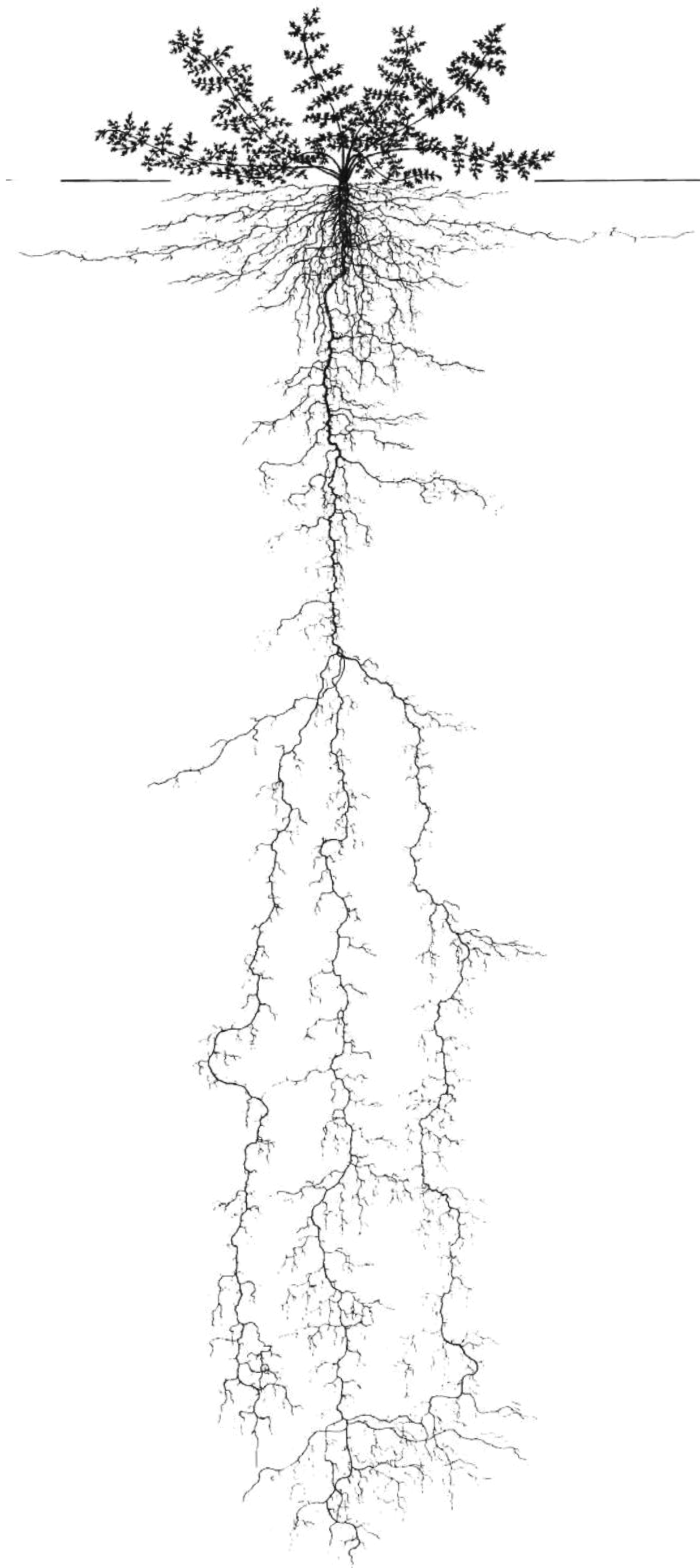


The Inhabited Garden



*This journey started with conversations,*

*It started with stories of widows living in unhealthy levels of isolation,*

*with stories of impoverished seniors unable to afford to buy fresh fruit,*

*with stories of women having worked their whole lives receiving almost no retirement rent,*

*with stories of elderly people taking more than 10 prescription medicines a day.*

*It went on with stories of people stating they would rather die than join retirement homes,*

*their fear was confirmed by stories of nurses, rushing through their work, feeling like factory line workers.*

This project was preceded by a reflection on the theme of Aging and retirement institutions, particularly in the case of women in Switzerland. In terms of methodology, the research was conducted through an inter-sectional feminist lens.

It was first informed by an analysis of the Swiss retirement institutions system, case studies of contemporary initiatives and retirement home alternatives. It also includes several interviews and conversations with elderly people currently living in Switzerland.

This led to a historical research on the evolution of the status and the perception and representation of the elderly women through the ages. In doing so, the inspiring example of the Béguinage emerged. The Béguinages were independent women's communities fostering communal life and solidarity, while at the same time allowing for independence. They were the guardians of precious knowledge of healing plants, empirically gained and passed down from generation to generation. In the brutal transition from feudalism to capitalism, a shift in religious and political perception made knowledge held by women considered extremely dangerous. It was believed that the Devil was back and acting through female bodies.

Hundreds of thousands of women were killed as witches.

From then on, women were strictly assigned to the domestic and reproductive sphere. Carefully erased through the witch-hunts and the institutionalization of medicine, an extensive knowledge of medicinal plants and gardens were lost, letting place to a general logic of privatization and exploitation.

The narrowing of the meanings of the body in old age that has occurred in the wake of the rise of modern science-based medicine has replaced the polysemic ones of the past. Narratives of decline have replaced other forms of meaning and interpretation of the body in later years and more humanistic or plural readings become impossible. At a time when care is overwritten by optimization, it seemed interesting to think about ways to collectively recover the thread of these lost stories, knowledge and traditions.

***[Patriarco-capitalism] managed to impose its rules of law and foundational ways of [practice] in sites and in that moment disrupted a natural development of other ways of [practicing] ... Measures of erasure [...] and progress in relation to lost selves challenge spatial development from such an unbelievable historical retrospective point of view, it is impossible to pinpoint what could have been. This is why we should look to the future with a lens that pays close attention to ways of being and how that can culminate into space.***

Adapted from a quote by Khensani de Klerk, Matri-Archi

The witch hunts are fascinating not only as being a defining shift in Woman's condition, but most importantly as being the emblem of extensive cultural loss, as historical marker of the rise of patriarco-capitalism which consequences are particularly noticeable in the case of elderly women today. They took place at the foreground of deep societal changes; the transition from feudalism to capitalism, general institutionalization and the enclosure of the commons. This questions the notions of property, profit and the capitalist mode of city production. Moreover, it raises questions about approaching, considering a site and project through rejecting patriarchal habits of architecture ; by caring equally for all contents and characteristics present whether valuable or not, human or not. To move towards less patriarchal ways of practice, one must be open to care for what is usually uncared for today.



In the words of Gilles Clément, landscape architect, gardener and writer, let's precise that;

***Patriarchy is not only the domination of men over women, but also of whites over others, of the global north over the global south, and finally, but perhaps in this case especially, of humans over nature. Patriarchy begins historically with sexism, but today it nestles until in the domination of architects, urban planners and landscape designers over the land and it's organisms.***

The affordable housing program is articulated along with an open garden. Cared for as much by its temporary as by its permanent inhabitants, aiming to encourage mutual care and exchange between generations. This combination facilitates a reciprocity between users, knowledge of healing plants and the act of gardening, offering an achievable solution to the feeling of lack of purpose at an older age, loneliness, fear of care homes, depression, lack of movement, over-medication and it's financial weight as identified through the research. On a larger scale, gradually empowering all generations to reclaim simple habits, preventing chronic diseases at their root.

The Hardturm Brache, on the border of the Limmat, between Hardbrücke and Altstetten was chosen to test this hypothesis. As opposed to the blank canvas as it is presented on existing documents the Hardturm Brache was mapped including all of its specificities, rejecting the use of the master plan bird eye view as primary tool for implantation. Fallow, terrain vague; anti-garden in its classic sense, already presenting a great diversity of wild plants and inhabitants. Intimately political, the site added a new layer of challenges and complexity. Introducing heterogeneous actors, such as ruins of a football stadium, the first park and ride facility in Zürich, a glass bridge, an experimental garden, a skatepark, a forest, seasonal events, a huge solitary wall, wanderers, readers, gardeners, builders, adding to the beguines, the witches, the river, the earth, the widows, the mothers, the makers, the storytellers, the the ones tired of living, the hopeful, the living. The architectural additions adapt to the existing site and its topography. It aims to create conditions that can help both human and non-human thrive. The site specific additions renew the attention of the spectator to a well known place.

***In these ruins proliferate «new worlds», where all kinds of living beings, all kinds of stories, often very tangled, cohabit. It is definitely a damaged world that we are dealing with, damaged by precise practices, those of advanced capitalism and what it does to the living, to the soil, to the very feeling of the common. The challenge is to invent ways of living in this damaged world: neither to conserve nor to survive, but to live, that is to say, to re-create collective rituals, by cooperating with all kinds of living beings, and by encouraging all life forms. To imagine practices in the interstices of capitalism, in what it allows without having planned it, in what it had not seen not foreseen and that it still does not know how to spoil: our connections.***

Anna Tsing, in «The Mushroom of the End of the World - On the possibilities of living in the ruins of capitalism»



The Inhabited Garden is a proposal to combine affordable housing for the elderly and a communal medicinal plant garden. Cared for as much by its temporary as by its permanent inhabitants, it aims to encourage mutual care and exchange between generations. This combination facilitates a reciprocity between users, knowledge of healing plants and the act of gardening, offering an achievable solution to the feeling of lack of purpose at an older age, loneliness, fear of care homes, depression, lack of movement, over-medication and it's financial weight as identified through the research. On a larger scale, it gradually empowers all generations to reclaim simple habits of care, preventing chronic diseases at their root.

## PRINCIPLES

### **Reciprocity**

Mutual care and solidarity are found on all scales

Temporary and permanent inhabitants of all generations contribute to the care of the residents and the garden. And vice versa.

### **The elderly are a value for society**

The Inhabited Garden chooses to consider the elderly as important resources to communities. By blurring the lines between carers and clients, givers and receivers, knowledge holders and passive followers an important role is given to all members, permitting even the oldest residents to remain mentally, physically and emotionally active.

### **Diversity**

The space and program is diverse and adaptable. The Inhabited garden gives space for public seasonal events. It considers existing structures, organic matter and human uses equally in design.

### **Prevention**

The Inhabited Garden gradually empowers all generations to reclaim simple habits of care, preventing chronic diseases at their root.

### **Habit**

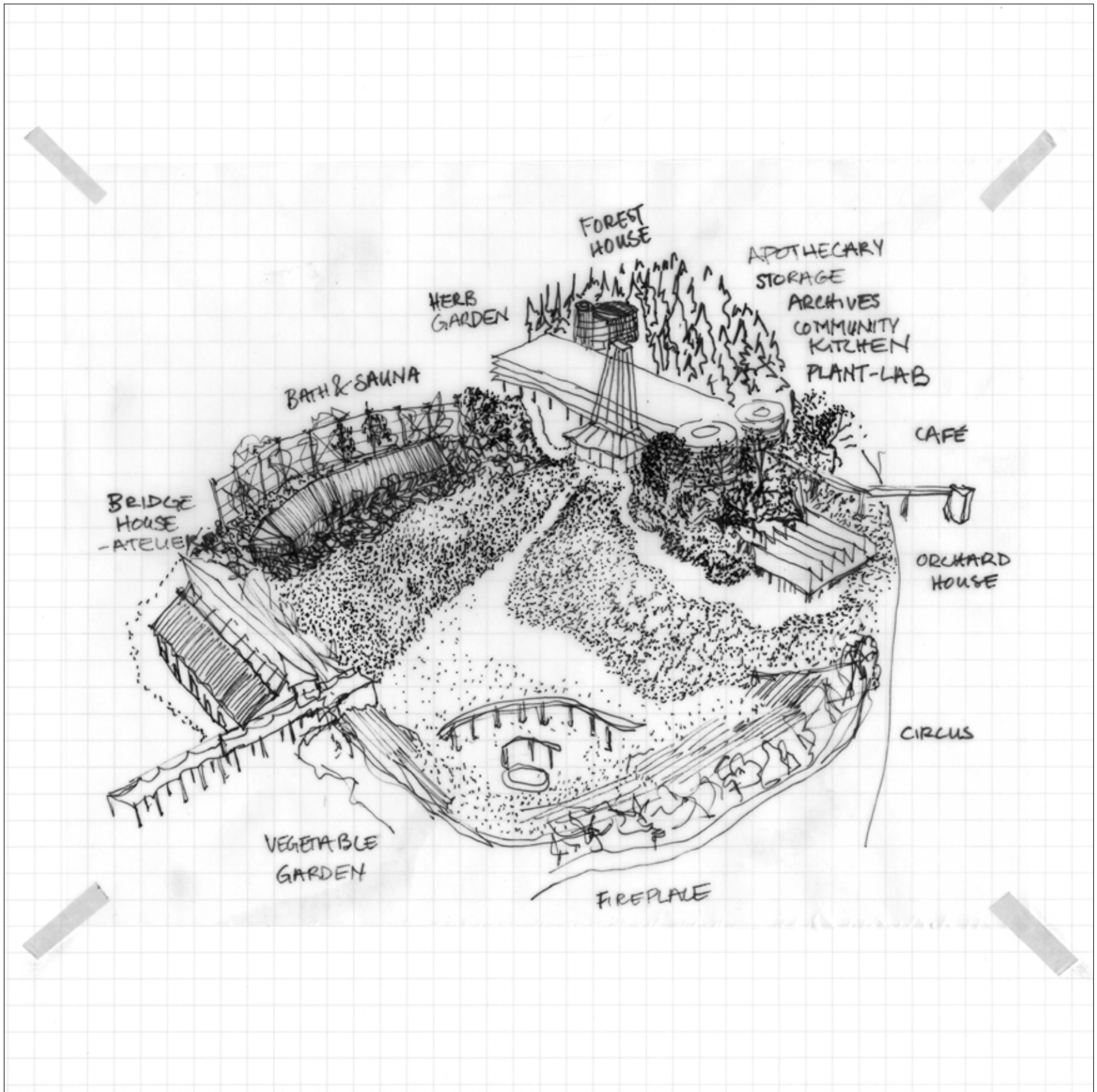
Evolutionary integration minimizes the damaging disorientation that occurs when people are withdrawn from their environment and habits at a high age.

### **Participation**

It is not a place that is imposed but rather collaboratively appropriated. Users of the Inhabited Garden share a sense of ownership and responsibility for the place, leading to significant commitment and care.

### **Sustainable Care**

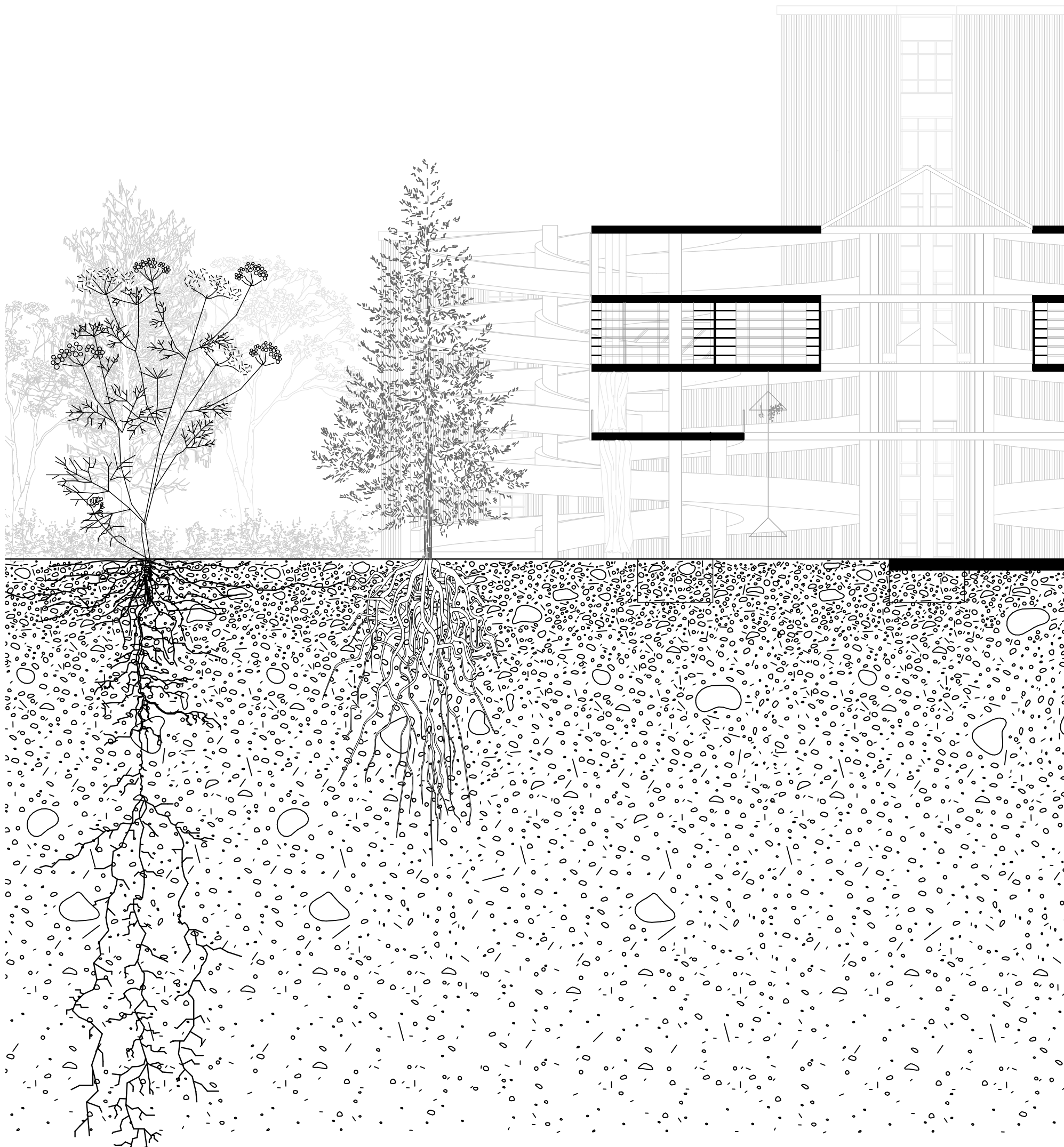
The Inhabited Garden is conscious of it's political leverage and uses it's potential to transition towards a more sustainable way of life and care in cities. By making space for the elderly and reintegrating knowledge and understanding of plants to the City, the Inhabited Gardens offer spaces for new narratives of collectively organized care to emerge.



