



Stories of the Forgone Forlorn Forgotten Space

Interrogating Mdantsane's Liminal
Space in which Ritual Operates

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Interrogating Mdantsane's Liminal Space in which Ritual Operates

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“Let us call people by what they call themselves.”

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o

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Definitions

Abahlali - Residents of a house or site in general

Ancestors – Individuals who have passed on and remain spiritually connected to the living

Abakwetha- Initiates

Amakrwala - Newly emerged men

Imbeleko – Ritual to welcome a newborn child to their ancestors

uLwaluko – Coming of age ceremony where boys are circumcised

Tokoloshe – Hairy, goblin-like creature

aBantu bomlambo – Human-like being believed to reside in bodies of water

Intonjane – Initiation into womanhood

Izinduna – Traditional Head

Izinkosi – Chiefs who reign over a region or village

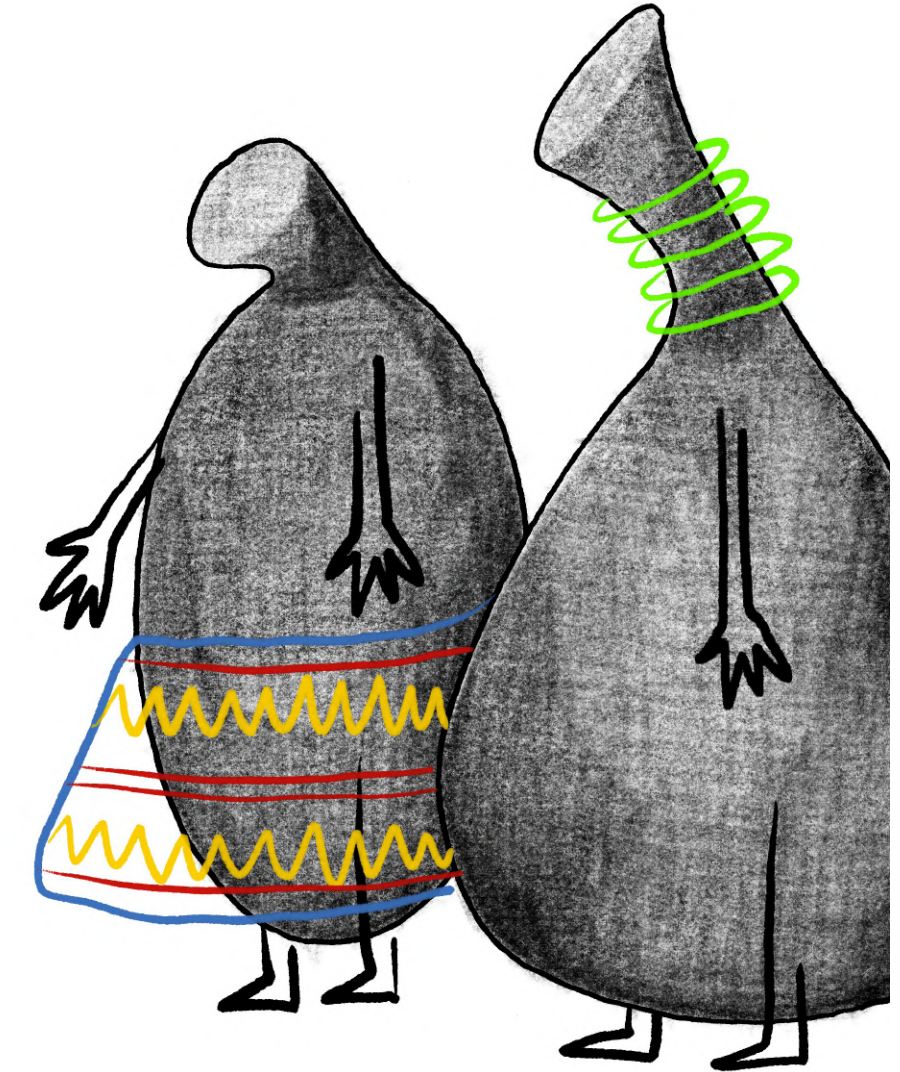
Isithethe – Ritual

Isangoma – Traditional Healer

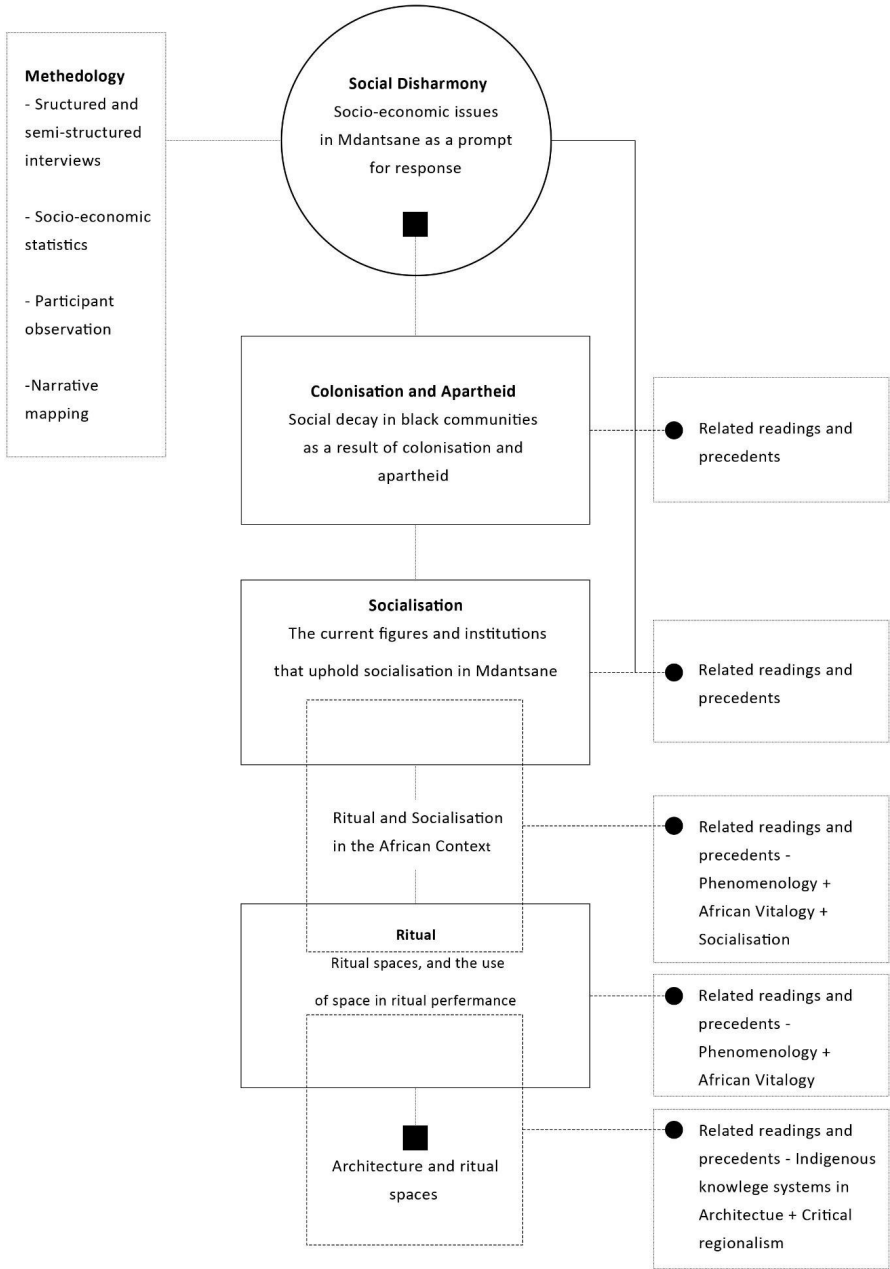
Umoja – Life force or essence

Ukwelukha – Initiation into manhood

Isikho – Tradition



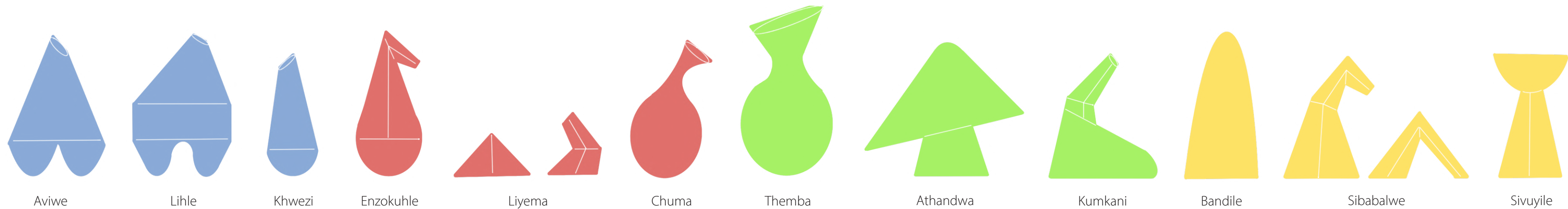
Abstract



The proposed site is located on Golden Highway in Mdantsane, Eastern Cape,- and is a vacant plot of land adjacent to Mdantsane Correctional Services. The site situates itself in close proximity to multiple educational institutions and commerce, centrally within the township.

The proposed research aims to analyse how Amasiko (cultural practices and their memory) within a non-transcribed culture can be translated into a built form that would be representative of its people. The built form would be envisioned as a container for memory where the ethnographic layering of information becomes a tool to access the ritual and its memory as a “Grand Mnemonic Device” to relay important aspects of the culture and its history (Trieb, 2013).

The space envisaged must promote the acts of remembering and collecting as a tool in the process of creating a “house of memory” (Bahloul, 1992). This assembles what was not transcribed into a physical, experiential manifestation by creating a stronger link between architecture and society, looking beyond the merely functional state of architecture represented in the context. The program enacted in the space will mirror the act of the ritual by providing spaces that relate to the processes of the ritual in their various stages of the procession. The three main ritual processes focused on include Umgidi (Initiation ceremony), Umshado (wedding) and Umngcwabo (Funeral). The spaces proposed function as a tool to access the memory and ritual through its organisation while its program reaches out to the community. The program includes a community hall centred around the acts of song, dance and sermon; a kitchen to be used during gatherings and as a link to food security outreach; urban farm facilities to service the kitchen and community; discussion rooms for skill sharing, dialogue, non-transcribed learning and storytelling; video exhibition spaces to immerse oneself in the memory; a foyer with a primary focus on cleansing or washing hands before crossing the threshold into the space; storage and offices for facilitators of the space.



An Introduction to Abahlali

Chapter 1 Introduction



Figure 1: the current site conditions along the street edge of Golden Highway

Set within an African context, the site is and continues to be, seeped in histories of colonisation that reach into all aspects of the organisation of the space and its people, thereby, discontinuing any autonomous power held over economic, political, cultural and psychological realms, to name a few. The site being analysed is Mdantsane, Eastern Cape, which is historically occupied by the Xhosa people and culture. The augmentation of colonial ideals not only impacted the natural resources of the land being occupied but also shifted the behaviour and thinking patterns of the individuals who were colonised. This, in turn, led to the belief that colonisation cannot be restricted to a specific area or period but must be viewed as a continuous force that did not dissipate with countries establishing their sovereignty. Systems of the past are still abided by in the present, despite claims of post-colonial ethos. These colonial systems persist and have taken root within the scars left in the exploited landscape.

In later years, having gained freedoms from colonial subjugation, ideas of independence were established through the rise and recognition of African leaders in politics. With the dissipation of excitement, however, came the lingering shadow of unmet anticipation and despondency. The remaining ideals of the imperial past obscure historically established factors, such as the social order, cultural practices and indigenous knowledge systems. These factors have been discomposed by the legacies of European colonial oppression. Colonial beliefs of hegemonic knowledge systems emerged in the Eurocentric standard of what it means to be a civilised society. These standards lead to the institutionalisation of the colonisers' respectable and desirable self-image, and, by contrast, colouring African cultures as barbaric and archaic, thus "deforming the being of the colonised" (Bulhan, 2015).

With the continued widespread colonisation came the dispersion and erasure of traditional institutions and indigenous knowledge systems as a result of "cultural repression, misrepresentation, misinterpretations and devaluation" (Shizha, 2013).

Systems implemented to establish this colonial and hegemonic knowledge were fundamentally created as a tool to disturb and manipulate African ways of doing and knowing. Before this interference existed Africa with the tools to self-sustain and self-socialise.

The African landscape in all its various iterations can be interpreted as a problematised space. What it means to remake, reappropriate and reconfigure a new world that acknowledges its colonial past and considers its indigenous knowledge as valid is constantly negotiated to reform the colonised being. Despite the lack of monetary contributions, these problematised contexts continue to put effort into the reorganisation of their identities while solidifying the role of the autonomous community in a post-colonial and neo-liberal country. This is achieved through imprinting on scarred landscapes, remaking what was once perceived as dispensable. There is significant evidence indicating that the human self throughout history has been able to adapt and assimilate to various environments, sustained through the relationships formed with their environment. This ability can be argued to have stemmed from the ability of the indigenous Xhosa people’s relationship between self and cultural practice. The practice of culture is communicated through elements such as time, place, people and ritual. (Maape, 2016)

The study of this thesis proposes that the ritual practices of the Xhosa people were key in the ability of its people to adapt to their variable environment. The critical use of ritual can be viewed as a tool used to facilitate these processes of change, all of which were sustained through dance, narrative, folklore and/or myths. These methods of recollection are portrayed through the use of art and artefact, furthering the longevity of the aforementioned processes of change. This dialogue encourages adaptive behaviour where nothing is viewed as an isolated or singular event but rather as linked to all of life’s systems. In today’s age, this cognitive processing of the environment has been limited through the destructive interruption of colonial

forces where characteristics of change have been discarded and, in their place, the longing for continuation and permanence have been framed as the ideal state of being (Maape, 2016). Maape (2016) discusses the implications of this loss of cultural recollection and dysfunctional self-image: “By negotiating boundaries of the self, the self as the other, the self as the landscape or the self as the ancestors, it was possible for people to confront variability and mitigate issues that may arise from solipsism, attachment to the self, attachment to a particular place or practice, which, if not mitigated, could cause maladaptive behaviour resulting in poor resilience and perhaps catastrophe” (Maape, 2016).

The study proposes that to achieve an architecture that is resilient and reflective of the community it is embedded in; the role of the architecture would have to reflect the nature of ritual and its ability to negotiate the fluidity of space in a contingent landscape. The need for this shift away from contemporary architectural processes is presented in various failures of this system, namely the failure to address climate change implications in sites that may not have monetary means to facilitate technology-driven solutions, and the failure to sustain communities which are set within a cultural landscape where systems, such as colonialism sustained through apartheid, have corroded social organisation and economic progression.

Furthermore, Mdantsane, the focus site, has been identified as a problematised landscape where systems, such as traditional institutions and indigenous knowledge, were attempted to be removed from the site by colonial powers. This was done through the introduction of modern institutions that promoted the “violation, exploitation and destruction” of the black body (Mothoagae, 2016). Despite the site’s traumatised histories, its people who inhabit the space continue to uphold their predecessors’ histories through the continuation of sacred ritual practice.

The Site Map: cultural sites map

- 1. Panama City - a spiritual site occupied during the seasons of uLwaluko
- 2. Railway - the railway way line acts as a mark in the landscpae that divides the modern and the traditional worlds
- 3. The Highway - the intersection between Qumza Highway and Spine Road marks the transition zone into the township
- 4. Spine Road and Golden Highway - the roads participate in the procession of the initiates back into the modern world of the new town
- 5. Churches as the link to the spiritual realm
- 6. The major regional roads feed deep into each section of the township facilitating ritual
- 7. African bodies being forced into a new landscape from 1966 marking the creation of a gap
- 8. Bridle Drift Dam - a site used by traditional healers in a cleansing ritual (isikhwakhalala)
- 9. An Exodus inwards
- 10. An Exodus outwards for rituals such as burials

- The Built Context
- N2 National Route
- Railway

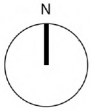


Figure 2: mapping of ritual spaces and practices that are still operated around the selected site marked in blue

The Site: The greater context of the Eastern Cape, South Africa

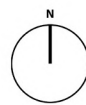
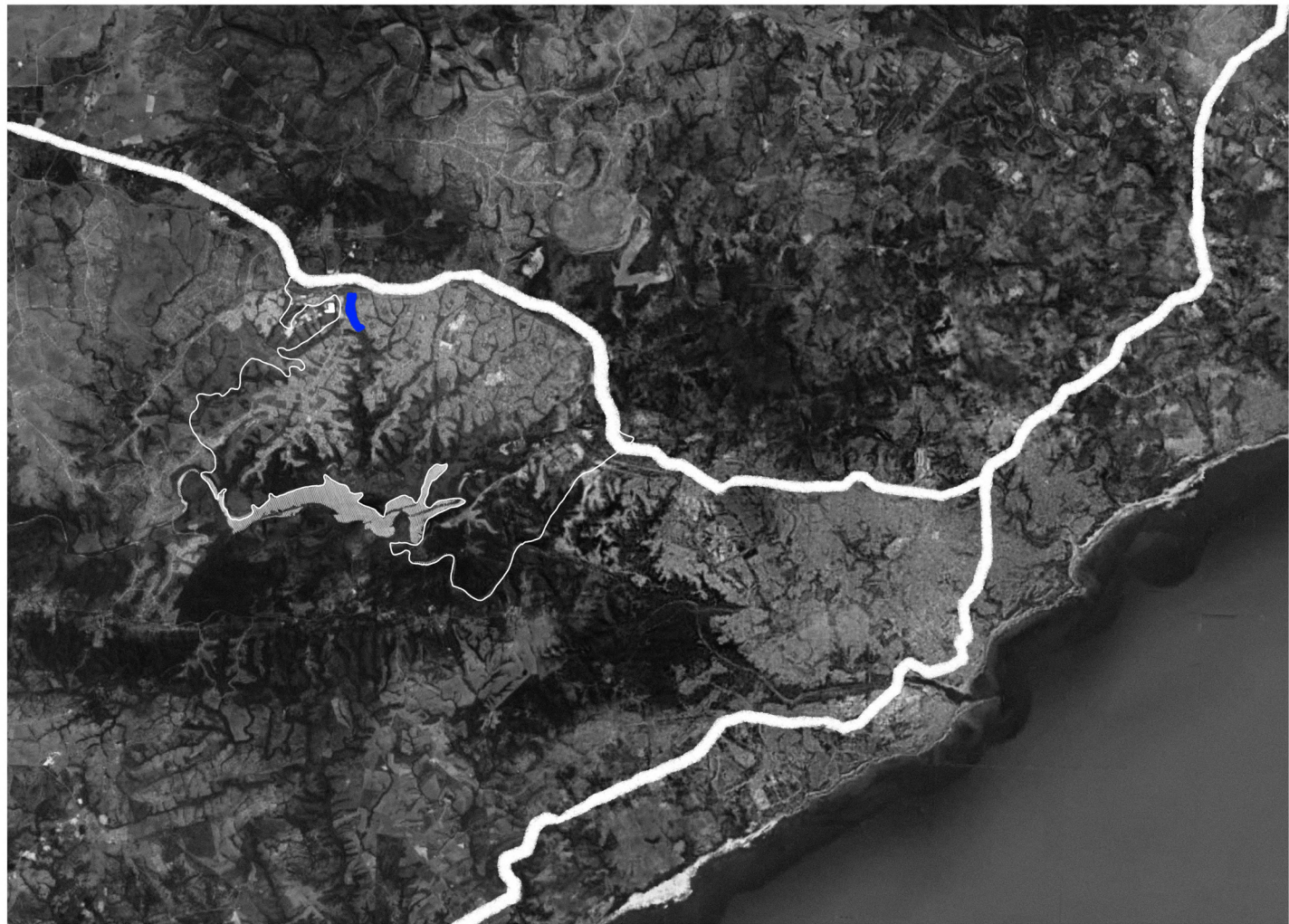


Figure 3: the greater site of the Eastern Cape

The Site: Connecting to existing ritual practice spaces



Site Plan
Scale 1:2000

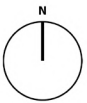


Figure 4: the existing connections to ritual grounds

Chapter 2 Research Questions

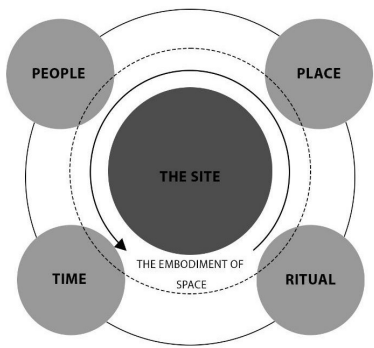


Figure 5: Illustration depicting the tools used to analyse the selected site (Maape, 2016)

The study aims to decrypt the relationship between the human self, the embodiment of community through space, the role of narrative, the community’s ability to adapt space to fit their needs and how individuals assimilate to the contingent nature of space. The following questions are key for this investigation:

- 1. How does ritualistic practice contribute to the community’s ability to adapt to a variable environment in a modern period that promotes ideas of stagnation and stunted continuity?
- 2. How can ritual and embodied space be translated into built architecture, in a site where ritual predominantly operates within nature?
- 3. How can ideas of resilience, stemming from ritual practice, be translated into tools to mitigate climate change in the built environment?

Aims

The study aims to investigate the ritualistic connections that exist within the site of Mdantsane. This investigation attempts to visualise how embodied space is created in a liminal space to introduce a site rooted in phenomenology and theological anchoring, thereby creating an architecture that communicates ideals of resilience, place-making and fluidity experienced within the ritual practice. Liminal spaces describe spaces that are used for spiritual rituals but are not physically identifiable to people outside of the culture.

Methodology

The nature of the ritual discussed is fluid, adaptive and resilient. It can be argued that the ritual’s nature can be used as a tool to deconstruct or reappropriate modern systems that function in dysfunctional sites such as Mdantsane - whose ability to sustain itself has been affected by the disruptive powers of apartheid. Guenther (1999) argues that ritual functions as an entity with influence on the structures of the social, religious and economic spheres. The methodology conducted in this study aims to investigate how the ritual practised on the site of Mdantsane operates and whether its reinterpretation and institutionalisation could positively affect the functioning of socialisation and economic advancement within the environment. The data essential in conducting this study requires analysis of elements such as

1.Place:

- What is the significance of the site?
- Why was it chosen by its users (climatic, environmental, spiritual connections to the site)?
- How is it accessed?
- Who can access it?

2. People:

- Who are the people that inhabit the space?
- What are the cultural ideologies they adhere to?
- What are their histories?

3. Time:

- When do these rituals take place?
- Why do they take place at these specific times and/or seasons?

