

If Eaves Dropped

Rethinking Privacy NOW

Mia Shucong Wang + Iris Yiwen Shen

Multi-generational Co-housing
Site: Omori, Tokyo, Japan

Pratt Institute Degree Project
Instructors Ostap Rudakevych Tulay Atak
Writing Professor Timothy Simonds



Thesis

Conventional understanding of **ownership**
realized through buying property

Redefinition of **architectural ownership**
claimed by enclosing a space



Thesis

Conventional understanding of **ownership**
realized through buying property

Redefinition of **architectural ownership**
claimed by enclosing a space

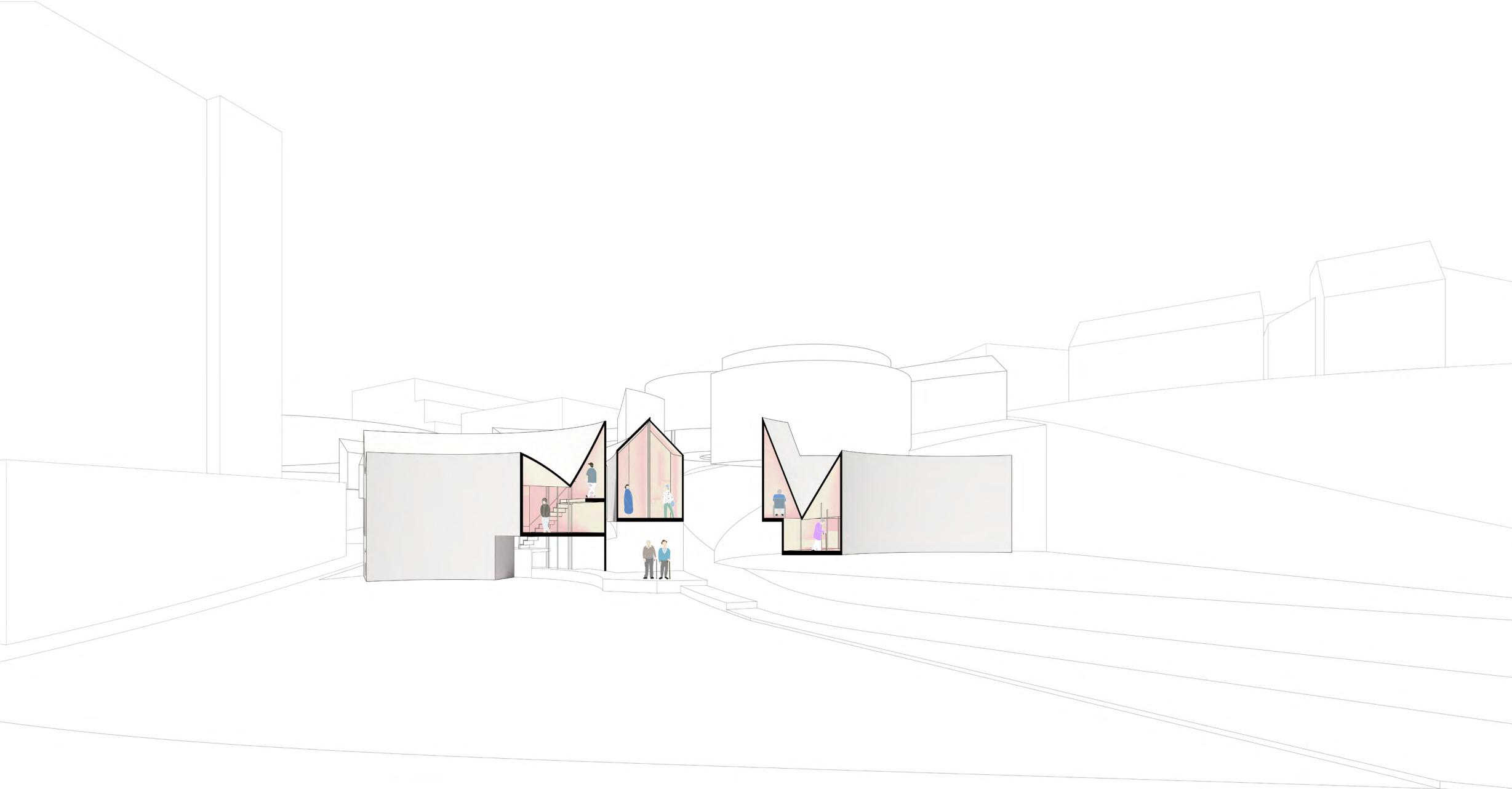
Our project imagines a new sense of privacy:
transient privacy, privacy without ownership,
established through curvilinear space and columns
that allow connection and separation. They allude
to enclosure but never offer a complete one in the
building.



Contents

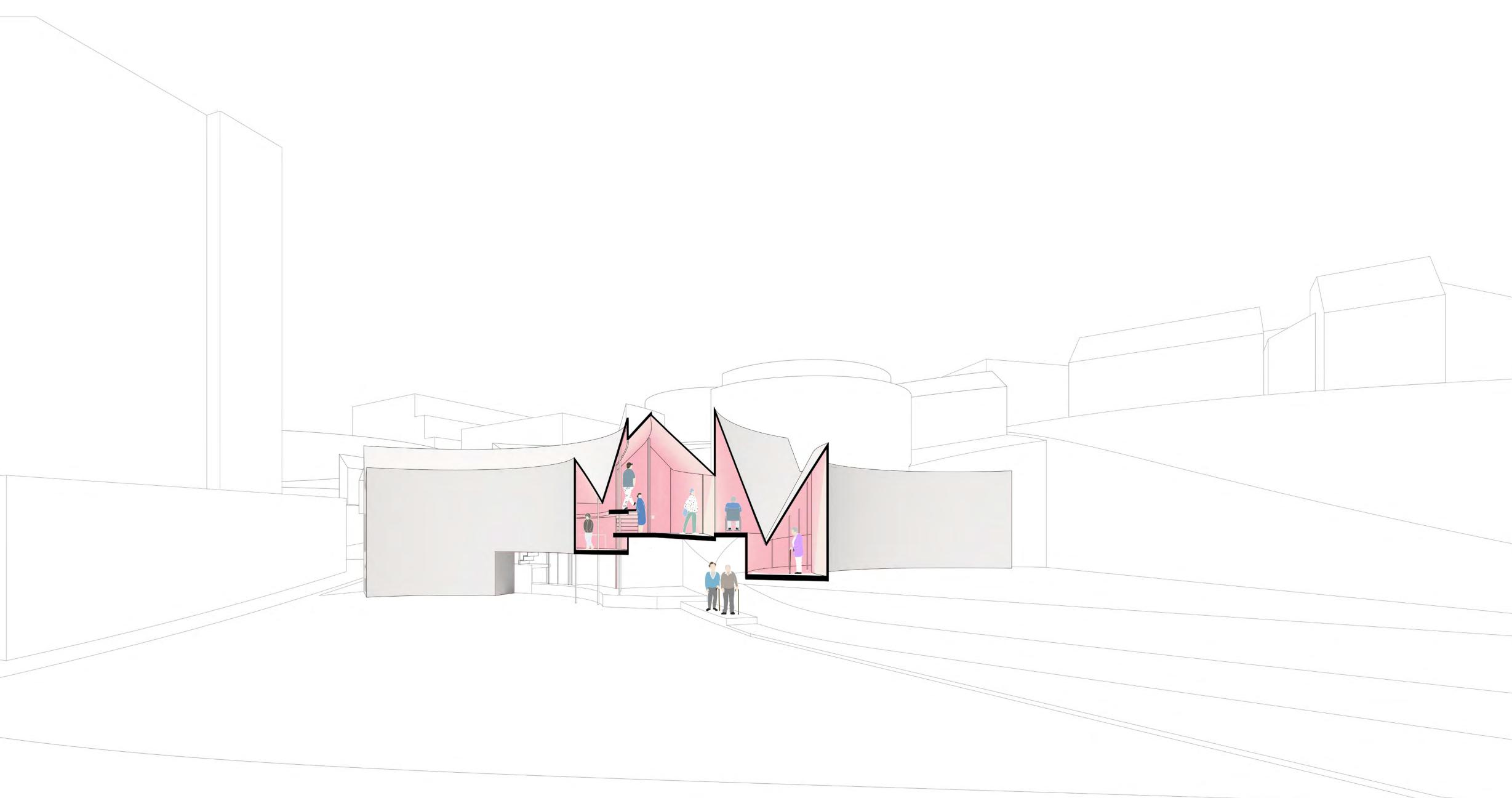
| | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Project Description | p. 5 |
| Genealogy Essay | |
| Iris | p. 9 |
| Mia | p. 16 |
| Concept Statement | |
| Iris | p. 14 |
| Mia | p. 15 |
| Design Statement | p. 25 |

Project Description



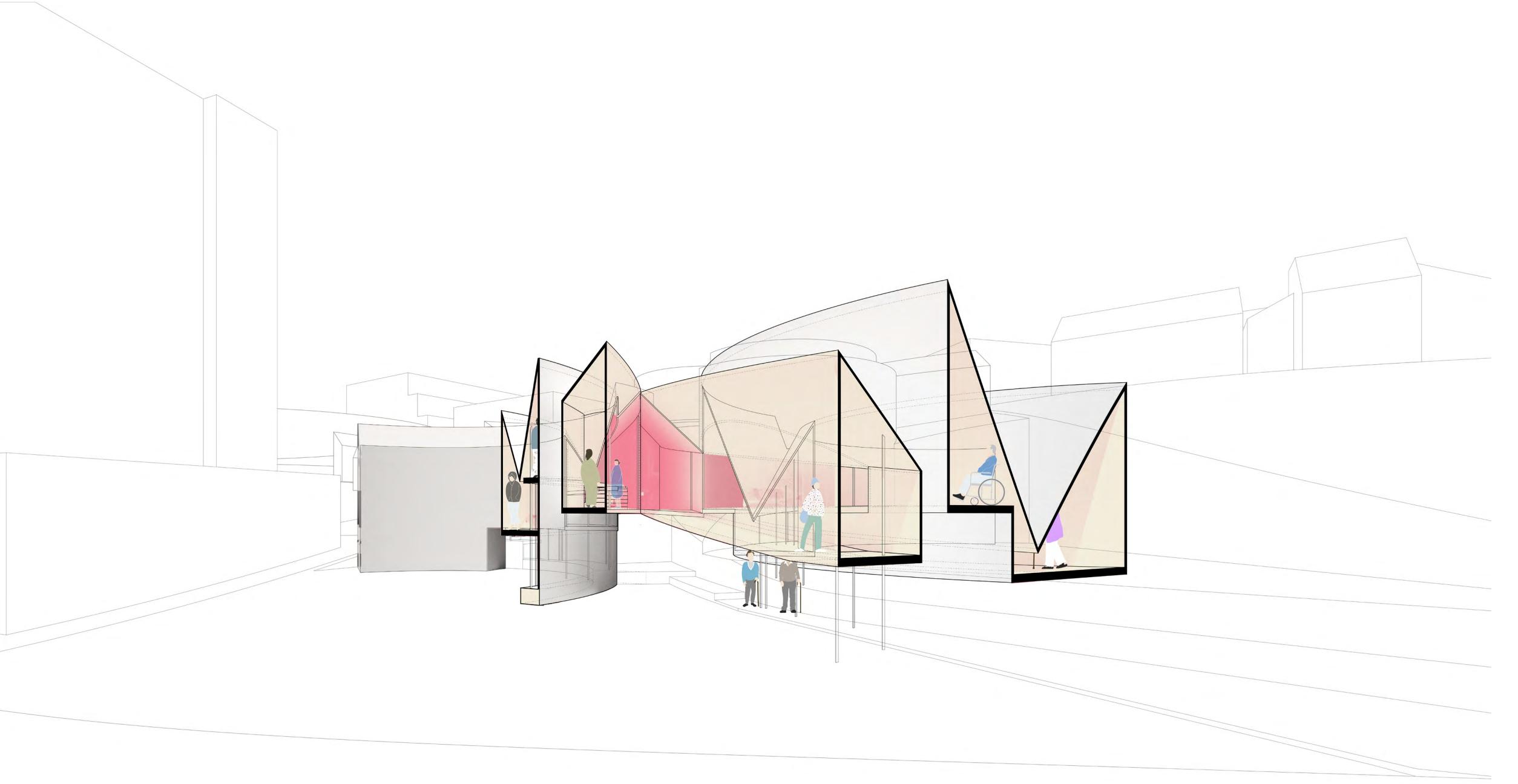
The conception of ownership is typically understood as buying, or possessing property. We are redefining ownership architecturally in relationship to enclosure. In any building one claims ownership of a space by enclosing a space. Traditionally one encloses a space through the control of accessibility, lighting condition, and visibility. Hence any interior space can be labeled as private once someone demonstrates his or her ability in controlling the enclosure. However, such forms of demonstrating ownership of a space is not equivalent to having one's own privacy. Individuals can lose control over opening and closing doors, switching on and off lights, and in having a private conversation. In other words, they can lose their ownership over a space, however, what cannot be removed in the same way is one's privacy.

Project Description



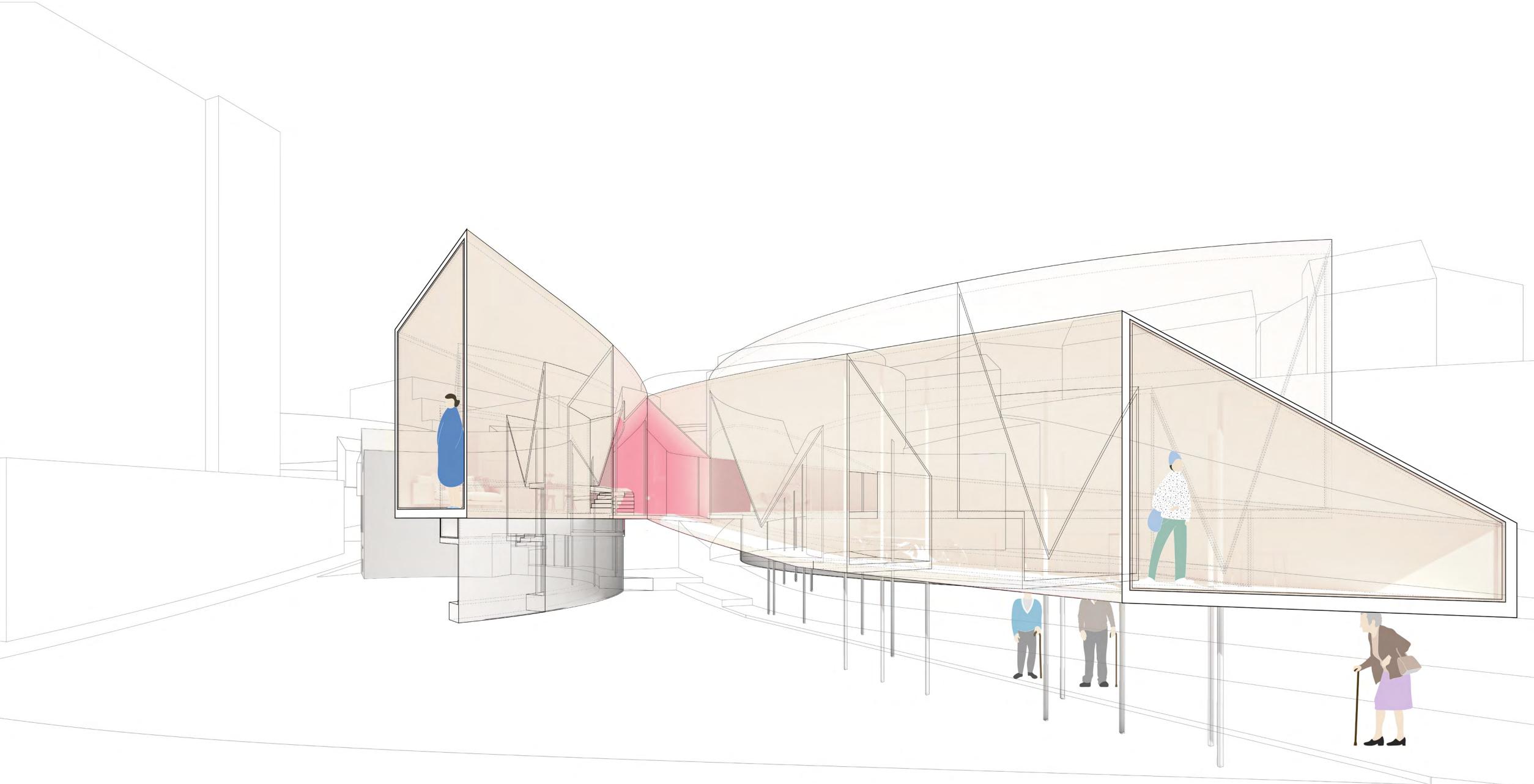
Our project provokes a new sense of privacy: transient privacy, in other words, privacy without ownership, established through curvilinear space and columns that allow connection and separation, but never offer a complete enclosure in the building. The familiar four-walled room is erased; consequently no one can mark their territory through the act of closing a door.

Project Description

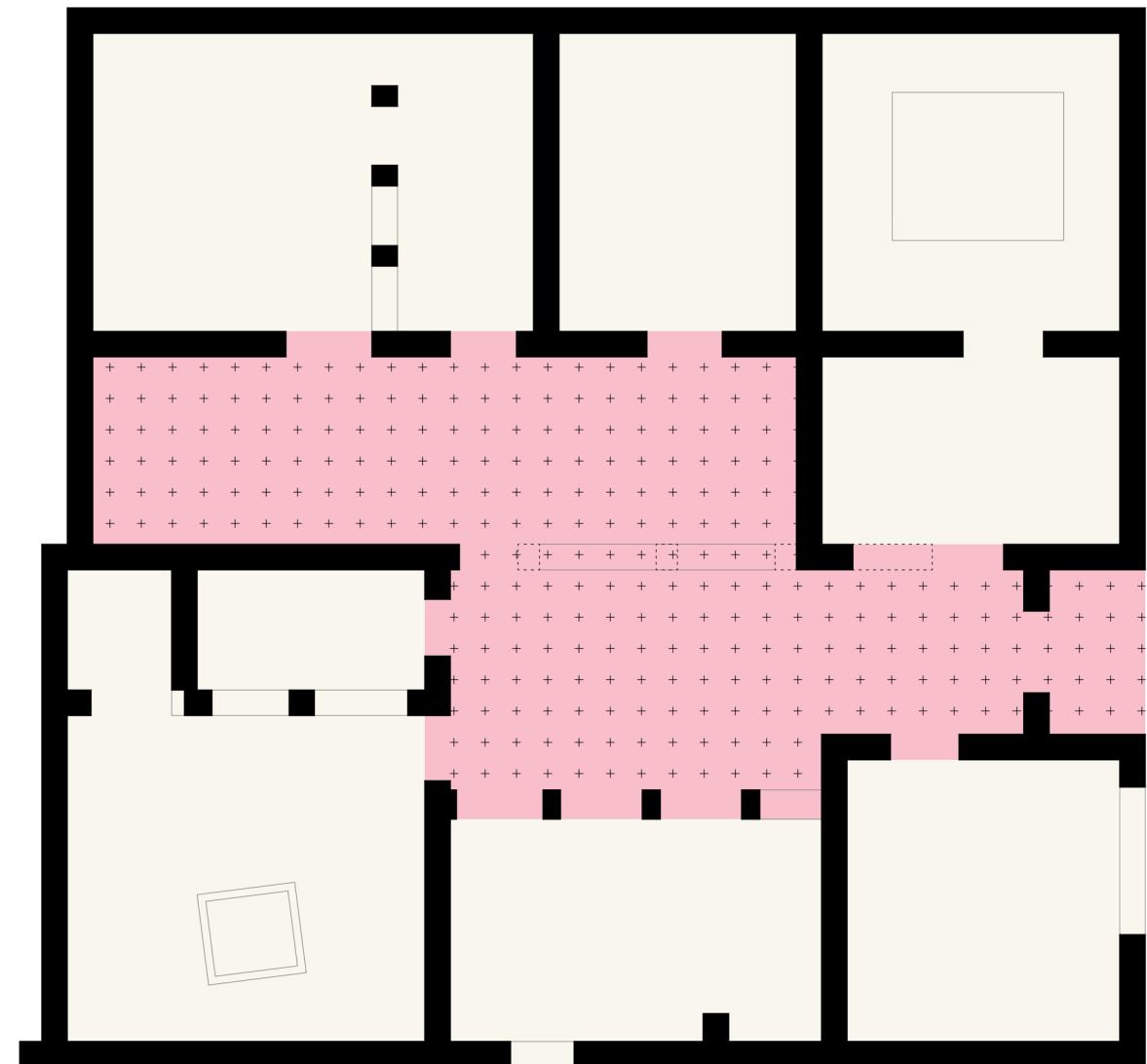


“Transient privacy” is a product of the digital age. A technological turn that happened around the 1970s and has profoundly affected the way we think about and discuss privacy, but it has not evidenced these new perspectives architecturally. 50 years later we are still talking about the duality of the online-offline world but have not matured our formal ways of understanding it. Back in 1997, Toyo Ito wrote in his essay, Tarzans in the Media Forest, back in 1997: A graphic designer skilled in the use of the computer says he has the odd sensation that part of his body starts to flow into the screen whenever he sits at a computer. ‘The inside of a computer is of course not inside myself, but it is not outside either.’ The boundary is vague and he cannot tell how far the self extends. The Internet has revolutionized our way of thinking about boundaries in relation to privacy. One became increasingly comfortable in extending oneself through sharing information with strangers online, to put another way, one’s boundary could change tremendously and swiftly in the virtual world; however such acceptance of a much more negotiable boundary is never reflected architecturally in the physical world. We are still stuck with the room-corridor organization that was based upon 19th century European conception of privacy.

Project Description



Robin Evans elaborates in his essay, Figures, Doors, and Passages, contrasting to the Renaissance period when the society was fond of carnality and gregariousness and was spatially reflected in the organization of connected rooms, in the 19th century the society found carnality distasteful, hence the corridor was devised and applied vastly since then. The clear separation between room and corridor represents a clear division between private and public. Such conception of privacy is rooted in European architecture and actually can be traced back to the ancient Greek times when a typical Greek house is composed of private rooms and a public courtyard. The courtyard can be understood as the ancestor of a corridor as it serves the circulatory function of the household. For us to rethink privacy in the context of the “digital age”, we must break ourselves from the binary organization of room-and-corridor and formally express how transient privacy affects the way we live.



private rooms

public courtyard

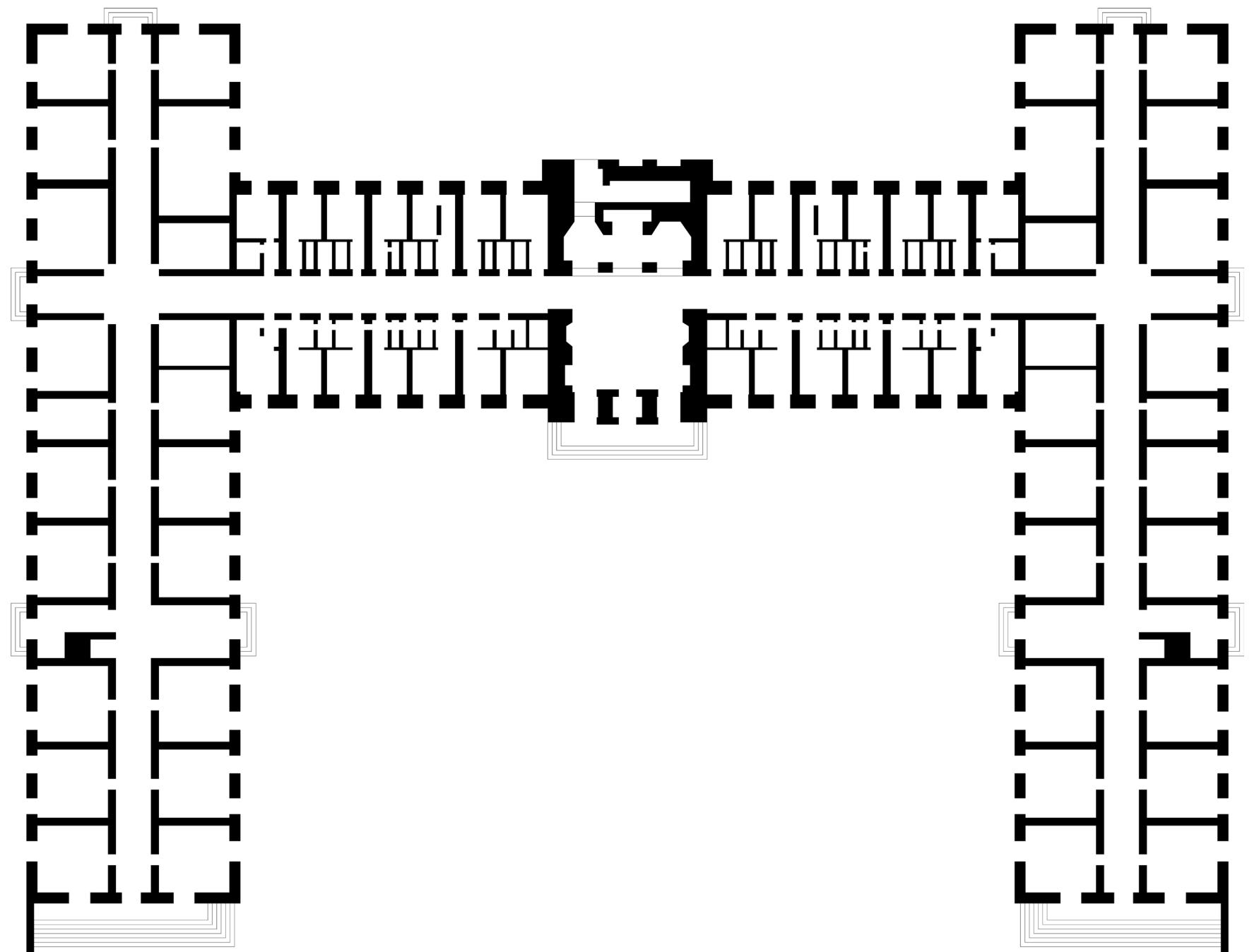
In the contemporary times our life has become extremely individualized. It is shown in all aspects of life, ranging from owning a smartphone to possessing one's own room. Privacy is no longer desired as it has come to this given condition provided by the complete enclosure of a room. Tracing back to the 19th century when the corridor system was devised, German-Israeli architect Alexander Klein explicitly commended on corridor in assisting the smoothening of the domestic machine. Corridor allows for all paths to be separated from each other and hence removing all possible friction that could be generated from domestic living. Ever since then, corridor system takes over the domestic design and more walls have been put up to clearly define the various function specifically ascribed to the rooms. The occupants inevitably develop a more isolated way of living. Isolation becomes an epidemic symptom of modernity since we are only passively accepting the side effect of the existing domestic planning model. To critically address such isolation, we must bring back people's desire for privacy.

