

PORKOPOLIS

THE AMERICAN
INDUSTRIAL - AGRICULTURAL
PHENOMENON
&
OTHER FICTIONAL
LANDSCAPES

ADAM FRIED
REBECCA SIQUEIROS



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It seems the architect is uniquely skilled at theorizing why things are the way they are, representing those things, and ultimately suggesting a new way. The result might be a new building, or new circumstance, a fiction, like pigs on an onion farm.

In its simplest form, our theory, The American Industrial Agricultural Phenomenon, and what has become to be our project, titled Porkopolis, asks why certain agricultural architecture emerges, and what those buildings describe about our relationship to nature. What values do WW reflect? What about a pasture?

This booklet and its accompanying presentation are broken into three parts. The first section, (AIAP), provides the conceptual foundation for a proposed intervention described in the second and third parts (titled Fictional Landscapes and Harvest). It is through this work that we suggest new buildings, but position ourselves as architects who, through analyzing the status of agriculture, propose a speculative circumstance that may have otherwise not been considered.

Our proposed solution is twofold: reconsider animal welfare, and “partner” with an animal protagonist—the pig—to rethink onion farming’s reliance on chemical fertilizers.





**ECOLOGIES
OF FUTURE
BELONGINGS**

01

**THE AMERICAN
INDUSTRIAL-
AGRICULTURAL
PHENOMENON**



PROCEDURE

1. PRESS
2. TUG
3. SCRATCH
4. RUB

On the Back of Pigs

Our first image, after surveying pig farms like Smithfield, sketched a cruel theatre of life and death, where participants, who must literally sit on the back of a sow for proper artificial insemination, scrolls polarizing politics, and self-mythologizes a future of stable agricultural jobs.

The American Industrial Agricultural Phenomenon argues that a culture of industry, lingering as an ideal of “American Nostalgia for a mid-twentieth-century period of stable jobs and social relations,”¹ has resorted to the crude exploitation of biological technology with unintended ecological effects. In the name of simulating the cultural and political aesthetics of industry in the American Midwest, biological systems are pushed artificially further with diminishing returns, attempting to realize the promise of an ever-advancing industrial food and reason for continued investment.

In other words, we argue that a demand for rural labor has led to the misuse of agricultural biotechnology, and therefore should be met with a solution that offers alternatives at scale. We feel that methods of food production that ultimately rely on industrial food act as bystanders to the environmental harm caused by this exploitation.

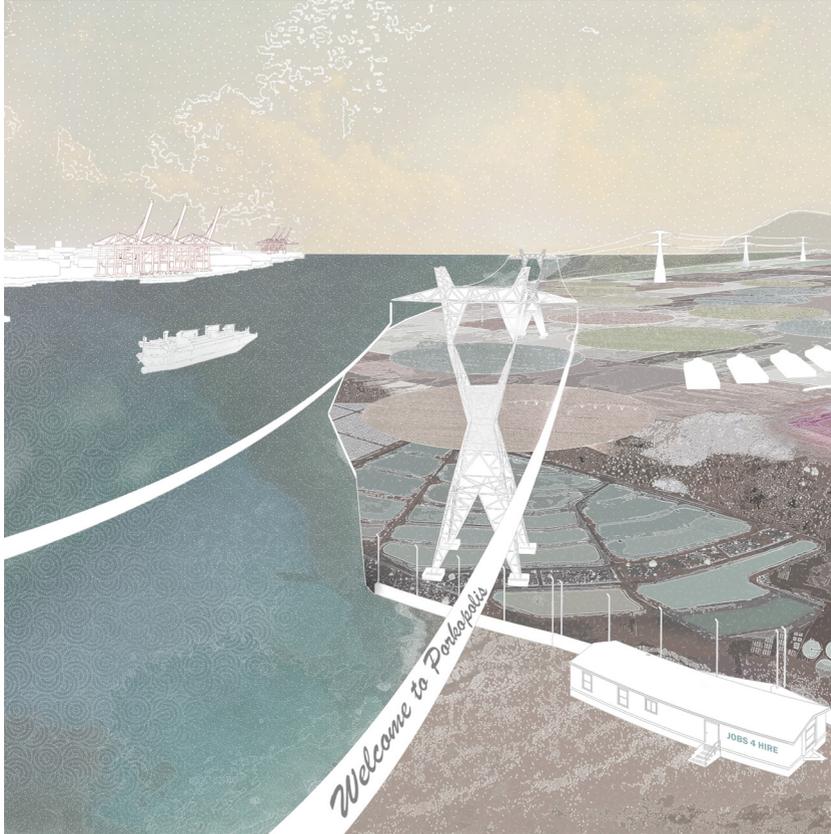
There is a conceptual tie between highly industrialized food production and low-producing organic farms, where both simulate labor: one simulating an aesthetic of mid-century advancing industry, and the other the ethical organic farmer, whose ultimate reliance on industrial farming is paradoxical.

Overlooking the disturbing realities of mass-livestock farming, industrial pork has specifically fronted an effort to push plausible biological efficiency. Bettina Stoetzer’s research titled “Pigs, viruses, and humans co-evolve in a deadly dance,” points to how the infrastructure of the pig industry has affected wetlands and local ecologies, namely through its overwhelming waste problem and wanton use of antibiotics for faster pig growth.

We argue that the geography of industrial food production has allowed for this production to be a siloed system in which regional urban publics are insulated from the distasteful environmental and social realities of mass agriculture. In Orange County, only 50 miles north of New York City, eco-tourism and small organic farms offer the image of localized ethical food systems and can be read as an indirect method of insulating the public from industrial meat.

In this first section, we briefly compare these two disparate geographic communities that similarly attempt to resuscitate values and aesthetics, forsaking animal and ecological welfare while building an architectural infrastructure that supports reactionary political and economic positions.

