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# PARLIAMENT



# TABLES



# KITCHEN

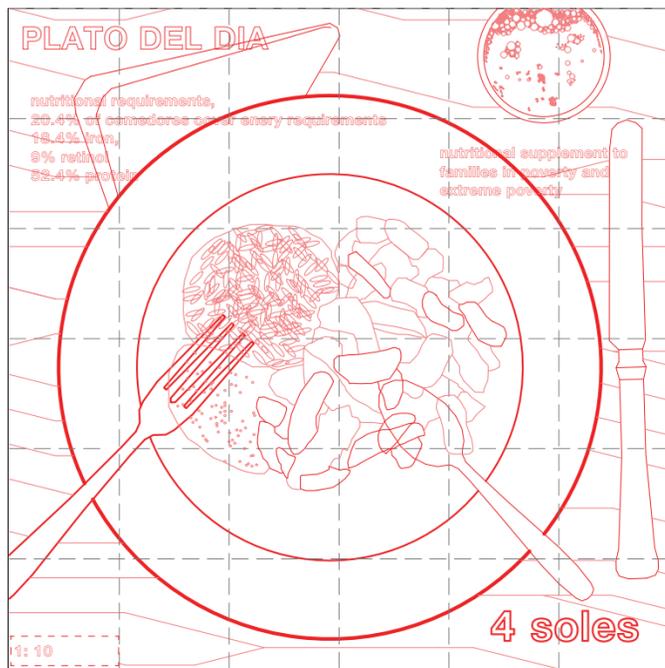


# PARLIAMENT

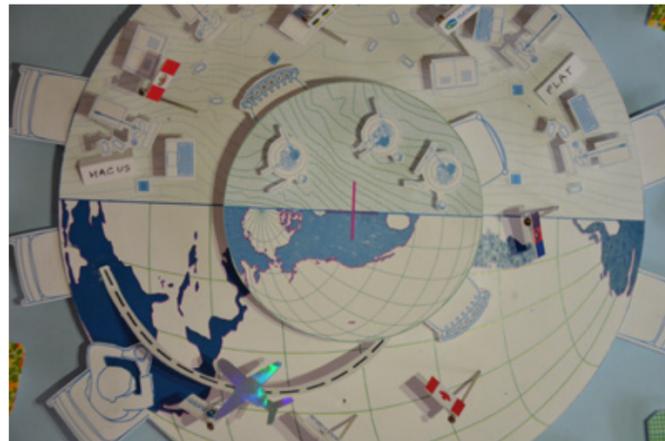


# KITCHEN





Behind these plates, one hundred thousand women are employed in cooking for the community, they are politically active agents.



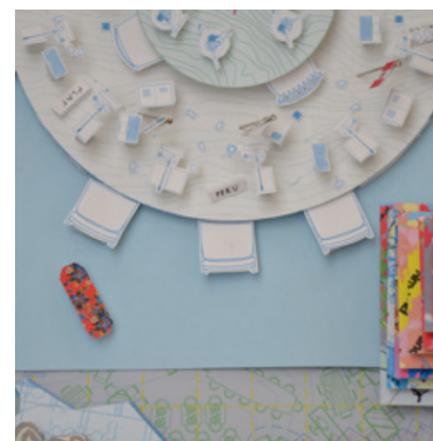
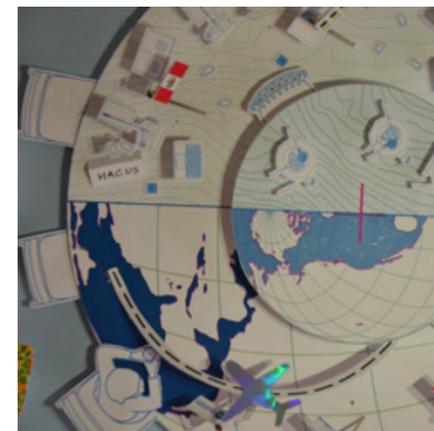
The women, as a group, and as an identity were becoming extremely united and gaining power, as recognized voices within diverse areas of Lima.



## FROM THE PLATE...



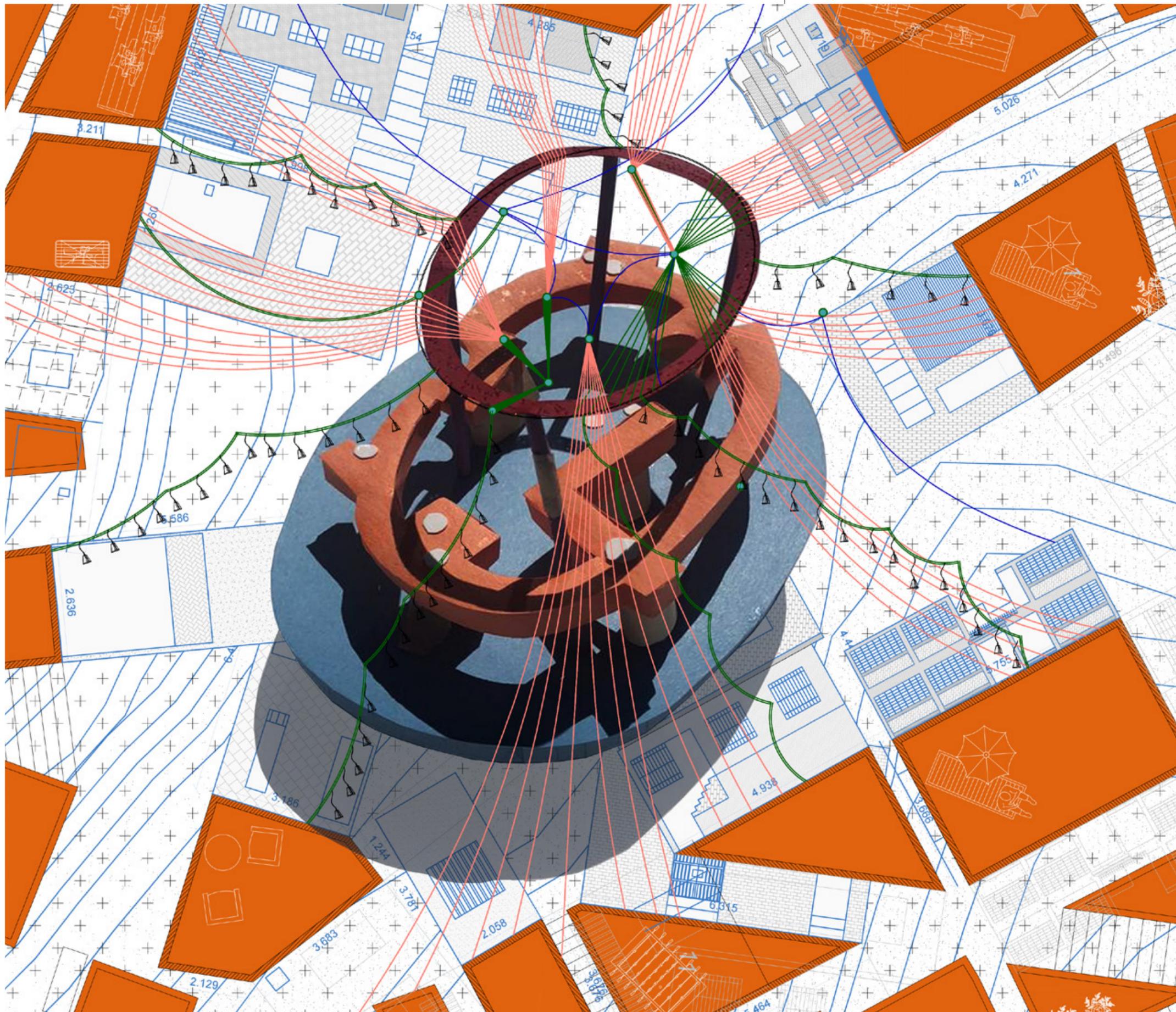
## WE TRACED A TRANS-SCALAR NETWORK WITHIN THE COMEDORES.



