

Project Book

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Interiors Buildings Cities
Graduation Studio 2024 - 2025

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“Define a new unified home for the VAI, incorporating the needs of the archive, alongside its other public and administrative roles. Working in response to the existing complex of De Singel.”

Situation



Antwerp, Belgium

The Flanders Architecture Institute (VAi) manages the architectural archive of Flanders while actively promoting public engagement with architecture

● = VAI archive

● = VAI offices and library



DeSingel, Antwerp



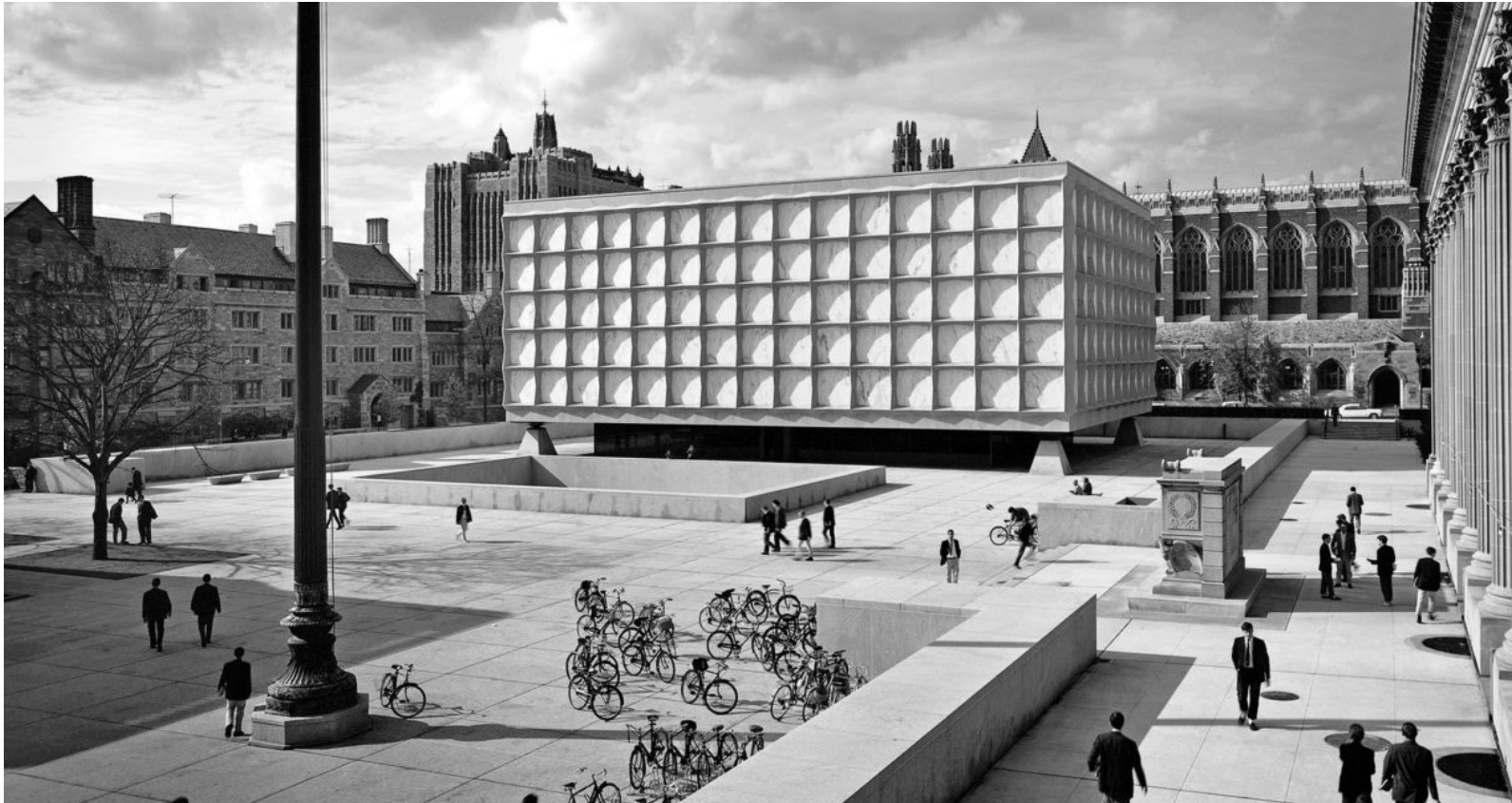
V&A archive, Antwerp



Inside the archive



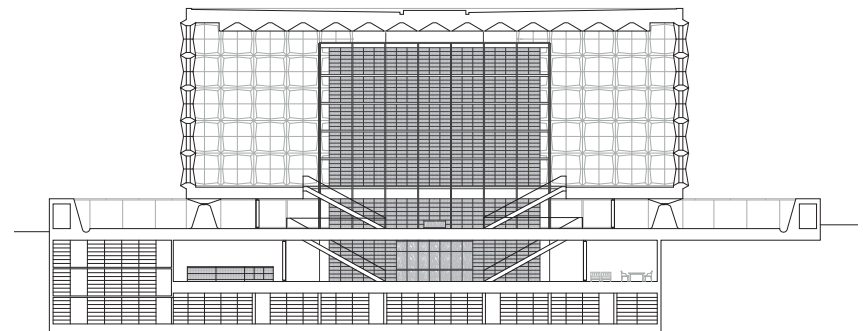
Position - precedent studies



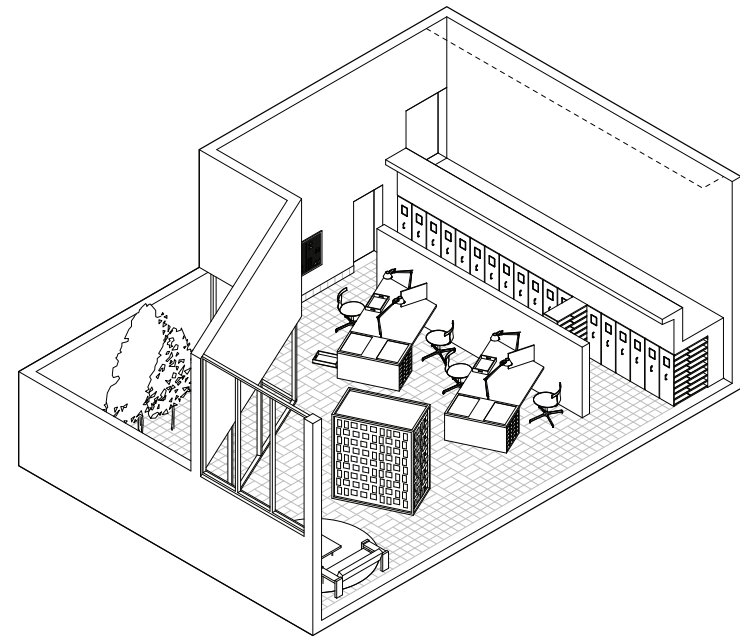
Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale



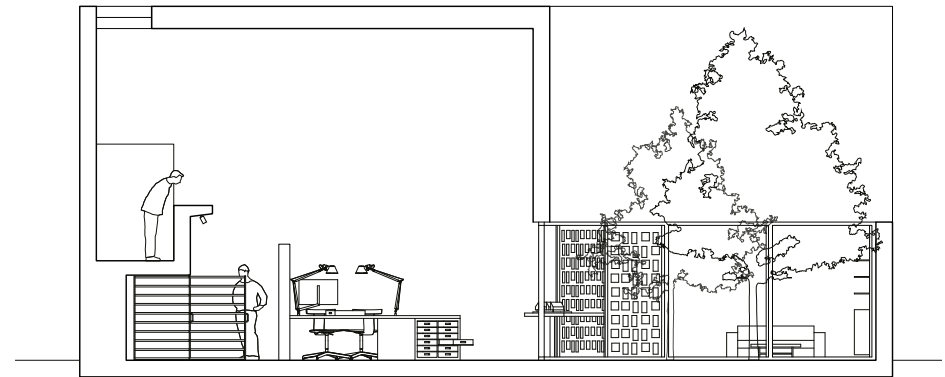
The book tower and archive



Position - a room for the archive



“exhibiting the art of archiving”



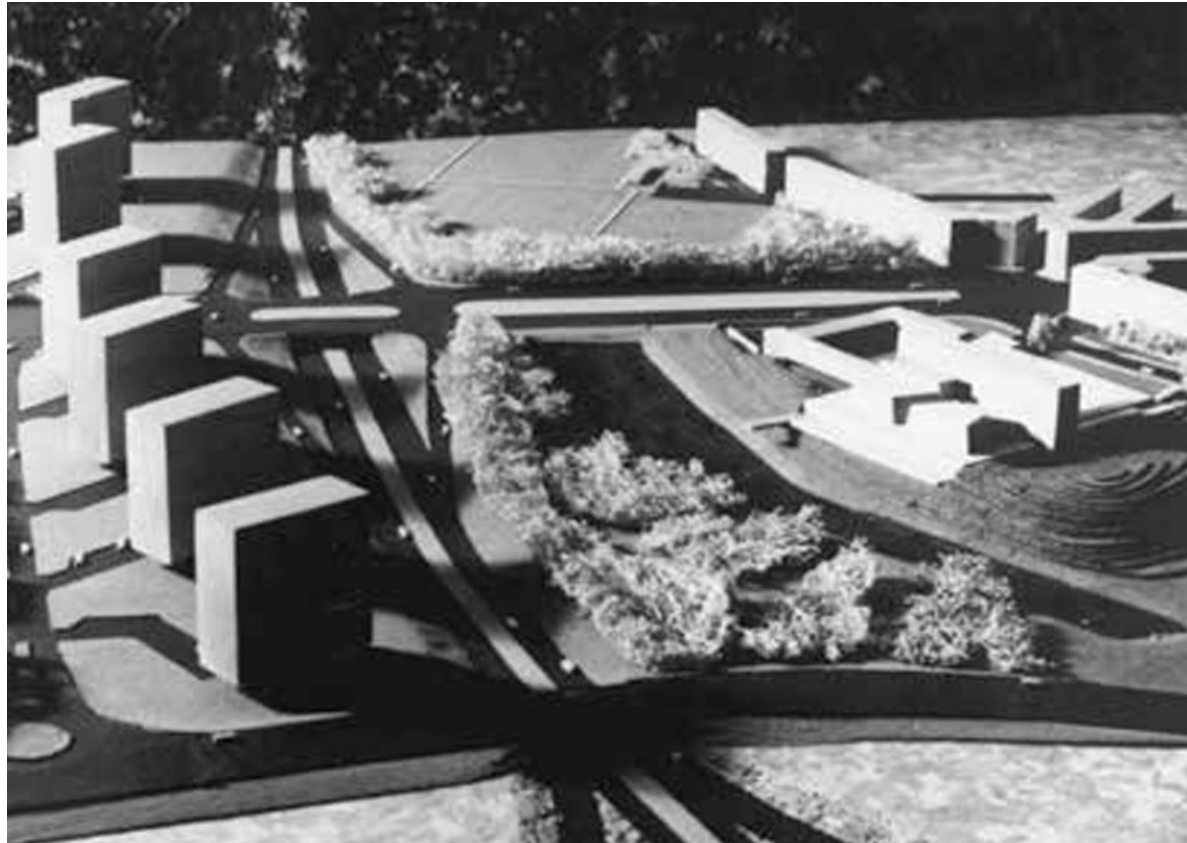
"an archive that is accessible, engaging, and lived in."

History - DeSingel



Historial photo before construction of DeSingel

The site in 1932: a quiet edge of the city, shaped by open fields and sloping terrain.



Urban design by Leon Stynen (ca. 1962)

Stynen envisioned DeSingel as part of a larger urban plan. Here seen overlooking the moat of the former fortifications, parallel to the projected ring road.

Stynen raised the building on columns to improve acoustics and allow the sloping landscape to flow underneath



Elevated from the ground



Robustness

The entire building follows a strict 7.4-meter grid, expressed clearly in the rhythm of the façade.



Rhythm



Permanence

The ring road under construction, cutting through the former moat instead of running beside it.



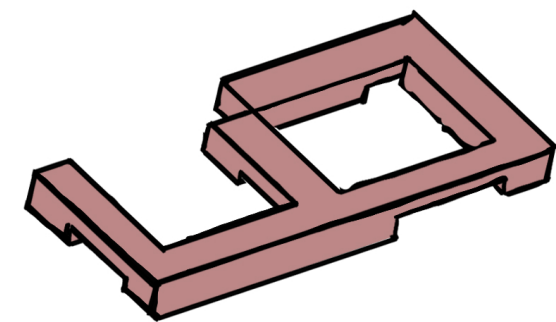
Ring road under construction (ca. 1969)



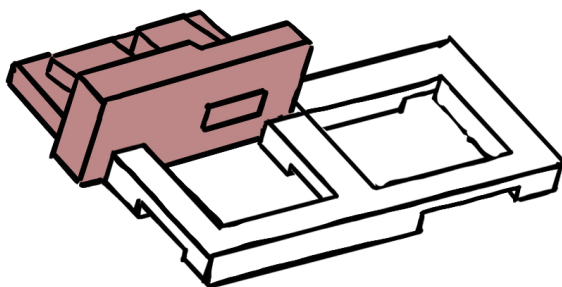
DeSingel (ca.1980)

Design phases

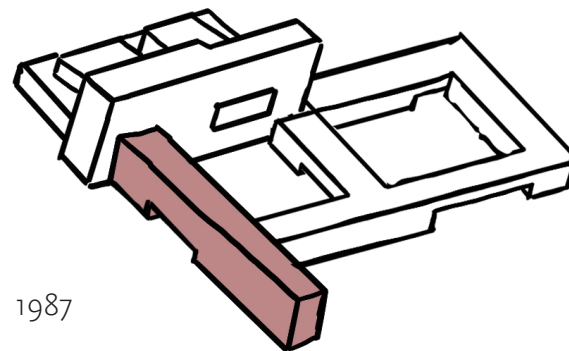
Leon Stynen 1899 - 1990



1968

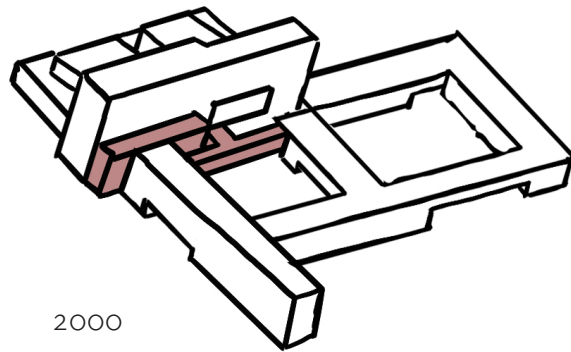


1980

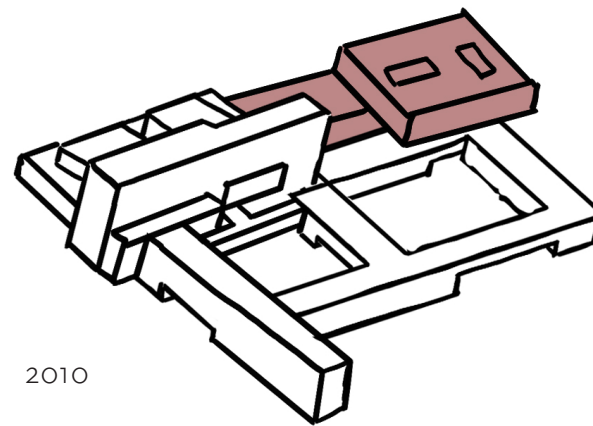


1987

Stéphane Beel 1955 -



2000



2010



Current situation (2024)



Aerial view (2024)

Urban expansion has enclosed the site, now bordered by major traffic arteries.

