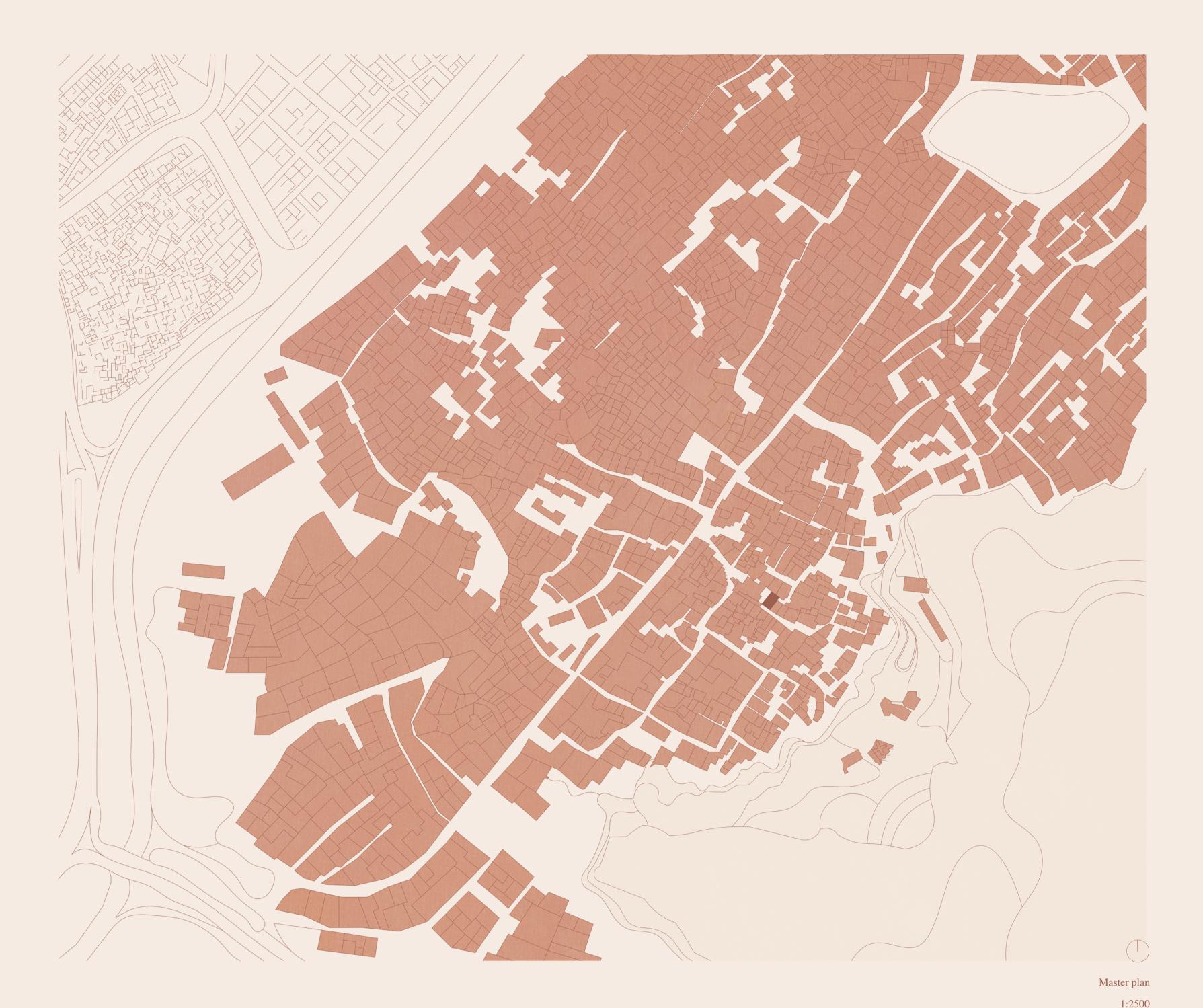
Nabe' (In)formal Cairo; beyond the everlasting dichotomy



