

LANDSCAPE AS HOUSE

in search of a new form
of topographic living

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mimesis, barbara and michael leisgen, 1972-73

AN INCOMPLETE VERNACULAR OF LANDSCAPE AS HOUSE

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INTRODUCTION

”landscape as house” is about animating my families landscape through a new form of topographic living: a defragmented house embedded into forests, meadows and the village. this house creates a life constituted of movement through landscape, on the scale of a farmers ground, with rooms inhabiting its topography. routines and rituals rooted in the change of weather. walking as a domestic action.

at the beginning of the last century my great-grandfather migrated into the valley of the bregenzerwald in the northern alps - the heart of europe. he inherited a small farmyard, enough to feed a family and passed it on to my grandfather. like most people in the post-war era my grandparents went from being peasants, living from the land, towards participating in a wage labour society in an urbanised environment. with this big scale change in lifestyle, the deeper connection to landscape that people had through constant interaction with their environment, is now limited to having a house with a view and a garden. like everywhere in europe, the active making of cultural landscape today is left to less than 2 percent of the people.

despite being a police officer, my grandfather kept his inherited land as a whole until today. he animated an entire farming landscape in a way of his own, through maintaining and tending this heritage. through cutting, planting, mowing, building, repairing he continued a connection to landscape in his own idea of dwelling and inhabiting. later all his daughters should have a house and a piece of land to inherit themselves.

in the bregenzerwald one can still find many traces of this topographic way of living: made by one of the last transhumant farmers of the alps, as well as through small domestic rituals still present within the lifestyle of the peri-urban dweller. just like my grandfather, many people still own pieces of landscape once taken care of by their farmer-ancestors. small plots of forests and meadows, rights to water and passage, old farmhouses and mountain huts. through this heritage and an appreciation of the values embedded within, small routines and rituals connected to the landscape are embodied until today.

my project seeks to renew my own connection with the landscape of my family and creates a personal space that leads to a new form of topographic living. topographic living means a life of constant interaction between myself and my environment, between what is considered inside and outside, building and landscape, mine and others. a way of living leading towards a new formation of cultural landscape where contemporary domestic actions gradually change the landscape of the bregenzerwald. my design interventions are opening up and diversifying existing spaces, creating new meaning for ordinary landscape elements. “topographic furnitures” create new relationships between domestic activities and the landscape that they inhabit.

essential to “landscape as house” is it’s fragmented character of space that leads to a daily rhythm of movement from room to room. this movement comes into being through the embedding of a personal routine into the landscape and leads to more awareness of surrounding, time and space – one might say a ritualisation of dwelling. seasons are a domestic experience, acts of maintenance become ritual. through walking this house is continuously reenacted, building up new relations between the landscape, the rooms and myself.

this project is my personal exploration of what it means to live in landscape. to experience it, learn from it, animate it and take care of it. every day.

anna maria fink, 2017

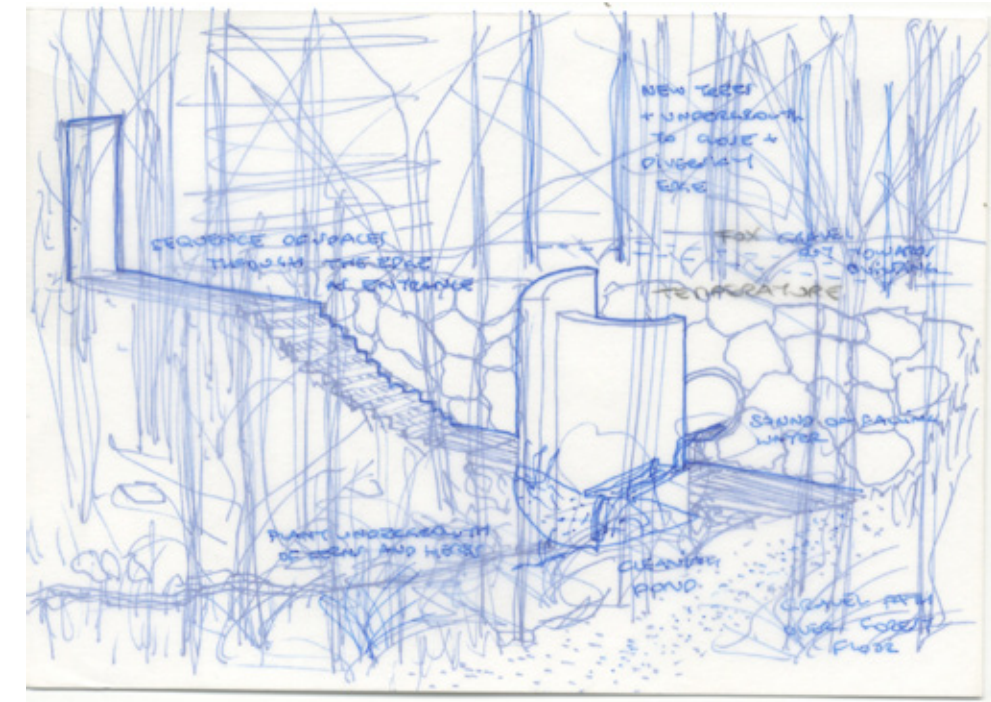
A

ANIMATING A LANDSCAPE

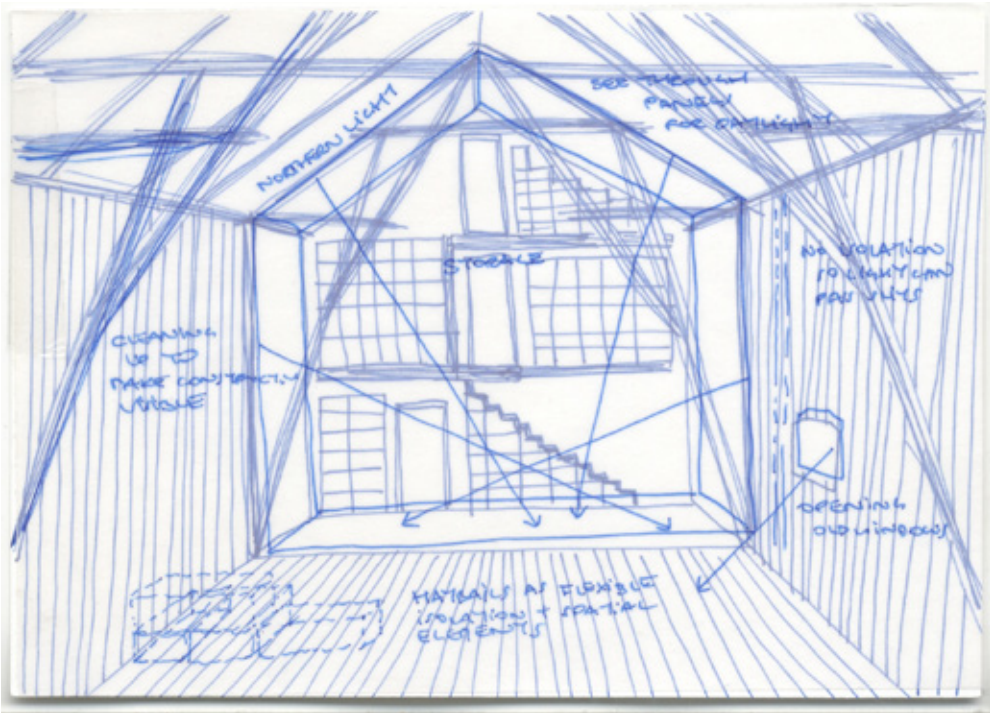
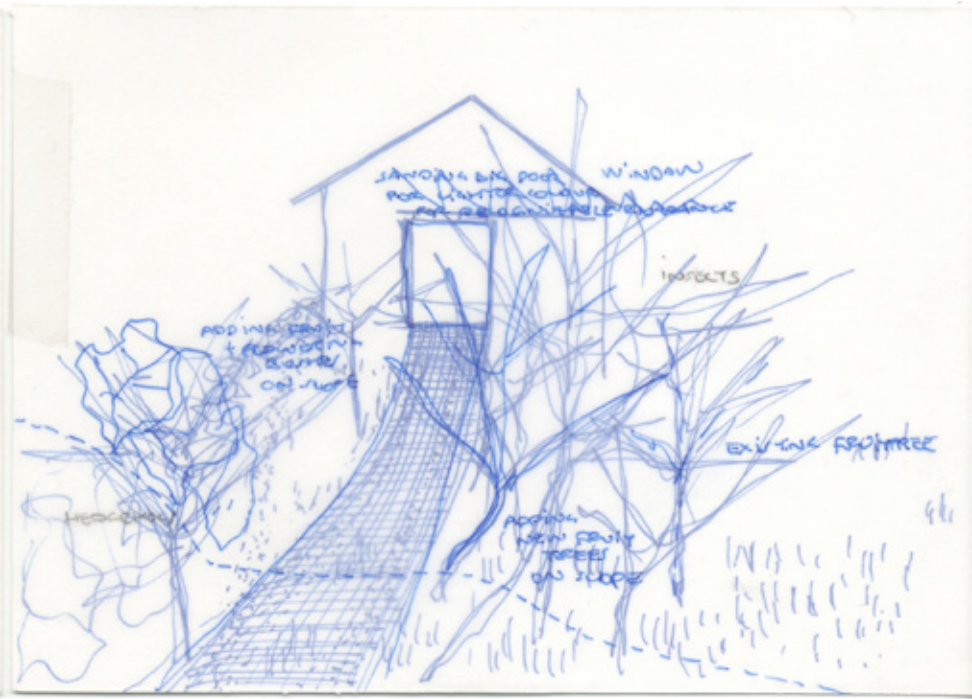
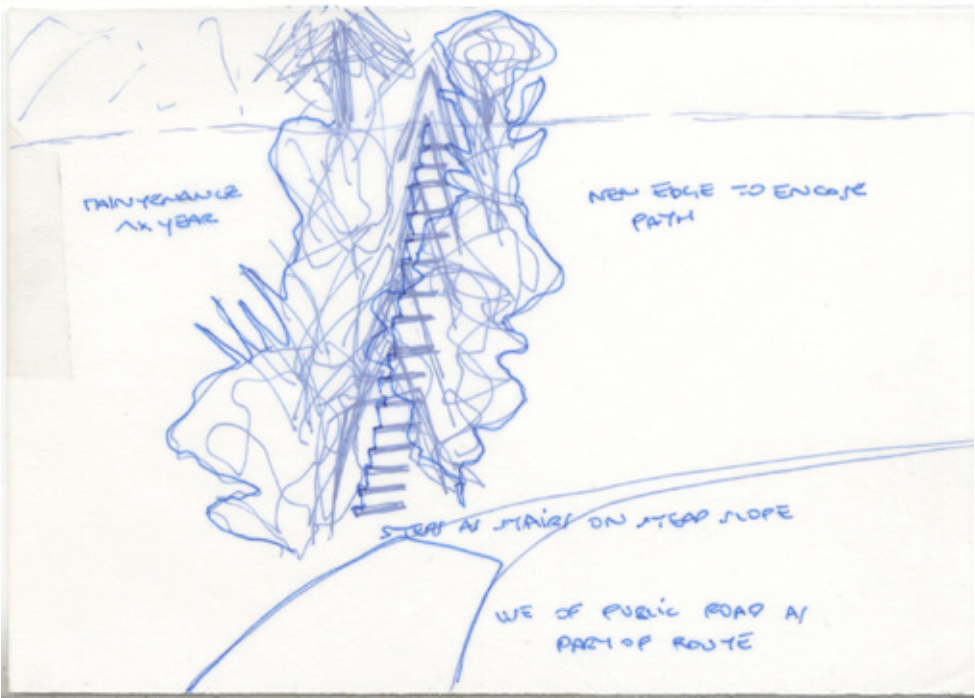
“what makes us feel liberated is not total freedom, but rather living in a set of limitations that we have created and prescribed for ourselves.” andrea zittel

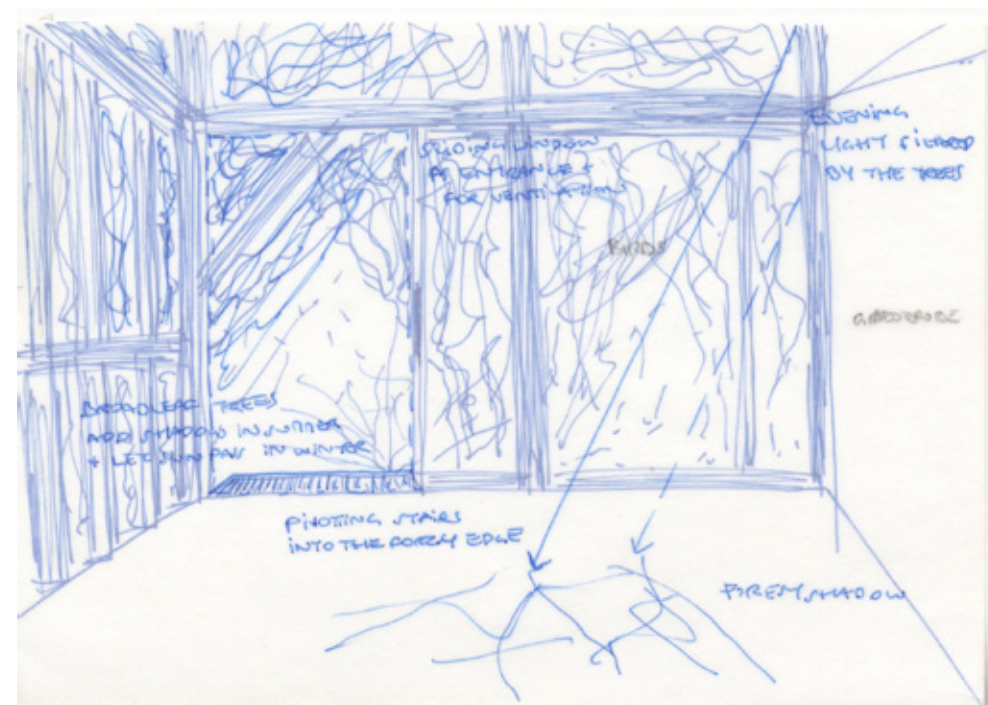
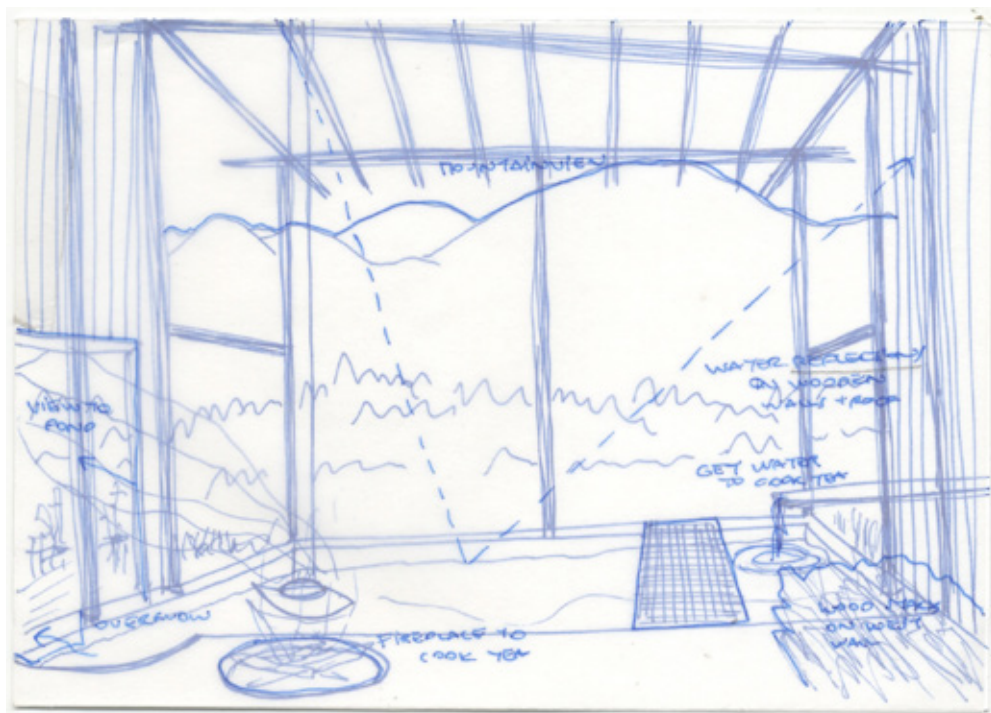
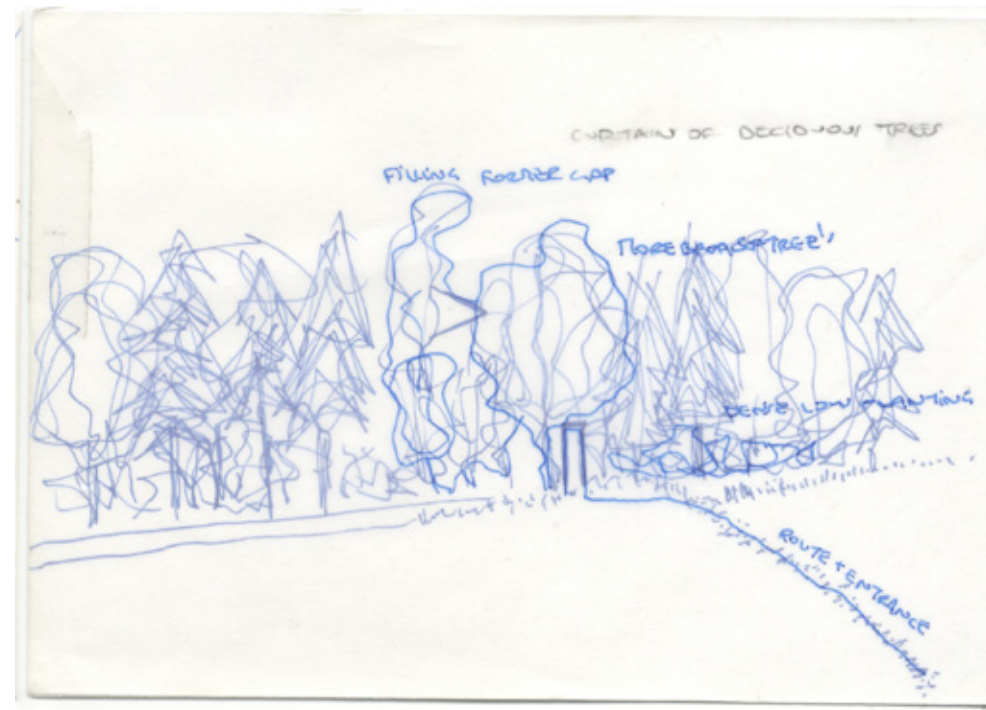
animating a landscape as a dwelling human asks for limitations - or in the words of a dwelling designer: interventions - that lead to interaction with the environment.

this series of drawings explores the design interventions that activate perception and awareness, and create physical interaction by choice of material and maintenance.



> sketches for
“landscape as house”, 2016





ASSEMBLAGE

taking photos, sorting them, cutting out elements, rearranging fragments - assembling imagery is a valuable research tool investigating the vernacular of a landscape. fragmentation and assemblage is at the core of my work as a landscape architect.

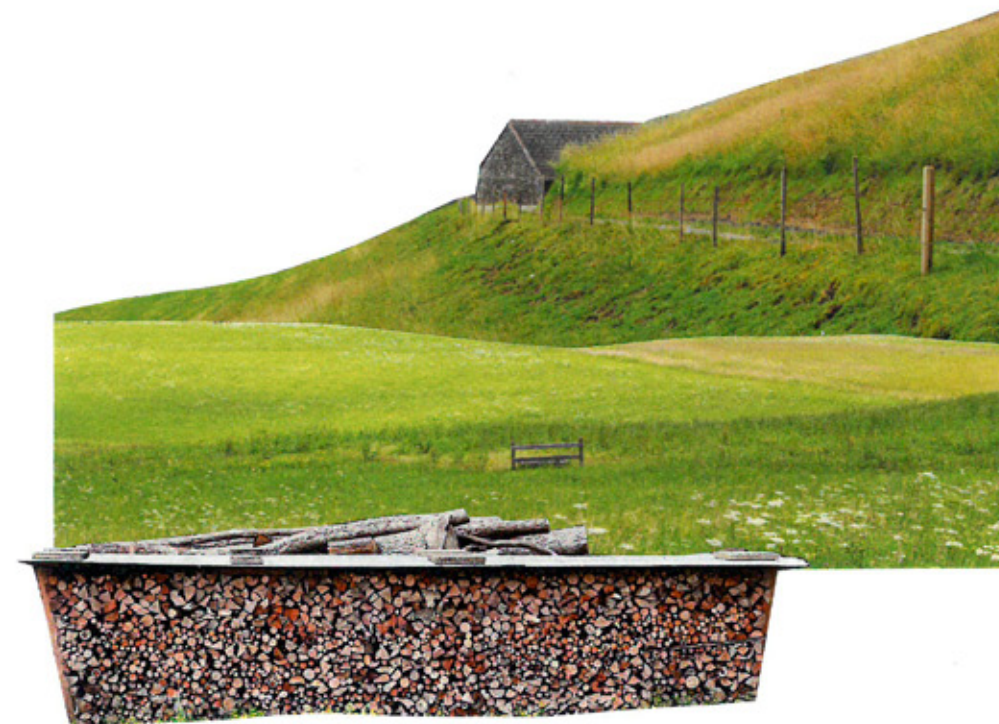
this series of collages show fragments of the landscape of the bregenzerwald and explores the material quality of it's appearance. revealing new worlds for "wälder", like myself, to inhabit in dreams, talks and images.



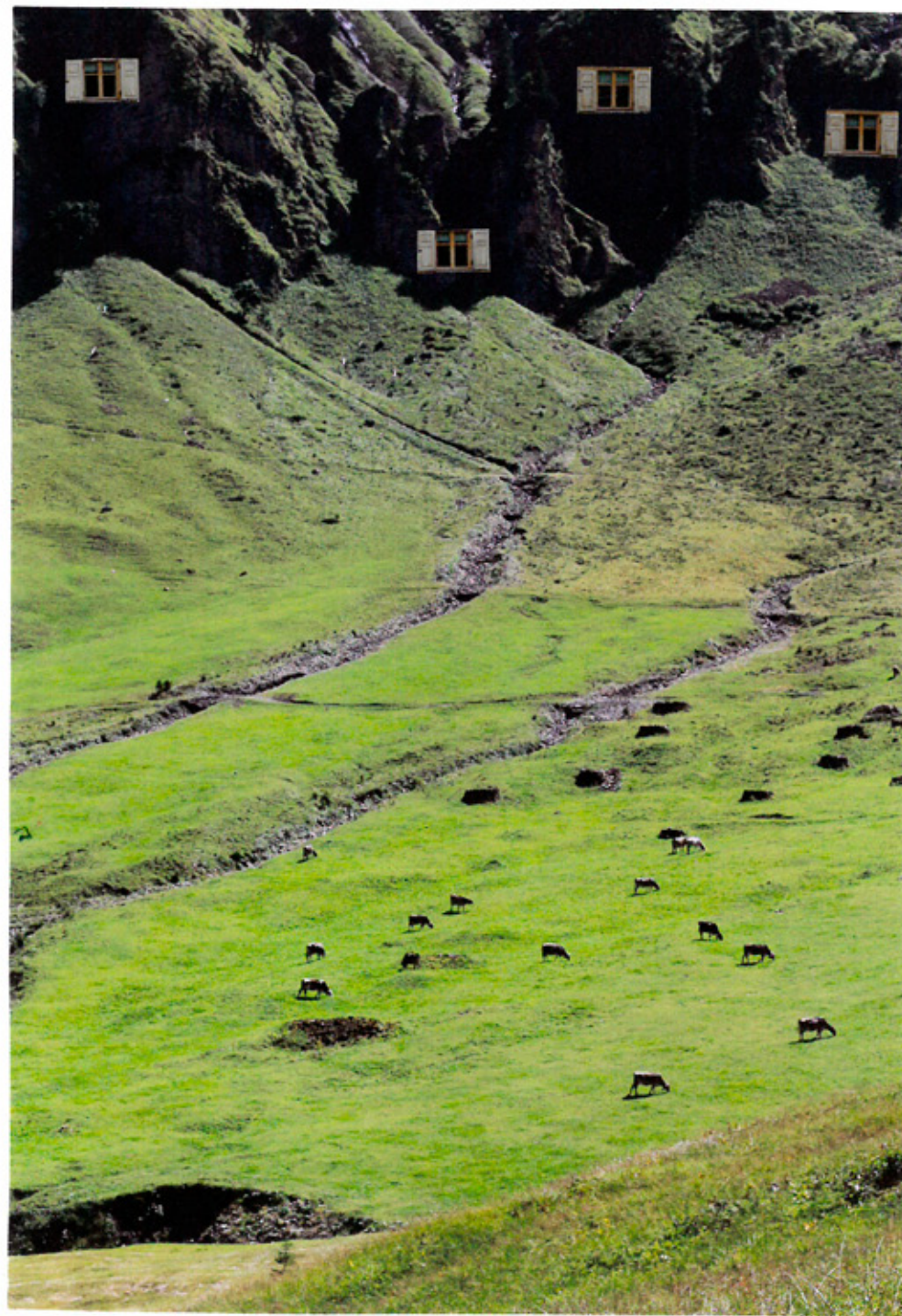






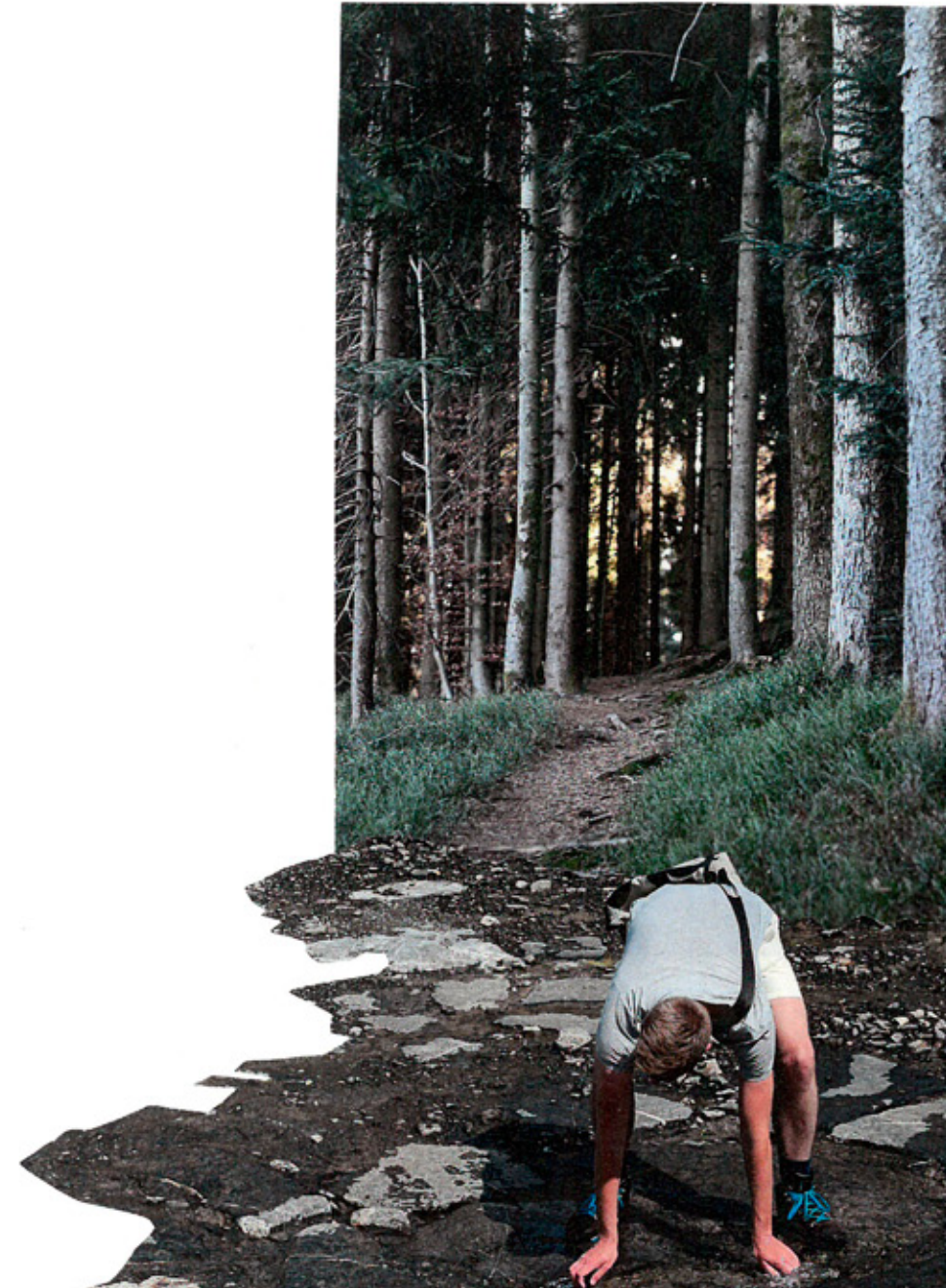






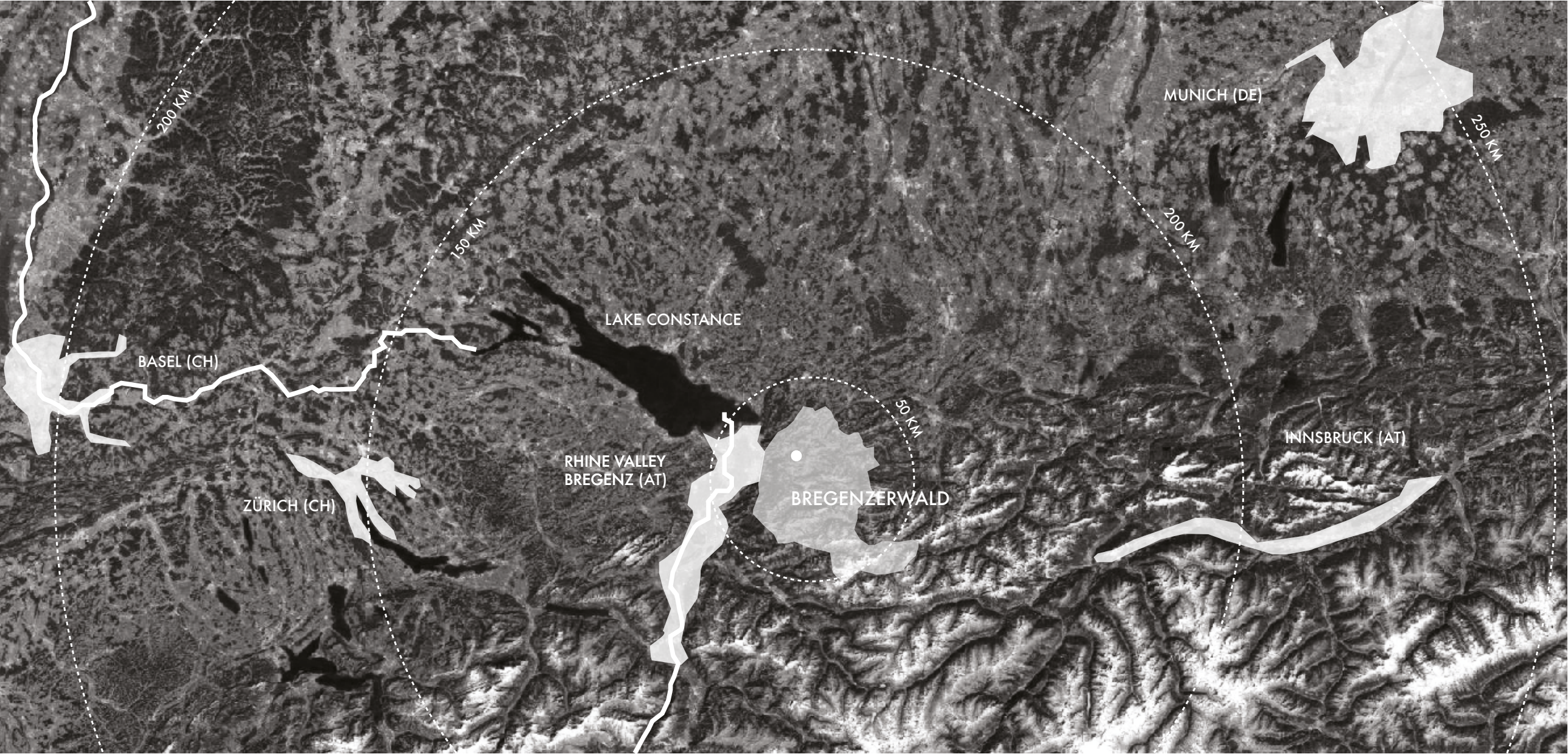








B





LAKE CONSTANCE

BREGENZ



ALBERSCHWENDE

EGG

ST. GALLEN (CH)

DORNBIRN

RHINE VALLEY

BEZAU

BORDER CH / AT

SCHOPPERNAU

FELDKIRCH

alberschwende, regio bregenzerwald, vorarlberg, austria

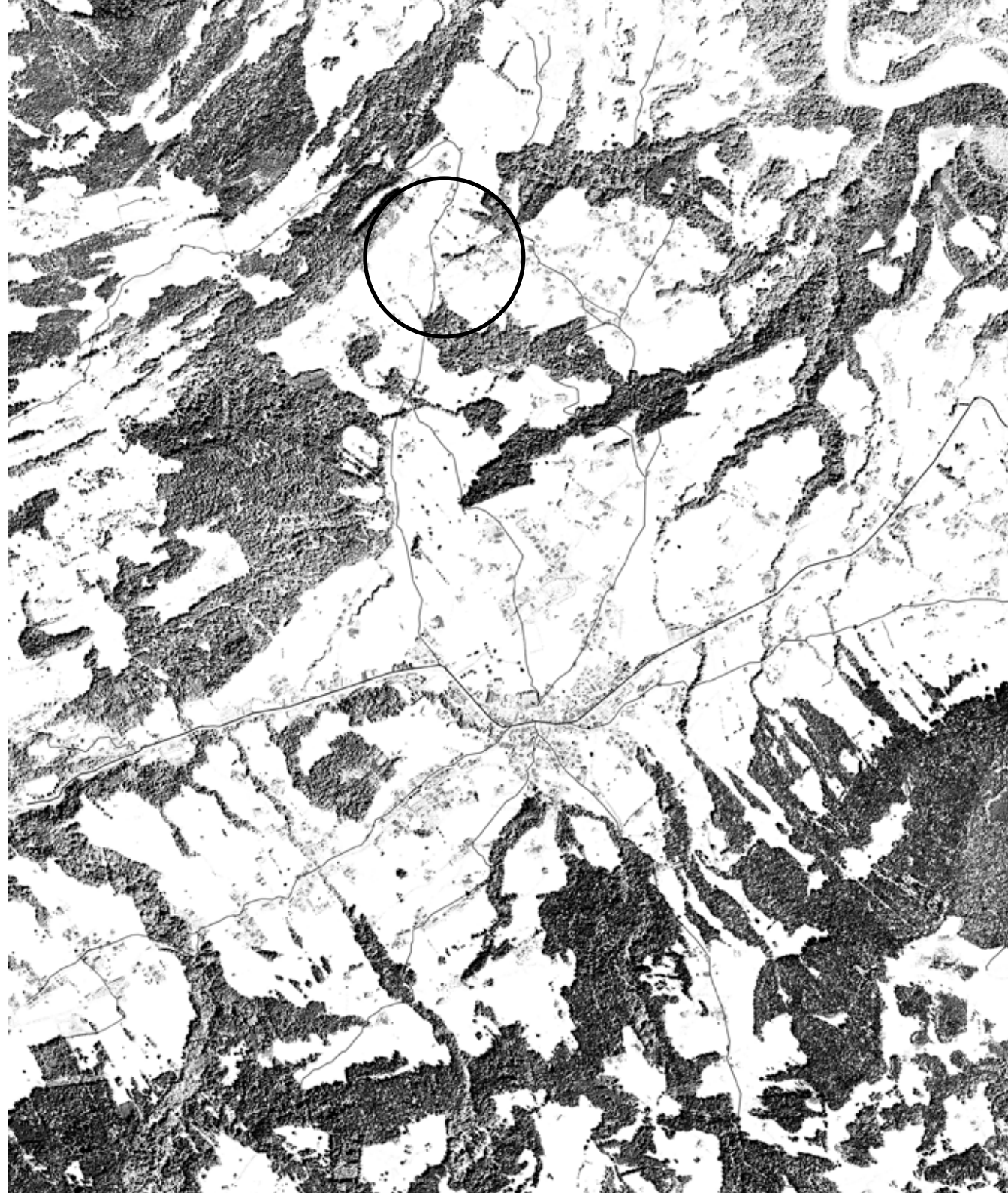
47° 27' N, 9° 49' O

21,11 km², 37% forested area, 54% agricultural area

lowest point 440m river, 740m village square, 1182m mountaintop

3.283 inhabitants - 156 inh./km², ca. 2000 inhabitants between 1850-1960

420 pupils, 56 companies with 327 employees and 56 trainees



BUILDING A HOUSE/HOME

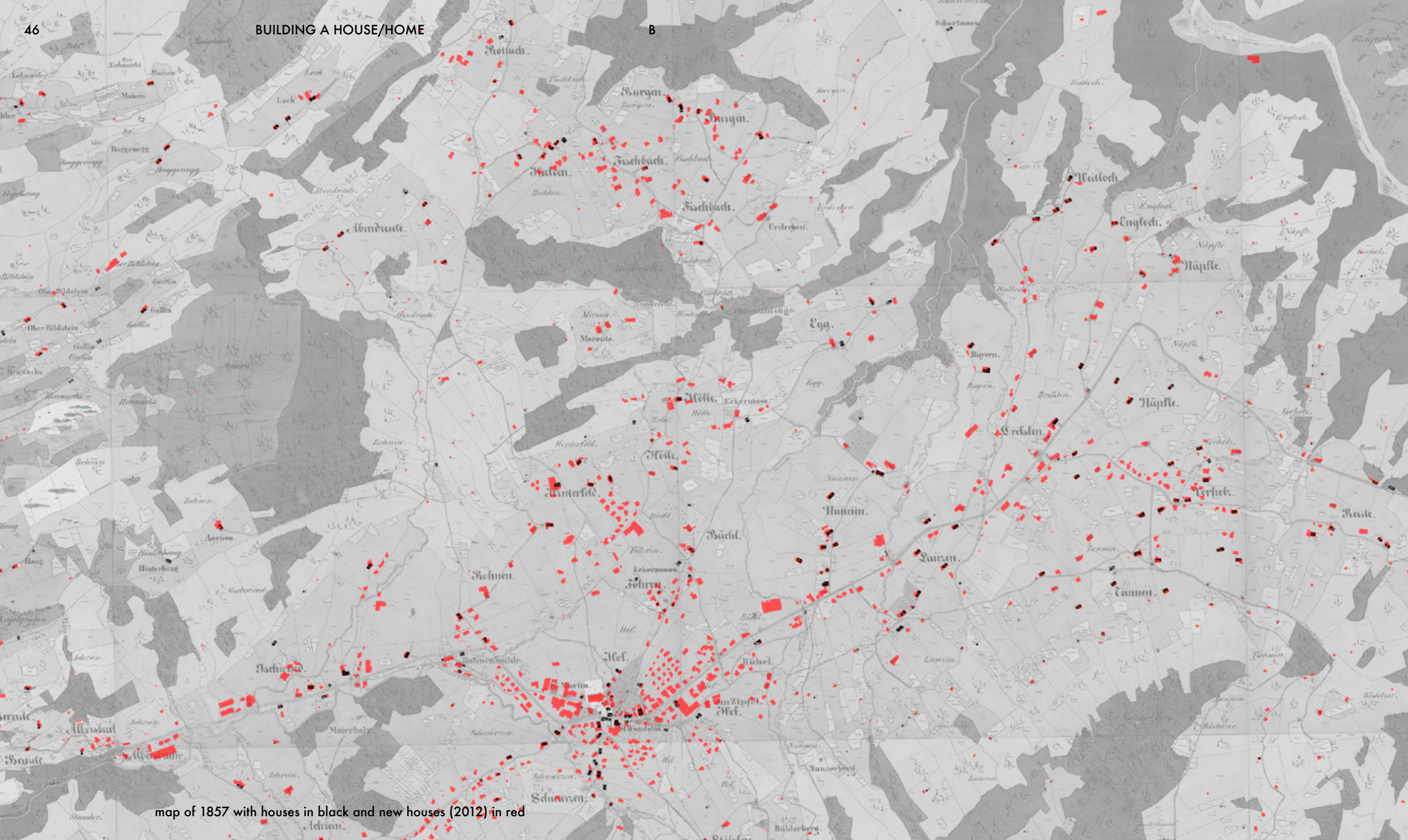
since very little commercial housing has been built in the bregenzerwald, building your own house is still a very strong tradition. many people inherit a building plots from their family as a fragment of land that originally belonged to a farmers landscape. to stimulate young families to stay in the “wald”, this building tradition has been subsidised by provincial government. young home builders benefited from low interests mortgages of local banks. therefore since 1857 the amount of houses in the villages of the bregenzerwald has increased greatly, whereas the amount of inhabitants remains consistent.

whereas many people strive for an appearance of their homes rooted in regional tradition (often with the help of ambitious local architects), the lives led in these new homes have little to no connection with the traditional landscape they are built within.

today not farming but building a home, building houses is building landscape.



> my parents building their own house - my grandfather directing the building process and passing on his aquired skills
1984-1987



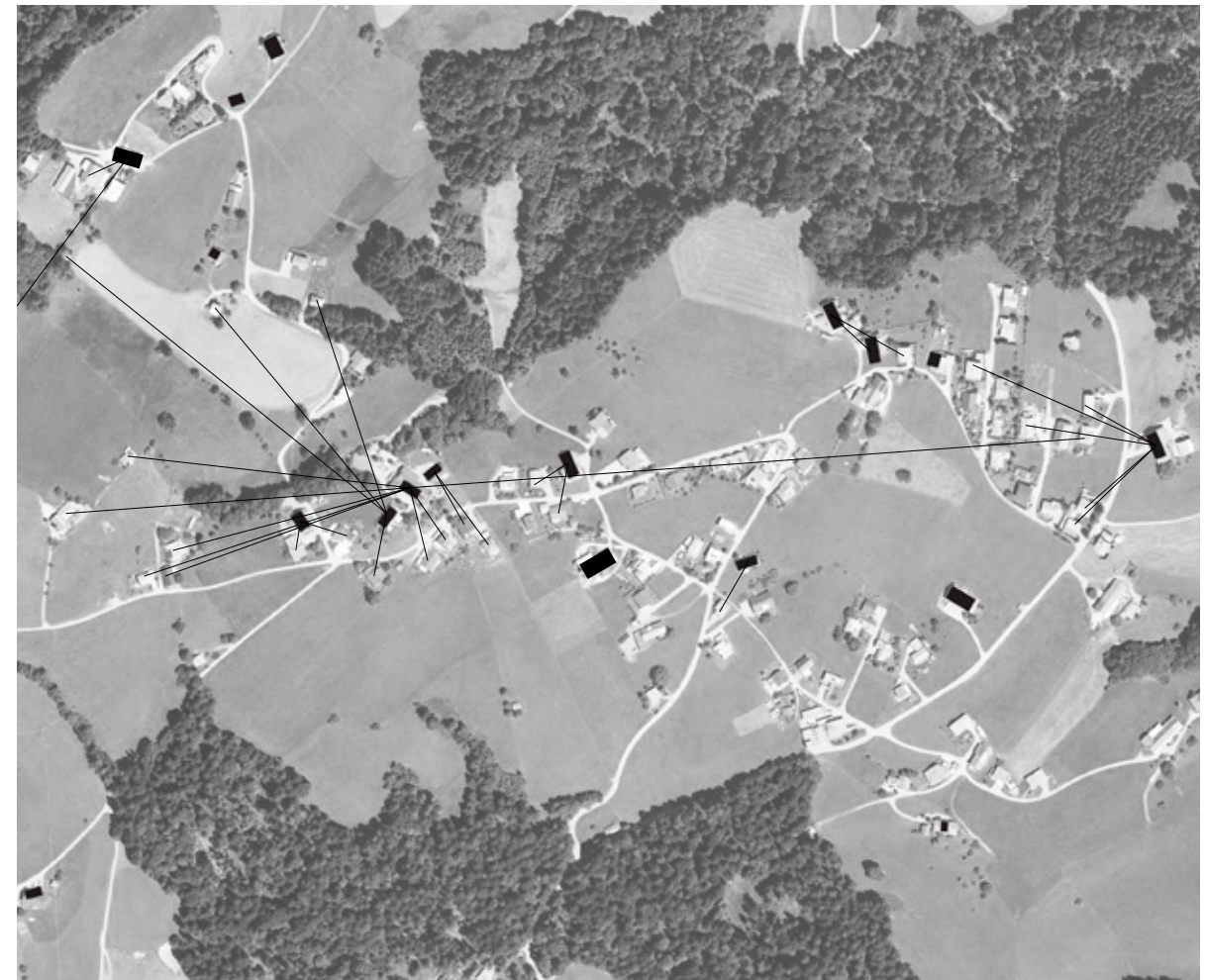
map of 1857 with houses in black and new houses (2012) in red

F

FAMILY AND LANDSCAPE

in the bregenzerwald the relationship between family and landscape is deeply rooted in the ground. even though family models are pluralising the spatial development of the region, in comparison to other european landscapes, is still very much influenced by family ownership and a strong unity of people and place.