¹ (Porkopolis: American Animality, Standardized Life, and the Factory Farm, Blanchette)

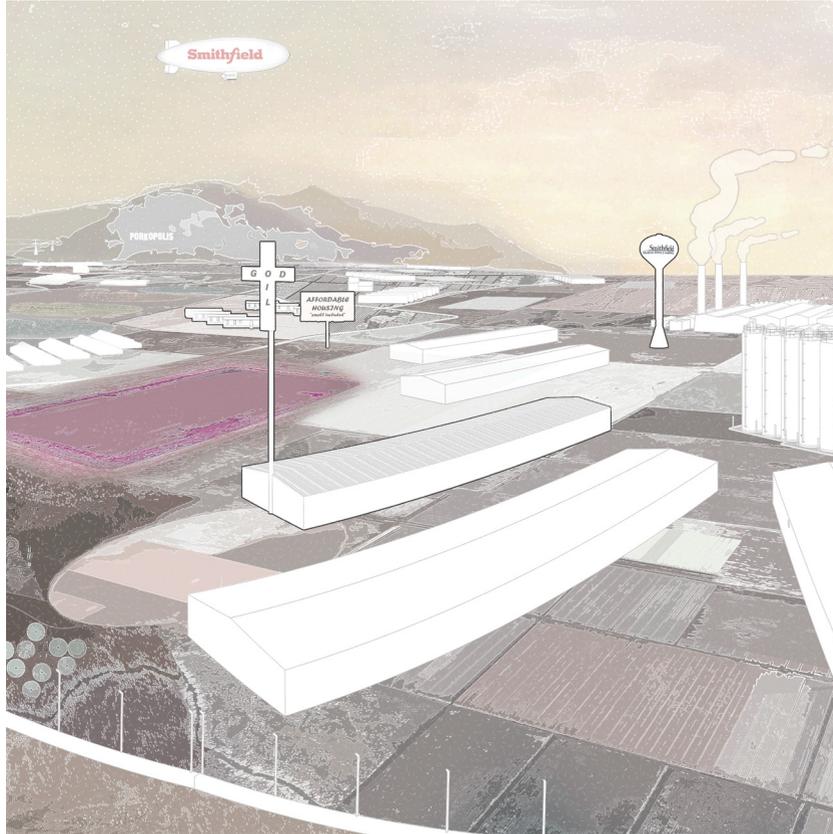


Is the industry town now a Hollywood set? Where the welfare of a species is traded for familiar props?

Is the farm a mere simulation? Where tourists can imagine pulling back a curtain to find an ethical source for their consumption?

Is it all a mirage? A religion? A shell company under the spell of a faux industry? And for what? In mass-customized post-industrial America, we're told "rabbit is the new beef," but is it paid for by the pig?

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Instance One: The Industrial Farm, Iowa

Famously critiqued by Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, 1906, Chicago's mass-produced meat industry boomed after the invention of the refrigerated train car, and marked a new relationship to livestock. A century later, the room for economic growth has tapered, and the market for cheap meat is saturated. Beginning in 1985, a series of rural development programs in North Carolina and Iowa reimagined the excitement of industrialized food, following model of Chicago's "Porkopolis." The pork industry, anachronistically revived in economically depressed rural towns, seemingly became a model for broader political ambitions, rather than the promise of business development.

Today, business hotels, office towers, and bone-rendering plants reify self-mythologized "industrial progress." The architectural outcome of this "progress" reveals the fundamental necessity of expansion and vertical integration, attempting to squeeze the remaining profit from the biologically-dependent system. Contemporary pork processing simulates the economic promise of Chicago's Porkopolis, perpetuating a nostalgic promise of stable rural labor.

The pork industry hopes for a perpetual increase in the American palate for pork, but depends upon a localized demand for rural jobs.

Instance Two: The Orange County Farm

Adjacent to New York City, tourists and politicians imagine a productive Hudson Valley that upholds politically progressive ethical values. Urban stakeholders disregard the realities of true agricultural production, yet demand the image of an anachronistic agricultural infrastructure. The outcome is simulation: tourists imagine a more palatable/ethical food chain within their immediate sphere of awareness, despite their reliance on industrial food.

In Orange County, farms are Hollywood sets; theatrical retellings of functional and ethical food systems. Their preservation, at times supplemented by the construction of new "old" buildings, forms an American-colonial pastoral nostalgia.



ECOLOGIES
OF FUTURE
BELONGINGS

02

FICTIONAL
LANDSCAPES

Towards Deindustrialization

The deindustrialization and localization of livestock breaks the siloed system that industrial pork relies on. By introducing pigs to Orange County, we have imagined a farm that returns to past methods of regenerative farming, where reliance on natural systems rather than artificial accelerants and chemicals, underscore the potential of self-sufficient natural agriculture.

Without drawing conclusions on the reality of meat consumption altogether, the project considers the potential benefits of livestock farming outside of production; including pig welfare and natural kinship with the land.

