

Unbuilt

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Abstract

Unbuilt

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Cities are in a continual state of change, translated in an incremental process of building and unbuilding, addition and subtraction. But “when building is the only proper, sanctioned event, there is no platform in place for constructively handling the deletions that reasonably or unreasonably accompany it.”¹ This thesis identifies a twelve-week condition of interim vacancy and demolition in Mexico City that results from current development practices, and proposes an incremental process of unbuilding that excavates built form to reveal the indeterminate space that was always there. Designed as a process governed by a set of instructions, unbuilding begins with a building whole and selectively removes material to reveal new configurations of space to accommodate program. Including multiple and unpredictable outcomes in how and for who the itinerant city is developed, this thesis argues for subtraction as being part of the process of addition, and not its inverse.



Mexico City

*I hear the ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling
masonry, and time one livid final flame. What's left us then?*

– James Joyce, *Ulysses*

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Preface

This thesis began as a project between Robert Hutchison and Cory Mattheis. In January 2015, Robert was invited by Xavier de la Riva, of Galería Altiplano,² to do an installation in a vacant single-family residence in Mexico City. The gallery was initiating a series of installations for sites that were temporarily vacant, and the vacancy would host a transient gallery³ before the building was demolished for redevelopment. Robert, who at the time was co-teaching the University of Washington Architecture in Mexico program with his former student Cory Mattheis, asked Cory to collaborate on the project. As this project was relevant to my interests for a thesis that studied the itinerant city, I was later invited to join the project as a third collaborator.

The next few months were marked by conversations that contended with the unusual yet ubiquitous condition of these sites in the interim of development. Without knowing which site we would be working with beforehand, the role that process played became more important to us than any predetermined product. Specific site conditions remained an important part of the intervention, but only to the extent that it was connected to the larger pattern of these vacancies. The site became incredibly important and unimportant at the same time, and we looked to the consistencies that Robert and Cory had observed during previous visits to these sites.



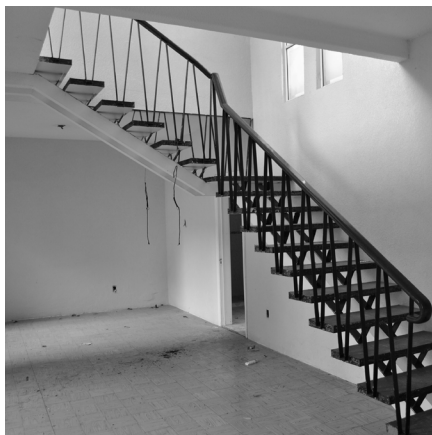
Xavier de la Riva, Gabrel Gonzales, Cory Mattheis, Robert Hutchison, Mauricio Rocha, Violeta Burkhardt, Francisco Pardo (from left to right)

¹ Easterling, Keller, et al. *Subtraction*. Critical Spatial Practice; 4. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014.

² Xavier de la Riva, "Altiplano Galería," *Altiplano Galería*. 2016. [www1.altiplanogaleria.com]

³ LOCUS. Vol 1. *Lineamientos / Demolición*. September 2015.

Figure 0.0 Project team

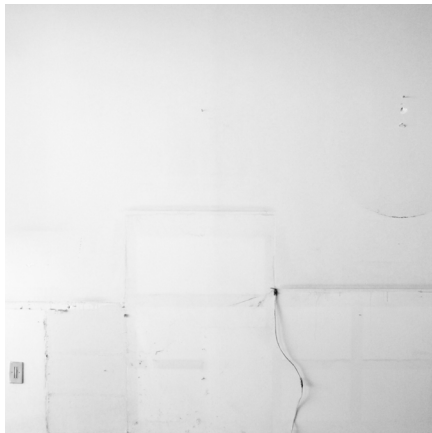


For us, what was remarkable was that these sites were not entirely vacant. In order to maintain this condition of vacancy, the developer would often elect to have a worker on site as a caretaker. Therefore, this interim vacancy doubles as an unusual confinement for some. Despite our initial reaction to accommodate the condition with some comfort, our intervention instead sought to respond to what these marginalized workers had come to Mexico City for in the first place: work.

How could we engage these workers so they could acquire and develop skills needed for the construction jobs they come for? To what degree could we open these sites to the neighborhood, making a place for residents to be part of the development forces that shape where they live? And could an intervention be continually worked on, changed, disassembled and moved to the next site? The intervention eventually took the form of a process, and the work of American Artist Sol LeWitt (1928-2007) was instrumental in how we began to approach this project. We were interested in how communication could be used as a tool to direct work, how it could be translated and interpreted to generate new and unforeseen possibilities in the design process. And as with the Wall Drawings of Sol LeWitt, the use of instruction sets became instrumental in our approach. The intention was to test this as an iterative process, repeated with the temporal condition of vacancy in the city. With that the three of us flew to Mexico City in the beginning of July, preparing to work on three different sites with three different workers provided the same set of instructions. Of course it was different when we landed.

On the way to the first (and only) site, we learned that there was no worker present this time as the developer was unconcerned with intrusions in this more secure neighborhood. However, we were assured that it was a really

*Figure 0.1 - 0.3 Partially demolished vacant houses.
photographs by: Cory Mattheis*



good house. And it was. Built in the late-1950s, and repeated twice adjacent, it proved a simple and beautiful plan. Located in Colonia Tlacoquemecatl del Valle, an area that had experienced rapid development in recent years, it is what remained of an era that had replaced fruit orchards with single family residences, reminiscent with street names like Limas, Fresas, Duraznos, Tejocotes and Manzanas. Now, densification is replacing the single family residence typology that historically defined the sprawling perimeter of Mexico City.

We had three days with the site. While we set about documenting the building, the innumerable shadows on walls that remained from objects that once filled the house became the subject matter for what would become our installation *Fantasmas*. Working with one site allowed us to concentrate our efforts, but the idea of introducing as much chance into the design process persisted. Mexican architects Francisco Pardo and Mauricio Rocha were each invited to write an instruction set as well. *Preliminaries* and *Cubo*, respectively, played by the same rules (Appendix A, *(In)Communicato*) that we had devised for the installations to exist both as an instruction set and its physical interpretation.

The three instruction sets were blind to one another. They were given to the worker-turned-artist, and executed to perfection by the hand of Violeta Burckhardt along with Xavier de la Riva, whose charge it was to interpret the overlapping chaos resulting from the three installations together. Eight-weeks later, the three of us returned to Mexico City to attend the result: *Lineamientos* (Appendix A). It was curated as a one-day public exhibition by Xavier and Violeta, and to a large degree it became the directive for the remainder of this thesis. The building was demolished two-days later. What remained was this temporal condition of vacancy. A void of use that

Figure 0.4 - 0.6 Object "ghosts"

concludes in demolition, and now a void between buildings. This condition repeats, deletes, develops, and continues in the translation of our cities. I remain curious about the integral yet often ignored role that vacancy and its subsequent demolition has in shaping the physical form of our cities.

For this thesis, the metaphor of this particular residence was rebuilt, its structure, material and spaces reused, the worker moved back in (his job undone), and the twelve-week vacancy reset to the beginning. What changed was that demolition would be thought of as part of the process of vacancy. At the end of the interim vacancy, all that would remain is the void to be returned to the city.



Unbuilt

Introduction

Cities are in a continual state of change, translated in an incremental process of building and unbuilding, addition and subtraction. As some cities adjust to an increasingly rapid production of space, others are emptied. Regardless of growth or decline, what they share is a condition of interim vacancy. But vacancy is seen as undesirable, a by-product or wasted space. “In the past 50 years terms such as ‘void,’ ‘nothingness,’ the ‘terrain vague,’ ‘no-man’s lands,’ ‘wastelands,’ ‘residuum,’ and ‘Dead Zones,’ have been attached to certain spaces in the built environment. Both the detractors and enthusiasts for these areas perceive them as unconstructed space, disordered and out of control, outside planning and architecture.”⁴ These spaces are contradictory to the development formulas that persist, the ones that provide a finished image of the city by ignoring discrepancy in favor of a product over process. But buildings as product become disposable the moment they are built. By placing the condition of development in a temporal context, this thesis contends with the finished image of the city to reveal a cycle of addition and subtraction. The thesis argues for subtraction as being part of the process of addition, and not its inverse. Regarding process as permanent, not buildings, subtraction is engaged as an active control to contribute alternative possibilities for development.

⁴ Doron, Gil. “Lost Zones.” *Blueprint*, no. 172 (2000): 68-72.

Figure 1.0 Aerial view of Mexico City

Current development practices in Mexico City have resulted in a condition of interim vacancy and demolition that define the scope of this thesis. When replacing a single family residence, there is a twelve-week period of vacancy that occurs between when the building is vacated by its previous owners and when demolition begins to prepare the site for new development. There is a liminal space that exists between buildings—not a void that occupies the space between two concurrent buildings, but a temporal pause between a building, its demolition, and subsequent replacement. A space of indeterminacy can be found in this pause. This thesis identifies this space as an opportunity to be additive in use when subtractive in form by using the act of unbuilding to provide a context for how we translate the city.

As accumulation and material excess defines much of what has been constructed, for a viable city to move forward it will begin to depend more on the reconfiguration of existing resources, of which subtraction plays an important role. At the individual scale, when a building becomes obsolete, it is either adapted to fit a new use or replaced entirely. Whether replaced in part or in whole, subtraction is integral to the process of development. And when the scale is defined at the city, this process is acting in constant manipulation of the urban fabric, a temporal field of subtraction resulting in a contiguous landscape of physical building. The result is an often unnoticed condition of temporal and spatial vacancies repeated through the city.

The role of architecture typically begins after subtraction occurs. But when buildings are engaged as a medium during subtraction, a richness of temporal space can be revealed. If architects were not only charged with the building of buildings but for their unbuilding as well, the value we place on product and process begins to change. When the built and the unbuilt are engaged simultaneously, the profession can detach itself from the falsity of

permanence in a way that more closely adapts to the changing needs of a city's inhabitants and its supporting economies. This is an intentional departure from attributing unbuilding as an act of erasure or the result of failure, so that we can leverage the unbuilt as the opportunity for exchange that it is. This approach can be a more inclusive way for how the city develops.

The design of this thesis proposes the incremental demolition of a building, that takes place in an interim vacancy, to provide a series of new spaces and program. Excavating built form reveals the indeterminate space that was always there. It briefly joins the intermediate city as a condition of latency, but it also retains some qualities of the built and determinate city, bridging the two. This is because the unbuilt is defined more by a process than a location. The process is suspended between the built and the void, positioning itself as a control for exchange, and consequently resembles the city more than either. Designed as a process governed by a set of instructions, unbuilding is used as the active control, capable of “orchestrating the ebbs and flows—the appearance and disappearance—of buildings.”⁵

⁵ Easterling, Keller, et al. *Subtraction*. 2014.

Unbuilding as Process

Theoretical Framework



Figure 2.0 Partial demolition
photograph by: Cory Mattheis

As the rate at which cities change accelerates,⁶ we can no longer sustain a pretense of permanence. Without a pretense of permanence, everything becomes contingent, provisional, even momentary. Artist and architect Kyong Park speaks of how “we have been overwhelmed by the study of cities in spatial terms and have failed to understand the importance of how time itself relates to space.”⁷ Viewing time as integral to space, the relationship between process and product changes. Process is moved to the foreground to become part of an incomplete product, blurring the distinction between permanent and impermanent. Architecture acts differently with this premise: Buildings, and the city, are always in progress, always unfinished.

“It is a question of ‘opening’ a space within the old one, where opening is not understood as a new space that can be occupied, but as an opening in the very idea of space.”⁸ When buildings expire, subtraction is often seen as erasure rather than exchange. But in the ongoing project Erasing Detroit,⁹ architect Dan Hoffman reads the abandoned city as the starting point for engagement. The abundance of material and available space becomes a canvas to be tested and appropriated. In this way vacancy is used to approach and manipulate the temporal city, opening process to include more voices that are invested in their neighborhood. Although this is representative of an extreme condition of city abandonment, Hoffman’s observation that “unbuilding has surpassed

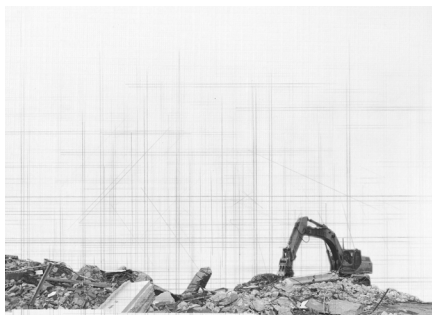
⁶ NYU Stern “Urbanization Project,” *Urban Expansion*. March 2016. [marroninstitute.nyu.edu/programs/urban-expansion]. See Mexico City urban growth [youtu.be/WtQjRCyOuVM]

⁷ “The New Urban Ecology.” Interview by Bert De Muynck. *Moving Cities*. April 7, 2007. Accessed December, 2015. [movingcities.org/interviews/kyong-park_domuschina]

⁸ Wigley, Mark. *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida’s Haunt*. 1st Pbk. ed. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995.

⁹ “Detroit Research.” *Knight Foundation*. Accessed December, 2016. [detroitresearch.org/vol1]

¹⁰ Hoffman, Dan, “Erasing Detroit,” in *Stalking Detroit*, ed. Georgia Daskalakis, Charles Waldheim and Jason Young. Barcelona: ACTAR, 2001.



building as the city's major architectural activity"¹⁰ remains relevant even for a dense city that is constantly replacing parts of itself. And particularly one that is experiencing rapid growth.

Architecture can benefit when the limited notion that its inevitable product is a building is expanded, because a completed building can only exist if separated from the processes of the city—that is when space is filled with no correlation to time. Current development practices have separated the categories of space and time, rendering them neutral and homogenous to be commodified in standardization. But space as inseparable from time can be read in the definition of space as “an interval of time.”¹¹ In his 1988 essay, Arata Isozaki describes two conceptions of time, one of “absolute time defined as the linear axis from the past linking it through the present to the future,” and an alternative “axis of imaginative time, that axis on which we actually live.” He continues:

“Time as we inhabit it is thereby colored with special hues, and one of its peculiar features is the freedom which we can develop it into the past and into the future. Absolute time is common to us all, its extensions conjugate, so that whenever we think of the future we conceive of it as a single determinate extension from the present along this uniform axis. However, imaginative time generates only collections of instants of remembrance. It is arbitrary and indeterminate. Do we not often get into a cul-de-sac because we mistakenly confuse it with the absolute time axis? Certainly it appears that the facts of the past are arranged along a single axis, but we can run imaginative time along the line of the past also. Facts are always being tampered with.”¹²

When time inhabits both the determinate linear axis, as well as the indeterminate imaginative axis, it provides a reference for how the unbuilt operates

¹¹ Stevenson, Angus., and Lindberg, Christine A. *New Oxford American Dictionary*, 3rd Ed. / Edited by Angus Stevenson, Christine A. Lindberg. ed. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

¹² Isozaki, Arata. *The Future City lies Ruins*. 1988.

Figure 2.1 Demolition sequence as verb and adjective

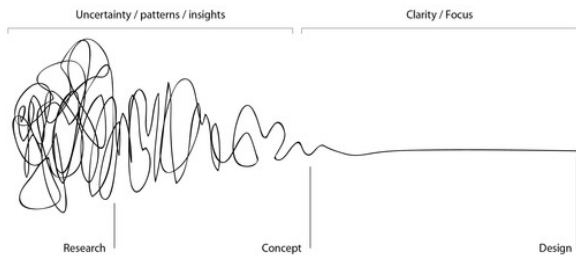


Figure 2.2 linear process diagram

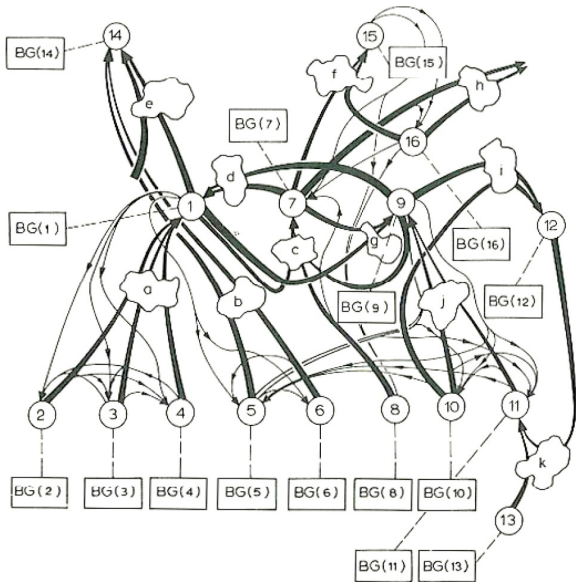


Figure 2.3 Paskian Feedback Loop diagram

within this duality. Even the definition for unbuilt points to both the past and future with an ease of ambiguity. As a verb, it is used to “demolish or destroy (something, especially a building or system),” while as an adjective, unbuilt refers to “buildings or land not yet built or built on.”¹³ Unbuilding can therefore be recognized as an interval and an actor within the determinate city, while it also signifies vacancy and uncertainty. As one does not negate the other, it is possible for this in-between condition to provide a context for how vacancy can be used to build and unbuild the city.

Presently, vacancy and subsequent deletions, act primarily to empty a site. “Once time and space have been emptied, and detangled, they can be systematically re-appropriated.”¹⁴ The appropriation of these spaces suppress irregularity, the unknown, the unfinished. But vacancy can also be used to interrupt this continuum,¹⁵ demolition a tool for engagement. Unbuilding as a process can test new possibilities that diverge from sameness, feeding back into the process of building while remaining autonomous from the determinate city. Rather than neutralize space with closed vacancy and predictability, unbuilding looks to reattach time to specific places, prompting the inclusion of multiple and unpredictable outcomes into a design.

However, design is often thought of as a linear process that concludes with a single solution. In this oversimplification, we have chosen to define process by its eventual, if not unavoidable product. But perhaps design more accurately resembles a conversation, as depicted in Paskian’s Feedback Loop diagram (figure 2.3). This could begin shifting the emphasis from the product to the process, becoming less concerned with formal built form, and instead interested in the built environment as an accumulation of infrastructures and flows governed by subtraction. Keller Easterling writes of a subtraction economy, where “subtraction is not simply absence, but a moment in a set of

¹³ *New Oxford American Dictionary*. 3rd Ed.

¹⁴ Giddens, Anthony. *Runaway World: How Globalization Is Reshaping Our Lives*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

¹⁵ Rietveld, Ronald, and Erik Rietveld. “Vacant NL.” RAAAF. Accessed September 09, 2015. [raaf.nl/en/projects/439_vacant_nl]. Venice Architecture Biennale 2010.

exchanges and advances, aggressions and attritions that are part of most active organizations. Active forms are multipliers, switches, remote controls, or governors—time-released protocols that generate or manage these exchanges with a stream of objects and spaces.”¹⁶ Subtraction produces as it consumes.

An example of an active form, and one of particular importance to this the-

Scribbles

Sol LeWitt

Scribble drawings have a tonal scale of “0” the lightest to “6” the darkest. They are drawn using 2mm graphite leads in the following grades of hardness: HB, 2B, 4B, and a woodless graphite pencil of 9B. “0” to “3” use HB; “3” to “4” use 2B; “5” to “6” uses 4B; and “6” uses 9B. The drawing’s tonal areas are marked off with white strings and numbered appropriately. These will serve as a guide for the tonal transitions and at some point are removed.

An overall, loose, and non-specific scribble network is drawn with less concentration from the “2” to the “0” and more from the “3”, gradually increase the network of lines towards “6” and a little towards “2”. The progression of the network should be even in tone. Once the “3” is established, return to the “4” creating a transition to the “3” and the “5”. The small white areas will become smaller. Complete the “4” and transition to the “5” and “6”. Complete the “5” and transition to “6”. The white spaces will be minute. Complete the “6” and transition to “5”. The white spaces will be nearly non-existent. Now work in reverse to establish the tonal transitions from “3” to “2” to “1” to “0”. At “1” and “0” the scribbled lines will be more individualized and the white spaces larger.

