

## **Beyond Survival**

Building resilient communities through cocreation for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

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# CONTENT

hapter 1 Chapter 2 Chapter 3		Chapter 3	Chapter 4	
The story of the displaced people	The story of the disappearing land	The framework of co-creating resilient communities	Design strategies for Bhashan Char	
Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7	Appendix	
Phase 1: Establishing identity through livelihood	Phase 2: Empowering through collective knowledge	Phase 3: Coexistence with more than human commons	Booklet	

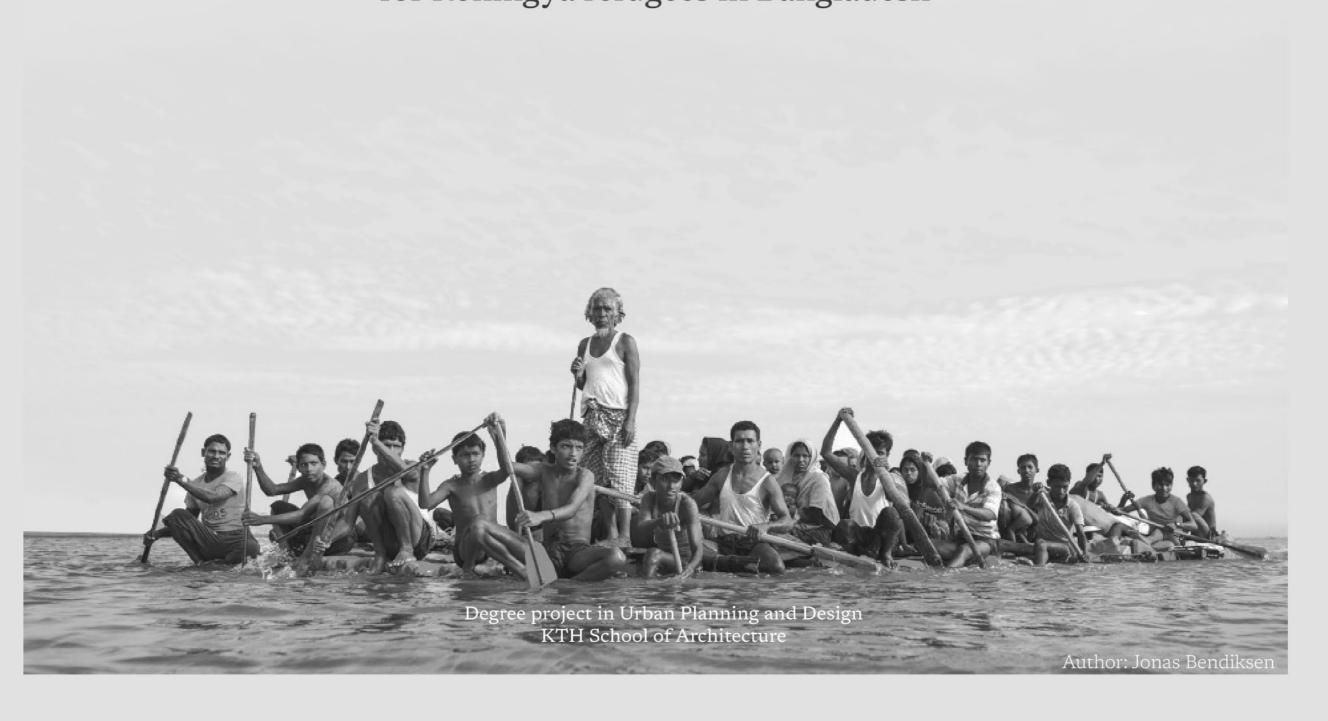
# BEYOND SURVIVAL

Building resilient communities through co-creation for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

Mariia Smoliakova & Lamia Ahmed

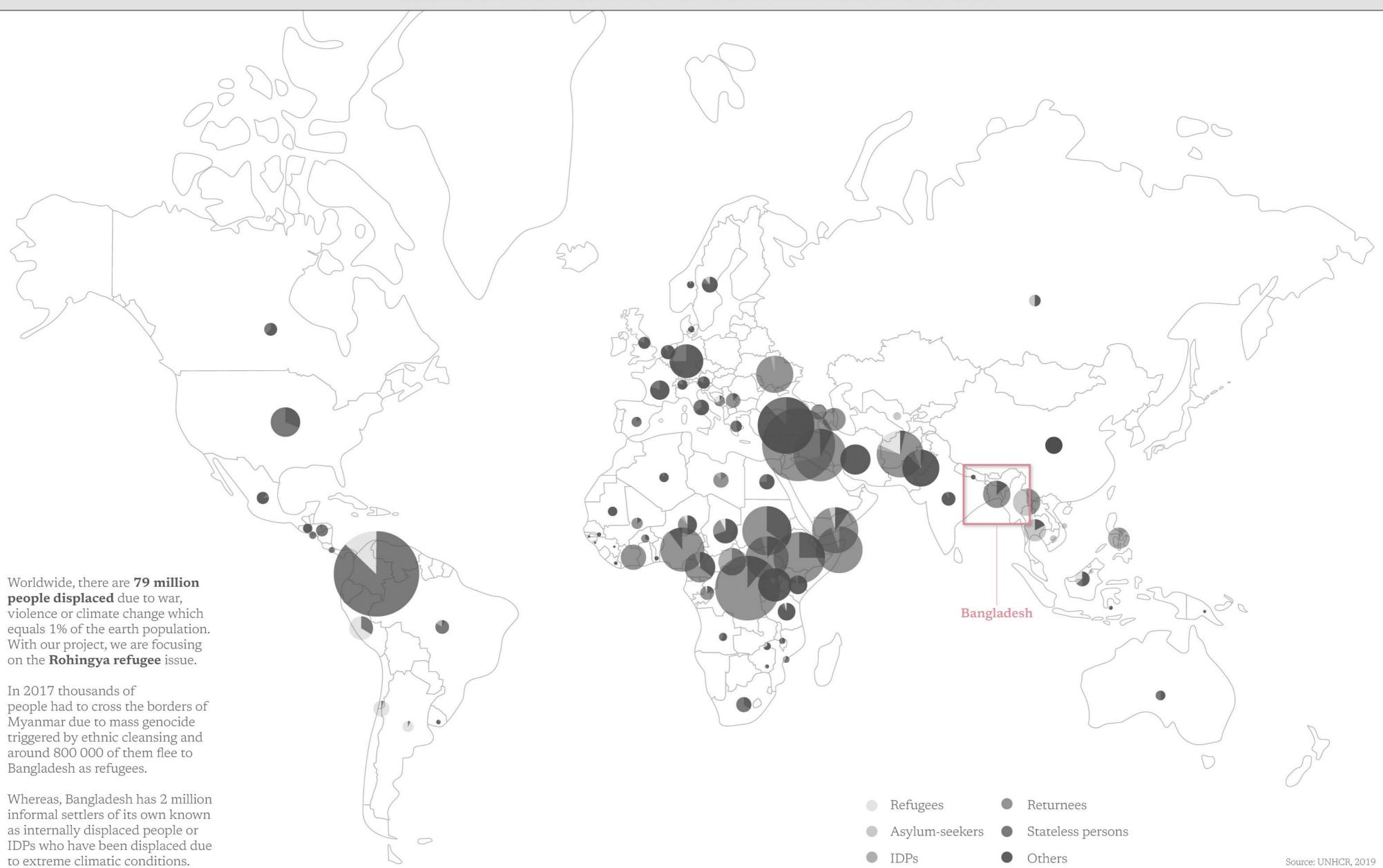
Supervisor: Alejandra Navarrete Llopis

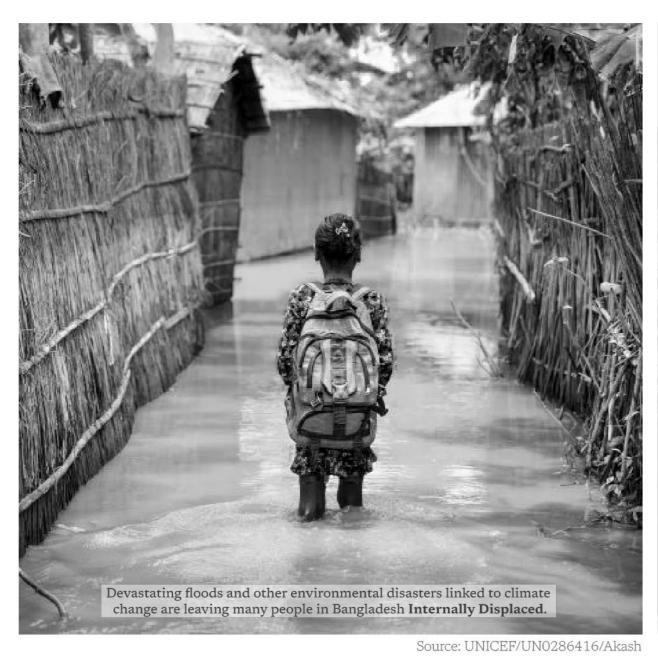
Year: 2021



Survival - the state or fact of continuing to live or exist in spite of an accident, ordeal, or difficult circumstances such as climate change, rising inequality, warfare etc. With beyond survival we mean having the opportunities for aspirations in life in spite of overcoming difficulties and hardships in life.

## CHAPTER 1: THE STORY OF THE DISPLACED PEOPLE







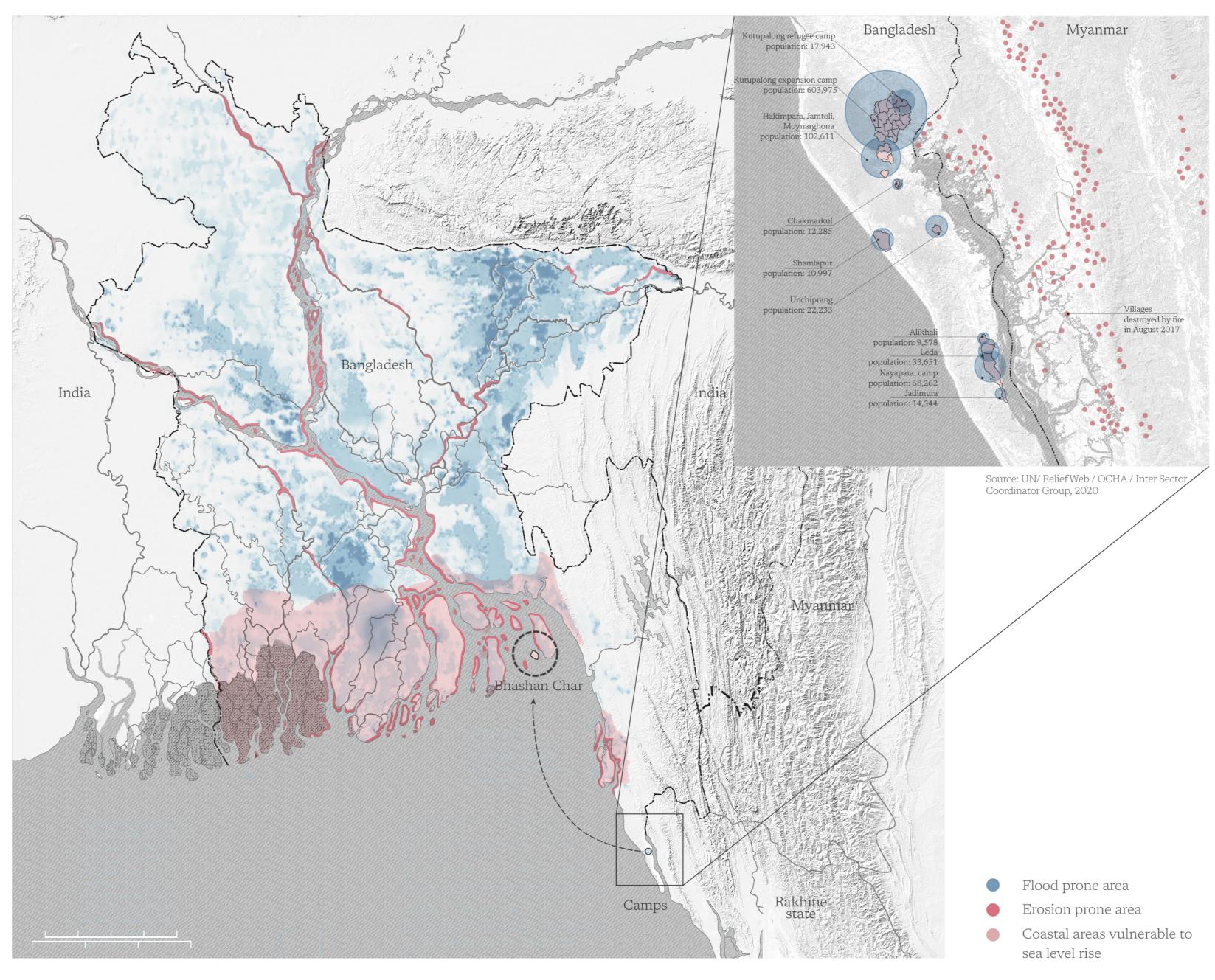
Refugees - people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country (UNCHR). They are unable to return to their country of origin due to the fear.

Internally displaced people (IDP) - people who have not crossed a border to find safety. Unlike refugees, they are on the run at home (UNCHR).

Since Bangladesh is a delta, two-thirds of the country is less than 5 m above sea-level. Large share of the land might be vulnerable to the sea-level rise.

Moreover, Bangladesh is a densely populated country where Rohingya refugees are living in 34 extremely congested camps in Cox Bazar which has ruined the ecosystem of the hill tracts of the region in the Southern part of the country.

Now Bangladesh is proposing to relocate 100,000 refugees to a remote island in the bay of Bengal, which is called Bhashan Char.



#### Camp Lifestyle of Rohingya refugees in the camps of Bangladesh



Built form Makeshift structues without formal planning. Lack of infrastructure and restriction on permanent material



## Social structure

No permanent occupation, low-wage contract based work arranged by the NGOs and small scale trading



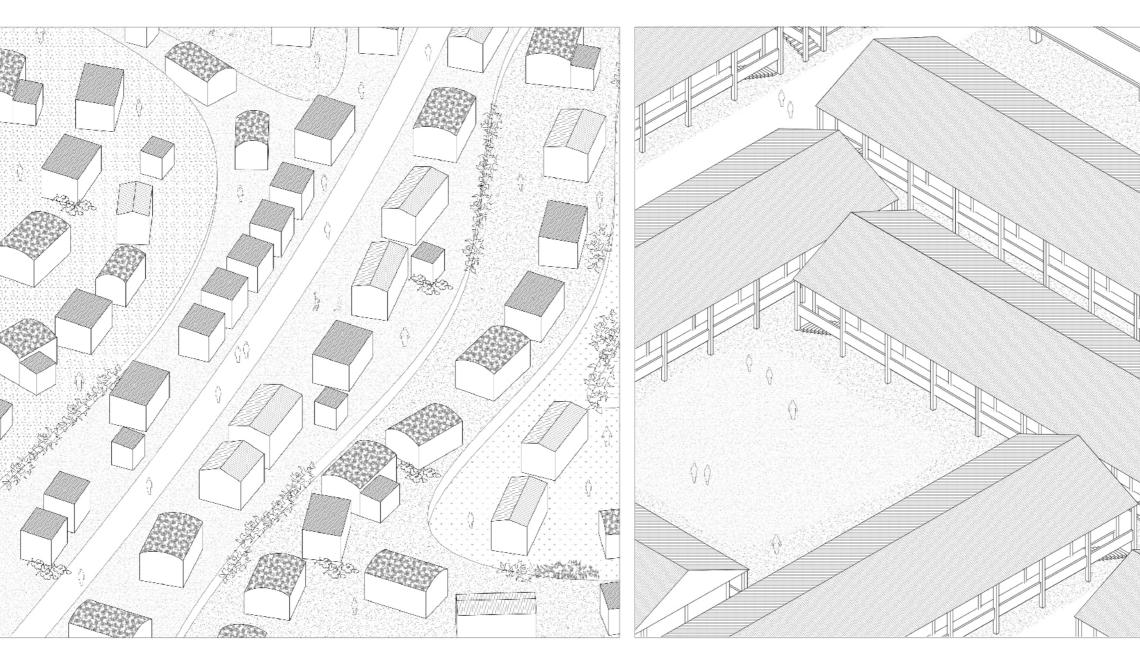
## Occupation

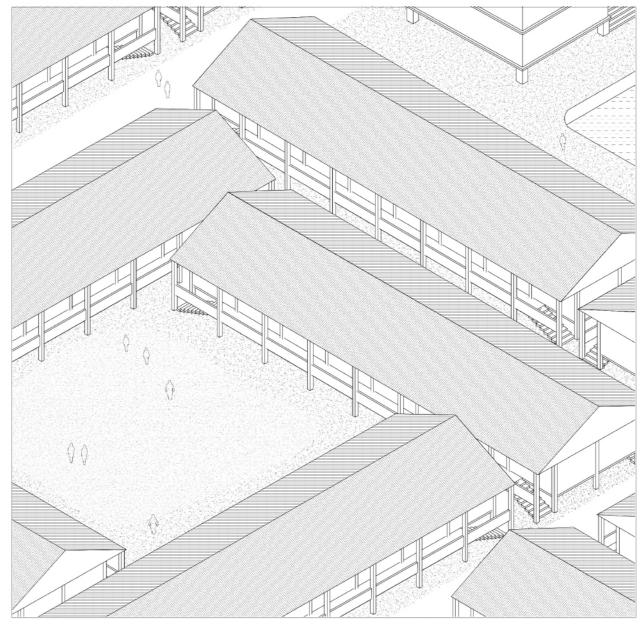
Muslim majority. Conservative outlook towards women is changing due to NGO initiatives