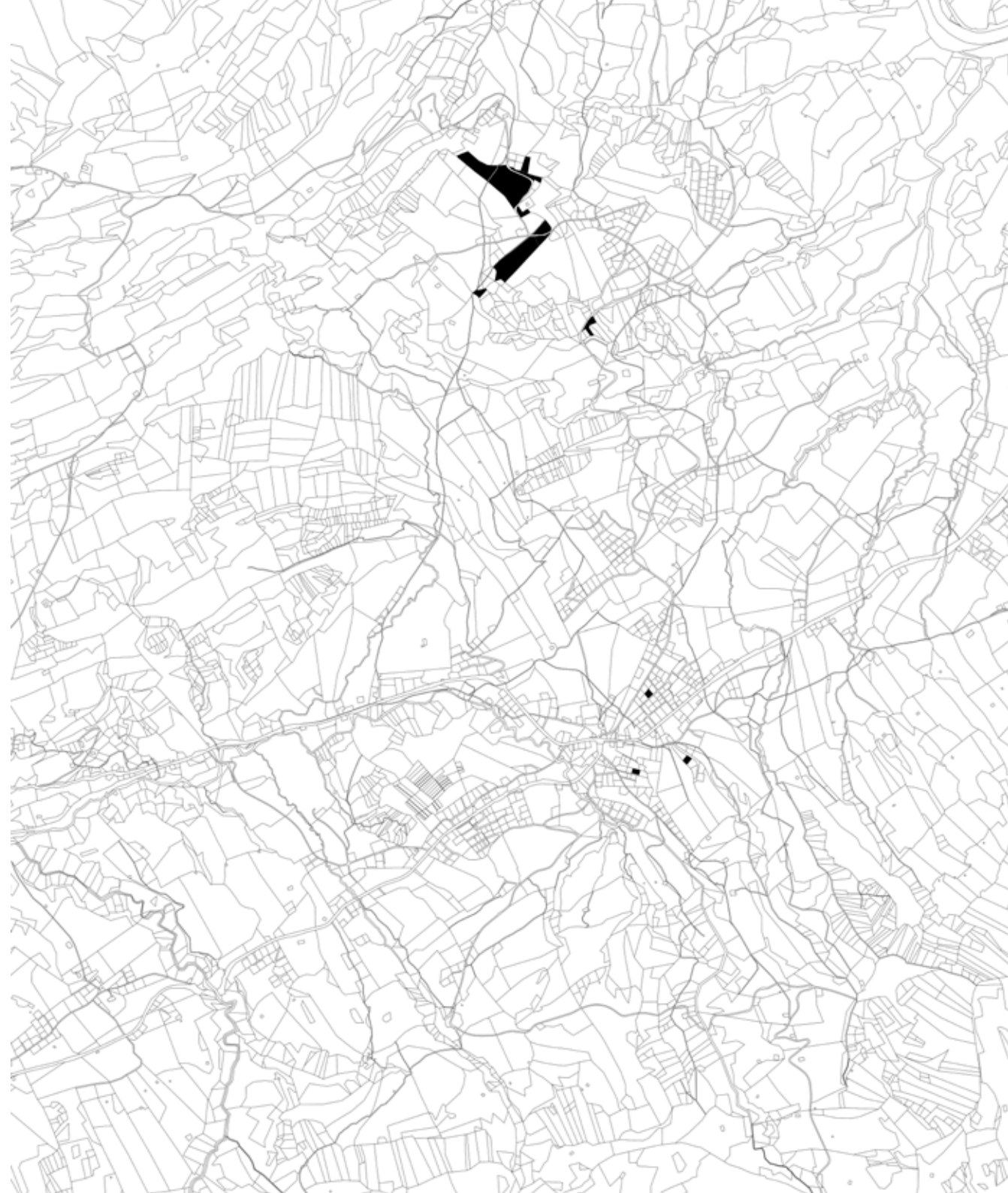
very few people move away from where they grew up and most villagers build a house close to their birth ground. therefore villages grow through generations of families “spreading and sprouting” around their ancestors farmhouses - often staying within a range of a few hundred meters of their parents home. this is also due to planning habits of allowing farmers to give small plots of land to their children for building. the last decade these possibilities, or freedom as it is perceived by villagers, is more and more undermined by developing planning instruments that focus on centralisation and prohibiting sprawl.



> diagram showing the farmshouses (black houses) and their “sprouting” through generations - new family members building their own house outgrowing the farm buildings of the extended family model

the drawing of the cadastre reveals this fine structure of ownership and socio-spatial relationships. what looks like one coherent landscape are fragments of family landscapes - a mosaic of ownership.

> cadastre with my family's property marked in black





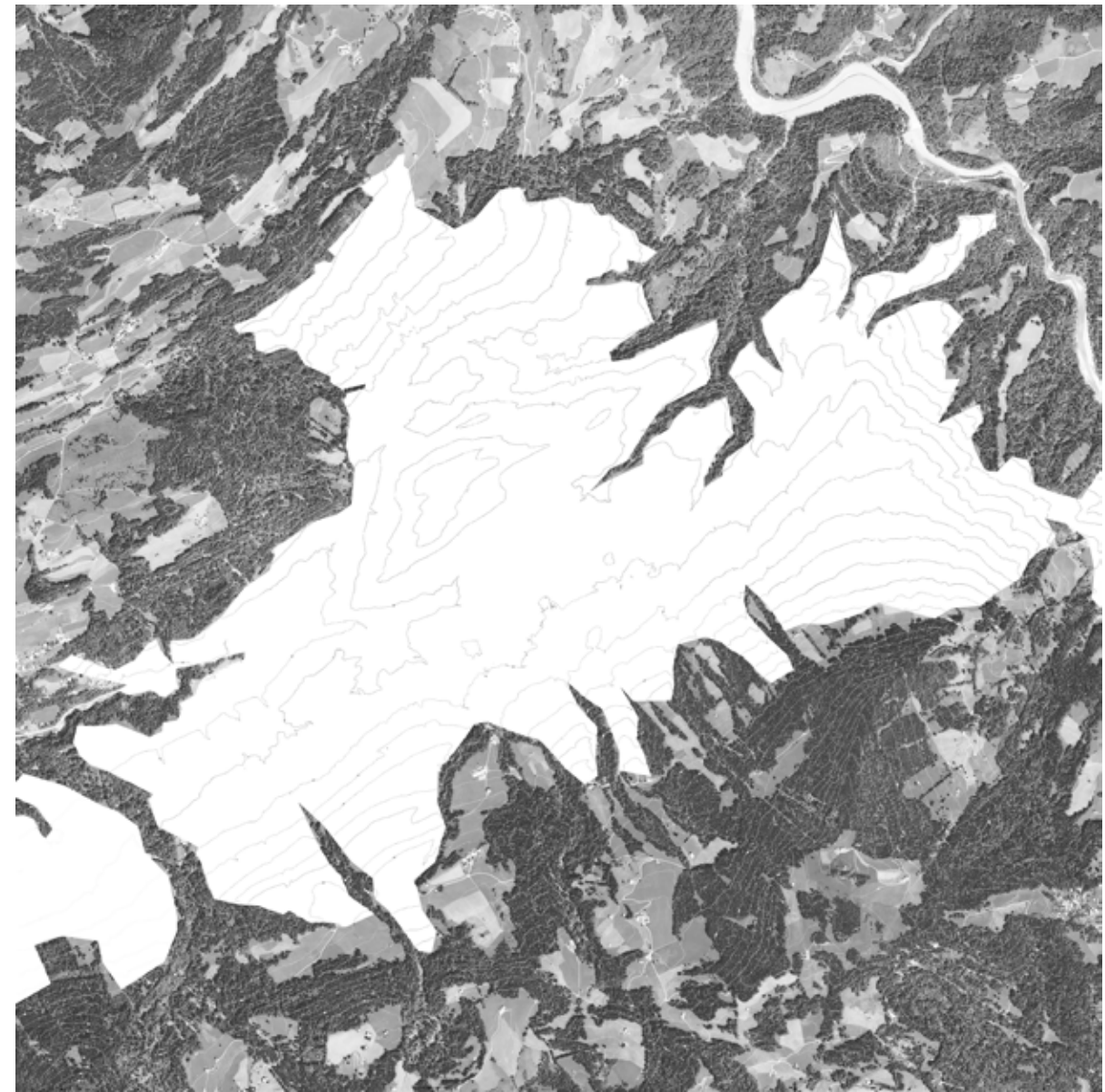
within my grandparents generation there was a massal move from subsistence labour to wage labour - from farmers to employees



shift from extended family housing to single-family house - from wood architecture tranforming through generations towards self built cement architecture rising within a year

FOREST AND IDENTITY

clearing forests, using the harvested wood and cultivating the clearings as meadows for agriculture are cultural acts at the origin of the bregenzerwald. with the occupation on softer slopes and the forest remaining on steep topography and higher grounds, the villages took shape with the forests becoming their framework. until today the forests are the most memorable spatial borders in the collective mind of the valley inhabitants. therefore they are key to the formulation of a sense of collectivity. moving through the valley, crossing a forest means entering a new spatial and social realm, the other village.



> the edges of the forests enclose the villages and define affiliation to the different settlements

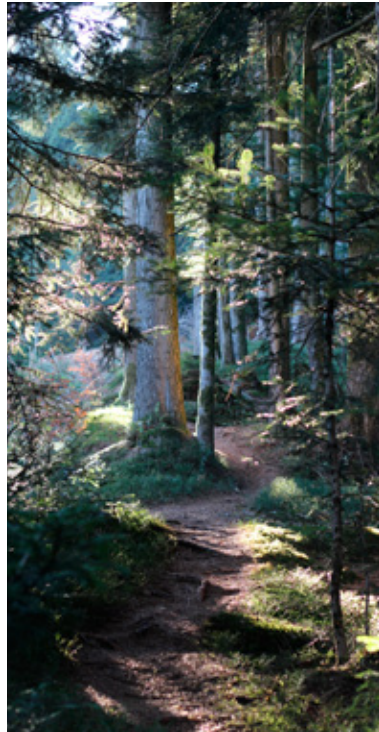
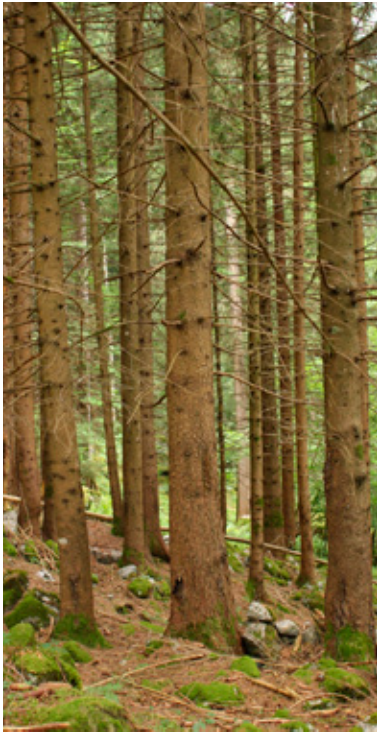


forests remain on the steep parts and the small ravines created by the water run-off of the mountains

the past 50 years the forests are growing again - because of mowing with machines, the farmers use the meadows less efficient and forest edges are expanding

the forest has always been a conglomerate of many small, privately owned plots. although the forest seems to be one entity it consists of fragments. taking a close look while walking through the forest one can also see this fragmented ownership in the many different atmospheres of the forest.

my grandfather gave everyone of his 4 daughters a forest plot because of an old rule: one can only buy a piece of forest, if one already owns one.



< one forest, many characters
according to the maintenance
patterns of the owners

> overlap of forest and kataster
- the fragmented character of
the seemingly coherent forest is
revealed

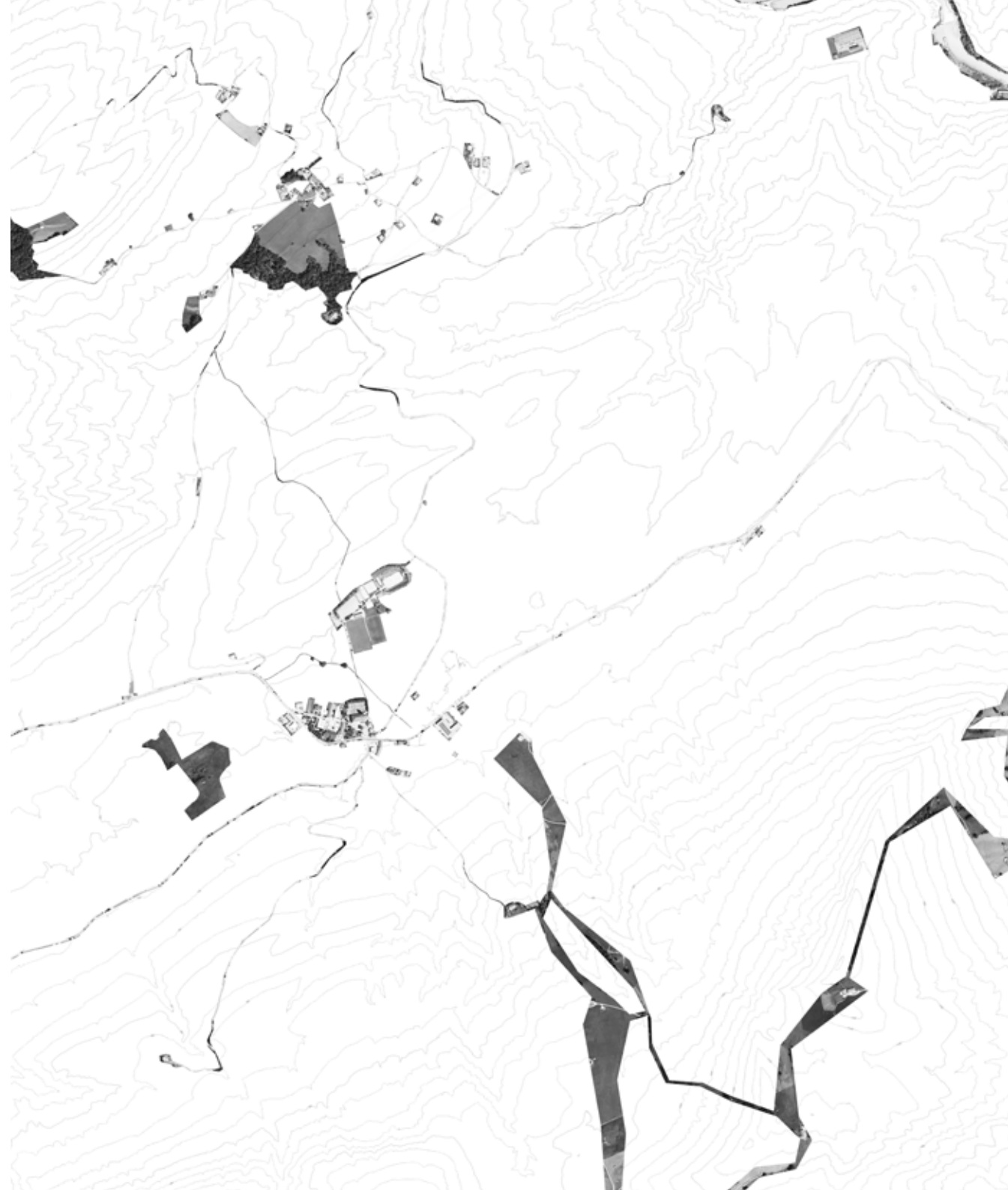


H

heimat, the german word for home or native country,
often associated with the place of birth.
for me heimat has a fragmented character of memories
and emotions. heimat is feeling rather than place.

this map shows places in alberschwende that capture
some of those feelings and reveal an emotional
topography.

> map of my emotional
topography.of alberschwende

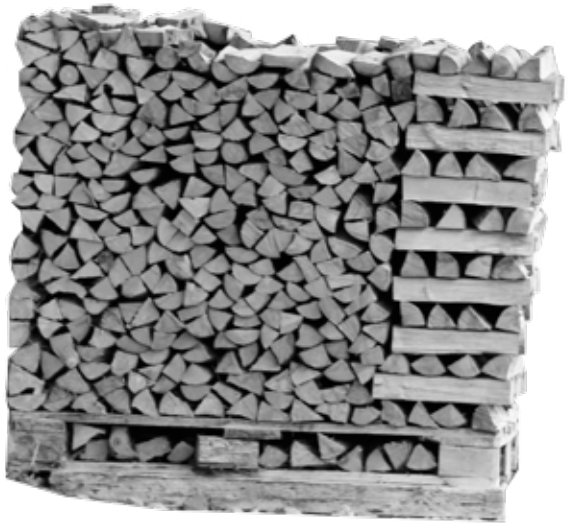


HOLZBIEGO

holzbiego is the dialect word for wood stack. wood is still the main resource in the alps and is used to heat most of the homes of the valley inhabitants. therefore the wood is stored to dry close to the house, often leaned against the facade using the roof of the house as protection from rain.

the booklet “various small holzbiego” documents the wood stack as the smallest form of vernacular wood architecture in the bregenzerwald.

V A R I O U S
S M A L L
B I E G O

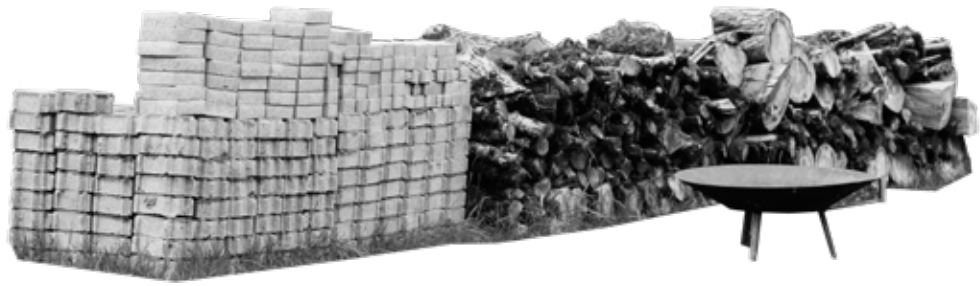
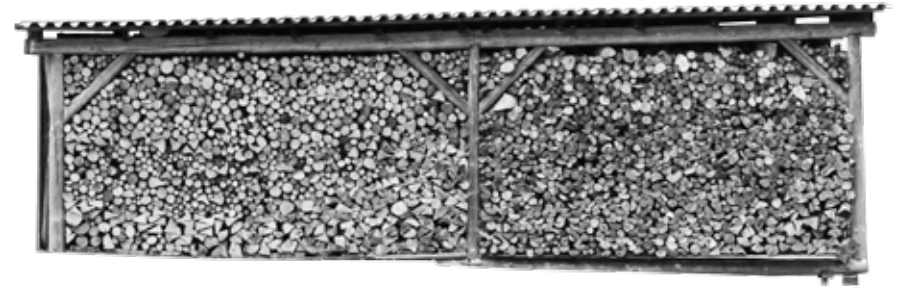




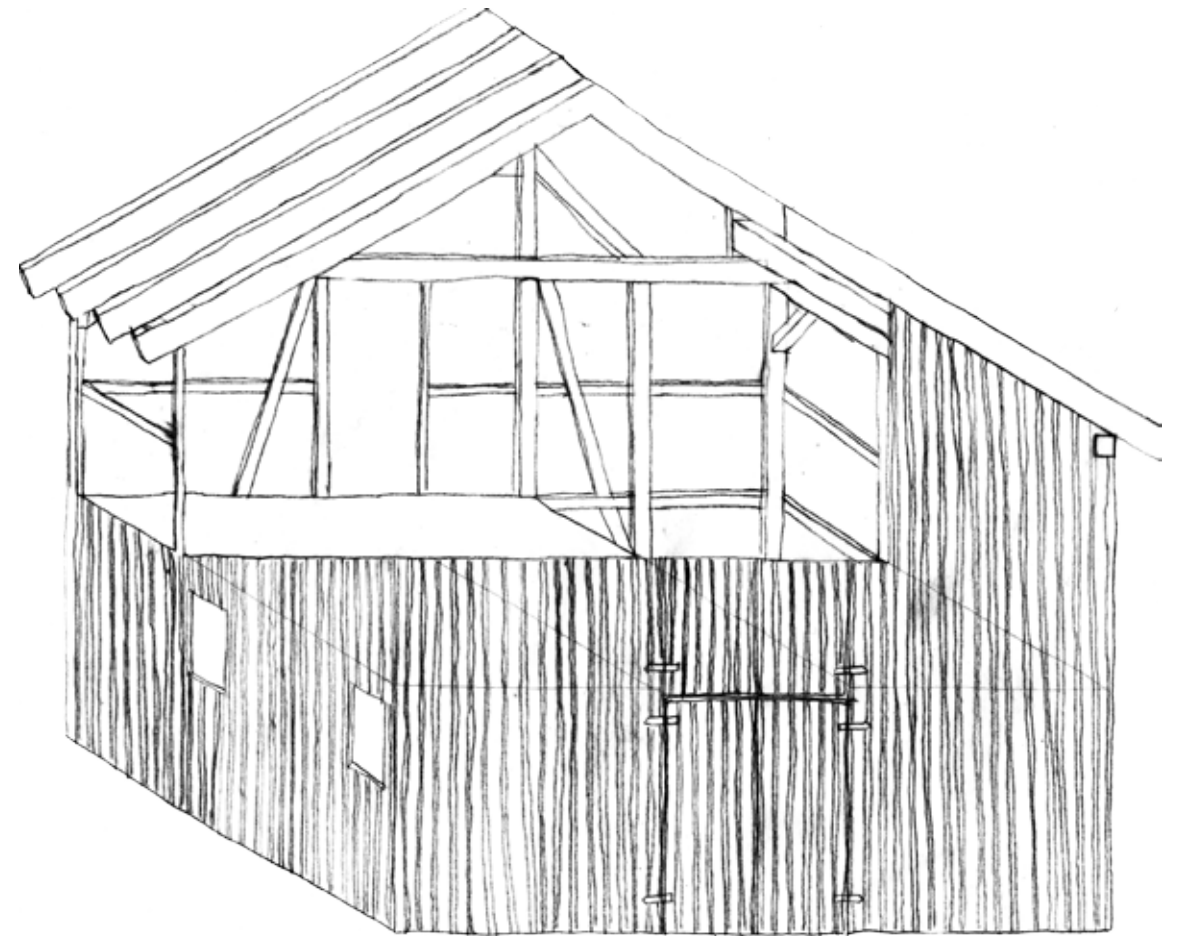






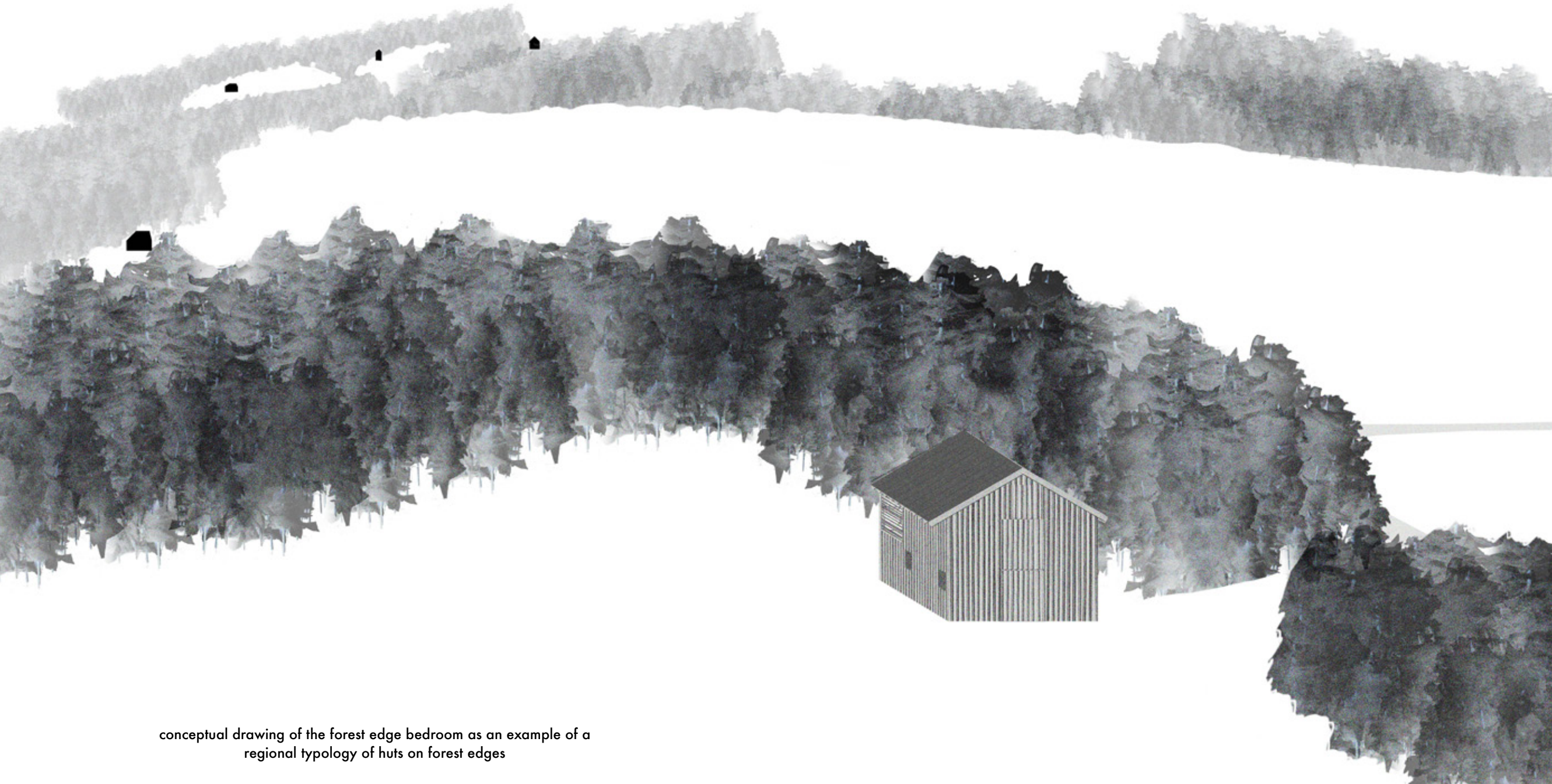


the bregenzerwald knows endless typologies of huts, barns, sheds, shelters, wash houses, cabins, lodges, shacks. small landscape buildings belonging to the meadows, forests and forest edges, the rocky slopes and soft hills, the water streams and rivers. by time many of these structures disappear because they are not used any more. together with the more than 1000 residential buildings in the bregenzerwald that are vacant or underused, these buildings and structures could become hosts for topographic furnitures.



> conceptual drawing of opening up and revealing the beauty of the wood construction

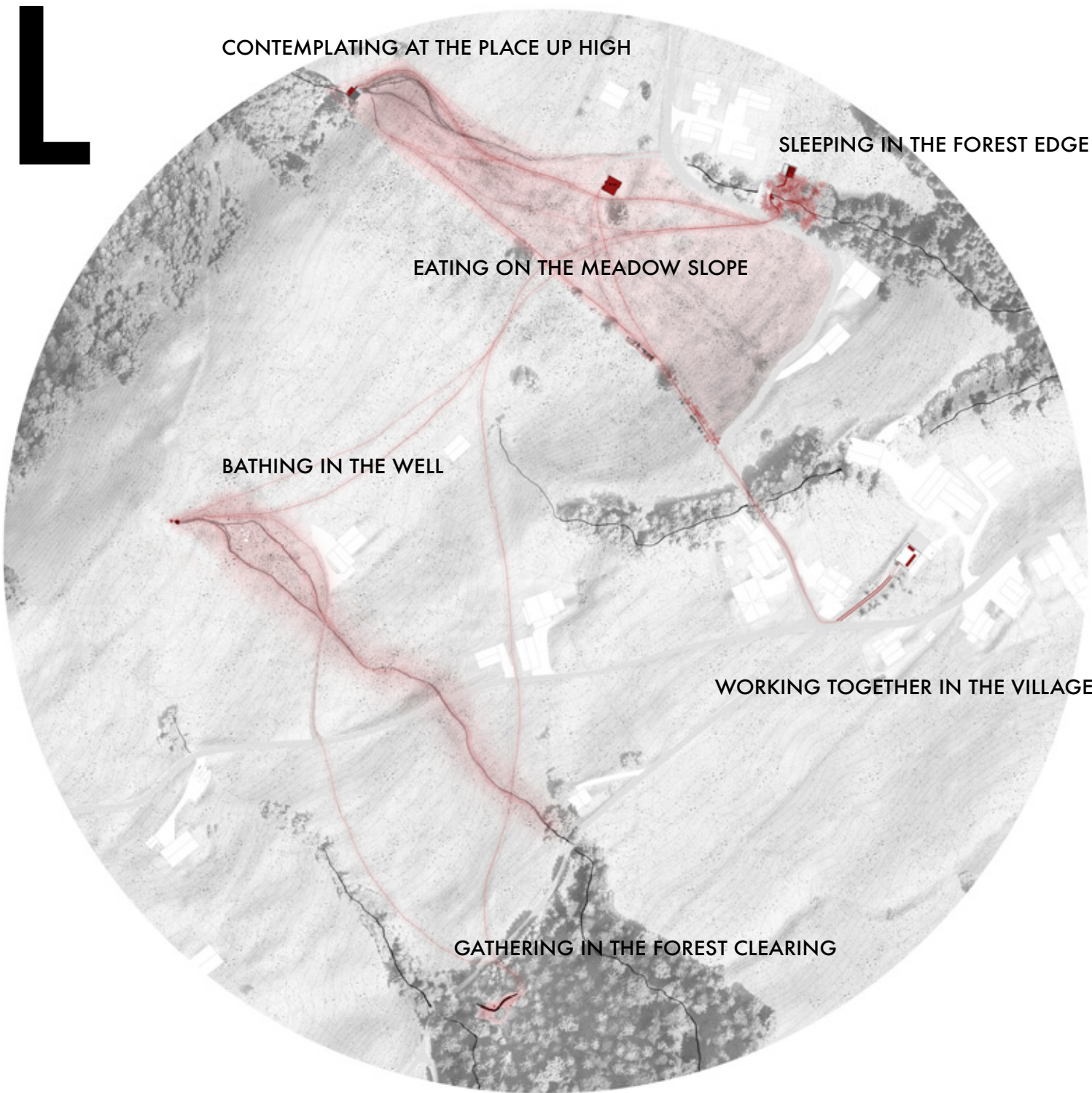


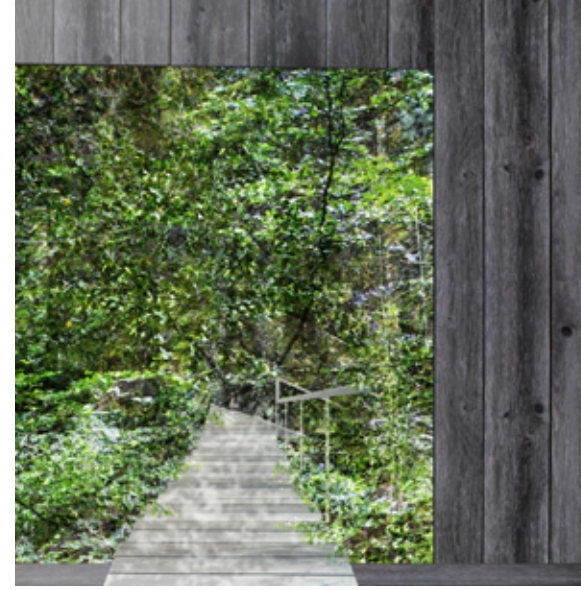


conceptual drawing of the forest edge bedroom as an example of a regional typology of huts on forest edges

LANDSCAPE AS HOUSE

a landscape as a house is a defragmented house on the scale of landscape. rooms embedded into forests, meadows and the village creates a life constituted of movement through landscape. rooms inhabiting topography, routines and rituals rooted in the change of weather.









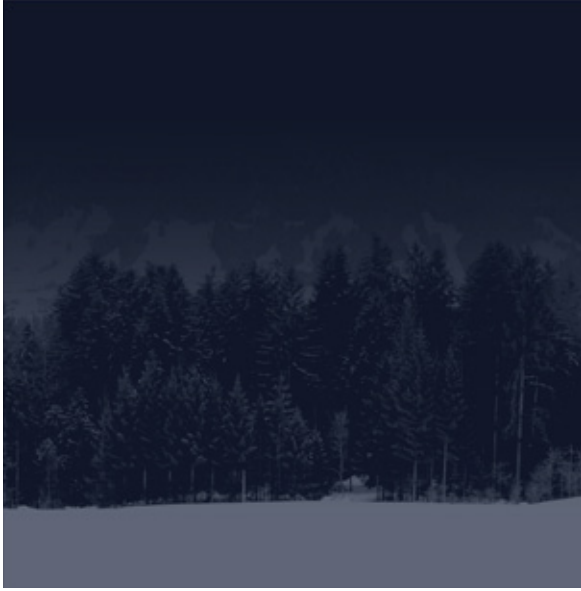








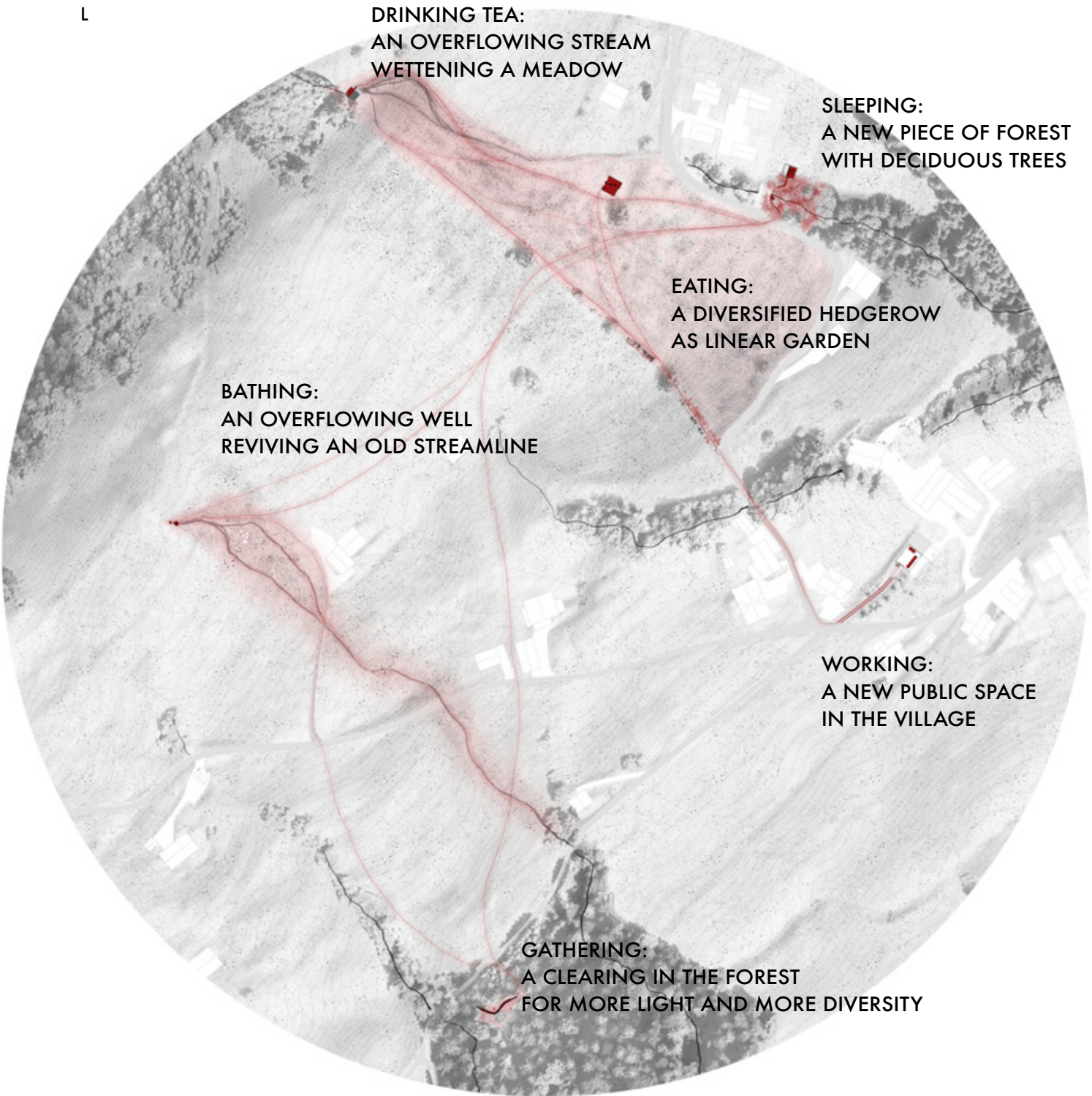


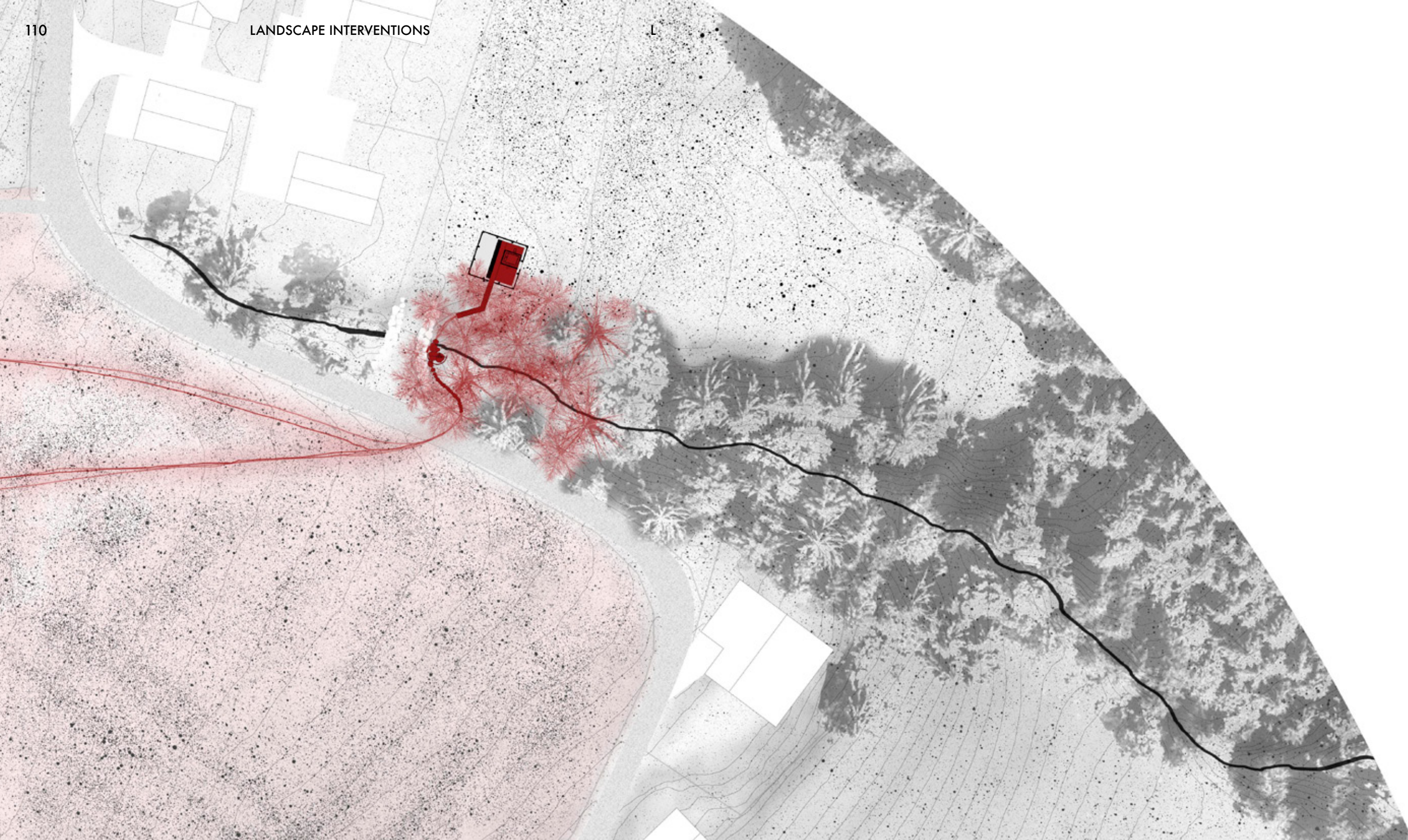


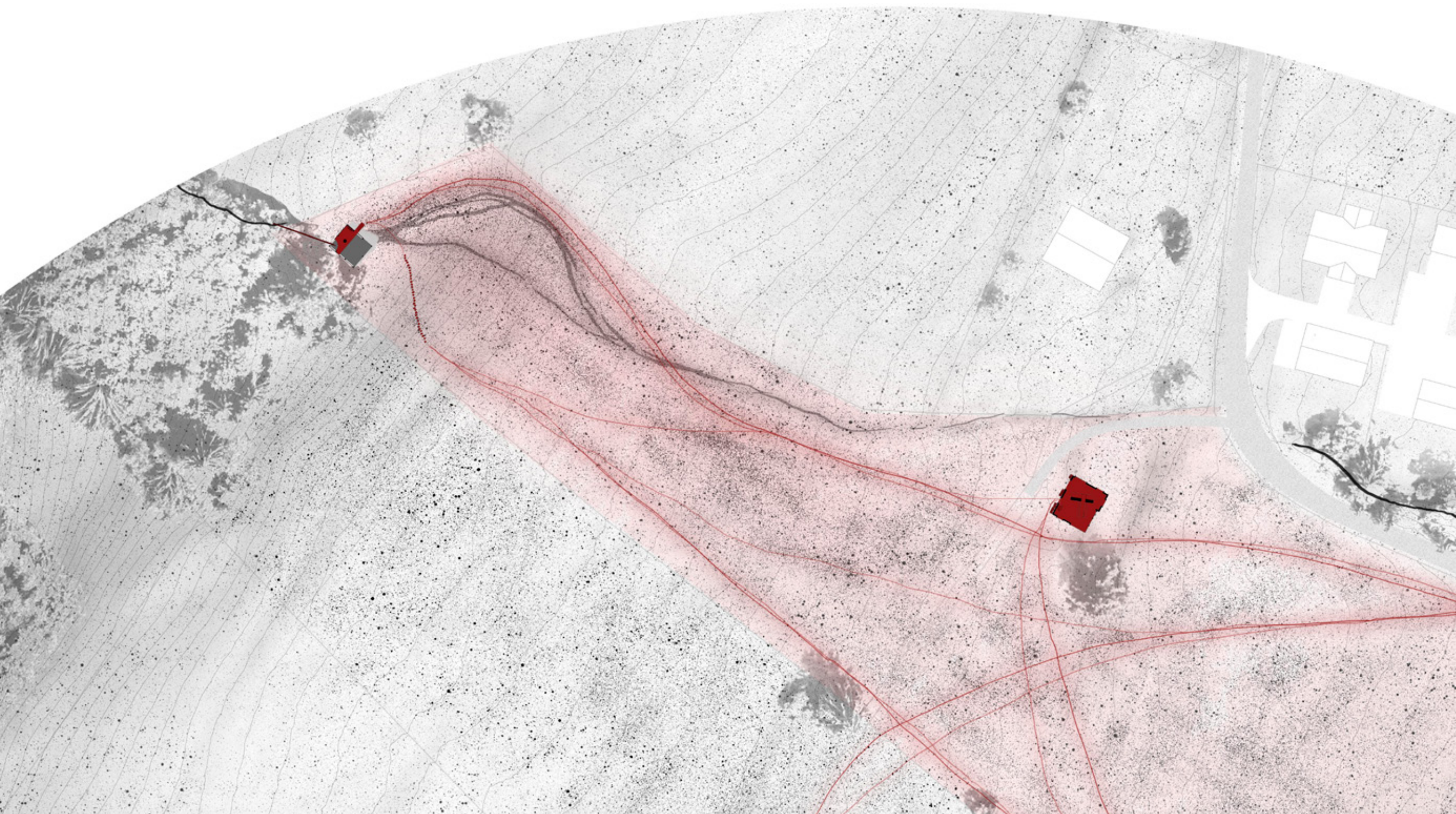


LANDSCAPE INTERVENTIONS

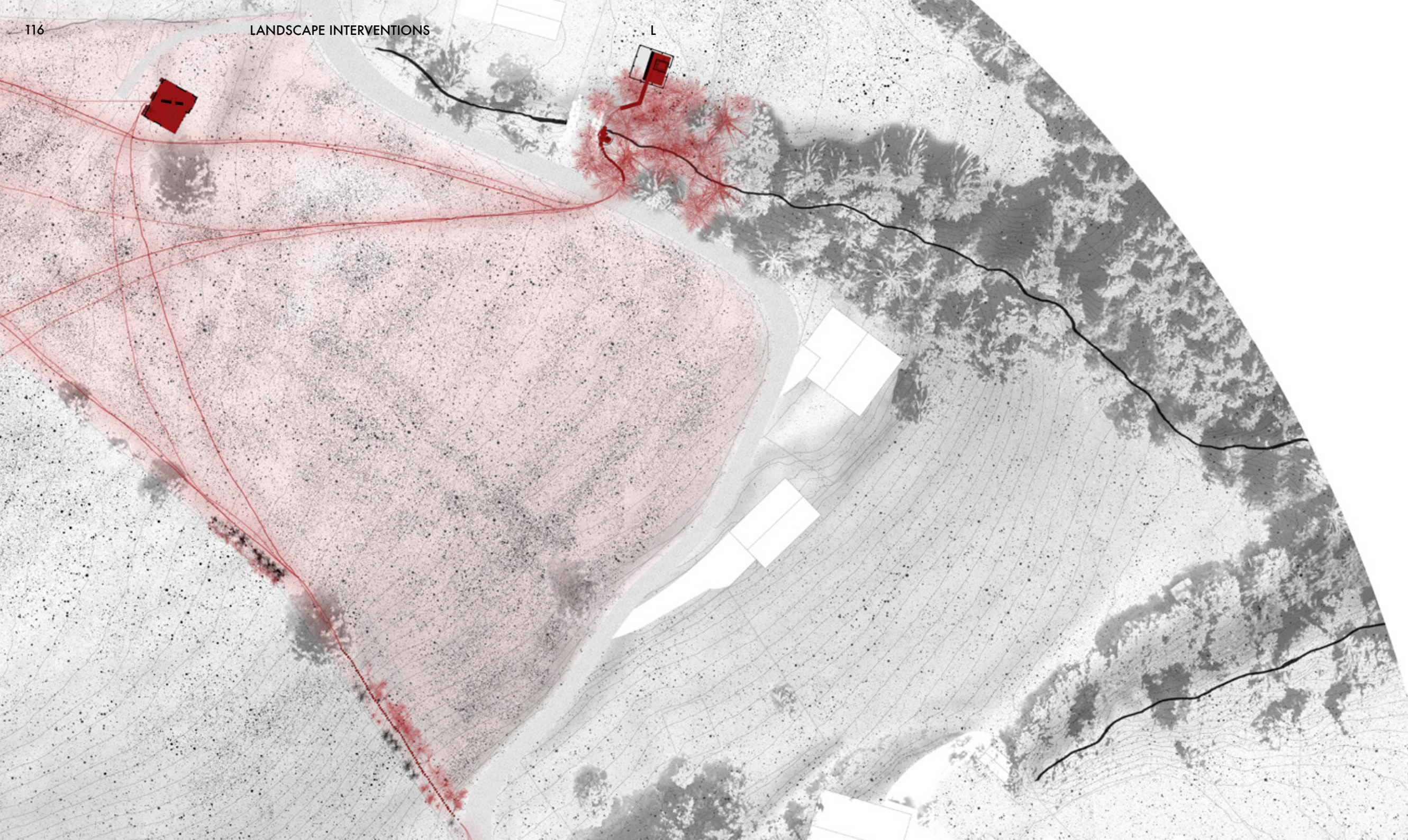
the design of 'landscape as house' starts with interweaving domestic activities and my personal rituals with the existing landscape elements and built structures. therefore the activities of daily domestic life lead to personal but significant changes in the landscape. cultural landscape is made by inhabiting landscape as a dweller, not by farming as in the pastoral landscapes of the past. the new ideal behind the making of landscape is not efficiency and profitability, but (bio-)diversity.

