

*tales for
those
who care*

studio caruso // ethz / final crit // fs20 // students: luca riggio, luca ugolini

story



In retrospect, historians would probably describe our epoch as: “the great Dittering”.

We live in a time of ineffective and widespread anxiety about environmental destruction, unmistakable evidence of accelerating mass extinctions, worldwide pandemics, violent climate change, social disintegration, widening wars, ongoing human population - increase due to the large numbers of already-born, and vast migrations of human and nonhuman refugees without refuges.

The fears of that time encouraged control and monitoring. Algorithms and artificial intelligence gave early warning of hypothetical dangers and diseases. Mistrust and fear changed life dramatically.

The public space, where spontaneous events and encounters promoted social exchange and freedom could be experienced, is now almost empty.

One such place is Zurich's main railway station. Once a bustling place, a reflection of society, a place that accommodates all milieus and a lively consumer Centre...

Even before the time of the great dittering, the perceived centre of Switzerland was already changing. Streams of movement were optimized, supposedly public spaces privatized, events commercialized, some marginalized groups were excluded, and all players at the main station regulated and monitored.

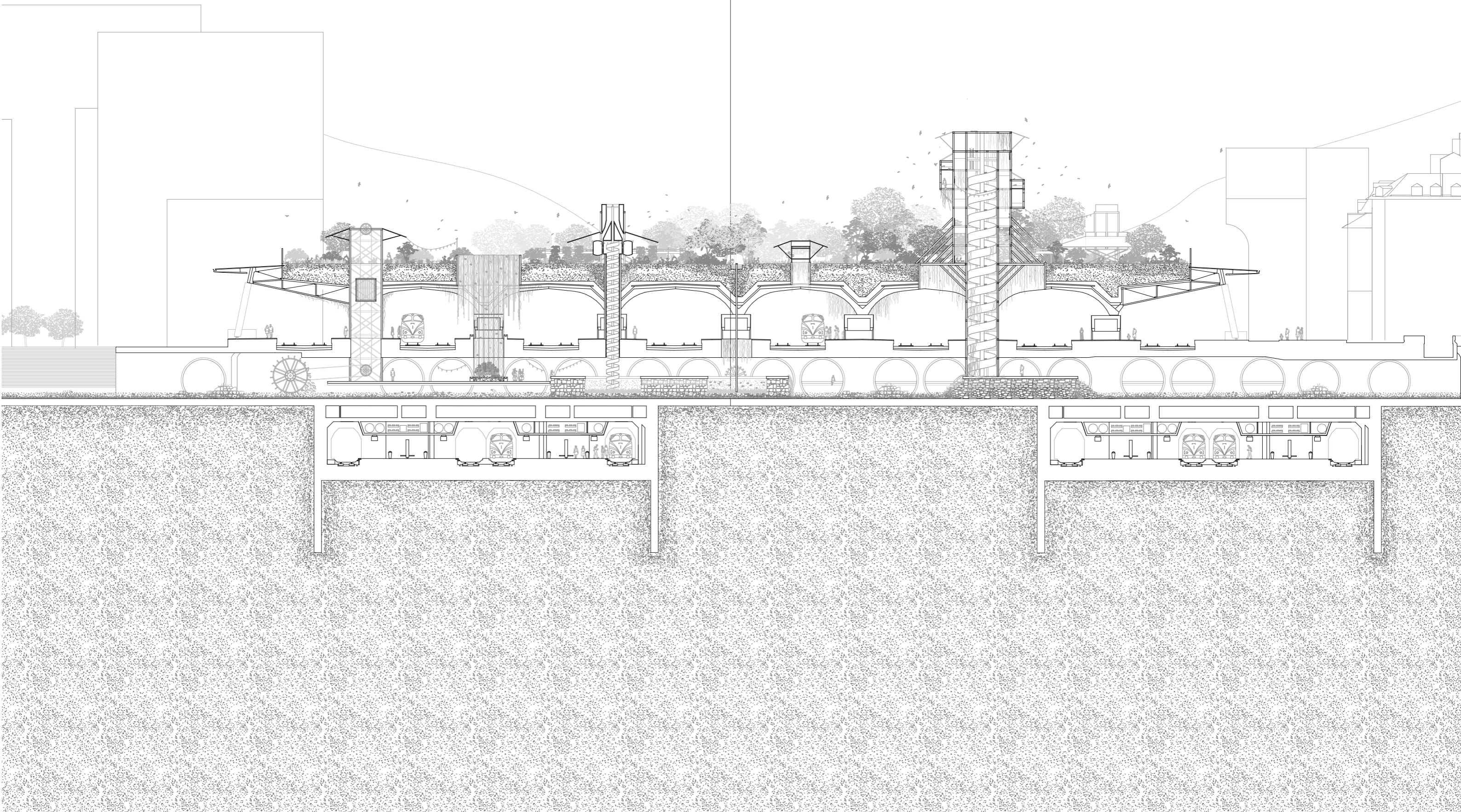
During this terrible period, when it was nonetheless still possible for concerted action to make a difference, it was in this very emblematic place for our society, that we - a group of young Compostists - decided to follow in the footsteps of the like-minded communities all over the world.

