

A SKIRT OF ONE'S OWN

Leonie Paula Heckmann
Pablo Munar Ortiz De Urbina
Bich Hoang Anh Phan
Brenda Roelse



INTRODUCTION

As a part of the Hannah Ryggen Triennale 2025 – MATER students of the circular studio's project skirts are exploring participatory and performative architecture activating public space.

„Drawing von Hannah Ryggen's legacy, SKIRTs are soft, wearable architectures made from natural and reusable materials, that weave together notions of solidarity, inclusiveness, and care. They explore the circularity by rethinking textile crafts and frame architecture as an event.“
– Aleksandra Raonic

This booklet shows our journey of developing A SKIRT OF ONE'S OWN¹.



¹ This refers to Virginia Woolf's text *A Room of One's Own* (1929)

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"I do not just weave for the sake of weaving. The yarn with its colours amuses me and inspires me but is not an end in itself. What I want to achieve with weaving is the expression" - Hannah Ryggen (Paasche, 2019, p.187)



1. IDEAS AND DEVELOPMENT

Inspiration

Wool and Weaving

First Ideas

Inspiration



Hannah Ryggen weaving Vi lever på en stjerne (We're living on a star), 1958. Courtesy NTNU University Library. Photo: Klaus Forbregd.

Hannah Ryggen (1894-1970)

Hannah Ryggen is an artist who mainly worked in Ørlandet and in Trondheim, creating tapestries where she combined international modernism and politics. "She was, in the Norwegian context, unique in transforming art into activism" (Paasche, 2019, p.7). In her artworks, she addresses the criticism of social hierarchies, privileges and abuse of power and established herself as one of the best-known Skandinavian artists of her time, exhibiting her art widely throughout Europe (Paasche, 2019, p.7). Hannah inspired us in many ways.

Her patience and care with which she carries out the activities that are necessary for weaving, making and dyeing threads is very impressive. As well as her courage to be activist and question existing conditions, protest against the war and politicians and to make her ideas accessible to the whole public through her tapestries. "They were made for the general public and she felt they should hang in public buildings, in schools and other places, where they could be seen by everyone" (Paasche, 2019, p.39).



Hannah Ryggen, "Mors hjerte" (Mother's Heart), 1947. Tapestry in wool and linen, 195 x190 cm. Photo: Andreas S. Solberg.

Inspiration



Else Laula Renberg. Photo: Helgeland museum.

Else Laula Renberg (1877 - 1931)

Elsa Laula Renberg was a Sámi and feminist activist and politician. In 1910 she founded the "Brurskanken Sámi Women's Association" and organised the first "Samelandsmøtet", the first pan-nordic Sámi National Assembly in Trondheim on February 6, 1917, what is now celebrated as the Sámi National Day. All members of the arrangement committee, which she led, were women. With the invitation, she wanted women to be explicitly encouraged to participate:

«Ikke en eneste kvinne bør savnes i vår forening. Vi tror at når samekvinnene slutter seg sammen med det store mål for øye å gjøre noe for folket, vil de snart finne midler hvorved de på sin måte vil bidra til at målet nås...»

(Not a single woman should be missing from our association. We believe that when Sámi women join together with the great goal of doing something for the people, they will soon find the means whereby they will in their own way contribute to the goal being achieved...). (Kåss, 2013)

The square in front of KUK, where we performed our SKIRTs on April 11, 2025, is named after Elsa Laula Renberg and still used for speeches and demonstrations such as the International Women's* Day.

As a person who stood up for both Sámi rights and the rights of women and through her speeches managed to unite people and bring them together to build society together, is very inspiring for us.



First pan-nordic Sámi National Assembly in Trondheim on February 6, 1917. NTNU Univeristetsbibliothek.

MATER

matter

mother

MATERIAL

raw

ALIVE

Spun

L — o — o — s — e

tight

warm

holding memory

gathered ~~ee~~ twisted ~~eee~~ s-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-d

PROCESS

slow...

pressed together

layered

pulled

a-p-a-r-t

A

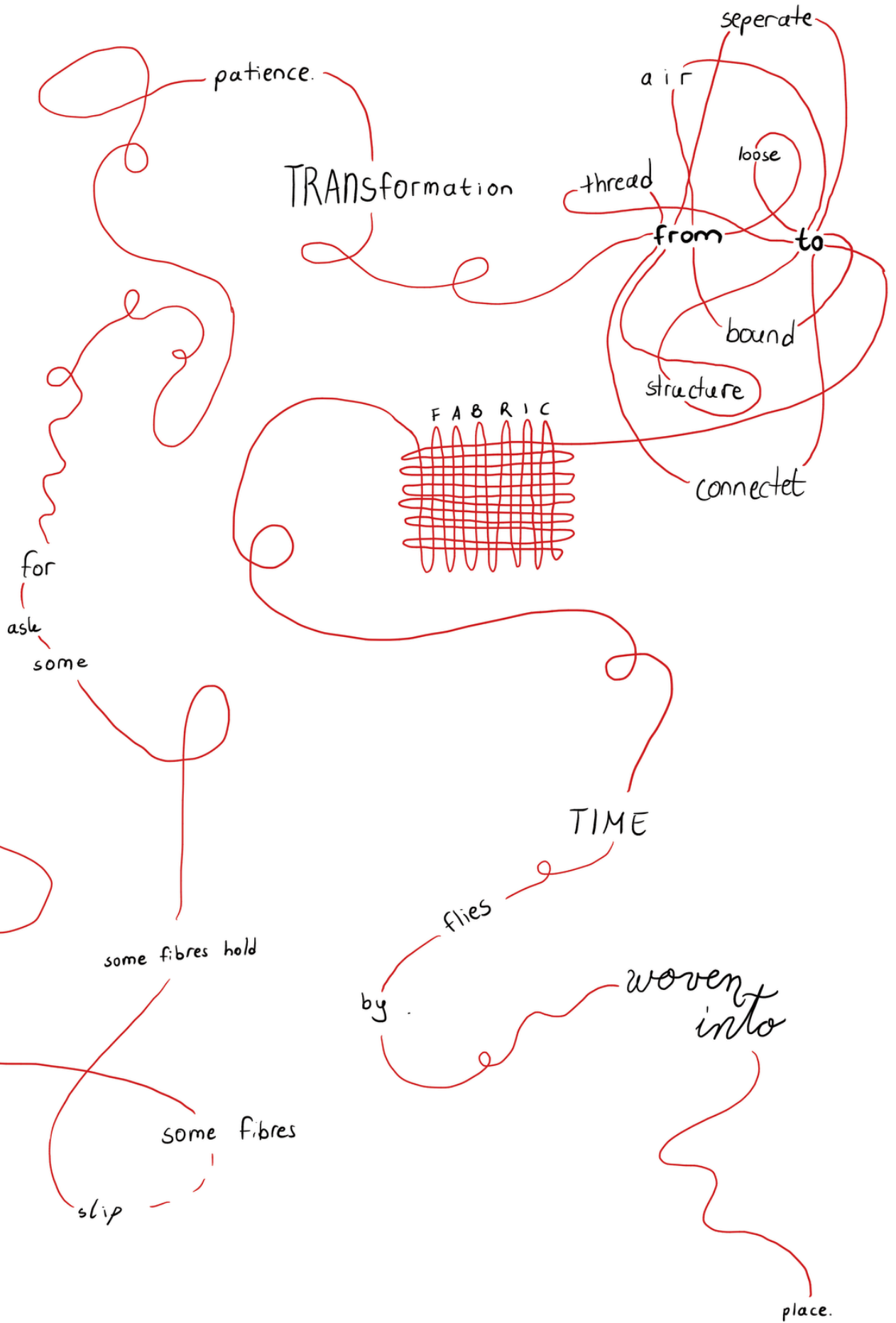
rythm.

A

negotiation

A conversation

RESISTANCE

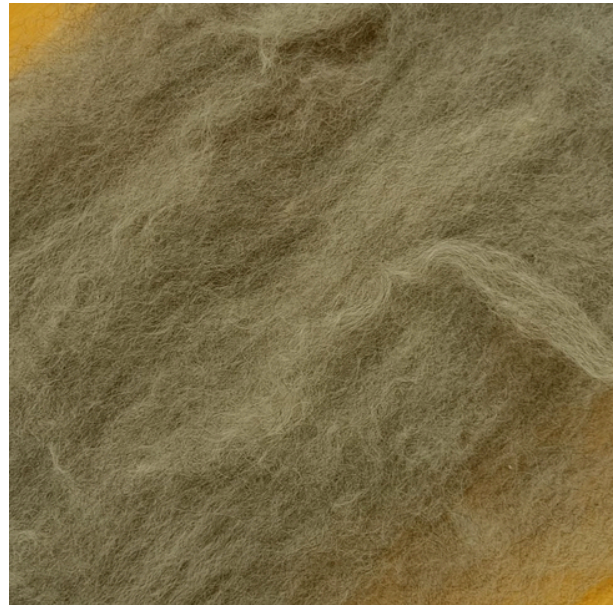


Wool and Weaving

To get a feeling for the material, we explored weaving through hands-on work with raw wool. By going through the whole process together, starting with washing the raw wool and sorting it, continuing with the carding and finally the felting or spinning of the wool, we not only explored the materials transformation from the raw, dirty fibre to a clean strong yarn. We also gained appreciation for the material, the time and patience the process requires. Those activities not just became technical processes, but repetitive meditative and communicative actions that allowed space for reflection and to share our thoughts and experiences with each other, creating a sense of community.



raw, unwashed wool



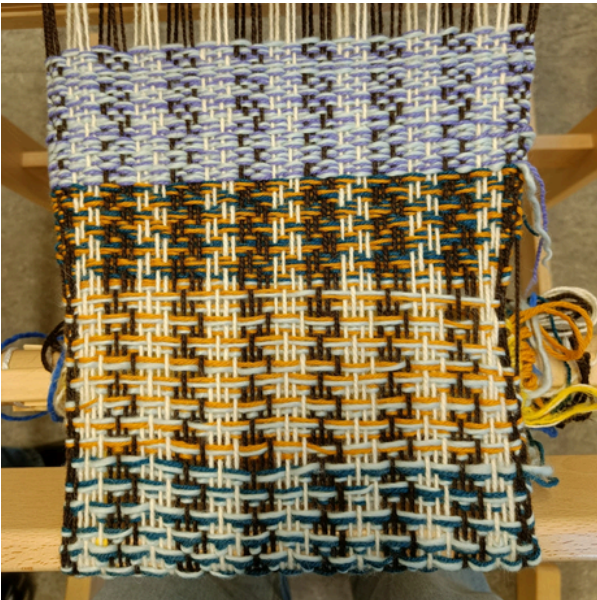
washed and carded wool



spinning



self-made loom



exploring different patterns

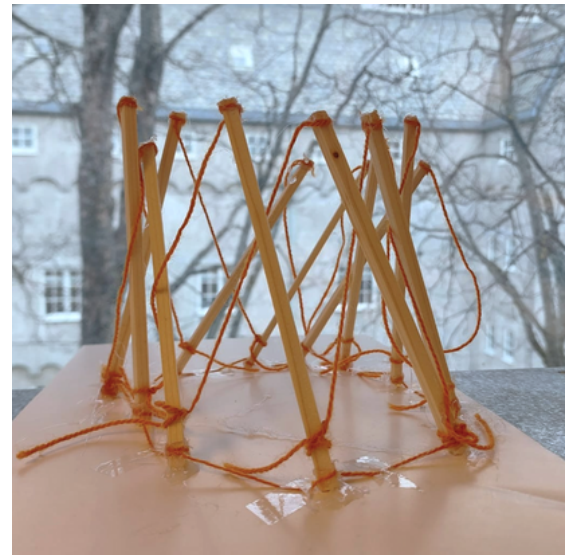


process of weaving

We discovered the process of weaving, tried out different patterns and were impressed by how this simple repetitive movement of placing a weft over and under the warp in different ways could create so many diverse designs. Inspired by Hannah Ryggen's approach, we also considered how weaving could be used as a form of storytelling or political expression. We began to develop a personal vocabulary based on physical experience - words like tension, rhythm, resistance, patience and transformation.