4. Rituals:

- What rituals take place at the site?
- What is the significance of these rituals?

The study’s site was selected by the criteria of being placed within the narrative

of a colonial past, while still negotiating the need to return or reinterpret how its ritual practice will function in a contemporary space that never imagined its myths, place-making, arts and artefacts experienced. Thus, it is through this criterion that Panama, a ritual site in Mdantsane, has been selected, allowing adequate investigation into the embodiment of its people, place, time and ritual.

Ethnographic Data Collection and Observation

Dialogue of Ritual

The study area of Mdantsane is comprised of a large majority of the Xhosa people in South Africa. In this site, ritual functions in a dispersed, variable form but none of these forms are truly representative of the weight and meaning held by the practice. This is evident as ritual plays an adaptive role in shifting and changing to fit the constraints of the consequences of apartheid. It is in this state that ritual must now be enacted in spaces which are not suited for its purpose. Through the interaction and dialogue with elders within the community, the methodology intends to gain a better understanding of the purpose of ritual in a contemporary time. This semi-structured dialogue will be carried out with the desired outcome of interrogating if the ritual still holds the same meaning through its translation and adaptations by multiple users and what the significance of the ritual is in maintaining the organisation of the community.

Dialogue of Narratives

Due to the oral, non-transcribed nature of the culture, the main facilitator in the organisation and maintenance of ritual practice in the community can be identified as a narrative where stories of gestures and their enactment within a space are recollected, transferred and carried between individuals through time. The facilitation of the aforementioned dialogue gives the opportunity to further understand the perceived relationships between place and the creation of new embodied spaces in the contingent environment.

Observation in the Use of Space

The observation of the ritual space is best understood through participation in a ritual event to analyse the processes typically undertaken in the act of ritual. This will be limited to the periods in which certain rituals are practised and the spaces that can be accessed for research concerning the rules surrounding the practice of the ritual. In addition, ethnographic observation of the site and its users will be carried out in order to better understand the patterns of movement and use of the site to highlight areas that need provisions to promote alleviation and opportunity for further development in the community.

Chapter 3 The Value

The value of the building could be discussed according to the future desired effect it would have in uplifting the targeted community. The building acts as a tool to help socialise a community rooted in a cultural landscape. However, these targets are only truly measurable further down the lifeline of the building, where elements such as job creation, education opportunities, decreased crime rates and higher food security can be identified and compared to figures from previous years. At the proposal stage of the project, the value can be analysed through the following listed factors:

- The cost of construction: what type of technologies are being proposed - traditional or modern?
- The context of the project - is the property targeted in an urban or rural site?
- Running and operational costs: who will be employed according to the program and how will the structure be maintained?
- Calculated rates of return: The market value or bulk potential of the project will be

determined through factors including its location, the building type, the building use, and its initial investment. The selected site is placed within a township meaning the land prices will be low to moderate. The program proposed is mixed use meaning the cost of construction will vary based on the programs proposed. The program proposed includes commercial and social functions, carrying the notion that income from the commercial use of the building is to fund the social benefit of the building.

- Risk assessment: understanding which possible events could incur additional costs to the budgets and how to plan for their consequences if they take place. Can income returns be guaranteed, and how will the construction techniques utilised affect the existing environment?
- Sustainability of the project: what is the cost of the investment being provided and how will it be repaid? Can future maintenance of the project be assured? Will the project be able to accommodate the fluctuations of the environment? Will the social program be maintained by the economic program of the site, and if not, will it receive outsourced funding from additionally targeted NGOs? The budget of the project will be based on how much funding can be obtained from the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture, feeding into the initial cost appraisal of the project, where the financing of the project can be broken down into the development, construction and contingency finance.

The initial formulations of the value of the project are determined during the design development stage where elemental costing plans will be created. These begin to communicate the appropriate quantities of the cost plans and the estimates for tendering contractors. To maintain the estimated value of the works completed, both the client’s and contractor’s cash flows should be closely monitored. This is achieved through the management of the committed cost target, through continued measuring of works completed, limiting cost variance by negotiating changes submitted and monthly reporting of financials. With the aforementioned factors

considered, the strategy and approach to the building and its positive effect on environmental, societal, and economic sustainability will require that the structure takes on “novel design and construction techniques” to allow for local material and labour to be involved in the production, reducing the embodied energy of construction (Ramage et al., 2010).

The use of this labour-intensive approach will allow the construction of this building to offer some economic relief to the area by employing workers and offering a skill transfer to the inhabitants of the area. This is done in the hopes that the construction of this architecture manages both the architectural output and development program as a desired outcome of this community-orientated project. The project recognises the importance of environmental and social sustainability, as such the chosen technologies and strategies for the underdeveloped site of Mdantsane avoid potentially large embodied energy in its construction while accommodating the need for economic development in the site through solutions of using a labour-intensive approach and locally fabricated materials and common materials. This also promotes skill development in the area to produce tangible positive effects in just the construction of the building. The processes that are required to attain these results are lengthy due to the unestablished nature of the site producing additional contained costs before the inception and conceptualisation of the project takes place this drawback however is offset by the building value in providing the necessary infrastructure to re-introduce sustainable social, environmental and economic practices. Apart from helping inject money into the community, a labour-intensive program will reduce the amount of pollution emitted during the building construction through the requirement of less machinery.

The project aims to explore and promote the re-integration of Xhosa traditional practices in the community of Mdantsane as a way to help socialise and support a community faced with many social, cultural and economic problems stemming

from its colonial past. Due to the program being proposed, the financial planning of the building may only attract specific funding from possibly two streams, which include Non-Profit Organisations and Government Departments. Through investigations based on the proposed program of the project, the main identified investor in this venture would be the South African Government’s Department of Sport, Arts and Culture - as they are responsible for supporting, developing, promoting and protecting the aforementioned fields. The money that could be invested in the project is limited to the funding allocated for cultural or social cohesion development in the specified calendar year (National Treasury, 2023).

The published “Estimates of Expenditure 2023 vote 37: Sports, Arts and Culture” has been consulted where the budget summary under “Arts and Culture Promotion and Development” highlights a total amount of R 1 538 900 000.00 allocated for transfers and subsidies in the 2023 financial year (National Treasury, 2023). The proposal and implementation of the building are supported under the selected performance indicators priority 6, stipulating a specific number of community dialogues implemented to foster social interaction per year. The building’s program promotes the act of dialogue and the exchange of narratives and therefore meets the criteria to receive funding.

The targeted financing originates from the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture, and, based on the factors discussed, is imagined to influence the value of the project. The best form of procurement for materials, special items and other factors related to the construction of the project will be published for tender to achieve the lowest possible costs in expenditures and will be published through single-stage tenders, which are considered the most traditional form of the procurement process in construction. The required information needed for cost estimates will be published to determine realistic pricing for contracts and the appointment of tenders. These costs will include consultant, legal, tendering and advertising fees, to name a

few. The large scale of the site and the scale of construction will result in more than twelve months of construction, meaning it is essential to keep in mind escalations and design revisions due to delays in drawing production or construction. A budget must accommodate the possibility of these changes affecting the total budget of the project. These overall costs may be broken down into four components; hard costs (construction labour and material), land costs (costs of acquiring the property), soft costs (planning, permits, administration, architectural design) and contingency reserve.

The land being targeted for development is owned by the municipality of Buffalo City. If the land is to be purchased and financed by external private parties, the steps that need to be taken to acquire that land include an application to the municipality. In this inquiry to purchase state-owned land, the application will be analysed based on the eligibility of the interested party to purchase or lease the land because, in some cases, the right to purchase land is reserved for specific groups such as low-income households or communities’ organisations where proof of community involvement in the development will be needed. Therefore, it is at this critical juncture that marketing must take place to provide proof of the interest and need for the development of the project on the site. Once the application to purchase the property is accepted, the interested party will be invited to participate in a public auction to purchase the land. The hard cost will largely be related to the building techniques consulted which was earlier discussed to be a labour-intensive approach. In the case of the project and its desired effect to help encourage skill development and job creation within the local market of Mdantsane, the use of masonry, timber, and grass would be the most beneficial to ensure labour from the site can be employable. This promotes more sustainable construction practices with customisable outcomes.

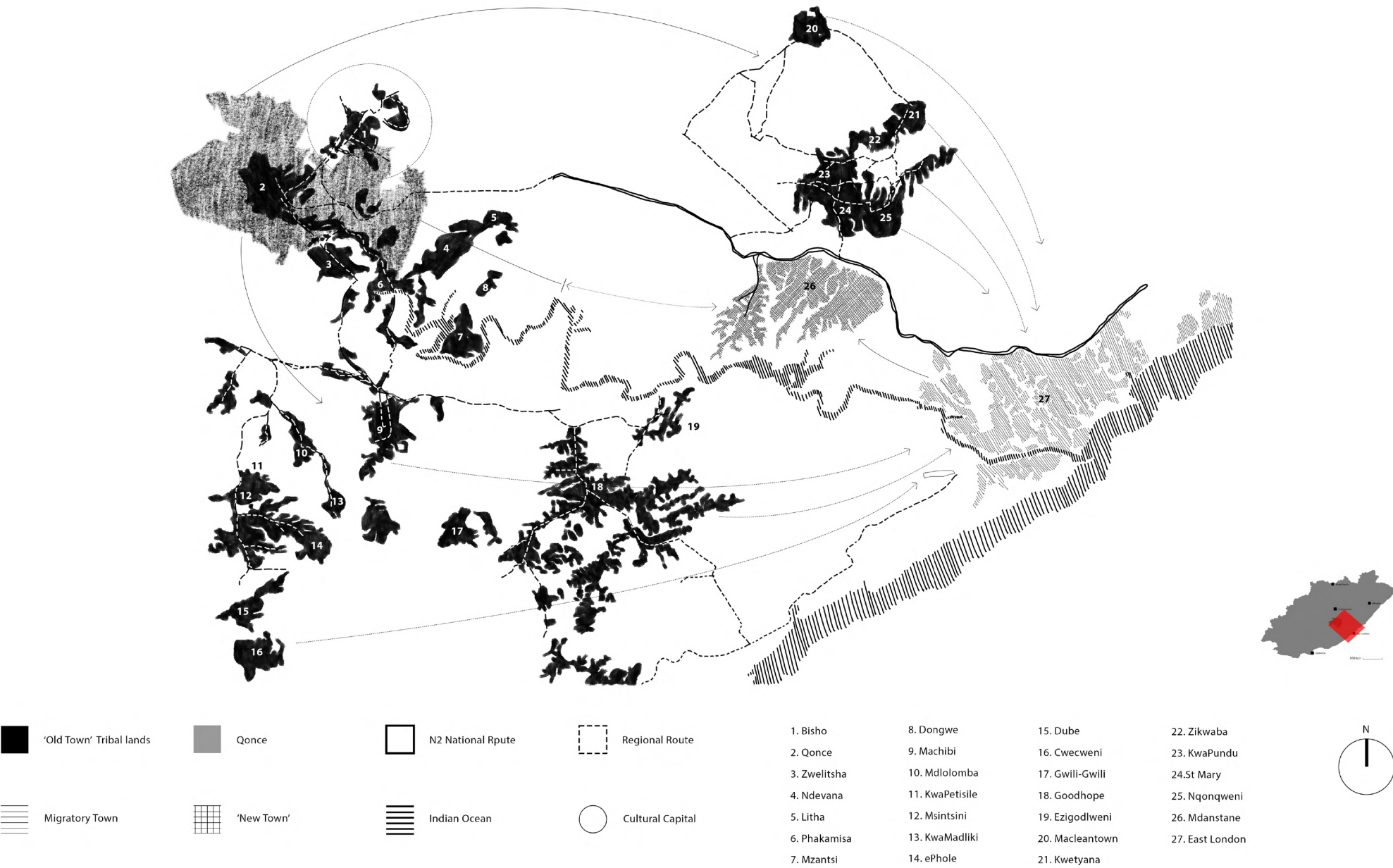


Figure 6: A map showing the movement of bodes between different regions through process of colonization

Chapter 4 The Site

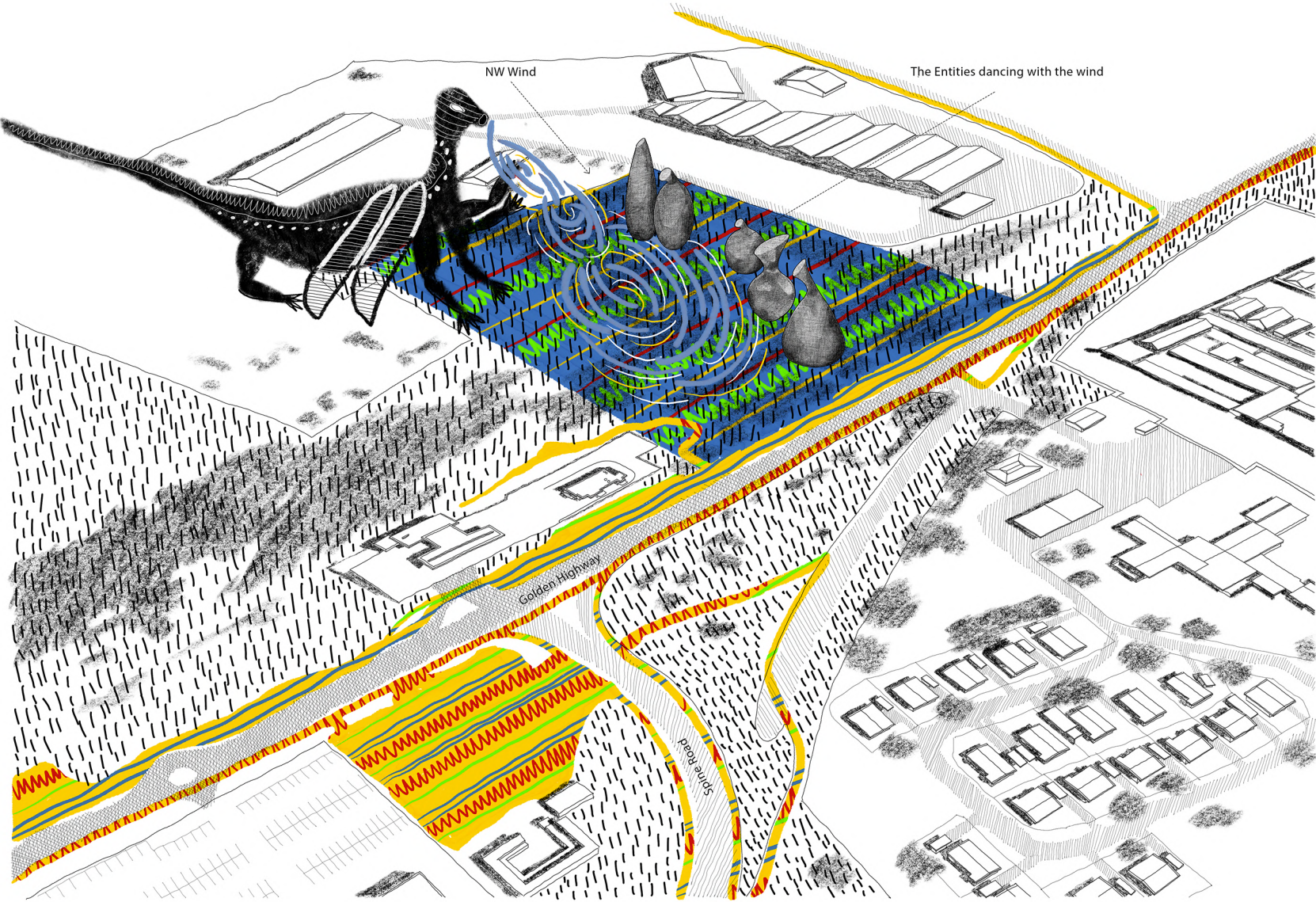
The site focused on in this study is Mdantsane. Mdantsane is located within the municipal confines of Buffalo City, which incorporates fifty wards, including King Williams Town and Bisho. It is contained up to East London's coastline of the Indian Ocean. The site's colonial history and experience of apartheid have led to mass disruption in the functioning of the site's historical systems, causing profound and widespread poverty that is difficult to untangle with the means provided by government institutions. With the colonial era of apartheid came the implementation of the segregation of races in laws, such as the Group Areas Act, leading to the formation of homelands. This was seen in the formation of Mdantsane where black bodies were forcibly relocated to form the seventeenth-largest township in South Africa (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2020). Economic, urban and social systems that have been implemented in these homelands by Western colonial powers have not adequately served the inhabitants' communities, causing a societal collapse. The failures in these systems have left remnants of the imperial legacy long after independence from these systems was achieved. In addition to these failing structures, the region of the Eastern Cape remains one of the most impoverished in the country. Some of the failures in government and municipal systems include the lack of social and economic transformation in homelands, the lack of socio-spatial development to desegregate past imposed borders and the rise in social and political injustices as a result of the rampant corruption seen in the various streams of government. All of the aforementioned results of systematic breakdown can be viewed on the site of Mdantsane (Seethal et al., 2021). Traditionally these communities used rituals to create social order. The practice of ritual is used as a tool to socialise all members of the community by instilling key ideologies to help them assimilate, contribute to the community within their social standings and promote healthy social behaviours and interactions between individuals. All rituals practised are rooted in the perception that the ancestors (individuals who have passed on and remain spiritually connected to the living) communicate

with God and offer guidance to the living. As a means to connect to the ancestors, certain steps and procedures are undertaken, thus the ritual is formed, for example, the sacrificial slaughtering of an animal signalling the occurrence of a ritual. In the current context, these traditional institutions of socialisation still exist. Some rituals still practised include Imbeleko - where a new-born child is introduced to their ancestors and becomes acknowledged as their kin - and uLwaluko - where boys who come of age are circumcised as their transition from boyhood to manhood under the guidance of the elders and ancestors. These rituals are done as a means of educating and instilling healthy social and leadership ideals. The participants will have to practice in order to prepare them to become custodians of the culture and contributors to society. As it stands, the rituals being practised occur in decentralised and informal spaces, such as the individual's house or a rented community hall, disassociating the experience of the ritual and its spiritual genesis from the practice.

Chapter 5 The Embodiment of Space

The symphonic orchestration of ritual is facilitated through the human performance of gestures such as song and dance, mimicry and translation of ancestral narrative, as well as symbolic representation as seen in the adornment of clothing and masks animating what can only be understood as otherworldly. These acts are prompted by embodied emotion that the human self holds toward the ritual and space (Maape, 2016). The study proposes to centre these gestures, artefacts and rituals in the landscape as a tool to orientate the human self in the environment.

The Site Map: Animating Space



Conceptualizing the interaction between the element of wind and the entity as a building. How does the building imagined move, whether and interact with the site as it is animated by the fluctuations of time and its growth and decay.

Pedestrian Activity Area

Site

Wind Direction



Chapter 6 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is often understood through the guise of what is processed through questions of the relationship between the human self and other living beings that occupy this space. In Tymieniecka’s ‘Logos of Phenomenology’ (2006) the evaluation of this line of thinking is analysed and restructured. It can be understood that the human self does not exist solely on the plain of what is presently occupying the space with them, but rather that the human self exists within a network wherein their life sharing extends outwards into the cosmos, reedifying phenomenology as a journey in attempting to understand the spiritual quest to accessing the “divine mystery” of life (Tymieniecka, 2006). Tymieniecka (2006) comments on the necessity of this quest: “We need to find some solid foothold in the vast network of existence, to regain a sense of stability and security, if only for the sake of our world’s further development” (Tymieniecka, 2006). The human self exists in an environment where little control can truly be exercised over the landscape as external forces and powers prevail to delineate the environment’s functions to fall within the will of the cosmos. Thus, it can be understood that what aids the human self in navigating the contingent space is the “human communicative community” which threads together all living beings in the workings of the earth (Tymieniecka, 2006).

During the Middle Ages, it was widely understood that human nature is what stood centrally in the functioning of all life’s systems as the organisers and wielders of will in the landscape provide consistency and stability to the processes of life that living beings participated in. This line of thinking was however interrupted through the developments of inquiry into bioengineering, genetic formulation of the human self and human nature, challenging previous understanding of human nature being unchangeable and the framing of humans as being above others through their capability to process thoughts, emotions enabled through conscious intelligence (Tymieniecka, 2006). What was then thought to be the human prerogative, rights bestowed upon them by evolution or the God/s, was contradicted through findings of other living beings having the capabilities to rationalise and process ideas

using conscious intelligence. These once indisputable ideas of what forms human nature now question the parameters that differentiate the human being from other beings. Could these parameters define the nuances of “form, limits and extensions” (Tymieniecka, 2006) into the cosmos to define the human self? Could the question of human nature be viewed through the perception of the body as the container to house the existential, manifested and animated through life’s contingent and immeasurable life processes? The processes of forming the human self are not linear and are rather constantly constructed and deconstructed by greater powers and forces to form the “autonomous living entity” (Tymieniecka, 2006). Tymieniecka furthers this concept: “At the core of the sweep of individual beingness and of the human individual, sentience delimits individual beingness even as it constitutes a pre-thematic communion of all that is living, a pre-experiential bond of everything-there-is-alive. This I have elsewhere called life’s “symbiotic empathy” (Tymieniecka, 2006).

Having explored the knowledge processes of phenomenology, its application is one that is reflective of African knowledge, where similarly life is understood to be all-encompassing holding true to the statement that ‘all things are alive’ (Tymieniecka, 2006) and therefore everything is connected. The opportunity to explore the building as a living entity is encouraged through these thought processes. If the building were to be envisaged as alive, who is this building in the greater schema of the cosmos, how were they brought to life, how does it age and how does it communicate with other living beings with which it participates in life’s processes?

The Site Map: A Call To Come Home

A call to reconnect the Homeland (Mdantsane) to its pre-colonial roots in East London by way of re-introducing the memory of rituals to reskill the community to allow for self-subsistence in the landscape they now inhabit.



