

# A FUTURE FOR A RURAL PAST

An investigation of rural communal life in New Zealand,  
through an architectural analysis of rural halls





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An investigation of rural communal life in New Zealand,  
through an architectural analysis of rural halls

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quirements for the Masters of Architecture (Professional)  
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## ABSTRACT

Since the early years of colonisation, rural settlements in New Zealand have undergone much change. The built infrastructure that once supported close-knit rural communities has become largely obsolete, degenerating into disrepair. Within this context of rural decline, my thesis explores the relation between rural buildings and communal living. In so doing, I offer a conceptualisation of a new rural facility, as an incubator for new communal experience, appropriate for bringing rural and urban dwellers together.

My focus is specifically community centred on rural halls within Taranaki's Stratford District. In offering a critical analysis of their demise, I contend that rural halls in New Zealand have undergone this change through processes of urbanisation. Urban dwelling has given rise to a lack of agricultural knowledge, providing a disassociation between urban residents and their earlier ties to the landscape and farm practices. The development of new forms of social life has aided an increase in the degree of physical separation between individuals and their neighbors. The traditional physical sense of belonging to a close-knit rural community has been transformed if not destroyed.

Belonging to a community is, I contend, a vital psychological requirement for humans. My theoretical stance is that buildings can and do support a sense of community. From a regenerative perspective, there is arguably a trend of moving back to rural environments as people seek out alternative ways of dealing with the overbearing issue of contemporary urban living. The built rural infrastructure

may be of importance to New Zealand's current and future generations. This thesis explores the possibility for a reinterpretation/adaptation of rural New Zealand halls in expressing physical rural 'communal life' in a contemporary context.

Critical Regionalist and Adaptive Reuse architecture theories are utilised to test this contention. The design ventures a new archetype, a new hub for a rural settlement that will include new facilities, whilst extending and reworking the traditional social roles of rural halls. Through fostering a renewed form of communal life and providing an environment that fuses rural and urban skill-sets, this facility is intended to breath new life into these former rural communities and in particular, the abandoned rural halls.



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**TOKIRIMA HALL**



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# CHAPTER 1

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## INTRODUCTION

[ Figure 1 Entrance of Tokirima Hall ]

## CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

### New Zealand Rural Halls

The Archaeologist and Historian Prickett<sup>1</sup> (1995), identified Rural Halls in New Zealand as holding social, cultural and historic character within the rural communities they are built in. They have been important in providing social engagement since early colonial settlement in New Zealand, and created a sense of identity for the community and districts that built them. The halls accommodated cultural activities such as concerts, lectures, debating societies, book club, and rural dances. Today, however, many people may overlook the value of these rural buildings through their perceived lack of grandeur and monumental splendor (Mitchell & Chaplin, 1984). I contend, however, that many rural halls hold certain architectural merit as examples of early rural built-form. Jackson Downing (1850), the early landscape designer and author, identifies such rural buildings as “*symbols of rural practicality, refined utility and an age-old dependence on the landscape*” (p.232). Rural halls provide a visual connection to New Zealand’s early history, the communal life and the surrounding landscape that became the basis of a new nation.

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1. Dr. Nigel Prickett is a New Zealand Archaeology expert and Historian. Prickett’s interest in the topic of rural halls culminated in a number of expeditions throughout New Zealand’s rural landscape documenting over five hundred ‘country halls’. This research was heavily influenced by his work, and it is with his permission that a number of his photographs are reproduced within this thesis.



[ Figure 2 Tututawa Hall 2011 ]



[ Figure 3 Toko Community Hall 2011 ]



## Loss of communal shared life

There has been a decline in the use of these once cherished rural buildings. As Prickett discusses, this has resulted in rural halls no longer being seen as holding any great social significance to the communities they serve (Prickett, 1995). The decline in the use and significance of rural halls is symbolic of a widespread change in rural communal shared life. This can be credited, in part, to the shift away from a rural lifestyle to one dominated by new urban environments. Pearson, a specialist in New Zealand settler societies and Thorns, a theorist of urban and regional sociology; identify this as a key constituent in the separation of social values, customs and practices between those residing in small rural settlements and the sprawling urban environments (Pearson & Thorns, 1983). As urban areas grow, the focus of engaging and identifying with a group of people or a place seems to have become less important than communal lifestyles. There is a discernable trend of people becoming increasingly removed from public and semi-public urban spaces within residential environments, whereby Simmel (1997), the urban sociologist and author, identifies that:

*“The only way for humans to cope with the overbearing and bustling urban environment was to shut themselves off from the world around them”* (p.231).

The steady decline in physical social interaction outside the immediate family has culminated in people spending less time interacting with their neighbors, and building the important community ties and networks needed to sustain future generations.

## Dislocation between urban and rural communal values and practices

The changing views of community and communal life found in urban areas have seen a loss in traditional skill sets, or cultural practices, used in creating greater connections with natural landscapes. These have been in favour of business-oriented practices, resulting in people appearing less likely to consider the landscape in their day-to-day lives than their predecessors a hundred years ago. Beatley (2004), a researcher in sustainable cities and author, observes this relationship, its connections, or ‘supply lines’, as becoming:

*“increasingly distant and abstract. Food arrives from far away and we lose all possible understanding of its source . . . or the health of the landscape that generated this generous bounty”* (p.11 – 12).

The skill sets needed to engage these processes have slowly been lost by generations of people over time. The ecologist and agricultural scientist Williams (2011), identifies that the quickening pace of technological, social and economical change; culminating in a disinterest in the landscape for many urban dwellers, has created a situation in which the natural environment has been pushed up to its limits. The effect this has on rural inhabitants in New Zealand, maintaining a more traditional approach to community; influenced heavily on place and a greater connection with the landscape may be considered to result in a further separation between rural and urban dwellers. The resulting scepticism towards urban residents by local rural communities attests to this (Thorns, 1992), potentially leading to increasingly insular rural communities.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Over the last decade, there have been changes in the way individuals have tended to view their communities, involving both social and physical interaction and the significance of environmental connections.

The communal life, once characteristic of rural life in New Zealand has slowly been supplanted by an urban lifestyle. The loss of rural communal life, ties to the land, and the self-sufficient farm practices associated with this way of living, are assumed to have become redundant in a contemporary society.

There appears to be a small change in population distribution emerging in New Zealand as people move out of urban area and into more rural locations (New Zealand: An urban/rural profile, 2006). There is potential for a new form of rural living based on a more interactive communal life to emerge. The ability for the built-environment to accommodate both local persons and current urban dwellers is important in recreating this potentially new form of communal life that focuses on physical social interaction.

## RESEARCH INTENTION

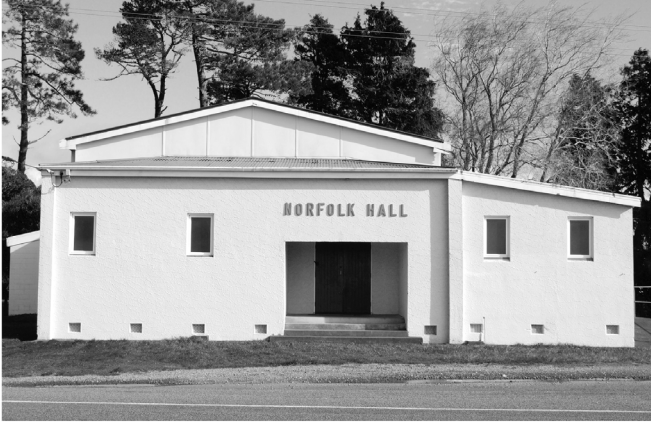
Through the reworking of rural halls, the main intention of this research is to explore the development of an adapted architectural form to express 'communal shared life' in a rural setting.

## RESEARCH STRUCTURE

This thesis has been separated into one background chapter providing justification for the research project, and two theoretical chapters, which offer a theoretical framework that informs the research focus and subsequent design. The thesis culminates in the discussion of the architectural design case study.

In creating a 21<sup>st</sup> century expression of rural communal life, its 20<sup>th</sup> century equivalent was deemed important to examine and for this reason rural halls form the basis of investigation throughout this thesis.

*Chapter 2: New Zealand Rural Halls – Fostering rural Community:* examines rural halls as the main form of communal shared life in rural contexts. Discussion then turns to the demise of rural community halls and an altering of communal life through urbanisation. The loss of communal shared life is then examined as a negative by-product of urbanisation. Information provided by Statistics New Zealand (2006) reveals an increase in movement from



[ Figure 4 Norfolk Hall 2011 ]



[ Figure 5 Douglas Hall 2011 ]

urban areas back to rural boroughs allowing the potential for a reinvented community facility centring on the hall to be realised.

*Chapter 3: In Search of the 'locale': Interpreting Community:* takes the definition of 'the community' from the English Oxford dictionary, as:

*'The people of a district or country considered collectively, especially in the context of social values and responsibilities.'*

I contended that rural populations associate with this more traditional notion of community, focusing on a connection to place through a stronger relationship with the landscape. The changing urban environment has seen a divergence from the significance of place within community to a more complex and diverse interpretation. This new understanding focuses around networking and business practice. Critical Regionalist Theory is explored in an endeavour to provide an understanding of architecture's ability to address both urban and rural interpretations of community. It may also provide the opportunity for cultural practices of both to come together and benefit a local rural district in creating a strong vision of communal life.

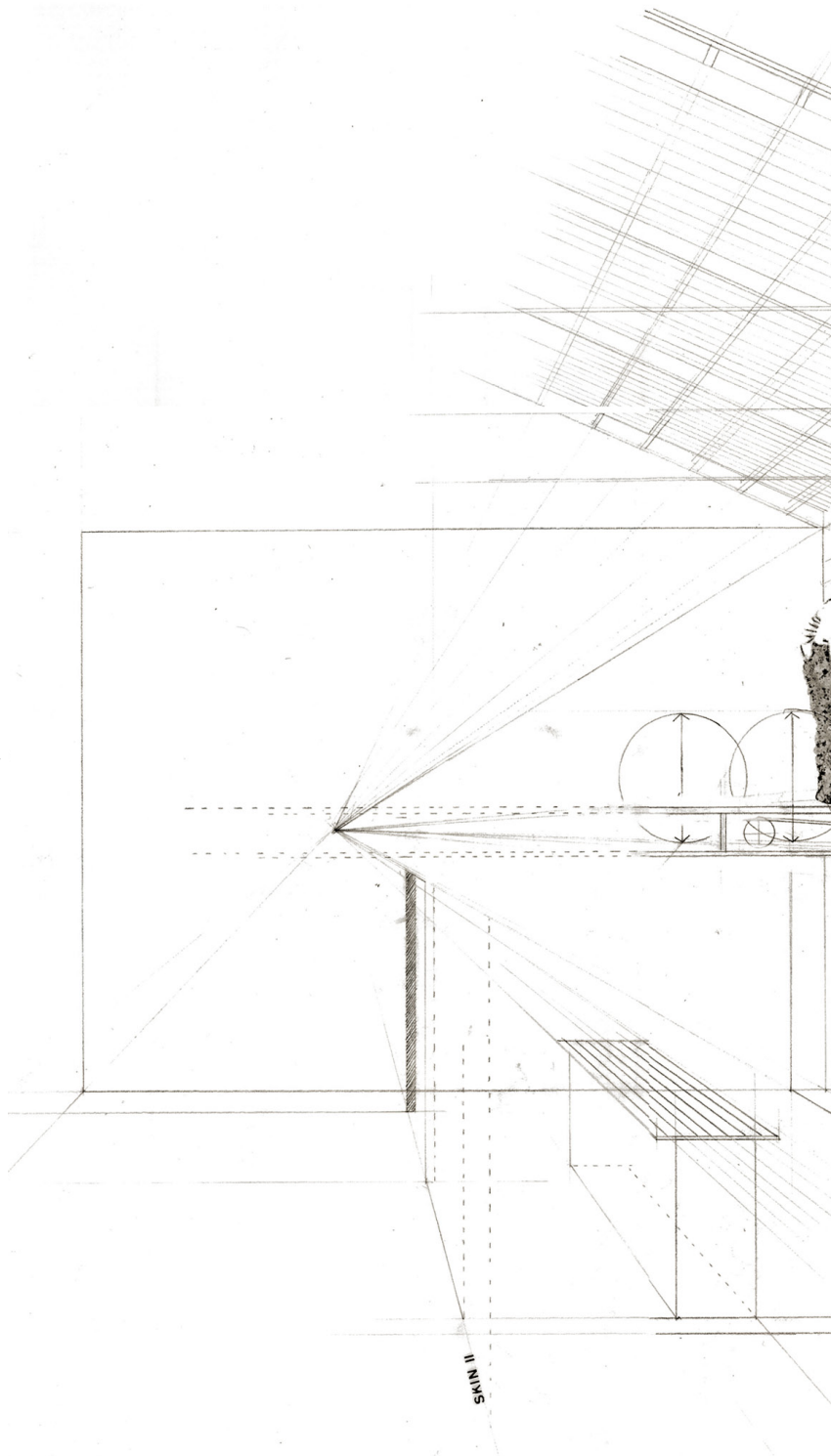
*Chapter 4: Architectural Analysis of Rural Halls:* Adaptive Reuse is used to generate a theoretical stance on the perceived benefits of reusing rural halls in the context of this research. Adaptive Reuse recognises the importance of re-appropriating old buildings in providing a representation of past and present local traditions/practices for future generations to experience and understand. The ability for rural halls to be used as the representation of past rural communality, when considering the contemporary

research context, is important. Adaptive Reuse is therefore used to rethink, architecturally, how these buildings can serve a contemporary rural community.

The chapter then analyses rural halls through three separate layers of investigation: Space plan, Skin and Structure, which are taken from Brand (1994) a critical thinker and author, focusing primarily on their cognitive and physical application. These layers have allowed for a focused critique of rural halls in their current context, providing a platform for small design experiments identifying certain characteristics considered important for a contemporary communal facility. The observations are carried through to the design case study.

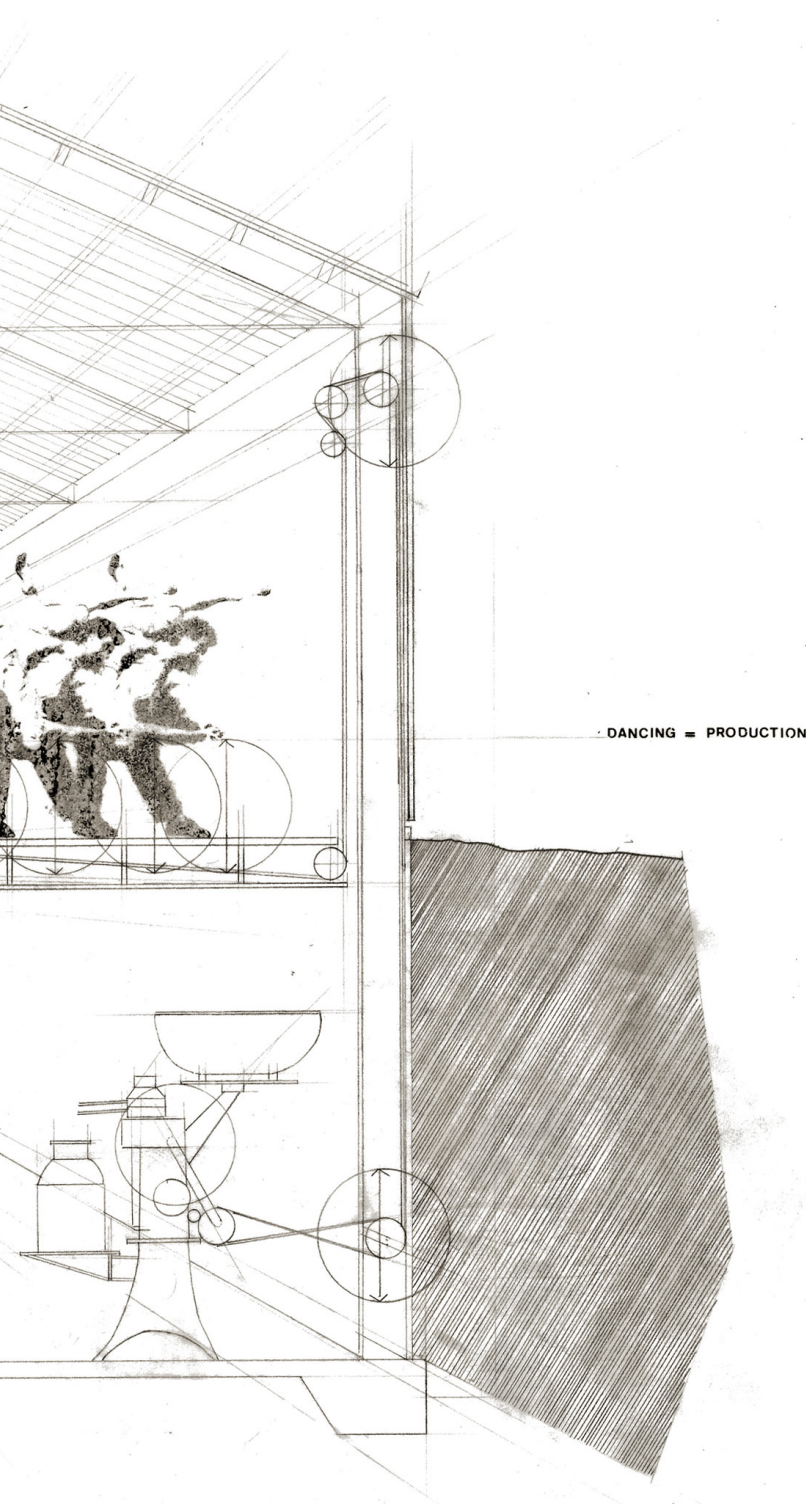
*Chapter 5: Design Case Study – A new rural communal facility:* describes the architectural case study resulting from conclusions drawn through the first three chapters. The design is the creation of an agricultural school, cross-programmed with smaller communal facilities. The design is a synthesis of Adaptive Reuse and Critical Regionalist theories. It investigates the ability to re-appropriate rural halls through the creation of a contemporary communal facility, drawing on principles of Critical Regionalist theory in creating a communal facility that brings together both urban and rural interpretations of community.

*Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion -* By conceptualising a facility that utilises the cultural practices associated with both rural and urban living, the design forms a positive example of a new form of rural communal life that can be used by future generations.



[ Figure 6 Rural prosperity, dance/production ]





## SCOPE OF RESEARCH

The physical context of the research focuses on 'rural halls' located in Taranaki's Stratford District. There are no comprehensive existing studies on rural New Zealand halls. As such the material that I have used in this research has been collated from a number of different sources, in discussing the subject. I acknowledge that the decline of community and subsequently communal life is not solely attributed to urbanisation, but a result of a number of factors. Eisenstein (2011), an intellectual generalist and author, concurs, identifying a number of reasons for the decline in community. He contends that all avenues instigating this change may be traced back to the growth of a contemporary monetised society, in which the exchange of gifts and favours between people, the building blocks of early settler communities, may be considered to have declined. Eisenstein postulates that the intimacy of a community of people is maintained through '*co-creation*' and not '*co-consumption*' (para.4). The research undertaken recognises this fact, considering a contemporary expression of communal life that incorporates the constant exchange of skill sets from existing and new residents in generating a synthesis of both. Rural and urban changes to community have therefore been addressed. Research is conducted from the perspective of an urban dweller moving into a rural area and the developed design is intended for a rural communal facility that is used by existing and new residents to a rural area. This thesis is anchored on a strong premise that there is potential for reinvigoration of rural communal living, or 'ruralisation', and the conceptual architectural design case study rests on this being a continual trend in New Zealand.



# CHAPTER 2

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## FOSTERING RURAL COMMUNALITY

[ Figure 7 Interior of Kohuratahi Hall from stage ]

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to establish the cultural importance of rural halls within New Zealand's rural communities. The chapter provides a brief history of rural halls in New Zealand. A key contention is developed; that rural halls in New Zealand have largely undergone demise through urbanisation of the New Zealand population. In this situation, rural communality and urban-shared life may now be considered to be lessened; if not changed for good. In more recent times, the trend of people moving from urban to rural settings is acknowledged. It is in this new context that the research project is situated.



[ Figure 8 A Distant view of Taranki, at dusk ]





## EARLY COLONIAL LIFE

The European colonisation and settlement of the Taranaki area took place through two main influxes. The first occurred in the 1840's with the second commencing almost thirty years later in the 1870's (McAllister, 1976). The first emigrates to settle in the Taranaki area came from the English areas of Devon and Cornwall (McAllister, 1976). These settlers had shown the initiative and motivation necessary to pack up and move to the other side of the world and as such, they were expected to fell, pit saw and process trees whilst clearing the landscape without help or supervision (Fearnley, 1986). The relationship that early settlers had with the land was of the utmost importance. Farmers' livelihoods depended on the level of attention they gave to land cultivation. The land in these early periods was not particularly productive, so farming was characterised as subsistent; whereby enough food was produced to feed only the immediate family and little more. Due to hardships faced by the majority of colonial settlers in the early years, the ability to afford hired help was limited. The interaction that occurred with people outside of the immediate family was therefore based on common beliefs, shared hardships and the occasional lending of a hand rather than a person's class or wealth. This allowed for a re-evaluation of traditional social norms that were common practice in Great Britain at the time (Thorns, 1992). One of significance was the male and female role within the household. The husband, wife and in many cases their children were out of necessity, the key sources of labour on a farm. Pearson & Thorns (1983)

identified the establishment of an egalitarian class system in New Zealand rural communities resulting from this practice, in which:

*“... even the wives of the better-off, who might have aspired to lives of gentry and refinement in England, were often forced to work in the frequently more demanding conditions of a newly emergent colony”* (p. 172).

Separation from the traditional social structure of Great Britain, in favour of a more egalitarian social platform, led to a reconfiguring of the initial settlement plan for the Taranaki area. There was a concern that there would be a lack of a working class to provide labour for the farms, owned by those of superior social standing, within the immigrant populations moving to New Zealand. It was believed that this could be avoided by instilling some form of English social structure, through its settlement pattern, based around a stratified grid (Pearson, & Thorns, 1983). The majority of lands within settlements in the Taranaki area were therefore divided up into well defined ‘plots’, allocated to the settlers through a land ballot carried out in the 1840’s (Lambert and Lambert, 1983). The settlement plans, along with a limited number of settlers and a dense native bush; culminated in a deprivation of social interaction for early settlers through physical isolation within the landscape (Lambert & Lambert, 1983). This resulted in families being seen as the main source of social stability.

One of the more anticipated events in a community was the Saturday market (Phillips, 2009a). This was an occasion in which any excess produce such as eggs, dairy products and other goods were sold and exchanged. As well as produce,



[ Figure 9 Woman feeding lambs ]



[ Figure 10 Haymaking ]





a much-needed exchange of physical social interaction was able to take place. These social occasions, in which people came together to share knowledge about tools, land clearing and the daily grind, were extremely important in keeping a positive morale amongst the settlers (Pearson & Thorns, 1983). They aided in instilling an egalitarian belief, where the co-operation efforts around communal interaction would lead to a better way of life for all. The market days can therefore be considered as one of the earliest form of communal shared life within New Zealand's rural settlements.

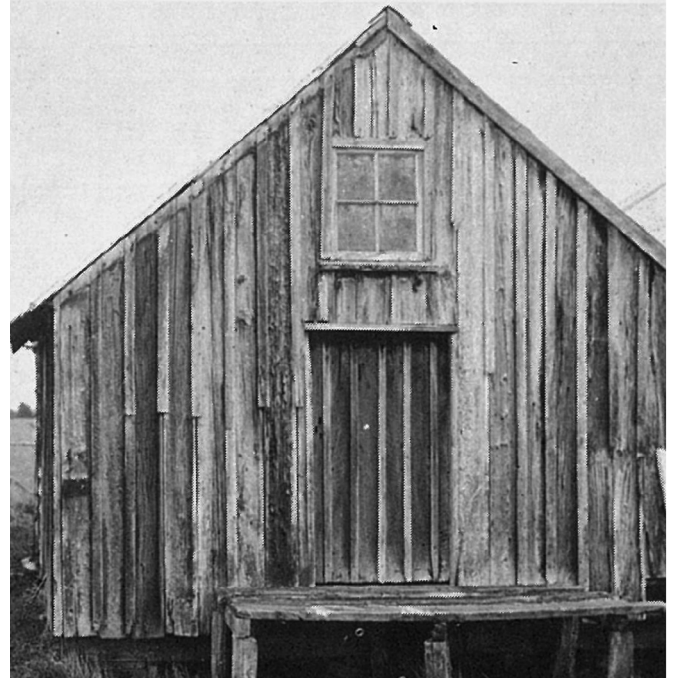
With these observations in mind, it becomes evident that a sense of urgency towards the construction of utilitarian community buildings was envisioned, to provide a similar expression of communal life experienced at the market days.

[ Figure 11 map showing Taranaki land plots ]

## RURAL HALLS – PROVIDING RURAL COMMUNAL SHARED LIFE

Whenever people travel through New Zealand, they will undoubtedly be exposed to New Zealand's rural landscape. Mitchell & Chaplin (1984) refer to this as 'hometown New Zealand'; the rural backcountry characterised by rolling hills, large open fields, sheep, cattle and a scattering of clumped buildings. In many cases the buildings, to a visitor, are indistinguishable wherever they are located in the country, constructed along strategic trading routes and offering travellers a place to rest and refuel before moving on to their next destination.

Church's, corner stores, hotels and halls were all sought after buildings that were seen to provide a point of difference for rural settlements. These buildings presented a snapshot of a township's livelihood and communal presence. They were intended to entice potential residents looking for a new place to settle, whilst at the same time instill confidence in the local residents. This confidence was based on the physical manifestation of a town's progress and robust community, where the church housed religious services, the corner store provided food supplies and the hotel/pub fostered male collective identification (Thorns, 1992, p57). The hall provided a multi-functional space for many communal events and became symbolic, in rural areas, of the communal shared life experienced within the settlement. The creation of a hall in a rural settlement was a social event rather than a chore. It generally began with a fund-raiser, which may have involved a barn dance or fair (Phillips, 2009b). These



[ Figure 12 Wilsons Crossing ]

events were run by the women in the community and often involved competitions to see who could raise the most money (Phillips, 2009b). In many cases the whole community was much more involved with the creation of a hall, compared to other community buildings, and invested time and effort in its materialisation. A hall gave value to the village and often showed that a settlement was prosperous and had a lively spirit.

Halls were made with differing degrees of craftsmanship, each structure, like many farm buildings, being designed as a 'one-off' (Thornton, 1986). A hall was usually erected by volunteers on donated land out of wooden timber boards, as wood was the material easily obtainable and often milled



[ Figure 13 Kohuratahi Hall ]

from nearby land (Prickett 1995). The simple rectangular form characteristic of early rural halls had a sloped roof and was not that indistinguishable from a shed. However, these buildings were often praised for their pragmatism, a trait common in New Zealand (Mitchell & Chaplin, 1984). It is also these buildings that Stacpoole (1982), a New Zealand architect and author, attributes to giving New Zealanders a great deal of pleasure when individuals come across them, knowing that *“these are our own thing.”* (p. 24). Rural halls, through their unembellished construction, are reminiscent of a simple way of life. This can be credited to their utilitarian purpose; a characteristic that allowed rural halls to be used by a number of different social groups.

## SATURDAY NIGHT “DOWN AT THE HALL”

Rural halls were used for a number of events, formal and informal, and overtime reduced some of the earlier social issues arising from isolation. In many settlements they acted as the schoolhouse, before rural schools were established, and provided an area for social gathering after church on Sundays. In Taranaki the best-known use for the hall however, was the weekly Saturday night dance. The dances held in rural halls grew to become the centre of rural culture from the 1920’s right up until the 1970’s, where, the New Zealand historians Mclean and Phillips (1990), state that:

*“The focal point of every rural district was the local hall, which was used for everything from dances to flower shows”* (p.147).

They were regularly held for up to seven months of the year and were highly regarded by local residents (McAllister, 1976). People from smaller towns, unlucky enough not to have a hall, would travel for miles along unkempt roads to attend dances, movies and other communal activities. Robertson (2000), a resident of a smaller settlement without a hall, recalls such an event:

*“It took us about an hour to ride to the township and we would tie up our horses at the local blacksmith shop, just across the road from the hall. The children all sat in the front stalls on forms with no back on them, and the adults sat in the back stalls on chairs of a fairly comfortable design and there was no heating in the hall.”* (p.111)

Dances would commonly start at 8pm and continue on until the early hours of the morning. On odd occasions



there would be a more formal ball, which was sponsored by a local club (Phillips 2009b). There was usually a small fee for participating in these dances; however women who brought a 'plate' (of food) generally were admitted without payment required. These buildings were tightly linked to the daily lives of farming communities. Rural hall sheds light on the physical social interaction that occurred within rural communities and acted as a symbol of the richly moving life of a group of people with a common purpose. They provide a strong sense of community symbolism for rural settlements. Whilst some of these buildings still maintain some use, the majority are now underused, neglected or have slowly fallen into disrepair.

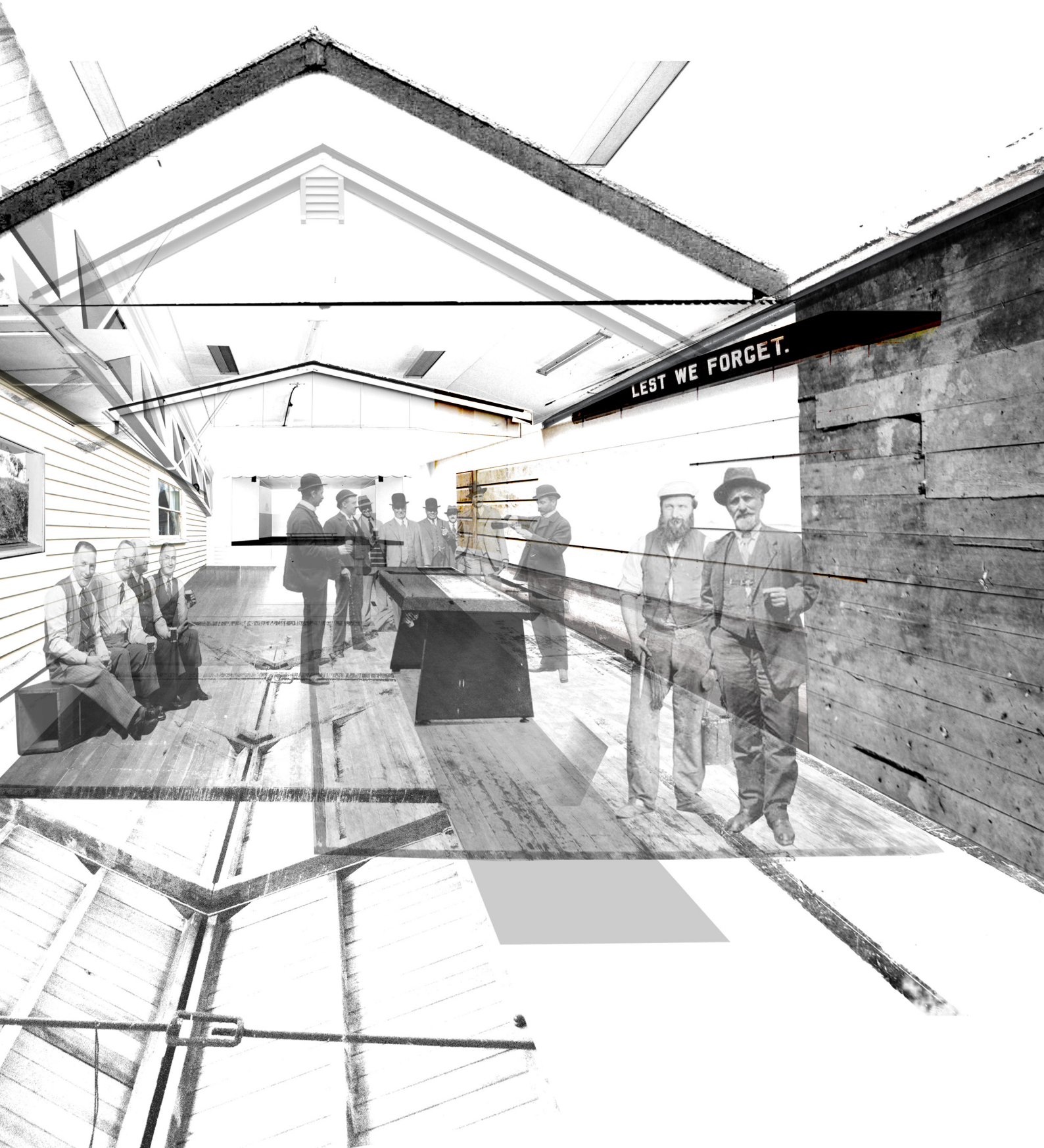
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*"Those who haven't experienced being a ten year old and eating peas out of a pod in a smoke filled hall have missed one of life's great treats."* (Harwood, 1999, p. 44)

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[ Figure 14 Hall interior – Down at the hall ]





LEST WE FORGET.



## RURAL HALL - MATERIAL RESIDUE OF EARLY COMMUNAL LIFE

The transformation of rural communal life has been largely due to the supplanting of rural public infrastructure to nearby larger towns and cities. The term 'urbanisation' involves the shifting of people, facilities and ways of life, and can be used to describe this transformation. Before WWII, almost half of New Zealand's population lived within small towns and districts that had less than 8000 inhabitants (Pearson & Thorns, 1983, p. 245). The dominant form of work and income was agrarian based. The diversification of New Zealand's economic base created changes to both the occupational and social structure. This had a considerable influence on the decline in local rural communities.

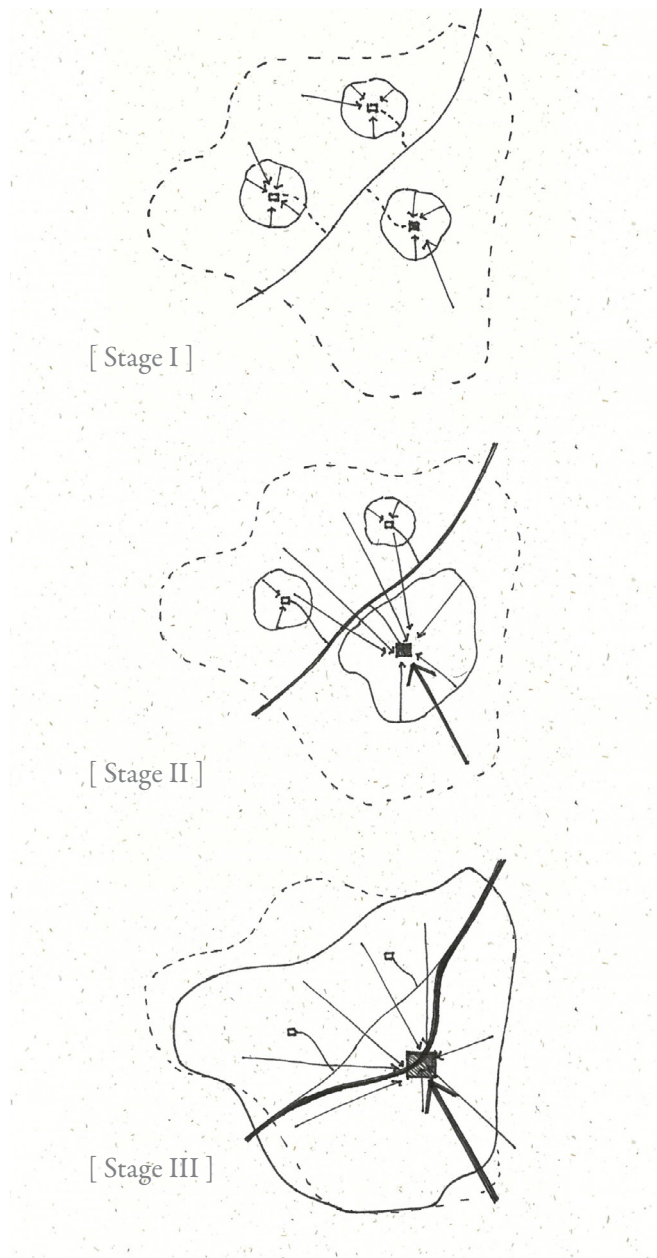
As people migrated to the larger towns and urban centres in search of greater job opportunities, the infrastructure that supported these areas grew around them. The provision of vehicular transport provided rural based families easy access to the new facilities in larger townships. The ability to go shopping or see a film in an environment that provided a much larger sense of communal life was a huge draw-card. As larger towns grew, they encroached on the rural built infrastructure, and often incorporated smaller rural towns into their service area. Local rural communities submerged themselves in new activities found in the larger towns and urban areas.

