

This is the Shanti Housing Project.

Started by the private sector? Sort of.

Started by hope? Maybe, at some point.

But mostly—was started by necessity. A way to house the people who had nowhere else to go, right next to the place where everything else went.

Built on top of the waste, around the waste, beside the waste. The air is different here. It's cold, acrid, familiar. You don't notice it after a while, and that's the problem.

People live here. Kids grow up here. They play on warm, uneven ground—the heat from the decomposition rising under their feet like ghosts of everything the city wanted to forget.

That would be the first.

The waste leaks into everything: the water, the soil, the bodies. It becomes part of the architecture—plastic woven into insulation, metal scraps reinforcing crumbling walls. An ecosystem of salvage. A vernacular of temporality. A stopgap.

But temporary things have a way of becoming permanent when no one wants to look at them too closely.

The community adapted. Of course they did. People always adapt.

They created informal economies: waste picking, sorting, selling.

They built homes with no blueprints, grew plants in questionable soil, educated their children with stories of how not to end up like this—but no one really listened.

Except when election time comes, or when a fire breaks out and makes the headlines for a day or two. Then silence.

We used to say: this isn't sustainable.

But what does that even mean anymore?

It's sustaining itself, just not in the way you'd want to admit.

So we keep going.

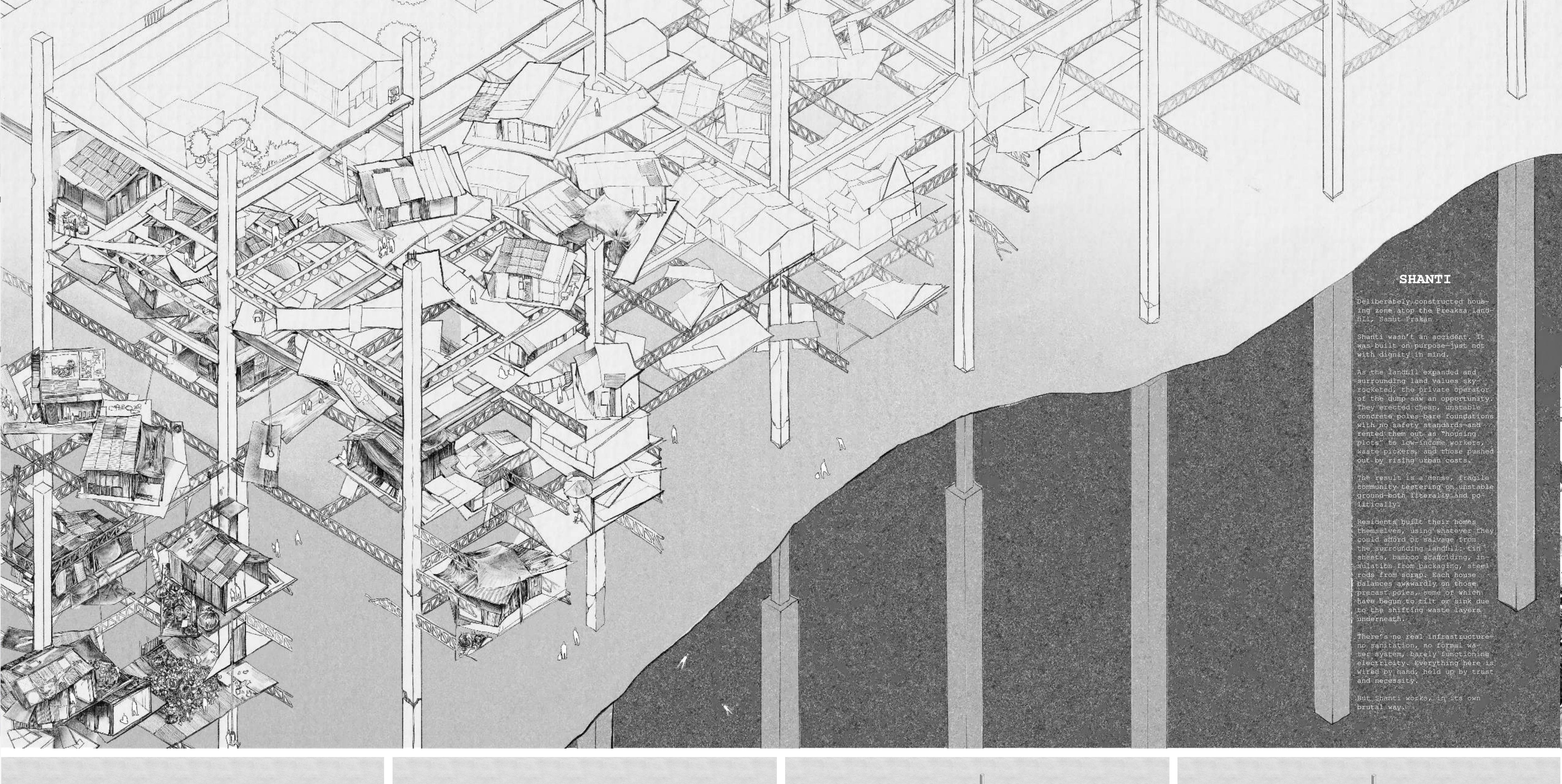
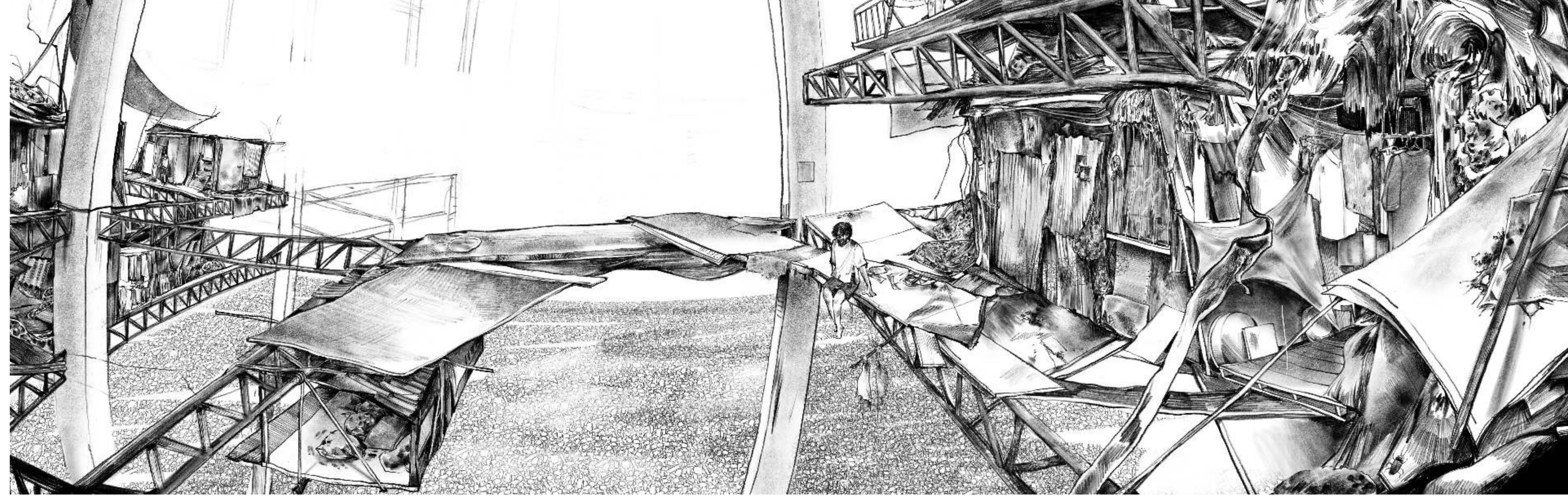
We bury the waste.

