



PORTFOLIO

HAFSA SYED

- **AA Diploma, RIBA Part 2, Architectural Designer**
- M.Arch at The Architectural Association School of Architecture, London, UK
- BA (Hons) Architecture at University of Westminster, London, UK

Portfolio Contents

The following body of work explores the intersections of **ecology, material culture, and architecture.**

It re-imagines architecture as a catalyst—one that unites multi-species communities in the face of environmental crises.



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page 1



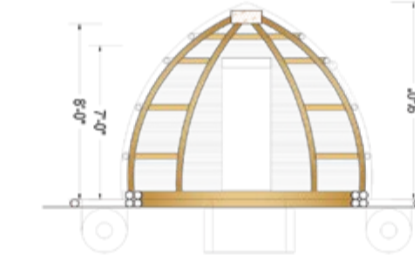
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ACADEMIC PROJECTS

PROFESSIONAL PROJECTS

DESIGN AND BUILD PROJECT

01

N.E.S.T Network for Endangered Species Typologies

PROJECT	Masters Thesis Project, Diploma 12, Architectural Association, London, UK
YEAR	2023-2024
TUTORS	Inigo Minns, Manijeh Verghese
GRADING	High Pass Grading with AA Distinction Award in Technical Research

N.E.S.T (Network for Endangered Species Typologies) is a distinction-awarded Master's thesis exploring the potential role of architecture in supporting bird conservation. It proposes NEST typologies – self-built, adaptable structures designed to connect birding communities across critical migratory flyways – in the context of the endangered house martin.

By merging contemporary and historic birding practices, it provides spaces for listening to birdsong, a dying citizen science and ecosystem monitoring practice. As such, *N.E.S.T* forms architectural nodes at a local and trans-regional scale, supporting collective observation, knowledge exchange, and ecological stewardship to strengthen conservation networks.



The research draws inspiration from *Hima al-Tyur*, bird towers once translated throughout the Islamic world to collect pigeon droppings as fertilizer. As industrial farming reduces their necessity, *N.E.S.T* seeks to revive their cultural function known as *Islah* – translating to peacemaking and 'reform' – focused on repairing relationships between humans and nonhuman species.



Adapted pigeon tower typology for the 'Kotu Creek' birding community in The Gambia – integrating local material culture with birdwatching practices

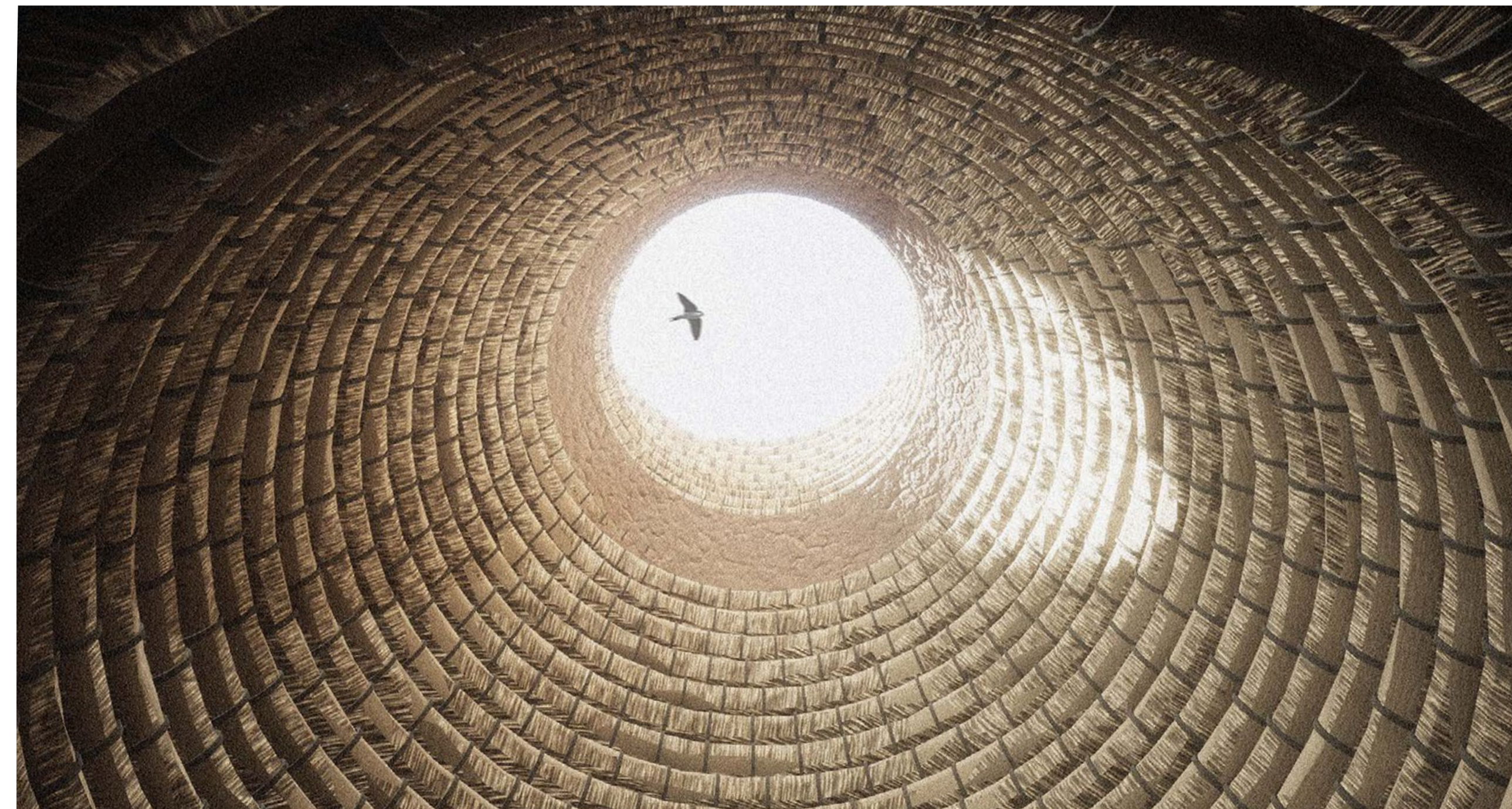
Repair, Reallocate, Restore

In 2023, Gambia's Kotu Creek wetland, a vital wintering ground for house martins, suffered a devastating avian flu outbreak, killing over 7,000 birds. The Gambian Bird Watchers' Association, with limited resources, mobilized hundreds of volunteers to bury the birds. Every year, they seek international funding and support for conservation efforts.

The *N.E.S.T* proposal envisions a network of sites promoting cross-geographic communication and financial redistribution along migratory flyways. By translating ecological barometers, the project preserves material cultures and highlights plural ways of caring. Architects act as facilitators, channeling resources to promote ecological and cultural preservation.



Archival images of The Gambia's 2023 Bird Flu Outbreak, sent by 'Yaya Barry' the head of the Bird Watchers Association in the Gambia



Interior Skylight View of the Acoustic Listening Chamber of Gambian NEST

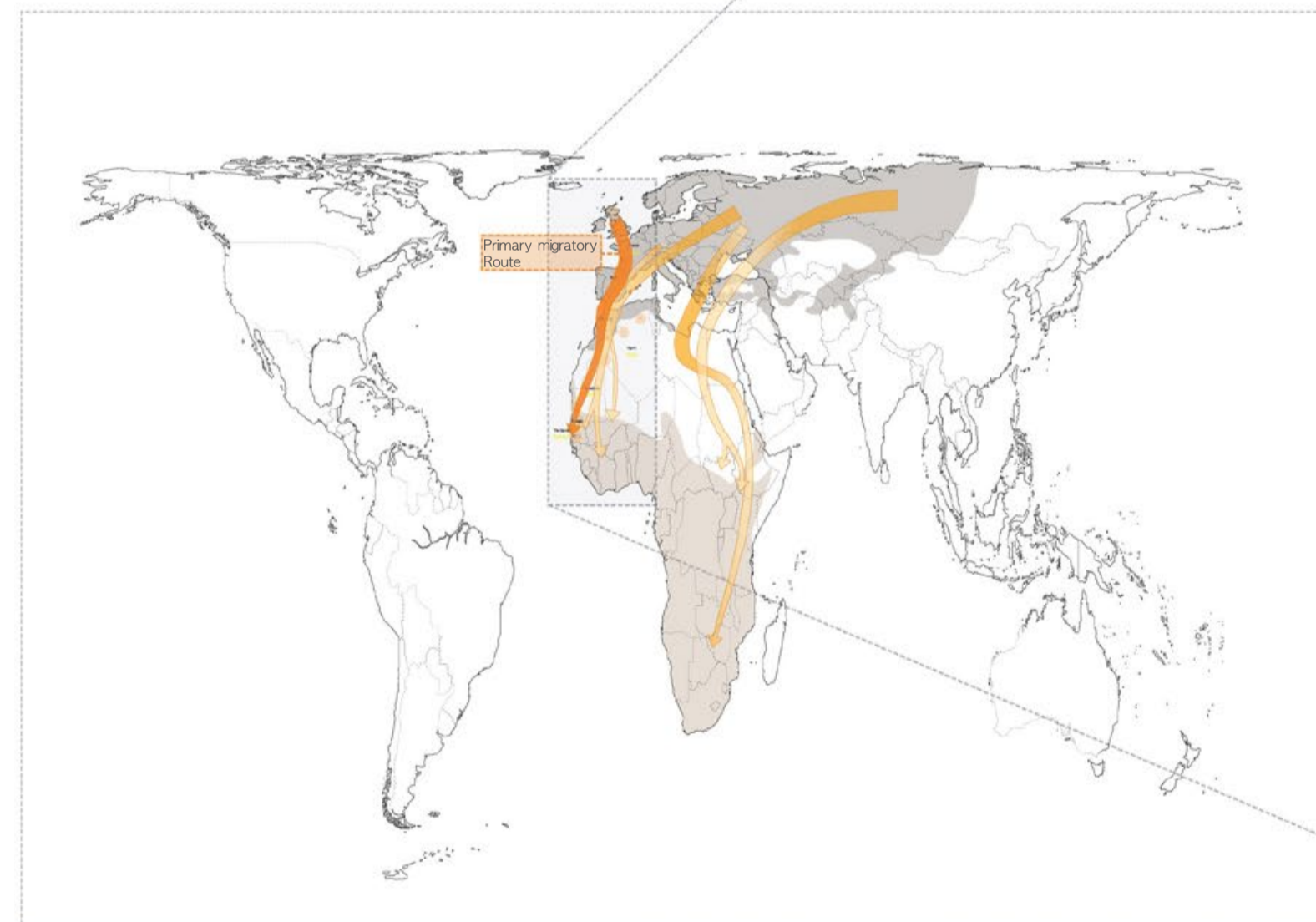


Interior View of entrance to Storage and Contemplation Chamber of Gambian NEST

New Rituals of Care

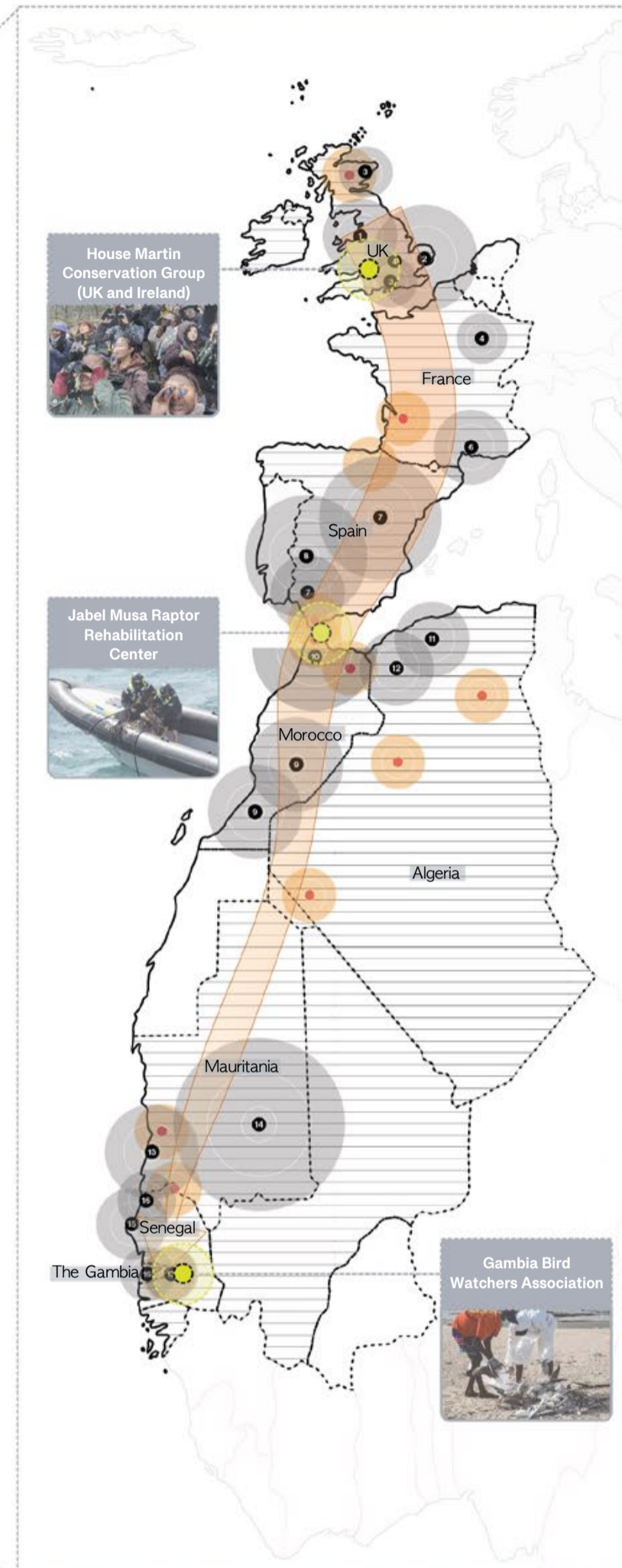
The dawn chorus – the collective vocalization of birdsong at dawn – serves as an acoustic marker of ecosystem health, an interspecies dialogue fading from human memory. *N.E.S.T* proposes the creation of local structures for deep listening, reconnecting listeners to this embodied citizen science and historic, cross-cultural ritual practice.

These self-built pilgrimage sites provide a distinct yet adaptable typology for birding communities, fostering new rituals such as the *Nest Repair Festival*, where communities rebuild and expand their NESTs. For the endangered house martin, this exploration connects key summer grounds in the UK reaching wintering sites in The Gambia. Translated across geographies, *N.E.S.T* becomes a living archive of ecological knowledge and local material culture.



2024 House Martin migratory patterns map (illustrated using the Gall-Peters projection offering a more equitable view of the world's landmasses, particularly of the African continent, compared to the commonly used Mercator map)

- DIAGRAMS KEY**
- Landmass Boundaries
 - Geopolitical Boundaries
 - House Martin Breeding regions
 - House Martin Non-Breeding regions
 - Key House martin migratory Routes
 - Key House Martin migratory Stop over Points
 - Active House Martin Stakeholders
 - Potential N.E.S.T Sites + Guardian Communities



- ACTIVE STAKEHOLDERS FOR HOUSE MARTIN**
- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) | 10 Jabel Musa Raptor Rehabilitation Center, Algeria |
| 2 BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) | 11 Association de Protection de l'Environnement de Béjaïa (APEB) |
| 3 House Martin Conservation Group | 12 Chréa National Park Association, Mauritania |
| 4 Flock Together, France | 13 Banc d'Arguin National Park Group |
| 5 Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux | 14 BirdLife International, Mauritania |
| 6 Station de la Tour du Valat, Spain | 15 BirdLife International, Senegal |
| 7 BirdLife Spain | 16 Nature Communauté Développement, The Gambia |
| 8 Grupo Ibérico de Aves Migratorias (GIAM), Morocco | 17 Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj Group, The Gambia |
| 9 BirdLife Morocco | 18 BirdLife The Gambia |
| | 19 Gambia Bird Watchers Association |

NEST Repair Festival

Join us for our annual NEST repair and build – the week leading up to International Dawn Chorus Day

© Kotu Creek, The Gambia

© Mountain of Moses, Strait of Gibraltar, Morocco

© Hooke Park Forest, Dorset, UK

Gelukkige Dawn koordag aan almal

Happy Dawn Chorus Day everyone!

