

NoRA

A person is walking away from the camera on a wide, flat, light-colored ground that appears to be a mix of sand and gravel. In the background, there are several modern, angular buildings with flat roofs and large windows. The sky is a uniform, light gray. The overall atmosphere is desolate and futuristic.

INTERNATIONAL ZONE THE HAGUE
WORLD FORUM/SORGVLIETPARK
YOUNG INNOVATORS 2019

a study commissioned by



Rijksvastgoedbedrijf
Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en
Koninkrijksrelaties

within the framework of the YOUNG INNOVATORS 2019 PROGRAMME

CONTEXT

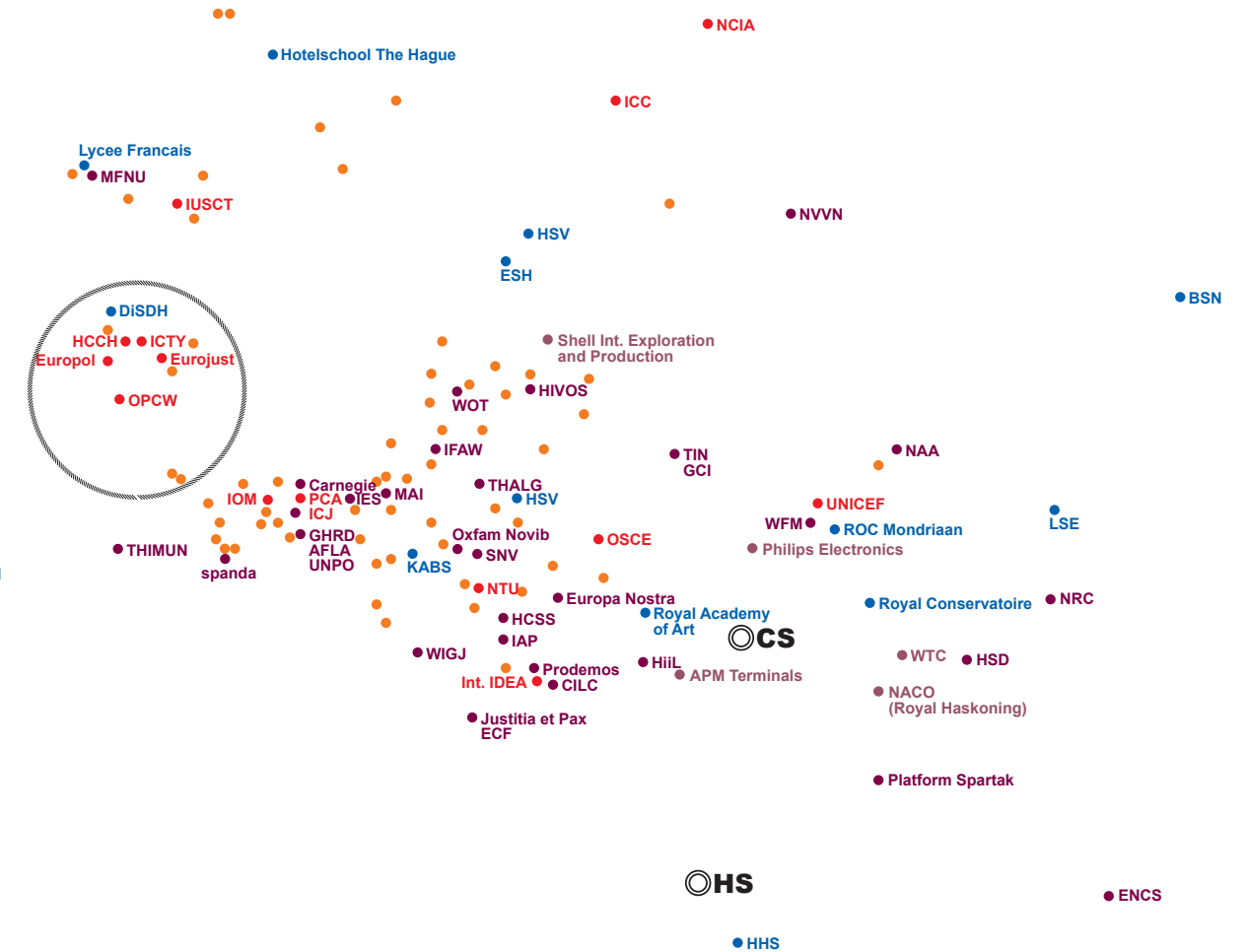
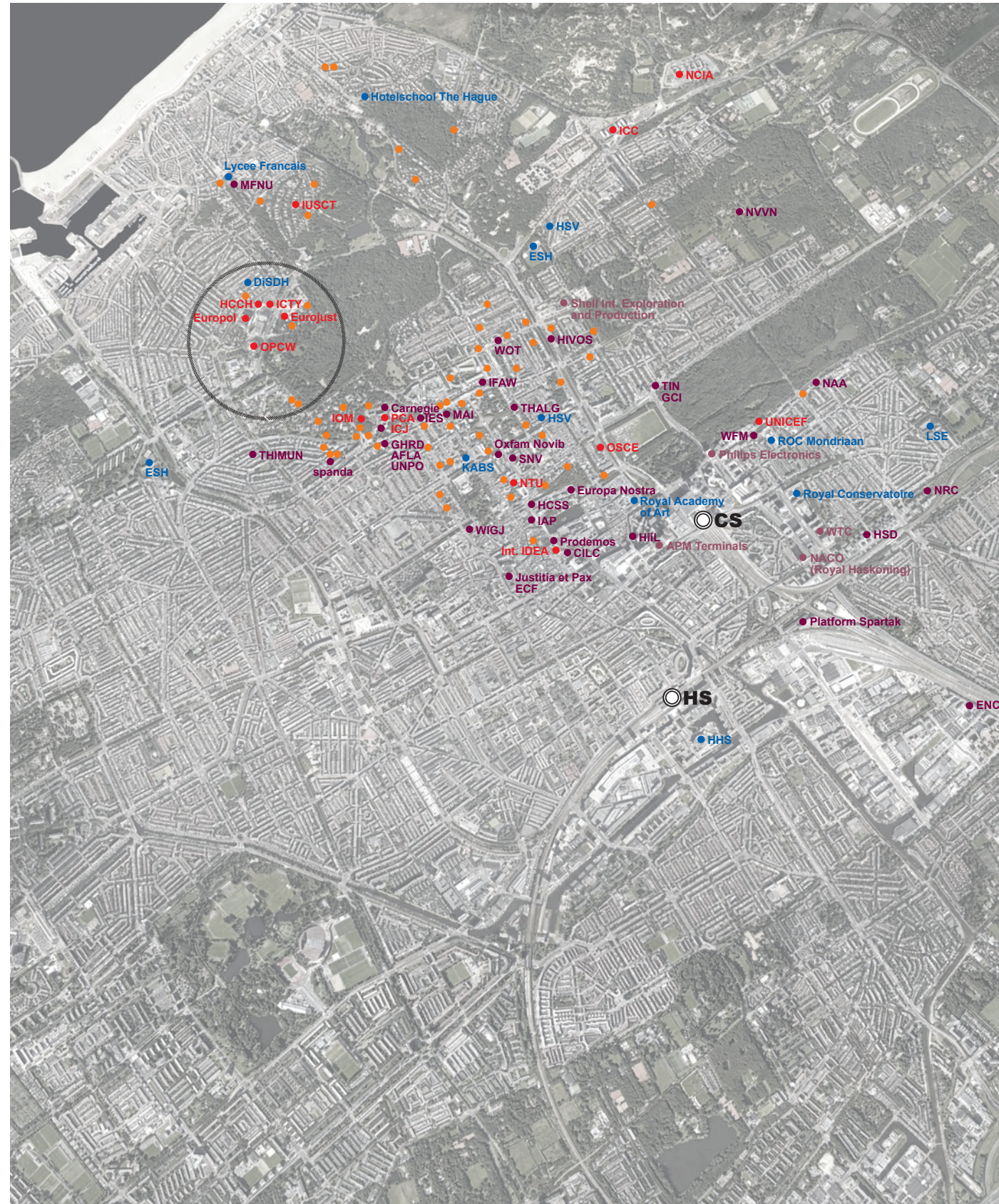
Home to a growing number of international organisations, the city of The Hague embodies the ambition of the kingdom of the Netherlands of being a Host Nation. The profile of said organisations (Europol, International Criminal Court, Eurojust, etc) has helped strengthen the branding of the city as the global hub for Peace & Justice.

While both the economic advantage and the prestige that come from being a host to those organisations is remarkable and motivates the city to remain an inviting host by addressing their individual needs and requirements, The Hague is equally careful not to jeopardise the integrity and cohesiveness of its urban environment.

As such, the agglomeration around the Zorgvlietpark of some of the largest intergovernmental organisations in a pseudo-campus setting - known as the International Zone - poses a number of urban challenges. The juxtaposition of the large structures appears to have gradually subtracted the site from the rest of the city. In fact, the poor quality of the public space as well as its scarcity has turned this archipelago of international organisations into a colossal autarkic island that neighbouring residents prefer to bypass rather than traverse.

In the summer of 2019, NoRA was tasked to reflect on the International Zone of the Hague and devise a set of actions that could improve the accessibility of the site and the quality of its public space as well as identify new plots for additional development.

SITE IS MOSTLY HOME TO IGOS AND EMBASSIES 1 BUILDING = 1 ORGANISATION



- Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs)
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
- International Centres Of Education
- Embassies
- Corporations

While many international organisations hosted in the city of The Hague are NGO's that tend to gravitate around the city centre where they often share a building, a number of important intergovernmental organisations have established themselves near the Zorgvlietpark.

SITE ANALYSIS

From the aerial view, the scale contrast between the typical grain surrounding the site and the buildings of the International Zone is clear. The vicinity of the park promises an exciting interface but the reality on the ground from an eye level perspective proves quite different.

In a virtually deserted environment, one is faced with an assemblage of autarkic and heterogeneous components that leads to a repetition of the same ingredients that visually and physically obstruct the open space: parking barriers, parking ramps, parking signs, security fences, back-of-house and loading decks etc.

All facades look like rear, secondary, service facades - the entrances are not obvious, perhaps by design?

Entrenched behind their individual fence, each organization is an island: isolated and autarkic, introverted and self-sufficient.

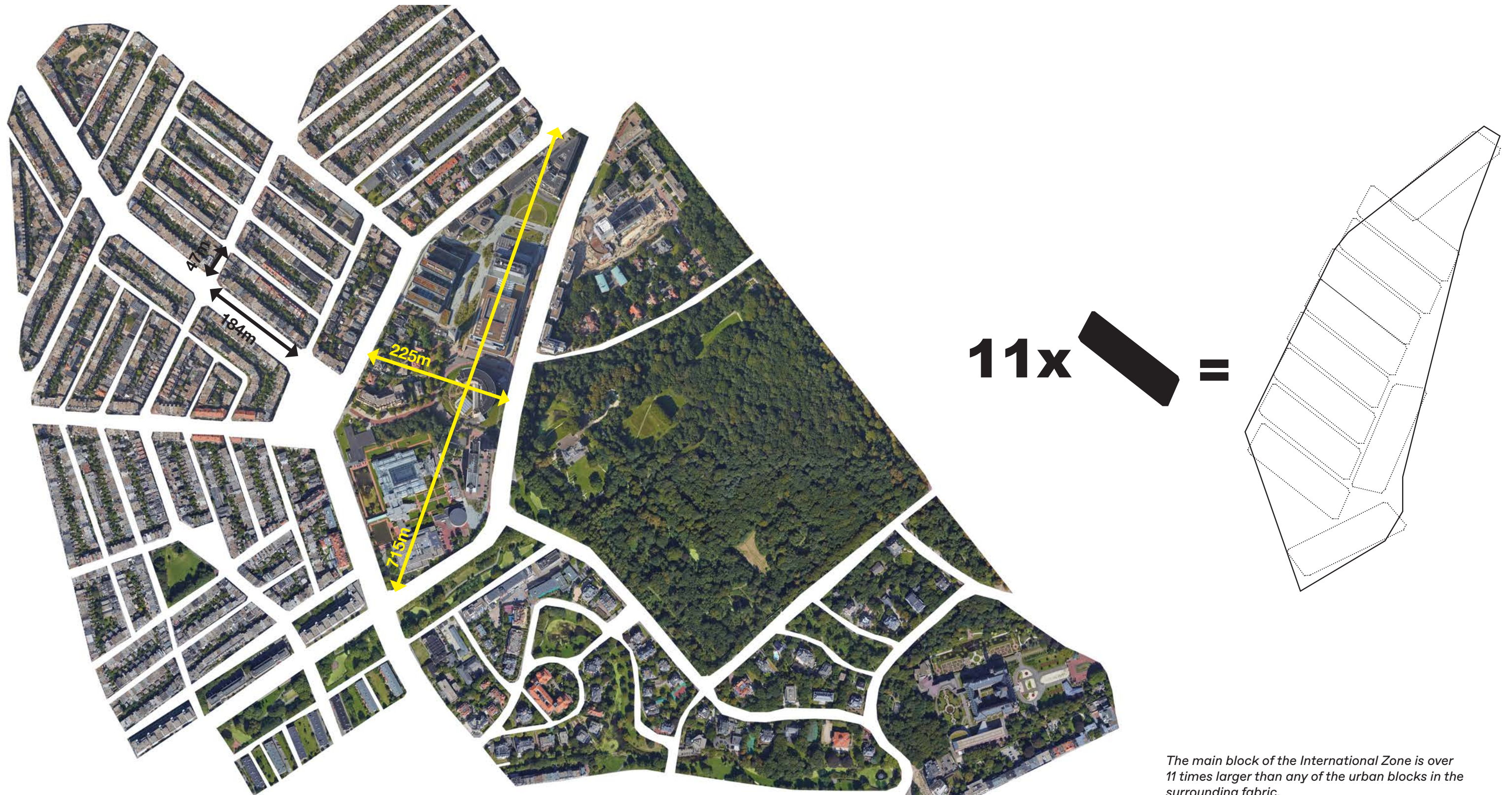
Together, these islands form a huge archipelago which seems entirely removed from the City.

**ZORGVLIETPARK: RATHER THAN A GREEN AND POROUS HEART,
THE PARK IS ANOTHER HERMETIC ISLAND**



The site is served by public transit with 2 tram stations within a 500m radius; the park, if it were open, would offer a scenic byway to the main organisations. Its potential is underexploited when one might expect - given its strategic location - that it constitutes the very epicenter of the International City.

