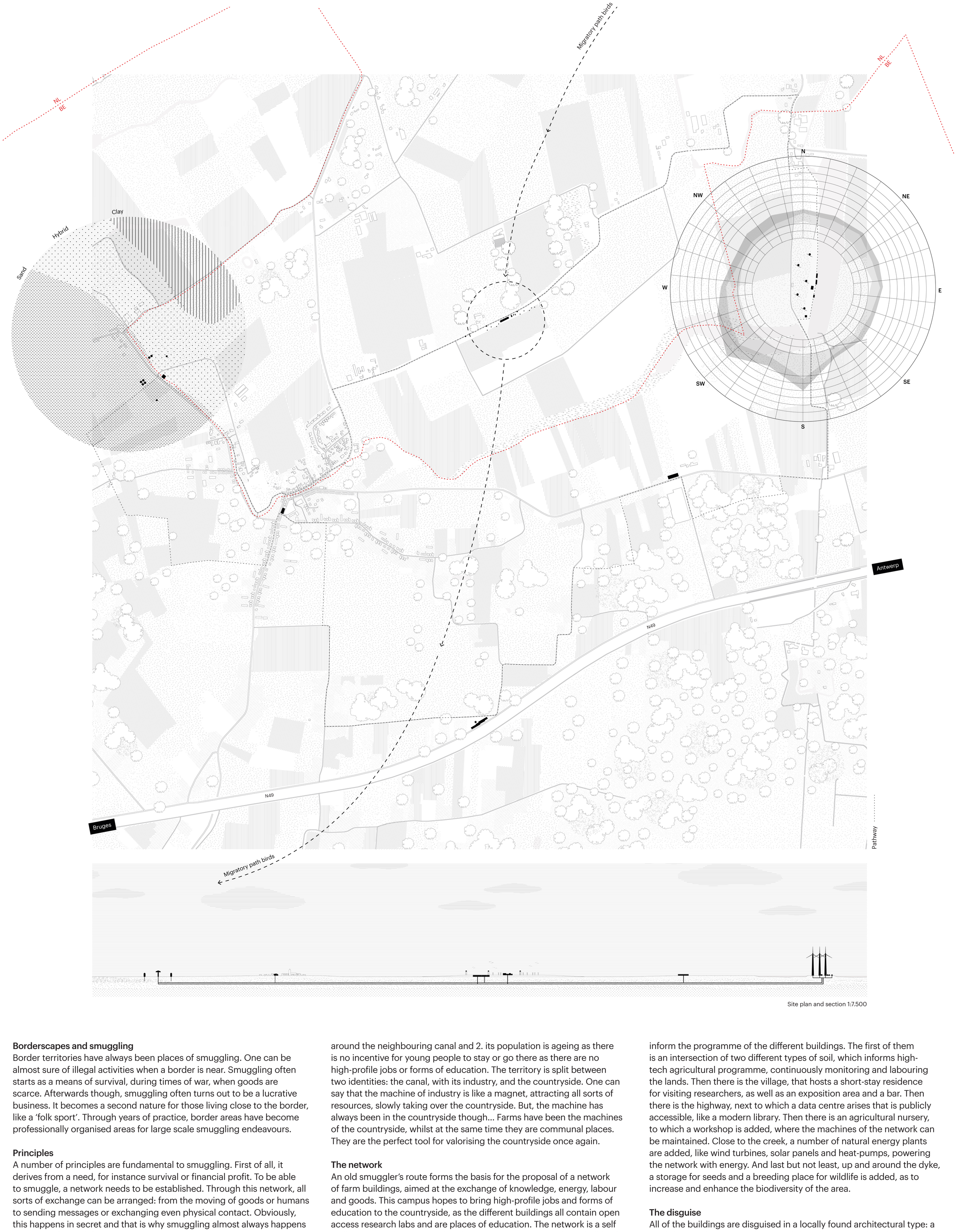
The bigger picture



Site plan and section 1:7.500

Borderscapes and smuggling
Border territories have always been places of smuggling. One can be almost sure of illegal activities when a border is near. Smuggling often starts as a means of survival, during times of war, when goods are scarce. Afterwards though, smuggling often turns out to be a lucrative business. It becomes a second nature for those living close to the border, like a 'folk sport'. Through years of practice, border areas have become professionally organised areas for large scale smuggling endeavours.