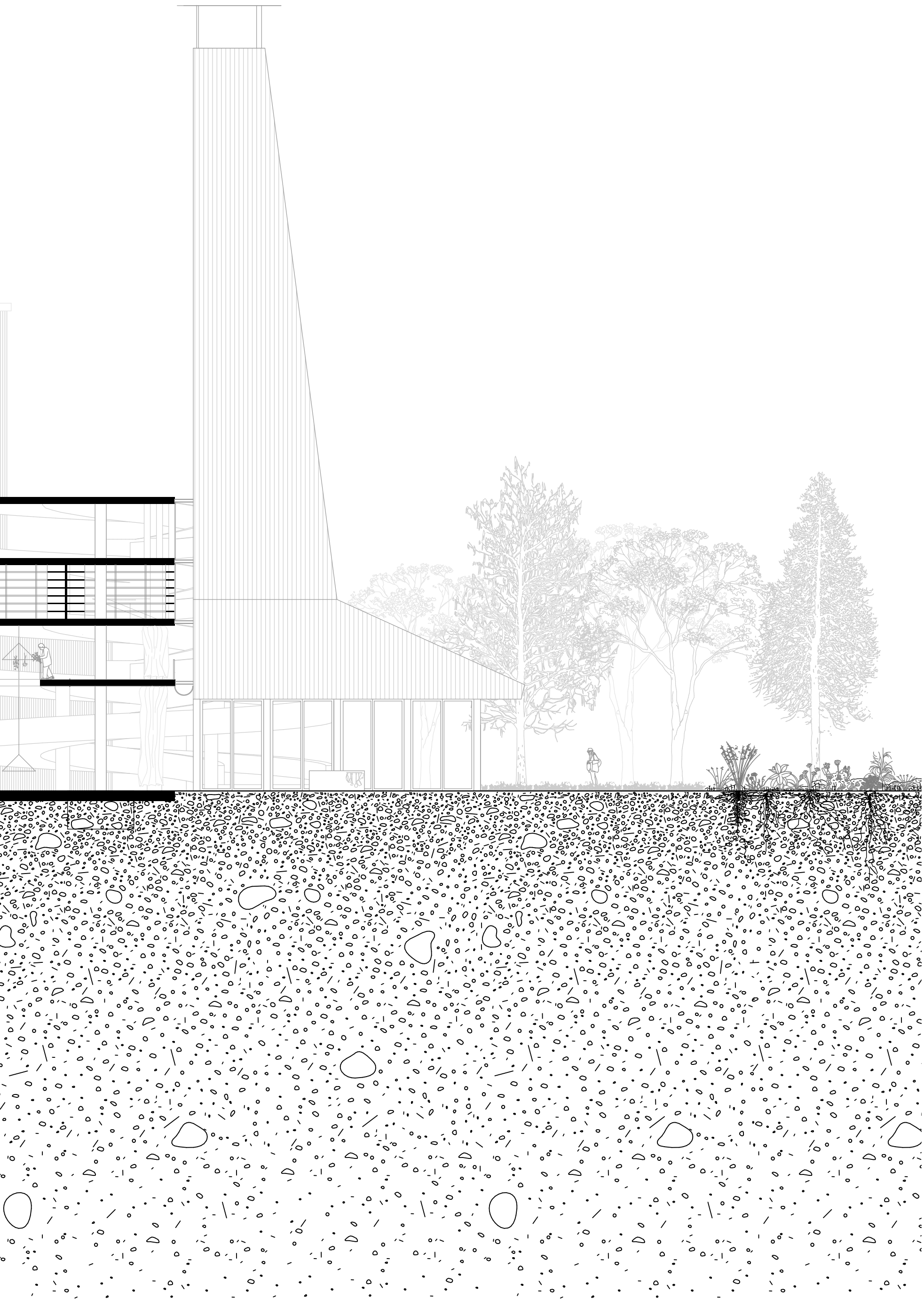




Plan

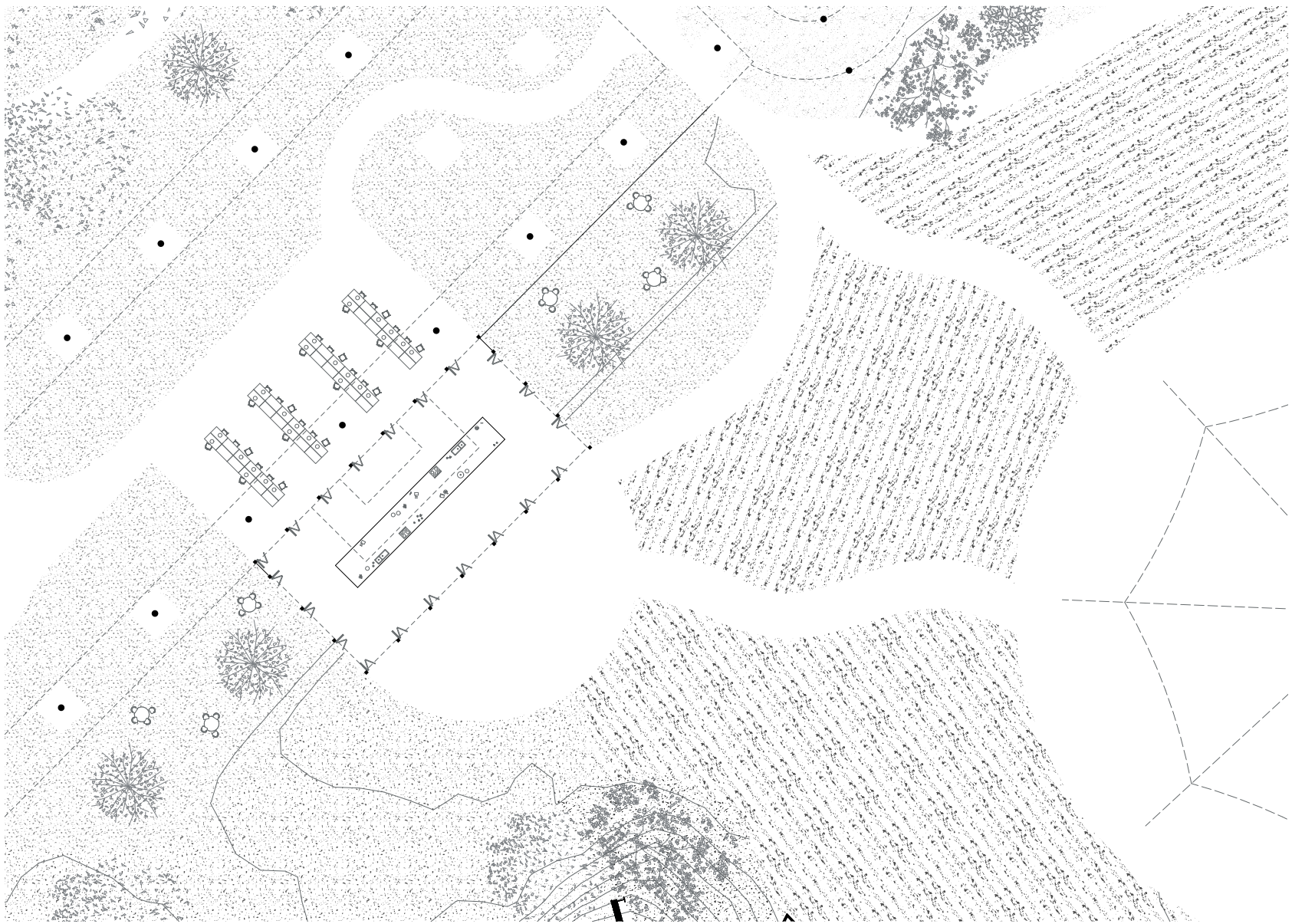


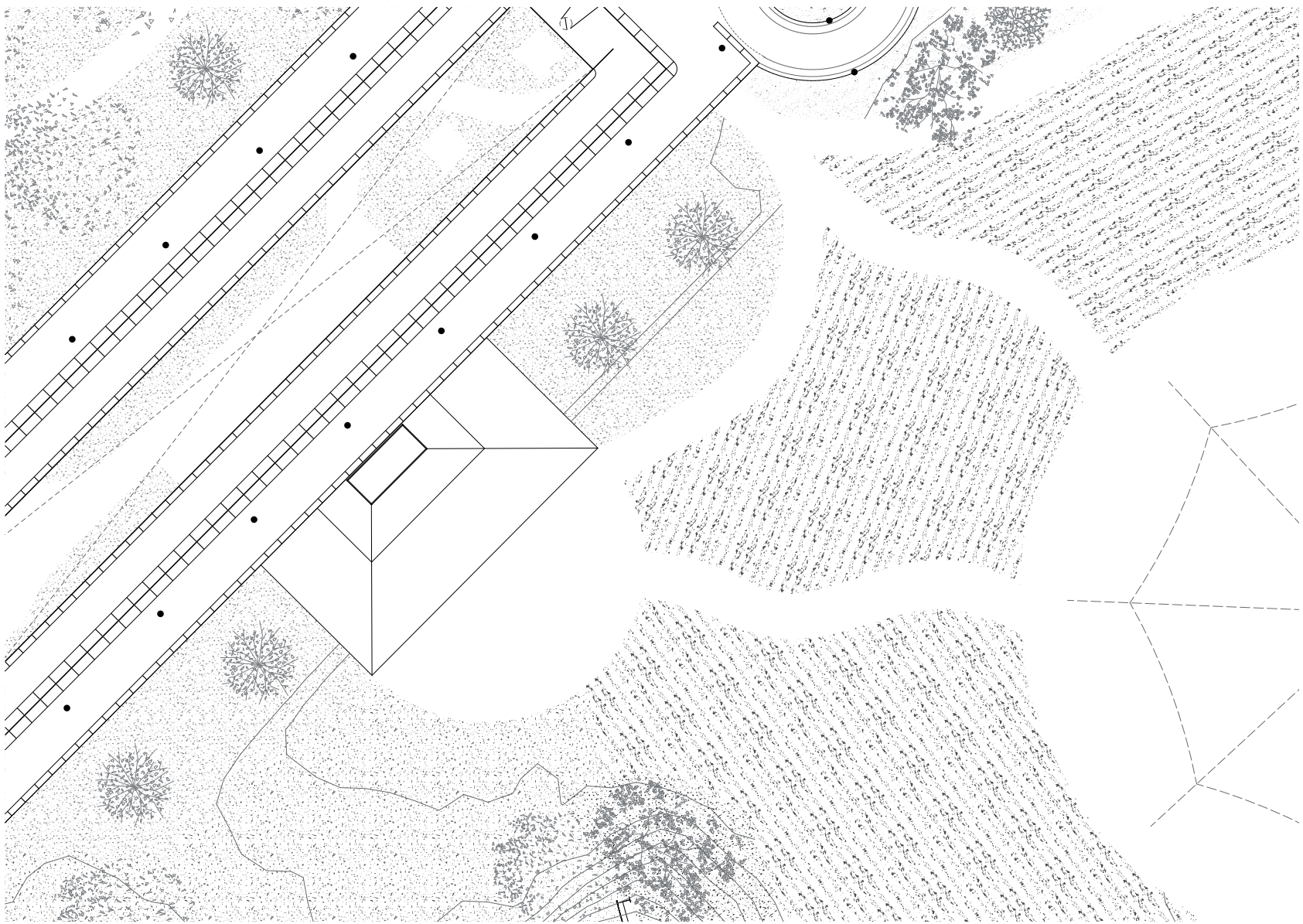
Plant-Lab/Kitchen



Plant-Lab/Kitchen



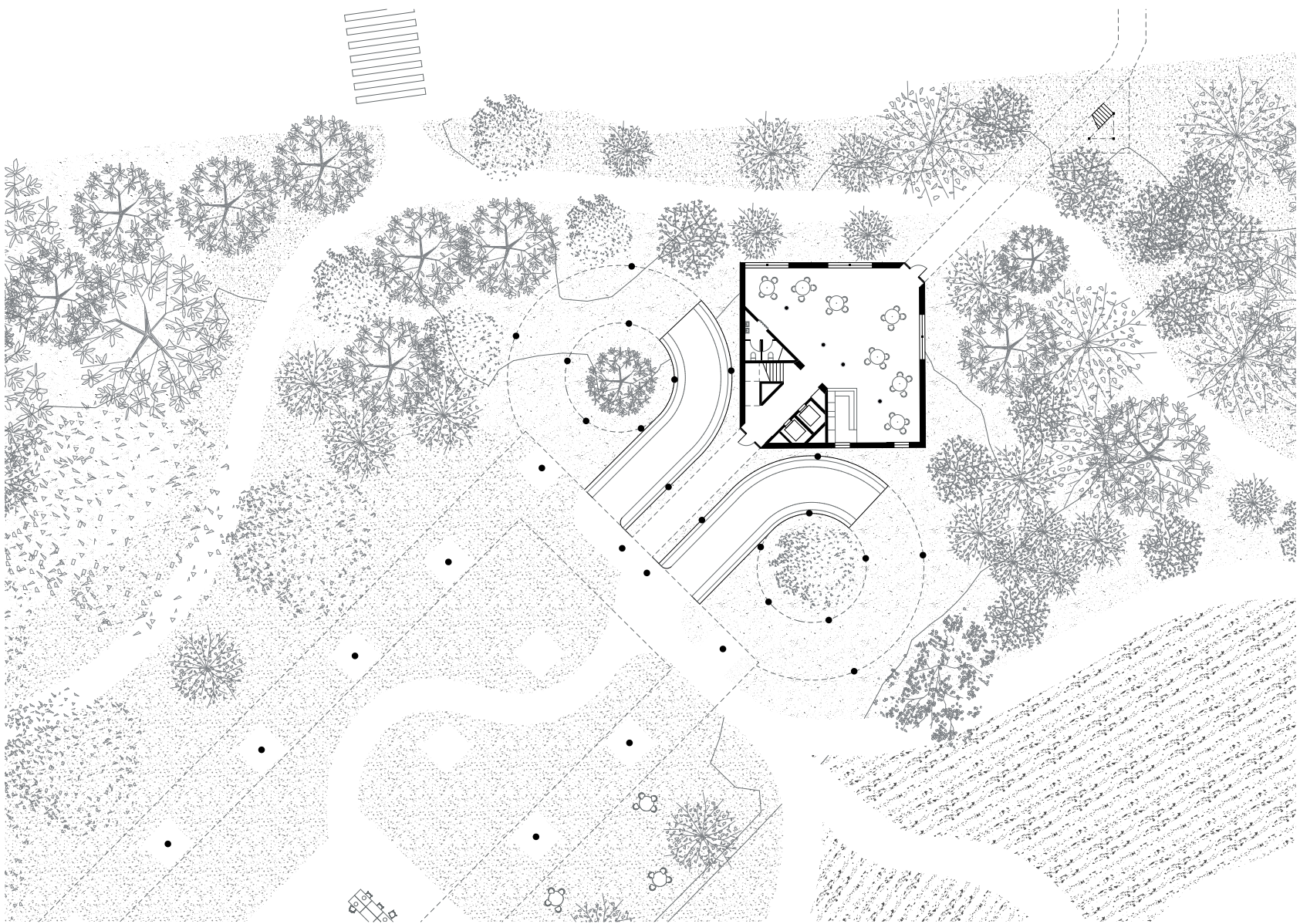


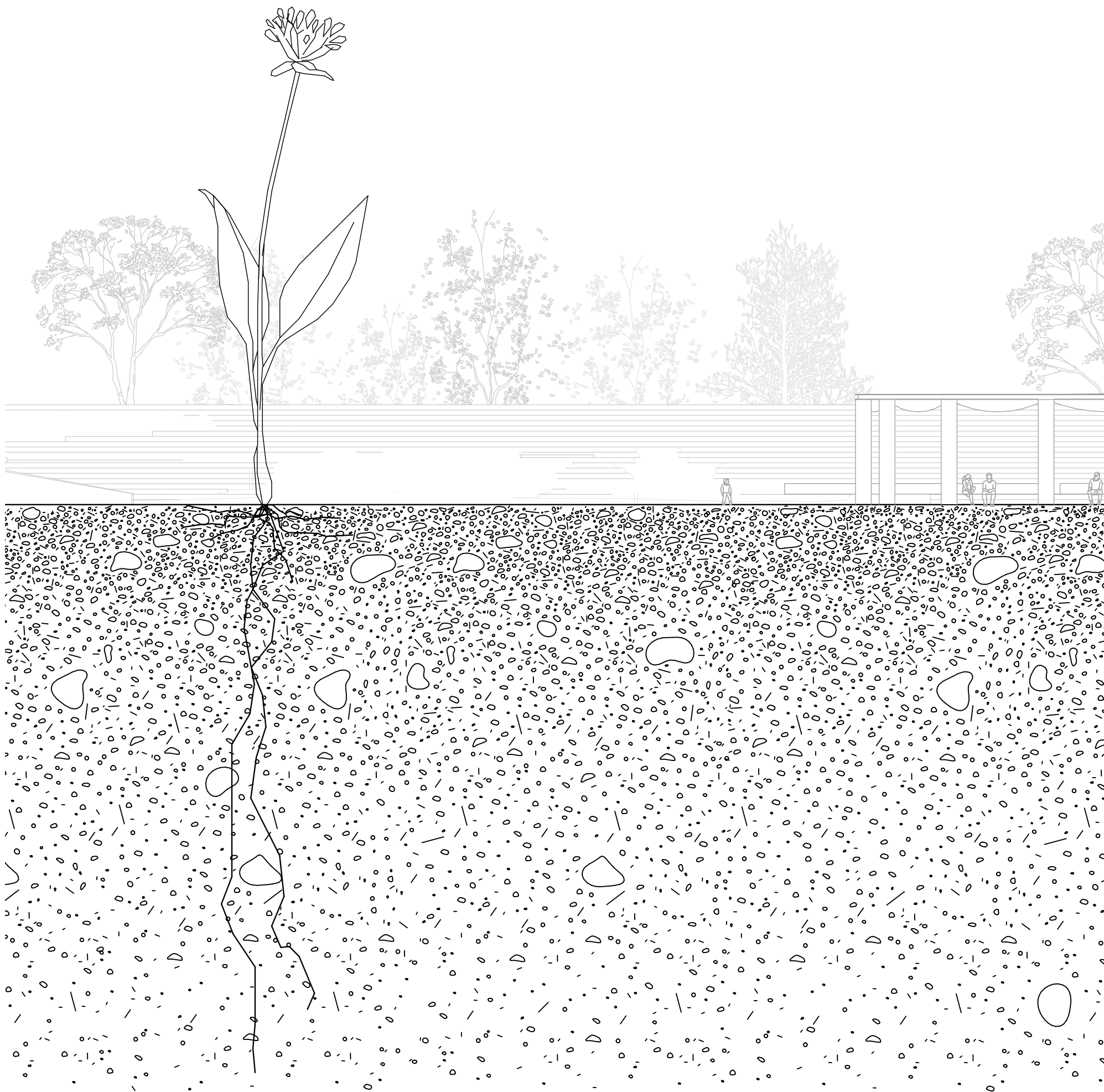




Plant-Lab/Kitchen

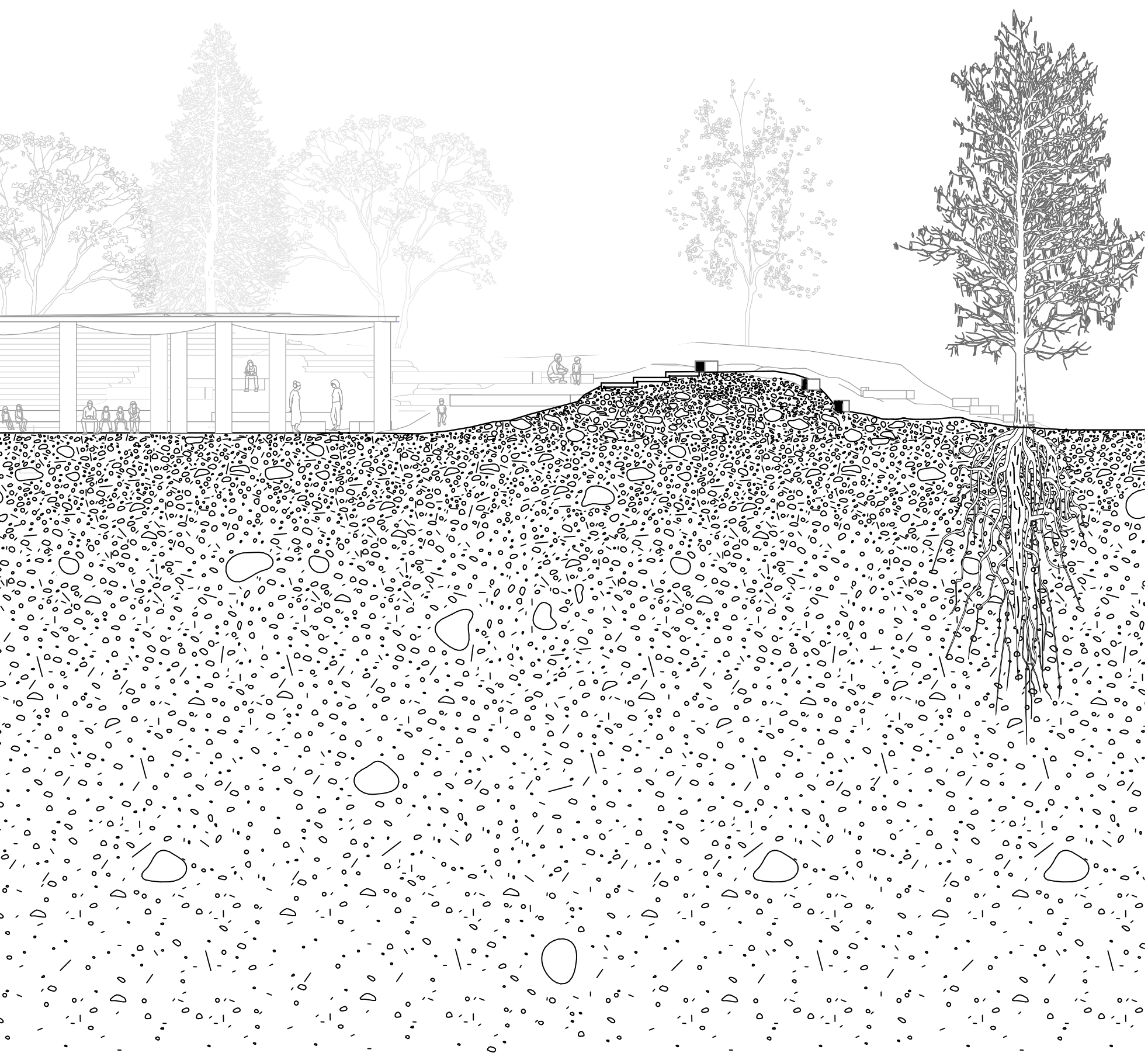