THE DIMENSIONS OF THE BLOCK OPPOSES A STARK CONTRAST TO THE SURROUNDING URBAN FABRIC





ADC ASSOCIATION OF DEFENCE COUNSEL
PRACTISING BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL
COURTS AND TRIBUNALS

EUROJUST EUROPEAN UNION JUDICIAL
COOPERATION UNIT

CJZ CENTRUM JEUGD
EN GEZIN

EMBASSY

NOVOTEL

NUTSSCHOOL

EUROPOL EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR
LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION

WORLD FORUM CONCERT VENUE
AND CONVENTION CENTRE

OPCW ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

CATSHUIS OFFICIAL RESIDENCE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
OF THE NETHERLANDS

MARRIOTT HOTEL

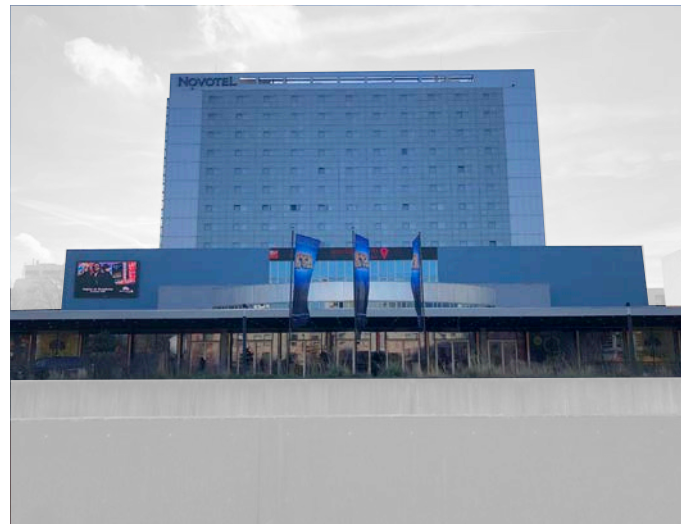
FOTOMUSEUM PHOTOGRAPHY MUSEUM

GEMEENTEMUSEUM ART MUSEUM

OMNIVERSUM IMAX THEATER

MUSEON MUSEUM FOR SCIENCE AND CULTURE

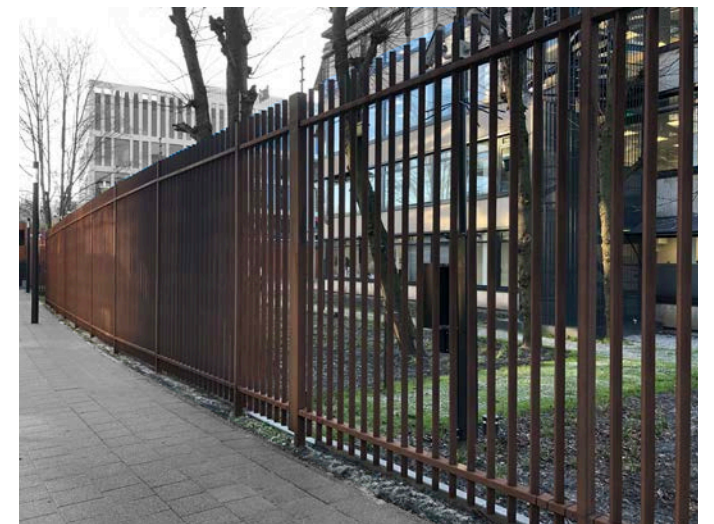
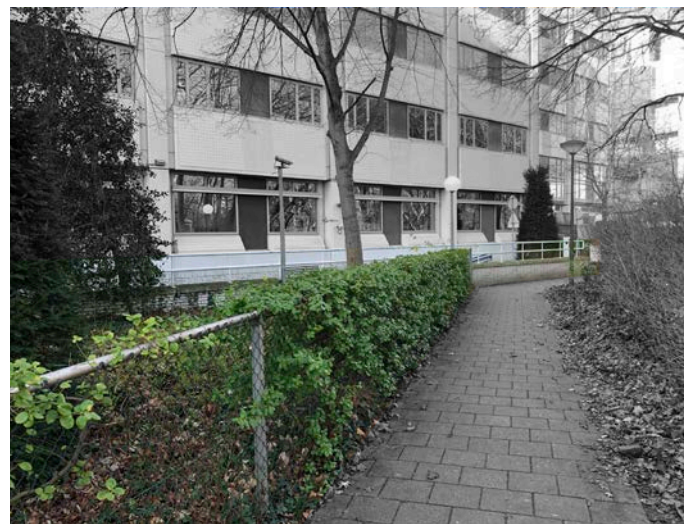
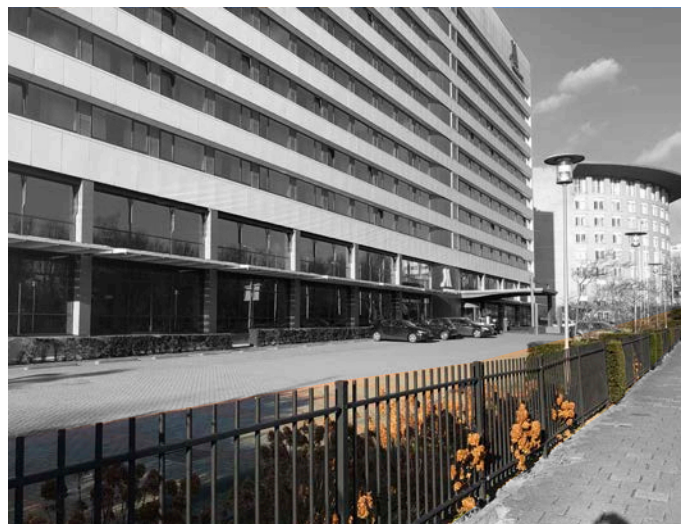
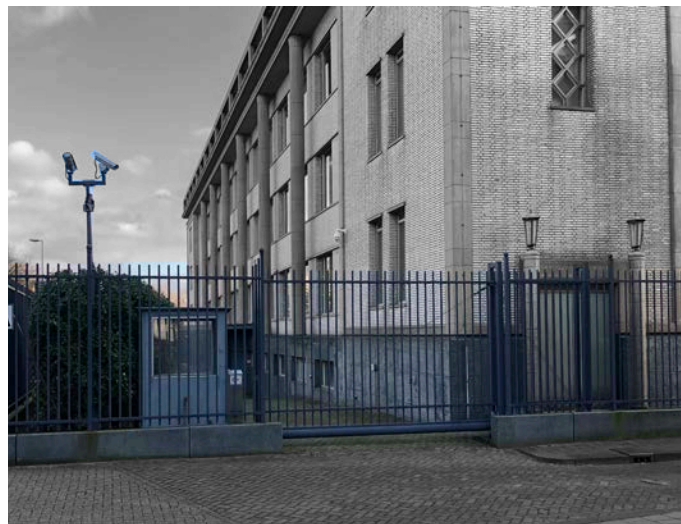
A COLLECTION OF LARGE STAND-ALONE BUILDINGS...

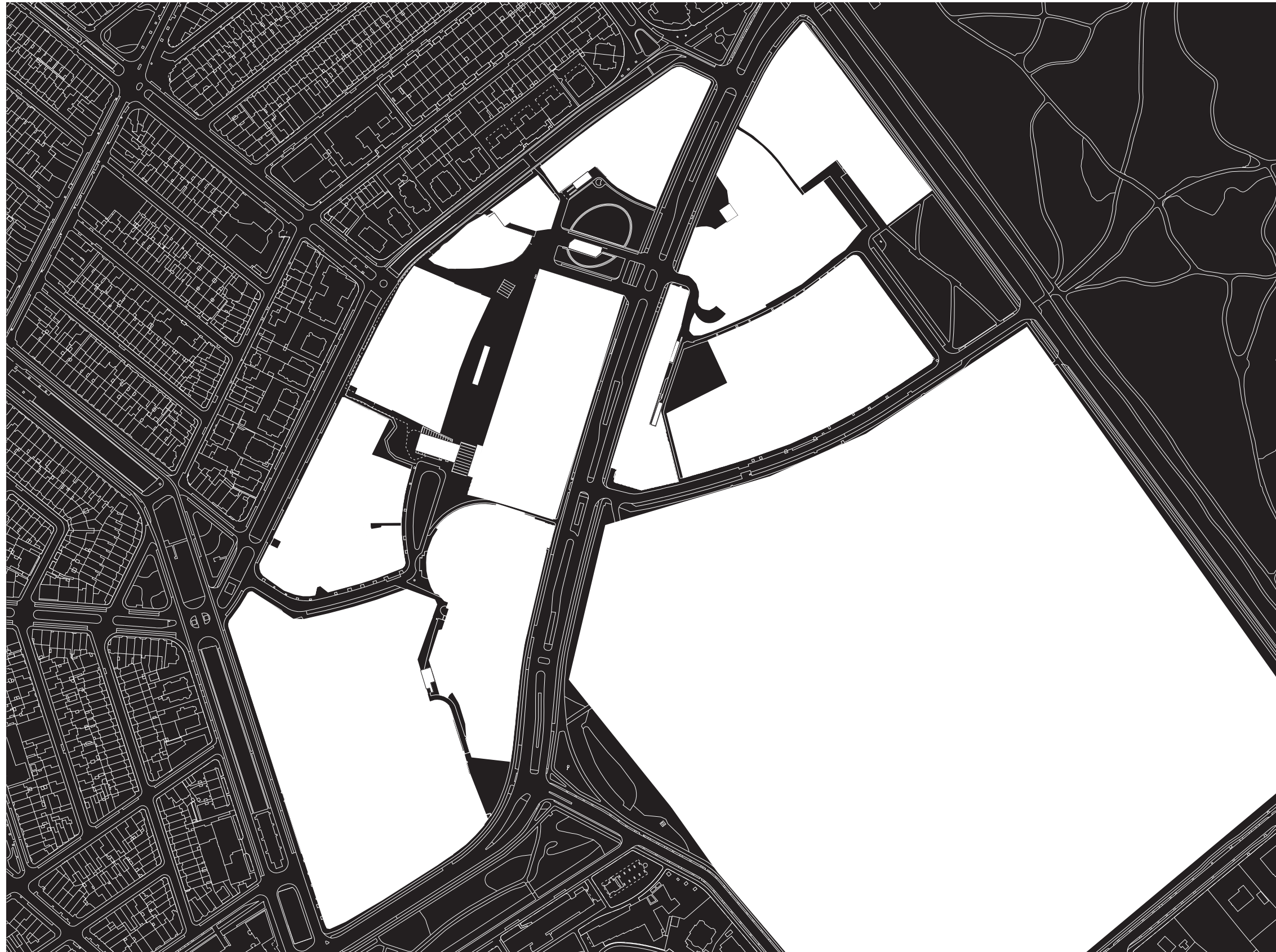




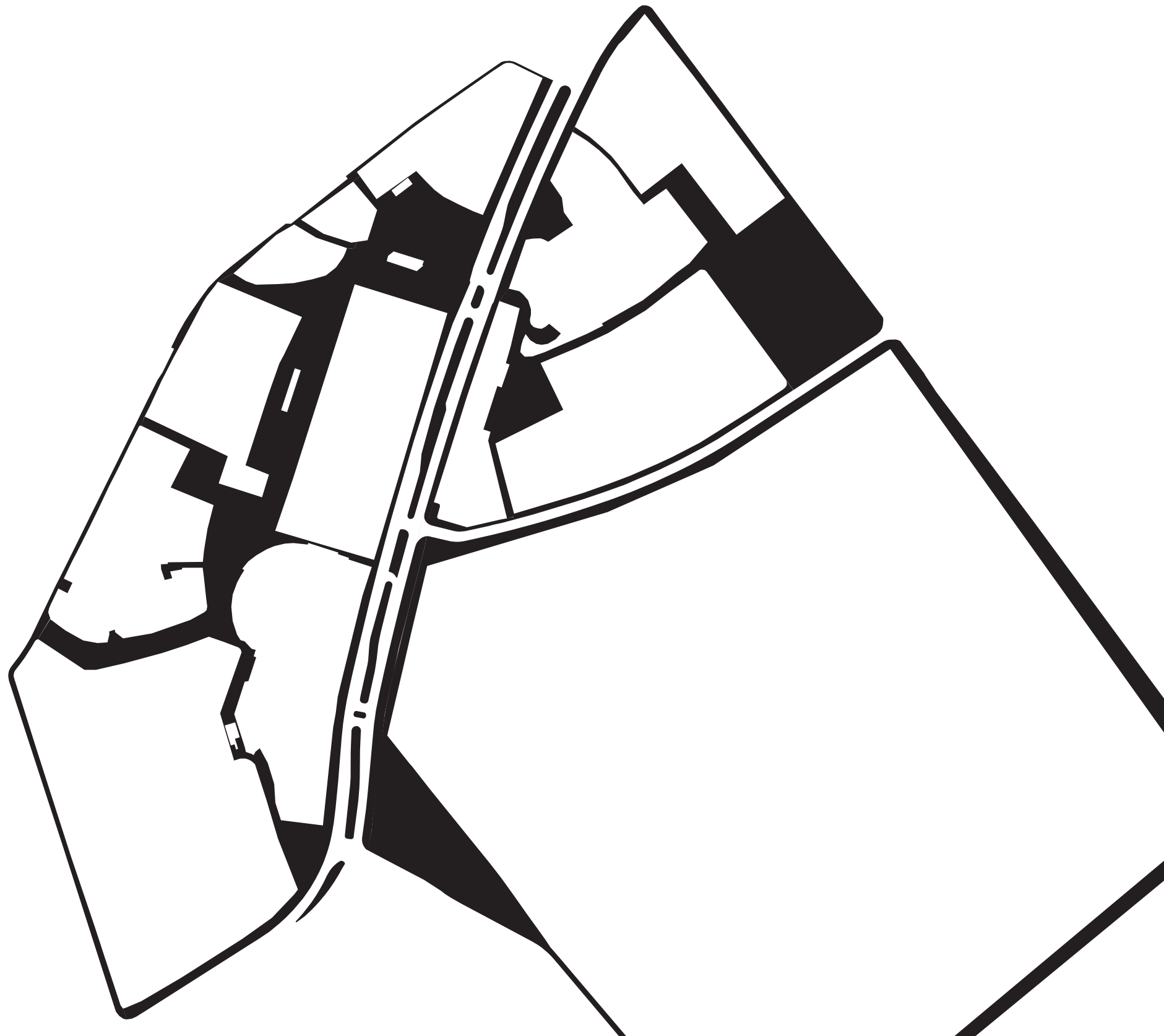
*Figure ground:
view in plan of the extra large building footprints of the
International Zone compared to the typical building
unit of the neighbouring blocks.*

...EACH BEHIND THEIR OWN INDIVIDUAL FENCE



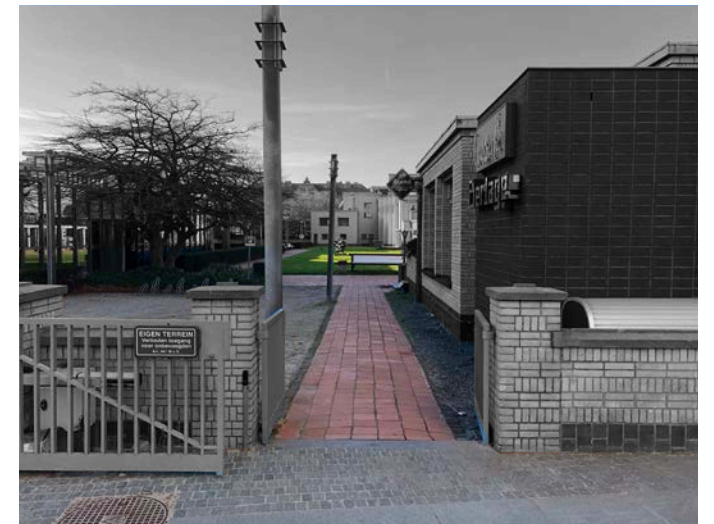
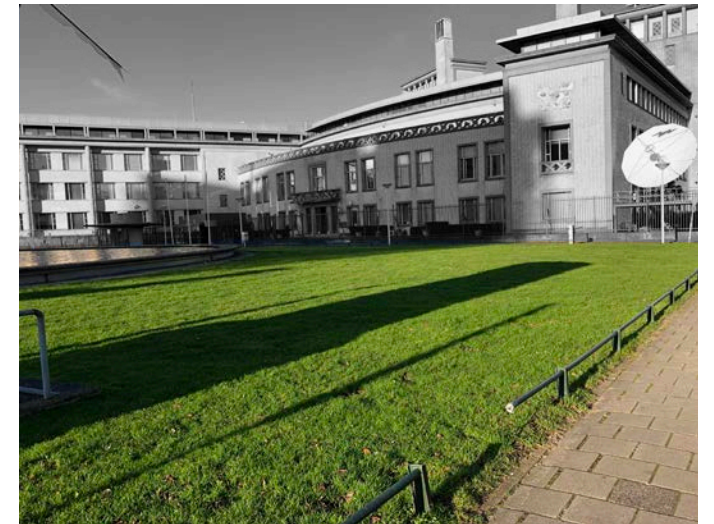