Nabe' - Contextualized

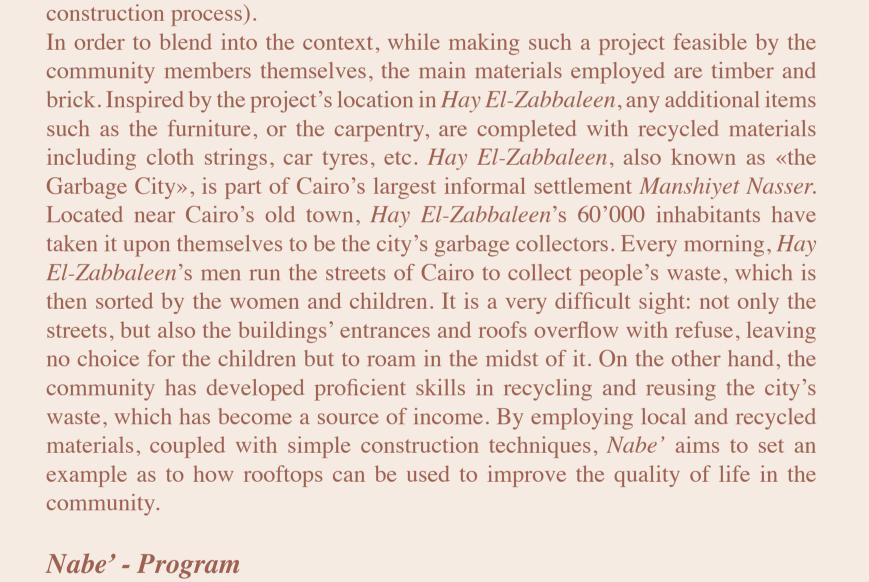


photographed by Nabky and Nasreldin



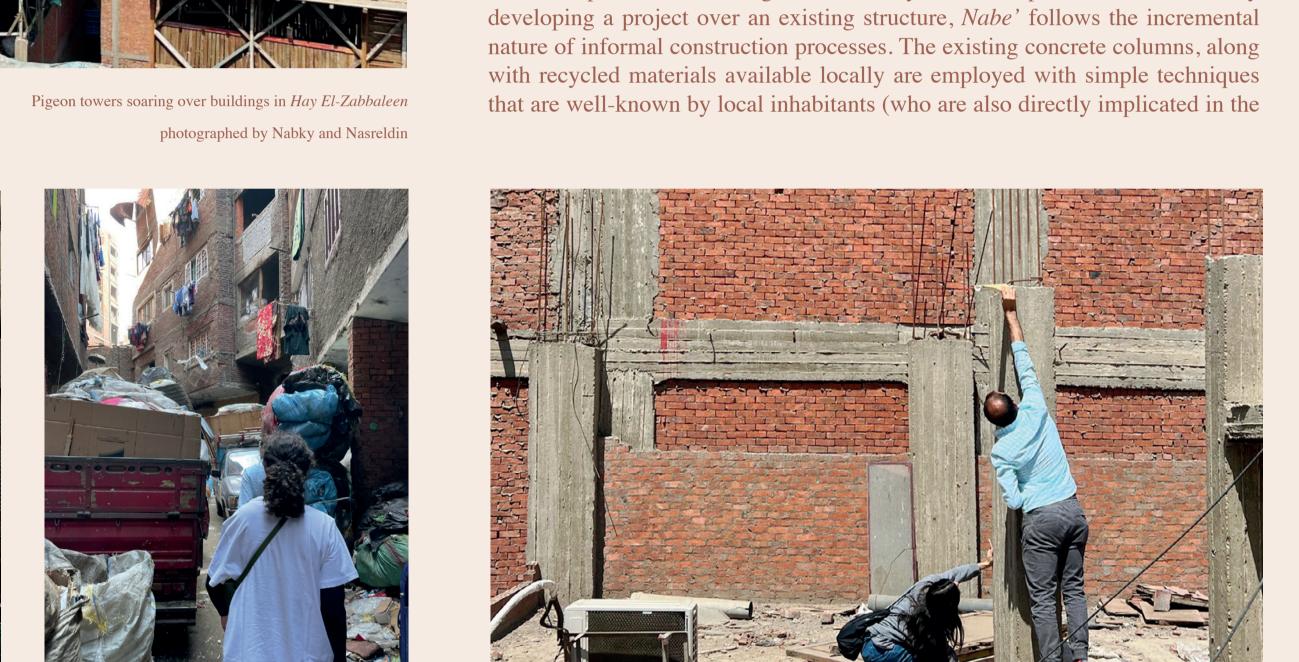


Streets of Hay El-Zabbaleen photographed by Nabky and Nasreldin



Nabe' provides space for communal activities that can improve everyday life. What inspired *Nabe's* program was the rooftop it springs on: that of *Fekra*. The latter is one of the few nurseries in *Hay El-Zabbaleen* that aim to educate the younger generation to provide a brighter future to them. *Fekra* holds the two top floors of the building it is in, and comprises classrooms and a kitchen. *Nabe'* offers an outdoor evasion for those children. A place where they can relish their youth, and forget about the stress of their daily reality. It endeavours also to be a setting for alternative education, where soft skills may be learnt in a safe and exuberant environment. Above all, it is a space that encourages playful moments, while nourishing the mind.

Consisting of a vegetable garden, an indoor area with a space to prepare food and