Away from virtual spaces and digital meeting rooms. Away from the screens, back to the senses. Reconnect with the world and all living species and forms.



section

Massstab 1:700



Under the tracks, in the tunnel of the river Sihl, which crosses the station, protected from prying eyes and state control mechanisms, we: the children of compost, began to create a place that functioned according to our principles.

Our settlement is flourishing, and we are gaining more and more acceptance in society. Our presence is slowly spreading to the roof of the main station and began to take root there. For the first few years, our community was concentrated on building culture, economy, rituals, and politics.

We are trying to find a way in which nature, human and technology could work together symbiotically.

So, we began to rediscover old, indigenous techniques of fish farming and agriculture and invented technical helpers that use energy in harmony with nature conservation.

Trying to cultivate the arts of living on a damaged planet to be those who came to recuperate and restore where we could.

It all started here in the underground. We freed the river from the straightness of the canals and cut round openings in the walls.

Do you see how the water swirls, and how gravel banks and stones regulate and change the speed of the flowing water?

Can you hear the rushing and splashing?

Nature is the conductor here, and the seasons and the precipitation are its baton.

Sometimes musicians supplement this acoustic spectacle with an instrument. An event which is open to everyone. Different gravel banks, sandbanks and platforms can be visited and appropriated freely by all- human and non-humans.

Between them small lagoons are formed: a newly won habitat for amphibians, fish, crabs and insects.

The morning light penetrates through the openings in the ceiling and allows animal and plant life where previously only rapid water flowed through.