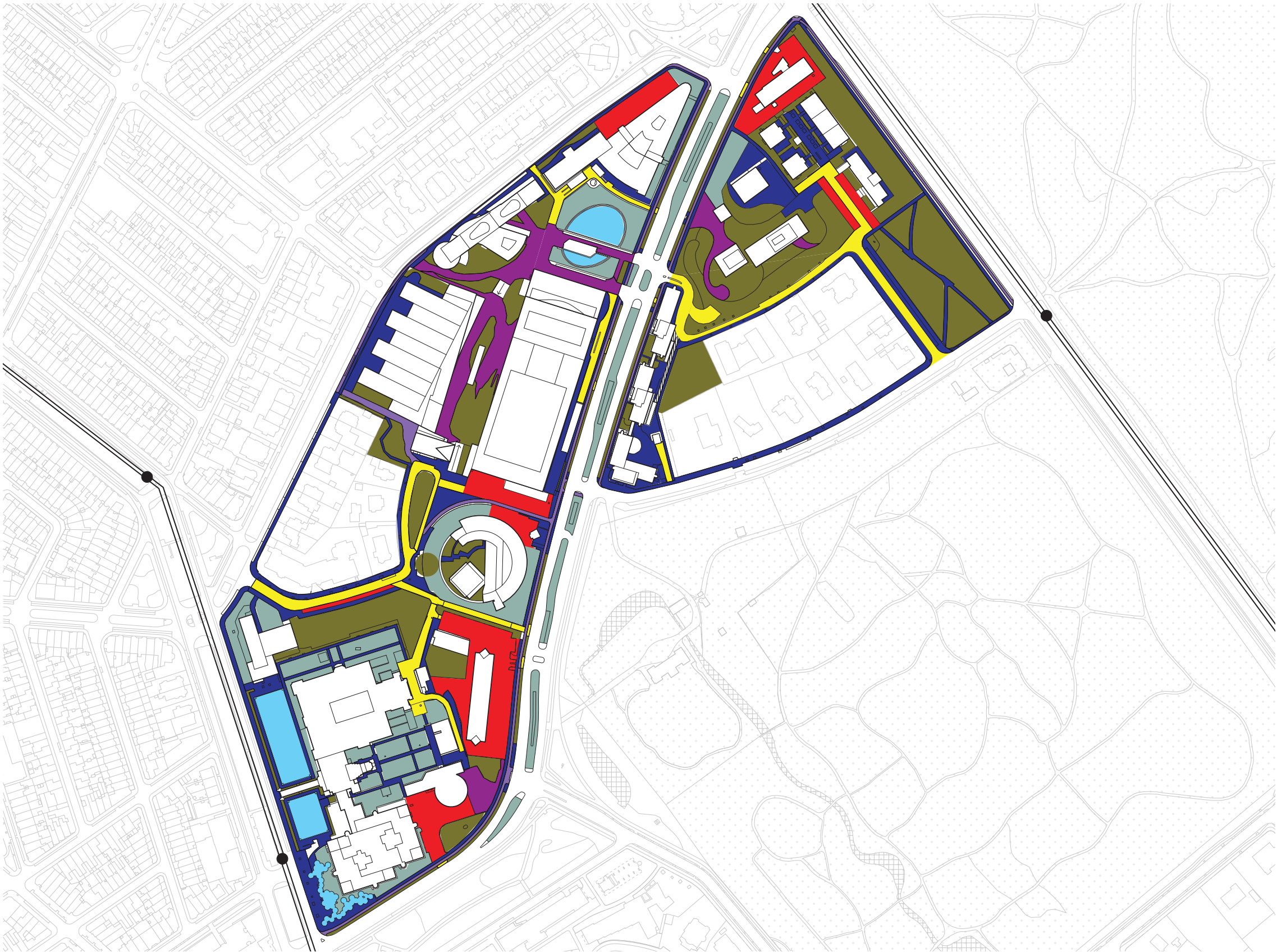
The individual (security) buffers that surround each entity establish a stand-off distance that exacerbates a certain confusion as what appears to be visually open is in fact physically inaccessible.











As such, public space - as in space that is concomitantly open and accessible - is thereby reduced to an interstitial corridor of varying width but that is invariably either too narrow or too wide.

AN INCONSISTENT LANDSCAPE...

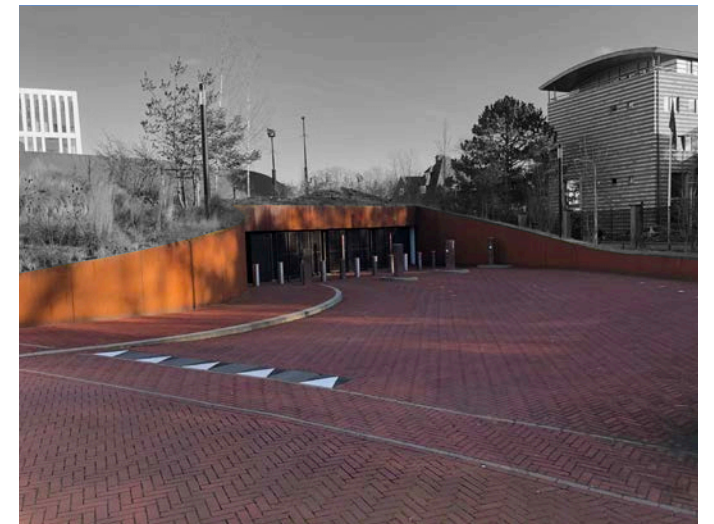
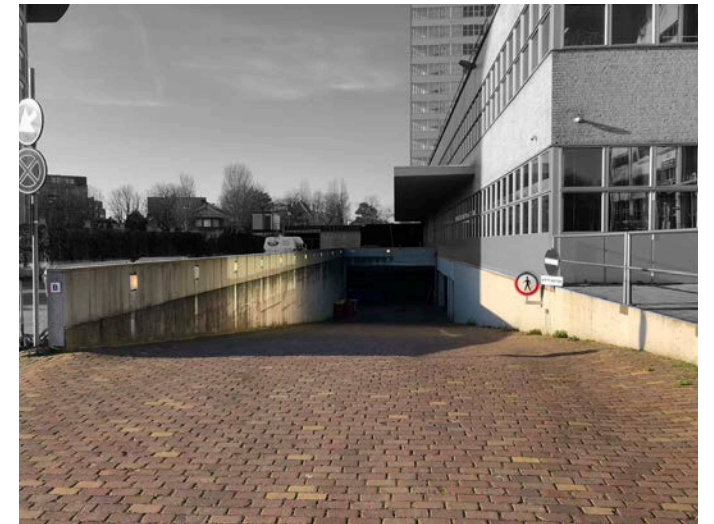
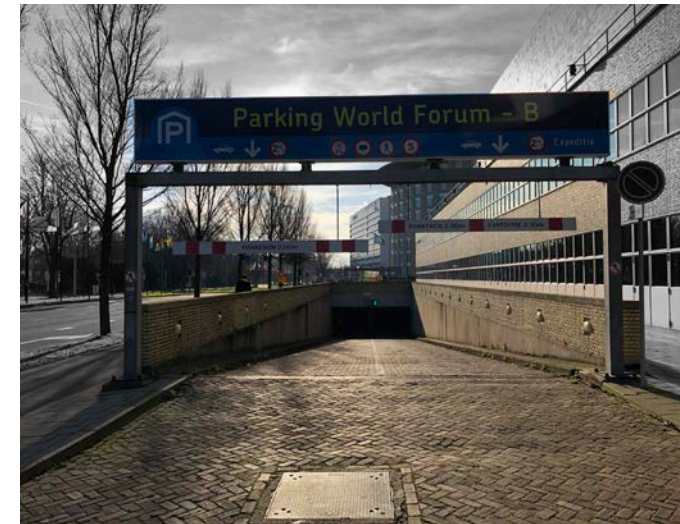
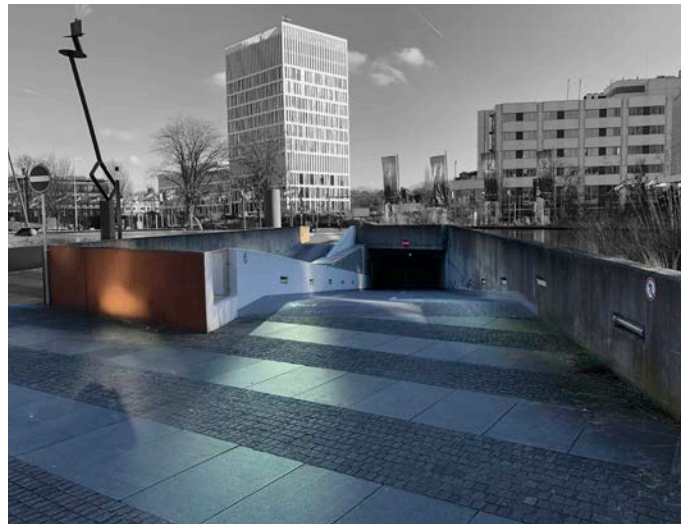




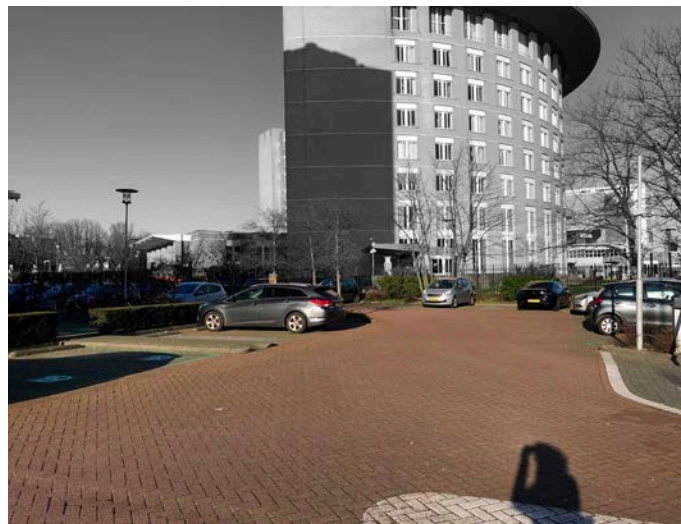
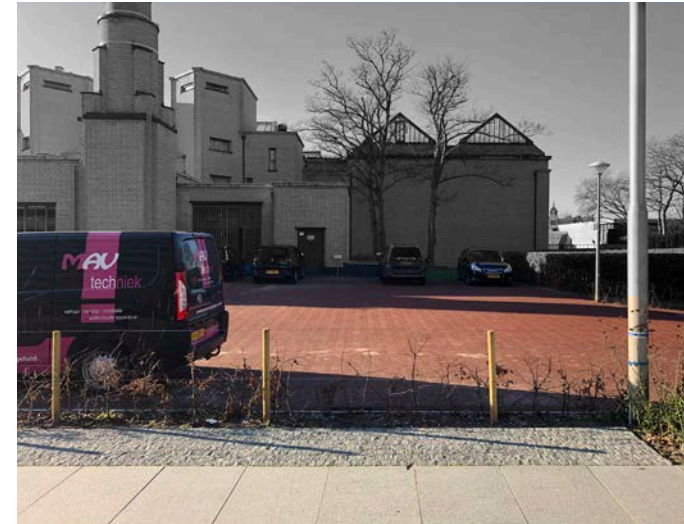
	Greenery - Trees, Shrubs	41 800 m ²	47% SOFTSCAPE
	Greenery - Grass	22 100 m ²	
	Water	6 000 m ²	4% WATER
	Surface Parking	16 400 m ²	49% HARDSCAPE
	Roads	9 600 m ²	
	Bicycle Paths	5 700 m ²	
	Hardscape Surfaces	26 000 m ²	
	Existing Landscape Design	8 800 m ²	
OPEN SPACE		136 400 m ²	
SITE AREA		200 000 m ²	

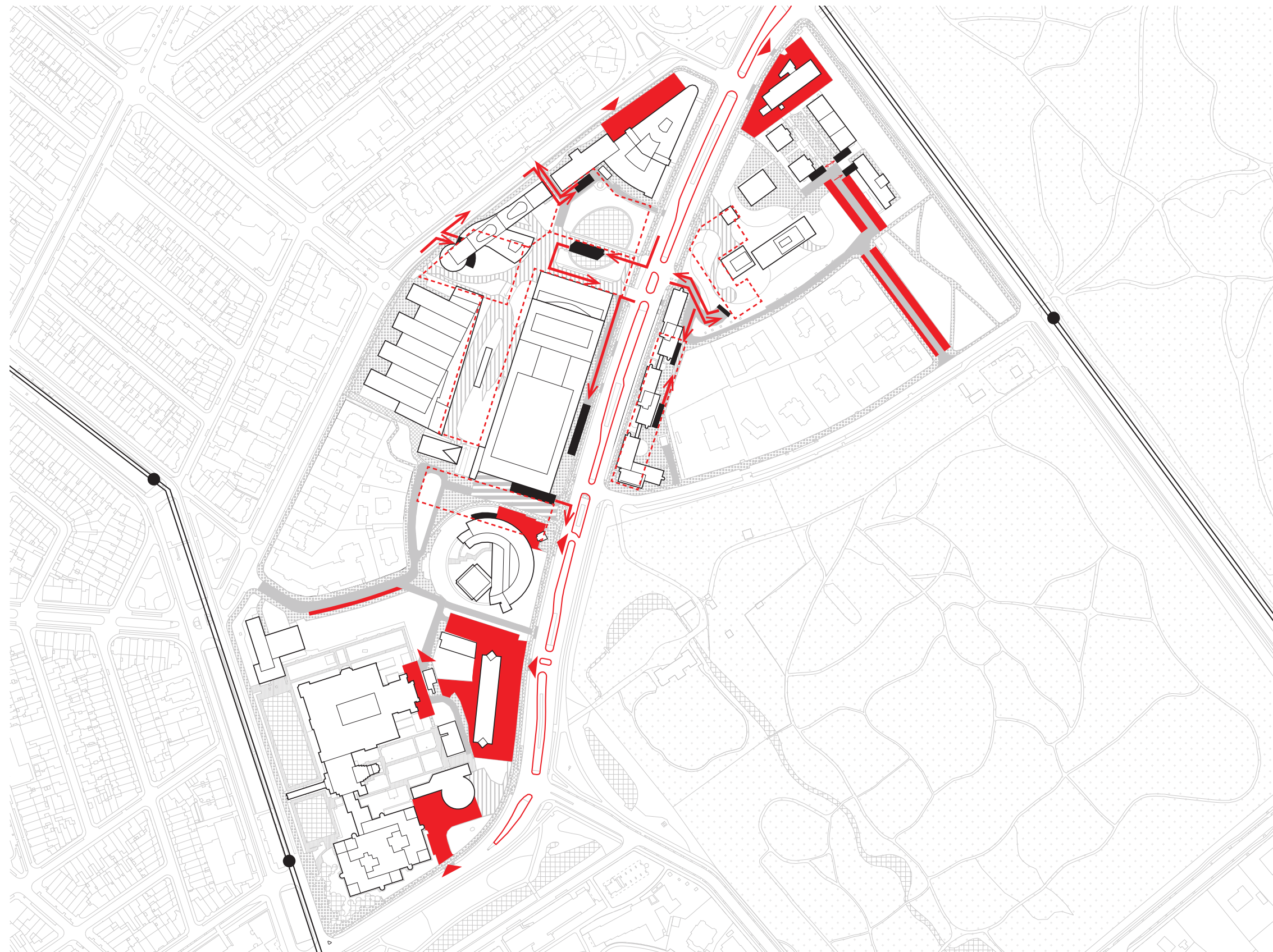
While the site is largely composed of open space as the built footprint accounts for merely 30% of the total area, the heterogeneous treatment of the landscape leads to such a fragmentation of the space that prevents its openness from being experienced or even recognized as a coherent whole. As such, rather than cementing the heteroclite assemblage of the different buildings, this mosaic of open spaces, that is there by default and not by design, contributes further to weaken any sense of place.



