

Portfolio

Sarah The

Selected Works from GSAPP

2025

I see architecture as a living entity—spaces that grow and evolve alongside their inhabitants and surroundings rather than remaining static. My pursuit in architecture is to rethink how humans engage with nature and the environment, designing spaces that are self-sustaining, environmentally responsive, and foster joy and connection within the community.

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Rooted In-Between:

Social & Garden Overgrowth

Columbia University GSAPP

Fall 2023

Critic

Prof. Hillary Sample

Collaborator

Abigail Zapalac

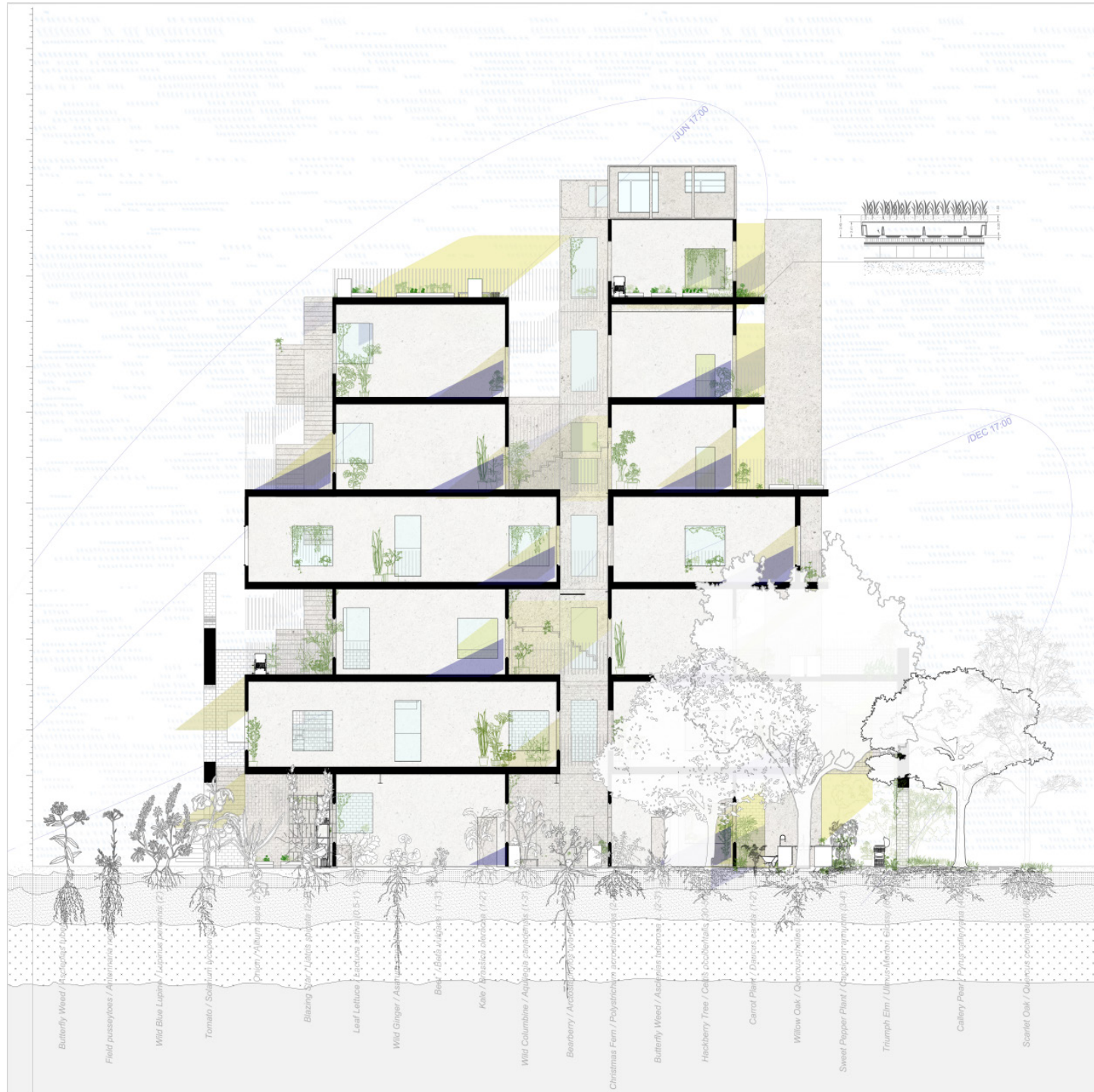
The adaptive reuse of a 1920s commercial building plants a seed for the introduction of a new, more regenerative approach to housing in New York City. Situated at the dead end of West 128th Street and framed by a retired MTA bus repair center, the Mink Building, and a block with a deep history of manufacturing use, this site is contextualized by the idea of maintenance as “work.” Kitchen and garden maintenance parallel the site with strong associations of daily, dreadful upkeep, ultimately hindering the possibility of connections between domestic and urban scales. Through the integration of housing – specifically kitchens – and gardens, “Rooted in Between” shifts the idea of maintenance from “work” to “social space” and “play.” Preservation of the existing building shell coupled with modular units – some with private kitchens and some without — reveal the “in-between,” outdoor spaces which become the focus of the project. Stairways, corners, and balconies host shared kitchens, gardens, and social gathering spaces that foster human interaction. A porous approach to form prioritizes natural light exposure, weaving root systems vertically through the “in-between” and cultivating social overgrowth that challenges societal pressures and preconceptions of housing.