Figure 8: A call for the revivng of tradion as a form of reconnecting bodied who have been displaced

Chapter 7 African Vitalogy

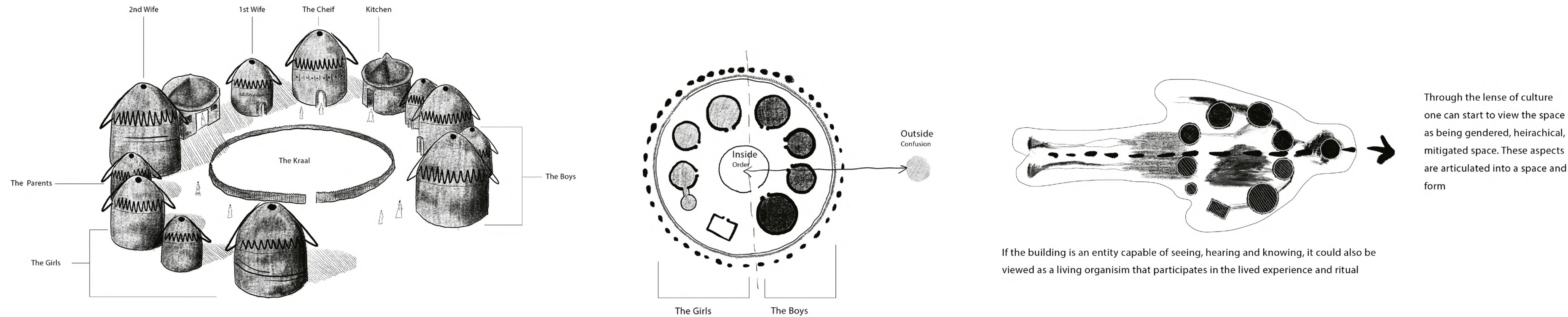


Figure 9: Drawing connections between indeginous architecture it’s gendered systems and the human self

African Vitalogy, in its simplistic interpretation, aims to define and give meaning to human existence and experience as a form of expressing the connection we inherently possess as forces of life and being. This interpretation values the pursuit of the human self gaining meaning in their journey to becoming a complete and self-sustaining being through “moments of meaning” that one might acquire through their various interactions with life forces (Agada, 2020).

The life forces animate themselves in souls and spaces, both intangible and tangible, placing said humans in a context that reaches far beyond the current frame in which they exist and into a narrative of the greater universe through this interaction

(Agada, 2020). On this journey, arguments of meaningfulness and meaninglessness are interjected. If one is not ultimately in control of their existence within the plane they’ve been situated, what meaning can be given to human life through the naturalistic point of view? An individual cannot be viewed as “absolute”; it is thought that one merely surrenders their existence to the systems of the universe in ignorance of the forces guiding them. This naturalistic and pessimistic view of the Western vital force theory fails to recognise the capacity of the human self and the nature in which we exist. Through the African people’s vantage point of vital forces, it is impossible to separate the physical being from the life forces or “vital energies” (cite) sustaining their existence. It is therefore understood through the Bantu interpreta-

tion that vital forces, whether tangible or not, will always possess within itself a force that is not separable from itself and will thus always exist perpetually in a dynamic relationship (Agada, 2020).

The aforementioned concepts of “being” and “forces” are what seed the foundation of complementarianism in the traditional Bantu value system and worldview (Agada, 2020). It is in this perspective that relations between beings and forces are outlined and guided by the understanding of the multidimensional dynamic that exists between being and forces, our weaknesses and strengths, can be understood through the same vantage point as factors that make beings different from each

other. However, this notion also highlights how in our differences we complement one another as parts of a whole. Therefore, we could understand the Bantu ontological worldview as an interpretation that aims to give meaning to the being by guiding the interactions we experience with different forces as a principle of reality. The vital force discussed plays the role of facilitator in the human self’s pursuit of agency as one tries to determine and create meaning in their environment through consciousness which is mediated by forces and vital energy and one’s ability to reflect on experience and draw meaning. Therefore, it could be understood that a vital force permeates through the human consciousness and formulates one’s capacity to rationalise and understand one’s approach to life and its systems and ultimately

one’s personality (Agada, 2020). “It stands to reason that a meaningful life will be one that maximises vital force in all aspects of a person’s life” (Agada, 2020).

The augmentation of human knowledge can be delineated into two spheres. The first sphere classifies knowledge as abstract (Nkemnkia, 2006). In this state, knowledge is not defined by emotion but is rather formed through structures that manifest inputs of ‘thought and reason’. The second sphere of knowledge is the experimental form (Nkemnkia, 2004). In this state, knowledge is something that can only be acquired through the lived experience, where what is understood to be true can only be understood as that through the experience of that knowledge itself. In the state of experimental form, one acquires knowledge through their perception of experiences, meaning what they see may become a memory that translates into acquired knowledge (Nkemnkia, 2004).

In African Vitalogy (Nkemnkia, 2004), it is argued that knowledge cannot truly be separated into the spheres of scientific reasoning seen in the abstract form and perception in the experimental form. It argues that knowledge can be viewed as a type of scientific or abstract form of knowledge (Nkemnkia, 2004). It would be limited to not acknowledge the importance of knowledge which represents objects that may only be perceived through acts held true in the reception of sight, hearing and understanding - all houses within the human container and the existence of its soul (Nkemnkia, 2004).

“In fact, the creativity of the human mind belongs to the activity of the Soul, which also gives sense and value to everything, thereby conferring immortality to the same creation” (Nkemnkia, 2004).

Nkemnkia argues that because one has the ability to interpret knowledge as both something that can be found through thought and reason but simultaneously

something that can be learned through lived experiences embodied through the senses of “to see, to hear, to understand” (Nkemnkia, 2006), it can be interpreted that the human mind processes the object of self through its place in the world. Through this guise, multiple modes of knowledge can be interpreted as true as they carry data or information transmitted between beings, objects and over multiple timelines. This information can be seen in modes such as myths, folklore, proverbs, tales and legends (Nkemnkia, 2004) which in the contemporary age may be perceived as solely a product of the human self’s creativity, holding no weight of truth. Though formalised historical documentation is believed widely by the global West as the only means by which narratives from the past can be retold, the interpretation of the myth acts as a document in itself as it is a product of experiential data. The ability of the human mind and consciousness to interoperate these myths proves the human mind’s capacity to conceive and understand the spiritual connections one can form between different worlds and the greater cosmos (Maape, 2016). It’s through these thought processes that Nkemnkia (2006) suggests that the human mind’s role in the life system is to perceive the knowledge it exists within, to experience the knowledge, to create and contribute new ways of understanding and to cultivate bonds within the cosmos. These functions are understood as both the past represented in the ancestors and the future represented in God who is persisting, thereby formulating another liminal space.

Title: *Abakwetha walking through a forest during their Ulwaluko.*

Author : Dingeman

Date : July 2012

The depiction of the procession of amakrwala (newly emerged men) during their procession back home

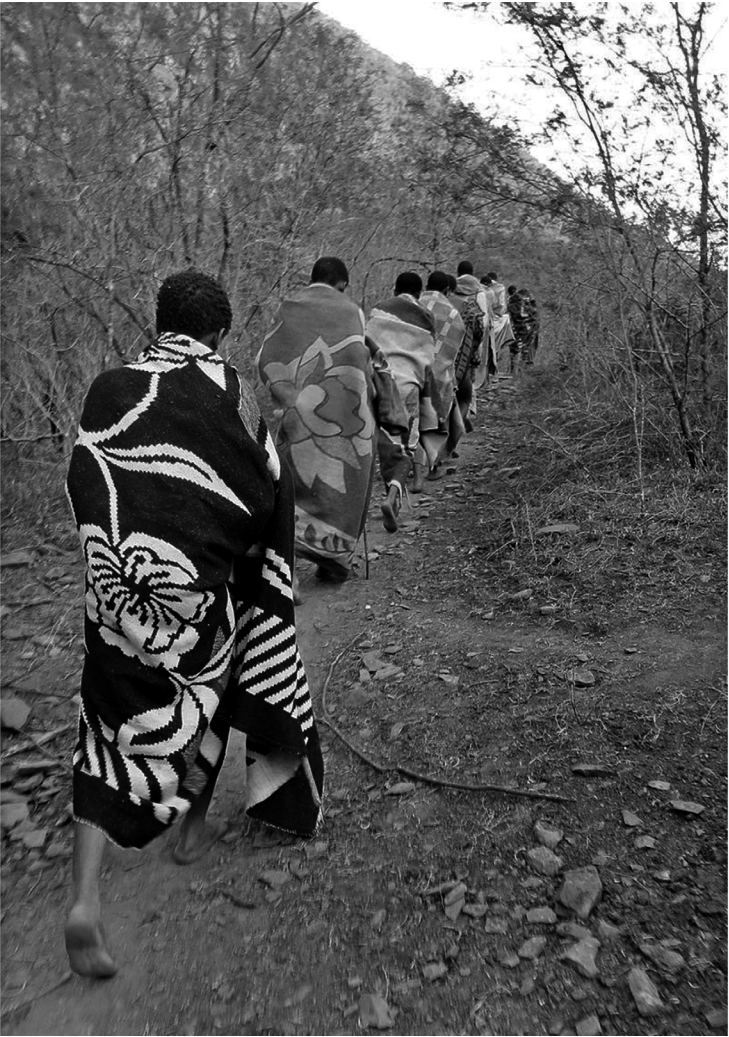


Figure 10: Initiation as a performance of vitality

Chapter 8 Animating Ritual

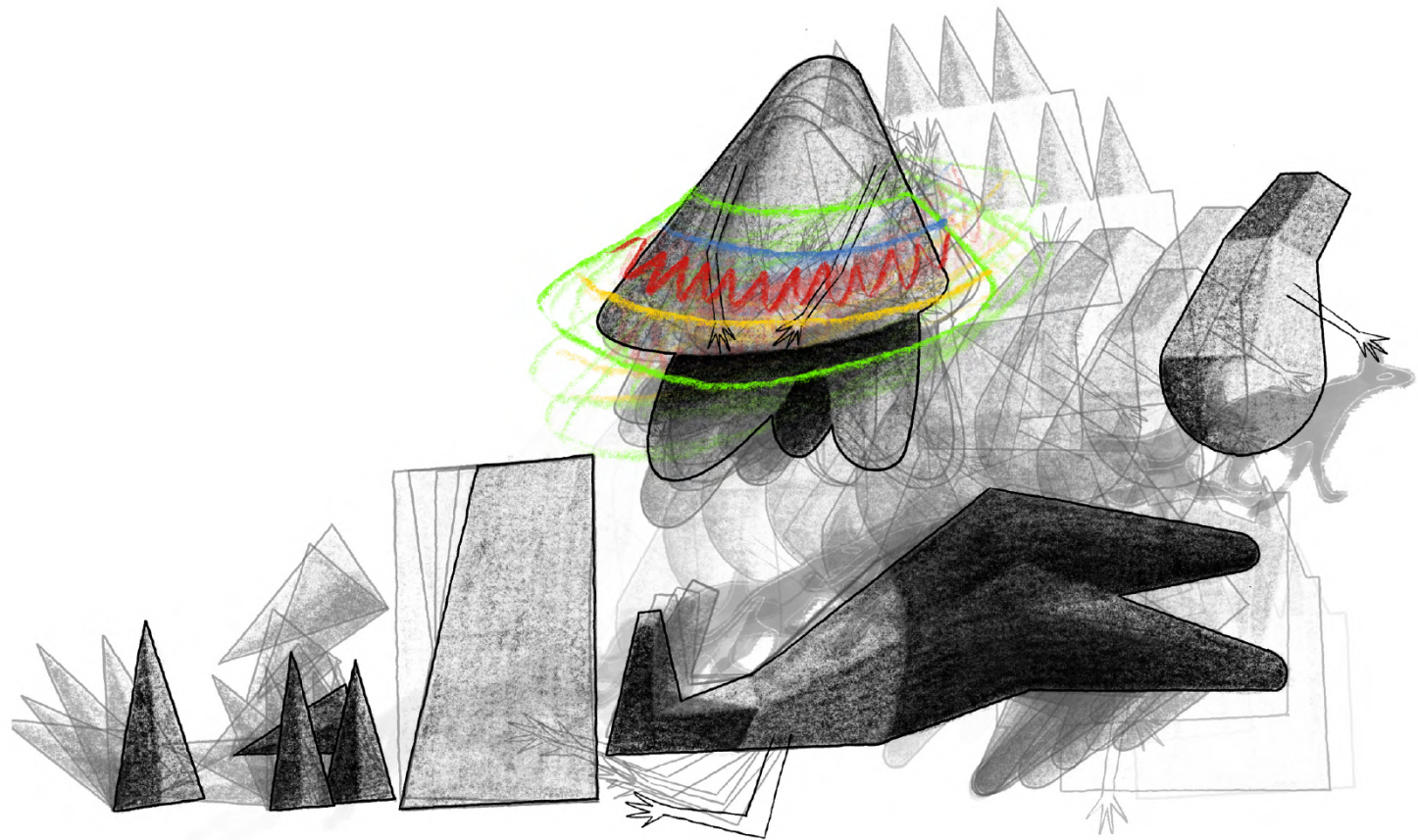
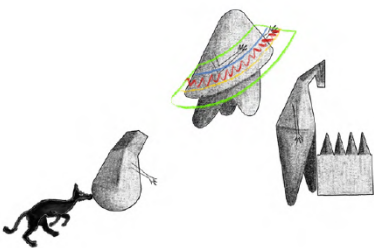


Figure 11: The happenings of celebration in rites

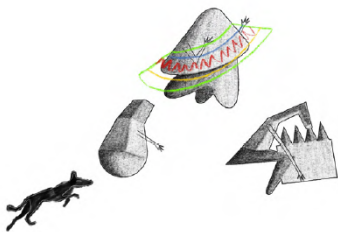
The Scene

The scene animated explores the nature of ritual enacted by the bodies who carry out its practice. The animation envisions the chaos entrenched in the celebration of ritual where the characters or each individual adds to a narrative of space. The three figures represent key figures one would encounter during an event. These include the energetic children who never seem to settle down, the aunts who dance outside in the tent while music vibrates through the space, and the uncle trying to lock away the alcohol in the transportable fridge before it all goes missing.

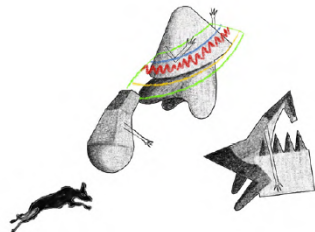
Link to animation: <https://indd.adobe.com/view/c75dda21-de5d-4468-afe2-de3688a9b3bb>



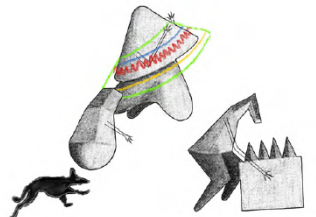
Frame 1.1



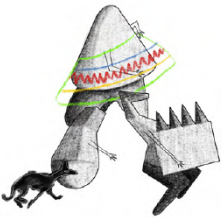
Frame 1.2



Frame 1.3



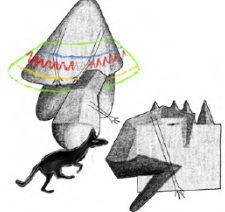
Frame 1.4



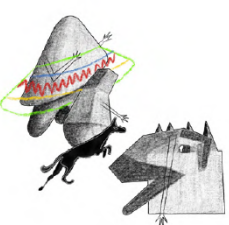
Frame 1.5



Frame 1.6



Frame 1.7



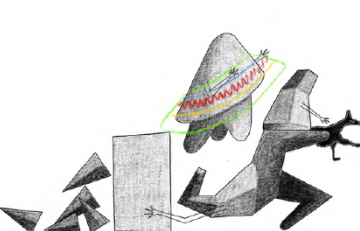
Frame 1.8



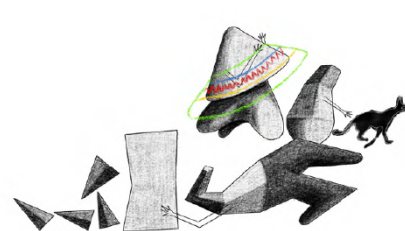
Frame 1.9



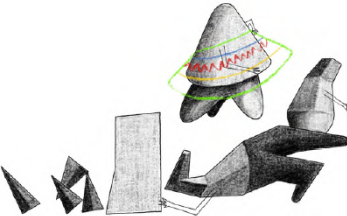
Frame 1.10



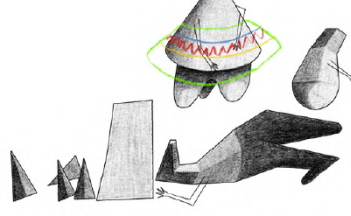
Frame 1.11



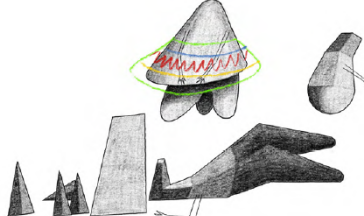
Frame 1.12



Frame 1.13



Frame 1.14



Frame 1.15

Figure 10:

Figure 12: The animation frames

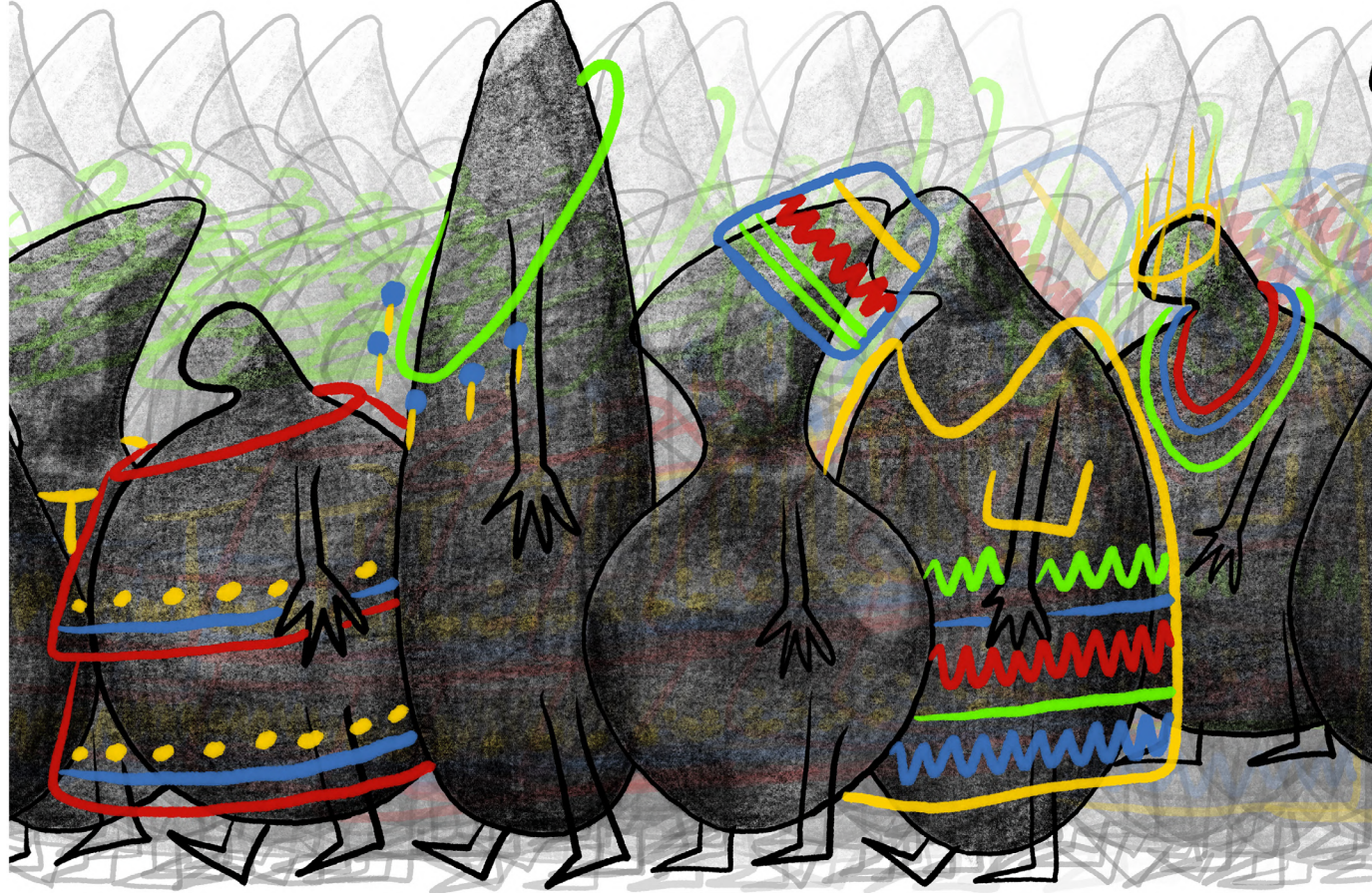


Figure 13: The procession of beings arriving to the prepared site of ritual

The Scene

The scene animates the entity that participates in the migration of bodies between spaces during a ritual as part of the procession. the garments these entities wear are a reflection of the connection to their culture, and status and a representation of the individual's personality.

Link to animation: <https://lndd.adobe.com/view/c1dad492-3a34-4675-9c57-b6d218daf3ae>



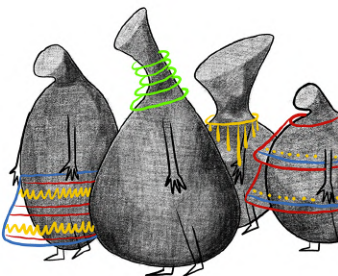
Frame 2.1



Frame 2.2



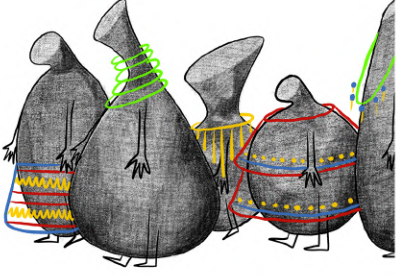
Frame 2.3



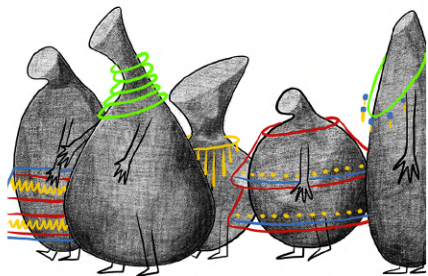
Frame 2.4



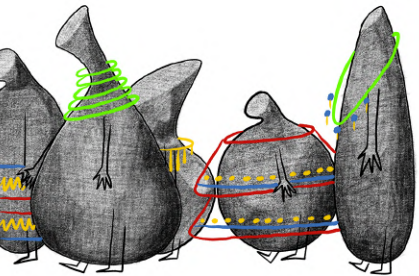
Frame 2.5



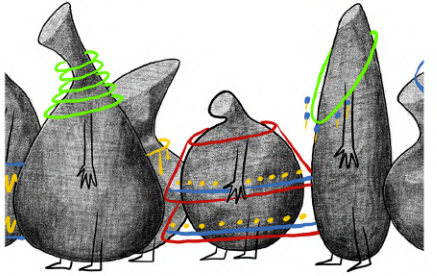
Frame 2.6



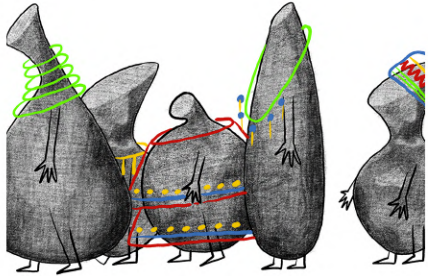
Frame 2.7



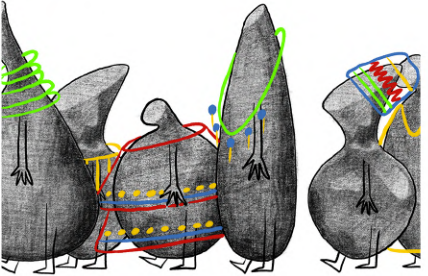
Frame 2.8



Frame 2.9



Frame 2.10



Frame 2.11

Figure 14: The animation frames

Chapter 9 Environmental Sustainability and African Indigenous Knowledge

When confronting various approaches to environmental sustainability, one will have to understand it through the guise of the opposing party’s worldview. Through the use of African indigenous knowledge systems, an understanding of the African worldview can be recognised as the manner in which knowledge is acquired and understood as well as its myths that contain within them the practices of their ancestral past and values. By regarding these relationships, an understanding of the systems upholding the environment can be achieved. African culture as it is understood has forged its society in order to interpret, relate and assimilate with nature and its life systems to sustain and nourish its society. The culture does not aim to assert its dominance over the landscape but rather it wishes for sustainability to exist within it. (Alokwu, 2015)

The aforementioned traditional knowledge is sustained in a non-transcribed culture through its myths, tales of caution and songs. This method of knowledge and understanding, however, does not present itself as an object that could be easily translated through scientific methods, as the African worldview perceives all things as alive, carrying within them their own unique traits, characteristics and soul. Inanimate objects in the landscape, such as the sky, the wind, the plains and rivers, are all recognised as living entities functioning through the direction of the cosmos and their creator who grants them energy to perform within a life system. Therefore, one cannot discern their will onto the landscape but can rather learn how to communicate with these entities to gain a better understanding and knowledge on how to work with them to achieve a sustainable state of being (Alokwu, 2015).

