

VANUA

Building Community with Water & Energy

A Modern-day Well & Watering Hole

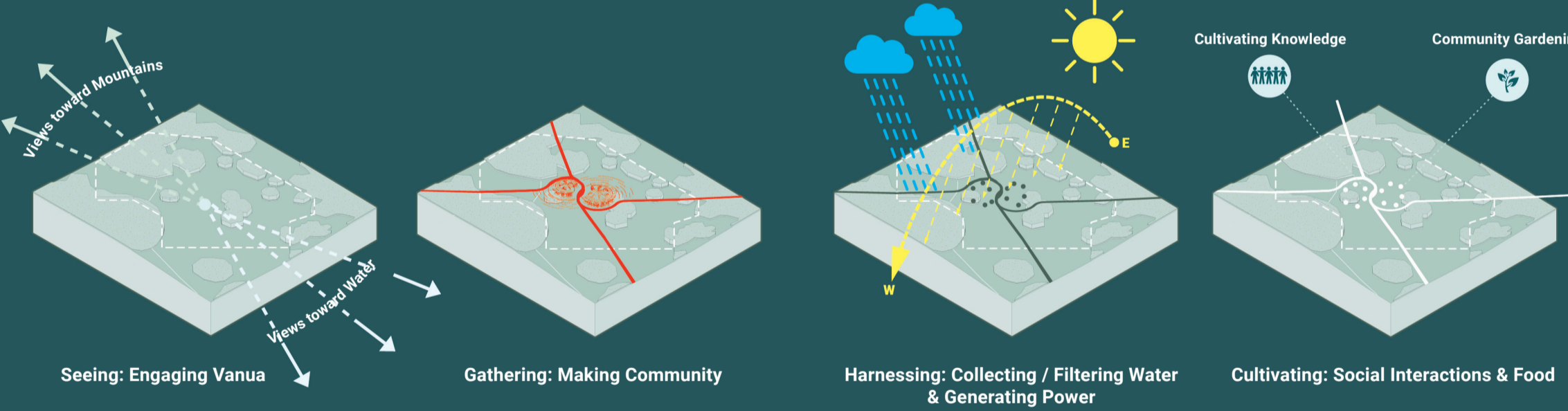
Vanua Sun-Well draws inspiration from the enduring human instinct to gather around essential natural resources—places where community, identity, and life intersect. Historically, the “watering hole” or “well” was more than just a source of water. It was a place of gathering, exchange, and connection—whether among animals in the wild or humans drawing life from the earth. Over time, these terms evolved to describe informal hubs of social interaction, where people came together for reasons both practical and communal.

Our proposal reimagines this timeless concept for the village of Marou in Fiji and capitalizes on its potential for more performative life-essential functions. *Vanua Sun-Well* becomes a modern-day “watering hole” layered with today’s technologies: a solar energy-harvesting, water-collecting, and water-purifying structure that not only integrates new performative functions but also becomes a symbolic and artistic form for villagers. It is designed as a social and educational catalyst, creating a flexible space where community interaction, learning, productivity, and sustainability symbiotically co-exist and are woven together. At its heart, the project aspires to become *vanua*—not just a structure, but a “home,” and “land,” embedded in the *Taukei* community.