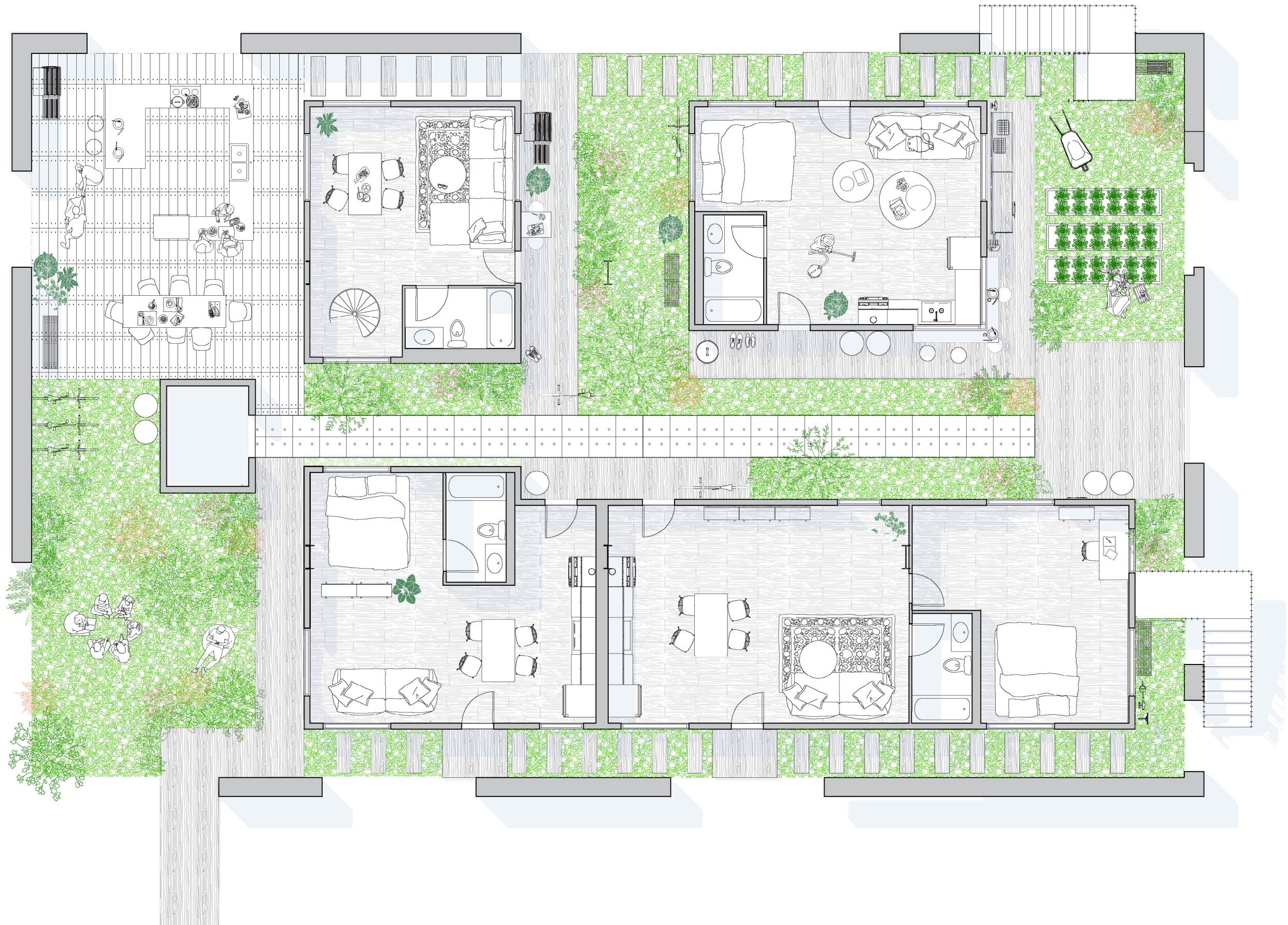


454 W 128th St.

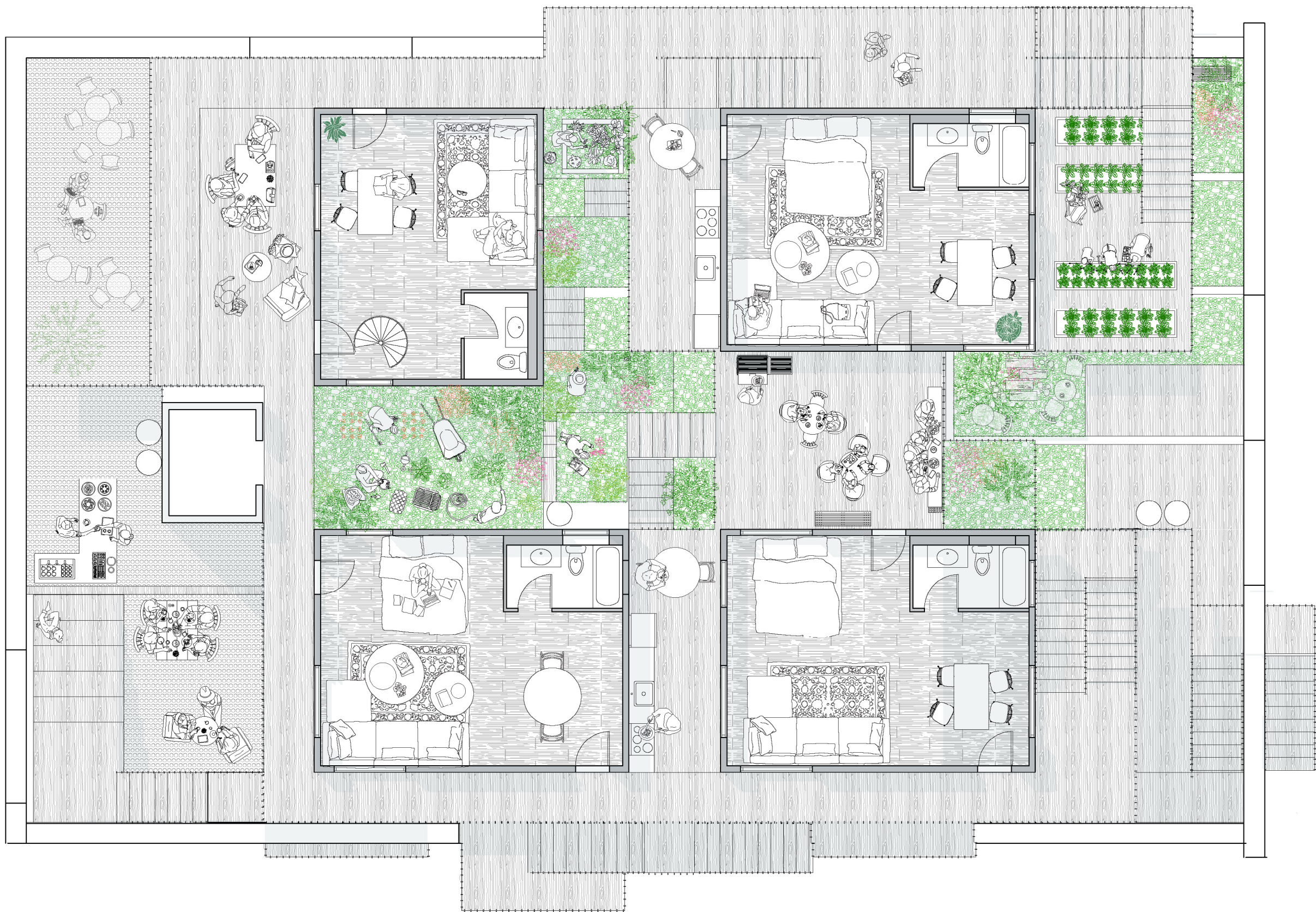
Amid a backdrop of rising commercial vacancies and urban decay, this project proposes the adaptive reuse of an abandoned brick building at the intersection of several Harlem neighborhoods to integrate housing and gardens. By transforming disused spaces into communal living and green areas, the initiative reimagines housing as dynamic, maintenance-driven systems that foster social connection, sustainability, and resilience. Emphasizing collective care and “repair ecologies,” the project envisions a living, evolving framework that harmonizes with both community needs and natural cycles.







