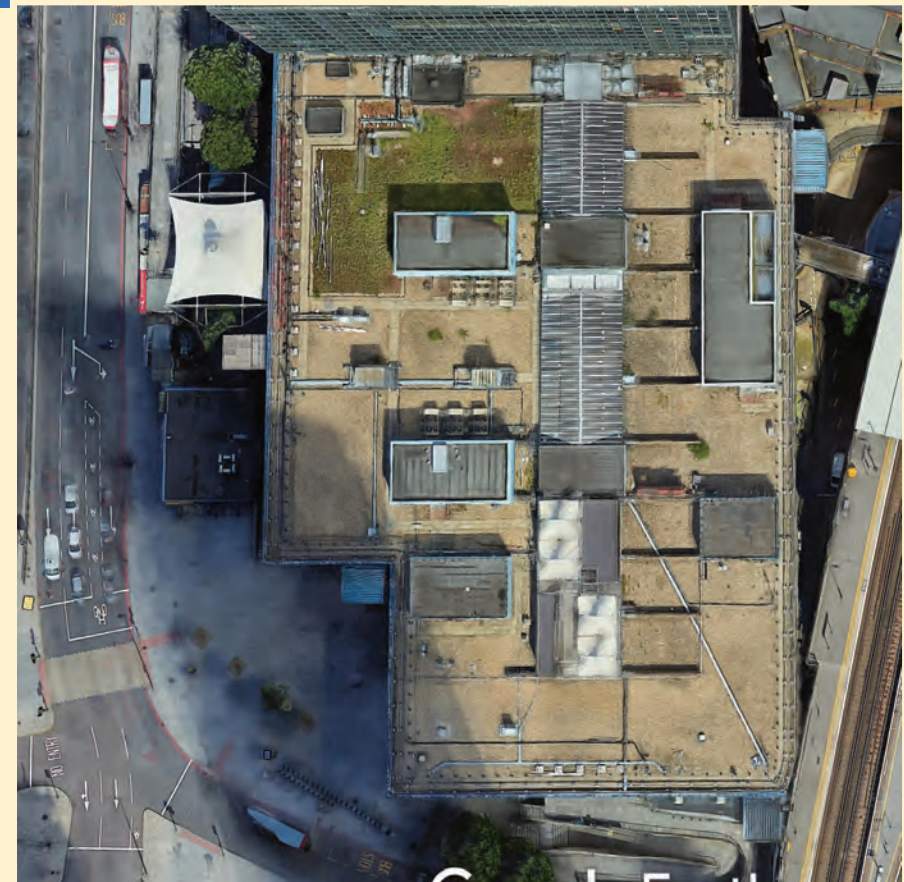


**THE ONES WHO STAY:**  
**THE LATIN ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM**  
**Cultural Resilience in a Gentrified City**

CARC7109  
“TESTING THE WATERS”

Edward Flores Acuña



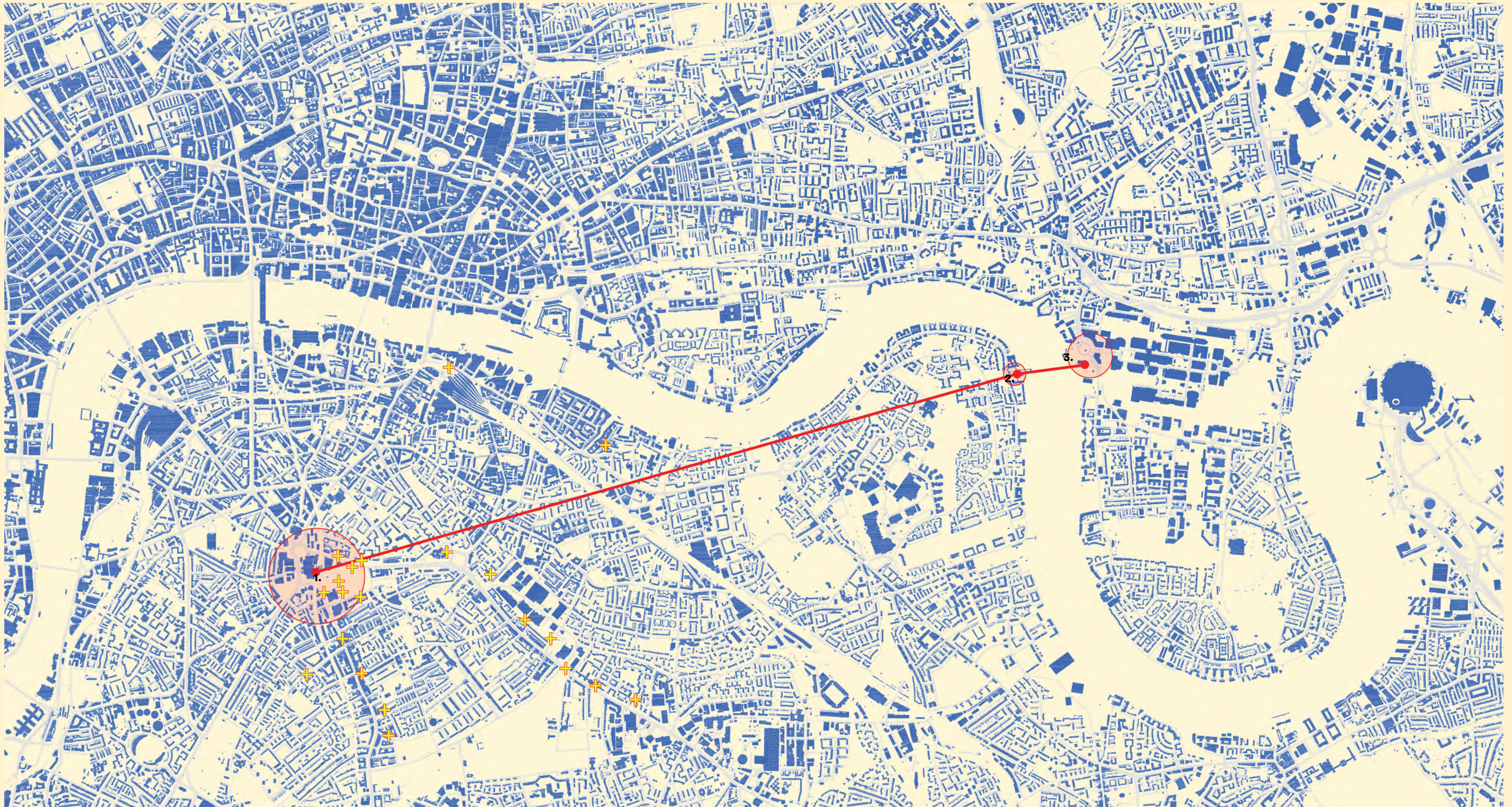


## A MEETING POINT IN SOUTHWARK

Latin American retailers started setting up businesses in the EC at the beginning of the 1990s and over the years have transformed the area into a vibrant Latin place in London. Elephant and Castle is a meeting point "*Un punto de encuentro*" for many Latin Americans in London.

Elephant and Castle was the reality formed by all the traders and people who actively engaged in the social, commercial and political processes of the city. The painted reality's attractive rests in the fact that it was one of the remaining hubs of real culture in London. The demolition of the shopping centre impulsed by yet another process of gentrification in the Capital damaged the ability of the traders to keep engaging in the processes of City making.



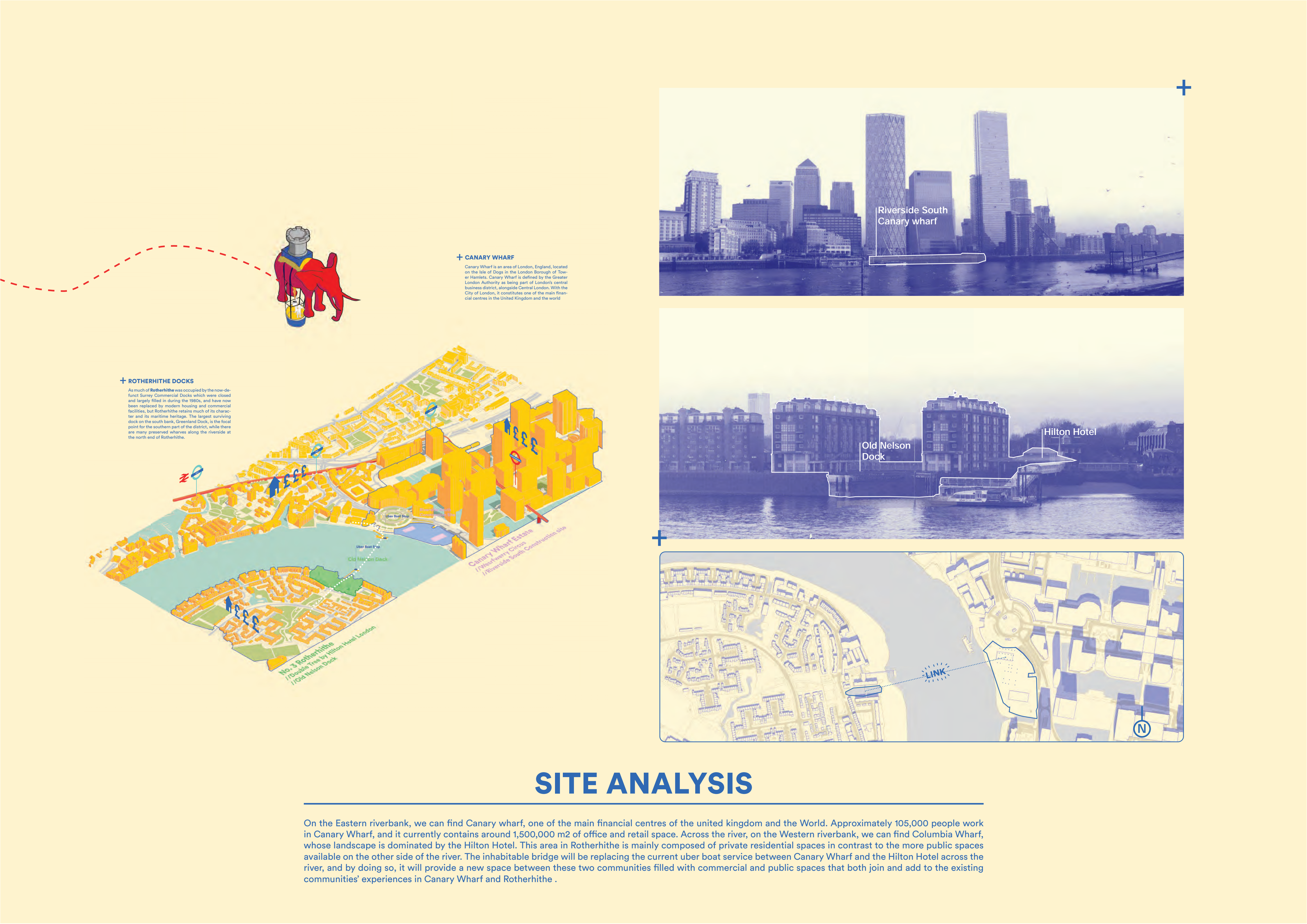


1. ELEPHANT AND CASTLE
  2. ROTHERHITHE
  3. CANARY WHARF
- + LATIN AMERICAN BUSINESSES IN SOUTHWARK

## BUILDING BRIDGES

Despite the closure of the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, the Latin American businesses in south London are still thriving, and some of them have also started adventuring outside EC. Retaining the culture created in EC by all the small traders is one of the main concerns of the different activist groups in Southwark when it comes to the neighbourhood's regeneration. For a specific culture to grow and be sustained in a city like London, there needs to be a cultural infrastructure apparatus that successfully promotes, maintains and most importantly, helps integrate the different cultures that are woven into London's multicultural tissue. In Southwark, between the highly residential private area of Rotherhithe and the intensively commercial area of Canary Wharf, in Tower Hamlets, there is an opportunity for new urban dynamics to happen between the three different communities.