Alokwu (2015) argues that indigenous knowledge is as valid as other modes of understanding, but has been cast aside in favour of Western modes: “Western scientific methodology is merely one way, and not the only way, to acquire knowledge and provide solutions to humanity’s multifarious problems. Unfortunately,

the superiority of the scientific method has gained more acceptance as the dominant knowledge system at the negligence of traditional knowledge” (Alokwu, 2015). The immeasurable knowledge of the African worldview has led to the exclusion of its understanding in the environmental studies of Western science (Alokwu, 2015). This has led to the misguided perception that Western science has a superiority over traditional indigenous knowledge. This perception fails to acknowledge the existence of knowledge that cannot be obtained through processes of the human mind’s rationality, which could change further down the timeline with the revelation of new pieces of knowledge. In this state, Western science’s monopoly threatens the systematic functioning of the multitudinal environments, where one truth enacted through policies may not be applicable to the next scenario, therefore leading to a failure of the environmental system in which this globalised, singular worldview has been applied. The solution to tackling the continued degeneration of environmental sustainability has been presented in the uptake of pluralism, where inputs from different approaches and types of knowledge are encouraged to solve environmental sustainability (Alokwu, 2015). The aforementioned solution can be understood as a “synergistic approach” (Alokwu, 2015). With a focus on developing new ethics applications based on indigenous knowledge.

The manner in which one interacts with the world is affected by the worldview one has adopted, guiding one’s values and understandings. This can also be translated into the manner in which we understand ourselves and the beings with whom we surround ourselves. Through the effects of British colonialism on Africa, Western worldviews have been adopted in most regions of the continent. This Western worldview in its nature can be described as mechanical, where everything must be measured, understood and compartmentalised to serve the needs of the human self. This is highly contradictory to the African worldview of the cosmos, where tactile and invisible elements are understood to be interlinked and reanimated in nature - there is no clear threshold stipulating where the body and matter end and

the spiritual and temporal begin. It is at this point of conflict where the failure of economic systems takes place, as the Western perception of using nature solely as a tool for exploitation leads to its depletion, and its requirement of nurturing is dismissed as a peripheral component in its existence.

“The African notion of boundness of all things fosters a sense of care for all of creation” (Alokwu, 2015). The sense of “boundness” fostered in the African worldview is one that extends to all parts of human self-existence. It is understood as a force that guides the development of the human mind’s behaviour in all of its life-system milestones from birth to death. It is in this boundness that ritual is formed where ritual functions as a tool to assist the human self in navigating a contingent landscape. This is contradicted by Western cosmology which views the life system as two distinct entities - the material and the spiritual. In this understanding of cosmology, life is a stagnant object impervious to change which lies as the fundamental cause of the breakdown of economic, social and political systems in the African continent. This movement from stagnation to change is represented in the field of architecture where ideas of architecture are derived from structures that were constructed as a monument to self as opposed to acknowledging the nature of life (Alokwu, 2015).

The architecture required is not one that is impervious to change, aiming to remain as it was when it was first erected, but rather one that adopts indigenous knowledge that requires all living beings to be affected by the boundlessness (Alokwu, 2015) of life, inviting change and growth to nurture the continuation of life. It is this understanding that everything is interlinked and alive in the greater schema that modernist practices of architecture can be questioned. Does the modernist system of constructing a building to solely serve the self in the present acknowledge a contingent environment that would require that buildings’ existence be reformed or erased in twenty years? The environmental consequences of the modernist practice of architecture, including environmental failure, are founded on the principles of

serving the self in the present and failing to foresee the needs of the community in the future. This could be attributed to the dichotomised cosmology of the West where the body and spirit are separated, failing to understand that the body is limited and the spirit everlasting (Alokwu, 2015).

In the African worldview, values are upheld through the use of myths, tales, prophecies, taboos, signs and symbols. It is through the spread and prescription of these taboos that consequences for the mistreatment of the environment are developed. Before this narrative was interrupted by colonial powers, morals were instilled through ethics founded in myths and taboos. If one were to deviate from these norms that have been established, they were taught that punishment would be dealt with by a higher being: punishments could be handed down from deities for acts such as stealing, homicide and incest. Thus, moral codes tied to the religious, economic, social and political spheres were practised to place restrictions and guide towards sustainable functioning (Alokwu, 2015). The implications of these moral codes were created to nurture and socialise society to safeguard and ensure the continuity of a harmonious life system.

The Concept: Greeting

The African landscape in all its various iterations can be interpreted as a problematised space. What it means to remake, reappropriate and reconfigure a new world that acknowledges its colonial past and considers its indigenous knowledge as valid is constantly negotiated to reform the colonised being. Despite the lack of monetary contributions, these problematised contexts continue to put effort into the reorganisation of their identities while solidifying the role of the autonomous community in a post-colonisation and neo-liberal country. This is achieved through imprinting on scared landscapes, remaking what was lost through repression and adapting function within the existing spaces (Shizha, 2013).

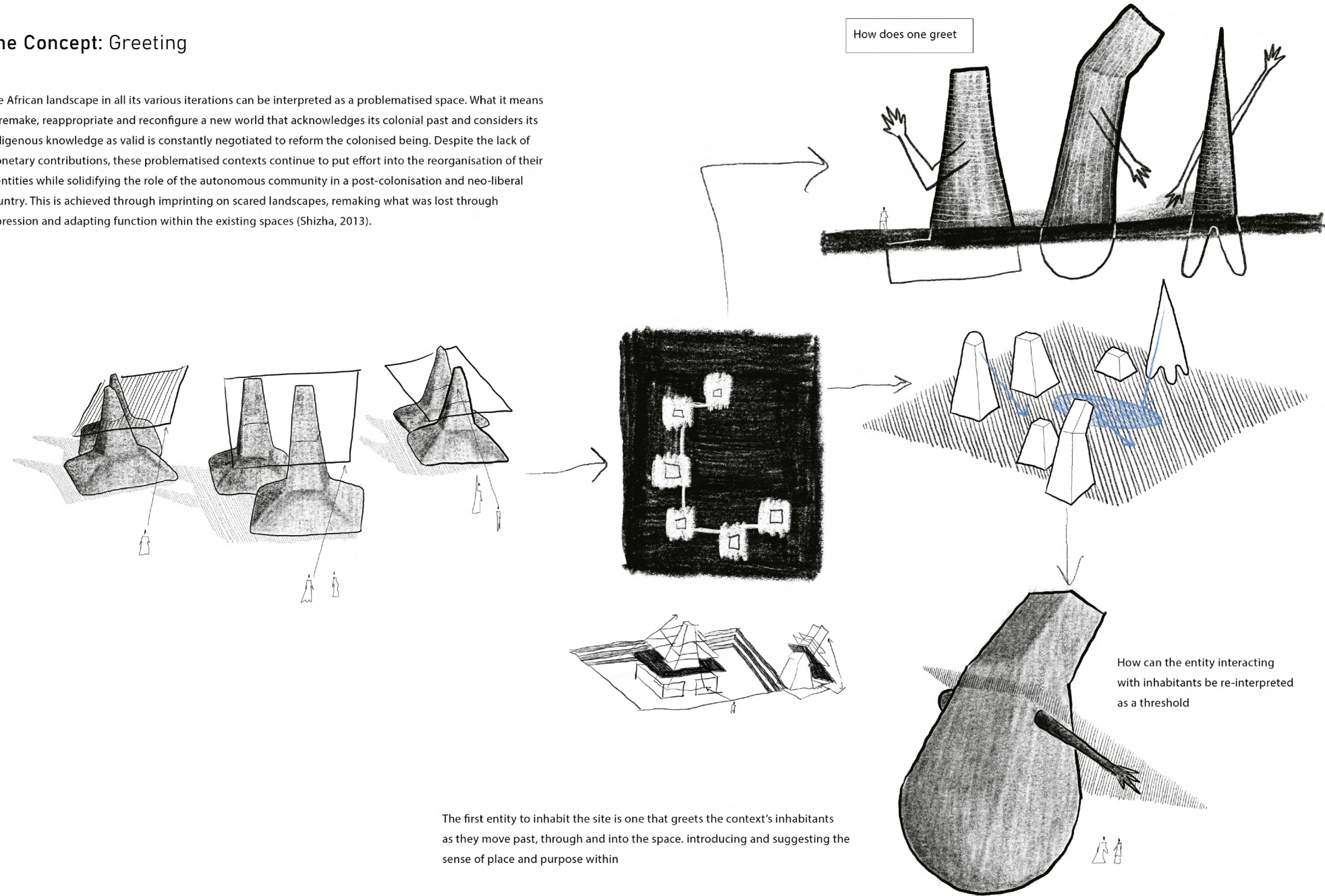


Figure 15: Imaging the building as a being and how it would participate in the processes of tradition through the gesture of greeting

The Concept: Introspection

The Facility is envisioned as a response to the site's desire to reconnect ritual to space. It takes the form of a Traditional Council Centre that aims to bridge the pre-colonial past to the neo-liberal site. Re-homing and defining ritual and cultural practices in the site is achievable by cementing the role of traditional heads in the community through the creation of formalised spaces for the practice of the culture and its rituals. By viewing the colonial past as a narrative of imposed modernity and the pre-colonial social order as a narrative of tradition, the building aims to mitigate the consequence of the two narratives existing in the same space

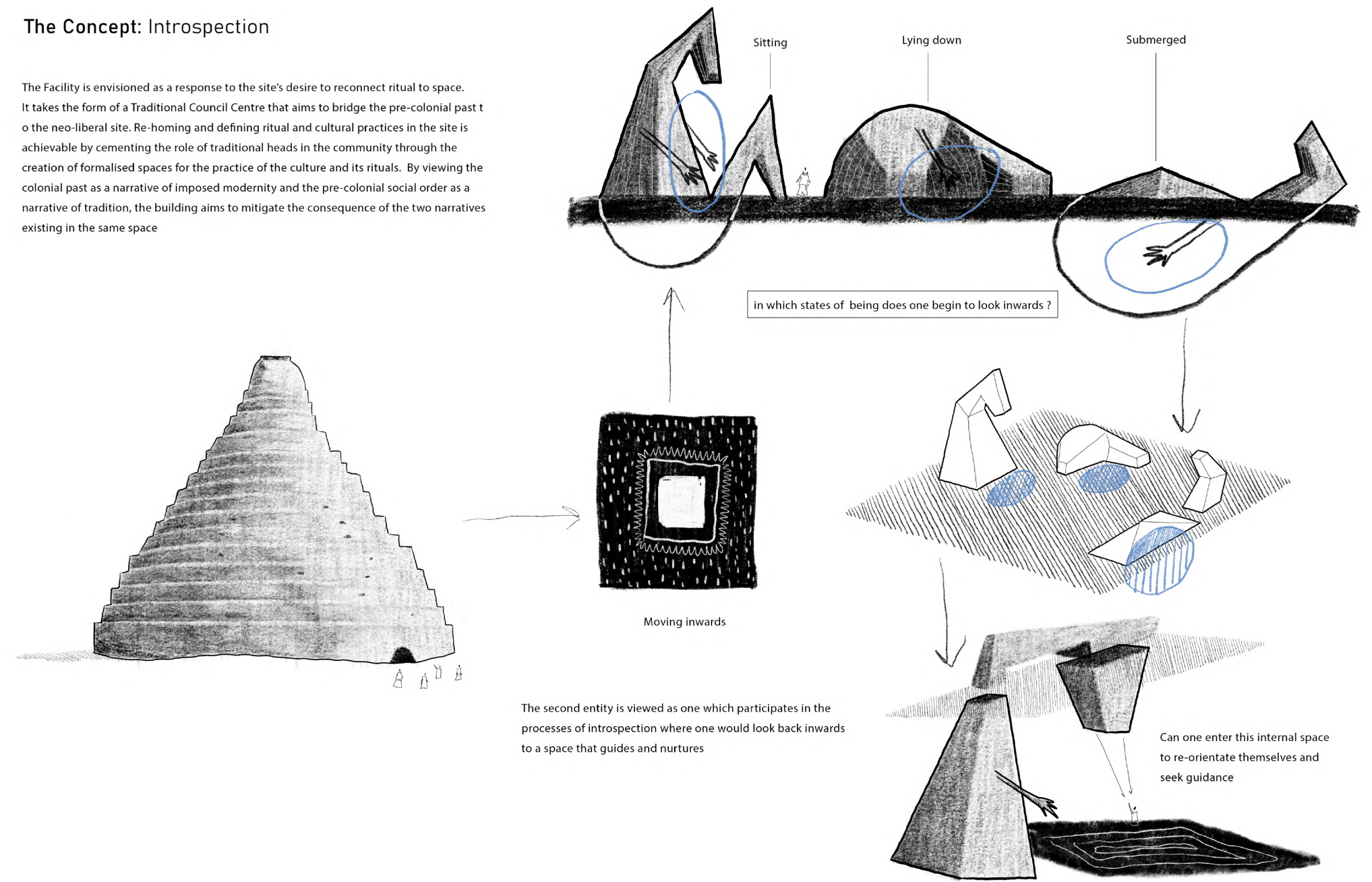


Figure 16: Imaging the building as a being and how it would participate in the processes of tradition through the gesture of introspection

The Concept: Celebration

Within the site some rituals are still practiced include Imbeleko - where a new-born child is introduced to their ancestors and become acknowledged as their kin - and uLwaluko - boys who come of age are circumcised as their transition from boyhood to manhood under the guidance of the elders and ancestors. This is done as a means of educating and instilling healthy social and leadership ideals the participants will have to practice in order to prepare them to become custodians of the culture and contributors to society. As it stands, the rituals being practiced occur in decentralised and informal spaces, such as the individuals house or a rented community hall, disassociating the experience of the ritual and its spiritual genesis from the practice.

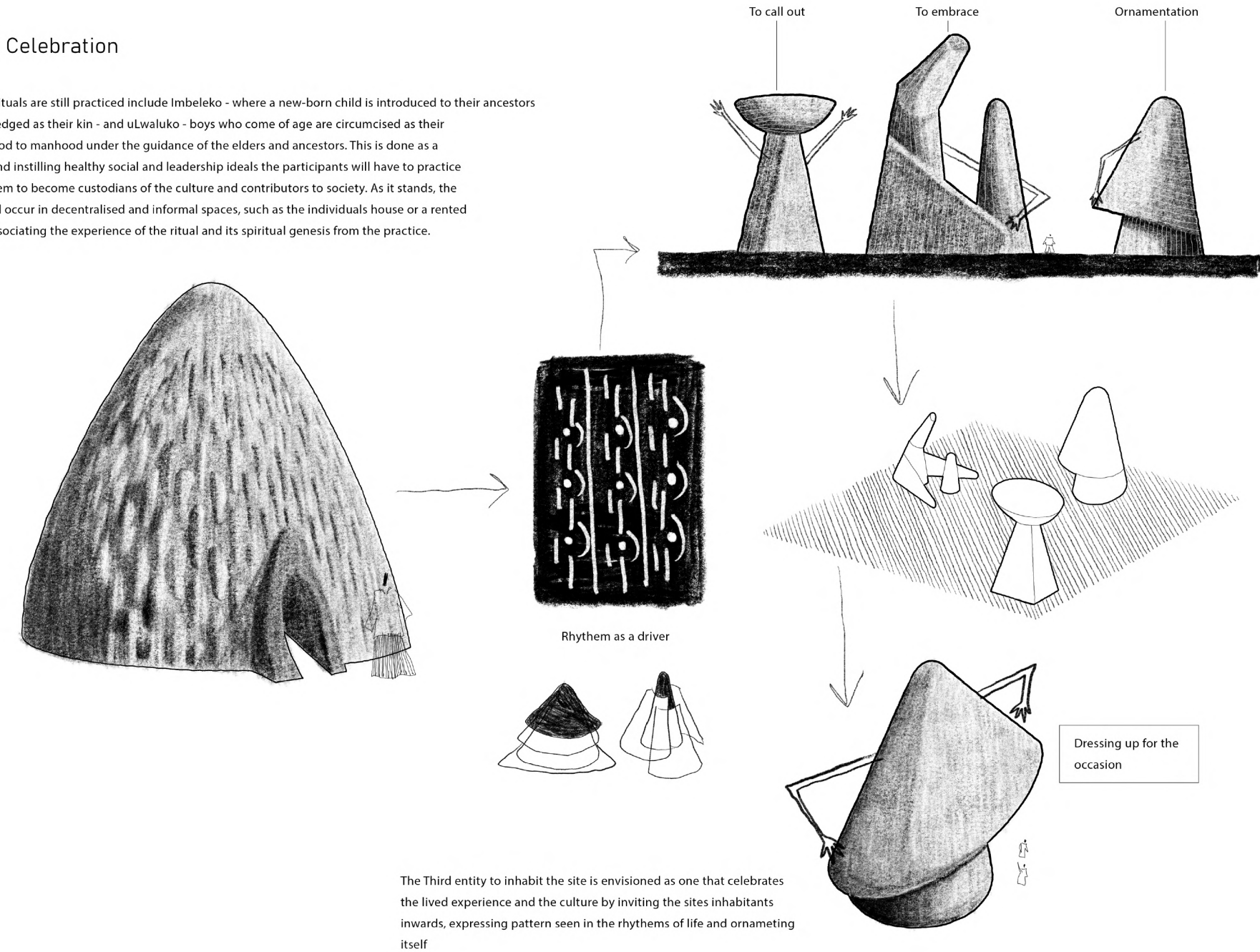


Figure 17: Imaging the building as a being and how it would participate in the processes of tradition through the movement of celebration

The Concept: Site

The site as it enacting its role in the landscape can be viewed as a part of history that remains stagnant prompting conversation how lost cultural and ritual spaces can be relived through spatial interventions to access the memory and allow one to immerse oneself in the lived memory The memory being reacted in the proposed space is one where tradition is brought to life to re-interact with its context

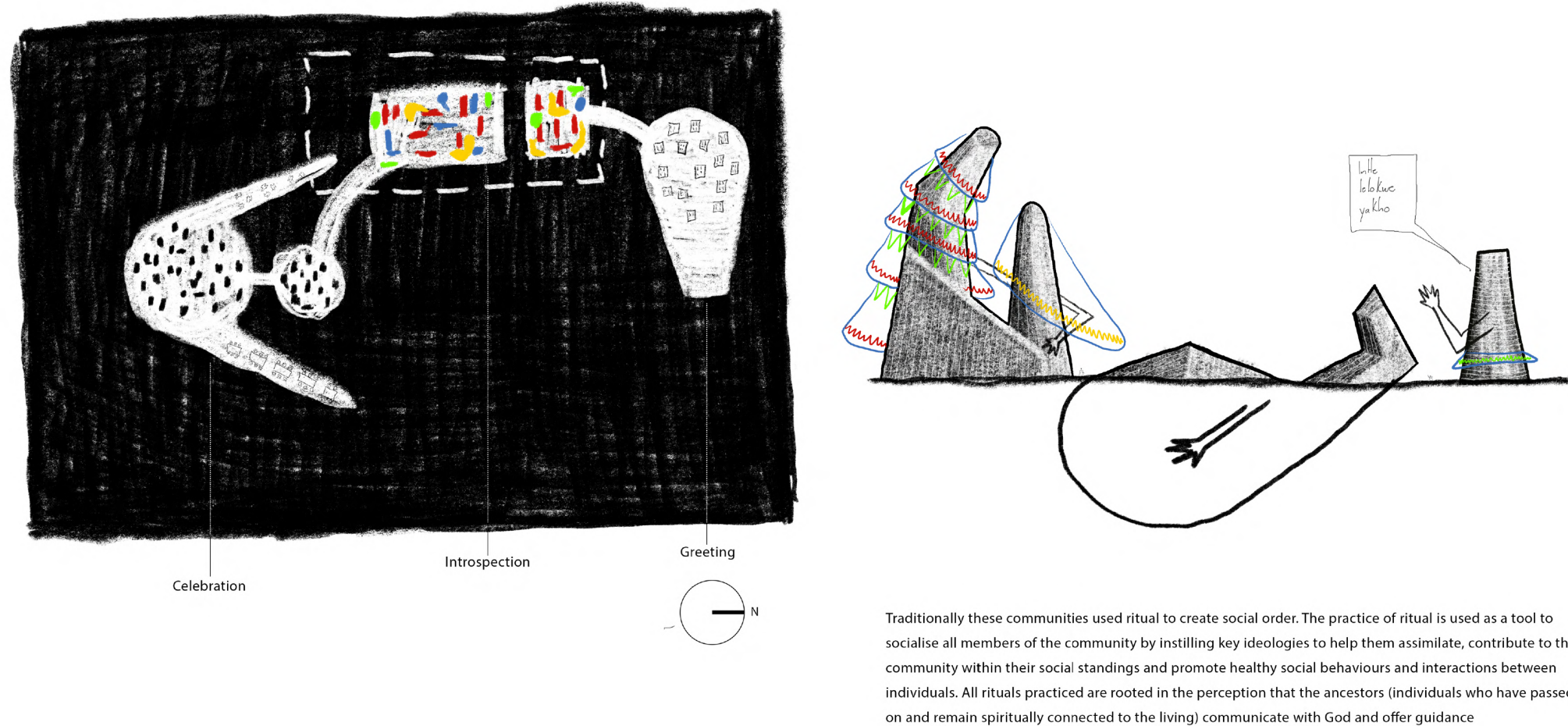


Figure 18: Visualising how the coming together of these being could result in spaces that individuals could move into and experience

Chapter 10

The organisation of the Xhosa people

During colonisation, the African body was violated and commodified, and, as a result of this force, African bodies migrated towards the city to access means to support their families (Liwani, 2021). Through this process, these individuals were separated from their rituals and ethics in nature. In modern times, we still see the stark separation of African bodies from the life systems they need to live sustainably and fruitfully.

