

2026 MERIT AWARD

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LYCEUM

A traveling fellowship in Architecture

INFORMAL



REVOLUTION

LAYERED MOVEMENT: WATER, PEOPLE, LAND

Water Systems

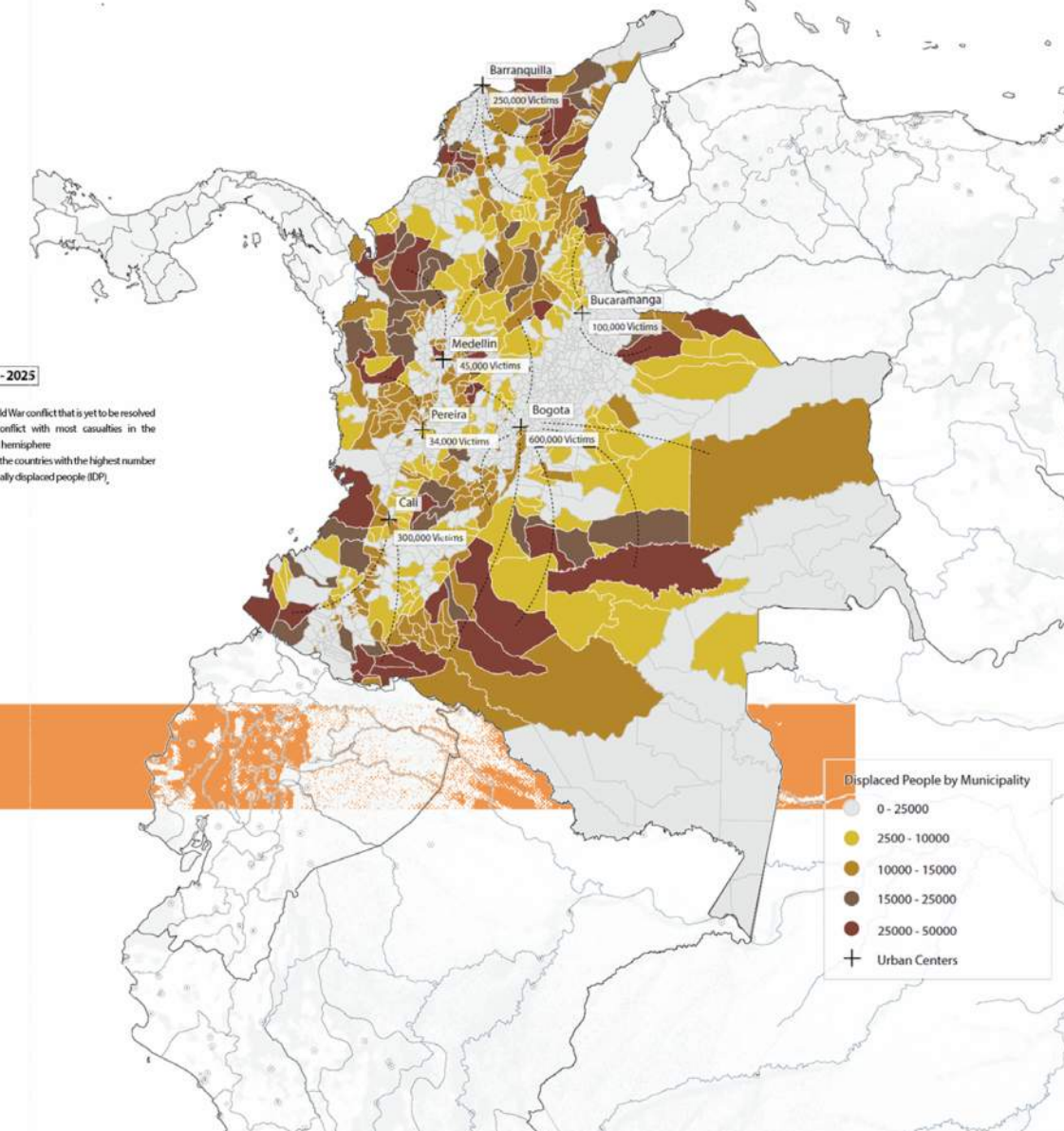
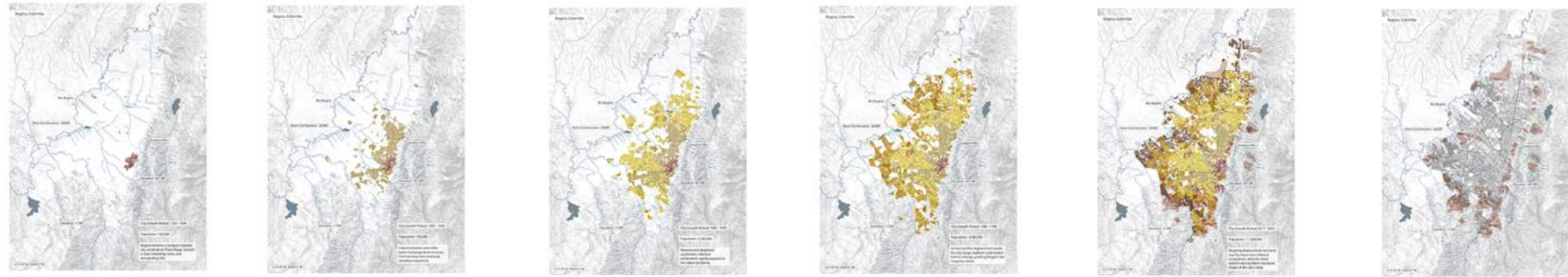
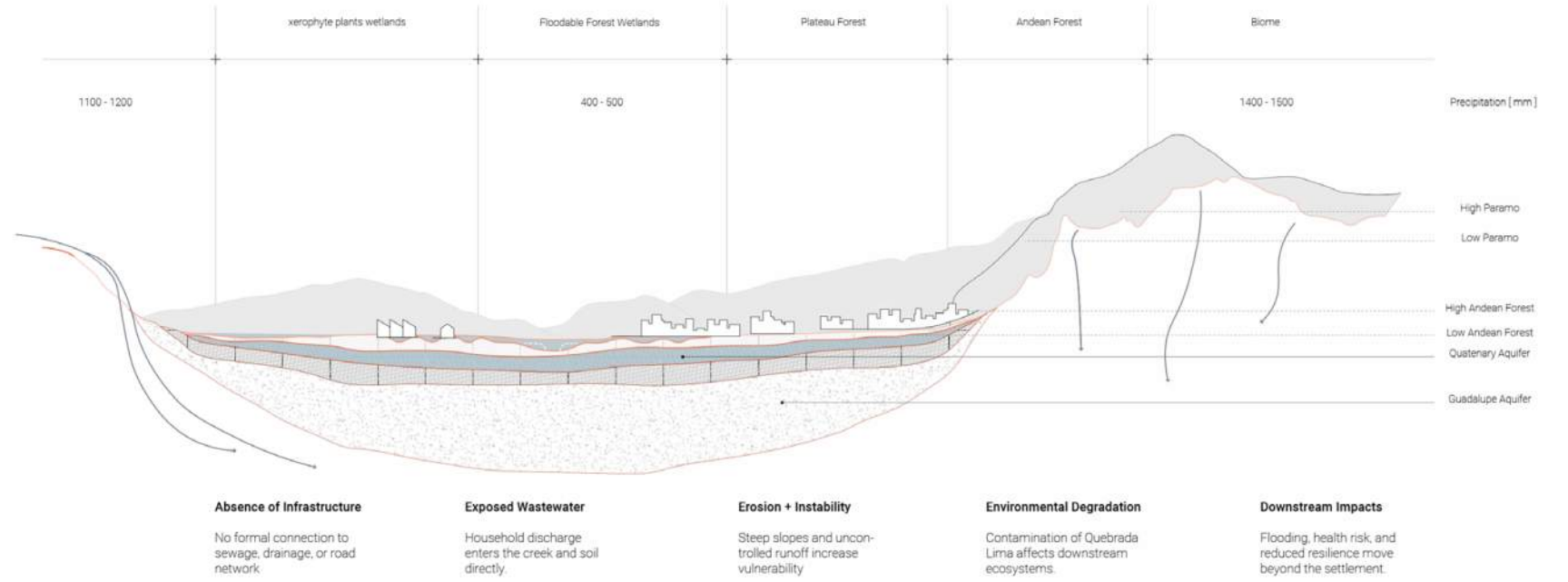
Topography, precipitation, and hydrology shape the valley. Water descends from the páramo and forest ecosystems into the quebrada, but formal infrastructure does not follow the same path.

