

Margins in Motion :

*Designing with Mobility, Memory and
Care in Sikkim.*



wayfinding this project

01 *abstract*

research questions

mobility burden map

02 *intervention 1*

intervention 2

intervention 3

03 *conclusion*

04 *appendices*



01 research

Research Questions

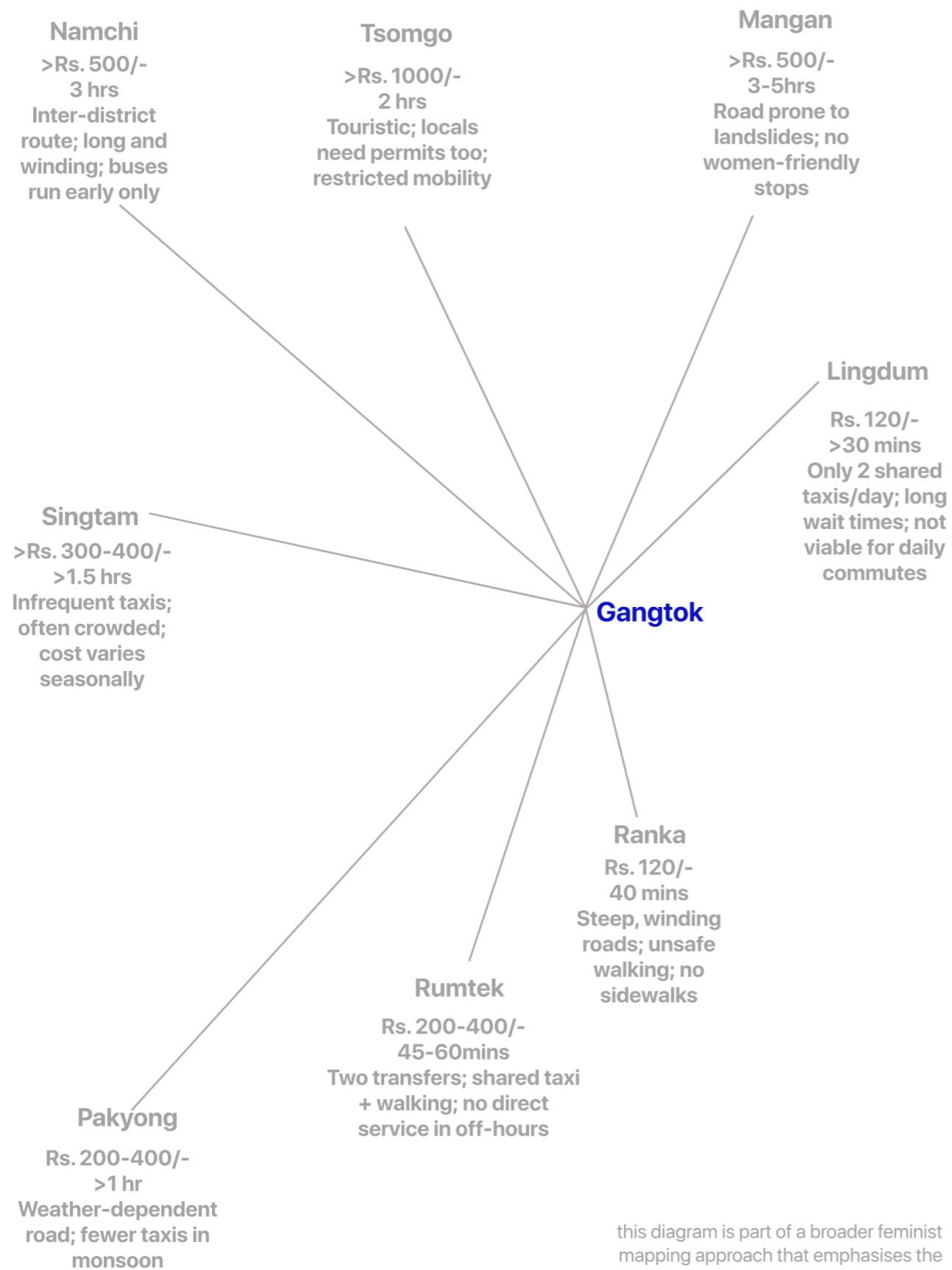
How can decolonial feminist frameworks reimagine mobility in Sikkim as relational and embodied, rooted in land, identity, and care, beyond infrastructure or access?

How do capitalist and state-led urban interventions in Gangtok create fragmented, tourist-centric spaces and how can feminist, place-based counter-interventions reclaim them for marginalised and informal communities?

How can role-playing-based participatory design act as a speculative tool of feminist resistance, proposing care-based alternatives to dominant planning in Sikkim?