Principles
A number of principles are fundamental to smuggling. First of all, it derives from a need, for instance survival or financial profit. To be able to smuggle, a network needs to be established. Through this network, all sorts of exchange can be arranged: from the moving of goods or humans to sending messages or exchanging even physical contact. Obviously, this happens in secret and that is why smuggling almost always happens with some form of disguise.

The need
Overslag faces two major challenges. 1. It is losing programme and with that a sense of community, as small retail is replaced by big warehouses around the neighbouring canal and 2. its population is ageing as there is no incentive for young people to stay or go there as there are no high-profile jobs or forms of education. The territory is split between two identities: the canal, with its industry, and the countryside. One can say that the machine of industry is like a magnet, attracting all sorts of resources, slowly taking over the countryside. But, the machine has always been in the countryside though... Farms have been the machines of the countryside, whilst at the same time they are communal places. They are the perfect tool for valorising the countryside once again.

The network
An old smuggler's route forms the basis for the proposal of a network of farm buildings, aimed at the exchange of knowledge, energy, labour and goods. This campus hopes to bring high-profile jobs and forms of education to the countryside, as the different buildings all contain open access research labs and are places of education. The network is a self sufficient, sustainable machine that acts as an example of possibilities for the future for the nearby villagers.

The exchange
The route crosses a number of specific landscape elements that inform the programme of the different buildings. The first of them is an intersection of two different types of soil, which informs high-tech agricultural programme, continuously monitoring and labouring the lands. Then there is the village, that hosts a short-stay residence for visiting researchers, as well as an exposition area and a bar. Then there is the highway, next to which a data centre arises that is publicly accessible, like a modern library. Then there is an agricultural nursery, to which a workshop is added, where the machines of the network can be maintained. Close to the creek, a number of natural energy plants are added, like wind turbines, solar panels and heat-pumps, powering the network with energy. And last but not least, up and around the dyke, a storage for seeds and a breeding place for wildlife is added, as to increase and enhance the biodiversity of the area.

The disguise
All of the buildings are disguised in a locally found architectural type: a red brick shed. Although they are high tech on the inside, their disguise makes them blend into the landscape. The architectural identity is an abstraction of the archetypical form of the shed. Like the traditional shed, its form is distorted by its functional demands and opened up to technical needs.

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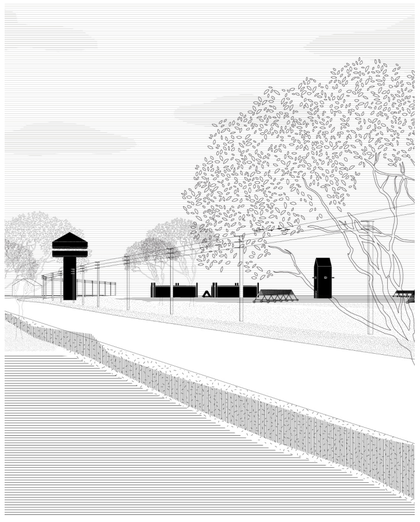
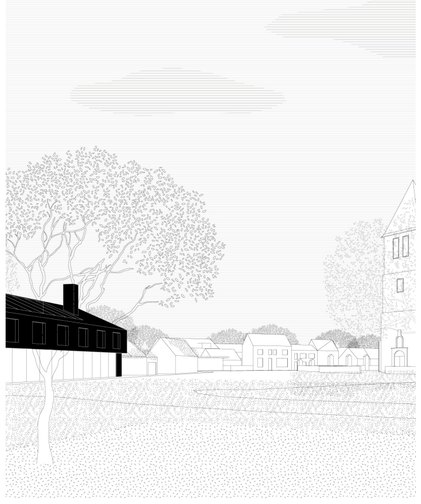
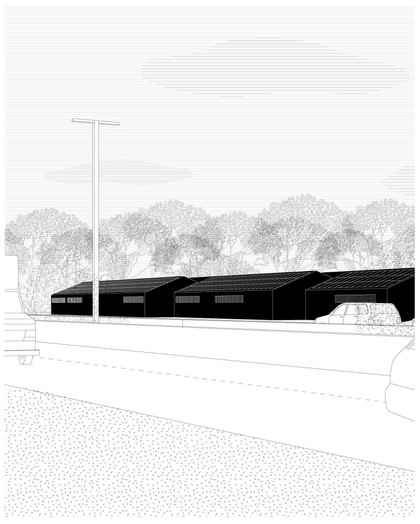
A network of buildings