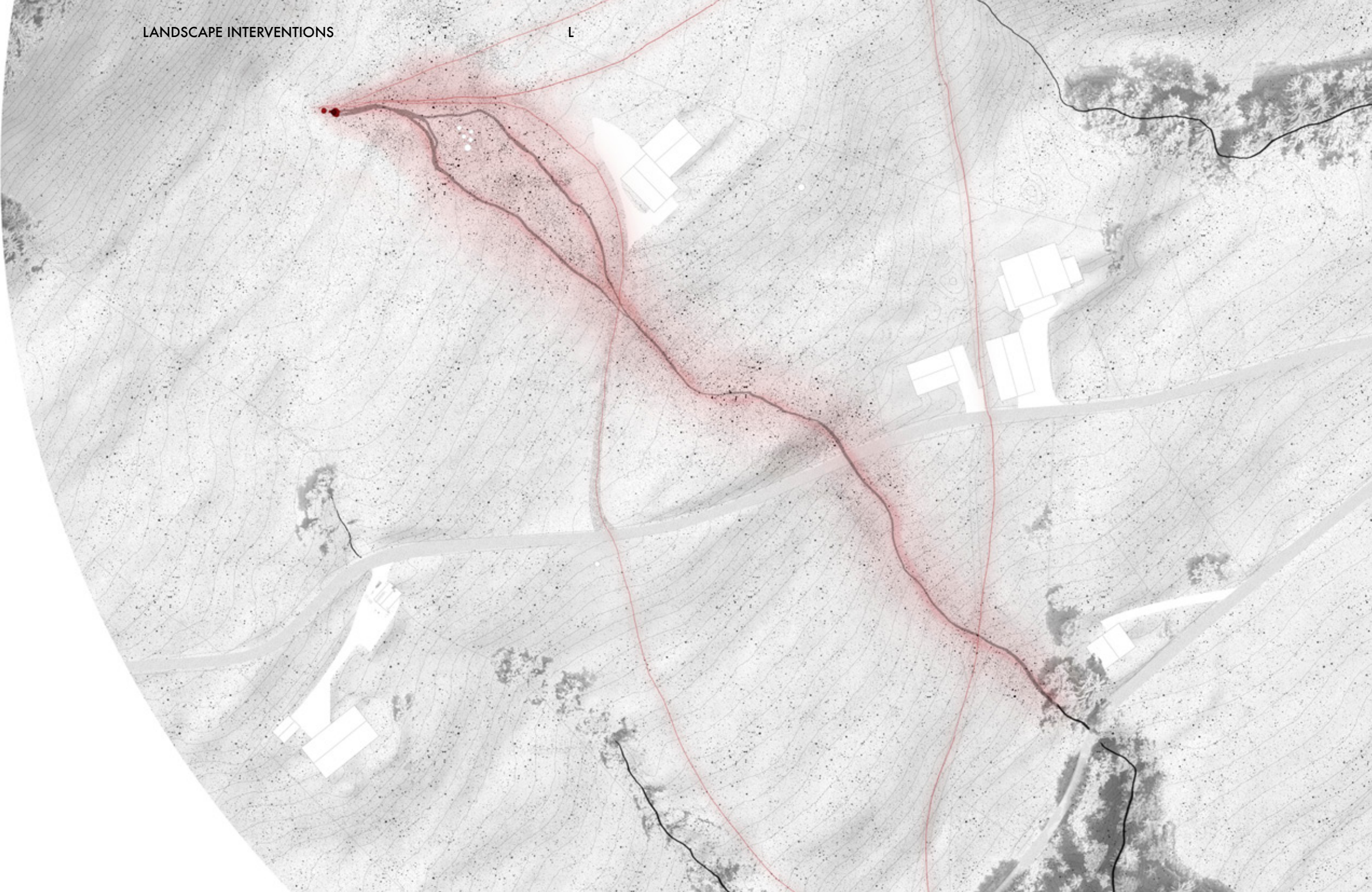


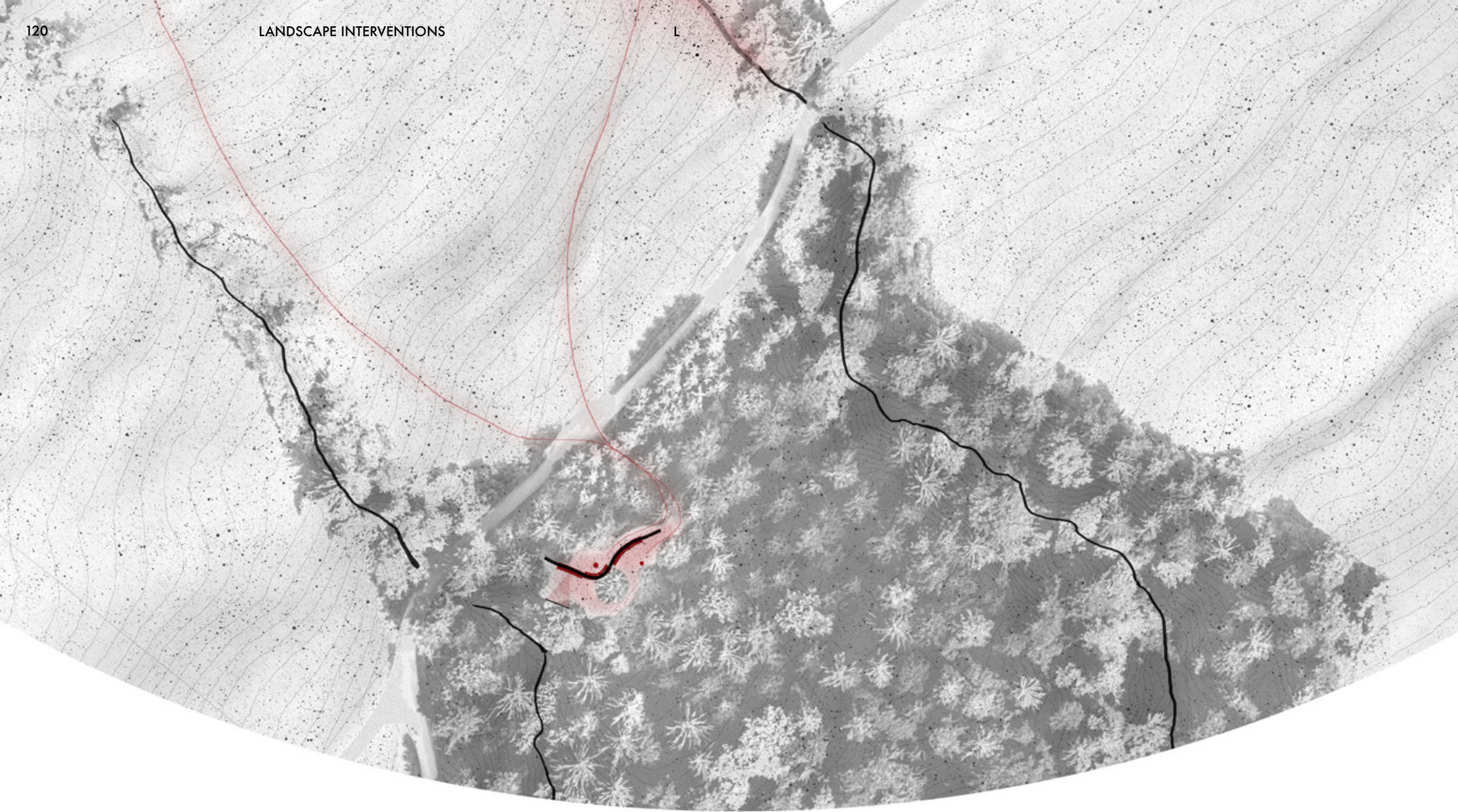












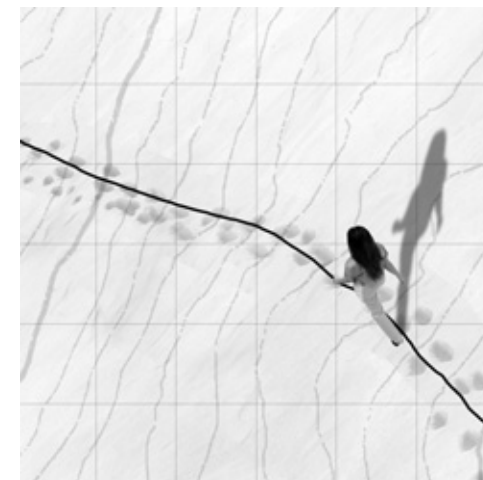
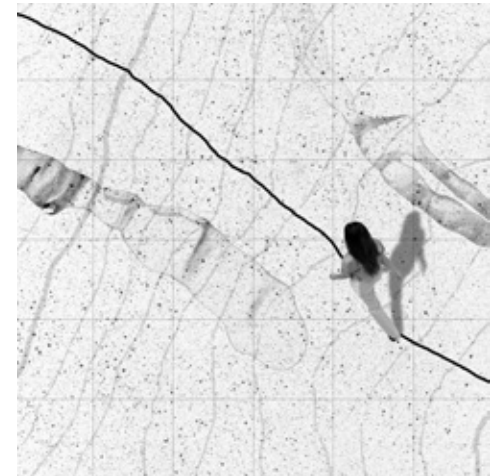
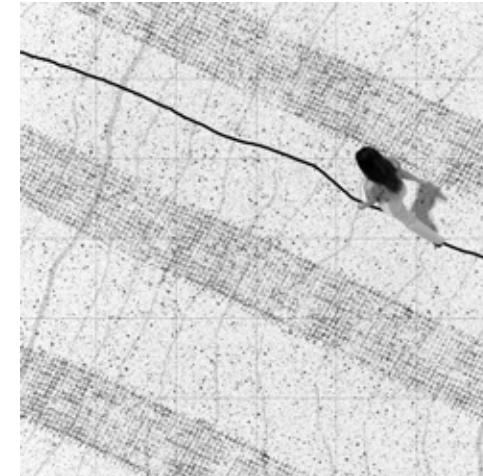
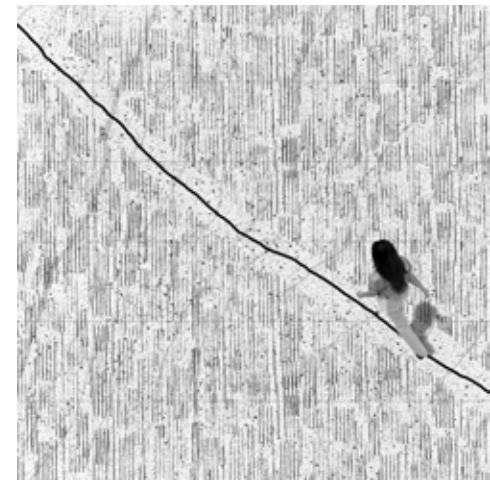
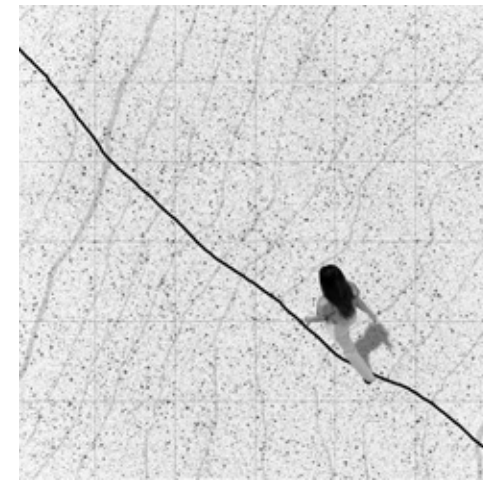
LINES MADE BY WALKING

within “landscape as house” routes are not determined paths, but “lines made by walking” – fluctuating and materialised through activity. It’s location depending on the texture of the meadow (cut grass, long grass, dry ground, saturated ground and so forth), the weather conditions and mood of the day.

the meadow itself dictates the placement of the steps and the movement along fluctuating, temporary lines.

only the steep parts of routes are materialised with stepping stones to secure daily movements over the sometimes straining topographic skin of the mountain.

- 1 short grass:
one chooses what feels as
shortest path -
more fluctuation
- 2 long grass:
one follows the trampled traces -
less fluctuation
- 3 cut grass, strands of hay:
one chooses path inbetween the
strands of hay
- 4 wet season, puddles of water:
one follows the higher ridges of
the meadow
- 5 snow:
one follows the preceding
footsteps - less fluctuation
- 6 overlap of different
“lines made by walking”



the principle of paths as “lines made by walking” follows the typical form of materialisation in the region - most paths are made for the use by vehicles and footpaths are not materialised. paths for walking are only visible by marks of use.

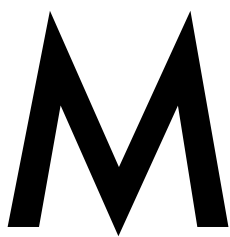
materialised paths in the landscape are mostly in private ownership and are layed out and maintained by the users themselves. materialisation therefore follows very pragmatic principles: the material used to harden surfaces is often recycled – farmers use what is available on the very day of repair (asphalt, recycled asphalt, concrete, gravel, rubble) and it only where necessary. over time these private paths have become a patchwork of materials.



> hierarchy of paths and materialisation

< example of the pragmatic material patchwork of a farmers path (4 different materials on 4 sqm)





MATERIALITY

the material culture of the bregenzerwald is a rich mixture of farmers pragmatism. a DIY vernacular of traditional craftsmanship and proud stubbornness. what binds these different aesthetics together is a visible and tangible respect for the acts and processes behind the materialised objects. a respect for tradition, a common sense and regional idea of “ways of doing”.

‘landscape as house’ attempts to add to the regional material vernacular by quoting the local use of material. not literally, but by associations and with slight alienation – through the change in scale and utilisation. this makes the design elements feel familiar yet different and plays with recognition of what is inside and what is outside.

the following series of photos shows a collection of (local) materials and their utilisation.

























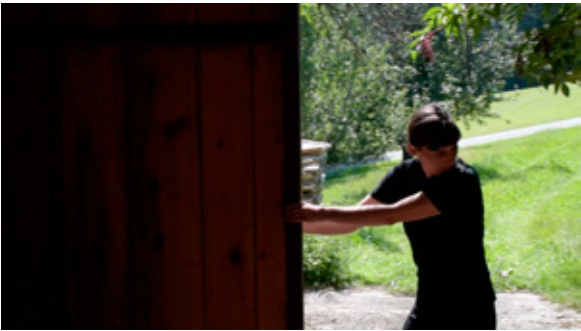




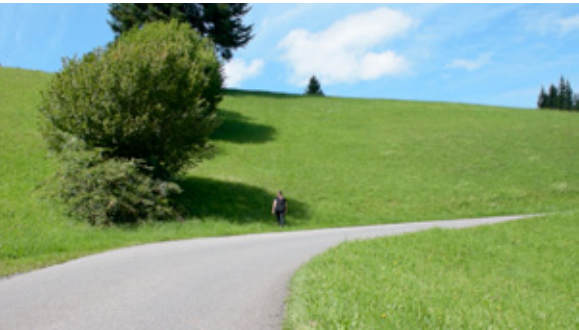
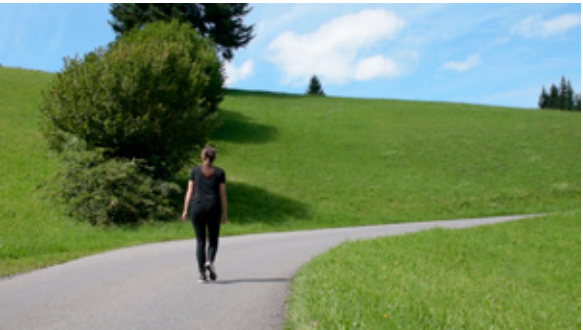
MOVEMENT

essential to “landscape as house” is it’s fragmented character of space that leads to a daily rhythm of movement from room to room. this movement comes into being through the embedding of a personal routine into the landscape and leads to more awareness of time and space - a ritualisation of dwelling. here seasons become a domestic experience, acts of maintenance become rituals. through walking this house is continuously recreated, building up new relations between the landscape, the rooms and myself.

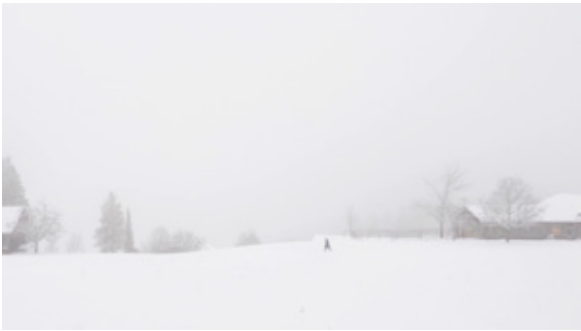
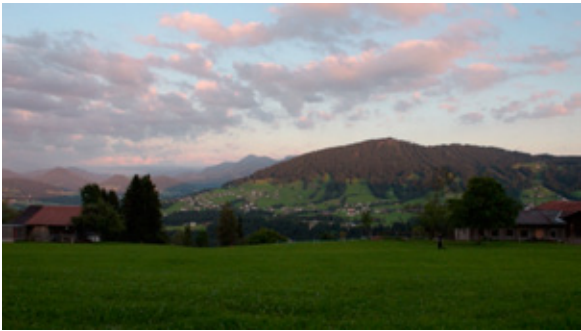
the movie “landscape as house” by elf godefroy shows my daily route - me moving from place to place through the landscape of my family. through one day and across seasons.



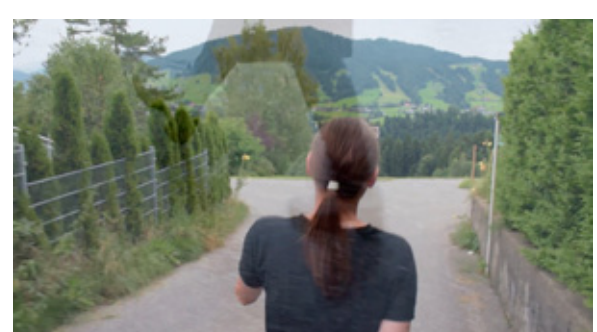
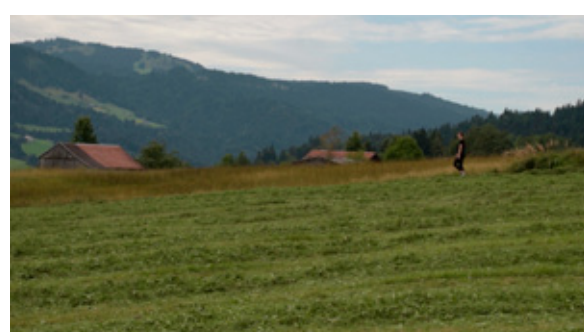
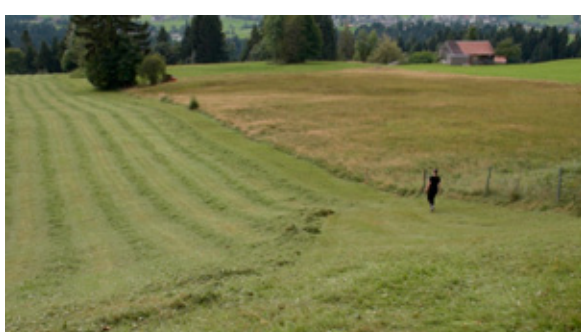
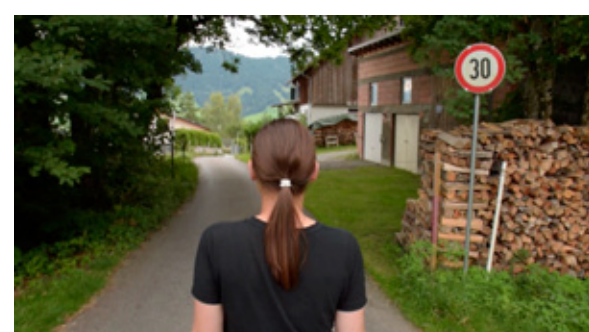
> “landscape as house”
movie (12 minutes)
by elf godefroy, 2017







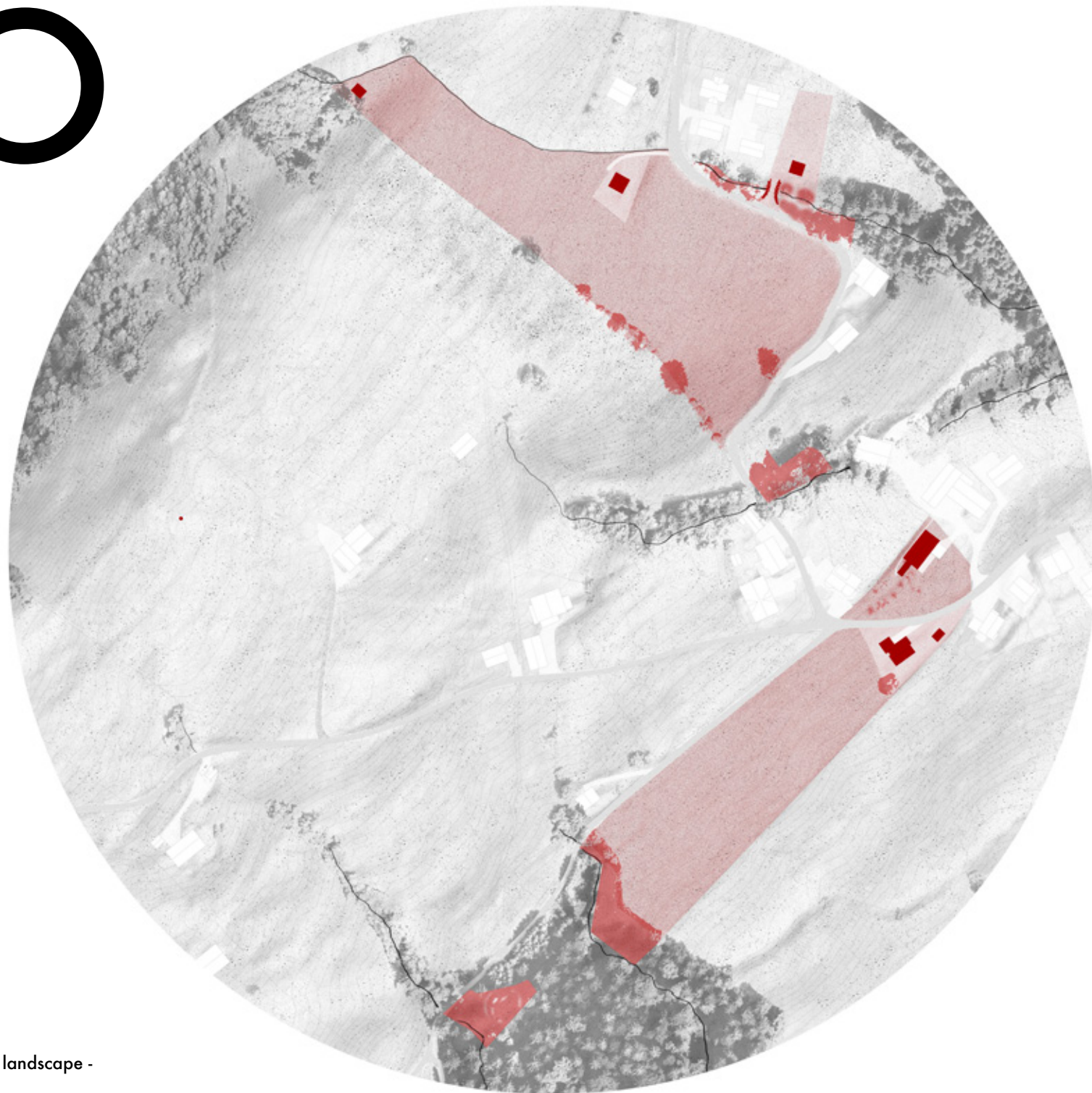
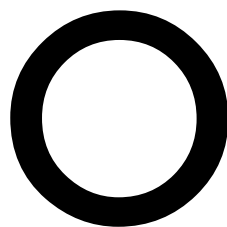






OPA 'S LANDSCAPE

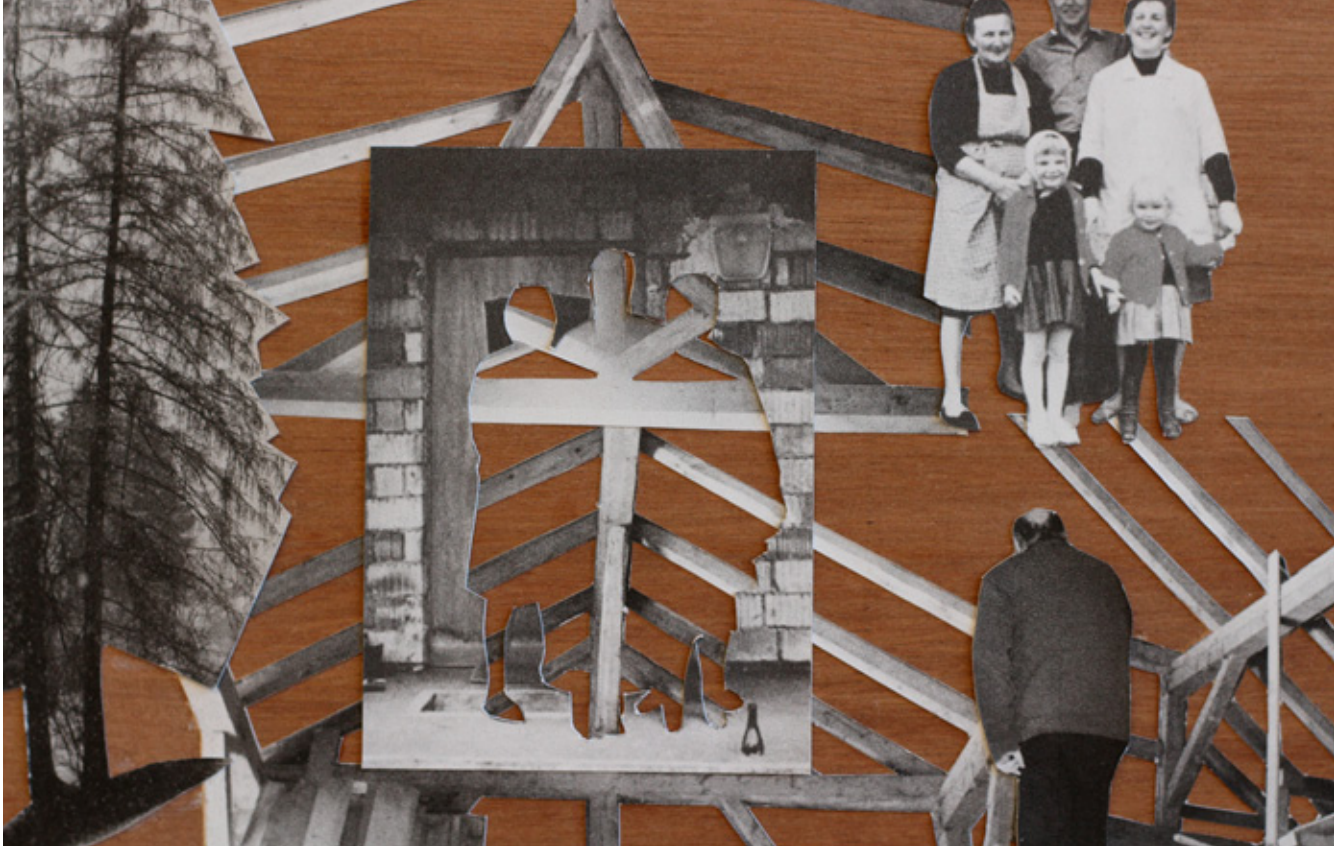
at the beginning of the last century my great-grandfather migrated into the valley of the bregenzerwald. two decades later he passed his land to my grandfather: a small farmyard - enough to feed a family - patches of forest, two meadows, an old farmhouse and water rights to a collective well.



> map of my families landscape -
the land of peasants

when he was only 16 years old, my grandfather renovated the farmhouse with his mother in order to become a farmer himself. but when he fell in love with my grandmother and they were in expectation of their first child, he decided to become a police officer and leave the farmers life behind for the promise of the better future.

throughout his life as a policeman he kept his inherited landscape as a whole. maintaining this land and building on became a contemplation to him. through these small acts of care he managed to animate an entire farmers landscape of his own. though cutting, planting, mowing, building, repairing, storing, planning - he kept this heritage-landscape and continued a connection to it in his own way of dwelling and inhabiting.



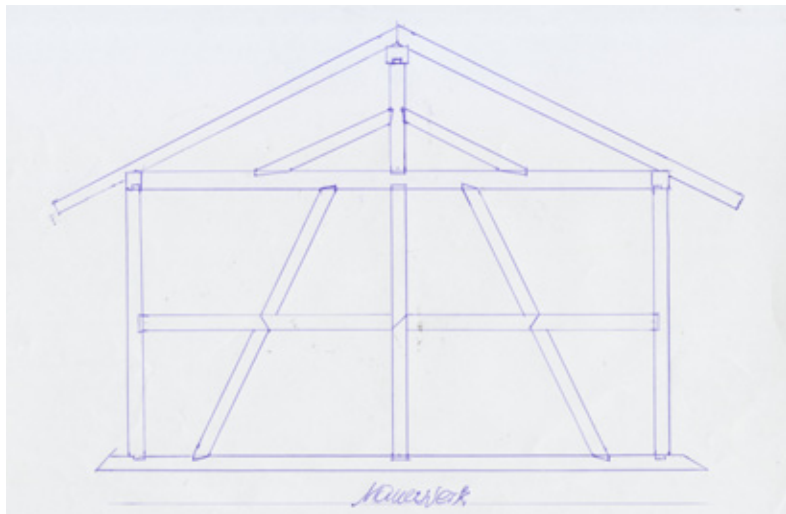
< building houses as contemplation

> fragment of the collage "opa's landscape"

>> fotos of my grandfather and his mother and my grandfather as police officer

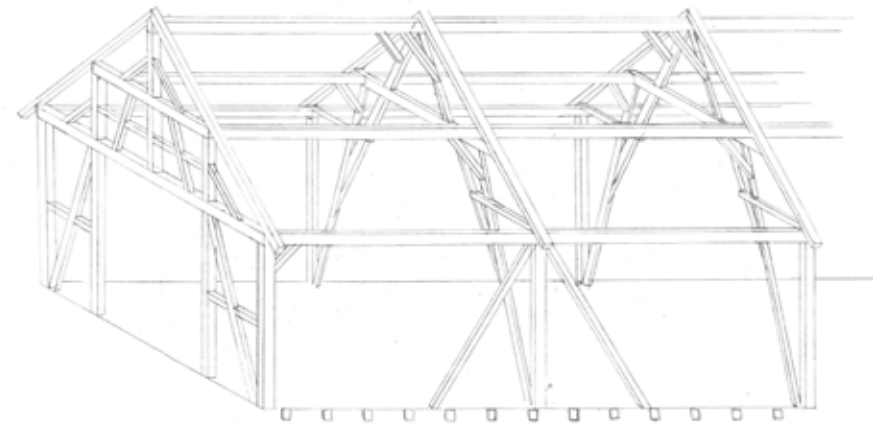


with his skills as a bricklayer, and some common sense, my grandfather managed to build 3 houses, 2 barns and a small vacation house. when he started a project he built a foundation and then let a carpenter set up the wooden construction that holds up his houses - the so called "Mauerwerk". with materials gleaned from neighbours or bought at the common hardware stores he finished these houses to his own abilities.



< sketch of the traditional
basic construction principle
"Mauerwerk", opa 2017

> wood construction of the barn
of the traditional farmhouse



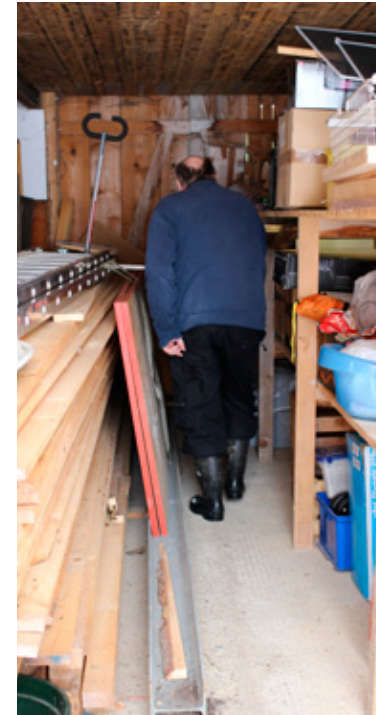
my grandfather uses his barns and their surroundings to store stuff he collects - building materials for future projects. he still hopes to build a concrete tower one day - a proper building, not a wooden barn (poor-man's architecture as he calls it).

every corner, inside and outside, is packed with stuff - sometimes neatly sorted and categorised, sometimes wildly piled into weird peculiar sculptures.

in 1995 my grandfather started his last big building project. like most of his projects, this building is a hybrid of a home - a house to dwell, a farm - a house to self-sustain, and a barn - a house for storage.

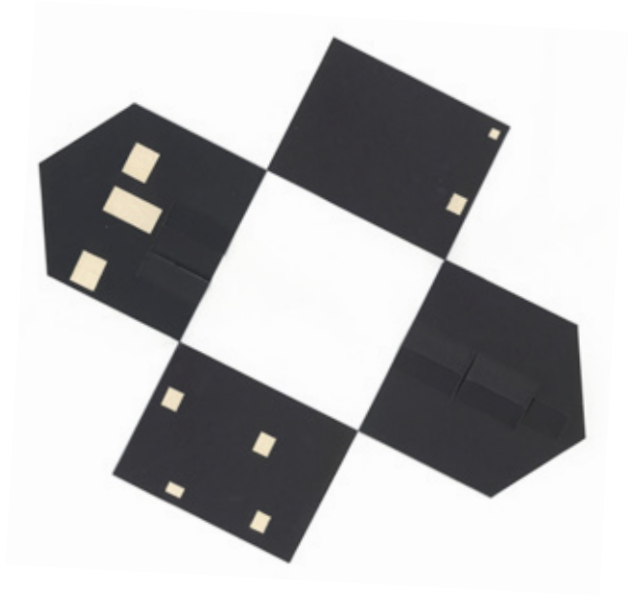
his collectibles resemble the objects found on farms - like for example the many bathtubs that are used to water animals on the meadows. on the ground floor of the shed he poured a concrete floor as the ones to be found in cow and cattle stables, even with a gutter to drain the manure. he says that one day somebody might want to keep a cow or a pig here. you never know.

with all the buildings, meadows, pieces of forest, orchards, water streams, gardens and hedgerows that he inherited and collected there is always something to do: something to fix, build, dig, cut, burn, grow.

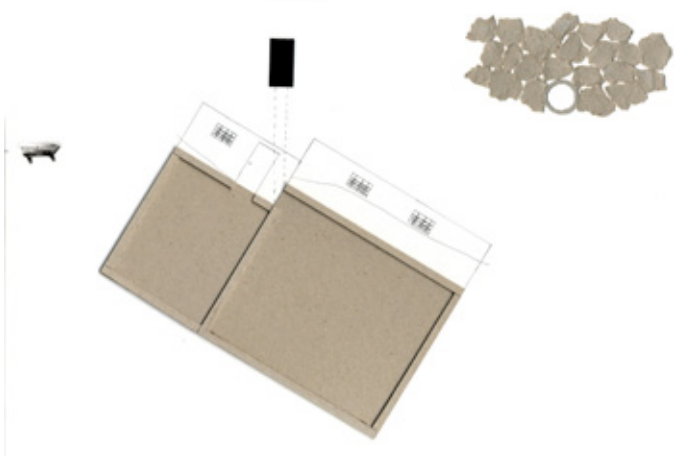


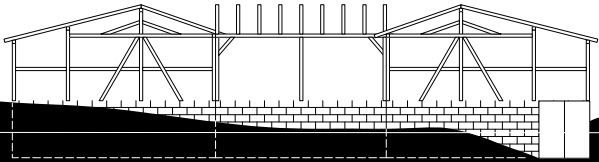
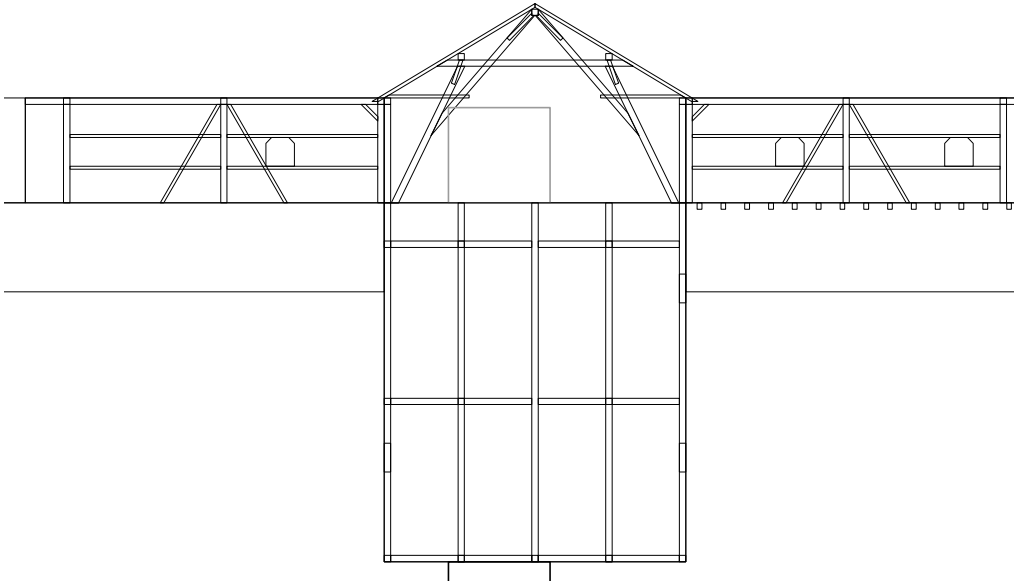
> fotoseries of my grandfathers
taskscape unfolding

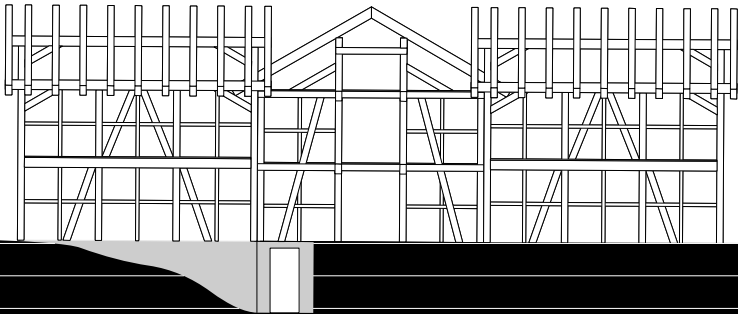
to develop a better understanding of the DNA of my grandfathers building activities i reconstructed one of his barns as 3D drawing. these drawings show his often strange choice of material and the clash between traditional building technique and my grandfather’s spleen for utilizing found objects like windows, metal beams, plastic foil, old dors and bathtubs.