The organisation of the Xhosa people is formulated through clans which comprise several groups, each led by a chief who is appointed through their maternal lineage. Historically, however, women were not permitted the rights of political authority as society functioned as a patriarchal organisation. The worldview of the Xhosa people is similar to that of the Nguni people. Their worldview focuses on the lore of ‘Animism’ (Liwani, 2021) which recognises the presence of ancestral figures and higher beings in the cosmos who rule over all life’s systems. Contingencies such as illness (physical and mental) and financial, social and environmental misfortune are attributed to the existence and workings of spiritual beings who express their displacement and sadness through these events. Lessons of the existence of these higher beings are instilled as early as childhood through the means of myths, taboos and songs which narrate the actions and precautions one must perform to not anger or disturb these spirits as well as how to please these spirits. Some of these beings include; the tokoloshe which is widely recognised as a hairy, goblin-like creature who seeks to attack at night, impundulu which is identified as a large bird who is capable of controlling lightning, and the aBantu bomlambo, which is perceived as human-like beings believed to reside in bodies of water such as rivers and seas.

Umeluko’s practice (initiation into manhood) and rites differ between the various groups and clans, with modernisation prompting many to abandon the practice. The custom was formulated as a tool to guide boys to manhood by further instilling principles they would require to lead a healthy household, essentially ensuring that

they are adequately socialised in order to contribute to the community. Intonjane (initiation into womanhood) is a custom largely practised in the Eastern Cape. This rite of passage is initiated when a girl has her first period. The ritual acts as a symbolic representation of the girl’s sexual maturity and ability to bear children. Through this ritual, girls are given tools to guide their behaviour as to what is socially accepted in the Xhosa tradition. This includes suggestions such as avoiding premarital sex. Imbeleko (initiation into the family) is a custom that acts to officially adopt a newborn child into the family and serves as the child’s introduction to their ancestors, where the ancestors are asked to protect and guide the child. During the ritual, the family is expected to slaughter a goat as an acknowledgement of the newborn being their own individual and bearing no sin (Liwani, 2021). The aforementioned rites of passage and rituals serve as tools to socialise the community. They act as performative representations of vitality.

Despite the seeped histories of colonialism on the site of Mdantsane, the cultural institutions of rites, rituals and customs still operate on the site, though in a selective and dispersed manner. The persisting existence of these rites, rituals and customs in itself acts as a form of protest against the contemporary, colonial systems of the site.

Chapter 11

Interview 1: The Exsisting Framework for Xhosa Communities

Mdantsane is faced with many issues related to tradition. There is no space provided for the rituals to operate, and there is no control in the organisation and prescribed steps taken prior to the initiation of rituals. This has led to the systems of tradition,

rites, rituals and customs losing their footing in the organisation of its people, as accidents and derived illnesses from the inaccurately performed rituals are experienced and demonised by its people. Effects of this occurrence can be seen in rituals losing their meaning and being abandoned by some groups who argue it is no longer valid with the modernisation of times. The roots of these issues can be traced from homeland townships, such as Mdantsane, which no longer have guiding, traditional, political figures. These figures are tasked with setting and maintaining the standard of the community. They act as a place of reference for those in need of guidance with matters pertaining to ritual and the contingency of life’s systems. These figures essentially instil lessons of Ubuntu Bakho - “This is where we come from; this is our history” - re-establishing traditional methods of socialisation to encourage the sustainable and fruitful growth of the community. Without such figures, the community risks dysfunction in the face of forceful modernisation (Xhegwana, 2023).

Mdantsane’s Izinduna (traditional heads) are appointed by virtue of practising the Xhosa traditions and, therefore, are permitted to become its custodians, operating within a specific clan. They oversee that rituals are carried out accurately. When specific rituals need to be organised and performed, Izinduna is approached, as specific protocols must be followed for the practice to be successful. Izinduna report to Izinkosi (chiefs) who are located in villages like Bisho at the institution of the “House of Leaders” (Xhegwana, 2023). The issue presented in the framework of this study is the severed link between the family heads who initiate the need for a ritual and Izinduna who organise and carry out the ritual. It is within this gap that we see the failure of certain traditional systems.

Chapter 12

Interview 2: The difference between rite, ritual and tradition

The organisation of the Xhosa culture can be seen taking forms in three distinct acts. These include rites, rituals and traditions. The maintenance of these acts solidifies the existence of both the culture and its people. The first act discussed is ritual (Isithethe). This act is viewed as a solution to a problem that may have arisen, be it in the physical or spiritual realm (Khetani, 2023).

Ritual in the present time is often approached as something negative and to be avoided based on how it is depicted in media and often unfortunate occurrences that are spread throughout a community. However, the ritual has two sides to it. Ritual in their earliest forms was seen as something to help tie a community together and bring about prosperity in their existence. This was to be facilitated by a traditional healer (Isangoma) who acts as a link between the physical human realm and the spiritual realm of the greater cosmos (Khetani, 2023). When practising ritual, the use of space is highly organised and individualised, dependent on the ritual and its medicines (umuthi). Such organisation is essential as cross-contamination between forces (umoya) is to be avoided to prevent rendering the space and the medicines produced unusable, as the bad spirit will always overcome the good removing its intended essence (Khetani, 2023). The arrangement of the space described above is known as Induma. Rituals in any form will present themselves through water, fire or wind. These are the healing elements which are used as weapons when battling a problem, as a communicator when seeking to heal is reminded of connections to the greater cosmos (Khetani, 2023).

The second act discussed is rites. These are afforded to those who have reached a certain age. Ukwelukha is a coming-of-age rite where boys are initiated into manhood, achieved certain social standing or crossed specific key life moments such as birth and death. Imbelekho is the rite of welcoming newborn children into a family and introducing them to their ancestors (Khetani, 2023). These rites are commonly changed not for the purpose of their practice but for how the process itself is carried out. These changes can be seen in the two rites mentioned above, Imbeleko and Ukwelukha (Khetani, 2023). For example, Imbeleko has assumed more meaning than initially given and gained practice of a rite (Khetani, 2023). It was seen as a practice to provide mothers who had given birth to a child a material to beleka (carry a child on one's back or chest). Beleka was obtained by slaughtering a lamb or goat and keeping its derma including the legs as a material to carry the child (Khetani, 2023). As time went on this practice was seen to have the value of connecting a child to their ancestors, thus in today's time, individuals long after birth still have the rite of Imbeleko carried out for themselves as they seek connection and guidance from their ancestors all while keeping true the materials and processes which had formed the practice of slaughtering a lamb or goat (Khetani, 2023). In the case of ukwelukha, its function as a rite of passage has been maintained but specific dealings that were once looked down upon and disapproved have been allowed in order to maintain the practice of the rite. These include the initiates visiting a hospital before entering the bush to monitor their health throughout the process and reduce the death of initiates (Khetani, 2023).

The third act of practice is Isikho (tradition). Traditions are viewed as unchangeable and encompass different practices that are required in order to maintain a Xhosa people (Khetani, 2023). This is upheld through the following of rites, rituals and social norms. Tradition is viewed as a tool to help create order in society and socialise individuals within the community (Khetani, 2023). It is believed that birth-specific spirits merge themselves with your being and instil a spirit of growth or destruc-

tion, among other options. This in turn guides your personality and your purpose in life all while instilling the manner in which we perceive right from wrong (Khetani, 2023). This so-called list of "dos and don'ts" is further reiterated and upheld through superstitions and myths taught to us as we grow up, thus aligning the socially acceptable manner in which we conduct ourselves in a Xhosa community (Khetani, 2023).

Chapter 13 Critical Regionalism

Indigenous Bantu architecture is often perceived through a conditioned viewpoint of the West, where the architecture is reduced to its aesthetics and discussed in terms which aim to compare and define the architecture's contribution towards a Western form of functionality which perpetuates a primitive, archaic narrative which often fails to recognise the processes, connections and thoughts which are all underpinned in the development of the Bantu people's architecture (Frescura, 2014). To further understand the limits in this perception of the development in African architecture, it is key to question the processes leading to the creation of the product (Frescura, 2014).

In the development of African architecture, what remains valued is the being existing within a space, manifesting itself as an architecture that exists within the balance of nature, life and its dynamic states of being. As a result, the architecture witnessed is one which is highly representative of its environment with all resulting precedents of aesthetics and function derived from its life systems and cycles (Frescura, 2014). This as a concept has led to a stylistic interpretation of the environment defined by its changes and availability of materials which by extension led to the definition of an African architecture stereotype which has been connected to the definition of a culture and its identity (Frescura, 2014). When discussing African

architecture in terms of function, it has always been viewed as a rational process attributed to a region's political, social, environmental and spiritual conditions leading to its fluctuating stylistic interpretation as factors may vary between each generation (Frescura, 2014). This dynamic approach to architecture can be seen in various groups of the Bantu peoples such as the Khoi-San. The Khoi-San pragmatic approach to architecture is reflected in an environment requiring a transitory lifestyle to successfully sustain life. The architecture developed is one that favours mobility while highlighting awareness of life systems and forces. This contradicts the West's engrossment in the permanence of being, which favours categorising the physical and intangible. this limits the duality of life and future possibilities to create new meaning and moments which allow us to reflect facilitating the growth of an individual or society (Frescura, 2014).

It is appropriate to view this African architecture as one that centres the material and its properties, influencing the form, construction techniques and ultimately its aesthetics (Frescura, 2014). It is these processes of creation that have been incorporated into the development of the cultural stereotype that is often used as an identifier of place and people defining a region. As a continuation of the concept of African architecture existing as a process, it is seen to permeate into the functioning of the society to uphold the ideals of their cultural identity (Frescura, 2014). The construction of architecture can be viewed as something that extends beyond the simplistic provision of shelter, as in its purest form it operates as a tool to help socialise and organise a community (Frescura, 2014). The act of construction becomes representative of the African ontological ideals of complementarianism and communitarianism as the emphasis is placed on an individual contribution to the functioning of the greater whole. It is through the facilitation of this practice that individuals can experience a sense of meaningfulness in their being and have their social interactions conform to the communities' norms and standards (Frescura, 2014).

The concepts and processes envisioned in African regional architecture, however, have seen a steep decrease in its practice from the beginning of the industrial revolution which introduced the use of standardised materials, leading to a homogenised approach to architecture and its construction applications (Agyekum et al., 2020). A result of the shift away from an architecture that saw a need to play in the balance of nature to an architecture that has been synthesised is a catastrophic impact on nature and its systems. These results are evident in events such as climate change and global warming (Agyekum et al., 2020).

As a solution to confront these environmental issues, modern systems have been developed to ensure energy practices are kept in mind as it is now understood that resources that were once viewed to be inexhaustible have limits and the consumption, processing, use and waste of these materials not only consume energy in its present but have an indirect effect in the building lifetime's consumption (Agyekum et al., 2020). To mitigate this effect, the construction processes of buildings are now being scrutinised through certification processes such as The Leadership in Energy and Environment Design (LEED) and Green Star (Agyekum et al., 2020). Alternative approaches to resolving this issue have been seen in the existence of traditional architecture as they exist as true reflections of a balance in negotiating human needs and environmental needs. This is seen in its process that requires the use of material readily available in an environment determining how the building is formed based on the properties of the materials as a response to conditions such as climatic response, social impact and cultural significance, ultimately forging the ideals of the modern approach to defining a sustainable construction technique (Agyekum et al., 2020). This underscores the need to return to traditional construction methods which make use of the process's strategies, techniques and materiality (Agyekum et al., 2020). The formulated result need not be a reflection of vernacular architecture but rather an adaptation of local traditional techniques to reiterate modern practice into an adaptive sustainable practice with the objective of reducing the direct and

indirect embodied energy seen in construction. Some of the vernacular building materials that have been used in the African context include the following:

•**Bamboo** as a material has been acknowledged to be one of the most economical and environmentally friendly materials accessible in the market due to its attributed properties making it possible to produce the raw material in large volumes in short periods of time in subtropical conditions (Agyekum et al., 2020). The nature of the material also allows for ease in its transportation. The material's constitution results in a structural element that has low weight allotted to its hollow cylinder interior with high strength and high tensile ability in comparison to industrial alternatives such as steel structural elements (Agyekum et al., 2020).

- **Timber** in southern African architecture can be seen used as a material to form the structure of buildings. This could be attributed to its availability in any given environment and its durable properties such as its resistance to fire and thermal properties.

- **Earthen materials** in traditional construction include materials such as laterite, a reddish material derived from the residual laterite rock, in addition to water and other organic materials. Clay soil materials are often seen used in the sustainable construction of traditional architecture (Agyekum et al., 2020). The properties of the clay soil material are directly influenced by water content and the energy held within the water resulting in varied structural conditions of compressive strength when dried and varied textures and colours in its hydrated state (Agyekum et al., 2020). Commonly, clay soils are adapted into bricks which have sustainable benefits such as being locally produced and energy efficient in their direct processes of production and conduction and its indirect energy effect properties of thermal conductivity.

- **Grass:** is typically used for roof construction due to its high insulation properties and ability to withstand strong wind-generated forces (Agyekum et al., 2020). Culturally it was also seen to be used for its ability to allow the ventilation of space in instances when fires are created indoors for the purposes of warmth or cooking.
- **Adobe construction:** distinctively noticeable as an earth construction technique. The costs associated with this construction are generally understood to be low due to the nature of the materials sourced, the lack of processing required for its application and the minimalistic skill input required in its application making it easily accessible within any specific community and beneficial to the environment (Agyekum et al., 2020).

With the consideration of the climatic condition of Mdantsane positioned near the coastal lines of East London which experiences a sub-tropical humid climate, the envisioned techniques applied must provide adequate ventilation in any given space to mitigate high humidity levels and adobe construction to take into consideration the sites economic and social context allowing for more individuals to participate in the construction of the building while shifting the financial focus away from building materials and advanced technologies toward encouraging growth and self-subsistence within the community by means of skill development and new avenues for access to the economy.



Figure 19: Perspectiv

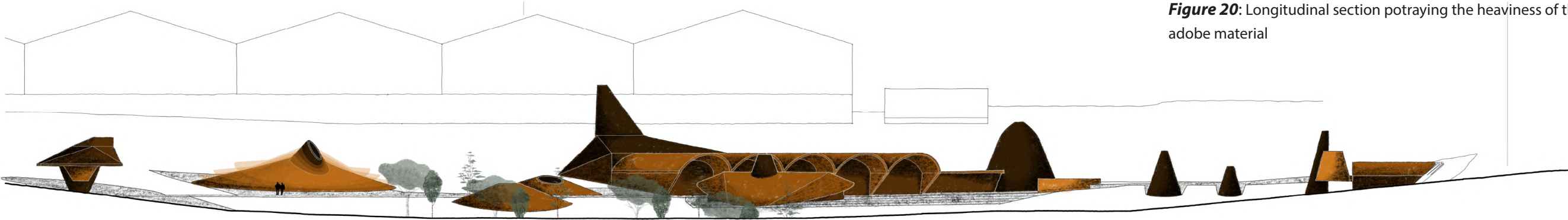


Figure 21: South Elevation visualising the building as being interacting with its landscape formed through pretruding forms

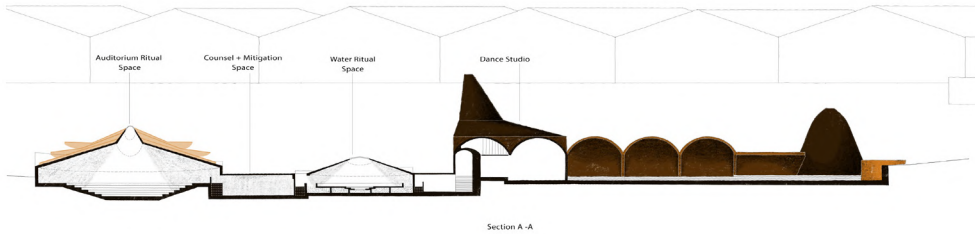


Figure 20: Longitudinal section potraying the heaviness of the earthen, grass and adobe material

Chapter 14 The building

It is at this interjection that the imagined solution is proposed. Having identified the gaps in indigenous knowledge and their potential to help socialise and create a sustainable society, the solution imagined is a building that exists to enhance and strengthen the functioning of traditional systems within the site, as their ability and desire to maintain rituals in a landscape that aimed to facilitate its demise proves the need to support its existence. The site proposed aims to act as a bridge between the two worlds of tradition and modernity, in order to acknowledge and institutionalise the traditional framework as a tool that is capable of facilitating the socialisation of the people of Mdantsane to better organise and sustainably grow. Focusing on the building bridging the gap between the traditional framework and modern framework, the building aims to modernise specific aspects of the traditional framework in order to improve its functionality in accordance with current standards. This would specifically focus on two failing factors which create an opportunity to further develop the Xhosa community of Mdantsane, as discussed in the following two paragraphs.

The first is the issue of tribal lands and how records of the lands and their developments are organised and stored. Traditionally, tribal lands are communally held, with InKosi (the king) overseeing the workings of the land. If the land were to be transacted between the chief who held the land communally and an individual, the price of the land would be paid for with non-monetary resources, such as alcohol or livestock, amounting to what would be deemed as the value of the property. When the land is in the process of development, plans are given to the chief who stores the document somewhere in their house. This traditional system is limited in what it could offer for the future developments of Xhosa society's urban landscape, as, despite the fact that these documents are stored, they are not organised to record the types of structures that have been erected. The opportunity missed lies in the eventuality of these Xhosa traditional lands being further developed, with no record of building lines and other building restrictions due to unanalysed past structures to

guide future structures.

The second, and arguably most important issue, is the issue of ritual and its place-ness. As it stands, most rituals are performed in spaces which were not envisioned to house their practice. The rituals have been adapted to operate out of the common family household which in modern times can be equated to the RDP house - a two-bedroom bathroom house with minimal living spaces provided. During events of ritual, the house is adapted to fit the need of the ritual. Tents, chairs and additional kitchen hardware, such as traditional pots, gas stoves and transportable fridges, are hired. In the case of the ritual Umleleko (Initiation into manhood), the procession of the boys returning to the site is welcomed back through song and dance. They then enter a room where they are spoken to by the elders within the family and are thereafter instructed to bathe their bodies. This act is a sign and symbol of their transition into manhood as they wash away remnants of their boyhood. Following this, they are finally dressed in items that are deemed socially acceptable for a young man and make their way back outside into the tent where a church service is held in celebration of their transitioning for all members of the community to acknowledge this fact. After the sermon, all guests of umgidi (a celebration) are offered food and drink. This, similar to all other acts of rite, customs and rituals in the Xhosa tradition, is the performance of vitality.

The facility is envisioned as a response to the site's desire to reconnect ritual to space. It takes the form of a traditional council centre that aims to bridge the pre-colonial past to the neo-liberal site. Re-homing and defining ritual and cultural practices in the site are achievable by cementing the role of traditional heads in the community through the creation of formalised spaces for the practice of the culture and its rituals. By viewing the colonial past as a narrative of imposed modernity and the pre-colonial social order as a narrative of tradition, the building aims to mitigate the consequence of the two narratives existing in the same space. This

consequence has prompted concerns of socio-culture collapse through the neglect of protocol and lack of indigenous knowledge systems on the site. The proposed building is envisioned as one with the capacity to function in parallel to established Western institutions by bridging the gaps in knowledge of the culture and its practice due to the disruption of its imperial past.

The program proposed for the site is located on Mdantsane Unit 6, 5219, Eastern Cape which amounts to an area of 10 547m2 and consists of spaces that would be needed to promote acts of mitigation, council and upskilling within the culture. The spaces imagined consist of the following:

- A place for discussion whose program would house:**
- Council chambers where traditional heads and figures could meet for discussions and conflict mitigations within the community
 - Boardrooms where smaller and more intimate and formal discussions can take place
 - A restaurant where informal discussions can take place
 - External discussion spaces which act as pavilions where the community are given opportunities to meet and share knowledge and narrative.
- A place for rituals where the spaces imagined consist of:
- An auditorium which can be used for sermons whose act promotes song, dance and prayer used primarily in the ritual practice of Umshado (weddings), Umngcwabo (funerals), Imbeleko (the introduction of new-borns to their ancestors) and uLwaluko (circumcision initiation) where typically Umgidi (a celebration) takes place after all processes in the initiation have been completed
 - A multi-purpose room where rituals can take place within a space designed to house its practice.

A place for cultural development where the spaces provided include:

- A digital and gallery archive to allow individuals to access memories of the culture
 - Small group listening and viewing rooms
 - Conversation, group work and instruction spaces
 - Computerised learning resources and art studios to upskill the community
- A place for nature consisting of:**
- Community gardens
 - A vendor's market

Administrative offices to facilitate the running of the aforementioned programs and would house specific spaces such as:

- Archive storage space for documentation of housing plans
- Archaeological documentation facilities

The proposed building is imagined to exist as the embodiment of space within the Xhosa community of Mdantsane the building should function as a symphonic orchestration of ritual by facilitating the performance of vitality through gestures such as song, dance, mimicry of ancestral narrative and the recollection of signs and symbols to guide individuals through the traditional systems of rite, customs and ritual. The building should help prompt the embodied emotion the community holds toward ritual. To achieve this concept, the building should be founded through the guise of phenomenology and African Vitalogy (Nkemnkia, 2004). It is through the guise of phenomenology and African Vitalogy that the experience of the spaces is imagined. The spaces that will be formed should question the relationships held between the human self and other living beings they occupy the environment with. This attempt to connect the plains that exist past the physical realm to the cosmos that exists beyond in a divine quest of mystery is the tool needed to articulate spaces that induce the embodied emotions held toward ritual.

