singer and Michael Singer Studio. Singer's practice moves between sculpture, landscape, public art and ecological infrastructure. His studio describes its work as a way of understanding and expressing environmental systems, social potential and site-specific conditions (Michael Singer Studio, n.d.).

The important point is not that Singer uses natural materials or fragile structures. His projects create small but precise spatial armatures: edges, frames, water elements, platforms, planted structures and material assemblies that make ecological processes visible and inhabitable. In projects such as Alterra Atria Gardens, water, planting and sculptural structure are not decorative. They actively filter air and water and make environmental processes part of spatial experience (Michael Singer Studio, n.d.).

For this thesis, Singer is useful because his work shows how a minimal intervention can guide attention without fixing the landscape completely. A structure can be precise and open at the same time. It can mark a threshold, support growth, invite pause and allow weathering to continue. This informs the Schie design: interventions should act as temporary anchors for perception while willow, wet ground, graffiti, weathering and informal use continue shaping the place.

5.6. Precedent V,

Strong structure, open succession



Figure 54: Concrete infrastructural frame at Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord. The photograph shows how hard industrial structure, shadow and spontaneous vegetation can form a strong spatial frame without erasing roughness. Own work, 2021.



Figure 56: Overgrown industrial frame at L occupies existing infrastructural structure w Own work, 2021.

A strong frame allows
wildness to remain legible.



Figure 55: Aerial view of Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord. Industrial structures, route systems and fourth-nature succession form one public landscape system. Own work, 2021.



Figure 57: Industrial bridge and water e Reflection, industrial remains and planting decay and care remain visible together. O



Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord. Vegetation
without erasing its material and spatial force.



edge at Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord.
produce a legible landscape frame where
wn work, 2021.

Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord was designed by Latz + Partner on the former Thyssen ironworks in Duisburg. The park is part of the transformation of the Ruhr region and works with blast furnaces, bunkers, rail traces, concrete structures, polluted ground and spontaneous succession as material for a new public landscape (Latz + Partner, n.d.).

The design does more than preserve an industrial frame. It actively organises how visitors can enter, read and use the site. Existing industrial structures become routes, gardens, climbing walls, viewing platforms and spatial markers. New interventions, such as stairs, bridges, paths, mown areas, safety measures and the Piazza Metallica, make the landscape publicly accessible without removing its roughness. The design therefore places clear cues to care in contrast with ongoing natural processes.

This contrast is the key lesson. Duisburg-Nord is not valuable because it is abandoned. It is valuable because decay, vegetation and industrial remains are held within a legible design structure. Curated gardens, visible maintenance, cut grass, safe routes and styled additions show that the site is cared for, while rust, succession and industrial traces show that time is still active.

For the Schie interstitial, this is directly relevant. The site already contains infrastructural pressure, concrete edges, wet margins, graffiti and spontaneous vegetation, but it lacks a clear armature. The design must therefore provide enough structure for orientation, safety and pause, while leaving room for weathering, succession and informal use. Ruinosity needs care to remain legible.

5.7. Ruinous Growth

Steel as temporary frame, taken over by time

Ruinous growth translates the attitude of this chapter into a material principle. The design introduces steel not as a permanent object, but as a temporary frame that can be weathered, marked and gradually occupied by vegetation. In the first years, the frame gives orientation, threshold and spatial legibility. Over time, rust, moss, climbing plants, willow growth and informal use begin to change its appearance and role.

This is not decay after design. It is design that anticipates transformation. The steel wall, the planted edge and the growing vegetation are conceived as one temporal system. The frame starts as the clearest element, but slowly becomes less dominant as growth takes over. Ruinosity is therefore not only preserved from the existing site. It is also built into the future behaviour of the design.

For the Schie interstitial, this principle is important because the site should not become a finished park image. It should remain able to age, thicken, fray and be used. The designer authors the first condition, not the final state. Chapter 8 develops this principle further through seasonal cycles, growth stages and maintenance over time.

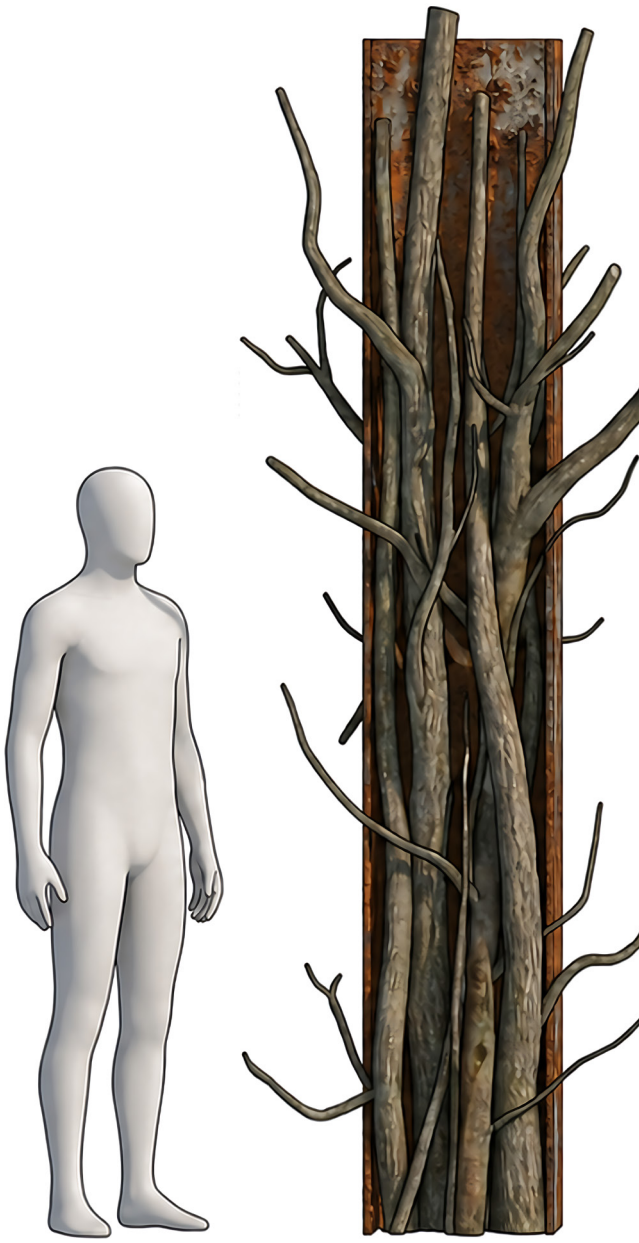




Figure 58: Ruinous growth principle. The sequence shows steel as a temporary spatial frame that becomes gradually occupied by weathering, vegetation and informal use. The design authors the starting condition, while time transforms the final appearance. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

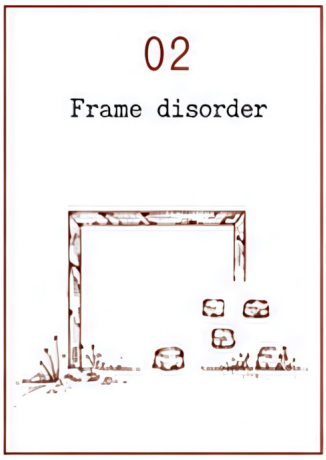
5.8. Rules for Ruinosity

How to design an unfinished landscape

RUINOSITY RULES

DESIGN WITH TIME, WEATHERING, AND USE







These rules are the design conclusions of Chapter 5. They translate literature, precedent analysis and site-reading into spatial operations for an unfinished landscape. Braae and Edensor frame ruins as active fields of use, disorder and sensory experience. DeSilvey and Koren show that care can allow weathering, impermanence and material change to remain visible. Nassauer clarifies why rough ecological conditions need cues of care to be recognised as intentional rather than neglected (Braae, 2015; DeSilvey, 2017; Edensor, 2005; Koren, 1994; Nassauer, 1995).

The rules therefore do not aestheticise decay. They define how roughness, weathering, appropriation and succession can be made readable through contrast, framing, bodily experience and maintenance.

01 Make care visible through contrast

The roughest conditions need a visible counterpoint. A clean edge, mown opening, repeated tree rhythm, trained climber, readable threshold or steel frame signals that the place is cared for. This contrast allows spontaneous growth, graffiti, wet ground and decay to be read as active landscape conditions rather than abandonment.

04 Accommodate appropriation

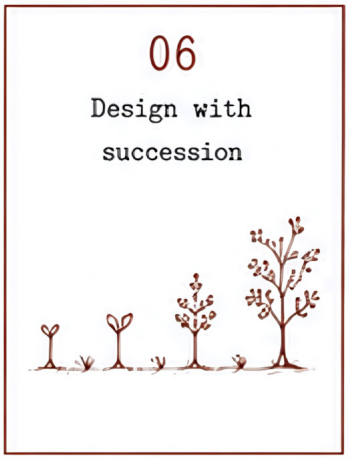
Graffiti, informal sheltering, shortcuts and trampled paths are treated as evidence of occupation. The design anticipates these uses without fully prescribing them. Rough surfaces may invite marking. Open ground may invite cutting through. Edges may invite sitting.

07 Allow ruinous growth

The design should be progressively taken over b
first conditions, not final forms. The designer au









02 Frame disorder

Disorder becomes spatially productive only when it has enough structure to be entered and read. Informal tracks, wet ground, graffiti, spontaneous vegetation and collapsed material are framed through edges, openings, routes and pause points.

03 Use weathering as material

Rust, staining, cracks, moss, water marks and surface wear are not defects. They record exposure, use and time. Steel, concrete, deadwood, compacted gravel and living vegetation are chosen because they can age without losing spatial meaning.

05 Make decay bodily perceptible

Decay should be felt through movement, not only seen as image. Uneven ground, root-broken surfaces, rusted edges, wet patches and shifting vegetation shorten the step, lower the gaze and make the body adjust.

06 Design with succession

Vegetation guides the design rather than decorating it. Pioneer growth, reed margins, willow, wisteria and poplar roots change enclosure, shadow, access and atmosphere over time. Succession becomes active design material rather than maintenance failure (Clément, 2004; Kowarik, 2005).

y vegetation, weathering and use. Steel structures, planted edges and rough surfaces are
thors the sequence, not the final appearance.



06 The Armature

6.1 Spatial preparation

6.2 Threshold of intervention

6.3 Spatial mechanism

6.4 Withdrawal within the city

6.5 Precedent VI

6.6 From armature to design walk

6.7 Spatial tests for Design

06 The Armature

6.1. Spatial preparation

Designing conditions, not meanings



Figure 59: *Spatial preparation as design attitude. The drawing shows the armature as a preparatory field rather than a finished composition. Existing conditions are organised through small cues, thresholds and pause points so that meaning can emerge through movement, bodily perception and time. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*

The design does not begin by adding a new image to the Schie interstitial. It begins by preparing conditions that are already present: water, shadow, rough ground, infrastructural pressure, spontaneous vegetation, traces of use and material decay. These conditions do not need to be invented. They need to be made readable, accessible and bodily perceptible.

Spatial preparation means working before meaning becomes fixed. The designer adjusts access, edge, surface, rhythm and pause so that the body can register what is already there. The aim is not to explain the site, but to let the site become perceptible.

The armature is not a finished design object. It is a spatial system of cues, thresholds, routes, surfaces and pause conditions that prepares the body for attention. It translates the contemplative rules from Chapter 4 and the ruinous rules from Chapter 5 into a testable route logic.

Each later design moment in Chapter 7 starts from an existing condition: a hard edge, a wet pocket, an infrastructural threshold, a loose route or a place where the body can stop. p. 98

The question is not what to add, but what each condition needs in order to become readable, enterable and inhabitable.



Figure 60: *Atmospheric reference for interstitial occupation. The image shows the experiential potential of the Schie underpass as a place where infrastructure, informal use and vegetation already form a spatial threshold. Photograph by Laura de Vos, 2024.*

6.2. Threshold of intervention

Where to hold back, where to act

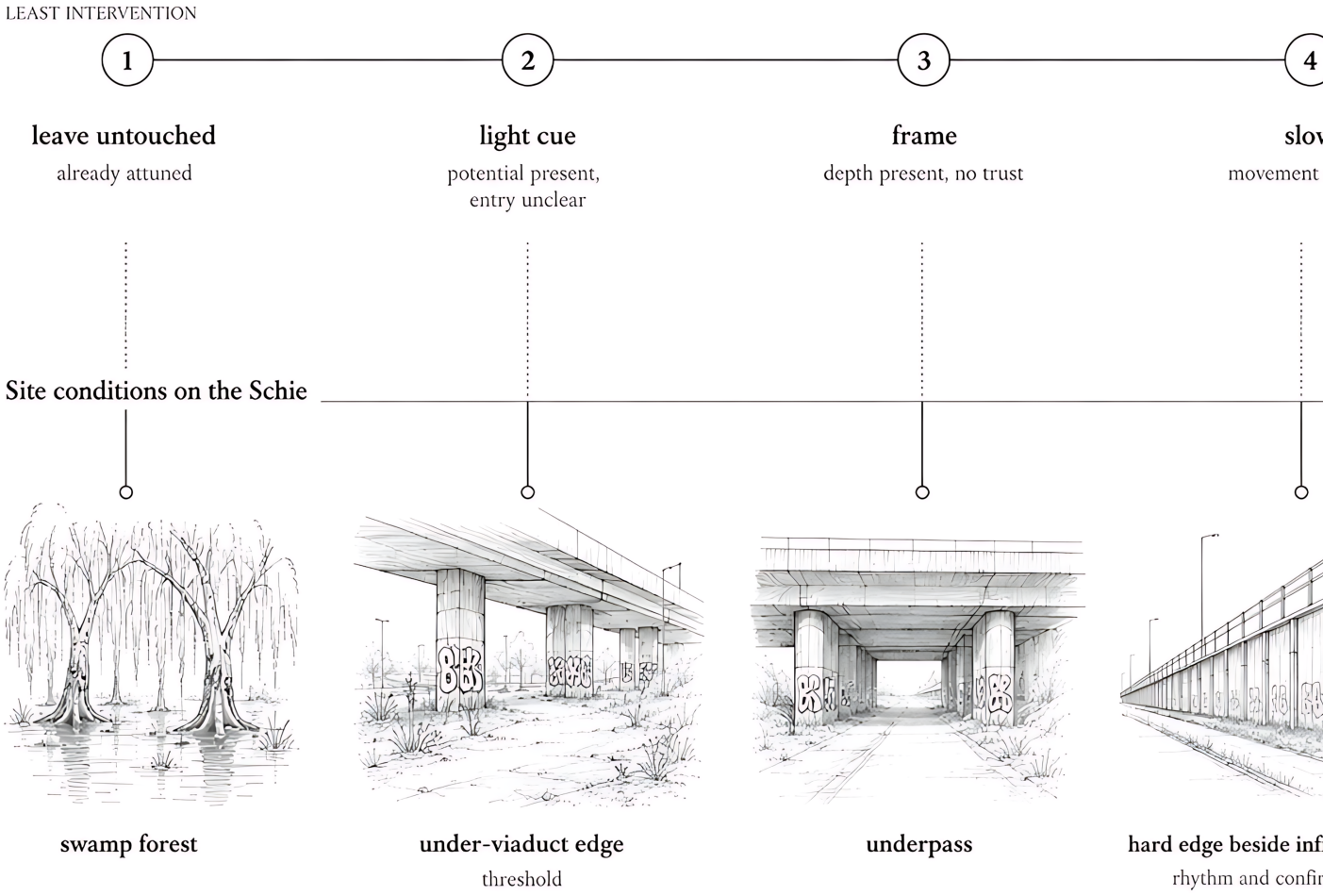
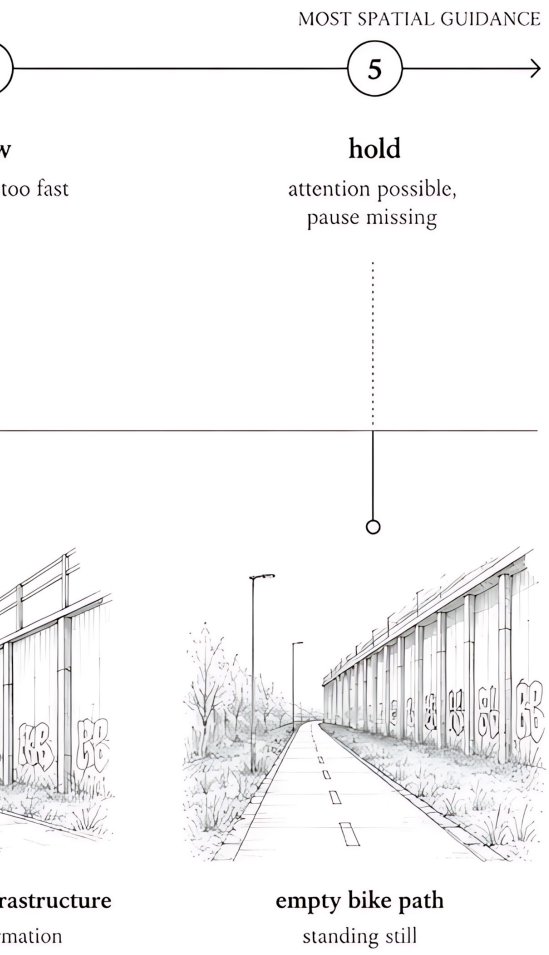


Figure 61: *Threshold of intervention. The diagram calibrates how much spatial guidance each condition needs, ranging from restraint to stronger framing. Some conditions already support attentiveness and should be left largely untouched, while others need a cue, frame, slowing device or pause condition to become inhabitable. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*

The first design decision is not what to add, but whether intervention is needed at all. Some interstitial conditions already produce attentiveness. The swamp forest holds wetness, density and limited access strongly enough to slow the body without design. Here, the correct response is restraint.

Other conditions contain potential but remain unreadable. The under-viaduct edge has shelter, shadow and acoustic depth, but lacks a reason to stay. The hard infrastructural edge has rhythm and direction, but moves too fast. The





easy to slow down and attune -> not much design need

in the contrary





Figure 62: *Threshold of intervention matrix. The diagram positions existing site conditions between restraint and stronger spatial framing, showing where the design should leave, cue, frame, slow or hold. Own work, 2026.*

empty bike path is legible as movement, but not as experience. These conditions require spatial guidance.
The armature is therefore calibrated through five degrees of intervention: leave untouched, give a light cue, frame, slow and hold. Design appears only where the existing condition cannot yet be entered, trusted, slowed or inhabited.
This threshold prevents the project from becoming a park layer. It works more like spatial acupuncture: precise intervention at points where a small cue can unlock an existing condition.

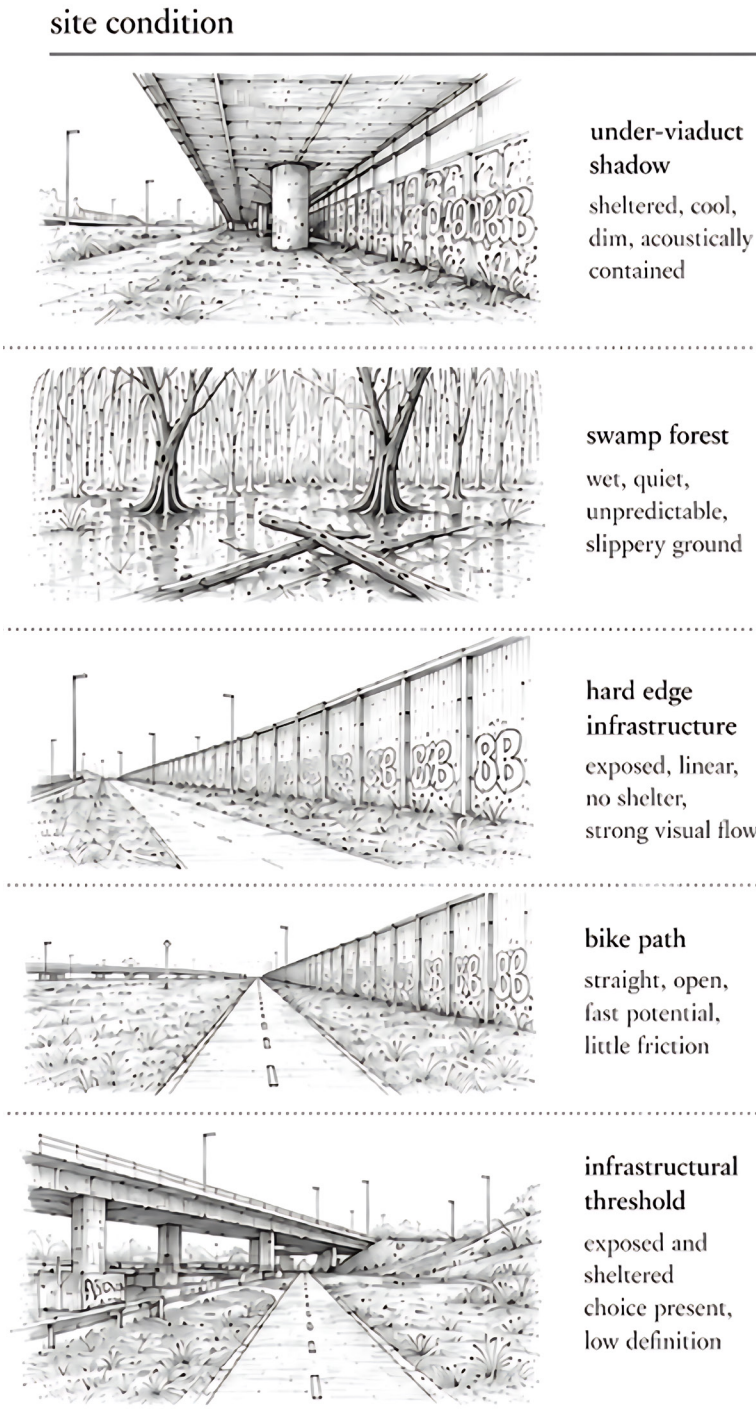
6.3. Spatial mechanism

From condition to body to design move

The armature translates existing site conditions into bodily effects. An under-viaduct shadow can make the body slow and listen. A swamp forest can invite pause and sensory attention. A hard infrastructural edge can expose speed. A straight bike path can accelerate movement. An infrastructural threshold can invite deviation.

Each condition receives only the design move it needs. The under-viaduct receives a light sitting edge. The swamp forest is held back. The hard edge receives tree rhythm. The bike path is interrupted through surface and edge. The infrastructural threshold receives a light cue that allows entry without over-directing movement.

This is where the thesis becomes operational. Contemplation and ruinosity become a method for deciding what the site needs: not more design everywhere, but the right spatial mechanism in the right place.



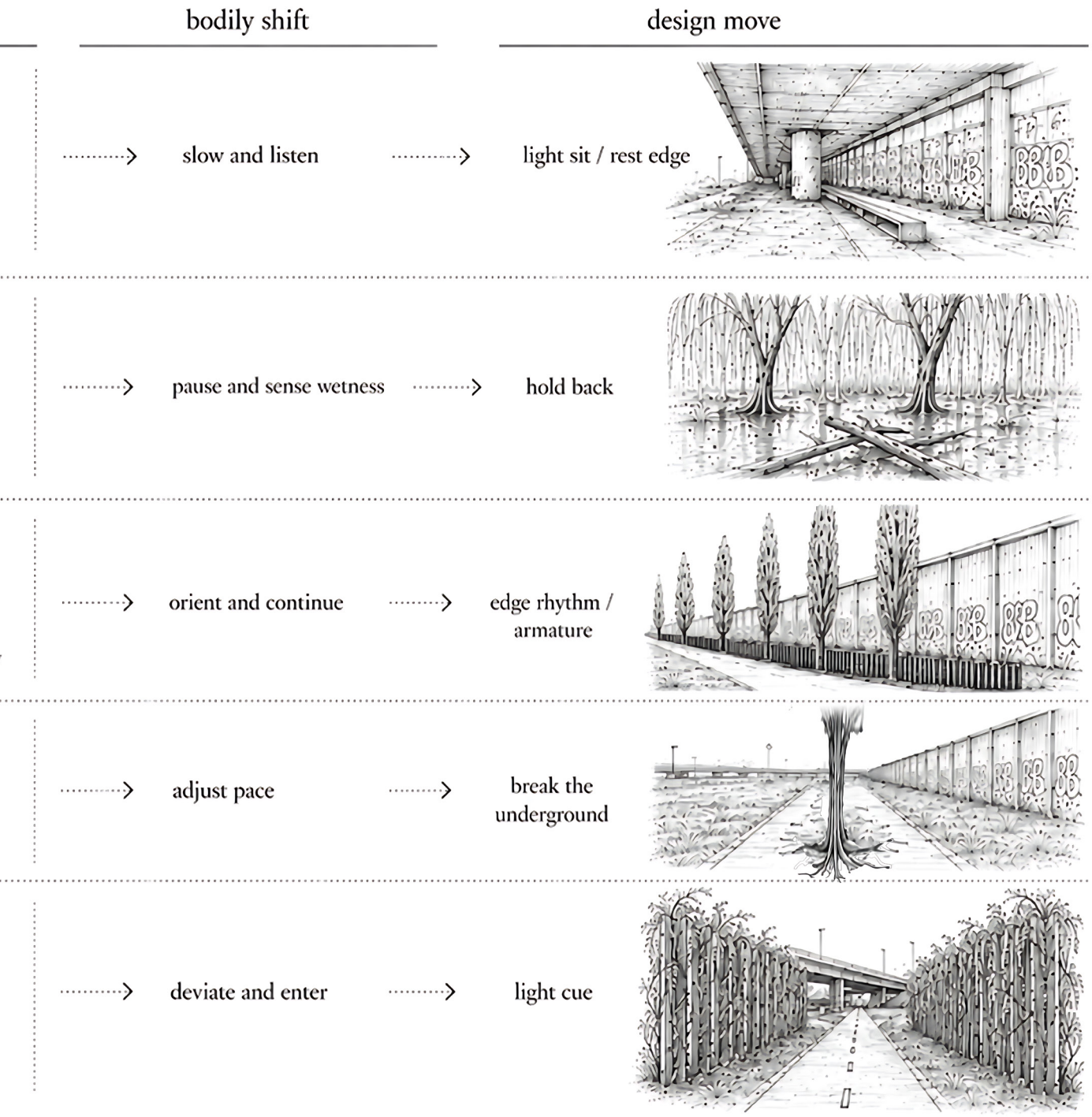


Figure 63: *Translation from site condition to bodily effect. The diagram links existing interstitial conditions to minimal spatial moves, showing how shelter, wetness, edge rhythm, ground resistance and light cues can become a sequence of attention. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*

6.4. Withdrawal Within the City



Figure 64: *Withdrawal within the city as sectional logic. The drawing tests how road pressure, viaduct shadow, vegetation and water edge can shift the body from exposure toward a sheltered pause condition. Own work, 2026.*

The interstitial does not offer escape from the city. It offers distance within it. Beneath viaducts, along canal edges and behind sound walls, the body can step out of the city's pace without leaving the metropolitan field.

Withdrawal is therefore not produced by silence. It is produced by a changed relation to urban pressure. Traffic, concrete, sound, graffiti, fences and infrastructure remain present, but vegetation, shadow, water and partial enclosure slow their effect on the body.

The section tests this shift from urban pressure to filtered threshold to sheltered pause pocket. On the left, the road sets speed, exposure and noise. In the middle, viaduct, sound wall, reed, trees and shadow filter that pressure. On the right, water and enclosure create a place where the body has a reason to remain.

The aim is not to hide the city. The aim is to make its pressure perceptible at a slower tempo.

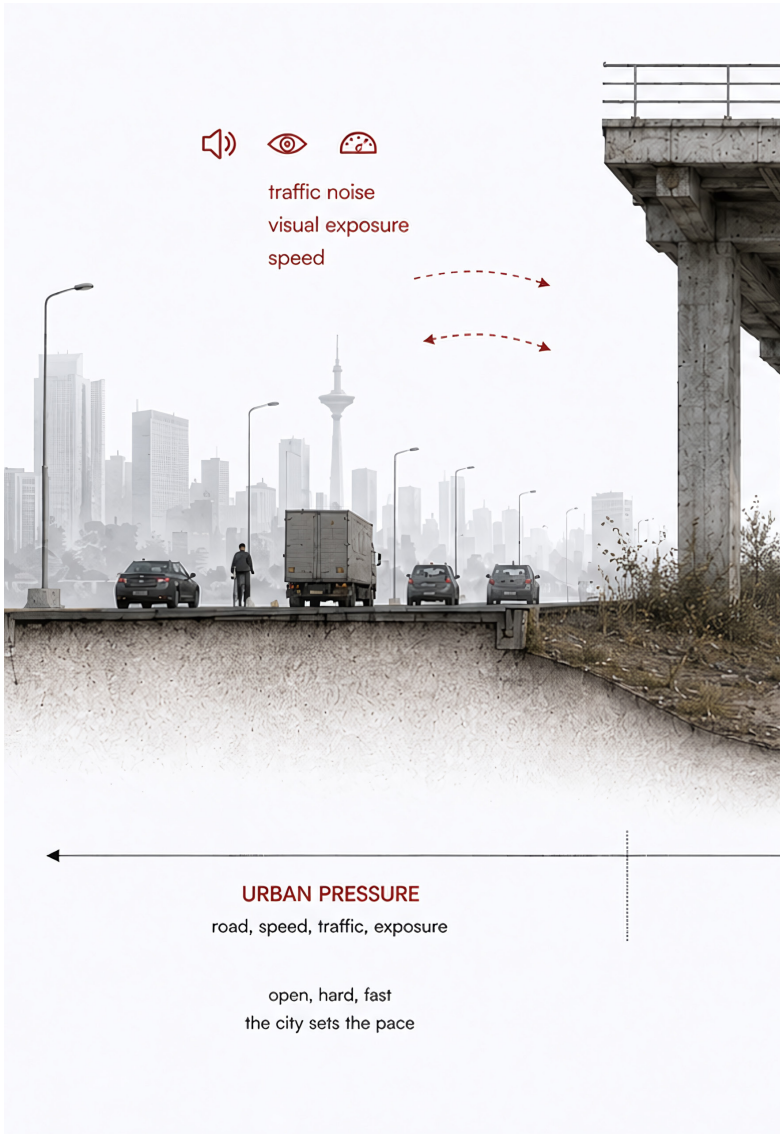


Figure 65: *Withdrawal within the city. The section shows how urban pressure is not removed but filtered through viaduct structure, vegetation, shadow and water. The body moves from traffic speed toward a sheltered pause pocket where the city remains present at a slower tempo. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*



6.5. Precedent VI, Selective guidance



Figure 66: Le Jardin en Mouvement. Film still introducing Gilles Clément's concept of a garden shaped through observation, selective maintenance and living plant movement. Film still from Le Jardin en Mouvement, directed by [Sawazaki, K.], 2016.

Garden



Figure 67: Guided planting condition. The garden is not arranged as a fixed composition, but managed through selective openings, paths and plant movement. Film still from Le Jardin en Mouvement, directed by [Sawazaki, K.], 2016.



Figure 68: Interstitial comparison. The Sc infrastructure and unmanaged vegetation, b make these conditions inhabitable. Own w

Inters



Figure 69: Existing underside condition at open grass, viaduct shadow and infrastructu rather than fully redesigned. Own work, 20



chie corridor already contains open grass, out lacks the selective guidance that would ork, 2024.

stitial



the Schie corridor. The photograph shows ural edge as a condition that can be guided 026.

Le Jardin en Mouvement, Gilles Clément

Le Jardin en Mouvement is a design and management concept developed by French landscape architect Gilles Clément and described in his writing on the garden in movement (Clément, 1997).

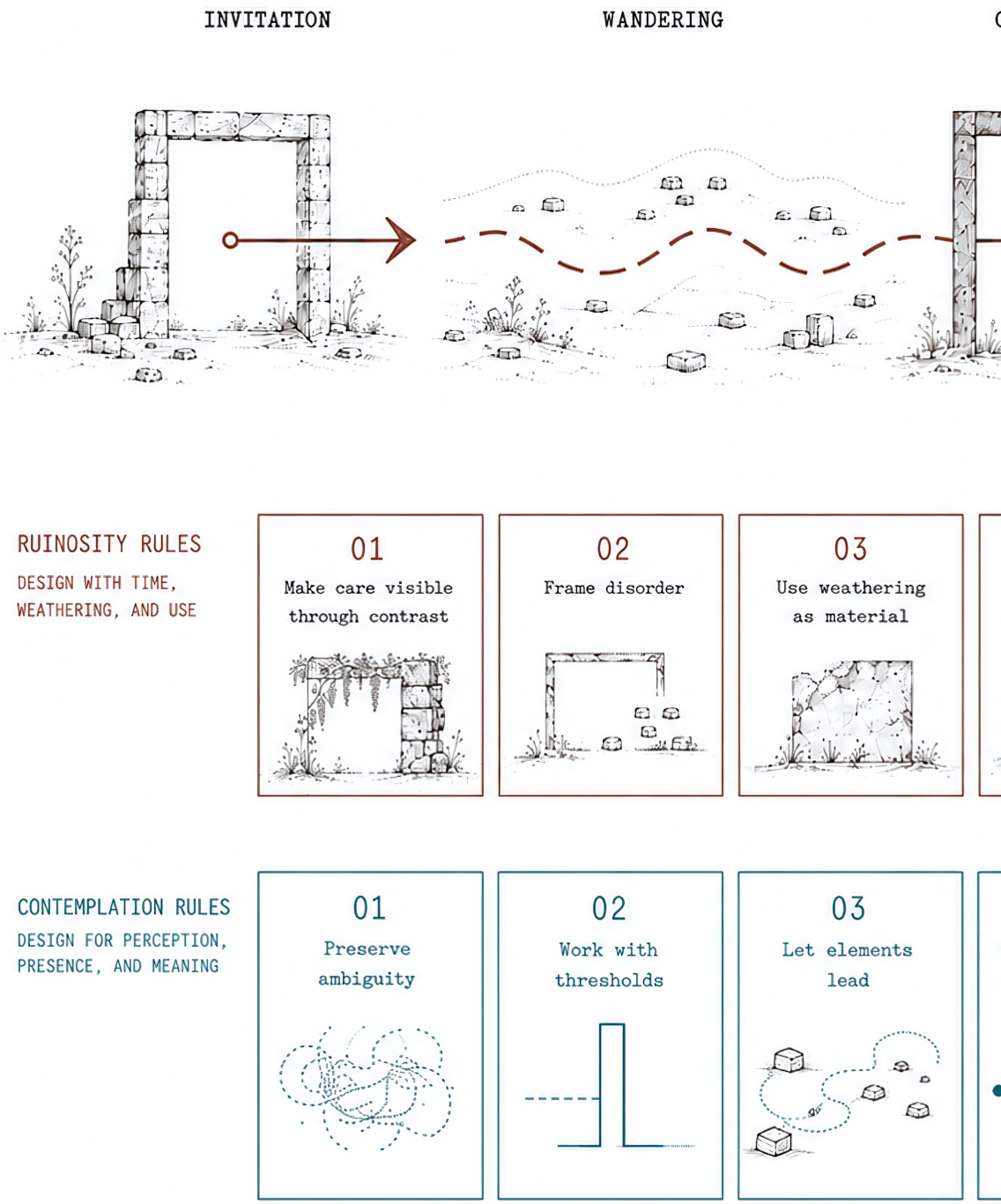
The concept shifts the role of the gardener from composer to observer and selective guide. Plants are allowed to move, seed, compete, disappear and return. The designer intervenes where access, legibility or ecological balance needs support. A clearing may be opened one year and allowed to thicken the next.

This precedent is read through Clément's writing and visual documentation, not as a fixed formal model. Its relevance lies in the management attitude: observe plant movement, intervene selectively and accept that the garden changes through time.

For the Schie interstitial, this clarifies selective guidance. The site should not be frozen into a finished landscape, but it also cannot remain unreadable. The task is to observe more, impose less and intervene only where movement, pause, safety or legibility needs support.

6.6. From armature to design walk

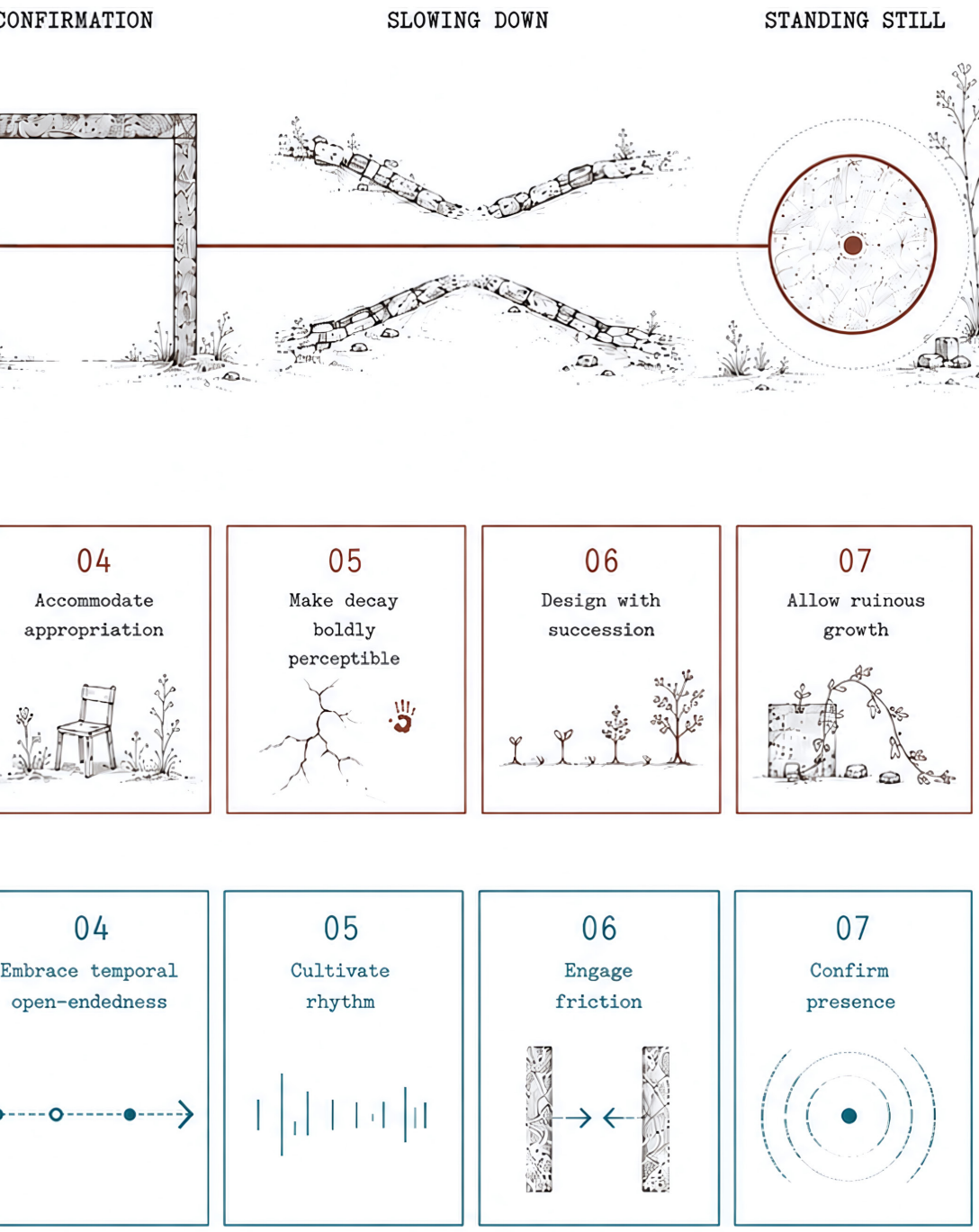
The score as route logic



The armature becomes spatial through a route. The visitor does not encounter all operations at once, but step by step. The sequence begins with invitation, passes through wandering and confirmation, slows the body and ends in a moment of standing still.

This sequence is the design score. It is not a symbolic story, but a way to organise movement, attention and bodily effect. Each intervention in Chapter 7 is placed on this score and tested through plan, section and material detail.

Figure 73: Design score for the contemplative path. The upper line shows the spatial sequence of the visitor. The lower lines translate the contemplation and ruinosity rules into design operations that structure the walk. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

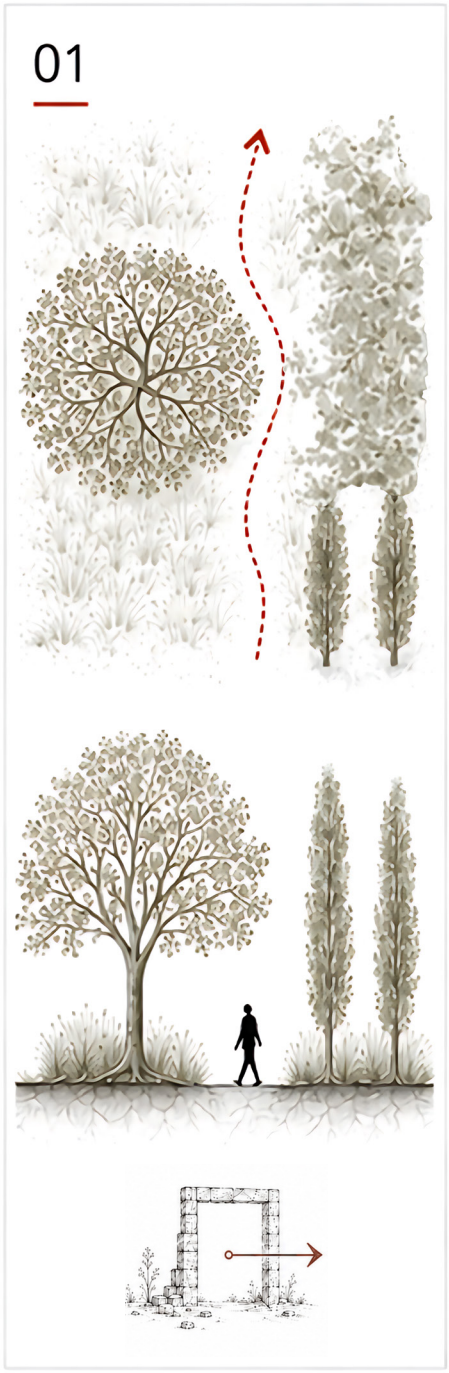


Confirmation is not a separate programme or an added object. It is the moment where several rules become spatial at once: threshold, rhythm, frame, sightline and visible care. After wandering, the visitor needs enough evidence that the rough corridor is intentional. Confirmation gives orientation and trust, so the route can continue toward slowing down and standing still.

The score turns the thesis into a route: from urban speed to spatial attention, and from existing roughness to guided inhabitation.