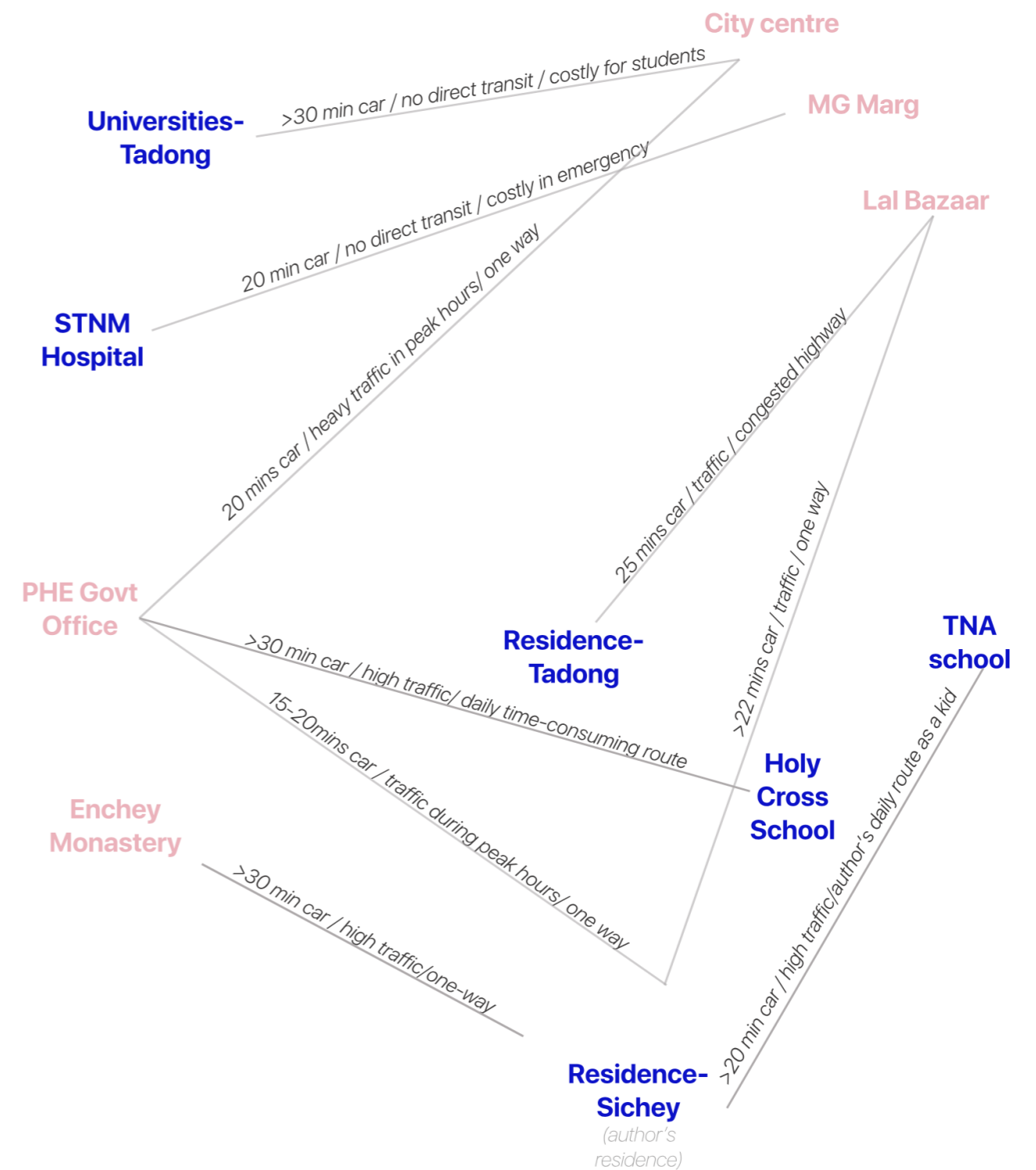


inter-city



this diagram is part of a broader feminist mapping approach that emphasises the overlooked realities of women's daily mobility and caregiving, which are frequently left out of the mainstream planning discourse.

mobility burden map



the times, costs, and descriptions in this mobility burden map are approximations based on my own lived experience in Sikkim, alongside informal conversations with women in my family and extended community.

this is a contextual and feminist illustration of how effort, exclusion, and infrastructure inequality shape mobility. It illustrates the complex ways Sikkimese people, women in particular, manage regional and urban problems on a social, emotional, and physical level.



02 design interventions

01

Rum-Tech Feminist Agro-Mobility Infrastructure

Context
Rumtek, Sikkim - a
hillside hinterland 23
kilometres from Gang-
tok

Gangtok - the capital
city of Sikkim



Rum-Tech is a spatial and systemic intervention that reimagines agro-mobility in Sikkim as one of care, access and collective governance over efficiency and productivity. It challenges the extractive logic of Gangtok's centralised food systems by redistributing logistics, decision-making, and spatial resources through a women-led cooperative infrastructure.

Anchored in two underused government sites in Rumtek and a pilot node in Tadong, Rum-Tech creates a mobility commons where agricultural exchange, mobility, and care coalesce to support rural women excluded by legal, infrastructural, and economic systems.

This intervention is shaped by the feminist design principle that mobility must serve caregiving, interdependence, and daily negotiation.

Locating the Agro-Mobility Commons three rural sites in Rumtek

The images show the everyday scale of the route.



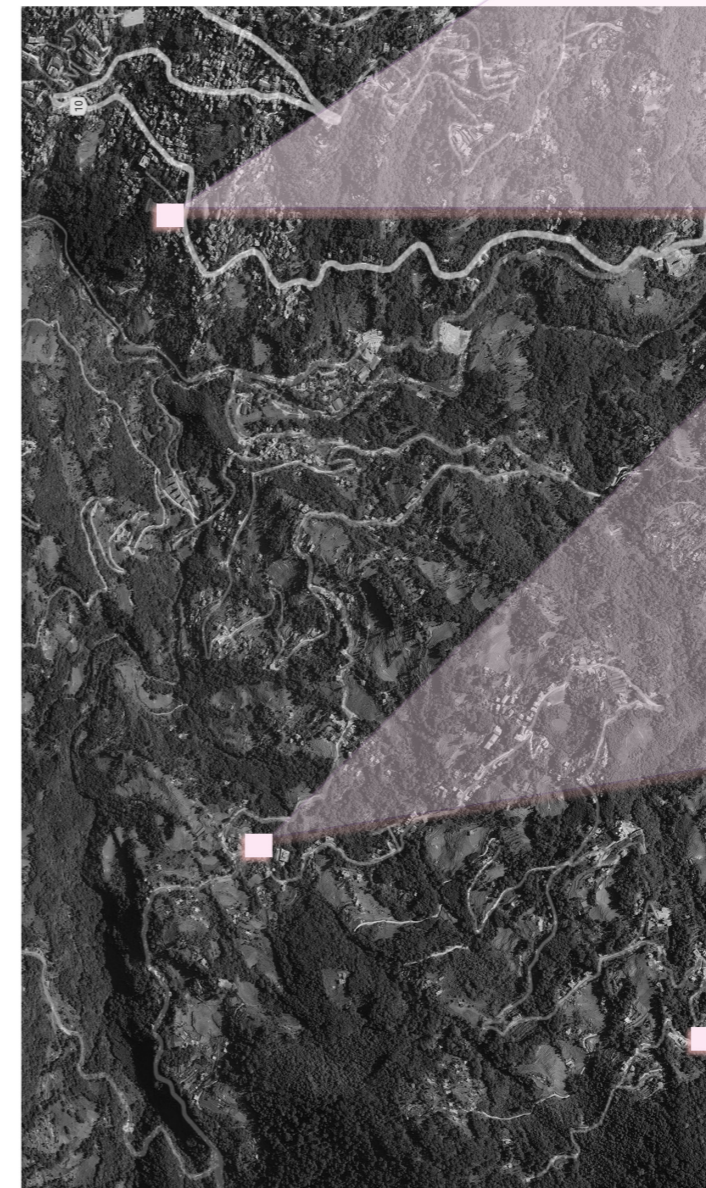
Site 1: Commons & Market Node



Site 2: Storage & Learning Node



Site 3: Roadside Pickup & Flexi-Space



Rum-Tech Network: Spatial Terrain & Everyday Movement
These three sites, located across Rumtek's fragmented hill terrain, anchor the proposed agro-commons network.