## Infrastructure

Congested structures built with bamboo, thatch and plastic sheets. Destroyed acres of forest and wildlife sanctuary





Bhashan char Lifestyle of Rohingya people in the

built structures of Bhashan char



Built form



Whole infrastructure built in a rigid manner colonizing a newly formed territory



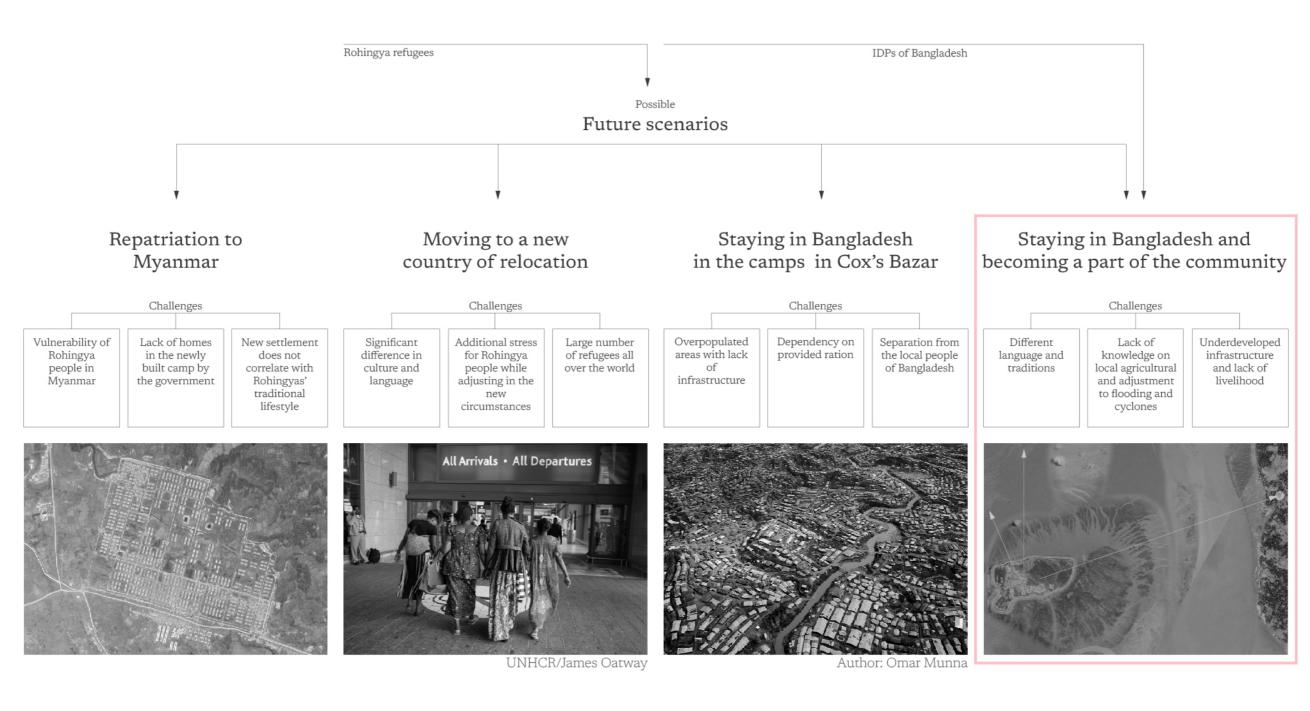
Social structure Lack of scope for pursuing a stable occupation. The model functions only with ensured continious supply of ration



Occupation Social structure yet to be formed. Refugees are coming breaking their ties with their families in the camps.

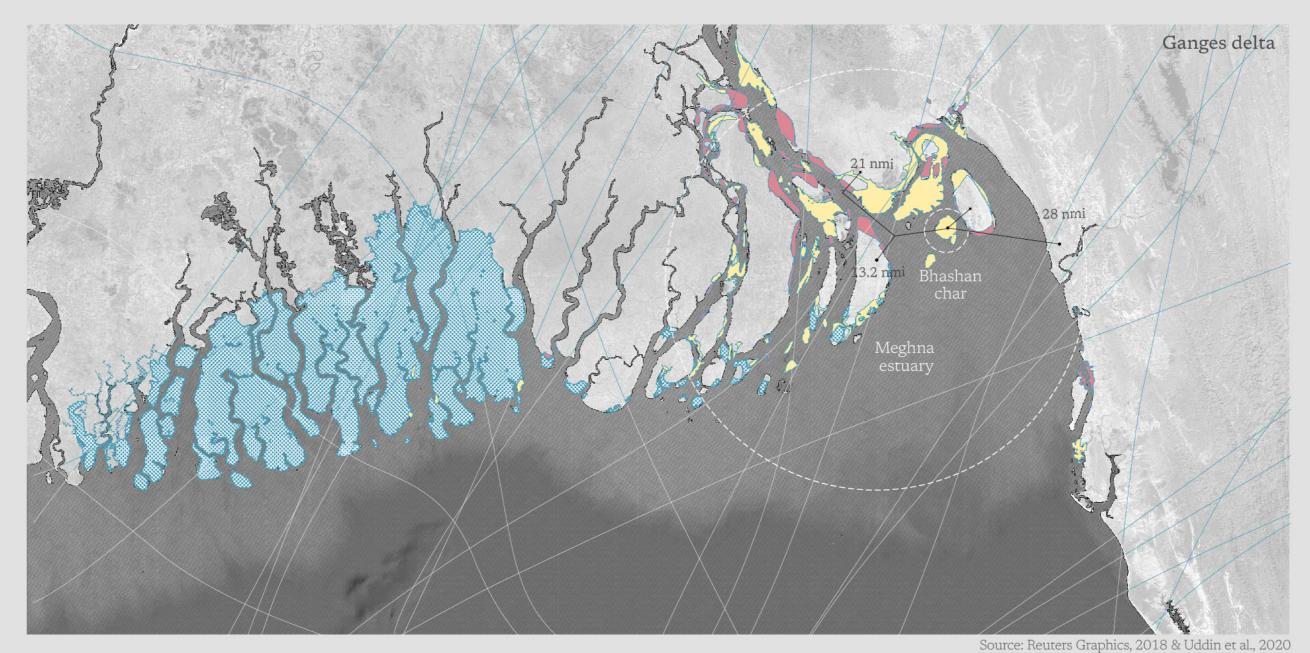


Infrastructure Rigid and monotonous one storied houses arranged around a courtyard with shared kitchen and toilet facilities



After exploring all the possible scenarios for these people and considering all the circumstances, we have decided to explore the scope and possibility for both the refugees and local IDPs to coexist and benefit from each other in Bhashan char.





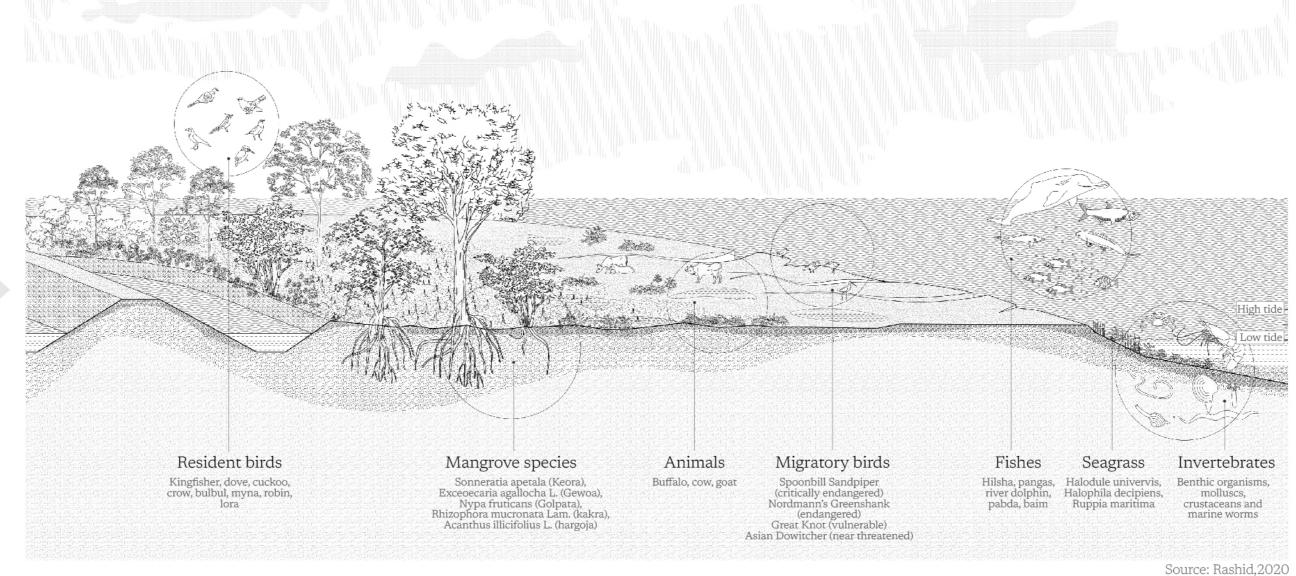
#### Bhashan Char

Area: Approx. 13000 acres
Habitable land: 6427 acres
Refugee relocation area: 1702 acres

#### Legend

- Mangrove forest (Sundarbans)
- Erosion (1989 2018)Accretion (1989 2018)
- Tropical storm or cyclone lines since 1970

# CHAPTER 2: THE STORY OF THE DISAPPEARING LAND



1. Emergence of the sand bar

during winter.

Biodiversity of the estuary

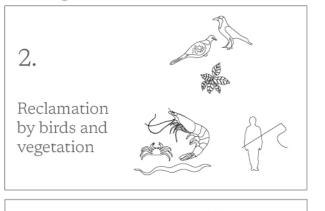
The estuaries are called the nursery of the sea since the

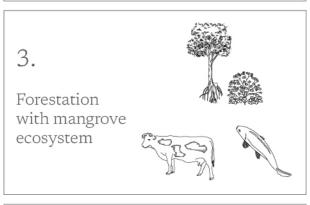
counter-currents trap sediment and nutrients for the habitats as a

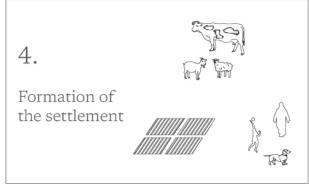
place to live, feed and reproduce. The area also coincides with 3

and shelters endangered species

major routes of the migratory birds



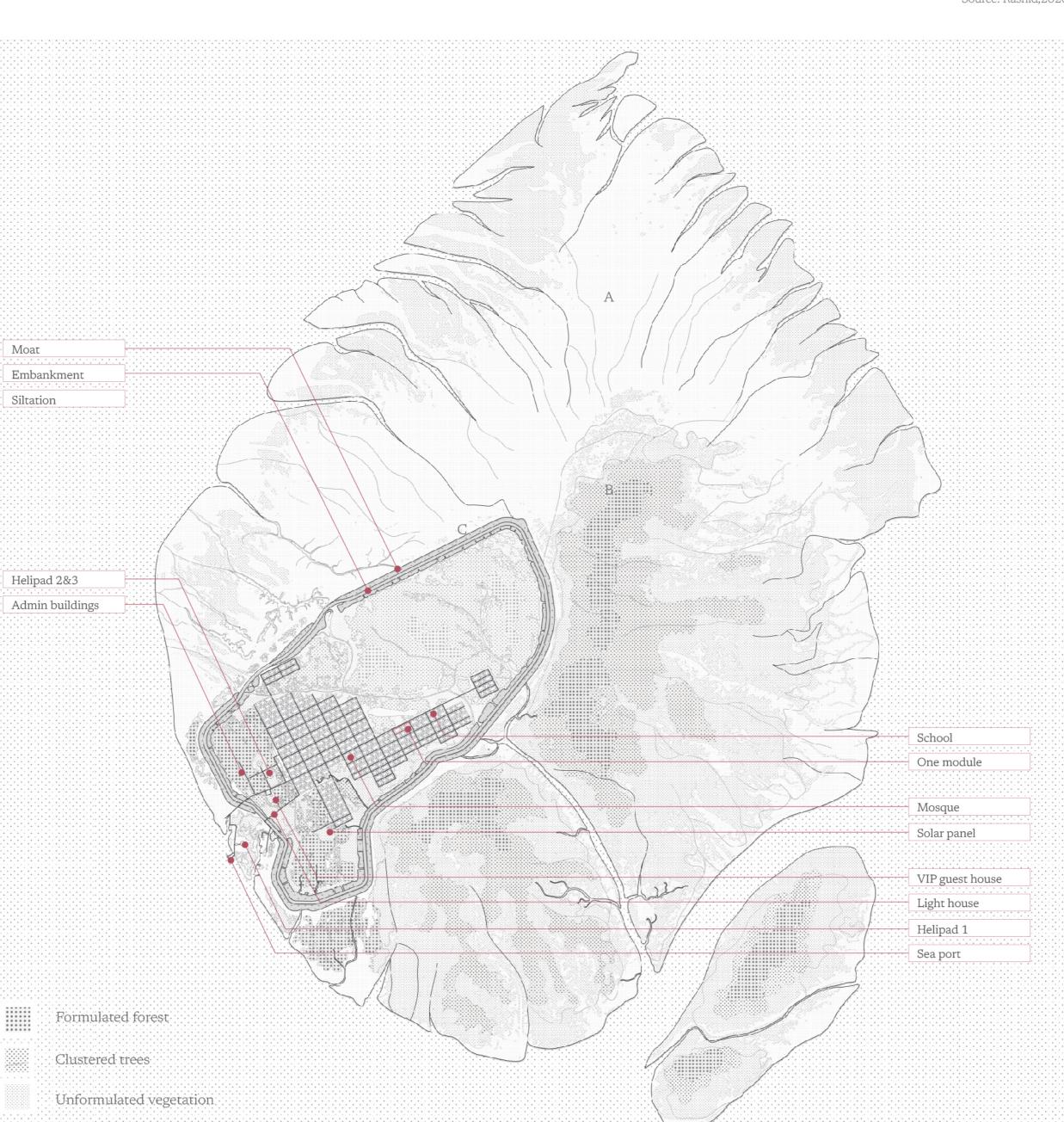










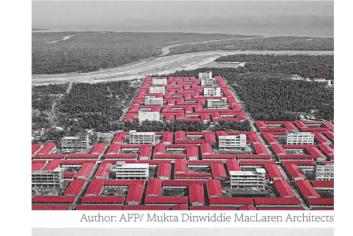


# Ecology

Formulated mangrove forest covers a share of the island which is in dark grey on the map, the rest is mostly covered with clustered trees and most part in the north is a mudflat. Following traditional techniques an embankment was built surrounding the settlement to protect it from flooding and reserve fresh water.

## Settlement

Compared to the traditional gradual inhabitation process of the islands, a whole settlement was built within 2 years to accommodate 100,000 people. Since the settlement is built from repetitive modules, it lacks diversity and it's rigid structures have a huge contrast with nature. Even though it has scope for providing basic services, it lacks livelihood support facilities.



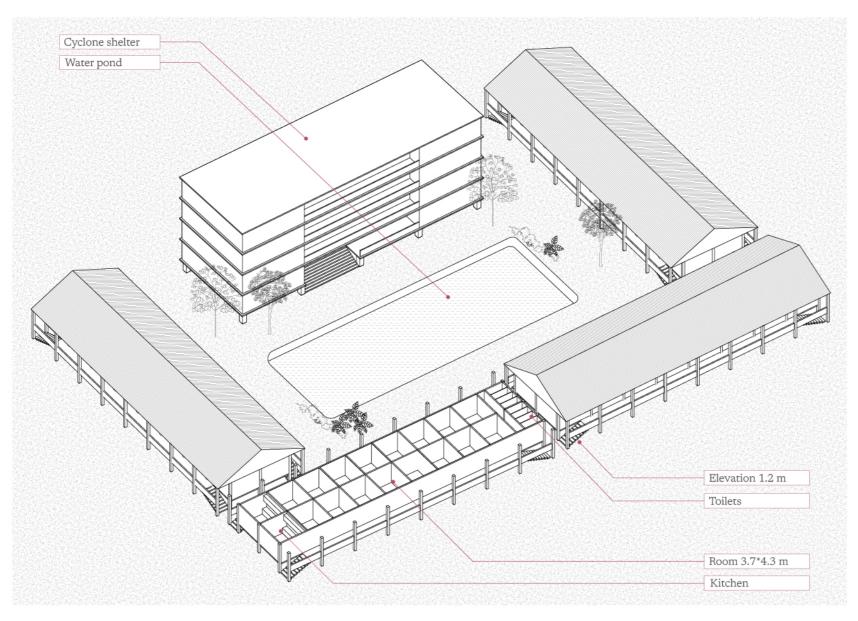




#### Bhashan char Building block

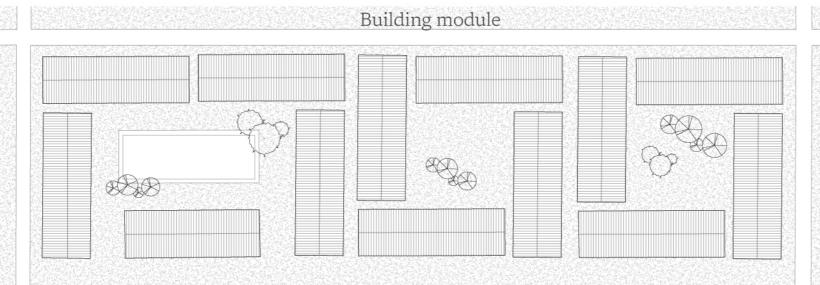
The settlement is built with repeating modules of three blocks, where each unit has 16 rooms with a shared kitchen and toilet facility. Moreover, Each module also has a multifunctional disaster shelter.