6.7. From route sequence to bodily eff

From route sequence to bodily effect

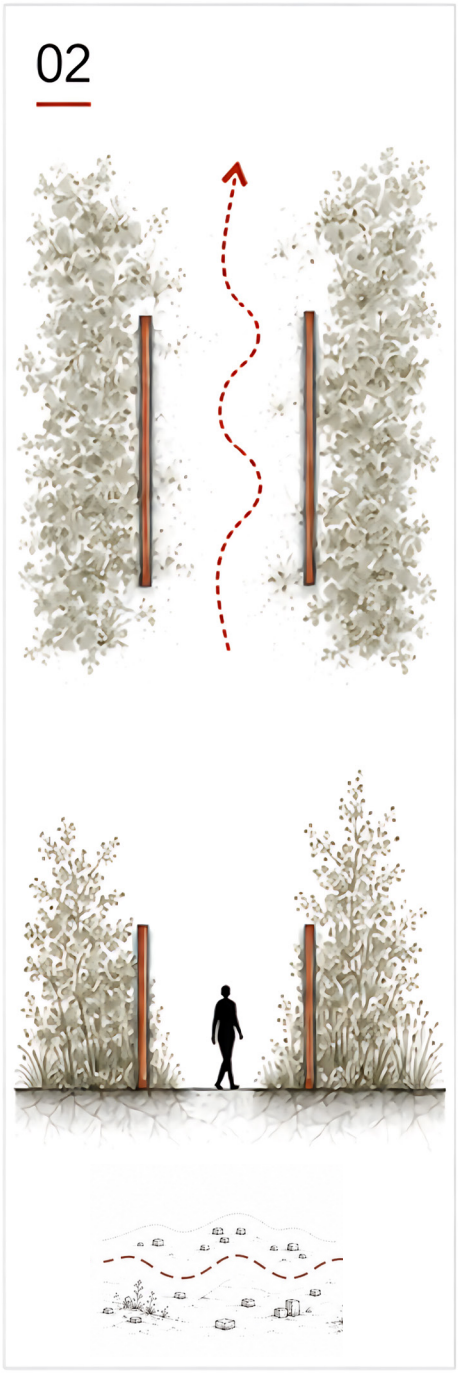


Invitation

Condition: subtle entry

Design test: visible cue

Body effect: enter without forcing



Wandering

Condition: between steel walls

Design test: loose route

Body effect: slow exploration



Confirmation

Condition: beneath

Design test: repetitio

Body effect: orientati

These tests define what each moment in Chapter 7 must do. They are not separate design options, but spatial checks for the route: each moment must translate an existing site condition into a bodily shift through a precise design move.

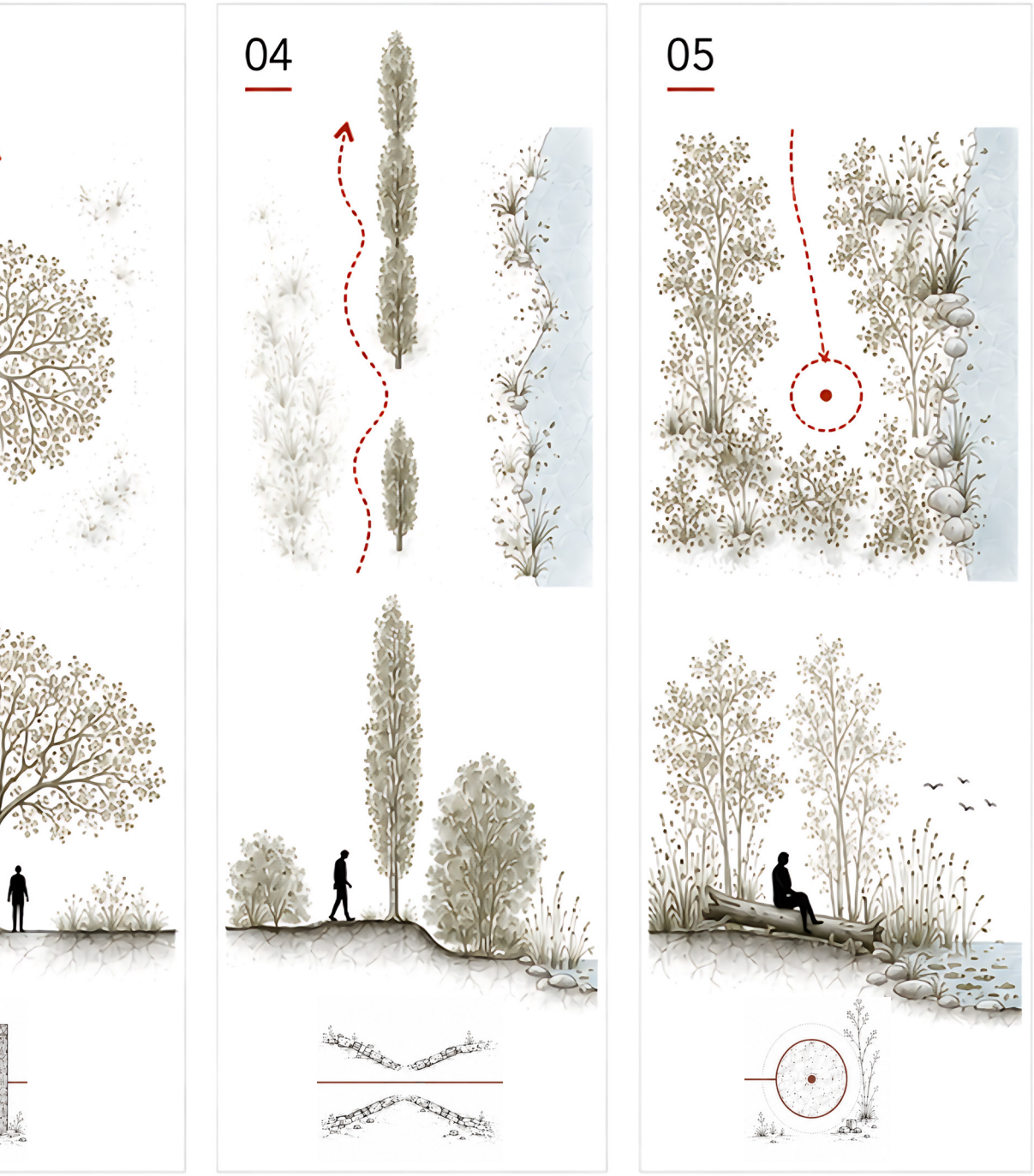


Figure 74: *Spatial tests for the design walk. The five tests translate the route sequence into concrete spatial operations, linking each moment to an existing condition, a design move and an intended bodily effect. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*



7.1 Synthesis and intervention

7.2 The Strip Plan

7.3 The route as a score of attention

7.4 The corridor within the larger interstitial system

7.5 Tree armature

7.6 Five moments

7.7 Conclusion: the path as prepared condition

07 The Contemplative Path

7.1. Synthesis and intervention

The design decisions in this chapter are not autonomous formal choices. Each intervention translates a theoretical or precedent-based lesson into a site-specific spatial operation. Luo's tension between disclosure and erasure defines how much the interstitial is opened. Nassauer's cues of care define where roughness needs a readable frame. The contemplative rules from Chapter 4 define how the body is slowed, sheltered and held. The ruinous rules from Chapter 5 define how weathering, succession and informal use remain active rather than being cleaned away.

The five moments do not describe a single linear walk. They describe recurring states in the encounter between body and interstitial landscape: invitation, wandering, confirmation, slowing down and standing still. These states are not arbitrary: they translate the spatial qualities that contemplative landscape research links to sustained attention, such as refuge, prospect,

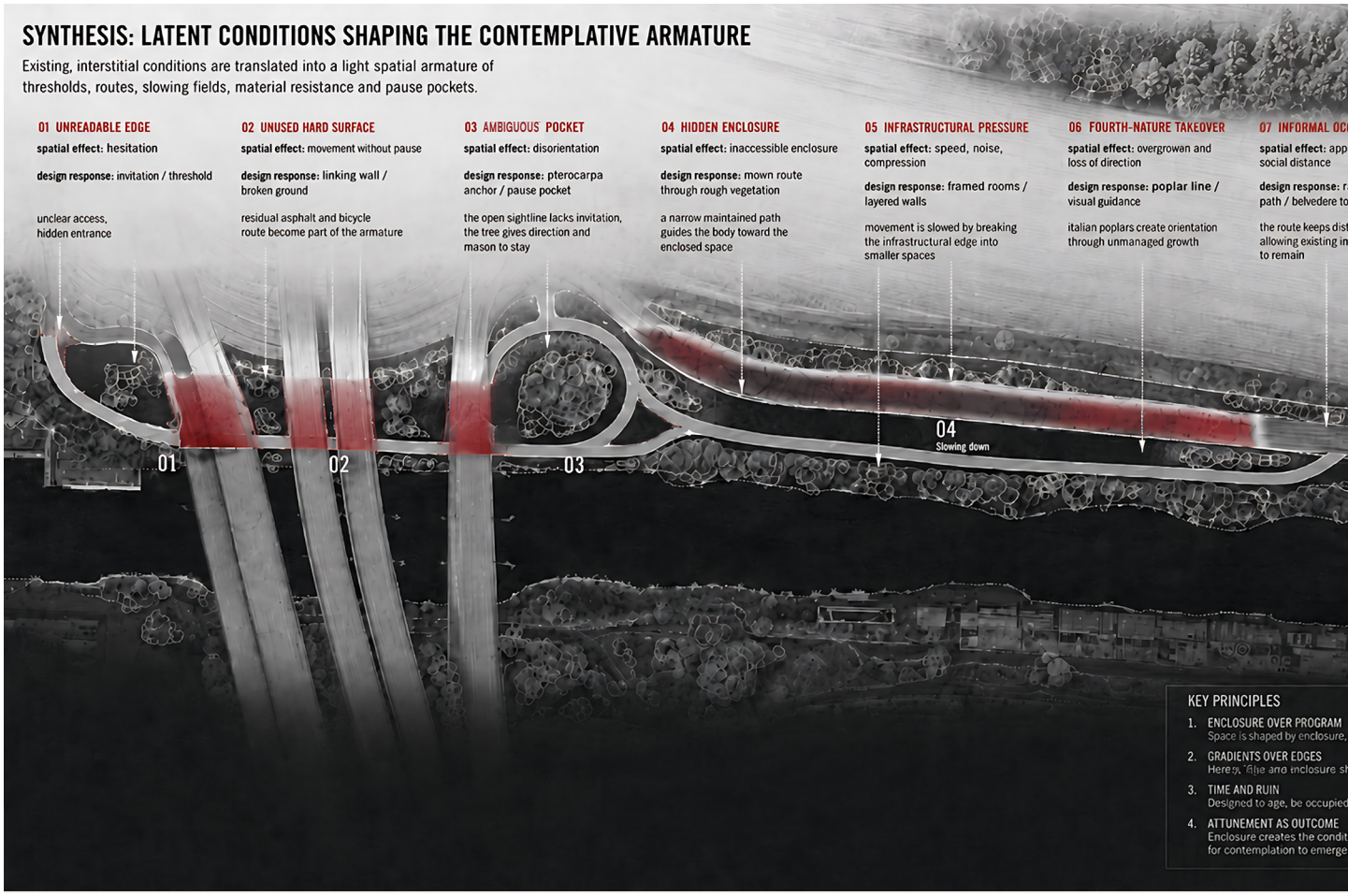
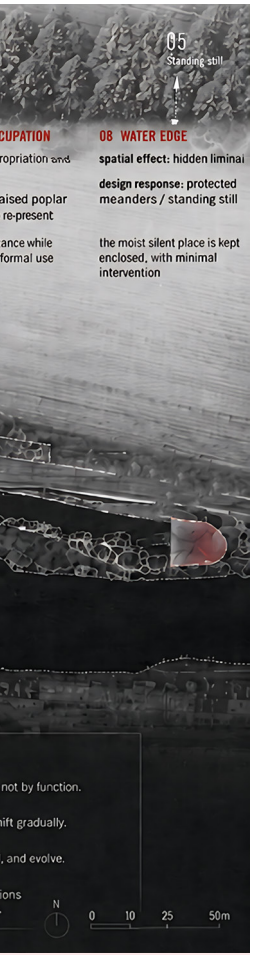


Figure 75: *Synthesis and intervention logic. Existing interstitial conditions along the Schie strip are translated into spatial responses: unreadable edges become thresholds, hard surfaces become broken ground, ambiguous pockets become anchors, hidden enclosure becomes accessible through mown routes, infrastructural pressure becomes framed rooms, fourth-nature growth is guided by tree rhythm, informal occupation is held at a distance, and the water edge becomes a protected condition for standing still. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*

mystery and coherence, into a sequence the body can move through (Olszewska-Guizzo, 2023). Depending on how the visitor enters the Schie strip, the same place may first appear as threshold, later as shelter, or again as friction.

Unreadable edges create hesitation. Unused hard surfaces produce movement without pause. Ambiguous pockets create disorientation. Hidden enclosure remains inaccessible. Infrastructural pressure produces speed, noise and compression. Fourth-nature growth takes over orientation. Informal occupation creates social distance. The water edge holds a hidden condition of stillness.

The design responds by adding a light spatial armature. Thresholds, walls, mown routes, tree lines, broken ground and protected pause pockets do not overwrite the site. They make existing interstitial qualities legible enough to enter, move through and remain within.



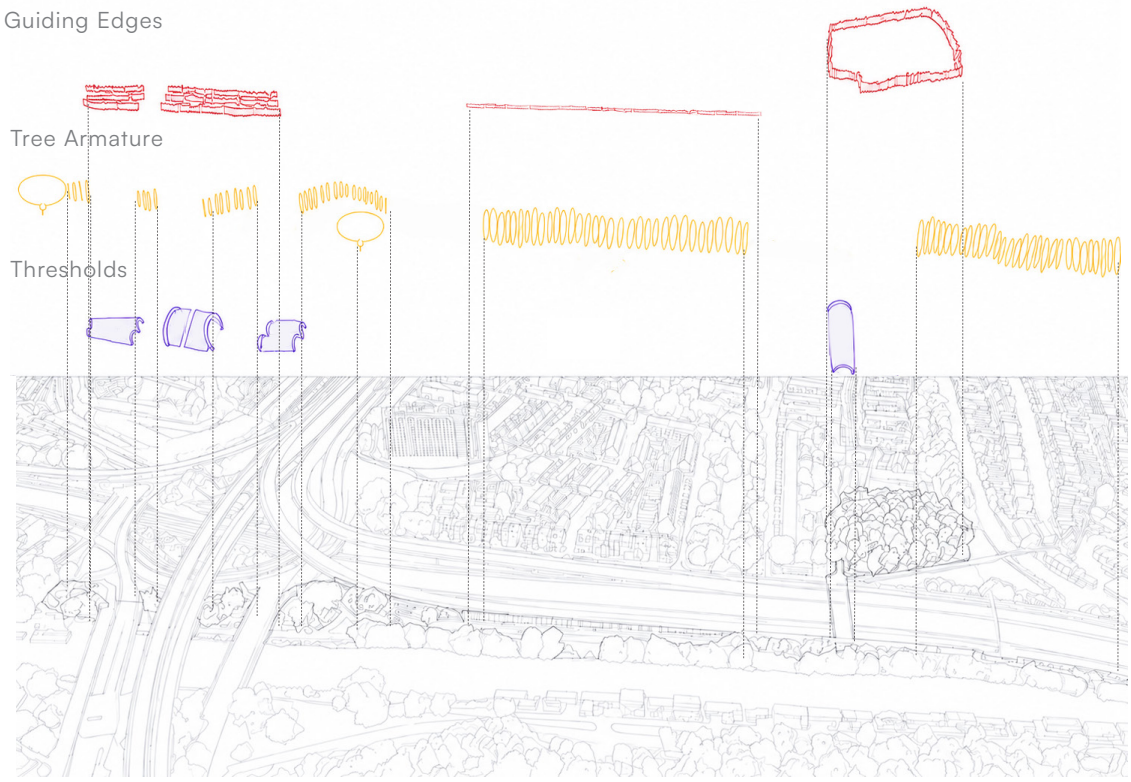


Figure 76: *Design reasoning diagram. Existing site conditions are converted into five spatial operations for the contemplative path: invitation, wandering, confirmation, slowing down and standing still. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.*

The corridor as interstitial system



Figure 77: The Schie corridor within the larger interstitial system of Rotterdam North. Existing infrastructural, ecological and residual urban lines guide movement toward the interstitial edge. Own work, 2026.



The Schie strip is not an isolated design site. It is one edge within a larger interstitial system of Rotterdam North, shaped by infrastructure, water corridors, tree lines, public green and residual urban fabric.

Movement through this system does not follow a conventional park route. The visitor is drawn along existing spatial lines: canal, bridge, tree rhythm, sound wall and leftover green edge. These lines do not fully connect places. They gradually pull the body out of urban speed and into a more uncertain interstitial condition.

The contemplative path therefore begins before the designed strip itself. It works by strengthening existing relations already present in the larger landscape.

7.2. The Strip Plan

The strip plan translates the synthesis into a continuous route. Unreadable edges become invitations. Enclosed pockets become thresholds. Empty mown grass becomes a field of slowing. Tree lines create rhythm. Steel walls frame transition. Water and willow pockets become places to pause.

The plan does not overwrite the site. It organises what is already present into a sequence of attention. The route remains partly open, partly uncertain and partly unfinished. This keeps the interstitial character active while giving the visitor enough orientation to move through it.

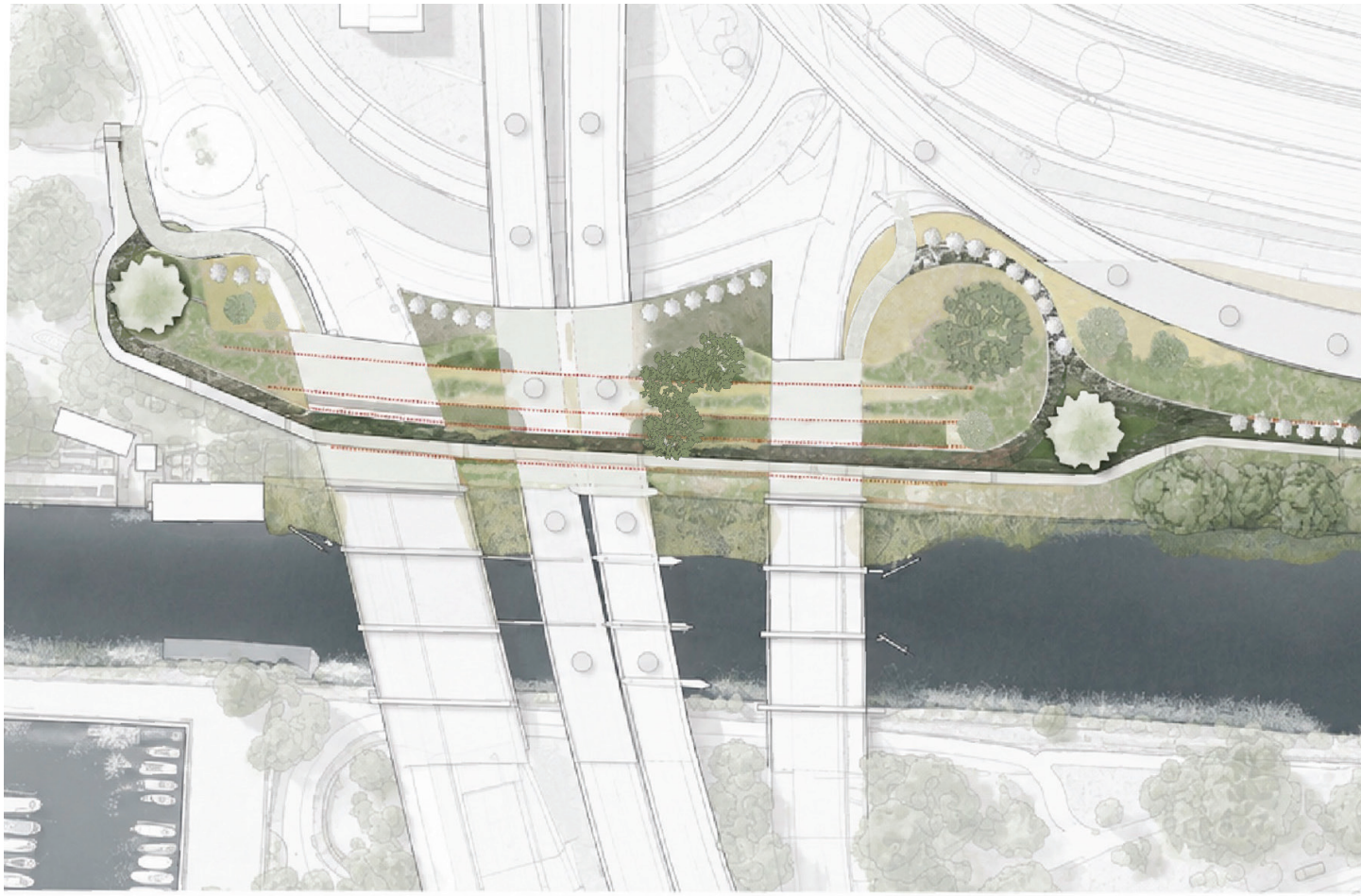


Figure 78: *Strip plan as spatial sequence. The plan translates existing edges, voids, vegetation and infrastructural pressure into a continuous contemplative route. Own work, 2026.*

Steel wall

Steel connector

reed

Bushes and undergrowth

Tall grass

Grass

Schie Schie

Surrounding infrastructure

Existing bushes

Existing tree

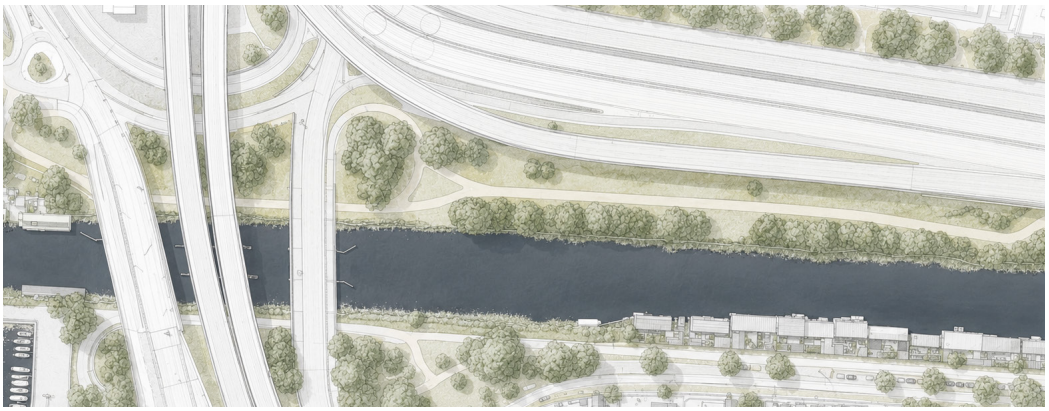
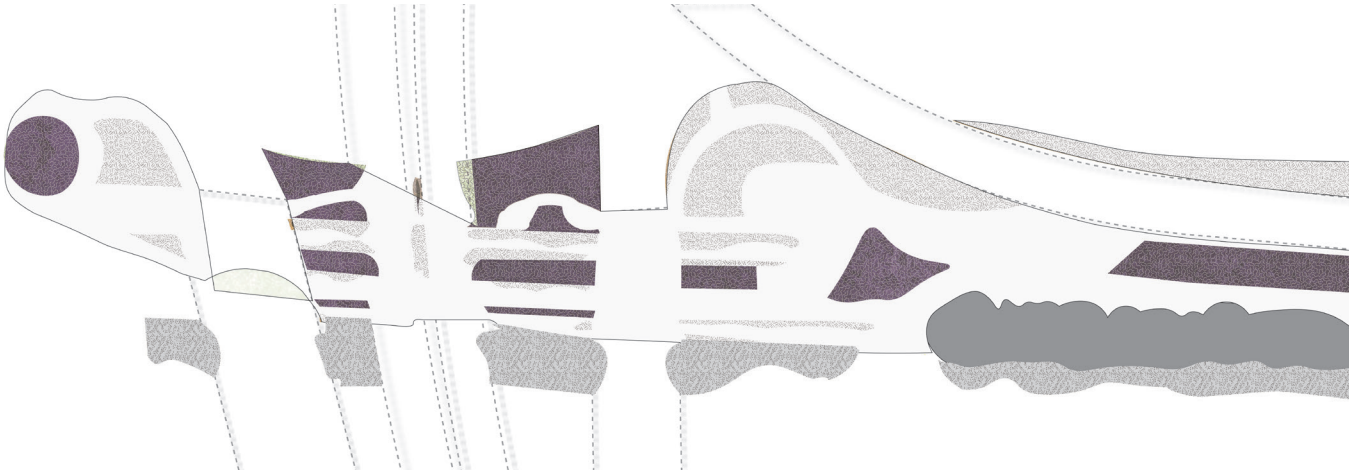


Figure 79: *Existing aerial condition of the Schie strip. The image shows the linear relation between canal, viaduct, infrastructure and residual green space before design intervention. Own work, 2026*

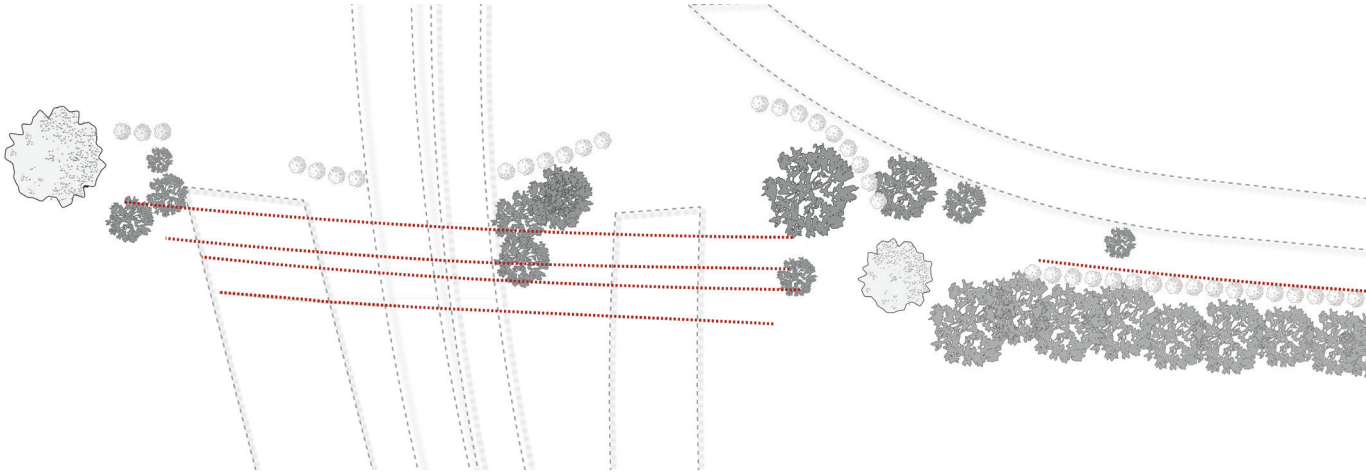


Design unpacked: vegetation, composi

VEGETATION



ARMATURE



COMPOSITION

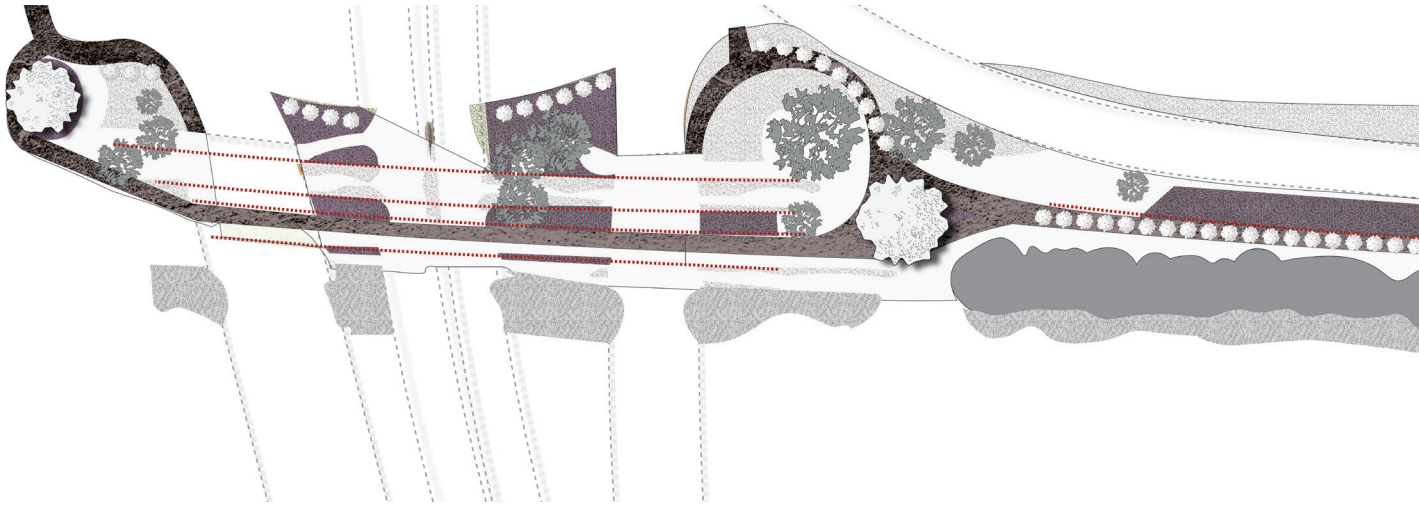
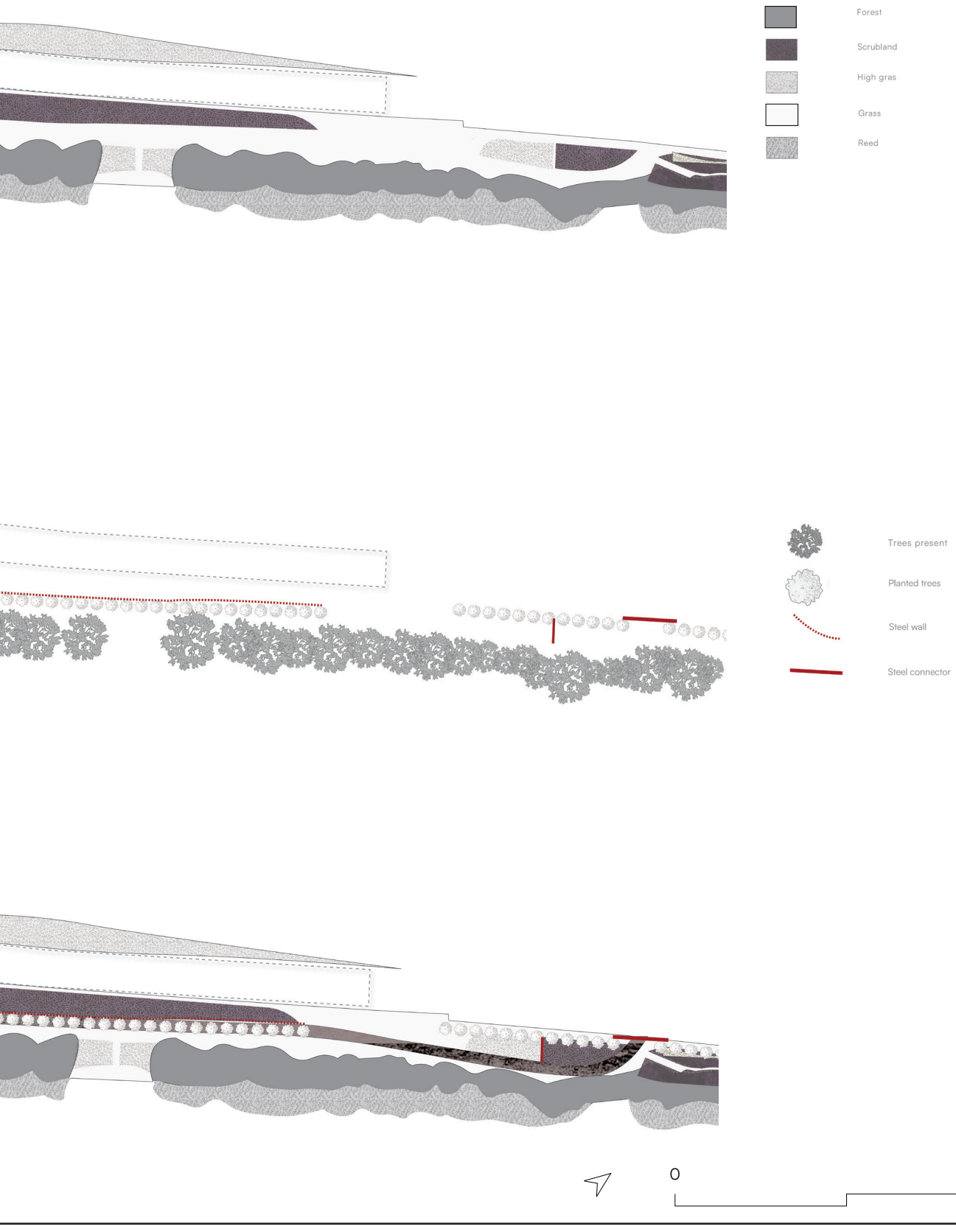
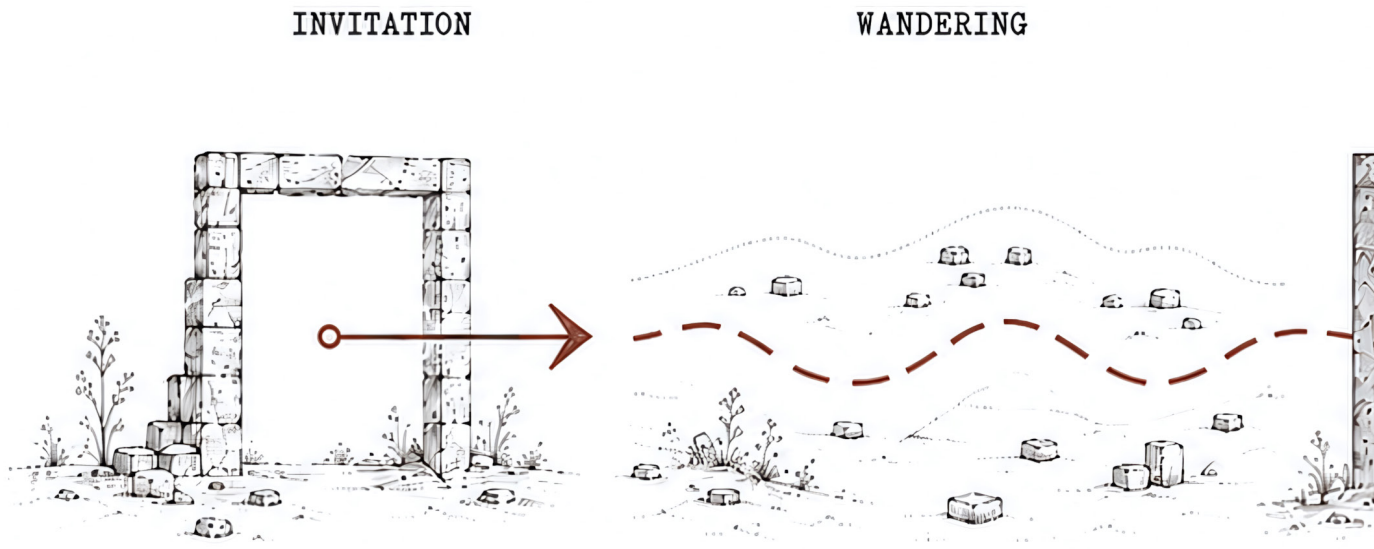
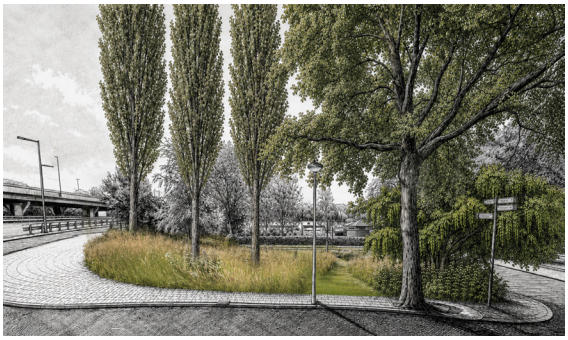


Figure 80: Design unpacked: vegetation, armature and composition. The drawing separates the proposal into its main spatial layers, showing how planting types, existing and proposed trees, steel walls and connectors structure the contemplative path along the Schie. Own work, 2026.



7.3. The route as a score of attention





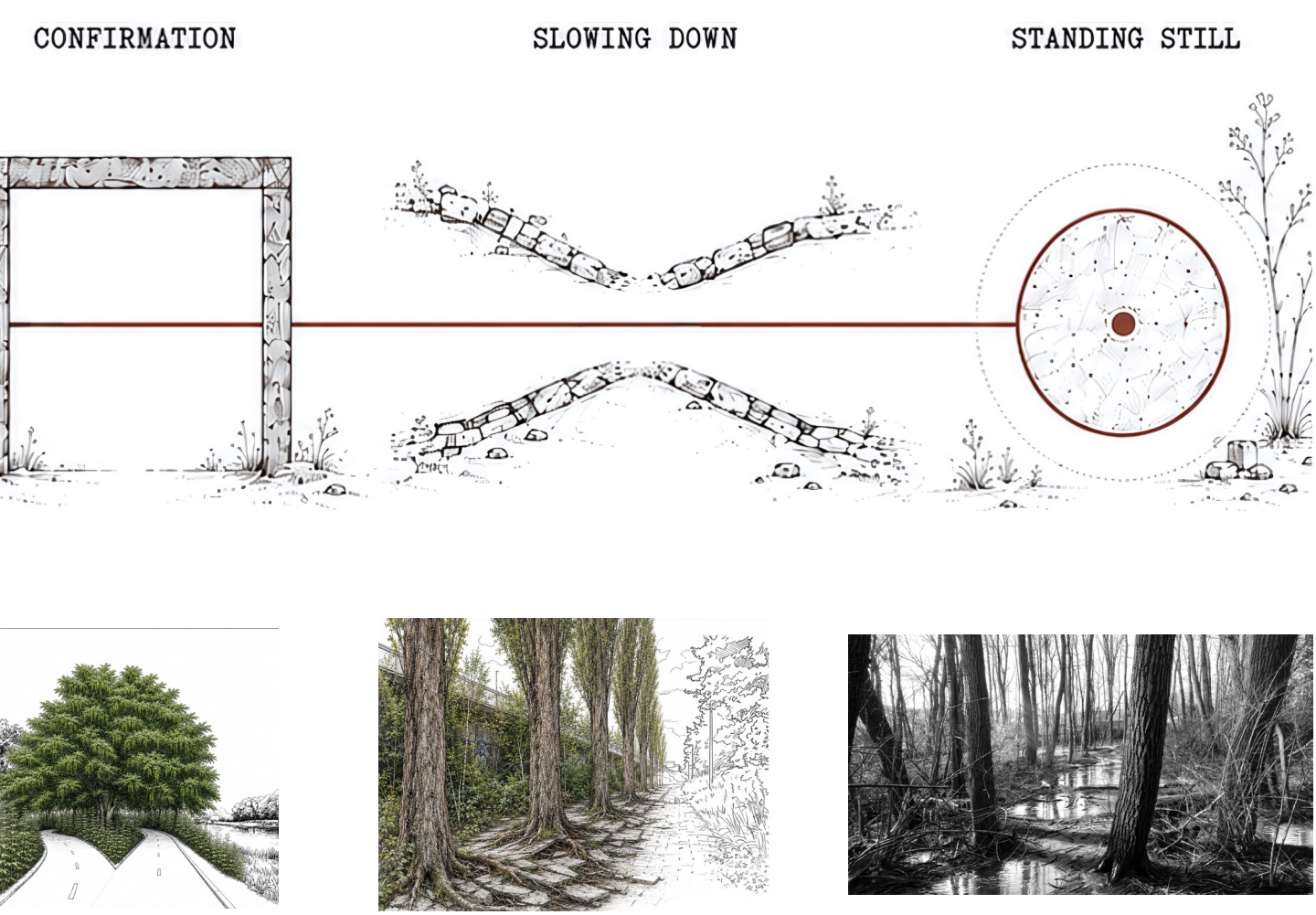




The route is not a fixed procession with one correct direction. It works as a score of attention: a framework of bodily conditions that can be encountered from different sides and in different orders.

The five moments do not describe a single linear walk. They describe recurring states in the encounter between body and interstitial landscape: invitation, wandering, confirmation, slowing down and standing still. Depending on how the visitor enters the Schie strip, the same place may first appear as threshold, later as shelter, or again as friction.

Figure 81: Route as score of attention. The drawing and reference images show the five moments as recurring bodily conditions rather than as a single fixed route. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.



This keeps the design open. The visitor does not follow one prescribed narrative, but repeatedly reconnects with the interstitial through changing edges, surfaces, openings, vegetation, rust, water and enclosure. The moments form a spatial grammar for attunement.

7.4. Precedent VII, Composition



Figure 82: Asplund, G. & Lewerentz, S. (1917—1940). Skogskyrkogården, Stockholm, granite cross on the open hill with elm grove, designed by Asplund. Photographer unknown. Retrieved from Architectural Digest: https://www.architecturaldigest.com/gallery/woodland-cemetery-stockholm-slideshow



Figure 83: Asplund, G. & Lewerentz, S. (1917—1940). Skogskyrkogården, Stockholm, processional path towards the meditation hill with elm enclosure against the sky. Photographer unknown. Retrieved from Visit Stockholm: https://www.visitstockholm.com/see-do/activities/sunny-walks-with-stunning-views/

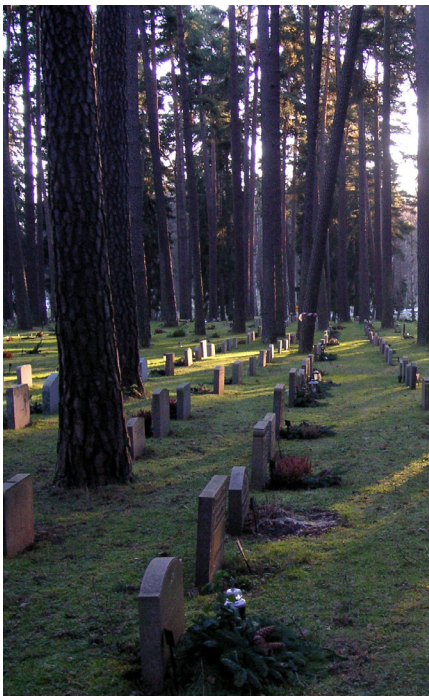
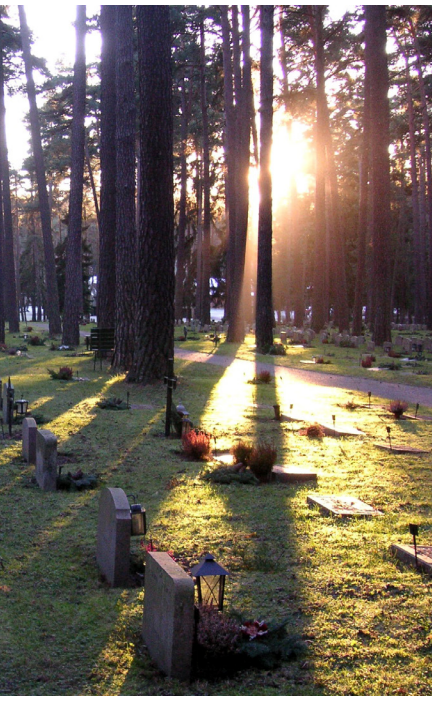


Figure 84: Asplund, G. & Lewerentz, S. (1
sunlight filtering through high pine crow
unknown. Retrieved from Wikipedia: https:



Figure 85: Von Sydow, L. (n.d.). Skogskyr
pine colonnade towards the Chapel of Re
Retrieved from: https://lidingofotoklubb.s
lennart-von-sydow?i=1.lennart-v-sydow--k



917—1940). Skogskyrkogården, Stockholm,
ns over the burial ground. Photographer
://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skogskyrkogården

Skogskyrkogården, the Woodland Cemetery in Stockholm, was designed by Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz between 1915 and 1940 (Mindel, 2014; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d.). The project is relevant here because it shows how landscape, architecture and movement can be organised as one spatial sequence. Its power lies not in one object, but in the relation between open field, lifted ground, tree mass, compressed path, threshold, filtered light and pause.