## TO THE WORLD.





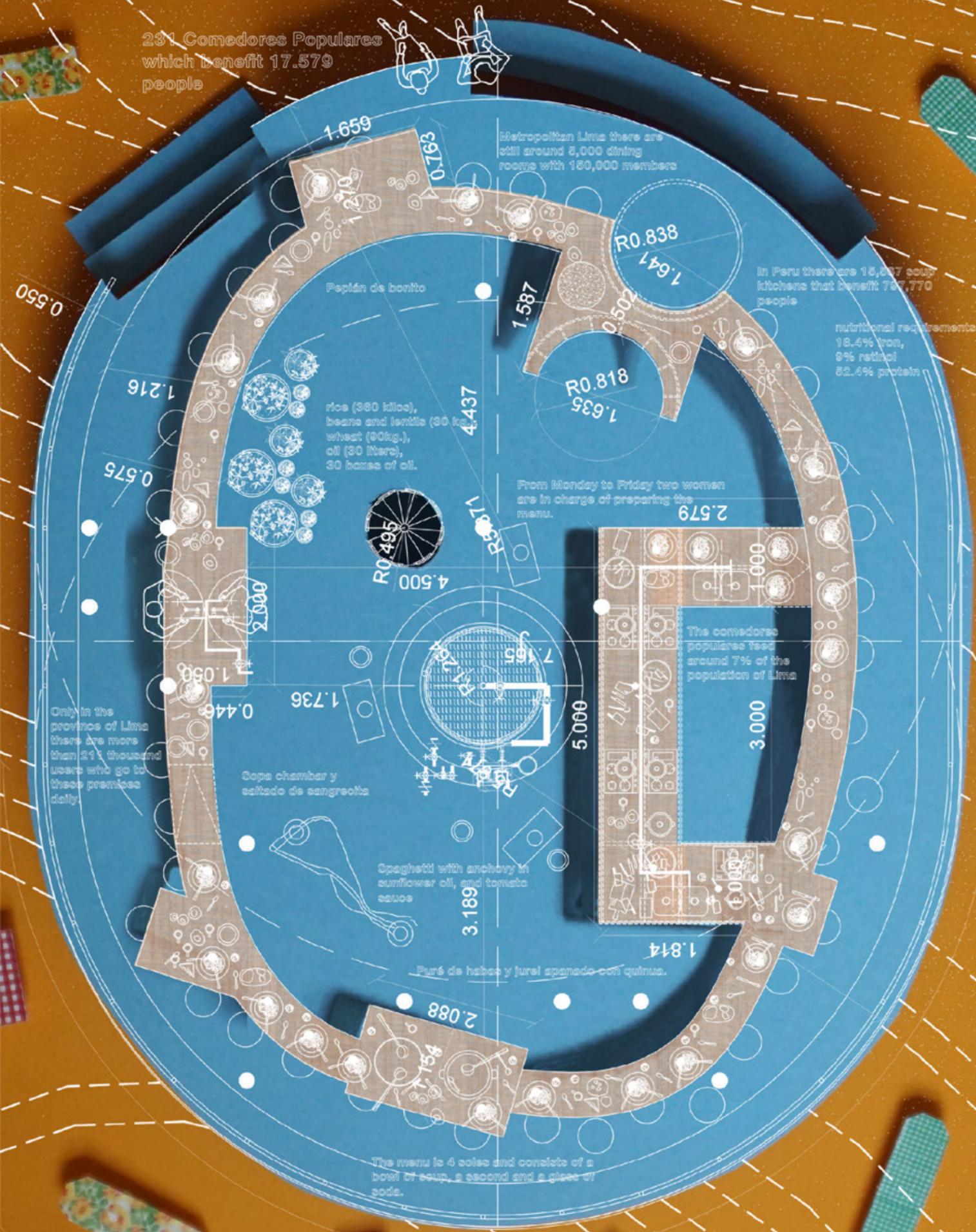


We choose to look at this reality through the table. If we start looking at it, understand it, study the ways it operates and distributes the roles, then we understand the larger community interactions. The table is the initial site.