فجر سعيد يوم جوقة للجميع

Urgent Notice

Gambia NEST has documented a concerning quiet dawn chorus due to avian flu outbreak. Focused efforts are needed to support our Gambian wing.

Call to repair, reallocate, and restore.

nest

House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*)
Primary Migratory Flyway

United Kingdom, France, Spain, Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia

NEST Global Chat, NEST Ecosystem Soundscape Archive, NEST Material Archive

NEST Build in Progress, NEST Complete, NEST Repair in Progress

N.E.S.T communities are encouraged to join the Repair Festival, held a week before International Dawn Chorus Day (celebrated annually on May 4th, where birdwatchers tune in live to listen to the consecutive chorus across the globe)

Developing the 'British NEST'

In an age dominated by globalized supply chains, my work emphasizes the importance of locally sourced, bio-based materials. Through designing a 'British NEST,' I brought these principles to life using local willow weaving techniques and cob (adobe) construction.

By hosting community workshops, I tested the material properties of willow at a 1:1 scale, documenting its tensile strength, flexibility, and suitability for collective weaving. This process led to the curation of weaving patterns that are structurally robust yet accessible for beginners, ensuring both durability and ease of construction for the 'British NEST' prototype.



Test 1: Community workshop for 1:1 living willow tunnel



Test 2: Community workshop for 1:1 living willow dome



Test 3: Community workshop for 1:1 living willow arbor

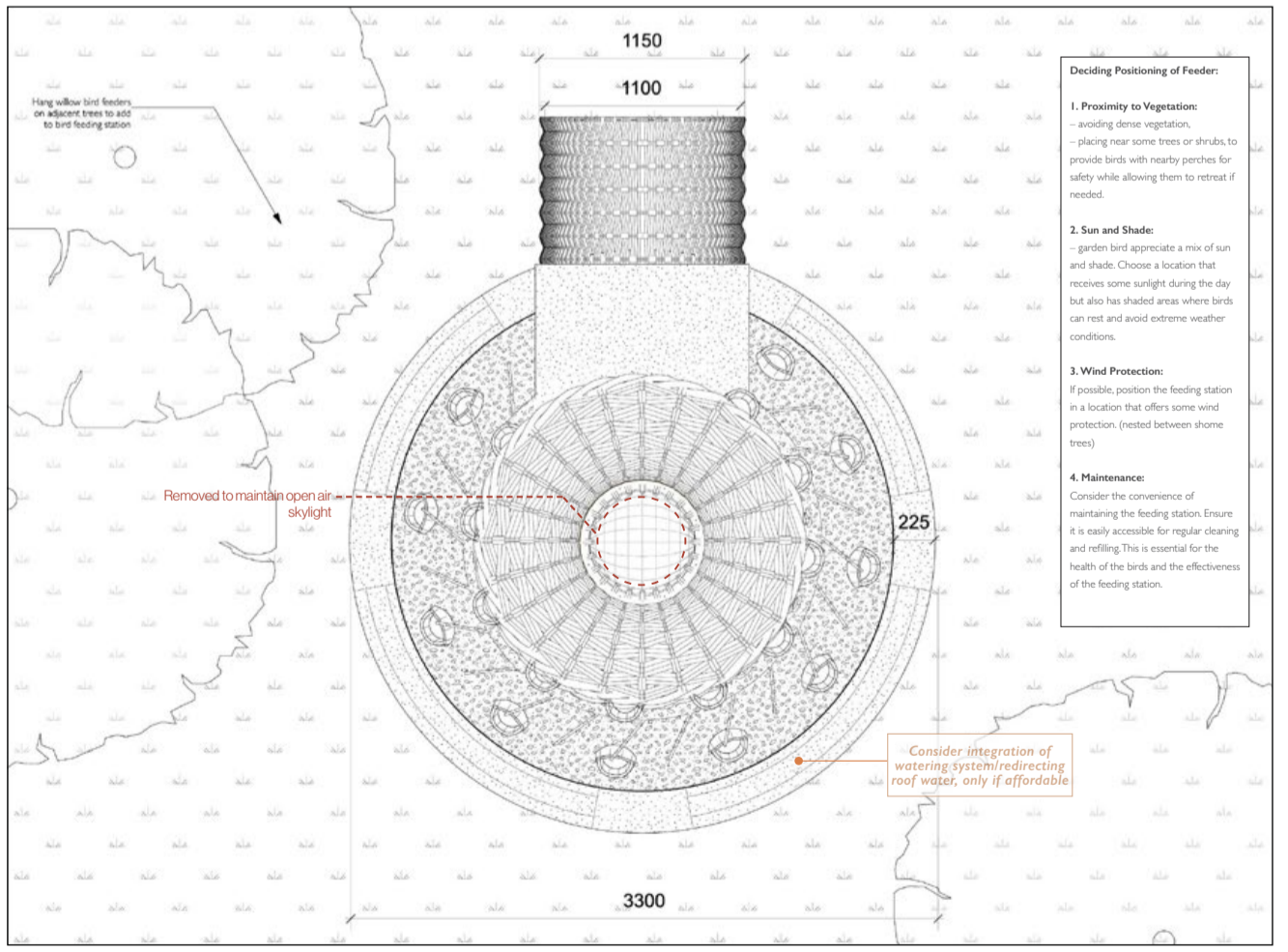
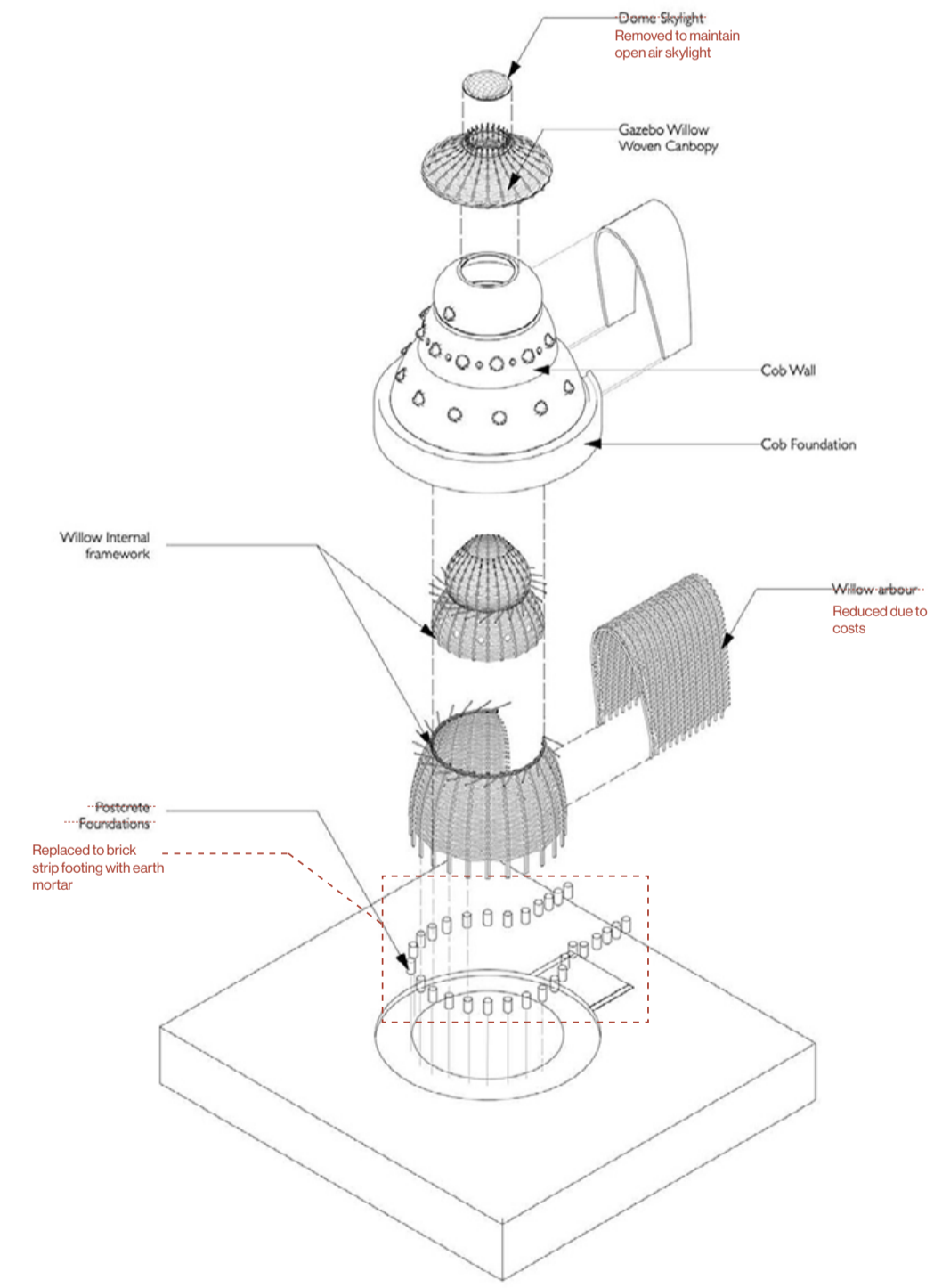
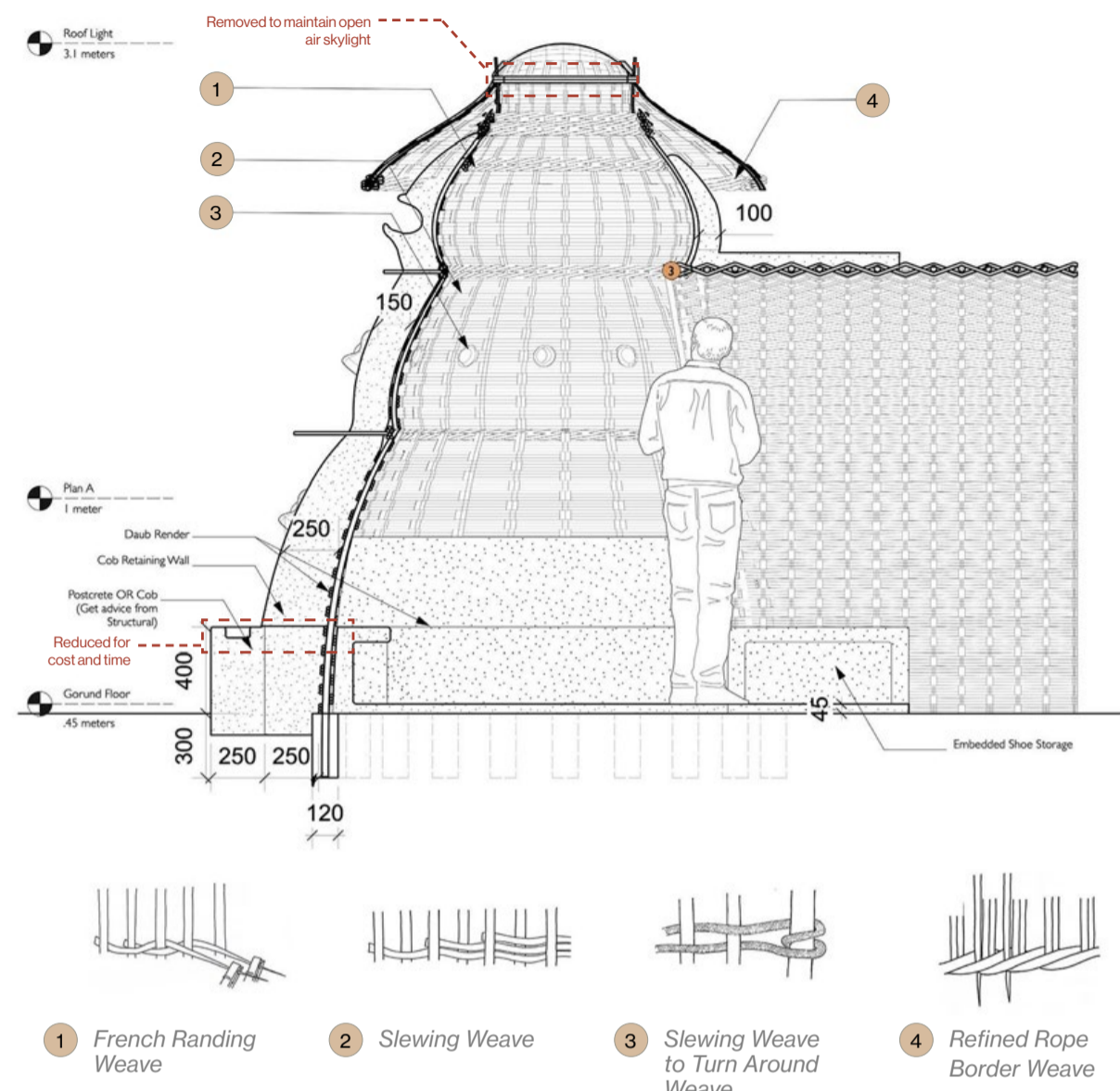


Interior of 1:1 NEST prototype built in Hooke Park Woodland, Dorset, South West, England

Weaving a NEST

The building process, termed *communal nesting*, emphasizes an approach that goes beyond construction – focusing on cultivating community bonds through collaborative weaving and building.

Communal nesting becomes a spatial act of ecological stewardship – encouraging more symbiotic and informed relationships between humans, the immediate environment, the material life of a built structure, and the species that interact with the NEST.



--- Elements adapted on site, during build process

Architectural drawings that evolved on site in response to site conditions and changing funding parameters, illustrating the adaptability required in leading the design and build construction process

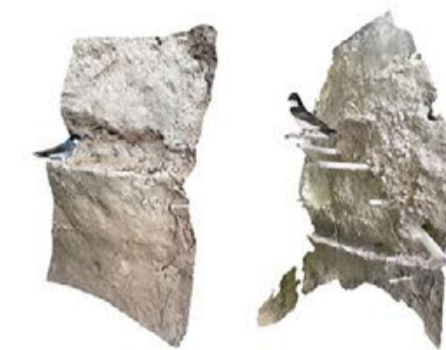
The NEST Typology

A mutispecies ecosystem barometer

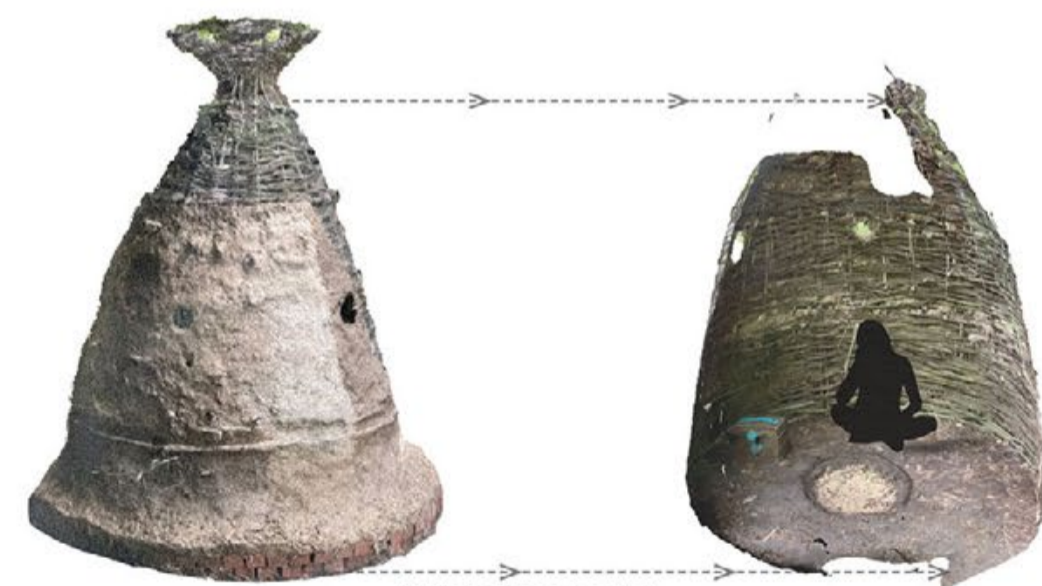
A proposed NEST is a collectively-built, adaptable typology that celebrates regional differences through local weaving and earth construction methods. It serves as a living document of environmental health, based on its observed multi-species interactions.

