

Fragility and Power:
The Architecture of protest

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MAIA - Master of Arts in Interior Architecture
HEAD - Genève
Diploma Project, 2025

Space Popular
w/ David Viladomiu Ceballos

At a time when public space is in constant negotiation, this project emerges as an operational platform for collective action: an open-source project designed to be accessed, downloaded, and activated by groups and communities seeking to reclaim urban space through protest. Protest becomes a form of urban design, where political needs translate into devices that question the relationship between protesters and authorities, in strategic maps and shared operational protocols. Each element adapts to different geographical, spatial, and socio-political contexts, revealing how each protest temporarily transforms the city according to different logics and durations. Through design, protest becomes choreography, language, ephemeral infrastructure: a collective act that creates space, relationships, and memory. In this project, architecture does not impose a form but withdraws, leaving space for image, gesture, and possibility. The structures it proposes are replicable and agile, resistance strategies born within conflict, capable of challenging repressive norms, protecting bodies, and disrupting the order imposed in public space. They are not permanent constructions, but mobile situations, ready to transform and be continuously rewritten by those who activate them.

The Architecture of Protest it's a call to reimagine political space through design. At a time when collective expression is increasingly restricted, design must not only observe or document from the sidelines, but stand beside those who act. This project contributes to an ongoing reflection on the role of design in processes of social transformation, reclaiming its power to generate not only objects, but new possibilities. In this framework, protest itself becomes a form of urban design – where political urgency takes shape in devices that challenge, connect, and reconfigure the relationships between people and power.

1 . ORGANIZATION

1.1 MAP

1.2 CARDS

2 . DEVICE /DESIGN

2.1 STRUCTURE

2.2 WEARABLE

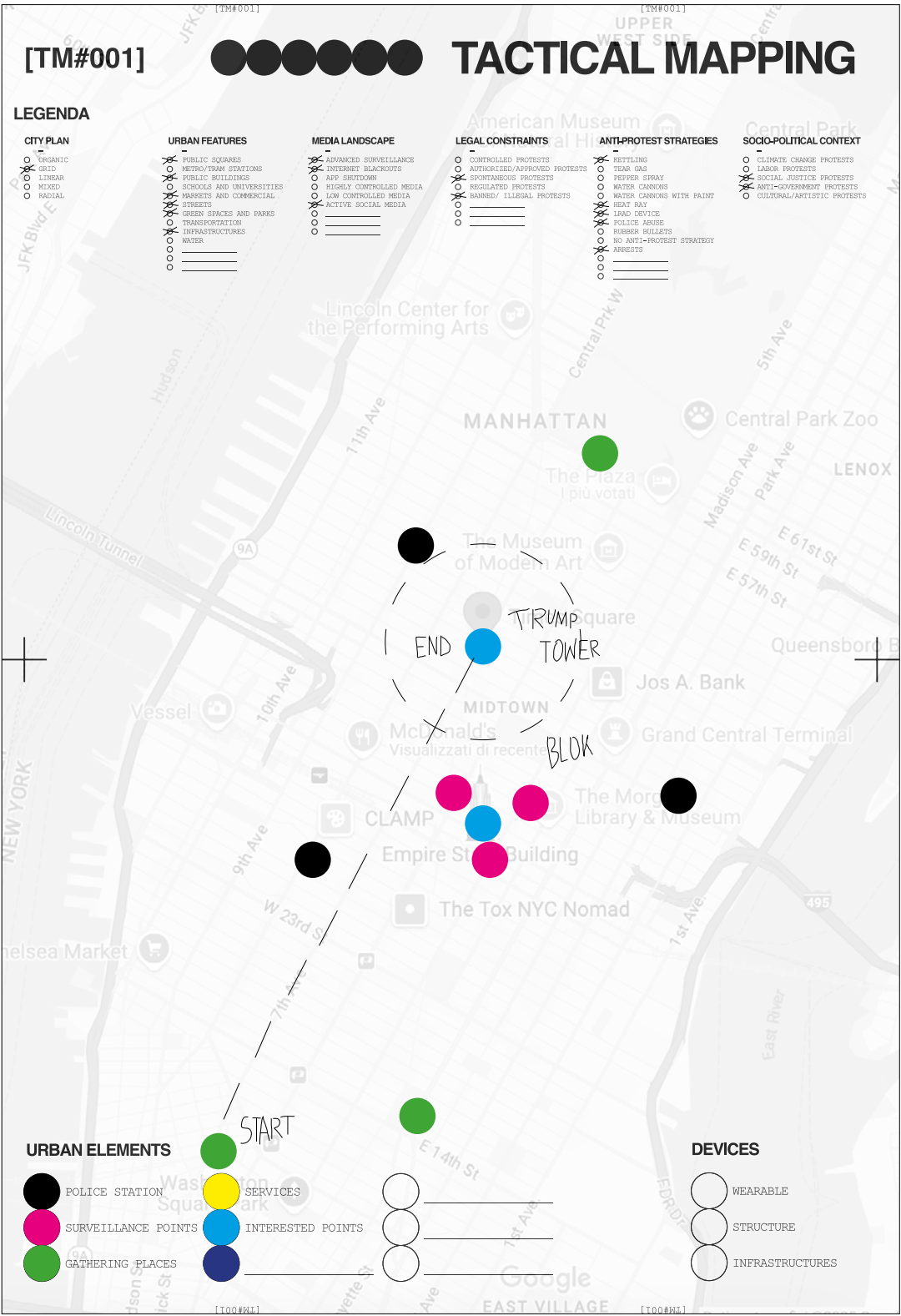
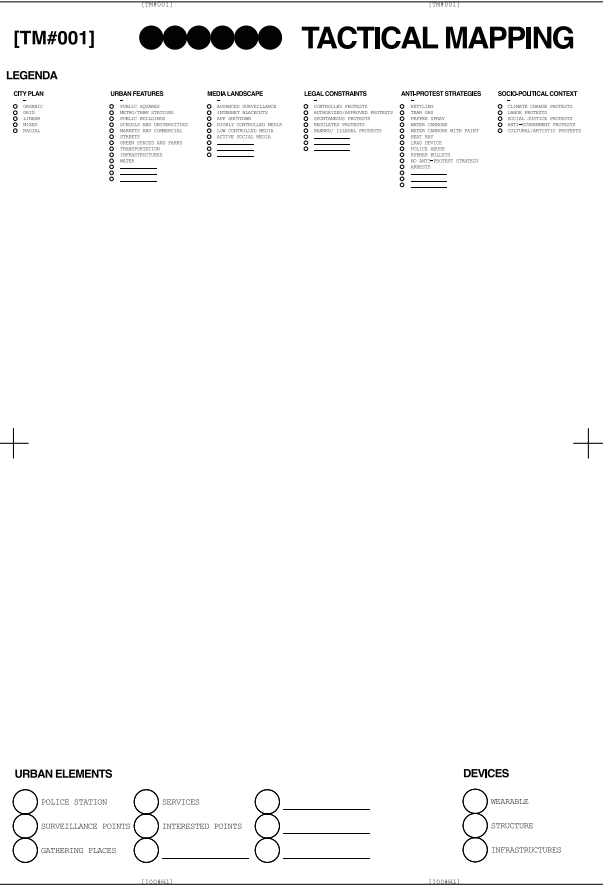
2.3 INFRASTRUCTURE