Architecture has always been an effective tool when it comes to isolating users, the most radical precedent of which is the Panopticon model proposed by the English philosopher and social theorist Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century. The word Panopticon derives from panoptes, meaning "all seeing" in Greek. Immediately the title becomes self-explanatory in that Jeremy Bentham set out to design an institution model that enables the people in charge to be able to see and supervise everyone simultaneously. He first published his plan for the Panopticon penitentiary in 1791. His conception of an "all-seeing place" resulted in a radial organization. The inspector is placed in the center of the structure, while the individual cells are organized along the perimeter. Walls are put up to physically separate one from the other, yet meanwhile all inmates are exposed to the gaze of the guard at all times. There isn't a trace of privacy in the building.

Source | Aureli, P. V. , & Giudici, M. S. (2016)
Familiar Horror: Toward a Critique of
Domestic Space. Log 38

Degree Project | If Eaves Dropped
Mia Shucong Wang + Iris Yiwen Shen

Saumur Barracks, 1765



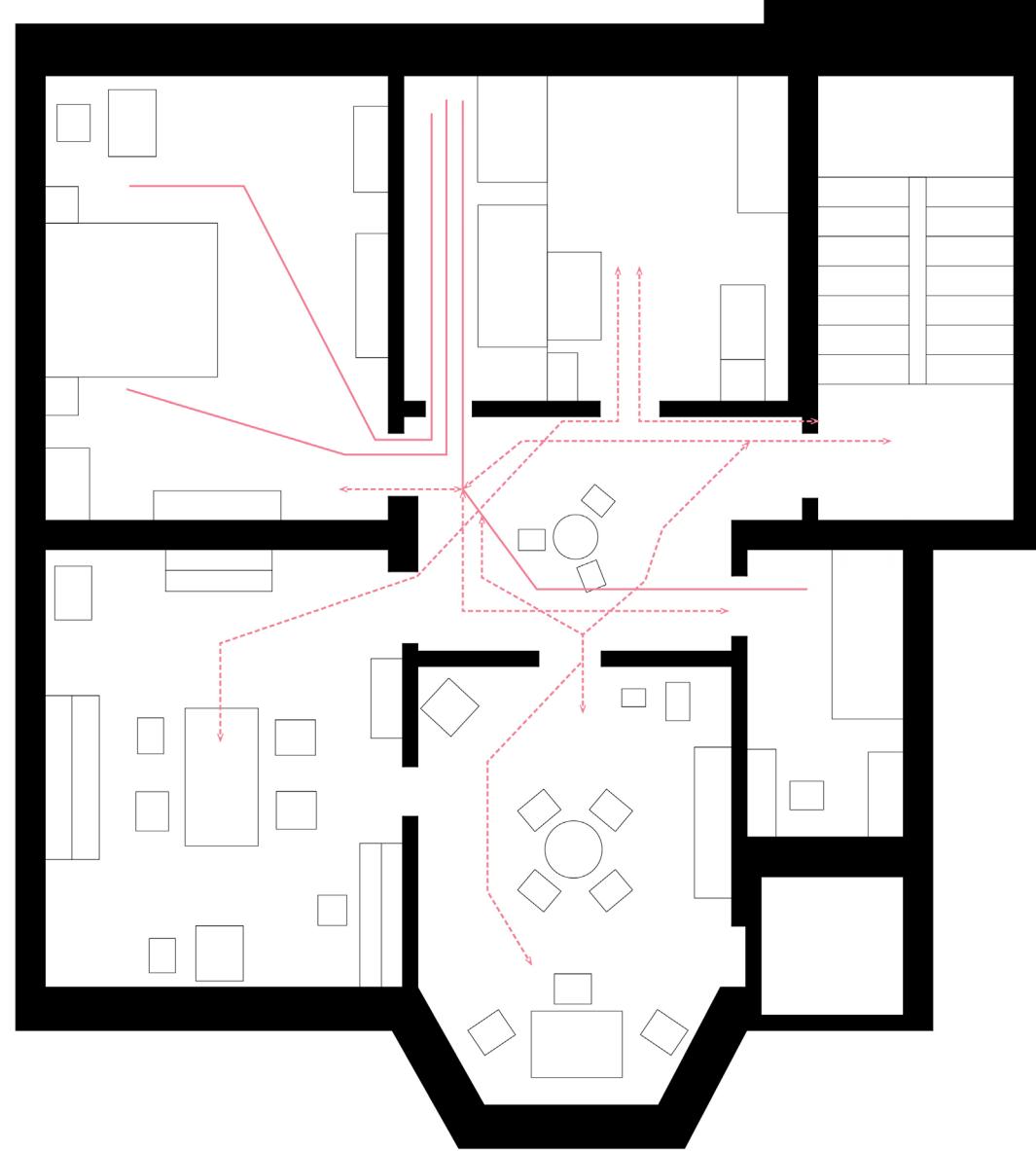
On the contrary, the White U House designed by Toyo Ito stands as a fitting exemplar as a piece of architecture that houses occupants who themselves desire isolation. Toyo Ito's sister commissioned him to build a stand-alone house in memory of her husband's sudden passing away. The single floor house closes itself from the noisy streetscape by erecting an unadorned concrete facade; meanwhile, the height of the facade also ensures the central courtyard is undisturbed. Programs are organized along the straight edges, while the curved part was serving as a continuous transition space. Due to the elimination of apertures on the facade, light is controlled through minimal openings on the inner walls and skylights; it can only come in during certain times of the day and subject to change along with the season. The curved section is rendered as sublime and infinite merely by light and shadow. After twenty years of dwelling the client, along with her two children, decided that they had found the direction and were ready to move on. The building was eventually demolished in 2007, putting a full stop to her grief and isolation. The client and her family reacquired their identity and meaning of life through the isolation that the house provided. The privacy desired by the occupants was provided by monolithic concrete facades that segregates the interior of the building from the disturbing urbanscape. In the current society, nevertheless, privacy is never desired, but rather a given condition provided by the integrity of a room and have been very much taken for granted. The loss of desire for privacy results in people losing their identities as American philosopher Raymond Geuss identifies three motives to why humans desire privacy at all, and one of the last reasons remains:

Thirdly because being aware of the presence of others could have an inhibiting effect on the performances of certain activities (cursing, writing letters, sex) that are recognized as constitutive of personality.

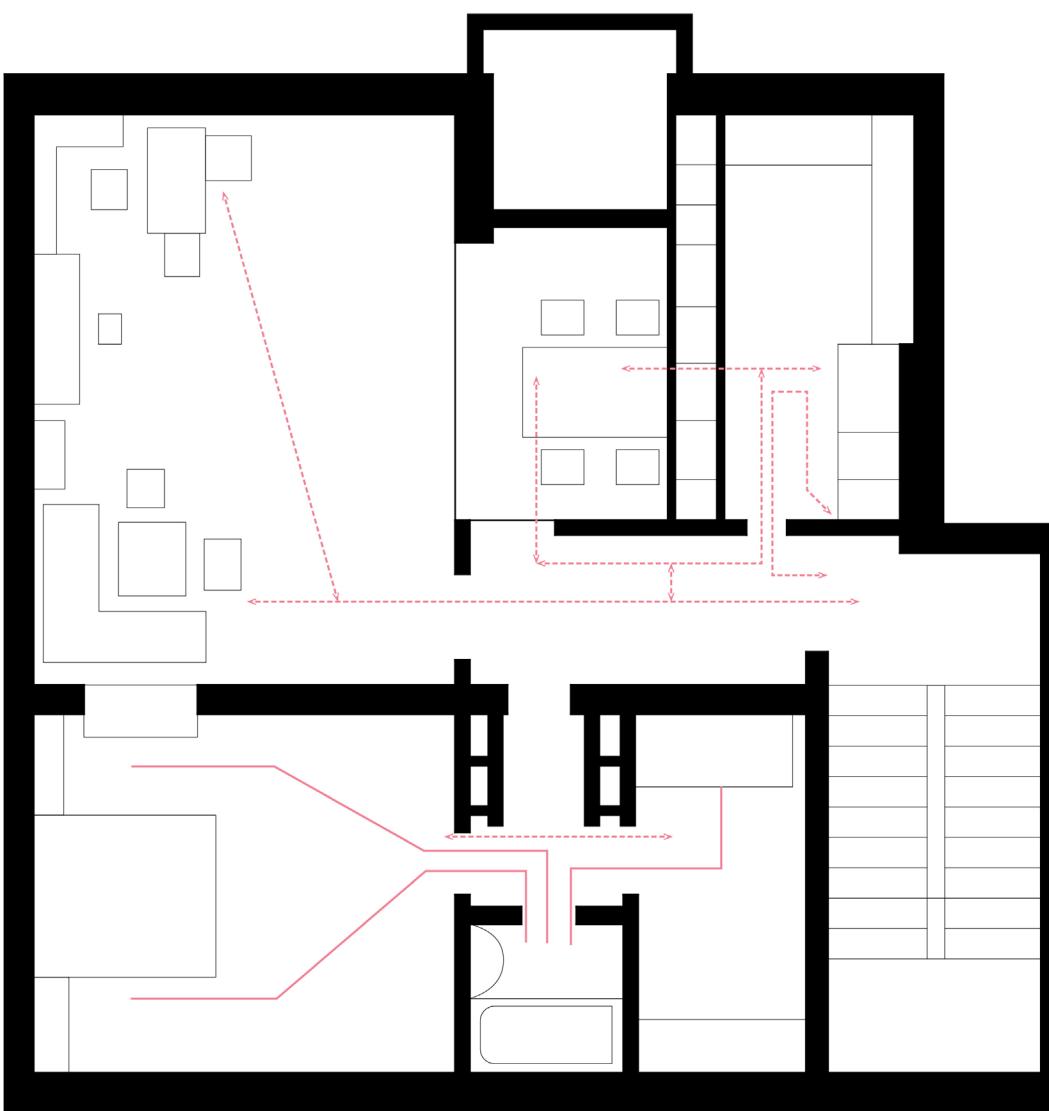
Hence in order to address the numbness of people accepting privacy as a passive condition causing epidemic isolation, we must recognize the relationship between privacy and rooms first.

Source | Jarzombek, Mark (2010)
Corridor Spaces

Functional House for Frictionless Living, 1928



“bad example”



“good example”

Source | Evans, Robin (1978)
Figures, Doors, and Passages

Privacy originates from the idea of a room. Hannah Arendt defines privacy as follows:
The distinction between the private and public realms, seen from the viewpoint of privacy rather than of the body politic, equals the distinction between things that should be shown and things that should be hidden.

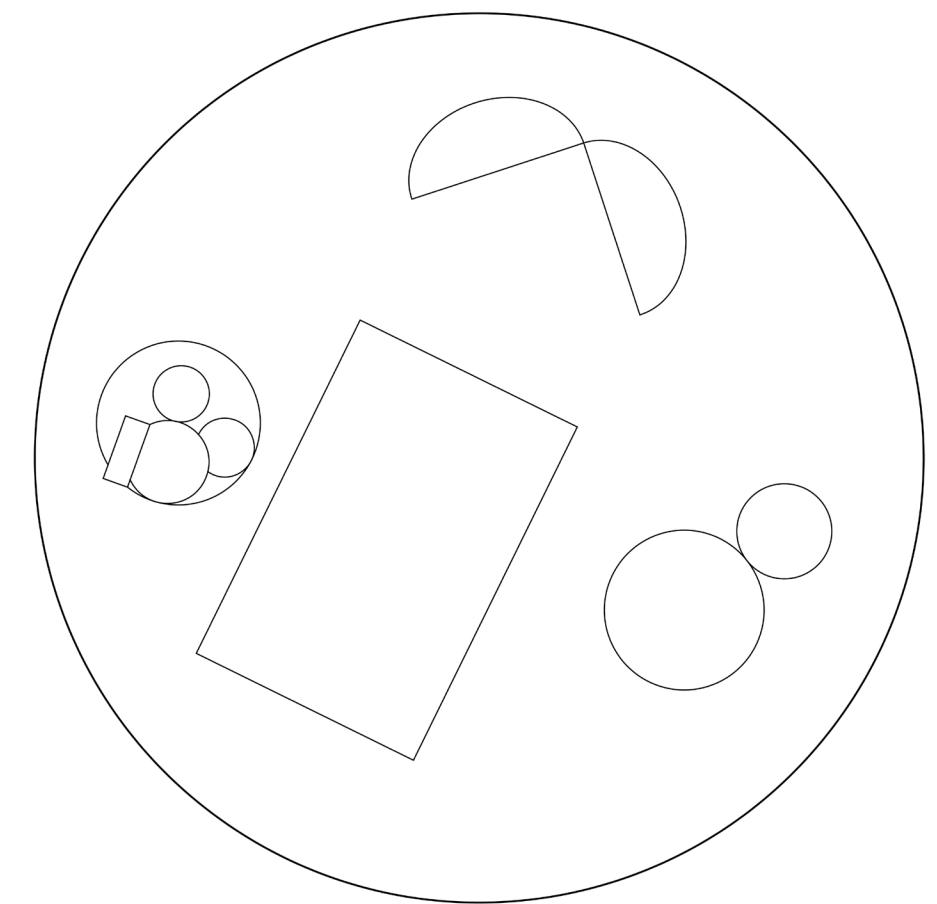
Such distinction is apparent in one of the earliest domestic models that dates back to ancient Greek times. As closely analyzed by Pier Vittorio Aureli and Sheherazade Giudici, the plan of a typical Olynthus house reflects the showing and hidden relationship:

The oecus complex and the andron were the two poles of the ancient domestic space: the hidden space of subsistence and reproduction, and the open space of hospitality and representation.

Rooms, typically consisting of four walls, was deployed as vehicles for distributions and prescriptions of the specific function across the house. With German journalist Niklas Maak's writing on privacy through the lens of etymology, he offers a new reading upon the spatial organization of a Olynthus house:

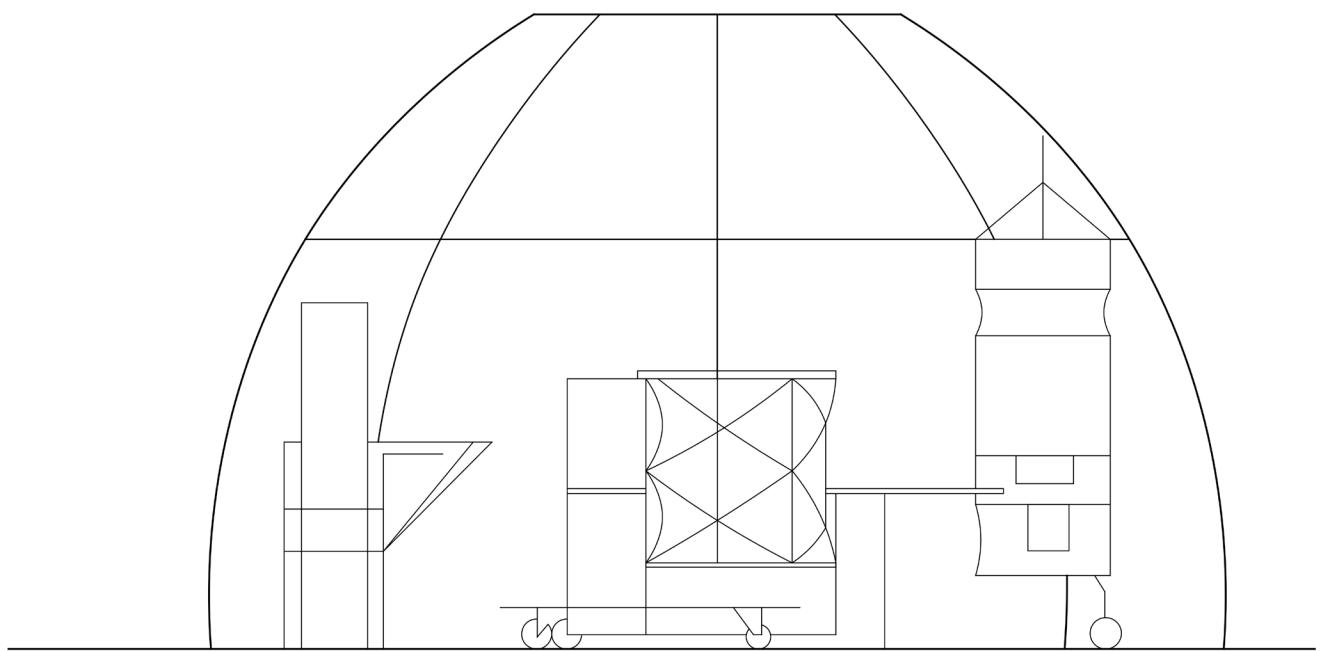
*The concept of privacy prevalent in Western Europe and America is shaped by an aggressive concept: the Latin word *privare* means “to rob.” Being in *privato* means being in a space previously wrested from a collective whole, which henceforth needs to be defended against the intrusiveness of the others.*

To further break it down, the western conception of privacy recognizes the establishment of a collective whole first, and later is privacy taken out from the whole and thus must be fought and defended. Hence in the case of an Olynthus house, even the walls are put up to enclose a private life, the external walls are considered to be part of the public space. The facades are rarely pierced with windows in order to ensure the privacy of the house, and such design move can be seen as defending privacy from the whole. Such tension in the relationship between the private and the whole, across the history of domesticity, continues to develop.



Plan

Section



Source | Ito, Toyo (1986).
Nomad, the chair as soft furniture,
Transparent Pao, a house that floats
Japan Architect, Vol. 61, pp. 56-63

The modern conception of domesticity is driven by the development of technology and economic systems. Critiquing upon Le Corbusier's ground-breaking Dom-ino model, architect Pier Vittorio Aureli argues that it served as the ultimate example of how economy has conquered architectural form:

Since the beginning of its history, the house is not only a potent symbol of the owner's mastery over the family as its private realm. It is also the locus of economy in its original sense of oikonomia, or house management. [...] Economy thus implies the translation of life into a typical spatial arrangement. The form of the house is thus the most tangible manifestation of economy.

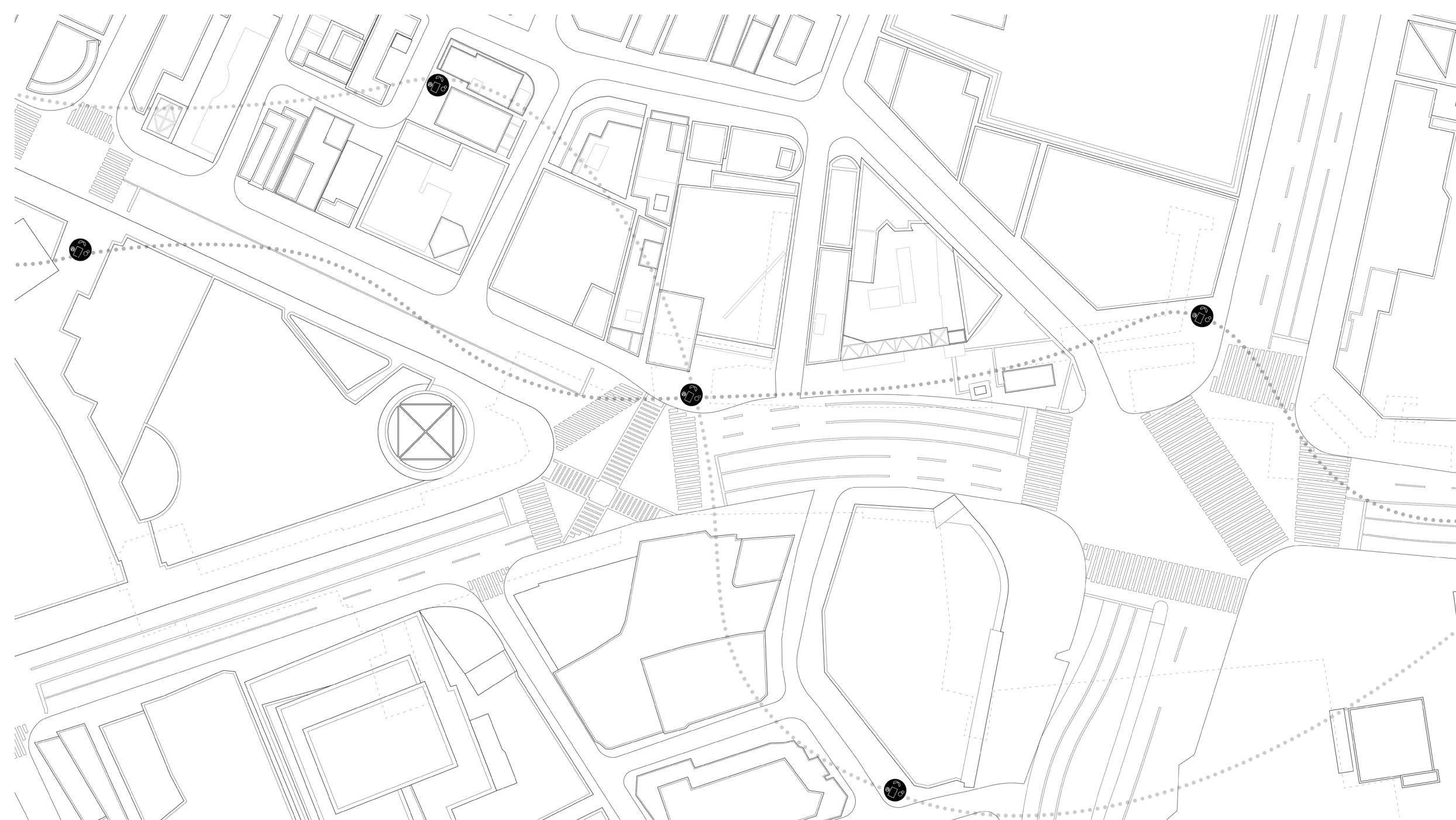
Deploying nuclear family as the fundamental unit to operate in the society was attested to be most productive and efficient, and the Dom-ino model assisted in naturalizing the domestic environment to be a machine in maintaining life and productivity of the household. An apartment with bedrooms, bathrooms, a living room, and a kitchen becomes the bible of domestic model. English architect Robert Evans captures people's numbness towards the domesticity in his writing precisely:

This is easily enough explained, since everything ordinary seems as once neutral and indispensable, but it is a delusion, and a delusion with consequences too, as it hides the power that the customary arrangement of domestic space exerts over our lives, and at the same time conceals the fact that this organization has an origin and a purpose.

Hence architects failed to see the core problem of domesticity which originates from the organization of apartment itself; they mistakenly treated designing a more efficient structure housing more apartments in one, with the great assist of progress in mechanical services, as the end goal. They began to stack room next to room, apartment on top of apartment; their only concern was how to come up with the most unprecedented forms that negotiates the relationship or organization between the apartments, but never the organization of the apartment itself. To put in a more explicit way, philosopher Peter Sloterdijk helps to reveal such acceptance of domesticity as following:

One can also read, in the evolution of apartment construction, that nothing is less based on presuppositions than the seemingly natural expectation that there should be at least one room for every person, or one living unit per head.

This conception should be seen as the basis of the cause of isolation in the current society. As long as one maintains his or her integrity of a bedroom, social interaction can be easily avoided, or even, completely erased. The physical boundaries, or the partitions segregating each function of the household are reinforcing the isolation. The boundaries between programs and users need to be redefined at various scales.



Site Plan

Source | Ito, Toyo (1986).
Nomad, the chair as soft furniture,
Transparent Pao, a house that floats
Japan Architect, Vol. 61, pp. 56-63

Boundary is an effective tool to break out from the existing rigid domestic planning. A Japanese term named engawa describes the edging strip of a non-tatami floor, usually wood or bamboo. Such condition is analogous to a western veranda, and in most cases engawa opens up to a garden in the backyard. In traditional Japanese houses engawa usually starts right at the shoji screen doors and extends certain length into the garden. There isn't any physical separation between the engawa and the garden, hence the engawa is more likely to refer to the zone connecting yet separating the interior and the exterior. And this is exactly why boundary must be differentiated from edge. Edge refers to a much more physical and binary condition, while boundary can be much more conceptual and fluid.

Boundaries are employed to negotiate between interior and exterior, between private and public. The idea of boundary is challenged in the Moriyama House design by Ryue Nishizawa. The completion of the project in 2008 was seen as a precursor on how it effectively questioned the existing domestic plan and began extracting and separating each element into a stand-alone part of the house. The gap in-between volumes, and the depth acquired though the protrusion and recess of the volumes play to its strength that the boundary of the project is now activated. There isn't a unifying reading of a facade anymore, or it can be argued that the house possesses an extremely porous facade. Not only the physical boundary of a building has been broken down, the isolation bubble around each occupant is shattered as well. Due to the fact that living room, bathroom, dining room, and bedroom have been scattered across the lot, the paths of each occupant is bound to overlap with each other, allowing conversations to take place when sharing the kitchen amenities, bumping each other in the garden, together hanging out on the rooftop, and the list goes on and on. The house also enjoys the proliferation of vegetation, which in a way acts as a soft boundary or buffer separating the house from its surroundings. By singling out every part of the household as a stand-alone element, Nishizawa protests against the current stereotypical domestic model, treating the house as one entity. Such design move concerns boundaries at human scale, building scale, and urban scale. The boundaries of each individual crash into each other in the in-between spaces: corridor, garden, and rooftop, the friction of which becomes the catalyst to initiate conversations. The boundaries of the building becomes much more fluid and ambiguous. It is hard to make out if the city is coming into the building complex or the domestic life spilling out to the neighborhood.