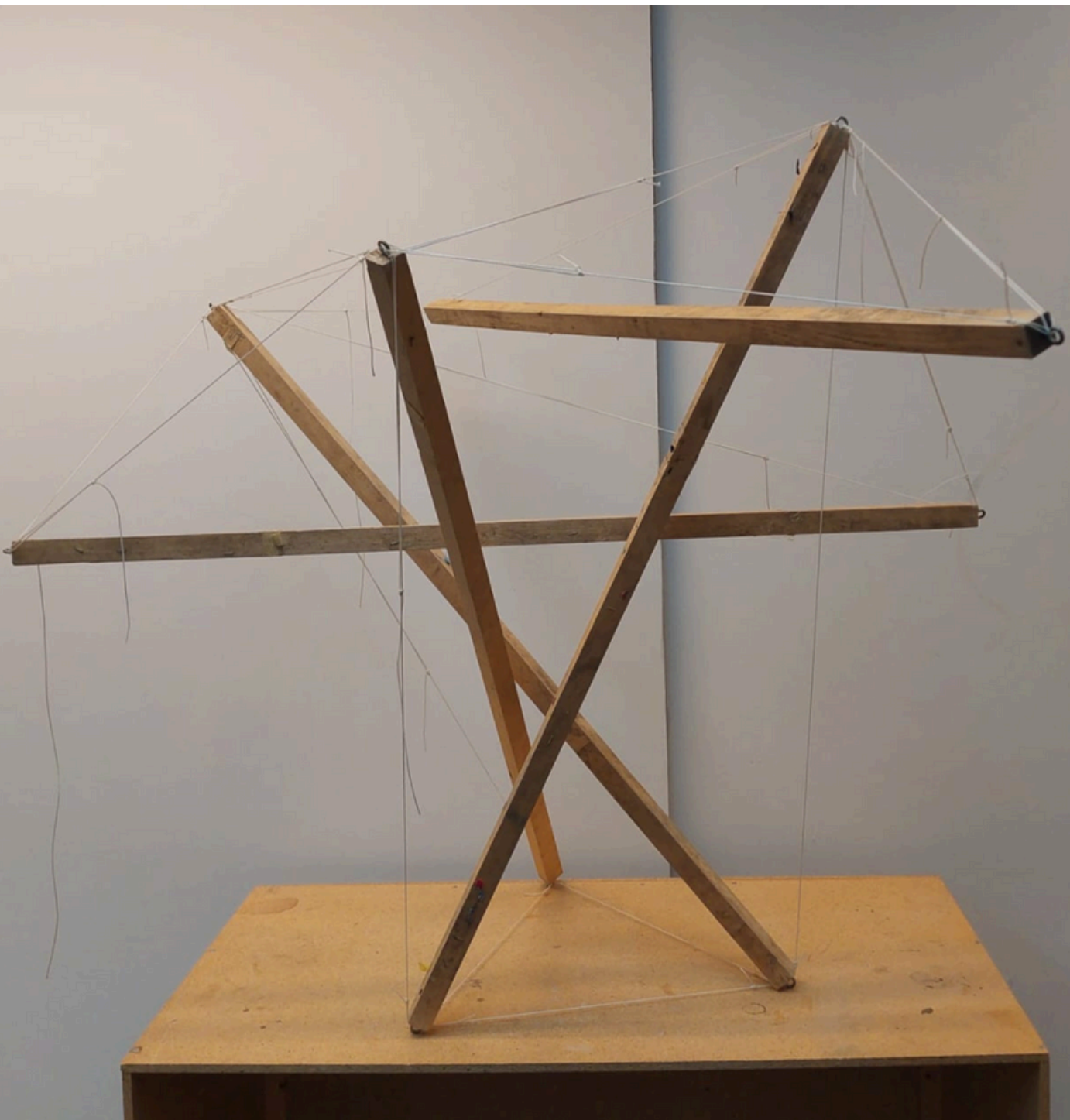
First ideas

During the first few weeks of weaving, we explored and enjoyed the progress of working together. We experienced how the hands-on work helped us to connect with each other as we shared knowledge and thoughts. Inspired by this process of weaving, the loom and Hannah Ryggen, we then experimented with different sketch models. We thought about the question "What does it take to make relationships to make a thing?" (Clarke, 1999) raised by muf and wanted to create a loom where people could explore the process of making, sharing experiences and connecting with each other. The idea was that by weaving into the structure of our loom, they would get a sense of the whole process, and so be more empathetic to the textile products by seeing how much effort it takes to make them.



Our first full-scale test model was a combination of two earlier dummy concepts: a string-and-wood tension system and triangular wooden frameworks. We experimented with placing sticks that we found in the basement in different ways to create various forms and used strings to suspend and stabilize them, anchored to the ground or using weights like bricks. One challenge was how to create flexible joints between the wooden elements.

We continued by expanding the structure with more sticks placed in multiple directions, which allowed the form to grow spatially. This showed how easily the structure could evolve by simply adding new elements. However, we noticed that the original sticks were too short for the kind of scale we wanted. To address this, we started working with three-meter bamboo sticks. Some older test sticks already had hooks, but the bamboo didn't, and its hollow interior made attaching metal hooks difficult. This led us to experiment with textile-based hooks instead.



I screamed out of happiness when our first scale 1:1 prototype of the balancing bamboo sticks worked. During the first try on scale 1:1, I was so frustrated when it did not work out the way we wanted to. When using the scale 1:1 adjustable knots it finally worked, because of the exact length of the strings which is so important in the design. This was a realisation for me that sometimes you just need to try to experiment with things in a different scale. - B

That was like an epiphany moment. I remembered we were literally screaming when the structure stood for the first time. I was so proud of what we did, and hopeful because after failures and failures we finally found something that could work. - A

It's so true, what you are writing. I won't forget this collective moment of joy we were sharing, screaming together out of happiness. And the solution with the adjustable knot was so easy in the end. We found a system that finally worked and that we could easily share with others. We could now begin exploring, experimenting and playing around with it. - L

We had a long process of making a lot of totally different models with different ideas. We could not figure out which direction we really wanted to go to. At the part where we started making the bigger scale models, that's when we got more insight in what we really wanted to show with our SKIRT. - B

I agree with Brenda here. I felt lost at the beginning of the process. I guess I didn't have a clear idea of what I wanted to do, but that's the same at the beginning of every process, I think. We tried many different concepts and none of them clicked, which made me a bit demotivated. Not until we worked with a bigger scale that we had a clearer idea of what the project could look like. - A

The process of experimenting was both really interesting but sometimes also exhausting. As Anh described it, we felt that we were sometimes experimenting around but often had the feeling that the outcome was not exactly what we wanted to reach. Sometimes it was really hard to say what we wanted to reach in the end. But those experiments helped to find out what we didn't want to do, and for me the lectures really helped to build a sense for an idea what I would like to do, what kind of space I'd like to create. And I really enjoyed the process of trying things out together and also inspiring each other. So it took us to, make relationships to make a thing" (Clarke, 1993). -L

I had a lot of fun with thinking about designs where textile is a more dominant material than wood, so I was really looking for a solution where textile can be the material that holds the most forces. Normally when designing we would use wood for that. It did learn me to have more patience; that is what you need for textile in general. -B

This was something new to me since I had never have to think so extensive about what kind of materials I want to use and how to use it. But because this is a project that we have to build ourselves, there were so many things we had to consider, and that include our skill levels. At the beginning we were thinking using wood and cut it to our intentions. But none of us besides Pablo have the experience needed to work with wood. We tried but the result was disappointing. So we had to think of something else. At the end, we found bambros and it was perfect, and it allowed us to incorporate textiles even more into our project. -A

It was so nice actually exploring all the different materials. Sometimes I have the feeling that architects really focus on how to organize rooms and the materials often seems to be something they just think about in the end. But actually our whole surrounding environment is only made out of that - of different materials, so actually it is a really important thing to care about. Exploring the material instead of putting the material on the design afterwards. And in the end the chosen three materials suited our project just perfect in so many aspects. -L



2. SKIRT

*"It is like a time of it's own,
filled with all the details
that need care and my full
concentration.*

*Moving, finding, repairing,
painting, lifting, joining,
constructing, copying,
adding. Being on site."*

*- Katharina Bonnevier
(MYCKET, 2017, p.63)*

Concept

Details

Concept

A SKIRT OF ONE'S OWN



a SKIRT — soft — made out of
 a wearable architecture — in the
 textile — and — bamboo — found
 lab — and — the — strings

adjustable knots — labyrinth — we found in the
 basement

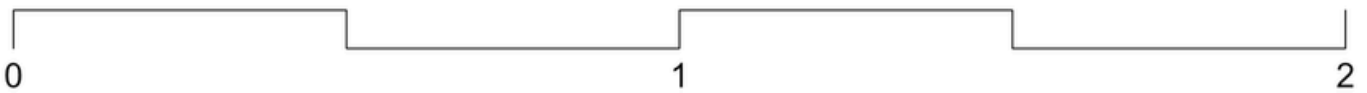
adjustable space — screaming out of happiness — bending bamboo

soft — things — hard — making

D — A — N — C — G — in — around — space — taking — sharing — giving — P — e — r — f — o — r — m — i — n — g

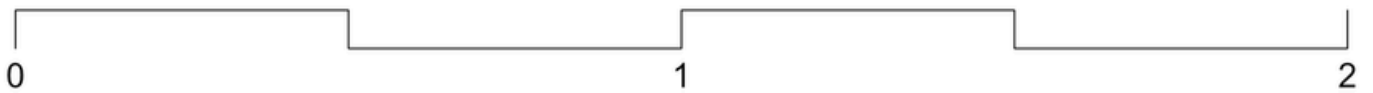
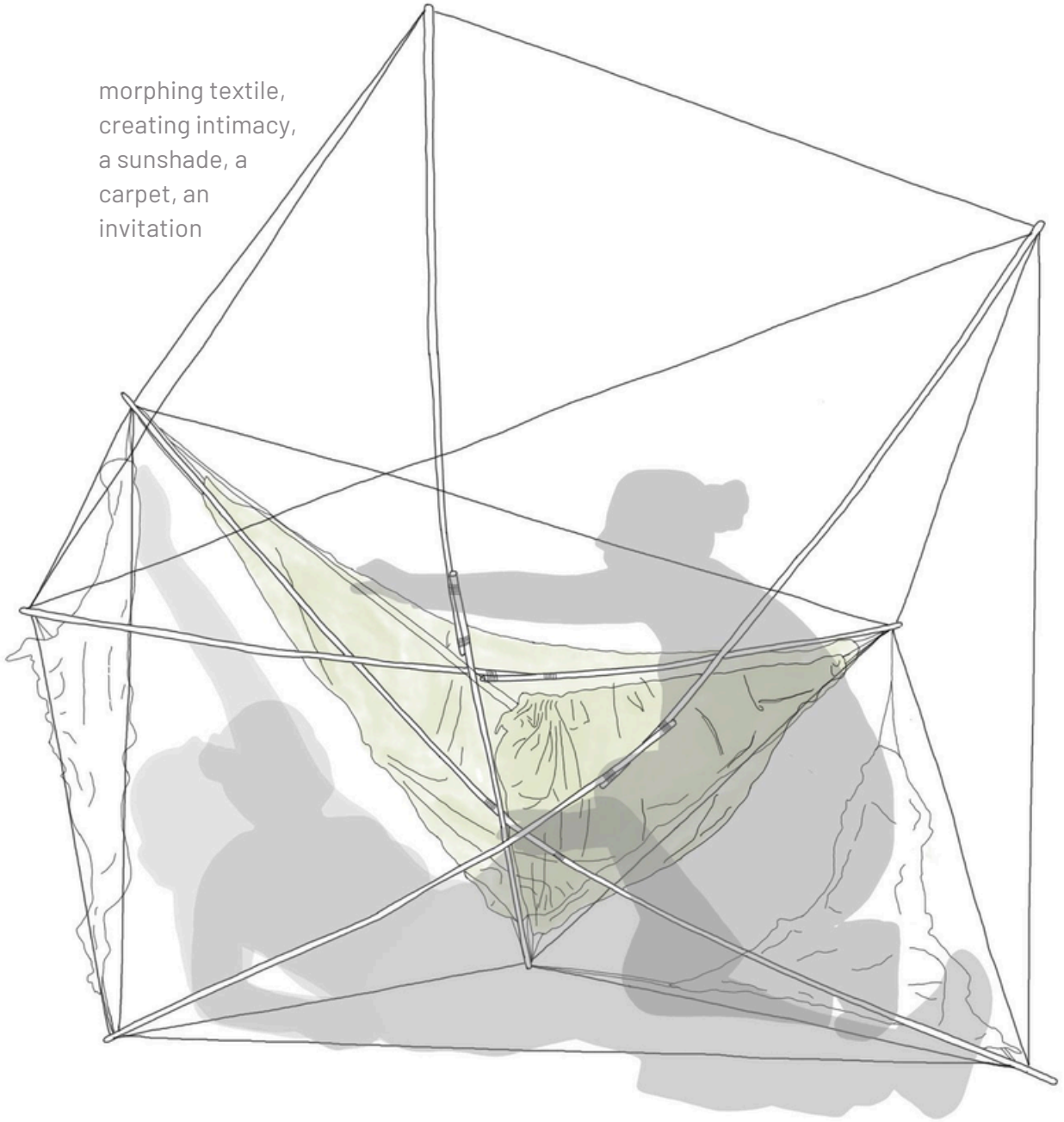
together — a — circular — process — my body — dancing with — a skirt of one's own

a body interacting
with the
structure,
reshaping the
space repetitively
according to
one's needs