The settlement is part of the Ashrayan project of Bangladesh which was initiated to provide housing for the homeless people. Projects under this initiative are all similar in terms of planning, where some actually failed due to lack of livelihood support facilities.









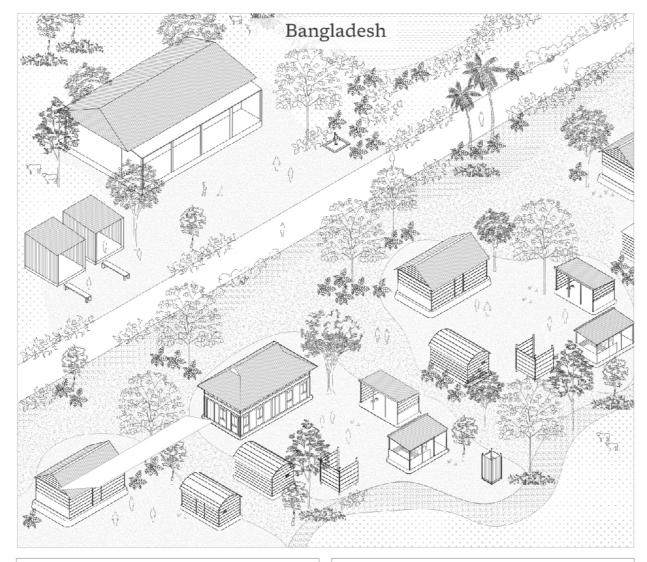


Myanmar

# Dwelling in the delta

To address the challenges of the low-lying landscape, people practice floating agriculture or a model where forest trees, fish and vegetables are combinedly harvested for short and long term benefit.

To build coastal resilience, one of the recent policies is to plant diversified species of mangrove in the shoreline as locals highly depend on the mangrove for livelihood.











### Built form Houses raised from the ground middle of a plot, most activities are carried out inside maintaining privacy



Occupation Majority involved in agriculture and fishing. A smaller portion involved in trading



Infrastructure



Social structure

Muslim majority. People are social and hospitable in general

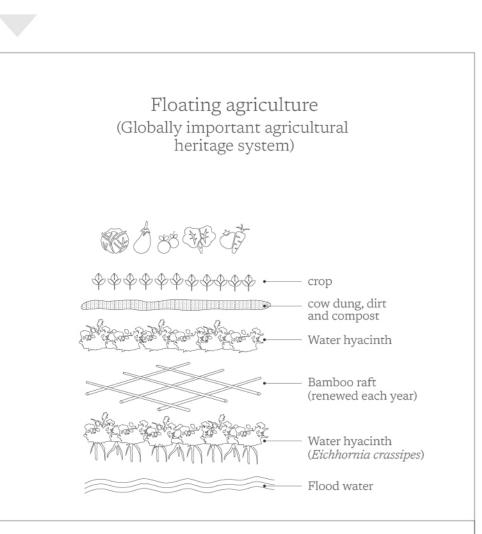


Integrated & diversified

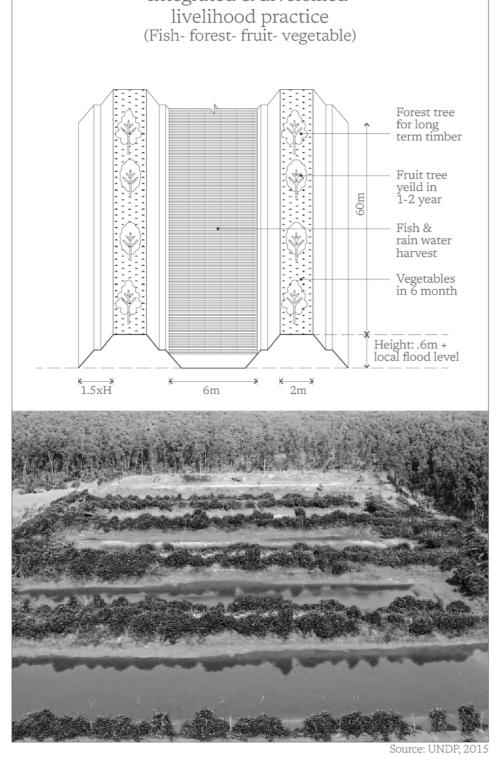


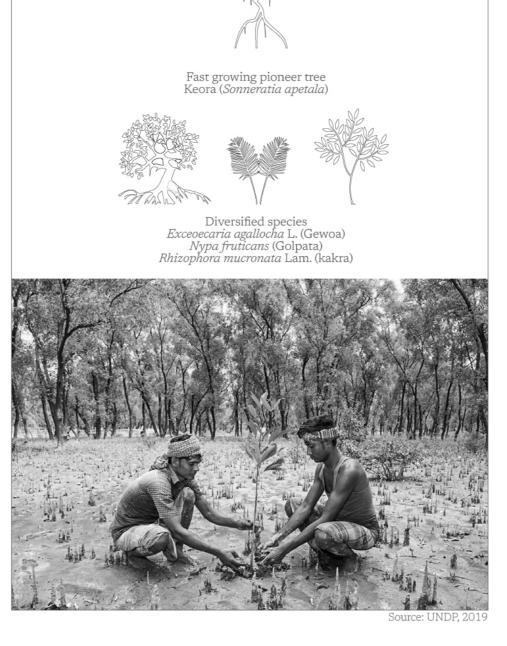


Lacks formal infrastructure due to statelessness, Restriction in using permanent material



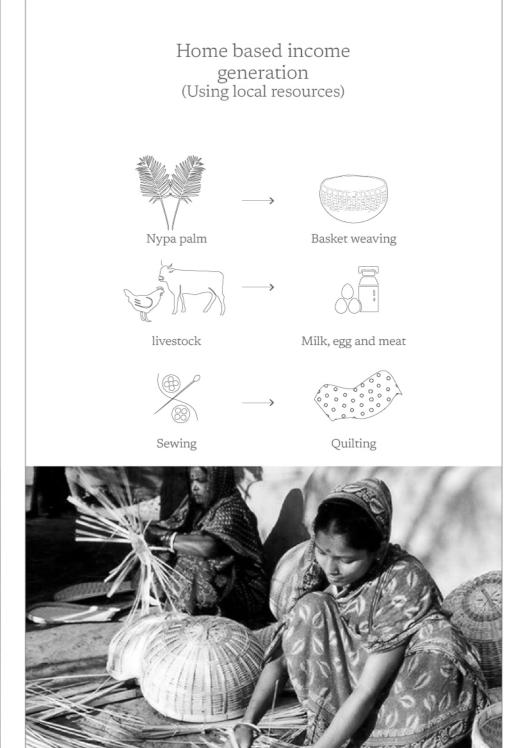






Mangrove restoration for

coastal protection (Diversified species plantation)



Rural settlement pattern of

Bangladeshi and Rohingya rural settlements differ quite a lot, where settlements in Bangladesh

infrastructure, it's mostly absent in

Homesteads in Bangladesh are

mound. Whereas Rohingyas build their houses elevated from the ground where most things are carried out indoors due to a

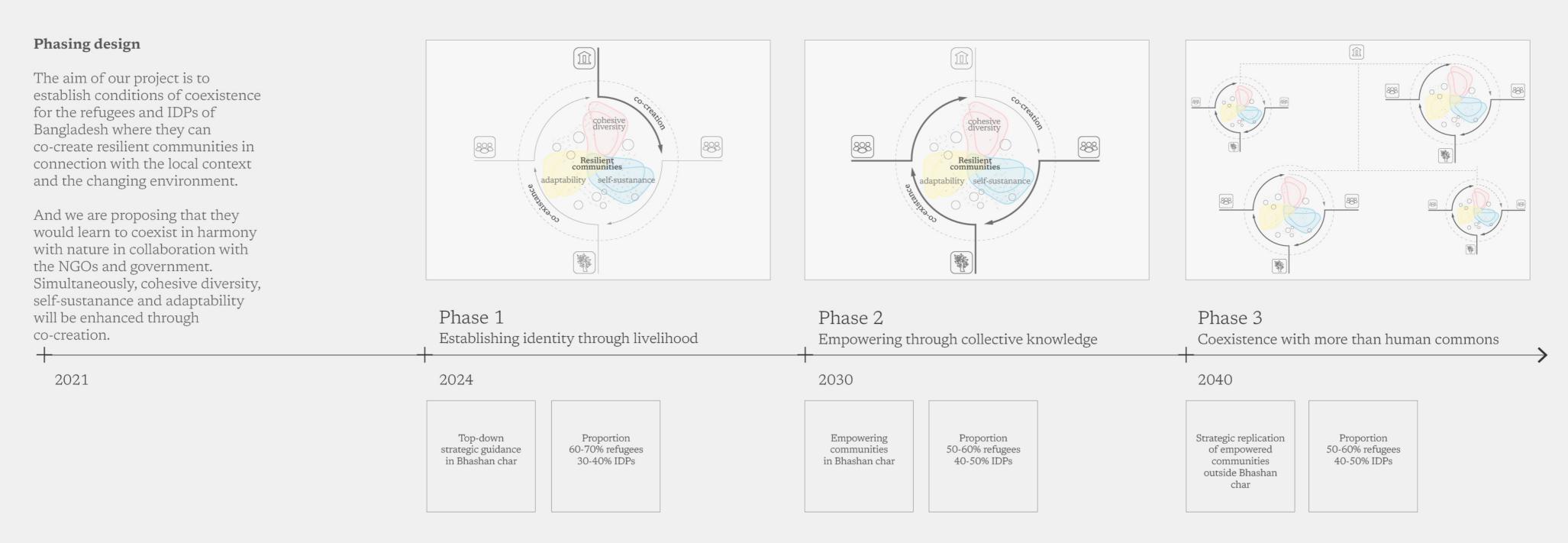
protective outlook towards women.

traditionally built around a courtyard on top of a raised

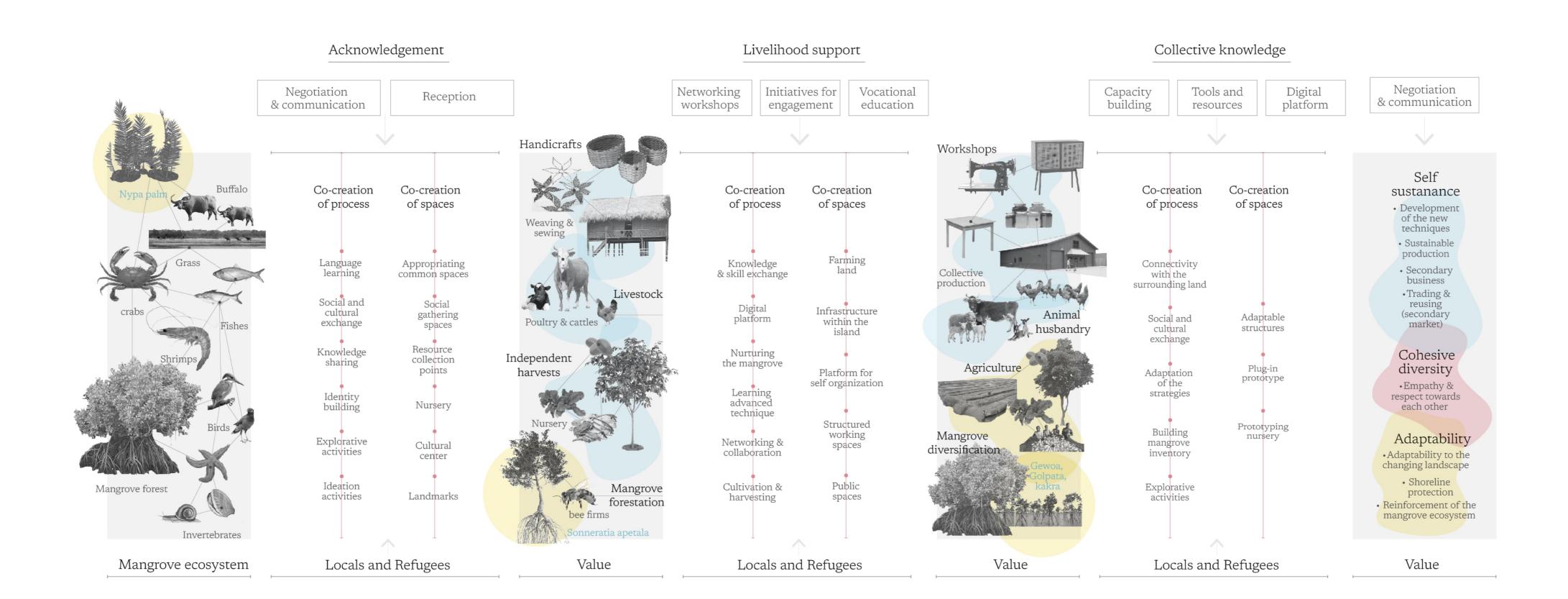
Bangladesh and Myanmar

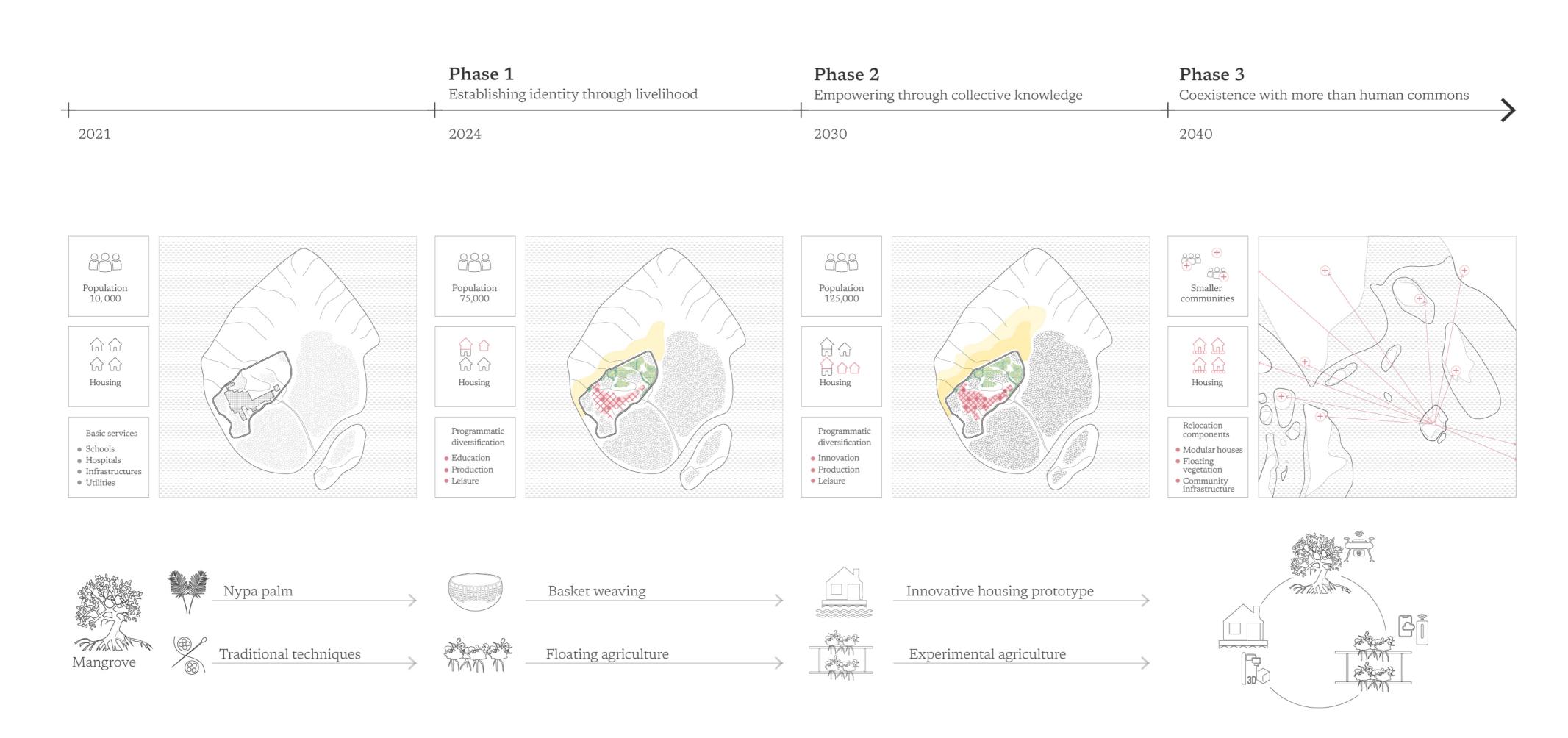
usually have a community

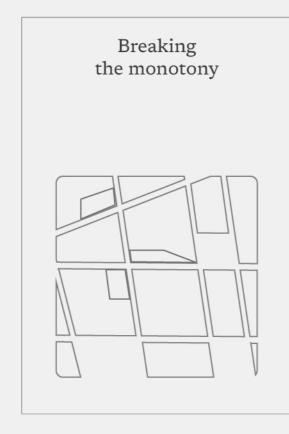
Rohingya villages.