Concept Statement_Iris Yiwen Shen

American-German philosopher Hannah Arendt discusses public in relationship to private in her book, *The Human Condition*, as follows:

The distinction between the private and public realms, seen from the viewpoint of privacy rather than of the body politic, equals the distinction between things that should be shown and things that should be hidden.

Privacy, therefore, is most directly related to visibility. Walls, naturally, are devised as the most straightforward tool to separate one's private life from the public. A private room is enclosed with four walls as the complete enclosure protects one from being seen and heard. The earliest model of privacy can be dated back to ancient Greek times. The Greek house is composed of two disparate elements: the private rooms and the public courtyard. Usually surrounded with colonnades, the courtyard that provides access to all of the spaces that comprise the domestic unit in return becomes the all-seeing place. The courtyard, therefore, is a space not only of circulation but also of surveillance. Courtyard is the ancestor of corridor as it serves as the circulation core for the Greek houses.

In the 17th century there has been a period of times when interconnecting rooms and corridor system in parallel. However soon corridors became an indispensable part of domestic design. Alexander Klein even explicitly illustrated that a good domestic circulation requires all paths to be separate from each other, or paths literally never cross.

Robin Evans holds corridor accountable for obliterating vast areas of social experience. Just as Alexander Klein envisioned, the neat planning of corridors had managed to atomize, individualize, and separate each person yet further; all physical interactions have been erased and smoothed out in a domestic context. And since then privacy, or private rooms, have become a given condition, or rather taken for granted in any domestic planning.

In contrary to Robin Evans's distaste for corridors and his hope in going back to the matrix of connected rooms might shed light on new domesticity, Mark Jarzombek believed that corridor was a social place – and a socially defining place – and there is no ounce of domesticity in the corridor.

I believe corridor is the most productive tool to interrogate the idea of privacy in the domestic context. Through establishing a more ambiguous set of relations between corridor and room can yield more friction in domestic living and consequently motivate occupants of the house to more actively define privacy.

Genealogy Essay_Mia Shucong Wang

BLAH BLAH BLAH

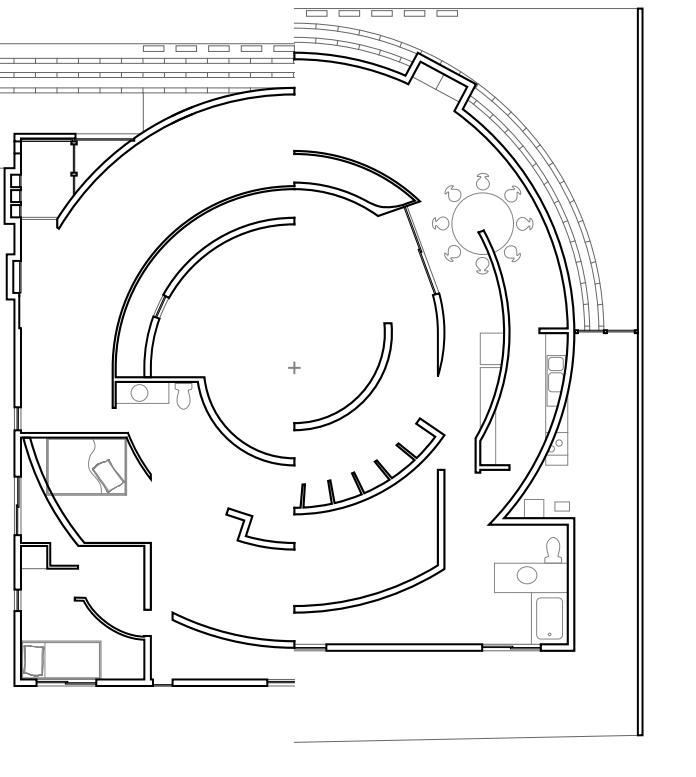
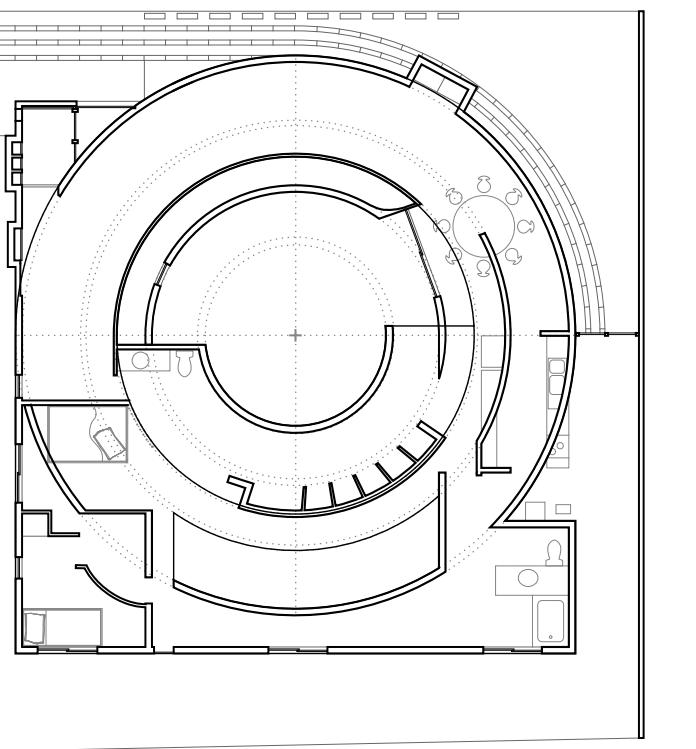
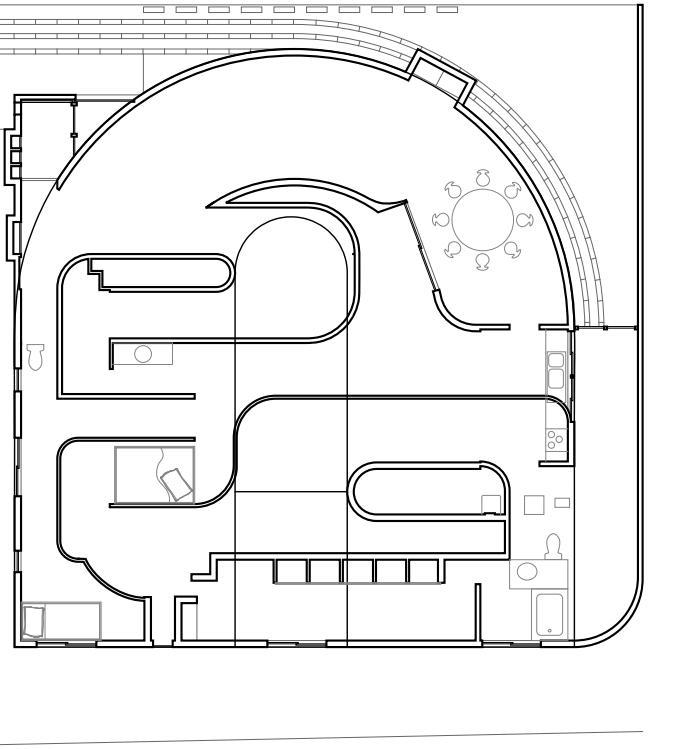
Concept Statement_Mia Shucong Wang

BLAH BLAH BLAH

Formal Investigation

Connector

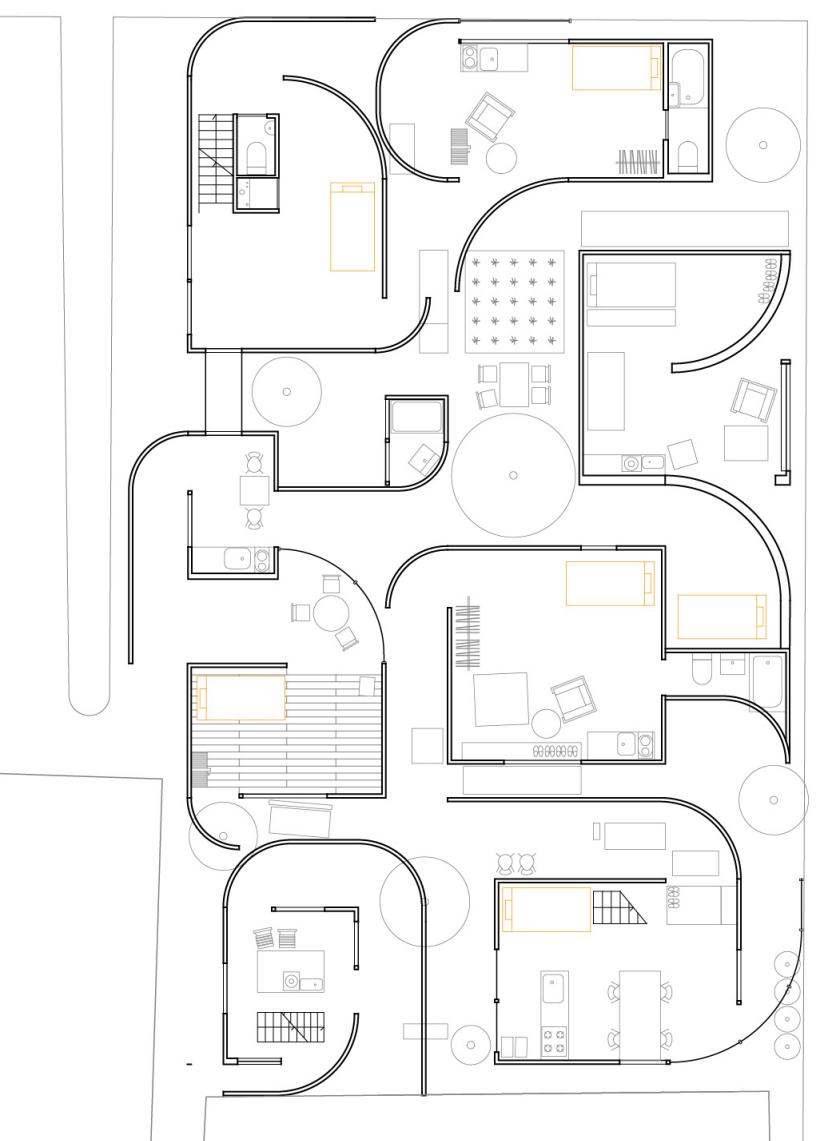
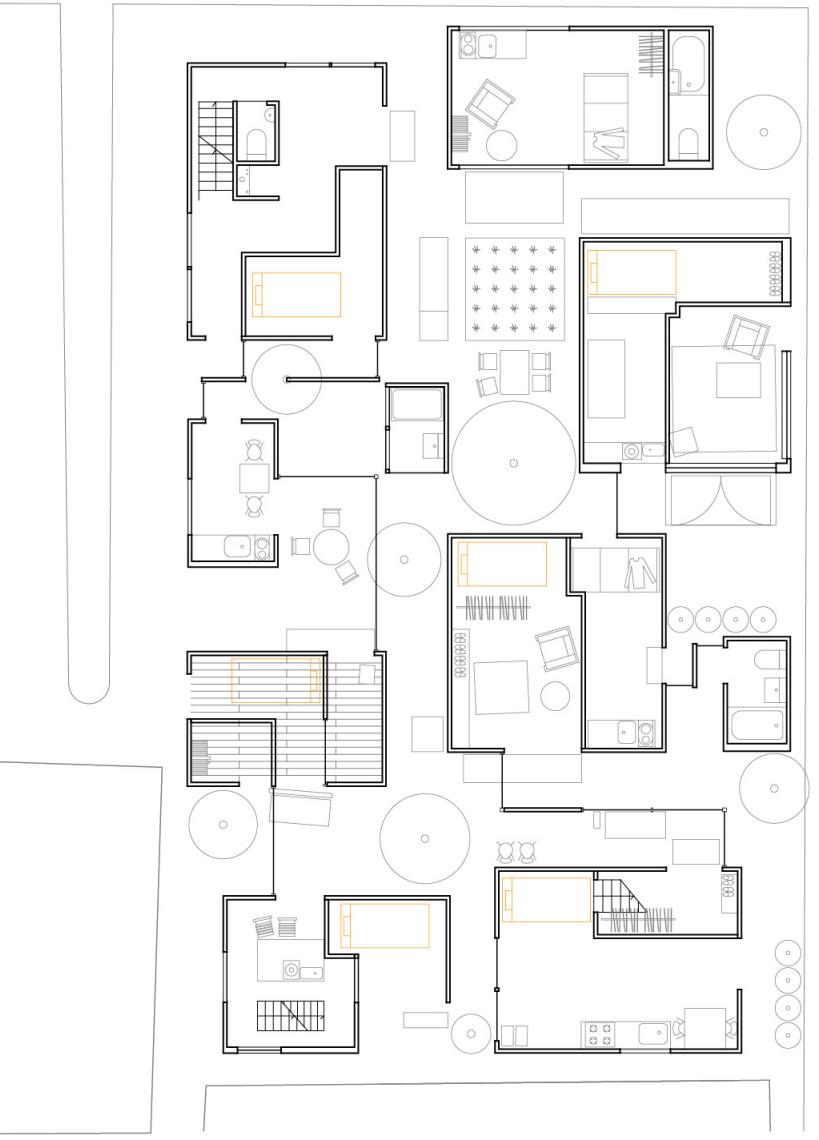
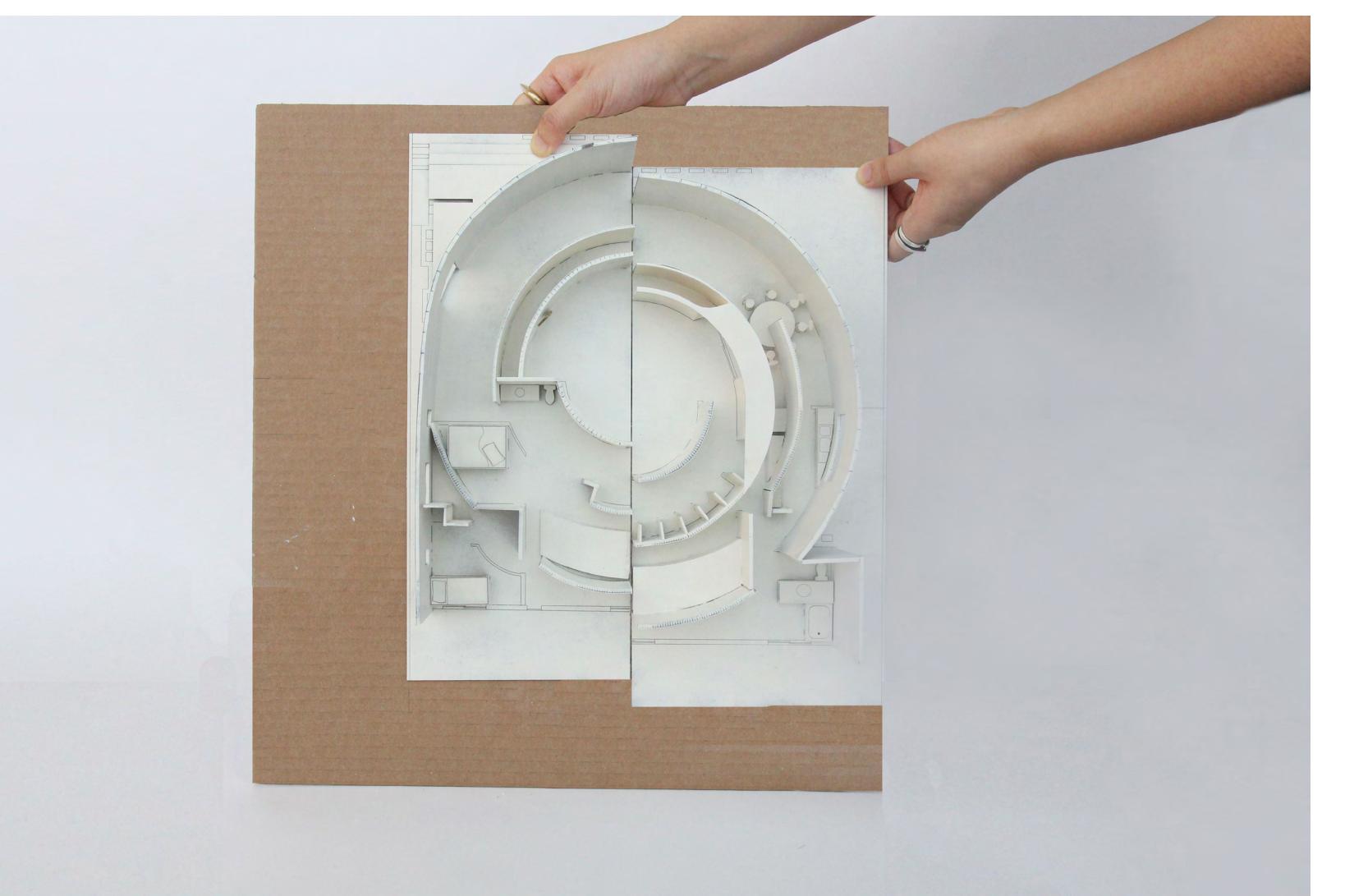
curved corridors
produce privacy
through occlusion



Precedent Transformation

White U House, Toyo Ito

Moriyama House, Nishizawa Ryue

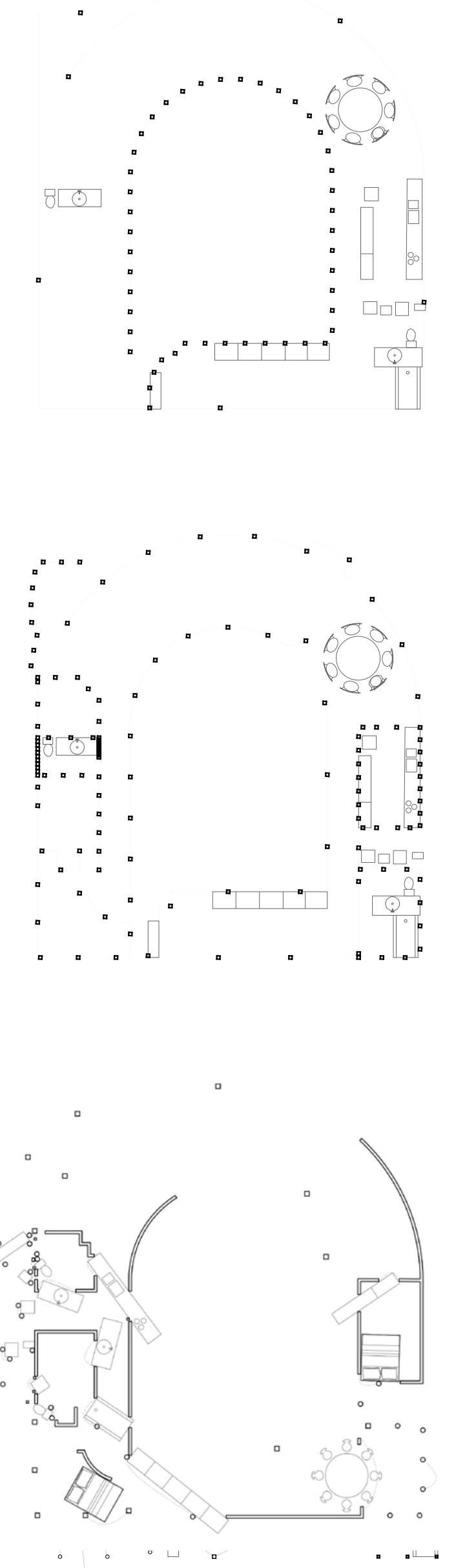


Degree Project | If Eaves Dropped
Mia Shucong Wang + Iris Yiwen Shen

Formal Investigation

Situators

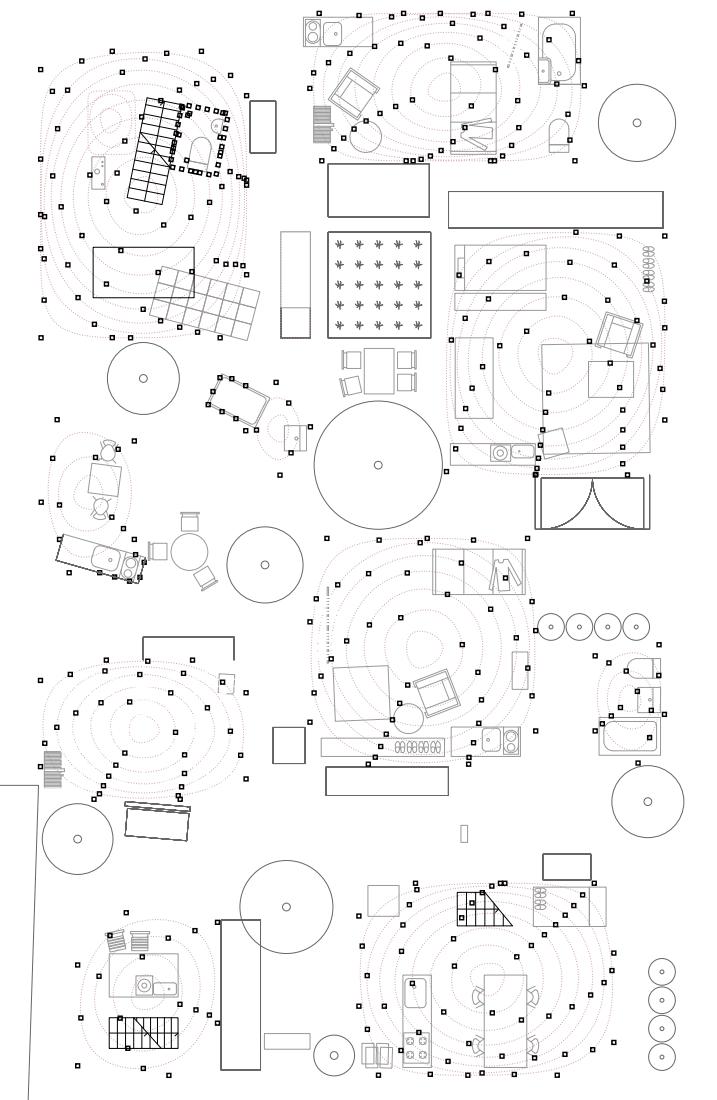
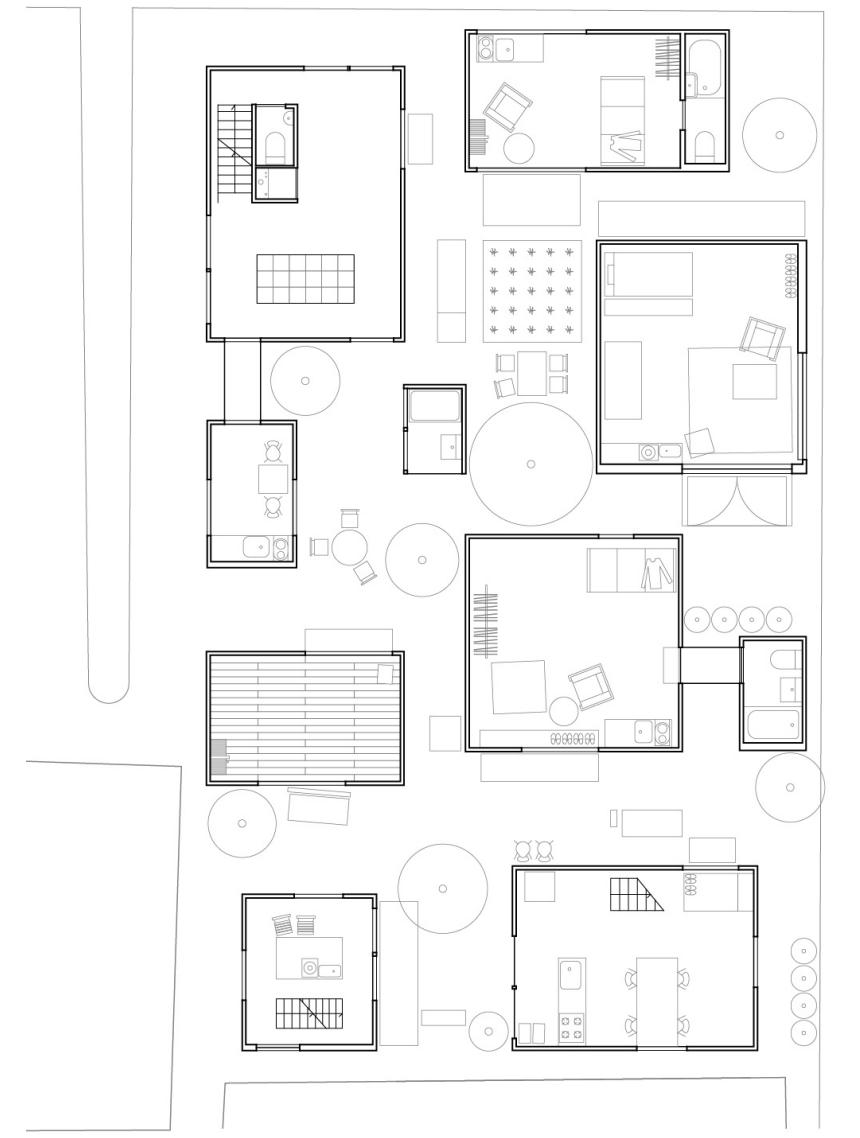
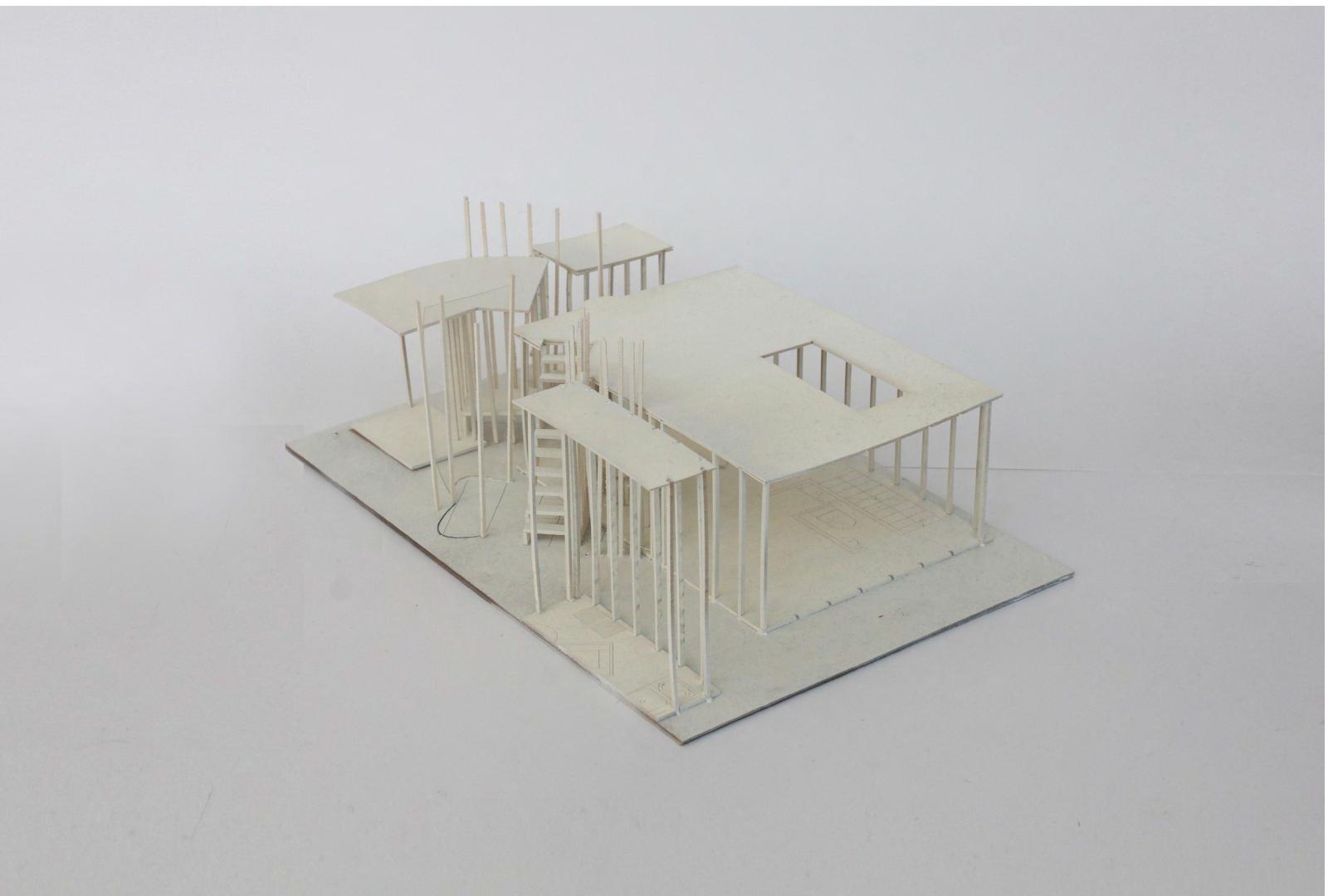
columns
allow for habitation