...ENCUMBERED BY A MULTIPLICITY OF PARKING RAMPS...



...AND SURFACE PARKING LOTS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO WEAKEN THE INTEGRITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM

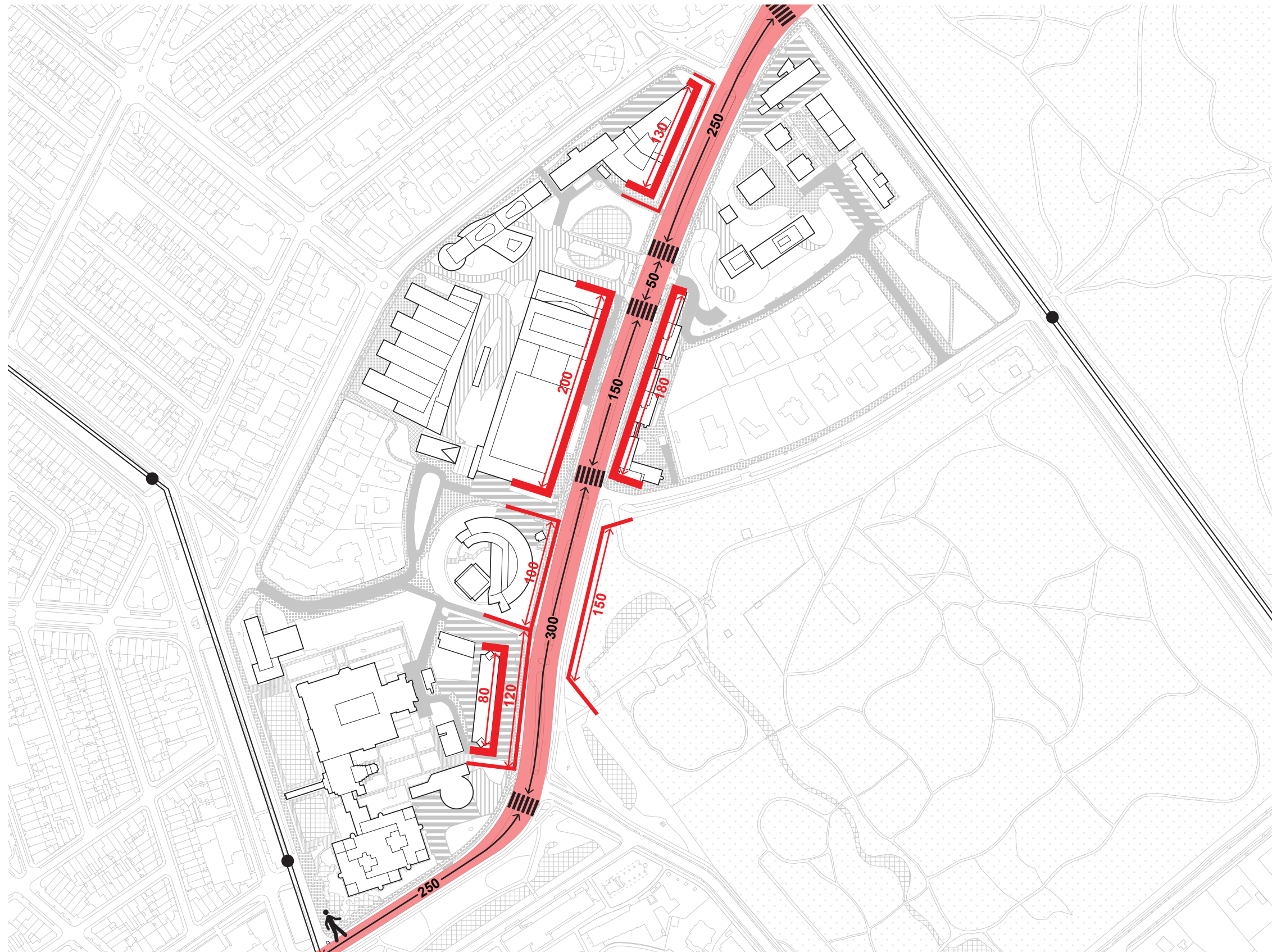




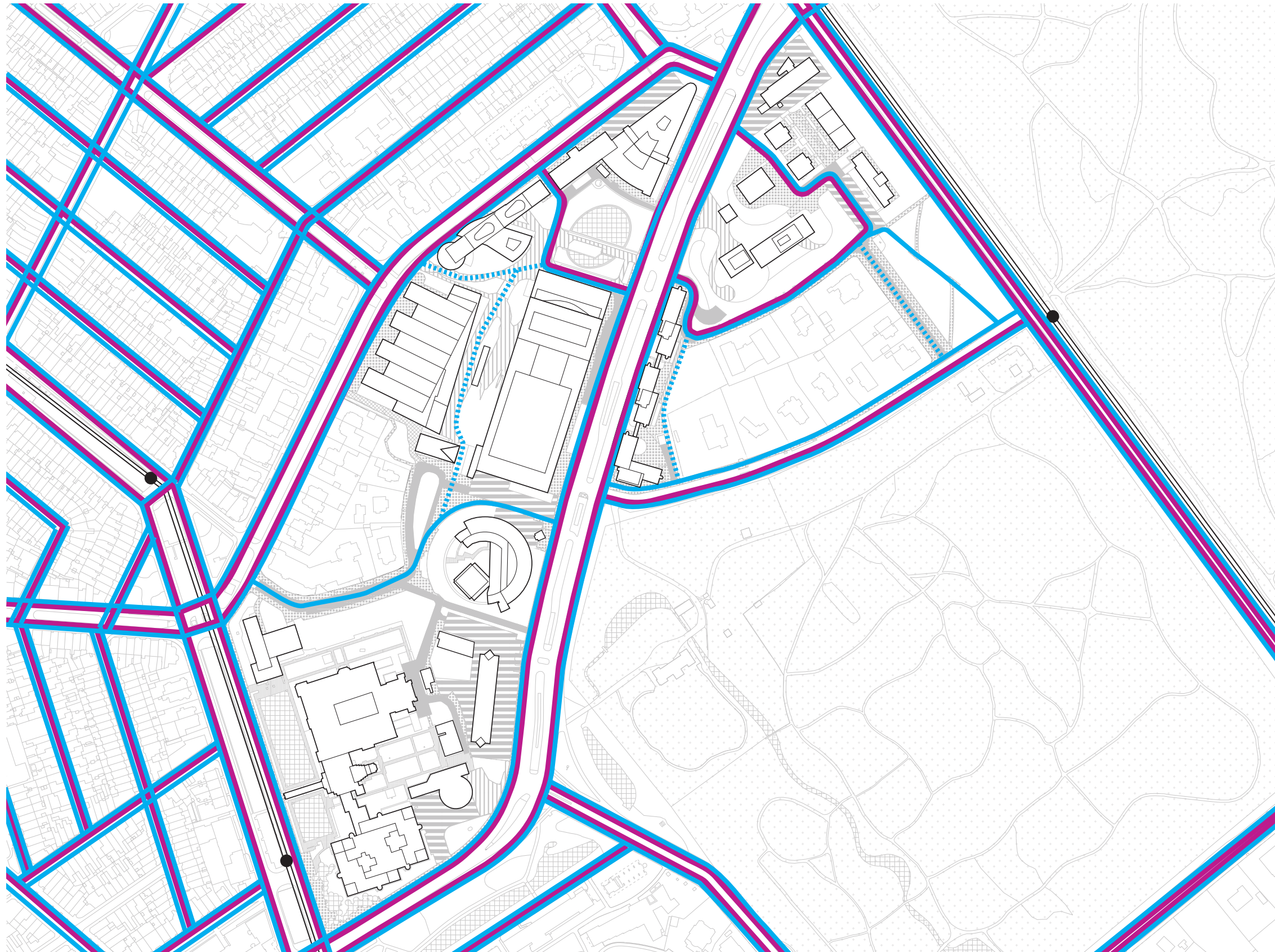
	Surface Parking	16 400 m ²
	Underground Parking	46 600 m ²
TOTAL		63 000 m ²

The numerous accesses to individual parking lots and underground car parks are not only physical obstructions, they add to the overall visual pollution of the public realm.

Also, to allow for various right and left turns to reach the parking entrances, the 2x2 road profile dilates, widening the gap between the two banks of the International Zone.



The wide profile of the road likens it to a highway in the middle of the city. Long and tall buildings stand parallel to the road; their continuous and blind facades frame it on either side, turning it into an unappealing walled channel.



Each of the islands that compose the International Zone as well as the walled Zorgvlietpark appear to be completely impermeable to soft flows and are often skirted by passerbys as if they were introvert obstacles rather than just another piece of the city.

PROPOSED STRATEGY

For any other site that would pose similar challenges, first measures would perhaps include reinstating basic urban rules: introducing transparent ground floors in every building, clarifying front from back facades, identifying public accesses etc. In the International Zone however, the individuality of each entity is too strong and needs to be acknowledged. There is little leeway to intervene on the built environment. Instead, we choose to focus on the unbuilt, the space in-between.

As it seems no longer possible to bring this site back into the fold of the conventional city - the scale of the buildings, the specificity of their functions being by essence unconventional - we propose to fully embrace the exceptional nature of the site and push it to the limit.

In place of the current aggregate of autonomous entities with each their own fence, their own parking, their own security, we advocate for the realisation of a true campus where some of the supporting infrastructure is shared and the entire perimeter is secured.

We propose a fantasy landscape traversed by strategic public routes. Landscape would be used as a common denominator, a unifier. But not just any landscape and certainly not a landscape one might expect in the middle of the city. Audacious. Bold. Radical. So that the design of the open space supersedes prosaic logistical requirements, not the other way around. We aim to create a visually seamless and coherent landscape where boundaries between public and private are integrated without being readily apparent.

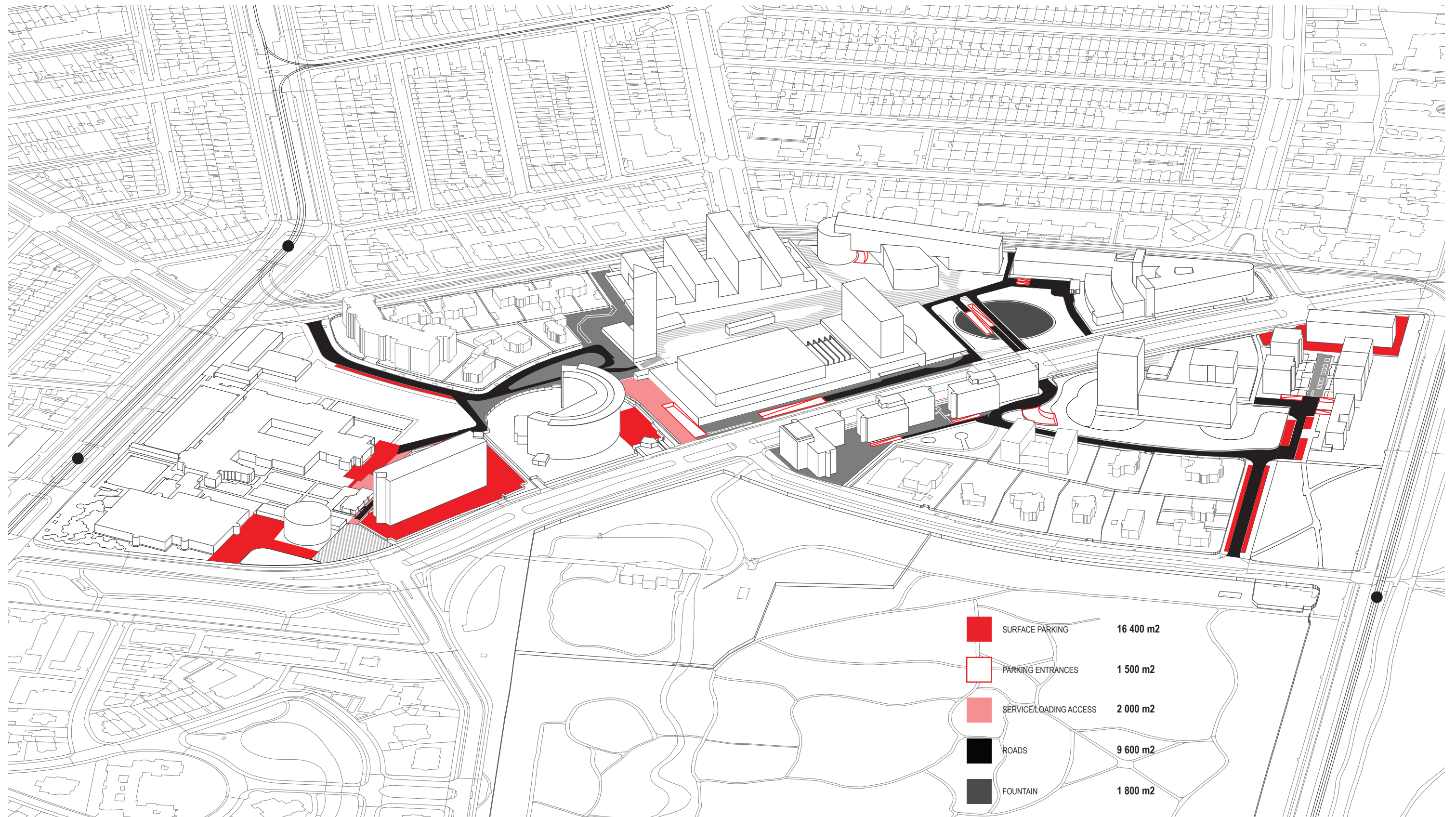
We propose to incorporate smaller scale light architectural structures that would accommodate shared public programs; the architecture of these pavilions would be more delicate and more refined to break the monopoly of supersized mastodons and create a welcoming public trajectory inside the park. Clear paths and through flows are identified within the public realm and would intersect at the location of those pavilions. The public circuit includes the Zorgvlietpark which we envision as an unequivocally public, porous and open park that one can cycle or walk through.

