

Cities in Bloom:
Rewilding Urban Spaces for a Walkable,
Regenerative Future

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Cities in Bloom: Rewilding Urban Spaces for a Walkable, Regenerative Future

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Abstract

Cities in Bloom is a practice-led architectural thesis, undertaken for a Master of Architecture at Auckland University of Technology, that explores how rewilding can serve as a regenerative design framework for reshaping urban ecologies. Situated within Auckland's Central Business District, the project investigates how architecture might facilitate coexistence between humans and non-humans by restoring lost ecologies and re-imagining the city as an active, living system. Wellesley Street stands as the core focus of the research, a spine that paves its way through the heart of the CBD intersecting with Queen Street and its connection out to the Waitemata Harbour. Through Queen Street, the project follows the contours of the buried Waihorotiu Stream, a forgotten ecology left dormant beneath our feet, which carries an innate potential to restore and reconnect the human to the natural world. Wellesley Street offers opportunity to link two underutilised green spaces, Victoria Park and Albert Park, creating a continuous ecological zone that spans the city, diverting down its many industrialised streets and transforming the CBD into a place of ecology rather than urbanism.

The research is theoretically grounded through the philosophy of kinship and vibrant matter. Deborah Bird Rose's concept of kinship reframes nature not as an external resource but as an extension of family; to think through kinship is to understand that the human and non-human fall under the same obligations. Care, responsibility, and respect unite life, encouraging an ethic of participation rather than dominance. Jane Bennett's theory of vibrant matter complements this view by asserting that all material possesses vitality and agency. Matter is not inert. It is a form that acts, responds, and transforms in relation to its surroundings, within architecture it implies that all things hold ecological significance beyond just their utility. Terrapin Bright Greens' framework in the form of the 14 Patterns of Biophilic Design lays the foundation for what the thesis aims to achieve. It is built from this set of patterns that the project grounds its roots. A reconstructed framework in the form of The 6 Patterns of Rewilded is formed, which entails a move from the anthropocentric to an ecocentric lens, and adopting instead an eco-centric lens. Ecocentrism refers to a viewpoint that design is not limited to the human, but needs to extend beyond, placing the non-human along the same plane of importance and tending to its needs just as much as ours.

Based on these considerations, a proposal is developed that re-imagines Wellesley Street as a living ecological corridor. The proposition is inherently speculative, imaging a future in which humans and non-humans coexist through layered urban ecologies. A radical re-configuration of spatial hierarchy is implemented through lifting human inhabitation above the ground plane, into rooftop glasshouse typologies and elevated walkways in which they traverse the city. The streetscape returns to nature, becoming an active ecosystem, allowing living systems to reestablish and move freely through an urban landscape. *Cities in Bloom* explores the potential of cities, a future where the built form and living ecology merge, transforming landscape into zones of connection, vitality, and kinship.

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I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date: 18/11/2025

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Disclaimer: Some drawings are updated from their Event Pin-up.

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Figure 1. Hutchins. *Pollinators*.



Research Questions & Design Tactics

As our cities continue to be developed as hard infrastructures leaving little space for nature, the relationship between humans and non-humans continues to attenuate. The connections we hold to the environment must be redefined to bridge that gap and create a more sustainable, and regenerative future at this time of ecological crisis that is marked by the intensifying impacts of climate change (IPCC, 2023) and the global decline of biodiversity (IPBES, 2019). This research explores how rewilding interventions support the integration of nature into the built environment, reshape systems to support biodiversity, foster human-nature relationships, and create dynamic, multi-species landscapes. This research addresses the following research questions:

How can rewilding strategies simultaneously enhance social connectivity and promote ecological regeneration through urban and architectural intervention?

This research contends that urban rewilding strategies have the potential to simultaneously enhance social connectivity and promote ecological regeneration by integrating nature into the built environment in ways that foster both human engagement and biodiversity.

How can urban architecture be designed to support and integrate wildlife within densely populated cities, fostering multi-species coexistence?

The loss of natural habitats forces wildlife to adapt to urban environments. Rather than just accommodating displaced species, architecture can actively integrate and support wildlife, creating urban ecosystems that foster human and non-human relationships.

How can vertical and horizontal rewilding strategies reshape urban landscapes to foster deeper and more immersive human-nature connections?

Urban environments often unintentionally create a division between people and nature, reducing direct engagement with our surrounding ecosystem in everyday living. Vertical and horizontal rewilding strategies can reshape cities into multi-layered ecological networks where humans and wildlife coexist.

This research explores a variety of strategies that support urban ecological connection, including biodiverse green corridors/ ecological pathways, wildlife sanctuaries and habitats for native species and pollinators, multi-layered ecological systems, multi-functional green roofs, blue-green infrastructure, and living facades.

Introduction

Roots Beneath the Concrete

Urbanisation has replaced once-thriving ecosystems with expanses of concrete, severing the deep-rooted ties between humans and the natural world. As cities continue to expand, the boundaries between ecology and architecture have become rigid and artificial, disrupting ecological balance and diminishing biodiversity. This thesis challenges these boundaries, advocating for a fundamental shift in urban design, one that actively embraces rewilding as a foundational urban and architectural strategy. The design proposition positions rewilding as the ontological and literal ground for contemporary cities in the Anthropocene, as it proposes rewilding the landscape and taking the human social life of the city to the rooftops. In this design, humans are not a priority, instead, we are designated to live and function above and allow natural processes to reclaim a world that once was.

Focusing on the Auckland CBD as grounds for my project, I will be exploring the link, or lack thereof, between Victoria Park and Albert Park, following Wellesley Street as the connective tissue. These two green spaces act as little pockets of ecologies in an otherwise entirely urban environment, and the space between them is sadly underutilised. What is currently a system of concrete roads, footpaths, and buildings, has the potential to be re-imagined as a regenerative environment, creating both human and non-human environments where the two can intersect and coexist together. This thesis argues that architecture and urban design must go beyond sustainability and meet this ecological regeneration, if we are to create living cities that are not only walkable and socially vibrant, but also resilient and ecologically diverse.

Through a critical examination of rewilding principles, this research aims to explore how urban spaces can be transformed into regenerative environments that support both human and non-human life. It argues that architecture and urban planning must go beyond sustainability and work towards ecological regeneration, restoring lost ecosystems and fostering multi-species cohabitation. By implementing strategies such as green corridors, rooftop gardens, vertical forests, biodiversity sanctuaries, and pollinator habitats, cities can be re-imagined as living systems.

Chapter One of this exegesis establishes the theoretical and contextual foundation for the research. It explores the concepts of kinship, rewilding, coexistence, and ecological connections. This chapter also identifies precedents that illustrate how these ideas and ways of thinking can be translated into successful design strategies.

Chapter Two of this exegesis describes my research methodology and key methods. It explores how careful design thinking can become a tool for reimagining the urban environment into a living system. It also delves into my own positionality for the research, exploring my views, the opportunities and constraints found within Auckland's CBD, and how success within the proposal can be measured.

Chapter Three of this exegesis presents the design that was developed using processes explained in Chapter Two, as I begin to realise the research and implement ideas surrounding rewilding into an architectural proposition. It documents the evolution of design as a living process that is growing , shifting, and adapting with time.

This thesis presents a framework for integrating nature-based design into urban development, demonstrating how rewilding can enhance biodiversity, reconnect people with the land, and create cities that function as thriving ecological networks. It is not simply a clean-cut design strategy, but rather an entirely new way of thinking and being. Ultimately, it envisions an urban future where built environments are not separate from nature, but an extension of it, where architecture serves as a bridge between human life and the more-than-human world.



Figure 2. Hutchins. *Groundscape*.

Chapter One – Grounds for Kinship

Introduction to Chapter

This chapter explores the contextual and theoretical concepts that have informed my proposal, providing a foundation for how urban design can be used to foster human and more-than-human coexistence. It begins by situating rewilding within its broader ecological and cultural context, tracing its origin as a conservative movement, its relationship to established indigenous knowledge, and its relevance within the Auckland CBD. These contextual layers establish the grounds upon which the theoretical framework is built; the foundation that allows kinship and ecological agency to emerge. Theoretical referents guide the project as they provide a critical frame. Deborah Bird Rose’s idea of kinship establishes an ontological understanding of the natural world not as other but as family; as something we are deeply connected to and responsible for (Rose, 2022). Key case studies help develop design responses throughout the thesis, offering critical insight into how we can reshape our urban environments to nurture a range of multispecies relationships, regenerate our ecological systems, and re-imagine current cities as wide scale living habitats.

1.1 Context

Rewilding for Ecosystem Function

Rewilding describes the process of restoring ecosystems to a state of self-sustaining autonomy where natural processes are left to shape the land and begin ecological repair. The concept of rewilding originated in the 1990s, with the term being coined by conservationist Dave Foreman as a “system of connected strictly protected areas able to support ecologically effective populations of all native species” (Johns, 2019, p. 12).

Rewilding analysis and proposals work with systems thinking, attending to the non-linear complexity of such systems. Attention is paid to the ecological interactions between environments and living creatures, with emphasis on the potential for trophic wilding, the introduction of apex species, to effect significant beneficial change in systems, including to the extent of changing river courses and enhancing tree health and growth (Scheiffer, 2018). The understanding of how ecological relational interactions can profoundly shift living systems and return these to better health is important in the context of this research.

Originally concerned with restoring wilderness to rural areas, rewilding efforts have shifted to an urban context as our cities became more vulnerable to climate change and increasing biodiversity loss. As an approach, rewilding shifts focus from this idea of simply “greening” spaces to providing ecologically active environments that can thrive without human intervention. This idea was captured by Monbiot (2013), who noted that “the rewilding of natural ecosystems that fascinates me is not an attempt to restore them to any prior state, but to permit ecological processes to resume” (p. 8). We are not managers of nature but simply participants within a wider system.

Civilisation is earth based, meaning that human societies are not separate from nature and are inseparable from it. Geneletti et al. (2019) expands on this by saying that “human life on Earth depends on ecosystems” (p. 1). Yet, the urban environments that we inhabit are increasingly disconnected from the natural world. Once flourishing ecosystems are uprooted and destroyed to make way for our cities without thought to the species that are lost. Urban rewilding paves the way towards a regenerative and self-sustaining future by serving as a design driven (re)implementation of our forgotten ecosystems. Reintroducing native flora and fauna, restoring natural systems, regenerating biodiversity, rewilding has the opportunity to serve as the leading regenerative approach that transforms our urban environments from concrete to kinship. (Moxon, 2023) In the context of architecture, urban rewilding is implemented to transform underutilised spaces, such as rooftops, waterfronts, or degraded areas, into dynamic, living ecosystems. This benefits the health of the environment and has positive societal impacts in terms of mental health and wellbeing. These implementations of urban rewilding can be used across a variety of scales, from small-scale interventions such as pollinator pathways or pocket habitats to large-scale urban planning projects like the establishment of green links or stream/river daylighting and restoration projects.

Relationship to indigenous knowledge

Within Aotearoa New Zealand, rewilding aligns closely with indigenous Māori knowledge systems and ways of thinking. The principle of kaitiakitanga, responsibility and guardianship over land, embodies the essence of rewilding (Kawharu, 2000). Both approaches understand the relationship between the human and non-human world, grounded in care and respect for our natural ecologies. Kaitiakitanga is about giving back to the environment as urbanisation has overtaken once thriving landscapes. As humans, we are deeply interconnected within our environments, which means that the restoration of land becomes simultaneously an act of restoring ancestral ties and relationships; that which is often overlooked in an anthropocentric view. This thinking begins to invoke ties to whakapapa and the connection to the past, present, and future, that intertwine to form relational networks that link across space. (Roberts et al. 2004)

Rewilding also shares conceptual similarities to the traditional Māori practice of rahui, a form of temporary ban or restrictions that is placed upon ecological resources and areas, allowing time for regeneration and rene wal (Te Kotahitanga o Ngāti Tūwharetoa, n.d.) A rahui suspends human interference, it gives agency to ecological processes, allowing them to begin anew. Drawing parallels, these temporary bans begin to mirror the ethos of rewilding in the sense that both concepts are about, letting something be. Such practices reflect the understanding that human restraint can serve as an act of ecological care, allowing for these damaged systems to heal and thrive once more. Complementing this, the maramataka, traditional Māori lunar calendar, guides ecological management and align human activity with the natural rhythms of the environment. This practice allows systems to regenerate and recover from human interaction and return to a natural state of living. These ideas can all be applied to the regenerative approach of rewilding as a sustainable way of reviving nature within our cities. In other words, rewilding seeks to achieve restoration not through intervention, but rather through letting go, omitting control.

To be truly regenerative, rewilding designs in Aotearoa must be developed with mana whenua, the Māori groups who have ties to the land, to ensure the appropriate application of indigenous knowledge and values. Rewilding becomes no longer just about restoring the natural landscape but about restoring these lost ideals and ways of thinking. It is about transporting ourselves into the past, embracing our relationships with the land, and displaying respect for the natural world. “Whakapapa brings the wild back into view, and this will enable society to transition beyond the exploitation of modernity, towards a more integrated, quite possibly high-tech, planetary culture” (Irwin, 2021, p. 13). In this sense, rewilding becomes a bridge between ancestral ecological wisdom and contemporary regenerative technologies, a hybrid framework that merges both culture and ecology within the urban fabric of Aotearoa.

Within an Urban Fabric

Auckland’s city today stands as a landscape defined by infrastructure and intense urbanisation. Beneath its paved streets lies an erased ecological memory, forgotten and overlooked. Lost network of streams, wetlands, volcanic soils, ecosystems that once formed the land and sustained both human and non-human life. The development of Auckland has left behind the natural world, prioritising efficiency and expansion. What remains of these ecologies is constrained, engineered as a cog within a larger machine. We forget our origins, the very land that formed us, a place where water once flowed freely and native species reigned. It is by returning to our roots that we can transform urbanised space into a sustainable living system.

Beneath Auckland’s urban streetscape lies a forgotten ecology, the once free flowing Waihorotiu Stream that carved through the land from Myers Park into the Waitemata Harbour. This example of ecological erasure shows the severe effects of urban intensification; to make way for infrastructure the stream was forced underground, flowing unknowingly beneath our feet. Its history traces back to the earliest period of Auckland’s settlement, where the stream was a source of drinking water, home to native trout and eels, and what is currently known as Aotea Square was swampland (Auckland City Council, 2013). What was once a thriving ecosystem, a key connection between soil, water, and life, lies dormant and forgotten. The Waihorotiu stream should be a part of Auckland’s identity, daylighted and revealed back to the surface, integrated within our infrastructure not beneath it. The stream represents an opportunity for re-connection, one that ties the present to the past and that pushes towards an integrated future where the human and non-human live in kinship.

Current council projects place Wellesley Street as a key connective network within Auckland CBD. Wellesley Street is a space that cuts through, intersecting with the Waihorotiu Stream and Queen Street, creating an axis of connectivity. Auckland Transport is in the process of setting Wellesley Street as a key transport link, following bus improvements and its relation to the Te Waihorotiu Station currently in construction. In the words of Auckland Council (2025), “Tamaki Makaurau is growing, and Wellesley Street plays a vital role in the future of the city centre” (Wellesley Street Bus Improvements, 2025). There is opportunity to follow the ideas presented by the council and expand on them to integrate ecologies into our city framework. With my proposed transformation of streetscapes into green corridors, movement through the city becomes a priority. Ceasing most of the automobile traffic, a

restructuring of this project could see the introduction of a new system to allow humans to move within these new ecologies. Wellesley Street can serve as an ecological artery, running through the heart of Auckland's CBD, uniting underutilised green spaces to form a continuous ecosystem that merges the infrastructure of a city with the untapped potential of ecology.

Figure 3. Waihorotiu Historic Alignment. *Stream Daylighting: Identifying Opportunities for Central Auckland.*

Image removed due to copyright restrictions. The original image can be viewed at: <http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/technicalpublications/TR2008-027%20Stream%20Daylighting%20Identifying%20Opportunities%20part%202.pdf>

Image removed due to copyright restrictions. The original image can be viewed at: <https://ourauckland.auckland-council.govt.nz/news/2023/07/auckland-s-heritage-buildings-offer-a-glimpse-of-the-city-s-past/>

Figure 4. ourAuckland. *Auckland's heritage buildings offer a glimpse of the city's past.*

1.2 Thinking for Rewilding

Ecosystems as Kin

What are the wider ramifications of rewilding? How can we think of this as a process but also as a different way of being in the world? Environmental humanities scholar Deborah Bird Rose explores themes of multispecies kinship, ecological ethics, and care in times of environmental crisis. In her work, a collection of essays expands upon the work of Rose by exploring ecological thinking through a variety of different lenses (Rose, 2022). The contributors thin k with Rose to expand on her central idea of kinship beyond the human, exploring how the relations between humans, plants, animals, and rivers are interconnected. Kinship, in traditional terms, describes family; your blood. But when applied to environmental thinking, it expands to things beyond human. Everything is kin, and that relationship places each of us along a living, interconnected web. Kinship means understanding the natural world not as other but as family, something we are deeply connected to and responsible for. If you would do anything for family, then why would you not do anything to shape the world around you.

This concept of kin helped me shift my conceptualisation of rewilding from simply ecological strategy to an ethical and relational practice. How do we live with other species and not just design space for them, and how can we as architects take responsibility for the wider environment and care for all things, land, water, animals, plants? Repositioning rewilding as an ethical practice of relation opens a more-than-human approach to design; one that is focused on prioritising care and coexistence rather than control. Restoration is togetherness. This means that we are not simply playing out an act to regenerate ecosystems but we are forming a shared process where the lines between the human and the non-human are blurred. Rewilding is a way of thinking that generates more than simple ecological interventions, it is a framing that situates living relationships, sustaining both people and the environment.

This thesis explores the idea of designing for more-than-human. This requires me to consider beyond what just humans perceive and account for how plants and animals view their surroundings. What does a city look like to a bird, or a bee, or a lizard? How can we design urban spaces to foster the more than human connections, creating a symbiosis between all life and providing nurturing habitats that interweave the fabric of a city with its lost ecologies?

THINKING WITH

DEBORAH BIRD ROSE

THOM VAN DOOREN &

MATTHEW CHRULEW,

EDITORS

Figure 5. Rose. *Kin: Thinking with Deborah Bird Rose.*

KIN

The Agency of Matter

Exploring rewilding as a relational and ethical practice that is more than human leads to an understanding that the wider living system is already highly active and interactive. What can this mean for design? Political theorist Jane Bennett's thinking around the agency of matter offers a provocative lens through which to reconsider our views and misconceptions about the built environment (Bennett, 2019). Thus, according to Bennett, materials, objects, and infrastructure are more than passive systems. Instead, they are linkages within a complex relationship with all things ecological. By acknowledging the liveliness of matter we can shift our ways of thinking, becoming more in tune with the building blocks that surround us and begin to engage with ecological systems that are so much more expansive than we thought.

In her work Bennett challenged the traditional view of matter as an inert and lifeless thing and instead proposed that all matter possesses its own kind of vitality. This is described as "thing-power", the idea that non-human materials, from the smallest particle to the largest, are active, living, and can interact with the world around them (Bennett, 2019). As designers, this encourages us to consider how materials and spaces interact with and affect the environments they inhabit, promoting a deeper understanding of ecological sensitivity and care for the spaces we aid in creating.

This re-imagining of matter as vibrant and active opens a variety of new possibilities within design. It becomes useful to understand that cities are not fixed structures. They are an assemblage of living, breathing systems that interact, evolve, and regenerate over time. Just as ecosystems are not static, cities too are dynamic and should be treated as the connection between the human and the non-human.

Ultimately, *Vibrant Matter* cements itself as a framework for understanding design as an act of engagement with all matter of things around us, appreciating that everything contains its own vitality, and encouraging a more holistic approach to architecture and urbanism. This text frames my research by offering a foundational perspective into how we perceive the world around us. It reinforces my goals of creating regenerative, multispecies urban spaces, and supports my thinking that architecture is about how we can be interconnected into a wider, evolving, ecological system.

Vibrant Matter

a political ecology of things



Jane Bennett

Figure 6. Bennett. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*.

1.3 Design Precedents

There is now a diverse range of precedents for urban rewilding interventions that have successfully integrated ecological systems into urban fabrics. These include urban or built approaches along with more explicitly ecological methods. In this section, I explore five approaches that highlight different design strategies implemented around the world, each varying in scope and scale, and draw lessons for how ecological design principles begin to inform urban interventions. High Line explores how a regeneration of a disused urban infrastructure can rewild. Cheonggyecheon Stream reveals how daylighting urban waterways can restore ecological and social vitality. Zealandia shows how urban sanctuaries can regenerate native ecologies and foster multispecies coexistence. Bosco Verticale demonstrates how architecture itself can become a living ecosystem, merging human and non-human habitation. ReGen Village envisions rewilding as systemic living, where housing, agriculture, and technology form circular ecosystems.

High Line — New York City

Landscape architecture firms Diller Scofidio + Renfro and James Corner Field Operations developed a public park on a former railway track in Manhattan, New York City. The project transformed a disused industrial space into a thriving ecological corridor that has succeeded in regenerating lost ecosystems and promoted biodiversity in a previously urban dominated space (Diller Scofidio + Renfro, n.d.). Growth of wild grass and plants was cultivated through intentional “cracks” in the sidewalk encouraging nature to push its way through man-made design and cement its way into the walkway, thus symbolising nature’s resilience and desire to co-exist in our environments. High Line is an exemplar in horizontal rewilding, forming a public walkable space which is blossoming with native plants and wildlife. Humans and non-humans are able to integrate and live together seamlessly, demonstrating multispecies coexistence. High Line is renowned for its transformation of a small, underutilised space, into a hub of activity. It highlights the importance of designing for these human-nature connections and this idea of “agri-tecture—part agriculture, part architecture” (Diller Scofidio + Renfro, n.d., section “Design”) which is a concept that blends together architecture and agriculture to address the challenges of urbanisation in our cities.

Cheonggyecheon Stream — Seoul

The Cheonggyecheon Stream Restoration Project is a transformative urban renewal project located in Seoul, South Korea (Urban Design Case Study Archive, n.d.). What was once a buried and polluted waterway concealed by an elevated highway became an ecological and social corridor that runs through the heart of the city. Its primary function was to reintroduce natural systems back into the environment and reintegrate back into the cityscape. This restoration project re-established the forgotten natural resources of the city, creating both aquatic and riparian ecosystems, and forming green public space for both humans and non-humans. Cheonggyecheon exemplifies the power of daylighting waterways and reclaiming urban landscapes back for nature. Similar design strategies can be implemented into Auckland’s CBD to reawaken the Waihorotiu Stream and breathe new life into an otherwise dull and uninteresting space.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions. The original image can be viewed at: <https://dsrny.com/project/the-high-line>

Image removed due to copyright restrictions. The original image can be viewed at: <https://www.theseoulguide.com/cheonggyecheon-stream/>

Zealandia — Wellington

Zealandia is a fenced, urban sanctuary located in Wellington, New Zealand. It is dedicated to the restoration of native flora and fauna and regenerating lost ecosystems that had once inhabited the land. Zealandia has become a global model for ecological regeneration within urban environments due to its success in reintroducing over 20 species of native wildlife which had been absent from the area for over a century (Wellington City Council, 2023). Zealandia focuses on the pre-human as it is concerned with the ecological systems that were in place before human intervention, and strives to restore the natural balance of these ecosystems. Predator-proof fencing prevents unwanted pests and invasive species from affecting these systems and keeps the habitat safe for native wildlife. This project has succeeded and lays the foundations of a framework that successfully reintroduces species, restores the natural landscape and waterways, and acts as an educational community network where visitors can become involved in conservation efforts. Zealandia embodies the principles of urban rewilding, proving how urban-scale ecological transformations can thrive within a city.

Bosco Verticale — Milan

Bosco verticale is Italian and translates to ‘vertical forest’, and accordingly, the rewilding project known as Bosco Verticale is a pair of residential towers located in Milan, Italy, which has turned the facades of these buildings into micro-habitats that integrate over 900 trees and 2,000 plants. The project was completed by Boeri Studio and serves as a model of vertical rewilding in a dense urban environment. It provides habitations for both humans and non-humans as it integrates residential housing with a natural ecosystem for a variety of wildlife. Ecologically, Bosco Verticale generates its own microclimate. (Stefano Boeri Architetti, n.d.). As such, it exemplifies how architecture can actively host non-human life and foster multispecies relationships and creates this idea that buildings themselves can be living, organic, things. Incorporating both vertical and horizontal rewilding through my design project will allow me to blend ecological and architectural systems and regenerate the urban cityscape of Auckland.

ReGen Village — Almere

ReGen Village is an eco-village concept that serves as a community model for self-sustaining hubs that function off grid. The proposal is planned to be developed in Almere, Netherlands, serving as the first pilot community. The village aims to demonstrate how residential communities can live and function with minimal ecological impacts, forming a closed-loop cycle that maintains all required resources to allow humans to thrive (urbanNext, 2025). The ReGen concept relies on being regenerative so that each part of the system provides benefit to another. This project positions rewilding not as aesthetic but systemic. Waste becomes nutrients for growing agricultures, architecture becomes habitat for humans and non-humans, and infrastructure becomes a foundational living ecology that actively supports, connects, and regenerates natural systems rather than disrupting them. Similar strategies could be deployed within Auckland CBD, introducing scalable regenerative urban nodes that leave no impact on proposed ecologies.

This chapter has explored a range of key design contexts, ontologies and precedents in order to set the ground for the ensuing design research. The examination of ideas such as the more-than-human kinship and ecological agency has provided a framework for the integration of ecological processes into the built environment. In the following chapter, I explore how ecological theory can become a methodology that structures the design conceptually and in terms of methods. In doing so, it bridges the gap between conceptual understanding and design application, offering a framework for translating the principle of rewilding in actionable urban strategies.

Figure 9. WellingtonNZ. *Zealandia Te Mara a Tane*.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions. The original image can be viewed at: <https://www.wellingtonnz.com/visit/see-and-do/zealandia-te-mara-a-tane>

Image removed due to copyright restrictions. The original image can be viewed at: <https://www.stefanoboeriarchitetti.net/en/project/vertical-forest/>

Image removed due to copyright restrictions. The original image can be viewed at: <https://www.efeekt.dk/regenvillages>

Chapter Two – Methods of Rewilding

Introduction to Chapter

This chapter establishes the foundations for the research, outlining how rewilding principles are translated into architectural thinking and practice. It moves from theoretical and contextual thinking into the evaluation and creation of eco-centric frameworks, placing the human within an ecological plane. The first section critically explores existing design frameworks, namely the 14 Patterns of Biophilic Design, assessing its comparability to core principles of rewilding. The section draws connections, defining its strengths and weaknesses, and ultimately, a reformed set of patterns are generated that are tailored to and built for rewilding efforts. The second section acknowledges that design is never neutral and positions the research as active within ecological systems. Drawing on indigenous knowledge and ways of thinking, the chapter establishes a connection to place for people positioning designers as part of living systems. This chapter identifies opportunities and constraints within the project, and measures how success is viewed. Overall this chapter places rewilding as both a conceptual framework and an evolving architectural practice, rooted in care, reciprocity, and regeneration.