The primary framework for a NEST typology entails:

1. **Exterior earth render** – adaptable for nesting and feeding spaces for local songbirds.
2. **A conical form** – designed for deep listening to the local bird eco-scape, overtime developing bird identification skills for citizen science
3. **A structural interior weave** – translatable vernacular across regions
4. **Refined yet beginner-friendly weaves** – foster community through collective weaving, developed and tested through hosting multiple workshops in community gardens



1
Shapeable Earth
Render



2
Conical
Form

3
Structural Interior
Weave

interior space for
deep listening



4
Refined yet
Beginner-Friendly
Weaves



Snails inhabiting cob niche, with cantilevered willow for perching songbirds



Common Blue mint beetle (*Chrysolina coerulea*) attracted to birdseed niche of NEST



NEST interior with birdseed – encouraging rituals of feeding and listening

“Humans are not separate from the web of life; we are kin to all living things, co-evolving in symbiotic relationships.”

– Donna J. Haraway



A locally endangered Blue Tit (Cyanistes caeruleus) documented visiting and feeding on the completed and constructed NEST structure

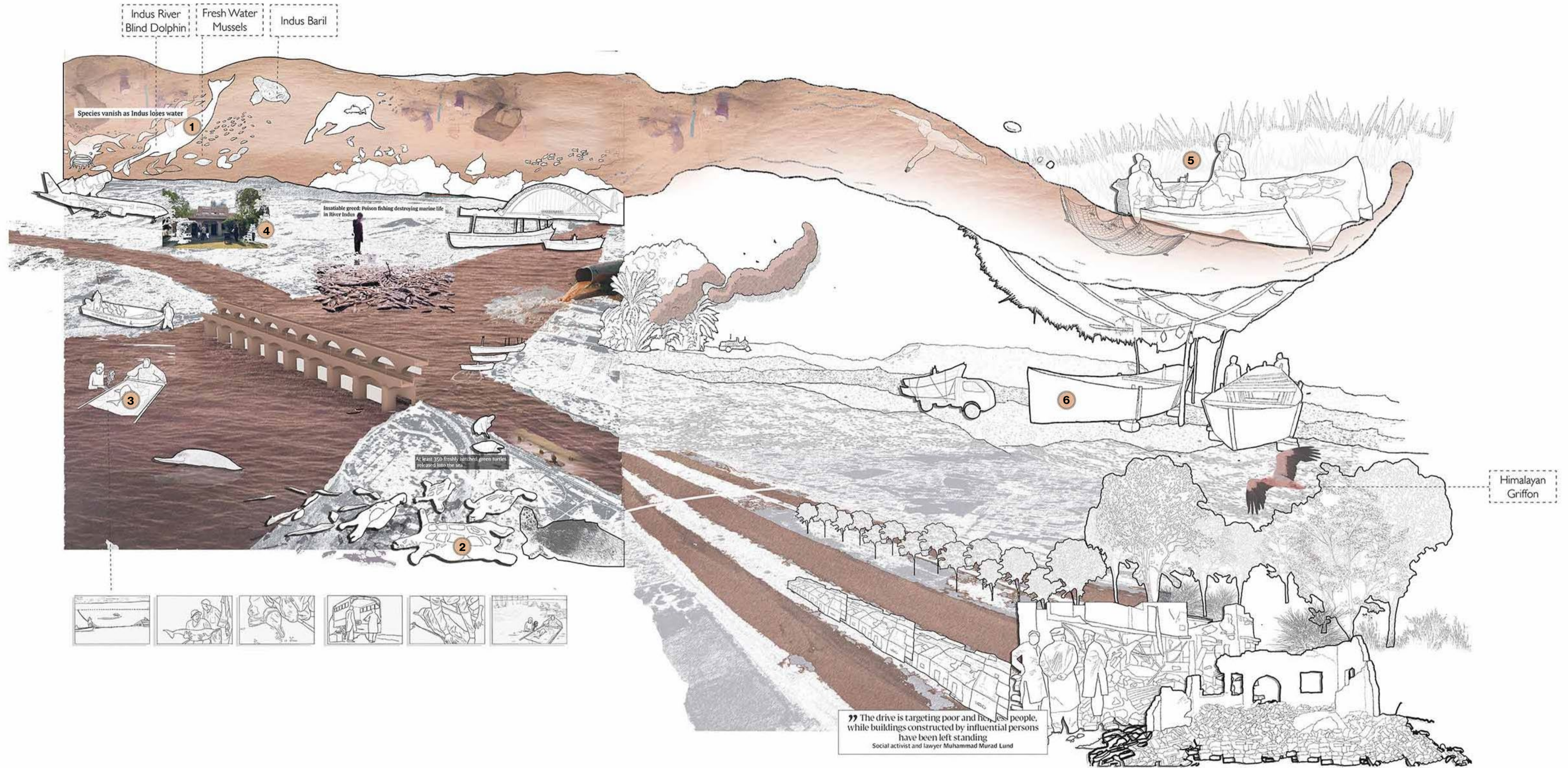
02

Illuminating the Indus Decentralized Epistemologies of Ecology

PROJECT	Academic Research Project, Diploma 13, Architectural Association, London UK
YEAR	2022-2023
TUTORS	Merve Anil, George Masood
GRADING	High Pass Grading with Distinction in Technical Research

Illuminating the Indus is a grant-awarded research and design proposal developed in collaboration with the Sindh Wildlife Department in Sukkur, Pakistan. The project introduces a counter-mapping method for the Indus River, challenging colonial portrayals that have long marginalized indigenous and local ecological knowledge.

Building on ongoing local efforts to protect the endangered Indus River Dolphin, the project proposes a decentralized, community-driven approach to ecosystem monitoring and river mapping, focusing on collective stewardship for sentient lifeforms along the threatened Indus Riverbank ecosystem.



Full Project Video



1 Endangered Indus River Dolphin (locally known as "Bulhan")



2 Endangered Indus River Turtle poisoned due to elevated pollution levels in the Indus River



3 Indus River Dolphin rescue mission conducted by local Wildlife Department and fishers



4 Interior of the Local Government Wildlife Department, Sukkur



5 On-site interview with fishers - locally referred to as custodians of riverbank

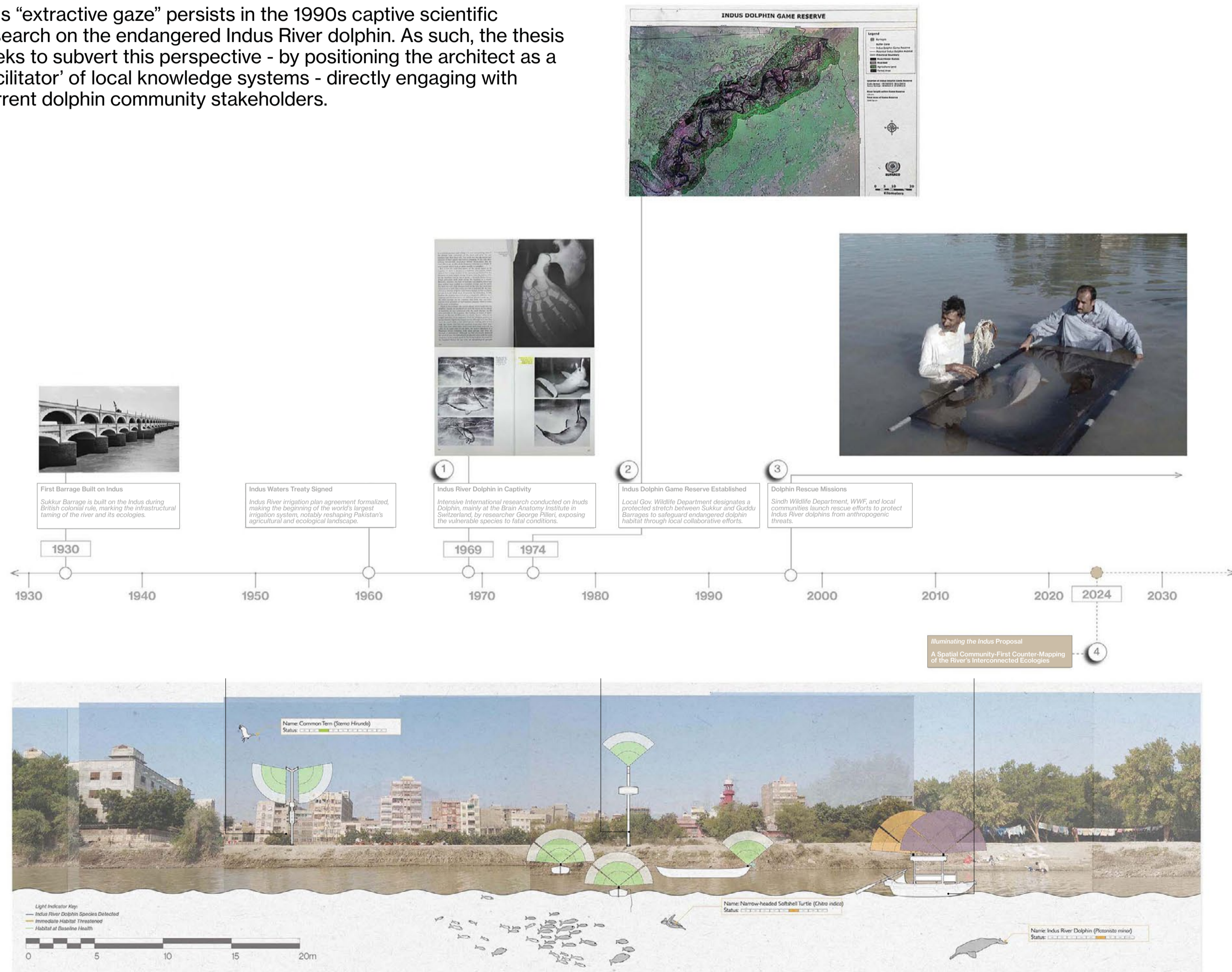


6 Boatmakers' workshop in Sukkur, utilizing local timber and lumber

Colonial Cartographies

Sukkur is home to the first barrage constructed on the Indus River during British colonial rule in 1932, marking the infrastructural taming of the Indus river and its ecologies. This thesis critiques the colonial gaze, evident in cartographic representations of the river - readings that ignored countless indigenous understandings of the river's ephemeral nature, reducing its dynamic ecologies to a static line.

This "extractive gaze" persists in the 1990s captive scientific research on the endangered Indus River dolphin. As such, the thesis seeks to subvert this perspective - by positioning the architect as a 'facilitator' of local knowledge systems - directly engaging with current dolphin community stakeholders.



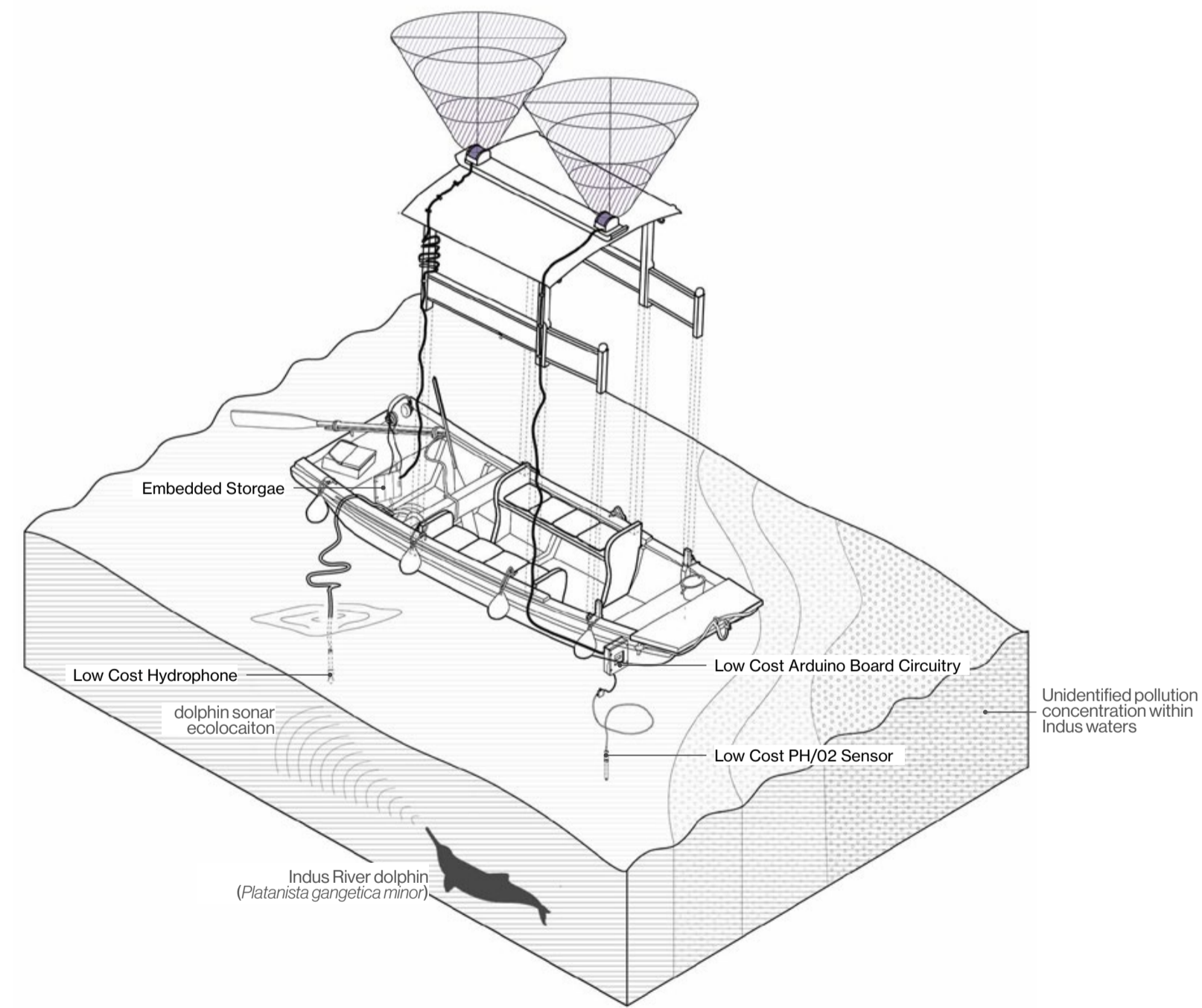
Redesigned office space for Mr. Adnan, the head of the Sindh Wildlife Department in Sukkur, Pakistan.

The Indus River Dolphin

From Extraction to Care

Of a total of six species of river dolphins in the world, all of which are globally endangered, the Indus River dolphin (*Platanista gangetica minor*) is the only species whose population is currently on the rise, primarily due to ongoing conservation efforts by the Sindh Wildlife Department in the Sukkur region.

Illuminating the Indus builds on existing initiatives but introduces researched, passive, and non-invasive monitoring systems, giving agency to sentient lifeforms and creating a publicly accessible form of spatial mapping.