Like in many developing countries around the world, Cairo's informal areas (the

ashwai'yyats) are constantly growing. In fact, despite their widely substandard

means, they are home to about 70% of the Cairene population. They are easily

spotted all over the capital due to their typical structures made of brick and

concrete. Reinforcement bars protrude from the concrete columns, hinting at

the possibility of accommodating additional floors. Despite efforts made by

the Egyptian government to eradicate such settlements, their vastness and their

pragmatic ways of absorbing the unmet demand for affordable housing have

While developing this project, it was crucial to keep in mind the context in which

Nabe' takes place. The inhabitants of the ashwai'yyats have had their rights

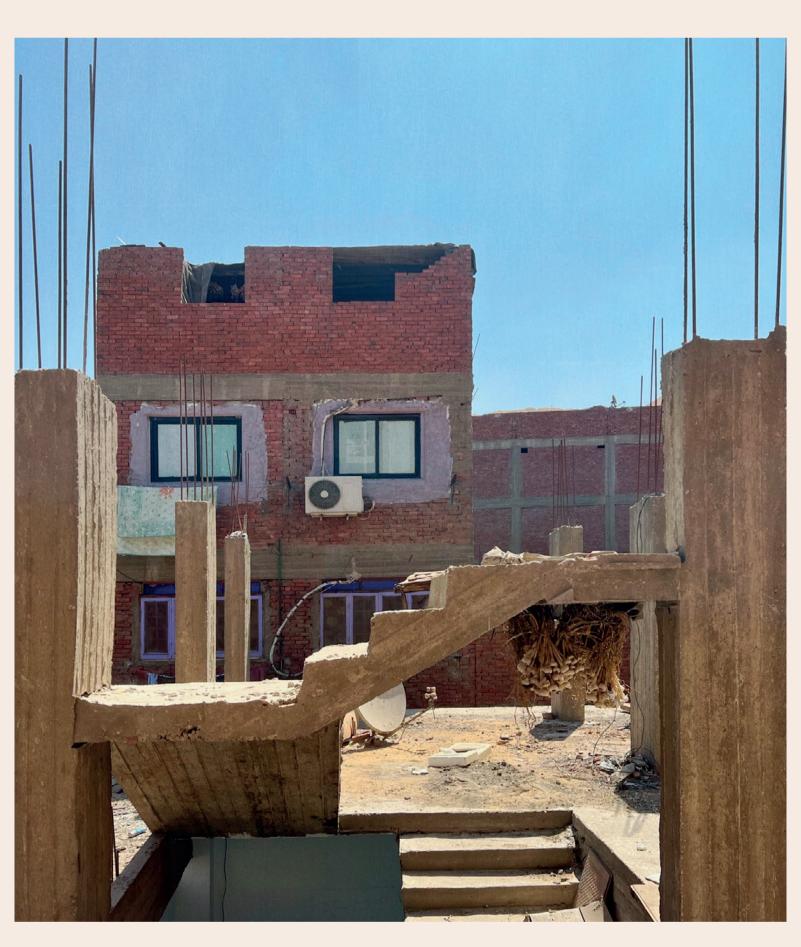
disregarded for decades by the government, making them weary of any project

meant to aid them. Hence, it was unimaginable to dismantle any existing structure

to create space for something new. The only available space is on the roofs. By

turned them into a permanent element of the urban landscape.