In the end, the effect is of glowing light within the wall.

Figure 2.4 Instructions for “Scribbles,” Sol LeWitt

sis, is Sol LeWitt’s series of Wall Drawings. In Paragraphs on Conceptual Art, he writes how “the idea becomes a machine that makes the art.”¹⁷ LeWitt’s approach attends to the process of making art, how it moves from the fundamental idea, to its interpretation, and finds multiple manifestations in production. The result is a shared authorship in the making of art. In opening the idea of art and who the artist is, the work persists as a duality, evidenced in the composition of written instructions (figure 2.4) that define and instigate drawings of its interpretation (figure 2.5 - 2.6).

How can the determinate city be used to produce instances of the indeterminate? As we contend with the messiness and intricacies of the city, unbuilding offers a willingness to relinquish control, to allow the built environment to be vulnerable and acted upon by its residents. Rem Koolhaas advocates an urbanism that “will not be based on the twin fantasies of order and omnipotence; it will be the staging of uncertainty; it will no longer be concerned with the arrangement of more or less permanent objects but with the irrigation of territories with potential; it will no longer aim for stable configurations but for the creation of enabling fields that accommodate processes that refuse to be crystallized into definitive form; ... it will no longer be obsessed with the city but with the manipulation of infrastructure for endless intensifications and diversifications, shortcuts and redistributions.”¹⁸

For me, this evokes the atmosphere of informal street markets, known as *tianguis*, in Mexico City. How they pulse in chaotic flows through streets and between buildings, a representation of daily life, balanced as a structure between one that supports interaction and economies, and one that can choke off important functions of the city. It lends itself to the axis of imaginative time, to the magical surrealism that makes Mexico City never one thing. *Tianguis* have “become a phenomenon that appears to elude any form of control”

¹⁶ Easterling, Keller. *Subtraction*. 2014.

¹⁷ LeWitt, Sol, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” in *0 to 9: The Complete Magazine: 1967-1969*, ed. Acconci, Vito, and Mayer, Bernadette. Lost Literature Series. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Ugly Duckling Press, 2006.

¹⁸ Koolhaas, Rem., Mau, Bruce, Sigler, Jennifer, Werlemann, Hans, and Office for Metropolitan Architecture. *Small, Medium, Large, Extra-large: Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Rem Koolhaas, and Bruce Mau*. 2d ed. New York, N.Y.: Monacelli Press, 1998.



Figure 2.5 Wall Drawing #1185
Art Partners, Caymen Island and Israel. 2005



Figure 2.6 Wall Drawing #1244
LeWitt Collection, Chester, Connecticut. 2007

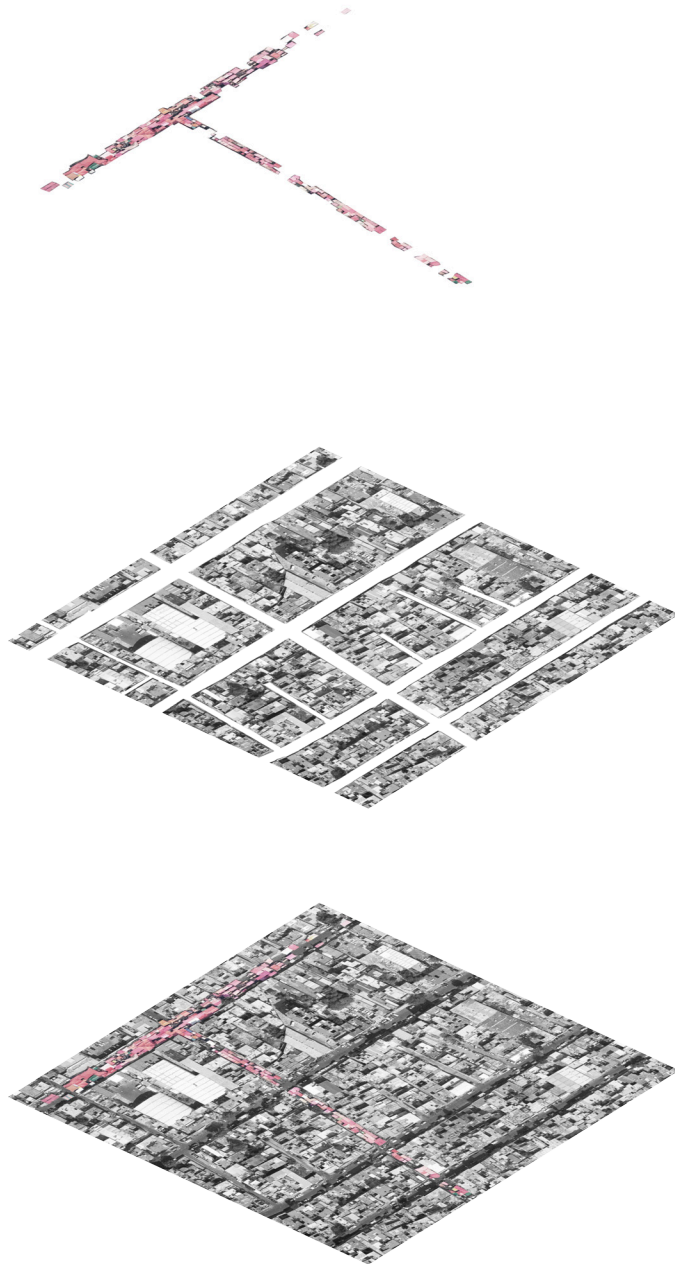


Figure 2.7 Layering of tianguis with the city

begins Eduardo Abaroa in his description of artist Melanie Smith's work on the subject. He writes of her work being "seduced by the intensity of the provisional transformation of the urban setting when these vendors gradually invade streets, blocking the traffic and attracting crowds eager for cheap (and possibly stolen) goods."¹⁹ The vendors both react to and instigate traffic, carving a place into the time of day that they occupy the street. They produce an accumulation that is temporary, its fluctuations felt throughout the day or the duration of a week.



And this same temporal transformation can be observed in the perceived permanence of the built environment, if one can sit still long enough. Photographer Camilo José Vergara²⁰ has meticulously documented this condition in the malleability of brick and mortar in cities across the United States. The

¹⁹ Cuahtémoc Medina, Dawn Ades, David Batchelo and Eduardo Abaroa. *Spiral City & Other vicarious pleasures*. A R Press, 2006.

²⁰ Vergara, Camilo Jose. "65 East 125th St." *Tracking Time*. Accessed March 22, 2015. [camilojosevergara.com].

Figure 2.8 Assembling tianguis in Mexico City

image of a single facade or street, transformed with time, can begin to tell the story of a neighborhood, a city. The representation of time begins to ask for new ways to engage the city, finding a place somewhere between daily activity and the oversimplification of a projected future. In observing his own work, Isozaki writes that “from the moment the constructions [he] participate in are completed they begin their journey on the road to ruin, just as living things



Figure 2.9 Taking down the morning stand on Avenida Nuevo León, Mexico City

move on to their death. Indeed, from the moment a building is conceived in thought, of itself it already includes its own decay. Thus, architecture becomes thinkable as ruins.”²¹



²¹ Isozaki, Arata. *The Future City lies in Ruins*. 1988.

Figure 2.10 Camilo José Vergara, *Tracking Time: 65 East 125th St.*

Instruction Sets and Translation

Methodologies and Process



To investigate how the process of subtraction can engage the translation of our cities, this thesis identifies the condition of interim vacancy present in current development practices. In the subtraction of material, rather than in its addition, it looks at how unbuilding can serve as an effective planning tool that tests new possibilities for the city. By using the condition of interim vacancy already part of typical development practice that replace single family residential with multifamily housing projects, it acts in a subtle way to be significant by including more voices in how and for who cities are changed. The storyline of this thesis is tied to a single residence in the south of Mexico City, now demolished. Its former vacancy provided a space to test and document how this thesis developed an interest in unbuilding as a medium for architecture.

The site was made available through a developer, architect, and gallery²² relationship in Mexico City. It was the twelve-week interval of vacancy before demolition that presented a unique situation to perform this work in, and it was this same time constraint that asked for a process to be designed before a particular site could be determined. This condition led to an approach that was simultaneously specific and general, able to guide an intervention to be interpreted for an unknown site(s).

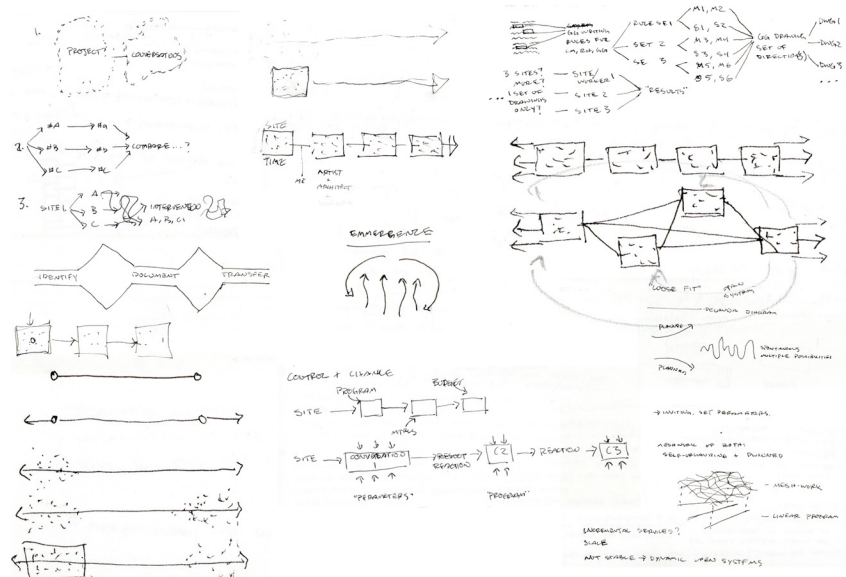
As this is a process applied to a condition of vacancy, it extends beyond the

²² Architect Juan Marquez; Xavier de la Riva of Galería Altiplano

Figure 3.0 *Lineamientos* instruction sets

individual site as it is designed to be repeated through the city—generating permutations that engage how we unbuild in order to build. Because the site is not attached to a specific location, it was the consistencies in structure, materiality, utilities, and an often occupied vacancy that were then used as design parameters.

As previously mentioned, the work of Sol LeWitt was instrumental in how we—Robert Hutchison, Cory Mattheis, and Gabrel Gonzales—began to approach this project. The premise being that we would write a set of instructions that would be interpreted to perform an intervention. It was the process that produced, and interpretation and discrepancy that tested ideas with unexpected outcomes (Appendix A, *Lineamientos*). Control was used to introduce chance whenever possible, instead of working to eliminate it. In the initial



process diagram sketches (figure 3.1) for *Lineamientos*, it depicts the intention to iteratively truncate design with control and expand it with chance. This led to a dynamic process and conversation that always worked within the twelve-week vacancy.

There is no formal law that dictates the twelve-week interim vacancy before a residence is permitted to be demolished and the site cleared for new construction. In correspondence with architect Juan Marquez, he described it as the typical processing time that deconstruction permits took to be issued. The buffer of bureaucracy in this case being used to protect the previous residents from forceful eviction. However, it is not uncommon to pay a fee to expedite the process.

When the site is vacated, there is no abrupt change seen from the street other than a suspension of daily activity. The mail collects in the entry, the phone rings without an answer, the gas, electric, water and sewer utilities remain connected. This however exposes the site to the previous residents moving back, or squatters finding refuge in an empty house. As these unsanctioned occupancies may delay demolition and construction schedules, the developer often elects to hire an entry level worker to secure the residence for the duration of vacancy. Incredibly, throughout this twelve-week process there lives a caretaker on site whose sole job is to ensure that squatters do not begin using the property.

The caretaker is a worker without work. He is tasked to watch a site for twelve-weeks before being given an entry level position on a construction crew. Sometimes, they do it more than once. The conditions, needless to say, are strange. The worker must be on-site day and night, allowed to leave only for food and necessities. Additionally, he is financially responsible for the site and

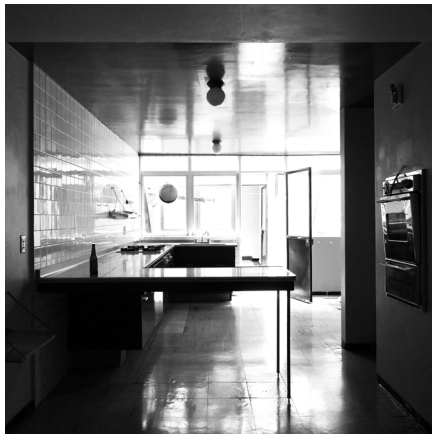
Figure 3.1 Initial sketches of *Lineamientos* process diagram: introducing error into the design process



The site is located in Colonia Tlacoquemecatl del Valle, in southern Mexico City



a
The existing house is a concrete frame structure built in the late 1950s



b
All utilities, including a full kitchen, are still intact

any construction materials that may be staged there prior to demolition—but would obviously lack the means to recoup such costs. These workers, or *albañiles*,²³ are part of a marginalized workforce in Mexico City who often migrate there attracted by the promise of a better income. When asked what sort of comfort could make their twelve-week internment more tolerable, the reply was “all I want to do is work.” The worker’s presence reveals a continuity between these sites; an occupied vacancy, and his capacity for work began to define the situation.

This thesis exploits the specificity of one site as a node indicative and part of the larger network of vacancies in Mexico City. Addressing multiple sites carries an inherent tendency to become siteless and disassociated with constraints. However, the opportunity to first test this thesis with an address, and its result in *Lineamientos*, provided an eight-week intervention and a one-day exhibition to draw new material from. This thesis continues with the process that *Fantasmás*, *Cubo*, and *Preliminaries* are now part of, adding to the design process of expansion and contraction induced by control and chance. The following is an excerpt from the project statement for *Lineamientos* (Appendix A), that describes our approach:

“The topic and focus of this project is communication. As architects, we use drawings to communicate our intentions and expectations to a builder. Sometimes the builder interprets these drawings (or instructions) directly; and sometimes the results can be completely counter to the intentions of our drawings. Most often however, the interpretation curiously lies somewhere in between. Regardless of our attempt to be succinct and clear in our instructions, the builder speaks a different language, and thus interprets, or translates, our instructions differently from our intentions. This project is interested in this in-between condition of communication: Where intentions are translated

²³ Rulfo, Juan Carlos, Montiel Pagés, Eugenia, Dolores Hernández, Isabel, Calzada Placencia, José Guadalupe, Zárate Centeno, Agustín, Sánchez Montes, Natividad, Sánchez Bernal, Pedro, Octaviano Simón, Isahín, La Luna Media Producciones, Fondo Para La Producción Cinematográfica De Calidad, and Kino International Corporation. *En El Hoyo*. New York: Kino International, 2007.

Figure 3.2 Site location

Figure 3.3 - 3.4 Site photos



c
The 2-story structure includes an accessible roof



d
A double-height open stair connects both floors



e
An outdoor patio provides light and air

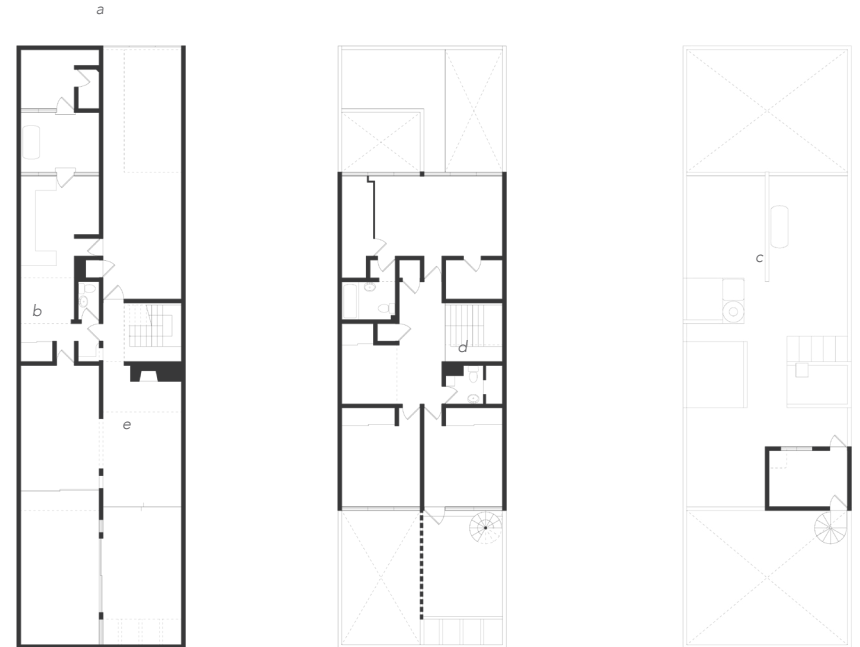
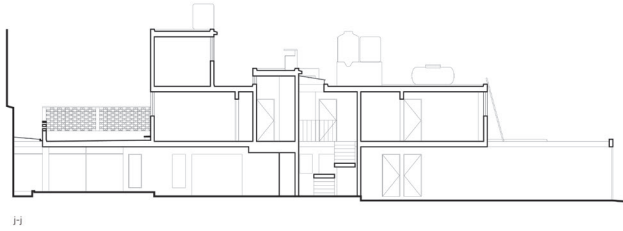
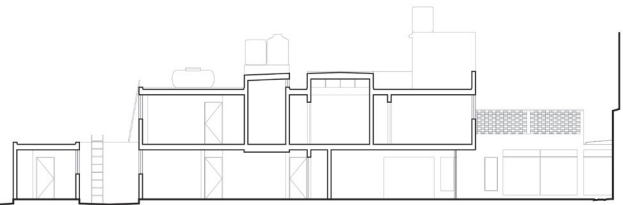


Figure 3.8 As-built: Ground Floor Plan, 1st Floor Plan, Roof Plan

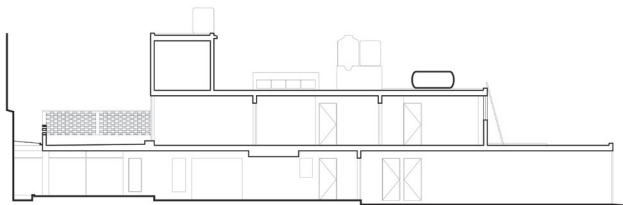
Figure 3.5 - 3.7 (opposite) site photos of existing condition



j-j



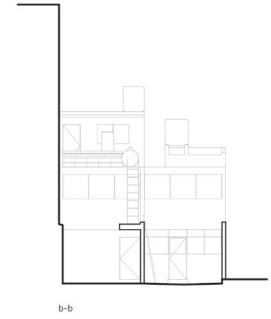
h-h



k-k



a-a



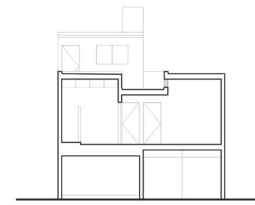
b-b



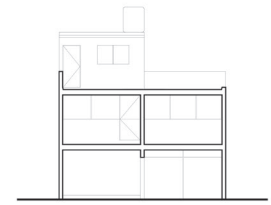
c-c



d-d

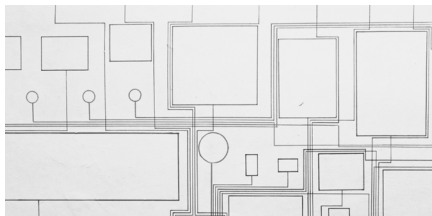


e-e

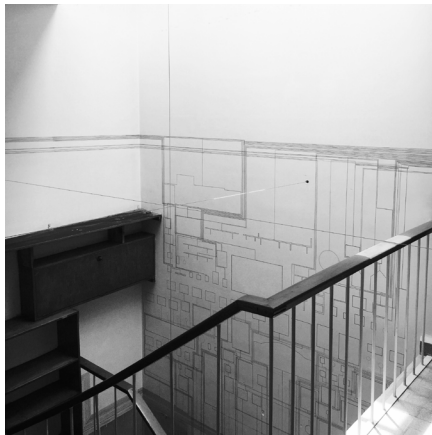


f-f

Figure 3.9 Longitudinal and transverse sections of as-built condition



Fantasmas



Cubo



Preliminaries

from ideas to built form, and from thoughts, images and words to physical reality; Where the final result can be mistaken (sometimes more successfully) relative to our original intentions; and where the tools that we use to communicate and how we choose to implement these tools can minimize or aggravate the differential between expectation and result.”