The architectural theorist Rapoport (1969) describes two distinct relationships that form between an individuals



[ Figure 15 Population 5 and steady ]





dwelling and their surrounding settlement. In the first instance the house is used for the most private activities, with the surrounding township acting as the 'setting for life' (p. 71). This creates a blurring of the boundary between private and public. When considering a New Zealand context, the result is a wider use of rural halls as a surrogate living space in the public realm. A more separated relationship forms the second condition, in which the dwelling is the centre of life and there is little interaction within the surrounding township. Pearson & Thorns (1983) consider this as becoming the reality for many rural towns in New Zealand, with informal communal gatherings being held in personal residences rather than communal buildings. Interaction then occurs between a select group of people sharing similar values, interests and aspirations, culminating in a certain level of *'inward looking'* (p. 42). This can be considered as rural provincialism loosely referring to a lack exposure to a diverse range of cultures and views, resulting in a certain level of narrow-mindedness. These particular social values have resulted in a greater level of social division between urban areas and rural areas. Terms like 'townie' or 'newcomers' (Pearson & Thorns, 1983) provide an insight into this form of explicit separatism expressed in rural areas, further distancing the relationship between rural and urban dwellers.

In latter times, rural halls mitigated this to some degree, as events held would generally bring together a range of different people, offering a greater diversity in points of view and interaction. This interaction is more limited in a contemporary context and the result is a heightened sense of rural provincialism, one in which the relationship between rural and urban dwellers is growing progressively distant.

[ Figure 16 Supplanting in rural public infrastructure ]

## ADDRESSING ISOLATION

Physical interaction between human beings is important for personal wellbeing and, in my experience, most people seek out the company of others. Larger cities are places that contain a greater density of people and are therefore likely to provide a greater level of physical social interaction. The hustle and bustle of the city can however become overwhelming. When this occurs, humans are able to shut the door and remove themselves from those situations. Individuals can retreat into the private spaces of their homes and the company of their immediate family, or simply disengage themselves from other human beings. Friedberg & Varnelis, (2008), a theorist of modern media culture, and a historian and theorist of network culture, respectively, discuss this situation through an observation of people interacting in a busy coffeehouse:

*“You are all somehow drawn together by the lure of the generic caffeinated beverage and the desire to share a similarly generic, but nonetheless communal, space with other humans with whom you are likely not to have any direct interaction . . . . We gather at the communal watering hole as we always did; only now we don’t reach out to those around us.”* (para. 4)

The ability to disengage, within the city, from physical social interaction has had an adverse effect on the public realm. Putnam (2001) suggested there is a trend in the modern world for people to be less interested in joining and interacting in social clubs in contrast to previous generations. Beatley (2004) discussed how the lost connections between people meant there is little time spent getting to know neighbors or forming ties within the local community.

The introduction of suburbs and lifestyle blocks, forming on the outskirts of the urban fringe, is an indication of a further removal from public realms and of communal life. Figures taken from Statistics New Zealand (2006) show that the greatest population flow within New Zealand in recent times occurred through people moving from urban to rural areas with ‘*moderate urban influence*’ (Statistics New Zealand, 2006) (Figure 17). I contended that this shift in population settlement may be considered as the next cycle in the internal migration of New Zealand. The movement of urban dwellers to more isolated rural areas has, within this research, been speculatively called a ‘Ruralisation’ of New Zealand’s population. This is one in which people are now choosing to live in more rural areas of New Zealand’s landscape.

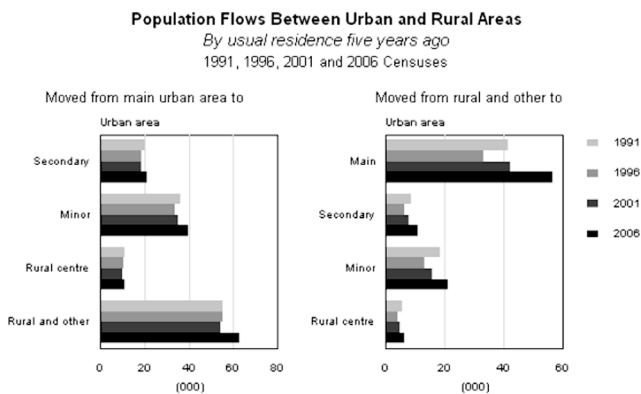
Moves to and from Area Types by Usual Residence Five Years Ago <i>Urban/rural areas</i> 2006 Census			
Urban/rural area	Moved to area type	Moved from area type	Net population flow
Main urban	133,227	134,595	-1,368
Satellite urban	31,026	28,881	2,145
Independent urban	75,624	82,575	-6,951
Rural with high urban influence	37,917	32,646	5,271
Rural with moderate urban influence	46,851	35,052	11,799
Rural with low urban influence	49,647	64,593	-14,946
Highly rural/remote area	16,689	11,682	5,007
Total(1)	391,302	391,302	0

[ Figure 17 Urban to rural migration 1 ]

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to identify the importance of rural halls within rural communities. It has identified that these buildings were erected in small towns, to provide a location for communal shared life. It is recognised that demise in rural hall use, may be attributed to a shift in people and public infrastructure to urban areas. As the developed design proposal is intended for existing and new residents to rural areas, focus then shifted to the negative effect of urbanisation and the change created in communal life within rural and urban areas. The effect on existing rural groups is observed as creating insular behavior in which outsiders are deemed 'not to be trusted'. Urban communal life is considered to be diminishing in some localities, as people remove themselves from communal activities in preference for the company of close family or themselves.

There is potential for a reinterpretation of rural communal life, as people disengage from the urban public realm, with a trend towards re-settling in distinctly rural areas. The interaction between urban migrants and local rural populations may become problematic as differing views on communal life can form a strong contrast in the way people interact socially. This suggests merit may lie in the exploration of the way urban and rural dwellers view community.



[ Figure 18 Urban to rural migration 2 ]



# CHAPTER 3

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## IN SEARCH OF RURAL COMMUNITY

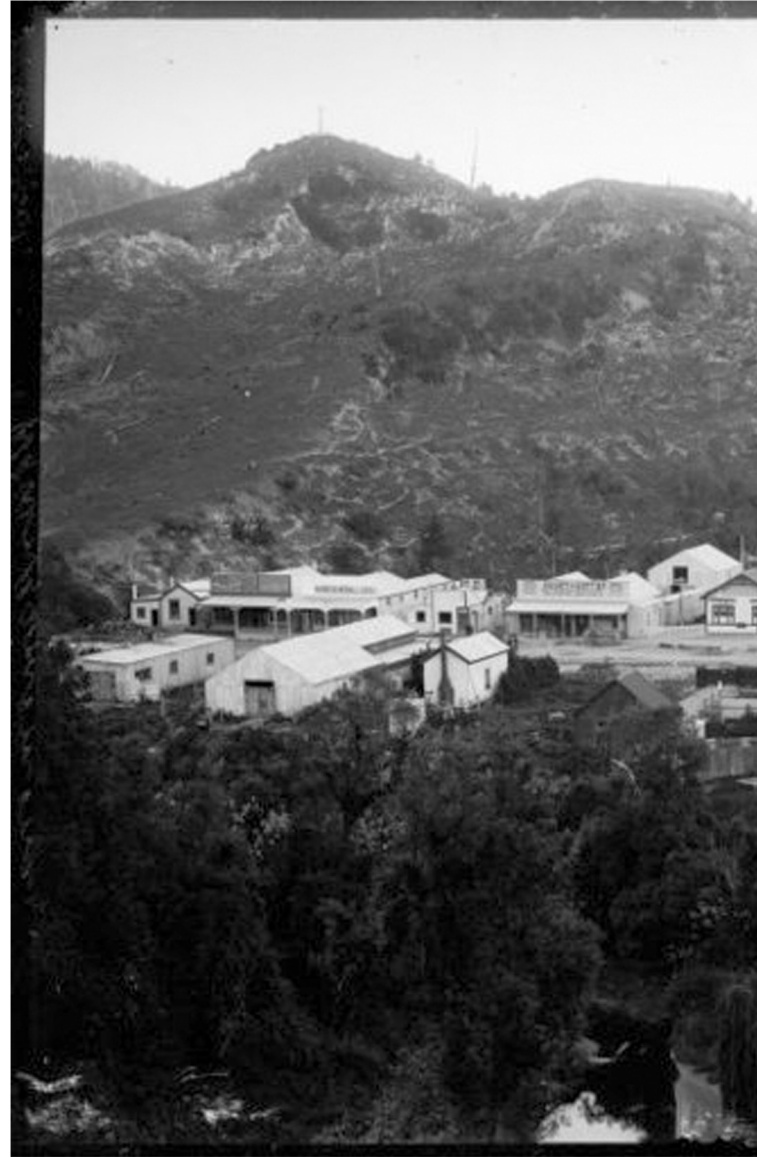
[ Figure 19 Furniture left in hall ]

## INTRODUCTION

The discussion to this point has focused on rural halls as a 20th Century manifestation of communal shared life. I have contended that rural hall's have been an important asset to the life of rural dwellers that reside around them.

In this Chapter I concentrate on rural and urban interpretations of community and communal shared life. There is an identified disjunction between rural and urban groups in the meaning ascribed to the term 'community', through a diverse conceptualisation of 'place'. Place is considered to have been supplanted, in many urban areas, for economic and global recognition. The impact on the environment and its deteriorating condition is observed as a result of this detachment with place.

Critical Regionalist Theory is utilised to determine the significance of place within community, using a number of different perspectives in creating a new understanding of community and communal life for existing and new residents. The notion of 'skill sets' is used to address social practices within existing rural and urban communities. These encompass human practices, cultural practices and cultural traits. New Zealand and international case studies have been utilised to provide focused direction for functional design considerations in the implementation of a developed design.



[ Figure 20 Whangamomona, 1920 ]





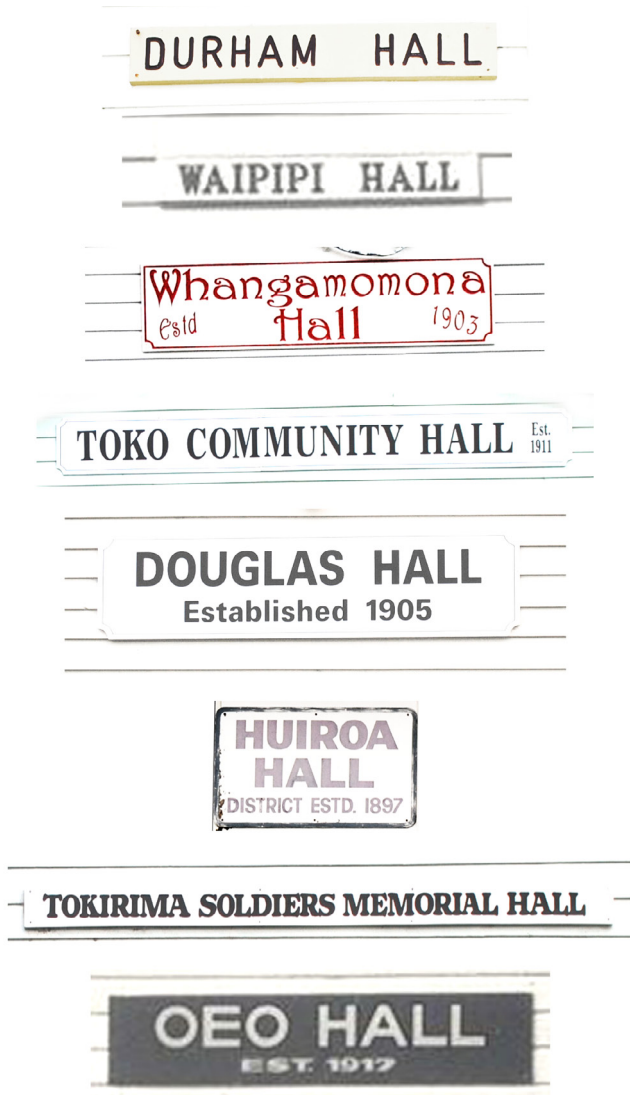
## RURAL VS URBAN COMMUNITY

As previously stated, this research utilises the definition of Community from the English Oxford Dictionary as:

*'The people of a district or country considered collectively, especially in the context of social values and responsibilities.'*

In considering this definition, it may be contended that the more traditional understanding of community relies heavily on a person's affinity to a specific place. The architectural theorist, Norberg-Schulz (2000) explains how this relationship, between place and community, can be credited to the isolation experienced within early settlements. As populations were far smaller and more sparsely located demarcation between a settlement (in latter times a town) and the countryside creates a strong sense of identity and an emphasis on the specificity of place to local rural groups (Norberg-Schulz, 2000).

However, in New Zealand's urban environment the notion of community has evolved to carry a different meaning where the importance of global networking has taken priority over affinity with the land. Toomath (1982), the architect and author, attributes this mind-set to New Zealand's relatively young colonial status, and the desire to be recognised as an established developed country. The political geographer Agnew (1987) believes this mind-set is reinforced through the cutting of 'ties to place' in favour of global networks and becoming recognised as modern. Lefaivre and Tzonis (2003), an architectural theorist, and architect respectively, discuss this apparent divergent thinking; whereby a moving global economy and subsequent networking contrasts with



[ Figure 21 Rural Hall plaques ]

Large plaques on rural halls denoting the rural area the hall was created in, provides a visual representation of the importance of place to the community.

the belief in being grounded in place and the promotion of local identity. The result is the creation of divergent views on the significance of place and this influences the way people may view community.

The architect and author Hamdi (2004), explores community as having different meanings for individuals, primarily 'community of place' and 'community of practice'. He contends that the importance of place becomes significant when there is an emotional connection to an identifiable area. In the context of this research, rural dwellers tend to possess a greater affinity with the land, as it is often apart of their livelihood, and are able to bond with others through this connection. 'Community of place' forms when these values are shared by a number of people. 'Community of practice' is used to signify communities devoid of an association with physical place (Hamdi, 2010). These communities focus on networking of people regardless of a specific physical location.

New Zealand's urban areas have seen a transformation of community and the significance of place being diluted. In these areas, there is no longer the need for previous skill sets that New Zealand's colonial settlers developed out of necessity in making their living off the land. Beatley (2004) has explored this notion, conceptually identified as 'Native to Nowhere', contending there is an increased disinterest by urban dwellers in their understanding of the health of the landscape and the skills needed to engage on a more intimate level with the natural environment. Thus, for urban dwellers, a connection with the landscape has become distant. Deskilling of agrarian practices has been displaced by other skill-sets, in what Eisenstein (2011) terms '*specialised domains*' (para. 4).



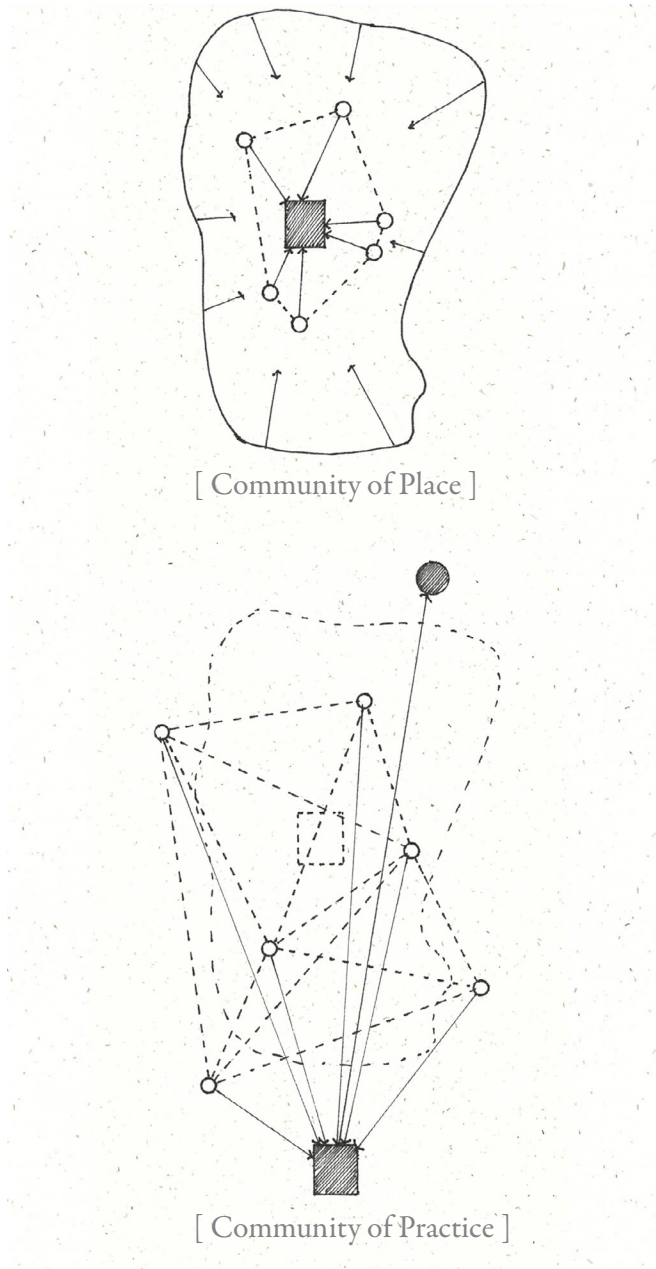
## DISENGAGEMENT WITH THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Through the cutting of ties to place, in favour of a consuming global economy, the impact on the environment is becoming more evident. According to Orr (2011), a specialist in climate change and ecological design; through our disregard for the resources that we *had*, we are currently changing the climatic conditions to the point where we will move earth out of the Holocene period that humans have evolved in for over 12000 years. A period characterised by a moderate climate, perfect for our growth as a species, and into a new climatic condition that humans, and many other species, may not be able to cope in (Orr, 2011).

Only a small proportion of urban dwellers experience the growing of vegetables or the tending of crops. The significance of the seasons is only taken into consideration out of convenience rather than necessity, and the welfare and respect for animals that provide us with milk, wool and meat are constantly being questioned by animal rights activists. The environment and its fragile condition, is a topic discussed at length and is slowly gaining attention within mainstream society as stated by Orr:

*“However conceived, described, or analysed, sustainability is the issue of our time, all others being subordinate to the global conversation now underway about whether, how, and under what terms the human experiment will continue.”* (p. xviii)

I believe that the skill-sets needed to engage with the landscape are important in reducing the tensions building



[ Figure 22 Community of Place and Community of Practice ]

within the world, regarding the natural environment. Williams has identified this concern in a recent talk given for ‘Sustainable Futures’. He asked the question of how people are able to construct within a world that, he argues, is pushing up to within, and past its limits (Williams, 2011). His talk focused mainly on food production and the need for institutional arrangements or systems that can build to secure our future and create ‘future makers’ and not ‘future takers’ (Williams, 2011).

In New Zealand, a country renowned for its natural beauty, it is not surprising that there have been a number of intentional back-to-the-land initiatives, in an attempt to address the apparent dislocation between people and the landscape (Sargaiisson & Tower-Sargent, 2004). The Ohu Movement, an initiative instigated by the New Zealand Government in the 1970’s, is considered to be an important communal movement in New Zealand’s colonial history (Sargaiisson & Tower-Sargent, 2004).

### New Zealand Back-to-the-land Movement – Ohu

The ‘*Ohu Movement*’ was a Governmental initiative to provide opportunities for people to lease rural land, located primarily in the North Island, off the New Zealand Government. The movement was intended by then Prime Minister Norman Kirk to induce a renewed appreciation for land-use in New Zealand. The scheme was aimed at New Zealand youth, as it was believed they would be able to contribute to the future development of New Zealand through working on the land. Scott (n.d), a political

historian and author, identified the rationale for creating the ‘assisted rural settlement’ was to reconnect people and the land in order to foster alternative models of social activity into New Zealand society.

People responded positively to the initiative with groups expressing interest in land ballots, run as a means to allocate land holdings. The Ohu Advisory Board described these interests as:

*“concerned about education and the need to look for and explore alternatives in this sphere . . . interested in the exploration of alternative forms of architecture, uses of materials, forms of construction and methods of design”* (Sargaiisson & Tower-Sargent, 2004, p.44).

The land allocated by the Government was often in isolated areas of New Zealand with limited power and poor road access. The Ahu Ahu community provides an example of this isolation. Located forty-minutes walk from any road, it involved crossing a river to reach the balloted land (Scott, n.d). Conditions, experienced by Ohu generated communities, are characteristic of the lifestyle encountered by New Zealand’s early colonial settlers. Although newly developed communities viewed the physical conditions as a challenge, the isolation from amenities was ultimately the downfall of the rural initiative in the 1970’s.

A further challenge related to the aspirations of those engaged in the initiative, beyond living simply and self-sufficiently off the land. The motivation to reach these aspirational goals resulted in little consideration given to outside sources for support. Groups were essentially closed communities that had no networks to provide any resourcing if needed.

Although aspirations towards self-sufficiency coincided with those of the government, it appeared there was limited contingency for sustaining these rural communities.

Although the Ohu movement was ultimately unsuccessful in developing intentional rural communities, it does provide insight into aspects requiring consideration for communitarian projects. The development of adequate support networks has shown to be one important consideration. Furthermore, Halfacree (2007), a specialist in rural geography and migration, describes the continued significance of urban connections as being a key consideration for a number of people moving to rural communities in the twenty-first century.

Through exploring the aims and subsequent demise of the Ohu movement, a key consideration for my thesis has been made clear. Attempting to re-establish communal shared life, through only the significance of place, does not provide a solid foundation for its future inhabitants. The tension created around 'a sense of place' results in the need to identify a middle ground that links an inter-connected view of community whilst still maintaining a connection to place and its surrounding landscape. Critical Regionalism provides a conceptual framework that addresses a networked community with a strong sense of place.

## CRITICAL REGIONALIST THEORY

Critical Regionalism endeavours to rethink architecture at a large scale through consideration for the balance of the ecosystem, or the creation of complex human ties (Lefaivre & Tzonis, 2003). The later aims to create a synthesis between globalisation on one hand and local identification on the other; creating, in the context of this research, an interconnected community of practice and place. This synthesis is achieved by considering architectural implementation at a regional level, said to "*sustain diversity while benefiting from universality*" (Lefaivre & Tzonis, 2003, p.20).

Canizaro (2007), editor of Architectural Regionalism, supports this contention through discussing the need to foster connectedness in response to the daily lives of local populations. He advocates connections be created, not in spite of global concerns but in order to take advantage of them. Kordetzky (2006), an architect and author, attests to this interweaving of connections through reference to the 'Out of Whack Circle' (p.22) and its penetration of the rigid circle, in creating new relations and points of movement within a place. Rose (2007), a geographer and author, provides a subtler alternative when discussing the need for a 'place-specific sense of rhythmic change' over static and enclosed places, those enclosed places which may be considered to align with communities in the Ohu scheme.

The consideration of 'global processes' is then seen as a positive resource in providing benefits for networking of resources within and around a community. Additionally,

Lefaivre and Tzonis (2003) attempt to create connectedness by considering how architectural projects retain the social, cultural and physical constraints of their 'unique' regions. Moore<sup>2</sup> (2005), an architect, theorist and author, is supportive of the critical regionalism developed by Tzonis and Lefaivre (2003). Additionally Moore provides a useful means for analysis and synthesis of the previously contrasting views on 'communities of practice' and 'communities of place' (Hamdi, 2010).

Moore's work builds on previous critical regionalist theory utilised, by the architect and historian, Frampton (1983) in constructing a manifesto for architectural design (refer to Appendix 1 & 2). Moore noted discrepancies in Frampton's argument, which resulted in a confusing definition of critical regionalism. Moore attempted to diffuse the tension created by Frampton's underlying, and contradicting, modernist and postmodernist assumptions (Moore, 2005). In reframing Frampton's work Moore developed his 'Non-modern' position (Figure 23), centrally aligned between modernist and postmodernist perspectives. Integral to Moore's (2005) manifesto is the acknowledgment of technology (of which he refers to human practices) (Figure 24), amalgamating with place in providing an understanding of 'region'. Moore's position, emphasising the amalgamation of human practices and place, provides a conceptual framework for considering an architectural intervention that expresses rural communality identifiable to both urban and rural peoples within a contemporary rural area.

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2. Steven Moore (b. 1945) practiced as an architect in the 1970's. He is currently an associate professor of architecture and planning, director of the Graduate Program in Sustainable Design, and co-director of the Centre for Sustainable Development at the University of Texas at Austin.

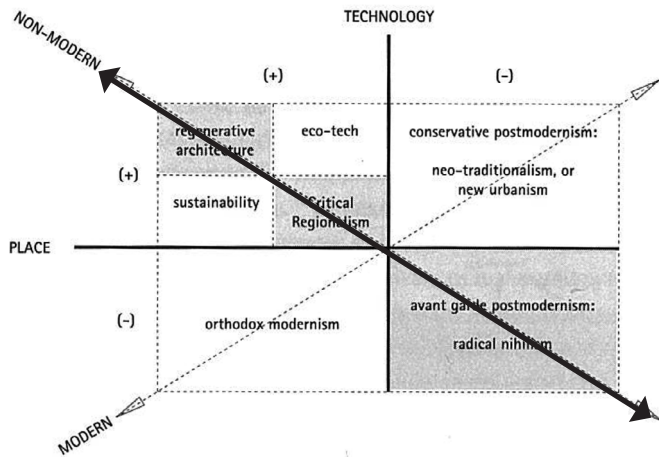
## PLACE

Within a non-modern framework Moore (2005) utilises Agnew's (1987) argument that the meaning people associate with place filters through a number of scales, each of which become relevant in constructing an understanding of region. These scales are identified as '*location*', '*sense of place*' and the resulting '*locale*' (Agnew, 1987).

*Location* is identified through an objective awareness of place. Place is viewed at a macro-scale, taking into account the way in which different areas or towns are linked together through political or economic ties (Moore, 2005). In this way it is possible to view place as being a 'location' by those who privilege the collective and global principles within a contemporary society. This contributes to an understanding of place linked to community, primarily attributed to urban-based settlements.

*Sense of Place* can be equated to a subjective understanding of place, viewed from a micro-scale, that focuses on the 'character' and 'quality of life' associated with a particular place (Moore, 2005). Those who associate with the qualities of place identified in the micro-scale can be considered to privilege a more intimate relationships with a specific place as unique. This view may be associated as having a greater level of significance in rural-based settlements.

*Locale*, or region, falls between the macro (location) and the micro (sense of place) (refer to Figure X). Moore (2005) describes this middle, or meso-scale, as "*the scale of place in which the setting of social relations are constituted.*" (p.131). Lefaivre and Tzonis (2003) emphasise the meso-scale's



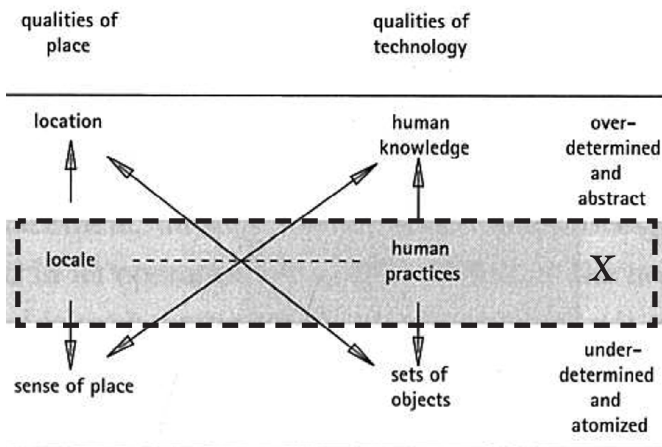
[ Figure 23 Non-Modern position ]

significance, in explaining the relationship between the built form and social relations, referring to building structures as places that support human interaction.

Through considering place in terms of a locale it becomes possible to align within the middle of the argument, recognising both globalisation and local identity as being important constituents in a contemporary community.

## HUMAN PRACTICES

The conventional image, when considering technology, is towards physical hardware: objects such as televisions or computers, for example. Moore (2005) however, filters technology through a similar three-scale format as place. The meso-scale related to technology, is identified as 'Human Practices' (refer to Figure X). This term offers a broad definition of the processes and skill sets needed to carry out daily life (Moore, 2005). Allen (2005), a political sociologist and author, advances Moore's characteristics of 'Human Practices' through the notion of culture in which she defines it broadly as "*the totality of our behaviours, beliefs, customs, habits and knowledge.*" (p. 422). This definition is one considered to be closely aligned with the notion of contemporary regional identity. I propose a new term be used in the discussion of practices specific to a contemporary regional context. 'Cultural practices' acknowledges the contributions of Moore (2005) and Allen (2005) in recognising changes that may occur to specific human practices depending on particular individuals and the communities in which they reside.



[ Figure 24 The three scales ]



## BUILDING NETWORKS THROUGH CULTURAL PRACTICES

Giving priority to the social and cultural practices of a community over the built environment is a key consideration and allows for a greater understanding of the complex human ties and practices that are unique to a specific community. This view is supported by Canizaro (2007) when he discusses the need for architecture to deal primarily with local experiences as a foundation of designs. The materiality and physical qualities of built-forms associated with certain areas play a pivotal role in expressing the cultural conditions and practices that form places.

Auge (2008), The geographer and critical thinker, refers to cultural practices of a specific place as 'Cultural traits', which he separated into two categories: those identified as material invention (a specific way of cultivating crops or a technique for cooking local produce) and secondly, immaterial inventions (rituals or traditions). Cultural traits and associated practices can be found throughout early New Zealand colonial settlements as people adapted to the conditions and resources available to them.

Through reducing the boundaries formed through insular views, within some of these smaller rural areas, the benefits of different cultural practices can be shared by both new and existing rural groups. In the first instance, it provides a strong point of reference for those outside of the immediate community who wish to gain an understanding of the local knowledge and cultural practices of an area. In the context of this research, these cultural practices may provide the

knowledge and insight into living off the land in a more self-sufficient manner. For existing rural occupants, the benefits of intersecting cultural practices with urban dwellers may provide fresh perspectives and innovative ways in marketing local businesses. Urban-based cultural practices could assist local businesses in accessing competitive markets, currently inundated by large corporations. Furthermore external views may provide a greater understanding of local rural traditions and highlight the special habits and customs of an area, which may otherwise seem mundane and insignificant. Allen (2005) notes the difficulty of viewing the integral nature of daily life, whether rural or urban, stating

*"It is difficult to see the things that define us. It can take an outsider, a valuable stranger, to see the cultural behaviours that locals do not"* (p.426).

The significance of architecture in expressing the cultural practices of an area is important. Critical Regionalist Theory recognises this, in providing a platform for architecture to address dividing issues within different interpretations of community.

## CONCLUSION

In considering a contemporary expression of rural communality there are a number of points that may be proposed. Through use of Moore's (2005) interpretation of the locale, research can concentrate on the revitalisation of more than a single hall, into considering site and its function as a piece of regional architecture. Therefore, it is suggested that there is a need to address the reworking of more than one hall within Taranaki's Stratford district, in providing an identifiable whole for the entire region.

Additionally, the need to create an environment that works functionally and symbolically in bringing together multiple positions on community is important for both local rural populations and new urban migrants. This may allow different perspectives on what constitutes a community to filter down through the users of the spaces. Furthermore, the unstable condition of the environment is, for me, extremely important to address. A new form of community is intended to focus on building strong invested ties to place and the subsequent cultural practices that are actioned within it. 'Community of practice' and 'Community of place' have the potential to become intertwined, leading to a more diverse understanding of community that promotes up-skilling towards reconnection with the landscape and the networking of local business ideas. My design builds on this understanding.





SPACE PLAN

STRUCTURE

SKIN

1:100 1:50

TAHORA HALL TUTUTAWA HALL

DOUGLAS R

SHAW'S "MOUNTAIN VIEW"



# CHAPTER 4

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## ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS OF RURAL HALLS

[ Figure 25 Plans, Photos and Sketches of Rural Hall analysis ]

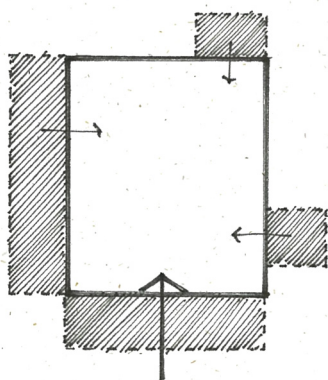


TUTUTAWA HALL

TAHORA HALL

KOHURATAHI HALL

[ Phase I ]





## INTRODUCTION

The discussion to this point has centred on an exploration of views concerning community and the significance of place. I have embraced Critical Regionalist Theory and addressed the issue of viewing 'place' from both local and global perspectives. This has culminated in the construction of a meso-scale, the locale. I consider this scale relevant for a new architecture in rural communities and one that incorporates existing rural halls.

I contend that rural halls, as currently identified, no longer fulfil the requirements of a contemporary community facility. The aim of this Chapter is to develop an understanding of the relevance assigned to reusing rural halls, in exploring aspects that can be reinterpreted for a design case study for a new contemporary rural community facility.

Adaptive reuse is used to frame discussion and becomes an underlying consideration throughout this section. A focus is directed towards the cognitive experiences for people of older buildings, through memories of past cultural practices and related activities that took place around and within them.

*Spaceplan*, *Skin* and *Structure* (Brand, 1994) are three interlinked layers of investigation that provide a framework for me to view the built-form of rural halls and is used to

inform design solutions. Brand discusses the layers at length, in relation to what he terms "shearing layers of change" (p.16). The layers offer an understanding of aspects of buildings that pertain to different groups of people. Within his framework, *Spaceplan* relates to aspects identified by individual users, *Skin* to those aspects identified by the general public or transients, and *Structure* to the local communities. These become underlying considerations within my research when analysing rural halls through the layers.

*Spaceplan* is a study of the spatial arrangement and functionality of rural halls, including the services that comprise its many boundaries. The Rural halls are discussed as an extended living space for the community. *Skin* investigates the exterior-interior envelope and the possibility of permeability between the internal-external environments. *Structure* examines the iconic farm building form and explores the traditional horizontal expansion of rural buildings, critiquing its effect on the built-form.

The exploration is carried out on three specific rural halls situated along Taranaki's Forgotten World Highway: Kohuratahi, Tahora and Tututawa rural halls. These halls have been identified by the New Plymouth District Council (2010) as underused, derelict and have been scheduled for demolition in the near distant future. Additionally, a number of other halls within the Stratford District have been sited in support of this exploratory study. Analysis of the existing rural halls, utilising the three layers of *Spaceplan*, *Skin* and *Structure* has assisted in identifying general characteristics in each category. The characteristics have then been considered in relation to design application.

[ Figure 26 Original Hall plans - Tututawa, Tahora, Kohuratahi ]

## REWORKING OLD BUILDINGS – ADAPTIVE REUSE THEORY

The reworking or adaptation of old buildings is a process that can be undertaken by architects and local enthusiasts, who perceive a building to hold significance and value. Significance is manifested within the built-form, providing a sense of identity for people who associate with, and value it. The building's original function may have a strong sensory impact on individual and community perception, whereby qualities are engrained within peoples' memories when contemplating certain buildings. The architectural writer Littlefield and architect Lewis identify that these can be pragmatic, poetic or pertain to an important social or cultural experience, whether experienced first-hand or through narratives (Littlefield & Lewis, 2007). The interior architects and authors, Brooker and Stone (2004) agree, and in their discussion of old buildings have considered how the building's former function remains in various forms within the built-fabric. This begins to form a dynamic relationship between those qualities of the original function and expectations of future use. The value of the old and the promise of the new provide a relationship that is simply not possible to create in a new building.

In relation to rural halls, the function has been to provide a space in which social and physical interaction could take place, building a sense of rural communal life. This form of space is considered important in preserving the physical representation of communal life for future generations

to experience. A potential shift from urbanisation to a ruralisation of New Zealand's demographic has been discussed. This has led to questioning the interpretation migrants from urban communities may have if they sought to understand the cultural practices of a rural environment. The established built infrastructure offer a reference to the cultural practices and values that exist through time. With old buildings people can invoke recollection of past experiences; providing a point of reference for migrants entering an established community, particularly when they have moved from areas with different social and cultural conditions from those they are now exposed to. Toomath (1982) identifies the merit in retaining existing buildings, to foster a sense of heritage, stating:

*“there are strong social and economic values attached to these humble buildings continued presence in our towns and cities”* (p, 38).

