



or  
All the Things I Learned From GSAPP

Niki Kourti

A year ago, a journey began; full of intense studios, thought-provoking papers and opposed arguments; full of professors who are legends for having shaped architecture; full of talented classmates who became, besides true friends, my teachers.

Looking back at these twelve months, I try to collect all the work and memories in this portfolio.

What I realize is that each studio, each lecture, and each guest speaker shape  
**ONE** architecture that is transcalar,  
**ONE** architecture that is entirely connected to its political, social, and environmental context,  
**ONE** architecture that does not only create forms and functions, but critiques our reality and suggests a whole new world.

Thank you, GSAPP

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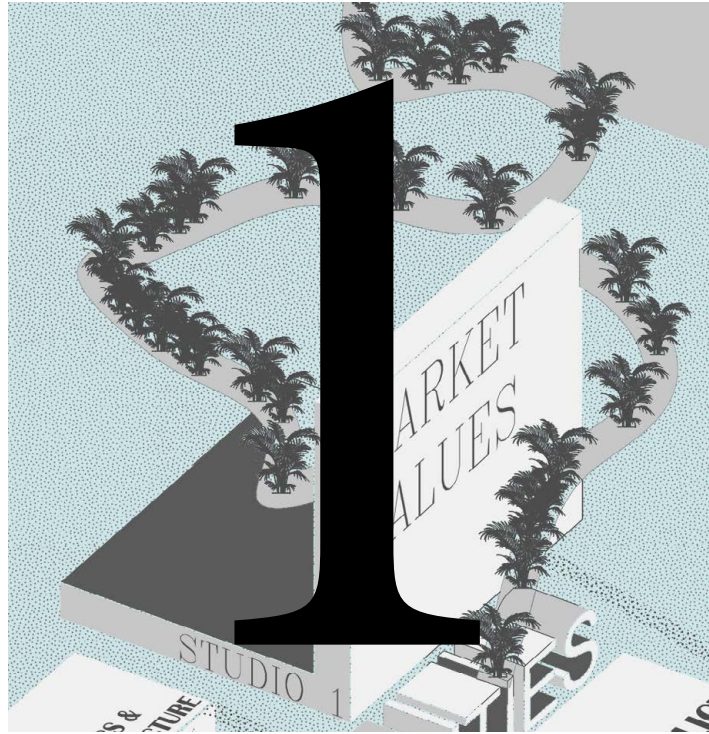
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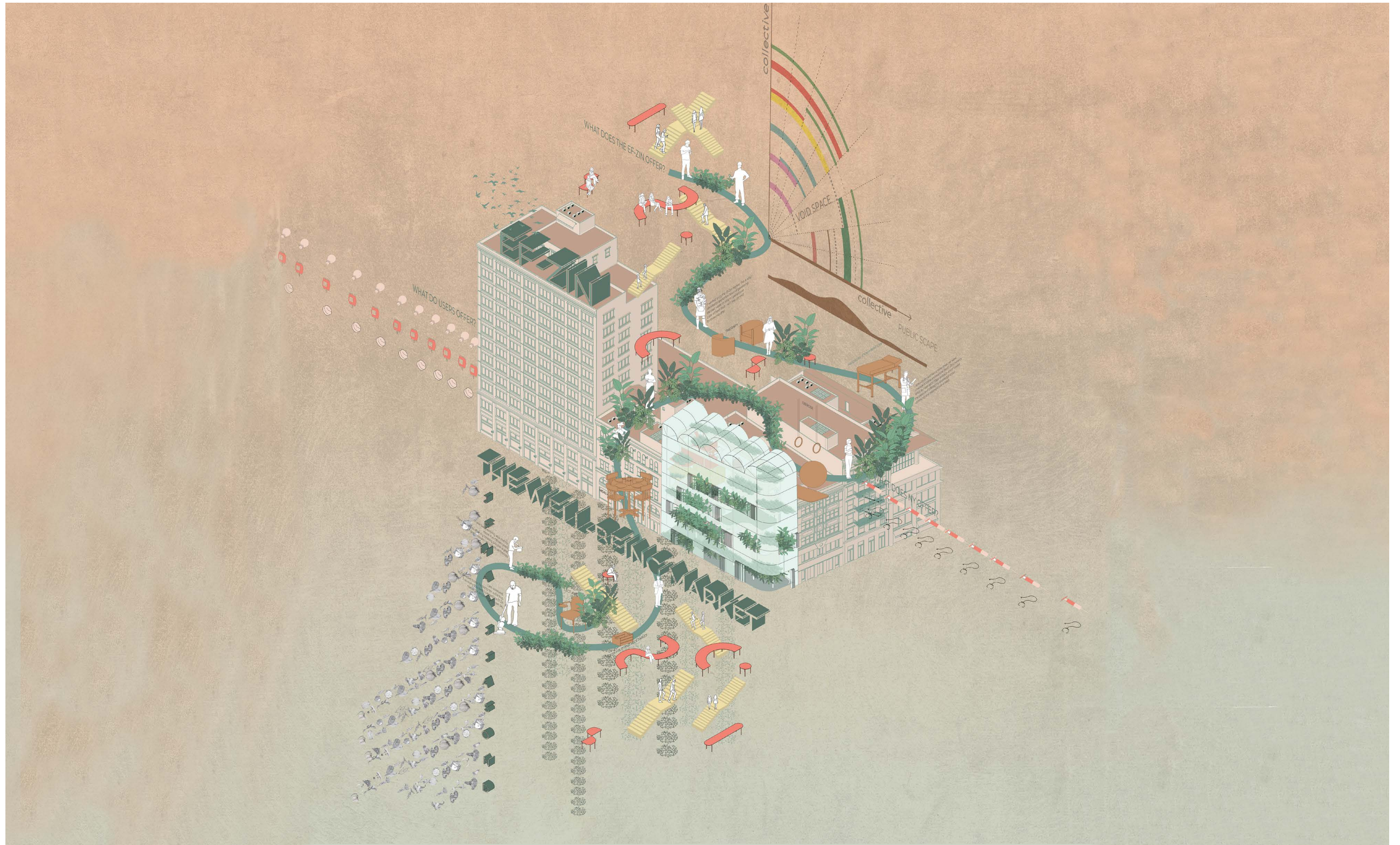


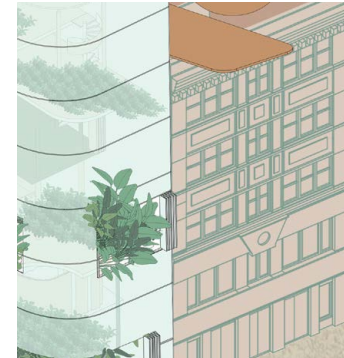
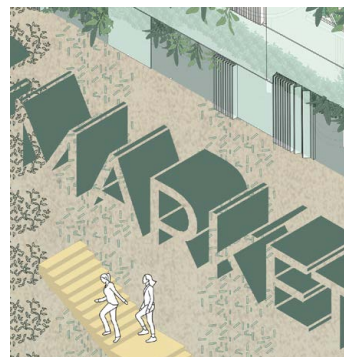
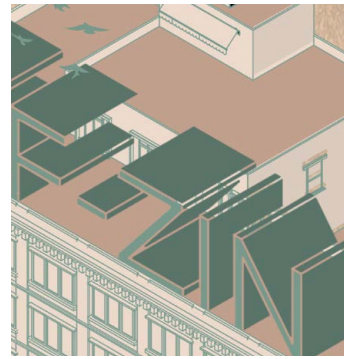
## MARKET VALUES

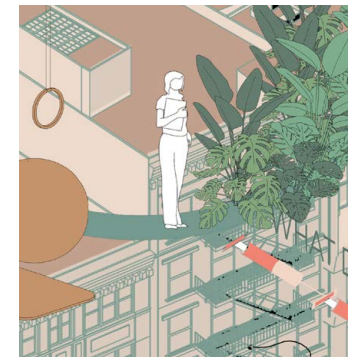
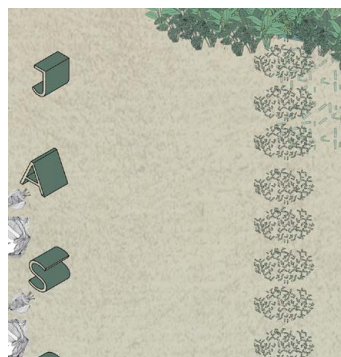
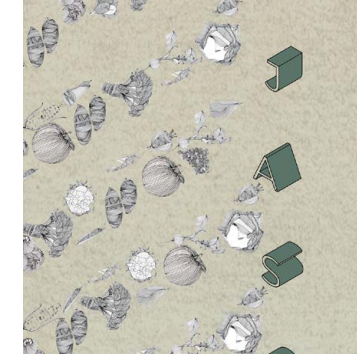
Instructor: Tei Carpenter

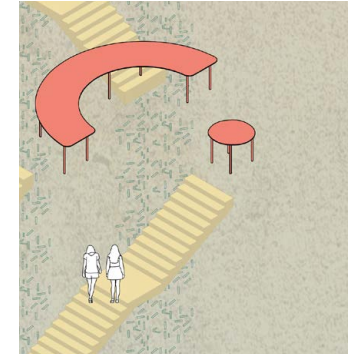
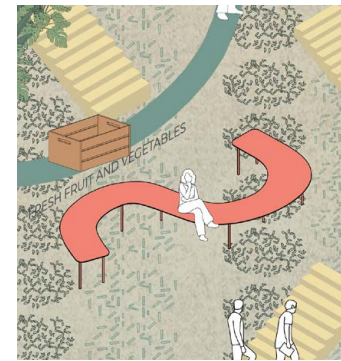
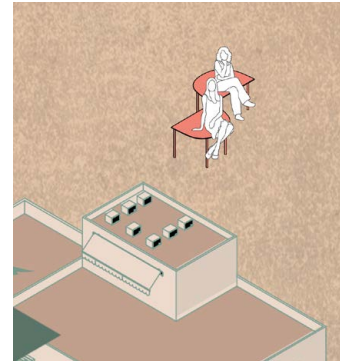
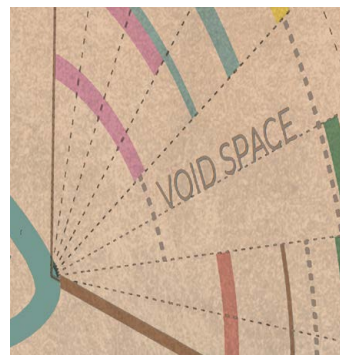
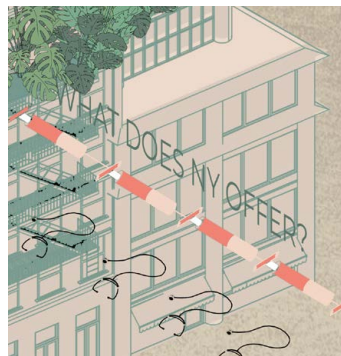
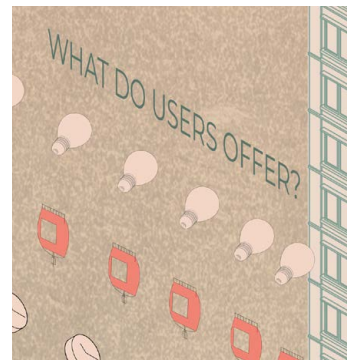
Partner: Anam Ahmed

Ef zin is a wellbeing cooperative that operates without any money and challenges the notion that wellbeing is a luxury, by making it accessible to everyone and anyone in New York City. Revolving around the core concepts of connection, giving back, activity and learning, visitors donate time to engage with both the mental and the physical sides of wellness. The building is conceived as an open space performing as a greenhouse in the winter and a porous building in the summer. It includes scattered volumes that are stacked and shifted in the air, allowing for intermediate garden and collective spaces.