Light Indicator Key:
 — Indus River Dolphin Species Detected
 — Immediate Habitat Threatened
 — Habitat at Baseline Health

Indus River Dolphin Detection Vessel



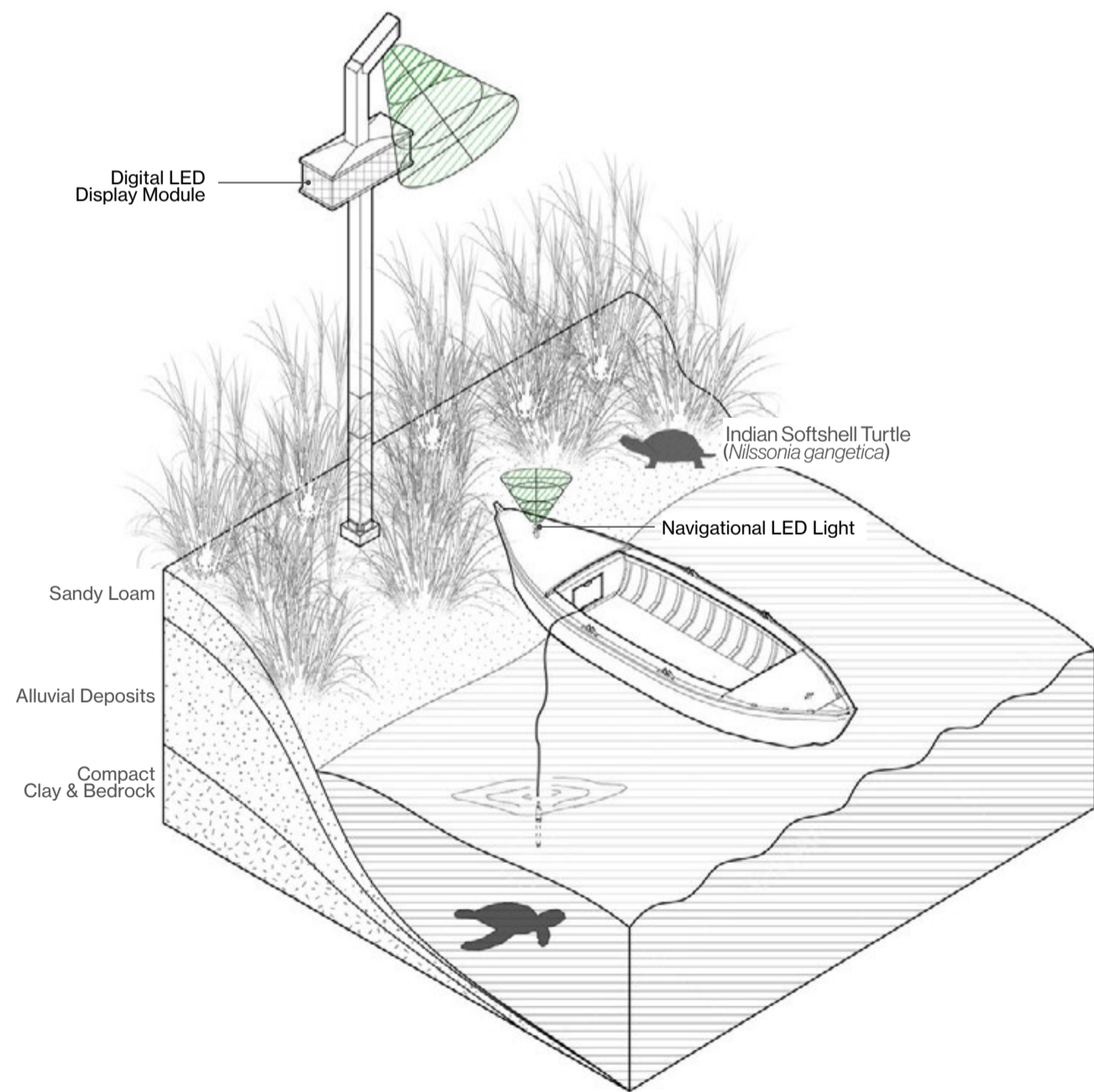
Proposed acoustic monitoring of the Indus River Dolphin population, integrating hydrophone passive monitoring as a non-invasive alternative to current data-tagging methodologies

Community Driven Monitoring

According to the United Nations Environmental Programme, approximately 55 cubic kilometers (km³) of wastewater are dumped into the Indus every year.

As of 2023, the Indus River was recognized as the second most polluted river globally, in terms of plastic concentration. This project, however, diverges from traditional top-down approaches to address the mutilated infrastructural and political challenges of contested Indus ecosystem, instead emphasizing monitoring and zoning strategies as means of fostering sustainable change.

Local boat makers are proposed to collaborate with a public university lab focused on pollution-detecting sensors, pH, and oxygen monitoring. By connecting them with fishers and existing research initiatives, a collective effort to fabricate environmental monitoring infrastructure begins to take shape.



Light Indicator Key:
 — Indus River Dolphin Species Detected
 — Immediate Habitat Threatened
 — Habitat at Baseline Health

Live Aquatic Pollution Monitoring and Zoning Infrastructure



PH sensors displaying pollution status for local fishers, helping to identify zones uninhabitable for endangered wildlife



Submerged perspective, with pH sensors to monitor endangered Indus River Turtle habitat

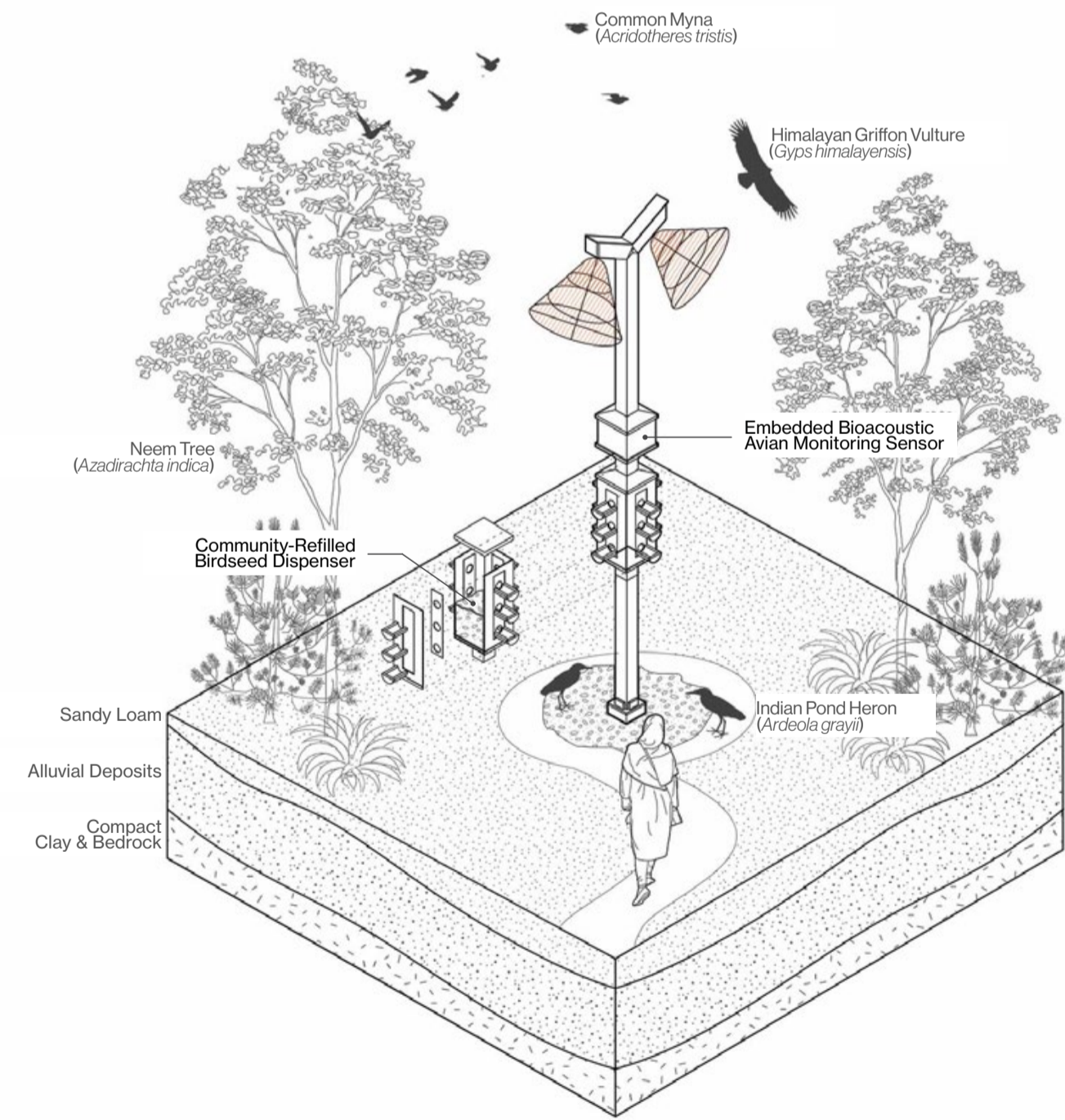


Local boat-makers rigging-up boats with environmental monitoring sensors

Towards Collaborative Conservation

In a speculative future, I envision the expansion of the Sindh Wildlife Department in Sukkur – an underfunded yet impactful body that has successfully facilitated collaborations with local fishers, community members, and international funding bodies.

The proposal positions the Indus River Dolphin as a catalyst, enabling fishers, dolphin researchers, artists, and the local public to become active collaborators in ecosystem monitoring, fostering decentralized methods of ecosystem care.



Light Indicator Key:
 — Indus River Dolphin Species Detected
 — Immediate Habitat Threatened
 — Habitat at Baseline Health

Avian Acoustic Monitor and Communal Bird Feeder



Acoustic eco-monitor and communal birdfeeder



Fishers, dolphin researchers, boat makers, and wildlife department collaboratively deliberating conservations strategies



The Indus River Dolphin as a tool for community mobilisation and the expansion of the Wildlife Department in Sukkur, Pakistan

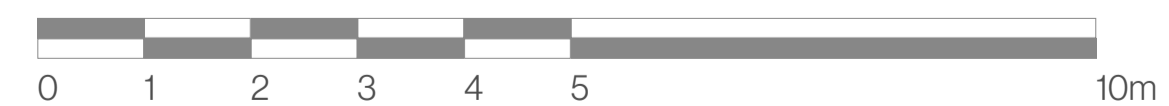
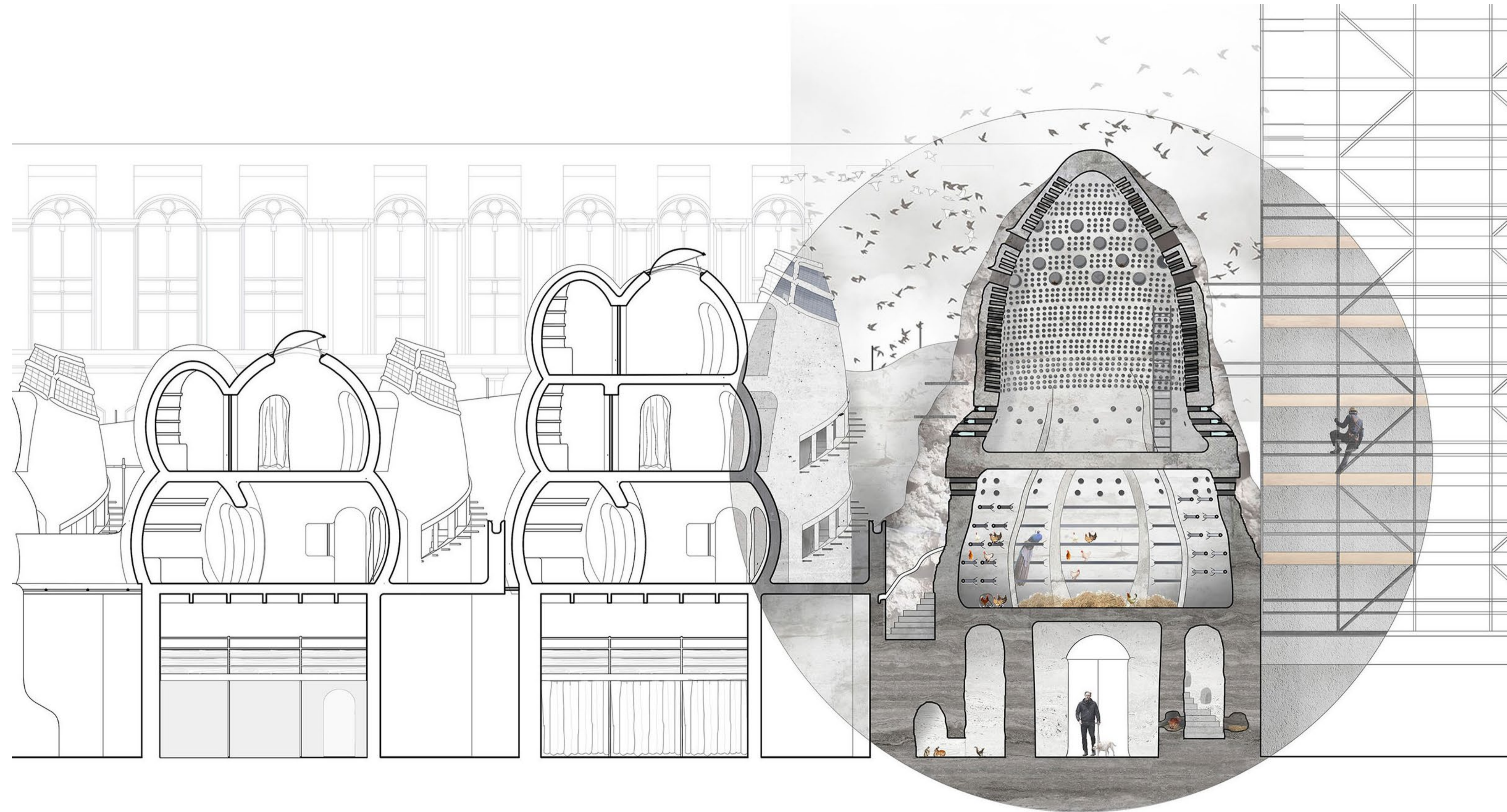
03

Living a *WildLife* Ecological Enclave in the City

PROJECT	Academic Project, Year 3 Undergraduate, University of Westminster, London, UK
YEAR	2021
TUTORS	Jane Tankard, Thomas Grove
GRADING	Honors Grading with RIBA Silver Medal Nomination

Living a WildLife is a RIBA Student Award-nominated project that re-imagines urban living in Southwark, London, UK.

Designed for a post-COVID19 landscape, it caters to city dwellers who have become complacent in their antisocial dwellings, seeking to combat feelings of isolation by reconnecting humans with nature and our memories of the forest – creating a bio-diverse haven that exists to challenge sterile urban visions of the modern metropolis.



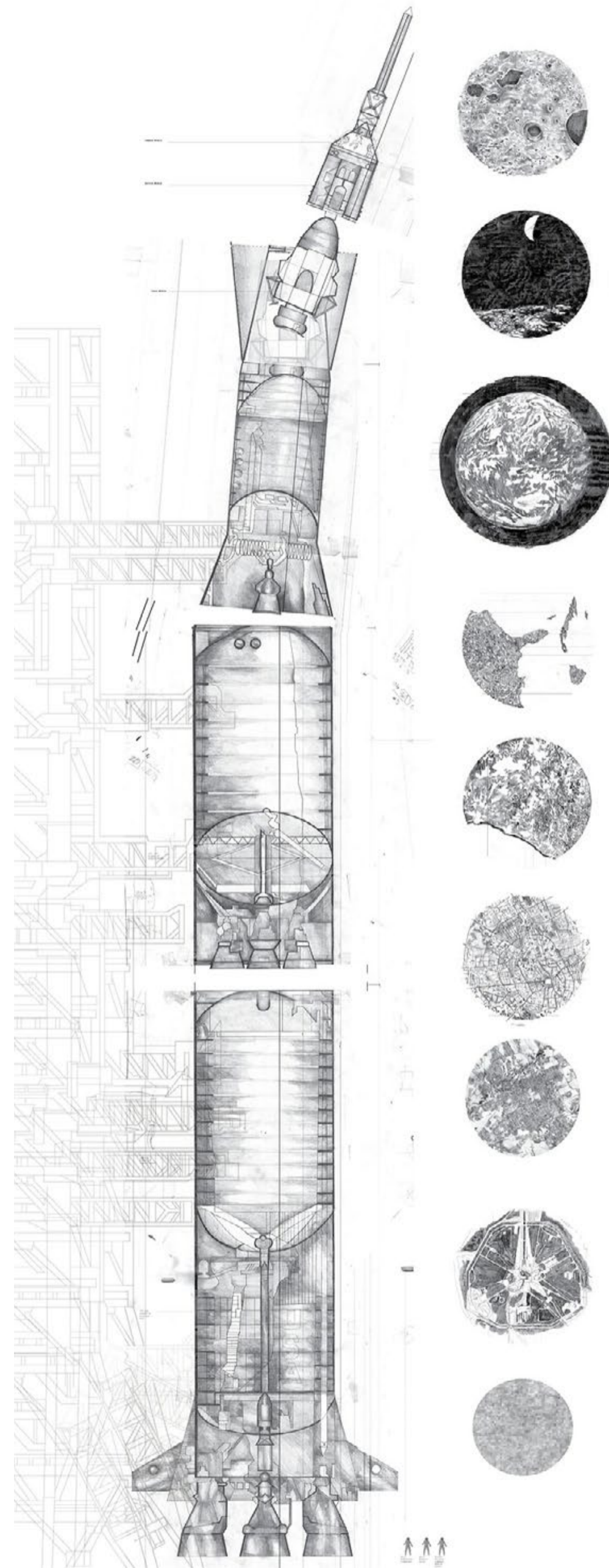
The Cognitive Shift Effect

In 1969, the Apollo 11 Moon mission refocused our gaze on Earth, revealing it as a jewel in the darkness, abundant with greenery, water, and life.