Rumtek Site Plans

Spatial contexts of agro-commons infrastructure



Rumtek Site 1: Commons & Market Node

Shared infrastructure node for learning & cold storage



Rumtek Site 2: Storage & Learning Node

Underused government land

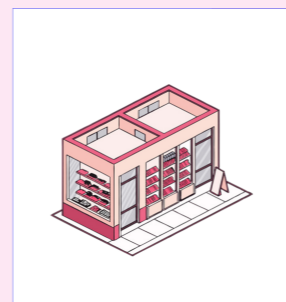
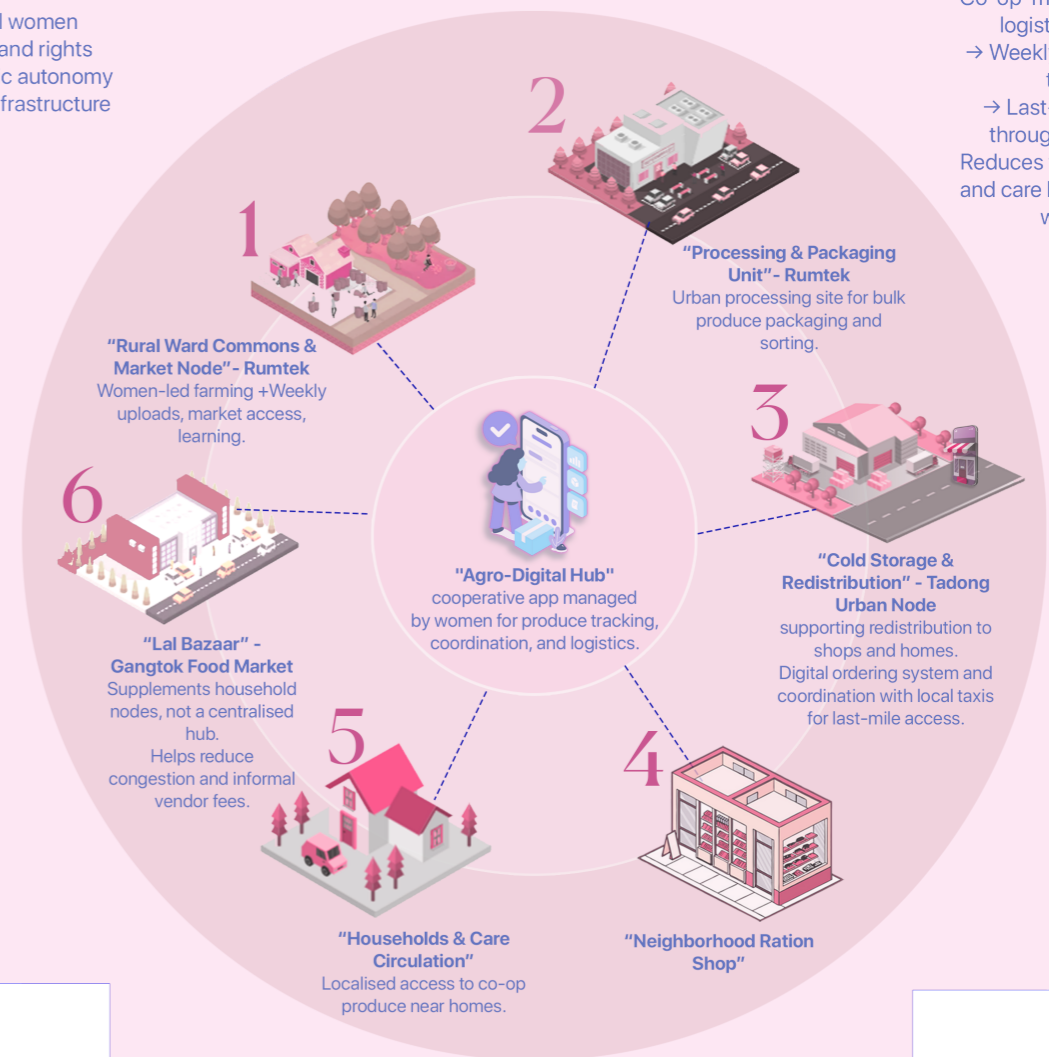
Rum-Tech Logistics & Distribution Network



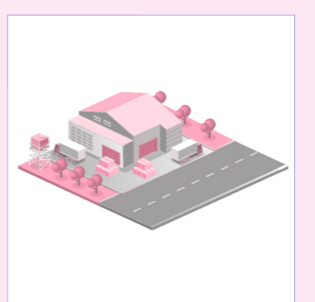
"Women-led Co-op Site"
Farming, sorting, cold storage node
→ Run by rural women excluded from land rights
→ Builds economic autonomy through shared infrastructure



"Delivery Network & Last-Mile Access"
Co-op-managed shared logistics system
→ Weekly deliveries via trucks
→ Last-mile access through local taxis
Reduces transport costs and care burden for rural women



"Neighborhood Shop"
Final distribution point
→ Familiar, accessible node
→ Builds trust and routine-based access to essentials
→ Reduces long-distance travel for women caregivers