Precedent Transformation

White U House, Toyo Ito

Moriyama House, Nishizawa Ryue

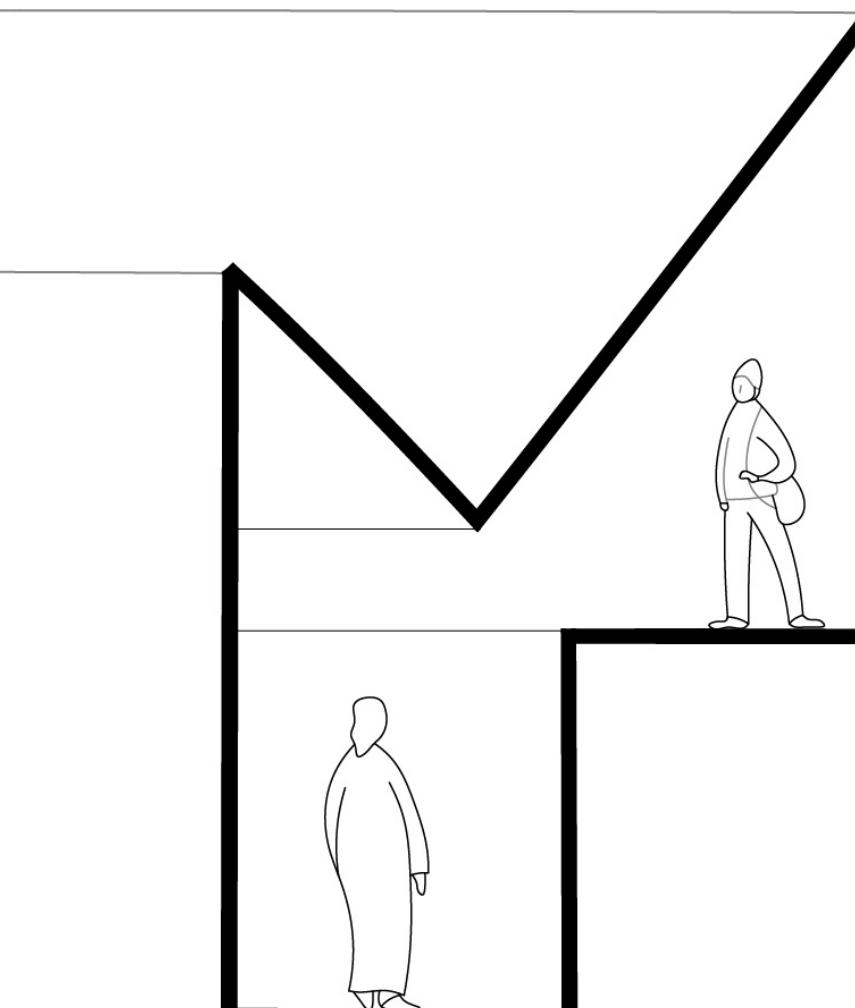


Degree Project | If Eaves Dropped
Mia Shucong Wang + Iris Yiwen Shen

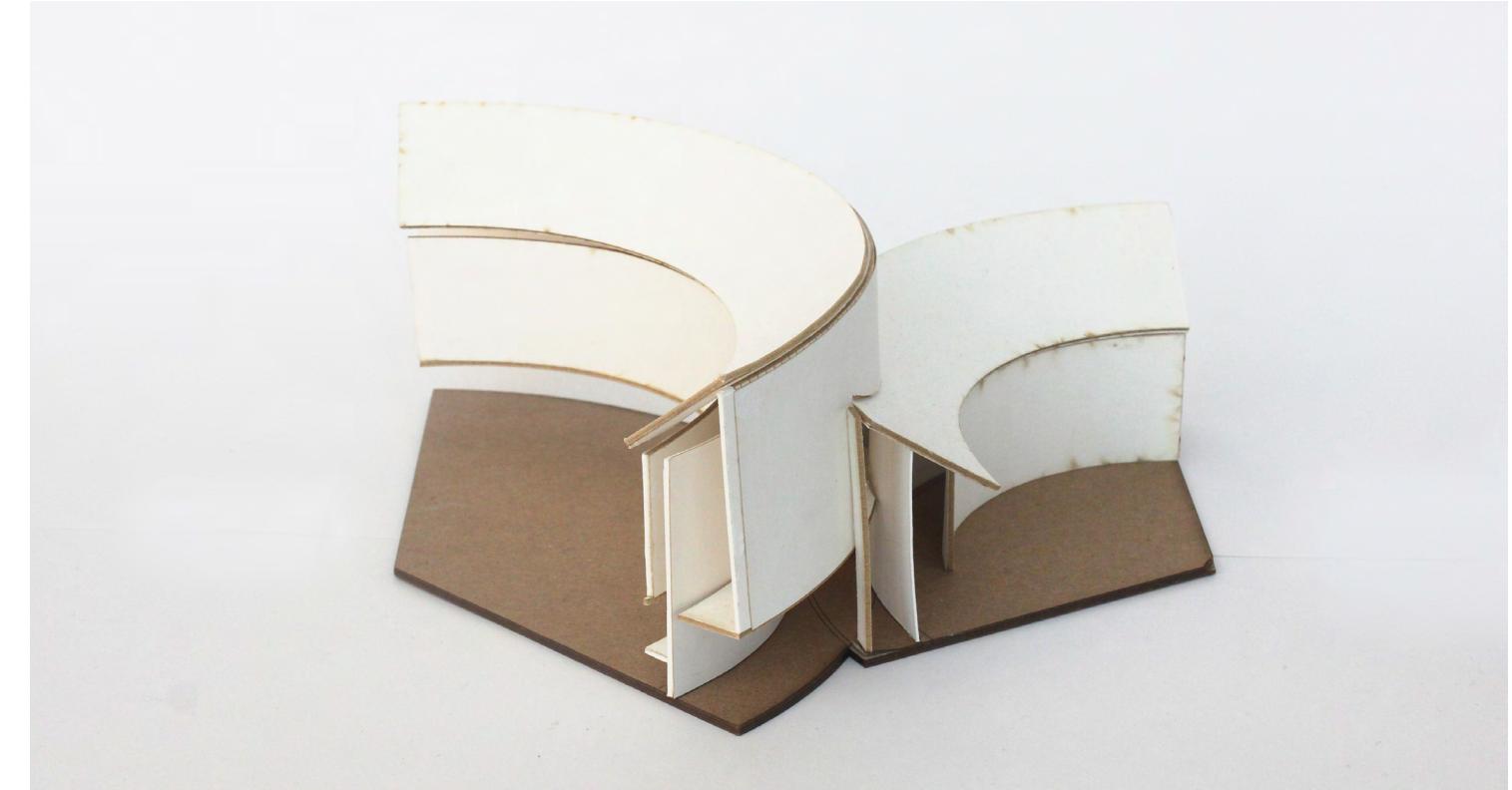
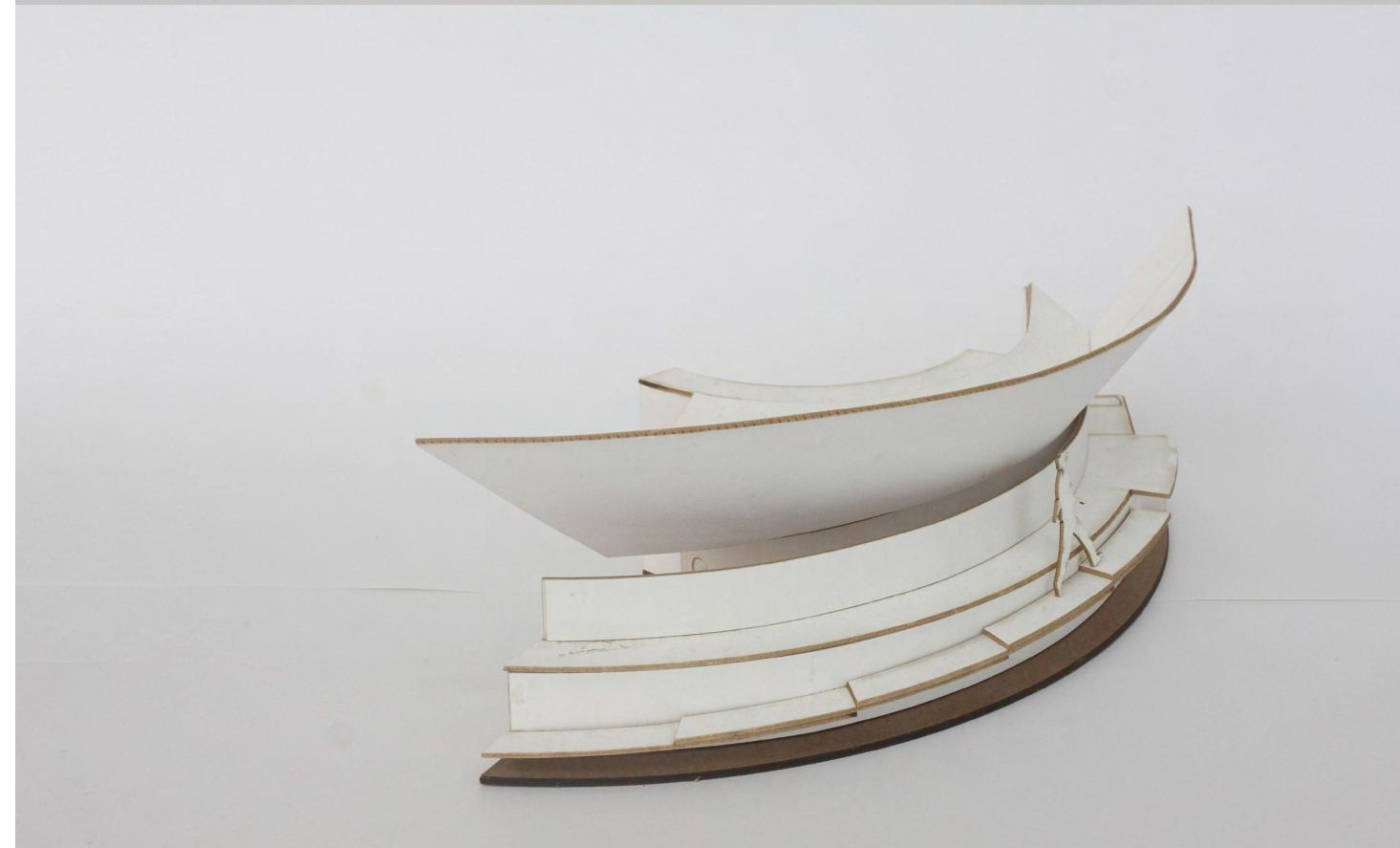
Formal Investigation

Dropped Eaves

as visual barrier

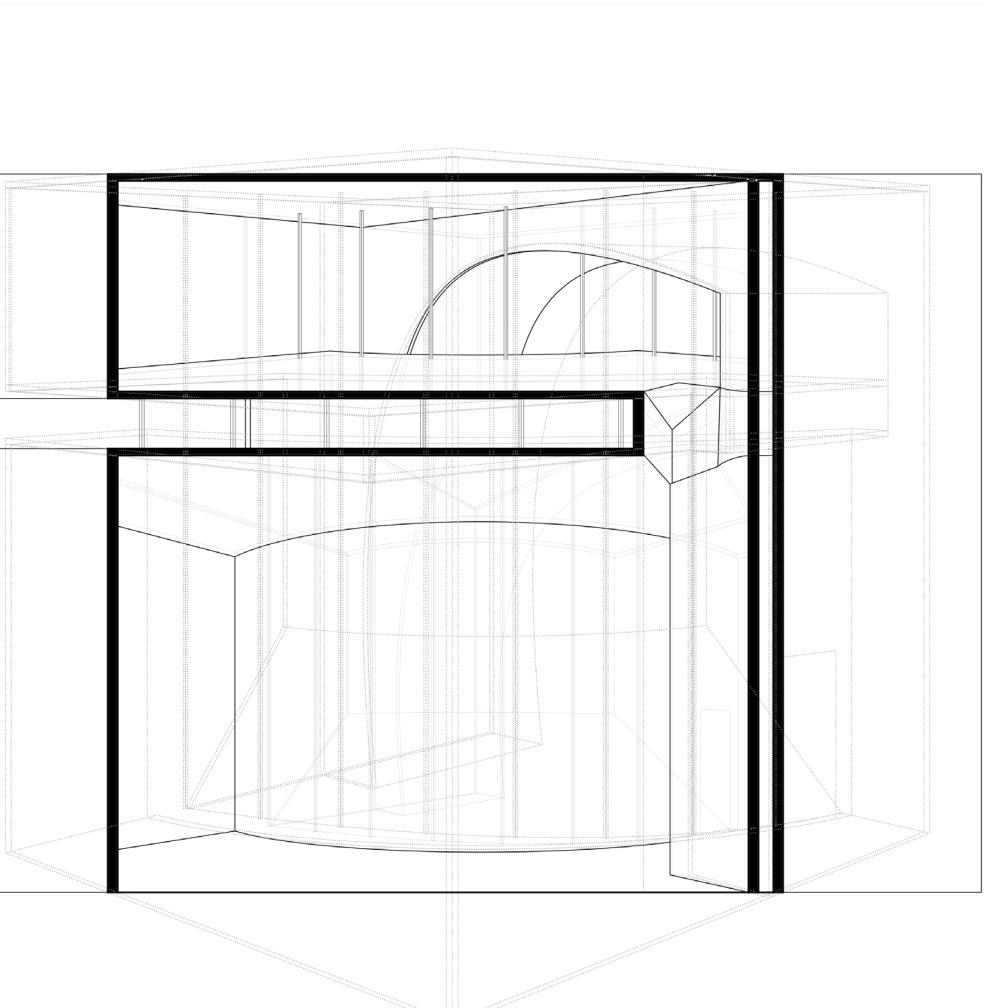
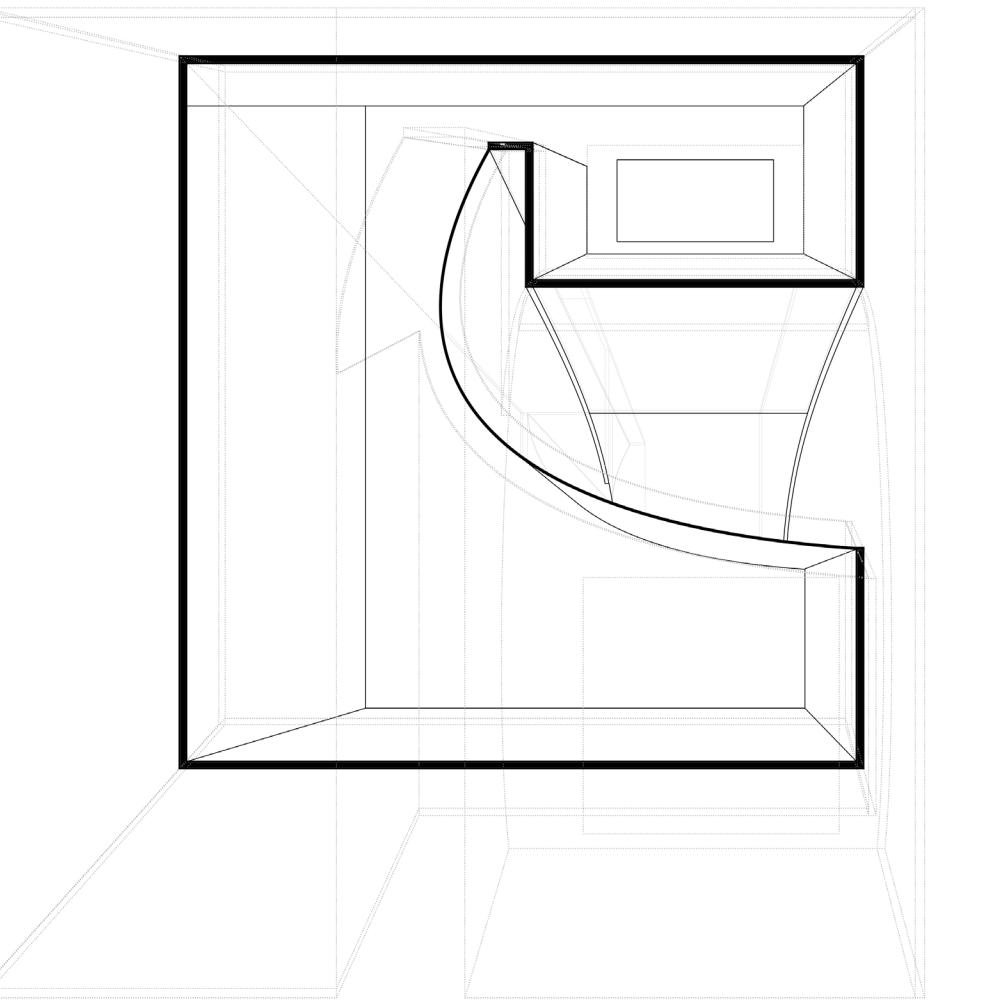


key section idea



Formal Investigation

Connected but Separated

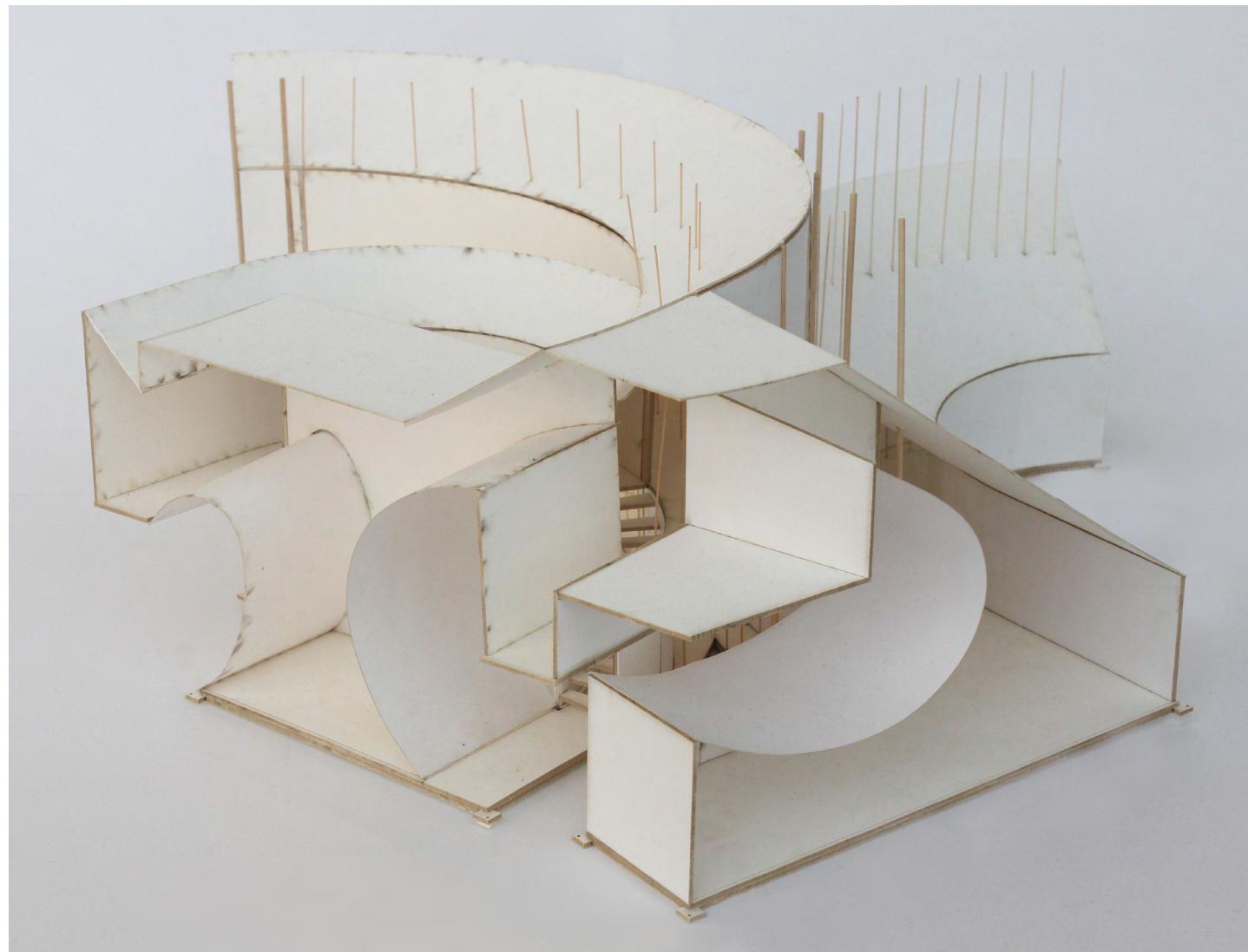


Formal Hybridization



Design Statement

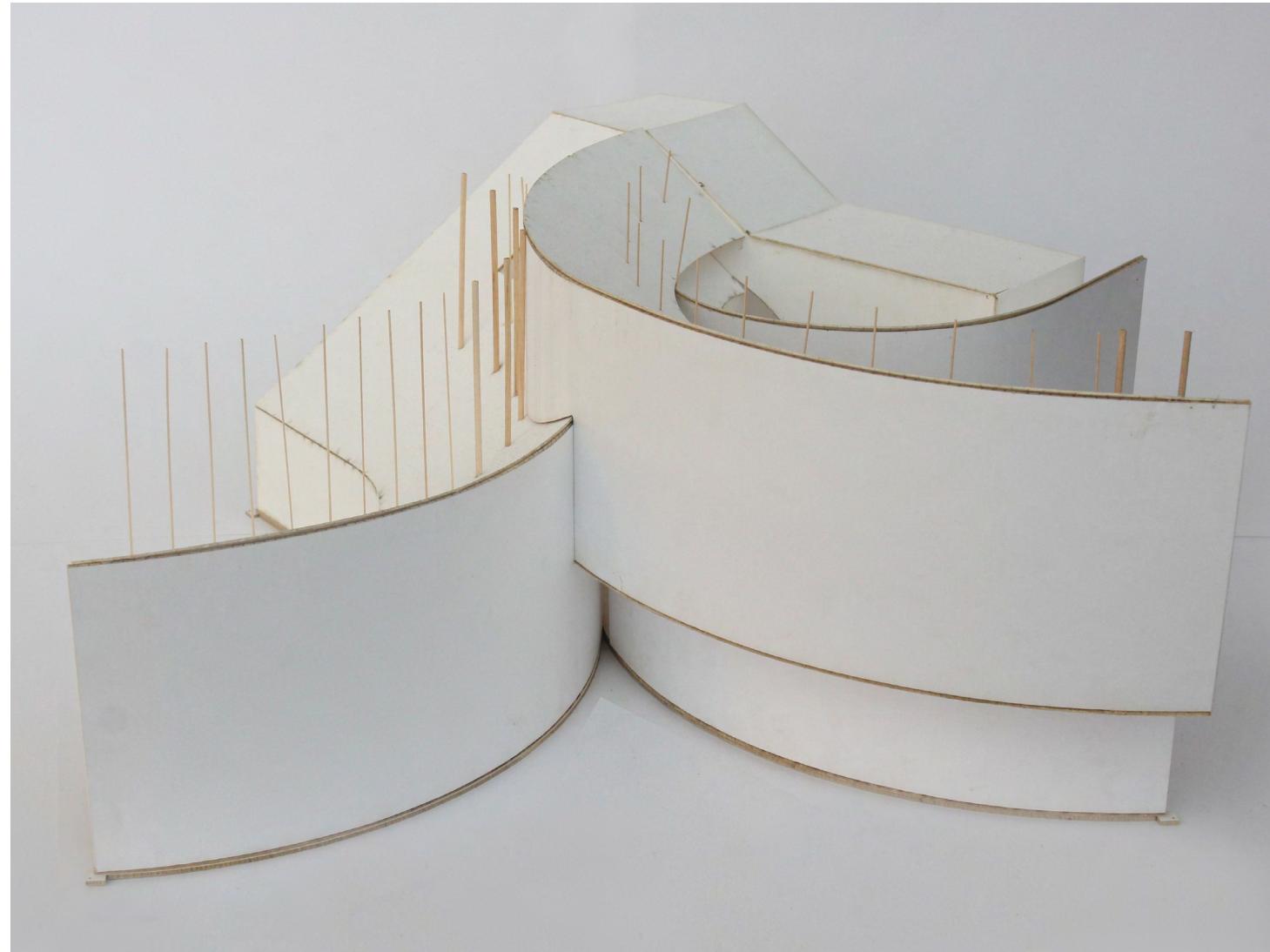
This architectural form addresses both the continuity of space and the separation between activities. Curved spaces act as connectors, inducing movement, while columns act as situators, allowing for habitation. The connectors intersect with each other tangentially, the intersection of which allows circulation to flow from one connector to the next seamlessly. Segments of curvilinear spaces utilized as individual bedrooms are all connected without doors or any form of four-walled enclosure. Residing in this type of housing, people's visual experience is interrupted by curvilinear geometries, such as the walls and dropped eaves. Conventional bedroom furniture pieces are organized in relation to situators (columns), vaguely suggesting zones of privacy. Even though physical activities taking place in each room are partially out of sight due to the curvilinear geometries, they are acoustically exposed throughout the interior.