In the conventional documentation of the existing residence, subtleties of its former inhabitation began to change the way we saw the emptied rooms. In the wall drawings of *Fantasmas*, the shadows left behind by objects removed from the house were collected again. Lines drawn in red, yellow, and blue trace a path from the shadow to its scaled replica. They accumulate on a central wall connecting the two levels, a circuit board of memory. The lines reveal the accretion of objects, their place and shape, and the intensity of the object’s shadow could be read as a function of time and exposure.

Cubo, with eight strings anchored to the periphery of site, draws a volume within the house that intersects the interior walls. It speaks to the space held by the site—past, present, and future— independent of the present building, but attached. The volume it delineates, though fragmented, would be revealed as the building was demolished.

Preliminaries is introduced. Though only partially realized for the exhibition, it instructs a specific sequence of demolition to be performed and documented. In methodic removal, the concrete frame is revealed and compromised to the point it gives under its own precariousness. Partial demolition had begun.

Communication, translation, and misunderstandings were instrumental to this study. While site constraints, logistics, and the short duration influenced every aspect of this initial intervention, most important was the team of architects

Figure 3.10 - 3.12 *Lineamientos* installation photos



Figure 3.13
Colonia del Valle (16 sq km)

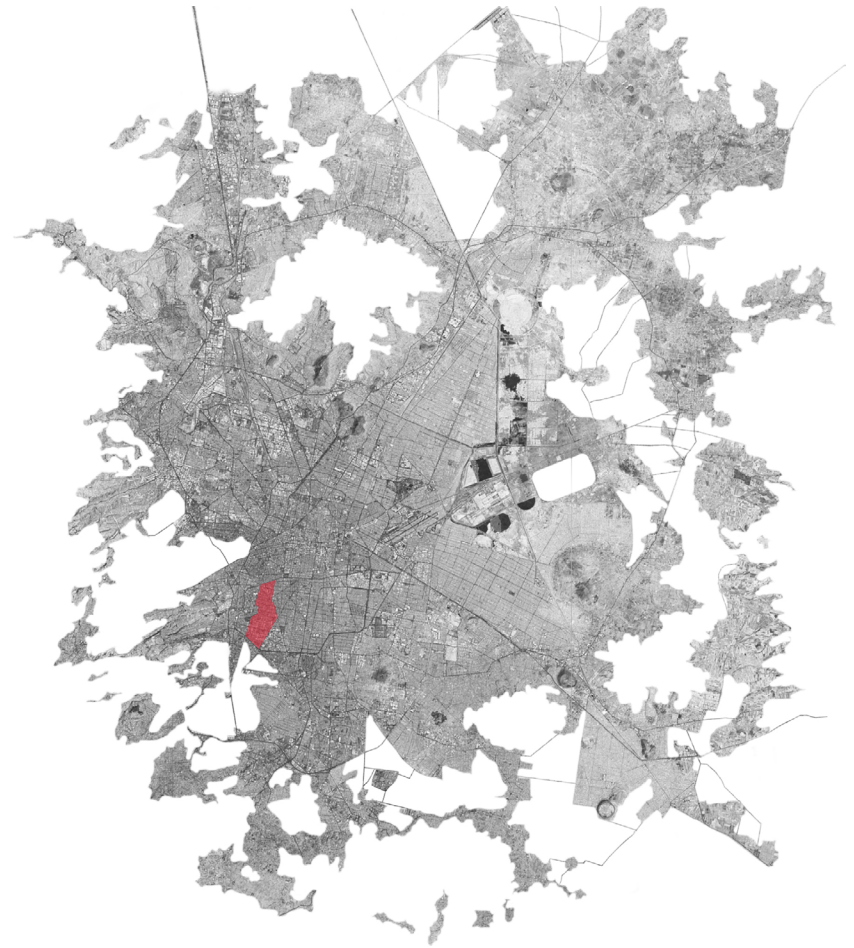


Figure 3.14
Mexico City urban extents

and artists it assembled. Although the intention was, and is, to apply this thesis to multiple sites, the material derived from these interventions also asks for the process of unbuilding to be continued. The intersection of these three installations propose a different way for unbuilding to be engaged, and the underlying process that directed how we communicate, and how we work, could be tested again and further developed as an important design tool.



For the purposes of this thesis, the decision was made to continue with the same site, deriving a parallel narrative that would arrive at the same product of deletion (a narrative that also seemed plausible for the two identical buildings it was next to, awaiting unbuilding). As a result, the site and its condition of vacancy became the constant, but what is done in this interim vacancy is where a discussion can begin. The ideas that a single site could generate became indicative of the larger condition of interim vacancies as a continually renewing network in the urban landscape of Mexico City. The singular site can be read as a field, reorganizing space through subtraction to effect material and social flows. What happens when we start with unbuilding?

Figure 3.15 Three repeated residences

12-week Subtraction

Design Intervention

Instead of starting with an empty site (often a product of subtraction anyway) or a context with an existing building, then adding architectural elements to meet programmatic requirements, subtraction begins with a building whole and selectively extracts material to reveal new configurations of space to accommodate program. This is able to reveal spatial qualities already present, and make them available for new uses. Architectural vocabulary favors the introduction of new elements to delineate space, so a definition for subtraction would present a useful new tool.

An initial design sketch to test this possibility began by starting with a physical as-built model, then removing pieces of the building while at the same time adding scaffolding to accommodate the worker and new opportunities for circulation in the excavated volume of the site. It was thought of in stages by week, with a total of twelve-weeks, and the incremental disassembly was documented as such (see fig. 4.1). What immediately became apparent was the diversity of spatial configurations and use that subtraction can provide that is largely excluded when designing or constructing a building to completion. Each stage of deconstruction can be viewed as a completely new space, one that results from the previous deletion and determines, to some extent, the next. It loosely directs parallel and unexpected outcomes. This approach amounts to as many spatial configurations as is logistically possible on a given site.

*Figure 4.0 Worker without work
photograph by: Robert Hutchison*



as-built



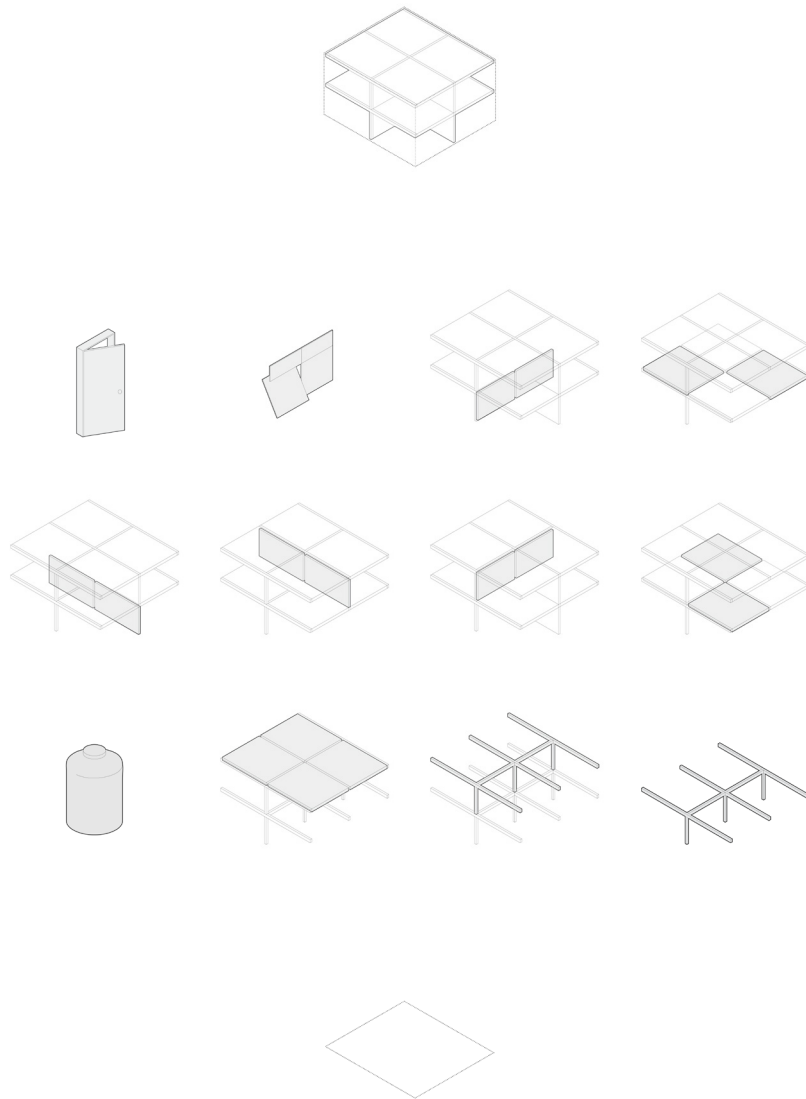
unbuilt

In a similar approach to the additive process of design—one where a set of rules and constraints are employed to respond to a site’s physical, environmental, and intended programmatic constraints—the same can be applied to the subtractive process for taking a building apart. It can be thought of in two ways: 1) where it is the inverse of building up and defining space with architecture; or, 2) as a cyclical pattern where unbuilding is just the other half of building, and together they reflect how cities are translated. For this thesis, the second approach is used as it better recognizes the pattern of development by accounting for a multiplicity of sites over time. (However, it is important to consider both as the design process of the first approach can be a more accessible explanation for the design methodology of subtraction).

The following design intervention seeks to introduce informal systems—already present in Mexico City—to the process of taking buildings down. It expands on the premise of *Lineamientos* to consider how an instruction set could instigate and direct work, and further how it could coordinate different actors involved in the process of disassembly. In a departure from defining it as an incremental process that occurs each week for twelve-weeks, the intervention proposes four-stages of unbuilding, summarized as:

- One.* The first stage is defined by an occupied vacancy, providing the worker, or *albañil* (migrant construction worker in Mexico City) with a temporary home and an opportunity to prepare the site in anticipation for the work to come.
- Two.* After initial selective demolition, the second stage uses the reconfigured space to introduce a common table. *Tianguis* (informal markets) move their tarps from the sidewalk to the site, hooking-up their itiner-

Figure 4.1 Initial unbuilding sequence



ant kitchens to the existing gas, electric, running water and bathrooms that remain in service. The site is opened to the neighborhood.

Three. The third stage focuses on the removal and redistribution of material. The site becomes an intermediate, a node in a network of locations that exist on a path between the *ropaviejeros* (trucks collecting used items) that ramble along the streets, repeating their recorded call on their way to the larger collection warehouses. The site, used by the *ropaviejeros*, becomes a staging area that collects unwanted items from the neighborhood while also producing salvaged building materials in its unbuilding. These activities are a storefront where residents can find material and items for their own home.

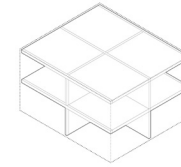
Four. And when the structure becomes too precarious to be open to the public, the structure and utilities that remain are dismantled or demolished, and removed. The scaffolding used to secure the site is broken down and the site readied for rebuilding. At the end of this occupied vacancy, all that remains is an ‘empty’ site, its space and materials having been consumed and migrated elsewhere.

A graphic set of instructions (figure 4.2) was developed to guide these four-stages of unbuilding. The design proposal that follows is an elaboration of a possibility.

Figure 4.2 Unbuilding instruction set diagram



one | Albañiles



The *albañil* is a caretaker for unbuilding. He moves to the site provided with the prospect of work, a lot of work, part of the process of taking buildings down. The occupied vacancy becomes a place for him to live and be supported by the different activities he is making room for. It is no longer an internment of solitude and boredom as he removes doors and sledges brick walls in anticipation of the *tianguis* to come. Instead of the marginalized worker he travelled to Mexico City as, he is offered a position to take control and direct how the building comes apart. The only requisite is that nothing is left at the end.

Figure 4.3 Worker with work, tumbling brick and concrete.
photograph by: Robert Hutchison

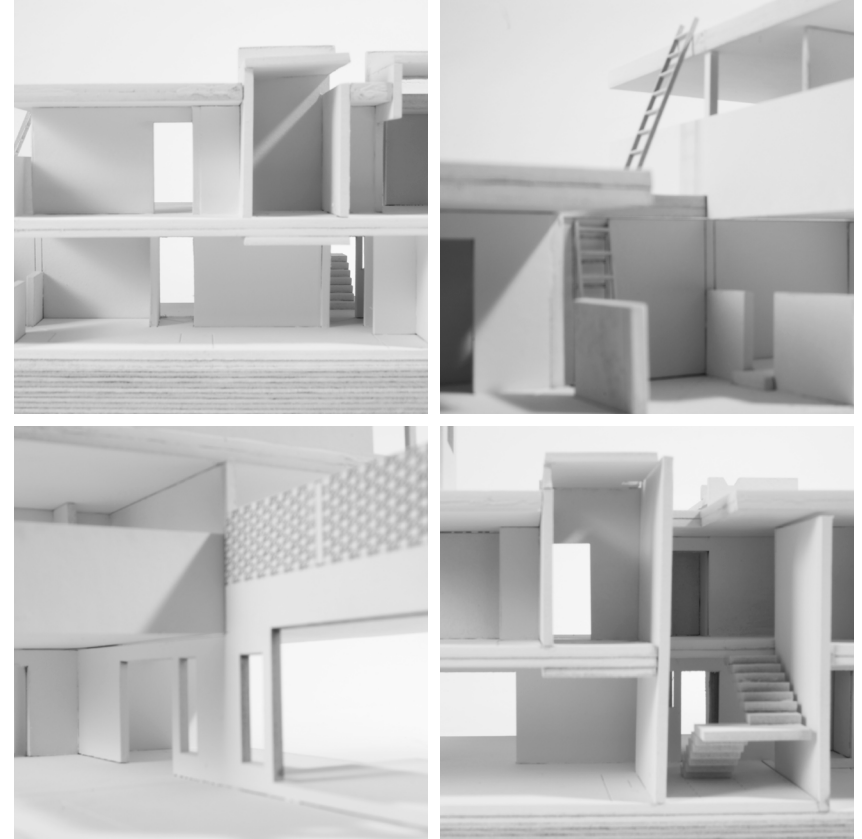
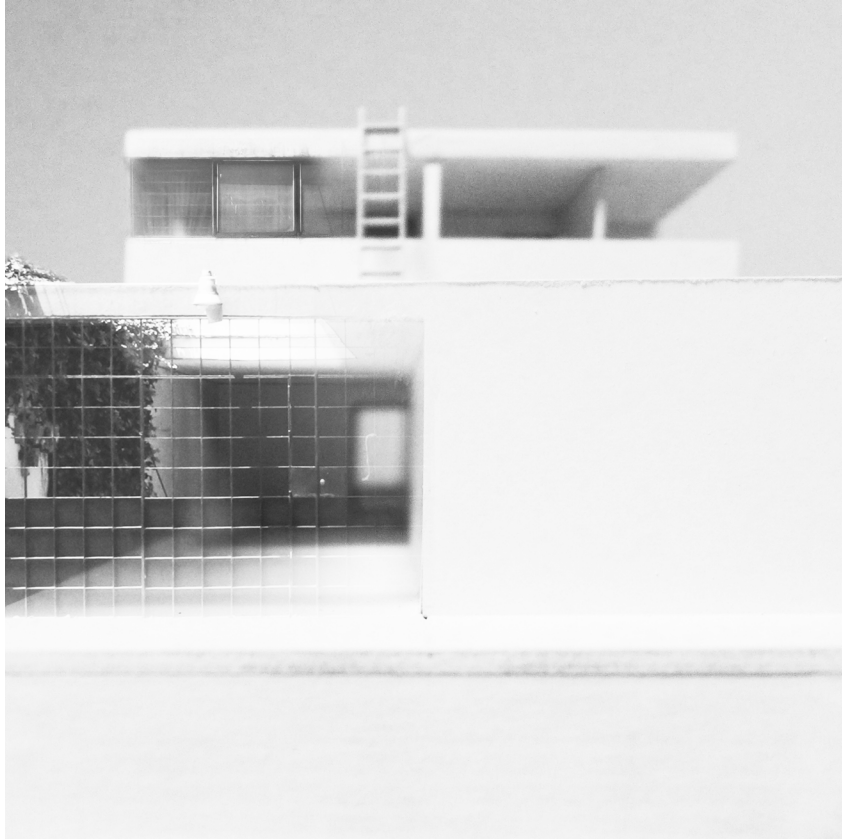


Figure 4.4 Model photos of stage one as-builts

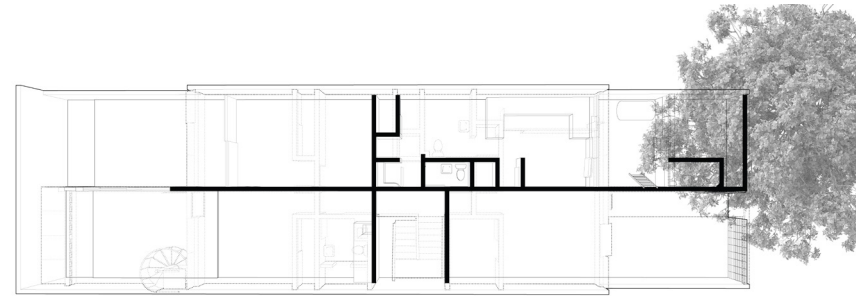
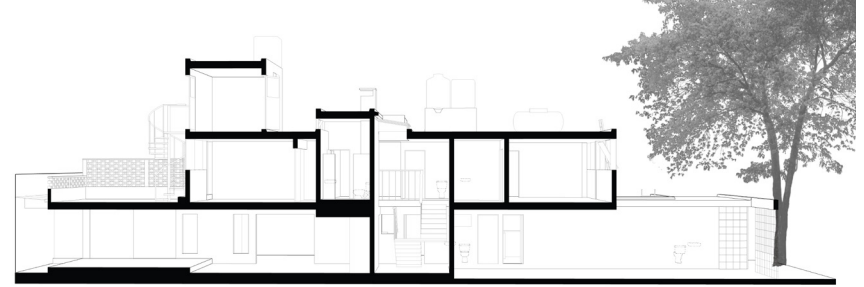
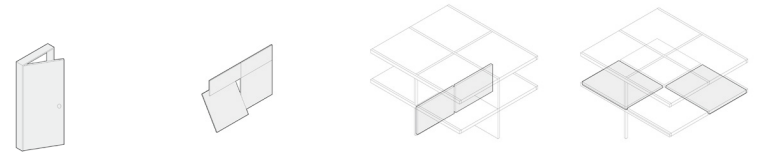


Figure 4.5 Model photo of as-built

Figure 4.6 - 4.7 Section and plan of as-built



two | Tianguis



Electrical wires are run through windows, tarps tied to poles, trees, vehicles, buildings, even each other, as *tianguis* attach themselves to opportunity. Though they are temporary structures made of light materials, there is a continuity of presence as they reappear each day and night, or even if only for Sunday morning to serve *barbacoa y consume*. For the second stage they are invited in, offered to connect to the utilities left on by the city. Instead of aggregating in a trafficked space, adding to the congestion, they gather around a common table to serve the neighborhood with new recipes and activity. And to accommodate, a more open plan is provided by removing doors and windows (unless it is a bathroom), as well as demolishing transverse walls to connect the length of the site to the street. Portions of the floor plate are also removed, providing double-height spaces and connecting the two levels.