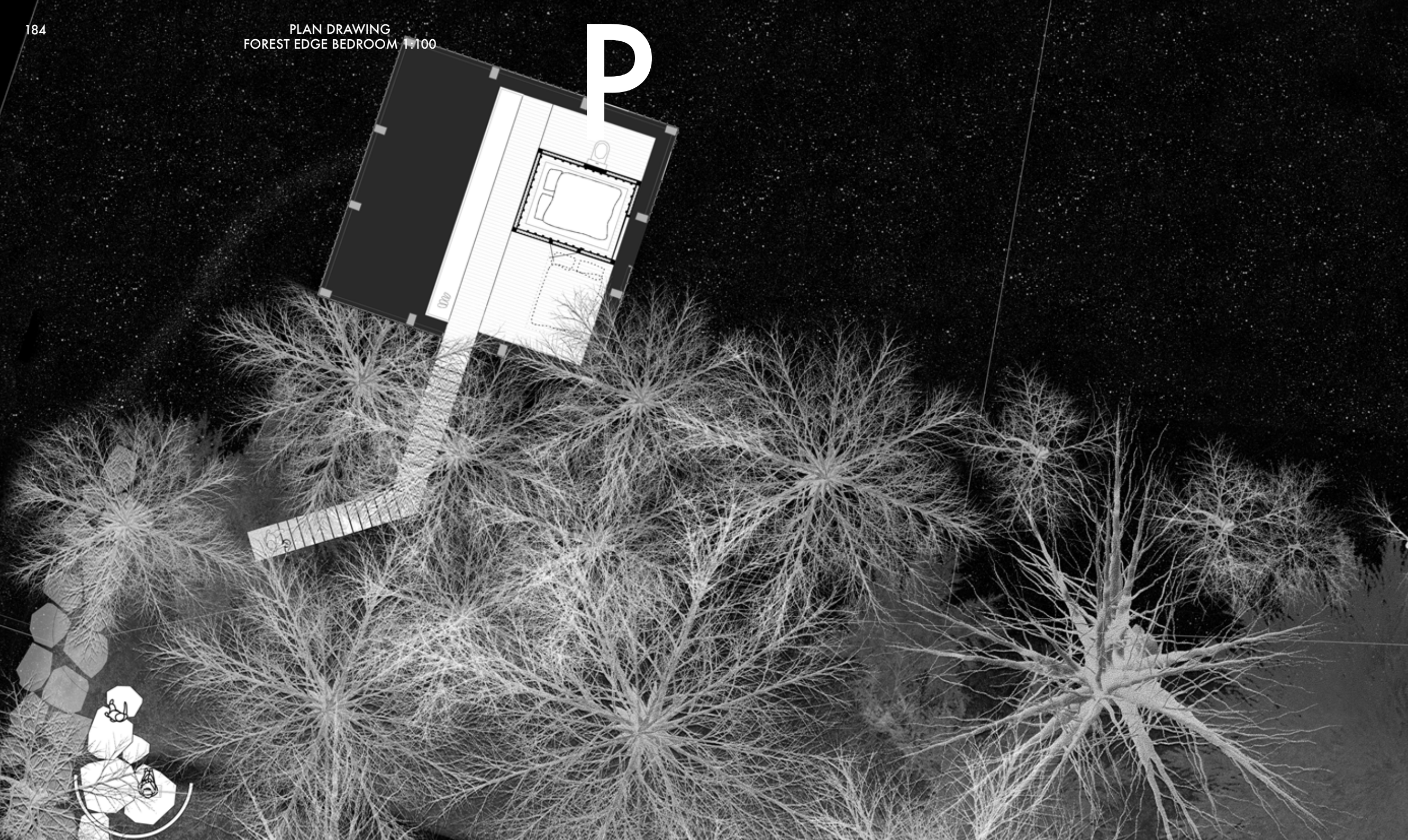
- < facade openings
- > first floor
- >> ground floor
- >>> cellar and surrounding

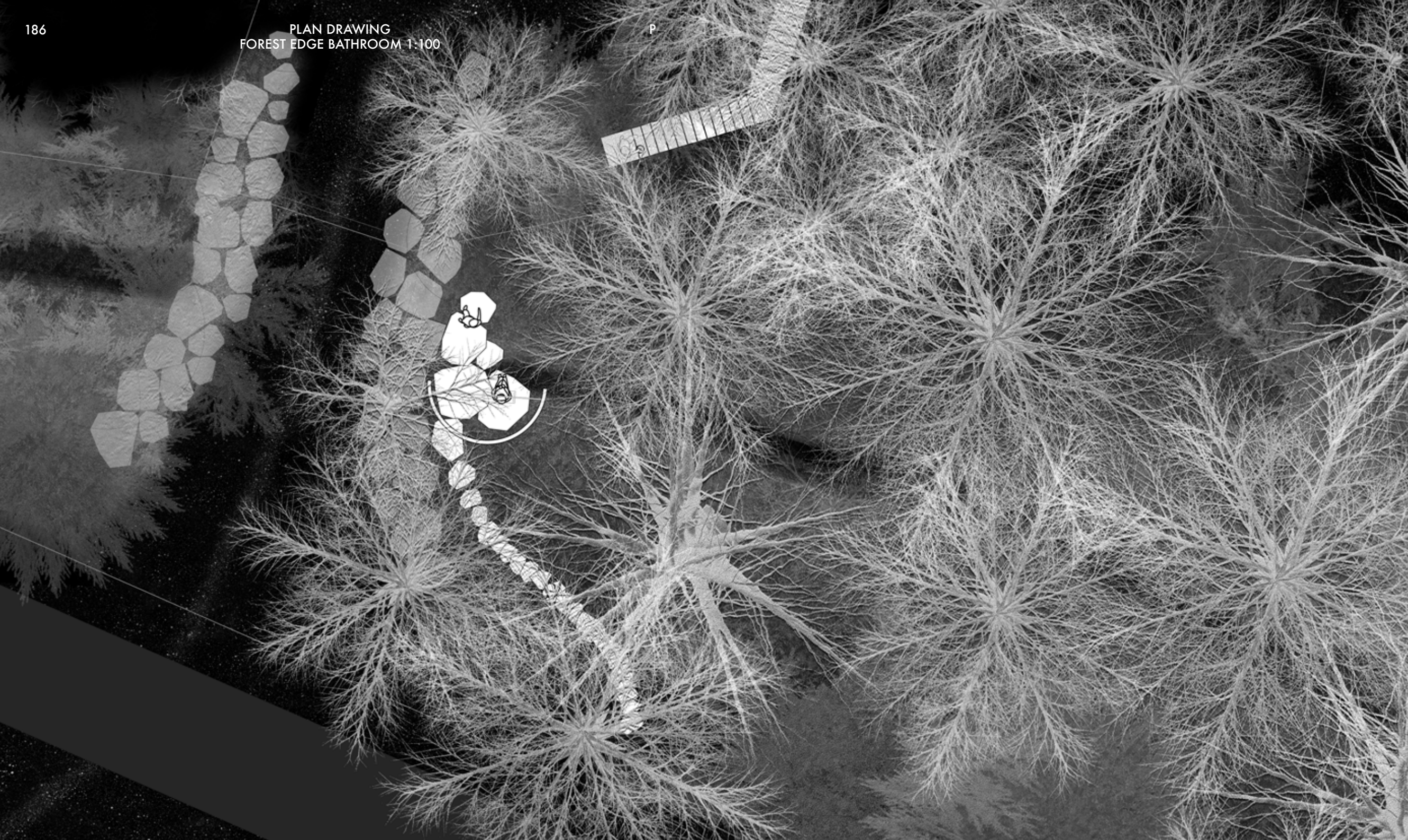




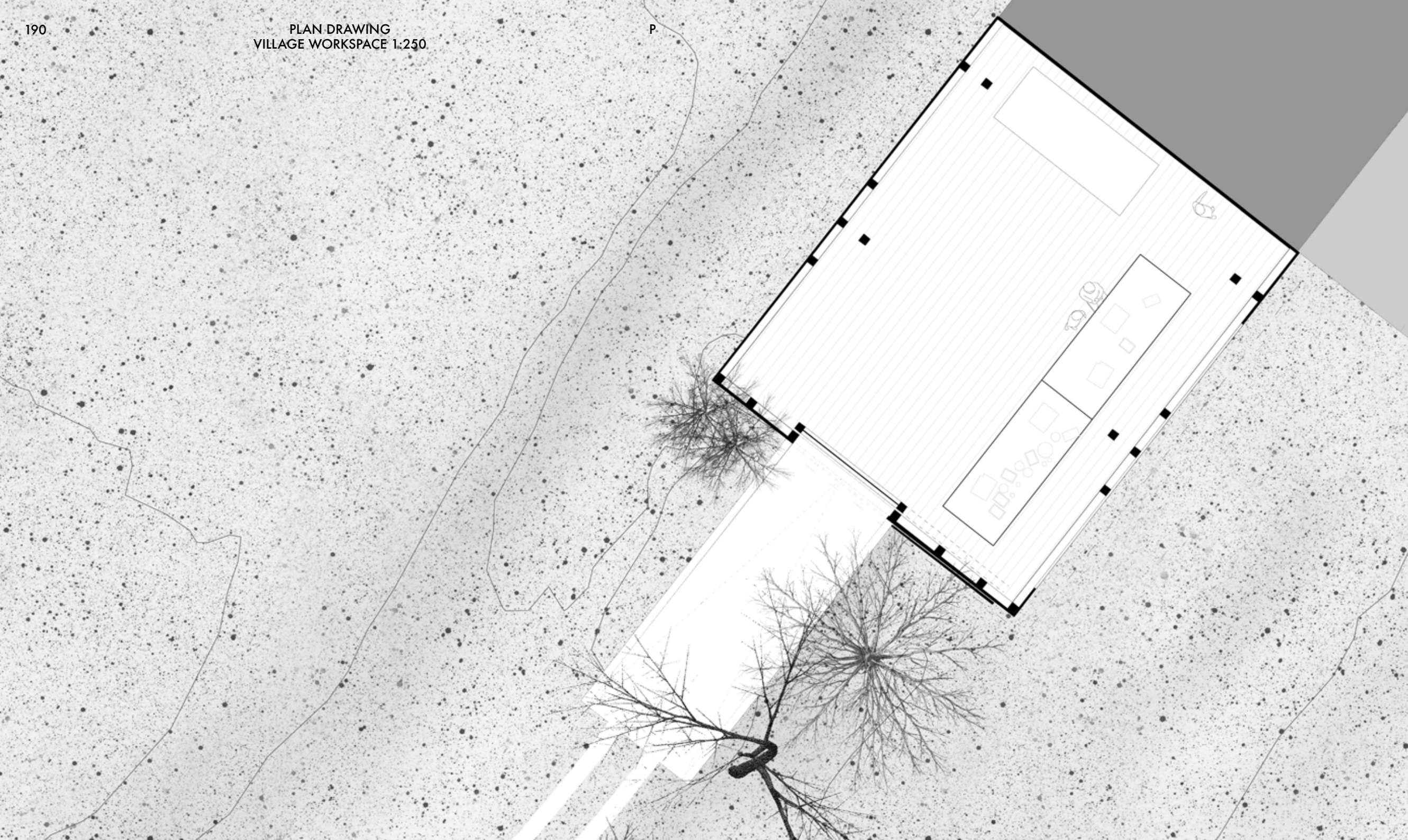


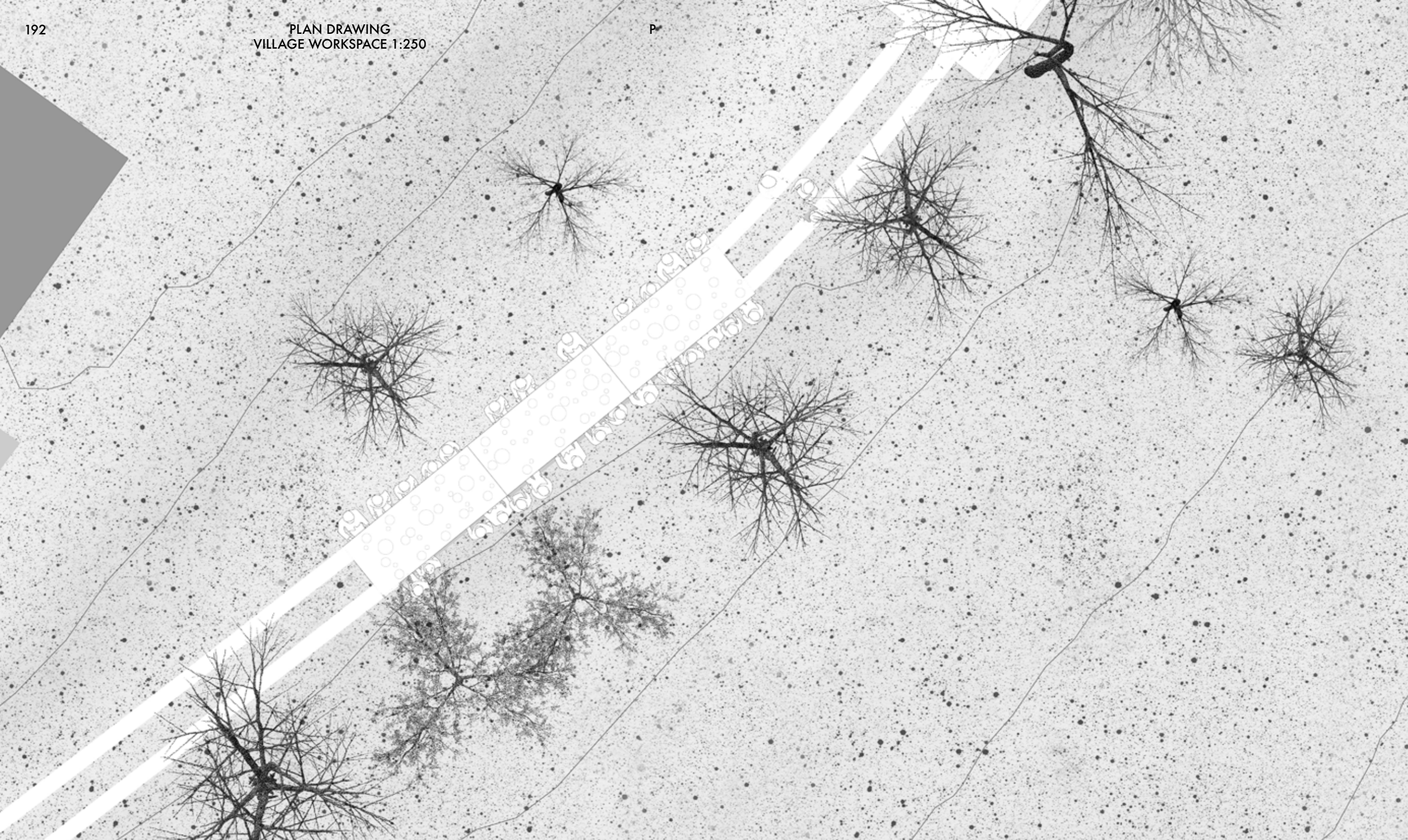
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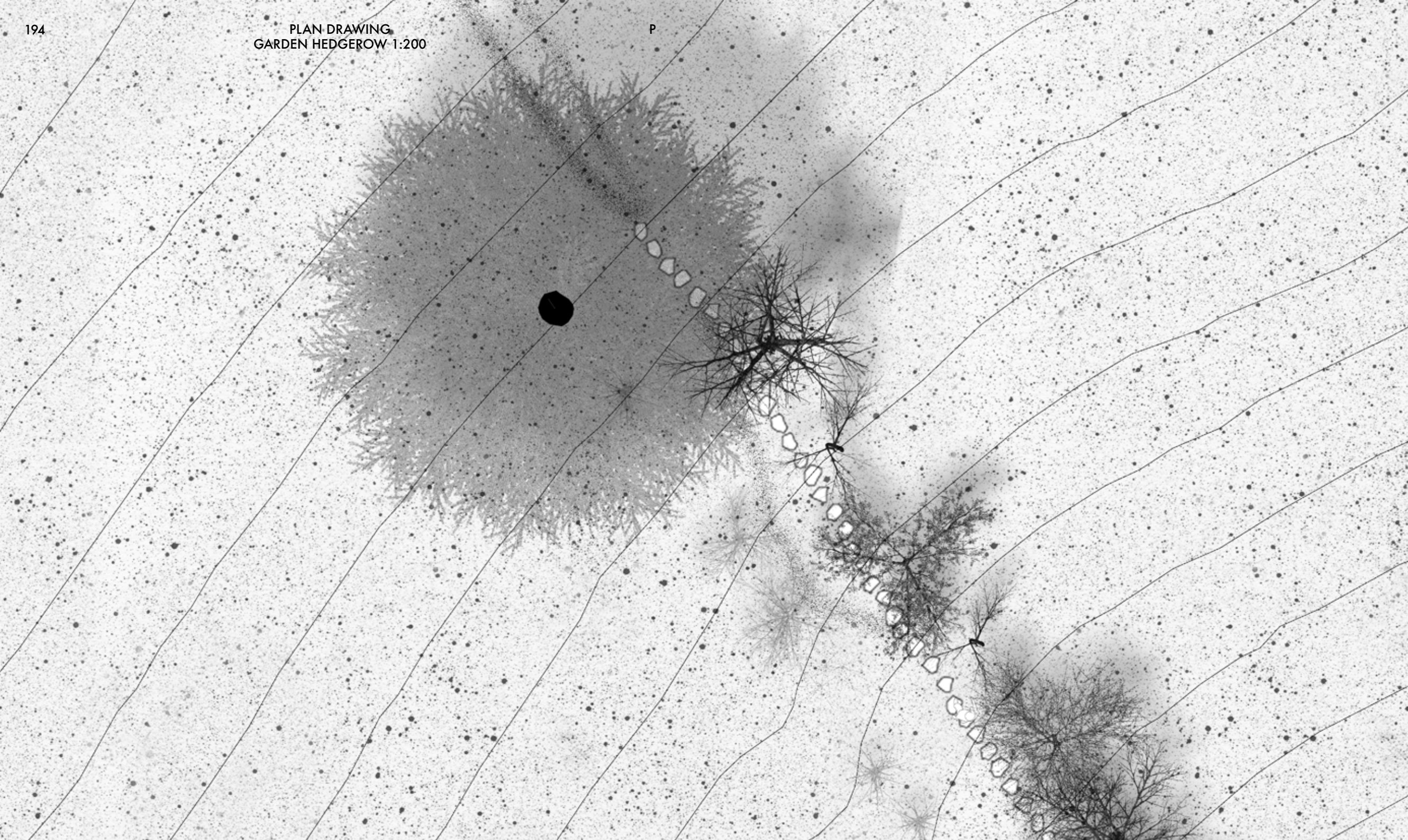


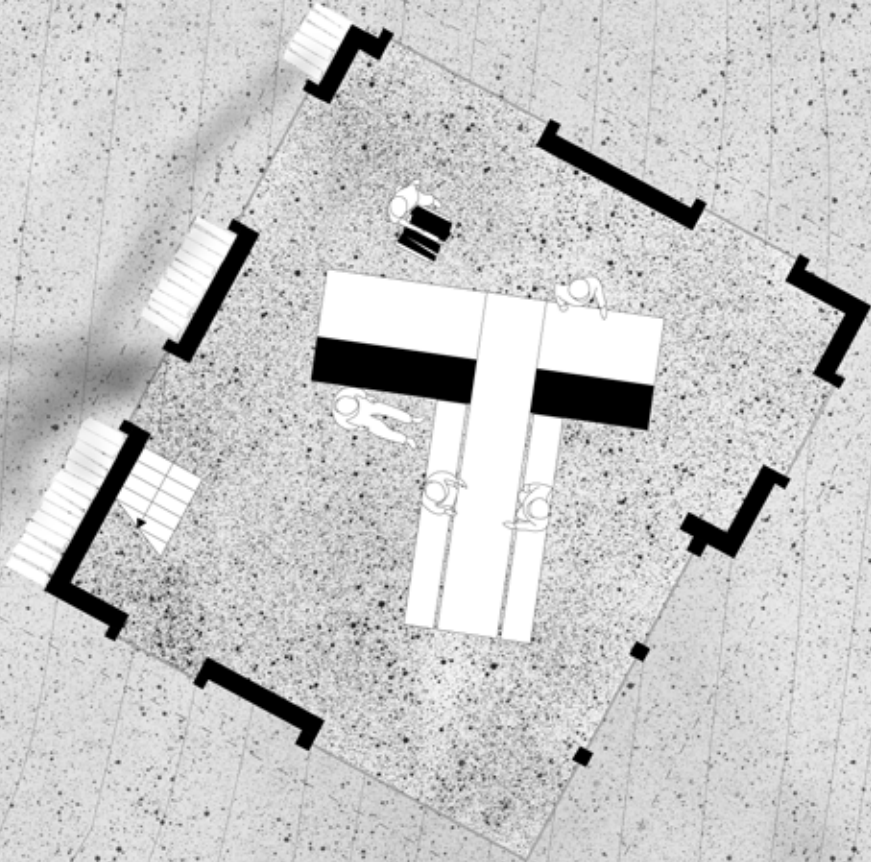




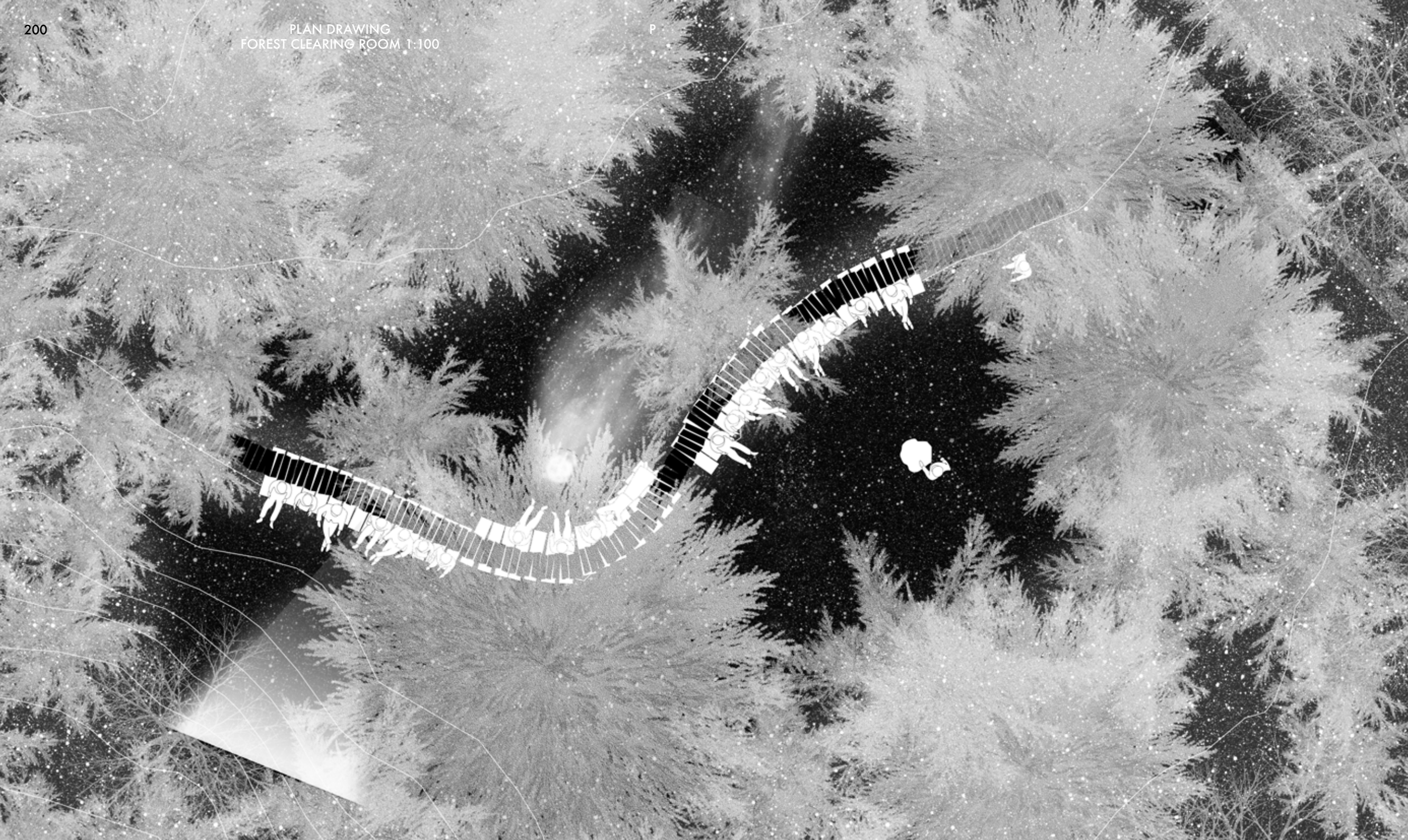












PLACE AND PLANT

the following pages show plants collected at and along the routes and places of "landscape as house"- each collection reflects the diversity of the rooms. new plants (marked with a *) are added to strengthen diversity and engage with the various (domestic) functions :

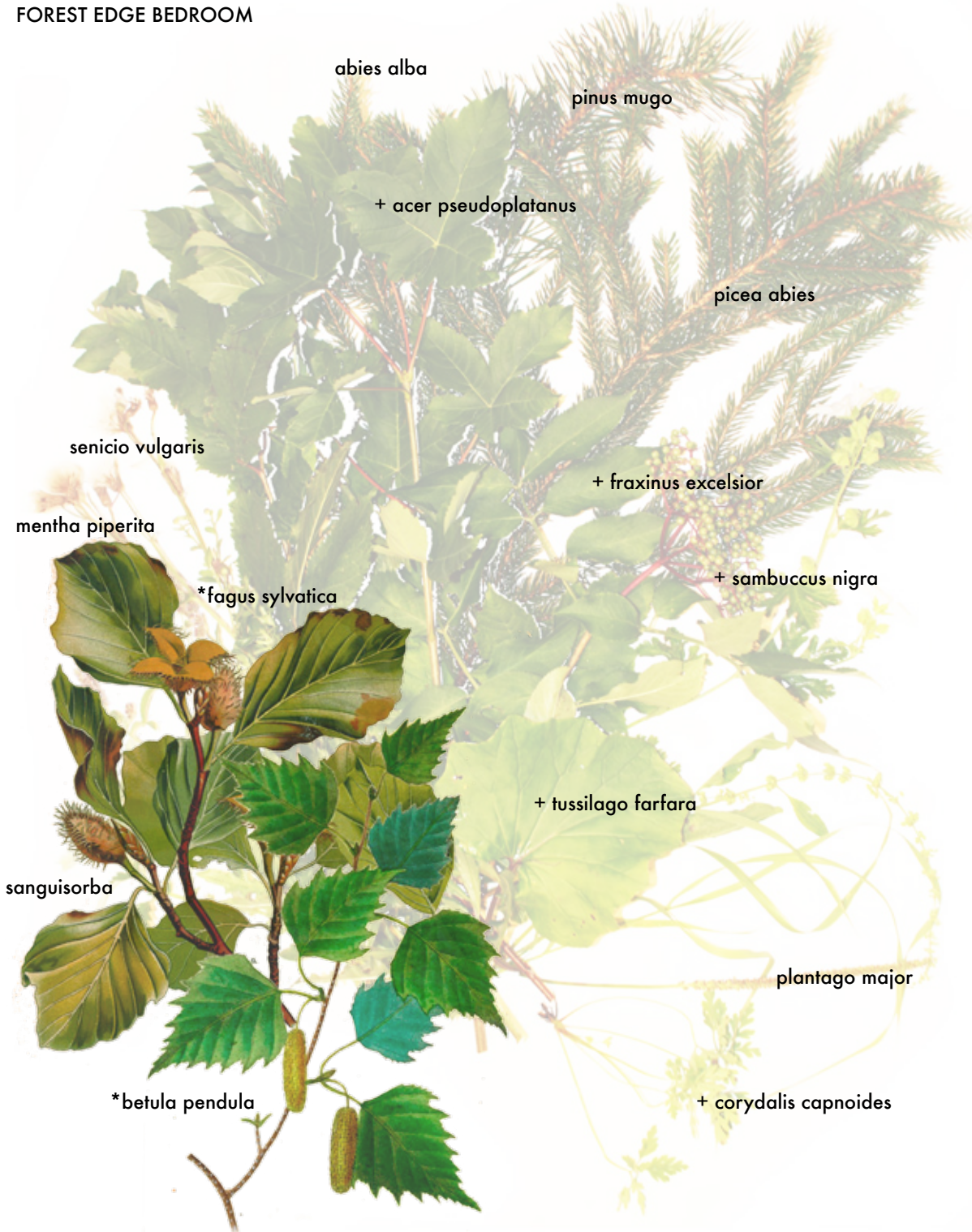
- enhance the perception of seasonal change (forest edge)
- diversify edible hedgerow
- frame walkway with orchard and cultivate old tree species
- engage withvillagers through collecting plantss in their'farmers' gardens. a reflection of the neighbourhood and the region in a strip of flowers.

when walking the route seeds and fruits from one place can be carried and distributed along the paths to enhance the diversity along the routes and slowly change the flora around the immediate space of the domestic walks (marked with a +).

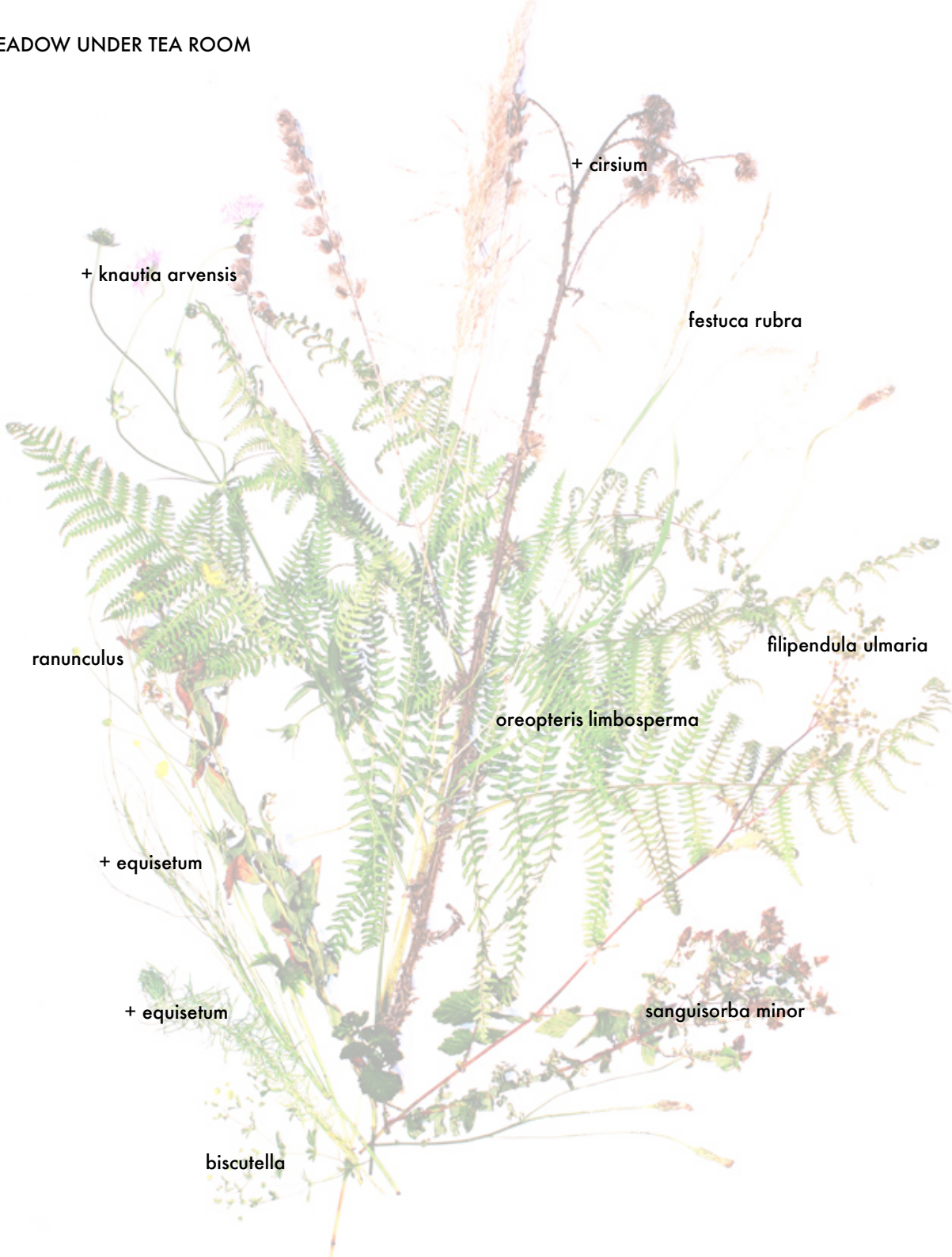
> bouquettes as assemblages of places and walks



