

THE BIRDHOUSE

The Wasteland in the City

PLACES FOR FREEDOM

*The Revalue of Unfinished Landscapes
Through Architectural Structures*

*Graduation Design Book
Esmeralda Bierma*

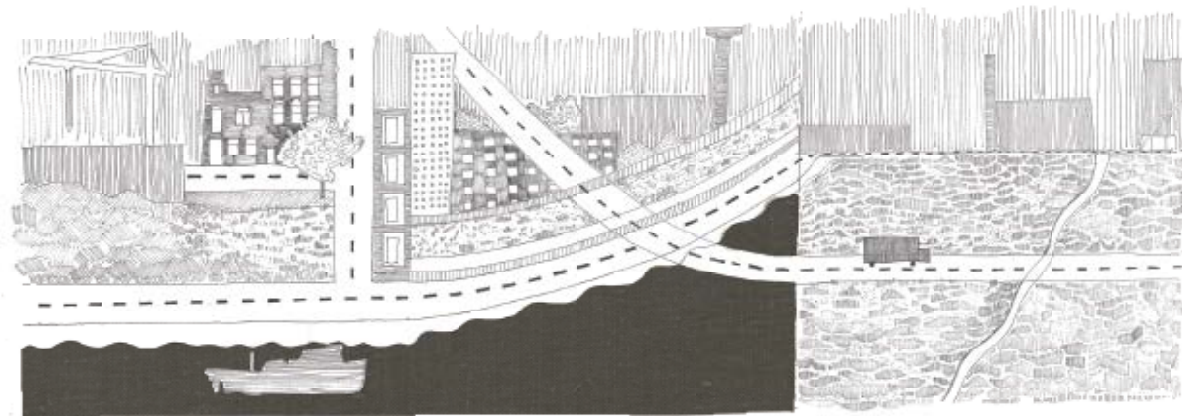
PLACES FOR FREEDOM / BOOK I /
The Birdhouse / The Wasteland in the City

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TU Delft Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment
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PLACES FOR FREEDOM



The research and graduation project are about the revalue of unfinished, abandoned landscapes through architectural structures. Nowadays it is almost rare to find places and landscapes in cities that have no function, are left behind or not taken care of. Even in the city of Rotterdam, which is less dense than Amsterdam, every square meter is very valuable and is often planned for. If it does not have a destination yet, then developers are eager to make that piece of land profitable. This capitalistic view is characteristic for our productive, accelerated and consumptive society. In this society, we tend to forget the small, but valuable things in life and stray away from our core, our existential self, which is that we are part of nature. In our continuous drive for moving forward, we tend to neglect the need for spaces for reflection or just being. The city needs these breathing spaces where, for a moment, the citizen is not a passive consumer, but an active and playful participant, a wanderer, a collector and an explorer in these 'Places for Freedom'.

Preliminary to the design a research was done on the unfinished, abandoned landscapes of Rotterdam: places in the city that lost their formal use, are left behind and often taken over by nature. Those places fascinated me as they actually oppose the productive and planned city and the effects thereof. In order to find the proper methods to explore and close read those places, a study was done in psychogeography. Psychogeography is an exploration of urban environments that emphasizes playfulness and 'drifting' to find unexpected perspectives and therefore can create new awareness of places. Walking, the merit of wandering, as the main act of the research for encountering those places, means slowing down which allows close

reading of space, remembrance and let in the invisible sensory experience. Furthermore, the methods photographing, drawing and writing were used to document, represent and make them legible for others. It allowed me to perceive the specific qualities of the observed places and lead to a categorization of different types of unfinished landscapes found in Rotterdam. For the design proposal, the three typical unfinished landscapes of Rotterdam are being exposed: the wasteland in the city, the in-between landscape and the industrial landscape.

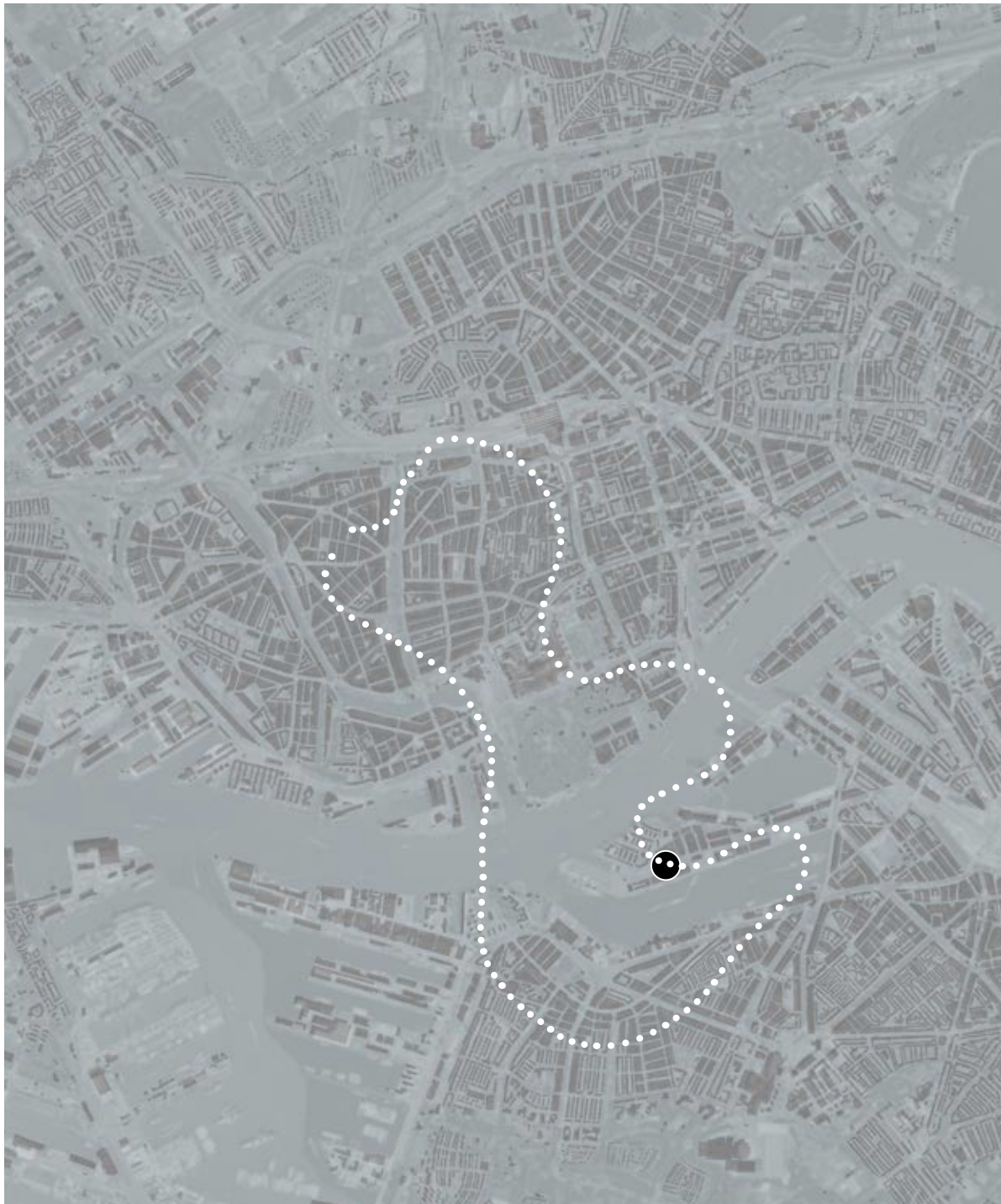
With the design 'Places for Freedom' I create architectural structures inside those chosen unfinished landscapes to offer an alternative way of being in and thinking about the city. These structures are inviting one to be present in the moment and provide a sensory experience of a place, they are enhancing the specific qualities of each landscape. 'Places for Freedom' offers a break in our routinized journeys within the city, a closer relationship with our natural environment and moments for intimate informal encounters, not only with humans, but also with animals and plants which are the other inhabitants of the city.

THE WASTELAND IN THE CITY

...As there is a lack of formal activity,
an absence of people controlling this
landscape, your attention is dragged
towards other things. Like the type
of vegetation, the light strokes on the
building next to the plot, the reflec-
tion of water on the side of the quay.
The wind moving the grass, the sound
of the city nearby.
Birds flying above you, people moving
fast, people moving slow.
Laughing, chatting and crying.
And when no one is there, silence.
Clouds moving fast, clouds moving
slow, it starts raining.
In the distance you hear an ambu-
lance. The smell of oats coming from
one of the factories on the other
side of the water.
I feel like having a cookie. ..

The Wasteland in the City: a terrain that is not maintained and has at the moment no function. Most of the time many different types of wild plants can be found, such as stonecrop & evening primrose. The Wasteland in the City is not found on the periphery of the city (as most other types of unfinished landscapes are) but it is set in dense urban fabric. Because the land is more profitable this type of landscape is often more temporal than other unfinished landscapes, and therefore more unique.





Map Rotterdam with my walk the south



MY WALK, KATENDRECHT

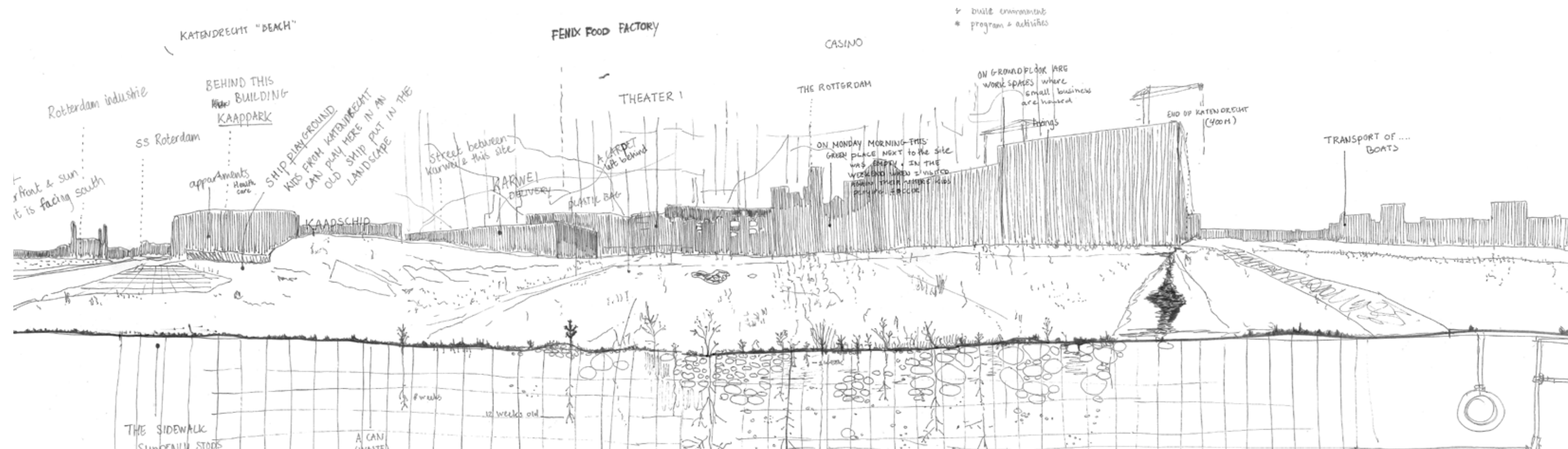
I found this one on my walk to the South of Rotterdam. After passing by an industrial zone, where it is more common to encounter wastelands, I was quite surprised finding a wasteland in Katendrecht. Katendrecht is now one of the most vivid neighborhoods of Rotterdam, with restaurants, shops, housing and culture leisure. To see this spacious piece of unused land here was quite amazing. I felt instantly attracted to it because of its location next to the waterfront and its southwards orientation.

As coming frequently at different moments of the day to this place I was able to localize some of the specif-

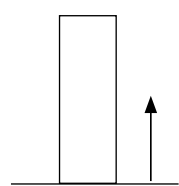
ic characteristics. When I climbed the hill which is on the side of the plot, I realized I wanted this overview of the landscape. Having the view of the city and the waterfront at once. The place is used as a passage as I found two elephant trails or "olifantenpaadjes". This place was also used by other inhabitants like insects and animals. Being there at several moments I saw that the most frequent visitor of the place was the bird.

The specific characteristics of the place are classified into the follow components: The Context, The Traces, The Users, the passengers, The Sensory Experience

A soft map was made of the place in order to localize the context and the landscape itself.



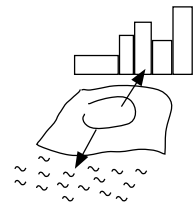
CONTEXT



Vertical expression to fit urban context of 4 to 6 story high surroundings, drags the attention when walking by or from the other side of the water. Also to touch the landscape as less as possible.

VERTICALITY

TRACES



Having the view of the city and the waterfront at once

VIEW/OVERVIEW

USERS/PASSENGERS



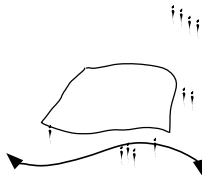
The place is used as a passage as I found two elephant trails. The design should emphasize on showing found traces such as this one.

USING EXISTING ELEMENTS



After coming several times on different hours and day to this place I noticed that the most frequent inhabitant is the bird

THE BIRD



The traces in the side tell a story about who is using the space. Although during day time nobody is inside the landscape, a lot of people do pass the landscape frequently. With bike, with car or by walking. Nowadays there are a lot of different cultural citizen initiatives on Katendrecht, such as Theater Walhalla. Involving local actors into the place.

PASSENGERS/ LOCAL COMMUNITIES





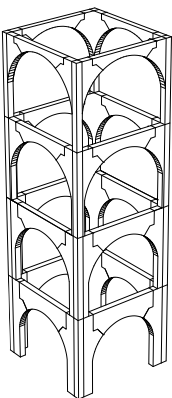
THE BIRDHOUSE

A vertical structure (a 'tower', a 'folly') is the site for seasonal activities, a place for humans and birds. During the summer a scaffolding structure can be attached to climb inside and to overview the landscape, the city and the waterfront. Local actors living on Katendrecht like Theater Walhalla can hold festive events such as an open-air theater. After the performance the curtain is placed upwards and the city is turned into a piece of scenery. Like a tree sheds its leaves during seasonal change, the birdhouse will 'shed' the additional scaffolding structures during the winter. The prefabricated concrete core will remain and will function as a folly. It does not have a practical purpose and becomes an anchor point in the landscape to drag the attention when walking by. As it lost its use - a lack of activity during winter-, the place is turned into a site of contemplation and reflection (whereas the arches are framing the city and landscape around it). The structure allows one to stand beneath it and one has

time to let in the sensory experience of a place. Such as the sounds of the city nearby, the sounds of the animals in and around the landscape, the wind moving the grass, the light reflection on the waterfront, the smells coming from the factories across the water, etc. However, a very important purpose of the core is that it operates as house for the most frequent user of the place: the bird. The different holes on the exterior of the core are dimensioned to inhabit various kind of birds (as each type of bird has its preferable size to live in). The inside of the concrete core is cast with a bird nest texture to make humans also feel a little bit like a bird coming home in their nest.



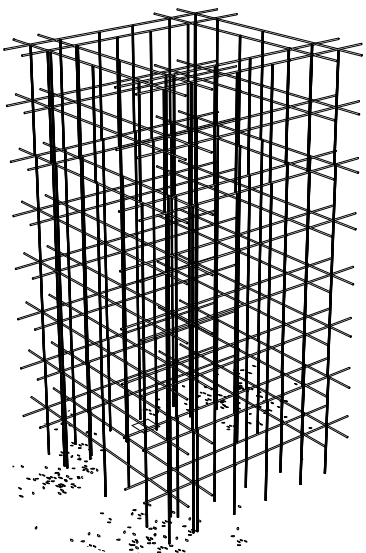
LAYERS OF TIME



THE CORE

the physical trace
which will remain in the land-
scape and decay slowly, nature
can take over or maybe one
day it is part of a new building
block.

the trunk of a tree



SCAFFOLDING

the temporal/flexible structure
allowing growth and change during
seasons

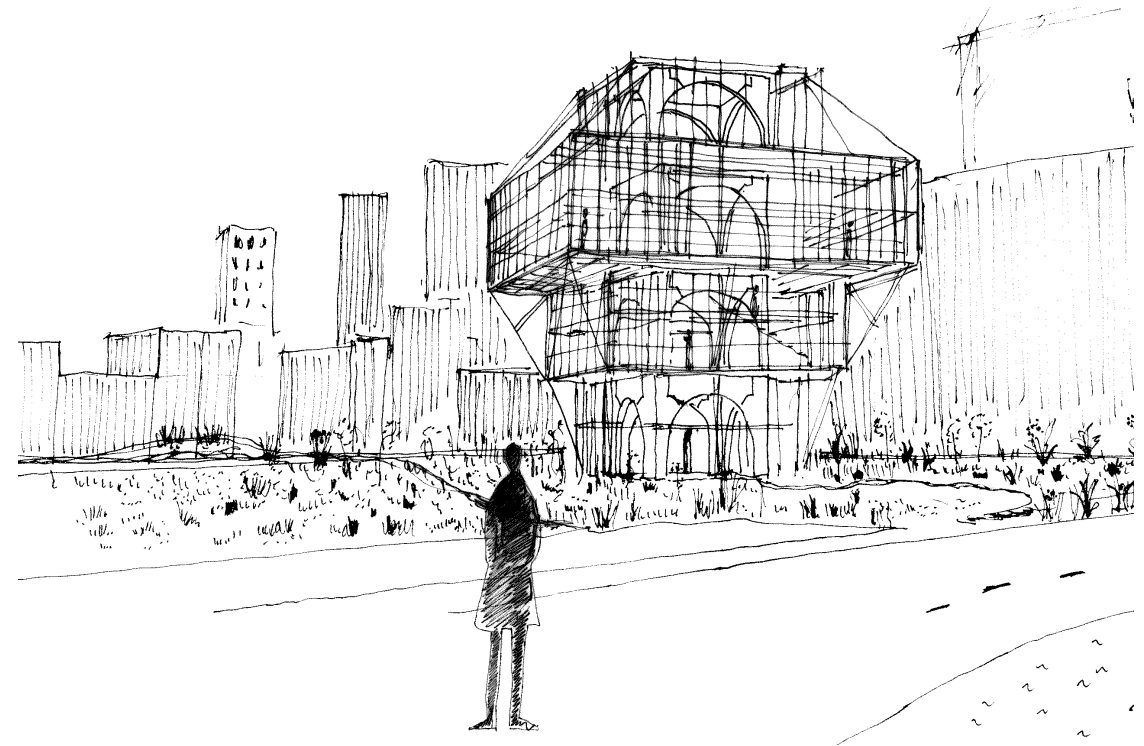
the leaves of a tree



THE EVENT

The most temporal element of the design.
The moment it get inhabit, the sensorial
experience a the place, or activating the
place with temporal events.

the moment, the experience,
the interaction



Fragile monuments

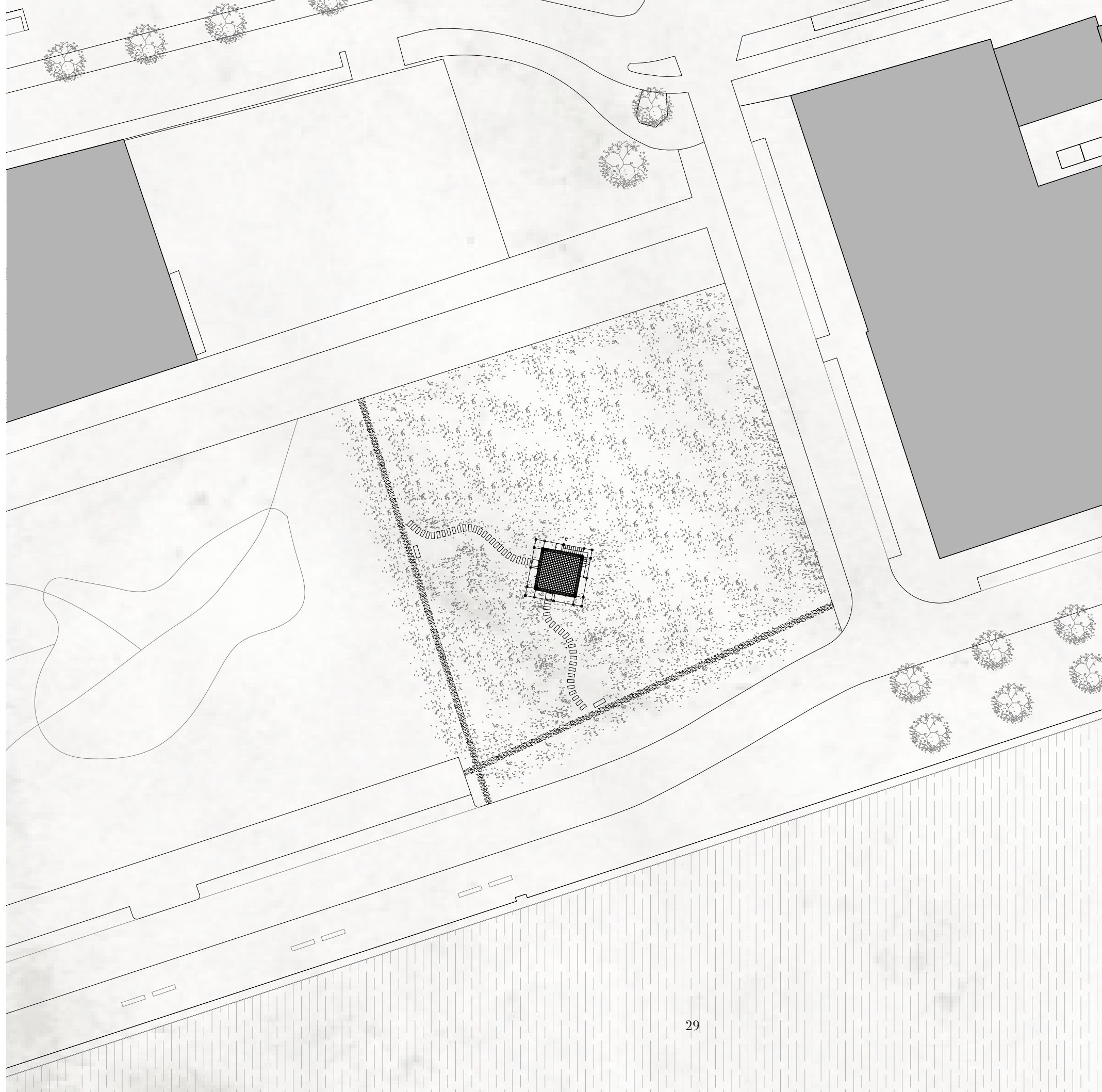
As these are temporal place, I want the design interventions to be more dynamic than usual through incorporating time. With the structures I do not want to oppose nature but merge with nature. Incorporating time would mean that there is room for growth, change and decay. That nature can take over the structures of maybe one day it will be changed into something else. It is moralistic in the way of a monument, but it doesn't commemorate an event of the past, it rather wants to open the eyes for future events in a friendly way.

