

In the Quiet of Continuity



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Ms.AAD 25' | GSAPP | Columbia University



## IN THE QUIET OF CONTINUITY

This body of work unfolds at the intersection of memory, land, and inquiry. Developed within the Ms.AAD program at Columbia GSAPP, the projects assembled here resist the notion of architecture as static form or isolated object. Instead, they approach architecture as an evolving system of temporal, spatial, ecological, and cultural. Memory is positioned not as nostalgia but as a method, an active, spatial practice through which continuity is sustained, ruptures are made visible, and stories are carried forward. Across geographies and mediums, the portfolio examines how infrastructures grounded in oral history, ecological stewardship, and ancestral knowledge, often excluded from dominant architectural discourse, operate as forms of architecture in their own right. These are not supplementary to spatial production; they are the foundations through which place is made and remade. Central to this inquiry is a refusal to uphold the false separation between nature and culture, or between story and structure. Projects trace the spatial logic of soil rituals, shadow ethics, deltaic extraction, and submerged sovereignties, proposing alternative ways of knowing and making that challenge the Cartesian and the colonial. Architecture here is not a singular act of design but a medium through which systems can be questioned, unlearned, and restructured. What emerges is a practice attuned to layered histories and speculative futures, where continuity does not mean repetition and where stories become the method and the medium. The work honors the wisdom of land as both epistemology and ground, suggesting that space is shaped as much by what is said and remembered as by what is drawn or constructed. To engage in this kind of practice is not to conclude, but to ask, to attend, and to alter to remain in motion with the evolving narratives of place.

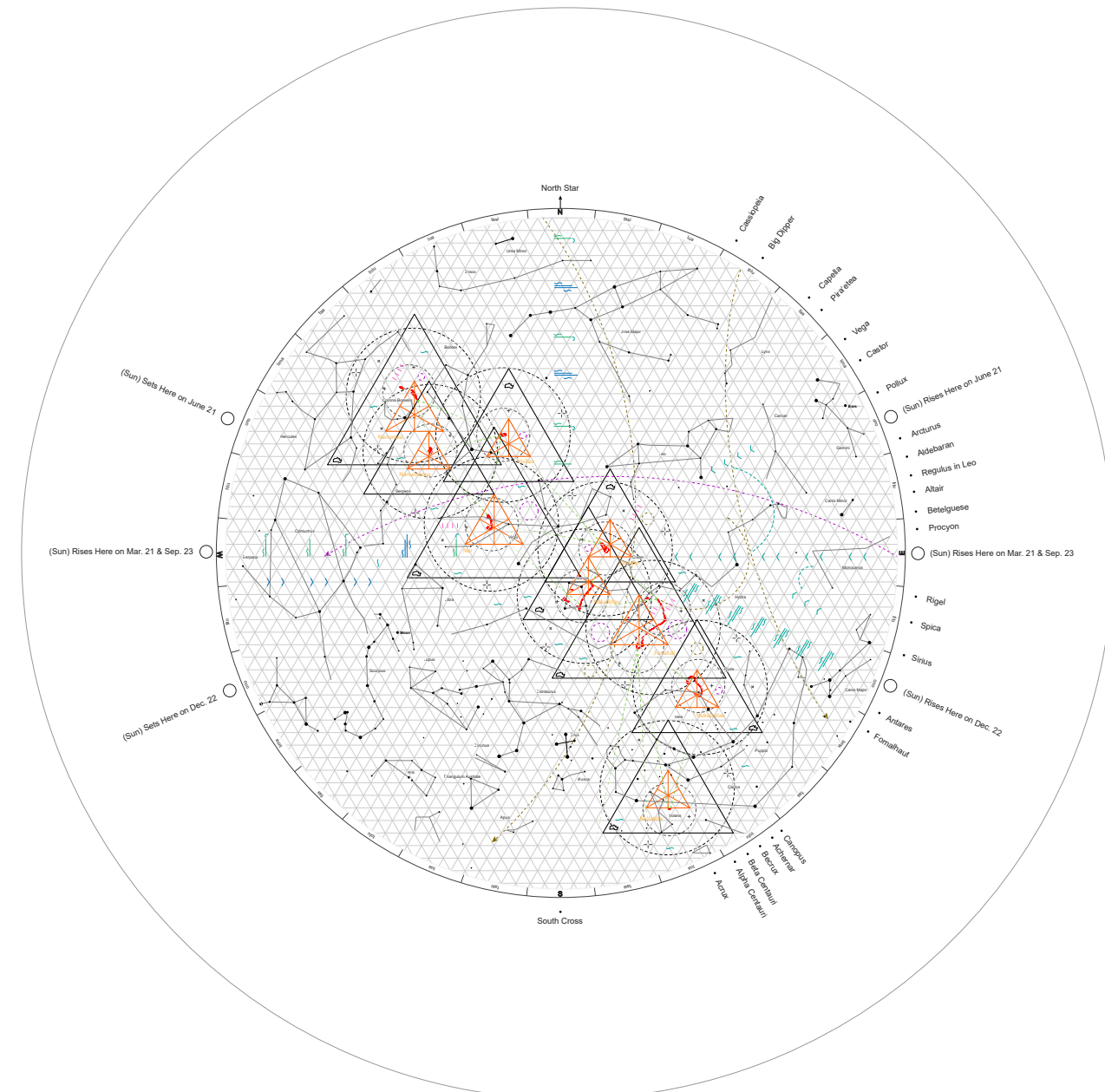


## BEYOND THE COORDINATES OF LOSS

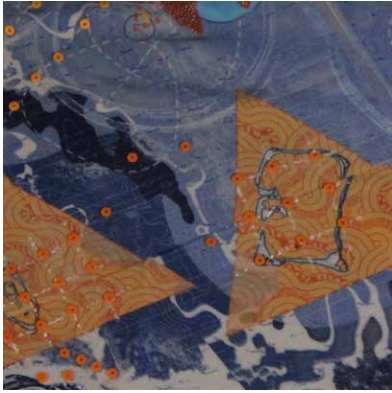
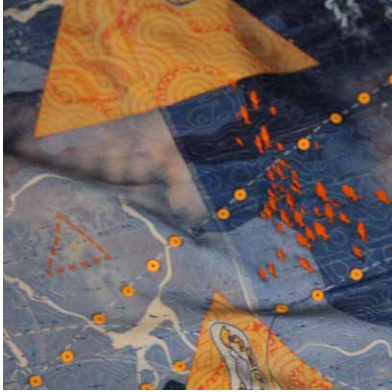
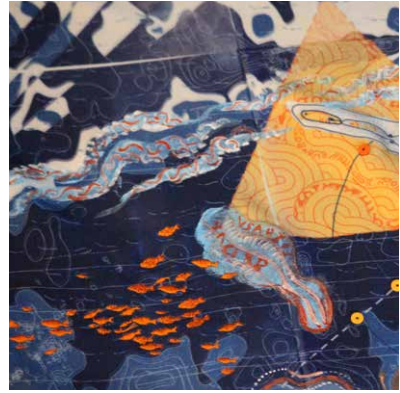
Oceanic Sovereignty: Alternative maps as testimonies, not territories

This project begins with a refusal: a refusal to let Tuvalu's nationhood dissolve with its land. Territory is not anchored in fixed coordinates but flows through oral memory, navigation, and ritual. As rising seas erase visible ground, the project asks, can sovereignty survive as memory, as practice, as a cartography of relation? Current maritime law, encoded in UNCLOS, binds sovereignty to surface landmass. This colonial framework renders submerged states legally invisible. In response, the project proposes a counter cartography, one that centers continuity over visibility and cultural testimony over physical presence. A rotating compass maps frictions between indigenous navigation and rising tides. It overlays myth with climate data, revealing epistemic exposures evidence of the gap between colonial mapping and oral geographies. Alongside it, a fabric map stitched with ocean ecologies and clan geographies acts as both archive and affidavit. Every thread is a claim; every line, a migration trace reframed as sovereign continuity. The project proposes a speculative amendment to UNCLOS, recognizing mnemonic jurisdictions, cultural waters, and the legal rights of submerged nations. Sovereignty becomes fluid, sustained through ocean based infrastructures that move with memory and circulate stories. Not fixed on dry land, it floats: storied, mobile, enduring.