Present - issues



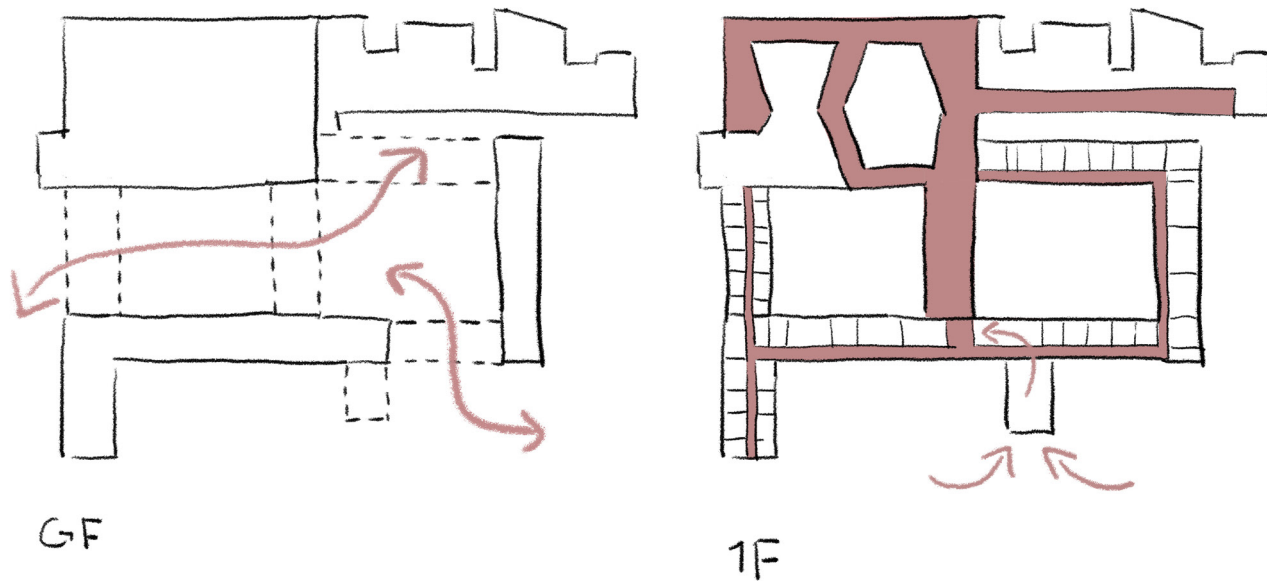
Surrounding roads



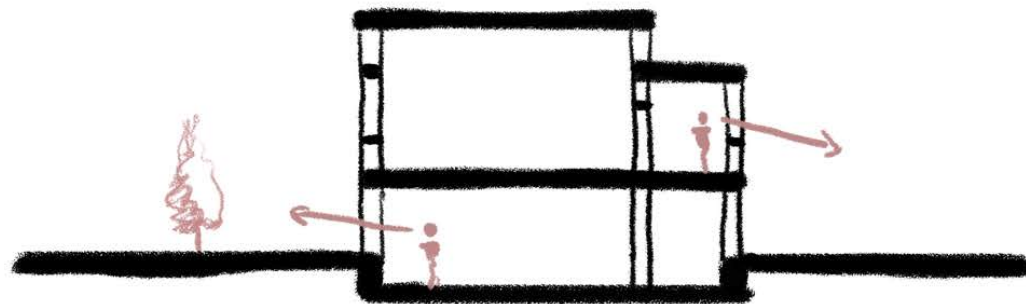
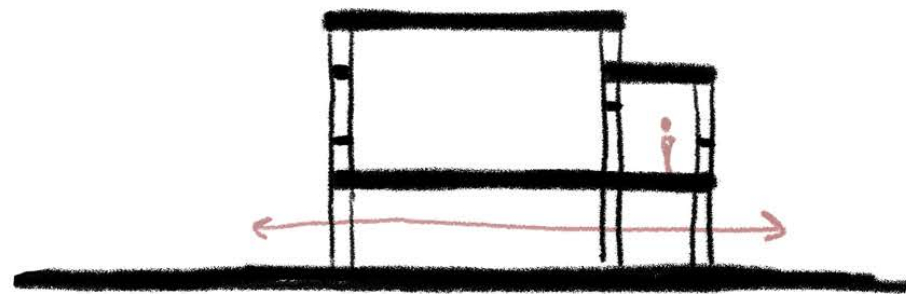
Surrounding spaces

The surrounding area around the building had to adapt as well to its growing infrastructural needs.

Because the building is elevated from the ground level, the main circulation is elevated as well on the first floor.



Elevated circulation system



Elevated circulation system

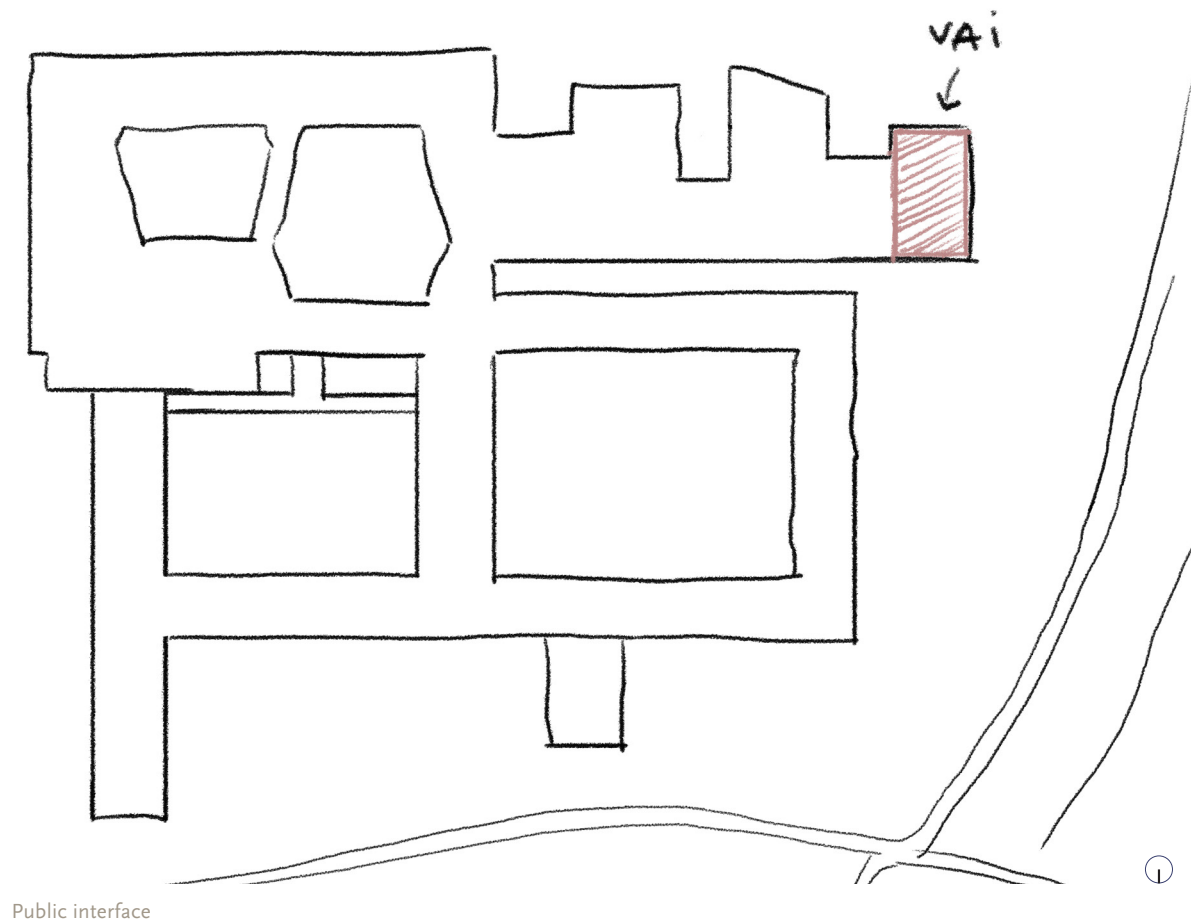
The ground floor's spaces are always a little bit recessed into the ground. A physical barrier to the outside is constantly present.

This leads to two opulent courtyards that aren't particularly related to the activities taking on inside the building.



Courtyards





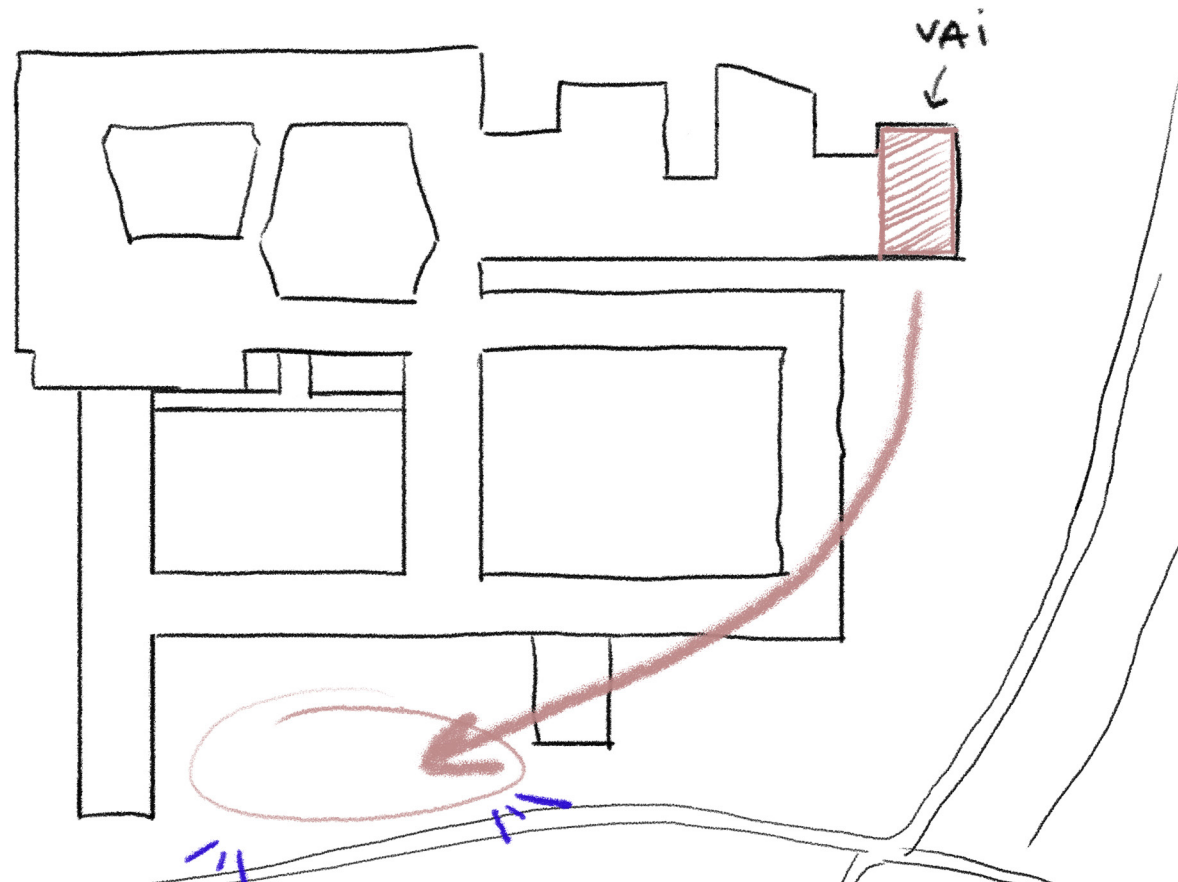
The VAI is tucked away on the first floor of the building. As a result they lack a clearly defined spatial identity in the building.