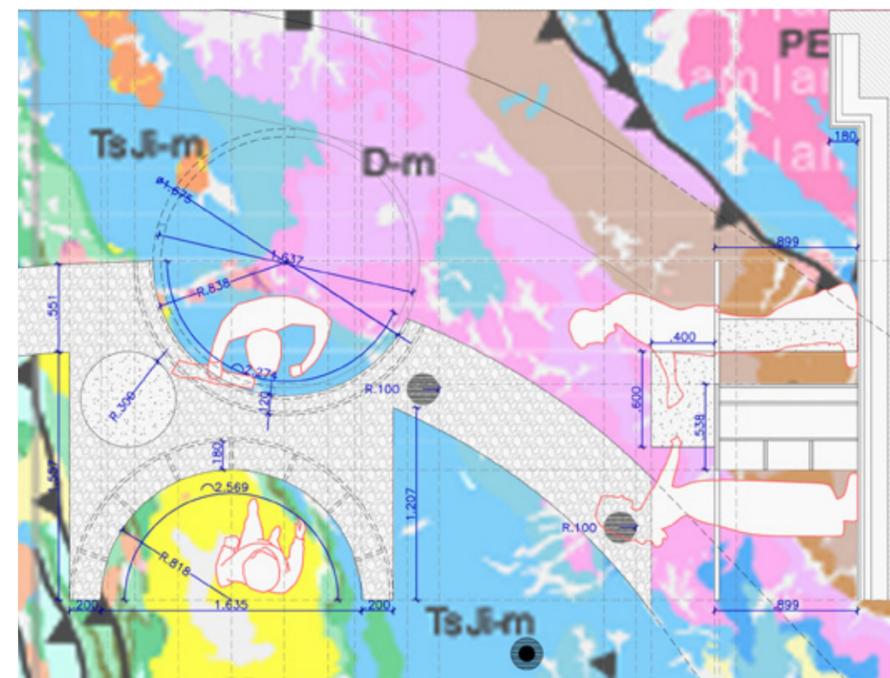
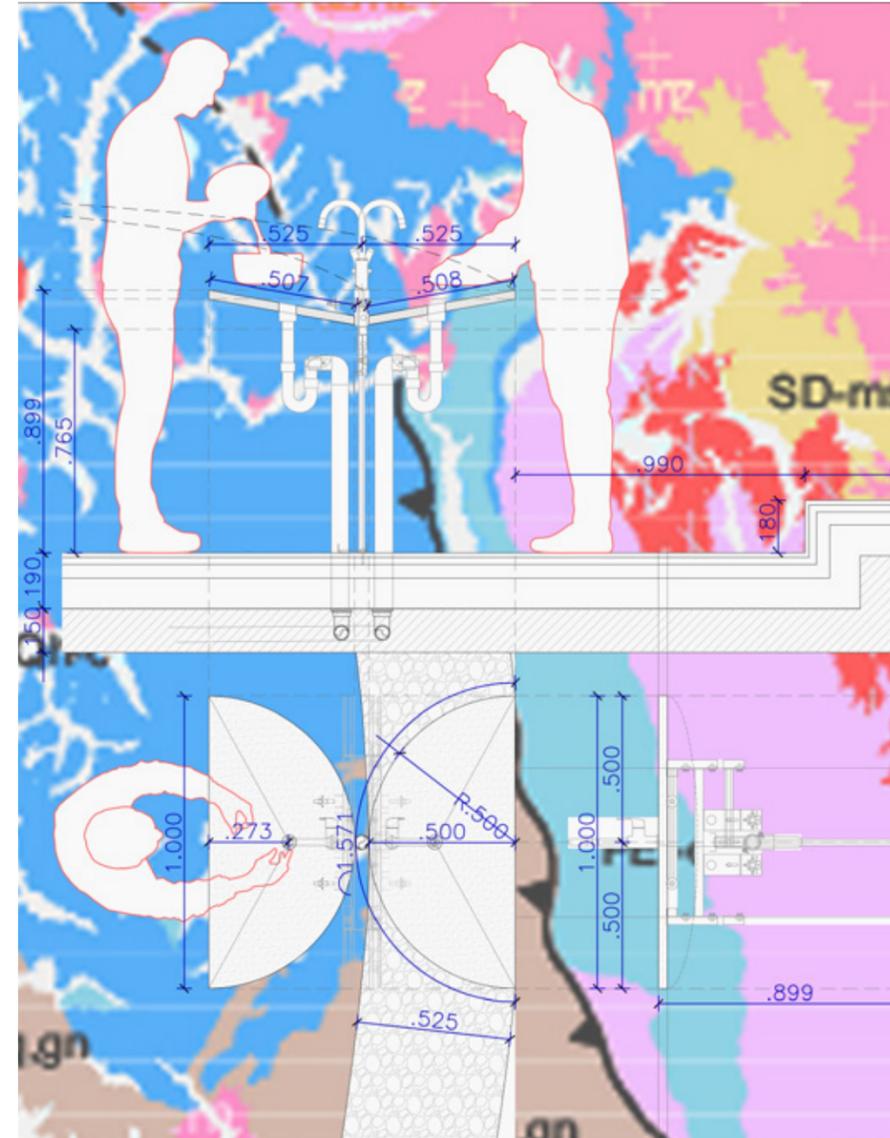
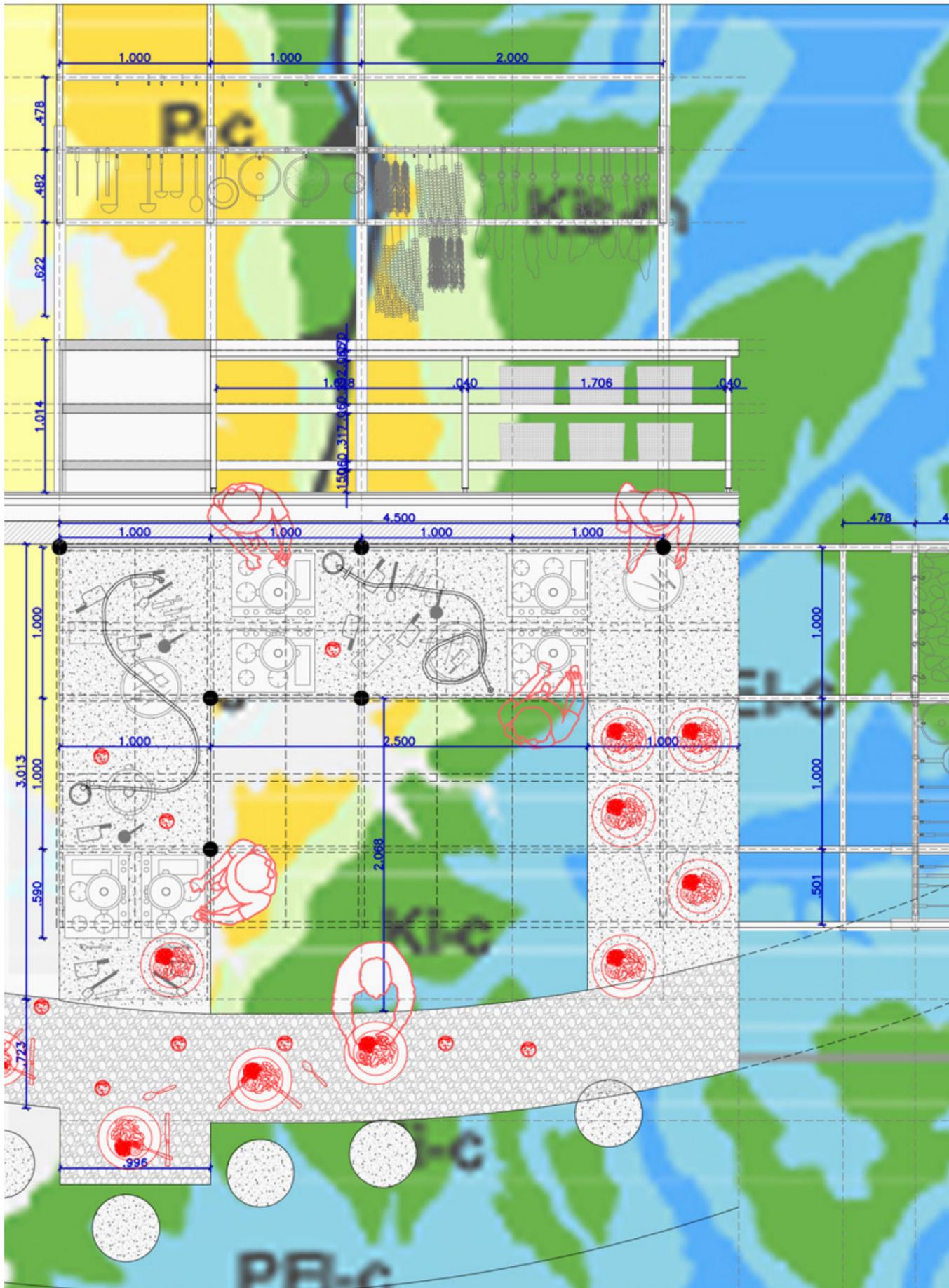