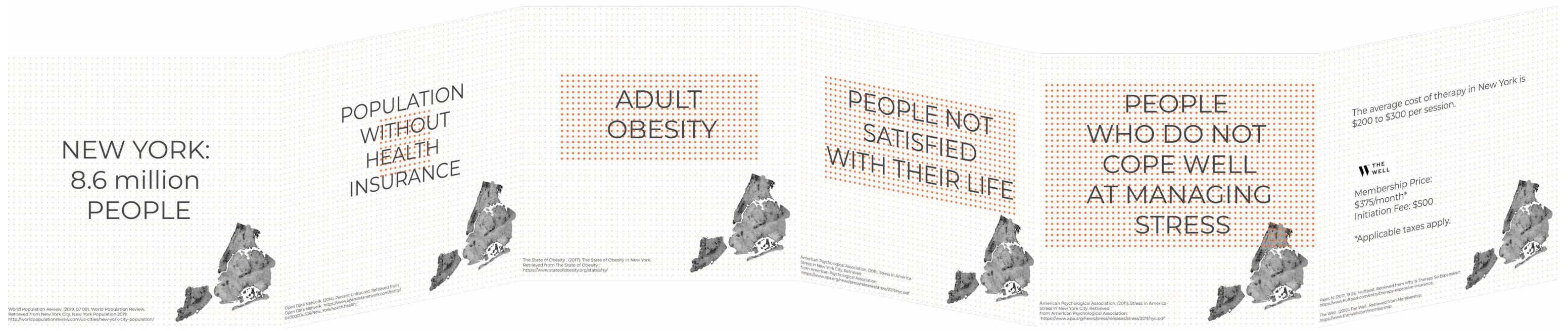




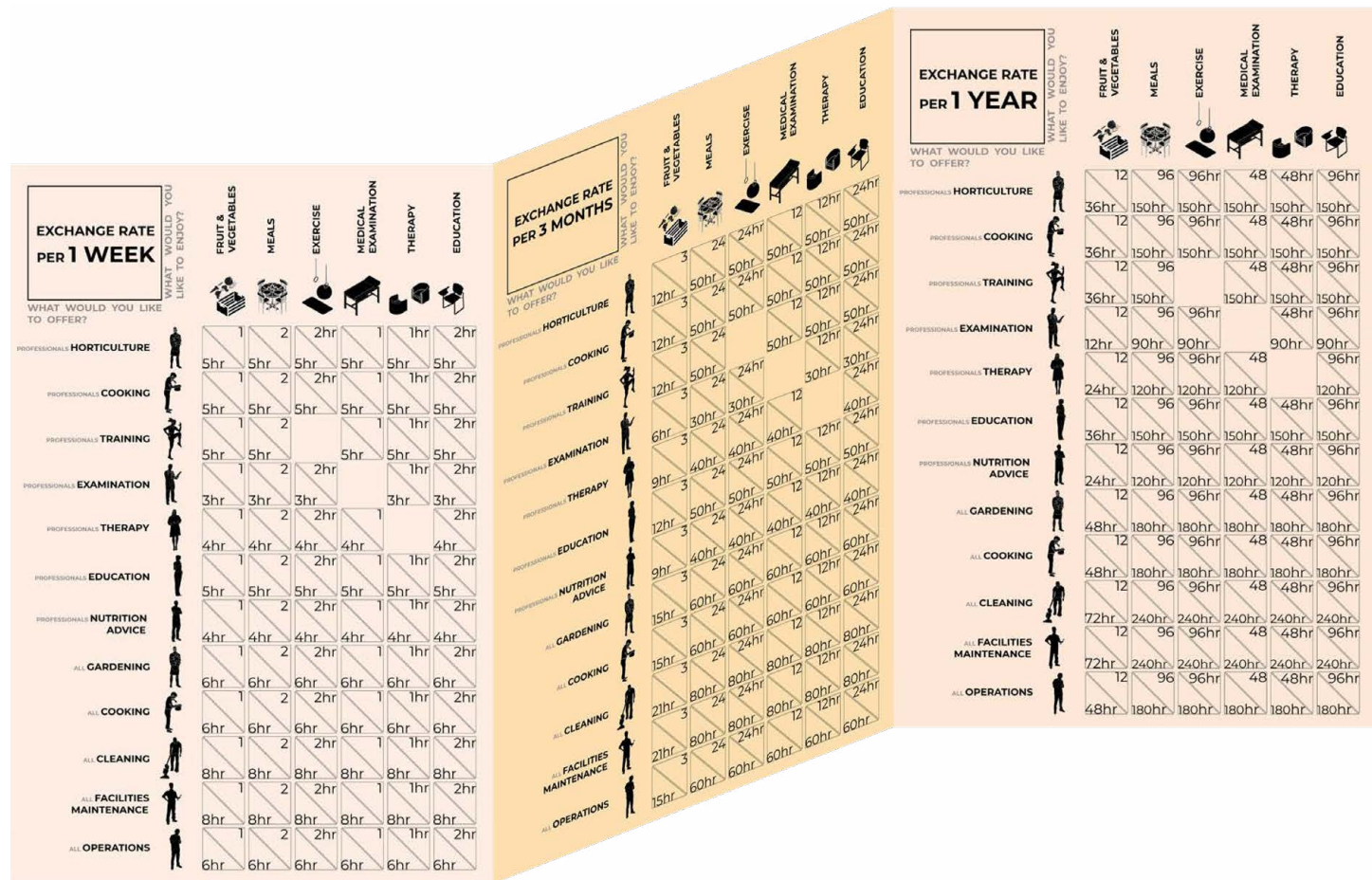








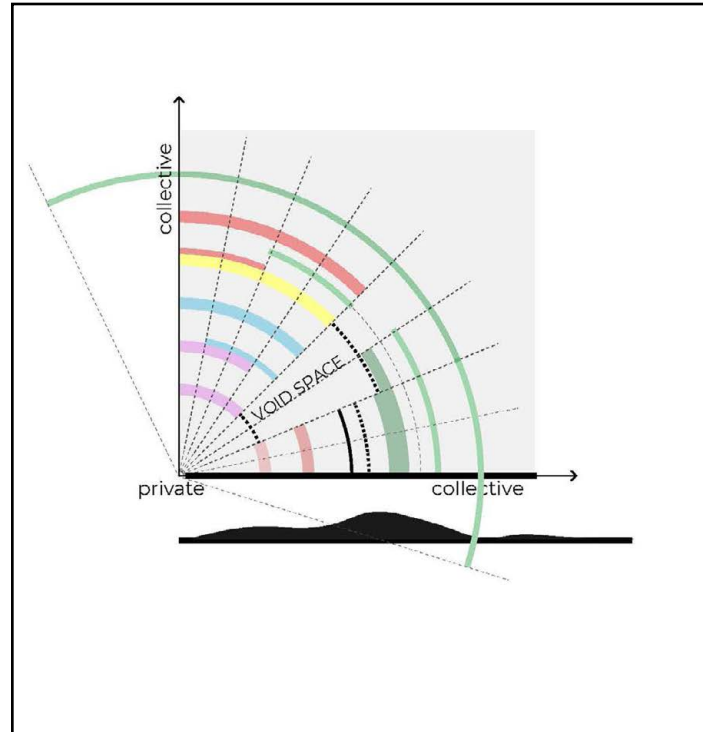
levels of well being in NY



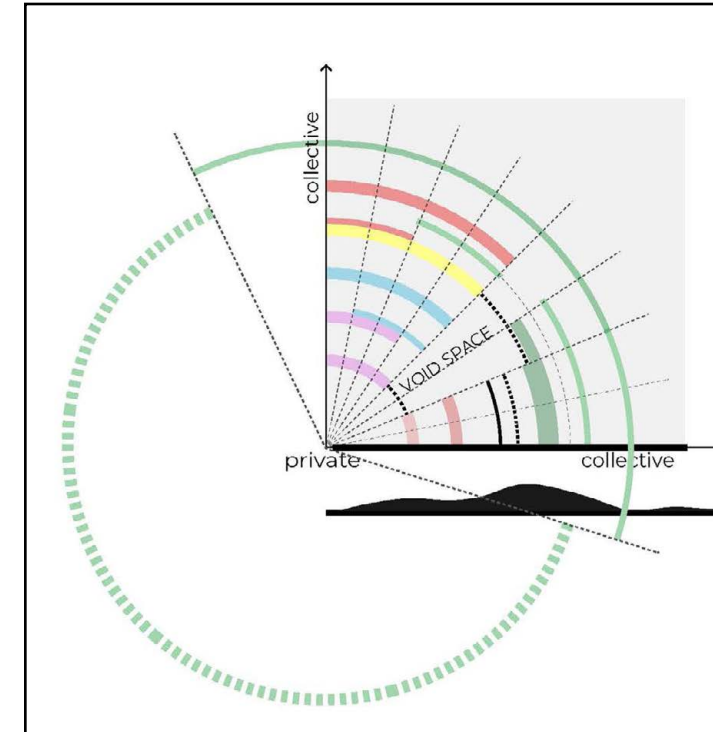
the proposed exchange system



the proposed exchange actions



private functions



public space



the market in the summer



the market in the winter



exercise space



common space







## A COLLEGE FOR WOMEN IN URBAN RWANDA

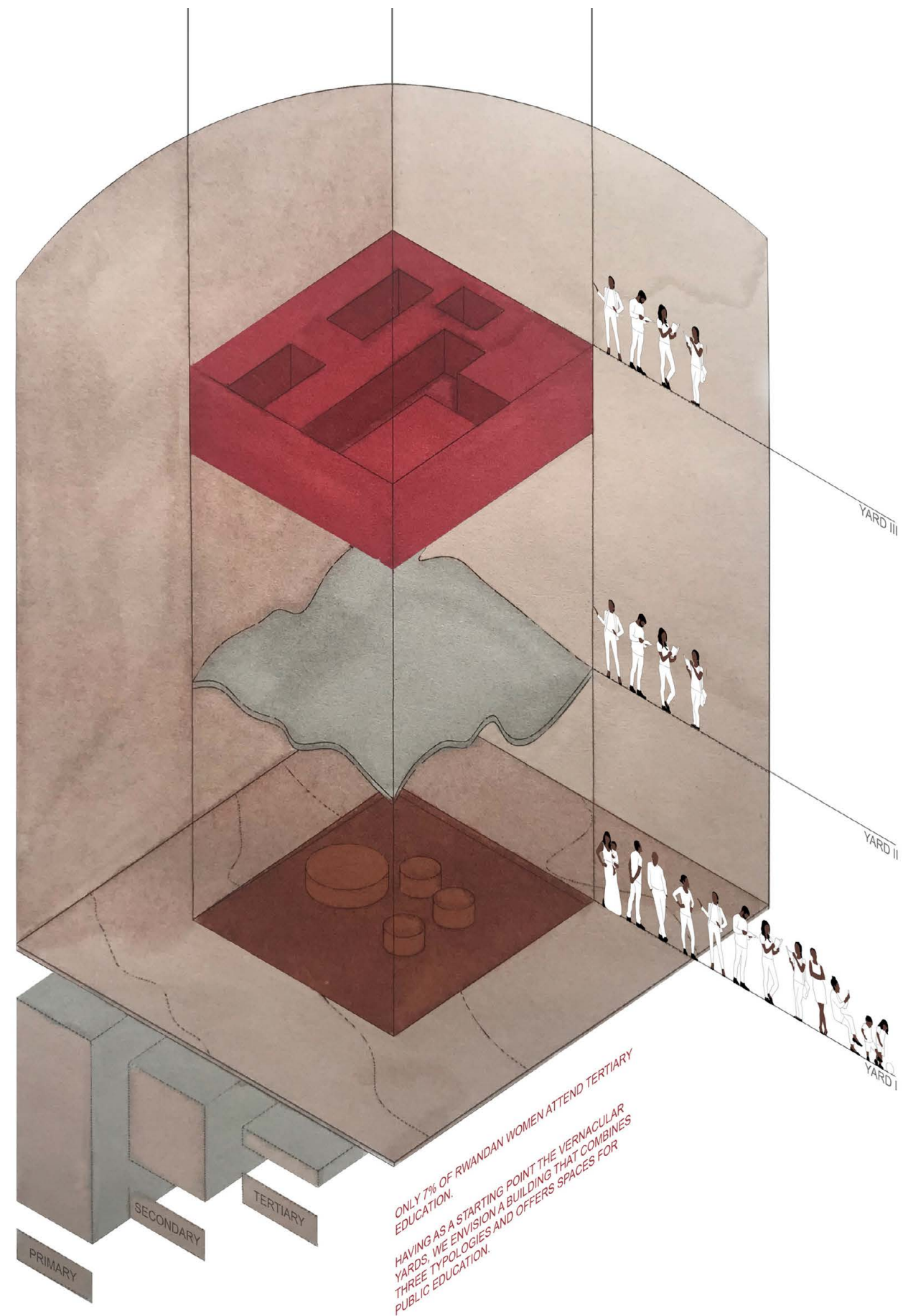
Instructor: Sharon Davis

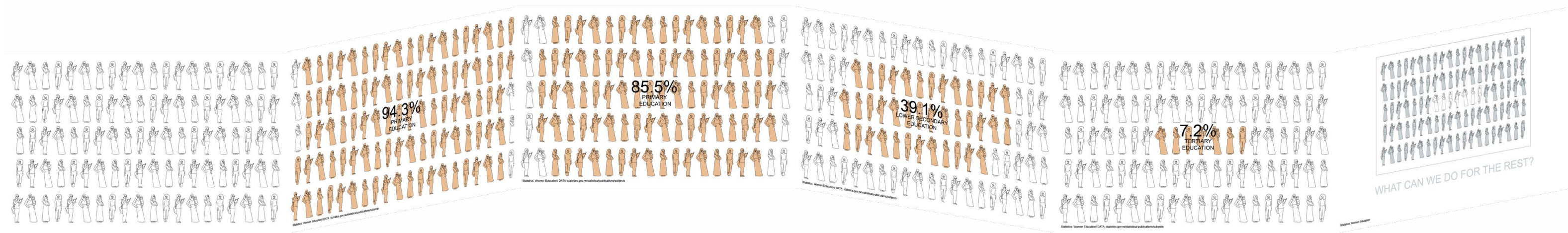
Partner: Xinyi Zhang

The design of this university building in Kigali followed an extensive research about women's education in Rwanda, as well as the forms of vernacular architecture and the role of the yards in the locals' daily activities. Responding to the regional climate and the available material, three levels with different typologies form a whole that is offering a range of public and private spaces and facilities (such as a kindergarten), aiming to create the ideal educational environment for the contemporary women of Rwanda.

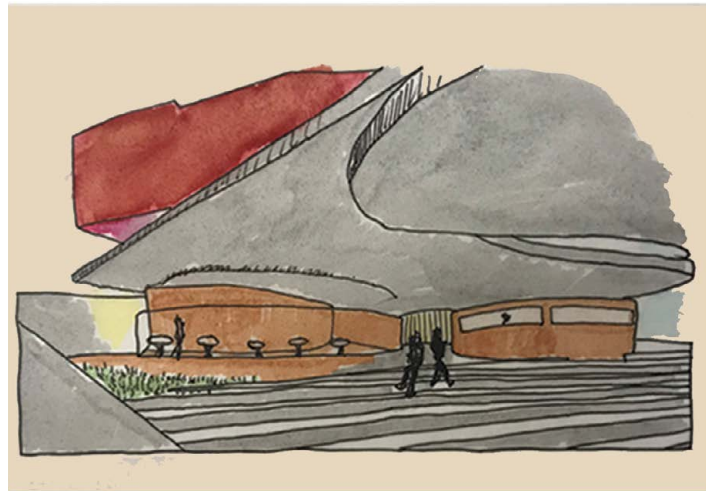
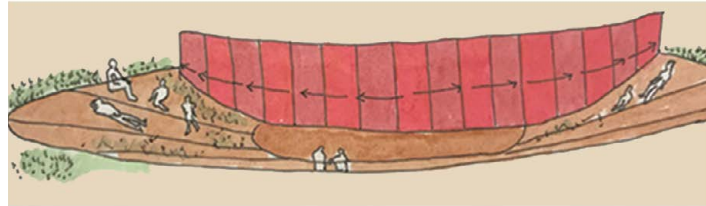


A WOMEN'S COLLEGE IN RWANDA

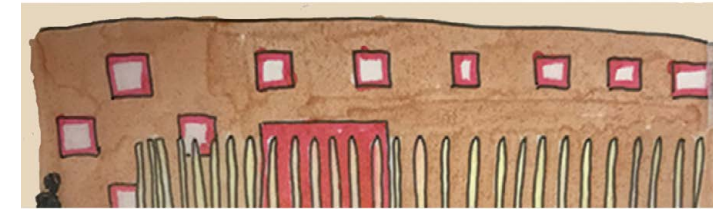




levels of women education in Rwanda



concept sketches



concept sketches



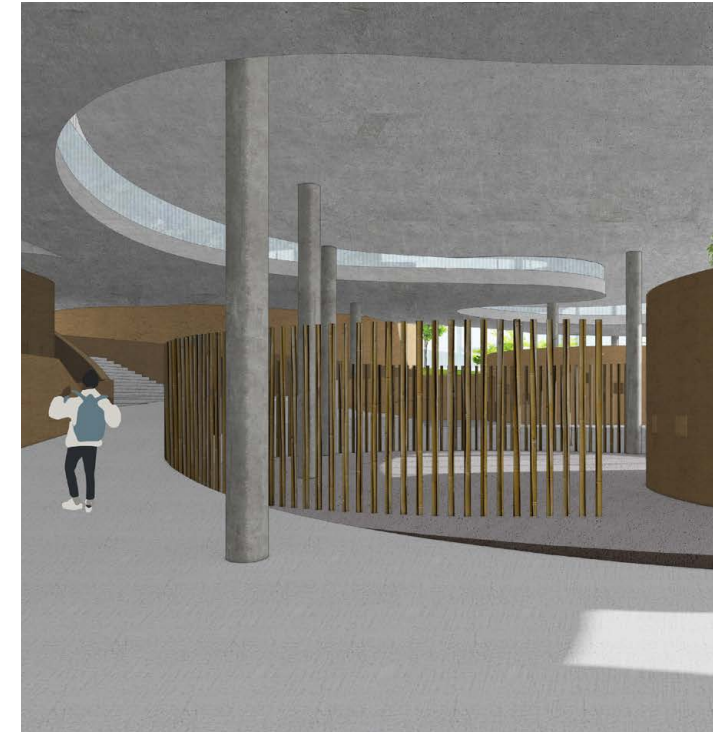
exterior view



exterior view



first level



first level



second level



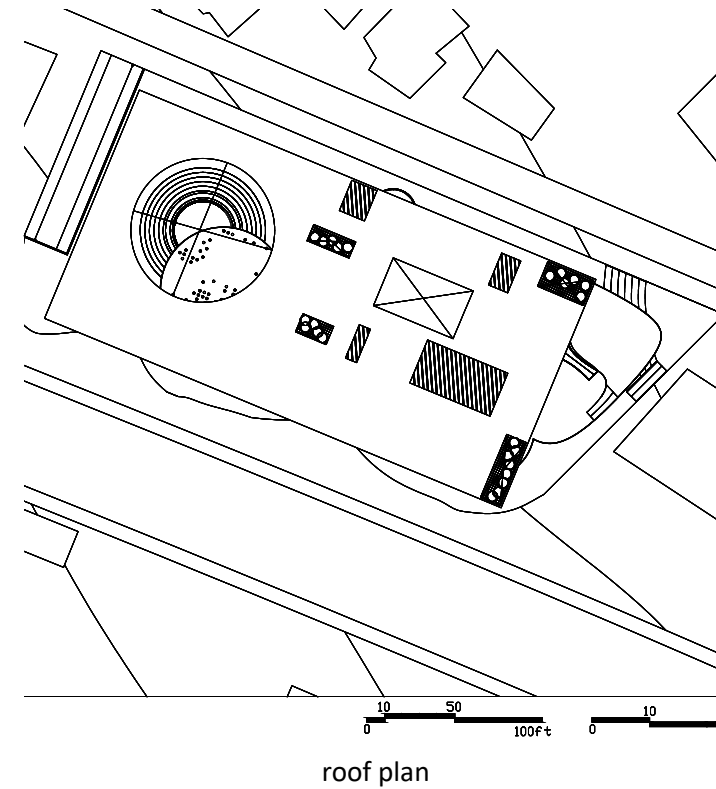
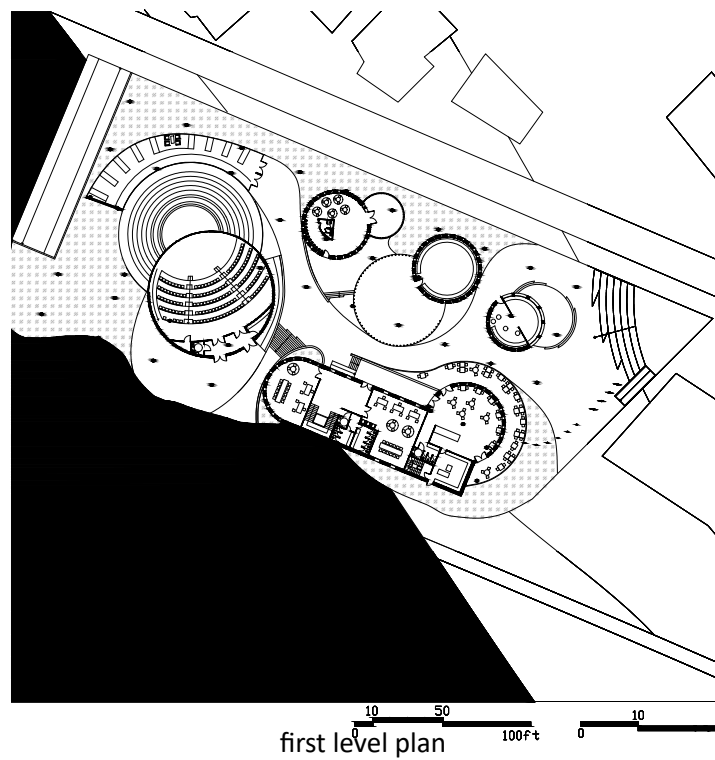
second level



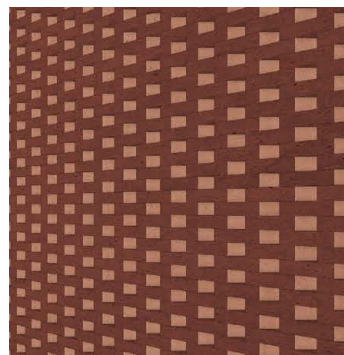
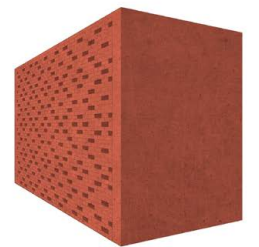
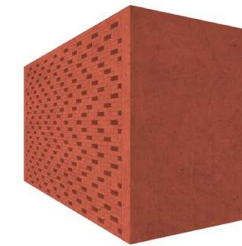
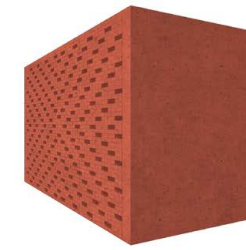
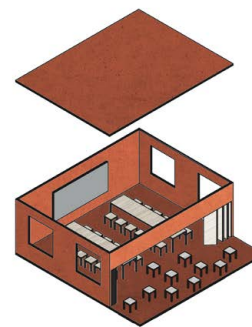
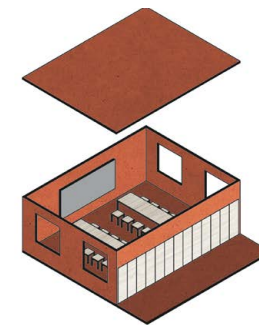
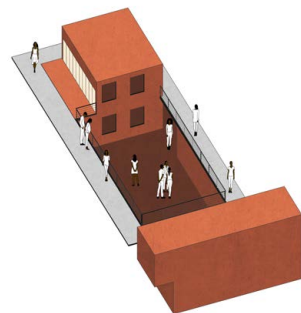
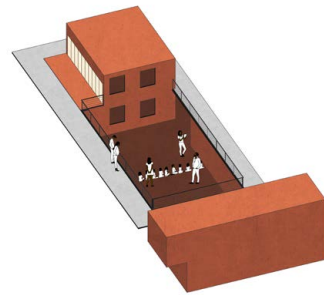
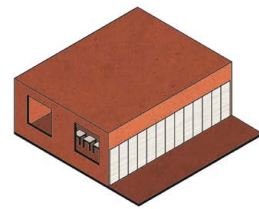
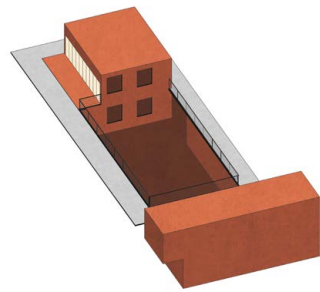
third level