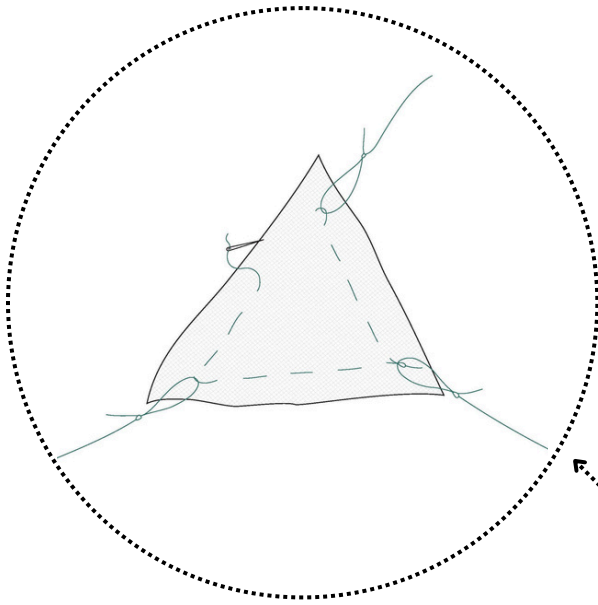


Concept

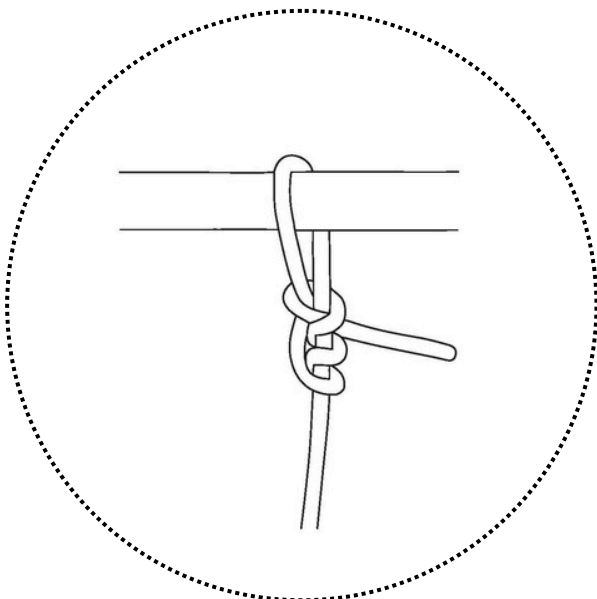
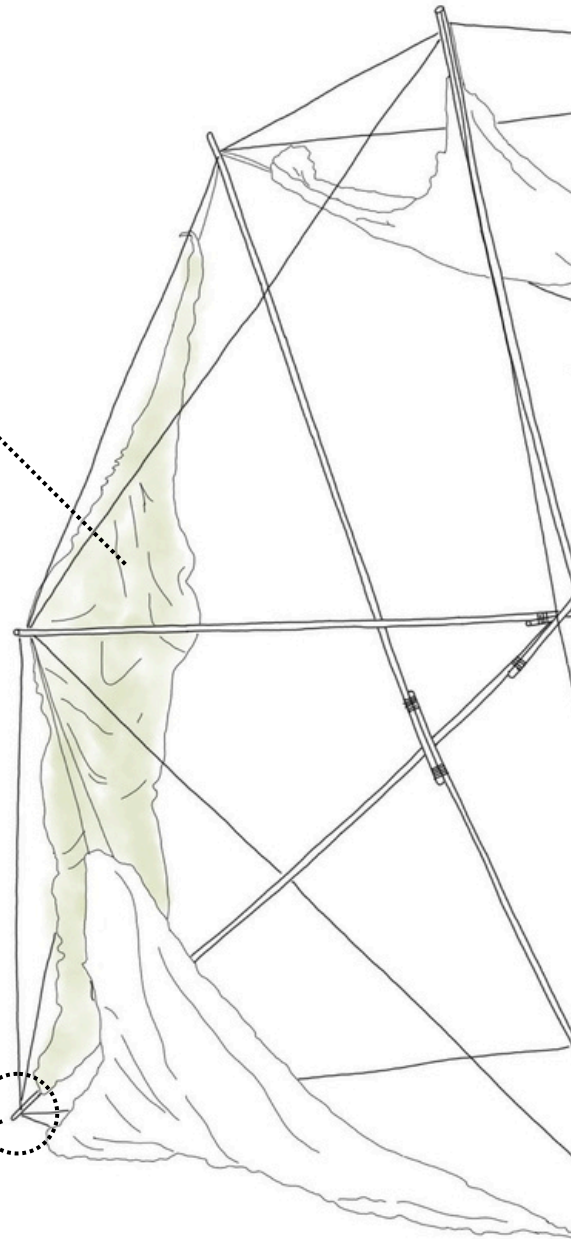
morphing textile,
creating intimacy,
a sunshade, a
carpet, an
invitation



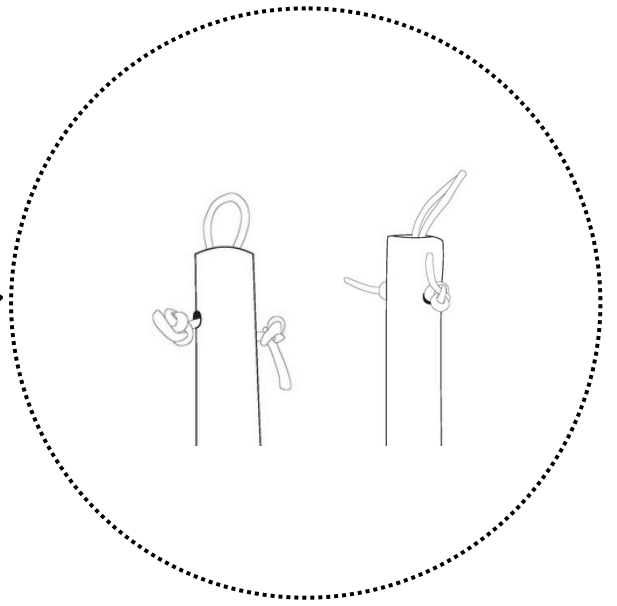
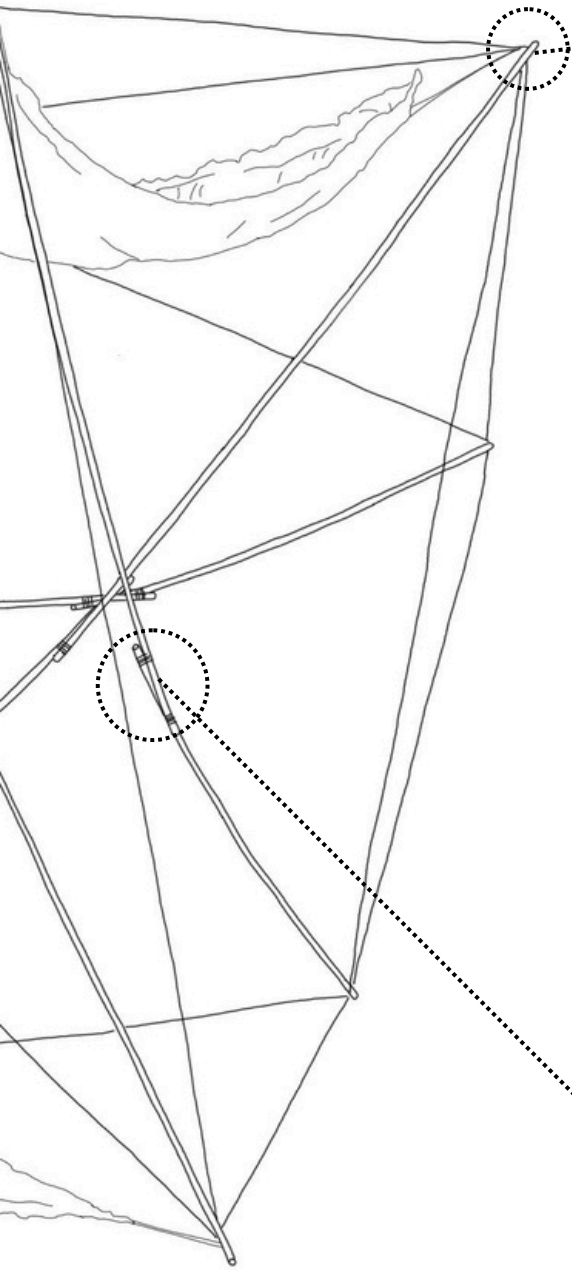
Details



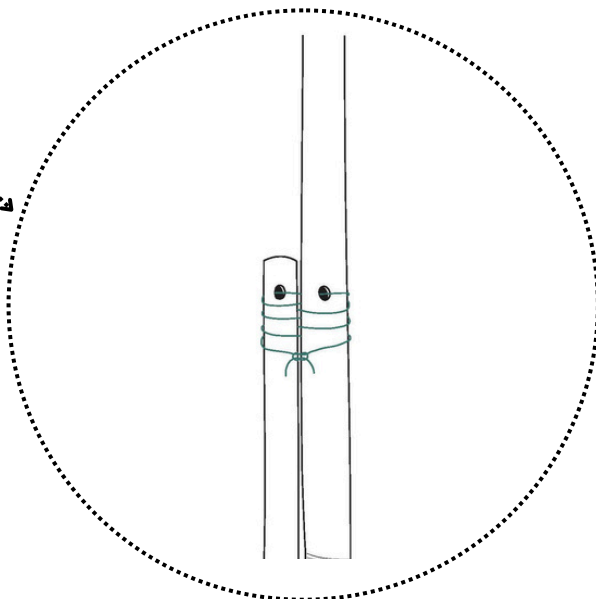
Textile connection
sewed and with adjustable
knots for attaching