For this thesis, the cemetery is not used as a sacred model. Its lesson is compositional. It shows how a body can be prepared before it understands the place mentally. An open lawn creates exposure. A tree mass creates anticipation. A compressed passage slows movement. A framed opening confirms direction. A clearing holds attention.



kogården, Stockholm, view through the tall
esurrection. First prize, Lidingö Fotoklubb.
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The Schie corridor cannot copy this atmosphere. It is rough, infrastructural and unstable. The precedent is therefore translated into a more ordinary sequence: from speed, through tree rhythm and threshold, toward an interstitial edge where the visitor can stop.

Compositional lessons from Skogskyrk

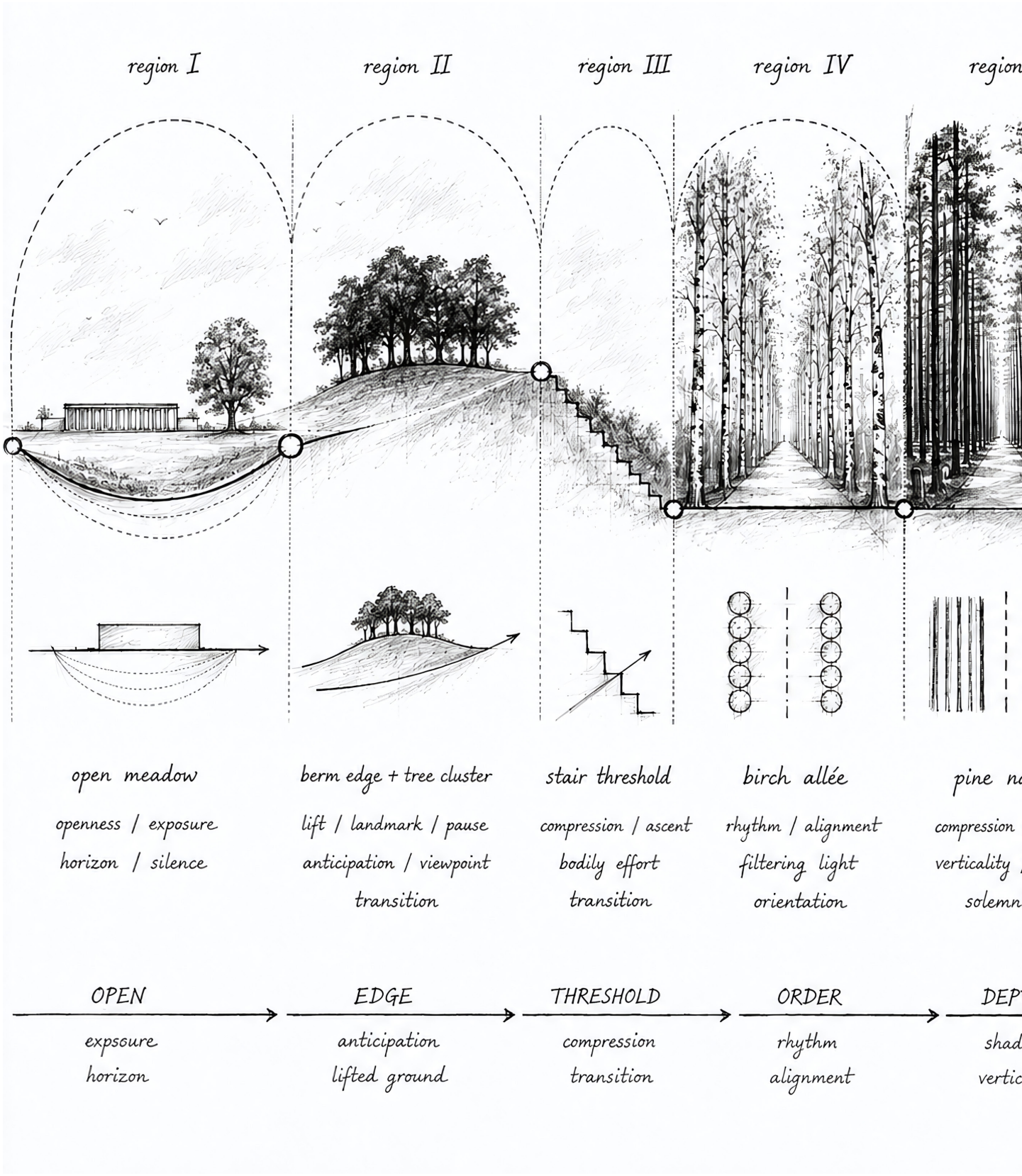
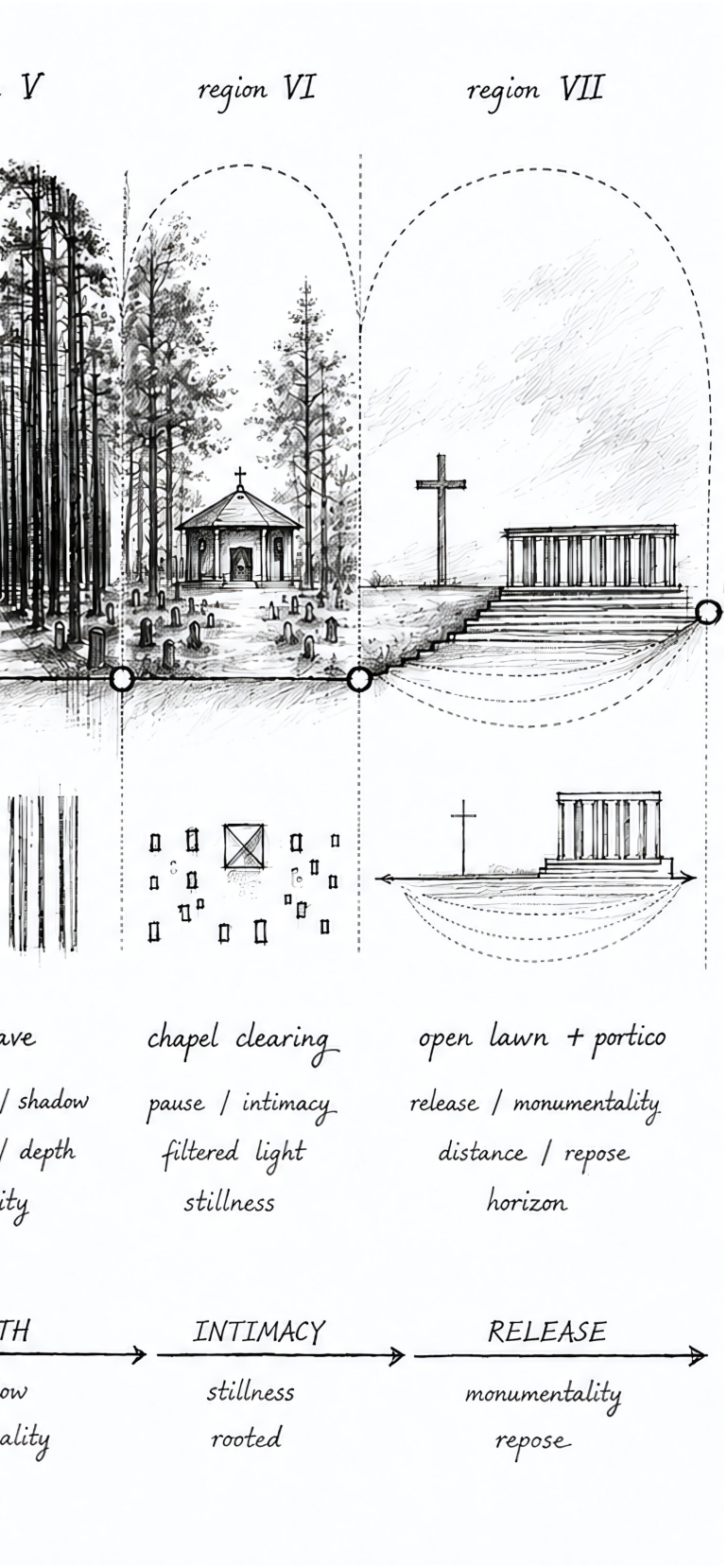
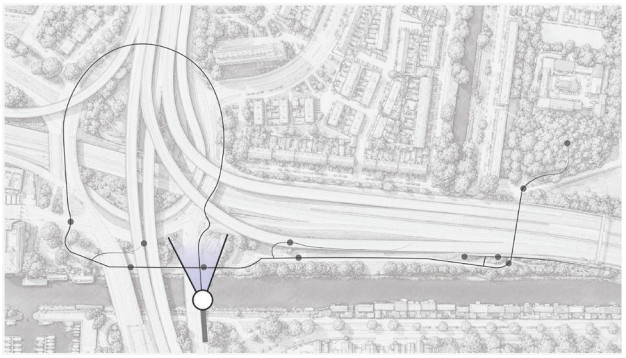


Figure 86: Compositional lessons from Skogskyrkogården. The drawing translates open meadow, lifted tree mass, stair threshold, tree allee and dense grove into spatial principles for exposure, compression, rhythm and deepening enclosure. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.



The precedent shows that contemplative sequence depends on the relation between open ground, tree mass, rhythm and threshold. Negative space is essential: mown grass creates breath, visibility and contrast against enclosed tree rooms. The lifted ground, tree rows and architectural rhythm show how movement can be slowed before the visitor reaches a place of pause. For the Schie corridor, this lesson is translated into ordinary infrastructural conditions: open mown ground gives orientation, poplar rhythm gives direction, and denser vegetation produces enclosure without turning the route into a formal cemetery composition.

From outside the Interstitial



Invitation begins before the visitor enters the interstitial. From the road, bridge, bicycle path or formal route, the site is first perceived at urban speed. At this speed it appears as leftover space: grass, bridge shadow, sound wall, canal edge and vegetation.

The Italian poplar line changes this reading. It creates a vertical rhythm that can be seen from a distance and passed at speed. The line does not yet explain the route, but it marks that another spatial order exists beside the infrastructure.

Invitation is therefore not a gate. It is a visual pull: enough order to suggest entry, enough ambiguity to keep the interstitial open.





Figure 87: Existing view from the moving city. The high corridor is first perceived as infrastructure rather than landscape, own image, 2026.



Figure 88: From outside the interstitial. A line of Populus nigra 'Italica' marks the edge from a distance and creates a first visual pull from the moving city toward the interstitial strip. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

7.5. Tree and Edge Armature

The tree and edge armature gives the route its spatial discipline. It does not replace spontaneous vegetation, but gives rhythm, orientation and moments of compression within it.

The poplar line marks movement. Existing tree masses hold pause. Canopy creates shelter. Steel edges clarify thresholds where the route would otherwise remain unreadable.

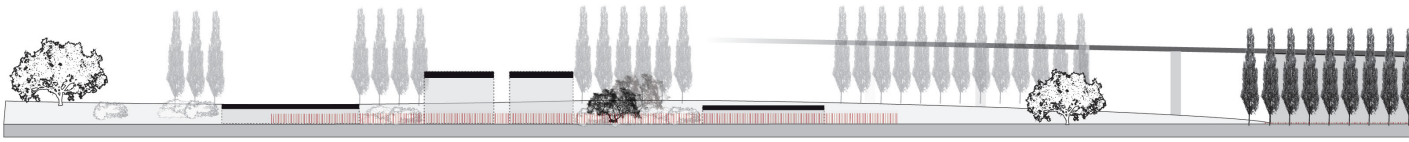


Figure 90: Elevation of the tree armature showing how poplar rhythm, existing tree mass and infrastructural edge structure the long corridor. Own work, 2026.

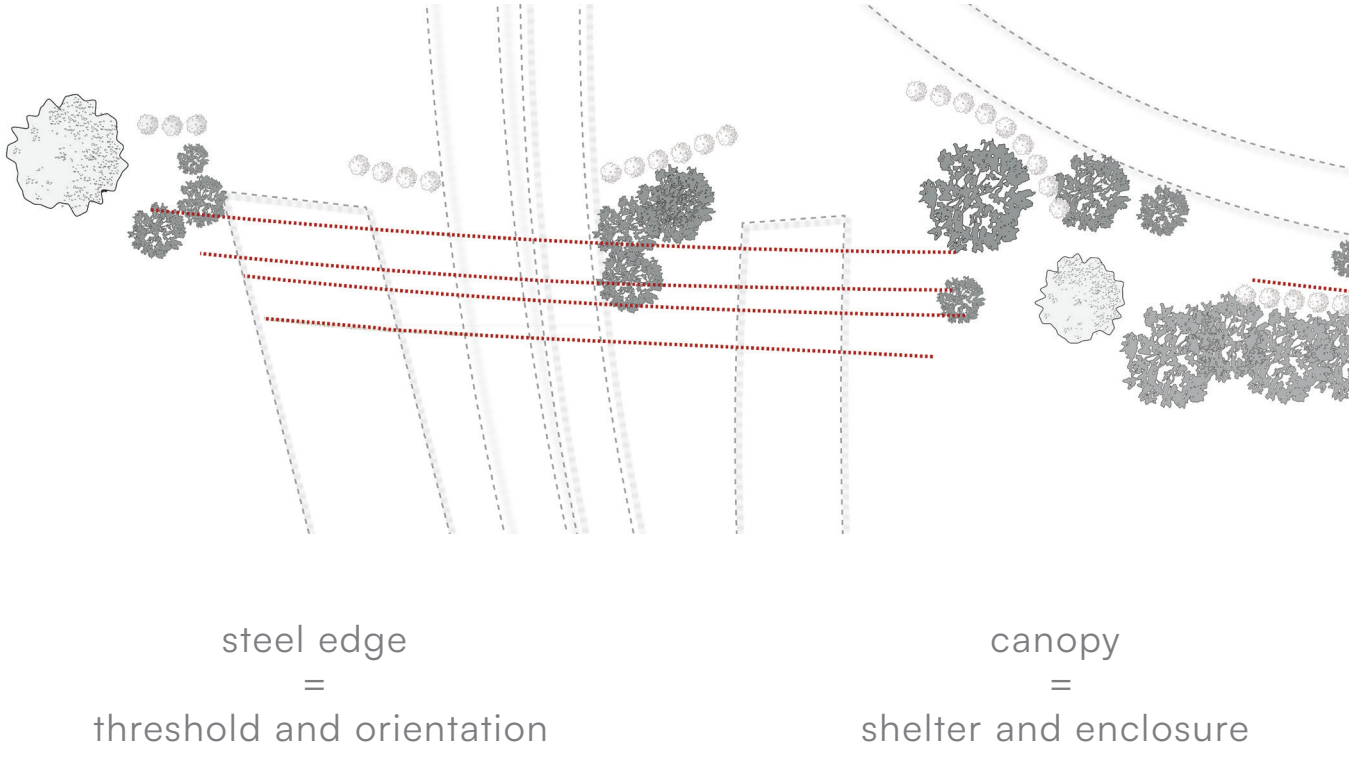
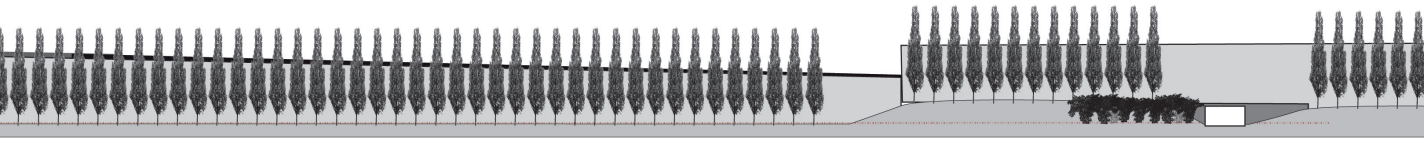
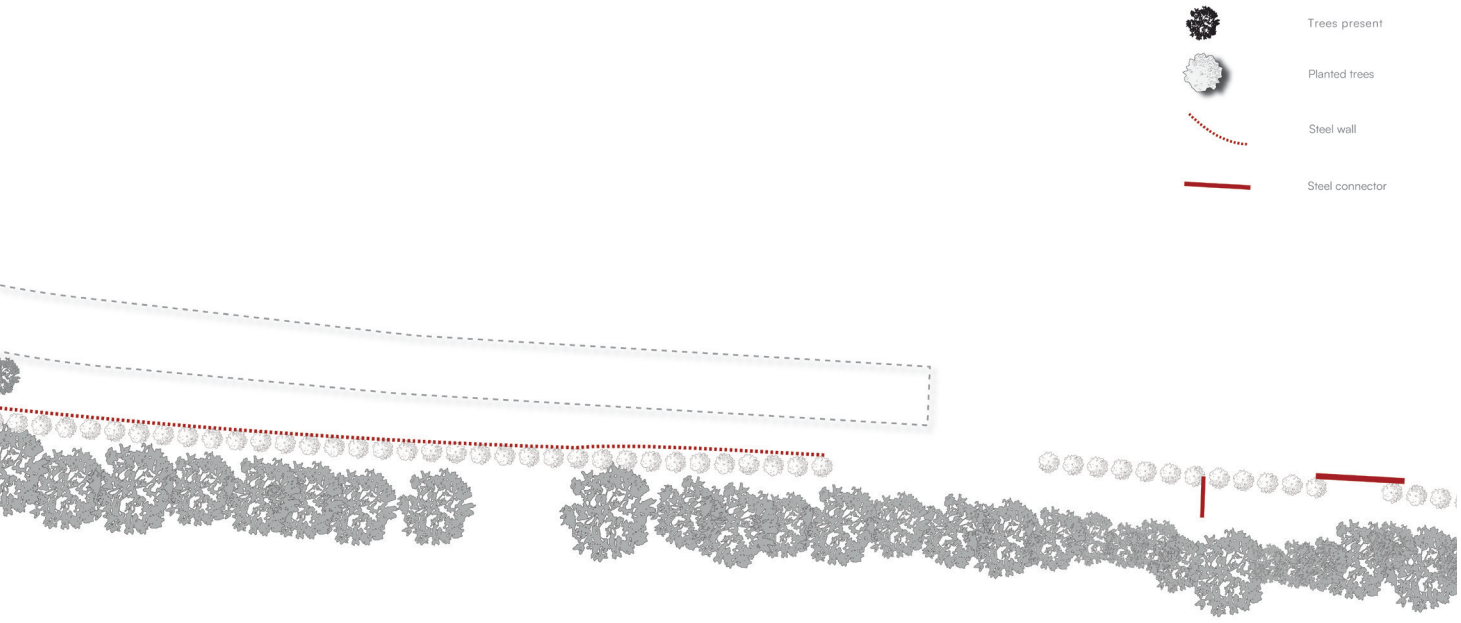


Figure 89: Plan diagram of tree architecture along the route. Singular trees, linear poplar rhythm, steel edges and canopy pockets organise pause, movement and shelter. Own work, 2026.

The armature is therefore not a park composition. It is a light spatial frame that makes the existing roughness legible enough to move through.





existing tree mass
=
pause and compression

poplar line
=
rhythm and direction

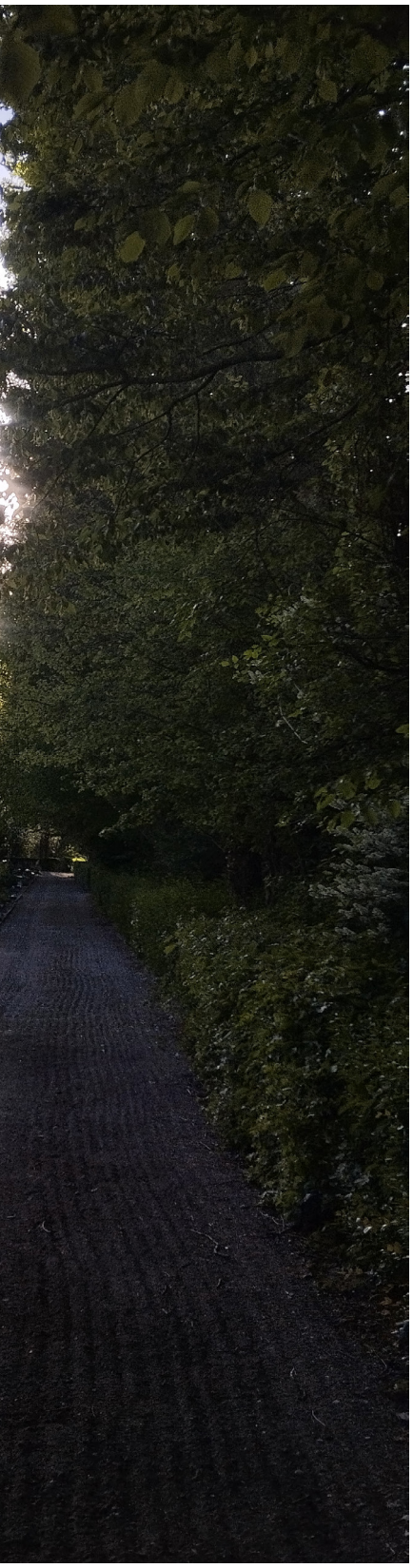
7.6. Precedent VIII: Tree Architecture



Figure 91: Single row of Populus nigra 'Italica' with privet hedge at base, Jaffa cemetery, Delft. The elongated crown form produces a continuous spatial rhythm along the raked gravel path, own photograph, 2026.



Figure 92: View along the cemetery ed
overhanging canopy create a legible fo
vegetation to remain visible behind it. Ow



ge. The poplar rhythm, hedge base and reground structure while allowing wilder n work, Jaffa cemetery, Delft, 2026.

Jaffa begraafplaats, Delft

The Jaffa cemetery in Delft is used as a local study of tree architecture. Walking through the cemetery, the effect of a single row of Italian poplars becomes immediately readable. The trees do not form a closed forest, but a vertical rhythm. Their narrow crowns and tall trunks create direction, cadence and scale.

The most relevant condition is the relation between the poplar line and the lower hedge. The hedge holds the base. The poplar lifts the eye upward. The wild growth behind remains visible, but it is framed by a clear foreground structure. This gives the rough background legibility without removing its depth.

For the Schie, this is the key lesson. The Italian poplar is not used as decoration. It becomes a spatial instrument. It can mark a route, confirm direction, create rhythm and give vertical presence to a flat infrastructural corridor. The poplar line works on prospect and refuge at once: the tall trunks open the view upward and along the corridor, while the held base and rough background keep a sense of enclosure (Appleton, 1975). Combined with reed, willow, rough ground and low edges, the poplar line gives the interstitial enough order to be entered without making it feel finished.

Route as score

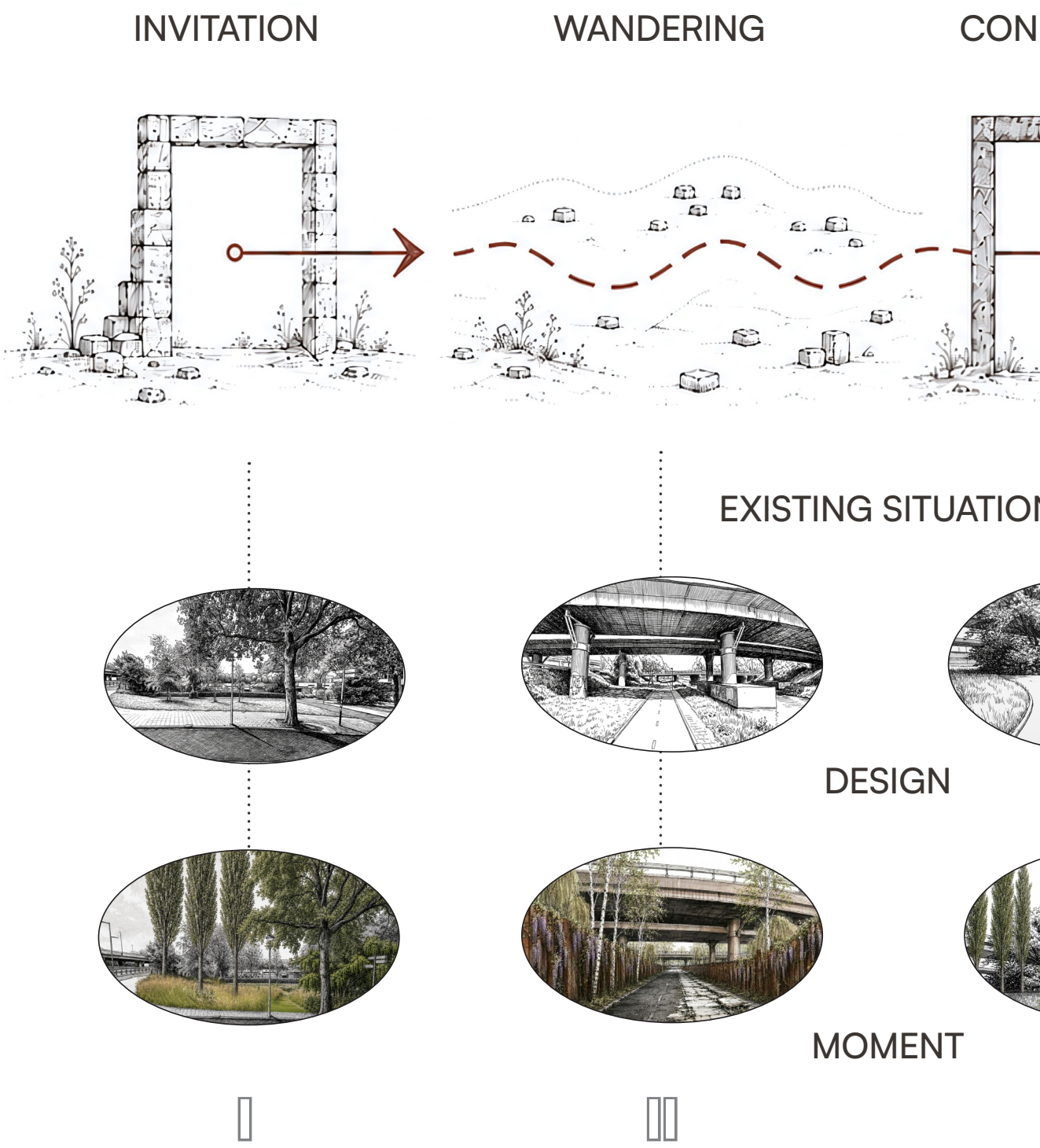
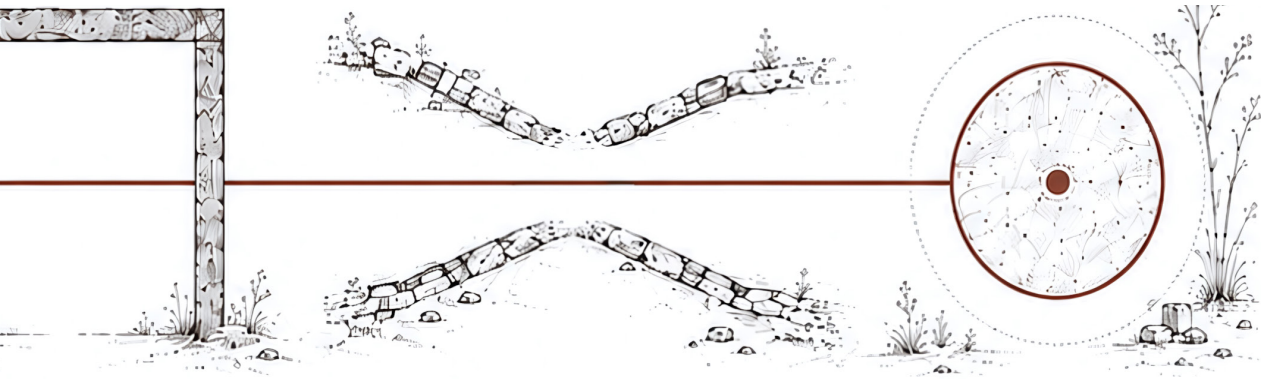
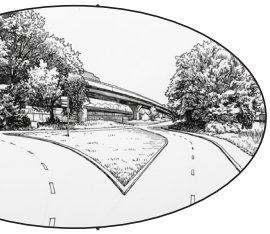


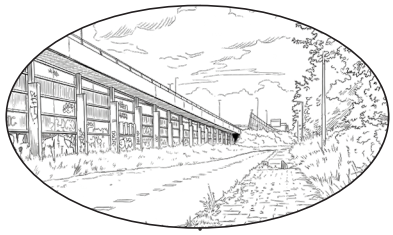
Figure 93: Route as score. The diagram translates the contemplative path into a sequence of spatial moments: invitation, wandering, confirmation, slowing down and standing still. Existing situations are paired with design responses to show how the route gradually shifts movement into attention. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

FIRMATION SLOWING DOWN STANDING STILL

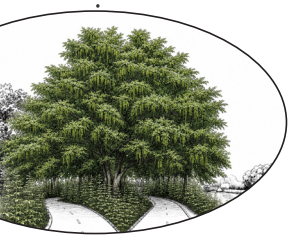


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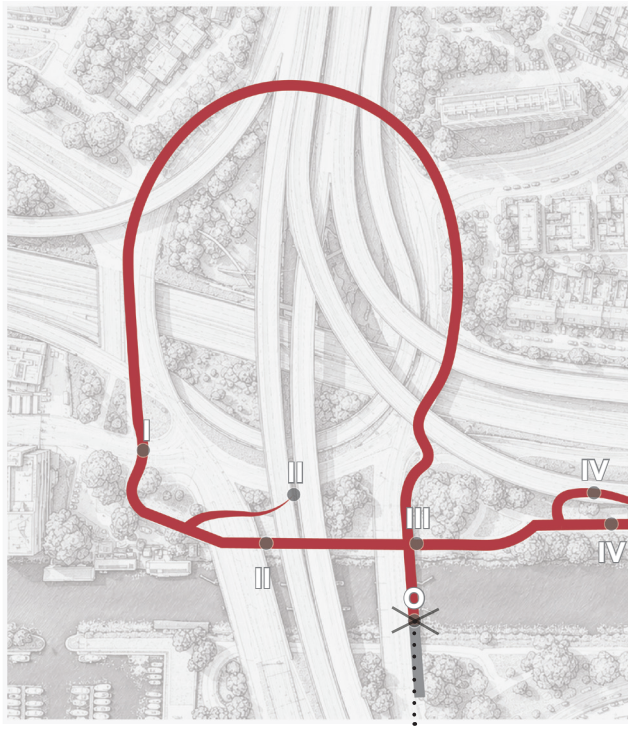




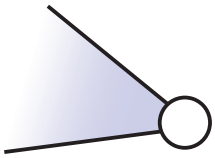


III IV V

A walk through: shift from



Where you are

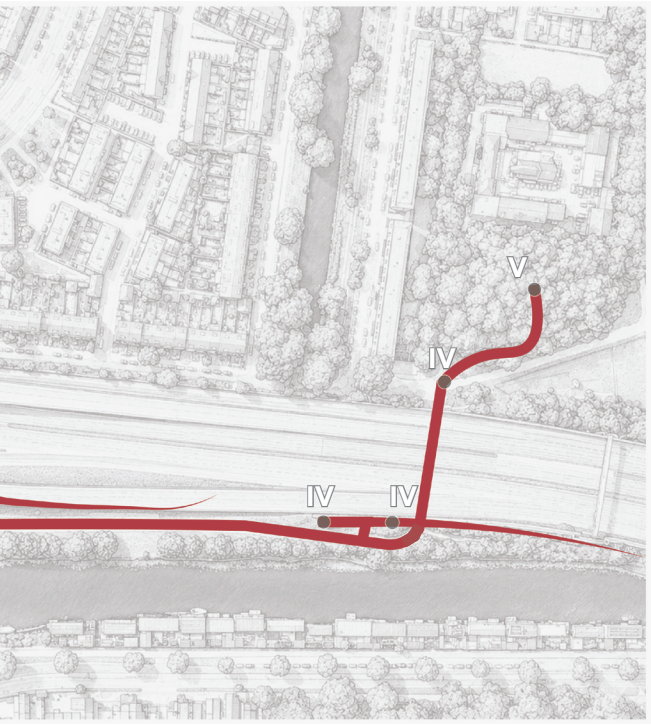


IMPRESSION

SECT

Figure 94: Walk-through navigation system. The diagram locates the reader within the overall route and explains how each design moment is read through impression, section and plan, linking the full sequence to its detailed spatial conditions. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

city speed to standing still



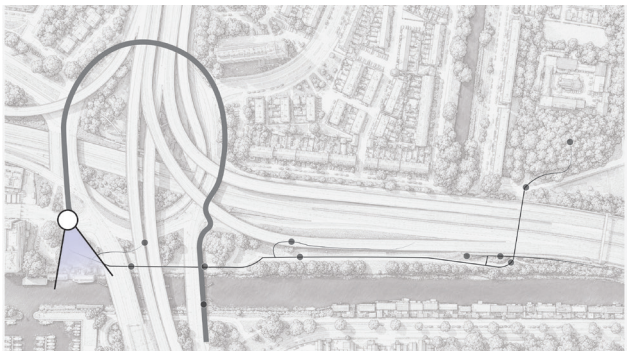
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TION

PLAN

Moment I: Invitation



The design does not announce itself as a park entrance. That would make the transition too abrupt. Instead, the entrance is a slight deviation from the formal route. A lowered edge, a change in surface, a visible tree marker and a framed opening suggest that another





Figure 95: Existing entrance condition. The image shows the current relation between formal path, open grass, existing tree mass and infrastructural edge. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

route is possible.

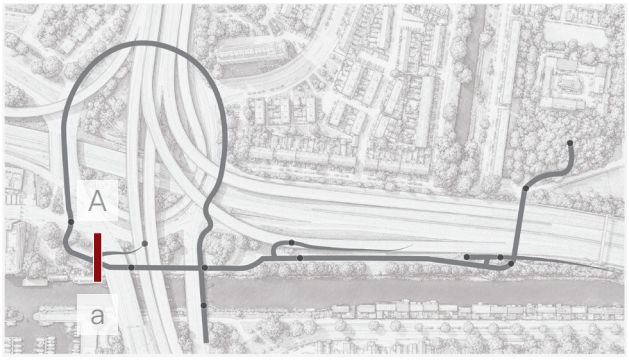
Invitation must remain modest. It should make entry possible without removing uncertainty. The visitor should feel that the site can be entered, but not fully understood at once.

The Italian poplar line works as a visual pull from outside the interstitial. It marks the edge from a distance, while the existing Pterocarya and open grass keep the entrance grounded in the current landscape.



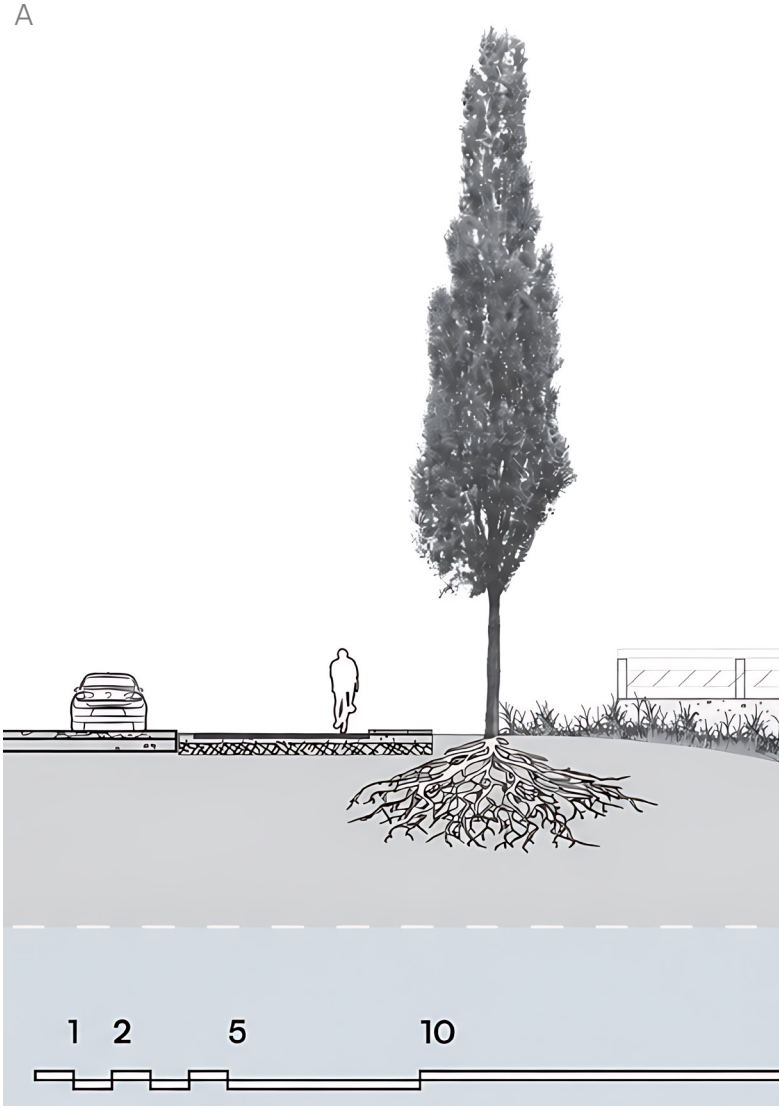
Figure 96: Invitation to the interstitial space. A line of Populus nigra 'Italica' marks the edge from a distance, while the entrance remains modest and partly ambiguous. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

Section: Entrance



The entrance is not designed as a clear gate. It begins as a small deviation from the formal path, where open grass, existing tree mass and a lowered edge make entry possible without fully explaining the route.
The bodily effect is hesitation followed by invitation. The visitor senses that another path exists, but still has to choose to enter. This keeps the threshold modest and prevents the interstitial from becoming a formal park entrance.

A



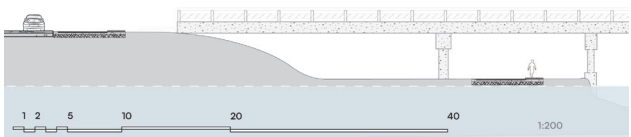


Figure 97: Existing entrance section. The section shows the current relation between formal path, open grass, existing tree mass and infrastructural edge, where entry is physically possible but not yet spatially invited. Own work, 2026.

a

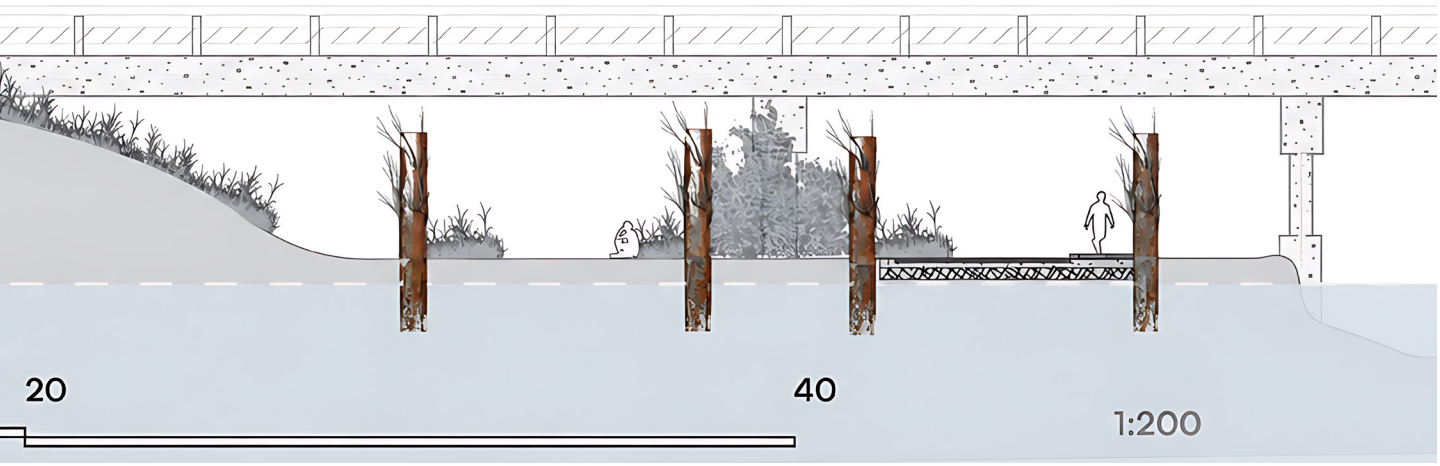
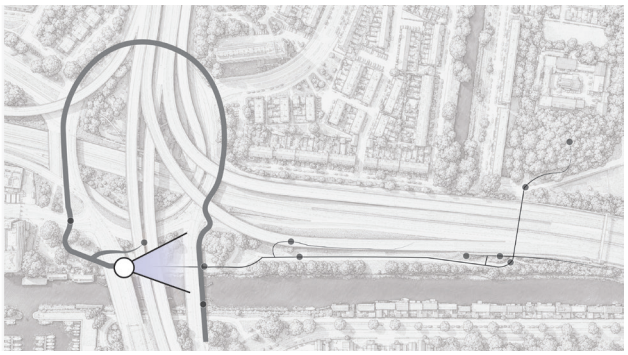


Figure 98: Designed entrance section. A modest path deviation, tree marker and lowered edge make the interstitial route enterable while keeping the transition partly ambiguous. Own work, 2026.

Moment II: wandering / the open marg



The designed image shows a later stage of the intervention. The steel has weathered, the planting has thickened and the path has started to register use,



After entry, the route is allowed to bend. It does not become a fixed promenade. The path shifts between hard edge, bridge shadow, planted margin and open ground. Existing infrastructural geometry remains visible, but the visitor is given enough room to deviate without losing direction.

Wandering is not aimless. It depends on partial orientation: enough rhythm to continue, enough looseness to notice the ground, vegetation, shadow and edge.

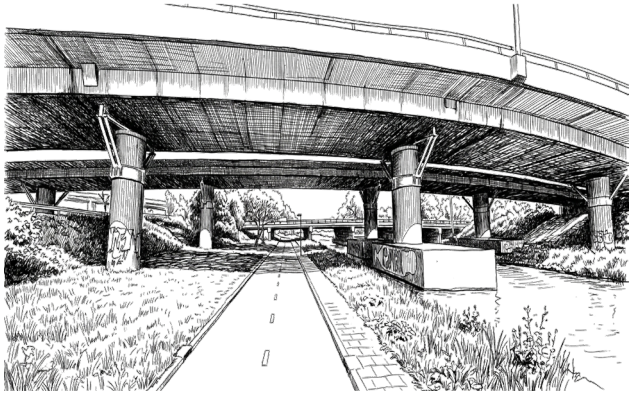


Figure 99: Existing condition below the viaduct. The current situation contains hard surface, bridge shadow and an underused infrastructural edge, but lacks a readable route structure. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026

root pressure and decay. This makes wandering a temporal condition rather than a finished layout.