Armed Conflict | Displacement

Decades of violence displaced rural populations and pushed families toward Bogotá's urban edge. The periphery became a place of refuge, but also a place where land was steep, unstable, and underserved.

Displacement | Informalization of the City

As displaced families settled where the city had left space, self-built neighborhoods expanded along slopes and waterways. Informality became a method of survival, producing adaptive infrastructures that remain largely invisible to institutions.



+ 1948 - 1959

- Violent confrontations between political parties takes place
- A series of social protests and strikes, period of civil unrest
- Military coup in 1953

+ 1959 - 1976

- Mutual governing agreement between the liberal and conservative party
- Persecution of peasant movements: Foundation of modern guerrillas (FARC and ELN)

+ 1976 - 1985

- Increased urban violence - political persecution (estatuto de seguridad)
- FARC and ELN begin kidnapping as part of their guerrilla tactics

+ 1985 - 1991

- La Uribe peace talks - establishment of the left-wing political party "Union Patriótica" (Democratic Alliance)
- An estimated 5000 assassinations

+ 1991 - 2002

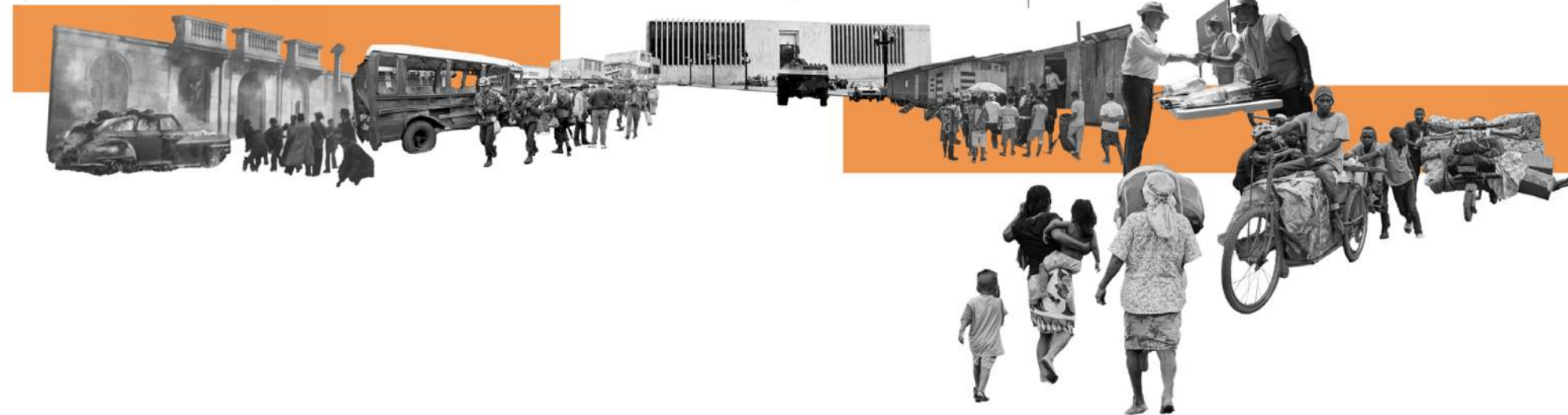
- Increase in paramilitary activity - massacres, internal displacement (5 million)
- Increase in FARC-controlled territory (40% of the country)

+ 2002 - 2014

- Radical right-wing government of Alvaro Uribe
- Increase in human rights violations - persecution of political, social and human rights activists
- Significant crackdown on FARC

+ 2014 - 2025

- Last Cold War conflict that is yet to be resolved
- The conflict with most casualties in the Western hemisphere
- One of the countries with the highest number of internally displaced people (IDP)



PROVOCATION

Bogotá has spent decades treating its informal peripheries as temporary errors waiting to be corrected. Across Bogotá's southern periphery, and particularly within Ciudad Bolívar, ecological vulnerability, infrastructural abandonment, and housing precarity are often framed as evidence of urban failure. Yet these territories reveal something else entirely: the capacity of marginalized communities to construct complex systems of survival in the absence of institutional support. Informality here is not a disorder, it is an alternative mode of city-making produced through collective labor, incremental adaptation, and spatial negotiation.