Figure 4.8 Tianguis near Chilpancingo metro

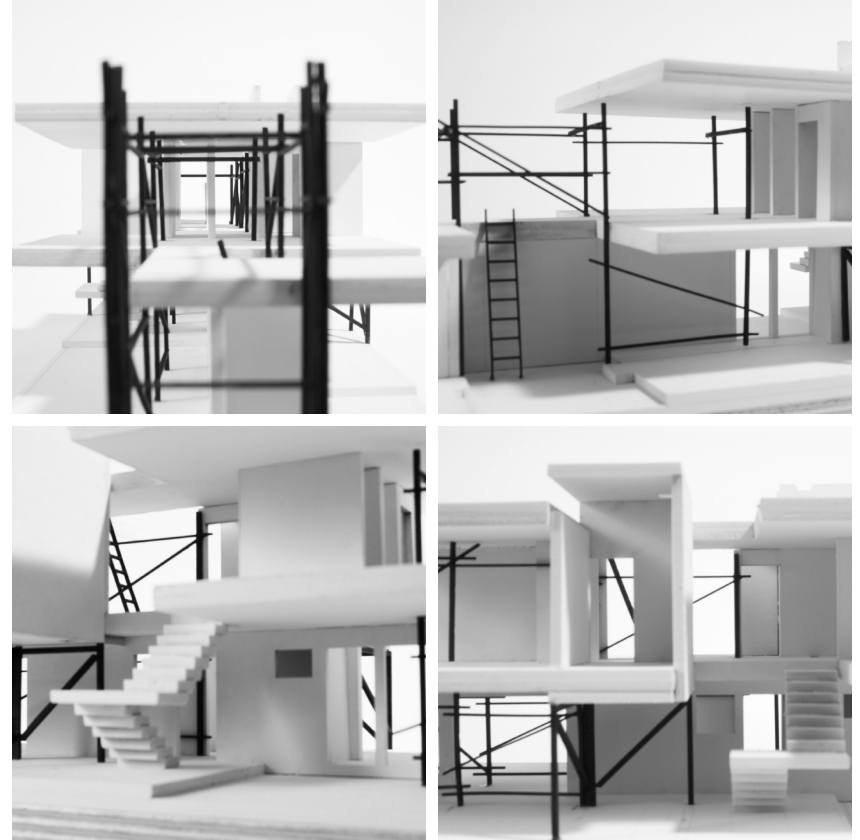
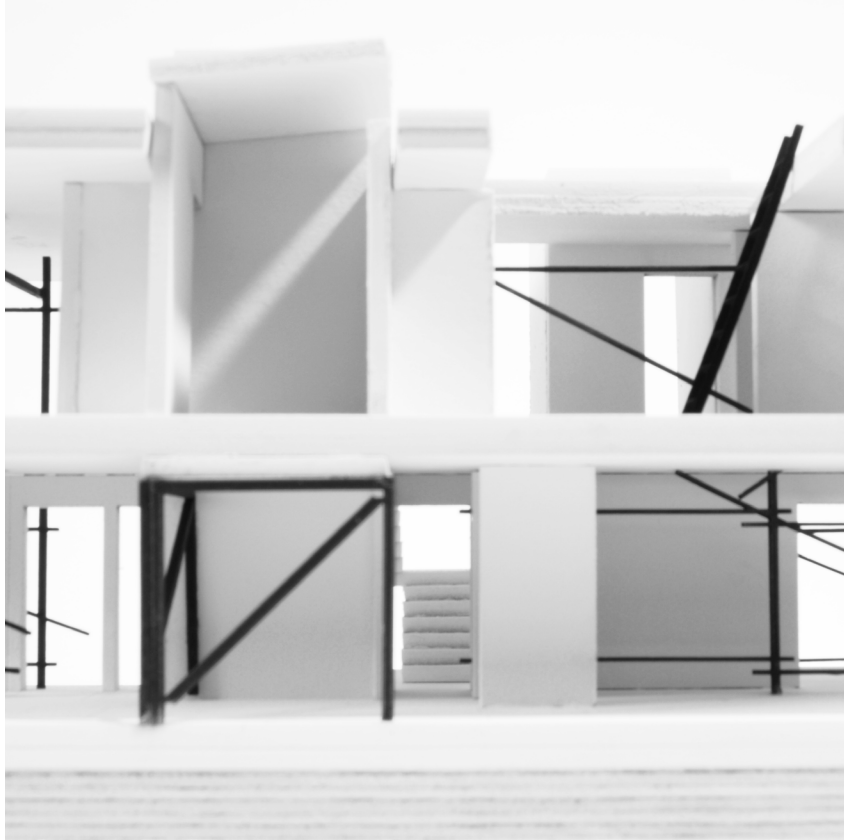


Figure 4.9 Model photos of stage two

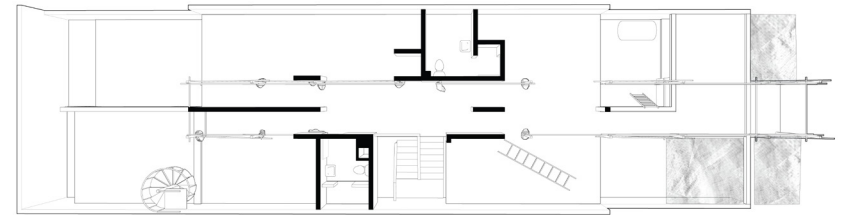
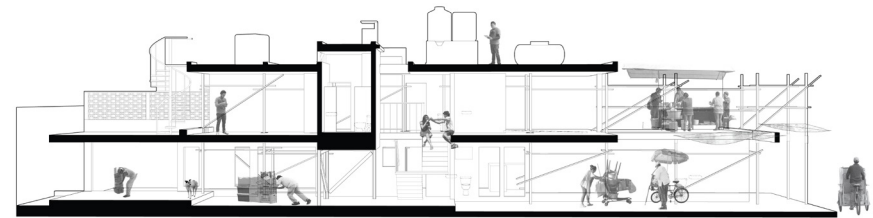
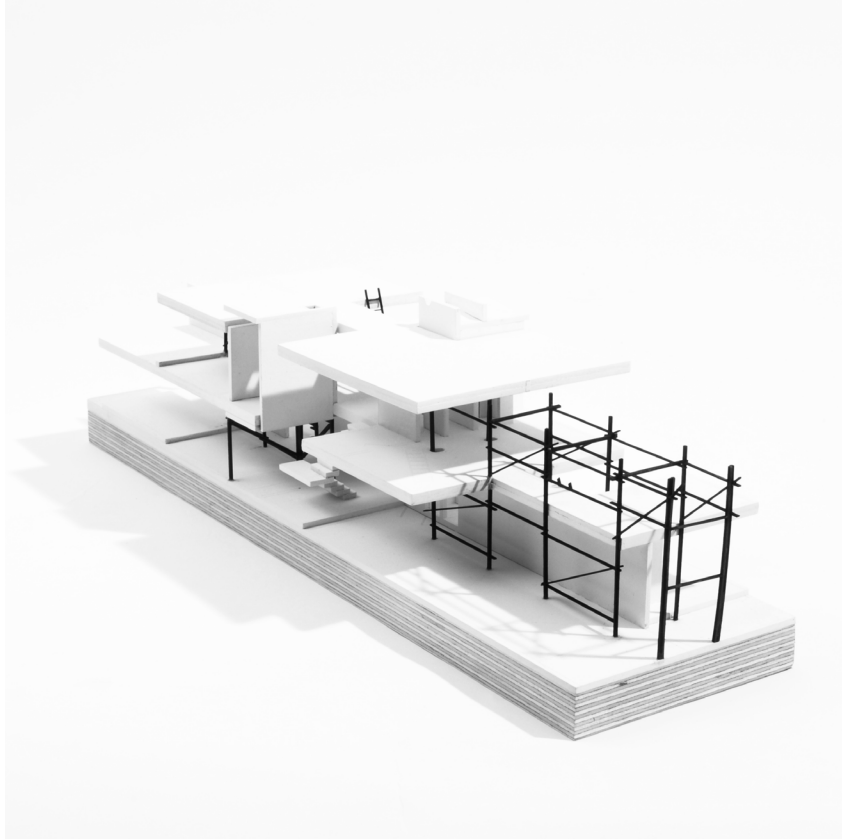
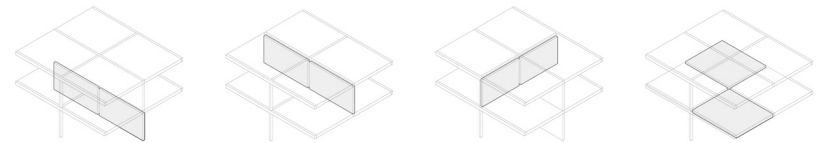


Figure 4.10 Model photo of stage two
Figure 4.11 - 4.12 Stage two section and plan



three | *Ropaviejeros*



The site begins to resemble and function more as a small warehouse as much of the walls and flooring is removed. In stage three, the remaining transverse walls are subtracted from the upper level along with the longitudinal walls from the entire house. Any unnecessary floor separating the two levels is also removed. This results in a covered frame used by the *ropaviejeros* as racks to stage and sell material collected from their journey through the city each day. They are able to depend less on the larger centralized warehouse, reducing the distance travelled and increasing time spent collecting. The *albañil* becomes a broker for these exchanges.

Figure 4.13 *Ropaviejero* truck in Colonia San Miguel Chapultepec. photograph still from Ben Emery recordings

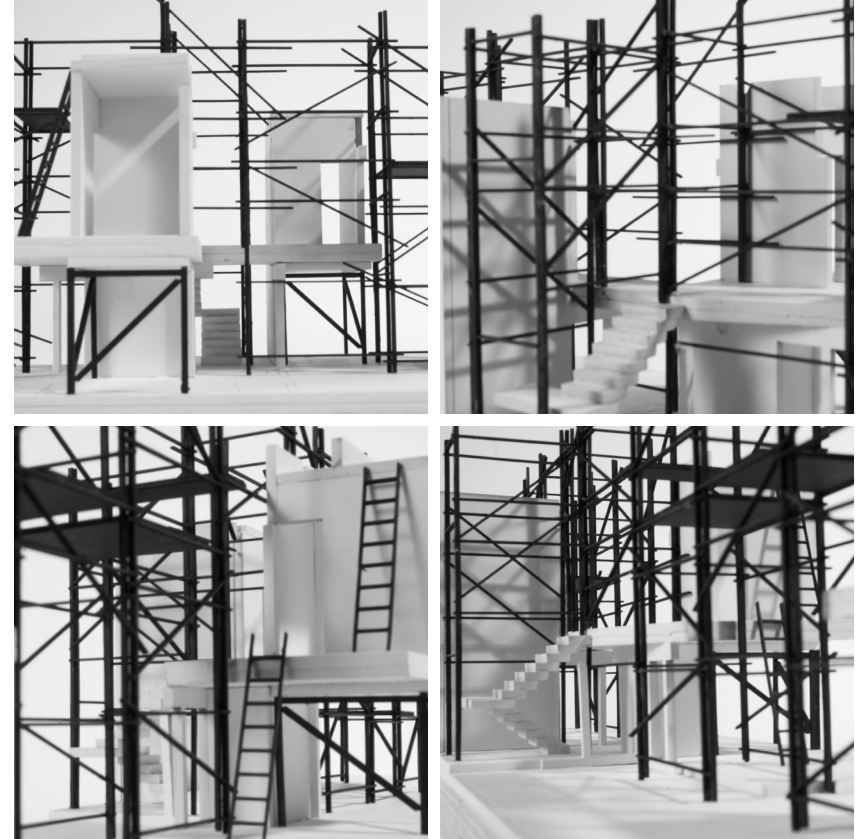


Figure 4.14 Model photos of stage three

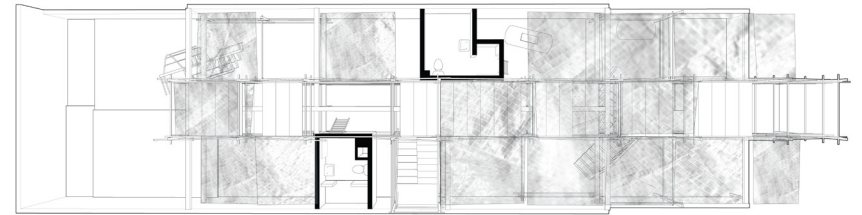
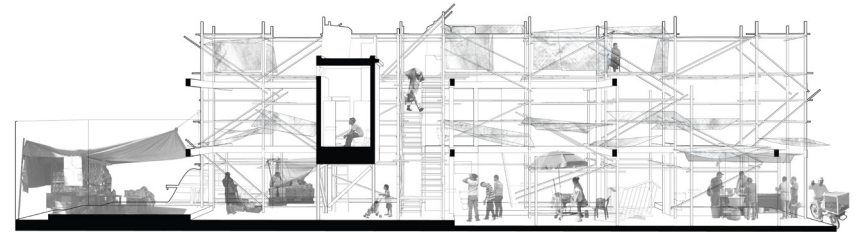
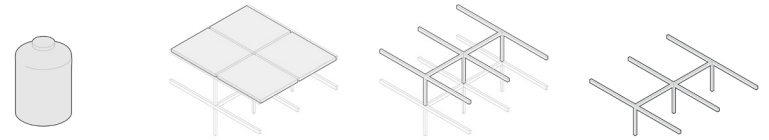


Figure 4.15 Model photo of stage three
Figure 4.16 - 4.17 Stage three section and plan



four | Unbuilt



All utilities that remain are disconnected, the tanks and lines removed. The scaffolding used to secure the site is packed up and taken to the next. The roof begins to be dismantled, followed by the upper, then lower structure. The tangle of rebar and concrete piles grow before being trucked off, clearing the site of any debris. As the dust settles, nothing remains. The worker walks away, looking for a new site a few blocks away, much the same as his, where it is the first night they are serving food.

Figure 4.18 Stripped concrete frame
photograph by: Scott Hocking [scotthocking.com/cast.html]

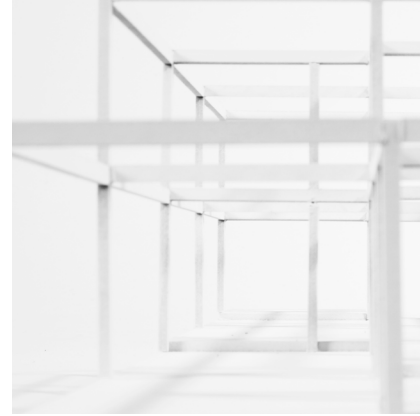


Figure 4.19 Model photos of stage four

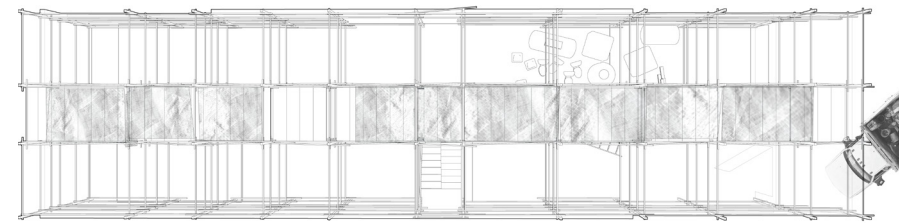
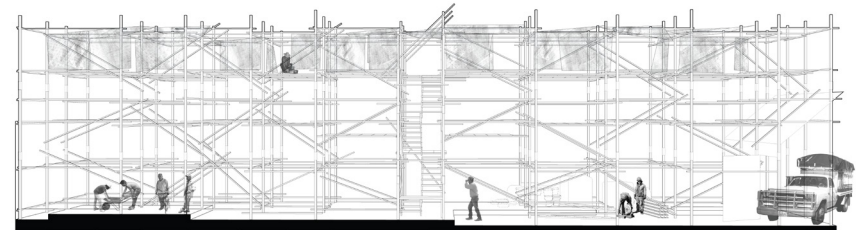


Figure 4.20 Model photo of stage four
Figure 4.21 - 4.22 Stage four section and plan

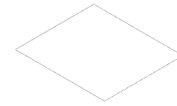
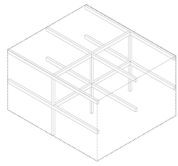
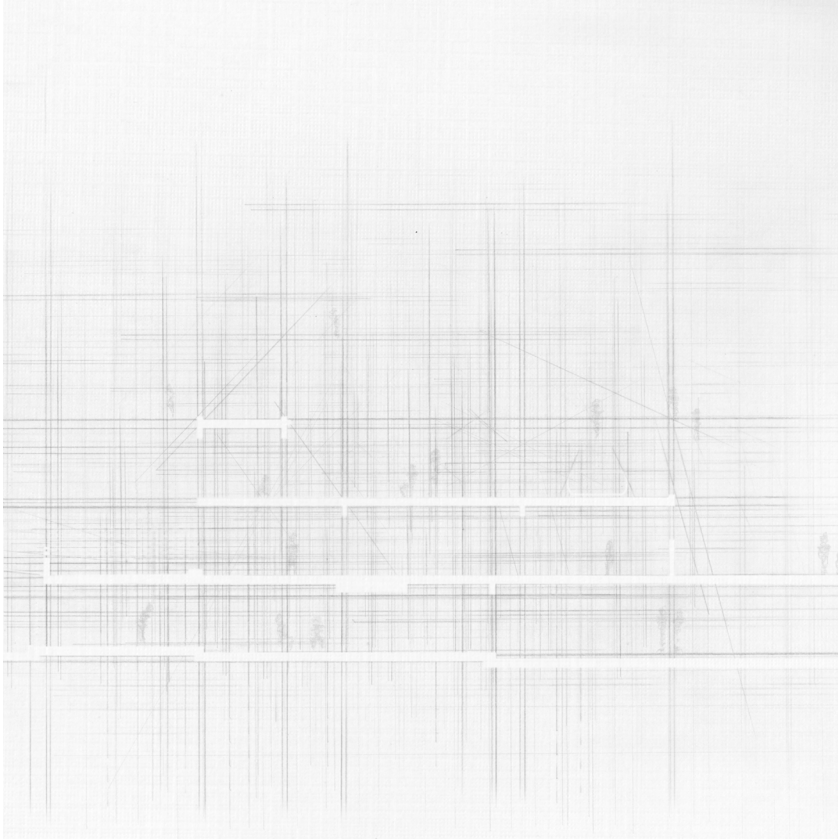


Figure 4.23 Built to unbuilt

The Space Between Built

Discussion



Unbuilding is a process integral to the translation of cities, but “when building is the only proper, sanctioned event, there is no platform in place for constructively handling the deletions that reasonably or unreasonably accompany it.”²⁴ However, this thesis contends that the interim vacancy a site often experiences before demolition provides a needed space to test how we unbuild in order to build. And when given the opportunity to apply this in a residence being redeveloped in the south of Mexico City, an accumulation of thoughts and work ensued.

The design intervention, installations, instruction sets, and the processes developed to direct this work are representative of the permutations that have stemmed from a single site. When the city is thought of as a field of addition and subtraction, this work only indicates the possibilities that could be generated for how we develop. “What is engaging about such realignment is that it repositions not only thought (the first step), but the landscape itself. The entropic residuum describes... the characteristic space of the Megalopolis. And as all systems move towards absolute closure, the qualities of this space are growing more palpable each day.”²⁵

In doing the design intervention, what this thesis best revealed was the variety of spatial configurations that a single building could generate as it is being

²⁴ Easterling, Keller, et al. *Subtraction*. 2014.