When a resident lives in this house, he enters the interior from a door that's located at the tip of an arc. He walks along the curved wall for a few seconds and finds his own furniture nesting in between a few columns. After climbing onto his bed, he leans against the backboard and is ready to take a break. Yet as he looks up, he sees a chair belonging to another resident hiding in between a group of columns on a mezzanine level towards the other end of the arc. But the slanted roof prevents his inquiring gaze into the room above. He begins to wonder if anyone is residing in that room. He moves around on his bed in a vain attempt for a better view, however he couldn't see much besides the chair and fails to make out any silhouette. Maybe no one is there, he thinks to himself and turns away. Before long a sudden laughter echoes in the space. Someone is there. Someone is in my room! Or am I in someone else's room?



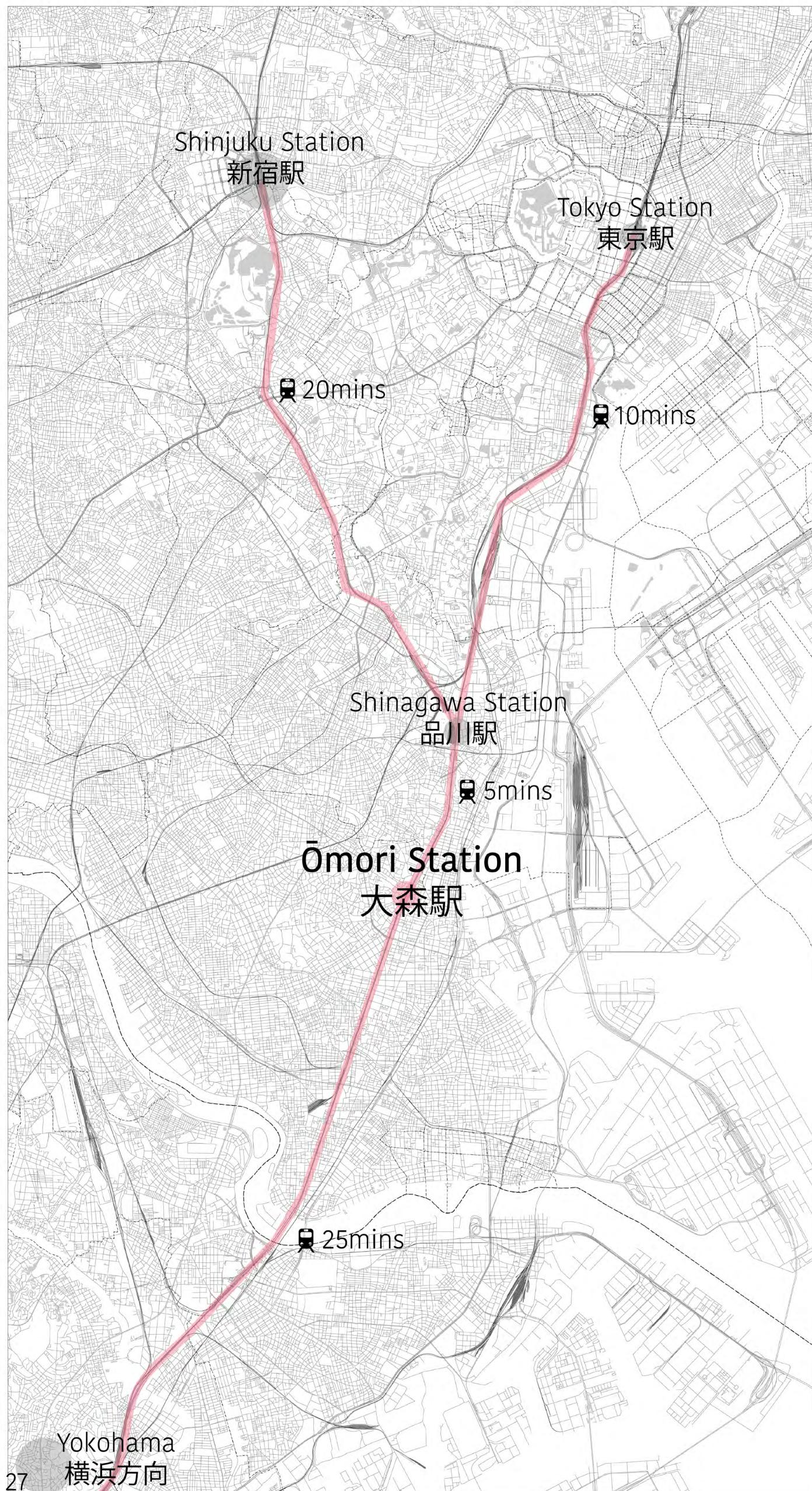
Design Statement



Instead of defining a clear boundary of one's territory, the sense of ownership in this project is built up upon one's accumulating experience and sharpening sensibility of scale and location. Two large scale connectors (curve segments with a radius $\approx 80\text{ft}$) span across and split the whole site. Eight connectors with smaller radii ranging from 30 to 50ft intersect with each other as well as the two big ones. The interior experience is mostly homogeneous. It is hard to determine any exact location of oneself in relation to which part of the arc one is occupying at the moment. Such a sense of spatial ambiguity creates the delay of acknowledging one's own living condition. This echoes with the mathematician and logician, Bertrand Russell's writing on the concept of continuity as the relation of before and after. Russel writes, "Nor can we say that events last for an instant, since there are no instances. Thus there will be no such thing as a state of change, for this implies continuity. In motion for example, we shall have different spatial positions occupied serially, but there will not be a passage from one to the other." In our project, for all the residents, isolation is always a state of relation and could be intruded at any given moment by others.

Perhaps there is no stage of being alone, but a transient sense of being separated together.

Choice of Site



Lonely Death

孤独死 (*Kodokushi*)

A phenomenon that describes the elderly dying alone in their apartments due to the extreme isolation provided by the individual houses.

| year | 1995 | 2050 |
|---|-------|-------|
| $\frac{\text{aged 65 or older}}{\text{total population}}$ | 14.6% | 31.8% |
| year | 1995 | 2050 |

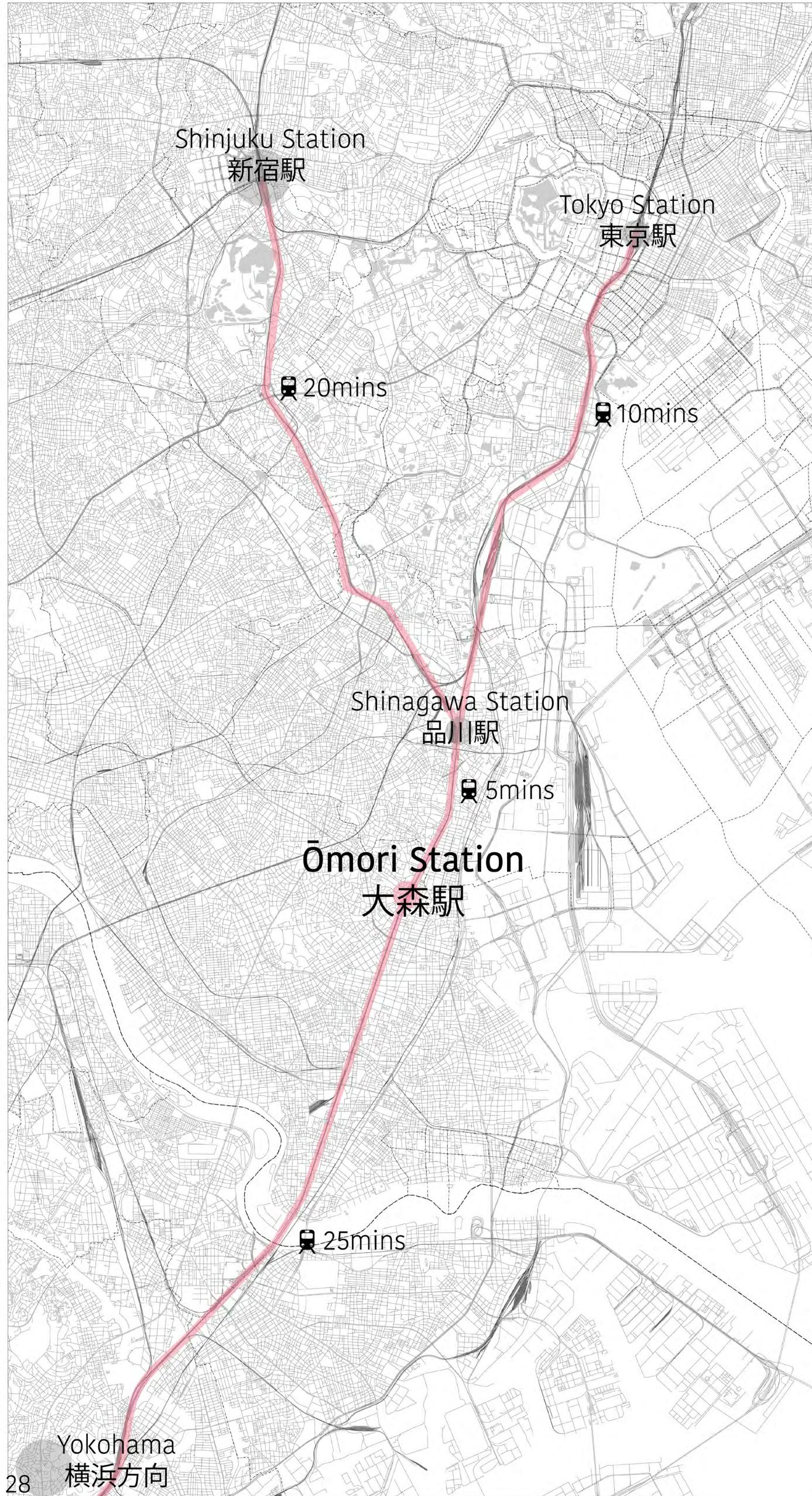
| year | 1995 | 2050 |
|---|------|------|
| $\frac{\text{working-age}}{\text{retired-age}}$ | 4.81 | 1.7 |
| year | 1995 | 2100 |

By 2100, every Japanese worker will essentially gain a statistical grandparent, on top of their own family, that they have to support.

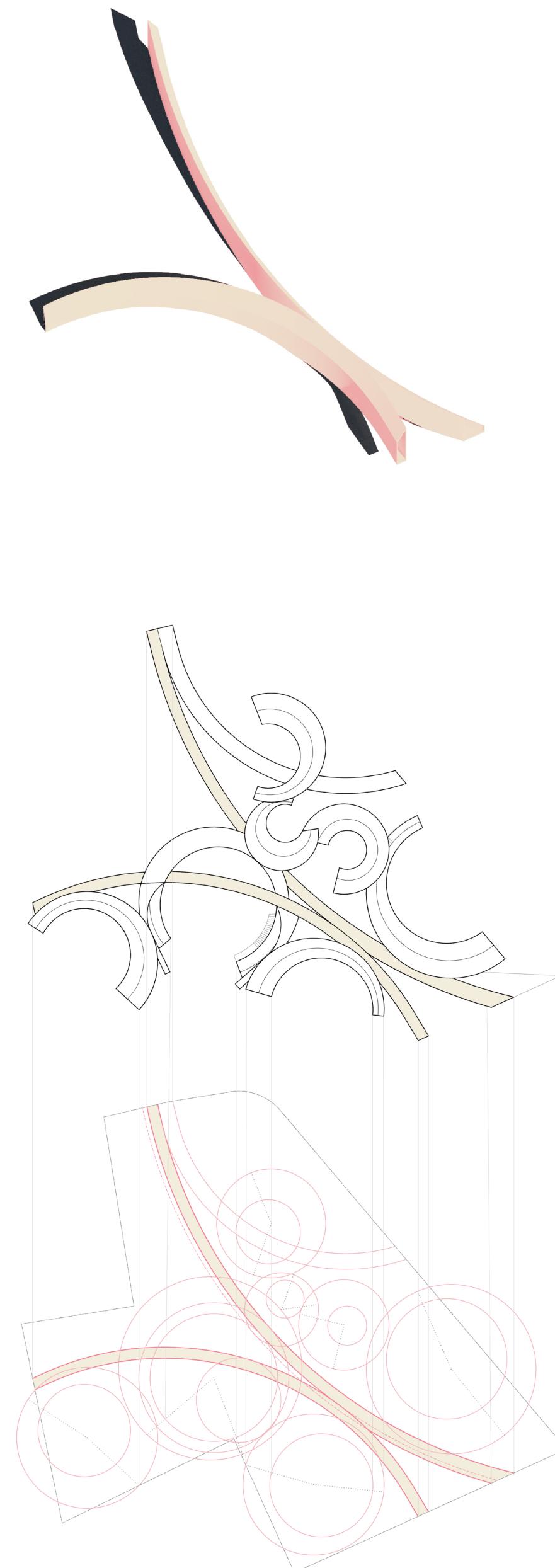
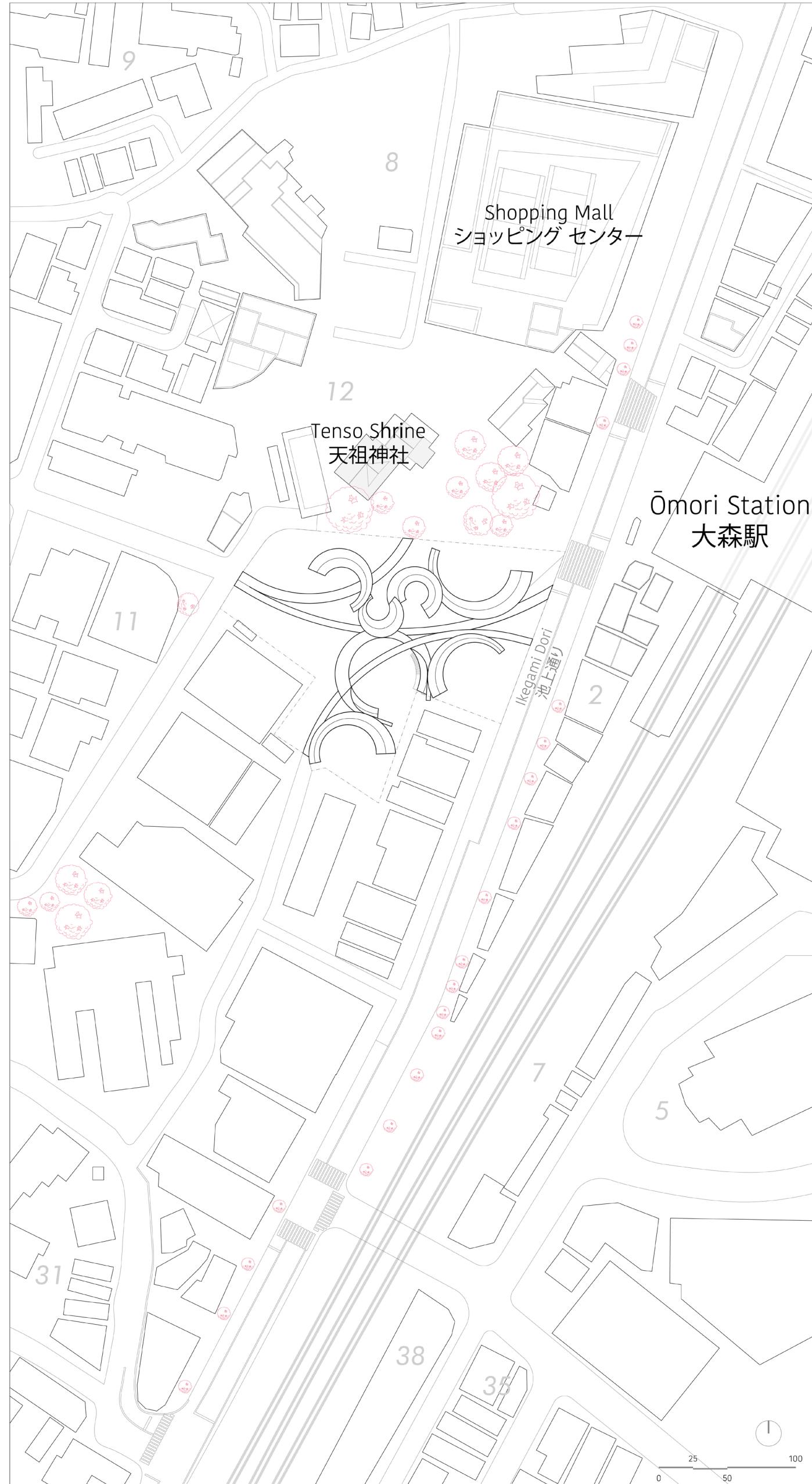
Source | United Nations Statistics

Degree Project | If Eaves Dropped
Mia Shucong Wang + Iris Yiwen Shen

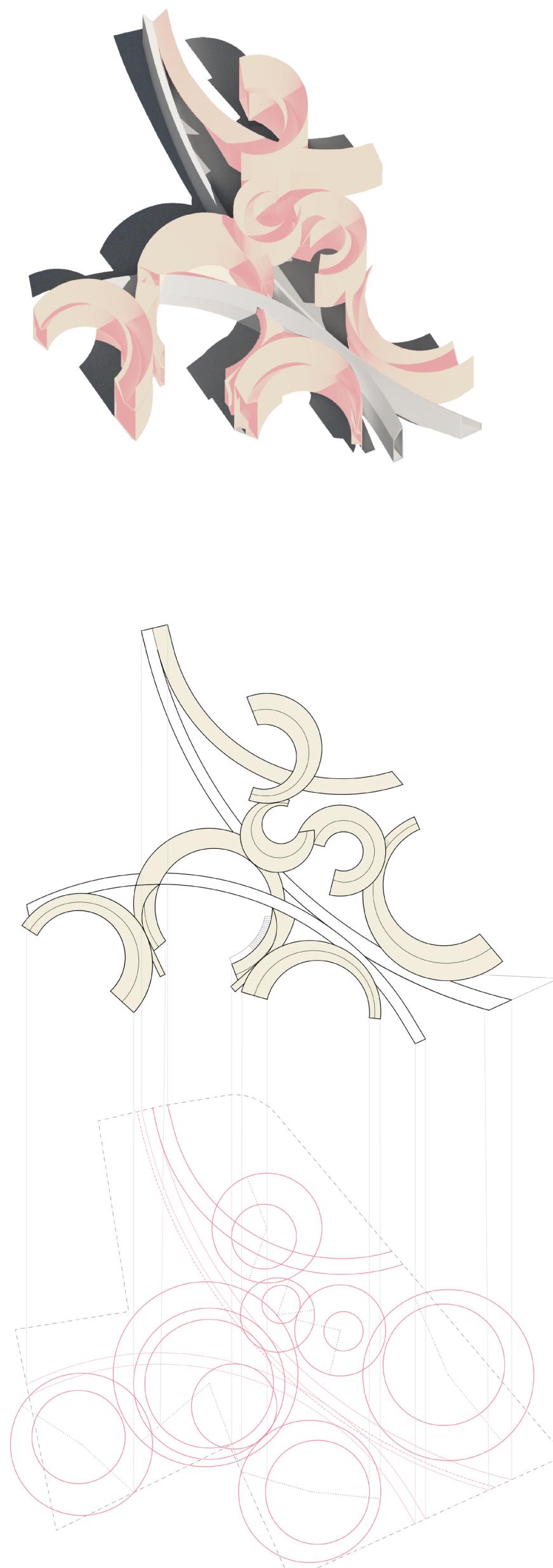
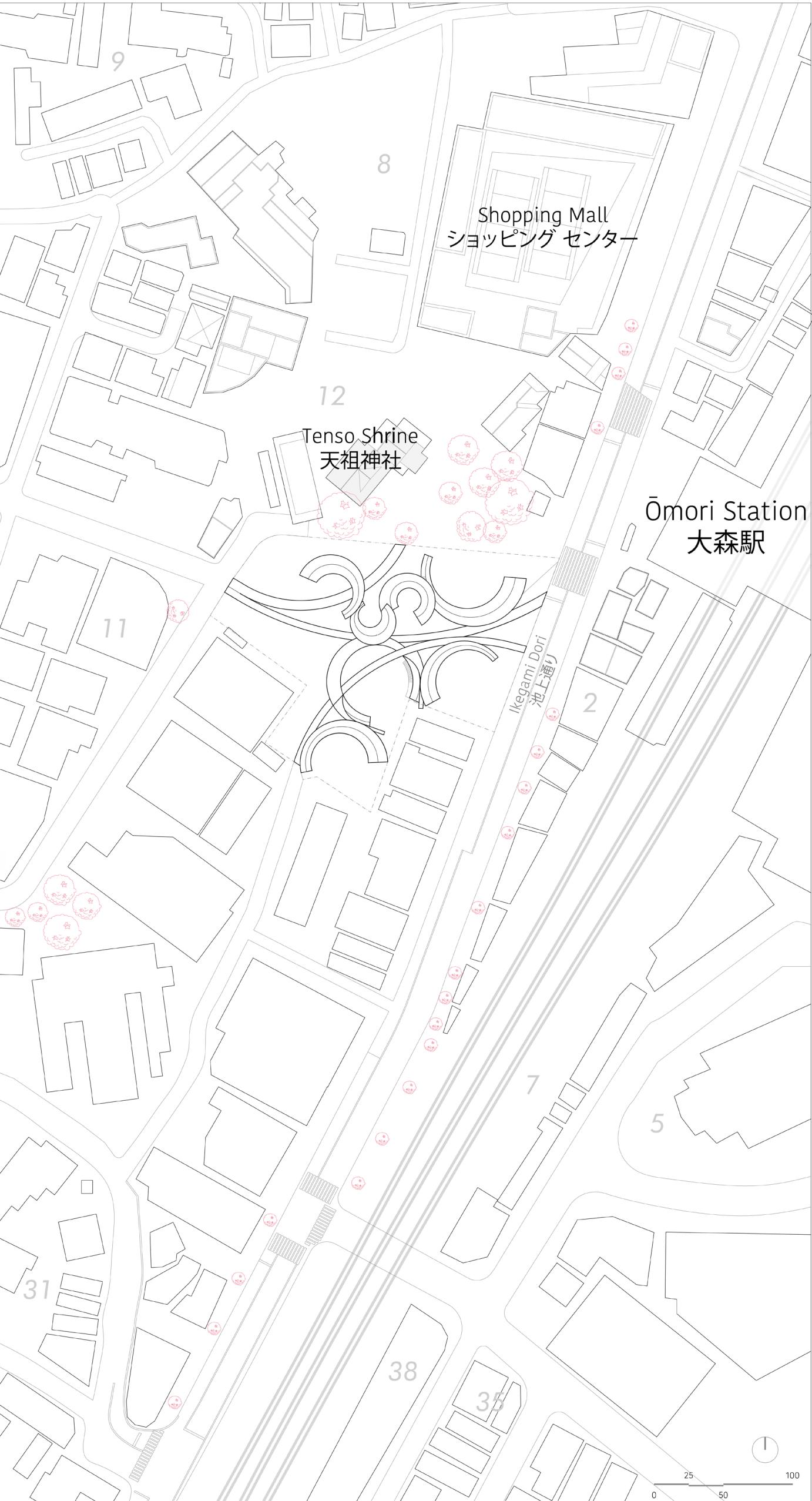
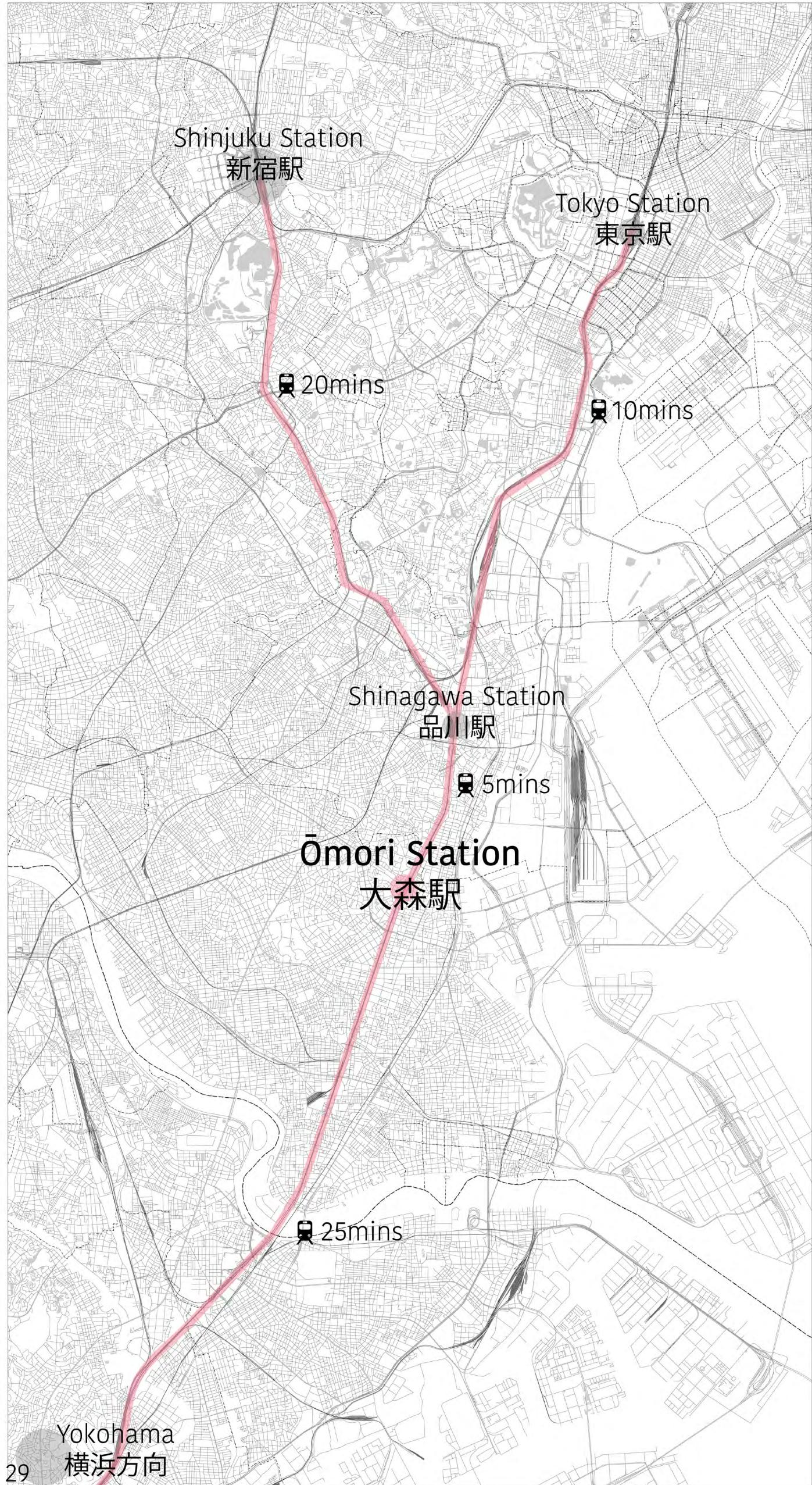
Site Plan