Figure 100: Wandering condition after establishment. The design keeps infrastructural enclosure visible while allowing steel, vegetation and cracked paving to age into a readable but unfinished route. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

Detail: Wisteria and steel edge

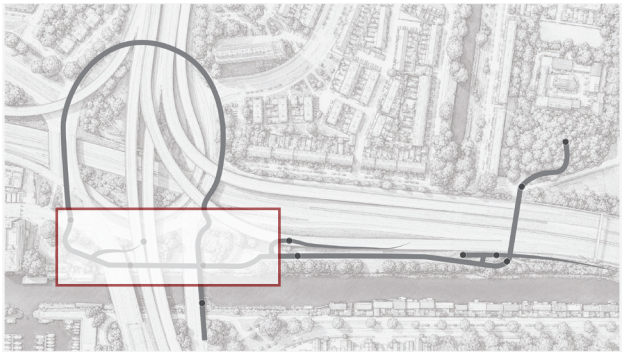


Figure 101: Detail of the steel wall armature. The image shows the steel wall as a weathering threshold where vegetation, rust, shade and vertical structure begin to turn movement into a slower edge condition. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.



Figure 102: Ground resistance detail. Exposed roots, broken paving and pioneer vegetation show how the ground begins to deform, slowing the body through tactile resistance rather than signage. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

Plan : Steel wall & tree armature



Steel wall
Current trees
Planted trees
Tall grass
Grass
Infrastructure
Sand under Viaduct
Bushes
Reed
Schie Schie
Side walk
Bike lane

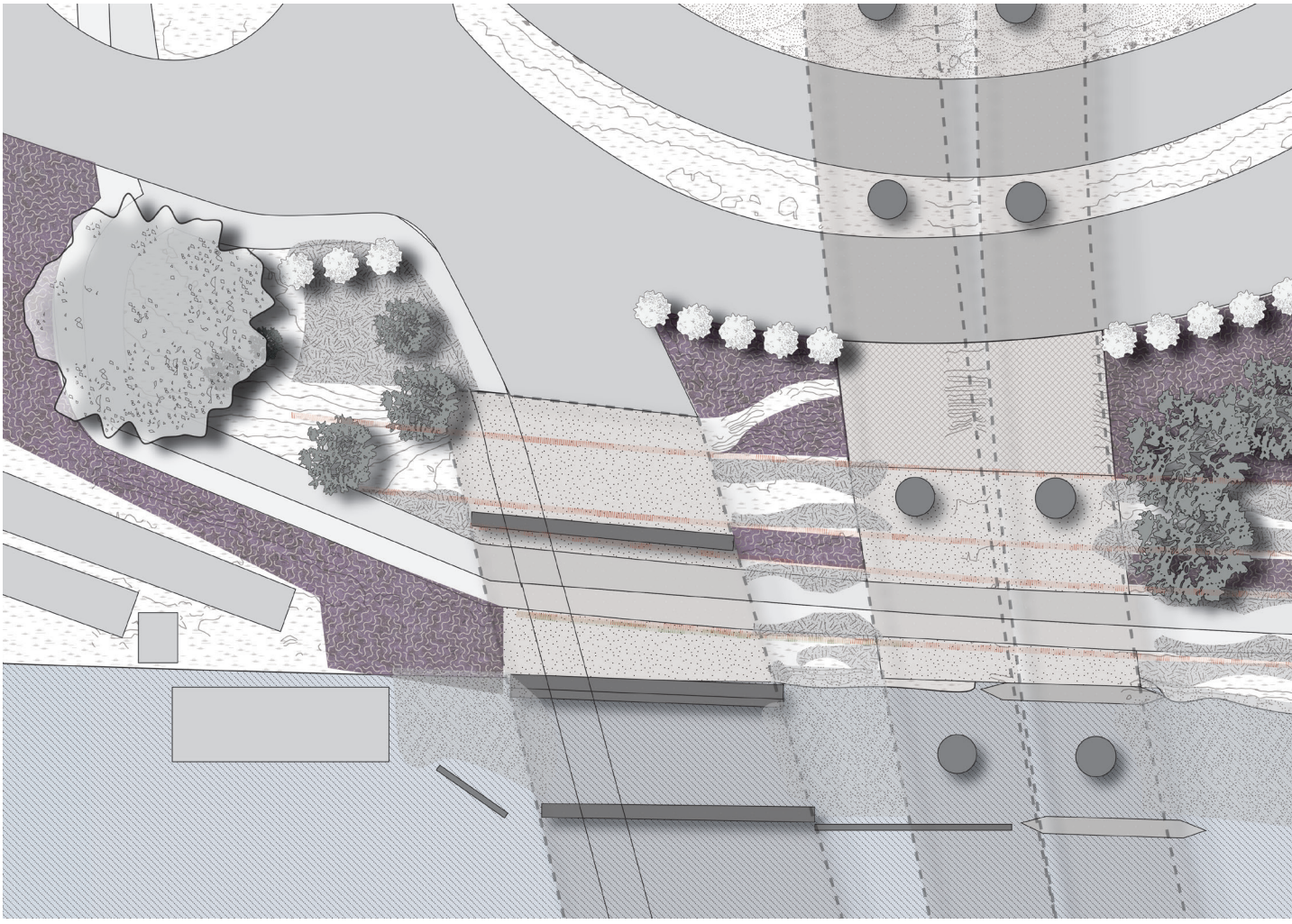


Figure 103: Design plan of the steel wall and tree armature. The plan shows how poplar rhythm, steel wall, rough surface and vegetation structure the route while leaving the corridor open to growth and appropriation. Own work, 2026.

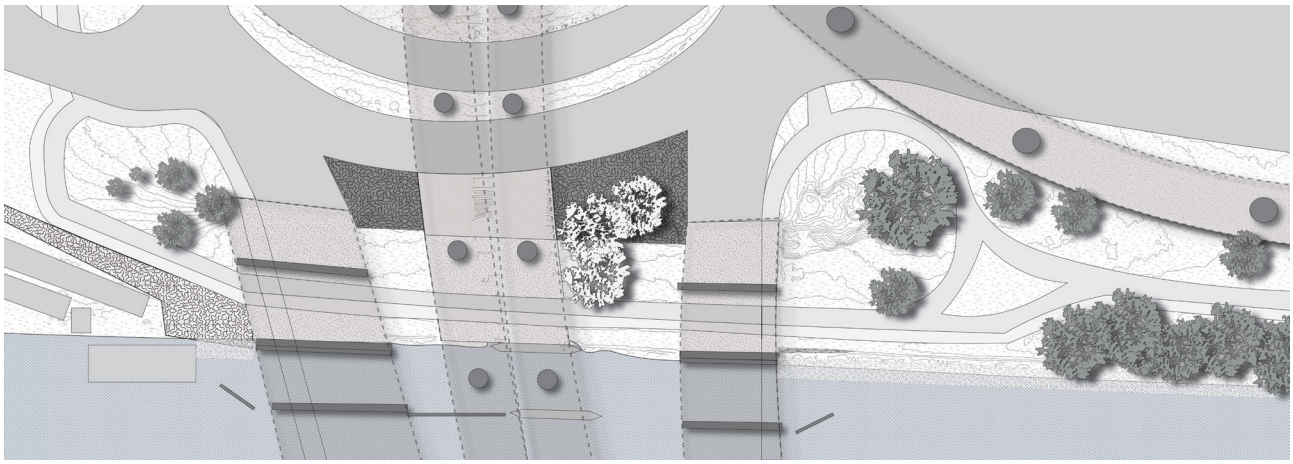
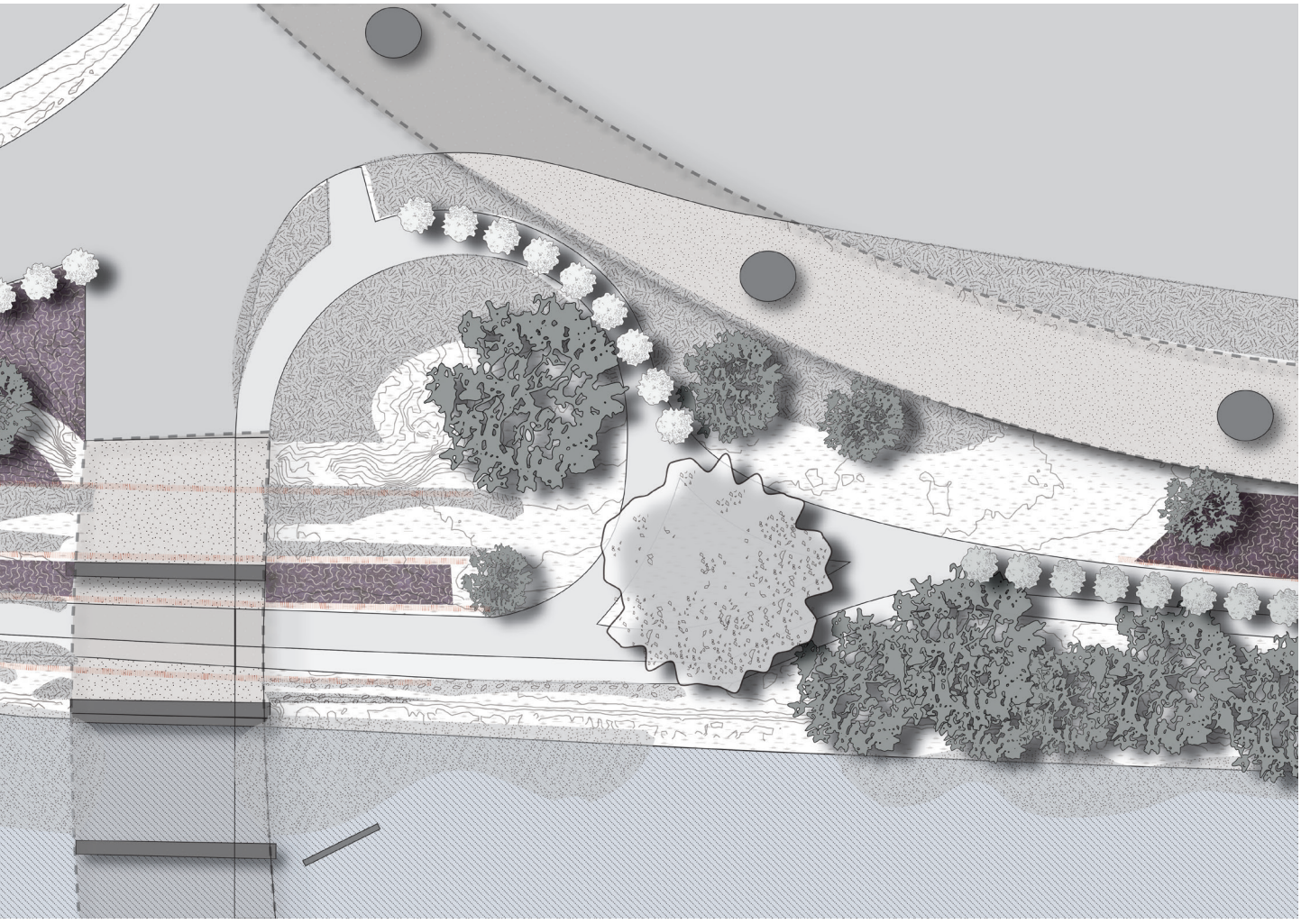
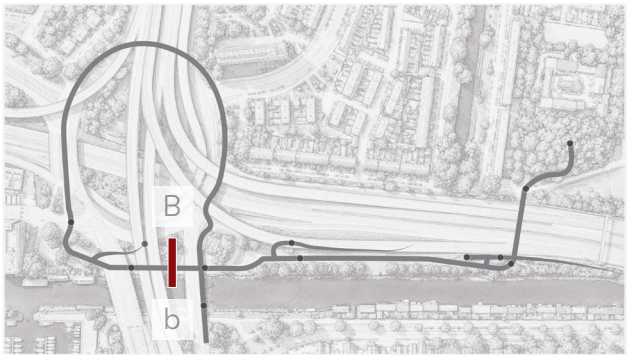


Figure 104: Existing plan of the steel wall and tree armature site. The plan shows the current spatial situation before intervention, where infrastructure, open ground and vegetation are present but not yet organised as a readable corridor. Own work, 2026.

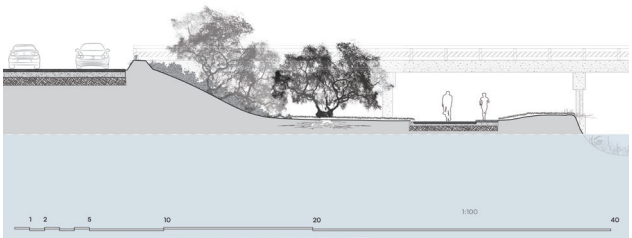


Section: Steel wall armature



Wandering is produced by partial orientation. The canal, viaduct and poplar rhythm keep a larger order present, while gravel, reed, wet soil and shadow interrupt automatic movement.

The steel wall gives the corridor a readable edge without turning it into a closed passage. The visitor can drift, but the section still gives enough direction to continue. Over time, weathering and vegetation soften the wall, so the armature becomes less like an object and more like a trace within the landscape.



B



Figure 105: Current section through the open infrastructural edge before insertion of the steel wall armature. Own work, 2026.

b

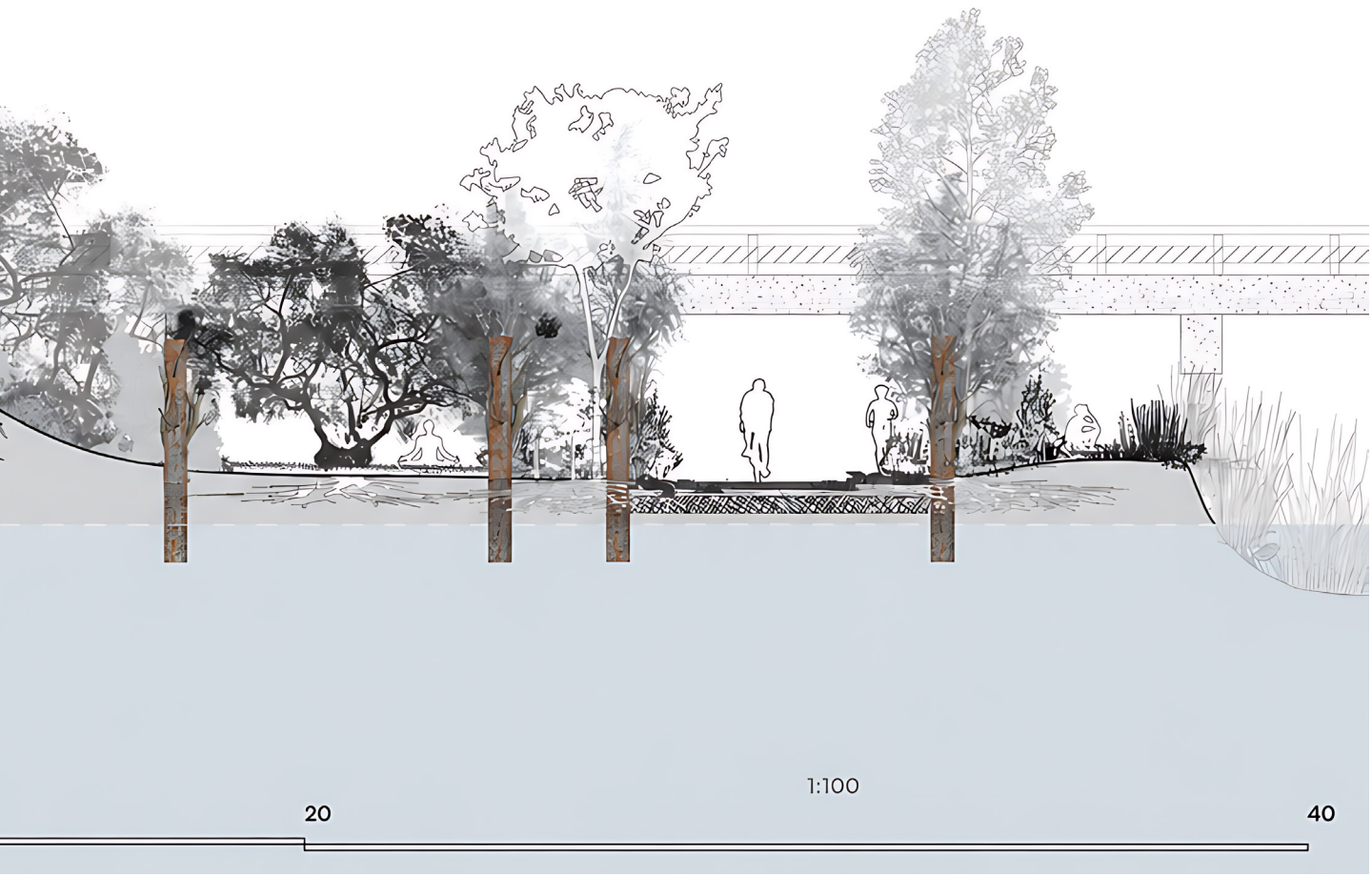
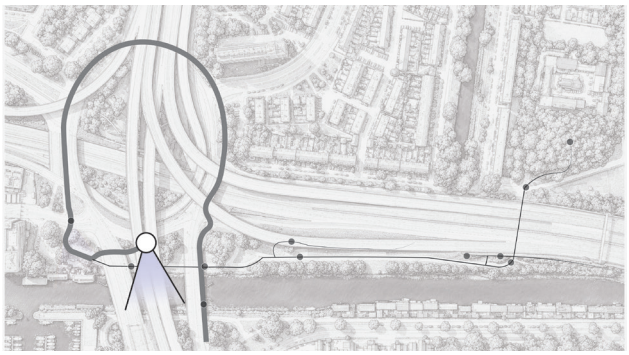


Figure 106: Designed section through the steel wall armature. Poplar rhythm, wall edge, vegetation and rough ground create a corridor that is readable but not fixed. Own work, 2026.

Moment II: wandering / the underpass



Here the route passes below the viaduct. The condition is already strong: overhead pressure, columns, fencing, graffiti, rough ground and broken vegetation. The design does not clean this up. It gives the visitor a line through it.

Wandering becomes a controlled drift. The path remains visible, but the edges stay rough enough to hold attention.

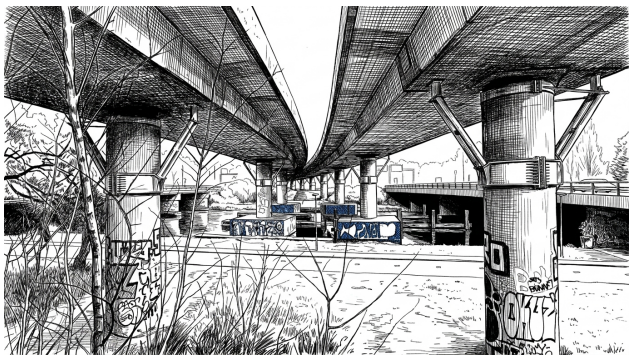


Figure 107: Existing underpass condition below the viaduct, with fencing, bridge structure, graffiti and unmanaged vegetation, own image, 2026.



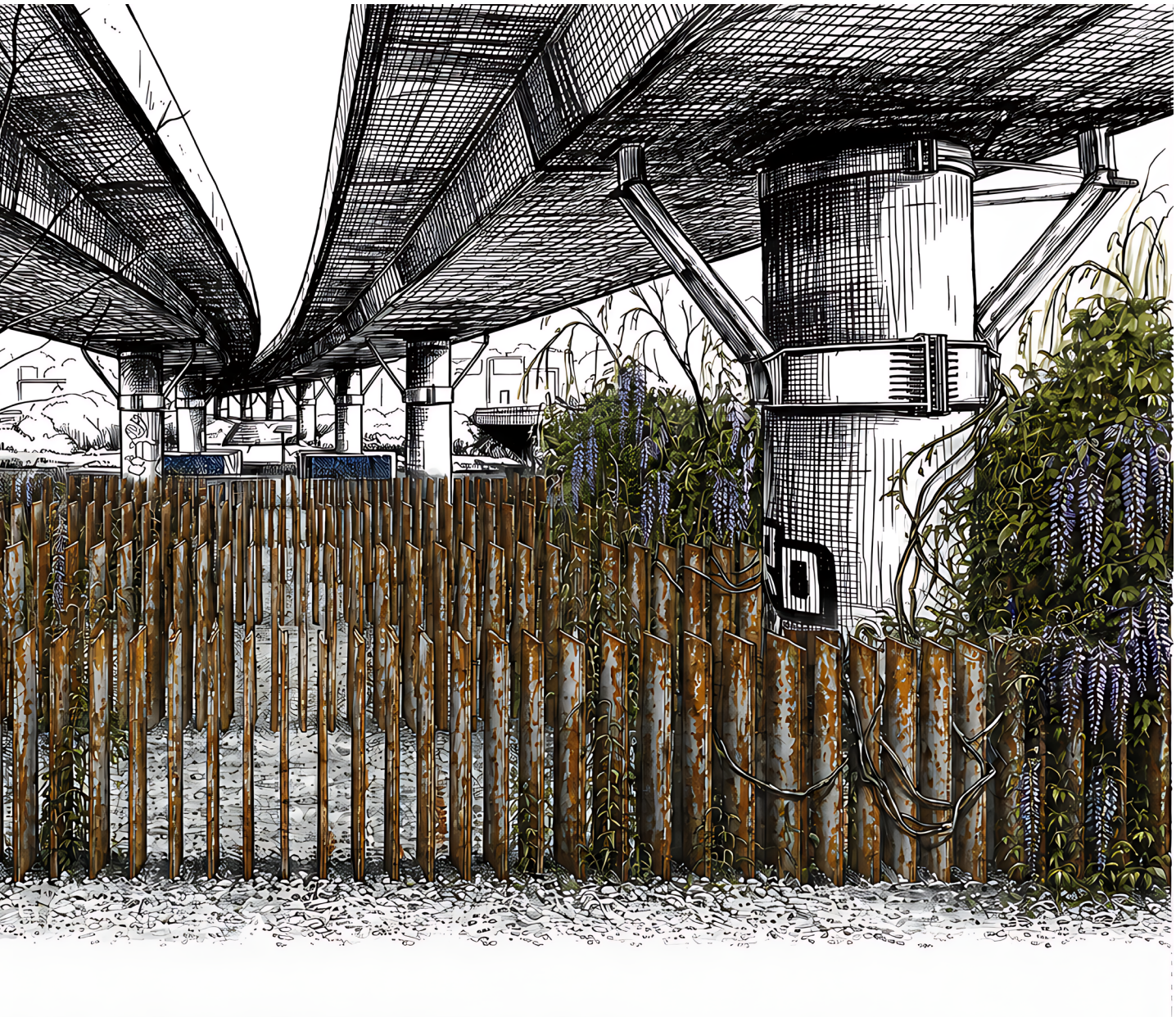


Figure 108: Wandering below the viaduct. The design keeps the infrastructural enclosure visible while creating a readable line of movement through the rough edge. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

Moment III: Confirmation

After wandering, the visitor needs confirmation that the rough corridor is intentional enough to continue. Under the viaduct, confirmation is produced by frame, repetition and sightline: columns, bridge decks, graffiti walls, open ground and tree rhythm give the site a readable spatial order.

The aim is not to make the place clean or conventional. The aim is to make its existing roughness inhabitable rather than threatening.

Here, the Pterocarya forms a pause after the sequence of bridges. Its broad crown interrupts the linear poplar rhythm and creates a moment of stillness. The contrast between vertical poplars and spreading tree mass confirms that the route has shifted from movement to pause.

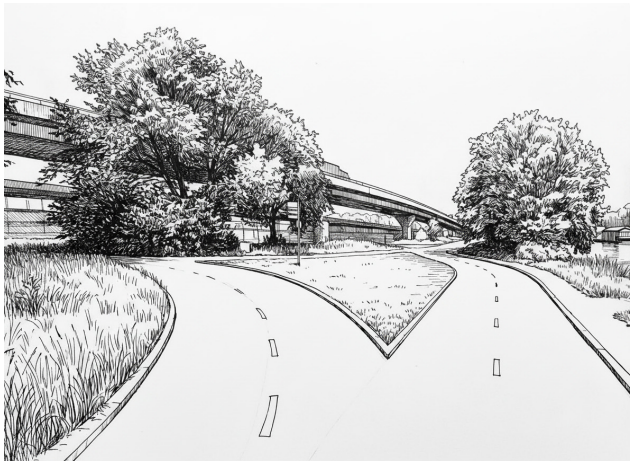


Figure 109: Existing confirmation condition, where the route becomes readable through bridge structure, sightline and open ground, own image, 2026.



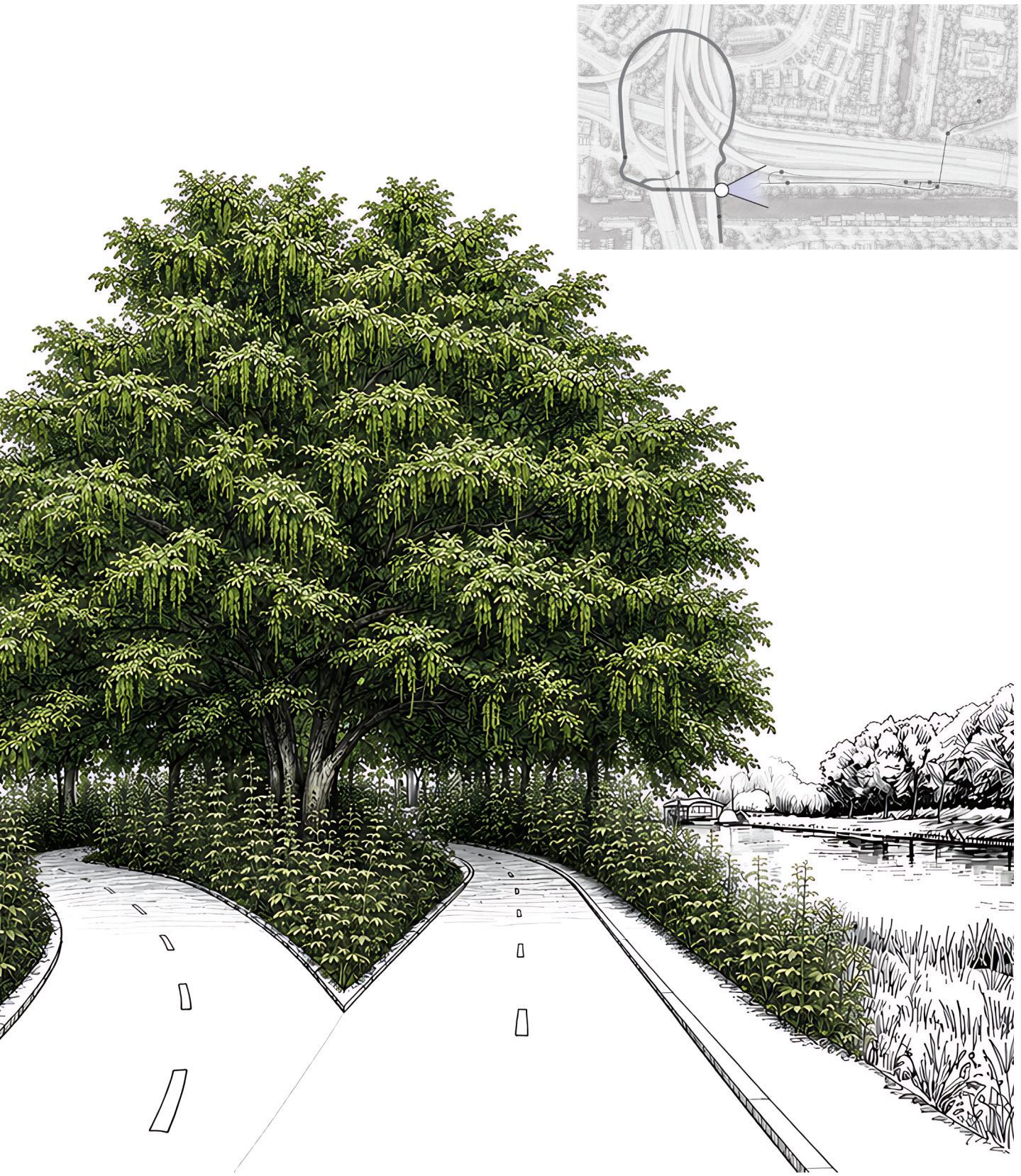
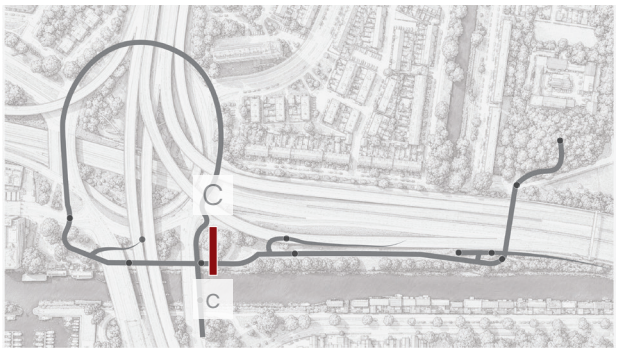


Figure 110: Designed confirmation moment. Tree mass, poplar rhythm and divided path create a clear spatial cue while preserving ambiguity. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

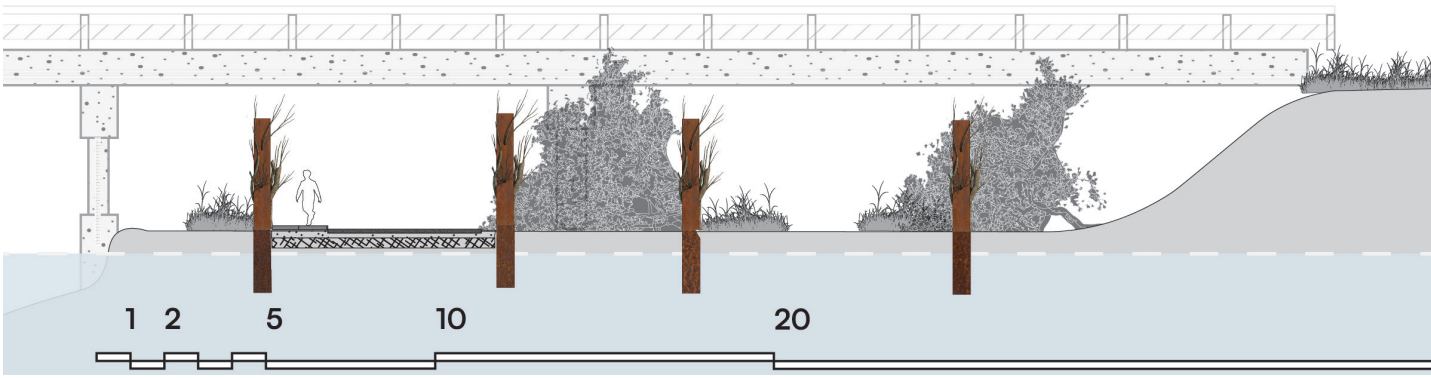
Section: Confirmation



Confirmation is produced by a clear spatial pause after the infrastructural corridor. The broad Pterocarya canopy interrupts the linear rhythm of the poplars and gives the visitor a moment of orientation.

The route splits, but does not become confusing. Tree mass, open sightline and water edge confirm that the rough corridor is intentional and can be continued.

c



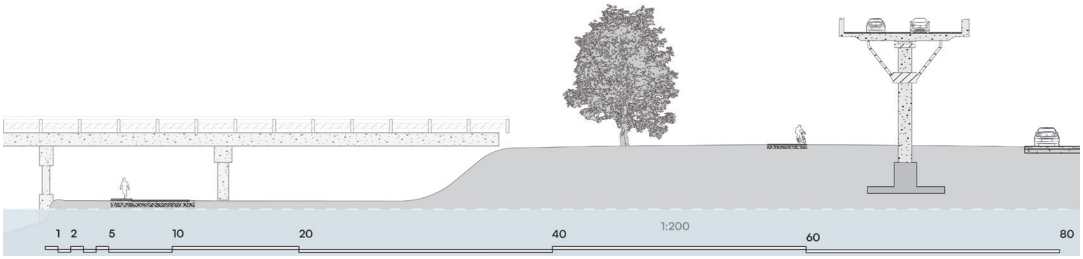


Figure 111: Existing confirmation section. The section shows the current relation between bridge structure, open ground, tree mass and water edge before the route becomes spatially confirmed. Own work, 2026.

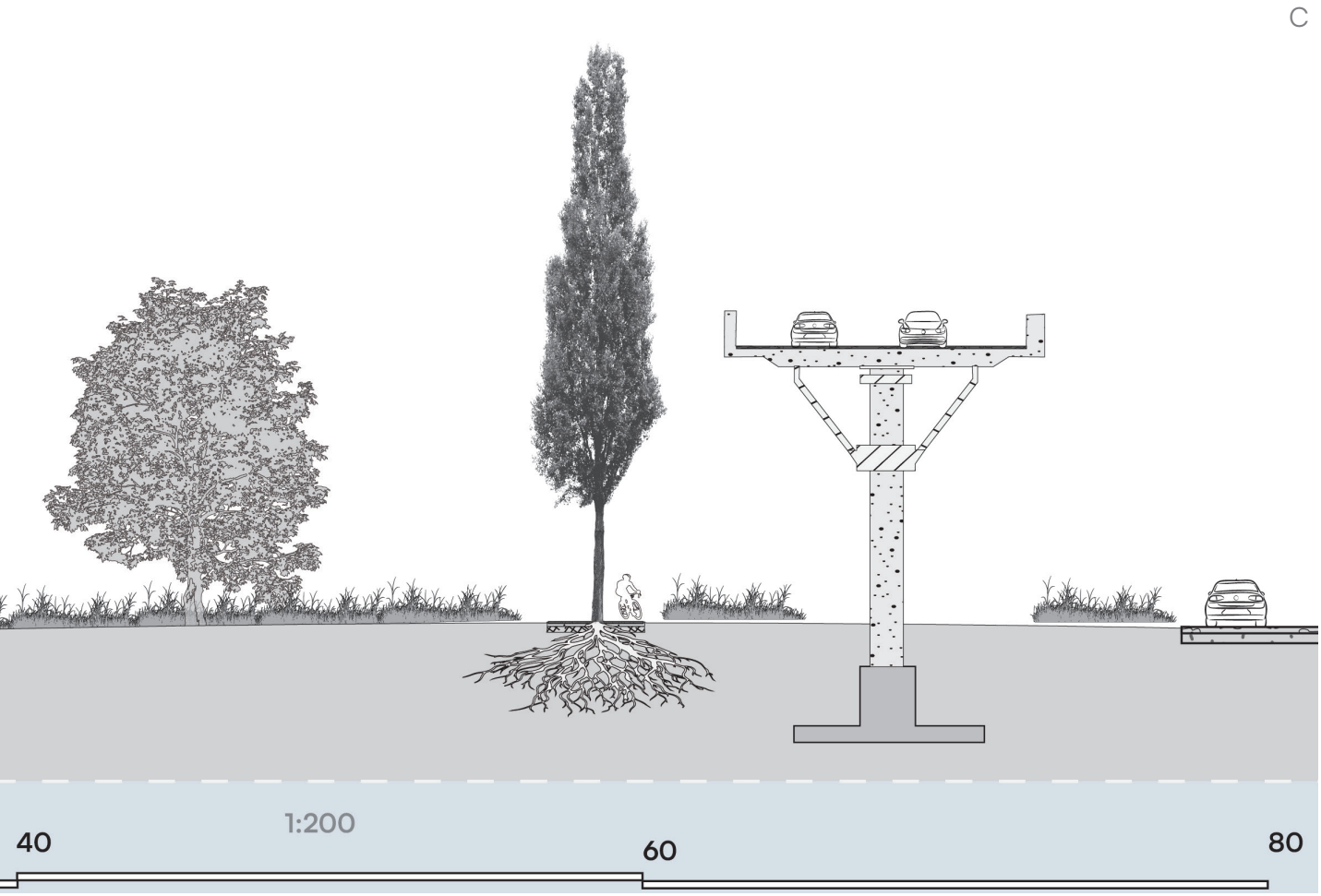


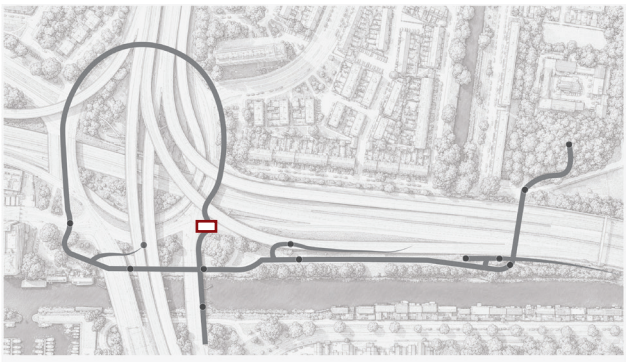
Figure 112: Designed confirmation section. Tree mass, divided route, open sightline and water edge create a moment of orientation and trust after the rough infrastructural corridor. Own work, 2026.

Detail: 2nd entrance



Figure 113: Second entrance detail. The aerial view shows how the broken bicycle path, raised edge, poplar rhythm and informal desire lines create a secondary threshold between upper route, viaduct edge and lower water pocket. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.





This detail shows a secondary threshold along the raised edge. The former bicycle path no longer functions as a direct movement axis. Root pressure from the Italian poplars begins to crack the surface, allowing leaves, sand and pioneer vegetation to collect in the openings. Because the groundwater level is lower here, the cracks are less severe than in the lower corridor, but they are still enough to slow walking and disturb the logic of the asphalt.

Informal desire lines appear through the tall grass. The visitor can move down toward the water and the four walls, or up toward the enclosed space beneath the viaduct. The entrance remains vague, but the broken surface, poplar rhythm and shifting vegetation make clear that something is happening here.

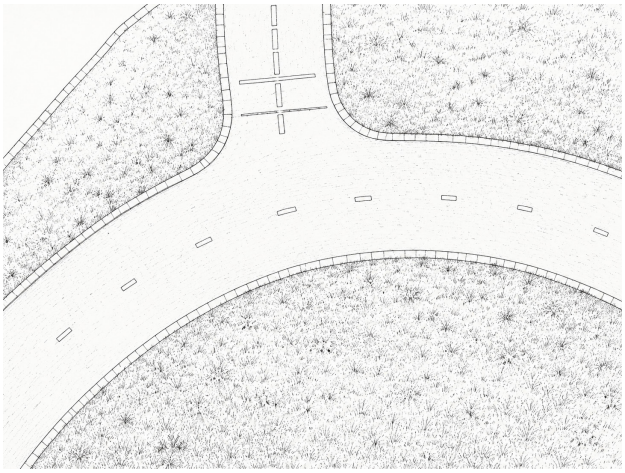
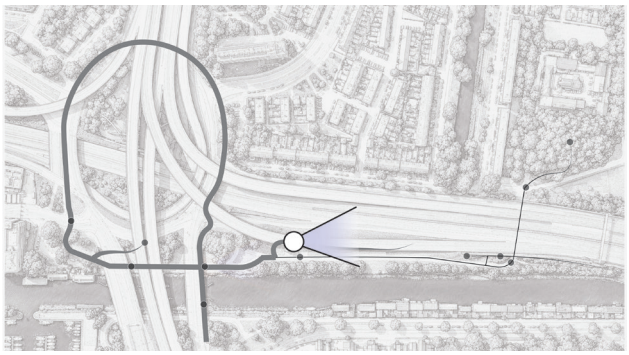
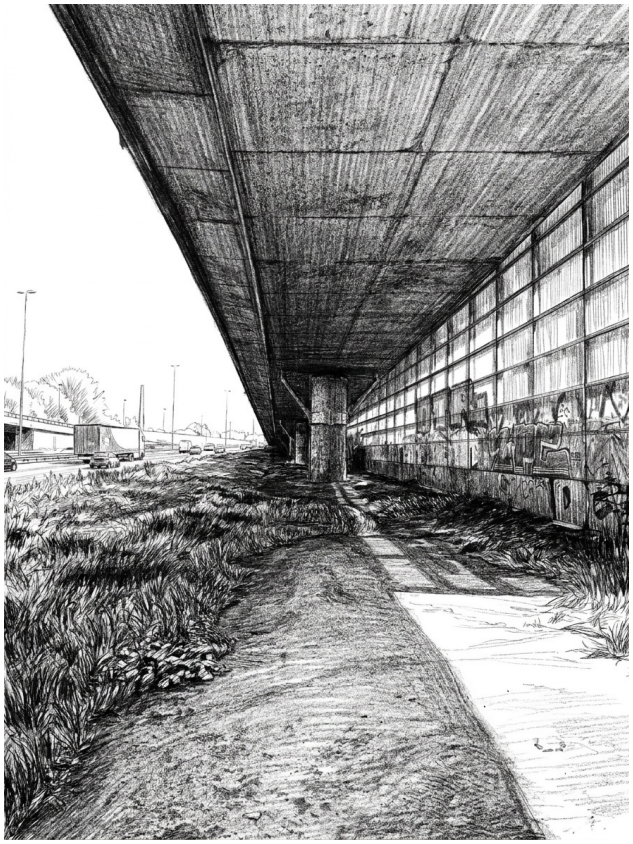


Figure 114: Plan detail of the second entrance. The drawing shows how informal paths, cracked pavement and shifting vegetation redirect movement away from the former bicycle path toward the enclosed space below the viaduct. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

Moment IV: Slowing down





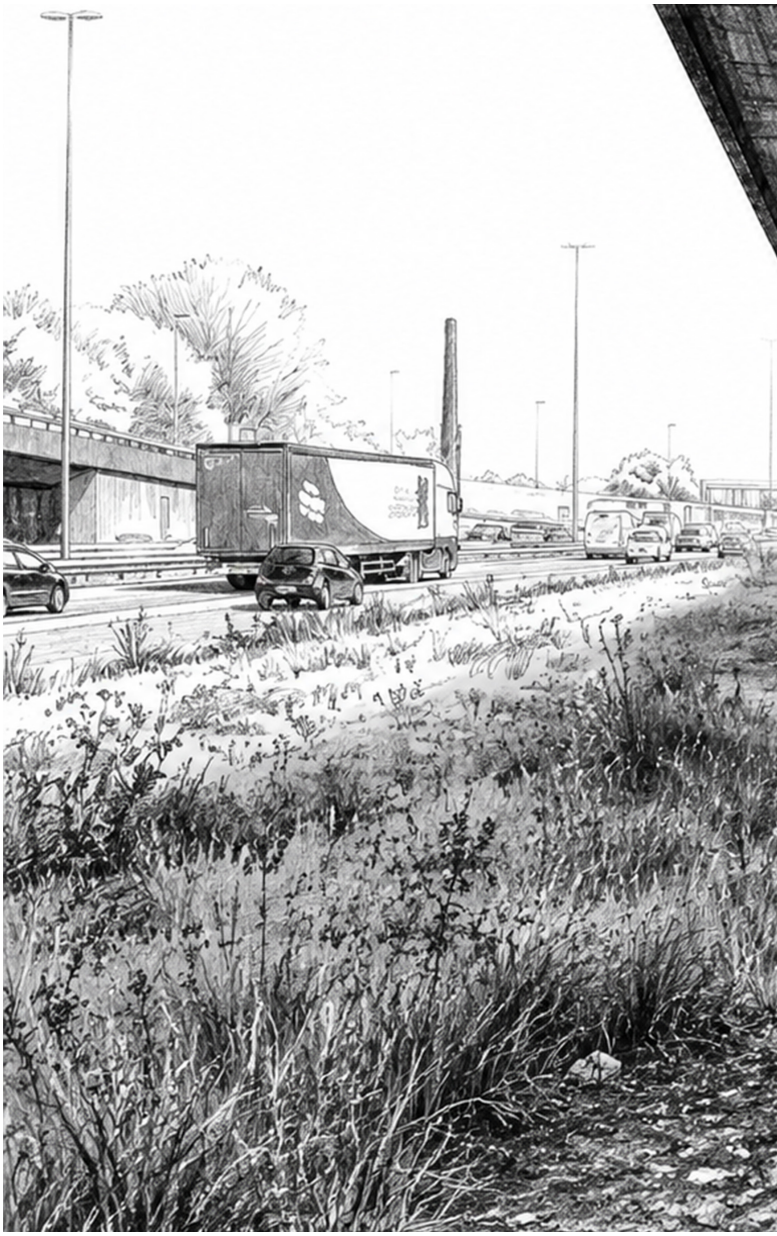


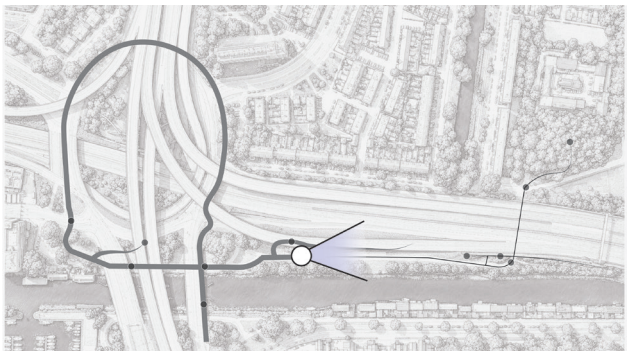
Figure 115: Existing underpass condition before slowing down. The image shows the rough infrastructural corridor where shadow, hard surface, graffiti and unmanaged vegetation already begin to disturb direct movement. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026

Here the route continues beneath the viaduct. This is the second cue to stop after the viewpoint over the four walls. A simple sitting edge gives the body a reason to pause and look toward the passing traffic, without turning the place into a formal viewpoint.
As the visitor moves further, the ceiling lowers, enclosure increases and the highway becomes less dominant as a visual object. Vegetation, surface and shadow change continuously. The route does not end in a clear destination. It gradually loses directness, forcing the body to slow down, look down and read the ground.