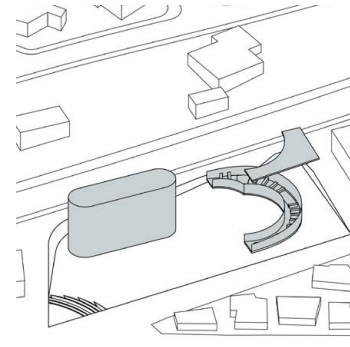
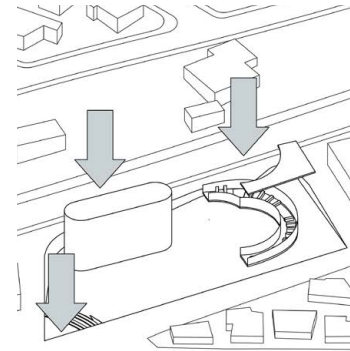
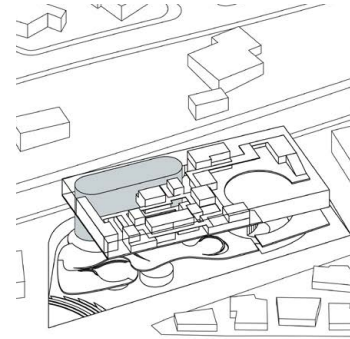
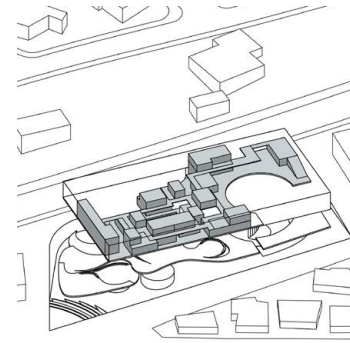
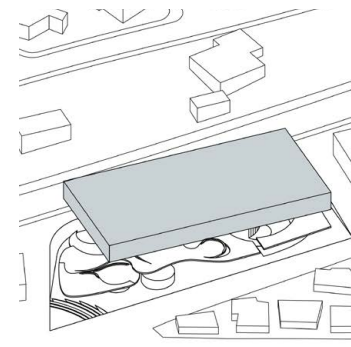
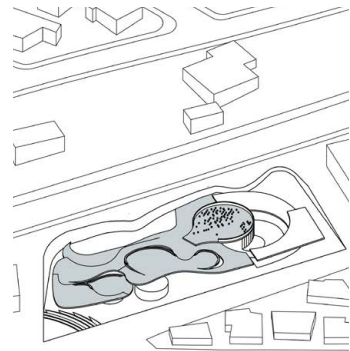
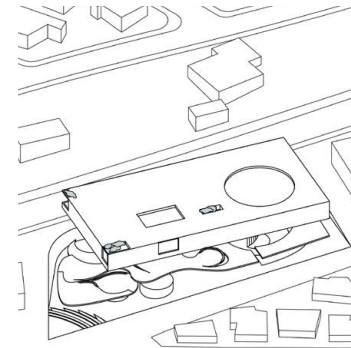
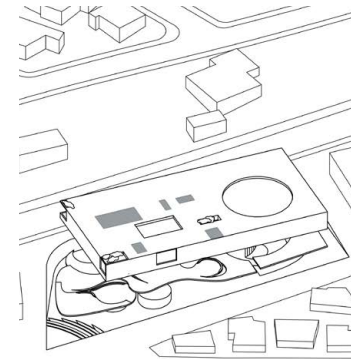
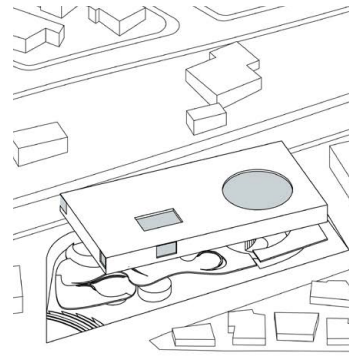
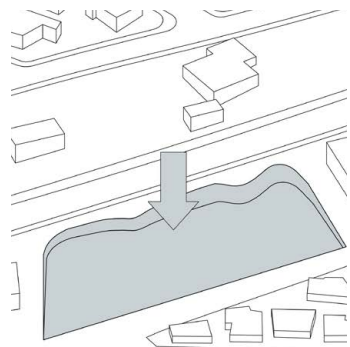
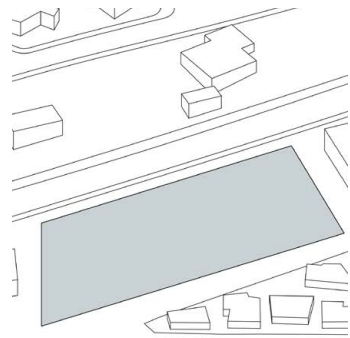
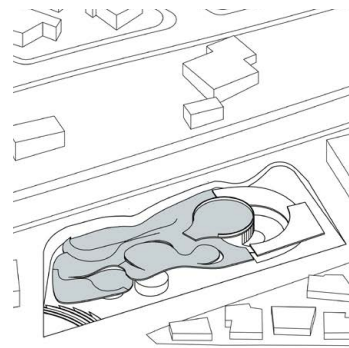
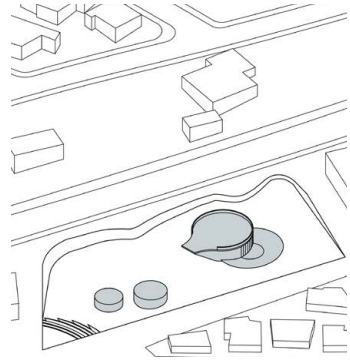
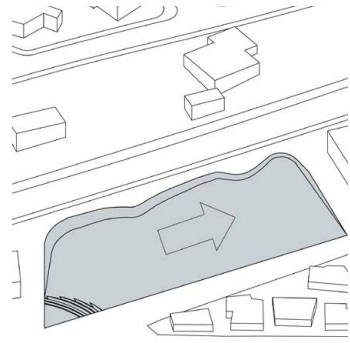


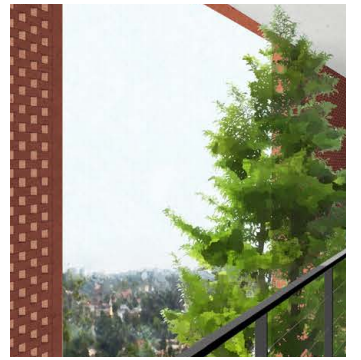
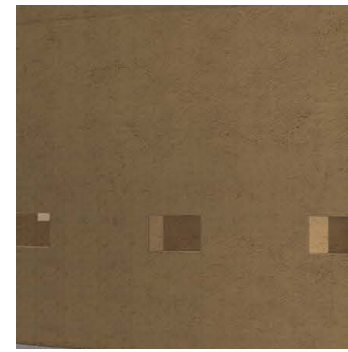
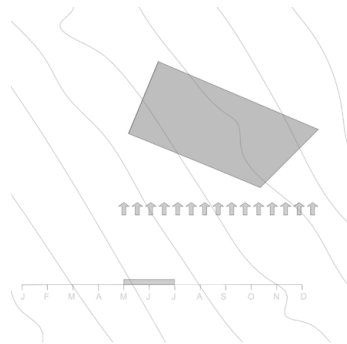
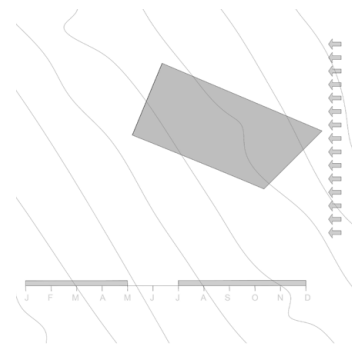
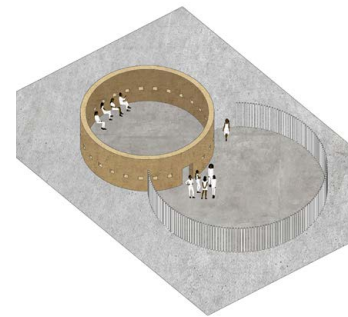
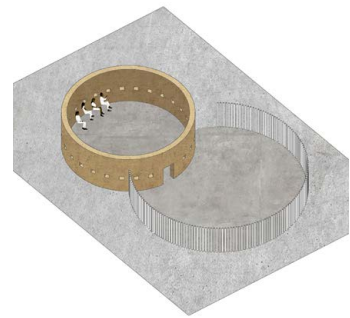
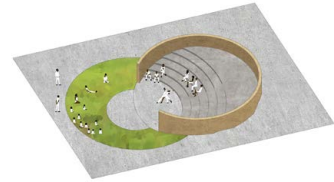
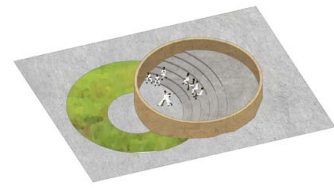
third level

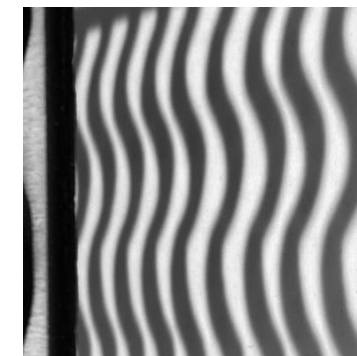
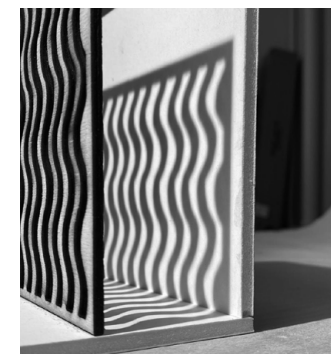
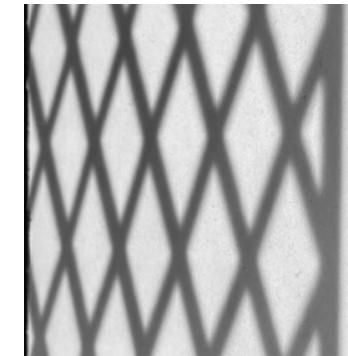
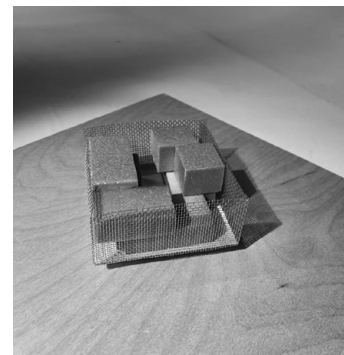
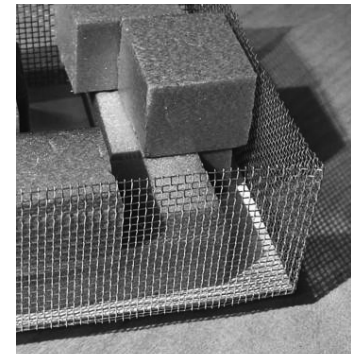


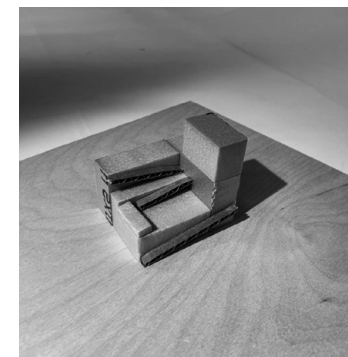
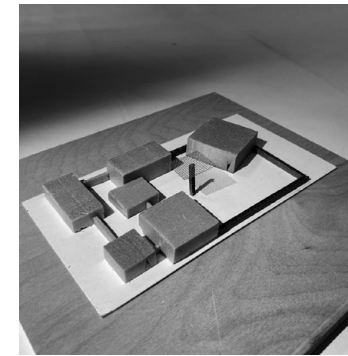
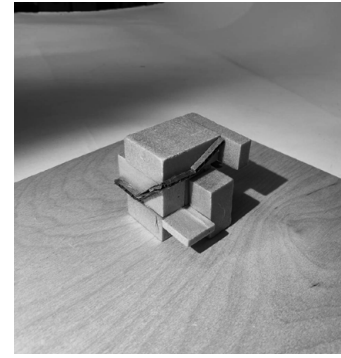
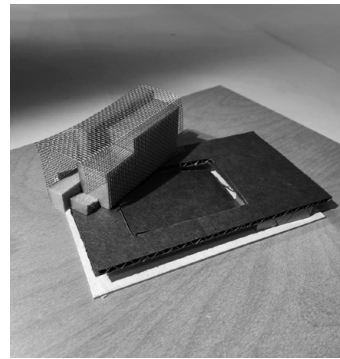
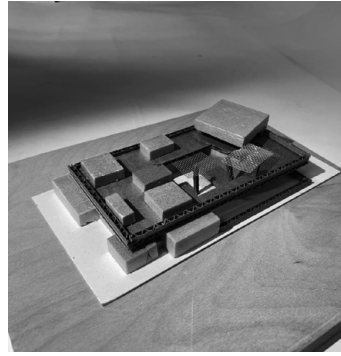
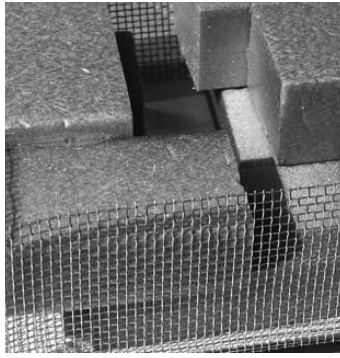


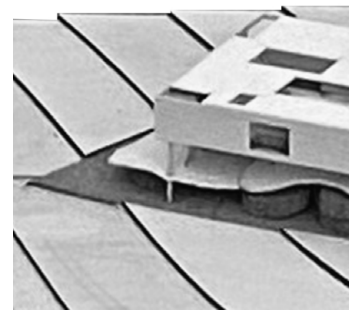
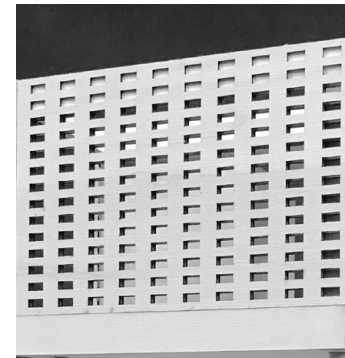
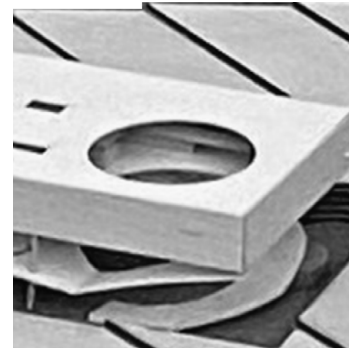
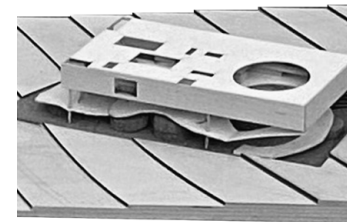
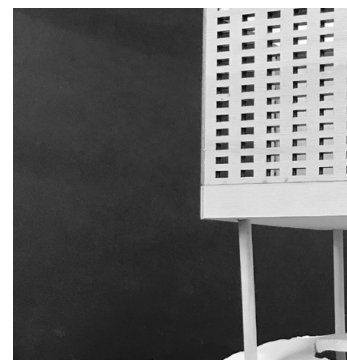
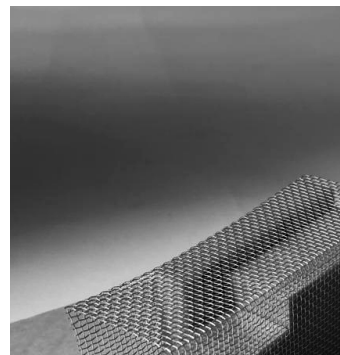
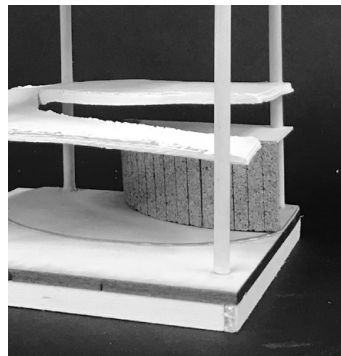











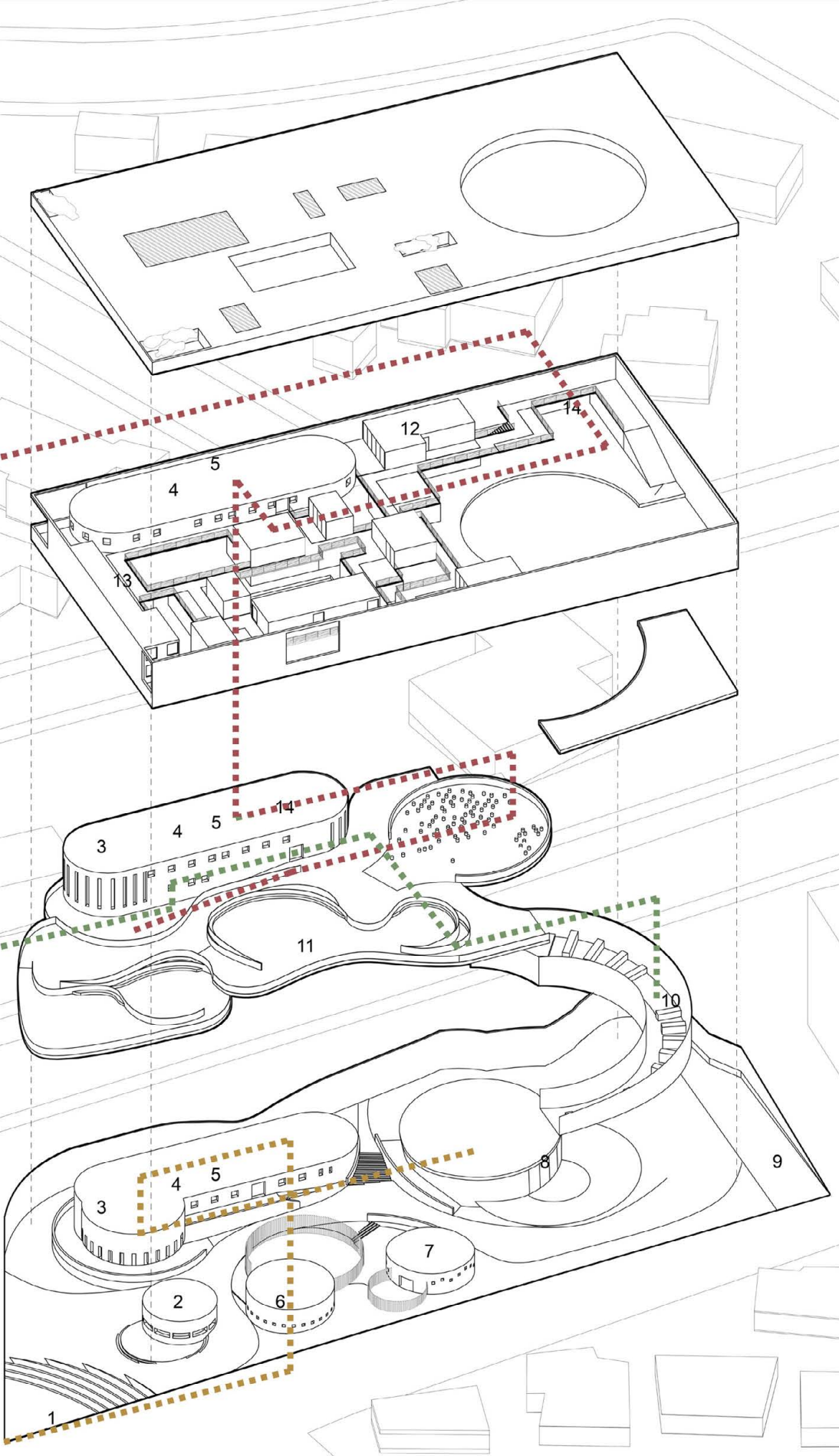


**Muteteli is a first-year student.**  
Today she used the entrance on the KN 3 Road, and went directly to class because the lecture had already started. During the break, she walked down the main staircase, and sit on the outdoor study space. Before going back to class, she had lunch at the student canteen.

**Professor Uwimana's office is situated on the second floor.**  
She prefers to teach on the outdoor classes, and as soon as she finishes work, she goes directly to the library, where she usually spends most of her free time.

**Mukamutara's house is very close.**  
She has never attended university, but she frequently visits public lectures and cultural events, and enjoys having dinner at the school's restaurant.