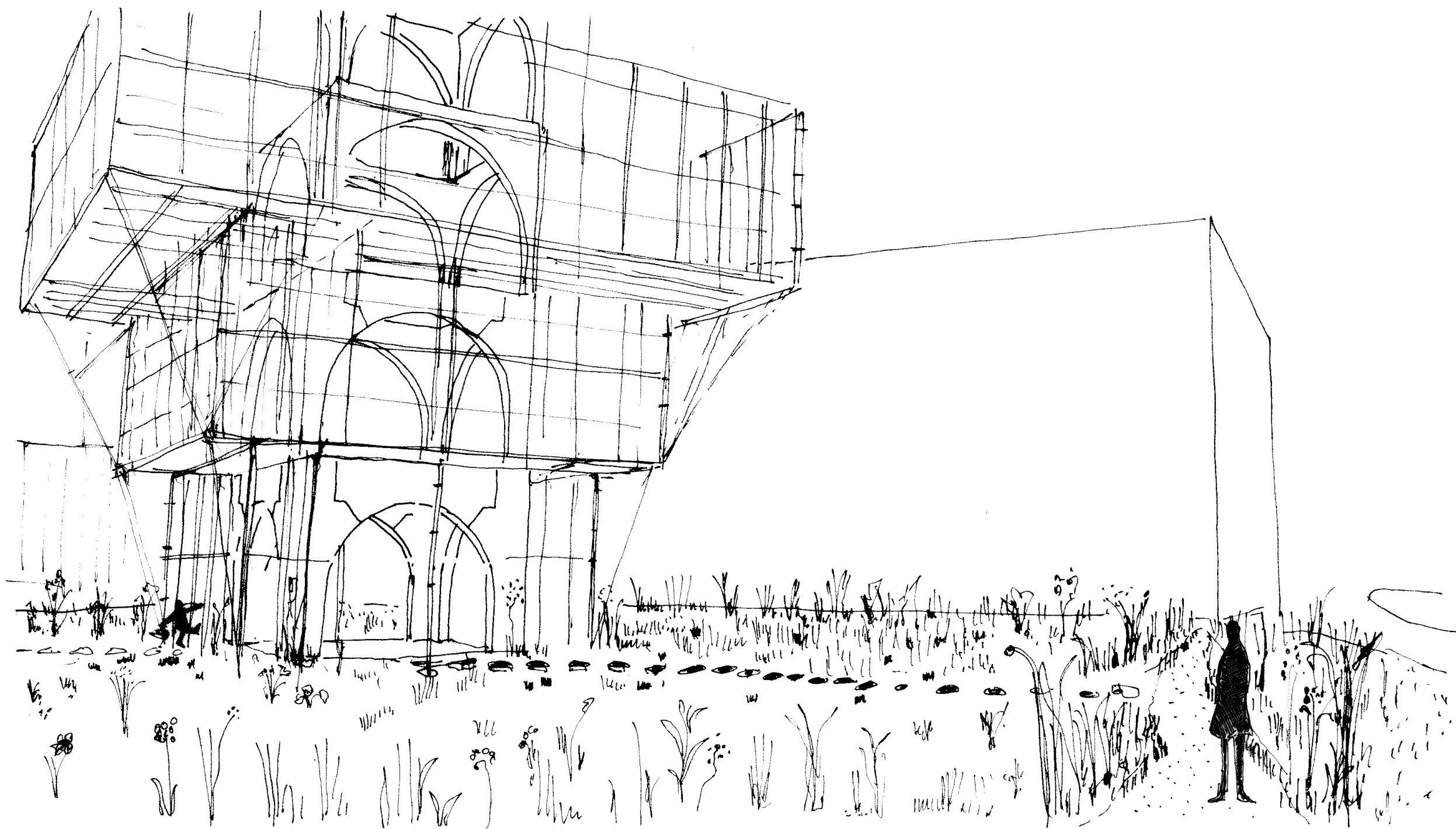
de Solà-Morales, Ignasi; Weak Architecture; 1987

This diversity of times becomes absolutely central in what I have chosen to call weak architecture... These architectures transform the aesthetic experience into 'event'...

URBAN SITUATION

The straight lines are the olifantenpaadjes: the existing infrastructures found in the place. The birdhouse is connecting with these existing path structures. The olifantenpaadjes will guide you inside the landscape. From these roads two winding paths of stepping stones are leading you to the birdhouse. The path is deliberately made curvy, to emphasise on the idea of wandering, which is never a straight line. The stepping-stones are placed from heart to heart with exactly the dimension of an average footstep. The stones are not too big, so every step you have to make carefully and will encourage one to slow down.

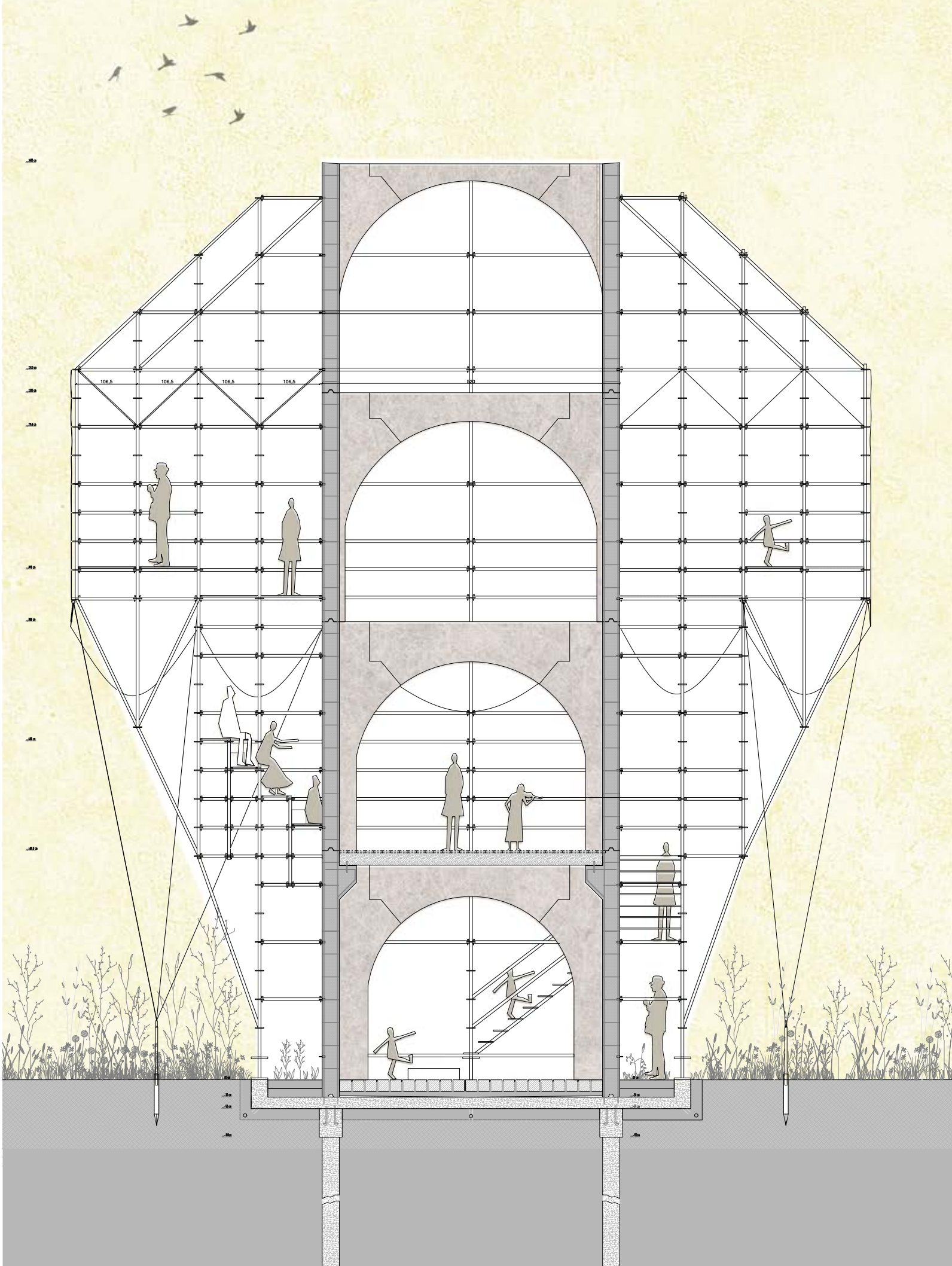




SECTION BIRDHOUSE

This is the summer version. When the leaves are in full bloom and activities are taken place into the bird-house. The core exists of prefabricated concrete elements. To occupy as little space within the landscape as possible, the area of the ground floor is limited and the structure becomes gradually wider towards the top.

The prefabricated elements can be assembled with a crane from the street, this to not destroy the landscape during construction time. The scaffolding structure will be attached to the anchors in the concrete core for stability (it also allows different configurations).

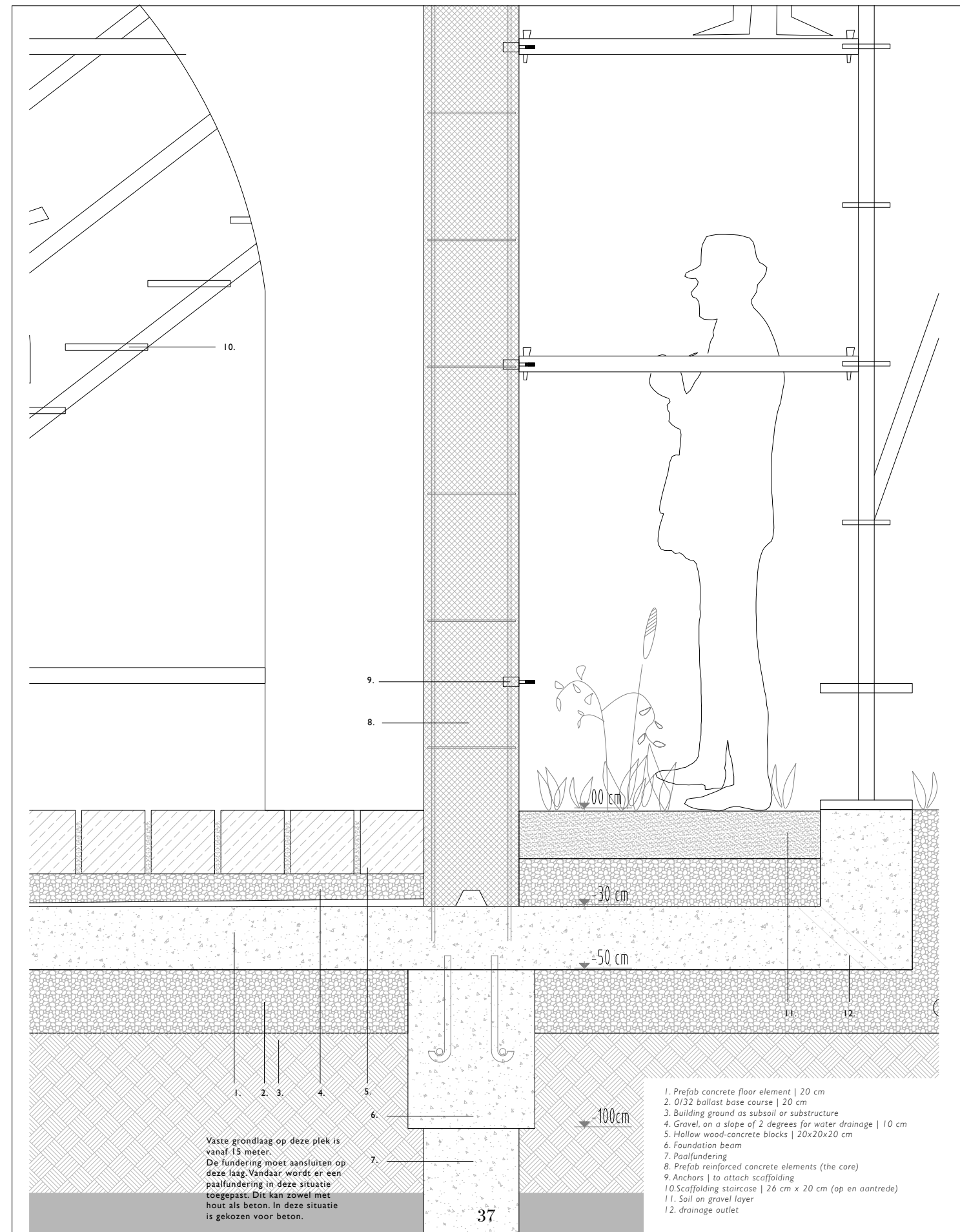


APPROACHING THE BIRDHOUSE

It is summer...The scaffolding structure is built around the core and it is possible for people to climb up to experience the landscape, the city and the waterfront from above (bird's view perspective).

When approaching the Birdhouse the tactility of the structure reveals. The dark and shiny scaffolding structure is covering the more rough and light coloured core.

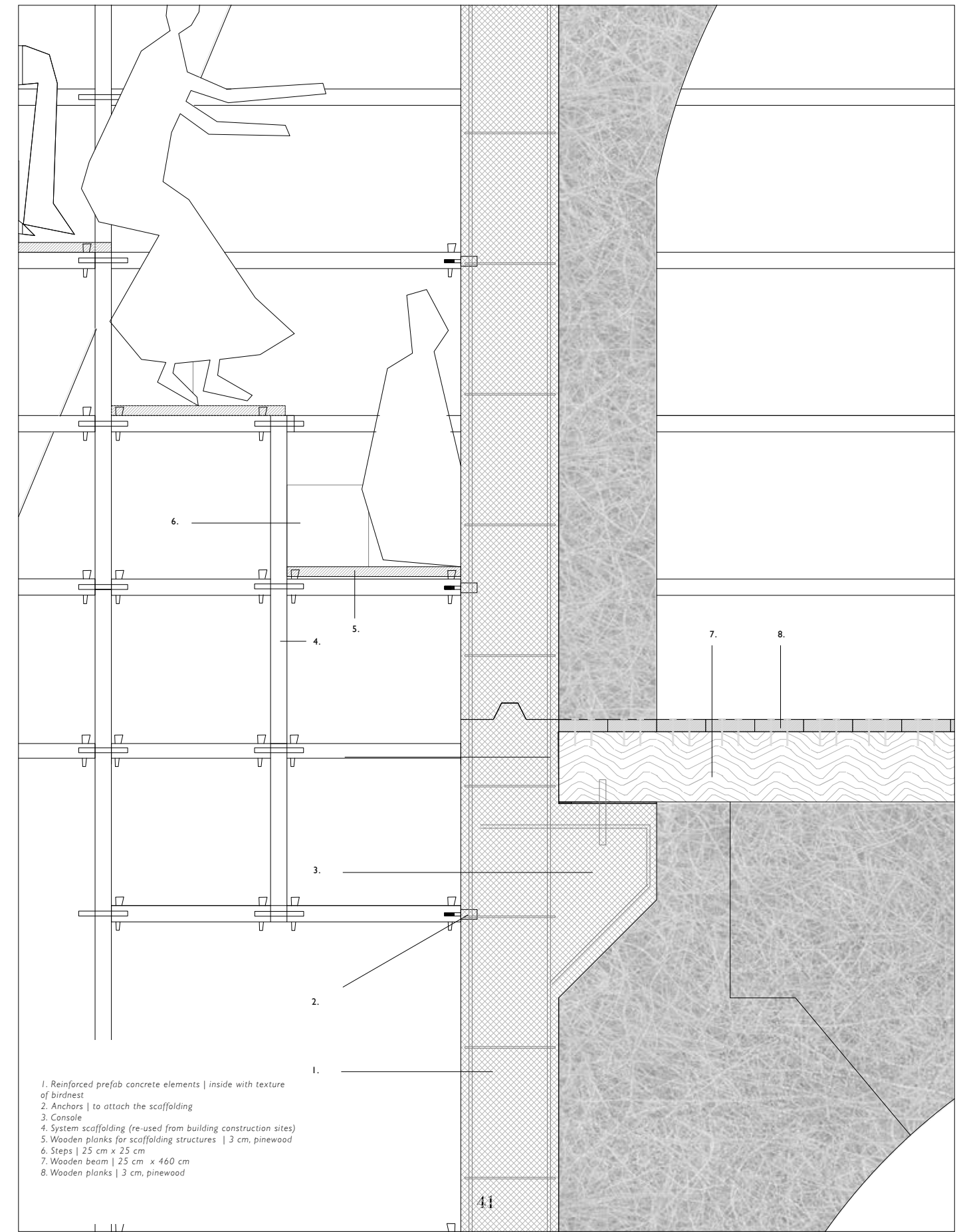


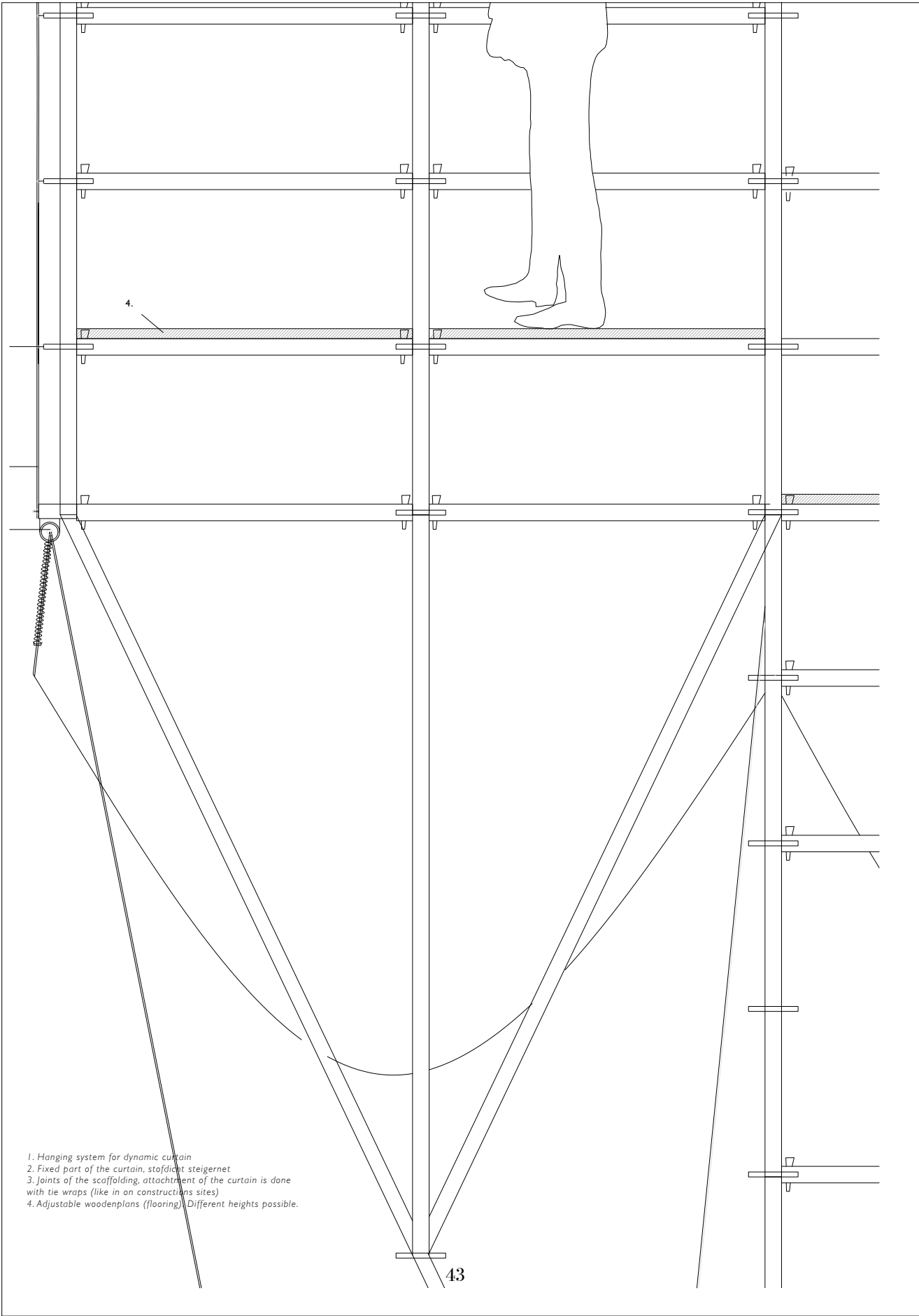


THE THEATRE

When one is climbing up the stairs one is arriving at the first floor which is there for different events, gatherings and encounters. To look and to be looked at. A small audience of 20 to 30 people can fit on the stands to enjoy the summer theatre of Walhalla. When the performance is finished the fabric can be moved upward and the city is turning into the new scenery.