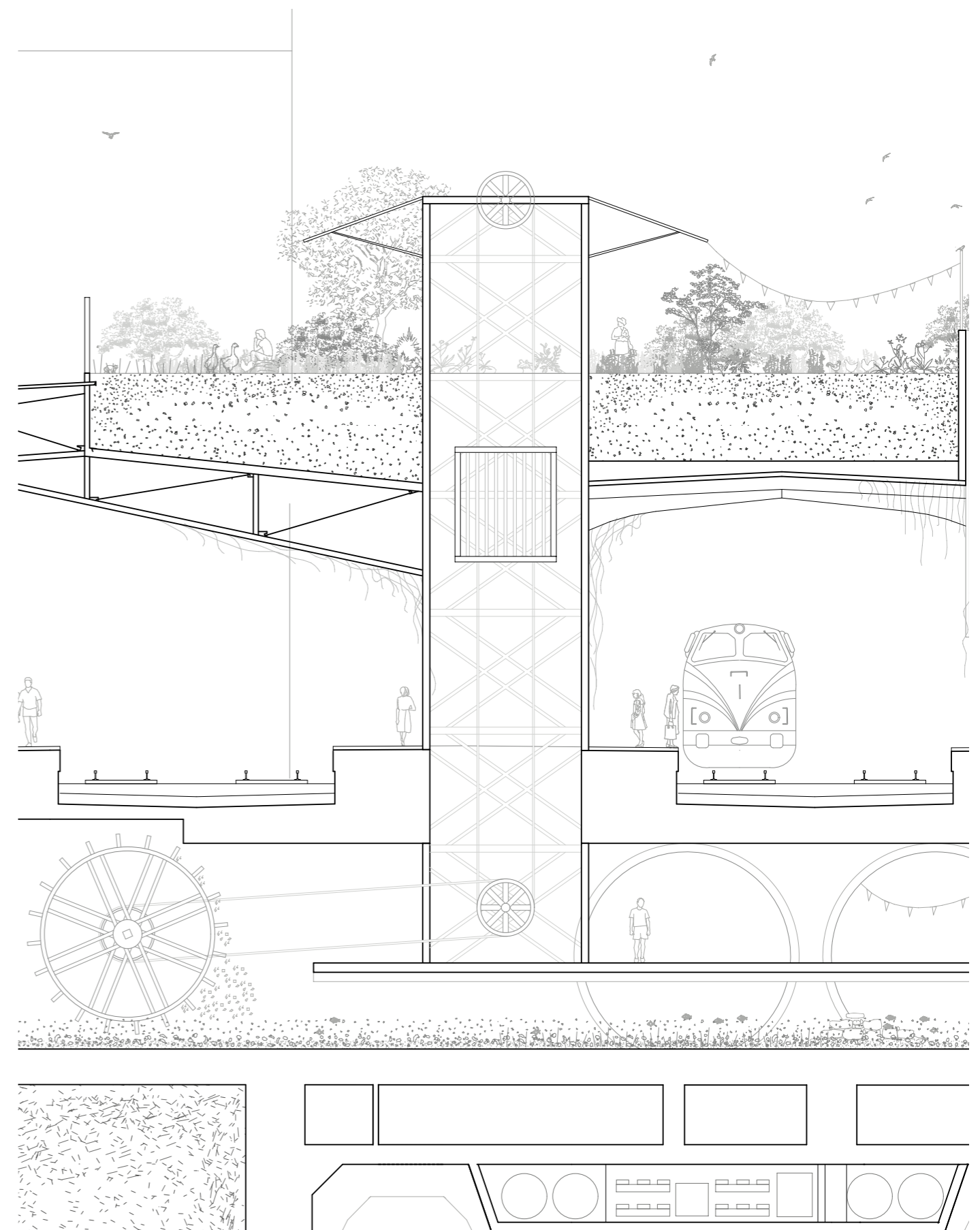
The sun's rays are reflected in many ways

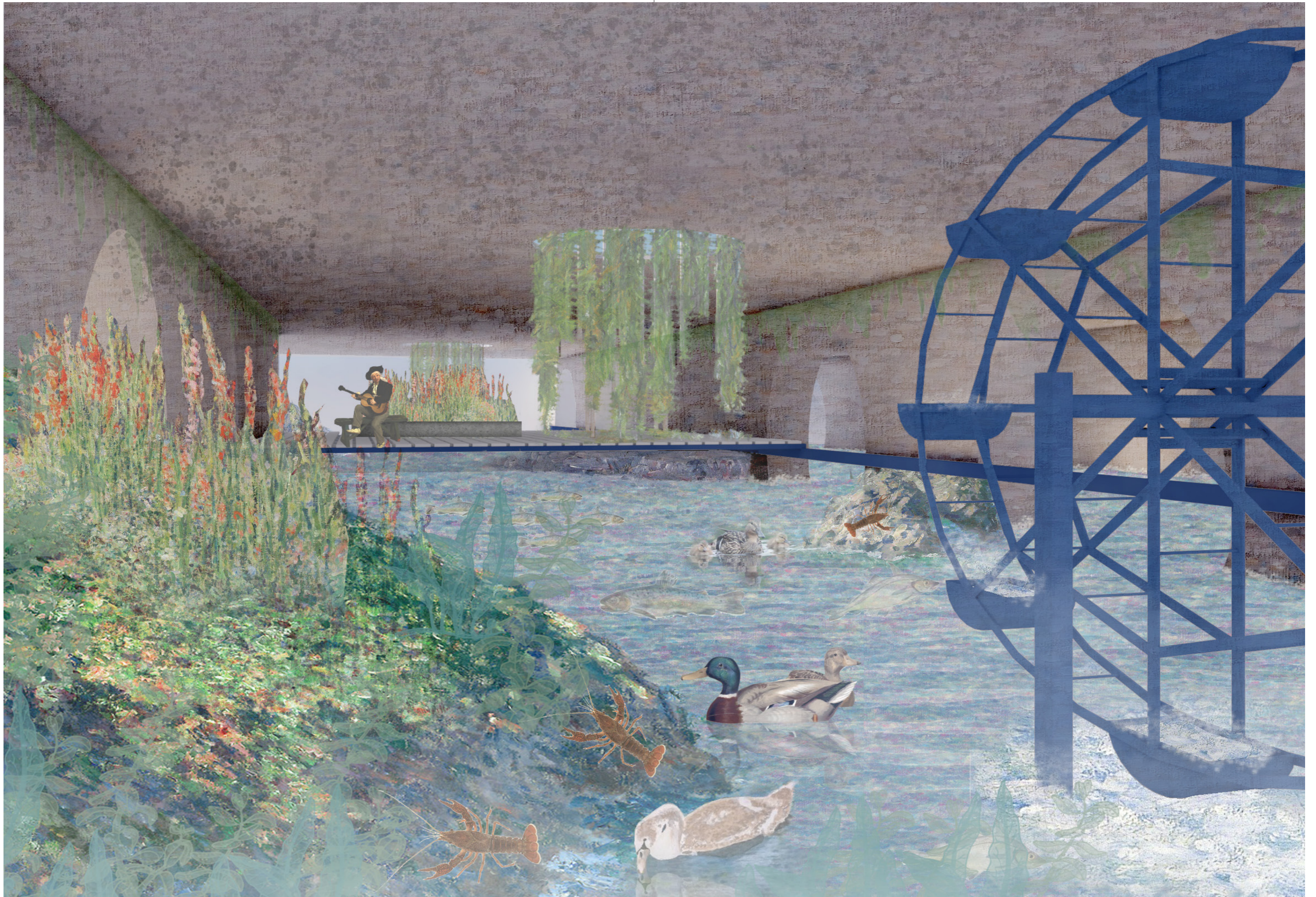
on the surface of the river. It reminds me of the bluish scales of the trout. An endangered fish species whose population must be increased for a healthy ecosystem.