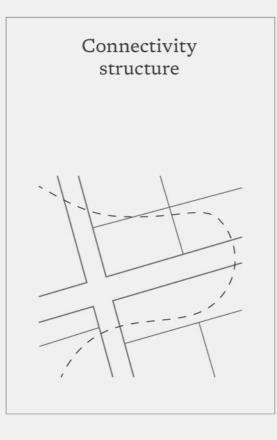


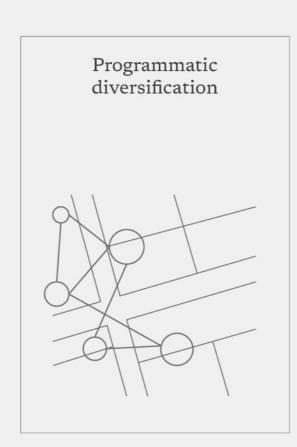
## CHAPTER 3: THE FRAMEWORK OF CO-CREATING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

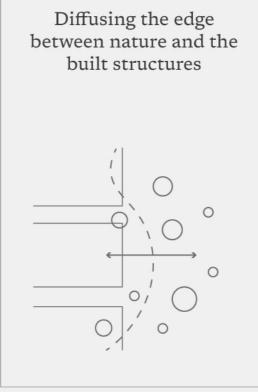


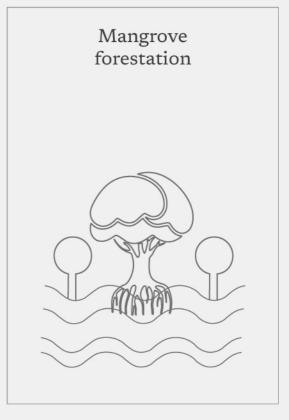




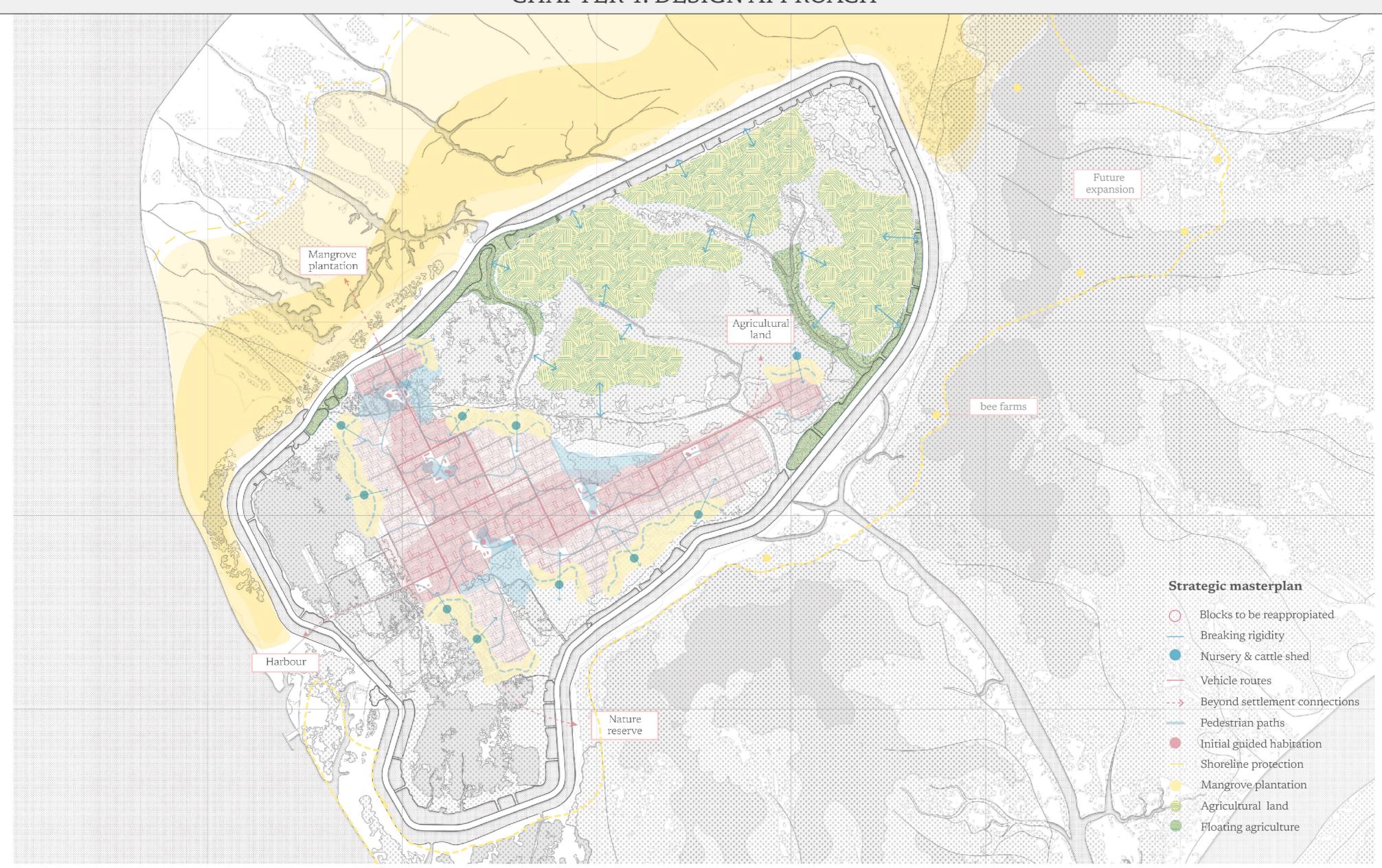


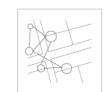






## CHAPTER 4: DESIGN APPROACH





## Programmatic diversification

With this strategy the areas along the settlement will be diversified with programs which will act as catalysts for activating livelihood and social cohesion.

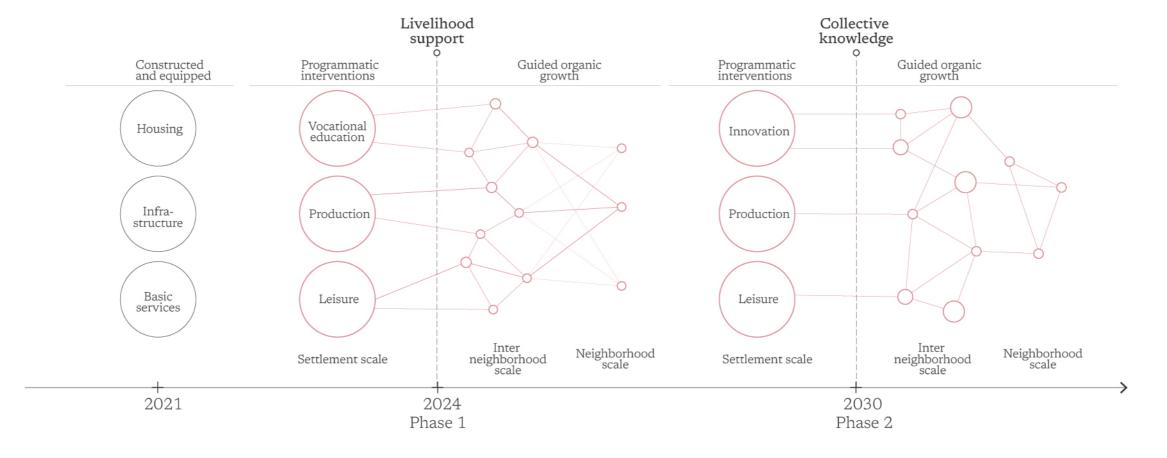
The core categories of programs will take place in each phase which will generate organic growth in the neighborhood and inter neighborhood scale.



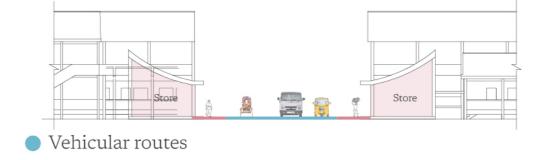














## Connectivity structure

With the second strategy we are creating a connectivity structure. Blue lines indicate vehicle connection and they mainly follow the existing street grid. The red lines indicate pedestrian connectivity routes, which are located along with the activities. Considering the local context, the island will not have cars but electric rides-hare and rickshaws, a tricycle as a main means of transportation.







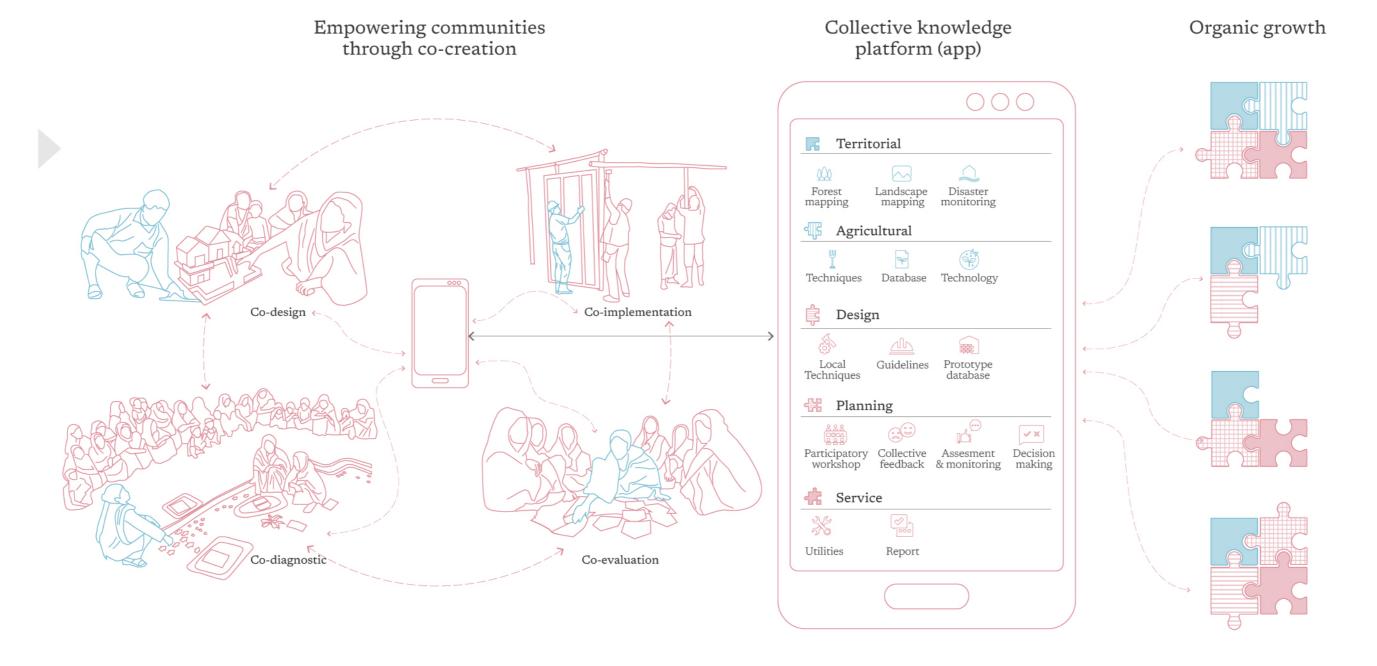


#### Diffusing the edge

One of our goals is to develop organic interrelations between nature and humans, thus this strategy aims to diffuse the rigid borders between the built and natural environment through organic growth.

We envision it to happen through principles of co-creation, where a shared collective knowledge platform will empower people to co-diagnose, co-design, co-implement, and co-evaluate, thus generating organic growth.

One block



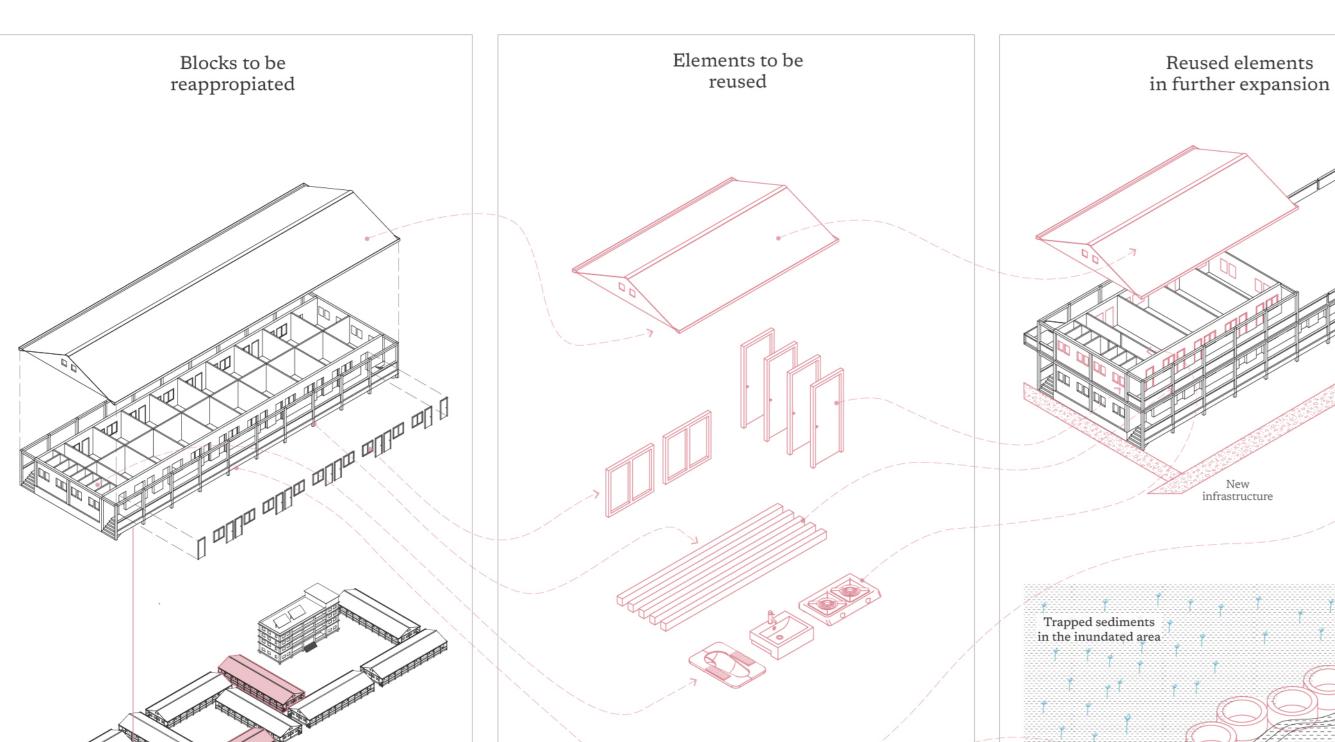


#### Breaking the monotony

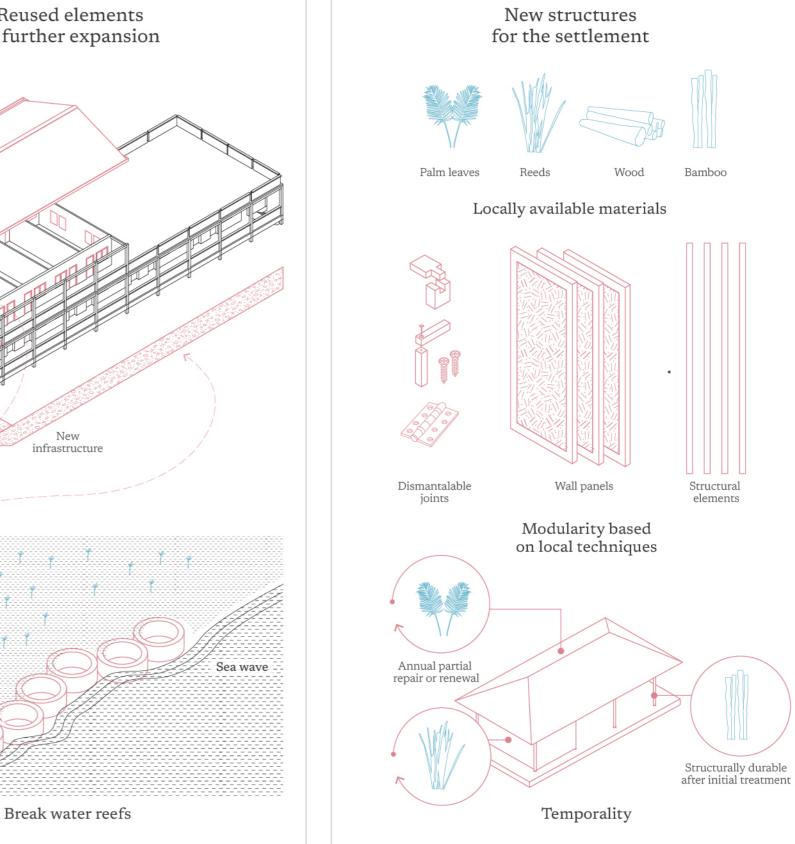
With this strategy we intend to break the monotony of the settlement by creating voids. One building from each block will no longer be used as housing, but rather the community can decide how to re-purpose or reconstruct it.