-  Circulation
-  Ventilation
-  Sun Light
- 14. Entrance from the Main Street
- 13. Closed Classroom
- 12. Open Classroom
- 11. Outdoor Classroom
- 10. Library
- 9. Parking Entrance
- 8. Multipurpose Space
- 7. Kindergarten
- 6. Public Classroom
- 5. Vertical Circulation
- 4. Staff Offices and Lounge
- 3. Restaurant
- 2. Info Desk
- 1. Main Entrance

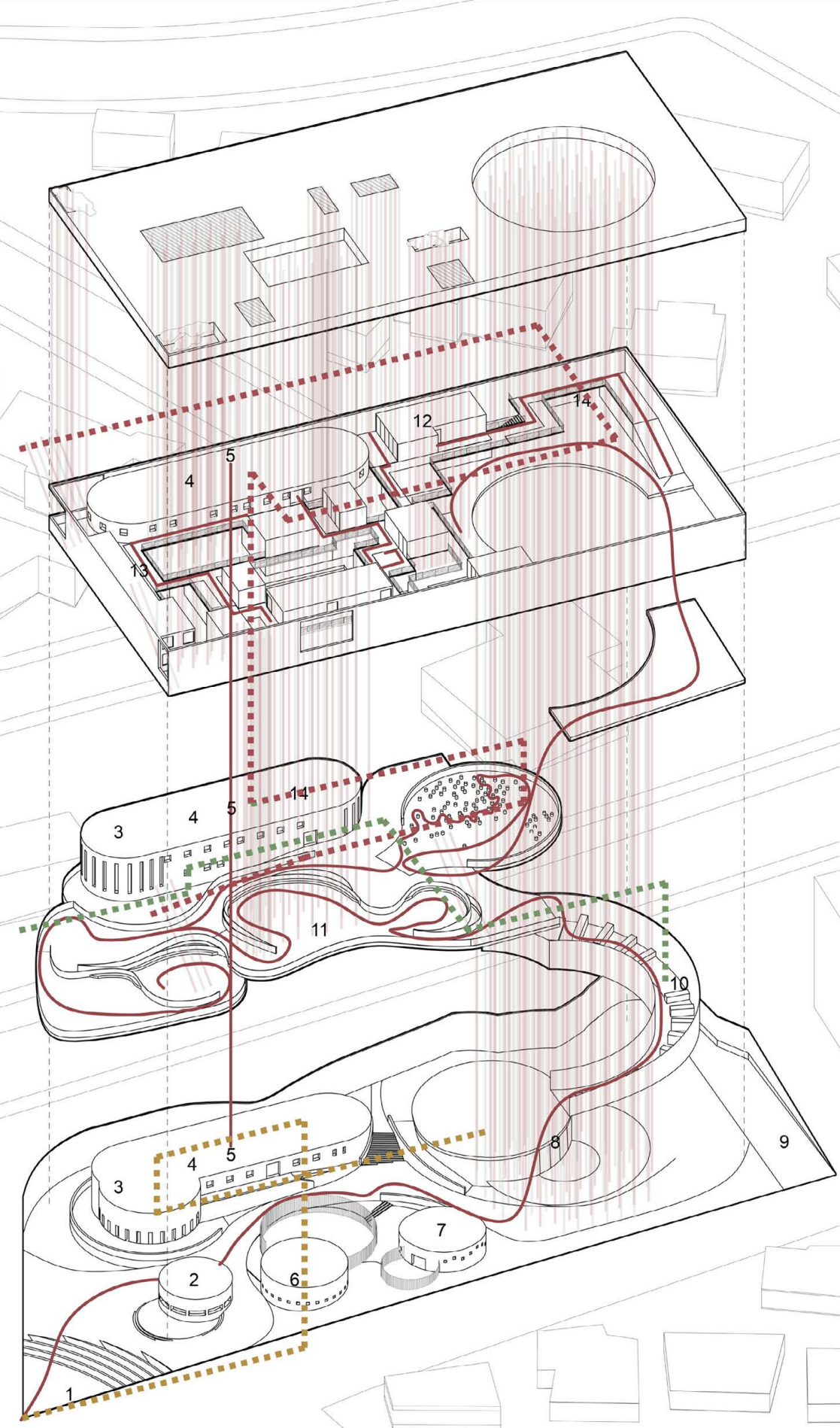


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## **SOMETHING OF VALUE**

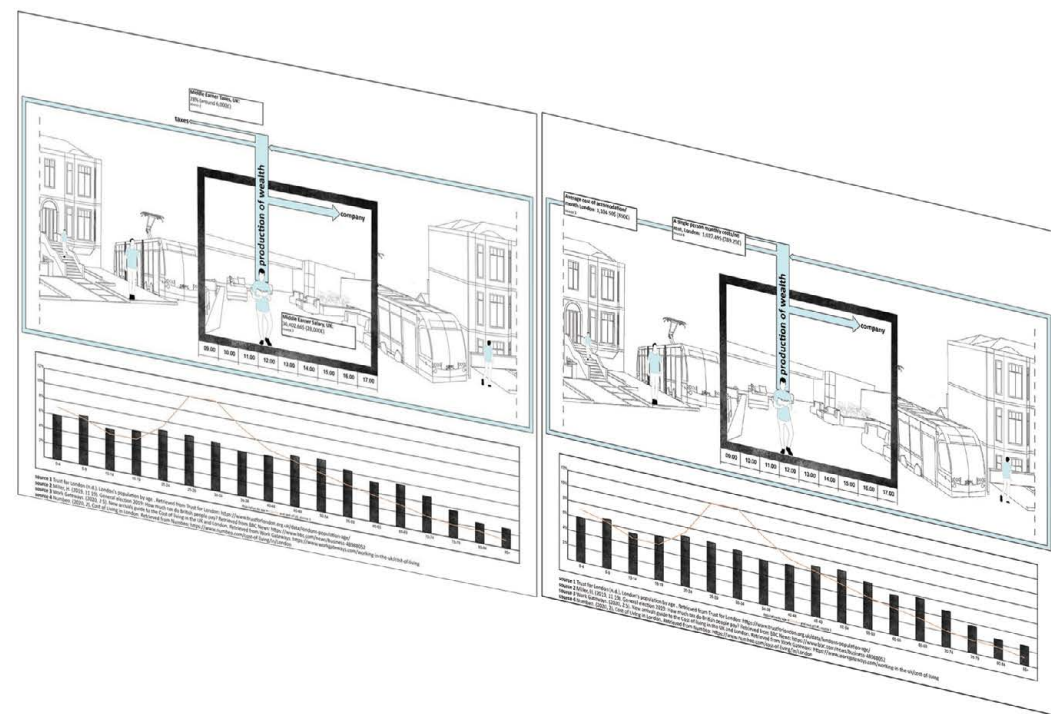
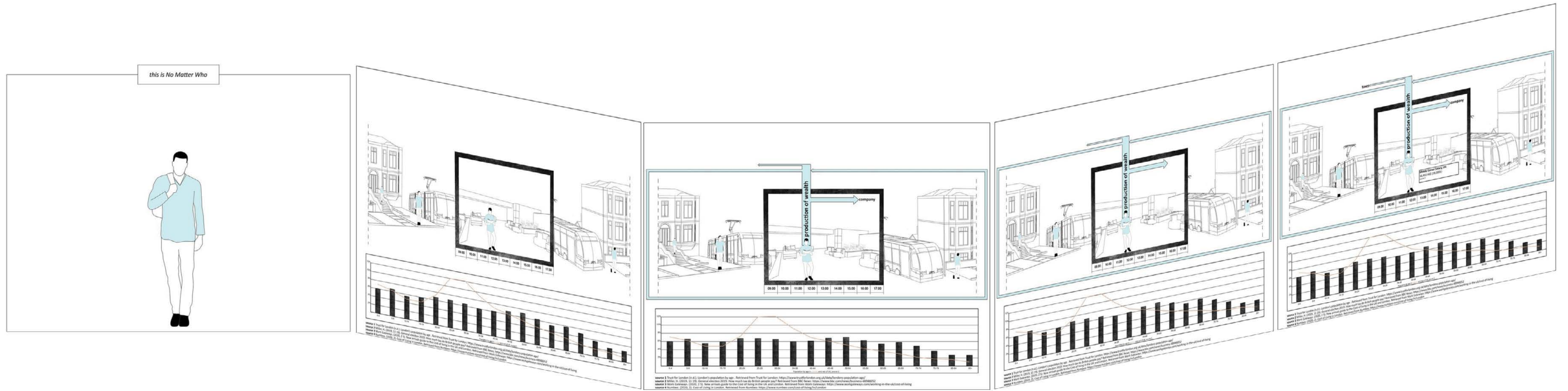
Instructor: Galia Solomonoff

*"No Matter Who was 27 years old. He was one of the many young people that lived in London and worked for a Company in Shoreditch..."*

Having as starting point the current economic expenses and inequality levels in the 2020 London, the proposal has a dual purpose: The first is the design of an ideal contemporary working environment in an existing building. A series of programs and experiences are imagined and placed inside a new envelope, above ground, while volumes are added and cut from the current structure, aiming to redefine the relation between the building and its context. The second is the reminder that architecture is interconnected and interdependent with each political and economic context. In this case, the Basement reflects social issues (such as violence and drugs) that not only exist, but on which, maybe, our reality is based.



The Story of No Matter Who



**Education**

Loan interest:  
After you graduate, you pay somewhere between 2.4% and 5.4% -  
depending on how much you earn.

Source: National Student Loans Company (NSLSC), 2019. <https://www.nslsc.gov.uk/what-we-do/repayment> (visited on 02/04/2020)



**Inequality**

50% of London's wealth is owned by the top 10%.  
The bottom 50% own only 5% of London's wealth.

Source: Trust for London, 2020. <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/key-facts/london-poverty-and-inequality/>

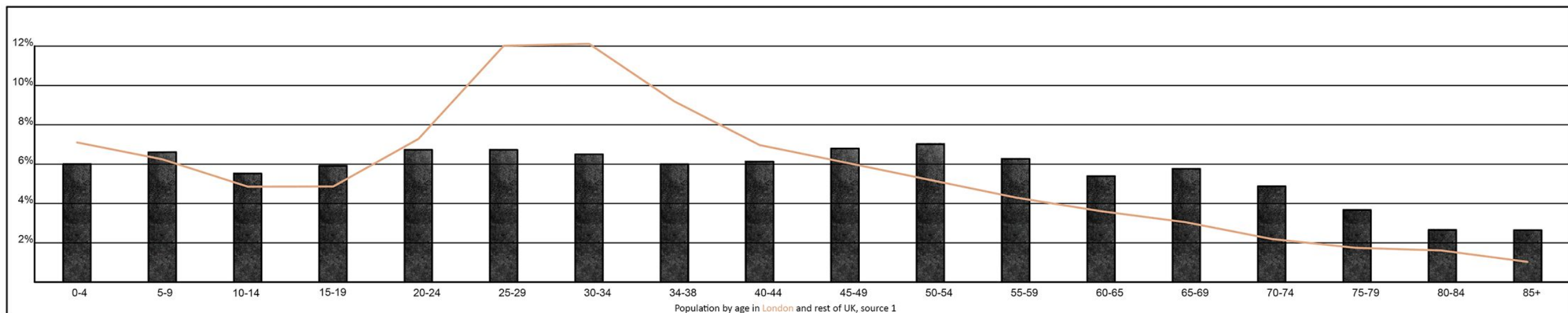
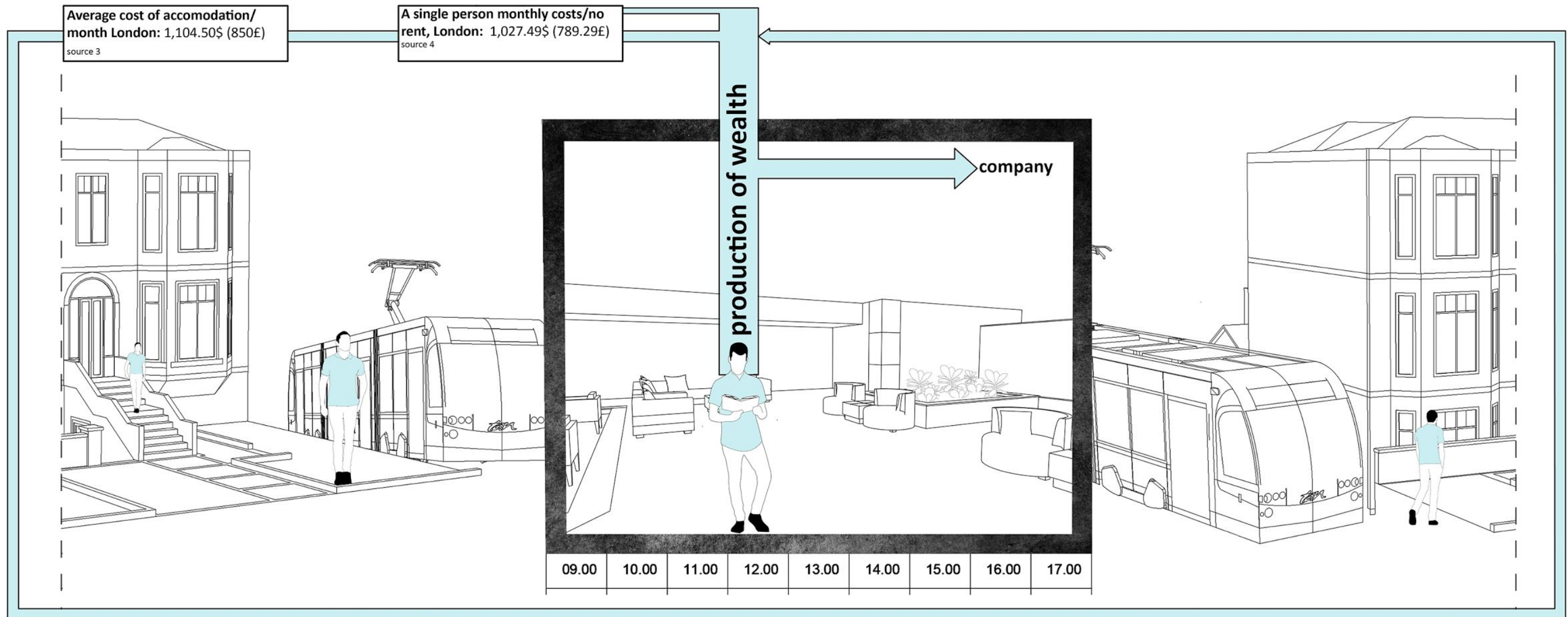


**Internships**

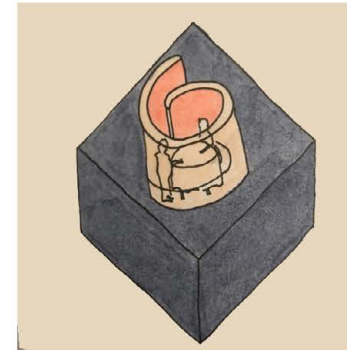
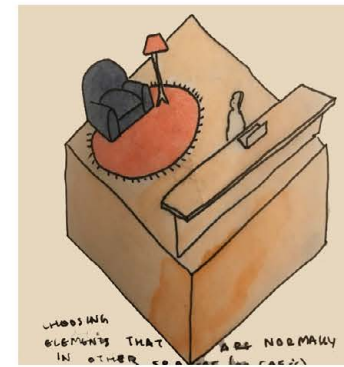
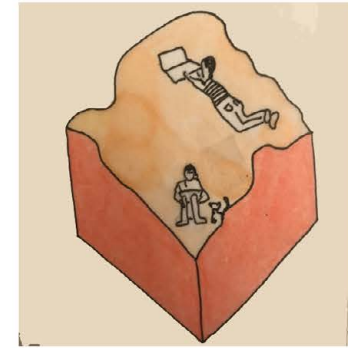
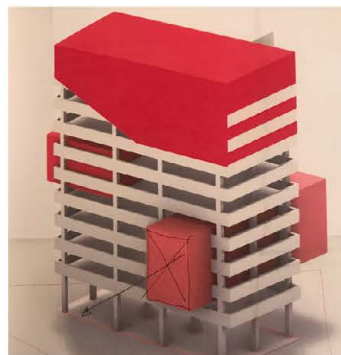
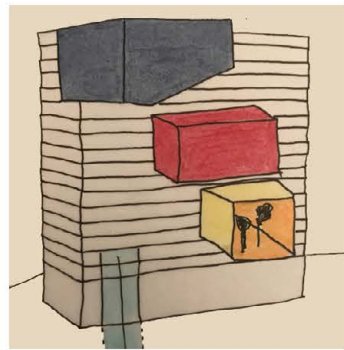
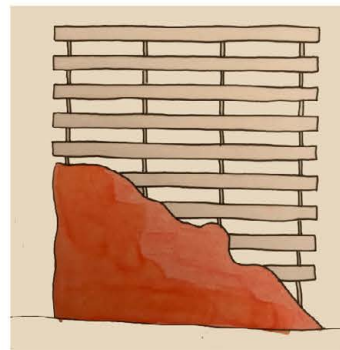
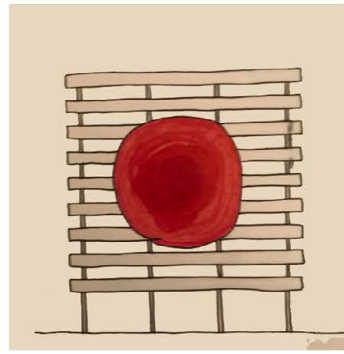
According to a YouGov 2014 poll, 26% of UK companies pay either  
nothing or only expenses for interns, typically about £500 (£744)

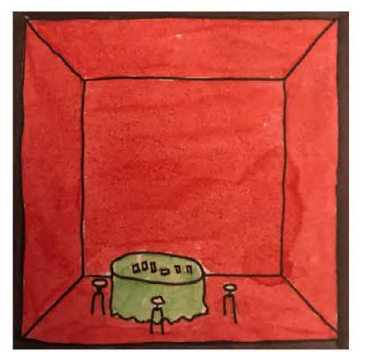
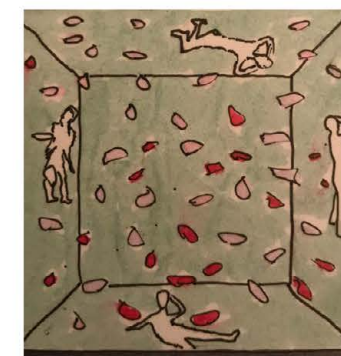
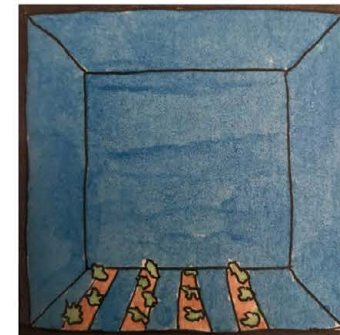
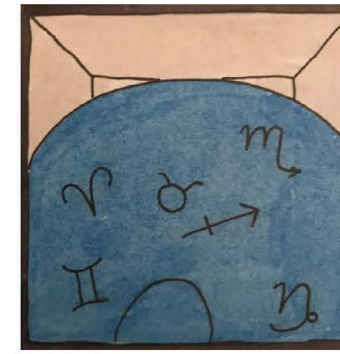
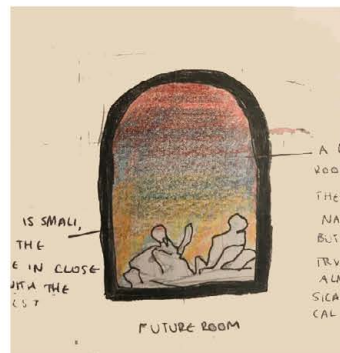
Source: YouGov, 2014. <http://www.yougov.com/research/2014/06/24/2014-yougov-poll-on-internships/> (visited on 02/04/2020)

incomes and costs in London



source 1 Trust for London (n.d.). London's population by age . Retrieved from Trust for London: <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/londons-population-age/>  
 source 2 Miller, H. (2019, 11 19). General election 2019: How much tax do British people pay? Retrieved from BBC News: <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-48988052>  
 source 3 Work Gateways. (2020, 2 5). New arrivals guide to the Cost of living in the UK and London. Retrieved from Work Gateways: <https://www.workgateways.com/working-in-the-uk/cost-of-living>  
 source 4 Numbeo. (2020, 2). Cost of Living in London. Retrieved from Numbeo: <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/London>