Jasmina takes care of that. She is standing on one of our platforms, which can be moved seasonally under the light openings by means of waterpower.

In addition to the trout and minnows from our fish farm, she takes care of the mushrooms that sprout from the plant baskets.

The irony of it all is, a few years ago she worked in a clothing store at HB and felt like a fish in an aquarium herself. Except she wasn't being taken very good care of.





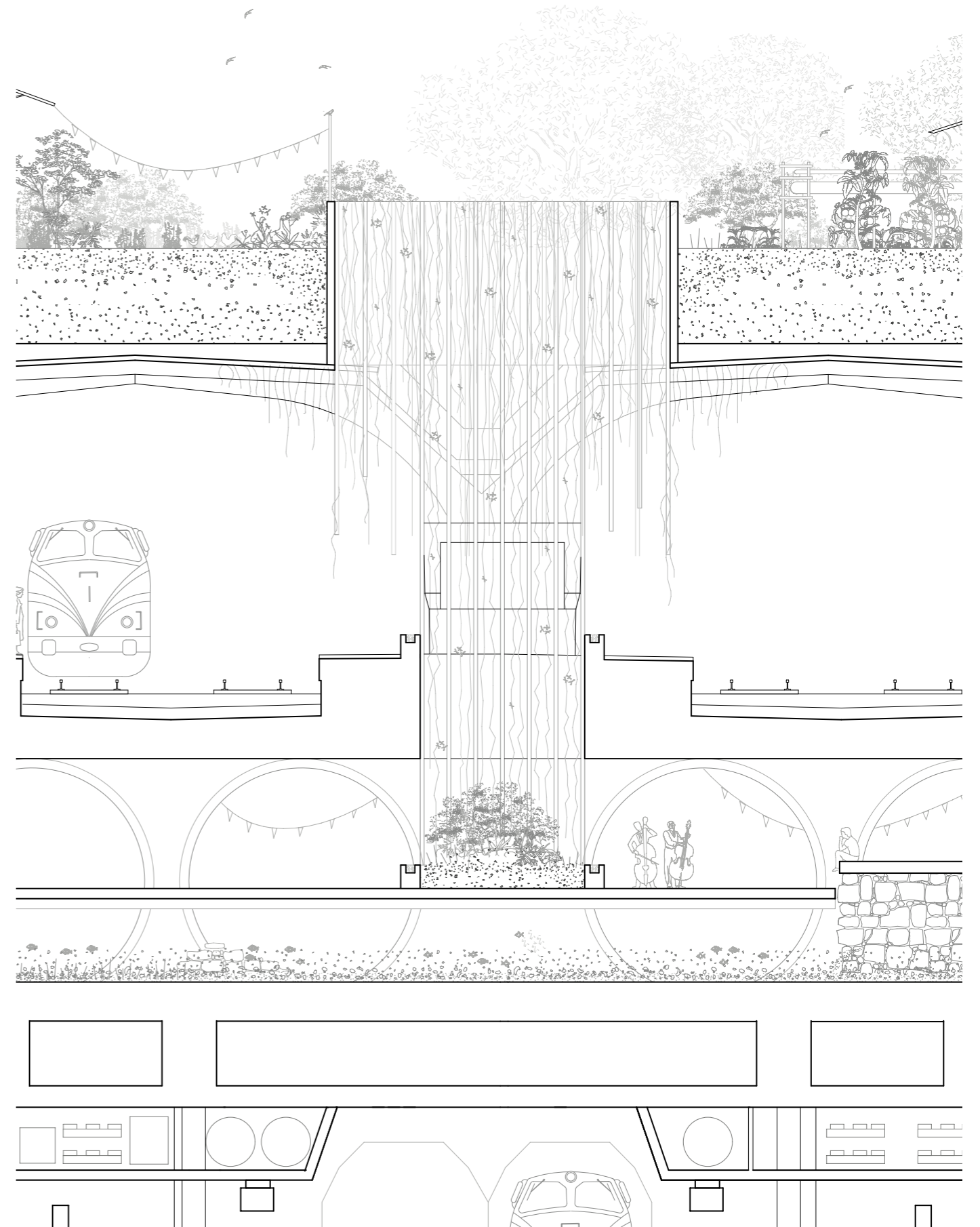
Standing on the tracks, there were only two possibilities before us: Towards the city or to the horizon. But now the way leads also to towards Sihl or to the sky.