To ensure the security of the campus, we propose to neutralise the main threat that stems from vehicles by centralizing their entry/exit into a shared car park from under the main road, over 30m away from any facades, where they can be screened if and when required. This also allows to reduce the road profile back to strictly 2x2 lanes over the entire length of the road and stitch the two banks of the International Zone together.



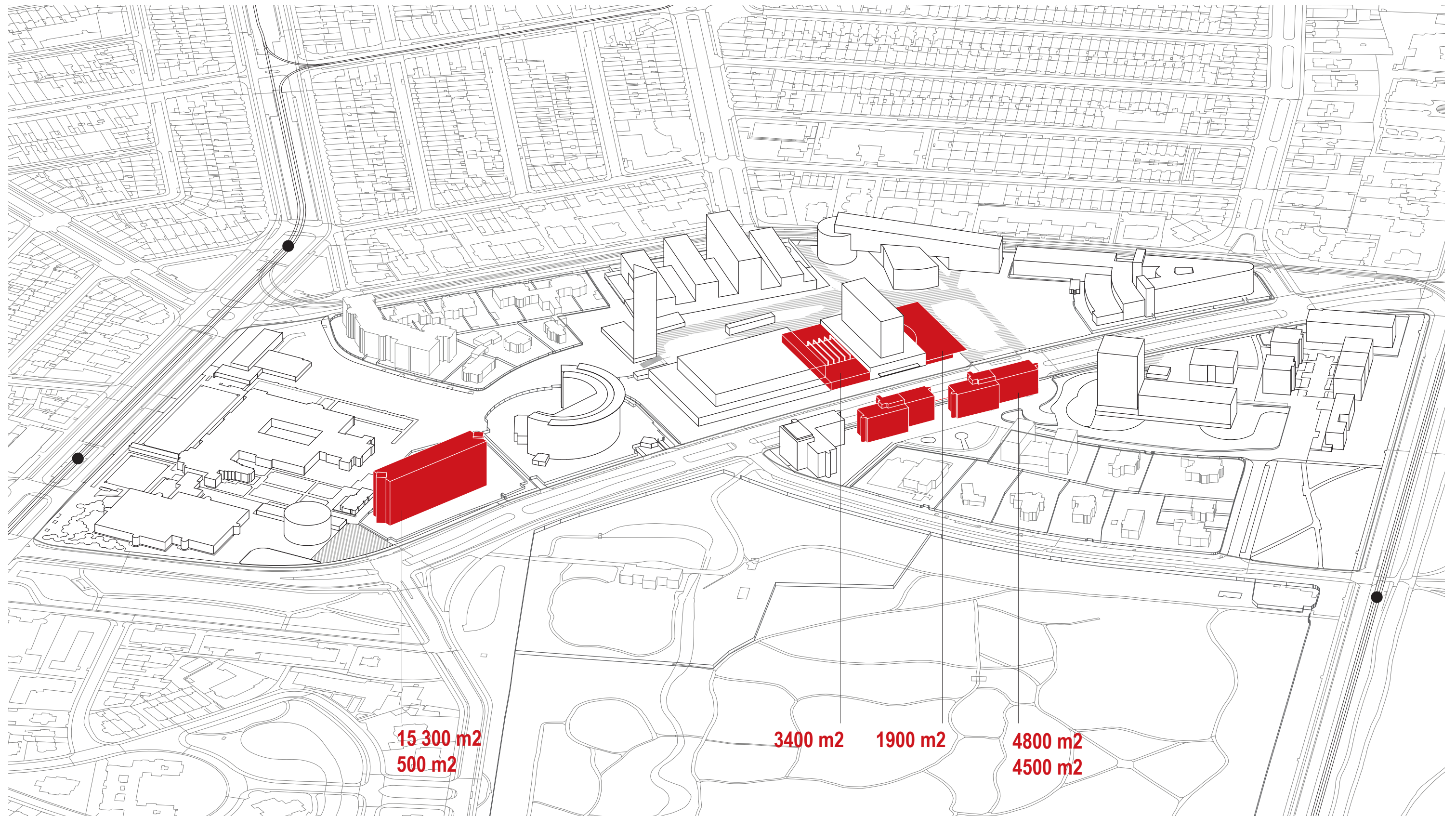
ACTION PLAN

**1. CLEAR ALL SURFACE PARKING, RAMPS, ACCESS ROADS AND BOH AREAS
= RECLAIMING OVER 40 000 M2**

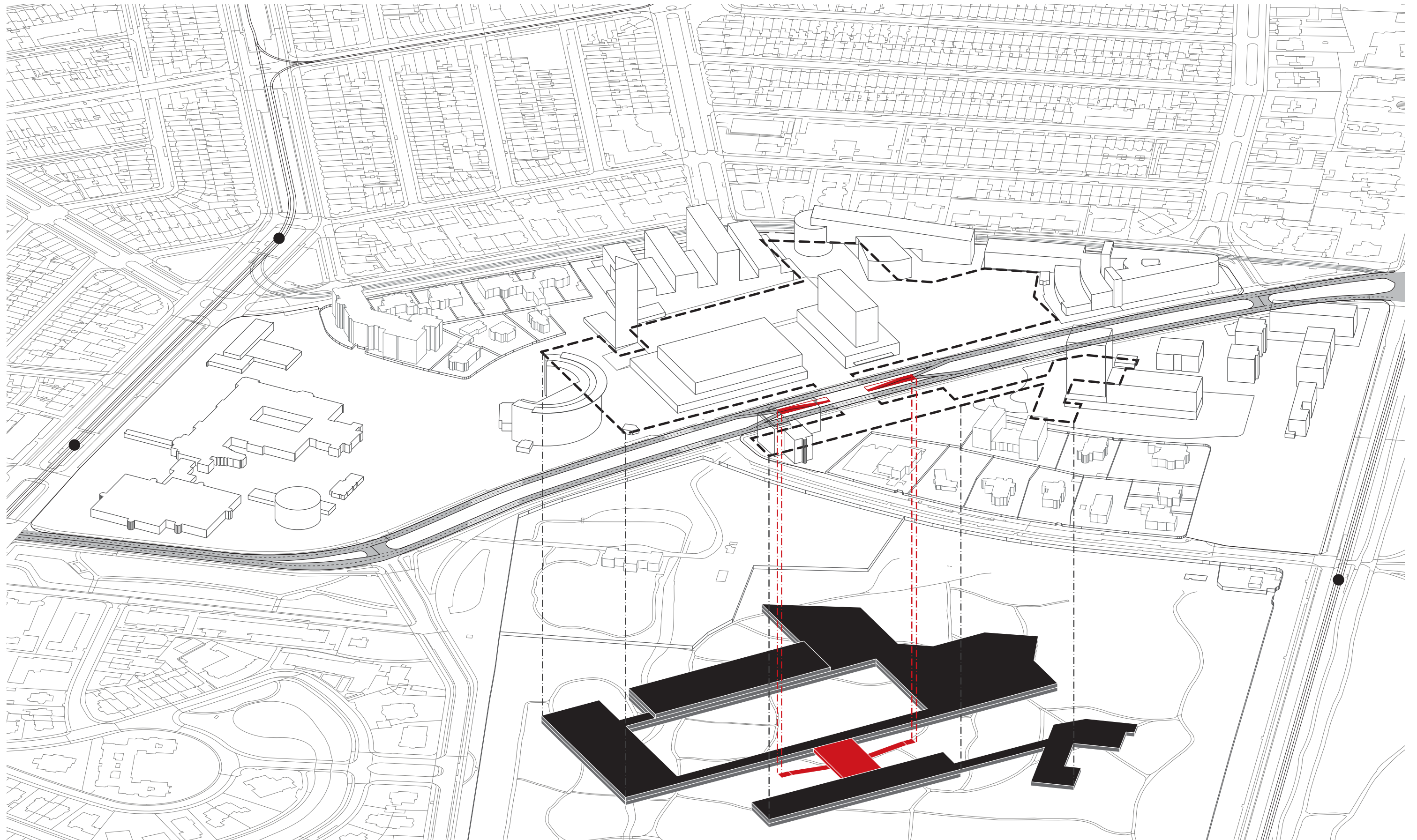


2. DEMOLISH STRUCTURES THAT CONSTITUTE MAJOR OBSTRUCTIONS (IN TERMS OF SIGHTLINES + FLOWS)

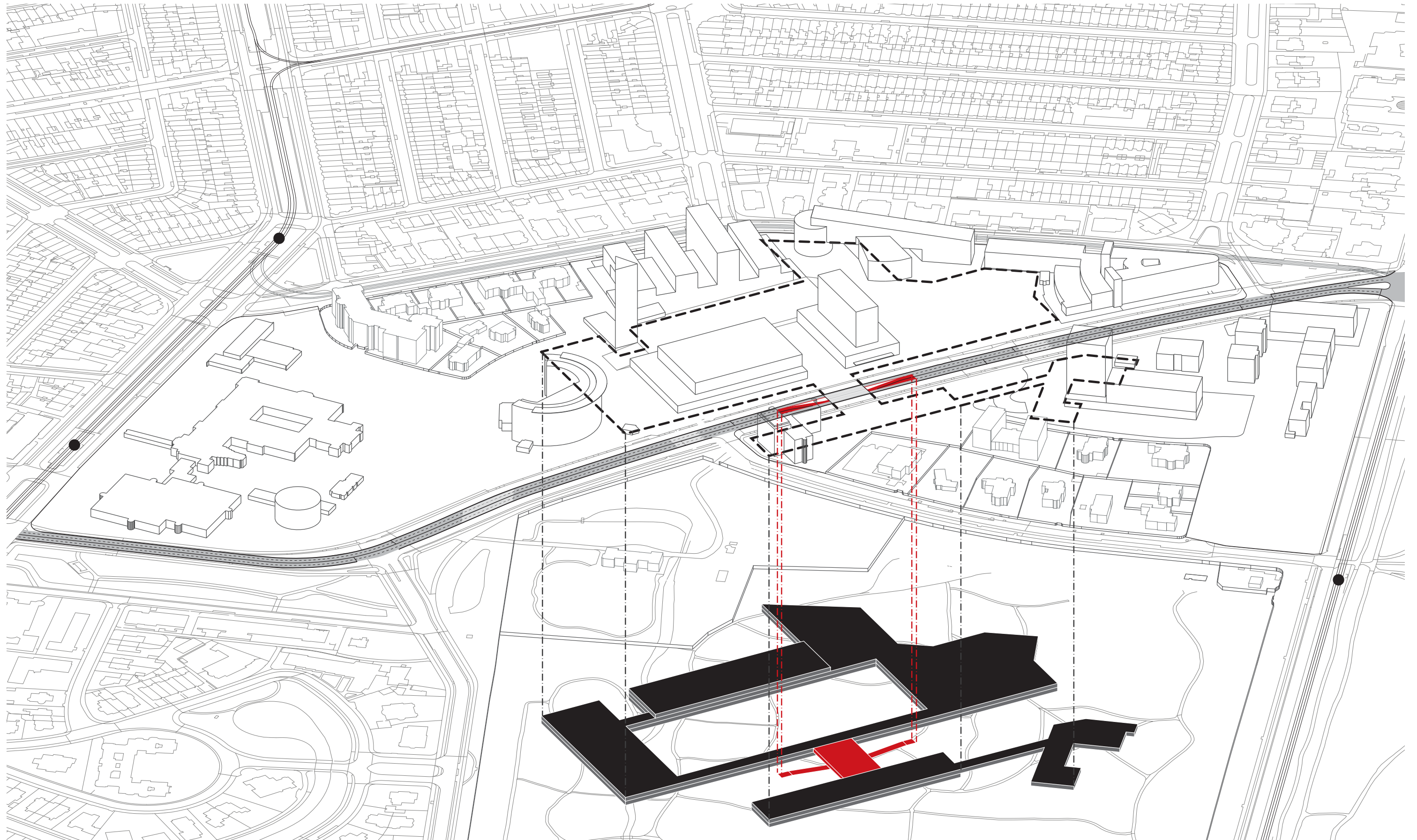
-30,400 m²



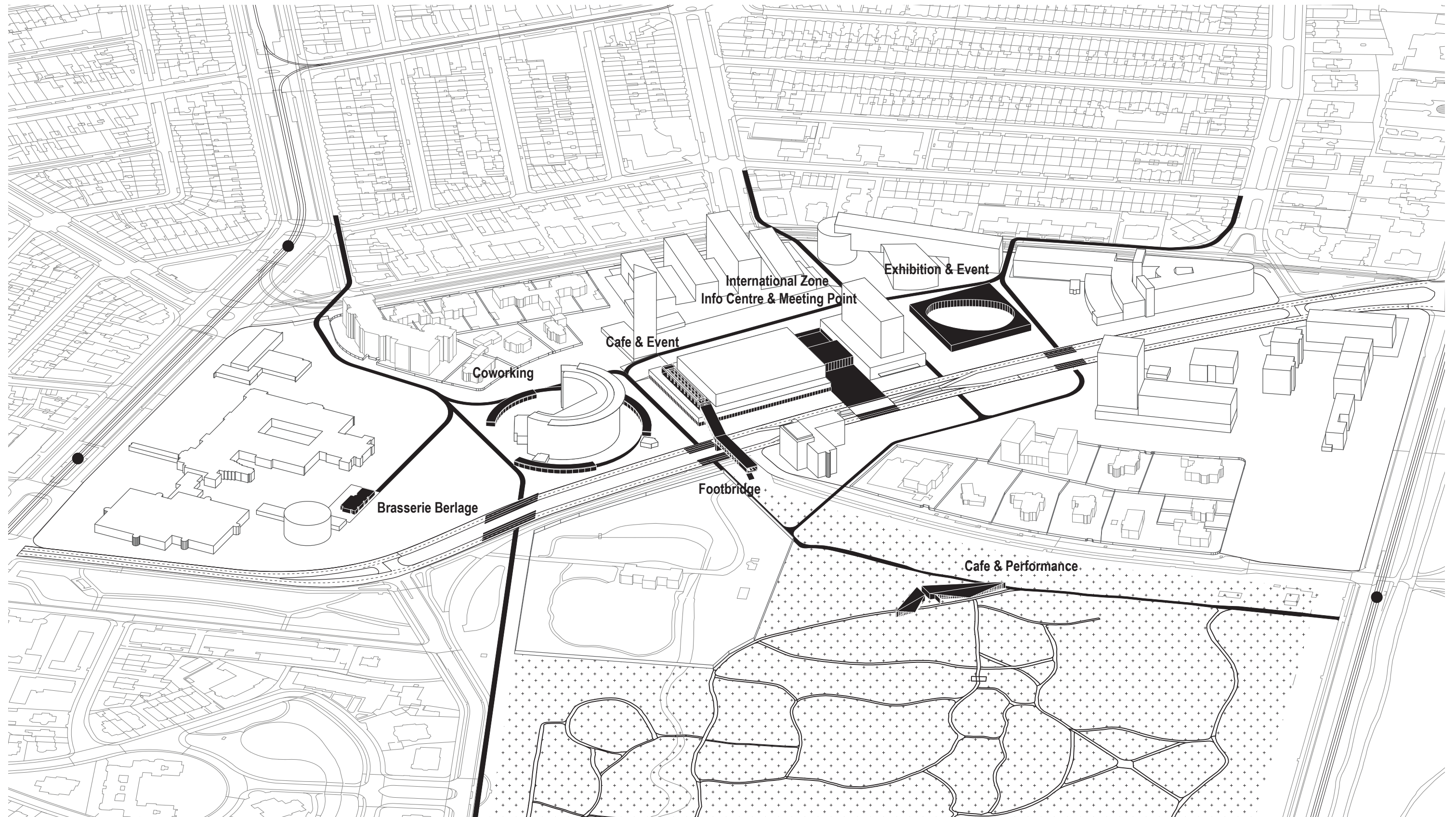
**3. CENTRALIZE PARKING ACCESS FROM UNDER MAIN ROAD AND
TRANSFORM HIGHWAY INTO CITY STREET
OPTION 1: WIDE PROFILE**



