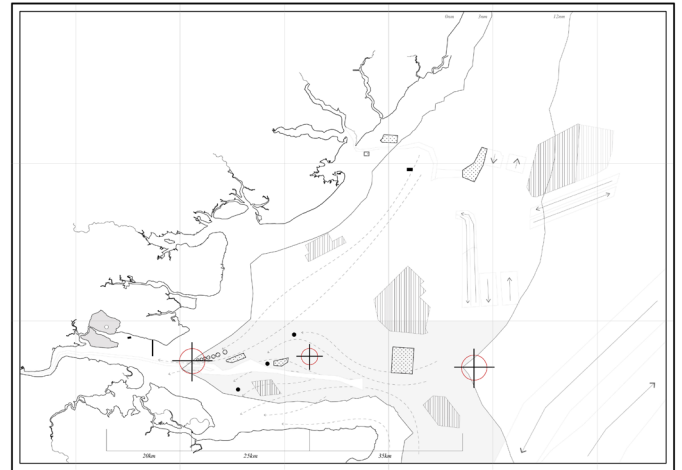
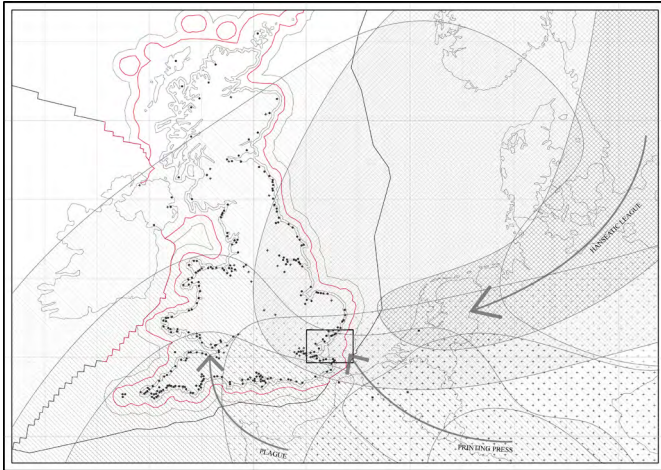


*Final Reflection*

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## 01. Research & Design

The research aspect of my project began with a broad investigation of flows and exchanges across the North Sea, identifying the historical position of the UK in relation to its surroundings. Based on this research I concluded that throughout history the two have been intrinsically linked, with the British Isles considered to be an appendage of the European continent. The strategy of designing a posthouse in the sea stems directly from the precedent I uncovered of the Romans doing the same while consolidating Britannia into their Empire. Following on from this, I mapped the specific conditions of the Thames Estuary to identify sites for my series of interventions. I would argue that the process of site selection is part of the design process because of its intentional nature driven by a specific agenda, and here too then the research feeds clearly into this aspect of design.

This relationship became much less straightforward, however, when it came to the development of a specific architectural proposal. It became more important to develop a cohesive narrative to bridge the two, allowing me to tie together tangential threads of investigation into a spatial result. This specifically related to the introduction of waste recycling as a program for my project, which addresses my research questions in both a literal and metaphorical way. I have also realized that the process is not a linear one where the end of research marks the departure point for design. Instead, as the design developed further, certain aspects such as the process of waste recycling had to be revisited and further strengthened with more information. Given the performative nature of my project where the building acts as a machine, the deconstruction and analysis of industrial processes was an important means of translating