In the quest for the divine mystery, the building will play the role of facilitating the

Chapter 15 Case Studies

regaining of stability and security to encourage the community's development by threading together the "human communicative community" that ties together all living things (Tymieniecka, 2006). The reintroduction of the African worldview in the building is essential, as it aims to deconstruct the Western worldview that exists in the site, causes failures in the economic, social and environmental systems. Through this Western lens, the environment and all of its life systems are viewed as stagnant and fail to recognise the contingent nature of life that requires the human self to be adaptive and responsive to its rhythms and patterns in order to exist fruitfully in its plains.

This will be achieved through instilling ideals of African Vitalogy in the building's form. The principle of African Vitalogy reasons that the human mind functions as the extension of the soul, which gives a certain value to all living beings in creation (Nkemnkia, 2004). This could be understood as the embodiment of life through lived experiences of perception - "to see, to hear, to understand" (Nkemnkia, 2004). Through this lens, it is not only the human self that is capable of perception as its processes can be carried out between varying living beings and objects through the continuation of time, thus granting all existing entities to be acknowledged as living beings that have established their own characteristics and ways of living. It is in the African perception of a boundless landscape that all things are treated with care for fostering life. The building imagined moves away from the Western worldview of dichotomising life systems into the physical and spiritual and rather perceives the building as an entity that exists within a boundless cosmos where its tactile and invisible elements facilitate the re-animation of nature, thus allowing us to view it as a living being who "fosters a sense of care for all of creation" (Alokwu, 2015).



Figure 22: The building as beings interacting between themselves expressed through models

The first case study interrogated is the winning submission for the Kaira LOORO International competition. The project discussed was the proposed new cultural centre for Sedhiou located in Senegal, Africa (Bonanomi et al., 2018). The architecture envisioned is described to be a "simple connotation" where the space functions as elements to be organised using lines of logic, adhering to African concepts in architecture where the building is seen as a tool that focuses highly on function with the effect of the process being an architecture whose materiality determines the form and aesthetic of the building (Bonanomi et al., 2018). The concept aimed to piece together voids to create "the full" as the individual spaces influence one another to allow the building to function as a single being (Bonanomi et al., 2018). The approach to achieving the desired effect was to see the identified program as individual spaces whose thresholds were to be unified through exterior spaces which take the form of a permeable wooden canopy functioning as spaces for pause and gathering (Bonanomi et al., 2018). A sense of individuality in the spaces is achieved through the varying scales of each building. The tallest building in elevation acts as a marker of place in the urban landscape and the first point of reference when moving through the site (Bonanomi et al., 2018). The spacing between the individual programmes creates a sense of openness and freedom to move through the site and engage in activities such as conferences, plays, and any other community-based activity (Bonanomi et al., 2018).

This approach to space aims to piece together individualised spaces through a void that provides an avenue to relaying the ideals behind the organisation of ritual space in the Xhosa tradition which seeks to separate space and function to prevent the cross-contamination of forces diminishing the effects of a ritual or medicine. This allows the building through its void to create a sense of connection between inside and outside as thresholds remain open to the void allowing for the continuation of ritual being performed in spaces to extend its connection to the elements. These voids are imagined to be translated architecture by creating openings

positioned to reference a connection to the elements and the external landscape. Voids directed upwards reference a connection to fire and wind elements while also providing openings longitudinally provide a link to the water element, thus always leaving the building open to the guiding elements in their primitive forms.

The second case study is the Dhaka Art Summit Pavilion completed by Counterspace. The space explores the themes of climate and its effects on the Bangladeshi region's cultural identity and history (Counterspace, 2023). This is expressed in the creation of a performative space where one witnesses the processes of regeneration or reforming of the vase as an artefact (Counterspace, 2023). The processes being undertaken by the female body reference the view of both water and women being sources of life and facilitating its processes (Counterspace, 2023). The ritual of summoning rain is conceptualised as a temporal happening animated through the creation of a space whose form fluctuates through cycles of revival and creation (Counterspace, 2023). The ritual uses water as the guiding element in facilitating the ritual as its processes of weathering guide the longevity of each artefact and its existence in space (Counterspace, 2023). The female bodies facilitating the ritual act as a link to a spiritual realm as their hands along with the water element guide the summoning through its cycles. The overlapping of the artefacts that line the conceptualised space visualises the repetitive process that forms the connections between all the elements that establish the practice. This suggests an additive process to formulating ritual space as it must be taken while keeping in mind knowledge of what came before to create what comes next. This may be informed by indigenous knowledge and, in some instances, common knowledge. This manner of viewing temporality as a driving force of ritual may be viewed as a guiding concept in the creation of its spaces. This could be communicated through the material composition of the building. The properties each material possesses, including how they weather and how they are constructed, will influence the forces which animate the space and sustain it through its use. Materials that are used should move away from

The third case study is Peter Riche's Mapungubwe National Park interpretive centre. Key identifying factors such as design processes which incorporate the use of catenary forms to create thin shell structures "using a 700-year-old Mediterranean tradition adapted for the Southern African context" (Ramage et al., 2010). This process was used as a guiding factor in the selection of the construction technique and materiality which required the fabrication of "soil-cement" tiles by local community inhabitants that were newly trained (Ramage et al., 2010). This labour-intensive approach to design was selected due to its capacity to enable a relief of poverty within the community through skills transfer (Ramage et al., 2010). This approach to architecture imagines it as a collaborative process between its development and its execution thus providing positive outcomes to both social conditions and economic conditions, which is realised in the employment of locals to both fabricate the materials required and also construct the building (Ramage et al., 2010). The site of Mapungubwe is celebrated in the context of South Africa as a UNESCO world heritage boasting indigenous flora and fauna. This is celebrated in the inception of the architecture revived through its landscape (Ramage et al., 2010). The programme proposes an exhibition space to showcase artefacts which hold cultural significance to the community; offices and facilities for tourists visiting the remote site (Ramage et al., 2010). The language of the building is a result of the manifestation of materiality and construction technologies employed (Ramage et al., 2010). The resultant vaults and tile technology are seen to take on new meaning as newly learnt indigenous knowledge and skills begin to transfer with the community becoming part of "a story that is still unfolding, of culture developing in symbiosis with its natural legacy" (Ramage et al., 2010).

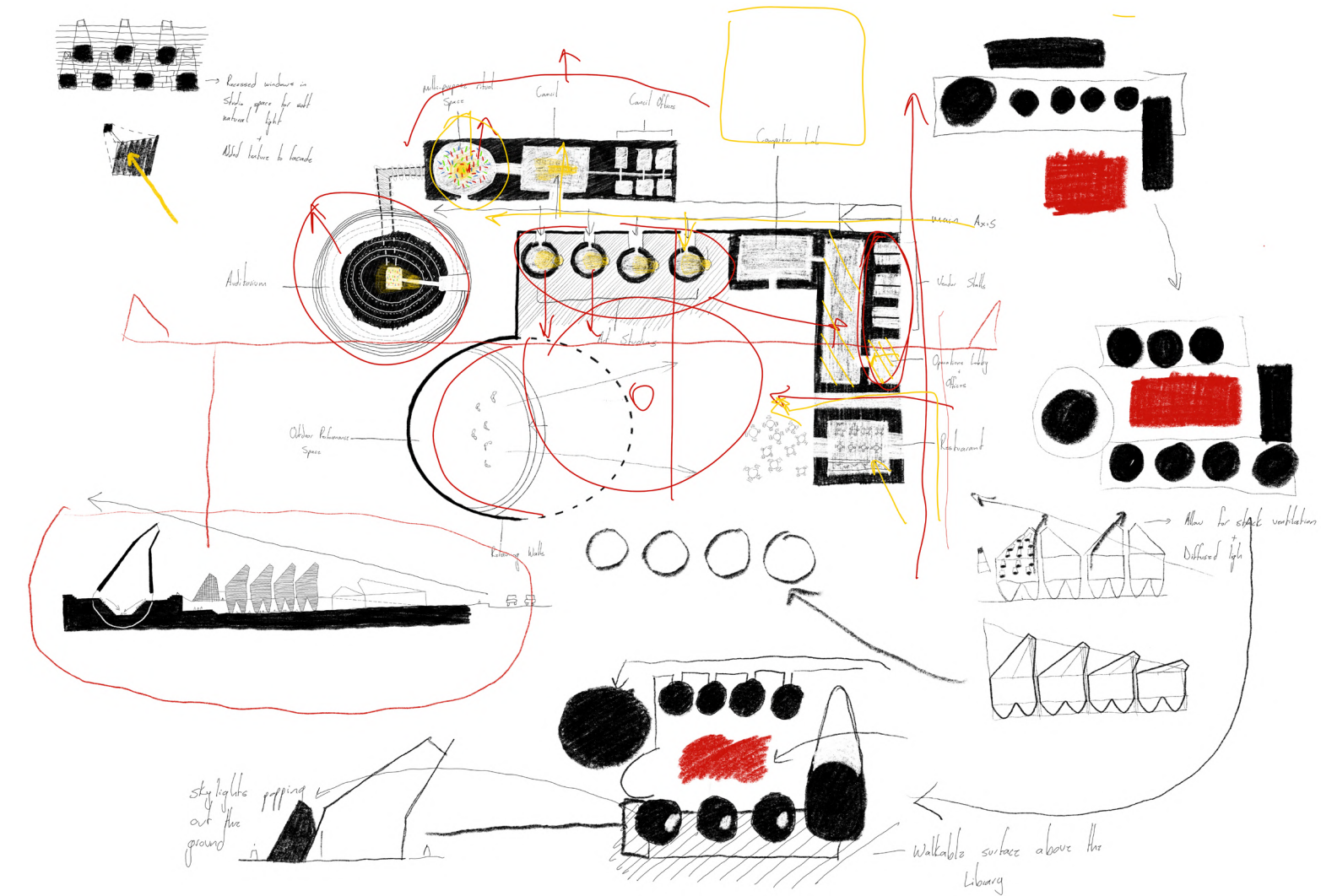


Figure 23: Perspective images of case studies

Chapter 16 Design Development

Figure 24: Conceptual Sketches

Initial drawings depicting the arrangement of the program on the site. The site is conceptualised to form along two axes' the first is vertical along the edge of the street to encourage a public interface between the public as they filter into the site. The second is the horizontal axis leading bodies into the site where the programme is arranged in a staggered manner on the left and right-hand side of the axis with the largest and most private programme placed at the furthest point from the street. The programme is arranged in a box-like form to isolate the internal from the external. The forms which house the programme are envisioned as beings which are placed in the site with roof openings poised upwards towards the sky creating an internal space which is posed between what is above and below thus referencing the liminality of rite and ritual experienced in the site of Mdantsane.



Envisioning a site seeped in memories of its past while imagining a future which aims to foster and celebrate the culture of its Xhosa people required an approach that is rooted in the organisation and practice of the culture’s rituals and rites. Based on the aforementioned studied findings the site is to be organised in a sequential manner in accordance with procedures and steps taken in each event These include the following:

- a) The act of greeting/ welcoming into the prepared space
- b) The act of gathering in preparation for departure into the space
- c) The act of cleansing once gathered in the space to prepare one’s spirit and orientate one’s mentality before the commencement of the practice of the rite or ritual
- d) The act of changing garments as a signifier of the transformation of one within life processes can be understood to be the transformation from girl to woman and boy to man
- e) The act of spiritual connection through prayer, sermon, song and dance
- f) The act of celebration as a signifier of vitality within the community participating in weddings and coming-of-age ceremonies
- g) The act of resting allows one a moment of introspection

The spaces within the site are to be separated thus forming individual nodes of function along the path this is done according to beliefs within the culture that dictate that spaces of spiritual significance are to be separated so as to not dilute or destroy the effects of a space or medicine with impure energies spilling over from another. it’s with this in mind that the prgrom has between physically separated with a wall between the secular and non-secular. the secular spaces are seen as more integrated an compact whilst the non-secular is dispersed as the function of spiritual connection is void.

The spaces envisioned to house the practice of rite and ritual remain open to the elements this is done as in spiritual practice it is understood that all matters of life are vitalised and sustained by the elements of wind, water, sunlight, moonlight and earth and fire. it’s in these elements that the being receives power to fight ill-intend-ed spirits, become energised and connect to life processes. is to this end that the structure of the spaces begins to communicate these aspects with openings placed both horizontally and vertically to connect to the elements.

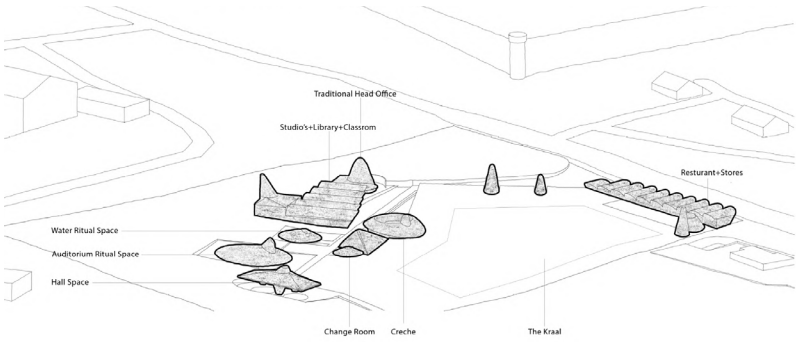


Figure 25: The Arrangement of program as nodes of ritual and rite procedures

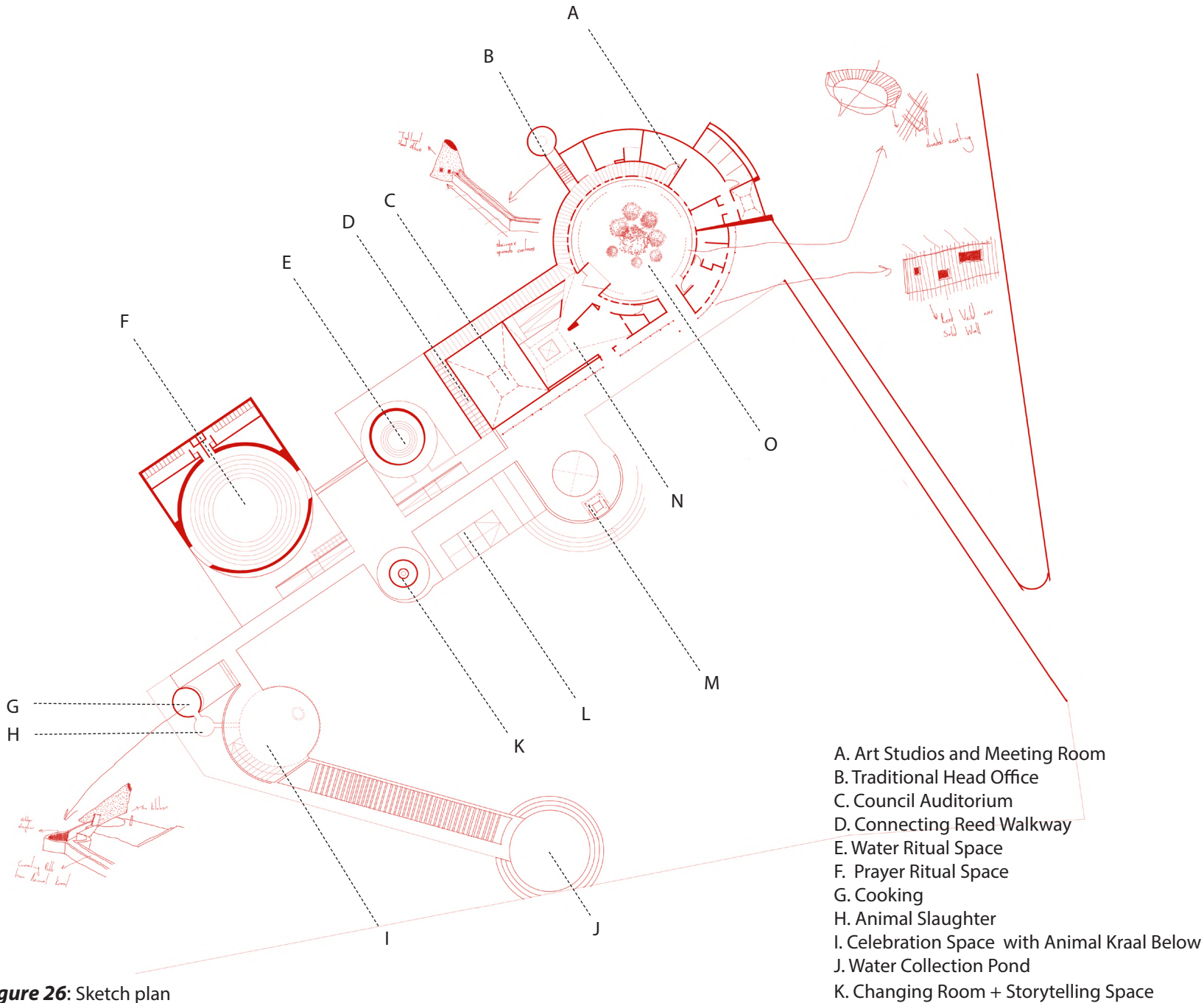


Figure 26: Sketch plan

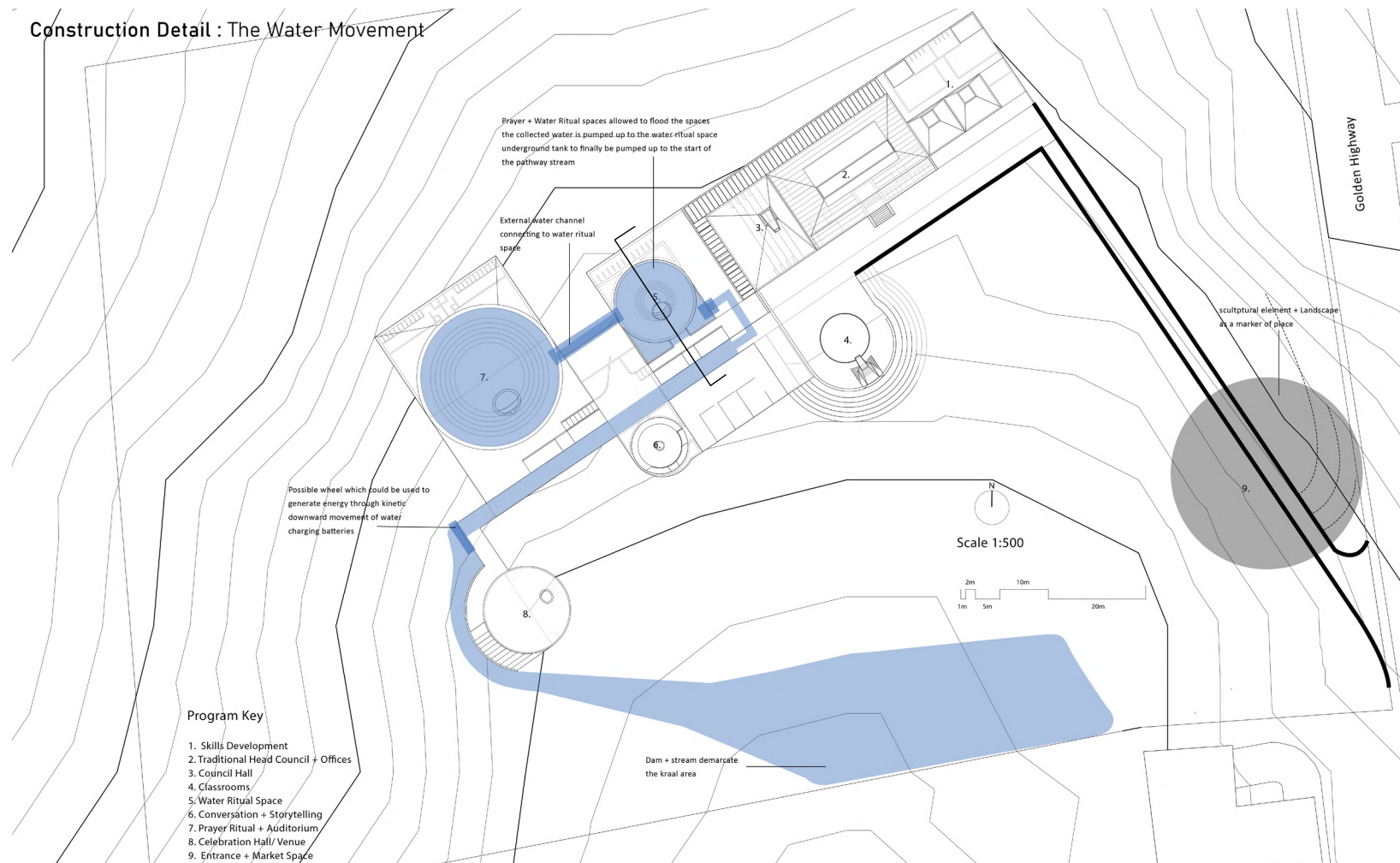


Figure 27: Sketch plan of the movement and pooling of water

The site aims to integrate its systems with the elements that contribute to sustaining its life as an approach to heating, cooling and ventilating the spaces. This is to be achieved through the conceptualisation of spaces which communicate the dynamic nature of climate and its seasons. Due to the topography and the drastic shift between the wet and dry seasons, the ritual spaces which are open to the external elements have been fashioned to allow for these changes to be accommodated within the spaces. This is imagined to allow the flooding of these spaces as water runoff migrates to the Southern most point of the site. The water collected in the spaces is to be pumped back up to the surface to be re-integrated into the journey between the various nodes of rite and ritual practice.

In defining the path of water in the building, a demarcated space is created as a kraal in which animals are kept. It is through this delineation that the inside and outside are created. The existing and created topography is to act as a buffer between public activity and the practice of rites and rituals, thus creating a world one moves into, incubating its memory and people. The journey conceptualised stems from the street edge and becomes a symbolic gesture of this notion as a path cuts into the earth and moves towards the building, mimicking the studied practice of the initiation rite as a procession guided through a historically identified path, leading to the initiates house where the rites process are adapted to the space.