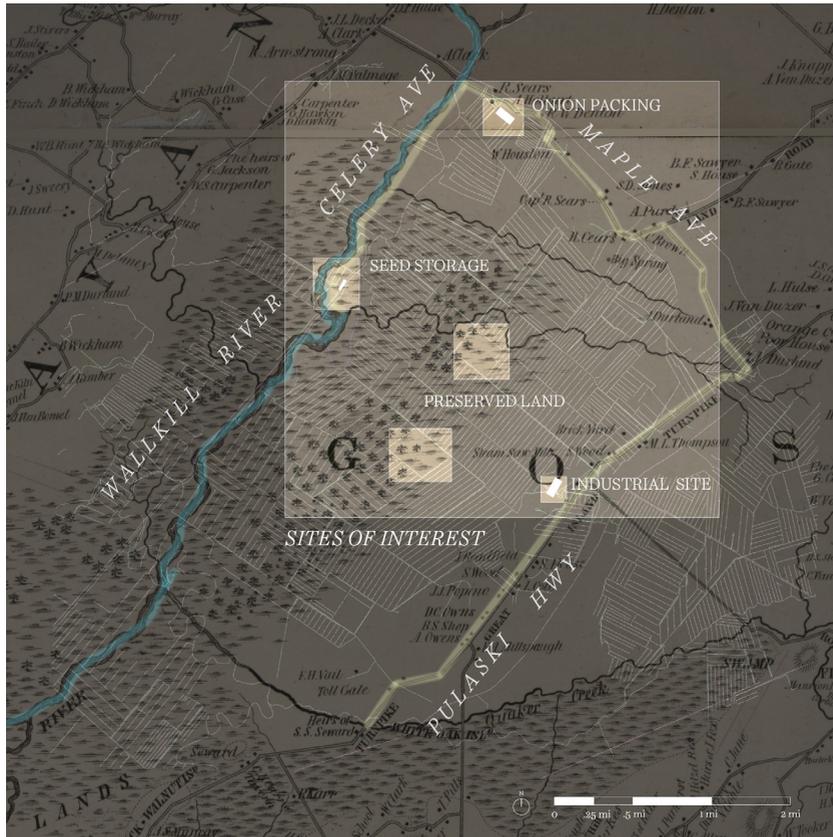


"The fresh-turned muck of early spring is a deep, moist black. It stretches for miles like a soft rug, divided into rectangular designs by the green-edged drainage ditches and dotted at regular intervals with small, weather-beaten, unpainted sheds or small houses.

As the weeks pass, the crops and weeds slowly change the rug to a beautiful dark green, which by harvest time fades to the dull yellow of dead onion tops. All the time the view is speckled with hundreds of industrious workers. In these black acres skeletons of the American mastodon have recently been unearthed.

The upright position of some of the skeletons shows that the area was once a huge swamp or lake, with islands of higher ground jutting up out of the water. As the years passed, decaying vegetation composed the muck, which pushed out the water and formed a rank, dismal swamp overgrown with lush vegetation.

Such were the black acres at the beginning of our country's history. Until the last half century these acres were known as the Drowned Lands, and were considered worthless except for a few spots cleared for vegetable gardens."



From "Drowned Lands" to Industry

The Black Dirt Region is an area of about 26,000 acres located in southeastern Orange County, New York. It was once a vast marshland that covered an area of approximately 150 square miles. Home to the Lenape, the region was largely characterized by wetlands, marshes, and swamps, supporting a wide variety of plant and animal species like garden peas, alfalfa, perennial clover, orchardgrass, cattails, sedges, rushes, and various types of marsh grasses and animals, including fish like bullheads, sunfish, and eels, amphibians like frogs and salamanders, reptiles like turtles and snakes, and birds like herons, egrets, and waterfowl.

In the late 18th century, farmers began to settle in the region, attracted by the rich, fertile soil, and created an infrastructure to drain the land. Digging ditches and canals, water flowed out of the marshes and into the nearby Wallkill River. Over time, this process gradually transformed the region into a patchwork of farmland. After the wetlands were drained and converted into agricultural land, many of these species were displaced or eliminated, as the landscape was fundamentally transformed. However, other species adapted to the new agricultural landscape and became more prevalent, including introduced species of plants like corn, soybeans, wheat, and other cereal grains.



Pieter Bruegel the Elder, The Harvesters, 1565, Netherlandish

Bruegel's depiction of rural life, capture an undeniable kinship between humanity and the natural world. His landscapes act not just as a backdrop, but as a source of sustenance, prosperity, and beauty, capturing the seasonal lifecycles and rhythms of agricultural work.

ECOLOGIES OF FUTURE BELONGINGS

03

HARVEST

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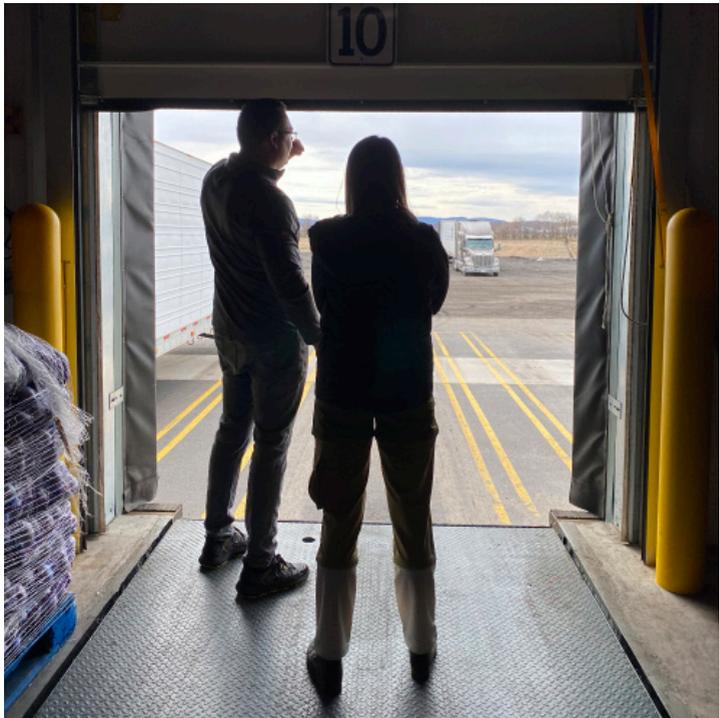
Currently, Minkus Family Farms is the largest producer and distributor of onions in the black dirt region and the broader east coast. Buying up 1500 acres of the northern portion of the black dirt region, they've become the most successful farmer and distributor of onions, being more technologically advanced and vertically integrated compared to neighboring farms. With the demand for Minkus-branded onions from major retailers and restaurant chains, Minkus has, during the off-season, at times even relied on the importation of onions from South America.