Figure 116: Existing underpass condition before slowing down. The photographs show the rough infrastructural corridor where shadow, hard surface, graffiti and unmanaged vegetation already begin to disturb direct movement. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026

Moment IV: Slowing down



Slowing down begins where the route no longer behaves as a direct line. The path splits around a dense tree mass and meets reed, rough edge, wet ground and shade. The body has to choose, shorten its step and read the surface.

This moment translates the ruinous rule make decay bodily into a spatial operation. Root pressure, broken paving, uneven ground and shifting vegetation do not block movement, but make it less automatic. Speed becomes attention through contact with the ground.

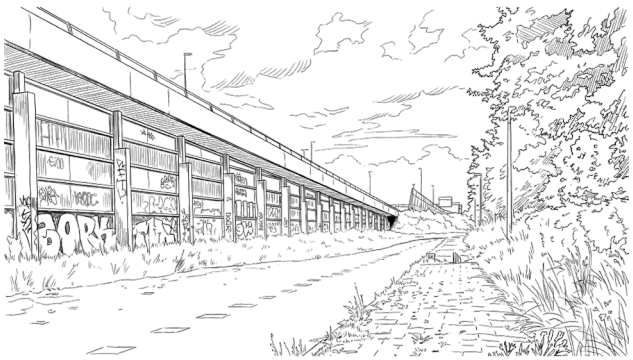


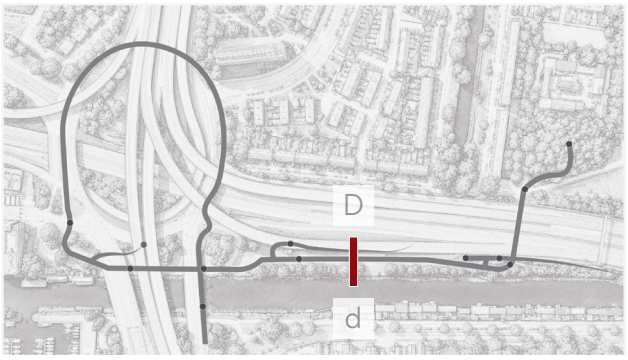
Figure 117: Existing rough edge condition before slowing down. Long wall, vegetation and broken paving already interrupt direct movement, own image, 2026.





Figure 118: Slowing down as ground resistance. Projected design condition after establishment, where poplar roots, broken paving and pioneer vegetation make movement slower and more attentive. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

Section: ground resistance



d

This section shows how speed is reduced through the ground rather than through signage. The route passes below infrastructure, beside root pressure and through a rough surface. Shallow roots, rubble, wet soil and uneven paving make the ground slower.

The intervention keeps the existing infrastructural section visible, but lets material resistance become part of the contemplative sequence. Under the highway, the space is not valuable because it is silent. It is valuable because overhead mass, rough surface, shade and reduced exposure make the body more aware of where it is.

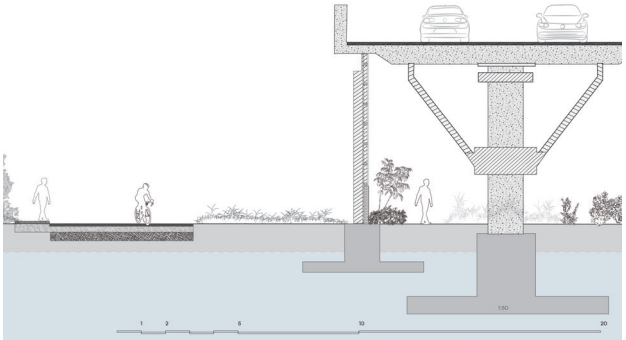




Figure 119: Current section through the underpass and rough edge condition before intervention. Own work, 2026.

D

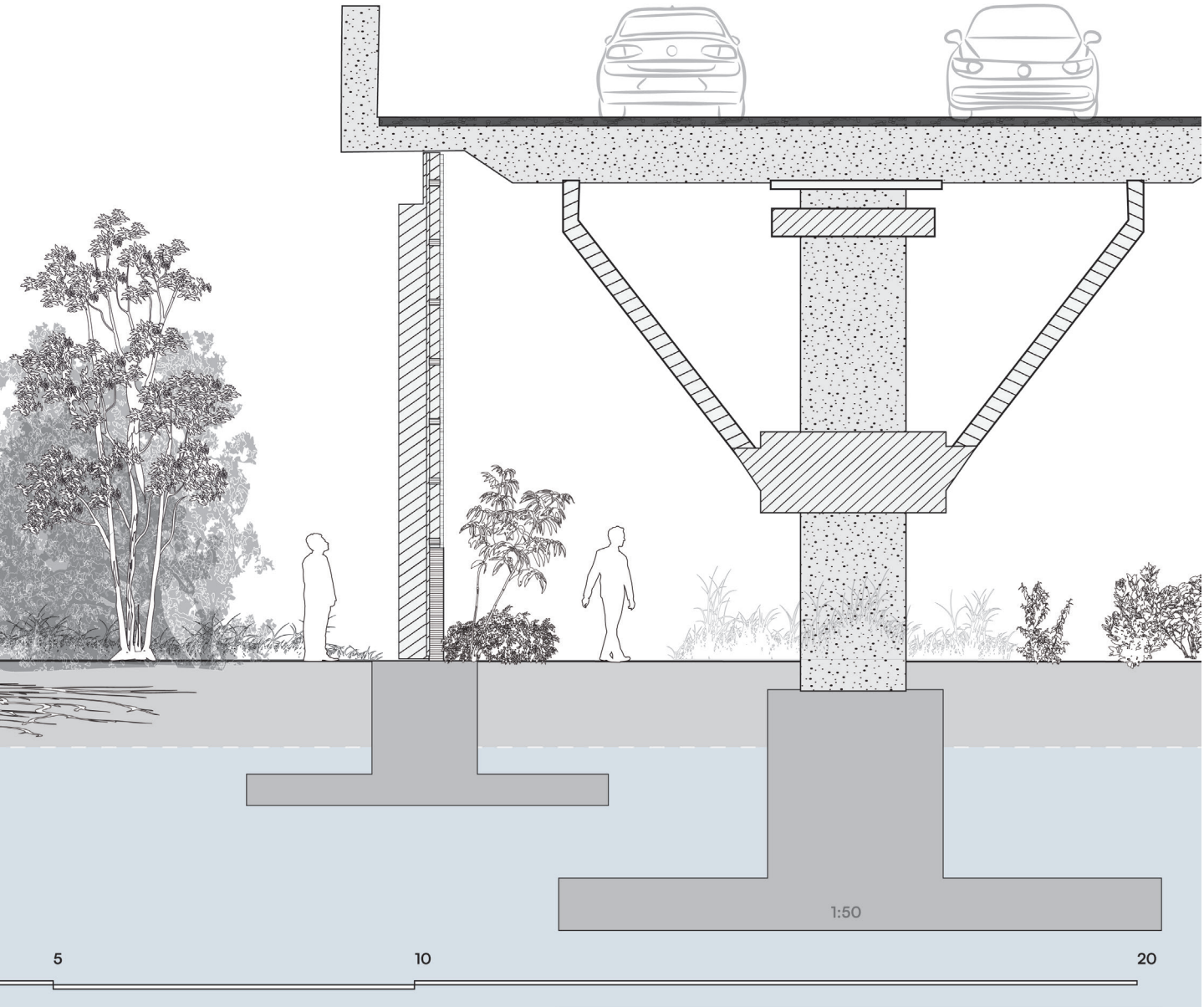


Figure 120: Designed section through ground resistance. Root pressure, uneven paving, wet soil, overhead infrastructure and vegetation slow movement through bodily adjustment. Own work, 2026.

Detail: roots and broken paving

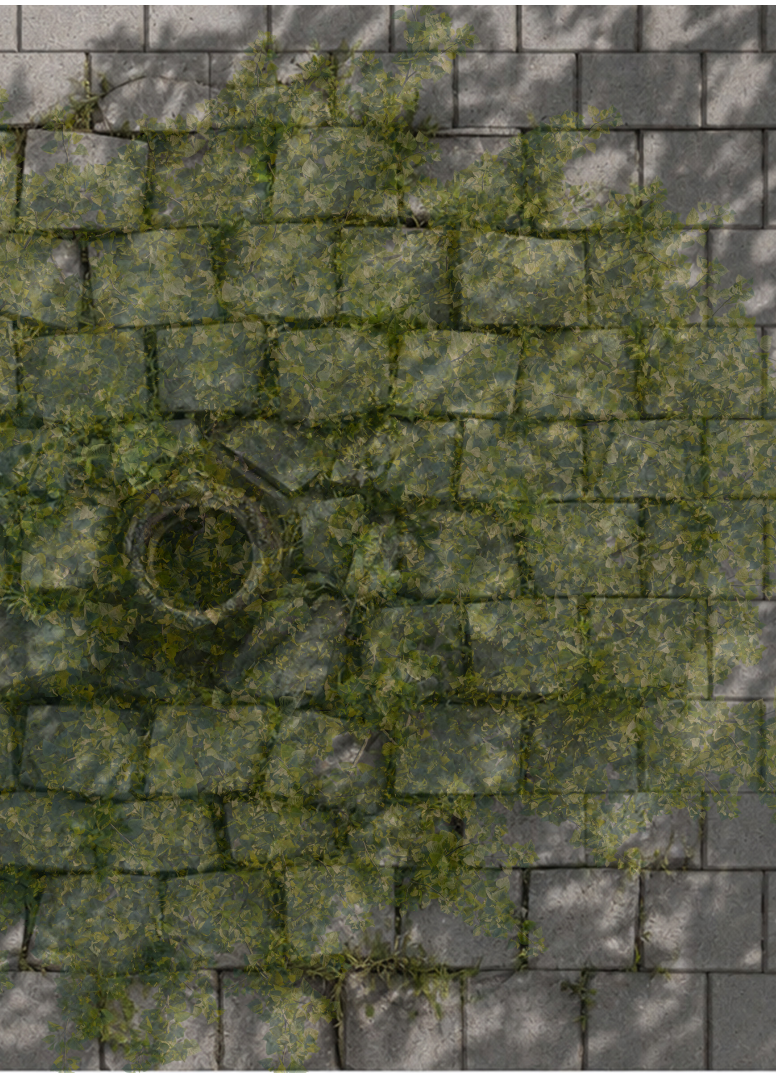
The detail translates slowing down into construction. The route is not made difficult for its own sake. It is calibrated through small height differences, exposed roots, loose joints and rough paving so that walking becomes slower without becoming inaccessible.

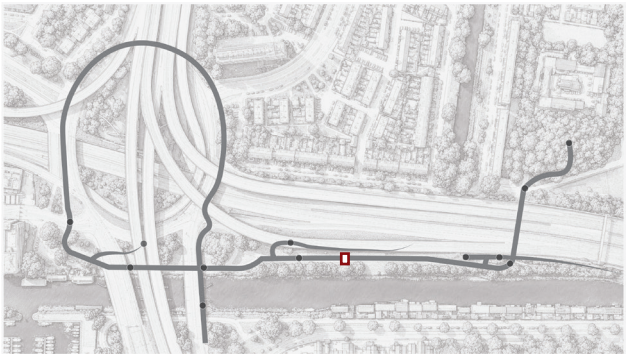
The section detail shows how root growth, rubble, sand, soil and water table become part of the design logic. The intervention accepts deformation



Figure 121: Plan detail of roots and broken paving. The drawing shows moss, cracks, root pressure and pioneer vegetation turning a former hard surface into a slower tactile ground condition. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

as a future condition. The ground is allowed to move, crack and register time.
This detail makes the slowing-down mechanism technical. The design does not simply represent decay; it constructs the conditions through which deformation, roots, water and rough surface can gradually become part of the walking experience.





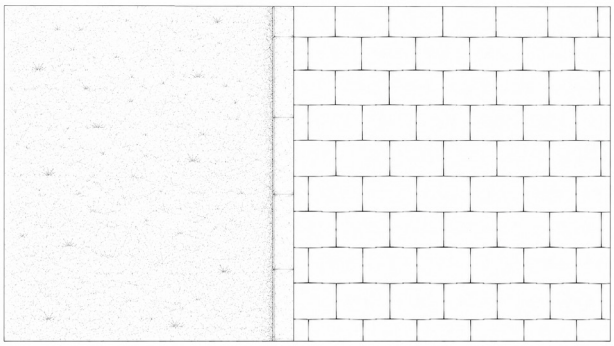


Figure 122: Paving transition detail. The drawing contrasts open sand and paved surface, showing how the hard walking surface becomes interrupted by cracks, vegetation and changing ground conditions. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

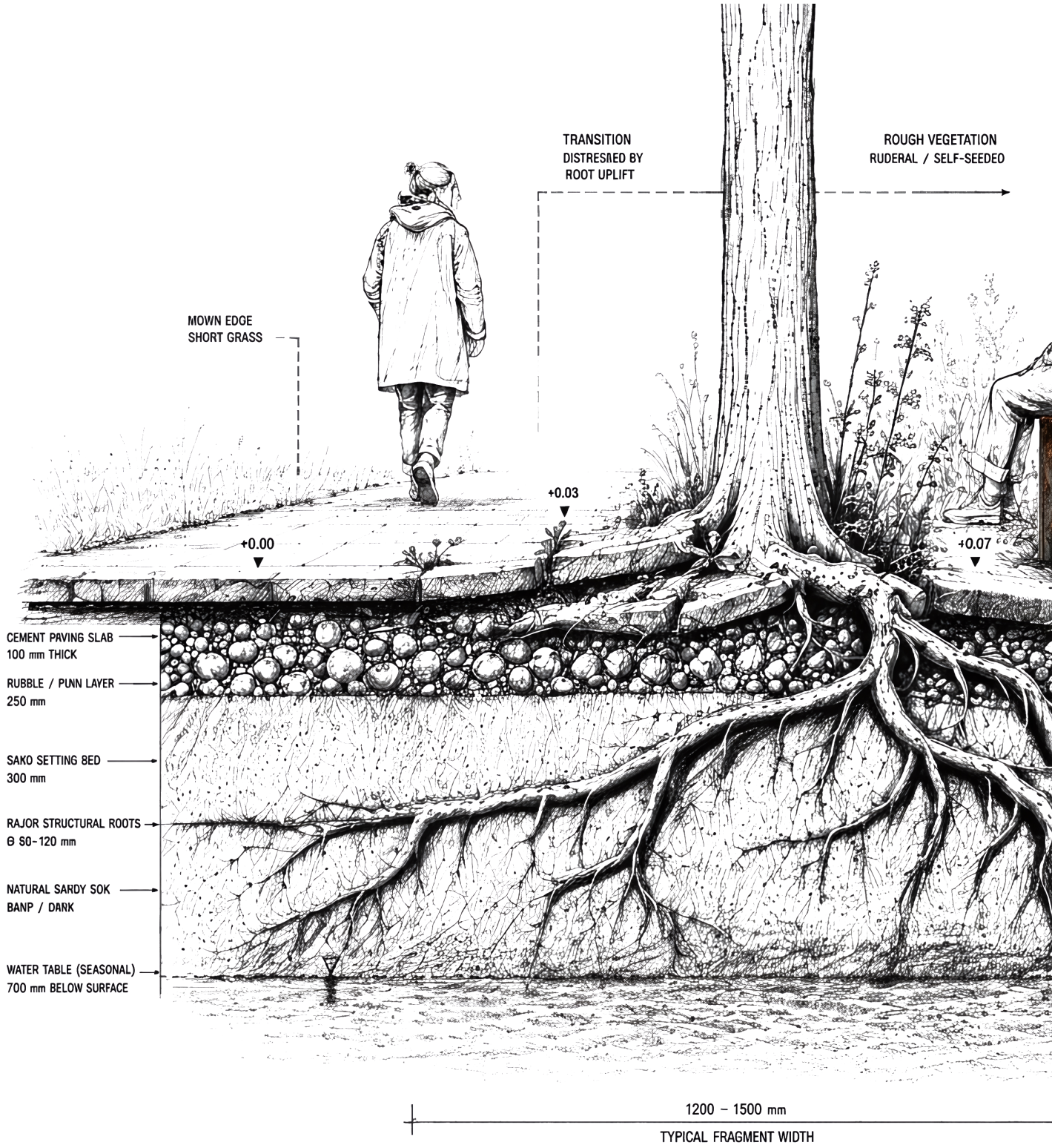
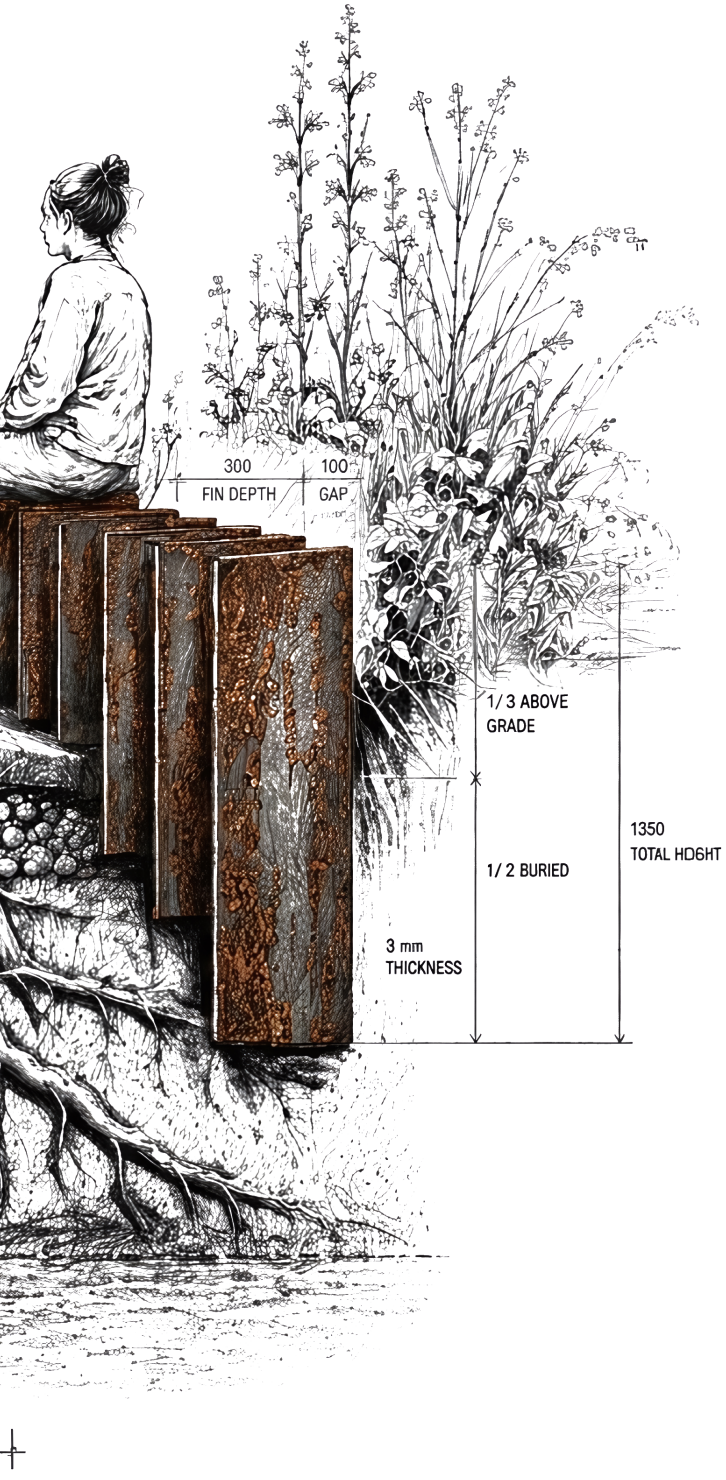
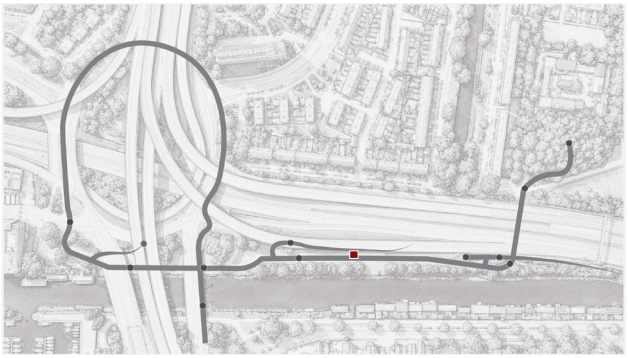


Figure 123: Ground resistance construction detail. The section shows how shallow poplar roots, rubble, sand, seasonal groundwater, rusting steel fins and rough paving work together to slow movement and allow the ground to deform over time. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.





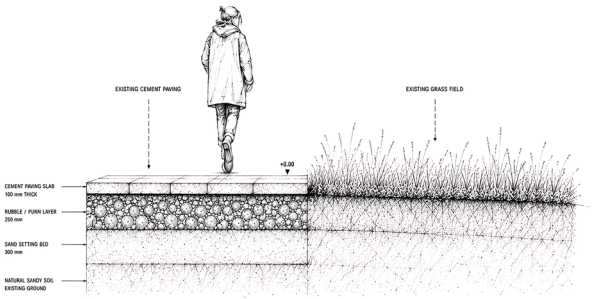
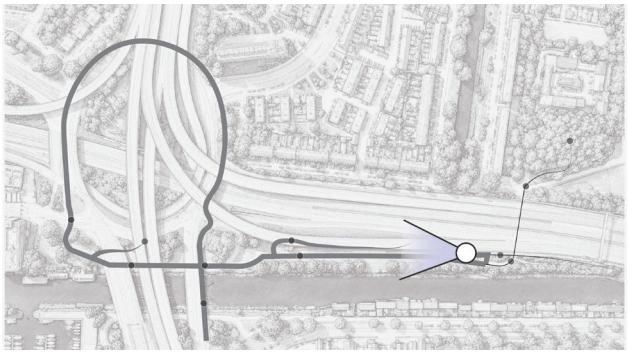


Figure 124: Existing ground construction detail. The section shows the current build-up of paving, rubble, sand and vegetation, forming the technical baseline for the later root-pressure and broken-paving intervention. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

Moment IV: Slowing down



The route does not always solve movement. At certain points it deliberately lets movement run out, so that the visitor no longer passes through the landscape but becomes held by it.

Standing still is produced by enclosure, tree rhythm, water edge and reduced direction. The visitor is no longer pulled forward by a single line, but held between wall, vegetation, canal and sky. The pause is therefore not added as furniture. It is prepared by the spatial sequence before it.



Figure 125: Existing edge condition before the final pause moment, showing wall, path and vegetation as separate elements, own image, 2026.



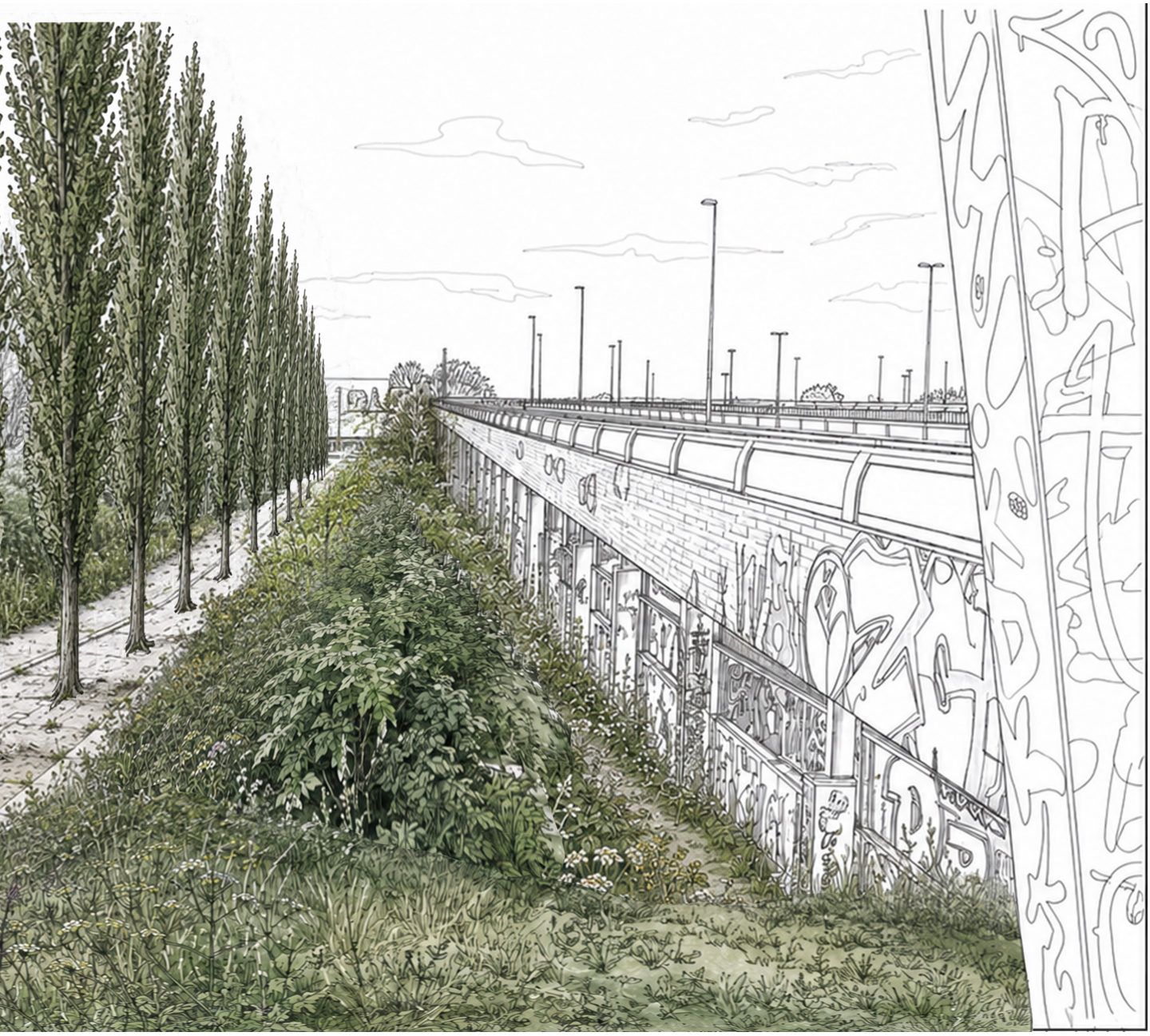
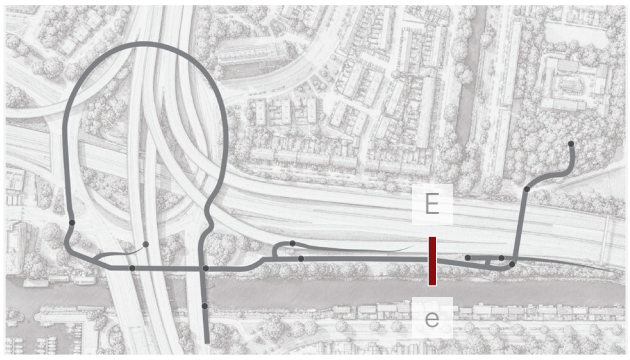


Figure 126: Existing edge condition before the final pause moment, showing wall, path and vegetation as separate elements, own image, 2026.

Section: Sightline and Edge



by a simple stair. To the left, the route visually terminates in the sightline just crossed. To the right, the older linear route along the Schie can be followed across the yellow bridge.

e

The section shows how the existing height difference already produces separation, but not yet invitation. The design keeps the raised infrastructural edge and uses vegetation, a visible tree marker and a narrow sightline to make the lower interstitial space readable from above.

The visitor does not see the whole route at once. Only a partial line is exposed. This keeps the edge ambiguous, but gives enough spatial trust to descend. The intervention therefore works as a cue rather than a full explanation.

After passing the Japanese knotweed edge, the visitor reaches the raised route

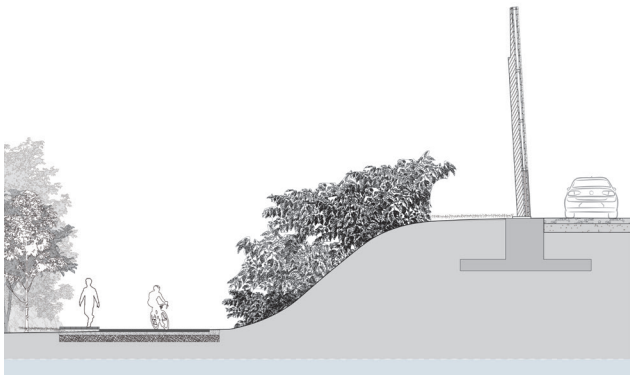




Figure 127: Current section through the raised infrastructural edge. The section shows the existing relation between upper route, slope, wall and lower interstitial strip before the edge becomes a readable threshold. Own work, 2026

The intervention therefore works as a hinge between the lower interstitial path and the historic canal edge. It does not explain the whole route, but gives enough orientation to continue.

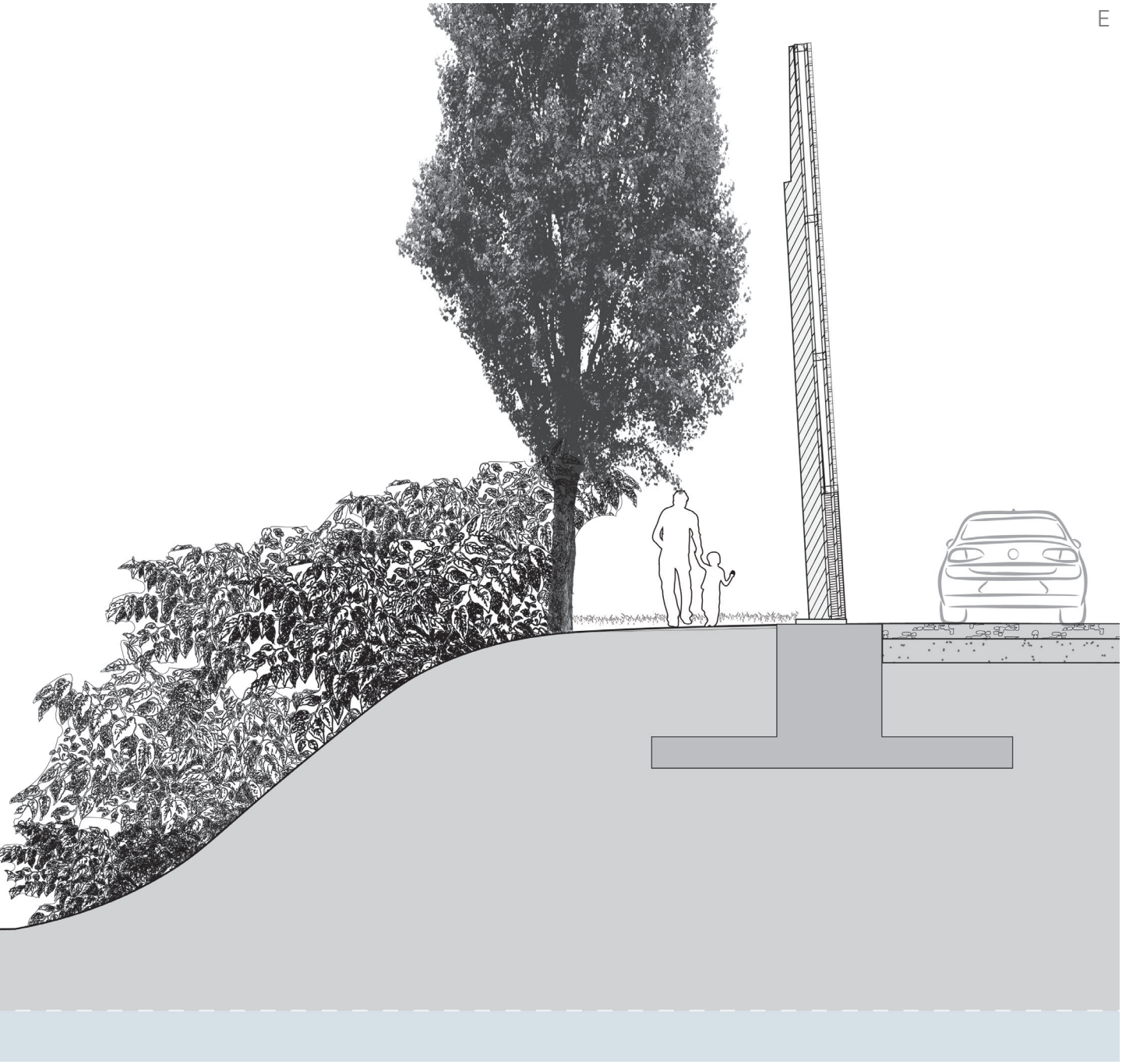
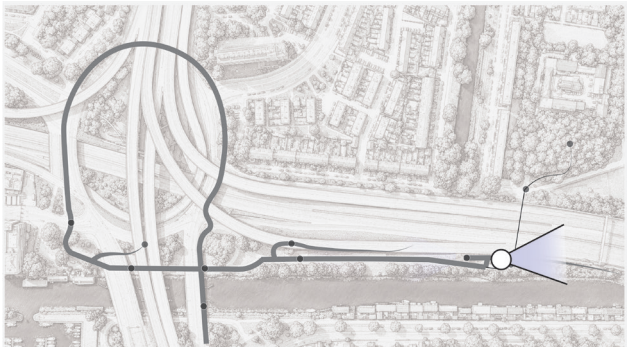


Figure 128: Sightline between raised infrastructure and lower interstitial edge. The design uses vegetation, tree mass and partial visibility to turn an avoided slope into an entry condition. Own work, 2026.

Moment IV: Slowing down



The yellow steel introduces a different design language within the route. Unlike the rusting steel wall, this element is not meant to disappear into decay. Its colour marks it as a maintained connector and as part of a larger route logic.

The walkway links two raised edges, offers a small informal stopping point and makes clear that this threshold remains cared for. It also limits direct movement into the sheltered lower pocket, allowing that space to remain more ambiguous and less exposed.



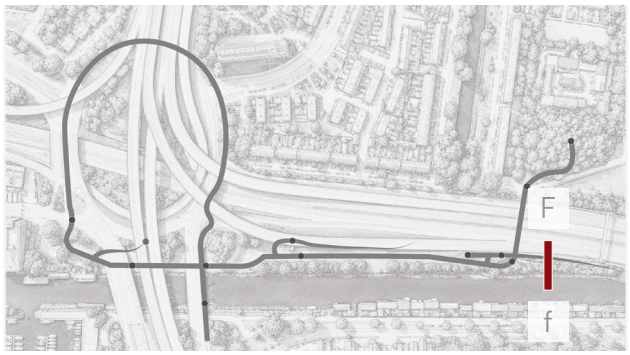
Figure 129: Existing view along the graffiti wall and vegetated edge before insertion of the steel threshold, own image, 2026.





Figure 130: Yellow steel walkway as slowed connection. The painted steel walkway connects two raised edges, creates an informal pause condition and limits direct movement into the sheltered lower pocket on the right. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

Section: planted slope threshold



f

This intervention frames the transition between infrastructure and overgrown edge as a place to enter rather than avoid. The lower zone remains loose and partly unprogrammed. It can still function as an un-housed resting place, informal shelter or edge condition.

Above, the route is made more legible by the raised edge and the line of Italian poplars. The design does not clean the slope completely. It thickens the threshold just enough to make access possible, while allowing the lower interstitial space to keep its ambiguity.

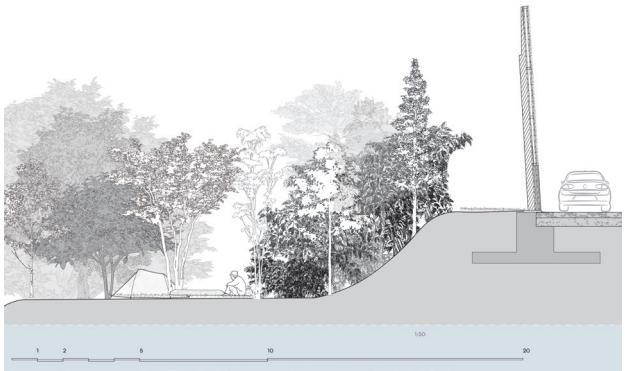




Figure 131: Current section through the planted slope below the road edge, showing existing enclosure without clear invitation. Own work, 2026.

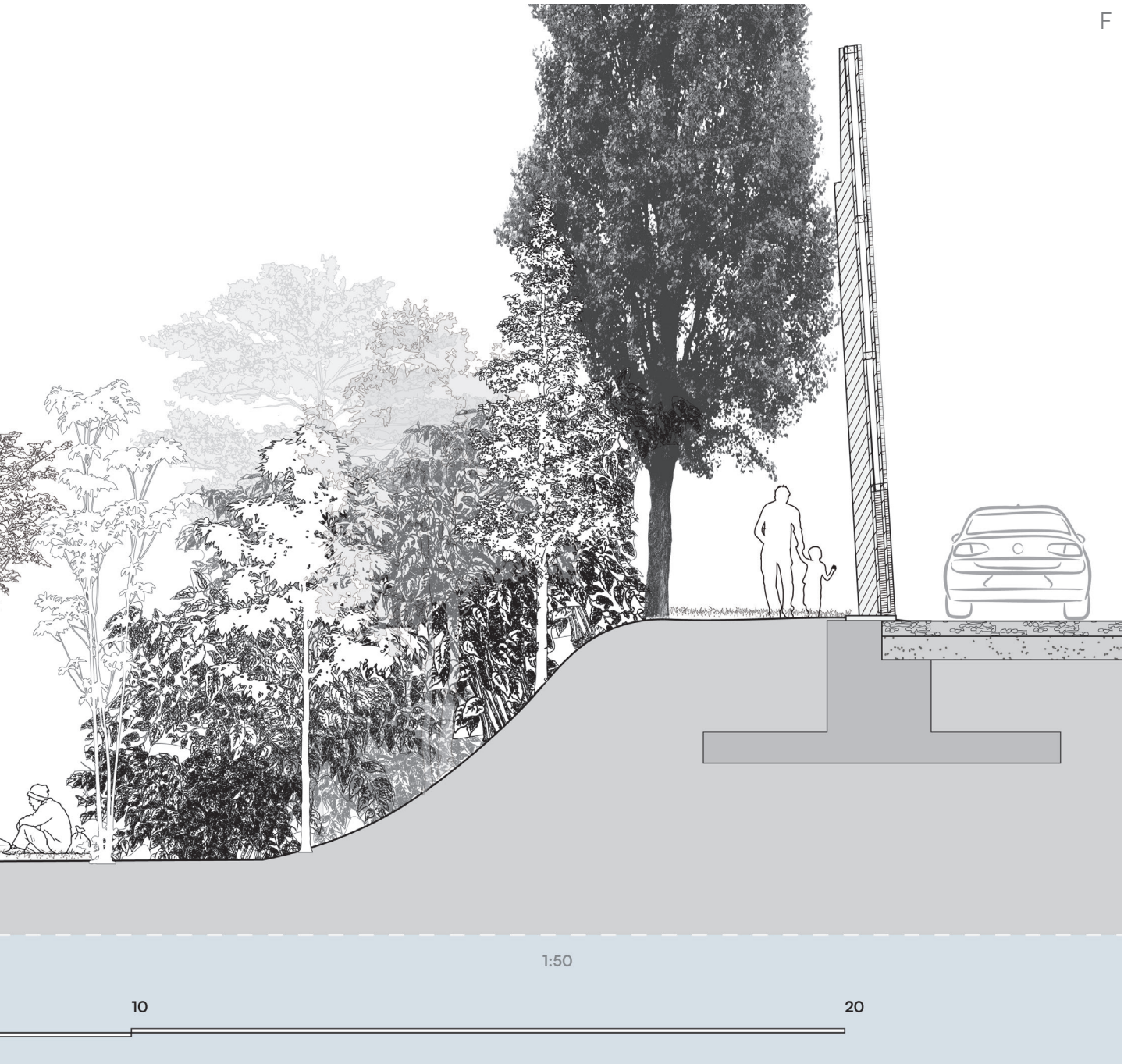
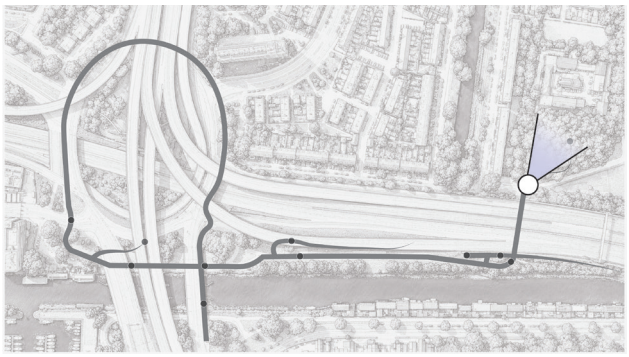


Figure 132: Designed entry condition at the infrastructural edge. A rusted steel insert turns the existing slope and vegetation threshold into an accessible transition. Own work, 2026.