²⁵ Pope, Albert. *Ladders*. Houston, Tex.: New York: Rice School of Architecture; Princeton Architectural, 1996.

Figure 5.0 Ghost section sketch



July 2015



October 2015
[google street view]



April 2016
[google street view]

taken apart. They are necessarily momentary, precarious, and not always safe for public access. However, design should better consider the methods for how we unbuild to make these spaces useful for public consumption. Additionally, this thesis struggled with a design that was exclusively subtractive in material. The scaffolding became a treaty, that although temporary, attempted to fill and define space the moment it was released. This does not align with the rigor that an entirely subtractive design process can offer.

Fortunately, as an epilogue (or a resurrection), this thesis was given another chance to perform its unbuilding. Storefront for Art and Architecture presented an open competition, “Taking Buildings Down asks proposals for the production of voids; the demolition of buildings, structures, and infrastructures; or the subtraction of objects and/or matter as a creative act. Removal is all that is allowed.”²⁶ In using the same site, we again imagined its rebuilding in order to unbuild. In collaboration with Scott Claassen, Robert Hutchison, Cory Mattheis, and Gregory Hicks, we told the story of “Juan Jesus and his Sledgehammer” (Appendix B), which was awarded an honorable mention. Unbuilding continues.

I would like to part with an excerpt from Isozaki; “could we by sketching and describing the past in imagination thereby turn all this into the future? Would not this be a way of sketching the future? bound to such an imaginative process. Will not this future also just be fragments? ... a future superimposed upon the ruined landscapes of the past. It would not be a case of the time axis extending in both directions so much as the axis of the past imposed on that of the future generating an irrational disjunction.”²⁷

²⁶ “Call for Ideas: Taking Buildings Down.” Storefront for Art and Architecture. Accessed March 22, 2015. [storefrontnews.org/archive/call-for-ideas-taking-buildings-down].

²⁷ Isozaki, Arata. *The Future City lies Ruins*. 1988.

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all images created by author unless noted otherwise

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Appendix A

Lineamientos

Lineamientos

Three installations at Limas 15, Colonia Tlacoquemecatl del Valle, Mexico City

Curated by Robert Hutchison, Gabrel Gonzales, and Cory Mattheis

Executed August 2015, Demolished September 2015

Installation #1: (In)Comunicato, Fantasma

Project by Robert Hutchison, Gabrel Gonzales, Cory Mattheis, and LOCUS

Architect/Conceptual Team: Robert Hutchison, Gabrel Gonzales, and Cory Mattheis

Artist/Delineator Team: LOCUS - Violeta Burckhardt and Xavier de la Riva

Installation #2: Cubo

Project by Mauricio Rocha and LOCUS

Architect/Conceptual Team: Mauricio Rocha

Artist/Delineator Team: LOCUS - Violeta Burckhardt and Xavier de la Riva

Installation #3: Preliminaries

Project by Francisco Pardo and LOCUS

Architect/Conceptual Team: Francisco Pardo

Artist/Delineator Team: LOCUS - Violeta Burckhardt and Xavier de la Riva

(In)Communicato

The topic and focus of this project is communication. As architects, we use drawings to communicate our intentions and expectations to a builder. Sometimes the builder interprets these drawings (or instructions) flawlessly; and sometimes the results can be completely counter to the intentions of our drawings. Most often however, the interpretation lies curiously somewhere in between. Regardless of our attempt to be succinct and clear in our instructions, the builder speaks a different language, and thus interprets, or translates, our instructions differently from our intentions. We are interested in this in-between condition of communication: Where intentions are translated from ideas to built form, and from thoughts, images and words to physical reality; Where the final result can be mistaken (sometimes more successfully) relative to our original intentions; and Where the tools that we use to communicate (our voice; our hearing; our body language; our instructions and directions), and how we choose to implement these tools, minimize or aggravate the differential between expectation and result.

This project seeks to investigate this in-between condition that comprises miscommunication, interpretation, and translation. Four architect teams (Gonzales/Hutchison/Mattheis, Francisco Pardo, Mauricio Rocha, and Estudio MMX) are asked to provide a set of written instructions for a worker and artist team to implement as a physical intervention within the confines of a 1960s residence in the south of Mexico City. The residence is slated for demolition mid-October 2015, providing eight weeks to conduct the project. Each architect team will be given five days to visit and experience the site, and to write a set of instructions for the worker/artist team. Once all of the architect team instructions have been submitted, a worker and artist team will implement each set of instructions within the existing residence, with the following rules:

1. A worker must collaborate with the artist(s) for the entirety of each implementation of instructions.
2. The worker/artist team can implement each set of instructions in the order of their preference.
3. Equal effort (to be determined by the worker/artist team) must be given to the implementation of each set of instructions.
4. One set of instructions must be completed before commencing with the next set of instructions.
5. After the architect team instructions have been given to the worker/artist team, no further communication between the architect and worker/artist teams is permitted, and the architect team is not permitted to view the resulting intervention.

During each intervention process, the work will be documented through video and photography by Galeria Altiplano. In between each intervention, photographer Onnis Luques will document the results of the intervention in their entirety. The residence will then be demolished. The project will culminate in a gallery exhibition with accompanying publication which will display all of the documentation work, including each team's written instructions.

Instructions for the Instructions

1. The instructions must be written. No graphic instructions are permitted.
2. The instructions must be typewritten.
3. The architect teams are asked to frame their written set of instructions and corresponding intentions around the word Drawing.



LOCUS printed instruction sets in the entry of Limas 15, installation exhibition

Installation #1: Fantasma

Walk.

1. Read the next instruction after entering the house.
 2. Before walking into a new room read the subsequent instruction.
 3. Walk individually through each room of the house only looking at the walls.
 4. Visit every room on the level you are on before moving to the next level.
 5. Notice that the house has been emptied of the items that before made it a home.
 6. Pay particular attention to the wall surfaces and the locations where there are shadows left behind by objects that used to hang on the walls. The imprint left by these objects will be referred to as a fantasma in these instructions from this point forward.
- Record the number of fantasmas you see on each level. You may return to any room you have already visited.
7. Note differences in fantasmas in the same room.
 - Note differences in fantasmas between rooms.
 - Note differences in fantasmas between levels.
 8. Close every bathroom door in the house.
 - Close every door to the outside.
 - Close every closet door.
 - Open any door that enters a bedroom.
 9. If at any time you are unable to proceed due to a discrepancy with an instruction, interpret and rewrite that instruction so that it allows you to continue to the next instruction.

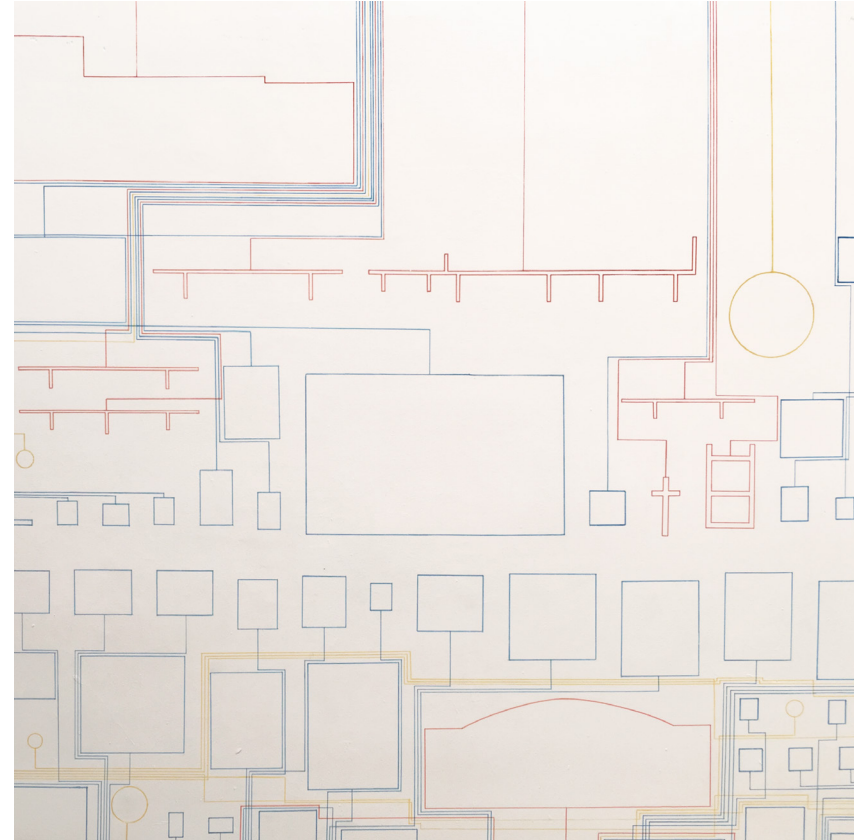
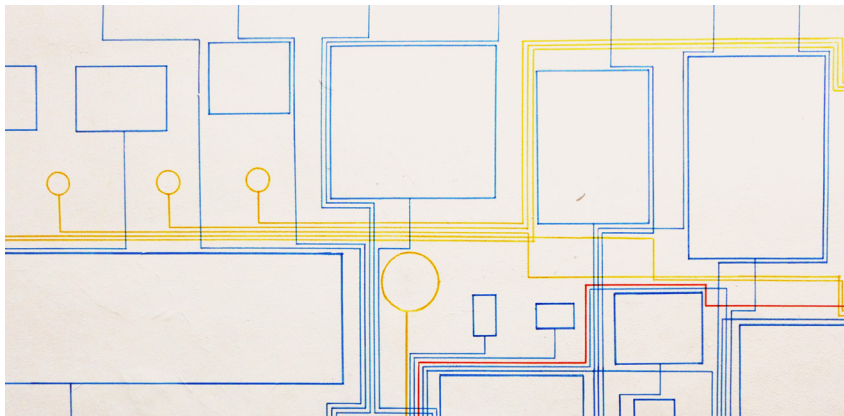
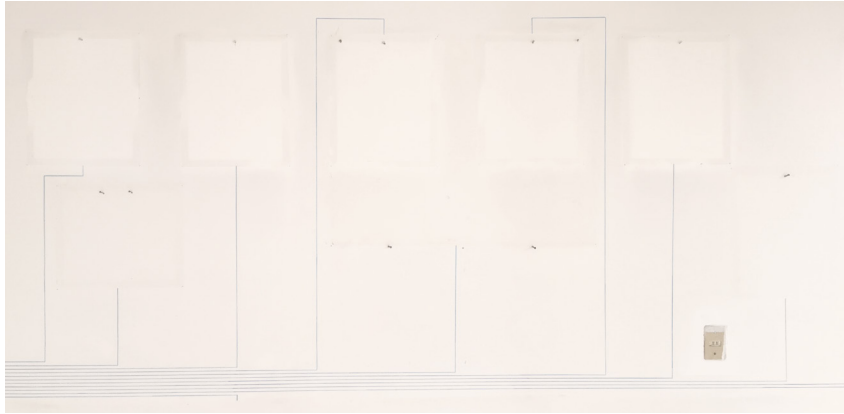
Document.

10. Meet at the top of the stairs and ask the other person how many fantasmas they found on each level. Discuss the differences you noticed in the fantasmas.
11. Decide together on a method that could categorize these fantasmas into three types. The quantities of each type should be relatively equally distributed.
12. Assign red to type 1.
- Assign blue to type 2.
- Assign yellow to type 3.
13. On the wall directly below the skylight in the main stairwell, describe these three categories with words and/or drawings at a place level with the second floor.
14. Visit each fantasma and draw a 5 mm dot at its corners in the color that corresponds to that type. If no corners were made by the removed object (ie. a circle), draw a dot at its highest, lowest, and outer most edges left and right. Use the same color in any drawing operation that relates to that fantasma type.
15. Record the size, shape and color of each fantasma in an A4 notebook. Do this in each room that is open as a result of Instruction #8.

Draw.

16. On the wall below the skylight in the main stairwell, draw two temporary horizontal lines the length of the wall. One line should be located 1500 mm above the first floor level, the other line should be located the same distance above the second floor level.
17. Either above or below each of the two lines, draw equally spaced replicas of the outlines of the original fantasmas for each floor level. All replicas shall be drawn at the same scale, reduced to fill **no more than two rows** of replica fantasmas for each floor level. The outline should be drawn as a 1 to 3 mm wide continuous perimeter line, with the color that corresponds to the original fantasma.
- The fantasma outlines are to be placed in a random order.
- The outlines may not overlap each other.
18. Remove the two temporary horizontal lines.
19. For each fantasma replica, starting at the midpoint of the top or bottom edge, draw a 1 to 3 mm wide vertical line a minimum distance of 200 mm in **the opposite direction of the fantasma replica**.
20. No line may enter the perimeter defined by either the original or replica fantasma.
21. If lines must change direction, they must change by 90 degrees.
22. If lines must intersect or cross with other lines, they must do so at 90 degrees.
23. All lines must be straight.
24. All lines must be drawn on vertical surfaces.
25. In the direction that is the shortest distance to the original fantasma, begin drawing a horizontal line.
- 26. All parallel lines must be separated by a minimum of 50 mm.**
27. All lines must be continuous from the replica to the original fantasma.
28. Closed doors may be used to bridge openings.
29. If the line intersects glass, use a black permanent marker until the wall surface is encountered again.
- 30. If the line intersects a wall that is not white, draw a white paint line 1 to 3 mm wide until a white wall surface is encountered again.**
31. When the horizontal line reaches a point directly above or below the midpoint of the corresponding fantasma, draw a vertical line that terminates at the intersection with the perimeter of that fantasma.
32. Repeat these drawing operations between every replica fantasma and its original.

red text are lines of instruction that were not followed, or left undone



*drawn lines that trace the outline of the shadow
to its replica on a central wall*



Installation #2: Cubo

12 red colored strings will be tensed across the whole house. 8 strings along the horizontal axes and 4 along the vertical axes in order to construct a 3-dimensional cube drawn directly in space.

The horizontal strings must necessarily go from one extremity to the opposite extremity of the house. On the first floor, from north to south, the trajectory of both strings must be between the walls, marking the center of the space **at an intermediate height from the floor to the ceiling**. The first one between the eastern wall and the intermediate wall going through the garage, stairs and living room. The second between the intermediate wall and the western wall going through the service room, kitchen, dining room and patio. On the upper level, in the same north-south direction, two more strings will cross all rooms, **also at an intermediate height between the ceiling and floor** and in the middle of the rooms. The lines will cross on the same axis but parallel to those traced previously on the bottom floor.

In a perpendicular direction, the strings will be traced from one boundary to the other along the east-west axis. The first strings to be tensed will be on the upper floor. The first one will be traced in the middle of the room closest to the northern facade, before the closet **and at an intermediate height between ceiling and floor**. The second string will be placed in the center of the main stairway between the intermediate wall and the wall located facing south.

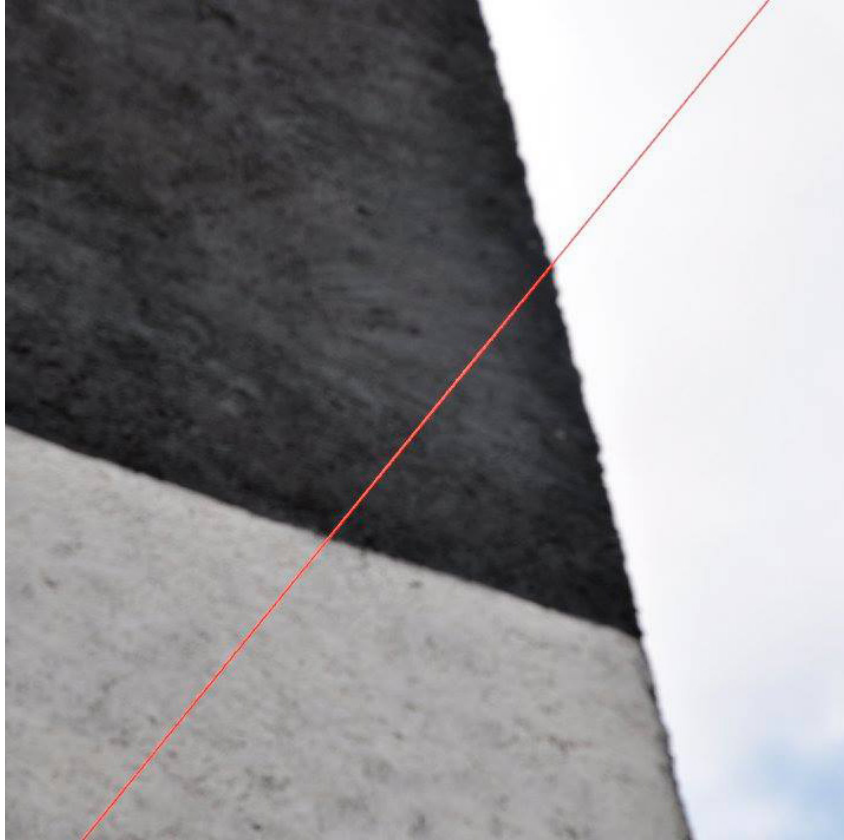
On the lower floor the same trajectories previously traced on the upper floor will be repeated **with an intermediate height between the ceiling and the floor**. These 4 traces on each floor level will touch, generating horizontal squares on each level. Only then will the 4 vertical strings that go from the lowest level of the house to the roof, touch with the other lines, outlining the vertex of a 3-dimensional cube. Each string that needs to cross a wall can be helped by making a perforation with a drill or similar tool.

It is fundamental that the 8 horizontal strings go from one end of the house lot to the other going through walls, doors or glass. On the vertical sense, the 4 strings that help to articulate the 3-dimensional cube must be tensed from the floor to the highest roof top, going through all intermediate floors. The 12 strings must be tensed with red "reventón" and go from one extremity of the house to the other to complete a floating 3-dimensional cube in space.

red text are lines of instruction that were not followed, or left undone



vertices of string that delineate the cube, in the kitchen and the stairwell



Installation #3: Preliminaries

The longitudinal axes I, II and III, from north to south, where I is the western axis, II is the central axis and III is the eastern axis. The horizontal planes L1, L2 and L3, where L1 is the roof slab, L2 is the mezzanine floor and L3 is the floor slab.

Four quadrants will be established: Quadrant C1 is the space between axes I and II, and the planes L1 and L2.

Quadrant C2 is the space between the axes II and III and the planes L1 and L2.

Quadrant C3 is the space between the axes I and II and the planes L2 and L3.

Quadrant C4 is the space between the axes II and III and the planes L2 and L3.

I. Photographs will be made on each of the axes found along the pre-established transversal cuts.

There will be one shot per quadrant plane on C1, C2, C3 and C4. This means, four takes for each cut plane. There are 7 cutting planes (A-A to G-G) and four shots per cutting plane, amounting to a total of 28 takes about the current condition.

II. In the C1 quadrant, position the camera along the A-A cutting plane. Demolish all transversal planes to axes I and II. The demolition sequence will follow the cutting planes (A-A to G-G). One take for each demolition, the camera stays along the A-A cutting plane. Repeat the sequence in C2, C3 and C4.

III. Demolish the horizontal plane L2 between the axes I and II. Begin with the section between the cutting planes A-A and B-B. Continue with the section B-B and C-C. Repeat until reaching G-G. For each demolished section one take will be made from A-A. Repeat sequence between the axes II and III.

IV. Demolish the horizontal plane L1 between the axes I and II. Begin with the section between the cutting planes A-A and B-B. Continue with the section B-B and C-C. Repeat until reaching G-G. For each demolished section one take will be made from A-A. Repeat sequence between the axes II and III.

V. Demolish the vertical plane I. Begin with the section between the cutting planes A-A and B-B. Continue with the section between B-B and C-C. Repeat until you reach G-G. For each demolished section one shot will be taken from A-A. Repeat the sequence on the vertical plane III.