Living a WildLife learns from this perspective, shifting focus to the adaptive wildlife thriving in an underused car park in Southwark in central London. The design transforms the site into an off-grid living environment while observing and protecting urban wildlife.



Nonhuman inhabitants of an underused car park in Southwark, London, UK



Sectional sketch of the Apollo 11 space module, used as a design development methodology, superimposed on-site

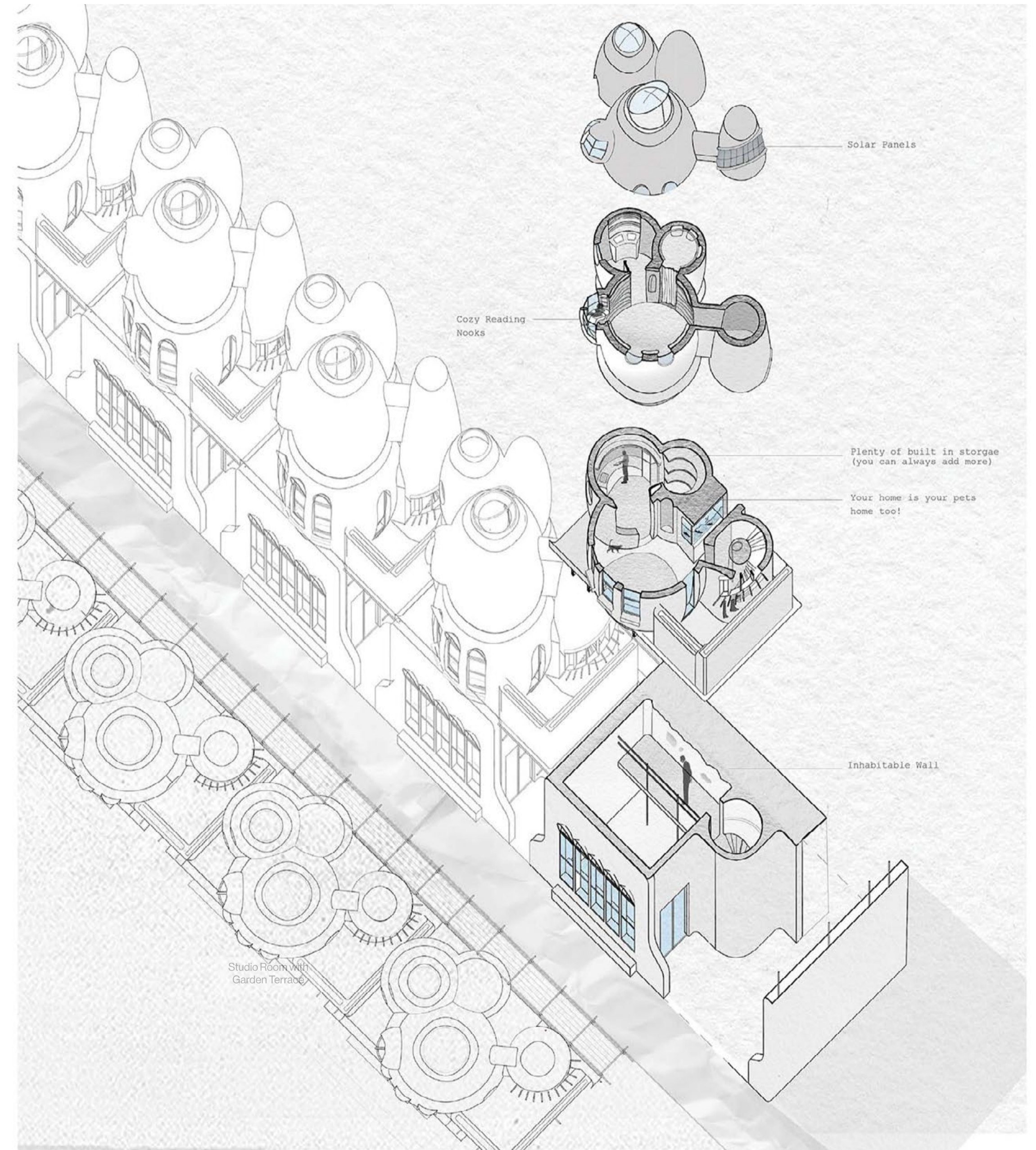
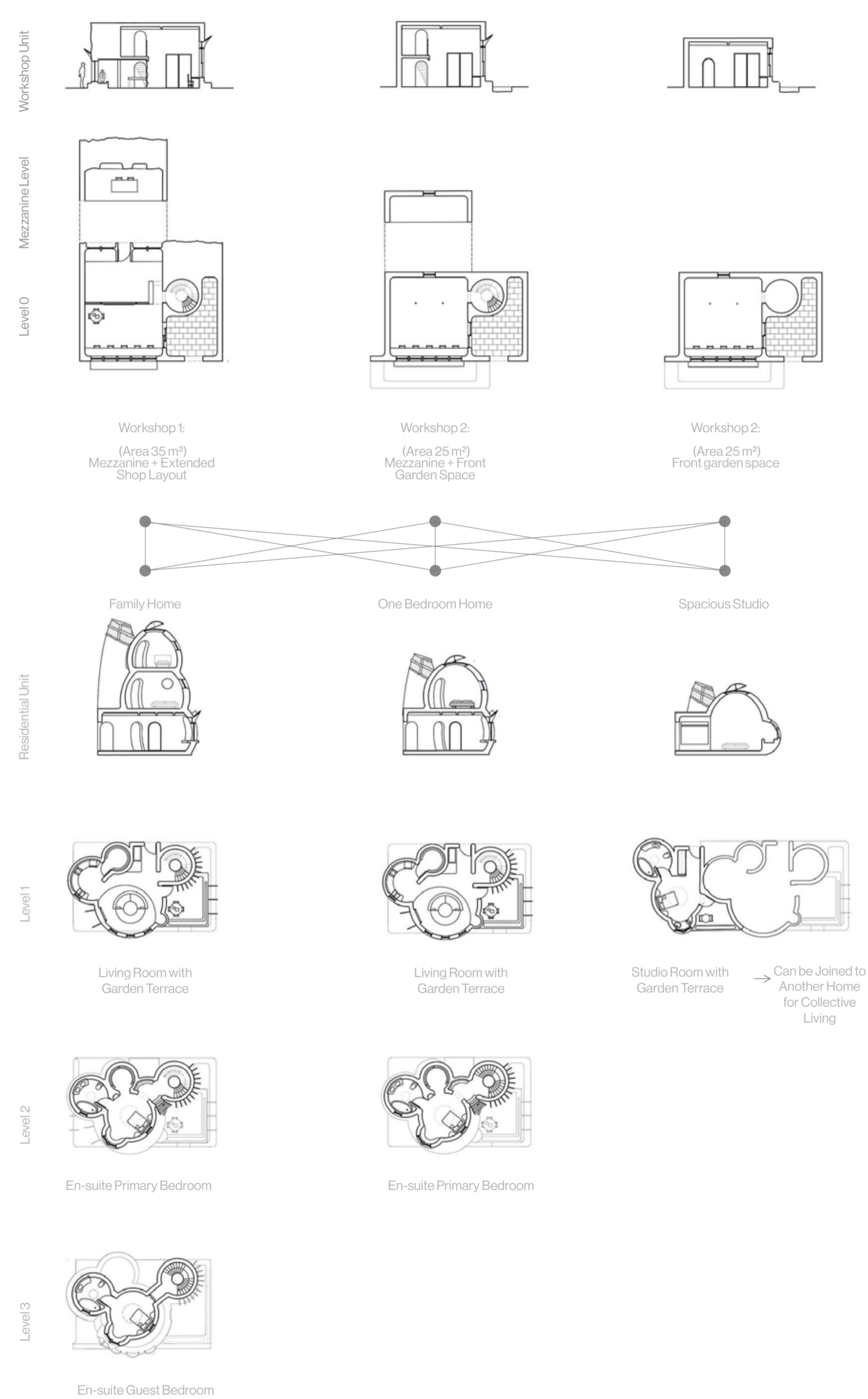


Settlement view and plan, with a dense perimeter to create a micro-climate within the site, fostering urban biodiversity

The Inhabitable Home

Living a WildLife provides residents with a variety of workspaces and home typologies to choose from. The buildings become living micro landscapes – environments that can be burrowed into and added onto.

The scheme is massed so that three housing types are each available with three workshop options.



The Inhabitable home-office typology, with walls that can be borrowed into by residents

Re-imagining the 'Woods'

The thesis understands the modern metropolis as a constructed landscape, blending the natural and man-made in architectural symbiosis. Inspired by the patterns of a temperate forest environment, the massing forms a dense perimeter with varying levels of permeability, creating a micro-climate within the site that allows specific urban species to thrive.



Nocturnal urban foxes may find their way into to the courtyard garden, where residents will have left scrap food for them to eat.



①
Co-working space +
Animal Activity Archival



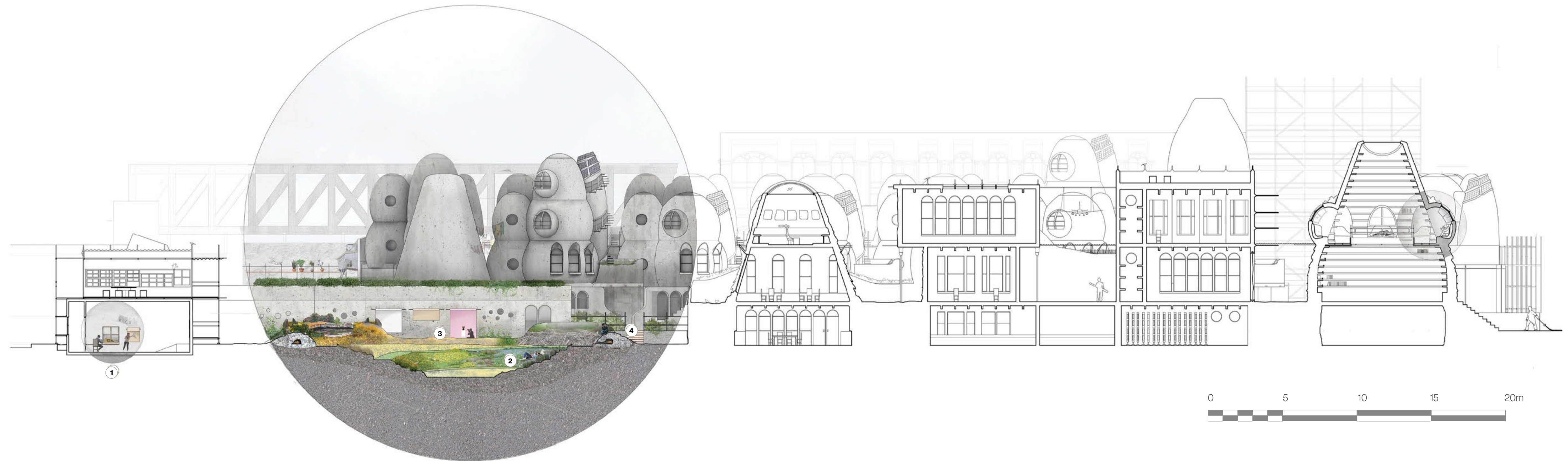
②
Wildflower Meadow



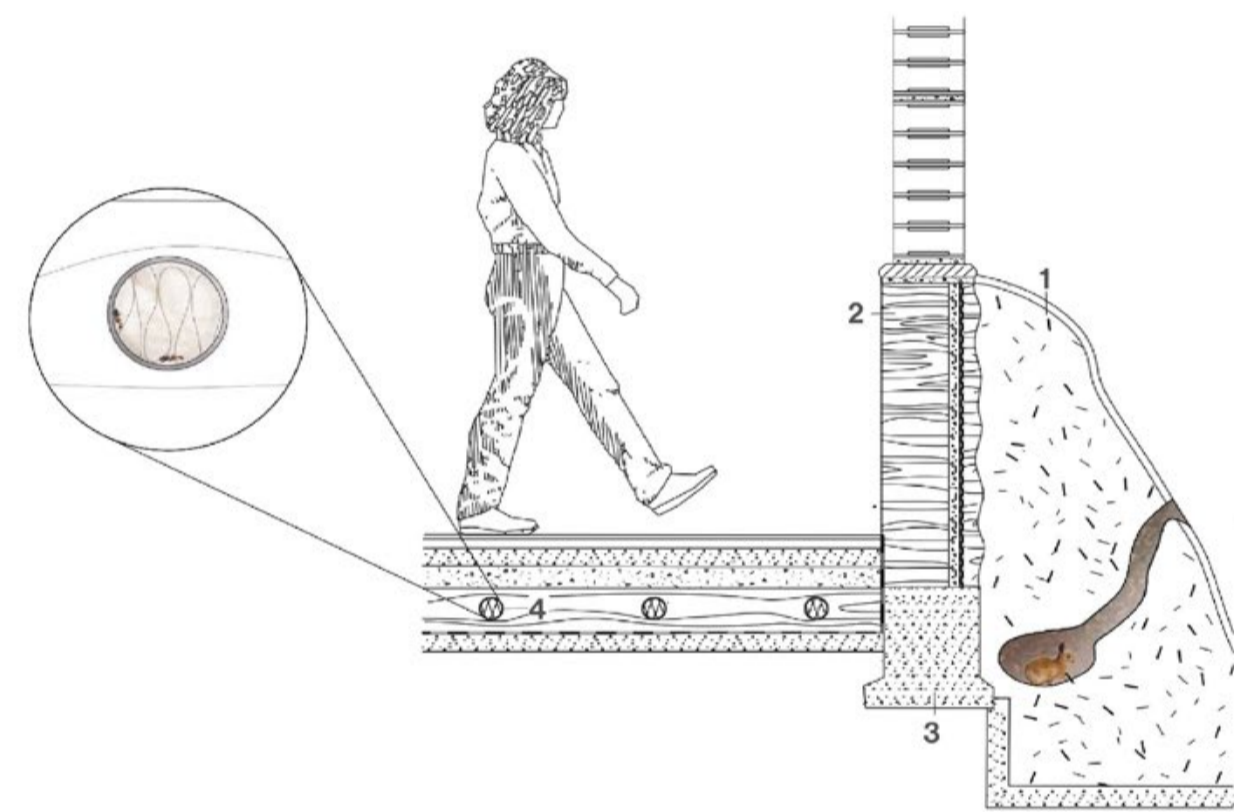
③
Photography Garden



④
Multi-species Cohabitation

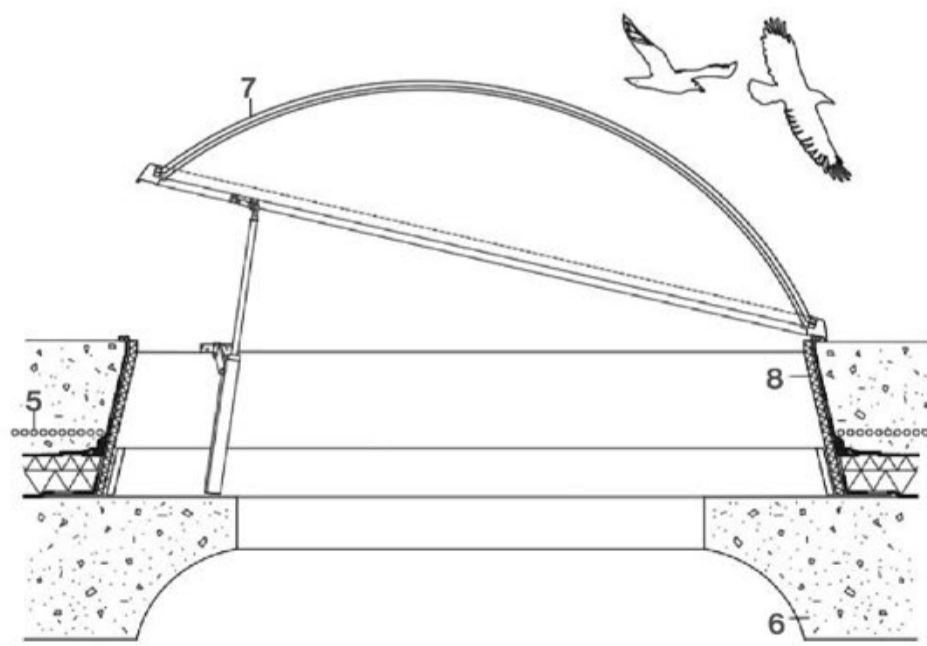


On January 2018, China banned the import of most plastic and paper waste, disrupting global recycling patterns. As a result, 2,500 metric tonnes of unrecyclable refuse were redirected, much of which is now buried in UK landfills, camouflaged under landscaped mountains for urban leisure. This speculative proposal of repurposing waste material at an architectural scale served as a speculative starting point for my current interests – exploring circular construction methods by integrating vernacular techniques with sustainable material technologies.