Ground Floor Plan



Fifth Floor Plan

Living Infrastructures

Co-existing in the Vertical

Columbia University GSAPP

Spring 2024

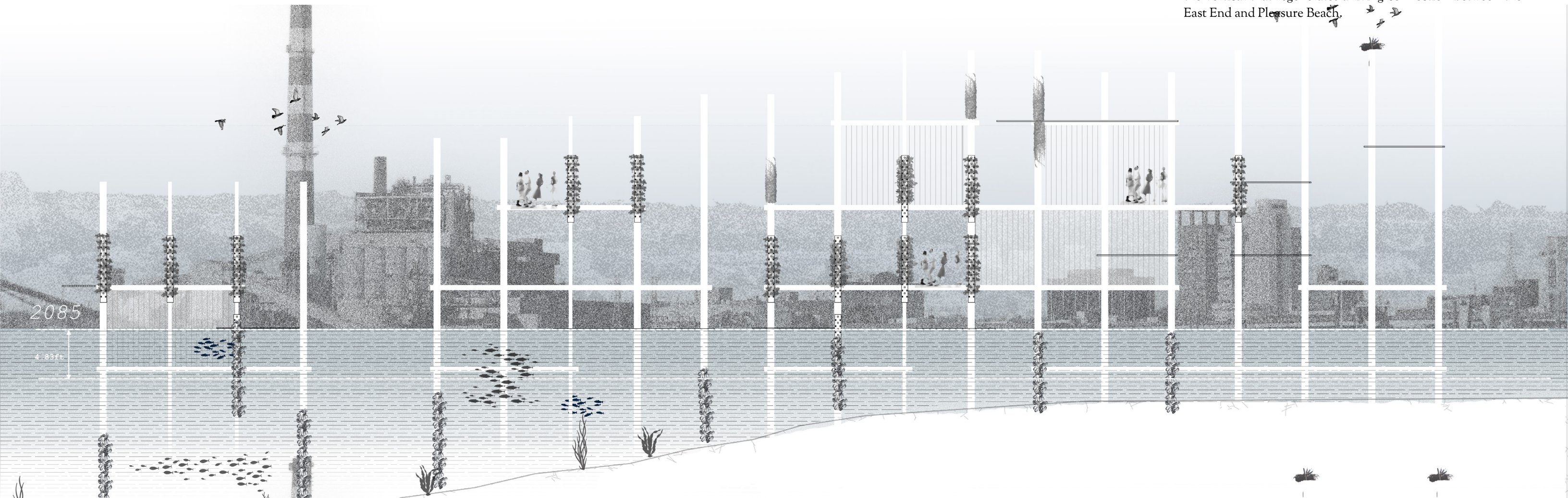
Critic

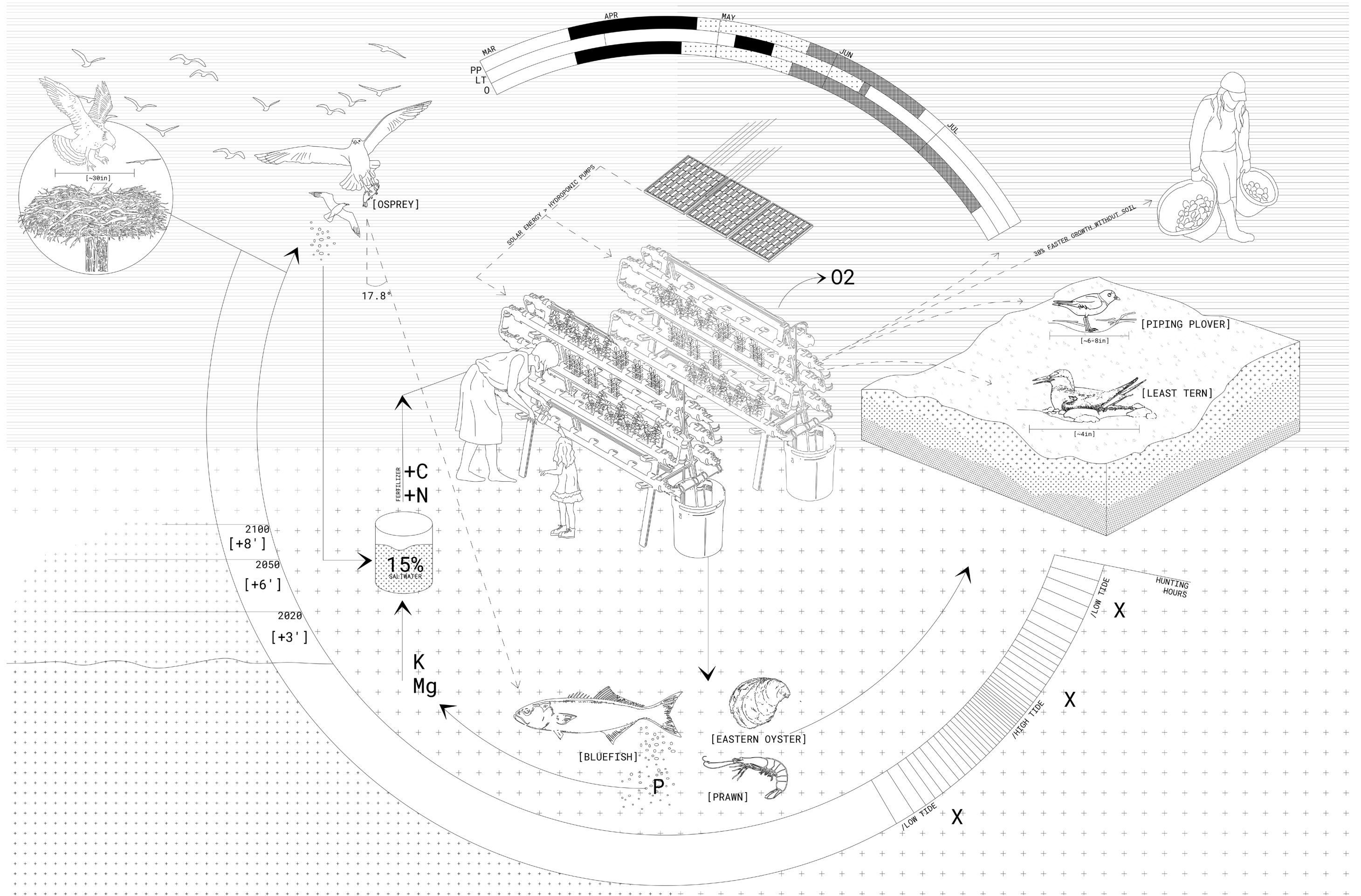
Prof. Rachely Rotem

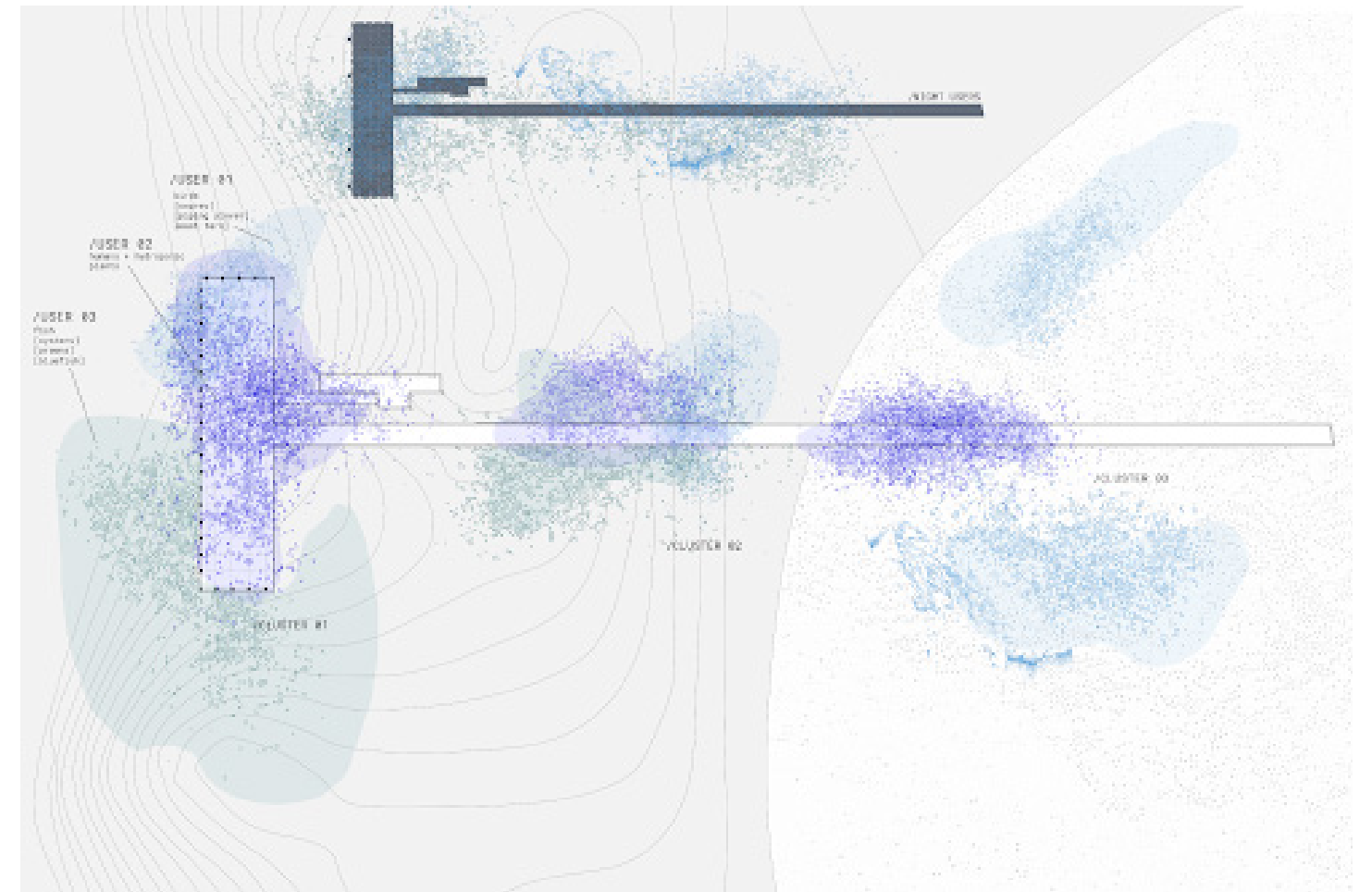
Collaborator

Abigail Zapalac

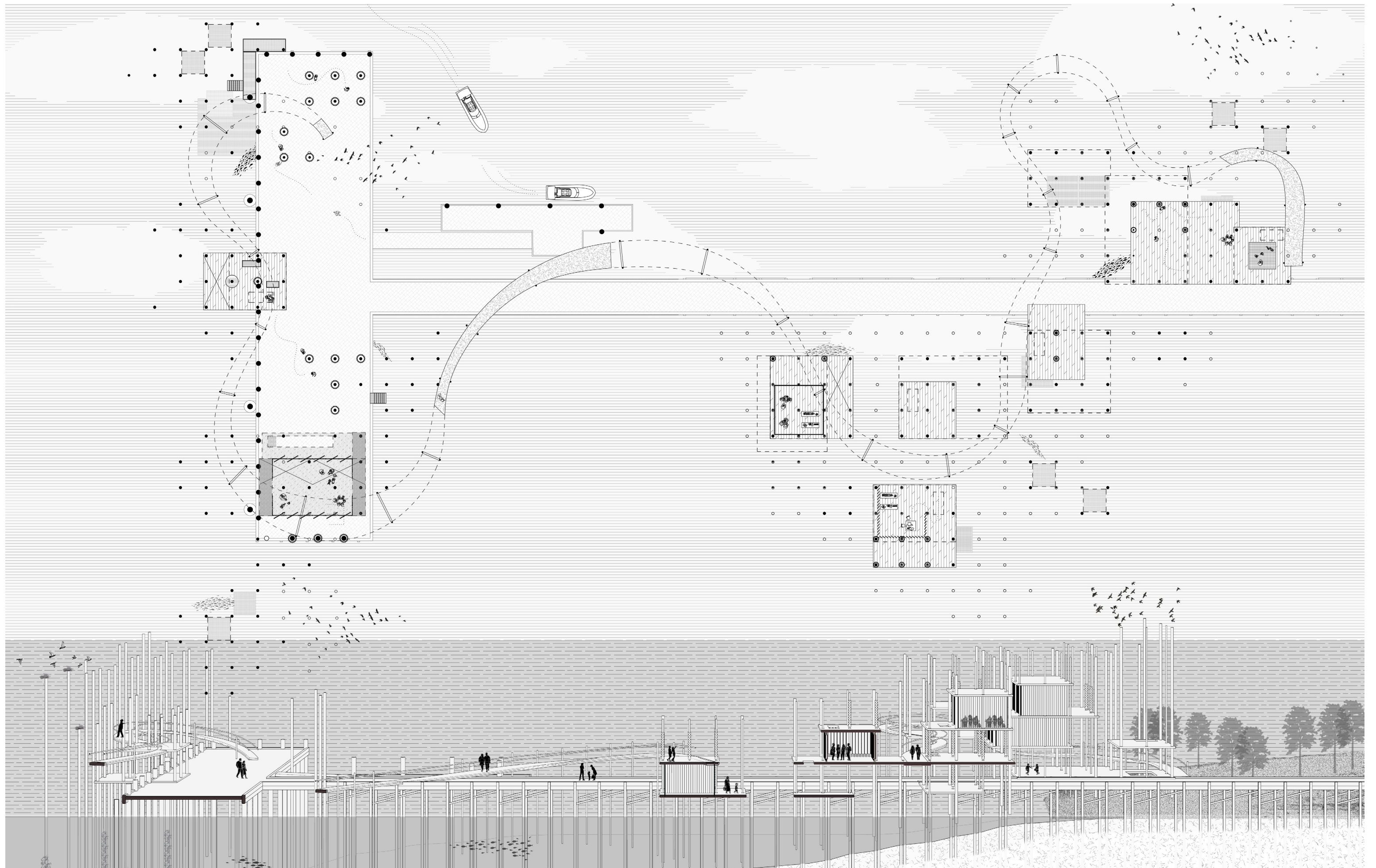
Clusters of thin, tall pilings spatialize a forest form where unexpected life can grow into a complex ecosystem. Pilings that extend beyond the reach of the platforms serve as protected areas for wildlife to thrive. An elevated ramp circulates between the clusters to maintain accessibility while shifting focus from controlling animal movement to directing human movement, prioritizing a more symbiotic relationship between humans and non-humans through intentional integration and separation of their spaces. Hydroponic gardens woven throughout the clusters tie various species into an ecosystem that supplements East End's food desert. The gardens emphasize verticality as they wrap around pilings and are supported by the vertical movement of nutrients, sunlight, and nesting platforms. These hydroponic systems become the infrastructure. As the structure extends beyond the dock, the grid of dots and lines fluctuates into clouds of randomness, allowing future uncertain use and structural growth to flourish. A seemingly static idea of "infrastructure" is challenged as this new ecology of growth breathes life into the non-breathing, creating coexistence in the vertical that regenerates a living connection between the East End and Pleasure Beach.