Furthermore Toomath alludes to the legacy of those who built for purpose:

*“Our old buildings display through their design not only the normal values held by our antecedents who built them, but also their aspirations and standards for the future”* (p.38)

Through use of materials, ornamentation, structural makeup and interior finishing the built-form provides a point of reference for those people seeking to align the history of a region, its community and the very existence of the buildings that are integral to the community. Littlefield and Lewis (2007) describe this relationship, which has been etched into the fabric of the built form:



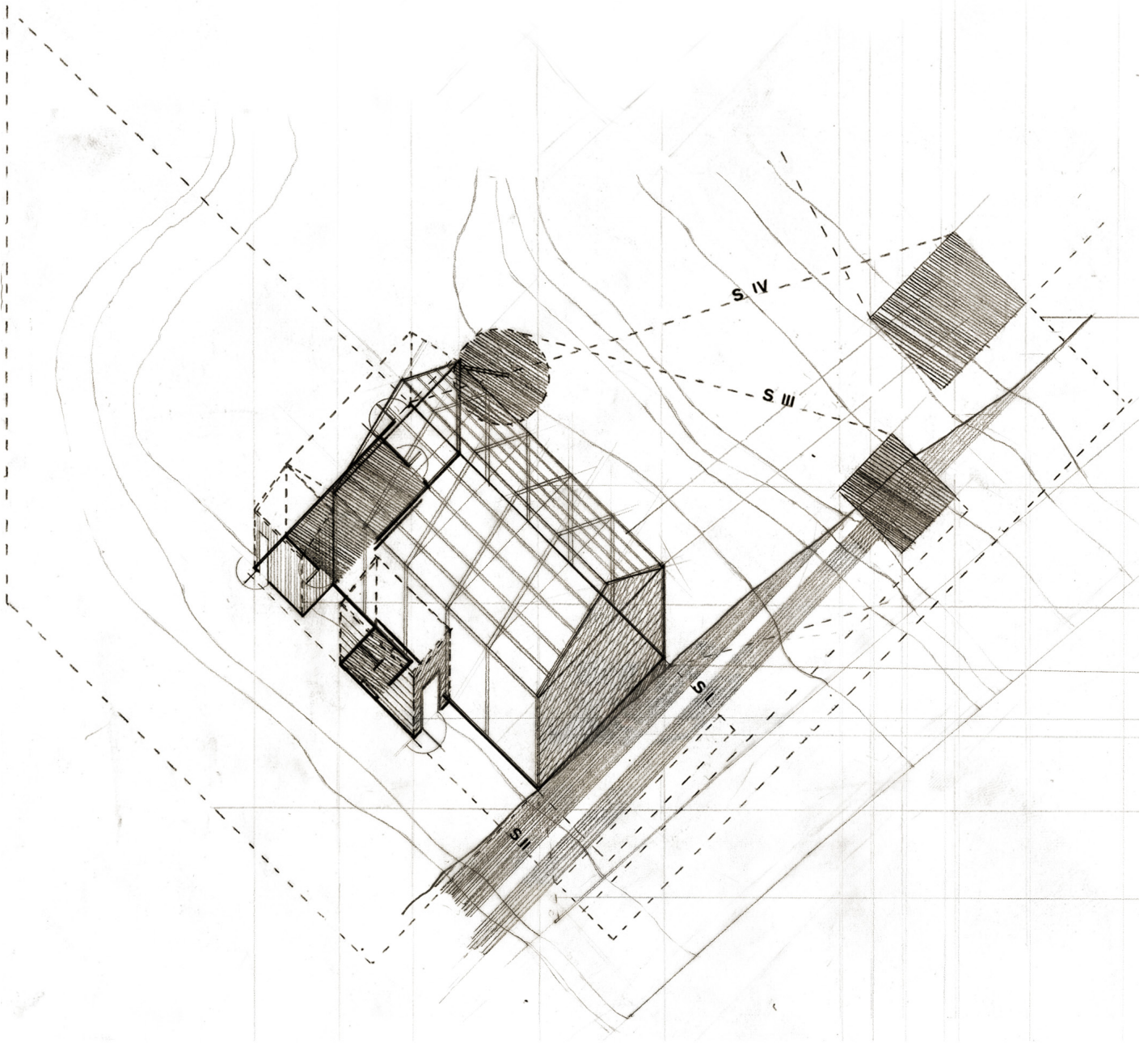


*'All inhabited spaces become loaded with biological debris – the dust of flaking skin, the hair, the exhaled air, the humidity, heat and bodily fluids that get left behind by generations of occupants can only combine to form a peculiarly human trace' (p.10-11).*

Through continual contact with 'aging' spaces in and around buildings, an individual is in a position to grasp cultural practices that have come before, the 'trace' that is left by human occupation and imagine how a building may be viewed by future generations. Aging spaces provide the opportunity for individuals to situate themselves within history. Rural halls epitomise the residual expression of communal lifestyles of New Zealand's early settlers. The adaptation of rural halls is therefore considered important in underpinning rural life in the twenty first century, providing an insight into New Zealand traditions and therefore reinforcing the communal way of life that occurred within rural communities. The value of adapting these buildings rests in the knowledge that memorable events have taken place there. Beatley (2004) advocates a sense of community rootedness, allowing people to consider the possibility for contributing to memorable events occurring in the future.



[ Figure 27 Remnants of Memorial Plaque/ Men's Bathroom sign/ bike]



[ Figure 28 Tahora Hall Spaceplan exploration ]

## ‘SPACEPLAN’

The rural hall plan is characteristic of many early rural buildings, with practical use being a primary factor for consideration before any aesthetic qualities (Thornton, 1986). The most important space was the open central area, also known as the hall. This space usually had a stage at one end for use in customary occasions where individuals or groups were visible to an audience (Prickett, 1995). The hall space was the building core. When extra money was donated or raised, additional spaces were added; splaying out from this core space. Additions contained kitchens, bathrooms, supper and storerooms and any other facilities deemed important for the community use.

Small rural communities experienced constant population fluctuations in their residential base, reflected in the number of additional ‘lean-tos’ that are seen in some rural halls. These fluctuations became evident when viewing the halls and allowed for the distinction of different boundaries/membranes of the hall forms. The First membrane (SI) denotes the primary envelope of the hall. The Second membrane (SII) marks the first additions that were added to the hall. The third membrane (SIII) signifies the smaller unconnected buildings and water tank that serviced the hall. The fourth membrane (S IV) is the perforated membrane, and represents the connection that formed between the hall and its adjacent buildings. Neighbouring houses or other public buildings were used to distribute power or supply water where a tank wasn’t provided on site.

The overlap of these borders reveals how intrinsically linked rural halls were with the surrounding community and aided in blurring the boundary between the private and public realm of rural communities. Turner (2005), a researcher in communication technologies and author, indicates this attitude in rural areas, suggesting:

*“when we look back only a few decades, residents of rural regions used to perform typical indoor tasks of home outside in the public place.”* (p. 80)

Functions associated with the home were not limited to private areas and therefore there was more engagement within the public realm between neighbours and those passing by. The hall appeared to facilitate social cohesion, through the blurring of the private and public areas and through the spatial relationship within the hall. The kitchen and adjoining supper room was the second largest, after the open hall space. These spaces were used for food preparation, smaller social groups and local meetings. The kitchen was easily accessed from the core hall space, by way of a large door. A ‘pass-through’ window also provided easy movement of food between these two spaces. This connection between spaces allowed fluidity of purpose and function between the open hall and kitchen for the many rural residents who frequented the communal hall. This use of space is similar to, planning student Freeman’s (2003) explanation of a family farmhouse in which:

*“The living room of my Aunt and Uncles house acted as a multi-purpose space. It was the place for parties and events and at times could be very social and public. [But when] there were smaller gatherings of people and family members, [we] sat in the kitchen.”* (p. 232)



In considering Freeman's (2003) examination, it may be possible to align the public rural hall with the functionality and purpose of a number of spaces within private residence. By considering the rural hall in this context, an understanding of it as the 'community's living room' is conceptualised. It can be seen as the in-between space of the community, one which transverses the boundary between the public/'newcomer' and private/'local' of the community. Furthermore, it may be possible to consider the rural hall as holding a similar purpose to a domestic hallway. The author Bryson (2010) alludes to this relationship between the domestic hallway and early examples of halls stating:

*"As life withdrew deeper and deeper into houses, the hall lost its original purpose and became a mere entrance lobby . . . a room to be received in and pass through on the way to more important spaces."* (p.65)

In contemplating Bryson's (2010) contention, characteristics become apparent between the domestic hallway and rural halls. The hall was used to receive new residents to settlements, were the established settlers would have a chance to develop a rapport with the newcomers before exposing them to the innermost happenings in their community.



[ Figure 29 hall 'pass - through' ]



## SKIN

The skin of the three New Zealand rural halls at Kohuratahi, Tututawa and Tahora comprised of weatherboard construction. This appeared a logical choice as wood was easily obtained (Thornton, 1986). The longitudinal sides of the hall generally comprised of large windows providing natural lighting in the 'core hall space'. However windows were commonly located high on the facade, cutting off direct views into the space. The relationship between the interior spaces and the exterior spaces was considerably disconnected as a result. There are logical explanations for this, and when these halls were built this disconnection may have even been intentional. For example, rural halls were commonly used for dances and meetings; the first occurring after dark when this disconnection became less significant, and the second requiring a certain level of privacy. When the halls were not being used for communal events they were left unattended. By having that level of detachment between the interior and exterior a certain level of security could be maintained.

When considering an adaptation of these buildings for a contemporary rural communal facility the lack of permeability appears problematic as it gives the illusion of an insular space. Observation between these two distinct zones, one being the public realm and the other being the heart of rural communal life, has been obstructed. The perceived ability to observe processes that occur within, from the outside, is considered just as important in the understanding and experiencing of the space (Moore,



2005). Individuals generally become inquisitive when they catch glimpses of human occupation within a building. Kordetzsky (2006) attests to this dynamic relationship, by emphasising the link between architecture and observers:

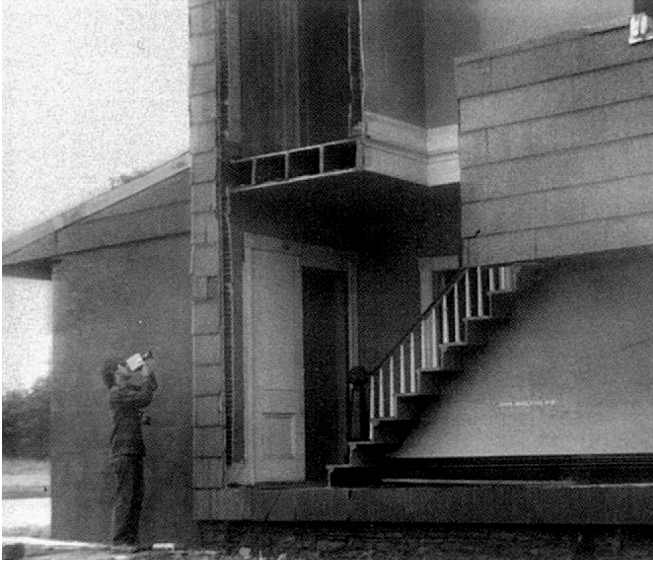
*“Architecture is an event, not materially . . . but rather in reference to the effect produced by the process of observation, by passage through and by stopping in front of and in the building.”* (p. 24)

By merging the interior and exterior visually, a new level of engagement presents itself for outside observers. Through creating a less dramatic distinction, new points of view can be established and the visual representation of the perceived private and public realm becomes merged. Gordon Matta-Clark uses this technique in a number of his works. His Bingo X Ninths project is an example of this.



[ Figure 30 Bingo X Ninths Photography sequence ]

3 Gordon Matta-Clark (1943 – 1978) was an American artist who received a formal architectural training. His work was heavily process based and employed dissection and extraction, revealing new visual points of reference for otherwise dilapidated buildings. The process Matta-Clark utilises when manipulating the built environment is applicable to the research being undertaken. Within this chapter, rural halls are analysed in an attempt to expose certain qualities present, within a deteriorating built form, that are important to retain. Matta-Clark’s work provides a point of departure when altering the residual built environment.



[ Figure 31 Gordon Matta-Clark shooting Bingo X Ninths ]



[ Figure 32 Bingo X Ninths Exhibition segments ]

## Bingo X Ninths House – Gordon Matta-Clark

Matta-Clark's work is characterised as extreme intervention and extraction (Yau, 1997). These are used to manipulate architecture as a means of exploring and expressing his personal views regarding social and community degradation in America.

The art critic and author Moure (2006), alludes to Matta-Clark's focus on buildings within 'rundown' neighbourhoods. The neglected structures are part of the residual built environment and are caused by social deterioration of the communities around them. The buildings offer a symbolic representation of the social, cultural and historic identity found throughout the city (Moure, 2006).

The project examined in this research is the Bingo X Ninths. It was carried out on a 'typical' small-town American house in 1974 (Moure, 2006). The house was located in the New York area of Niagara Falls and was due for demolition. The project called for the removal and visual documentation of a section of an exterior wall. The weather-boarded surface was divided into three vertical and three horizontal surfaces, totalling nine square pieces. The 'fragments' of the house were removed one piece at a time, rotating around the central ninth piece that was left behind. The eight removed fragments of the exterior skin were then presented in a gallery exhibition, presenting visual representation of Matta-Clark's, arguably, sympathetic relationship with buildings and their degradation. Visual documentation from this project was taken at regular intervals over time, revealing inflicted transformation that took place to the facade of the house.



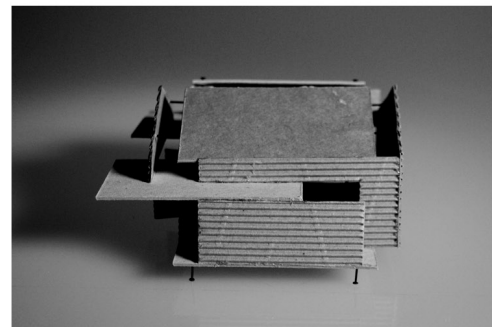
Matta-Clark attempts to form an enhanced relationship between the interior and exterior spaces of the building, by directly addressing the façade of the town house through the displacement of the wall into smaller fragments. The importance of this relationship is revealed through:

*“Confronting the house by activating the space around it so that internal changes also became strong external images.”* (Moure, 2006, p. 142)

The ability for a member of the public to pass by the altered building and engage with both interior space simultaneously with the exterior, provides the viewer with a certain level of curiosity. The simple unmasking of the building allows for a change in depth perception when viewed through the open façade.

A number of observations have been made which become relevant when considering the permeability of the rural hall. Firstly, the creation of the unexpected, with the ability to take an otherwise conventional structure and manipulate its past and present representations. People are generally interested in the unexpected. In relation to the Bingo X Ninths project, interest is generated through a conventional surface having been manipulated to allow a new vantage point for the witnessing of activity between previously visually unconnected spaces.

Additionally, the way in which Matta-Clark uses fragments of the now broken-down skin of the façade after removal from the house is interesting. The elements are assigned an alternative function, which allows the essence of the original building to remain intact.



[ Figure 33 Hall Dissection models 1 ]

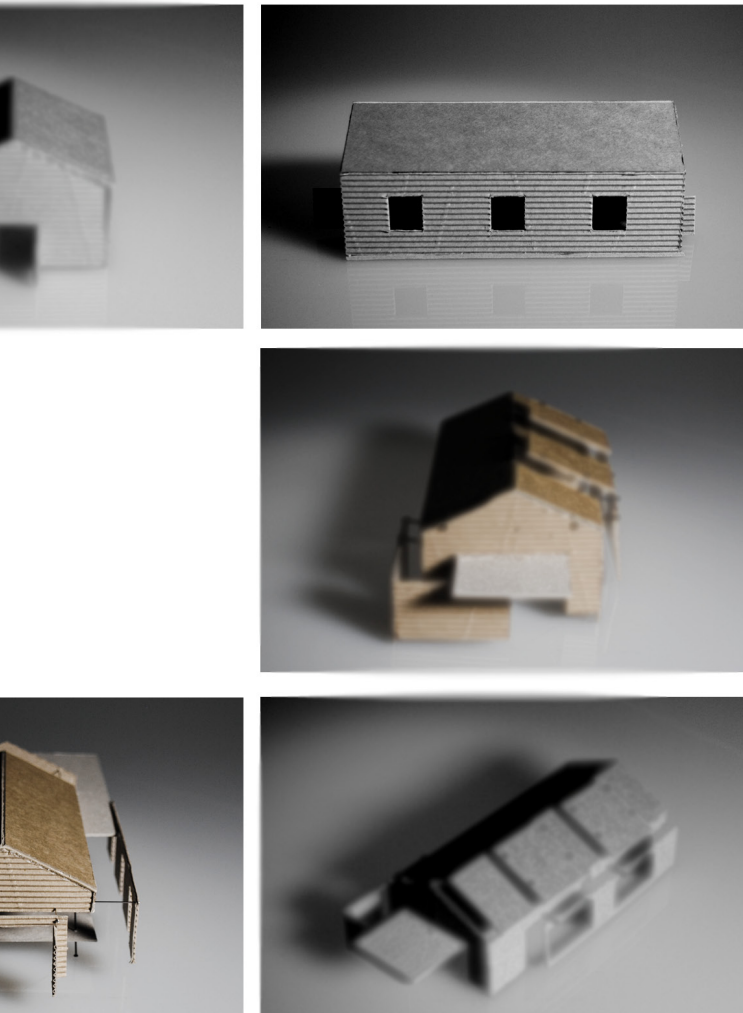
## Hall dissection Study

Following from the analysis of Matta-Clark's work in the Ninth X project (1974). I conducted a model making experiment that utilised his process of dissection and manipulation, focusing on the way this may be applied to the surfaces of rural halls. The aim of the experiment was to address how the halls were to be pulled apart, cut away and manipulated in a manner that preserves the essence of their original form and structural integrity.

The models are presented as a series, relating to each hall, showing a different level of dissection. It was a key consideration at the start of this phase of the design investigation to strip the halls back to their original form, before altering them. The first model in each sequence is therefore the original structural form of the hall as it was conceived, and the following are iterations and manipulations of this form.

The cutting of facades, projection of roof planes and splitting of floor plates have been explored through the sequence of models. These elements have been lifted, skewed, rotated and pushed or pulled away from their original facades. Each piece changed within the iterations can be pieced back together, creating the original form without the introduction of foreign components or additional materials; therefore maintaining the integrity of the manipulation.

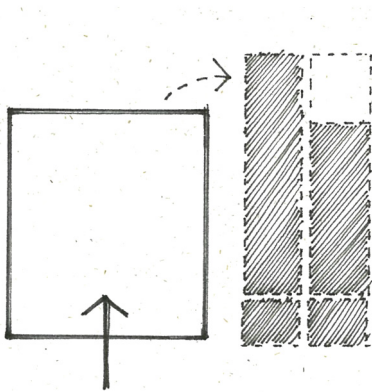
With the intention of manipulating existing structures, the facades, floor plate and then the roof warranted consideration, and were ranked in order of significance respectively. The facade elements could be separated and cut a number of times and the overall configuration still strongly



resembled the original form of the halls. The floor plate, to a lesser degree, could be raised and lowered whilst still maintaining the articulation of the hall. The roof structure proved to be possibly the most important aspect to preserve; in particular its pitched form, which served a dual purpose in creating the generic 'hall' aesthetic as well as providing the open space of occupation beneath.

Additionally, it became apparent that by dissecting the hall and opening the facades there was opportunity to implement new, smaller spaces that could provide new activities. By splitting the floor plate these spaces could be located above, on mezzanine height zones. This would allow the open space of the hall to retain the original identity for the engagements that might happen within. By creating new programme considerations on raised levels, the ability for the witnessing of the larger iconic space from above is now a possibility, providing a constant activation of the core. This assumes recognition of the history of this symbolic communal space.

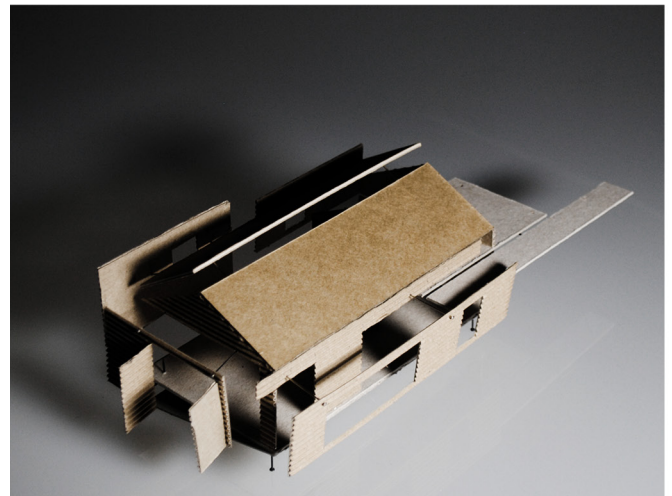
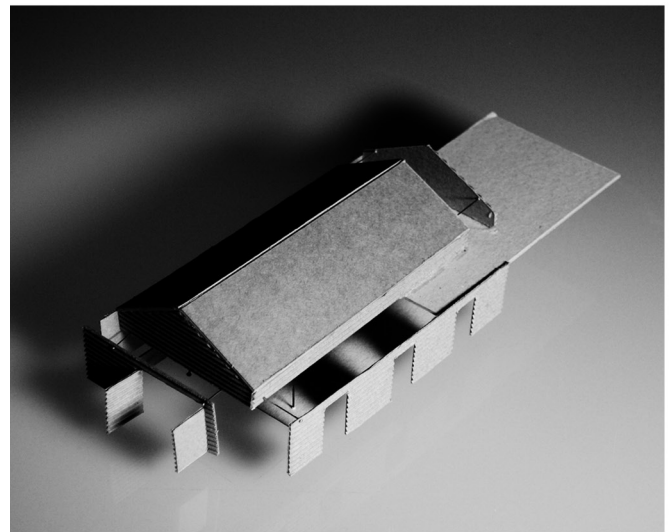
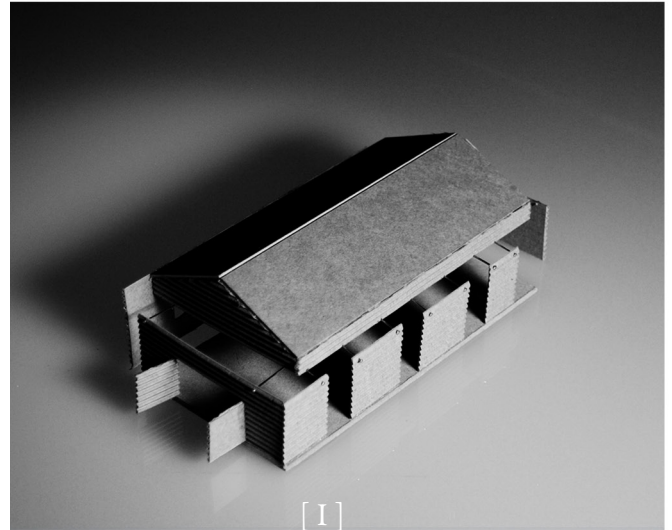
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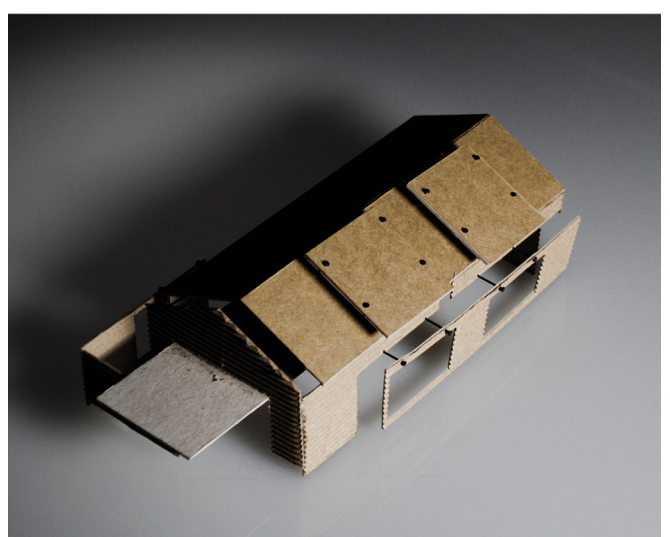
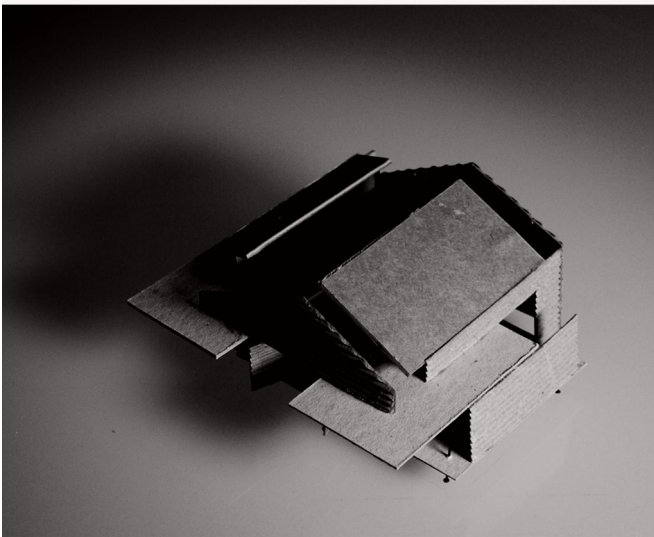
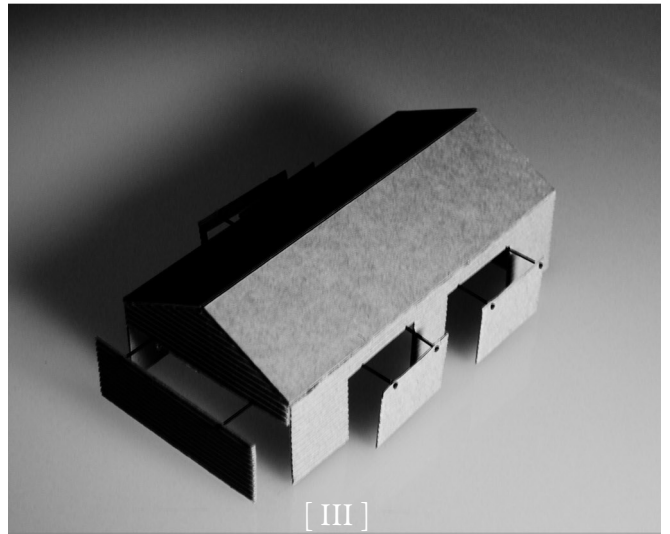
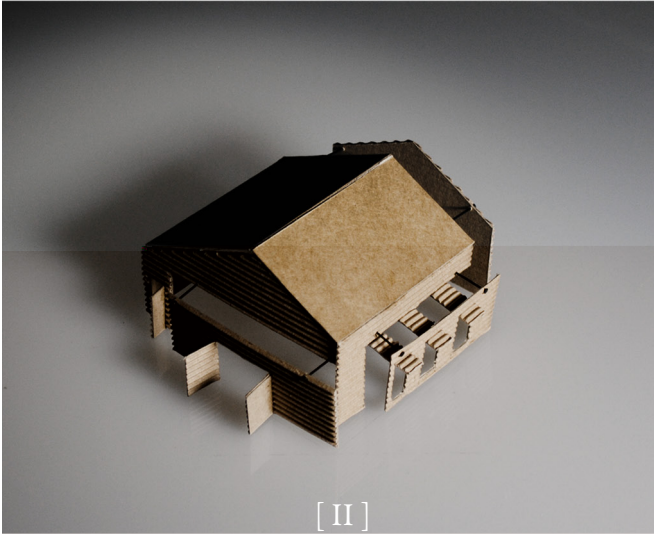
[ Figure 34 Kohuratahi Hall Dissection Sequence ]

[ Figure 35 Tututawa Hall Dissection Sequence ]

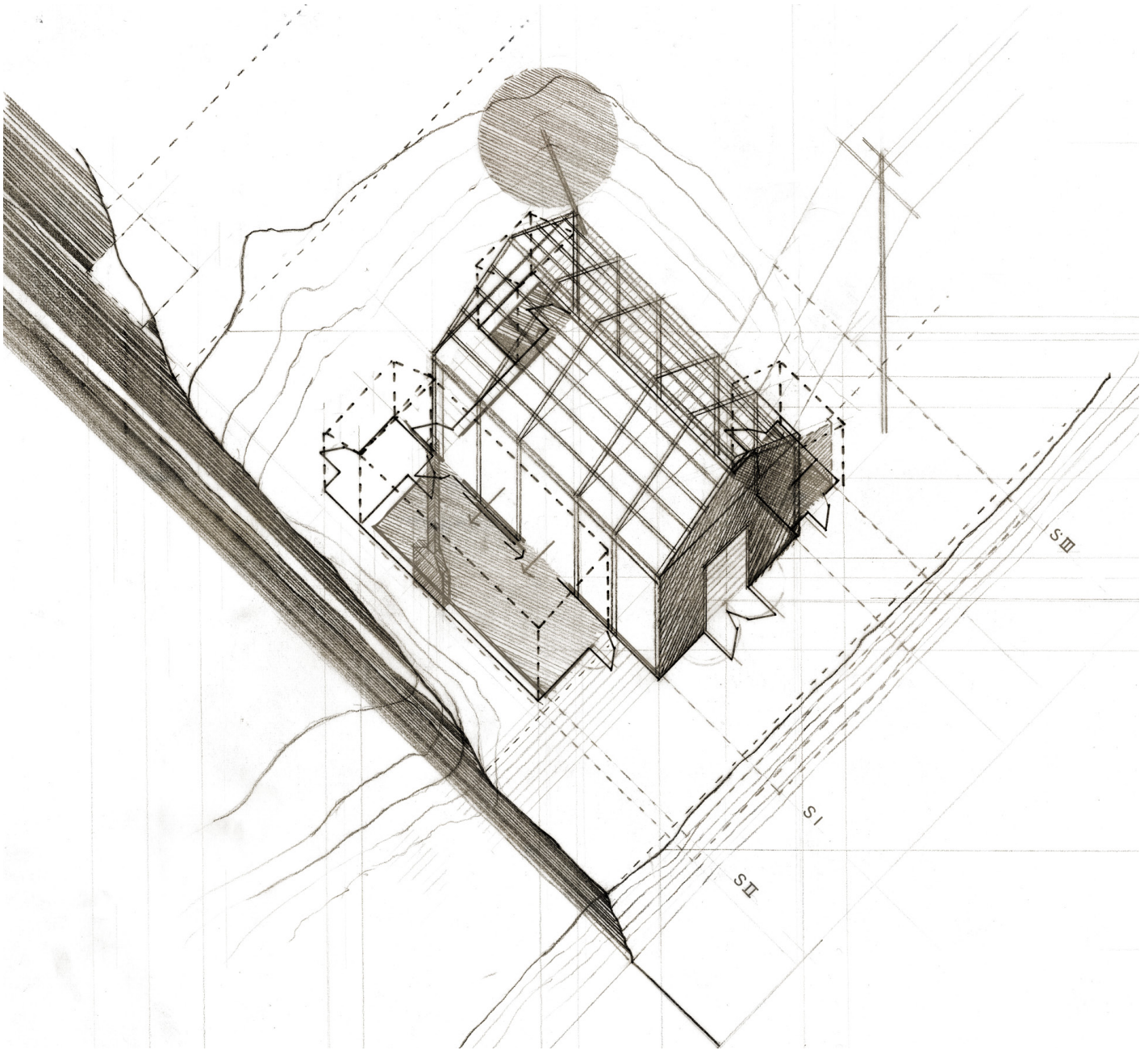
[ Figure 36 Tahora Hall Dissection Sequence ]











[ Figure 37 Kohuratahi Structure Exploration ]

## STRUCTURE

The structural form of the rural hall exudes notions of New Zealand's rural built tradition. The creation of the basic hall form was given significance through the intricate layers of strong communal interaction housed within and around its simple framed structure. The symbolism of the pitched roof, and its framed truss system, provides a significant connection to the cultural histories of the rural regions halls were created in. The pitched roof is seen as the stereotypical symbol of farming and the farming lifestyle throughout the western world (Thornton, 1986), and was utilised on the majority of halls within the Taranaki area.

When analysing the additions made to these rural hall structures, a distinct contrast was observed in the way rural halls had expanded, when compared with similar urban building types. The horizontal extension evident in the rural halls is common within rural buildings. It is easy to consider this lateral growth as an adaptation of a traditional

English building technique. These 'outbuildings', a term used in England to indicate any building not a part of the original space (Hubka, 1984) are better known as a 'lean-to' in New Zealand (Fearnley, 1986). They are visually characterised by a sloping roof that comes off the main built structure, and traditionally contained a specific agrarian function. Lean-tos are a common occurrence on rural halls, forming an integral part of their visual representation. Some of these lean-tos have been added with consideration to the original hall form; however the majority are of haphazard construction that detracted from the original aesthetic value of the rural hall (Prickett, 1995).

*"Ugly additions spoil these once fine buildings. Other early halls are hidden beneath later additions to simple original structures."* (p. 24)

An example of this form of expansion can be attributed to the development of New England farms in America. These buildings are hereafter analysed as a critique of the horizontal expansion found in rural architecture.



[ Figure 38 Tarihi Hall - showing horizontal expansion ]



[ Figure 39 Roof Structure of Hall from inside ]

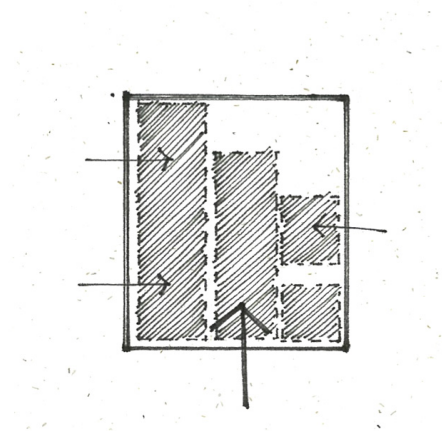




[ Figure 40 lean-to off hall ]



[ Phase III ]



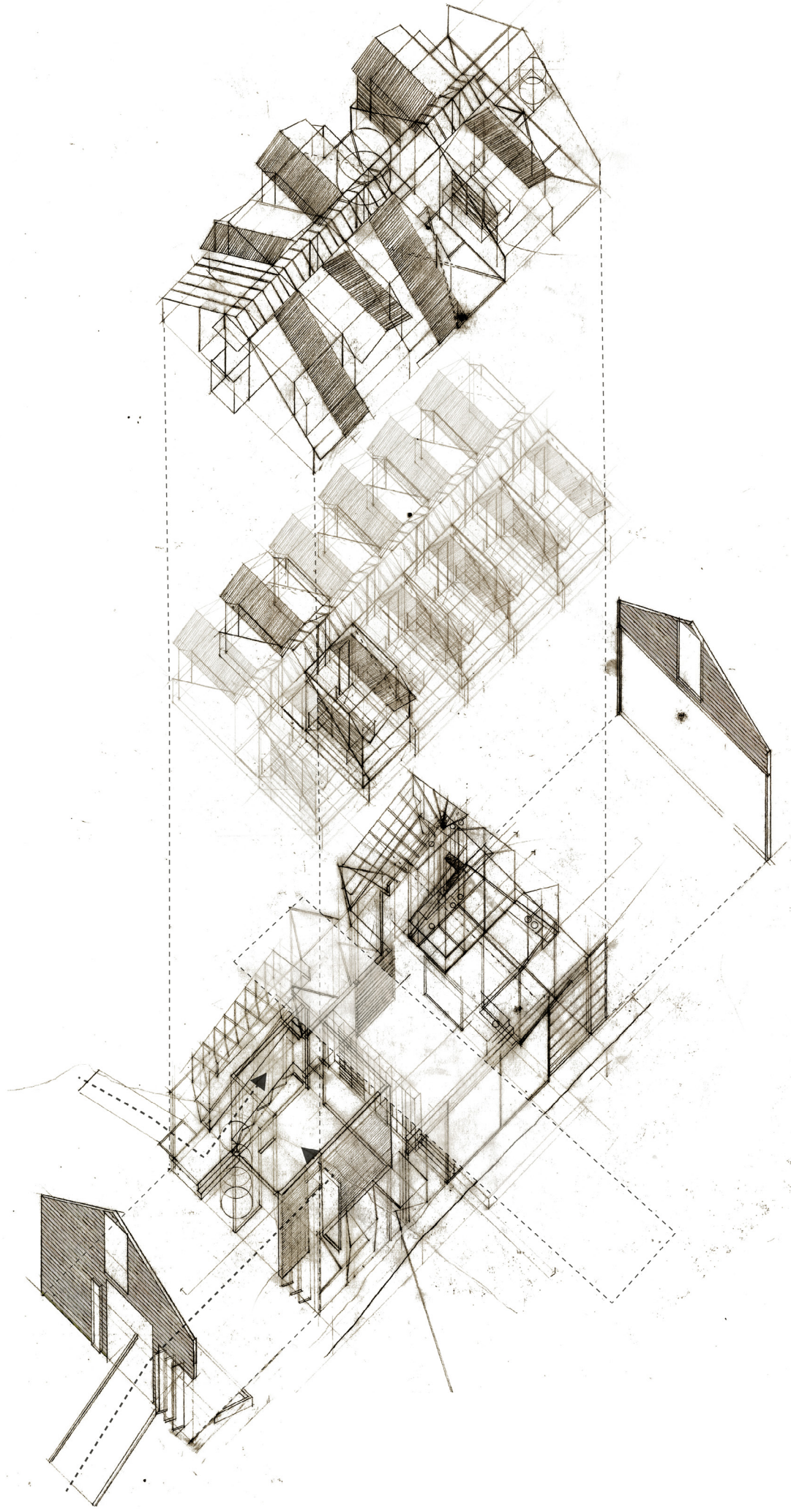
[Figure 41]

1st Design Iteration

The design Iteration explored the potential of moving additional spatial requirements, originally house in lean-to's into the main hall space ( Phase III). The design utilised a second level for human occupation. A corridor runs the length of the building providing access to eight small rooms. On the ground level an area was designated for animal occupation, with a communal sitting space located in the centre.