+ CANARY WHARF

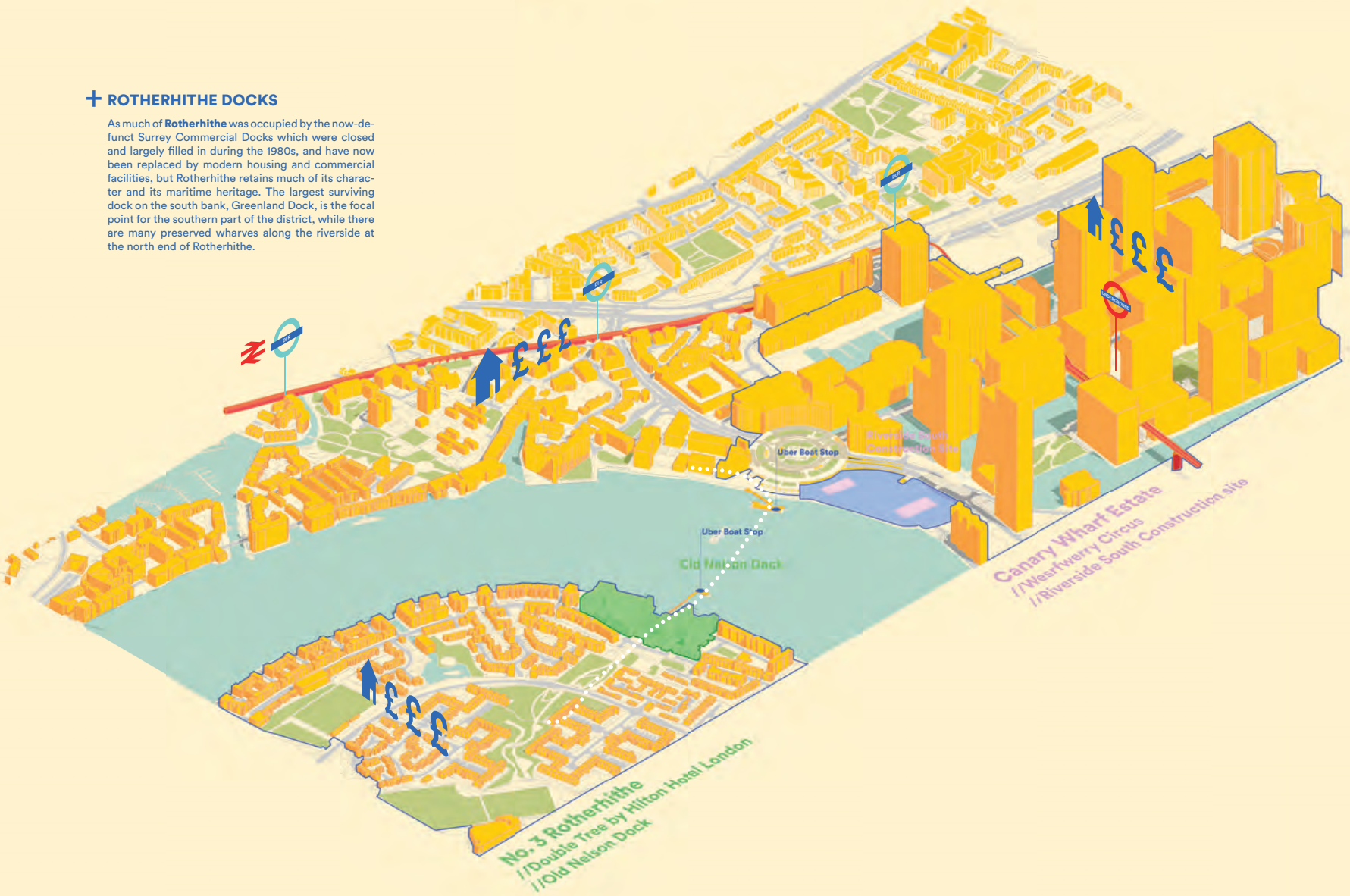
Canary Wharf is an area of London, England, located on the Isle of Dogs in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Canary Wharf is defined by the Greater London Authority as being part of London's central business district, alongside Central London. With the City of London, it constitutes one of the main financial centres in the United Kingdom and the world



Riverside South  
Canary wharf

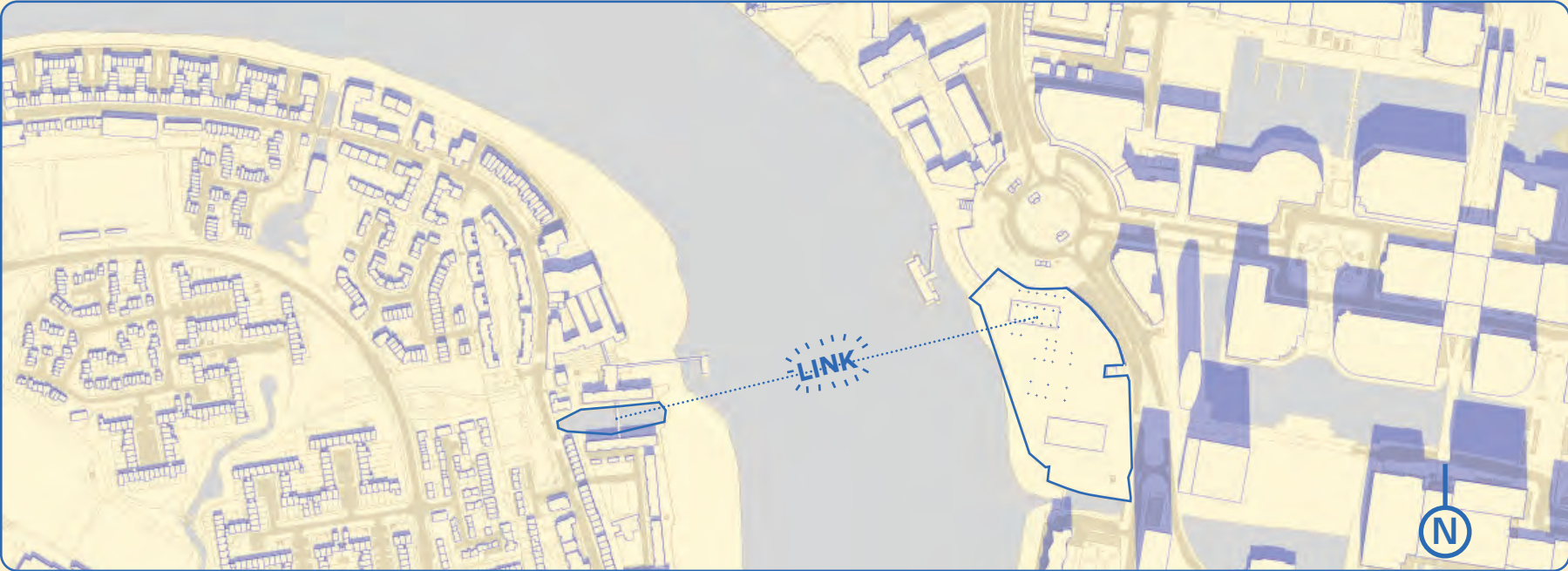
+ ROTHERHITHE DOCKS

As much of Rotherhithe was occupied by the now-defunct Surrey Commercial Docks which were closed and largely filled in during the 1980s, and have now been replaced by modern housing and commercial facilities, but Rotherhithe retains much of its character and its maritime heritage. The largest surviving dock on the south bank, Greenland Dock, is the focal point for the southern part of the district, while there are many preserved wharves along the riverside at the north end of Rotherhithe.



Old Nelson  
Dock

Hilton Hotel

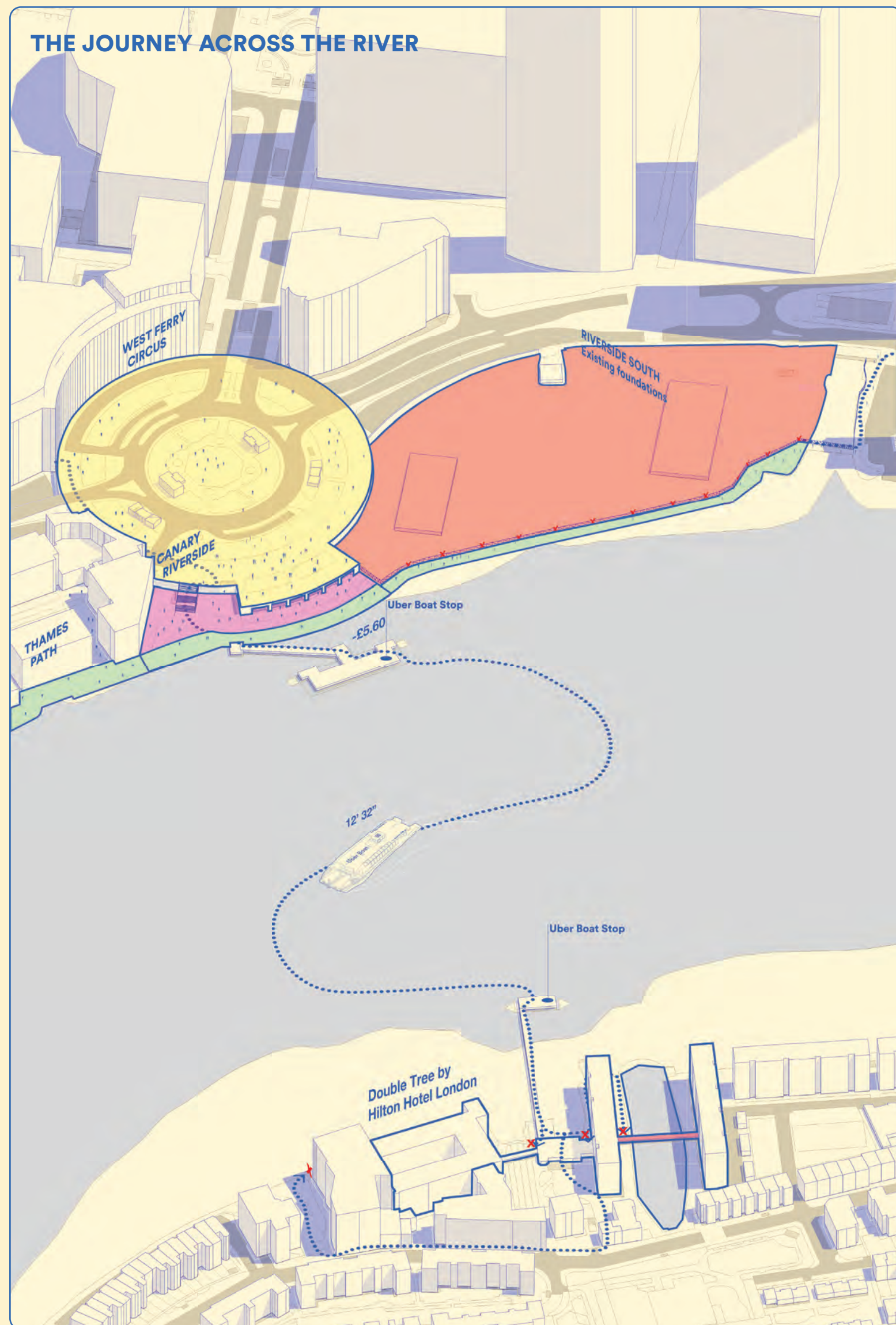


# SITE ANALYSIS

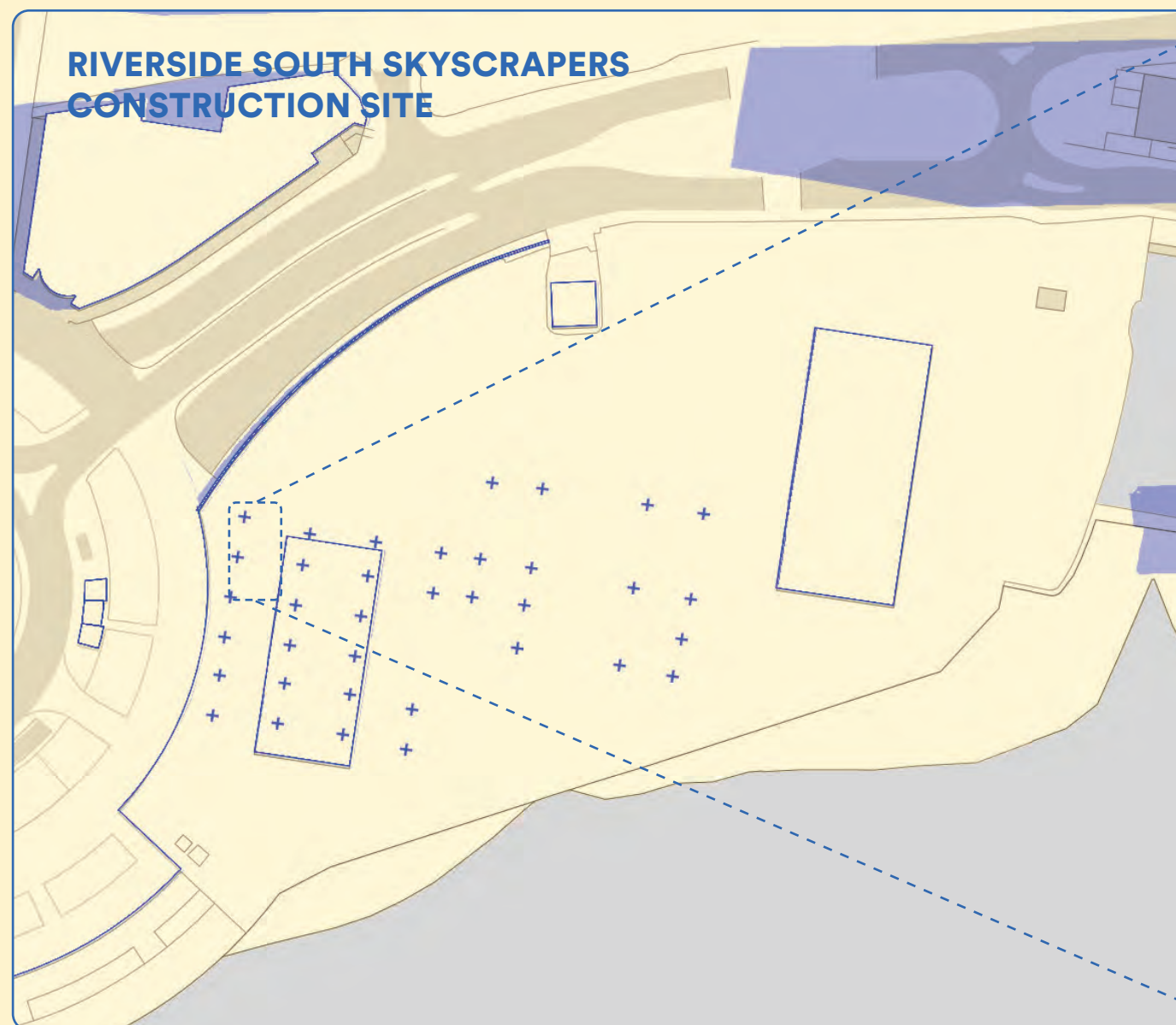
On the Eastern riverbank, we can find Canary wharf, one of the main financial centres of the united kingdom and the World. Approximately 105,000 people work in Canary Wharf, and it currently contains around 1,500,000 m2 of office and retail space. Across the river, on the Western riverbank, we can find Columbia Wharf, whose landscape is dominated by the Hilton Hotel. This area in Rotherhithe is mainly composed of private residential spaces in contrast to the more public spaces available on the other side of the river. The inhabitable bridge will be replacing the current uber boat service between Canary Wharf and the Hilton Hotel across the river, and by doing so, it will provide a new space between these two communities filled with commercial and public spaces that both join and add to the existing communities' experiences in Canary Wharf and Rotherhithe .