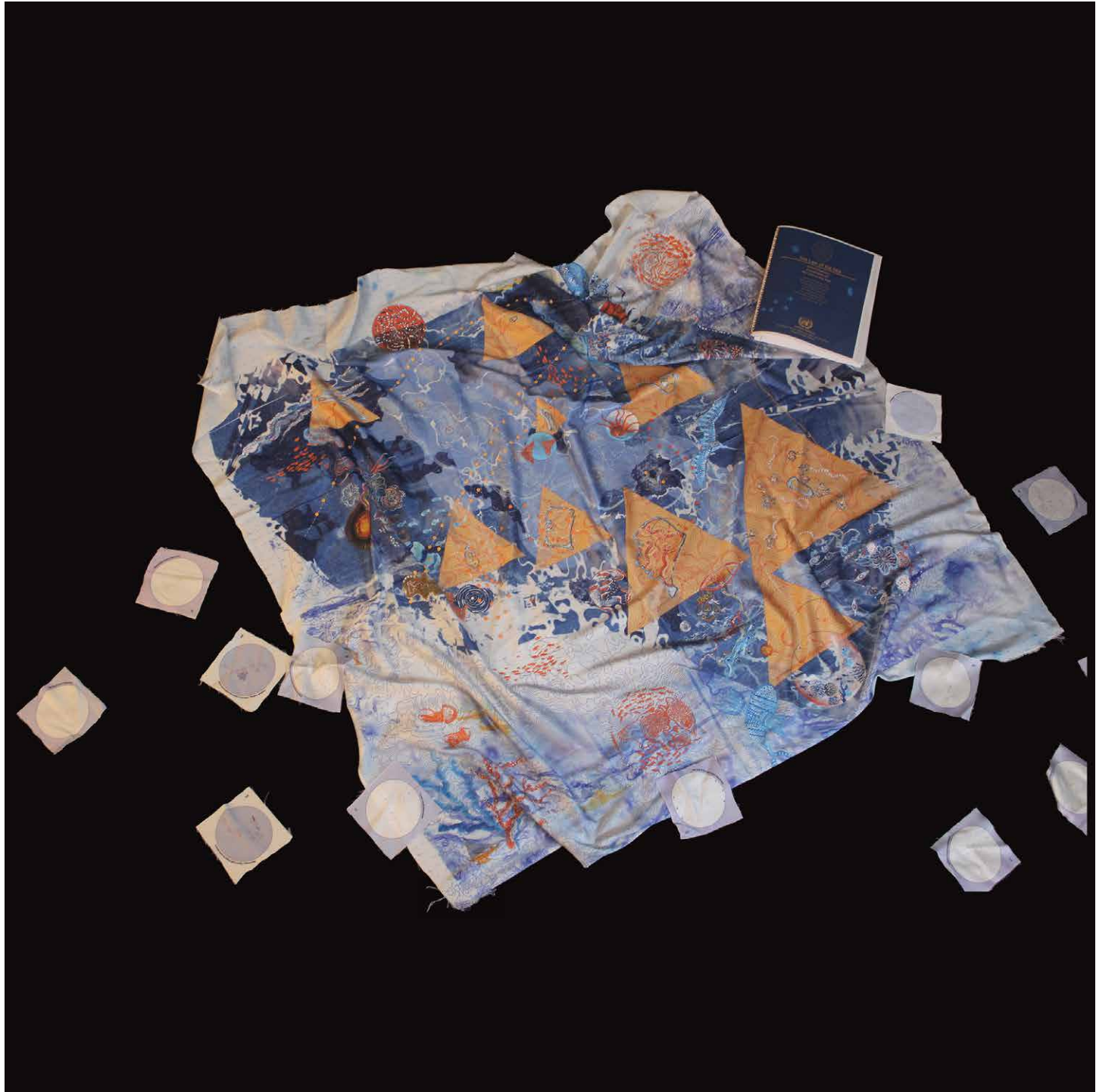
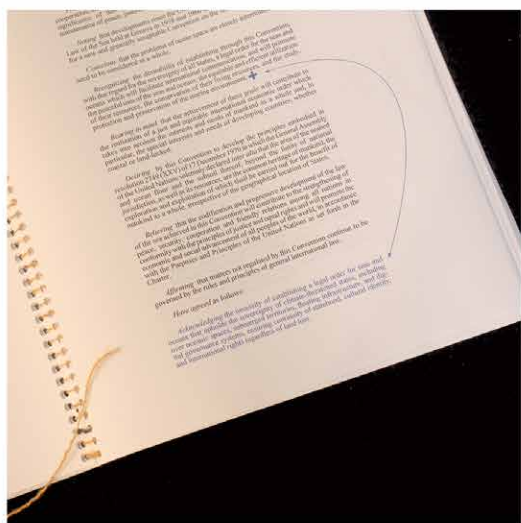
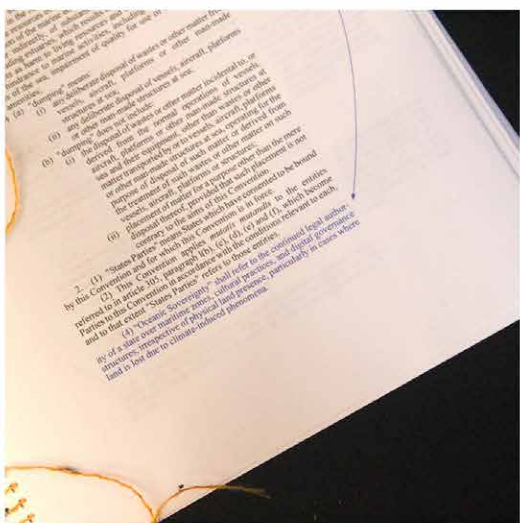
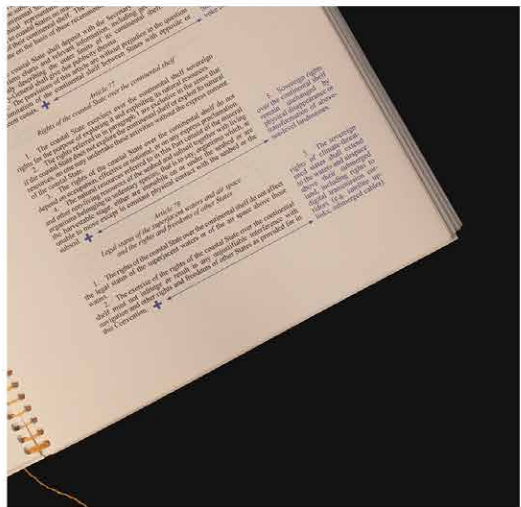
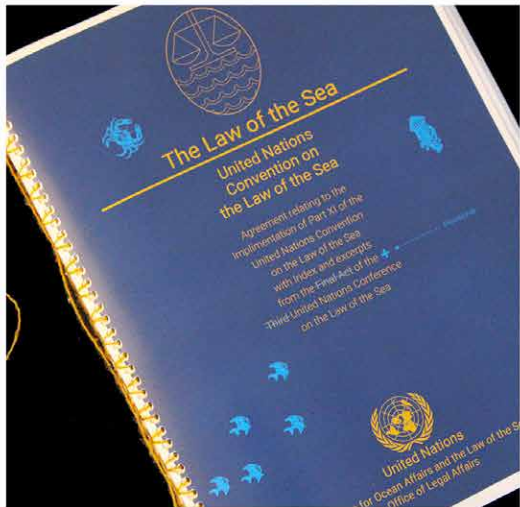














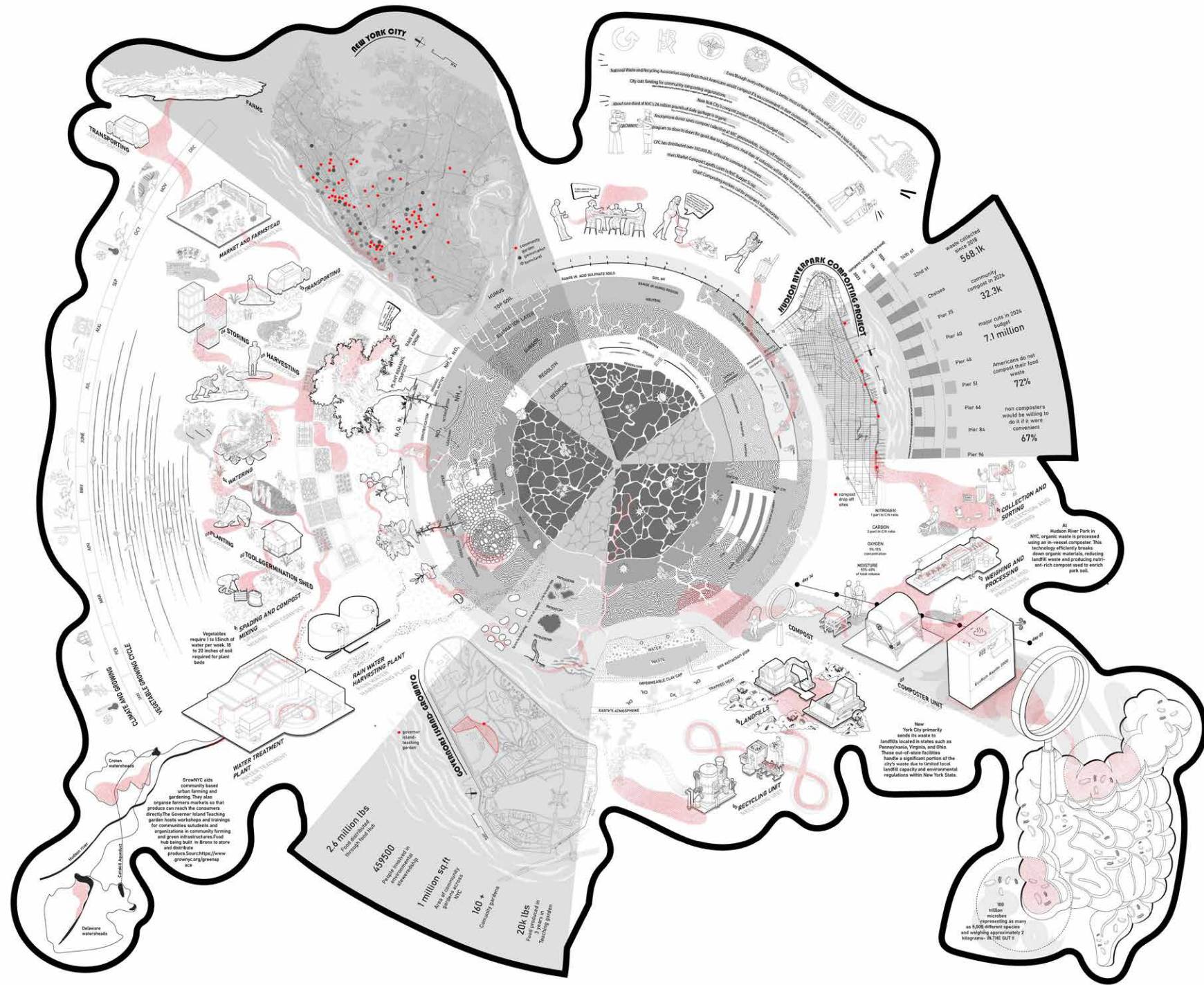
## MEMORY OF THE FUTURE

### Infrastructures of Decomposition and Growth

This project begins with the soil not as inert matter beneath the city but as a living, metabolic infrastructure that challenges the divide between nature and culture. Memory of the Future maps New York City's above and below ground soil systems, tracing how life is continuously generated, broken down, and regenerated through cycles of decomposition, microbial labor, and human interaction. Across three soil contact zones in the city, soil-based markers are introduced to make visible and active these ongoing processes. Inspired by the Tibetan mani stupa, where each marker is constructed from soil and embedded with seeds, farming tools, and ecological relics, objects of cultivation and memory. These structures are designed to slowly decompose back into the ground, reinforcing that remembering is not static but cyclical. The project proposes these soil markers as living archives, ritual sites that invite care, decomposition, and renewal. In doing so, it reimagines infrastructure not as a fixed system but as a spatial practice rooted in ecological reciprocity and temporal resilience. Memory of the Future asks how architecture can hold space for loss, regeneration, and the earth's unseen labor, activating memory not only to mourn what may disappear but also to sustain what must continue.