Adjustable knot
can be pulled for
adjusting the tension



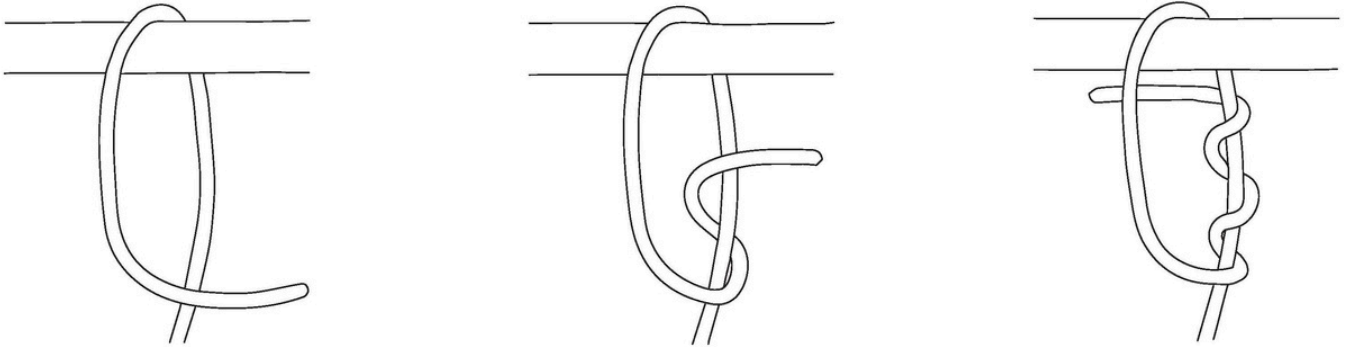
Bamboo connection with other ropes



Bamboo to bamboo connection
weaved with a string

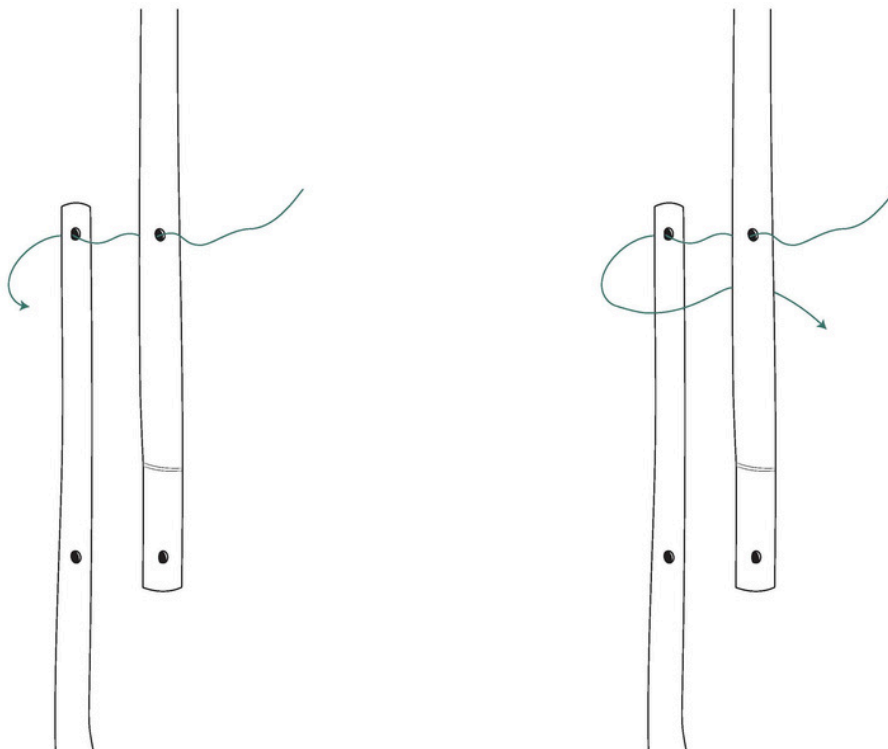
Details: Connections

Adjustable Knot

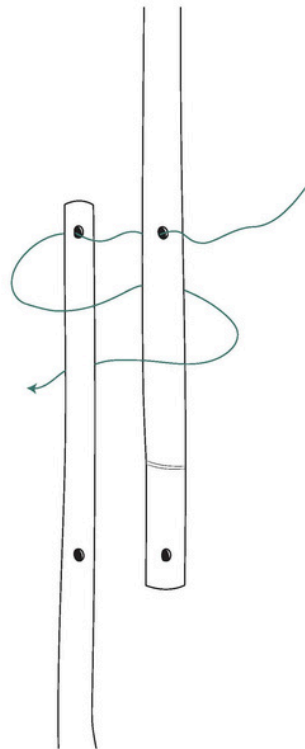
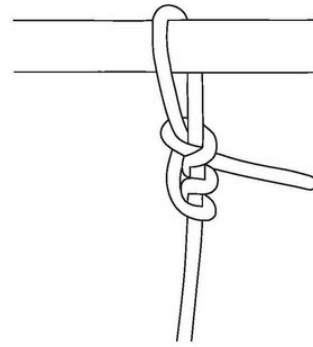
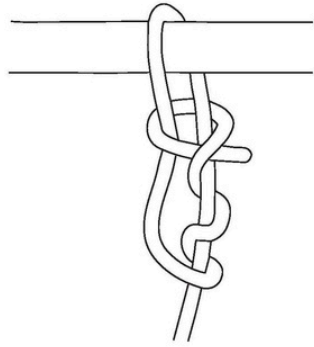


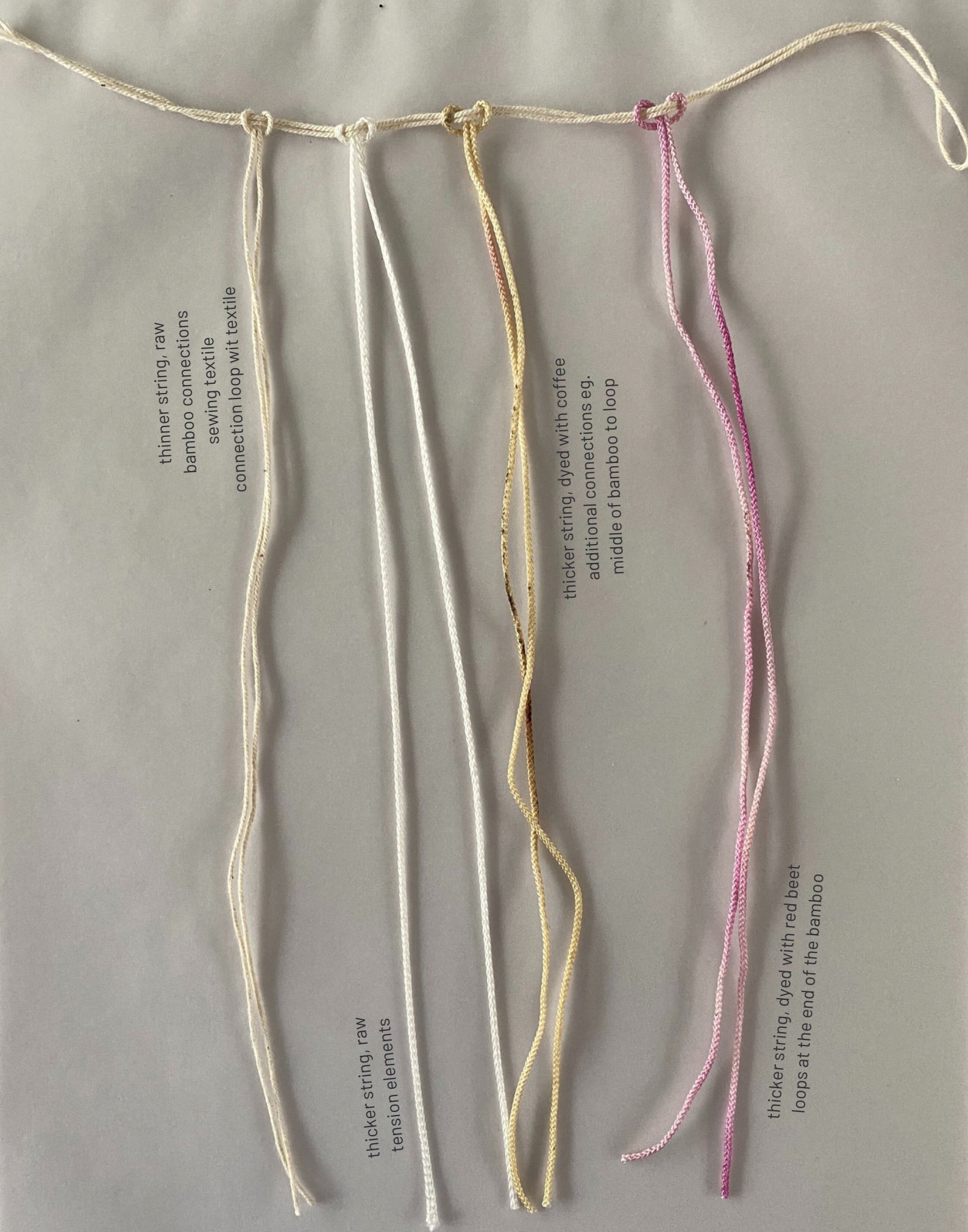
With the adjustable knot every rope can be adjusted to the perfect length to create tension between the bamboo sticks.

Bamboo Connection



With the connection between the bamboo sticks, a longer stick can be formed by weaving multiple bamboo sticks to each other.





thinner string, raw
bamboo connections
sewing textile
connection loop wit textile

thicker string, raw
tension elements

thicker string, dyed with coffee
additional connections eg.
middle of bamboo to loop

thicker string, dyed with red beet
loops at the end of the bamboo

The strings we used were colour coded, we dyed it with natural material, whats why the colour partly was washed off from the rain during the performance.



Textile sample with the used connections

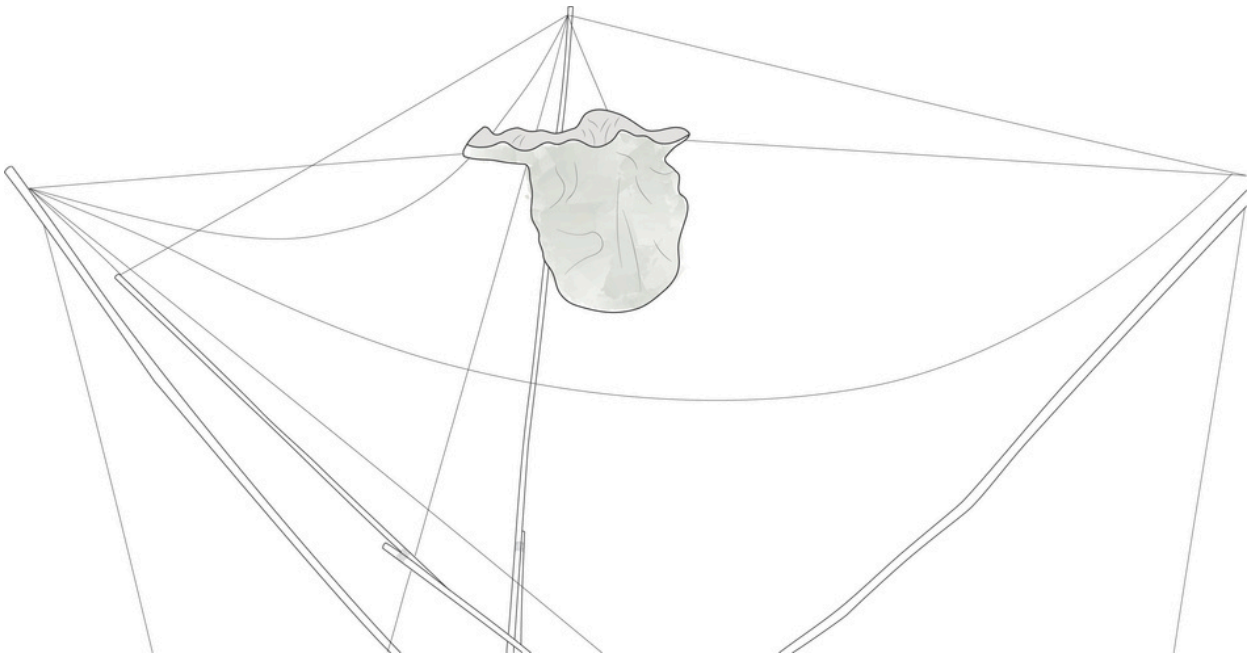
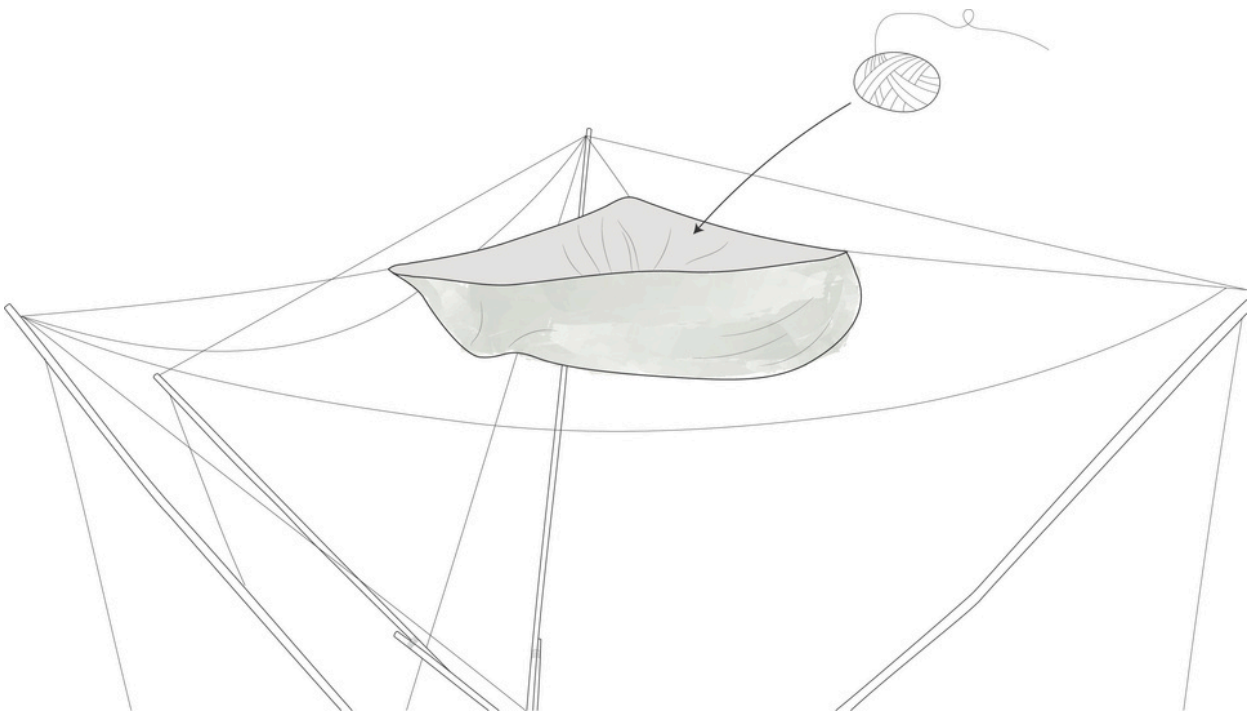
Details: Textile performance



relaxing



wind as a dancing partner



carrier bag



*"People show up and participate, out of their own will, because of their own necessity. We also have to dare to let go of the situation, let people take it over, make it theirs."
– Thérèse Kristiansson
(MYCKET, 2017, p.66)*