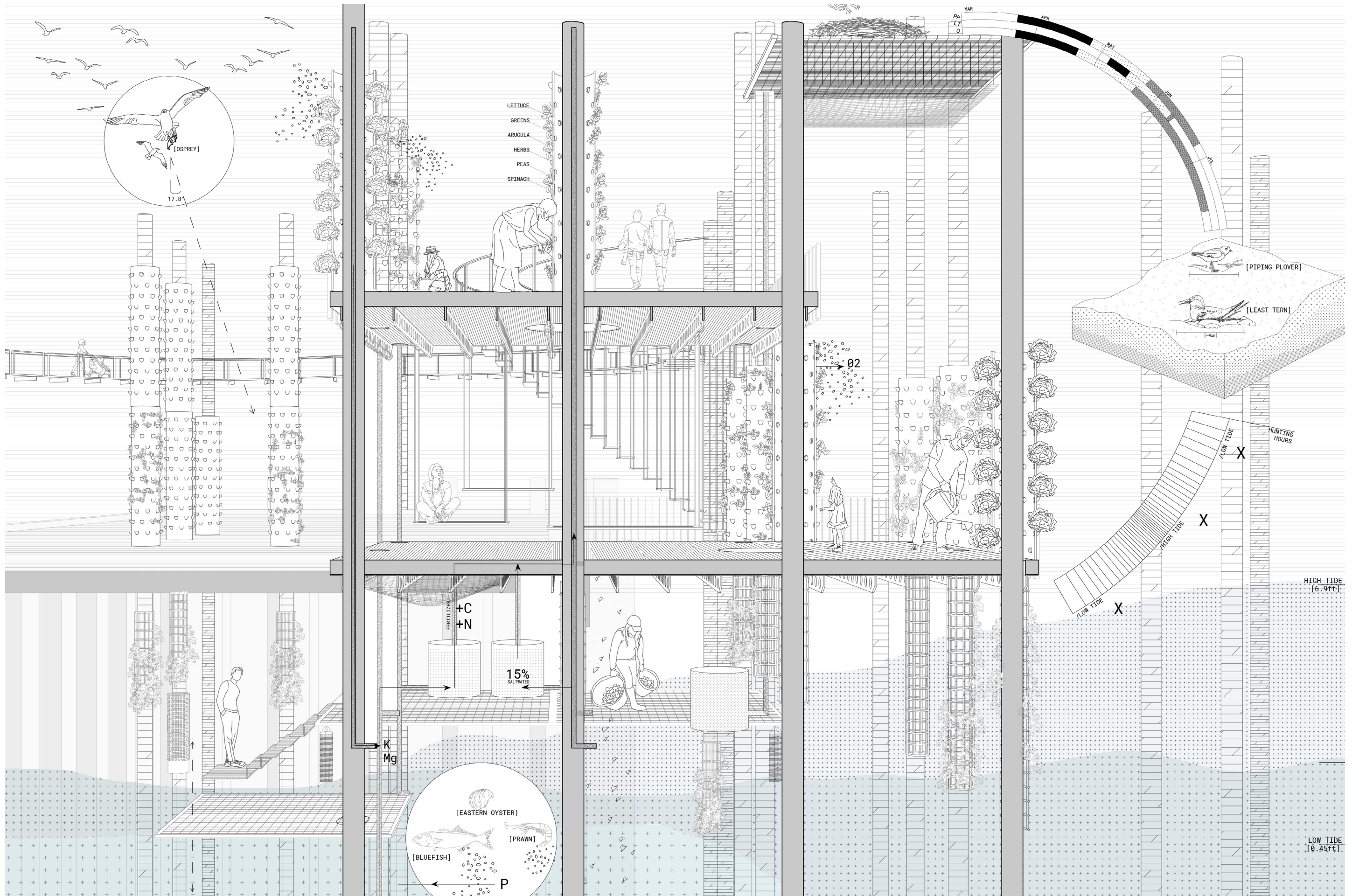


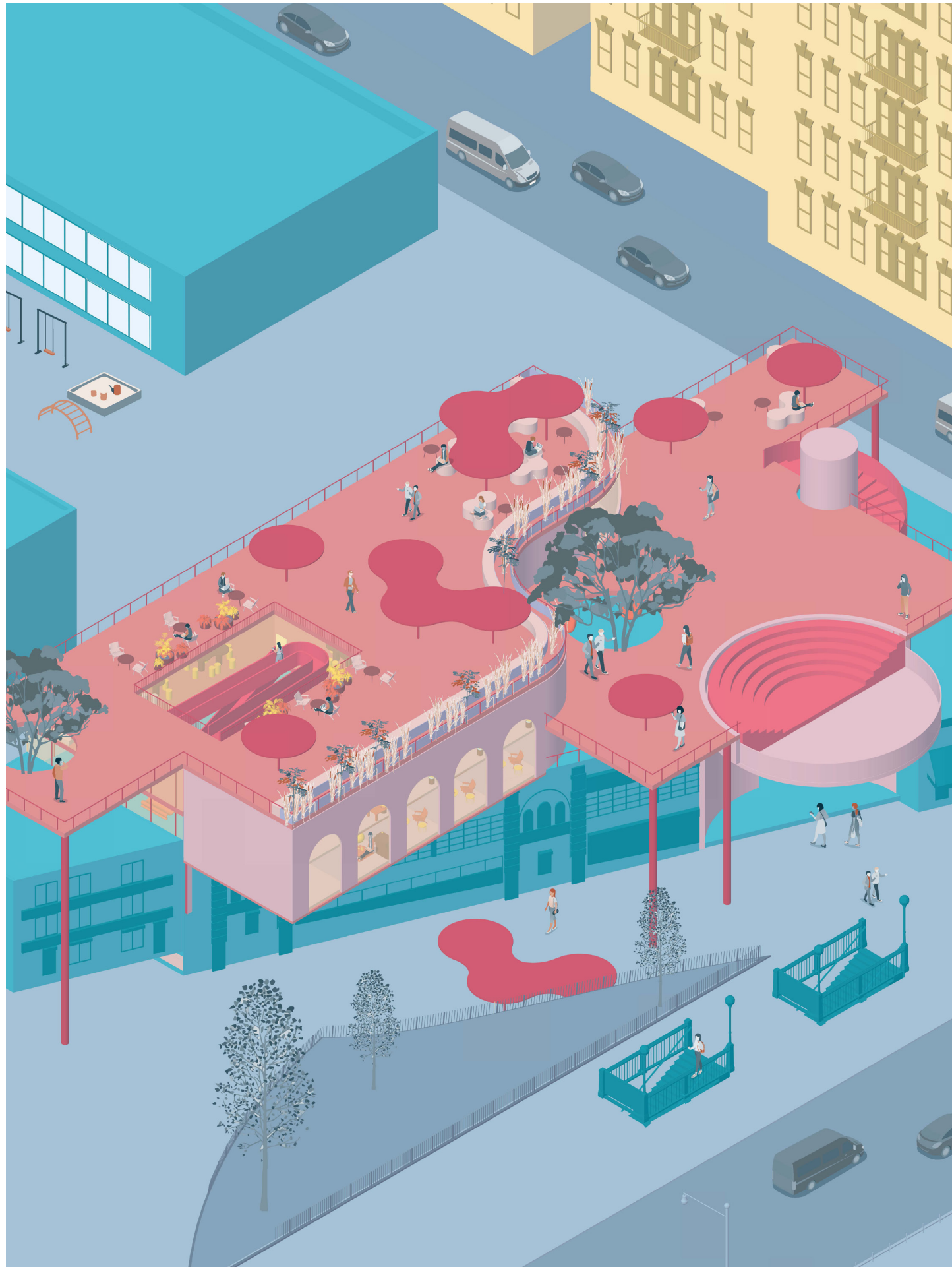




“Living Infrastructures” explores how uncertainty can foster new relationships between humans and non-humans by connecting Bridgeport’s East End and Pleasure Beach. Using sites of environmental and infrastructural decay as research, the project reveals emerging social and ecological networks—from community gardens to natural regrowth in abandoned spaces. By linking the East End’s budding social infrastructure with Pleasure Beach’s resilient ecology, the design proposes a vertical system of coexistence that reframes decay as a catalyst for new growth.