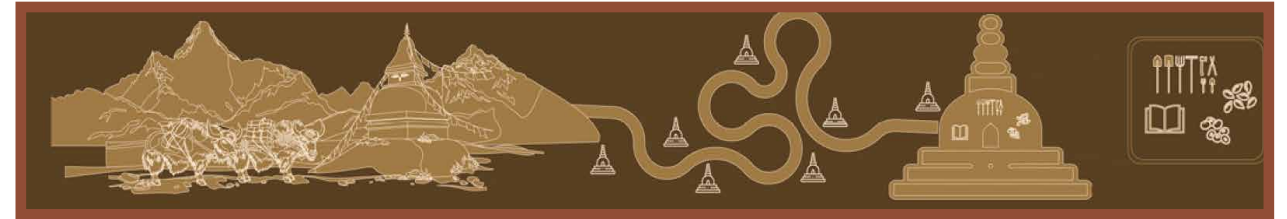






# Memory of the future

Soil rituals for the seed of death and burial of life



Sustain soil contact zones

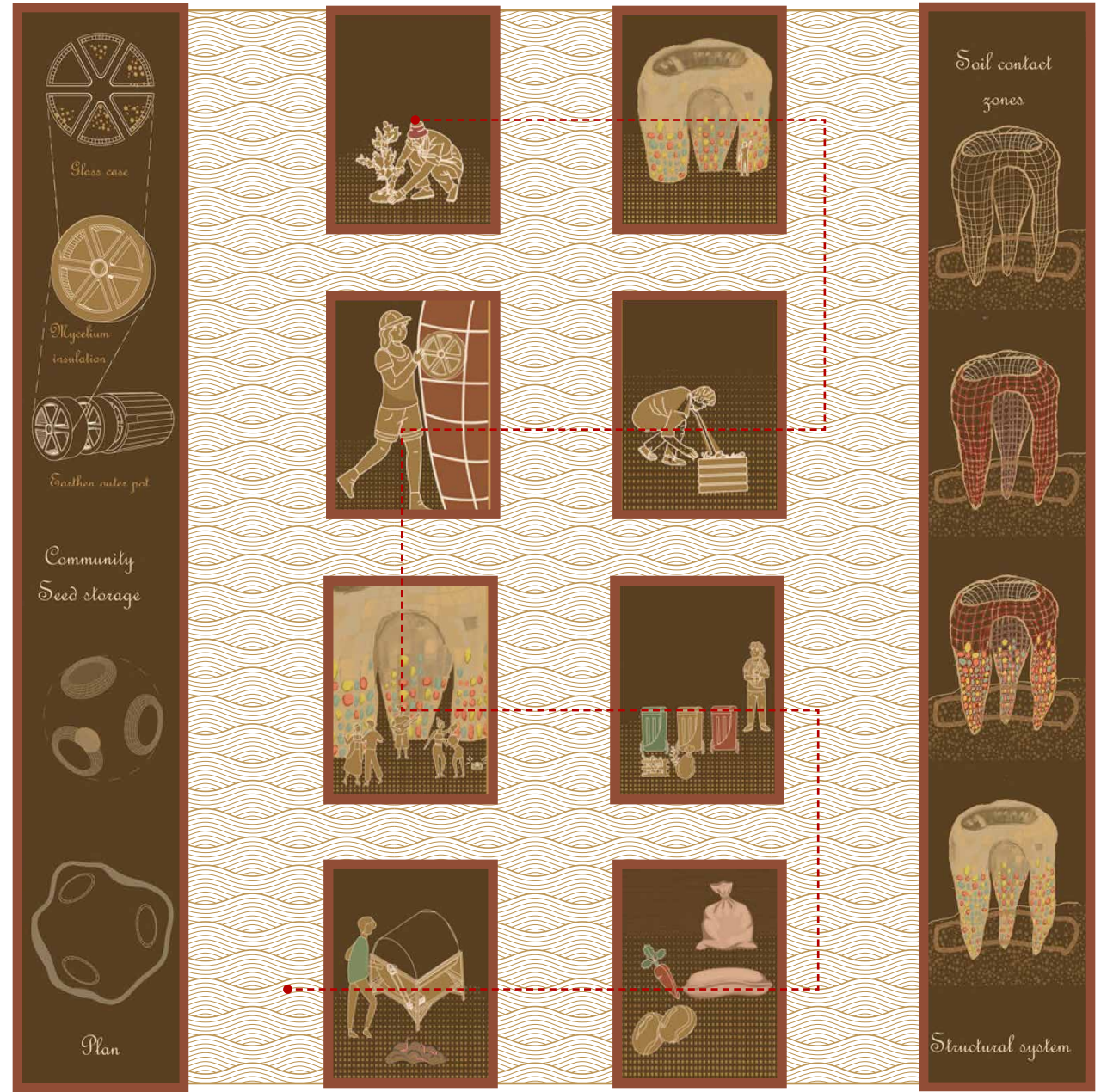
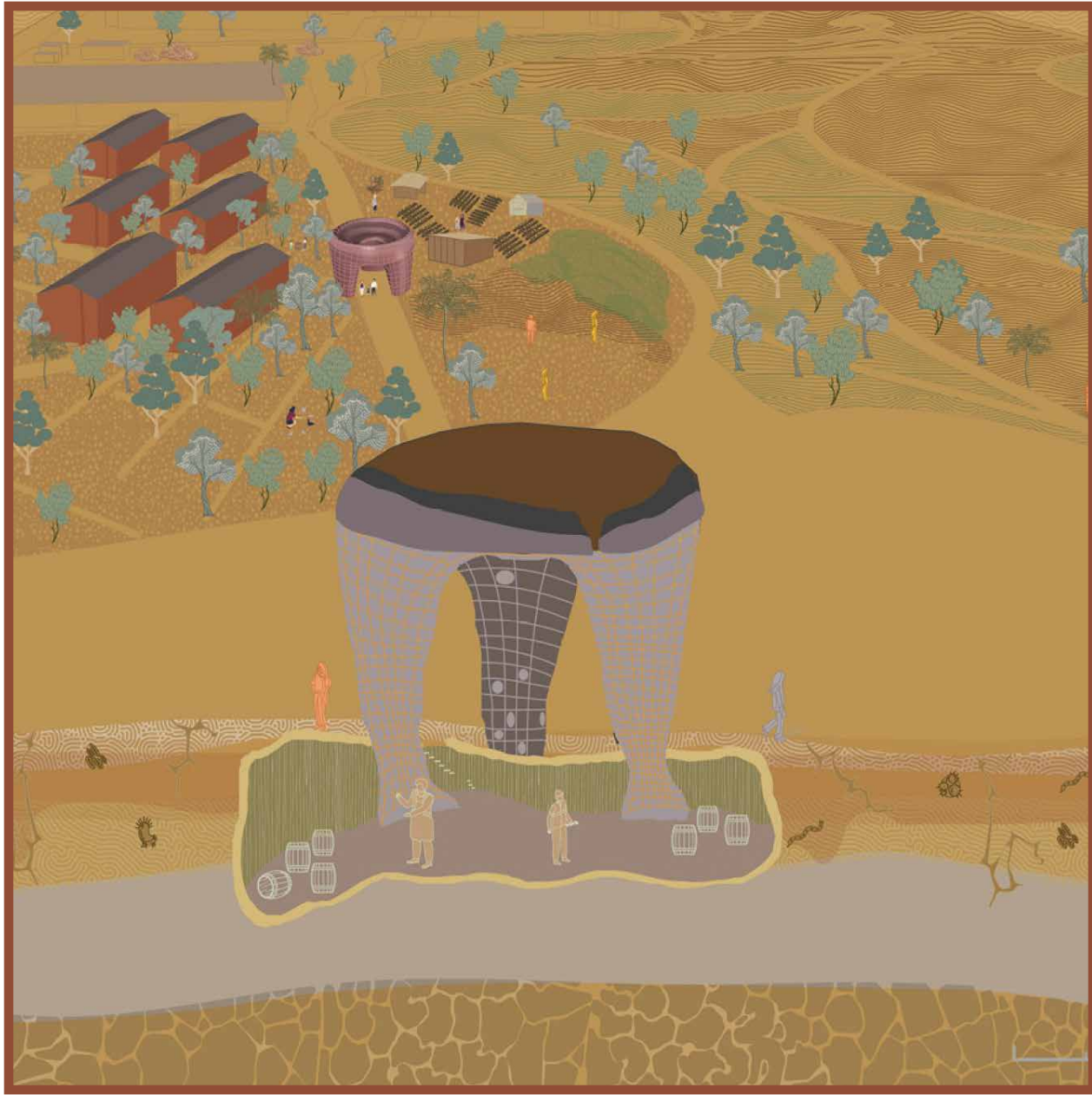


Activate soil contact zones

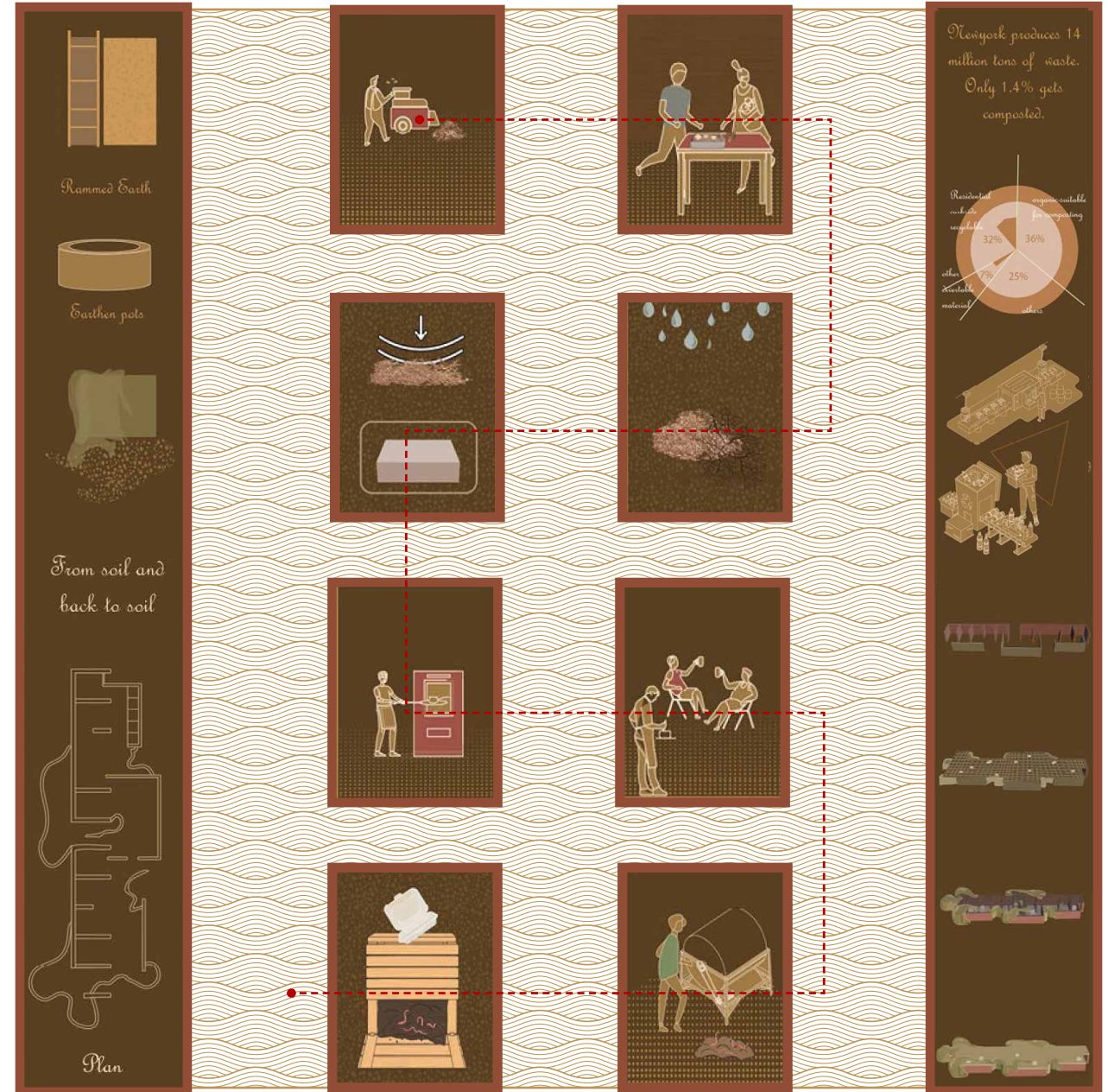
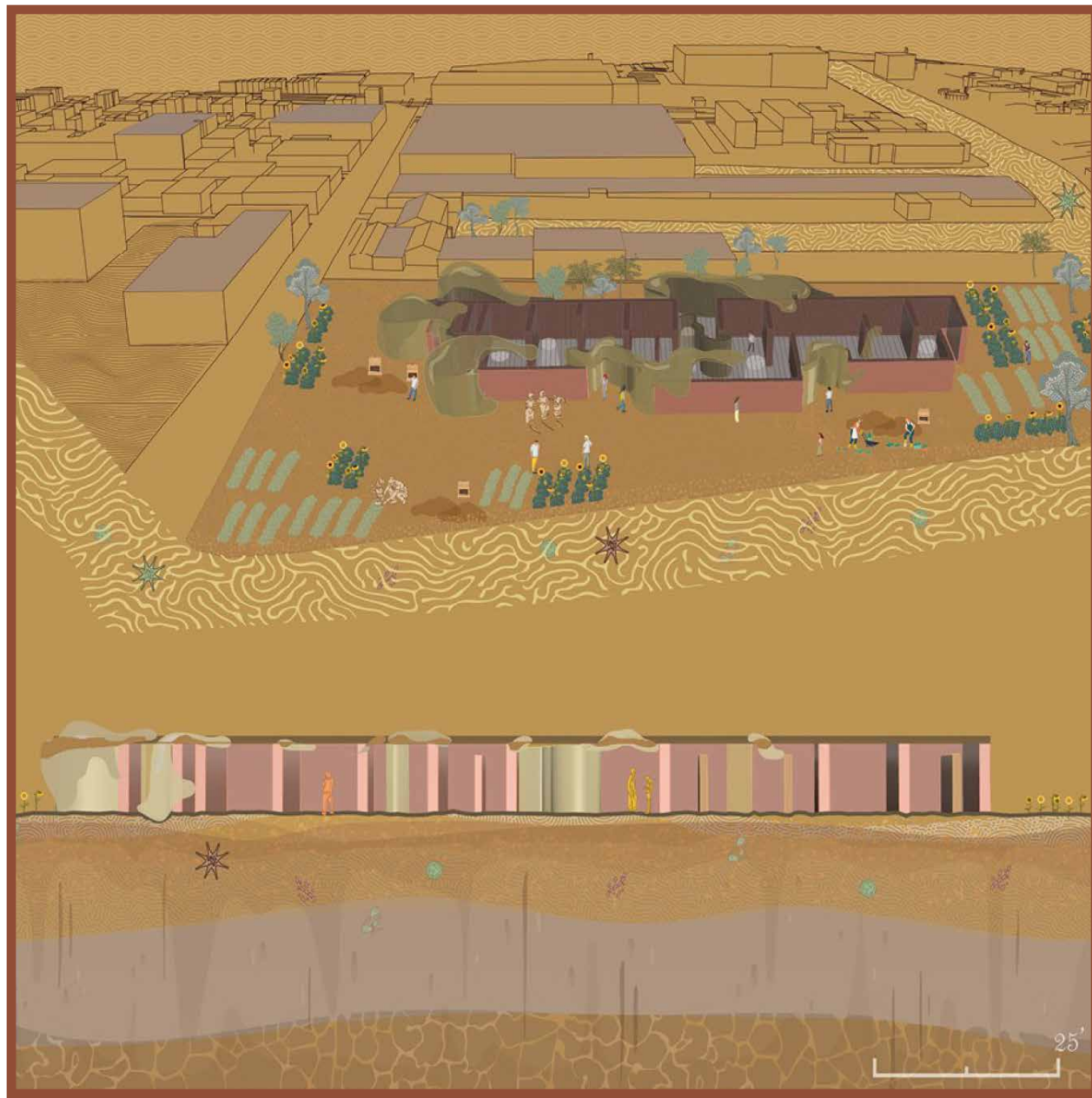
Re activate soil contact zones

