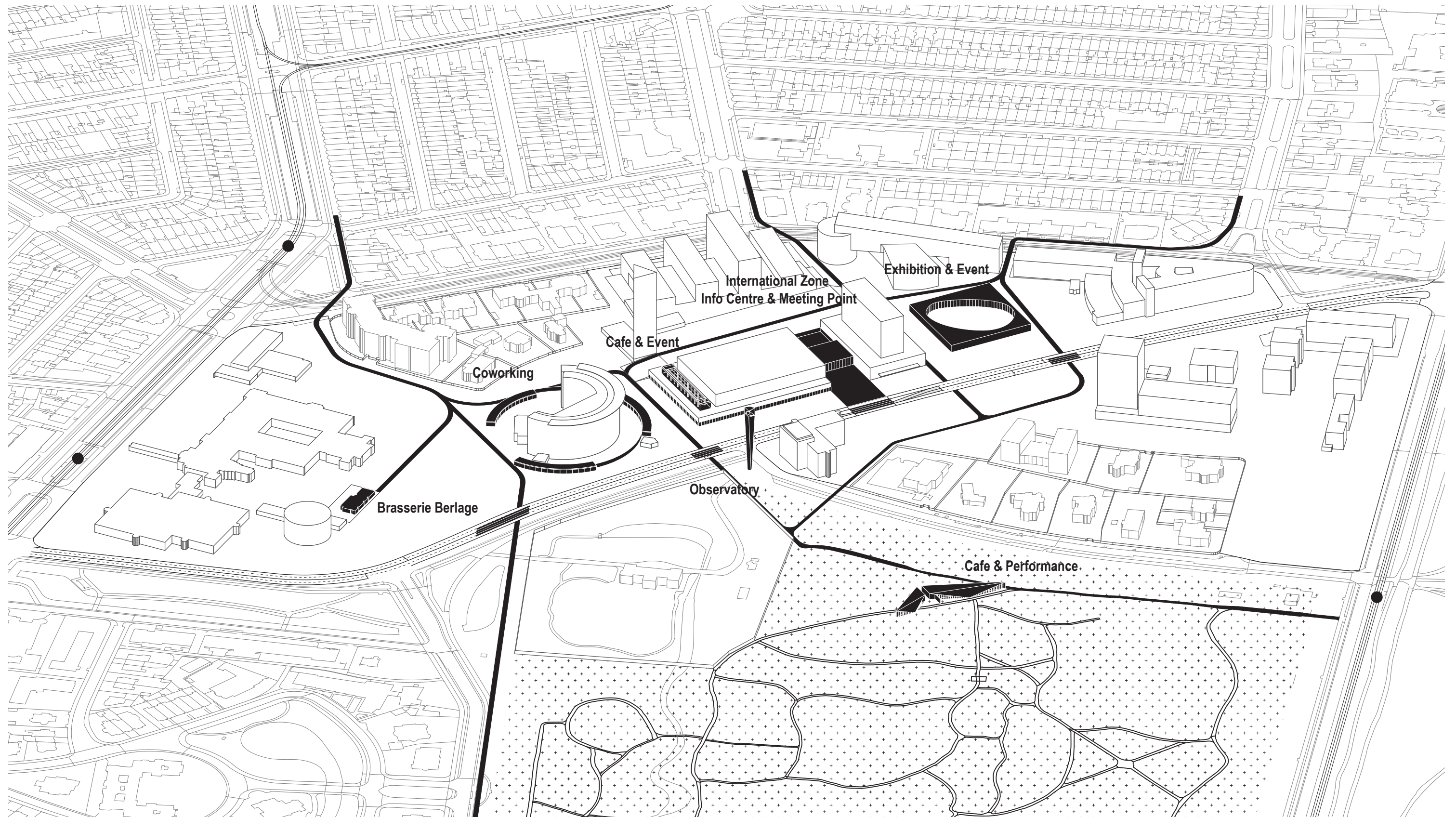
**3. CENTRALIZE PARKING ACCESS FROM UNDER MAIN ROAD AND
TRANSFORM HIGHWAY INTO CITY STREET
OPTION 2: NARROW PROFILE**

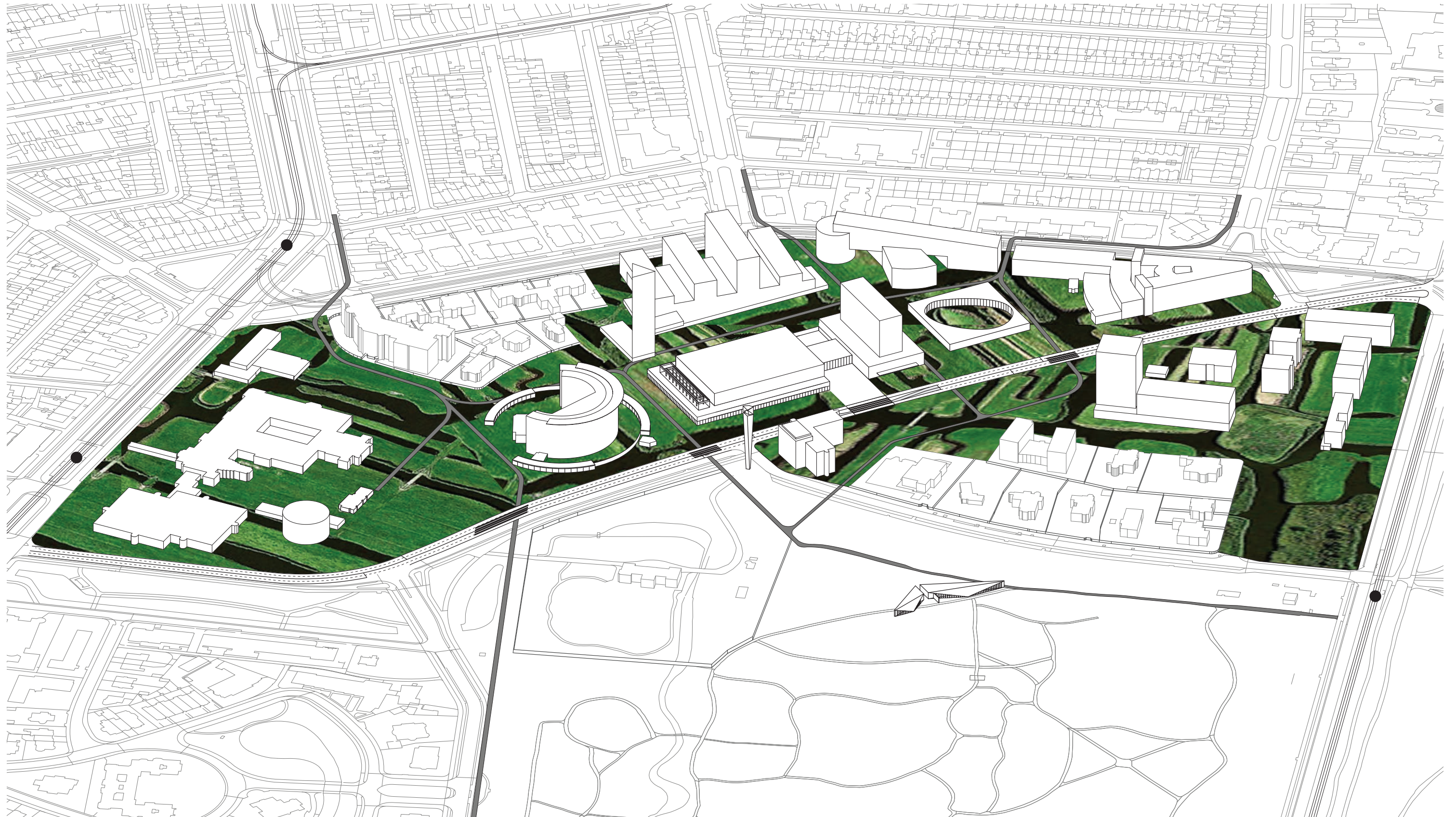


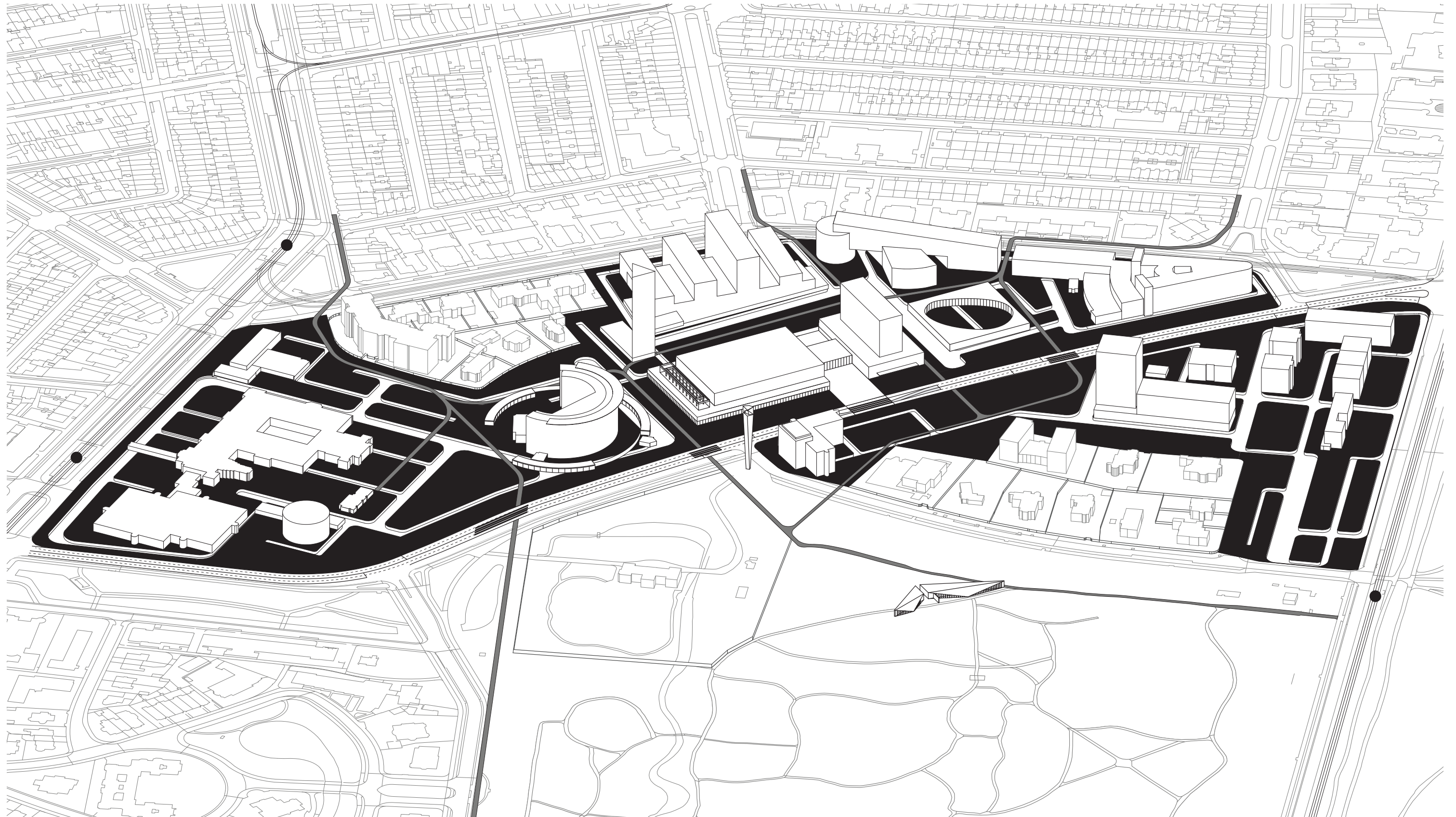
**4. TURN ZORGVLIETPARK INTO A PUBLIC PARC
IMPLEMENT NEW PATHWAYS AND SHARED PUBLIC PROGRAMMES AT
STRATEGIC LOCATIONS**



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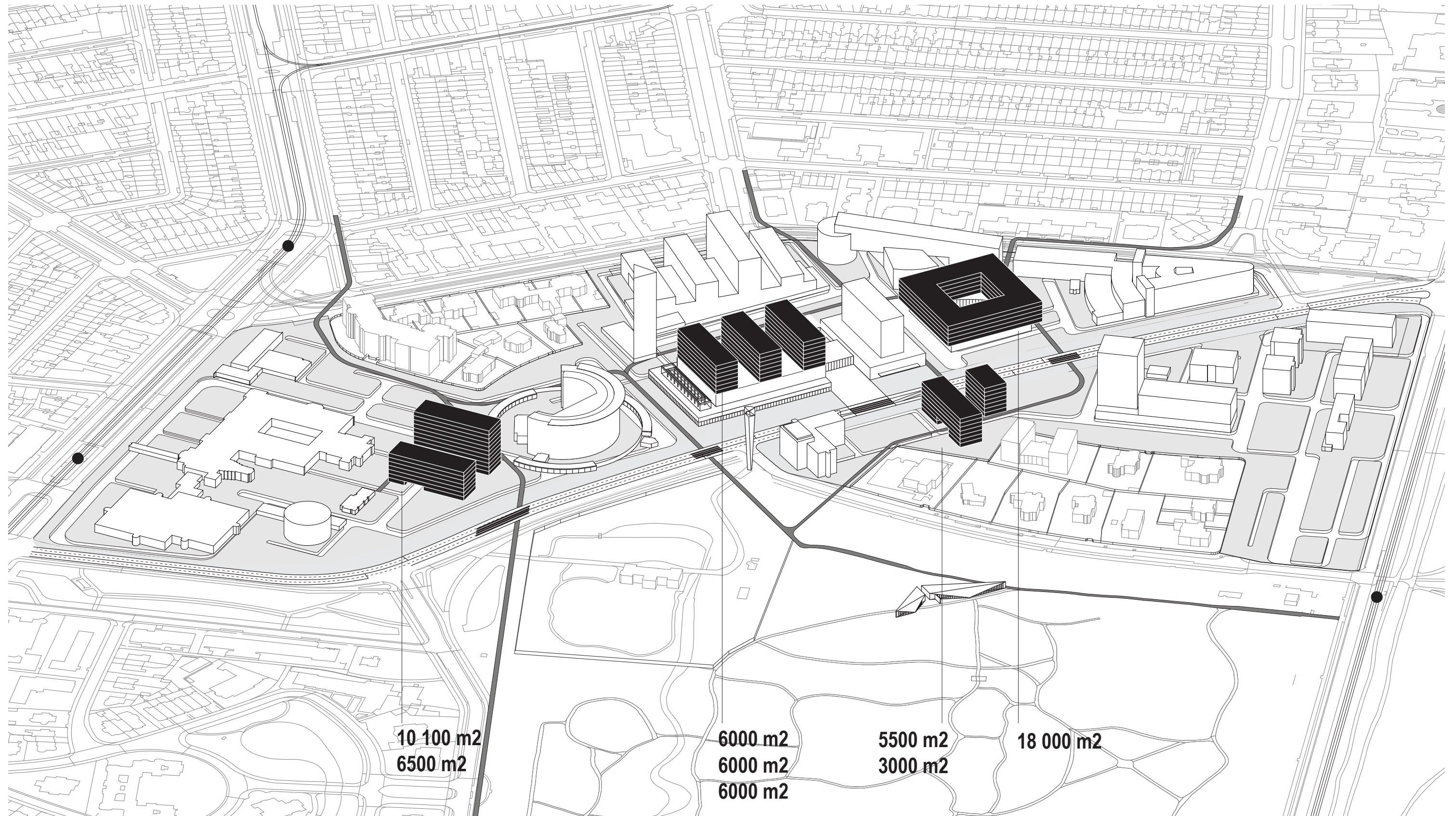


5. IMPLEMENT A BOLD AND UNIFYING LANDSCAPE ACROSS ENTIRE SITE

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6. IMPLEMENT A FEW NEW BUILDINGS TO REPLACE OLD STRUCTURES AND WELCOME NEW ORGANISATIONS

+61,100 m²



OVERVIEW



DUNES



the dunes landscape was the initial design concept for this site, over a decade ago. It allows the integration of topography and is reminiscent of the historical and geographical identity of the area, well before the city had reached this point. Today, implementing such a landscape would offer a striking contrast with the urban surroundings but it needs to be fulfilled entirely and boldly as no half-measures will suffice to lend the site a poetic and fantastic appeal if the dunes do not completely take over. Ways to maintain the sand need to be investigated.