Moment IV: Slowing down, final approa



The intervention at the willow pocket is deliberately minimal. The existing fence is replaced by a line of rusting steel fins that marks the edge without fully opening the interior. A narrow entrance allows access, but the wet ground, dense willow growth and enclosed atmosphere remain protected. The place becomes readable as part of the route, while still resisting easy occupation.





Figure 133: Existing approach to the willow pocket. The photograph shows the current edge condition, where vegetation, fencing and unclear access make the pocket difficult to read. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

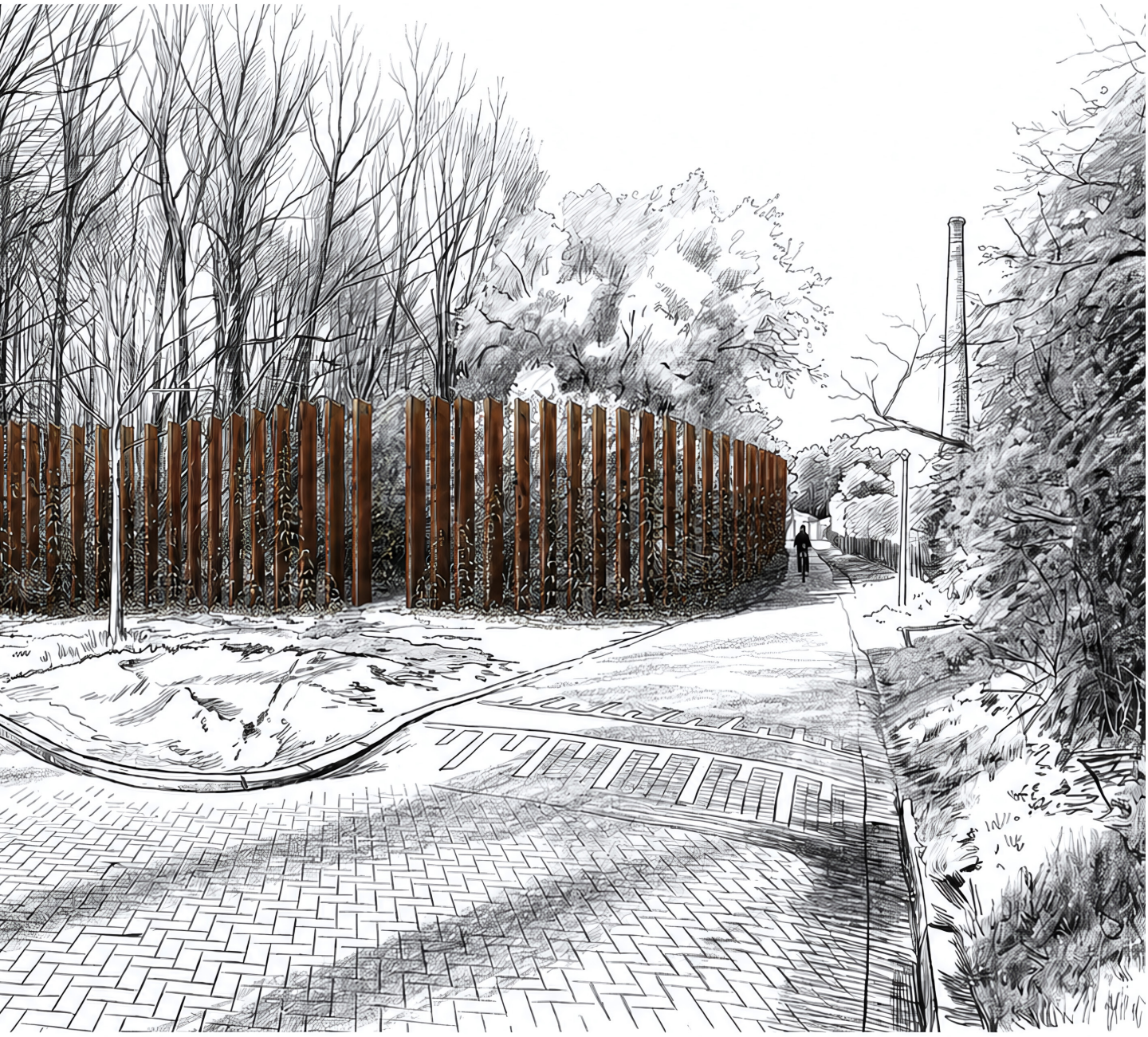
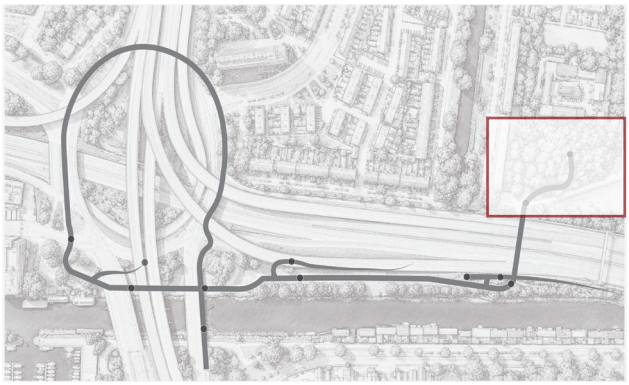
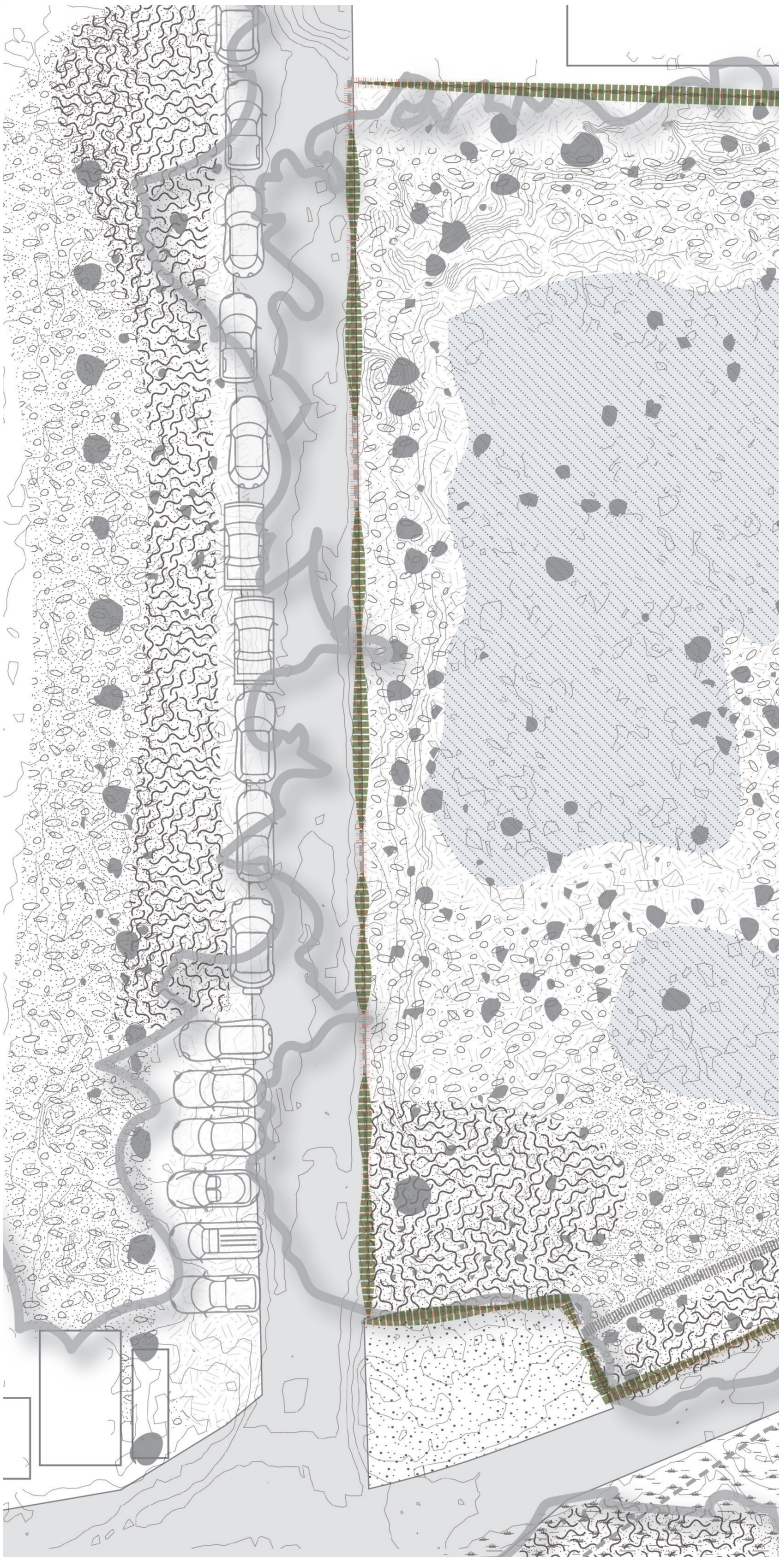


Figure 134: Protected willow threshold. Rusting steel fins replace the decaying fence and create a controlled opening into the willow pocket. The intervention clarifies access while keeping the wet interior rough, fragile and only partially inviting. Own work, 2026.

Plan: Willow forest





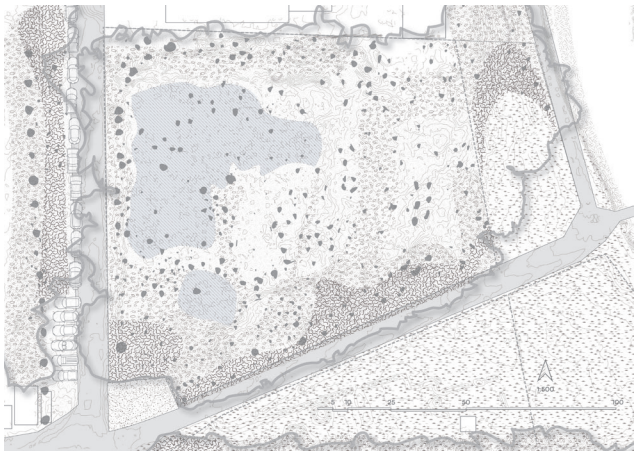


Figure 135: Existing willow forest plan. The plan shows the present pocket as a dense wet enclosure with unclear access, existing vegetation and difficult ground conditions. Own work, 2026.

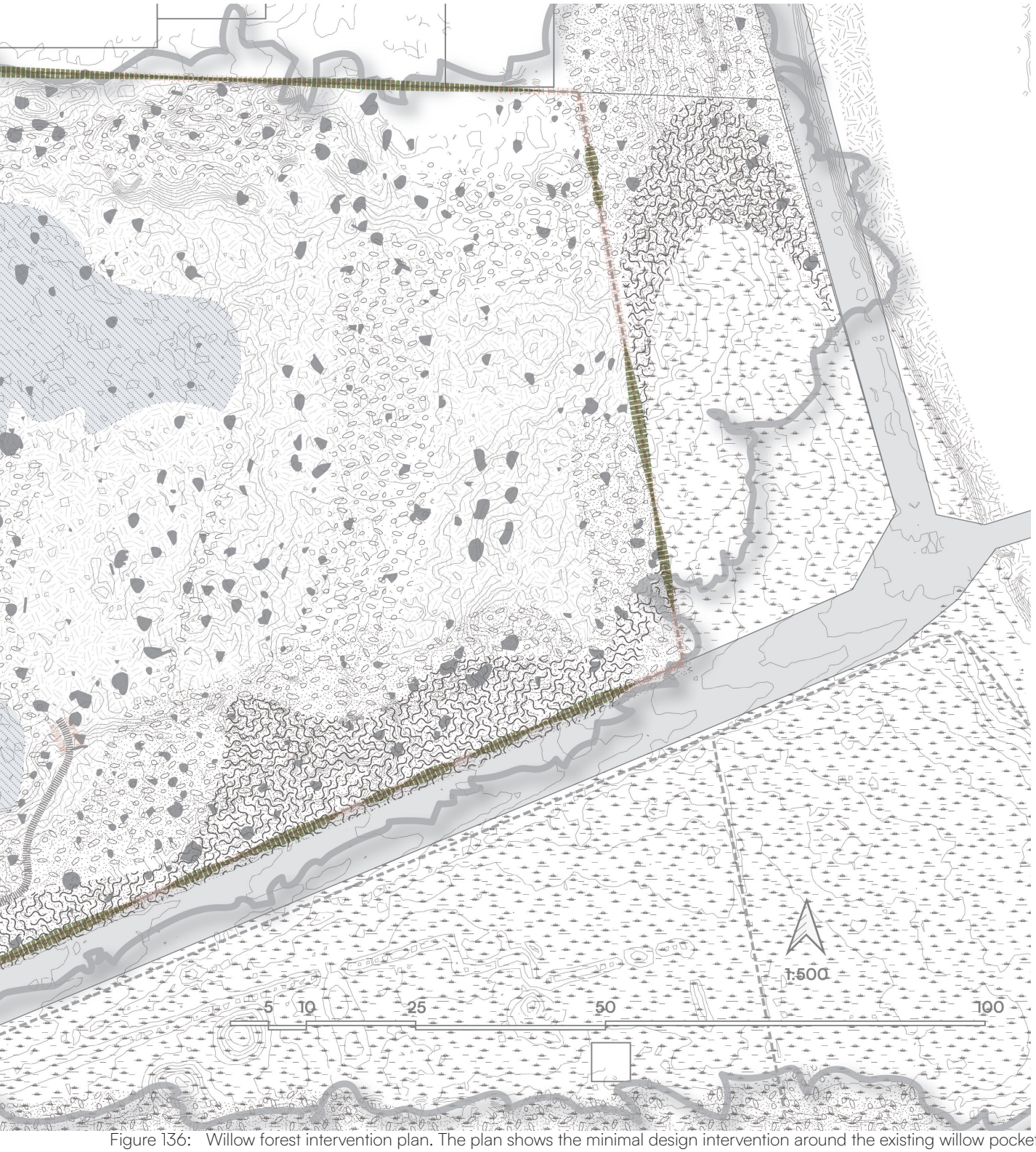
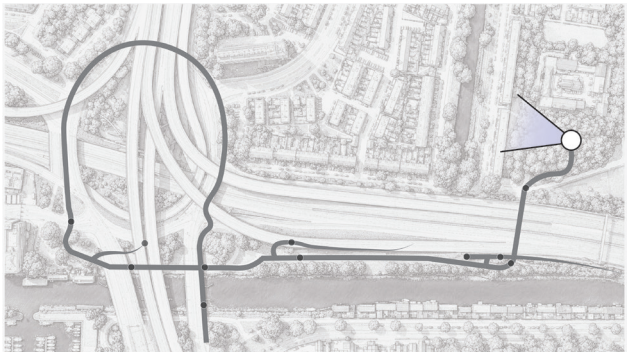


Figure 136: Willow forest intervention plan. The plan shows the minimal design intervention around the existing willow pocket: a controlled entrance, rusting steel fins, protected wet ground and a maintained access route. Own work, 2026.

Moment V: Standing still



The final moment is not a viewpoint, but a held condition. After invitation, wandering, confirmation and slowing down, the route releases direct movement. Wet ground, willow, water and reduced orientation prepare the body to remain.

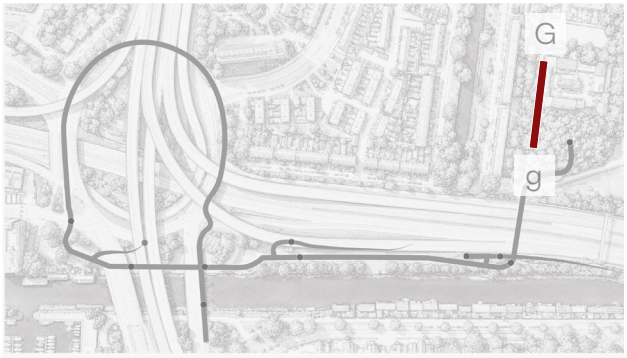
The final pause is prepared by wetness, enclosure and the loss of direct route logic. The space does not need a strong object. It needs a condition in which movement becomes unnecessary.



Figure 137: Standing still inside the willow pocket. Wet ground, willow canopy, water edge and reduced direction hold the body in place rather than pulling it further along the route. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

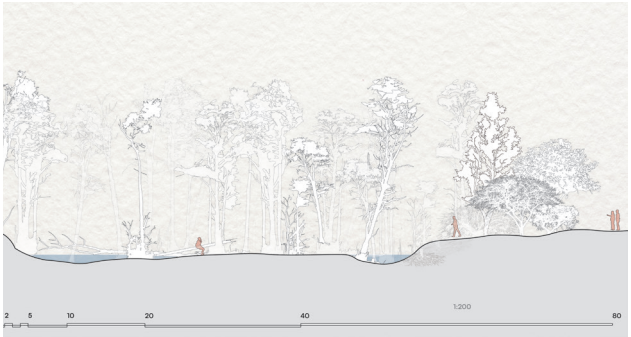


Section: Stopping in swamp forest



relation between body, water and vegetation. The visitor is not asked to look at one object. The visitor is placed inside a condition where stopping becomes possible.

This is the quietest point in the sequence. The intervention does not add a strong object, but frames the existing wet



G



Figure 138: Current section through the wet edge and loose vegetation pocket before spatial framing. Own work, 2026.

At the end of the route, movement becomes less linear. The ground lowers, water appears, vegetation becomes lighter and the path loses the direct pressure of the infrastructural edge.

This section prepares standing still. It does not create a destination through monumentality, but through reduced direction, filtered views and a soft pocket so that the visitor can stay with water, vegetation and filtered light. Standing still emerges because there is no longer a clear reason to continue moving. The body is held by enclosure, soft ground and the water edge.



Figure 139: Section through the wet pause pocket. The route shifts from linear movement to a softer edge condition where water, vegetation and reduced direction prepare the body for standing still. Own work, 2026.

7.7. Conclusion

The contemplative path is not a finished object added to the Schie. It is a sequence of prepared conditions. Each moment performs a different task: invitation opens the site, wandering allows exploration, confirmation gives spatial trust, slowing down changes bodily pace and standing still holds attention.

The design remains deliberately incomplete. It does not erase infrastructure, roughness, informal use or ecological succession. Instead, it gives these conditions a spatial armature. Tree architecture, rough surface, thresholds, water edges and pause nodes make the existing interstitial landscape legible enough to inhabit.

The result is not a park in the conventional sense. It is a route through a living urban margin, where the visitor begins to move with the landscape rather than only through it.



Figure 140: Existing situation of the final corridor. The photograph shows the Q4 field condition before intervention, where cracked paving, ruderal vegetation and infrastructural edge already form a rough interstitial atmosphere. Photograph by Frederic de Milliano, 2024.





Figure 141: Final visualisation of the contemplative path as a living interstitial corridor. Tree rhythm, broken pavement, ruderal growth and infrastructural edge remain present as conditions for attention and attunement. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.



8.1 Why listen?

8.2 Temporal agents

8.3 Life inside the system

8.4 Ruinous growth: steel, wisteria and willow

8.5 Poplar roots and the ground below

8.6 Broken asphalt and fourth nature

8.7 Section over time

8.8 Growth, use and management

8.9 Maintenance as temporal design

8.10 Seasonal cycle and maintenance

8.11 The manager and field observer as co-authors

8.12 The Listening System

8.13 Conclusion: attunement as adaptive relation

08 Design with Time

8.1. Why Listen, and to Whom?

Designing with time means accepting that the project is not complete at the moment of construction. The Schie corridor will be shaped by growth, decay, informal occupation, maintenance decisions, animal movement, wetness, wind, shade and seasonal change. The design therefore does not prescribe a final image. It creates an armature that can be read, used, damaged, occupied and adjusted.

Listening is therefore not a metaphor. It is the method through which the corridor remains legible, inhabitable and ecologically responsive over time.

This also changes who the design is made for. The corridor is not only shaped for walkers or moments of stillness. It is also used by rough sleepers, graffiti writers, maintenance crews, neighbours, cyclists, birds, insects, rodents, bats, willow, reed, fungi, roots and water. Each agent reads and claims the corridor differently.

The task of design is not to satisfy every use equally, but to make these overlapping forms of life visible enough to guide care. The route becomes a shared condition between body, site, material, species and maintenance.

1. FAUNA: VOGELS

1. **Gierzwaluw**
Apus apus



- **Needs:** nest holes in facades and roof edges
- **Prefers:** hard urban edges near open flight space; little disturbance near buildings
- **Maintenance:** no renovation or demolition in breeding season (mei–aug)

2. **Ooievaar**
Ciconia ciconia



- **Needs:** high nesting place at forest edge and quiet breeding conditions
- **Prefers:** open foraging ground near rough meadow or wet grassland
- **Maintenance:** avoid mowing machines near nest in breeding season (mrt–aug)

3. **Oeverzwaluw**
Riparia riparia



- **Needs:** steep sandy banks with nesting holes
- **Prefers:** undisturbed waterside edge with exposed sand
- **Maintenance:** no bank hardening or excavation in breeding season (apr–jul)

4. **Huismus**
Passer domesticus



- **Needs:** dense shrubs plus cavities in buildings
- **Prefers:** seed-rich vegetation, shelter, and edges between city and rough greenery
- **Maintenance:** do not heavily prune shelter shrubs before winter

2. FAUNA: ZOOGDIEREN EN REPTIELEN

5. **Dwergvleermuis**
Pipistrellus pipistrellus



- **Needs:** dark corridor, insect-rich airspace, and roost opportunities
- **Prefers:** dead wood, tree lines, and no night lighting
- **Maintenance:** keep corridor dark after sunset

6. **Ringslang**
Natrix natrix



- **Needs:** high grass, compost or rotting wood, and calm edge zones
- **Prefers:** sunny rough vegetation near water and undisturbed banks
- **Maintenance:** no mowing in mei–jul; provide compost or wood pile as breeding place

7. **Rugstreeppad**
Bufo calamita

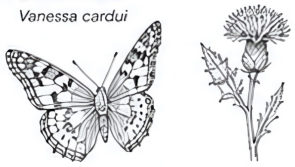


- **Needs:** open sandy ground and shallow temporary pools
- **Prefers:** sparse pioneer terrain, not dense grass
- **Maintenance:** keep patches of bare sand open; do not sow them in

ⓘ **Note:** Seasons in Dutch abbreviations — mrt (maart), apr (april), mei (mei), jul (juli), aug (augustus), sept (sept

3. INSECTEN

8. Distelvlinder
Vanessa cardui



- **Needs:** nectar plants and host plants
- **Prefers:** distels, kaasjeskruid, koninginnenkruid, and flower-rich rough grass
- **Maintenance:** do not remove thistles as weeds

9. Insectenmassa



- **Needs:** diverse unmanaged vegetation and zero chemical control
- **Prefers:** layered flowering vegetation and seasonal continuity
- **Maintenance:** mow in phases so some flowering vegetation always remains

4. FLORA EN VEGETATIE

10. Kaasjeskruid
Malva sylvestris



- **Needs:** open lightly disturbed soil
- **Prefers:** path edges, fences, and riverbank transitions
- **Maintenance:** leave rough path margins unmown

11. Koninginnenkruid
Eupatorium cannabinum



- **Needs:** moist nutrient-rich soil
- **Prefers:** waterside edges and humid polder conditions
- **Maintenance:** do not mow before flowering ends (sept)

12. Riet
Phragmites australis



- **Needs:** wet nutrient-rich soil and slow or still water
- **Prefers:** shoreline strips and shallow wet edges
- **Maintenance:** mow in phases; remove at most one-third per year

13. Wilg / Schietwilg
Salix alba / fragilis



- **Needs:** moist to wet soil and room to develop
- **Prefers:** banks, polder edges, and fast-growing woodland structure
- **Maintenance:** pollard at most once every 3 years; never clear all at once

14. Japanse duizendknoop
Reynoutria japonica



- **Needs:** almost no niche limitation once established
- **Prefers:** disturbed ground across all zones
- **Maintenance:** active control required; otherwise biodiversity collapses

ember).

5. HUMAN USERS OF THE INTERSTITIAL SPACE

15. Rough sleeper / zwerver



- **Needs:** thermal comfort, privacy, and minimal enforcement
- **Prefers:** sheltered high grass and hidden edge conditions
- **Maintenance:** avoid routine mowing and hard pruning in occupied refuge areas

16. Graffiti artiest



- **Needs:** access, anonymity, and long concrete walls
- **Prefers:** seasonal vegetative screening and darkness
- **Maintenance:** keep shrub edge near walls relatively unlit and not over-pruned

17. Evenementbezoeker



- **Needs:** temporary access and a wild-looking setting
- **Prefers:** open routes with rough scenery as backdrop
- **Maintenance:** keep paths open during events, then allow recovery time afterward

18. Buurtbewoner / wandelaar



- **Needs:** accessible path, some visibility, and a place to pause
- **Prefers:** low grass along the path with rougher vegetation set back 2–3 m
- **Maintenance:** maintain a readable edge along walking routes

19. Veld-observator / beheerder



- **Needs:** periodic access and ability to read ecological and social signals
- **Prefers:** flexible routes and direct contact with changing site conditions
- **Maintenance:** adaptive management; react to what is observed rather than fixed schedules

Figure 142: Interstitial space users. The overview identifies human and more-than-human users of the Schie corridor and their spatial requirements. It shows that maintenance must respond to overlapping needs rather than one dominant public-space programme. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

8.2. Temporal Agents

The temporal agents diagram shows the project as a living system rather than a finished park image. The route is shaped by four overlapping layers: spatial armature, material processes, human use and more-than-human occupation.

The spatial armature gives the corridor its first readability: path, threshold, frame and pause condition. Material processes then begin to alter that armature through rust, root pressure, cracking asphalt, wet soil, wisteria and willow. Human users bring walking, cycling, shelter, graffiti, maintenance and observation. More-than-human users bring nesting, pollination, colonisation, decomposition and habitat formation.

Attunement emerges from the overlap between these layers. The design does not control every relation. It makes relations visible enough to be noticed, cared for and adjusted over time.





Figure 143: Temporal agents of the Schie corridor. Spatial armature, material processes, human users and more-than-human users operate simultaneously, turning the design from a fixed object into a living system. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

8.3. Life inside the system

The temporal agents diagram explains the system, but the corridor is ultimately experienced from within. Time is not only visible in diagrams. It is felt through wet ground, changing vegetation, wind in the poplars, overgrown graffiti, puddles, rust, shelter, mowing traces and moments where the path has just been cleared enough to pass.

This spread shows the Schie corridor as a lived condition rather than a finished park image. A walker slows down because the ground is uneven and damp. A cyclist remains on the clearer edge. A rough sleeper occupies a sheltered pocket beneath vegetation and wall. Graffiti remains partly visible, partly absorbed by wisteria and shadow. A maintenance worker has recently opened a narrow passage, leaving cut stems and a visible mowing edge. Birds, insects and pioneer plants occupy the parts that are not fully accessible.

The design does not remove this mixture. It makes it readable. The corridor becomes contemplative not because it is calm or clean, but because different forms of occupation, decay and care are allowed to overlap without becoming illegible.



This is what makes the interstitial condition specific. Users and life forms that are usually separated in the city meet here: a cyclist and a rough sleeper, a maintenance worker and a graffiti writer, a neighbour and a fox, reed and concrete, willow roots and asphalt, insects and a steel edge. The design does not romanticise this mixture. It gives it enough structure to be seen, negotiated and cared for.



Figure 144: Life inside the system. The collage imagines the Schie corridor as a lived temporal landscape where shelter, graffiti, maintenance, wet ground, vegetation, animals and material decay overlap within the same spatial armature. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

Precedent IX, Wisteria and Ruin Contra



Figure 145: Overgrown wall condition showing decay partly absorbed by climbing vegetation, used as reference for the contrast between neglect and conscious growth iStock. (n.d.). Wisteria growing on old wall [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.istockphoto.com/nl/foto/wisteria-gm1391589547-448147907

Decay read as abandonment



Figure 146: Wisteria growing over a weathered wall, showing how flowering growth can shift decay from abandonment toward attended transformation. iStock. (n.d.). Wisteria growing on old wall [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.istockphoto.com/nl/foto/wisteria-gm1391589547-448147907



Figure 147: Park Pergola, Máximapark, Ut
plants using a large structural frame as sea
8. (n.d.-b). Pergola at Máximapark [Photo
com/projects/pergola-maximapark/

embracin



Figure 148: Park Pergola, Máximapark, U
plants using a large structural frame as sea
8. (n.d.-b). Pergola at Máximapark [Photo
com/projects/pergola-maximapark/



recht, showing wisteria and other climbing sonal, ecological and spatial support. West graph]. Retrieved from https://www.west8.

g the wall



trecht, showing wisteria and other climbing asonal, ecological and spatial support.West graph]. Retrieved from https://www.west8.

Between uncontrolled takeover and visible care

Wisteria clarifies a central tension in the project: the difference between vegetation that makes decay read as abandonment and vegetation that makes care visible.

Uncontrolled overgrowth can intensify a ruinous condition, but it can also make the edge harder to read. When branches, dead stems and climbing plants absorb a wall without a clear support structure, decay may disappear into neglect. The wall becomes less legible as a spatial condition.

Máximapark in Utrecht, designed by West 8, offers a controlled counterpoint. Its Park Pergola uses a large structural frame to support climbing vegetation as a seasonal, ecological and spatial layer (West 8, n.d.). The relevance for the Schie is not the formal image of the pergola, but the relation between support and takeover: growth becomes readable when it has something precise to act against.

For the Schie corridor, wisteria is therefore used as a cue of care within a ruinous setting. It should not cover the wall completely or beautify decay away. It should create contrast: flowering growth against rusted steel, seasonal change against graffiti, and living stems against infrastructural hardness. The wall remains ruinous, but no longer reads only as abandoned.

8.4. Ruinous growth: steel, wisteria an

Steel, wisteria and willow over time

Ruinous growth is not introduced as decoration. It is a way to make care visible within conditions that could otherwise be read as neglect. This spread continues the contrast of the previous page: vegetation can either blur decay into abandonment, or it can make transformation legible when it grows against a clear support.

In the Schie corridor, steel, wisteria and willow are combined because each material already belongs to a different logic of the site. Steel refers to the infrastructural language of fences, sound barriers and bridge structures. Willow belongs to the wet ground, shallow water table and spontaneous edge vegetation of the Schie. Wisteria is introduced more deliberately, as a visible cue of care: flowering, seasonal and clearly planted, but still capable of taking over its support.

At selected thresholds, where path meets embankment, sound barrier creates shadow, or wall meets river, the design introduces mild steel plates. The plates are 3 mm thick and spaced 10 cm apart. Their spacing prevents the wall from becoming one closed surface, while allowing stems, roots, light and partial views to pass through. The frame gives the visitor enough order to read the place as intentional, without removing rust, graffiti, wetness or rough growth.

Over time, the frame loses dominance. Rust stains the surface. Wisteria climbs and flowers. Willow thickens, bends and presses against the steel. Moss and reed occupy the wet margins. What first acts as structure later becomes support, trace and resistance. The point is not that vegetation simply takes over. The point is that takeover remains readable as a cared-for process.

Ruinous growth is therefore decay as part of design, not decay after design. The intervention sets the first condition, but the spatial effect is produced through conflict: steel gives legibility, willow gives force, wisteria gives visible care, and time makes their relation unstable.



Figure 149: Existing informal shelter and multi-use edge. The image shows how sitting, storage, graffiti traces, animal occupation and material decay overlap in one sheltered pocket. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

Figure 150: Ruinous growth through steel, wisteria and willow. The steel wall begins as an armature, then becomes rusted, deformed, occupied and partially overtaken by vegetation. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.



Precedent X, De Groene Kathedraal



Figure 151: Mature poplar rhythm in De Groene Kathedraal. The rows of Populus nigra 'Italica' show how living trees can construct an architectural space through height, repetition and temporal growth. Retrieved from Land Art Flevoland.

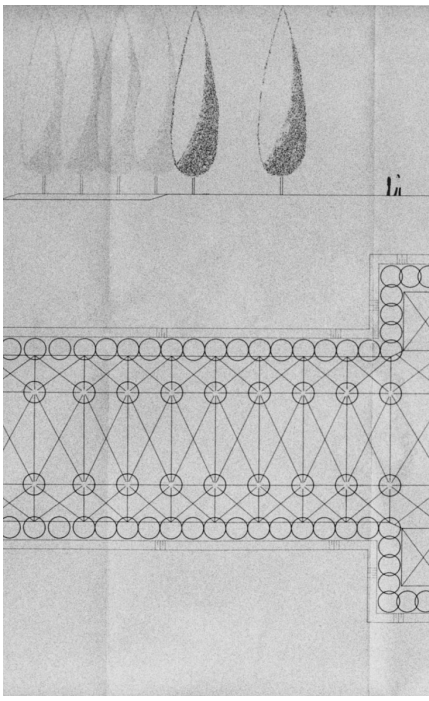


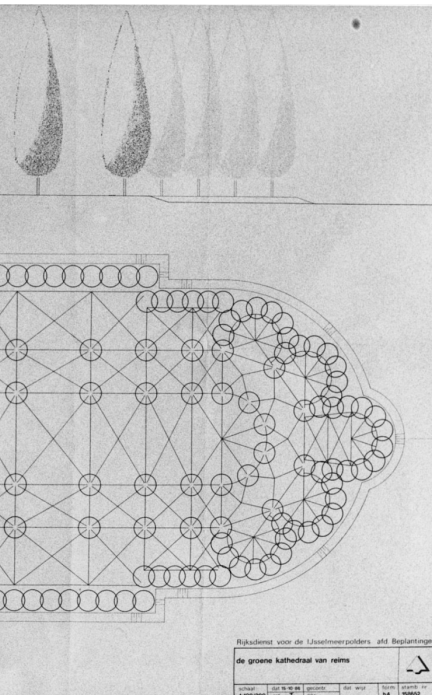
Figure 153: Floor plan of De Groene Kat layout based on the cathedral of Reims, usin material. RIJP Planting Department. (1987 Kathedraal [Drawing]. Photograph by Ton Archives.



Figure 152: Winter interior of De Groene Kathedraal. The concrete paths between the poplars echo the cross-ribbed vaults of Reims Cathedral, showing how tree architecture can translate a built plan into living spatial rhythm. Wildschut, S. (2011). De Groene Kathedraal [Photograph]. Retrieved from Land Art Flevoland.



Figure 154: Aerial view of De Groene Kat how storm damage, replacement and dec rather than failures outside the design. B Almere [Aerial photograph], winter 2021/2



thedraal. The drawing shows the planting
g trees as columns and time as construction
'). Drawing of the floor plan of De Groene
Kastermans. Gooi en Vechtstreek Regional



hedraal after replanting. The image shows
ine are part of the temporal life of the work
oezem, M. (1987). De Groene Kathedraal,
022. Retrieved from Land Art Flevoland.

De Groene Kathedraal in Almere is a land art project by Marinus Boezem. In 1987, 178 Italian poplars were planted according to the ground plan of the cathedral of Reims. Instead of stone columns, the work uses living trunks, height, shadow and time to construct a temporary spatial cathedral (Land Art Flevoland, n.d.).

The project is relevant because its strongest lesson is not permanence. The spatial effect rises, peaks and declines as the trees mature, suffer storm damage, are replaced and eventually disappear. The work is architectural, but its material is living and therefore unstable.

For the Schie corridor, the Italian poplar is used in the same way: as a strong vertical rhythm that gives direction and scale, while accepting that wind, shallow rooting, disease and old age will eventually change the structure. The tree line is not a permanent monument. It is a temporal armature whose decline, replacement and failure are part of the design.

8.5. The Ground Below

Root pressure as spatial process



Figure 155: Italian poplars growing in asphalt. Root pressure lifts the pavement within the first years, allowing sand, water and pioneer vegetation to collect in the opened cracks. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

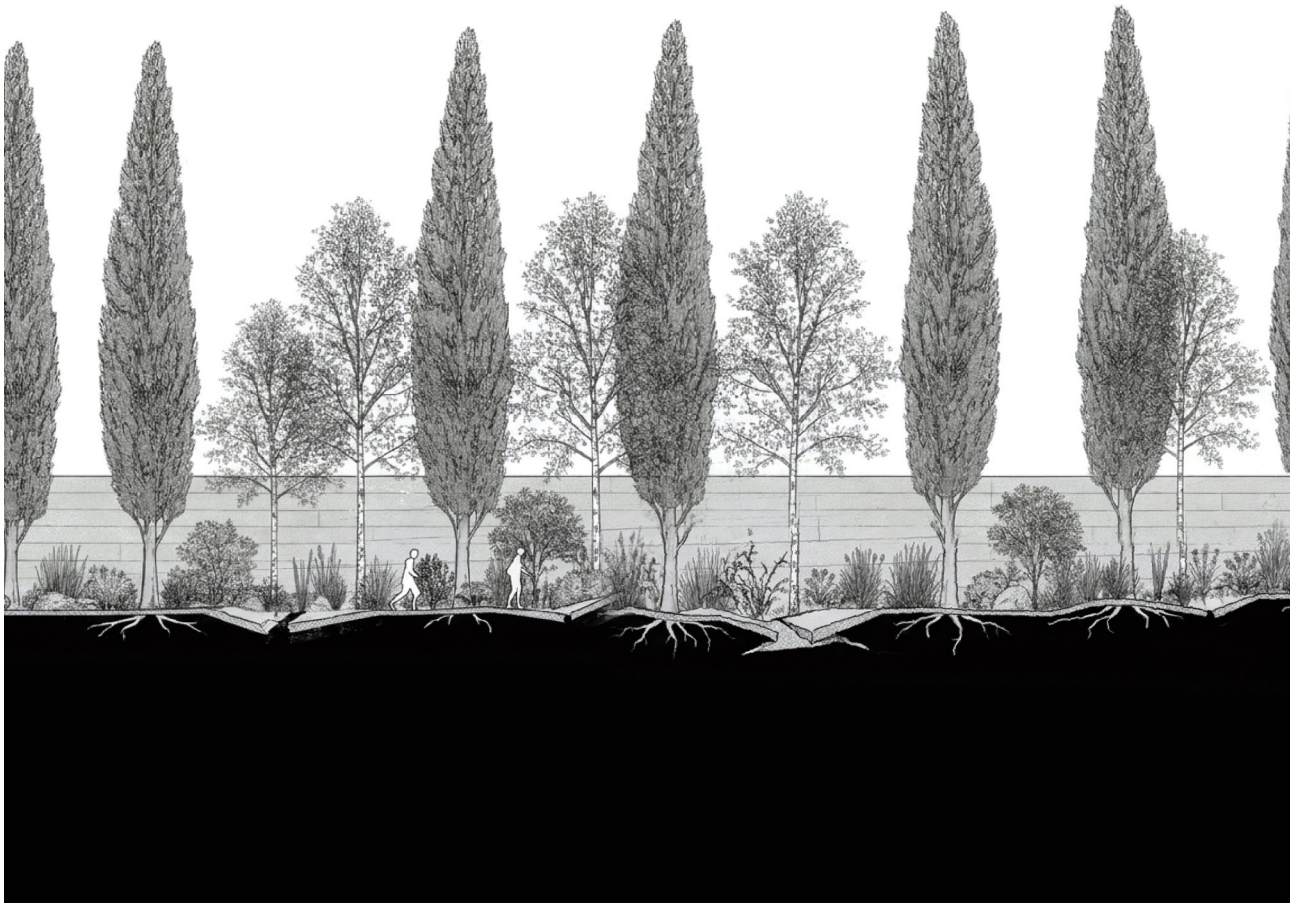


Figure 156: Fallen poplars as ecological opportunity. The drawing shows how failed trees leave root systems, exposed wood and broken surfaces that continue to open habitat after the tree itself has collapsed. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

The Italian poplars in the corridor act as temporal agents within the sealed ground. They grow in asphalt, rubble and shallow soil. Because groundwater and limited oxygen restrict deeper rooting, the roots remain close to the surface. Over time, they thicken, lift and fracture the asphalt.

This process is not a defect to be corrected. It is one of the engines of the design. Sand and organic matter collect in the cracks. Pioneer plants establish. Insects, fungi and small animals begin to use the opened surface. The sealed ground gradually becomes porous.

The poplar therefore changes from a formal tree rhythm into a material force. Its roots deform the path, slow the body and create openings for new vegetation. The visitor experiences this as uneven footing, rough surface, changing shade and local slowing down.