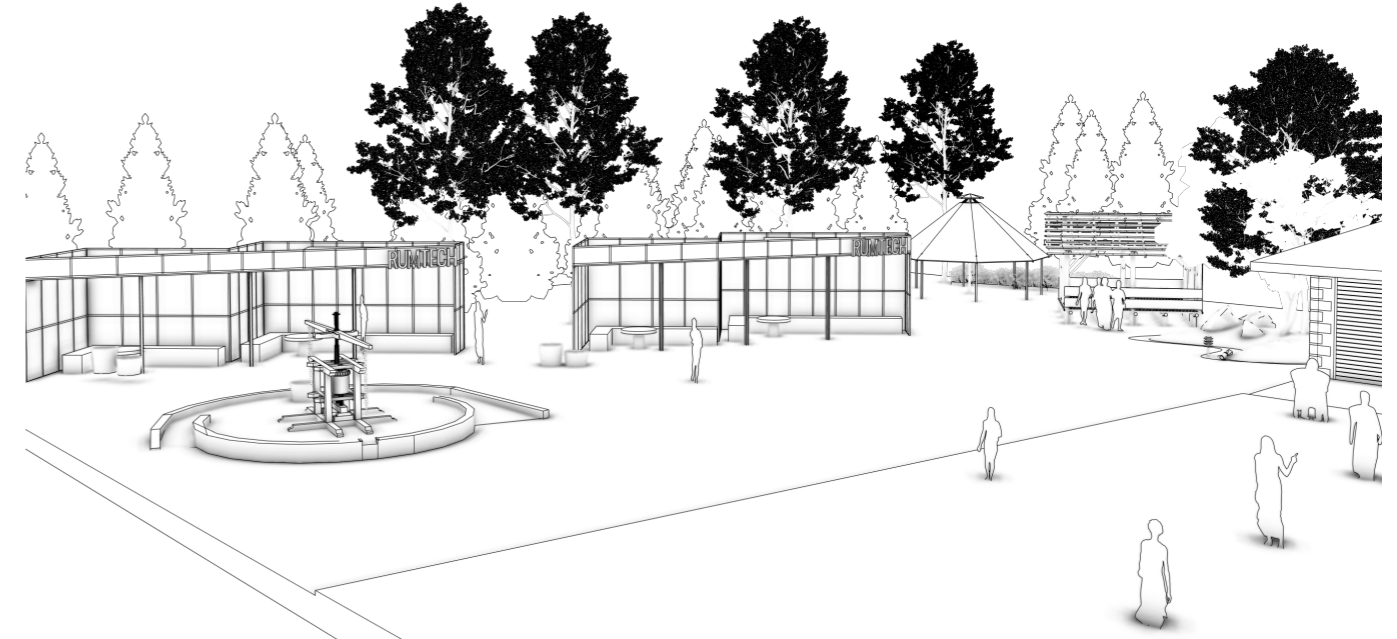


"Households & Care Circulation"
→ Brings produce into everyday rhythms of cooking and care
→ Especially supports elders, caregivers, and those without transport

Spatial Intervention for the rural ward in Rumtek - Commons and storage node



The node invites local exchange and care-based gathering under shaded zones. The structure blends open stalls, storytelling edges, and resting spots



A shared agro-commons for women farmers, featuring public seating, cooperative stalls, and a community fountain repurposed for everyday water use and pause.



Reimagined as a dignified rural infrastructure, the node offers cold storage and bulk handling spaces, operated and maintained by local women cooperatives.



The back of the building functions as the drop-off and collection point

02

Car(e) Nodes Care-Based Urban Infrastructure

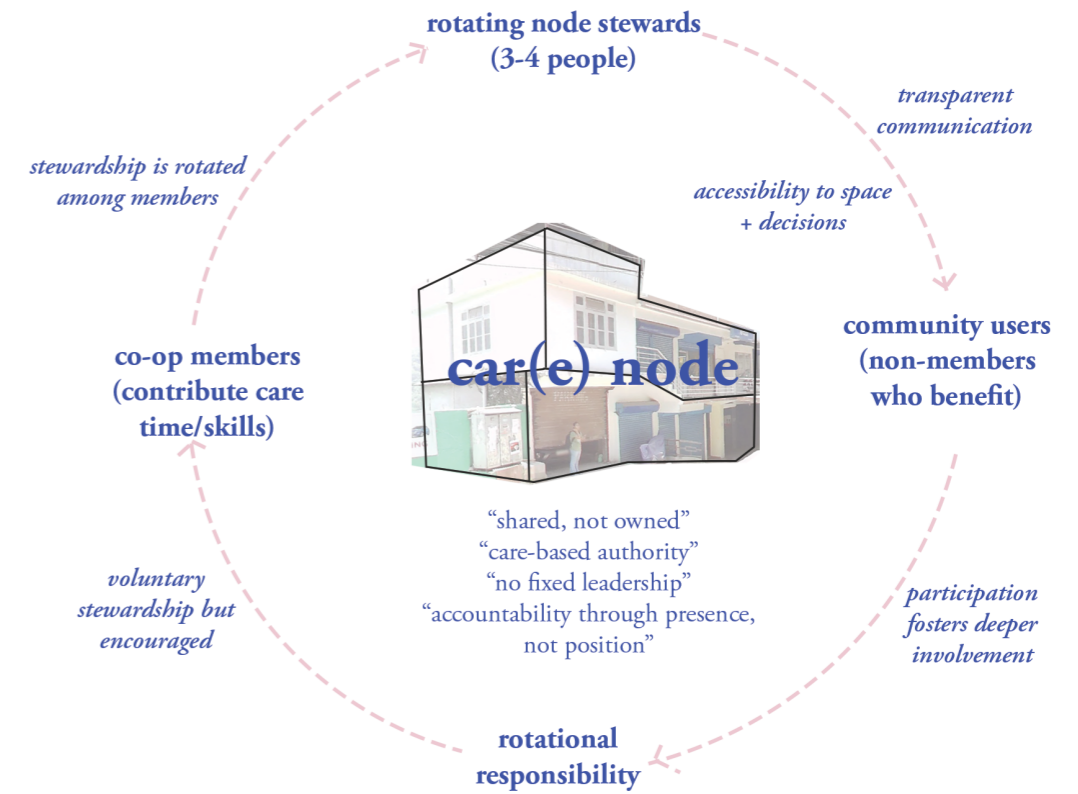
Context :

Different neighborhood wards in *Gangtok, Sikkim* with pilot interventions in two sites- *Tadong* *Daragaon*