3 . ARCHIVE

4 . COMMUNICATION

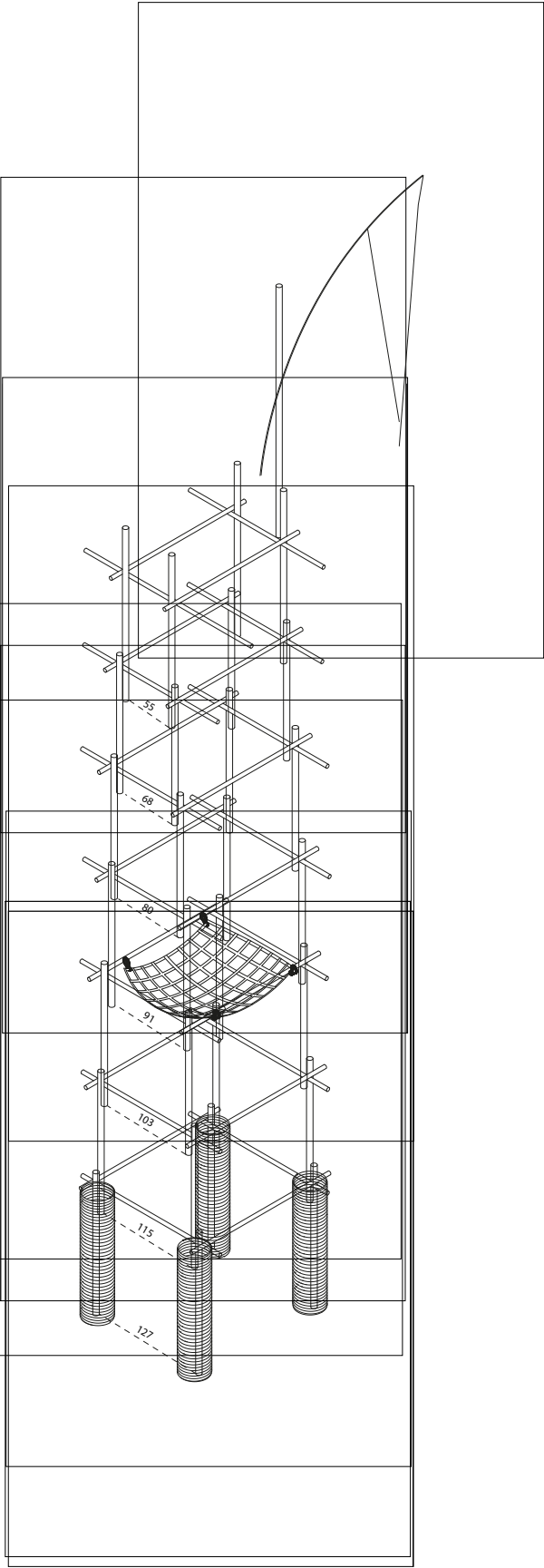
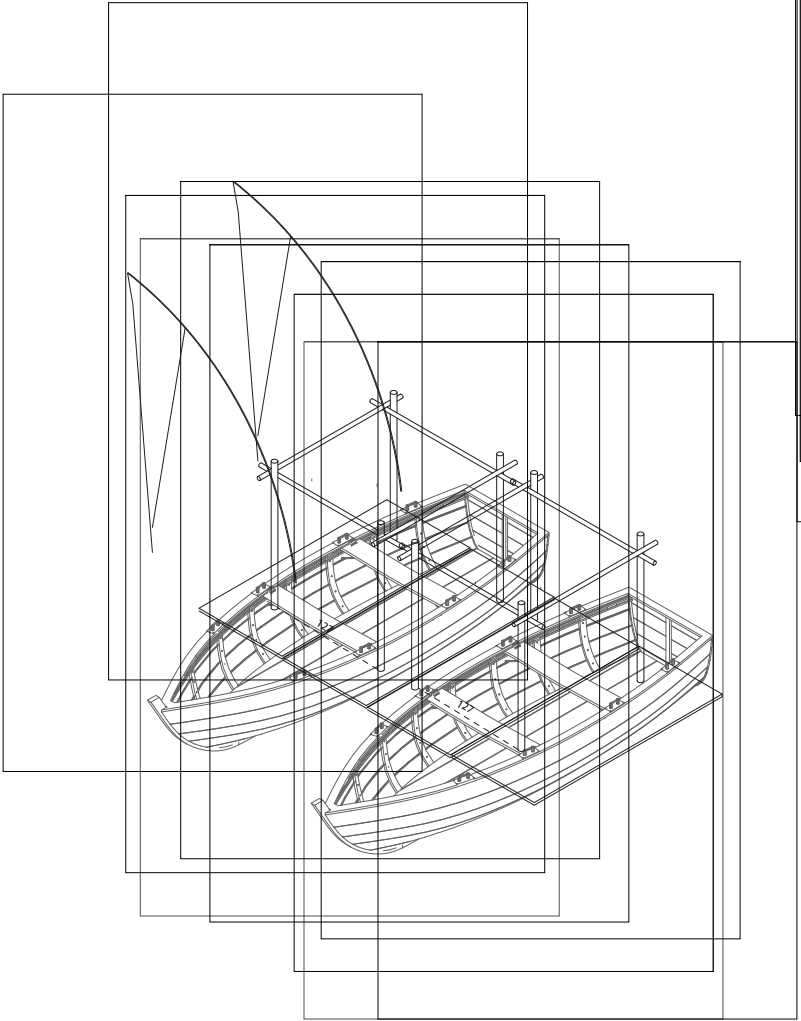
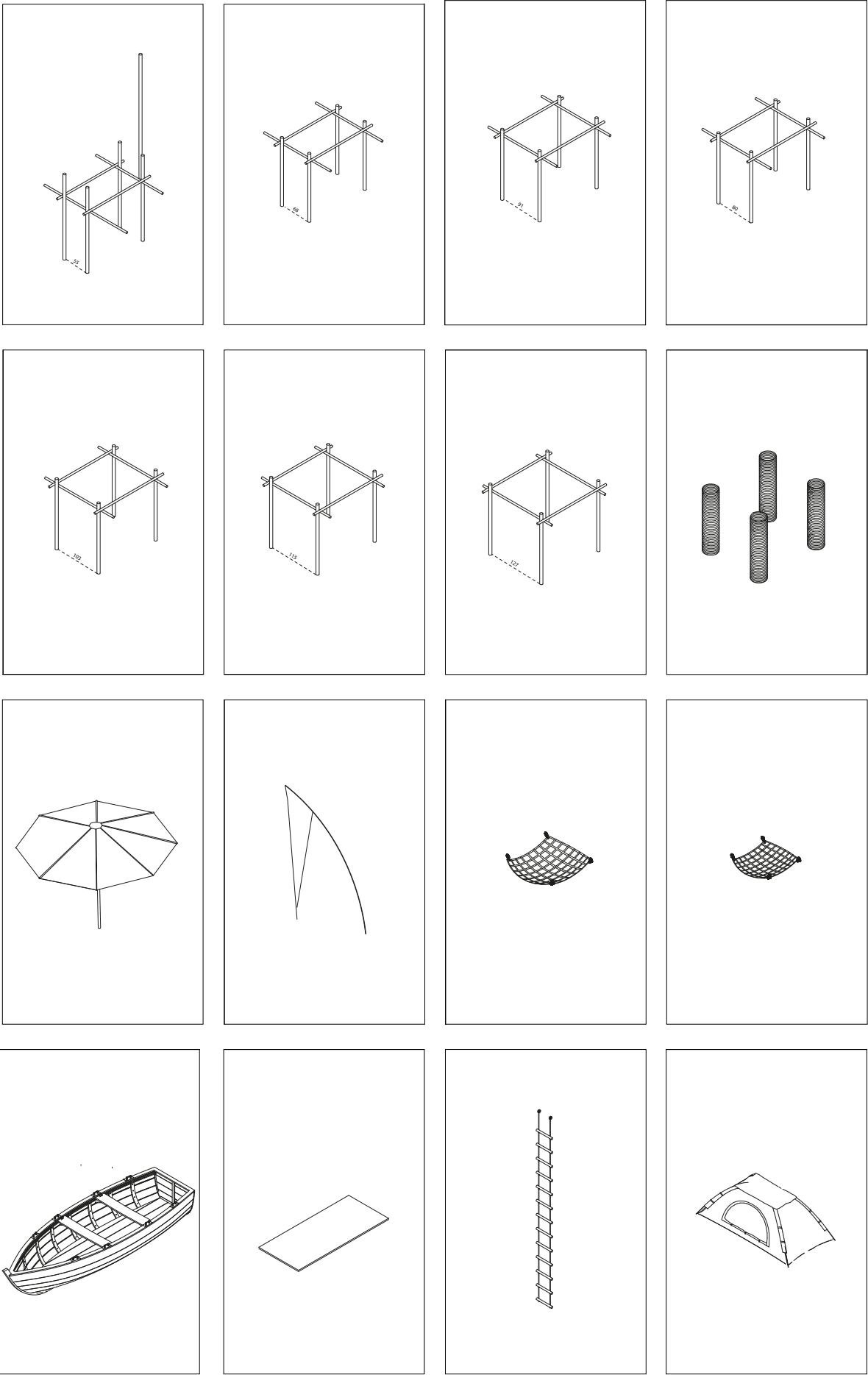
1. ORGANIZATION

