

[RIVER ISLAND ECOLOGIES]

Wetlands, fishing, seasonal flooding, island ecology, livelihoods, cultural landscapes, riverine communities.

MArch Thesis

Pernel Nsanga Kivouila

Project description

River Island Ecologies is a climate-responsive architectural proposal located on Mbamu Island in the Republic of Congo. The project explores how architecture can strengthen the relationship between water, community, and landscape while responding to the environmental challenges of seasonal flooding along the Congo River.

Inspired by local fishing traditions, Kongo cosmology, and the everyday life of riverine communities, the proposal combines a floating fishermen's market, lightweight public pavilions, and elevated residential blocks to create an adaptive and community-focused river settlement.

The floating market supports local trade, fish processing, and social interaction through modular buoyant platforms that rise and fall with changing water levels. The fishermen's tripod pavilion reinterprets traditional Congolese fishing structures as shaded public gathering spaces connected to the waterfront. Inland residential blocks positioned on higher ground provide safe and climate-responsive living environments organised around shared courtyards and communal spaces.

The project uses passive environmental strategies including natural ventilation, daylighting, deep roof overhangs, and locally sourced materials such as timber and compressed earth blocks to reduce environmental impact and improve thermal comfort.

Rather than resisting flooding, the proposal embraces seasonal change and transforms water into a catalyst for collective life, resilience, ecological awareness, and cultural identity.