Proposal

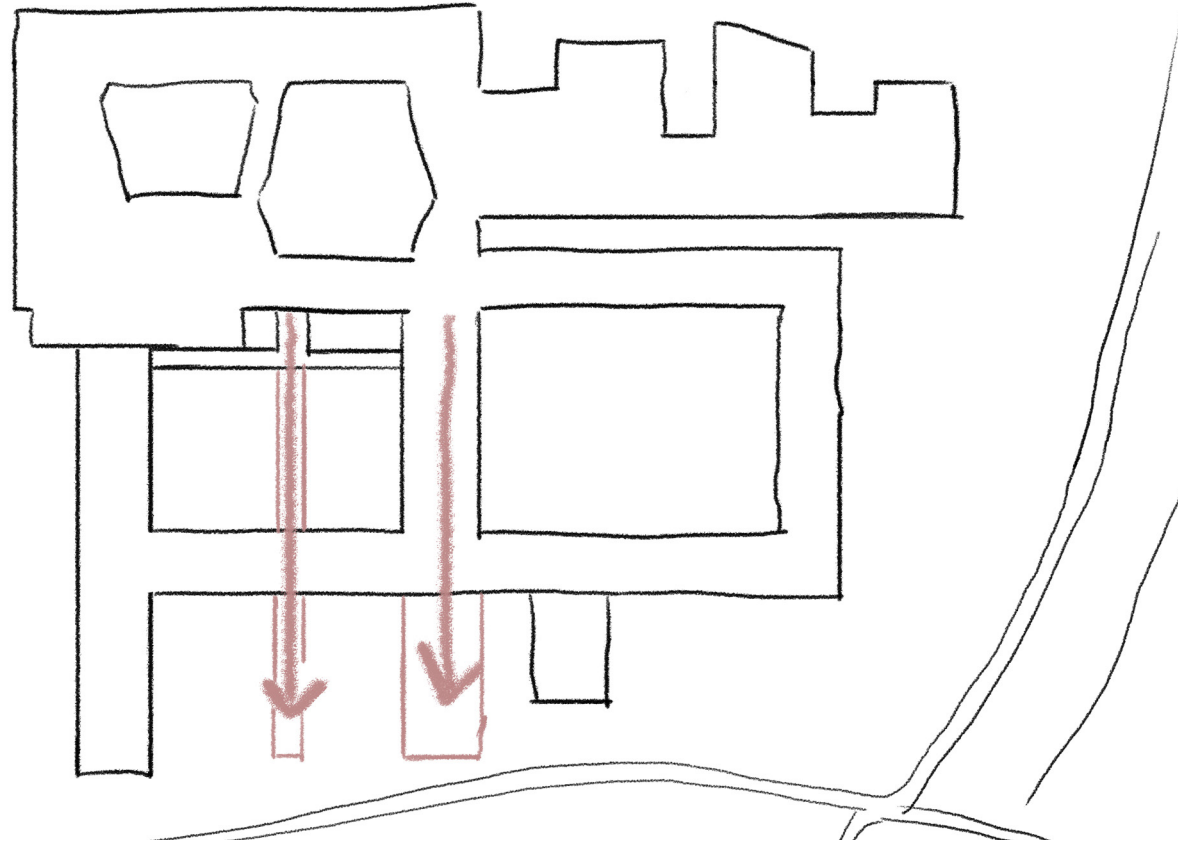


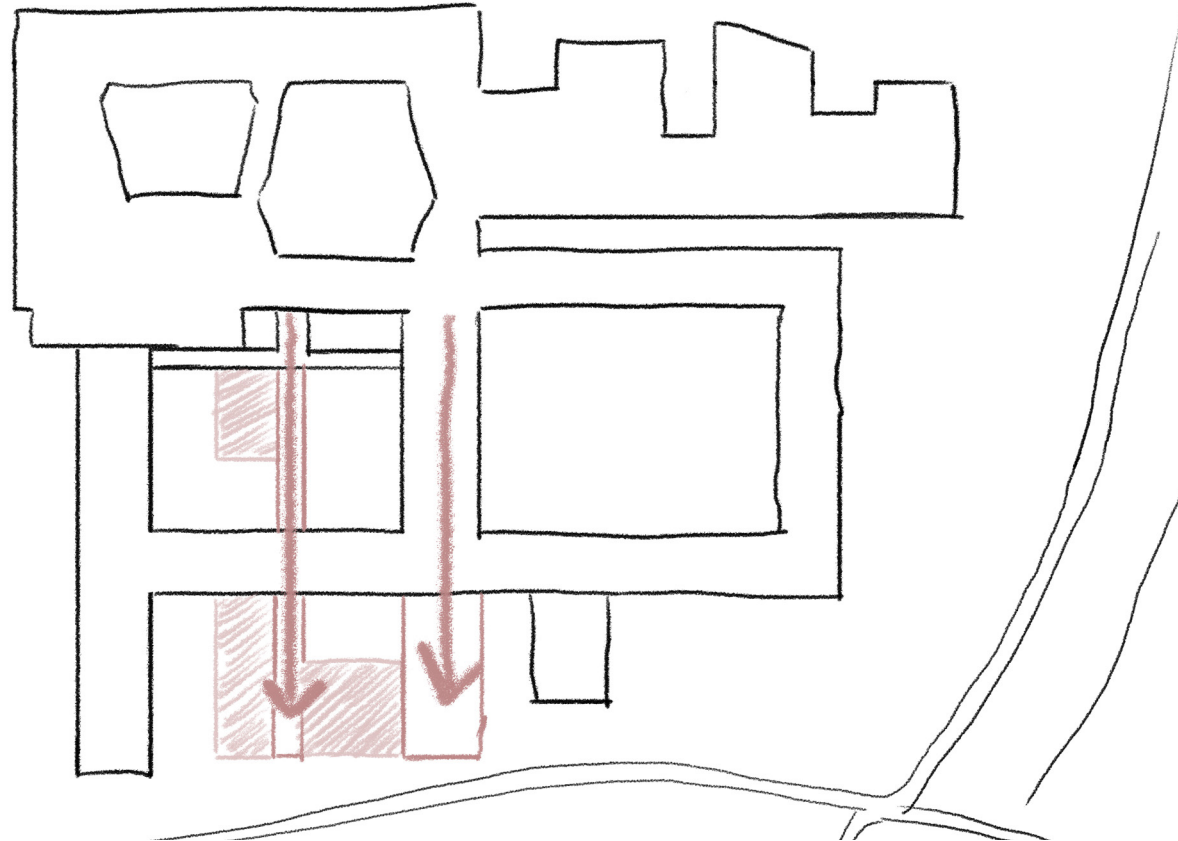


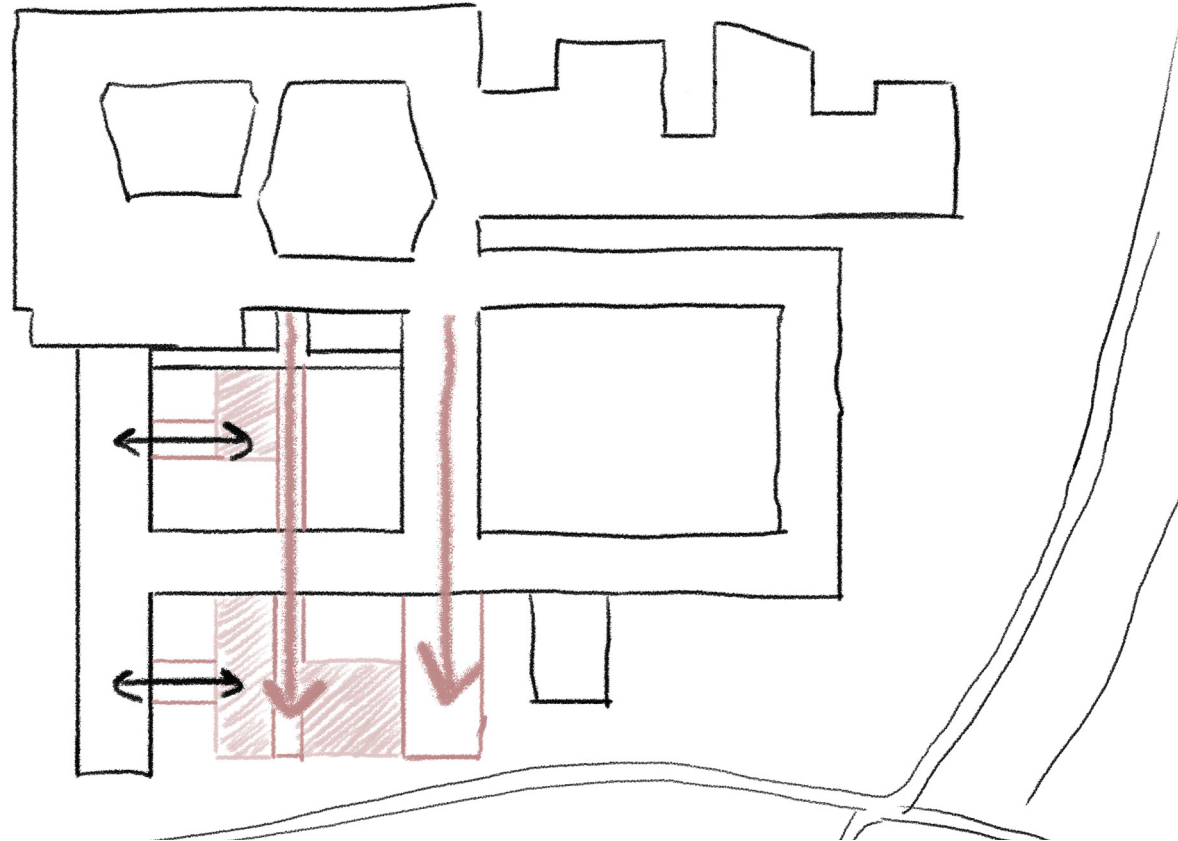
Strategy



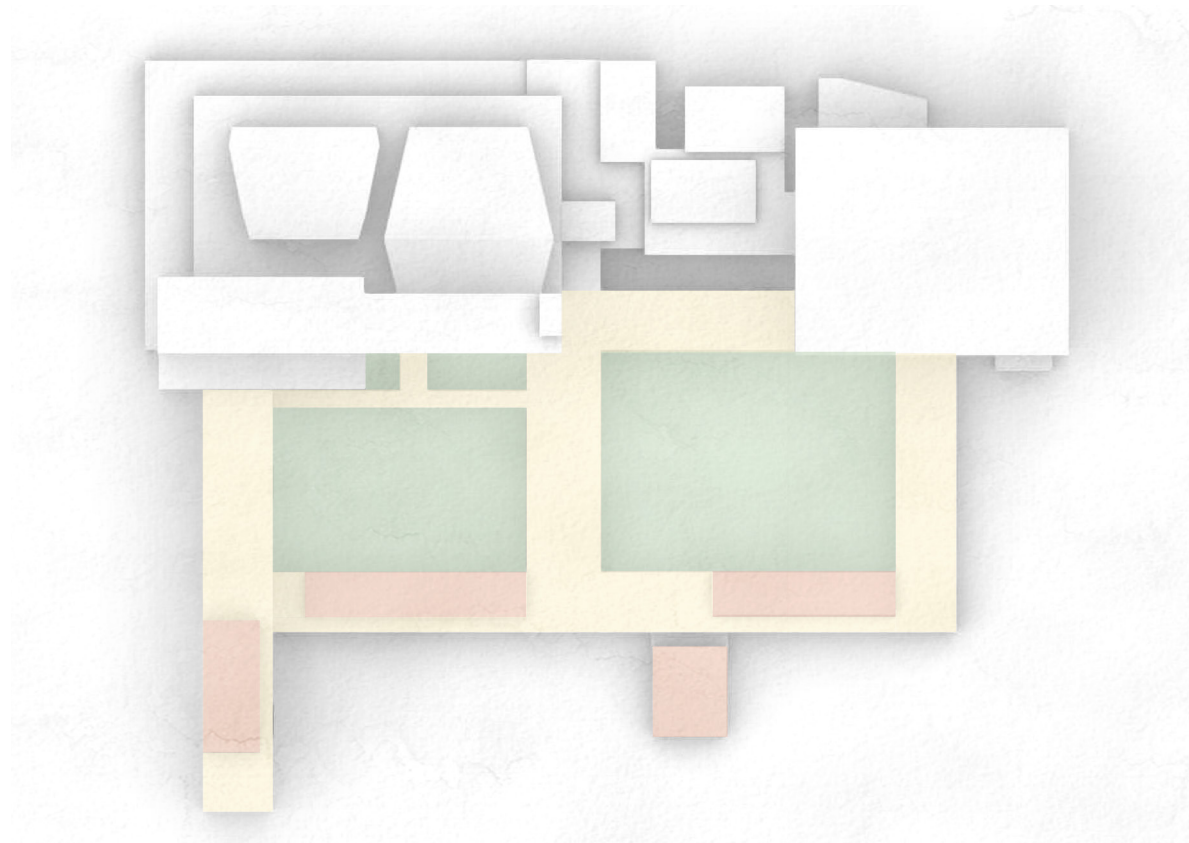
I propose to move the VAI from their corner to the front of the building, creating a new front façade towards the city.







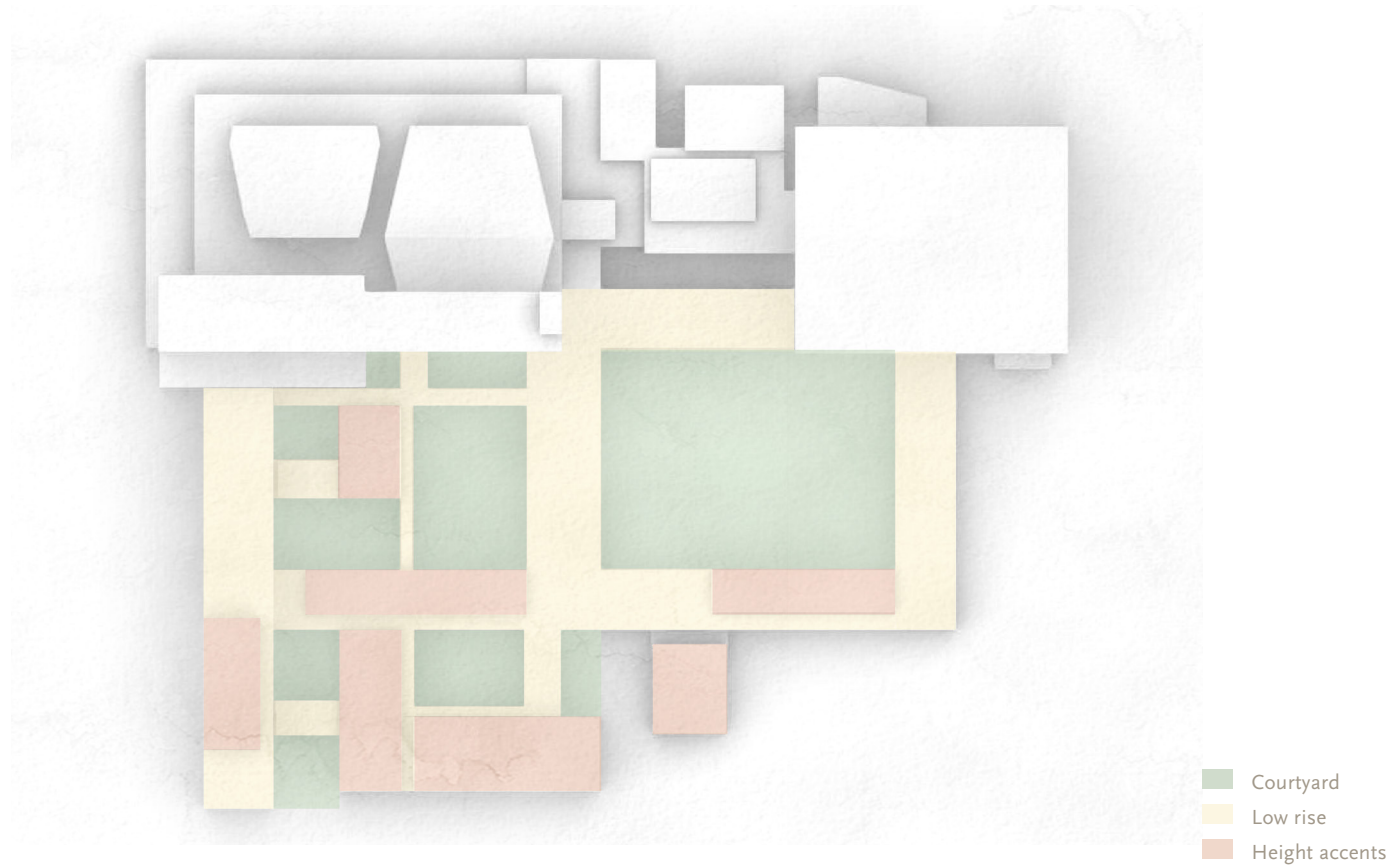
Composition



Drawing inspiration from modernist abstract paintings, DeSingel's volumes can be viewed as a combination of three distinct planes.