1.1 MAP



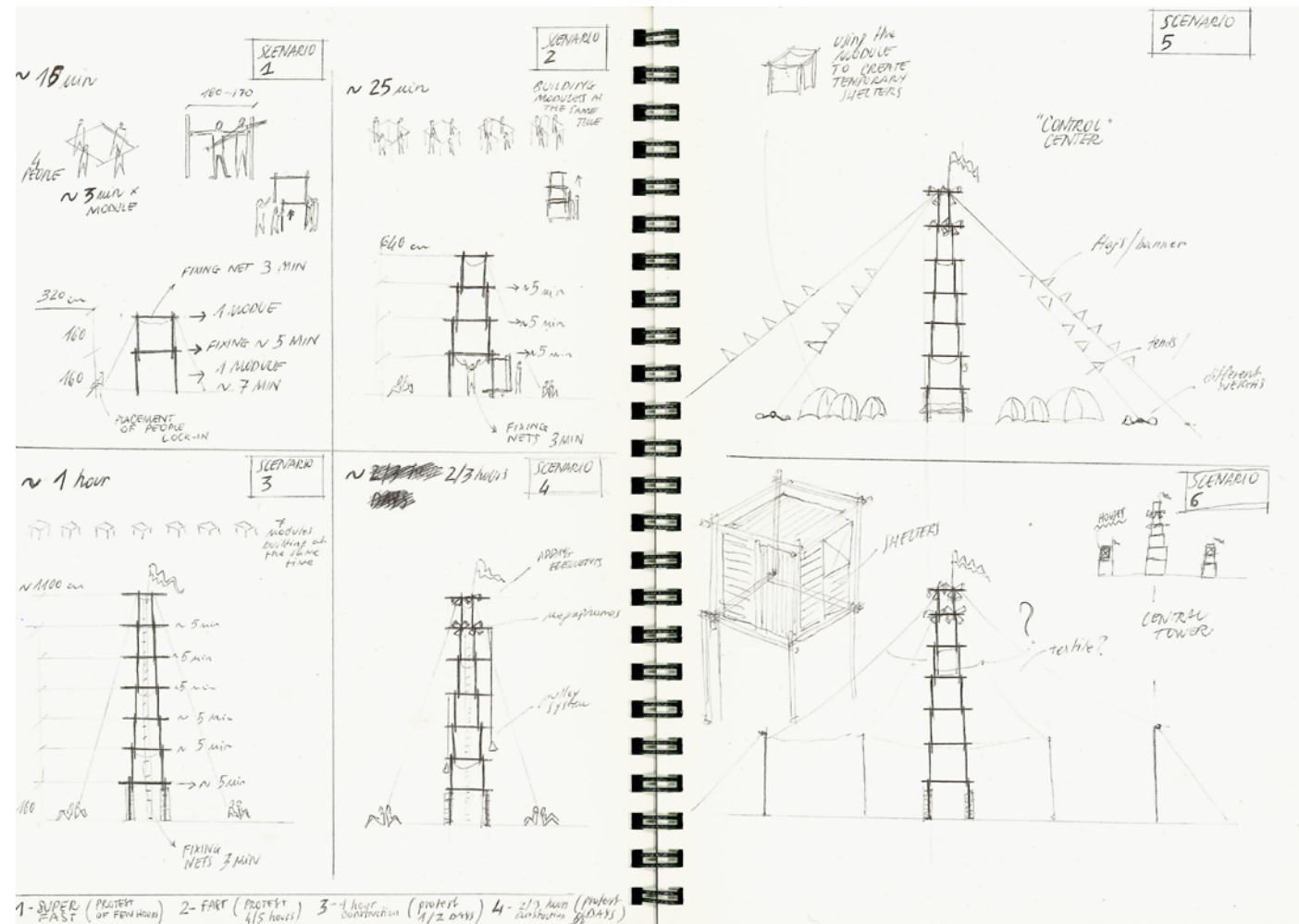
1. ORGANIZATION

1.2 CARDS

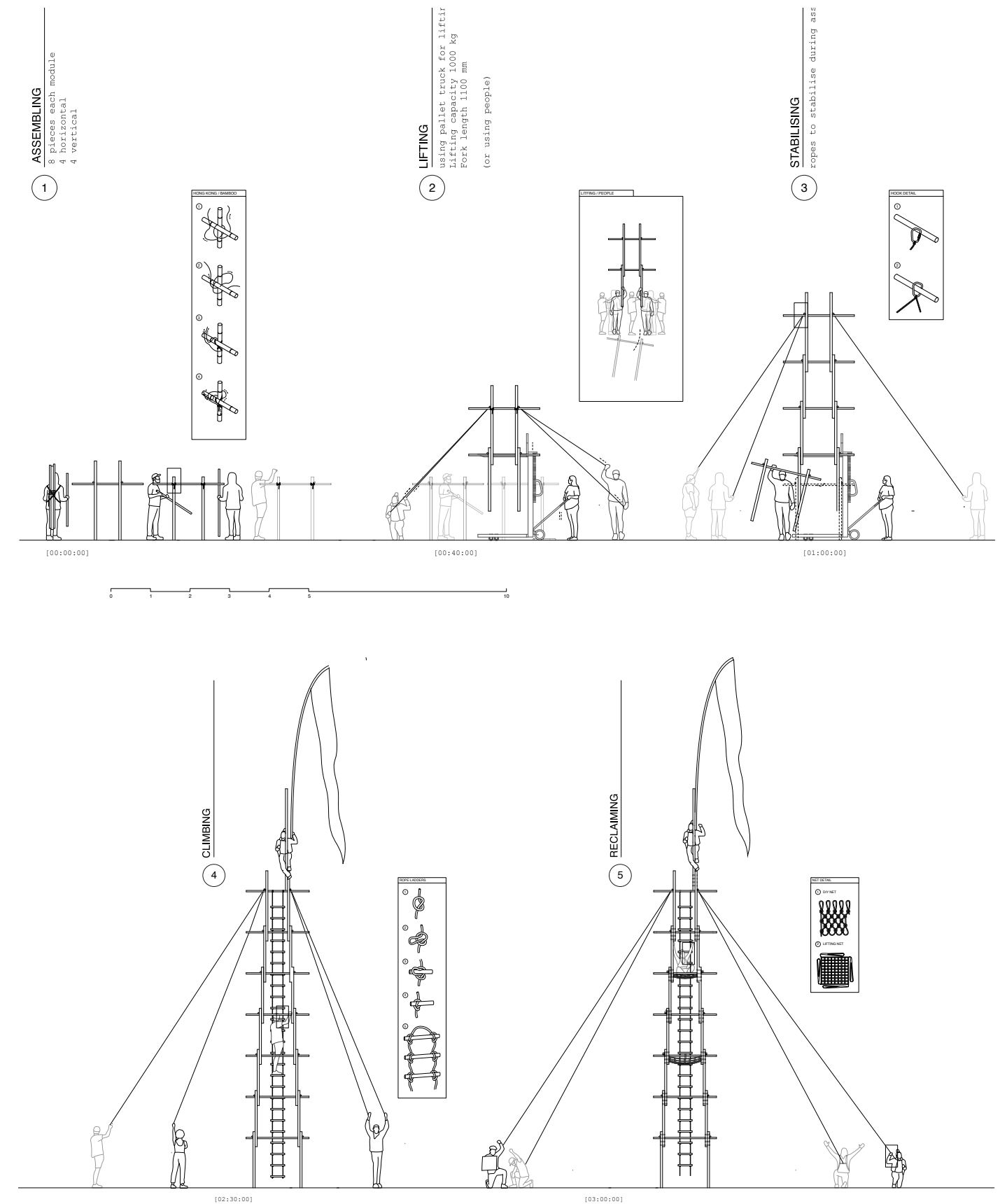


2. DEVICE /DESIGN

2.1 STRUCTURE



Preliminary sketches which explore how time influences both the height and function of the structure: short timeframes lead to simple, quickly assembled forms, while longer durations allow for more complex and articulated constructions.



Time as a design element

The project is based on time as a fundamental parameter. The duration of the action influences spatial strategies, forms, and materials, turning time into a design material. Time defines spatial typologies: from quick protests that require temporary, removable solutions, to longer occupations that demand adaptable and resilient structures. In this way, time is not just an external factor, but an integral part of the design process, shaping the form and function of structures as they adapt to the evolution of the protest.





01:28



03:04



03:51



05:37



[TM#001]

[TM#001]

VENICE (ITA)

NO GRAND NAVI

NO GRAND NAVI

Impact: Block in the Grand Canal
Features: Users could rely on boats & floating structures.

FLOATING BARRICADE

Construction time: ~15"
Minimum crew: 4 people
Event duration: ~4/5 hours

MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Limited international media coverage:
Social media activism (instagram, facebook, telegram).

LEGAL CONSTRAINS

Not allowed protest:
- Strict cultural heritage laws.
- Police presence is low but highly bureaucratic.

POLICE TACTICS

- Soft policing but heavy restrictions due to cultural heritage laws.
- Legal Deterrents (Protesters fined or arrested for "public order" violations instead of being forcibly removed).

SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

- Protests against mass tourism, environmental degradation, flooding.
- Tension between residents & tourist economy.

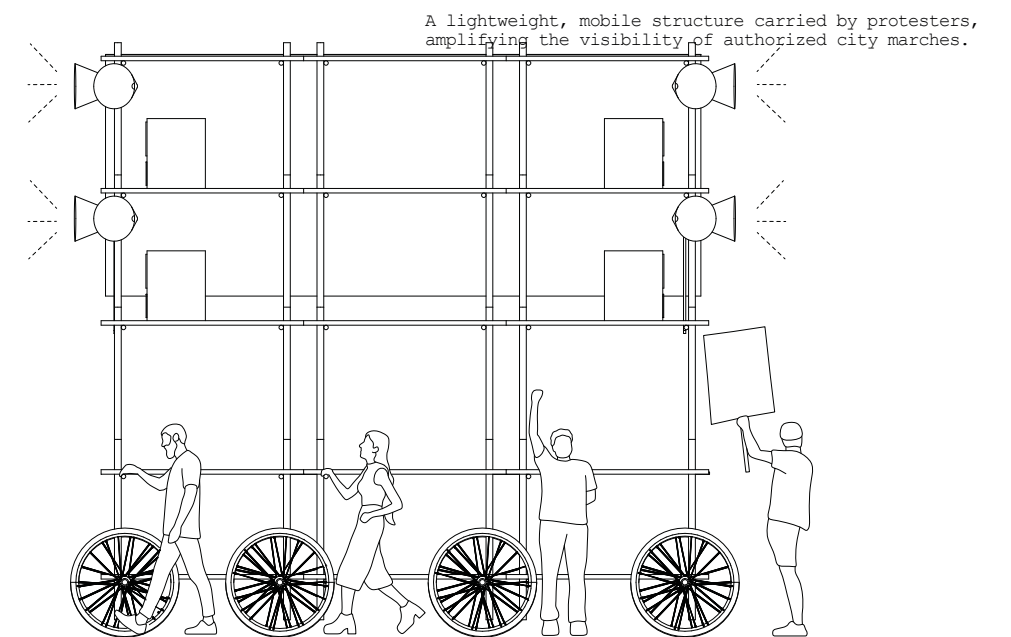
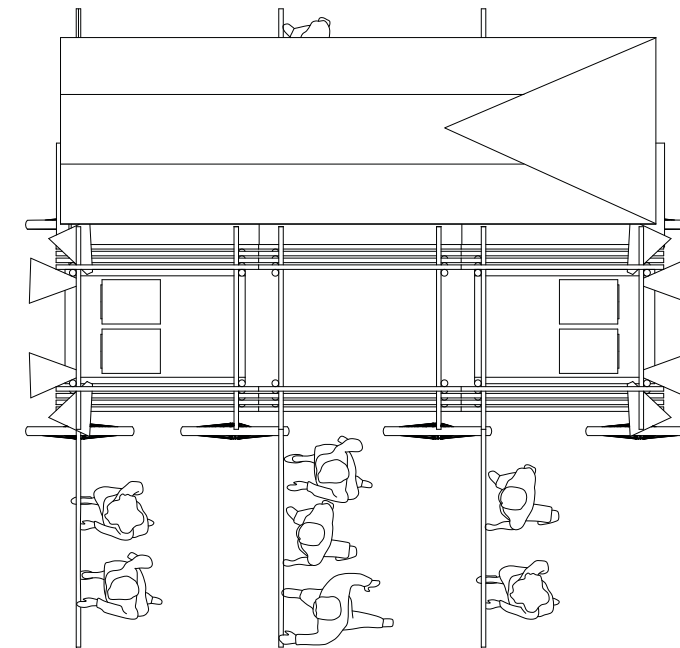
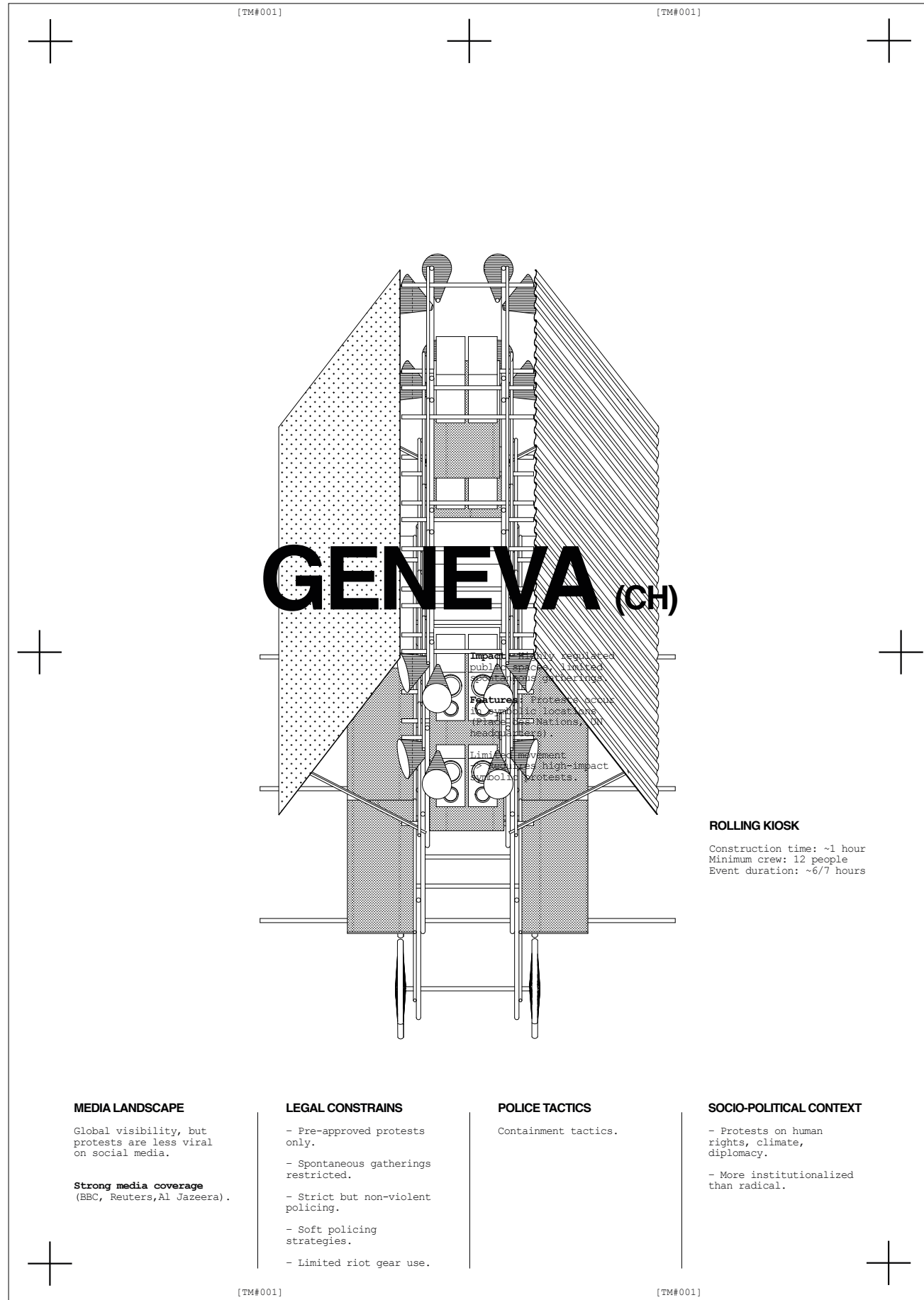
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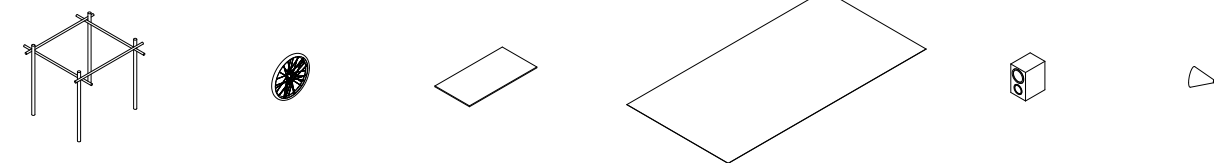
Emma Canton