Botanica

Botanical Health and Wellness

Columbia University GSAPP

Fall 2022

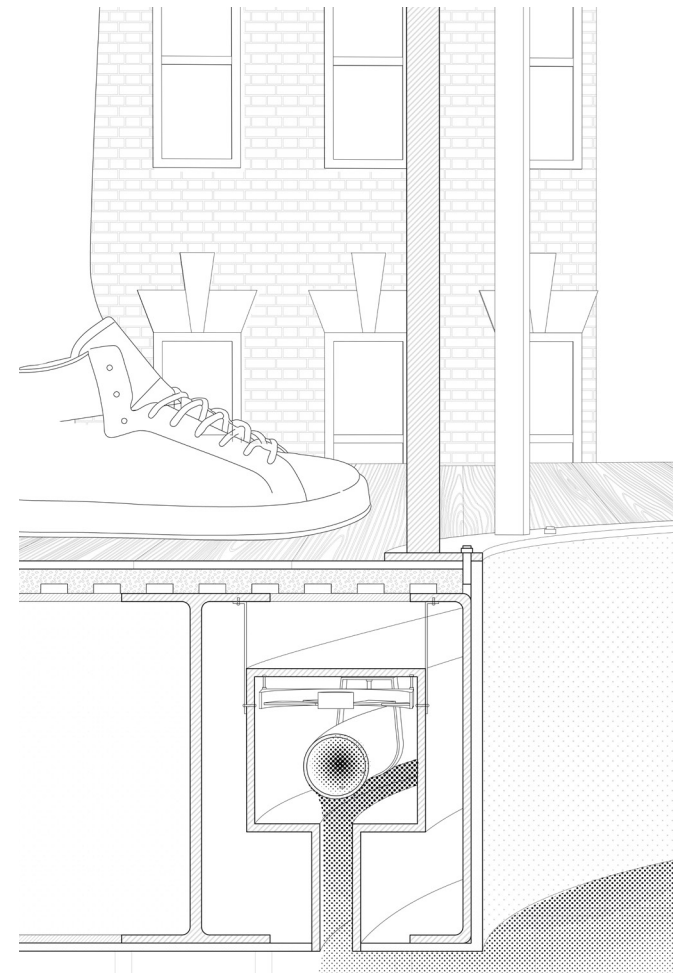
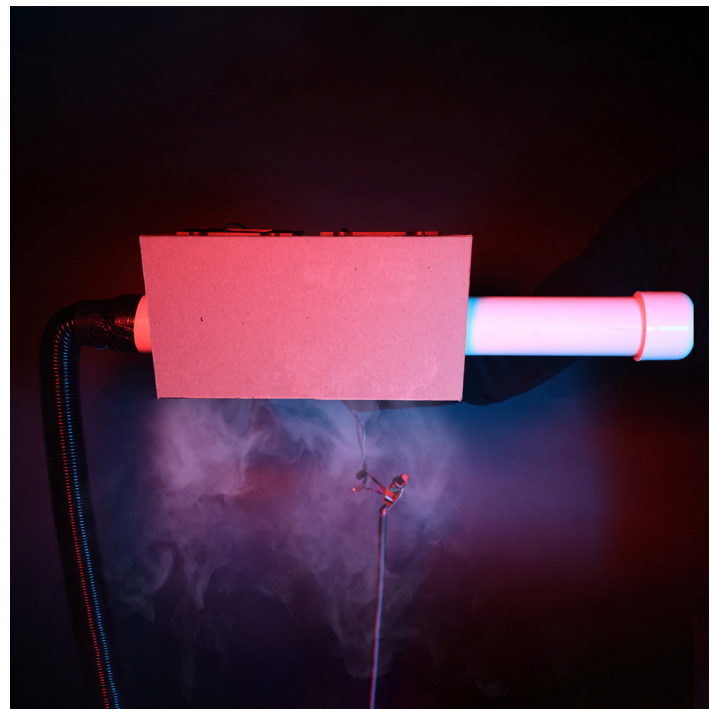
Critic

Prof. Alessandro Orsini

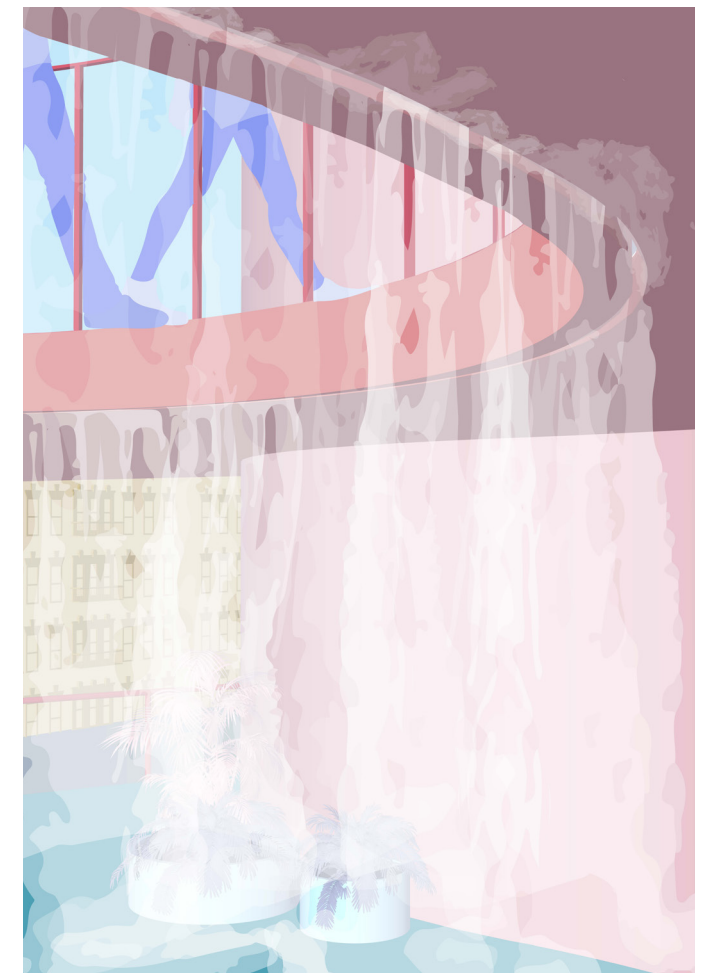


Botanica is a space designed for the latinx community that allows them to embrace alternative methods of mental health and wellness that speaks to their cultural and ancestral roots. It integrates itself into the existing medical facilities, sparking a dialogue between what is considered mainstream healthcare and a more holistic definition. Health and wellness in the US has long been heavily commoditized and defined by heteronormativity in theory and in practice, often excluding minority groups such as POC, youth and the lgbtq community. Botanica invites the community to reclaim wellness and to embrace their ancestral roots through practices such as plant medicine, Santeria and Brujeria which have been erased and demonized through centuries of colonization. The project is a mix of mutual care, self-led activity and individual support and communal building. There are various prescribed and non-prescribed spaces that allow for the occupants to use the space freely and while also having more intimate and private spaces for individual and group therapy. Other programs include a community herbal garden, herbal medicine workshops as well as spaces that can facilitate sacred rituals and performances. There are opportunities to connect or retreat or to collaborate or create.





Queering detail - playing with the idea of “non-spaces” that have been appropriated and occupied by the lgbtq community as a way of making room for themselves without a formal architecture, ex. Inhabiting transient, intermediate spaces. The ephemeral quality of smoke ties with the transitory nature of these spaces being able to activate and deactivate depending on the needs of the occupants. Smoke curtain creates a room



without walls as a way to subvert from the heteronormative idea of an interior space which that does not prescribe to normative ideas of gender, class, race and sexuality. The smoke connects the floor of my intervention to the roof of the existing building creating a transcendent experience. Smoke is also a large part of the rituals of santeria which is a very intimate practice but not necessarily private.