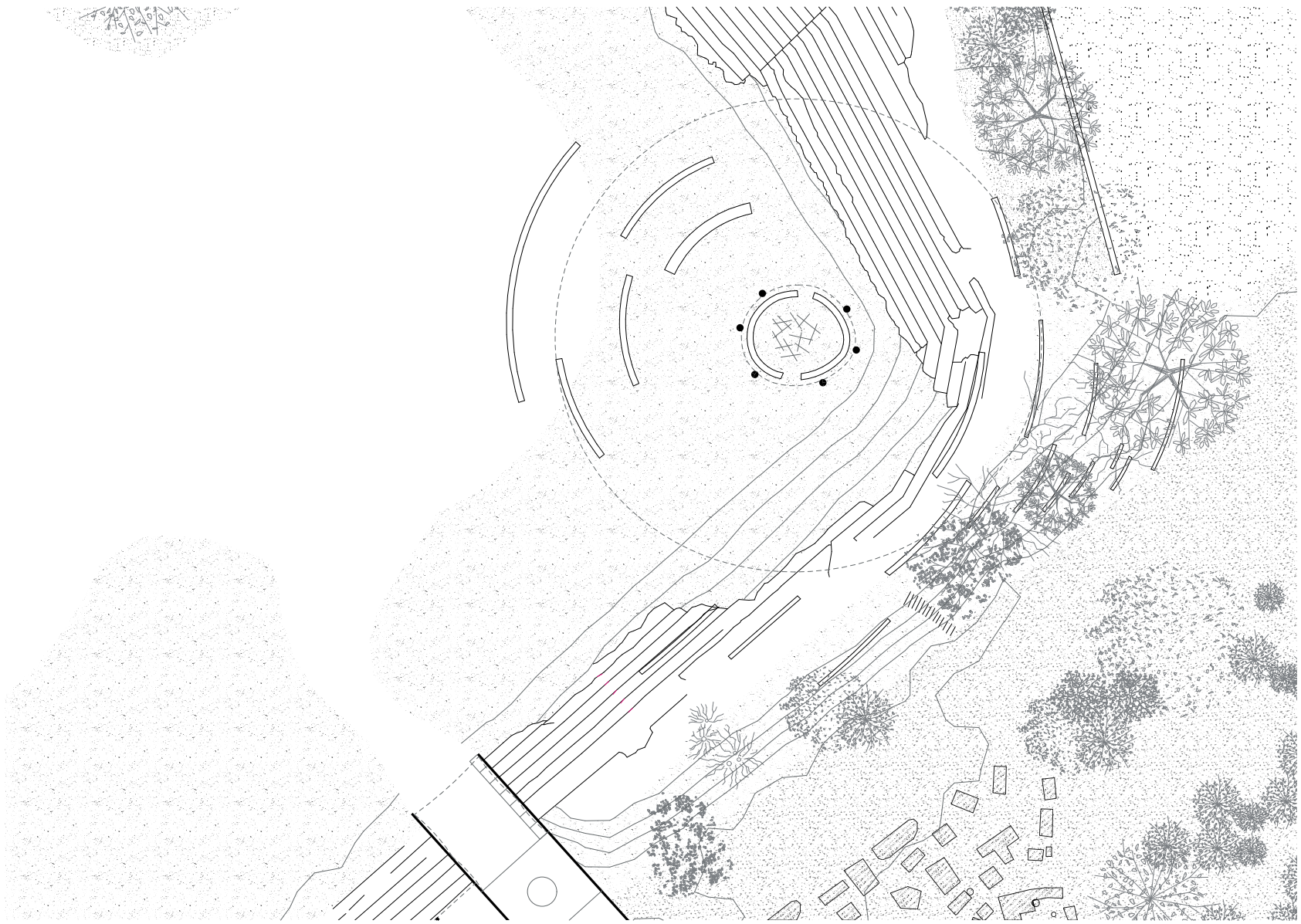


Fireplace - Story Alcove





Fireplace - Story Alcove

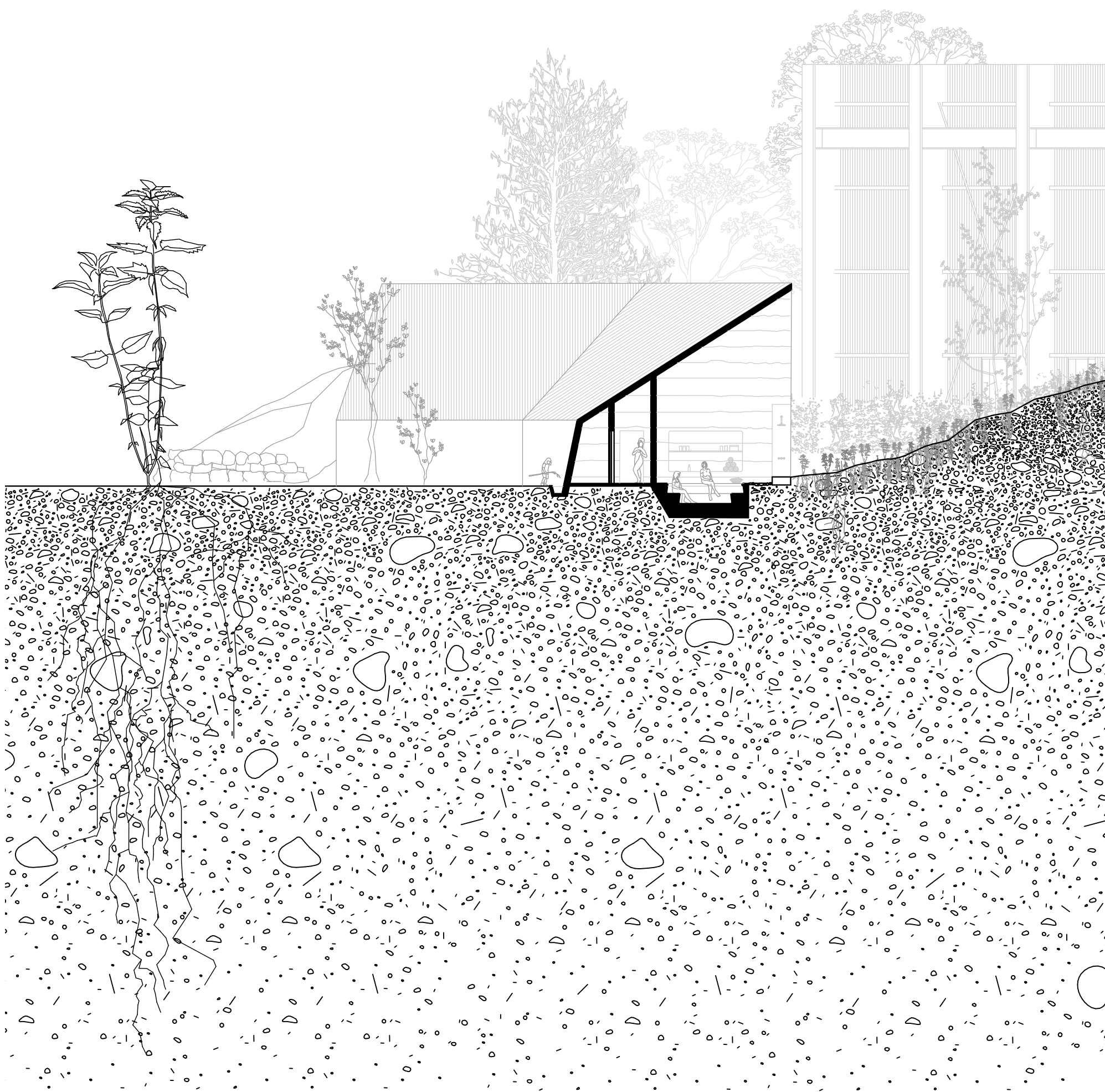


Fireplace - Story Alcove

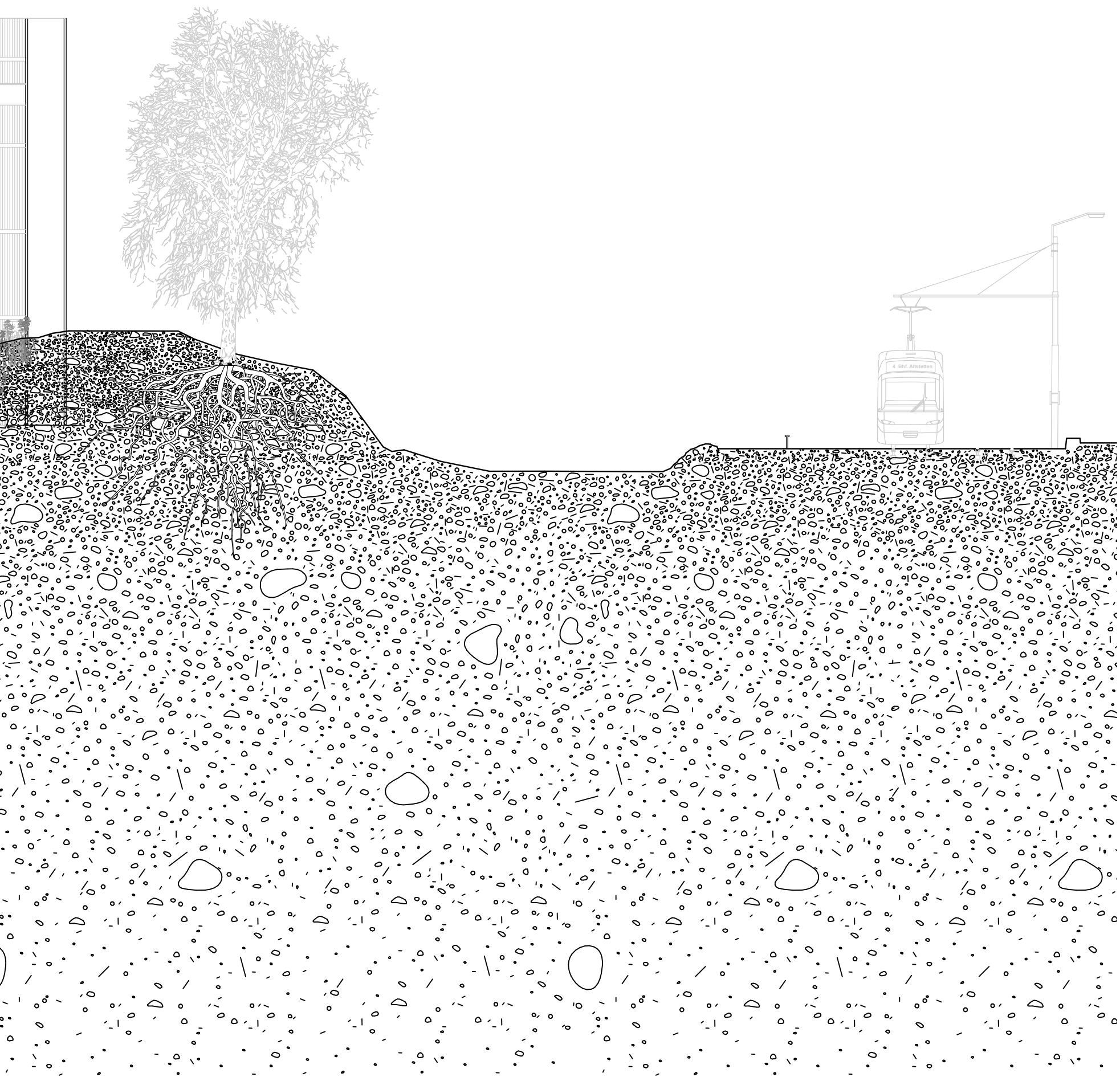


Fireplace - Story Alcove

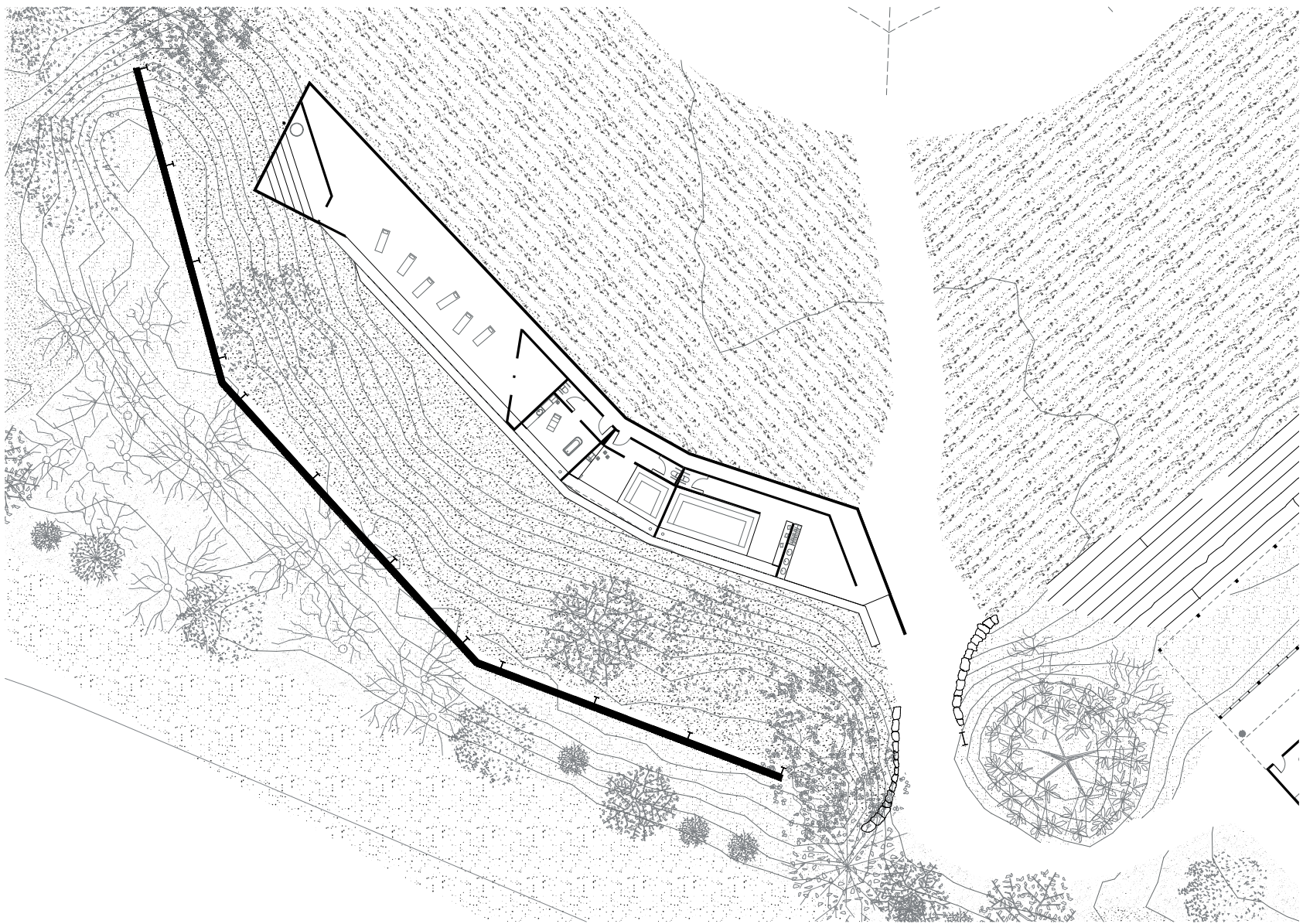




Bath & Sauna