- Courtyard
- Low rise
- Height accents

Existing composition



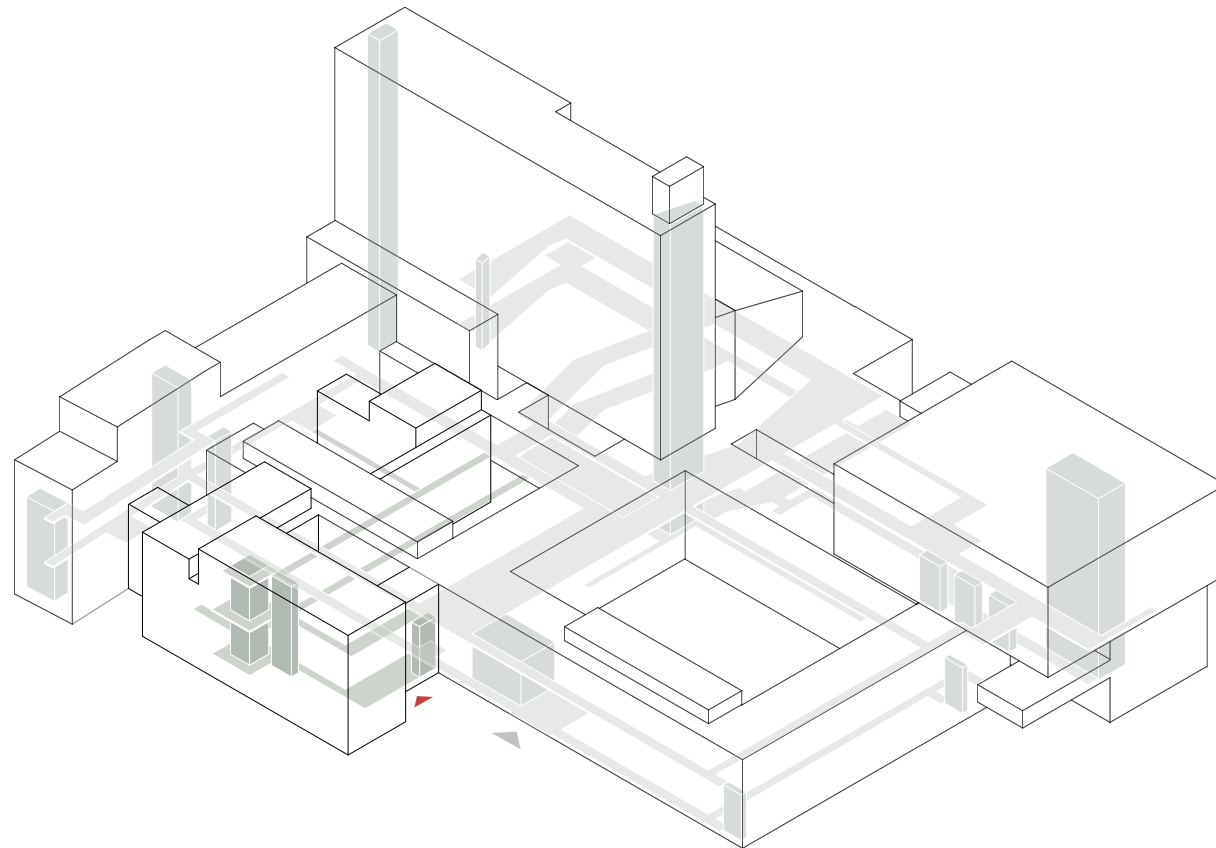
Composition with extension



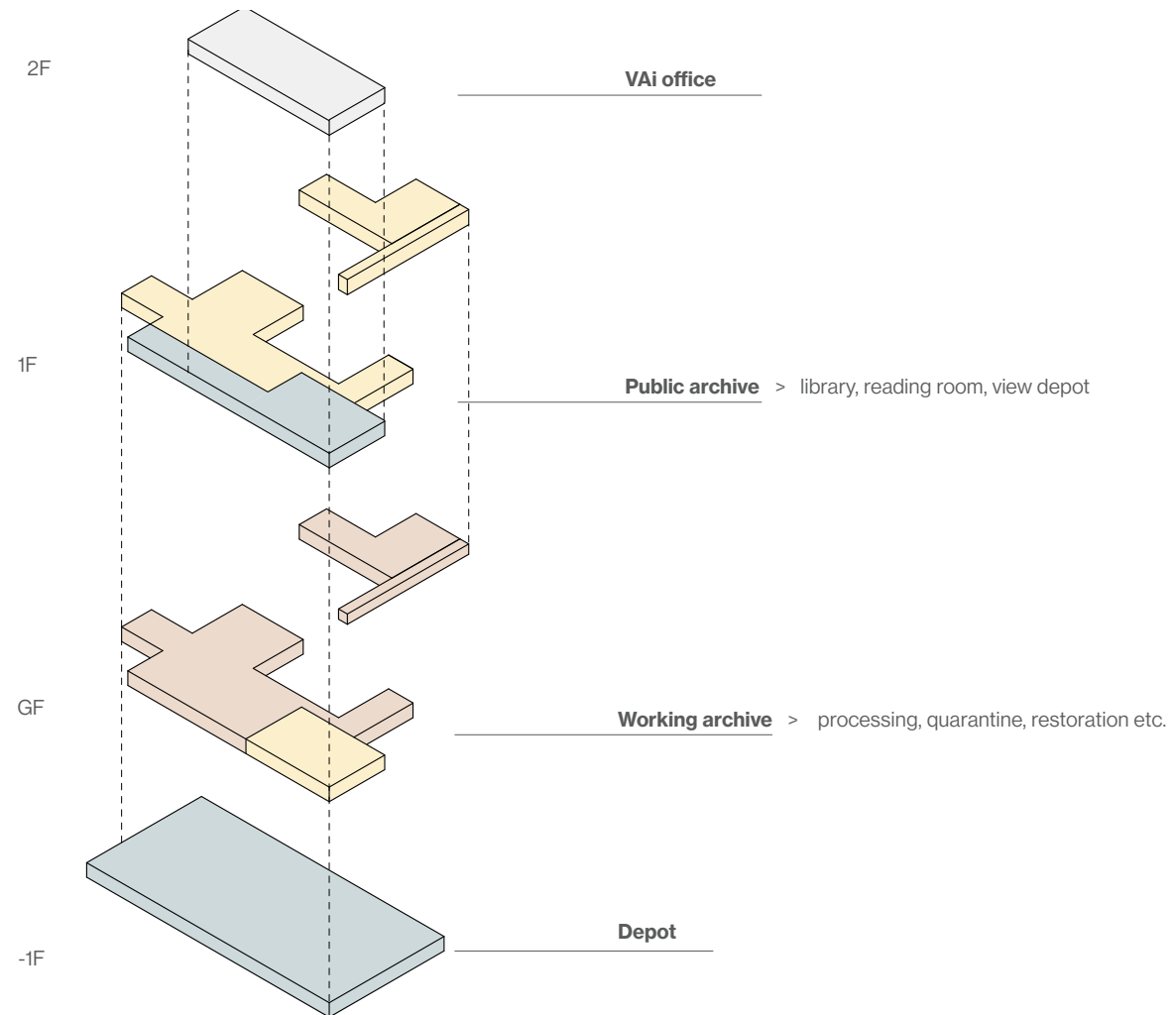
New front towards the city



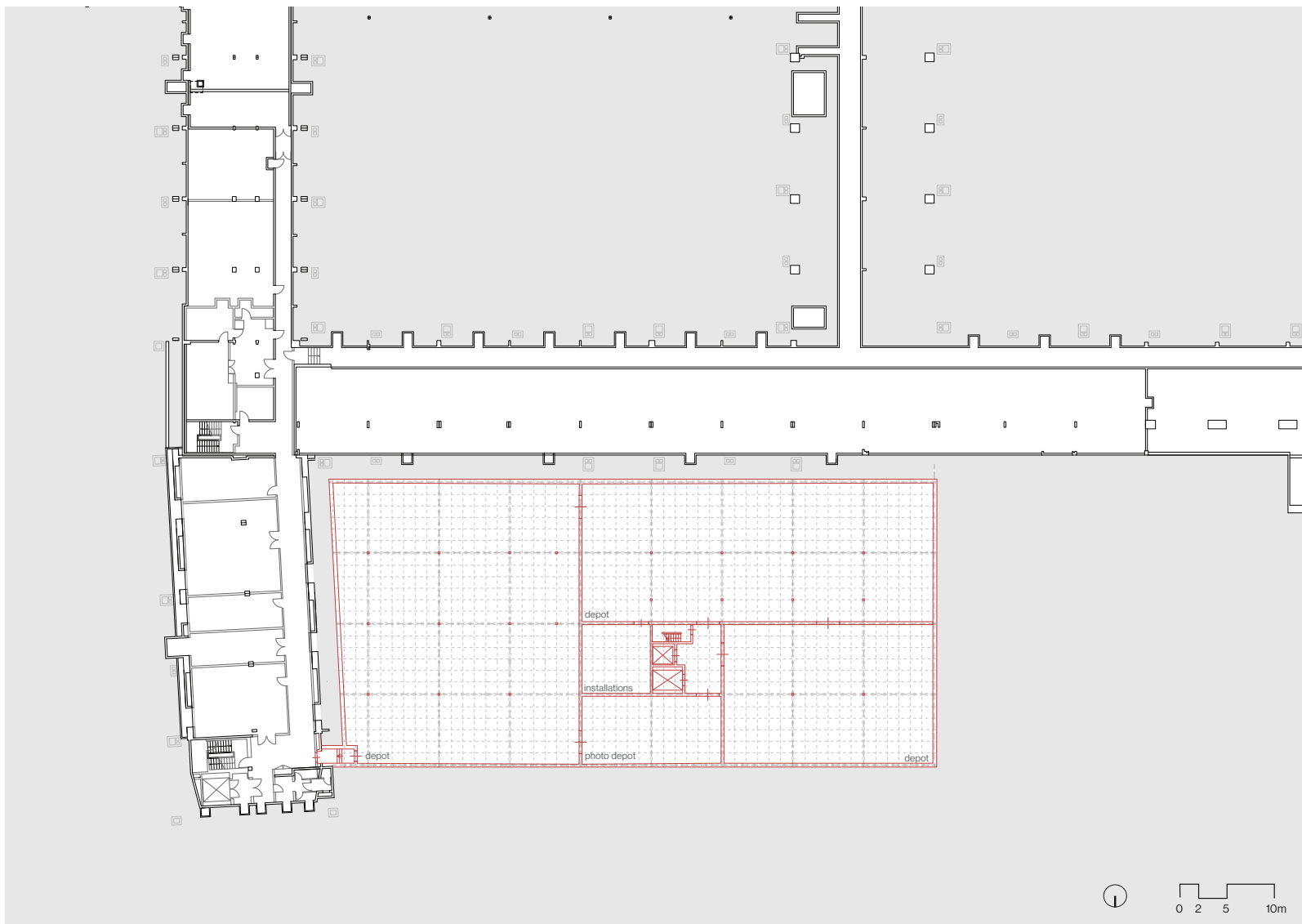
Programme



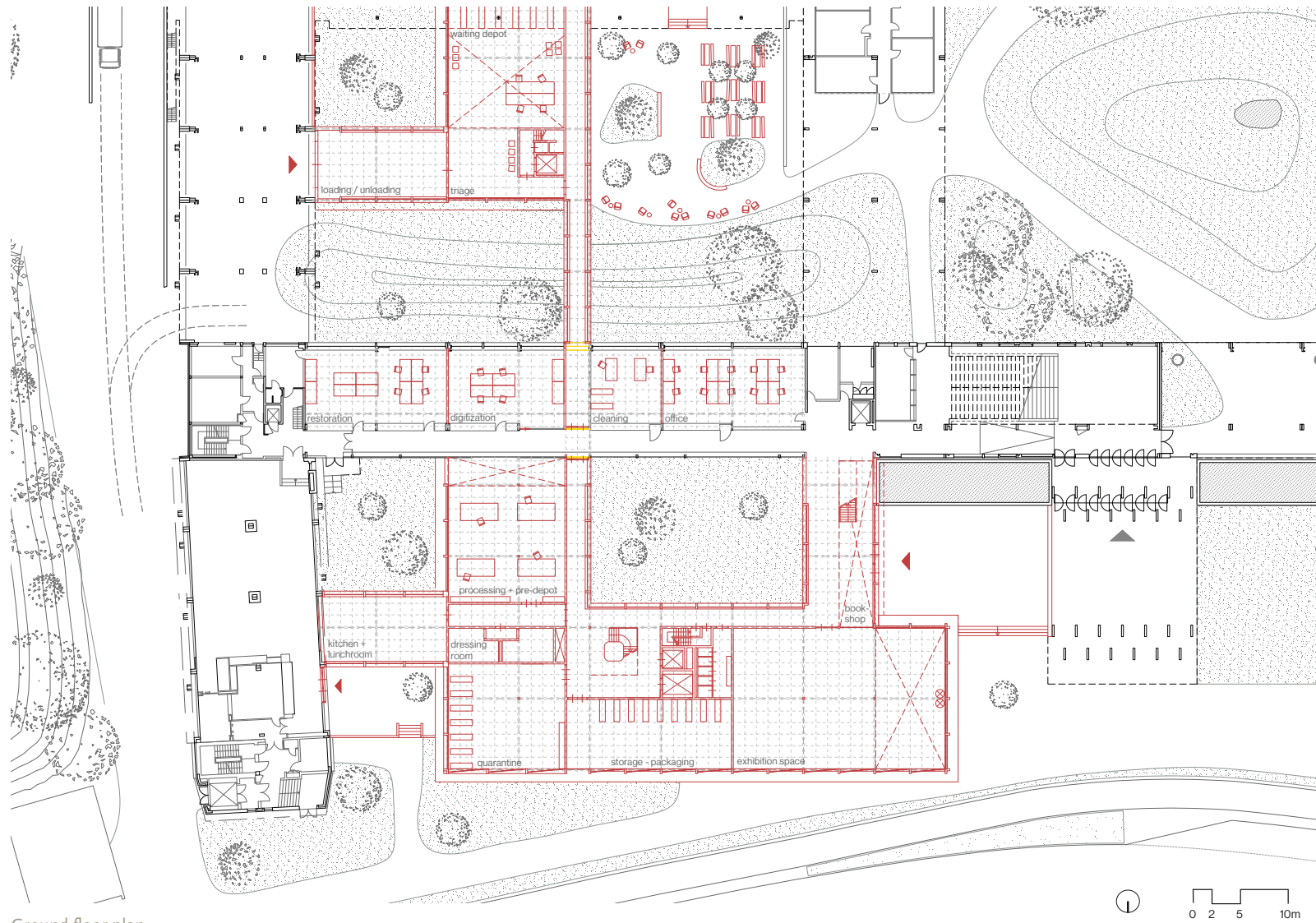
Connecting to the circulation



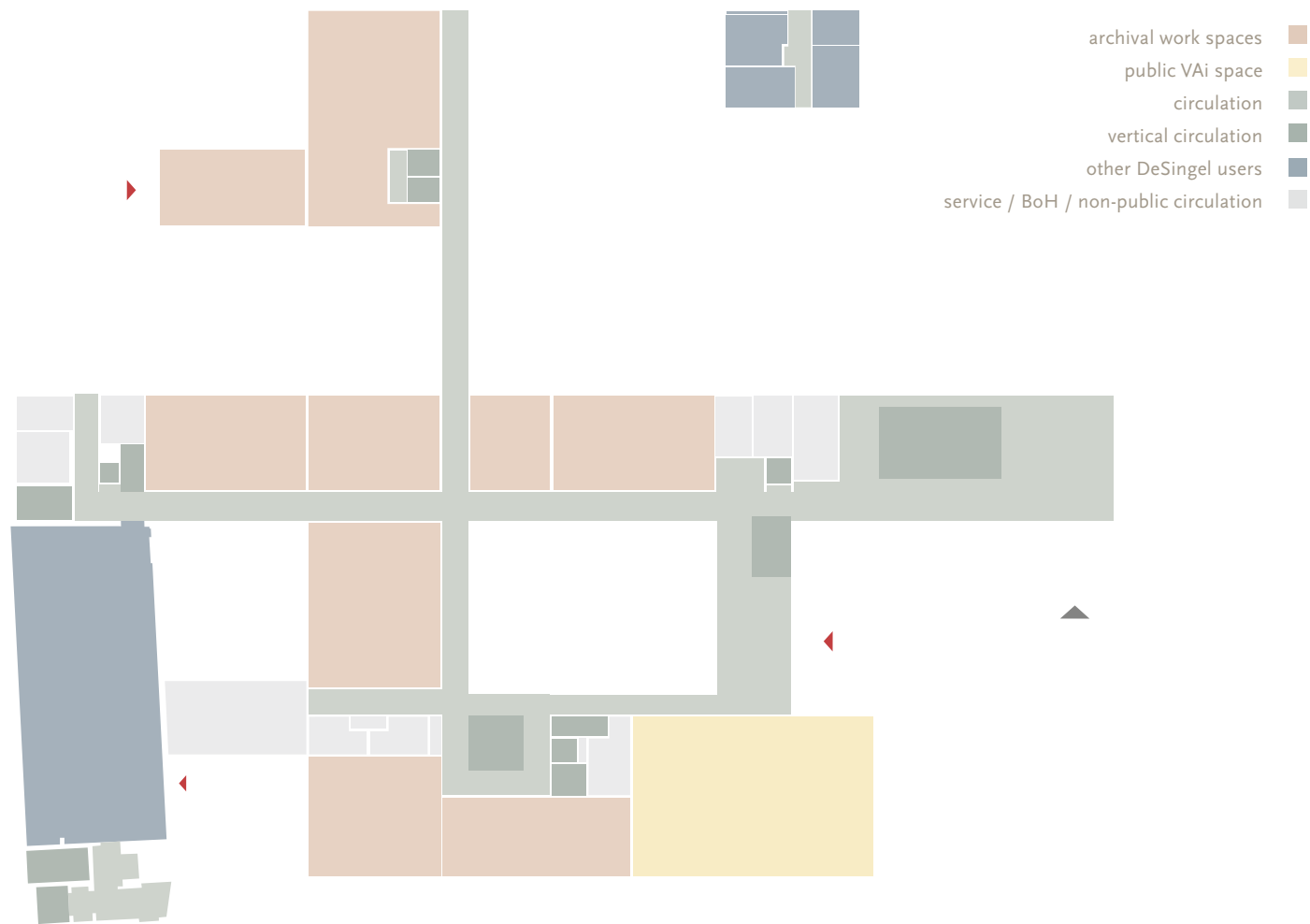
Programme of the VAI extension



Basement plan