Damage Control

“Public” Spaces

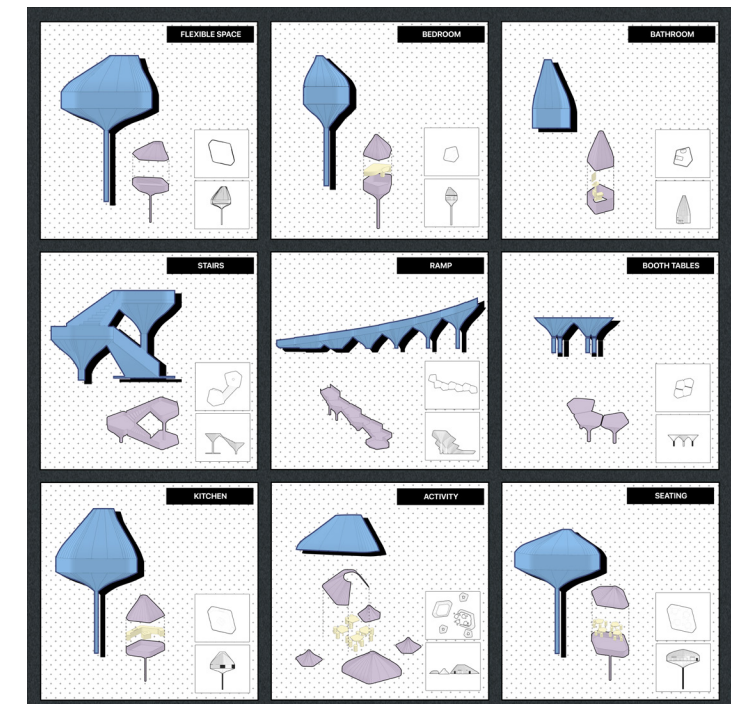
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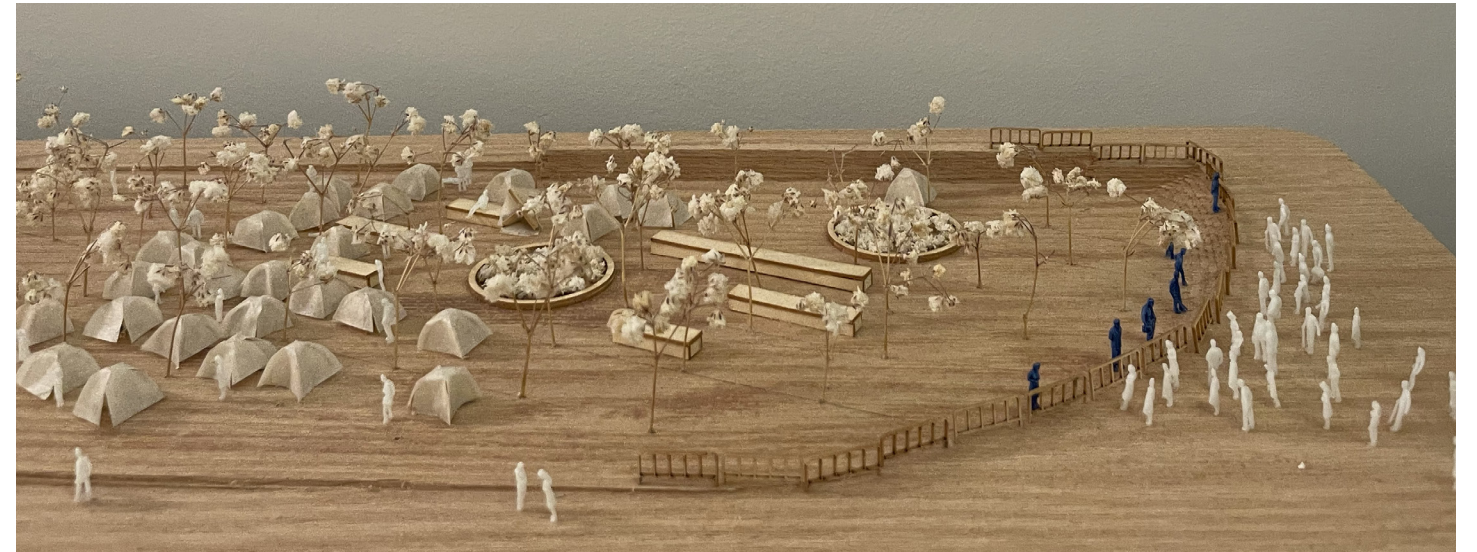
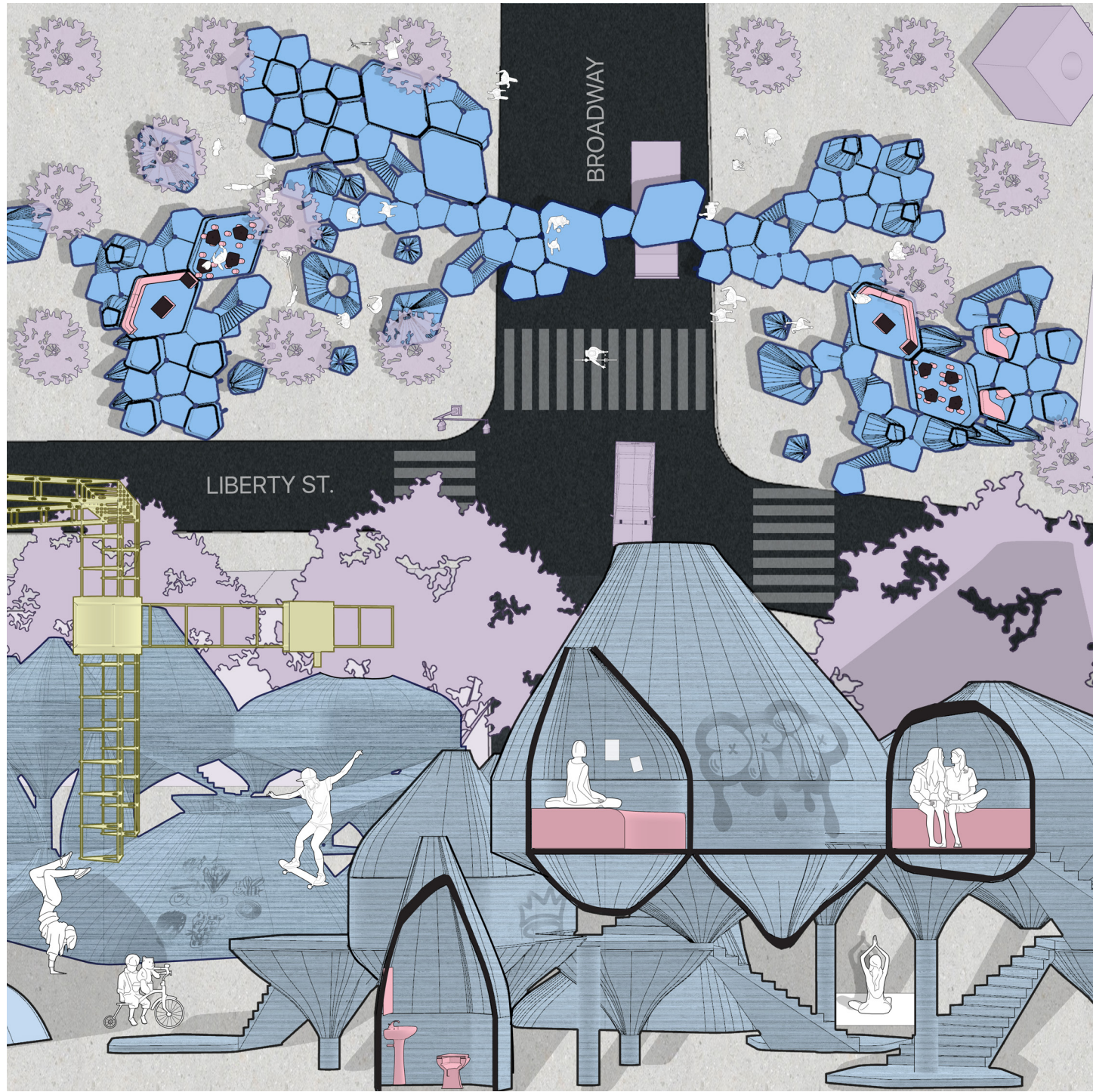
Spring 2022