The crisis is not merely one of deficient infrastructure. It is a political framework that criminalizes self-built urbanization while simultaneously depending on it to absorb the social consequences of displacement, migration, and economic inequality. Water becomes the clearest manifestation of this contradiction. Creeks are channelized, buried, contaminated, or treated as residual voids, while the communities living alongside them are excluded from the ecological and civic systems of the formal city. Existing infrastructural models operate as instruments of separation: dividing ecology from urbanization, legality from necessity, and public investment from public need.

This project proposes the opposite. **Rather than erasing informal settlements through top-down redevelopment, it asks how infrastructure can become a civic and ecological commons capable of supporting the intelligence already embedded within the settlement itself.** The proposal reimagines the quebrada not as a boundary, but as a spatial armature for collective urban repair. A lightweight elevated infrastructural network threads through the hillside, intercepting wastewater, stabilizing vulnerable terrain, and supporting new public and ecological programs. Blackwater systems, constructed wetlands, community gardens, pedestrian circulation, commercial platforms, and shared civic spaces become integrated into one continuous territorial framework. Infrastructure is no longer hidden underground as a distant technical service; it becomes visible, accessible, and collectively maintained.

But the project extends beyond physical form. It proposes new coalitions between residents, environmental agencies, universities, local labor networks, and community land stewardship models to challenge the institutional fragmentation that produced these conditions in the first place. The project therefore operates simultaneously as ecological infrastructure, public space, governance framework, and political claim. **If modern urbanization has relied on the channelization of rivers, labor, and people into systems of extraction and exclusion, this project asks what it would mean to unchannel the city: to design forms of infrastructure that redistribute ecological access, collective ownership, and civic agency back into the territories that have historically been denied them.**

Informal Tenure



Residents build without legal recognition

Risk-Zone Criminalization



The settlement is treated as a problem to remove

Open Sewage Discharge



Water infrastructure becomes environmental harm

Environmental Degradation



Creek pollution, erosion, and unstable slopes

State Neglect



Lack of public investment or maintenance

Fragmented Governance



No single agency is accountable

Incremental Legalization

Phased tenure recognition
Adaptive zoning
Protection from displacement

Community Stewardship

Maintenance cooperatives
Resident monitoring
Local knowledge as infrastructure

Distributed Water + Sanitation

Decentralized treatment
Visible, repairable systems
Right to water

Ecological Restoration as Public Investment

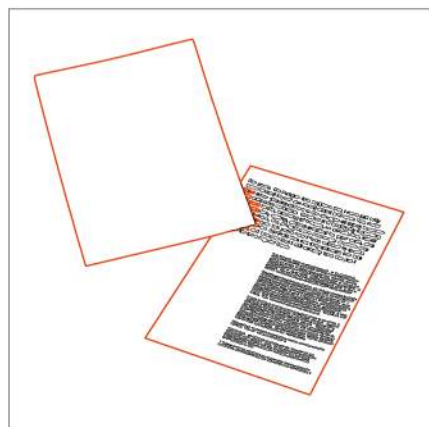
Slope stabilization
Watershed repair
Native revegetation