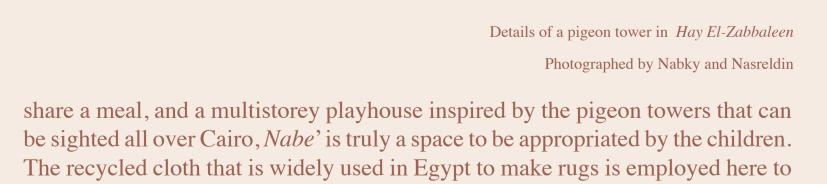
Project site facing north-east photographed by Nabky and Nasreldin



Project site facing south-west Photographed by Nabky and Nasreldin





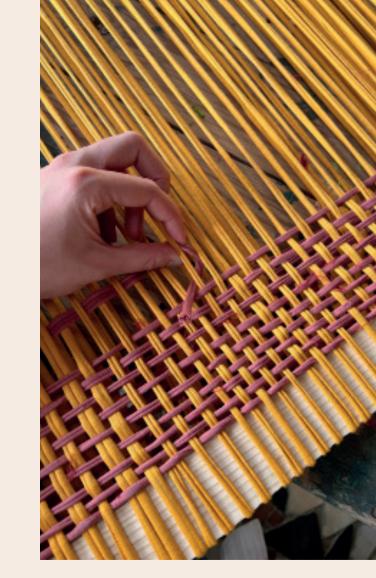


provide different activities for the children, as well as to bring vibrant colours to the project. Nabe' - Construction techniques and materials

A core element of the project is the employment of vernacular construction techniques. Therefore, with the help of a few connoisseurs in Cairo, we were able to learn part of the local craftsmanship, in order to evaluate the feasibility of the construction process. We tested different weaving techniques and materials, and were able to integrate crafty carpentry in a brick wall. The construction technique used for the wooden tower is inspired – yet enhanced – from the typical pig that are ubiquitous in Hay El-Zabbaleen. Indeed, these towers use approximately 9x9 cm timber posts to mount the structure. *Nabe*' doubles the number of timber posts in the structure to make it studier, and to rise up to several floors. As for the reinforcement steel bars that protrude from existing concrete columns, they are twisted around the primary beam with the help of pliers, holding the wooden structure in place. We opted to keep this solution in our project, as it is widely used in *Hay El-Zabbaleen* and allows to easily dismount *Nabe's* wooden structure