## THE JOURNEY ACROSS THE RIVER



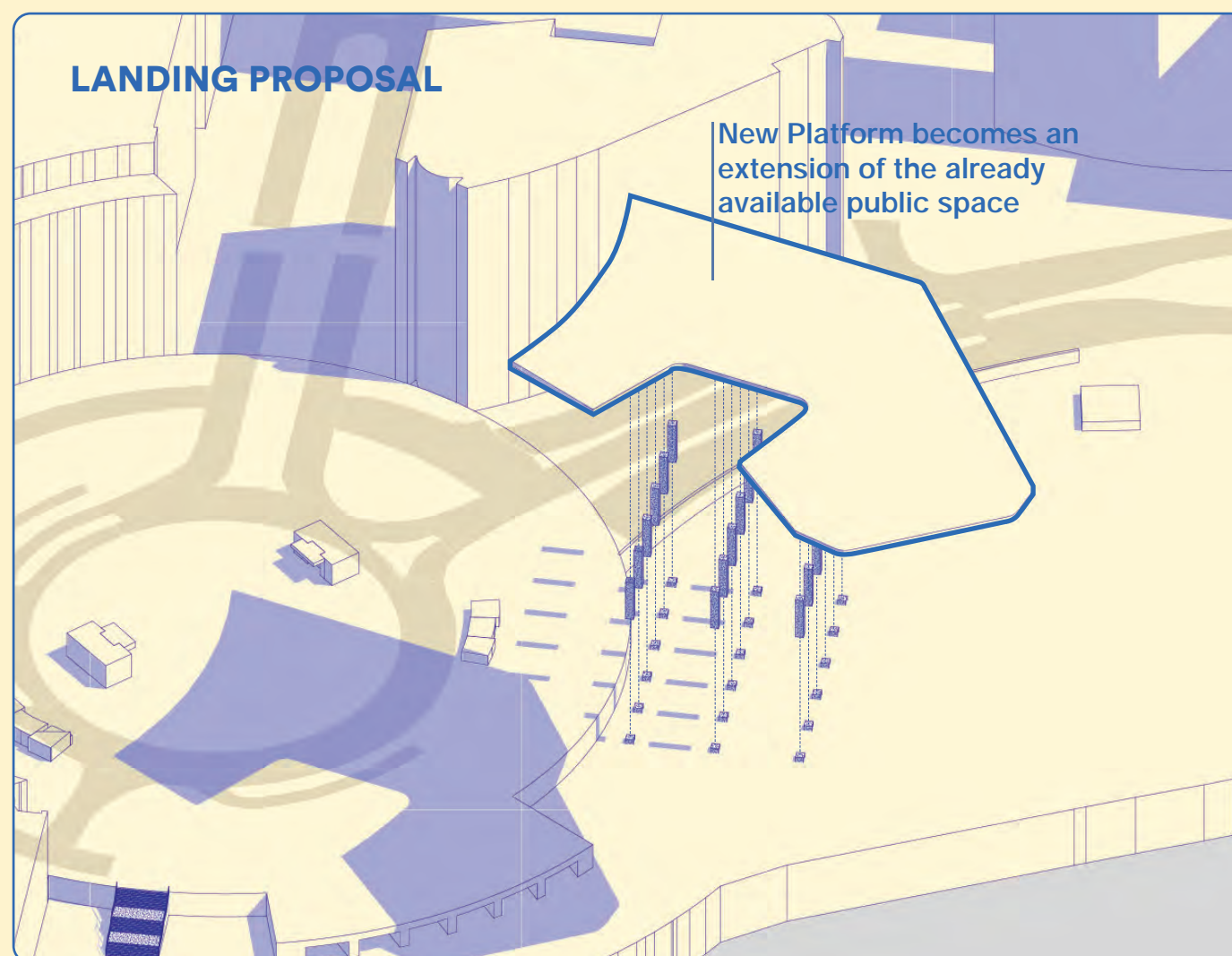
## RIVERSIDE SOUTH SKYSCRAPERS CONSTRUCTION SITE



## TAKING OVER AVAILABLE STRUCTURE



## LANDING PROPOSAL

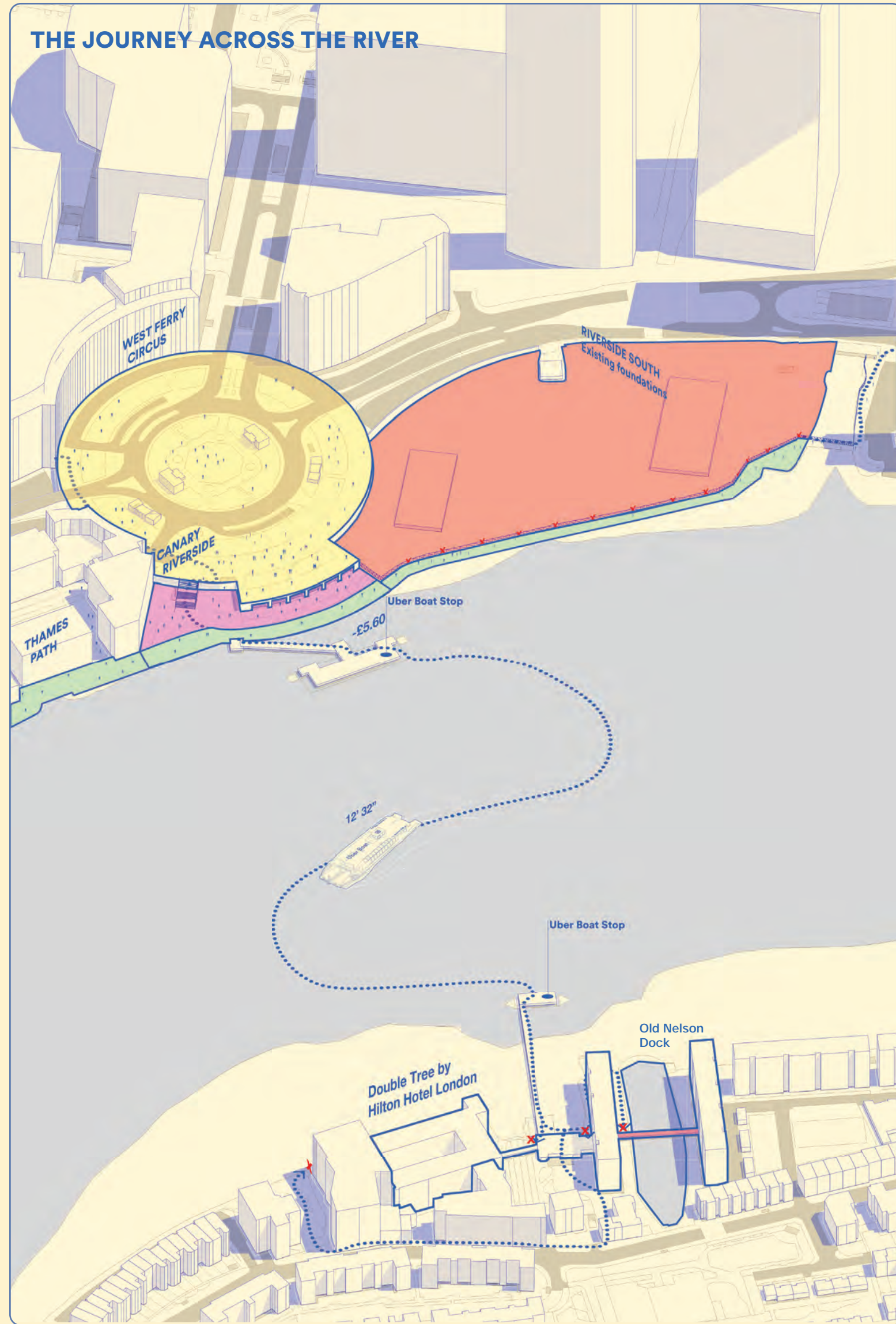


## EASTERN BRIDGEHEAD

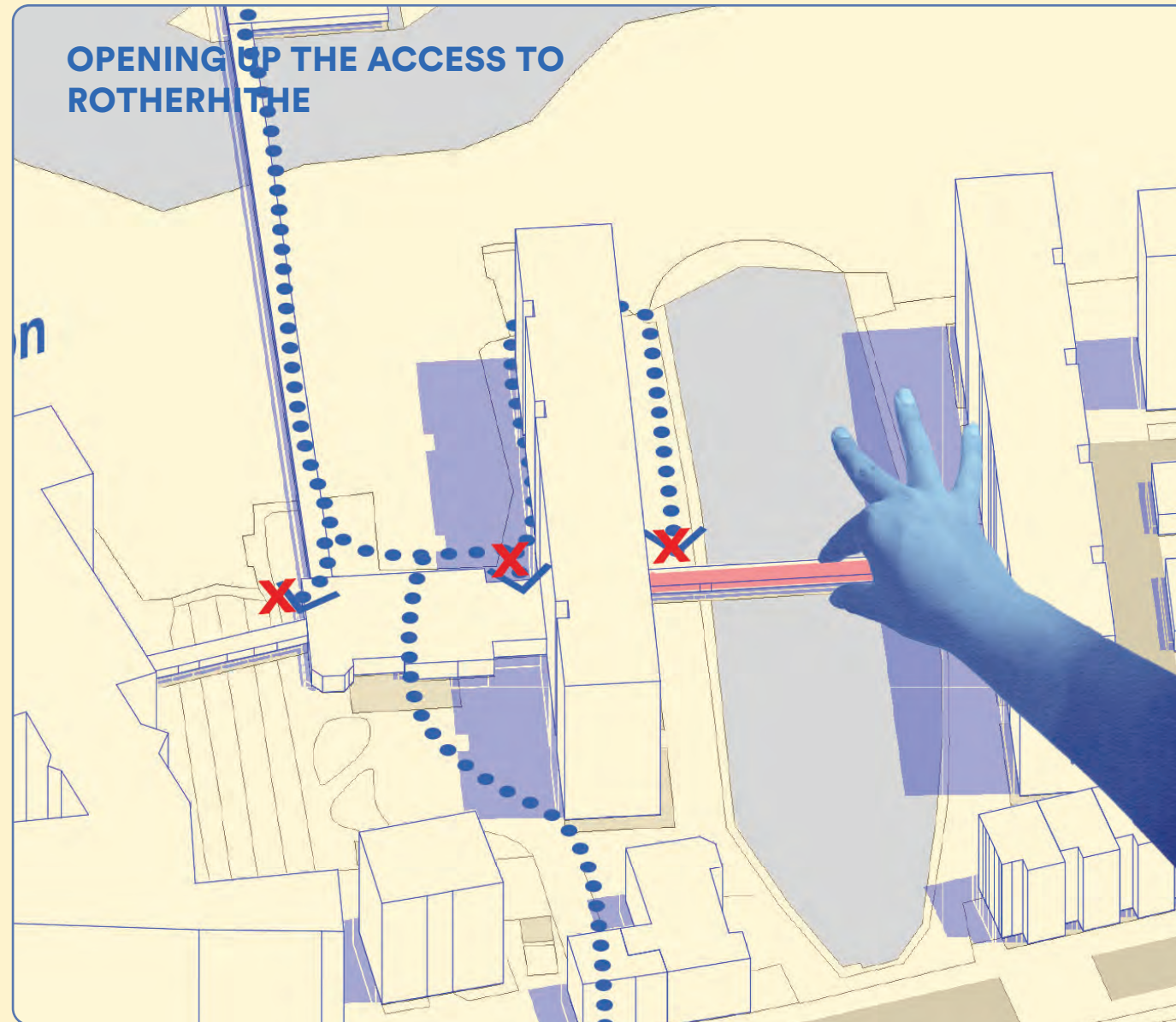
When landing on Canary Wharf, you will find yourself in the middle of the Canary Riverside, a public plaza with some retail on the lower level and green space and more retail spaces on the upper level, complete with some sitting areas and trees. Adjacent to it, we can find the skyscraper development site for Riverside South, whose construction has been halted for a while after completing the basement levels. The proposal for the annexation of the bridge to the site is to take over some of the already available structural elements from the riverside construction site to support an elevated public plaza to accommodate retail and public spaces native to the bridge's community.