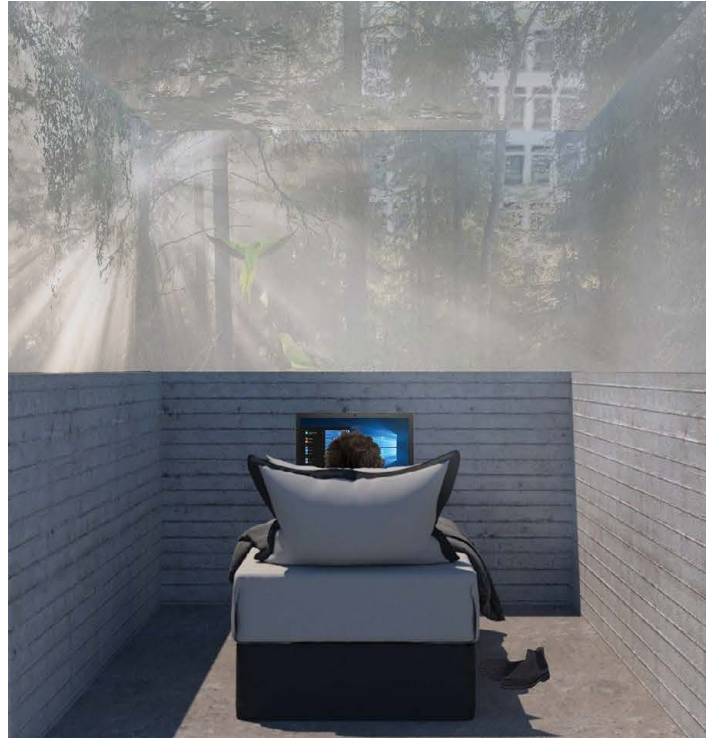




the building's site



the existing building



sleeping unit



violence room

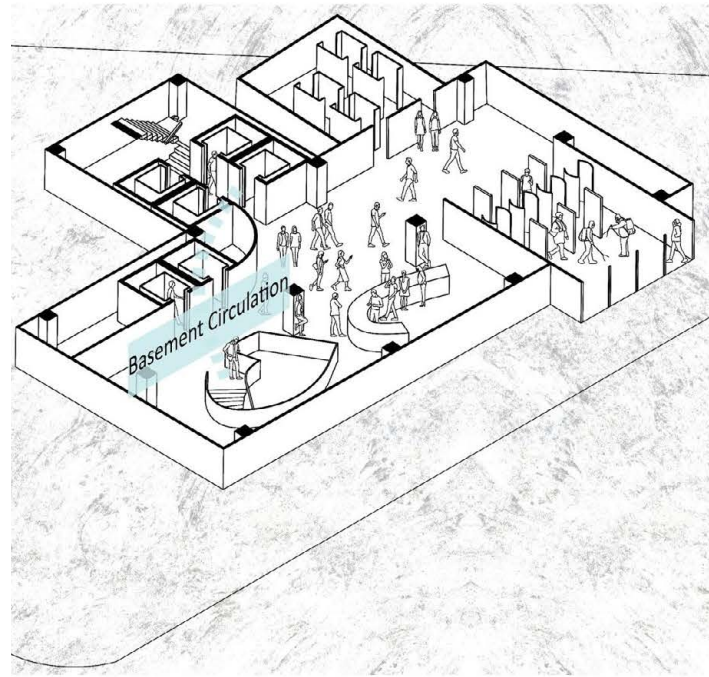




kitchen and living room



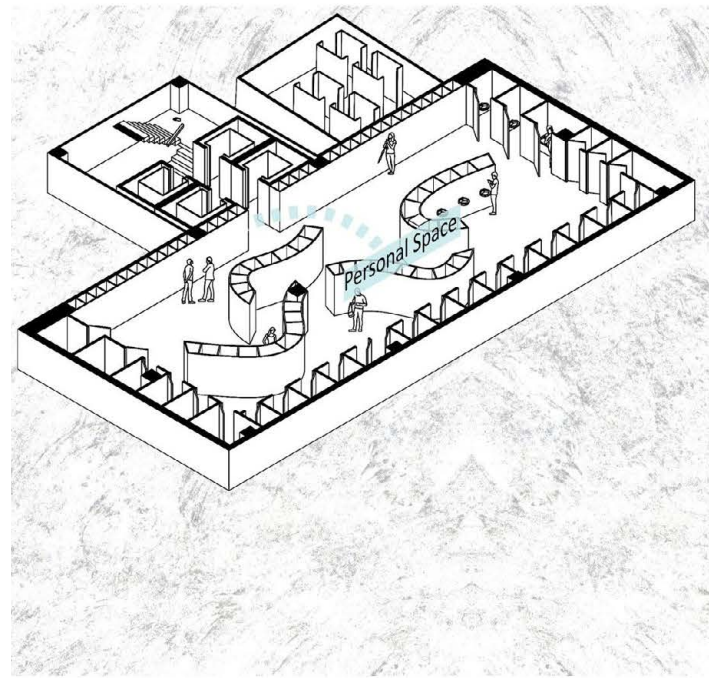
hallucinations room



main entrance



basement reception



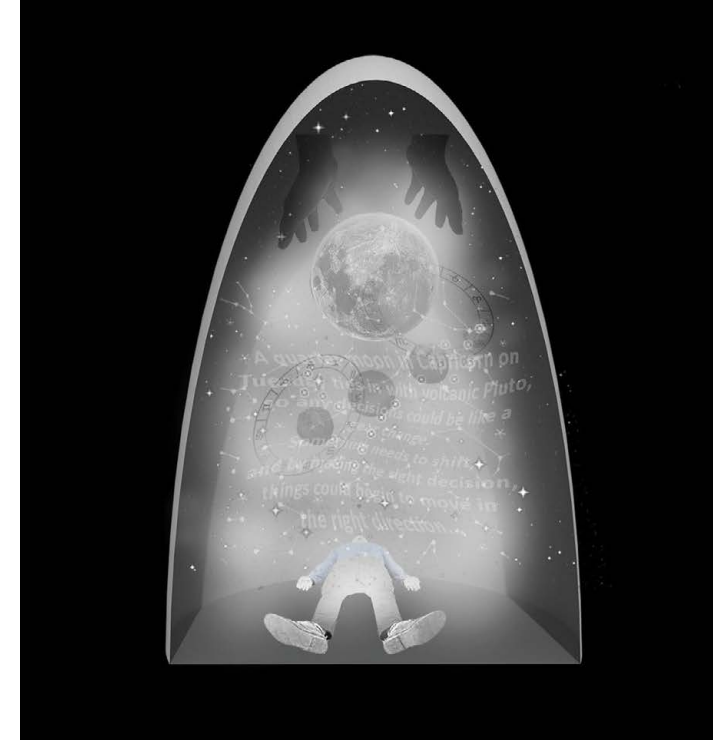
personal space level



vacation room



working units



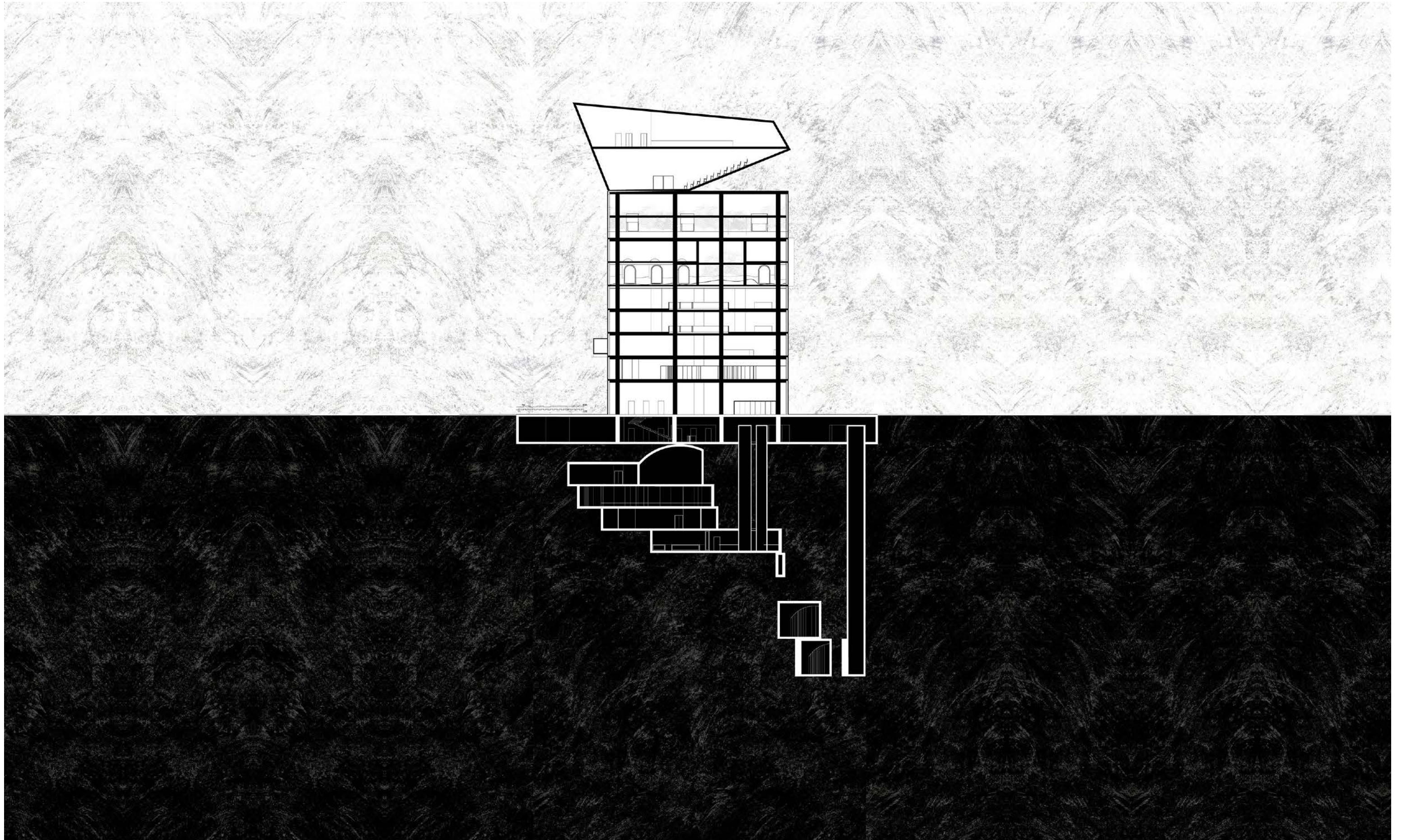
future room

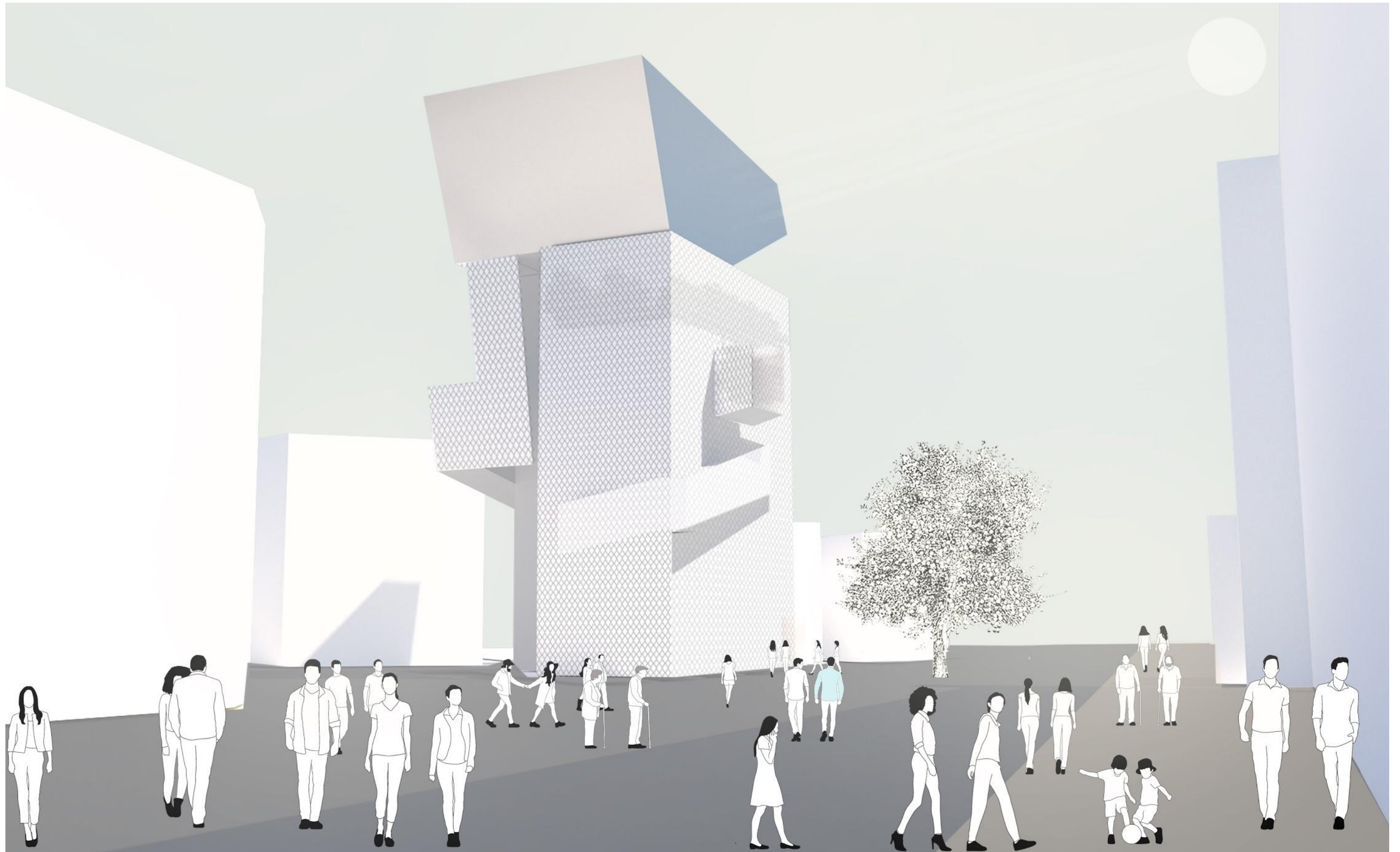


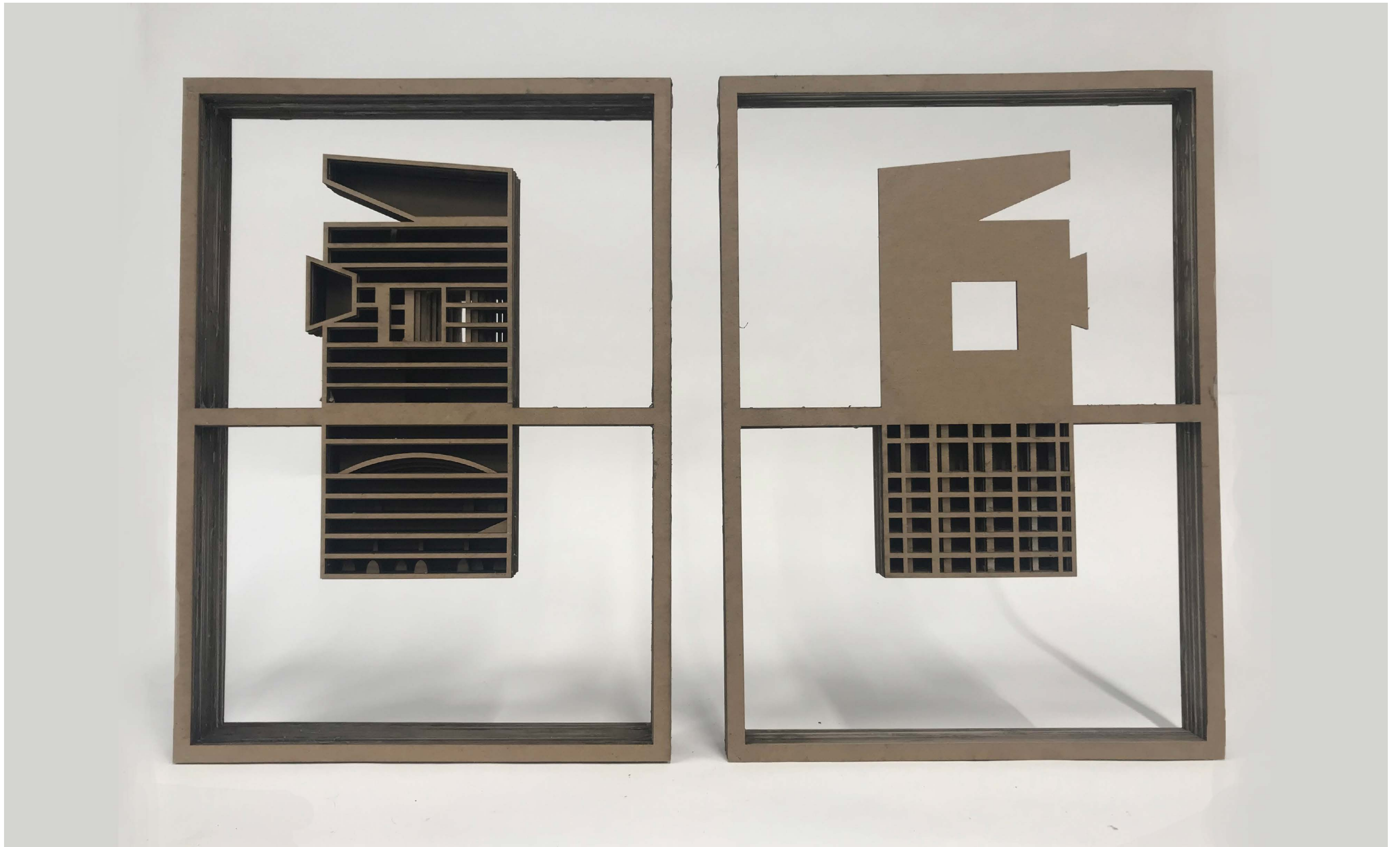
kitchen and living room



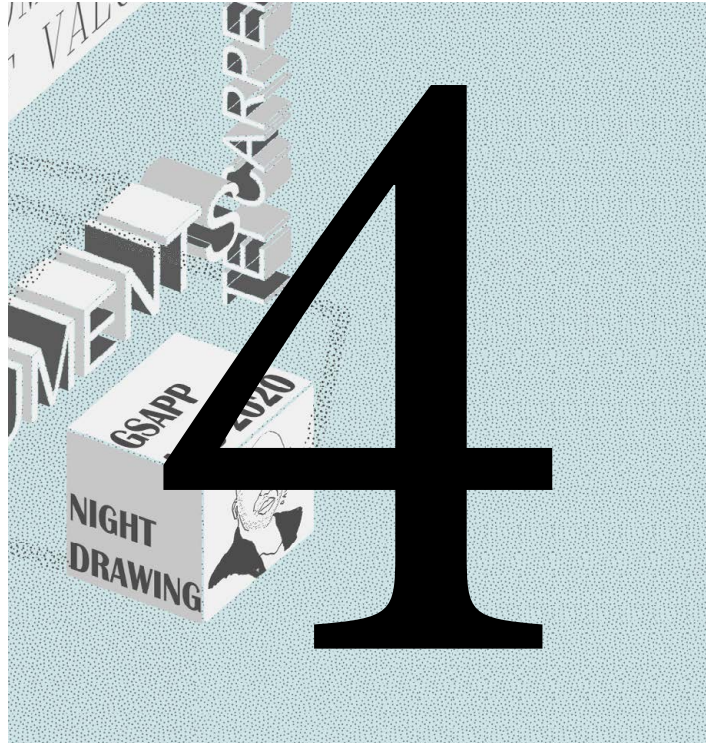
greed room











### **LINES NOT SPLINES**

Instructor: Christoph Kumpusch

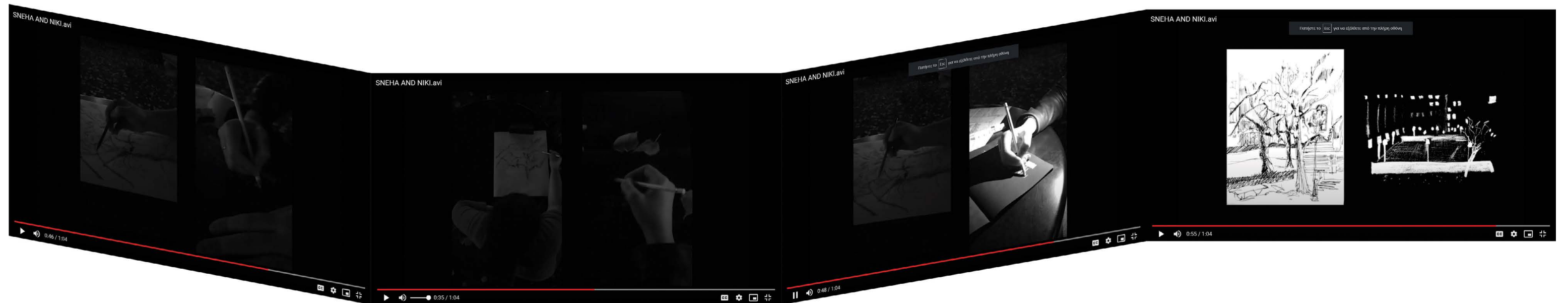
Partner: Sneha Ayier

“Drawing is not the form; it is the way of seeing the form.”