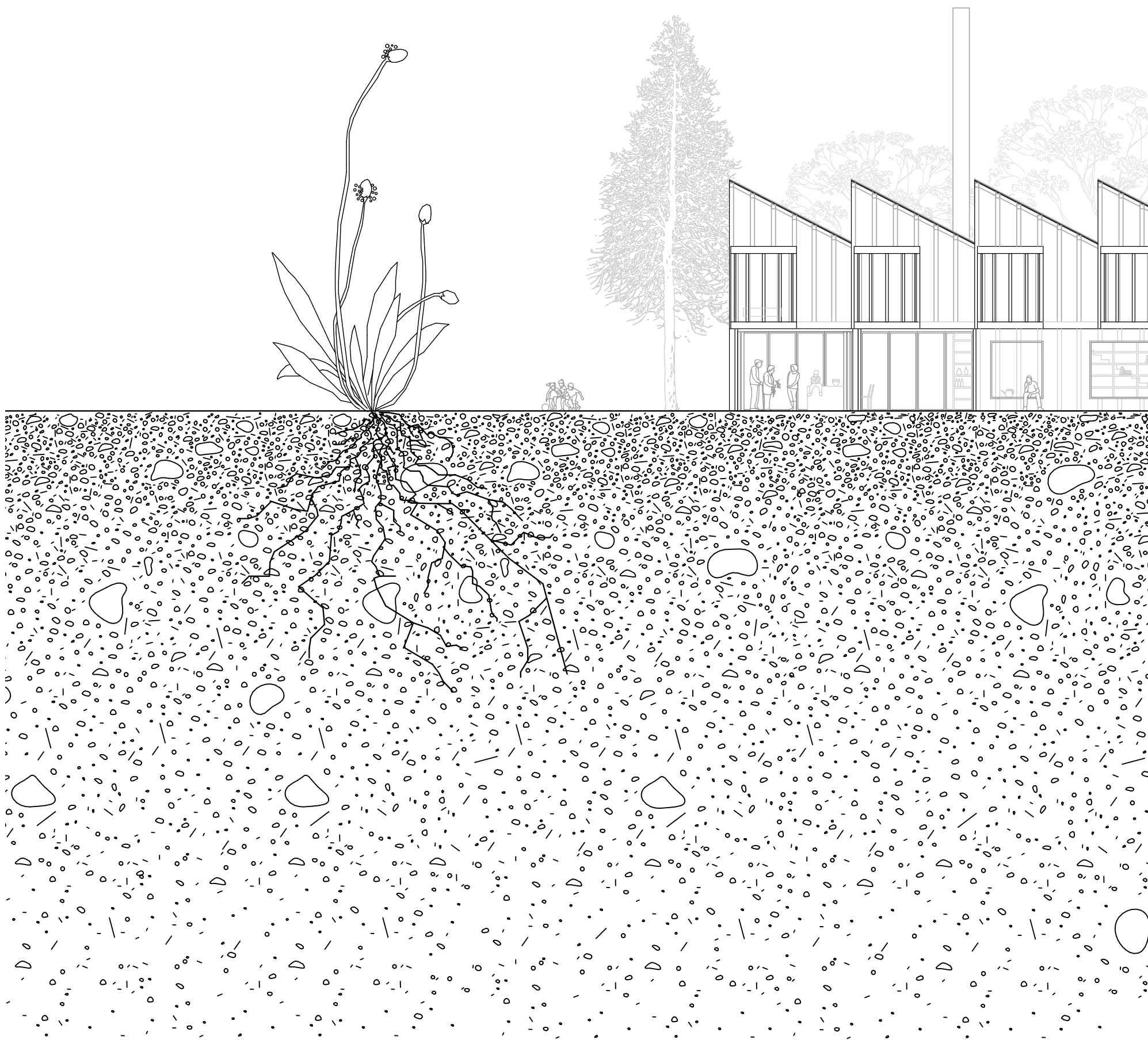


Bath & Sauna



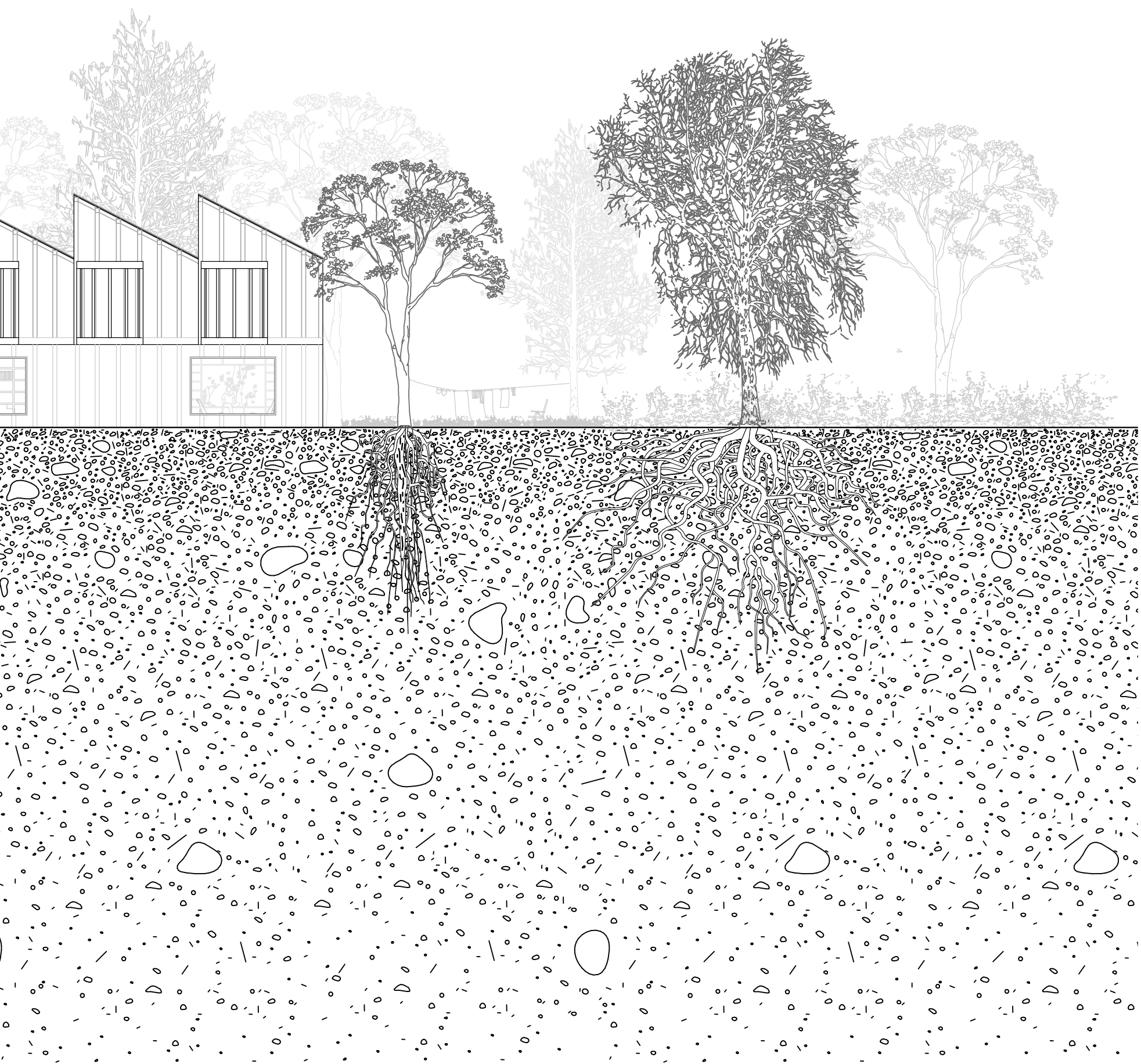
Bath & Sauna



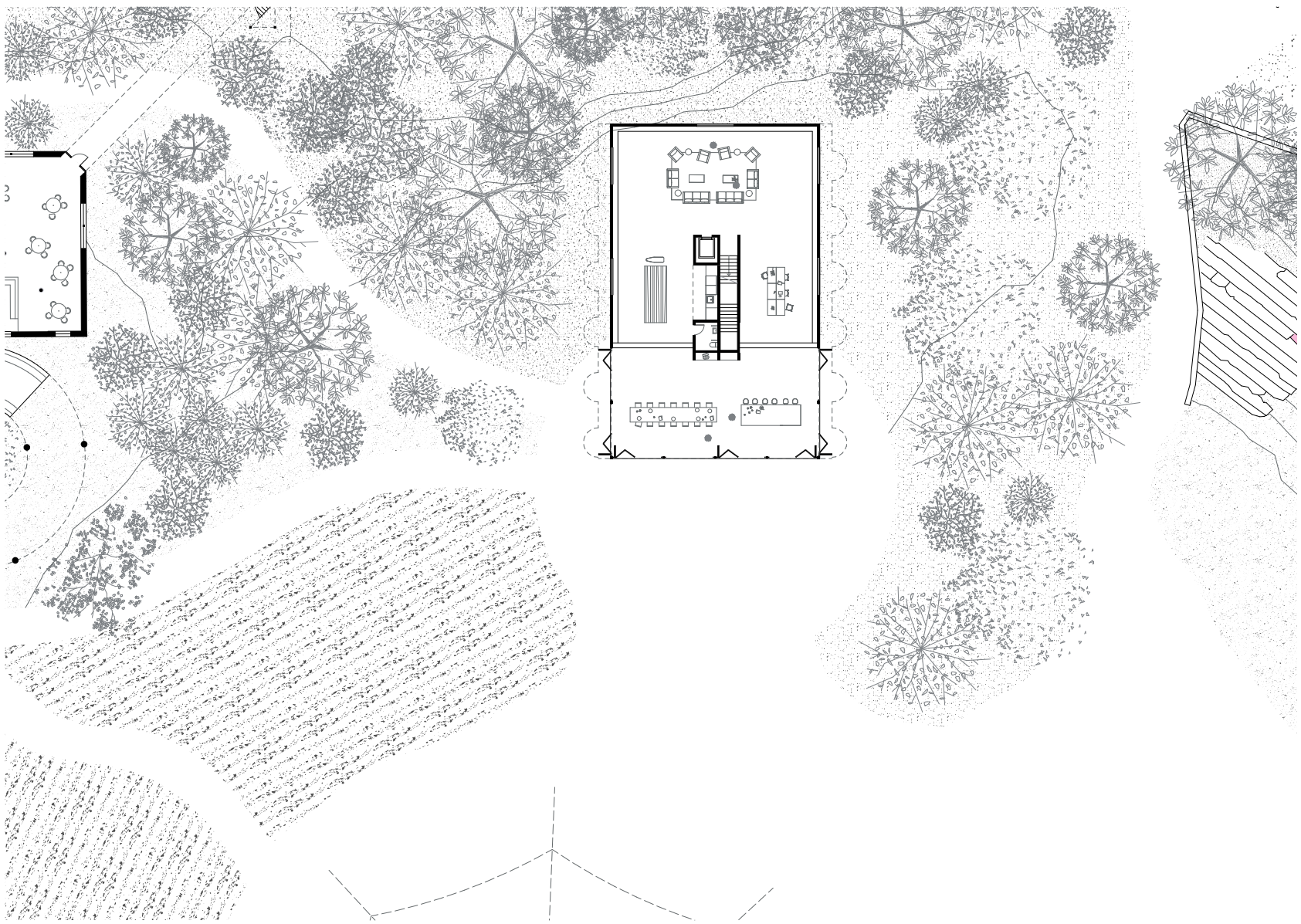


The Orchard House - House for Twelve



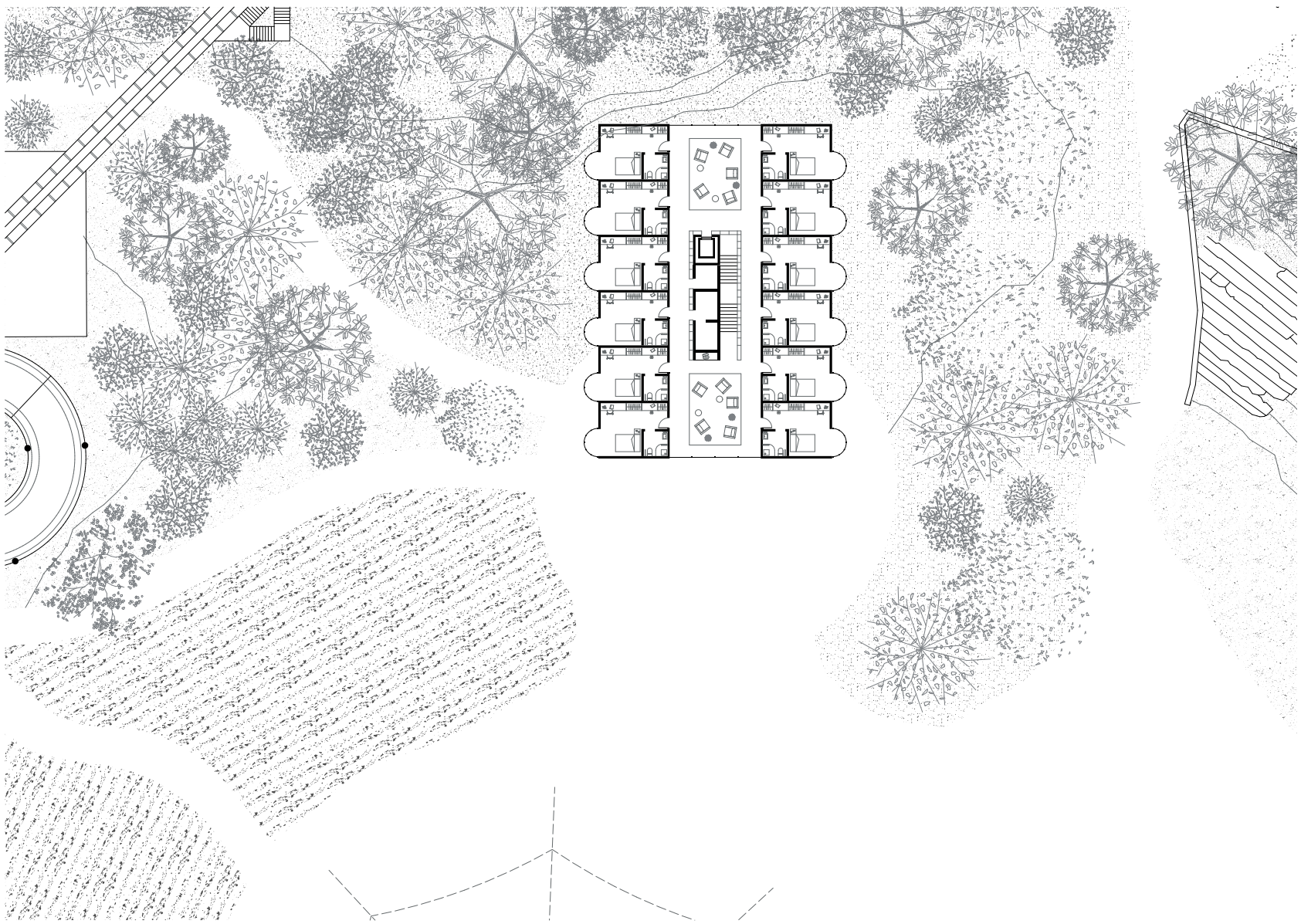


The Orchard House - House for Twelve

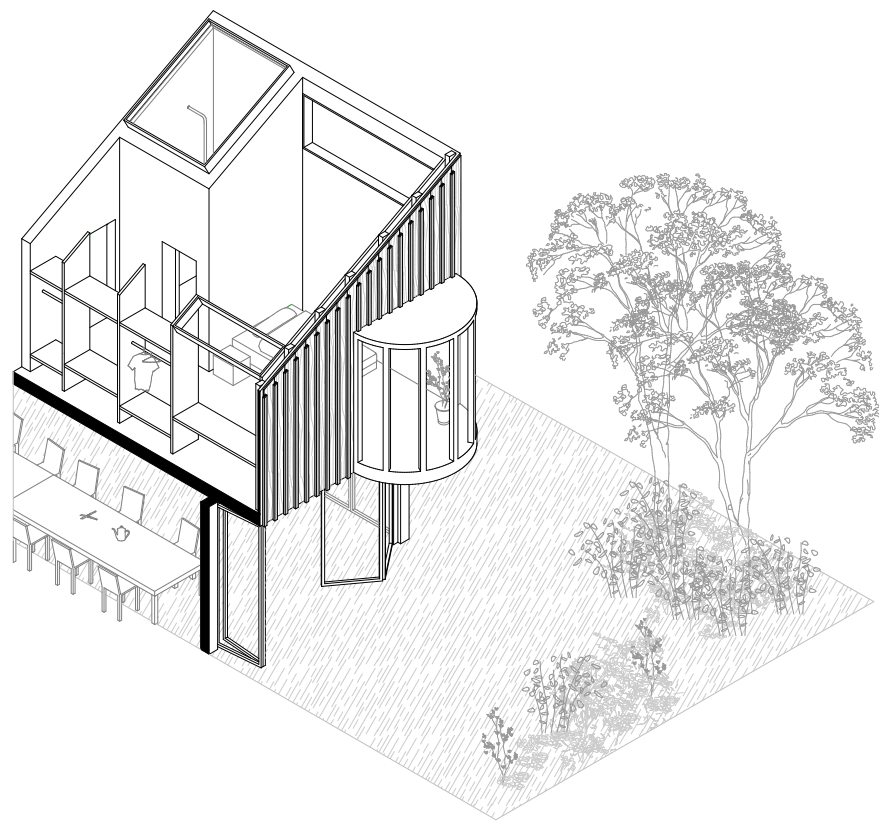