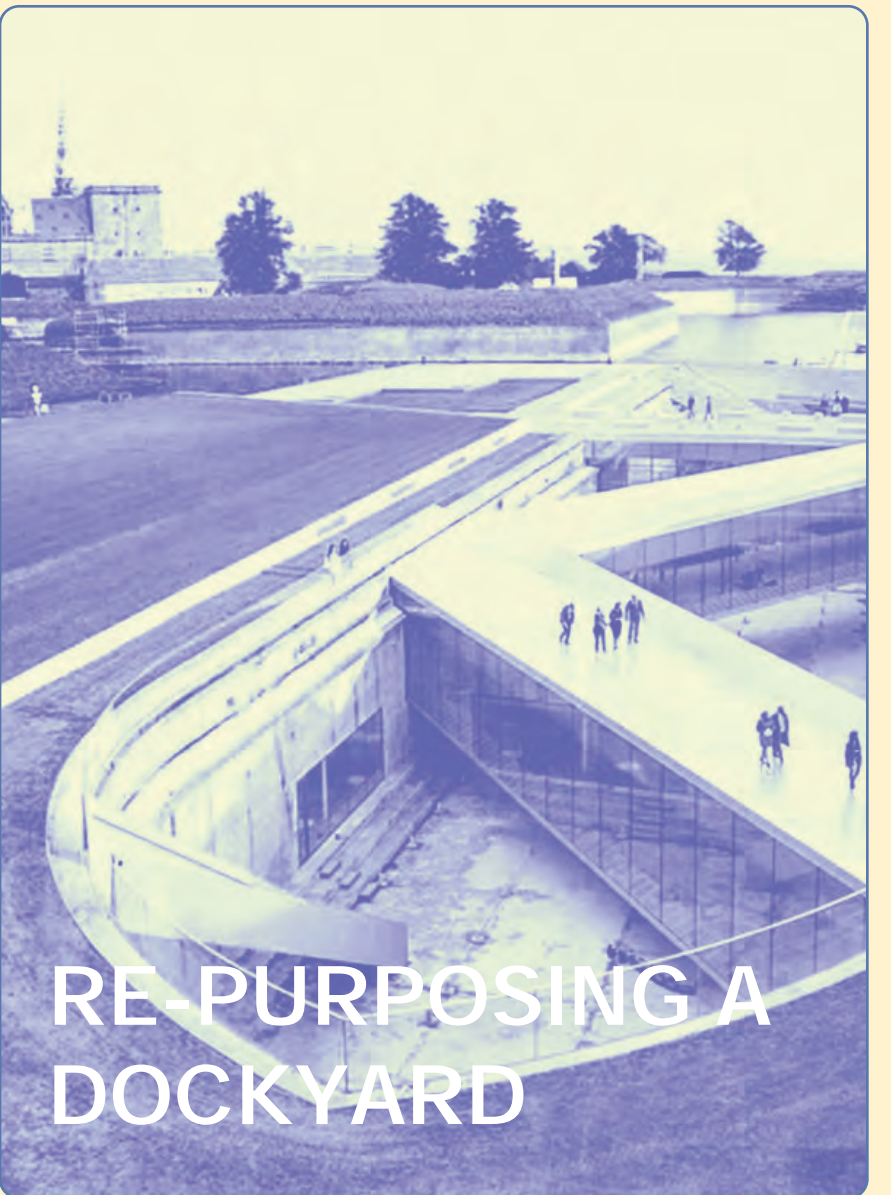
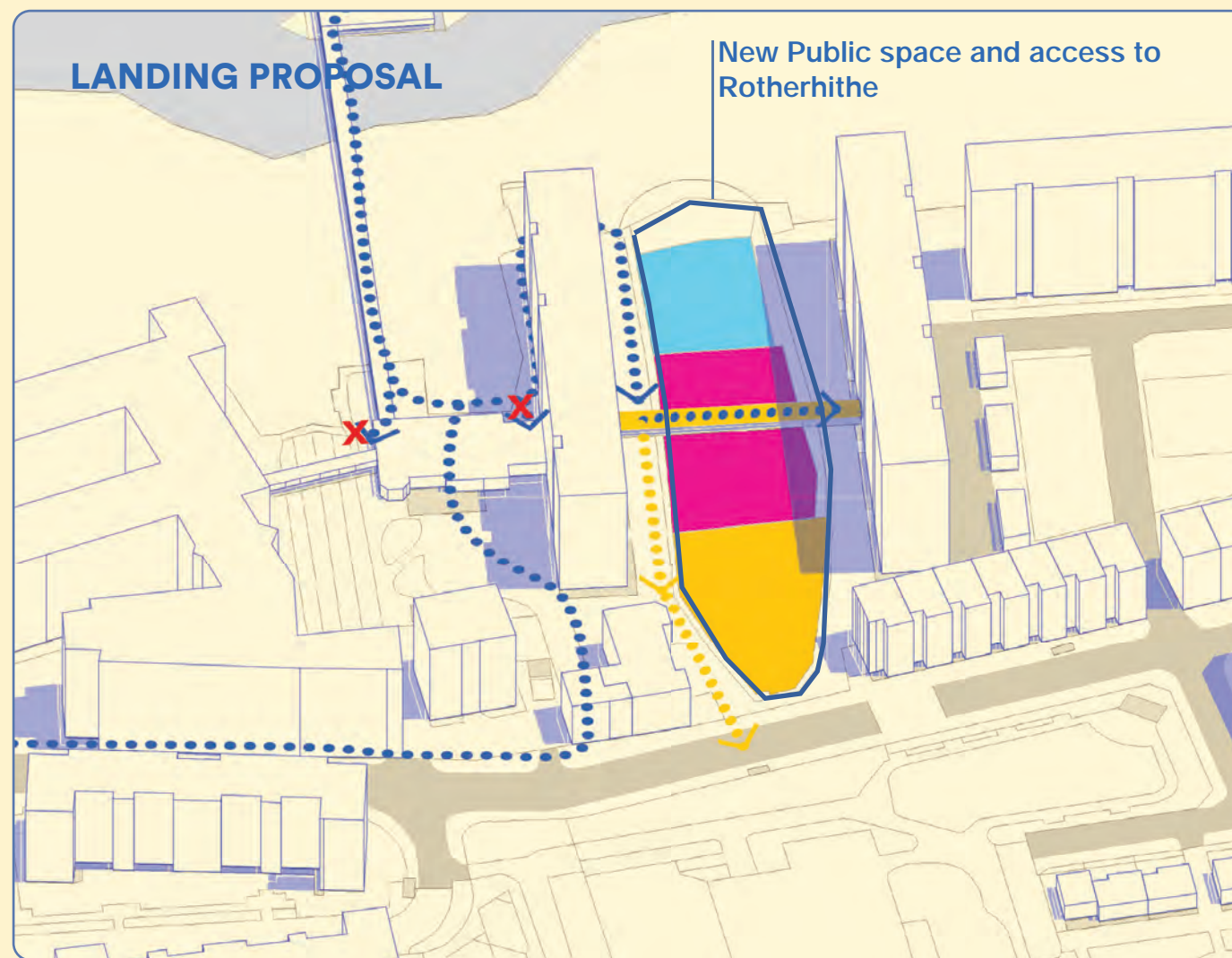
## THE JOURNEY ACROSS THE RIVER



## OPENING UP THE ACCESS TO ROTHERHITHE



## LANDING PROPOSAL

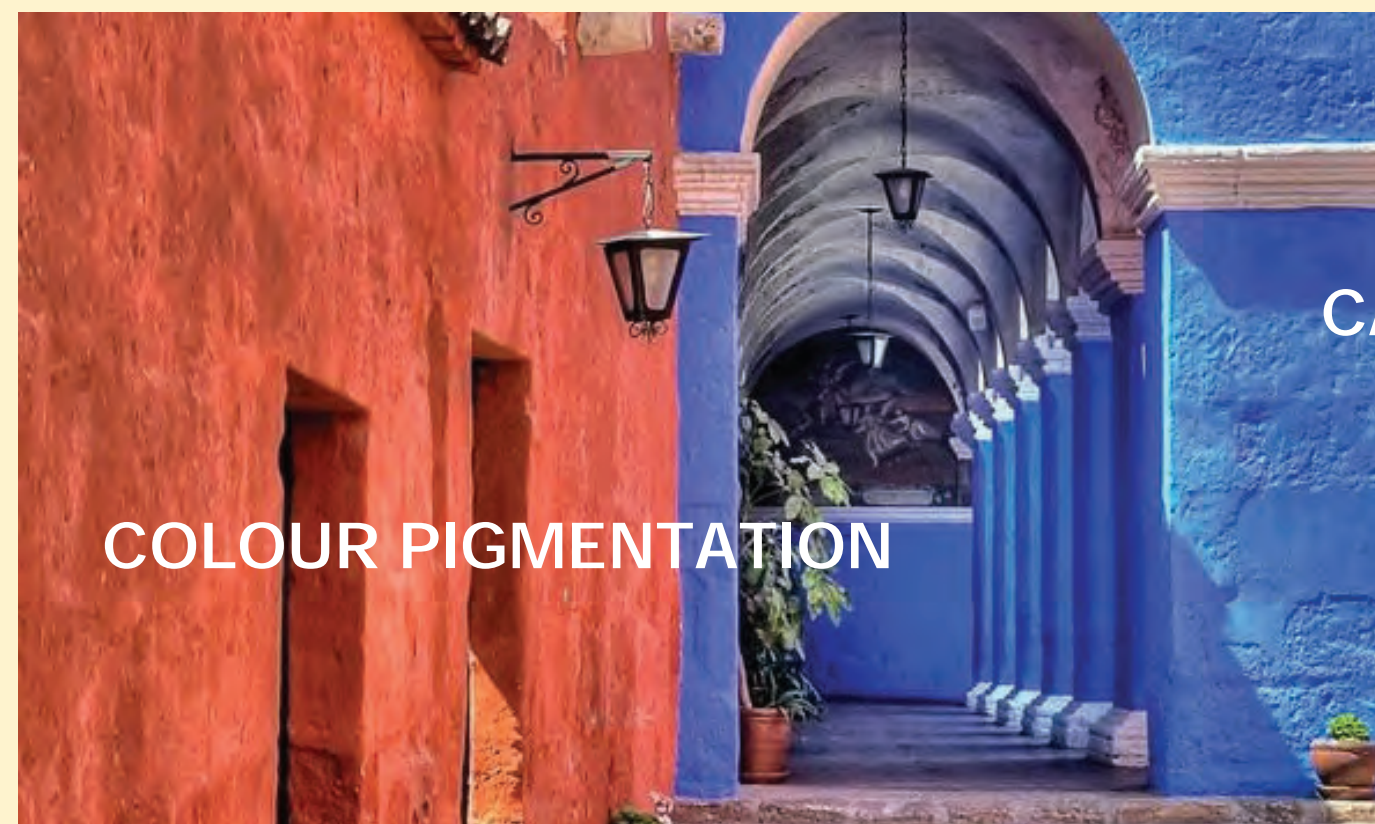


## RE-PURPOSING A DOCKYARD

# WESTERN BRIDGEHEAD

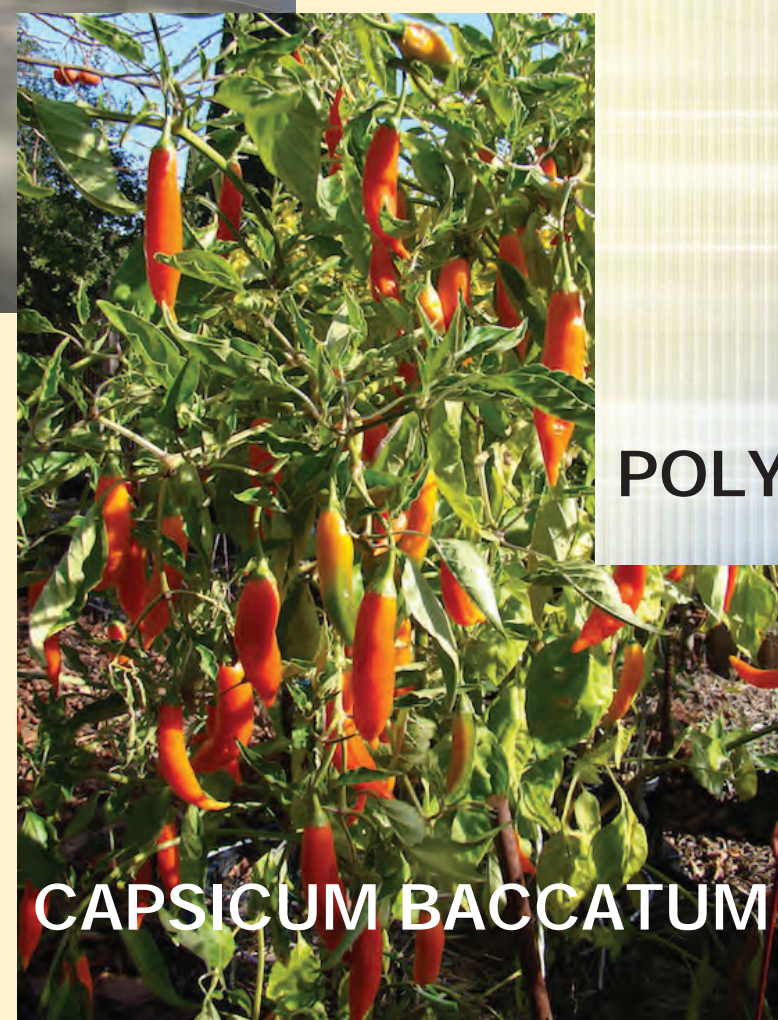
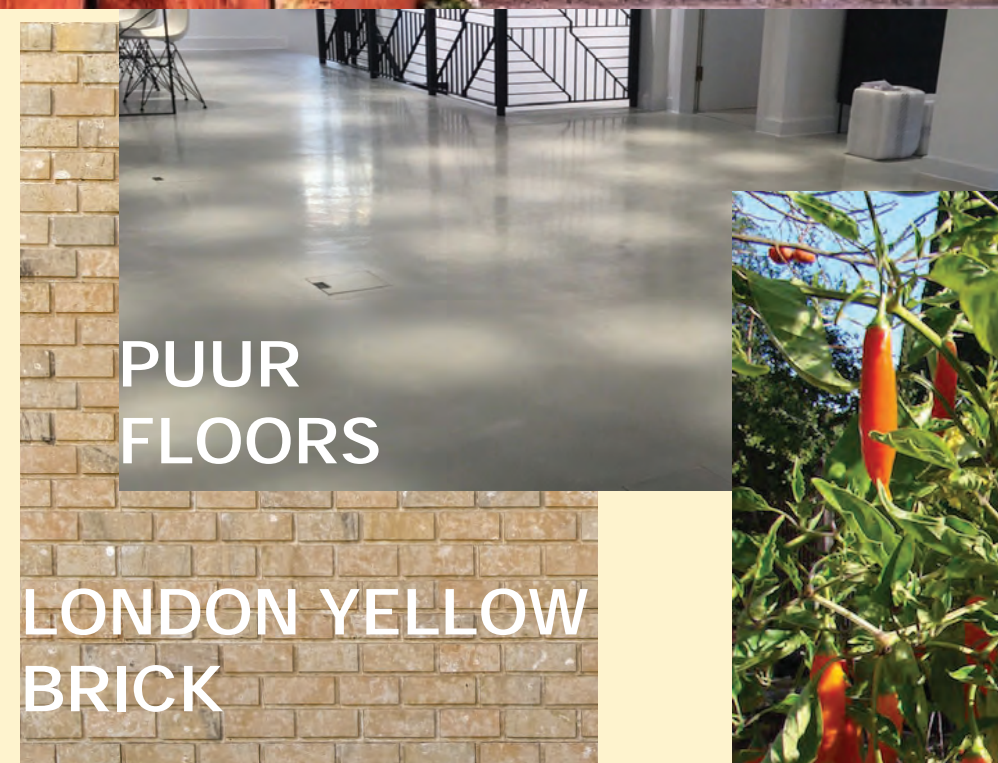
When landing on Rotherhithe, it is impossible to access the neighbourhood without going through the Hilton Hotel Lobby. This is due to the Uber Bus stop being located within the hotel premises. When trying to access the neighbourhood through the north and south paths, access is prevented by two walkways that connect the different blocks of the hotel in a direct with each other. The design of the bridge requires the landscape to open up, granting in this way access to Rotherhithe and connecting the neighbourhood to Canary Wharf.