After meeting with Minkus, we learned they were motivated to expand and stop dependence on an arbitrage as a business model, the ultimate goal being buying the neighboring onion farms in the area.

Taking stock of the plausible buildings Minkus would take over, we've designed, reconsidered, and adapted current facilities and structures, including offices, employee housing, onion storage and processing/packaging facilities, equipment storage, irrigation/pump houses, and seed storage buildings. We've also imagined a new, minimal, architecture that begins to integrate pigs and onions together.

Although our site was chosen for its scale and access to existing infrastructure, a unique coincidence is that onions have a smell and strong flavor that is unappealing to pigs, making them unlikely to consume the onion bulbs or damage the growing plants. This natural aversion to onions acts as a "living fence."

They forage on weeds, leftover onion debris, and other organic matter, but they avoid consuming the actual onions. This unique behavior of pigs makes them ideal for managing the onion farm, as they do not pose a threat to the crop, but instead help to clean up the fields and reduce the risk of disease and pest infestation. This reduces the need for chemical or physical barriers to protect the crop, contributing to a more natural and sustainable approach to pest management on the farm.



The pig manure, rich in essential nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, acts as a natural fertilizer, enriching the soil and nurturing the growth of soy, corn, lettuce, sod, and onions without the need for excessive synthetic fertilizers. This reduces the farm's reliance on chemical inputs and potentially lowers farming costs.

As they move from one crop to another depending on the crop cycle, natural tilling helps break up compacted soil and control weeds. The pigs' rooting behavior also stimulates microbial activity and nutrient cycling in the soil, improving soil health and fertility.

Their cyclical movement breathes life into each plot, rejuvenating the land and creating a natural rhythm that harmonizes with the farm's needs. It's a dance of symbiosis, where the pigs play their part in nurturing the soil, and the crops flourish in their wake, promising a healthy harvest.



1 FARROWING BARN
Aluminum Facade - Wooden Structure

2 SEED SHED
Aluminum Facade - Wooden Structure

SEED DRILL
Model XYZ

LETTUCE *Lactuca sativa*

LACTATING + PREGNANT SOWS + PIGGLETS *Sus scrofa domestica*

ALFALFA *Medicago sativa* L.