The Orchard House - House for Twelve





The Orchard House - House for Twelve

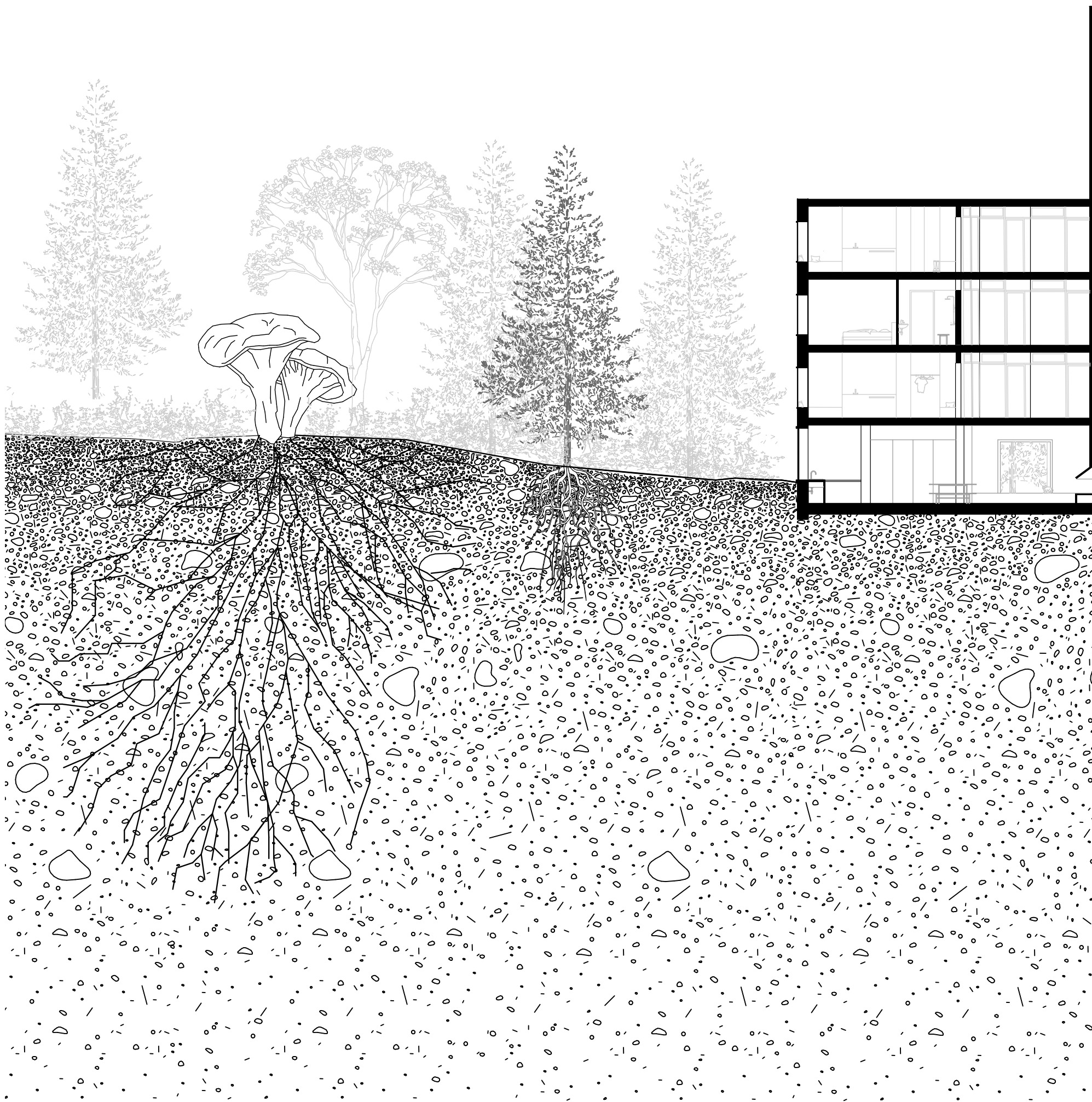


The Orchard House - House for Twelve

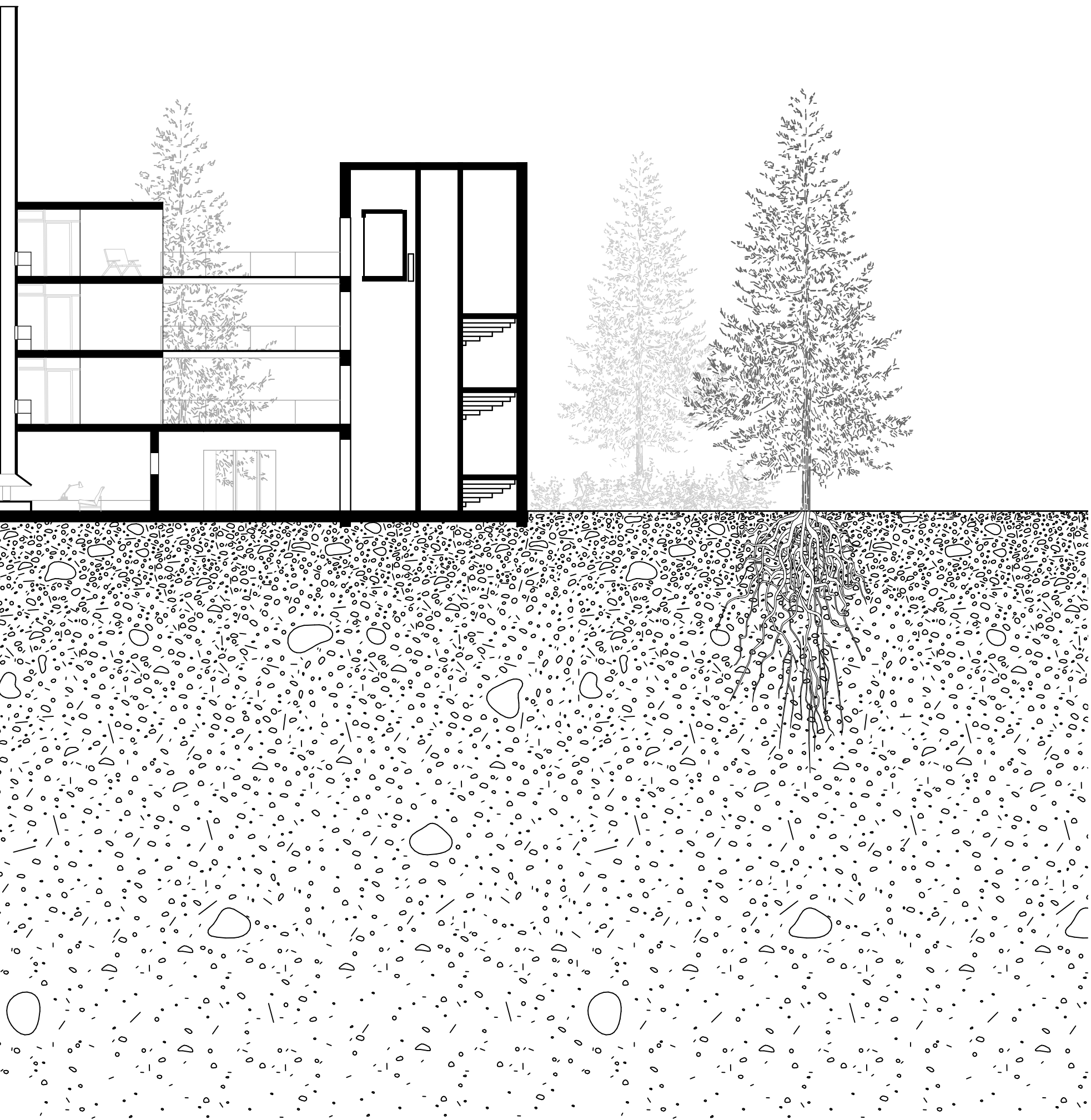


The Orchard House - House for Twelve

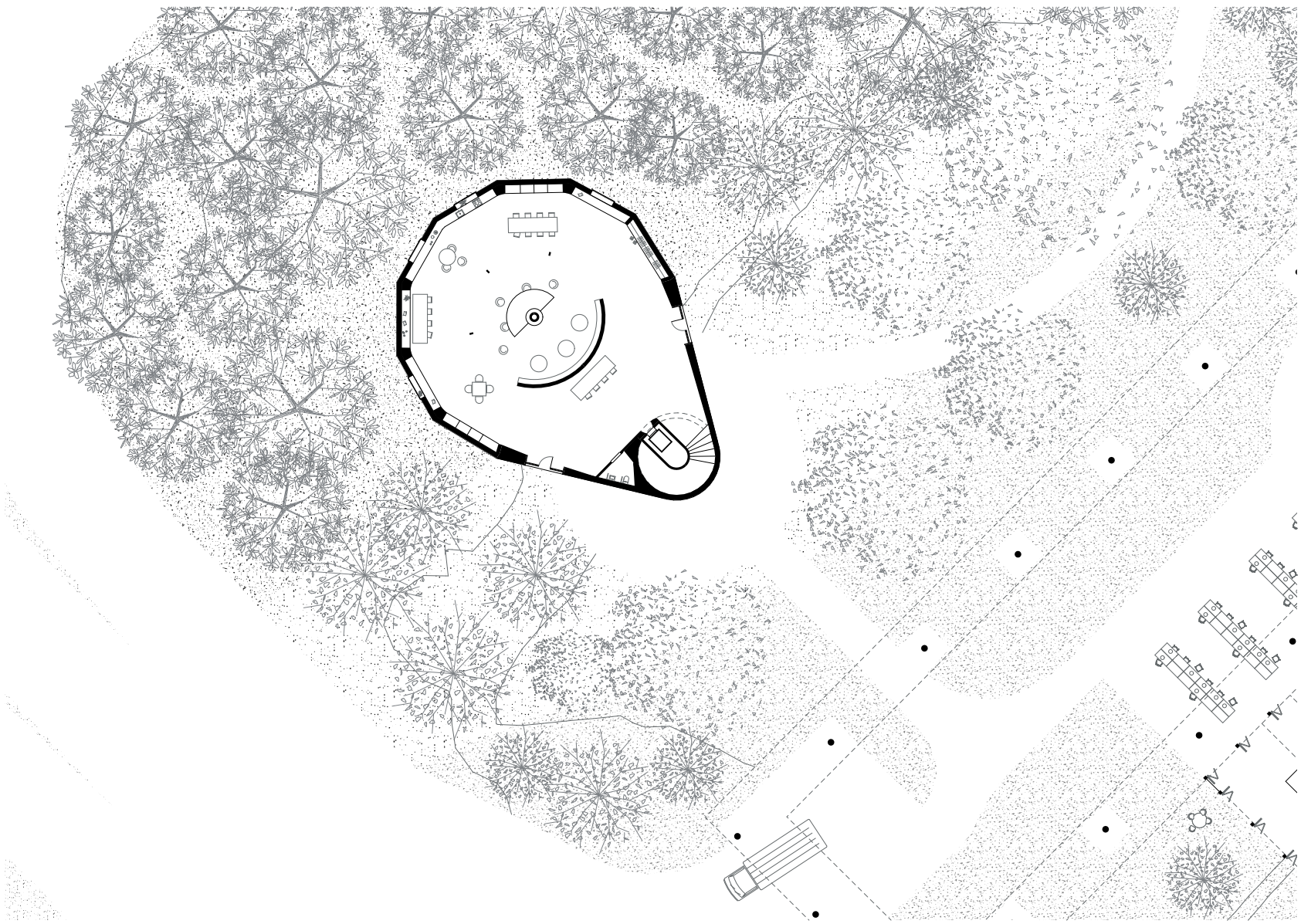




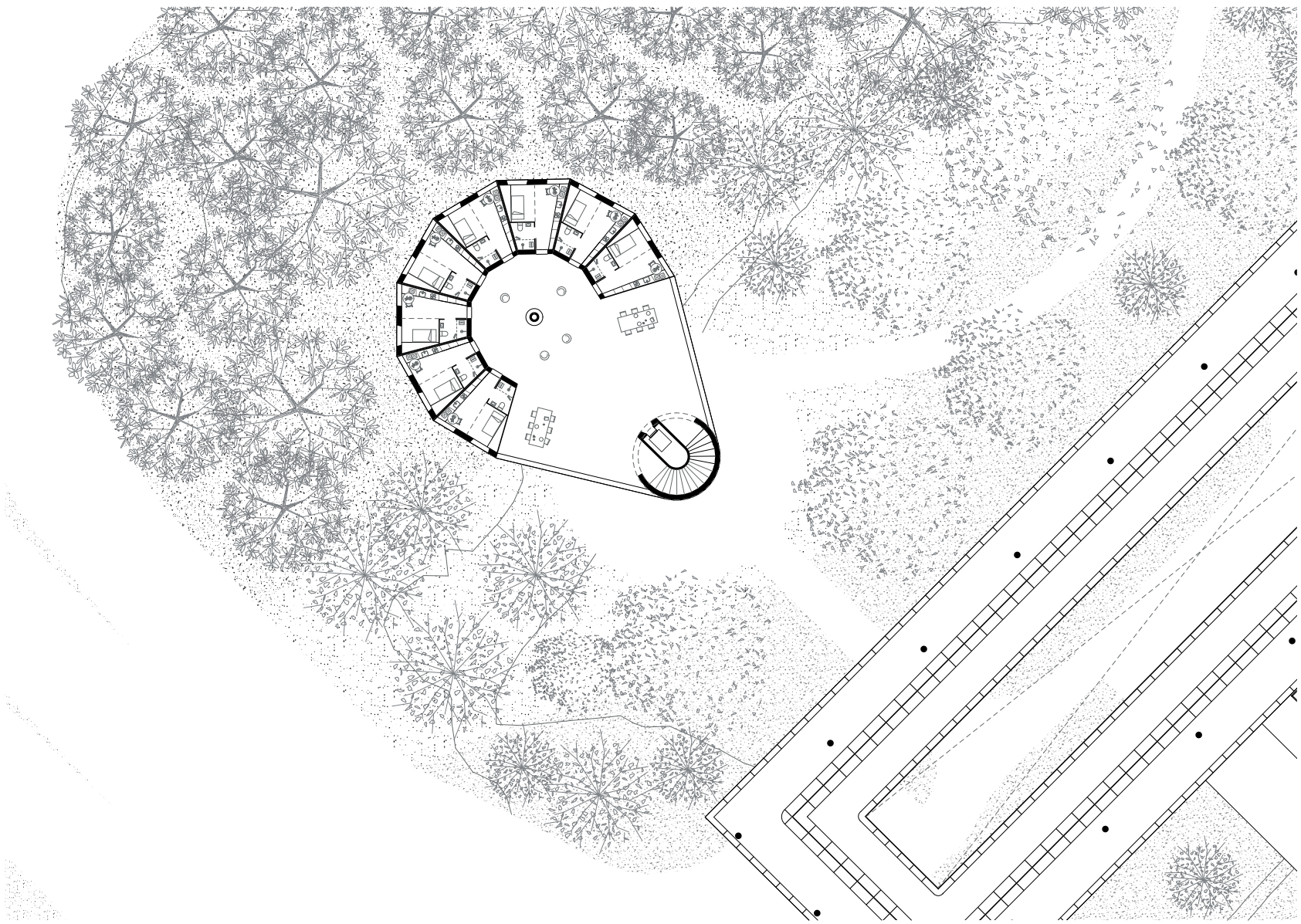