The experiment posed a number of issues, both programatically and visually. The spatial layout of the hall becomes cluttered and provides limited understanding of the original hall form.

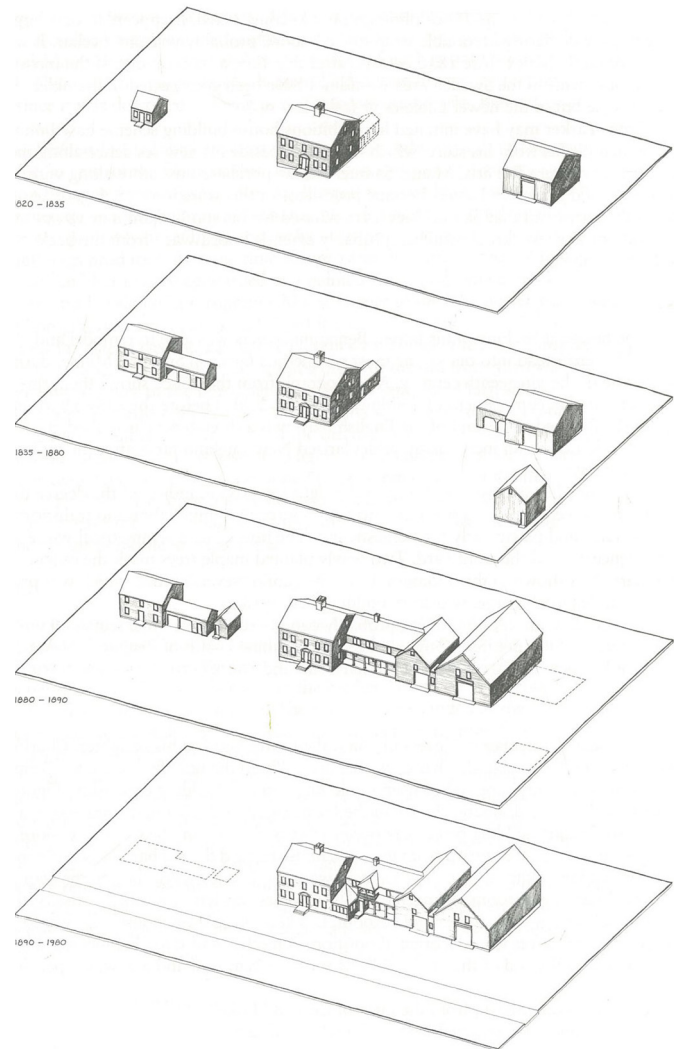
In order to provide adequate height in bedrooms, the roof surface had to be manipulated, opening and closing with occupation. This resulted in the loss of the pitched roof form, which has been identified as a key component in retaining within the reworked hall forms.



## Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn – A Critique of New England's Connected farm buildings

'Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn' was a children's rhyme used to describe the unique building arrangements of farms located within the New England countryside in America (Hubka, 1984). The common spatial arrangement of New England's connected farm buildings is one that has similar characteristics to rural halls and follows an expansion that is based solely on the practical need of families. The Big house was the main farmhouse and contained the bedrooms and main living space. It was the most lavish building on the premises. The Little house was used as the kitchen. The Back house functioned as a workstation and housed storage and bathroom facilities. The Barn was for more functional aspects of the farming lifestyle, containing storage space and animal stalls. The big house was linked to the barn through a series of connecting passageways, which allowed the farmer to tend to his housed animals in the cold winter months.

Although the practical implications of these connected buildings is relevant, the visual representation of the built-form and its arrangement has been considered whimsical and unreadable by passing motorists or people outside of the immediate community. Hubka (1984) contests that *"connected farm buildings appear to be strangely composed and haphazardly strung together."* (p. 113). The lack of apparent hierarchy or distinction between the spaces gives little understanding of aspects within the built form that hint at the historic development of the farm or surrounding area. As new spatial uses are envisioned for a reworked communal facility, the consideration of how additional spaces will work to compliment the existing hall form is important.



[ Figure 42 Connected farm building - horizontal expansion axo ]





[ Figure 43 Connected farm complex ]

## Hall Structural form Study

Following a critique of New England's Connected Farm Buildings, I conducted another set of model making experiments. These aimed to explore possible reconfiguration of service spaces off the original hall form, while providing a continued visual understanding of the iconic rural hall form and structure.

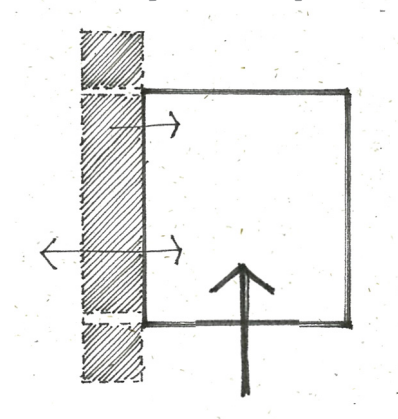
The models have been presented in a sequence, each exploring different possible configurations. Small blocks have been used to represent the new pod spaces, with different colour tones denoting the amount of light expected to permeate into the space. The structural framework constructed for these pods each address one of the three strategies, identified by Brooker and Stone (2004) as approaches available when reworking an old building. These strategies are *intervention*, *insertion* and *installation*.

*Intervention* can be considered as a stitching together of the old and new. When observing these models (series II), the new structure connects in with the truss system established in the hall. The resulting arrangement requires both structural forms, the old and the new, in order to function. The *insertion* of a new form alongside an old building is a process that creates a strong relationship between the old and new. By allowing each to remain, visually, as an independent form, the structure (series I) provides a skeletal representation of the main structural components within the hall. The *installation* of a new structural form within an existing building (series III) provides new opportunities for the interior makeup of the space. This becomes concealed from the outside as the new structure is hidden within the shell of the hall, allowing the roof form to remain visibly unaltered.

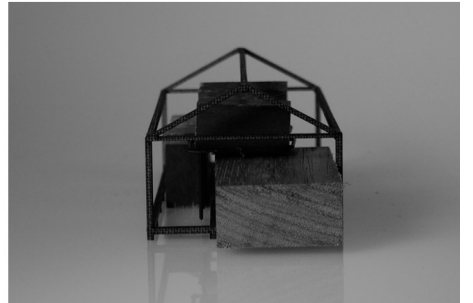
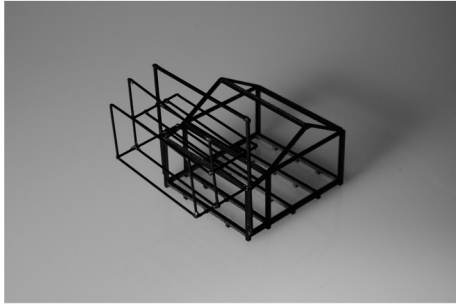
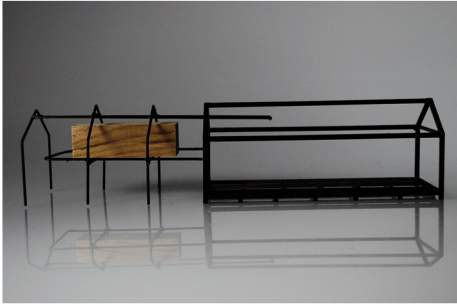
Through the introduction of steel intrusions, a vertical component has been addressed. This has provided the ability to observe both distinctly new and old structural systems.. The wooden horizontal structures of the existing halls allow for the creation of a dialogue of duality, with the vertical and horizontal forming a symbiotic relationship. The service spaces live within the horizontal hall space, or can be seen as reaching into this space.

By using a selection of blocks in experimenting with possible spatial arrangements the effect of different sized pods becomes evident. In aligning with the case study examined (Big, House, Little House, Back house, Barn) and developed hall examples, the larger additions detracted from the original form considerably (Prickett, 1995). However, when broken up, the spatial configuration of the new 'pods' seemed less dominant on the landscape. This is important as it provides a greater level of permanence to the hall forms and adds another level of differentiation between the existing and the new spatial considerations.

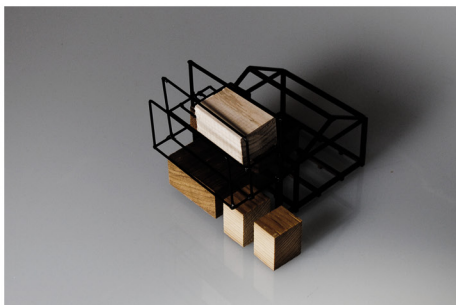
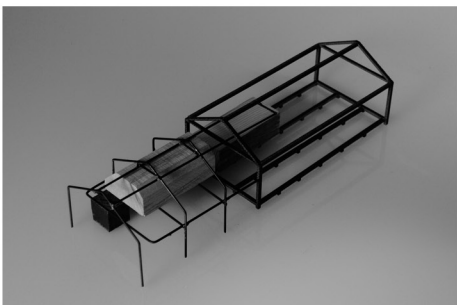
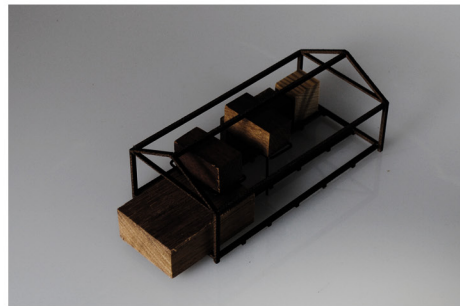
[ Phase IV ]







[ Figure 44 Hall Structural Form  
Experiment models ]

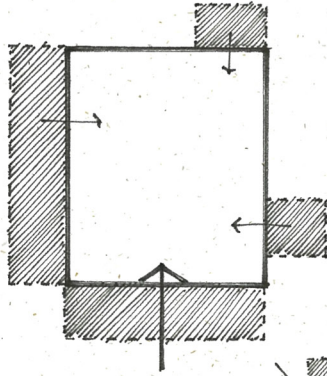


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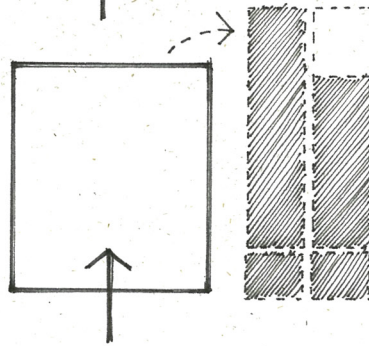
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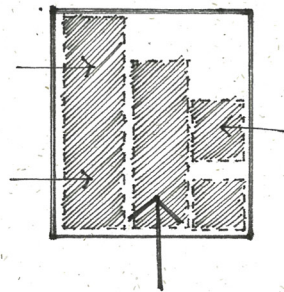
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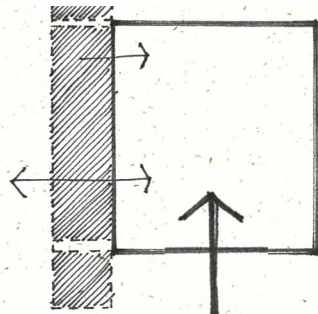
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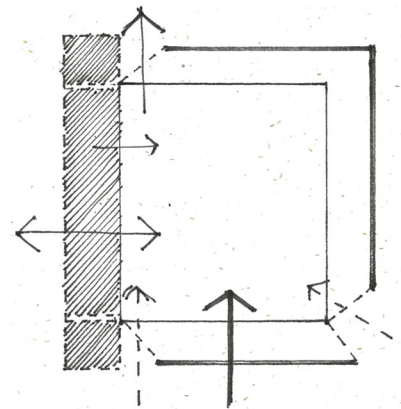


[ Phase IV ]



[ = ]

[ Phase V ]



## CONCLUSION

Drawing on the work of influential others (Brand, 1994; Brooker & Stone, 2004; Hubka, 1984; Littlefield & Lewis, 2007) has provided a theoretical basis for using a historic rural built form in a contemporary context; bringing attention to certain characteristics of the rural hall that are applicable to consider for a reinterpreted communal facility.

The rural hall provides a space for the communal life within a town. The layout of the spaces within the building, in relation to the core 'hall' space, and its perceived understanding as the extended living room of the community; are all considerations that provide a representation of the way people interact within their own private homes, through a public communal place.

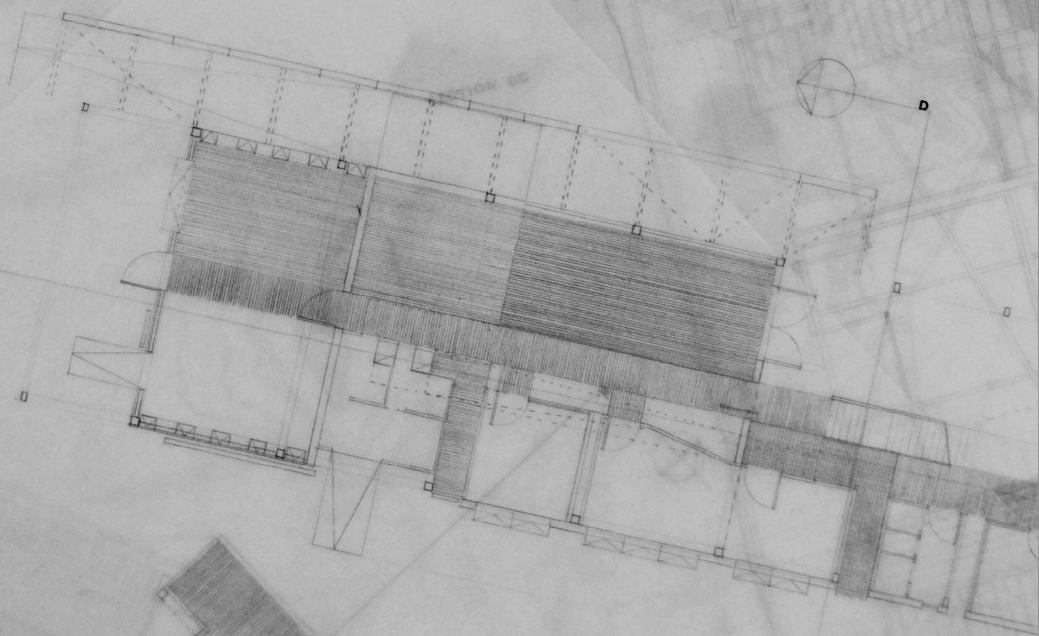
When considering the façade treatment, the analysis of the Bingo X Ninths project has provided a possible avenue for addressing the permeability within the rural

hall. Manipulation of the surfaces provides the potential for people who are moving past the hall to engage with the activity occurring within the hall. By opening up the halls, inner and outer spaces begin to flow into one another. Additionally, sunlight can penetrate further into the interior space, illuminating the interior. At night the artificial light inside can radiate out into the surrounding landscape.

Through adapting the existing rural halls, an ability to bundle the elements of early communal life, as foundation symbols for community, becomes possible. The critique of rural expansion and, in particular, the effect it has on iconic rural architecture is one that needs to be addressed. When considering a rural communal facility, there are a number of amenities needed that cannot be held solely in the rural hall. Additional buildings are inevitable and how these can be added to the original form in a sensitive manner is significant. Analysis of New England's connected farm buildings, and the subsequent model investigation has provided the ability for a vertical expansion to be conceived. The ability to echo the original aesthetic value of the built form remains, for me, integral to the manipulations.

[ Figure 45 Phases of hall analysis and manipulation ]

FORGOTTEN WORLD HIGHWAY



GF PLAN HU

# CHAPTER 5

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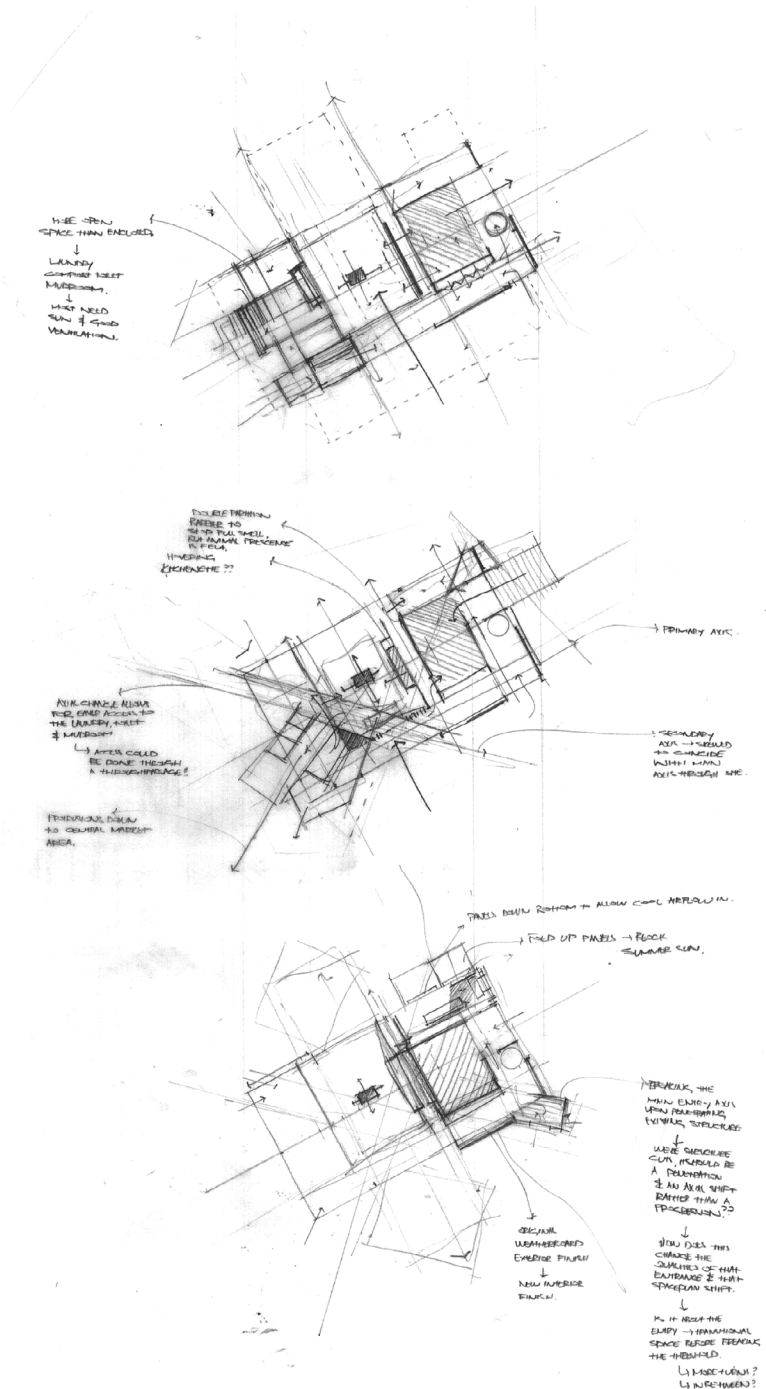
## DESIGN PROJECT: RURAL COMMUNAL FACILITY

[ Figure 46 Plans, Sections, Site Drawings ]



# INTRODUCTION

The discussion to this point explored the validity in creating a contemporary rural community facility. This Chapter focuses on the main design component of this thesis. It is an architectural study intent on exploring and testing in greater detail; contentions and notions made in previous Chapters on communal shared life within a redefined rural community context. This design study aims to reconnect local rural populations and a new migrant urban population in generating a contemporary expression of rural communality. It utilises the historical significance of rural halls and re-appropriates them through the addition of new forms and programmatic considerations; allowing for social interaction to occur physically within and around the built form. The design has employed a site located within the borough of Kohuratahi in order to explore the implementation of the scheme at a village 'locale' scale.



[ Figure 47 1<sup>st</sup> Design Iteration plan exploration ]

## DESIGN INTENTIONS

The aim of this design study is to present a contemporary expression of a reworked rural communal life through addressing a select number of New Zealand rural halls. The design has been informed by Critical Regionalist and Adaptive Reuse theories, and through analysis of relevant case studies and subsequent experiments addressing the built-form of a rural infrastructure. The key aspects taken into consideration during the design phase of this project are the different understandings of 'community' by rural and urban dwellers, and the reuse of halls as an expression of communal life. These issues are briefly summarised as:

### *Rural versus urban community understanding:*

The development of urban areas and global markets has influenced the way people view community and the natural environments. The more traditional approach to community focuses primarily on an association with a particular 'place'. This has been considered generally linked with a rural interpretation, where inhabitants have a close relationship with the land. In contrast urban dwellers have increasingly favoured a global networking approach to community at the expense of place-based identity, giving rise to a lesser engagement at an intimate level with the natural environment. The polarisation of cultural practices has causing a disjunction between urban and rural dwellers.

The 1970's Ohu Movement was an attempt at addressing this disjuncture, by providing crown land for small communities of people wishing to re-establish bonds with

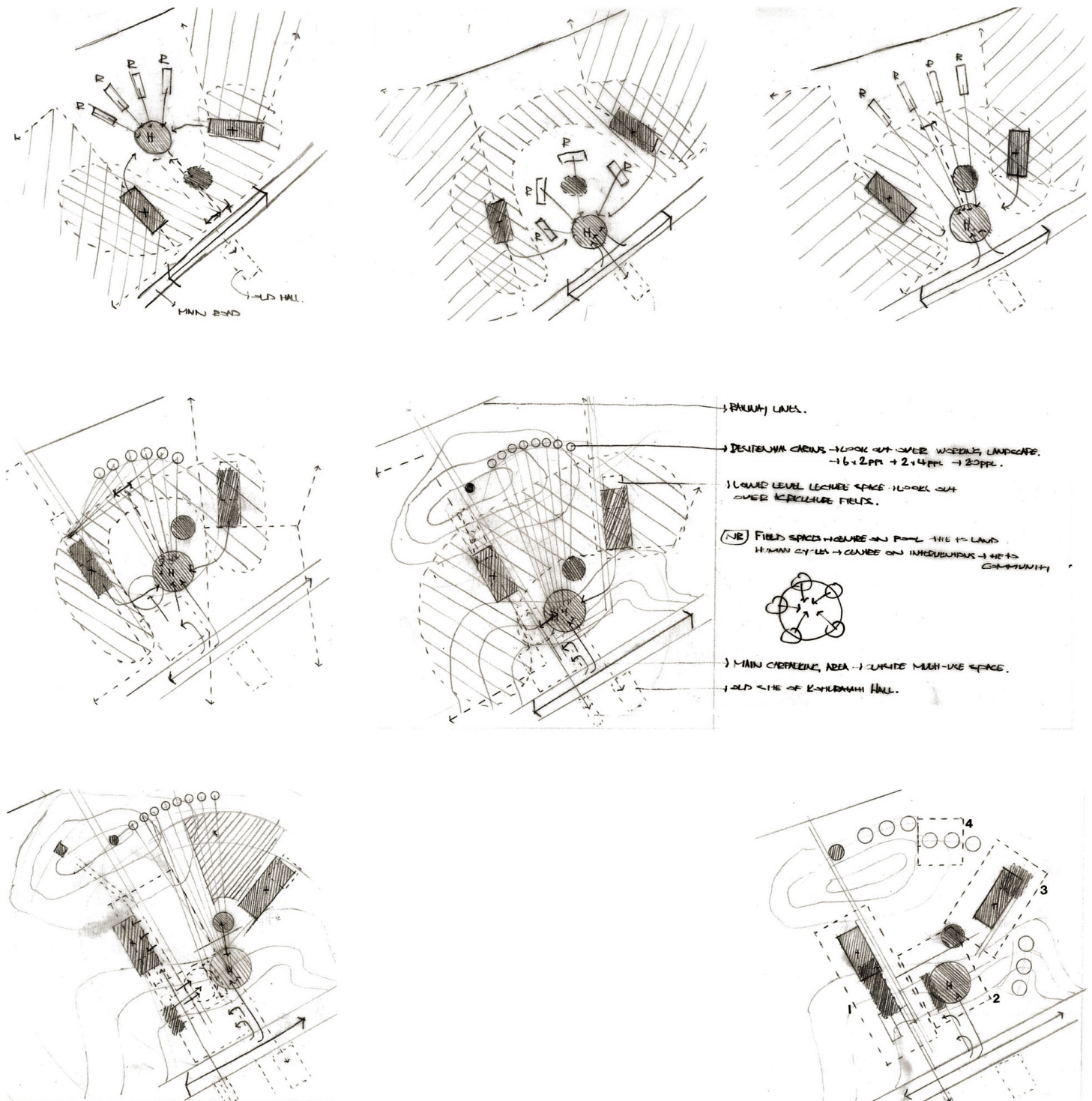
natural environments created by working off the land. The design study recognises the Ohu Movement as being an important, albeit unsuccessful. As a result, recognition of the need for strong connections with the world at large, rather than forcing the community to grow in isolation has influenced functional design intentions. The study of the design site has therefore been explored through a number of scales ultimately creating a middle ground (locale) in which a built form can be situated. The design acts as a nub to account for both interconnected (location) considerations as well as the more intimate (sense of place) considerations.

### *Reuse of rural halls as 20<sup>th</sup> century expression of communal life:*

Rural halls have been identified as rural New Zealand's 20<sup>th</sup> century manifestation of communal shared life. Currently, they are underused and generally falling into disrepair (Prickett, 1995). Research has identified the need to reconsider the formal representation of these halls, if they are to be used as a 21<sup>st</sup> Century response to a contemporary expression of rural communal life. The need for the halls to retain their historic and cultural symbolism is important, in acknowledging local significance and fostering an external understanding of cultural traits and practices that have occurred within and surrounding these buildings. Modelling explored the adaptation of physical space in and around these halls with the intention of providing a clear visual connection between interior and exterior spaces, coupled with the potential for purposeful engagement with the surrounding landscape. Maintaining the iconic form of existing halls has been an underlying consideration throughout this research and design.

The main principles within Moore's (2005) manifesto have been adapted into five main design intentions for use as a framework in constructing the design study for the reworked communal hub. These intentions consider both functional and built-form design, in addressing the potential for a new form of rural communality; where 'place' and 'cultural practices' are interlinked in a contemporary rural community. Furthermore the intentions centre on generating a strong sense of social physical interaction for both local populations and new urban migrants. Adaptations from Moore's (2005) original manifesto are as follows:

1. *Express the importance of local significance and privilege local cultural practice:* Recognise local knowledge and practices as an important component in the day-to-day operation of the facility. The term 'school of local culture' (Moore, 2005) is used to identify the types of functional considerations that could provide insight into local cultural practices. Cultural practices need to remain flexible and open to change, this includes recognition and openness to alternative skill sets and practices that may have relevance within a contemporary rural community.
2. *Emphasise the use of 'hands-on' experiences over other forms of learning:* When considering the use of the built form as a 'school of local culture', the use of physical experience over instructional and less physical forms of learning is important.
3. *Construct social settings that can be lived in differently:* Through consideration of how architecture can provide a meaningful place promoting physical interaction, a building's facilities should be able to adapt and be used in multiple ways. The built form should cater to fluctuations in peoples' activities and interaction.
4. *Articulation of structural elements within the built-form:* Through privileging the expression of framework and construction material over the masking of these elements, an understanding of local building techniques is developed. This can allow for occupants to foster an understanding of the structural forms that have influenced social and cultural process that occur within their form.
5. *Create strong ties between the built form and its situational context:* Designing built-forms that necessitate social activities to interweave with the surrounding landscape create opportunities for a greater understanding of an intimate relationship between human occupants, their physical surroundings and the natural landscape



[ Figure 48 Building layout exploration ]



## DESIGN BRIEF

The design is intended to create a rural hub comprised of an agricultural and husbandry school cross-programmed with communal facilities. The upskilling of agricultural practices in the context of this research refers to the cultivation of soil and production of crops. The upskilling of husbandry skill sets refers to raising and tending of livestock. They are therefore appropriate in creating a 'school of local culture'.

In our current world I am a firm believer that people will need to relearn and up-skill themselves on self-sufficient food production, thus focusing on a greater engagement with the landscape through practical skill sets. Williams (2011) notes the need to create arrangements that develop 'future makers' rather than 'future takers'. In consideration of this; the facility is to service the needs of residents within Taranaki's Stratford District and may be used by existing and new residents, people from and people seeking a rural lifestyle, one that focuses on social and physical engagement through the landscape. The teachings of Animal husbandry and Bio-Intensive farming practices, catering to groups of ten, form the main programs within the facility. It is therefore intended that people coming together through learning may foster a new form of communal life. The addition of a central communal building provides further indoor space for forty people and the bar area has a maximum capacity of twenty. In total the facility is able to cater to roughly one hundred people, excluding abundant outdoor space.

The use of three rural halls, currently situated in the Stratford area of Taranaki New Zealand, has provided core buildings

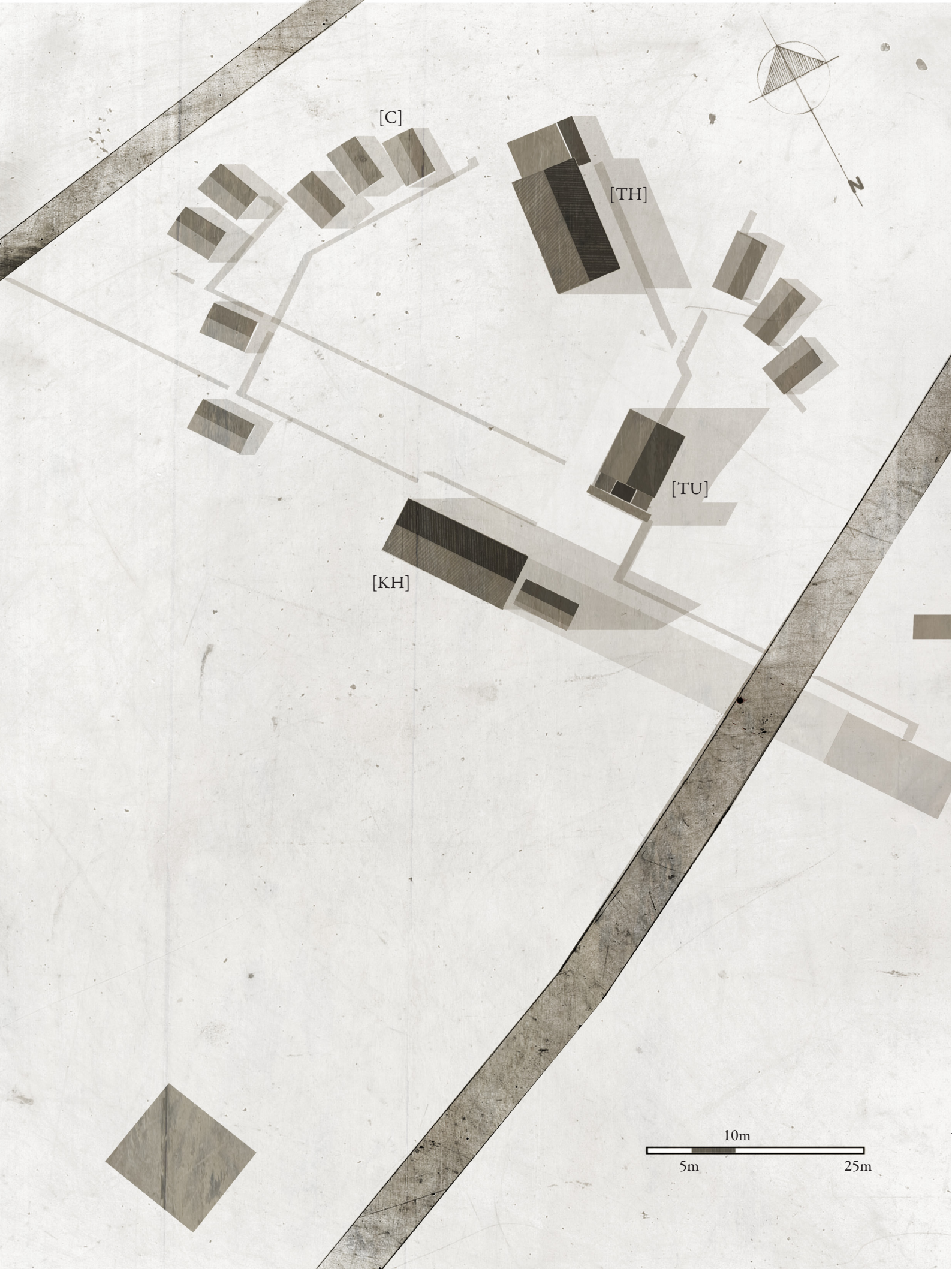
for this design case study. Tahora, Tututawa and Kohuratahi halls have all been identified by the New Plymouth District Council for demolition ('Community halls strategy', 2010), through a lack of use and maintenance. The rural hub facility is made up of these three core-building elements, and 10 single room residential cabins, located around the core buildings, provide accommodation for people who wish to stay on site.

The towns in which these halls currently reside have felt the full force of urbanisation and are remnants of their once bustling rural communities. The site proposed for the facility is Kohuratahi, situated approximately 70 km's from the satellite town of Stratford. This site is located at the centre of State Highway 43, currently referred as 'The Forgotten World Highway' ('Forgotten world highway', 2005). In selecting Kohuratahi as the site for the design case study it is envisaged that there is potential to substantially alter the rural communal structure in the area and breathe new life into the region.

[ Figure 49 ]

### Built-form site plan

Showing placement of Husbandry School (Kohuratahi Hall)(KH), Agriculture School (Tahora Hall)(TH), Main Communal building (Tututawa Hall)(TU). The cabins (C) provide a semi enclosed central space, buffered by the surrounding buildings from prevailing winds.