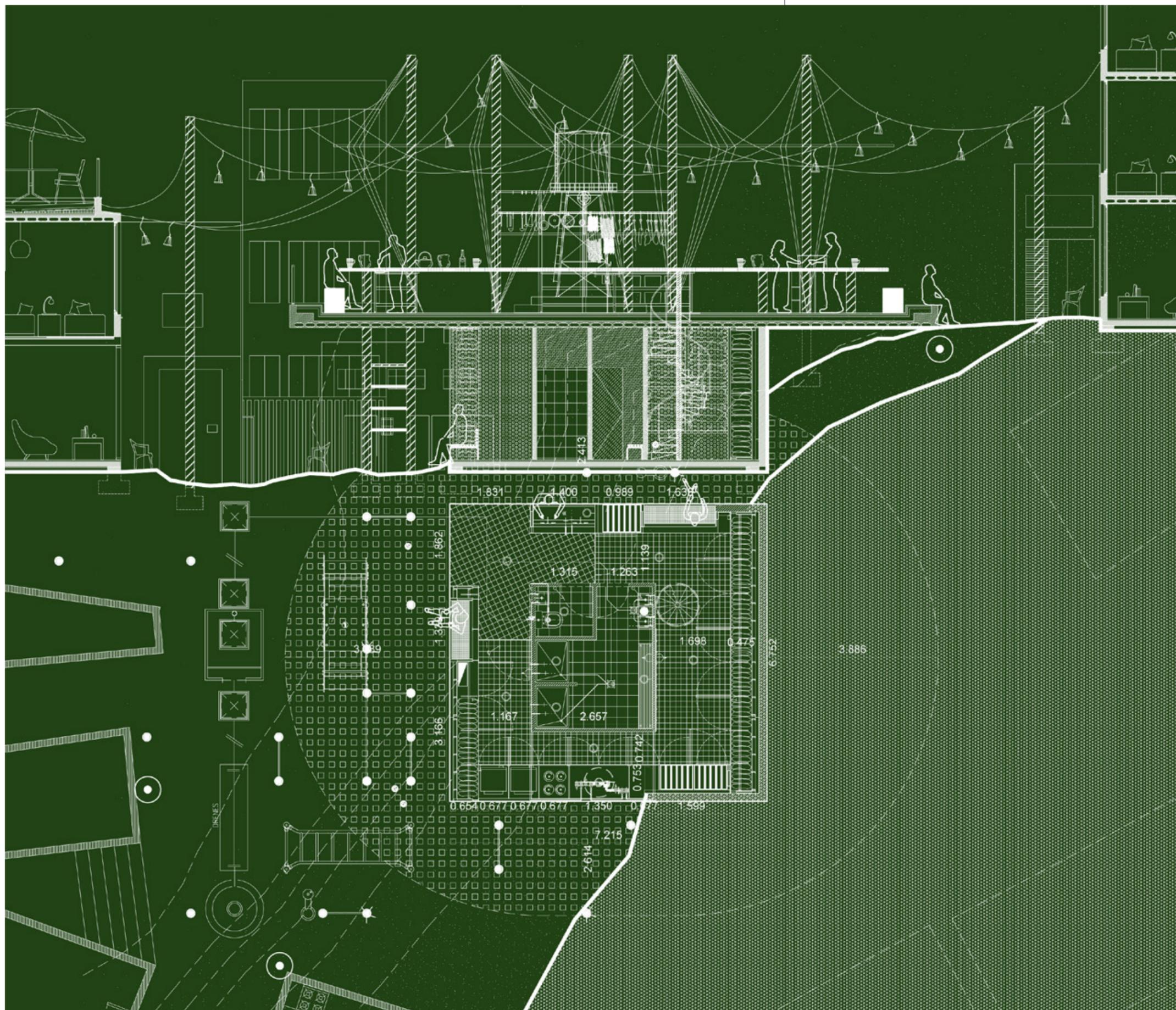
A domestic subject is a product of things that surround us. By displaying common objects and locating them in new layouts, organizations, inside or outside areas we are dealing with the introduction of the idea of monumentality within the context of mundane objects. By the displacement of objects we look at the behaviorology and reaction of the people caused by a simple mundane device.



We understand the architecture to be the table, this simple but powerful operation aims to shift the way the comedor is managed within Lima. Its circular shape embodies the ideal of collective, decentralized democratic representation, its pillars represent the key values of stateless democracy such as gender equality and social ecology.



The kitchen is the lieu for interaction, sharing, eating and gossiping. The table around which these women prepare the 'plato del día' becomes the lieu for initial interaction. The space between the tables becomes the lieu for gossiping. A table in the comedores is an active agent. We choose to look at this reality through the table. If we start looking at it, understand it, study the ways it operates and distributes the roles, then we understand the larger community interactions. The table is the initial site.

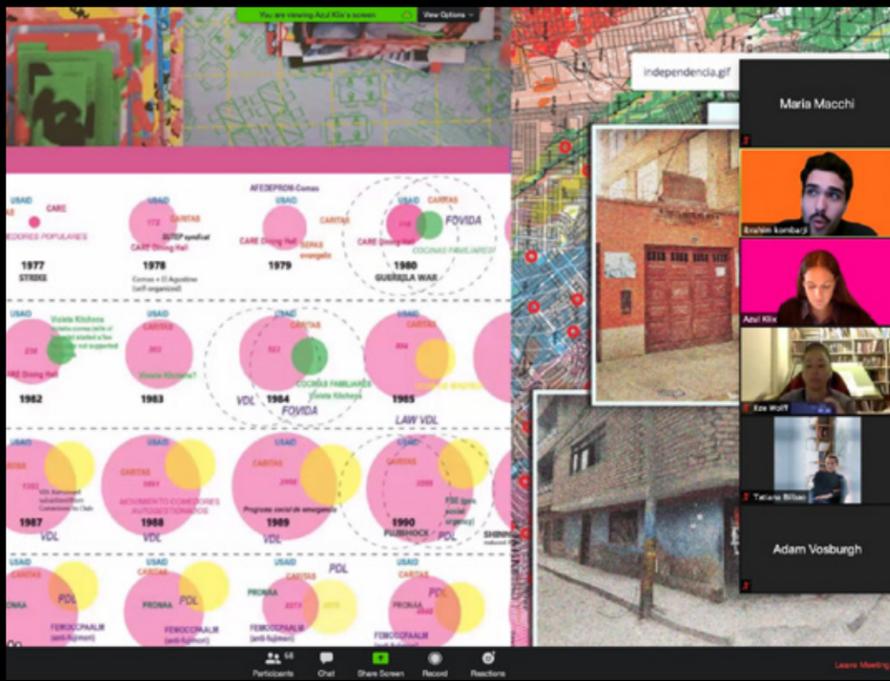


The Kitchen Parliament aims to introduce the ideals of the “comedor popular” to a wider public and build alliances with political organizations, civic platforms, activist groups and cultural workers. In a time of increasing democratic crises that have turned our parliaments into theaters, the project proposes to turn the kitchen – into an alternative people’s parliament instead.

The lower part of the parliament is organized into a storage for the donations, a bathroom for the city and a showering and preparation space for the cookers. The donation is exhibited to the city through the metallic mesh structure and the donations are rendered public for transparency purposes.

The table is covered by a large canopy created by cables which connect to posts placed both within the kitchen parliament as well as with its immediate context, these connections allow for urban lighting, and supply the comedor with water and electricity. Through the design of one object we aim to act within different scales, from one to one personal interaction to creating a network within Independencia, and expanding to the rest of Lima.





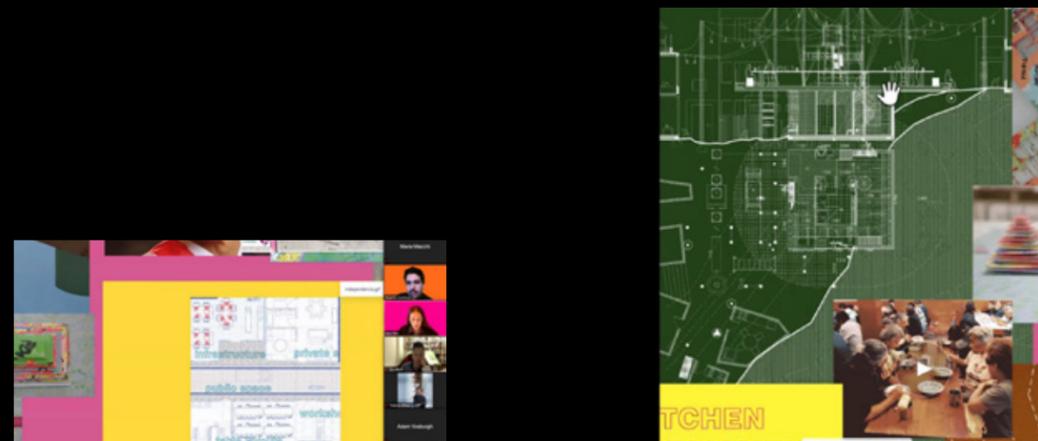
WE HAD TO FIND NEW WAYS TO IMMERSE THE AUDIENCE INTO THE PROJECT.



GSAPP TRANSFORMED INTO AN ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCE.