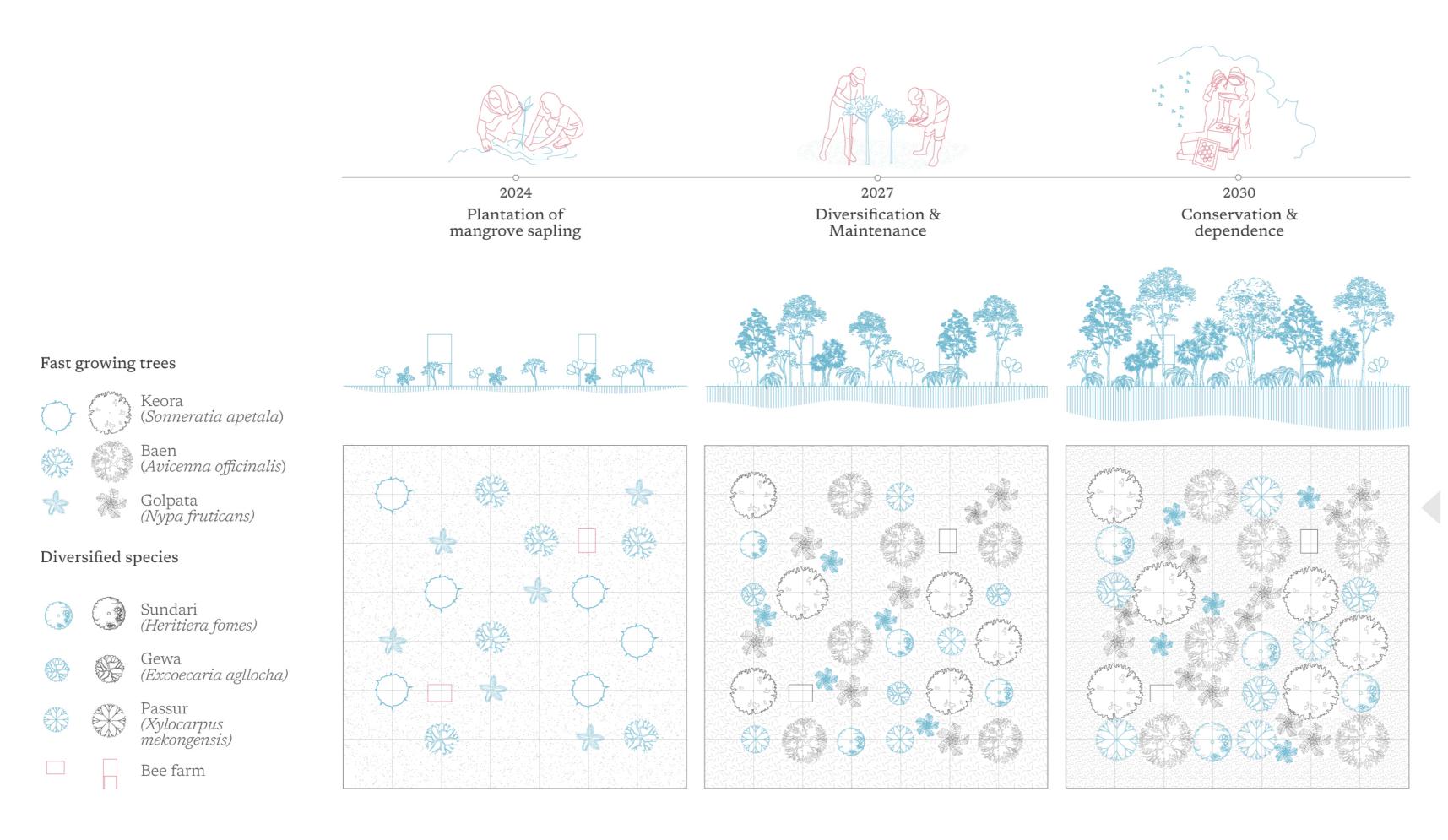
The materials from the de-constructed buildings will be used for new constructions. The elements will be reused in the new extensions and the concrete rubbles can be used for building break water reefs and permeable pathways.

New structures will be built with local materials following the principles of modularity to address the challenges of future relocation



Construction rubbles



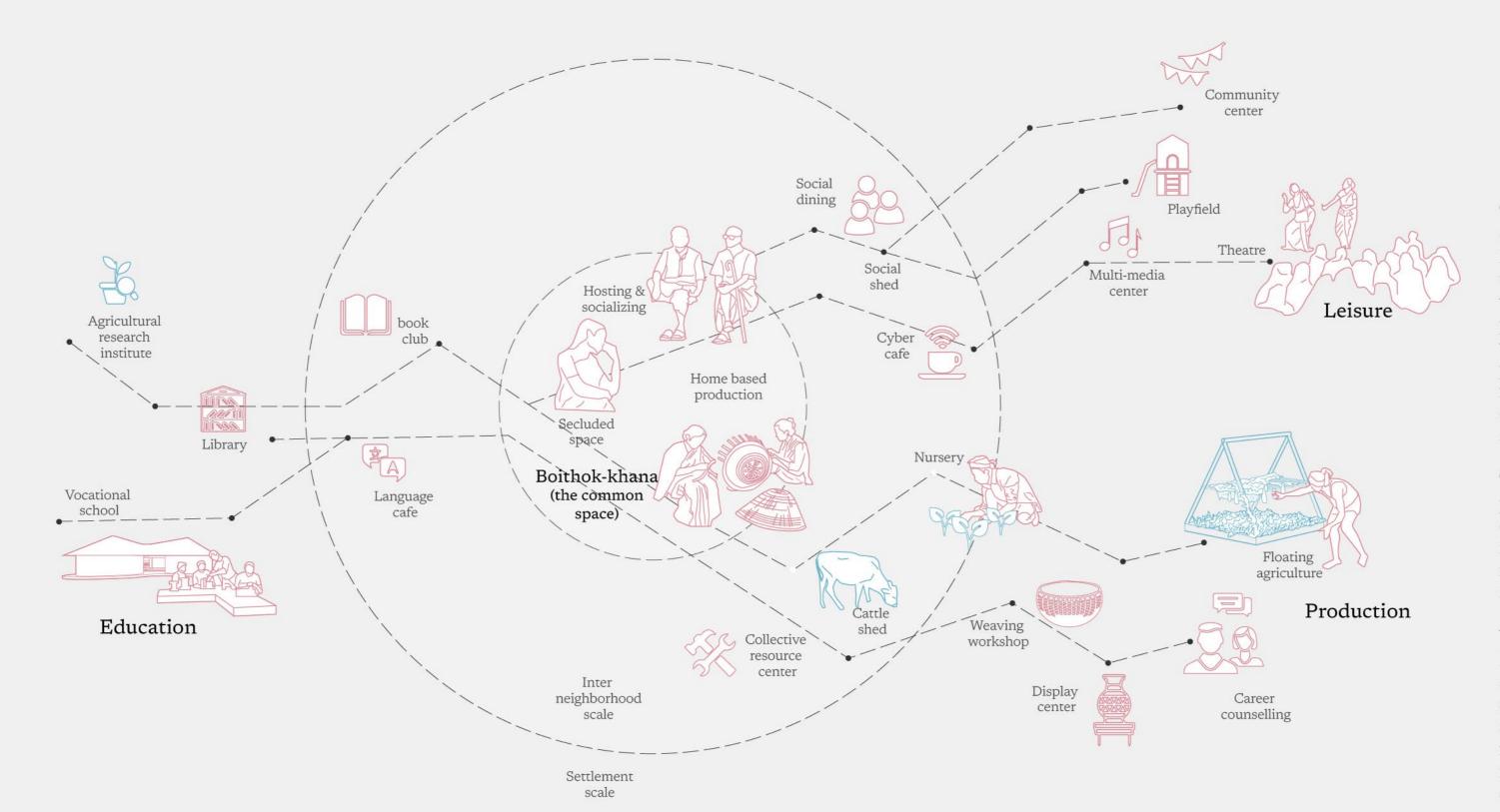




## Mangrove forestation

As part of increasing the resilience of the settlement, we propose mangrove forestation in the northern part of the island along with break water reefs as shoreline protection.

The mangrove forestation process will take place by planting the fast growing trees and bee farming in the first phase and later diversifying with different species to generate an independent mangrove habitat.

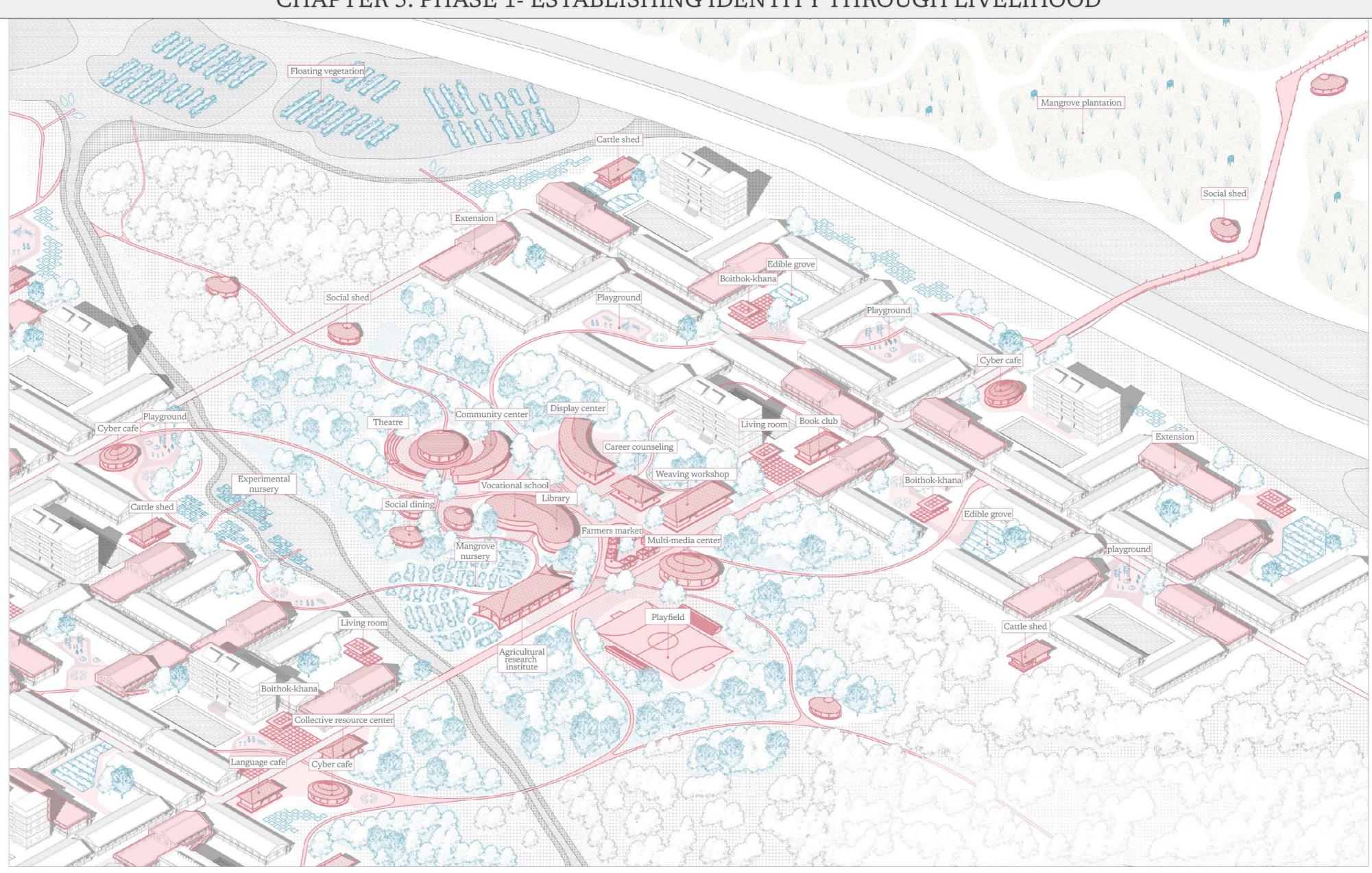


The aim of the first phase is to create identity through livelihood. Here we are emphasising on two of their traditional techniques, the weaving techniques with nypa palm leaves and floating vegetation. It will create possibilities for the communities' future development while building care and empathy towards nature and each other.

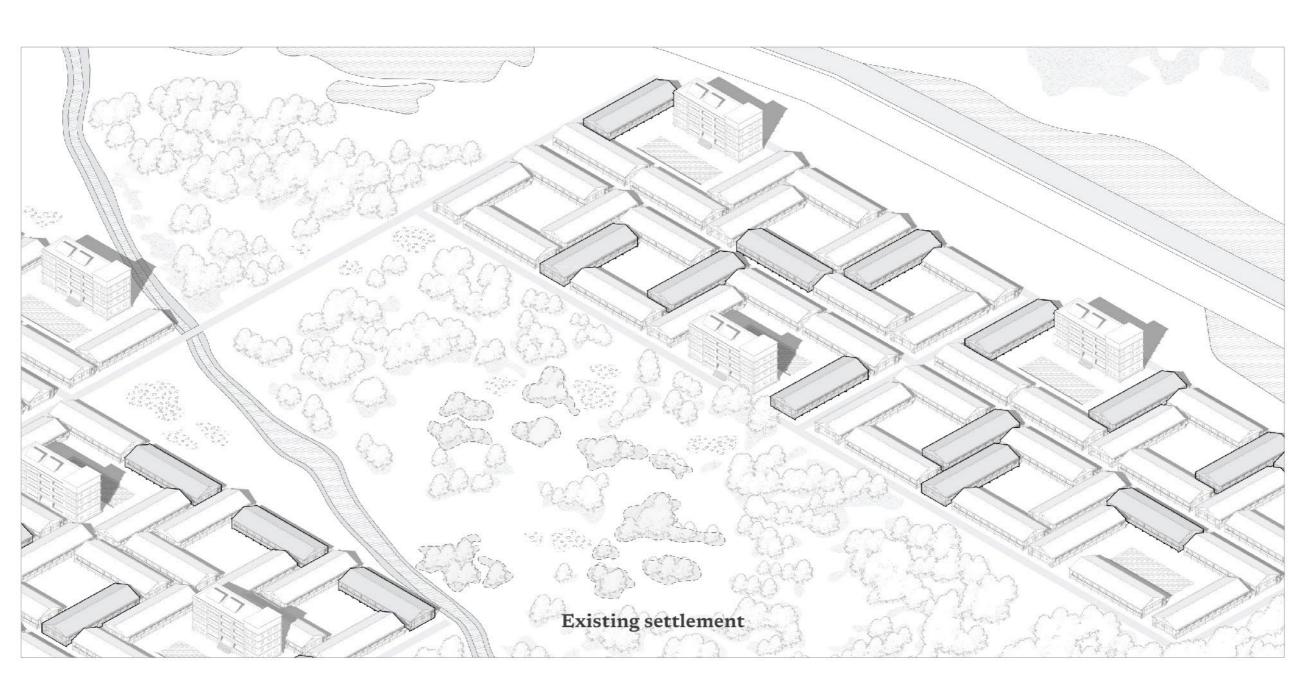
Three sets of programs, education, production and leisure are distributed in three different scales, neighborhood, inter neighbourhood and the settlement scale.

Whereas we imagine the Boithok-khana or the common space in the neighborhood to be appropriated by the residents but all the other programs will formulate an interdependent network engaging the communities.

## CHAPTER 5: PHASE 1- ESTABLISHING IDENTITY THROUGH LIVELIHOOD







For the first phase we have selected the area located north of the island. The embankment is separating the settlement from the tidal flats in the north and there is a lake going in the middle.

In connection to our overall strategies, we have identified the buildings which will be disassembled.

#### Boithok-khana

Fatema, a 15 years old girl is currently living in Bhashan char with her family. She helps her mother in her spare time to weave the baskets with nypa palm leaves, just like they used to do when they were living in Myanmar. It's one of the things that makes her feel connected to her roots. They have made this structure in their neighborhood which they call "boithok-khana" means the living room. Here, they spend their leisure time with other families and sometimes she just goes to the upper floor to get some quiet time on her own.