VI. Demolish the vertical plane II. Begin with the section between the cutting planes A-A and B-B. Continue with the section between B-B and C-C until you reach G-G. For each demolished section two shots will be taken from A-A. One is quadrant C3 and the other in quadrant C4.

Notes

All photographic takes will be frontal, facing south and with a one-point perspective. The camera will be positioned at the center of each quadrant at an equal distance between the axes I, II and III and the planes L1 and L2 or L2 and L3.

Each take will be codified with the following nomenclature. (instruction, quadrant, cutting axis, photograph number / ex: I.C1 A-A 01)

During the whole process, non-structural elements such as stairs, aluminum works, smith works, wood work, electric installations, hydraulic installations, bathroom furniture and kitchen will stay in place.

red text are lines of instruction that were not followed, or left undone



the first wall removed from demolition, beginning to erase the traced lines and the house

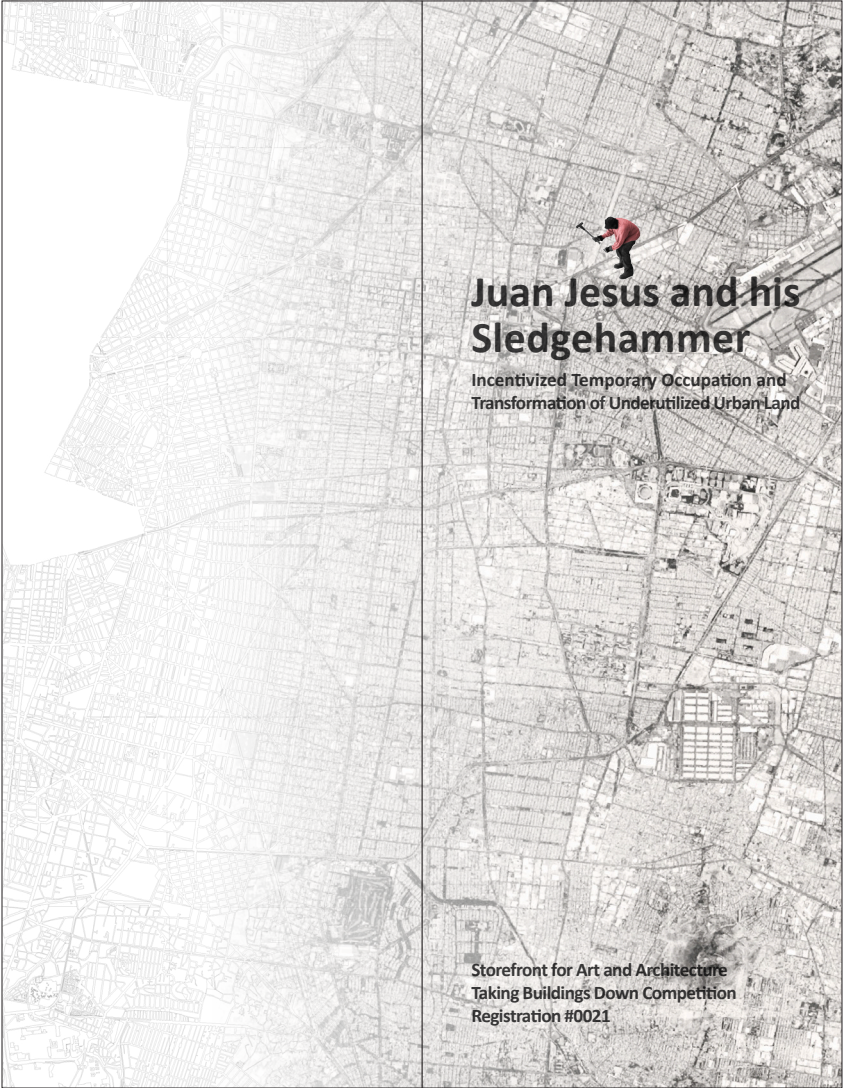


Appendix B

Juan Jesus and his Sledgehammer

'Taking Buildings Down' Competition
Storefront For Art and Architecture, 2016
Awarded Honorable Mention

Competition Proposal by Gabrel Gonzales, Robert Hutchison,
Cory Mattheis, Scott Claassen, and Gregory Hicks



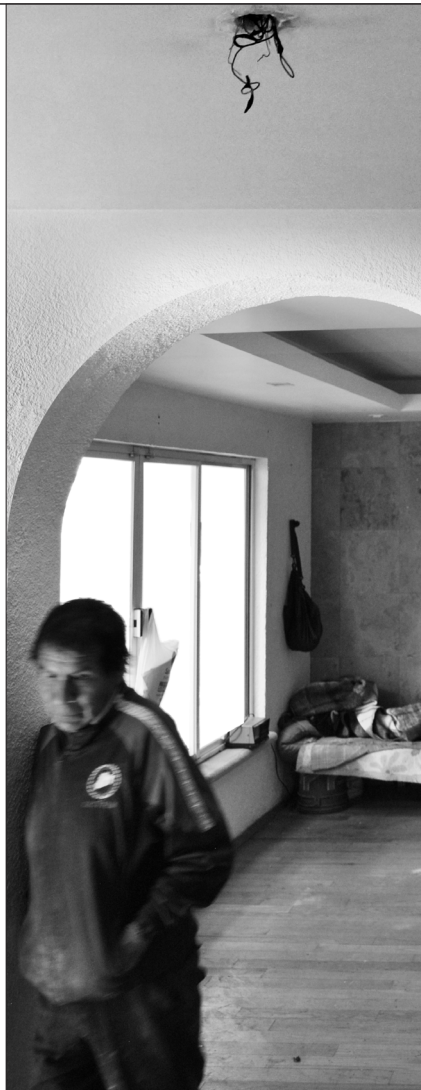
Foreword

We are interested in how Demolition can serve as an effective planning tool that tests new possibilities for the city. In Mexico City, as single family residences are redeveloped into multi-family housing projects, there exists a 12-week vacancy between when residents have vacated, and before the building is demolished. Incredibly, throughout this 12 week process there lives a caretaker on site whose sole job is to ensure that squatters do not take over the property. We met one such person while visiting a site in the south of Mexico City. His name was Juan Jesus, or JJ for short. We were struck how lonely he must feel, and that there was nothing for him to do except sit in the house all day and night. We asked if we could get him something - a bed, a tv, books to read. His reply was simply "All I want to do is work".

...throughout this 12 week process there lives a caretaker...

Meeting JJ and caretakers at other similar sites made us start to think about these sites as opportunities for temporary inhabitation and alternative activities, which could occupy the site between periods of demolition. But rather than allowing for informal, user-led appropriation, we propose a formalized "undevelopment" of the sites, one that considers and enrolls all stakeholders with incentives. What if the caretaker helped to carefully demolish the building in phases? What if the community was granted temporary occupation of the site? What if the owner/developer was given tax incentives to allow for this temporary occupation? What if the City could start to use these sites for infrastructure and emergency management in times of earthquake or flooding? Through a recognition of the political and economical processes involved in the evolution of the city, there exists the opportunity for architects and the community to design the un-built.

JJ's story served as the inspiration for our project. The social implications behind his involvement, and the opportunities that they represent to him as well as the public, challenged us to develop a project whose scope and application is far reaching. In honor of JJ, we have asked him to help tell our story.



May 25, 2015, Mexico City
Translated from Yucatec Maya

**Juan Jesus, can you tell me little bit about yourself?
Where you came from, and what brings you to
Mexico City?**

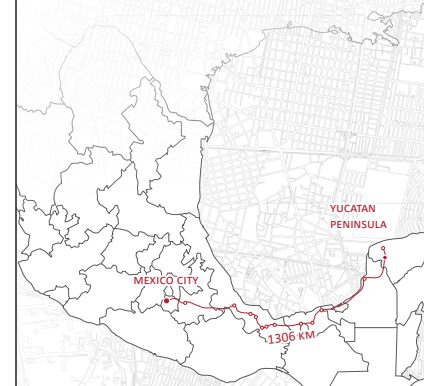
My name is Juan Jesus, but my friends call me JJ. I just turned 29 years old and I am a carpenter. I have been out of work since the beginning of the year and heard the opportunities were greater here in the City. I just finished a 2-day bus trip from Santa Elena- a small Mayan town in the Yucatan where I grew up. I hope to find work on a construction site, but I am worried that my limited Spanish will hurt my chances for finding a job. I wonder if I can find some people who speak Yucatec Mayan? My mother is very sad, but she knows this is for the good of our family. If I can find work, I can send money back home.

**You mentioned that your training was in carpentry?
What sorts of projects did you work on?**

Mostly I've worked on building additions throughout the homes in Santa Elena. You know, as families grow so do the houses. Recently, more and more families are moving to the City and our work in the town has slowed down. Residential construction keeps me busy most of the time but when it gets slow I build shrines of Guadalupe.

**I've always wondered where the shrines were made.
Have you ever done the pilgrimage to the Basilica?**

No. But I hope to this year.



June 12, 2015

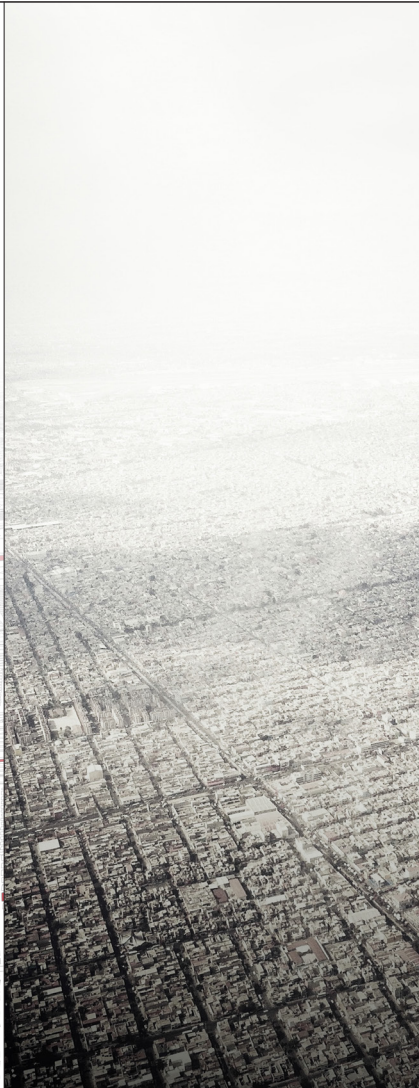
JJ, it's been a few weeks since we spoke and I'm curious how you ended up here? On this jobsite, in this house?

It was sort of the only opportunity that has come up. Like I said before, even though I've been trained as a carpenter, my limited Spanish has meant that the only job I could find is serving as a caretaker on residential properties that are awaiting demolition. In Mexico City, there are many residences that are being demolished throughout the city, to be developed for multi-family housing by developers. For 12 weeks, while the permits are being handled, the property is unoccupied and the existing house remains intact. I have to live on the site for the entire 12 weeks.

For 12 weeks, while the permits are being handled, the property is unoccupied and the existing house remains intact...

So for 12 weeks this house is your home? What's your daily routine like? How do you spend your time?

I am only given one hour per day to leave the site to get food and supplies. My boss tells me that I am here to prevent vandalism, but I know the real reason is to keep the squatters out. I wish there was something more to do... They ask me if I want a TV or books, but my Spanish is still poor, and I can't read. Besides, all I want to do is to work. At least the utilities are all still turned on, but who knows for how long...



September 25, 2015

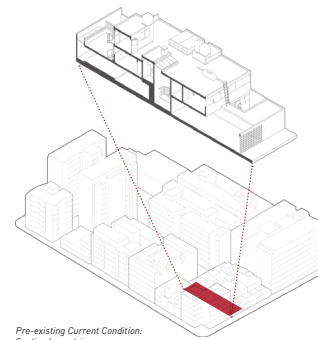
Here we are at a new job site- you seem different than last time we spoke. What's going on?

I'm excited! My boss just told me that this job site is going to be run differently than the last. Apparently the City has created a new program that encourages developers to allow the residential sites to be used by the local community during the 12 week period. As an incentive for the developer, the City allows the buildings on the site to be slowly demolished over the course of the 12 weeks.

a new program that encourages developers to allow the residential sites to be used by the local community...

So the community will get to use the site over the course of the demolition? What does the developer think about this? I can imagine there could be some concern...

Actually, my boss is pleased that at the end of 12 weeks he will have a clean site ready for construction to begin, and the City is now paying for my salary. I will be in charge of four other workers to coordinate the demolition process with the occupation of the site by the community. I've been talking with my boss about the schedule and it's definitely going to be challenging- but finally, I get to work!



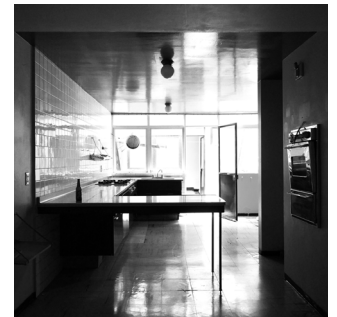
Pre-existing Current Condition:
Section Isometric



The site is located in Colonia Tlacoquemecatl del Valle, in southern Mexico City



A The existing house is a concrete frame structure built in the late 1950s.



B All utilities, including a full kitchen, are still intact.

Can you show me around the house?

Yes. As you can see from the street the house is modest - a 2-story rowhouse surrounded by taller apartment buildings. It's located in the Colonia Tlacoquemecatl del Valle, south of downtown. I think this type of house was typical for the area many years ago but you can see that the neighborhood is changing. The lot is deep and divided in the long direction by a central wall. On the ground floor there are living and dining spaces with a kitchen and two small bathrooms. There is a paved parking space in the front, a garden in the back and a small courtyard off the kitchen. This courtyard separates the maid's quarters from the rest of the house.



Pre-existing Current Condition:
Ground Plan, 2nd Floor Plan, Roof Plan

Was a maid's quarters typical in this type of home?

Yes, in middle class homes. My aunt worked and lived in a home in Merida for many years when I was young.

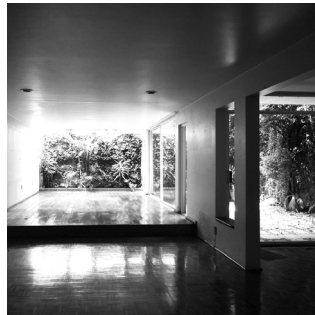
Moving on... upstairs are the bedrooms ... there are three of them; one faces the street and two face the courtyard. There are also two bathrooms. If you take the spiral stair from the bedroom terrace you will arrive at the laundry room on the roof- my favorite room in the house and probably where I will sleep during for the next 12 weeks.



C The 2-story structure includes an accessible roof.



D A double-height open stair connects both floors.



E An outdoor patio provides light and air.

September 26, 2015

Buenos Dias JJ. It's great to see demolition starting to happen! But why are you removing parts of the ground floor slab? Why not start with the roof and walls?

I know, it seems strange, doesn't it? But this is what my boss has instructed me to do, apparently at the request of the City. The City has the idea that this site, along with the numerous other sites that stand vacant, represents an opportunity to address annual flooding that occurs in the City during our rainy season.

Boy, tell me about it. Last night's thunderstorm had me stuck in traffic for four hours! There was two feet of standing water on Avenida Insurgentes.

As you probably know, our rainy season typically lasts from June into October, when there are daily thunderstorms that roll across the city every evening, dumping large quantities of rain in a very short period of time.

...this site, along with the numerous other sites that stand vacant, represents an opportunity to address annual flooding...

I read that flooding in the City has been a problem ever since it was founded by the Aztecs over 500 years ago on an island in the middle of a lake. And once the Spaniards arrived and conquered the City, they started to drain the lake, making the problem of flooding even worse!

Yes, it can be really bad. But the City hopes that by removing paving on these temporary sites, it will provide a place for the water to go. As the first item of demolition on the site, they have asked that we remove at least half of the paving. The challenge for me is to figure out what areas to remove!

Prepare for Stormwater
Drainage: Remove up to 50% of
ground floor slab





September 30, 2015

So JJ... how is it going after a few days on the site? I imagine there is some pretty significant demolition happening in order to prepare for the upcoming community occupation.

It's my fifth day on the job site. Or should I call it my new home? Yesterday we helped the community to set up a Shrine for the Virgin Guadalupe, which we placed near the back wall to watch over the house. I feel safer now that she is present on the site. Over the next few days we will continue with the preliminary demolition of the house.

Day 1: Install Shrine



It is an intricate process because the house is going to be used as a temporary community kitchen next week. This means we can only salvage the most accessible items - doors, windows, and interior finishes that don't affect the functionality of the kitchen.

the house is going to be used as a temporary community kitchen next week. This means we can only salvage the most accessible items - doors, windows, and interior finishes

We sell these items to the ropavejeros, who come down the street with their trucks each day and will buy or sell nearly anything. Many of them specialize in building materials. Yesterday, I saw a neighbor buy two doors before they even loaded them onto the truck. We've been instructed to open up the front of the site to provide better access from the street to the kitchen and food counter, however I am concerned about securing the property at night. After all, I will be living here for the next 12 weeks.

Prepare for Community Kitchen: Salvage Doors, Windows & Interior Finishes

Week 1 - Demolition

October 24, 2015

JJ, I must say... I came by la Cocina del Valle last week and was impressed. It was packed! How did you guys pull this off?

(Jajajaja) Thank you. To tell you the truth we didn't have to do much. We just approached the job like a typical salvage process but very selectively. Everything that was removed was in an effort to enhance the experience of the kitchen. Did you have anything to eat?

Yes, of course-it was delicious! And if the line down the sidewalk was any indication, people are going to be disappointed that the kitchen is only open for two weeks.

Well you're probably right about that. But the neighborhood is already talking about the next temporary use. My boss tells me that in the next step of demolition we will need to create space for offices. But not typical offices- incubators. I just learned this word.



Weeks 2-4: Community Kitchen

The idea is that the house can become a resource for residents of the neighborhood who are interested in starting new businesses. I've already heard that Maria, who lives down the street, is going to have some space to work on her new clothing store, while Ivan is going to be working with his students on a way to supply the neighborhood with water while the city is still planning how to install a larger system that keeps up with development. I'm just happy with a working toilet!

...the house can become a resource for residents of the neighborhood who are interested in starting new businesses...

So what does that mean for you and your crew? How will you turn a rowhouse into offices?

Again, we will approach the process thinking primarily about removal. I can't imagine working indoors all the time, so I want to provide some new outdoor space. The weather in Mexico City is perfect for being outside; the only thing you have to worry about is providing some cover for the rainy season.

Prepare for Incubator: Open up ground floor, provide for double-height spaces, removal of some upper floor walls to bring more light to ground floor



Week 5: Demolition



Well, that seems like an important part of it all. One major asset of these sites is that they have functioning infrastructure already in place. It makes sense to take advantage of that and use it.

That's the whole idea, as I understand it. How can these buildings give back to the community in some way? At least temporarily...

We are basically opening up the site as much as possible...

How do you think the site will be used by the community in preparation for the festival?

The site will give them a common covered space to organize and plan for the long walk. It's no walk in the park ... it's 20 km, and some of them crawl on their hands and knees the entire way! Also, many of the pilgrims carry pictures or statues of Our Lady, and the site will give them a place to stage for this. Besides the residents, we also anticipate pilgrims already in route from the countryside to stop by the site for final preparations before the last segment of the journey. We are expecting a lot of people.