“Night Drawing/ Darkness as media.

We will conduct a series of urban profile/edge drawings in an around campus in the dark of night that use your Time-Line as a map. How do you represent what is fading or invisible?

How can drawing mitigate the darkness? What media are appropriate to night drawing? You will videotape each other Night Drawing and edit these into 1-minute mini-documentaries.”



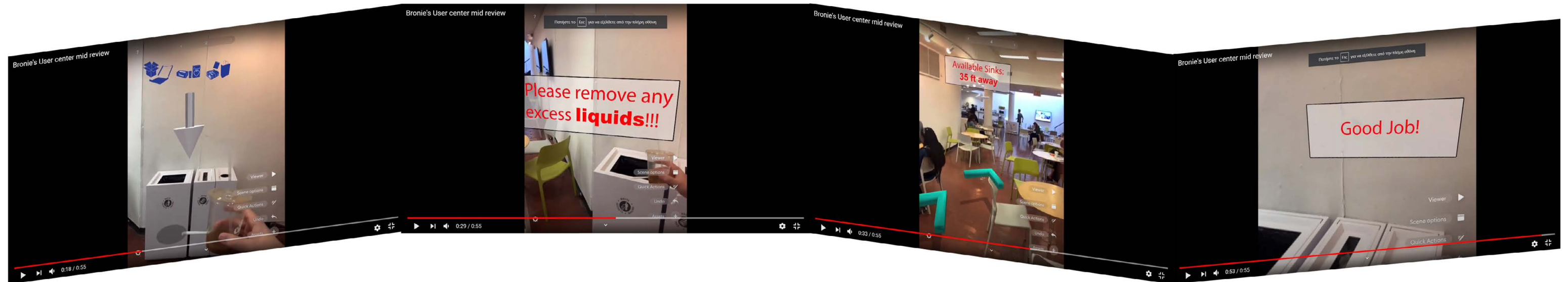
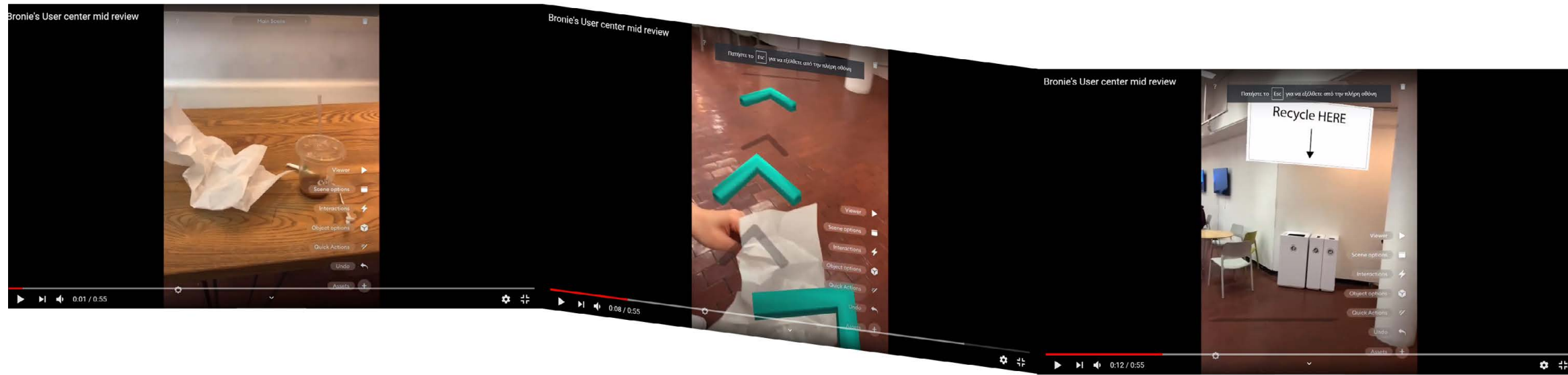


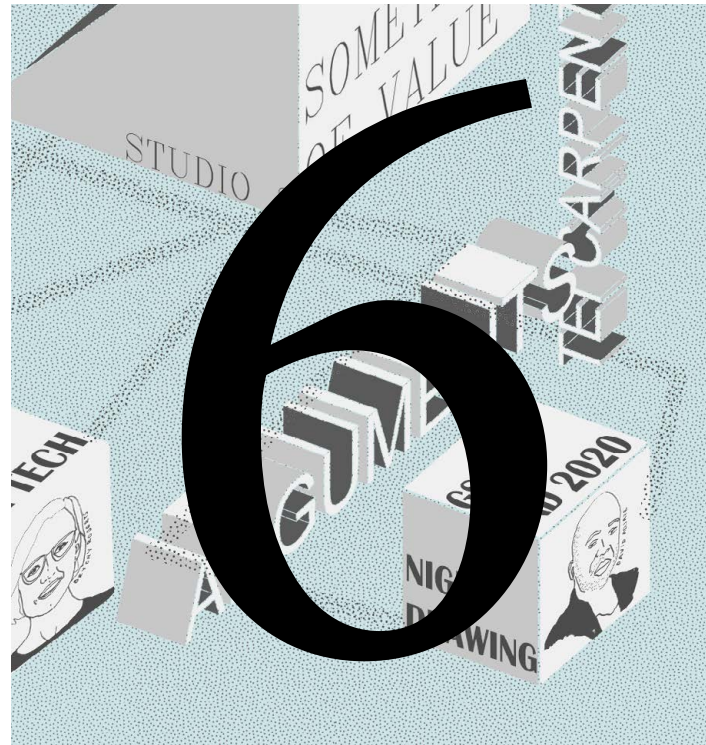
**USER CENTERED DESIGN FOR EMERGING DIGITAL-  
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS**

Instructor: Agnes Chang

Partners: Joyce Chen, Jingyi Shao, Ruisheng Yang

How can we create an AR application that helps us recycle at Brownie's cafe? This AR prototype is aiming to guide the user into a series of suggested actions to help reduce the amount of garbage collected daily at the GSAPP's cafeteria.





**ARGUMENTS**  
Instructor: Andres Jaque & Jonah Rowen

TITLE:  
**SCALES OF CONTEMPORARY  
CLOSED WORLDS**

This writing assignment is structured in two parts. In the first it is attempted to define Closed Worlds according to Lydia Kallipoliti, as well as through three different examples of existing or imaginary examples. The second part is based on (1) a question- argument, (2) a response to it, and (3) a second response to the former one, making use of the first three examples in order to provide more clarity.

## PART 1

**Scenario 1** An imaginary person that represents many existing ones.

George wakes up every day in his airconditioned apartment, in New York. He eats his breakfast- preferably organic- and then heads to the metro, in order to reach his job. While getting there, he reads the news that appear in his personalized newsfeed, and he sees the stories that his friends, or friends of friends have posted. He works for four hours, stops for a lunch, throws the lunch bag in the recycle bin because he always tries to “reduce, reuse, recycle”, continues working for four more hours and then heads back home, has dinner, and sleeps. Sometimes he goes out for a drink, and two weeks per year he leaves New York for vacation.

**Scenario 2** A description of an existing eco-community of 600 people, that was founded in Italy in 1975, as revealed by their website.

“At Damanhur, we believe that our planet is a living being to be respected and protected. In addition to cultivating a respect for nature, our ecological vision includes an awareness of how all of humanity is deeply connected with everything that surrounds us. These principles inspire the lives of Damanhurians, and they translate them into practical, everyday actions-from renewable energy to organic farming, green building construction to the community’s school system (where children are taught to take care of the environment)” (Damanhur n.d.).

**Scenario 3** The existing Earth, according to Nasa Science.

“Our home planet Earth is a rocky, terrestrial planet. It has a solid and active surface with mountains, valleys, canyons, plains and so much more. Earth is special because it is an ocean planet. Water covers 70% of Earth’s surface. Our atmosphere is made mostly of nitrogen and has plenty of oxygen for us to breathe. The atmosphere also protects us from incoming meteoroids, most of which break up in our atmosphere before they can strike the surface as meteorites. Since we live here, you might think we know all there is to know about Earth. Not at all, actually! We have a lot we can learn about our home planet. Right now, there are many

satellites orbiting Earth taking pictures and measurements. This is how we can learn more about weather, oceans, soil, climate change, and many other important topics” (Nasa Science 2019).

Lydia Kallipoliti defines the Closed World as “a self-sustaining physical environment demarcated from its surroundings by a boundary that does not allow for the transfer of matter or energy” (Kallipoliti, *The Architecture of Closed Worlds* 2018). For example, her book includes case studies like the Biospheric Test Module, or the Biosphere 2. As the architect and author has mentioned, however, a Closed World does not only concern the energy that we spend, or the climate in which we live, but also the information and the culture that we receive (Kallipoliti, *The Architecture of Closed Worlds or What is the Architecture of Shit?* 2019).

As a result, we can perceive the Closed World as a broader, a more general term. There are various types and sizes of Closed Worlds, some of which overlap, interact, or always remain separate, depending on their types of boundaries. For example, The Earth (scenario 3), is maybe the broadest Closed World, which contains and encloses all of the existing ones. A community in Europe (scenario 2) is also a form of a Closed World because it produces the food and the energy that the members need to survive, it has its own currency, and it creates and shares principles and knowledge with the outside world. Finally, a citizen of New York (scenario 1) lives in a Closed World in which he survives because he produces work, he gets specific information and experiences, and he tends to interact with people that are in the same bubble. He may never interact with the second scenario, but he will always be part of the largest Closed World, the Earth.

These diverse examples, as well as Lydia Kallipoliti’s book, are thought provoking and contemporary issues that are worth to be explored.

## PART 2

**1.** We, humans, decide to construct, to maintain, and to live in Closed Worlds inside the larger context of the Earth, and the first question that arises concerns the importance of such a decision. There are mainly two purposes that are connected to this choice, and they both belong in the Basic Needs of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Leod 2018).

The first purpose is related to our Physiological needs, meaning all the elements that are required for our survival: Closed Worlds fulfill our needs for food and water supplies; they reassure us that we will have a space that will be warm

in the cold days, and cool in the warm seasons; they offer a place in which we can rest, so that we can later work in order to produce what we need, and thus survive. For instance, in the first scenario the protagonist works for a job that will help him buy his food and rent his apartment, whereas the city in which he lives provides him with electricity (Leod 2018).

The second purpose concerns our need for Safety and Security, and humans need to be secure in a direct and indirect way (Leod 2018): On the one hand, we want to be physically safe towards dangers that can be caused by other people, as well as the environment and its possible disasters. On the other hand, humans need to feel safe towards the future! In other words, Closed Worlds provide a level of certainty in this world, the future of which cannot be foreseen. Since we cannot control the Earth, is it not essential to control a micro-world, that can guarantee that our safety will continue to exist, and the conditions will continue to be viable, in the future? In the Damanhur Community (scenario 2), the members attempt to accomplish security towards the future through maintaining “the quality and reproducibility of natural resources”, as well as a continuous “food production chain” (Damanhur n.d.).

In this way the question that we should pose is, could we even imagine people’s lives without the creation and the existence of Closed Worlds?

**2.** Even if we answer negatively to the previously mentioned question, and even if we accept the fact that the creation of Closed Worlds is required, we could argue that ideally it would be better for Closed Worlds to not exist, mainly because they promote the presence of distinctions. From the moment that boundaries are set, there is suddenly a differentiation of inside and outside world, meaning a distinction of belonging in one or the other, which may result to the creation and the promotion of inequality. In fact, we all live in the broadest Closed World, which is the Earth, but who can choose if he will belong to one smaller world or another? In the capitalistic system, it is probable that the richer a person is, the more protected he will be in his Closed World, and the better quality of life he will enjoy. For example, the first scenario would be completely different if the protagonist was an unemployed New Yorker, if he was living in a different city, or even more if he was living in a different, developing country.

To make matters worse, we can argue that Closed Worlds tend to promote individualism, not only in the scale of the person, but also in the scale of groups. This is evident in the final part of the book, where Lydia Kallipoliti uses a firstperson narrative “I am inside, though... I breathe my own exhalations... my plan is to grow vegetables and tomatoes and

feed them with my own shit”. Also, this can be found in the examples of the Nasa Langley Simulator, the 1966 biological waste system, the 1967 Man+ (Kallipoliti, *The Architecture of Closed Worlds* 2018). In a larger scale, individualism is evident not only in communities such as the Damanhur, but also in the scale of the countries: A critical example would be that of the Closed World called USA, and its action towards the Paris 2020 agreement.

According to the European Commission, the Paris 2020 agreement “set out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C” (European Commission n.d.). However, Donald Trump has claimed in the past that “the Paris accord will undermine our economy,” that it “puts us at a permanent disadvantage”, and that “It’s time to exit” (Chakraborty 2017).

What I am trying to explain, is that Closed Worlds can be competitive, incompatible, and contradictory. There is always the possibility that the inhabitants of a Closed World will not protect its context or will not care about the neighboring Closed Worlds. In my opinion, this tendency is illogical, especially in the cases related to the broadest Closed World, the Earth. According to the journalist Christofer Flavelle and a United Nations report, “the world’s land and water resources are being exploited at “unprecedented rates,” which combined with climate change is putting dire pressure on the ability of humanity to feed itself” (Flavelle 2019). The individual smaller Closed Worlds will not be able to exist, if the Earth operates differently, due to the climate crisis!

**3.** However, we must now accept the fact that an ideal scenario, in which the Closed Worlds do not need to exist, will remain a utopic fantasy. It is not realistic to claim that Closed Worlds should not exist, and that we need a more holistic approach of design as well as living. In fact, as architects, our job is to use our skills and knowledge in order to create Closed Worlds that are protected from their environment. The problem is that contemporary Closed Worlds tend to not work as capably as they could, and that in most cases we provide our services to relatively wealthy groups of people, who can afford the design and the creation of a new space. Fortunately, sometimes, and especially more often in the few past decades as well as now, architects have been trying to design in a more sustainable way, meaning that there is a concern to create Closed Worlds that preserve as much as possible the Earth.

It is my belief that as humans and as architects, we should accept the fact that people will always be in a need of one or more Closed Worlds. Yet, what is extremely crucial is to ask in each case the following questions, as a way to evaluate

close worlds in a detailed and analytical way: For whom did any of these Closed Worlds come into existence? Who profits from its presence? What type of waste is produced, and where does it end being? What is the relationship between one Closed World and its surrounding Closed Worlds? And finally, in what way does any of the Closed Worlds interact with the Earth?

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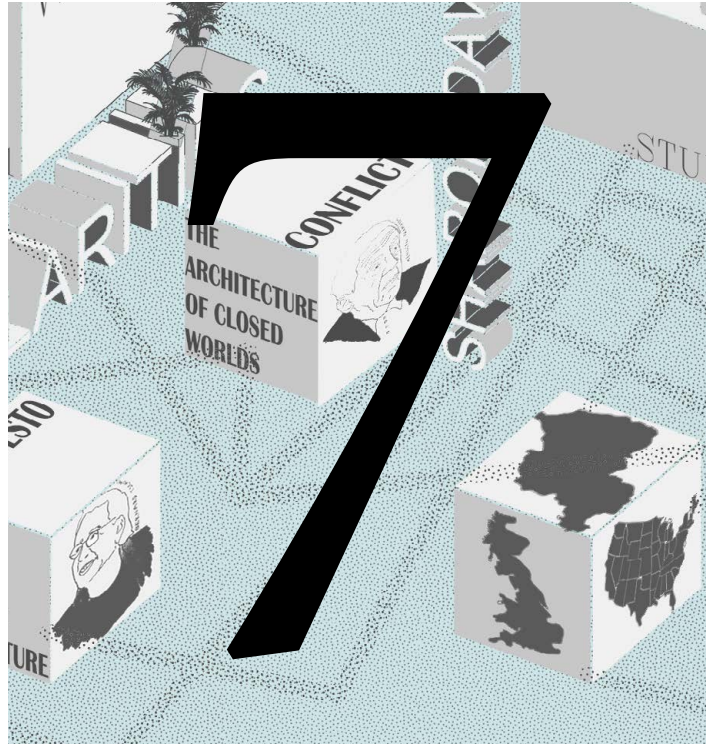
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**URBAN MAGAZINE**  
"Emergence", Spring Semester 2020

TITLE:  
**DEMETER'S ANGER**

*According to an ancient Greek myth, Persephone was the beautiful daughter of Demeter, the beloved goddess of Earth and Agriculture. When Hades (Pluto), the God of the Dead and the Underworld, saw the young girl, he fell in love; but, as he was sure that Demeter would never allow him to become Persephone's husband, he decided to set a trap, abduct her, and bring her with force in his underground kingdom. And so he did, with the help of Zeus, the king of Gods.*

*Demeter, not knowing what happened, felt devastated as she was hopelessly searching for her daughter across every land and sea. But Helios (Sun), who always saw and knew everything, revealed the whole truth to the tragic mother.*

*Demeter's anger and sorrow was so deep that she refused to allow any harvest; the Earth became infertile, and the plants did not grow. People starved, death arose, and humanity was about to disappear.*

*The only act that could stop this disaster and bring back life to the Earth and the people would be that Demeter's anger was relieved, so Zeus did not have a choice but to ask Hades for a compromise, to rejoin the mother and daughter. And so it happened; from then on, Persephone would spend six months on Earth and six months in the Underworld; half the year Demeter would be happy and the harvest would be plentiful, and the other half she would miss her daughter and would not allow for plants to grow (Kakridis 1986).*

The myth above is not used as a way to honor a glorious cultural past while judging a complex contemporary era, and by no means does it contain any scientific accuracy. The myth above, however, is just another proof of how humanity's position towards the earth, nature, and the ecosystem, has been changing over the millennia.