Support for Informal Economies

Micro-finance
Skills + training
Productive public edges

Participatory Governance

Participatory budgeting
Community councils
Transparency + accountability



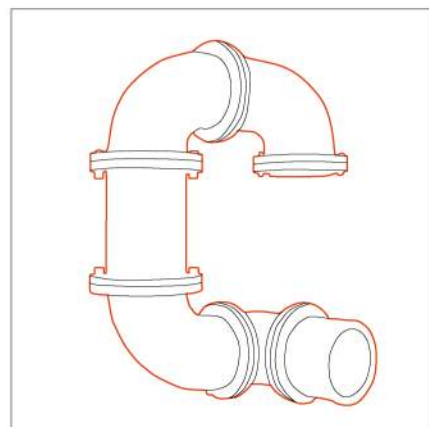
Recognized Tenure

Security without displacement;
legal protection for residents



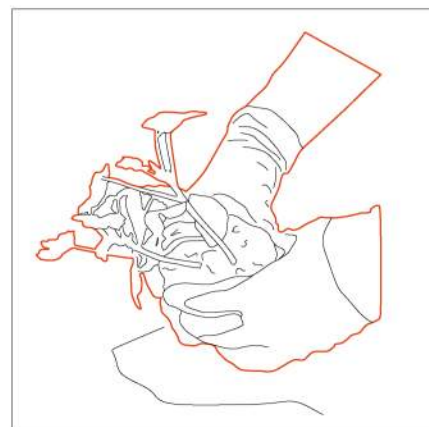
Collective Maintenance Networks

Residents as paid stewards;
maintenance as dignified labor



Publicly Supported Sanitation

Clean water systems
maintained collectively



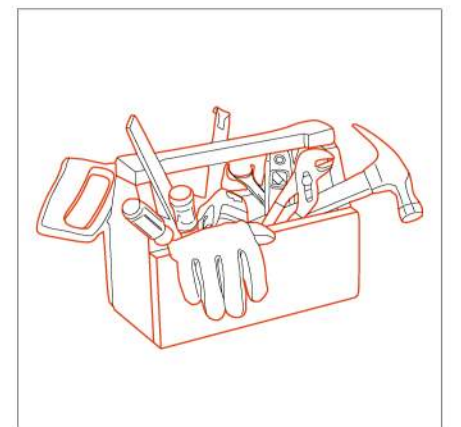
Ecological Integration

Creek, settlement and infrastructure
function as one living system



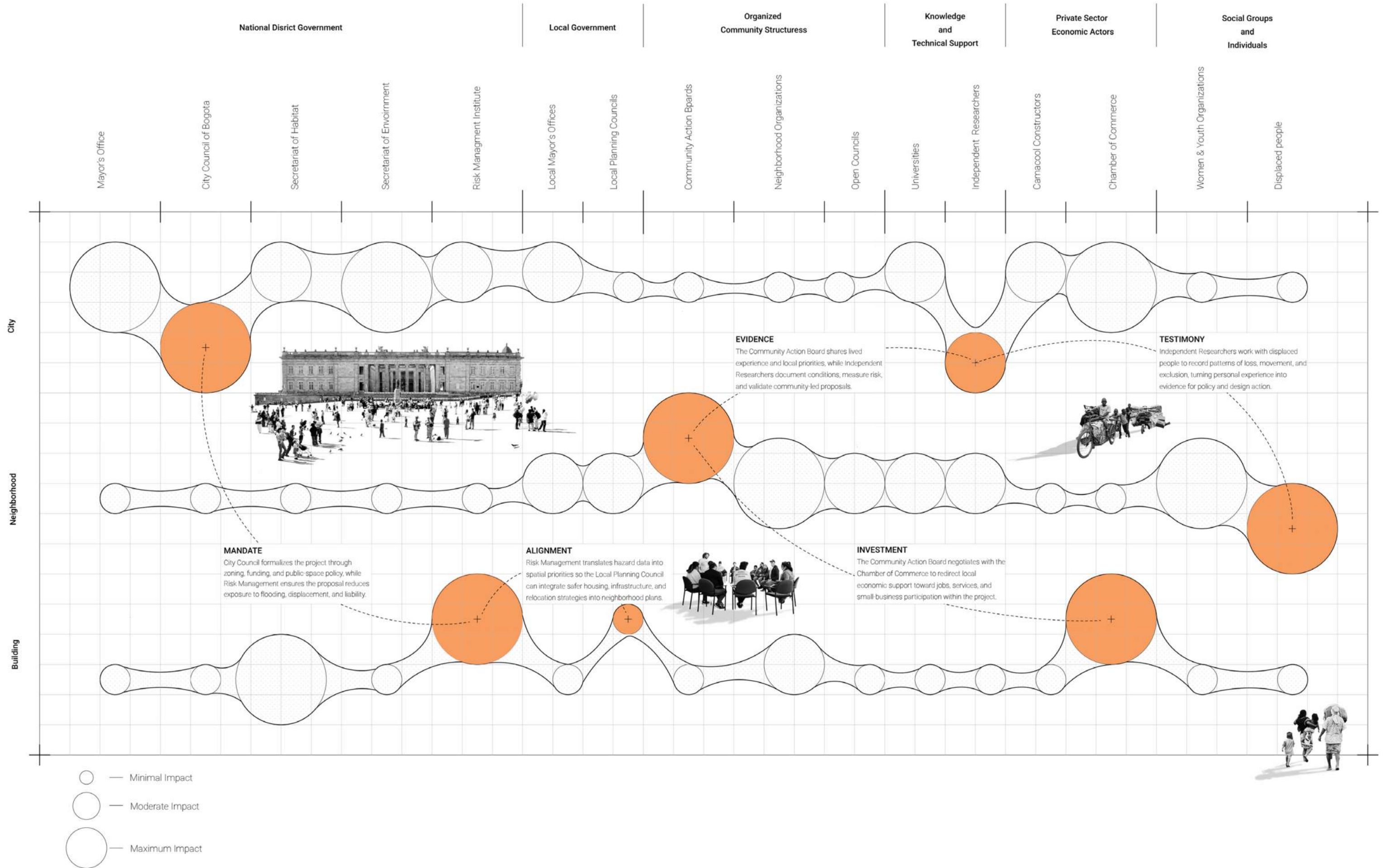
Productive Public Space

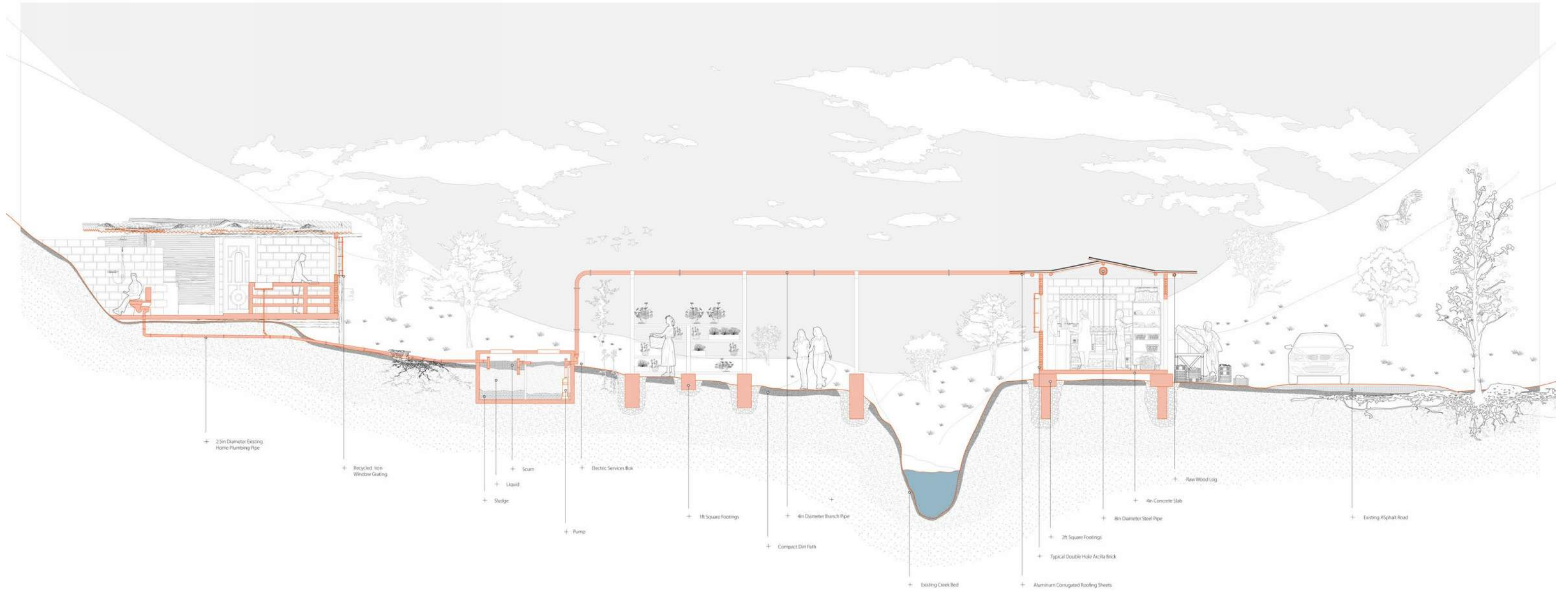
Markets, gathering, care,
and local economies thrive



Stabilized Slopes

Risk reduction through
ecological and structural repair





In the self-built dwelling, the toilet and sink discharge into a simple interior waste line that the builder routes through the wall and down the slope by gravity. The layout reflects the builder's pragmatic detailing: short pipe runs, accessible cleanouts, and slopes sized to maintain continuous flow.