Critic

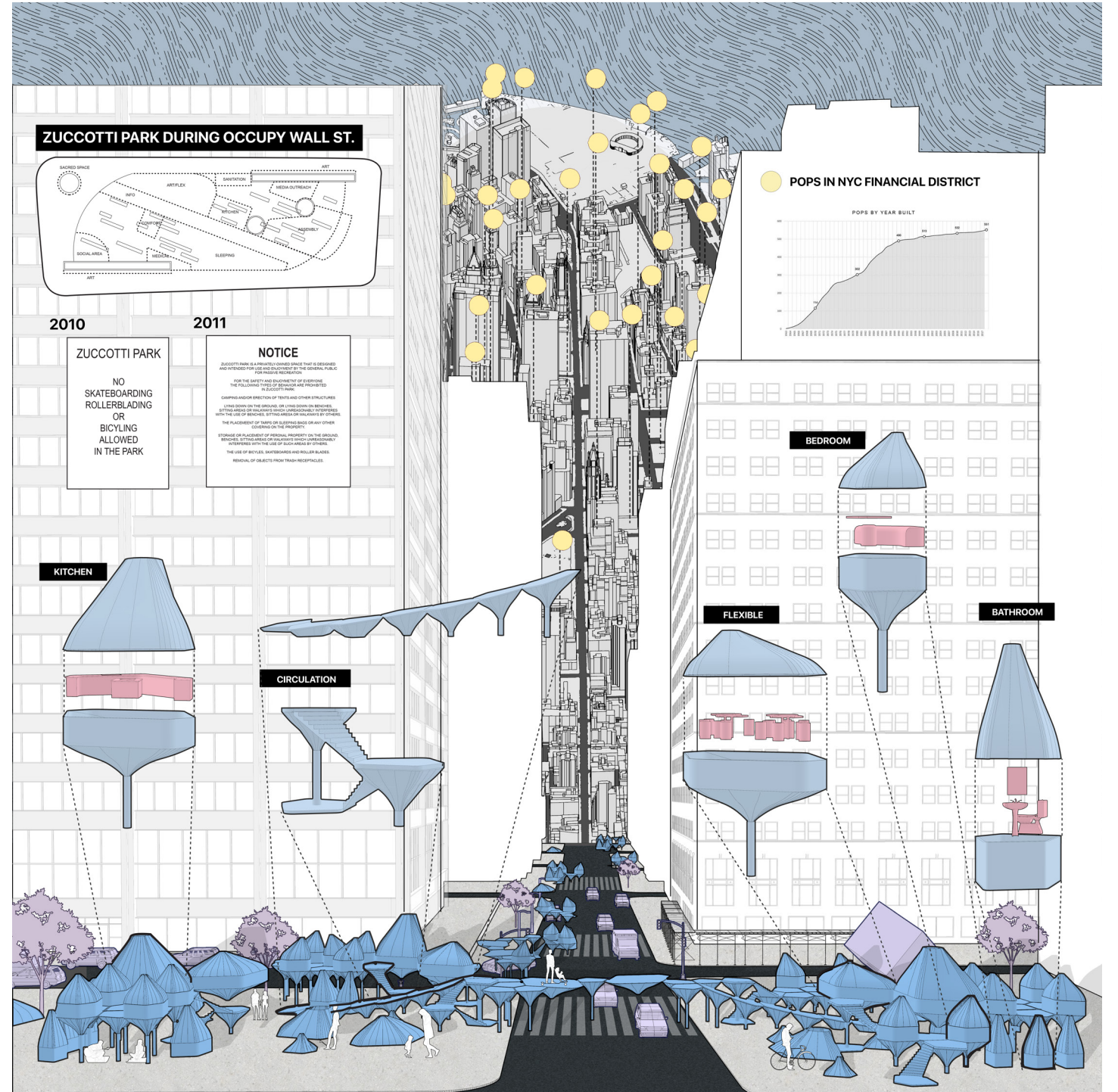
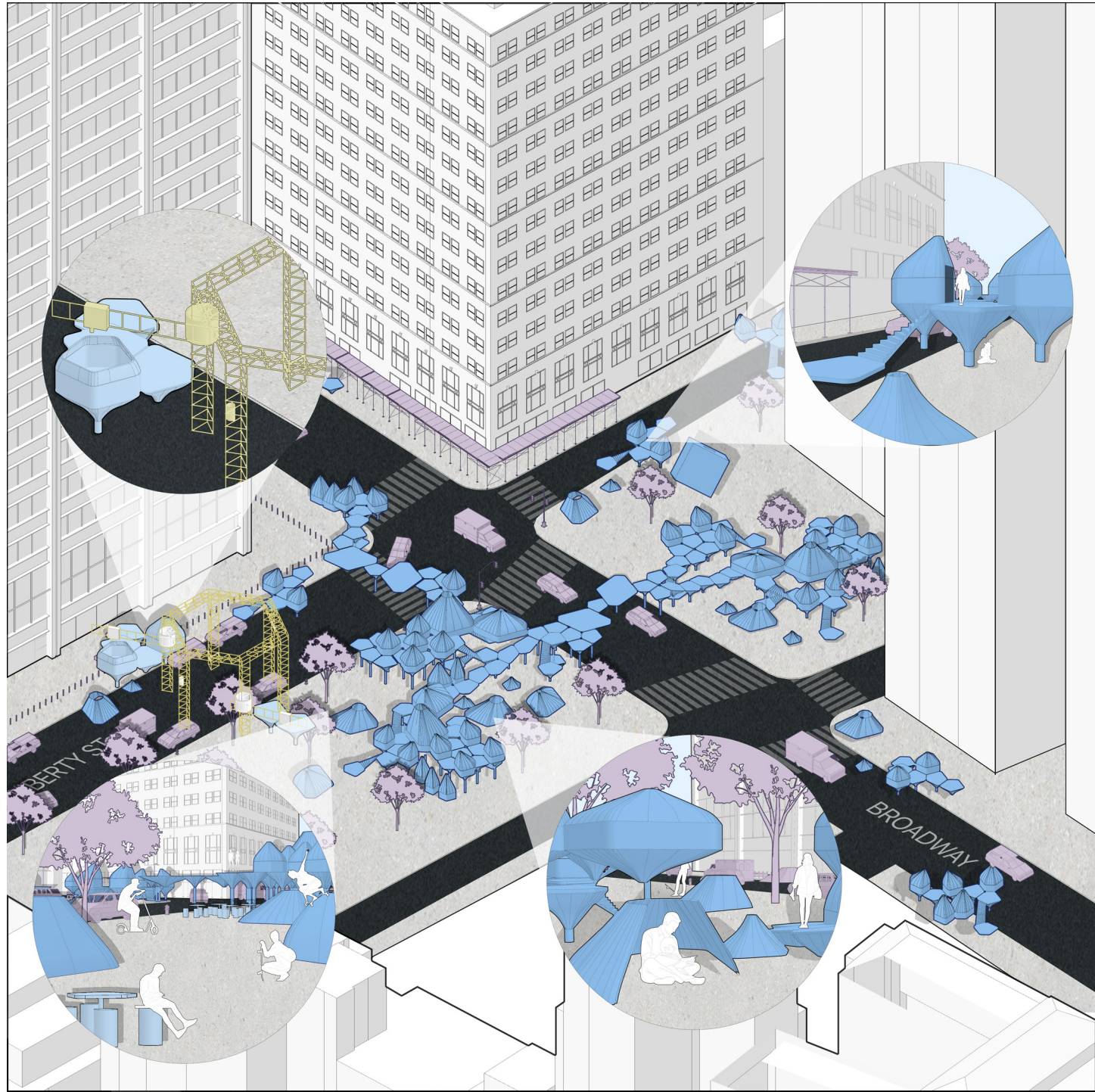
Prof. Rosanna Elkhatib

This intervention introduces modular, 3D-printed vessels that reclaim and activate space across Zuccotti Park and One Liberty Plaza, bridging two POPS. Inspired by the tents of the Occupy Wall Street movement, these organic forms offer flexible uses—shelter, bathrooms, kitchens, or open platforms for sitting, skating, or gathering. Variations in elevation provide privacy and protection, while the modular design enables proliferation across sites in need. By extending into select street lanes, the intervention reclaims space typically dominated by cars for pedestrian and communal use. Aimed at marginalized groups—youth, unhoused individuals, and activists—it challenges exclusionary urban norms and reasserts public space as essential to democracy and diversity.





Model of OCCUPY Wall St. Protest in Zuccotti Park



Food Corners

Food-First Typology

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Fall 2024

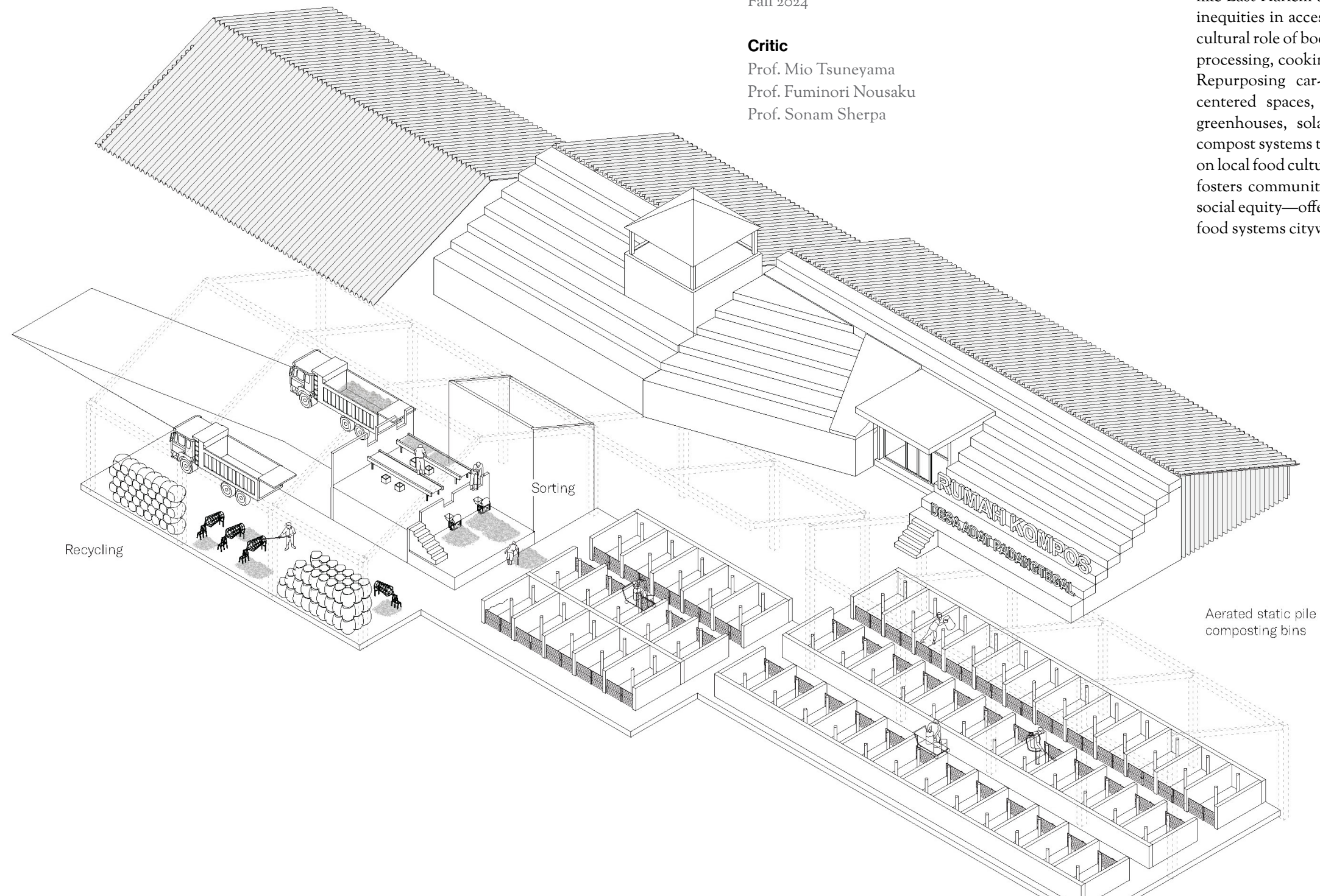
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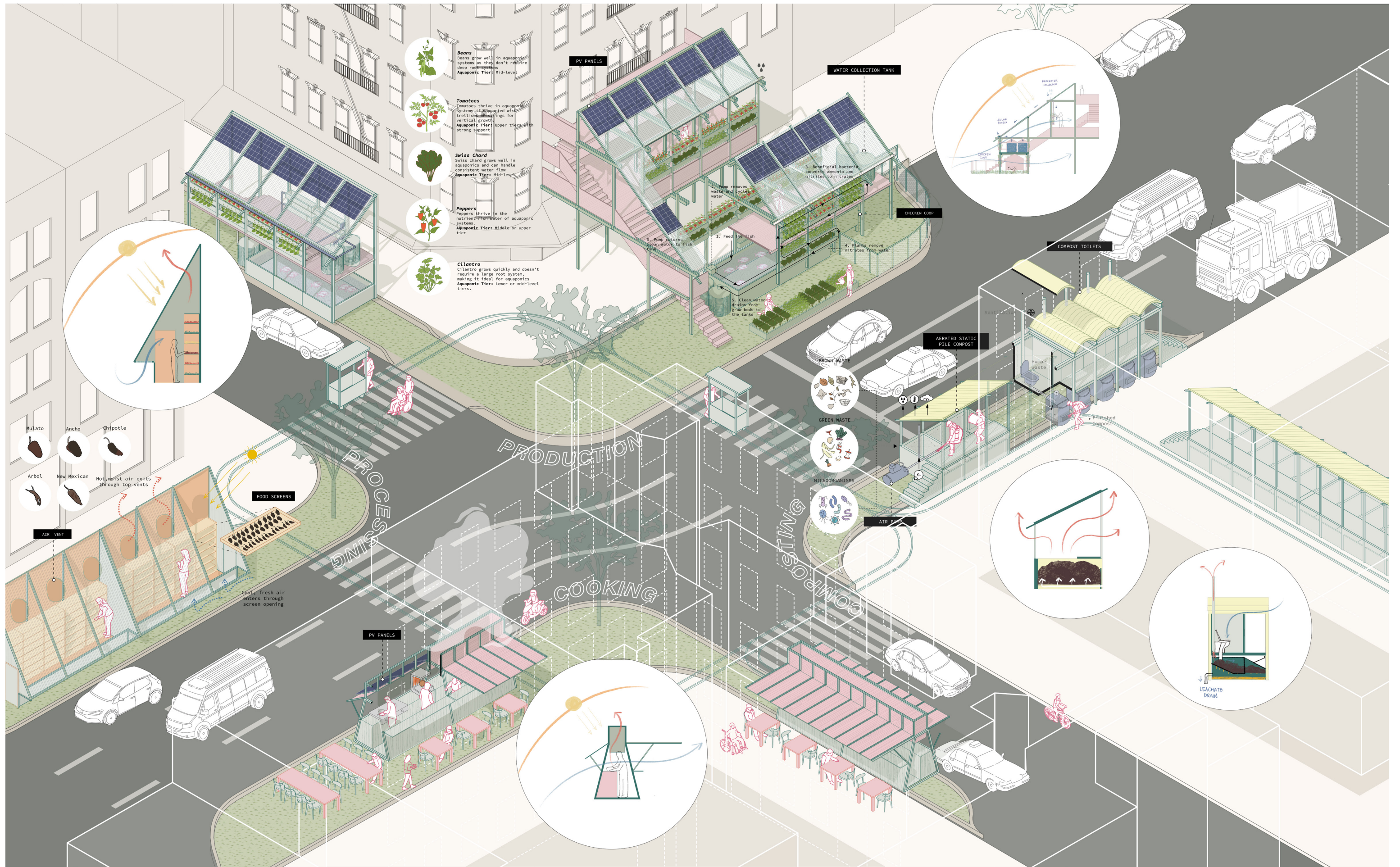
Prof. Mio Tsuneyama