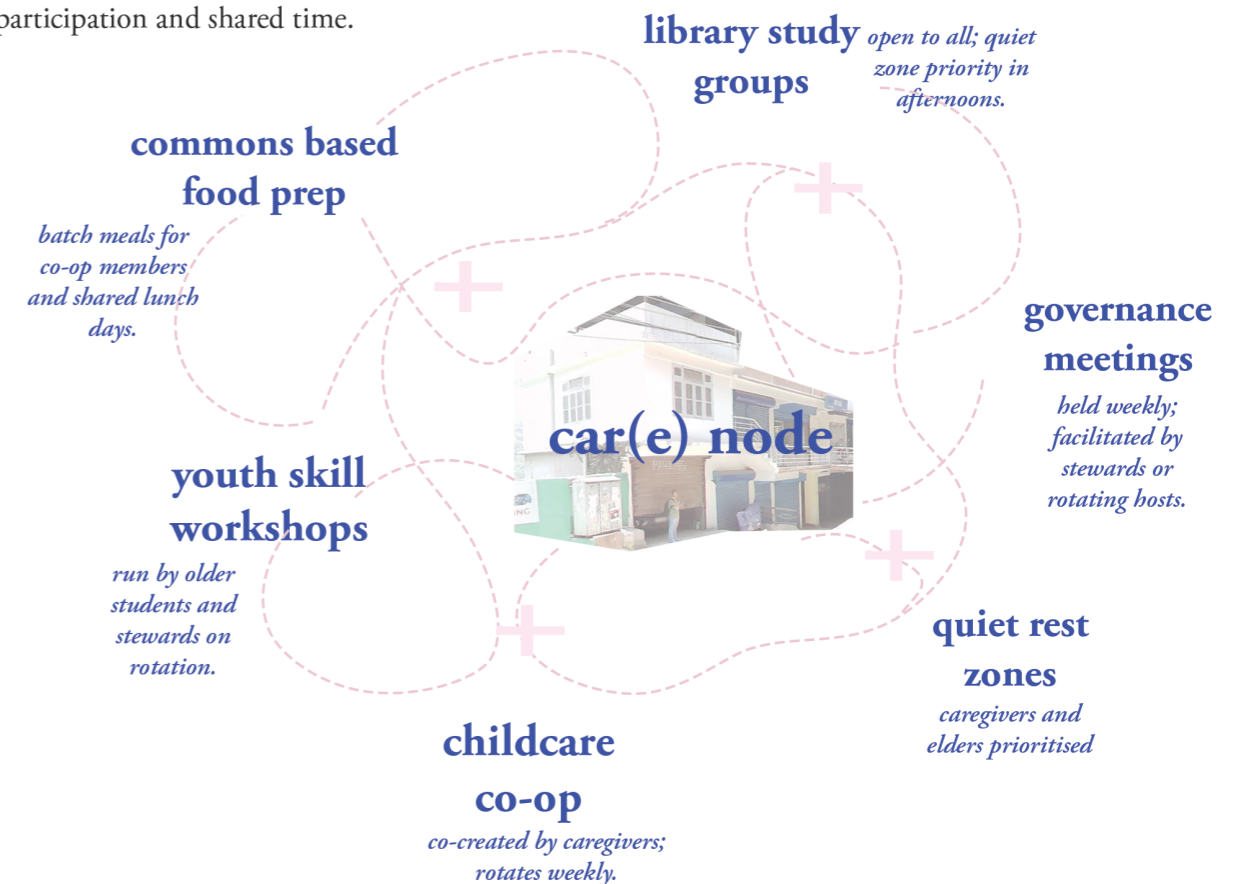
Car(e) Node is a feminist design brief. It is not a singular architectural object but a network of care infrastructures embedded in Gangtok's urban fabric. It was born from observations of daily fatigue, invisible labour, and fractured support networks in the city. The parenthetical "(e)" in Car(e) challenges dominant, vehicle-centric urban logics and reclaims space for care, presence, and pause.

governance model

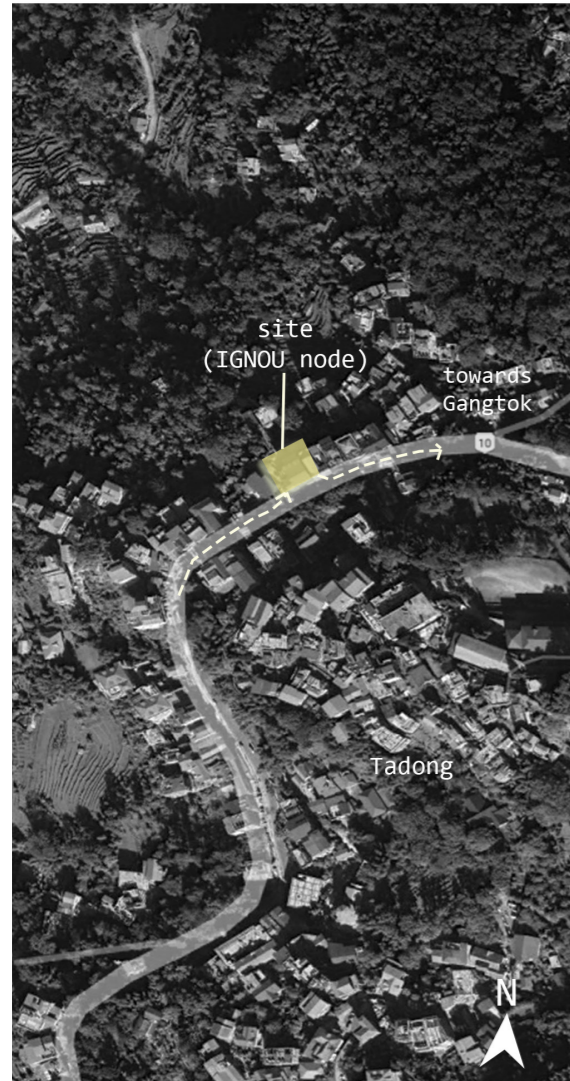


rhythms of shared use

the car(e) node adapts to daily, seasonal, and collective rhythms. programs emerge through participation and shared time.



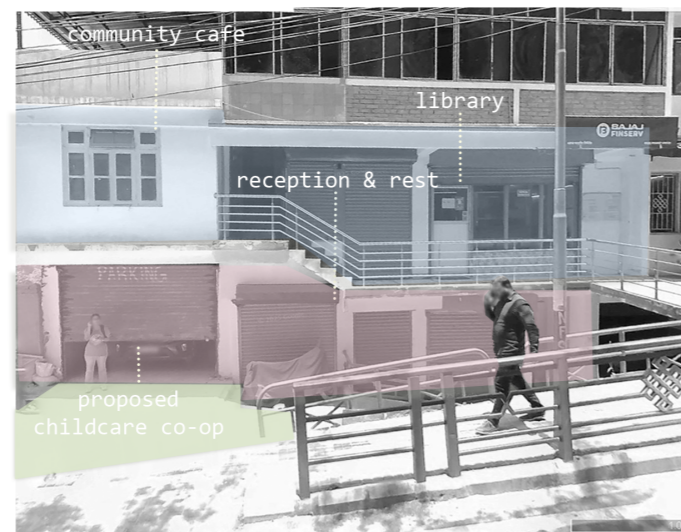
Spatial zoning logic for IGNOU care node