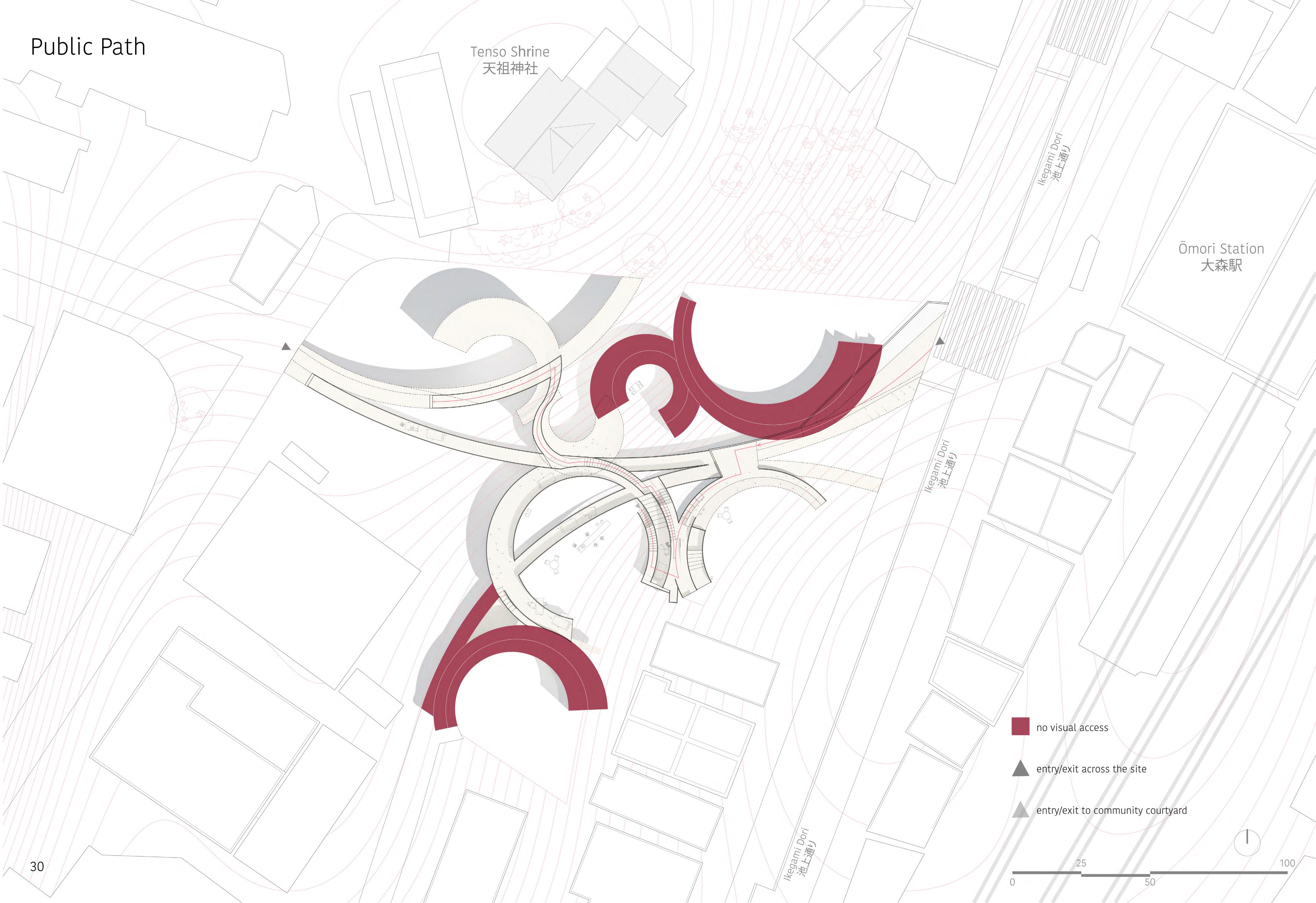
28



Site Plan



Public Path



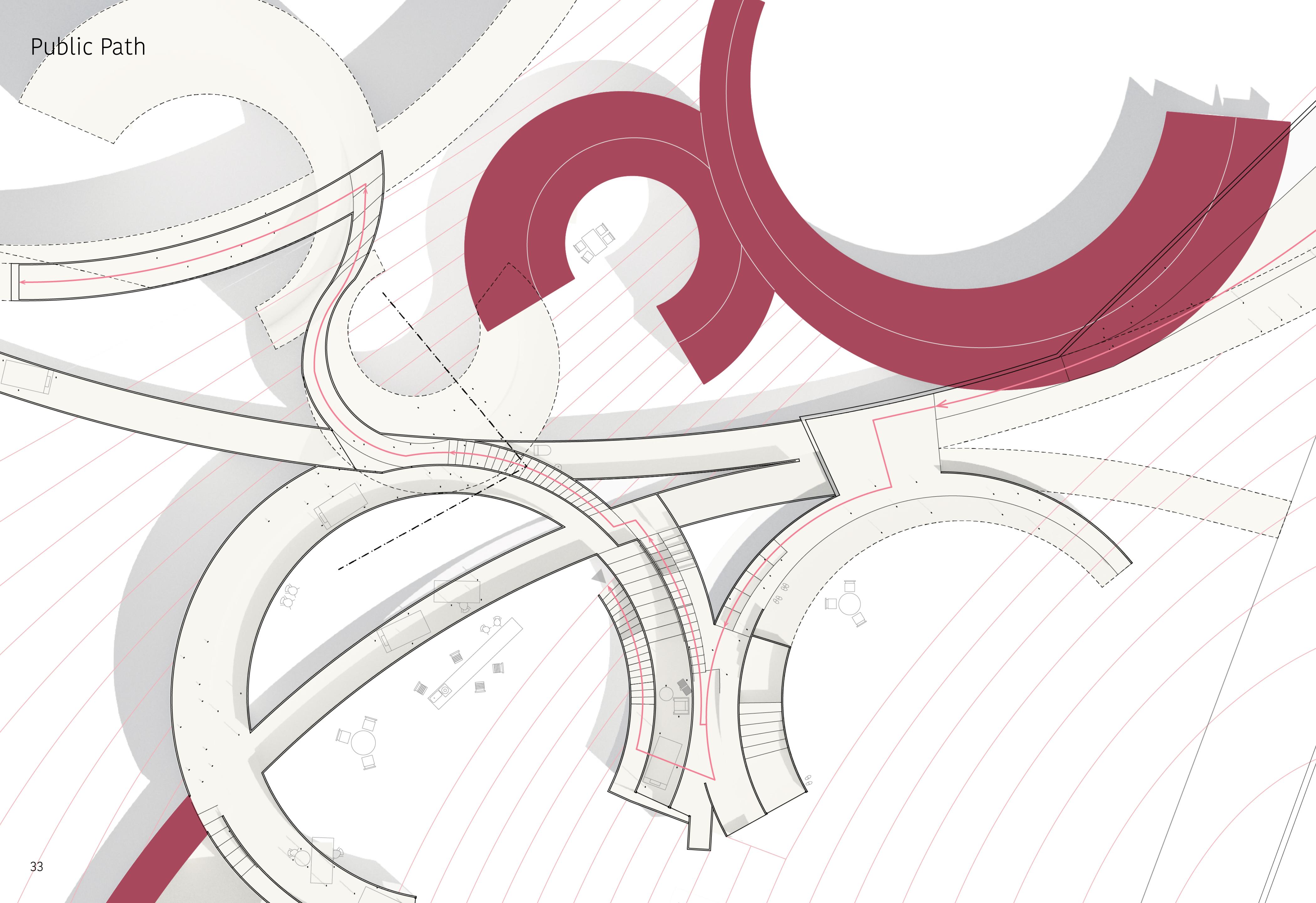
Public Path

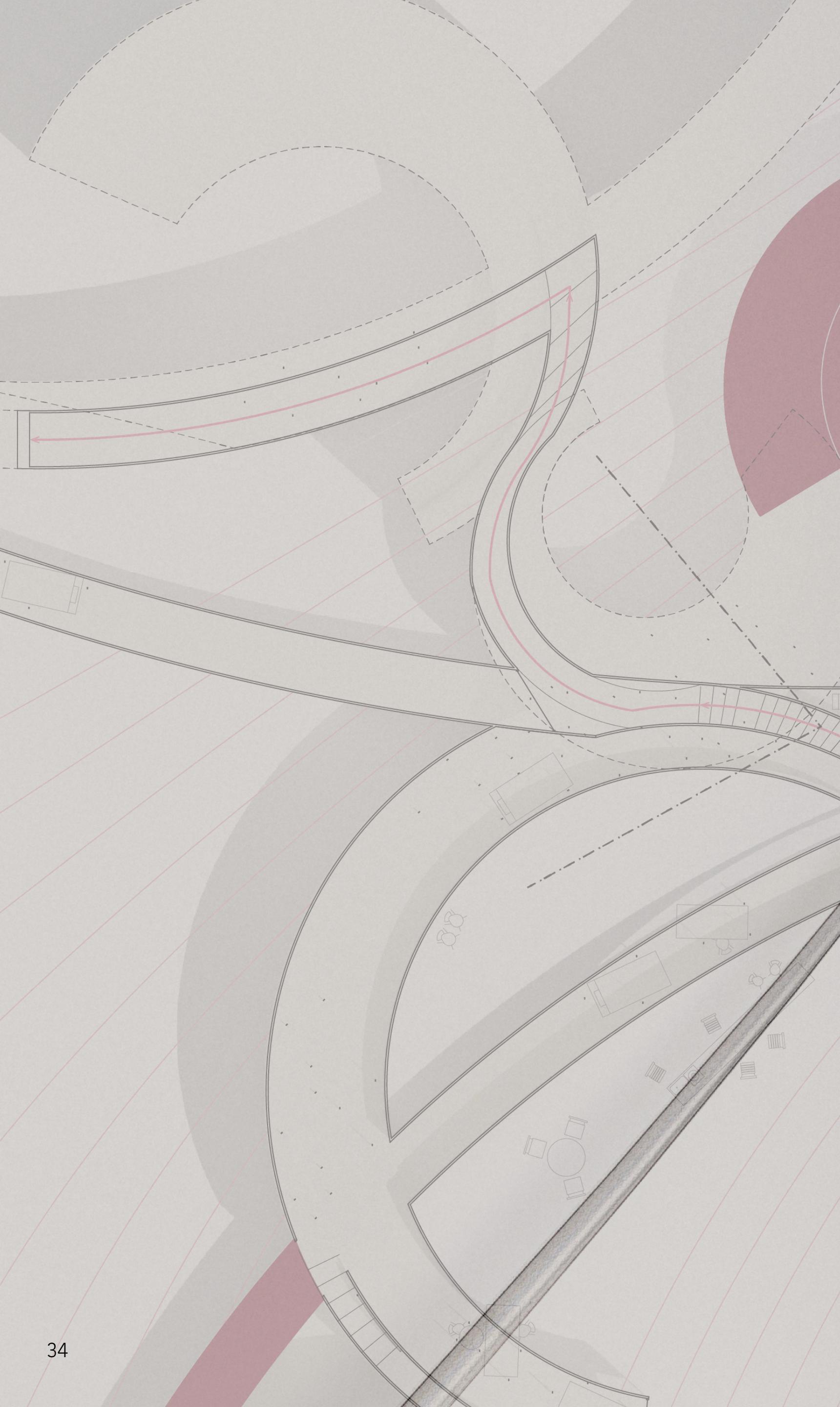
Ikegami Dori
池上通り



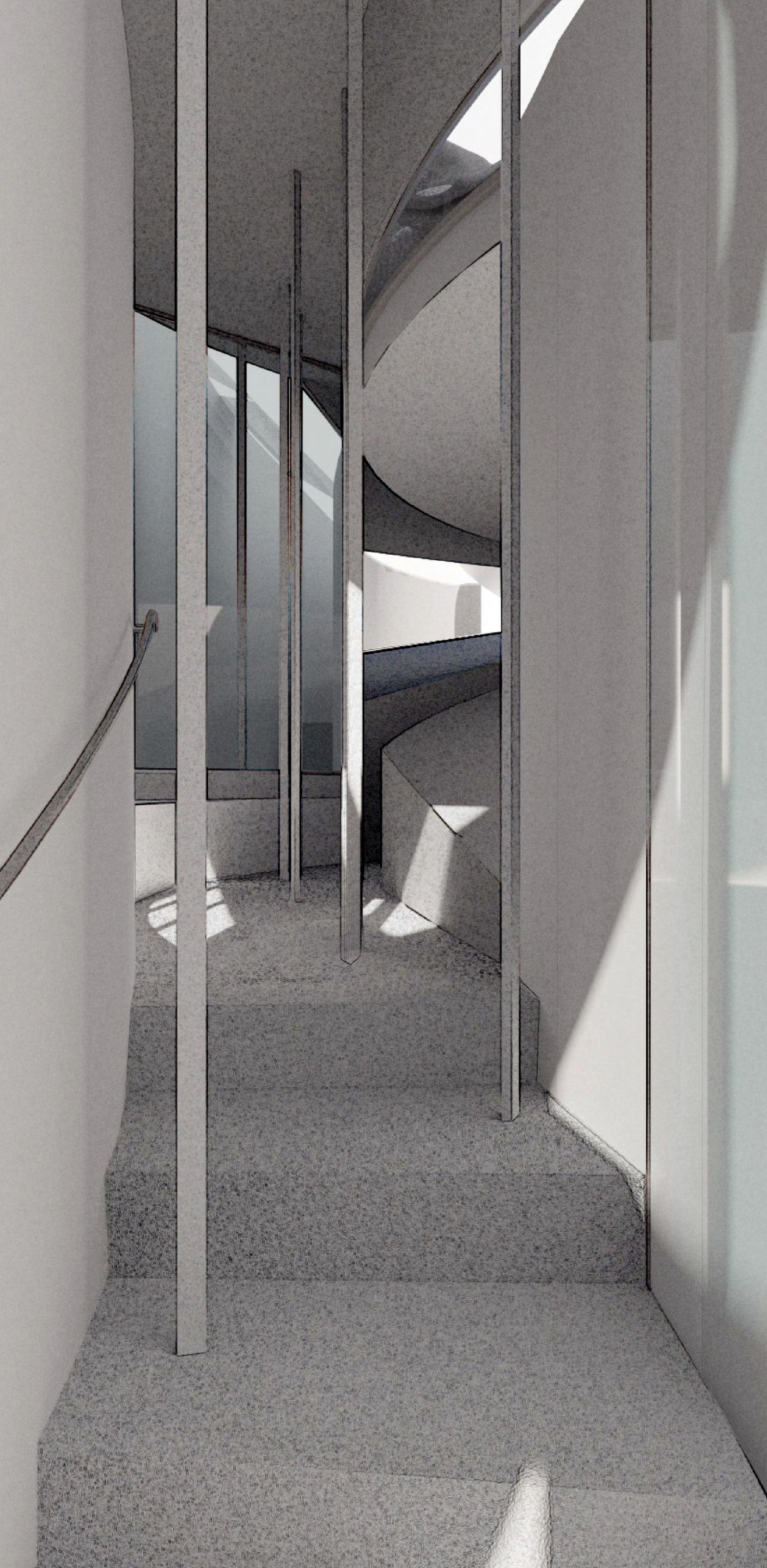
Degree Project | If Eaves Dropped
Mia Shucong Wang + Iris Yiwen Shen