PERENNIAL CLOVER *Trifolium repens*

LADINO CLOVER *Trifolium repens*

ORCHARDGRASS *Dactylis glomerata*

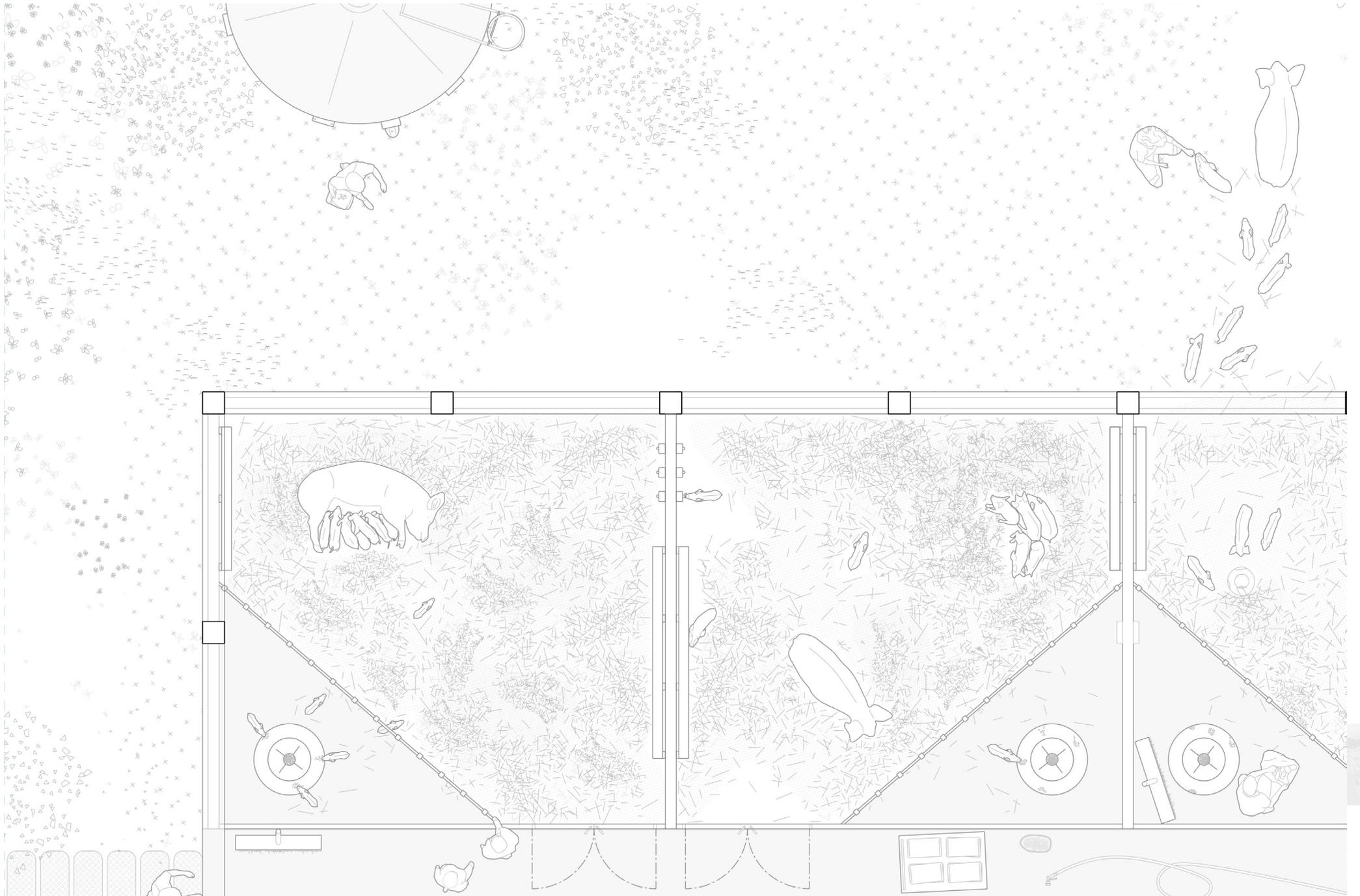
ONION *Allium cepa*

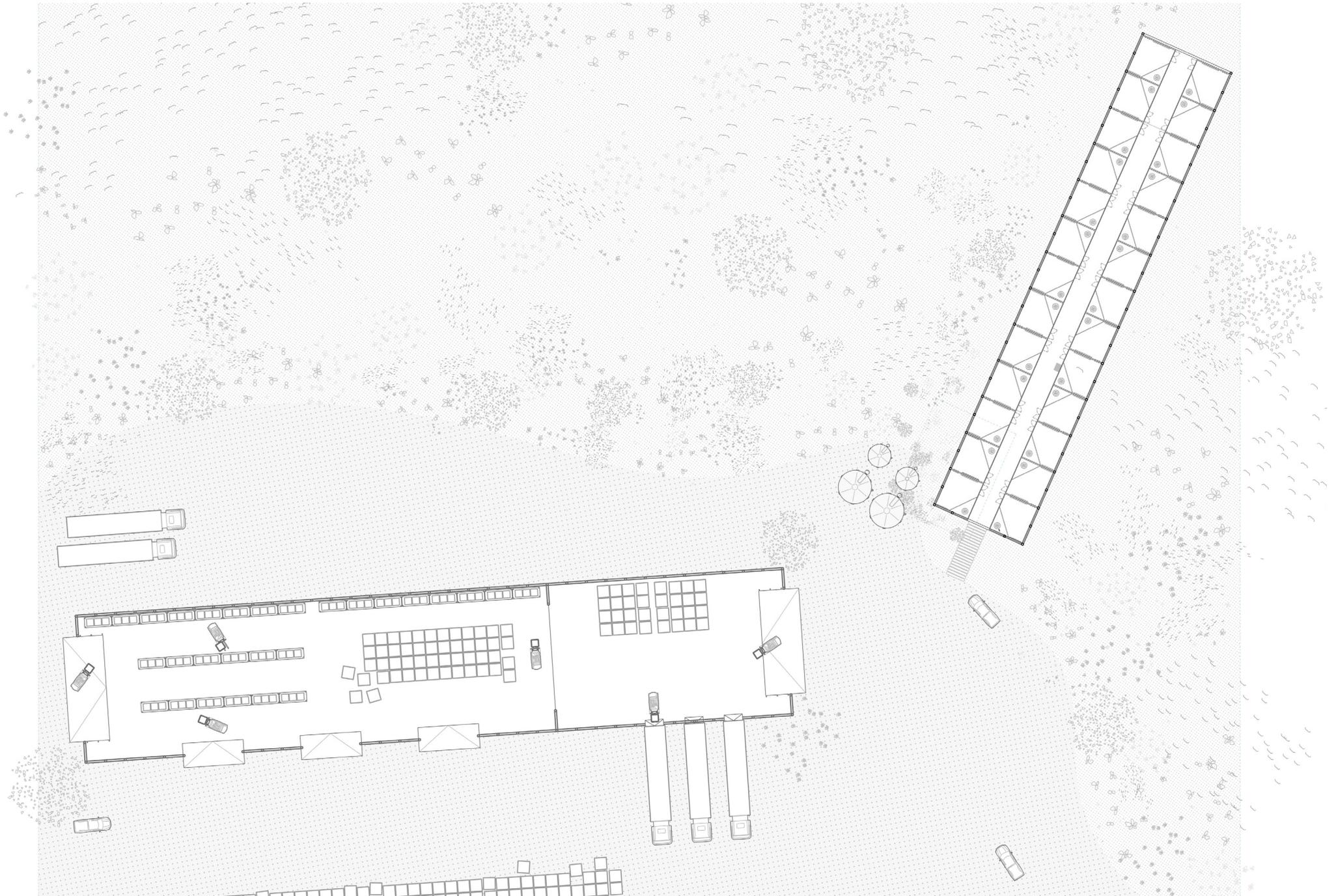
During the spring, seeds are sown, and young piglets are kept in light-filled barns off the crops. They are provided with ample food and water, including leftover cereal grains from previous harvests.

Compared to industrial crowding, the architecture of the piglet barn significantly increases the space available for piglets. Although with a warm hay-strewn interior, the sides of the structure open, allowing access to the neighboring field and air movement through the barn.

It's a landscape of early life, where piglets and seeds start their journey through their first seasonal rotation.

As the summer approaches and the onion bulbs start to mature, the pigs are herded to off-cycle onion fields, often planted with sod.