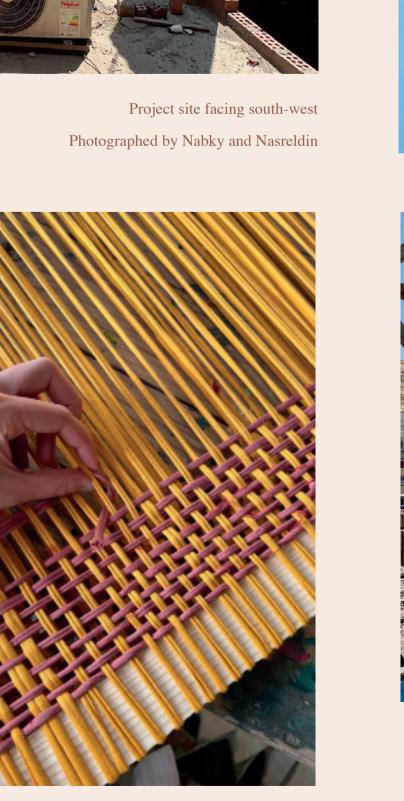


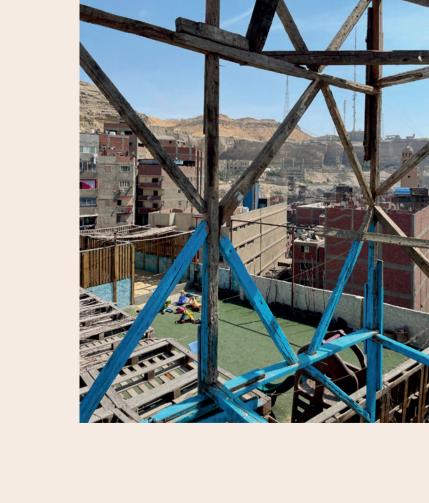






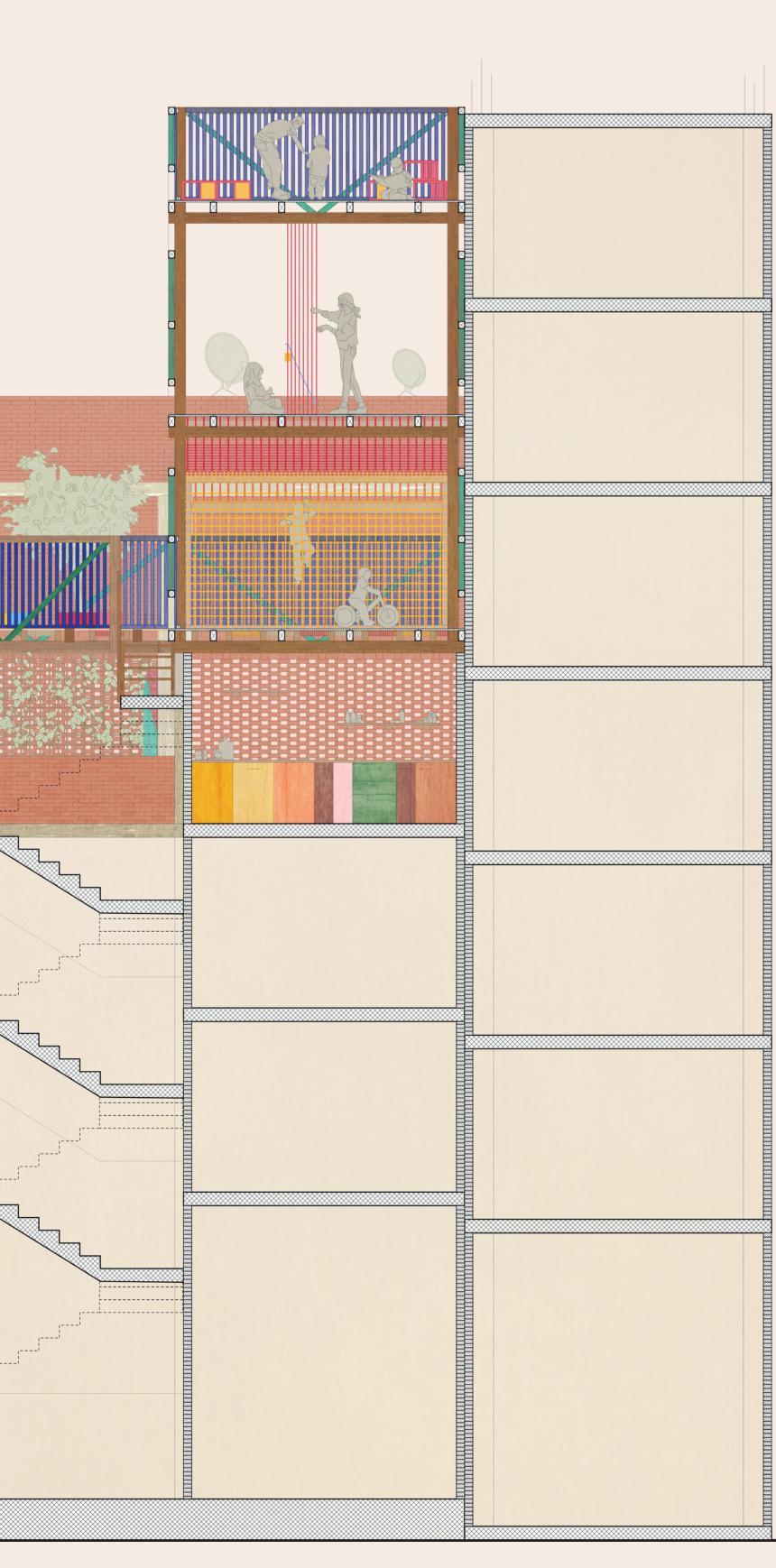




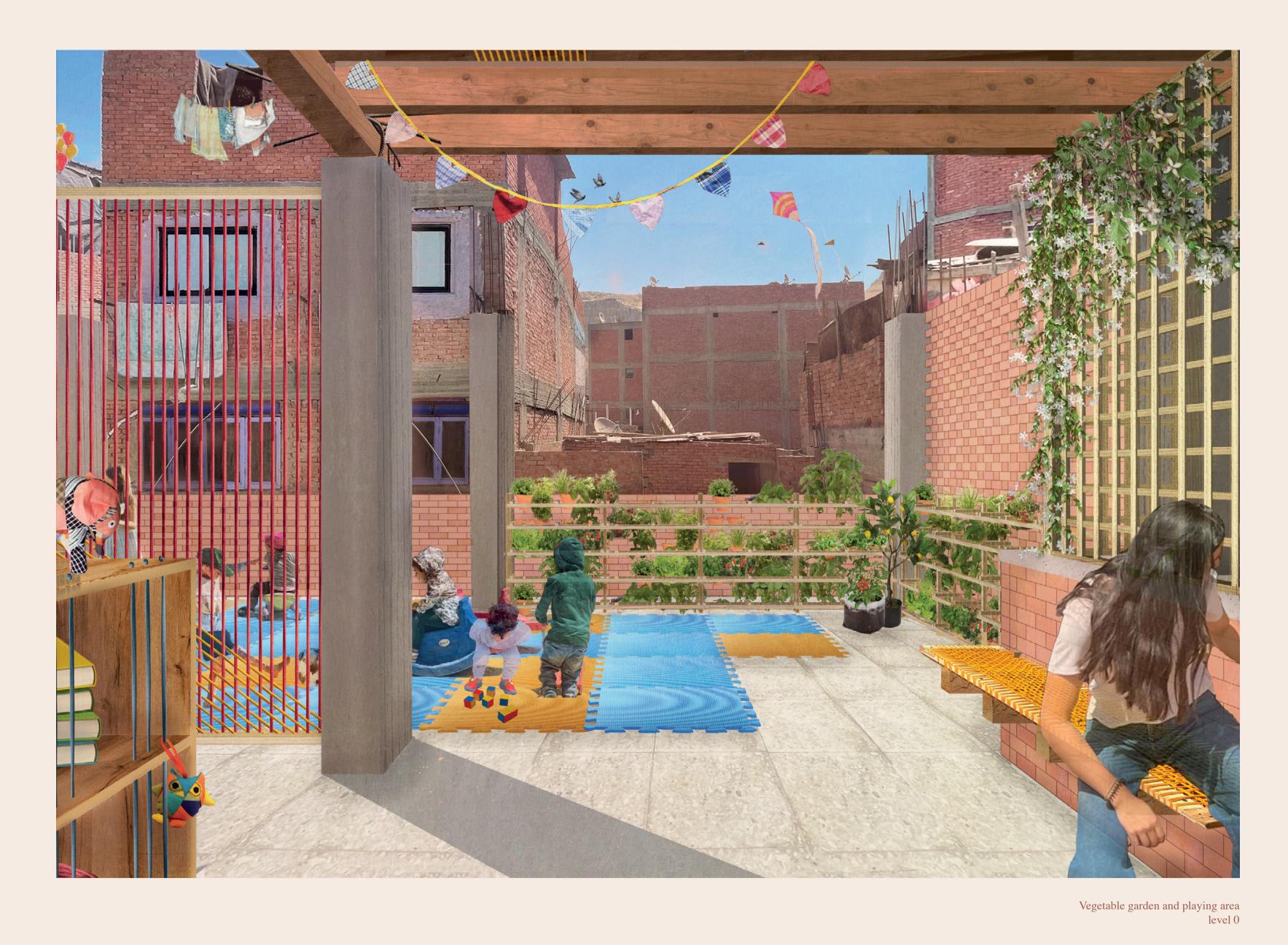