We build the homes.

We bury the problem.

And we call it Shanti.

What would be the last?



SHANTI

Deliberately constructed houses in the middle of a Plethora Landfill, Phra Samut Chedi, Thailand.

Shanti waste's an accident. It was built on purpose—but not with dignity in mind.

As the town expanded and surrounding land values skyrocketed, the private operator of the dump saw an opportunity.

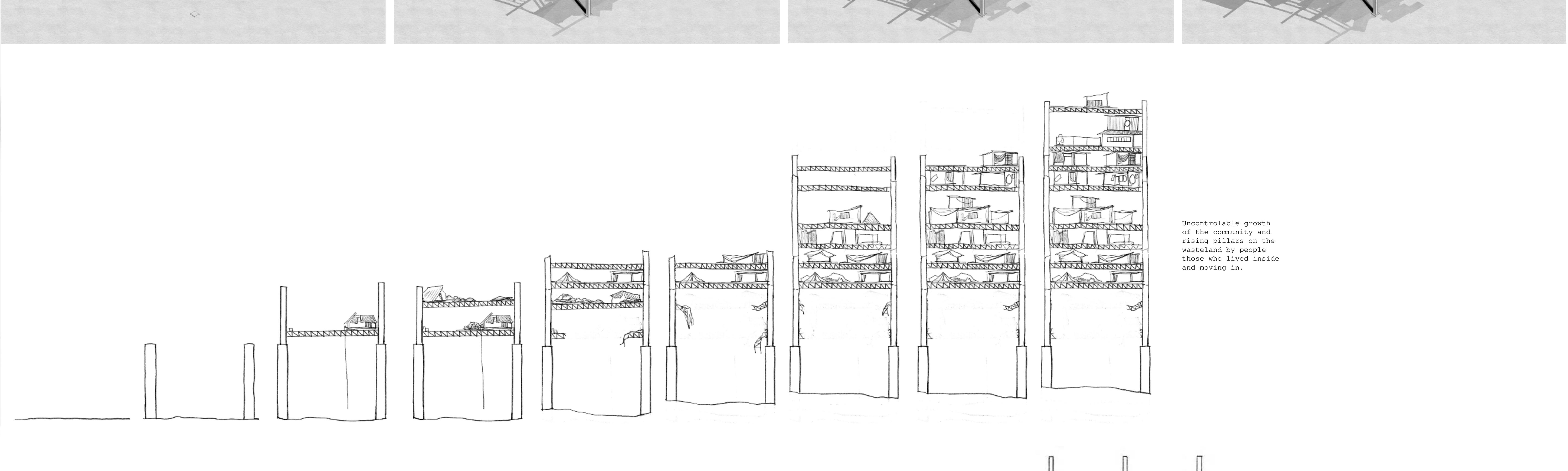
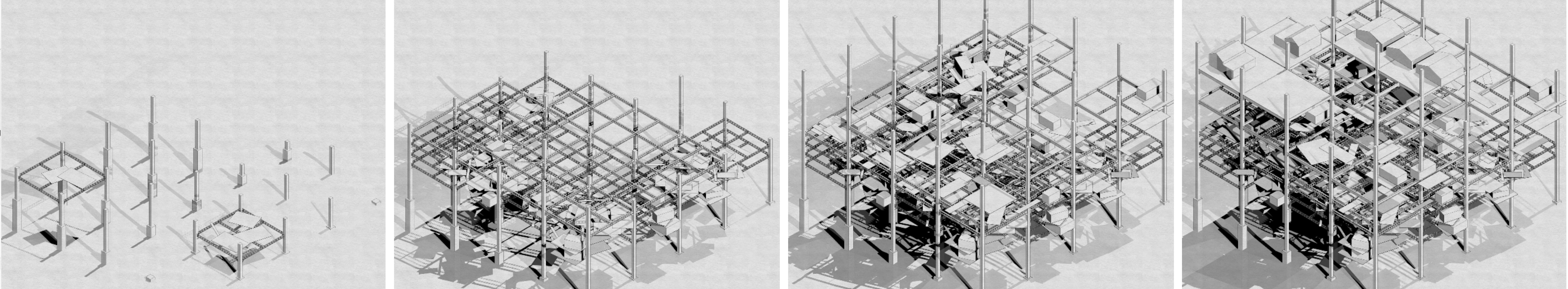
They began to build on compacted piles—bare foundations with no safety standards—and named them as "Shanti," which means "peace," "quiet," "waste picker," and those pushed out by rising urban costs.

The result is a dense, fragile community centered on unstable ground—but it's real, and it's lasting.

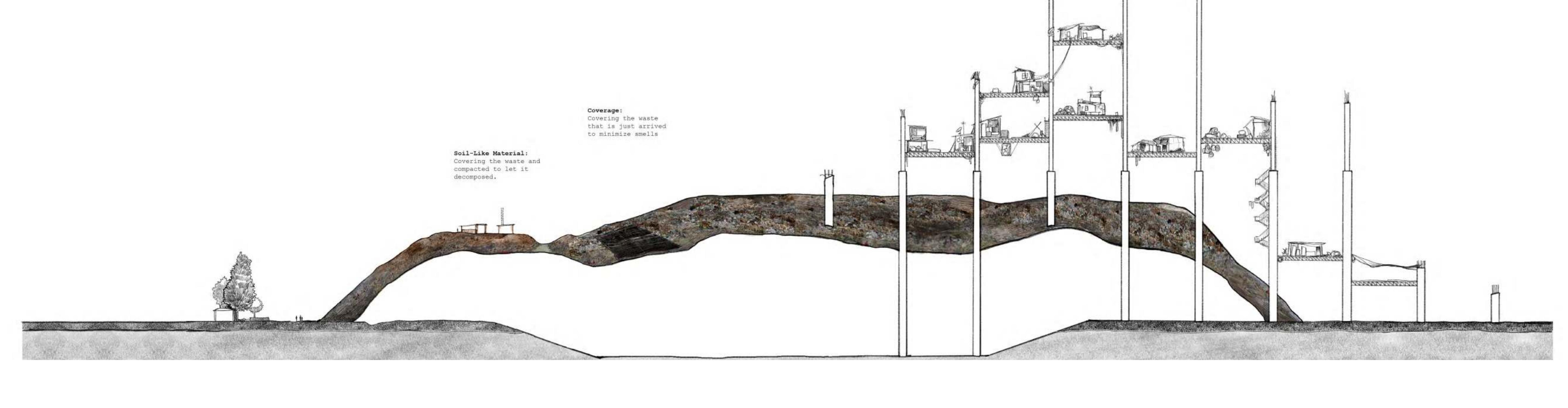
Residents built their homes themselves, using whatever they could afford or salvaged from the surrounding landfill. Can't afford lumber? Use scrap metal. Can't afford sheet rock? Use scrap rods from scrap. Each house balanced awkwardly on those shifting layers, which have begun to tilt or sink due to the shifting waste layers underneath.

There's no real infrastructure: no foundation, no formal waste management, no electricity. Everything here is wired by hand, held up by trust and ingenuity.

But Shanti works. In its own brutal way.



Uncontrollable growth of the community and rising pillars on the waste layers made those who lived inside and moving in.



Coverage:
Covering the waste
that is just arrived
to minimize smells

Soil-like Material:
Covering the waste and
compacted to let it
decompose.