FOREST EDGE BEDROOM



MEADOW UNDER TEA ROOM



WET STREAM EDGE

phragmites australis

filipendula ulmaria

mentha spicata

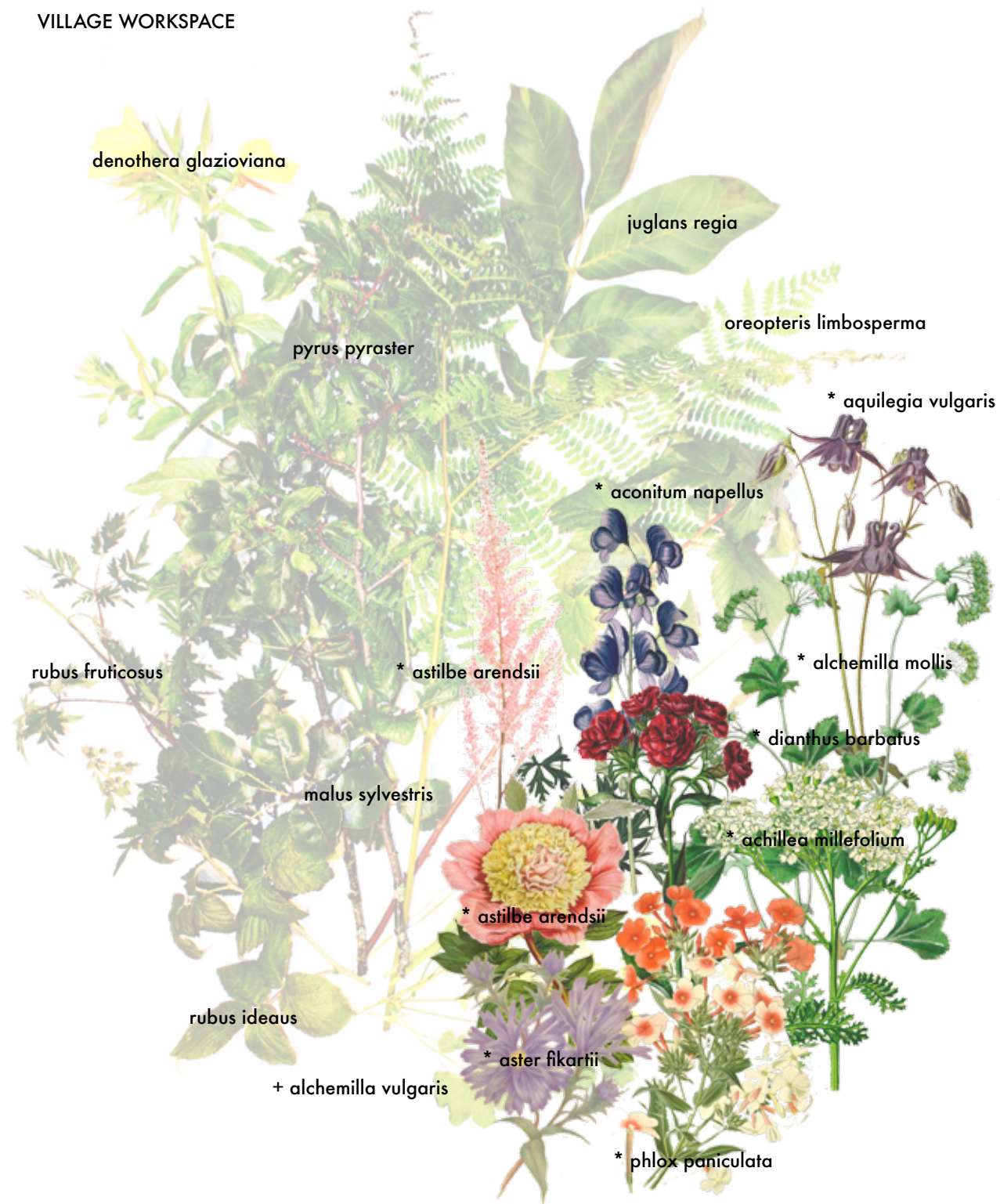
epilobium dodonaei

rumex

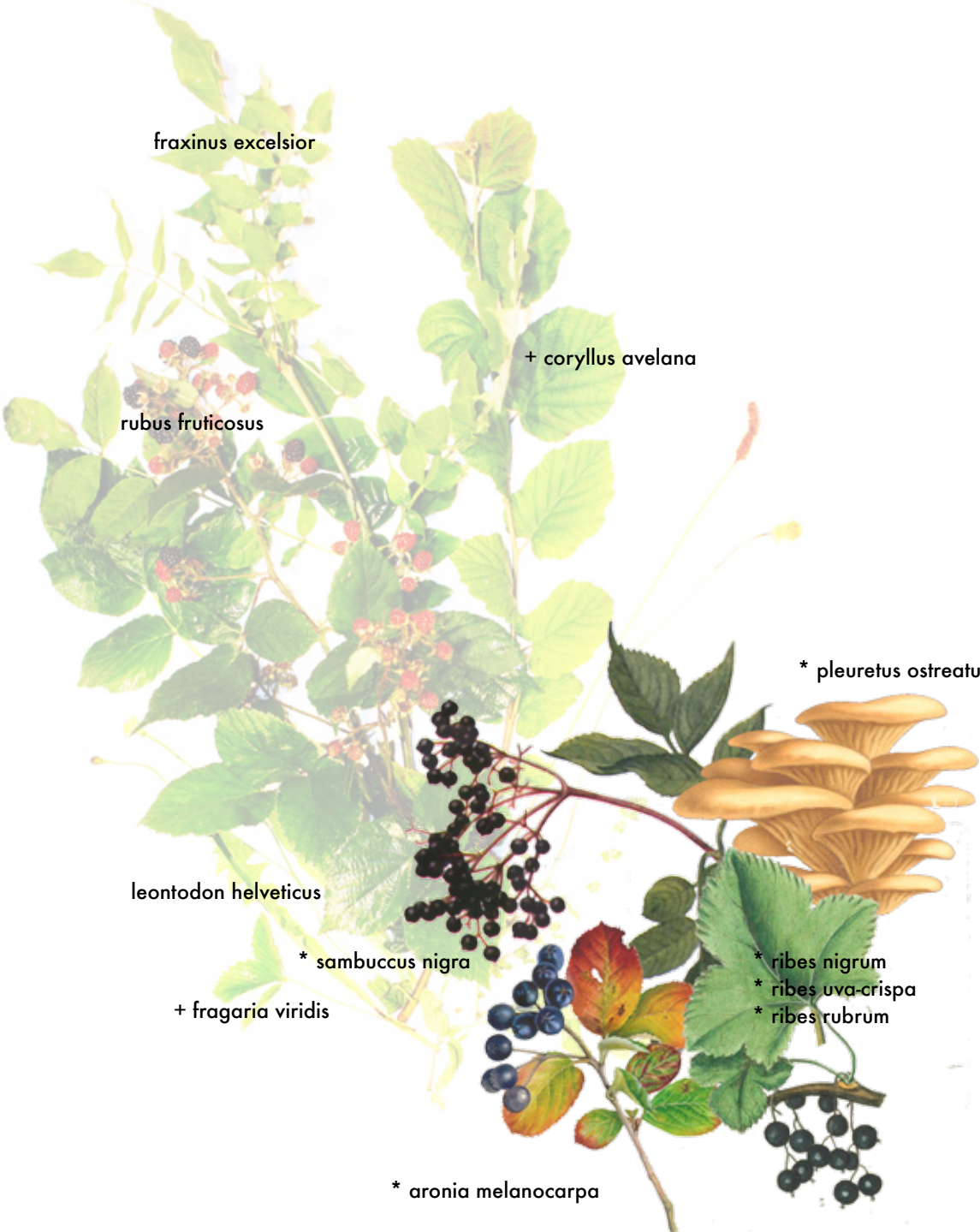
lythrum salicaria

geum urbanum

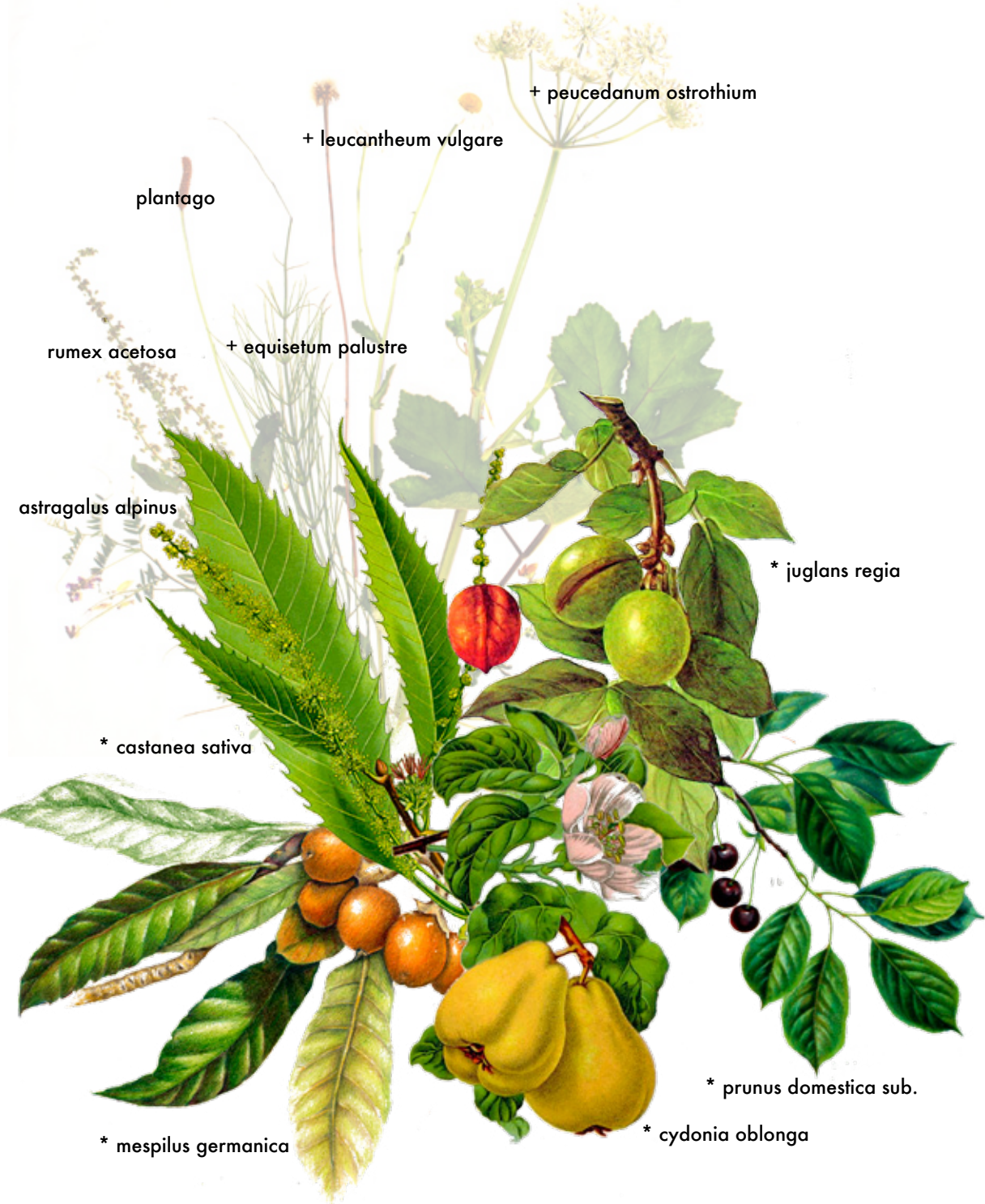




HEDGEROW GARDEN

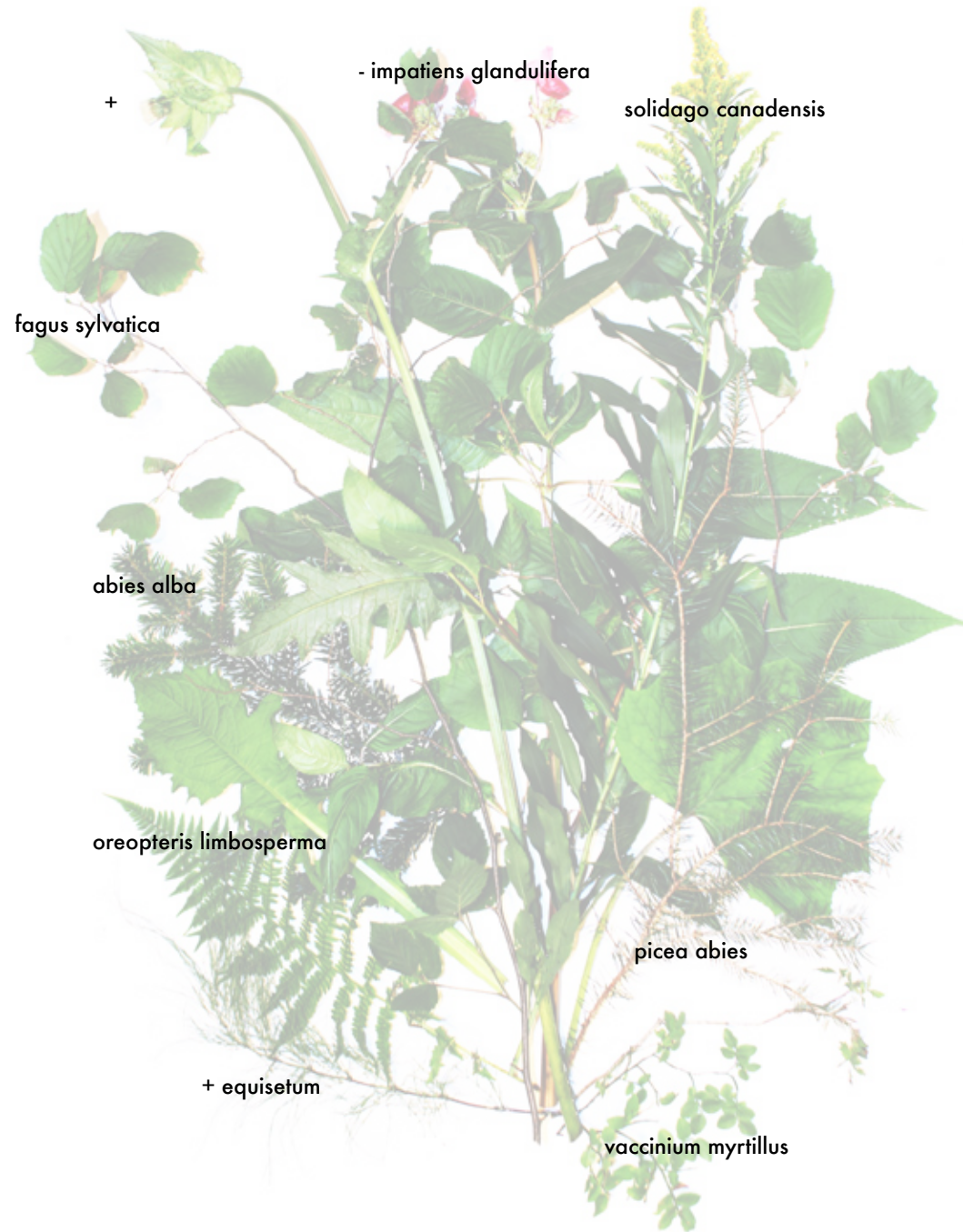


STEEP MEADOW



MEADOW SLOPE

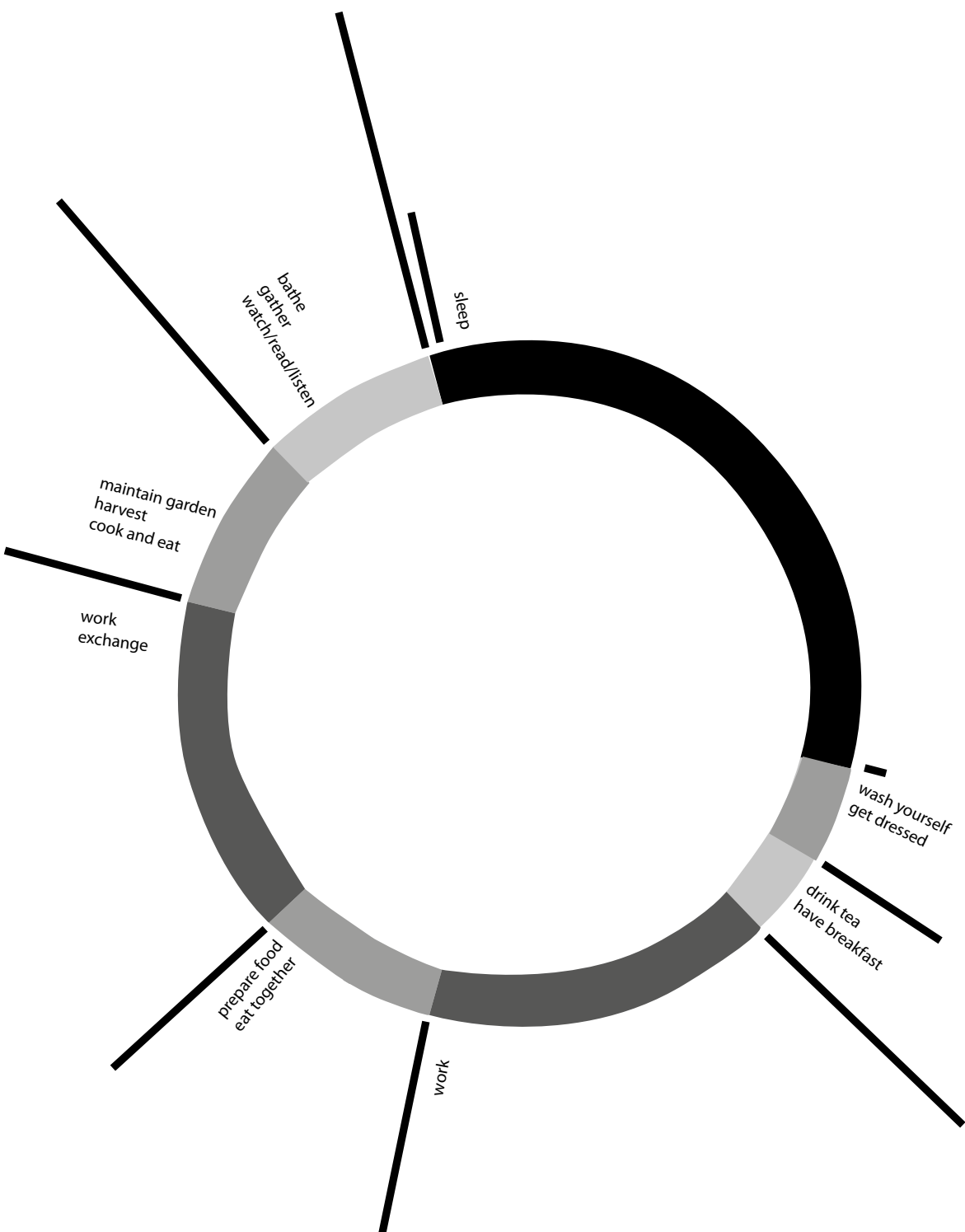




RITUAL AND ROUTINE

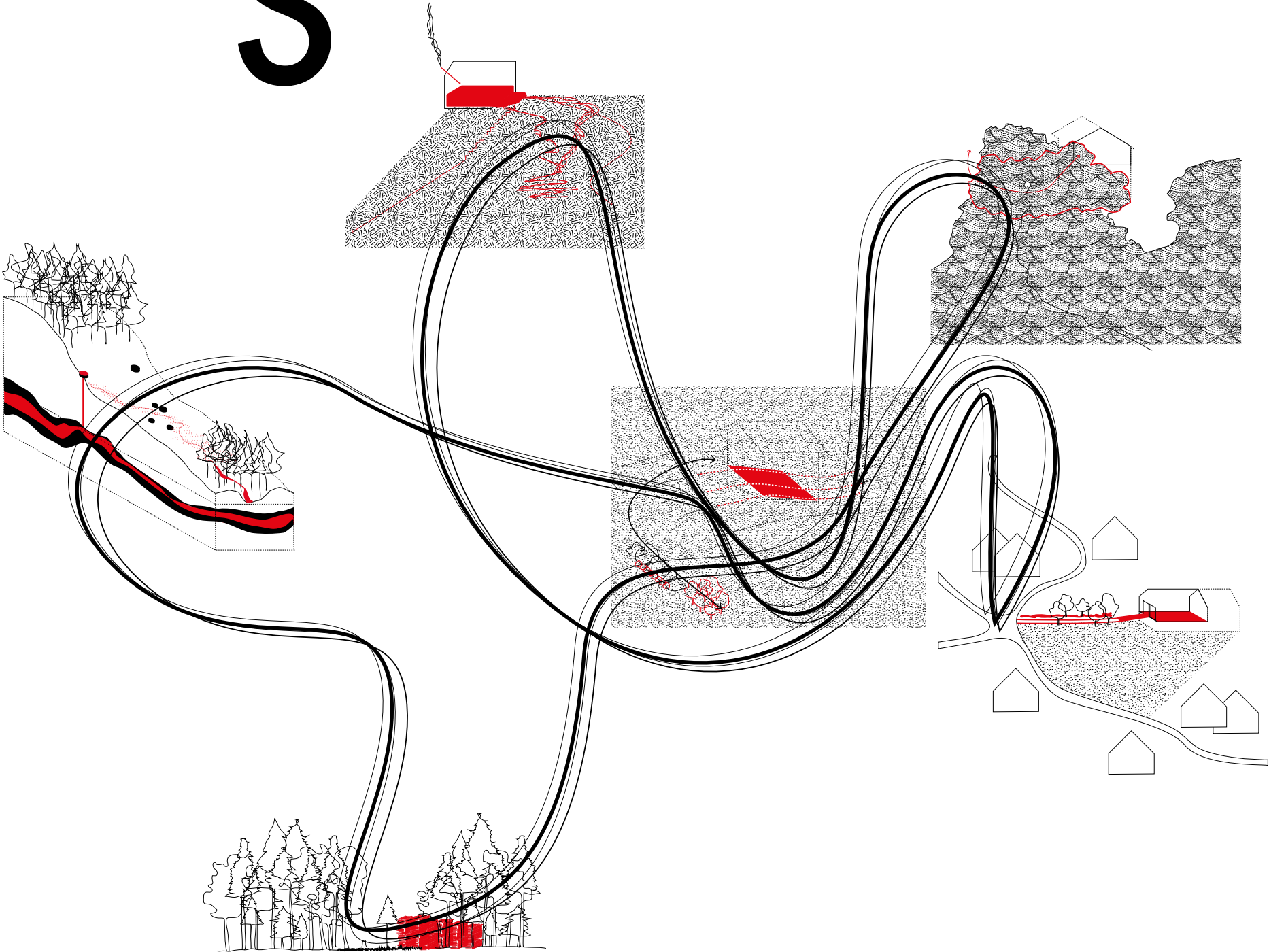
within “landscape as house” daily activities become spatial through fragmentation. therefore the house becomes the layout of a daily routine embedded in landscape. making the landscape an essential part of the experience of each place and activity creates a deeper awareness of surrounding – space and time of a daily rhythm. an environmental way of dwelling.

through this awareness the border between routine and ritual, maintenance and cultural act is shifting.

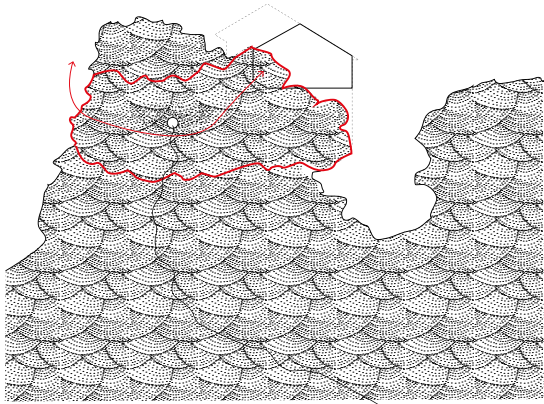


> daily cycle of routines and the distances between the rooms/ activities (black strips)

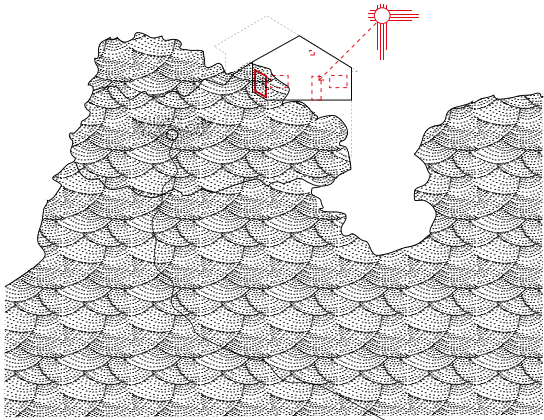
S



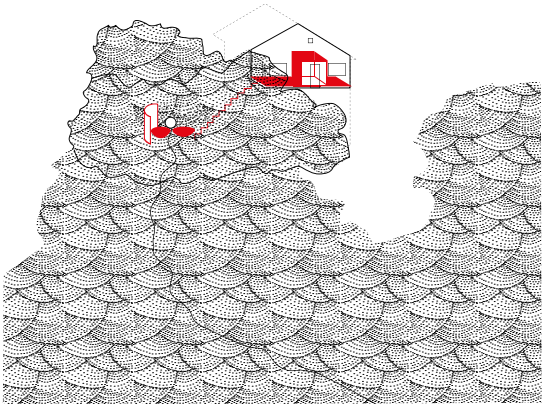
EXPANDING AND DIVERSIFYING THE FOREST
EDGE WITH NEW DECIDUOUS TREES



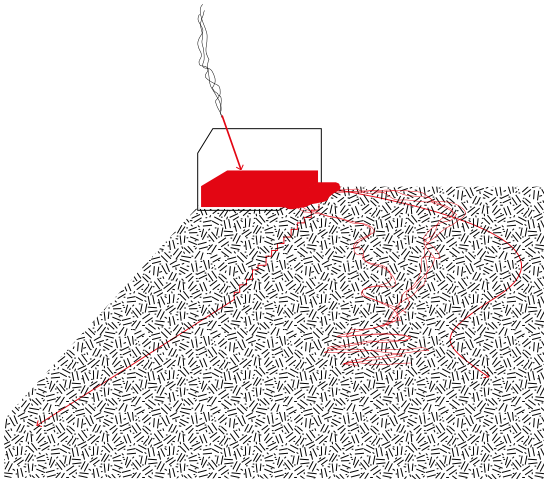
DISMANTLING EXISTING WINDOWS AND
CREATING NEW OPENINGS TOWARDS THE
FOREST EDGE



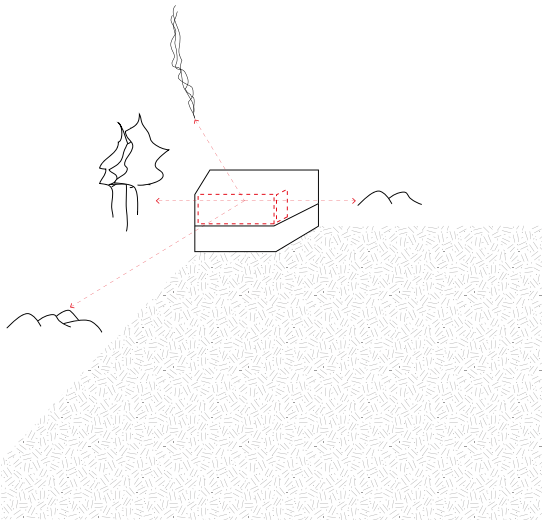
INSERTING STAIRS AND A SLEEPING PLATFORM
WITH A WINTER BED



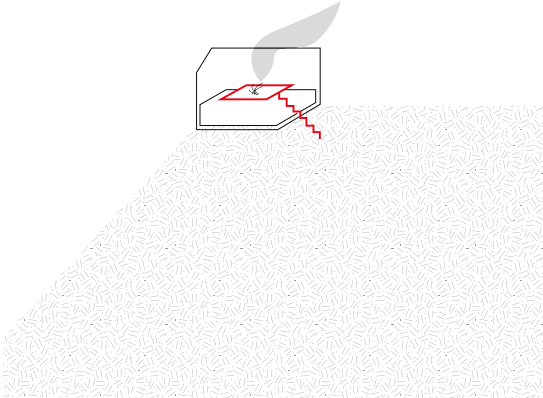
DIVERTING WATER STREAM INTO A BASIN AND
OVERFLOWING THE MEADOW



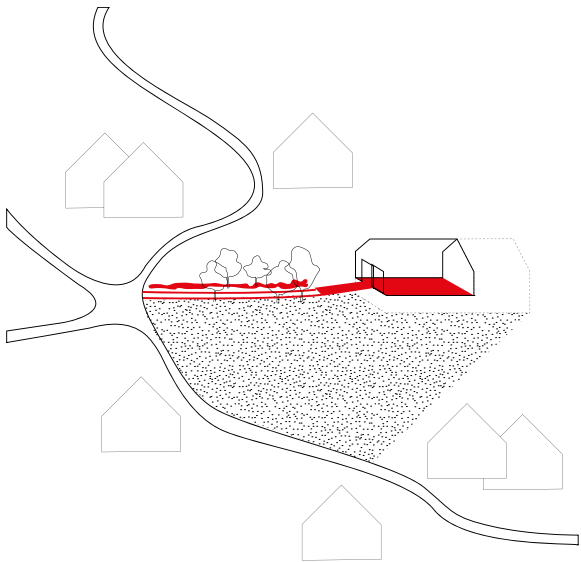
OPENING UP THE FACADE TO FRAME A VIEW ON
TO THE STREAM AND THE VALLEY



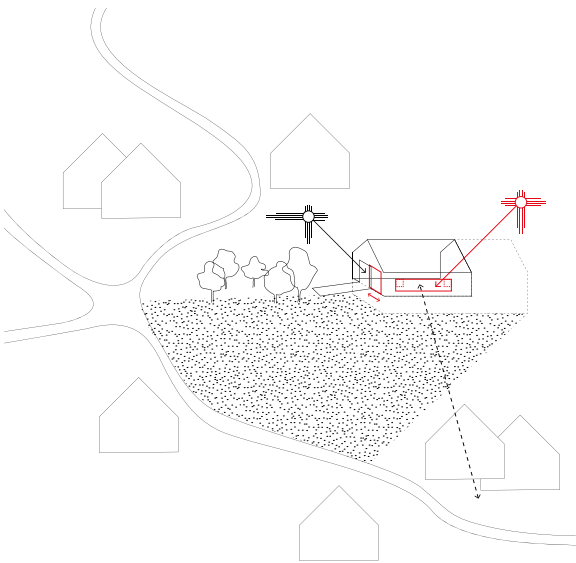
INSERTING A PLATFORM FOR MAKING TEA ON
WOOD FIRE WHILE CONTEMPLATING THE VIEWS



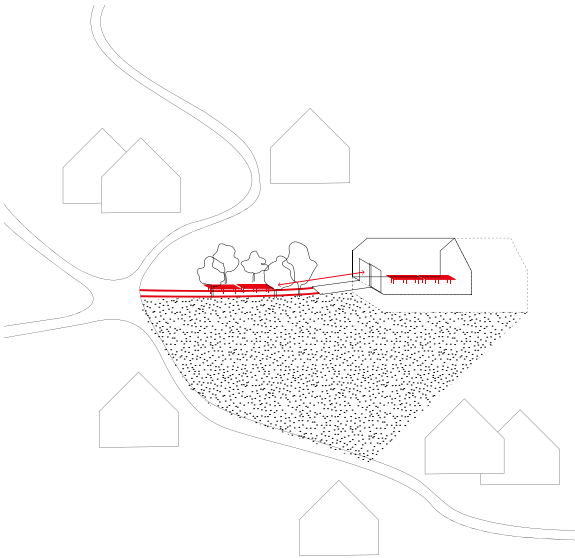
EXPANDING THE PUBLIC SPACE INTO THE BARN
BY ADDING NEW PAVEMENT AND OPENING THE
BARN FOR VILLAGE COMMUNITY PROGRAMME



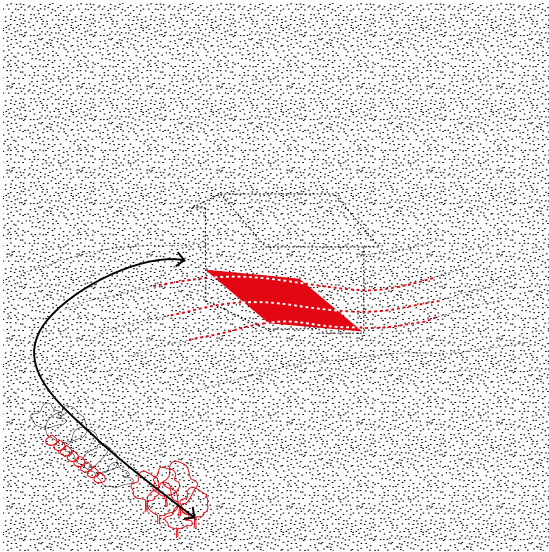
ENLARGING EXISTING WINDOWS TO FILL THE
BARN WITH LIGHT AND TO VISUALLY CONNECT
THE INTERIOUR SPACE WITH THE VILLAGE



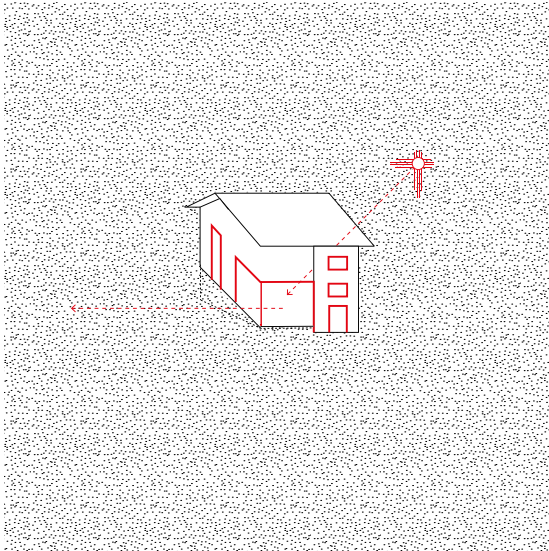
A MOVING TABLE CAN BE USED INSIDE AND
OUTSIDE THE BARN ALLOWING FLEXIBLE
PROGRAMME



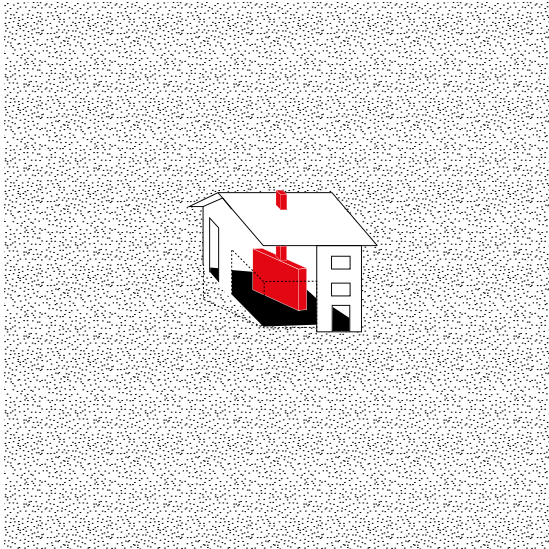
CONTINUING THE MOUNTAIN SLOPE THROUGH
THE BUILDING AS AN INCLINING EARTH FLOOR



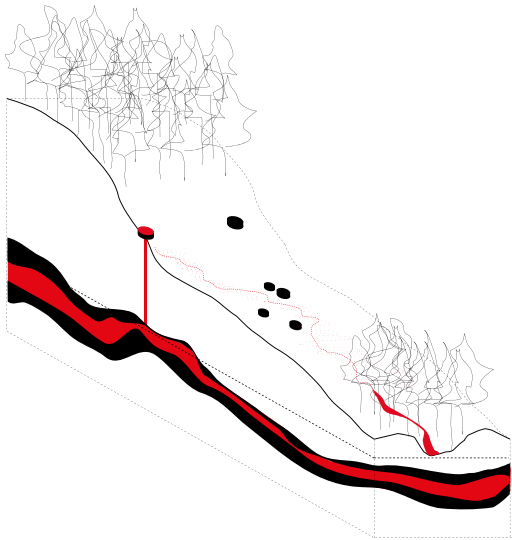
OPENING THE EXISTING WINDOWS
DOWNWARDS TO THE SLOPING FLOOR AND
AND COMPLETELY OPENING UP THE CORNER
TOWARDS THE WIDE MEADOW



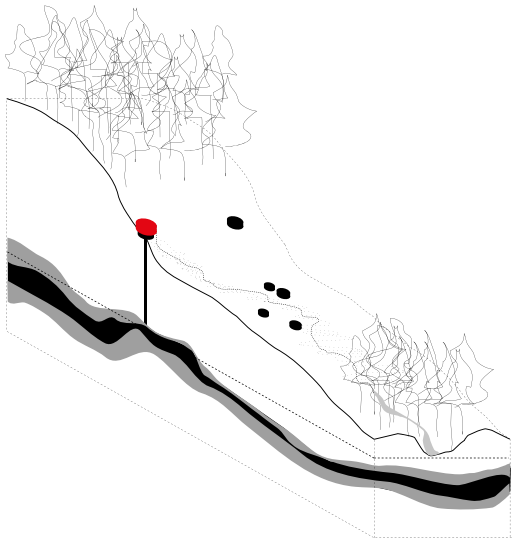
INSERTING A WOOD OVEN, A WARM WALL
AND A TABLE SPACE LOOKING OUT OVER THE
MEADOW



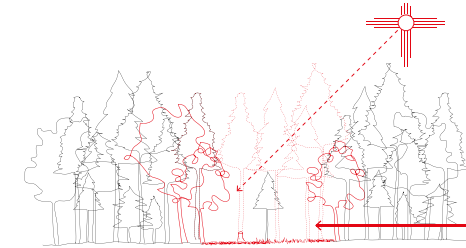
CATCHING THE WELL WATER IN A BASIN AND
LETTING IT OVERFLOW THE MOUNTAIN SLOPE TO
REVIVE AND OLD NATURAL WATER COURSE



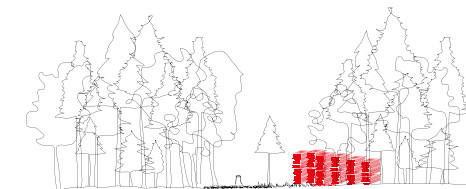
USING THE BASIN AS A HEATABLE BATH IN THE
MIDDLE OF THE MOUNTAIN SLOP



FELLING TREES TO CREATE A CLEARING - A PLACE
FOR GATHERING IN THE FOREST

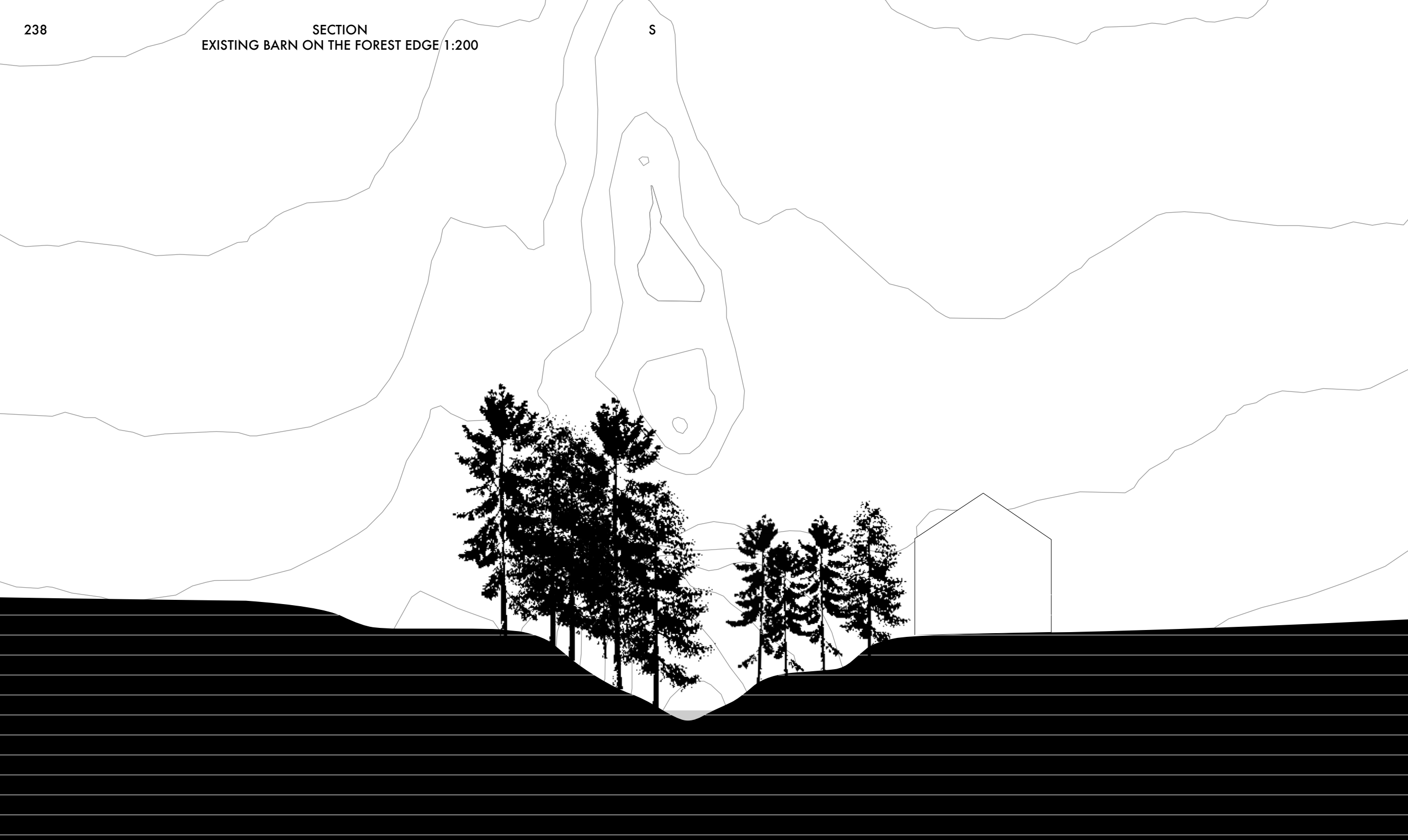


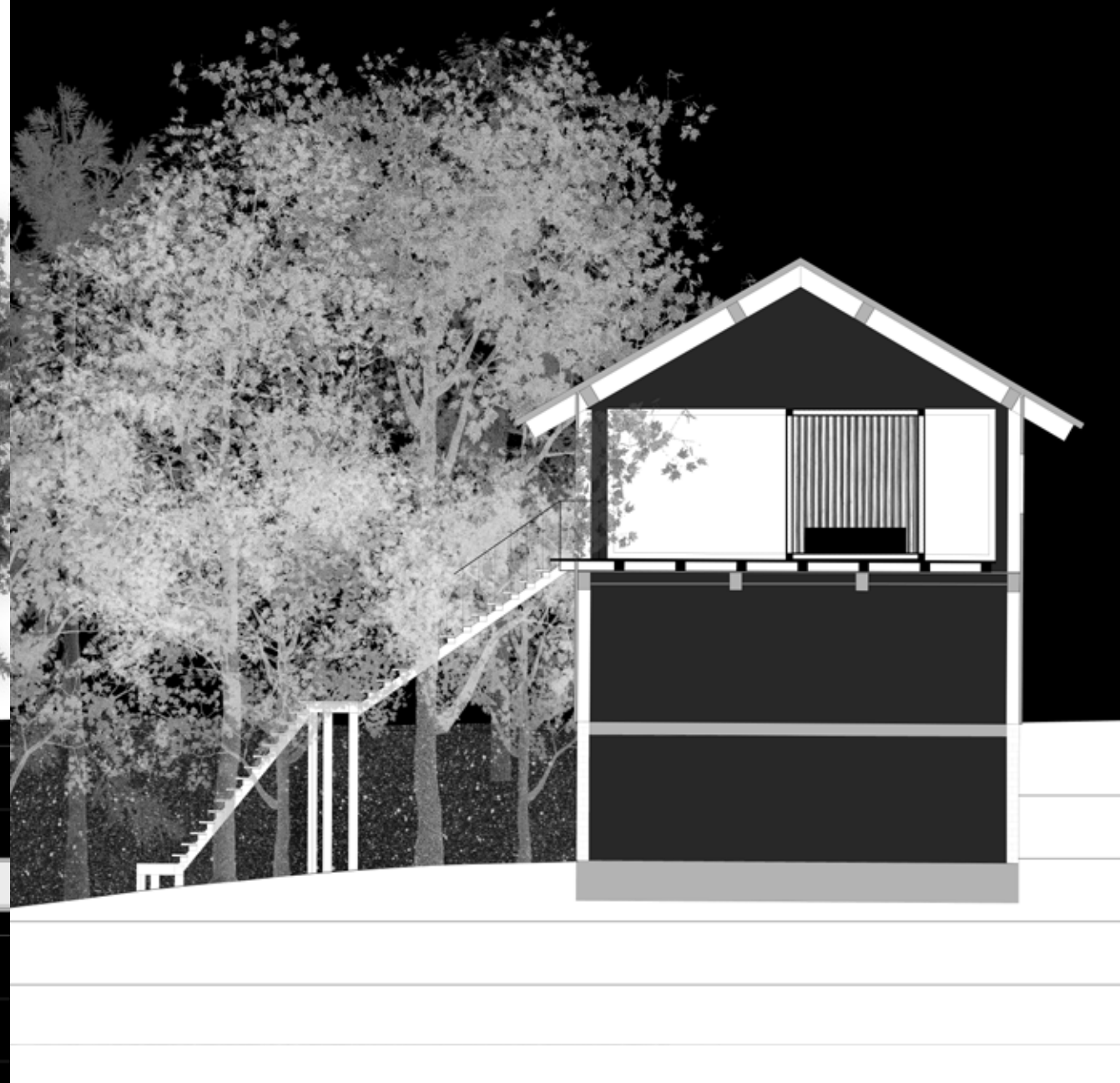
USING THE CHOPPED WOOD TO MAKE A WOOD
STACK, A 'HOLZBIEGO' WALL CREATING THREE
DIFFERENT SPACES FOR GATHERING



SECTION
EXISTING BARN ON THE FOREST EDGE 1:200

S

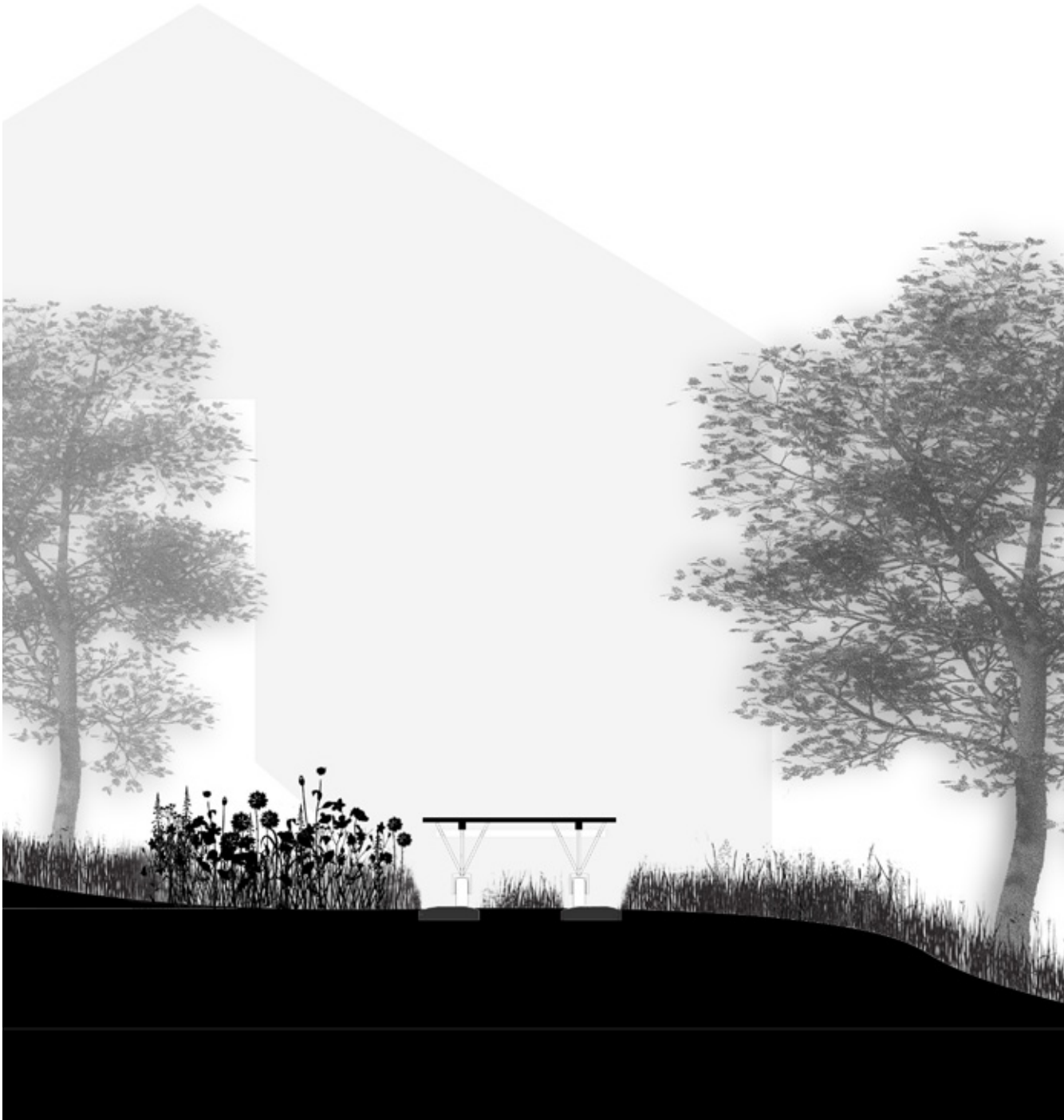


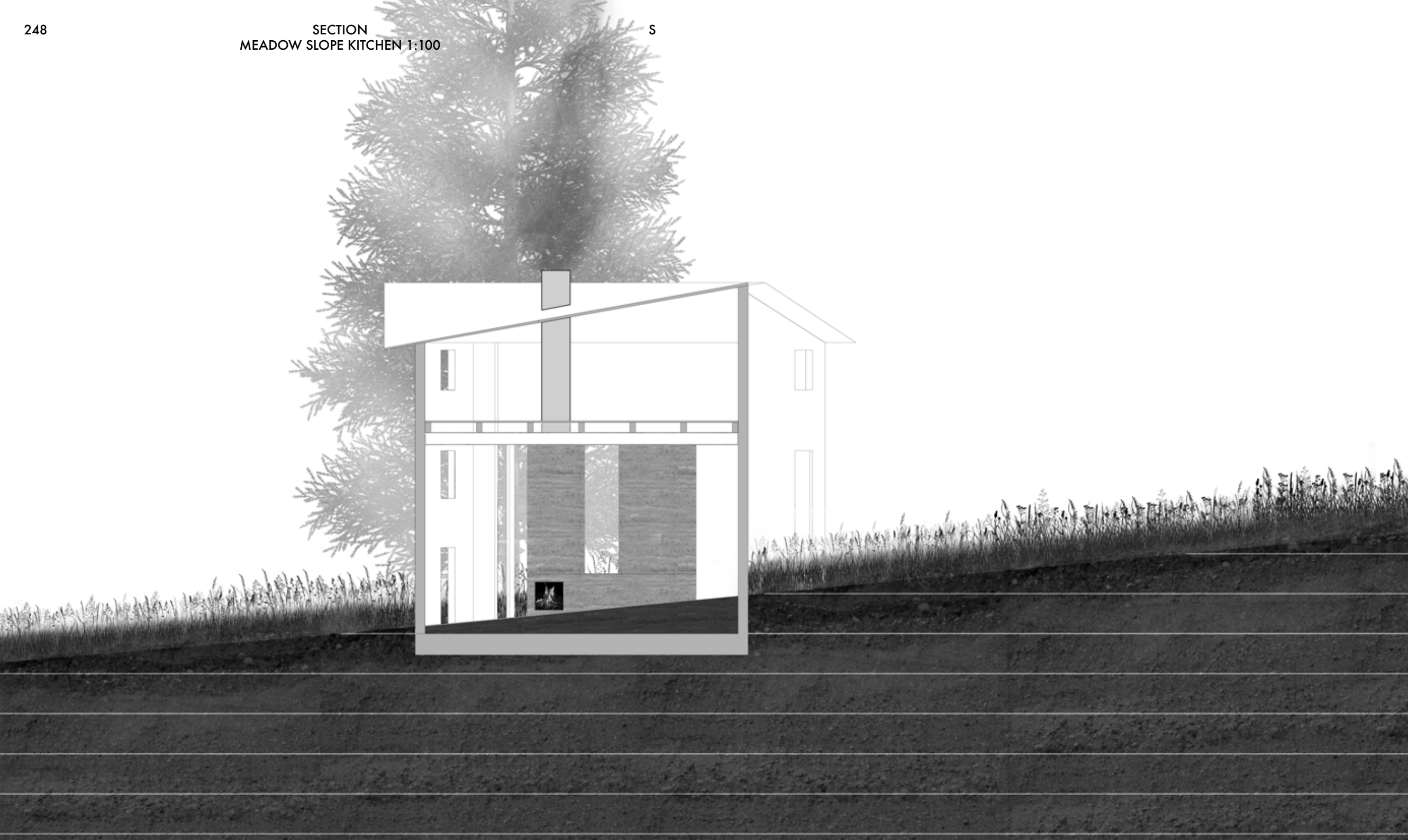


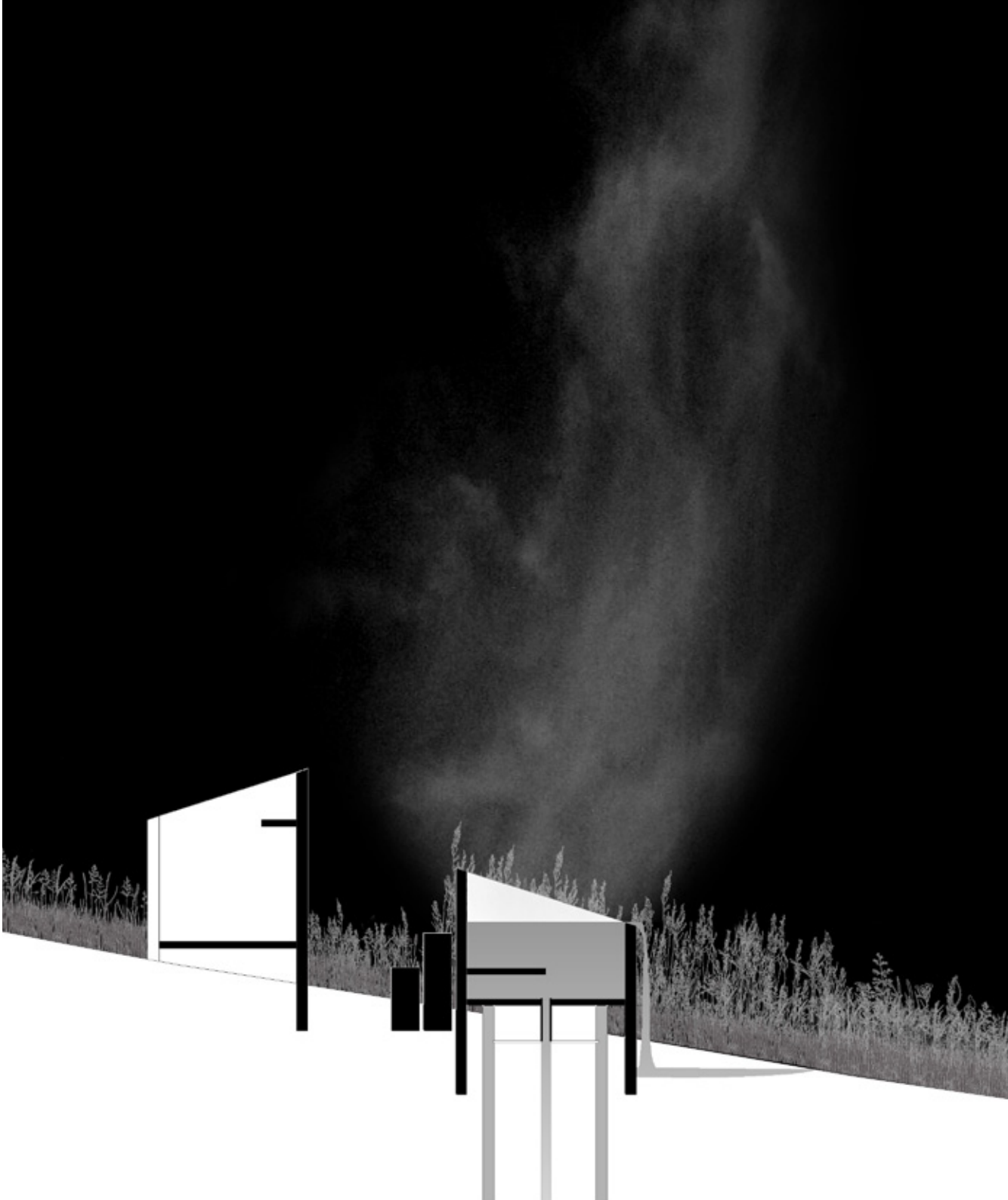
SECTION
EXISTING VACATION HOUSE 1:500













TASKSCAPE

in his text “the temporality of landscape” tim ingold introduces a new terminology to bridge the gap between thinking in nature and culture as two opposing constructs - the taskscape.

often landscape is defined through the use of words like nature and culture. or looked at as a result of landscape architecture. i share tim ingold’s idea that landscape is the embodied form of tasks or acts of dwelling. therefore i think that landscape is a way of looking at the environment, constituted by innumerable processes, human and non-human. being a landscape architect is about a way of seeing, understanding processes and using this understanding to narrate a new taskscape.

> Ingold, Tim: The temporality of landscape. In: World Archaeology, Vol. 25, No. 2, Conceptions of Time and Ancient Society (Oct., 1993), pp. 152-174

this purpose I shall adopt the term ‘task’, defined as any practical operation, carried out by a skilled agent in an environment, as part of his or her normal business of life. In other words, tasks are the constitutive acts of dwelling. No more than features of the landscape, however, are tasks suspended in a vacuum. Every task takes its meaning from its position within an ensemble of tasks, performed in series or in parallel, and usually by many people working together. One of the great mistakes of recent anthropology – what Reynolds (1993: 410) calls ‘the great tool-use fallacy’ – has been to insist upon a separation between the domains of technical and social activity, a separation that has blinded us to the fact that one of the outstanding features of human technical practices lies in their embeddedness in the current of sociality. It is to the entire ensemble of tasks, in their mutual interlocking, that I refer by the concept of *taskscape*. Just as the landscape is an array of related features, so – by analogy – the taskscape is an array of related activities. And as with the landscape, it is qualitative and heterogeneous: we can ask of a taskscape, as of a landscape, what it is like, but not how much of it there is. In short, the taskscape is to labour what the landscape is to land, and indeed what an ensemble of use-values is to value in general.

Third, the forms of the taskscape, like those of music, come into being through movement. Music exists only when it is being performed (it does not pre-exist, as is sometimes thought, in the score, any more than a cake pre-exists in the recipe for making it). Similarly, the taskscape exists only so long as people are actually engaged in the activities of dwelling, despite the attempts of anthropologists to translate it into something rather equivalent to a score – a kind of ideal design for dwelling – that generally goes by the name of ‘culture’, and that people are supposed to bring with them into their encounter with the world. This parallel, however, brings me to a critical question. Up to now, my discussion of temporality has concentrated exclusively on the taskscape, allowing the landscape to slip from view. It is now high time to bring it back into focus. I argued in the previous section that the landscape is not nature; here I claim that the taskscape is not culture. Landscape and taskscape, then, are not to be opposed as nature to culture. So how are we to understand the relation between them? Where does one end and the other begin? Can they even be distinguished at all? If music best reflects the forms of the taskscape, it might be thought that painting is the most natural medium for representing the forms of the landscape. And this suggests that an examination of the difference, in the field of art, between music and painting might offer some clues as to how a distinction might possibly be drawn between taskscape and landscape as facets of the real world. I begin by following up this suggestion.