Public Path



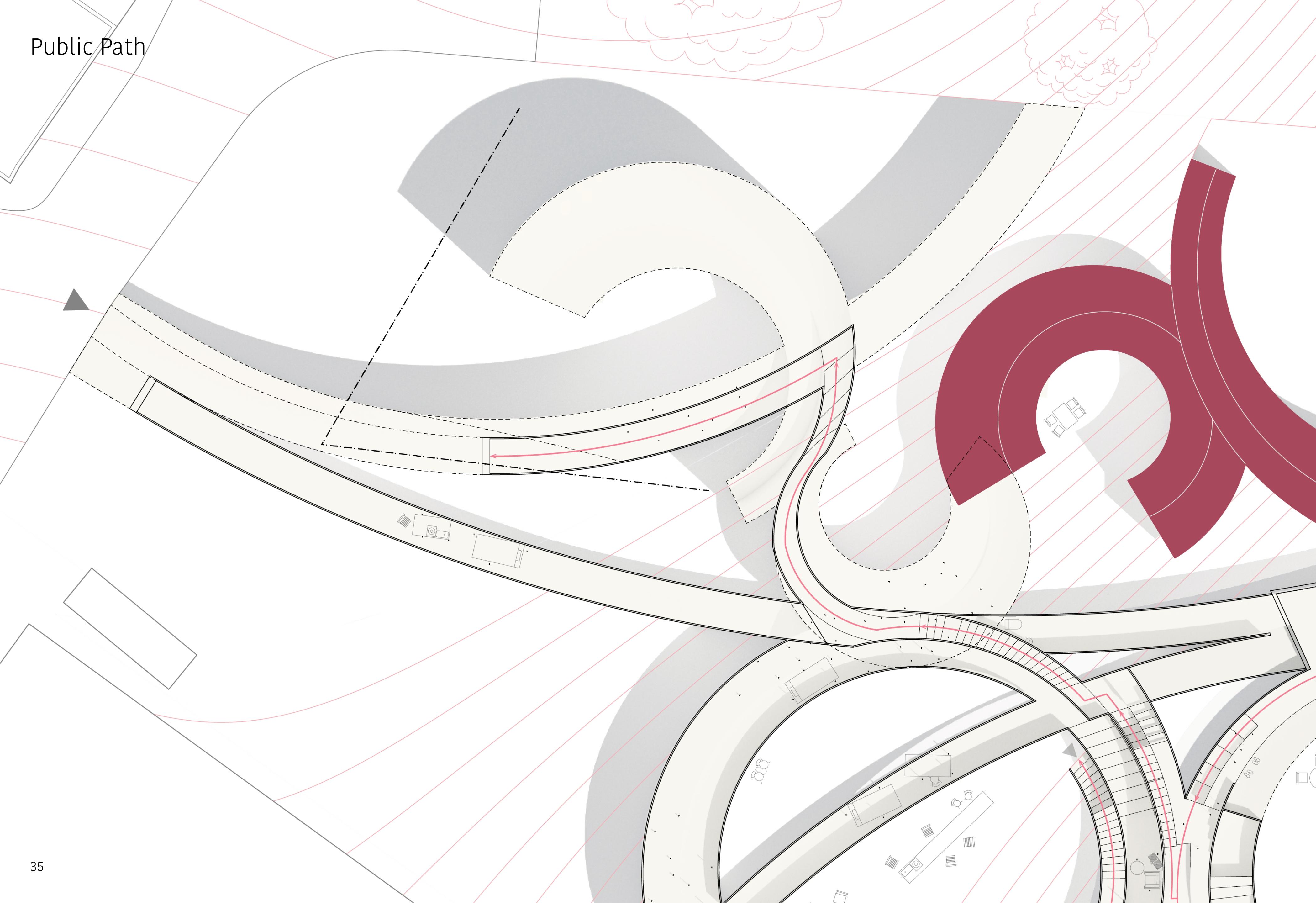


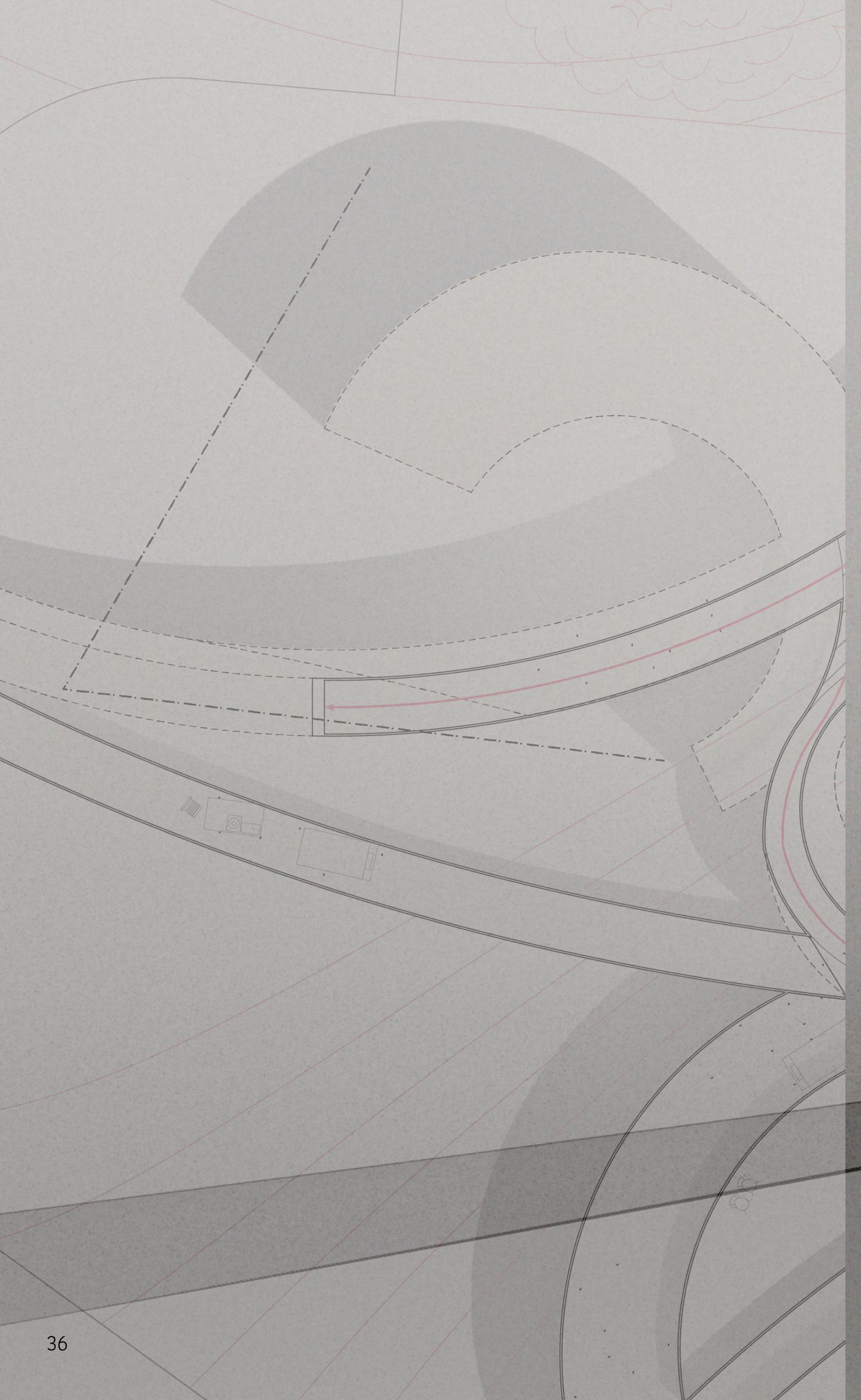
34



Degree Project | If Eaves Dropped
Mia Shucong Wang + Iris Yiwen Shen

Public Path



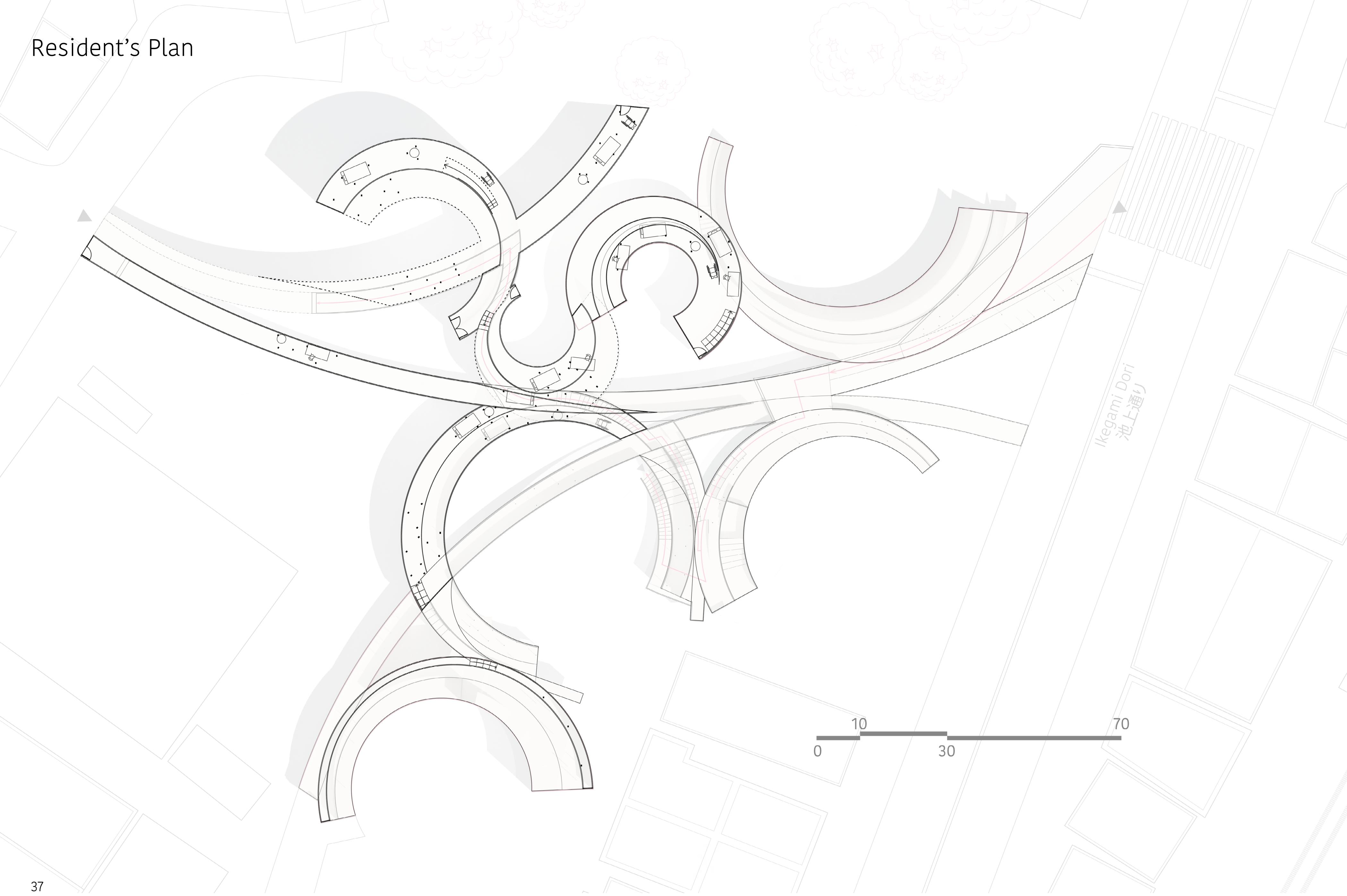


36

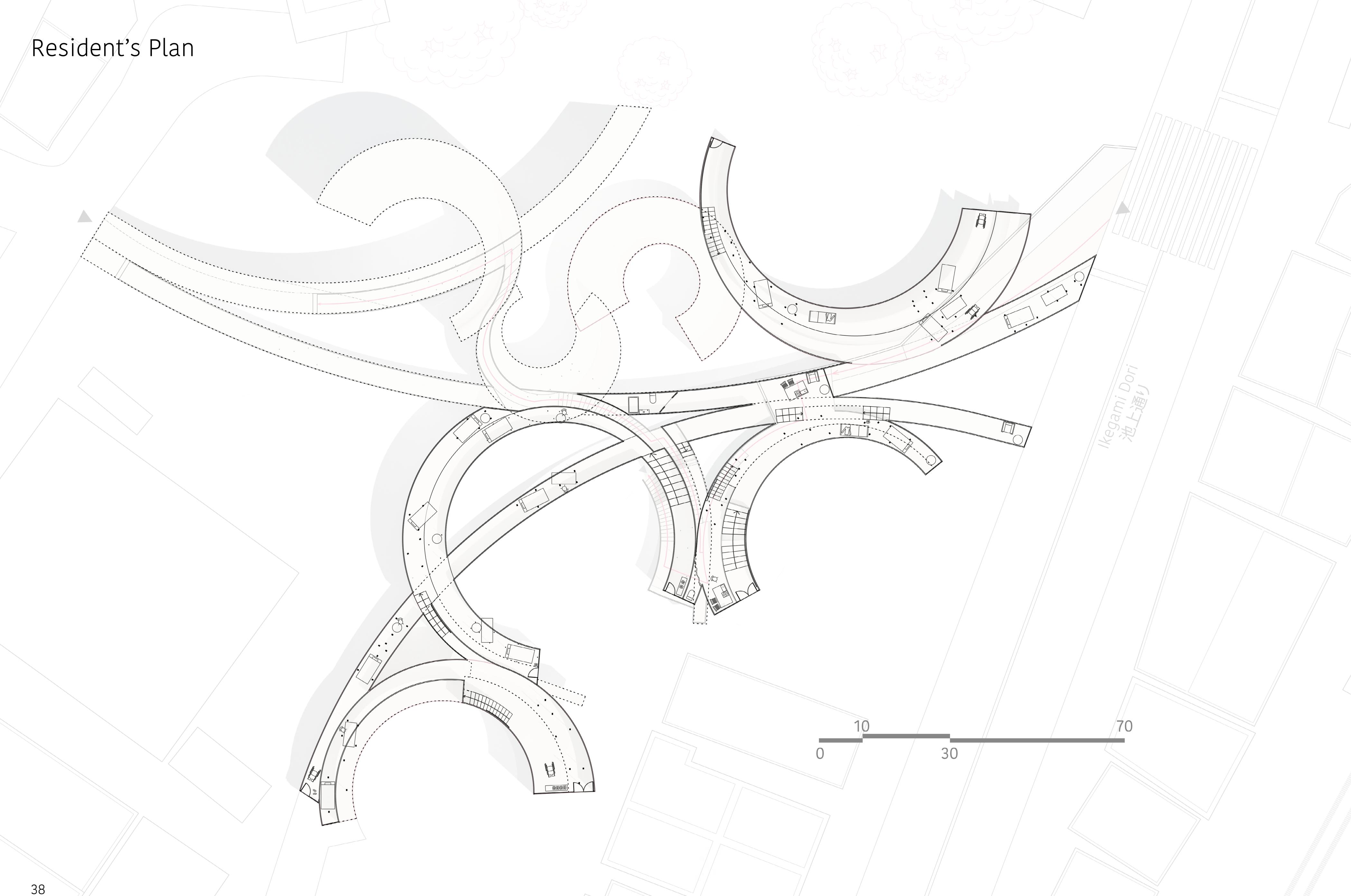


Degree Project | If Eaves Dropped
Mia Shucong Wang + Iris Yiwen Shen

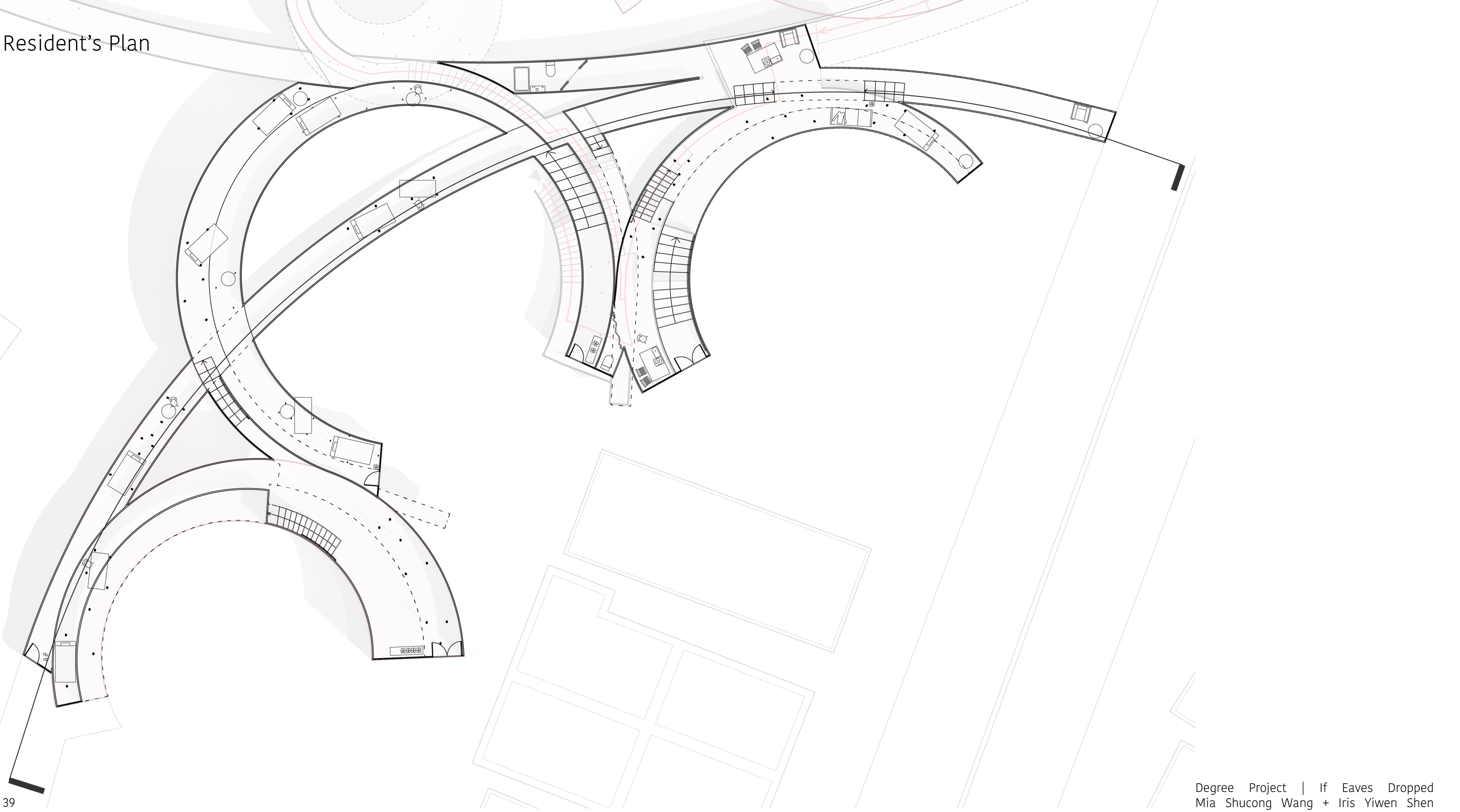
Resident's Plan



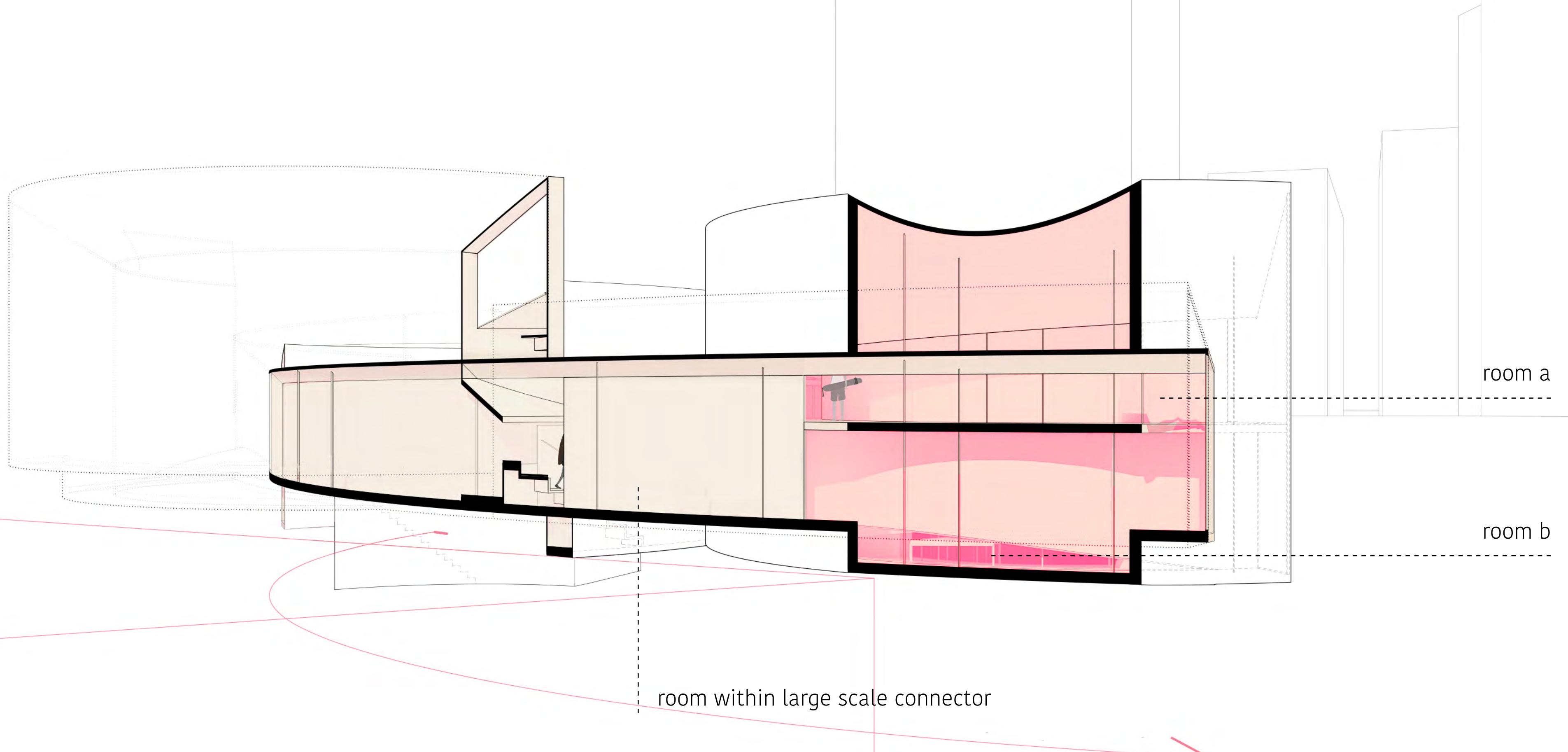
Resident's Plan



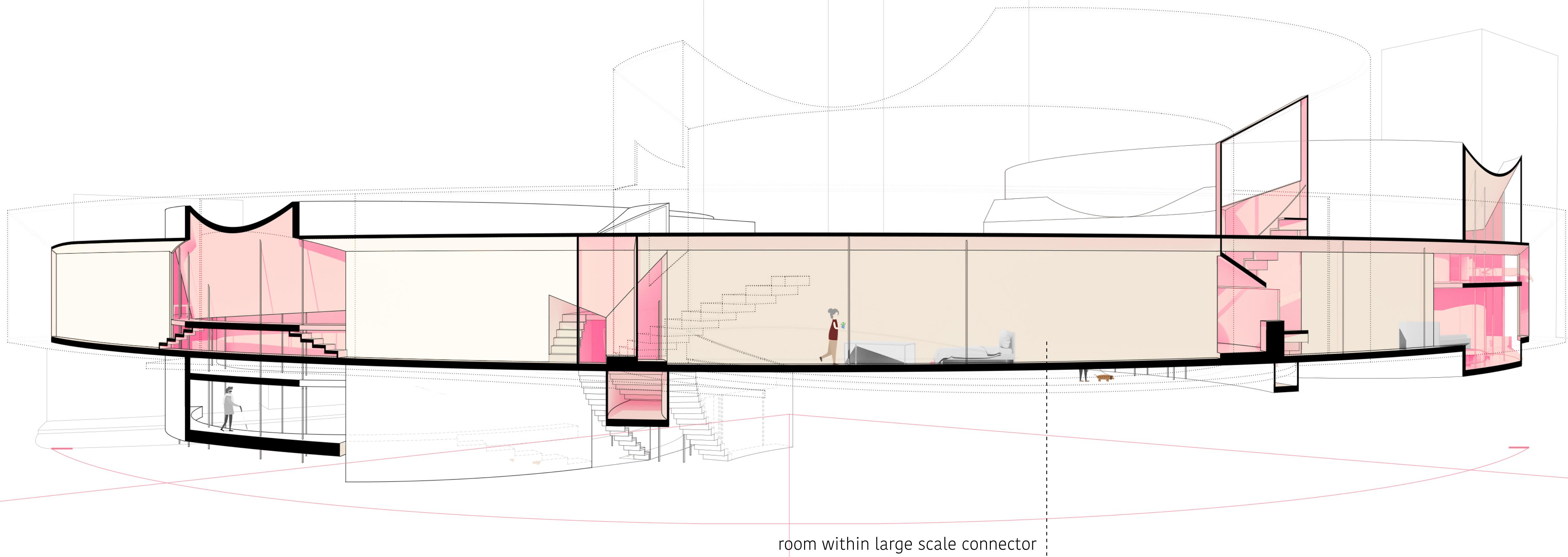
Resident's Plan



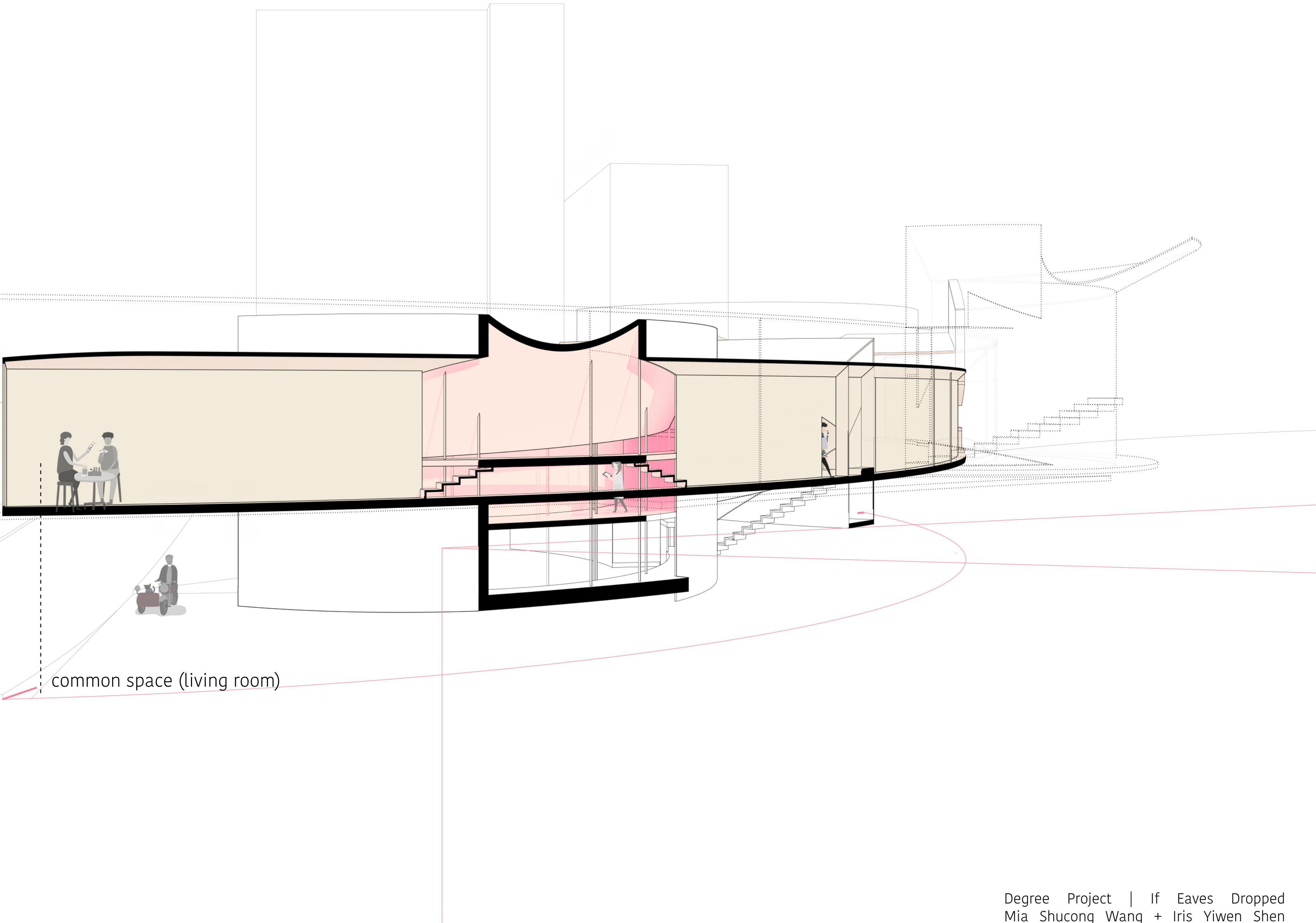
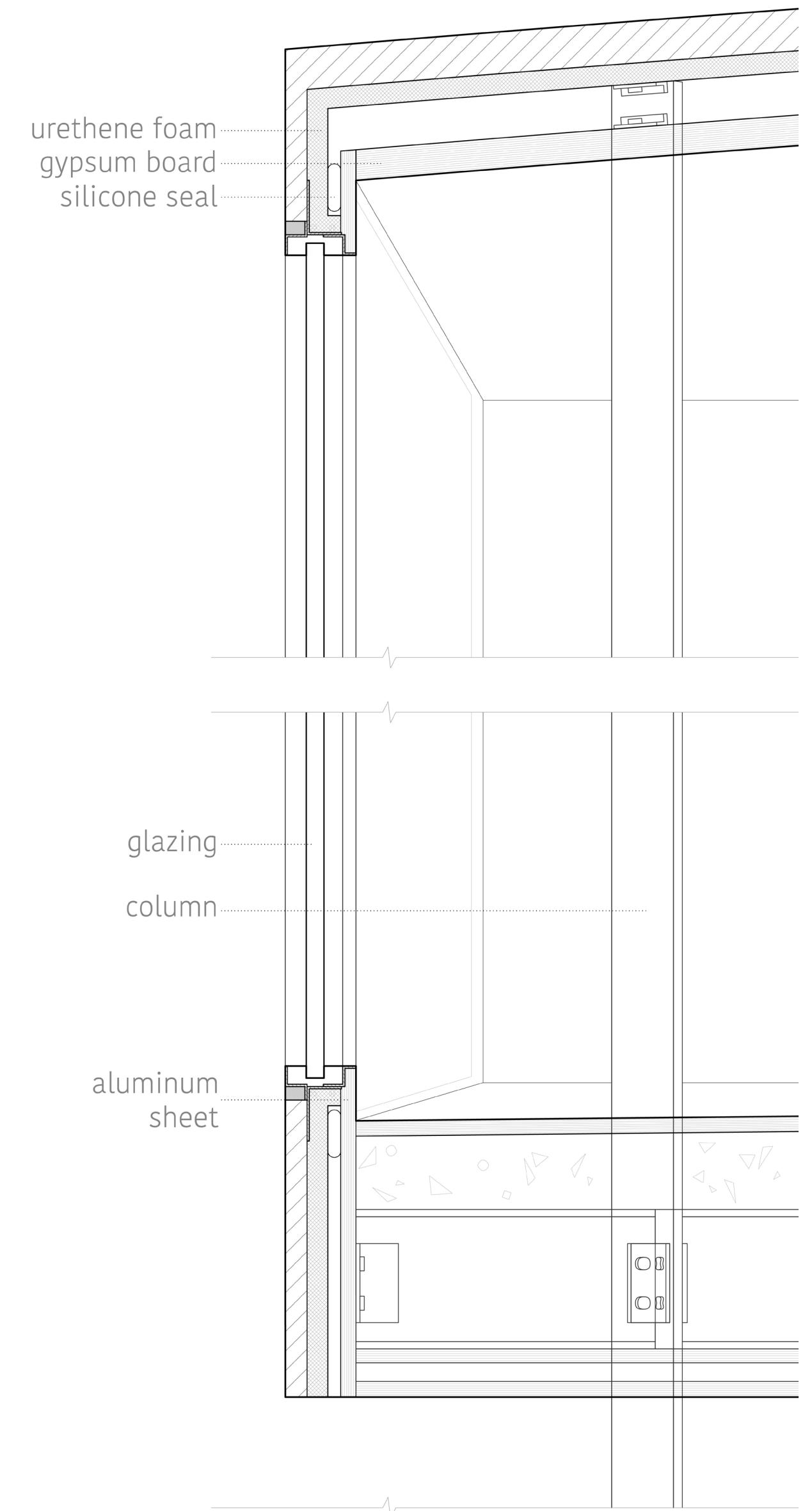
Longitudinal Section