3. PERFORMANCE

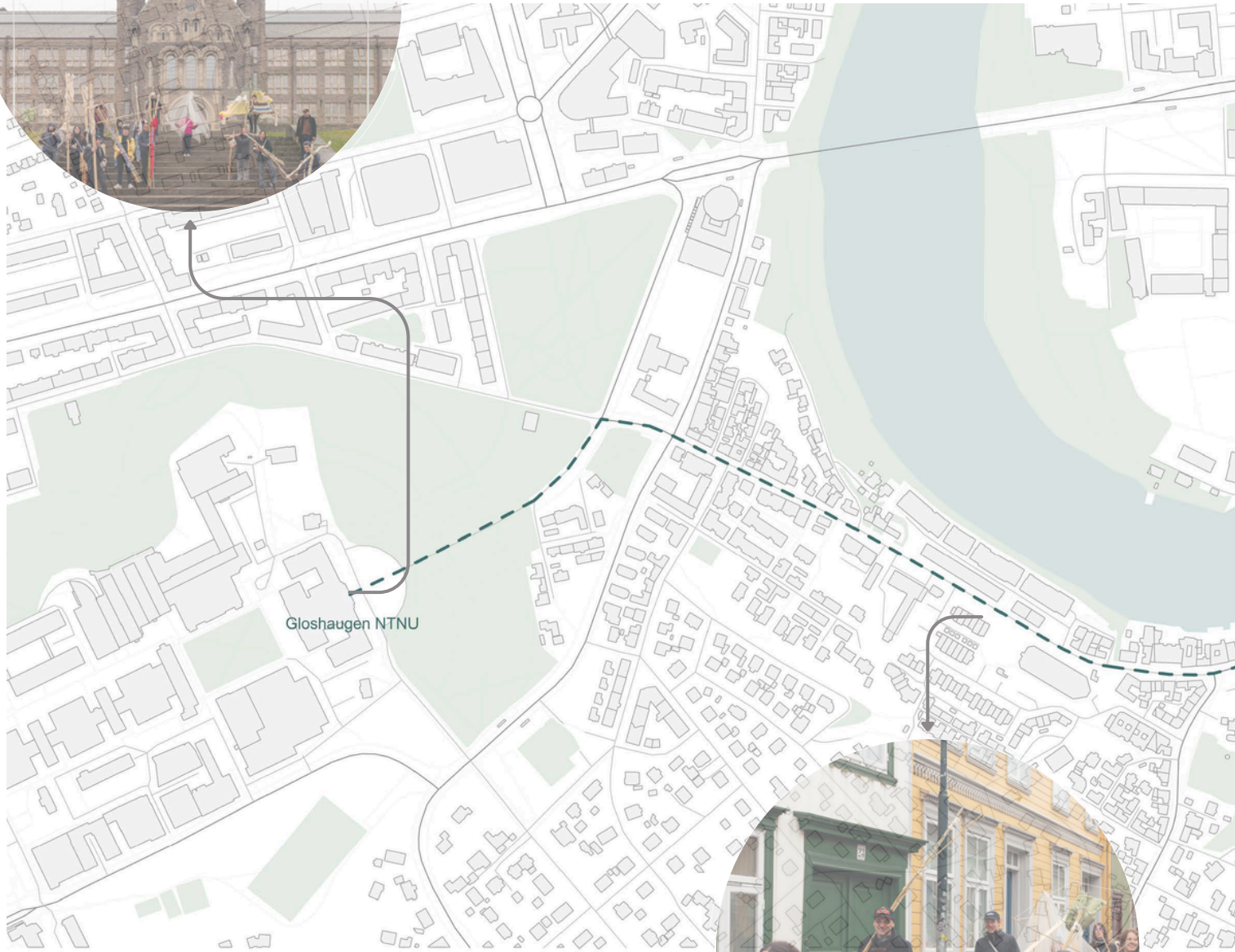


Carnival

Improvisation

Reflection

1. PERFORMANCE

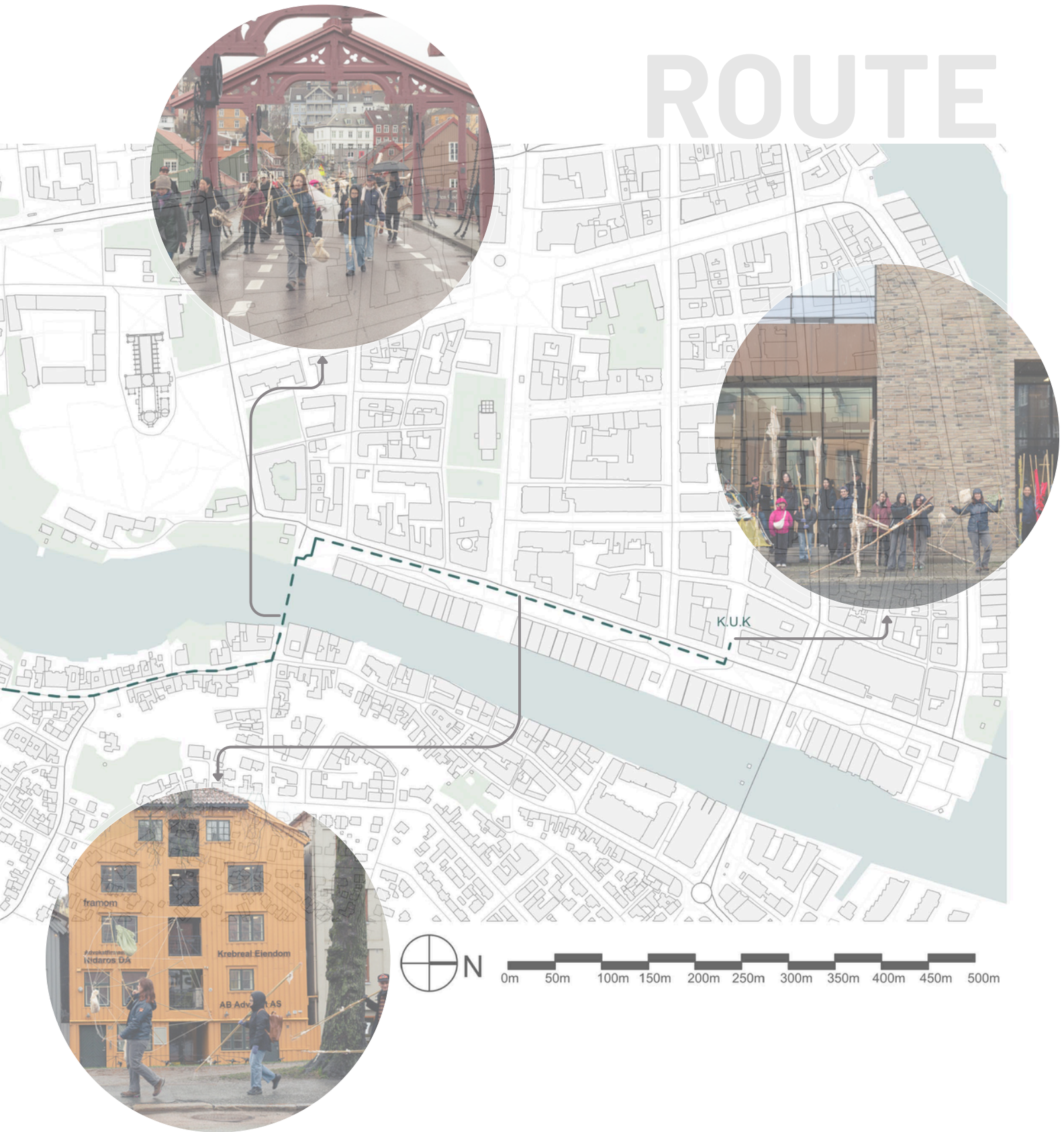


Glosaugen NTNU

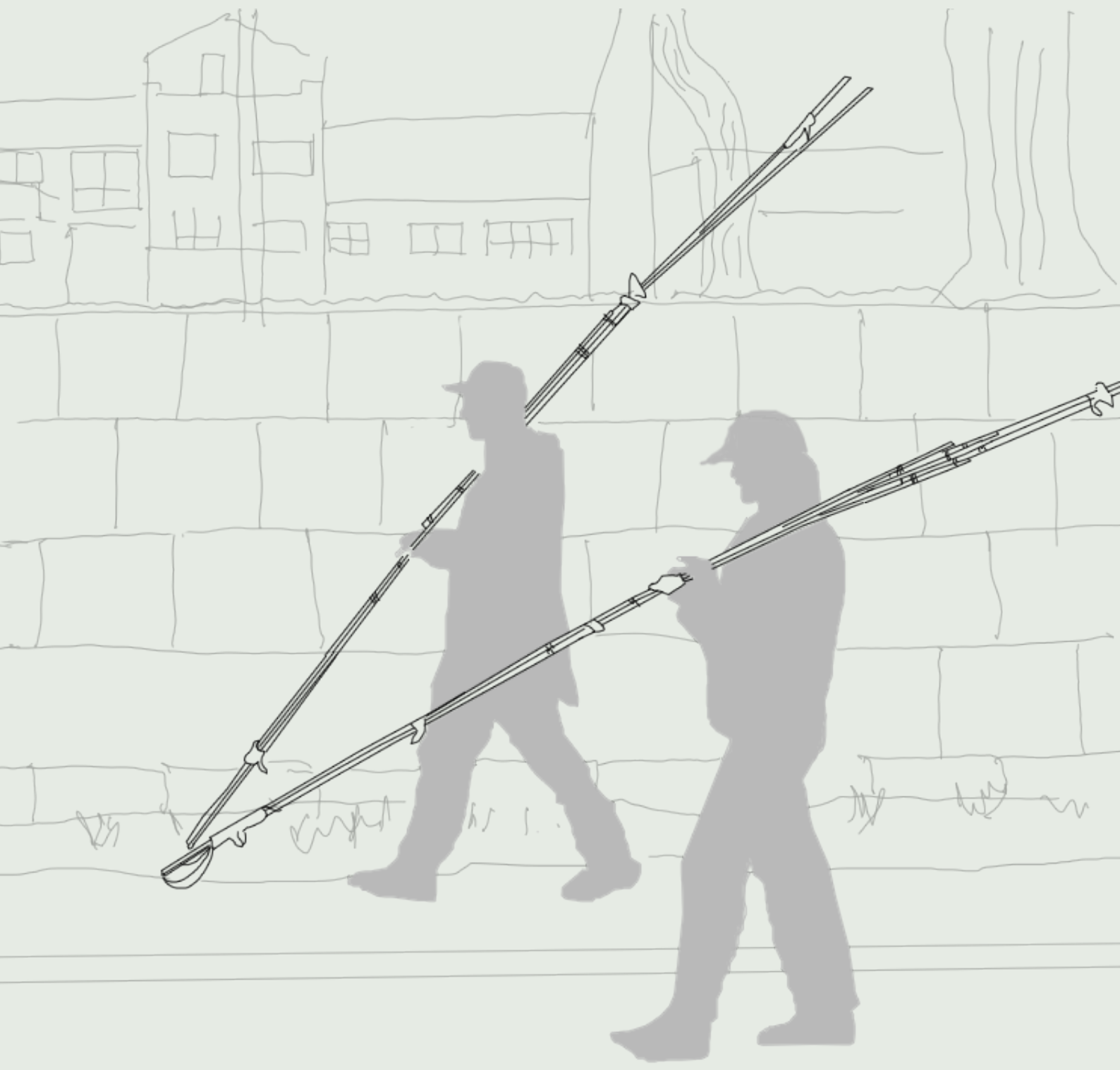


CARNIVAL

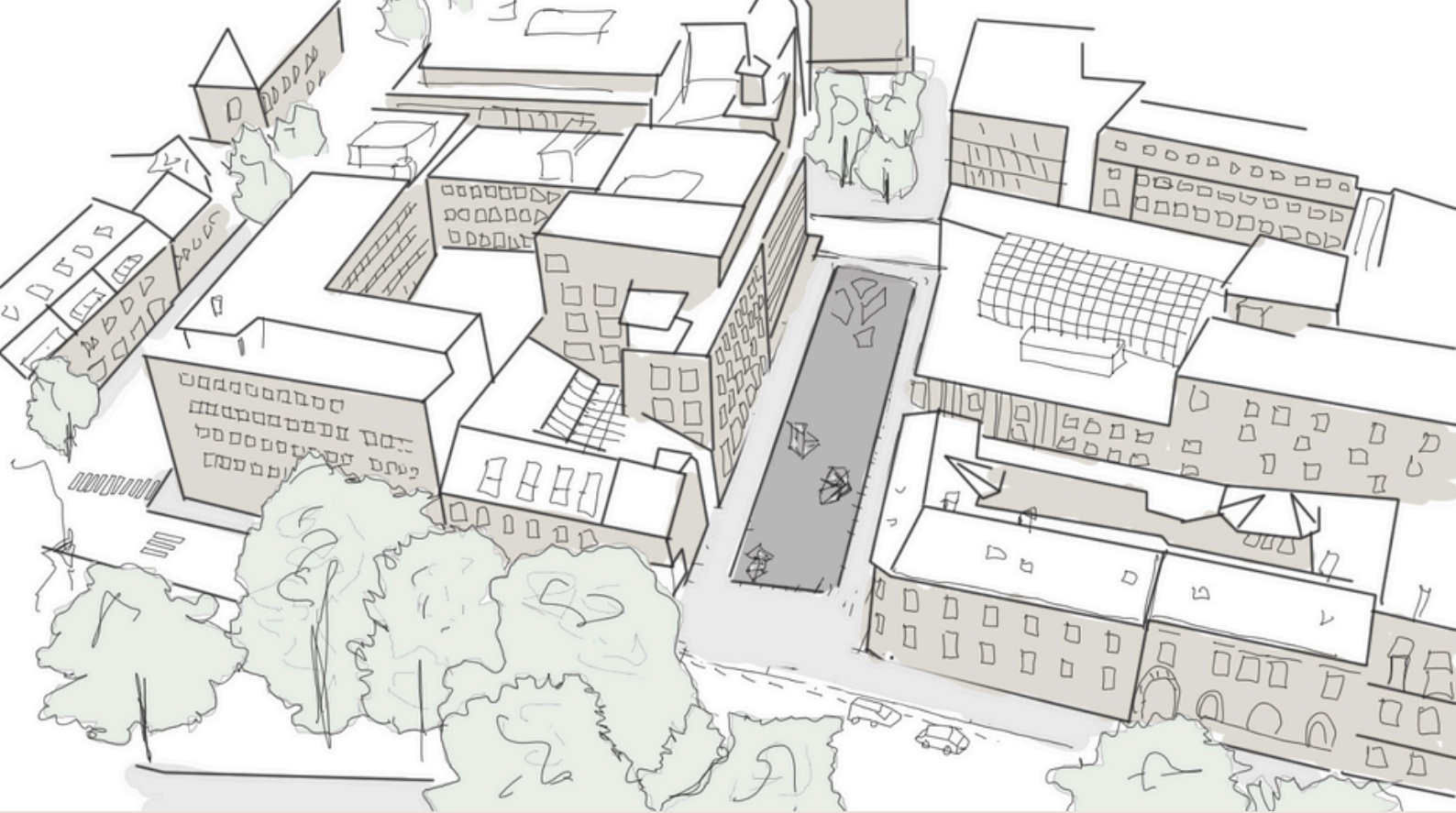
ROUTE



*Moving around in the city,
coloured spots in the gray weather
inviting others to join
taking space
redefining space
offering space
showing an alternative
on how public spaces
could be used*







performative spaces

I'm standing in the square in front of KUK, my eyes closed. The spring sun warms my face, I hear people walking past and how their steps slow down as they pass us. I wonder what they are thinking right now. The square is probably fuller than usual with us and our skirts, although there were even more people here on March 8. When the demonstration had ended, the rallies also talked about Else Laula Renberg, whose name and memory the square now carries. It's about to start. Or has it already started? When did it start then? When we started walking at the university with our bundled long bamboo sticks that we had sewn together from small bamboo? Was it later, when we used these sticks to temporarily redefine the space and its boundaries by making a barrier in the pedestrian zone while walking from the campus to the city? Or was it even before that, when we sewed the sticks together, tied the knots or found the sticks in the basement labyrinth? Maybe when we started weaving, went to the museum or visited the KUK for the first time. But maybe also when I became a feminist, whenever that was again. But that's probably the way it is with beginnings, they are often fluid.

I open my eyes and am ready to start. Or to continue? Anh, Brenda, Pablo and I untie the knots, the outermost layer that held our bamboo poles together while bringing them to the square. What remains are the knots that we have woven between the small sticks to connect the individual sticks into a larger community. And the knots that form the loops at the margins of the communities, with the help of which we want to connect the individual communities in order to create spaces. Almost like people who can also come together to form something new as a group. And when different groups meet, even more exchange can take place, even more different things can emerge.