2.1 The Patterns of Rewilding

The 14 Patterns of Biophilic Design

This research responds to biophilic design theory, specifically the 14 Patterns of Biophilic Design as defined by Terrapin Bright Green (Browning, Ryan & Clancy, 2014). Terrapin Bright Green is a New York-based sustainability consulting firm founded in 2016 and recognised for pioneering ecological and regenerative design strategies. Their report on the 14 Patterns of Biophilic Design, or the patterns for short, articulates a framework for how nature-inspired design can improve human wellbeing and connect architecture with ecological systems. This is a structured set of design principles for integrating nature into the built environment with the goal of enhancing human health, productivity, and mental/physical wellbeing. The patterns form a designer's toolkit, a checklist of fundamentals to create environments that provide functional connections to nature.

The patterns fall under three categories: *Nature in the Space* refers to the direct physical introduction of natural elements into space; *Natural Analogues* refers to the representation of natural forms and patterns, an evocation of nature rather than the physical presence of it; and *Nature of the Space* refers to spaces that mimic human experiences of nature (figure X). The framework is useful as it highlights biophilia and structures thinking around this. A key limitation is the way that it is situated within an anthropocentric view. Thus, it is focused on human benefit, human health, human wellbeing, but neglects to consider ecological processes. It connects humans to nature, but it does not connect humans within nature. From a critical perspective, this limitation constrains the ecological potential of biophilic design. Plants and animals are seen as symbolic or decorative elements rather than active participants in a wider ecological system.

In the context of this research, the patterns provide the framework for describing human-nature connection while a focus on ecological rewilding is used to capture gaps which a focus on ecological rewilding can address. Consequently, this research utilises an eco-centric lens, centring on ecological. Such an approach embraces the emergent and non-linear complexities that arise with rewilding processes to develop an ecologic design process. As Scheiffer's (2018) discussion of the reintroduction of wolves highlights a single ecological intervention can ripple outward through "trophic cascades," reshaping not only the relationships between different species but the physical geography of the landscape (Scheiffer, 2018). This case helps illustrate the non-linear behaviour of ecosystems, they are dynamic, adaptive, and interdependent, small changes can cascade into unforeseen outcomes. Designing through this kind of system-based lens means embracing that unpredictability, allowing architecture to participate within rather than control. This transition marks the shift from biophilic design as human-centred to rewilding as life-centred. Design calls for a reorientation of this framework that places urgency on the more-than-human and promotes symbiotic living.

Mapping Natures Patterns

This section extends the analysis of the 14 Patterns of Biophilic Design (Browning, Ryan & Clancy, 2014) by positioning them in dialogue with, and comparing against, rewilding (Figure 13). The idea is to identify overlaps, gaps, and contradictions between biophilia, the human-centred, and rewilding, the eco-centric. Through this mapping process, each pattern was assessed for its relationship to rewilding as either direct, partial, or opposing. This approach allows the research to move beyond an anthropocentric framing and towards eco-centric understanding, one that acknowledges non-human agency and regenerative processes. The mapping reveals both areas where the patterns align closely with rewilding principles and spaces where critical gaps emerge, particularly within sections that follow constraints or rules.

Figure 13 maps the intersections between biophilic design and rewilding, identifying direct, partial, and opposing relationships. The mapping serves as a diagnostic tool, creating a comparative exercise that shows how the patterns can be re-interpreted using an eco-centric lens, and setting the stage for the development of my own set of principles in relation to rewilding.

Direct connections are *Visual and Non-Visual Connection with Nature*, *Non-Rhythmic Sensory Stimuli*, *Thermal and Airflow Variability*, *Presence of Water*, *Connection with Natural Systems* and *Mystery*. These Patterns all foster multisensory engagement within ecological processes, drawing the human into direct contact with the environment. *Visual and Non-visual Connection with Nature* explores how nature is interacted with by humans. Our senses play a vital role in how we integrate within living systems and how we perceive the environment. *Non-Rhythmic Sensory Stimuli* mirrors the unpredictability of rewilded ecologies. Movement, sound, and scent are spontaneous, not contained by fixed cycles. The rewilded is free, ecosystems are dynamic, living and breathing as its own entity. *Thermal and Airflow Variability* follows natural processes in terms of change. These environmental conditions are not regulated to provide comfort or tailored to human needs; they are honest. It follows the climate of place, the ebb and flow of natural systems that allow us to integrate within ecologies rather than above them. *Presence of Water* directly relates to ecological regeneration; it defines the core structure of life and growth. It itself is a living system, something that connects all corners of an ecological system together. This pattern goes beyond a holistic view of

an aesthetic that is mainly concerned with how things look, towards an understanding that systems are both dynamic and functional. *Connection with Natural System* is an explicit overlap with rewilding. It does not just recognise, but embraces, the cycles and independent processes such as growth, decay, succession, and migration that structure a living system. *Mystery* envelops a rewilding sense of discovery in that it captures how spaces can transform and evolve over time, capitalising on the human instincts of curiosity. Nature provides a forever changing network of ecological processes, that we are not intended to intervene with, but merely observe.

Partial connections are *Dynamic and Diffuse Light*, *Biomorphic Forms and Patterns*, *Material Connection with Nature*, *Prospect*, and *Refuge*. These patterns all share affinities with rewilding principles, despite not fully embracing an eco-centric lens. Rather than promoting ecological participation, they become more concerned with controlled spatial experiences. *Dynamic and Diffuse Light* follows the interplay with light and shadow within nature. In architectural application, this is generally artificially controlled or simulated where rewilding positions light and shadow as a natural system. Rewilding this as part of a wider ecology, something that naturally occurs and aids processes that sustain life. *Biomorphic Forms and Patterns* describes an emulation of natural forms and shapes to create an aesthetic familiarity with nature. It becomes more of an abstraction, something that aims to simulate but not fully engage these evolving systems. Rewilding goes beyond mimicry; it is a representation of these natural geometries. *Material Connection with Nature* promotes the use of natural materials within architectural interventions to promote an engagement with ecologies. These materials, however, often remain static, visual qualities that do not fully participate in ecological cycles. They are an evocation, but not an activation. *Prospect* is rooted in the psyche of human connections, distant views and orientations designed for the human. Rewilding can push this, tailoring more towards ecological permeability, enabling species to navigate the landscape. *Refuge* is typically a human retreat through architecture, a space to facilitate safety and rest. Partial Connections are limited in their inclusivity, not yet applying to the more-than-human. Rewilding can extend this idea to multi-species habitation to include spaces that provide protection for other living beings.

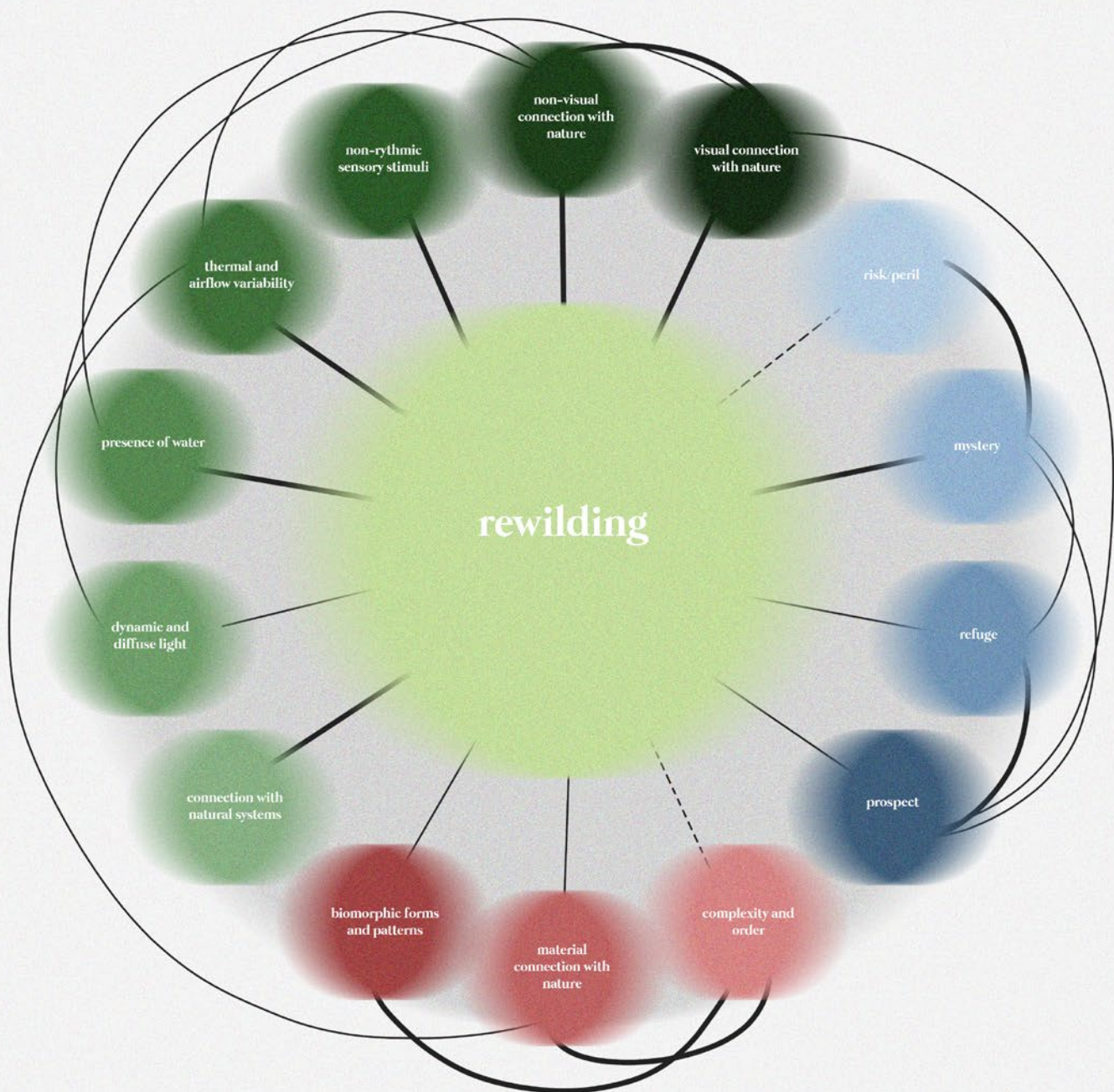
Opposing connections are *Complexity and Order*, and *Risk/Peril*. These patterns contrast rewilding principles because they operate through a lens of control as they strive to manage ecological systems and prevent freedom. Rewilding in my view means openness, a system that is not conformed by anything else but its own processes. *Complexity and Order* prioritise the human, curating systems to a fixed hierarchy or composition. It becomes about the visual but does not embrace ecological systems. Rewilding should value natural succession, spaces that evolve and change; not through human intervention but through its own cause. *Risk/Peril* follows a controlled introduction of uncertainty or danger. It plays on the human psychology to simulate environments that engage. But why simulate? Nature itself is already an uncertainty; rewilding needs to embrace genuine ecological unpredictability as part of its vitality.

These comparisons highlight opportunity for a new framework, one that goes beyond the human, placing all living beings on an equal plane. By mapping the patterns against the concept of rewilding, this section has shown that only few biophilic patterns extend beyond human-centric perspectives. I propose that rewilding must support multispecies coexistence and kinship. Building from these comparisons, the following section introduces a new framework; a framework tailored towards an eco-centric view that repositions design and architecture thinking towards ecological reciprocity.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions. The original image can be viewed at: <https://www.terrapinbrightgreen.com/blog/2015/09/big-data-biophilia-spatial-design/>

mapping natures patterns


rewilding and biophilic design




direct connection ———

partial connection ———

opposing connection - - - - -

nature in the space 

natural analogues 


nature of the space 

Figure 13. Hutchins. *Mapping Natures Patterns*.

The 6 Patterns of Rewilding

This research now proposes a new framework: *The 6 Patterns of Rewilding* (Figure 14). While biophilic design centred on the human experience, these 6 patterns extend the framework to the more-than-human. In this sense, the 6 patterns represent a new agency of ecological reciprocity that repositions design as an active participant within living systems rather than an observer. As rewilding practice continues to evolve, it reveals a shift from human-centric design to ecological autonomy. As Monbiot (2023) observed, “while rewilding has spread further and faster in the past 10 years than I could have dreamed, it follows a certain pattern, described by ecologists as “non-trophic”.” (Monbiot, 2023, para. 3). Trophic rewilding follows the introduction of missing keystone species to restore ecological processes and systems. Current rewilding implementation usually lacks this, hence becoming “non-trophic”, so that ecological processes tend to be closely monitored by people. These non-trophic rewilded spaces still provide ecological value, but Monbiot (2023) argued that these native species can create richer and more beneficial, living systems. It is by letting go, allowing nature and its ecological processes to take agency, that a shift from an anthropocentric lens to an eco-centric one can occur. Each of the patterns encompasses an eco-centric lens and together they form a new design methodology that acknowledges the natural systems of nature, encompassing its fluidity, unpredictability, and self-sustaining processes.

Figure 14 illustrates the conceptual framework for the 6 Patterns of Rewilding. It expands upon the previous comparative analysis presented in Figure X and aims to position new patterns as evolutions from the 14 Patterns of Biophilic Design, reframed through an eco-centric lens rather than an anthropocentric one. The diagram relates inputs that followed through from the previous comparison, establishing the new set of patterns to guide the work, creating outputs that aim to reshape the way we interact with the living world.

These new patterns include *Multispecies Kinship*, *Connection to Place*, *Rhythmic Ecologies*, *Nature-Led Design*, *Living Texture*, and *Natural Succession*. Through this set of patterns, the 14 Patterns of Biophilic Design framework has been extended, now grounded in eco-centric design thinking. Previously, nature has been situated as a tool, something to enhance human wellbeing, creating connections to nature but failing to place humans within it. These 6 patterns reimagine that framework by positioning the human as an active collaborator who is working alongside natural systems to foster multispecies coexistence and ecological agency. The pattern of *Multispecies Kinship* extends beyond *Visual and Non-Visual Connection with Nature* to establish a relational framework built on coexistence. It repositions nature by no longer conceiving of it as a backdrop to human agency but as its own active, ecological network. It becomes kin as plants, animals, and microbes all share the same ecosystem and taking part in a wider living, breathing network. This understanding draws on Deborah Bird Rose’s theory of kinship (Rose, 2022). It is an approach based upon care, the idea that the non-human should be thought of as more than other, it is family. *Connection to Place* expands on the biophilic pattern *Connection with Natural Systems*. We do not need to just interact with the physical environment; we need to root ourselves within them. It is about embracing the local ecology, the whakapapa of place, the rich histories of land. Design must adapt and respond to site; instead of being situated upon it, it is situated within it. *Rhythmic Ecologies* builds from *Non-Rhythmic Sensory Stimuli*. It shifts a focus from a momentary perception of nature to living within the rhythms of the environment. It encompasses ecological time, the rhythms of day and night, of migration and movement, of life and decay.

Pushing beyond a pattern designed for static experience, *Rhythmic Ecologies* designs with these natural rhythms, accepting it as a state of living, an experience of life. *Nature-Led Design* becomes an evolution of *Biomorphic Forms and Patterns*. It transitions from representation and mimicry of natural forms to allowing nature to be an active participant, something to lead the design. It encourages design to embrace rather than control, allowing space to adapt, transform, and age with its ecologies. *Living Texture*, an expansion of *Material Connection with Nature*, is a call for change in the way we integrate materiality. Material systems should be ones that are alive, active. They need to react and change to the environment and represent the shifting elements of nature. *Natural Succession* builds upon *Connection with Natural Systems* and *Mystery*. It recognises the idea that rewilded environments are not finished and do not end. These ecosystems are ever evolving and changing in response to the environment. *Natural Succession* becomes a prioritisation for long-term transformation. Withdrawing human interaction and allowing ecosystems to evolve independently marks a shift from completion to continuance that should lay the foundation for the spaces that we design. Both the built and the organic must evolve together.

Together, these 6 Patterns form a framework that bridges ecological theory and design practice. Applied within an urban scale, they should inform design, guiding how we redesign our cities to create better environments for humans and non-humans alike. In a rewilded city architecture becomes an active substrate, streets and corridors become habitats, facades host ecosystems. These patterns ultimately transform static systems into living networks.

rewilding patterns

a regenerative design framework

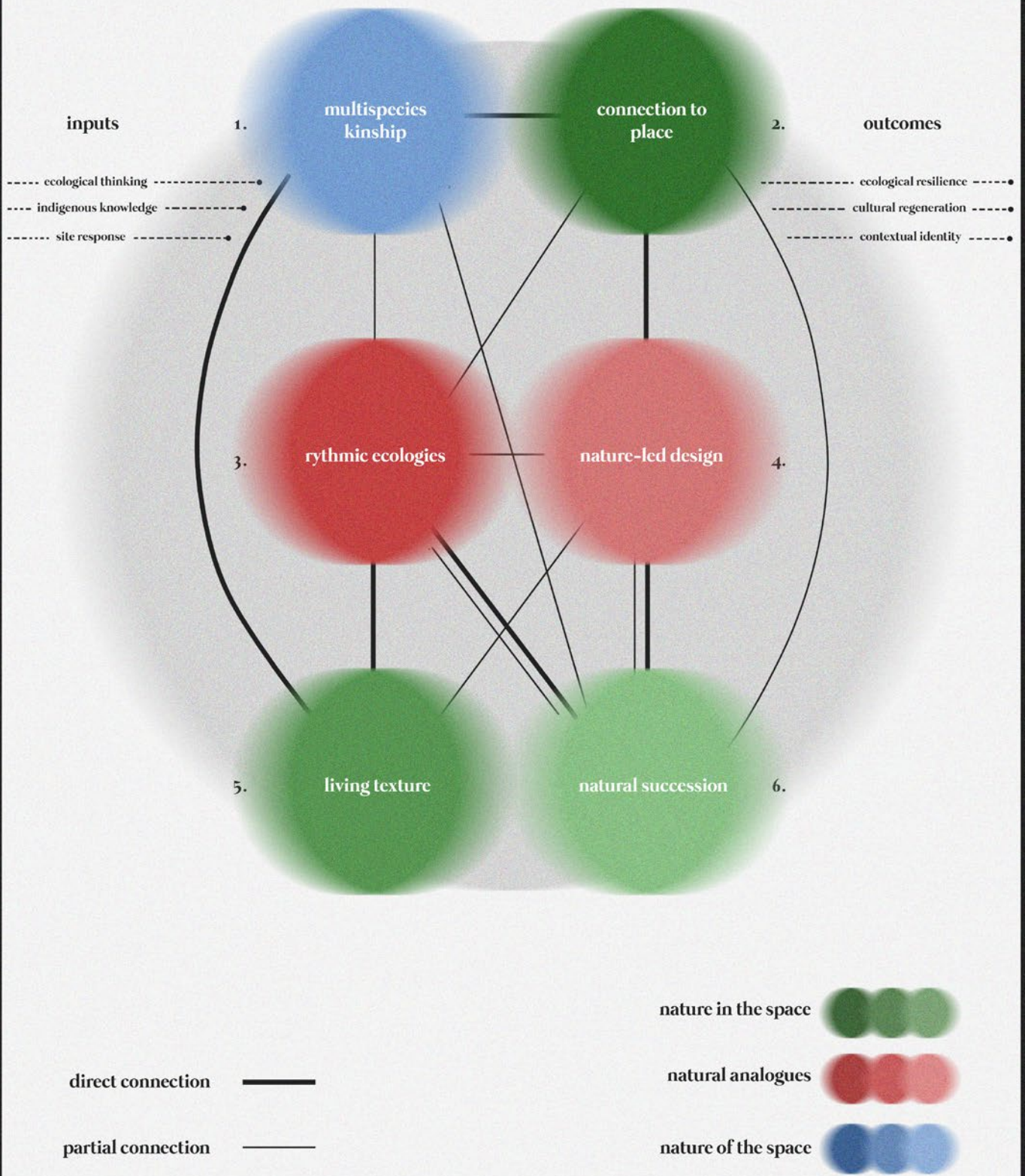


Figure 14. Hutchins. *6 Patterns of Rewilding*.

2.2 Situating the Self

Positionality

To situate oneself within the research is to understand that design is never neutral. Every design decision carries with it intention, a purposeful change to space. As designers, we carry an obligation, not only to humans who will inhabit these spaces but to the ecosystems that sustain them. My role in this research is not to dominate ecological outcomes but to guide them, facilitate conditions where the natural world thrives without human intervention. I become an active participant, someone to observe, respond and co-create with, merging both the human and non-human world. My thinking is rooted within my connection to Aotearoa, shaped by its landscapes, layered ecologies, and natural rhythms. These living systems teach me to adapt, to immerse myself within an eco-centric lens, to respect that which lays the foundation for life. Grounding my position further are Māori frameworks of kaitiakitanga and whakapapa, which help to remind me that all things are connected: people, land, water, sky. All these ideas combined form the foundations upon which a living fabric is built, an interwoven system that reciprocates care and relationship. Through rewilding, I carry this obligation, repositioning design as an act of restoration rather than an act of control. Architecture, when viewed through this lens, becomes a form of care. It is a testament to kinship, where built form and landscape grow and thrive together.

Opportunities and Constraints

Situated within the dense fabric of Auckland's CBD, this research surrounds itself with both opportunity and limitation. The space between Victoria Park and Albert Park offers potential to act as a spine, cutting through the CBD, reconnecting fragmented ecologies, and creating a cascading web of green belts. It lays an opportunity to replenish lost ecosystems and return to a state of before, before mass urbanisation, before sprawling infrastructures, before human. This idea of living corridors replaces once familiar streetscapes into multispecies networks, transforming the ground, rooftops, and facades and tests a wide scale application of rewilding to an urban fabric. The thesis positions rewilding not as an environmental intervention, but as a foundational urban strategy capable of transforming the spatial, social, and ecological fabric of the city.

While the design strategy cements itself as a speculative proposal, its implementation within a built environment faces significant challenges. The priority of Auckland's CBD is placed on density, efficient infrastructure delivery, and maximising investments (Auckland Council, 2023). Ecological thinking is an afterthought, something that serves to provide surface level integration. Design is human-centric, it fails to put ecologies on equal footing with human needs. Space is valuable, the act of withdrawing human agency from the groundscape means reforming the very fabric of the city. If we designate the streets to ecologically replenish, then the circulation changes, humans must then traverse the city through a different plane, allowing both the human and the non-human to co-exist and live in kinship. I think the challenge within design lies in bridging time. Urban time moves fast, it is urgent, immediate, rapid, whereas ecological time moves slowly, its processes deliberate, natural, unfolding through growth, decay, and succession. Systems need to be designed to begin within human

timeframes but endure and adapt to ecological ones. Architecture should act as a scaffold for ecological time, offering temporary structure while nature regains its boundaries.

Measures of Success

Success within this research is not based upon immediate completion. Instead, it is about enduring. It is measured by a point in which human interventions can recede and the living systems they once supported begin to thrive. Architecture is not just judged by its form at the moment of construction, but how it continues to live, transform, and sustain life over time. Should this not be the same for ecologies? Success lies in the project's capacity, how it is able to nurture biodiversity, restore ecological processes, and create spaces where human and non-human life can intertwine and coexist meaningfully. But it is also about more than just the physical transformation of the city. Success emerges through both perception and participation: when the lens through which the CBD is viewed shifts from an anthropocentric view to an eco-centric view, and when the city begins to be seen not as an inert thing but a living ecology. Small shifts within this new ecology will be observed; native birds will return and thrive, concrete will be replaced by green, humans interacting not as dominant forces but participants within space. Success is when design ceases control and instead becomes part of an evolving system that sustains and regenerates through time.

This chapter established the methodological framework that guides this research, and situates the self within architecture, as an active participant and observer, someone to guide ecological processes but not control it. Through the analysis of the 14 Patterns of Biophilic Design, their anthropocentric focus was revealed, prioritising the human over the non-human and placing the human with nature, not within it. Prompting a shift to a more eco-centric lens, the 6 Patterns of Rewilding emerged, a framework which positions architecture as a part of nature, a living participant, rather than a dominating space. By situating design within these processes, this chapter acknowledges that design cannot be neutral; instead, it must be relational and responsive. This thinking now informs the next stage in this research that captures rewilding transitioning from theory to practice.



Figure 15. Hutchins. *Decomposition.*

Chapter Two – Designing the Living City

Introduction to Chapter

This chapter explores the application of the research and theoretical thinking developed through literature, context, design precedents, and methodology. This stage of the thesis investigates how architectural design can operate as an extension of living systems, aiding establishing ecologies, and working towards multispecies cohabitation. Practice-led design work follows structured key events, functioning as critical checkpoints within the study where ideas are tested, challenged, and then refined. The chapter is structured chronologically, tracing the evolution of the design as it blossoms from early concepts and site investigations to a resolved intervention that successfully regenerates lost ecosystems and forms ecological pathways the host humans and non-humans alike. In preparation for each event, design drawings are presented, and the suitability of the design is tested. The event is followed by feedback from supervisors, and my personal reflections on the process. Across these stages, the chapter positions architectural design as a method of inquiry, one that explores ecological relationships, multispecies needs, and new spatial possibilities for a living city. The concept of rewilding presented in this exegesis implements theory into practice and transforms urbanisation into regeneration, offering an eco-centric lens in which the city takes shape.

3.1 Establishing the Foundations

Mapping Ecologies

The initial set of mapping serves to establish a foundational understanding of the CBD. These first maps already highlight the potential of the area to be an ecological system rather than an urban space. Figure 16 identifies existing green space, revealing a fragmented ecological network, with small, disjointed pockets of vegetation spread across the city. When viewed through an eco-centric lens, these spaces demonstrate a severe lack of structural connection, acting as small, isolated interventions rather than a cohesive network of habitats. This drawing therefore highlights a critical spatial condition within the CBD. Infrastructure has minimal ecological function, offering little in the form of species movement, biodiversity support, or connectivity.

Evolving from this, Figure 17 proposes a connective ecological corridor. One that begins to reimagine the CBD as a series of interlinked habitats. The mapping highlights key connective opportunities within the drawing, the main connections following Victoria to Albert Park, cutting an axis through the city, then connecting onwards to the Domain and Newmarket region as well as Dove Myer Robinson Park and the Parnell region. This proposal shifts from fragmented ecologies to a continuous body of vegetation, promoting species movement and completely shifting the transversality of these parts of the CBD for both humans and non-humans. Together, these drawings demonstrate how spatial mapping can expose the absence of ecological function within a city, identify opportunity, and suggest options for reconnection and regeneration.