site plan of the IGNOU site



site context with proposed interventions

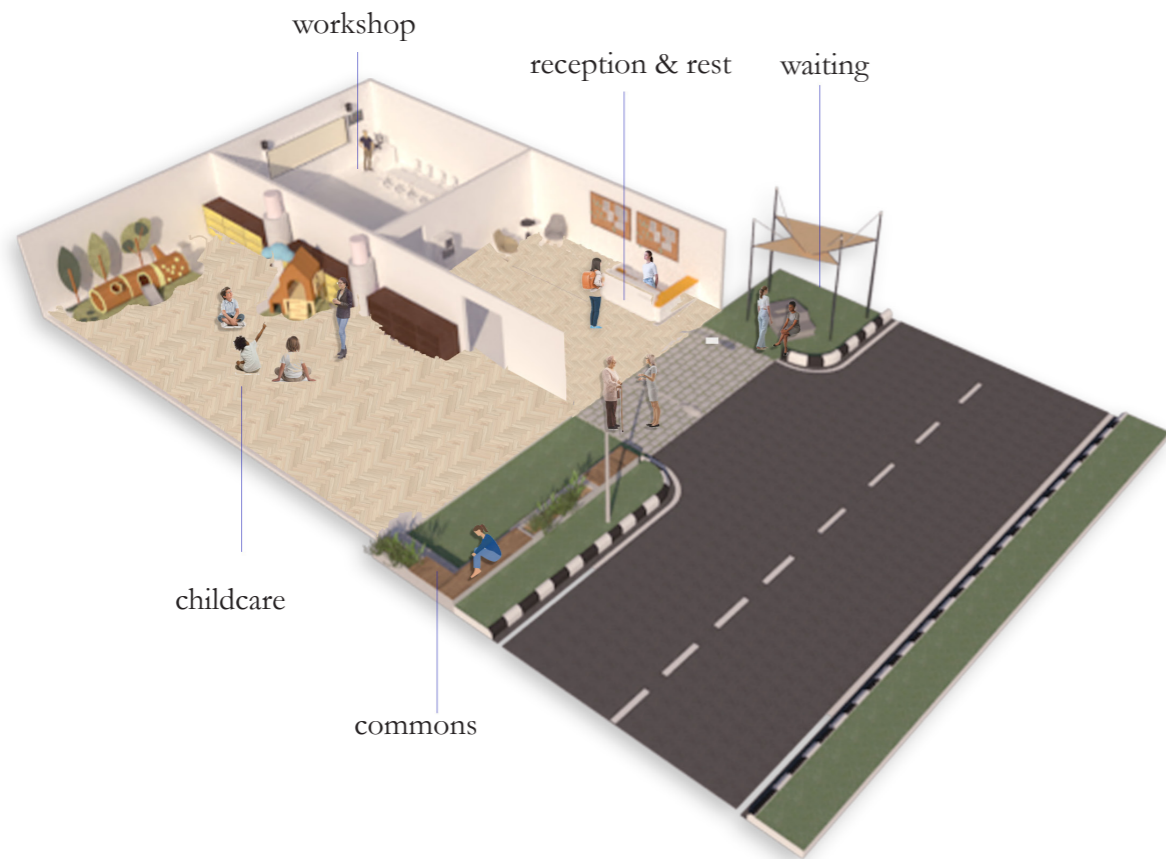


elevational zoning of the spaces

- rest/knowledge
- care
- commons



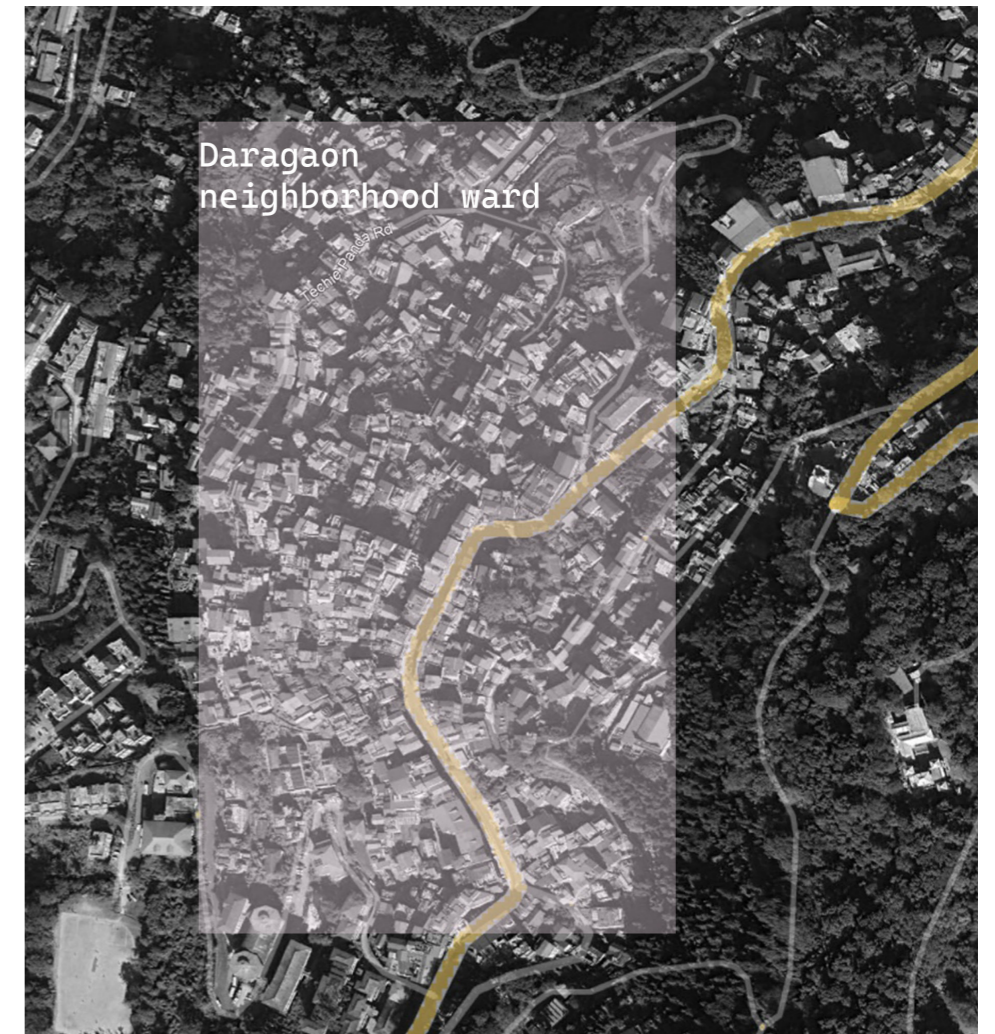
Ground floor



First floor



Reimagining Daragaon as a Distributed Care Network



Context :

Daragaon, Sikkim

While the IGNOU care node functions as an institutional anchor, everyday infrastructures of care already exist in Daragaon, in its lanes, thresholds, and underused plots. These micro-interventions propose light, co-created care spaces grounded in the neighbourhood's rhythms.

Each site responds to existing spatial and social cues, emphasising:

proximity to homes

visibility across generations

flexibility and rotational participation

feminist logics of commons, rest, and mutual support

The interventions are augmentations of care : commons benches, shaded resting zones, co-op gardens, and laundry platforms, integrated into the textures of Daragaon.