Construction Detail : Materiality Perspective

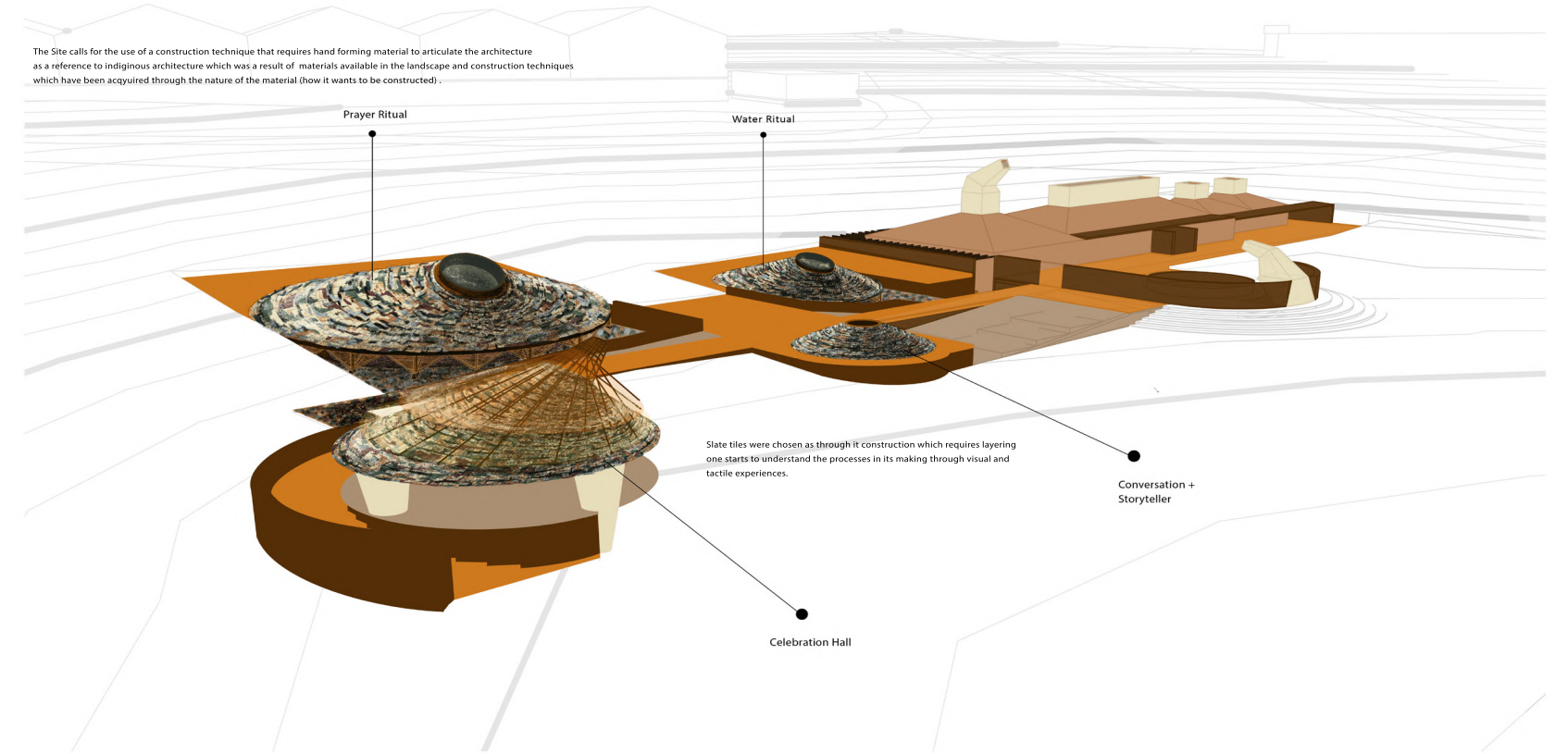


Figure 28: Concept perspective on the articulation of material and form

The materiality of the site was selected in accordance with the principles reflected in African indigenous practices in forming the built environment. It is through that gaze that the materiality selected aims to reflect its environment with its ant hills, grouped boulders, dense shrubbery and grassy plains. It is with the aforementioned in consideration that the materiality of the site depicts methods in which the local inhabitants vested with the construction of the site would articulate the material according to its properties, lending the techniques used to the narrative of the space. The ritual spaces, which act as ritual nodes, are imagined as a being participating in the re-enactment of ritual: they are adorned in specific garments signifying their standing and participation in the culture. The selection of slate as the prima-

ry material is due to the aesthetic properties it holds. The varying colours imbued in the material and the textures created from the overlaying of the tiles almost mimic the optics one could view in the fabrics used to construct skirts in traditional garments where a mesh is overlayed on an opaque canvas-like white material or soft black ribbons sewn into the highly textured white material. The layering seen in the construction of the garments prompted the layering of a veil over the opaque, earthen materials. This is conceived as a reed mesh support through timber structural elements and fixed to the earthen structural walls.

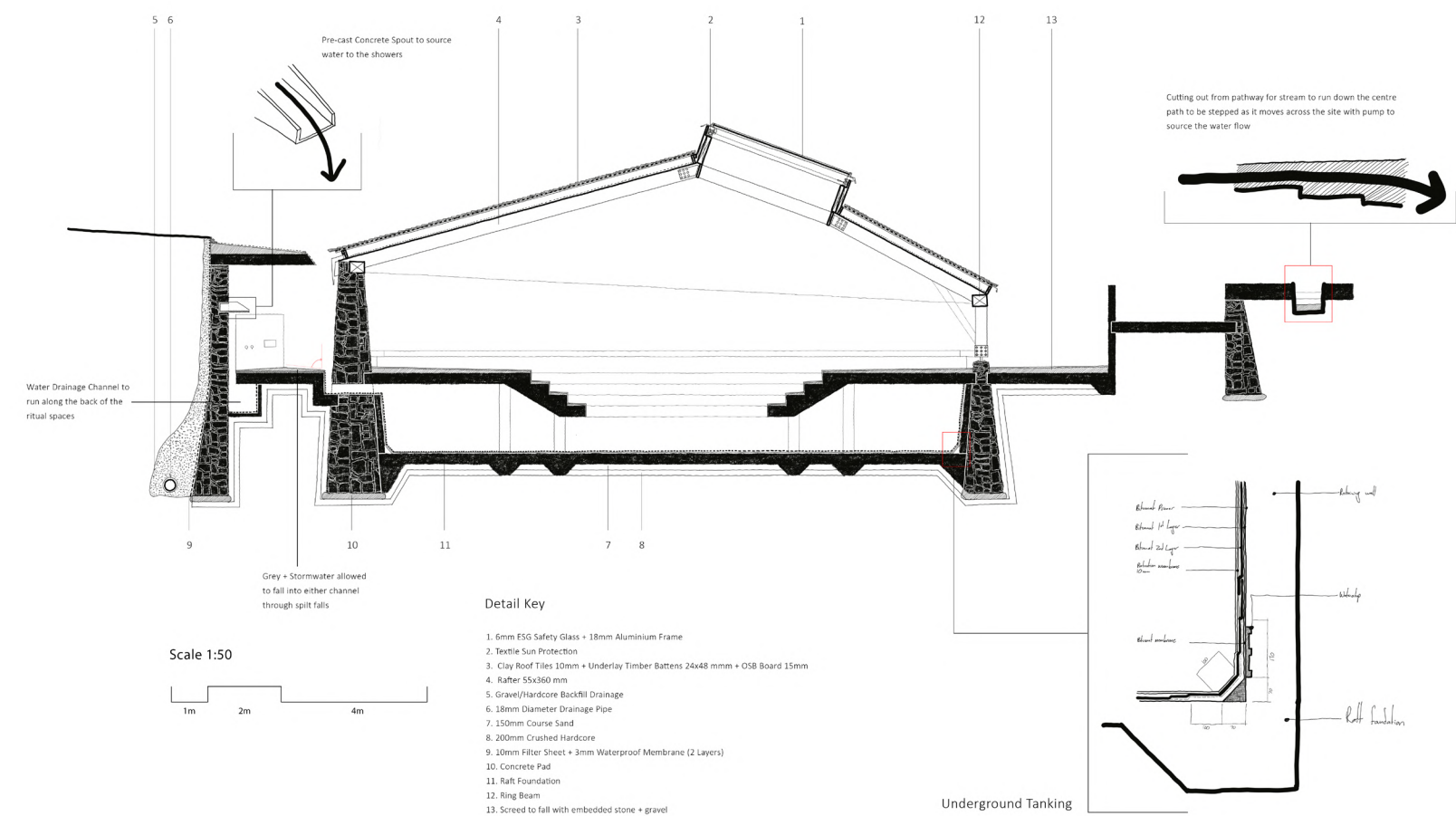


Figure 29: Section through the water ritual space depicting the systems and forms adapted to house the fluctuations of water

The systems envisioned aim to allow the flooding of the spaces. This has been articulated in the steps which step downwards, allowing for a larger area for the water to collect while still accommodating for the programme of the space to function. Individuals would be able to migrate to levels above the flood plane in order to access the space. The housing of water, therefore, becomes a key driver in the construction detail. To retain the water, the structures have been carved into the topography with a heaviness in its structure relaying notions of containment and retention. This can be seen in the use of retaining stone walls and raft foundations which set the structure within the earth.

The concept of the journey of water is carried throughout specific programme-related details such as the shower spaces where initiates cleanse themselves once returning from the ritual site. The roof lies level with the intersecting topography and allows runoff water to filter into the space by carrying the incline of the topography through the roof and chamfering into the space. The shower head, which is a precast concrete spout detail, replicates a waterfall-like movement of water from a cliff which is replicated by the retaining stone wall with its apertures and carved out channels for the water to be circulated throughout the site where stormwater is guided to collection and reintegration and grey water circulated to municipal services.

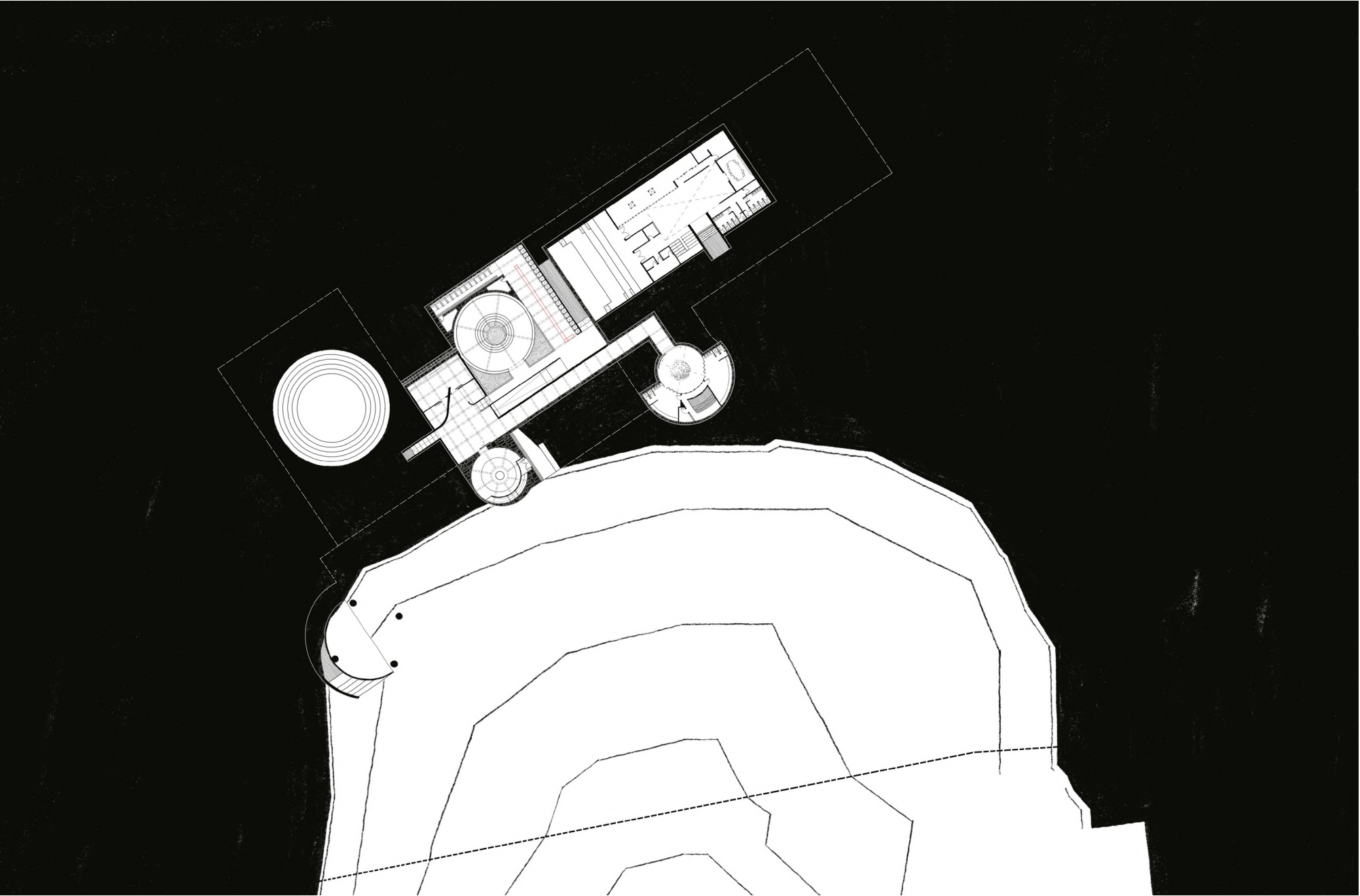
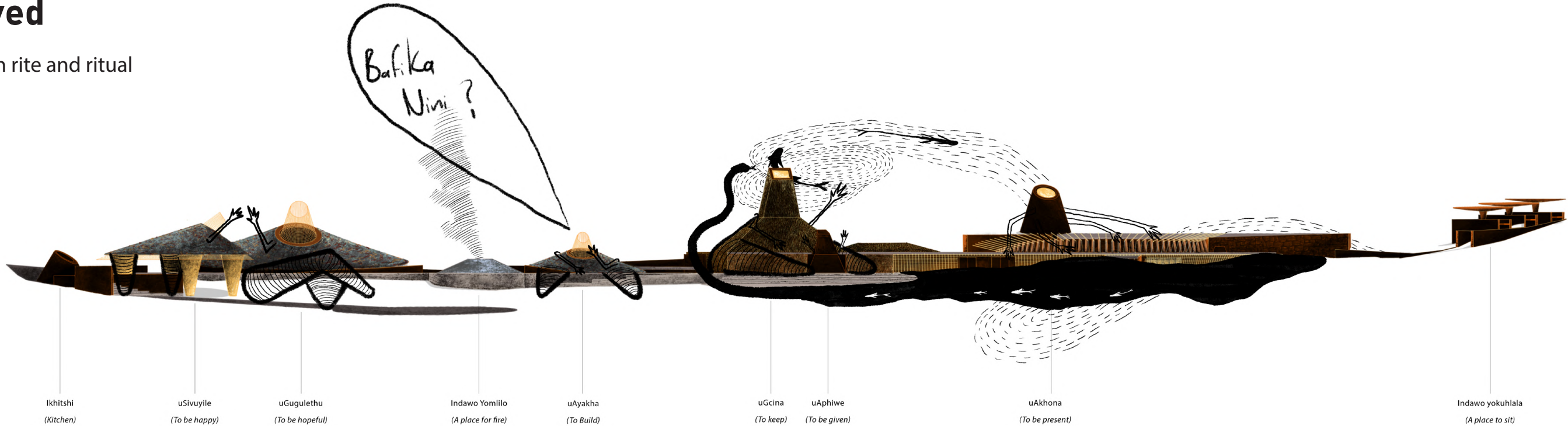


Figure 30: Basement plans showing changing levels and stepped retaining pools seen in the circular forms

Chapter 17: The landscape lived

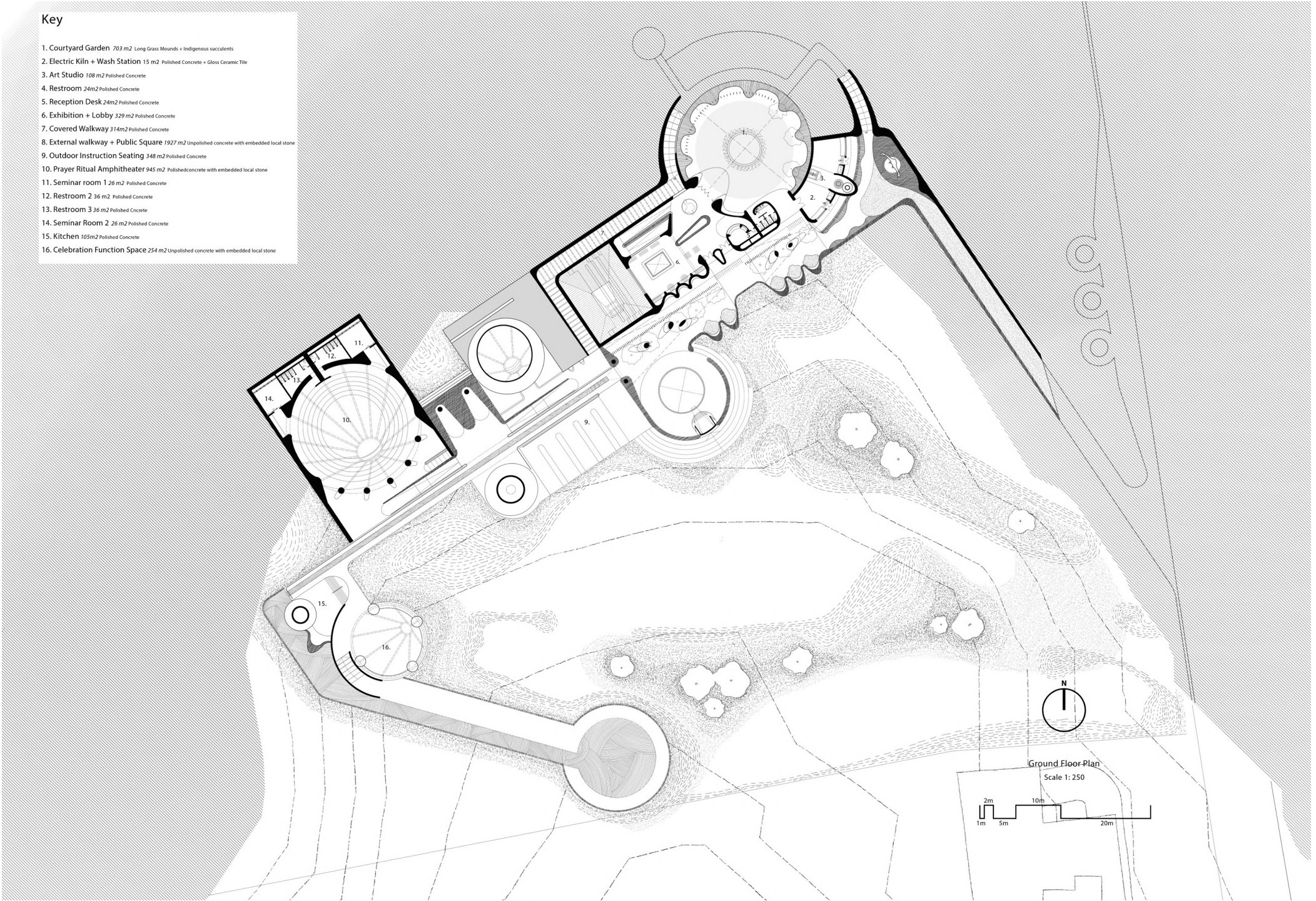
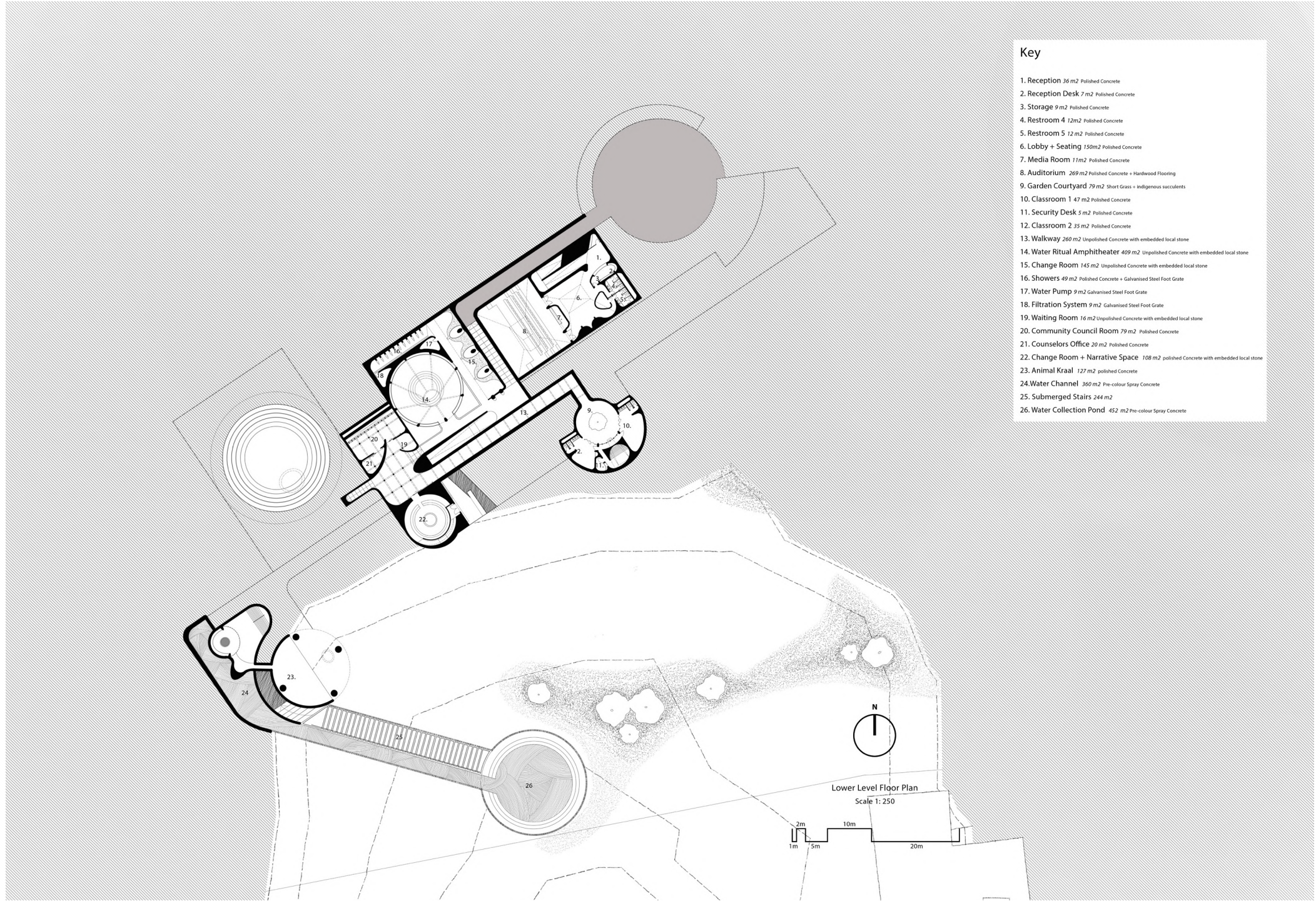
Final images of the site as it enacts all it’s processes in rite and ritual

