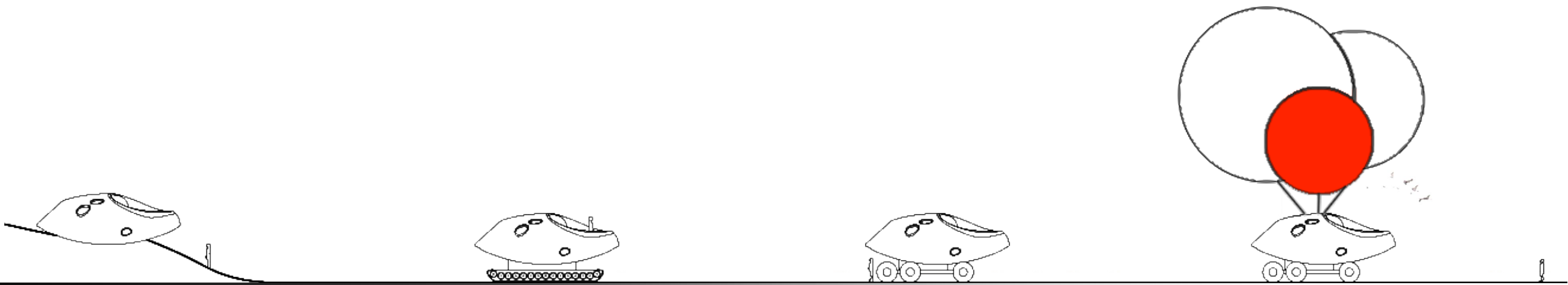


GRADIENTS OF IMPACT



The re-introduction of the Arabian Oryx into the natural habitat of the Sheikh Zayed Protected Areas Network represents a triumph in modern conservation efforts. An important strategy of stewardship of the natural environment is to provide a degree of public access to nature in order to allow popular appreciation and reinforce the importance of protection efforts – people need to see and experience nature in order to value it. However, this access always comes at a cost in terms of impact and disruption of the landscape and ecosystem in question. Balancing the benefits of public access with the impacts on the environment is a critical task requiring constant calibration and evaluation. Particularly in the realm of built architecture, where human occupants will inhabit the site alongside the native flora and fauna, a range of options and degrees of disruption are critical to this calibration. Zero impact is an impossibility – but how close to zero can one get?

Is it preferable to concentrate severe impact of the architecture on a focused area of the site? With highly disruptive conventional foundation, anchoring, utility, and waste disposal systems? Or “spread” the impact with a kinetic approach where habitations are in and of themselves transient and therefore never remain in one place long enough to do lasting damage? The project proposes a variety of deployments – some of them radical - of a single family of forms, across the spectrum of degree of impact of the architecture on the natural environment.

Standard and VIP lodges “dock” to the Common Hub, but are also self-contained for permanent, semi-permanent or highly temporary placement in the landscape. Radical strategies for kinetic movement of these elements are also imagined, where they are drawn across the landscape by camel, via wheeled movement, or float above the protected area as air-ships, having zero physical contact with the ground-plane post-launch.

A technical re-imagining of traditional arish palm-front weaving techniques forms a woven, monolithic envelope enclosure that also controls for heat, moisture, sand infiltration. Space conditioning, waste disposal, and back-end power generation systems are housed in the lower portion of each volume below the finished floor. Vision portals are provided for both star-gazing and observation of the Oryx in its habitat; under some deployments the animals may be completely unaware of and unmolested by the human visitors...