CONVERSATIONS WERE HELD FROM OUR HOMES AND THROUGH OUR SCREENS.



# Comedores Populares

## Table Stories

Azul Kliz  
Ibrahim Kombarji

Societies, around the globe today, are facing this unprecedented health and economical crisis with such bravery and zeal. From the imposed necessity of being at home, many are looking into methods and systems of communal collaborations. Strong community ties are growing within our societies. Many citizens are coming together, for instance, to actively participate in a general global effort. Some of these initiatives are helping with sharing resources such as sewing masks and hospital uniforms, helping within small communal supermarkets and delivering food to their neighbors in a way to cope with this global crisis. It is precisely at this moment that we notice these active communication networks and strong collective platforms that transform the way a society operates.

Whilst investigating the *Comedores Populares* we can not help but find a strong parallelism between these collective efforts. The notion of community and communal, that we ourselves are in today, find certain common grounds with the uniqueness found in Lima. The *Comedores Populares* are active community kitchens which help the community in a direct manner and try to impact on both a small and large scale.

During the military dictatorship of 1976, a massive strike grew against the president of the time, Francisco Morales Bermudez. This strike was a rise of the worker movement in response to the economic instability caused by the measures implemented by the government. This crisis generated a strong sense of community attachment and identity. In response and as a way to support their husbands, the women of these communities started to cook for the community in the back of their kitchens, in organized little shared kitchens. "Los comedores populares nacieron como una respuesta valerosa y creativa ante el hambre del pueblo."<sup>1</sup> This engagement with the political and economical crisis was not passive nor ignorant, but rather a way to address the problem and create solutions for their political and social context.

The *Comedores Populares* are a response to a social need, they are not only a reaction to a protest but a cultural necessity to bring people together, help each other in moments of instability. The small communal entities gained strength and power to work within a network and create collaborations as an aspiration of social change. The women made conscious and active decisions to create alternative social contexts.

The appearance of the first *Comedor Popular* is registered in the districts of Comas and El Agustino, initially dedicated to distribute milk and breakfast for infants, later transformed into the preparation and distribution of lunch. These *Comedores* are designated as 'self organized' due to their autonomous organization and procedure, as well as their significant deployment of their own resources for the training. Differences and distances were raised between the *Club de Madres* and the *Comedores Populares*, since one was government organized and the other self-organizes<sup>2</sup>, affirming the fragmentation of the popular universe, a phenomenon that would deepen even more during the government of Alan García.

1 Imelda Vega-Centeno, ¿Los comedores populares son política social? Entre la nominación y la violencia simbólica

2 Lora, Carmen: Creciendo en dignidad. Movimiento de comedores autogestionarios, IBC / CEP, Lima, 1996.

The women, as a group, and as an identity were becoming extremely united and gaining power and leadership, as recognized voices within the communities. They started to organize themselves in small groups of eight to fifteen, as well as the hours and the shifts within the kitchens. The work spaces started to transform, from mixed domestic spaces to exclusively kitchens. Some women today suggest getting paid in exchange for their work, although not all of them were inclined to this remuneration method. Soup kitchens and popular women's organizations, see their political negotiation field narrowing even further. They are falling progressively into forms of pre-welfare corporatism that assure them a weak profit, within an economically exclusive, politically authoritarian and widespread corruption.

This ongoing debate in the comedor still shapes the discussions between those groups of women today.

There was a large growth period, where many communal kitchens started to appear throughout Lima. Today there are about 7086 who attend a total of 569,976 beneficiaries.<sup>3</sup> The woman leading these kitchens continued to grow and feed from the political instability and the informality that shapes Peru.

Although some of these kitchens gained legitimacy through their networks in the neighborhood and the strong bonds they created within their communities. Many of them also grew due to the increase of support and promotion of the *Cocinas Familiares*, a program implemented during the presidency of Fernando Belaunde (1980-1985) and promoted by his wife, Violeta. In parallel, Alfonso Barrantes, then mayor of Lima, started two other important government initiated plans that took on similar needs, the *Club de Madres* and *Vaso de Leche*.

In order to differentiate themselves from the government-only subsidized kitchens, some women who participated in the *Comedores Populares* took the brave decision to not accept direct involvement of the peruvian government in the way their kitchens function. They preferred to continue to organize themselves individually.

During the 80s a terrorist group called *Sendero Luminoso*, threatened these entities by saying they were "corrupt and sold out to the government"<sup>4</sup> they introduced fear and guilt between the woman of the communities claiming that the women who participated in the comedores were woman who didn't work and were used to having everything delivered to their homes, this internal battle led to the assassination of Maria Elena Moyano, a strong leader who had activated the kitchen as a political space.

1985 was the year that Peru had its first democratically elected leader, Alan García, the growth in the amount of *Comedores Populares* was largely increased, going from 600 to 1000 in Lima. During these years many different types of organizations were involved, such as the Catholic, Adventist and Evangelical church, political parties, and non government organizations.<sup>5</sup>

Later in the 90's during Alberto Fujimori presidency the state began to see the *Comedores Populares* as possible captive voters, and a clientele subject to need, which could show a food distribution program as if it were a social policy. Fujimori applied a severe program

adjustment by eliminating the food subsidy and increased by 3 Nedda Angulo, *Comedores Populares: Seguridad Alimentaria y ejercicio de Ciudadanía en el Perú*.

4 Imelda Vega-Centeno, ¿Los comedores populares son política social? Entre la nominación y la violencia simbólica

5 Granados, Arturo: Organizaciones populares de mujeres ¿por una cristiana sepultura o por un cuarto intermedio para la resurrección? Informe preliminar, Calandria, Lima, 1996b.

859% the prices and rates that the government controlled in basic items such as bread, flour, milk, fuels and public services.

The communal system of the kitchens helps to reduce the costs of food consumption in four ways, firstly the bulk consumption of food reduces the costs, second; the state subsidies of food or money as well as the subsidy of the labor force by organized women and lastly the governance logic within the organization aimed at exclusively replacing the subsidized factors of production.<sup>6</sup>

The women organize themselves by having weekly assemblies in which they establish the following weeks shifts, of six to eight hours, and coordinate the dishes since they work intensely from Monday to Saturday. Each worker receives three to four prepared meals as well as a lower cost in the purchase, in total the cookers produce between 70 and 120 dishes daily.

In order to help and promote these organizations different types of donations are offered depending on the different political regimes in place in Lima. Often sugar, rice and flour are given as subsidies. In 2019 USAID injected \$6196663 exclusively in cash transfers for local and regional food and complementary services in the regions of Arequipa, Lambayeque, Lima, Piura, Trujillo, La Libertad and Tumbes.<sup>7</sup> Over The provenance of the primary products used to prepare each 'plato del día' is an issue that is still not totally addressed today in these kitchens, partially because of the multiplicity and informality within these kitchens but partially also because larger discussions of funding and corruptions grow around the peruvian public sector.

Behind the large amount of meals distributed within the *Comedores* and in the neighbourhood though organized delivery systems, one hundred twenty thousand women are employed.<sup>8</sup> By belonging to a community, these women are part of a network system, thus, they become politically active agents.

After looking at these entities and understanding that the *Comedores Populares* are the kitchens of the neighborhood, and that the community lives, grows and debates in them. The kitchen is the lieu for interaction, sharing, eating and gossiping. The table around which these women prepare the 'plato del día' becomes the lieu for initial interaction. The space between the tables becomes the lieu for gossiping. A table in the comedores is an active agent. The table has become the initial site for our design process.