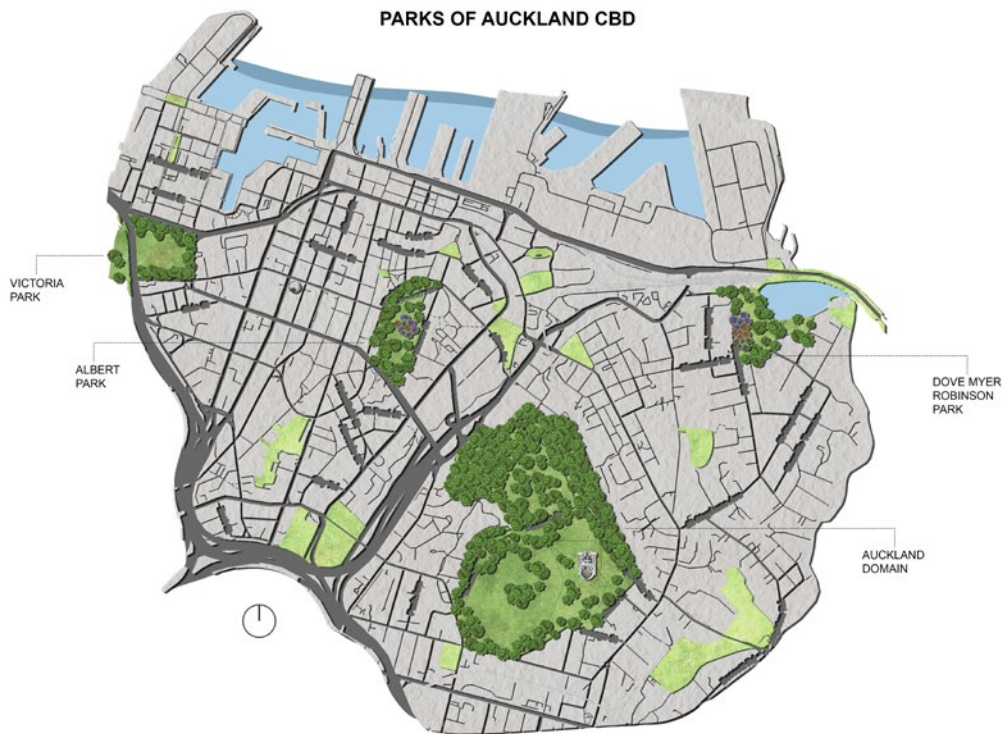


Figure 16. Hutchins. *Parks of Auckland CBD.*



Figure 17. Hutchins. *Proposed Rewilding of Auckland CBD.*

Drawing Urban to Ecological Connections

This set of drawings consists of conceptual collages that explore speculative futures for urban life within a city. It illustrates visually how rewilding might interact with existing infrastructure and re-imagines spaces into one of cohabitation. The drawings act as emerging design tools, composing how human and non-human cohabitation may function in relation to each other. Figure 18 imagines a green link, a zone where ecology can traverse between built architecture and cement itself into the fabric of a city. It hosts dense vegetation, attracting wildlife species, as well as spaces for pollinator habitats and resting nodes; ecologies are not contained but a part of a wider system allowing one to root in place and be within nature. In this proposed connection, ecology is not depicted as an isolated pocket but an extension of a wider living system. A sanctuary within an otherwise inert landscape.

A similar exploration of a rewilded streetscape materialises in Figure 19. Here, the potential for the places we traverse to be more than is explored. Transformed are everyday urban environments, reconfigured to support multispecies living and merging human activity with a non-human presence. The drawing begins to think about rewilding, not just through a horizontal lens but a vertical one, for instance by extending ecological processes to underutilised rooftop spaces and uninspired facades. Architecture should be more than a static building; it needs to be active, a part of a wider system. As speculative collages, these drawings establish an ambition for this project. A vision that reimagines urban environments as living systems. It argues that architecture should become a facilitator of ecological regeneration, merging built typologies with a natural, forgotten world.

A Journey Through

Site mapping becomes a valuable method of research for this project as it realises the actuality of space and depicts what traversal through a city entails. Figure 20 highlights the aforementioned lack of ecological presence within the Auckland CBD, following the journey one takes from Victoria Park to Albert Park. A pathway which begins and ends within two prominent green spaces lacks in any ecological presence in between. Framed through a pedestrian lens, the viewer follows the spatial experience between these two fragmented spaces. The drawing reveals the stark transition that occurs, moving from a brief moment of refuge into the industrial core of the city. Piwakawaka trail above, tracing a flight path across the same urban corridor. It provokes an understanding of the challenges faced by native species attempting to move through these disconnected ecosystems, lacking the safety of vegetation and canopy cover. The mapping reveals the need for change, a reconstruction of how we design our landscapes to foster multispecies cohabitation. There is a realisation that the buried ecologies that once spanned the landscape became lost, causing a disconnect with the natural world. A completely new experience of our cities is needed to revitalise the space.



Figure 18. Hutchins. *Conceptual Link.*



Figure 19. Hutchins. *Conceptual Streetscape*.

VICTORIA
PARK





Figure 20. Hutchins.
Journey Map.

Speculative Passageways

This research speculates on a rewilded urban future. Speculative drawings have been an important tool to envision how ecological systems might be spatially integrated into the fabric of an urban city. Here, the existing intersection within the Auckland CBD of Wellesley Street and Queen Street is used, overlapped with a new architectural intervention that extends past current infrastructural norms. Figure 21 proposes an ecological overpass, a raised vegetated structure that lifts the human and non-human above the ground to safely traverse a point in the city. It becomes an elevated habitat corridor, one that starts to suggest that ecology does not need to be confined to the ground, forming a refuge that shelters from urban movement.

The second drawing, Figure 22, investigates an ecological bridge. Playing further with the idea of verticality, a continuous ecological zone is proposed by introducing an overpass. Lifting the human and non-human above ground onto a multispecies pathway transforms underutilised spaces without infringing on existing systems. Together these drawings frame rewilding as a transformative urban strategy, capable of changing the way in which we traverse our cities whilst prioritising the regeneration of ecologies. These are not fixed solutions, but conceptual possibilities, ways in which architectural thinking should shift to form a better future.

Revitalising Drawings I

At the heart of the idea of urban rewilding is the vitality and complexity of ecological systems. In terms of architectural norms, these complex systems are hard to represent. One key aspect of this exegesis was developing methods that communicate the vitality of ecological systems. In doing so it challenges the static nature of architectural images through movement, emphasising the fact that the living world is dynamic in nature. Figures 23 and 24 expand upon previous conceptual collages, reprocessing them through generative AI (Adobe Firefly, 2025) and producing animated scenes that indicate active environments. While useful, AI is limited in its ability to realise form and function of space. In this research, it was used as an indicative tool for emulating the movement of ecosystems to revitalise the drawings.

Figure 25 explores a similar medium of animation, using stop-motion techniques to construct vitality in static architecture. The image interprets movement in the form of species migration, pedestrian and automobile traffic, and wind as an ecological actor. This approach highlights how space evolves through small shifts in the environment, echoing the reality of living systems and how they dynamically change. It further reinforces a transition in architectural thinking, moving from an anthropocentric lens to an eco-centric one, viewing rewilded space as evolutions rather than depicted in a static state.



Figure 21. Hutchins. *Speculative Visualisation of Ecological Overpass.*

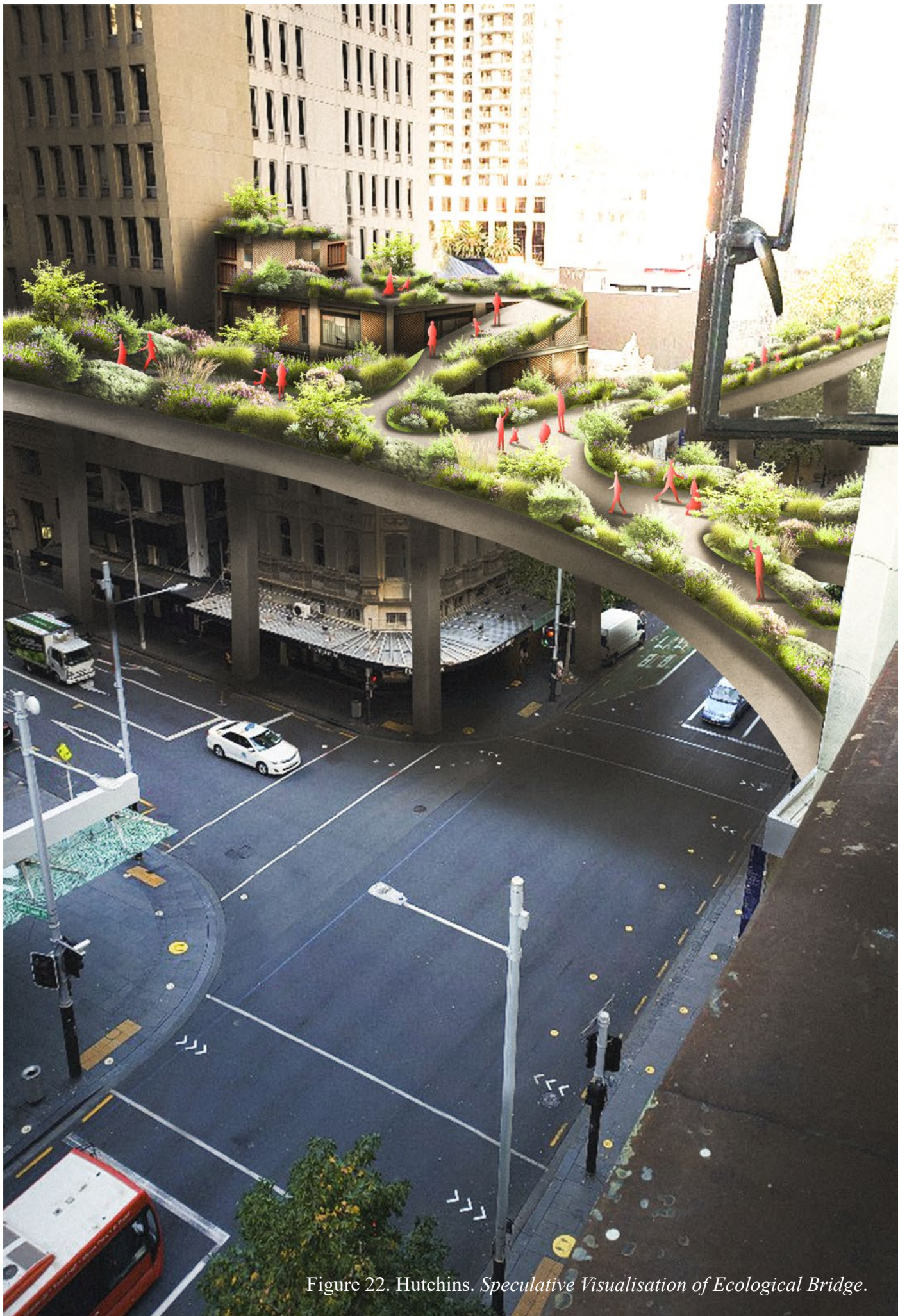


Figure 22. Hutchins. *Speculative Visualisation of Ecological Bridge.*



Figure 23. Adobe, Firefly. *Panning Ecologies*.
AI Animation of Figure 18.



Figure 24. Adobe, Firefly. *A Wider Lens*.
AI Animation of Figure 18.

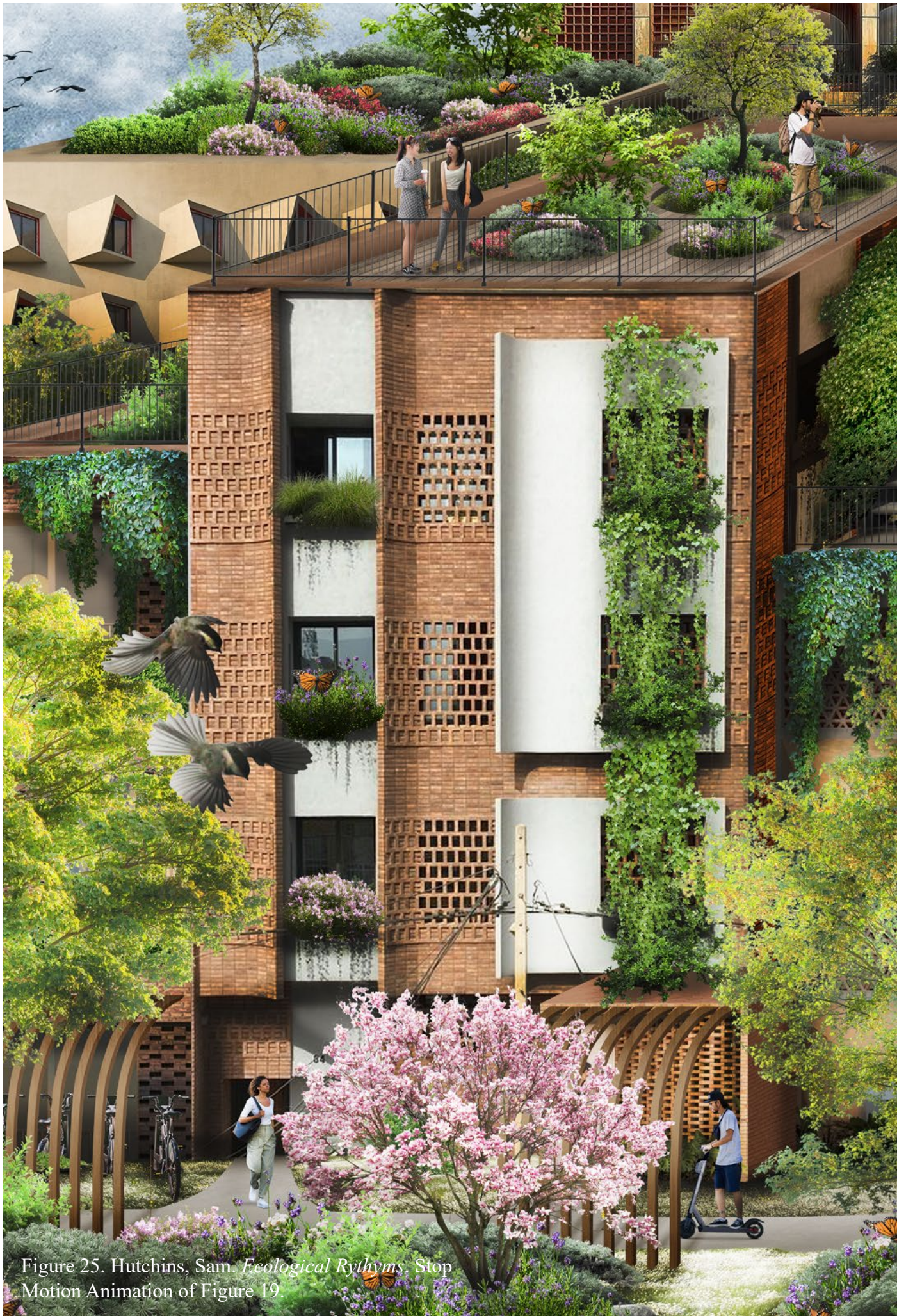


Figure 25. Hutchins, Sam. *Ecological Rythms*. Stop Motion Animation of Figure 19

Transport Hub

This set of drawings investigates the transformation of the Wellesley Street and Queen Street intersection into a rewilded urban node. At the midpoint, all lines converge to a central transport hub positioned above a rewilded streetscape and the emerging ecology of the buried Waihorotiu Stream. The drawings reimagine space as a layered ecosystem where movement, habitat, and living systems exist in kinship with each other. The hubs' design introduces a flower form, drawing from nature's patterns to evoke a relationship between built and living structures. Its roof operates as another layered ecological surface, creating a terracing system of habitat. By lifting primary modes of transport above the street level, the proposal allows for the ecological restoration of the ground as lost ecologies are now able to emerge and root themselves within an urban fabric with the stream flowing visibly alongside green corridors and pedestrian pathways.

Each drawing tests a different proposal for elevated mobility. Each radiates from the central hub, transforming an underutilised space between built form as means of transportation. Figure 26 explores a pedestrian walkway and cycleway system that emphasises a human-scale form of movement through space and draws a direct connection to emerging ecologies. Figure 27 introduces a gondola system, a much more radical approach not often seen utilised within dense urban environments. It allows for a slow-moving traversal through the city, with its extra elevation allowing for a more personalised experience of the city. Figure 28 concludes with a tram system, presenting a more infrastructurally familiar form of transportation within the CBD that does not encroach on the rewilded transition of the streetscape. Together these drawings speculate on how transport infrastructure can be restructured in a way that supports ecological processes. The suspended hub acts as a circulation node that expands and connects the urban infrastructure of a city to the living world it forgot.

Transport Hub: Site Plan

Figure 29, the site plan, traverses the isometric typologies of the transport hub into a wider realisation. Operating at a scale of 1:2500, the drawing visualises the proposed ecological link between Victoria Park and Albert Park. Fragmented space combines with a restructuring of movement infrastructure within the city. By elevating transport above the ground plane, we can follow ecologies through its continuations, immersing architecture within nature, but not directly impeding on it. The drawing illustrates three core activations: the exposed Waihorotiu Stream, the suspended transport hub, and the transformed surrounding architecture. By reinstating the stream along its historic path, ecologies that once thrived begin to regenerate, allowing water to act again as a symbol of life. The river roots itself as a hydrological spine that runs through the city and anchors rewilded landscapes as a part of the built environment. Moving above the restored ground, ecological processes are enabled to unfold as they do not interfere with existing infrastructure. The surrounding architectural fabric also transforms with these interventions as they are re-imagined as active participants within a living system, acting as extension of habitat vertically and horizontally across the site. Through these interventions, both fragmented ecologies and urban blocks can be transformed to create a single integrated living system.



Figure 26. Hutchins. *Transport Proposal: Walking/Cycling.*



Figure 27. Hutchins. *Transport Proposal: Gondola.*



Figure 28. Hutchins. *Transport Proposal: Tram.*

Figure 29. Hutchins. *Site Plan: Concept Strategy*.



site plan: concept strategy

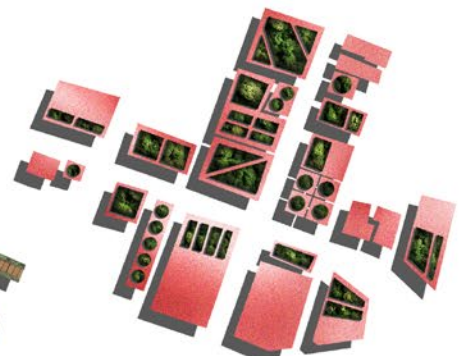
1:2500



waihorotiu stream



central hub



affected buildings

Transport Hub: Long Elevation

The long elevation cuts through the heart of the CBD and displays the vertical layering of the proposed ecology. Figure 30 follows the established Victoria Park to Albert Park connection, illustrating how an architectural intervention can be deployed within Auckland's city without impeding on current infrastructure. The proposal instead meshes within an established system and aims to expand its capabilities to foster multispecies relationships and biodiverse environments. Following the gondola-based transport scheme, the drawing reveals how an elevated mobility can operate alongside ecological restoration, positioning movement both above and within the regenerated ground plane. At the intersection with Queen Street and the revealed Waihorotiu Stream, the section features the elevated transport hub, serving as a structural landmark that roots infrastructure, people, and ecology as one. Within this vertical system, a spatial hierarchy emerges that imitates the natural function of wilds as the ground scape becomes the substrate for the city; it becomes the forest floor where natural cycles of growth and decomposition occur.

The elevated walkways form a mid-canopy layer that provide pathways for species movement and serve as navigational tools within a dense urban environment. The roofscape mirrors a canopy layer, spreading ecology across otherwise inaccessible urban spaces and offering shelter. The gondolas act almost as a species themselves: they migrate across the city like birds, minimising disturbances to other layers and using ecologies as stepping stones in which to traverse. It is through its layered composition that the drawing communicates how rewilding strategies can restructure an urban environment, suggesting a city in which the need for movement no longer displaces ecological functions but adapts to it.

Ecologies at Night

Figure 31 explores nocturnal ecologies. How can the spaces we create extend function beyond daylight and envelop the vitality of night-time ecology? The drawing emphasises the spatial relation between ecology and movement, investigating the role of nocturnal species within a reconfigured city. The elevated walkway becomes subtly illuminated by red lighting, reinforcing a care for environmental sensitivity. The lamps provide sufficient light to guide human movement through space whilst minimising the disturbance to the environment. It becomes a design tool that facilitates the needs of both the human and non-human. Along the walkway, several habitat structures are placed as resting environments for native species, such as the long-tailed bat or avian species. Nocturnal species like the ruru (morepork) become present within the ecology of our cities, acting as night-time predators, returning to a rewilded environment. On a smaller scale, insects such as the puriri moth emerge to an environment of multispecies relations and facilitation. The rewilded spaces we create can nestle within urban infrastructure, acting as an extension of the built environment and allowing for the emergence of natural ecologies. The project's framework becomes supported across a full 24-hour cycle, fostering kinship through the human and non-human world.



Victoria park

Halsey st

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SAN DIEGO



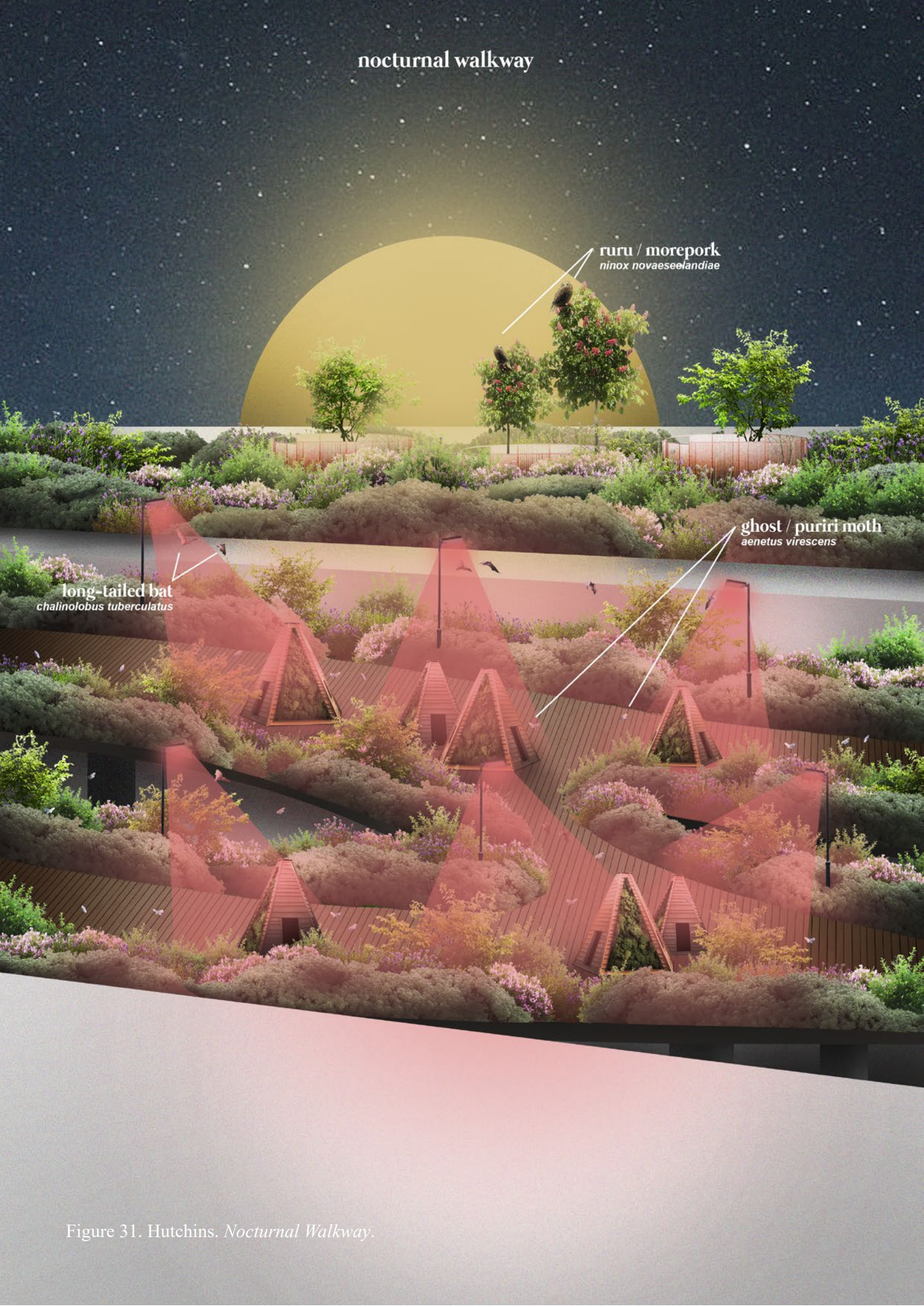
site elevation: north

1:1000



Figure 30. Hutchins. *Site Elevation: North.*

nocturnal walkway



ruru / morepork
ninox novaeseelandiae

long-tailed bat
chalinolobus tuberculatus

ghost / puriri moth
aenetus virescens

Figure 31. Hutchins. *Nocturnal Walkway*.

Organic Habitats

The next drawing, Figure 32, explores the potential of generative form-making to create new ecological possibilities within design. Playful in origin, the drawing illustrates how rewilding can be approached in a multitude of ways and methods. Beginning with a random shape, each drawing takes abstract form and uses this spatial boundary to form a unique habitat. The drawing shifts away from the constraints of architectural form, embracing the shape's irregularities and mimicking the spontaneous nature to land on a set of four ecological structures. Each work as microhabitats, tailored towards different species. It highlights how we can utilise a range of different spatial configurations to support ecologies. Each form is not fixed; like the natural world in which it immerses itself, it is able to evolve and change through interaction with the environment. The design becomes merely a starting point, allowing for a naturally shifting typology as species interact and use the space. Through these different habitats it is revealed how the needs of specific ecologies can become drivers for architectural form, changing thinking surrounding the way we design and embrace the natural world.

3.2 Event 1: Positioning Ecologies

Summary

At key milestones throughout the study, events were used as means of exhibiting the workings of the thesis, gaining valuable critique from supervisors to further develop and change ideas. Event 1, Figure 33, encompassed the project's early investigations and findings regarding both the ecological scope of the thesis as well as the spatial conditions of the CBD. The work created a story of fragmented and lost ecologies being reconnected into a singular living system that works within the established infrastructure of the city rather than against it. It united two sides: the ecological world, and the urban one. The presentation highlighted the core focus of the Wellesley Street connection, following Victoria Park to Albert Park, intersecting with the reveal of hidden ecologies through the Waihorotiu Stream. This exploration establishes the core the thesis, shaped by hydrological and ecological restoration, while simultaneously restructuring how movement can work within dense urban environments.

Outcome

Feedback from Event 1 brought key problems to light. By constructing the proposed elevated walkway, a large portion of the streetscape becomes blocked from natural sunlight and rain, making the space unsuitable for ecology to thrive, therefore running counter to the rewilding philosophy. At the event, suggestions were made for how to utilise otherwise inaccessible space within the CBD and for how movement can be integrated into the scheme. What if the rooftop plane became a series of interconnected structures that people moved through to traverse the city? How could we transform these spaces into hubs of human and non-human activity while still maintaining the rewilded ecologies of the ground plane? The questions structured the next stage in the research, moving towards a more spatially resolved design that operates within the established architecture of Auckland city.