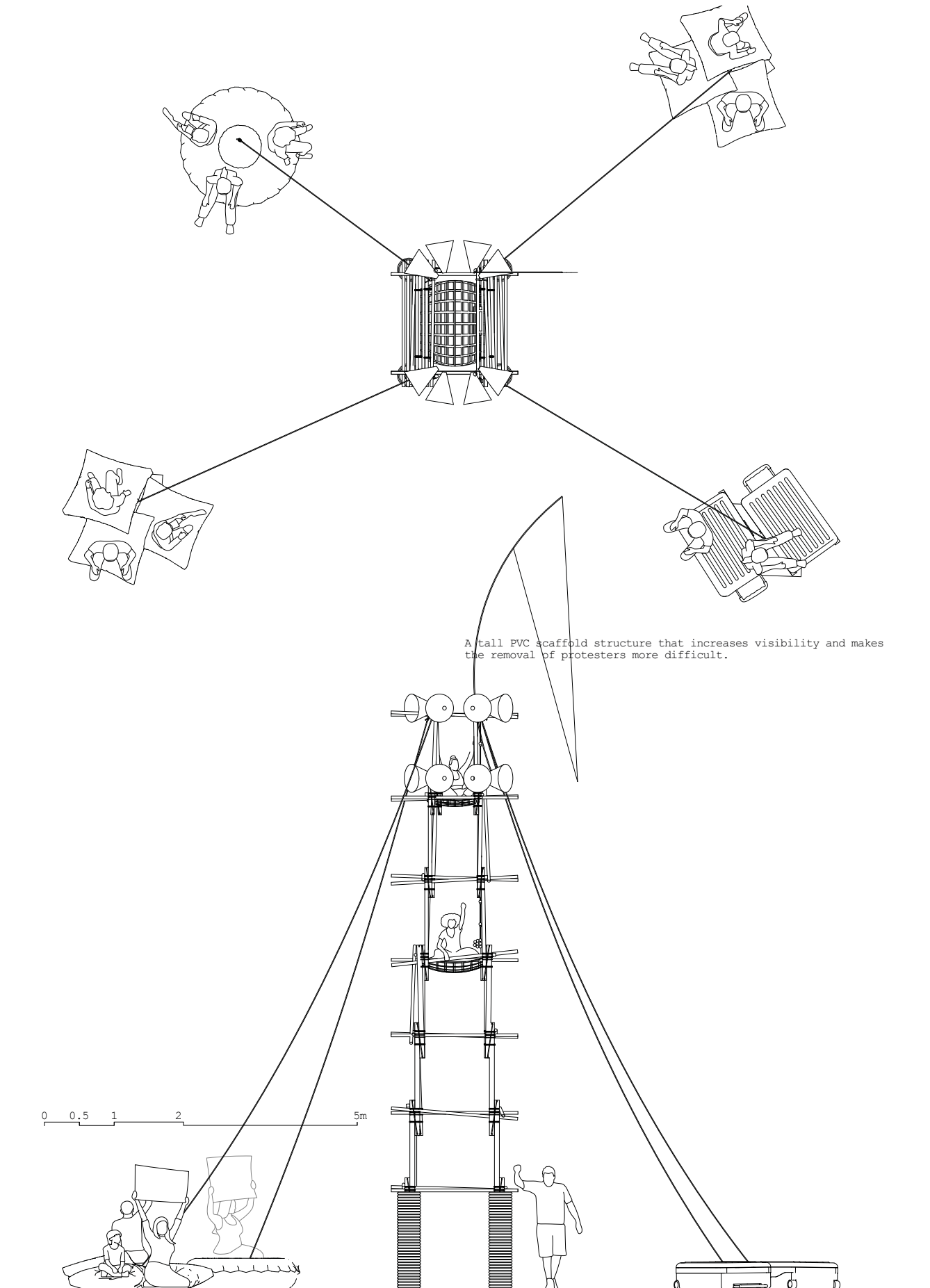
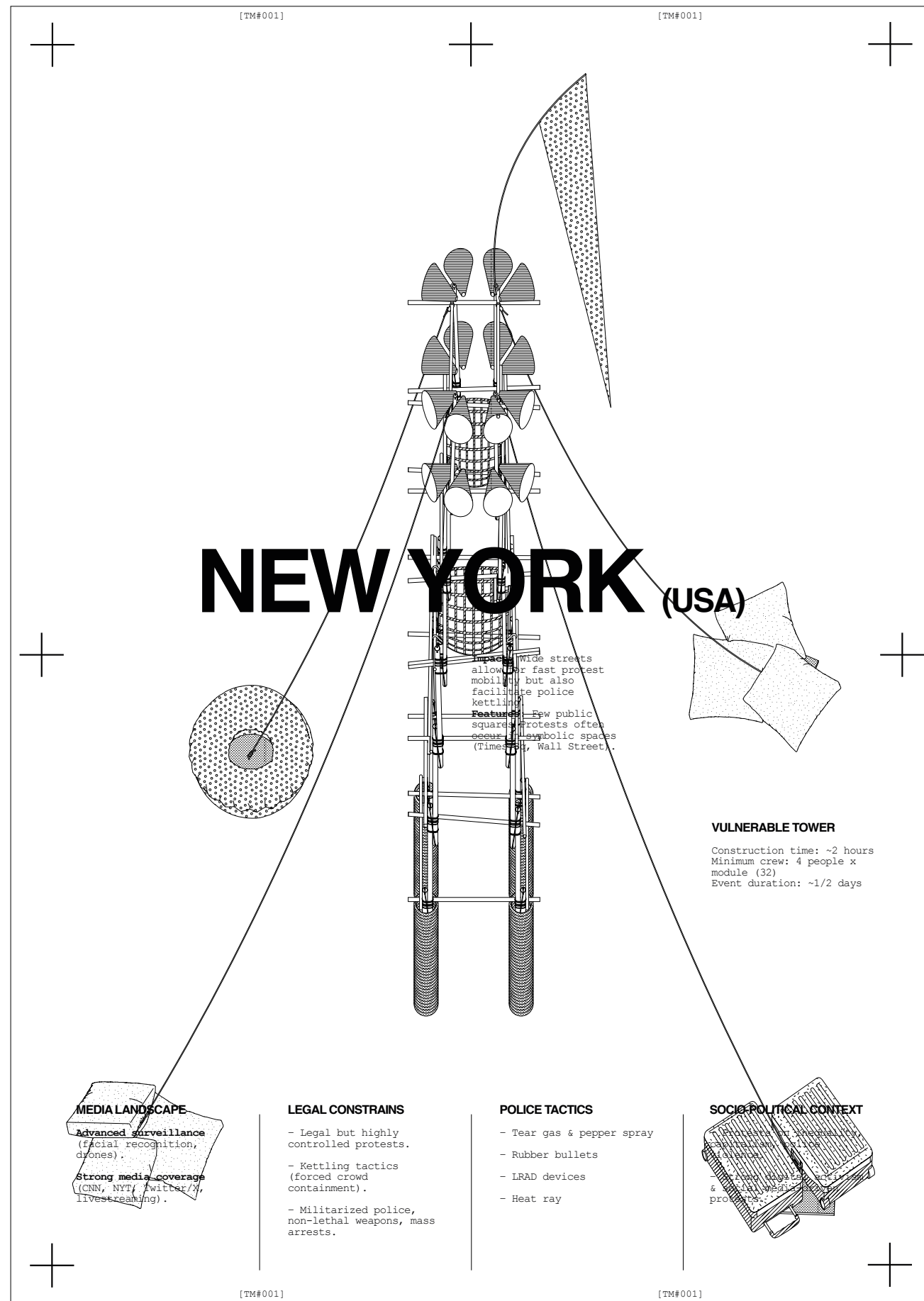
Fragility and Power: The Architecture of protest