Vanua: Circular Community Nodes

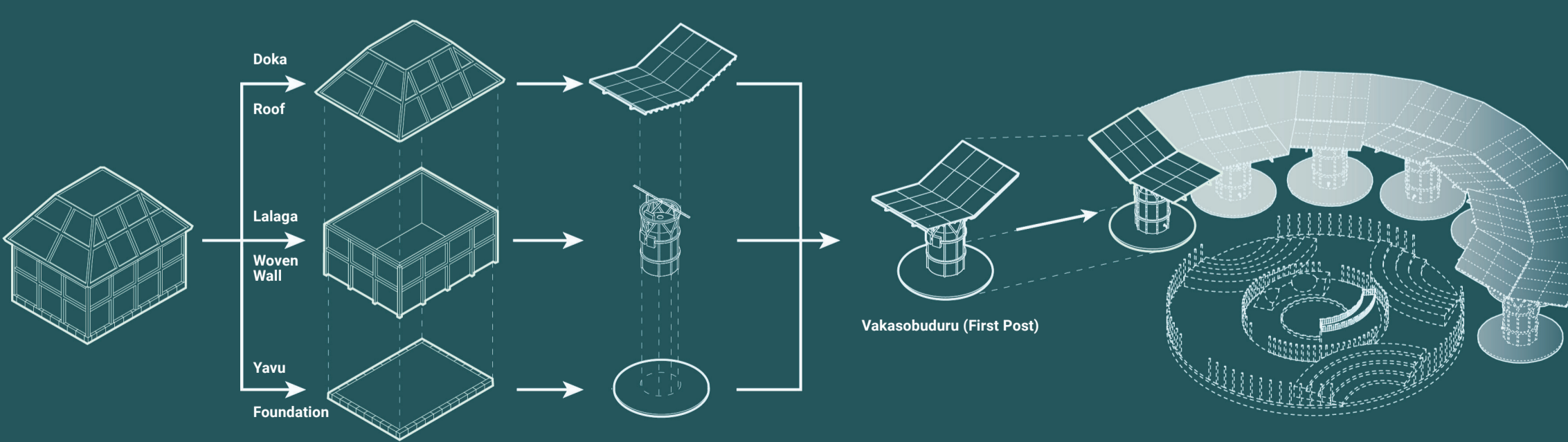
The design centers around two strategically positioned circular geometries within the site, which serve as the primary reference point—the *vanua*—of the proposal. These forms are intentionally oriented to frame key views, connecting the space visually to the surrounding hills and the coastal waterfront. The radial arrangement of the two circles and the crossing paths does more than honor the traditional concept of gathering—it reimagines the site as a dynamic space for connecting people. Much like *lovo*, the communal act of cooking that draws people together through shared ritual, these circular nodes become living spaces of interaction, sites of connection—echoing the organic, communal rhythms of village life.

Primary circulation paths gracefully crisscross and weave around and between the two circles, linking them and reinforcing their shared role as centers for gathering and exchange. The intertwining of the paths around the center of the proposal extend outwards off of the site’s boundaries, connecting the existing village center (to the southeast) to existing homes lying on the villages outskirts (to the southwest) while also leading to the existing farm and school currently utilized by the villagers (to the northeast) and extending to the mountain and the existing dam (to the northwest). The project reinforces belonging, cultural identity, and ecological awareness, all while addressing the practical needs of energy and clean water in a warming world.



Yavu, Lalaga, Doka, Vakasobuduru: Building Elements Reinterpreted

Architecturally, the gathering spaces are made with modular elements arranged in circular formation, inspired by the cultural symbolism and architectural form of the traditional Fijian “*bure*”. Made up of individual singular “units” that could be artistically interpreted as a branching tree or butterfly-like in form and profile, this unit becomes the modular repeatable component of the proposal. This approach grounds the design in local identity, while adapting it to accommodate both contemporary function and community building. The units are designed as a social and educational catalyst, creating a flexible space where community interaction, learning, productivity, and sustainability symbiotically co-exist and are woven together.



The unit draws from traditional Fijian construction processes, deeply rooted in cultural practice, from the building elements: *yavu* (foundation), *lalaga* (woven walls), *doka* (roof), and *vakasobuduru* (first post). Our reinterpretation of these elements overlays them with new performative and social functions. Each unit's roof (*doka*) element still gives shade but now collects solar energy through photovoltaic panels. The unit's wall (*lalaga*) holds the PV roof up through a large cistern that captures rainwater runoff funneled from the PVs arrays for

community use. The foundation (*yavu*) of the unit holds prefabricated bases that can be customized by villagers for various social uses. Together, the construction of the first unit as a prototype becomes the proposals’ “first post” (*vakasobuduru*) as additional units get constructed to complete the circular array. Altogether, the reinterpretation of these vernacular elements for new social, energy-gathering, and water-collecting uses represents not only building components but becomes a layered cultural and performative narrative for the community.

SUN-WELL