The Home

Household blackwater flows by gravity into a small on-site septic tank, where solids settle and effluent is partially clarified. A compact pump then lifts the treated effluent through a vertical riser into the elevated trunk line to a sealed conduit running along the creek where it continues downstream for safe transport and further treatment.

The Tank

clarified effluent into linear planter beds set on wooden slats. The flow is distributed through perforated drip laterals that release only pre-filtered greywater, allowing the plants to uptake moisture while excess filters back into a gravel layer. Any remaining effluent bypasses this diversion and continues toward the main trunk line for conveyance.

The Garden

With blackwater and greywater rerouted into the elevated trunk, the creek is no longer a waste channel and its water quality begins to recover. This cleaner flow supports the larger tributary system downstream, reducing pollutant loads and improving overall watershed health.

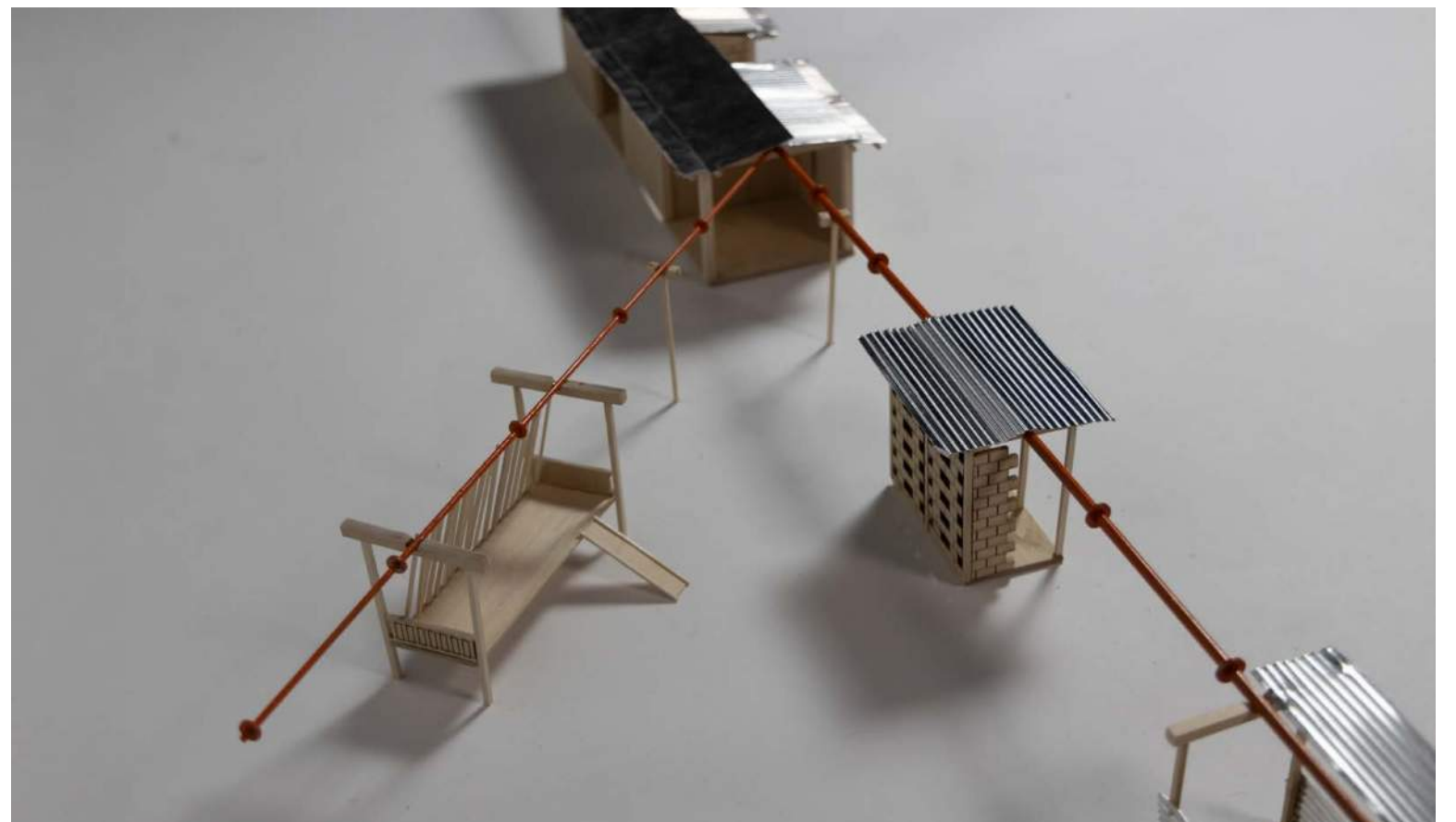
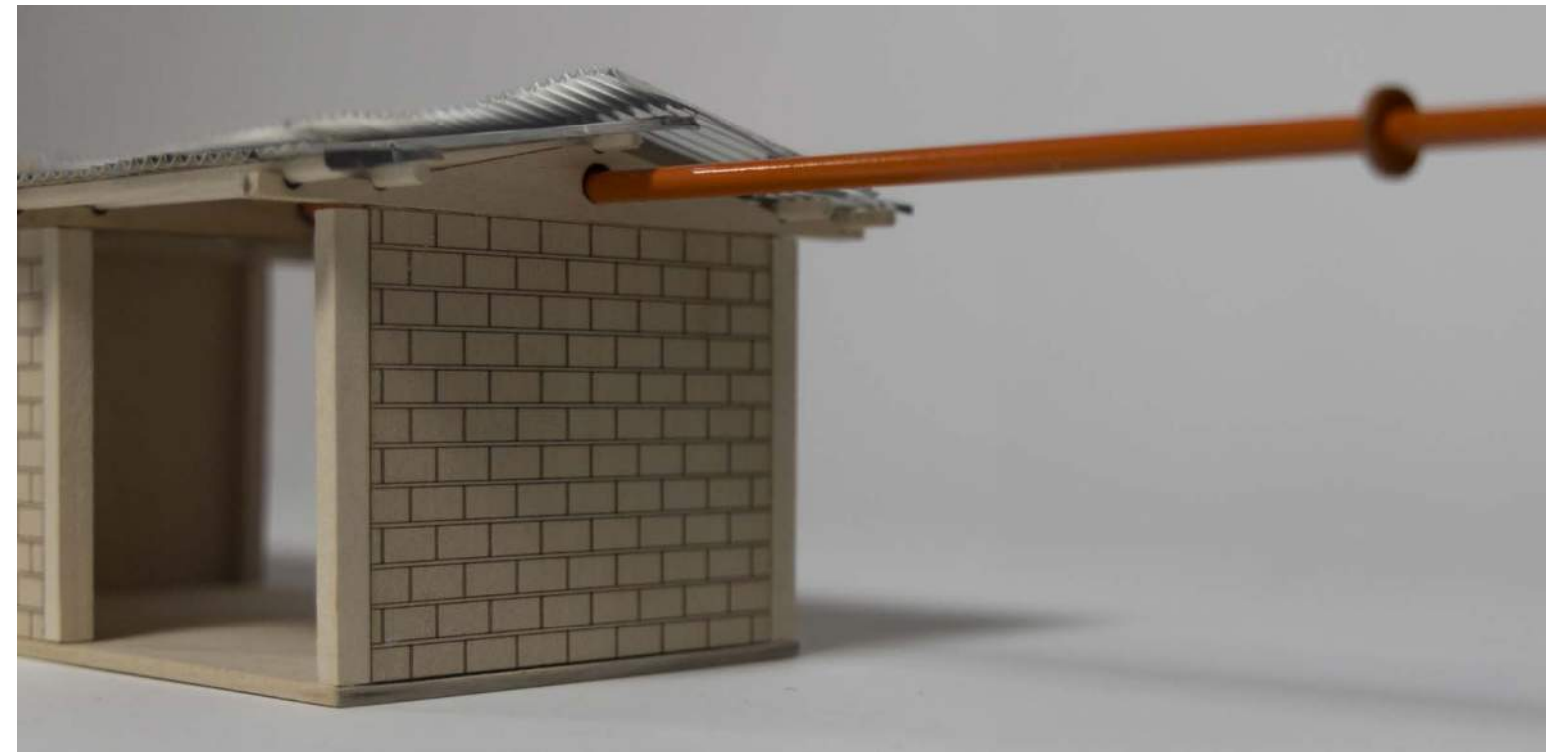
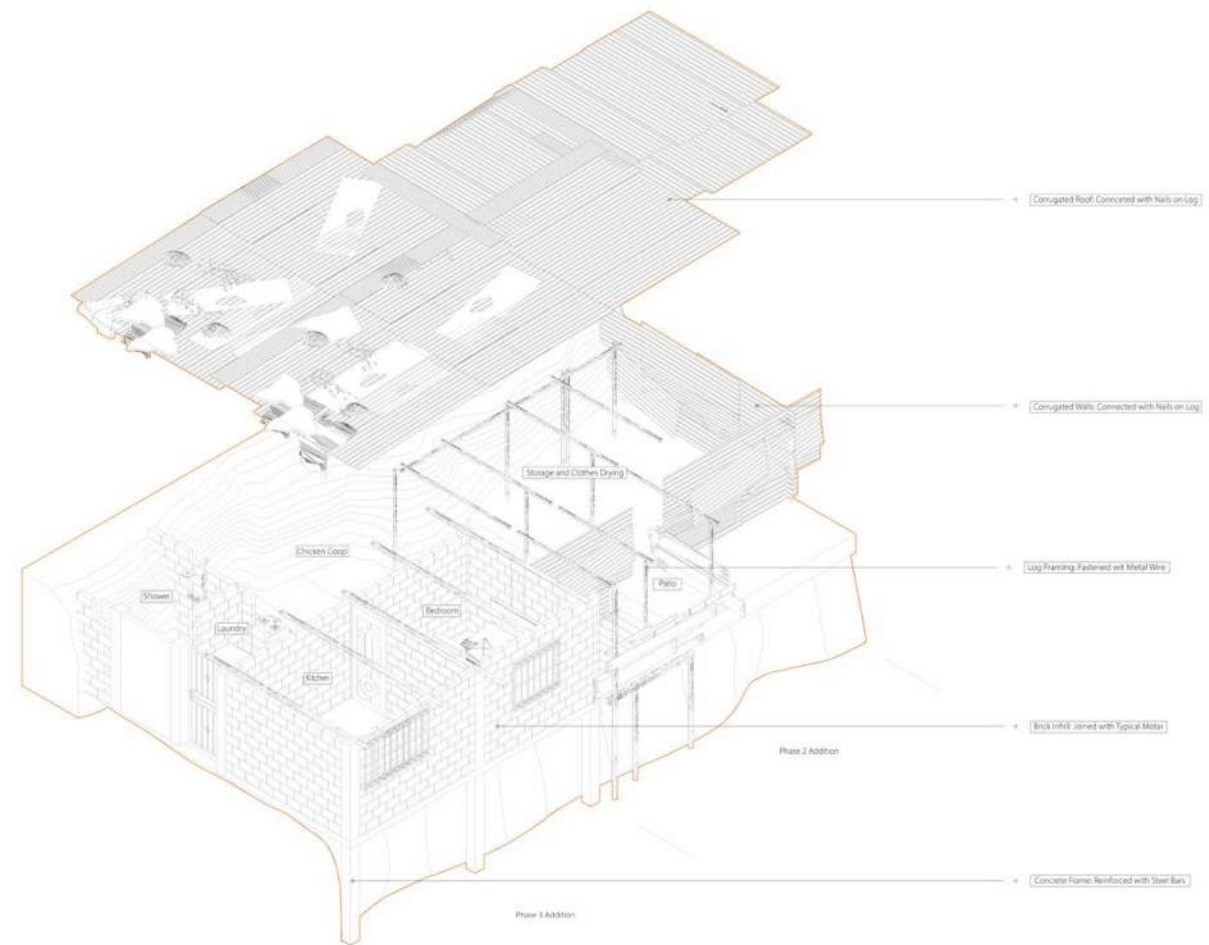
The creek

A small tienda sits beneath the modular 10x10 frame, providing a nearby source for groceries and activating the local micro-economy. The lightweight frame system allows residents to assemble or adapt the shop easily while remaining integrated with the elevated main pipe above.