CURRENT CONDITION



COLLAGE



WOODS

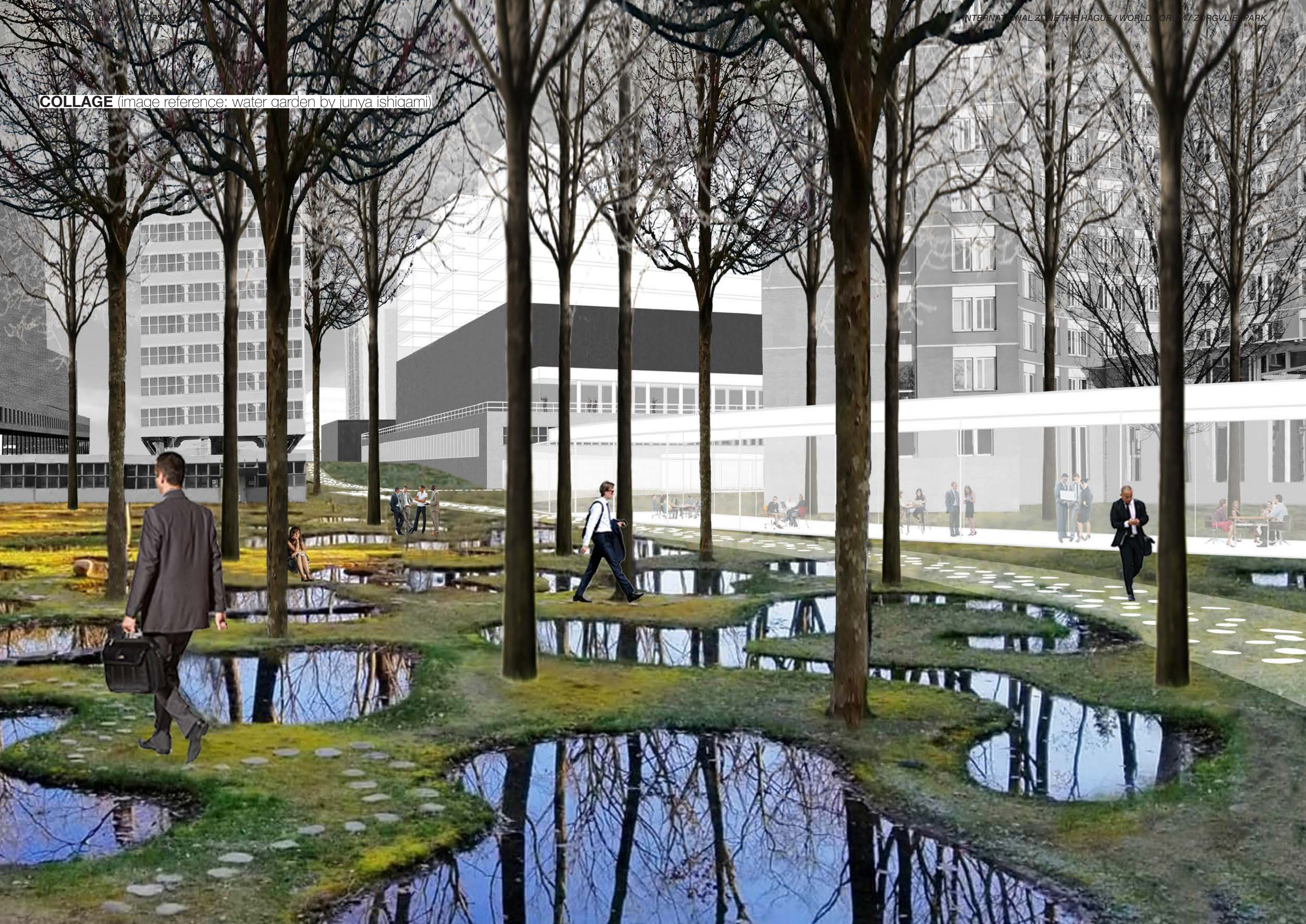


planting a significant amount of trees so as to create a woods condition would offer the possibility to physically and visually blend the International Park and the Zorgvlietpark. Planting density needs to be carefully considered so that there remains enough daylight inside the offices; also adequate soil depth needs to be studied.





CURRENT CONDITION



COLLAGE (image reference: water garden by iunya ishiqami)

POLDER



a polder landscape at this location would offer a striking juxtaposition of urban and rural; water channels can be used to subtly delineate public and private areas. Adequate depth for the water needs to be considered. This mostly flat landscape challenges the topography that was previously implemented on the site.



CURRENT CONDITION



COLLAGE



STONEWALLS



the stonewalls that are integral to this rural landscape can be used to enclose private property and/or channel public flows in an almost undistinguishable manner: an outsider's eye would not be able to tell where one starts and the other ends.





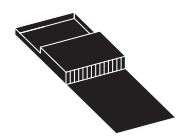





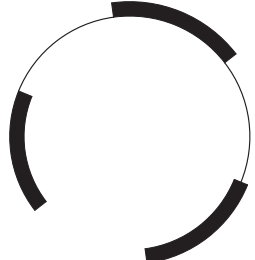







CURRENT CONDITION















COLLAGE



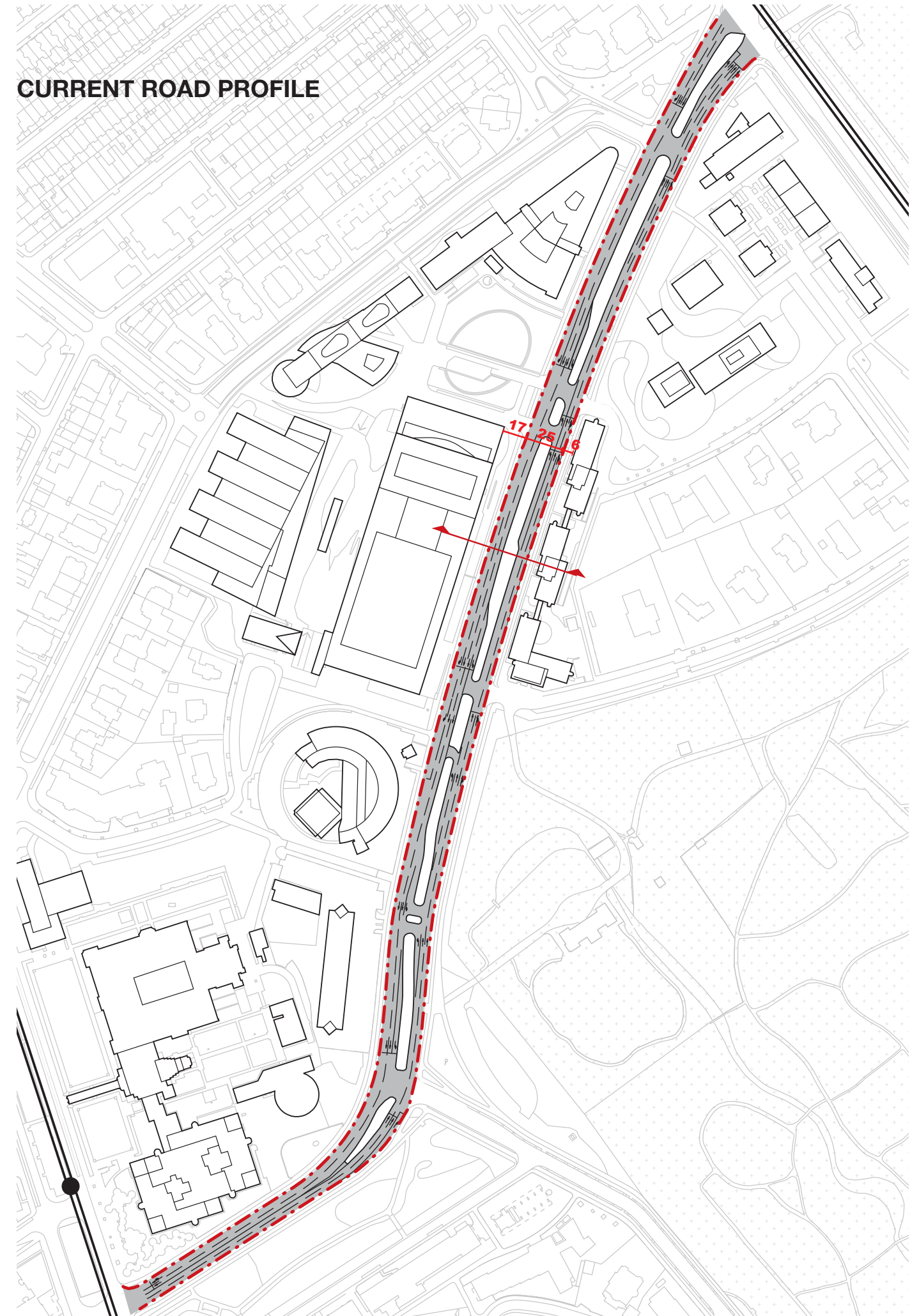
A SERIES OF HUMAN-SCALE PAVILIONS THAT PUNCTUATE THE SITE AS PUBLIC NODES OF INTENSITY

			
			
			
COWORKING Vijversburg Visitor Center - Junya Ishigami and Studio Maki	EXHIBITION & EVENT Rolex Learning Center - SANAA	INFO & MEETING POINT Louvre Lens - SANAA	PERFORMANCE & CAFE 21_21 design museum - Tadao Ando
			

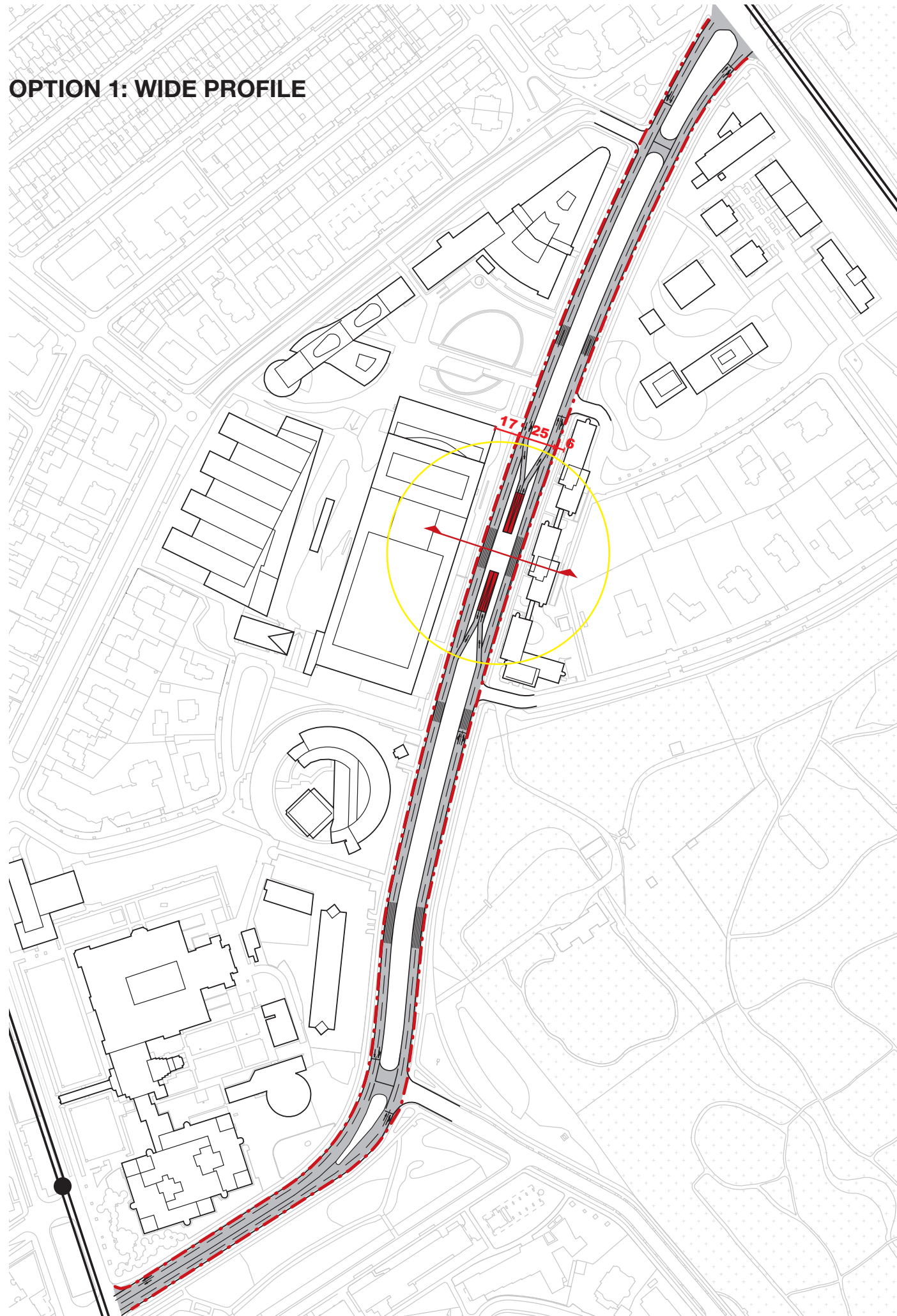
		
		
		
FOOTBRIDGE Pfaffenthal Lift - STEINMETZDEMEYER	CAFE & EVENT micasa vol.C - Studio MK27 & M. Tanaka	OBSERVATORY Chapel in Valleacaron - S.M.A.O.
		