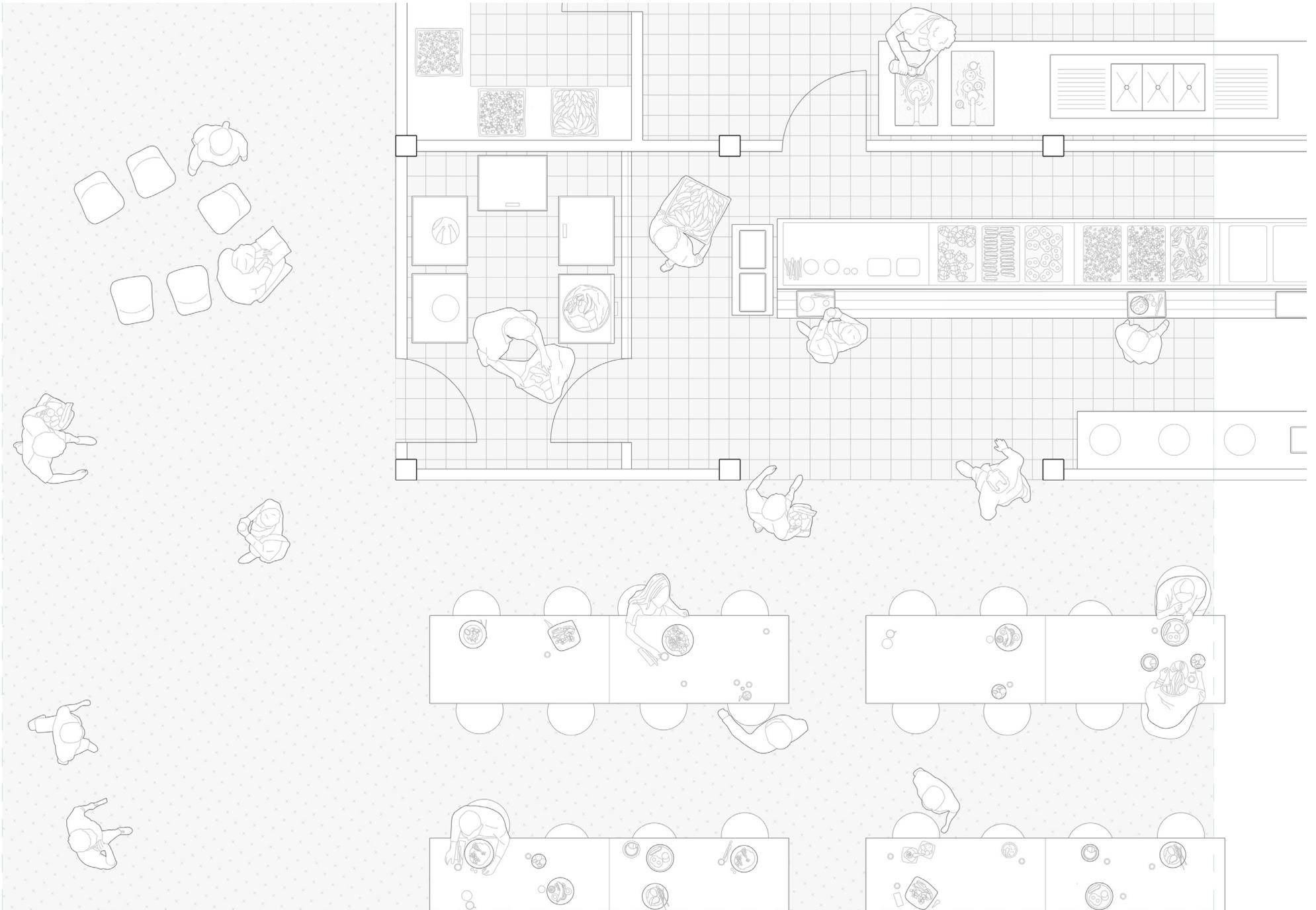




Summer is a time of movement on the farm. As growing pigs get used to their new land, they retreat to the cool areas of the forest, preserved, non-developed plots in the middle of the cropland. Simultaneously, seasonal labor comes to Orange County, with over a hundred workers picking onions in the hot field.

New buildings, including new housing and a new community center for eating and learning are welcome additions to the northern edge of the farm. These designed farm structures are carefully planned to provide a comfortable environment, recognizing seasonal workers' contribution to the farm's success. The architecture serves the daily rhythms of the farm - a place to eat, a place to sleep - creating a sense of place and belonging.

Along with the thesis of deindustrialization, we argue good quality buildings for labor highlight the essential role of farmers in fostering a new sense of kinship with the land.