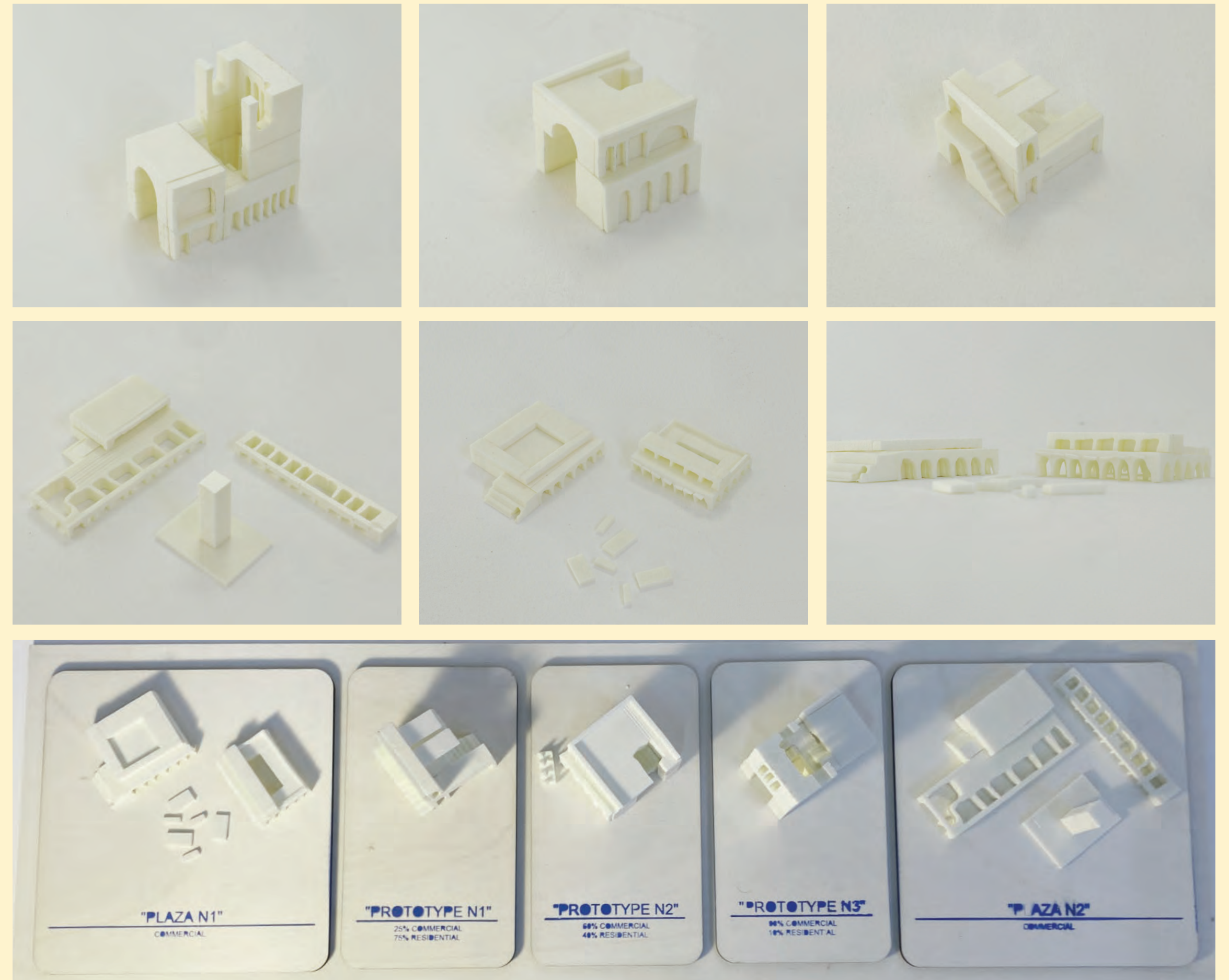


## SYNCRETISM AND TECTONICS

The materiality of the bridge is purely syncretic, a mix of both areas that are joined by the bridge, steel framing similar to the one found in many buildings across Canary Wharf, the more traditional yellow london brick from Rotherhithe unified by latin american syncretic tectonics such as heavy forms and colour that homogenize all architectural elements together.







# COURTYARDS AND PLAZAS

Latin American households are typically used both as domestic and productive spaces. The ground floor usually is assigned for commercial activities, and the capital that the business on the ground floor generates usually goes to building up the house.

I intentionally used references from Latin-American households and their architecture to formulate these inhabitable urban block prototypes. The plaza as a purely commercial urban space serves as an integration agent within the community and between the outside communities.



# ARCHITECTURE TECTONICS AND SPACES

Trading is an integral part of the Latin American Community in London. The bridge and the spaces that form it have been formulated by the modulation of the % of commercial space in contrast with residential space available in its architecture.

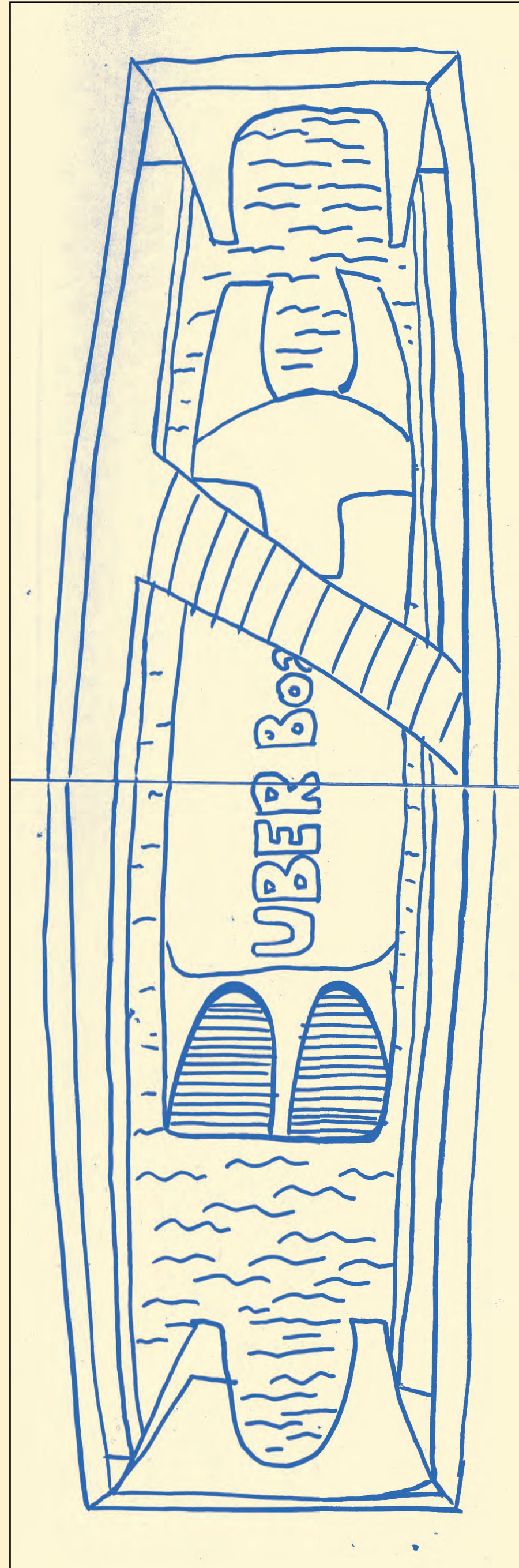
The residential buildings all have a portion of its ground floor dedicated to commerce. The percentage of the groundfloor assigned to capital production is decided by the trader and facilitated by a versatile design.

The Plaza (or square) is an important outdoor space for all kind of human interactions. It serves as a community gathering place and the plazas at both ends of the bridge act as integrating agents between the pre-existing communities in both Canary Wharf and Rotherhithe.

The shopping arcade as an urban typology is borrowed from the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre. The Arcades created the perfect conditions for EC shopping centre to become the meeting point of Latin-Americans. The success is vastly attributed to the proximity and variety of these shops which facilitated the newcomers with all they needed to start living in London.