Longitudinal Section



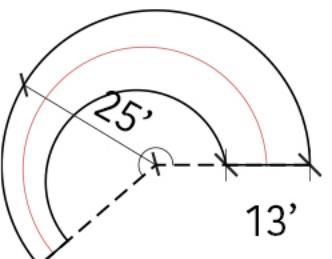
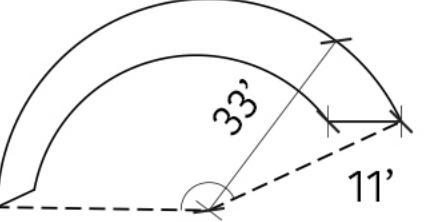
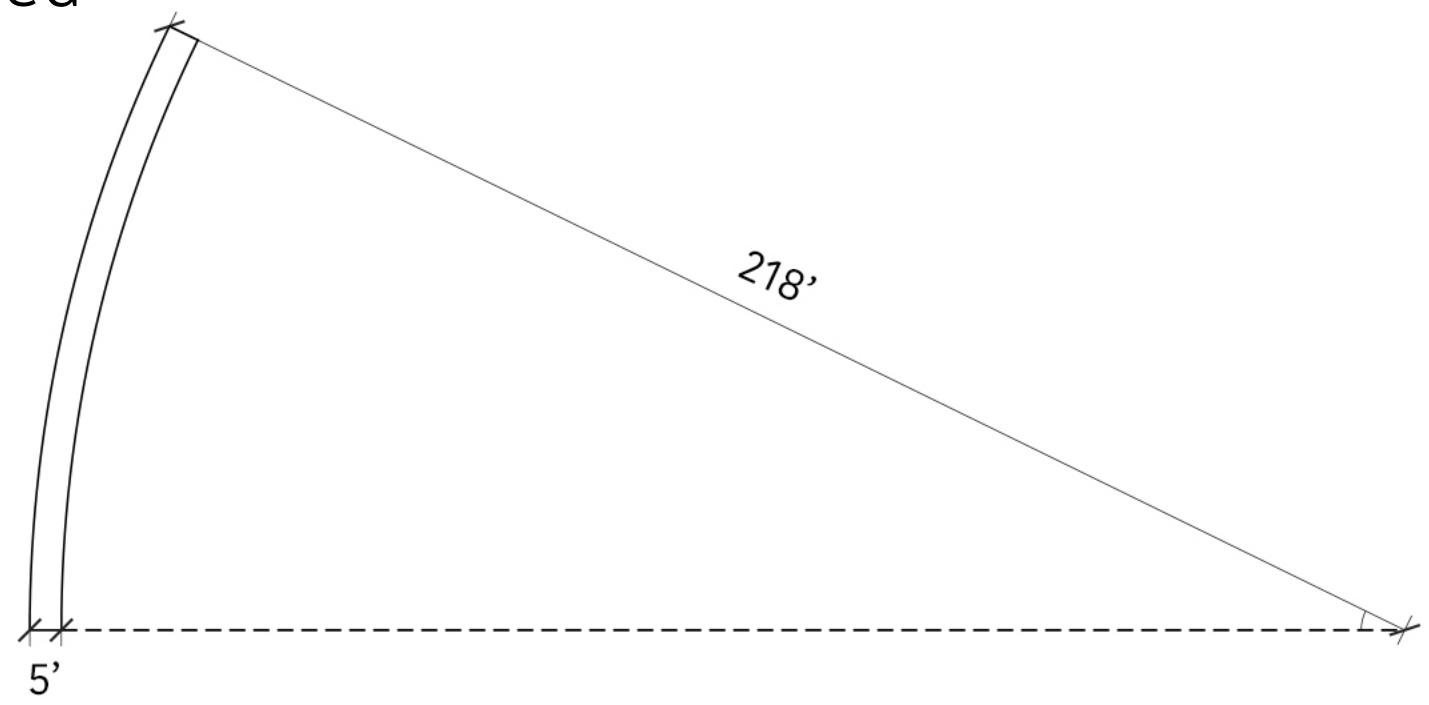
Wall Section Detail



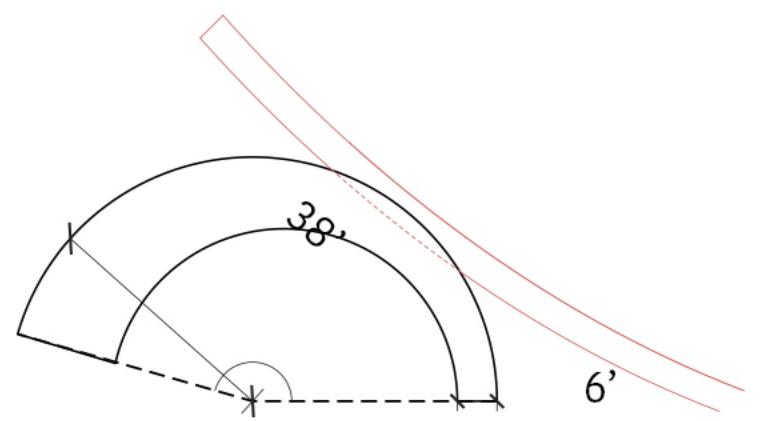
Geometries of Privacy



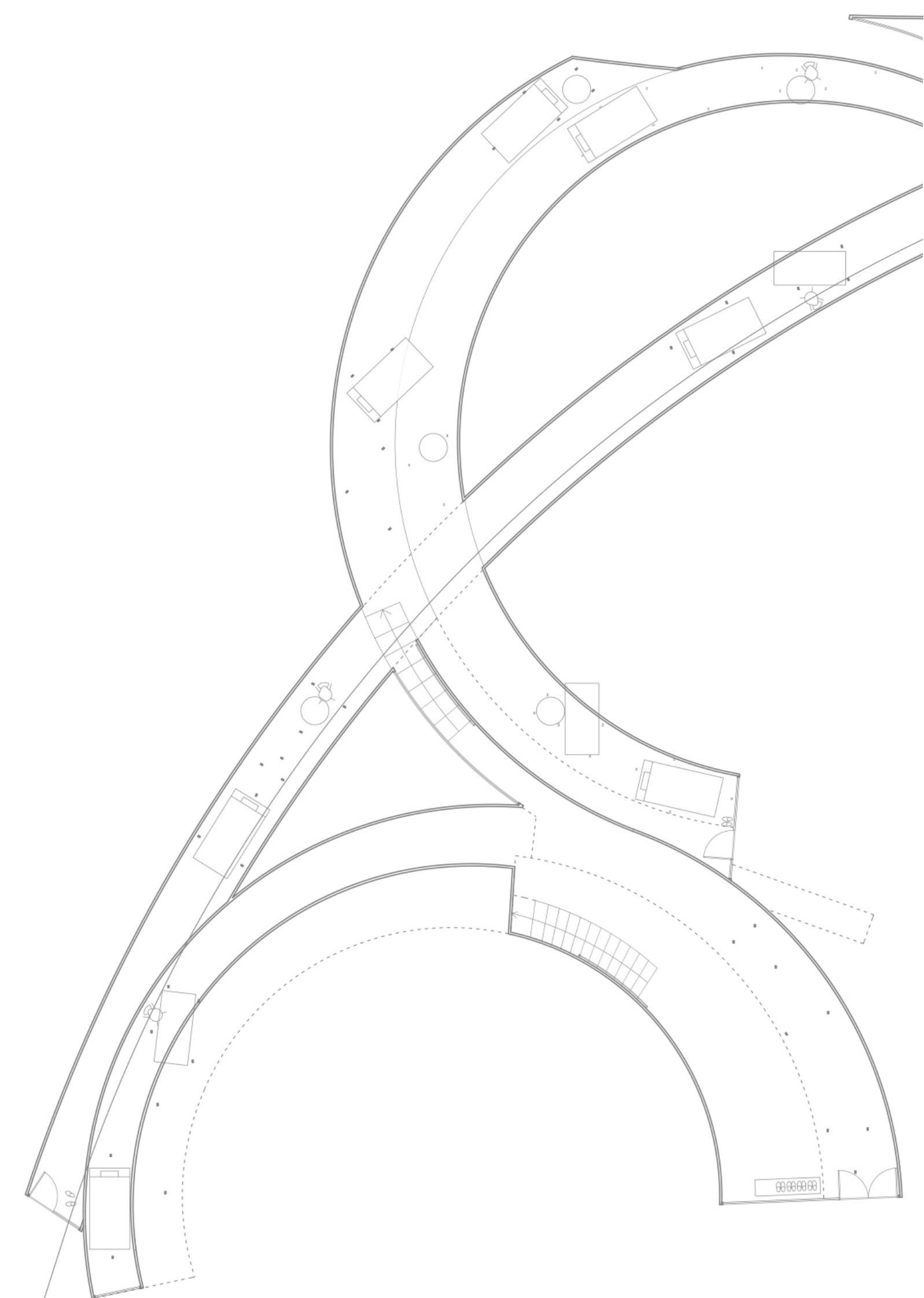
isolated



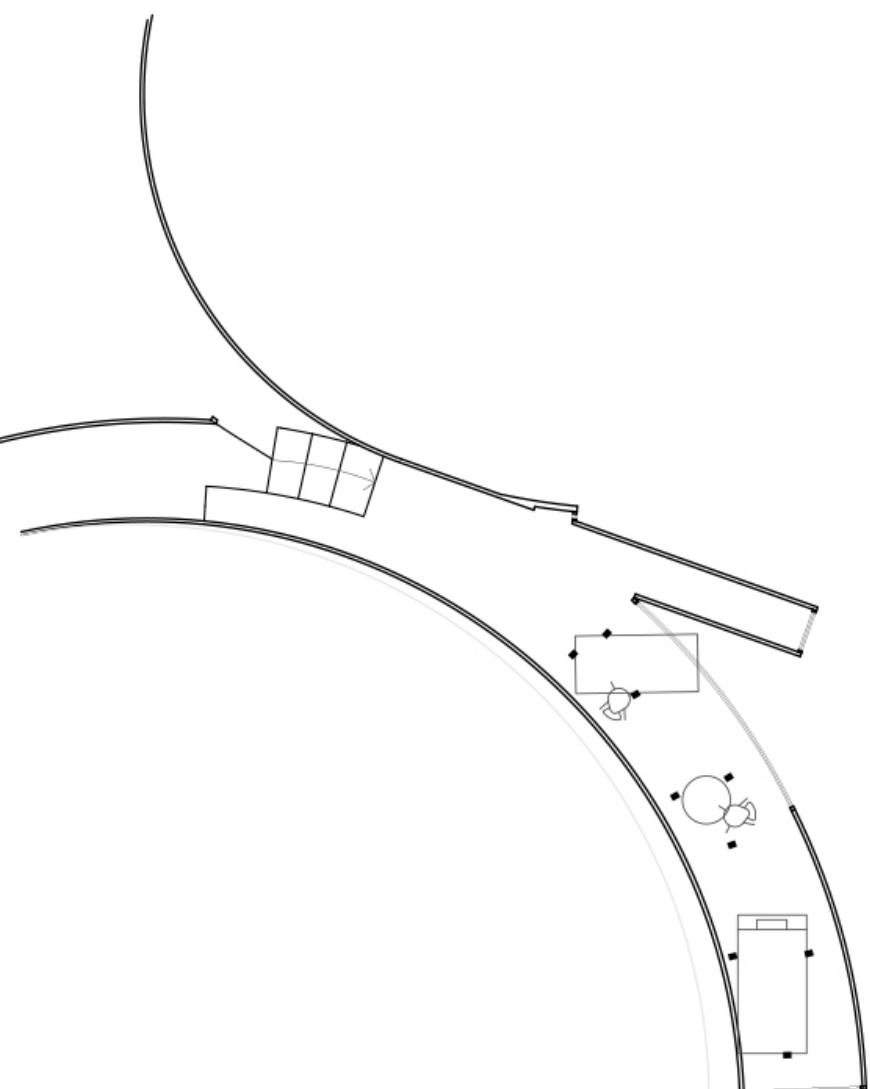
connected



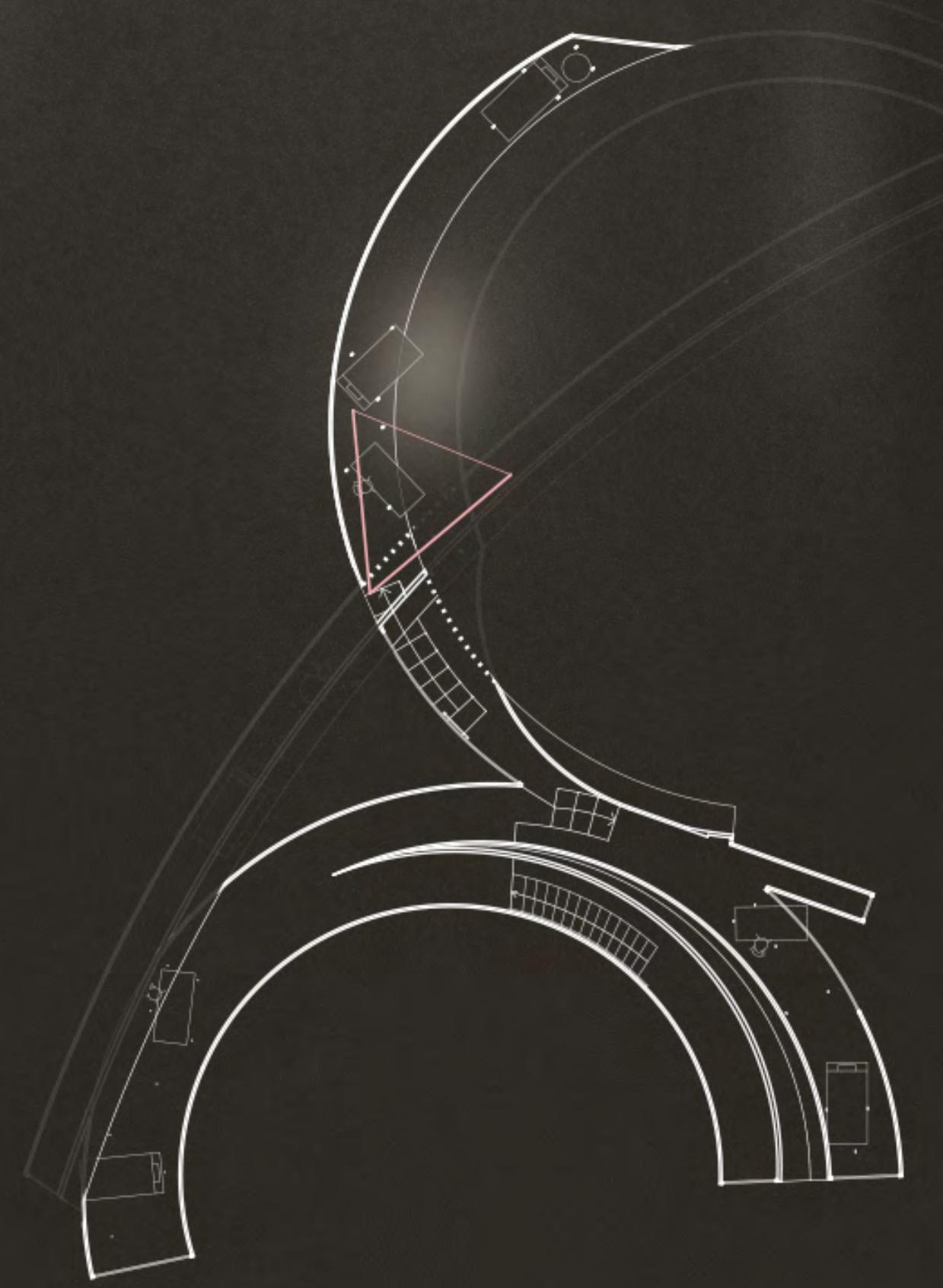
Column Operation



subdivide

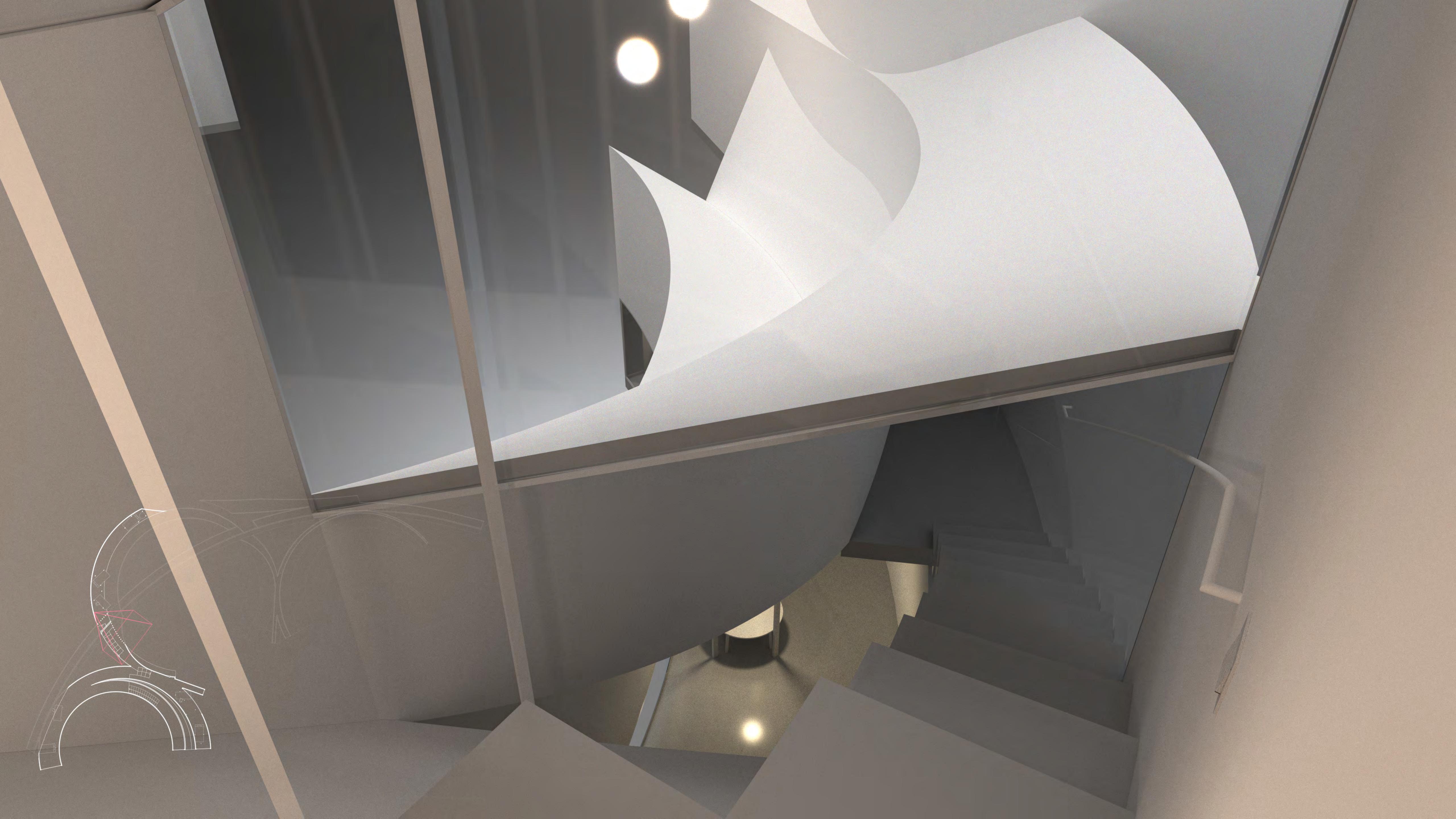


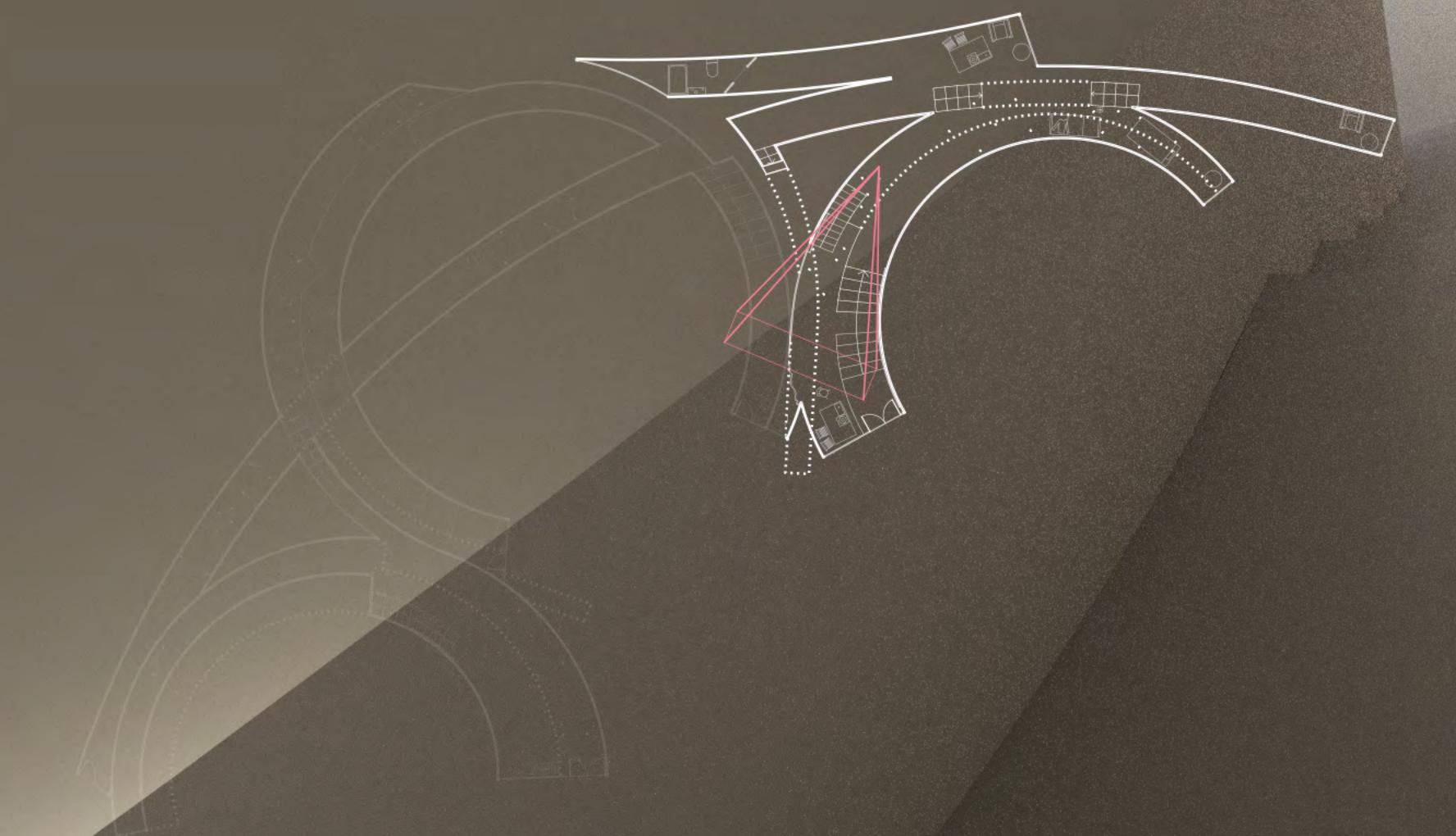
rotate















Bibliography

- Arendt, Hannah (1958). *The Human Condition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press
- Aureli, Pier Vittorio, & Giudici, Maria Sheherazade (2016). Familiar Horror: Toward a Critique of Domestic Space. *Log* 38
- Aureli, Pier Vittorio (2014). The Dom-ino Problem: Questioning the Architecture of Domestic Space. *Log* 30, pp. 153-168
- Bois, Yve-Alain, & Shepley, John (1984). A Picturesque Stroll around “Clara-Clara”. *October*, Vol. 29, pp. 32-62
- Corish Denis. (1969). The Continuum. *The Review of Metaphysics* Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 523-546
- Craig, Salmaan (2015). *Beyond Thermal Monotony, Essays on Thermodynamics, Architecture and Beauty*. New York, NY: Actar Publishers
- Evans, Robin (1978). Figures, Doos, and Passages
- Hartoonian, Gevork (1989). Mies can der Rohe: The Genealogy of Column and Wall. *Journal of Architectural Education* Vol. 42, No. 2, pp. 43-50
- Holder, Andraw (2016). On Sufficient Density, *Log*, No. 38, pp. 95-104
- Horn, Eva (2017). Aesthetics of the Air
- Ito, Toyo (1997). Tarzans in the Media Forest
- Ito, Toyo (1986). Nomad, the chair as soft furniture, Transparent Pao, a house that floats. *Japan Architect*, Vol. 61, no. 11-12 (355-356), pp. 56-63
- Jarzombek, Mark (2010). Corridor Spaces, *Critical Inquiry*, Volume 36, Number 4
- Maak, Niklas. (2015). *Living Complex: From Zombie City to the New Communal*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press
- Maki, Fumihiko (1964). Investigations in Collective Form
- Moe, Kiel (2014). *Insulating Modernism: Isolated and Non-Isolated Thermodynamics in Architecture*. Birkhäuser
- Rakatansky, Mark (1992). Transformational Constructions (For Example: Adult Day). *Assemblage*, No.19 pp. 6-31
- Sloterdijk, Peter, & Fabricius, Danielle. (2007). Cell Block, Egospheres, Self-Container. *Log* 38 pp. 89-108
- Teyssot, Georges (2013). *A Topology of Everyday Constellations*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press