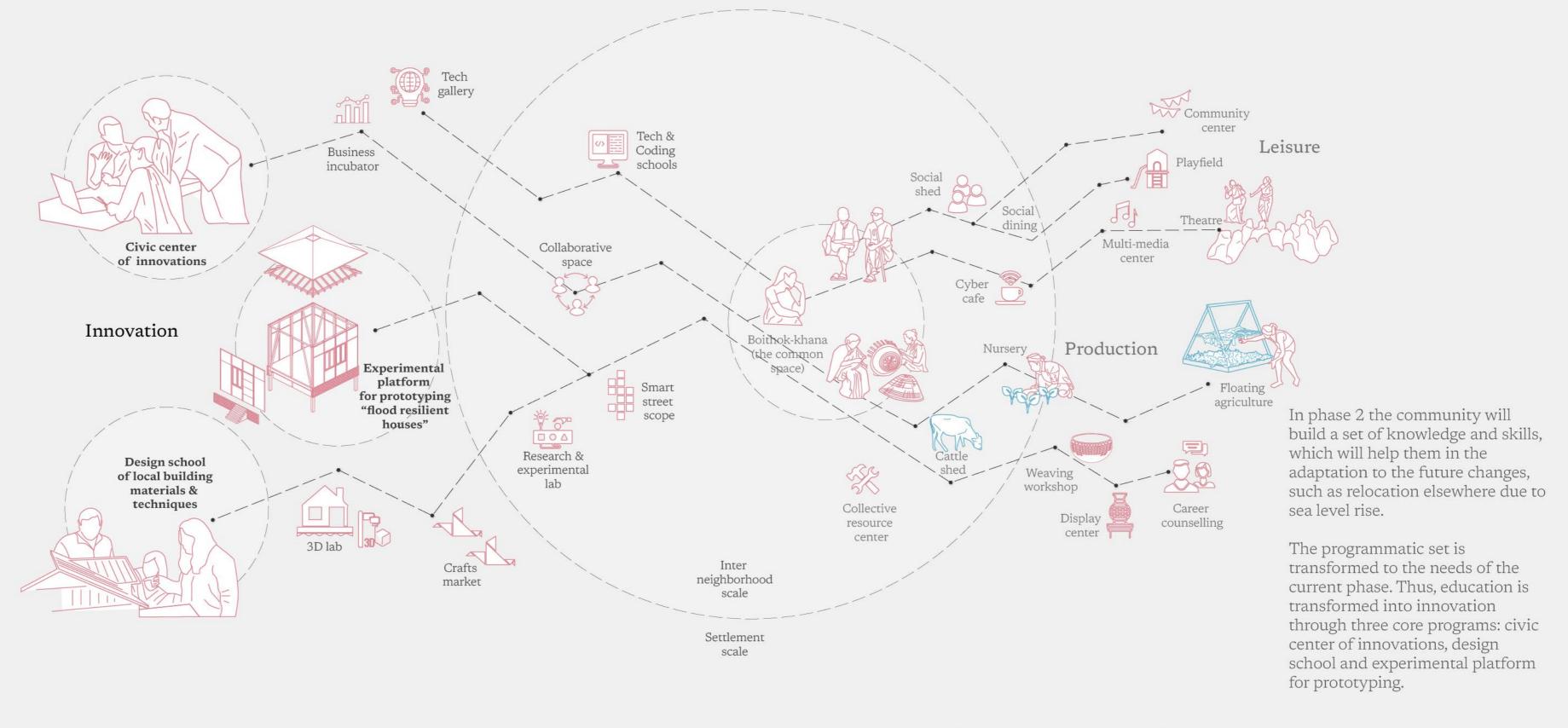




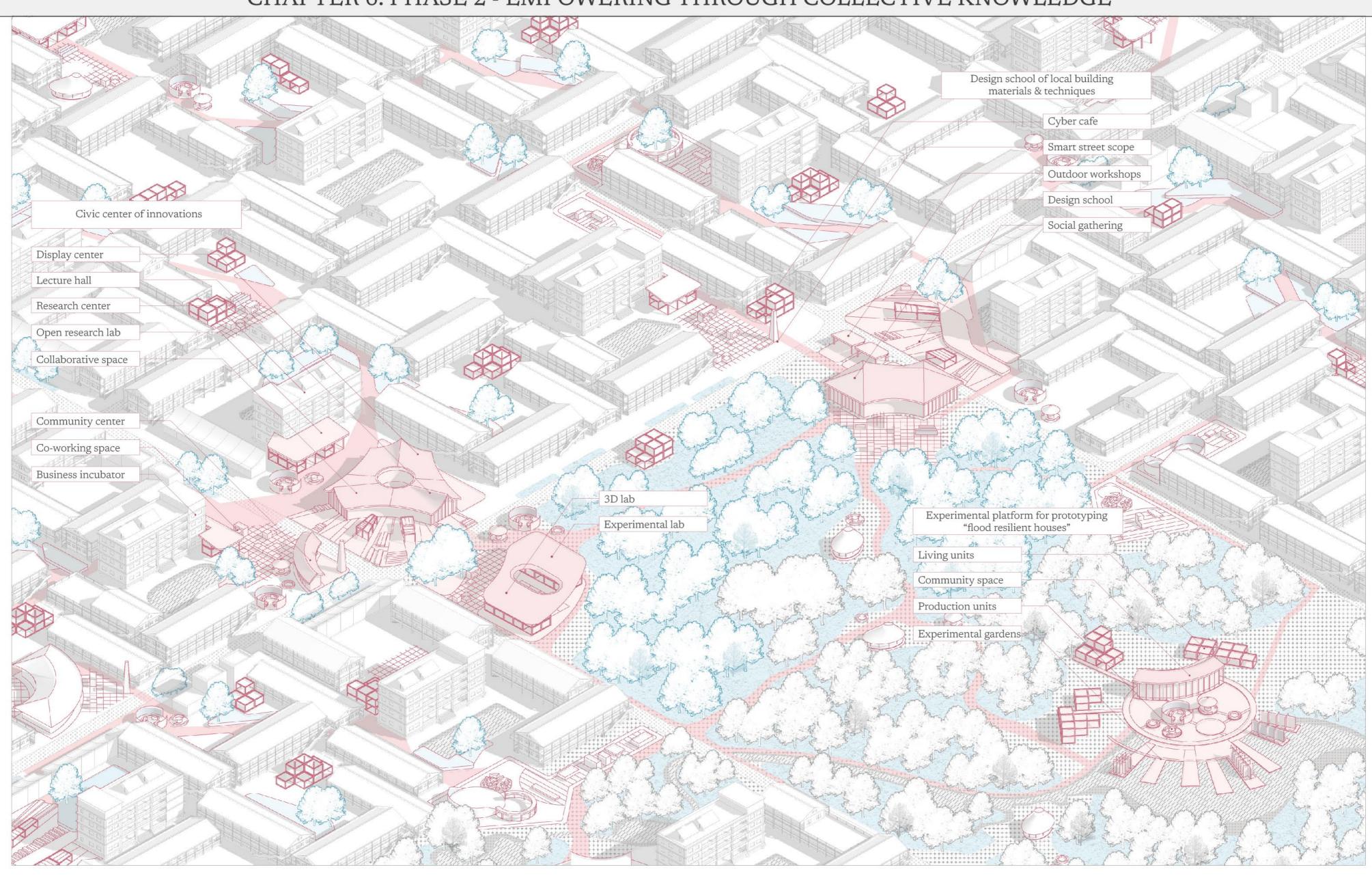
#### The in-between

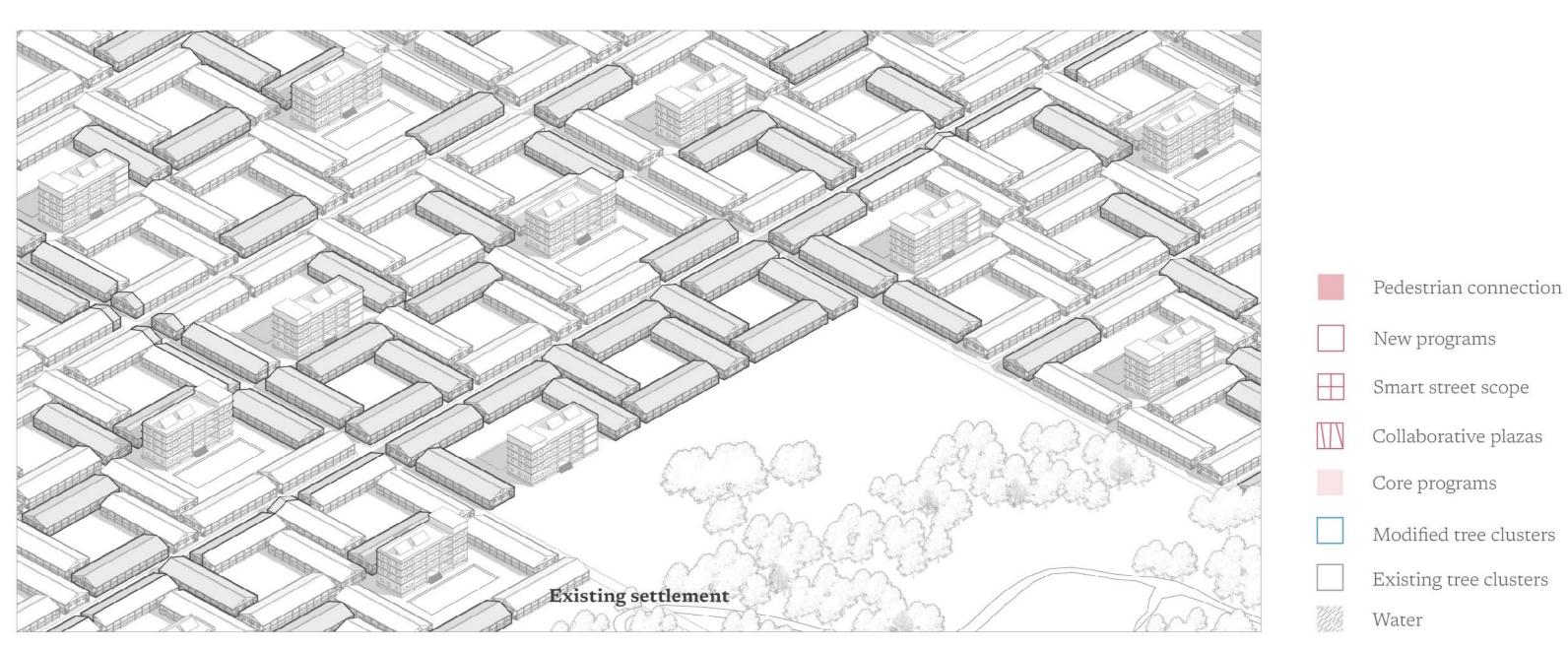
Karim (age 28), an young adult, is currently associated with the experimental floating vegetation model in Bhashan Char. They are trying to figure out an adaptive approach for growing vegetables in the water. It has helped him learn new techniques and collaborate with other farmers. He really enjoys his work since it also gives him the scope to be creative. Now he is becoming more self reliant in his life and he is no longer dependent on the ration provided by the humanitarian organizations.



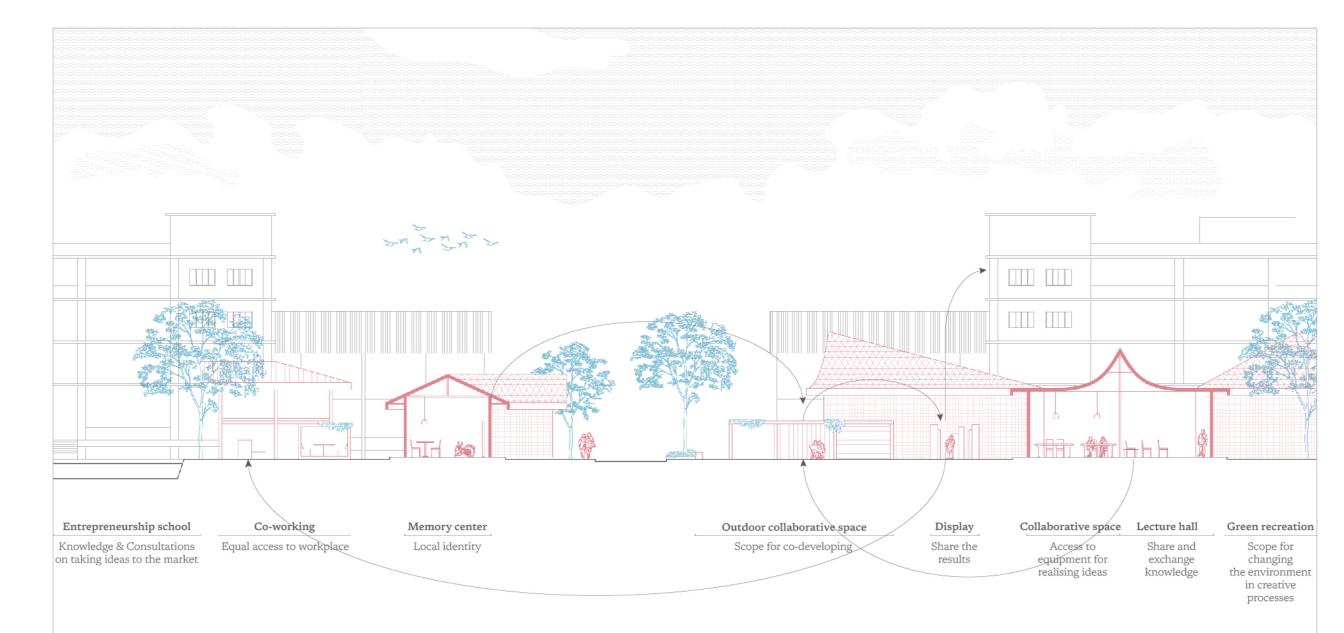


## CHAPTER 6: PHASE 2 - EMPOWERING THROUGH COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE



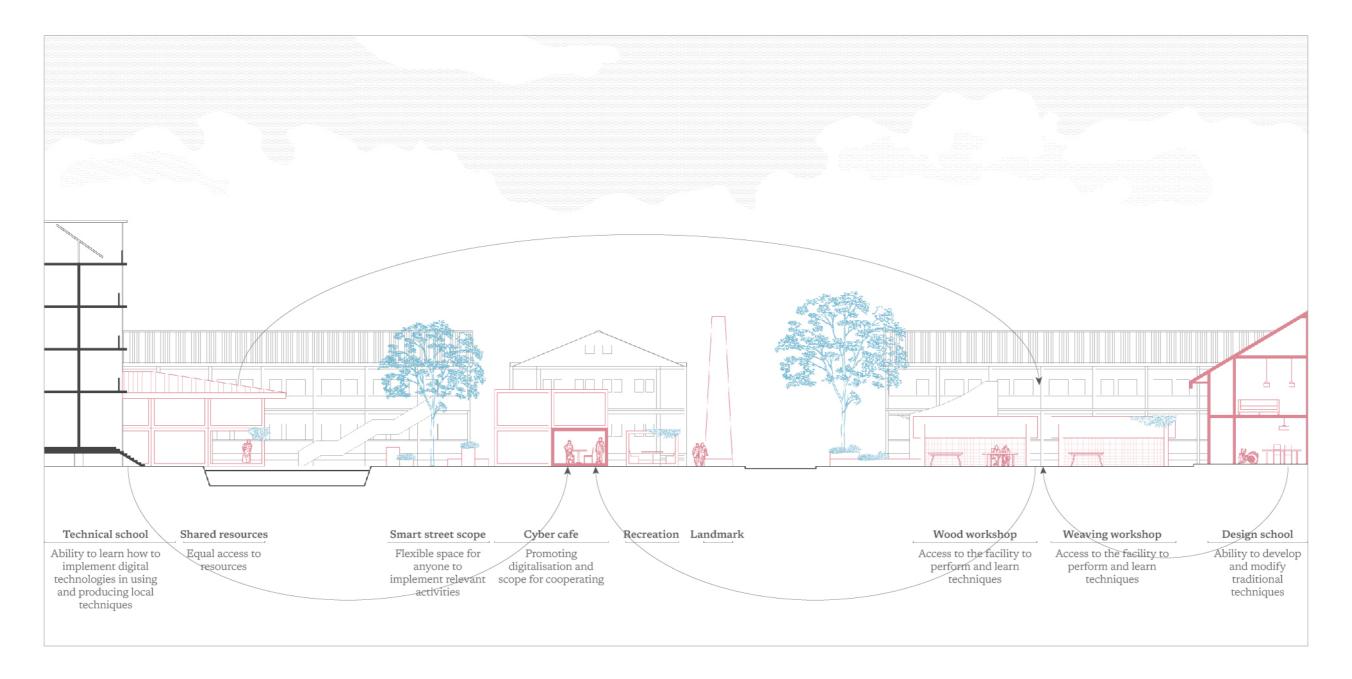


The zoom-in area in phase 2 is located in the central part of the settlement. The context is densifed and diversified through additional floors and a set of programs (innovation, production, leisure). The three core programs innovation center, design school and experimental platform for prototyping are parts of the urban system.