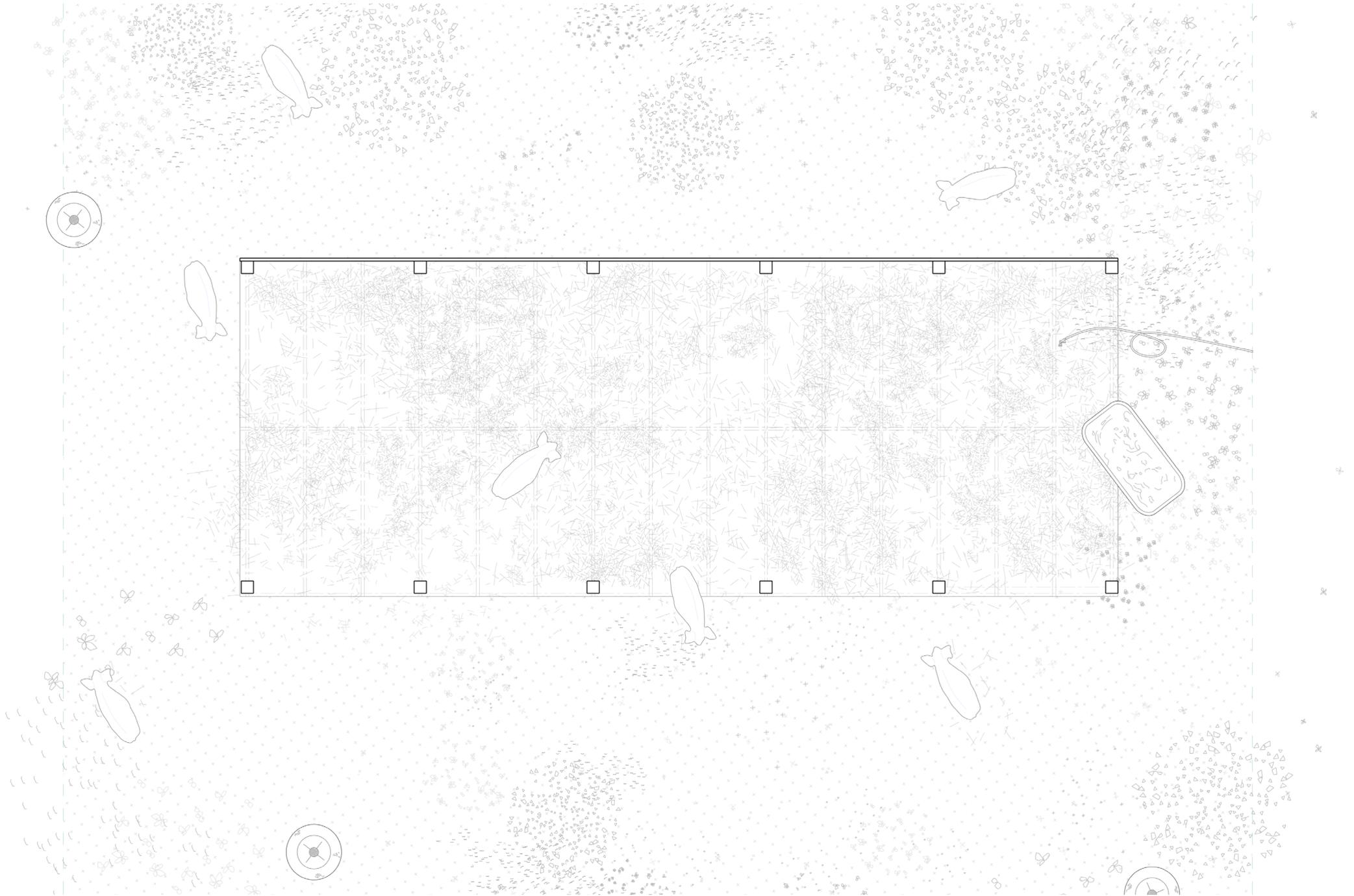




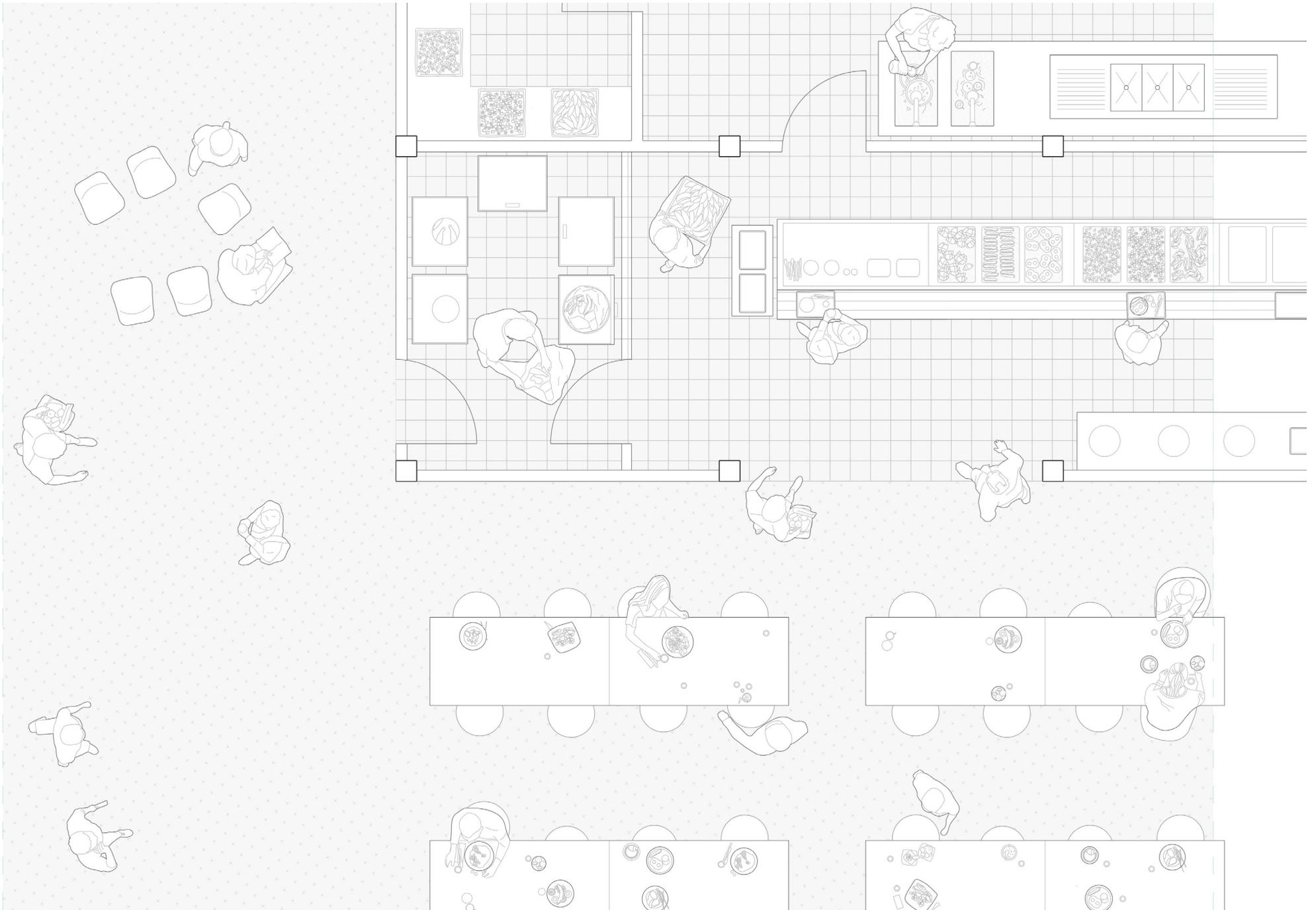
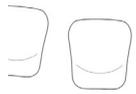
To uphold good quality land for the pigs, over hundred pigs in each 11-acre patch of forest move from one-acre paddock to another every thirty days. The pigs are guided by farmers; their oinks, snuffles, and grunts harmonize with the rustling of leaves underfoot. Using low-voltage electric fences, the pigs are kept within the confines of a given paddock for their benefit, allowing paddocks to rest after grazing.