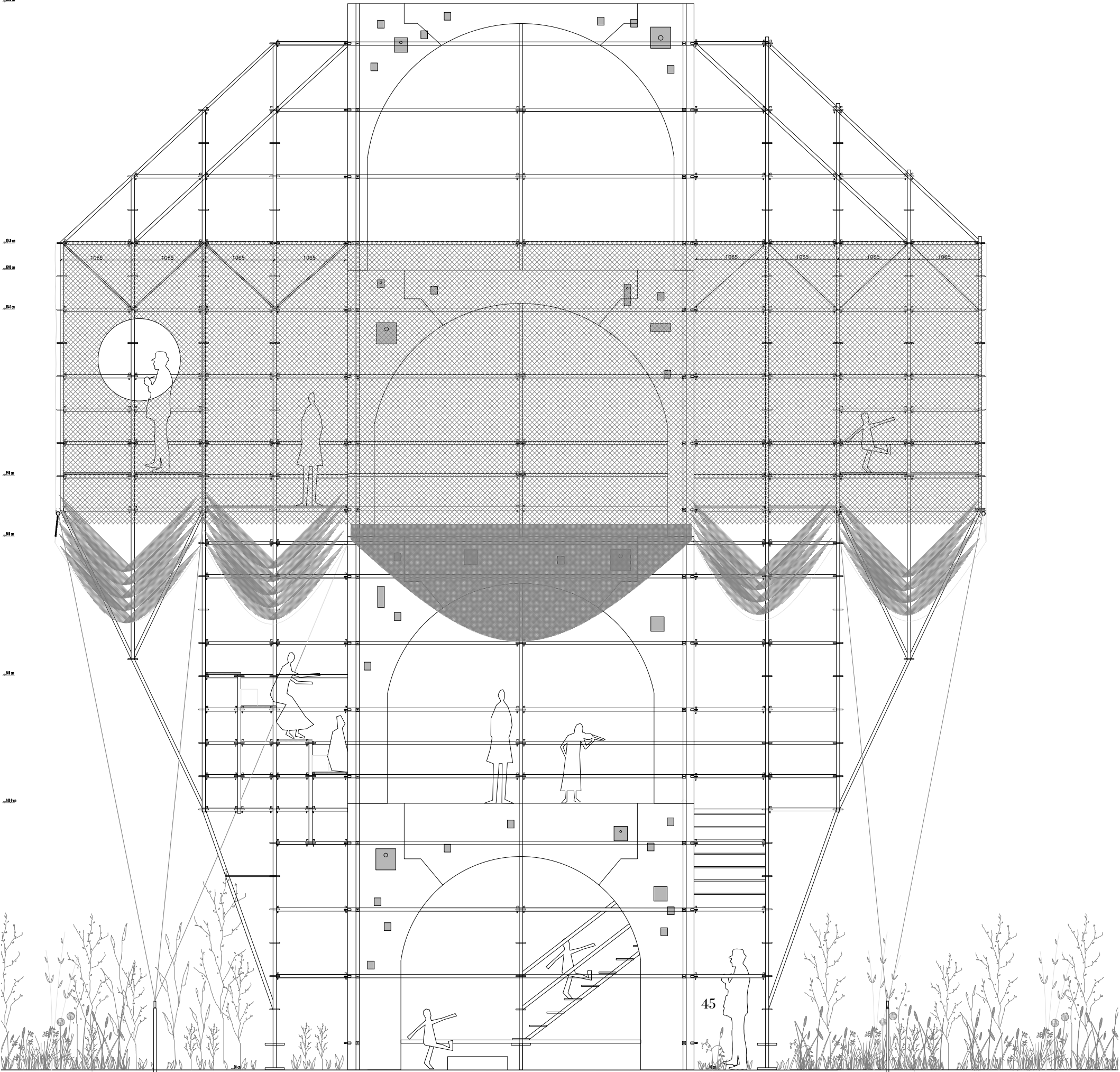






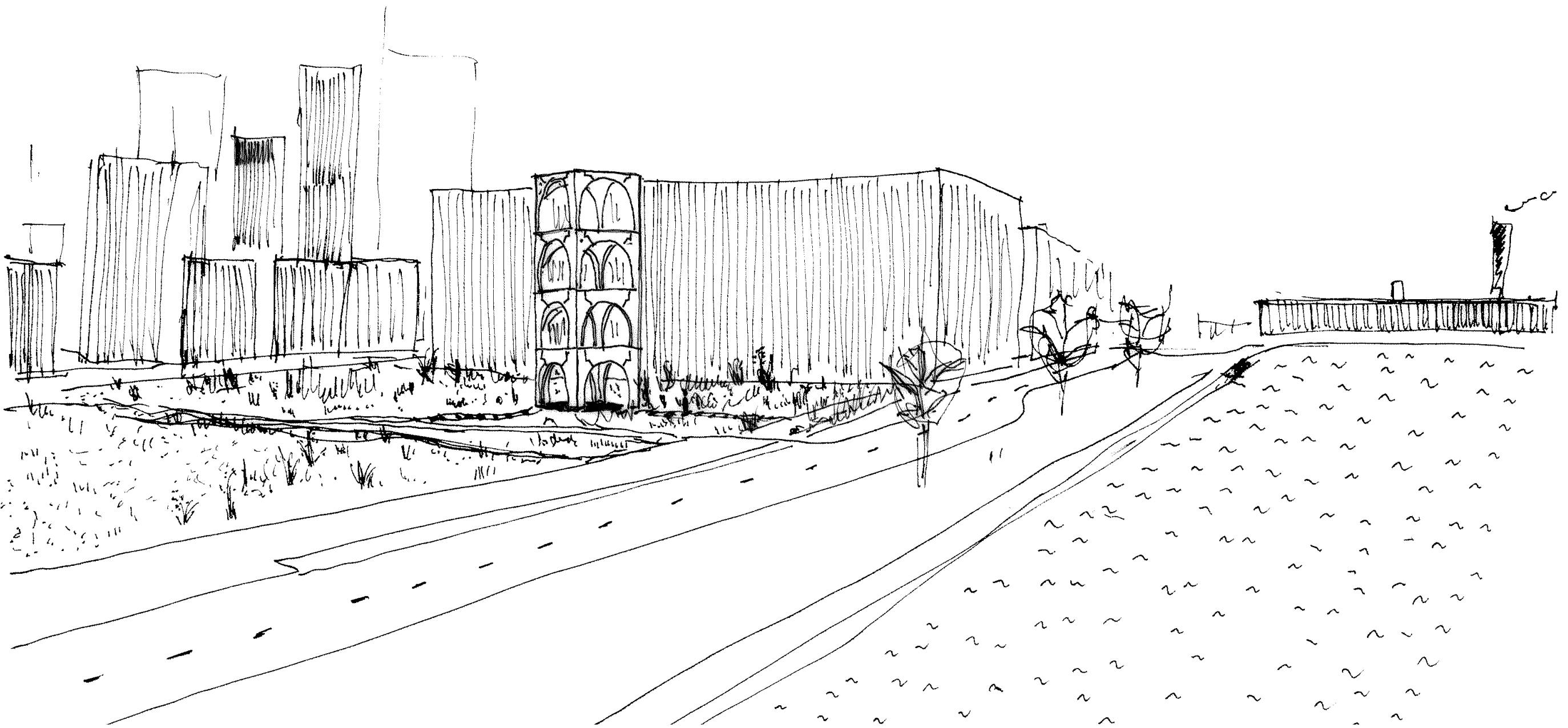
- 1. Hanging system for dynamic curtain
- 2. Fixed part of the curtain, stofdiicht steigernet
- 3. Joints of the scaffolding, attachment of the curtain is done with tie wraps (like in on constructions sites)
- 4. Adjustable woodenplans (flooring). Different heights possible.

ELEVATION BIRDHOUSE





view from the top - on the waterside, facing south Rotterdam



TALKING WALLS

The In-Between Landscape

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PLACES FOR FREEDOM / BOOK II /
Talking Walls / The In-Between Landscape

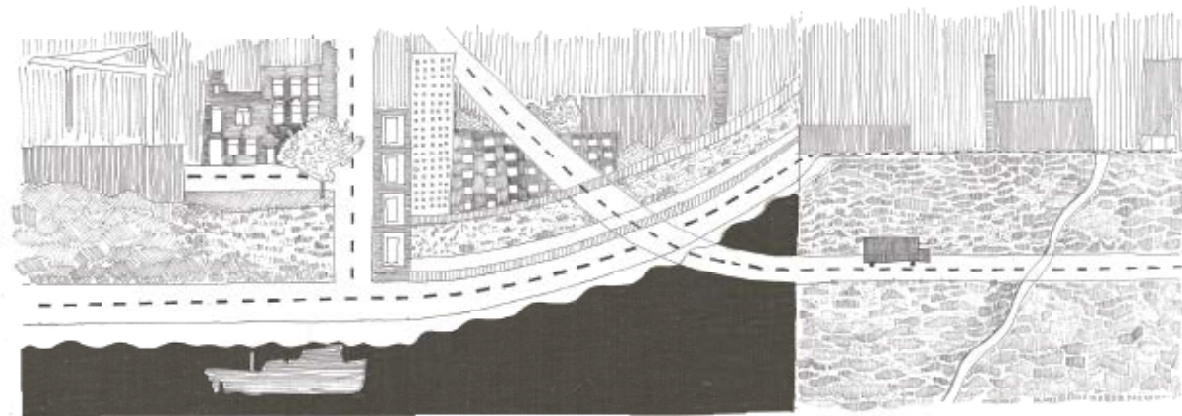
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The design proposal is a statement opposing our productive, accelerated and consumptive society and intends to offer an alternative way of being in and thinking about the a city.



PLACES FOR FREEDOM



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THE IN-BETWEEN LANDSCAPE





The In-between landscape is a landscape between all kinds of infrastructure, also called the 'berm'. As Rotterdam is highly dominated by infrastructure since the reconstruction after world war II, it is a typical landscape of the city. You can find it everywhere around you. In most cases it is mowed but there are some unregulated in-between landscapes ('bermen').

As the plants can grow uncontrollable the height of the plant during the summer can reach up to 1,5/2 meter high. These in between landscapes are usually narrow but long. As kind of species are using this place, such as bees, butterflies and other kind of insects.



Map Rotterdam with my walk the east, finding this particular inbetween landscape.



THE IN-BETWEEN LANDSCAPE / COOLHAVEN

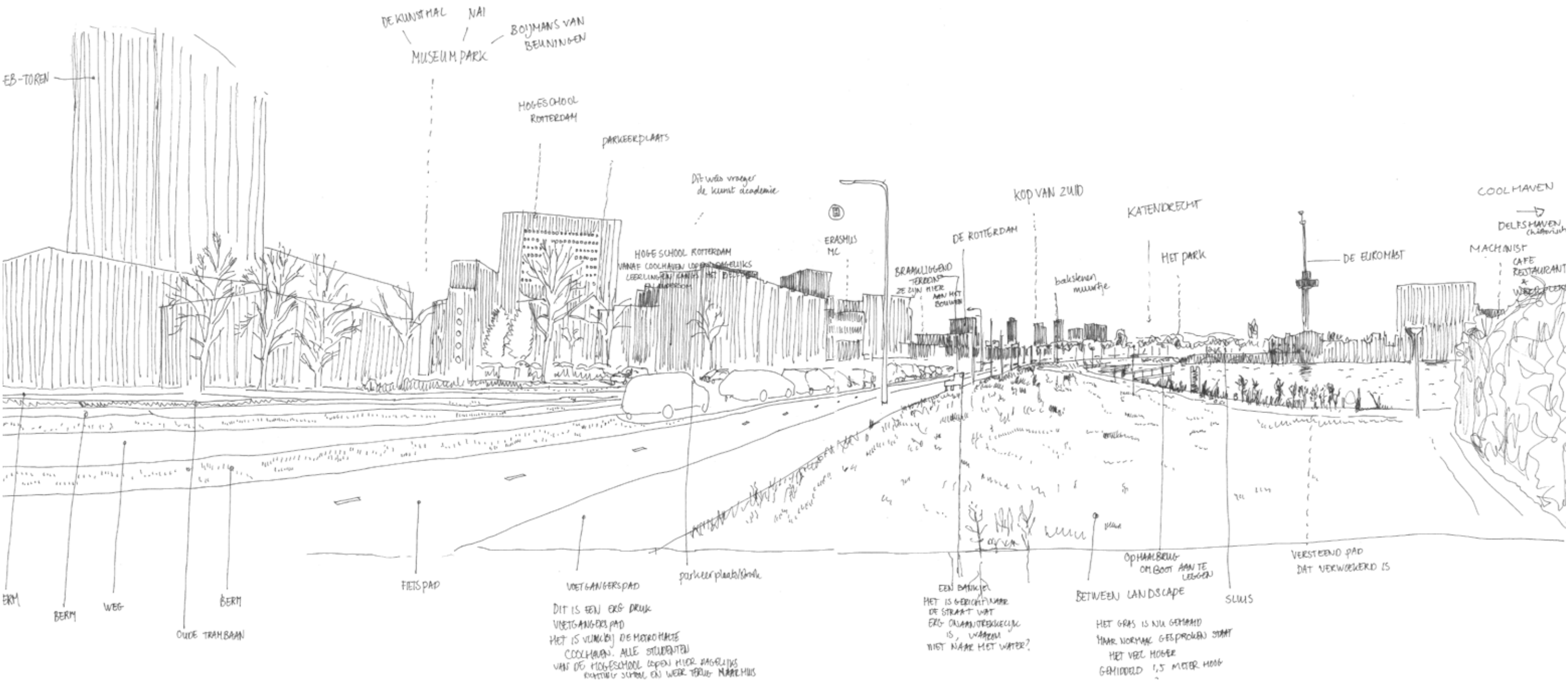
This particular place lies between to the waterfront and the sidewalks, bikelane, carlane and tramline. The depth of the plot is more less 10 meter and it is 150 meters long. It is set on slope.

Coming here on several moments I was kept by all the movement taking place around me. All the different speed rhythms: from slow to fast, with often people with focused motion and directions. When filming some of this movement, people who passed by were looking a bit weird. What is that girl doing over there? What attracted me was not only the movement around me, but also above me. The wind moving all the different types of grass, and of course the beautiful waterfront all along the site.

With the intervention on this site, I wanted to make people aware of all the different movements that are constantly in and around the place. To experience and emphasize the length of the landscape I have chosen for 3 structures inside them which will guide you through the place. The structures refer to the position of the human body and will help you to become more present in the moment. They will drag your attention to the rhythms, the sounds, and the different light phases of the day.

Laying position will focus on above and underneath, standing will focus on the sides of the plot and the sitting will focus on the direction of inside the plot

The specific characteristics of the place are classified into the follow components: The Context, The Traces, The Users, the passengers, The Sensory Experience. A soft map was made of the place in oder to localize the context and the landscape itself.



MOVEMENT

Movement, different rhythms everywhere around the place. This photograph is taken in the winter, when the grass was mowed.

The Metro stop Coolhaven is very close by this in-between landscape, this is one of the reasons it is always a quite busy place of pedestrians walking by to Erasmus, de Hoge School, to Delfshaven or to Het Park.

The In-Between landscape not seen as a border laying between the water and the other infrastructure, but as a potential connector.



TALKING WALLS

Stacked block structures ('follies') are placed in a left-over landscape (berm) between infrastructures to reveal and frame the poetic of the everyday life in and around the place. Functioning similar as a chapel along the roadside. These structures do not have a practical purpose (like a folly), but they do want to tell stories about the experiences of a place. A story one is able to see, to read only when slowing down. It is about perceiving, not only with the eye but also with other senses like, smell, sound and touch. Furthermore, the architectural structures want to emphasize on being in the moment as the experiences are all about a short timeframe: the minutes and the hours of a day. They focus on all the different rhythms around you. As this place is set between infrastructures there is movement everywhere around you: moving cars, moving trams, moving bikes, moving pedestrians, moving boats. But also, above you, under you and inside the landscape: moving clouds and moving grass. I call it Talking Walls because through the wall-structures the experiences of the place are emphasized and in such a way you can see them as talking with their surroundings, talking with the human encounters and talking with each other. The in-between landscape is often characterized by being narrow but long. To experience the full length of the place three structures are placed divided in the landscape, to guide one through it. As these places are

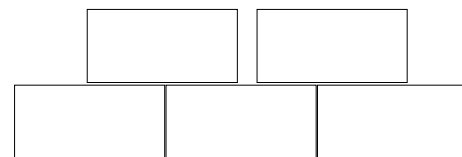
about the individual encounter, contemplation with the artifact, they refer to the position of the human body: sitting, laying, standing. The laying one is emphasizing on the awareness on what is beneath us and above us. It is designed like a bed. The walls are partly built, and nature can take over the structure itself. Laying on the bed you have the view of the sky. In the corner of your eye you still see the moving grass around you. The standing structure serves as a frame to expose the movement on sides of the plot. Wandering through the walls. It allows one to move through this landscape, being in the landscape with views on the water, views on people, views on traffic. The sitting structure is closed from its environment. Only through various holes in the wall the sunlight is able to come inside in different patterns during the day. The holes also provide the sounds coming inside from the sides of the plot. This place is about light and sounds.

Construction: The base is made of prefabricated concrete elements to touch the landscape as less as possible. The walls are made of blocks made of waste and concrete. The idea is that people themselves can built the structures with the blocks and re-use materials. To change the user into an active participant.





