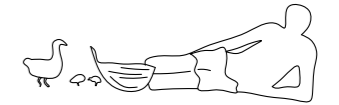


EROSION FOR BETTERMENT - SECTION

*Designing with erosion to improve well-being
| a case study of the Volta Delta, Ghana*

by Eva Ventura



I start my day early as the sunlight coming through the woven walls and roofs hits my face. For breakfast I collect some eggs around the house from the chicken that wonder around our community and flutter when I approach them.

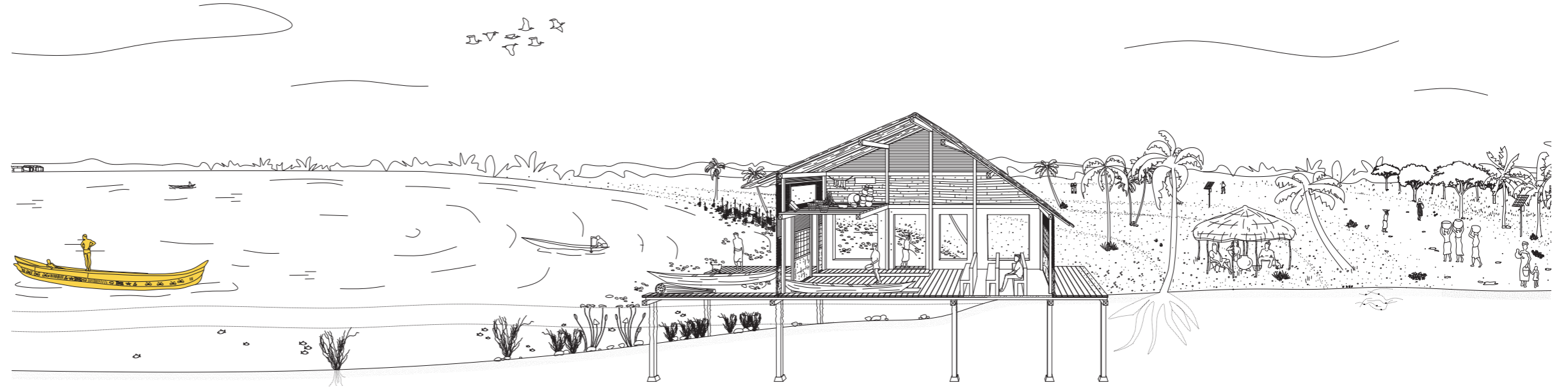
I cook the eggs and some beans in red sauce in a cast iron cauldron on an asokpo with coles, and eat them with my family in our courtyard.



My family consists out of my mom and dad, my two little brothers and one sister, my grandpa who is the family head, my grandma, my uncle from my dad's side and his wife and my two cousins. We all live together in one compound.

After breakfast, my brother Kojo which means he is born on a Monday, goes out fishing with my dad. In our community there are clear roles for men and for women. As we are a fishing community, the men go out fishing and the women stay at home to cook and clean and the bring

our fish to the market to sell them. Fishing is a very important part of our lives. Before my grandparents and before their grandparents many generations on, my family was already fishing. The children learn the trade from the elders and they teach it to their children. Fishing is part of us. I know most people think fish smells bad, but for me it smells like home.

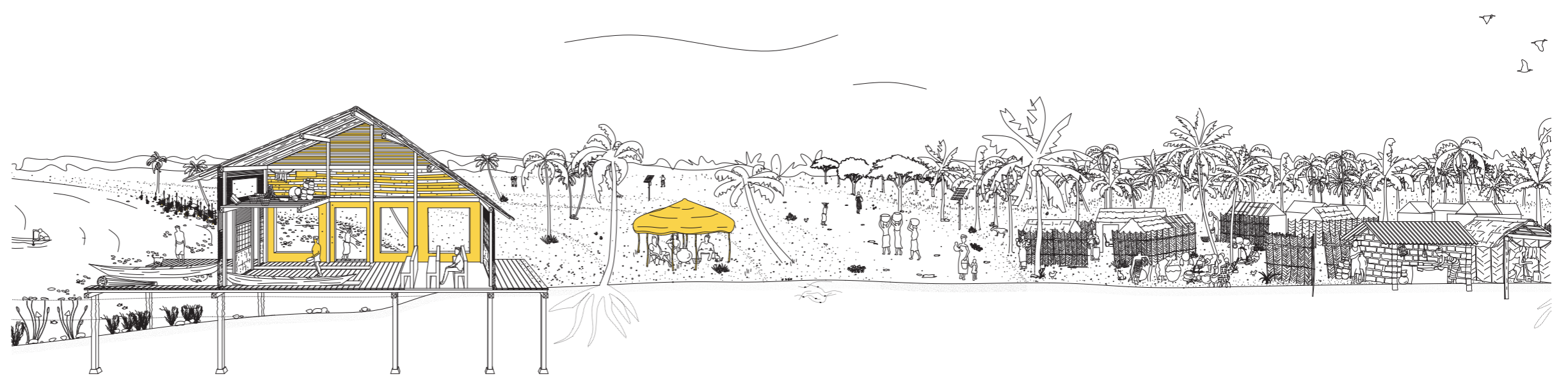


We live with 5 families in our community and we own 7 fishing boats. The boats are docked to our public boat house. They even come inside the house! This is nice because it makes me feel like the boats are part of us, part of our family.