## A PLACE CALLED HOME

Belonging through memory, repair, and placefulness

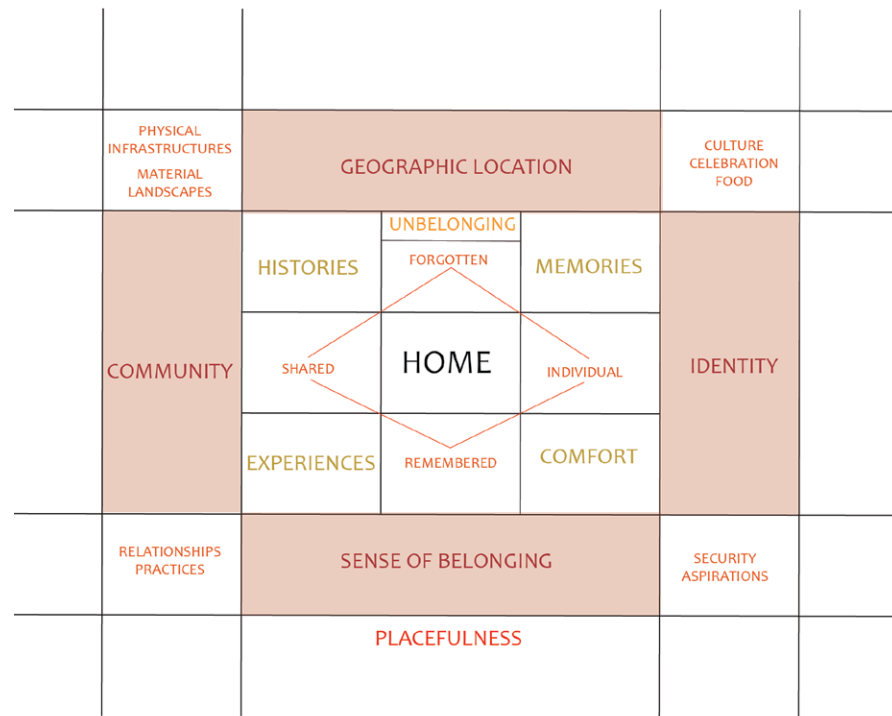
The Chelsea-Elliot and Fulton Houses, public housing complexes in Chelsea, NYC, stand at the edge of demolition, caught between the weight of their histories and the violence of erasure. These buildings are more than structures; they are vessels of memory. They hold joy, struggle, lineage, and the everyday rhythms of life. Yet gentrification has made their residents feel increasingly out of place in their own homes. This project proposes an alternative to displacement: not demolition, but repair. The existing buildings are retained, retrofitted boilers are replaced with heat pumps, and solar infrastructure generates both power and revenue for upkeep. But more critically, the spatial logic of the ‘tower in the park’ is reimagined. Courtyards and lobbies, once residual, become sites of care: play areas, study rooms, gardens, and weekly community markets. These spaces remain active and adaptable, fostering rhythms of gathering, use, and return. Placefulness, where physical space supports emotional attachment and shared ritual, becomes the ground for rebuilding a sense of identity. A place is not home until one feels seen within it. Architecture here is not simply shelter; it becomes a framework for continuity, for intergenerational memory, and for identity. It is not just about preventing loss but cultivating presence. Through these interventions, the project asks, can place carry the weight of both joy and trauma and still remain home?