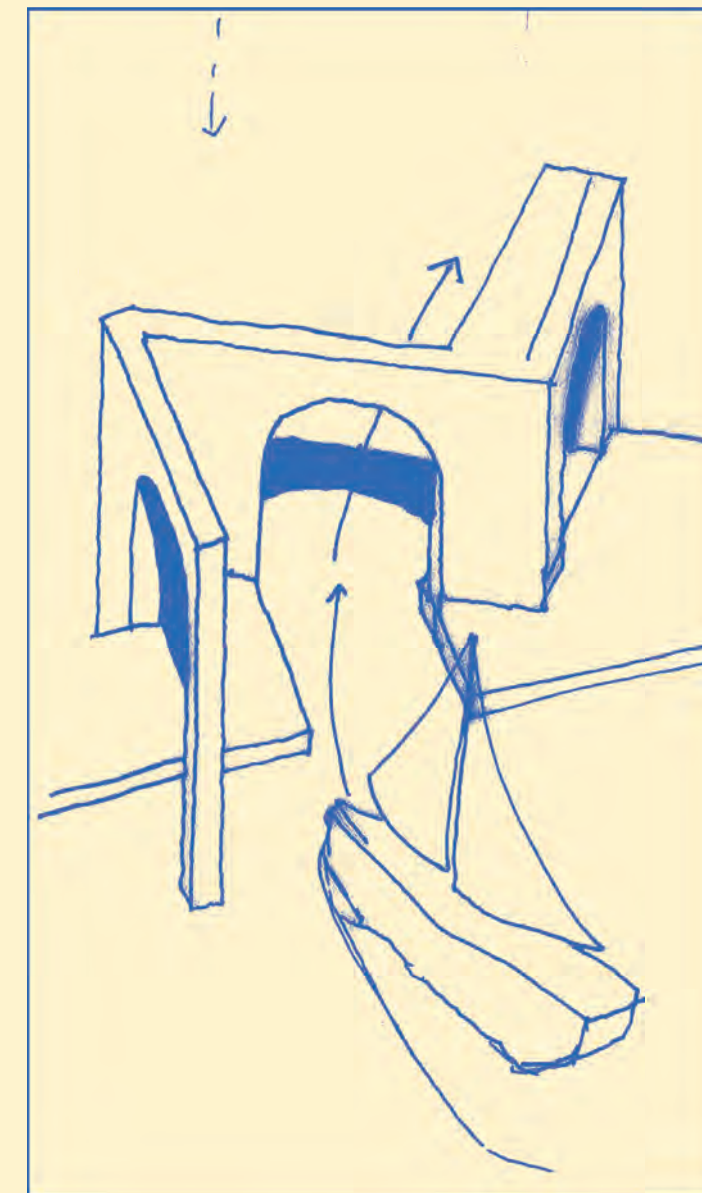




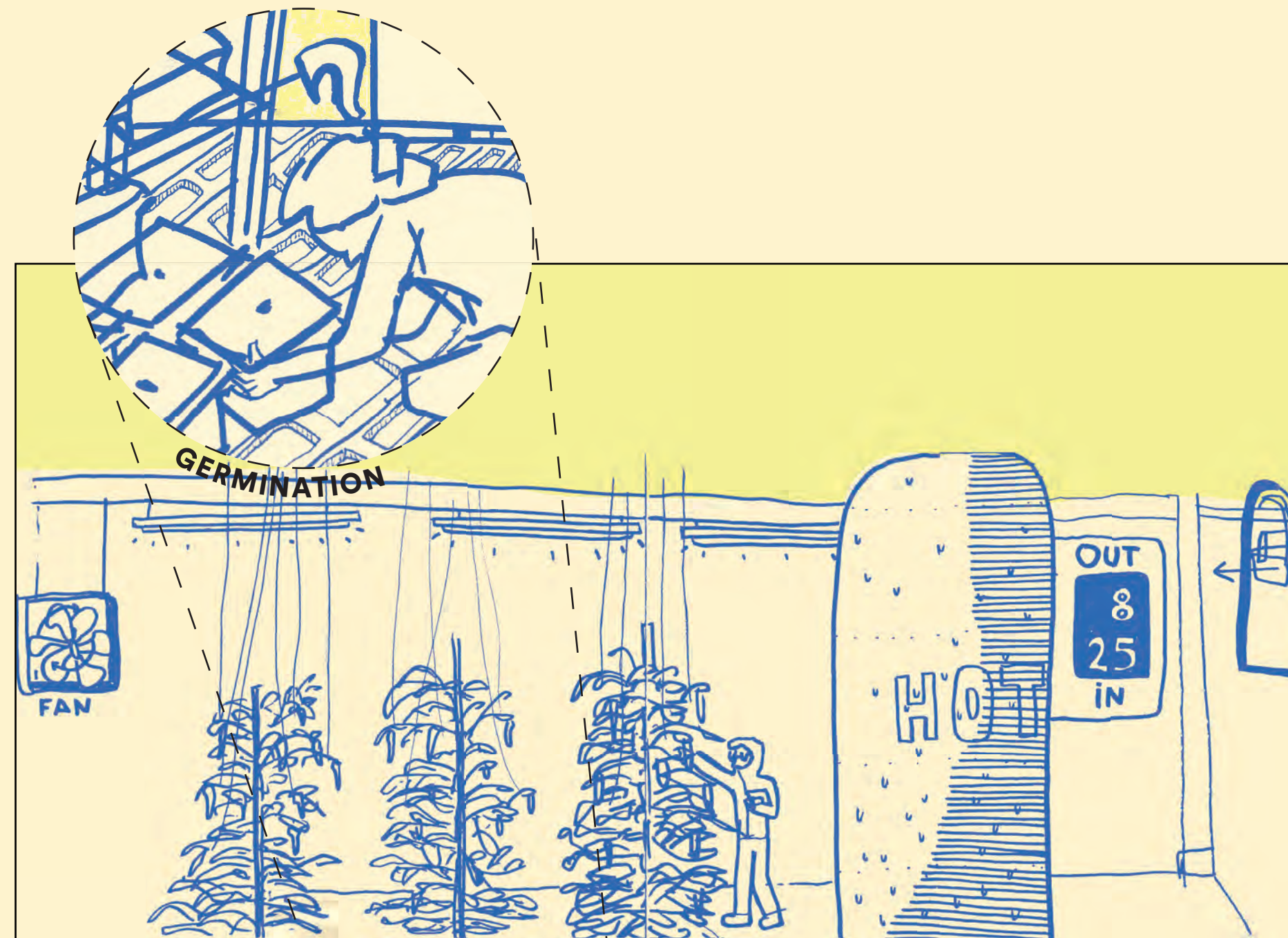


## TRADING PORT AND CITY LINK: NAVAL SPLIT

The bridge being only 400 metres long means that the uber service between Rotherhithe and Canary Wharf is no longer needed, so the new Uber Terminals will be relocated to the bridge and connect it with Greater London. These terminals suppose a fissure in the bridge's structure, and at the centre of the bridge, a larger naval split allows for bigger boats to approach the bridge and trade with the community.





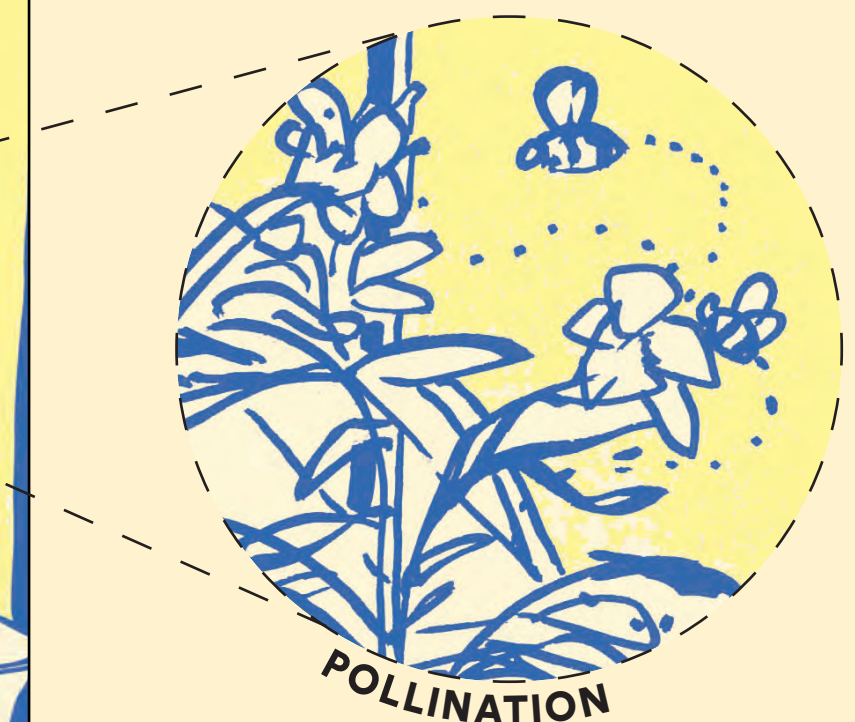
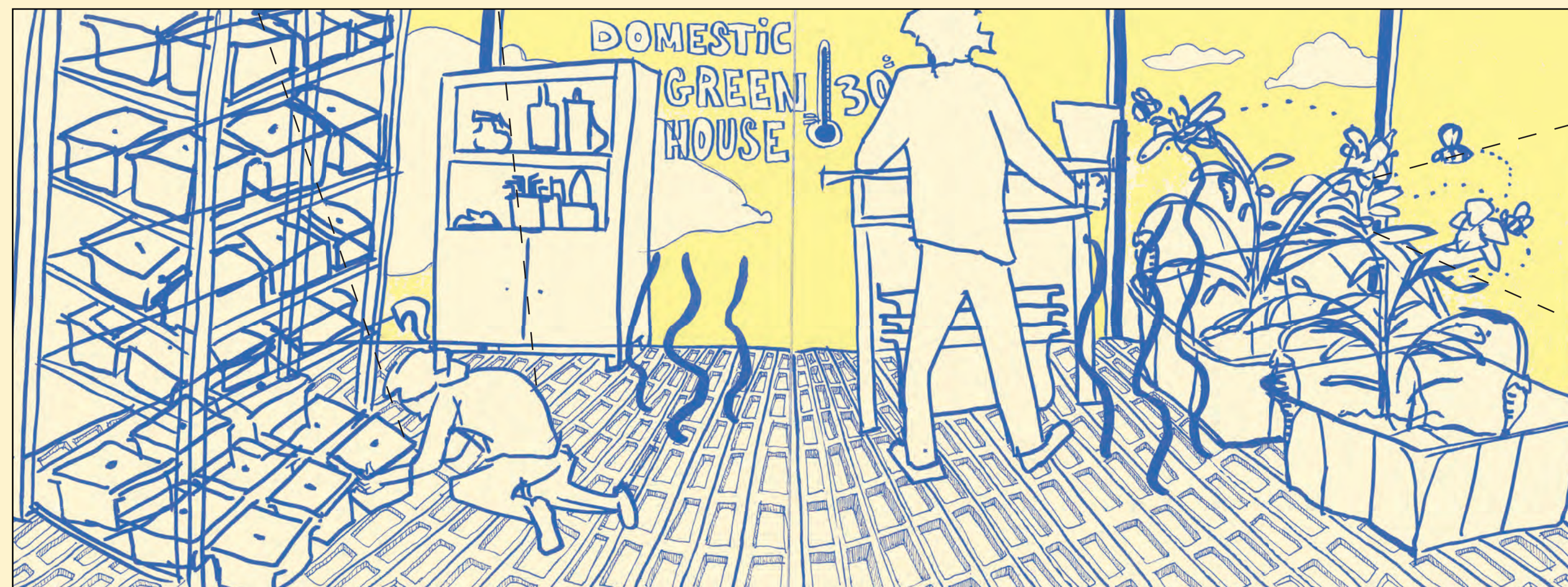


## CULTURAL RETENTION: FOOD PRODUCTION

People connect to their cultural or ethnic group through food patterns. Food is often used as a means of retaining their cultural identity.

People from different cultural backgrounds eat different foods. The areas in which families live and where their ancestors originated influence food like and dislikes. These food preferences result in patterns of food choices within a cultural or regional group. The meaning of food is an exploration of culture through food. What we consume, how we acquire it, who prepares it, who's at the table, and who eats first is a form of communication that is, it has a rich cultural base. Beyond merely nourishing the body, what we eat and with whom we eat can inspire and strengthen the bonds between individuals, communities, and even countries.

The bridge, inhabited by the Latin American community, is set to become an important production hub for ingredients native to Latin American cuisine, such as the *capsicum Baccatum* (chilli pepper), which has several variations, each with different uses within each country.







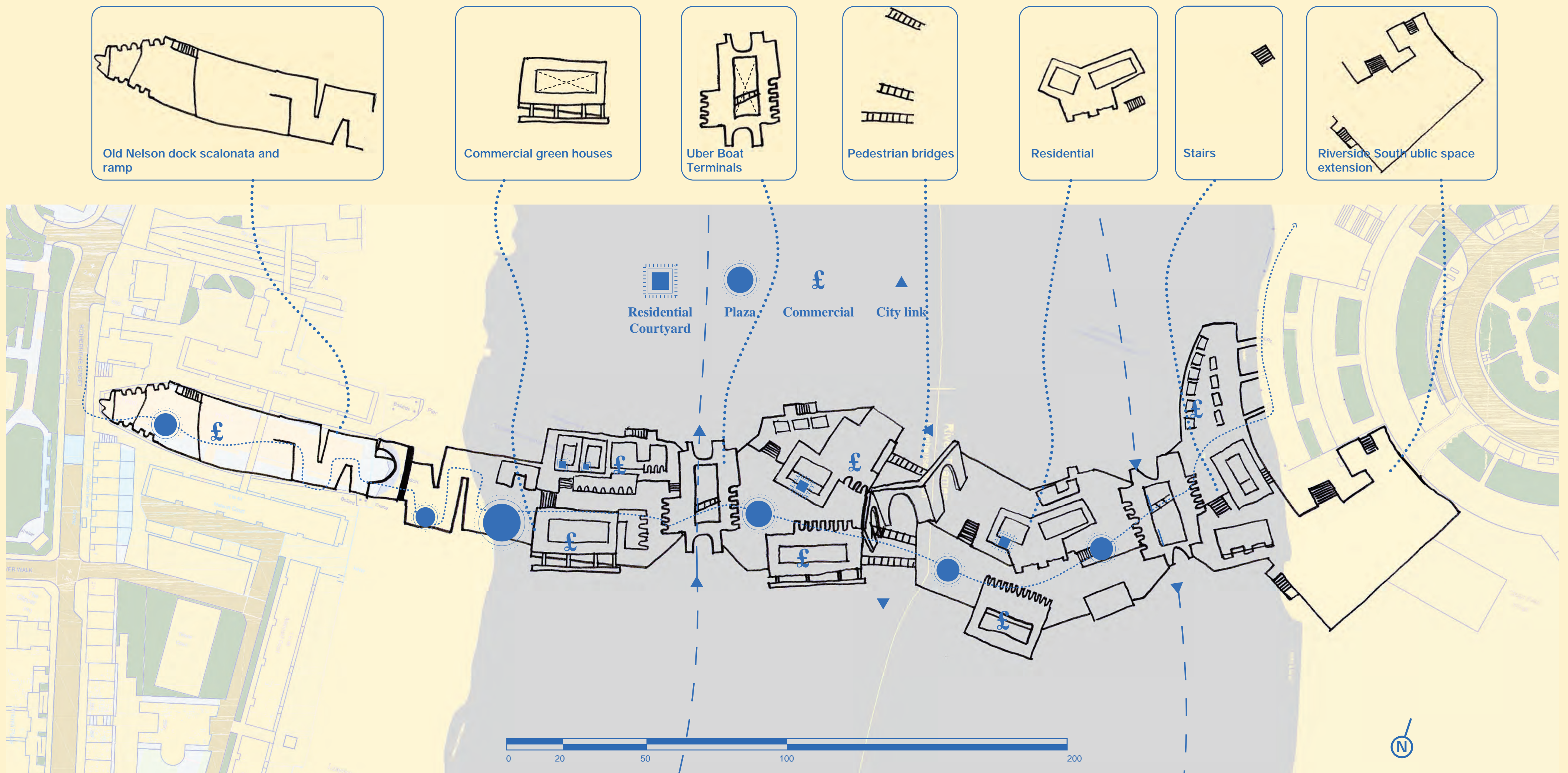
## CULTURAL RETENTION: “EL CARNAVAL DEL PUEBLO”

The Carnaval del Pueblo is a festival celebrating Latin American culture, held in Burgess Park, London in the first week of August.

The carnival features a spectacular procession of exotic floats, costumes, musicians and dancers, making their way through London Bridge, along Borough High Street, Elephant and Castle and Walworth Road, finally arriving in Burgess Park. The event incorporates elements of Latin American culture, featuring dance rhythms, food and music. Throughout the day, a mixture of musicians perform on the four stages set up around the park.