I walk with my dad and brother to the water and help them carry some of the nets down the stairs of our communal storage room. Today the water is coming almost all the way to the edge of the pier so it's really easy to get on the boats. Through the big openings of the boathouse I watch the men of our community

disappear on the horizon of our inlet towards the bigger waters.

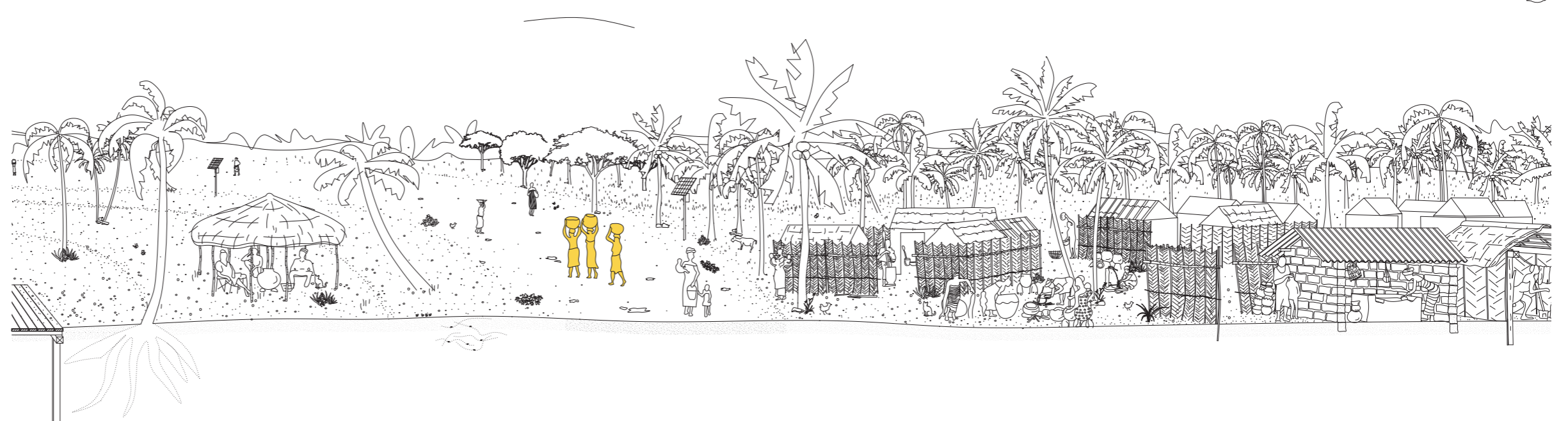
On my way back to the houses I greet my grandpa who is resting under the pavilion that our family made for them on the beach. Hey Dodzi, stop that! My cousin likes teasing the goats, but he is not allowed, so I pick him up and carry him back to his mom.



His mom and my mom are preparing the baskets to carry the fish we dried in the sun yesterday, to the market.

When they are ready, the older women walk to the market, I carry my youngest brother on my back and my aunt is carrying my cousin. On our heads, we carry the baskets full of tiny fish. The route we take to the market is beautiful and different every day. Sometimes the water comes close to us and sometimes it is far away and all the birds come to the marshes and a whole new world is revealed where the water was.

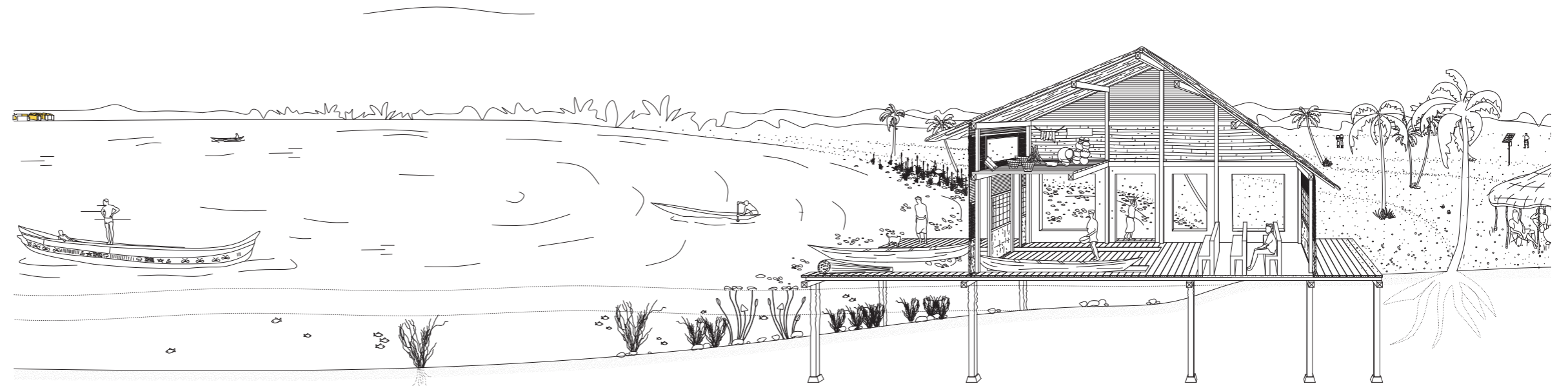
As we walk along the red sandy road, we pass some other communities. I always like to talk to the community specialized in aquaculture. They don't just catch the fish, they grow them and then sell them. Today they are telling me that they use the fact that the water comes close and goes away to fill their ponds with new water and to let the fish swim into their circled nets, which I think is really smart.