Weeks 10-11: Festival Preparations

December 16, 2015

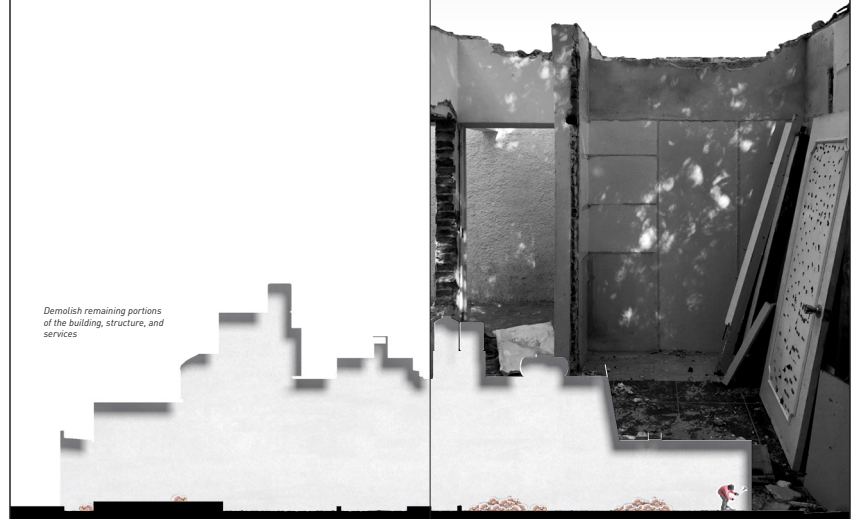
JJ, did you make the walk to the Basilica on the 12th?

I did! It was incredible. The entire community came out to walk together. I also met several families who had made the pilgrimage from Puebla, on the other side of the mountains.

The Day of Our Lady Guadalupe made me wonder what is going to happen to the Shrine that you installed on the Site?

Tomorrow there is going to be a procession to carry the Virgen de Guadalupe to another house that's not far away. She will migrate from site to site - like I have. I met the family who is moving from the next house- they came by at least once a week during the demolition. I heard that when they sold it to the developer, they negotiated for their house to be used in the same way as this one. I don't really know how all that works, I just know how to take down these houses.

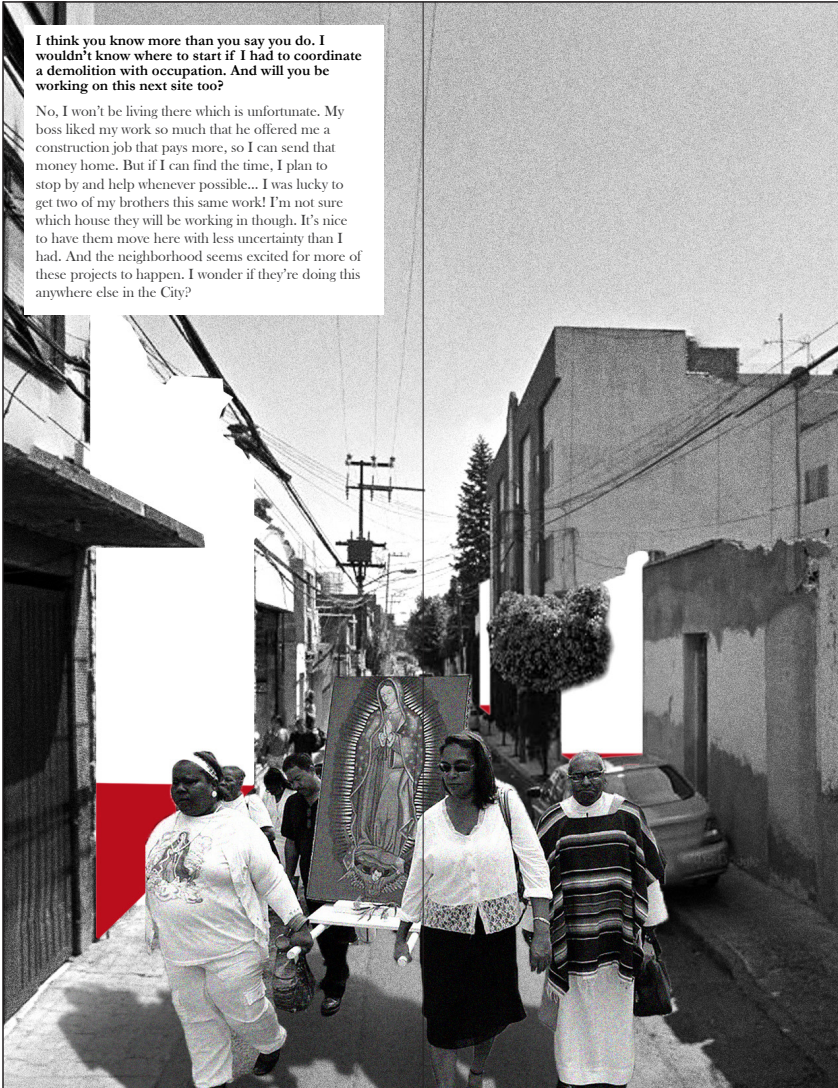
Demolish remaining portions of the building, structure, and services



Week 12: Demolition

I think you know more than you say you do. I wouldn't know where to start if I had to coordinate a demolition with occupation. And will you be working on this next site too?

No, I won't be living there which is unfortunate. My boss liked my work so much that he offered me a construction job that pays more, so I can send that money home. But if I can find the time, I plan to stop by and help whenever possible... I was lucky to get two of my brothers this same work! I'm not sure which house they will be working in though. It's nice to have them move here with less uncertainty than I had. And the neighborhood seems excited for more of these projects to happen. I wonder if they're doing this anywhere else in the City?

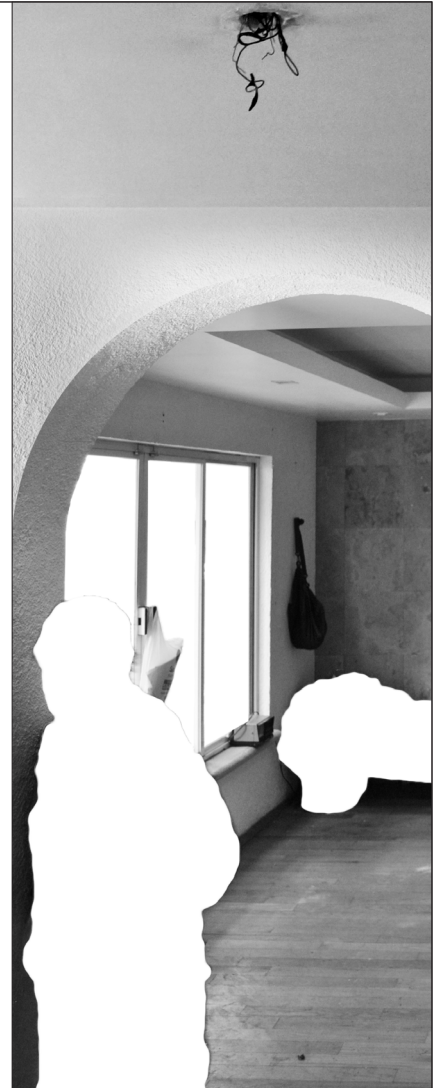


Afterword

Through a considered and designed demolition process - one that includes and values all stakeholders involved - liminal urban sites offer the opportunity to serve as a new means for the temporary architectural occupation of the City. The challenge in advancing the goal of public access to these liminal sites is the uniting of historically estranged and/or diametrically opposed participants involved in or affected by the purchase, sale, demolition, development, and use of urban space. We believe that through the generation of complimentary (and at times subversive) incentives, the local government, community, and property owners/ developers can be brought together into a collaborative network to achieve the common good of all parties involved. Within this practice of the "undevelopment" of Mexico City's liminal spaces, the Architect serves the multiple roles of Planner, Networker, and Moderator.

...liminal urban sites offer the opportunity to serve as a new means for the temporary architectural occupation of the City.

We thank Juan Jesus for helping us to tell this story. We wish him the best as he continues to seek out a better life for him and his family.



Synopsis

How can we engage the Developer to join our Network?

A developer's incentive is almost always financial, or driven by governmental requirements or benefits. One tool might be to seek regulatory changes, including tax structures, to provide incentives for developers to allow temporary use of privately owned sites for public use. (Tokyo's property tax structure provides incentives for vacant lots to be used for agricultural purposes over parking). Also provide reimbursement of labor costs for the demolition of the building.

A property seller's incentive is almost always financial. Establish a property tax structure that provides incentive for property sellers to require that purchasing developers allow temporary occupancy, for example, by granting them tax credits to offset any reduction in the sale price they suffer by insisting that developers allow temporary use.

To relieve a Developer's concern regarding liability, establish a City-provided liability insurance program that absolves developers from all liability related to public use of the site.

How can we engage the Mexico City Government to join our Network?

Mexico City suffers from extensive annual flooding during their rainy season, and is considered to be one of the worst examples of ground water depletion. These sites represent a temporary, yet continuously replicating civic infrastructure that as a collective group of sites has the potential to relieve storm water drainage in times of flooding, and can assist in recharging the City's groundwater depletion. Mandate that as part of the demolition process, 50% or more of the ground floor impervious surface be removed.

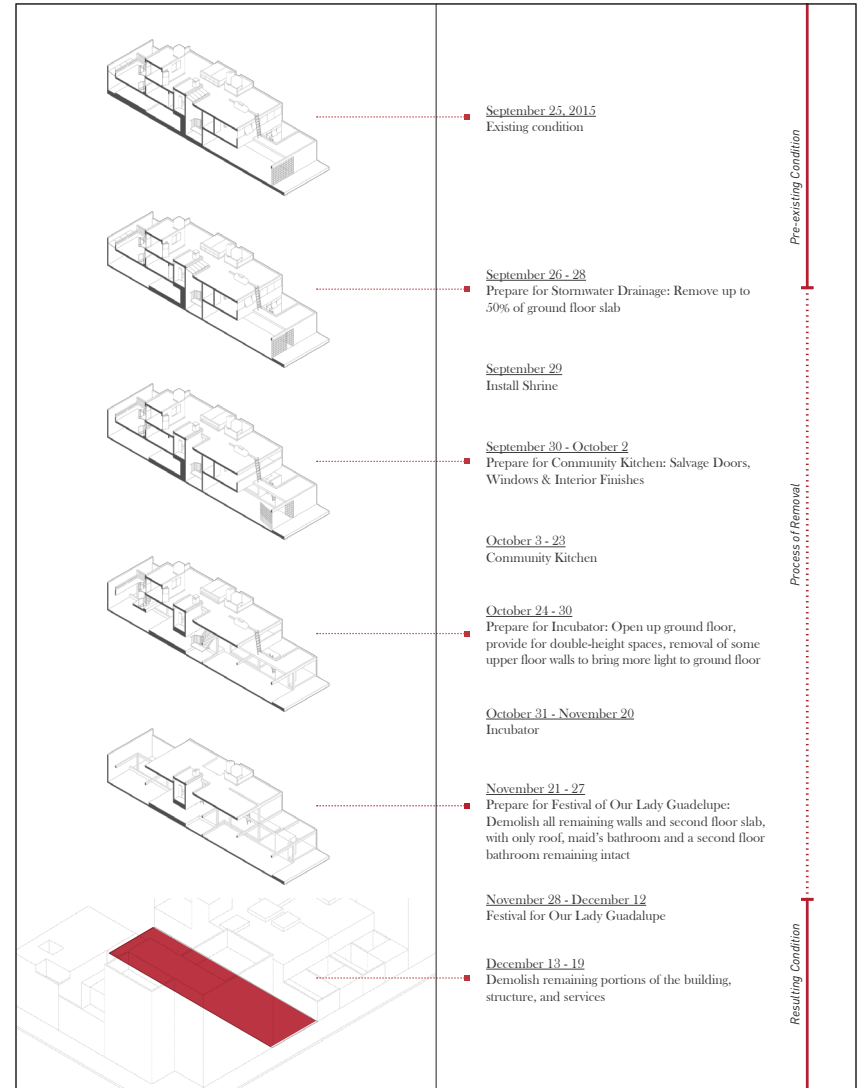
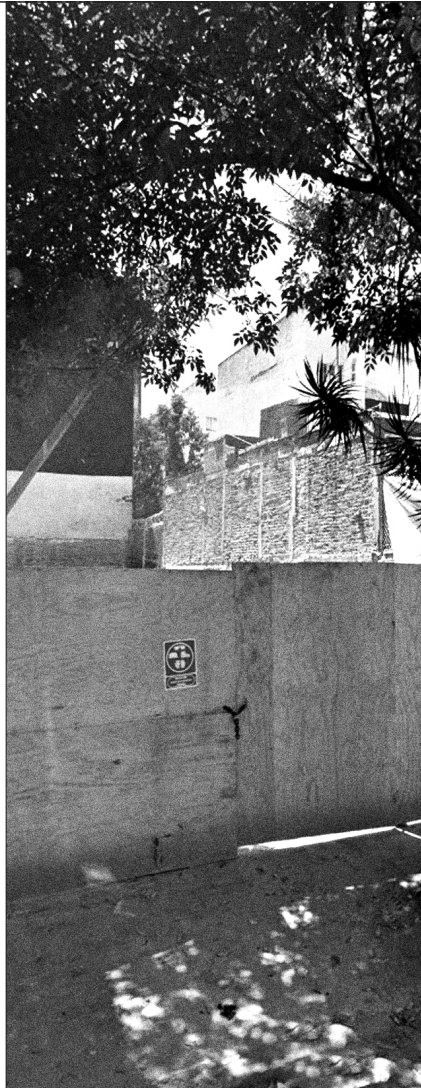
Mexico City's government historically has problematic relations with communities and community groups. The city could play a vital role in establishing and coordinating the process through which properties were included in the network and opened to community use, thereby generating substantial goodwill and strengthening its image in the eyes of the public.

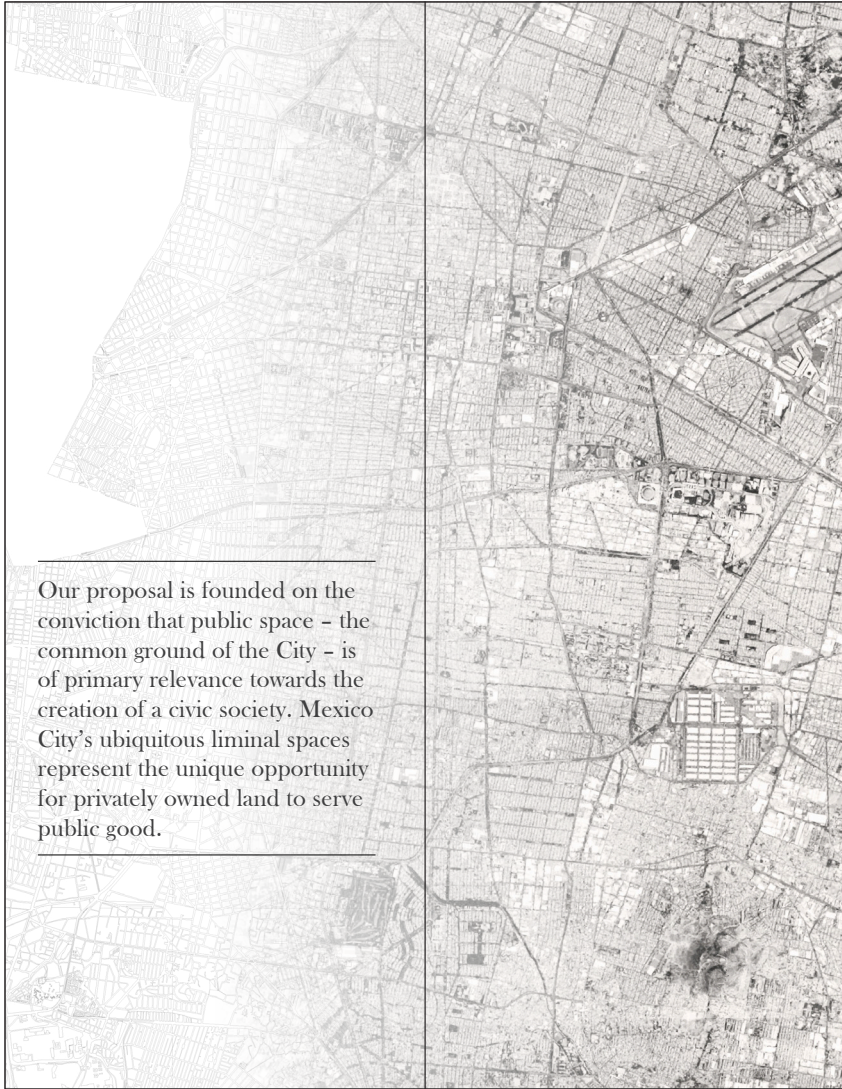
How can we engage Communities to join our Network?

Mexico City's communities suffer from a lack of public space, particularly space that provides shelter for community gathering. This proposal provides the community with a temporary covered public space to gather and use for the benefit of the public good.

Mexico City's communities historically have problematic relations with the local government. Provision of public space will aid in repair of the communities' distrust of the government.

In Mexico City, as in many cities, the relationship between communities and developers is always strained. Through temporary public occupation of the site, the community is provided the opportunity to engage with the developer in a way that otherwise would never exist, allowing for the possibility for the community to provide input on how the property might be developed and used in the future.





Our proposal is founded on the conviction that public space – the common ground of the City – is of primary relevance towards the creation of a civic society. Mexico City’s ubiquitous liminal spaces represent the unique opportunity for privately owned land to serve public good.