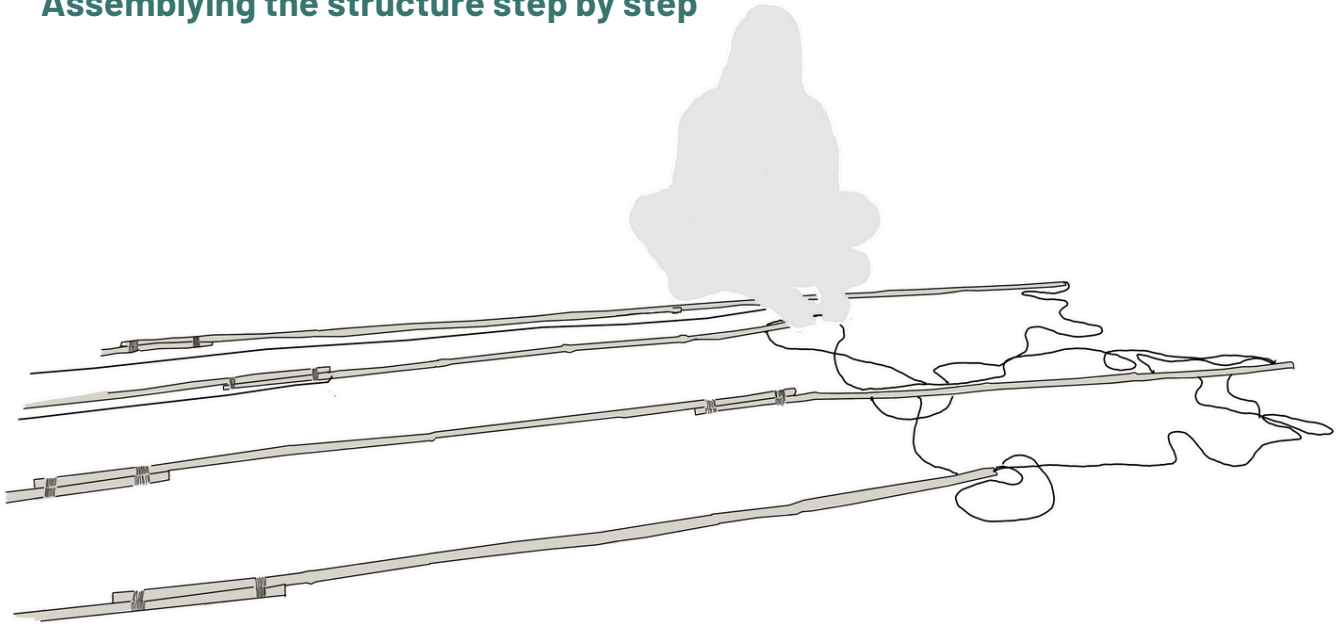
Together we build our first structures. Two of us hold the bamboo while the other two knot the connections and then adjust the tension in the strings. The bamboo bends under the tension and the structure becomes independent and can now stand on its own. I have to think of one text I read during the semester, about making hard things soft. By joining the thin sticks into one long one, the bamboo has become much more flexible. We attach another horizontal stick in the middle and connect it to the others at several points, repeating the knotting and creating the tension. Now we can carefully increase and decrease the tension, which stretches the bamboo more or less and thus creates different spaces.

When raising the second structure, we switch roles. Again, we hold, knot and adjust the tension. Now we connect the two and define the space between them. When we've finished assembling, I look up. I was so wrapped up in the process that I hardly noticed that more and more people had not only slowed down their steps but had also stopped to watch us and the other groups. Some people walk interested around the SKIRTs.

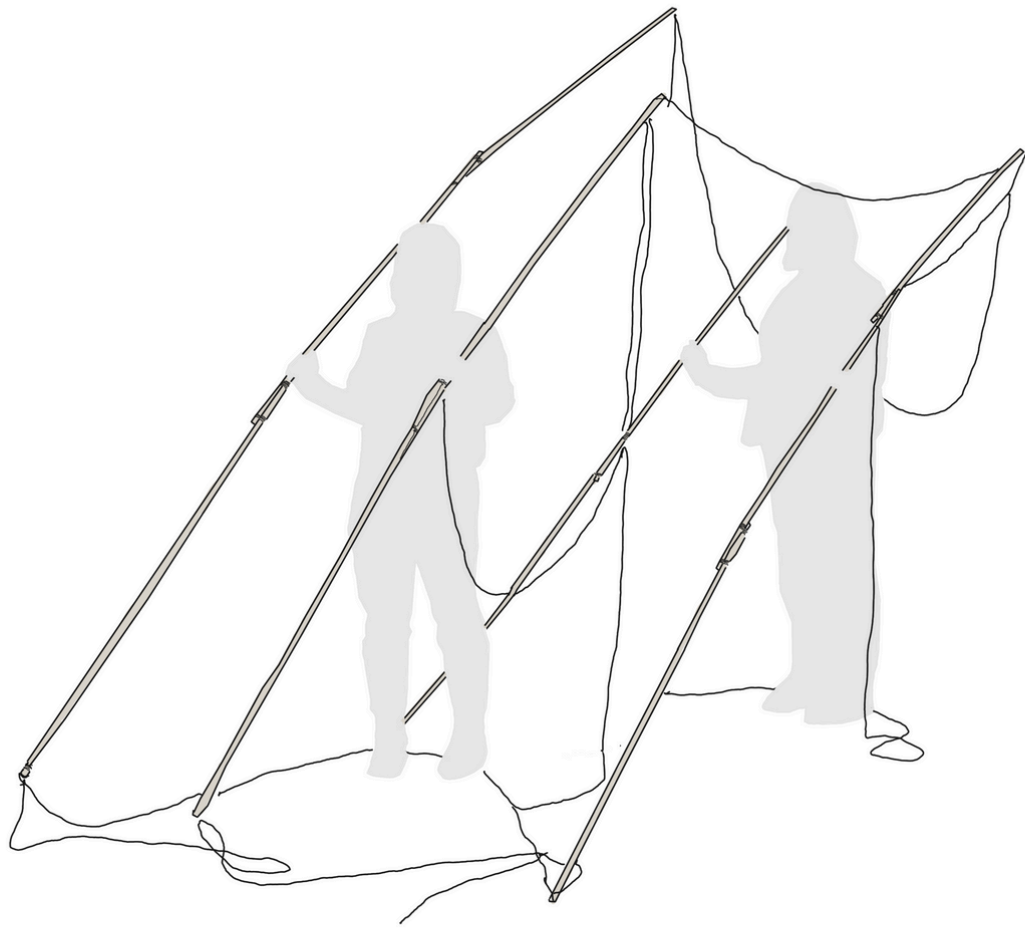
Our performance is not quite finished yet. We are showing how we can constantly rebuild and redefine the space by loosening or strengthening the connections between the bamboo. We invite those around us to help us. As the first people do this and help to shape, weave, tighten and knot in various groups, not only the boundaries of the newly defined spaces shift. It also shifts the boundaries of the "we" and the "others" into a larger, more expansive community as we begin to create together, talk to each other, explore new boundaries and discover new spaces.