Daragaon's Care Gaps: *Margins in Motion*



layered with utilities, this vital link remains precarious for daily use, especially for elders and caregivers



care and kinship unfold in back alleys where infrastructure fails to meet movement



common plaza intervention - resting & gathering zone

steps through risk, routine, and responsi-



upward journey embedded with invisible work ; walking as care labor



re-imagined alley node

03

Re:Memory Commons in NIT

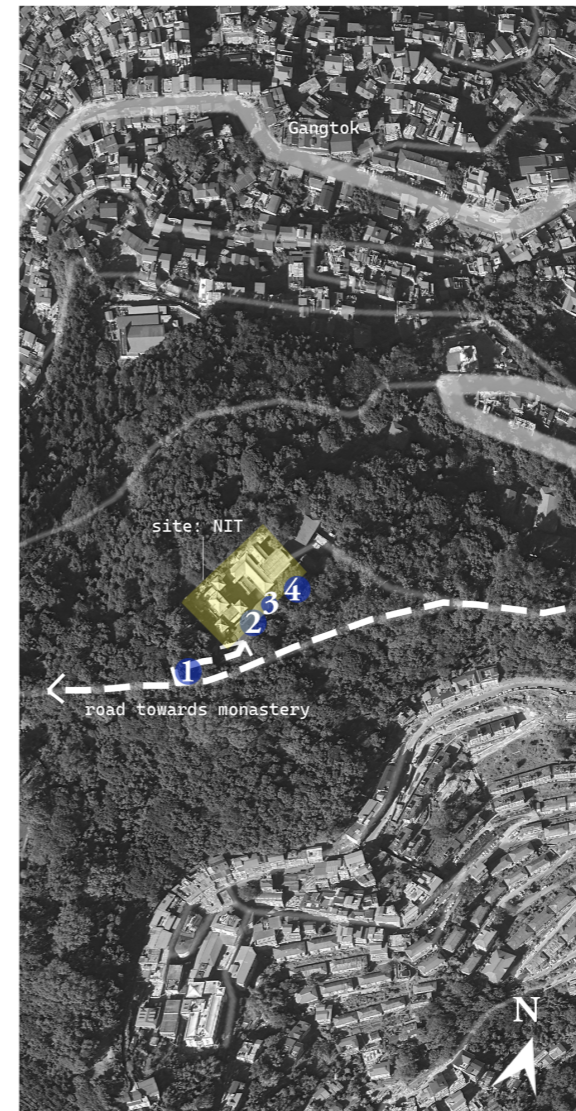
Context:

Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, Sikkim: A Tibetan heritage museum founded in 1958



Re:Memory Commons is a conceptual spatial brief that reimagines the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (NIT) through a feminist rethinking of authorship, institutional memory, and access. It builds directly on this thesis's central claim that feminist urbanism is not only a critique of dominant infrastructures but also a spatial method for making exclusion visible and imagining otherwise.

By intervening in the symbolic and spatial governance of cultural memory. (NIT) through a feminist rethinking of access, authorship, and cultural stewardship, this intervention asks how memory institutions in Sikkim might become porous, participatory spaces, especially for women, youth, and Bhutia and Lepcha communities.



site plan of NIT



rear site / institutional wing *Rear complex is visually disconnected from main road*



entry gate *signage and gates mark the beginning of the symbolic threshold into NIT.*



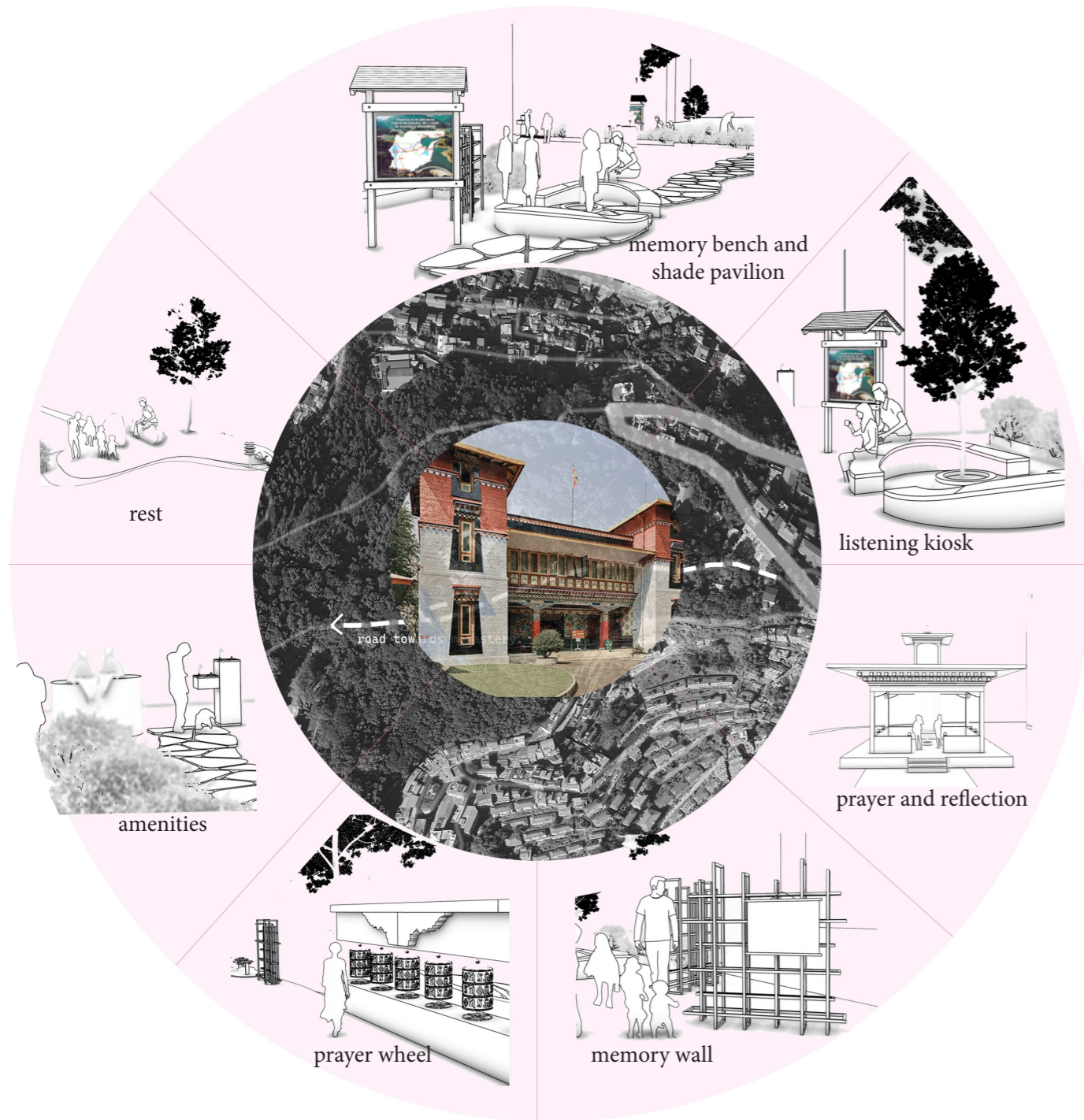
forecourt & landscaping *Highly landscaped formal road acts as spatial buffer*



courtyard *currently used for parking*

Distributed Commons of Care & Memory – NIT Grounds

A radial diagram of spatial gestures activating care, access, and everyday belonging around the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology.