The Tienda

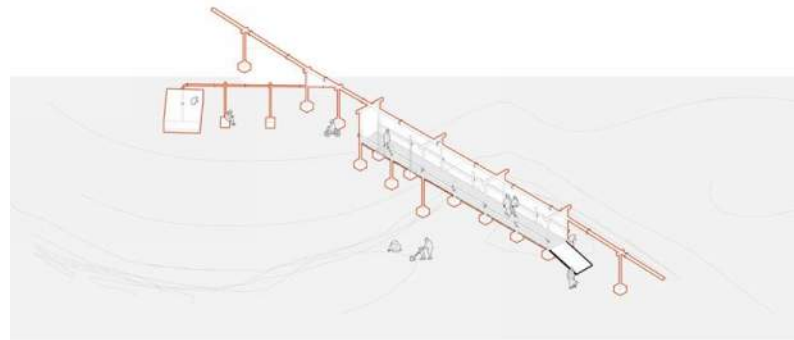
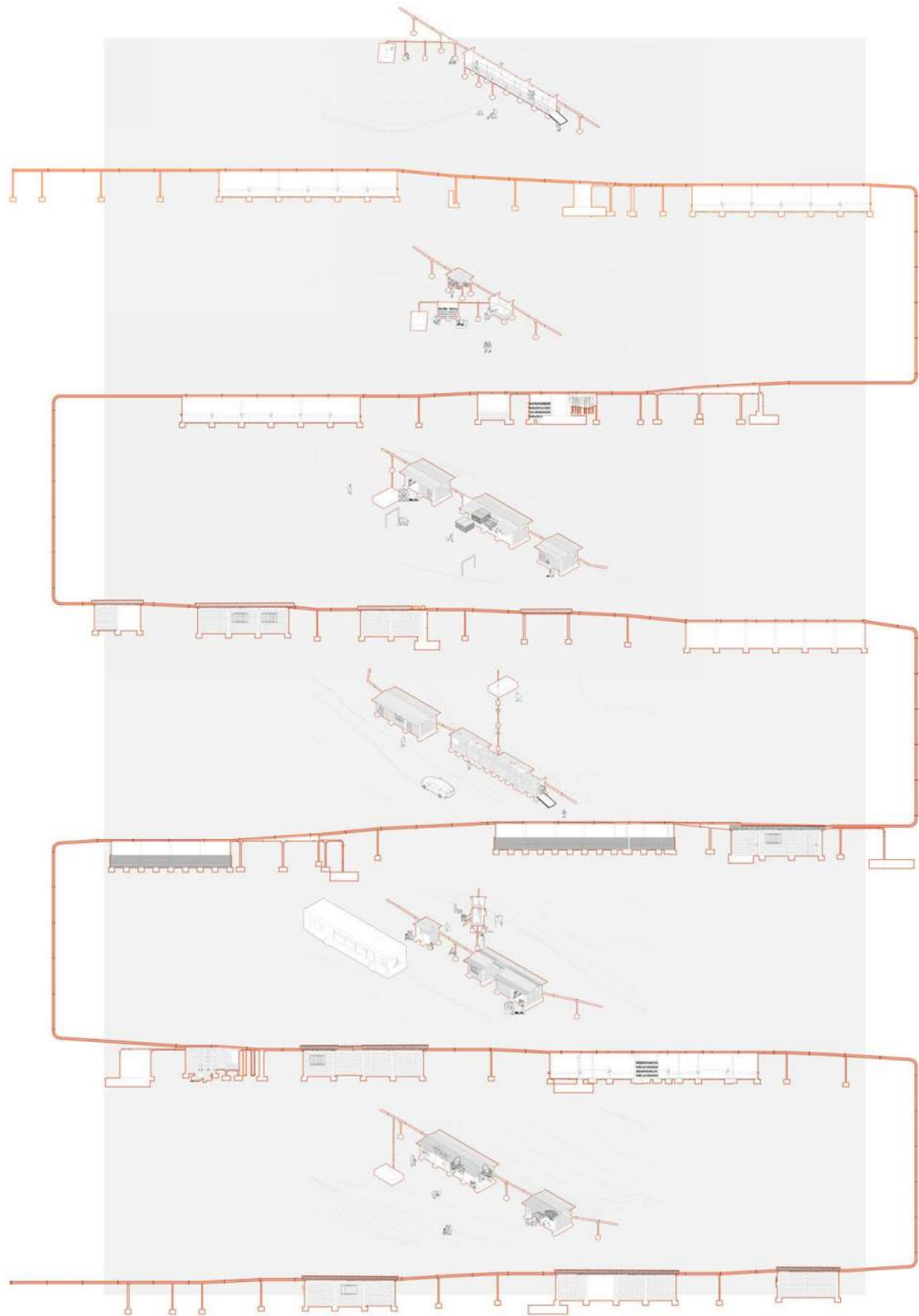
A standard local road runs along the valley edge, providing everyday access for residents and service vehicles. Its alignment accommodates the passing bus route, maintaining essential mobility without interfering with the elevated pipe system.