Forest House - 24 Studios



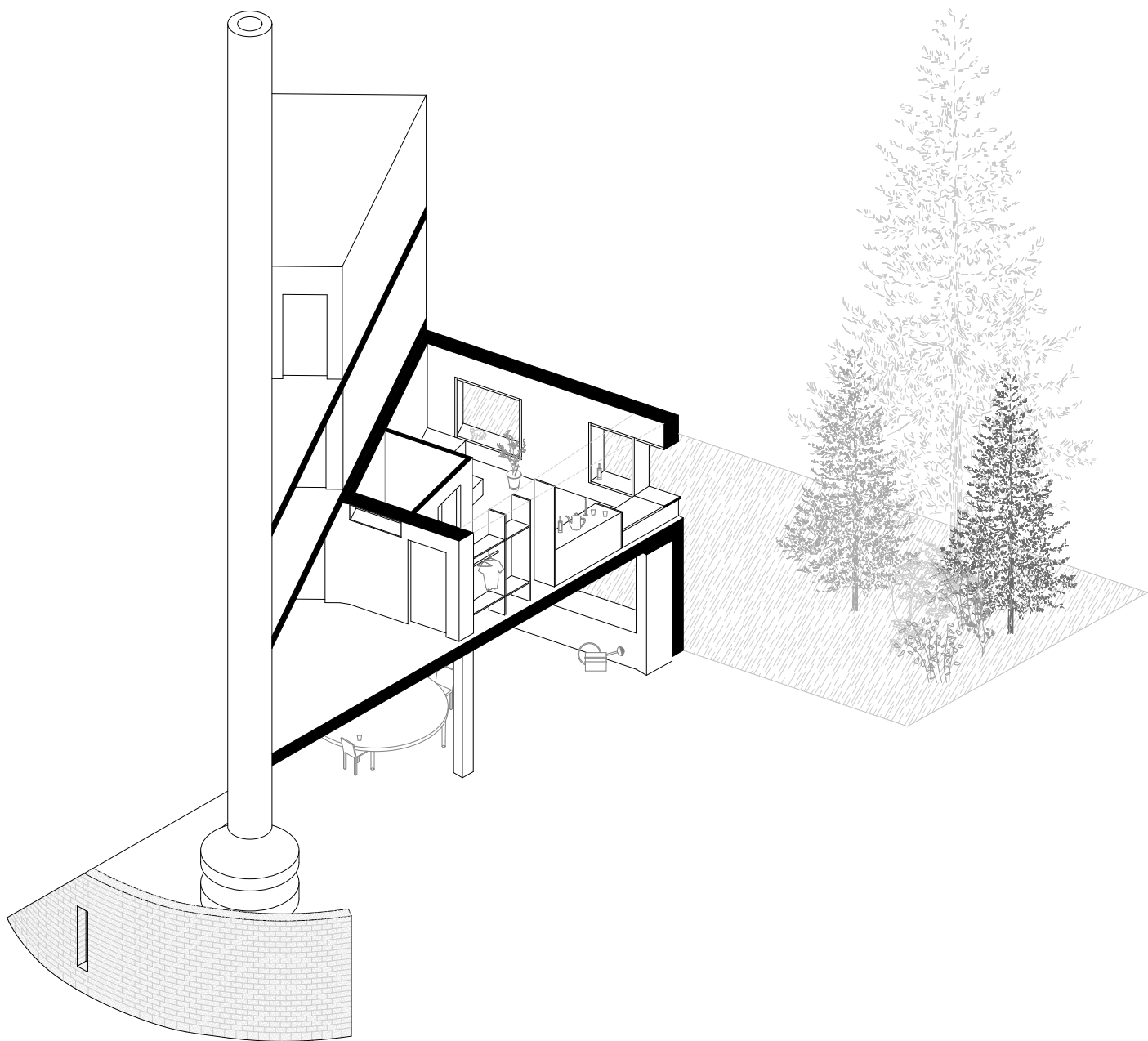
Forest House - 24 Studios





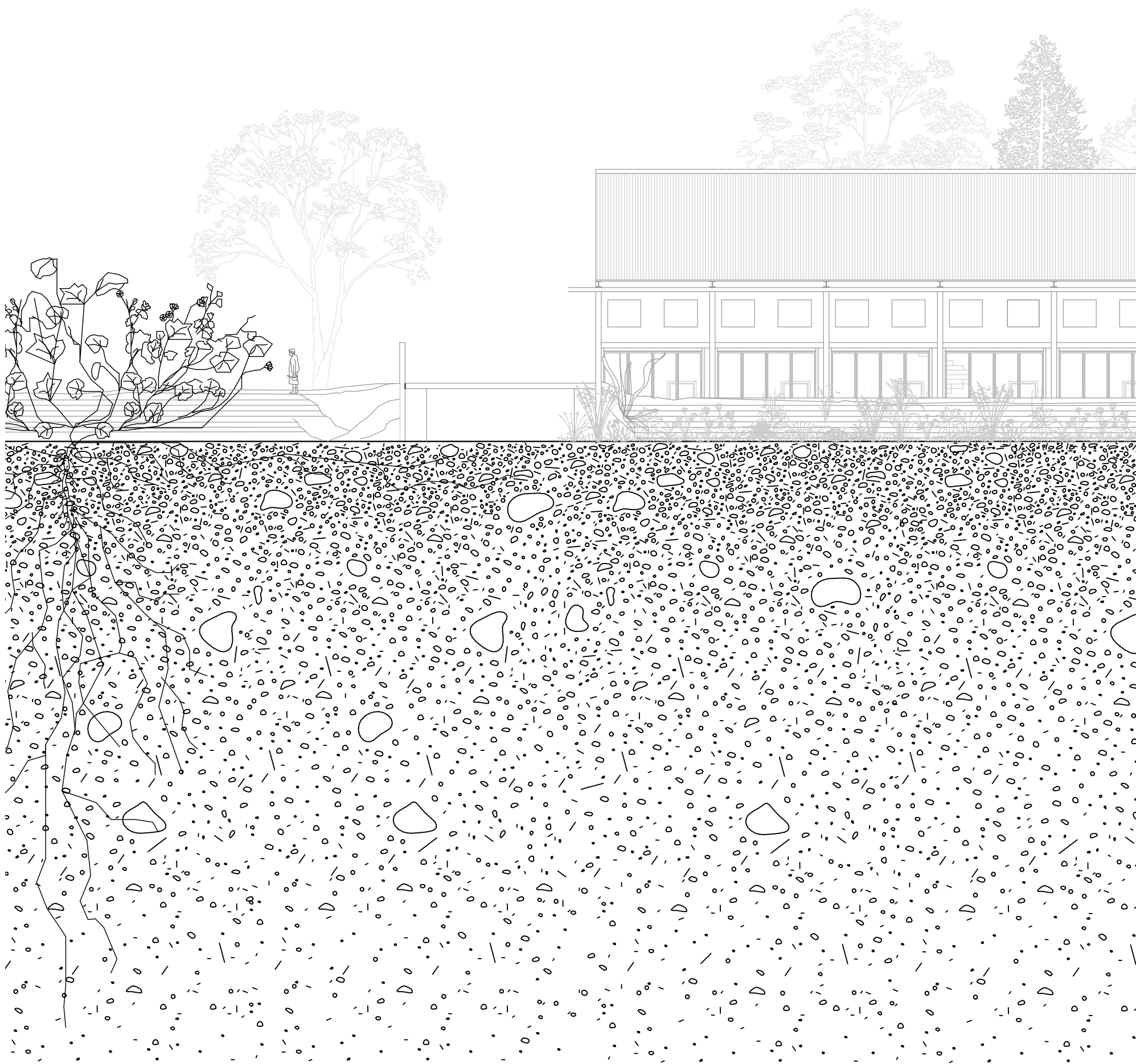


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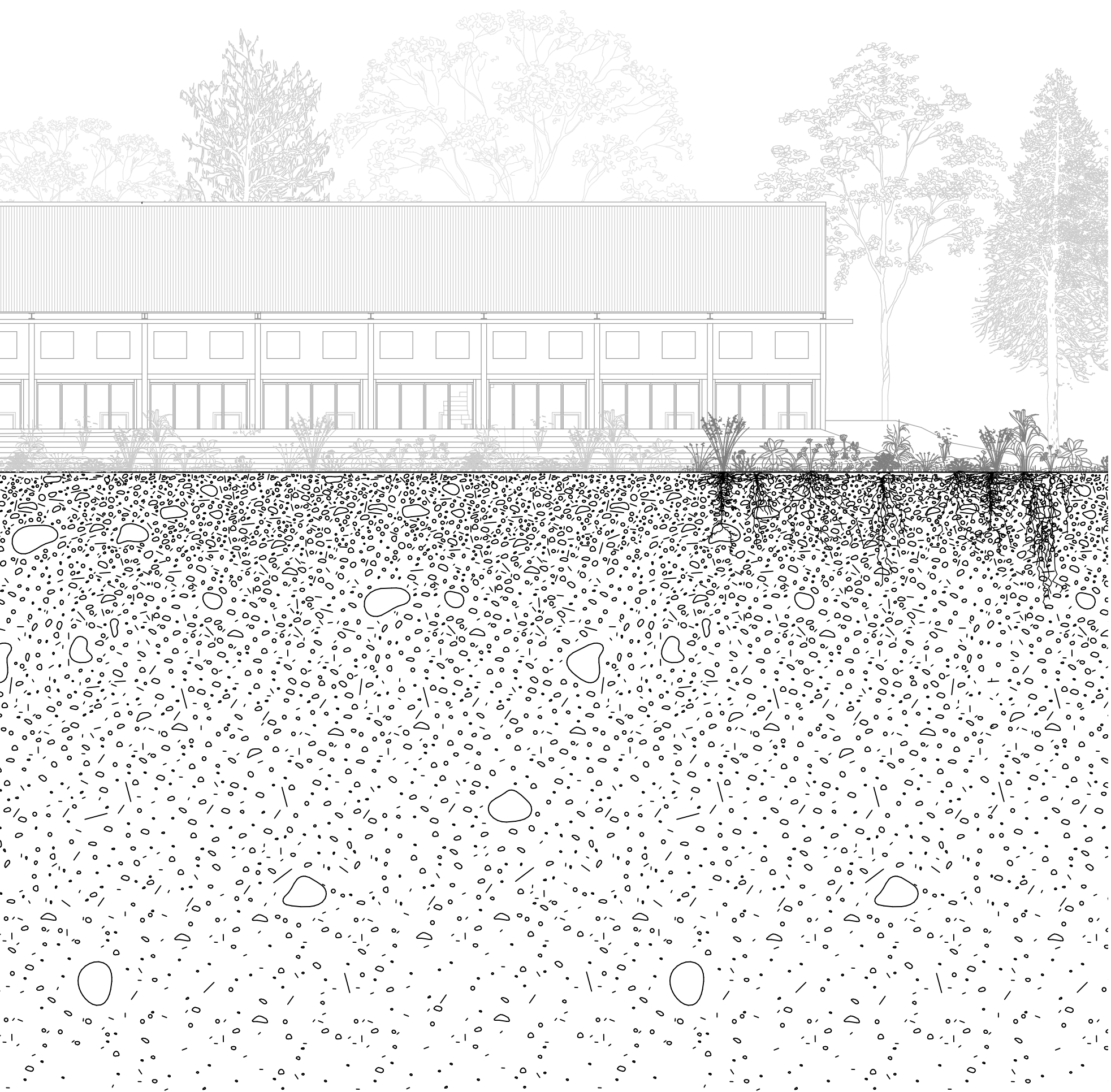


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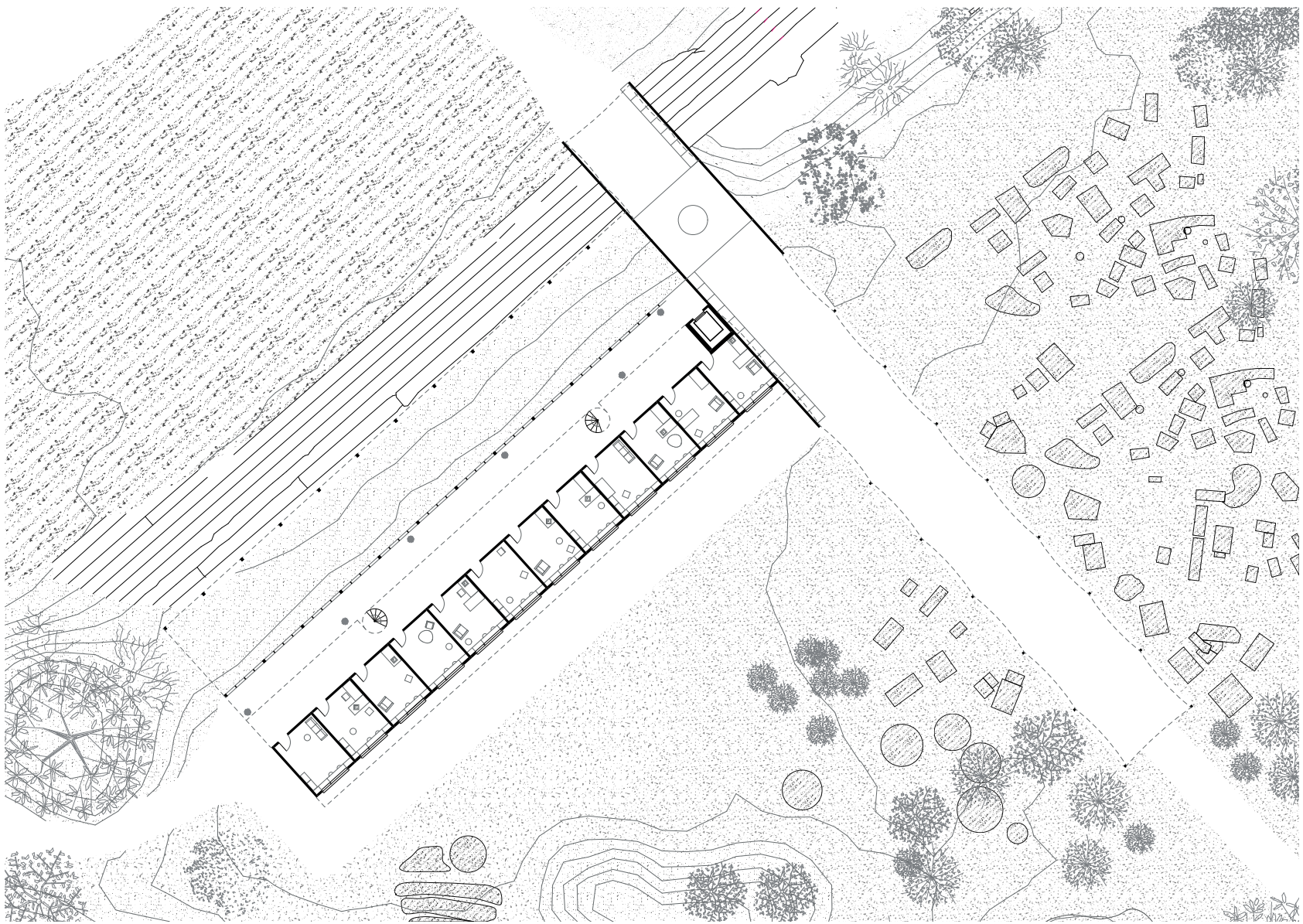