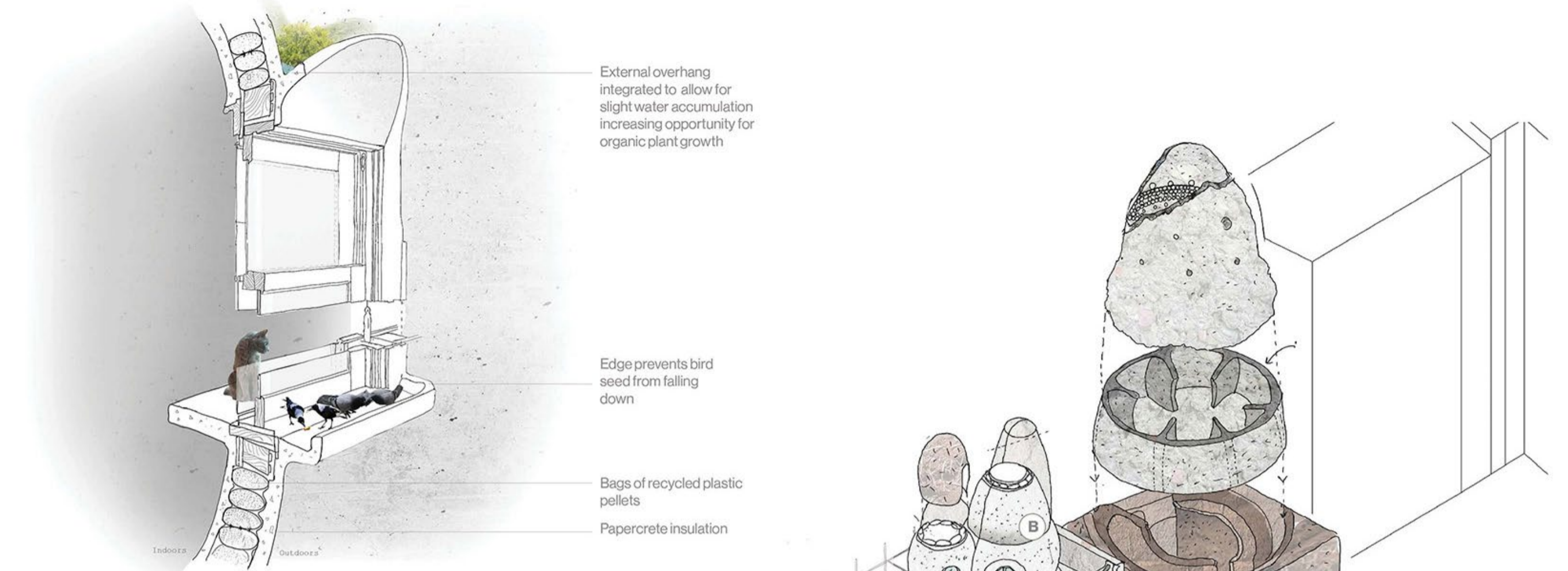
(A) Rammed Earth Tower – Foundation Detail

1. Timber-cob external massing and wall render
2. Rammed earth load bearing wall
3. Concrete foundation
4. Metal scaffolding filled with old insulation for ant inhabitation



(B) Residential Unit – Dome Skylight Detail

5. 500mm gravel with plastic sealing layer
6. Papercrete
7. Triple-glazed dome roof-light
8. Double-walled GRP insulated curb with papercrete/cellulose insulation



Double-Hung Double Sill Window

External overhang integrated to allow for slight water accumulation increasing opportunity for organic plant growth

Edge prevents bird seed from falling down

Bags of recycled plastic pellets
Papercrete insulation



- (a) Concrete Foundation
- (b) Rammed Earth Bearing Wall
- (c) 'Earth-Bag' Construction with Plastic Pellet Infill
- (d) Papercrete External and Internal Render
- (e) Timber-Cob External Massing Layer

04

Texan Typologies *Houston, Texas, USA*

OFFICE	Brett Zamore Design, Houston, Texas, USA
YEAR/STATUS	2022/Built
OFFICE	Architectural Assistant (RIBA Part 1)

Texan Typologies details my work at Brett Zamore Design, an AIA-licensed, LEED-accredited architecture firm based in Houston, Texas, specializing in sustainable residential design with a focus on prefabrication and adaptive reuse.

Using BIM modeling, I refined my expertise in design detailing, emphasizing high-performance building envelopes, material efficiency, and energy optimization strategies.

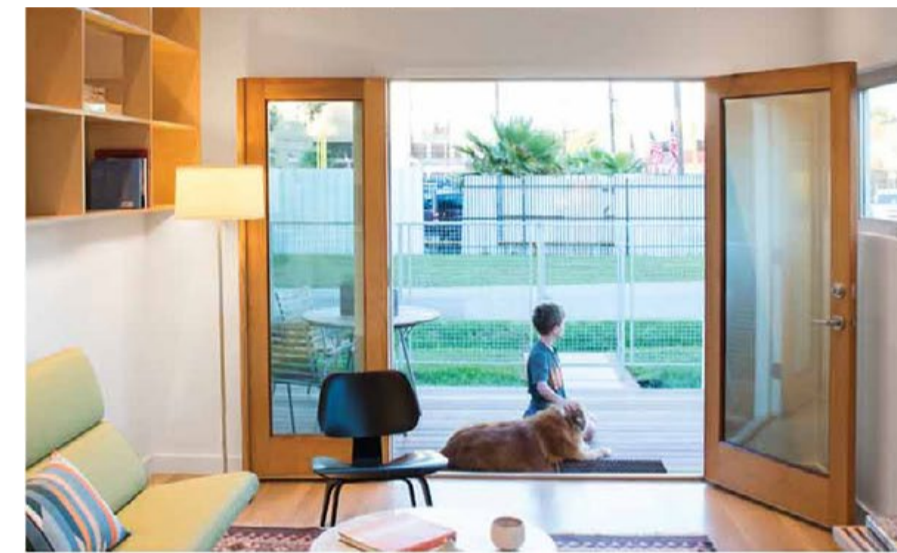


Image of the built zFAB, a typology for which I produced the drawing set during my work experience, under the supervision of the managing architectural designer. Image is property of Brett Zamore Design.

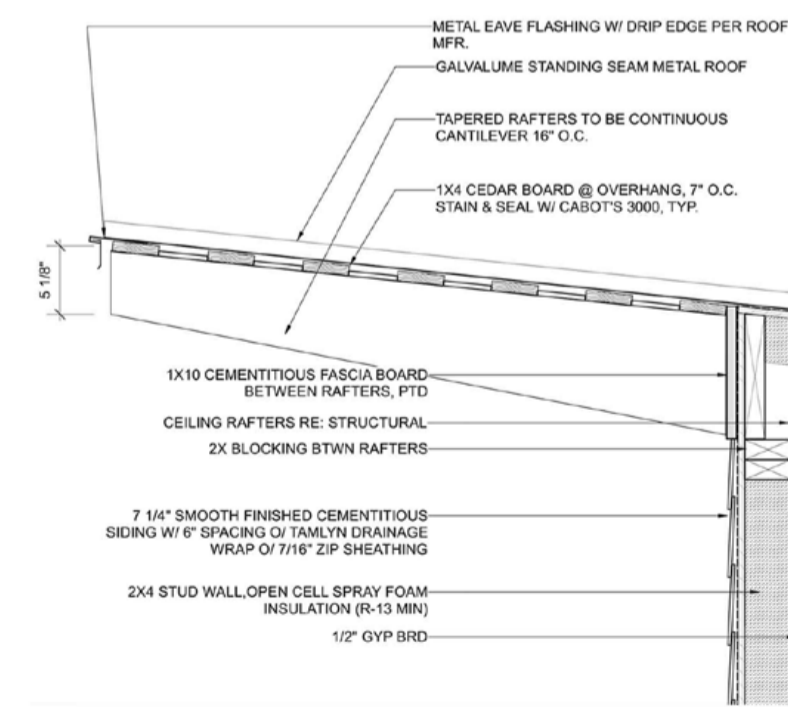
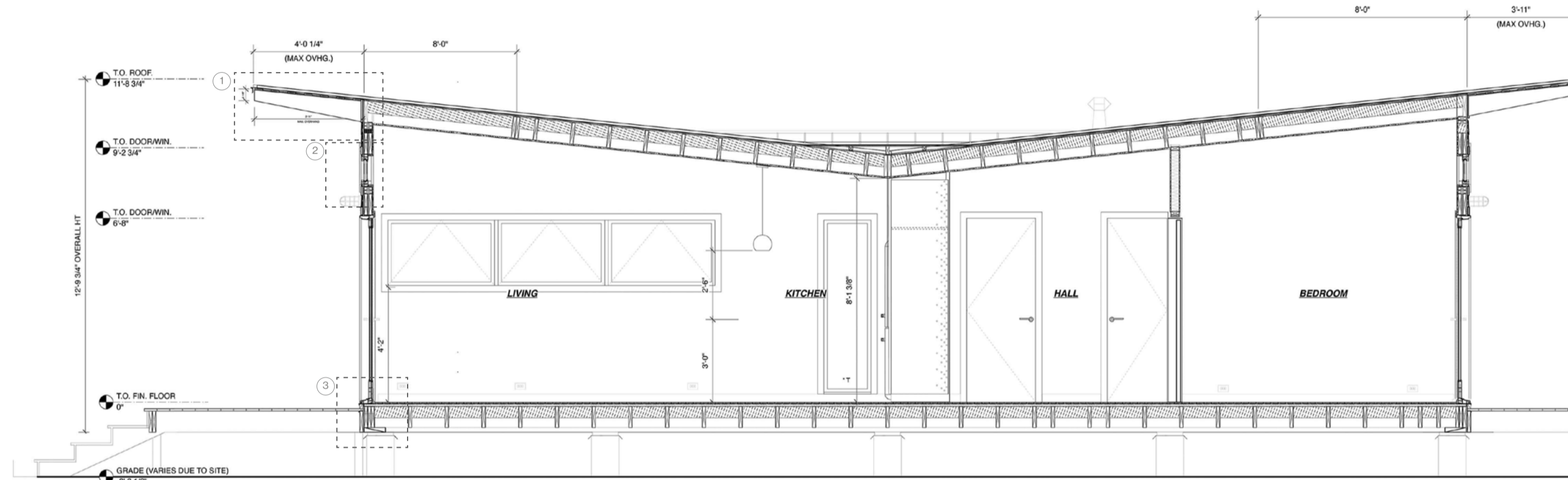
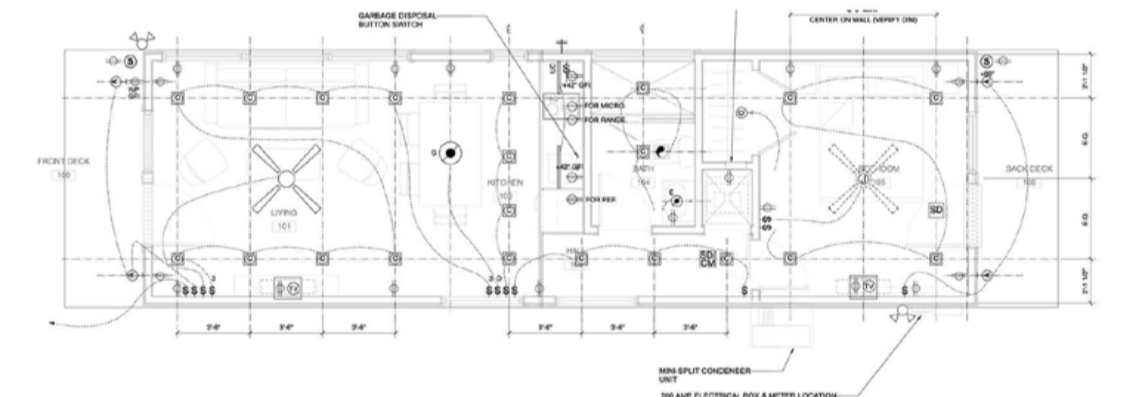
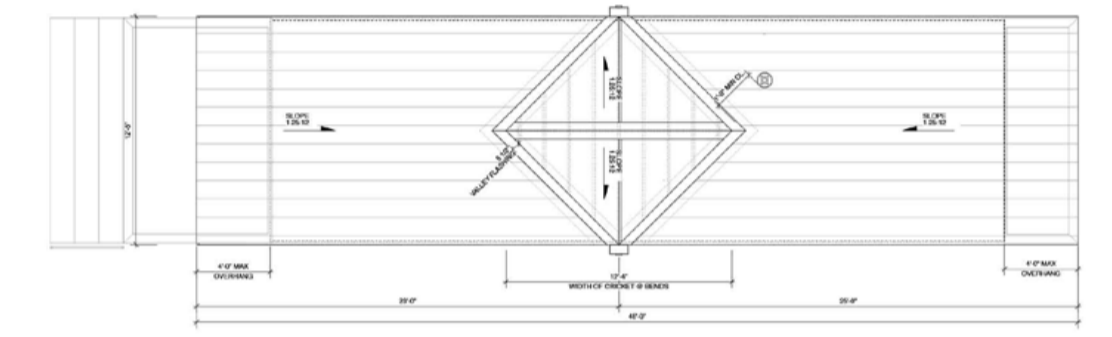
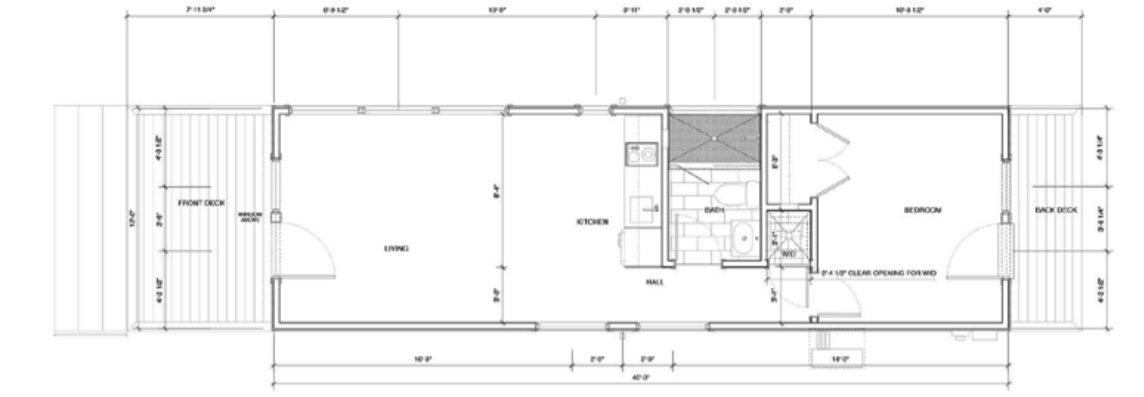
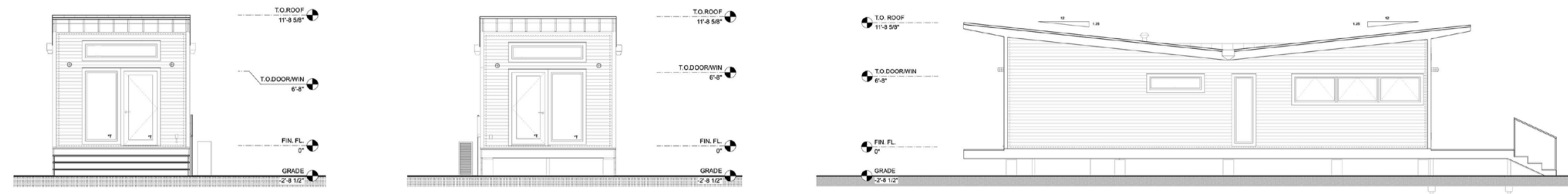
zFAB Butterfly

The zFAB Butterfly is a prefabricated butterfly-roof home design offering affordable, efficient living solutions under 800 sq ft. Factory-built and delivered for on-site installation, it reduces cost, waste, and construction time, providing a sustainable housing option.