URBAN STREET PROFILE

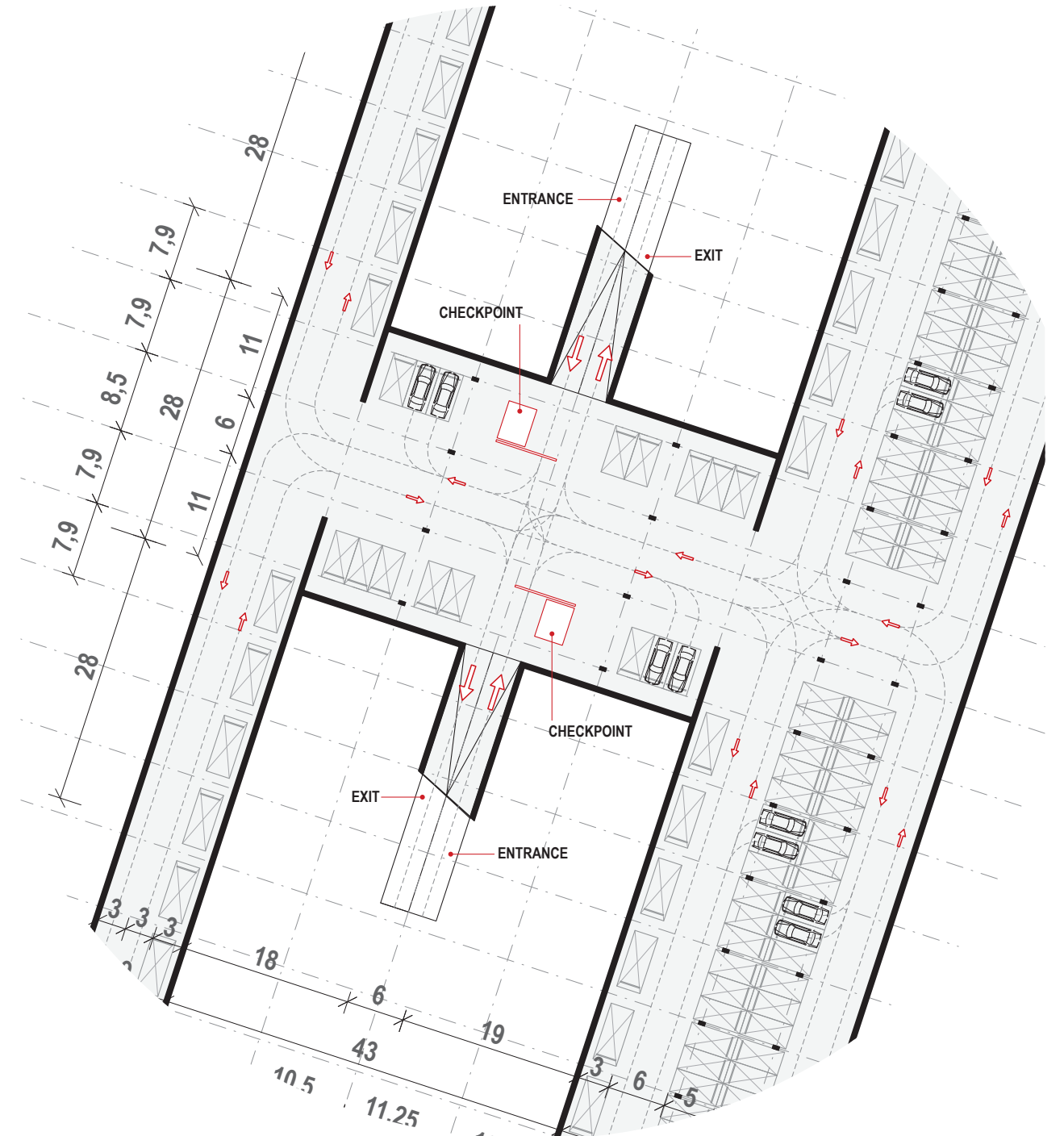
CURRENT ROAD PROFILE



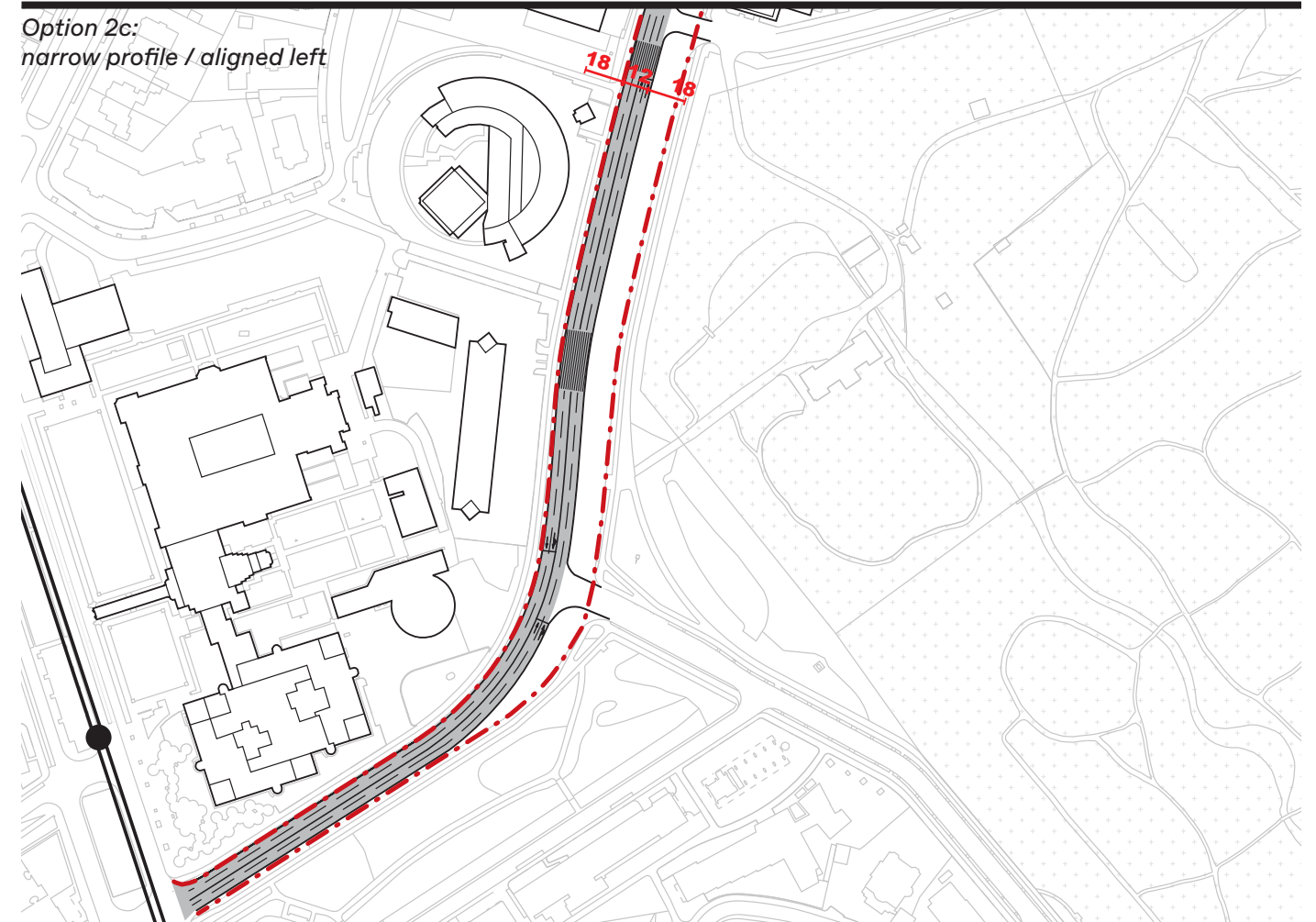
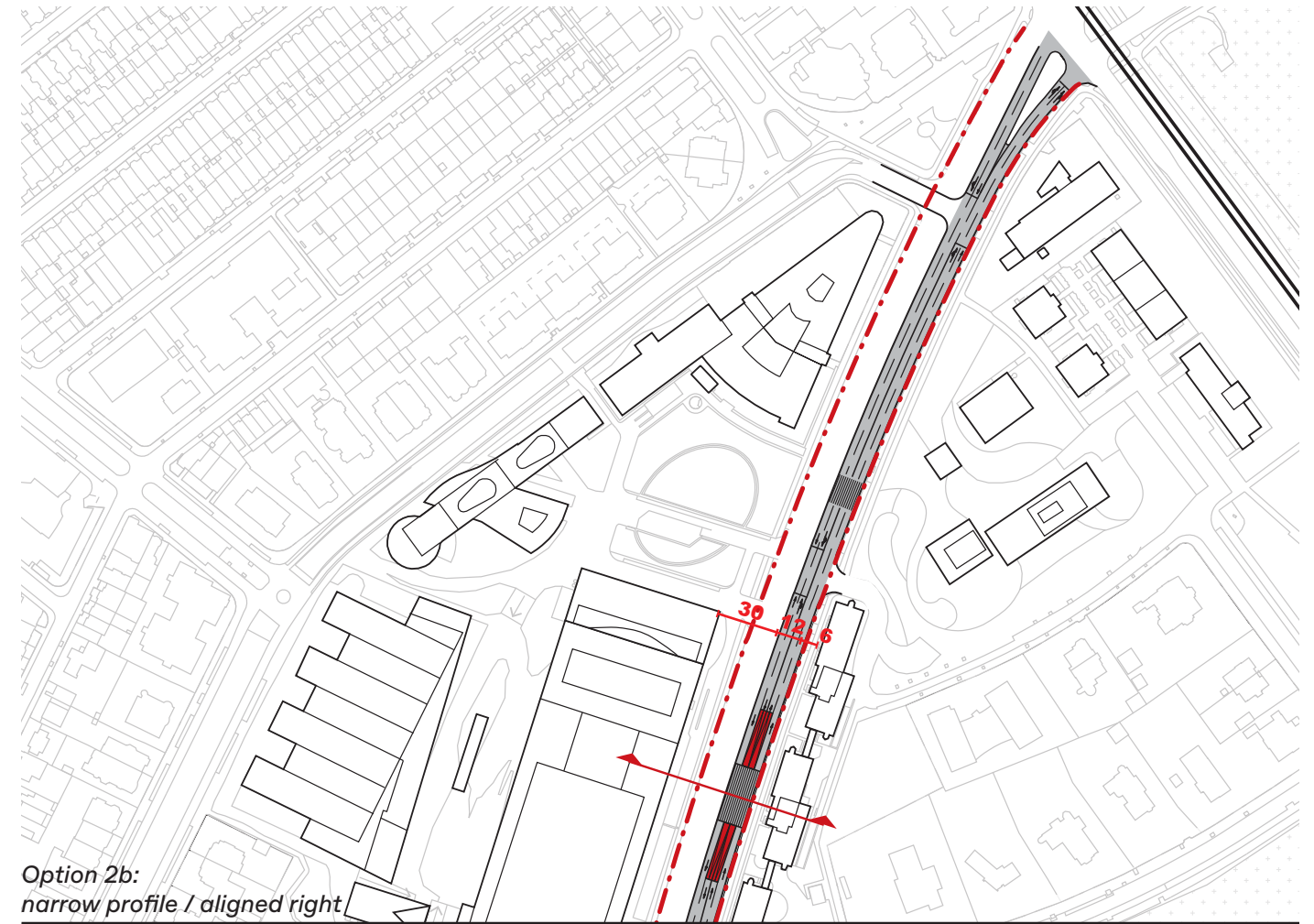
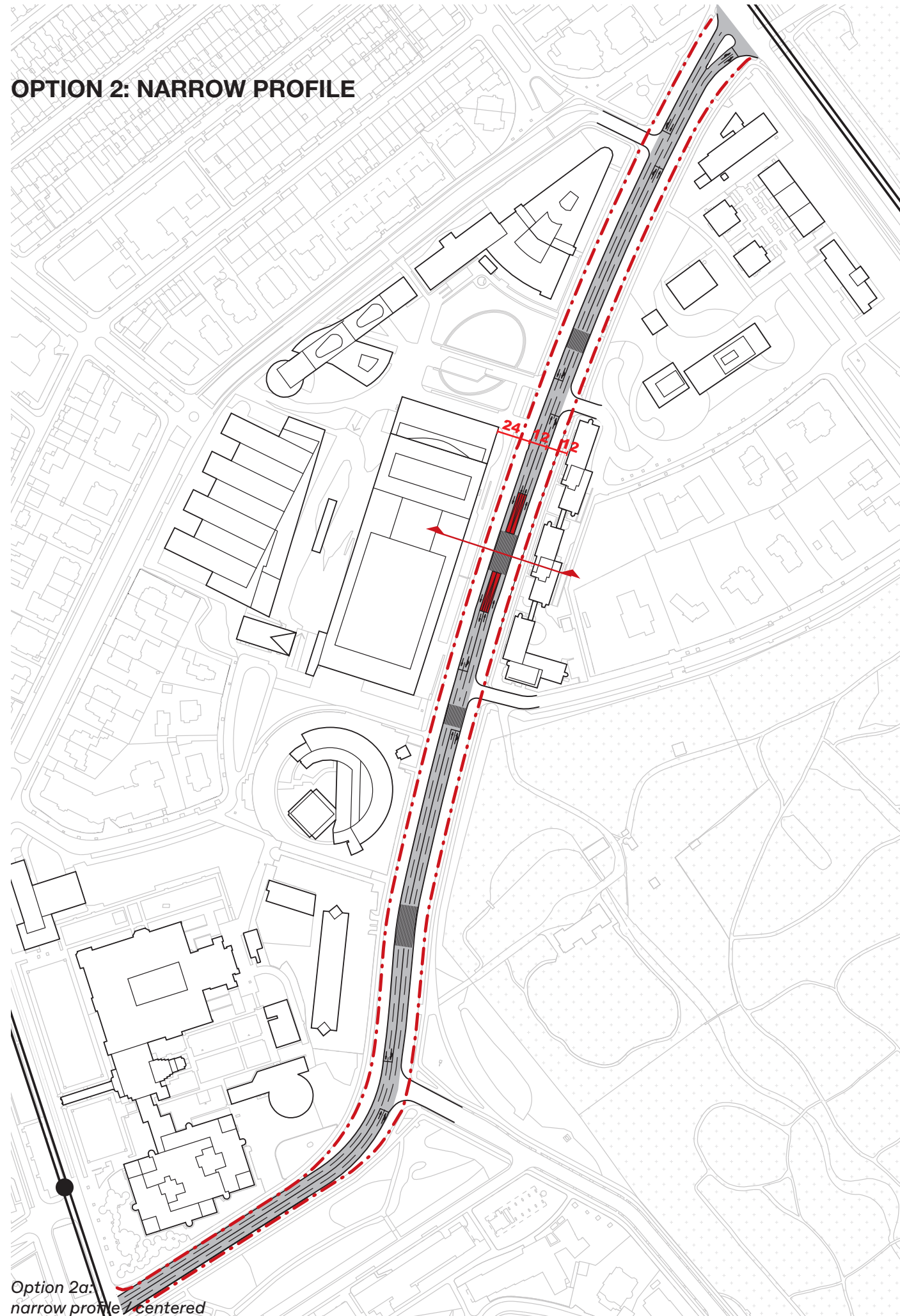
OPTION 1: WIDE PROFILE



CENTRALIZED CARPARK ENTRANCE



OPTION 2: NARROW PROFILE



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Network of Research & Architecture