During the carnival, the bridge becomes part of the carnival route with the different spaces within it acting as both Stages (Performance spaces) and Houses (Spectator spaces).





## MASTER PLAN

The bridge meets both Rotherhithe and Canary Wharf with public and commercial spaces at both ends, which serve as introductions to the nature of the bridge. This strategy encourages integration between the three communities by providing highly active, vibrant spaces full of trading and other communal activities.

The main body of the bridge can be split into three platforms, separated by gaps occupied by the new Uber Boat terminals that connect the whole area to the rest of London. The multi-level nature of the bridge offers plenty of public spaces and gathering spaces whilst confining the different programs in a specific area. During the Carnival, the various terraces act as spectatorship spaces whilst the troupe of dancers and performers take the main streets of the bridge.



PUENTE DE ENCUENTRO

The ones who stay: The Latin Elephant in the room

The struggles of the Latin American community in London are common to the ones that other urban communities experience. They are constantly fighting gentrification and, in essence, always on the verge of losing control and ownership of the spaces they inhabit, have inhabited and helped build in the city.

The primary two examples of these struggles are the campaigns to save the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre and the organised manifestations to save the Latin Village in Seven Sisters. Although one ended in bliss after Grainger Developer walked away from its plans to build luxury apartments in Seven Sisters, the Latin American community in Southwark suffered a significant loss when in April 2021, the plans for the demolition of the Elephant and Castle shopping centre were fulfilled and by doing so leaving several small traders without a place where to operate.

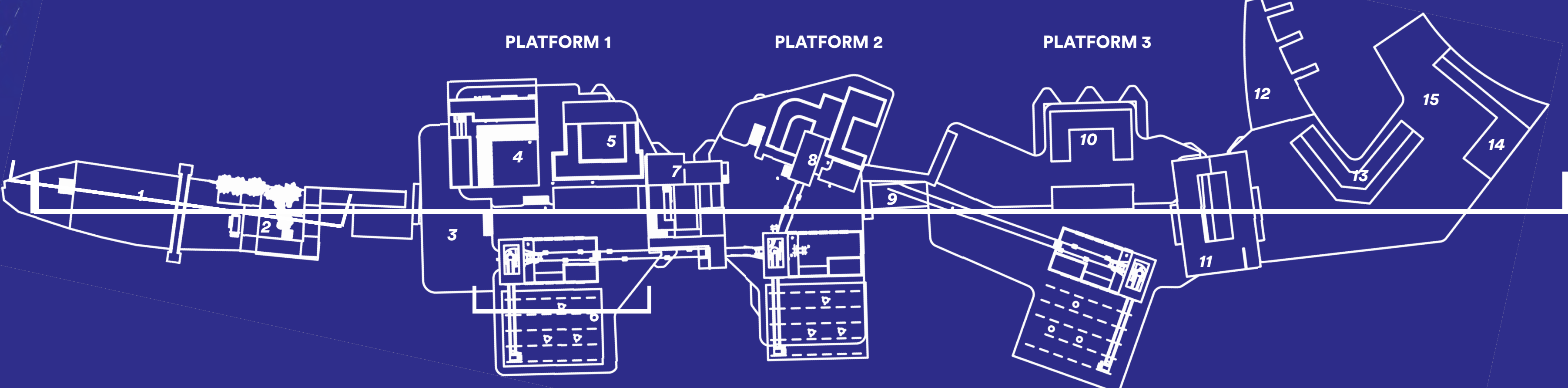
The Latin Elephant in the Room is a project that explores the issue of gentrification and subsequent urban resistance in London.

By testing the waters of the Thames river as an "uncontested" space, the tale of the Latin American resistance in London takes a step further in imagination where an architectural proposal in the form of a bridge is envisioned as the vital organism that keeps the community's culture alive. The bridge also provides means to reproduce it and disseminate it to the other two communities at each end of the bridge as a strategy for integrating the newly arrived community into the already multi cultural fabric of London.

Market/Trading Spectator spaces Chilli Production City Links

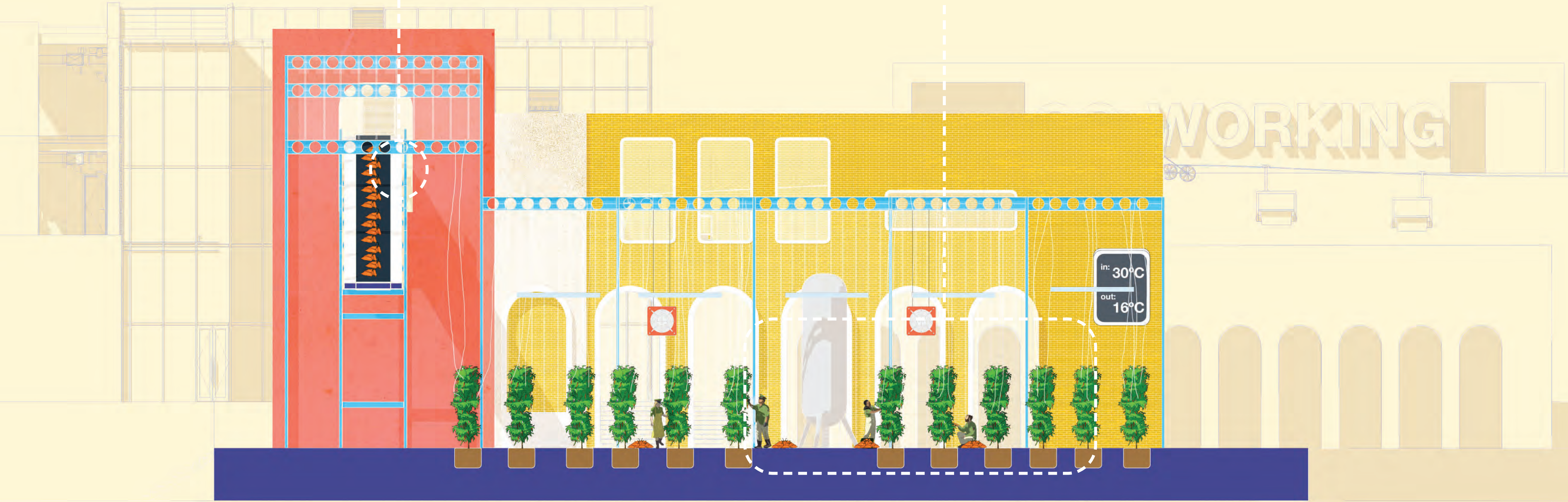
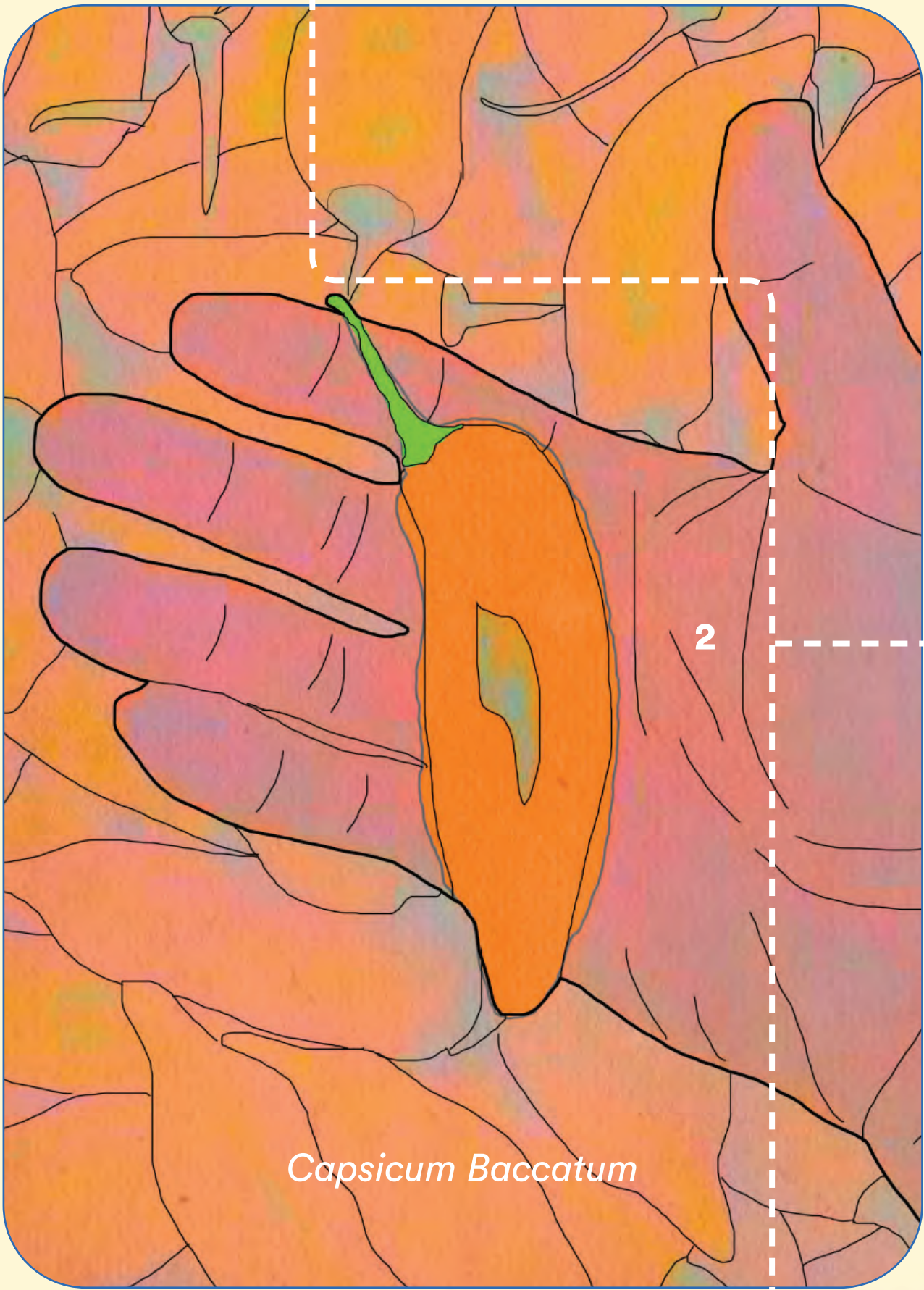
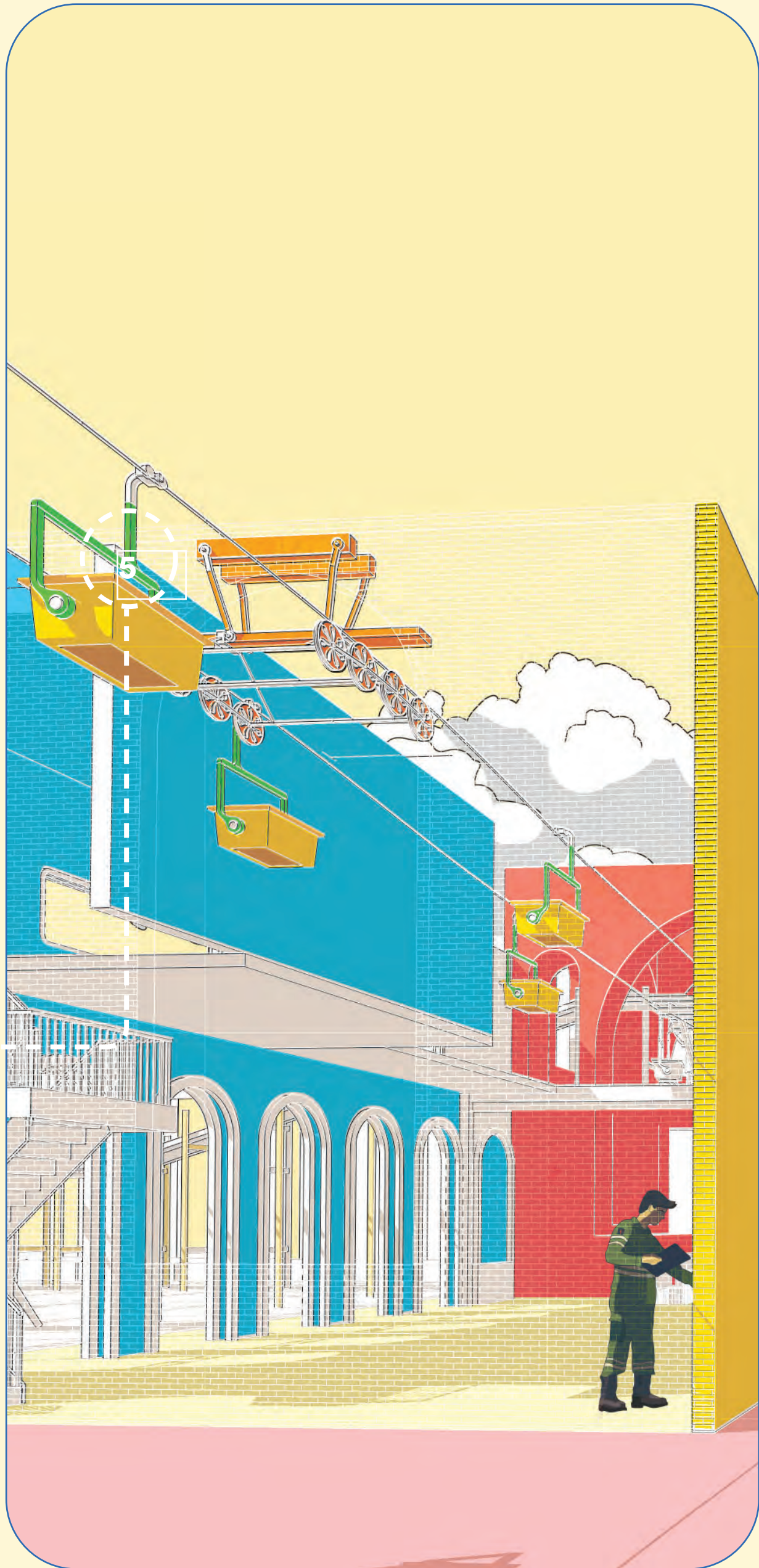
UNDERGROUND  
WASTE HEAT ENERGY  
CENTRE