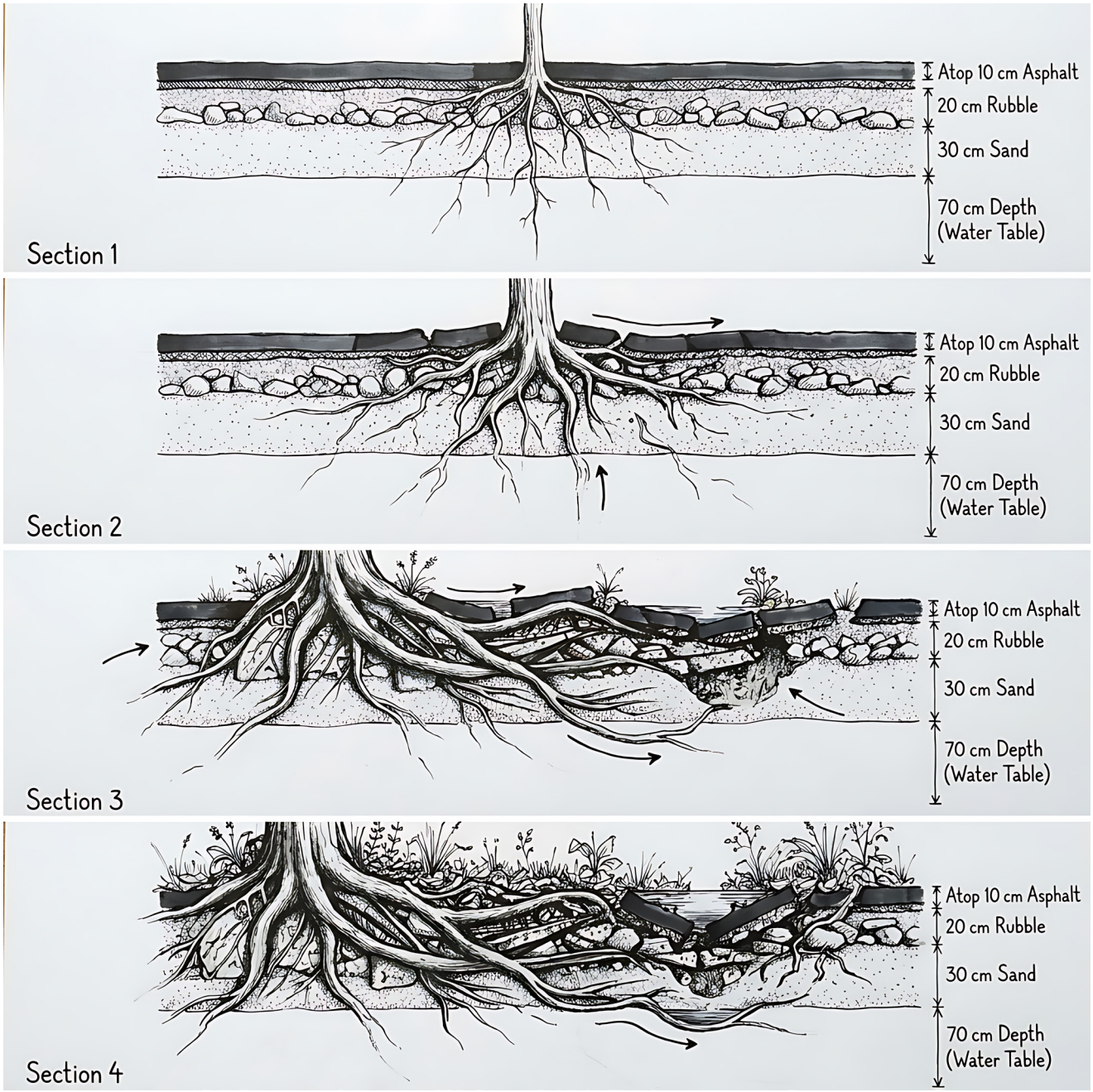


Figure 157: The invisible engine of the corridor. Shallow poplar roots grow horizontally through rubble and sand, lifting asphalt and creating cracks where pioneer vegetation can establish. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

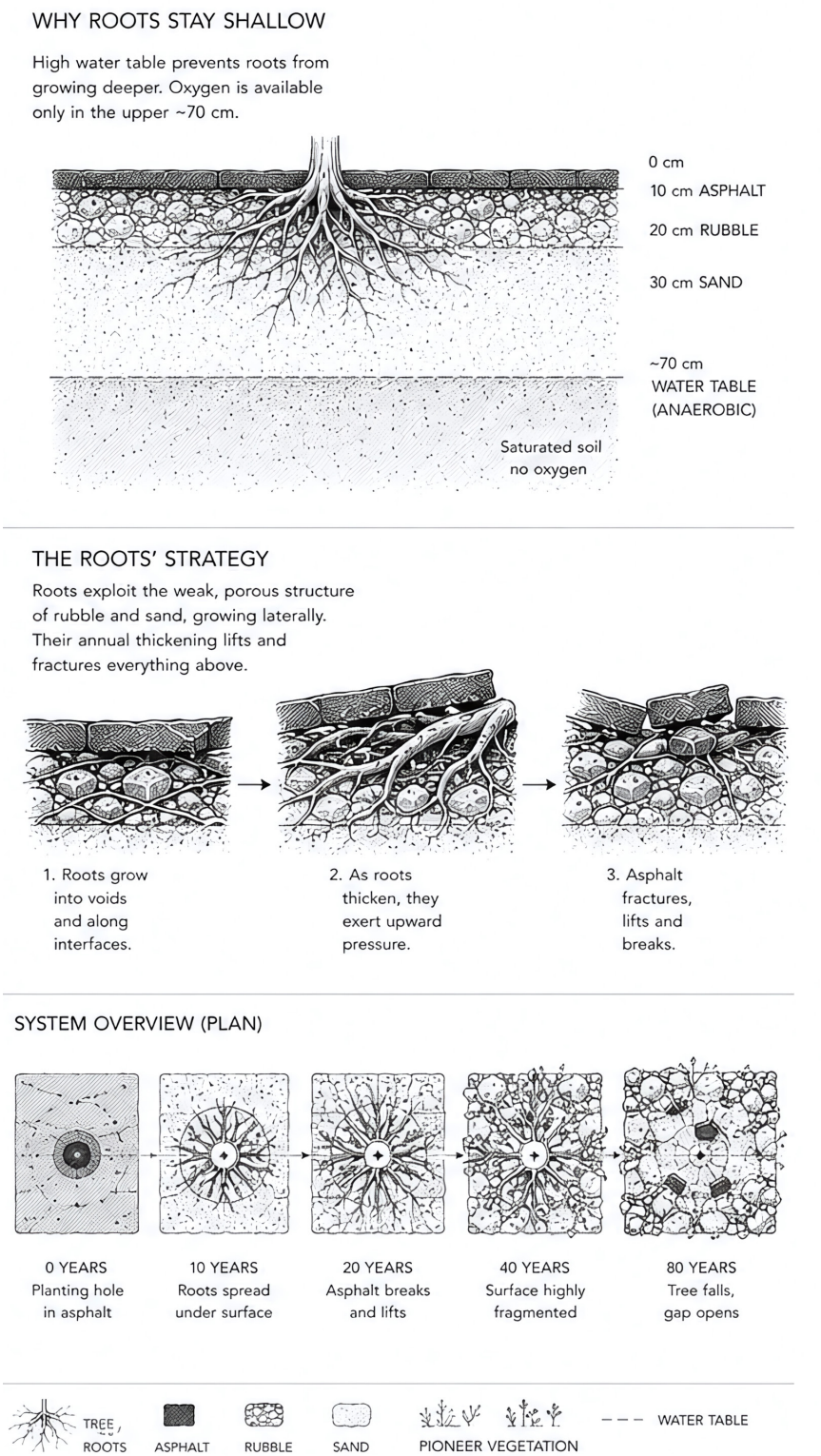


Figure 158: Root strategy under sealed ground. Limited oxygen below the groundwater level forces roots to remain shallow, where they thicken, exert upward pressure and fracture the asphalt layer. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

Precedent XI, Broken Asphalt and Four



Figure 159: Designed broken ground at Jardin des Joyeux. The project uses broken asphalt as planted substrate, turning a former hard surface into a readable condition for ruderal vegetation. Wagon Landscaping. (n.d.). Joyeux project [Photograph]. Retrieved from Wagon Landscaping.

Designed broken ground



Figure 160: Pioneer vegetation in opened paving. The detail shows how cracks, thin substrate and loosened hard surface allow planted and spontaneous vegetation to establish. Wagon Landscaping. (n.d.). Joyeux project [Photograph]. Retrieved from Wagon Landscaping.



Figure 161: Spontaneous fourth-nature su
species colonise the cracked surface witho
how broken ground can become ecologica
Hollanders, TU Delft Landscape Architectu

Spontaneous f



Figure 162: Detail of spontaneous vege
shows pioneer growth using cracks, wa
for colonisation. Photograph courtesy of
Architecture, n.d.



uccession on abandoned asphalt. Ruderal out planting or direct intervention, showing l substrate. Photograph courtesy of Matthijs ure, n.d.

fourth nature



tation between asphalt slabs. The image rmth and loosened edges as micro-sites Matthijs Hollanders, TU Delft Landscape

Between planted cracks and spontaneous colonisation

Broken asphalt is not automatically ruinous in a useful way. It can become either a designed condition for colonisation or a leftover surface that slowly turns into fourth nature without clear spatial intention.

Jardin des Joyeux in Aubervilliers, developed by Wagon Landscaping, shows the designed side of this condition. The project works with a former asphalt surface by opening, breaking and planting the hard ground instead of removing its memory completely (Wagon Landscaping, n.d.). Asphalt becomes substrate, edge and trace. The broken surface is not disguised as nature, but used as a condition through which pioneer vegetation can establish.

The comparison with spontaneous vegetation on abandoned asphalt is important. In unmanaged fourth nature, cracks, roots, wind-blown seeds and sediment slowly produce vegetation without design. This is spatially rich, but also difficult to read as care. Without framing, the same process may appear as abandonment.

For the Schie corridor, the lesson is precise. The design should not fake age before it has happened. It should create conditions where time can act: exposed edges, open cracks, thin substrates, moisture traps and surfaces where pioneer vegetation can take hold. Broken asphalt is therefore not a style. It is a prepared ground condition in which decay, growth and maintenance can begin to work together.

8.6. Section over time

Eighty years of corridor transformation

The longitudinal sections show the corridor as a changing spatial field. In the first years, the armature is still mostly constructed: path, steel wall, poplar rhythm and rough surface. After ten to twenty years, vegetation thickens, roots deform the ground and steel begins to weather. After forty years, the corridor becomes denser and more uneven. After eighty years, collapse, root pressure, canopy mass and decay become part of the spatial experience. The design therefore does not move toward a single final state. It moves through stages of legibility, enclosure, deformation and partial takeover. Each stage produces a different relation between body, material and vegetation. In some places the armature remains visible. In others it is bent, absorbed or made secondary by growth.

The point is not to predict the exact future. The point is to design a corridor that can change without becoming unreadable. Each stage keeps the same basic armature: path, steel edge, tree rhythm, wet margin and infrastructural frame. What changes is which agent carries the spatial experience: first construction, then vegetation, then root pressure, then decay, then maintenance and regrowth.

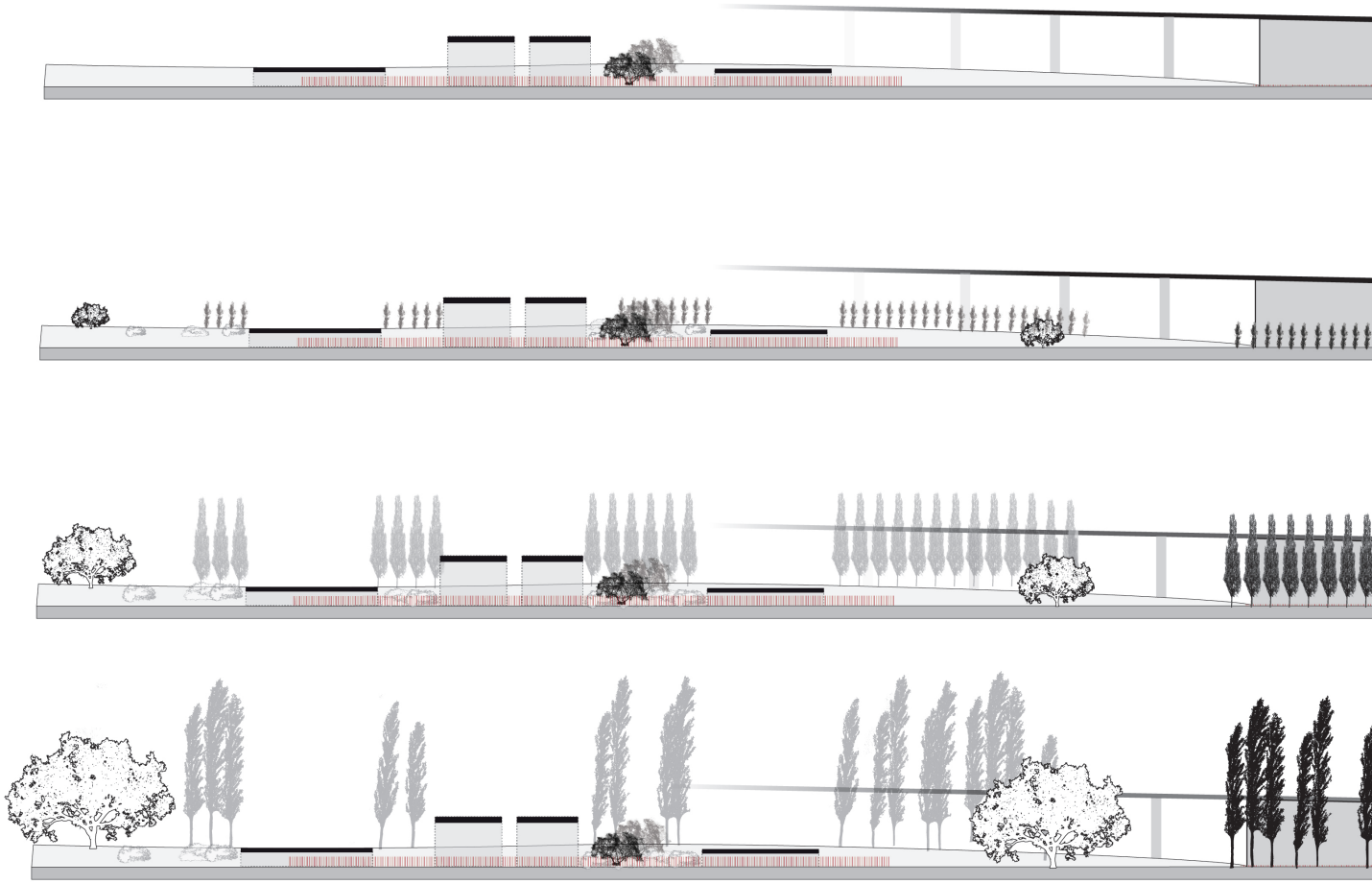


Figure 163: Four longitudinal sections showing the corridor over eighty years. Italian poplars mature, steel wall structures deform and dissolve beneath root pressure and climbing vegetation, while open ground gradually fills with vertical growth. By year eighty, the spatial experience is carried primarily by living height. Own work, 2026.

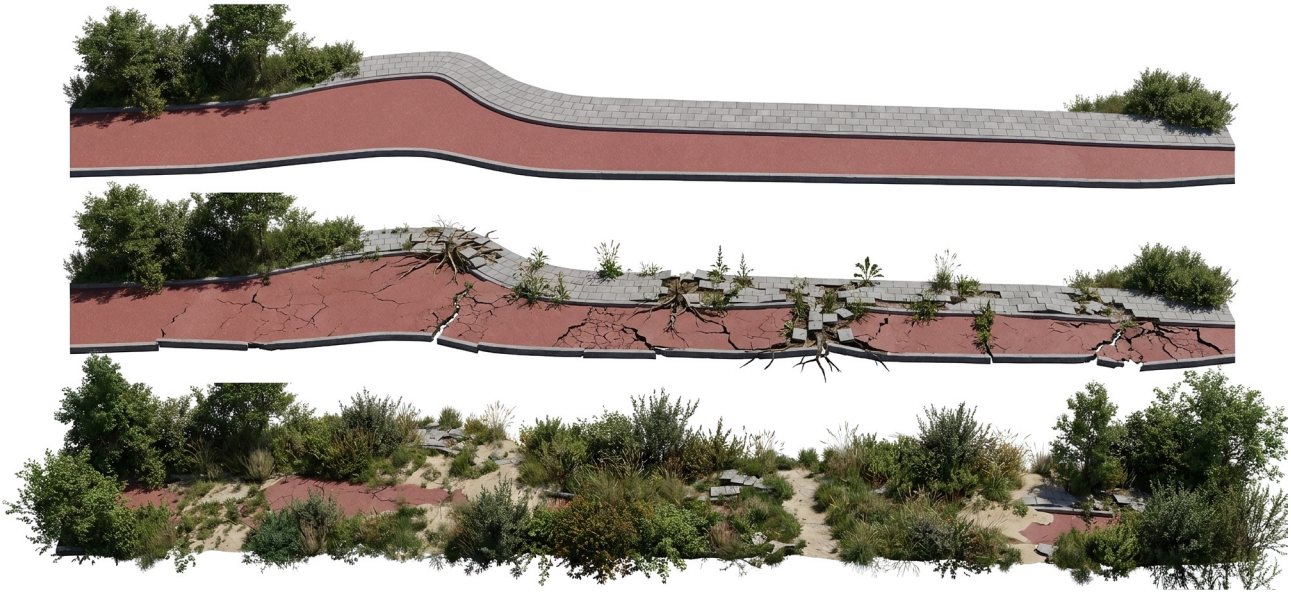
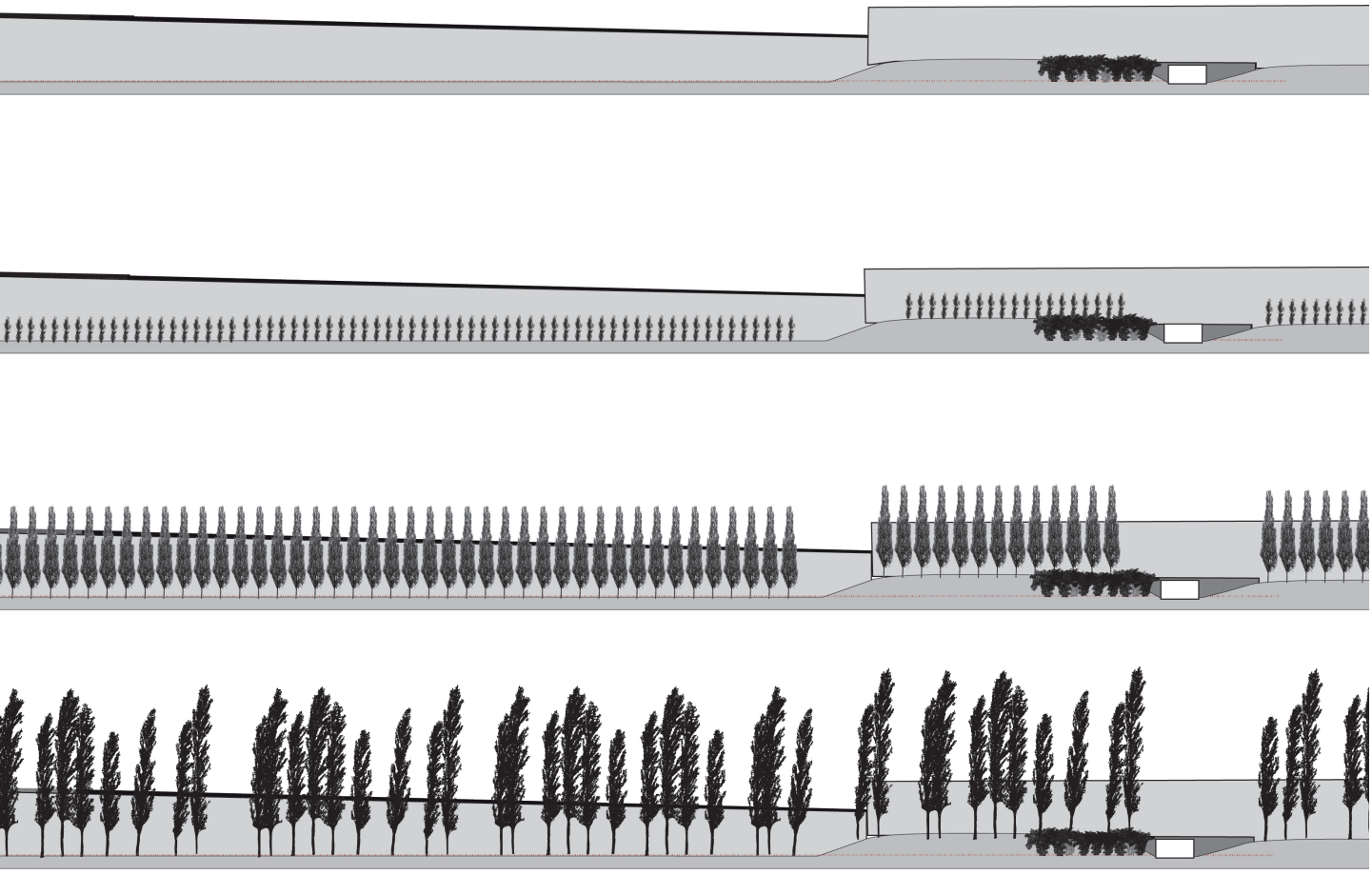


Figure 164: Three cross-sections spanning eighty years. Material structure gradually dissolves as roots deform surfaces, plants colonise openings and ecological processes take spatial dominance. The design initiates transformation but does not determine its outcome. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.



Precedent XII, The Eco-Cathedral



Figure 165: Exterior view of the Eco-Cathedral in Mildam. Stacked stone structures, birch and undergrowth show how construction, weathering and vegetation can continue shaping a landscape over decades. Le Roy, L. (1965-ongoing). Ecokathedraal, Mildam [Photograph]. Photograph by Minji Choi, 2021.



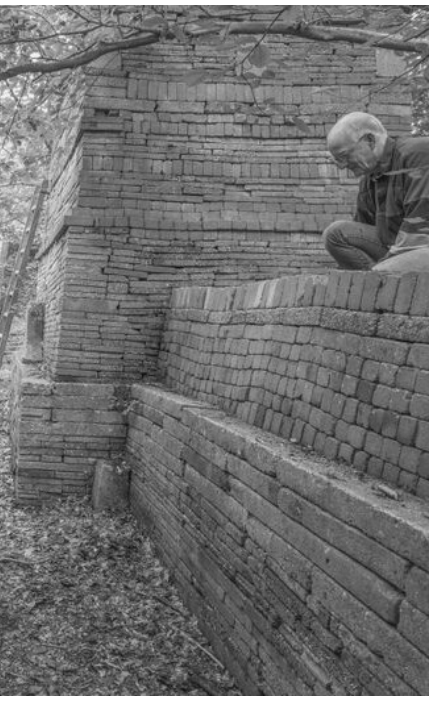
Figure 167: Walking between stacked bri shows the site as a lived process of mate ongoing maintenance. Rijksdienst voor het Mildam [Photograph]. Retrieved from Rijks



Figure 166: Arched passage in the Eco-Cathedral. The stacked masonry passage and tree canopy show how informal construction can create spatial enclosure while remaining open to time, weather and growth. Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed. (2024). Ecokathedraal, Mildam [Photograph]. Retrieved from Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed.



Figure 168: Louis Le Roy placing stones at design as repeated action over time rathe P. (1996). Louis Le Roy placing stones at Retrieved from Rijksdienst voor het Culture



ck walls in the Eco-Cathedral. The image
erial accumulation, bodily movement and
Cultureel Erfgoed. (2024). Ecokathedraal,
dienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed.



t the Eco-Cathedral. The photograph shows
er than as a finished composition. Wouda,
the Ecokathedraal, Mildam [Photograph].
eel Erfgoed.

The Eco-Cathedral in Mildam is the long-term project of artist and ecotect Louis Le Roy. Since the late twentieth century, rubble, tiles, bricks and other discarded materials have been stacked without mortar, allowing plants, animals, weathering and human action to continue shaping the site over time (Nieuwe Instituut, n.d.).

The project is relevant because it refuses the idea of a finished landscape. Le Roy's work shows that design can establish a rhythm of action and withdrawal: build, leave, observe, return and adjust. Its value lies not in a final composition, but in the continuation of relations between material, vegetation, animals and people.

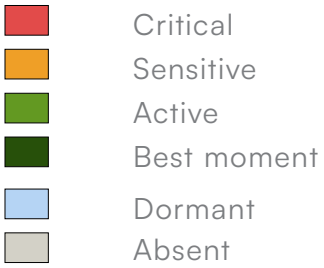
For the Schie corridor, the lesson is that intervention should remain provisional. Later decisions must depend on what has grown, what has been used, what has become unsafe and what has become spatially valuable. The armature should therefore be strong enough to begin the process, but open enough to be changed by it.

8.7. Growth, use and management

Each vegetation type has a different temporal rhythm, and each rhythm produces a different spatial condition. Low meadow remains open and accessible, but requires repeated cutting. Tall grass creates enclosure, seasonal transformation and ecological value, but can become private or unreadable in summer. Shrub offers shelter, nesting and informal occupation. Forest edge provides the greatest ecological depth, but needs the least intervention once established.

The same landscape is therefore used differently by different agents. Walkers need readable paths. Rough sleepers need cover and privacy. Graffiti writers use walls, underpasses and hidden edges. Birds and insects depend on flowering periods, seed heads, dead wood and nesting seasons. Maintenance must respond to these overlaps rather than applying one uniform schedule across the whole corridor.

Management becomes spatial design. Cutting, leaving, opening, pruning and protecting determine whether the corridor feels accessible, hidden, ecological, unsafe, intimate or over-controlled.



Monthly Calendar

		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
HUMAN USE — behavioural patterns (place- and season-dependent)													
Rough sleeping outdoors	temp · shelter · enforcement												
Outdoor graffiti — peak	light · anonymity · accessibility												
Festival TREK	Vroesenpark, May												
RA Month / Schiemond	June · recovery July												
IABR Biennale	June–Oct (biennial)												
Stadspark West recreation	trampling · compaction												
MORE-THAN-HUMAN — FAUNA (010-species Rotterdam)													
White stork — breeding	no noise/machinery near nest												
Common swift — breeding	cavities · eaves · no machinery												
House sparrow — breeding	multiple clutches												
Common pipistrelle — active	maternity May–Jul: extra sensitive												
Sand martin — breeding	riverbank: do not disturb												
Grass snake — egg-laying	tall grass + dead wood = nest												
Natterjack toad — spawning	pond edge + bank												
Painted lady + insects	bloom continuity crucial												
MORE-THAN-HUMAN — FLORA (ambassador species + invasive)													
★ Common mallow	host plant of painted lady												
★ Hemp agrimony	butterfly nectar · riverbank												
Early nectar plants	Mar–Apr underestimated for bees												
Late nectar plants	Sep–Oct crucial · often mown too early												
Japanese knotweed — growth	never flail without removing cuttings												
Knotweed — cutting window	phased · always remove cuttings												
VEGETATION MANAGEMENT — mosaic principle (max ■ per cut, never all at once)													
Low meadow — 6–8x/year	phased · leave flowering patches												
Tall grass — 1x/year	Aug–Sep · never May–Jul												
Shrub — 1x/5 years	Nov–Feb only · not Mar–Aug												
Forest — 1x/year	winter only · very limited												
4th Nature core zone	Schie riverbank · no intervention												

Figure 169: Monthly calendar of temporal conflicts. The table compares human use, maintenance needs, vegetation cycles and more-than-human requirements to show why fixed yearly management is insufficient. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

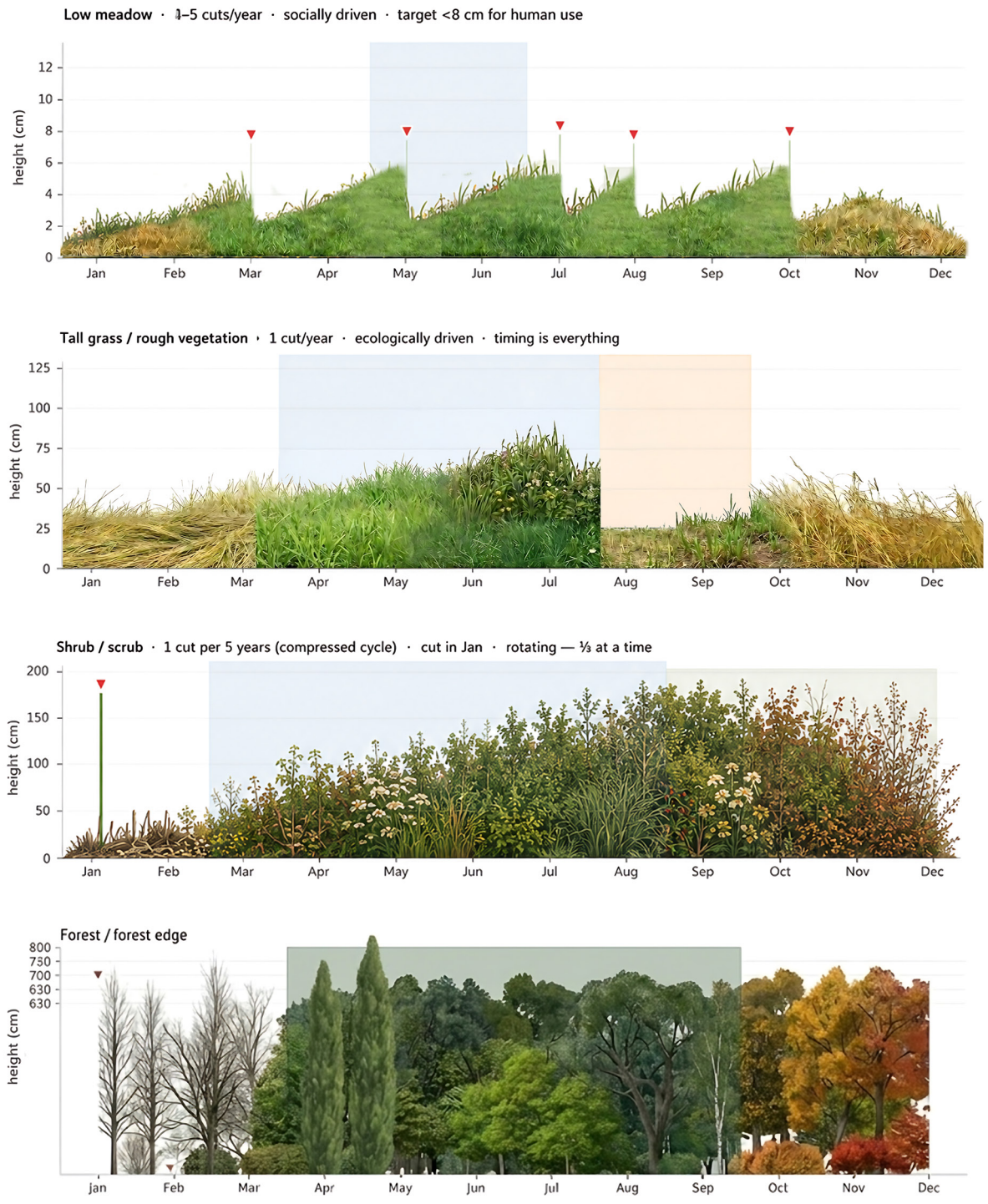


Figure 170: Vegetation rhythms and maintenance windows. The diagrams show how low meadow, tall grass, shrub and forest edge each require different cutting, leaving and observation cycles. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

Precedent XIII, Girona's Shores

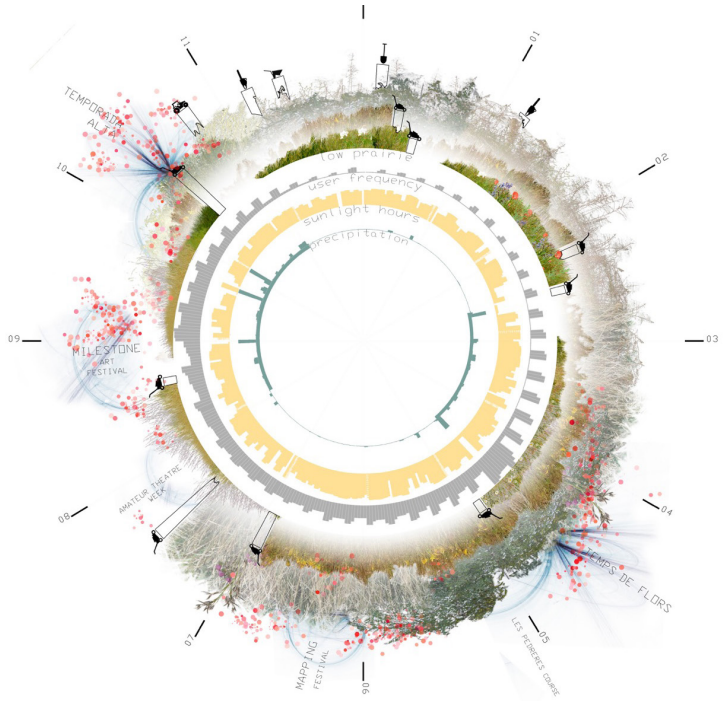


Figure 171: Seasonal maintenance diagram for Girona's Shores. The diagram shows how differentiated vegetation regimes organise the river edge through time rather than through a fixed final composition. EMF, Estudi Martí Franch. (n.d.). Girona's Shores [Diagram]. Retrieved from Landezine.

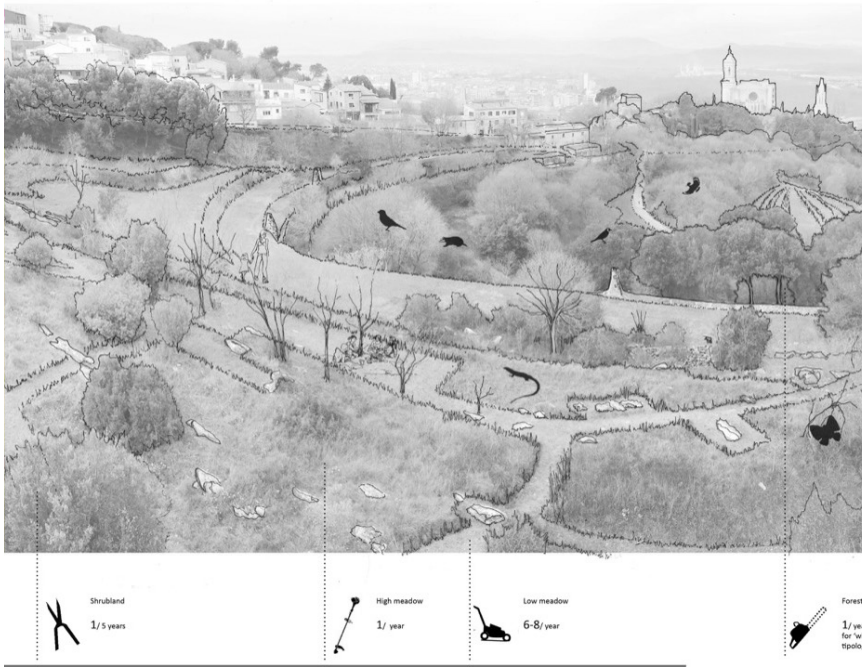


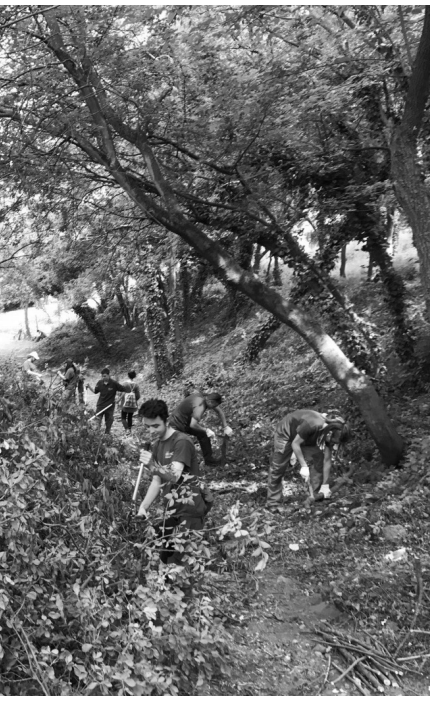
Figure 172: Maintenance as spatial strategy at Girona's Shores. The diagram shows how management produces spatial variety, openness and ecological continuity across the river landscape. EMF, Estudi Martí Franch. (n.d.). Girona's Shores [Diagram]. Retrieved from Landezine.



Figure 173: Field operation at Girona's Sh
site show how maintenance can become
technical aftercare task. EMF, Estudi Martí F
Retrieved from Landezine.



Figure 174: Maintenance as temporal des
cycles and selective clearing show how
openness and ecological continuity rathe
Estudi Martí Franch. (n.d.). Girona's Shore



hores. Selective clearing and adjustment on
an active design instrument rather than a
Franch. (n.d.). Girona's Shores [Photograph].

Girona's Shores shows that maintenance can be a spatial strategy rather than a technical aftercare task. Its value for this thesis is not its visual language, but its method: differentiated maintenance keeps openness, shelter, ecological continuity and access active through time.

For the Schie corridor, mowing, cutting, clearing and leaving are design decisions. A path may need to stay readable, while a thicket remains dense for birds, insects or informal shelter. A meadow edge may be cut to keep movement possible, while flowering grass, seed heads and rough vegetation are left standing elsewhere.

This shifts maintenance from routine control to situated judgement. The question is not how to keep the corridor neat, but how to keep its differences alive. Management must notice informality, ecological use and material decay without automatically removing them.



ign at Girona's Shores. Differentiated cutting
management can produce spatial variety,
r than preserve one fixed final image. EMF,
s [Photograph]. Retrieved from Landezine.

8.8. Seasonal cycle and maintenance

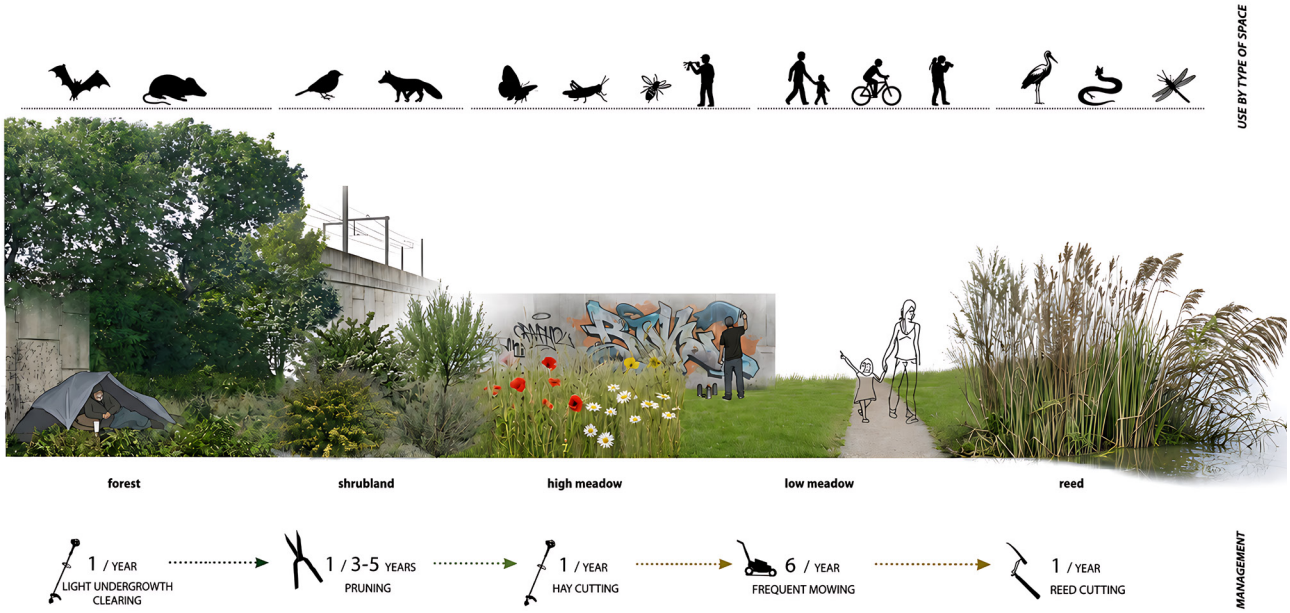


Figure 175: Four types of vegetation maintenance. The diagram compares low meadow, tall grass, shrub and forest edge as different management regimes, each producing a different relation between access, shelter, biodiversity and spatial readability. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.



Figure 176: Baseline vegetation composition of the Schie interstitial. The plan maps the resting-state mosaic of reed, forest edge, tall grass, low meadow and shrubland, showing how different vegetation structures alternate across the corridor before seasonal maintenance and adaptive care are applied. Own work, 2026.

The management plan is not a fixed schedule. It is a grammar. A schedule says: cut this zone on this date. A grammar says: when this condition is present, this species is nesting, this path is still readable, or this shelter is occupied, then act differently.

The calendar maps human use, more-than-human presence and vegetation management together. These layers are not independent. A rough sleeper's summer occupation may coincide with tall grass. A butterfly's late nectar period may coincide with municipal mowing. A path may need to remain open while seed heads are left standing. A willow thicket may need to stay dense because it shelters birds, insects or informal occupation.

The value of the calendar is that these conflicts become visible before maintenance removes them. It turns care into a spatial judgement rather than a routine operation.