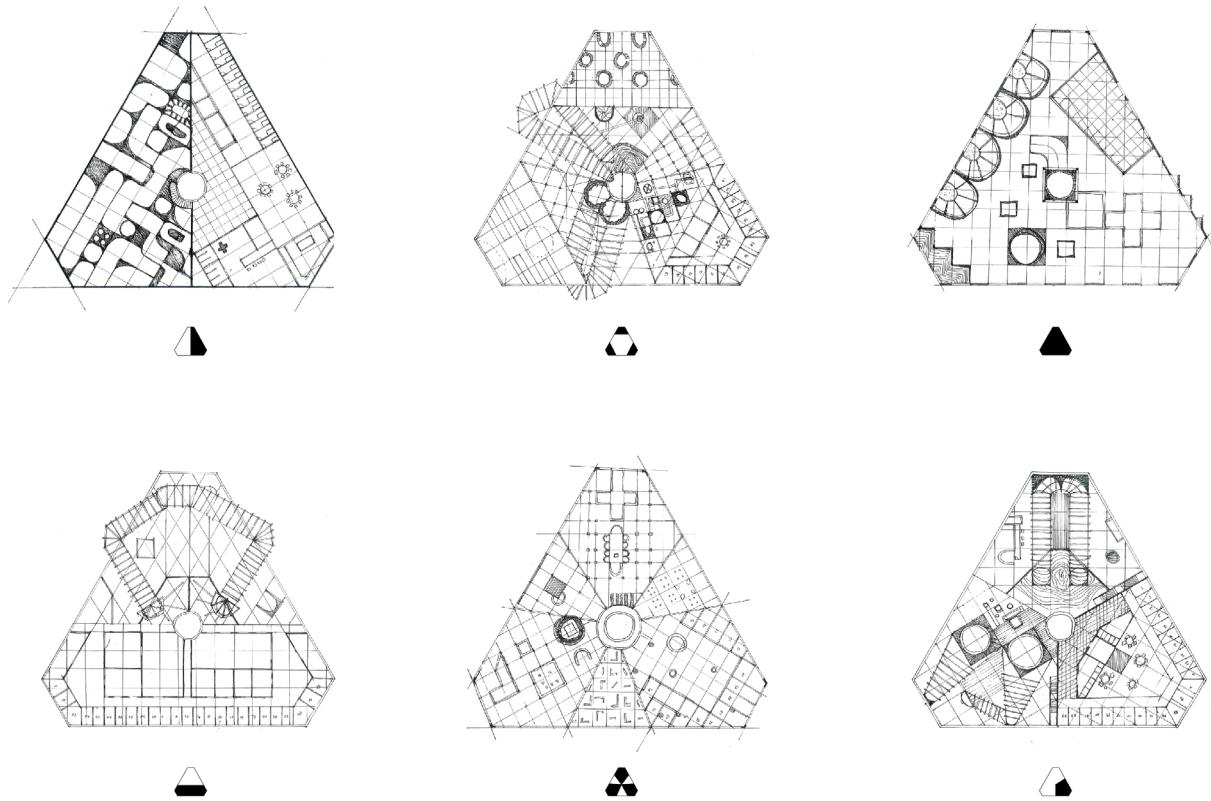
existing systems into an invented design. What was particularly challenging for me was striking a balance between being limited by what exists and conceiving a new hybrid typology. Widening my research allowed me to uncover other examples of how diverse functions can coexist within the same structure, such as in monasteries.

## 2. Graduation Topic & Studio Brief

The Delta Interventions studio this year focused on the North Sea as a 'landscape of coexistence'; investigating the tensions between land and sea that influence this territory. The sea as a territory remains the last frontier, with much of it still unmapped and unoccupied by humanity, our efforts largely thwarted by its impermanence and constant movement.

My project delves into this by exploring how the territorialisation of the sea can be achieved, and how this process would occur in relation to land-based ideas of control. It is important to note that the project is only able to function as it does precisely because it is located at sea within a specific zone beyond the territorial waters of the UK. Its lack of tethering means it is not subject to national jurisdiction, but no such juridical equivalent exists on land.

Furthermore, by proposing a machine which creates a floating island in the middle of the sea the project contests the North Sea's current role as a site of extraction. To further emphasize this point the new land will be built of recycled waste, highlighting the irony of using unwanted matter generated in a terrestrial context to create a productive landscape in the middle of the sea.