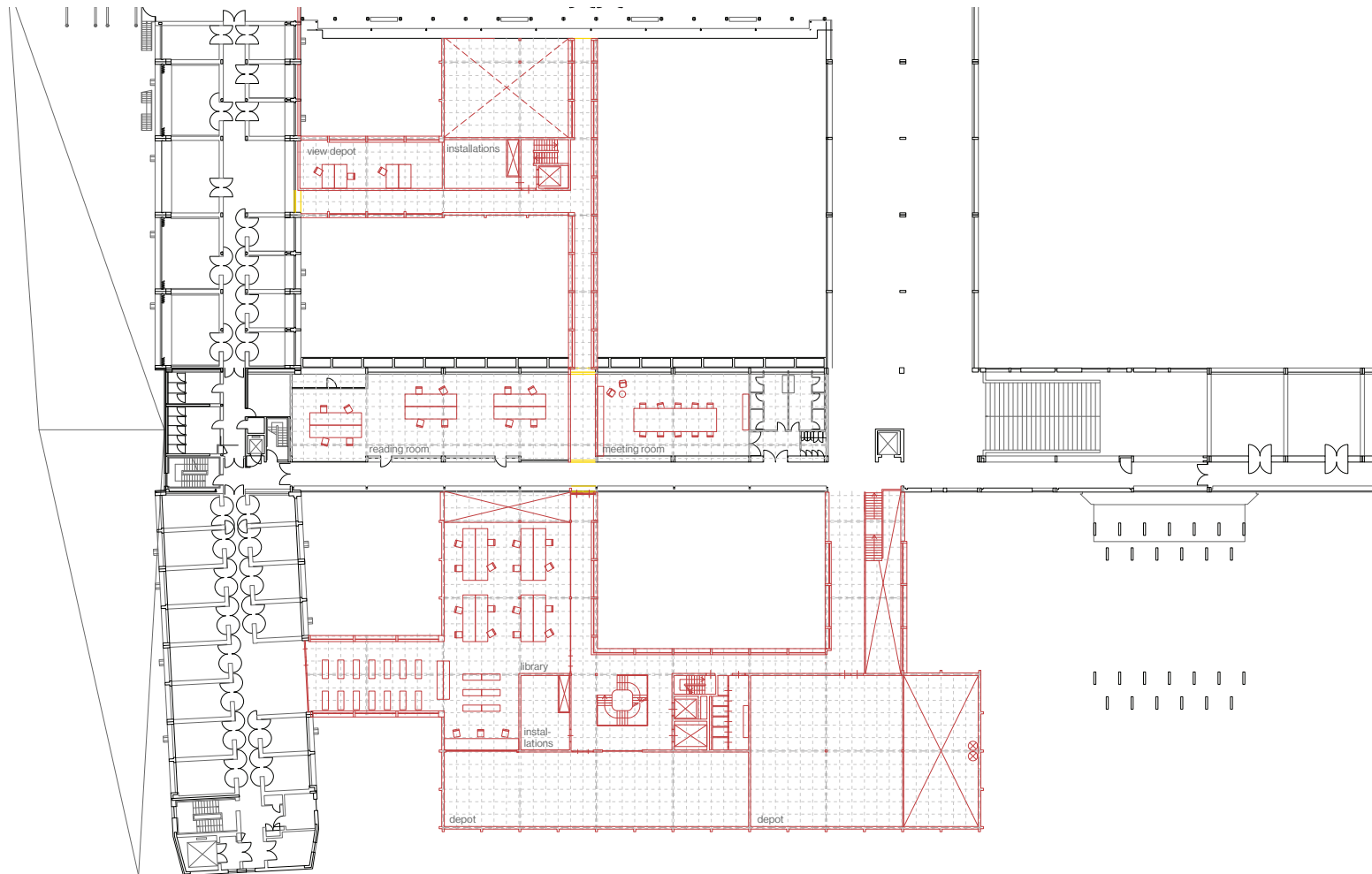
Ground floor plan



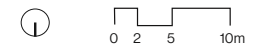
Ground floor programma

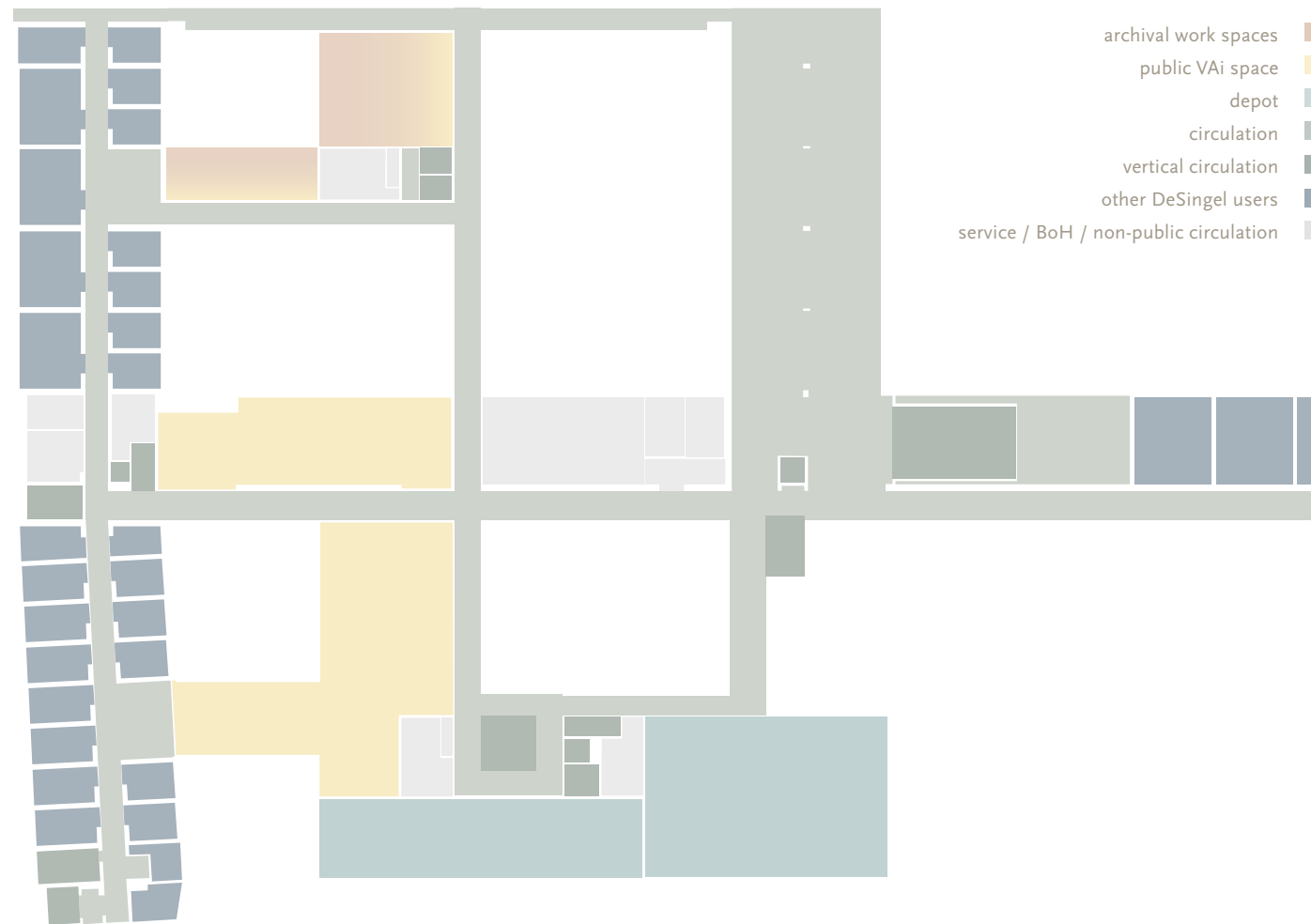


Entrance

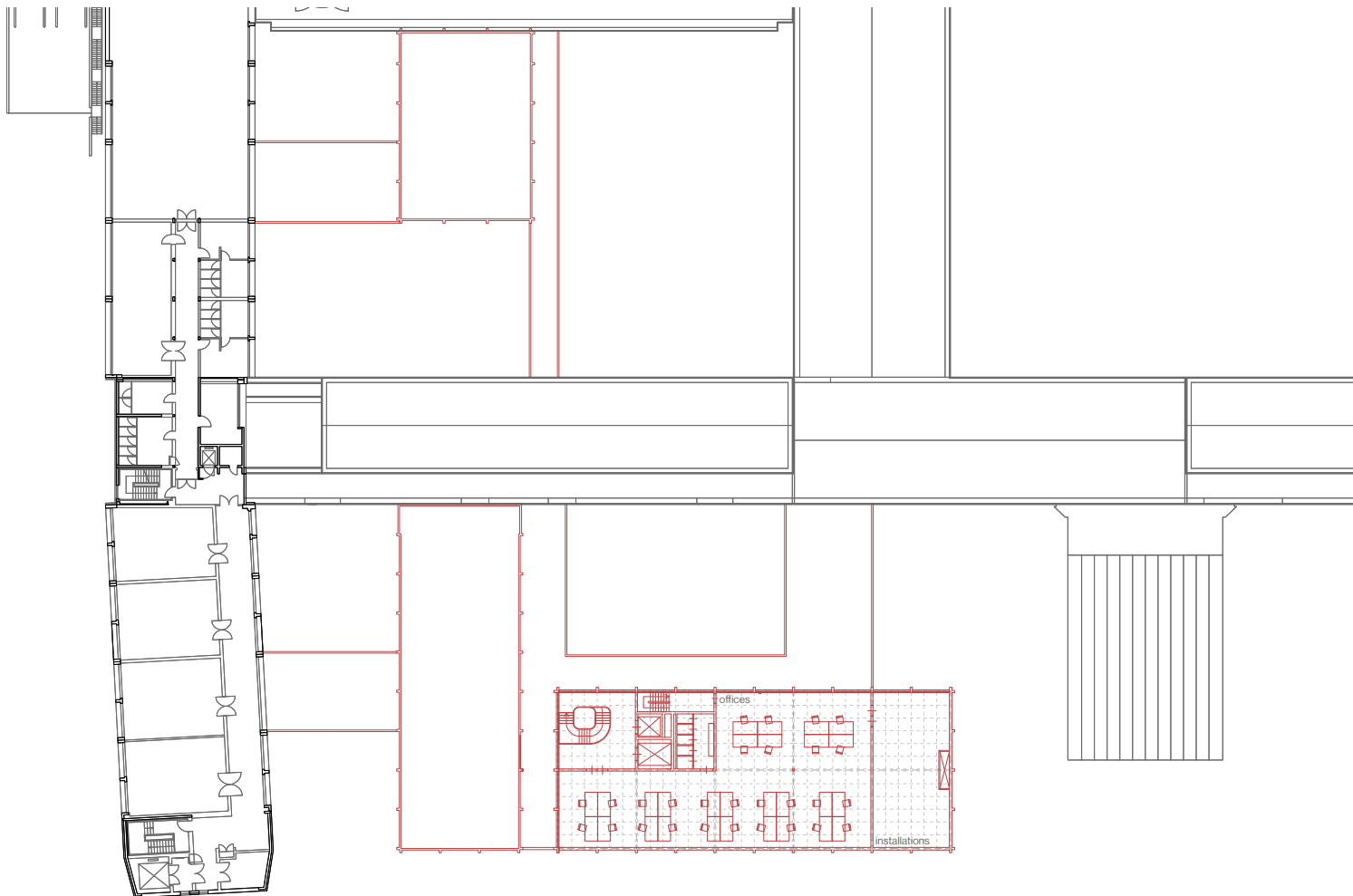


First floor plan





First floor programma



Second floor plan

Services & tectonics



Reflecting the heavy concrete skin of DeSingel but creating a distinction between the two through texture.