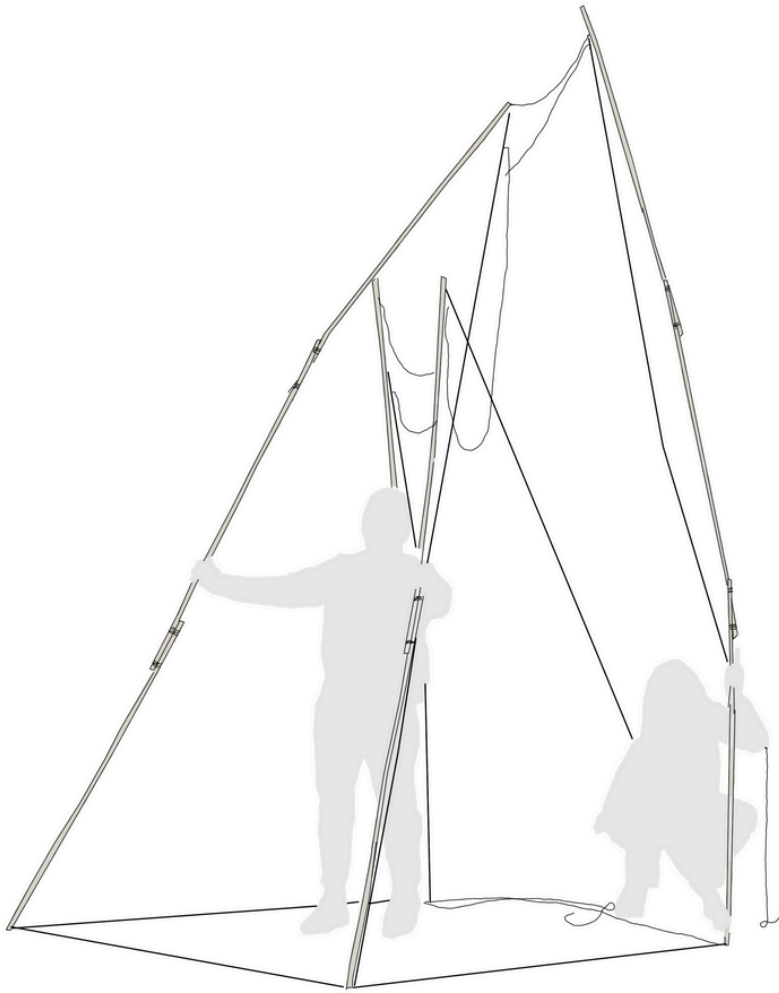
Assembling the structure step by step



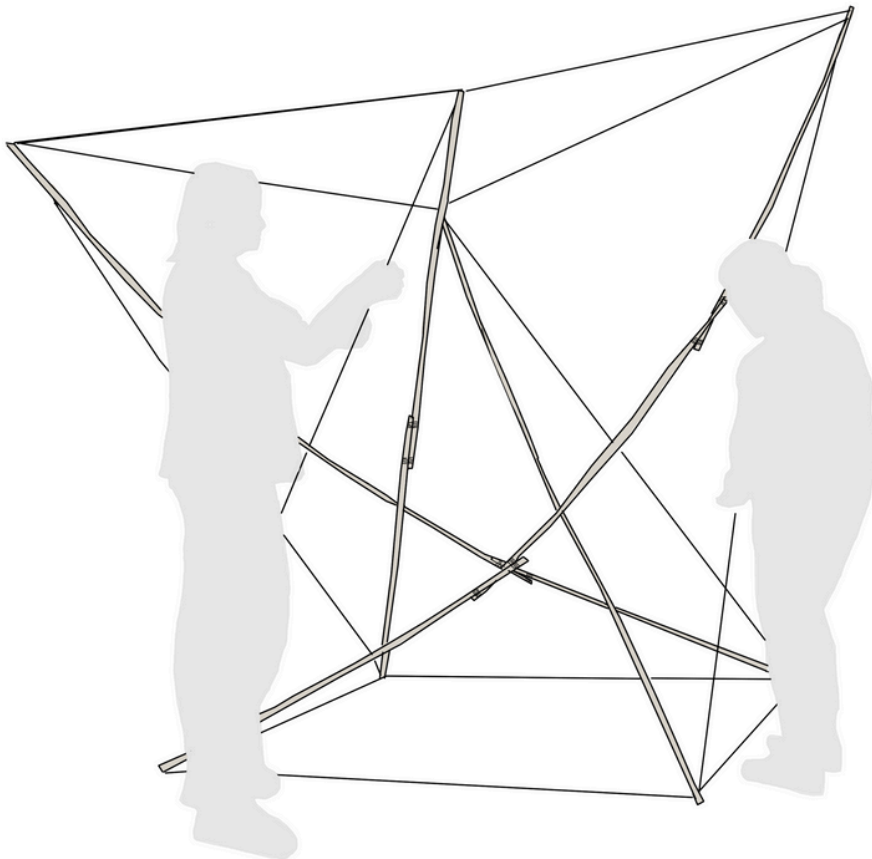
1. tying the adjustable knots to the bamboo sticks



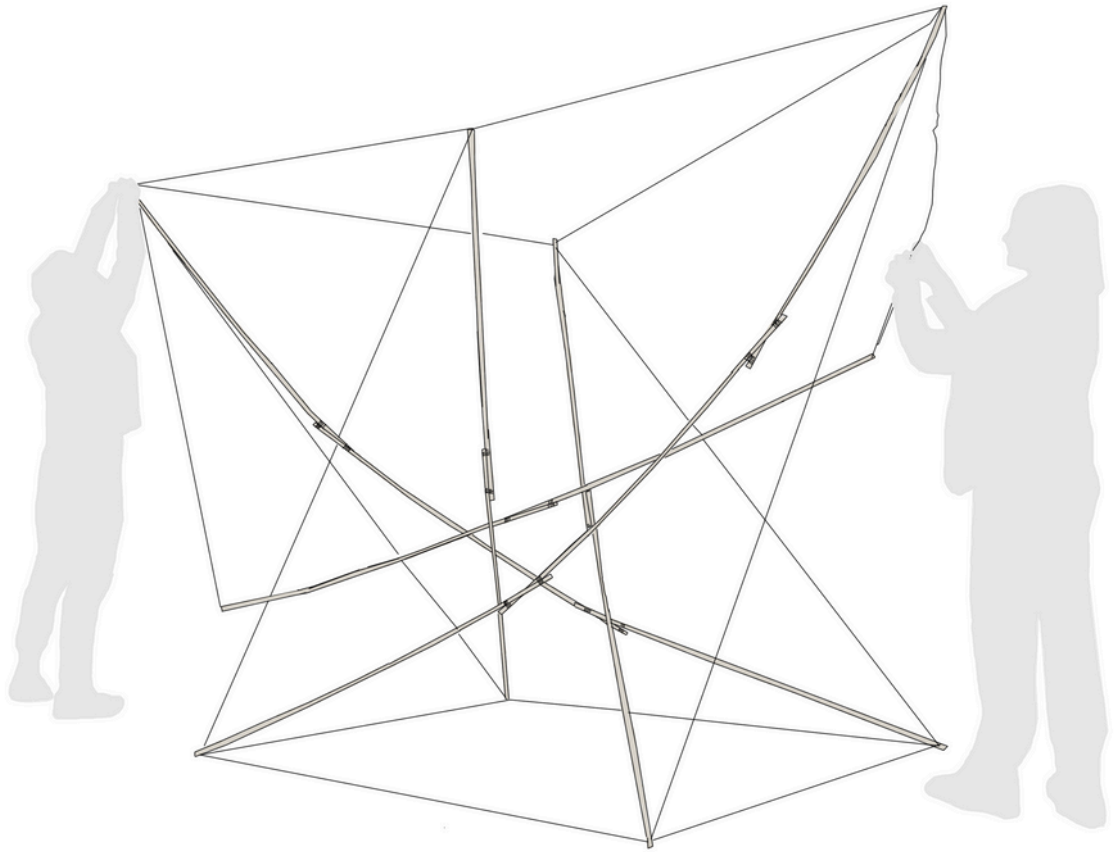
2. Holding the structure up in the air



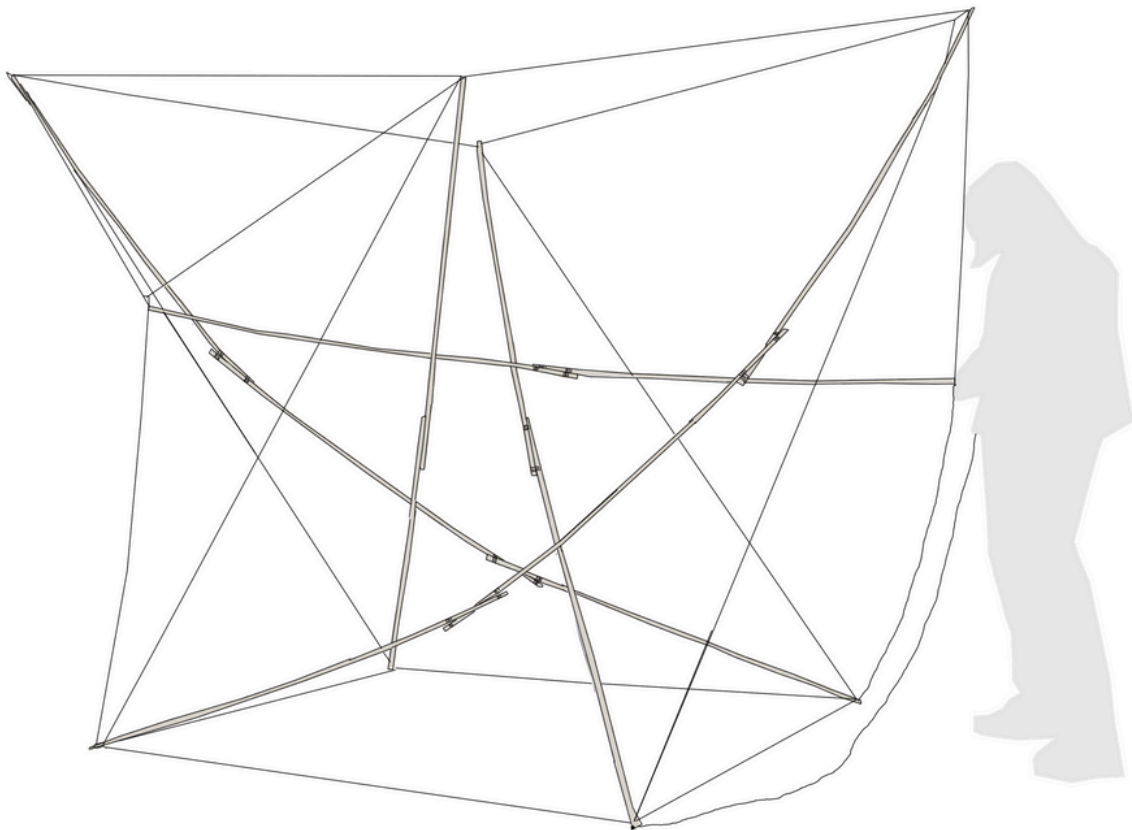
3. Tying the diagonal ropes to the bamboo sticks