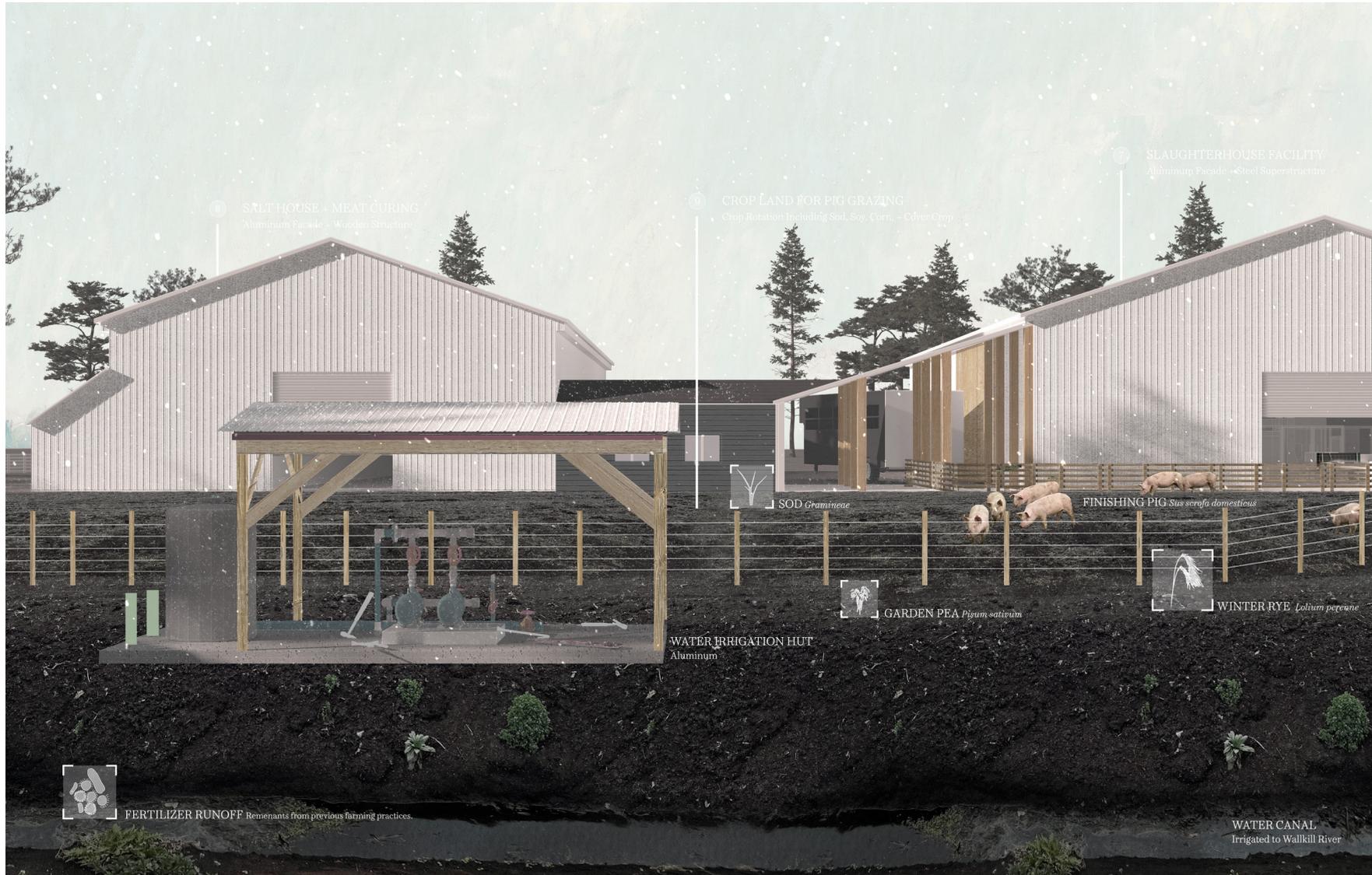
The pigs are granted the freedom to roam and forage in the wild forest center, mimicking their natural instincts and behaviors. The result is a symbiotic relationship between the pigs and the forest, with the pigs providing natural tilling and fertilization, while the forest offers abundant nourishment and shelter.

The forest floor is covered with a diverse array of plant species, creating a natural buffet for the pigs to choose from. They selectively graze on the available plants, consuming a balanced diet that mimics their natural diet in the wild, including acorns and roots, alfalfa, ladino, sweet yellow clover, and dandelions, as well as small animals such as snakes and toads.



HARVEST





During the winter, when the onion fields are covered with sod, soy, and barley, the pigs are welcome to move once again to graze the croplands. In a final scene, select large, finishing pigs are herded to a slaughterhouse south of the site, where the facility proceeds with slicing the pig, whose meat is a far greater standard. The pork is moved to the neighboring salt shed where the meat is cured throughout the winter; the seasonal timeline of food production allows for low cooling/energy consumption.

The farmers take this time to plan for the upcoming planting season, prepare for newborn piglets, and adjust their crop rotation plans.

The intertwined dance between pig and onion, labor and industry, and interspecies dependence allows The Black Dirt Region to continue to flourish, a rebirth of an age-old natural system.

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