THE ENCOUNTER
THE MOMENT



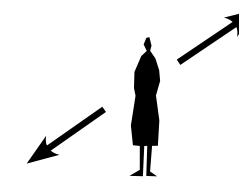
STACKING BLOCKS
a temporal layer as the blocks
are not cemented but stacked



THE TRACE
THE PLATFORM



LAYING
focussing on the movement
beneath and above



STANDING
focussing on the movement on the
side of the plot



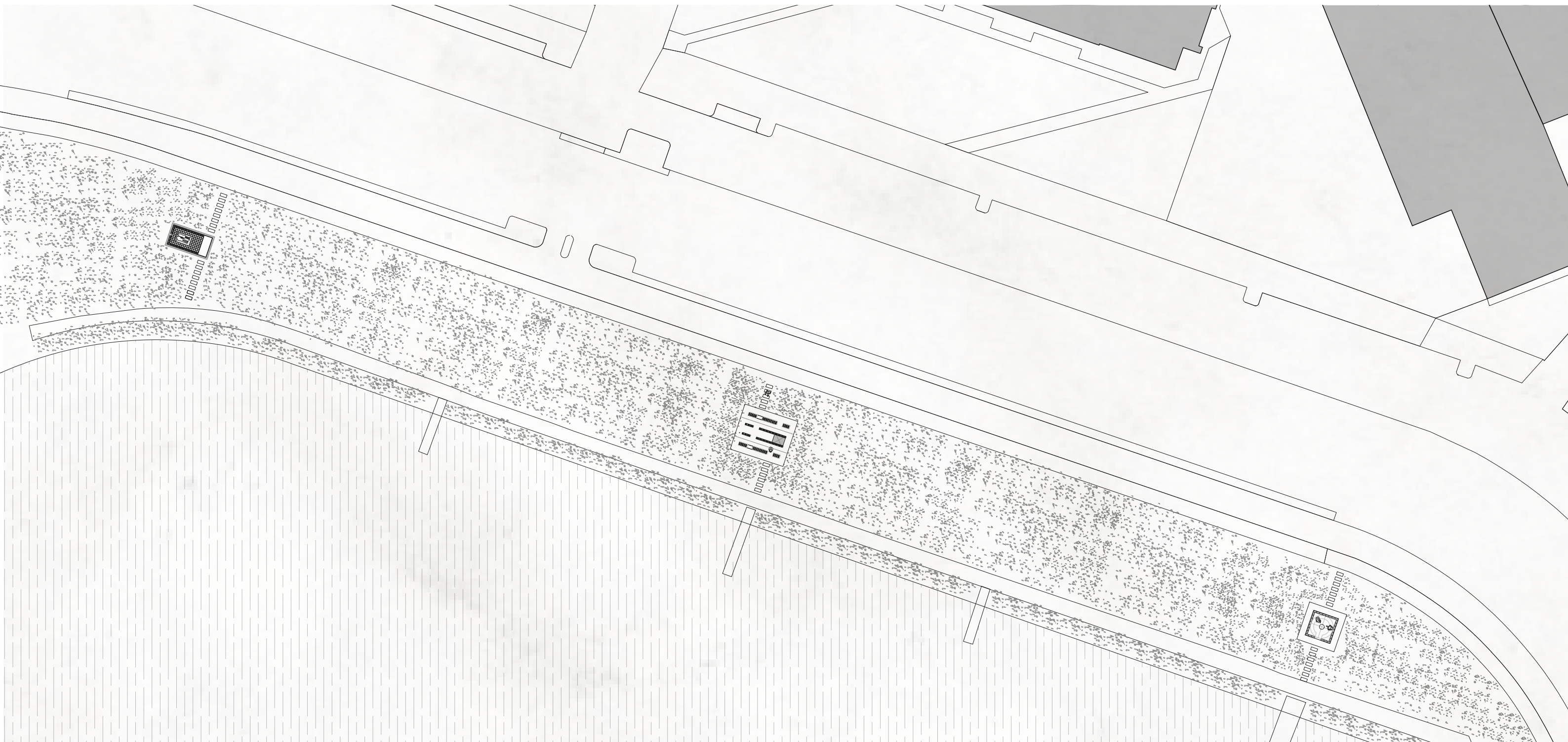
SITTING
closing of from the busy traffic side and
focus on the inside of the landscape

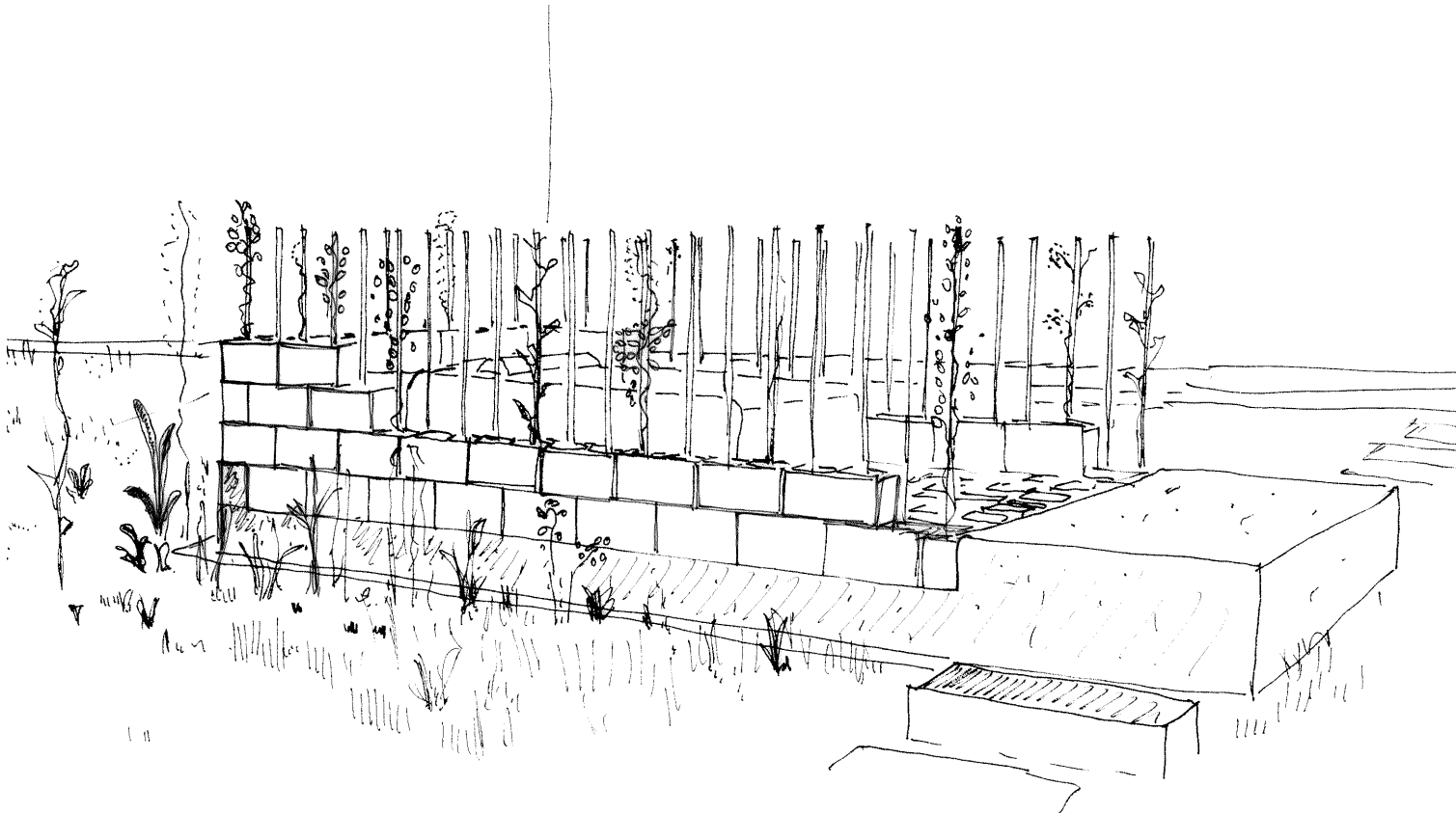
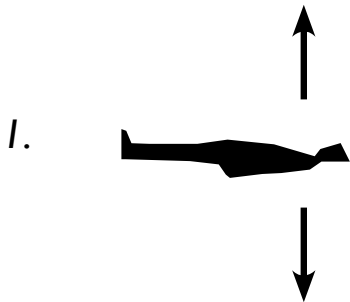


II.



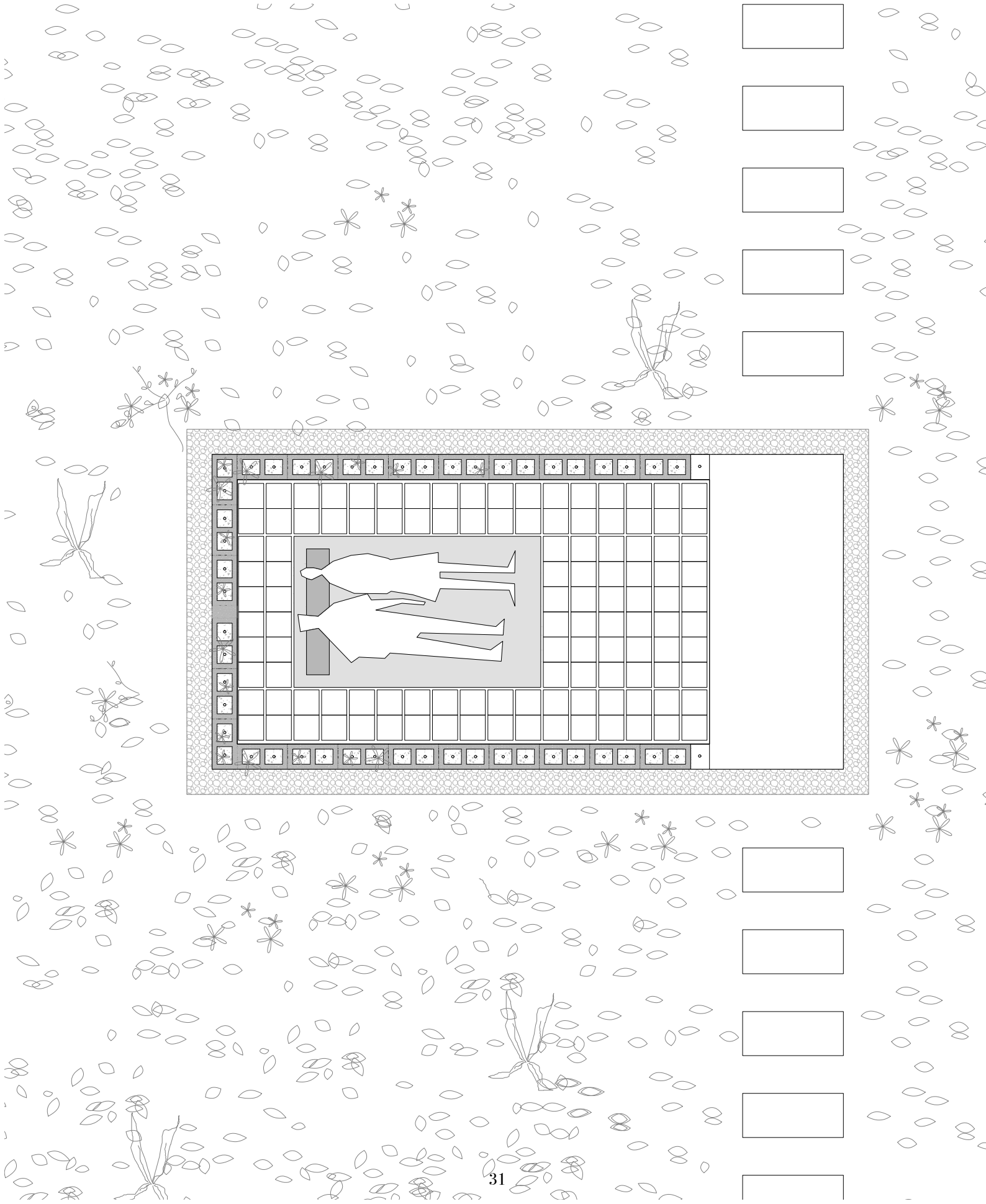
III.



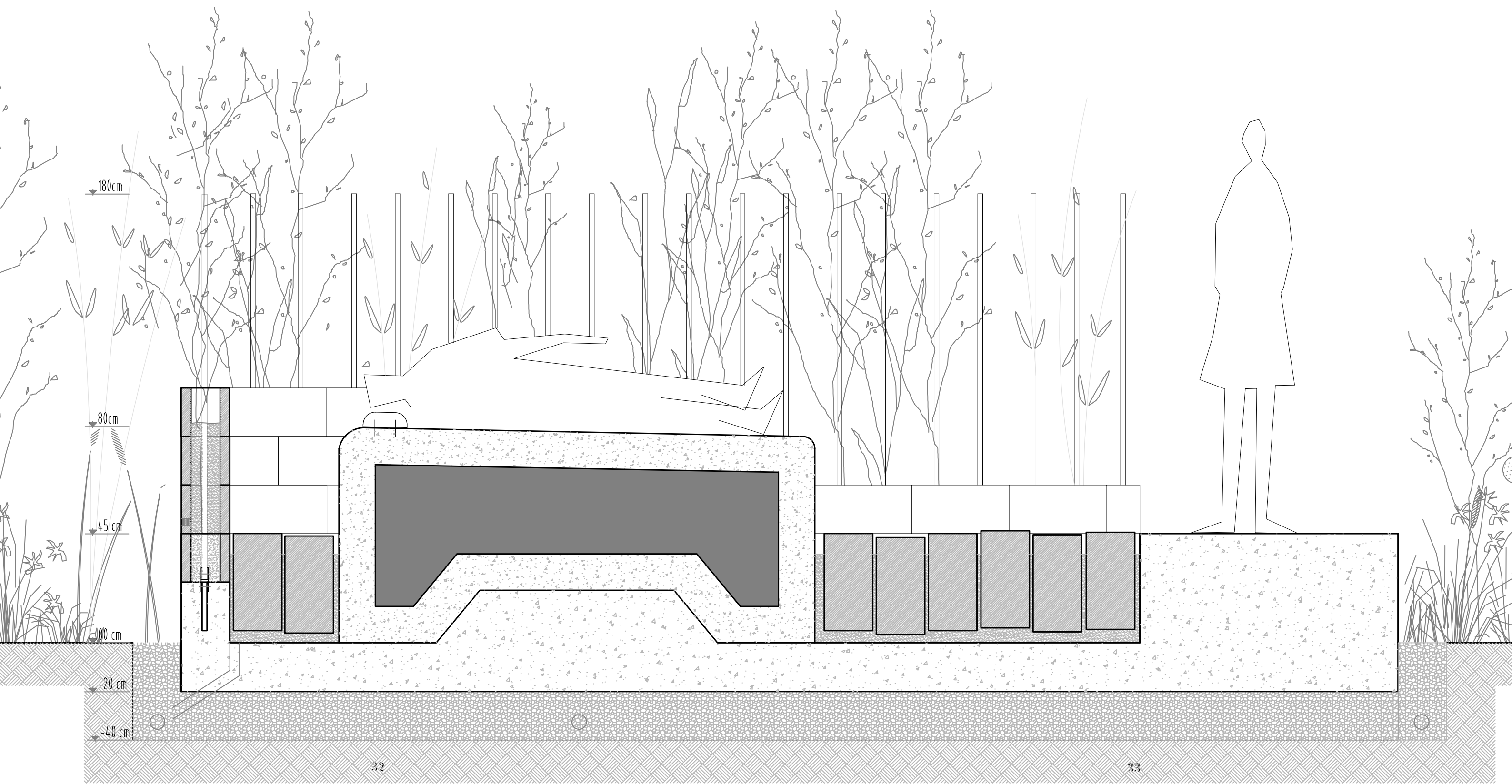


I. LAYING / FLOORPLAN

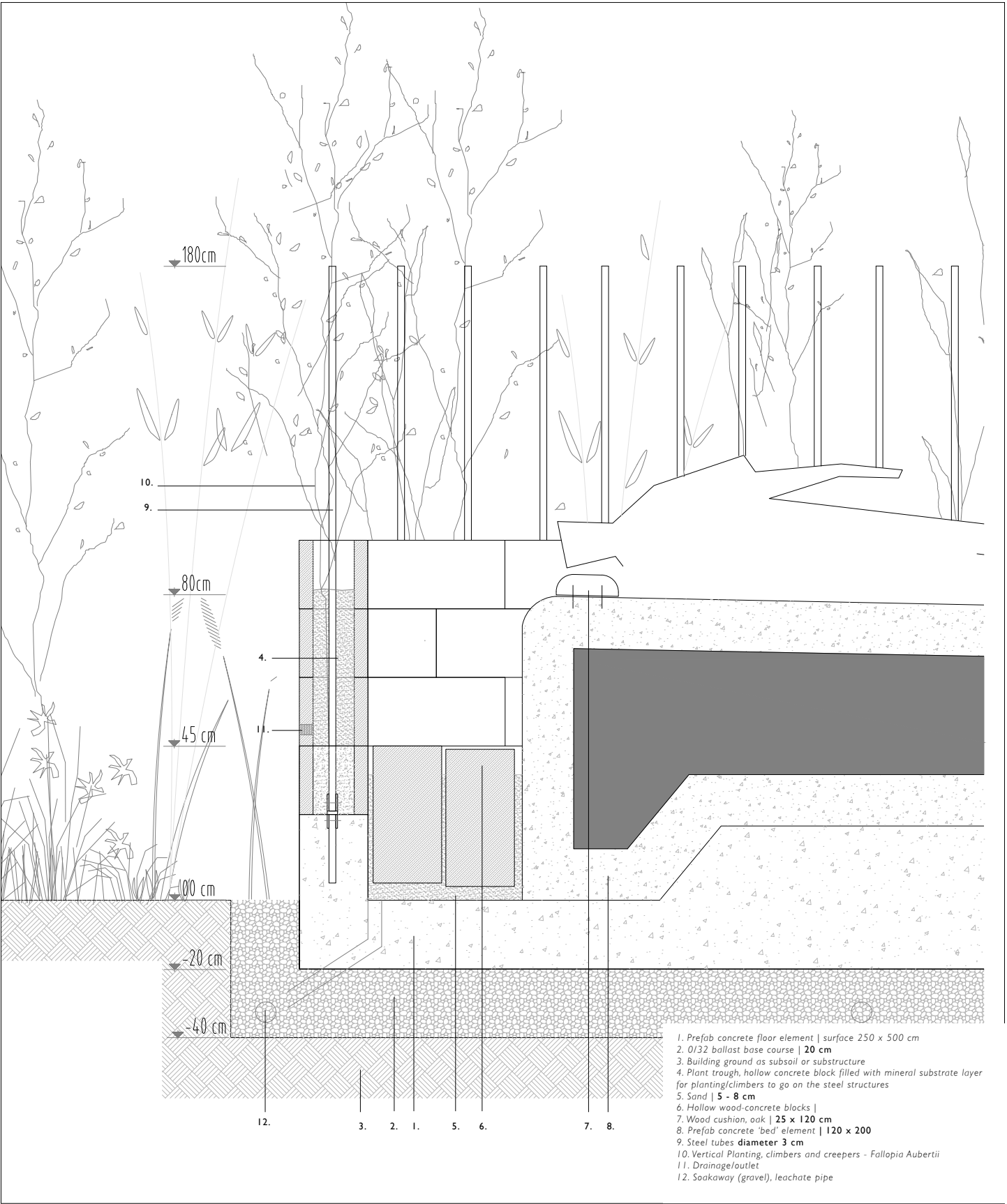
The laying structure is designed like a two person bed. In order to guidance people to be more present in the moment this structure is dragging your attention towards what is beneath you and above you. By placing the blocks (on the floor) in slightly different heights, you are becoming aware of the ground. When laying on the bed you are enclosed by plants that can climb up the steel frames.

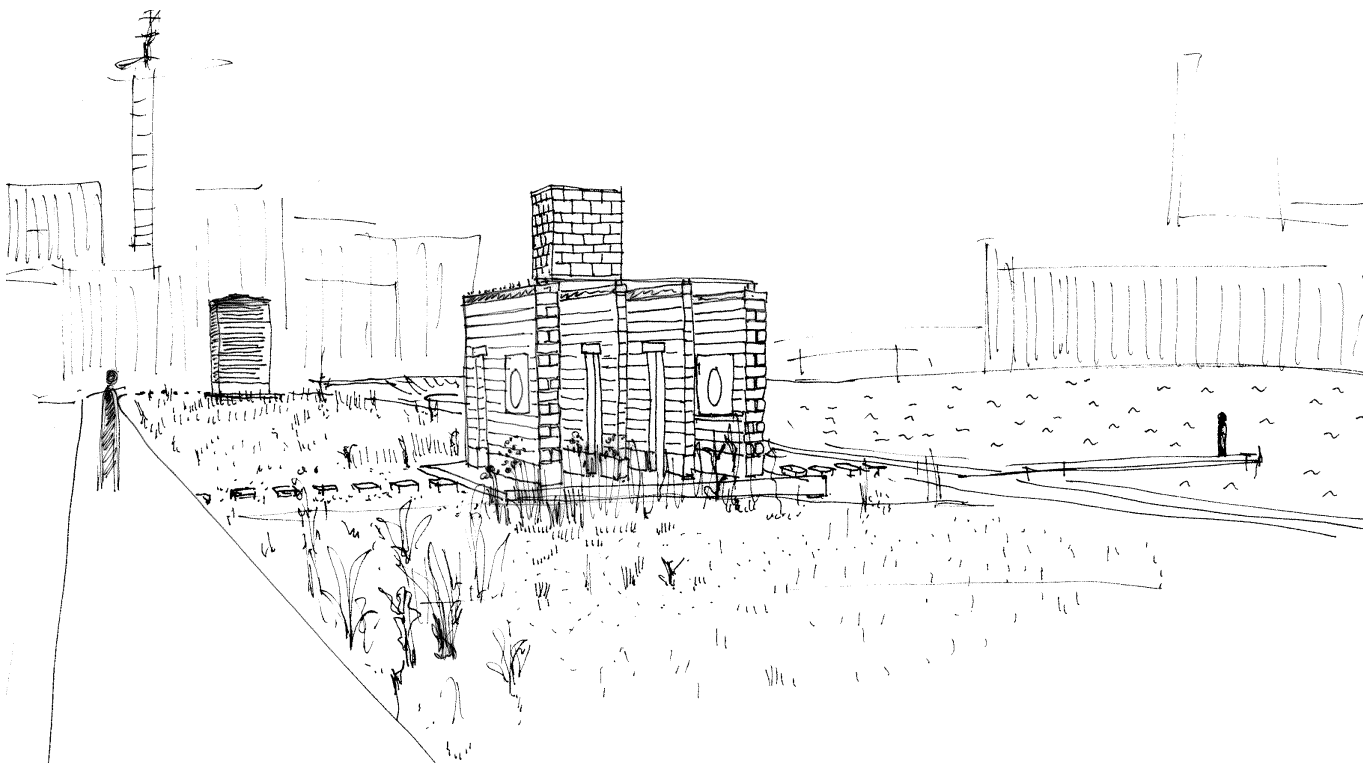
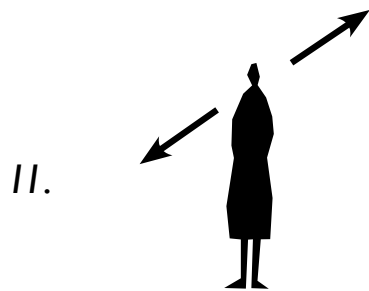