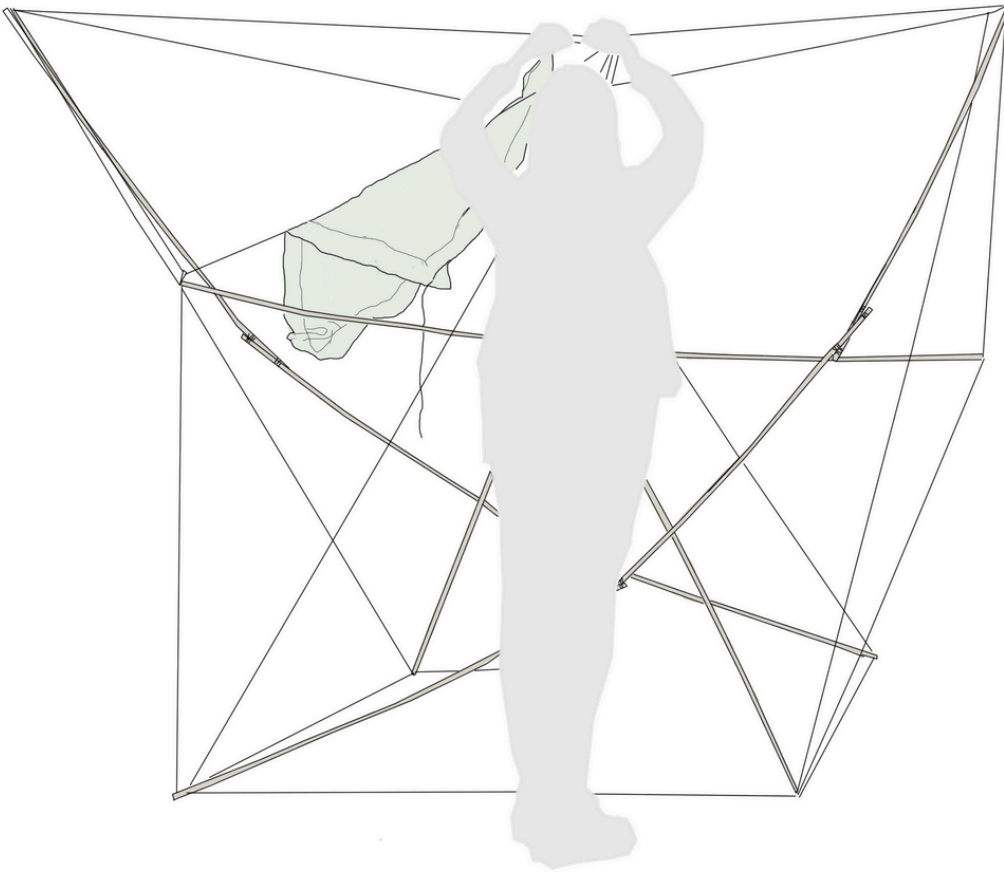
4. adjusting the rope with adjustable knots into the right length



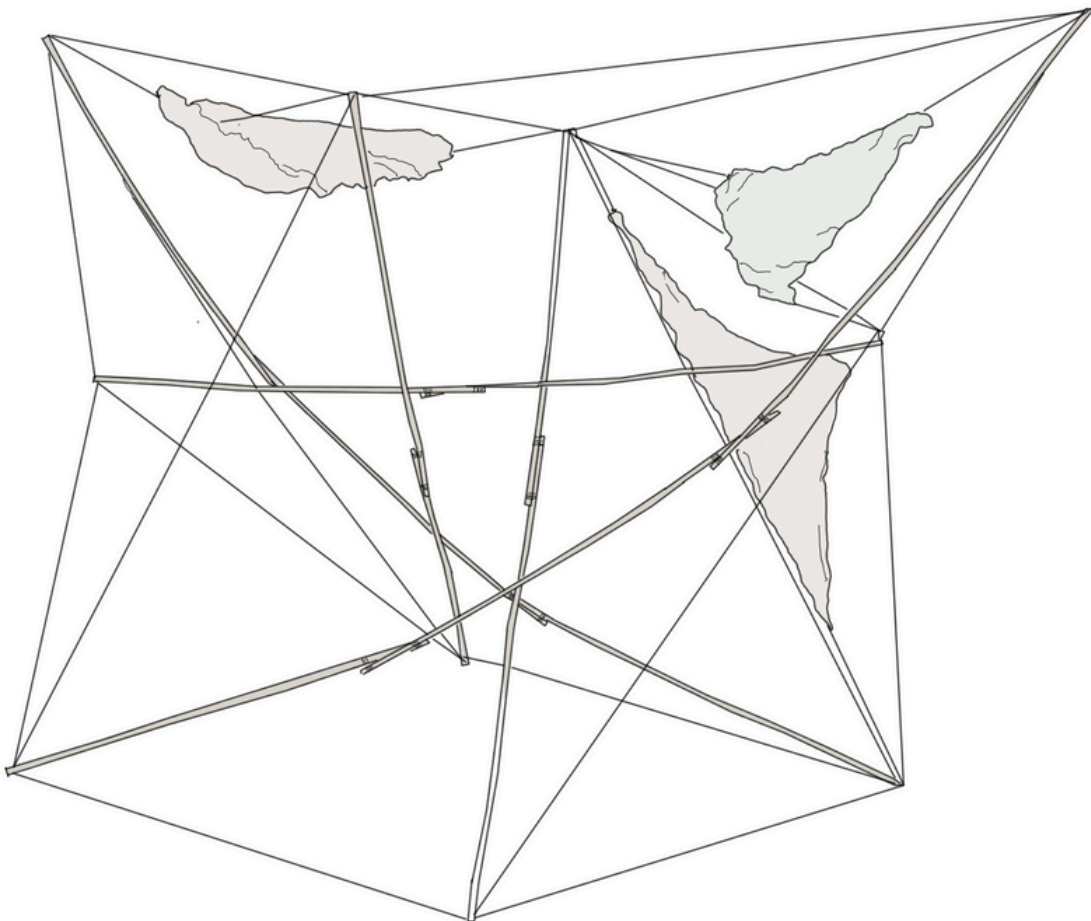
5. Adding a horizontal bamboo stick



6, Adding stings to the horizontal bamboo stick to create triangles



7. Tying the textile with stringts to the bamboo sticks



During the walk towards the K.U.L. museum everyone that walked passed us, looked at us to see what was going on. The funny thing was that we together with the whole group, we brought a lot of colour to the city, when there was a really grey, rainy sky. - B

I didn't pay much attention to the surroundings during our walk to the city. I think because the weather was really bad and most of the time I was just looking down at the road. I also felt a bit "weird" because I was walking with these long bamboo sticks, and it made me a bit self conscious. - A

It's so true, what you are writing, Brenda. We were a vibrant carnival bringing colour in our lives and hopefully in the lives of others as well, on that rainy greyish day. We offered opportunities of different ways on how people could start using public spaces like streets. Maybe they were curious what we were about to do, and as far as I remember a few of the people passing by asked us what we were doing. I remember a person on Else Laula Renberg plass who stopped for asking us what we were doing. She told us that she was happy seeing us using the space and bringing colour and life to it. - L

While practicing our performance we never had the same weather conditions as during the real performance. The strong wind really had an effect on the structure, and especially when adding the textile; the structure began to move a lot. - B

The weather definitely made it more difficult for us. It made the structures heavier because the textiles got soaked, so they were not standing as well as I had hoped. Also, it made it more difficult to see because the rain kept splashing on my face, and it was so cold that I couldn't feel my hands. It was disappointed since I could be more present during the performance if the weather was nicer. - A

Yes, the weather made it difficult for us. The textile was heavier than we were used to and we had to use more tension than usual, what also led to the cracks in the bamboo sticks. But I really can take some positive aspects out of the weather, that turned into a designer or a dancing partner for our structure and for us as it directed our ways over the space and made us moving around even more. - L

At first I thought it was a bad thing that the structure collapsed and fell to the ground because of the wind. But afterwards I realised that it made the performance thrilling because of the audience that was really watching when it happened. Same for when the bamboo stick broke, but we quickly could fix that, using the textile piece we used for the transportation. - B

I watched it fell down and in my head it was like falling in slow motion. At the time I was working on another structure so I couldn't fix it right away. I was thinking I would come to it as soon as I was done with this one, and the falling structure was in my mind the whole time, which made me a bit stressed out. I was wondering what the audience was thinking when they saw it happened. Afterward, I remembered that the falling "incident" is what we already discussed before, so it's not considered a failure, it's a part of our performance. - A

Like Brenda and Anh I was as well working with another structure. When realizing it my first reaction was more an "oh no...". But while Brenda and Anh were staying at the structure we were working with at that time, Pablo and I walked back for fixing the structure. I felt like a mother caring for their children, everyone needed our attention. I did not really think that much about it during the performance but when we talked about it later, we realized that it was actually really interesting and showed even better how our project is supposed to be. We used leftover textiles for fixing the cracked sticks showing possibilities of how to deal with cracks. We repaired it instead of replacing it and the textile even added something beautiful. Another interesting thing to see was the weather as a dancing partner for our structure. And it brought the element of improvisation in our performance. Unexpected situations offer the space for creativity and opportunities for a change. - L

I had fun adjusting the structure and asking the audience to interact during the performance and let them decide where to put the textile onto the structure, because that added another perspective to the SKIRT. - B

The audience was curious about our structures, which is a good thing. At one point there was this girl who came to us and asked to put on the textile on the structure and asked questions about how it works. It made me feel relieved to be honest, because I was scared that nobody was going to interact with us. - A

I felt like it was so nice that people not just passed by but also started exploring all of our skirts. It breathed life into the place in front of KUK. When people we didn't know before started interacting with us and our structures I was really happy because this has been one intension, to bring people together and offer a space for communication. - L



4. AFTERLIFE



1. STREET INTERACTION



The Skirt unfolds into the urban rhythm—woven forms stretch across pavement cracks, inviting passersby to linger. Tension holds the bamboo limbs mid-air while textiles sway in the breeze. People interact, not just with the structure, but with each other, pausing under its shade, touching its weave, and contributing new threads. The street becomes a loom; the public, its weavers.



1. GREEN HOUSE



Once the event ends, the Skirt sheds its urban shell and transforms. Bamboo poles become trellises; woven textiles filter light in a greenhouse or drape across garden beds to protect seedlings. Nothing is discarded—each knot untied is a gesture of continuity. Disassembly is not an end, but a planting.



1. Bigger Scale: Park Structures / Public Space



Scaled up, the Skirt becomes a soft pavilion. Loomed canopies stretch between trees, balancing on tension rather than weight. It no longer just hosts a performance—it becomes the performance: changing shape with the wind, framing open-air classrooms, shaded resting spots, or interactive art spaces. A structure that listens to its site and responds.



When expanding our SKIRT I would love to next time work on an even bigger scale, with the bigger bamboo sticks. When using bigger materials you can create even bigger spaces and give the space more functions. - B

If there is one thing I would do different next time, I would say combining bamboos together to make even bigger structures. So similar to what Brenda said, but the difference is that I would want to continue to use smaller bamboos, but find a way to bind them together more securely. That way, we can explore a different scale, since our current structures were a bit drowned by the site in my opinion. - A

That would be really interesting, to try out different scales. I would love to see what you are suggesting, Anh. Connecting even more of the small bamboo sticks in order to have an even more bendable structure, making hard things soft.

I think it would be interesting for going for a smaller scale as well. We developed new skills so now I've the feeling that we could be able doing it in smaller scale. You once suggested hand puppets, Anh and I would really enjoy seeing that.

I have the feeling that we developed not only a structure but more of a concept on how we see future feminist spaces. It would be really nice to explore our concept, the thought behind it in very different kinds of spaces and be aware about how this spaces are organized. - L

Going to the basement and looking for left-over materials to use, it gave a good perspective on how much potential a lot of left-over materials have. When you have a limit of what you can use, you get really creative in thinking how to work with it. Because the design is really temporarily, only for an hour of the art performance, we also really tried not to edit the material too much, to give it an afterlife after the performance. Our SKIRT is easily demountable because we used textiles for everything. The materials can be now used for something else again when deconstructing. - B

I would say having to think outside of the box. It was something different from what we were used to. We had to think of materials that were available, but also easy for us to build. Also, it's a temporary project, so we need something that is small and light enough to be carried to site, and can be easily dismantled afterward. All of that combined I think is what made it difficult. But ever since we found bamboos, it was a changing point for us, because it's light, easy to carry, and has a certain flexibility to it. The question remained was how to make them stand, and that was when the strings came in handy. - A

You have some good points there Brenda and Anh. Having some limitations by the used material opens up the space for creativity and for developing new solutions and details. It shows how care is needed for the process as you have to sort the material. By using the materials we used, that were already used by others, too, we actively gave value to them, instead of replacing them. We need to carefully think about how we use material in order to care for our environment, for us and for others.

Another interesting aspect of the circularity is the sharing of knowledge. We are designing a simple system that could easily be rebuilt by others, sharing our experiences and offering a space for an exchange of thoughts, again and again.

It also raises the question about the role of the architect in the future. We created a system that enables people to build their own structure so our role was more that we created an idea and are questioning how spaces are used so far while we try offering new possibilities. - L

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