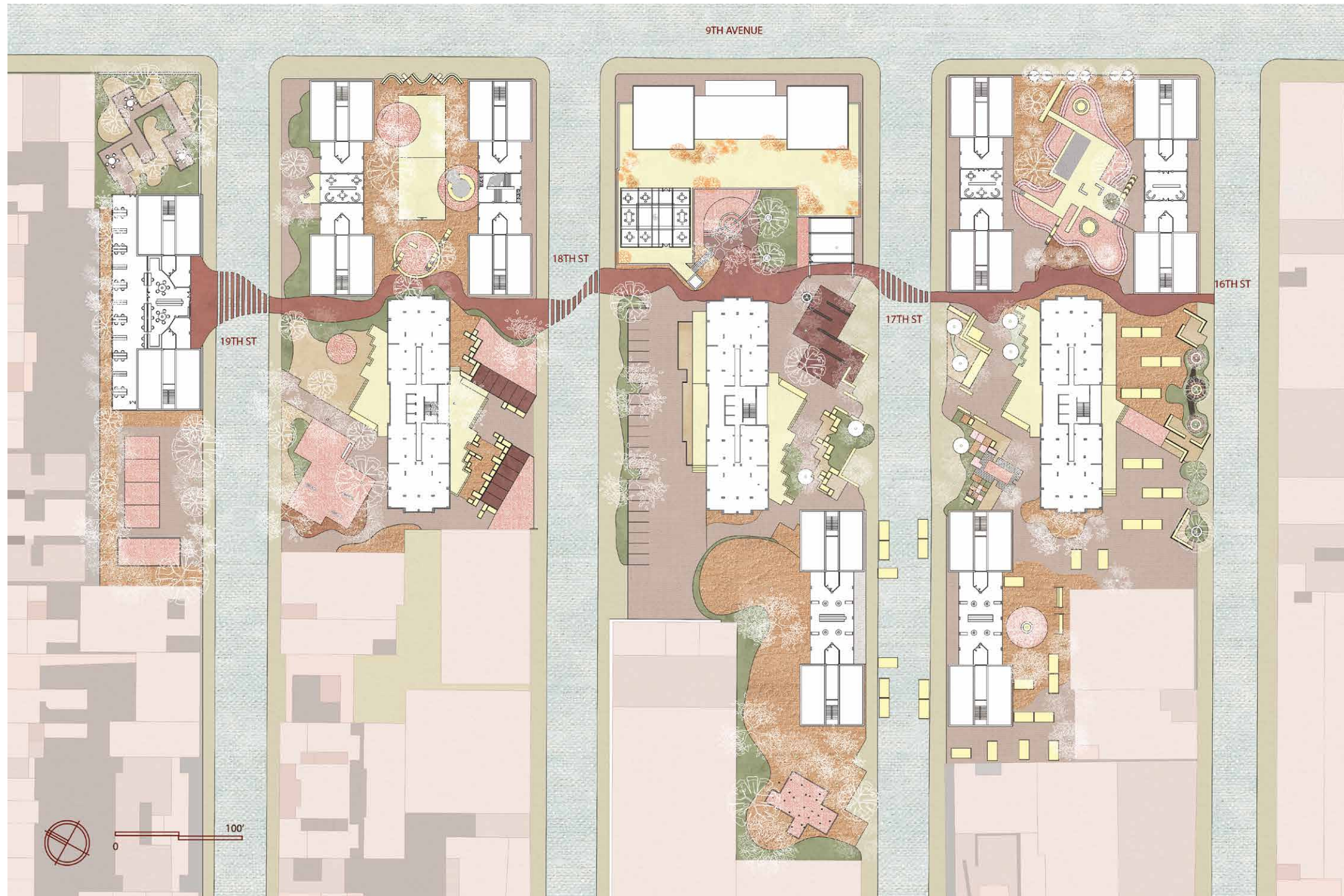








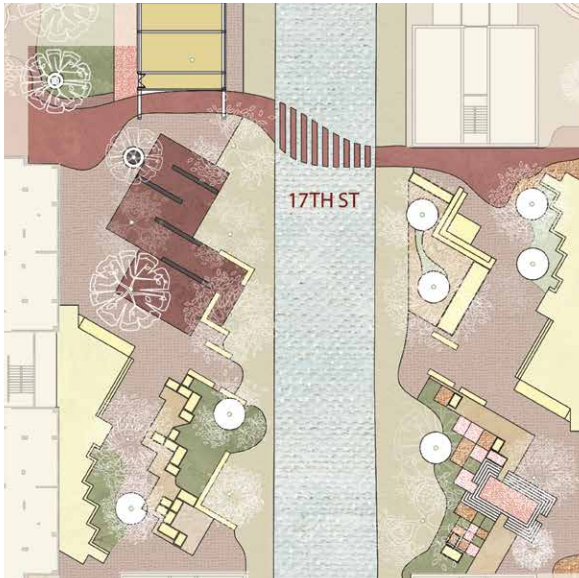
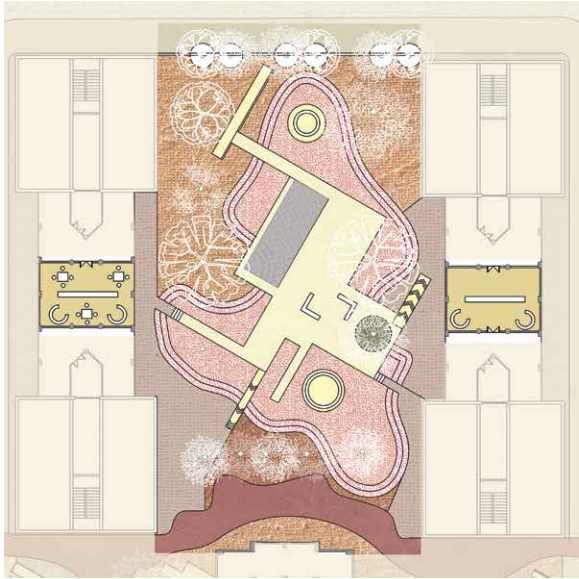
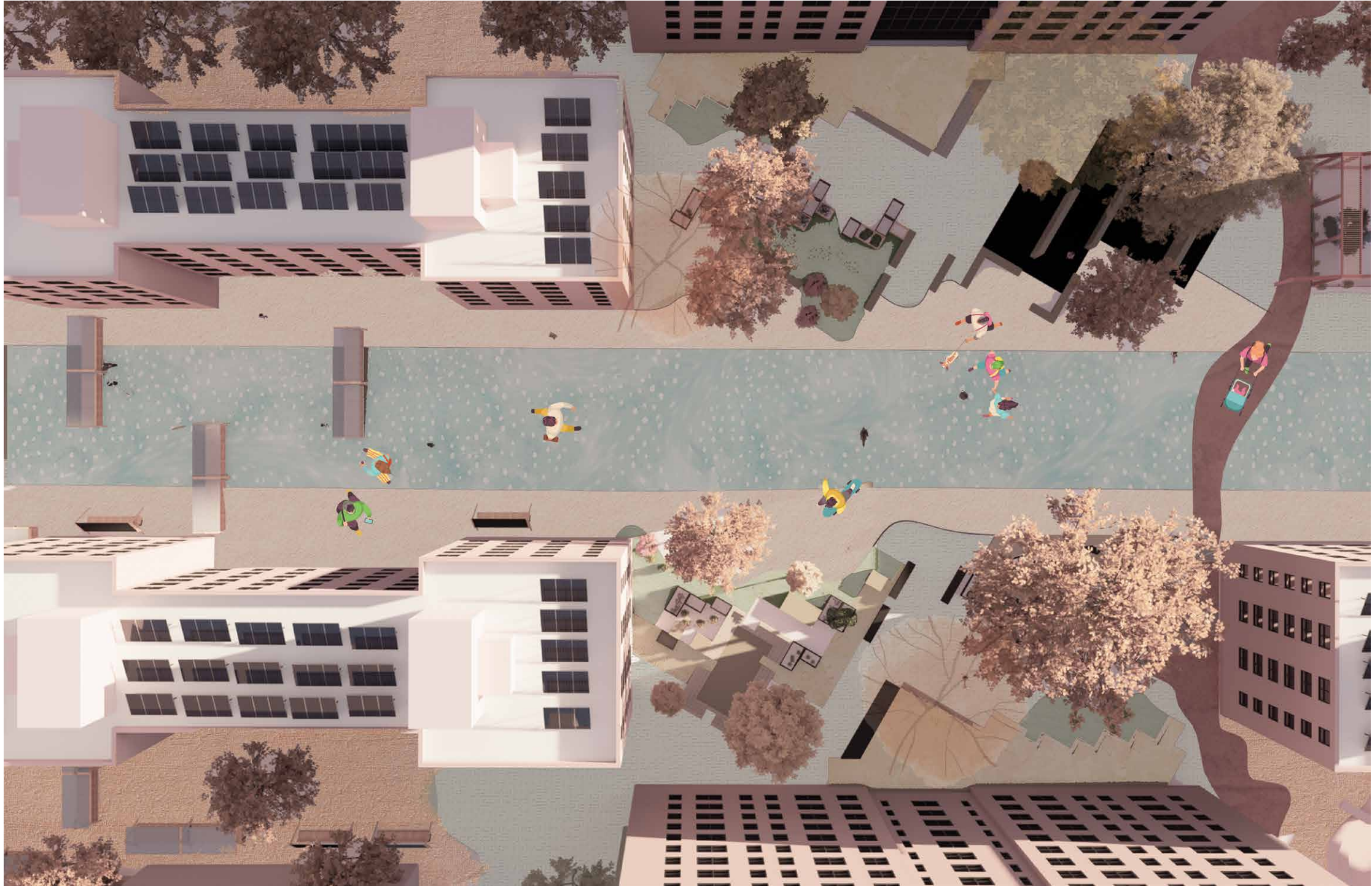




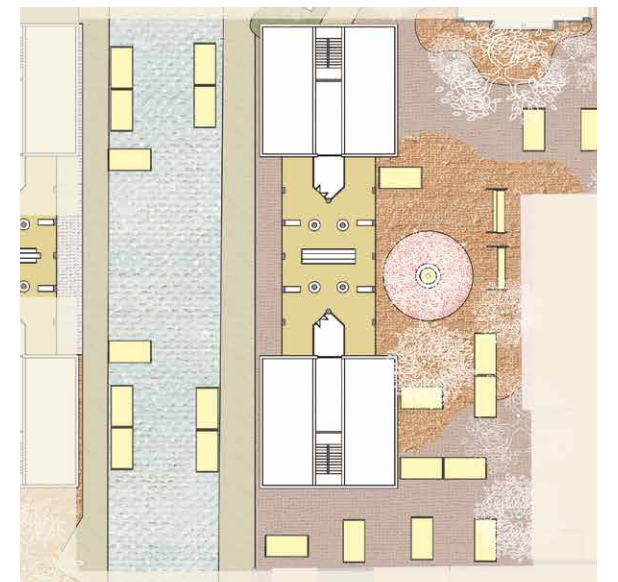
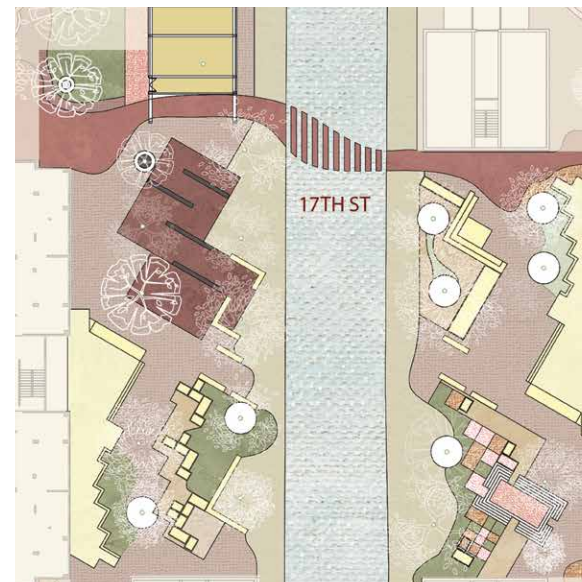
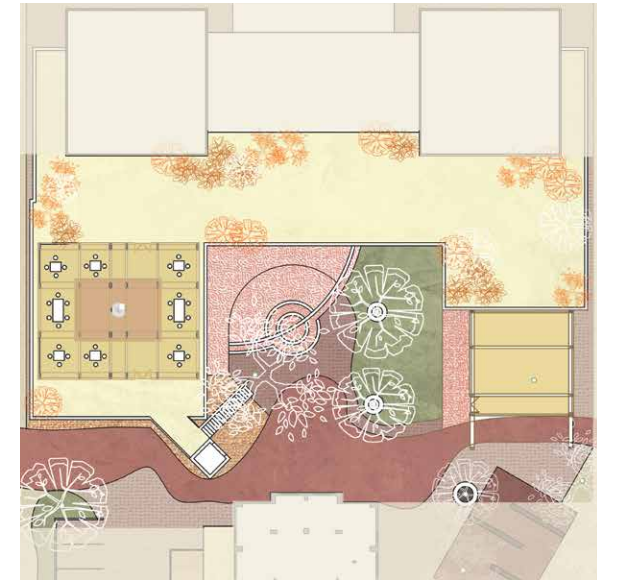
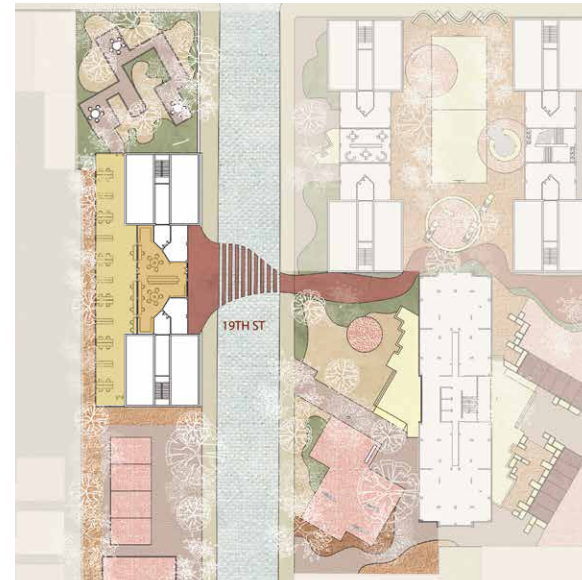