[C]

[TH]

[TU]

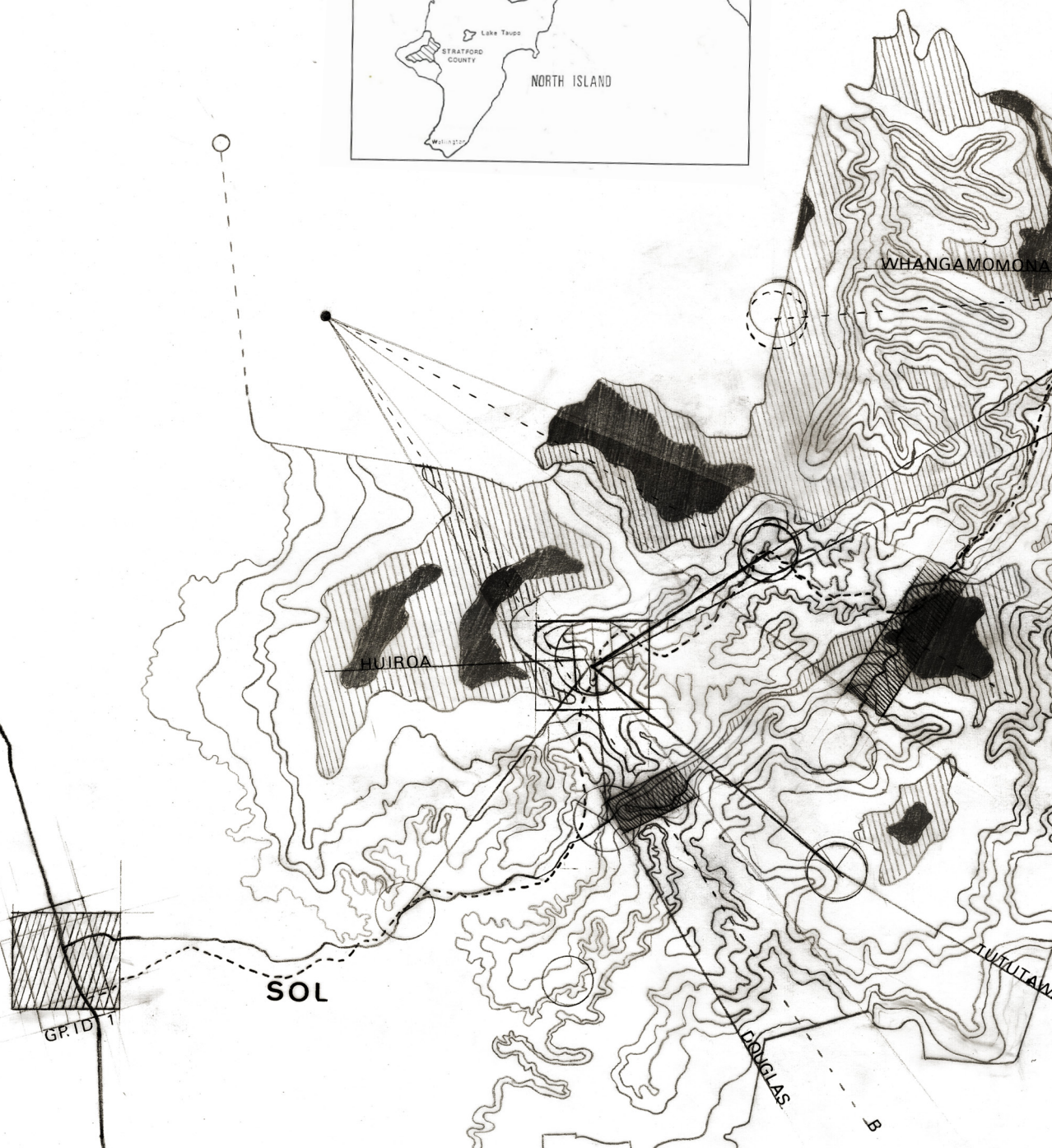
[KH]

10m

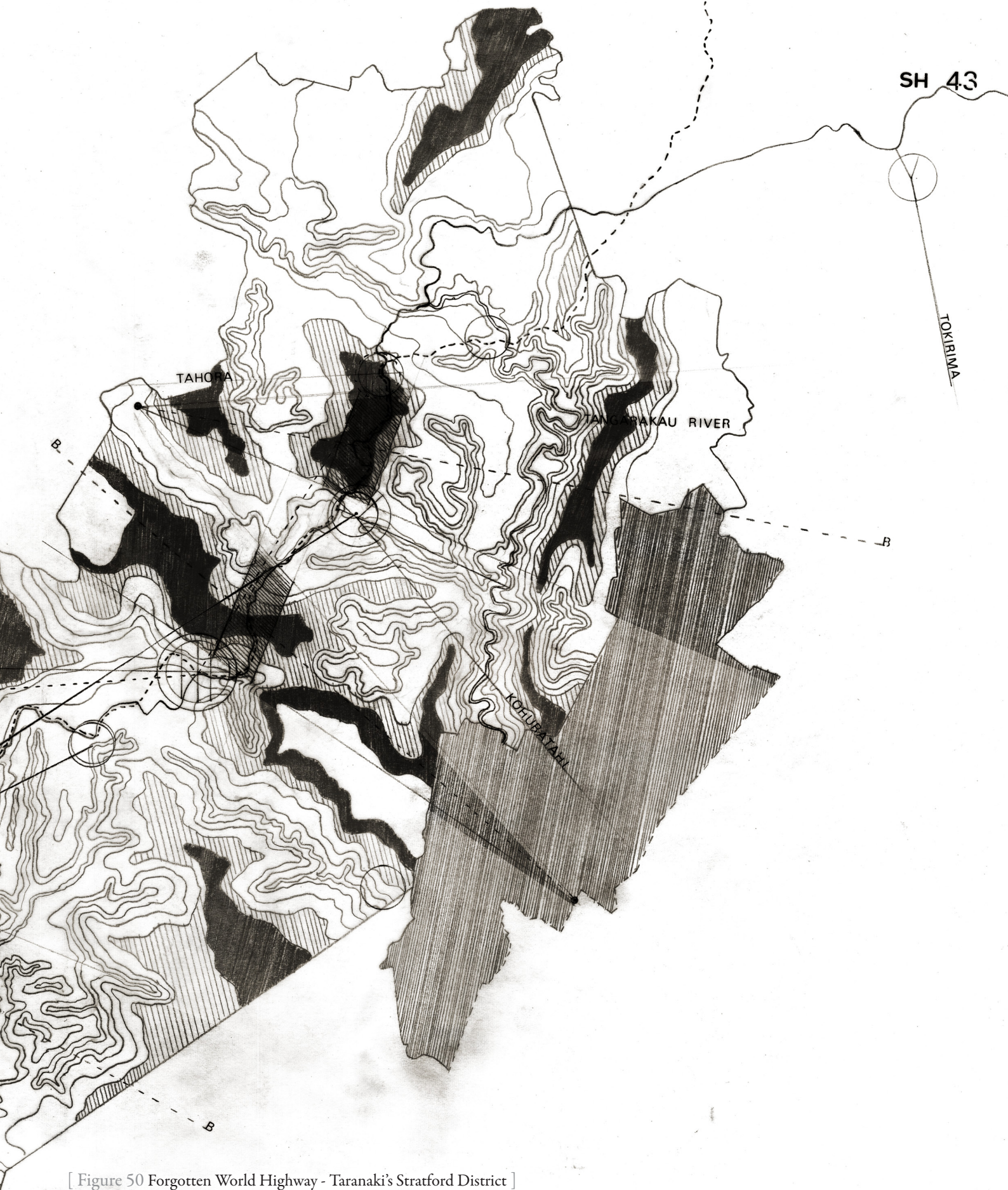
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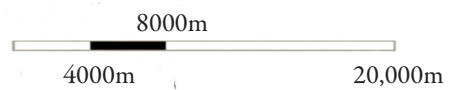








[ Figure 50 Forgotten World Highway - Taranaki's Stratford District ]





## PLACE STUDY

### Location – Macro site analysis

In keeping with Moore's (2005) interpretation of place, a macro-scale analysis was carried out on small rural towns located in the Stratford District. The intention of this analysis was to view place as an interconnected network of areas, joined through trade and circulation routes. Material used in this study has been generated from literature obtained throughout the research.

Upon investigation into the history and cultural practices of the Stratford District, strong connections were drawn between the local dairy creameries and Huiroa's dairy factory (see Figure 50). These connections, when added to a district map, form a visual representation of the main trade lines that flowed along the forgotten world highway. The majority of towns in this area were established, as explained in Chapter 2, with differing levels of grid planning and a strong relationship to the road. These roads were the main sources of supplies and people-traffic through the area. This made it easier to determine locations when traveling through the site, as borders were relatively well defined.

Kohuratahi was one of the few towns within the district that was not established along a main track/road. In contrast to

the other small rural towns, Kohuratahi used the river that weaved its way through the hilly terrain, as a main supply line. The town was originally established along two service roads that connected this river to the main railway line 45 km's away. The township of Kohuratahi originally hugged the surrounding landscape, in contrast to a man-made grid, which provided greater visual affinity with the natural landscape it was situated in. This became significant and the defining feature in selecting an appropriate location for a facility intended to provide greater engagement of people with the landscape.

[ Figure 51 ]

Analysis of the Kohuratahi Borough –  
distribution of residential base + Flood areas.

The plan identifies a speculative boundary within which the early settlers of Kohuratahi may associate as their area. However as Kohuratahi was not established on a structured grid, this boundary is marginally blurred. Farms are located along two service roads (A and B), and have been enclosed within different sized circles, each expressing the size of the built infrastructure at the location. Arrows denote catchment areas off the hills, feeding streams and land prone to flooding.

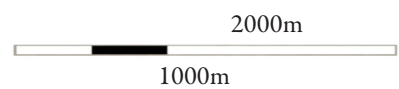
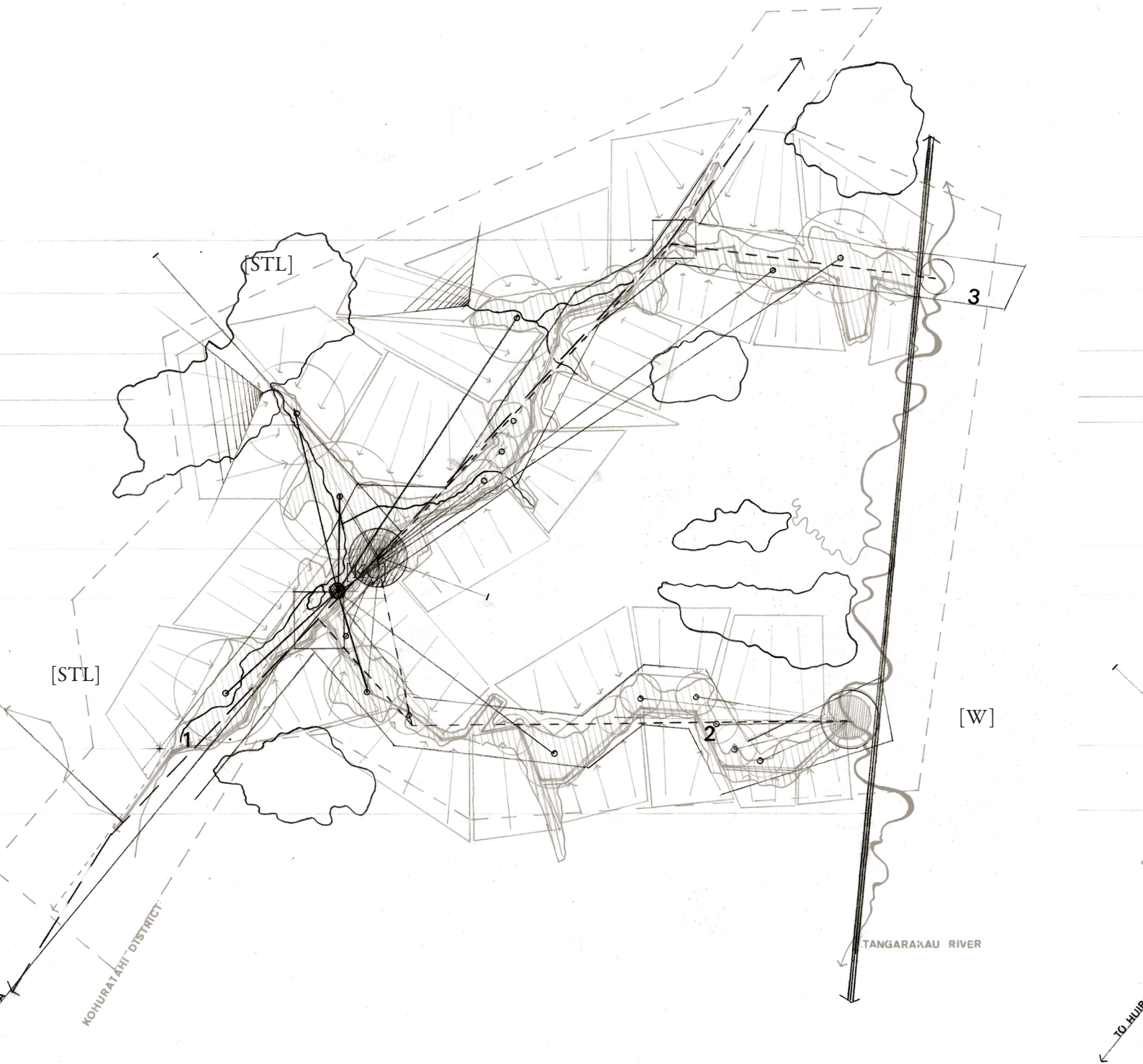
The filled circles denote the location of the hall (H), and the original proposed location for a hall by the community (PH), alluding to the importance of the Tangarakau river for early settlers.



[ Figure 52 ]

Analysis of the Kohuratahi Borough – Trade  
Lines.

The plan provides a representation of the many trade lines and connections that formed within the Kohuratahi area. Local farms supplied milk to the Kohuratahi Creamery (KC), established in 1902, which supplied to the Crown Dairy Company located in Huiroa. The local store (located in close proximity to the hall) employed carriers to transport supplies from the Wharf (W) to the store where they were then distributed to the surrounding residents. ‘Severed trade lines’ (STL) originally linked Kohuratahi to more small settlements along Toi Rd and Marco Rd. These roads eventually were abandoned through a lack in maintenance and geographic and political conditions.

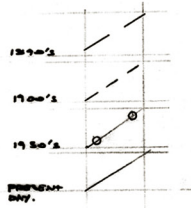




[ Figure 53 ]

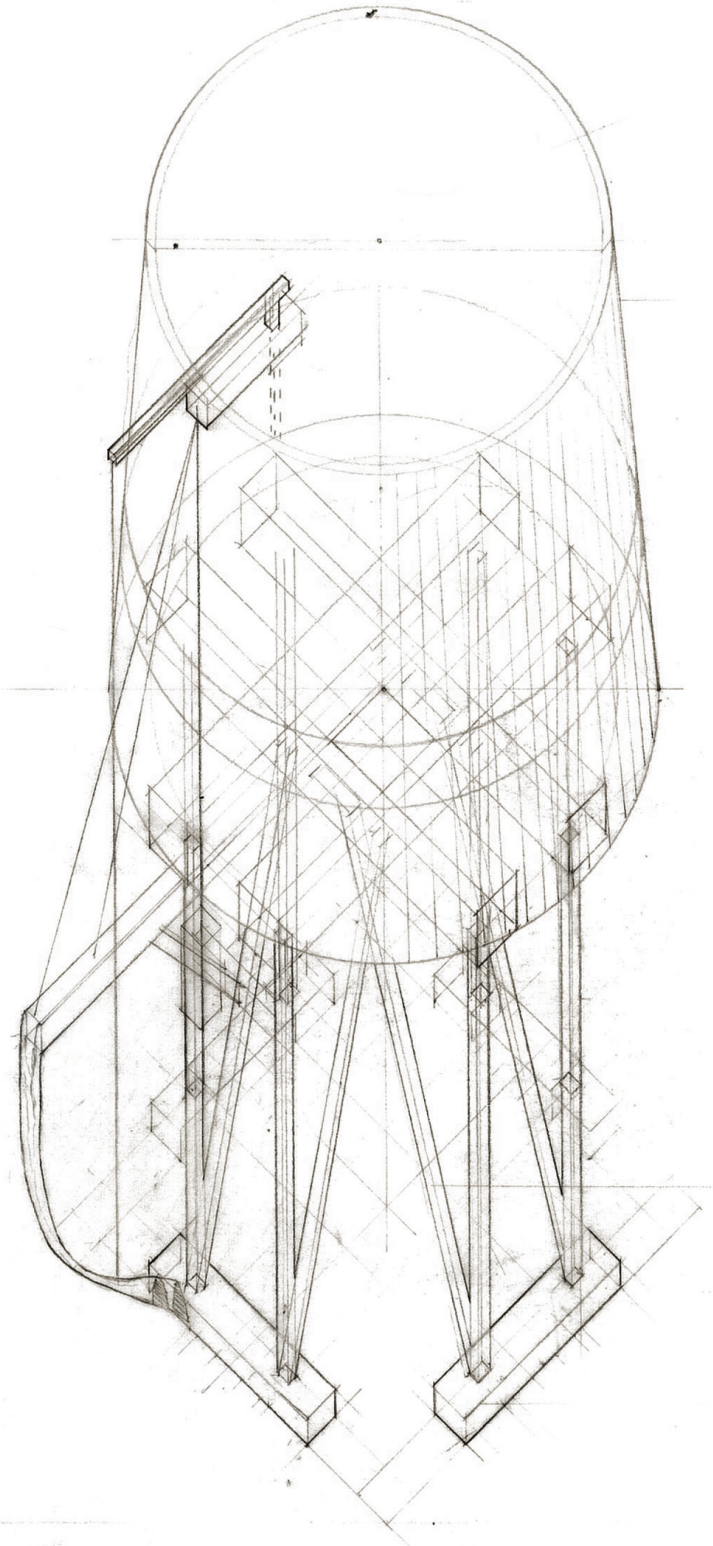
Analysis of the Kohuratahi Borough – Flow  
through Site.

The plan represents the perceived change in the flow of people and supplies through the site from the 1890's – 2011. A succession of landslides into the river restricted the transport of goods via boat to Kohuratahi. This and the improvements to the main road resulted in a shift in supplies being brought into the settlement. The severing of trade links along Toi and Marco Rd resulted in the railway, which reached Kohuratahi in 1918, and road from Whangamomona supplying the area. When the SOL, Stratford Ohakura rail Line , became non-operational, the road became the only route in and out of the settlement, expressed in the plan.



### Sense of place – Micro Site Analysis

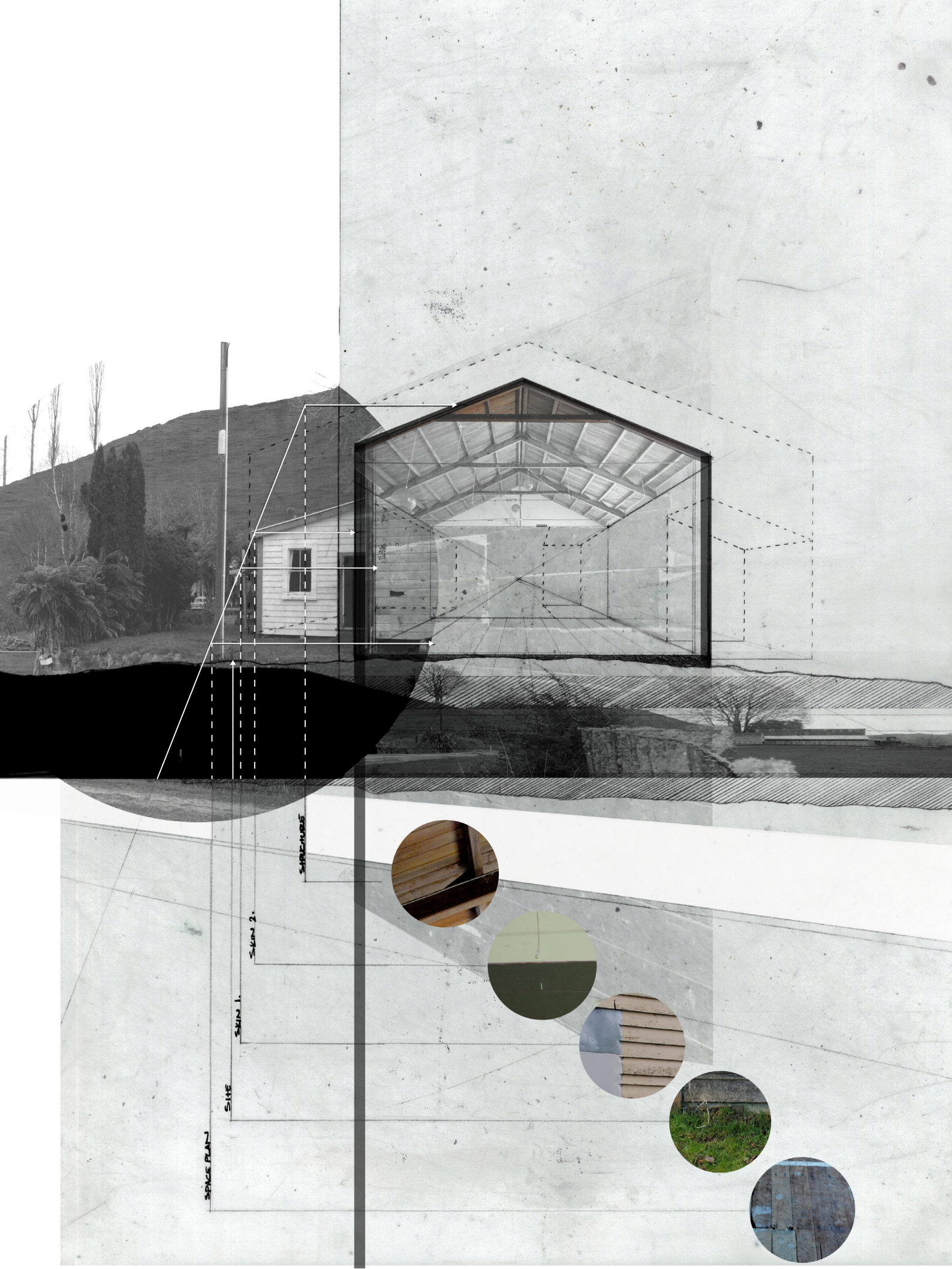
Following the decision to use Kohuratahi as the design case study site, a micro place study was conducted, focusing predominantly on aesthetic considerations and materials found immediately around the Kohuratahi hall location. This building was the dominant form of communal life within the region, and therefore the materials and forms become recognisable residual-elements that local peoples associate with a certain area. These elements pertain to the built-form and provide a material palette for use in the design of a communal facility.



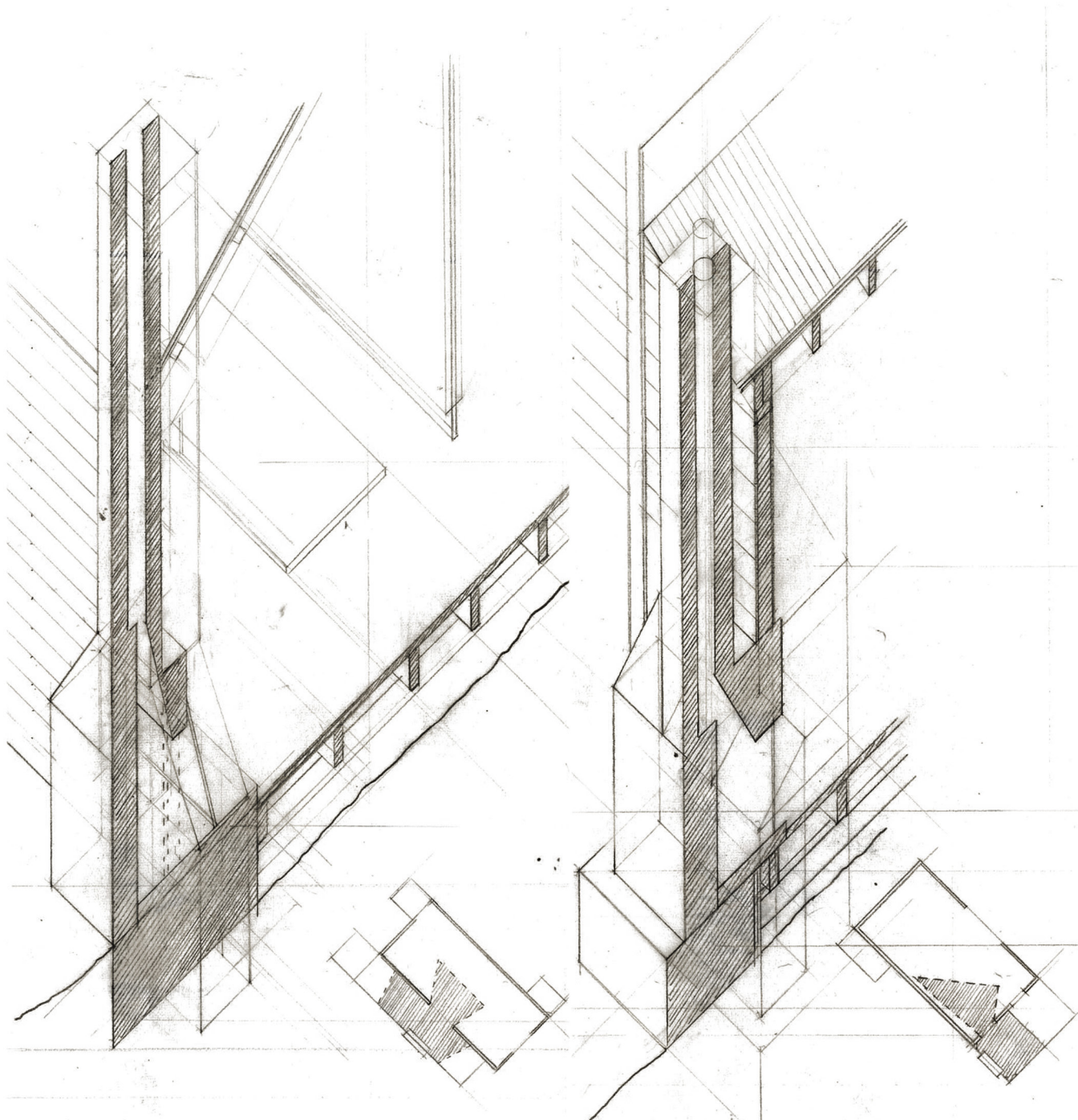
[ Figure 54 sketch of water tank ]

[ Figure 55 material analysis ]

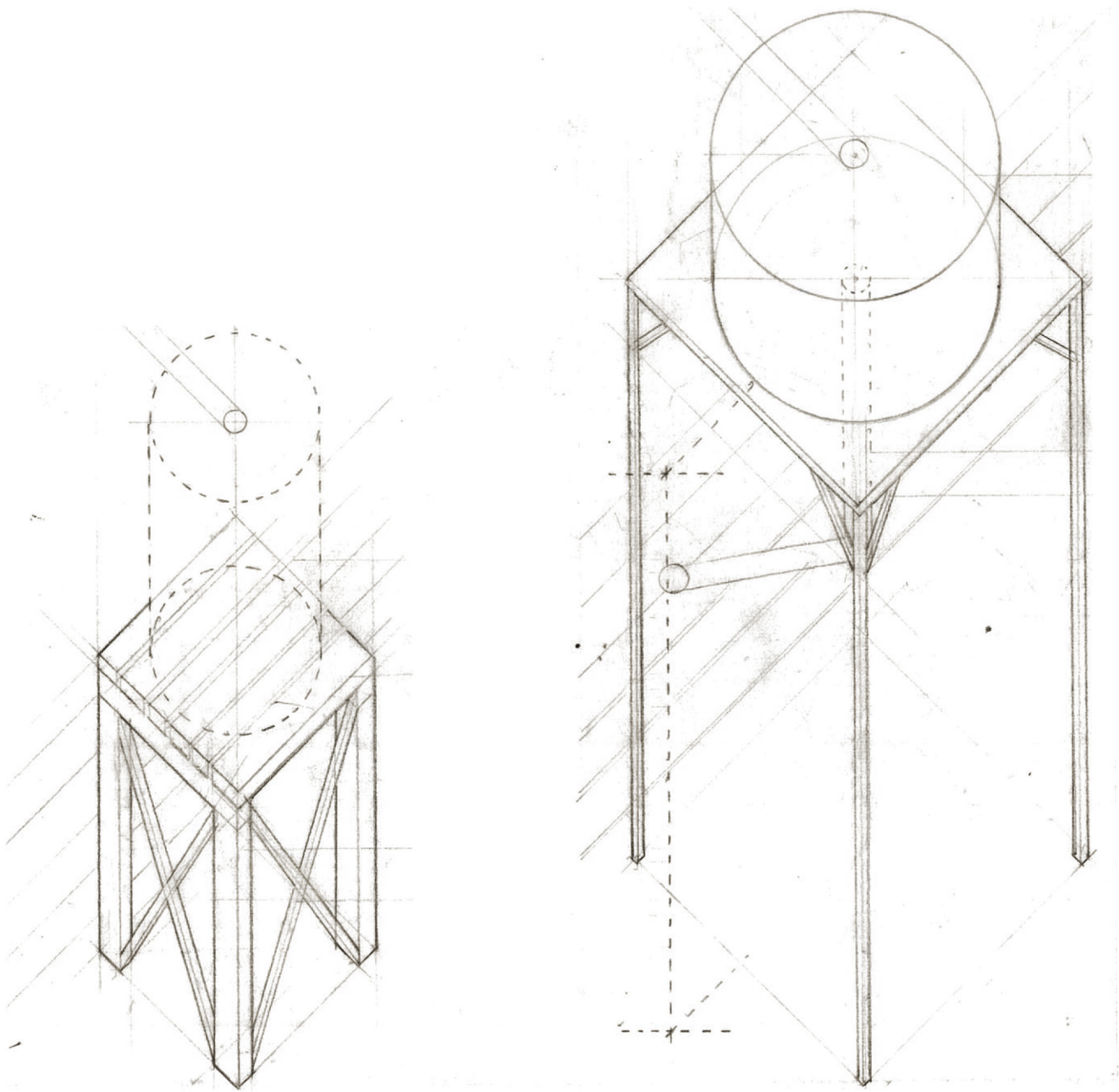








[ Figure 56 Chimney analysis sketches]



[ Figure 57 Water tower typology analysis]

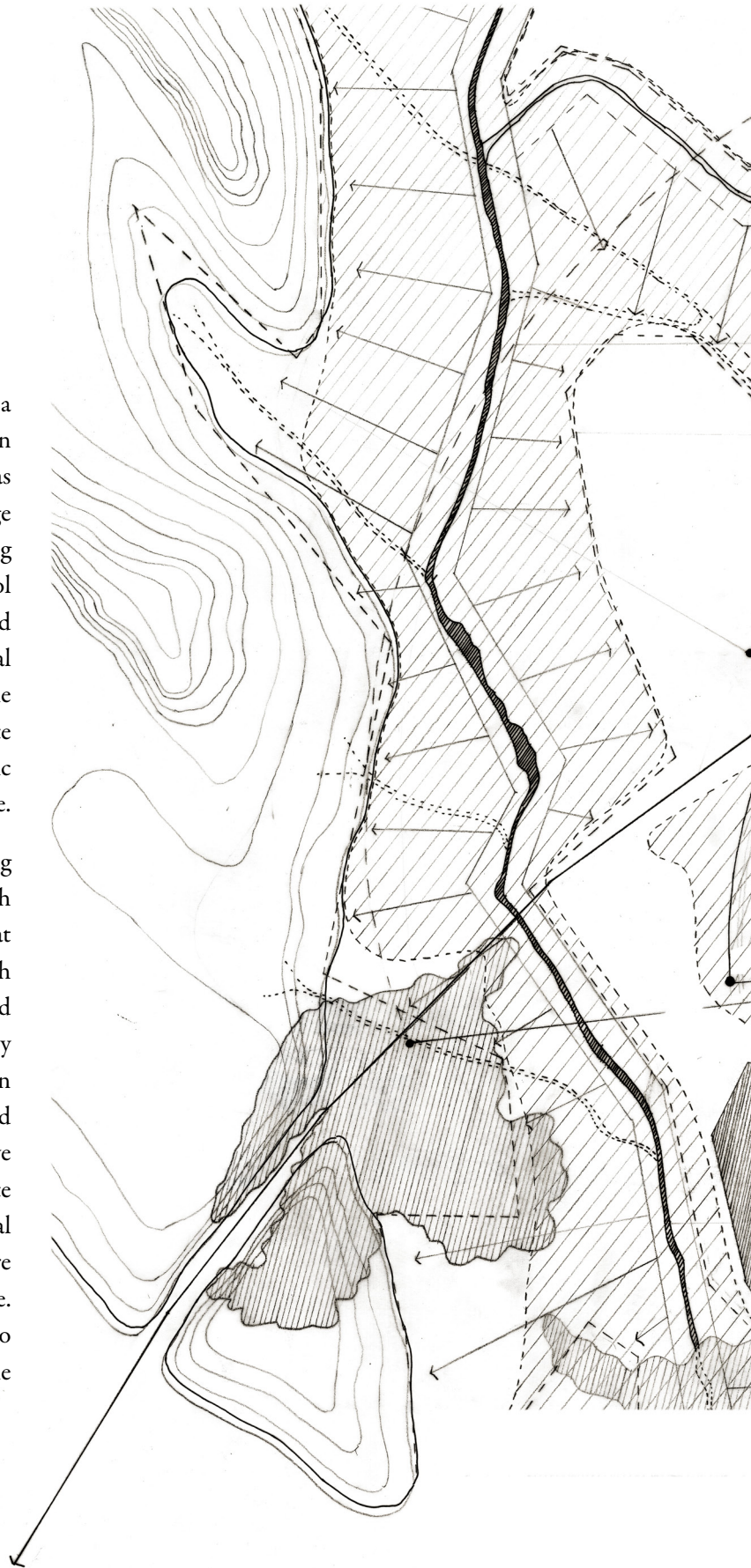


## DETAILED DESIGN SOLUTION

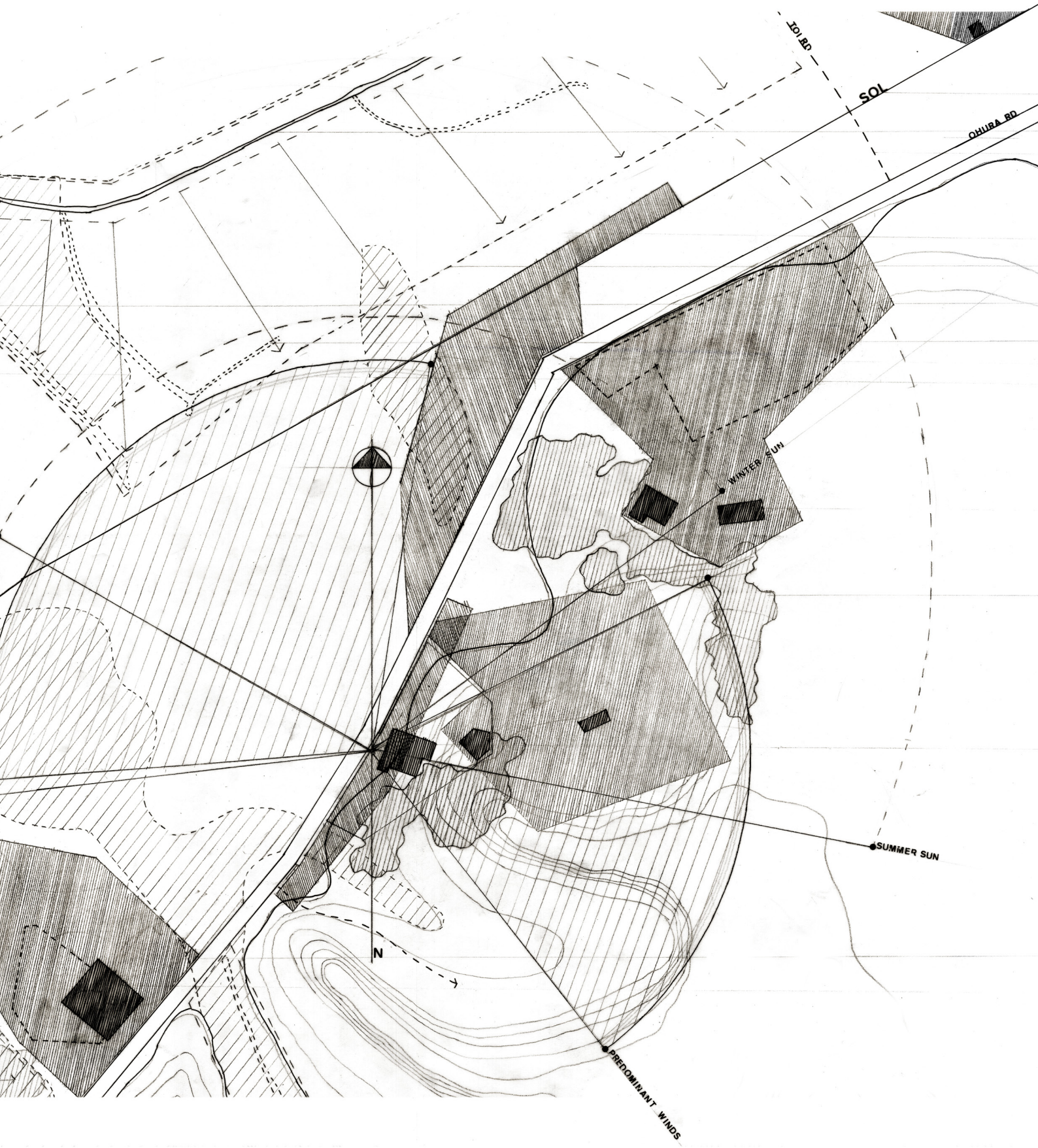
### Response to Site – Village Scale – the ‘locale’

It is anticipated the rural hub facility will be located on a plot of council owned land. The topography of the site can be classified as having minor undulations, with certain areas prone to flooding (see Figure 59). The facility takes advantage of these low-lying points within the terrain areas, splitting the communal spaces from the main agricultural school spaces. Communal buildings are sited on naturally elevated mounds at either end of the complex, with the agricultural buildings being located on lower ground, through the middle of the site. The primary axial route through the site runs perpendicular to the main flow of supplies and traffic through the area, connecting the main road and railway line.