From an unknown world full of mysterious phenomenons that can only be explained with imaginary stories, we, humans, have managed to reveal a significant part of the world we live in through the use of research and science. According to Y.N. Harari and his book *Homo Deus*, "For the first time in history, more people die today from eating too much than from eating too little; more people die from old age than from infectious diseases" (Harari 2018).

Going one step further, humans gained so much more power over nature, that the effects led to the so-called Anthropocene era. The climate crisis effects are closely related to nature, animals, humans, societies, and economies; yet the only way to face and resolve it is through politics. How could a human of the past, a mythology believer in the ancient years, even imagine that the world as we knew it would eventually be changed not by a mysterious and strong reli-

gious force, but by human's decisions, actions and choices?

Proposals such as the Green New Deal seem to be urgent, but I must admit that the European's Commission slogan, "A European Green New Deal: Striving to be the first climate-neutral continent" (European Commission, nd) makes me hesitant. The spread of the coronavirus pandemic in the winter and spring of 2020 is apart of a tragedy, a reminder of how small our world is; how borders do not exist in front of such a global issue; and how pointless it is for countries to take such policies individually, since we are all part of one, continuous, uninterrupted closed world. In other words, is the scale of a country, or even a continent, powerful enough to respond to such a global issue?

Apart from voters we are also architects. Proposing and designing arguments and ideas that will be realized in the future context, however, is itself a political act and must be a very cautious and conscious procedure. And while forming and learning the principles and goals of green architecture is a necessity for its practice to be wholly successful and aligned with tackling the climate crisis, it must be driven by the knowledge of the environmental and social footprints of our work as an absolute given. It will only be successful once the terms sustainable and green are not being used in front of architecture because of a pleonasm.

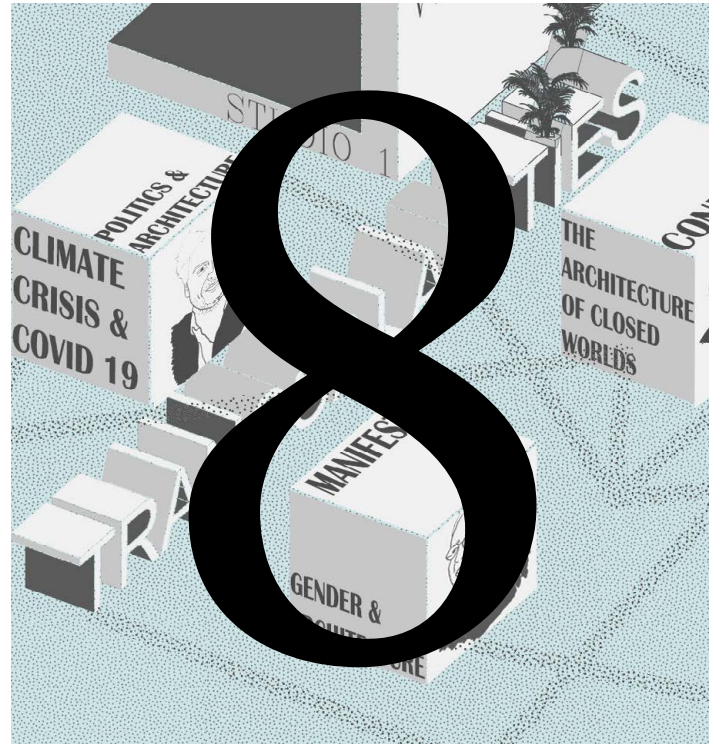
There are no Demeters, Persephones and Zeus' to blame for disasters, only humans and their decisions. It would be unfair to claim that globally all people are equally responsible for the current climate and social crisis, as it is naive to believe that the effects will be the same for all. The major question that should arise, however, is how we, the upcoming generation of designers, architects, planners and preservationists, the privileged and lucky Columbia GSAPP students, will respond to these conditions? To be answered soon and hopefully, proudly!

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**TRANSCALARITIES**  
Instructor: Andres Jaque & Yara H. S. Saqfalhait  
Partners: Zifan Zhang & Jae Kyun Park

TITLE:  
**THE  
WASHINGTON BRIDGE  
APARTMENTS  
CONFLICT**

Imagine opening your living room's window, to find yourself over a constantly noisy and polluted expressway. The Washington Bridge Apartments are situated in the Washington Heights area of New York. What is extremely interesting, however, is that these four blocks of flats, that house 4000 residents, are actually located on top of the Trans-Manhattan Expressway (Chen 2004). This fact and its implications, which are related to the absence of sufficient protection against the noise and air pollution, have become a matter of conflict ever since the project's creation in the 1960s by Guenther Brown Architects (Gissen 2007). This paper aims to analyze this complex, yet thought-provoking case study, by focusing on the reasons that led to its realization, as well as the different positions towards it.

Of course this was not the first time that the idea of layering infrastructure and buildings was introduced: some of the best known modernist architects in the West had proposed this arrangement in the 20th century. Let us think, for instance, Le Corbusier's drawings for the Central Station Flanked by Four Skyscrapers in The City of Tomorrow and its Planning, or Sant Elias' drawings for The Citta Nuova: transportation's improvement was admired and thus considered a vital part of the city, worth to interact directly with the buildings (Caratzas 2002).

But is the admiration of technology the reason that the New Yorkers introduced in the 1960s this uncommon typology? Probably not. In fact, the Washington Bridge Apartments came into existence because of social, and mainly because of financial reasons.

On the one hand, according to David Gissen, the creation of a new group of dwellings that would include all the modern facilities of the time, such as air conditioning, could transform the neighborhood from a poor into a middle class region (Gissen 2007).

On the other hand, and most importantly, the creation of the Trans-Manhattan Expressway required the demolition of 76 buildings, which were housing in total 8000 people. The New York City lost, in this way, a significant amount of money, not only because of the expense of occupying this land, but also because of the loss of the area's taxes. At the same period, a legislation concerning the 'highway air rights developments' appeared (Gissen 2007). According to Michael Caratzas, the Air-Rights were a solution to urban issues such as "the scarcity of building sites", or the "high land costs" (Caratzas 2002). Thus, the New York Municipality organized an auction, and the site's air rights were sold to Kratter Corporation for more than \$1 million, in 1960. Only one year later the construction had begun, and in three years the first inhabitants moved in (Gissen 2007).

This issue engaged many parts, during and after its construction. Protagonists of the conflict have been, except from the New York Municipality, the investors, and of course, the apartments' inhabitants. Equally important was the role of the Citizens for Clean Air Group, as well as various professionals of fields of Architecture and Science, who conducted interventions and examinations (Gissen 2007). It is important to point that in most of the previous cases, we can see a juxtaposition and an evolution of the opinions concerning the main conflict throughout time.

In the political context, the New York Municipality profited from the auction. However, only three years after the building's realization, senator Robert F. Kennedy, said that "the choice of this location for these apartments, astride one of the most heavily traveled highways in New York City, shows a total disregard for environmental factors on the part of our city planners" (Gissen 2007). Also, he suggested that the cut between the buildings and the expressway is covered with a barrier, as a way to diminish the existing pollution (Caratzas 2002).

It would be logical to wonder how the architects could agree to design dwellings that tolerate such an unhealthy environment. Yet, the architects stated that they "were very concerned about the noise and pollution factors, but the highway was being finished at about the same time as the buildings", so it was impossible to fully acknowledge the extent of the problem (Gissen 2007). In fact the architects took an interesting design decision: to use an aluminum curtain wall, thanks to its ability to not need a constant maintenance, to be abrasion-resistant, and to look innovative and aesthetically different (Caratzas 2002).

Hazel Henderson, who formed the Citizens for Clean Air group, and was one of the most powerful opponents of the Washington Bridge Apartments, asked the City Department of Air Pollution Control to examine the air of the region around the apartments in 1964. According to their research, the air quality was "undesirable but not dangerous" (Gissen 2007). There is evidence that tenants responded "... what does tolerable mean? That you'll drop dead in ten years instead of twenty? ... We do not like the idea of being slowly poisoned" (Caratzas 2002). In fact, the absence of danger was the main argument that was used by one of the company owners, when, after the inhabitants' demand for supplementary protection, he insisted that they pay the installation cost (Gissen 2007). According to Caratzas, by 1967 "the area's pollution was twice as what was considered normal" (Caratzas 2002). In the 1970s a research revealed that "the apartments contained higher levels of carbon monoxide inside than the roadway below" (Gissen 2007).

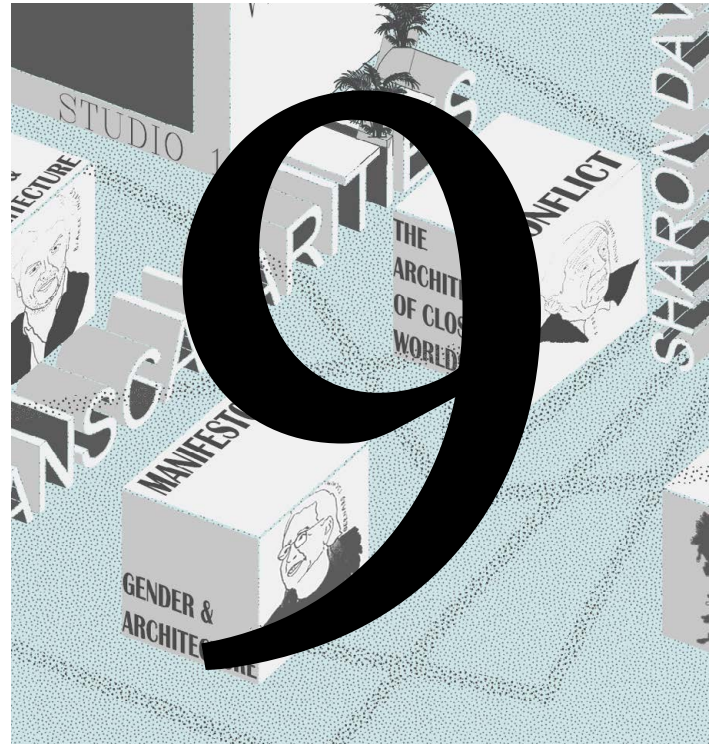
Apparently there is an interesting level of contradictions between the inhabitants' opinions as well. In fact, M. Kratter, the head of the development company, reported that in August 1961 there were more than 1000 applications for the apartments" (Caratzas 2002). Only some years later, there is evidence of a family that moved from the 14th to the 28th floor, but were still unable to open the windows because of the noise. In the 2000s, some inhabitants characterized apartments as "constantly irritable" and "asphyxiated" (Bernstein 2004).

Although the buildings never became "the New York's most fabulous big-family opportunity, "where residents could "live luxuriously", as it was promised in the 1960s by the investors (Chen 2004), our field research revealed that even now there are positive comments from the inhabitants who have chosen to live there. For some residents the views are characterized as breathtaking (Chen 2004). Also, these buildings have become recognizable landmarks. What is more common, however, is that many inhabitants have managed to get used to the problems that characterize the Washington Apartments, as it is described in the article of David Chen (Chen 2004). After all, in the 2000s, meaning after almost forty years of their construction, there have been efforts of maintenance: new double glass windows were installed (Gissen 2007), and the elevator, which was previously able to go from the level of the road to the floors, and not from a floor to another floor, has been changed (Chen 2004).

In conclusion, more than fifty years after their construction, the Washington Bridge Apartments embody not only the inability of architects to foresee with clarity several variables of the future projects, but also the architecture's adjustments to the individuals' financial interests. For the past years the residents are mostly working class Dominicans. Aiming to save money, some of them split the apartments and then sublet them partly (Chen 2004). This fact makes us wonder whether the inhabitants are actually living in Washington Bridge Apartments out of financial necessity, or a personal choice. The question that should now be posed is: how can the contemporary construction innovations be used, to give at last, a healthier quality of life to the inhabitants?

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**STUDIES IN TECTONIC CULTURE**

Instructor: Kenneth Frampton

Partner: Sneha Ayier

TITLE:

**ROLAND RAINER:  
HOUSING SETTLEMENT AND  
SPACE OF APPEARANCE**

Public spaces in a housing community are not often discussed in relationship with tectonics and environmental design. Roland Rainer's research and practice were ahead of his time in bringing such issues to the fore. This paper examines his work in relationship with the concerns he raises in his book *Livable Environments*. They are not limited to his immediate context, but focusing on international examples and precedents. We look at the following housing projects of Roland Rainer- Vorfabrikation: Fertighaus, Sommerhaus, Puchenau I & II, Lignosthal House, Bratislava 1967, Linz- Leonfeldnerstrasse, Tamariskengasse, Linz Auwiesen, and Oko Siedlung Essling in the context of his theoretical research.

### Environment

Roland Rainer explores the effects of population inflation of various countries on housing. He challenges the vertical stacking of floors as a solution to congestion and proposes a rather unclear argument in favor of horizontality. On the other hand, he suggests that the horizontality should not be accomplished through single freestanding family houses in large plots, but by creating multi-family units, that share private open space. This strategy can accommodate larger populations, without resulting in an extensive city expansion (Rainer, 1972).

Further, he illustrates his concerns about the automobile and its effect on the urban footprint through the cloverleaf intersection overlaid on the plan of Salzburg. Motor traffic affects the urban environment by way of not only air-pollution, nerve-racking noise and accidents in a catastrophic way, but just as much owing to its demands for more and more space (Rainer, 1972). Such concerns for automobile and its influence on the public spaces subsequently became pivotal in his architecture, especially housing. It reflected in the organization of the schemes as well as the materiality of these public spaces.

### Streets

For Hanna Arendt, the polis stands for the space of appearance, for that space "where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but to make their appearance explicit." Such public space of appearance can always be recreated anew wherever individuals gather politically, that is, "Wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action" (Passerin, 2019).

Since we are going to discuss his housing projects and space of appearance, it is important to reflect on Rainer's concerns and references with regard to the street. In a hous-

ing project, the street becomes the first interaction space outside the realm of privacy. He looks at two examples, a residence in London that displays the house on the front yard and a house from Chinese vernacular settlement that encloses a semi-private court by a spirit wall to create a threshold between the private and the public. In this way, he questions and learns about transitions and negotiations between private and public space. He compares the organization of the housing units in relationship to open space. In a single-family house situated in an open yard i.e. "the house in its garden", there is an unimpeded view of the neighboring houses across the street. All outside rooms are exposed to noise and fumes from motor traffic. In his alternate suggestion - the "Adjoining courtyard house type" i.e. the garden in its house, it is impossible to look from one private sphere into another, each garden is seen only from its own house; houses, courts and gardens are not exposed to traffic influences, noise and fumes (Rainer 1972).

For instance in Puchenau, the walls enclose not only the private courtyards, but also the streets that run between them, making them sheltered, quiet, and secure for the pedestrians. He mentions, "...creating streets that are not allowing the entrance of cars can appear in a scale that resembles the picturesque cities that we see on our holidays" (Rainer, 1995).

The garden city of Puchenau (1963 -78) (Rainer, 1990), west of Linz, is regarded as one of the famous examples of garden cities. It consists mainly of single row houses in the form of a long band parallel to the Danube, but also of four and five-story multi-family houses, which form a sound barrier against the passing railway and streets. The apartments are located on narrow, partially paved footpaths.

The construction of Puchenau II began in 1978, and provided an expansion of 750 apartments. In 1976, a children's dormitory, an eight-grade elementary school and a pastoral center were completed. Within the settlement, each street is designed to fulfill different functions, such as "federal street", "garden street with parking", "partially covered footpaths", "playgrounds on Danube", "traffic road", "parking places", "underground garage", "middle promenade", "secondary street", "partially shaded", "footpaths". The materiality of the street allows for only pedestrian movements on the "partially shaded" paths covered by lightweight steel structure (Rainer, 1995). He uses pebble stone paving or plantation on the edges of housing units in order to create the possibility of water percolation. He learns from the case studies of Islamic settlements and creates a density interwoven with pedestrian movement, which in fact becomes the space of appearance. In Puchenau, everyone has to walk a short distance to their dwelling from a com-

mon public space or car parking situated along the edge of the settlement or beneath an elevated garden while in Jorn Utzon's scheme at Fredensburg Housing some patio units are equipped with garages, leaving the garden open and continuous.

All of the house types share some common features. For instance, the main entrance is not situated in a yard, and the first functions that one encounters are the dining and kitchen spaces. In this way, the living spaces open onto the garden courtyard and become part of the private realm (Rainer, 1990).

### **Courtyard houses**

Roland Rainer learned not only from the Chinese vernacular courtyards but also from modernist architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe's courtyard houses. In his projects, he attempts to connect each enclosed space with a private open space. His student's project and Chermayev's studies (Rainer, 1972) illustrates the same idea where the mass and void alternate to create an interconnected relationship between the outside and inside.

The Linz- Leonfeldnerstrasse project was designed between 1972 and 1985 (Rainer 2003) and could be described as a smaller- scale, and more economical version of Puchenau. The buildings in the edge are higher, protecting the inner ones from the traffic noise and the cold winds. As seen in the plan, the courtyard or the "Living Yard" is directly connected with the living room and the two bedrooms, while it remains free from the house's main entrance and the interruption that this would create.

### **Courtyards- Squares- Streets**

Learning from Medieval examples of public spaces that are created because of the dictats of social hierarchy, Rainer employs such progression of scales of public spaces in his housing scheme. For instance, in Linz Auwiesen (1990), the courtyard typology is evident in the housing units and the settlement is punctuated by larger squares that act as public open space.

The two-story row houses in the center of the estate open on to a central inner courtyard with a playground that connects with an existing large square that lies between blocks of flats towards the North.

In addition, he explores the pioneering idea of creating self-sufficient neighborhood units in a competition project. The aim of Bratislava 1967 was to create a new decentralized district with a possibly optimally organized hierarchy of centers: each of the five neighborhoods, which is equipped with a kindergarten, recreation areas and daily necessities,

forms three districts. The centers are connected by public and commercial facilities with a main center on the Danube, which allows for public functions of the city of Bratislava, such as university, stadium, and exhibition areas as well as administrative buildings (Rainer, 1995).

### **Prefabricated Houses**

In Vorfabrication: Fertighaus (1952) Rainer proposed a system of prefabricated elements for the production of fully furnished houses. The aim was to use the least amount of material and energy, produce as many houses as possible, and provide comfort for the household. Therefore, purely single-story detached houses (unlike his other schemes) without cellar and attic were proposed, with 2-3 bedrooms. Each house has a fully equipped kitchen, a storage room usually located directly in it, a bathroom with built-in tub, porcelain sink, hot water and toilet (Riner, 1995). Sliding doors made of hardboard enamel panels were used in kitchens while the floors of the living rooms and bedrooms consisted of prefabricated hardwood. The wall elements were 1 m wide and 2.50 m high, and light enough to be unloaded and placed by hand, without cranes. All houses were equipped with direct gas-fired and thermostatically controlled air heaters.

In the early 1960s, Lignospan Holz(wood)industry, commissioned Rainer with the establishment of a new building system for housing. Lignosthal house was built in 1964 with walls and ceilings made of thermo-insulating elements supported by a light steel skeleton, so that the house stands on eight very slender steel columns above the ground (Rainer 2003). This not only saves on protection against moisture and the usual costly and time-consuming foundations, retaining walls and earth movements, but it also avoids the destruction of natural soil formation (Driendi 2010). It aims to achieve the same characteristics as Mies's Farnsworth house in an economical manner, except for the transparency, as the windows are perforated metal sliding shutters that cut out solar radiation and glare.