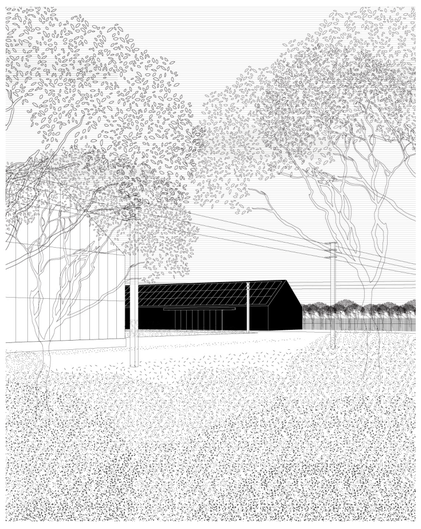
1. Soil — Shared smart agriculture systems



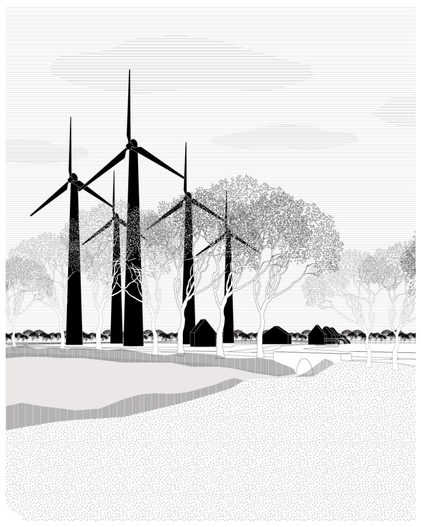
2. Community — Residences and expo for the locals