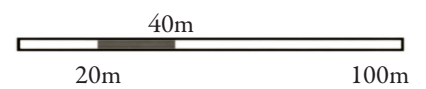
Each building has been configured with a differing orientation on the site, but coming together in a rough circular formation, surrounding an open central space that is used, both as cultivated land and for social events, such as market days. This area is tucked away from the road and is protected from the prevailing south-easterly winds. By locating the various buildings in this formation, the intention has been to draw disparate built elements to one site, and into a communal formation, emphasised by the collective sheltering of a central space. Upon approaching the site (see Figure 61), people navigate through a number of visual portals, before finally encountering the central hub, where they discover the inner workings of the communal space. The way in which architectural elements have been used to create this association provide a tangible link between the reworked rural halls and the site.



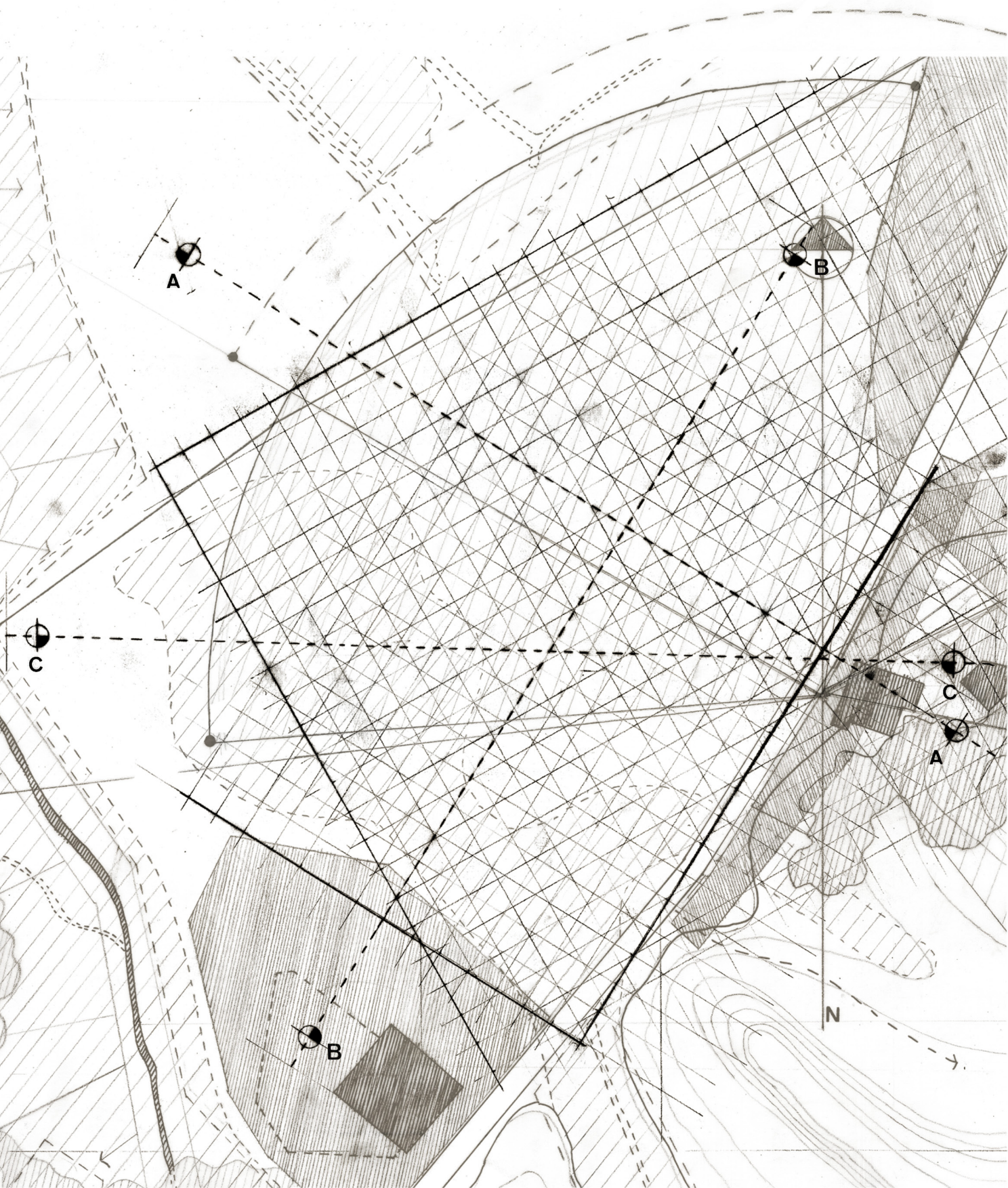




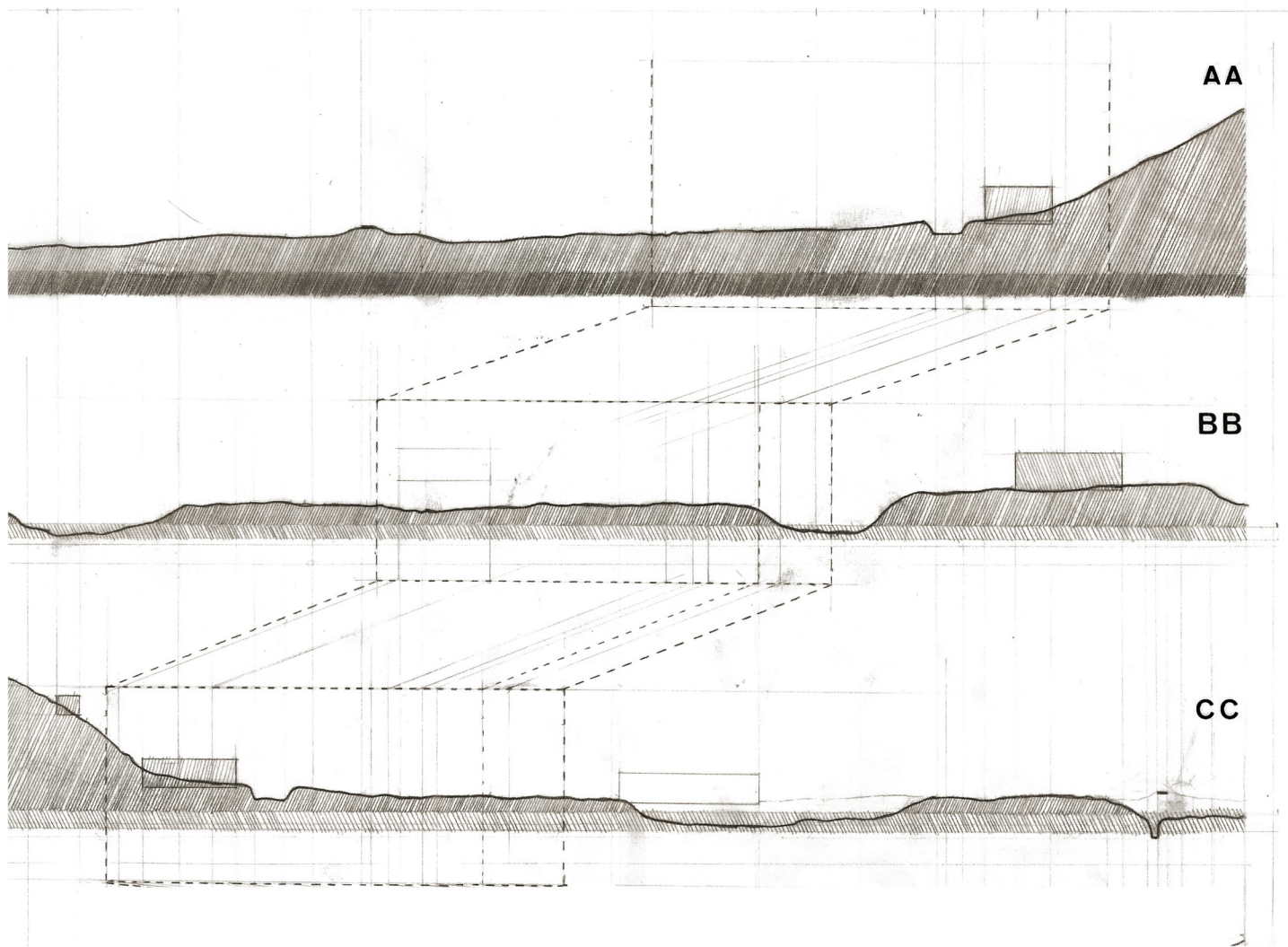
[ Figure 58 Kohuratahi plan - site conditions analysis ]





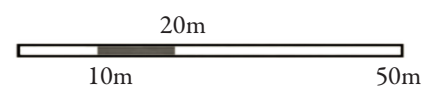






[ Figure 60 Sections through site ]

[ Figure 59 Kohuratahi plan - site conditions analysis 2 + Section cuts ]





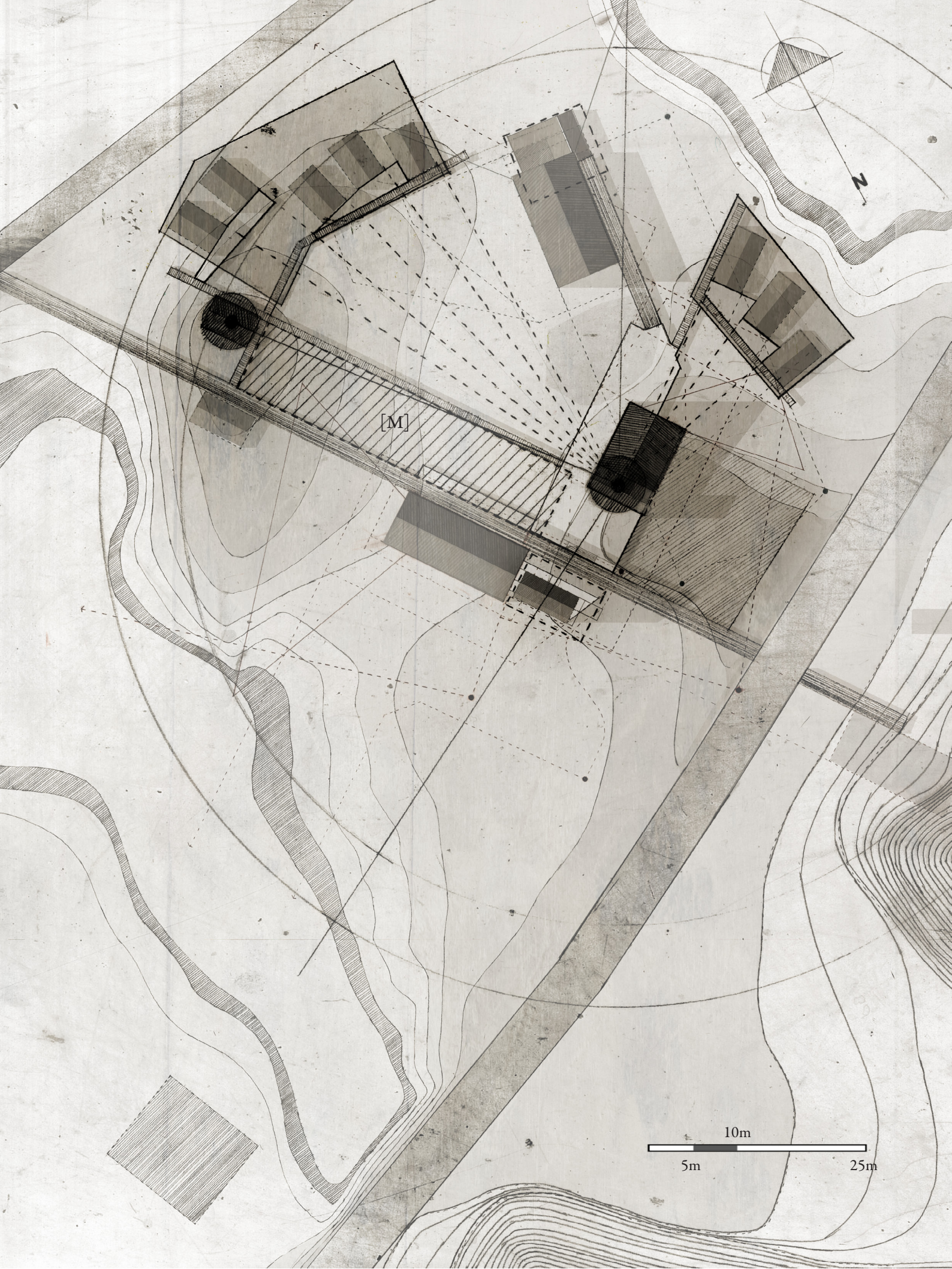


[ Figure 61 ]

#### Circulation Site Plan

Placement of Central Communal open space (CS) provides ease of access from all buildings on site. A sealed area is located directly in front of the Communal Building (Tututawa Hall), providing a place for cars to park having come off the main road. The axial route through the site (AR), connecting the main road and the railway provides for vehicular and pedestrian access into the communal outdoor space. A secondary axial route (Sr) separates the agricultural fields from space designated for outdoor markets.







[ Figure 62 ]

#### Communal Buildings

The Main communal buildings, within the facility, are highlighted and sit on raised levels within the site. These are the communal hall (the old Tututawa Hall) and a smaller communal lounge and laundry space, providing for occupants of the cabins. The secondary axial route links these two buildings and provides a visual link for people moving around the exterior of the facility. The outdoor market space (M) is in close contact with both of these facilities. The placement of cabins radiates off the main communal building, providing a strong focus on this space







[ Figure 63 ]

#### Agricultural + Husbandry Buildings

The husbandry building (the old Kohuratahi Hall)(H) and agriculture building (the old Tahora Hall) (A) are located within a lower lying area through the middle of the site. The agricultural fields (AF) are arrayed within the central communal outdoor area , which utilises the sheltered space and abundant sun contact. The main pastoral fields are located to the south of the husbandry buildings utilising existing farmland.

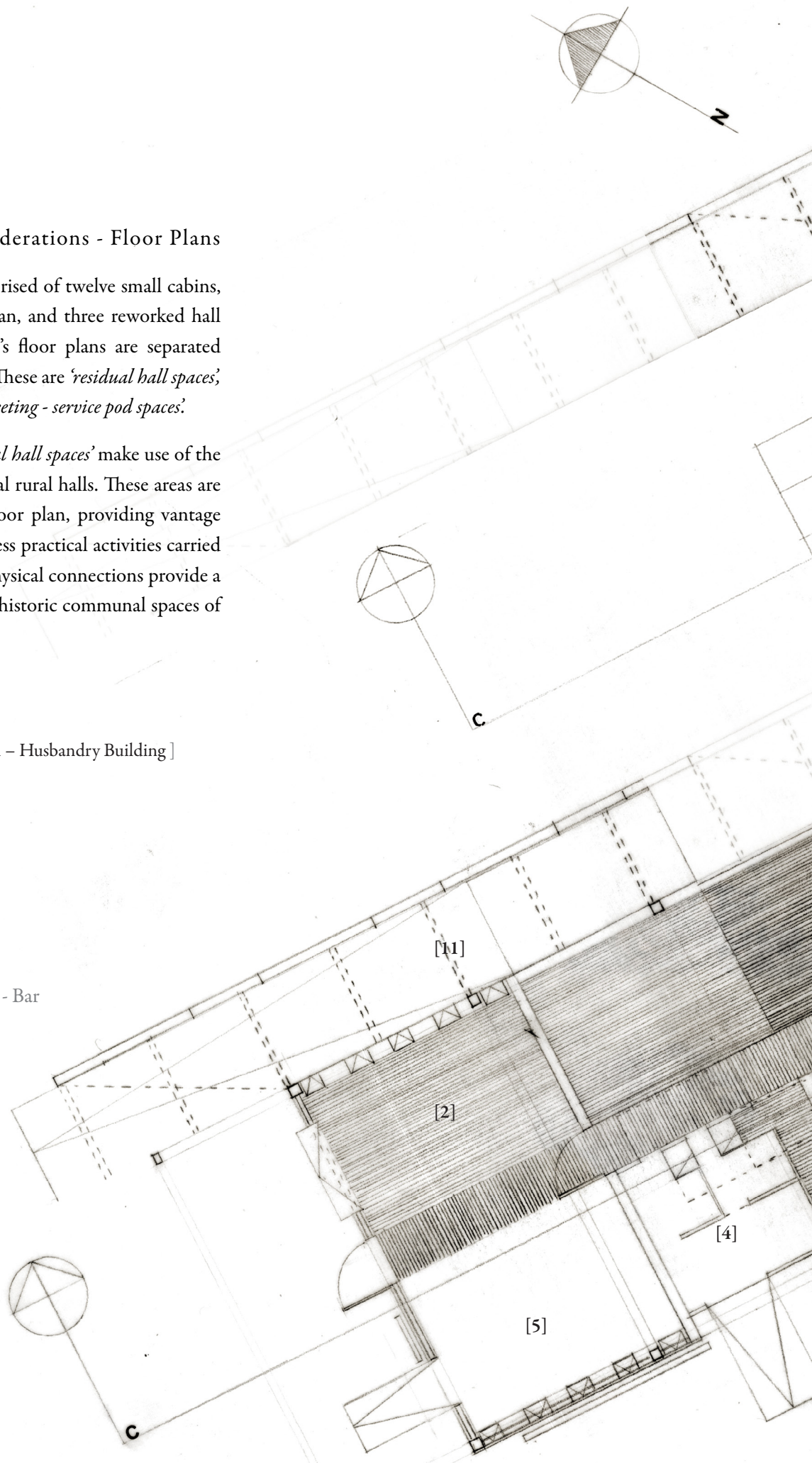
## Functional Design Considerations - Floor Plans

The building footprint is comprised of twelve small cabins, each with a replicated floor plan, and three reworked hall buildings. The larger building's floor plans are separated into three distinct spatial uses. These are '*residual hall spaces*', '*communal nodal spaces*' and '*meeting - service pod spaces*'.

On the lower levels the '*residual hall spaces*' make use of the multi-height roof of the original rural halls. These areas are centrally located within the floor plan, providing vantage points that allow users to witness practical activities carried out in the spaces. Visual and physical connections provide a constant engagement with the historic communal spaces of the reworked hall.

[ Figure 64 Kohuratahi Hall plan – Husbandry Building ]

- 1 Entry
- 2 Residual hall space
- 3 Workshop
- 4 Shearing Station
- 5 Pig pen
- 6 Bathroom
- 7 Mudhouse
- 8 Communal nodal space - Bar
- 9 Exterior balcony
- 10 Viewing platform
- 11 Exterior ramp







[L1]

[GF]

PLAN HUSBANDRY SCHOOL

2m  
1m 5m



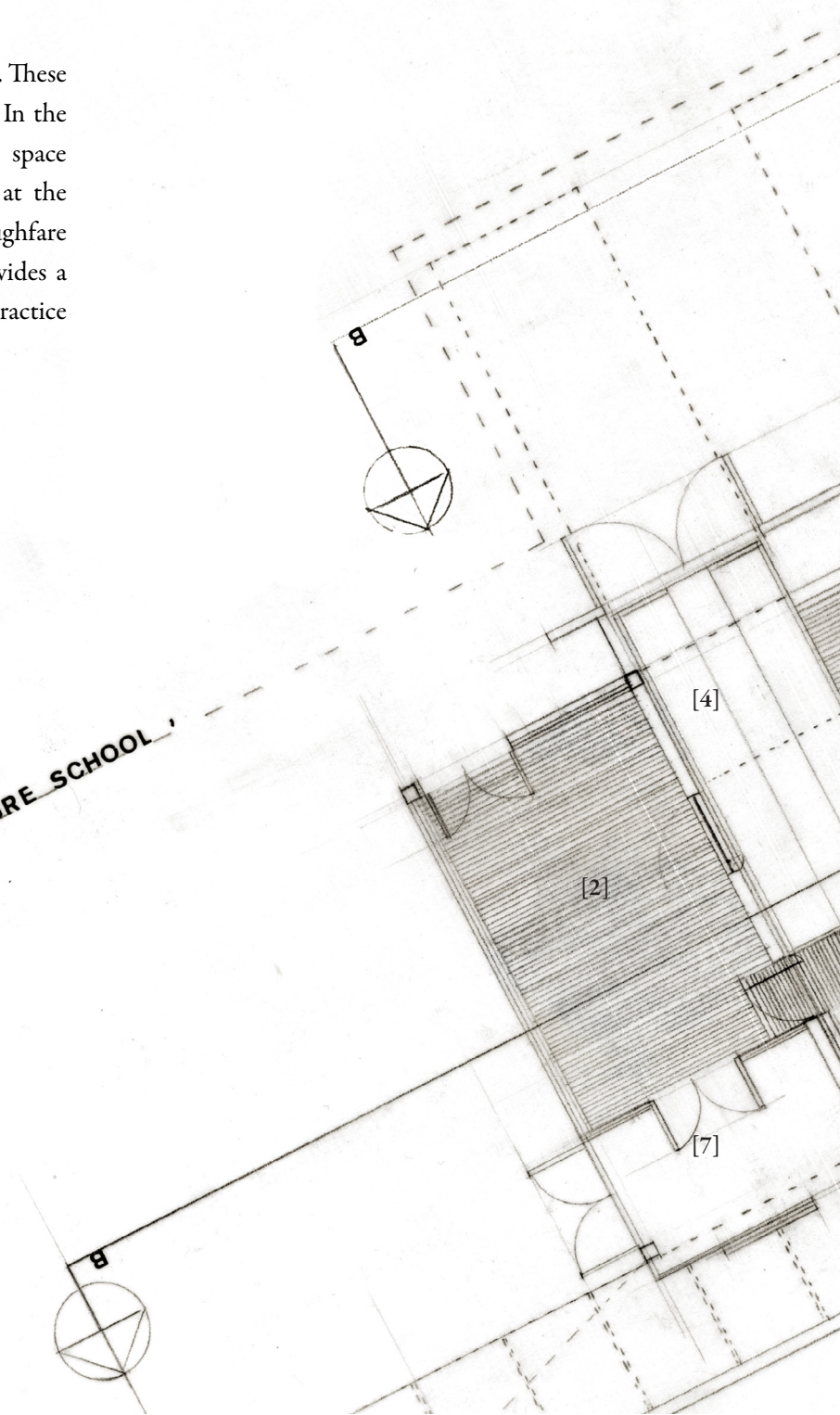
These spaces can be altered to cater for a number of activities or user fluctuations. They are the practical spaces within the facility and as such focus on displaying local cultural practices; this may include shearing competitions and the upkeep of moveable lathe house nurseries (greenhouses for early stages of seed germination) as examples.

'Communal nodal spaces' form the second spatial use. These are located on different levels within each building. In the reworked Tahora hall (Figure 65) a small lecture space that alternatively functions as a theatre is located at the northern end of the building. The creation of a thoroughfare running along the transverse length of the hall provides a physical separation between this area and the main practice workspace.

[ Figure 65 Tahora Hall plan – Agricultural Building ]

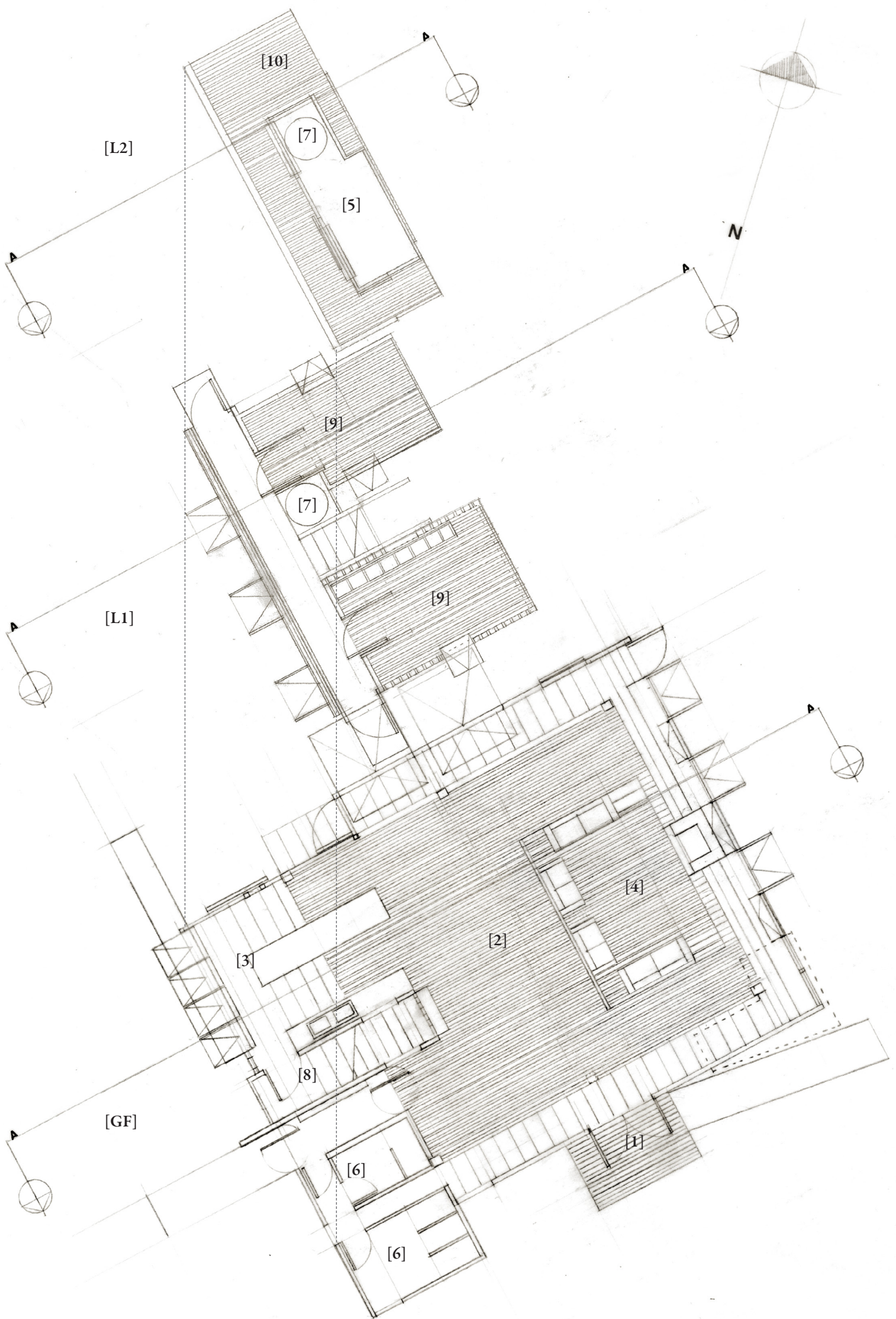
- 1 Entry
- 2 Residual hall space
- 3 Workshop
- 4 lathe House
- 5 Communal nodal space - Lecture/ Theatre Space
- 6 Bathroom
- 7 Preparation and Canning Area
- 8 Storage
- 9 Meeting Room
- 10 Overbridge
- 11 Exterior Pathway

PLAN AGRICULTURE SCHOOL











The reworked Kohuratahi hall (see Figure 64) holds a bar area which is located at the southern end of the building on the raised structural frame, accessible by a staircase. These stairs lead directly onto a gangway, which punctuates the hall facade. The gangway mirrors the main circulation route on the lower level and ends at a small viewing platform over the shearing blocks. This platform is easily accessible from the bar space and is intended for use during shearing competitions.

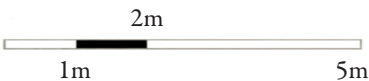
The reworked Tututawa hall (Figure 66), reconfigured as the main communal building, utilises both communal nodal spaces and historic hall spaces as one entity. On arrival at the site, this hall is generally the initial building people enter. Bringing these two spatial uses together heightens an awareness of the symbolic representation of the hall, in fostering a sense of communality.

The ‘meeting - service pod spaces’ form the last components within the floor plan. These smaller spaces have a practice-based focus. They are linked to the larger residual hall spaces both visually and physically. The smaller spaces also provide opportunities for community members to hold meetings for local business plans, intentionally utilising practice based skill sets of urban migrants. An example of one of these spaces are the meeting areas, located on upper mezzanine levels within the reworked Tahora Hall that connect, through apertures, into the residual hall space from within the roof trusses.

By creating spaces that can be adapted to serve a range of functions, the ability to utilise different areas within each hall adapts to user fluctuations. The architecture is therefore sympathetic to changing requirements of a contemporary community and is thus perceived as a dynamic entity; constantly in a state of flux as people arrive and leave. The visual connection formed through the manipulation of hall facades provides a social showcase of activities created inside for people moving around the perimeter of the halls. Views into ‘the heart of rural communal life’ and the interactions that take place within are therefore observable both within and external to the hub.

[ Figure 66 Tututawa Hall plan – Main Communal Building ]

- 1 Entry
- 2 Residual hall space - Communal nodal space  
Communal Kitchen
- 3 Sitting Pit
- 4 Office
- 5 Bathroom
- 6 Stairwell
- 7 Storage
- 8 Meeting Room
- 9 Outdoor balcony
- 10



## Built form Design Considerations – Sections

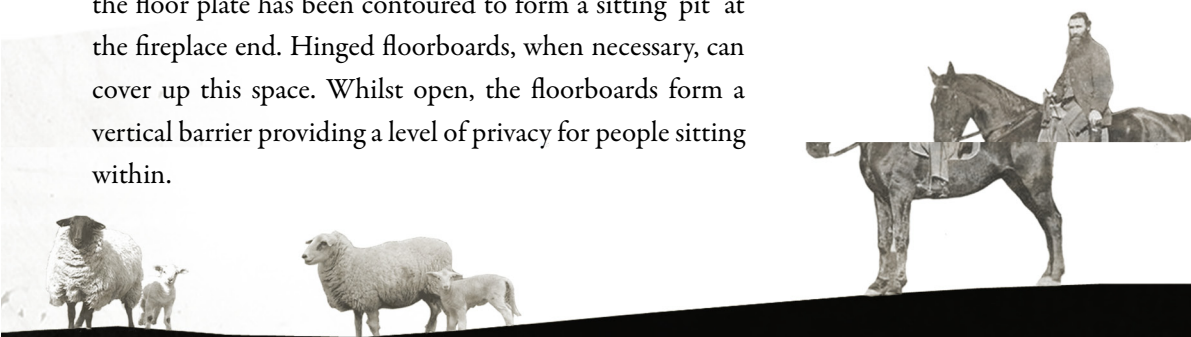
The structures of the residual-hall forms are unaltered to signify the social practices that once resided at the heart of rural communal life. Through introducing a contemporary structural framework that intertwines with existing rural hall forms, different areas of occupation are able to penetrate into the historic hall spaces.

In relation to the Tututawa hall (see Figure 69) a new structural frame is positioned on the side of the hall, providing meeting spaces and the opportunity to transverse from the vertical structure into the open roof space of the hall. The new structure, although physically connected, does appear as its own entity. This is achieved through careful placement of windows, which allow uninterrupted views through the building. The steel structural frame provides a third level, containing an office space. As this is the tallest part of the entire facility, reaching ten meters in height, it provides a symbolic reference to a town clock steeple and allows a view out over the entire site.

As the Tututawa hall is situated on one of the raised mounds, the floor plate has been contoured to form a sitting 'pit' at the fireplace end. Hinged floorboards, when necessary, can cover up this space. Whilst open, the floorboards form a vertical barrier providing a level of privacy for people sitting within.

In the Kohuratahi hall (see Figure 68) the new structural form, housing the bar area, appears to be lifting the existing frame of the hall, raising it above the dip in the land below. This allows the floor-plate of the hall to be dropped; creating a lower level space that can be used to clean out animal excrement. It also provides a space for the holding of sheep after shearing competitions. A 'sheep's run' running parallel to the main access path through the building creates a direct link between human activities above and animals moving below.

The Tahora Hall (see Figure 70) provides a new structural form that sits within the existing frame, housing two meeting spaces with views over the fields and into the main hall space. The building appears to be forced down into the site by the additional spaces, and weight, above. This provides an opportunity for the site to rise and merge with the floorboards of the hall, and allows lathe houses to be rolled in and out of the building with ease.