Re: Memory Commons : Threshold Interventions



Micro-interventions, such as collaborative memory walls, resting areas, and sensory planting, make space for pause, gathering, and gentle resistance within an otherwise formal institutional terrain.



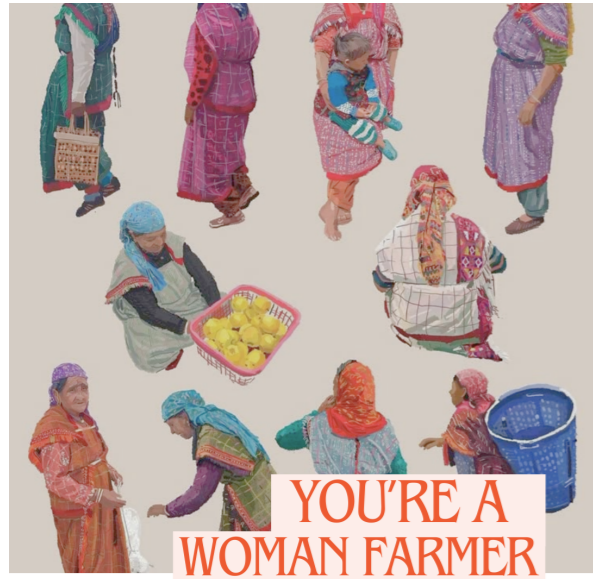
The site invites public intimacy through playful spatial cues, modular seating, knowledge exchange kiosks, and shaded storytelling spaces, foregrounding informal histories and lived presence. The intervention resists architectural hierarchy by making memory, rest, and reflection accessible to all.



03 conclusion

Together, the three interventions propose a reimagining of infrastructure as relational, care-driven, and locally situated. Rather than monumental redesigns, they offer grounded gestures, rooted in everyday rhythms, interdependence, and feminist logics of mobility, commons, and belonging. From agro-cooperative pathways to care-based urban nodes and cultural reactivation at the Namgyal Institute, each site resists extractive planning by centering lived realities, rotational participation, and spatial tenderness. These proposals are invitations to rethink how care can shape place, policy, and possibility in Sikkim and beyond.

Appendices



YOU'RE A WOMAN FARMER

- You live in Rumtek.
- You manage small agricultural land and contribute to household responsibilities.
- You sell fresh produce seasonally through nearby markets.
- You balance caregiving work (elders, children) with farming. You have a basic smartphone but limited digital literacy.



YOU'RE A MALE TAXI DRIVER

- You drive a taxi based in Gangtok, earning your living through transporting people and goods.
- You regularly transport farmers, workers, and sometimes tourists.
- You depend on flexible routes and informal arrangements for income.
- You worry about rising fuel costs and competition from other taxis.
- Your working hours are long and unpredictable.



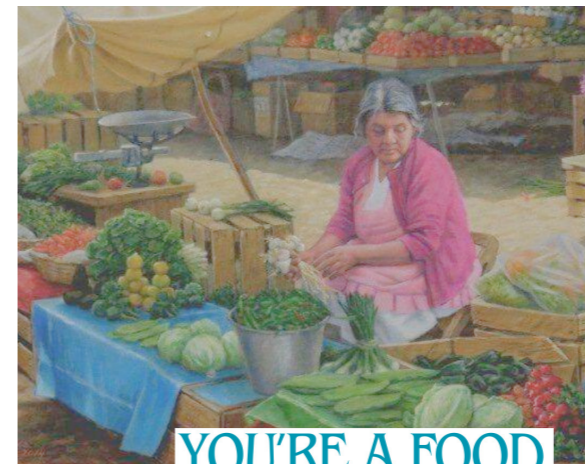
YOU'RE A MIDDLE-CLASS WORKING MOTHER

- You live in a middle-income neighborhood in Deorali, Gangtok.
- You work in the Govt service sector while managing household responsibilities.
- You have a young child attending school locally and elderly parents needing occasional care.
- You rely on local markets and urban services for your daily needs.
- You balance employment, caregiving, and commuting in your daily life.



YOU'RE THE TOURISM MINISTER

- You work on promoting Gangtok as a destination for sustainable and eco-friendly tourism.
- You are involved in planning infrastructure and marketing projects that attract tourists.
- You balance local interests with economic development goals.
- You often work with private companies, investors, and international visitors.
- You believe modernisation and connectivity are key to Sikkim's future.



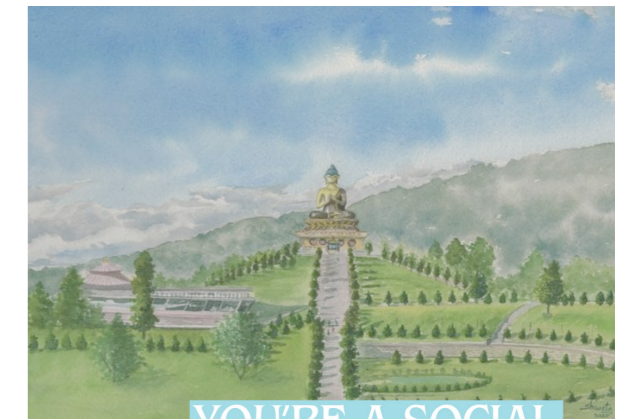
YOU'RE A FOOD VENDOR WOMAN

- You run a small, informal vegetable stall in Lal Bazaar, Gangtok's busy market area.
- You source your produce directly from farmers or wholesale markets.
- You do not have a formal trading license but have been vending for many years.
- Your income is modest but critical to your family's survival.
- You negotiate daily for space and customers to stay in public selling areas.



YOU'RE A MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKER

- You migrated from Nepal to Gangtok in search of work.
- You work as a cleaner or support staff at a small hotel.
- Your wages are low, with no formal contract or benefits.
- You often send remittances home to family members.
- You balance precarious work, high living costs, and limited access to public services.



YOU'RE A SOCIAL WELFARE MINISTER

- You are a state-level official responsible for policies on women's rights, caregiving, and rural welfare.
- You must balance economic modernisation with social equity.
- You face pressure from politicians, private sector players, and rural advocacy groups.
- You aim to improve gender inclusion and community well-being through policy reforms.
- Your decisions can significantly shape access to mobility, care, and economic opportunity across Sikkim.