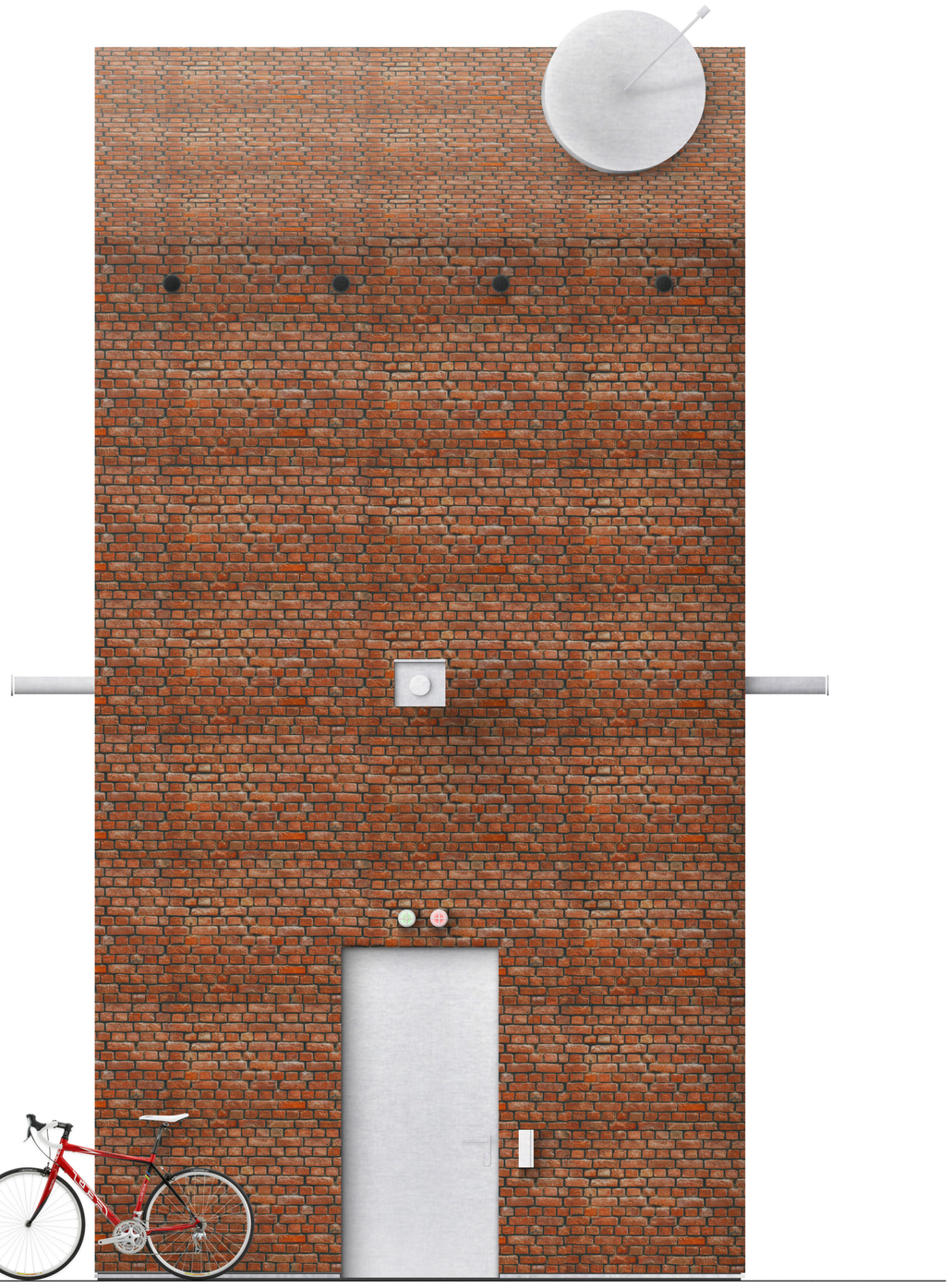
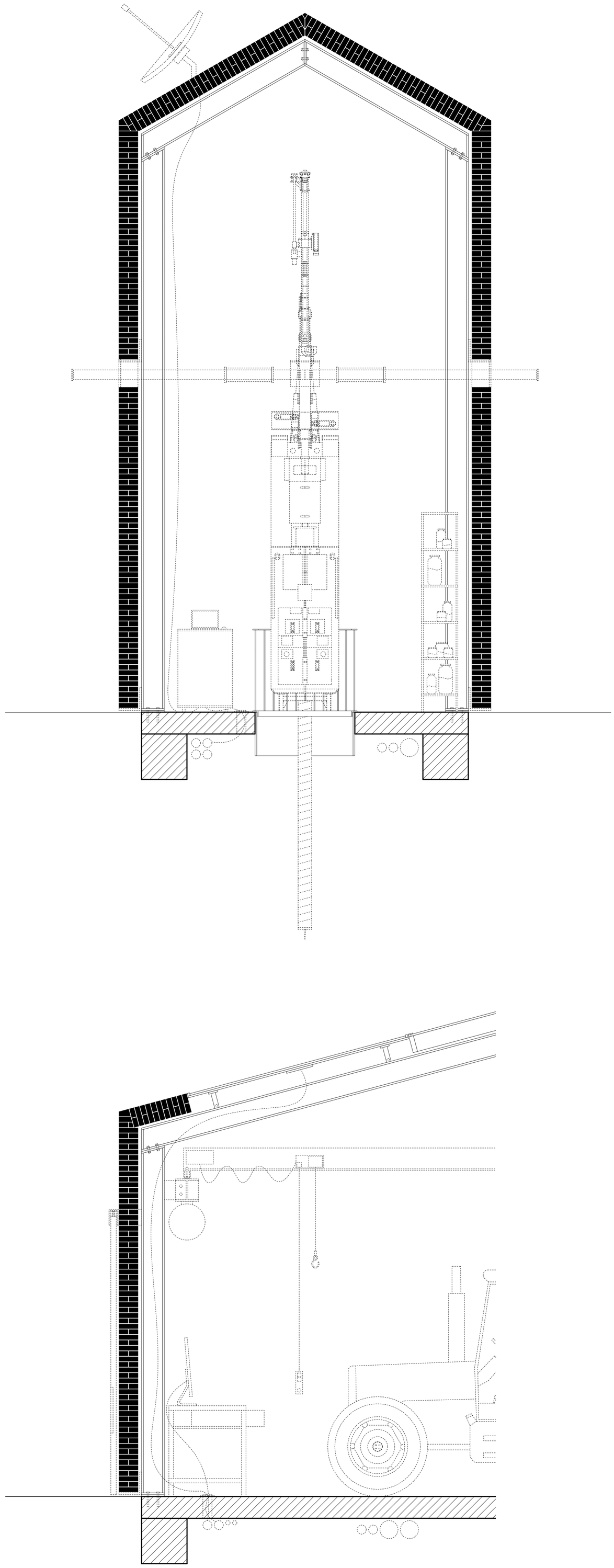
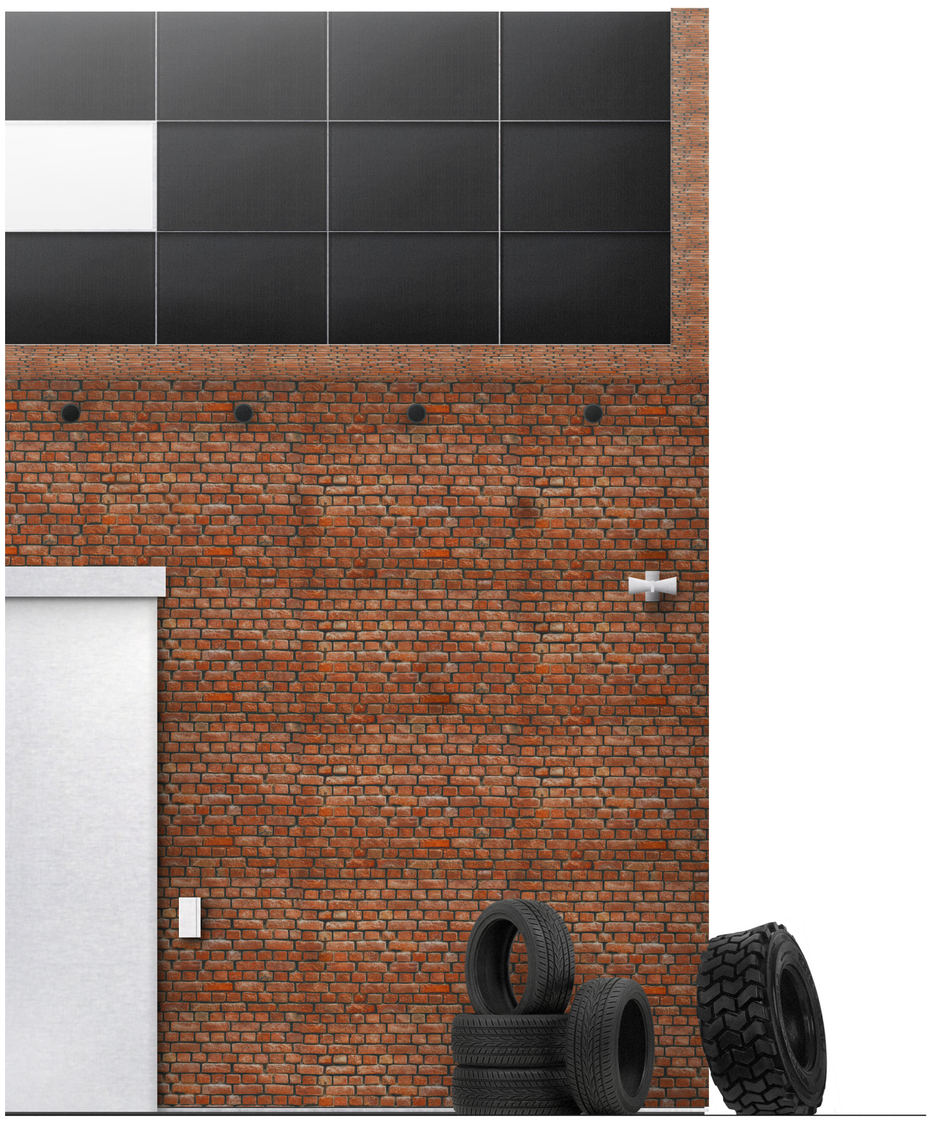
3. Data — Modern library for sharing knowledge



4. Workshop — Maintaining machinery together



5. Energy — Self-sufficient and independent

6. Biodiversity — A place for wildlife & storage of seeds

Disguised in locality