Returning now from the contrast between music and painting to that between taskscape and landscape, the first point to note is that no more than a painting is the landscape given ready-made. One cannot, as Inglis points out, 'treat landscape as an object if it is to be understood. It is a living process; it makes men; it is made by them' (1977: 489). Just as with music, the forms of the landscape are generated in movement: these forms, however, are congealed in a solid medium – indeed, to borrow Inglis's words again, 'a landscape is the most solid appearance in which a history can declare itself' (ibid.). Thanks to their solidity, features of the landscape remain available for inspection long after the movement that gave rise to them has ceased. If, as Mead argued (1977[1938]: 97), every object is to be regarded as a 'collapsed act', then *the landscape as a whole must likewise be understood as the taskscape in its embodied form: a pattern of activities 'collapsed' into an array of features*. But to reiterate a point made earlier, the landscape takes on its forms through a process of incorporation, not of inscription. That is to say, the process is not one whereby cultural design is imposed upon a naturally given substrate, as though the movement issued from the form and was completed in its concrete realization in the material. For the forms of the landscape arise alongside those of the taskscape, within the same current of activity. If we recognize a man's gait in the pattern of his footprints, it is not because the gait preceded the footprints and was 'inscribed' in them, but because both the gait and the prints arose within the movement of the man's walking.

Since, moreover, the activities that comprise the taskscape are unending, the landscape is never complete: neither 'built' nor 'unbuilt', it is perpetually under construction. This is why the conventional dichotomy between natural and artificial (or 'man-made') components of the landscape is so problematic. Virtually by definition, an artefact is an object shaped to a pre-conceived image that motivated its construction, and it is 'finished' at the point when it is brought into conformity with this image. What happens to it beyond that point is supposed to belong to the phase of use rather than manufacture, to dwelling rather than building. But the forms of the landscape are not pre-prepared for people to live in – not by nature nor by human hands – for it is in the very process of dwelling that these forms are constituted. 'To build', as Heidegger insisted, 'is itself already to dwell' (1971: 146). Thus the landscape is always in the nature of 'work in progress'.

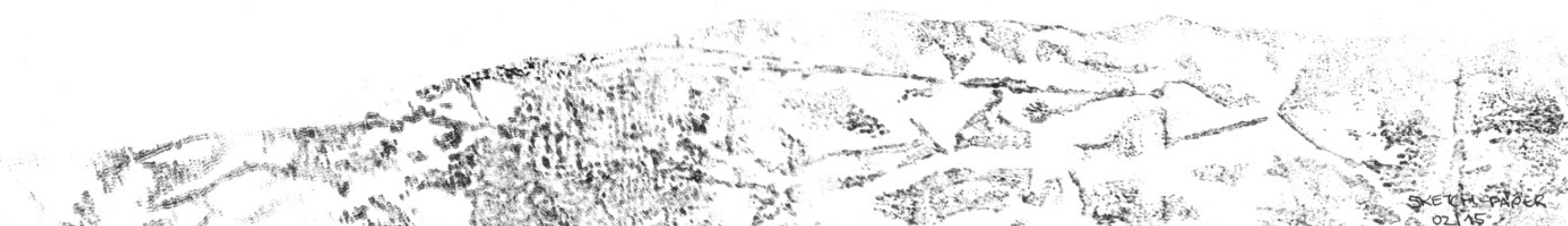
relations, and the activities of organisms are moments of its unfolding. Indeed once we think of the world in this way, as a total movement of becoming which builds itself into the forms we see, and in which each form takes shape in continuous relation to those around it, then the distinction between the animate and the inanimate seems to dissolve. The world itself takes on the character of an organism, and the movements of animals – including those of us human beings – are parts or aspects of its life-process (Lovelock 1979). This means that in dwelling in the world, we do not act *upon* it, or do things *to* it; rather we move along *with* it. Our actions do not transform the world, they are part and parcel of the world's transforming itself. And that is just another way of saying that they belong to time.

For in the final analysis, everything is suspended in movement. As Whitehead once remarked, 'there is no holding nature still and looking at it' (cited in Ho 1989: 19–20). What appear to us as the fixed forms of the landscape, passive and unchanging unless acted upon from outside, are themselves in motion, albeit on a scale immeasurably slower and more majestic than that on which our own activities are conducted. Imagine a film of the landscape, shot over years, centuries, even millennia. Slightly speeded up, plants appear to engage in very animal-like movements, trees flex their limbs without any prompting from the winds. Speeded up rather more, glaciers flow like rivers and even the earth begins to move. At yet greater speeds solid rock bends, buckles and flows like molten metal. The world itself begins to breathe. Thus the rhythmic pattern of human activities nests within the wider pattern of activity for all animal life, which in turn nests within the pattern of activity for all so-called living things, which nests within the life-process of the world. At each of these levels, coherence is founded upon resonance (Ho 1989: 18). Ultimately, then, by replacing the tasks of human dwelling in their proper context within the process of becoming of the world as a whole, we can do away with the dichotomy between taskscape and landscape – only, however, by recognizing the fundamental temporality of the landscape itself.

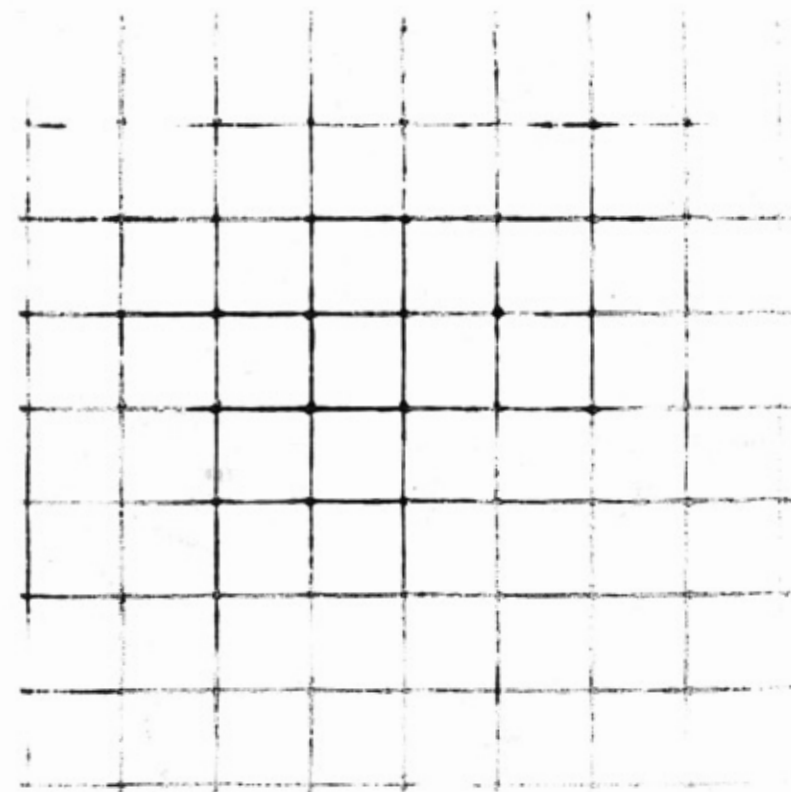
another winds up the hill behind. In the distance, paths criss-cross the village green. Taken together, these paths and tracks 'impose a habitual pattern on the movement of people' (Jackson 1989: 146). And yet they also arise out of that movement, for every path or track shows up as the accumulated imprint of countless journeys that people have made – with or without their vehicles or domestic animals – as they have gone about their everyday business. Thus the same movement is embodied, on the side of the people, in their 'muscular consciousness', and on the side of the landscape, in its network of paths and tracks. In this network is sedimented the activity of an entire community, over many generations. It is the taskscape made visible.

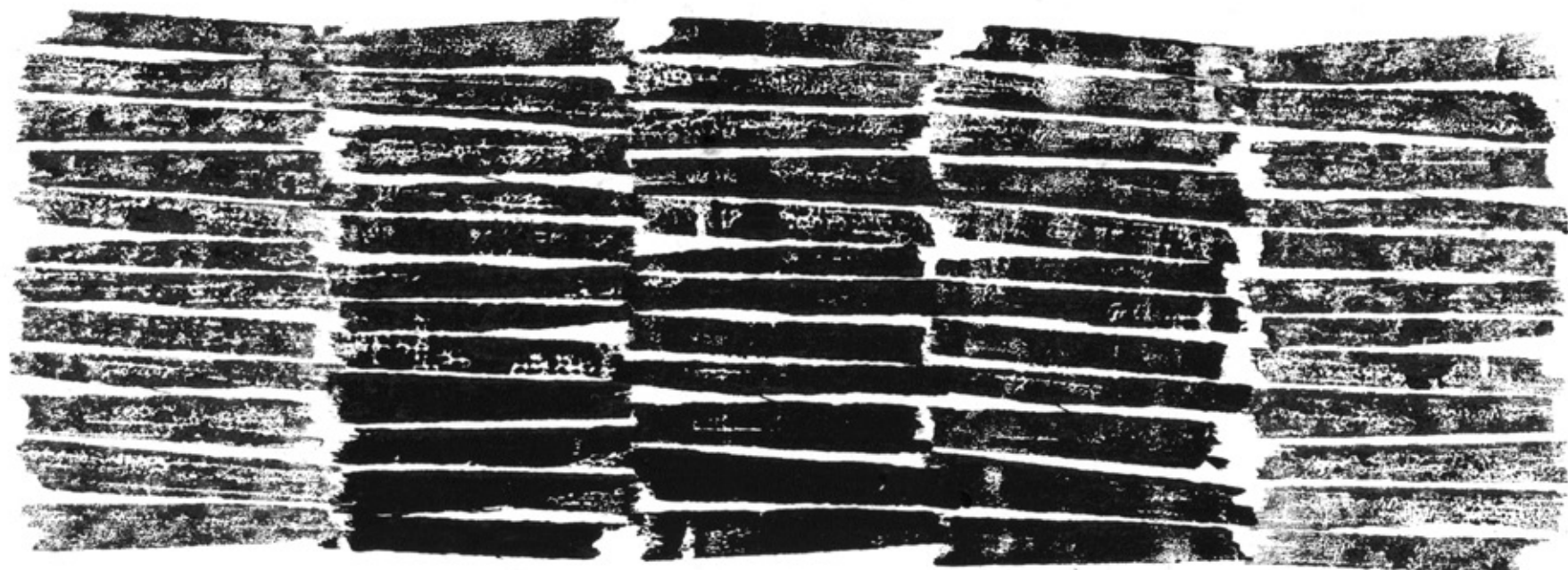
In their journeys along paths and tracks, however, people also move from place to place. To reach a place, you need cross no boundary, but you must follow some kind of path. Thus there can be no places without paths, along which people arrive and depart; and no paths without places, that constitute their destinations and points of departure. And for the harvesters, the place to which they arrive, and whence they will leave at the end of the day, is marked by the next feature of the landscape to occupy your attention. . . .

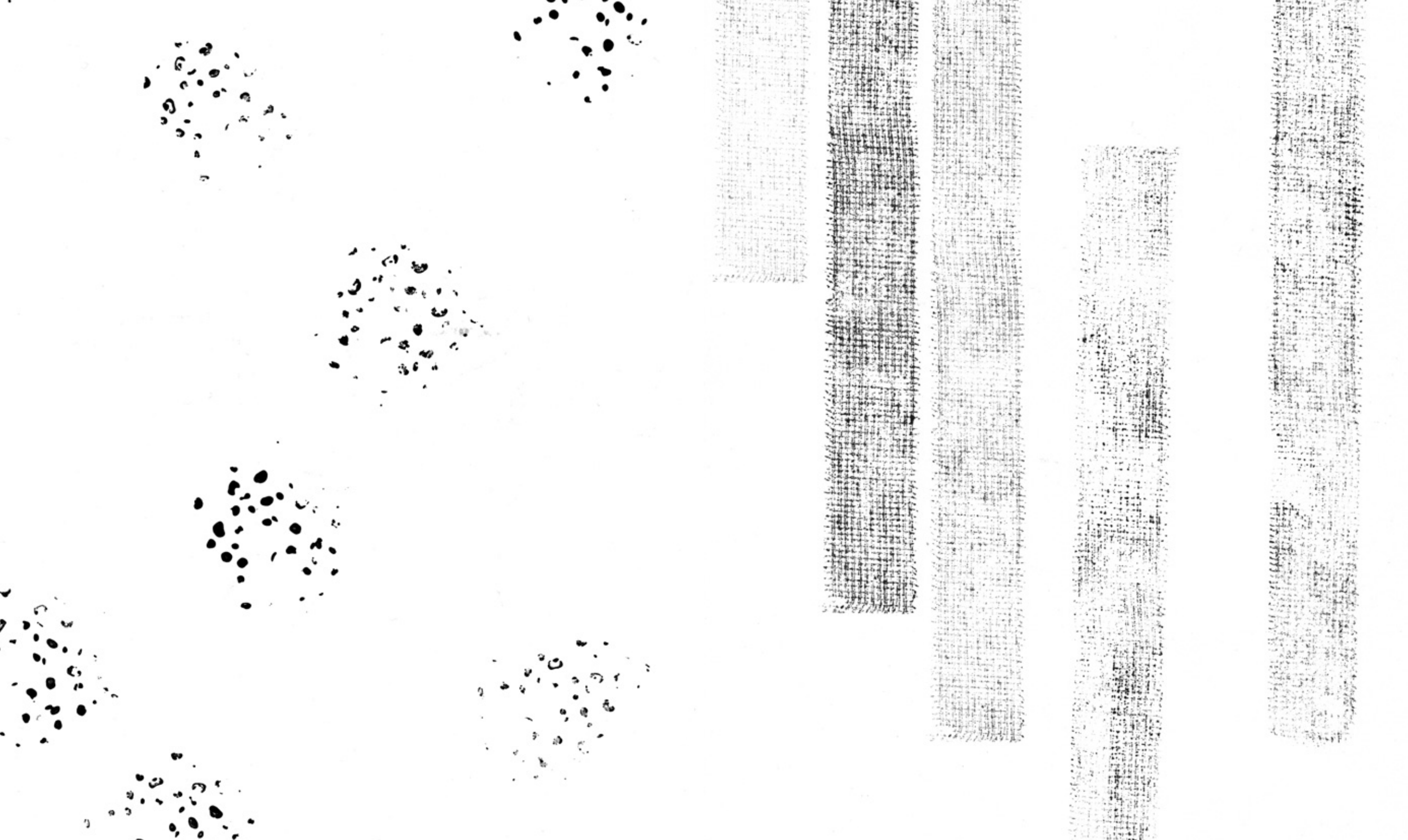




SKETCH PAPER
02/15

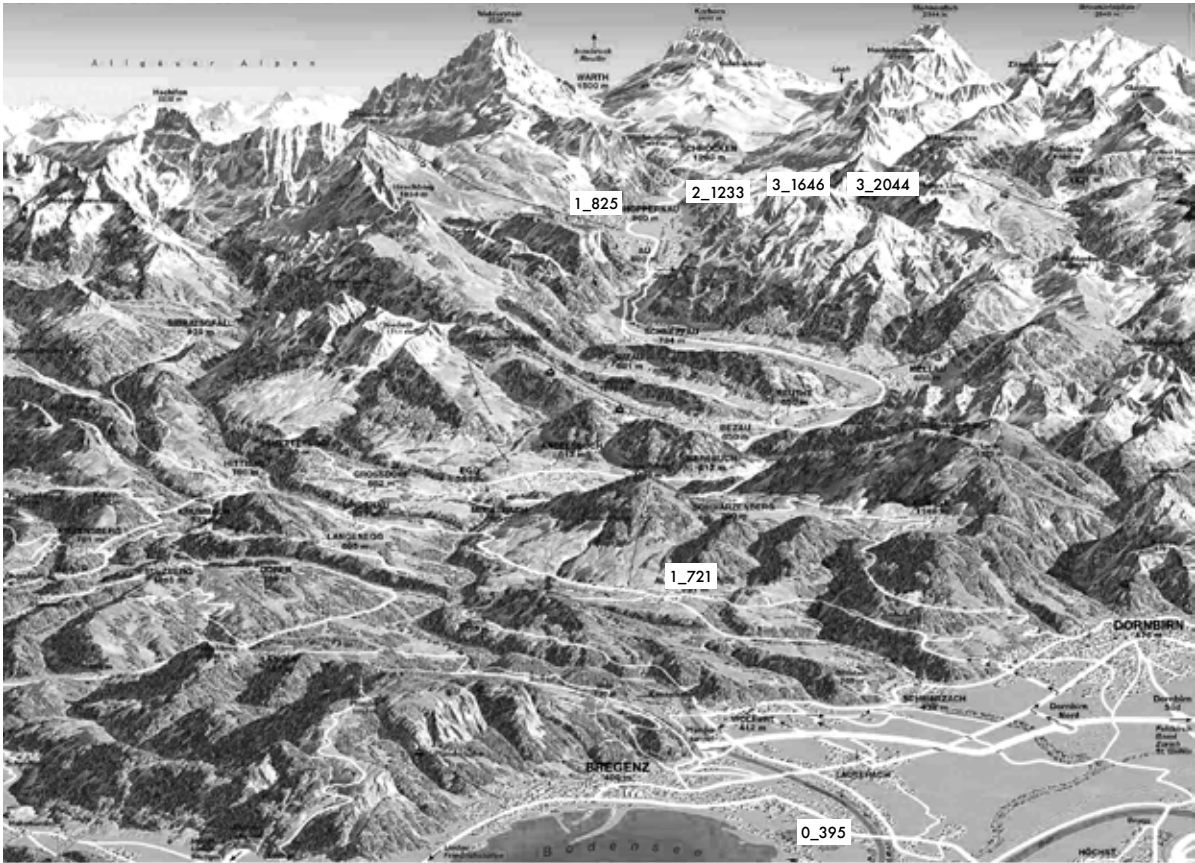






TOPOGRAPHIC LIVING

the following essay gives insight into the relationship between topography and ways of living - how the landscape of the bregenzerwald has shaped the rituals and routines of his inhabitants and how these inhabitants have shaped the valley.



The above image shows the Bregenzerwald folded into the perspective of a visitor - an observer from the outside, looking at this landscape with a panoramic gaze. It will be the map to guide us along the topographic hight lines, crossing different borders, villages, landscapes, scales and times. We will follow the river of the Bregenzerach from it´s delta in the valley of the river rhine through steep ravines into the Bregenzerwald, where we will cross several villages, until we move with our animals on to the intermediate alp – the vorsäss. We will be hiking to the alp until we finally climb the mountaintop of the Kanisfluh to look back over the alps – over europe.

> Fink, Anna: The topography of the survivor. 2014

A CULTURE OF SURVIVORS

“Peasant life is a life committed completely to survival. (...) Yet for the first time ever it is possible that the class of survivors may not survive. (...) Peasant life did not stay exactly the same throughout centuries, but the priorities and values of peasants and their strategies for survival were embedded in a tradition which outlasted any tradition in the rest of society.” [1]

In 1973 the english writer John Berger abandones the city of Geneva and moves to the remote Vallee du Giffre in the French alps. He moved there to work on his book about european migrant workers “The Seventh Man” about which he later says “Now certain things about their lives I could imagine as a writer: the city’s impact, the solitude. But I couldn’t imagine what they had left behind. What were the peasant’s values, his view of his own destiny?”. It was after this book that he made the decision to write about peasants, about what mattered to them, about the world they were living in. “I wanted to tell the peasants’ story before they were gone from the earth.” [2]

I write this paper to get a better understanding about my home – the Bregenzerwald. A region in the austrian alps where until the 20th century nearly everyone has lead a peasant life. The aim is to deepen the understanding of how the topography of the alps shaped the peasants life and furthermore about the traces they left behind, articulating their way of looking at their home, their landscape. The paper is a story about their movements in and out of the Bregenzerwald and up and down their mountains, where mobility and half-nomadic living becomes a strategy for

survival. Furthermore this story is about collective actions and intuitive decisions, and looks for their manifestations within the landscape.

A JOURNEY ALONG FOUR HIGHTLEVELS

In the introduction to his book “Into their labours” Berger states that peasant culture was seldom embodied in lasting objects [3], while I believe that in the Bregenzerwald there are many traces of this culture still visible and alive. Until today the mind of the peasant is embodied in the three level-pasture, the architecture and it’s craftsmanship, the structure of the villages and in the paths that lead through the landscape. The spirit of the survivor is kept within the intuition and experience of the farmers, comes to life in numerous folktales and toponyms, the use of certain words and a sort of common language, and finally it is commemorated in the everyday traditions and habits of village life.

This paper is looking for these embodied traces in the landscape – the topography of hight – and tells the story of the survivor concentrated on four levels:

- 0 the level of the valley where the waters come together, where cities formed and the Bregenzerwald connects to the world.
- 1 the village level - d’hoamat - home, where communal life takes place on the cleared terraces, the melting pot of collective actions.
- 2 the intermediate level – the vorsäss, considered as the second home in between the forest
- 3 the alp level, where the people collect and produce rare goods above the tree line, on a level of extremes

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This topographic anthropology of the Bregenzerwald begins where the cold river Bregenzerach merges with lake constance. The Bregenzerach is the main river of the Bregenzerwald. It’s spring is at 2400 meters hight, and runs 80 km towards the rhine valley, where at 395 m it mounds into lake constance lake of Germany, Switzerland and Austria. [4] All 24 villages of the Bregenzerwald are settlements along this river or one of it’s sidearms.

OCCUPATION OF THE BREGENZERWALD

At the foot of the highest mountain at lake constance lies Bregenz, the capital of the province of Vorarlberg, at the most western tip of Austria. It got it’s name from being the region before the passage over the ‘Arlberg’ one of the three alpine passes that splits Vorarlberg from the rest of Austria. Today it is the second smallest province, yet it has the highest population density after the capital city Vienna. [5] The Bregenzerwald itself, the forest of Bregenz, today has 30.000 inhabitants with about 35.000 cows.

It was at the end of the Bregenzerach where the occupation of this part of the alps started. After the Kelts, the Romans settled in “Brigantium” and at the higher terraces of the Rheinthal, the valley of the rhine. Already in these times (around 400 BC) settlers of the flat valley used the remote forests and alps of the Bregezerwald for hunting, cattle farming and even cheese making. After the Alemannians defeated the Romans in around 300 AD people finally settled permanently in the Bregenzerwald. [6]

PATHS OF (IN)DEPENDENCE

The movement of these first pioneers, their animals and goods, in and out of the Bregenzerwald, used to follow paths over hills and mountain ridges, through forests, open grasslands and avoiding swamps. Those were mostly open dirt paths, just wide enough for a simple carriage to pass, that were made and maintained by collective use. Every time someone followed them and left his or her footsteps and the imprints of their animals behind, the path is made.

Only in the 1780’s the first real street was built into the Bregenzerwald to expand the trading of dairy and other products. Only at the end of the 19th century normal streets were built in the whole region. [7] The first streets developed out of these old paths connecting villages and securing trading routes. Therefore at the beginning of the 20th century even the steep valleys were crossed with small wooden bridges leading over the rivers Bregenzerach and Subersach. These routes were not only important to connect places within the Bregenzerwald but also in their connection to the network of the rhine valley and the neighbouring provinces of Austria and Germany. The long and arduous trips over the simple dirt roads were the only possibility to sustain a society in these remote places where people depended on the resources that were available within the region – they were and still are the life lines of the remote Bregenzerwald.

During times of economic crisis, or during the winter seasons, thousands of people had to leave their home to earn money in the cities and in more wealthy regions in Germany. Until the early 20th century even peasant children were sent to work

in farms in upper Swabia during the summer months. Then thousands of “Schwabenkinder”, lead by priests, had to walk over the still snow covered mountains to finally be sold on a children’s market. [8]

Stories about my great grandmother and her sisters who were all women without men providing for them, were walking daily for 6 hours to go to work in the textile factories of the rhine valley. Even in winter they would walk through the darkness of the morning covered in snow freezing to their layers of clothes. Until the 20th century only a few “Wäldar” have ever left their home and have witnessed a life outside of the village structure.

INFRASTRUCTURAL REVOLUTION

Today the main routes that connect the Bregenzerwald to the outside world are new ones and have changed their appearance just like technological advantages allowed to. The development of the infrastructure, the paths, the streets, follows the affordances of the vehicles. The first of these modern routes came with the industrial revolution that brought the steam train into the woods of the Bregenzerwald.

In september 1900 the track of the Bregenzerwaldbahn was built following the valley of the Bregenzerach. [9] While the old routes were based on use by foot or animal carriage following the topography of hight, this new “machine route” follows the logic of the river, looking for the shortest distance and the least hight difference. This route started in the village Bezau and followed the river along it’s soft terraces, over stone viaducts and on narrow paths carved into the stone of the ravine

until they ended up in the flat rhine valley at the station in the city of Bregenz. While the river has always been the literal connection between the valley and the city, this was the first path made of steel and stone, just like the machine it was built for and the ravine it was running through. This 35km long trip took hours of sitting on wooden benches and every couple of years landslides, mudflows or floods caused turbulences on the trip and parts had to be rebuilt again and again.

For some of them it was the first time, and only possibility to visit the city for a couple of hours. Not just people, but also goods could be transported in a completely new efficiency, and wood logs that used to be floated down the river to the rhine valley, now arrived there safely by train. A counting in the 60’s showed that more then a thousand people used this train every day. This steam train revolutionized the mobility of the Bregenzerwälder for more then half of a century until it was closed down in 1980 due to the obsolete state of the trains and the tracks. This was the end of the first public transport system that connected the Bregenzerwald to the urban region.

Today the track is being renovated as a bike path, while some of it is a beautiful ruin used as an illegal hiking route along the river. Only in the early 90’s a public bus system was able to replace the capacity of the Bregenzerwaldbahn to transport commuters, pupils, visitors and tourists in and out of the Bregenzerwald. During the last century and the drastic change in mobility the Bregenzerwald was able to expand it’s economic horizon from purely forestry and agricultural based towards tourism, craftsmanship and vital three-level pasture. With the increase in mobility through

public and individual traffic, work migration shifted towards commuting and the direct and daily relationship between the Bregenzerwald and the rhine valley is increasing immensely - by the year 2020 the austrian ecology institute fore spells 60% more commuters than in 2013. [10]

TRANSITION

Even though the old routes in and out of the Bregenzerwald shifted their positions and transformed their , they tell a story of exhausting journeys and until today they host a sensational transition between the urban valley and the rural mountains. While in the old days this transition was slow and meandering through different landscape spaces and hight levels, today it is getting more and more gradual, as straight as possible through the steadily rise in hight. The Bregenzerwaldbahn was the first of these `straight´routes following the natural path of the water, from its source to it’s mound. Since 1838 the main street leading into the Bregenzerwald is the Schwarzach Tobel, a narrow serpentine street meandering through an uninhabited ravine of water, stone and dark forest. [11] This rough transition landscape brings us to the first stop on the hight level of the village – Alberschwende, my hometown.

1_721

Here in Alberschwende at 721 meters above sea level we will learn more about the occupation of the Bregenzerwald, how settlement took place and about how ownership structured the landscape.

BUILDING VILLAGES

The first settlers in Vorarlberg, descendants of the Alemannians, lived in “Markgenossenschaften”, small closed communities with houses close to each other and collective use of the fields and sharing of the crops. Only the small gardens that were called “Egart” were for private use. The communal fields were called “Allmende” and existed until a couple of centuries ago until the common ground was split up and became property of different owners. This was a widespread system of communal living that was brought to Vorarlberg by the occupation of the Alemannians. At first Alberschwende was used by these people from the rhine valley for seasonal alp pasture, when at some point between 500 and 1000 AC they decided to stay and settle. Around 1000 AC the entire Bregenzerwald was the property of the different monastarys such as Mehrerau Bregenz or Stift St. Gallen in Switzerland. [12] To expand their property they started to clear parts of the open deciduous forests to win new agricultural land and for occupation. These new settlements got the names of their owners and when more and more people became interested in these newly available areas, also the rich counts of Bregenz gained interest and started to claim land. They kept the nicest parts for themselves, built a small church in the village center and split the rest of the area in even parts. The parts were measured in units of

“Huben” that had a size of 60 “winterloads”. One winterload was the amount of hay that was needed for one cow to get through the winter. [13]

So in the case of Alberschwende these independent bigger farms and estates spread over the shallow clearings and finally grew together into a village. These settlements typical for the whole of the Bregenzerwald are called scattered settlements with a knot or starlike spread along the routes and roads that connected the center to other parts and villages. Just like this, nearly all the villages of the Bregenzerwald came into being as an accumulation of people and their houses, slowly densifying around cores, into what we call a village today. [14]

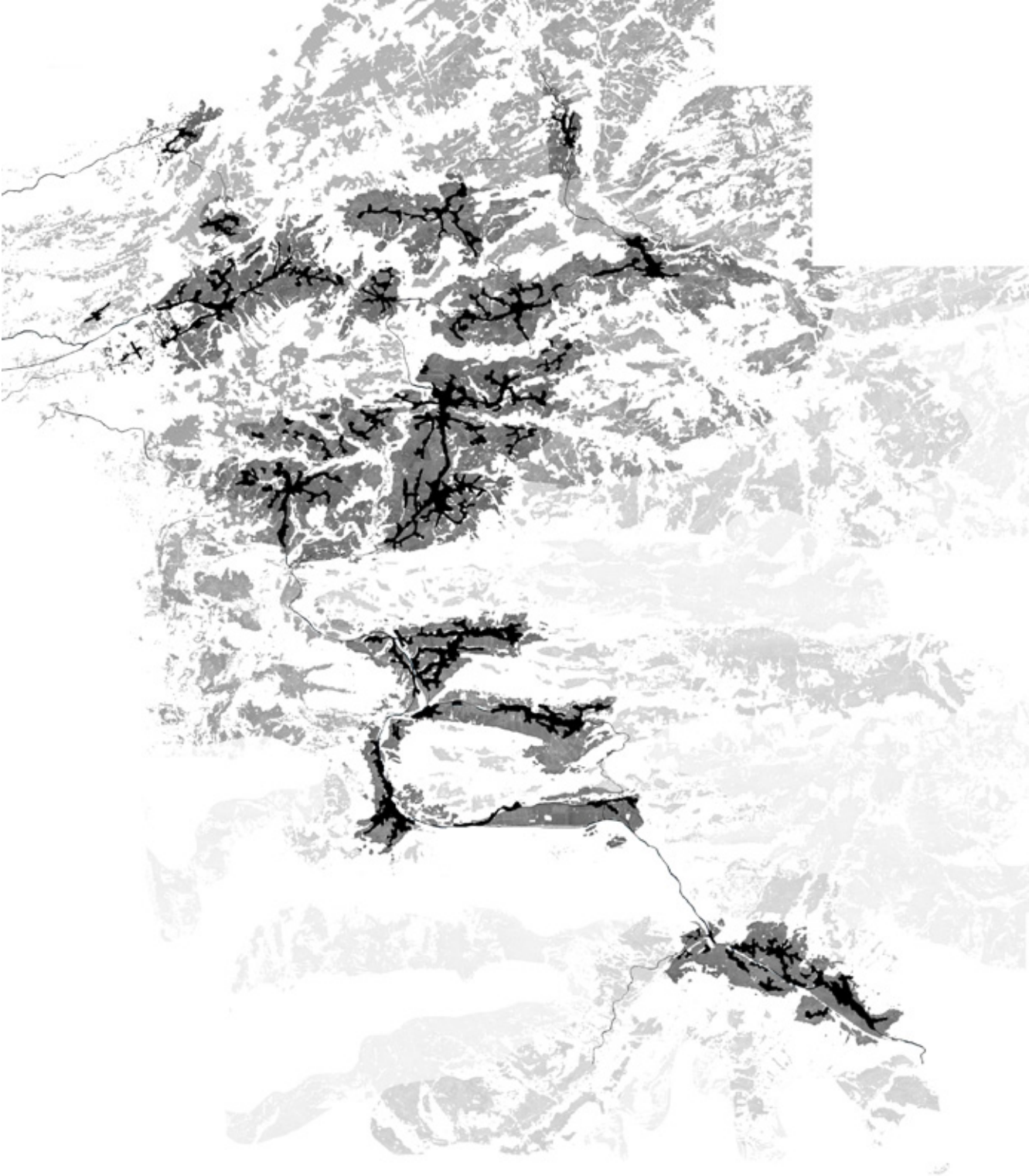
COMMONS IN TRANSFORMATION

In Alberschwende we can read that the concept of the Allmende as the center of the village slowly transformed from a collective farm ground into a common ground in the village center, a void for traditional festivities and collective actions. What used to be a common, later became one of the view public spaces in the village. In Alberschwende the two main public spaces were the church square and an empty grass field along the main street. For example, once a year, in the second week of september, the ‘Alpabtrieb’ would stop all traffic towards Alberschwende for many hours. It is the homecoming of the cattle from the alps where they have stayed all summer. If all animals endured the summer safely and none of them died, the farmers would decorate them with flowers, pine branches and heavy bells and lead them from the alp over the paths and streets into the village. The grass field in the village would be the place where the owners (that remain in the village during summer) would

take over the animals from their employees and bring them back to their home stable. Nowadays most animals are brought back with transporters and only a few still walk the long distances back home. Not just the traditions start to change or sometimes disappear, also this open void is now filled with a big supermarket and a parking lot.

> map showing the villages of the bregenzerwald and the mountainlandscape divided in the three hightlevels:

- darkgrey: the village
- medium grey: the vorsäss
- light grey: the alp



825

We are leaving Alberschwende behing and are moving on towards Au/Schoppernau, two villages that belong to the area of the rear forest – the “Hinterwald” where the village level is on 825 meter above adriatic sea level. Here we will get to know more about the three level-pasture of the Bregenzerwald, the yearly rhythm of the pasture farmer and the archetype of the Wälderhaus that we can find all over the region and variations of it on all hight levels.

THE THREE LEVEL PASTURE

Ever since the alps have been populated in 6000 BC there have been two forms of agricultural use that are both (partly) dependant on the use of different hight levels: transhumance „on the top“ and subsistence farming „on the bottom“. While the subsistence farming developed into a complex system of arable farming and sometimes in combination with „Almwirtschaft“ (alpine dairy), transhumance didn´t change much until the 20th century. All across the alps pastoralism and the use of different hight levels have been the base for population and have played an important role in the enlargement of the living space in middle europe. [15]

Before the appearance of the alpine dairy, the first farmers that settled permanently in the Bregenzerwald grew mostly crops and did less dairy farming. They were employees of their count and so most farmers were managing the fields collectively to feed their families and give interests to their counts. How much of their upbringing they had to deliver to the counts was measured in ´days´- good days, and less good days. That was

a measurement to evaluate the yield made in one day, or on not good soil – on a bad day. On better valley sites the farmers used the cultivation method of the three field crop rotation, where a field grows two different crops in two years and is lies fallow in the third. From the 14th until the 17th century climate change led to decrease in crop agriculture, while around 1750 new vegetables like potatoes and mays were available and helped to prevent famine.

Since 1650 the knowledge and skill of fat-cheese-dairy was brought to the Bregenzerwald from Switzerland, so cattle farming and alpine pasture gained importance. [16] Since 1860 crop agriculture decreased immensely and is now completely replaced by dairy farming. [17] In the 18th and beginning of the 19th century the establishment of fat-cheese-dairy led to a time of glory for the „Stufenwirtschaft“ (level pasture) until the development of communal dairy production on the village level in the second half of the 19th century lead to an immense drop. Ever since only Switzerland, parts of Austria, Southern Tyrol, Slovenia and Southern Bavaria were able to maintain most of their „Stufenwirtschaft“.

In the french alps the alpine agricultural systems have been struggling until they nearly disappeared in the 70´s due to a centralistic political approach. In Italy due to immense emigration the three or more level pasture has lost it´s significance completely. Only in Switzerland (more specifically in Berner Oberland, Wallis and Graubünden) and Austria the multilevel pasture could sustain itself in a vital manner due to societal and political acceptance and their financial, subsidiary consequences. This is why the three-level pasture of the Bregenzerwald is considered quite special

within the range of the alps and their agricultural identities. [18] Because 4/5 of the total surface of Vorarlberg is mountainous, the use of the vorsäss and alpine level was necessary for most farmers to sustain. Until today in the Bregenzerwald still nearly 80% of the farmers rely on the use of the higher levels. [19] After 1955 a lot of small farmers disappeared and so more farmland was available for the ones left. This was when some farmers it was possible to stop using the higher levels and transform to a one- or two level-pasture.

The movement along those levels - village level – the home, the vorsäss – middle level and the alp – the alpine level - follows the seasonal cycle for meadow use and pasture. That means that traditionally the whole farm family, or a part of them, together with all their animals follow the rhythm of the season according to the most efficient use of food resources for their animals. This results in a half-nomadic life style that is accommodated by independent buildings on each level facilitating all functions needed for the specific tasks executed on that level in that season. [20]

THE RYTHM OF THE PEASANT

The scheme shows the seasonal movement of the farmers, their family and animals oscillating between the village level and the alpine level. This cycle is based on the optimal seasonal use for pasture and hay yielding. While the farmer chooses the exact date of the moving himself according to the actual weather and field circumstances, in alp-collectives the farmers have to move on a set date regulated in strict documents, that are often hundreds of years old.

In april the animals leave the home stable and are sent onto the village meadows. Between half may and beginning of july the farmer and sometimes his family move with the animals to the vorsäss, where they will remain four about four weeks. Here cattle and milk cows are mixed and in collective vorsässe the milk would often be processed at the place. When the animals move on the meadows are used for hay yielding during the summer, the last cut would be 24th august.

At the beginning of july (usually 8th of july for alp-collectives) the animals move to the alps. In most alp-collectives the farmer then moves back home to the village level while his animals are taken care of by alp employees. Often the animals are split up so the cattle is sent to cattle alps while the milk cows are sent to dairy alps (with own sennereien – dairy kitchens). Private alps today are often taken care of from without the home level, so the farmer or a familymember moves up and down daily. Some farmers have high-alps, a fourth hight level, where the animals are sent to during the whole of august.

Around 15th of september the animals move back to the vorsäss where they stay another three weeks to graze. Then they move on to the home meadows for the autumn pasture. After that some families would move back up to the vorsäss for a couple of more weeks until the first snow falls (so the home hay yield could be prolonged). [22]

How long the animals would remain on the Vorsäss-level before they went back home to the valley was dependant on the weather cycle and on the hay situation on the village level. This ´moving back´ mostly took place in december, sometimes even in january. [23]

INTUITION

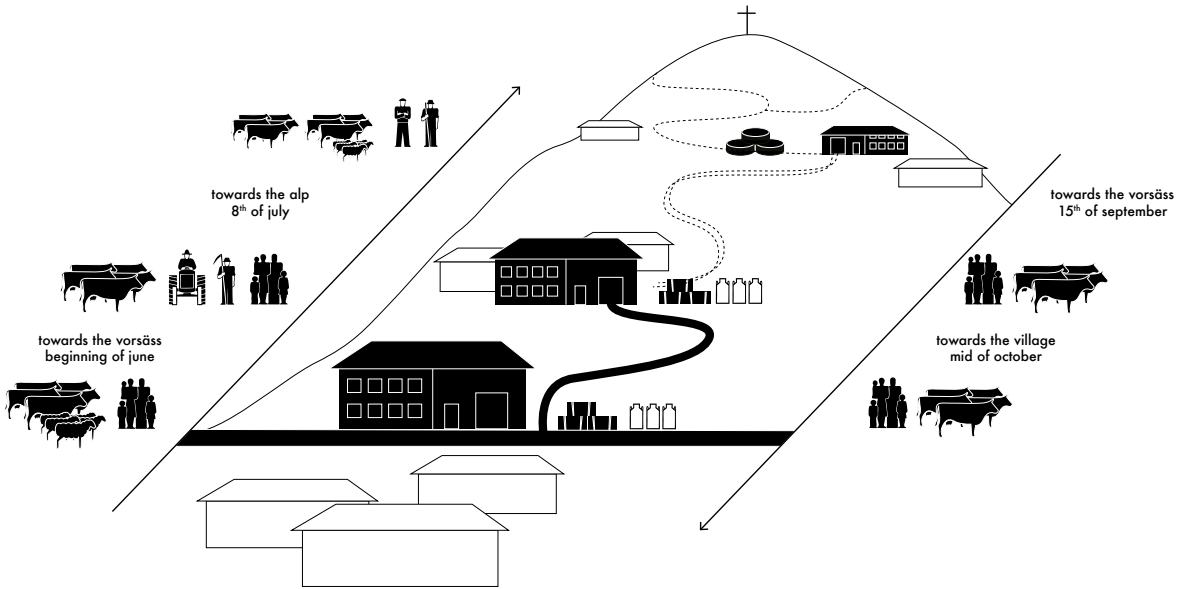
“Viele Bauern hatten die ganze Nacht nicht ruhig schlafen können, denn immer wieder hatte es sie aus dem Bett ans Fenster getrieben, um zu sehen, was der Nebel mache. Und nun, als man noch bei Licht den Kaffee trank, erzählten sie genau, wie der Himmel jede Stunde ausgesehen, bis endlich um zwei Uhr der letzte Nebel über die Berge hinausgezogen sei.” [24]

Until today a good farmer is the one that picks the right day and hour to cut the grass and bring in the hay, to send his animals to a different meadow or displace his household to a different level. Generations of experience, tacit knowledge and personal intuition lead to the decisions a farmer needs to take every season. Once taken they will influence the success of his yield and the dairy production of the coming year. A wrong interpretation of the clouds, the wind and the colour of the grass can ruin an entire cut.

“His (the peasants) observation does not allow the slightest sign of change to pass unnoticed, and his debt magnifies the real or imagined threat of a great part of what he observes.” [25]

Just as farmers making decisions based on a fine complex of intuition, experience and tradition also other craftsman like butchers and especially woodcutters rely on the precision of time. It is fascinating how every product - milk, cheese, meat and wood has it’s own, intrinsic time, where the essence of quality can be caught within a traditional chronology of decisions. The cutting and processing of wood is an old and important

craftsmanship of the Bregenzerwald and is the base for the world famous traditional wood architecture. From the planting, to the felling, the sawing and the drying process every moment follows traditional rules that are mostly based on the moon calender. That means that the date of felling is set on the day with shortest distance of the sun, the proximity of the new moon and the astrological sign. At the beginning of winter the enduser, for example the carpenter is walking through the forest with the wood farmer to have a look at his trees and choose the best exemplar by eye and ear. After the felling the wood is set away for rest to age and transform from hydrous living to dry substance put to rest. Every piece of wood, before it ends up at a building site or in a workshop, gets a unique mark, documenting these dates in special signature, so the user will know the exact history of the piece of wood and can be sure that is the right one for it’s purpose. [26]



> scheme showing the seasonal movement date of animals and people to the different hight levels [21]

>> a farmer on the move towards the alp

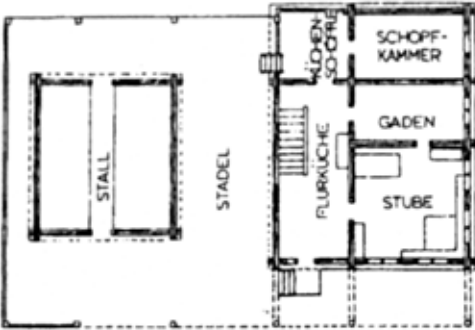
THE BREGENZERWÄLDERHAUS – AN
ARCHETYPE

This craftsmanship of woodcutters, carpenters and architects is spread all over Vorarlberg, while the Bregenzerwald until today is one of the best maintained wood building regions in europe. All over the alps wood architecture is dominant because of wood being the best resource and having a great isolation capacity. The traditional house of the Bregenzerwald is a so called “Einhof”, a building that has stables, work rooms and living rooms under one roof. It started as a primitive building with one room, and throughout centuries the functions more and more split and differentiated in space and construction, but remaining under one roof. Until today most farm buildings resemble this transforming archetype that today resembles the house of the late 19th century when farming methods were modernized. Even modern architecture, which has no agricultural context anymore, continues constructional, material and spatial principles of the old farmhouses. [27]



> a typical setting of
bregenzerwälderhäuser in
schnepfau

>> schematic drawings of
one of oldest forms of the
bregenzerwälderhaus -
more than 70% of the house is
not heated; the living space of the
family has the oven at the center



The traditional wlderhaus is three houses under one roof shown as a double partition along the long side of the building. The different use is reflected in the application of wood on the faades, that shows the scale and aesthetic of the use: the delicate, representative farmers home on the front, and the coarse stable and workspace in the back. Stable and work building at the backside of the house often have no windows but big doors for the machines to enter and vertical wooden slats as facade and door material. The front part of the house is the living part, with small regular windows on the representative short side and a “Schopf” - an interior balcony/veranda, on the long side. This housing part often has fine ornaments on the crest with the constructive beams under the canopy and the typical “Schindeln” - fine wooden slats, nailed on top of each other creating a scaly skin. All buildings have a stoney basement with a cool cellar under the housing unit, often painted white. Most building relate to topography and exposition – some buildings positioned within a slope so they could have a raised approach road to the hay stack on the first floor. Some buildings, especially little hay barns out in the meadows have wooden facades reacting to the exposition with different wood types (deciduous or pine) and different claddings (slats or “Schindeln”).