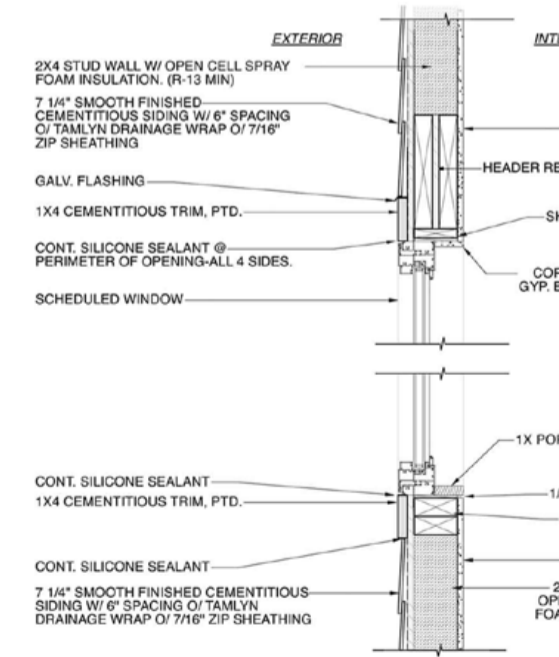
I developed a complete version with a full BIM-modeled drawing set, under supervision, drafting the architectural, structural, and MEP components to ensure efficient fabrication and site installation.



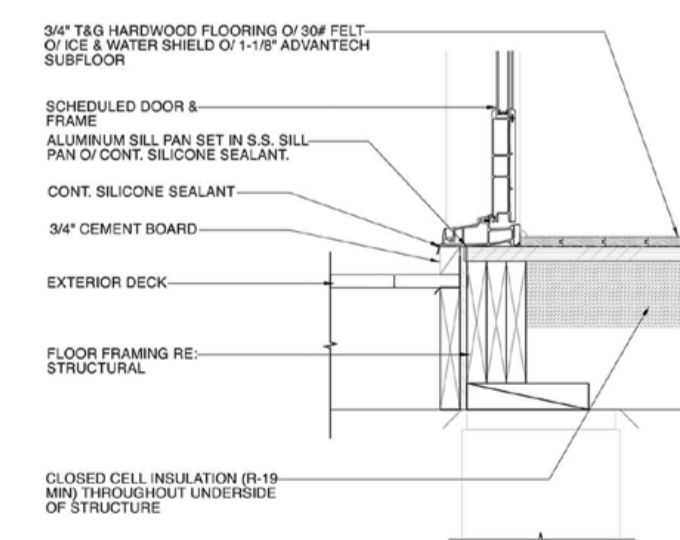
Completed and built images of the zFAB Butterfly, property of Brett Zamore Design.



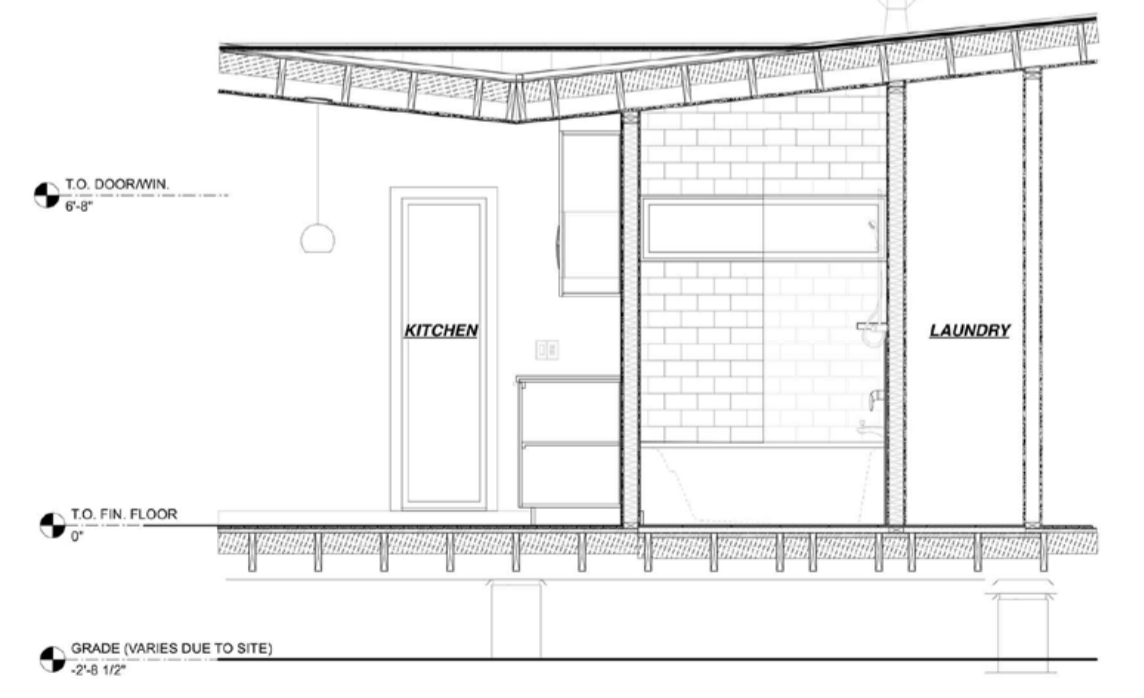
1 RAFTER DETAIL



2 WINDOW HEAD/SILL DETAIL



3 DOOR SILL TO EXTERIOR DECK DETAIL



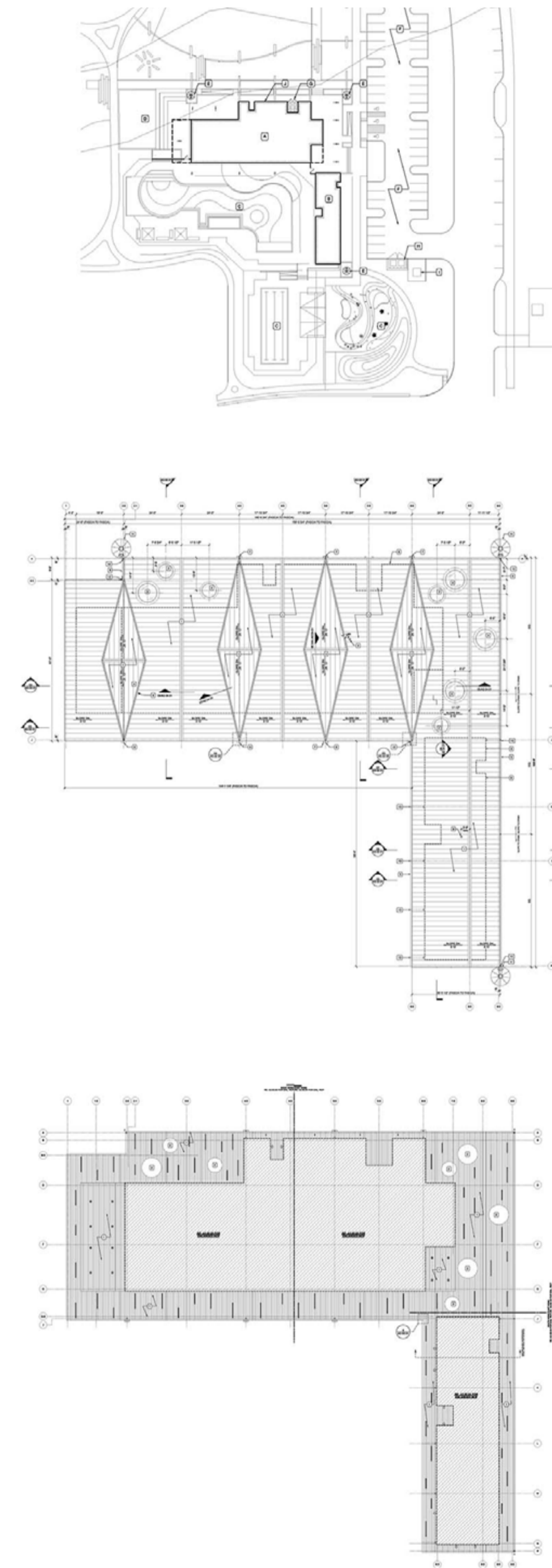
Bridgeland Creekland Activity Centre

As part of the design team at Brett Zamore Design, I contributed to the development of the *Bridgeland Creekland Activity Centre*, a mixed-use project aimed at enhancing the visitor experience while preserving the natural environment.

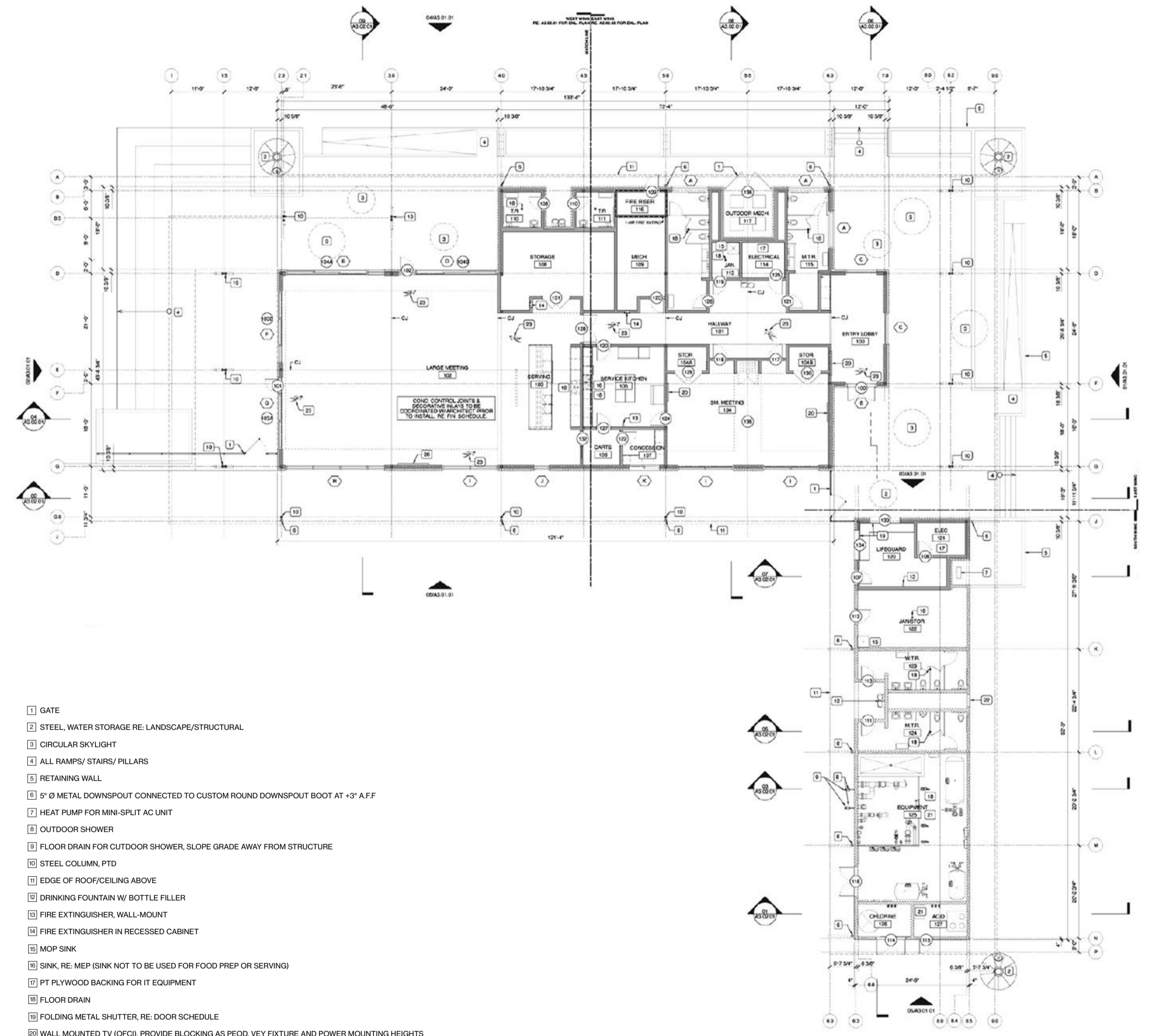
My role included drafting and detailing across various project phases whilst also coordinating material orders and preparing visuals for client meetings.



Rendered visuals for Bridgeland Creekland, produced in collaboration with the Brett Zamore design team



Drafting work including Site Plan Floor, Roof Plan and Roof RCP Plan



- 1 GATE
- 2 STEEL, WATER STORAGE RE. LANDSCAPE/STRUCTURAL
- 3 CIRCULAR SKYLIGHT
- 4 ALL RAMPS/ STAIRS/ PILLARS
- 5 RETAINING WALL
- 6 5' Ø METAL DOWNSPOUT CONNECTED TO CUSTOM ROUND DOWNSPOUT BOOT AT +3' A.F.F
- 7 HEAT PUMP FOR MINI-SPLIT AC UNIT
- 8 OUTDOOR SHOWER
- 9 FLOOR DRAIN FOR OUTDOOR SHOWER, SLOPE GRADE AWAY FROM STRUCTURE
- 10 STEEL COLUMN, PTD
- 11 EDGE OF ROOF/CEILING ABOVE
- 12 DRINKING FOUNTAIN W/ BOTTLE FILLER
- 13 FIRE EXTINGUISHER, WALL-MOUNT
- 14 FIRE EXTINGUISHER IN RECESSED CABINET
- 15 MOP SINK
- 16 SINK, RE: MEP (SINK NOT TO BE USED FOR FOOD PREP OR SERVING)
- 17 PT PLYWOOD BACKING FOR IT EQUIPMENT
- 18 FLOOR DRAIN
- 19 FOLDING METAL SHUTTER, RE: DOOR SCHEDULE
- 20 WALL MOUNTED TV (OFCI), PROVIDE BLOCKING AS PEOD. VEY FIXTURE AND POWER MOUNTING HEIGHTS
- 21 EYE WASH BASIN
- 22 32X32" METAL ACCESS PANEL PTO COLOR TO MATCH ADJACENT CMU
- 23 BRONZE TURTLE INLAY