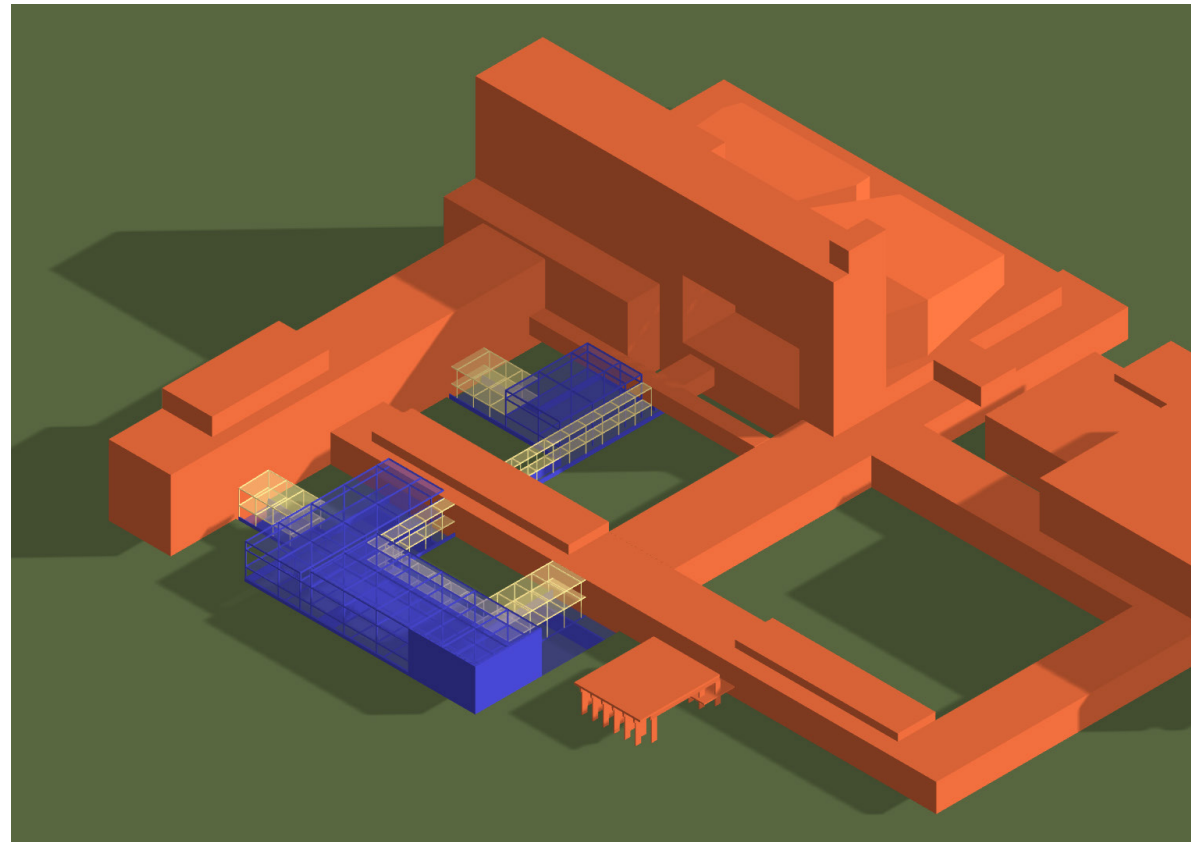
Limewashed brick façade

The archive spaces are structured by a concrete frame with sand-lime brick infill, left exposed to help regulate indoor humidity.





Circulation zones are constructed in timber, offering a warm and light counterpoint to the heavy materiality of the archive spaces.



Structural diagram

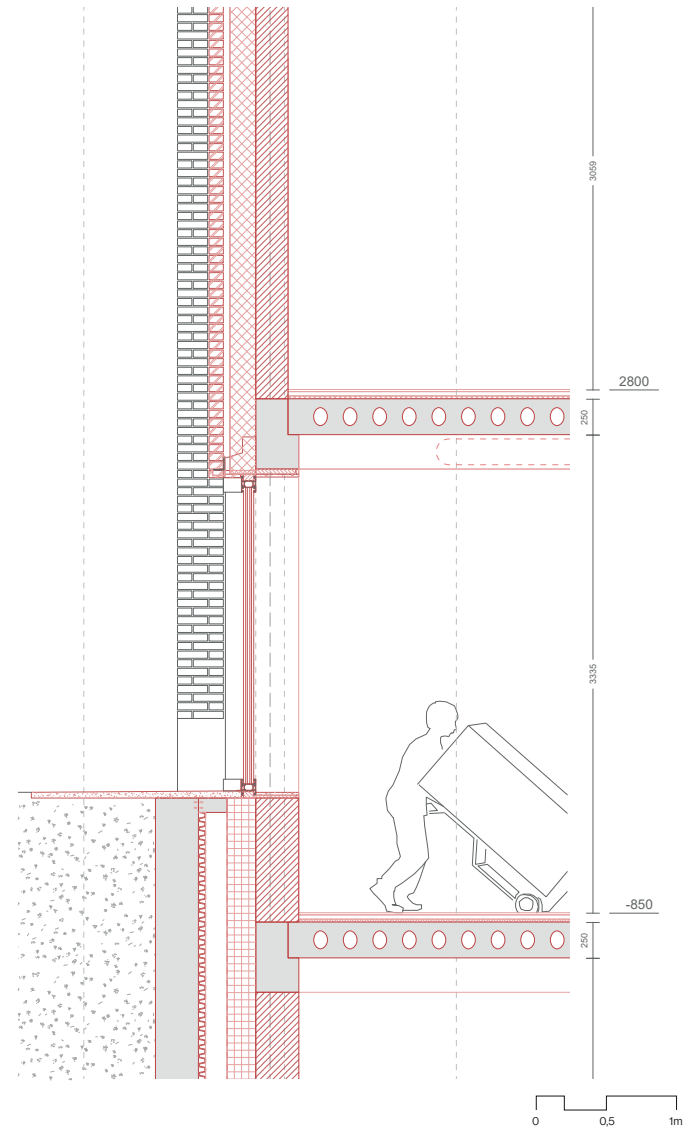
concrete frame 
timber frame 

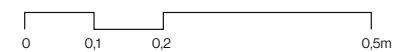
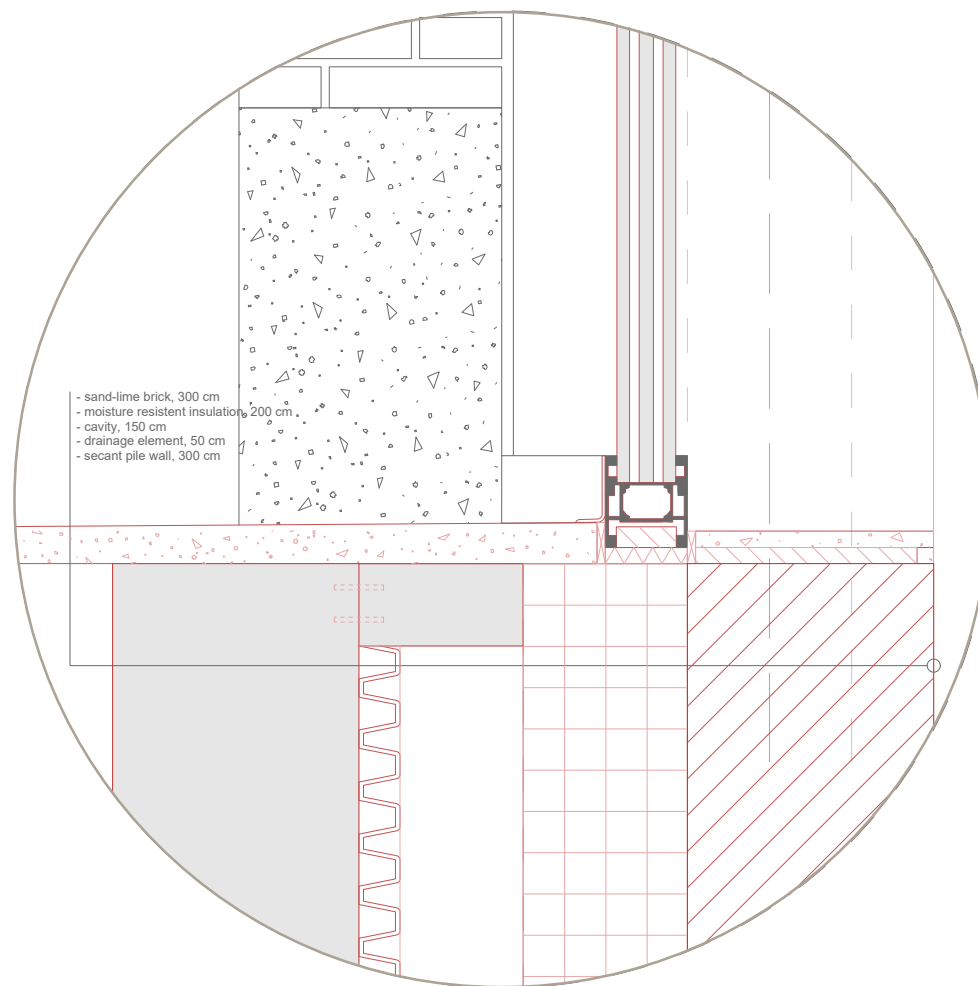


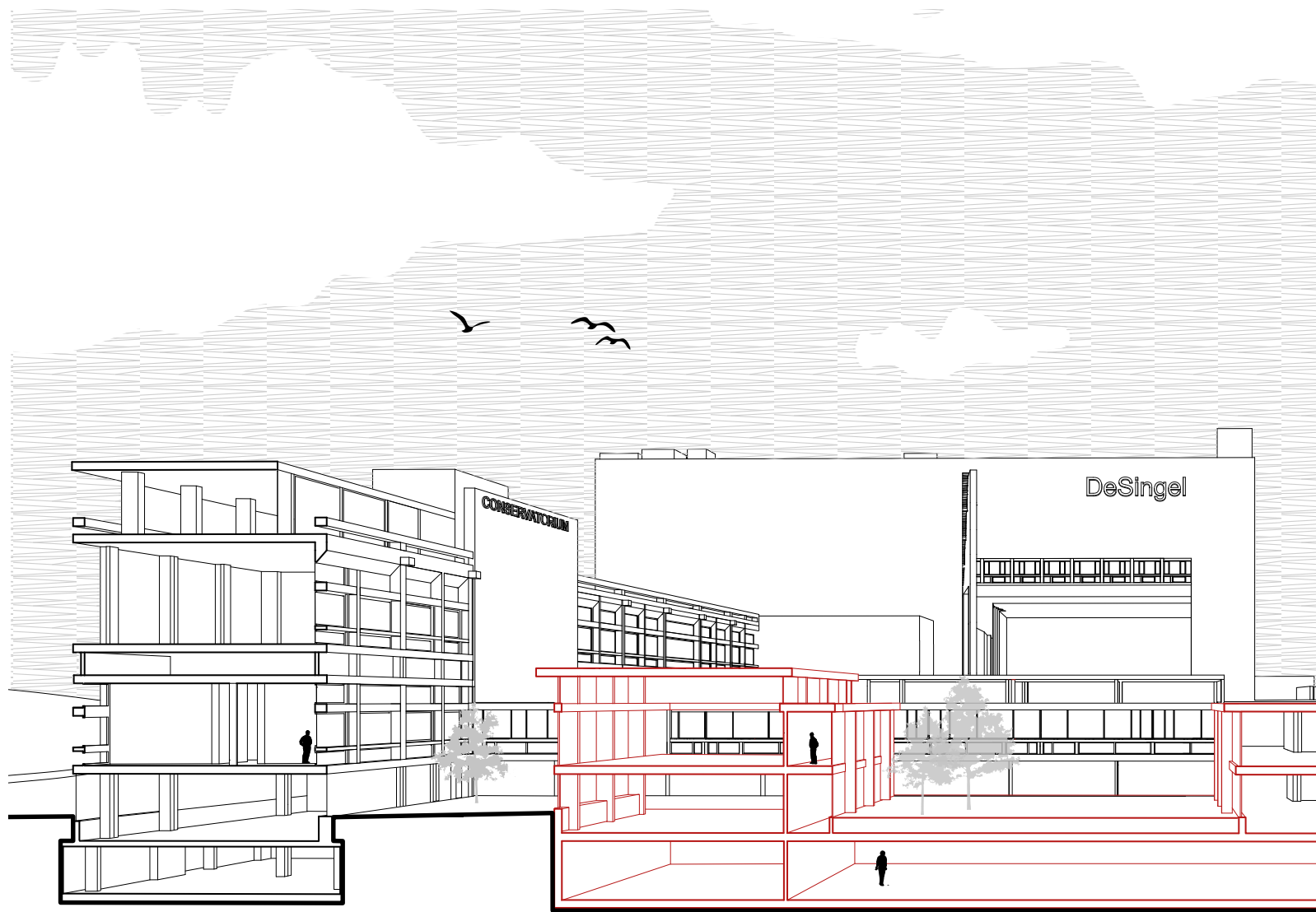
Along the façade, the building reveals its dual structural logic