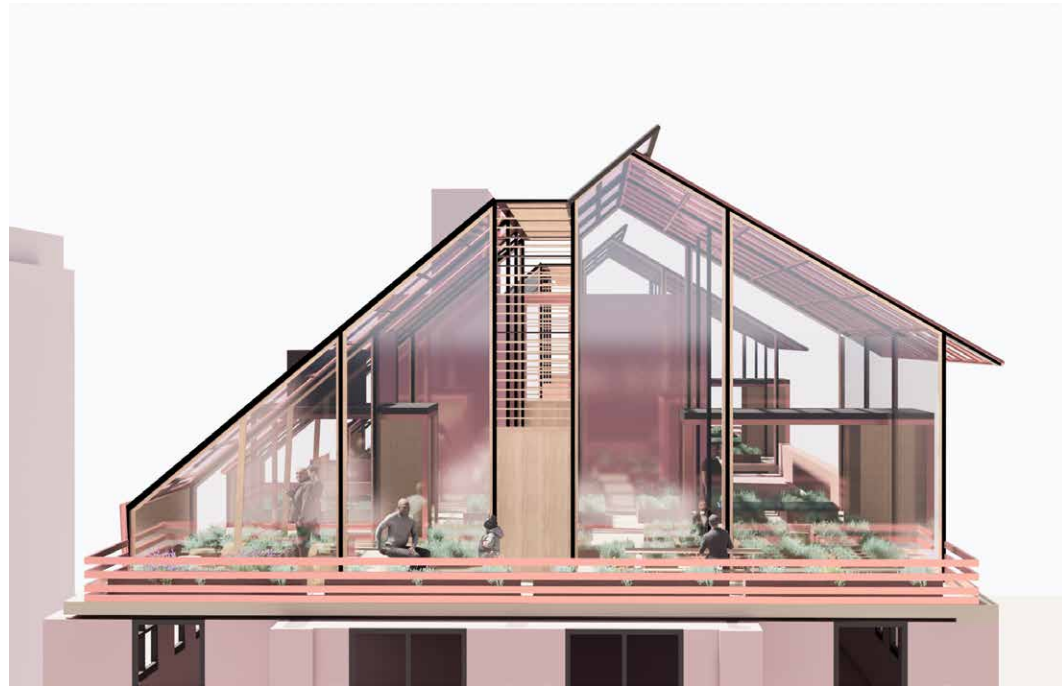




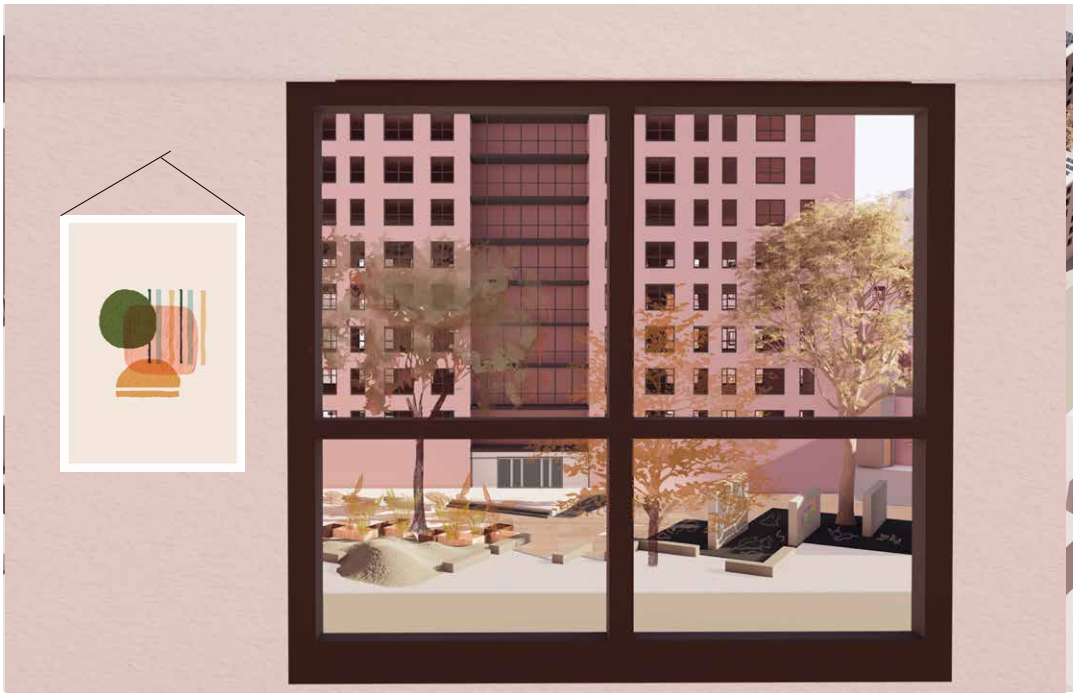














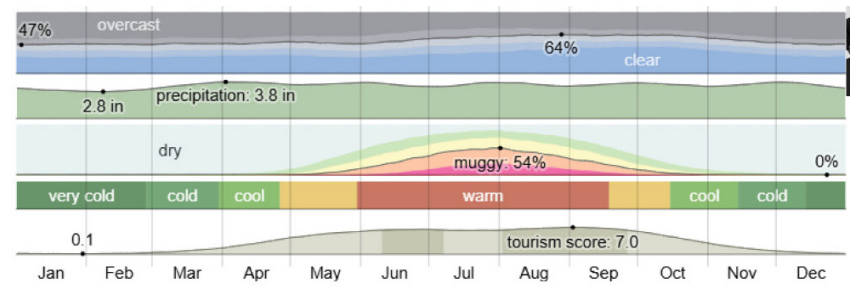
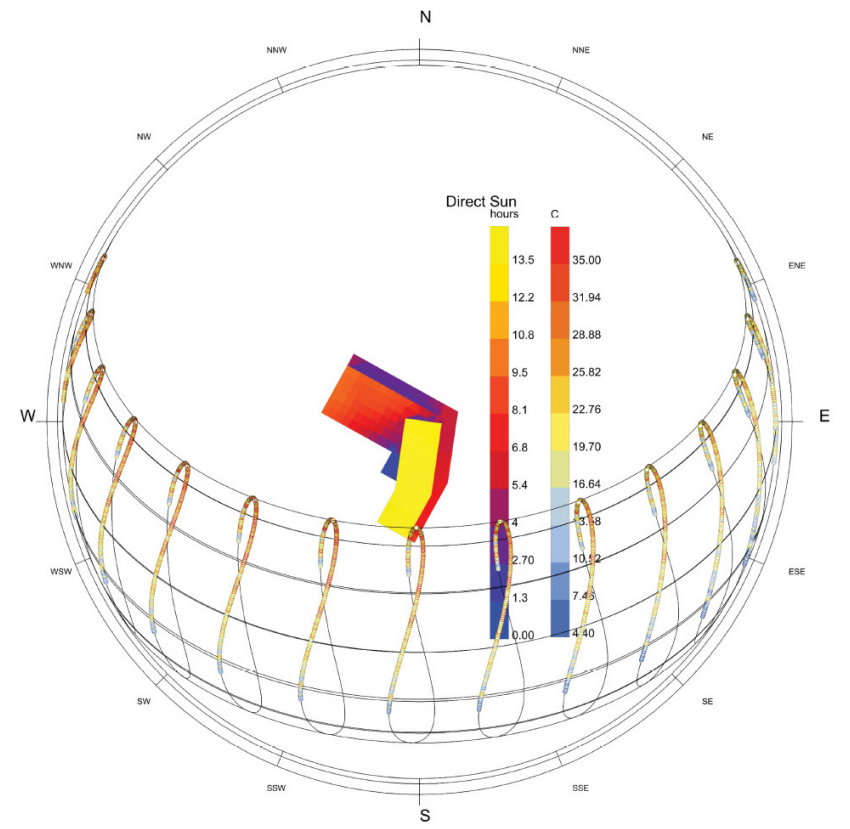
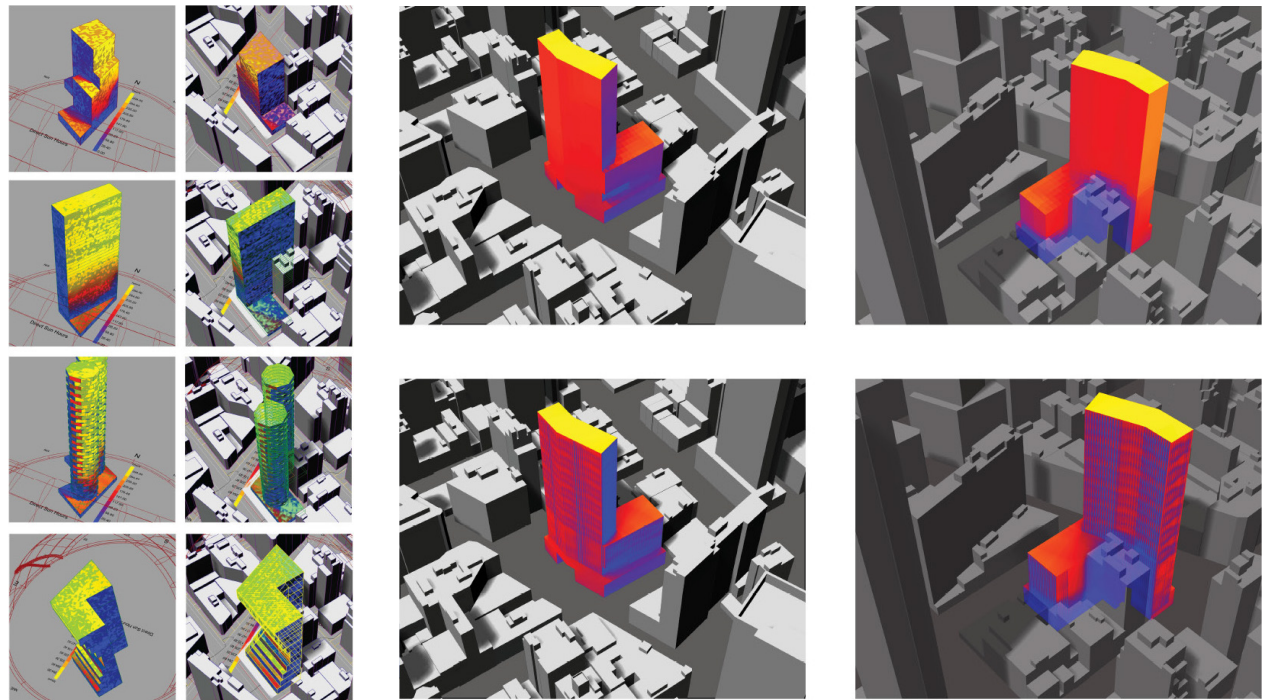
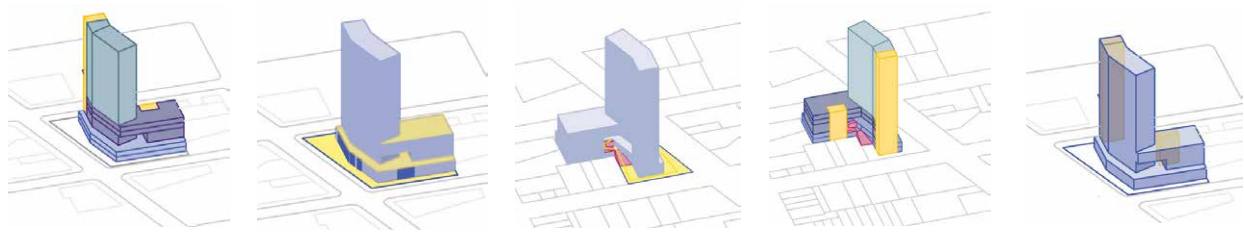


## HELIO FINS

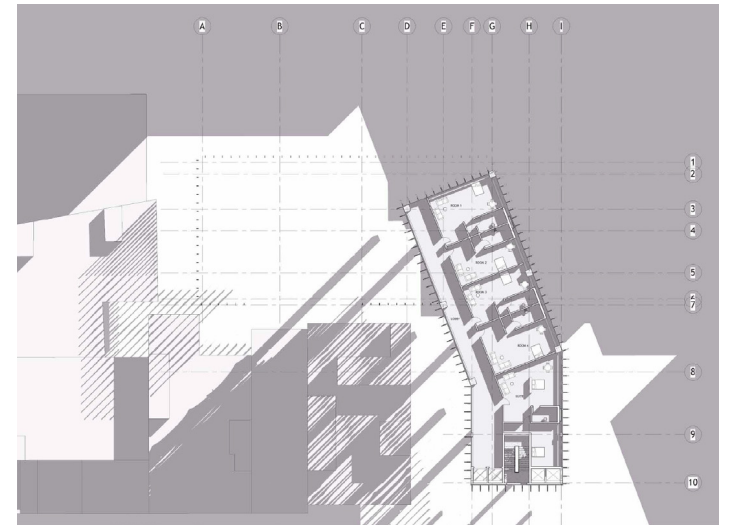
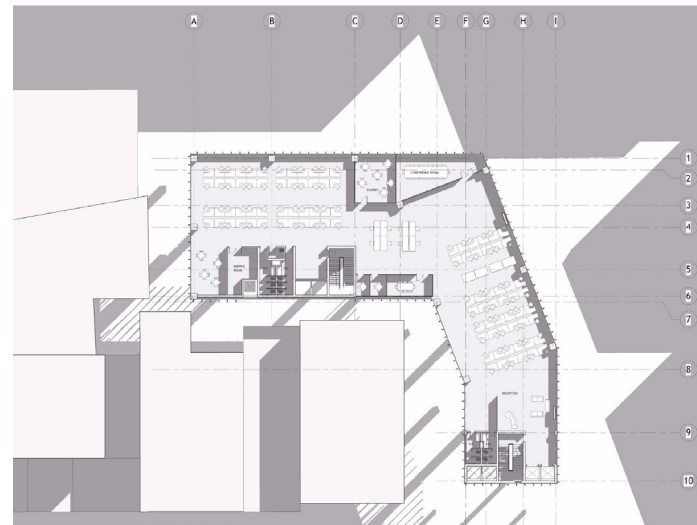
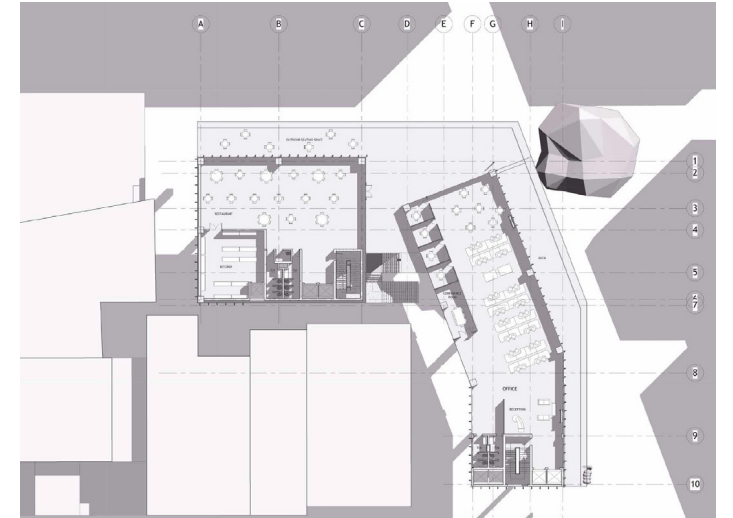
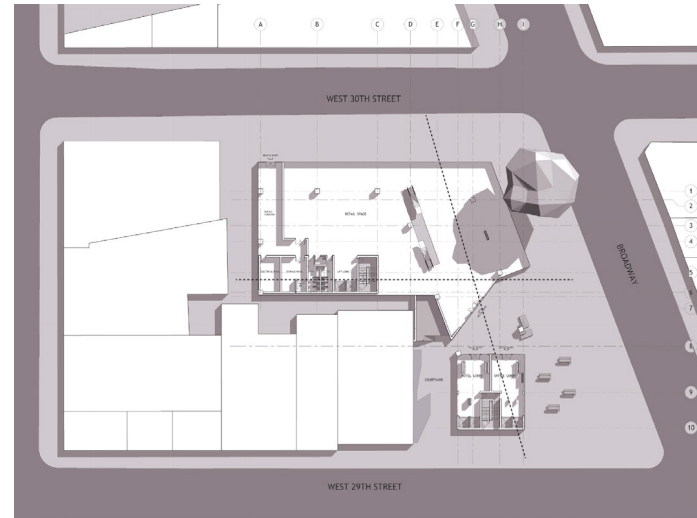
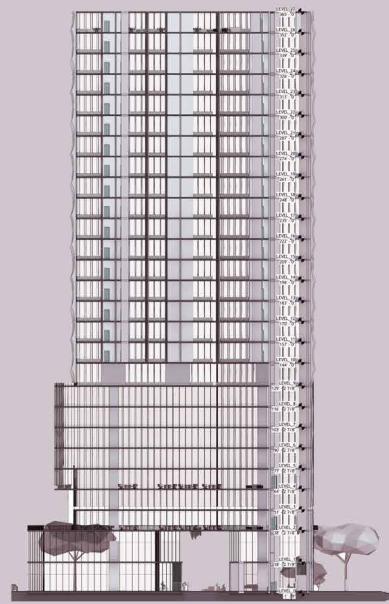
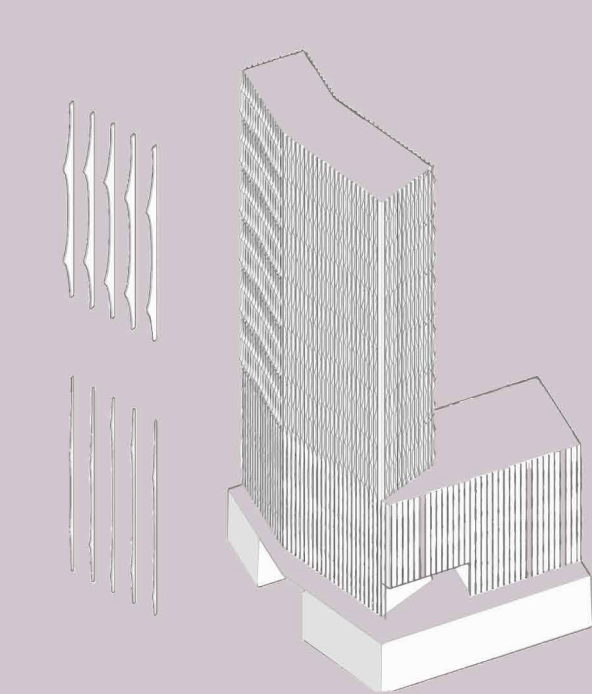
Design Through Solar Analysis and BIM integration