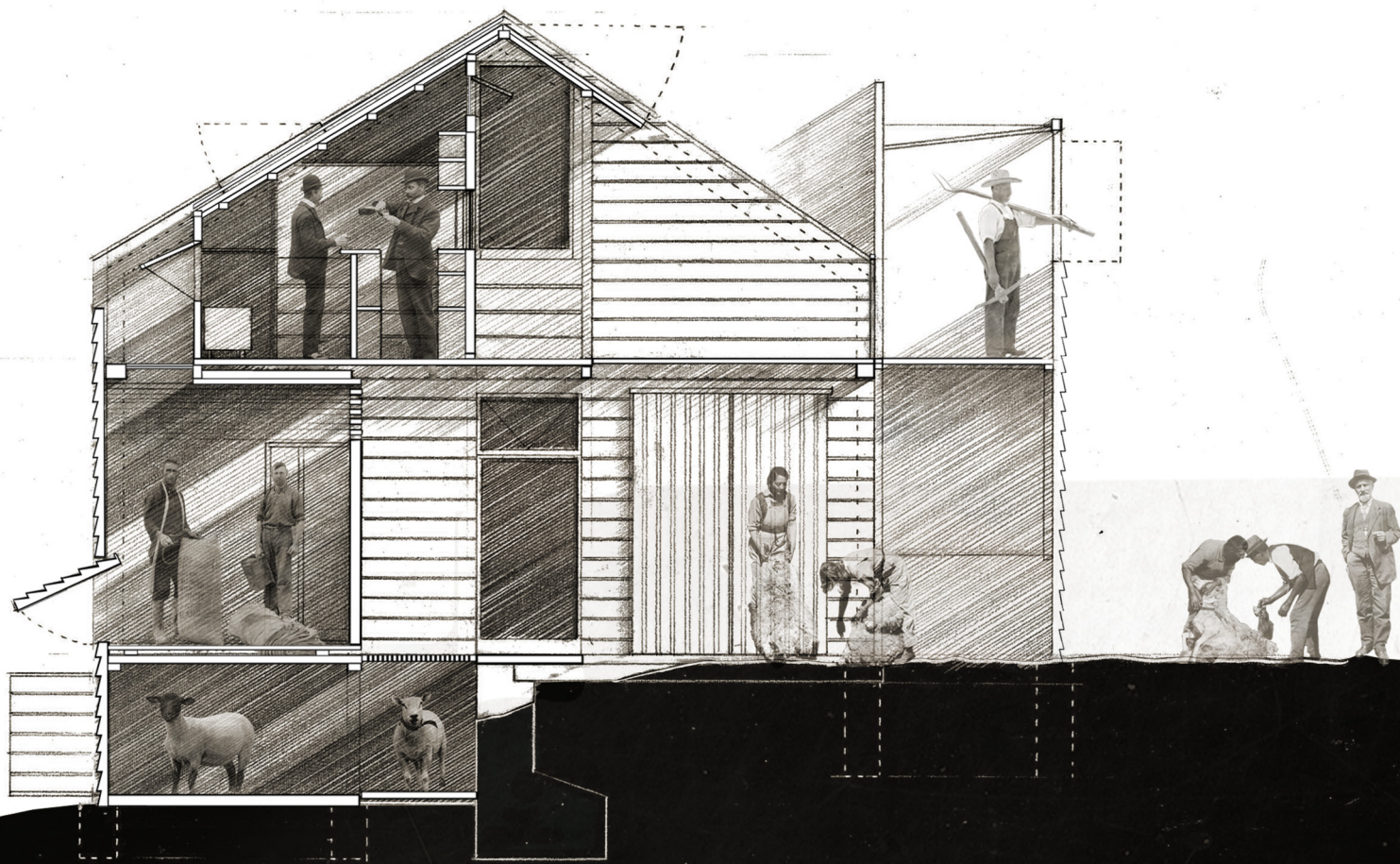


[ Figure 67 Kohuratahi Hall Treansverse Section DD ]

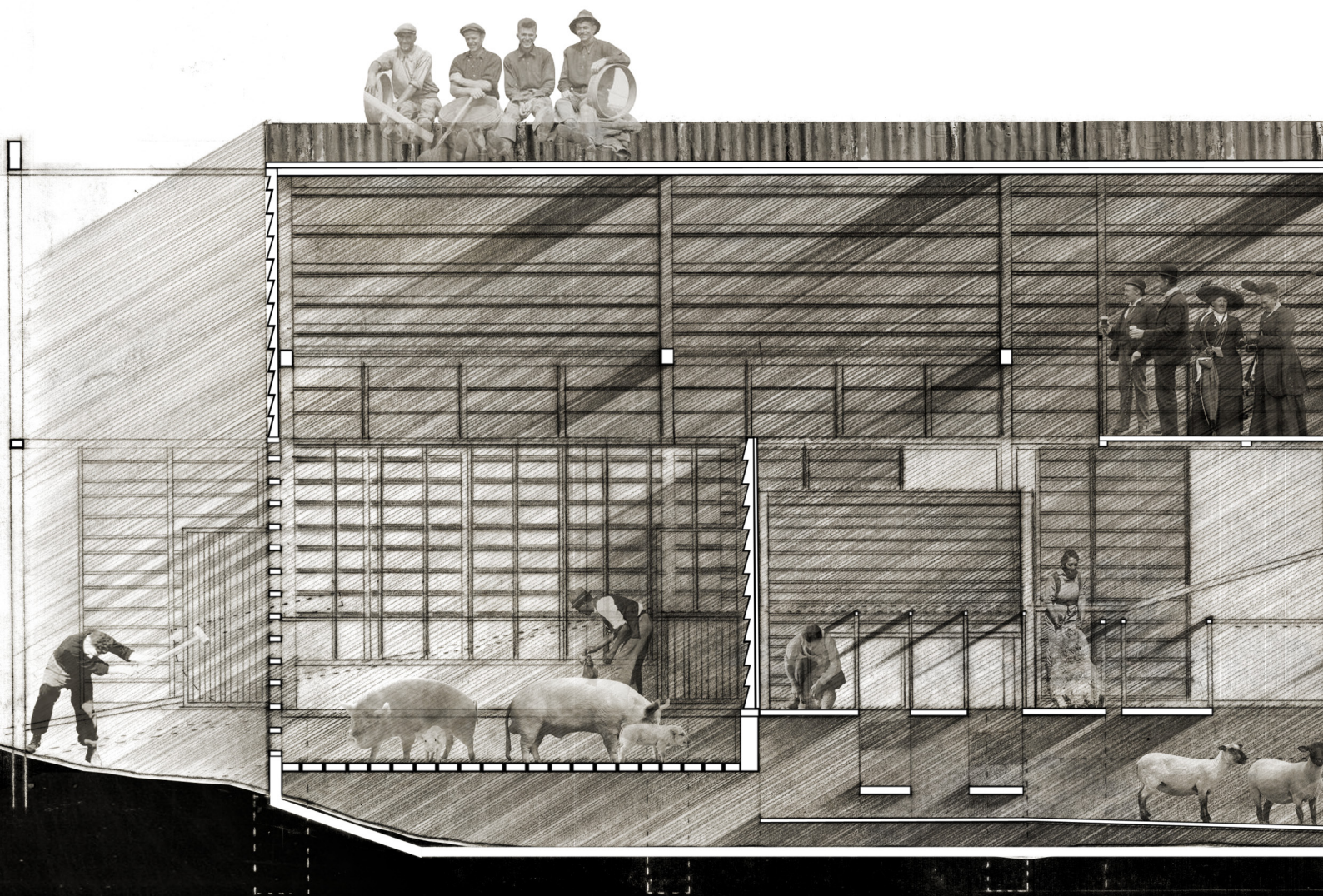
2m

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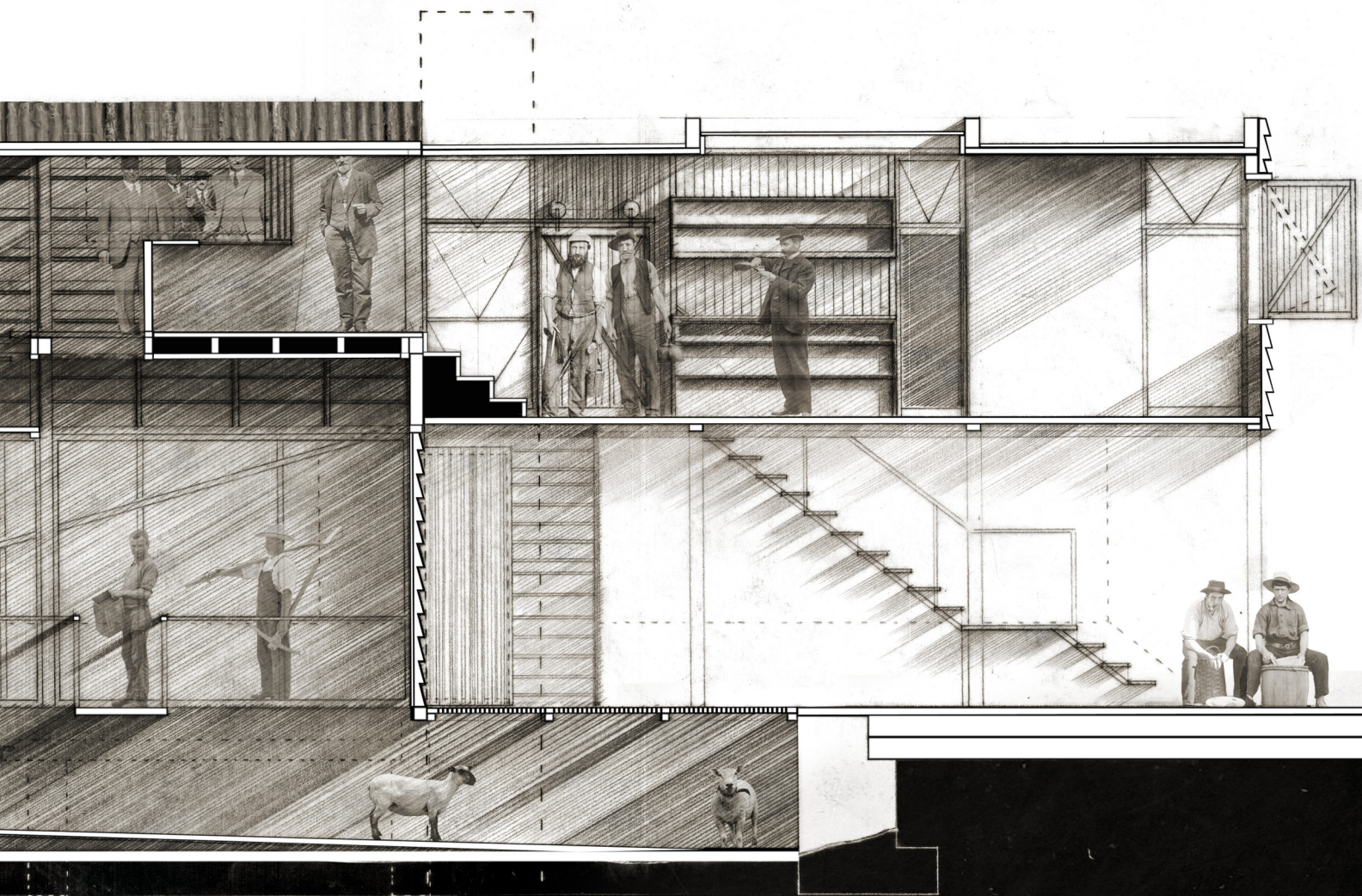


[ Figure 68 Kohuratahi Hall Longitudinal Section CC ]

SECTION CC

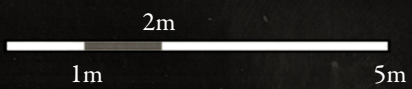




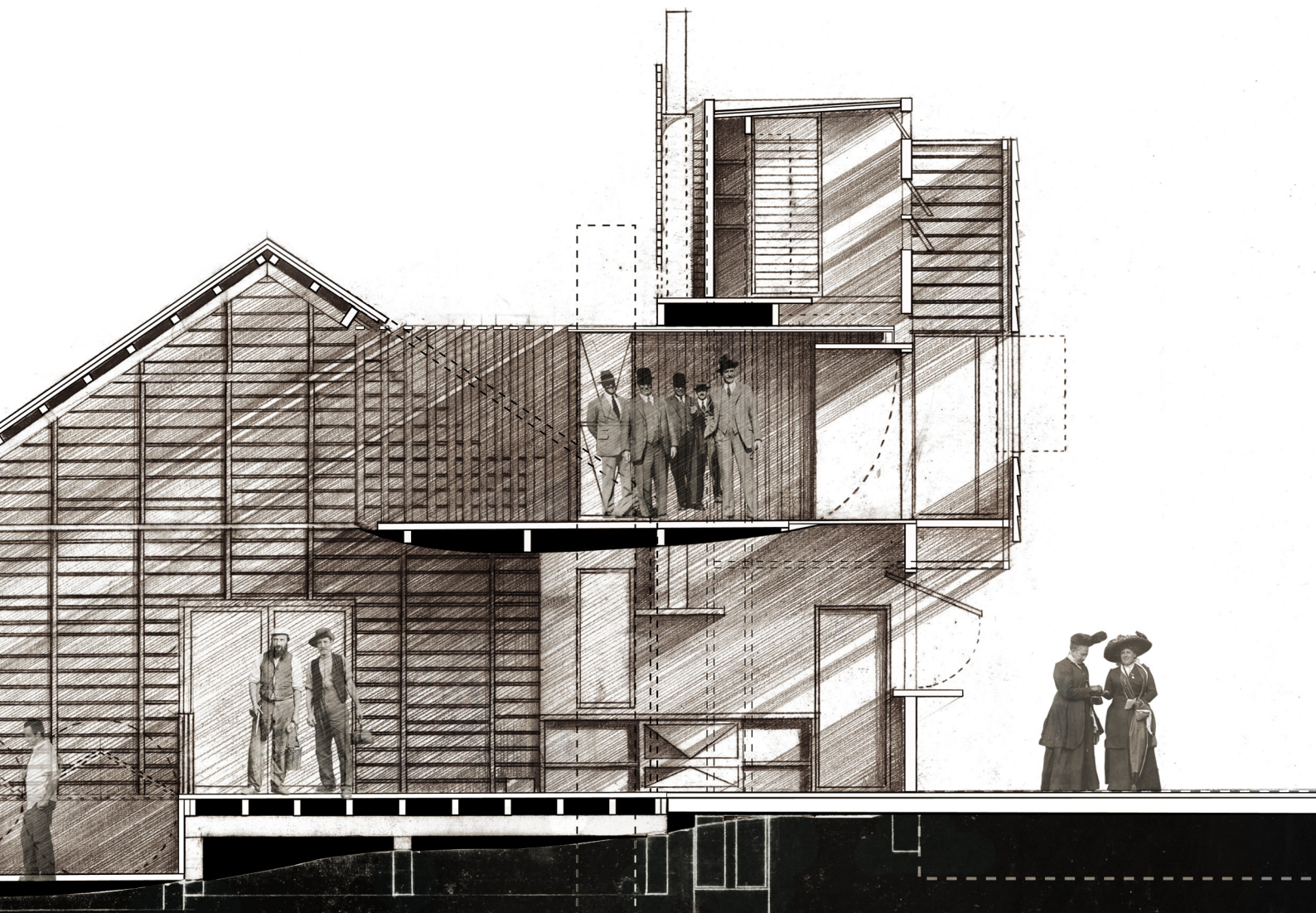




[ Figure 69 Tututawa Hall Longitudinal Section AA ]

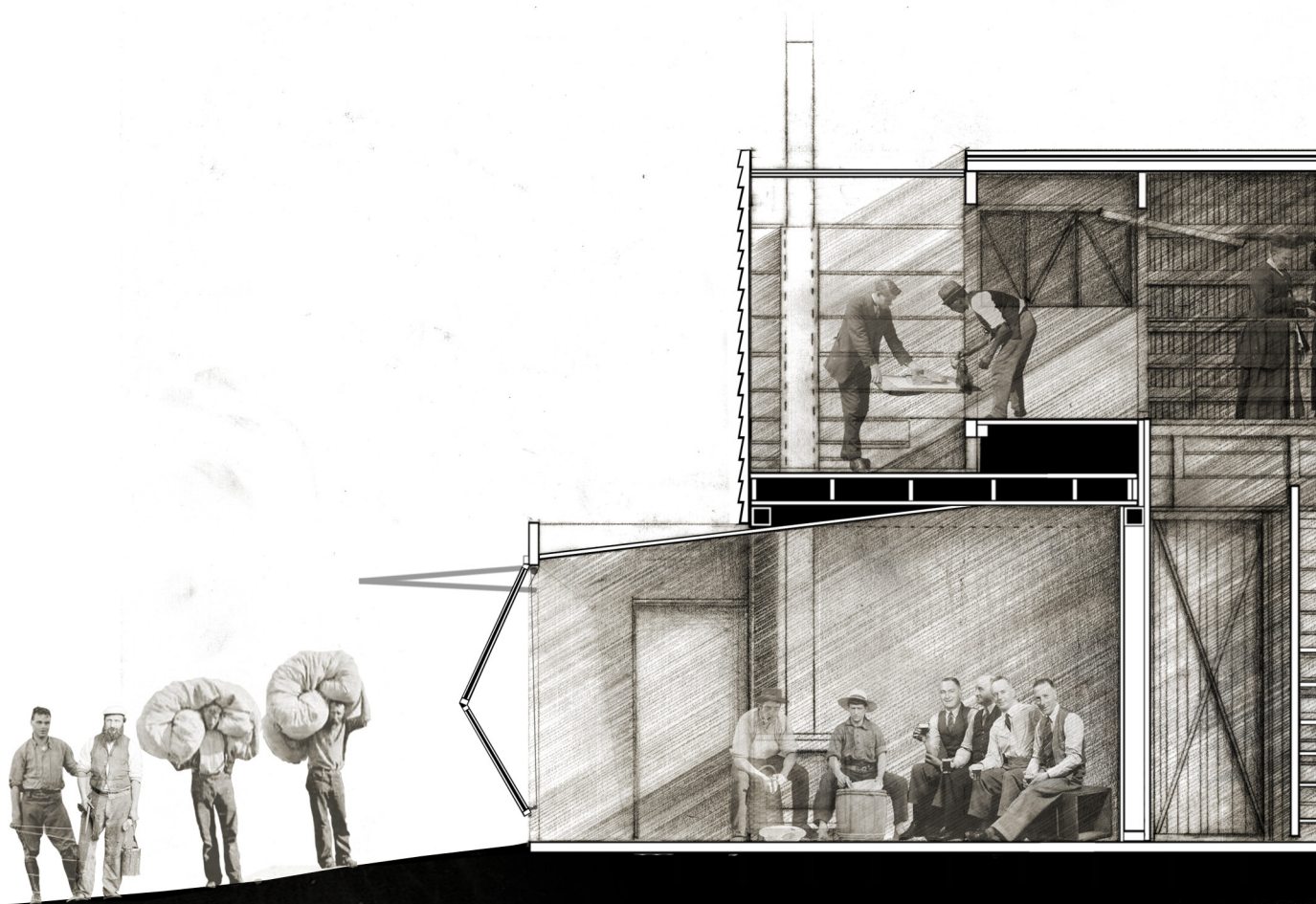






SECTION AA

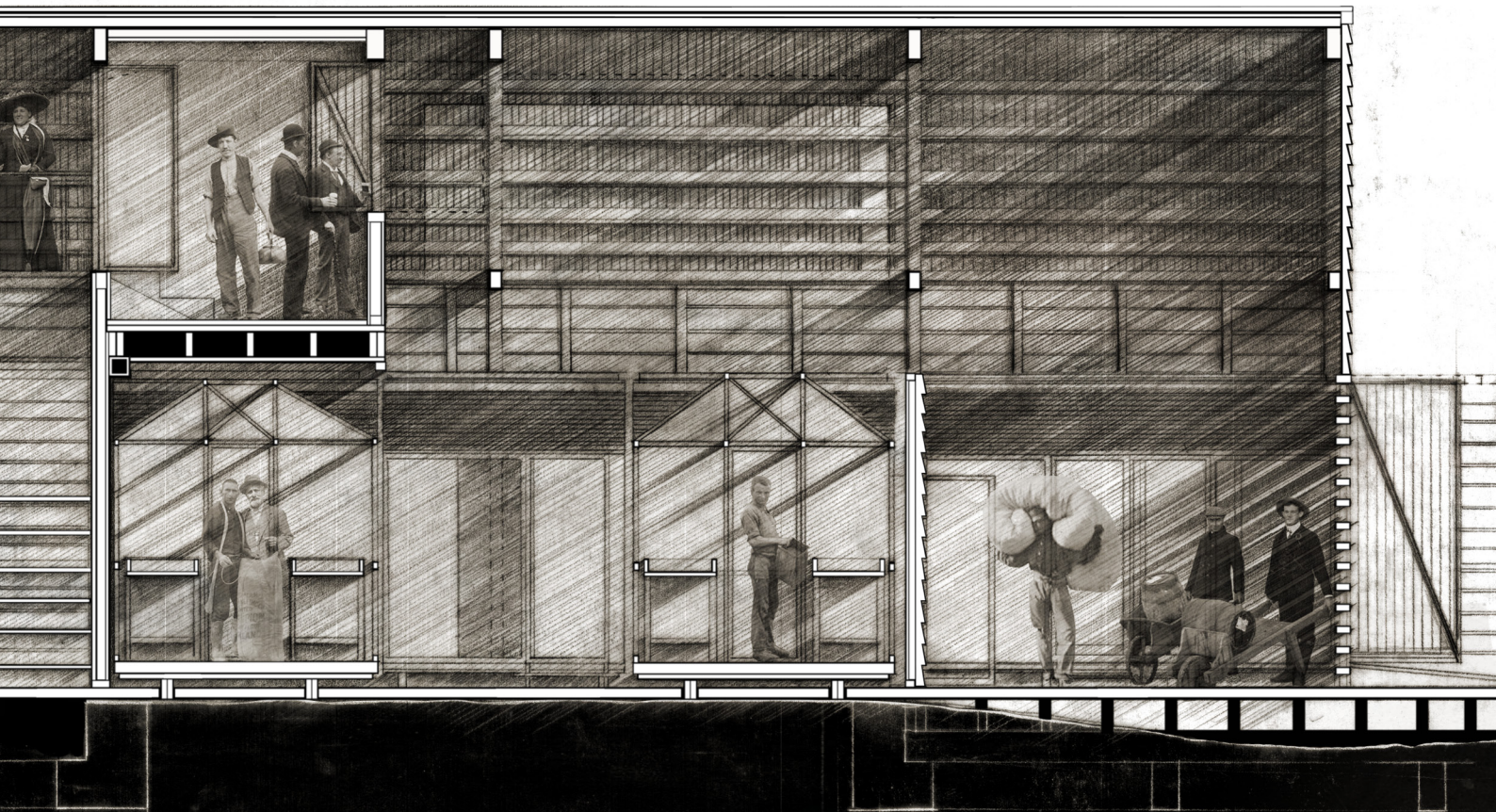




[ Figure 70 Tahora Hall Longitudinal Section BB ]

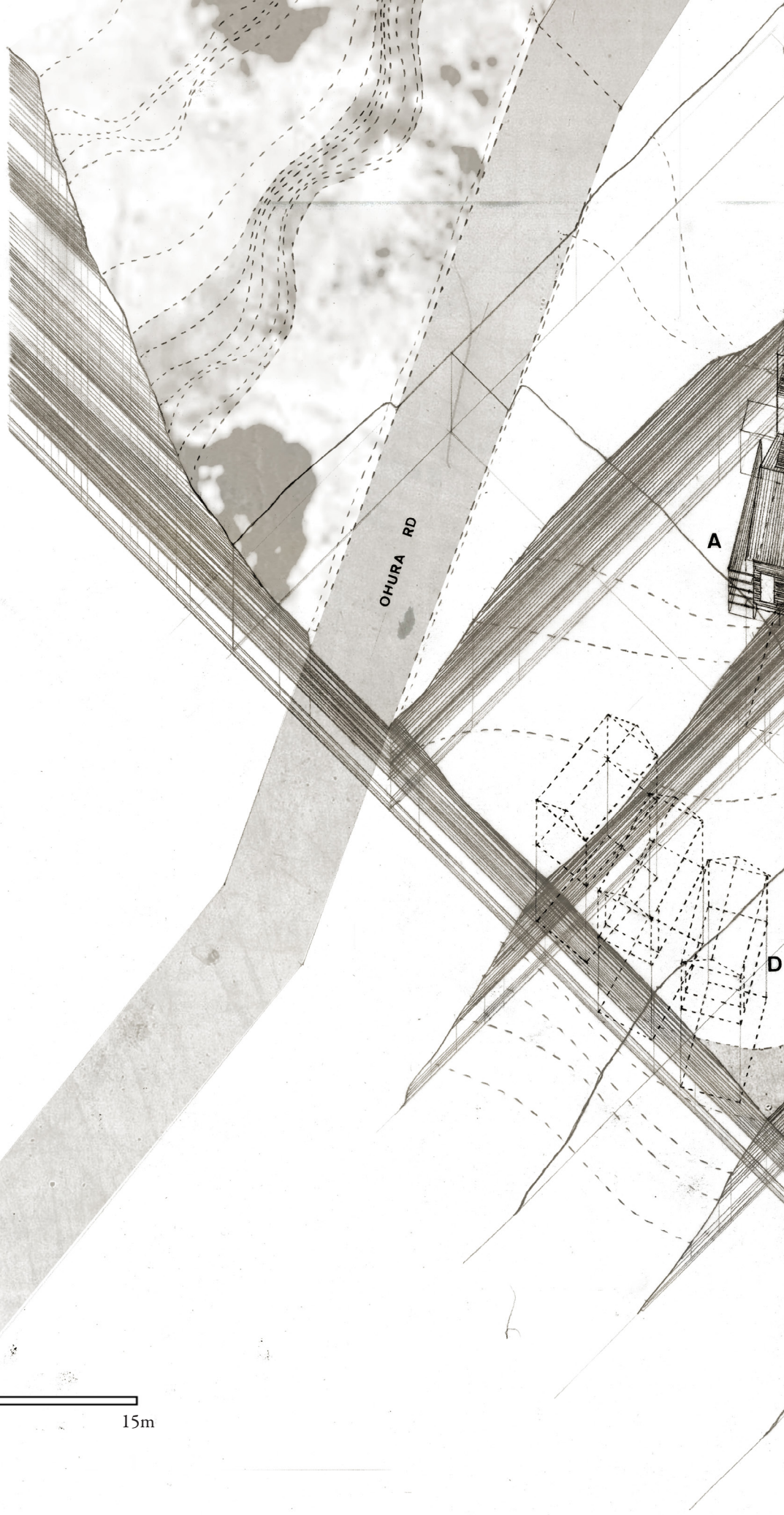






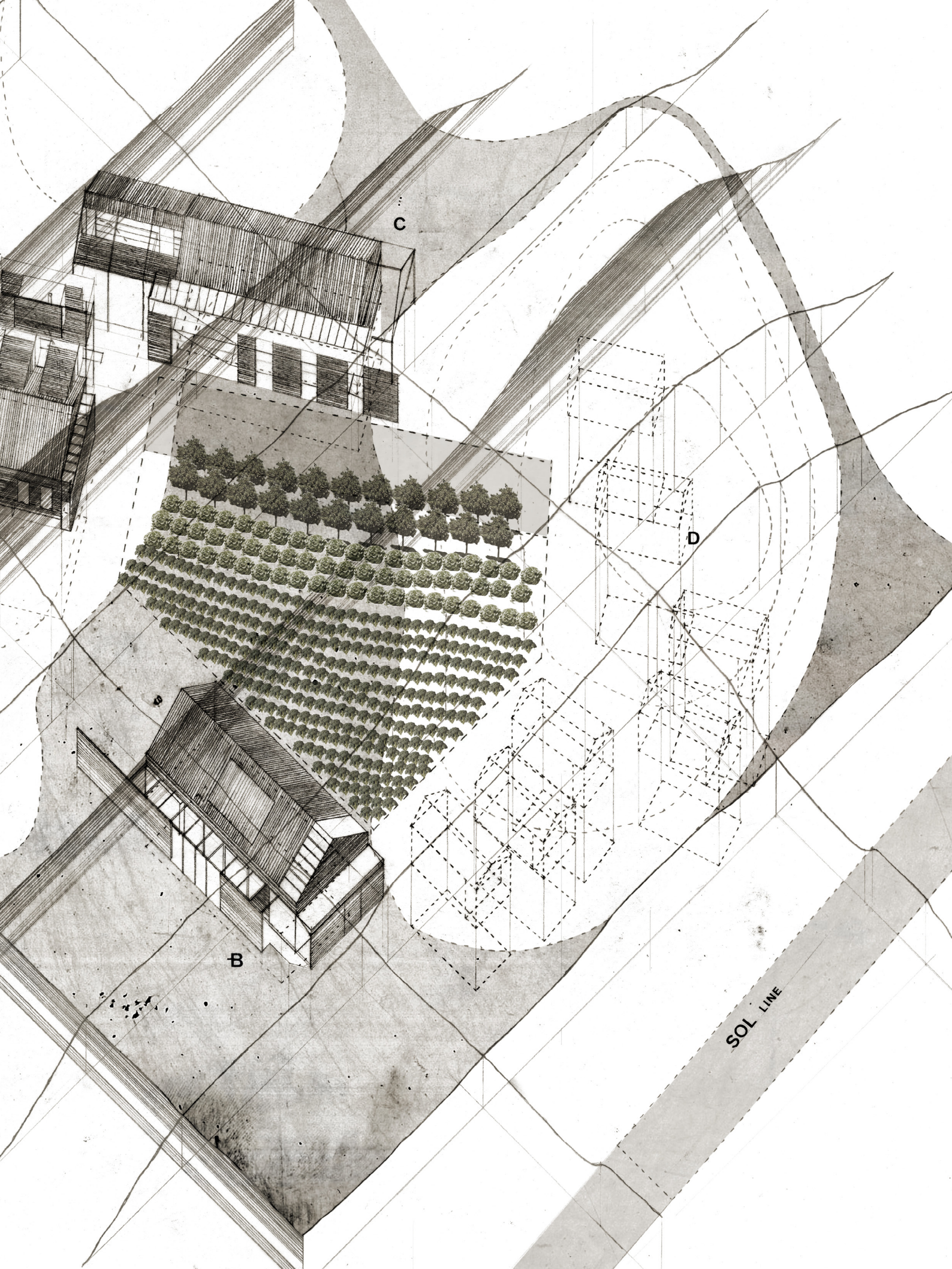
SECTION BB





[ Figure 71 Site Axo ]





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B

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is turned OFF

before leaving hall.



# CHAPTER 6

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## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

[ Figure 72 Note left on Tututawa hall door ]

## DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this research has been to develop a new architectural form for a rural communal facility; one that provides an expression of communal shared life for rural inhabitants. The new expression of communal life was identified through an analysis of existing rural halls in Taranaki, New Zealand. A number of these halls were in disrepair with negligible use, as a result of changing times. Prickett (1995) argues that rural halls were important as social and cultural components in rural communities within New Zealand. Traditionally, rural communities used halls for social events. As a 20<sup>th</sup> century example of rural New Zealand's communal life, underuse is symbolic of an altered rural population due largely to urbanisation. This imbalance may be attributed to a change from social interaction within the public realm to alternative forms of private interaction.

More recently a demographic shift has seen people from urban areas move to rural locations (Statistics NZ, 2006). Both urban migrants and existing rural dwellers have developed alternate understandings of community interaction. Bringing these disparate understandings together, so they synergise in creating a unified communality for future generations, is important. The research explores the challenges of adaptively reusing rural halls in reintroducing communal life back into the public realm, engaging existing rural populations and urban migrants. The ability of rural halls to adapt adequately to contemporary requirements for community has been insufficient. Historically, the construction of rural halls focused on the internal environment, leaving little

consideration for external use. When additional spaces were required, they were haphazardly constructed at the expense of the original form (Prickett, 1995). A limitation attributed to the previous haphazard spatial development of the halls requires consideration of how the existing structures will stimulate an understanding of reconstruction of a community. There is an opportunity to resurrect the value and purpose of rural halls. This would require a consideration of design intentions that respectfully value traditional significance, of the rural hall, with contemporary functionality of communal spaces. Furthermore communities of people will be required to access and utilise the communal spaces, thus attributing to the sustainability of rural halls over time.

Case studies have demonstrated possible avenues of exploration, in reconfiguring facades to provide new points of visual reference (Matta-Clark, 1974). New England's connected farm buildings provide an extreme example of horizontal expansion of rural buildings (Hubka, 1984), with little thought as to the negative effects of horizontal sprawl. To counteract this negative effect, a vertical expansion has been explored within the current developed design study. A further consideration of positively interconnecting function and aspiration resulted from the failed Ohu movement, initiated by New Zealand's Labour Government in the 1970s (Sargaiison & Tower-Sargent, 2004). Geographic isolation of rural communities contributed to the failure, compounded by a reliance on insular, inflexible resources available to those communities. This has led to a consideration of fusing 'sense of place' and 'interconnectedness', to optimise purposeful forms of community engagement in rural locales.

Rural halls, as a residual built form, could be considered inappropriate or unrecognisable when used as a foundation

symbol for a new expression of rural community in contemporary times. The ability to promote a new form of 'community', utilising and remodelling existing buildings, may be problematic, resulting in new urban migrants not recognising the significance of the residual built form. In my experience, structural additions to halls appear to have been made solely to meet the immediate needs of the communities (Thornton, 1986), in isolation of an expanded view of potential interconnectedness.

Drawing on communal diversification Moore (2005) has stressed the importance of diversification through considering a continuum of place; in terms of understanding geographic locations related to global, local and 'meso-scale' significance. More specifically, Kordetzky (2006) has provided a direction for an architectural design implementation, with the intention of breaking down the 'mono-centric-circle' of insular community boundaries. With this in mind, the location of a regional community centre for a new rural population has to be carefully considered. A 'regional' community, considering Moore's (2005) 'locale', has been re-conceptualised to encompass a number of smaller rural towns that come together to utilise a common space. The location of the communal space ought to intersect main transport routes in providing access to the site. As it is intended for future generations, alternative routes ought to be contemplated that may be utilised in future.

The developed design study site for this current regional communal hub was located centrally within the district in a disbanded rural town. The site utilises a catchment plateau situated within a predominant hilly landscape. The site is

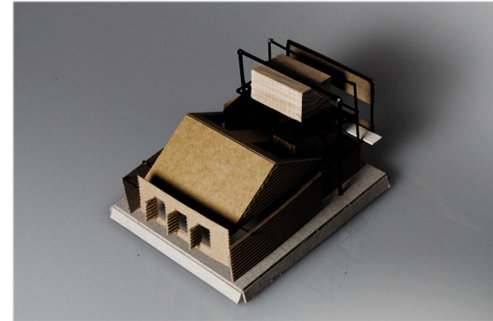
accessed off the main highway, and forms a link between this existing thoroughfare and the main railway line. This railway line is non-operational, but may possess an opportunity as a future arterial route in some form or another.

The location of the site within a catchment zone has implications for the spatial configuration of buildings within the community facility. It became important to identify the areas within the site that are prone to flooding. By situating the buildings on areas of land identified as lying above the flood plain level, the risk of buildings getting water damage is diminished. In a preliminary design investigation the potential flood plain areas were mapped and became self-imposed site constraints on an otherwise unimpeded area of land. A perceived benefit to locating this communal facility on raised land, yet still inherently connected to flood prone land, is the opportunity for people to experience the dynamic natural cycles that occur within a landscape. A consideration within Critical Regionalist Theory is the reconnection that architecture can provide between humans and their environment (Lefavre & Tzonis, 2003). It is therefore important to create the ability for people to recognise the dynamic qualities of the natural environment within a contemporary rural community. In the developed design the built forms magnify this relationship by providing a point of reference through their 'stillness' on the landscape (Brand, 1994). The creation of 'communal nodal spaces' and 'meeting - service pod spaces' in specific vantage points have been explored, utilising views over the landscape and into the working areas of the buildings in providing a visual connection between the human environment and the natural environment.

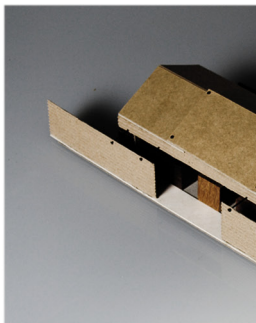
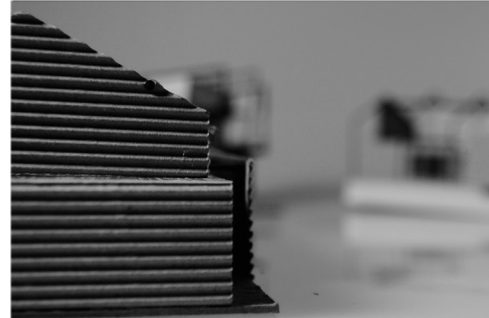
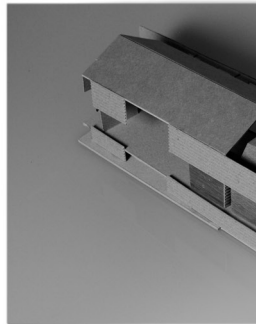


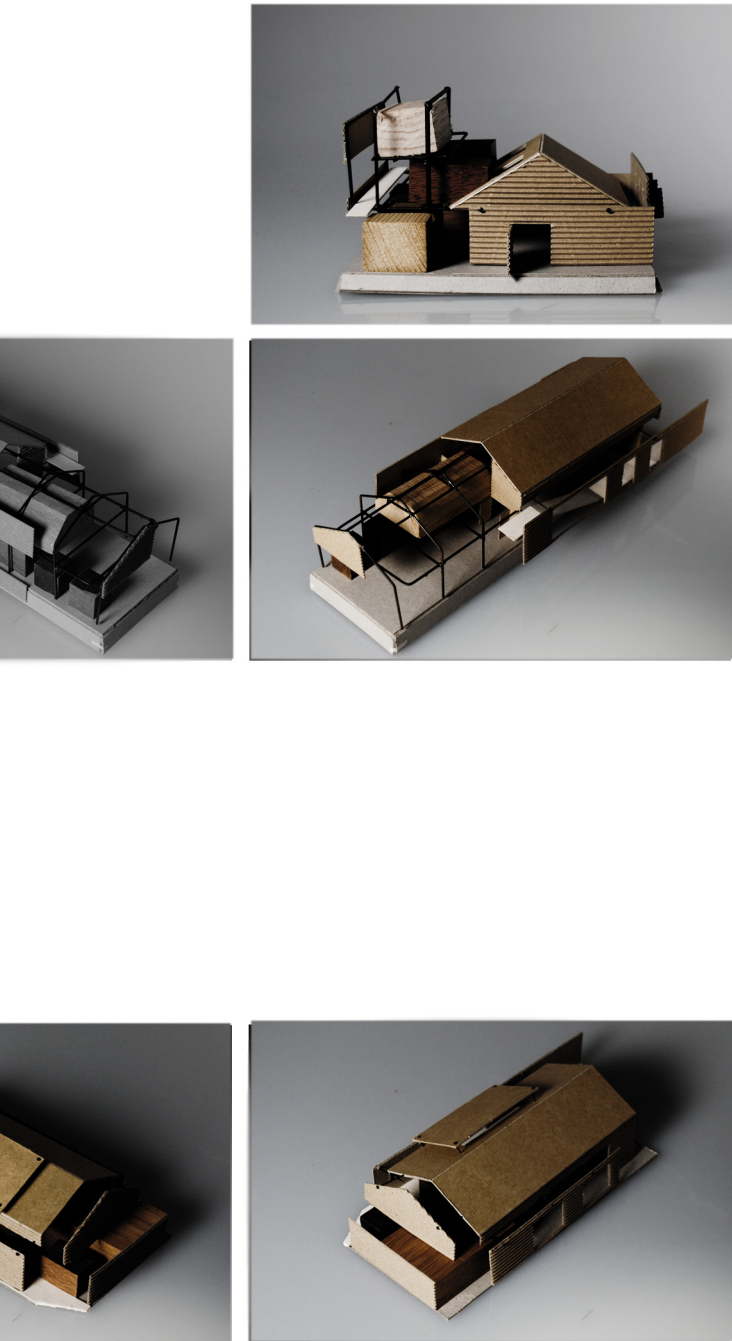
Critical Regionalist Theory provides a point of departure for architectural implementation, with the privileging of complex human ties through the consideration of cultural practices. By ensuring that local knowledge manifests itself in the built-form as well as the programme considerations, these notions align with Adaptive Reuse thinking; acknowledging the way in which older buildings are able to provide insight for an occupant into the former use, and the values, beliefs and traditions of those who created them. Rural halls provide a point of departure for exploring both of these positions; Critical Regionalism and Adaptive Reuse.