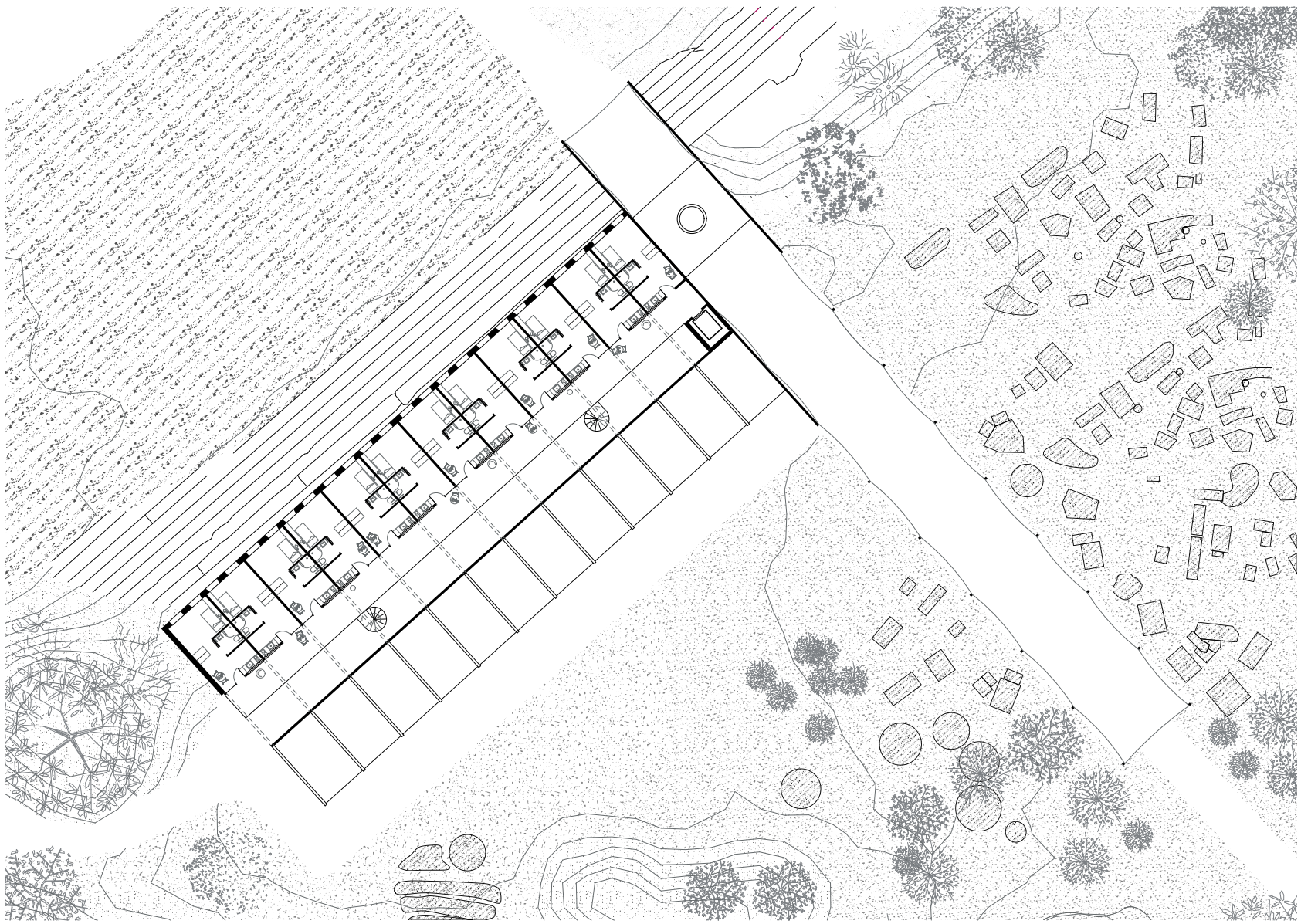
Bridge House - Studio Ateliers



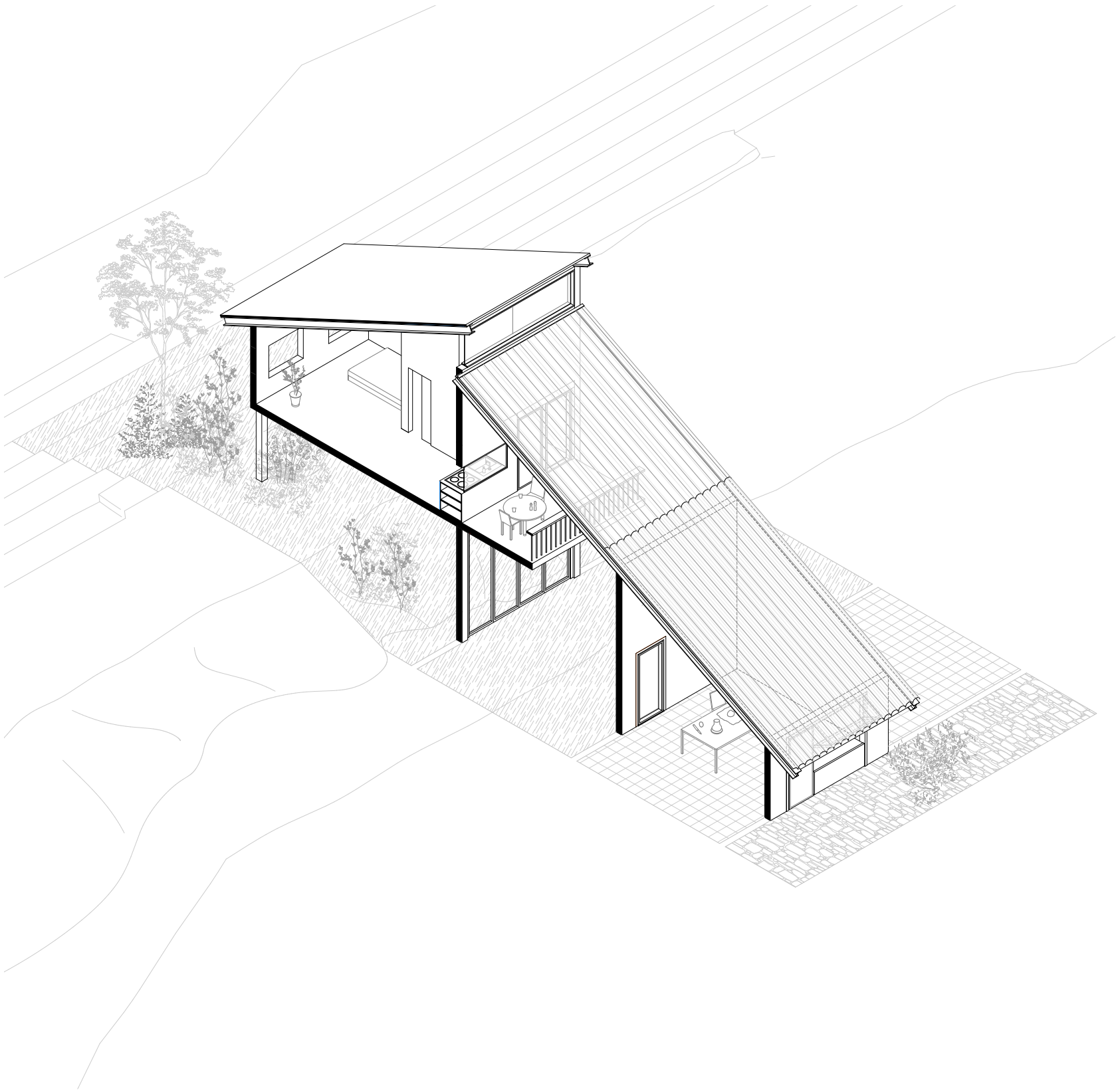
Bridge House - Studio Ateliers







Bridge House - Studio Ateliers



Bridge House - Studio Ateliers





Bridge & Vegetable Garden

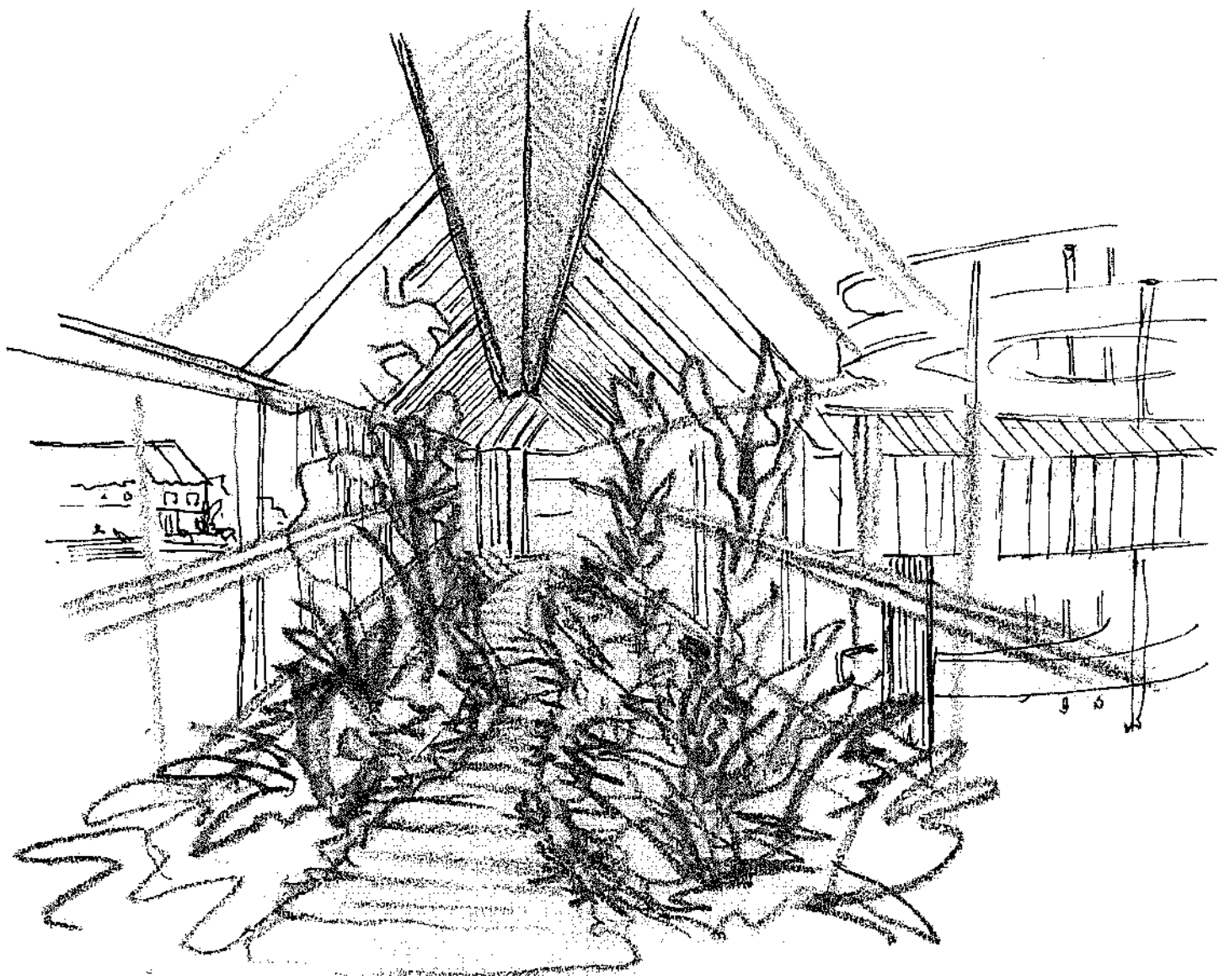




River side - Along the Limmat

On the way to the inhabited garden where my grandmother lives

Wild plums to dip in oil, golden hawthorn to stimulate blood circulation and young pine thorns for my favorite biscuits. I take care to pick only the side branches, as she explained to me. Picking the front ones, even if they look softer, would prevent the tree from growing.



## Glass Bridge

I try to bring her little gifts every time, even if I know she has more than enough. I know she will remind me that the gift is not really from me but from the earth, she says that every time. I am not sure where to turn, but I see the Entrance Bridge from afar.



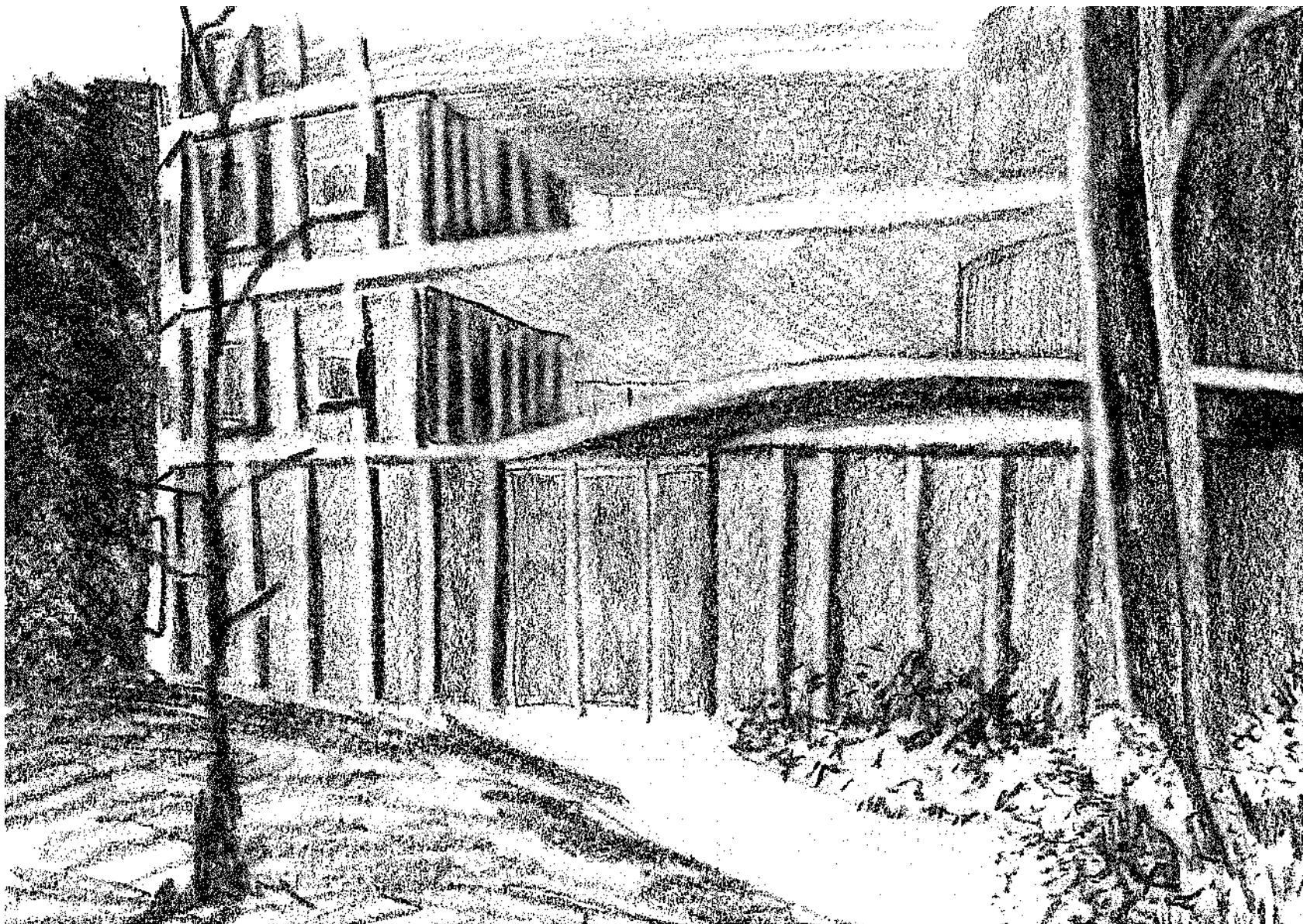


Table - Fire (Orchard House)

Come in, come in ...I have been waiting for you ... Come, sit with me for a while. Let's take some time for each other, far from the "many unfinished things". There will be time enough for everything else later. Let us now simply devote ourselves for a while to pleasant thoughts before we talk again about the tormented world... Here, take this chair. It seems just right for your precious body. I have lit a fire for us; it will burn all night long - long enough for all the "stories in the stories" to be told.