I. LAYING / SECTION

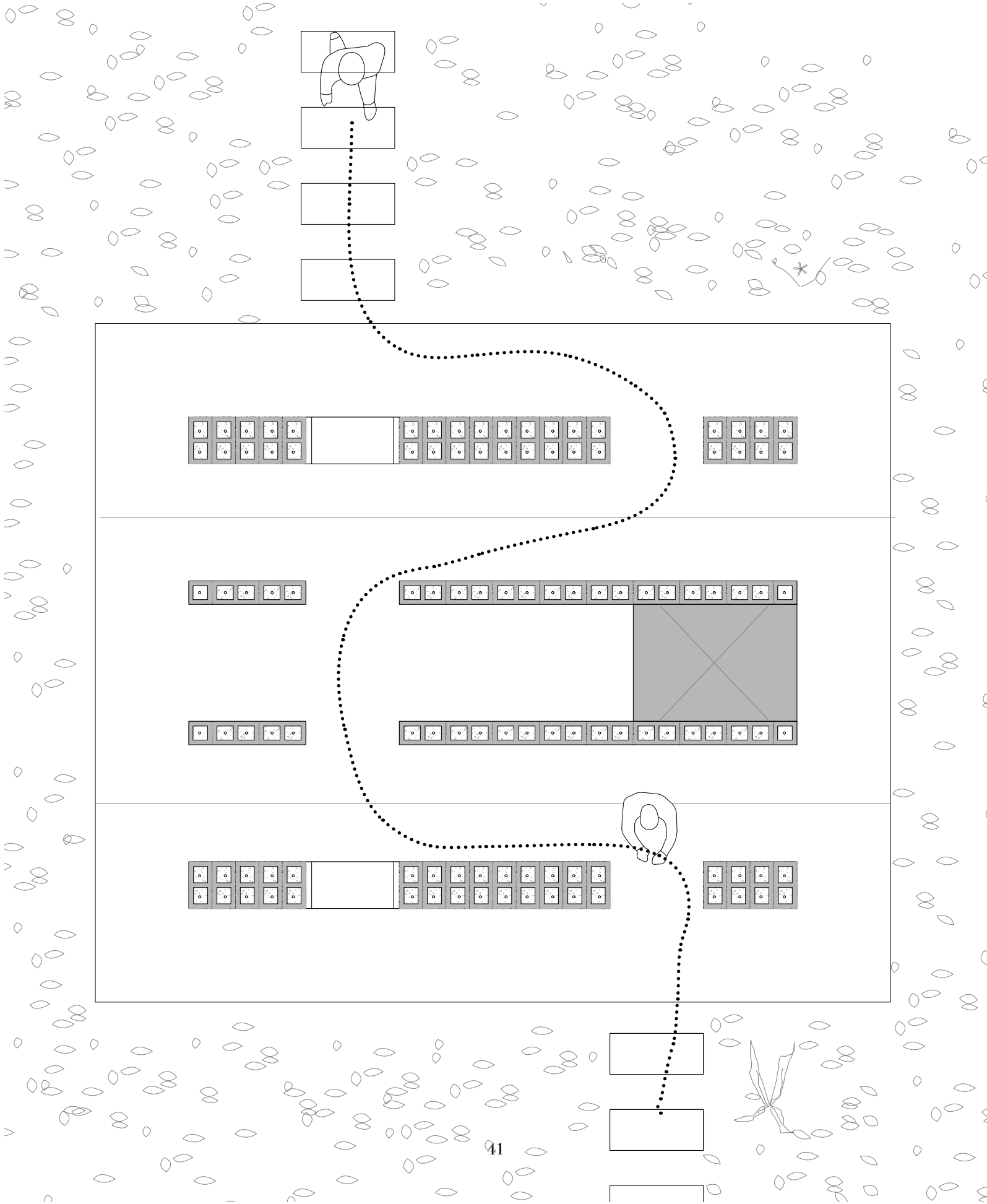




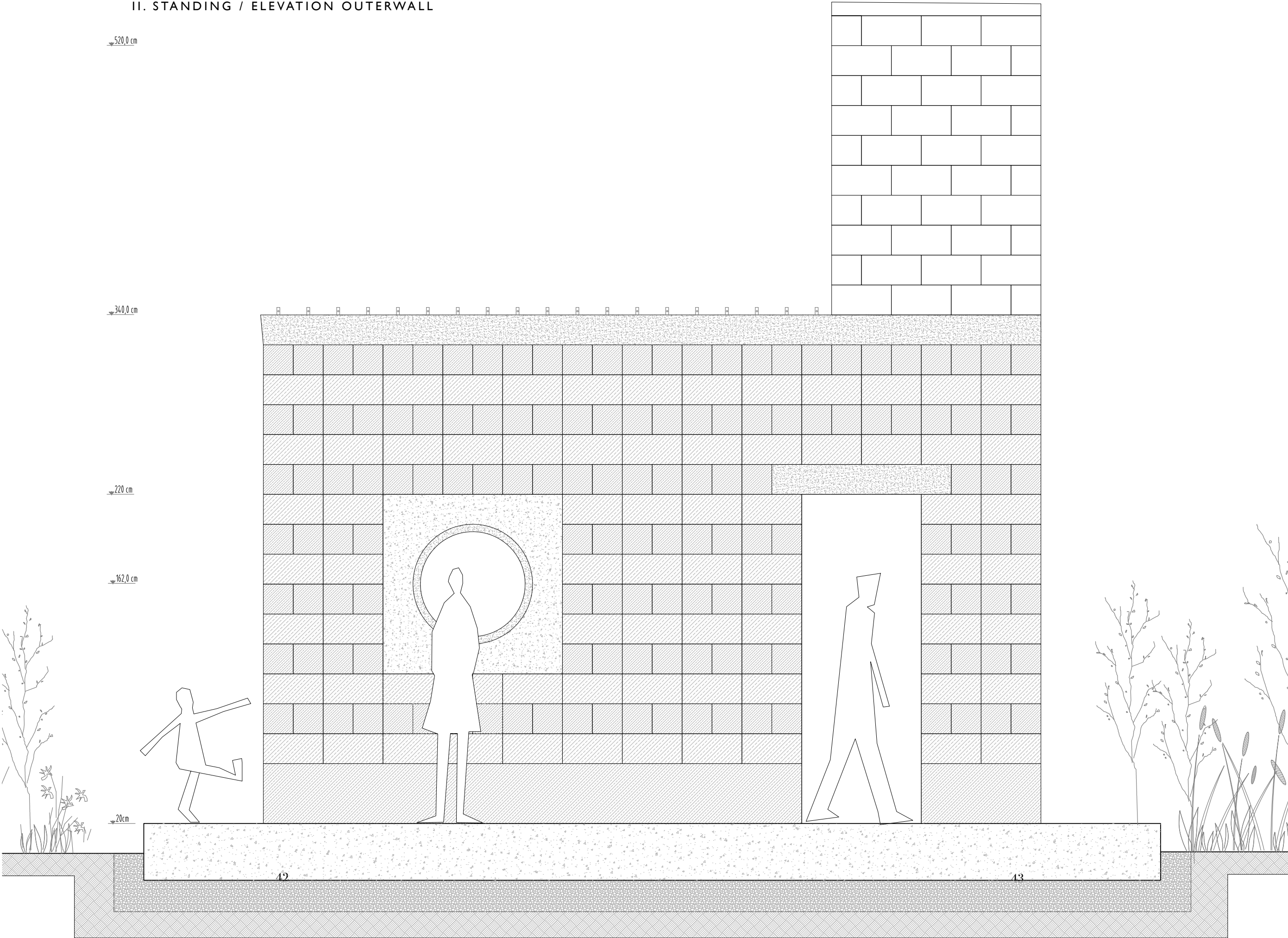


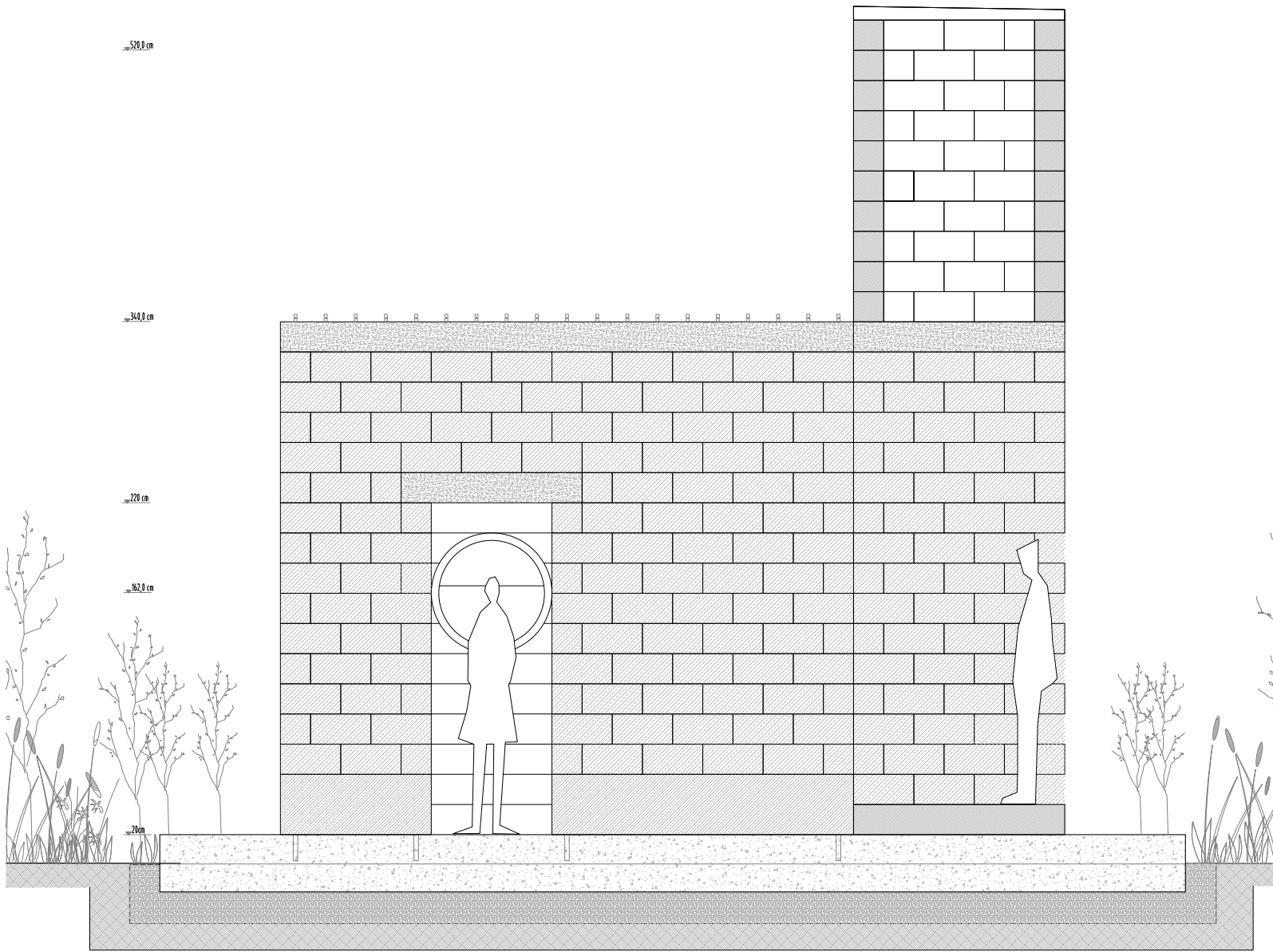
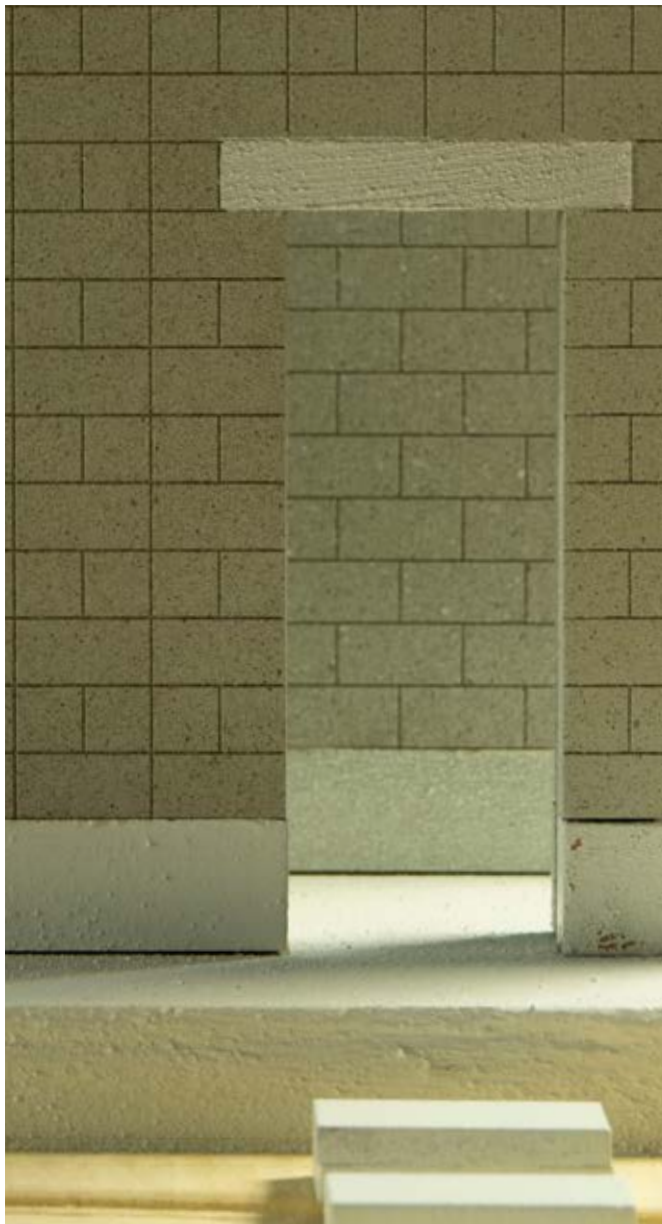


II. STANDING / FLOORPLAN

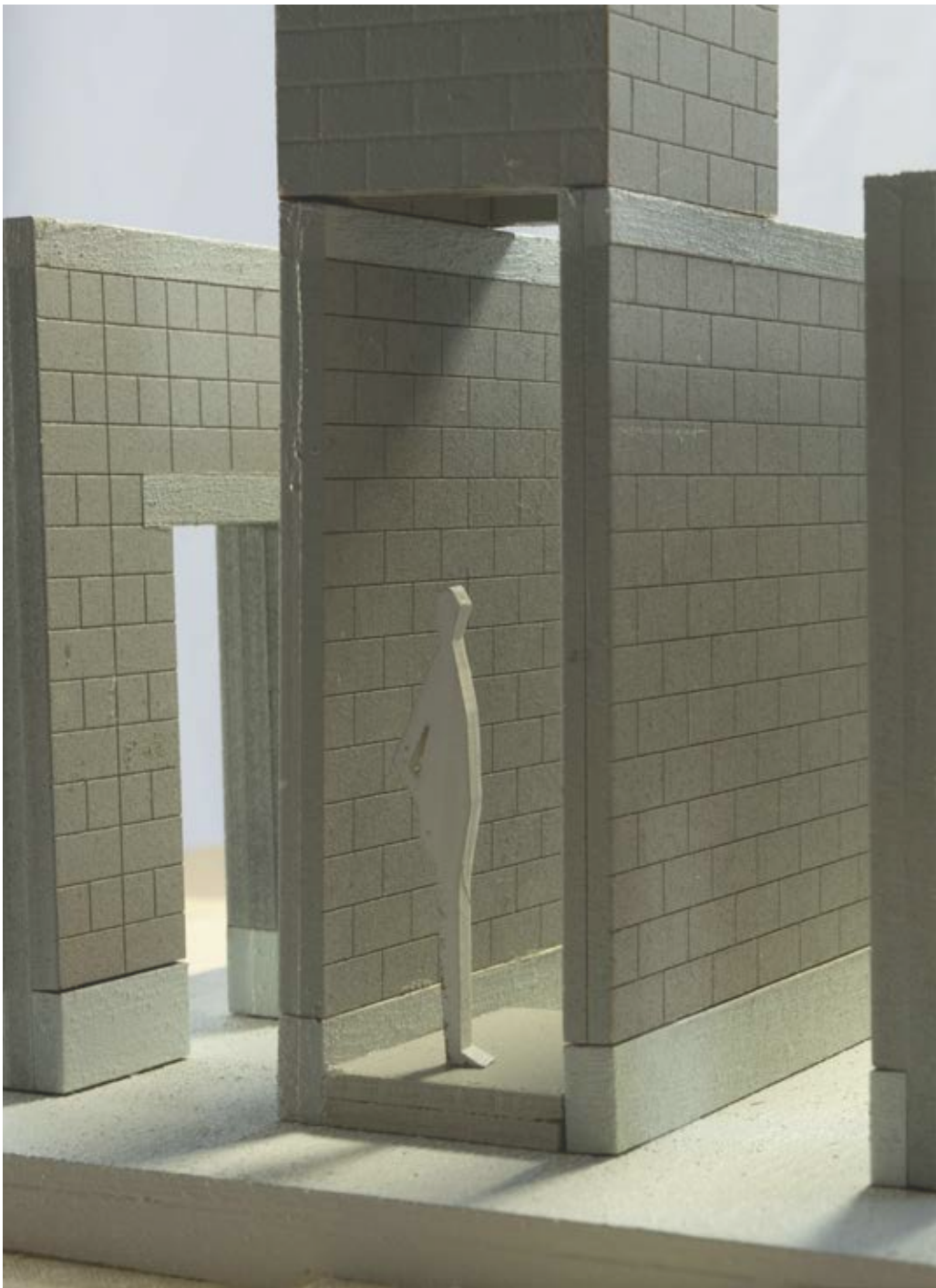
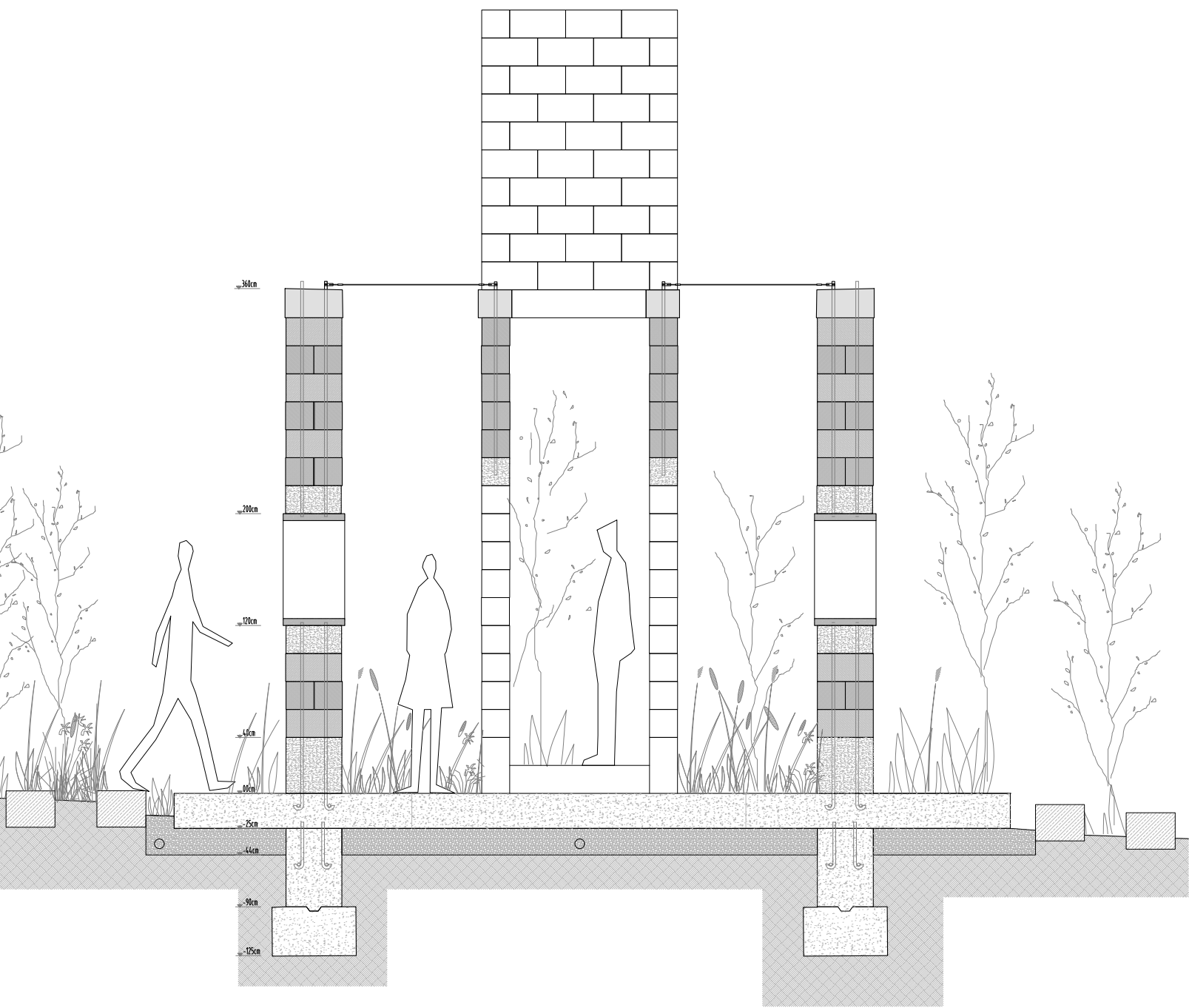