The Road



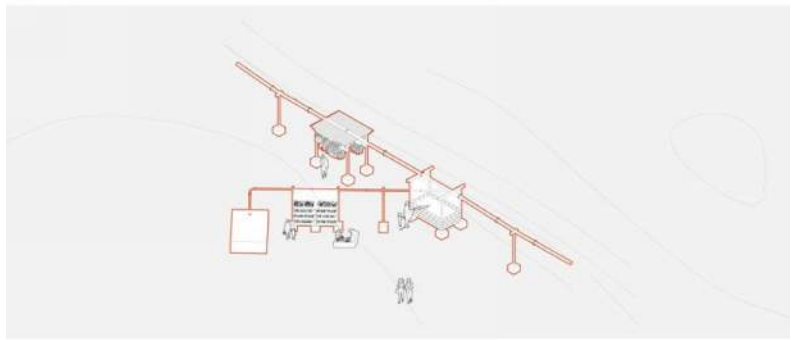
	Stage 1			Stage 2				Stage 3		
Material	Soil [Adobe]	Bambo [Guadua]	Recycled Materials [Carton] [Latas] [Plastico]	Plastic Sheeting [Tarpaulin/ Lona]	Wood/ Timber [Madera]	Corrugated Metal Sheet [Lamina de Zinc]	Asbestos Cement [Placa de Eternit]	Brick [Ladrillo]	Concrete Mix [Cemento]	Concrete Block [Bloque de concreto]
Composition	Clay Sand Straw Water	Hollow grass culm Lignocellulose	Paper pulp Aluminum PET Mixed waste	Polyethylene PVC fibers	Cellulose Lignin Natural fibers	Thin galvanized steel sheets	Cement Asbestos Fibers	Clay Shale Water Fired in kiln	Cement Sand Gravel Water	Cement Sand Gravel Water
Uses	Flooring	Scaffolding	Walls Insulation Patching	Roofing Walls Weather Protection Floor Lining	Walls Floors Roof structure	Roofing Walls Doors	Roofing	Walls Partitions Facades	Floors Small Columns	Exterior walls
Pros	Affordable Sustainable Thermal mass	Renewable Lightweight Seismic Resistant	Free Reduction of waste Adaptable	Affordable Flexible Waterproof Immediate shelter	Lightweight Easy to cut Reusable Warmth	Affordable Durable Quick install Waterproof	Affordable Durable Fire resistant	Strong Affordable Permanence	Strong Permanent Available	Durable Fire Resistant Modular Available
Cons	Labor-intensive Erosion-Risk Seismic Vulnerability	Requires Treatment Not Widely Accepted	Not Durable Unsafe in Rain Flammable	Not Durable Flammable Traps Heat No Structural Strength	Vulnerable to Rot Termites Humidity Fire-Risk Potential Low-Quality Source	Poor Insulation Potential Rust Easily Blown Off	Health Hazard Brittle	Requires Mortar Labor-intensive Thermal Conductivity	Requires Skill Curing Time Risk of Mixing Ratio	Heavy Requires Mortar Costly Poor Insulation
Replacement Time			2	4	6	8	10	12	14	





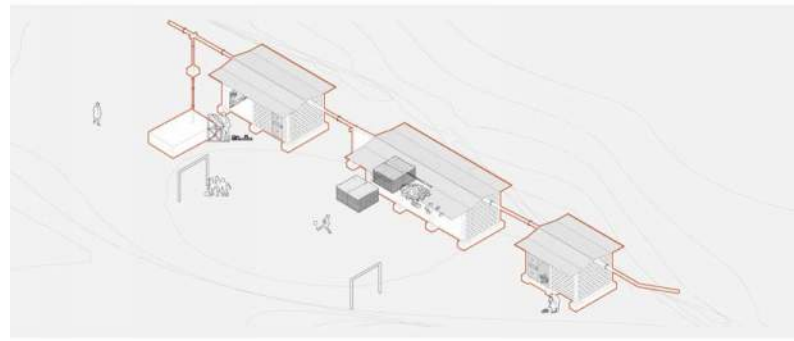
PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

Movement concentrates where paths intersect changes in elevation. Pedestrian bridges align with existing desire lines, allowing residents to cross the creek without descending into unstable terrain.



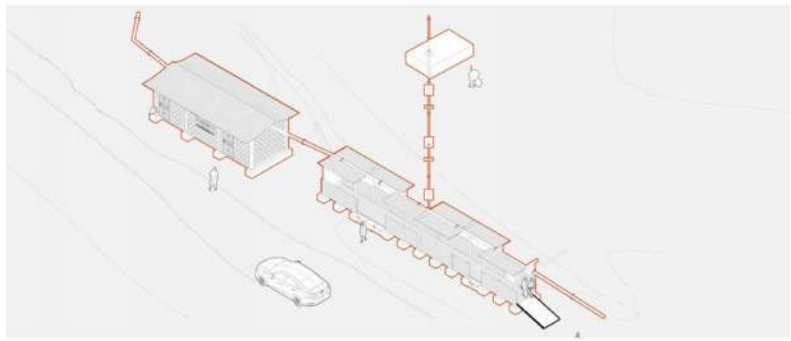
GARDEN SPACE | CLOTHES HANGING

Movement concentrates where paths intersect changes in elevation. Pedestrian bridges align with existing desire lines, allowing residents to cross the creek without descending into unstable terrain.



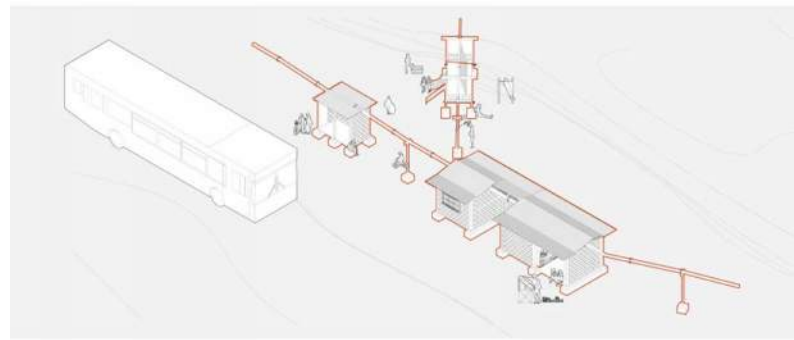
CONVENIENCE STORE | CHICKEN COOP

Movement concentrates where paths intersect changes in elevation. Pedestrian bridges align with existing desire lines, allowing residents to cross the creek without descending into unstable terrain.



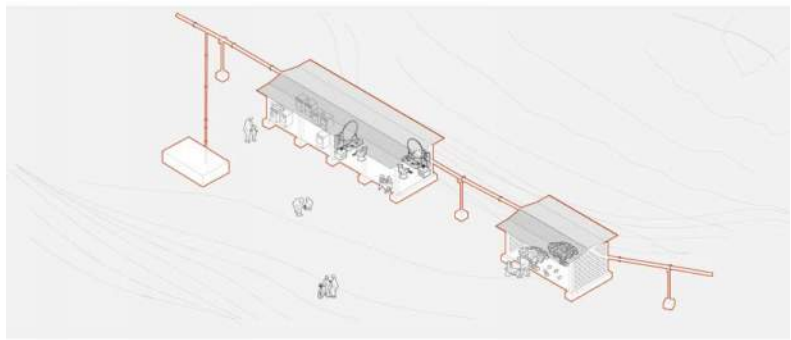
FLOOD BRIDGE | ROAD STORE

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PLAYGROUND | BUS STOP

Movement concentrates where paths intersect changes in elevation. Pedestrian bridges align with existing desire lines, allowing residents to cross the creek without descending into unstable terrain.



HAIR SALON | MATERIAL GATHERING

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