Prof. Fuminori Nousaku

Prof. Sonam Sherpa

This project reimagines intersections in dense urban areas like East Harlem as localized food hubs that address systemic inequities in access, waste, and sustainability. Inspired by the cultural role of bodegas, the design integrates food production, processing, cooking, and composting into walkable networks. Repurposing car-dominated intersections into pedestrian-centered spaces, the intervention uses vertical aquaponic greenhouses, solar dehydrators, community kitchens, and compost systems to create a closed-loop food cycle. By drawing on local food cultures and renewable infrastructure, the project fosters community ownership, environmental resilience, and social equity—offering a scalable model for transforming urban food systems citywide.





Food/Ecology/Architecture

Between Self and World

Columbia University GSAPP

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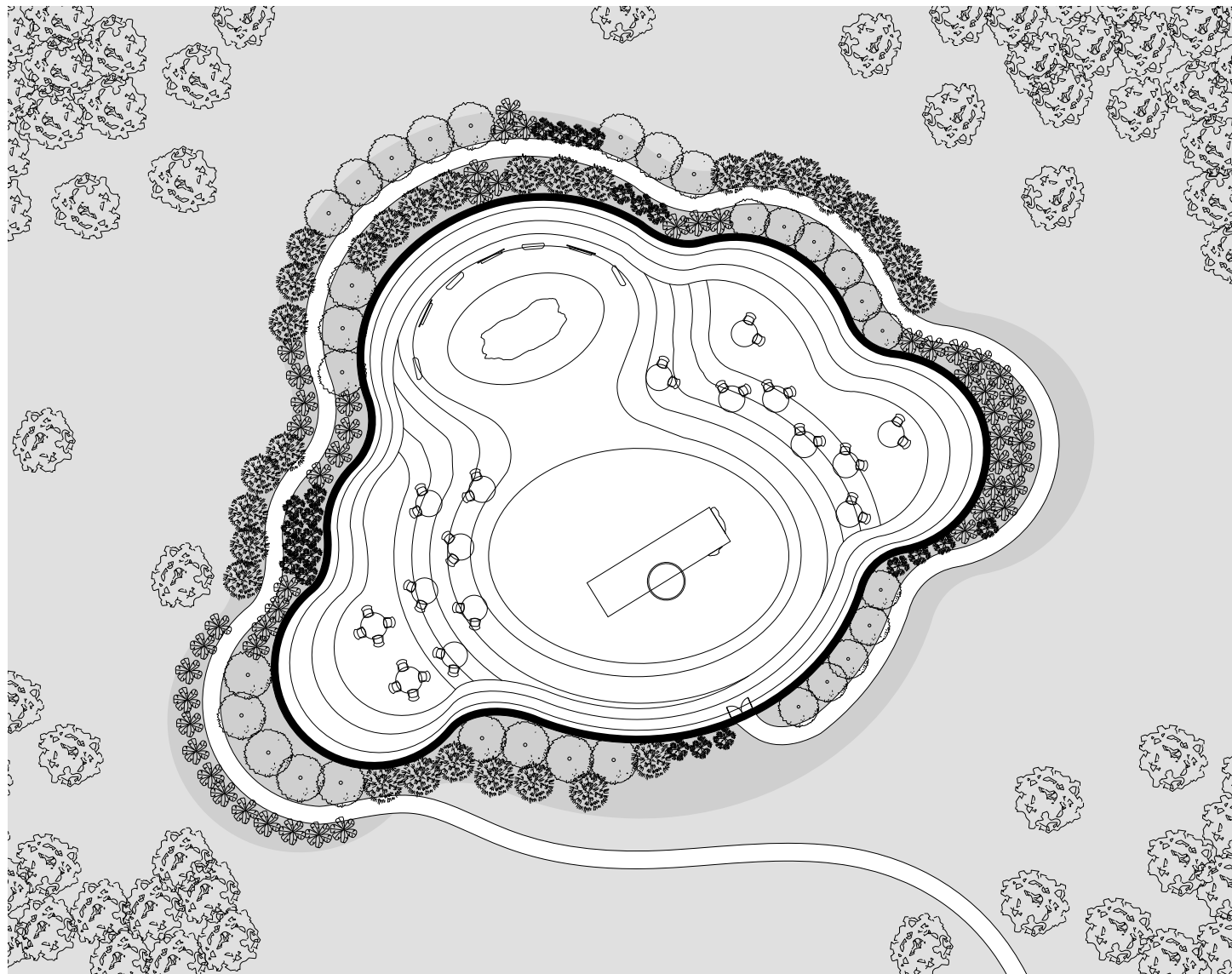
Critic

Prof. Eleni Petaloti

Prof. Leonidas Trampoukis

This project explores how food can serve as a powerful medium between people and the natural world. By examining the intersections of art and ecology, it invites us to rediscover the many roles food plays in our everyday lives—beyond sustenance. It brings attention to the visible and invisible consequences our choices have on the environment, and it creates a platform where activists, scientists, farmers, chefs, musicians, and local knowledge-holders can come together to engage deeply with place. Food becomes the tool—a vehicle for radical, meaningful connection with our surroundings.

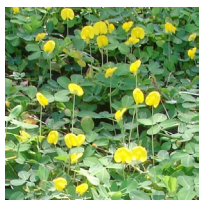




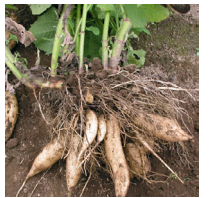
/Canopy Layer:



/Understory Layer:



/Shrub Layer:



/Herbaceous Layer:

/Ground Cover Layer:

/Root Layer:

A food forest is a sustainable, layered planting system that mimics a natural forest ecosystem while producing food. It includes trees, shrubs, herbs, vines, and groundcovers—each chosen for their role in supporting biodiversity and human nourishment. Unlike conventional agriculture, food forests regenerate soil, conserve water, and require minimal maintenance once established. They offer a holistic approach to growing food in harmony with nature.