Plants climb up the wooden climbing aid. Insects do the same. Attracted by the light, which illuminate the station through the round openings.

This also benefits the cross spider. It stretches its web between the struts of the climbing aid and thus gets hold of its prey.

The travelers enjoy the presence of nature. I have observed how Leonie, who once was a competent SBB ticket seller, showed the beauty of hops to a group of interested travelers. A plant whose shoots rise from the ground every year and die in autumn after flowering to leave room for other plants.

Rainwater collects in small drinking fountains, which are filtered through the gravel and humus layer on the roof.





The afternoon sun is high. Can you hear the grinding sound? Its from the Archimedean screw powered by our Solar Chimney. It creates a circuit with the fish farm in the basement.

The nutrients excreted by the plants on the roof get into the fish tanks through pipes. There you feed the fish; whose excrement is used as fertilizer for the plants. The excrement is transported upwards in tanks by means of an Archimedean screw powered by even this solar chimney. This creates a closed sustainable cycle. A system which, in another form, was already known to the Mayas.

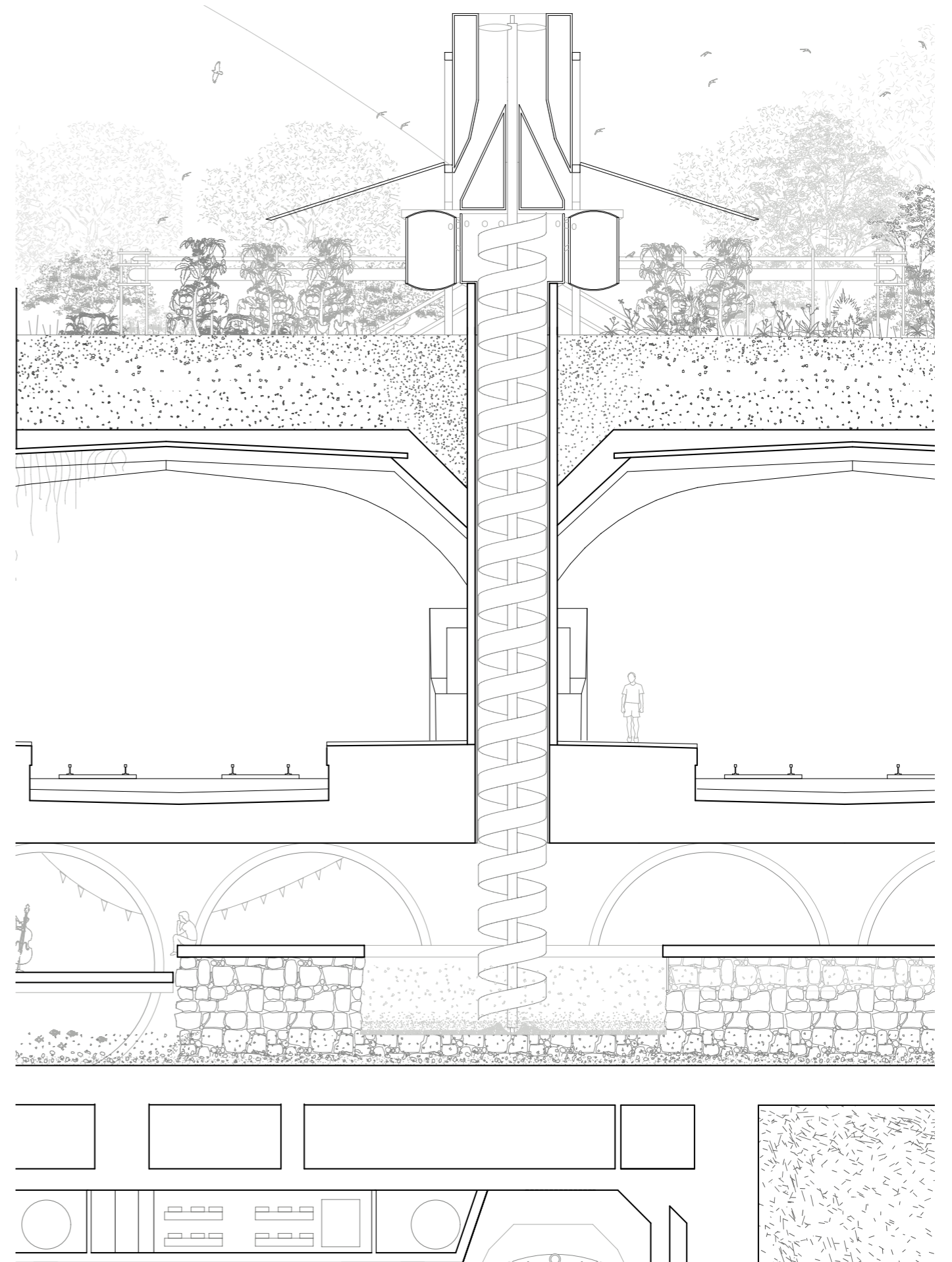
A remarkable amount of tomatoes grows under the wings of the solar chimney.

The red fruits of the plant benefit from the heated, humid air near the solar-powered machine. The variety of different plants on the roof is almost limitless.

In order to keep it that way and to prevent individual plants from displacing others, Sabine keeps a watchful eye on the less dominant plants for a while and takes care of the preservation of biodiversity.

She could never have dreamed that she would be able to enjoy her time at the station so much.

She used to stand on the platforms between the tracks. Her time was measured by how quickly she got away from there. She was always too early or too late.