Give me a moment to finish cleaning the table with fresh mint. Here, let's use the special occasion dishes. And special occasion wine. Believe me, whenever the soul takes over, there is such a "special occasion". Have you ever noticed it? Let's sit together for a little while, just the two of us ... and that spirit which arises of its own whenever two or more souls meet with mutual respect, whenever two or more women talk about "the really important things".

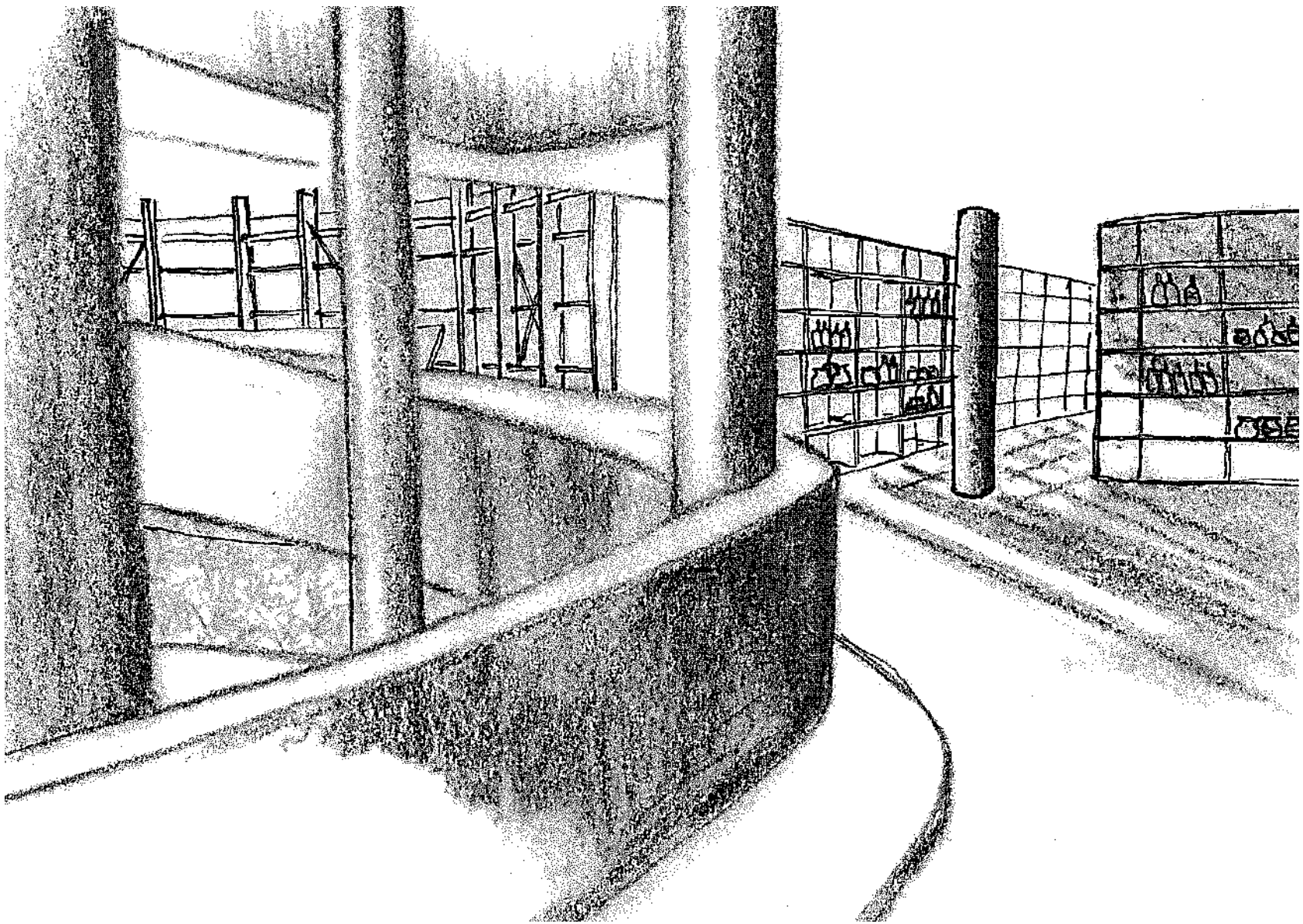




### Forest House (Room)

On one side of the Plant-Lab, which separates the garden into two areas, is the large courtyard around which most of the buildings, and the common house, are gathered. The forest house is located on the other side, sheltered from the comings and goings. Granted in priority to the oldest companions or to those who wish to have more solitude. Clarissa who lives there once told me that solitude is not, as some believe, an absence of energy or action, but rather abundant wilderness offered by the soul. Here she is sitting in bed, overlooking the forest. In ancient times, intentional solitude was used to cure exhaustion and prevent weariness: a way of listening to one's inner self. Most of the time, she stays on her own, joining the community only during meetings, readings or lectures. She herself does not attend every day, but she enjoys sharing supper with others. It's an opportunity to chat, to see how they are doing, especially the young newcomers, to evaluate the spirit of the Béguinage which, like a large body, needs to be kept in harmony. At the Béguinage, she found more than she expected.





## Archive

She immediately became involved in the life of the community. She first prepared remedies, then became responsible for the archive. Today, however, it is she who needs help.

## Communal kitchen

Sitting at the kitchen table, she breaks into small pieces a piece of plane tree bark, then a piece of willow, throws them into the pot filled with water - two portions of willow for one of plane tree - adds some tops of agrimony, stirs the whole and puts the pot on the fire. Against fever, the remedy is sovereign. More and more inhabitants gather around her, making their own recipes, learning from one another. I have always thought that chatting over a cup of coffee is a remnant of a very old female ritual, a ritual in which women get together, speak honestly, don't hide the truth, have a great time and feel alive again. And when they return home, everything is better.

They volunteered to take a primary school around the garden tomorrow. Once a month, they come by. They learn to name and recognize the plants throughout the seasons, what they can pick and how to use them. Most children love the experience, older ones come by on their own, whether to play, help or in need of an attentive ear. They are thought reciprocity. The nature gives to us and we give back. We cannot respect what we don't know, learning the name of plants and things permit respectful relationships to grow.

## Forest/Mushrooms

"Today I'm going to teach you a secret. "The first thing is to spot the north, northwest. You see the sun coming up..." Now, look around, under the grass, especially if it looks greener, and at the edge of the trees, in the moss. What should we look for? Witches' circles, laughs Ysabel, swinging her basket, There!

She crouches down, delicately detaches the short foot of a mushroom. She turns it over, revealing it's thin pleats. She brings it to her nose, sniffs it gently. Then she hands it around. Did you recognize its smell? Fresh flour! Smell again. You have to learn. The smell of mushrooms the kids asked giggling? It's fine, it's of your age facing someone of mine. But I would like you to pay attention to what I am going to explain to you, because I know you can understand. What does this smell tell you? It's telling you to forget what you think you know. And to listen, to look, to feel the nature around you. Because it is richer, more subtle than you think."

## Batik

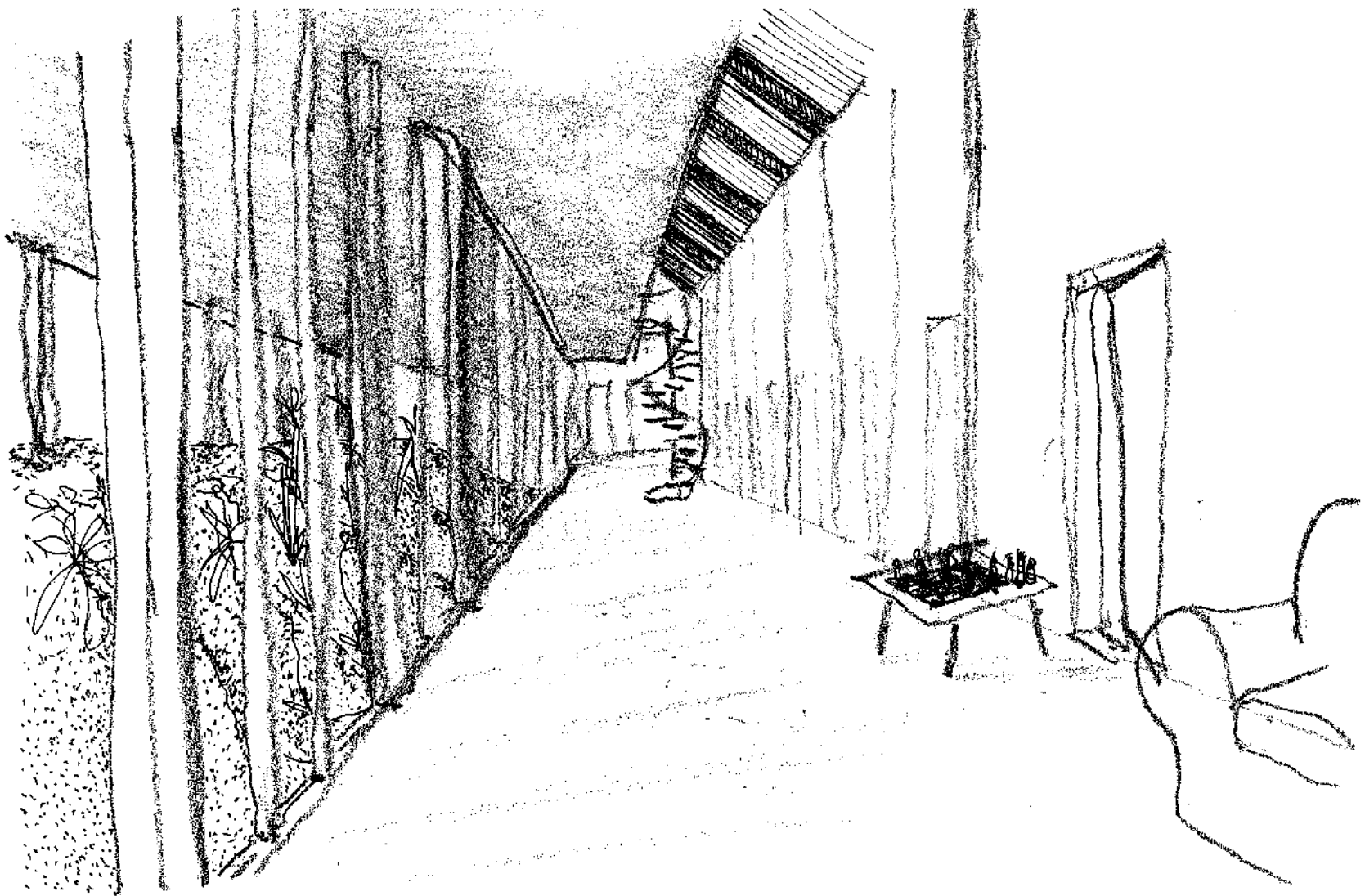
One day, a young Indonesian girl who was helping in the garden told us about a tradition of her native tribe: When they feel ready to die, the elderly gather all their relatives in a big banquet, and they celebrate their life. The banquet is the same as at weddings and baptisms. Your relatives thank and bless you, family matters and wishes are settled.



### Garden - Bridge House

Ysabel drops her hood. It is still cold in the evening, but the sky is still completely clear. She looks up at the moon whose face is almost full. When it decreases again, it will be time to harvest the first herbs from her garden. Here she is, crossing the yard and heading, despite the late hour, towards her plantations. The scent of humus welcomes her, soothing and full. A bench welcomes her. She tastes the silence of the night.





### Winter garden - Bridge House

In mid-March, the air began to soften, and the land with it. Ysabel was able to start working on her garden again. Transplanting the wild strawberry plants from the Winter garden, cleaning up the sage bushes, choosing a sunny spot for the marjoram to prevent it from yellowing. However, every day, after having handled the earth, she visits Clarissa to help her bathe.



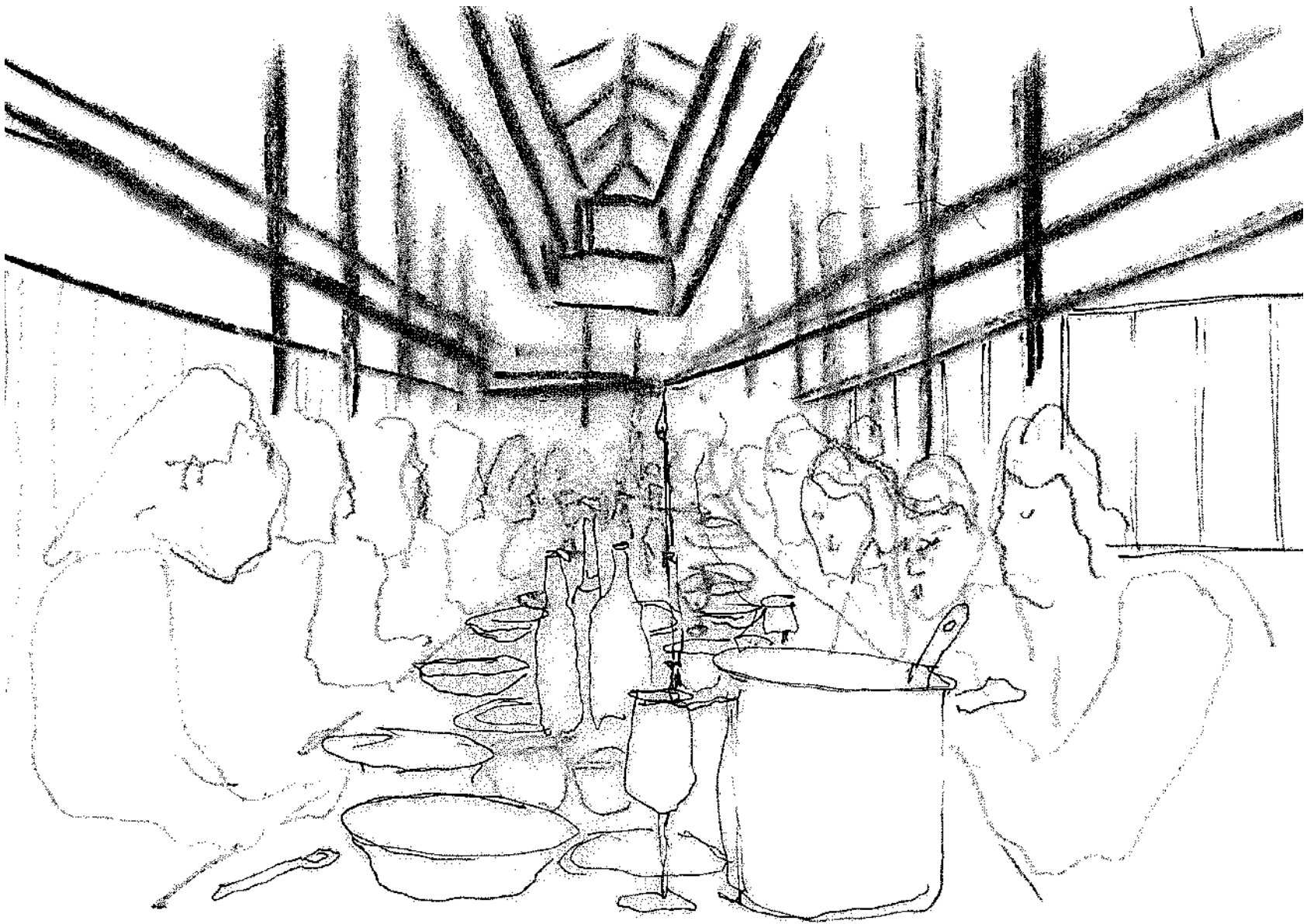
## Bath

In a recess of the wall, shelves on which pots of varnished earth were arranged. Without hesitation, Ysabel grabs three of them and scatters handfuls of herbs and dry petals into the hot water.

The white petals unfold in the water.

“I’ll take off your shirt and bathe you”

She reaches out her hand, leading her elder to the tub, helping her to step over the ledge, to sit in the warm water, then to lean against the linen cloth protecting her skin. Ysabel breathes the fragrant smell invading the room and sighs, knowing someone will take care of her as well as she is when she needs it.



## Parking

The beginning of spring has given her the desire to organize one of these “spring dinners”, as she used to call them at home. The table of the *béguinage*, a simple trestle, has a much more modest appearance than the long and massive one of her former house. The benches are made of wood, the bowls of coarse clay.

Wild vegetable skillet, blueberry root and wild spinach quiche, sloe jelly linzertorte, nettle soup, grilled mushrooms and thyme. The guests will arrive early, everybody will cook together in the big kitchen. If the weather is nice, we will eat in the orchard, if it is not, the kids will set the table in the former parking. Alerted by the smoke in the big chimney, neighbors will join.

After Dinner, everyone will move to the big fire place. Stories will be told until dawn.