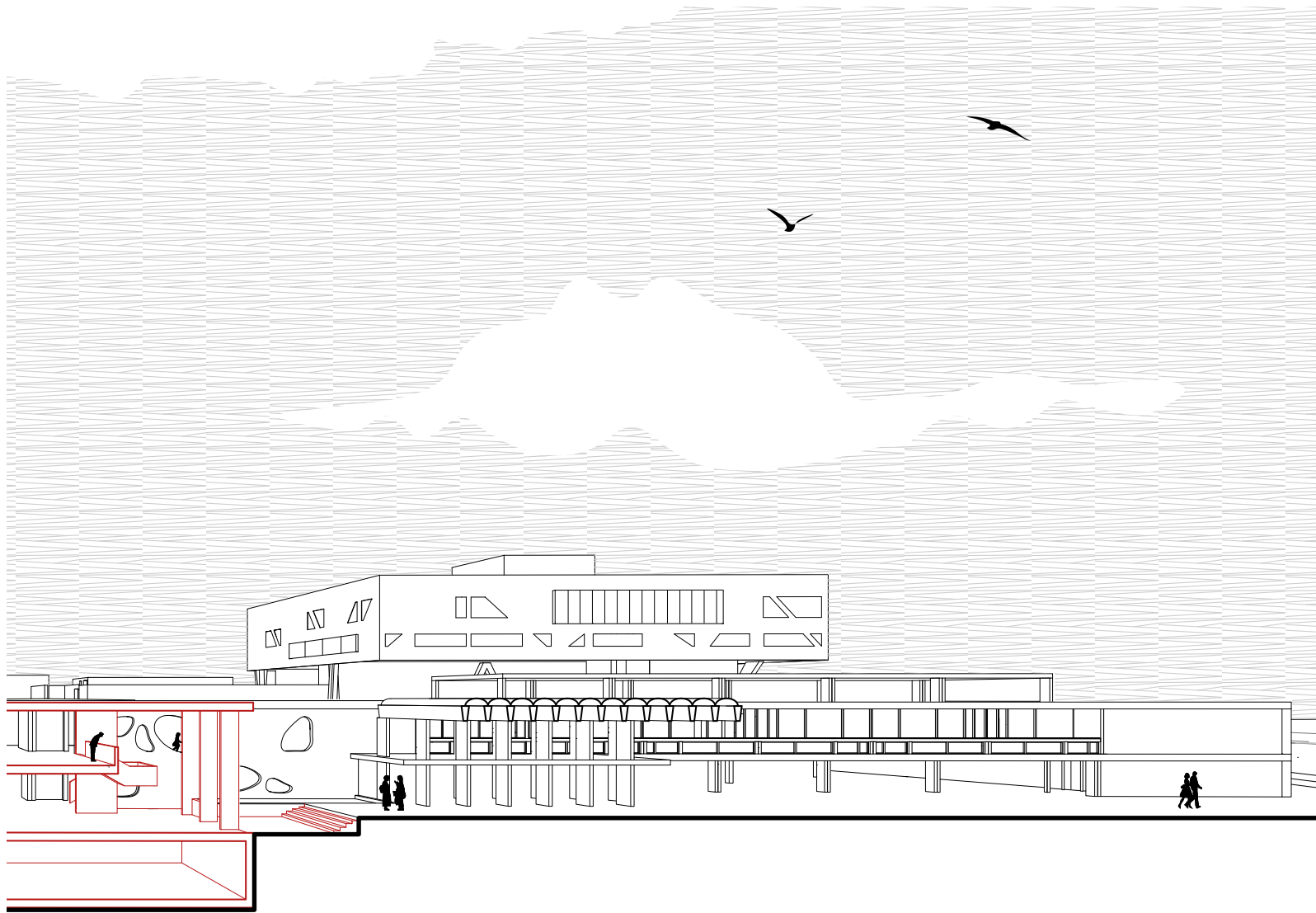


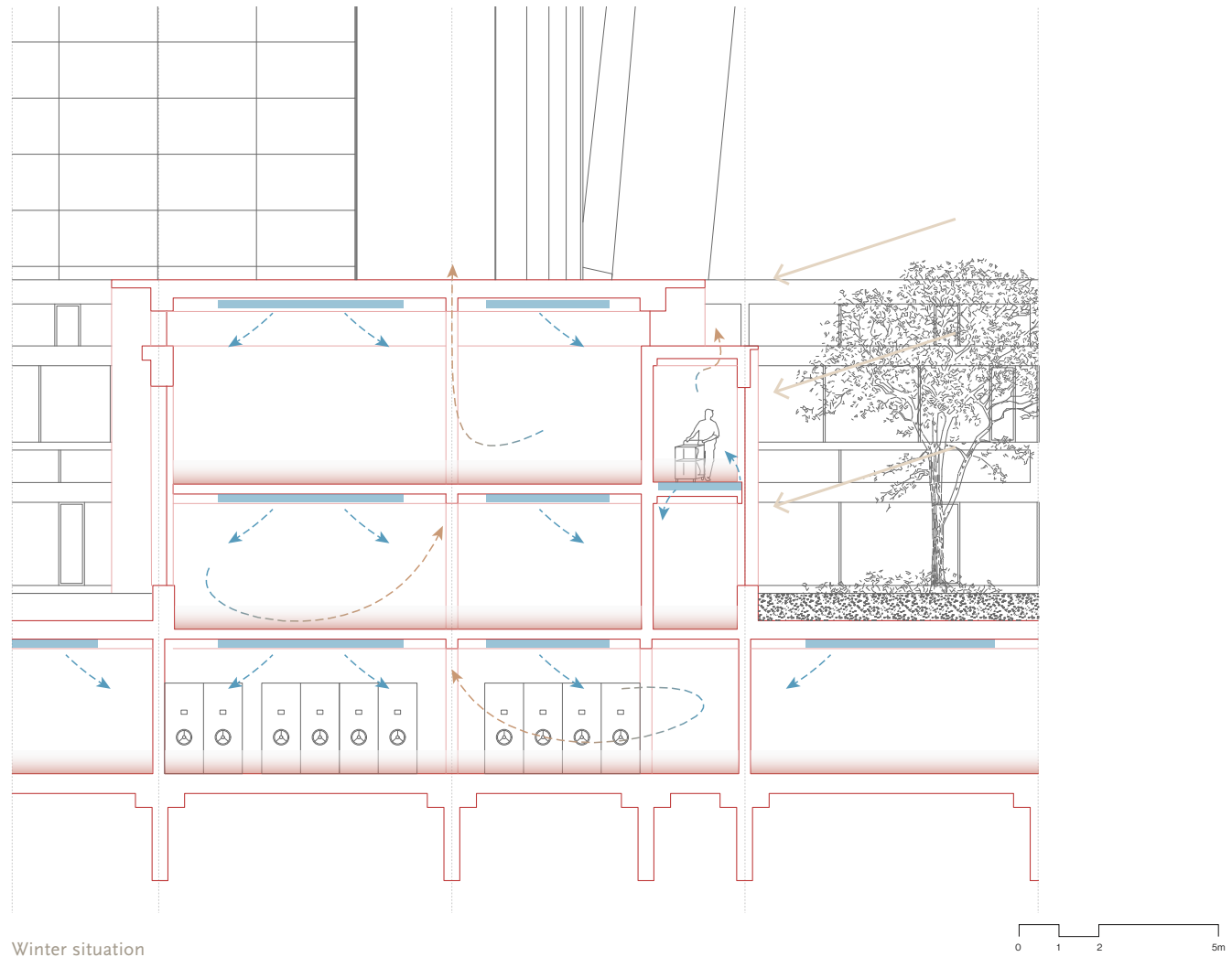
Windows in the front façade are slightly rotated to align with the angle of the adjacent DeSingel façade.