The developed design explored the creation of multiuse spaces, utilising the structures of three existing New Zealand rural halls. The inability to present the buildings as a structured whole was challenging, with the developed design attempting to address this consideration by employing the use of agricultural fields as the central core element in the complex. The aim in doing this was to cement the communal facilities links to the landscape. The design demonstrates that it is possible to create a contemporary communal complex that utilises rural halls and engages with the landscape; however compromises were made. A lack of space within the existing hall structures required an expansion of their floor plates, both horizontally and vertically. Furthermore the original exterior facade of the halls provided limited synergy between the perceived communal learning programmes taking place inside and people moving around the exterior of the complex. A favourable solution was identified, through analysis of a case study (Bingo X Ninths) in creating of a greater physical and visual connection between interior and external environments.



[ Figure 73 Final Hall models ]





Expanding the floor plates horizontally also generated additional challenges. The more the floor plate is extended horizontally, in catering with new spatial requirements, the more diluted the original hall form becomes. In addressing this challenge, the placement of additional structures, in a manner befitting the original forms of the rural halls, retaining their visual recognition by the community, was important. Different solutions were needed in order to provide opportunities for expansion that didn't result in dissolution of the original forms of the hall. This led to a critique of the way in which rural buildings are adapted to cater to an expanded programme (Hubka, 1984), resulting in an exploration into differing degrees of vertical expansion. Steel structures attached to the existing halls housed additional spatial requirements in 'pods'. The pods, viewed as small vertical spaces, contrasted the original horizontal hall form, in providing a visual separation to occur between the forms. The facade treatment saw the pushing, pulling and cutting of the exterior envelope in order to provide views into the interior of the halls, whilst still providing a recognition that the parts all came from the original whole.

The exterior facade of the hall has traditionally created a barrier, isolating interior from exterior aspects. Whilst large windows could be used to provide a level of permeability, the resulting representation has potential to detract from the original hall form. A critique of ways in which the external facades of the hall may be manipulated has resulted in the use of 'exploded' facade treatment and 'vertical stacking' of additional spaces. Vertical stacking may be considered by some local communities as pushing the rural hall form to far. The design solution was to accommodate a multiple use

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of spaces. However, by attempting to create multiple use of space an over-specification of some parts may have occurred. Consultation with communities is recommended to ensure a favourable design outcome.

In thinking about future research opportunities, it would be advisable to carry out a comprehensive structural analysis of the rural halls used for this project, before a scheme like this was to occur. Whilst this project has used aspects of Critical Regionalist Theory in focusing on the creation of physical social interaction within a rural contemporary community, further research into technological use in a project like this could be explored. This includes those forms of technology that are used in creating other forms of social interaction and communities, at a global scale. The ability to utilise technological means to publicise, promote and allow people to be recognised, within a local community, at a global scale can offer huge benefits to the local communities.



## CONCLUSION

This research has drawn together the Adaptive Reuse of rural halls with Critical Regionalist Theory; in creating a contemporary expression of rural communal shared life within the public realm, whilst acknowledging the historic significance of this building form in rural New Zealand. Upon arriving at the end of this research, I have realised that although starting with the exploration into the demise in use of rural halls, research shifted and the cultural phenomenon studied here has focused more on rural based community and the demise in its transformation.

An experimental design has been created, which utilises both representational and symbolic community notions. Limitations of the design have been identified, relating mainly to resource concerns. In the New Zealand context, the viability of moving and reworking three existing derelict rural halls has been explored, with particular emphasis on the re-utilisation of space and function. This exploration, combined with critique and analysis of architectural forms has resulted in the design of a contemporary building complex that fuses a 'sense of place' with an appreciation for 'interconnectedness'. Whilst areas within the complex have been created to encourage physical interaction amongst the community, this rests on the level of involvement that members within the region wish to have. Although this is a major factor in the success of the project, the advantages of using, and restoring a well-known rural communal building provides a positive image within the existing rural

community. It may also offer a chance for new residents to become part of that community; therefore providing validity to this form of project.

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## APPENDIX 1

### **Eight Points for Regenerative Regionalism: A Nonmodern Manifesto**

- 1) *A regenerative architecture will construct social settings that can be lived differently.* This point rejects the notion that technology in itself might be an autonomous agent capable of liberating humans from the oppressive natural and/or social conditions of place. Rather, it suggests that human institutions are both affected by and, in turn, affect the social construction of technological networks. Humans might, then, rationally and democratically construct regenerative technologies as the engaged agents of the humans and nonhumans that collectively inhabit a place.
- 2) *So as to participate in local constellations of ideas, a regenerative architecture will participate in the tectonic history of a place.* Participation in the tectonic history of a place requires that the interventions of architects be, first, intelligible to local citizens and, second, perceived as relevant to the material conditions of everyday life.
- 3) *Rather than construct objects, the producers of regenerative architecture will participate in the construction of integrated cultural and ecological processes.* Historically, architects have tended to claim sole authorship for places and thus obscure the complex social and ecological processes in which buildings participate. A regenerative architecture will de-emphasize the significance of objects and emphasize the construction of processes that relate social activity to ecological conditions.
- 4) *A regenerative architecture will resist the centers of calculation by magnifying local labor and ecological variables.* The overt political program of regenerative architecture will include two principal strategies. First, the producers of regenerative architecture will consciously subvert the universalizing and optimizing measures of objective building performance. These

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are typically promoted by such technological networks as the air-conditioning industry and measured in BTUs, calories, and watts. This strategy should not be construed to mean that human comfort is to be devalued or energy squandered. Second, regenerative architecture will rely upon technologies that reveal the manner of their making to magnify local labor knowledge and local ecological conditions.

5) *Rather than participate in the aestheticized politics implicit in technological displays, regenerative architecture will construct the technologies of everyday life through democratic means.* The market has increasingly manipulated architectural technology in order to stimulate those consumers whose appetites have become dulled by the ever-increasing rates of production and consumption. A regenerative architecture will subvert the power of market-driven technologies by engaging citizens in decision making about the technologies that enable everyday life.

6) *The technological interventions of regenerative architecture will contribute to the normalization of critical practices.* Rather than construct critical objects that inform viewers of how history might have been different, regenerative architecture will strive to influence normative construction practices. This proposition recognizes that the ontological dimension of building takes precedence over the representational—that the repetitive material practices of construction do more to influence the operation of society than do singular aesthetic critiques. In this sense, the reproduction of life-enhancing practices is preferred over aesthetic commentary.

7) *The practice of regenerative architecture will enable places by fostering convergent human agreements.* A durable architecture need only delay the inevitability of decay. A sustainable architecture need only maintain the status quo of natural carrying capacity. A regenerative architecture, however, must concern itself with the reproduction of the institutional agreements that tie humans to the ecological conditions of a place. This suggests that architecture itself must facilitate democratic consideration of the tidal cycle, of prevailing breezes, or of the coolth of the earth itself. This is a matter of democracy and technological development.

8) *A regenerative architecture will prefer the development of life-enhancing practices to the creation of critical and historically instructive places.* The critical place helps society to understand that the social construction of places and technologies might have been different. Such a place is a memorial to the forgotten or as yet untried modes of non-capitalist production that would transform nature in some other way. My final point is that critical places are not in themselves productive. Better yet, a critical place can become regenerative only through the production and reproduction of democratic, life-enhancing practices.





## APPENDIX 2

## Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance

KENNETH FRAMPTON

*The phenomenon of universalization, while being an advancement of mankind, at the same time constitutes a sort of subtle destruction, not only of traditional cultures, which might not be an irreparable wrong, but also of what I shall call for the time being the creative nucleus of great cultures, that nucleus on the basis of which we interpret life, what I shall call in advance the ethical and mythical nucleus of mankind. The conflict springs up from there. We have the feeling that this single world civilization at the same time exerts a sort of attrition or wearing away at the expense of the cultural resources which have made the great civilizations of the past. This threat is expressed, among other disturbing effects, by the spreading before our eyes of a mediocre civilization which is the absurd counterpart of what I was just calling elementary culture. Everywhere throughout the world, one finds the same bad movie, the same slot machines, the same plastic or aluminum atrocities, the same twisting of language by propaganda, etc. It seems as if mankind, by approaching en masse a basic consumer culture, were also stopped en masse at a subcultural level. Thus we come to the crucial problem confronting nations just rising from underdevelopment. In order to get on the road toward modernization, is it necessary to jettison the old cultural past which has been the raison d'être of a nation? ... Whence the paradox: on the one hand, it has to root itself in the soil of its past, forge a national spirit, and unfurl this spiritual and cultural revindication before the colonialist's personality. But in order to take part in modern civilization, it is necessary at the same time to take part in scientific, technical, and political rationality, something which very often requires the pure and simple abandon of a whole cultural past. It is a fact: every culture cannot sustain and absorb the shock of modern civilization. There is the paradox: how to become modern and to return to sources; how to revive an old, dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization.<sup>1</sup>*

—Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*

### 1. Culture and Civilization

Modern building is now so universally conditioned by optimized technology that the possibility of creating significant urban form has become extremely limited. The restrictions jointly imposed by automotive distribution and the volatile play of land speculation serve to limit the scope of urban design to such a degree that any intervention tends to be reduced either to the manipulation of elements predetermined by the imperatives of production, or to a kind of superficial masking which modern development requires for the facilitation of marketing and the maintenance of social control. Today the practice of architecture seems to be increasingly polarized between, on the one hand, a so-called "high-tech" approach predicated exclusively upon production and, on the other, the provision of a "compensatory façade" to cover up the harsh realities of this universal system.<sup>2</sup>

Twenty years ago the dialectical interplay between civilization and culture still afforded the possibility of maintaining some general control over the shape and significance of the urban fabric. The last two decades, however, have radically transformed the metropolitan centers of the developed world. What were still essentially 19th-century city fabrics in the early 1960s have since become progressively overlaid by the two symbiotic instruments of Megalopolitan development—the freestanding high-rise and the serpentine freeway. The former has finally come into its own as the prime device for realizing the increased land value brought into being by the latter. The typical downtown which, up to twenty years ago, still presented a mixture of residential stock with tertiary and secondary industry has now become little more than a *burolandschaft* city-scape: the victory of universal civilization over locally inflected culture. The predicament posed by Ricoeur—namely, "how to become modern and to return to sources"<sup>3</sup>—now seems to be circumvented by the apocalyptic thrust of modernization, while the ground in which the mytho-ethical nucleus of a society might take root has become eroded by the rapacity of development.<sup>4</sup>

Ever since the beginning of the Enlightenment, *civilization* has been primarily concerned with instrumental reason, while *culture* has addressed itself to the specifics of expression—to the realization of the being and the evolution of its collective psycho-social reality. Today civilization tends to be increasingly embroiled in a never-ending chain of "means and ends" wherein, according to Hannah Arendt, "The 'in order to' has become the content of the 'for the sake of,' utility established as meaning generates meaninglessness."<sup>5</sup>

## 2. The Rise and Fall of the Avant-Garde

The emergence of the avant-garde is inseparable from the modernization of both society and architecture. Over the past century-and-a-half avant-garde culture has assumed different roles, at times facilitating the process of modernization and thereby acting, in part, as a progressive, liberative form, at times being virulently opposed to the positivism of bourgeois culture. By and large, avant-garde architecture has played a positive role with regard to the progressive trajectory of the Enlightenment. Exemplary of this is the role played by Neoclassicism: from the mid-18th century onwards it serves as both a symbol of and an instrument for the propagation of universal civilization. The mid-19th century, however, saw the historical avant-garde assume an adversary stance towards both industrial process and Neoclassical form. This is the first concerted reaction on the part of "tradition" to the process of modernization as the Gothic Revival and the Arts-and-Crafts movements take up a categorically negative attitude towards both utilitarianism and the division of labor. Despite this critique, modernization continues unabated, and throughout the last half of the 19th century bourgeois art distances itself progressively from the harsh realities of colonialism and paleo-technological exploitation. Thus at the end of the century the avant-gardist Art Nouveau takes refuge in the compensatory thesis of "art for art's sake," retreating to nostalgic or phantasmagoric dream-worlds inspired by the cathartic hermeticism of Wagner's music-drama.

The progressive avant-garde emerges in full force, however, soon after the turn of the century with the advent of Futurism. This unequivocal critique of the *ancien régime* gives rise to the primary positive cultural formations of the 1920s: to Purism, Neoplasticism and Constructivism. These movements are the last occasion on which radical avant-gardism is able to identify itself wholeheartedly with the process of modernization. In the immediate aftermath of World War I—"the war to end all wars"—the triumphs of science, medicine and industry seemed to confirm the liberative promise of the modern project. In the 1930s, however, the prevailing backwardness and chronic insecurity of the newly urbanized masses, the upheavals caused by war, revolution and economic depression, followed by a sudden and crucial need for psycho-social stability in the face of global political and economic crises, all induce a state of affairs in which the interests of both monopoly and state capitalism are, for the first time in modern history, divorced from the liberative drives of cultural modernization. Universal civilization and world culture cannot be drawn upon to sustain "the myth of the State," and one reaction-formation succeeds another as the historical avant-garde founders on the rocks of the Spanish Civil War.

Not least among these reactions is the reassertion of Neo-Kantian aesthetics as a substitute for the culturally liberative modern project. Confused by the political and cultural politics of Stalinism, former left-wing protagonists of socio-cultural modernization now recommend a strategic withdrawal from the project of totally transforming the existing reality. This renunciation is predicated on the belief that as long as the struggle between socialism and capitalism persists (with the manipulative mass-culture politics that this conflict necessarily entails), the modern world cannot continue to entertain the prospect of evolving a marginal, liberative, avant-gardist culture which would break (or speak of the break) with the history of bourgeois repression. Close to *l'art pour l'art*, this position was first advanced as a "holding pattern" in Clement Greenberg's "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" of 1939; this essay concludes somewhat ambiguously with the words: "Today we look to socialism *simply* for the preservation of whatever living culture we have right now."<sup>6</sup> Greenberg reformulated this position in specifically formalist terms in his essay "Modernist Painting" of 1965, wherein he wrote:

Having been denied by the Enlightenment of all tasks they could take seriously, they [the arts] looked as though they were going to be assimilated to entertainment pure and simple, and entertainment looked as though it was going to be assimilated, like religion, to therapy. The arts could save themselves from this leveling down only by demonstrating that the kind of experience they provided was valuable in its own right and not to be obtained from any other kind of activity.<sup>7</sup>

Despite this defensive intellectual stance, the arts have nonetheless continued to gravitate, if not towards entertainment, then certainly towards commodity and—in the case of that which Charles Jencks has since classified as Post-Modern Architecture<sup>8</sup>—towards pure technique or pure scenography. In the latter case, the so-called postmodern architects are merely feeding the media-society with gratuitous, quietistic images rather than proffering, as they claim, a creative *rappel à l'ordre* after the supposedly proven bankruptcy of the liberative modern project. In this regard, as Andreas Huyssens has written, "The American postmodernist avant-garde, therefore, is not only the end game of avant-gardism. It also represents the fragmentation and decline of critical adversary culture."<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, it is true that modernization can no longer be simplistically identified as liberative *in se*, in part because of the domination of mass culture by the media-industry (above all television which, as Jerry Mander reminds us, expanded its persuasive power a thousandfold between 1945 and 1975<sup>10</sup>) and in part because the trajectory of modernization has brought us to the threshold of nuclear war and the annihilation of the entire species. So too, avant-gardism can no longer be sustained as a liberative moment, in part



because its initial utopian promise has been overrun by the internal rationality of instrumental reason. This "closure" was perhaps best formulated by Herbert Marcuse when he wrote:

The technological *apriori* is a political *apriori* inasmuch as the transformation of nature involves that of man, and inasmuch as the "man-made creations" issue from and re-enter the societal ensemble. One may still insist that the machinery of the technological universe is "as such" indifferent towards political ends—it can revolutionize or retard society. . . . However, when technics becomes the universal form of material production, it circumscribes an entire culture, it projects a historical totality—a "world."<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Critical Regionalism and World Culture

Architecture can only be sustained today as a critical practice if it assumes an *arrière-garde* position, that is to say, one which distances itself equally from the Enlightenment myth of progress and from a reactionary, unrealistic impulse to return to the architectonic forms of the preindustrial past. A critical *arrière-garde* has to remove itself from both the optimization of advanced technology and the ever-present tendency to regress into nostalgic historicism or the glibly decorative. It is my contention that only an *arrière-garde* has the capacity to cultivate a resistant, identity-giving culture while at the same time having discreet recourse to universal technique.

It is necessary to qualify the term *arrière-garde* so as to diminish its critical scope from such conservative policies as Populism or sentimental Regionalism with which it has often been associated. In order to ground *arrière-gardism* in a rooted yet critical strategy, it is helpful to appropriate the term Critical Regionalism as coined by Alex Tzonis and Liliane Lefaivre in "The Grid and the Pathway" (1981); in this essay they caution against the ambiguity of regional reformism, as this has become occasionally manifest since the last quarter of the 19th century:

Regionalism has dominated architecture in almost all countries at some time during the past two centuries and a half. By way of general definition we can say that it upholds the individual and local architectonic features against more universal and abstract ones. In addition, however, regionalism bears the hallmark of ambiguity. On the one hand, it has been associated with movements of reform and liberation; . . . on the other, it has proved a powerful tool of repression and chauvinism. . . . Certainly, critical regionalism has its limitations. The upheaval of the populist movement—a more developed form of regionalism—has brought to light these weak points. No new architecture can emerge without a new kind of relations between designer and user, with-

out new kinds of programs. . . . Despite these limitations critical regionalism is a bridge over which any humanistic architecture of the future must pass.<sup>12</sup>

The fundamental strategy of Critical Regionalism is to mediate the impact of universal civilization with elements derived *indirectly* from the peculiarities of a particular place. It is clear from the above that Critical Regionalism depends upon maintaining a high level of critical self-consciousness. It may find its governing inspiration in such things as the range and quality of the local light, or in a *tectonic* derived from a peculiar structural mode, or in the topography of a given site.

But it is necessary, as I have already suggested, to distinguish between Critical Regionalism and simple-minded attempts to revive the hypothetical forms of a lost vernacular. In contradistinction to Critical Regionalism, the primary vehicle of Populism is the *communicative* or *instrumental* sign. Such a sign seeks to evoke not a critical perception of reality, but rather the sublimation of a desire for direct experience through the provision of information. Its tactical aim is to attain, as economically as possible, a preconceived level of gratification in behavioristic terms. In this respect, the strong affinity of Populism for the rhetorical techniques and imagery of advertising is hardly accidental. Unless one guards against such a convergence, one will confuse the resistant capacity of a critical practice with the demagogic tendencies of Populism.

The case can be made that Critical Regionalism as a cultural strategy is as much a bearer of *world culture* as it is a vehicle of *universal civilization*. And while it is obviously misleading to conceive of our inheriting world culture to the same degree as we are all heirs to universal civilization, it is nonetheless evident that since we are, in principle, subject to the impact of both, we have no choice but to take cognizance today of their interaction. In this regard the practice of Critical Regionalism is contingent upon a process of double mediation. In the first place, it has to "deconstruct" the overall spectrum of world culture which it inevitably inherits; in the second place, it has to achieve, through synthetic contradiction, a manifest critique of universal civilization. To deconstruct world culture is to remove oneself from that eclecticism of the *fin de siècle* which appropriated alien, exotic forms in order to revitalize the expressivity of an enervated society. (One thinks of the "form-force" aesthetics of Henri van de Velde or the "whiplash-Arabesques" of Victor Horta.) On the other hand, the mediation of universal technique involves imposing limits on the optimization of industrial and postindustrial technology. The future necessity for re-synthesizing principles and elements drawn from diverse origins and quite different ideological sets seems to be alluded to by Ricoeur when he writes:

No one can say what will become of our civilization when it has really met different civilizations by means other than the shock of conquest and

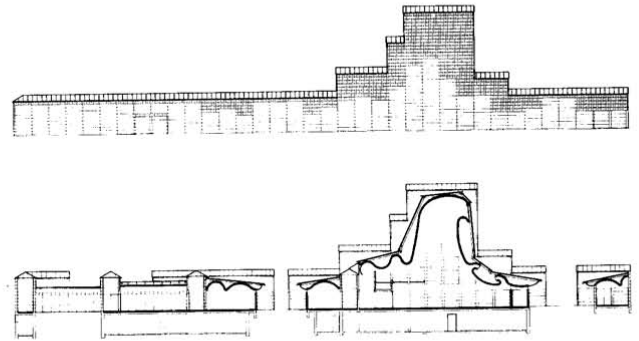
domination. But we have to admit that this encounter has not yet taken place at the level of an authentic dialogue. That is why we are in a kind of lull or interregnum in which we can no longer practice the dogmatism of a single truth and in which we are not yet capable of conquering the skepticism into which we have stepped.<sup>13</sup>

A parallel and complementary sentiment was expressed by the Dutch architect Aldo Van Eyck who, quite coincidentally, wrote at the same time: "Western civilization habitually identifies itself with civilization as such on the pontifical assumption that what is not like it is a deviation, less advanced, primitive, or, at best, exotically interesting at a safe distance."<sup>14</sup>

That Critical Regionalism cannot be simply based on the autochthonous forms of a specific region alone was well put by the Californian architect Hamilton Harwell Harris when he wrote, now nearly thirty years ago:

Opposed to the Regionalism of Restriction is another type of regionalism, the Regionalism of Liberation. This is the manifestation of a region that is especially in tune with the emerging thought of the time. We call such a manifestation "regional" only because it has not yet emerged elsewhere. . . . A region may develop ideas. A region may accept ideas. Imagination and intelligence are necessary for both. In California in the late Twenties and Thirties modern European ideas met a still-developing regionalism. In New England, on the other hand, European Modernism met a rigid and restrictive regionalism that at first resisted and then surrendered. New England accepted European Modernism whole because its own regionalism had been reduced to a collection of restrictions.<sup>15</sup>

The scope for achieving a self-conscious synthesis between universal civilization and world culture may be specifically illustrated by Jørn Utzon's Bagsvaerd Church, built near Copenhagen in 1976, a work whose complex meaning stems directly from a revealed conjunction between, on the one hand, the *rationality* of normative technique and, on the other, the *arationality* of idiosyncratic form. Inasmuch as this building is organized around a regular grid and is comprised of repetitive, in-fill modules—concrete blocks in the first instance and precast concrete wall units in the second—we may justly regard it as the outcome of universal civilization. Such a building system, comprising an *in situ* concrete frame with prefabricated concrete in-fill elements, has indeed been applied countless times all over the developed world. However, the universality of this productive method—which includes, in this instance, patent glazing on the roof—is abruptly mediated when one passes from the optimal modular skin of the exterior to the far less optimal reinforced concrete shell vault spanning the nave. This last is obviously a relatively uneconomic mode of construction, selected and manipulated first for its direct associative capacity—that is to say, the vault signifies sacred space—and second for its



Jørn Utzon, *Bagsvaerd Church*, 1973-76.  
North elevation and section.

multiple cross-cultural references. While the reinforced concrete shell vault has long since held an established place within the received tectonic canon of Western modern architecture, the highly configured section adopted in this instance is hardly familiar, and the only precedent for such a form, in a sacred context, is Eastern rather than Western—namely, the Chinese pagoda roof, cited by Utzon in his seminal essay of 1963, "Platforms and Plateaus."<sup>16</sup> Although the main Bagsvaerd vault spontaneously signifies its religious nature, it does so in such a way as to preclude an exclusively Occidental or Oriental reading of the code by which the public and sacred space is constituted. The intent of this expression is, of course, to secularize the sacred form by precluding the usual set of semantic religious references and thereby the corresponding range of automatic responses that usually accompany them. This is arguably a more appropriate way of rendering a church in a highly secular age, where any symbolic allusion to the ecclesiastic usually degenerates immediately into the vagaries of kitsch. And yet paradoxically, this desacralization at Bagsvaerd subtly reconstitutes a renewed basis for the spiritual, one founded, I would argue, in a regional reaffirmation—grounds, at least, for some form of collective spirituality.



#### 4. The Resistance of the Place-Form

The Megalopolis recognized as such in 1961 by the geographer Jean Gottman<sup>17</sup> continues to proliferate throughout the developed world to such an extent that, with the exception of cities which were laid in place before the turn of the century, we are no longer able to maintain defined urban forms. The last quarter of a century has seen the so-called field of urban design degenerate into a theoretical subject whose discourse bears little relation to the processual realities of modern development. Today even the super-managerial discipline of urban planning has entered into a state of crisis. The ultimate fate of the plan which was officially promulgated for the rebuilding of Rotterdam after World War II is symptomatic in this regard, since it testifies, in terms of its own recently changed status, to the current tendency to reduce all planning to little more than the allocation of land use and the logistics of distribution. Until relatively recently, the Rotterdam master plan was revised and upgraded every decade in the light of buildings which had been realized in the interim. In 1975, however, this progressive urban cultural procedure was unexpectedly abandoned in favor of publishing a nonphysical, infrastructure plan conceived at a regional scale. Such a plan concerns itself almost exclusively with the logistical projection of changes in land use and with the augmentation of existing distribution systems.

In his essay of 1954, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," Martin Heidegger provides us with a critical vantage point from which to behold this phenomenon of universal placelessness. Against the Latin or, rather, the antique *abstract* concept of space as a more or less endless continuum of evenly subdivided spatial components or integers—what he terms *spatium* and *extensio*—Heidegger opposes the German word for space (or, rather, place), which is the term *Raum*. Heidegger argues that the phenomenological essence of such a space/place depends upon the *concrete*, clearly defined nature of its boundary, for, as he puts it, "A boundary is not that at which something stops, but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing."<sup>18</sup> Apart from confirming that Western abstract reason has its origins in the antique culture of the Mediterranean, Heidegger shows that etymologically the German gerund *building* is closely linked with the archaic forms of *being*, *cultivating* and *dwelling*, and goes on to state that the condition of "dwelling" and hence ultimately of "being" can only take place in a domain that is clearly bounded.

While we may well remain skeptical as to the merit of grounding critical practice in a concept so hermetically metaphysical as Being, we are, when confronted with the ubiquitous placelessness of our modern environment, nonetheless brought to posit, after Heidegger, the absolute precondition of a

bounded domain in order to create an architecture of resistance. Only such a defined boundary will permit the built form to stand against—and hence literally to withstand in an institutional sense—the endless processual flux of the Megalopolis.

The bounded place-form, in its public mode, is also essential to what Hannah Arendt has termed "the space of human appearance," since the evolution of legitimate power has always been predicated upon the existence of the "polis" and upon comparable units of institutional and physical form. While the political life of the Greek polis did not stem directly from the physical presence and representation of the city-state, it displayed in contrast to the Megalopolis the cantonal attributes of urban density. Thus Arendt writes in *The Human Condition*:

The only indispensable material factor in the generation of power is the living together of people. Only where men live so close together that the potentialities for action are always present will power remain with them and the foundation of cities, which as city states have remained paradigmatic for all Western political organization, is therefore the most important material prerequisite for power.<sup>19</sup>

Nothing could be more removed from the political essence of the city-state than the rationalizations of positivistic urban planners such as Melvin Webber, whose ideological concepts of *community without propinquity* and the *non-place urban realm* are nothing if not slogans devised to rationalize the absence of any true public realm in the modern motopia.<sup>20</sup> The manipulative bias of such ideologies has never been more openly expressed than in Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966) wherein the author asserts that Americans do not need piazzas, since they should be at home watching television.<sup>21</sup> Such reactionary attitudes emphasize the impotence of an urbanized populace which has paradoxically lost the object of its urbanization.

While the strategy of Critical Regionalism as outlined above addresses itself mainly to the maintenance of an *expressive density and resonance* in an architecture of resistance (a cultural density which under today's conditions could be said to be potentially liberative in and of itself since it opens the user to manifold *experiences*), the provision of a place-form is equally essential to critical practice, inasmuch as a resistant architecture, in an institutional sense, is necessarily dependent on a clearly defined domain. Perhaps the most generic example of such an urban form is the perimeter block, although other related, introspective types may be evoked, such as the galleria, the atrium, the forecourt and the labyrinth. And while these types have in many instances today simply become the vehicles for accommodating pseudo-public realms (one thinks of recent megastructures in housing, hotels, shopping centers, etc.), one cannot even in these



instances entirely discount the latent political and resistant potential of the place-form.

### 5. Culture Versus Nature: Topography, Context, Climate, Light and Tectonic Form

Critical Regionalism necessarily involves a more directly dialectical relation with nature than the more abstract, formal traditions of modern avant-garde architecture allow. It is self-evident that the *tabula rasa* tendency of modernization favors the optimum use of earth-moving equipment inasmuch as a totally flat datum is regarded as the most economic matrix upon which to predicate the rationalization of construction. Here again, one touches in concrete terms this fundamental opposition between universal civilization and autochthonous culture. The bulldozing of an irregular topography into a flat site is clearly a technocratic gesture which aspires to a condition of absolute *placelessness*, whereas the terracing of the same site to receive the stepped form of a building is an engagement in the act of "cultivating" the site.

Clearly such a mode of beholding and acting brings one close once again to Heidegger's etymology; at the same time, it evokes the method alluded to by the Swiss architect Mario Botta as "building the site." It is possible to argue that in this last instance the specific culture of the region—that is to say, its history in both a geological and agricultural sense—becomes inscribed into the form and realization of the work. This inscription, which arises out of "in-laying" the building into the site, has many levels of significance, for it has a capacity to embody, in built form, the prehistory of the place, its archeological past and its subsequent cultivation and transformation across time. Through this layering into the site the idiosyncrasies of place find their expression without falling into sentimentality.

What is evident in the case of topography applies to a similar degree in the case of an existing urban fabric, and the same can be claimed for the contingencies of climate and the temporally inflected qualities of local light. Once again, the sensitive modulation and incorporation of such factors must almost by definition be fundamentally opposed to the optimum use of universal technique. This is perhaps most clear in the case of light and climate control. The generic window is obviously the most delicate point at which these two natural forces impinge upon the outer membrane of the building, fenestration having an innate capacity to inscribe architecture with the character of a region and hence to express the place in which the work is situated.

Until recently, the received precepts of modern curatorial practice favored the exclusive use of artificial light in all art galleries. It has perhaps been insufficiently recognized how this encapsulation tends to reduce the artwork to a commodity, since such an environment must conspire to render the work placeless. This is because the local light spectrum is never permitted to play across its surface: here, then, we see how the loss of aura, attributed by Walter Benjamin to the processes of mechanical reproduction, also arises from a relatively static application of universal technology. The converse of this "placeless" practice would be to provide that art galleries be top-lit through carefully contrived monitors so that, while the injurious effects of direct sunlight are avoided, the ambient light of the exhibition volume changes under the impact of time, season, humidity, etc. Such conditions guarantee the appearance of a place-conscious poetic—a form of filtration compounded out of an interaction between culture and nature, between art and light. Clearly this principle applies to all fenestration, irrespective of size and location. A constant "regional inflection" of the form arises directly from the fact that in certain climates the glazed aperture is advanced, while in others it is recessed behind the masonry facade (or, alternatively, shielded by adjustable sun breakers).

The way in which such openings provide for appropriate ventilation also constitutes an unsentimental element reflecting the nature of local culture. Here, clearly, the main antagonist of rooted culture is the ubiquitous air-conditioner, applied in all times and in all places, irrespective of the local climatic conditions which have a capacity to express the specific place and the seasonal variations of its climate. Wherever they occur, the fixed window and the remote-controlled air-conditioning system are mutually indicative of domination by universal technique.

Despite the critical importance of topography and light, the primary principle of architectural autonomy resides in the *tectonic* rather than the *scenographic*: that is to say, this autonomy is embodied in the revealed ligaments of the construction and in the way in which the syntactical form of the structure explicitly resists the action of gravity. It is obvious that this discourse of the load borne (the beam) and the load-bearing (the column) cannot be brought into being where the structure is masked or otherwise concealed. On the other hand, the tectonic is not to be confused with the purely technical, for it is more than the simple revelation of stereotomy or the expression of skeletal framework. Its essence was first defined by the German aesthete Karl Bötticher in his book *Die Tektonik der Hellenen* (1852); and it was perhaps best summarized by the architectural historian Stanford Anderson when he wrote:

"Tektonik" referred not just to the activity of making the materially requisite construction . . . but rather to the activity that raises this construction to an art

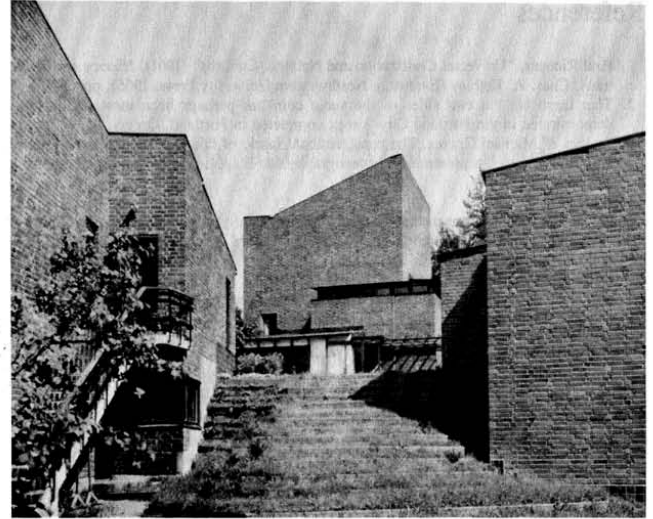
form...The functionally adequate form must be adapted so as to give expression to its function. The sense of bearing provided by the entasis of Greek columns became the touchstone of this concept of *Tektonik*.<sup>22</sup>

The tectonic remains to us today as a potential means for distilling play between material, craftwork and gravity, so as to yield a component which is in fact a condensation of the entire structure. We may speak here of the presentation of a structural poetic rather than the re-presentation of a facade.

### 6. The Visual Versus the Tactile

The tactile resilience of the place-form and the capacity of the body to read the environment in terms other than those of sight alone suggest a potential strategy for resisting the domination of universal technology. It is symptomatic of the priority given to sight that we find it necessary to remind ourselves that the tactile is an important dimension in the perception of built form. One has in mind a whole range of complementary sensory perceptions which are registered by the labile body: the intensity of light, darkness, heat and cold; the feeling of humidity; the aroma of material; the almost palpable presence of masonry as the body senses its own confinement; the momentum of an induced gait and the relative inertia of the body as it traverses the floor; the echoing resonance of our own footfall. Luchino Visconti was well aware of these factors when making the film *The Damned*, for he insisted that the main set of the Altona mansion should be paved in real wooden parquet. It was his belief that without a solid floor underfoot the actors would be incapable of assuming appropriate and convincing postures.

A similar tactile sensitivity is evident in the finishing of the public circulation in Alvar Aalto's Särnäsalo Town Hall of 1952. The main route leading to the second-floor council chamber is ultimately orchestrated in terms which are as much tactile as they are visual. Not only is the principal access stair lined in raked brickwork, but the treads and risers are also finished in brick. The kinetic impetus of the body in climbing the stair is thus checked by the friction of the steps, which are "read" soon after in contrast to the timber floor of the council chamber itself. This chamber asserts its honorific status through sound, smell and texture, not to mention the springy deflection of the floor underfoot (and a noticeable tendency to lose one's balance on its polished surface). From this example it is clear that the liberative importance of the tactile resides in the fact that it can only be decoded in terms of *experience* itself: it cannot be reduced to mere information, to representation or to the simple evocation of a simulacrum substituting for absent presences.



Alvar Aalto, Särnäsalo Town Hall, 1952.

In this way, Critical Regionalism seeks to complement our normative visual experience by readdressing the tactile range of human perceptions. In so doing, it endeavors to balance the priority accorded to the image and to counter the Western tendency to interpret the environment in exclusively perspectival terms. According to its etymology, perspective means rationalized sight or clear seeing, and as such it presupposes a conscious suppression of the senses of smell, hearing and taste, and a consequent distancing from a more direct experience of the environment. This self-imposed limitation relates to that which Heidegger has called a "loss of nearness." In attempting to counter this loss, the tactile opposes itself to the scenographic and the drawing of veils over the surface of reality. Its capacity to arouse the impulse to touch returns the architect to the poetics of construction and to the erection of works in which the tectonic value of each component depends upon the density of its objecthood. The tactile and the tectonic jointly have the capacity to transcend the mere appearance of the technical in much the same way as the place-form has the potential to withstand the relentless onslaught of global modernization.