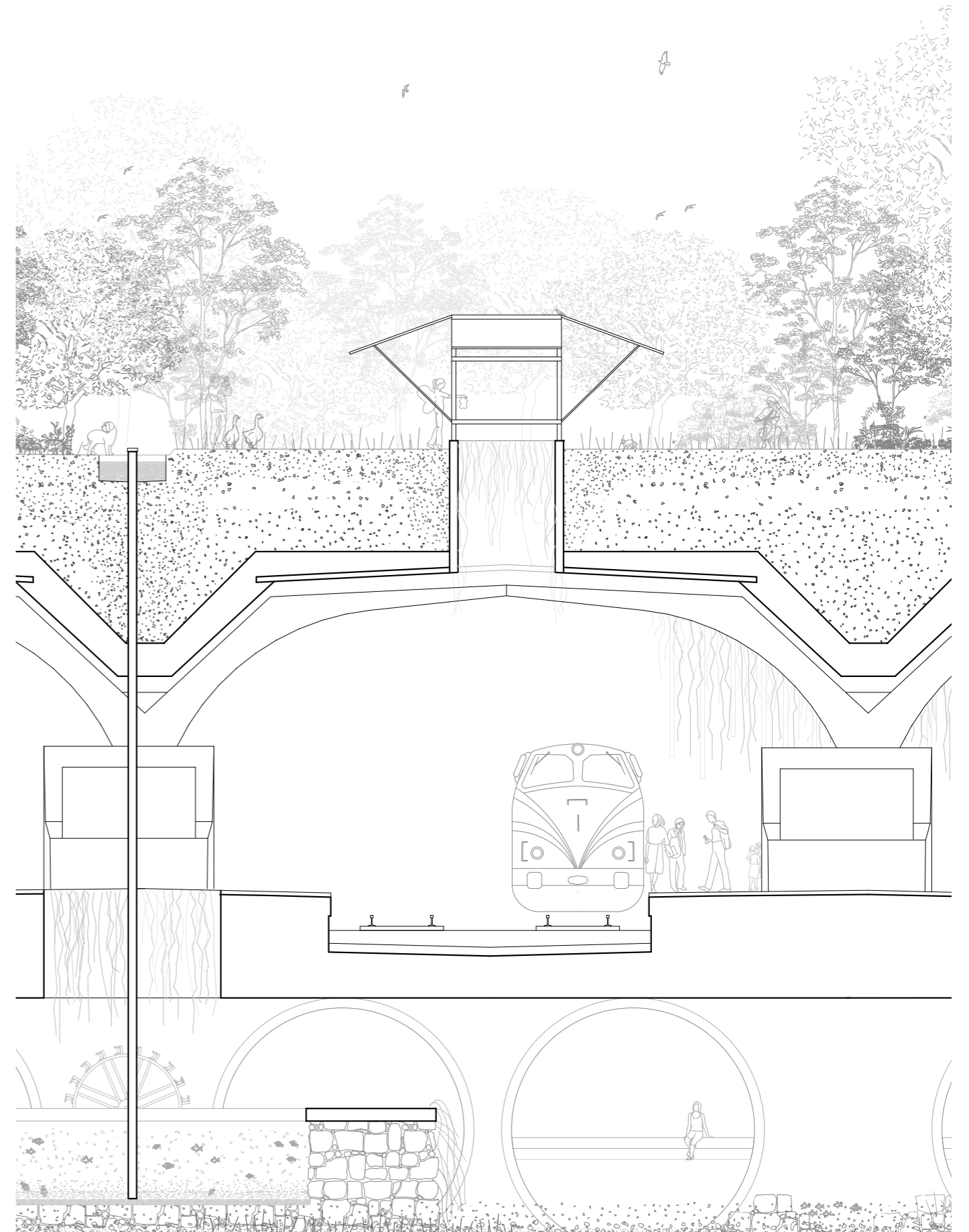




The sun is going down. It's getting cooler. I remember a story my grandfather told me. Before it became common to heat with oil or electricity, they kept their farm animals on the ground floor. The waste heat from the animals warmed the floors of the living quarters and thus served as heating. The same happens in reversed roles in our overgrown tower.

Klara, who once helped whoever she could in the station help service, is now the human radiator for nesting boxes of the swifts above her. A sociable bird that likes to breed in colonies and can be in the air for hours.

Klara also told me about a barn owl that has nested on the top floor. Both animals are used to nesting near humans, but due to the glass and compact facades of contemporary architecture, they do not find niches and hide where they can live.





It's dawn. One of our rituals takes place in the clearing. Milena and Jose have decided not to give birth to any biological offspring.

Instead of having children of their own, they make a kinship with a group of monarch butterflies. A decision which is celebrated by the whole community! The kin-making work and play of the community-built capacities critical for resurgence and multispecies flourishing. In particular, friendship as a kin-making practice throughout life is elaborated and celebrated.

Early in the morning, before rush hour, the community gathers in the clearing.

Through an opening in the ground, let a chunk of humus: peppered with seeds, insects and pollen, sink to the roof of a train.

The man-made trains leaving HB carry these seeds into the distance in the hope that the thoughts, lusts, wishes and ideologies of the community will take root there.

The HB would again become a mirror of society. Of a new society who cares, who stays in the trouble...