At the market, we sell most of our fish. Our spot is in right at the street across from a concrete building with holy Adinkra symbols on it. The tourists that stay across from our community on the beach always like to try the traditional food. With the money we earned we buy some wood that we can use to smoke the tilapia fish. This is special mangrove wood because that is what makes the fish taste and smells so delicious. We buy the wood from big rolls stacked on the pier. This pier is very popular to come to as the stream of the bigger water towards the market pushes

the boats in the right direction. This way the men on the boats don't have to use a lot of gas and muscle.

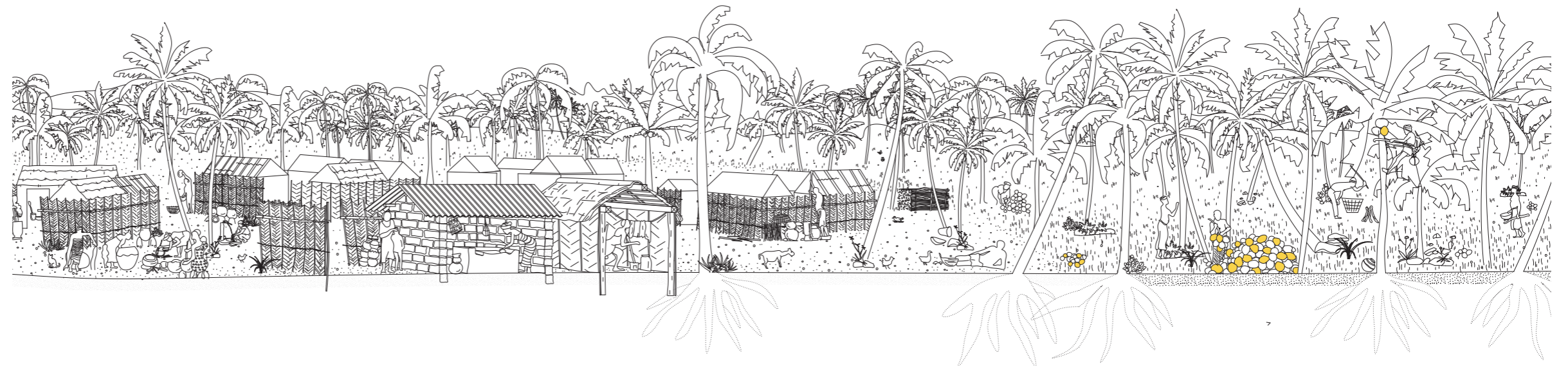
It is nice to see how all the different communities come together here. Unlike other areas, our bay provides equal opportunities for all types of livelihoods. The tomato farmers have their place just as much as the mango growers do! Even tourists have a place in our society. The tourists come to get a taste of our traditional life and to see the dynamics of our landscape.



Walking along the path home, I can feel the wind coming in, which means the water is coming closer. The sea is such a powerful thing and I like how it is helping us live our lives.

When I get back I go get some coconuts from behind our houses. Our community is one of the first ones to try a new thing where we can do two trades. Our chief introduced this when we had a meeting in the boathouse to talk about the future. This way, when the fishing yield is low, we still have the coconuts to provide for us. Some members of our village were a little scared to

try something new, but I was really happy. Not just because I LOVE coconuts but also because it feels safer. In the past when the fishing yield was low, we couldn't buy any food or clothing which was really hard.



But today is not a day to feel sad because we are celebrating. Every year we celebrate the disappearance of the sand that used to be where the water is now. In the room I share with my siblings I change into my most colorful dress that I wrap around my body.

For the celebration, first we gather in our boathouse. The chief and queen mother have a chance to say something and thank God. From the inside of our boathouse I look out to the water and see the lights of the other communities at it's contours. Is someone surfing in the dark? That is

dangerous, must be a tourist. The water is making relaxing sounds as it sputters in between the reeds and leaves of the water plants.

When we are done praying, we gather in the court and dance to music. After all our energy is washed away with the sea, I go to bed and stare at our woven ceiling. I can hear the sounds of fulfillment in our families breaths as they fall asleep. We are grateful for our lives, our land and our future.