> every facade has it´s own wood adaptation according to function and exposure; ornamentation decreases the visibility of weathering and the fragmented character allows for small scale adaptation throughout generations



Especially remarkable is the “Schopf” which can be described as an outside room between veranda and balcony depending on it’s vertical position. It can be opened or closed with big wooden hatches and serves as a balcony in summer, a warm intermediate in spring and autumn and as refrigerator in winter. In the past it was often used to dry or cool meat, fruit and herbs, to hang the wash or simply as an extension of the living room, which it is until today.

The interior of the wälderhaus is often entirely made of wood, has low ceilings and small window openings to enhance the warmth balance. The heart of the house was the living room with the tiled stove with the small bench attached to it. The tiled stove was heated from within the kitchen where it was connected to the cooking oven. It was the only heating element to heat the whole house which reinforces the importance of the living room as the only heated room for socializing.

Besides church and the “Gasthaus” (simple guesthouse and pub in the village) the private living room had an important function for public life. Until today people would use the phrase “Zur Stubat go” (going to someones living room) for visiting a neighbour. This comes from the tradition that young men could only see their loved ones in the supervised context of the girl’s family living room. Then the boy and girl were allowed to sit next to each other on the “canapé” (a handcrafted wooden sofa) while the grandmother of the girl would sit at the table watching over the teenagers conversation like a hawk. While this tradition is long gone a restored version of the “canapé”, as a witness of the most important social interactions of the private space, can still be found in most households since it was a traditional wedding gift for women.



> “schopf” - a traditional balcony-like room where exterior and interior merge

>> the woodfired oven at the center of the floorplan creating a gradient of heat

2_1233

Mai is coming and we have to say goodbye to the cosy living room and lead our animals out of the village and follow narrow paths uphill through the forest, until we reach a clearing on a terrace with the still snow covered mountain tips in the backdrop. We move on to the vorsäss, where we get to know more about the organisation of the three level-pasture and the half-nomadic way of life that it used to afford.

THE SECOND HOME

While most nomads all over the world have mobile homes the half-nomadic life of the three level-pasture has it’s own building on every level. These are all based on the archetype of the Wälderhaus and are mostly simplified variations of it, yet they offer the full functionality of a home, a stable and a workplace.

One might ask themselves how a simple farmer could afford to build 3 houses for his family and his animals. The answer is that the building process often spread over generations, the houses are inherited and every generation improves it or updates it to his or her standard. Often the alp was less luxurious than the home and less comfort was accepted due to it’s temporality. The vorsäss though was a fully furnished second household, sometimes less representative but just as comfortable as the village home. Some collective vorsässe developed out of former higher village parts on shallow terraces. [28]

Very often collective vorsässe have the character of small second villages. Just like on the village

level the settlement is a scattered accumulation of big farmhouses that resemble the “home”. Some of these vorsäss villages had more then 20 buildings and some like Schönebach, which is still the biggest vorsäss of the Bregenzerwald (260 ha), already in 1837 had 28 farmhouses, 1 guesthouse, 1 sawmill, and 1 chapel. Later a lot or vorsässe also had their own collective dairy kitchen, so the milk could be processed immediately. For a couple of weeks a year this assembly of buildings would become a fully functioning village with a close community of working members. Until the 60’s it was traditional to move to the vorsäss during autumn because moving the hay to the village level would be impossible. Especially during this calmer time the social interactions created a very warm and special atmosphere which made the vorsäss into a beautiful nostalgic place for a lot of the older generations. [29]

Since after the second world war the mobility and economic possibilities has changed so drastically also the standard of the houses changed and a lot of the nomadic structures disappeared or transformed to daily commuting. Many changed the farming patterns and adapted them to their improved situation. Instead of moving entirely to the vorsäss, it was now possible to drive there by car every day and send the milk daily to the cheese maker in the valley.

> santification with ritual fire of the new vorsäss chapel of the collective Armengemach vorsäss in Schoppernau, 1961

>> vorsässvillage Vorderhopfreben in Schoppernau, in the backdrop the ridge of the Diedamskopf



With a rise in living standards it would also become impossible to establish the same comfort on all three levels, therefore the investments were focussed on the home. The farmer’s family was more bound to the village level due to secondary jobs and the children’s education. The animals did not need daily surveillance any more because of electric fence systems and due to these technological improvements the same work could be done by less people, often the farmer on his own. Also in the old days it was usual that visitors are welcome on the vorsäss as long as they would help with the daily tasks like milking and haying. Since the 50’s many huts became vacant and were then rented to (mostly german) tourists or family members seeking a vacation. Ever since the touristic value of these houses is an important factor contributing to the completeness of the village structure on the vorsäss level. [30]

THE STRUCUTRE OF THE LANDSCAPE

In total the Bregenzerwald has 270 vorsässe and over 400 alps (of which 100 are dairy alps). Due to topographic and geographical conditions the dreistufenwirtschaft has been partly or entirely collectively organized. That means that independent farmers would share their ground for collective use, so all yields and products were gained collectively and then split according to the number of animals and the square meters of ground a farmer would own. While the good meadows were reserved for hay winning to feed the cows, the cattle on the village level was kept on mostly collective meadows. In some villages it was impossible to split up all the meadows by ownership through the use of wooden fences so the cattle would walk around freely and

the meadows were used collectively. When the electric fence was invented this collective system mostly disappeared, but also solved a lot of conflicts that arose between the farmers. Because driving the cattle from the stables to the meadows and back every day for milking was too time consuming, farmers built small milking stables in the meadows. In the last century though the government encouraged collective stables for this purpose. Also the technical improvement of retaining constructions to prevent mudflows and avalanches and flood preventing measurements along riverbeds, made it possible to expand towards steeper and more remote meadows. [31]

An important factor for the appearance of the cultural landscape on the village level was the land consolidation that was started around 1750, when national governance was also reaching the Bregenzerwald. Through generations of inheritance the agricultural landscape was scattered into small pieces of ownership. Between 1750 and 1850 all properties and plots were measured, documented by size and owner and then, in a highly complicated process, redistributed in connected entities for each owner. What used to be a scattered and fragmented, small scale landscape, was now measured, certified and restructured. Sometimes this led to major conflicts between the owners, since it also included right of way, fences, trees, water sources and sometimes even buildings. [32]

> kataster of Au
the small dense plots are the villages, the elongated narrow plots are the forests running up the mountain, the big plots are the collective surfaces of the high mountain Kanisfluh (below) - where farmers cooperatives are gathering hay in summer



COLLECTIVE ORGANISATION

These topographic and geographic differences show in the dominance of farm collectives (on vorsäss and alp) in the Hinterwald (17.000 ha), while in the Vorderwald nearly all alps are private (6.000 ha). In the lower areas of the Vorderwald the vorsäss level is mostly absent and less farmers use all three levels. The Hinterwald lies much higher than the Vorderwald (600-1000) and offers the possibility to optimize farming by the use of all three levels – from 800 to 2000m. This split in dominating private organisations in the Vorderwald is explained through the geographical proximity to germany: there the land consolation was more present and stricter, so a lot of collectively used pasture was privatized. The border of this very strict land consolation and the split in private and collective is the river Subersach. [33]

This domination of alpine collectives might also be the reason why the three-level pasture is still functioning in the Bregenzerwald in a traditional manner since collectives are mostly slower and less adaptive to change, while private farmers react faster to changes in the agricultural developments. Yet today most vorsässe are private (through area is nearly even 1000 ha private, 840ha collective), while the balance in amount between private and collective alps is even. [34]

In parts where the land consolation did not take place collective use of village meadows often stopped due to more and more conflicts arising. In most villages it was a normal practice that individual owners would share their meadows for collective pasture during the summer and autumn period also on the village level. Stories tell of farmers exploiting the collective by fertilizing their

parts earlier so the cows would not graze his land anymore, while the next year these parts would be more yielding then the ones of his neighbours that waited until the “corporate moment”. This example shows well how precarious the relationship between ownership and use is. Collective use has different meanings on private ground or on commons. [35]

As an example of a collective and privately organized vorsäss we will have a look at the vorsäss collective at Ahornen in Au. It is 169 ha big and stretches from 1100 to 1900 meters hight, which is just as high as other alp levels. Ahornen is used independent from the village. While in 1955 22 people worked in Ahornen, 1986 it was just 12 employees haying and looking after the animals, while the milk is sent to the village via a narrow street possible for a tractor. In total the vorsäss village has 16 farm buildings and 12 buildings that are used by tourists. What is special about Ahornen is that it shows a topographic split in two parts that are also differently organized. The area to the north-east of the little stream is being mowed to yield hay one to three times a year with machines, called Berggut, not vorsäss. That means that this part is split in private parcels and used by the farmers individually according to ownership (like they do on the village level). The area south-west is entirely pasture area with collective use and maintenance (four weeks in spring, two weeks in fall, in total about 42 days). [36]



3_1646

It is the 8th of july, the celebration of Saint Kilian, and the farmer and his family say goodbye to their animals and send them with the team of „Älplar“ (alpine employees) towards the alp high above tree level. Now the cattle will be split in milk cows that go to dairy alps and the other cows (young cows that have not been a mother yet, male cows and one and two year old calves). The farmer and his family will go back to their „Hoamat“ in the village to mow their fields and care for their hay yield. Even though we came up here by car and brought our favourite cereal and lemonade, there is no hot shower in the morning and the radio only works with the soup pan touching the antenna. The „Älplar“ are mostly men, often loners that do not mind to endure the heat of summer closer to the sun and further away from their village comfort. Up here at 1646 meters the circumstances change, life is concentrated to the most important – the cow and her milk.

Life on the alp is also beautifully described in Arno Camenisch’s “Sez Ner” (2010), where the “Älplar” have no names but every animal does. It is a calm and simple place, where conversations are limited to the minimum, food is basic and the forces of nature structure the days. Camenisch refers to the “Älplar” as “the cheese maker” that is on top of the alpine hirarchy, his helper, “the two cowboys” who are in charge of the safety of all the cattle and “the pig herder” chasing the pigs up and down the meadows and feeding them with the whey, a highly nutritious byproduct of the cheese makers.

A lot of Bregenzerwald’s farmers still give names to their cows, they are the same names since generations. In his story “Geschichte einer Kuh von A bis Z” Franz Michael Felder (1866) describes how the cow is at the center of so many conversations between farmers. They would talk about the day and astrological sign the cow was born at, describe the appearance and age of the mother cow, and retell all the comments of their wife’s, their sisters and their neighbours about the newborn calf. He made an inventory of all the classical cow names and their origin – a transcript of the cow code: “Blaß” for a cow with a white spot on it’s forehead, “Gauld” for one that does not give milk anymore, “Grisol” for a black and white one, “Ahle” - grandmother - for an old cow , “Huokuo” for one that is kept in the village during the summer, “Kratto” for an old, skinny cow and “Muttlat” for one without horns. The stables would have (and some still do) little chalkboards above every cow’s place to write their names on to. Wether a cow should have horn or not is still a philosophical discussion amongst farmers, some think it’s dangerous while others believe it is taking away a cows dignity.

While today the interior of the cheese kitchen has adapted to hygiene regulations and the overall standard rose, the alp is still the level which appears to be the most remote, where the feeling of the half nomad’s environment is the most present. Where the strategies of survival are the most tangible.



2044

The sun is at it’s highest point when we start hiking away from the alp hut moving closer to the mountaintop in the distance. We follow the routes of the herders, along the tiny terraces the cows have shaped with their feet throughout decades and start meandering steadily towards the cloudy sky above us. We look back over the valley we come from and the journey of our last weeks, that soon will repeat itself backwards towards the village and the darker winter period.

“The peasant is unprotected. Each day a peasant experiences more change more closely than any other class. Some of these changes, like those of the seasons or like the process of ageing and failing energy, are foreseeable; many – like the weather from one day to the next, like a cow choking to death on a potato, like lightning, like rains which come too early or too late, like fog that kills the blossom, like the continually evolving demands of those who extract the surplus, like an epidemic, like locusts – are unpredictable.” [37]

What is going to change in the Bregenzerwald seems predictable – just like everywhere else in the alps this region is slowly urbanizing, becoming more mobile, older and probably also less agricultural. [38] Standing up there on the mountaintop, with my back leaning against the big metal cross, looking out over the Bregenzerwald, Vorarlberg, Europe I ask myself what we can inherit from our ancestor, the peasant? From people that rely on animals and the landscape that feeds them. From their movement led by the cycle of the seasons and their built and unbuilt collective strategies to expand their opportunities. How

could this heritage be the base for a vital future Bregenzerwald innovating it’s authenticity?

“To dismiss peasant experience as belonging to the past, as having no relevance to modern life, to imagine that the thousands of years of peasant culture leave no heritage for the future – simply because it was seldom embodied in lasting objects – to continue to maintain, as has been maintained for centuries, that peasant experience is marginal to civilisation, is to deny the value of too much history and too many lives. No line of exclusion can be drawn across history in that matter, as if it were a line across a closed bank account.” [39]

For my final project I want to think about the new layers the future generation of the “Wäldar” can add to the topography of the survivor, how they can make new traces through the landscape of his heritage that will be able to keep the authenticity of our “hoamat”.

How can the villages of the Bregenzerwald transform and adapt to the new mobility, changing demographics and progressive agricultural landscapes?

Is it possible to embed new cultures of transition within these landscapes to generate a new type of rurality? A rurality that is preventing urbanisation in space while expanding possibilities within the social?

How can this new rural landscape become a hybrid between the ephemeral, rhythmic, holistic and nomadic of the inheritance of the alpine peasant and his village, and the progressive, adaptive, fluid and specific of the metropolitan “Weltmensch” and his cities?



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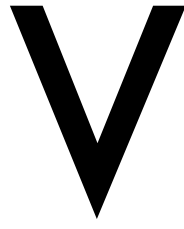
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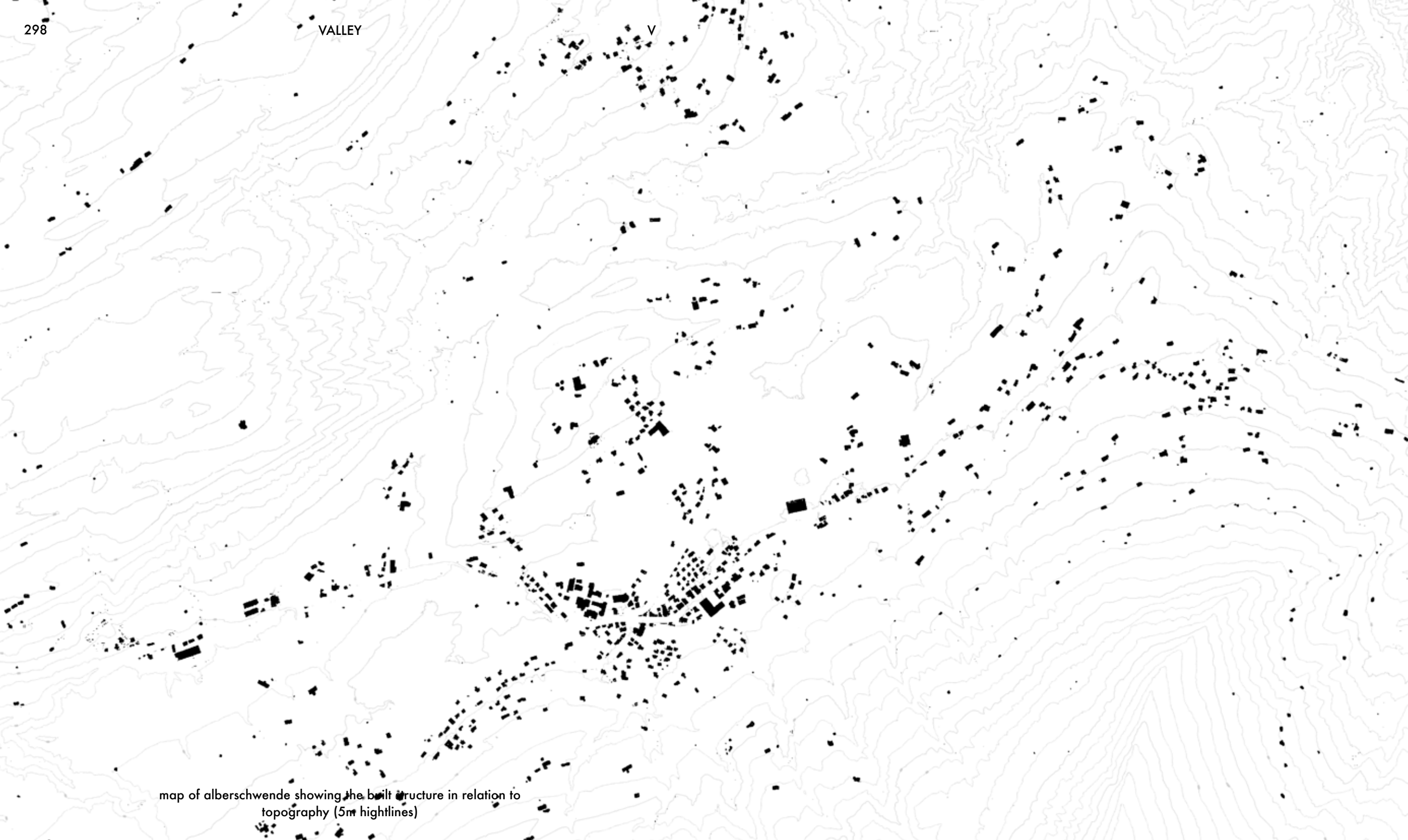
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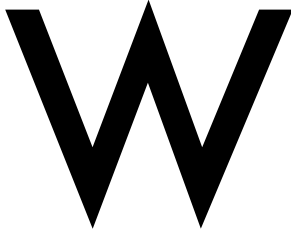
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> drawing all the villages of the
bregenzerwald to reveal the
valley



map of alberschwende showing the built structure in relation to
topography (5m highlines)



WATER

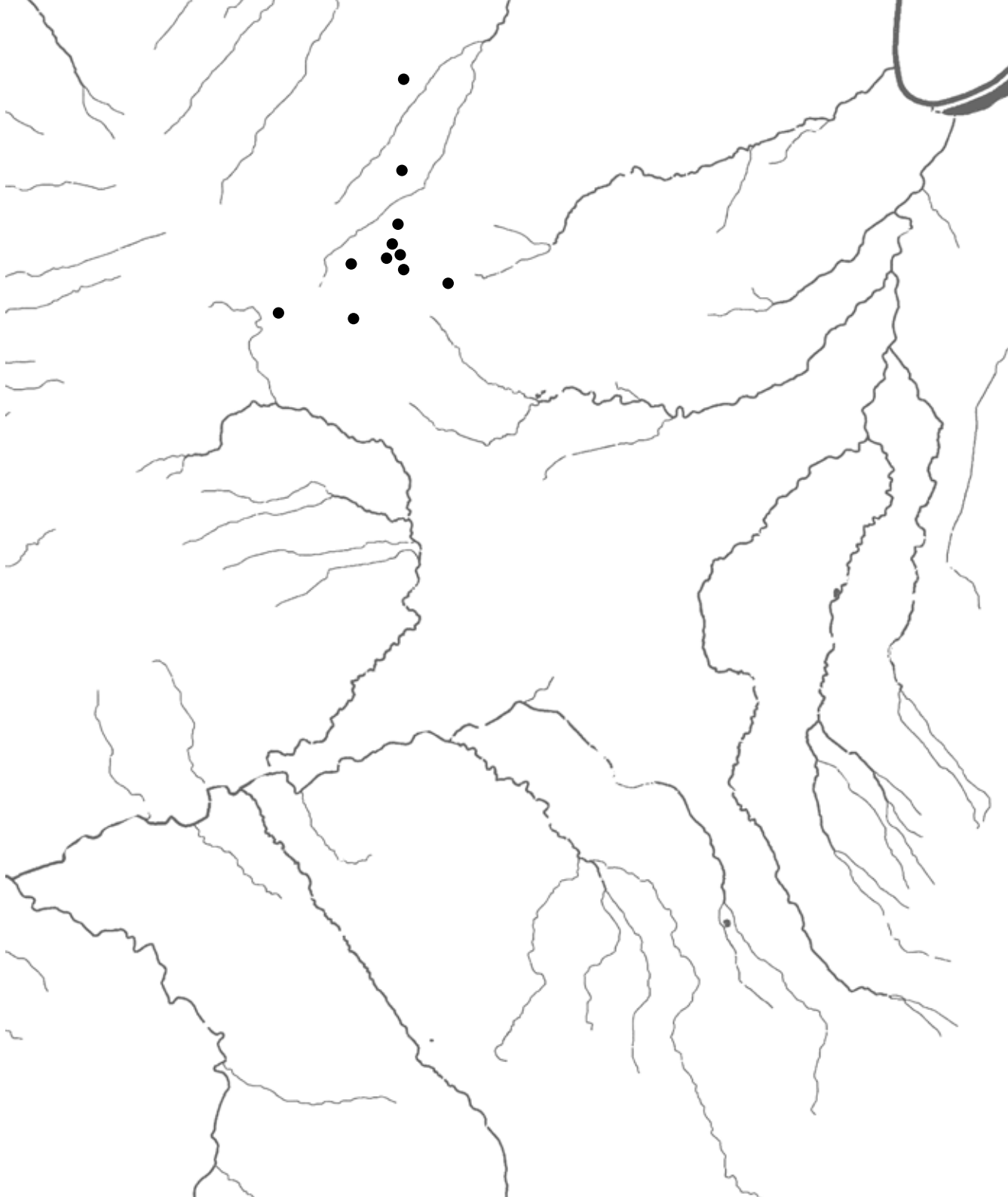
water and ice are the main forces shaping the geomorphology of the bregenzerwald. surface water runs off the mountain towards the bottom of the valley - growing from small spring to stream to creek to river. carrying sediments from the mountains towards the lake and finally ending up in the sea.

the occupation of the valley is a direct reflection of the water locations - avoiding streaming water and accumulating around well water. the first settlements occurred where well water could be caught and distributed. the amount of houses and families living around these wells was dictated by the amount of water a well would carry around the year. therefore wells are often in collective ownership. people then own rights the use of this water i.e. my grandfather owning 1/10 of a well shared with 4 neighbour families.

until today wells are found by specialists using dowsing rods - feeling the underground water flows.

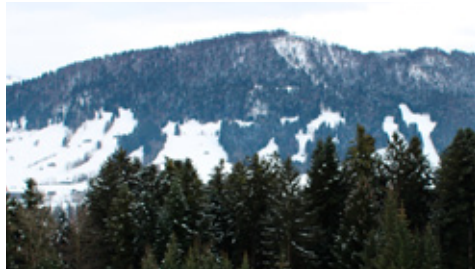
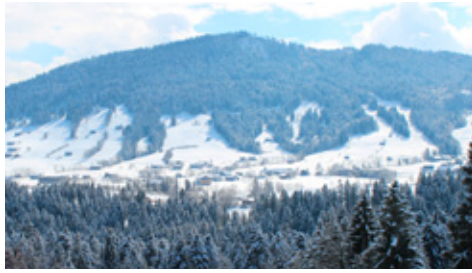
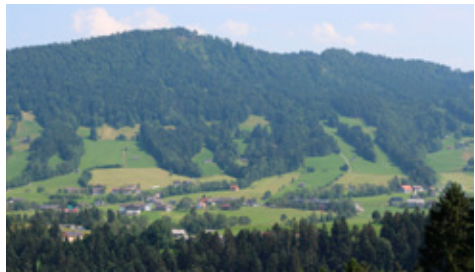
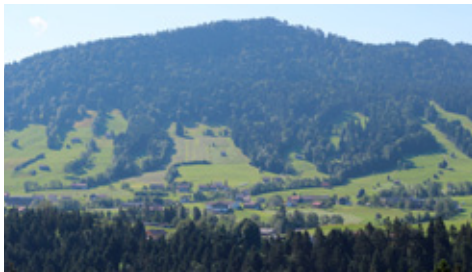
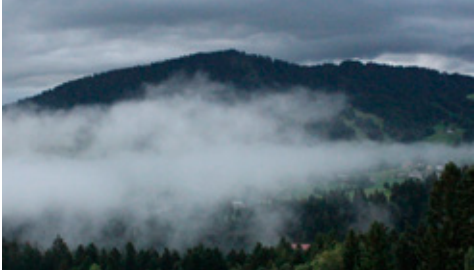
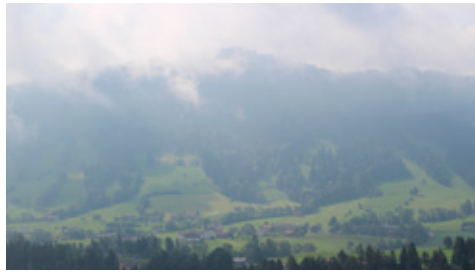
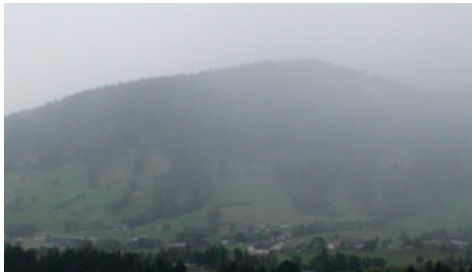
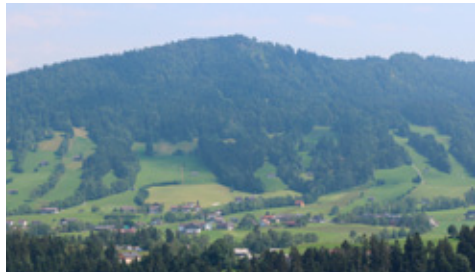
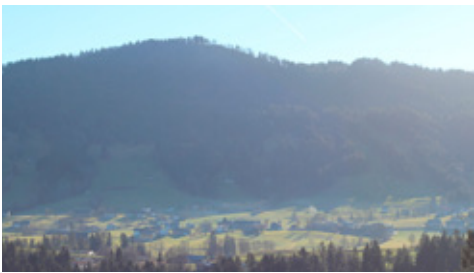


- < one of the well fields
- << wood cut illustrating the social importance of water
- • • > map of water running of the mountain towards the valley and into the Bregenzerach (top right)



WEATHER

W



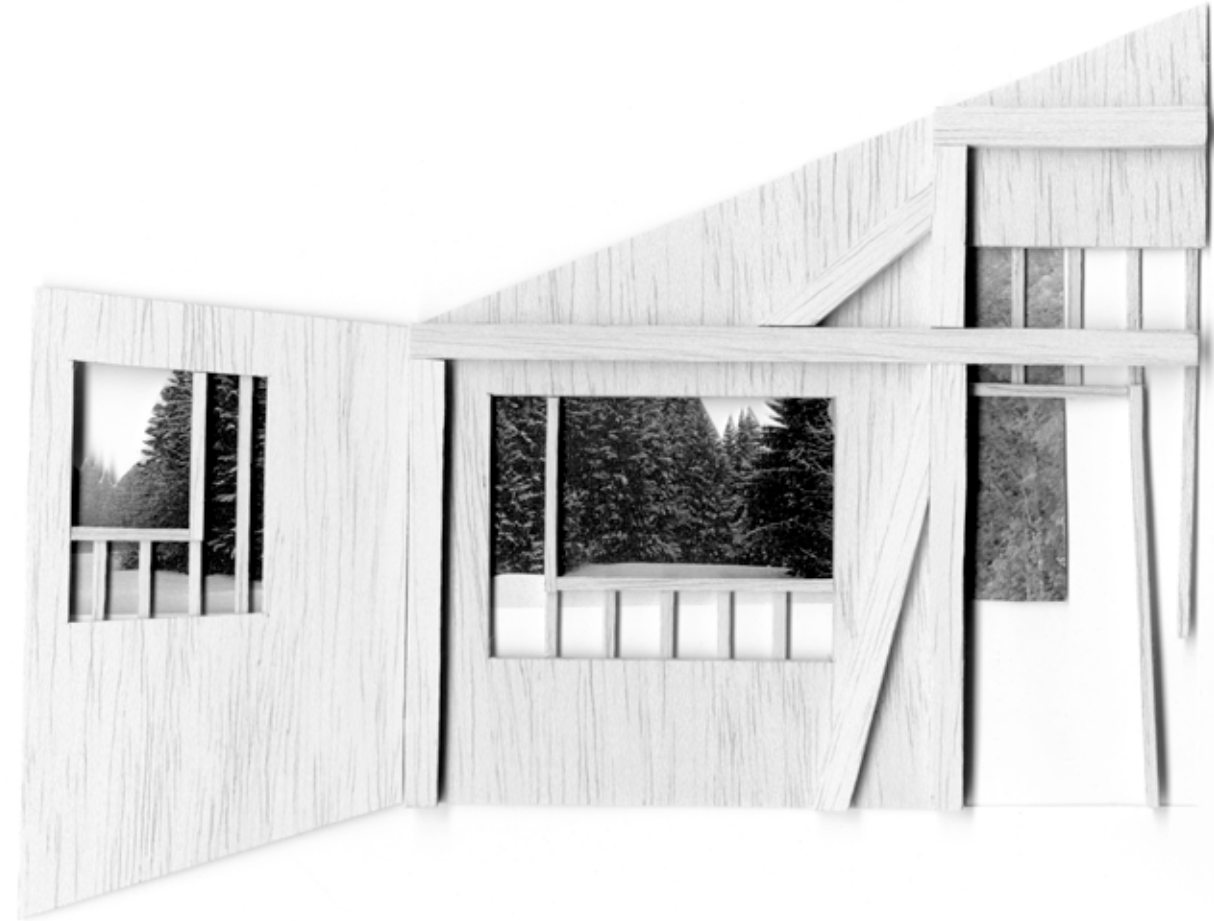
> fragments of an ongoing photographic documentation of the view from my parents balcony revealing the dynamics of weather

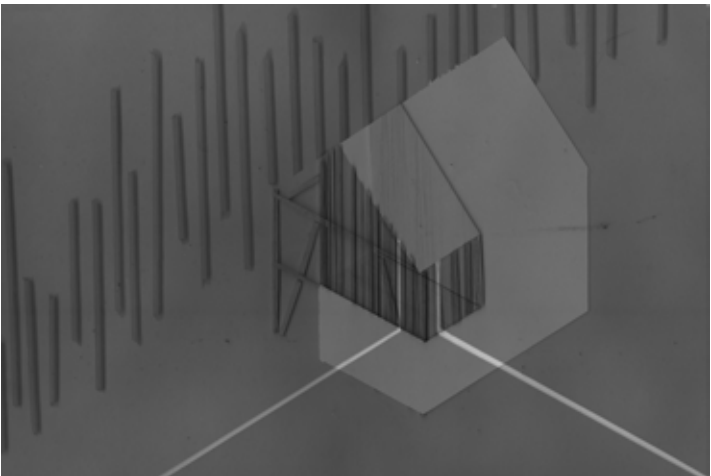
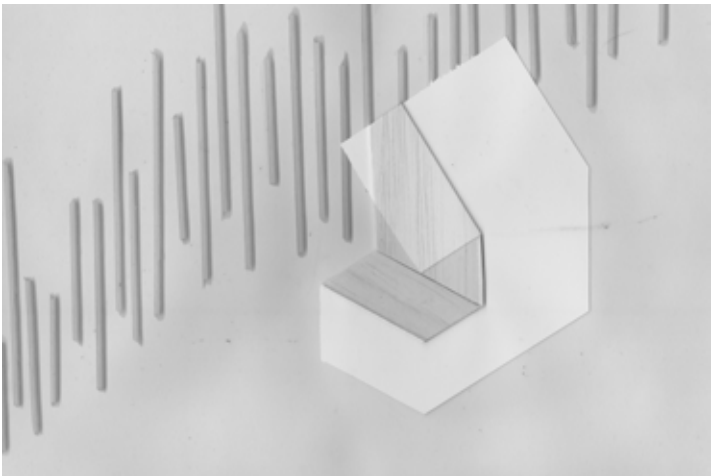
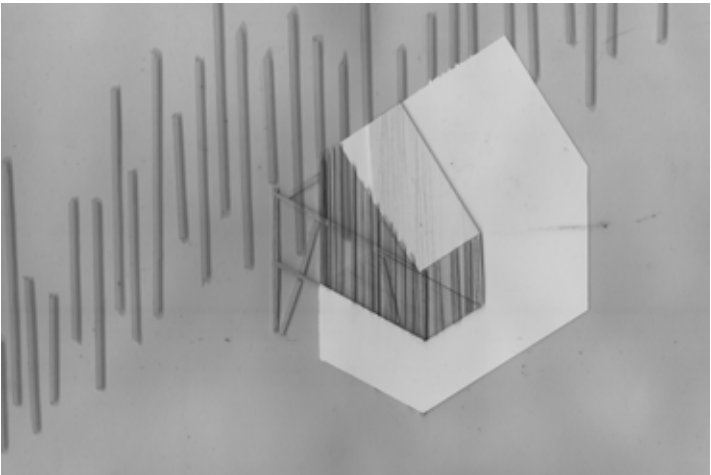
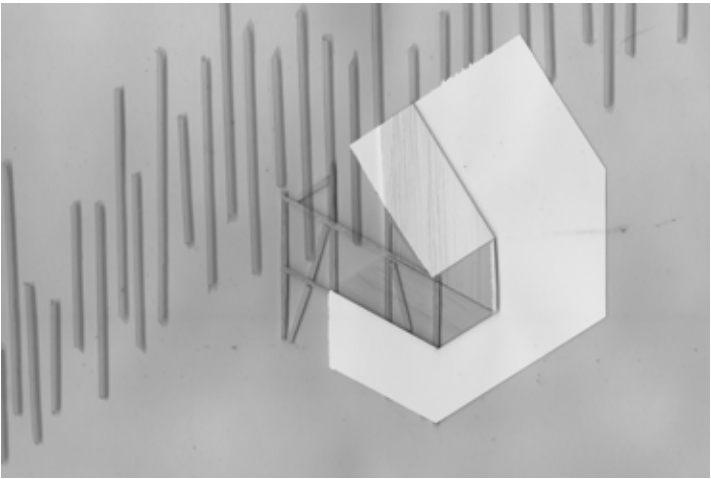
XYZ

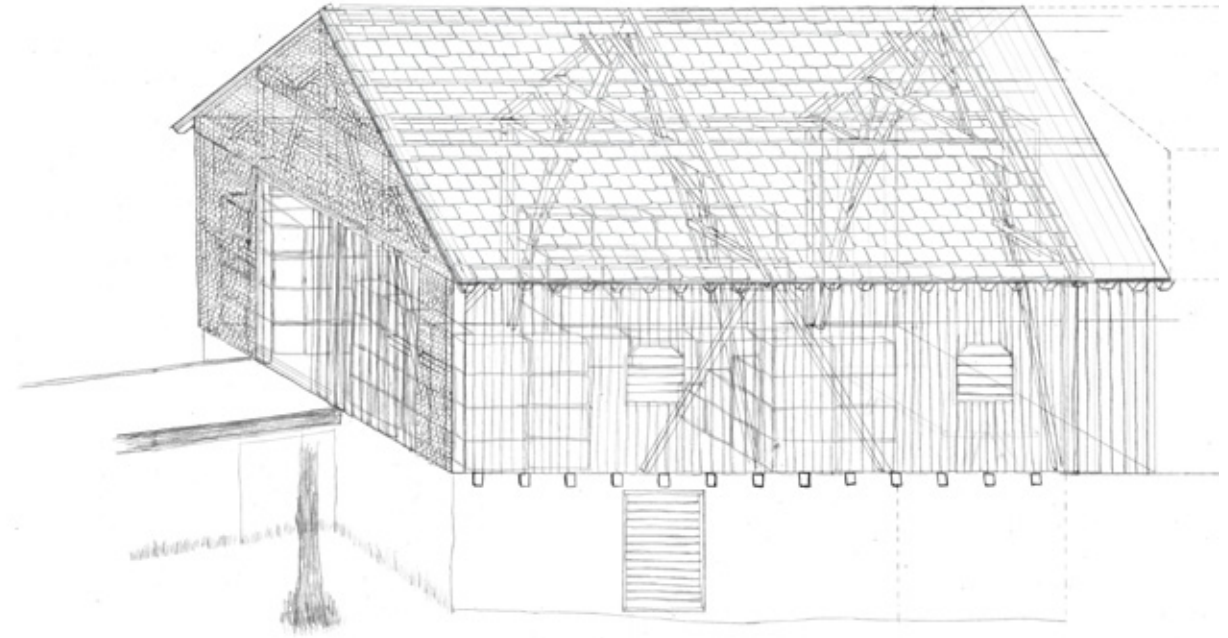
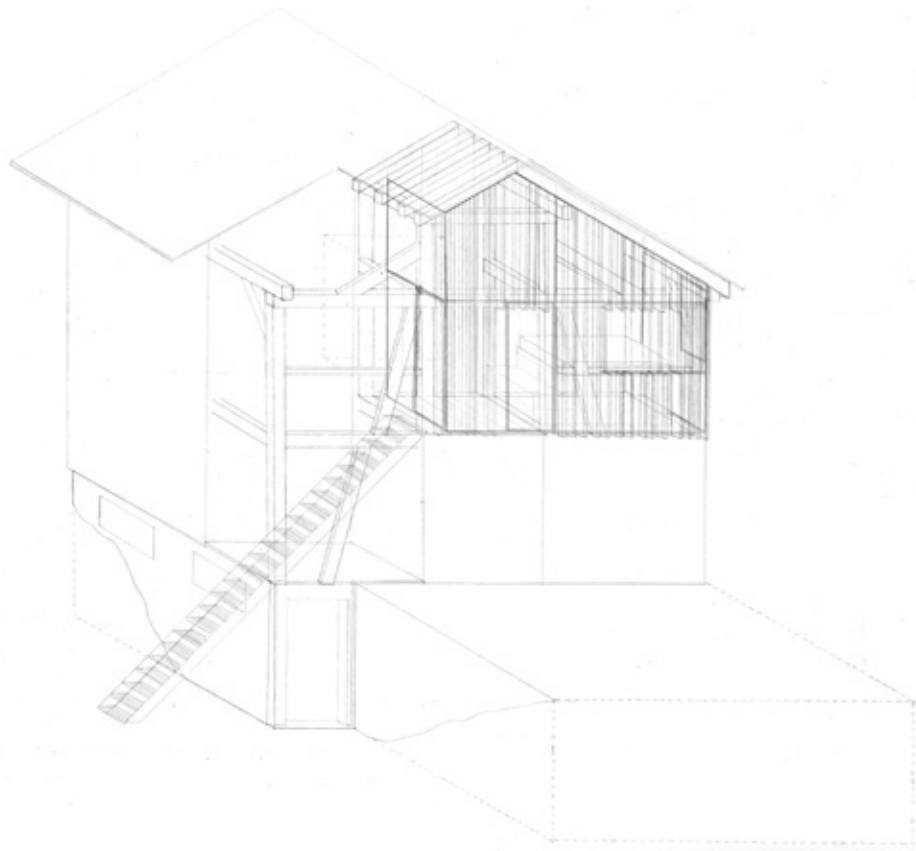
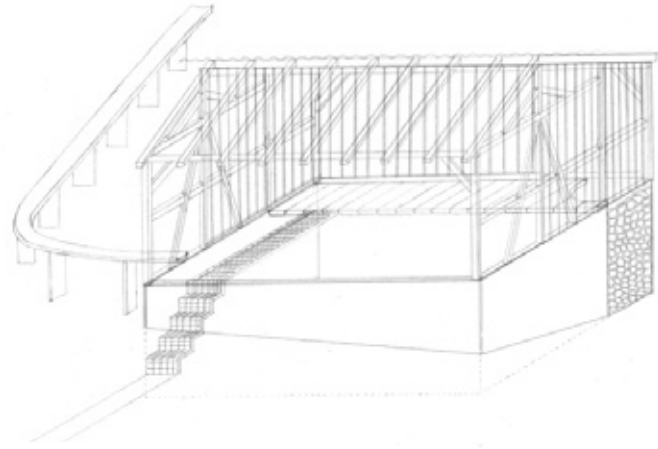
the following pages give insight into the project process and development. experiments, tests, thoughts and fragments of fascination.

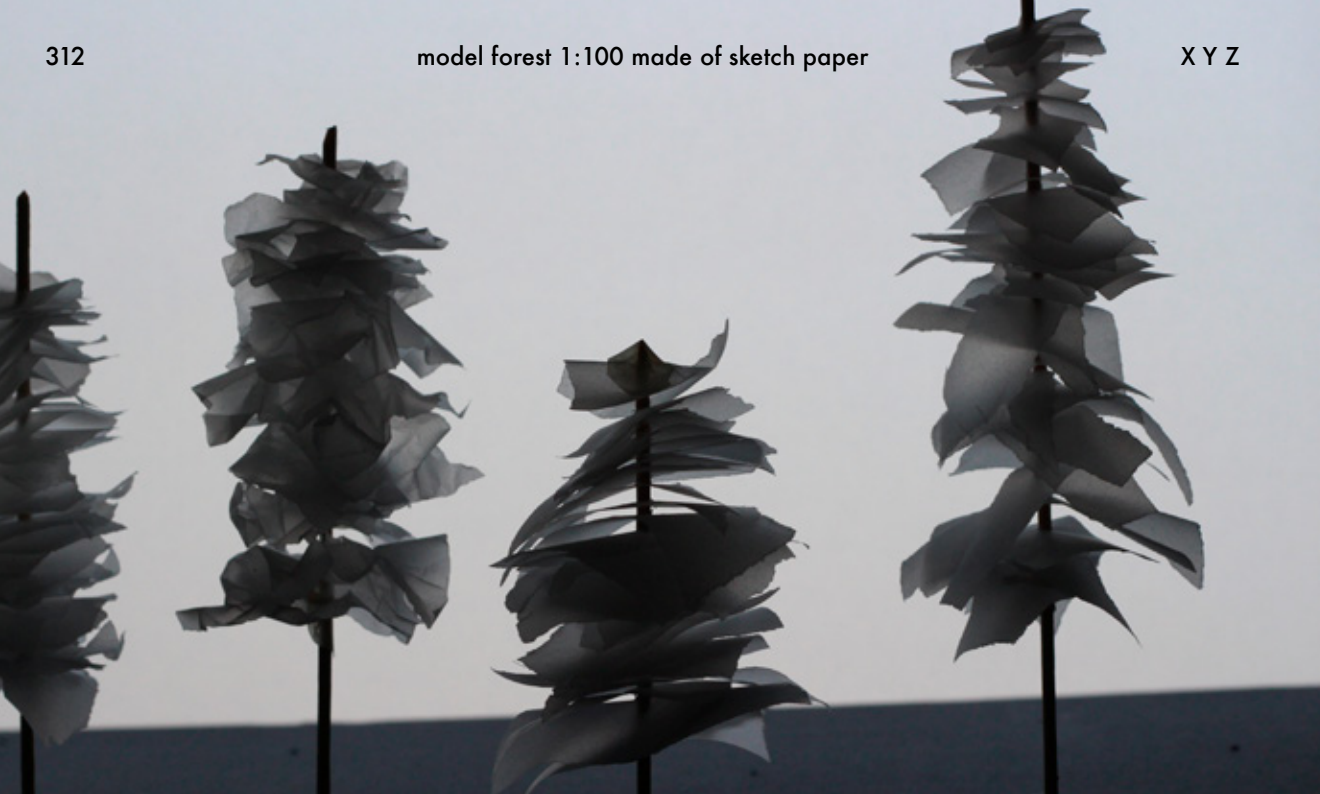
> drawing that my grandfather made to show me the oldest route of the valley - the route of settlement, also part of the route to rome and his own childhood memory of walking to church (square in the middle) on sunday - walking/running 15 minutes (3km!)