Therefore, the table becomes the portrait of a context, by studying the movements and activities that occur above, under and around the table we can understand the behaviour of a community. What are the values, priorities, conversations, and activities happening within a given space. Women in Lima, coexist and have a large sense of community through shared spaces and areas of common interchange. What if these areas of interchange and exchange would also be layered with areas of disciplinary multiplicity? How do people organize themselves around a table and who is sharing this surface? The *Comedores* are transgressive environments, where a violation of accepted or imposed boundaries, especially those of social acceptability are introduced. These spaces allow women to be empowered within their community. The kitchen has become a space of control, and constraints, the table is no longer an innocent object within this context, but rather has a

6 Portocarrero, F. et al.: Gestión pública y políticas alimentarias en el Perú, Universidad del Pacífico, Lima, 2000.

7 <https://twitter.com/sonidodepalo/status/124444342800056320/photo/1>

8 Cecilia Blondet, Carmen Montero, Hoy: Menu Popular. Comedores en Lima.

specific operating logic and distributes roles within a community.<sup>9</sup>

The *Comedores Populares* are sites of active debates such as gender bias in the domestic space, the funding of community kitchens, the remuneration methods in such benevolent spaces, the organizational and spatial politics of kitchens. Redefining the comedor becomes crucial in understanding the social and political responsibility it inhabits. It also becomes a way for us to rethink its formation, the way it operates today and the active role it plays in Peru today.



Comedor Comunitario in Mexico City. Photo: Anna Puigjaner.

9 Vázquez, E. et al.: Los desafíos de la lucha contra la pobreza en el Perú, Universidad del Pacífico, Lima, 2001.

# TRANS- SCALARITIES

Prof. Andres Jaque

Comment on the text by Dolores Hayden.

## The Grand Domestic Revolution

Haydens introduction of the implication of spatial design and material culture as a tool to transform women's role and activities in society is crucial. Discussing how material feminists fought and argued for autonomy, as well as economic and social needs. The material feminists' ambitious goals of socialized housework and childcare meant revolutionizing the American home and creating community services. Defending that "women's work must be controlled by women - economically, socially and environmentally."

These topics led the material feminists to design a series of physical spaces; housewives' cooperatives, kitchenless houses, day-care centers, public kitchens, and community dining halls. By doing so they were challenging two basic principles of industrial capitalism: the physical separation of the household from public space and the economic separation of the domestic from the political economy.

After reading this text I cannot help linking it to the contemporary investigation of Anna Puigjaner, who seems to be continuing the investigation started in 1982 by Hayden. Positioning herself not so much as a feminist but rather as a theorist, she introduces the possibility of thinking about domestic space without a kitchen. Analyzing how today these practices are being carried out throughout the world. Just as many homes were designed in this way back in the 18th century.

Both Hayden and Puigjaner state the social and cultural projects embedded within our society for the last centuries, understanding the politics of space, and how this has an influence on our notion of women's roles, work, and domestic relationships.



Anna Puigjaner, Kitchenless City, New York kitchenless apartment floor plans 1871–1929.

Comment on the text by Rosi Braidotti.

## Compensatory Humanism

As architects where we are accustomed to designing for humans and their needs. I find that it is often difficult for humans to notice life forms that exist on a scale different from our own, such as animals and plants, or microscopic organisms. I would like to address the topic of post-human or neo humanism in association with the art world. Maybe because this concept is still difficult for me to grasp, whilst within the art world I am more familiar and can maybe explain my interest or thought through this medium.

Throughout this year's Art Biennale di Vicenza titled; "You may live in interesting times", there was a large amount of work dedicated to the topic of human and non-human relations. I believe some artists intended to highlight the audience's awareness of this topic by creating a connection between human and more than human agencies.

Japans pavilion presented "Cosmo Eggs" a collaboration between artist, composer, anthropologist, and architect. It included a series of videos and an inflatable seating area. Their main interest was to imagine possible ecologies of co-existence between humans and non-humans expressed through their videos. "How are we to think of the massive impact on the earth's environment caused by the human species which—seen in perspective—inhabits only the thin surface layer of the planet?" Hiroyuki Hattori

The Nordic Pavilion, also focused on microscopic non-human organisms, reminding us of the nature of co-existence and putting us, humans, aside from the dominant species. Braidotti mentions this by stating the critique on species-ism; "anthropocentric arrogance of man as the dominant species whose sense of entitlement includes access to the body of all others." We can also see how Ane Graff questions the notion of "human exceptionalism and dualistic thinking are connected to the ecological crisis."

Going back to Rosi Braidotti's text, I believe the examples given above are relevant and address the topic of "New analytic data on the status of animals is currently being analyzed through the interdisciplinary tools of anthropology, primatology, paleontology, science and technology studies" We could argue that art is also analyzing the status and connectivity in relation to non-humans.

I also agree with Frans de Waal's statement of "stressing the importance of empathy as a form of emotional communication or emotionally mediated communication among non-human primates." In my case, this empathy is achieved through architecture, design and art, design. Finally I would like to stand out Braidotti's final sentence which I believe is extremely powerful; "I am a she-wolf, a breeder that multiplies cells in all directions; I am an incubator and a carrier of vital and lethal viruses; I am mother earth, the generator of the future." This closing statement makes me question whether if humans are sufficiently evolved to understand the meaning of human non-human relations. This involves understanding, evolution and empathy, unfortunately today that is still not the case for many people, that is why we still have to fight for feminism, and LGBTQ rights.



From Tsunami Stone (2015-), Motoyuki Shitamichi; exhibited at the Japan Pavilion, 2019 Venice Biennale.

# TRANS-SCALARITIES

Prof. Andres Jaque

Prof. Bart Jan Polman

## The Red Box:

*A collective of buildings*

Azul Kliz

Haeri Choi

The Red Box is a twelve-story red sandstone box, with thick perimeter walls creating a sense of immensity. The library has a square-shaped center, with an open space of thirty by thirty meters that visually connects all floors—a space where various conflicts manifested themselves throughout the years. The red sandstone perimeter constitutes an entity that rises above Washington Square Park, an open space that also brought several controversies to the neighborhood.

Throughout the years Bobst Library has been defined through its materiality. Decades after its inauguration, between 2003 and 2009, a number of NYU students committed suicide by leaping from the higher floors onto the monochromatic marble that covers the squared open atrium. By 2012, in response to these events, laser-cut aluminum panels coated with gold paint were introduced by the architect Joel Sanders, in order to prevent further jumps. Sanders tried to match the color with the existing bronze handrails originally designed by Philip Johnson, and intended the panel to be seen as a lace that hangs from the ceiling into the atrium. Although it is a solid panel that can be regarded as a cold, harsh and solid material within the steel category, its coloring and porous design infused different characteristics into space from the original material.

The stakes were high, as the architect, Sanders was expected to “clean” the image of the building and also, in a way, that of NYU as an institution. By incorporating a perforated panel with a digital pattern, his hope was to enhance the quality, character, and identity of the university. Responding to the surrounding context, the perforation of the panel gradually dissolves along the perimeter of the atrium. By using this strategy, the architect aimed not to lose the openness and transparency of the volume. However, after the construction was completed, the evaluation amongst the general public including the students of NYU, was

not positive. The visual quality of the atrium space was not maintained, despite the original intention of the architect.

Sanders was hired after previous responses of the university to control the jumping had not been effective. After a third incident, in 2009, temporal polycarbonate barriers were installed along the balconies. These panels were intended to prevent subsequent jumps while at the same time maintain the open spatial quality of the atrium. Sanders’ work had dealt with architectural materials for a number of years already, including research that tried to understand how or why certain textures are related to specific activities and what they portray in the audience. In his book *STUD: Architectures of Masculinity* he addresses how the characteristics of materials are related to the stereotypes of sexuality. For example, glass or steel is accepted as a masculine material because of its cold and solid nature, and according to the main target or ambient of the building, the choice of the material is being affected to create different feelings within spaces.<sup>1</sup>

The urban radicalism of the 1960s period further explains how and why many decisions were made regarding the monolithic building; The Red Box. Greenwich village was gradually being transformed, forcing many originally poor immigrant or bohemian residents to move to areas such as the Lower East side where rent would be more affordable.