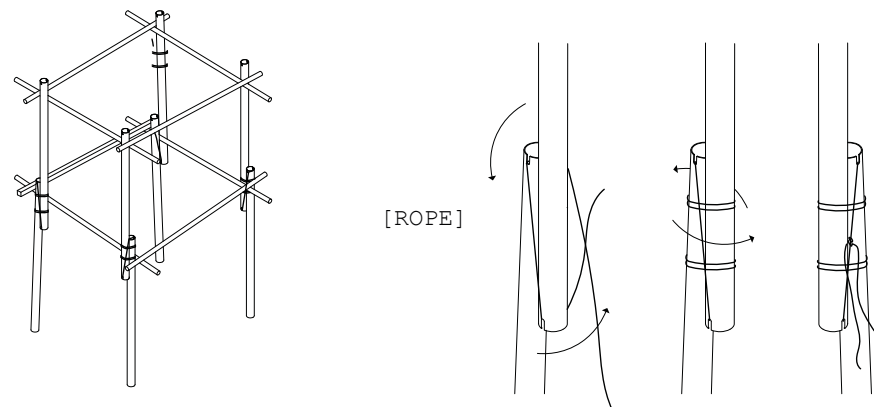
MAIA / HEAD - Genève



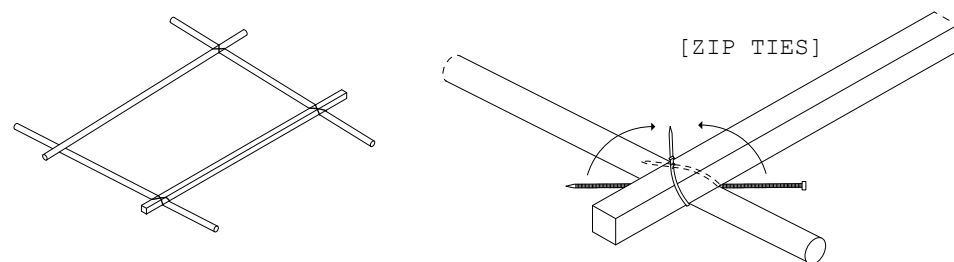
0 0,5 1 2 5m



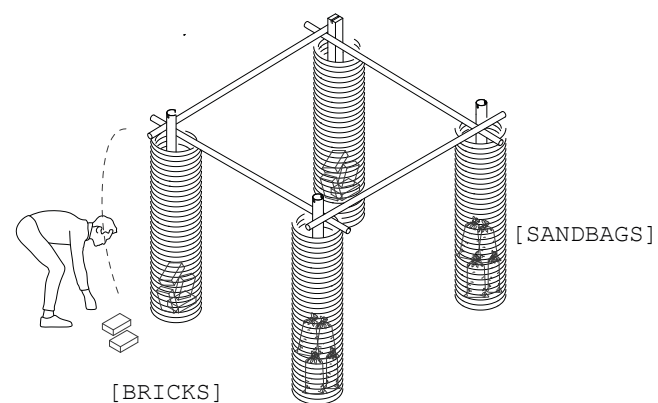




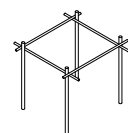
Vertical modules are secured with ropes threaded through pre-cut notches in the pipes, ensuring a tighter grip. The fastening is completed with a Fisherman's Knot.



Horizontal module elements are secured with cable ties, forming a cross-joint with perpendicular structural poles.



Larger-diameter pipes can serve as the base of the structure and act as formwork, filled with heavy elements to increase stability.



[x7]



[x4]



[x2]



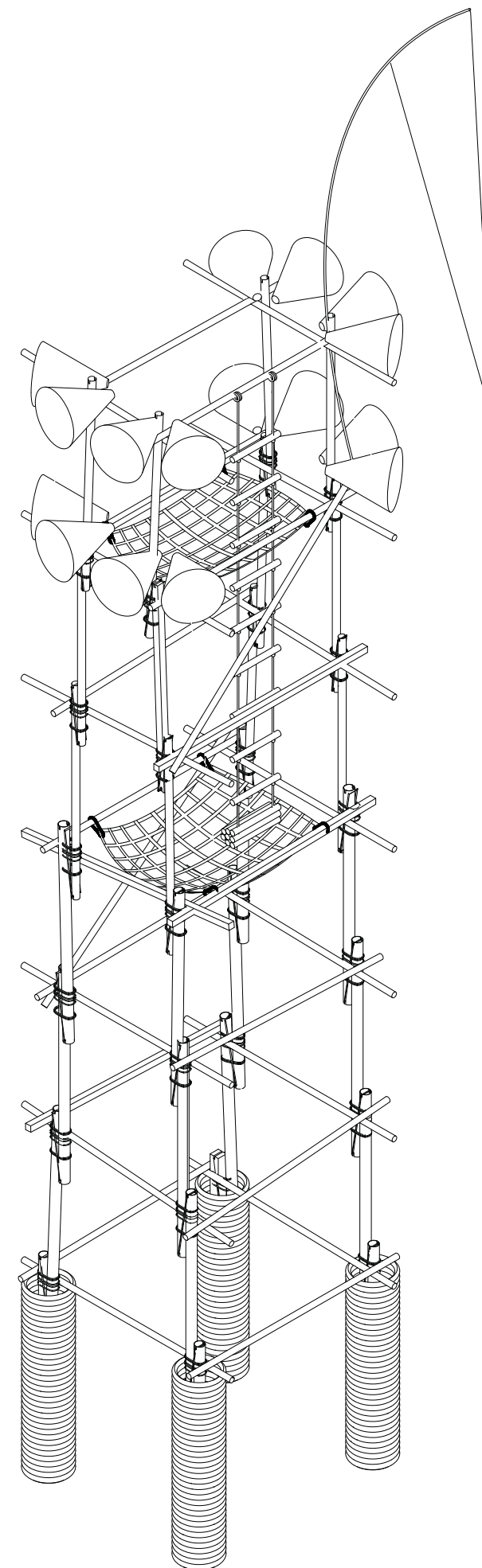
[x16]