Floor Plan - Overall

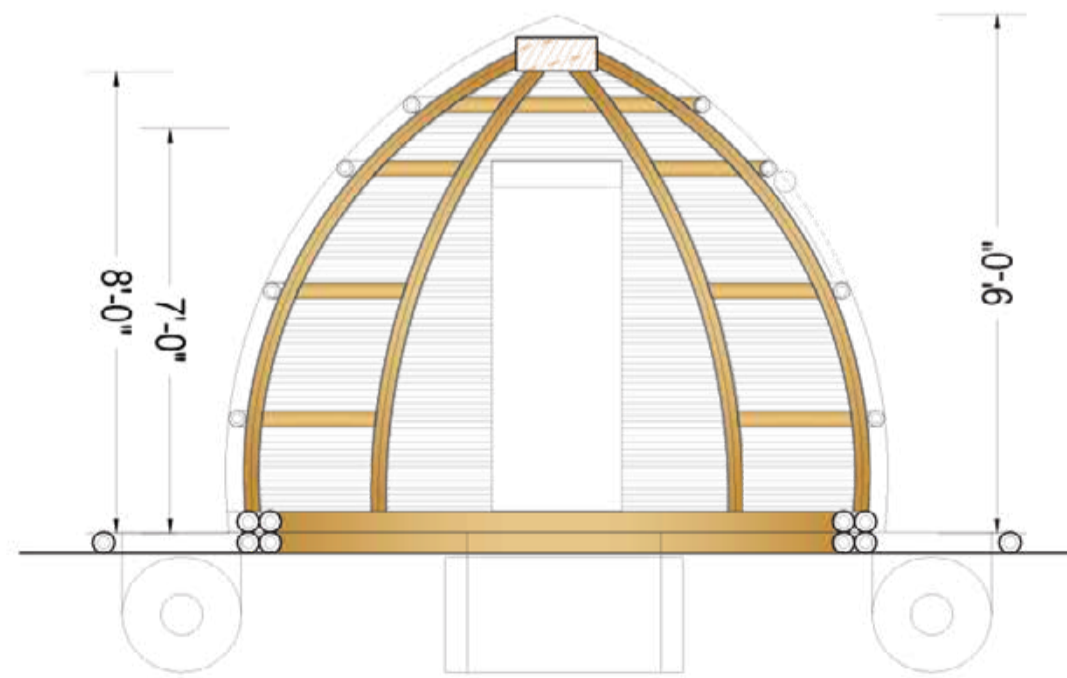
05

Floating L.O.G *Makli, Sindh, Pakistan*

OFFICE	Ar. Yasmeen Lari – Heritage Foundation of Pakistan, Makli, Pakistan
YEAR/STATUS	2021/Built
ROLE	Architectural Assistant (RIBA Part 1)

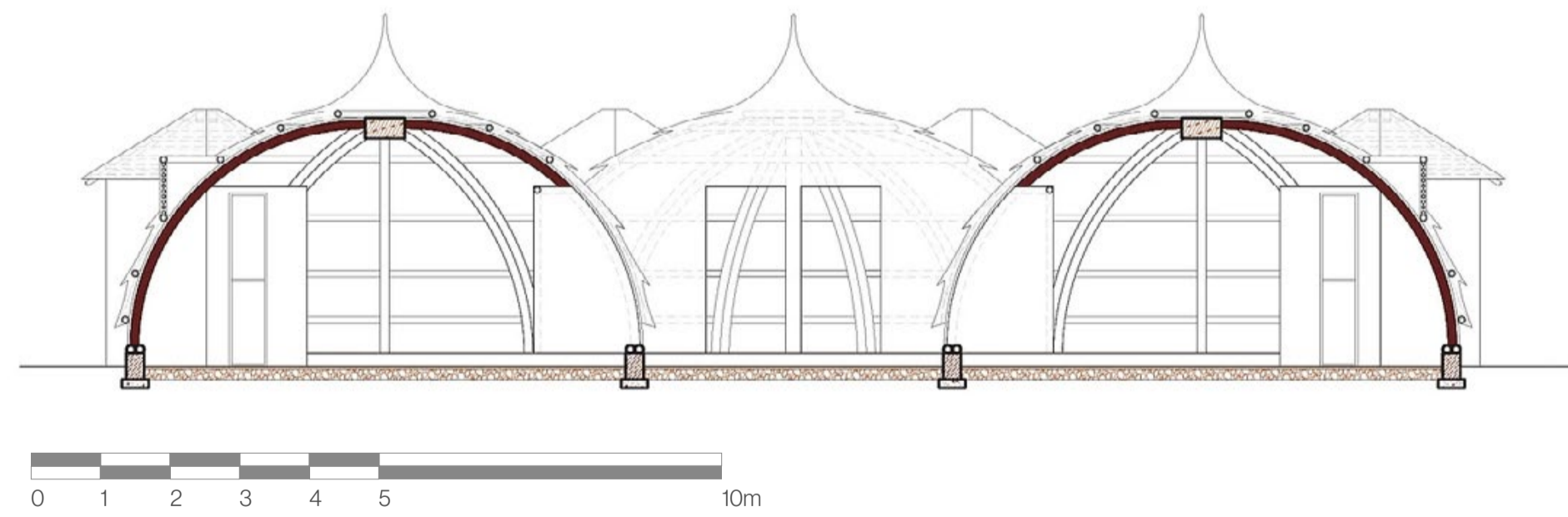
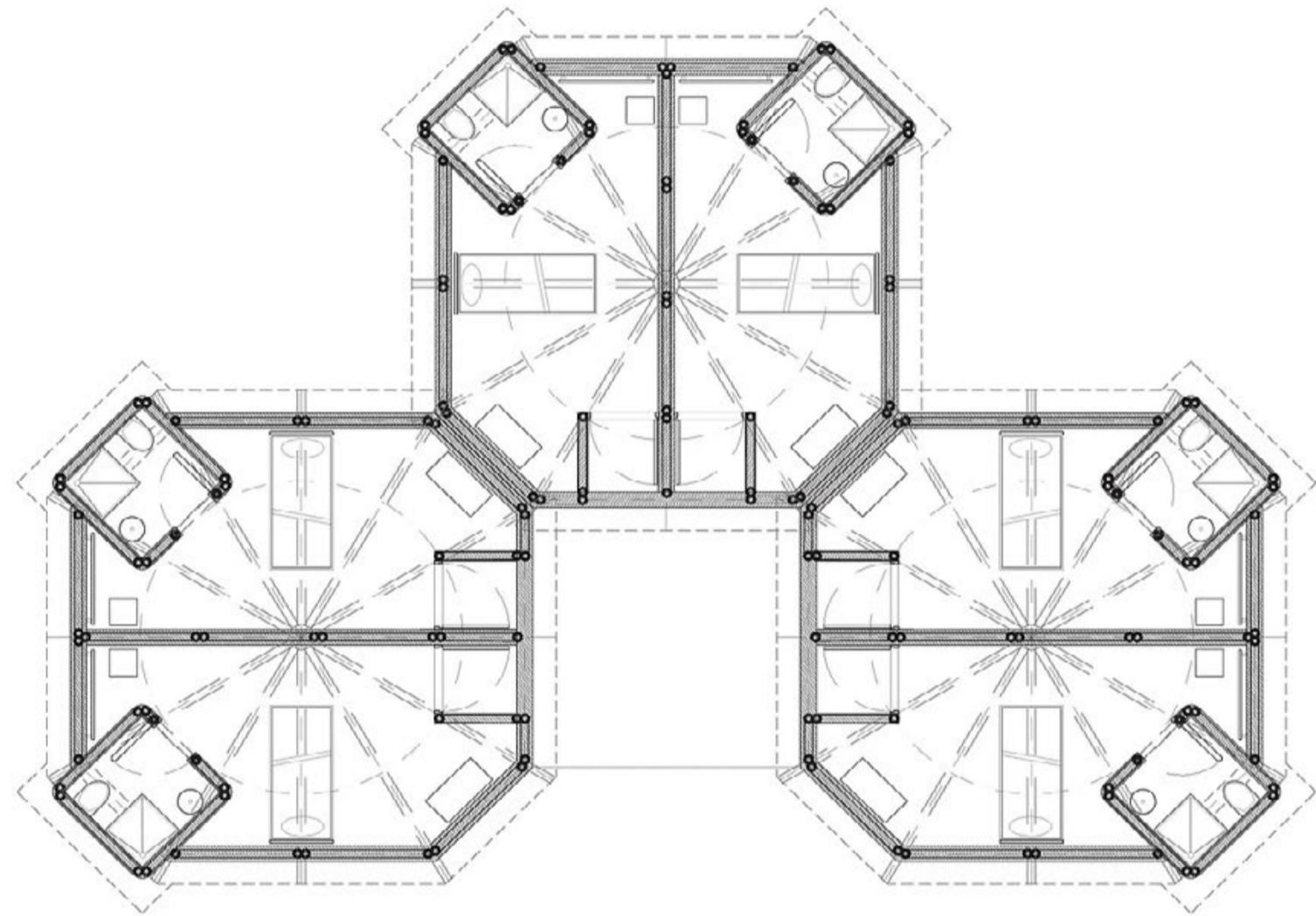
Floating L.O.G (Lari-Octa Green) is a mobile bamboo system designed by architect Yasmeen Lari to adapt to the region's flood conditions in Makli, Sindh, Pakistan.

It functioned as a floating quarantine shelter during the COVID-19 emergency, and was then adapted as residential clusters for post-crisis use. The design was constructed in 1-2 days, focusing on efficient and quick fabrication.



Role and Responsibilities:

- Designed and drafted technical drawings with design team.
- Co-managed and assisted on-site construction.
- Engaged with local communities to gather feedback on the design's functionality, impact and requested adaptations.



Floating Pod designed as an adaptable typology to create settlements post its initial usage (drawing produced in collaboration with 3 person design team)



Bamboo pod typology constructed at Yasmeen Lari's 'Zero Carbon Centre Design Lab in Makli, Pakistan



Bamboo pod covered with thatch roof to test lightweight roofing system before testing structural buoyancy



Bamboo pod clad with a thin layer of earth-lime plaster to provide shelter

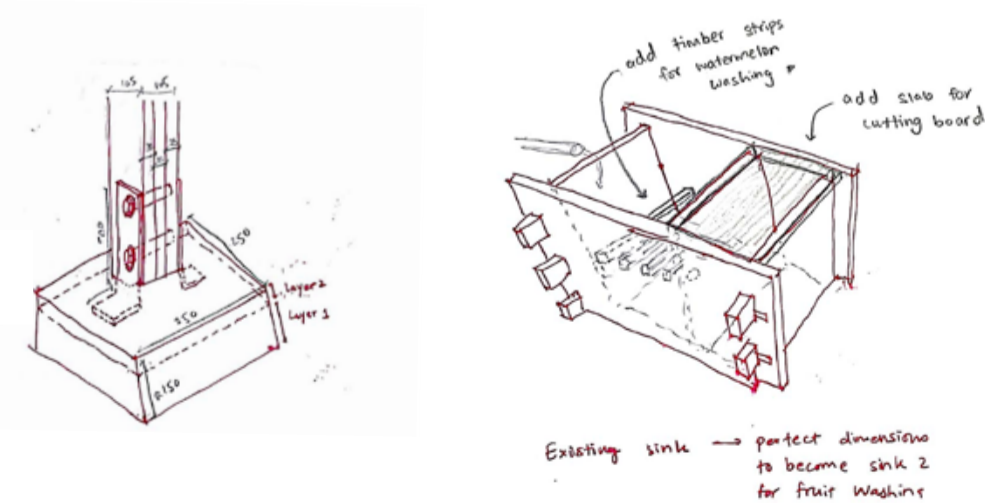
06

Watermelon Place Koshirakura, Niigata, Japan

PROJECT	Shin Egashira's Architectural Association Visiting School in Koshirakura, Niigata, Japan
YEAR/STATUS	2023/Built
ROLE	Group Rorkshop Design and Build

Watermelon Place is a design-build project created in the rural village of Koshirakura in Niigata, Japan. As part of the AA's longstanding workshop, the initiative collaborates with the local elderly population of the post-agricultural community, using vernacular materials and techniques to address community needs.

It revitalizes a natural spring once used for washing locally grown watermelons. A reclaimed timber basin is elevated on an in-situ cast concrete pedestal, providing an accessible washing and drinking station. A timber structure was designed to offer shade in summer and protection from heavy snowfall in winter. My role focused on the concrete foundation and footings as well as the timber sink details.



In-process sketches during the design and build of *Watermelon Place*



Exposed timber truss roof with a polycarbonate covering for diffused light filtration



Dry-stacked stone and concrete-stabilised base, supporting timber post



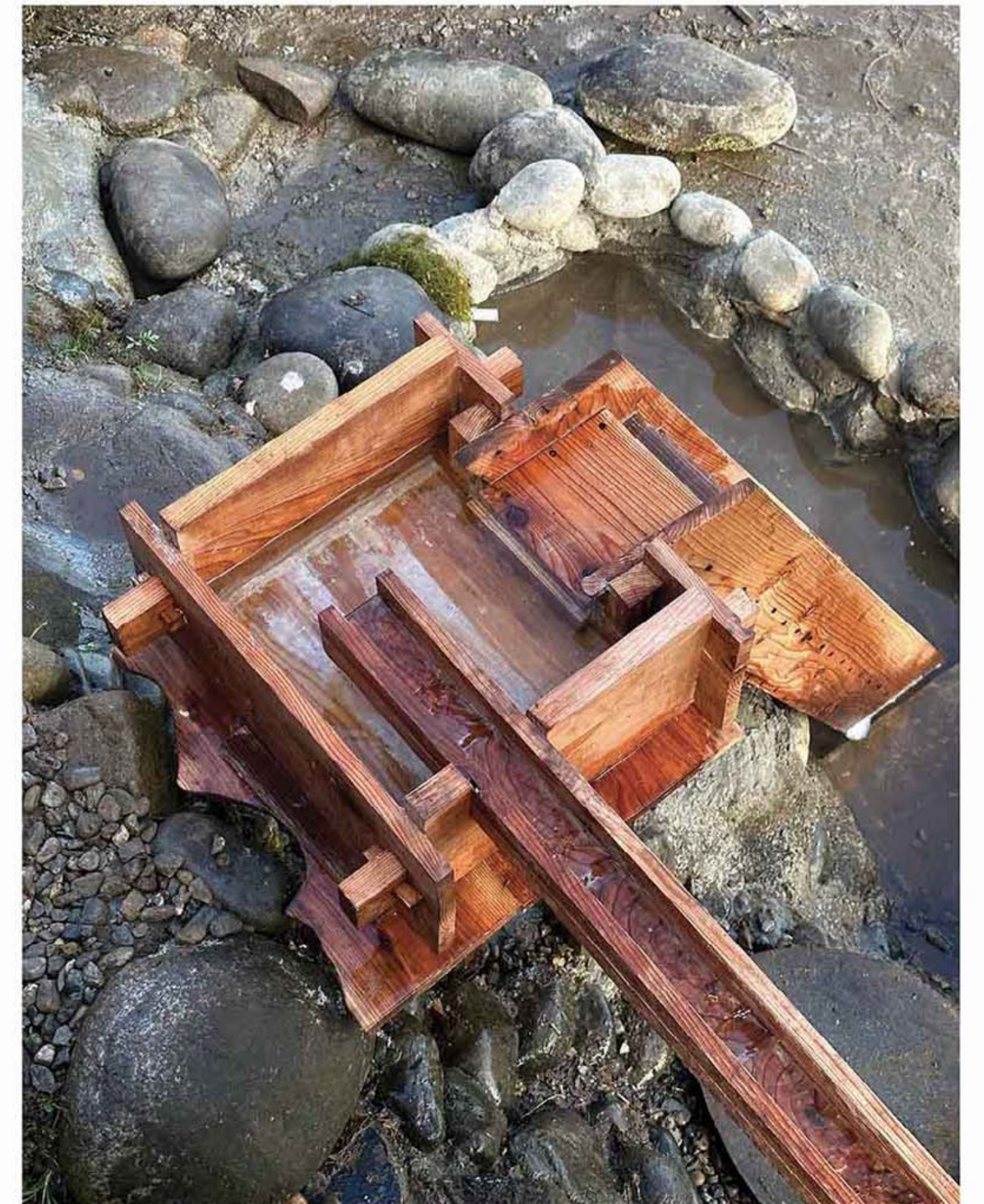
Wood and metal water spout system, to provide adjustable pressure of fresh water stream



Completion of *Watermelon Place* project, using locally sourced lumber



A local villager and friend named Hirosun, enjoying the fresh spring water after repair of water channel upon project completion



Water channel directing fresh water from stream into designed concrete-cast pebble basin