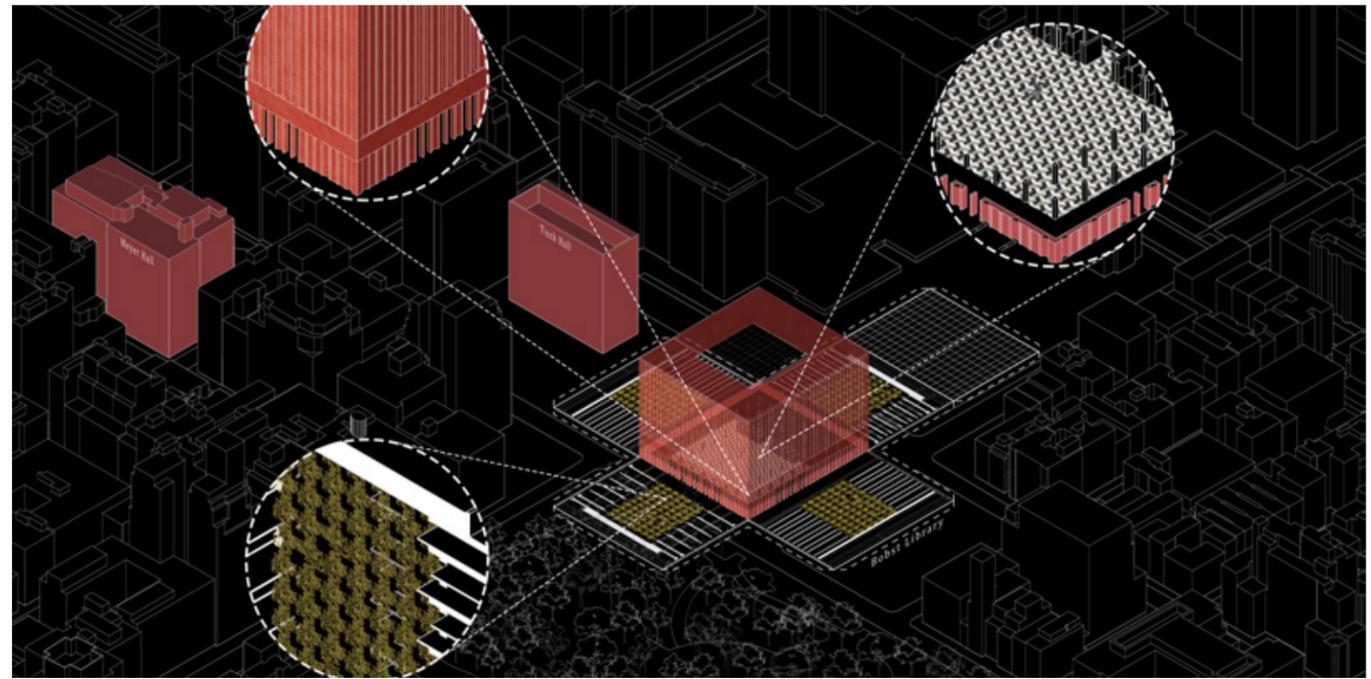
In 1961 the West Village had been designated to go under “urban renewal”.<sup>2</sup> At this moment the local resident and activist Jane Jacobs already understood what the authorities were implying; zoning and demolition. This highly exceptional protest case was led by the famous journalist, who was against the “Exploding Metropolis”<sup>3</sup> and argued that cities needed old buildings and small blocks in order to flourish. She mentioned that planning needed to leave space for the “incongruous, or the vulgar, or the strange”.<sup>4</sup>

**1 Joel Sanders, *STUD: The Architectures of Masculinity*.** “How does architecture, as a concrete material practice, works to institute sexual identities by delimiting and demarcating the interaction of human subjects in actual space? While previous studies have tended to concentrate on architecture’s role in the formation of feminine identities, 4 Stud interrogates how, through the precise organization and distribution of materials, objects and bodies in space, physical structures assist in the fabrication of masculine identities at specific sites and at precise moments in history.”

**2 Urban Renewal,** a concept intended to the clearing out of areas in order to introduce new buildings, highways and super-blocks.

**3 Shannon, Joshua A.** Claes Oldenburg’s The Street and Urban Renewal in Greenwich Village, 1960. *The Art Bulletin*, Mar. 2004

**4 Shannon, Joshua A.** Claes Oldenburg’s The Street and Urban Renewal in Greenwich Village, 1960. *The Art Bulletin*, Mar. 2004



As an outcome of this urban renewal, Superblocks were planned around Washington Square Park, these would be buildings out of scale with their context and large volumes introduced over winding, narrow and disorderly streets. The neighbors argued that these were destroying the physical character of the area that had originally attracted artists and intellectuals. In other words, they feared the area would be gentrified which would force them to move into other areas. Objections were mainly centered around the simplicity and uniformity that was transforming the originally patchworked area.<sup>5</sup> Residents were more interested in maintaining the distinctive character of the neighborhood.

Philip Johnson was commissioned to design a library that would unify the scattered buildings of NYU. Making reference to the large monolithic palaces once seen in the city, now The Red Box was intended to conglomerate a series of buildings.

This project is one of the many philanthropic buildings built during the NYU renewal and was funded by Elmer Holmes Bobst. Because of its financial origins, it cannot be freed from controversy due to Bobst’s declaration as an anti-Semite as well as a sexual abuser of two relatives, including his granddaughter and great-granddaughter who many years later filed suits against his assaults.<sup>6</sup> The building also stands as a manifestation of a certain political interest, due to the economical intentions of Bobst and President Nixon to render an image of strength and solidity within the educational institution. This directly reflects on Johnson’s intentions to focus on the exterior image, materialized in red sandstone.

The evenly fine-grained sandstone that varies from a bright red color to a reddish-brown, was ordered from a Massachusetts quarry, specially re-opened for numerous projects such as Tisch Hall, Meyer Hall and Bobst Library which can be seen today on campus. The three buildings are designed with clear modernist intentions; lack of ornamentation and repetition of the exposed vertical structure. Their facade composition looks as if pieces were extracted from an entire volume, creating semi-circle

cutouts, and in some areas voids that allow for various access points on the ground floor. The material’s intention was also to make the building blend into the context rather than making it stand out.

Amongst the large amounts of negative criticism the Red Box received upon opening, some good critiques were also developed. In an article written for *The New York Times* in 1973, Paul Goldberger commences by saying “It’s been a long time since a great interior space was constructed in New York.” He also writes “the red sandstone of the facade is a warm, good color, and its use was a laudable attempt to relate the building to its old redbrick neighbors around the square”.<sup>7</sup>

However, Goldberger also mentions that the building seems out of date since it was designed ten years before it was inaugurated. In 1971 the construction was stopped initially with claims related to the poor quality of construction, but we further understand that this was rather because of a shortage of supply of the red sandstone. We could argue that from its initiation the building seemed to be out of date. Bobst Library belonged to a different era, rather than to the developing City of New York. “Bobst is, in a sense, architecture for the Great Society”<sup>8</sup> a society intended to eliminate poverty and social injustice, but by 1971 they no longer existed.