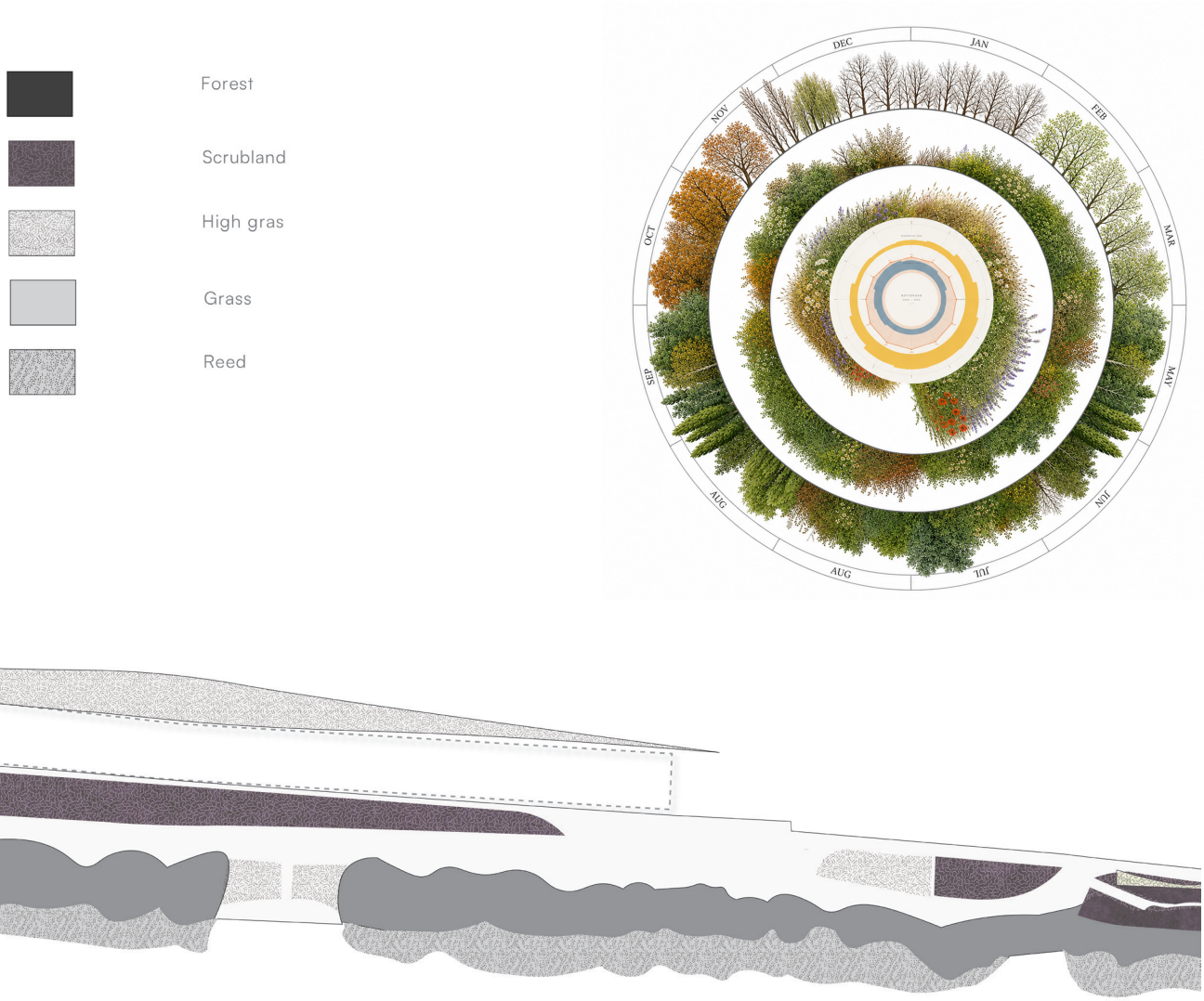


Figure 177: Seasonal maintenance windows. The diagrams translate vegetation height, flowering periods, breeding seasons and disturbance sensitivity into a phased management rhythm for the contemplative path. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

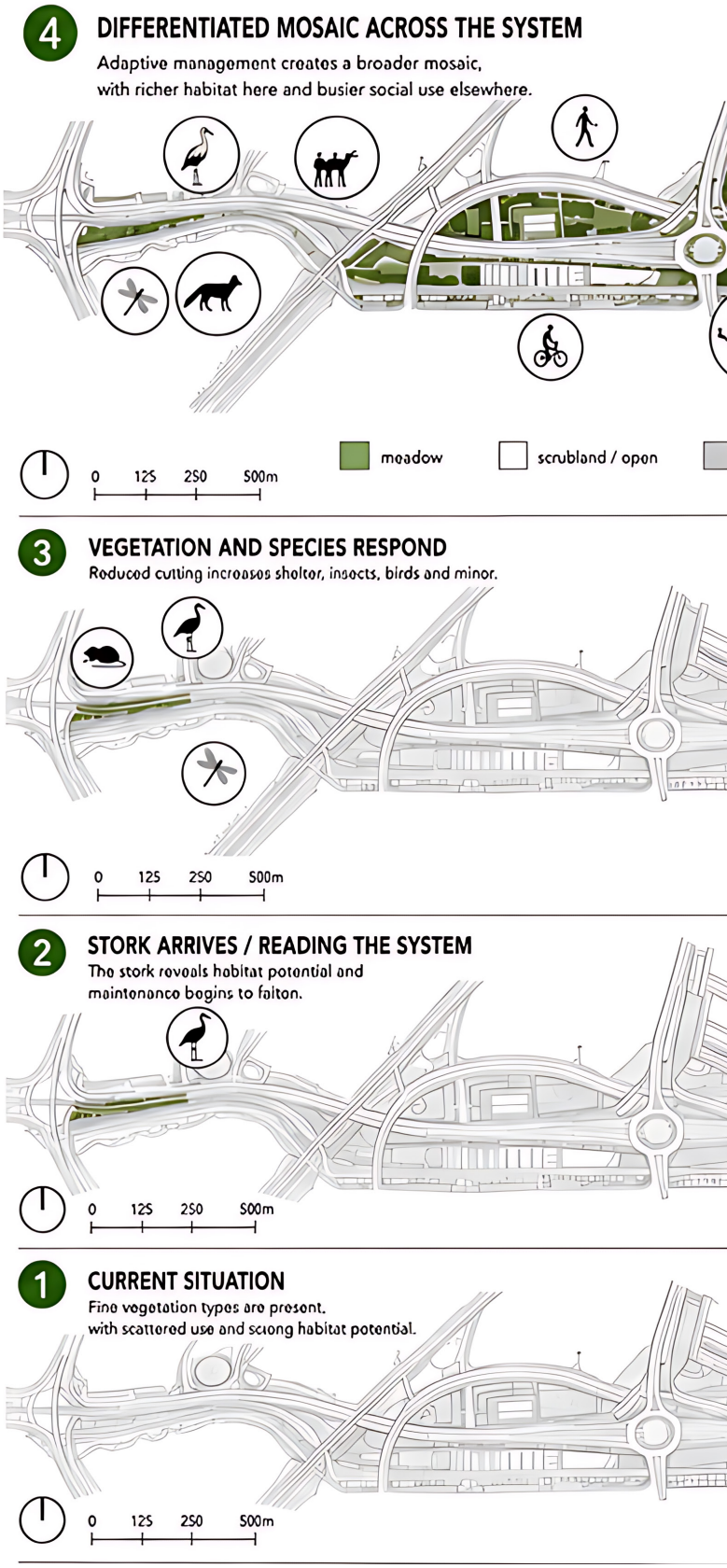
8.9. The manager as co-author

A landscape designed with time cannot be held by fixed maintenance alone. Every decision to mow, leave, cut back, open or protect reshapes light, shelter, visibility, access and habitat. The person making that decision is therefore not outside the design. They become one of its co-authors.

This builds on a shift in ecological design from controlling a final state toward guiding systems that keep changing. Reed and Lister frame design through ecological thinking, uncertainty and projective systems rather than fixed compositions (Reed & Lister, 2014). Clément's moving garden works in the same direction: the gardener acts with vegetation, redirecting growth rather than arresting it (Clément, 2004). DeSilvey's curated decay adds that care can allow material transformation to remain visible, instead of preserving everything as stable form (DeSilvey, 2017).

The maintenance crew carries operational knowledge: safety, access, timing, equipment and municipal responsibility. The field observer reads what is happening before action is taken: occupation, nesting, flowering, blocked paths, emerging habitat and material decay.

Together they turn maintenance into ongoing design. The corridor continues through small decisions: opening one path, leaving one thicket, cutting one edge, tolerating one temporary shelter, protecting one nesting period and allowing one crack to widen.



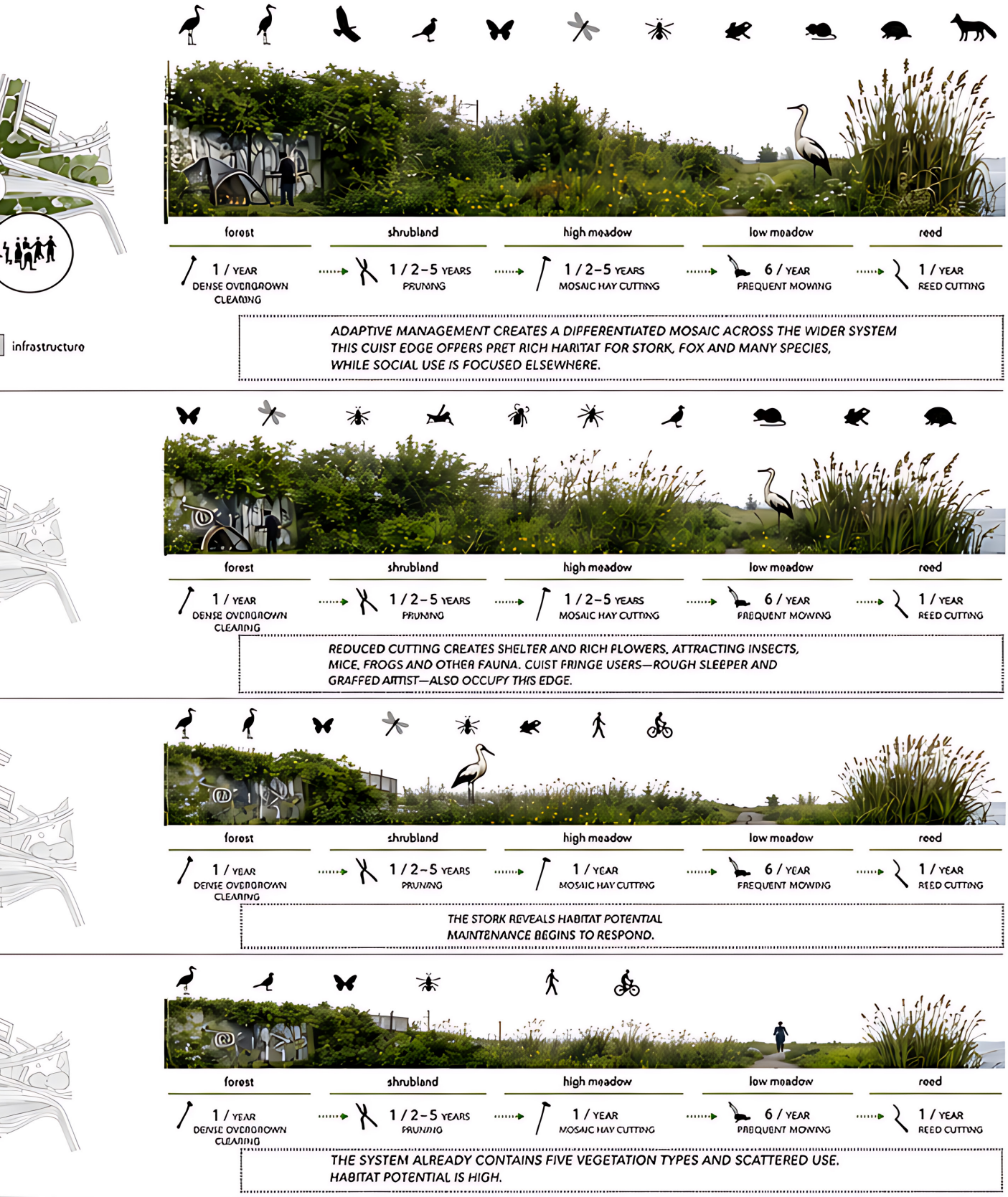


Figure 178: Listening system for the Schie corridor. Four temporal stages show how storm events, vegetation response, species occupation and differentiated maintenance gradually transform the corridor from fixed design into adaptive living system. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

8.10. The listening System

The listening system brings the chapter together. The design establishes a spatial armature, but the larger interstitial landscape is continually rewritten by growth, decay, occupation, weather, maintenance and more-than-human use. The system does not aim for stability. It aims for responsiveness.

DeSilvey describes care as a practice that lets material change stay legible rather than arresting it (DeSilvey, 2017). The matrix works in that spirit. It asks who or what is present, what is being claimed, what is at risk, and what minimal response is needed. Some spaces are opened. Some are held dense. Some walls stay visible for expression, others are softened by vegetation. Some shelters are tolerated temporarily. Some nesting or flowering periods override visual neatness.

The ruinous elements are not corrected by default. Broken concrete lifted by poplar roots is not repaired. Wisteria is not pruned into order. Cracks, root pressure, weathering and takeover are allowed to continue where they do not block essential access or create direct danger. The task is to keep ruinosity legible, not to clean it away.

The system therefore does not decide what the place should become. It decides when to open, hold, hide, reveal, protect or leave. Attunement is no longer only an individual contemplative experience. It becomes a shared relation between body, site, material, species and care.



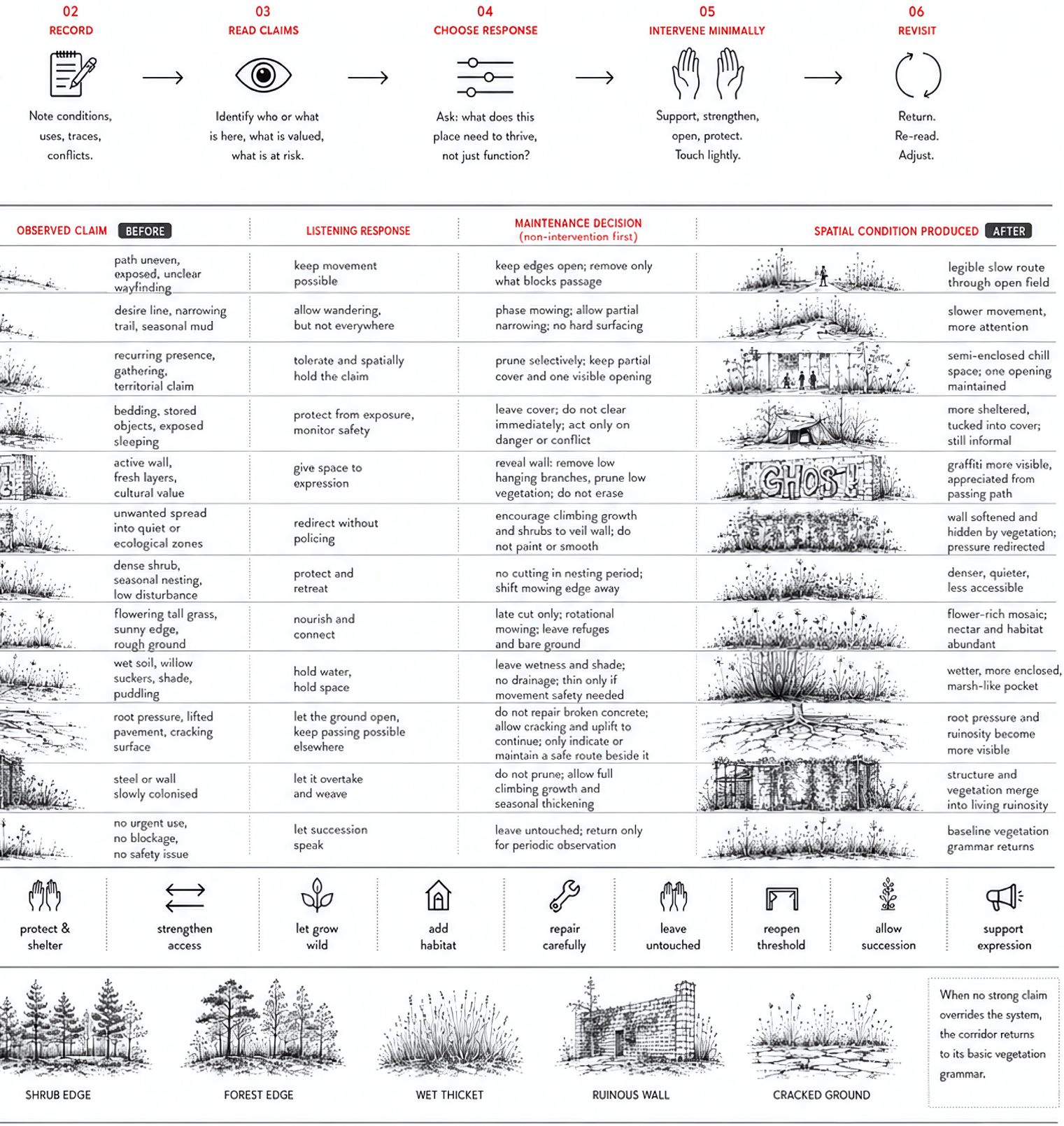


Figure 179: The Listening System as adaptive care manual for the larger Rotterdam North interstitial landscape. The matrix translates observed claims into minimal maintenance decisions, showing how paths, informal occupation, graffiti, nesting, pollinators, wet hollows, poplar roots, cracked concrete, wisteria and resting vegetation are read, protected, opened, hidden or left untouched over time. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

8.11. Conclusion: attunement as adapti

Designing with time changes the meaning of the project. The contemplative path is not finished when the armature is built. It remains dependent on growth, decay, informal occupation, maintenance decisions and more-than-human use. The images on the right show this not as one final design state, but as multiple possible conditions within the larger interstitial field.

This does not weaken the design. It is the design. The armature gives the corridor enough structure to remain readable, while the listening system prevents that structure from becoming fixed, over-managed or closed to change.

The Schie corridor therefore becomes a living ruin: not abandoned, not restored, not turned into a conventional park, but held in a state where movement, shelter, weathering, vegetation, access and decay can keep negotiating with each other. In that condition, care is not the opposite of ruinosity. Care is what allows ruinosity to remain legible.

Figure 180: Possible futures for the wider Schie interstitial field. These images are not fixed design proposals for one location, but atmospheric projections of how the armature, adaptive maintenance and the listening system could produce different spatial conditions over time: open, layered, sheltered, wet, ruinous and slowly occupied. Own work, digitally refined with AI-assisted image editing, 2026.

Possible futures of the wider interstitial field





The design does not produce one final image. It prepares a field in which different forms of ruin, shelter, growth and access can emerge while remaining legible.



09 Conclusion, Discussion, Reflection

9.1. Conclusion

Contribution to landscape architecture

This thesis contributes to landscape architecture by treating the interstitial landscape not as leftover ground to be corrected, but as a spatial, ecological and temporal condition to be read, framed and cared for. The design operates across four landscape architectural perspectives. Spatially, it works through movement, enclosure, threshold and sequence. As palimpsest, it reads infrastructure, water, informal use, vegetation and decay as accumulated layers rather than as disturbance. As scale-continuum, it connects small bodily encounters along the Schie to the larger infrastructural and ecological system of Rotterdam North. As process, it treats succession, weathering, maintenance and informal appropriation as active design materials. The project therefore does not propose a finished park, but an adaptive armature through which attention, use and ecological development can remain open over time.

The research question of this thesis asked how the latent contemplative and ruinous qualities of interstitial spaces along the Schie can be spatially framed as an armature for contemplative attunement with nature. The project answers this question by showing that attunement cannot be designed directly. It can only be prepared through spatial conditions that slow perception, make time perceptible and allow the visitor to enter into a more careful relation with the living landscape.

The design assignment is answered through the transformation of the interstitial space of Stadspark-West into a contemplative path: not by replacing its rough conditions, but by organising them into a sequence of invitation, wandering, confirmation, slowing down and standing still.

The Schie interstitial already contains many of these conditions. Water, bridge shadow, sound, rough ground, graffiti, wet vegetation, informal paths, decay and fourth-nature growth are not absent qualities waiting for design. They are the existing material of the site. However, they are fragmented, difficult to enter and often socially misread as neglect. The design therefore does not invent contemplation from outside. It makes existing contemplative and ruinous qualities legible enough to be encountered.

The answer is structured through three design lines. Contemplation defines the perceptual aim: slowing down, noticing,

pausing and becoming bodily present. Ruinosity defines the temporal and material attitude: weathering, decay, roughness, informal use, ecological succession and incompleteness are not removed, but made readable as active processes. Tree architecture provides the spatial armature: rhythm, enclosure, threshold, orientation and pause are created through trunks, crowns, edges and planted structures rather than through conventional park composition.

Together, these lines form the contemplative path along the Schie. The route is structured through five experiential moments: invitation, wandering, confirmation, slowing down and standing still. Each moment performs a specific task. Invitation makes the interstitial approachable without turning it into a formal park entrance. Wandering allows uncertainty while keeping orientation. Confirmation gives the body enough trust to continue. Slowing down shifts attention from destination to ground, edge, sound and surface. Standing still creates the condition in which attention can stabilise.

The project therefore works between openness and legibility. It gives the existing landscape enough order to be entered, read and inhabited, but not so much order that its ambiguity disappears. This position follows the tension identified by Luo, in which leftover spaces can be disclosed through design but also risk losing the openness that gives them value (Luo, 2021). It also builds on Nassauer's argument that messy ecological conditions need cues of care to be recognised as intentional rather than neglected (Nassauer, 1995).

The final design is not a finished image, but a spatial and temporal armature. It establishes a first structure and then allows weathering, growth, informal use and maintenance to continue shaping the place. Steel rusts, wisteria and willow occupy the walls, poplar roots disturb the asphalt, pioneer vegetation enters cracks, and maintenance selectively opens or protects different zones. Over time, the design becomes less a fixed composition and more a negotiated system between people, vegetation, animals, water, material decay and care.

The contribution of this thesis lies in showing that contemplation does not have to depend on purity, silence or perfect composition. In the interstitial landscape, contemplation can also emerge through friction, roughness, weathering, enclosure and living processes. The Schie corridor becomes contemplative not by escaping the city, but by slowing the city down enough to be perceived differently. The aim is not to produce a prescribed experience, but to prepare conditions for attunement: a more careful relation between body, place, material, time and the more-than-human world.

9.2. Discussion

The main unresolved issue in this thesis is the balance between making the interstitial landscape legible and keeping it open, rough and unfinished. Too little design leaves the place unreadable or inaccessible. Too much design risks turning it into a park-like composition, erasing the qualities that made it valuable. The final proposal positions itself between these extremes, but this balance remains fragile.

This fragility is not only visual. It is also social and ecological. Interstitial spaces are often used by people and species with limited formal power in the city: rough sleepers, graffiti writers, informal users, pioneer plants, nesting birds, insects, rodents and spontaneous vegetation. These users often depend on the fact that such spaces are overlooked, ambiguous or difficult to control. Making the corridor more visible and accessible could also make it more vulnerable to regulation, displacement or over-maintenance.

For that reason, the thesis cannot argue that every interstitial space should be opened or designed. Some places should remain hidden. Some forms of roughness provide shelter, anonymity and ecological freedom. The design attitude developed here is therefore selective. It asks where intervention is necessary, where a small spatial cue is enough, and where doing nothing is the strongest form of care.

A second limitation concerns the question of who contemplative attunement is actually for. The thesis does not only aim to serve people who already seek silence, reflection or alternative urban nature. Its ambition is broader: to make the value of interstitial fourth nature perceptible to people who might otherwise pass by, dismiss it as disorder, or read decay only as neglect. Whether the design succeeds in doing this remains uncertain.

This uncertainty is important. Existing informal users may already have forms of attunement to the site, but not necessarily through scenic appreciation or recreational walking. A graffiti writer, rough sleeper or maintenance worker may know the site through repeated use, shelter, risk, material, access, timing or necessity. These forms of relation are different from contemplative appreciation, but they are not less real. The design therefore has to avoid replacing existing forms of attachment with a more aesthetic or controlled idea of attention.

The proposal assumes that tree rhythm, clear thresholds, maintained openings, visible edges and material framing can shift perception from neglect toward

attended ruinosity. This assumption draws on Nassauer's notion of cues to care, but it remains untested in this specific context (Nassauer, 1995). More research would be needed to know whether visitors who are not already sympathetic to ruinosity, fourth nature or interstitial landscapes would actually read the design as cared for rather than abandoned.

A third limitation concerns the users of the site. The thesis is based on repeated observation, mapping, drawing and site visits, but it does not include structured interviews with rough sleepers, graffiti writers, maintenance workers or regular informal users. This limits the social precision of the proposal. More direct engagement would be needed to understand what forms of access, shelter, privacy or disturbance these users actually experience.

The contemplative experience also remains difficult to prove. The thesis argues that thresholds, enclosure, rhythm, water, material depth, rough surfaces and temporal change can prepare conditions for attunement, supported by literature on contemplative landscapes and embodied perception (Olszewska-Guizzo, 2023; Pérez-Gómez, 2016). However, it does not empirically test whether visitors will actually experience the site in this way. Future research could include walking interviews, seasonal observation, sound mapping, behavioural mapping and longer fieldwork across different times of day.

The temporal dimension is another open question. The design depends on processes that cannot be fully controlled: rust, root pressure, willow growth, wisteria coverage, cracking asphalt, changing water levels, informal occupation and maintenance decisions. This is part of the strength of the project, but also part of its uncertainty. The proposal can set conditions, but it cannot guarantee the exact outcome.

This uncertainty is central to the thesis. Designing with time means accepting that the landscape will keep making itself. The role of the designer is not to fix the final state, but to establish a structure that can remain meaningful while it changes. In this sense, the thesis proposes the designer as reader, editor and temporary co-author rather than as the sole author of the landscape.

9.3. Reflection

This thesis changed the way I understand landscape architecture. I began with the desire to design strongly, to intervene clearly and to make a visible spatial statement. Over time, the project forced me to slow down. The interstitial landscapes of Rotterdam North did not need a new identity imposed on them. They first needed to be read.

That reading took time. At first, the sites appeared messy, damaged and residual. Through repeated visits, their structure became visible: water collecting in low points, vegetation occupying cracks and edges, graffiti using walls as shelter and surface, informal paths appearing through use, bridge shadows creating enclosure, and rough ground slowing the body down. These conditions were not failures of the landscape. They were the landscape.

The most important shift in the thesis was from designing contemplation as an atmosphere to understanding attunement as a relation. I no longer see contemplation as something that must look quiet, clean or sacred. In the Schie corridor it appears through rougher conditions: wet soil, broken asphalt, rust, shadow, vegetation, infrastructure, water and informal occupation. The project taught me that stillness can exist inside friction.

The design process also made clear that not every user seeks the same kind of attention. A cyclist, a rough sleeper, a graffiti writer, a bird, a willow and a maintenance worker all read the corridor differently. The design should therefore not force one ideal experience. It should create conditions where different forms of use and attention can coexist. For some, the site offers beauty. For others, shelter, cover, movement, nesting, material, or simply a place where no one asks anything.

Working with time was one of the hardest parts of the project. It was difficult to draw processes without making them too fixed. Root pressure, decay, succession and maintenance do not behave like architectural objects. They require conditional thinking: if the path is left, vegetation takes over; if a zone is cut, visibility returns; if a wall rusts, it becomes more open; if roots lift asphalt, the ground becomes readable as a living surface. This made the project more complex, but also more honest.

The thesis also changed my own working rhythm. Designing for contemplation while working under constant pressure created a contradiction. I had to learn that the subject was not only theoretical. It also asked something from my own

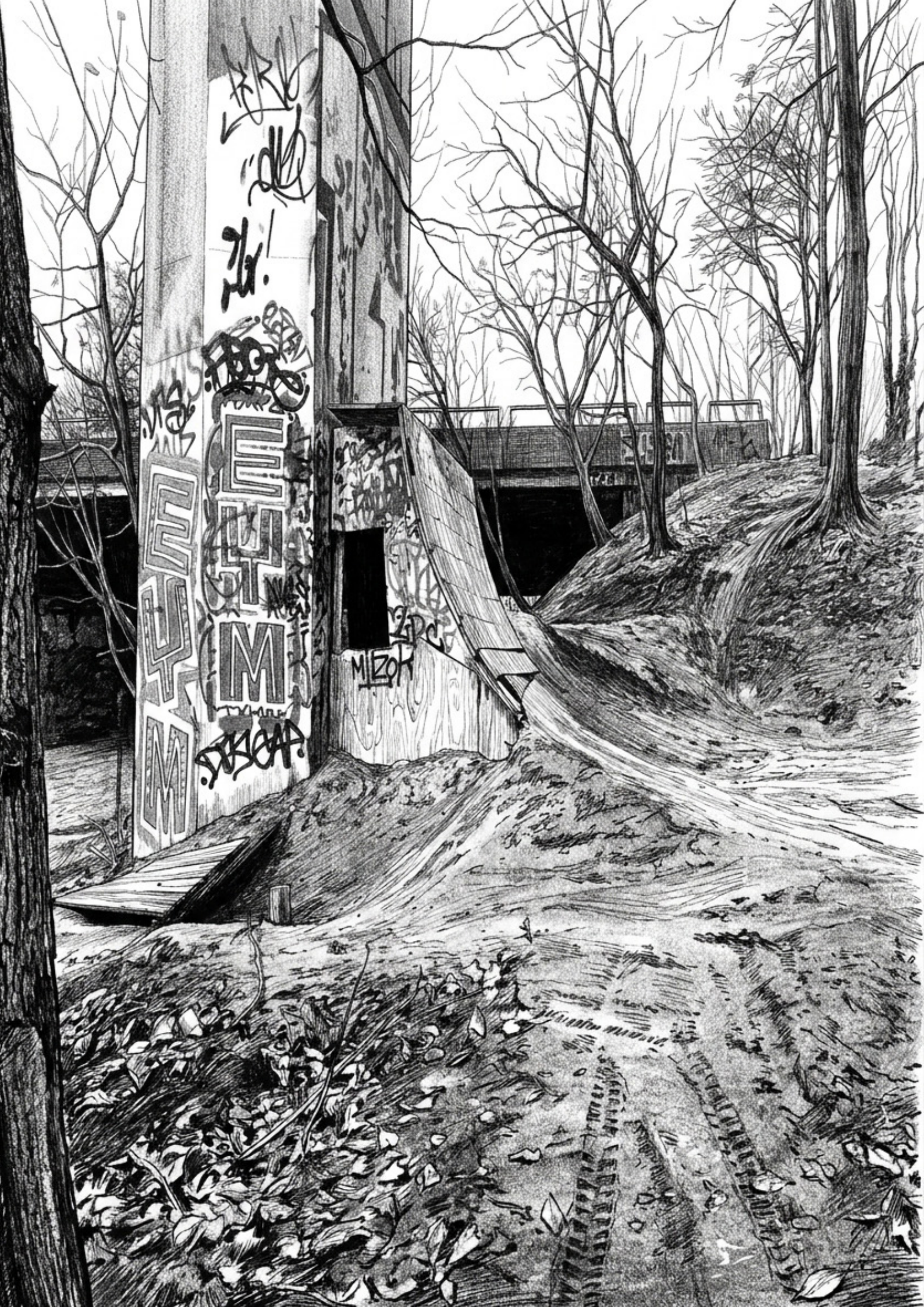
attention, patience and way of working. That made the project more personal, but also more precise.

What I would do differently is spend more time with the existing users of the site. I would visit at night, observe across more seasons, speak with people who use the corridor informally, and follow maintenance decisions more closely. This would make the social and temporal consequences of the design more grounded.

The project also changed my understanding of who attunement is for. Not every user enters the Schie corridor in search of beauty, silence or reflection. A cyclist, a graffiti writer, a rough sleeper, a bird, a willow and a maintenance worker all read the site differently. Some forms of connection emerge through aesthetic attention, others through use, shelter, cover, nesting, material or necessity. The design should therefore not force one ideal contemplative experience. It should create conditions in which different forms of attention and occupation can coexist without erasing the roughness that made them possible in the first place.

I would also start the physical model earlier. During the process I moved quickly into details, time-based systems and experimental elements. A stronger model phase could have helped test the larger composition, sequence and spatial hierarchy before the design became too detailed. It would have allowed the route, openings, tree rhythm, walls and pause moments to be judged more clearly as one spatial system.

The main lesson I take from this thesis is that landscape architecture does not always need to add more. Sometimes it needs to reveal what is already there. Sometimes it needs to frame, slow down, protect, open slightly, or leave alone. In the interstitial landscapes of Rotterdam North, the task was not to create beauty from nothing. It was to make the existing beauty of roughness, incompleteness and time perceptible.



10 Acknowledgements & References

10.1. AI Acknowledgements

I utilized generative AI tools, including ChatGPT, Perplexity, Grok, and Claude, to improve the clarity and readability of the text. I fully developed the original content and interpretations; the AI output was reviewed and revised by me as needed. As the author, I bear full responsibility for the final text.

In addition, I used generative AI tools in the development of visual material. These tools were primarily used to support early-stage visual exploration, such as enhancing hand sketches, generating base layers, testing textures, and testing and exploring creative ideas quickly. The AI-generated outputs functioned as intermediate working material rather than final representations. All AI-generated visuals were critically reviewed, corrected, adjusted, or redrawn by me. In many cases, they served as a foundation for further manual drawing photoshopping or were used as exploratory studies that were subsequently refined into final design decisions.

10.2. Photo Acknowledgements

All chapter-opening photographs are based on fieldwork material from the TU Delft Q4 on-site course in 2024. The majority of these photographs were taken by Frederic de Milliano. Additional site photographs were taken by the author during later fieldwork visits in 2025 and 2026.

Several photographic materials were redrawn, edited or digitally refined as part of the visual development of the thesis. Where AI-assisted image editing contributed to the final appearance of an image, this is stated directly in the relevant figure caption.

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11 Appendix

Stakeholder Analysis — Vegetation Type vs. User

Schie Interstitial Space, Rotterdam · What does each vegetation type offer each user? · Long-term perspective

Stakeholder	Low Meadow 6–8×/year	Tall Grass 1×/year	Shrub 1×/5 years	Forest 1×/year
HUMAN USE				
Rough sleepers	No shelter, exposed	Seasonal cover	Good cover, winter too	Best cover, thermal comfort
Graffiti artists	No camouflage	Seasonal screen	Good screen	Access limited by vegetation
Recreation / Stadspark West	Accessible, clear	Hard to enter, tick risk	Paths disappear	Dark, less inviting
RA Month / IABR / Festivals	Neutral backdrop	Wild aesthetic, photogenic	Interesting venue	Atmospheric
Municipality / manager	Highest cost: 6–8×/year	Low cost: 1×/year	Occasional capital works	Clearing, occasional
MORE-THAN-HUMAN — FAUNA				
White stork / swift / sand martin	Little food, nest disturbance	Good insect base	Nesting at shrub edge	Forest edge: ideal
House sparrow / pipistrelle	Little cover, few insects	Good foraging	Nesting in shrubs	Cavities, crevices
Grass snake / natterjack toad	No egg site, no microclimate	Seasonal, vulnerable	Compost zones, dead wood	Fallen logs: ideal
Painted lady + insects	No nectar plants	Good bloom, mowing destroys	Flower-rich edge	Closed canopy = little bloom
MORE-THAN-HUMAN — FLORA				
★ Common mallow	Mown before flowering	Flowers, timing risk	Flowers in light gaps	Too dark under canopy
★ Hemp agrimony	Mown before flowering	Flowers, timing risk	Grows along edge	Too dark
Japanese knotweed	Suppressed by mowing	Dominates, displaces all	Unbeatable in shrub zone	Takes over forest edge

Figure 182: Stakeholder matrix for vegetation management. The table compares how low meadow, tall grass, shrub and forest edge support or hinder human use, more-than-human habitat and long-term maintenance. Own work, 2026.

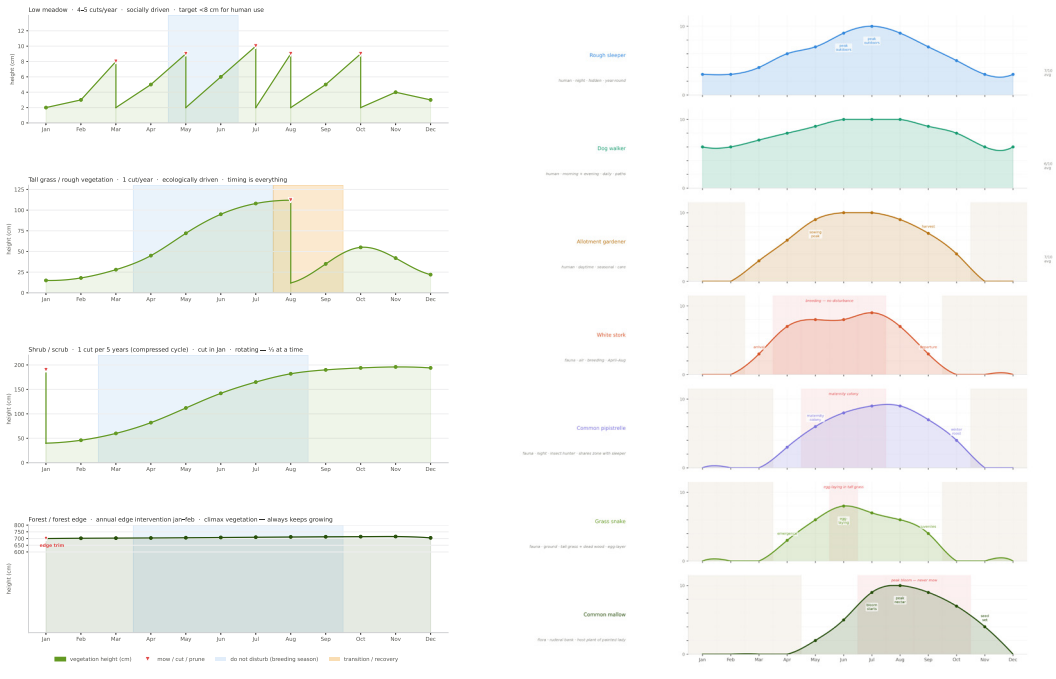
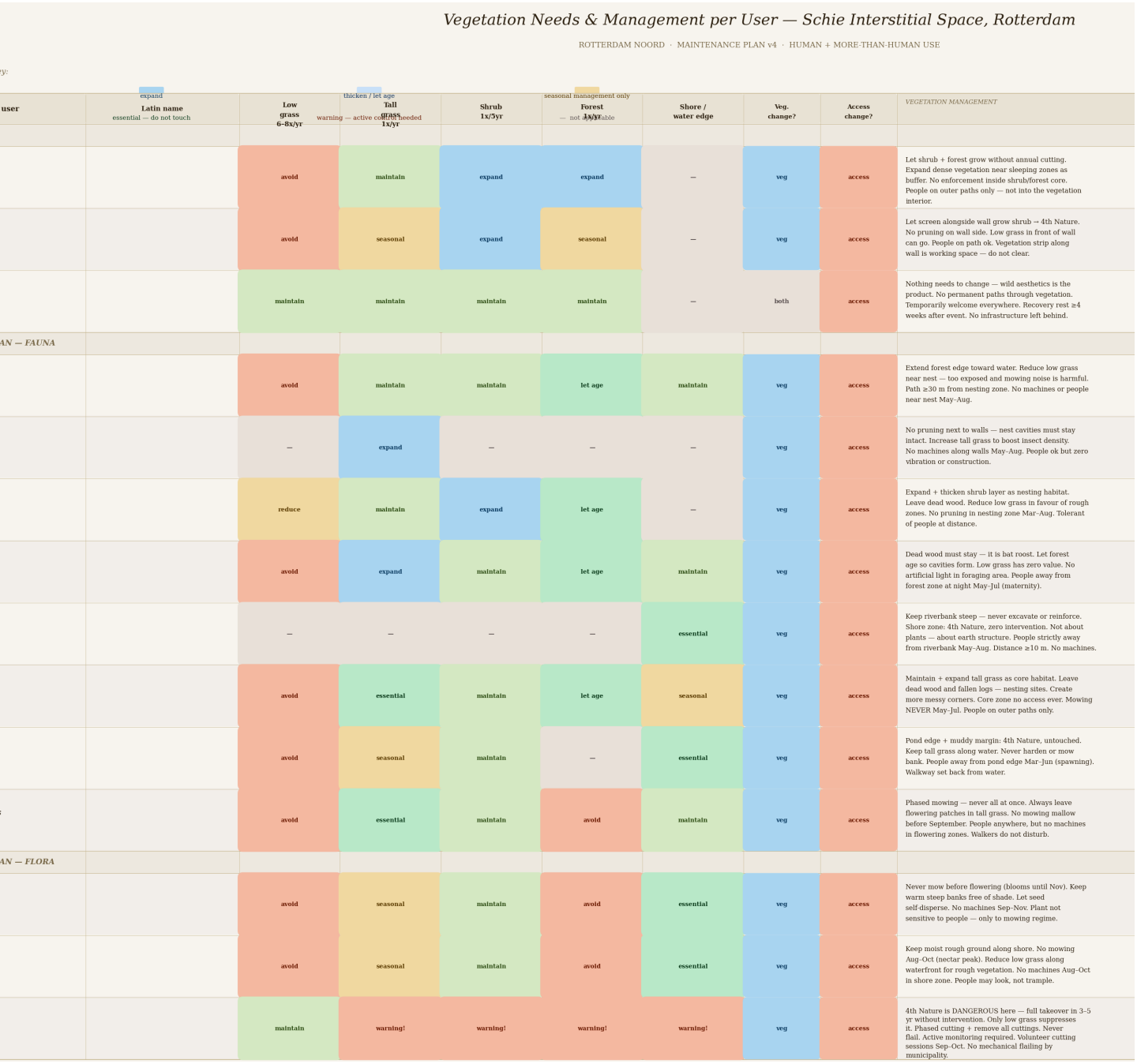


Figure 181: Vegetation height and maintenance rhythm. The diagrams compare seasonal growth, cutting moments and disturbance-sensitive periods for low meadow, tall grass, shrub and forest edge. Own work, 2026.



Vegetation Needs & Management per User — Schie Interstitial Space, Rotterdam

ROTTERDAM NOORD · MAINTENANCE PLAN v4 · HUMAN + MORE-THAN-HUMAN USE

key:
expand
essential — do not touch
thicken / let age
warning — active control needed
seasonal management only
— not applicable

user	Latin name	Low grass 6–8x/yr	Tall grass 1x/yr	Shrub 1x/5yr	Forest 1x/yr	Shore / water edge	Veg. change?	Access change?	VEGETATION MANAGEMENT
		avoid	maintain	expand	expand	–	veg	access	Let shrub + forest grow without annual cutting. Expand dense vegetation near sleeping zones as buffer. No enforcement inside shrub/forest core. People on outer paths only — not into the vegetation interior.
		avoid	seasonal	expand	seasonal	–	veg	access	Let screen alongside wall grow shrub → 4th Nature. No pruning on wall side. Low grass in front of wall can go. People on path ok. Vegetation strip along wall is working space — do not clear.
		maintain	maintain	maintain	maintain	–	both	access	Nothing needs to change — wild aesthetics is the product. No permanent paths through vegetation. Temporarily welcome everywhere. Recovery rest ≥4 weeks after event. No infrastructure left behind.
AN — FAUNA									
		avoid	maintain	maintain	let age	maintain	veg	access	Extend forest edge toward water. Reduce low grass near nest — too exposed and mowing noise is harmful. Path ≥30 m from nesting zone. No machines or people near nest May–Aug.
		–	expand	–	–	–	veg	access	No pruning next to walls — nest cavities must stay intact. Increase tall grass to boost insect density. No machines along walls May–Aug. People ok but zero vibration or construction.
		reduce	maintain	expand	let age	–	veg	access	Expand + thicken shrub layer as nesting habitat. Leave dead wood. Reduce low grass in favour of rough zones. No pruning in nesting zone Mar–Aug. Tolerant of people at distance.
		avoid	expand	maintain	let age	maintain	veg	access	Dead wood must stay — it is bat roost. Let forest age so cavities form. Low grass has zero value. No artificial light in foraging area. People away from forest zone at night May–Jul (maternity).
		–	–	–	–	essential	veg	access	Keep riverbank steep — never excavate or reinforce. Shore zone: 4th Nature, zero intervention. Not about plants — about earth structure. People strictly away from riverbank May–Aug. Distance ≥10 m. No machines.
		avoid	essential	maintain	let age	seasonal	veg	access	Maintain + expand tall grass as core habitat. Leave dead wood and fallen logs — nesting sites. Create more messy corners. Core zone no access ever. Mowing NEVER May–Jul. People on outer paths only.
		avoid	seasonal	maintain	–	essential	veg	access	Pond edge + muddy margin: 4th Nature, untouched. Keep tall grass along water. Never harden or mow bank. People away from pond edge Mar–Jun (spawning). Walkway set back from water.
;		avoid	essential	maintain	avoid	maintain	veg	access	Phased mowing — never all at once. Always leave flowering patches in tall grass. No mowing mallow before September. People anywhere, but no machines in flowering zones. Walkers do not disturb.
AN — FLORA									
		avoid	seasonal	maintain	avoid	essential	veg	access	Never mow before flowering (blooms until Nov). Keep warm steep banks free of shade. Let seed self-disperse. No machines Sep–Nov. Plant not sensitive to people — only to mowing regime.
		avoid	seasonal	maintain	avoid	essential	veg	access	Keep moist rough ground along shore. No mowing Aug–Oct (nectar peak). Reduce low grass along waterfront for rough vegetation. No machines Aug–Oct in shore zone. People may look, not trample.
		maintain	warning!	warning!	warning!	warning!	veg	access	4th Nature is DANGEROUS here — full takeover in 3–5 yr without intervention. Only low grass suppresses it. Phased cutting + remove all cuttings. Never flail. Active monitoring required. Volunteer cutting sessions Sep–Oct. No mechanical flailing by municipality.

Figure 183: Vegetation needs and management per user. The matrix compares how different vegetation types support or hinder human users, more-than-human species and maintenance responsibilities, showing where access, shelter, nesting, nectar, water edge conditions and invasive growth require different forms of care. Own work, 2026.