II. STANDING / ELEVATION OUTERWALL



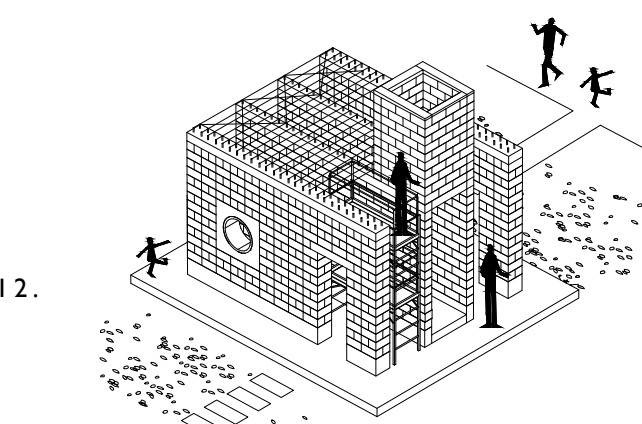
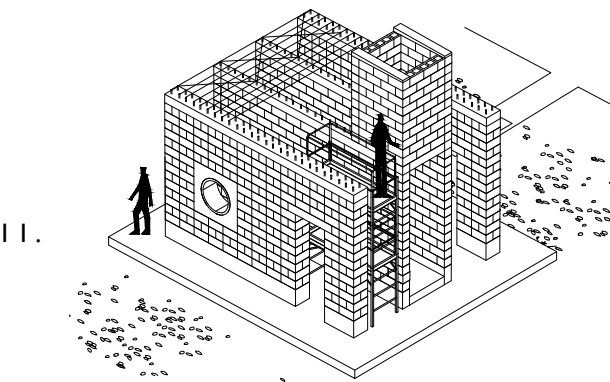
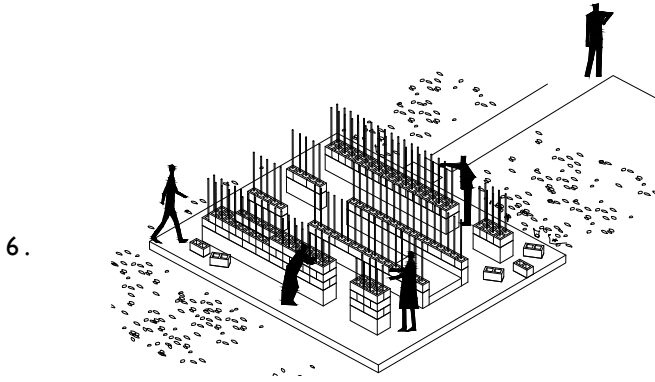
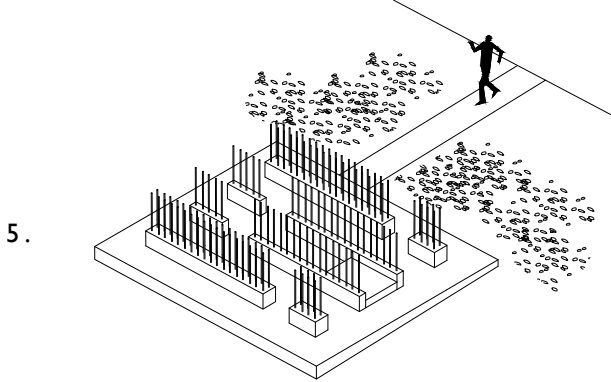
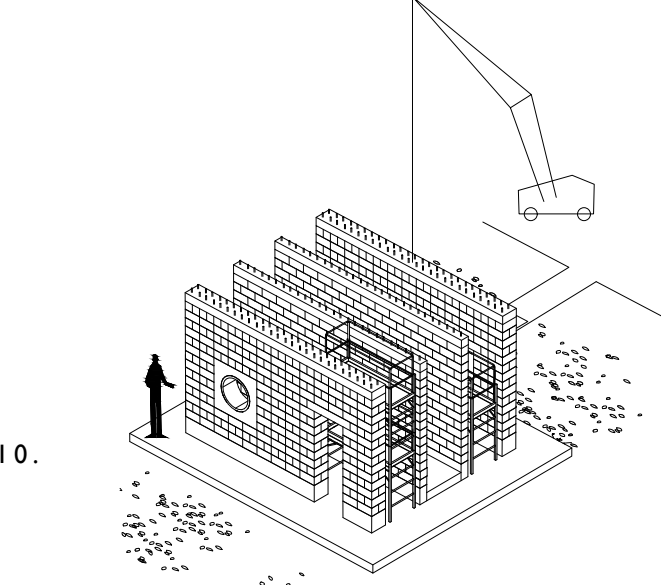
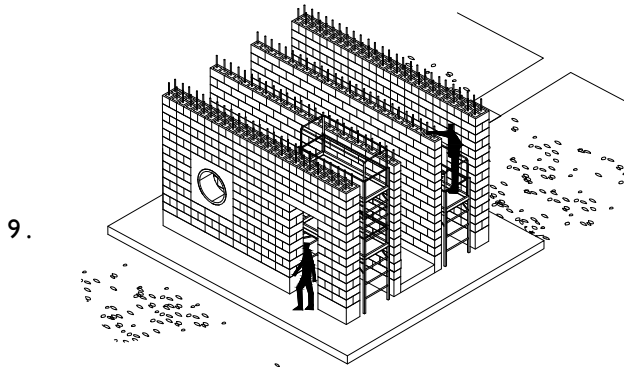
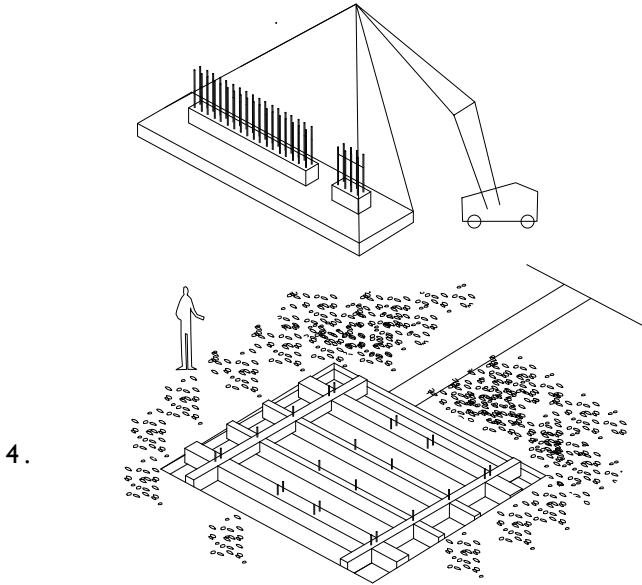
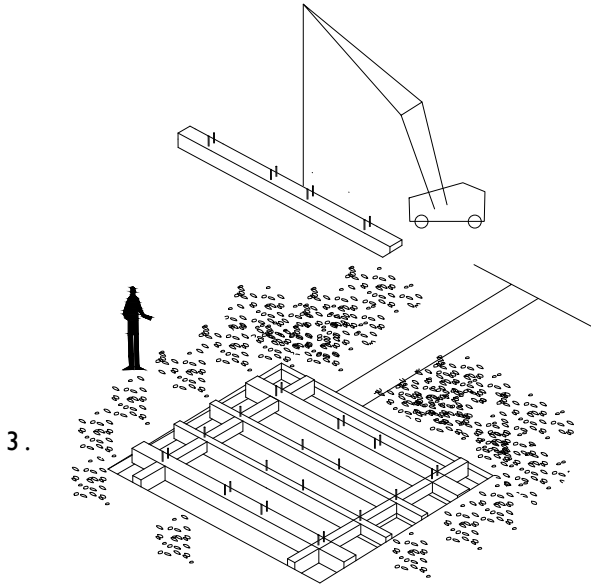
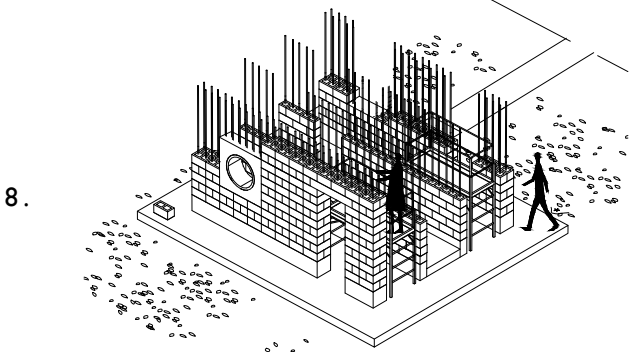
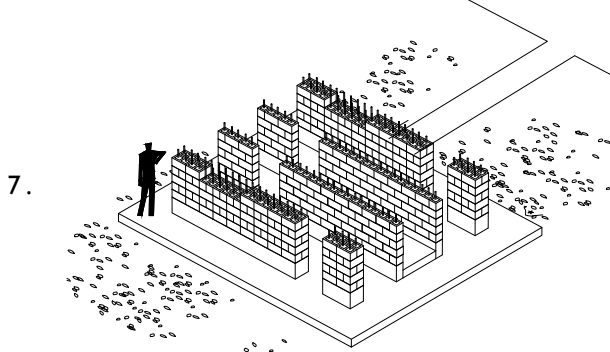
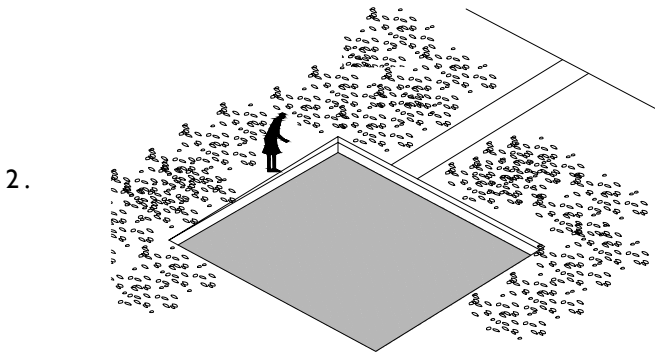
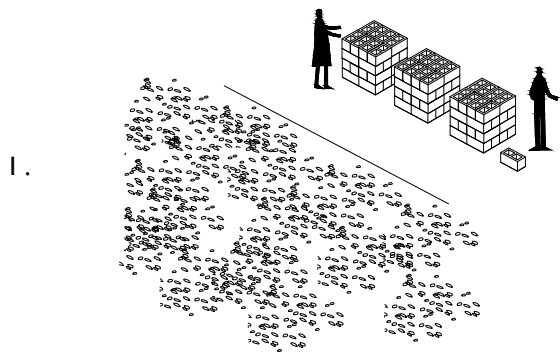


II. STANDING / SECTION

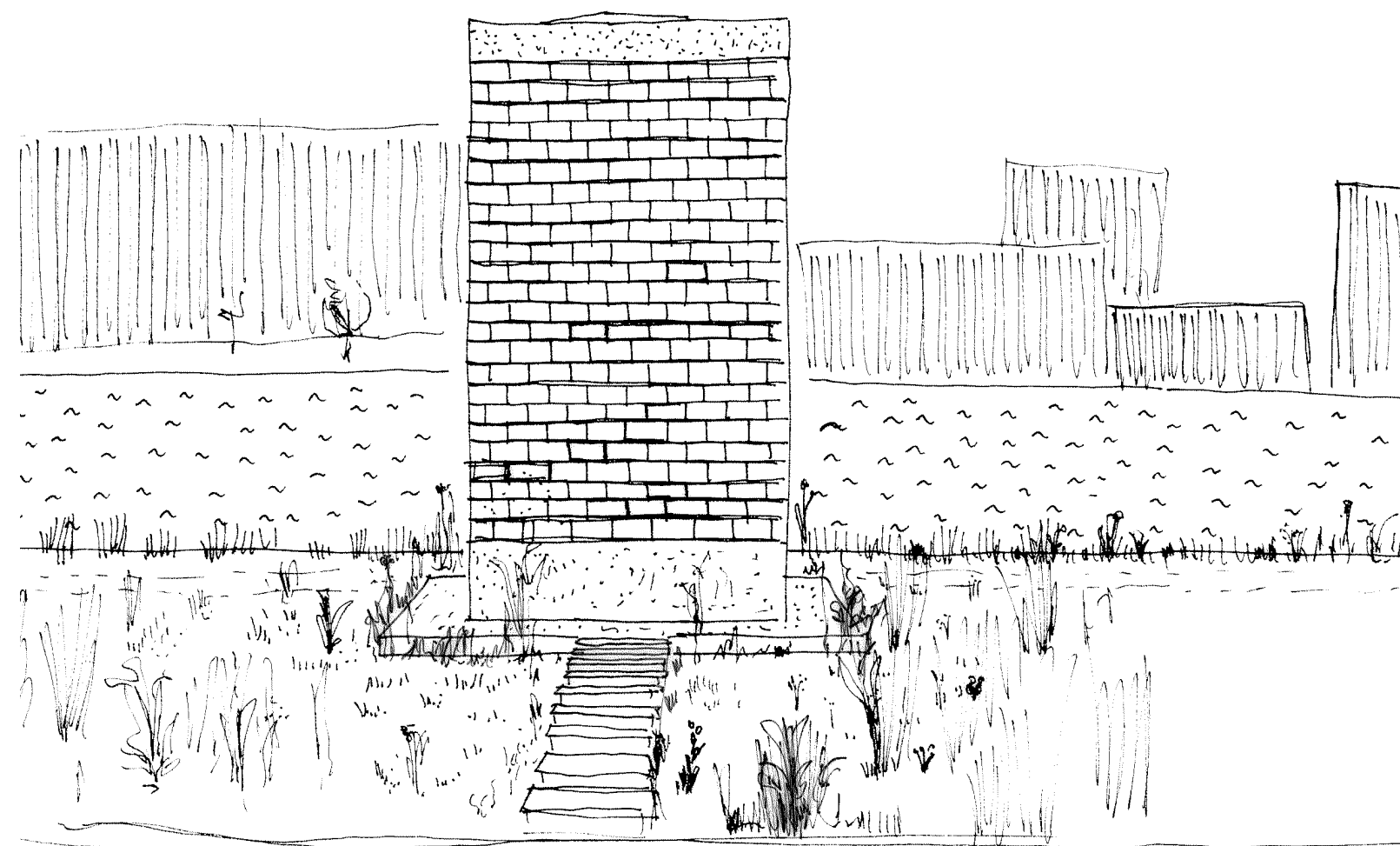
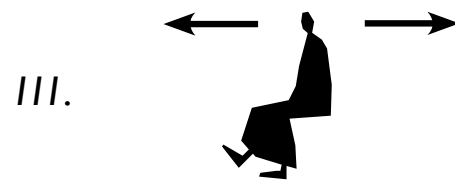


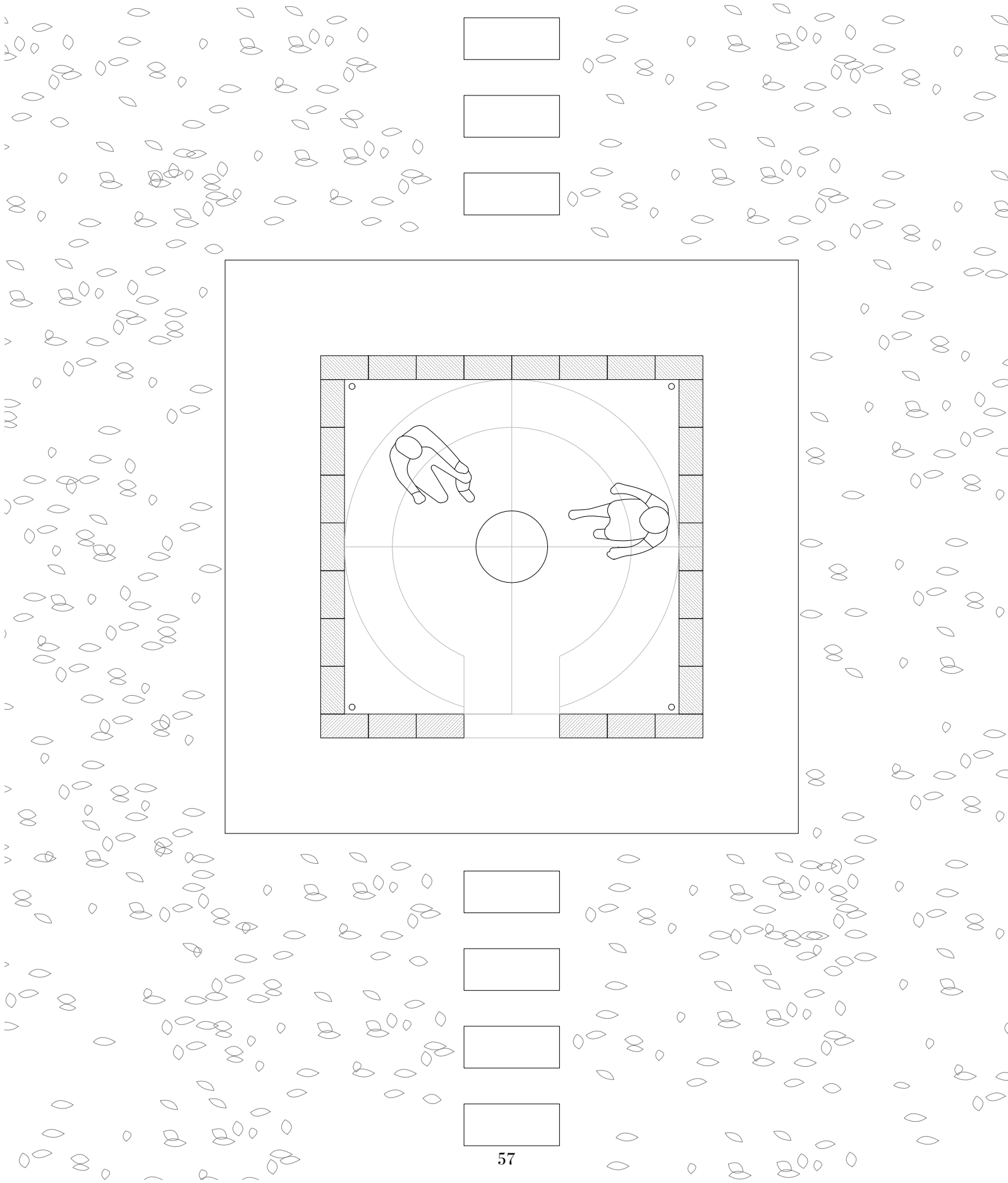
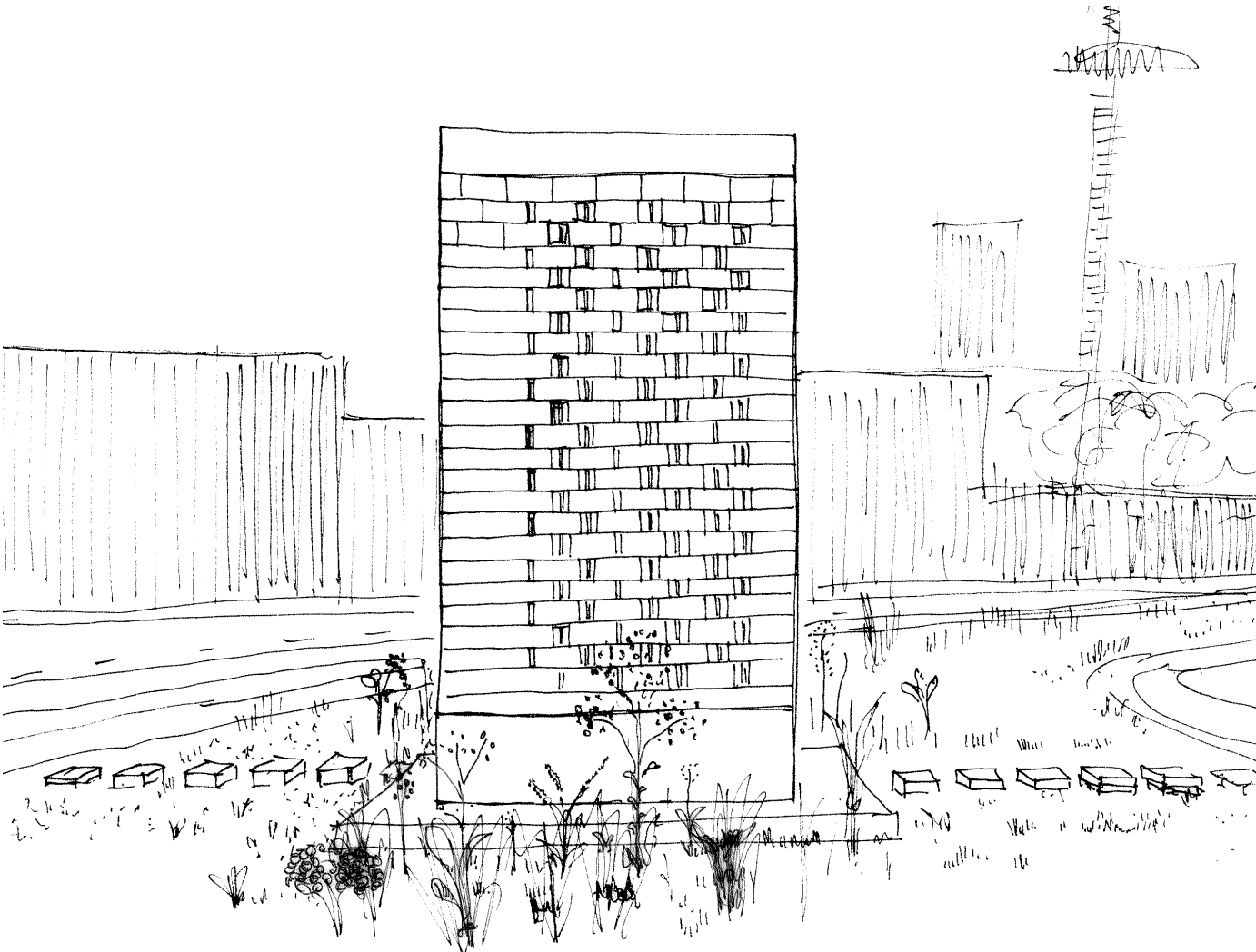