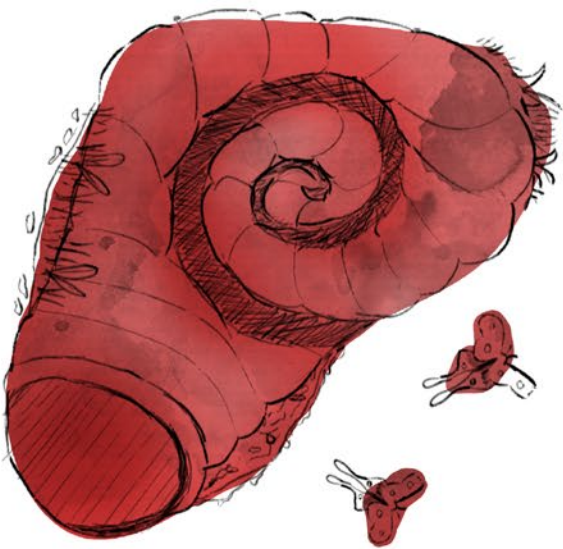
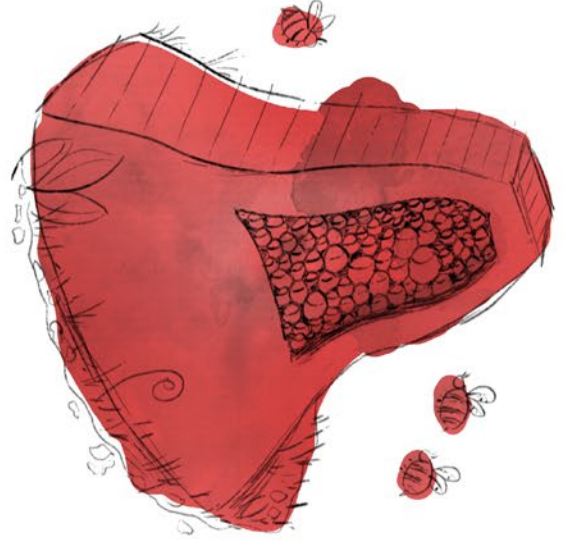
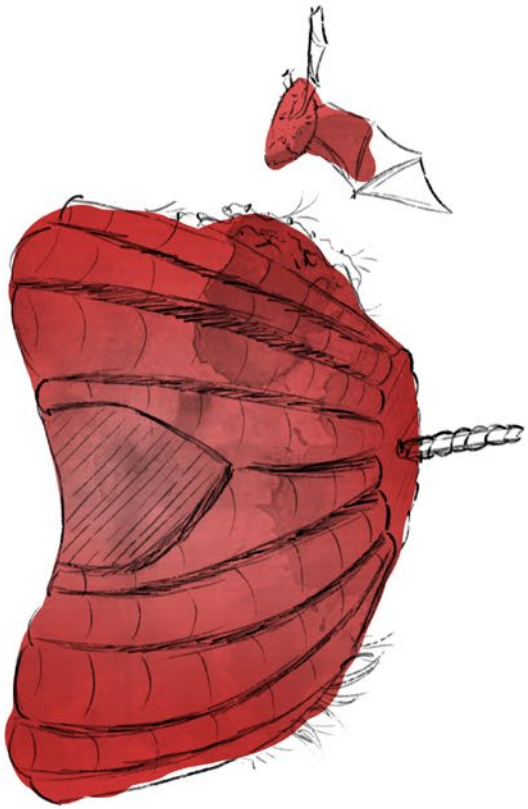


Figure 32. Hutchins. *Organic Habitats*.

3.3 Gardens in the Sky

Exploring Ecological Surface

Figure 34 realises the actuality of site, photographing the built form that connects Victoria Park to Albert Park. The photos are arranged as if to follow the natural contours of the space, rising and falling in relation to its topography. Each photo connects to its relation on an abstracted site map, zeroing in on the Wellesley Street corridor and showing the emergence of a layered ecological landscape. The photographs expose the ecology of the CBD, displaying its highly fragmented state and dense infrastructure. Juxtaposing this, the mapping explores the possibilities and potential of the site, it shows the impact that environmental regeneration could have within the city by completely transforming it to facilitate multispecies relationships. A red bounding box appears to the right of the drawing, which indicates that a focus for the architectural resolution is beginning to emerge. It frames the X-Gallery building as this focal point, a potential to transform underutilised space into ecological form. Together, the photographs and mapping establish a representation of the current state of our urban landscape, whilst simultaneously proposing a shift from concrete to vegetation. It highlights the need for ecological intervention, a way to reconnect and revitalise the CBD into a living city.

(Site section A, B, and C refer to later site section collages, figure 60, 61, and 62.)

Assembly of Ecology and Architecture

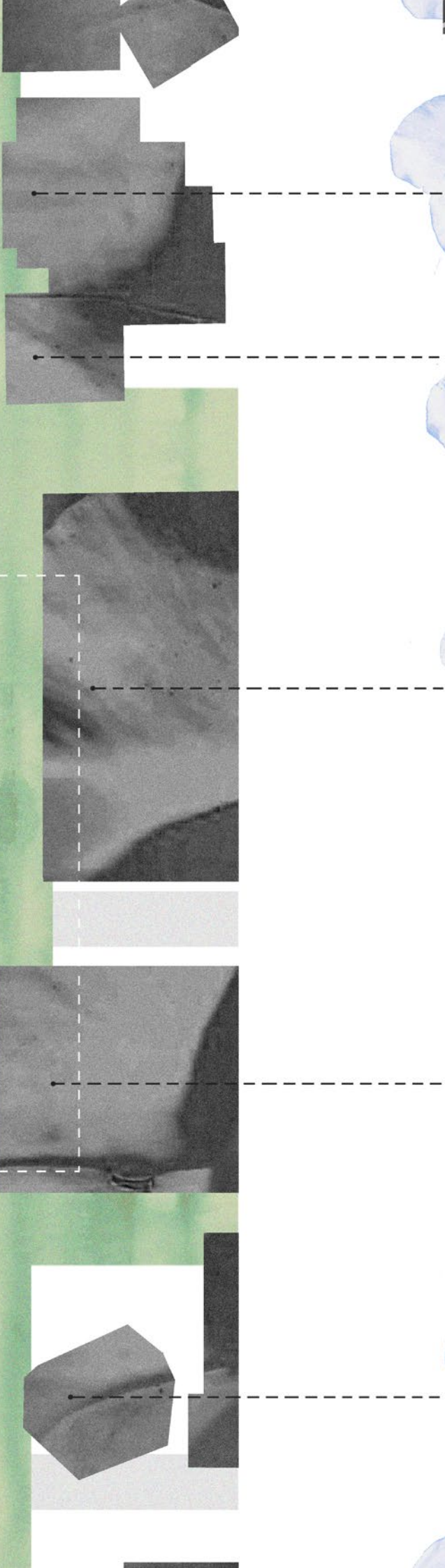
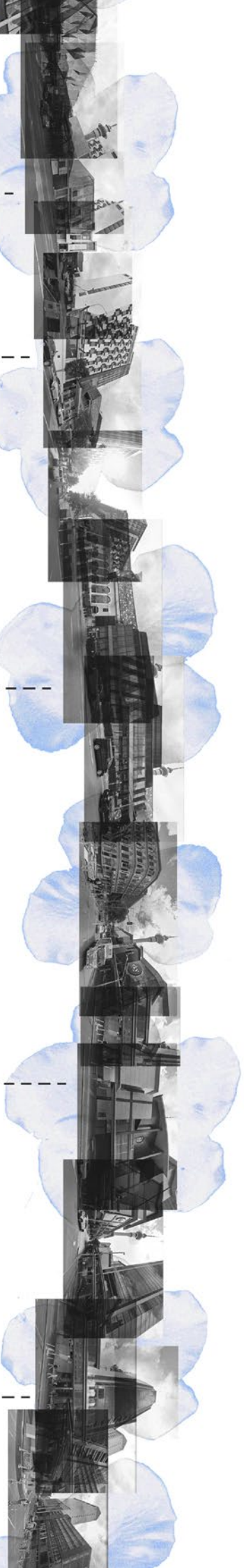
This drawing uses an exploded axonometric view to convey the proposed layered relationship between existing form, ecological systems, and rooftop infrastructure. As Figure 35 displays, a system of connection and rooftop activity have been established that move traversal into an elevated plane. Within these structures the human navigates the city, viewing the urban space through a new perspective, able to watch the grounds of the city replenish beneath our feet. The drawing presents the architectural fabric of the CBD as a base upon which ecological form is built upon, taking over the groundscape and bringing lost ecosystems back. The rooftop structure proposes a series of glasshouse infrastructure, bridges that serve as walkways across rewilded landscape to the next piece of existing architecture. By expanding each component, it showcases how each system works collectively as a wide-scale ecological framework, a merging of the past, present, and future. A proposed transport infrastructure is also referenced here through the suggestion of a raised tramline, embedded within the rewilded ecology of the ground. This positions mobility as another layer within the scheme. As established in the previous mapping, the X-Gallery building is highlighted, identifying the space as a strategic focus for future development. Through its layers, the drawing positions the city as a system of components or interwoven connections that exist together to form a singular design. Each part is working to regenerate, sustain, and transform a lifeless city.



victoria street w

victoria park





wellesley street w

site section a

a journey
across
auckland city

photo site map

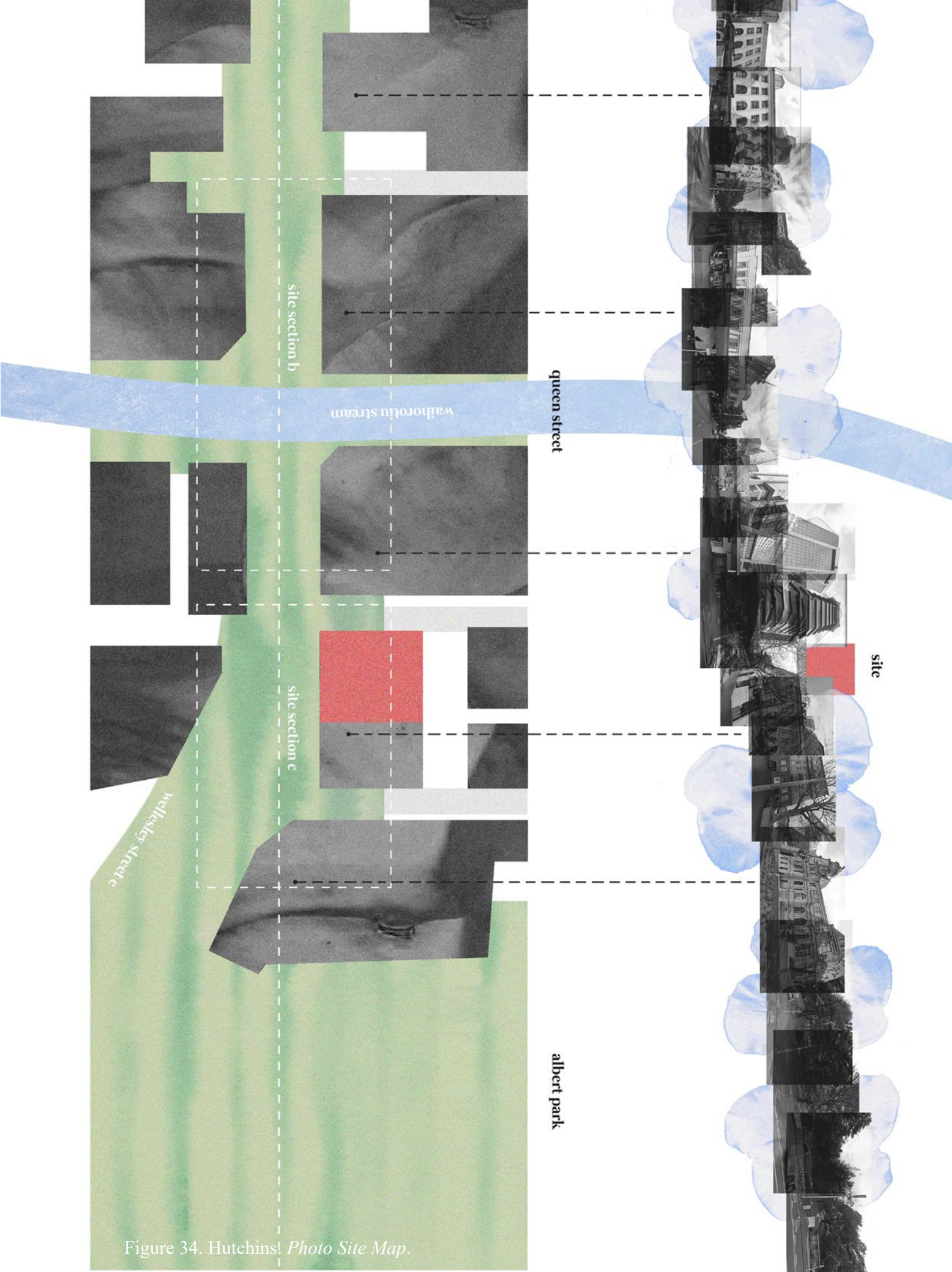
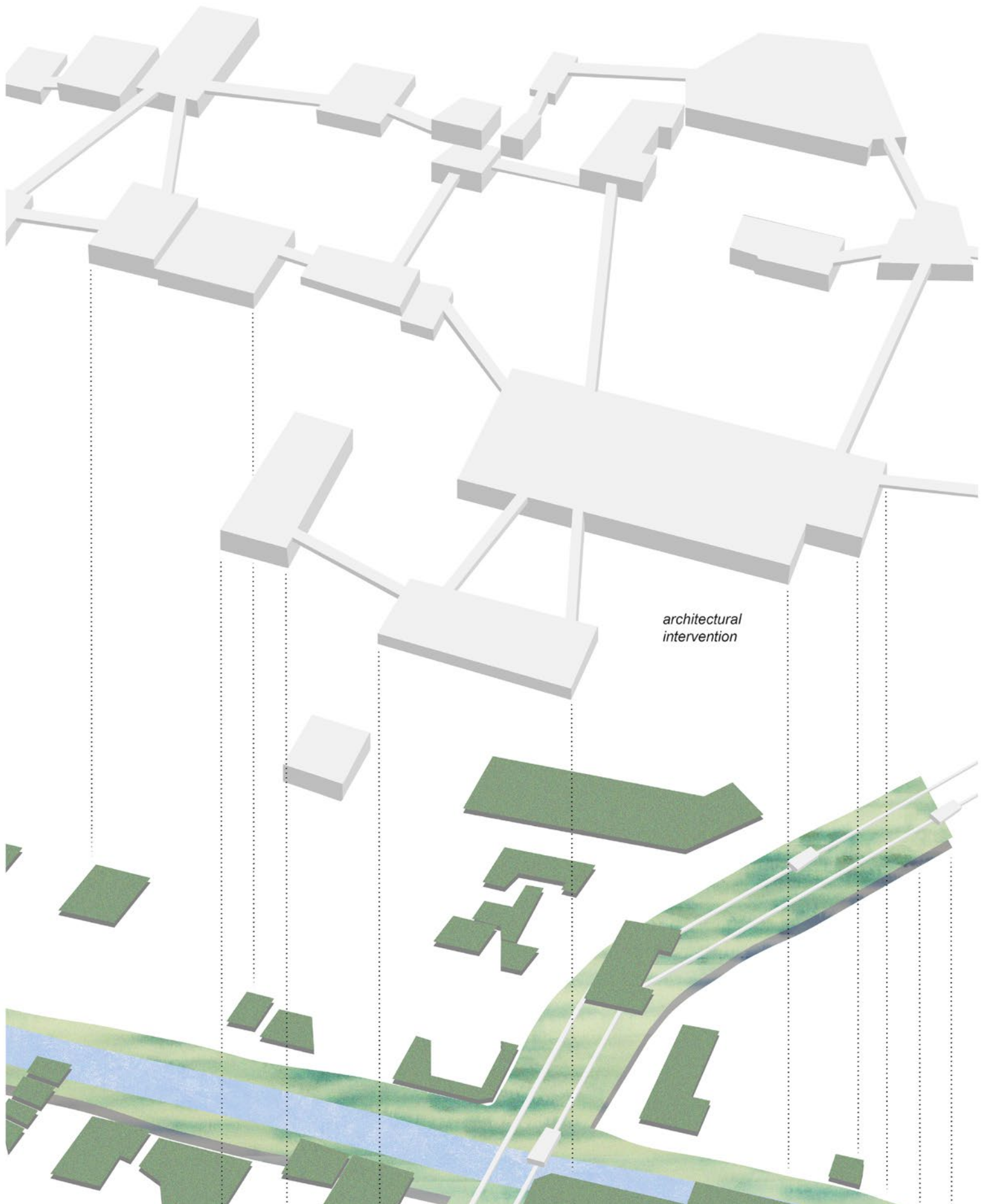


Figure 34. Hutchins! *Photo Site Map*.

exploded axonometric



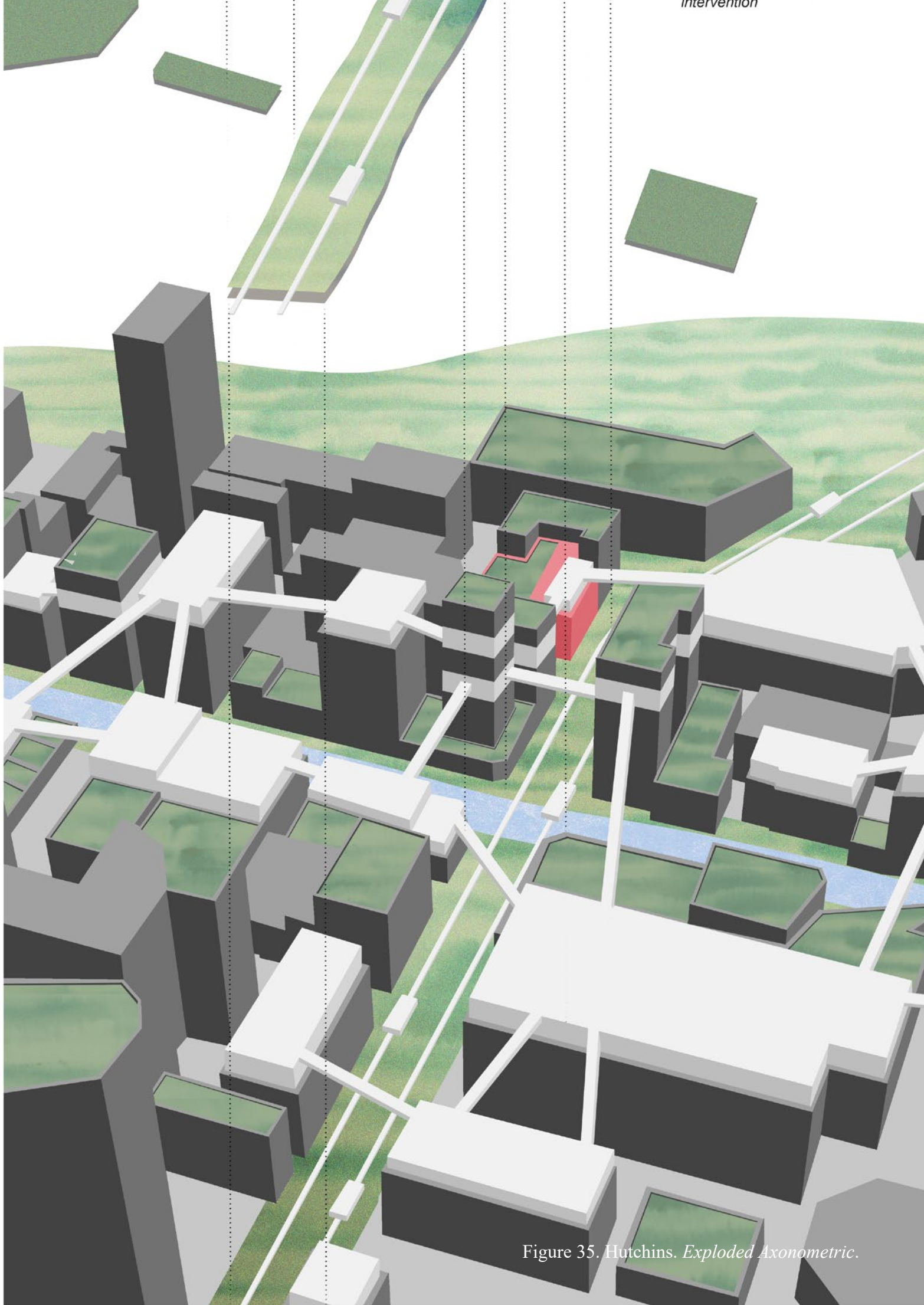


Figure 35. Hutchins. *Exploded Axonometric*.

Network of Glass

The drawing presented in Figure 36 encompasses the wild and offers an entirely different perspective of Auckland City. Figure 36 presents a perspective overview of the CBD, focusing on Wellesley Street as it connects fragments of ecologies. As if viewing through the lens of a bird, the drawing reveals a set of glass structures and walkways forming a continuous network of connections across the city. These structures operate as transparent nodes, allowing movement and light to permeate through to support the rewilded ground. Within this street axis, the Waihorotiu Stream flows, a hydrological spine that feeds the ecological renewal of space. The tram system nestled within vegetation facilitates transport through the ground-scape, merging infrastructure with ecology. Overall, the perspective presented in Figure X situates the city as a living system, a cohesive network of architectural form and ecological function that transforms the CBD into a kinship between the human and non-human world.

Section Through the Sky I

The drawing in Figure 37 explores the use of a different architectural medium in the form of a section. This tool allows for the spatial, ecological, and programmatic relationship of the proposal to be understood through its deployment within an existing structure. Figure X shows a section cut through proposed rooftop infrastructure. The building's height, underutilised roof space, and visibility from the streetscape make it an ideal site for both architectural and ecological intervention. The X-Gallery building becomes the central structural node for the proposal: from it spans a network of infrastructure that links the city into a singular living system. Cutting along its upper axis, the drawing reveals its programmatic and ecological conditions. Greenhouse structures serve food cultivation, imbedding aquaponic systems to create a self-sustaining cycle of production. Adjacent to this, a nocturnal walkway enables passage within low-light conditions to minimise disturbance to species active at night. A third component contains a rest pod or reading garden, a space that provide refuge and quiet for humans. Through these layered programmes, the section proposes a connective elevated landscape, where cultivation, rest, access, and habitat merge and operate within the architectural form of a rewilded city.



Figure 36. Hutchins. *Glasshouse Network*.

perspective section
glasshouse

1:150



Figure 37. Hutchins. *Perspective Section Concept.*

Coexisting Perspectives I

There are two ways to view the living city. This pair of drawings presented in Figures 38 and 39 below establish a developed form of the design intervention, presenting two distinct lenses: the human and the non-human. Figure 38, the non-human lens, provides a street level viewpoint, immersing self as a part of ecologies, and how the fabric of the X-Gallery building intercepts vegetation and wildlife species. It presents unique insight into how the building is perceived by non-humans, highlighting the visibility of glasshouse structures and elevated pathways. Blurring past, the tramline cuts through the rewilded streetscape, providing a faster means of traversing the city whilst becoming immersed within it. Similarly, both the human and non-human are shown in movement—people, butterflies, and birds—given the illusion of vitality through an otherwise static image.

In contrast, Figure 39 situates the viewer within the rooftop infrastructure, represented the human lens of how this space is seen and inhabited. It highlights the roof level ecologies, the greenhouses with aquaponic systems supporting cultivation, the gardens for outdoor planting, and the green spaces for socialising and rest. The drawing showcases a level of circulation, facilitating movement across a proposed rooftop network. It becomes an occupied and productive environment that utilises a forgotten space within the CBD where human activity can intersect within a broader ecological system. Together the two drawings articulate a wider proposal, the beginning of a wider ecological infrastructure that stems from a singular architectural intervention. The drawing thus presents a layered experience of urban space as it is inhabited by not just humans, but the more-than-human world.

Realising Form

This set of model photographs, shown in Figures 40-42 below, document the physical exploration of the established ecological streetscape and glasshouse infrastructure. Working through physical modelling introduces another architectural medium, one that allows space to be processed as a three-dimensional body. Through its layered construction, the model reveals the existing infrastructure of the city, integrating it with both the ecological proposal of rewilding the streetscape and the architectural proposal of glasshouse structures. It allows the space to be realised, testing how these elements react and work together to form a singular living system. Figure 40, 41, and 42 showcase photographs that capture the form of the model. They capture the spatial proposition as they are able to zoom into specific moments. This exercise highlights a deeper understanding of what is trying to be proposed: how proportion, light, and interaction work together and sit within a rewilded urban corridor.



FROM A NON-HUMAN LENS

Figure 38. Hutchins. *From a Non-Human Lens*.



Figure 39. Hutchins. *From A Human Lens*.