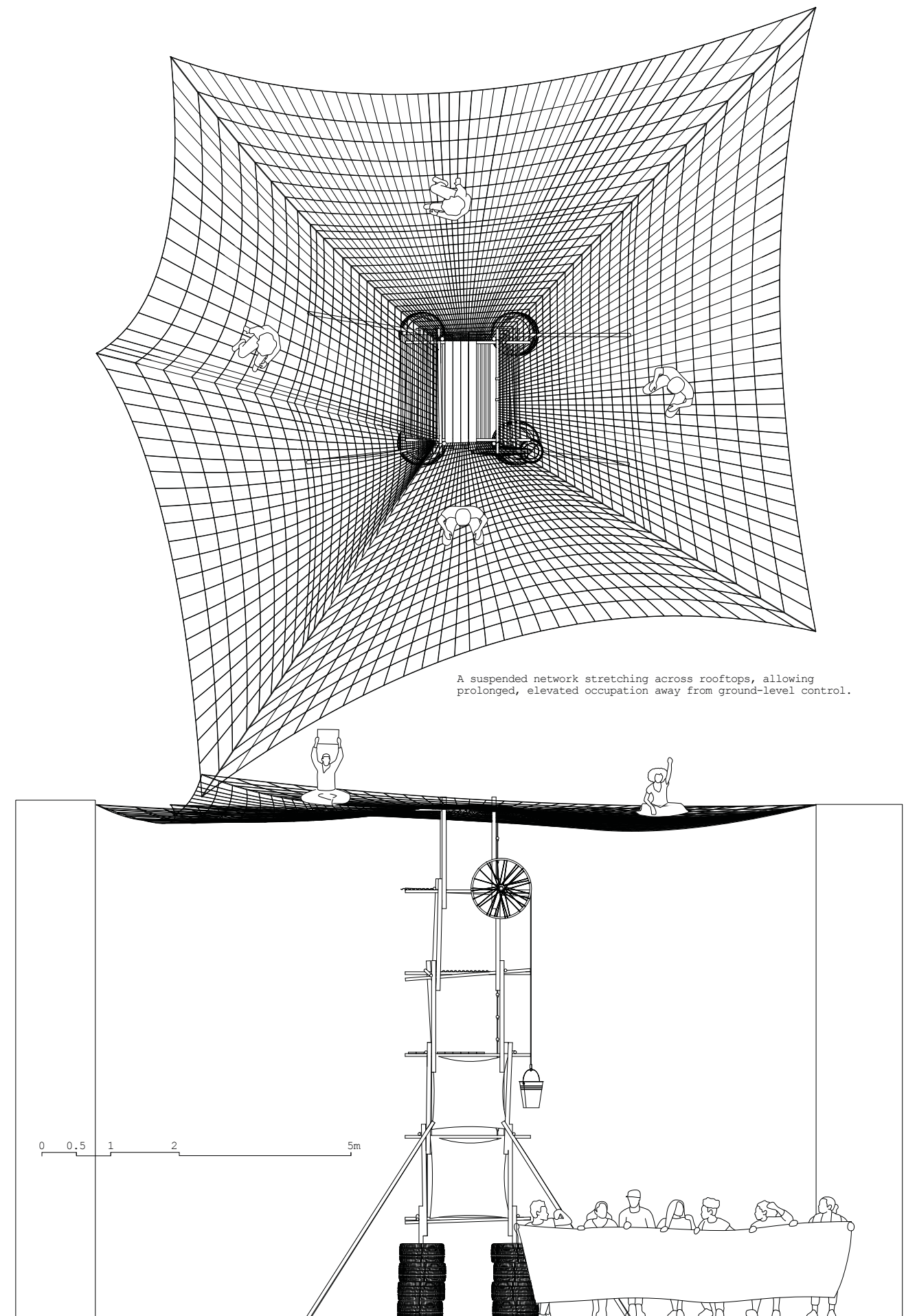
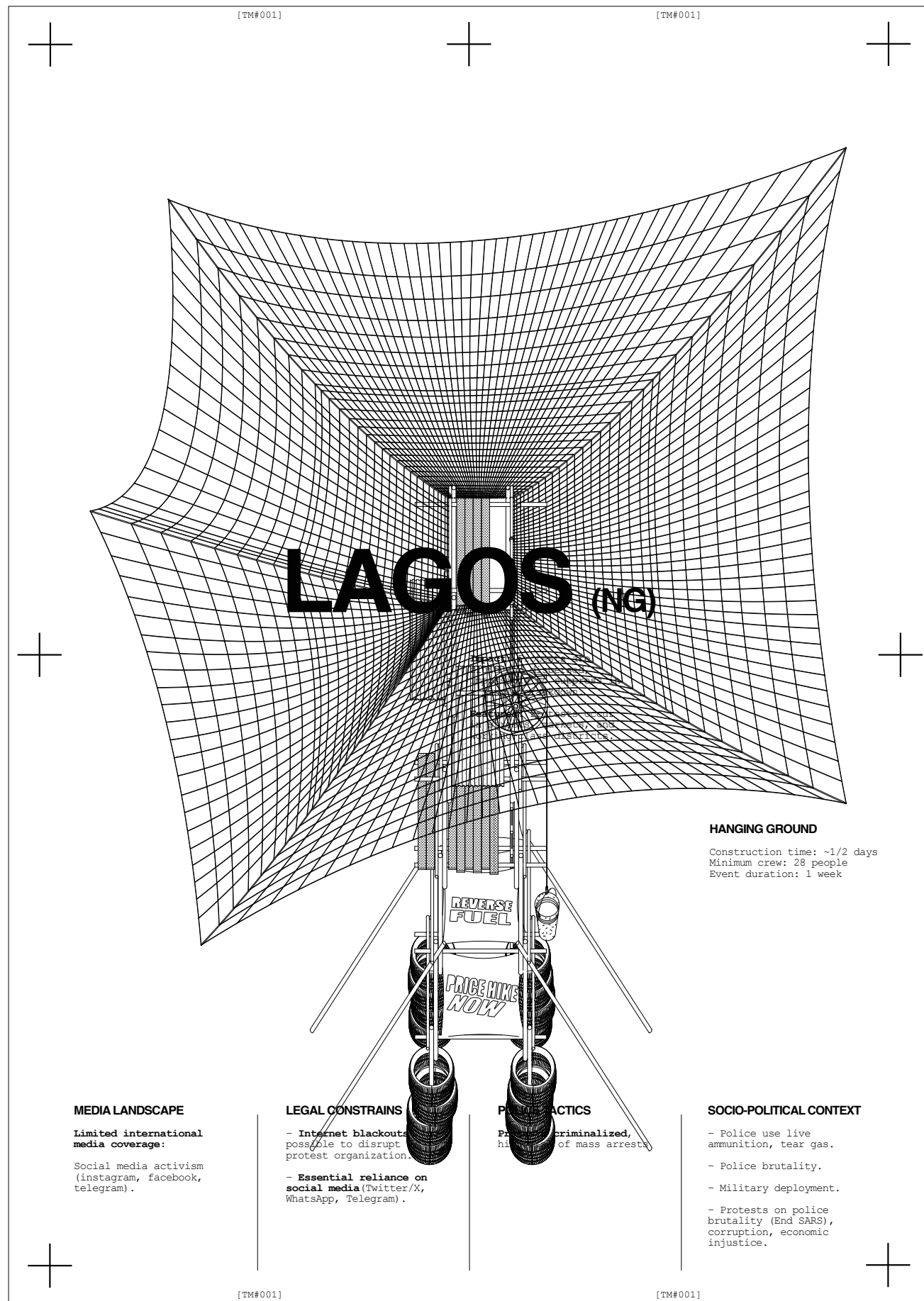


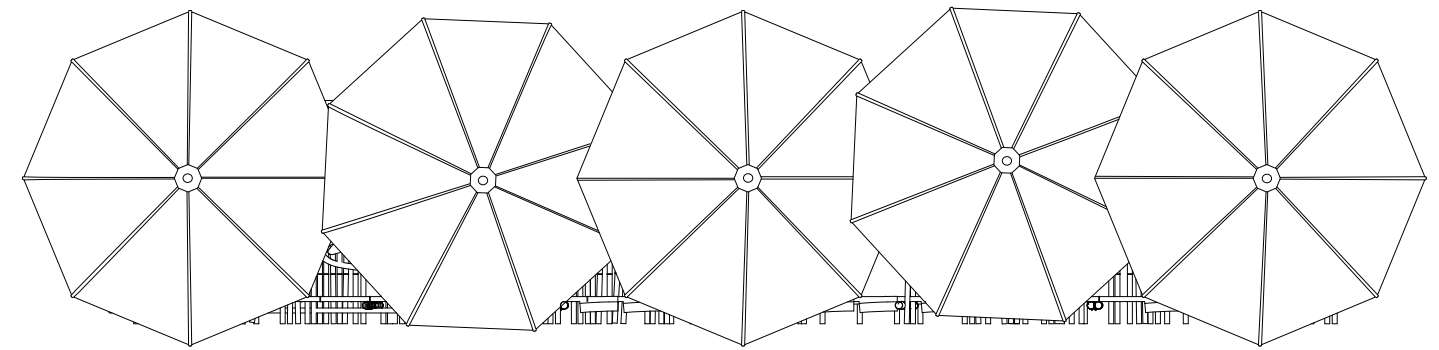
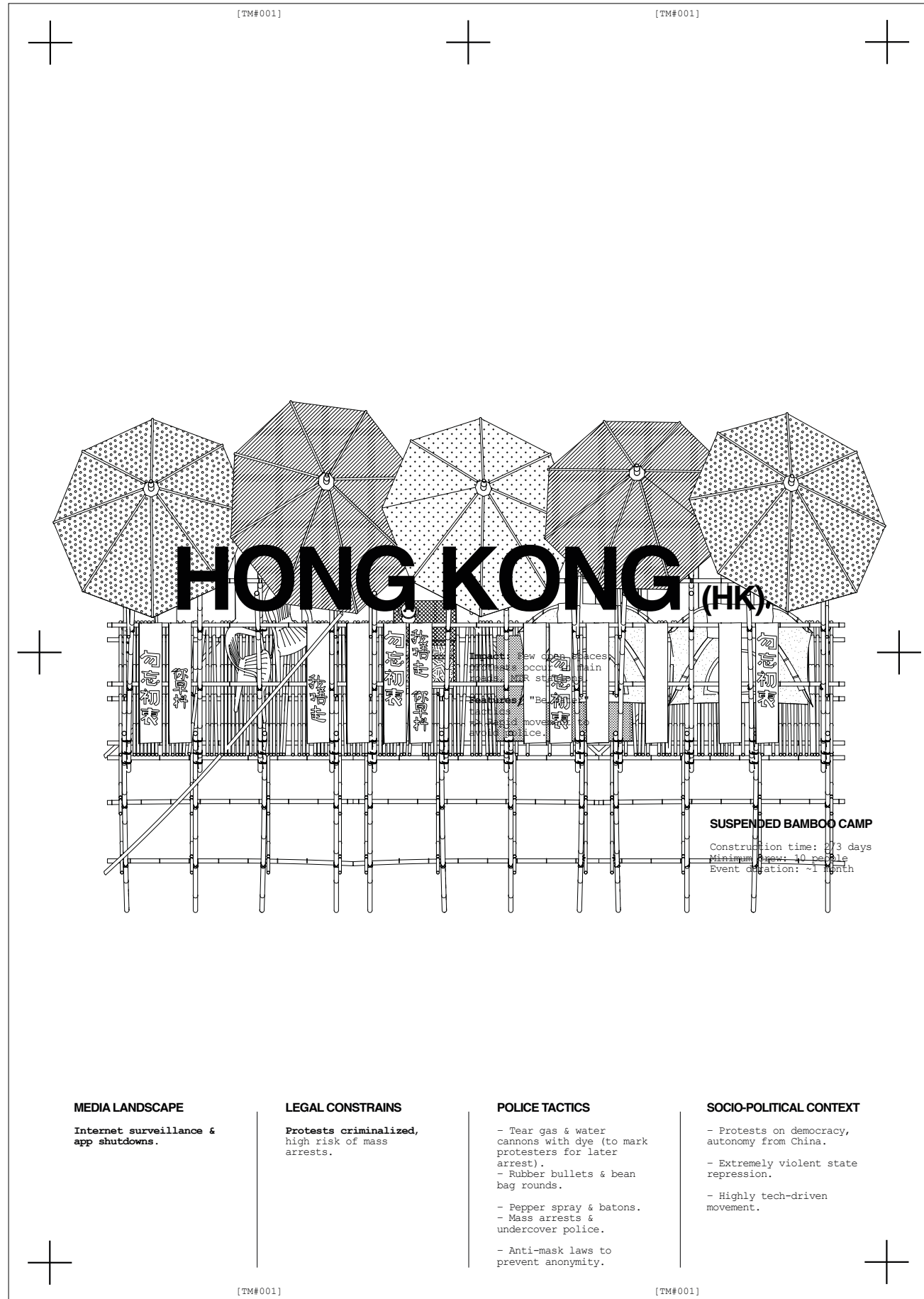
[x1]