A mixed-use tower in New York City that rethinks vertical development as an ecologically responsive and socially attuned urban form. The design process began with a solar and heat gain analysis using Grasshopper, which informed the variable depth of facade fins. These fins, optimized for performance, reduce solar exposure and minimize heat gain across the building envelope, enhancing interior comfort and overall energy efficiency. The tower is vertically organized by program: retail and commercial spaces anchor the first two floors, followed by nine levels of office space and capped with a hotel above. The facade's responsive geometry gives the building a dynamic identity, one that shifts with the sun and reflects the building's environmental intelligence. At the ground level, shaded terraces and open thoroughfares create a porous public realm. Drawing from the spatial logics of community oriented housing, it reinterprets the role of courtyards and thresholds within a vertical context. The project negotiates between private and public realms through a series of open terraces, shaded passages, and semi public courtyards that activate the tower's base. Rather than isolating the tower from its surroundings, the design fosters continuity and permeability, offering a model for high-rise living that is both spatially generous and socially inclusive. isappear but also to sustain what must continue.

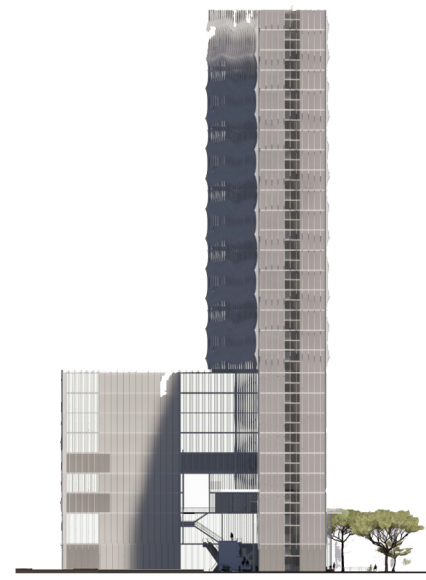
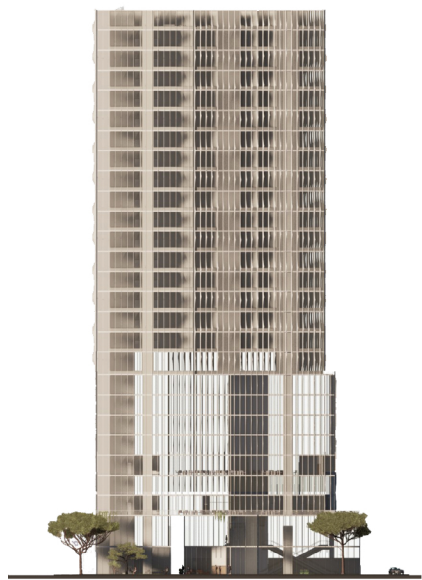
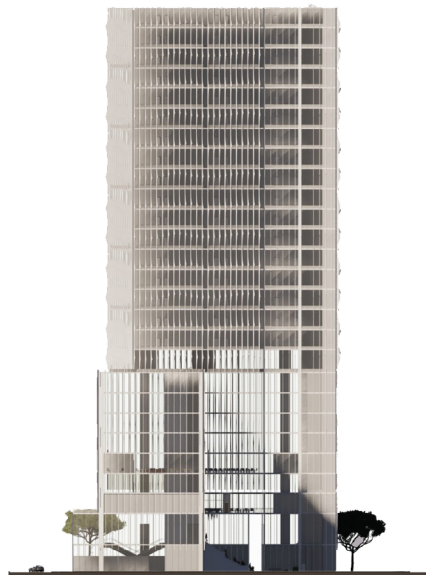
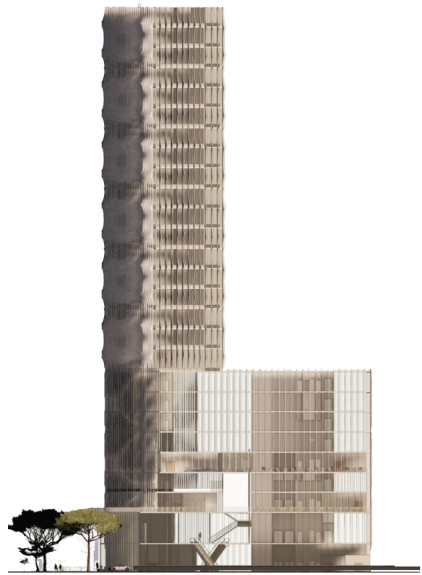










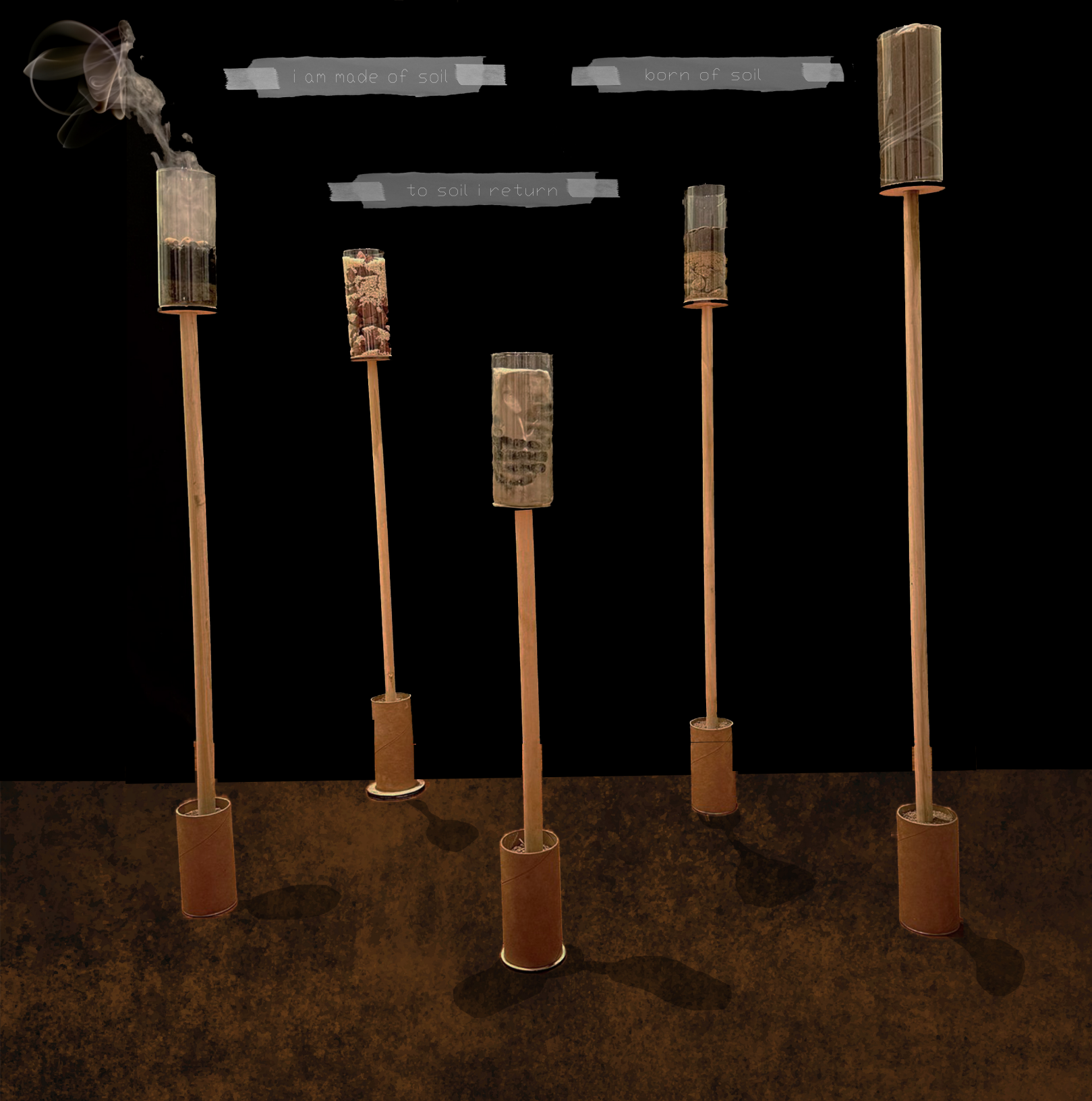




## SILT ROUTES

Stories of Extraction from the Bengal Delta

In the riverine heart of Bangladesh, soil is both sustenance and sacrifice. Brought down from the Himalayas and carried through the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna delta, this alluvial clay has long nourished fields, built homes, and rooted communities. But today, it burns. This exhibition traces a cartography of the extraction of the earth turned to commodity and of livelihoods eroded by fire. From floodplain to kiln, Silt Routes maps the journey of soil as it is stripped, sold, and scorched. The land's skin, "its fertile topsoil, is peeled away by the brick industry, sold by farmers in desperate barter, and molded into bricks that fuel the skyline of a nation in flux. What remains is not growth, but depletion: of land, of labor, of breathable air. At the center of this installation are six glass cylinders, monuments to a dismembered landscape. Each holds a layer of river silt, arable clay, harvested soil, fired brick, kiln ash, and broken earth. They stand as both archive and altar, a "material witness" to an ecological wound. As the mangroves of Sundarbans seek to sequester carbon, Bangladesh's bricks release it. As rising tides displace communities, they are also undone by the slow violence of land loss, which leaves them sold, fired, and forgotten. What if the soil could speak? What would it remember? What futures lie buried in the clay?