Appendix C

Tianguis

Documentation project by Gabrel Gonzales
Exhibited at Altiplano Galería, Mexico City

Conducted for 'Recording the City' course taught by Affiliate
Assistant Professor Robert Hutchison and Part-time lecturer Cory Mattheis
University of Washington Architecture in Mexico Program
March 2015



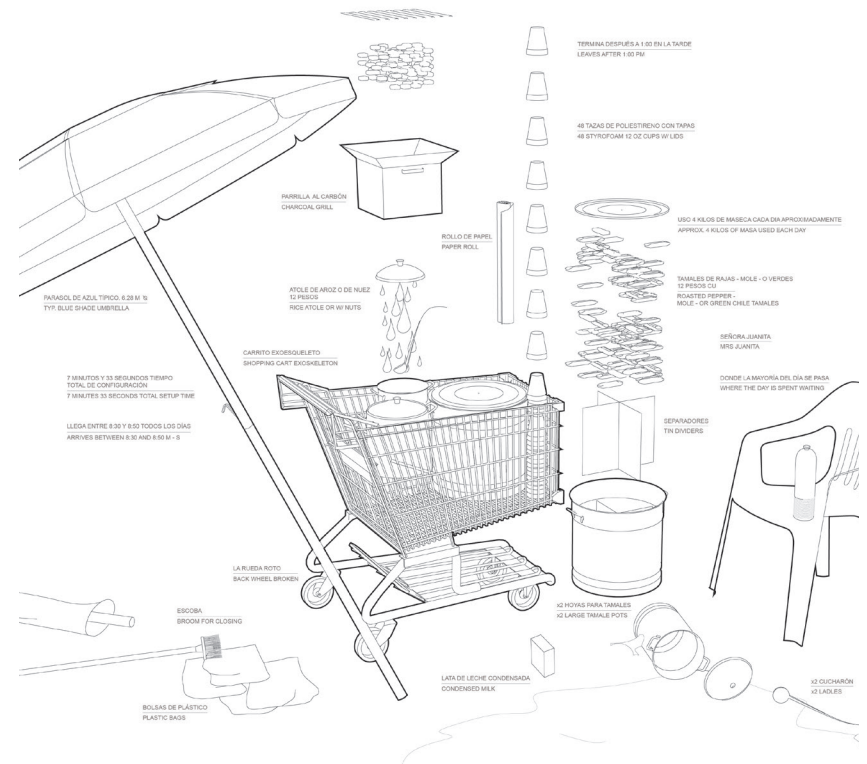
Avenida Nuevo León, Mexico City

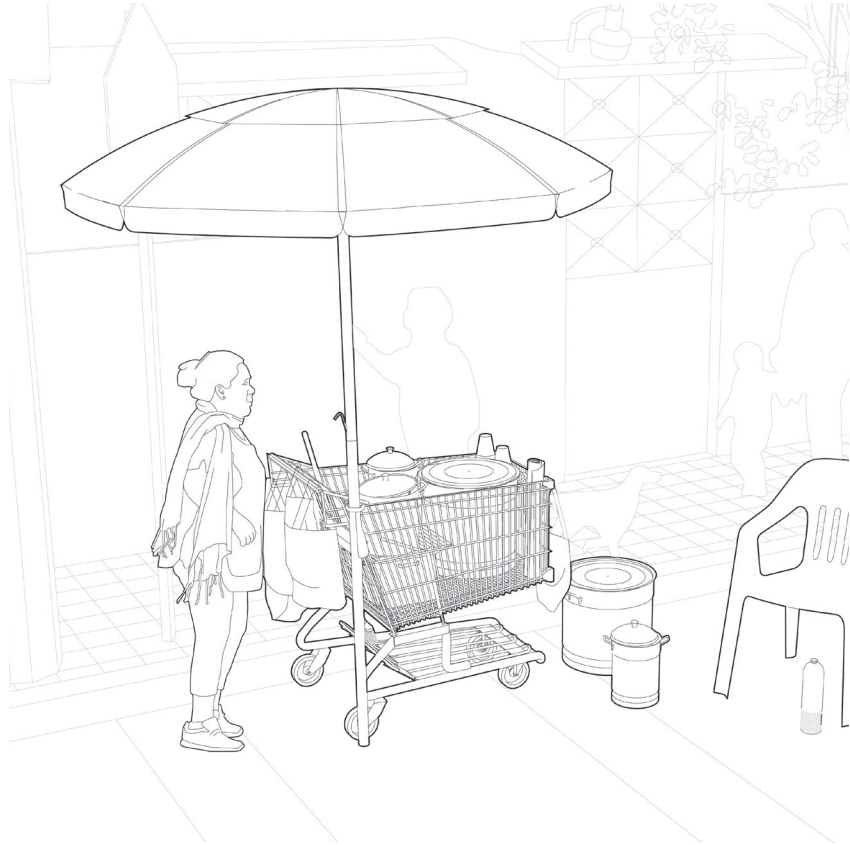


Exhibition at Altiplano Galería. 03/2015



Gobernador Ignacio Esteva, Mexico City





Appendix D

Periférico Infrastructure

Project Statement

Today's global population is occupying an increasingly itinerant lifestyle, a modern return to the nomadic condition of following resources and opportunity where they exist. Whether by choice or necessity, it is a transition away from the stability associated with a fixed home. As increasing numbers of people move into urban environments, instead of remaining static once there, populations continue to travel within that city or make their way to new cities. Opportunity for placemaking is often diminished along with resources expended to make these frequent transitions. Periférico Infrastructure proposes a prototype for living that responds to this condition of movement and migration, one that could adapt as its inhabitants adapt to new places and situations.

The condition of urban movement defines Mexico City. Having reached the urban fringe with the vehicle, there is now a shift inward to accommodate growth and changing functions of the city. This has made available a network of vehicular related infrastructure that could support fluctuating populations with new modes of living. For a more flexible and open architecture to occur at this scale, three types of infrastructure have been identified: the periférico (a circular elevated highway); advertising billboards, and; pedestrian bridges that span between dissected city parts.

A proposal for adapting these ready-built infrastructures was developed during a three-month University of Washington architecture studio taught by Rob Hutchison and Cory Mattheis. It explores an architecture that could inhabit an environment in a given time and place, be able to react and interact with ongoing social and cultural changes, complex cities, technology, uncertain futures, and changing structures. A mobile architecture that could move with you. What would begin as an individual could aggregate, attaching to shared resources and infrastructure, creating a sense of place defined by a network instead of a static location.

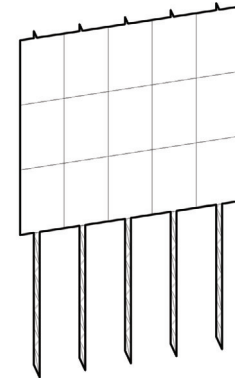
Studio project by Gabrel Gonzales
Conducted for Arch506 studio course taught by Affiliate
Assistant Professor Robert Hutchison and Part-time Lecturer Cory Mattheis

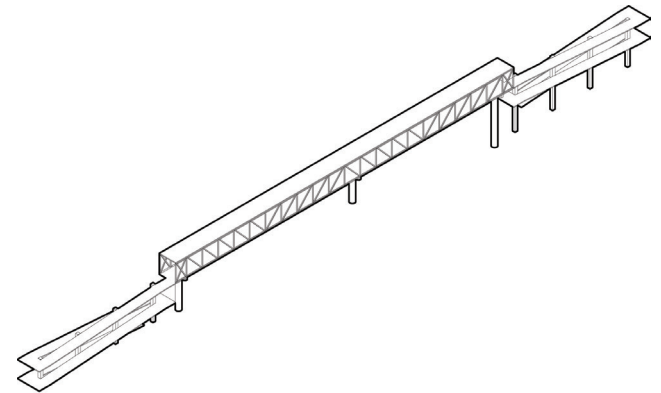
'Tectonic Tacubaya: Strategic Interventions in Mexico City's Colonia Tacubaya'
University of Washington Architecture in Mexico Program
March 2015



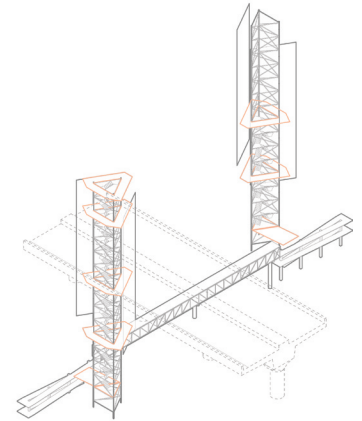
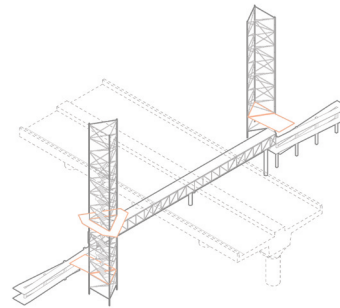
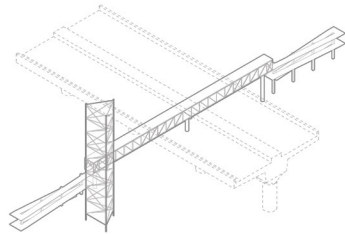
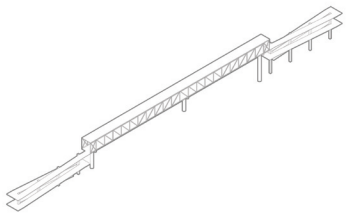
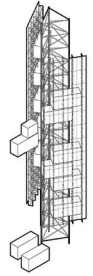
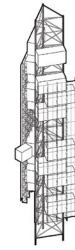
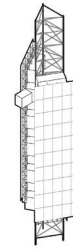
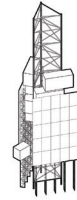
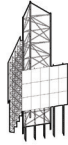
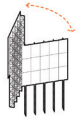


anillo periférico [92 km / 57 mi]
circuito interior [42 km / 26 mi]



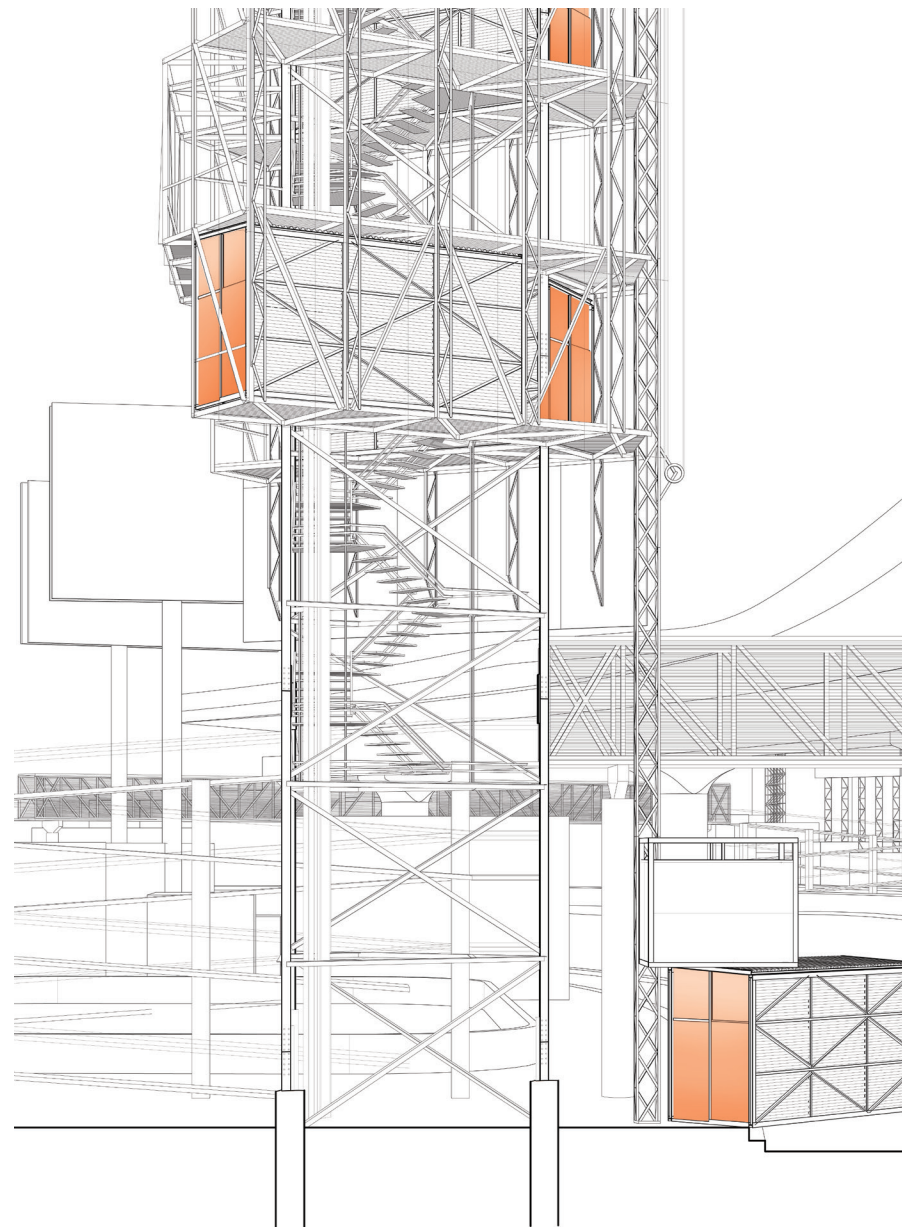
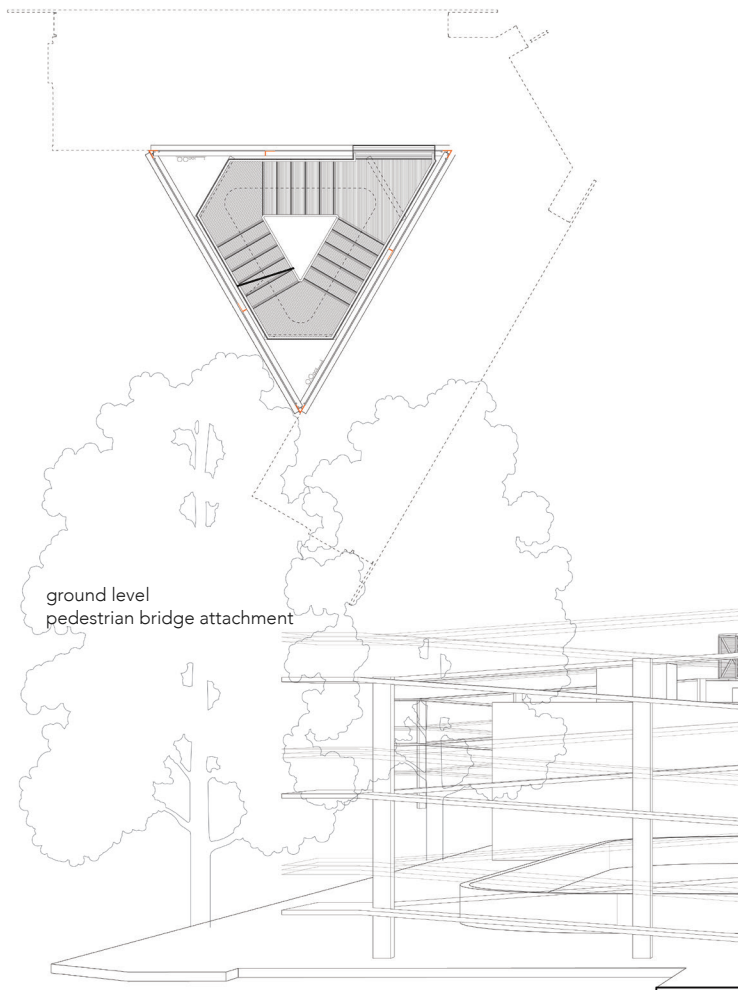


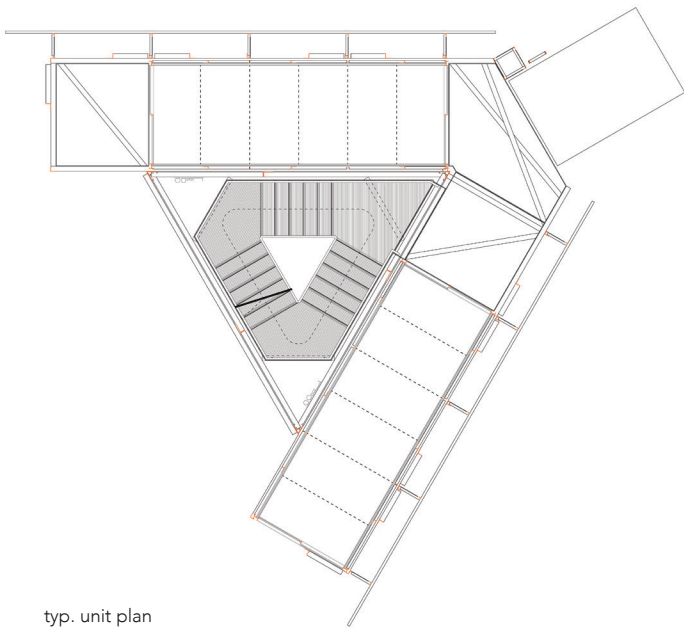
pedestrian bridges



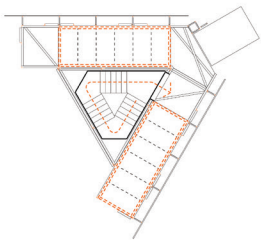
concentrate advertising
to offset investment + living costs

pedestrian bridges provide
elevated entry + public patios

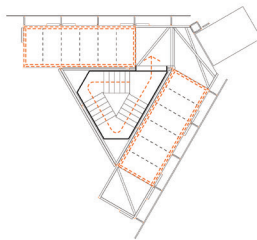




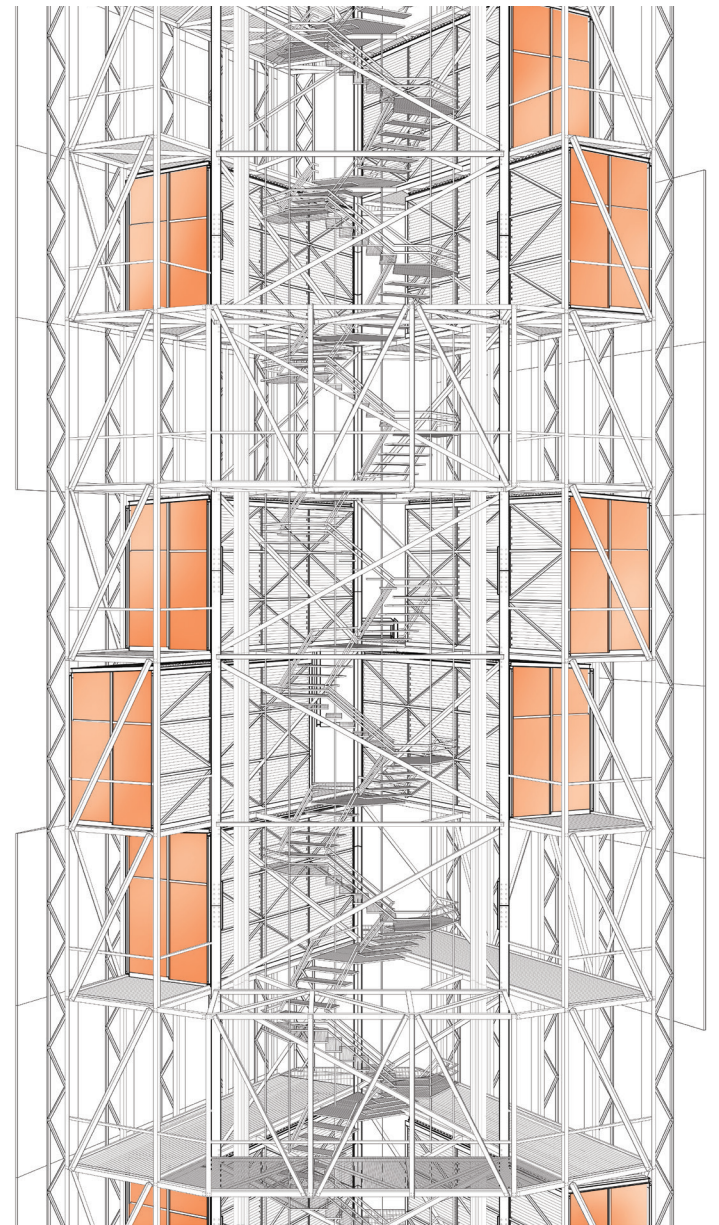
typ. unit plan

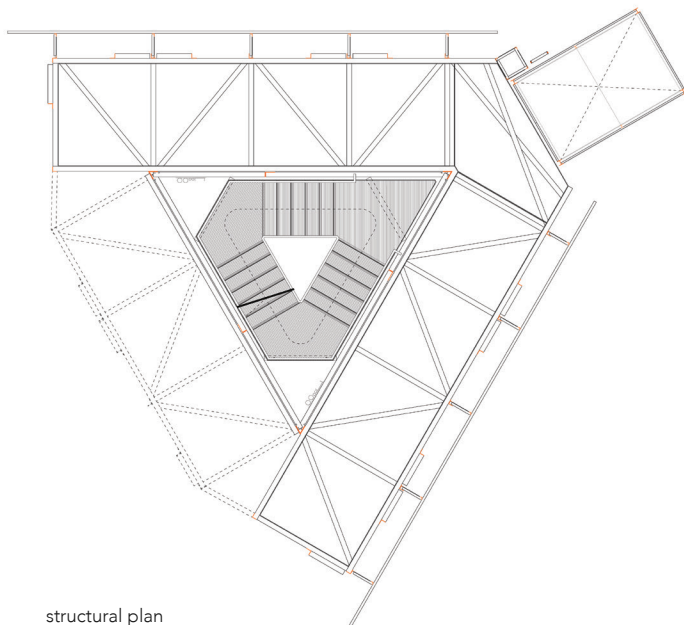


unit plan A

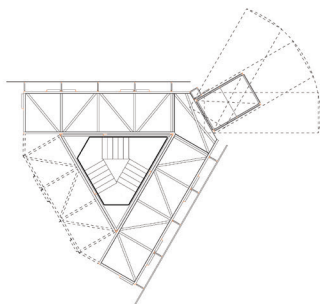


unit plan B





structural plan
common area / services every 4° level



elevator lift -
unit plug in / out