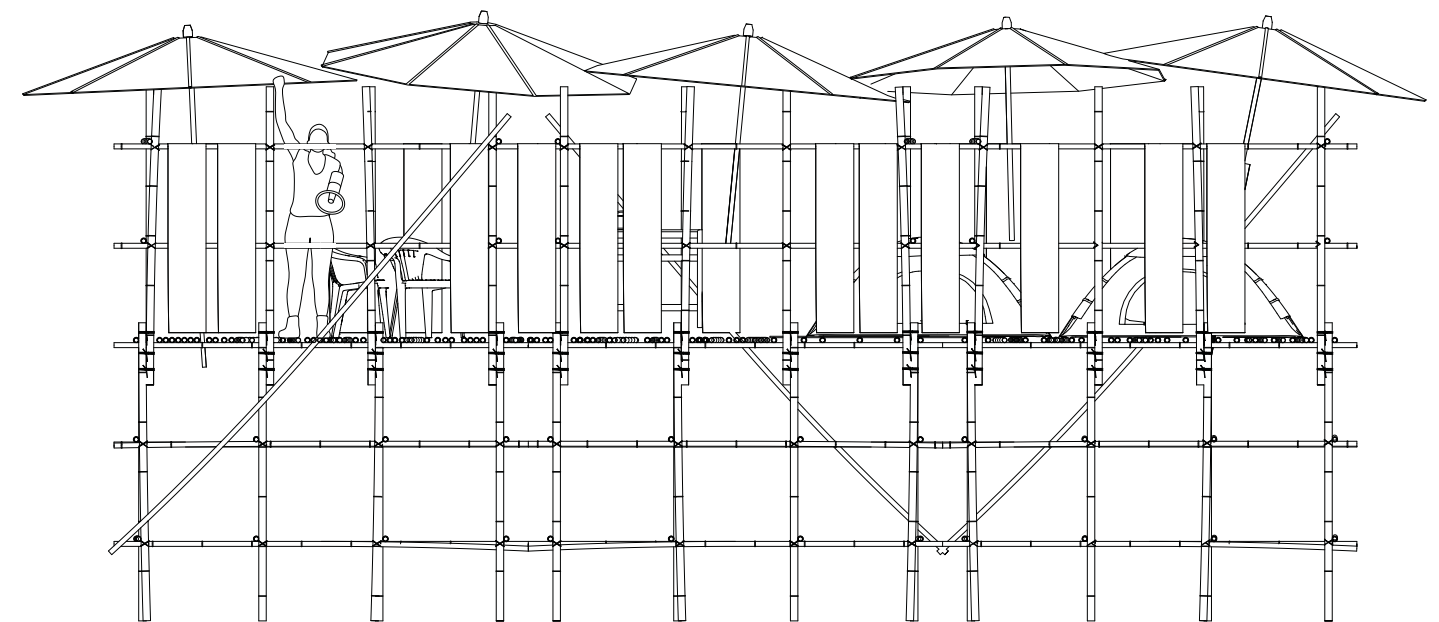
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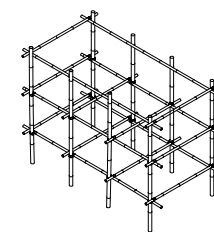




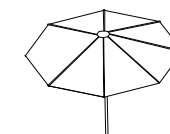
An elevated bamboo scaffold camp, complex to dismantle and offering a raised space for collective resistance.



0 0,5 1 2 5m



[x4]



[x5]



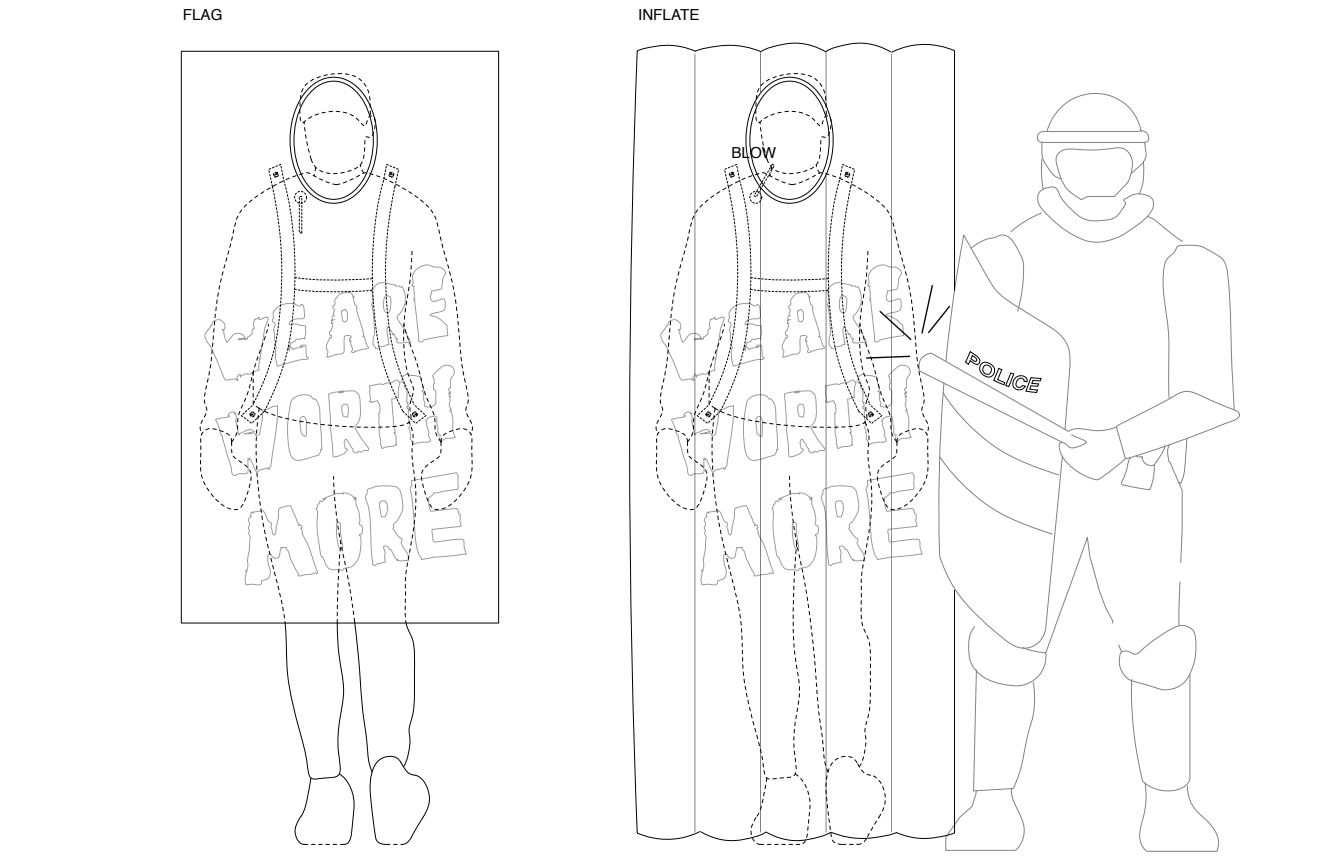
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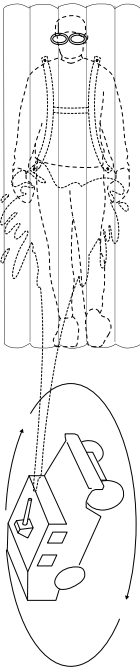
[x18]

2. DEVICE /DESIGN

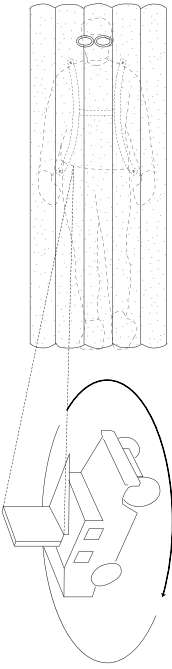
2.2 WEARABLE



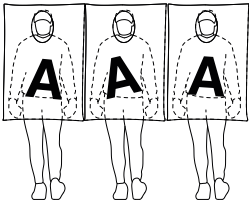
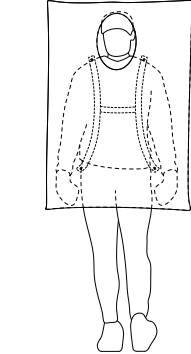
HONG KONG
Water / pain cannon
Waterproof fabric