### 03. Methods

A number of research methods were employed during the course of my graduation project, varying according to the scale being tackled. When dealing with the North Sea in its entirety, mapping was my primary tool of investigation as it efficiently visualizes diverse types of information in a consistent format. In addition, the overlaying of these maps was a useful analytical exercise, revealing information that would not have been apparent had they remained as data sets. The availability of information was initially a limiting factor in this process but due to reading literature such as James Corner's *Agency of Mapping* I began to understand the power of the map as not just a research tool but also as a means of design. I came to realize that maps are not infallible representations as I had imagined, and the use of an educated guess to fill in gaps in knowledge does not automatically negate the accuracy of the entire result.

At the scale of the architectural project, the focus shifted from mapping to a more intuitive way of working. I found that remaining within the rational and precise realm of visualizing and analyzing my research limited my ability to create something new; therefore I experimented with a series of imagined hand-drawn sections. While not yet architectural these sketches led to a more exploratory design method that I was more satisfied with. Crucial in this process was the exposure to multiple reference projects which inspired me visually and helped me understand the extent of what my design could be, such as drawings by Jan Kaplicky and Peter Cook.

The idea of flows, which formed an essential part of my research mapping, also helped me to design at the architectural scale. The two major functions of my project consisted of a

machine which would recycle waste and spaces tucked within it which would host people. Finding a way to integrate the two spatially required testing out in sketch plans as there was a need to balance the design objective of connecting them with safety and liveability aspects. Breaking down both programs into a series of actions or flows of movement allowed me to develop a design which combined the two. By arranging the machine spaces in a vertical sequence as necessitated by their gravitational functions, the core of the building came to be formed. In turn, the arrangement of inhabitable spaces were then organized in anticipation of what someone seeking shelter would need - beginning with first aid, followed by other services such as provision of food and communication, and ending with a place to sleep. By separating these functions to the corners of the triangular deck, the circulation between spaces is emphasized as a means of ritualizing the process - creating a moment of stability amidst the unpredictability of the open seas.



#### 04. Wider Implications

Within the larger context of the environment and the growing importance of ideas like the circular economy, the recycling of waste to create something new directly relates the project to a lot of research being carried out globally regarding the use of secondary resources. The re-use of bottom ash, for example, is a crucial issue for densely urbanized settlements as even when they incinerate their trash the remnants need to be disposed of. By placing my project afloat at sea there is an instant comparison with a similar existing typology - oil rigs. This was a valuable counterpoint in the design process as the intentions of my project run directly in opposition to them and therefore I found it important that my architectural decisions reflected this.

Regarding the question of wider societal relevance, increased globalization has made the movement of people a way of life; however, this process is easier for some more than others. Especially as climate change intensifies and makes more people vulnerable, the issue of how people exercise their freedom of movement and how they are received is one of increasing importance.

Lastly, in terms of my own professional development as a designer, creating a cohesive story out of the many layers of the project has been a new challenge for me. While initially the addition of the waste-recycling aspect seemed a dilution of my core concept regarding the movement of people, I have come to appreciate the complexity and different levels of metaphor that this adds to the project. Despite the learning curve, this is a useful skill to have in order to communicate complex ideas in a professional setting.

#### 05. Ethical Issues

Ethical issues I have encountered in the process of research have related to the status of migrants. One aim of the studio as a whole was to investigate the contested nature of the sea and the question of how to define a territory. Within this context, my project touches on how humans specifically access the various layers of the North Sea, both physical and invented. Given the recent exodus of people from Northern Africa across the Mediterranean Sea into Europe, this is a contentious topic with no clear or easy solution. A key aim of the project is to highlight the plight of those in transit with limited access to territory, and the ease with which they are forgotten because they are quite literally 'out of sight, out of mind.' The use of architecture to document their existence and territorialise their experience is an important idea underpinning the project. The project is by no means a proposition which will solve the problem, rather it capitalizes on the physical presence that a building provides to provide a gesture of stability to those with none.