Figure 40. Hutchins. *Concept Model Photograph 1.*

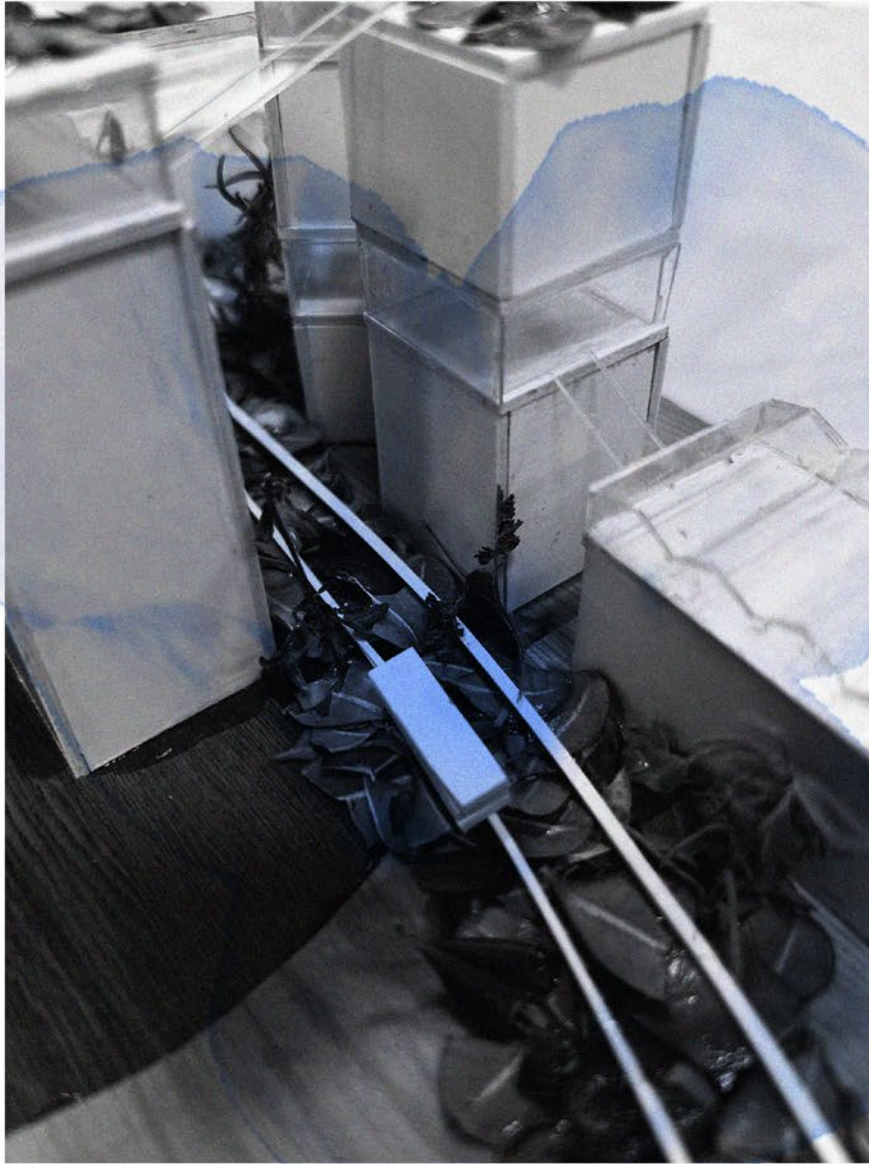
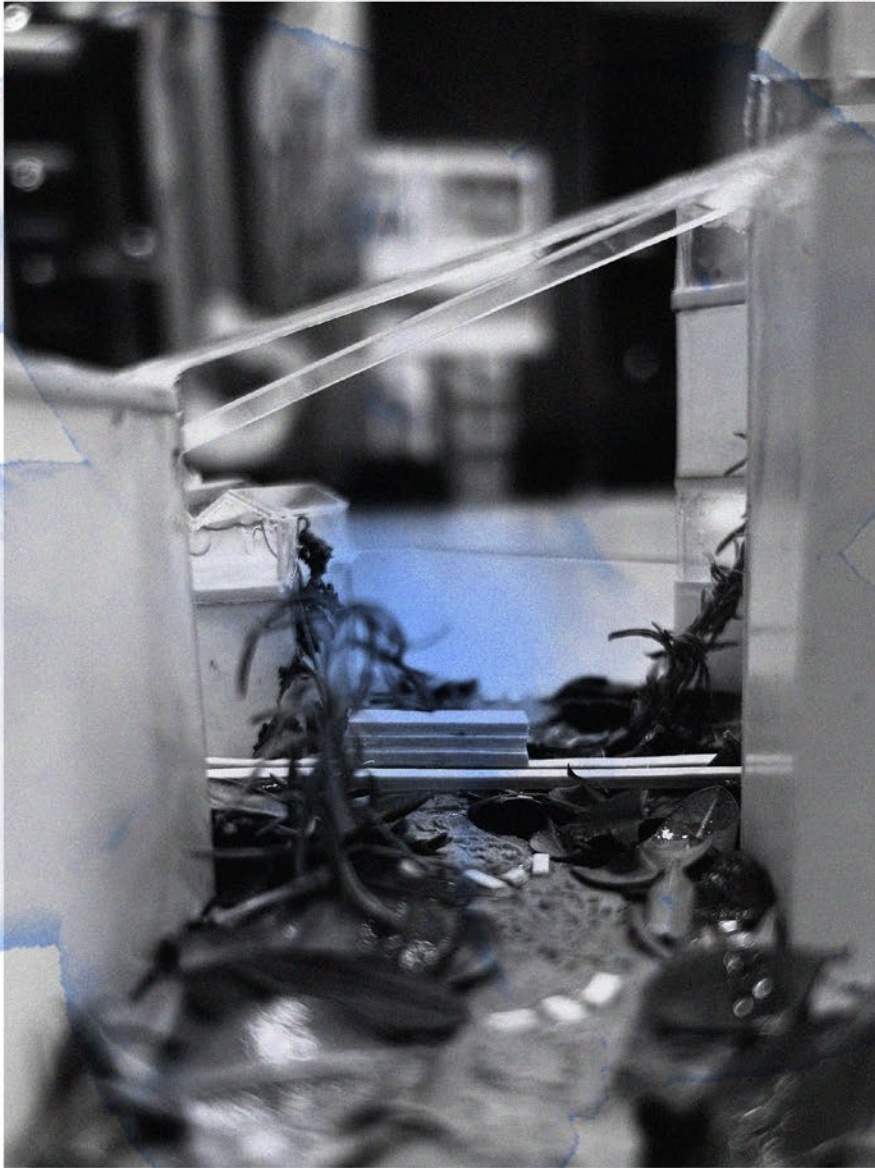


Figure 41. Hutchins. *Concept Model Photograph 2.*



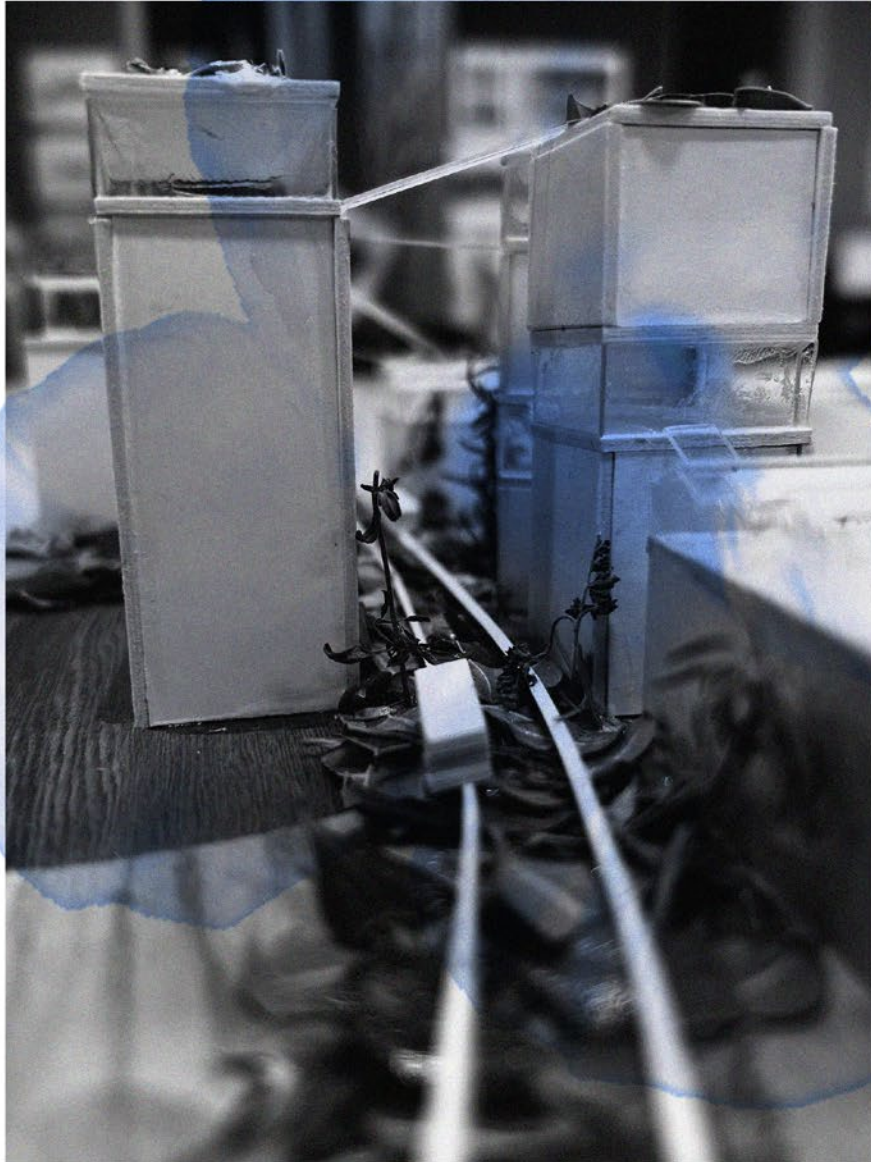


Figure 42. Hutchins. *Concept Model Photograph 3.*

Ecology in Motion

Ecology in Motion presents a series of drawings, Figures 43 to 49, that were generated by moving flowers as they were recorded through scanning. This technique allowed for the appearance of vitality through an otherwise static image, relating to the reality of ecological life. Each scan adopted its own colour scheme, embodying the variety of colours found within nature. This gives a unique distinction between each image. This exploration highlights ecologies as living systems, continuously shifting and changing through reaction to environmental processes. Through this method, the flowers begin to morph and change form, starting to inherit properties of other natural processes. Flora adopts the shape of atmospheric gases, the contours of a river, clouds in the blue sky, each evokes a deeper ecological thinking one that positions matter as a transmorphic thing.

3.4 Event 2: Developing Interventions

Summary

Event 2, Figure 50, continued the process of presenting design work to supervisors and guest reviewers, receiving feedback, and reflecting critically on this feedback before continuing with the design work. This stage brought together the work established following Event 1, focusing in detail on the actuality of space within the CBD and how these interventions could be deployed. At this point, the architectural language of rooftop ecologies and glasshouse systems have become key focuses and were used to establish the design form. The presentation was titled Te Mara Rangī, which roughly means “The Garden of the Sky”. It portrayed the elevation and restructuring of ecological glasshouse structures and how they begin to form a layered network of function and mobility. Through perspectives, sections, axonometric, and model exploration, the work staged a proposal for the transformation of the CBD as well as for the potential to expand further to other fragmented ecological nodes. The work has become almost a framework, a way to inhabit underutilised space, forming a programme of cultivation, habitat, and movement whilst regenerating lost ecologies. Event 2 positioned the sky layer as a means of inhabitation, supporting the rewilding of dense urban environments.

Outcome

The feedback from Event 2 identified the need for several refinements to strengthen the emerging proposal. While the glasshouse networks and rooftop ecologies were thought to display a compelling design direction, critique highlighted the lack of connection between the rooftop plane and the ground plane. To create a framework, something capable of being adapted and used across other urban environments, the design should encompass a more compelling adaptive system. It needed a way to continue the established horizontal movement through the site but also to start thinking vertically: how can humans and non-humans scale these buildings to reach the rooftop plane? This shift sets the foundations for the next chapter, which begins to explore a modular system to better expand on spatial movement through the CBD.



Figure 43. Hutchins. *Flower Scan 1.*

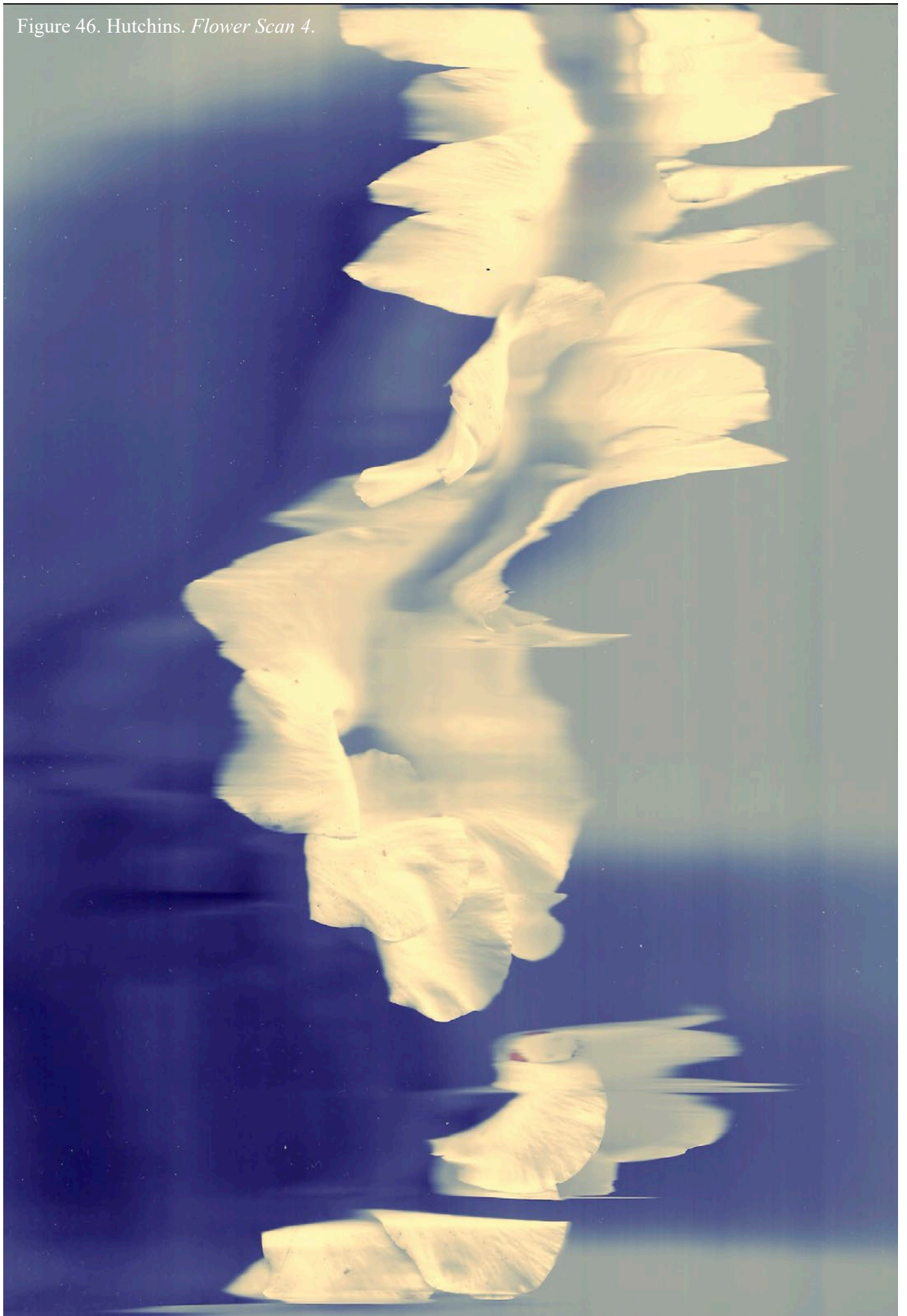


Figure 44. Hutchins. *Flower Scan 2.*

Figure 45. Hutchins. *Flower Scan 3*



Figure 46. Hutchins. *Flower Scan 4.*



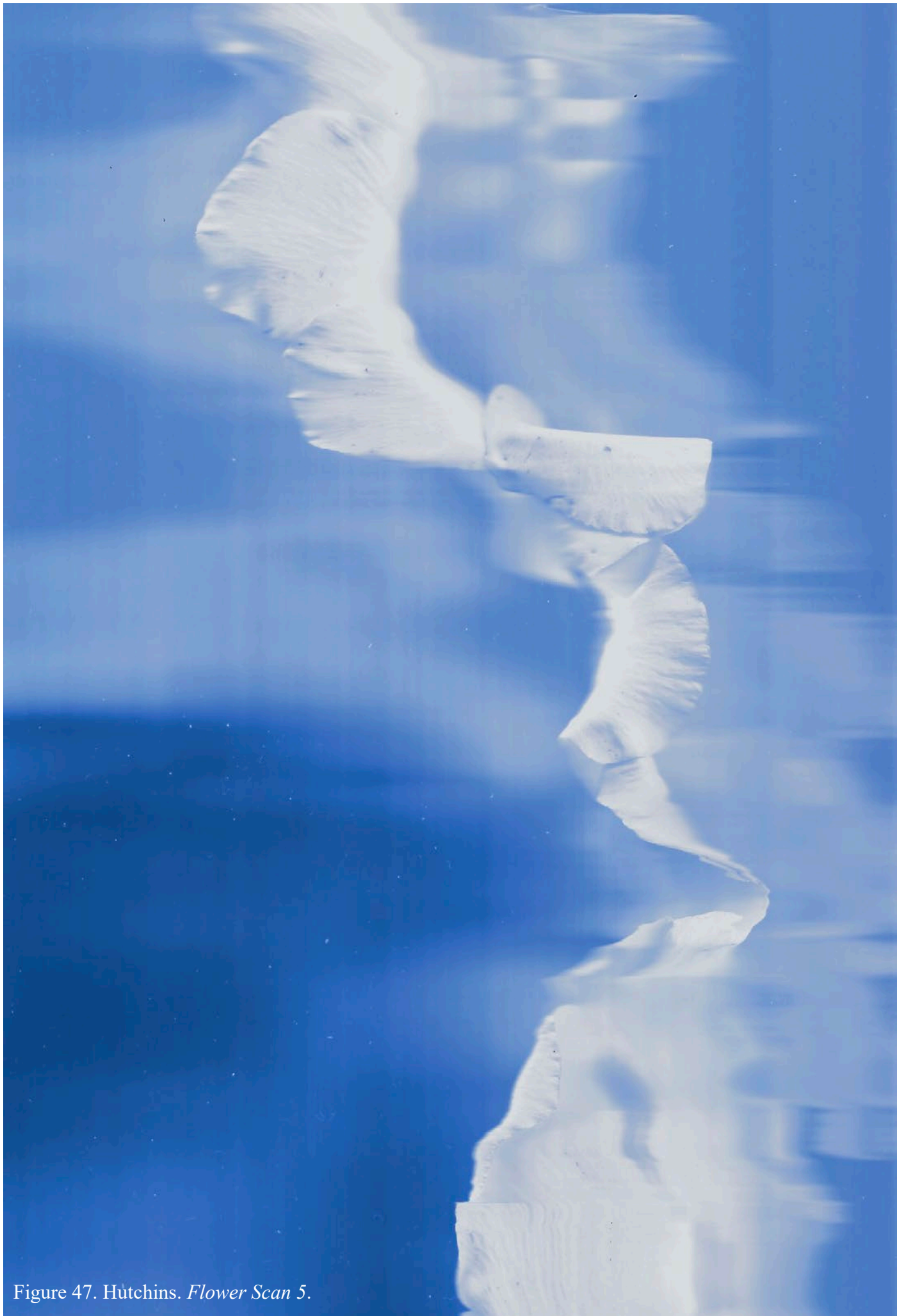


Figure 47. Hutchins. *Flower Scan 5*.

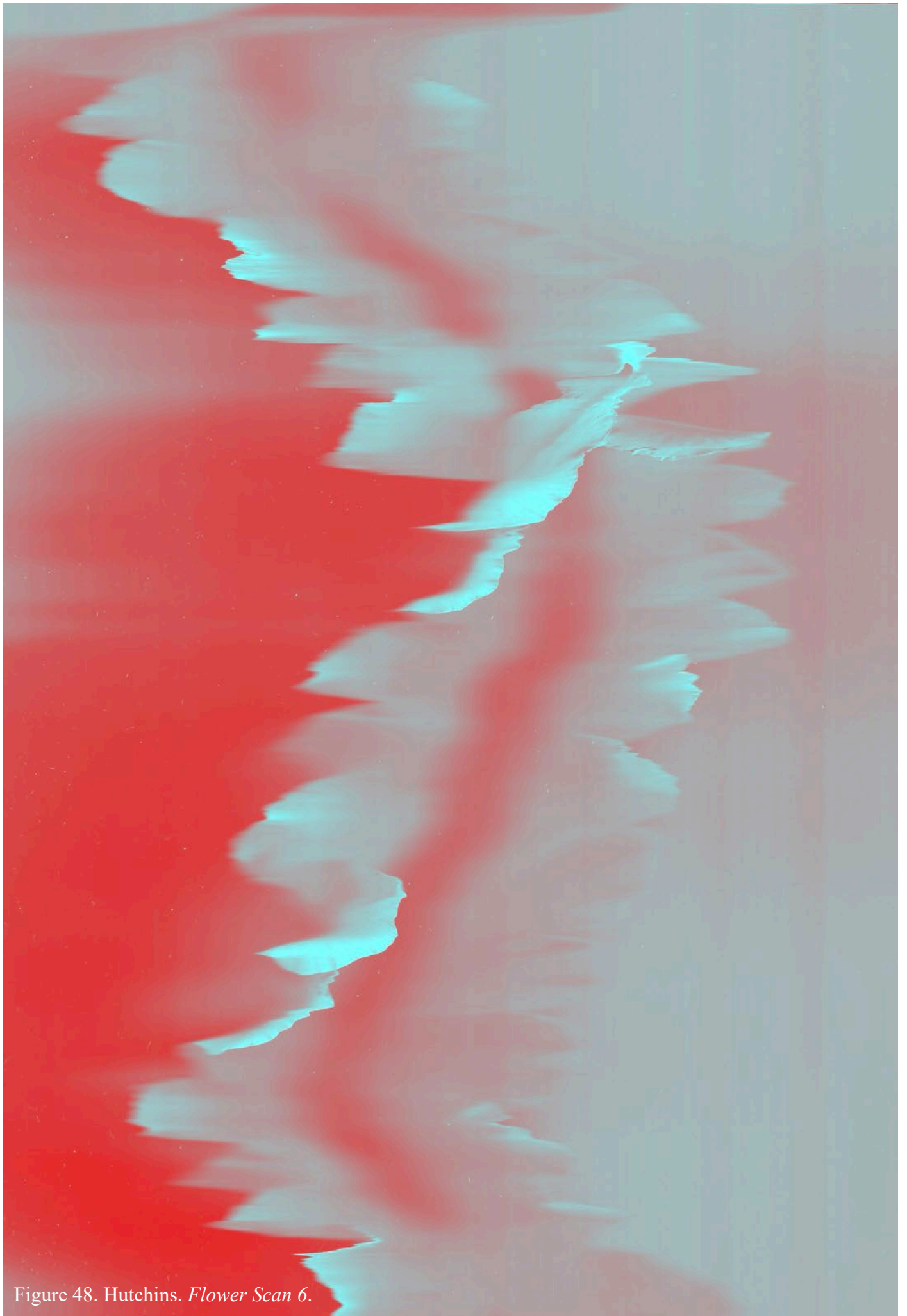


Figure 48. Hutchins. *Flower Scan 6*.

Figure 49. Hutchins. *Flower Scan 7.*





Figure 50. Hutchins. *Event 2 Pin-up.*

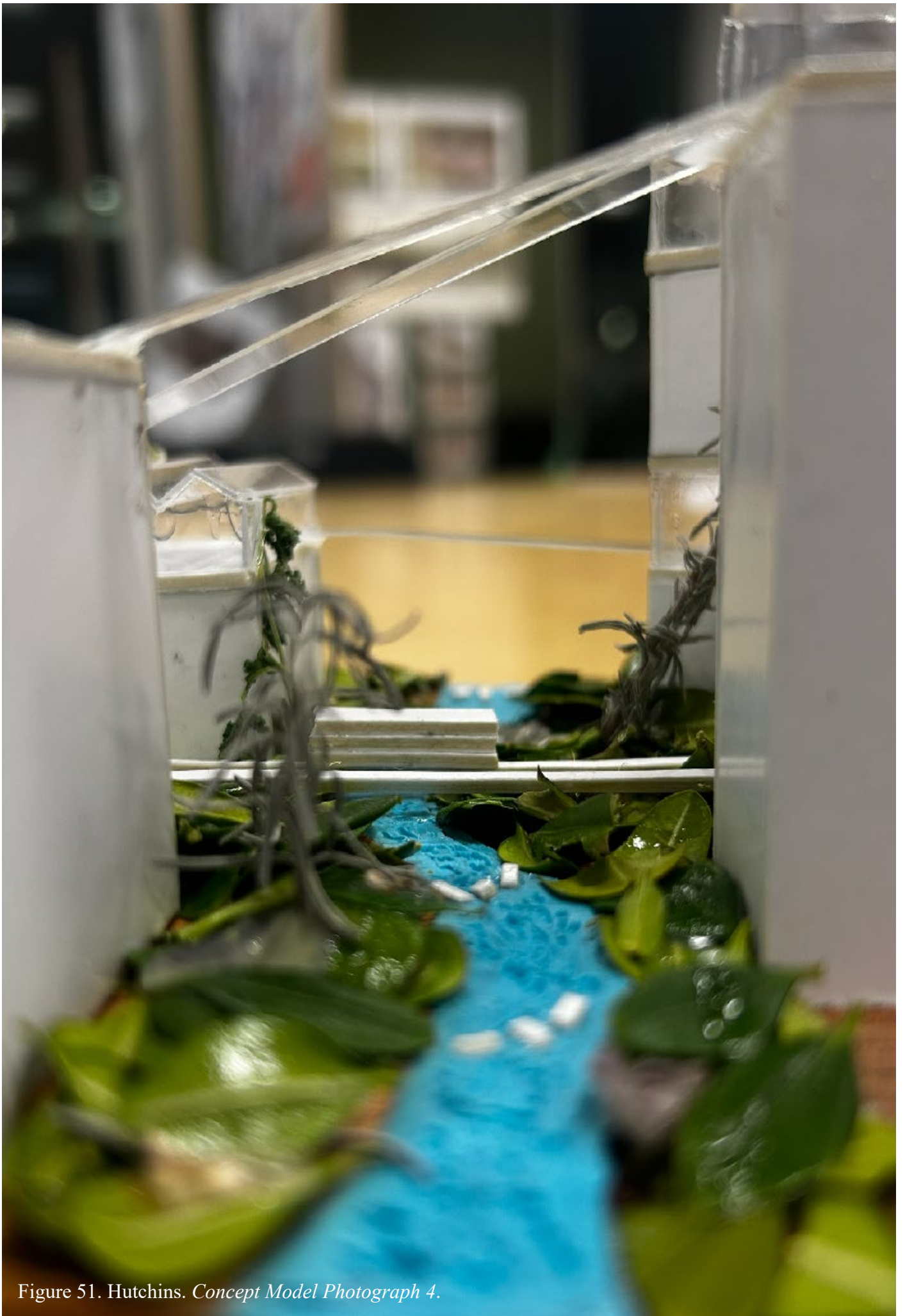


Figure 51. Hutchins. *Concept Model Photograph 4.*

3.5 A Modular Framework

Programmatic Functions

The set of drawings presented in this section introduces the programmatic function of the X-Gallery building whilst outlining a proposed spatial experience of accessibility, which explores ways to allow humans and non-humans to move between the different planes. The existing form of the building becomes disrupted, cut in half to make way for a modular accessibility framework that connects ground to sky. By reshaping the building plan, the drawings establish the ways we can transform existing architecture to promote connectivity and ecological activity. Figure 52 breaks down these nodes, with one part of the building being a designated residential and the other a public space. The connective tissue, the accessibility node, unites both sides and connects the space to the proposed rooftop infrastructure. With the rewilding of urban corridors, a hierarchical shift forms. From the top floor, the most valuable space, to the ground floor, where it becomes immersed within natural ecologies. Being closer to the ground becomes viewed as being part of the living fabric of the city.

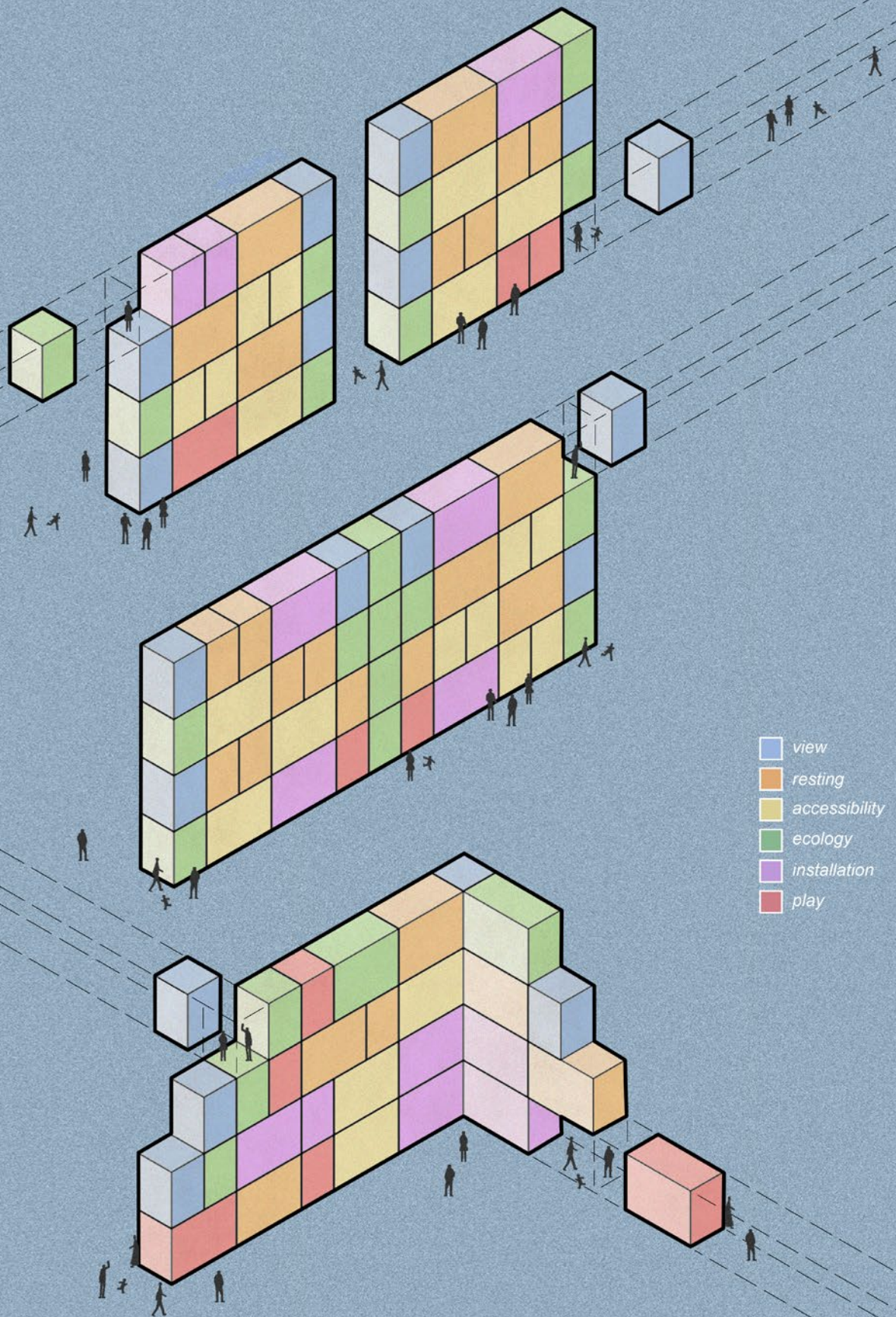
The second drawing, Figure 53, expands further on the spatial configuration being deployed within the site. The modular framework serves as a series of individual nodes, arranged and placed as needed within site-specific conditions. Each block represents a unique spatial function: viewing, resting, accessibility, ecology, installation, play. Nodes can be deployed in any configuration in line with the needed function of any site, forming a framework that can be deployed across small or wide-scale urban reconstruction. Within the context of the X-Gallery building, this spatial configuration provides a means to connect the streetscape to the proposed rooftop architecture, forming a seamless rewilded infrastructure.