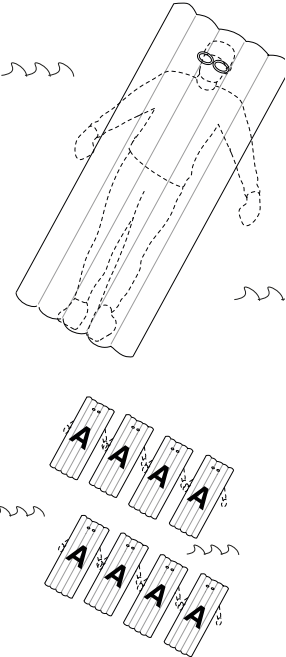
NEW YORK
Heat ray
Isothermic fabric



GENEVA
-

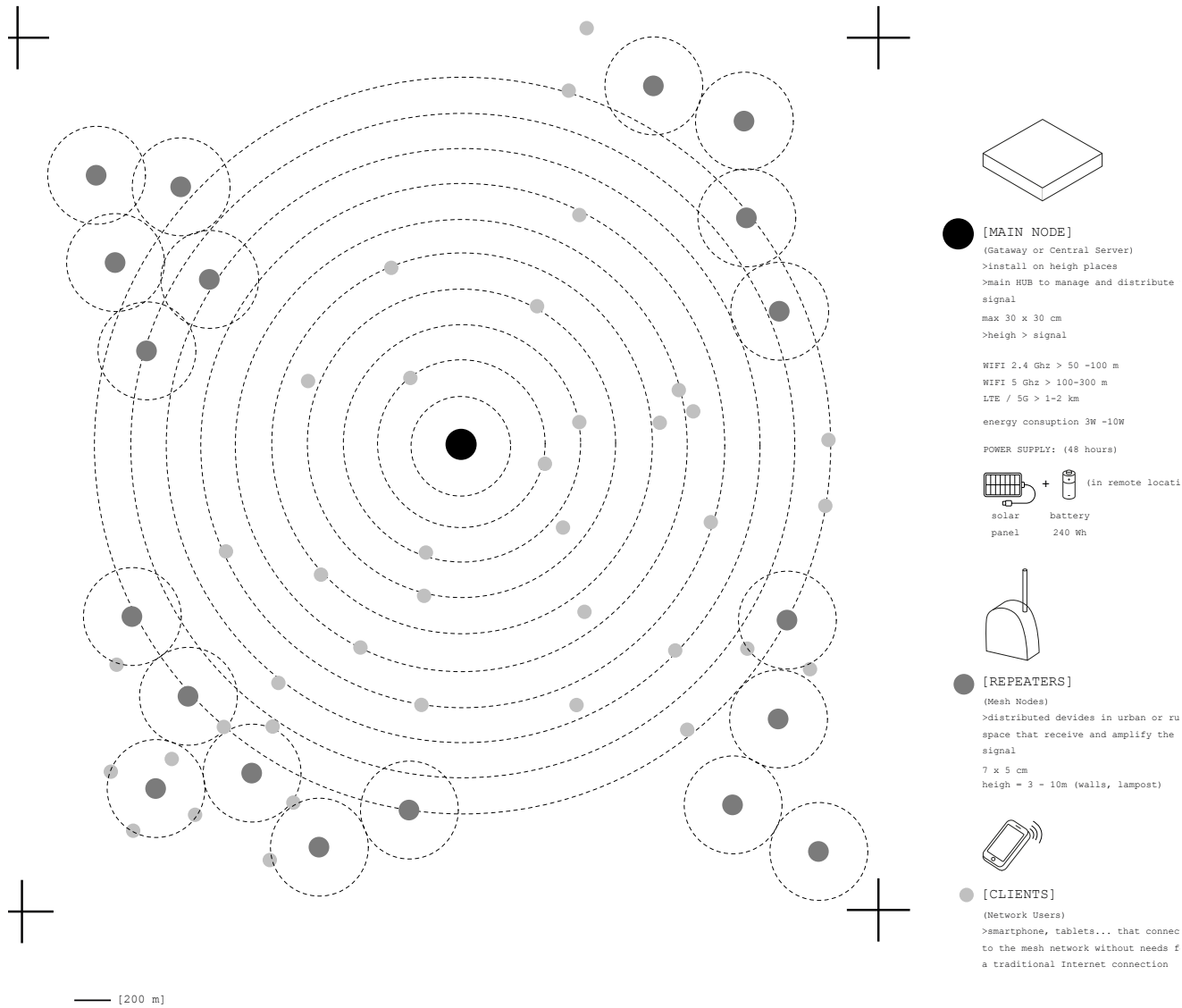


VENICE
-
Floating

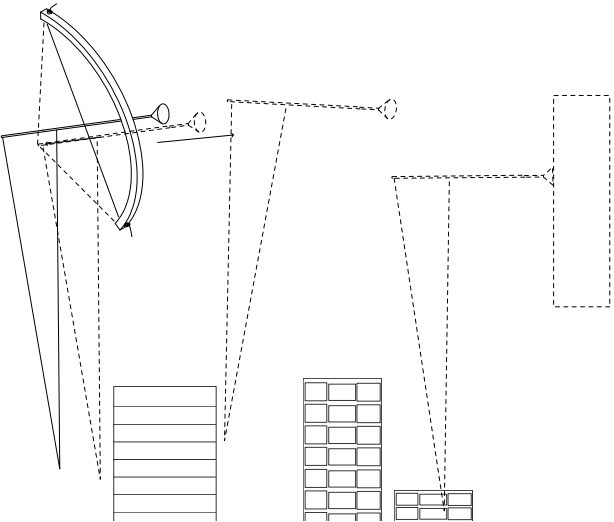


2. DEVICE /DESIGN

2.3 INFRASTRUCTURE

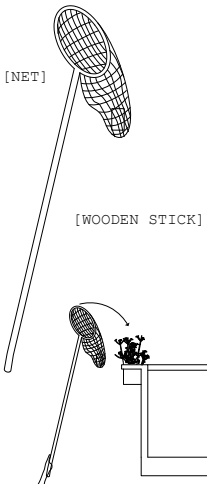


HONG KONG
Glass Skyscrapers

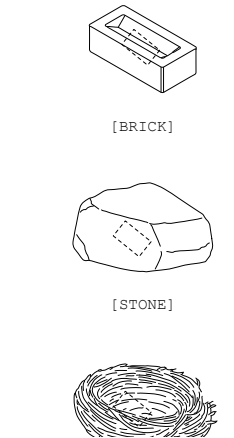


NEW YORK
Glass Skyscrapers

LAGOS
-



VENICE
Fake natural elements





JAPAN — 1977



UK — 2019



JAPAN — 1977



USA — 2013



UK — 1994



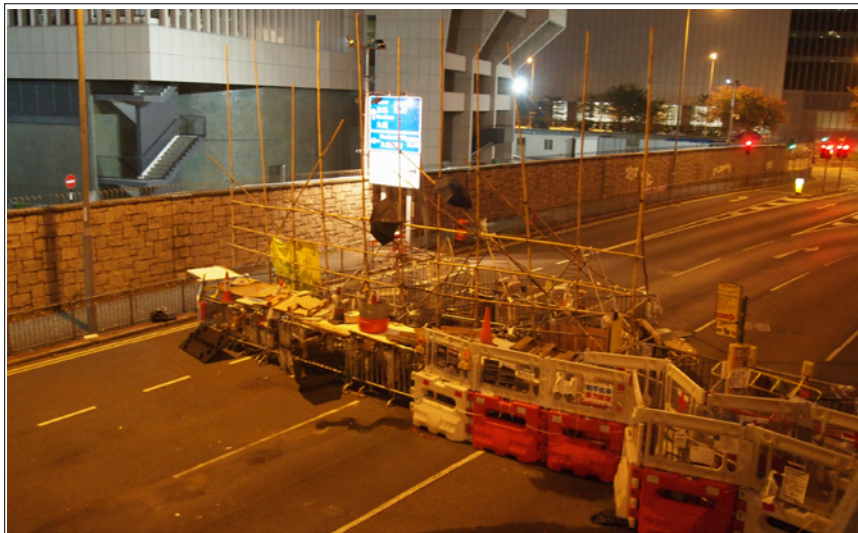
UK — 1994



UK — 2019



UK — 2022



HONG KONG — 2014



AUSTRALIA — 2019



HEAVY DUTY CARGO NET



HEAVY DUTY CARGO NET

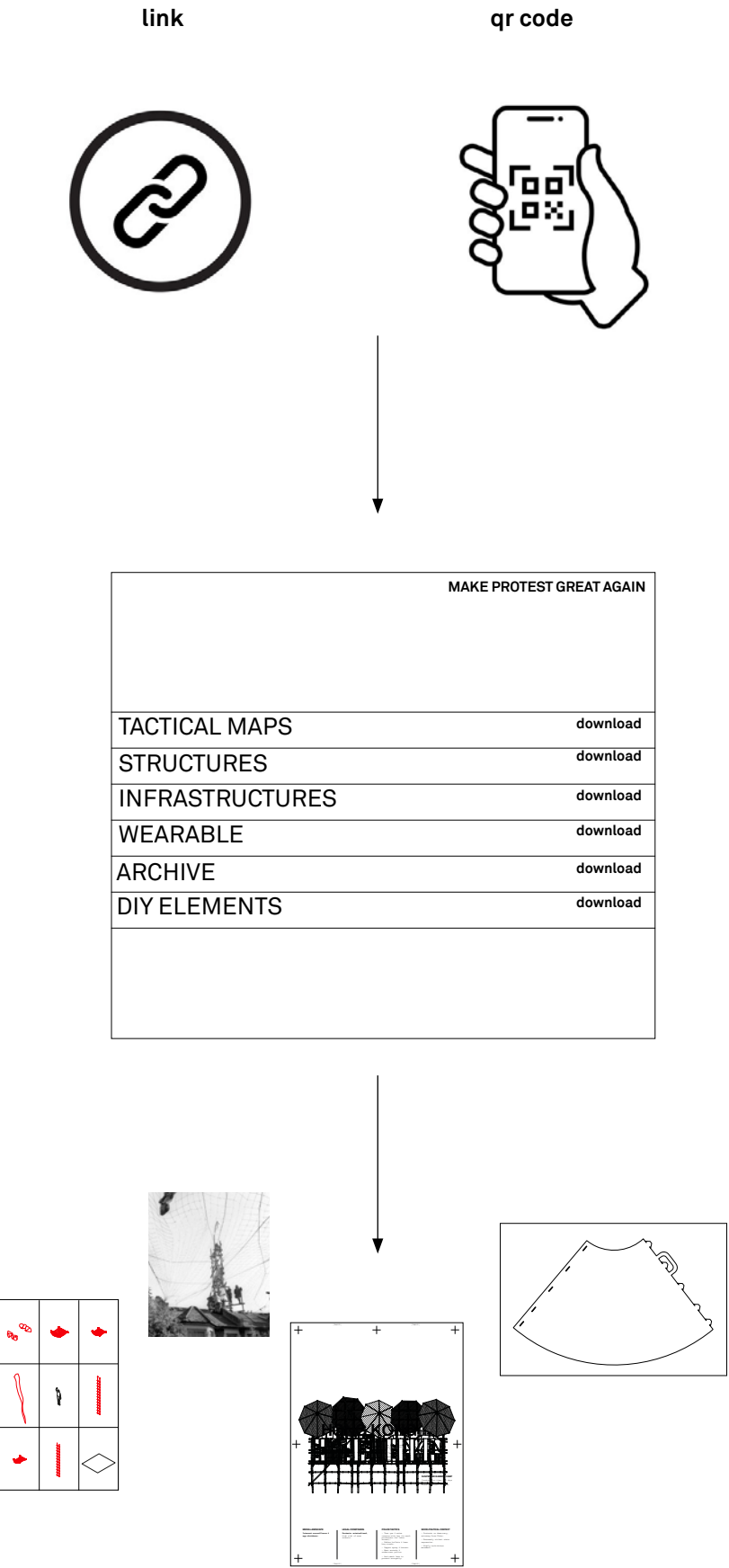


BAMBOO SCAFFOLDING



PORTALEDGE





By scanning a QR code or accessing a link shared through platforms like Telegram groups, users can access the open-source platform. From there, they can download materials, add new content, and consult existing resources. This process creates a dynamic and evolving resource that can be freely shared, modified, and adapted, ensuring that the platform remains a flexible tool for activists to support and enhance their protests.