II. STANDING / WAY OF CONSTRUCTING

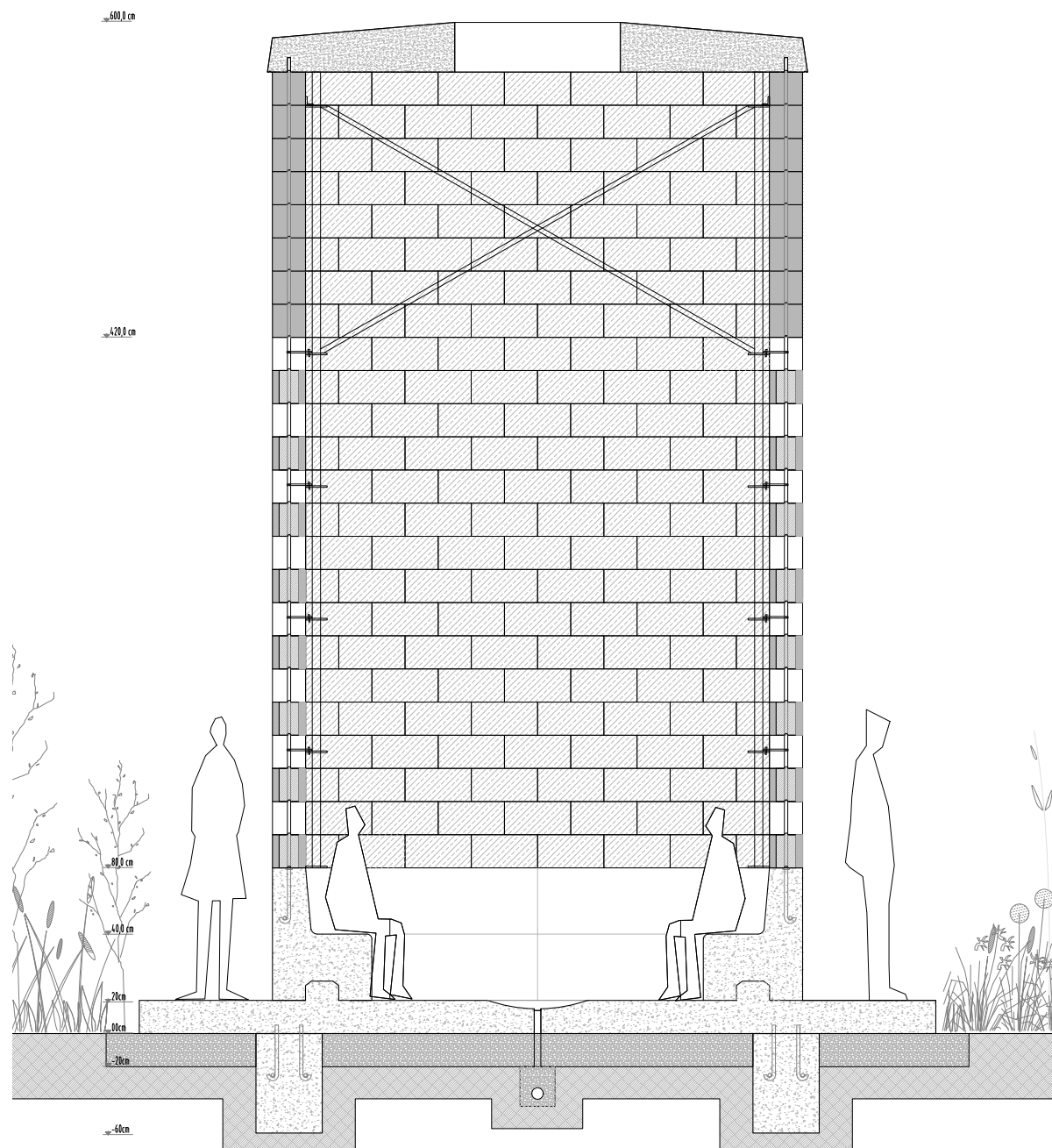








III. SITTING / SECTION



THE WILD GARDEN

The Industrial Landscape

PLACES FOR FREEDOM

*The Revalue of Unfinished Landscapes Through
Architectural Structures*

*The design proposal is a statement
opposing our productive, accelerated
and consumptive society and intends
to offer an alternative way of being
in and thinking about the a city.*

*Graduation Design
Esmeralda Bierma*

PLACES FOR FREEDOM / BOOK III /
The Wild garden / The Industrial Landscape

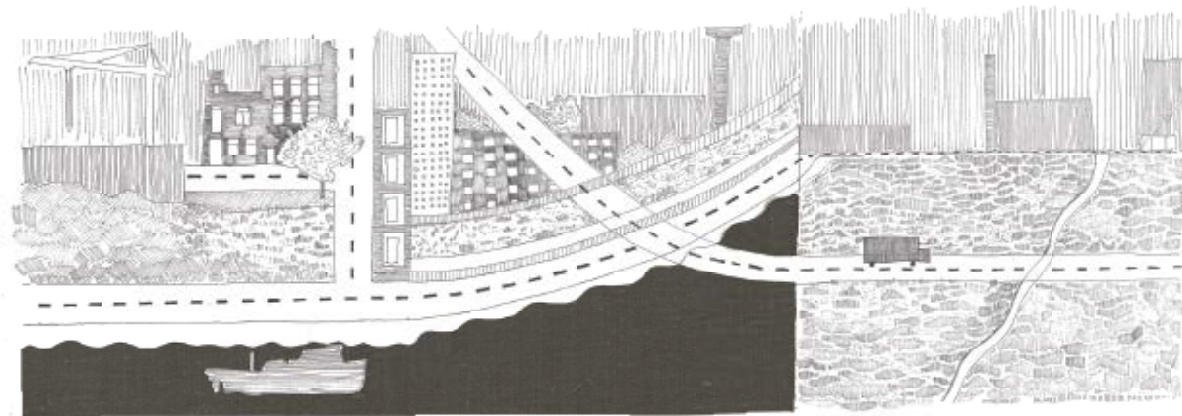
Mentors:
Mark Pimlott
Leontine de Wit
Gilbert Koskamp
Leeke Reinders

TU Delft Faculty of Architecture
and the Built Environment

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PLACES FOR FREEDOM



The research and graduation project are about the revalue of unfinished, abandoned landscapes through architectural structures. Nowadays it is almost rare to find places and landscapes in cities that have no function, are left behind or not taken care of. Even in the city of Rotterdam, which is less dense than Amsterdam, every square meter is very valuable and is often planned for. If it does not have a destination yet, then developers are eager to make that piece of land profitable. This capitalistic view is characteristic for our productive, accelerated and consumptive society. In this society, we tend to forget the small, but valuable things in life and stray away from our core, our existential self, which is that we are part of nature. In our continuous drive for moving forward, we tend to neglect the need for spaces for reflection or just being. The city needs these breathing spaces where, for a moment, the citizen is not a passive consumer, but an active and playful participant, a wanderer, a collector and an explorer in these 'Places for Freedom'.

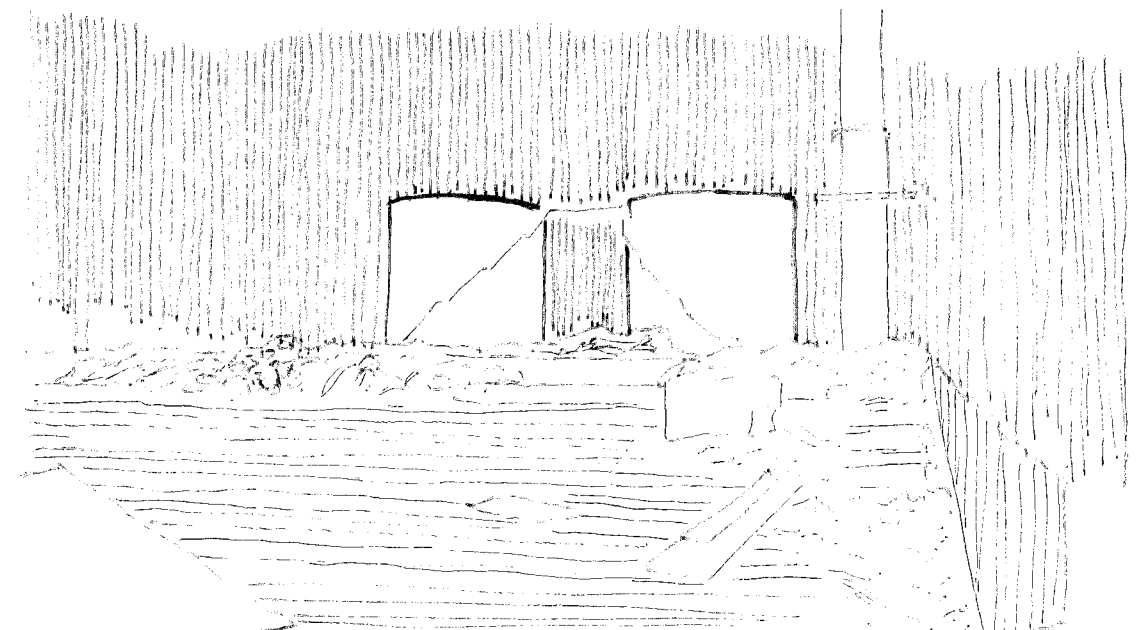
Preliminary to the design a research was done on the unfinished, abandoned landscapes of Rotterdam: places in the city that lost their formal use, are left behind and often taken over by nature. Those places fascinated me as they actually oppose the productive and planned city and the effects thereof. In order to find the proper methods to explore and close read those places, a study was done in psychogeography. Psychogeography is an exploration of urban environments that emphasizes playfulness and 'drifting' to find unexpected perspectives and therefore can create new awareness of places. Walking, the merit of wandering, as the main act of the research for encountering those places, means slowing down which allows close

reading of space, remembrance and let in the invisible sensory experience. Furthermore, the methods photographing, drawing and writing were used to document, represent and make them legible for others. It allowed me to perceive the specific qualities of the observed places and lead to a categorization of different types of unfinished landscapes found in Rotterdam. For the design proposal, the three typical unfinished landscapes of Rotterdam are being exposed: the wasteland in the city, the in-between landscape and the industrial landscape.

With the design 'Places for Freedom' I create architectural structures inside those chosen unfinished landscapes to offer an alternative way of being in and thinking about the city. These structures are inviting one to be present in the moment and provide a sensory experience of a place, they are enhancing the specific qualities of each landscape. 'Places for Freedom' offers a break in our routinized journeys within the city, a closer relationship with our natural environment and moments for intimate informal encounters, not only with humans, but also with animals and plants which are the other inhabitants of the city.

THE INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE





These leftover landscapes that are situated at the industrial areas, often at the periphery of the city. They lay between factories and the stage of wilderness is often the most advanced of all types of unfinished landscapes.

As Rotterdam is a harbor city there are quite a lot of industrial landscapes. Because a lot of industry is removed or replaced the number of wastelands inside those areas is big. As these places are often set on the periphery of the city the value for money is not that high and landscapes can be empty for years.



Map Rotterdam with my walk to the industrial area



THE INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE / VIERHAVEN

Specific characteristics

/ Most advanced stage of wilderness, high biodiversity, all kind of species living in the place.

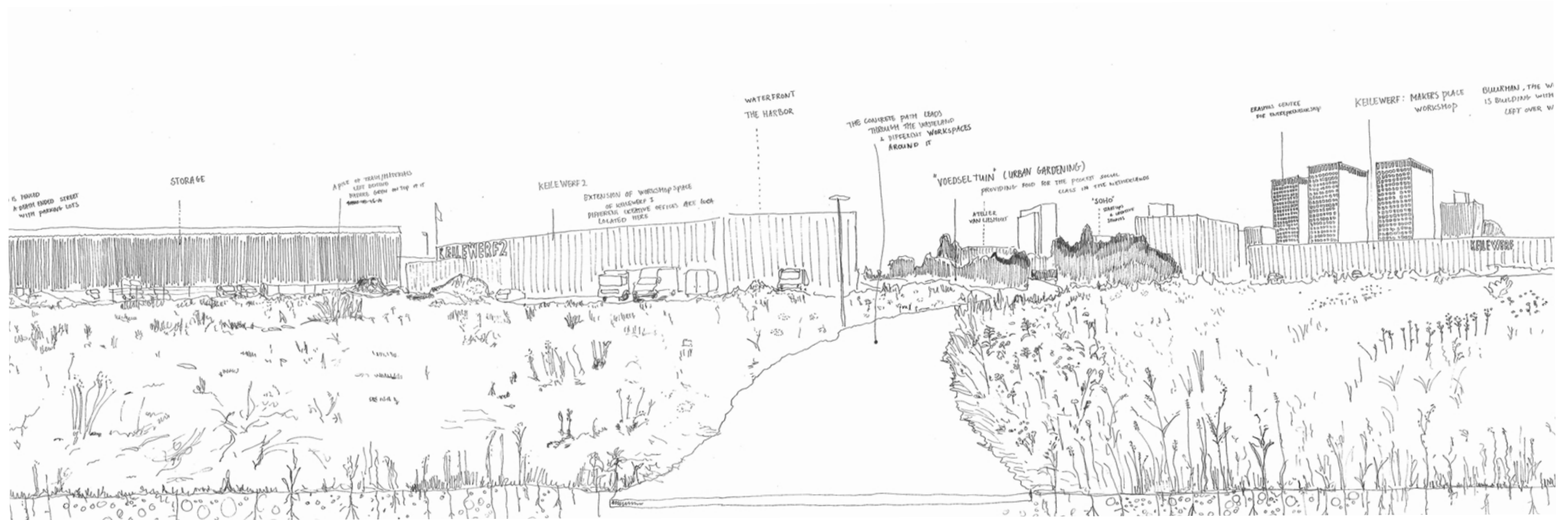
/ Landscape character, as it is set on the periphery of the city, less densely populated

/ Open, wide character, less human scale, less intimate space

/ Often rough places (materiality a lot of steel)

/ Local actors such as artist, designers, workshops and start-ups are concentrated in the area. They are all around the wasteland I found but there is a lack of meeting point.

The specific characteristics of the place are classified into the follow components: The Context, The Traces, The Users, the passengers, The Sensory Experience. A soft map was made of the place in oder to localize the context and the landscape itself.



THE WILD GARDEN

An enclosed garden is the site where the advantage stage of wilderness of the wasteland is celebrated, a place for humans and plants. Inside the enclosure there are three platforms for encounter, play and reflection. Through the experience of elemental elements such as water, fire, wind and earth awareness to our natural environment is dragged (as we sometime tend to forget our existential self of being part of nature)

The wooden walkway, the cloister, marks the landscape, but it does not close of from its surroundings. The open structure allows the connection between the inner world and the external world. The enclosure, the walkway is shaped as a circle to be able to walk continuously on the edge between inside and outside. Symbolizing the cycle of life. The temporal wooden structure can be built by local actors as the wood workshop next to it. The garden can be maintained by local actors such as the voedseltuinen.

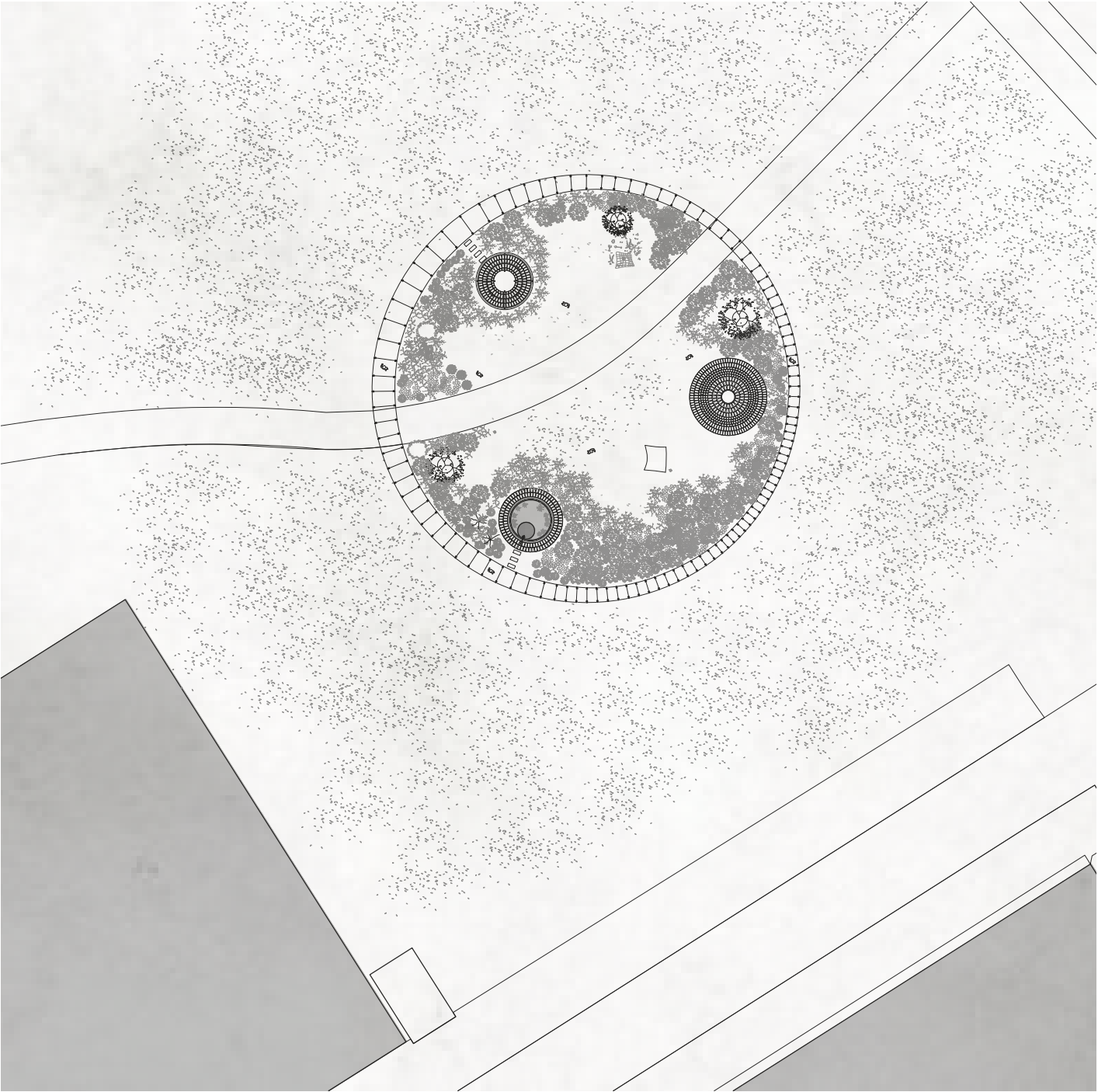
Water place – reflection. The water place is natural equilibrium basin. The idea is that when it rains water can flow naturally and will be restored underground. When water is needed the handpump serves as mechanism to circular the water.

Fire place – gathering, BBQ. The small amfi-theatre around the fireplace is for gathering, poetry, presentations, but also a place to bbq with local people of the area.

Wind place – play. A platform with swings to enjoy the moments with the air.

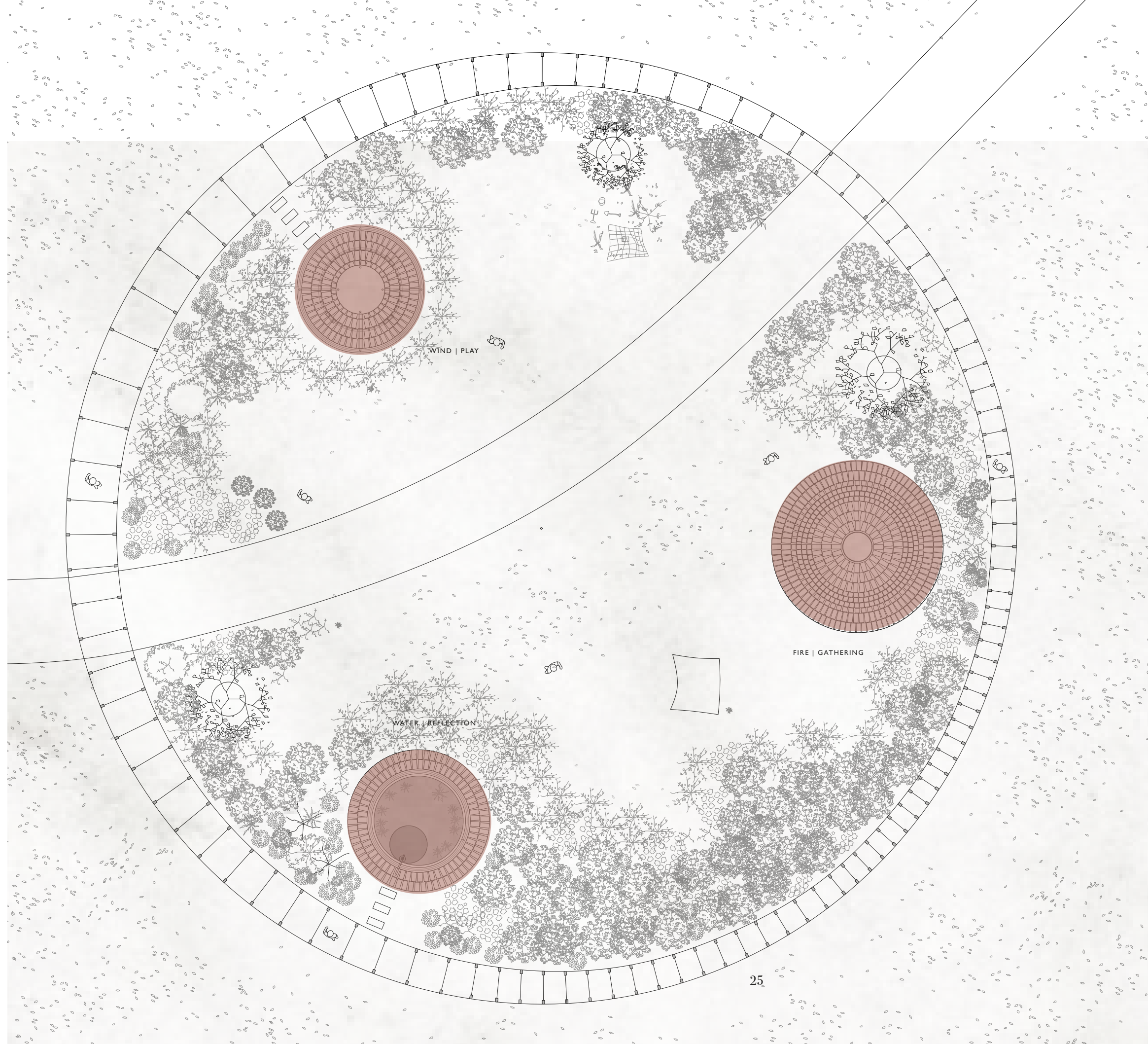
Earth – the center of the enclosed space. Different events can be hold here such as sculpture expositions, small parties and gatherings, open air restaurant with cooking from the garden etc.