Modular Walkway and Components

The next set of drawings expand on the introduced spatial framework, developing it in more detail as the central connecting walkway. Figure 54 acts as a connector between the ground plane and the rooftop axis, forming a transitional spine that moves through ecological layers. The drawing illustrates how a series of inhabitable spaces can be arranged to foster multi-species relationships, showing one of many possibilities for this framework to be deployed within an urban environment.

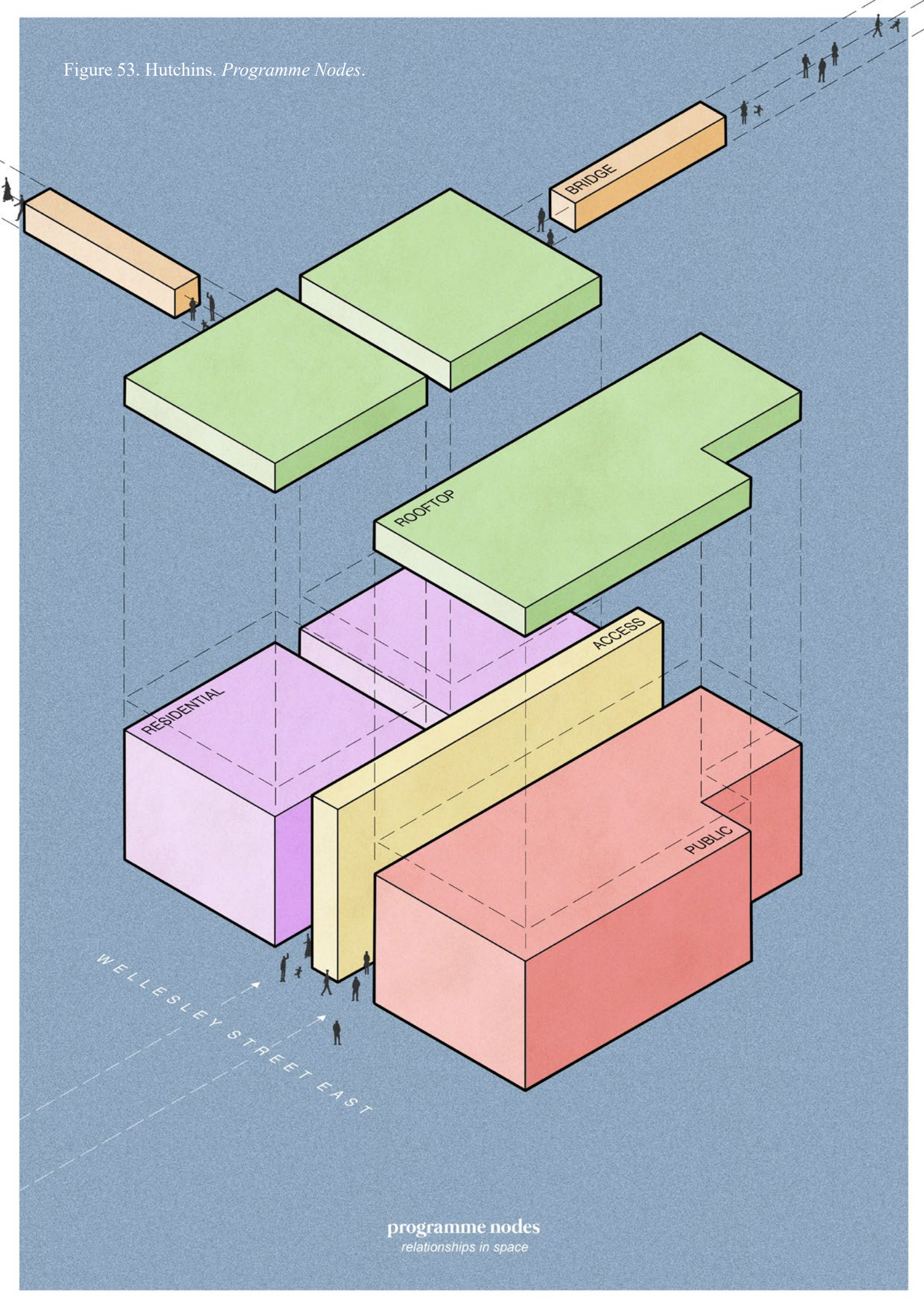
Figures 55 and 56 accompany this drawing; here, the individual modules that assemble the central walkway are isolated and expanded upon, each as a unique spatial unit. View: this module encourages an intentional pause; key site lines and ecological layers are framed and a space to observe the cities transformed landscape is offered. Ecology: this module is a space for biodiverse planting to vertically connect ground ecologies to sky. Play: this module is a zone for exploration and learning, interactive installations that incite a child-like curiosity. Installation: this module is a platform for engagement, a space to explore cultural expressions. Resting: in this module a space to stop and linger is provided, placing the self within the rhythms of the natural environment. Access: the module marks the connective threshold that links space, guiding movement and circulation. Collectively these spaces show how modules become an architectural strategy, one that enables an evolving network of space to support human and non-human life.

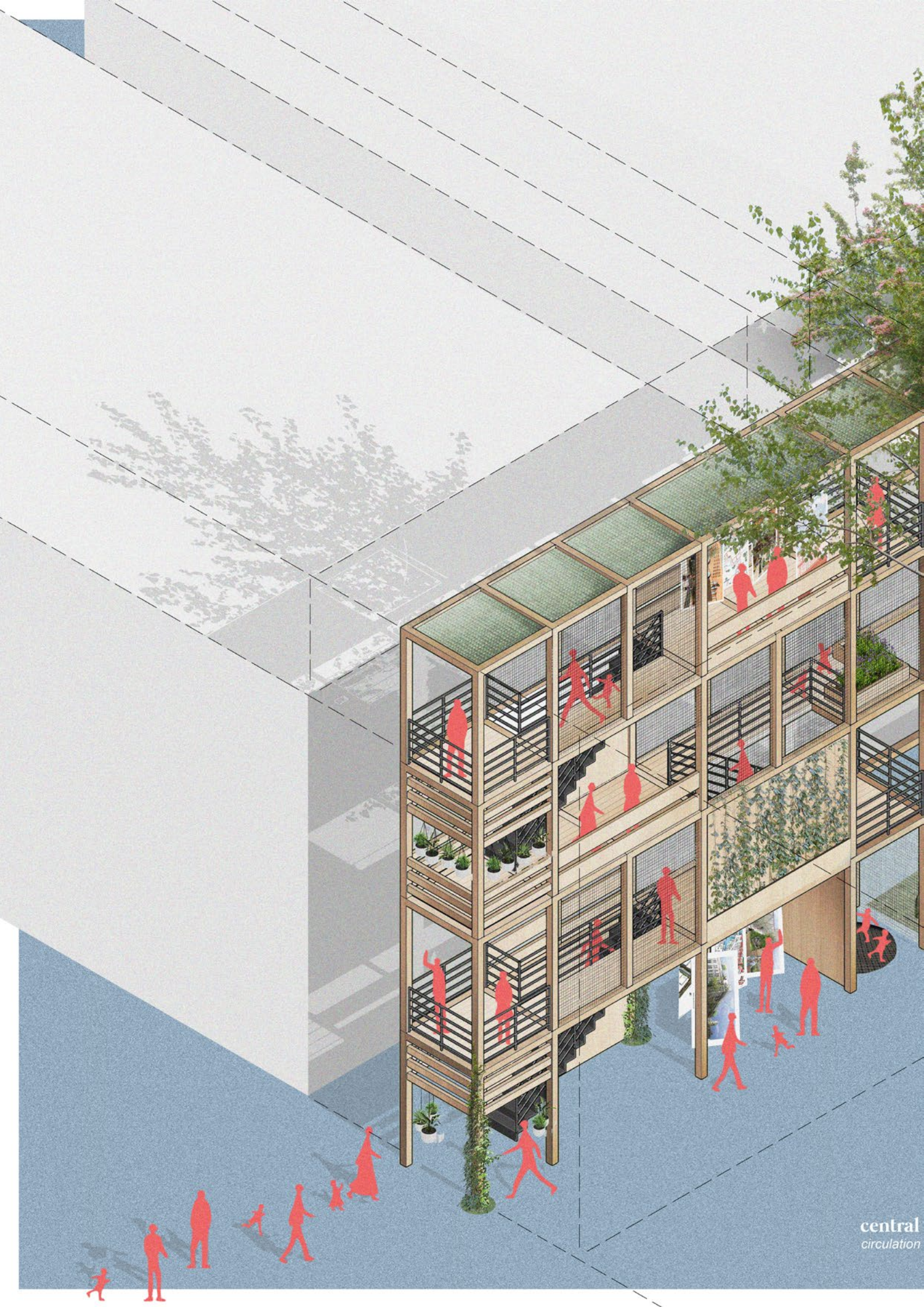
Figure 52. Hutchins. *Modular Access*.

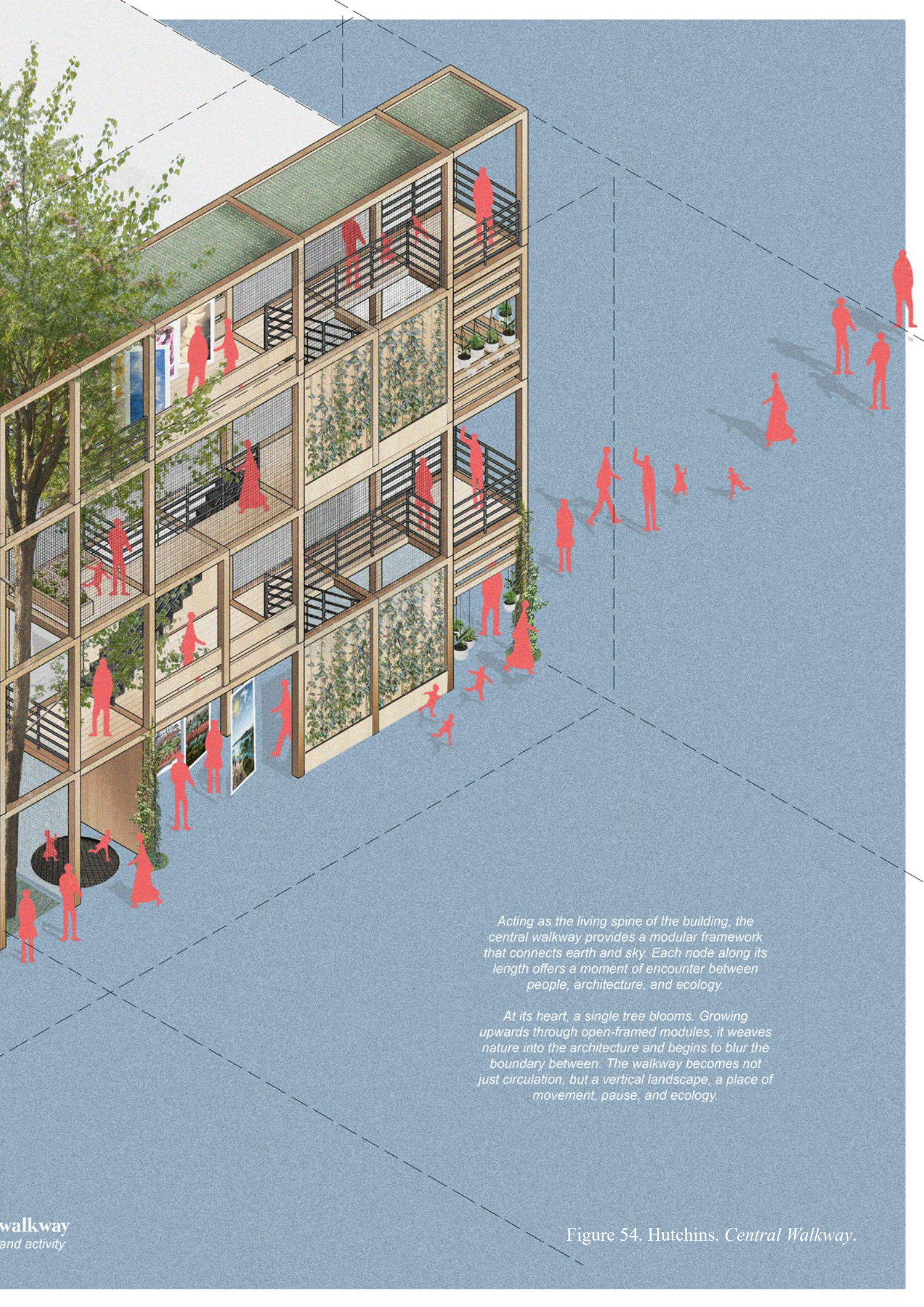


modular access
spatial framework

Figure 53. Hutchins. *Programme Nodes*.



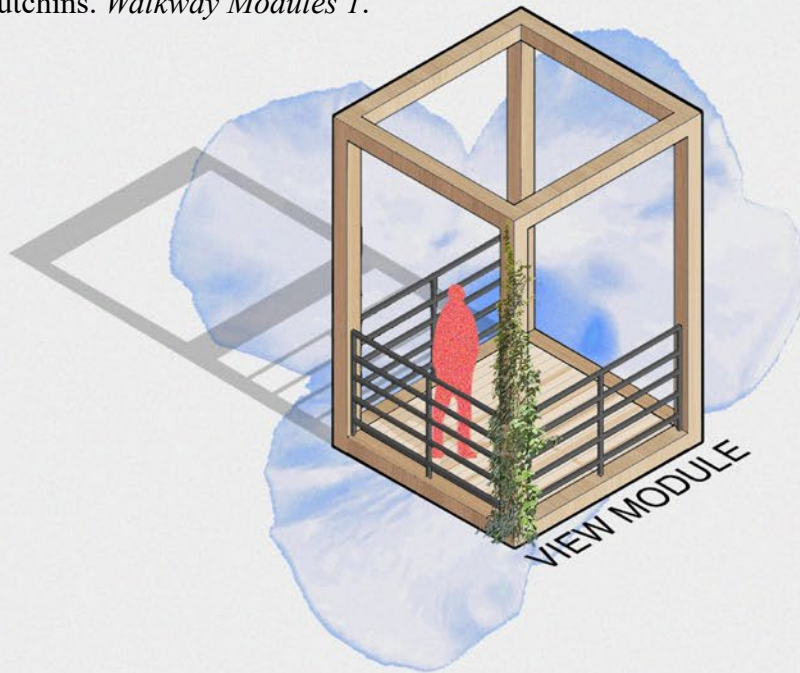




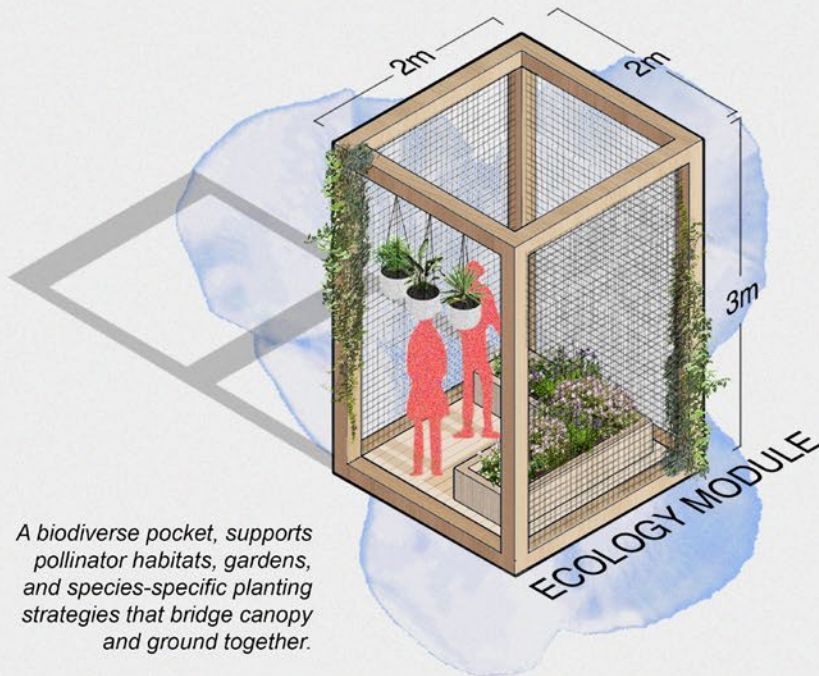
Acting as the living spine of the building, the central walkway provides a modular framework that connects earth and sky. Each node along its length offers a moment of encounter between people, architecture, and ecology.

At its heart, a single tree blooms. Growing upwards through open-framed modules, it weaves nature into the architecture and begins to blur the boundary between. The walkway becomes not just circulation, but a vertical landscape, a place of movement, pause, and ecology.

Figure 55. Hutchins. *Walkway Modules 1.*



An intentional pause, this module frames key sight lines and ecological layers, inviting reflection and discovery within the city's transformed landscape.



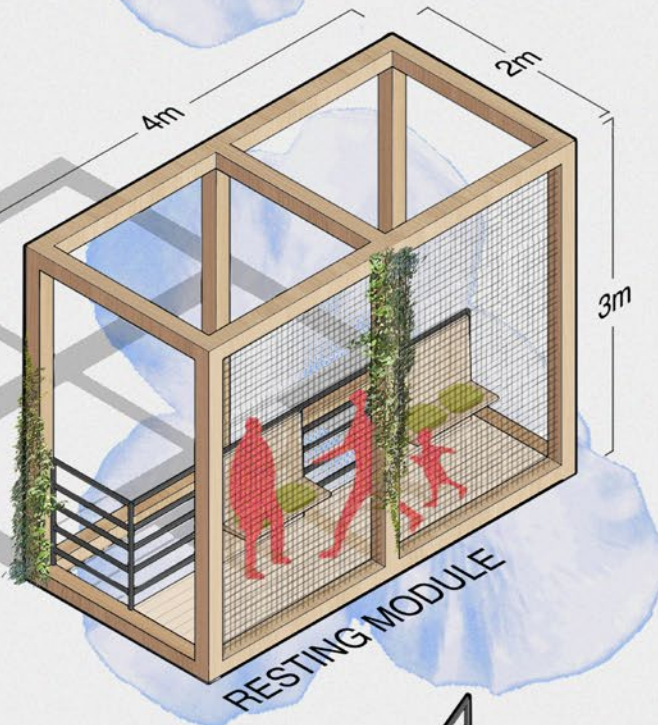
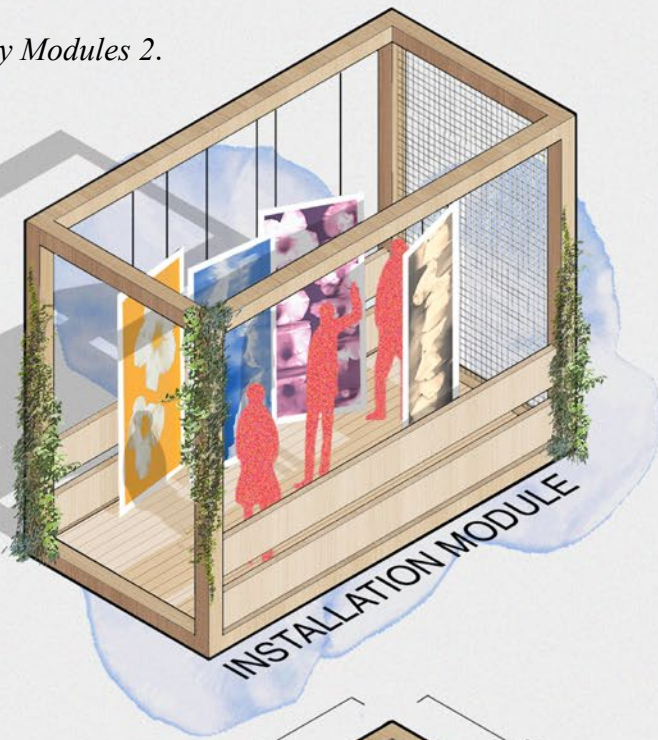
A biodiverse pocket, supports pollinator habitats, gardens, and species-specific planting strategies that bridge canopy and ground together.



A zone for imaginative exploration and tactile learning. This module invites moments of wonder, movement, and discovery through playful structures, colour, and sensory interaction.

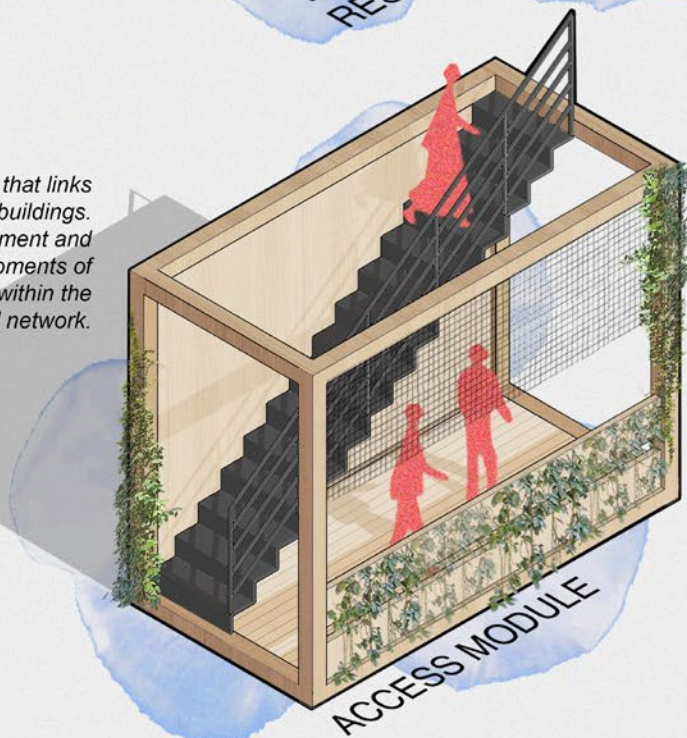
Figure 56. Hutchins. *Walkway Modules 2.*

A platform for dynamic engagement. Sculptural, sensory, or interactive installations shift with time and season, anchoring cultural expression within the ecological framework.



Stillness as resistance, this quiet threshold offers seating, shade, and material softness. A space to linger among the rhythms of rewilded life.

A connective threshold that links spaces across levels and buildings. This module guides movement and flow, creating clear moments of entry, exit, and transition within the elevated network.



X-Gallery: Site plan

Figure 57 shows a 1:250 site plan of the X-Gallery building and its immediate surroundings. The plan illustrates how the modular framework and rooftop infrastructure is integrated within the existing urban fabric of the CBD. The drawing places the building at the core of a wider ecological network. Here, the rewilded streetscape replaces what was once busy streets and roads as spaces of flourishing biodiversity. The restructured rooftop hosts both ecological and architectural activity in the form of the central walkway and glasshouse systems. The roofscape functions as both habitat and public space, reinforcing the idea of the proposed infrastructure being an active participant within the wider living system. Bridge connections stem out to other existing forms, linking the adjacent architectural fabric and thus enabling a single continuous network of ecologies and circulation, a link between humans and the more-than human world. Overall, the purpose of the site plan is to situate the X-Gallery building as a pivotal node; a space where architecture, ecology, and movement intersect.

Entering Site

The next drawing, Figure 58, depicts the entrance to the X-Gallery building. Traversing through the rewilded ecologies, one then moves into the spatial network of access, the connective hub linking residential, public, and rooftop spaces. Positioned between two nodes, the central access links sky to ground, moving inhabitants both vertically and horizontally through a network of programmatic modules. The perspective drawing frames this access-way as a threshold, where movement transitions from dense vegetation to open structures. Its architectural form enables circulation, moving both humans and non-humans from ground to sky, bridging together a divide in function. The drawing works to emphasise how integral accessibility becomes within a rewilded landscape, a tool to guide ecological processes and provide habitation through space.



site plan
overview 1:250

Figure 57. Hutchins. Site Plan: Overview.

entrance perspective
1:250



Figure 58. Hutchins. *Entrance Perspective.*

3.6 Event 3: Constructing Systems

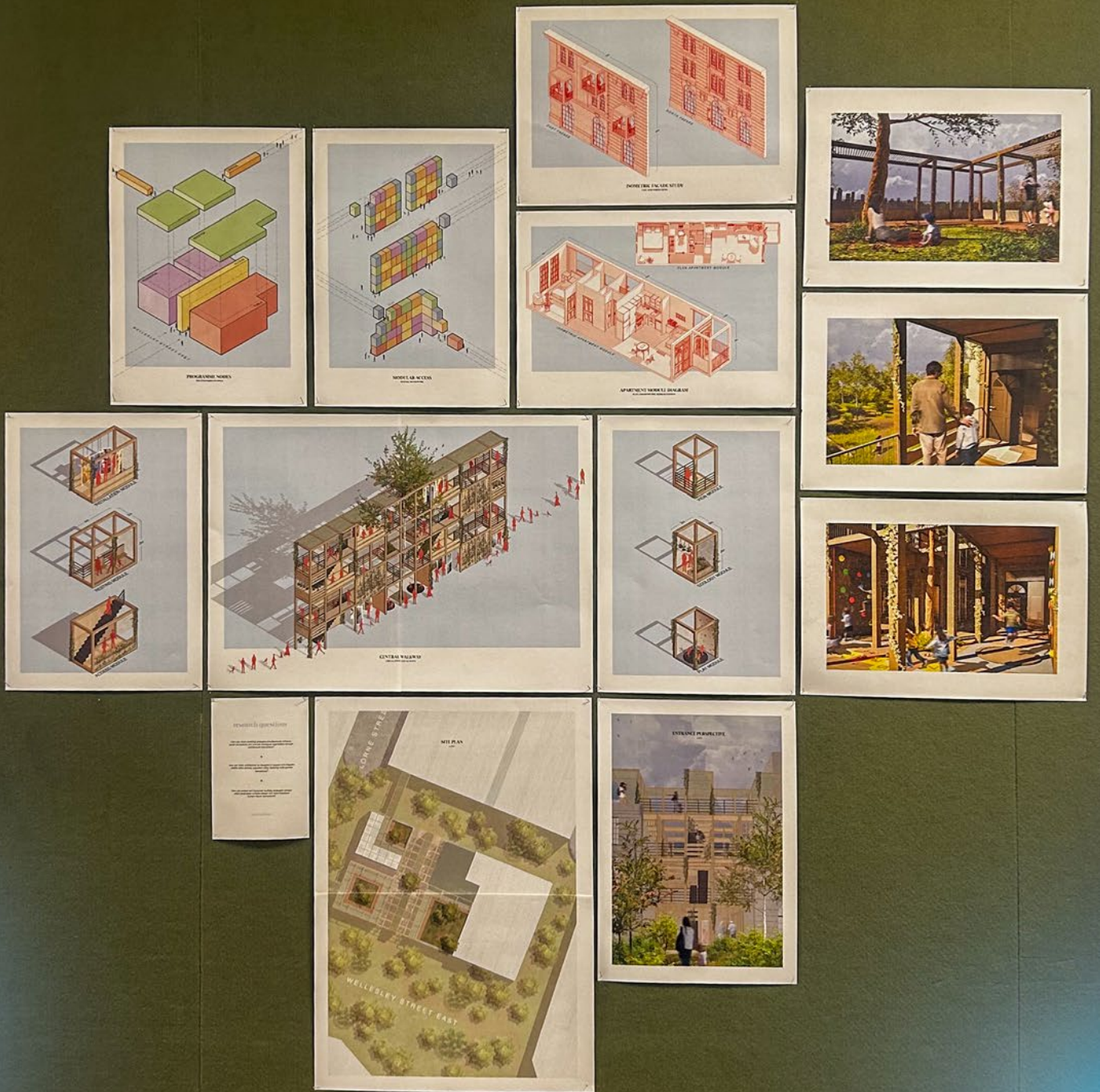
Summary

Event 3, Figure 59, focused on the progression of the design work into a newly developed modular framework. The framework resolved in the form of a central walkway, acting as the connective tissue between both the roof and ground plane, as well as the residential and public nodes of the X-Gallery building. The modular system served to support a vertical rewilded infrastructure, one that can be adapted and deployed to site-specific conditions. The drawings up to this point have articulated how this modular system fits within the wider rewilded ecologies, acting as the missing link between architectural form and emerging ecologies. Event 3 demonstrated a refinement of architectural resolution, moving thinking beyond speculation towards a proposed structural system capable of encouraging environmental processes and human movement. As a milestone, the event cemented the architectural direction this research assumes for integrating human life into the living fabric of a rewilded city.