The prospectus of the Lignospan Holzindustrie quotes: "We have built this house as you build a modern car - you will therefore receive a high quality, modern industrial product delivered on time and at a fixed catalog price."

### **Gardens**

Rainer observed landscape, the design of gardens, as well as geometry the notion of symmetry that characterizes them. In Tamariskengasse (Rainer 1990), the geometry with which the volumes are structured is clear and results in the creation of hierarchical public spaces. A circular waterbody located at the culmination of the avenue, becomes a space



of gathering, especially for children

### House

Houses, patios, terraces and public spaces remain uninterrupted by the presence of cars, so that the settlement has a nuanced structure of narrow streets, large-sized plots and green spaces with a central water body. A landscaped mound covers the parking at the edges of the settlement. The three-story buildings on the western and southern edge protect the entire complex from wind, so that the interior forms a calm hollow.

### Decoration or experience of nature

In his book *Livable Environments* (Rainer 1972), he raises the question of decoration versus experience of nature. In *Summer House*, the height and position of the natural elements in relation to the window makes them dominant in the experience of the house. He sees nature as something that becomes an integral part of the constructed space as opposed to nature as distinct from the built environment. Although the image of the constructed house and the section drawing do not correlate, the idea however is expressed. He further elaborates on integration of nature and architecture, "If a tree stands in the courtyard of an old house and is regularly painted like the walls of the house and yard, it seems to be a perfectly natural part of the habitat" (Rainer, 1972).

### Conclusion

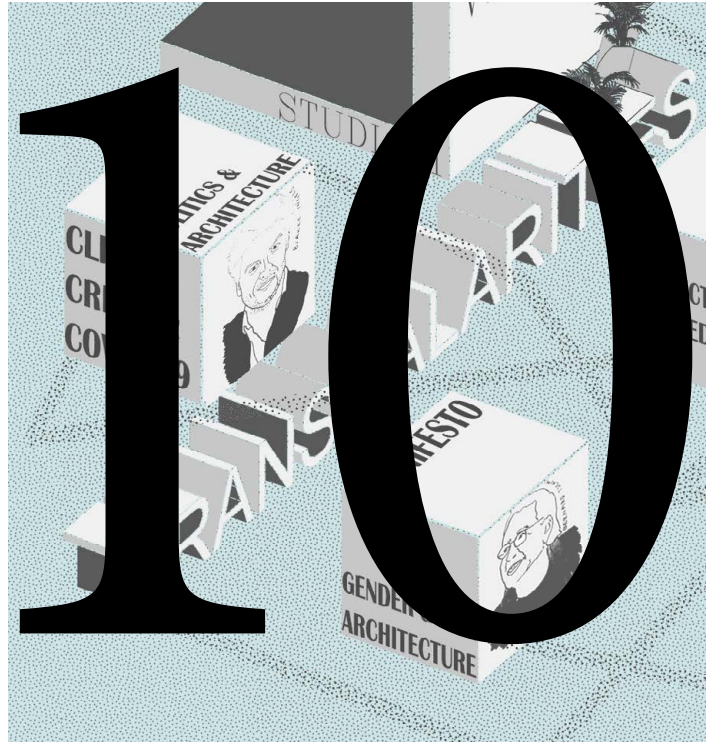
From our research, it is clear that Roland Rainer not only takes into consideration the enclosed built environment, but also the open space. The open spaces- courtyards, streets, and squares are consciously designed and thus become distinctive features of his projects. It is evident that he designs the house not only as a unit but also as part of a whole. This illustrates his concern for building community spaces.

Through various iterations of housing projects, he is looking for alternative patterns of land settlement. He looks at several issues of population density and environment and offers his work in housing as a possible solution. Thus, we observe low-rise and high density built forms in his housing. His designs resemble narratives of a way of living that he imagines to be the most appropriate for the people and their environment. However, in the present scenario we feel these issues need to be addressed with regards to the specific context and needs. His housing complexes are a kind of gated communities that do not connect with the urban environment. They are isolated and independent entities in themselves. Imaginably the projects are not universally ac-

cessible, and are a result of an imposed notion of efficiency achieved by alienating automobiles. Therefore, we question the relevance of his work in the present scenario.

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**ARCHITECTURE: THE CONTEMPORARY**  
Instructor: Bernard Tschumi

TITLE:  
**BEING OR APPEARING?  
A CONTEST OF REGIONAL  
HONESTY IN CYCLADES**

## Introduction

As an undergraduate student, I was lucky to work in an office in Athens, Greece, that is dedicated to designing works for one of the most profitable domains of the country's weak economy: tourism. All of the projects in which I participated were located in the Cyclades, but belonged in a range of scales; from summer houses and small hotels, to tourist complexes and a hospital extension.

In all cases, however, the design process was similar: the definition of the program, the creation of a concept, the transformation of the program into (most of the times) small, separate volumes in a way that they correlate functionally; and lastly, an unquestionable "wrap-up" in a white and blue envelope (sometimes complemented with stones), because that is how architecture there, is.

The perception of how architecture there, is, was unquestionable because of the client's expectations, the office's strategy and pace of work, as well as the strict regulations concerning the construction permissions on these islands. However, I could not stop questioning: How close should contemporary architecture's appearance be to what is considered to be existing and vernacular in places with strong architectural identity, such as the Cyclades? Why does the envelope seem to be so appreciated? Is the result fake or real? And how much space can there be for architectural evolution and imagination, when the constraints of the pre-existing are so specific?

The paper's topic is focused on Cycladic Architecture, but is strongly connected with architectural issues that are faced globally, as we are all a part of a palimpsest: the conflict between the old and the new; the respect of spatial memory and identity; the notion of critical regionalism.

The area of research has been limited to the Cycladic Islands as, because they are frequently considered to represent "the Aegean sea's mythical image" (Filippidis 2003), they become a center of global attraction, and thus are transformed into a zone with a fast on-going construction growth. To make the following arguments clearer, a number of reference projects which range in the extent to which they appear to follow what is considered to be vernacular.

The theoretical background is mainly based on international texts that deal with critical regionalism, such as works of Kenneth Frampton, Alexandros Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, as well as architects who have specifically written about the effects of tourism on local architecture, including Yannis Aesopos and Dimitris Filippidis.

## The Context

Before explaining the opposed arguments of designing in a context with a specific architectural identity, it is essential to explore which this identity is.

What images does someone bring in mind when hearing about Cyclades? The perception of the Cycladic architectural identity is specific and usually common: similar monolithic white interconnected volumes, with flat roofs (rarely domes), curved corners, external staircases and small windows colored in variations of blue. These representations have been established from a range of published photos and touristic advertisements, to the actual decoration of Greek restaurants across the world.

Apart from the fact that there are variations and differentiations between the islands, or even between each island's specific areas (Filippidis 2003), the general typological and morphological elements are an amalgam of different eras and functional needs. For instance, the homes were made of stone, as besides the fact that this material was available in plethora, it would also appear to perform ideally in the region's climate conditions. To avoid the summer heat, small openings with wooden frames (wood is a scarce element on these dry islands) were put, in many cases strategically, to accomplish adequate interior ventilation. The white color is a characteristic that became common in all buildings less than a hundred years ago, when Dictator Metaxas commanded the whitewash of walls with lime for hygienic reasons, while the homogenous blue color was added during the 1967 Dictatorship - probably because these two are the colors of the national flag (Stasinopoulos nd).

In the past few decades there have been specific regulations and permission procedures that need to be followed before constructing or restoring buildings on the Islands, restricting the architect's design freedom (Aesopos 2015). Still, we can identify a variation on the level on which they relate to the perception of Cycladic architecture, as described above: works that respond almost literally to the appearance of vernacular; and works that are opposed to continuing this direct relation, trying to shape a contemporary critical regional architecture. An in-person visit to the islands can probably reveal that numerically, the first category seems to surpass the second one. The case studies distinction in one of the two categories, however, is not always equally clear. As Tzonis and Lefaivre have written, "We have not made check lists of physical design criteria of how to be a critical regionalist. And for a good reason. The poetics of critical regionalism does not include a set of design rules of partitioning, motifs and general as does the definition of neo classicism" (Lefaivre, Tzonis 1990).

### **A new architecture that is closely related to the appearance of vernacular against critical regionalism**

Designing new buildings, the appearance of which is very close to what is considered to be vernacular, is an approach that is frequently applied. A new building is added in a group of pre existing ones, yet the users, cannot identify with certainty what their chronological relation is. The result is, thus, an a-chronological totality, a series of buildings and villages that give the impression of being paused in a vague point in the past, becoming, in a way, eternal.

The fact that old and new are not juxtaposed, leads to a result that is coherent, similar and modest; a result that does not only protect the spatial identity, but reinforces it and contributes to its continuation in the future. The outcome reminds a Tzonis and Lefaivre statement: “the sense of individual and local architectural values symbolizing an aspiration for emancipation against universal alien design canons, a sense of belonging to a single racial community” (Lefaivre, Tzonis 1990). There are no hierarchies in the built environment, meaning that no individual unit monopolizes the viewers’ attention; rather, the separate constructions form a whole which manages to complement the natural dry and cliff landscape.

The characteristics of vernacular Cycladic architecture are, as history has shown, not constraining, but inspiring. For instance, the principles of economy and simplicity, purity and austerity that are reflected in the white cubic forms were, later, influential to Le Corbusier (Colquhoun 1997) . Nowadays, creating a formula of an architecture that has been broadly appreciated over the decades, and following it closely, can be thought to be a more efficient way of production and growth, since the pace of design is quicker through repetition. In a way, this commerciality that is based on the commonly acceptable, can be proven to be a recovery tool for a professional field that was severely hurt by the country’s financial crisis.

The popularity of Cycladic architecture should, also, not be undermined. Now more than ever before, visitors have a very clear idea of what they expect and anticipate seeing, even before reaching their destination. As Norbrerg- Schulz states, a particular character of a foreign country becomes an important part of the experience (Schulz 1976). In other words, if architecture is part of a character that magnetizes attraction, it is expected to be experienced as seen, posted and published across the globe. Responding to this required image, architects create spaces that immediately provoke “sympathy”, “affinity”, “memory”, “familiarity” (Lefaivre,

Tzonis 1990). As Zengelis describes, “fixed hubs of locality that represent samples of “greekness” (...) eagerly act the part with ardent zeal” (Zengehlis 2005). Although supporting a different context, the argument of Robert Stern about postmodernism becomes relevant in this case: “These facades are mediators between the buildings as “real” construct and those allusions and perceptions necessary to put the building in closer touch with the place in which it is made and beliefs and dreams of the architects who designed it, the clients who paid for it, and the civilization which permitted it to be built” (Stern 1976). In addition most locals and people that are connected in some way with the islands, tend to be hesitant towards an alternative design approach, as a potential change or innovation could be a threat to this very specific identity.

### **Critical regionalism against a new architecture that is closely related to the appearance of vernacular**

The notion of Tabula Rasa has long faded away. But do we honor the past by mimicking its appearance, or by creating a new language that respects it by evolving it? Why should architecture pause in time when functions, needs and people evolve? The idea of maintaining and obeying the past in a literal way, is a heavy burden that constraints the architect’s capabilities. Extreme localization is not just recognizable, but stereotypical, underestimating the architects potential capabilities, which as Tzonis and Lefaivre mention, include “the operations of identifying, decomposing, recomposing regional elements” (Lefaivre, Tzonis 1990). On the other hand, the interpretation of vernacular in a more contemporary way can be both honoring and actually responding to its era. An example is Aris Konstantinidis’ hotel Xenia in Mykonos, which manifests a strong opposition to the established way of the traditional- looking design. The architect stated: “I noticed the stone walls that separated the various fields, on top of which there was a layer of mud (...) that was whitewashed by the locals (...). And this is what I did with Xenia (...). I built the hotel with the regional stone, and with local constructors (...) and I let the stone’s natural color and texture (...) whereas the parapets, that were made of concrete, I painted them white (...). And in this way, when you saw Xenia from a distance, you would have the impression that it was stones scattered around the mykonian landscape” (Kolonas 2013). It becomes clear that modernist Konstantinidis detected the region by focusing on the anonymous structural simplicity found within the landscapes (Aesopos 2015). In this way, he distanced himself not only from the International Style, but also from the “sentimental aestheticism of the regionalists” (Emmanouil 2015). This approach is aligned with Keneth Frampton’s description of

Critical Regionalism, as the strategy of mediating “the impact of universal civilization with elements derived indirectly from the peculiarities of a particular place” (Eggener 2002). In other words, and returning to the notion of allowing the projection time’s evolution, Xenia proves how valuable it is to offer differentiated styles that simultaneously accord with their region: Mykonos now has, apart from its precious vernacular architecture, a modernist paradigm created by one of the country’s most important architects.

The argument of homogeneity and the importance of the whole against the unit would be convincing, if the total was authentic. The moment a new structure tries to resemble a traditional one, the latter one loses part of its value, by appearing as if it is less scarce and by becoming slightly more invisible. On the contrary, when variations and different proposals fit into their physical and historical context, they end in a visually, and culturally, richer, result. Juxtapositions that on the one hand share common principles, but on the other hand reflect their creator’s unique approaches and ideas, can create a constantly evolving entity that does not antagonize, but completes vernacular.

Why is a contemporary building considered to be more regional when its appearance is directly derived from what is thought to be traditional, than a building that might look contemporary, but embodies and evolves the indigenous construction knowledge about the local climate? Kenneth Frampton interestingly states: “The way in which (...) openings provide for appropriate ventilation also constitutes an unsentimental element reflecting the nature of local culture. Here, clearly, the main antagonist of rooted culture is the ubiquitous air conditioner, applied in all times and all places, irrespective of the local climatic conditions which have a capacity to express the specific place and the seasonal variations of its climate” (Frampton 1983). A very convincing example is a 1990s house by Agni Kouvela, in Santorini. The design clearly collides with the compatibility of traditional principles, yet thanks to the creation of funnel-like windows, it manages to perform excellently against the strong Etesian winds (Filippidis 2003).

The argument of fulfilling the visitor’s anticipations does not indicate an ethical architectural approach: The creation of an architecture that is primarily based on a series of expected and obvious clichés leads to the creation of a mask of vernacular, a theatrical scenery that operates as the ideal background for summer users. When, for example, architects are commissioned a hotel in the Cyclades, they are expected to make a non-traditional program, for new users, with the use of contemporary technologies and materials,

and probably, in a much larger scale than most of the pre-tourism structures, yet, with the same appearance of the envelope. Thanks to this appearance, the building will easily be considered Cycladic and get constructed, besides the fact that its purpose and materiality differ utterly from the past, and do not necessarily accord with the landscape’s requirements or climatic conditions.

## Conclusion

The second design approach is based on a critical regionalism, which in this case does not oppose globalization (critical regionalism was an “architecture of resistance” seeking “to mediate the impact of universal civilization” (Eggener 2002)), it does not oppose nationalism (“...regionalism became deeply involved with nationalist movements” (Le-faivre, Tzonis 2012)), but it opposes the commercial global impression of a specific local identity.

I cannot but support wholeheartedly critical regionalism, over this frequently a-critical imitation of an envelope, that in the end, does not always actually relate to vernacular. This focus on the envelope’s appearance can be even accused of disorienting architects, clients, and users: it gives the impression that a new building respects its context, when in reality it does not even guarantee that it responds efficiently to its climate. I believe that this mimicking architecture is nothing more than a costume of tradition that is used to fulfill numerous contemporary economic and social needs.

I need to highlight the urgency for a major change in the way construction permissions are processed. Of course the existence of these bureaucratic procedures is important, in order to make sure that no alien- to the natural and constructed landscape architecture is created, yet the new projects should be relevant to what is supposed to be vernacular, in a less obvious and more essential way. The controls should, in my opinion, be focused on the way a project relates to its climate; how much of the local available material is used; how the indigenous knowledge that has been collected over centuries on issues such as, for example, natural ventilation, is transformed and used in contemporary architecture.

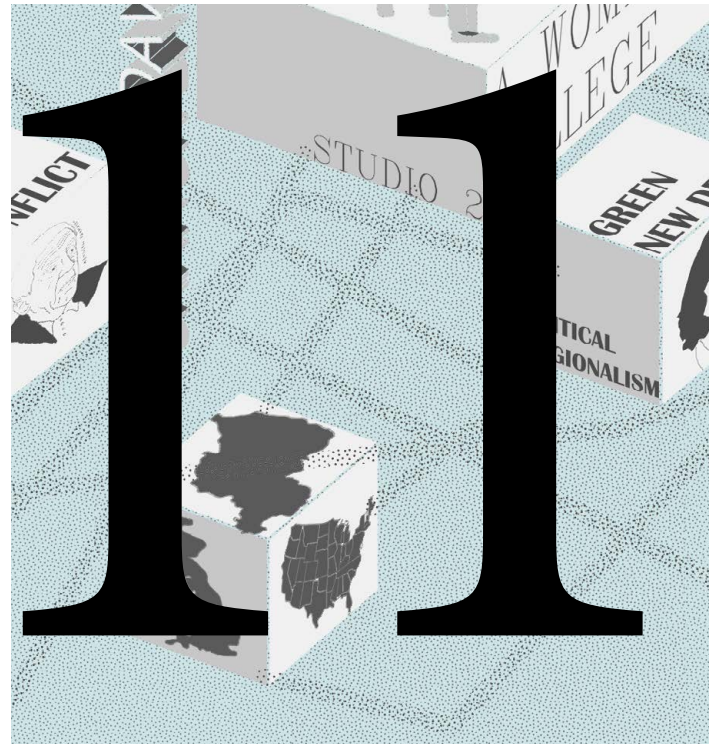
Another matter that is of great importance is the public opinion and anticipation of experiencing what is thought to be local. Architecture is created for the users, and their points of view do matter. However, their opinions should be formed, at least up to a point, by architects who embrace the opposition to the obvious interpretation of tradition; by

architects that are not complacent with the creation of an envelope that resembles what is commonly thought to be vernacular, and thanks to which, their proposal will be allowed to be constructed. When users and clients start to experience more frequently works that successfully embrace critical regionalism, the fake identity of what is now thought to be traditional, will be hopefully revealed.

I believe that works such as Kouvela's house or Divercity's hotel in Santorini, which is carved out of the cliff, are samples of a new, more personalized and complex architecture that is going one step further from the "appearance", understanding and responding deeply to the landscape and its needs. It is unpleasant that in comparison to the rest of the projects such examples are so scarce, however they must become paradigms and references for the new generation of architects.

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## LECTURES

Including, among others, Marina Tabassum, Bjarke Ingels, Renzo Piano, David Adjaye, Elizabeth Diller, Steven Holl

A series of lectures and guest speakers presented their projects and architectural experiences; shared thoughts, opinions and knowledge; contributed in the studio projects evolution, and in my personal thoughts, goals, and questions.







“Cause you can apply architectural thinking at the scale of a piece of furniture, a restaurant, a city block, a city, and, why not, the planet?”, **Bjarke Ingels**

“As architects we can project, and we can project more than form, we can situate our architectural desires, imagining societies, and I think you miss that dimension”, **Amale Andraos**

Wood Auditorium, January 27, 2020



“... this is the biggest problem we have, it's the political problem. It is not the engineering problem, we have the knowledge now... It's the same thing we are facing with the virus...”, **Steven Holl**

Broadcast, April 16, 2020