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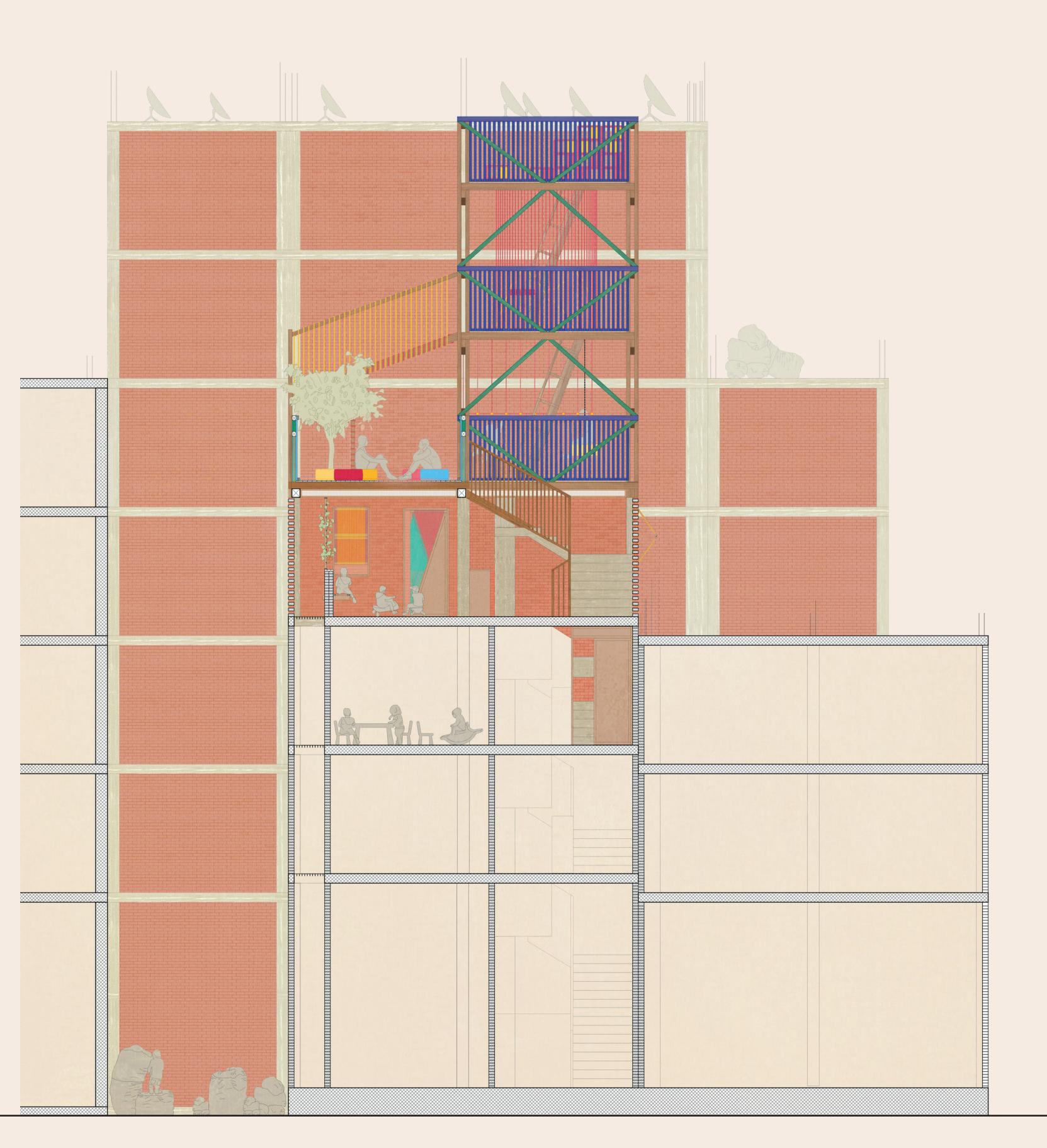












South-West Elevation 1:50

Plan - level 0

1:50

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1:50

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Plan - level 2

Plan - level 3

1:50

Plan - level 1