Outcome

Feedback from Event 3 recognised the strength of the modular system but highlighted a lack in contextual grounding for the scheme. It was suggested that the project needs a clear and grounded foundation which architectural and ecological interventions can be built upon. There needs to be a broader spatial strategy that extends past the confines of the CBD, which can involve an exploration of how these ecological networks expand to other suburbs of Auckland, providing continuous connections from coast to coast. The feedback directed this next phase towards Event 4, resolving contextual problems, and integrating the modular system into a coherent city-scale proposal. The next stage in the design work sees a revisit to contextual mapping and site research, whilst simultaneously reinforcing the combined feedback on each presentation to reach a completed proposed intervention within Auckland's CBD.

Figure 59. Hutchins. *Event 3 Pin-up.*



3.7 Moving Towards Resolution

Transitions Across Time

The drawings presented in this section feature a series of site section collages that follow the transformation of the Wellesley Street corridor as it moves from an inert urban fabric to a re-wilded future. The drawings present a look into the future, a representation of the potential of our cities, acting as a call to action to create change and move towards a regenerative model of urban living.

Figure 60 captures the current state of the CBD: a dull and lifeless urban landscape dominated by concrete, infrastructure, and automobile traffic. It represents a loss of ecologies through its absence of visible ecosystems, highlighting the fragmented fabric of our city. The drawing provides a lens in which the human dominates the landscape, prioritising form and function rather than a connective living system. Figure 61 introduces the transitional phase, where early ecological structures and typologies begin to emerge, blooming once more from their dormant rest. Vegetation infiltrates through the impermeable ground, the Waihorotiu Stream, now uncovered, restores itself as a key hydrological system. This drawing portrays a movement away from the existing fabric of the CBD towards a future where the human and non-human live in harmony. Figure 62 depicts the developed proposal: a city where ecological form has been allowed to take over and coexist within an urban environment. Wellesley Street, now a re-wilded corridor, establishes a living system that works in conjunction with a glasshouse infrastructure to form a future in which ecosystems are not static but dynamic and evolving. Together these drawings construct the key narrative of this thesis, laying the foundation for how urban environments can be reconfigured to prioritise ecological vitality and be grounded in the more-than-human world.

Rewilding Memory

These drawings juxtapose historic photographs of the Auckland CBD with collaged ecological processes, re-establishing a past landscape of vitality and essence. This technique creates an evocative language, employing visual fragments of a forgotten ecosystem to blur the boundaries between past and present. Figures 63 and 64 capture an act of remembrance for something lost, whilst simultaneously gesturing towards its potential to return. Native vegetation, wetland conditions, and the buried Waihorotiu Stream emerge and return to a place within an urban fabric. This highlights the dramatic shift from a once thriving landscape to heavily urbanised environment, one that is now defined by infrastructure rather than ecologies. The collages invite the viewer to recognise the severity of ecological loss, how such beautiful and space driven by vitality can be transformed to something so lifeless, but they also spark hope for how these erased systems might yet return. Bridging the past and present allows for remembrance, acknowledging the history of place and ecologies within the city, and suggests a return to the past to re-establish a future brimming with ecological agency.

site section collage
existing condition



Figure 60. Hutchins. *Site Section Collage: Existing.*

site section collage
transitional phase

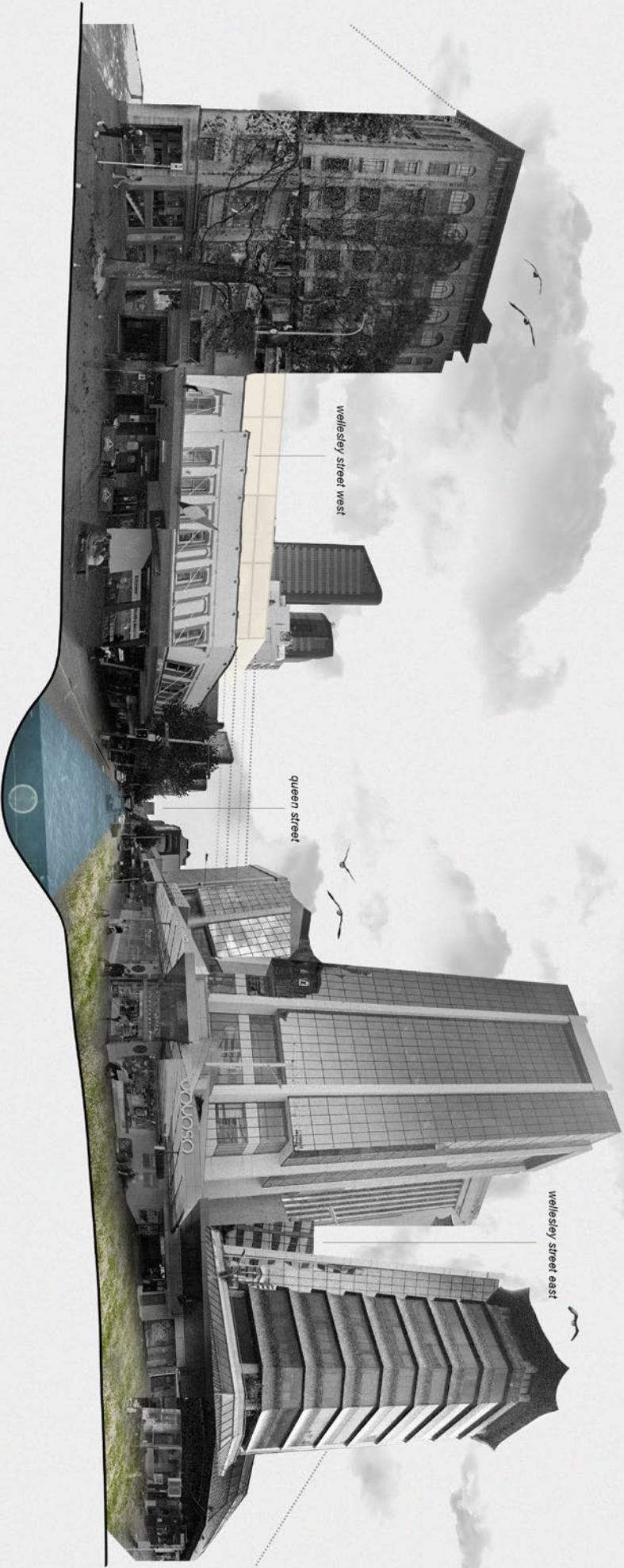


Figure 61. Hutchins. *Site Section Collage: Transitional.*

site section collage
proposed future



Figure 62. Hutchins. *Site Section Collage: Proposal.*

Figure 63. Hutchins. *Historic Collage 1*.



what was, and could still be

Figure 64. Hutchins. *Historic Collage 2*.



beneath the concrete, the river waits

Wider Ecological Connections

Expanding on the context for the scheme, Figure 65 maps the proposed ecological linkages across the wider Auckland region at 1:25000 scale. It positions the established Wellesley Street corridor as a piece within a much larger network of green spaces that expands across a wider area and provides continuous habitat coverage. The drawing establishes how the rewilded CBD forms one node within a larger system of ecological pathways that stretches through the entire urban fabric. It progresses the project's scale tenfold, turning a central city proposal into a much grander multi-suburb framework. The transformation of the city becomes not an isolated architectural proposal but a component that reframes Auckland's entire environmental infrastructure. The mapping links a series of fragmented ecologies to form a resilient network of ecosystem that supports the movement of species, enabling birds, insects, and other mobile species to navigate across the entire region through connected habitats and green corridors. Overall, the drawing helps to establish a larger landscape narrative, demonstrating how the proposed urban intervention can expand to regenerate a succession of isolated and lost ecologies.

Ecological Stepping Stones: Present and Future

Traversing back towards the CBD, the set of drawings featured in this section present a 1:5000 mapping of green spaces within the central city, visualising the radii of bird movement across distances and identifying opportunities for improvements. Figure 66 depicts the existing condition of the city, where circular ranges reveal minimal overlap between these fragmented ecologies, exposing a lack of the ecological stepping stones necessary for species to traverse through urban environments. These isolated pockets highlight the limited permeability of the current city, where species' movement and navigation become increasingly disconnected. On the other hand, Figure 67 proposes a reconfiguration of the city's ecological connections, suggesting a continuous network of green linkages that reclaim abundant infrastructure such as roads and footpaths. This network of vegetation forms a scheme in which the circular movement radii expand across the city, overlapping circular nodes in which both human and non-human movement becomes continuous. Through this comparison, the drawings illustrate the need for a transformation of our urban fabric, highlighting a shift to reconfigure infrastructure into a navigable landscape for wildlife and to strengthen biodiversity and kinship between the human and non-human world.



proposed ecological linkages

Figure 65. Hutchins. *Proposed Ecological Linkages*.



Figure 66. Hutchins. *Ecological Stepping Stones: Existing.*

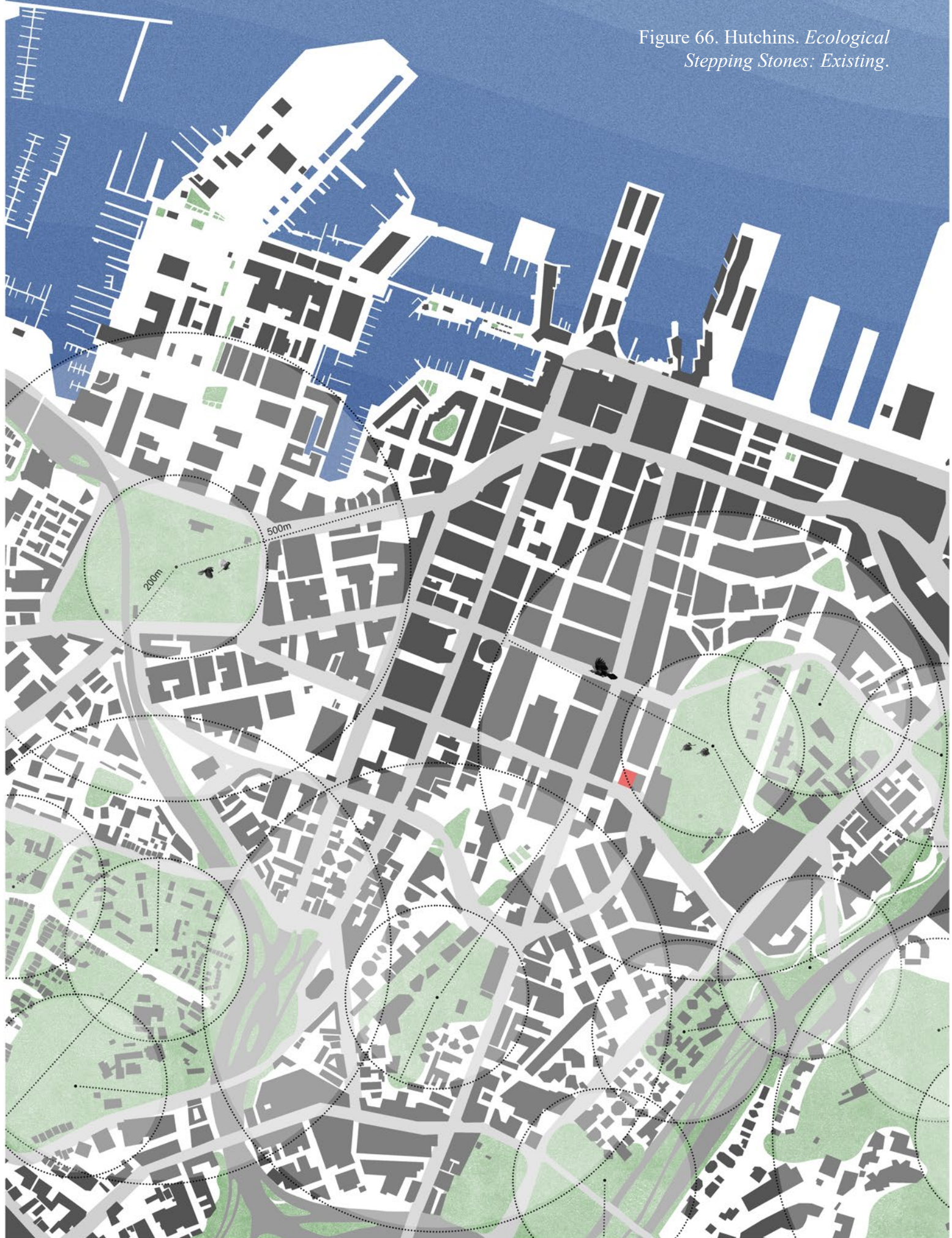
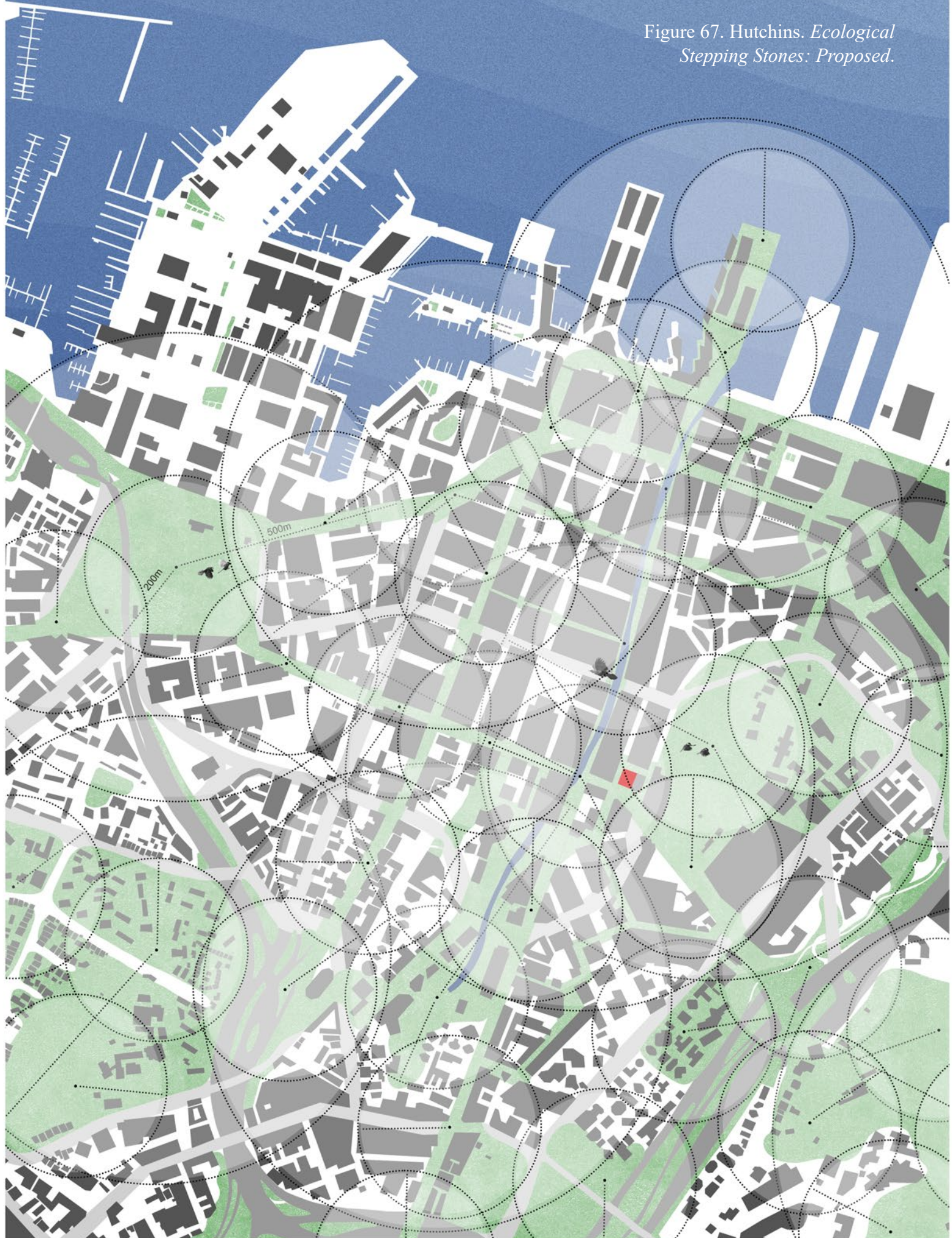




Figure 67. Hutchins. *Ecological Stepping Stones: Proposed.*



Urban Flight Patterns

Figure 68 explores the presence and movement of Aotearoa's native flying species, including birds, insects, and bats. It places these species within the 200m – 500m radii, plotting each within its comfortable range of flight. The diagram introduces native species that the proposal will interact with, these include lower mobility species such as the Piwakawaka (Fantail), Miromiro (Tomtit), and Kahuhu (Monarch Butterfly), to higher-mobility species such as the Kerereu (New Zealand Pidgeon), Taringi (Starling), and Warou (Welcome Swallow). By positioning these species within a measurable radius, the drawing highlights the importance of designing for movement and navigation, especially within dense urban environments. In this sense, the drawing emphasises that rewilding must accommodate to non-human needs, and highlights the need for linked ecological corridors that support multispecies mobility.

Functions of Architecture

This series of drawings advances the modular framework, exploring its spatial adaptability to site-specific conditions/needs. It follows four distinct architectural conditions: between, within, along, and above. Each typology tests arrangements of the modular system to embed itself within the urban fabric of cities. The drawings highlight the system as a flexible infrastructure capable of supporting both ecological processes and human movement. Figure 69, between bridge, follows a connecting architecture that positions the modular system as both a vertical and horizontal bridging system. It links two buildings to form a suspended circulation, which emphasises the connective capacity of modular systems. Figure 70, within ground, roots architecture nestled within rewilded vegetation, thereby becoming an extension of ground. This assembly of form allows for modules to dissolve within the landscape, hosting habitat structures or planting pockets to enhance biodiversity within a rewilded environment. Figure 71, along façade, follows a traversing architecture that restructures facades as vertical terrains, using modular blocks to move vertically alongside a built form. It extends the idea of ecosystems into vertical infrastructures that can continue ecologies to different axis. Figure 72, above floating, finishes with an elevated architecture. Modules suspended above ground form a canopy of functional structures. Positioned above rewilded corridors, these modules expand on the ground-sky based network established earlier in the exegesis. Collectively these typologies work to demonstrate the versatility of a modular framework, focusing on its capacity to form ecological-architectural connections within an urban fabric.

aotearoa mobile species

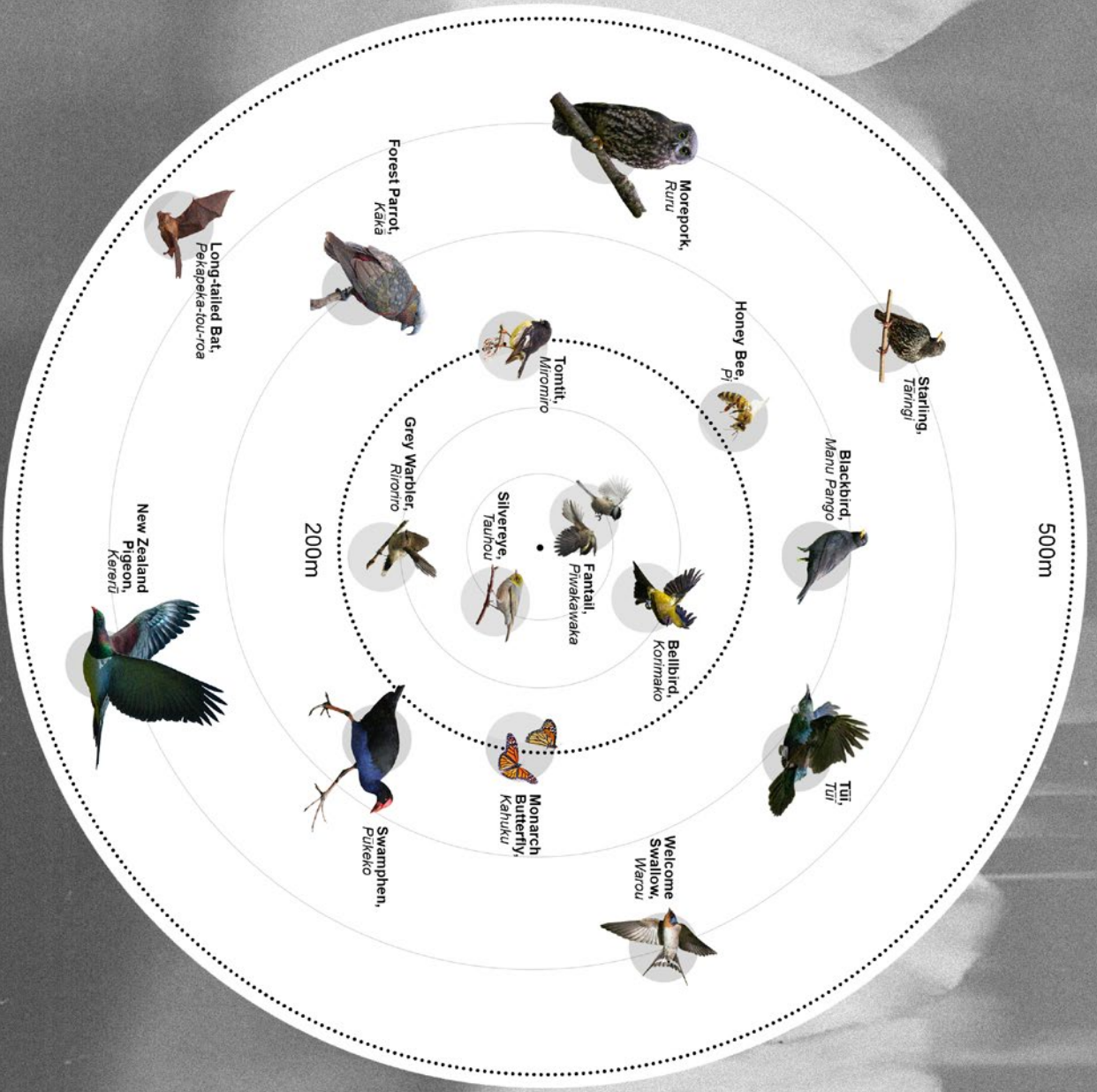
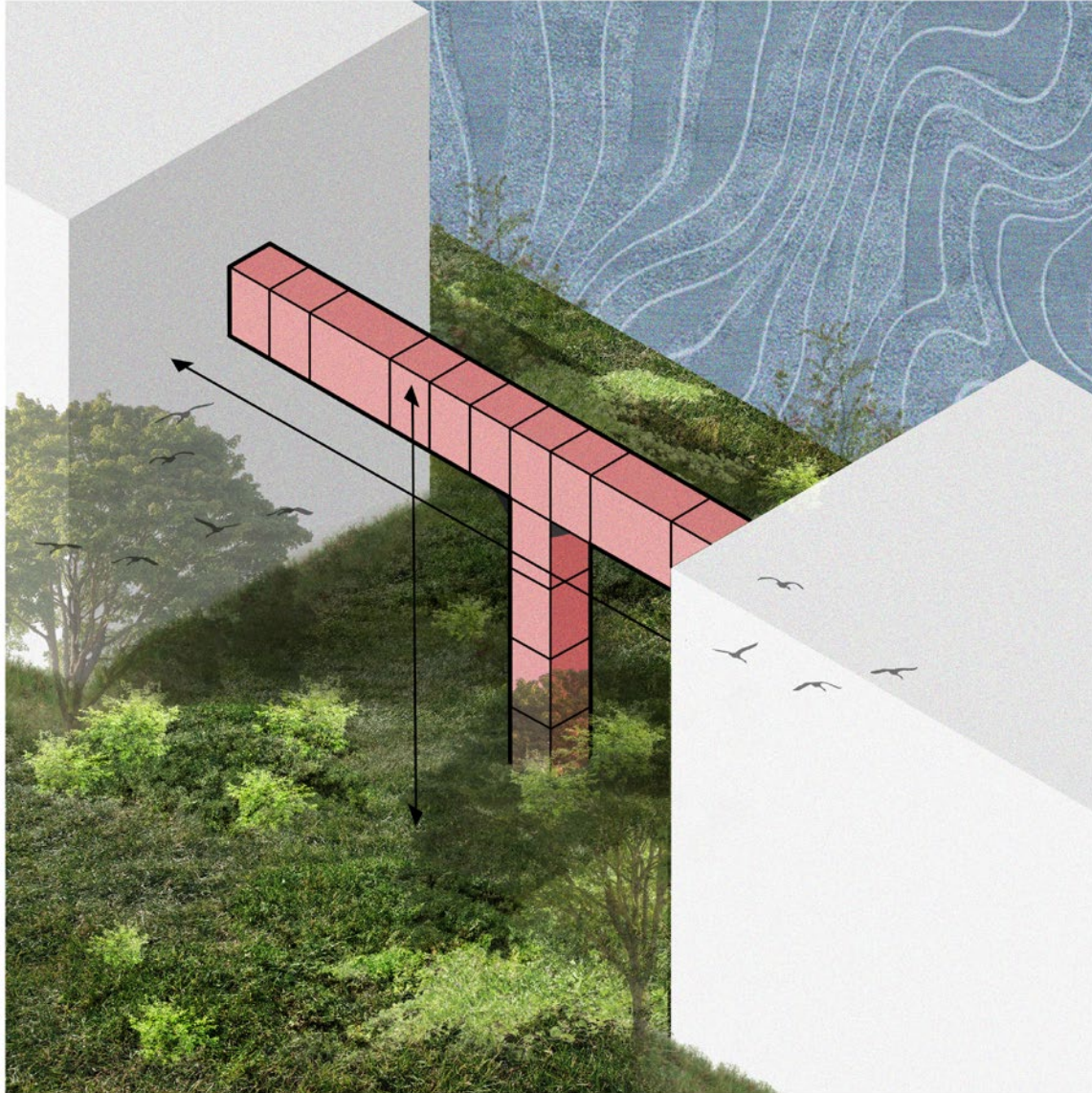