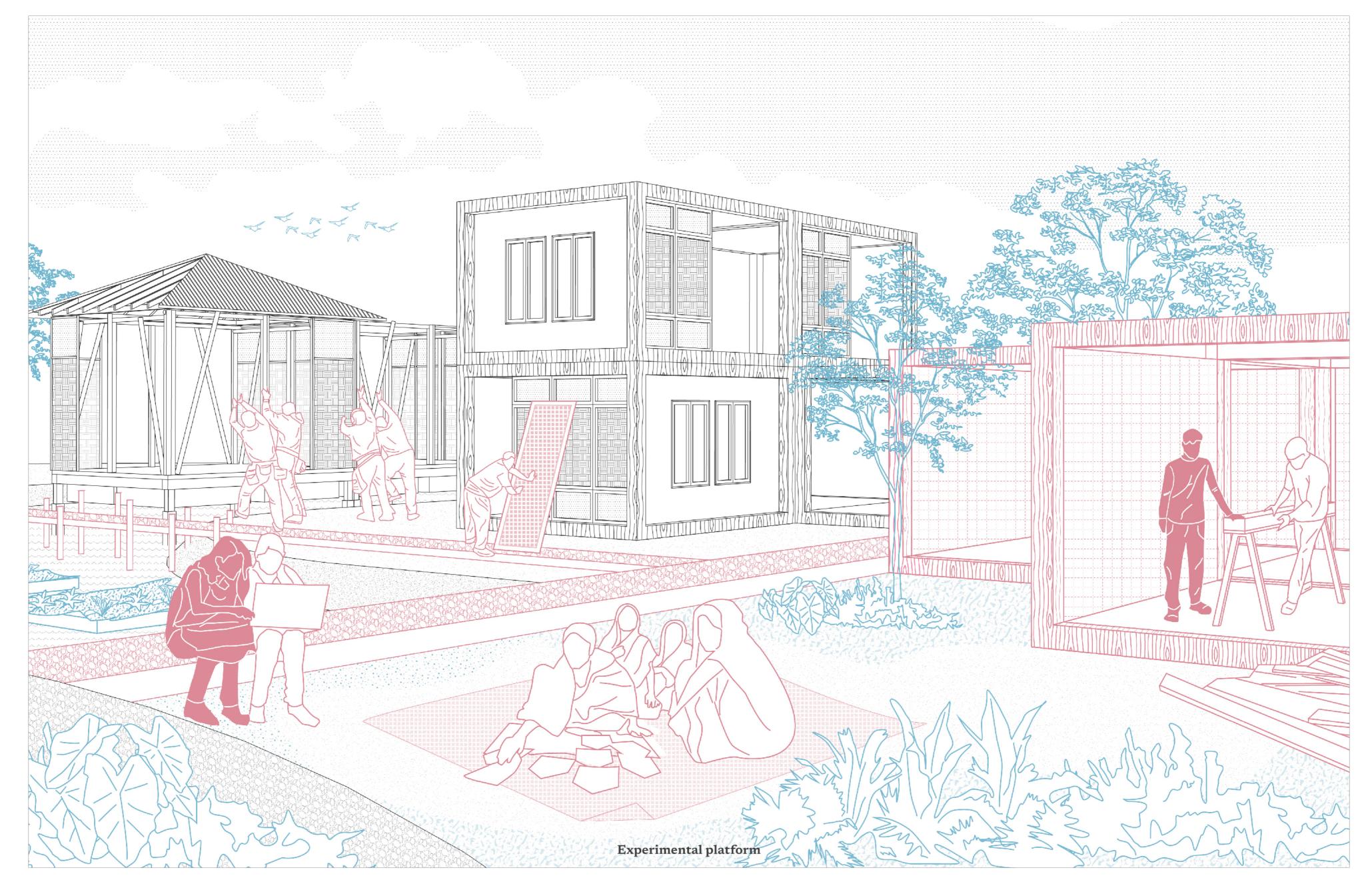
#### Civic center

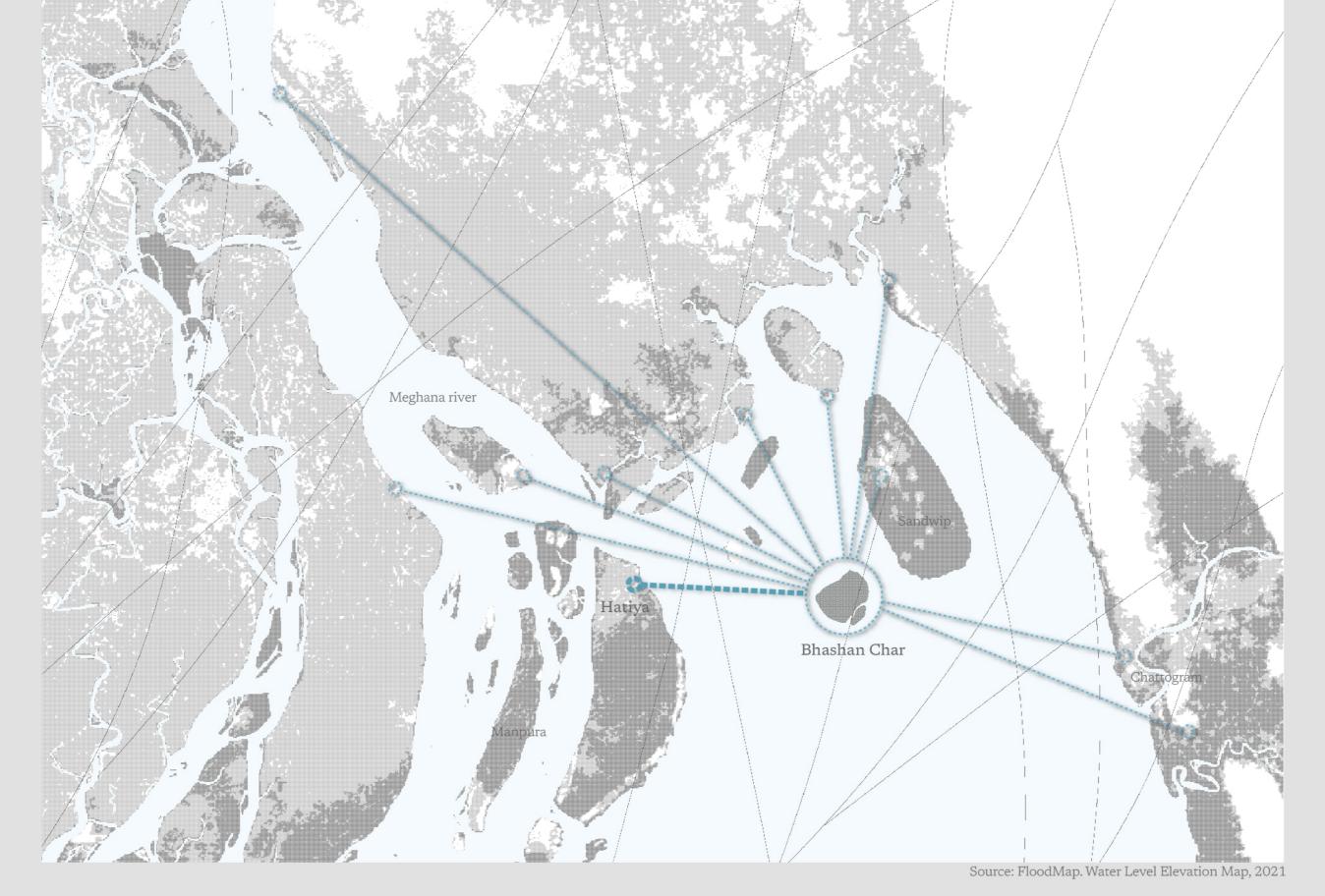
Karim, who in the first phase was working with experimental floating vegetation, in the second phase is participating in a workshop in the civic center. Their ideas can then be exhibited in the outdoor display space. Additionally, they have the opportunity to get consultancy from business school and the research center on how to proceed with their project on vertical aquaculture units.



#### Design school

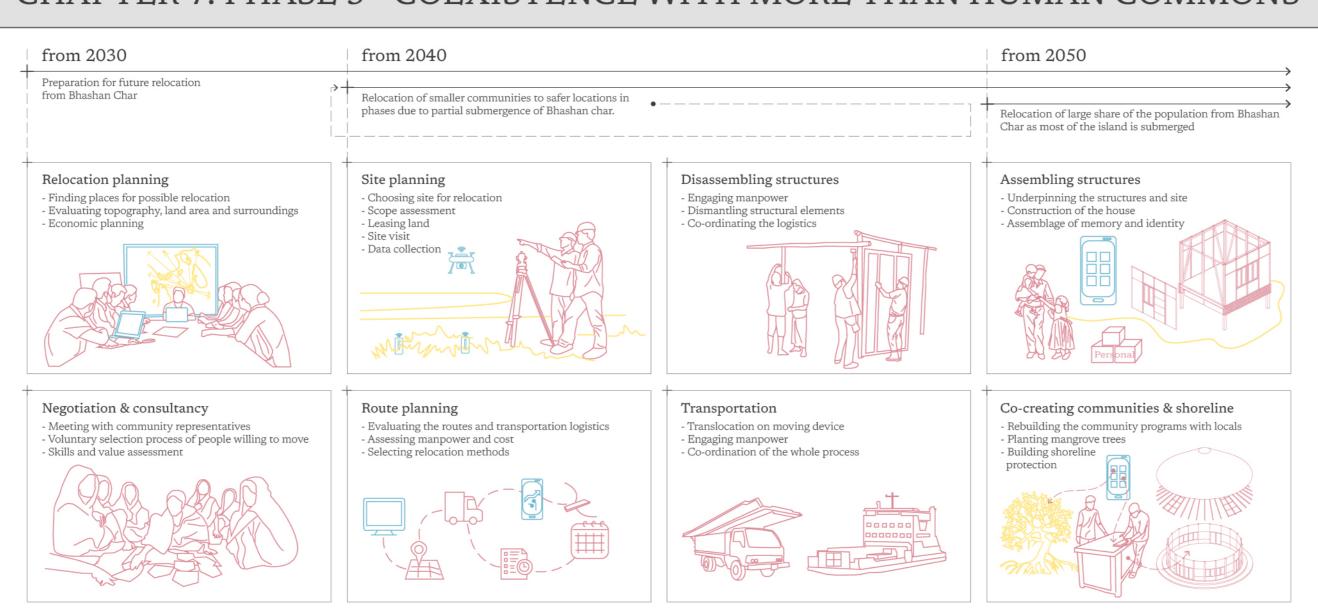
Fatema is studying in design school in phase 2. She is working in a weaving workshop in collaboration with some residents. They can go to the cyber cafe in order to develop a 3D model of their facade for a living unit whereas other students from the technical school would work on the platform with a guide for this new technique. Fatema can also use a 3D printer from the collective resource center to prototype the facade.





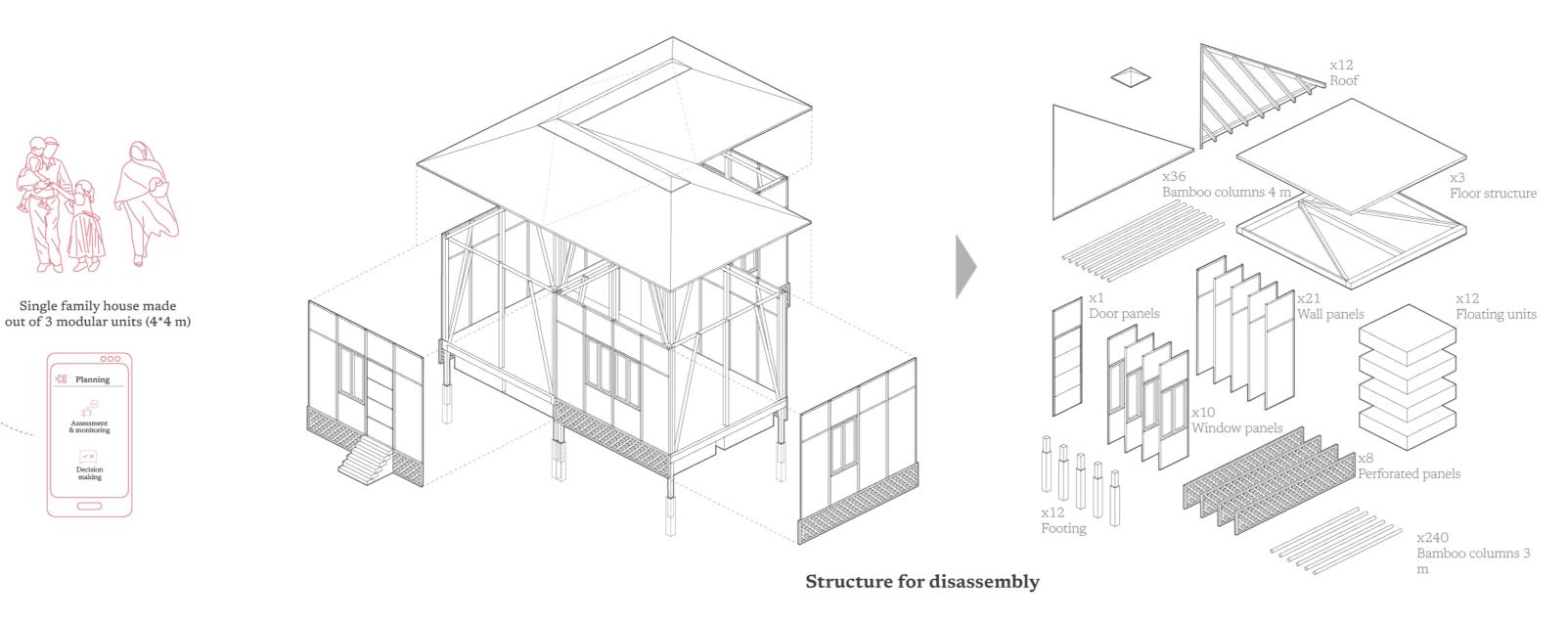
Large share of land area of Bangladesh might be affected by sea-level rise by 2050. Considering the high density of Bangladesh, land will be a scarcity and most of the mainland will be heavily saturated with people. So, here we assume that relocation from Bhashan Char will take place in multiple sites and we have identified one sample location, Hatiya island to further explore the relocation scenario considering its' proximity to Bhashan char.

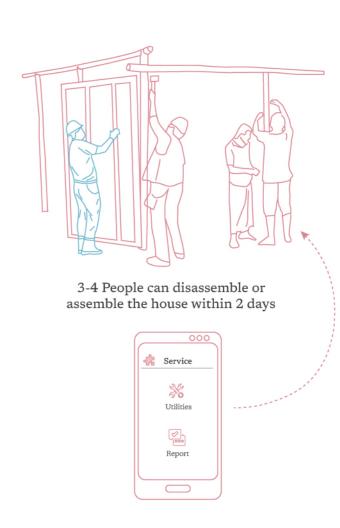
# CHAPTER 7: PHASE 3 - COEXISTENCE WITH MORE THAN HUMAN COMMONS



One of the goals for the project is to increase preparedness. Hence, in this phase we considered the relocation process from the island before it gets entirely underwater with these cooperative steps which are distributed through the time.

Rlanning





Cyclones

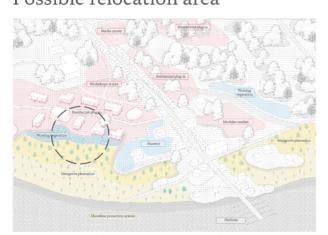
Possible plug-in relocation

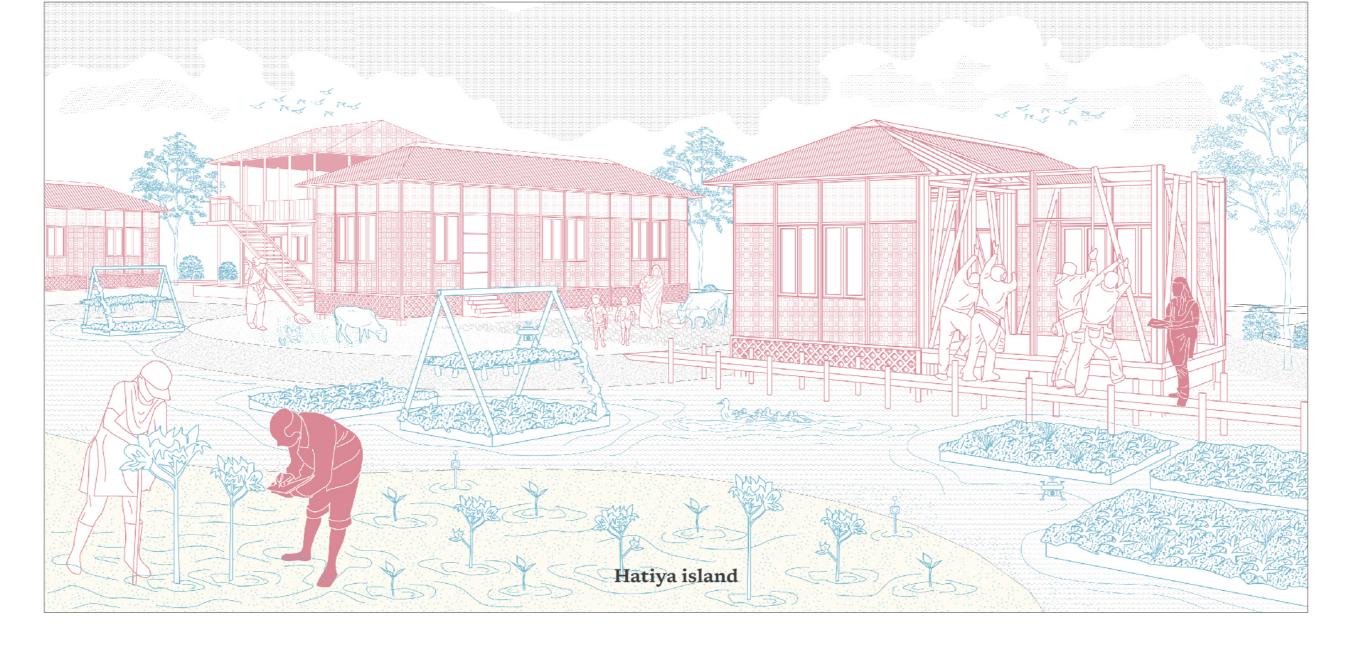
Selected plug-in relocation scenario

Annual flood risk areas by 2050

Sea level rise affected areas by 2050







Fatema and Karim along with many others are co-creating their community in the new place.
Karim is teaching mangrove plantation techniques to a student, whereas Fatema is guiding the process of assembling modular floating houses.