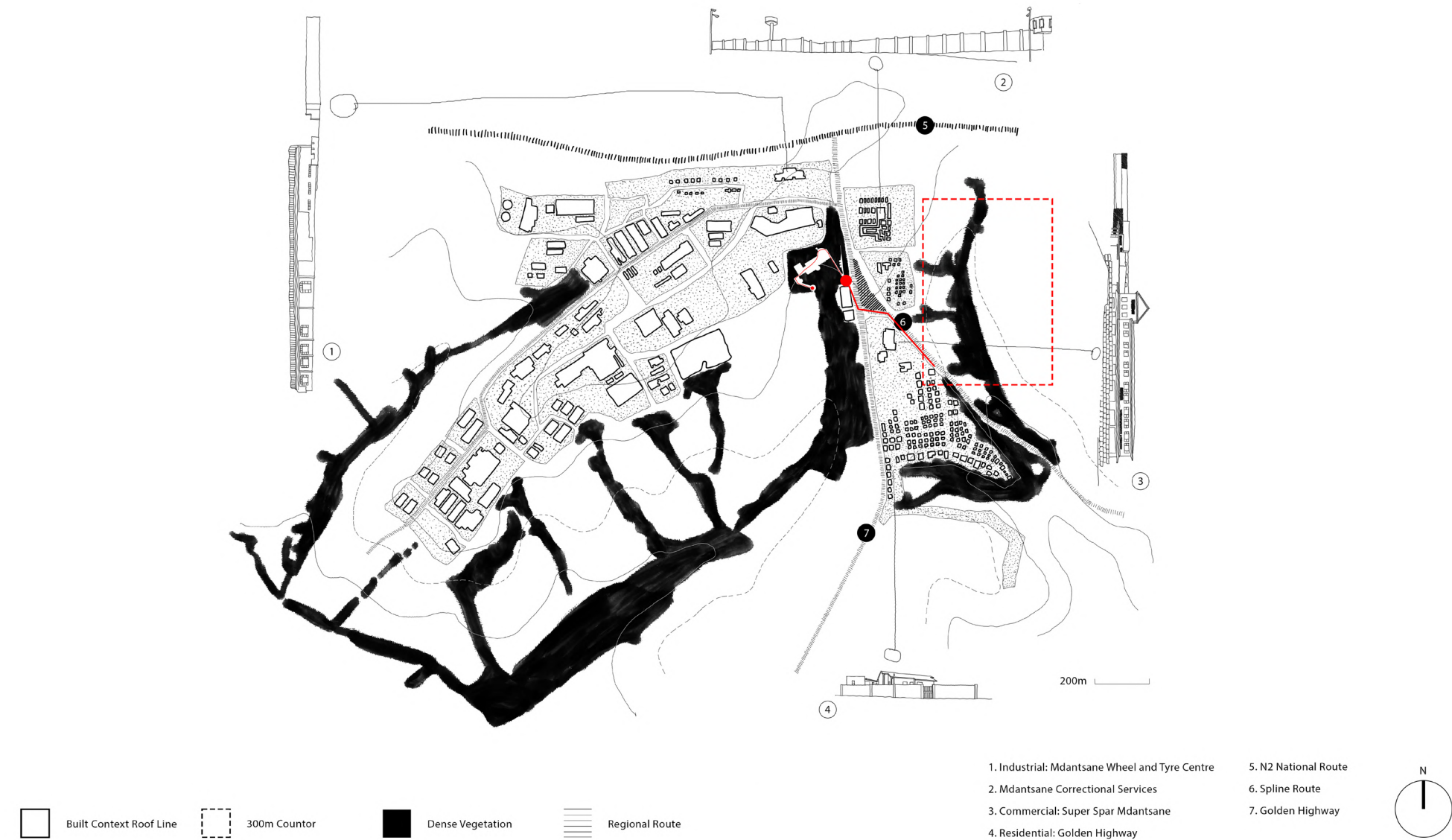
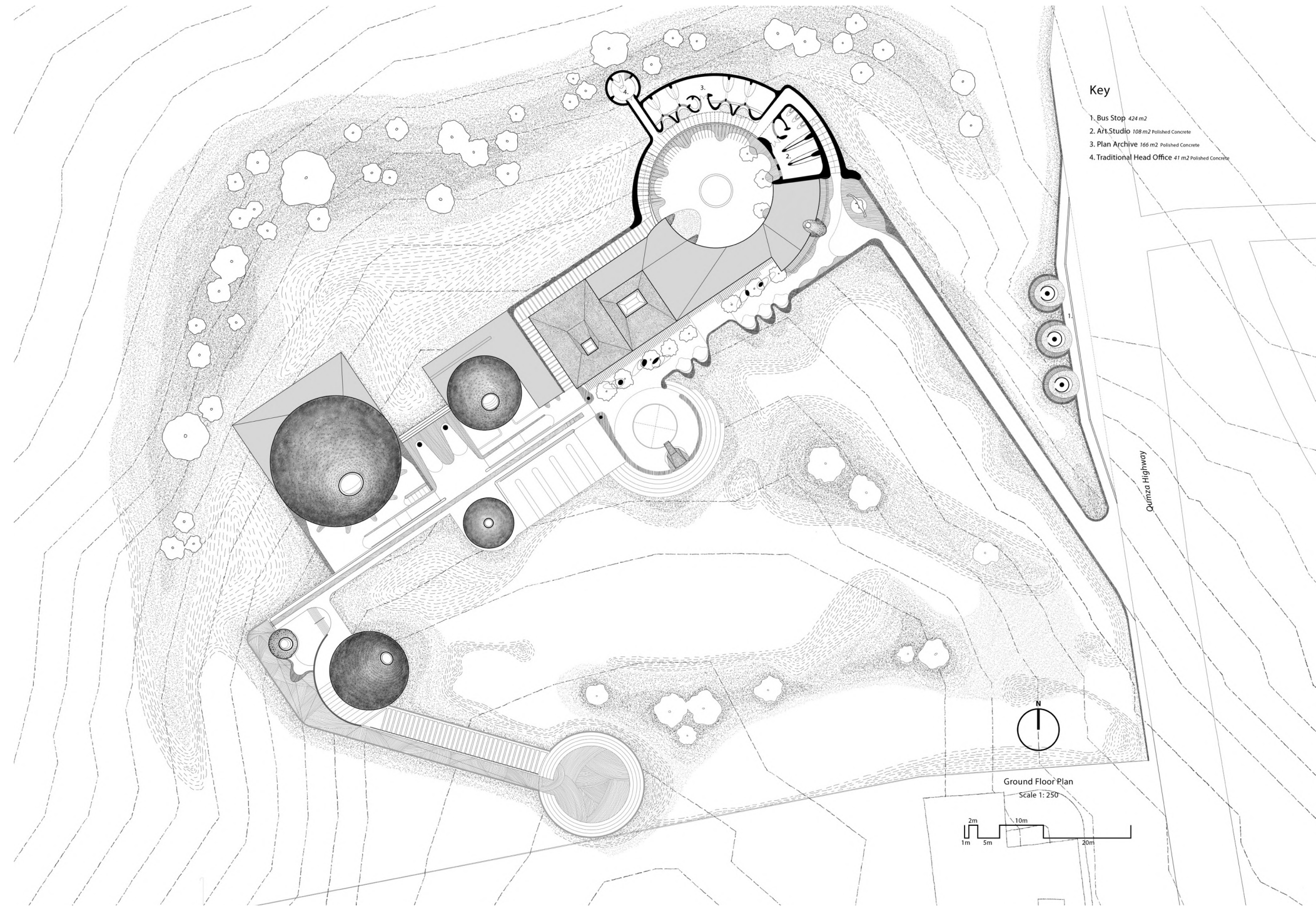


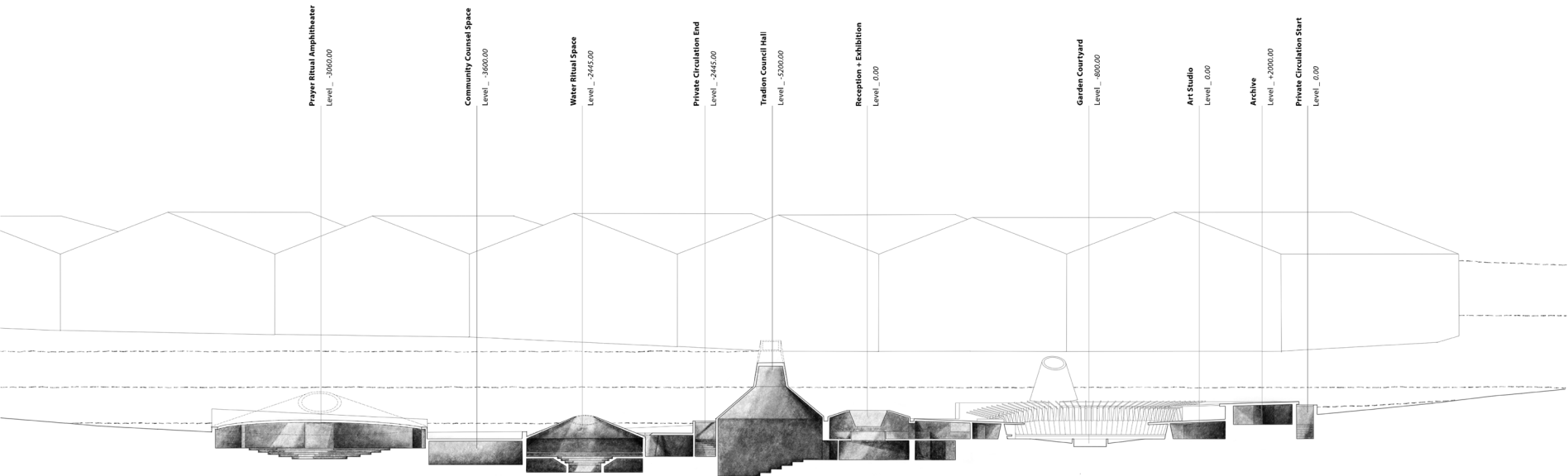
ibali

(The Story)

In the family home, uGcina, an elder, imparts ancient myths and tales of the water to uAphiwe, the youngest in the family. These stories serve as both beacons of hope and caution, guiding the child along the righteous path. Meanwhile, in the living room, uAkhona graciously welcomes a tardy guest arriving for the ongoing celebrations. Just outside, uAyakha sits patiently in a tented structure, regretting not having eaten before leaving his house earlier. In the kitchen, uSivuyile and Guhulethu sit together as the aroma of food wafts through the air, the meal slowly simmering over the crackling flames.



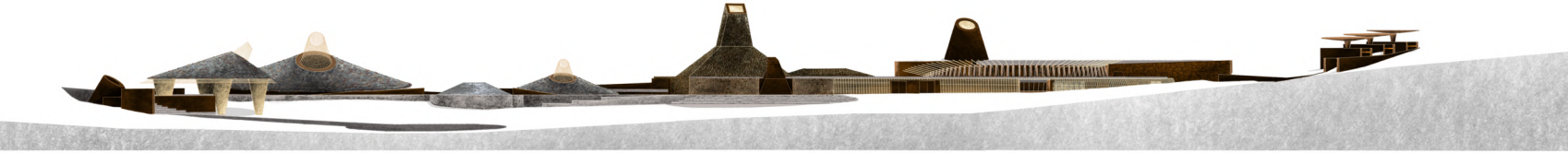




Longitudinal East West Site Section

Scale 1:200

The Section Depicts the varying levels at which the nodes of program are placed



South Elevation

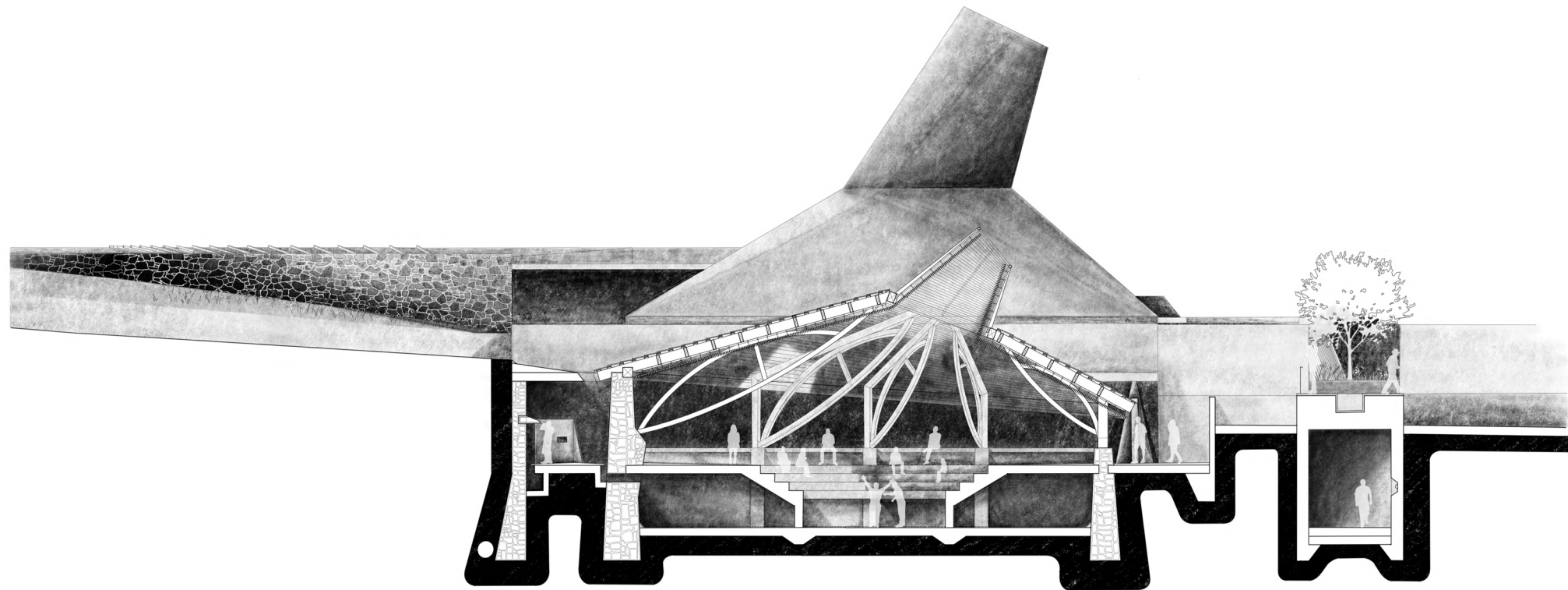


West Elevation

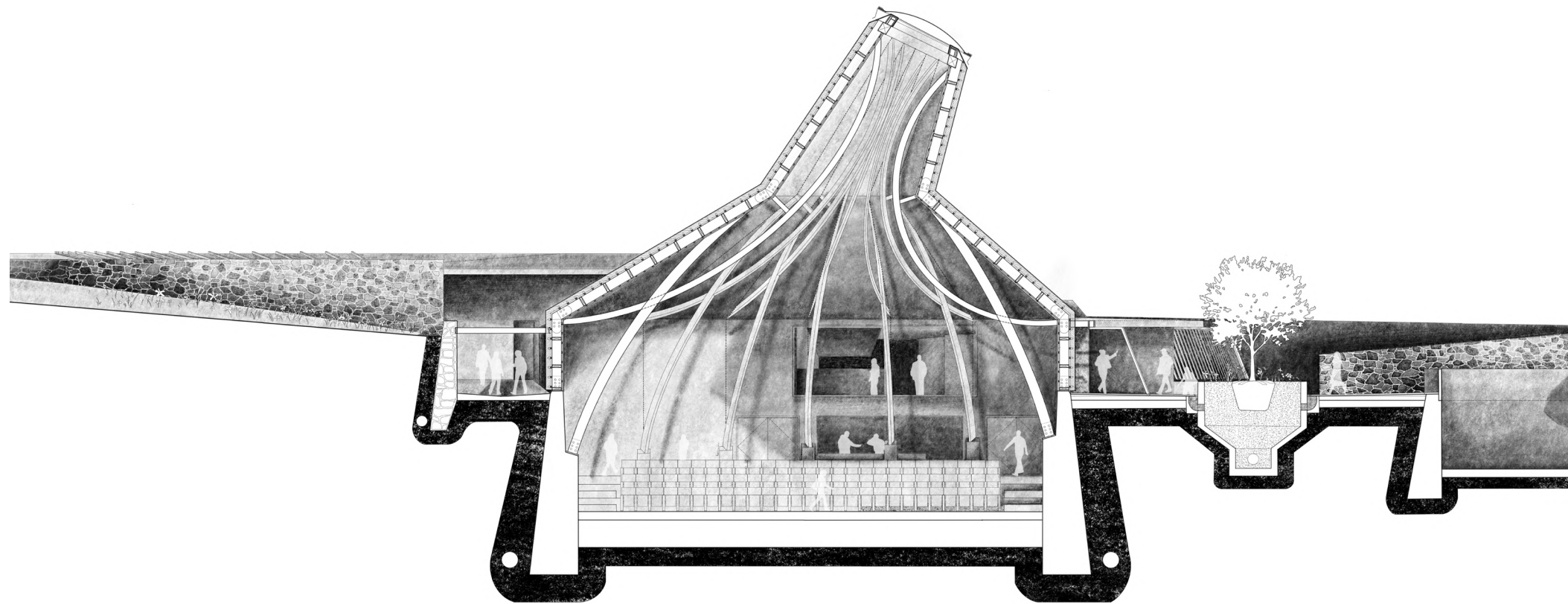
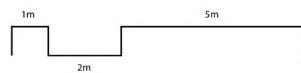
Elevations

Scale 1: 250

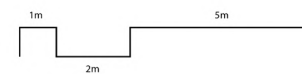


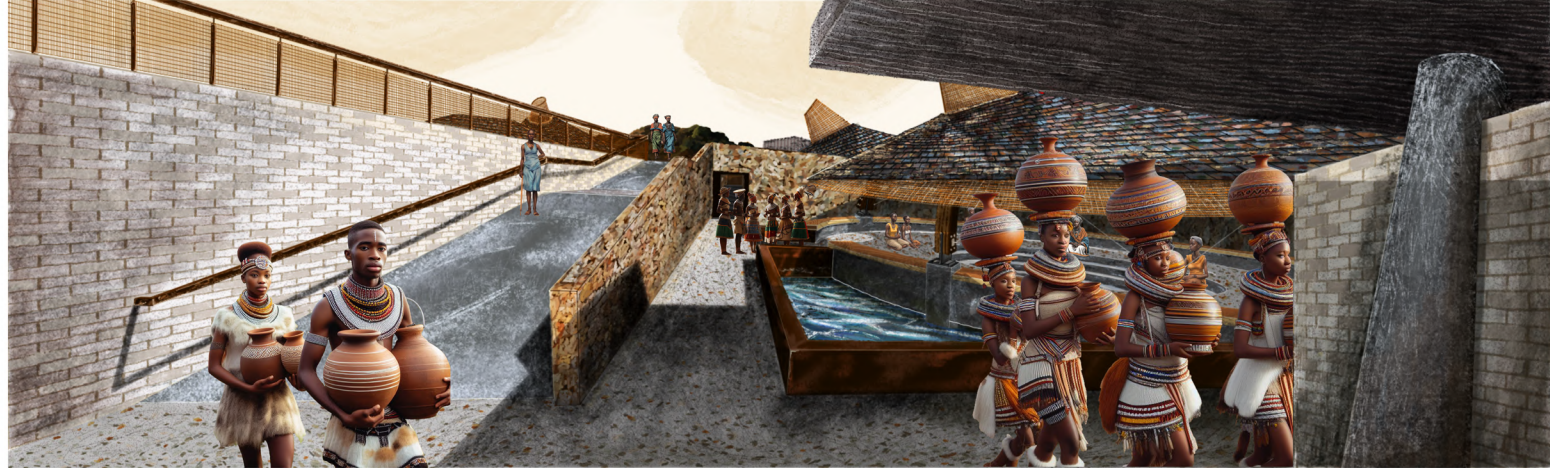


Water Ritual Space
Section 1:50



Traditional Council Hall Space
Section 1:50





Water Ritual Space
Internal Perspective



Central Walkway
External Perspective



Chapter 18 Conclusion

By analysing the practices, needs and functioning of Xhosa culture, as well as the richness of African architecture, one is able to develop a program that honours its worldview and architectural necessities for an environmental and economic subsistence for the community of Mdantsane. The intended program has an undercurrent of African Vitality that values the life forces surrounding the site and the life forces that experience the building. By analysing the practices, needs and functioning of Xhosa culture, as well as the richness of African architecture, one is able to develop a program that honours its worldview and architectural necessities for an environmental and economic subsistence for the community and inhabitants of Mdantsane. As emphasised in this essay, the necessity of this building moves beyond functionality of providing shelter or aestheticism, that is often strived for by Western ideals of Architecture. By honouring African indigenous knowledge and African architectural standards, the programme proposed aims to be a space where ritual, rites and tradition can be maintained and developed for the longevity of Xhosa culture. The intended programme has an undercurrent of African Vitality that values the life forces surrounding the site and the life forces that experience the building. Therefore, following the standards of African architecture, Mdantsane's environment, resources, its life forces and its citizens are heavily involved in the process of design and construction. With consideration of the benefits and downfalls of contemporary architecture and Mdantsane's complex colonial history, the building aims to provide a liminal space between past and present, thereby valuing the experiences of Mdantsane's inhabitants while allowing room for growth and prosperity in Xhosa culture and experience.



Changing Room / Narrative Space
Internal Perspective

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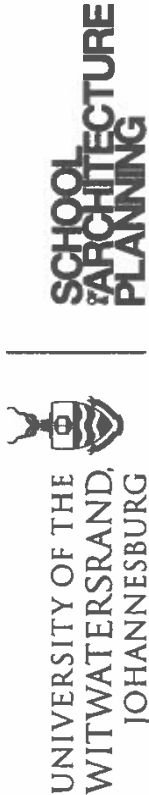
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19 May 2023

**Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment:
Ethics clearance letter:**

Dear Buhle Xhegwana

Student number (1855080), this letter confirms that your ethics application has been cleared. Your clearance/protocol number: SOAP027/04/2023

Lerato Nkosi
Yours sincerely

Lerato Nkosi