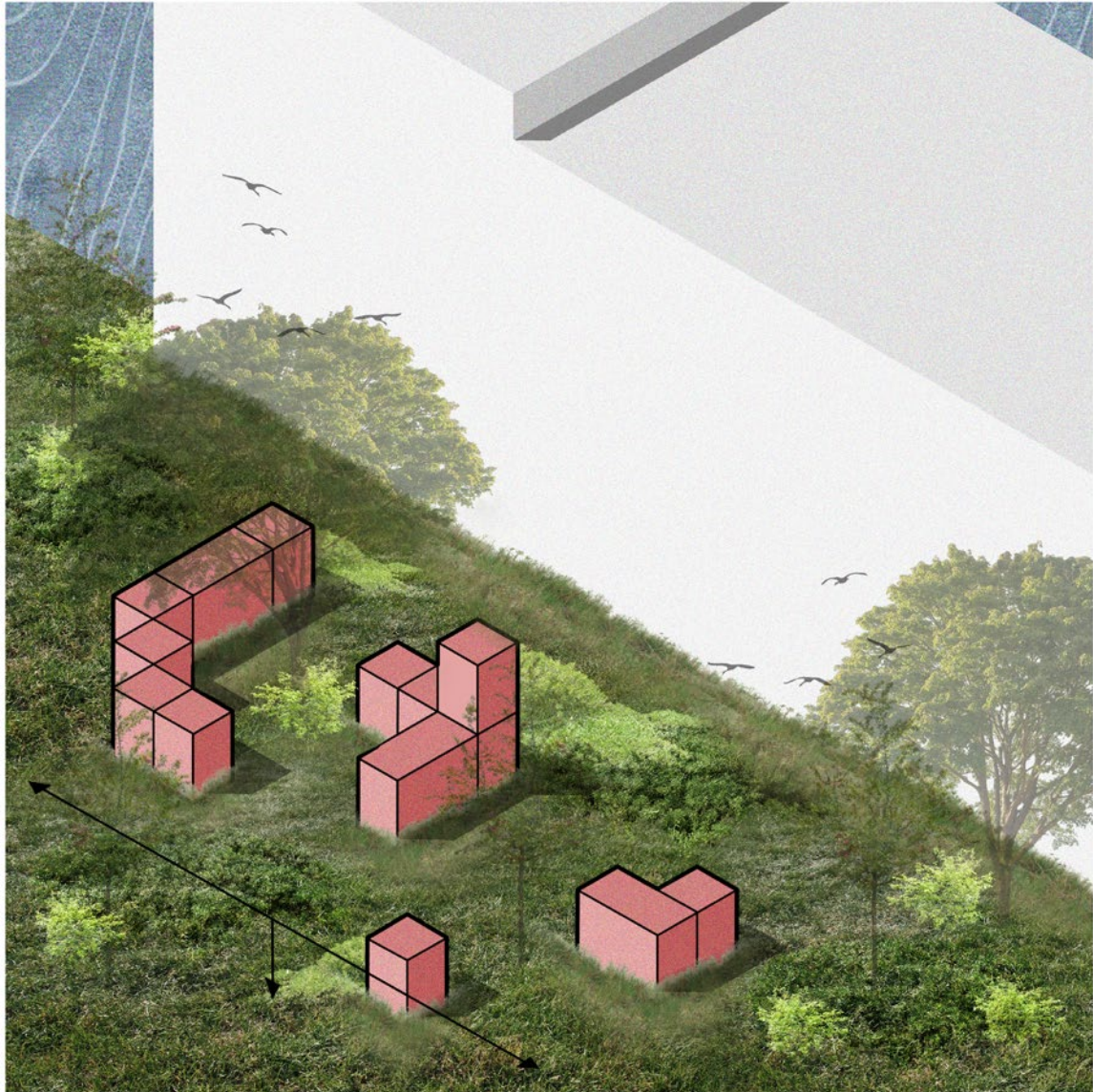
Figure 68. Hutchins. *Aotearoa Mobile Species*.

Figure 69. Hutchins. *Connecting Architecture: Between, Bridge.*



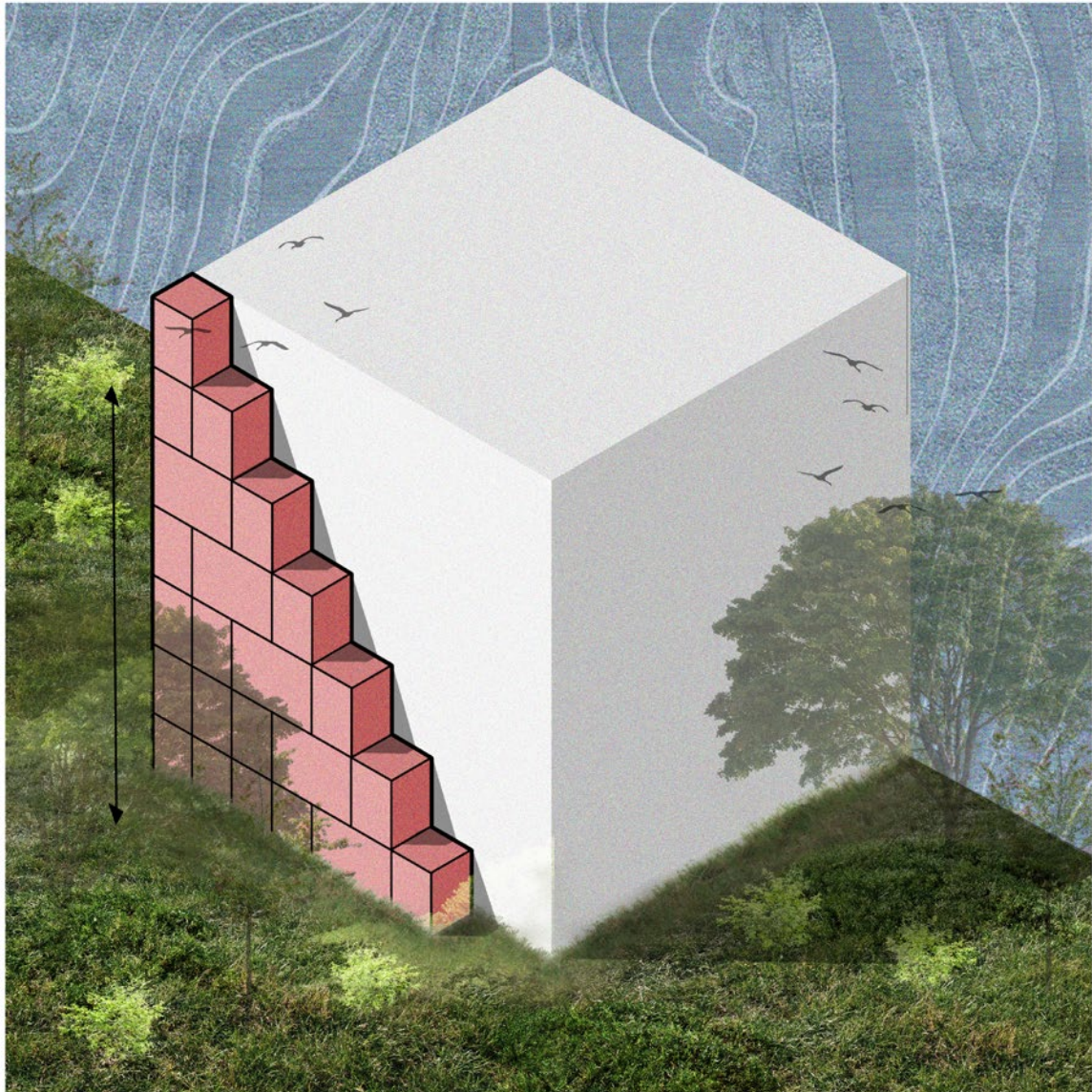
between: bridge
connecting architecture

Figure 70. Hutchins. *Connecting Architecture: Within, Ground.*



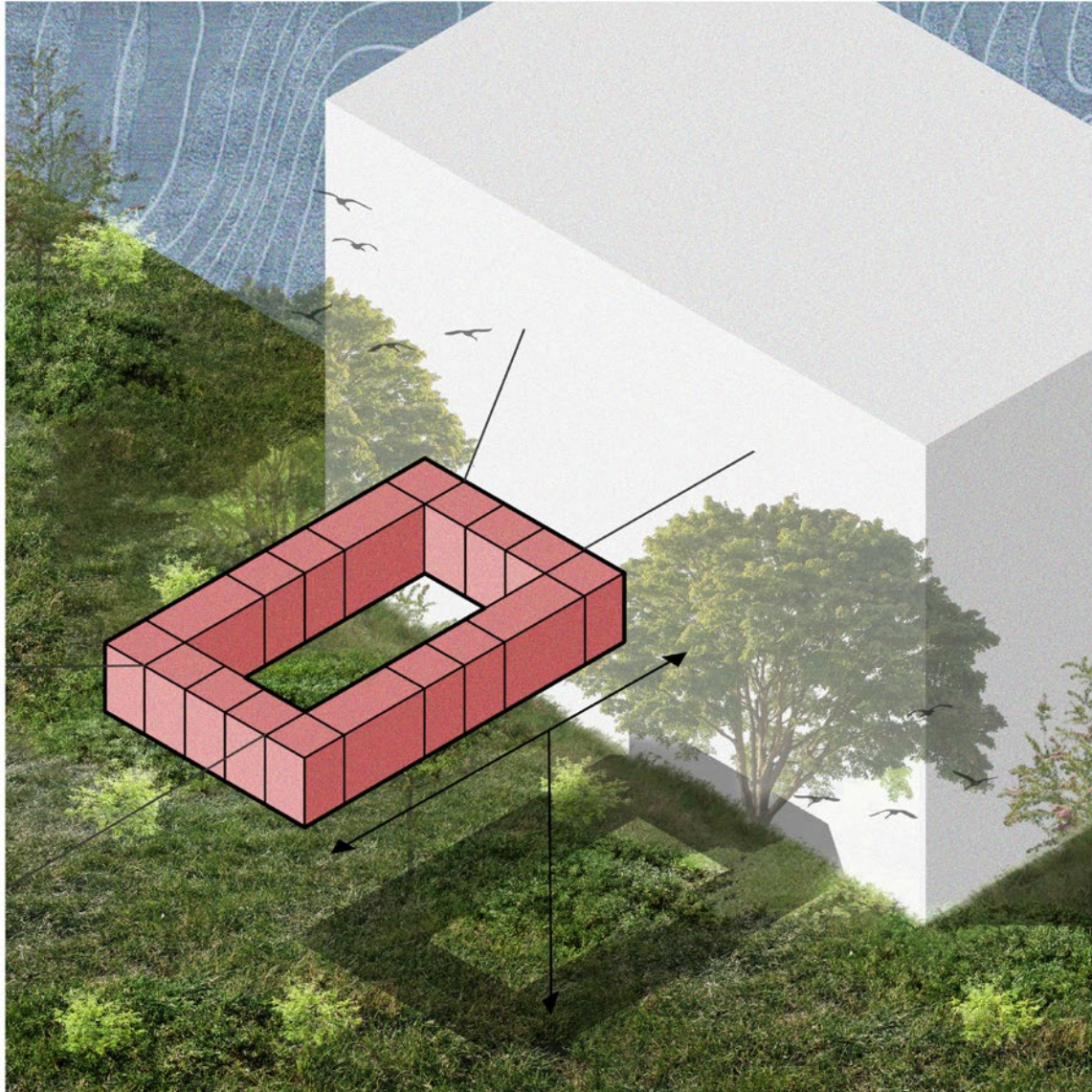
within: ground
rooting architecture

Figure 71. Hutchins. *Connecting Architecture: Along, Facade.*



along: facade
traversing architecture

Figure 72. Hutchins. *Connecting Architecture: Above, Floating.*



above: floating
elevating architecture

X-Gallery: Rooftop plan

As a continuation to the earlier site plan, Figure 73 serves as a rooftop plan to provide a more detailed understanding of the X-Gallery building's programme and function as space. When cut, the drawing reveals rooftop infrastructures that illustrate how greenhouse forms contain aquaponic systems and plant nurseries. These spaces serve as controlled growing environments, working in conjunction with outside planters to contribute to a wider ecological network and provide food for the community. These food production spaces are linked through shaded walkways to zones designated to human inhabitation. A communal kitchen and laundry occupy a portion of the right side of the roof space, becoming a shared amenity for residents. The coexistence of cultivation systems and collective spaces echoes ecological processes of kinship, creating a bond between urban infrastructure and ecologies. The proposal begins at the roof spaces and then extends the modular framework to bridging walkways that connect to a wider urban fabric, allowing these processes to become interwoven into a collective living system. The plan drawings critically position the X-Gallery building as a pivotal node, an intersection where ecological production, community infrastructure, and multispecies movement converge to form a continuous and cohesive living framework.

Section Through the Sky II

Figure 74 explores an advancement of the earlier sectional study (Figure 37), refining and expanding upon the architectural and ecological systems embedded within the X-Gallery building. This section forgoes some earlier proposed functions to instead further develop the greenhouse typologies and reveal the central connective walkway. Aquaponic systems are more clearly defined, forming a closed-loop ecological cycle in which aquatic species support plant cultivation. This scheme uses tuna (eel), hosting them within the rooftop structure within water tanks, where their natural waste production provides nutrients that are highly beneficial to growing plants (Somerville et al., 2014). Next to these systems are plant nurseries, spaces to cultivate seedlings to grow a range of produce, involving the human to aid natural processes and support growing flora. The modular framework now sits as a central circular system, aiding both horizontal and vertical movement. It encompasses a connection between papatuanuku and rangi, the ground and sky, linking all elements, from the rewilded corridor to rooftop infrastructure, into one continuous living system.

rooftop plan
overview 1:250



Figure 73. Hutchins. *Site Plan: Rooftop.*

perspective
rooftop

1:2



Section a-a'
Top activity

250



Figure 74. Hutchins. *Perspective Section Proposed.*

Coexisting Perspectives II

These set of drawings encapsulates the final proposal for the design outcome. It expands on the multispecies framing of the previous drawings, this time presenting three distinct viewpoints: the insect, the human, and the bird. Each reveals different spatial and ecological qualities of the proposed intervention, adopting thinking towards the more-than human.

Figure 75 places the viewer in the perspective of an insect. Situated within the rewilded streetscape, this drawing becomes immersed within the vegetation, viewing architectural intervention through the ground plane. The viewer mirrors the earlier non-human lens perspective, but its scope is expanded to include new developments, like the modular framework system and an expanded bridge network. From this perspective, the city becomes one filled with life; ecological processes occur at a ground and rooftop level, humans move within glasshouse structures, and restructured transport systems move through what once were the city's inert streets. Figure 76 captures the scene again through a human lens. This time, it places the viewer in the interior of a greenhouse space as rooftops are utilised for the cultivation of crops and social places. Inside, we see the imagined aquaponic system as it works to provide vegetables with nutrients while seedling nurseries begin to sprout. People tend to produce and seedlings, children observe the eels and peer out onto the below streetscape; the space becomes a lived environment. Humans coexist within ecologies on a plane not often associated with them. Figure 77 shifts to an avian lens, presenting an arial overview of the site as if the viewer was a bird migrating to another part of the city. From this viewpoint, the network of glasshouse infrastructure and bridges is seen in a wider detail. The rewilded corridor transforms streets once bustling with automobile and pedestrian traffic into ecological pathways hosting multispecies movement and canopy connections. This lens reveals a spatial coherence of the city, as isolated systems were transformed into a living one. Together the three drawings emphasise a different experience of space, placing the viewer in both familiar and unfamiliar perspectives. It highlights the importance of designing not just for humans but for non-humans, too, creating a space where all life lives in kinship.

Revitalising Drawings II

Revitalising Drawings expands on the previous iterations, this time using AI to give vitality to the final proposal. By revisiting the earlier exploration, these videos succeed in interpreting what these spaces are actual like to inhabit. The drawings become dynamic videos that simulate vitality inherent to ecological processes. Human and non-humans move within their environment. Architecture is given an ecological agency, a glimpse into life within living systems, and a greater understanding of the more-than-human rhythms that drawings alone cannot fully capture. Figure 78 specifically simulates human activity, portraying how this 2D environment becomes lived in and experienced. In Figure 79, the wild moves, static birds, and insects become real, interacting within the environment while people circulate through glass structures, and transport infrastructure traverses through the streetscape. These videos capture the essence of life, placing the viewer within a proposal that moves beyond a static form.





Figure 75. Hutchins. *Inhabiting Ground.*



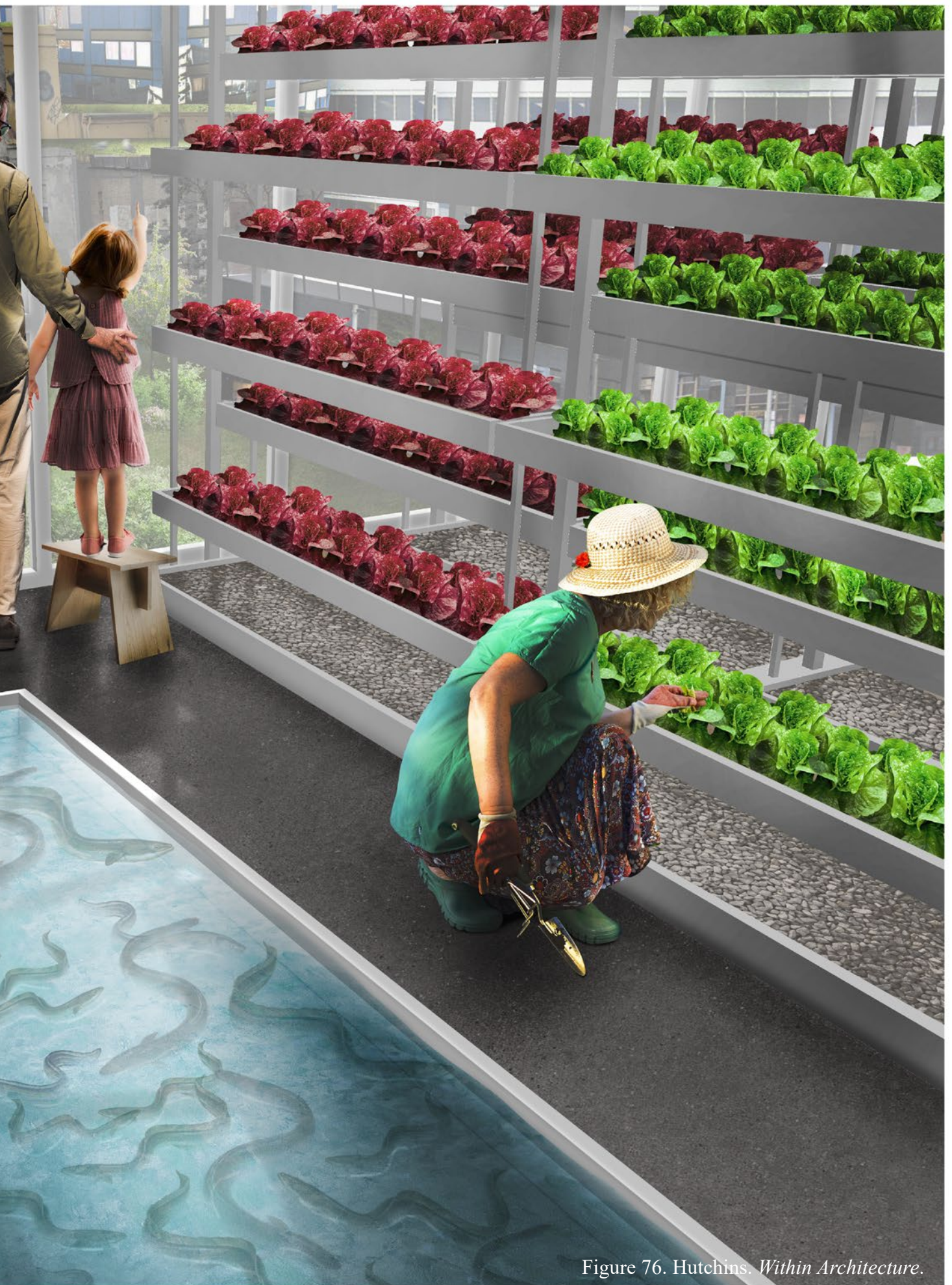


Figure 76. Hutchins. *Within Architecture*.





Figure 77. Hutchins. *Above a Living City*.



Figure 78. PIXLR. *Animating Ecologies*. AI Animation of Figure 75



Figure 79. PIXLR. *Animating Space*. AI Animation of Figure 76.

3.7 Event 4: The Proposed Design

Summary

Event 4, Figures 80 – 83, marked the culmination of the year’s design work, presented in full as a developed proposal that integrates ecological restoration and adaptive infrastructure within a dense urban environment. The final body of work synthesised the research established through earlier event—rewilding strategies, multispecies mapping, modular systems, glasshouse interventions—and formed a single cohesive scheme for Auckland’s CBD. The final work started with the context by mapping the site and ecologies, followed by access as the modular framework were explored. Next, the glasshouse infrastructure scheme was discussed and the final series of drawings concluded the proposal. Each board highlighted both the journey and the shifts in design thinking that define the research. Through a range of design tools, the proposal demonstrated how architecture can operate as an ecological infrastructure, facilitating movement, habitat creation, and multispecies coexistence. Event 4, therefore, established the project’s architectural and ecological resolution, conceiving a vision for the CBD that functions as an interconnected ecological corridor. The work that was presented highlighted a core proposition: a movement from integrating nature for humans, to placing humans within nature. The thinking places a challenge on how our cities are designed and it lays the grounds for foundational thinking, a way to design for both humans and non-humans to create connected living systems.

Outcome

Feedback from Event 4 recognised the strengths of the ecological framework, its continuous pathways, its multispecies responsiveness and its grounding in changing cities into living systems. The final proposal was thus able to solidify the thesis’ argument that architecture can act as ecological infrastructure, enabling urban environments to transition from fragmented ecologies to continuous networks. The proposed intervention suggests a rapid change in the way we design our cities to create spaces that should evolve with natural processes, not fight against them. Looking forward, the project aims not only to propose a spatial intervention but to challenge the existing assumptions about how cities are designed. The work aspires to shift thinking towards ecological sensitivity, recognising the city as a shared habitat inhabited by more than just the human. The proposal therefore acts as a foundation, a project that speculates a future where urban environments become sustainable, regenerative, connected hubs of ecologies and built form. Its aim is to evoke change, a chance to restructure environments before it is too late.

Figure 80. Hutchins. *Event 4 Pin-up Context.*

board 1: site/context



Figure 81. Hutchins. *Event 4 Pin-up Modular Framework.*

board 2: modular framework



Figure 82. Hutchins. *Event 4 Pin-up Glasshouses.*

board 3: rooftop resolution



Figure 83. Hutchins. *Event 4 Pin-up Hero*.

board 4: final hero



Conclusion

This thesis has explored how rewilding can be translated from ecological theory into architectural practice. The research differentiates itself by placing humans within natural ecosystems rather than above them. It goes beyond simply greening space by instead suggesting a framework that restores ecological processes and promotes wide-scale species movement across a region. Architecture becomes a living infrastructure, a scaffold which ecology builds upon and with to form an essence of kinship between the urban and ecology. By embracing the complexity and interdependence of natural systems, our cities become all the richer, a transformation from fragmented environments to an interconnected system that sustains both human and more-than-human life.

The final proposal establishes a cohesive connective ecological corridor, one that paves its way through existing infrastructure to cement itself within an urban fabric. It demonstrates how rewilding can be spatially and architecturally deployed, forming a layered system of ground and sky. Rewilded streetscapes restore lost ecological function, productive rooftop structures support cultivation and social living, and walkways act as connective tissue by linking each node of the city into an interconnected unit. Together, these interventions transform the city, proving that dense urban environments can host biodiverse, regenerative, and sustainable environments, thus fostering meaningful coexistence between the human and more-than-human world.

How can rewilding strategies simultaneously enhance social connectivity and promote ecological regeneration through urban and architectural intervention?

Rewilding strategies enhance social connectivity and ecological regeneration through a restructuring of urban environments into multispecies systems. It forms a return to the wild where a place long forgotten is being given the chance to bloom again. By restoring the ecological and hydrological processes of the site, native flora and fauna emerges, nestling within the urban fabric of the city. Embedded within architectural interventions, the thesis suggests the use of mutually beneficial spaces in the form of a framework that supports species movement, biodiversity, environmental, and community wellbeing as well as social interaction, which creates a renewed understanding of the relationship between people and place.

How can urban architecture be designed to support and integrate wildlife within densely populated cities, fostering multi-species coexistence?

Urban architecture supports and integrates wildlife by shifting a focus in design. It moves from a human-centred approach to one that recognises the city as a shared habitat. It moves from the commonly adopted anthropocentric lens, a lens which prioritises human needs and places itself above other species and the environment, and shifts to an eco-centric lens. This lens allows for an understanding that humans are a part of a wider ecological community, that they are equals to more-than-human lifeforms within a wider ecosystem, who can become active and engaging participants that support ecological processes and live in harmony with the natural world. With this design thinking, the project establishes a kinship of space, linking built form to environmental agency and forming a framework that restructures cities to become socially vibrant and ecologically active.

How can vertical and horizontal rewilding strategies reshape urban landscapes to foster deeper and more immersive human-nature connections?

Vertical and horizontal rewilding strategies are deployed within the thesis which fundamentally reshape its urban landscape. The thesis proposes a multi-layered ecological system that immerses the human within the natural world, across different planes of ground, built form, and elevated space. Horizontal rewilding shapes through both continuous ecological corridors as well as networks of glasshouse structures. These interventions allow for large-scale multispecies movement, traversing through a living landscape rather than inert environments. Vertical rewilding extends these ecologies upwards, through facades and modular systems, enabling nature to occupy an overlooked axis of the city. Together these strategies cultivate deeper relationships between humans and non-humans, renewing a sense of belonging within a now living city.

By answering these questions, the research contributes to architectural practice by reframing the city as a multispecies environment and positioning architecture as a tool to create deeper ecological processes. The thesis expands on architectural thinking, placing an emphasis on a foundation built to design with environments rather than dominate them. A shift in the way we design our cities is needed—they must be re-imagined into environments that support coexistence, species resilience, and the relationships between human and more-than-human life. We must redefine architecture's role within the living world as an active participant for ecological renewal, grounded in care, reciprocity, and kinship.

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Figure 84. Hutchins. *Flowers in Bloom.*