## APPENDIX

Booklet

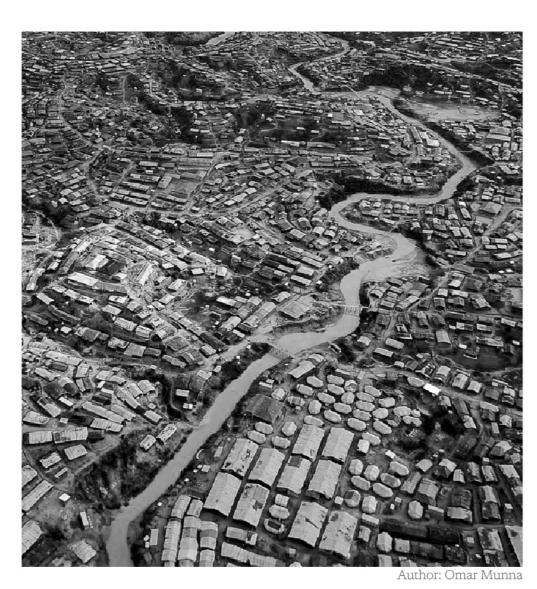
#### **CHALLENGE**

Currently, there are around 7.8 billion people in the world, among them, 79.5 million people are displaced from their homes, 45.7 million people are internally displaced, and 26 million people are refugees (UNHCR, 2020). These numbers are just a mere reflection of the consequences of the increasing scale and frequency of natural disasters due to climate change and/ or rooted in conflicts such as warfare, violence, human rights violations, and so on. Among the numerous ongoing cases from all around the world, we have decided to focus on one, the ethnic minority group called the Rohingyas from Myanmar who are currently refugees in Bangladesh.

The Rohingya population has been migrating from Myanmar since 1977 due to the decades of systematic discrimination, statelessness, and targeted violence in the Rakhine State, Myanmar. Hence, they fled to Bangladesh due to the closeness of the borders of these two countries. However, in August 2017, the largest refugee influx took place, as their houses were burnt down, families were separated and killed and girls were gang-raped. As a result, an estimated 800,000 Rohingyas fled into Cox's Bazar and they got shelter in 34 extremely congested camps in Bangladesh (OCHA, 2019).

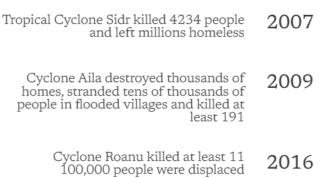


Source: UNICEF/UN0286416/Akash





	Bangladesh
1947	East Pakistan was formed as a part of the State of Pakistan following the end of British rule, combining current Bangladesh and Pakistan
1971	Bangladesh became independent
1974	In Bangladesh famine and flooding left an estimated 27,000 people dead this year
1982	Thirteen camps for the refugees were established. Repatriation took place due to economic and social burden
1987 - 88	Massive flood inundated three-quarters of the country, killed over 3,000 people. Half a million were left homeless and 1300 were killed after a cyclone hit Bangladesh
2004	Death toll rose above 1,500 due to flooding and strandedmore than 30 million people
2007	Tropical Cyclone Sidr killed 4234 people



Cyclone Fani and Bulbul hit Bangladesh Severe flooding displaced 800,000 people and inundated a third of the country	2019

Bangladesh started relocating Rohingya refugees in a remote island, Bhashan char

#### Maranmar

			Myanmar
		1800	British allowed local autonomy. Burmese government considers the migration during this period illegal, and refuses citizenship to the Rohingya.
		1948	After independence from British rule, Muslim rebellion erupts in Rakhine State, with people demanding equal rights and an autonomous area.
		1962	Military rule begins in Burma.
		1977 - 82	Among 135 national ethnic groups, Rohingyas were excluded and rendered them stateless. More than 200,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh.
		1989	Burma was renamed Myanmar.
		- 91	Military crackdown, another 50,000 refugees flee to Bangladesh.
		1992 - 94	The Myanmar and Bangladesh governments agree to repatriate refugees. Hundreds of thousands of people return to Myanmar over several years.
		2014	Myanmar's first census in 30 years, the Rohingyas are still not included as an ethnic group.
		2017	Horrific violence and terror targeting the Rohingya community. More than 700,000 Rohingyas flee Myanmar.

Myanmar's military seized power after detaining Aung San Suu Kyi and other elected leaders.

Source: Timelines, 2020 and World Vision, 2020

#### Bhashan Char

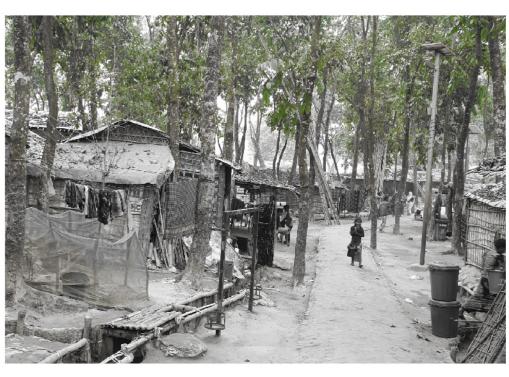
Bangladesh is the largest delta in the world with population of 161.4 m people. The country on itself does not have enough infrastructure and resources to support everyone. Moreover, due to its location, lands are extremely vulnerable to the sea level rise. Consequentially, by 2050 with 50 cm sea level rise Bangladesh might lose up to 11% of its already overpopulated land (Environmental Justice Foundation, 2020). It will affect approximately 15 million people directly. In this context, the area of focus for the Master's Thesis will be the remote island Bhashan Char in Noakhali District, where Rohingya refugees are being relocated which we defined as "disappearing land".

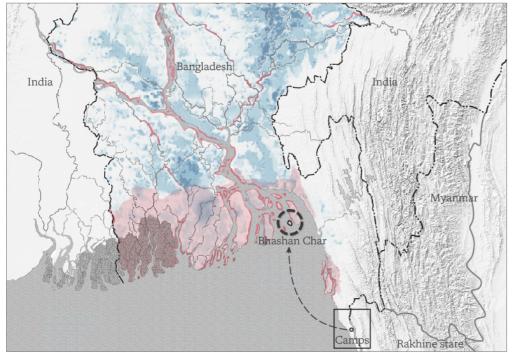


### Remote site visit (refugee camp)

For the project we did a remote site visit to the camp-1 East in Cox's Bazar with the help of architect Shimanto Goswami from Bangladesh, accompanied by Rizvi Hassan (IOM) and Khwaja Nuzhat Zerin Fatmi (ActionAid) who are currently working in the camps. It gave us better understanding of the living conditions and the lifestyle of the Rohingya refugees.







#### **PROJECT**

With our project, we are focusing on the Rohingya refugee issue. In 2017 thousands of people had to cross the borders of Myanmar due to mass genocide triggered by ethnic cleansing and around 800,000 of them flee to Bangladesh as refugees. Whereas, Bangladesh has 2 million informal settlers of its own known as internally displaced people (IDPs) who have been displaced due to extreme climatic conditions. So, we are dealing with the issue of how refugees can coexist in a country where there are already thousands homeless.

Currently, the government has built a settlement for 100,000 people on a newly emerged island, Bhashan Char in the Bay of Bengal. Thousands of Rohingya refugees are already being relocated there. However, with the predicted sea-level rise not only the island but the majority of the coastal area of Bangladesh might go underwater. Our project is an attempt to imagine a resilient community, where both refugees and Bangladeshi people will be able to coexist in Bhashan Char, build empathy for each other, and be connected with the surroundings. Simultaneously, be able to co-develop preparedness for future changes connected to sea-level rise using local potential.

Hence, the aim of our project is to establish conditions of co-existence for the refugees and IDPs of Bangladesh where they can co-create resilient communities in connection with the local context and the changing environment.



uthor: Jonas Bendiksen

#### **METHODS & TIMELINE**

week

1 Research

## 2. Interviews . architects and urban planners from the current refugee camps 3. Desktop study . social structure . settlement patterns . local resources (building materilas etc.) . cultural conditions . ecologicla conditions Design 1. Prototyping . testing different approaches to design 2. Strategies . defining main direction to approach the challenges 3. Concept . co-creation . temporality . designing for belonging 4. Toolbox . developing a system of design interventions

Research

. worldwide experience of refugee relocation

. understanding co-creating principles

1. Literature review

#### Analysis

#### 1. Mapping

- . topographical conditions
- . density and social structure
- . distribution of services
- . location and distance to the surrounding land

#### 2. Synthesis

- . systematization of the collected information
- . conclutions

#### 2 Literature review Interviews Analysis Design Desktop study Mapping Prototyping 6 Synthesis Strategies Concept 8 Toolbox 9 Midterm 10 11 12 13 14 15 Proposal Green light 16 Drawing 17 Posters making 18 Final presentation 19

## Proposal

#### 1. Drawing

. producing comprehensive graphical representation of the project

#### 2. Posters making

- . presenation
- .layout
- . panels

#### REFERENCE LITERATURE

#### Critical care: Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet

A. Fitz, E. Krasny and A. Wien

"Responding to the interconnectedness of economy, ecology and labor results in interdisciplinary ways of working that draw on situated knowledges and different ways of knowing, learning and sharing. These alliances around diverse strategies and knowledges enable transformative practices which counteract exploitative and extractive models of the Anthropocene Capitalocene condition."

# Diverse economies: performative practices for 'other worlds'

J.K. Gibson-Graham

"The 'formal' economy, constituted through wage labour in capitalist enterprises is but the tip of a much larger iceberg, a plethora of alternative economies exist in the mostly submerged 90 per cent. The myriad of activities that are positioned as "other" to capitalism the direct provisioning of care and well-being in households, communities and associations; the non-monetized transactions of gift giving, reciprocity and sharing."

# The living room: Al-Madhafah

Sandi Hilal

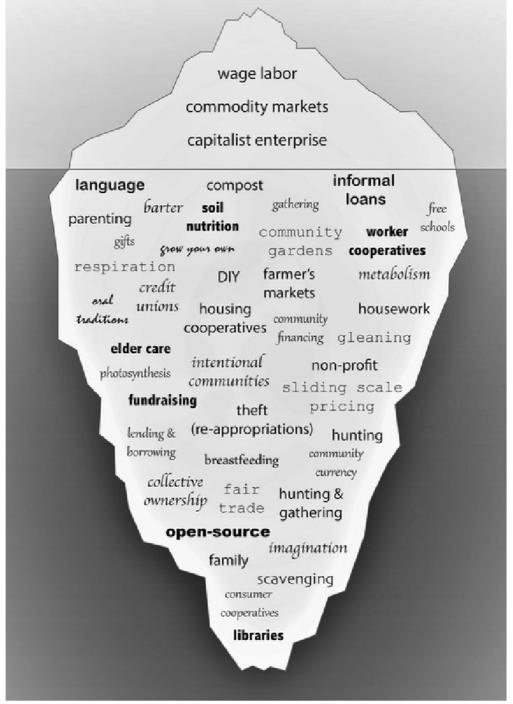
"The living room dedicated to hospitality. It has the potential to subvert the role of guest and host and give a different socio-political meaning to the act of hospitality. It activates the right of temporary people to be a host and not to behave as eternal guests, the right to claim life in the new destination but without feeling obliged to revoke the desire to belong to the life back home."

# Co-Creation in Theory and Practice

C. Horvath and J. Carpenter

"Co-Creation, although it may pursue social justice and community engagement through different means, will always promote agency, collaboration between participants and alternative visions taking into account different perspectives rather than inertia, separation and status quo."









Source: Community Economies Collective

Source: Visible project Author: Naimul Haq/IPS

### REFERENCE PROJECTS

## Solidarity in action

# Strategy for dispersal

People's friendship is people's strength

The Republic of Belarus

Sierra Leone

The importance of partnerships

Responsibility sharing

Self-reliance, reducing dependency

Cities of Solidarity

Strategic dispersal Communication strategy

Strong partnership Integration from the moment of arrival

Community-run business

System of collaboration

Inclusion of the major stakeholders in the decision-making process

Self-reliance and active contribution

System of consultations



Solidarity is the tenderness of the people.







UNHCR / B. Heger 2004

UNHCR / B.Bannon 2008

UNHCR / G.Kent 2010

UNHCR / G.Kent 2010

#### REFERENCE PROJECTS

#### Arcadia education project

Location: Bangladesh Architect: Saif Ul Haque

The project adapts to the flood prone landscape with its innovative approach, where the building is segmented into amphibious modules, which can be used both during dry periods and floods. It used recycled tires & different varieties of bamboos in the area. The site is flooded almost five months of the year, but conventional solutions like raising the land with sand or building on stilts were not compatible with its topography (Architexturez,

#### Cyclone shelter

Architect: Kashef Mahboob Location: Bangladesh

The prototype was designed in response to the devastating cyclone in 2007, to save lives during disasters and also to serve the community by contributing to its education, halth & safety. The inner part is protected with an external spiral ramp which reduces the impact of cyclones and under normal weather, gives shade to the interior (Architectural review, 2019).

#### Quinta Monroy social housing

Architect: Alejandro Aravena Location: Iquique, Chilie

Architect Aravena implemented the idea of "incremental housing". In other words, instead of designing the whole house with a limited budget, he proposed to build half of each house providing minimal basic sanitary equipment. The rest of the houses were built and design by people, bringing a character to each of them (ArchDaily, 2008).

#### Aloon Lar Shay Pha la women center

Architects: Khwaja Fatmi, Abid Ibna A. Rahman Location: Rohingya Refugee Camp , Ukhiya

"The display centre offers a platform for the Rohingya women to create, showcase and sell handmade products to the visitors. The process of the making of the centre was focused more on the participation of the users and the artisans than the usual top-down method" (ContextBD, 2020).

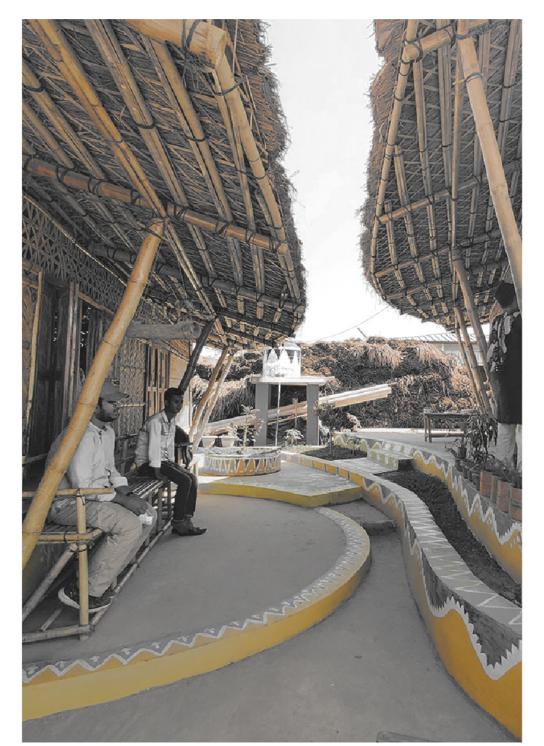












Source: Architexturez, 2016 Source: Architectural review, 2019

Source: ArchDaily, 2018

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She is the architect for the project "Rohingya display and production center" which is located in the Rohingya Refugee Camp no – 11. At the time she was part of the team who were developing a website on the heritage, culture and lifestyle of Rohingya people. Most of the refugees want to go back to their homeland in a scenario where the violence and persecution has stopped.

2. **Shegufta Newaz** (Site Planning Associate at UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency)

Being a part of the urban planning team she shared her insights about the camps. They have inconsistent planning systems since there are several NGOs trying to address the current challenges but are lacking communication amoung each other. Currently in Cox's Bazar the infrastructure is underdeveloped: lack of schools, public spaces, basic services, livelihood options. Other important issues are distraction of the natural reserve and waste management in the camps. Additionally vulnerable locals from the surrounding areas feel threatened due to the funding the refugees get.

3. **Majhi** (Rohingya refugee group leader)
In a remotely documented interview he shared about their dense and congested lifestyle in the camps and how they manage to still engage in different livelihood practices like trading and repairing in spite of those activities being illegal.

4. Elahe Karimina (Architect and Urbanist leading on Urban Research and Spatial Practice at Theatrum Mundi) After formulating the overall concept we asked Elahe Karimina, who is also a course teacher in the "Contemporary Urban Theory" at KTH, for feedback on the direction we have taken in our research and design. It gave valuable insights into how to use design for empowering communities and shift focus towards infrastructural design to explore it in our project.

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