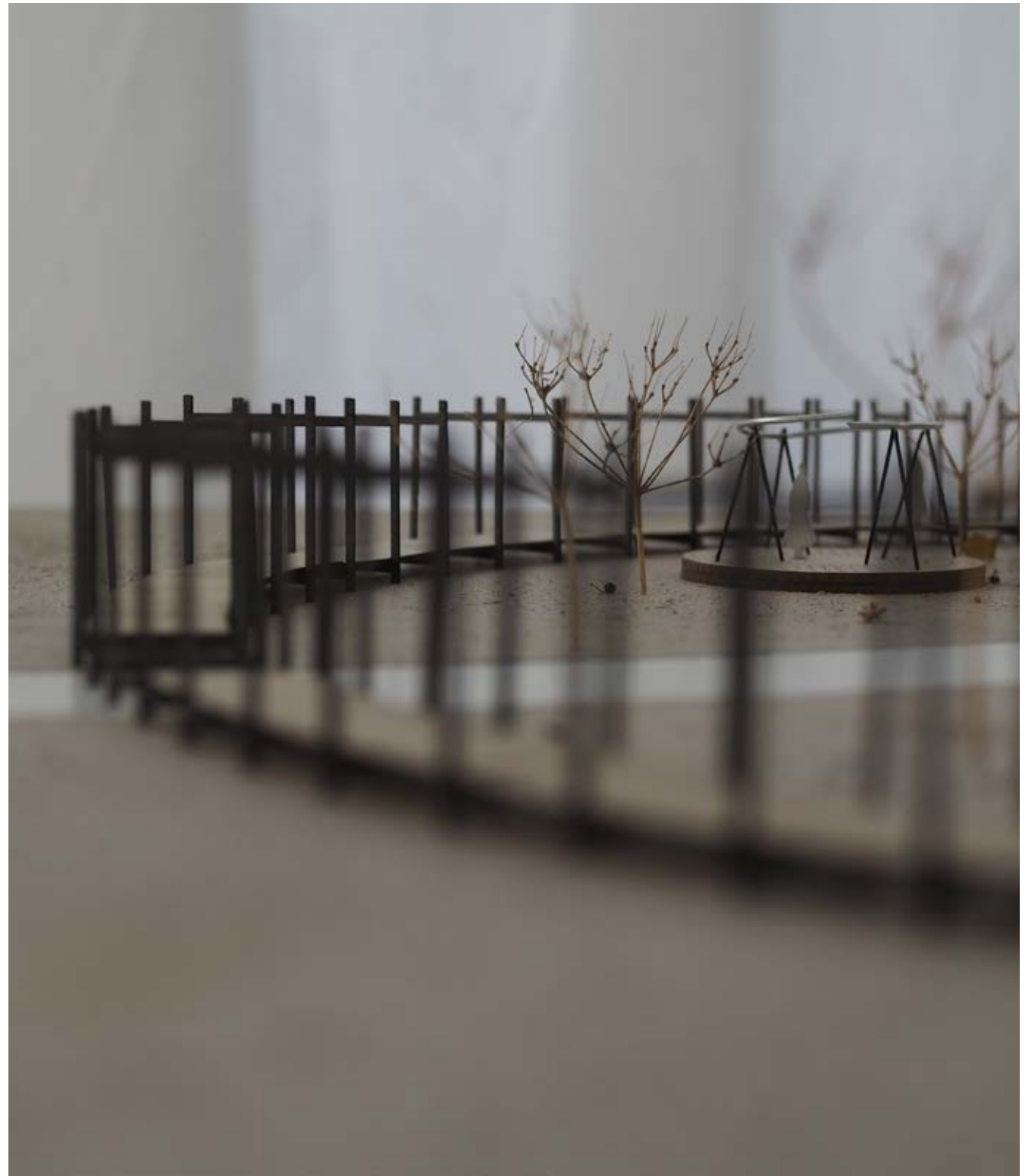




THE PLATFORMS

The platforms are made of concrete and the wooden-concrete blocks. They are the traces in the landscape. Time is incorporated in the design by allowing slowly decay of materials and nature that can take over.

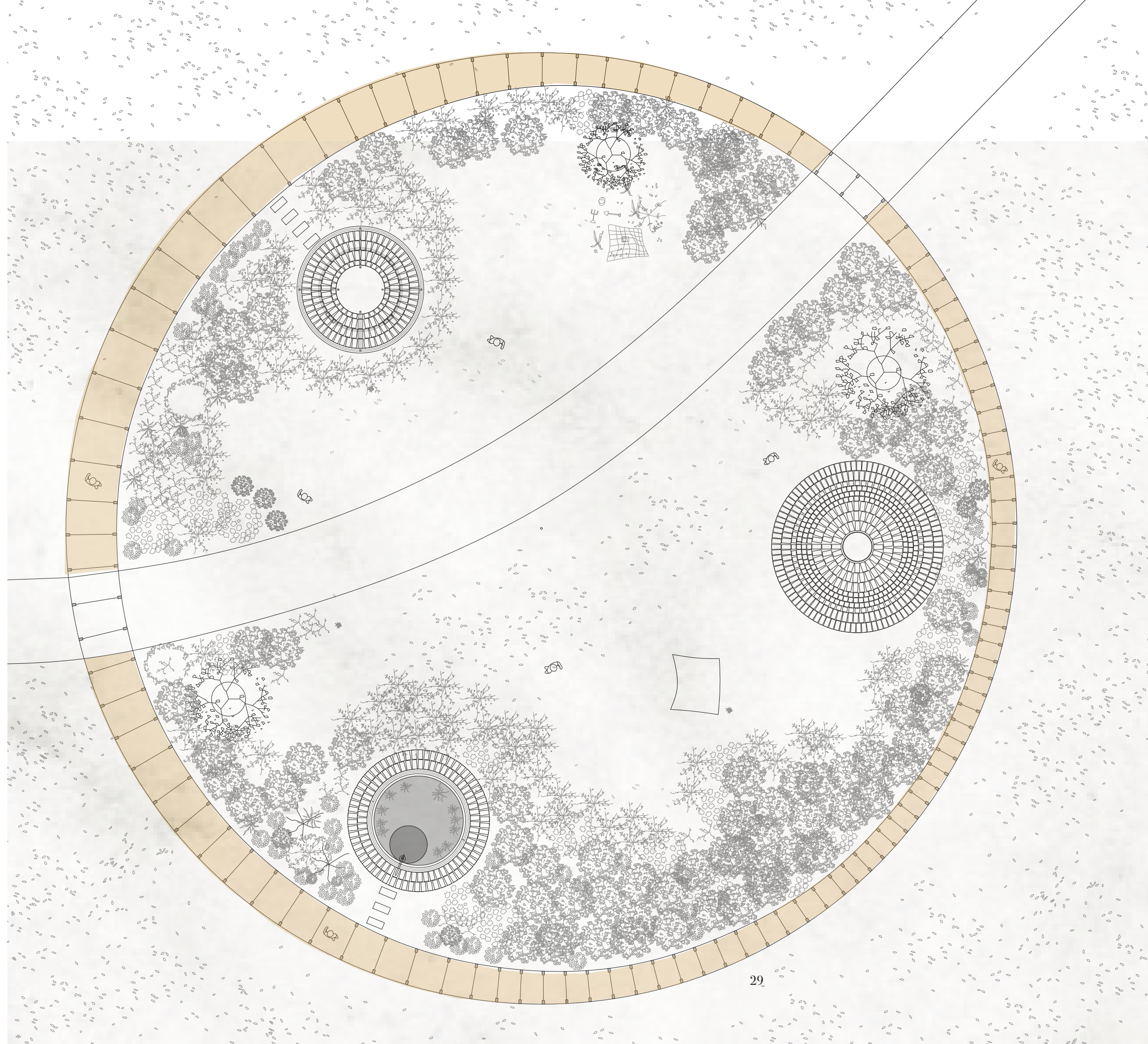


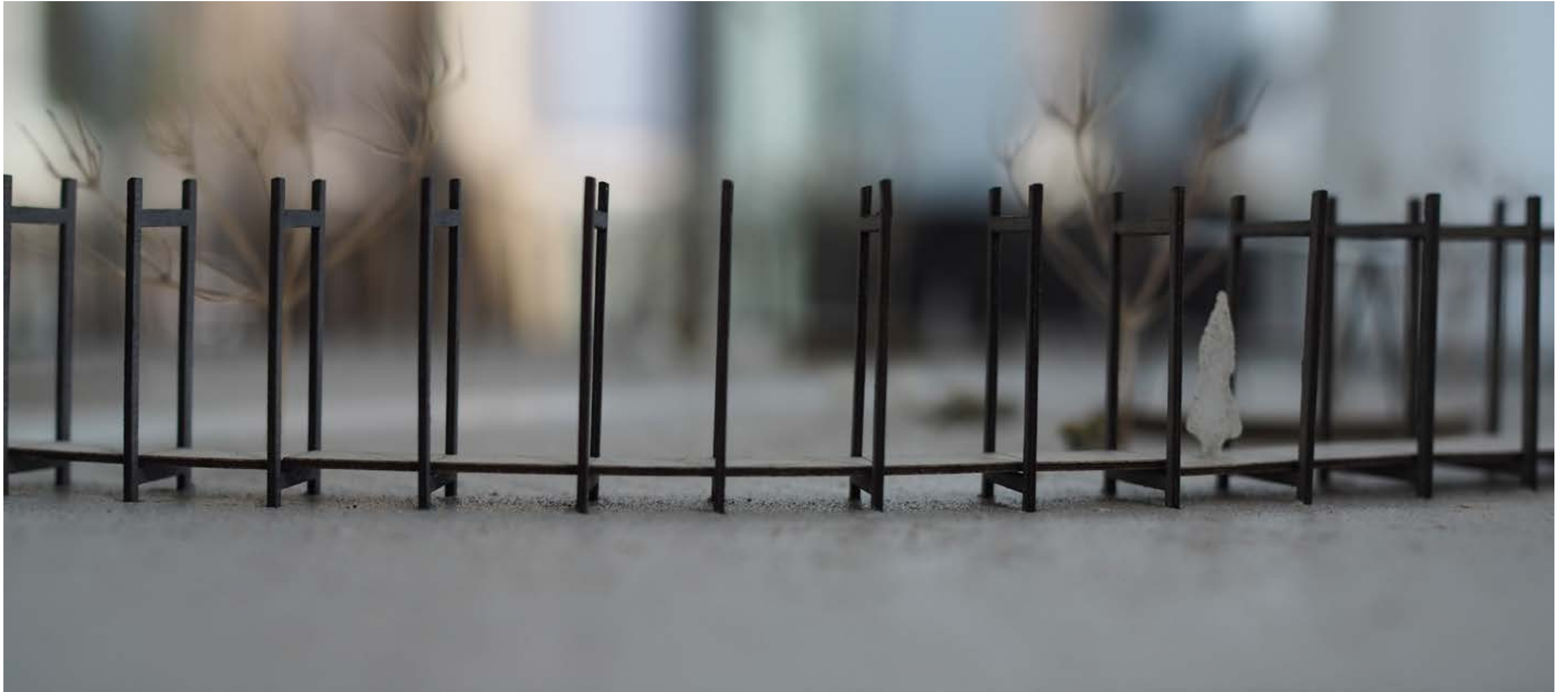


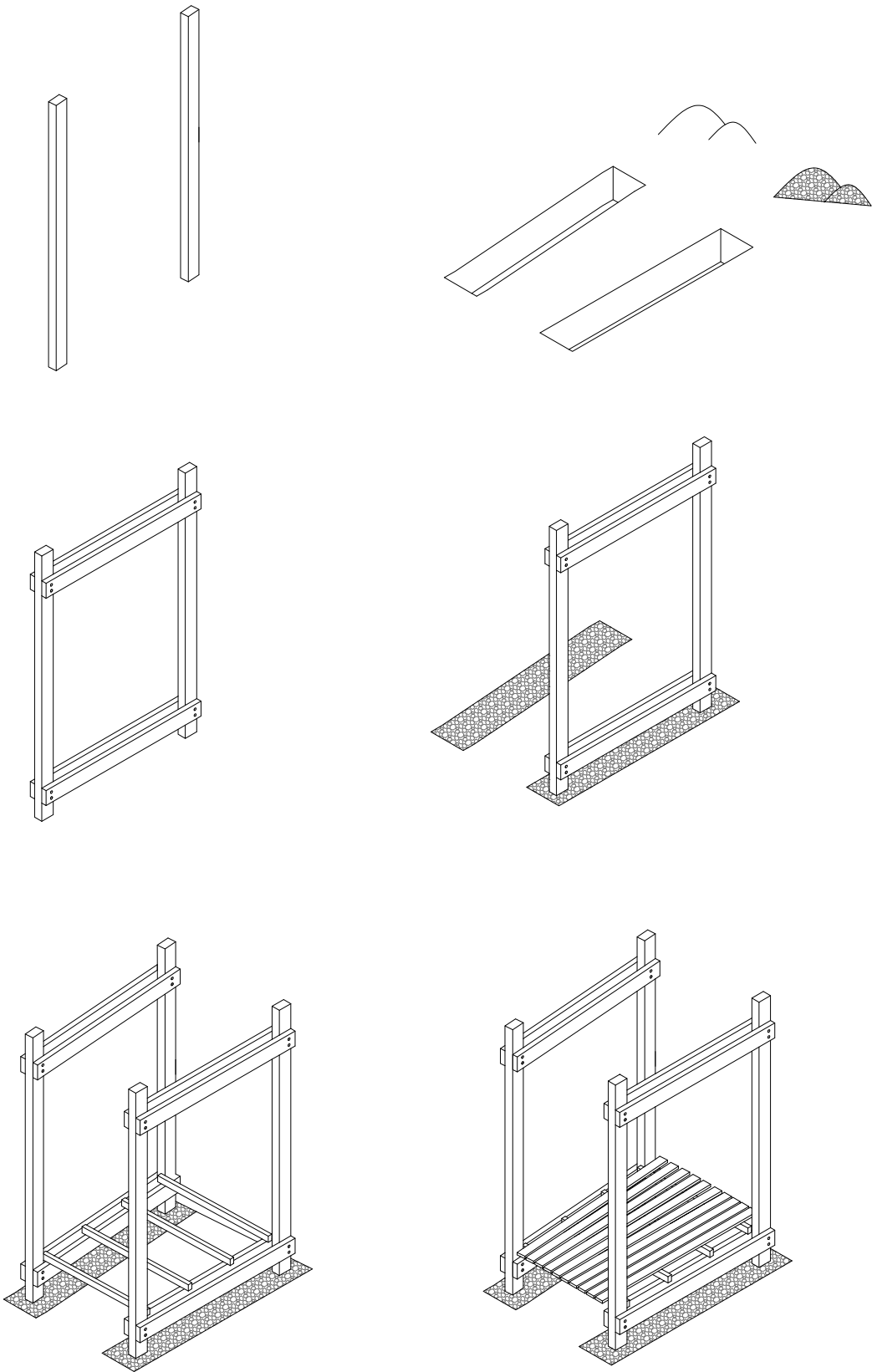
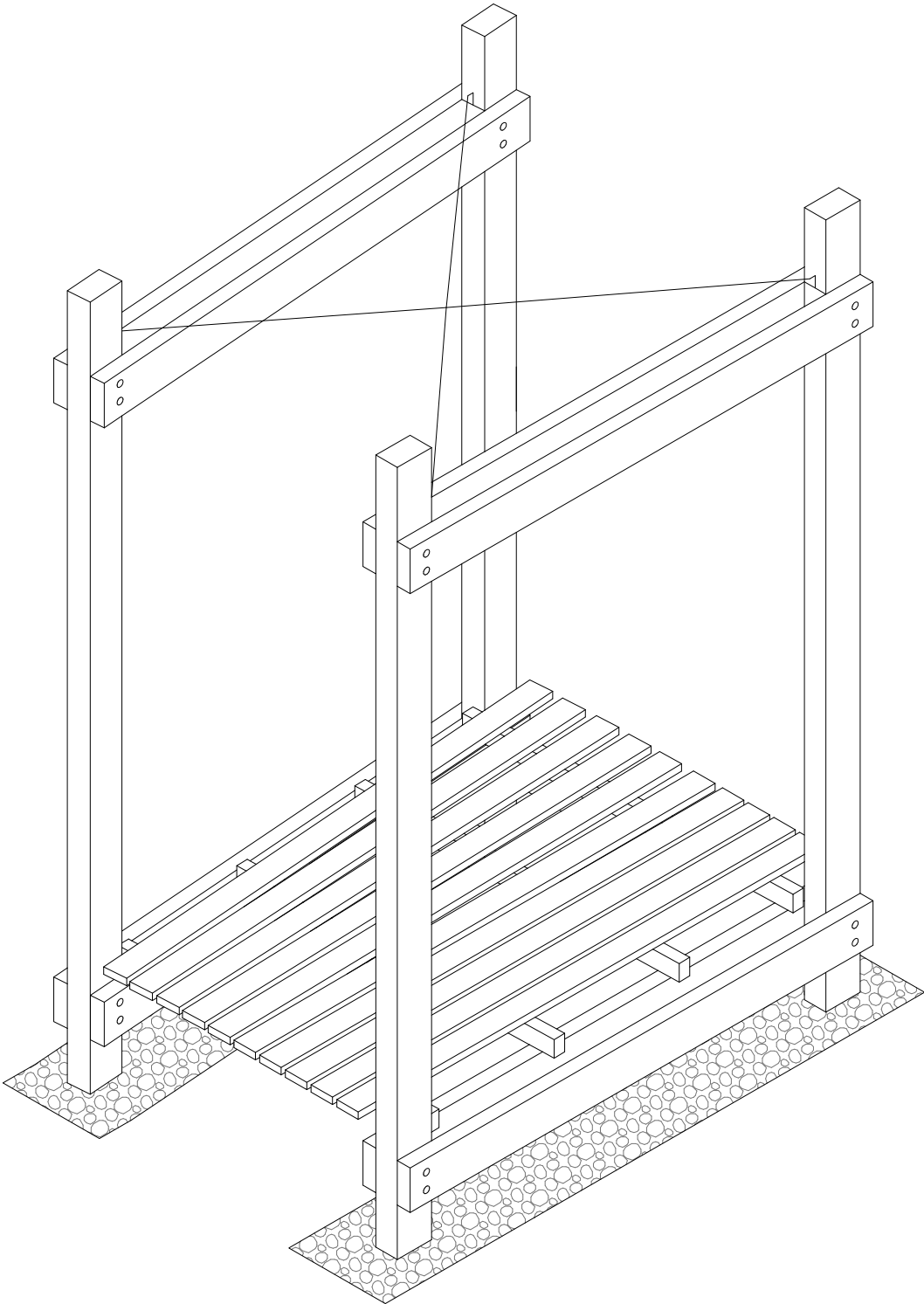
THE WOODEN ENCLOSURE THE WALKWAY

The wooden walkway, the cloister, the enclosure, is to create a more intimate interior space inside the rough industrial area: to celebrate the advantage stage of wilderness but also to learn from it. What kind of weeds are there actually, and how can you use them for cooking for example. The idea is that local communities, like Buurman (the woodworkshop) built the structures themselves. Therefore the construction is designed to be as simple as possible.

Furthermore, the wooden walkway is the contemplative area where one walks alone or with others. It is designed from very close, dense structure (which closes of the street side) to a very open, wide part (opens to the wasteland)









THE CENTER

The center of the Wild Garden functions as a square. People can gather, local communities can bring their chairs and tables to sit and eat outside, but also sculpture exposition can be hold for example. It is a place where different events can take place.