- 1 Old Nelson Dock Square
- 2 Ramp/ stage
- 3 Front Square
- 4 Residential/ commercial building
- 5 Community market/ co-working spaces
- 6 Commercial greenhouse
- 7 Uber terminal North
- 8 Chilli factory/ customs
- 9 Pedestrian bridge
- 10 Residential/ commercial building
- 11 Uber terminal South
- 12 Food/ Retail
- 13 Residential/ commercial building
- 14 Commercial/ Retail
- 15 Riverside South Plaza
- 16 Riverside South Waste Energy Centre

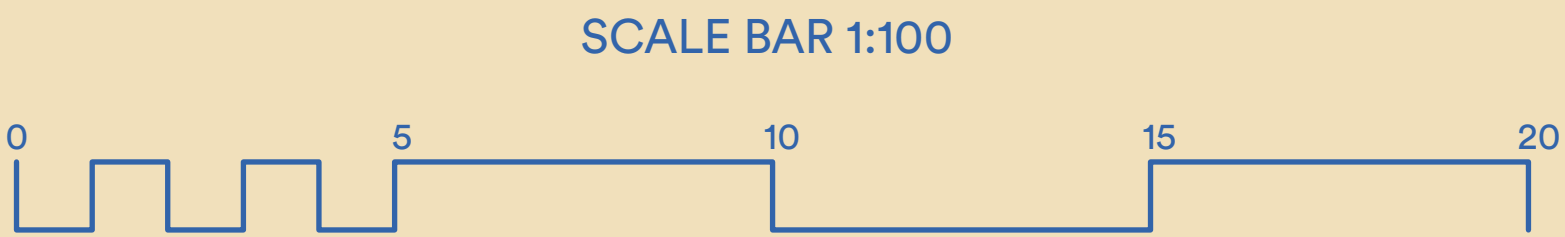




# JOURNEYS ACROSS THE BRIDGE: HARVEST DAY



COMMERCIAL GREENHOUSE  
SECTION 1:100



- Vignettes
- 1 Harvesting
  - 2 Conveyor belt to Aerial Ropeway Buckets
  - 3 Capsicum Baccatum, Aji Amarillo
  - 4 Loading chillies into Buckets
  - 5 Buckets leave Commercial Greenhouses towards the Chilli Factory, where they will be processed into other goods



# AJÍ EXCHANGE

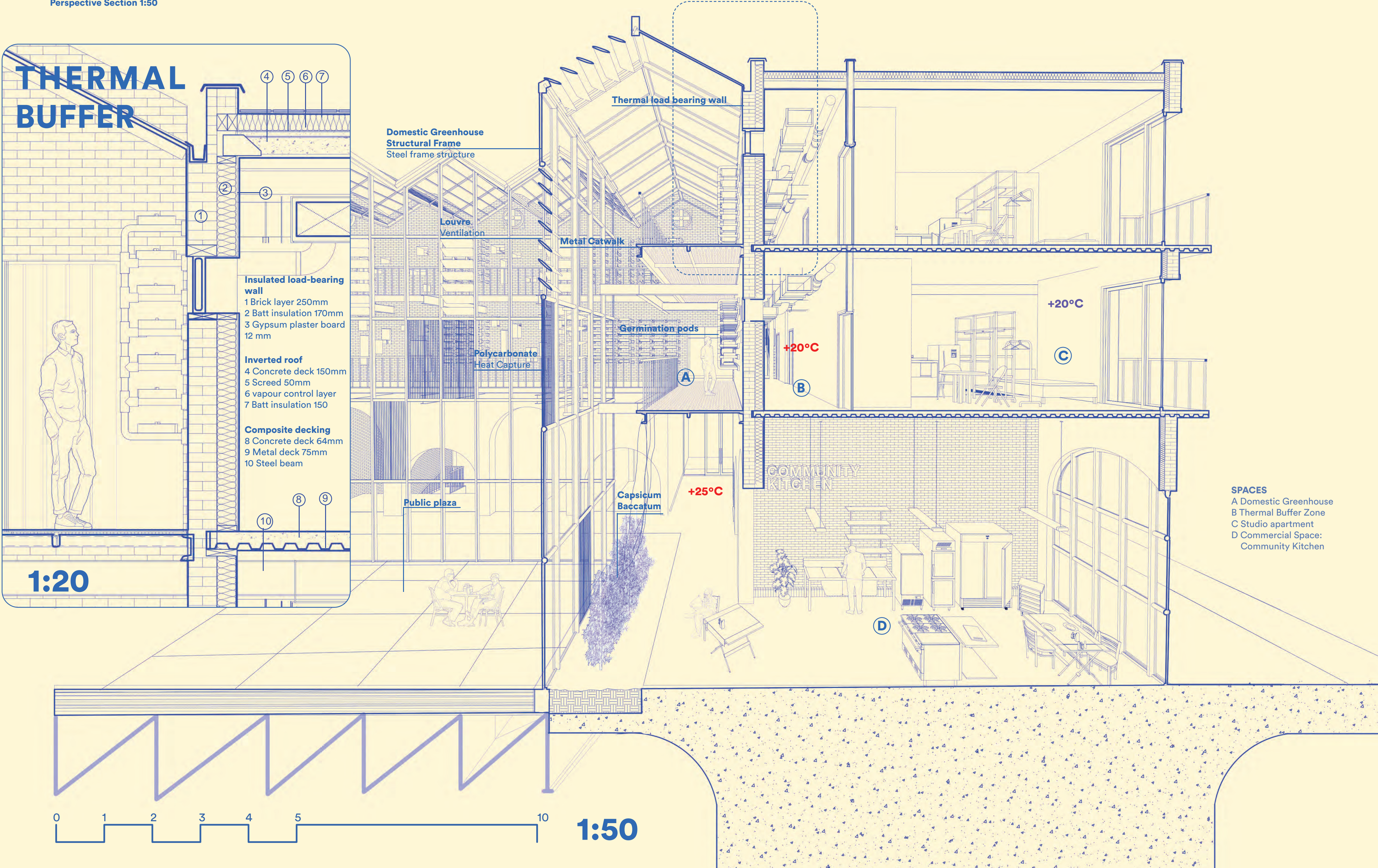
The bridges' role as a significant producer of capsicum in Europe strengthens the community by providing a stable influx of capital into the bridge. Consequently, it also becomes a centre for commerce enhanced by the naval split present in the second platform, where larger boats can dock to load and unload goods. The chilli pepper's growth is split into two spaces: the domestic greenhouse adjacent to the studio apartments will host the chilli plant until it germinates and reaches 28cm. During this time, the residents of the apartments will be the ones in charge of the seedlings, and once they have reached the indicated height, they are traded for some money with the workers over at the commercial greenhouses.





# DOMESTIC GREENHOUSE

Perspective Section 1:50





# EXPLODED AXONOMETRIC

Mixed Residential and Commercial typology + Domestic greenhouse



Roof

HVAC System

Commercial Greenhouse

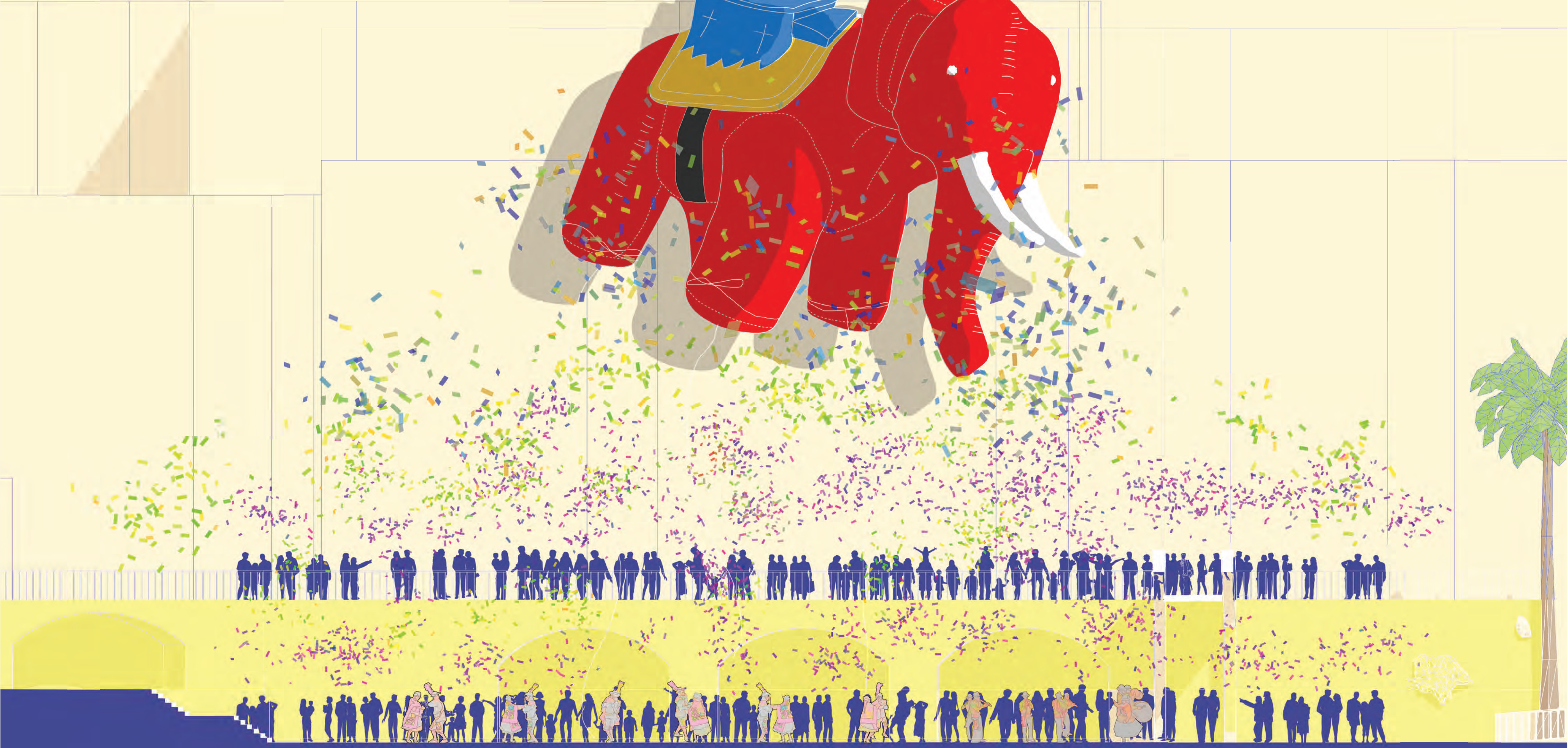
Chilli germination zone

16 x Studio apartments  
4 x Three bedroom apartments

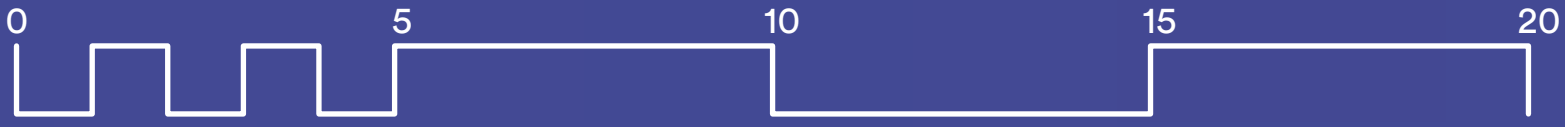


# JOURNEYS ACROSS THE BRIDGE: THE CARNIVAL

When the first week of August comes around, the Carnival exposes the dual nature of the bridge. The event inherently turns the bridge dweller and user into either a performer or a spectator. Doing so also exposes the fundamental principle by which the bridge was formed: to become a space where choreography is enhanced and effectively displayed. The different levels of the bridge become stages and spectator houses, respectively, and their relationship continues as the troupe moves across the bridge. The different routes, passages and pedestrian bridges also become a backstage system for the spectator to follow and enjoy the performance.



SCALE BAR 1:100





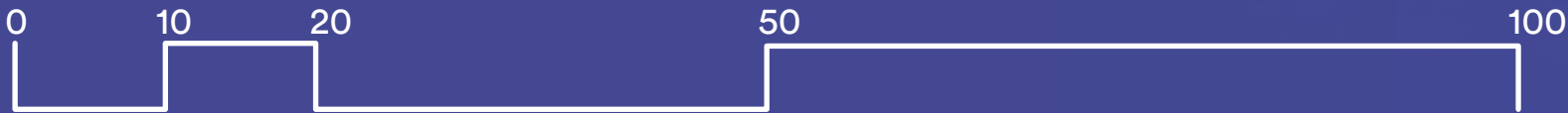
# EL CARNAVAL DEL PUEBLO

Being itself a statement of cultural resilience, the bridge welcomes the carnival, which becomes the epitome of the bridge's functionality. The event attracts all kinds of citizens and invites them to explore and engage in Latin American culture by hosting various events aimed at promoting the communities' culture.



PUENTE DE ENCUENTRO  
LONG SECTION 1:500

SCALE BAR 1:500



River bed