allowed extraction 0.3 m

extract clay from depths 0.9 to 2.4 m



Sea level rise

Smoke and sooth from Klin burning

loamy sands, sandy loams,  
or sandy clay loams

Actors : Land

Top soil loss for farming

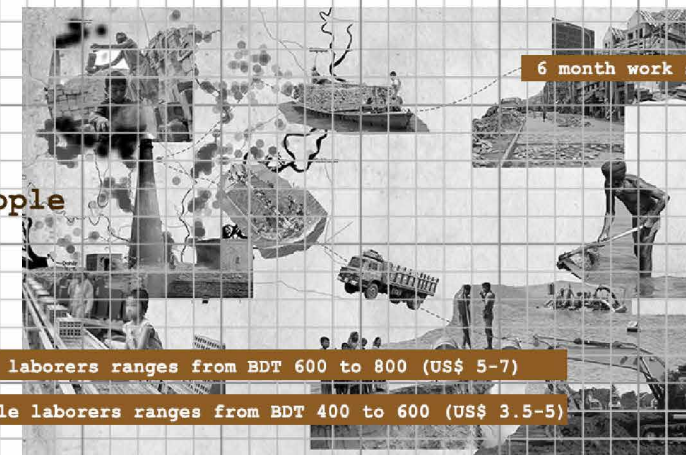
> water collection in dug fields

Actors : People

1.2 million people employed

Farmers selling top soil

40 - 80% < crop productio : 40 - 70% < income



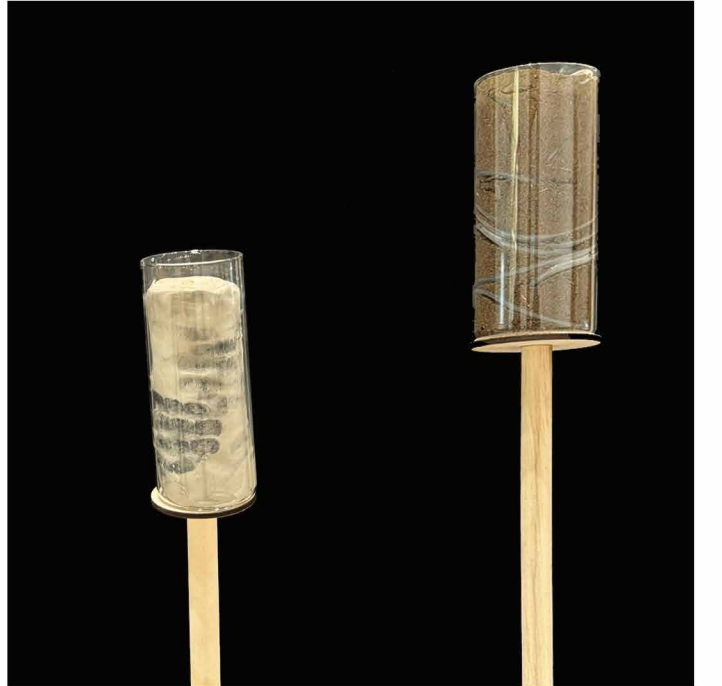
6 month work season

daily wage male laborers ranges from BDT 600 to 800 (US\$ 5-7)

daily wage female laborers ranges from BDT 400 to 600 (US\$ 3.5-5)

Brick Klin owners and Govt Bodies







The Poetics of Absence: Shadows and the Architecture of Restraint.  
Reading Tanizaki: Shadows as Cultural Infrastructure

Theory, Space, and Material Memory

Phenomenology, Non-Western Epistemes, and Postcolonial Echoes

“Architecture should not erase the memory of its past, but rather hold it in shadow.  
*Light flattens, shadow thickens. In shadow, memory lingers.*”

Shadow as Cultural Infrastructure

What if infrastructure was not built of steel and concrete, but of silence, ambiguity, and shadow?

Tanizaki renders shadow as a non-Western system of meaning, a spatial technology that encodes memory and ritual. This is not a lack but an alternative infrastructure that resists legibility and control.

The Aesthetics of Restraint

Can architecture withdraw to speak louder?

In a world obsessed with exposure and visibility, Tanizaki reclaims restraint as a radical aesthetic act. He teaches us that the power of architecture lies not in what it reveals, but in what it withholds an ethics of spatial ambiguity.

Materiality and Memory

Is the obsession with the new a form of erasure?

Against modernism's polished surfaces, Tanizaki elevates the aged, the textured, the worn materials that carry memory. Lacquerware gleaming in shadow becomes a political object: one that archives the passage of time and local cosmology.

On Memory and the Weight of Light

What if forgetting was architectural?

When the world is overexposed, memory fades not from absence, but from saturation. To remember is to dwell in shadow to allow space for silence, for echo, for grain.

In Japanese aesthetics, beauty lives in the incomplete, the veiled, the worn. Wabi-sabi honors erosion, and yūgen elevates the barely seen. Tanizaki teaches us that in darkness, objects deepen. But his shadows often conceal more than just architecture they mask the gendered gaze through which he frames space.

What appears as restraint can also be control; what is veiled may not always be protected, but silenced. We must ask: whose memory is preserved in shadow and who is made invisible? Architecture, then, is not just the poetics of absence, but the politics of perception.

Architecture as Cultural Resistance

Whose values shape the built world?

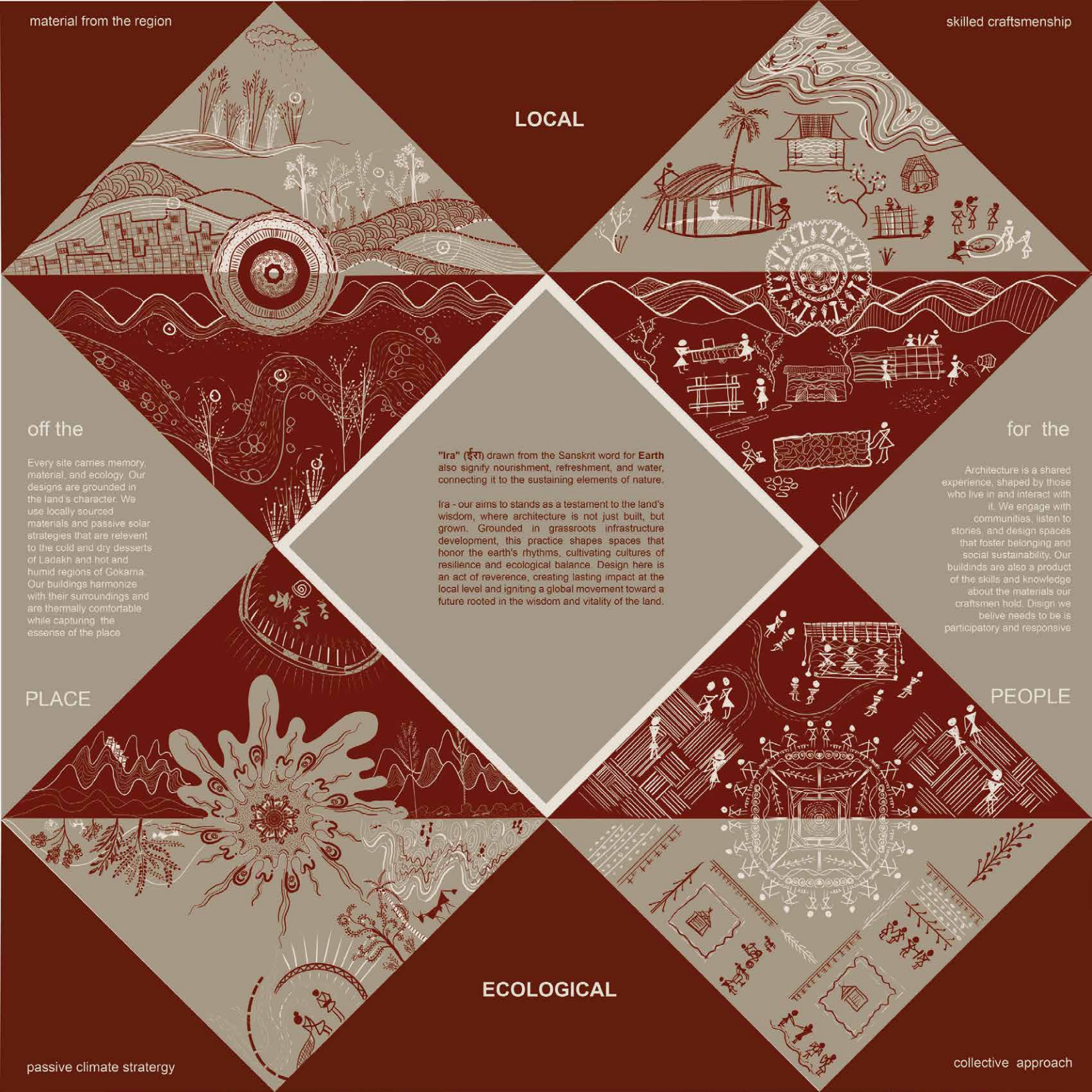
By privileging shadow and atmosphere over function and clarity, Tanizaki challenges the moral superiority of modernist design. His spaces are not passive, they are acts of refusal, resisting the flattening effects of Western technocracy.

Non-Western Phenomenology of Darkness

Why must clarity be equated with truth?

Tanizaki proposes an epistemology of darkness where knowledge is intimate, partial, and embodied. His architecture denies the Western gaze its dominance, offering instead a phenomenological politics of the unseen and the indeterminate.





unorthodox practices | spring 2025  
 instructor : Juan Herreros

## IRA

Memory as Method, Land as Epistemology,  
 Architecture as Situated Inquiry

Ira is an architecture practice rooted in the belief that buildings should emerge from the land and return knowledge to it. The word Ira, meaning “earth” and “the wisdom of the land,” reflects a commitment to designing with care, context, and continuity. Operating between Ladakh, Gokarna, and Bangalore, the studio follows the rhythm of climate and culture, working in the Himalayas during the warm months and along the tropical coastline in winter. Each place informs a seasonal pedagogy: high altitude earth construction and solar techniques in Ladakh, laterite and kaavi-lined coastal traditions in Gokarna, and material research and storytelling in Bangalore. Ira’s approach centers community knowledge, passive ecologies, and radical care. Projects begin with listening to landforms, to local materials, and to lived practices and evolve through drawing, building, and telling. From community shelters and archive galleries to conceptual installations and soil-based exhibitions, Ira works at the intersection of ecology, architecture, and narrative. The brochure you hold is a fragment of this ethos, part map, part memory. It is a folding of place, people, and process into architecture that is as much about restraint as it is about generosity.