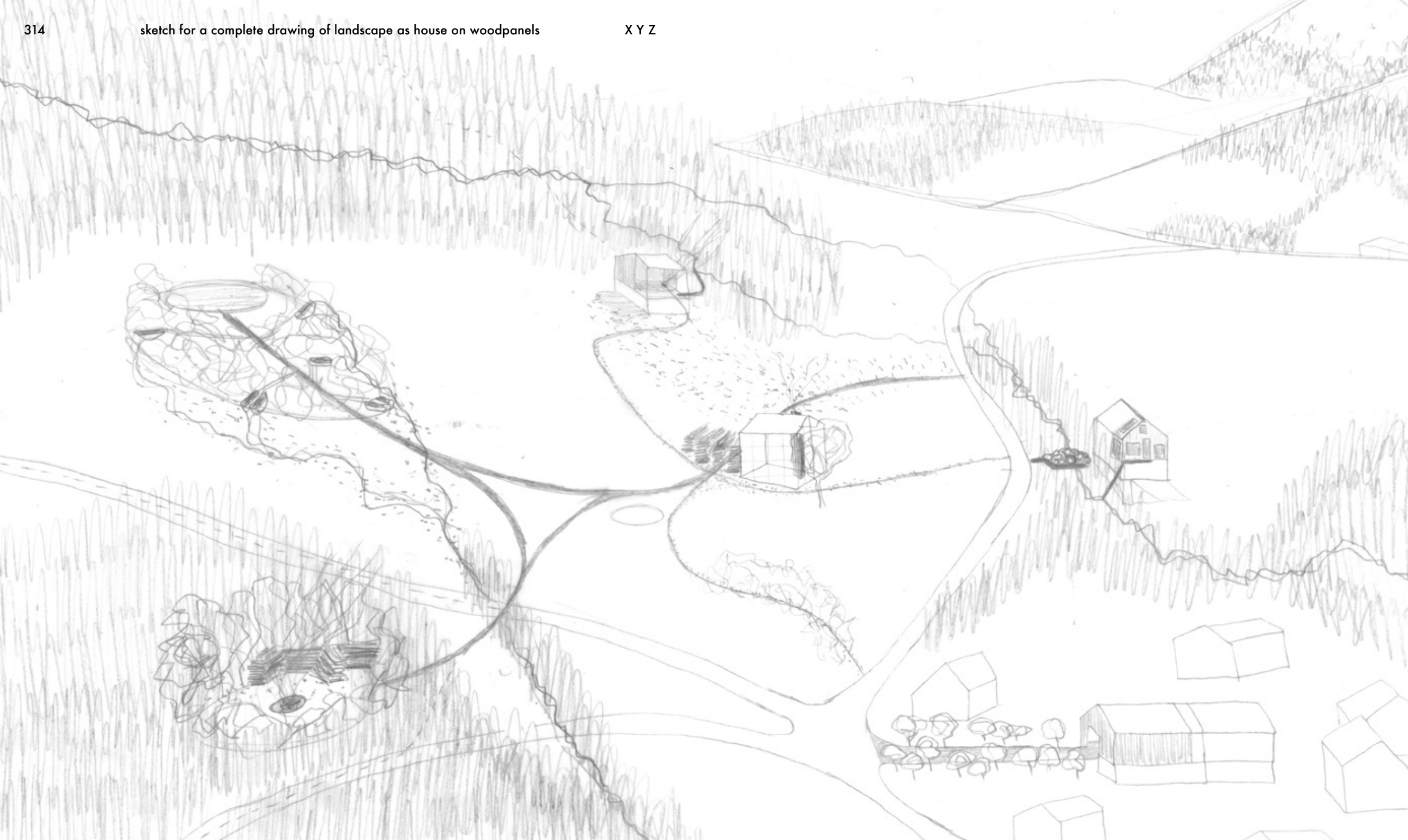


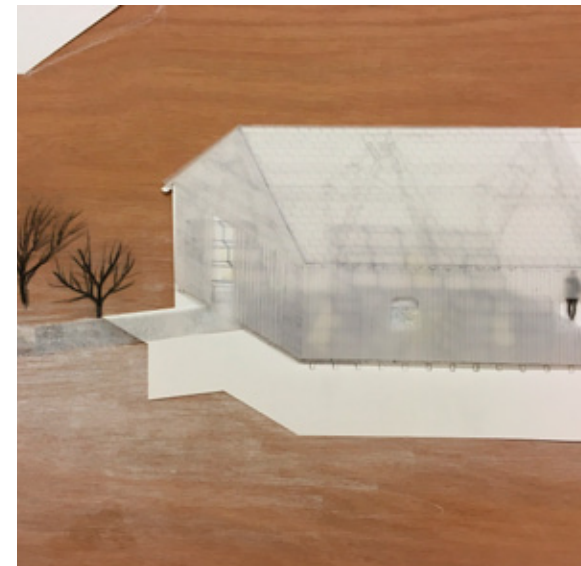


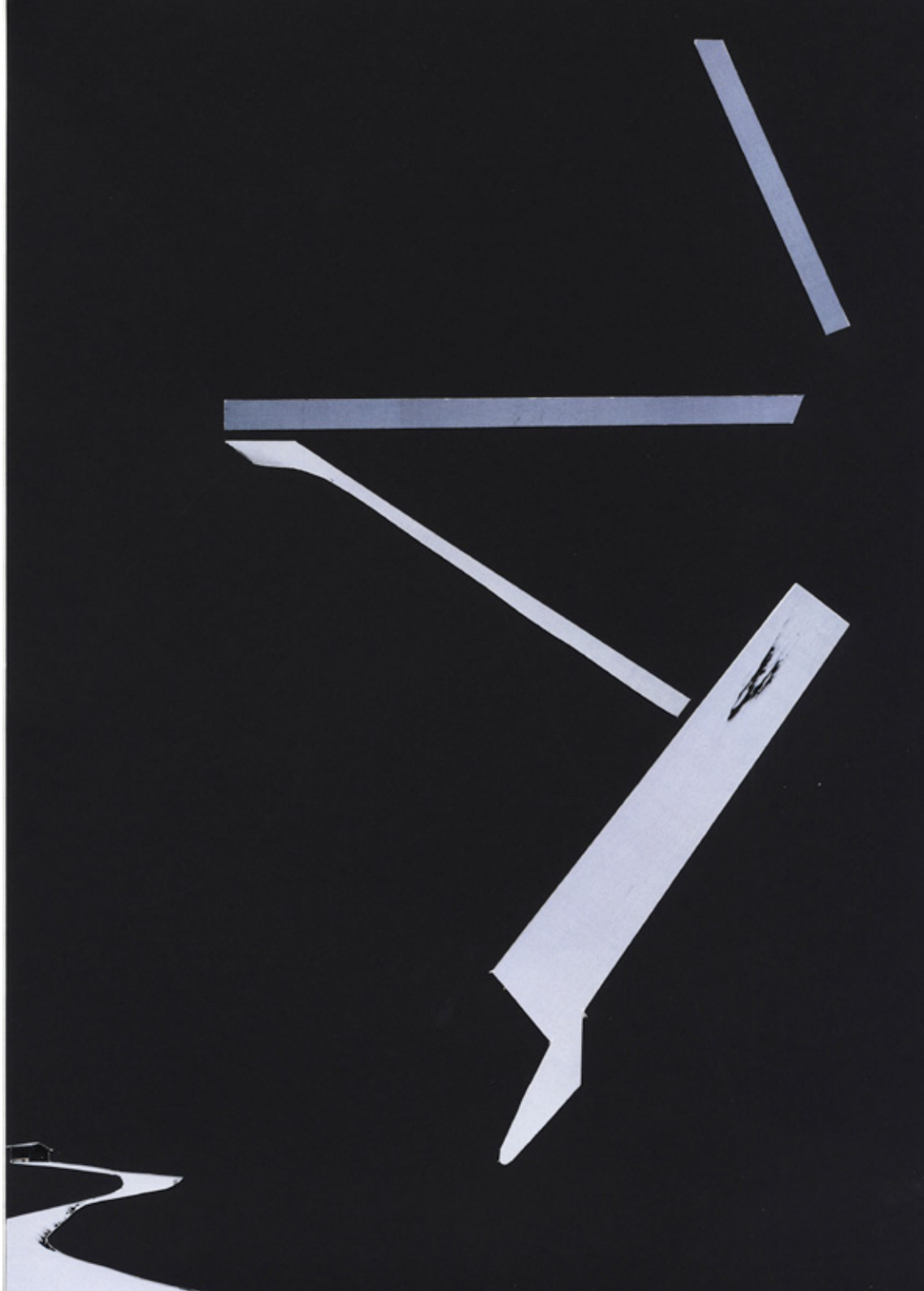
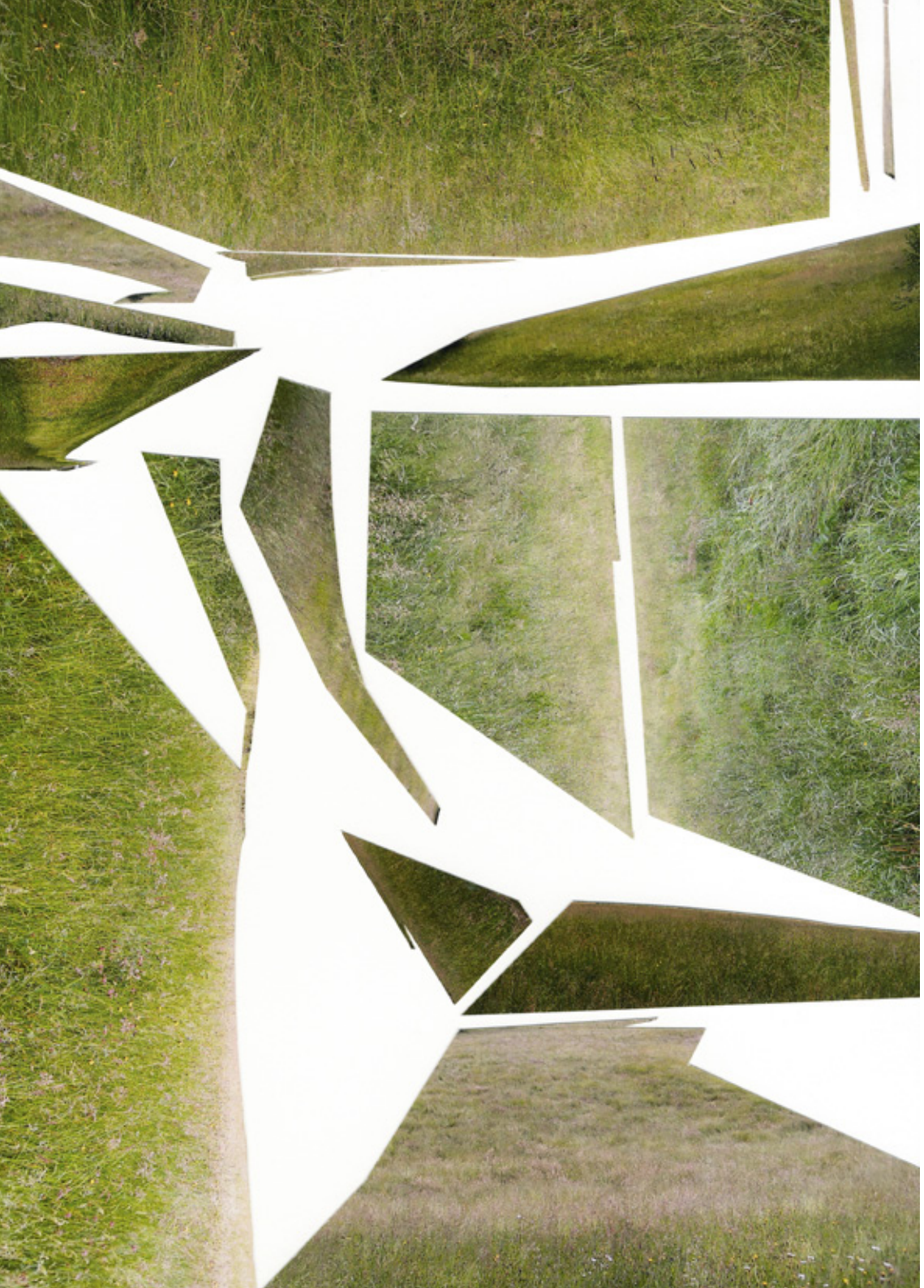


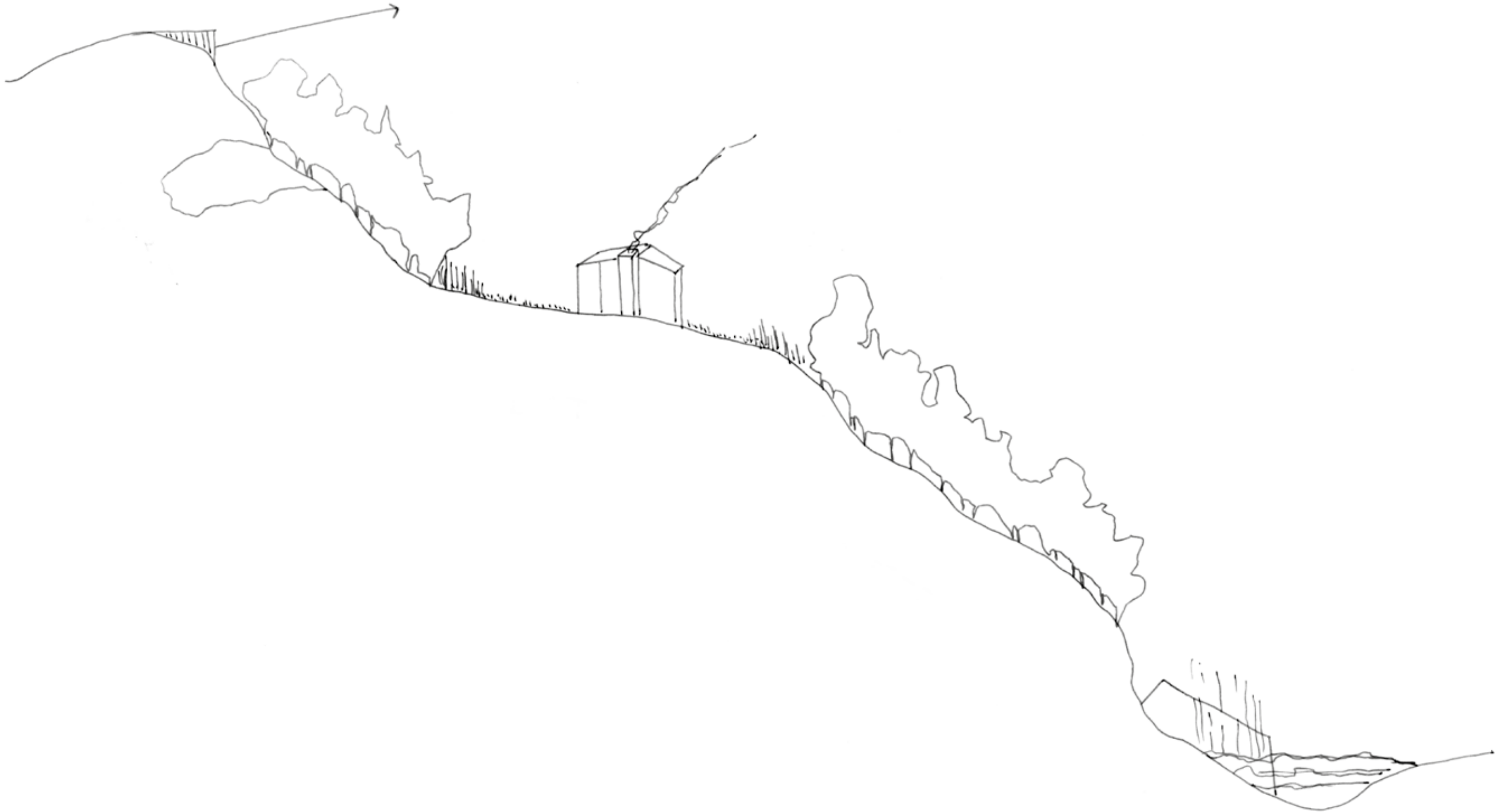


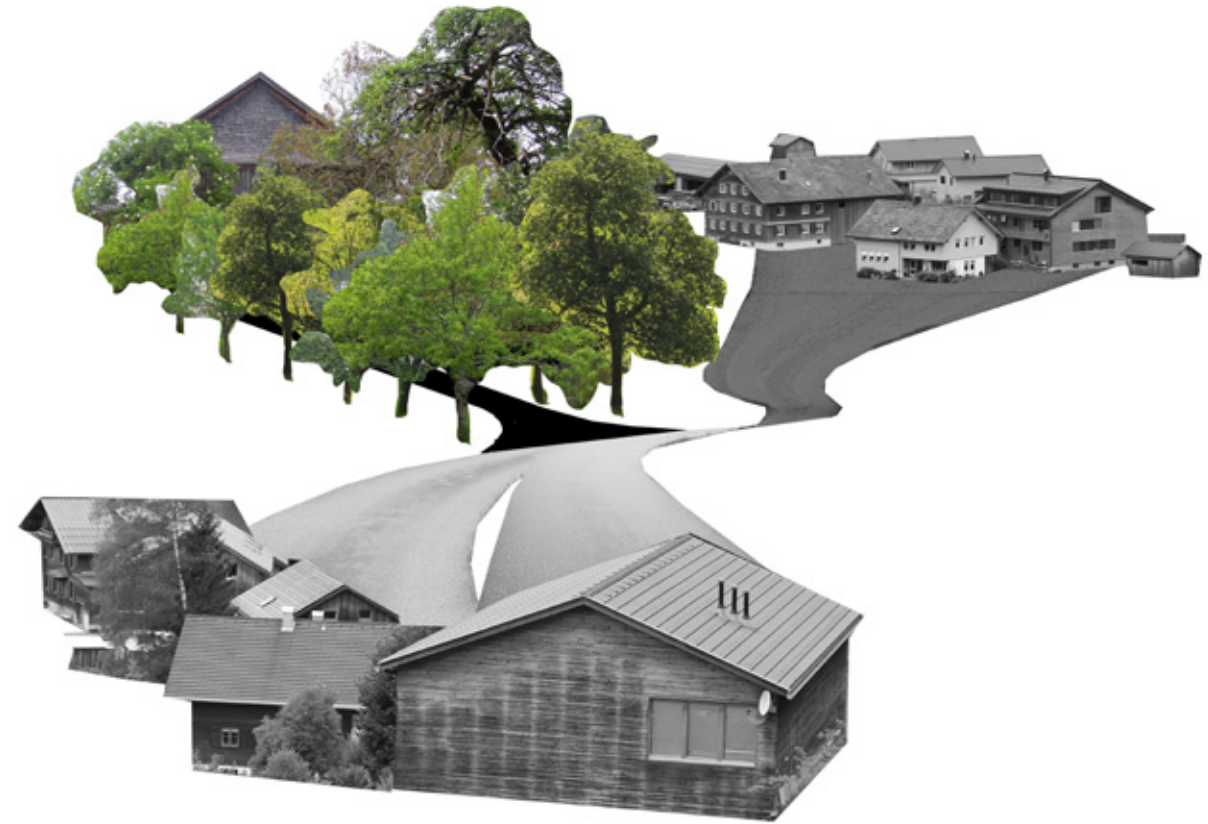
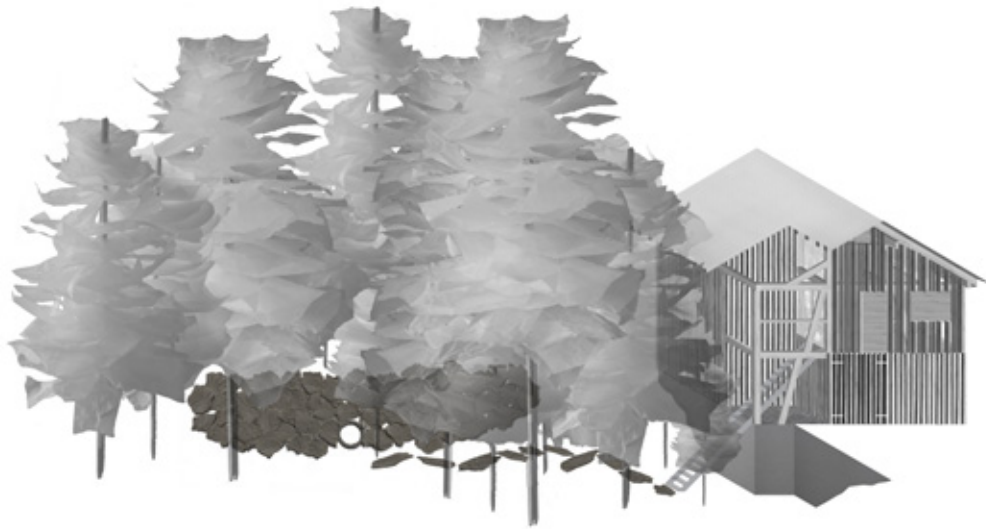




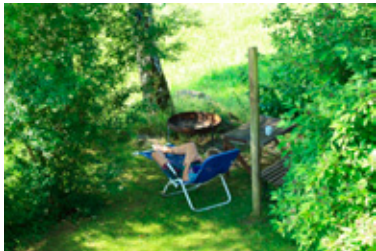
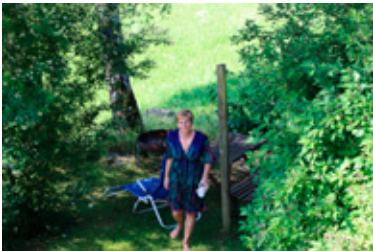
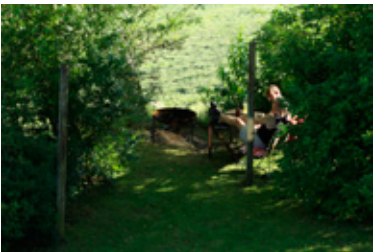
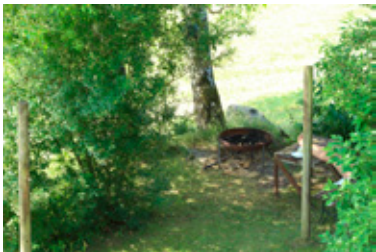
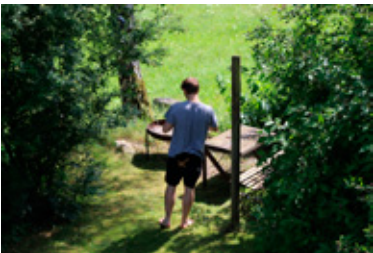
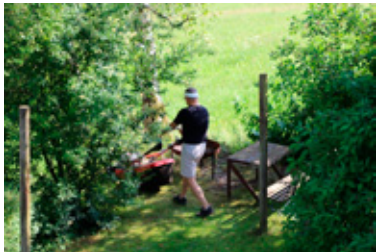
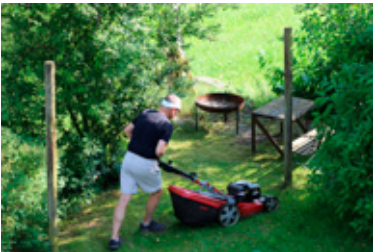
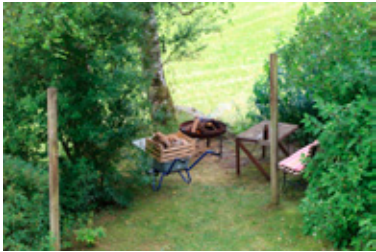
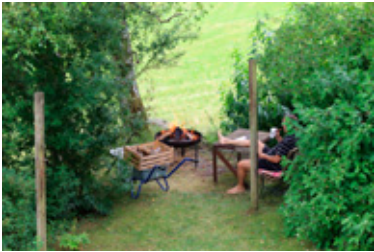
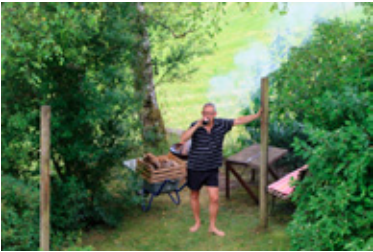
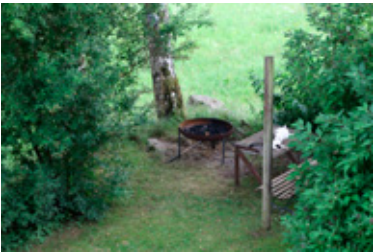
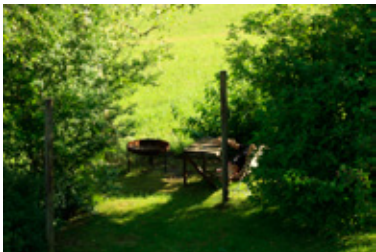
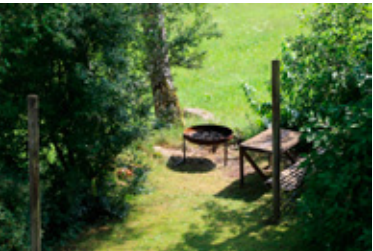






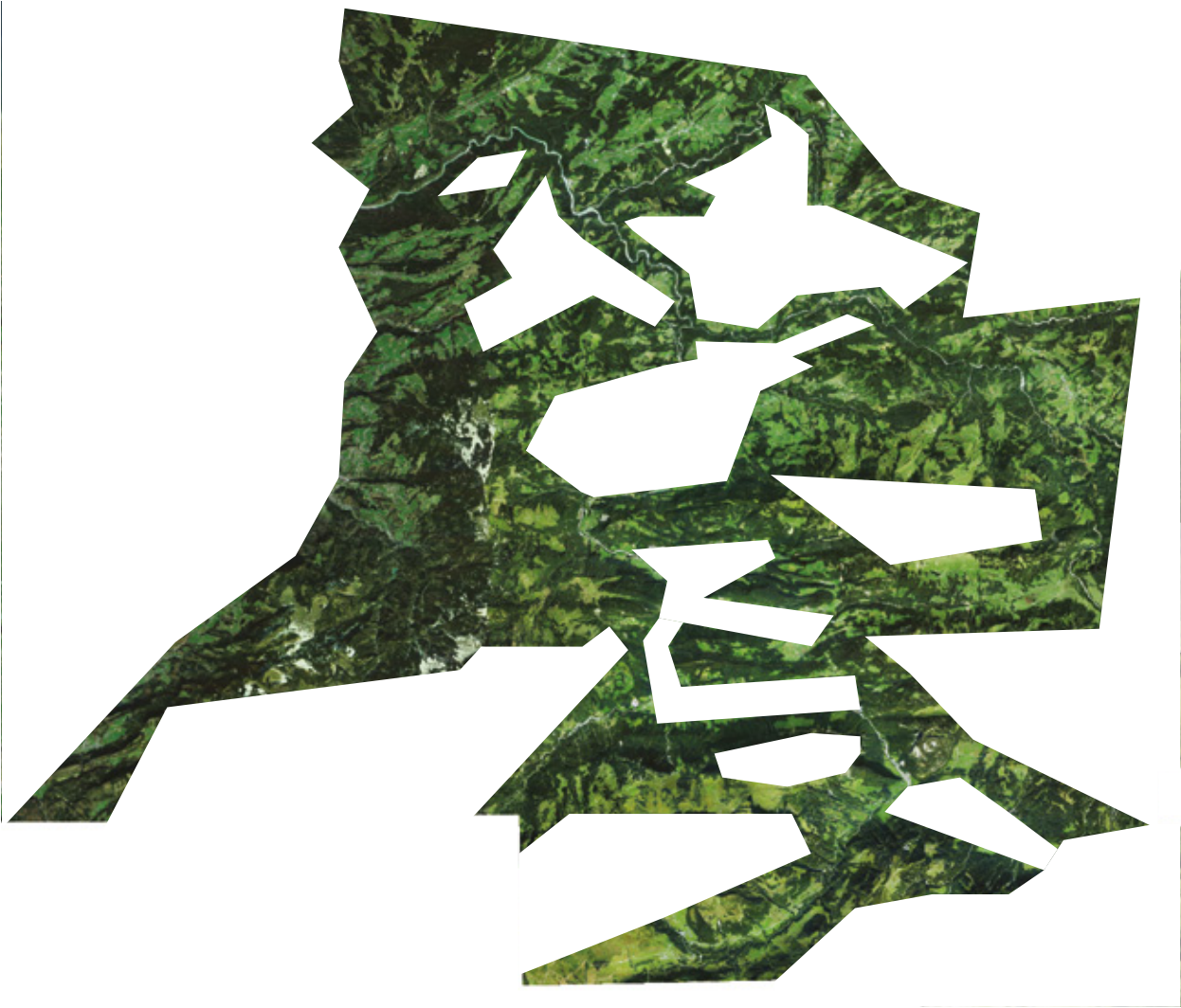
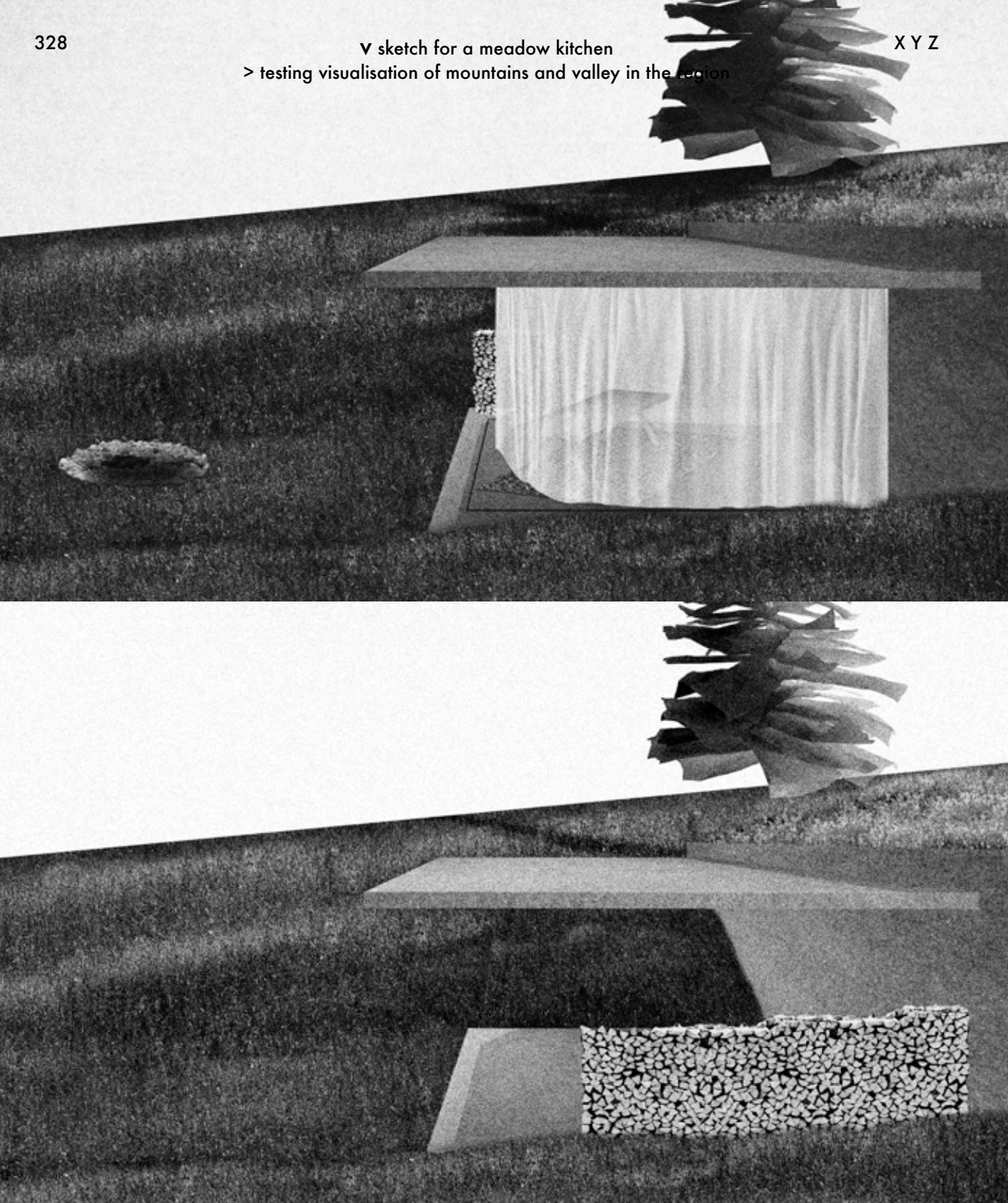




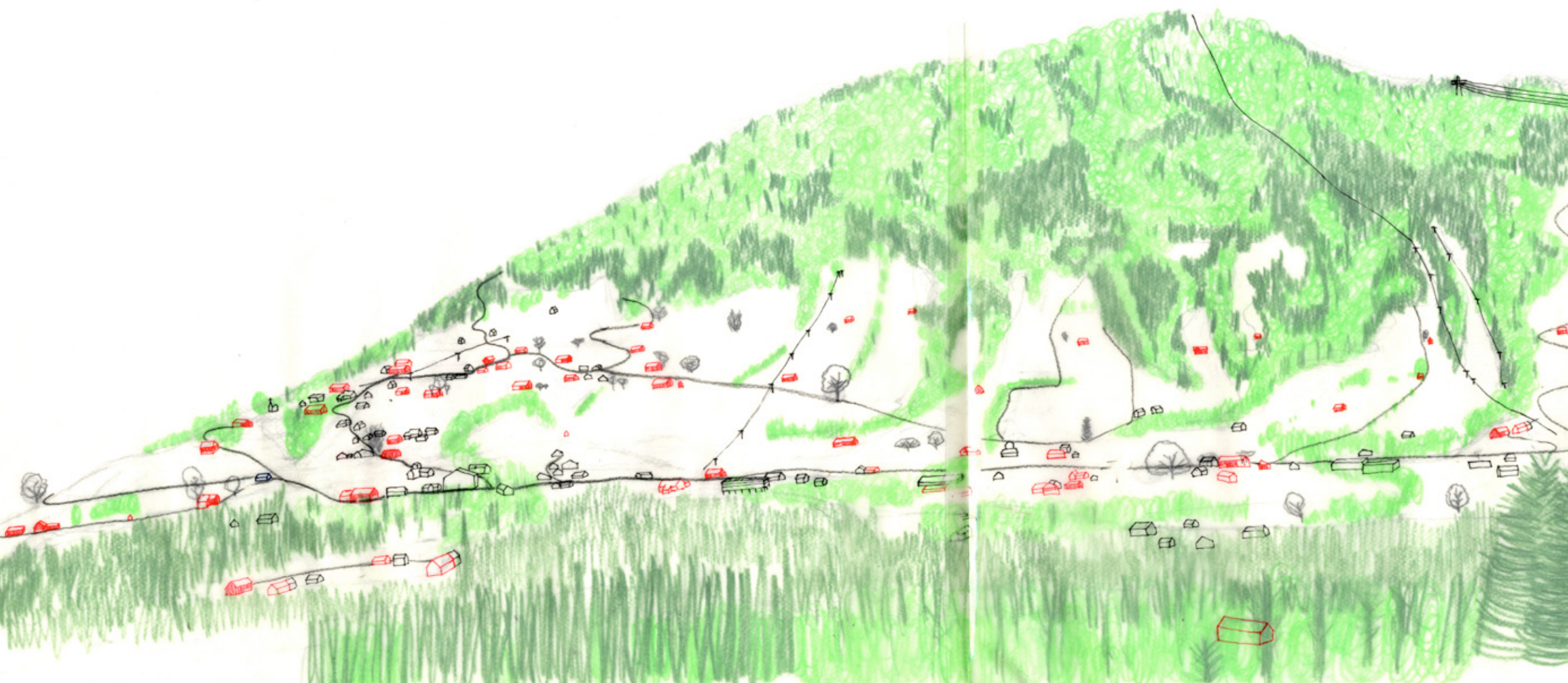


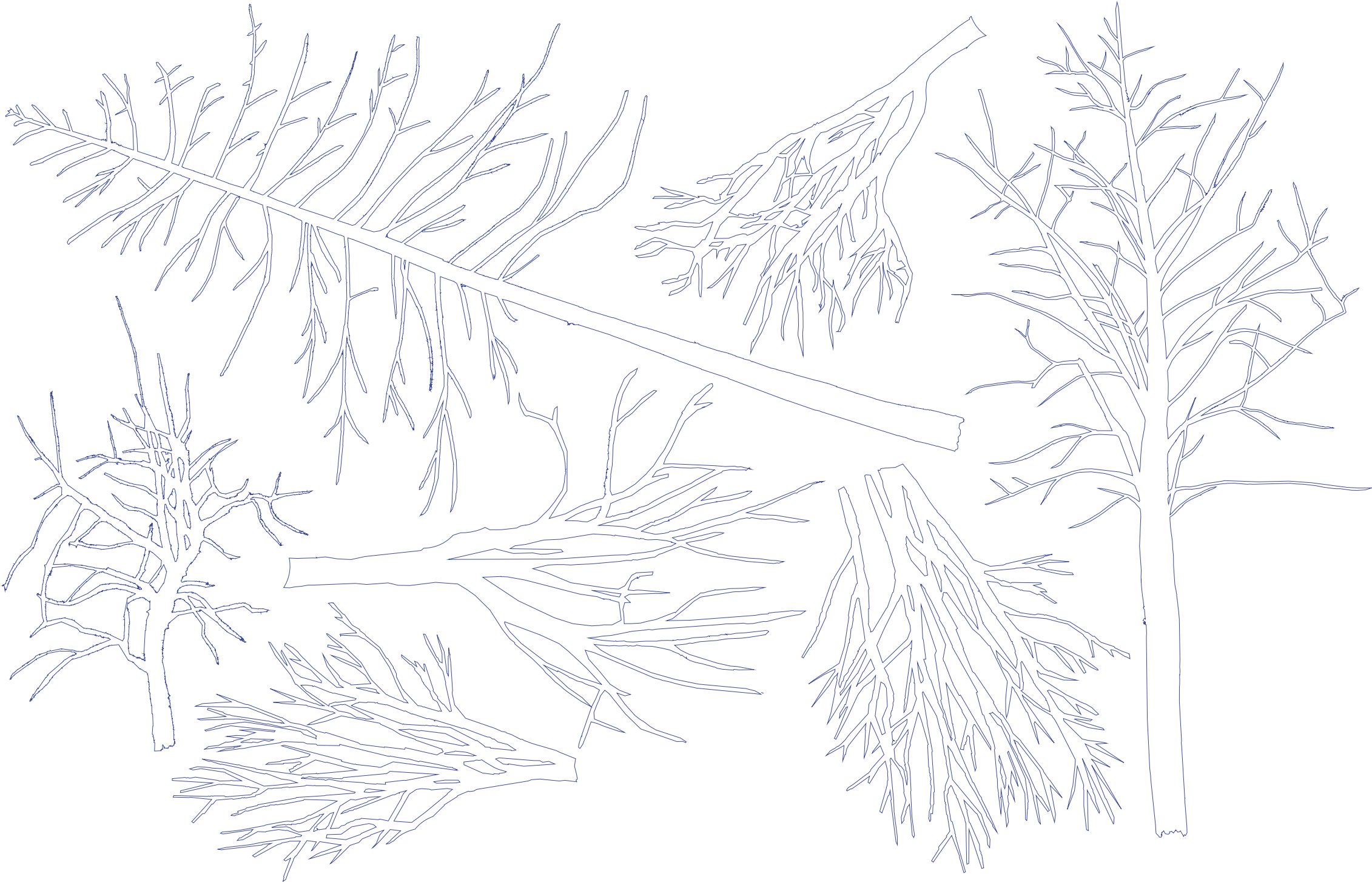
V sketch for a meadow kitchen
> testing visualisation of mountains and valley in the region

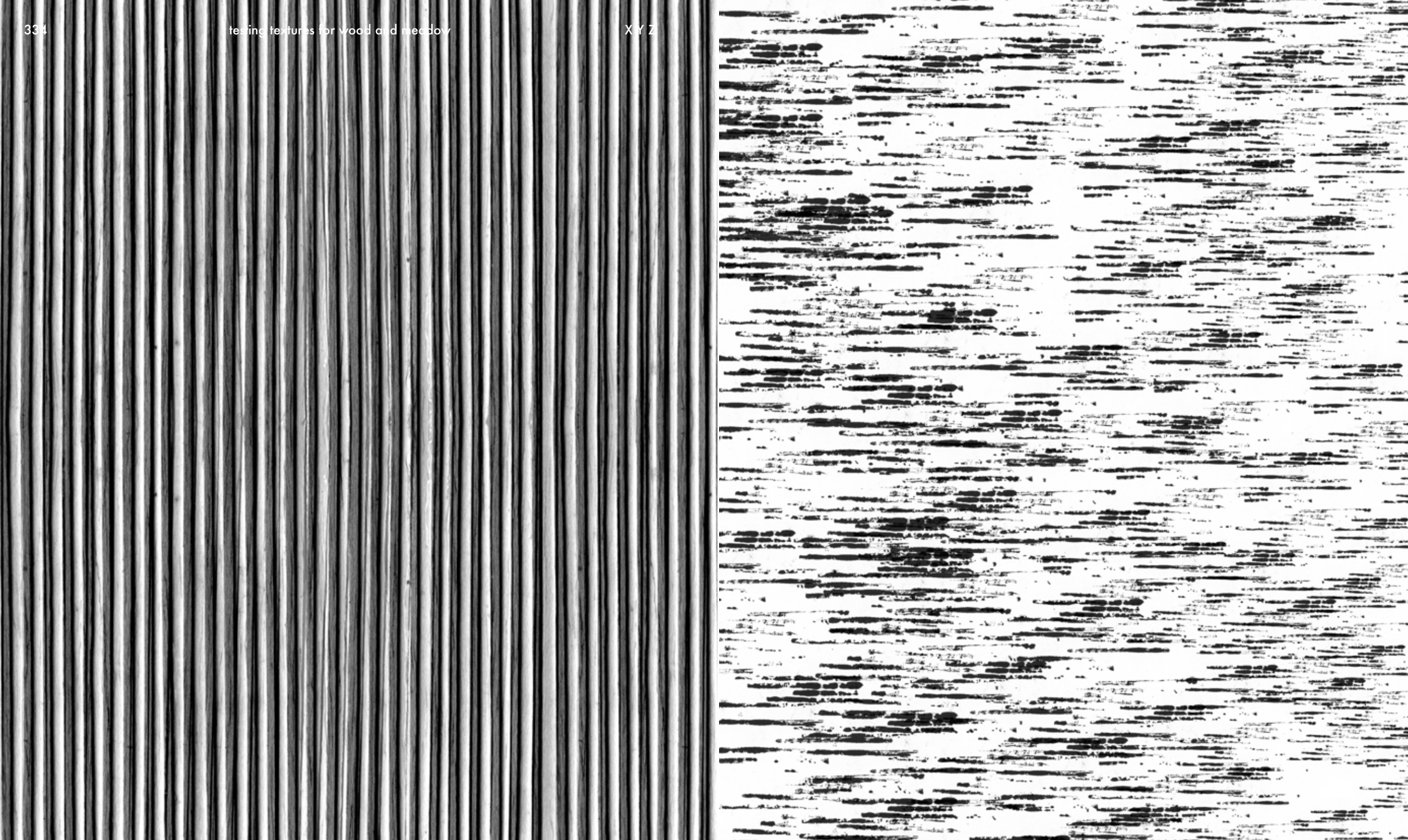
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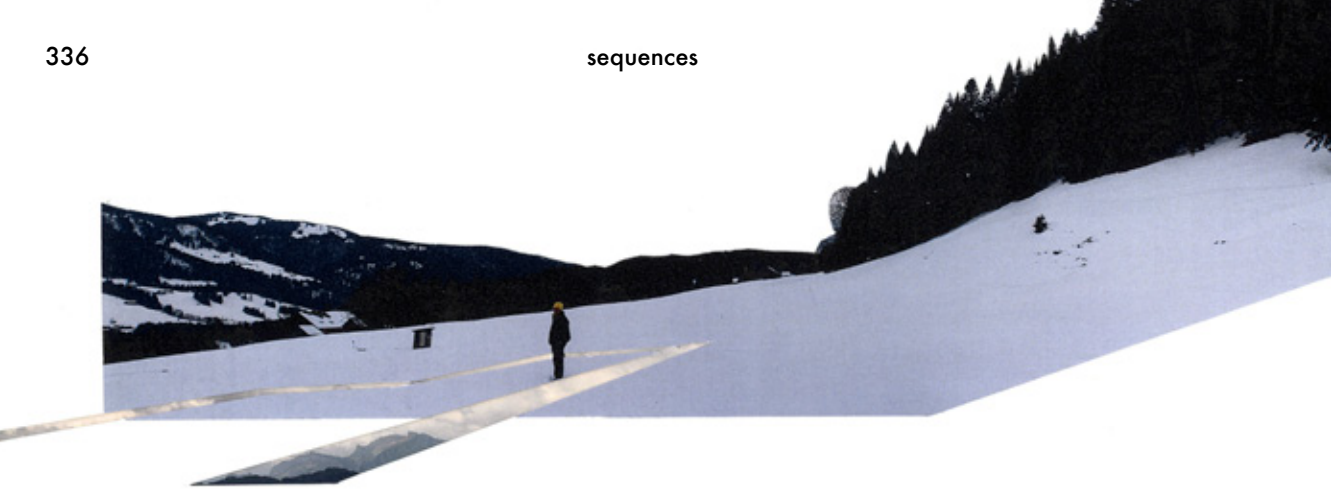


layered drawing of my "home mountain"
light green - mixed forest, dark green - coniferus forest, red - farms,
black - new houses, black lines - streets+ski lifts











in deep gratitude i want to thank

my mentor marieke, my love david, mama und bapa, frau wladika,
anouk en bruno, elf, berte, paul en maarten, ricky, meintje, michiel, jeanette en mascha, mirte, clemens, jan,
johannes, romy, my grandparents roswitha und herman, my brother johannes, my aunts and uncles, stella en herbert