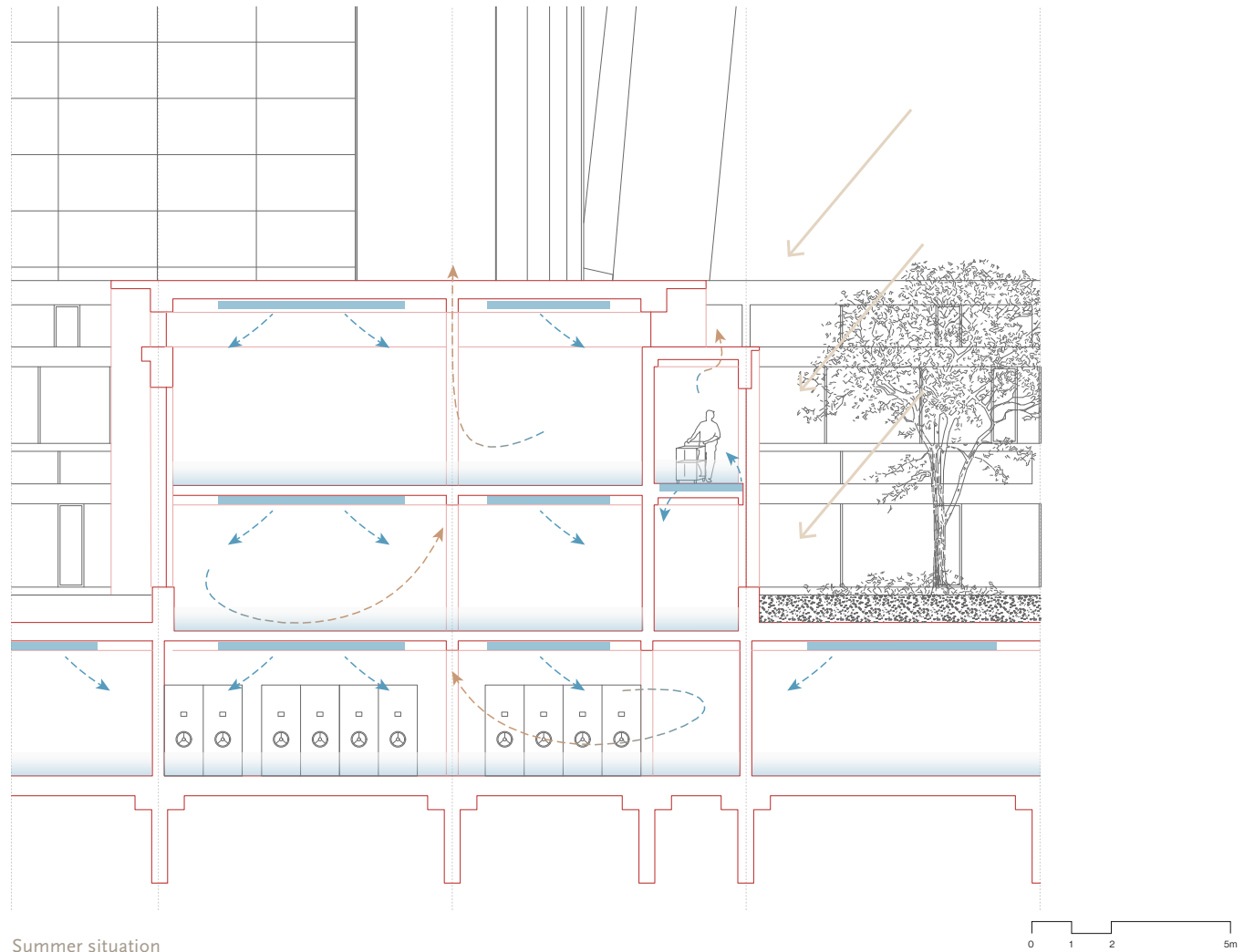




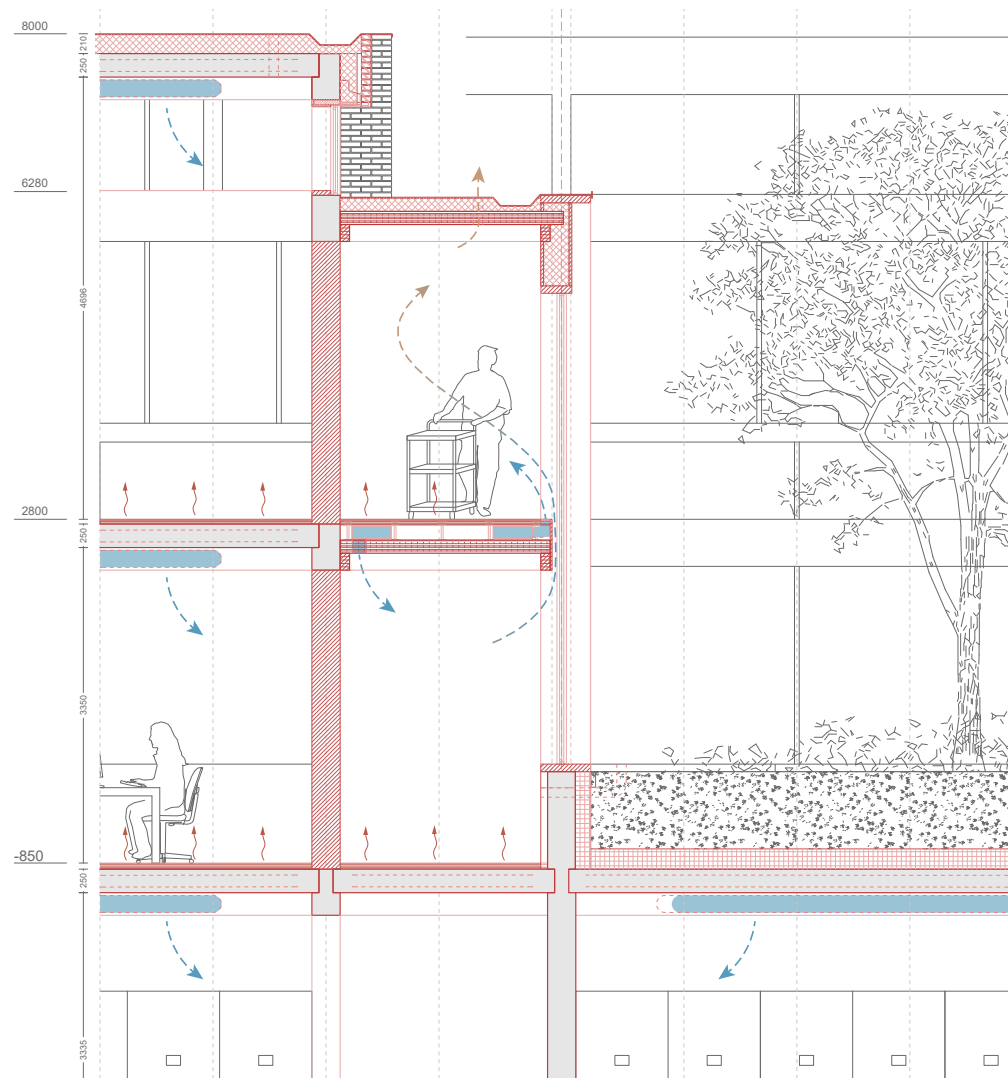




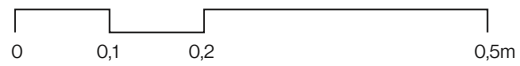
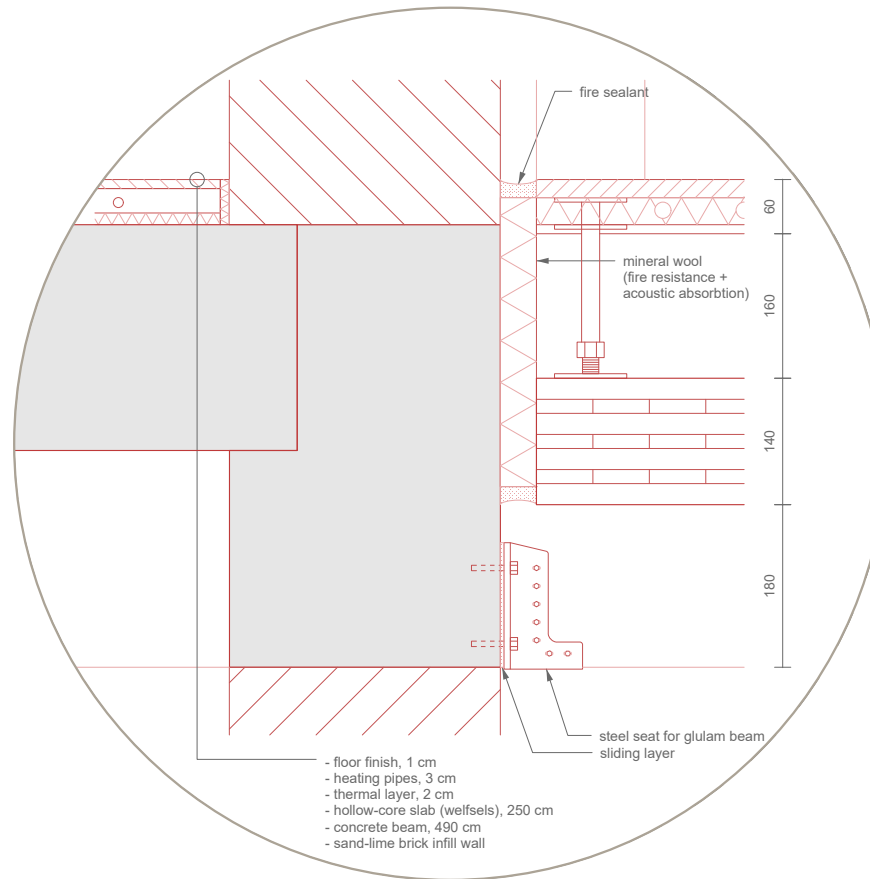




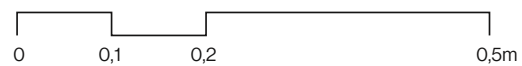
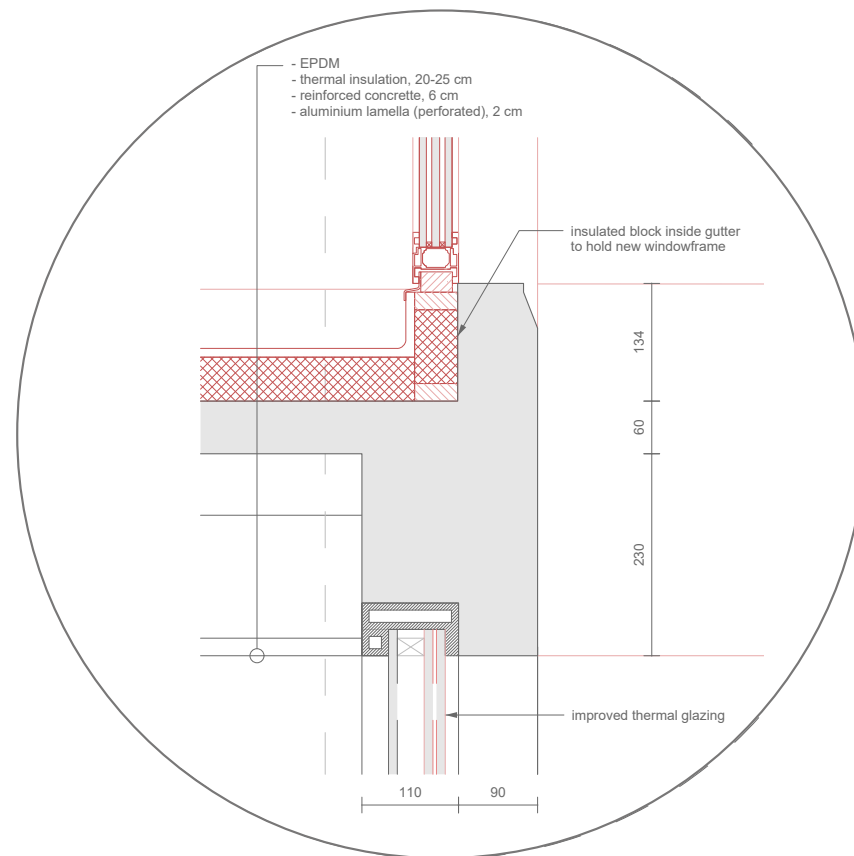
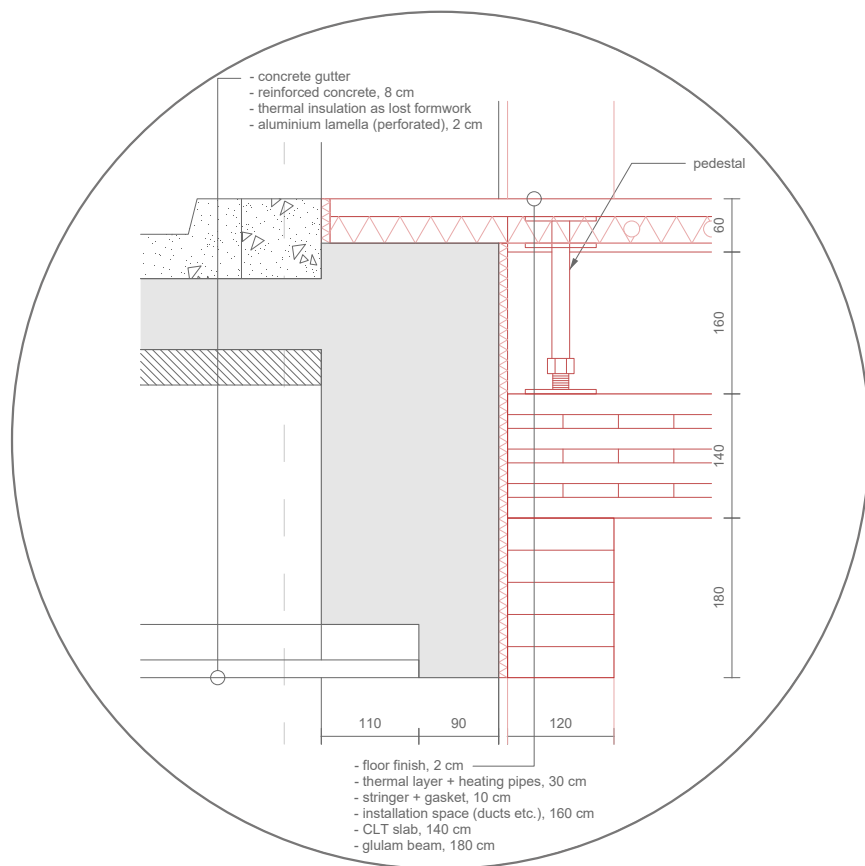
Because the buildings comprises of two different structures, the ventilation is separated as well. With a highly regulated system for archival spaces and a less strict one for the circulation zones.





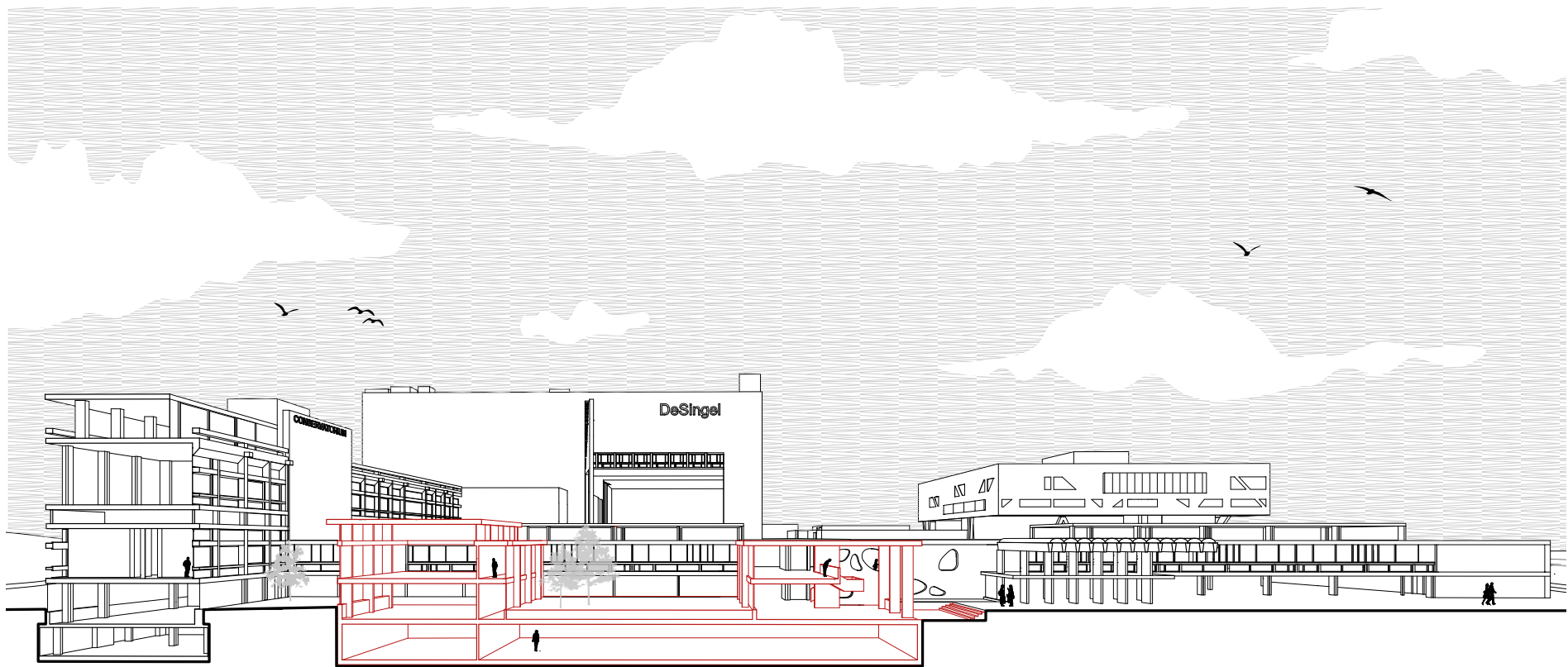


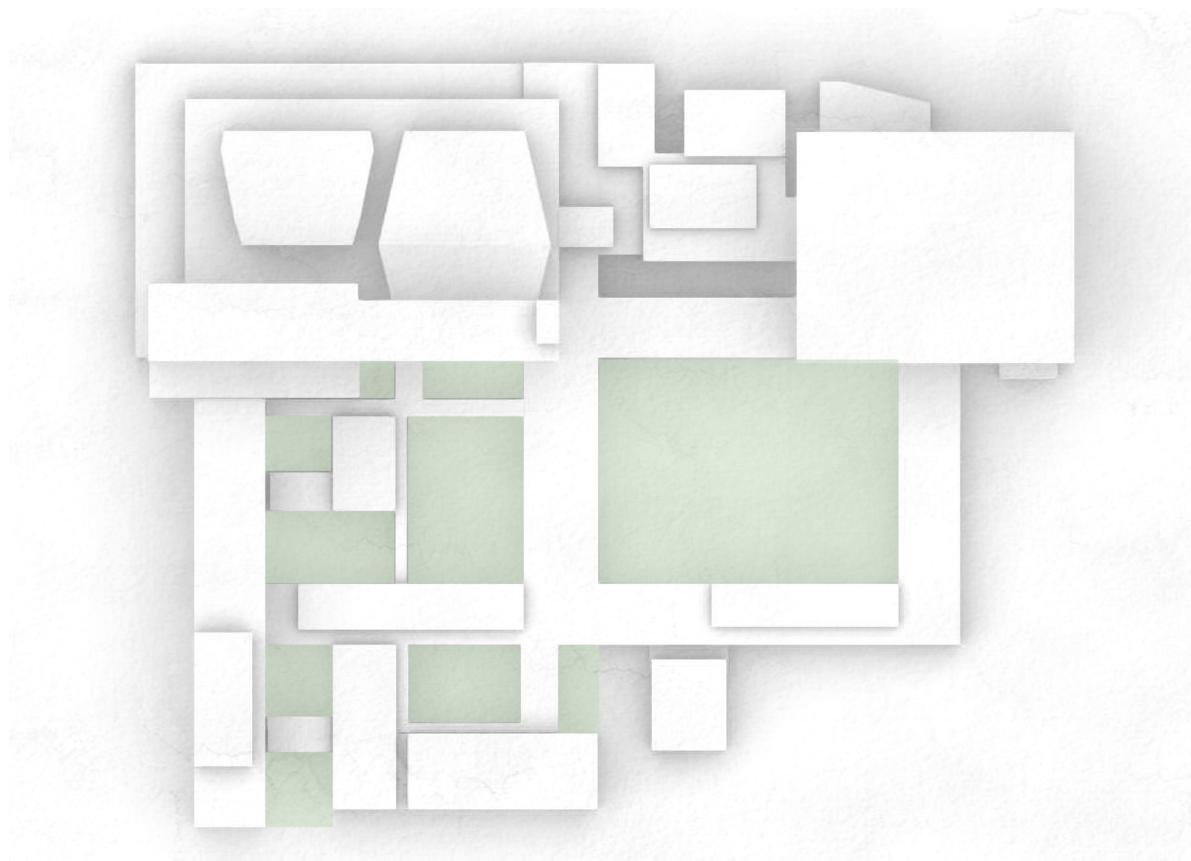




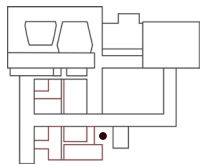


Courtyards

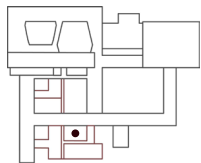


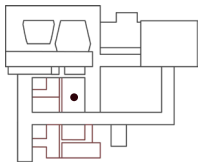


















Thank you