Understanding how materials such as the red sandstone and the metallic mesh create a narrative and trajectory in regards to the building allows us to address the intentions of the building and furthermore that of the architects involved. At each moment of conflict, this large Red Box portrays itself as an actor as well as a backdrop, where light materials are used to shut out a worrying problem within the institution instead of engaging and dealing with it. Heavy materials are used to express a message, portraying an image and representing the institution and its values, presenting the building as a media of communication rather than the medium. The Red Box stands out within the collective of unwanted buildings because of its materials, context, and incidents.

<sup>5</sup> At the time Greenwich village was know for its diverse variety in its buildings, construction, heights, materials, colors.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.apnews.com/541de2ead82e957e95c52e3dc74221>

<sup>7</sup> Greenwich Village was known for the use of bricks and sandstone, originally brown but then migrated to red color.

<sup>8</sup> Goldberger, Paul Source. *An Emphasis on Space*. *The New York Times*, Nov. 7th 1973



NEW MODES OF ENGAGEMENT WERE INTRODUCED.



THINGS GOT DIGITAL

The unexpected and unprecedented situation forced the movement into a completely digital education, this pushed us to adjust, to explore our creativities, embrace new ways of thinking about architecture and produce it, and communicate it. The digital platform separated us physically, but also united us as a creative collective of students and professors. Meetings held on the screen, introduced a new need for clarity, patience, disconnect and reconnect, but ultimately optimism, creativity, and flexibility. We had to let go of the forms that existed and allow for new and re-imagined formats to be held on these platforms. We were suddenly immersed into the domesticity of our peers, this enabled a direct view on what the other person was looking at, and surrounded by.

GUESTS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE ZOOMED IN.



LECTURES WERE ALL HELD ONLINE.

# THE CON- TEMPORARY

Prof. Bernard Tschumi

Elliot Sturtevant

Valeria Paez Cala

## Exhibiting Architecture

*How have the prolific biennials and triennials affected an architects work.*

### Introduction

It comes at no better time where we are at the peak of the postmodern re-introduction into architecture, maybe because only now can we acknowledge the processes and the struggles posed at the time. Today there is a return to produce an architecture of a cultural expression, issues of the past also seem relevant today. To start thinking about today's influence and ways in which architecture is exhibited, mainly by the use of biennials and triennials, a controversial experience on their own, which I will go into detail further on. It seems only right to start and develop from one of the most controversial architects and buildings of the 20th century, the Vanna Venturi house.

The postmodern period of the 1970s referred to by Robert Stern as "post-modernism" rather than "post-functionalism" as Peter Eisenmann refers to it, has a intense struggle of making architecture once again about the development of a strong formal basis for design.<sup>1</sup> He claims that architecture will now be more responsive to its context, as well as its social and political context. The 'Grays' approach to architecture through a built or a theoretical manner is by establishing connections with the formal, spatial, and decorative inventions of the 19th century. They understood the capacity of architecture to be empowered through symbols and

<sup>1</sup> Robert A. M. Stern. *Gray Architecture as Post-Modernism, or, Up and Down from Orthodoxy*. 1976

by re-introducing elements that were once disregarded by the modern movement. This re-introduction also includes breaking rules and permitting themselves to work by accepting diversity, hybrid forms, multiple and simultaneous readings as well as a layering of both cultural and historical references.

Was the 1980 Venice Biennale the reason the Vanna Venturi house was able to claim for an architecture of complexity, contradiction, symbolism, and geometry, and only after this cycle of ascendance, acceptance, disrepute, and as we see today, revival, of this architectural style the reason of its relevance?

### Vanna Venturi House

In 1959, Robert Venturi was asked by his mother, Vanna, to design a house, five years later the house was completed. Frederic Schwartz refers to this suburban house as possibly the first "postmodern building and arguably the first postmodern anything".<sup>2</sup> His mother trusted him to design without deadline, dialogue or a detailed list of requirements. There was a plainness to the site and the program. This was to be no 'dream house' in the grandiose sense.

Vanna presented only a few guidelines: there was no need for a garage because she did not drive, her budget was modest, and she did not want the house to be pretentious. This is possibly one of the reasons Venturi describes it as big as well as little, it is a little house with a big scale.<sup>3</sup> Since it was never intended to be a grandiose house in its appearance, but for Robert it clearly needed to be so in the theoretical realm. It was an opportunity to expose the many things he was building up through the years, specifically his argument on complexity and contradiction.

The five year process describes a struggle of research and clarification in a young architect who wants to do it all in his first building. In the six different schemes of the house produced through models and drawings there is a constant editing process. (see image 1) The designs of the first four years followed a long and

<sup>2</sup> Frederic Schwartz, Vincent Joseph Scully, Robert Venturi. *Mother's house : the evolution of Vanna Venturi's house in Chestnut Hill*. New York : Rizzoli, c1992.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Venturi *Complexity and Contradiction*. 1977 "The house is big as well as little, by which I mean that it is a little house with big scale. Inside the elements are big: the fireplace is "too big" and the mantel "too high" for the size of the room; doors are wide, the chair rail high."

steady course, but a seemingly radical shift occurred in the year of the final design.

Due to the size being too large and expensive, the concept of condensation becomes extremely complex and interesting. Venturi redirects the course of design from the earlier projects and is now influenced by ideas of shelter and symbolism.

"The house started out more like Kahn. After all, I was young and he was influential. The design was my way of learning and it was a wonderful experience. But I wasn't satisfied with the house and it didn't turn out the way I wanted it to be. In a way, I was lucky that the budget made the house change and it got much better. My intuition told me what to draw and took control of my hand. It told me what to do and it came out very quickly in the end."<sup>4</sup>

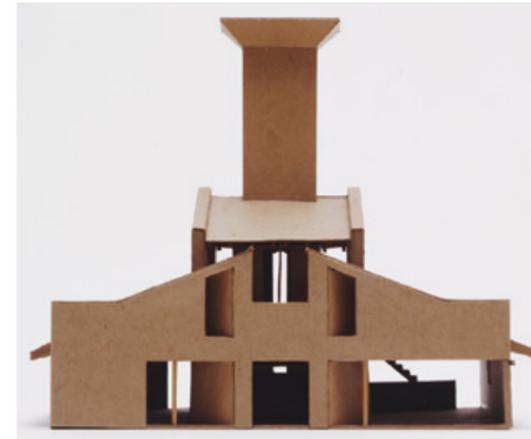


Image 1

In the attempt to achieve a symbolic meaning through allusion, the 'grays' utilize a series of strategies, as Robert Stern lists, and which the Vanna Venturi house complies with, some of these are; complex entries with symbolic, nonstructural, and arched openings that organized the whole, applied ornament, frames around windows, the manipulation of forms to introduce an explicit historical reference. The preference of incomplete or compromised geometries, voluntary distortion and the recognition of growth of building over time, also conventional and big-scale elements expressed a new and complex architecture.<sup>5</sup>

Denise Scott Brown (1997) explained that although they did not consider themselves postmodernists, as she claims they found "truths" too quickly, they try to make relevant borrowings, contextually and culturally, then break with context to meet new needs and to ensure they don't "limit the truth by over defining it."<sup>6</sup>

Only after a construction period of eight months Vanna and Robert moved into the house. The inside spaces are complex and distorted in their shapes and interrelationships. The outside form is simple and consistent, it represents the house's public scale. The front, in its conventional combinations of door, window, chim-

<sup>4</sup> Frederic Schwartz, Vincent Joseph Scully, Robert Venturi. *Mother's house : the evolution of Vanna Venturi's house in Chestnut Hill*. New York : Rizzoli, c1992.

<sup>5</sup> Robert A. M. Stern. *Gray Architecture as Post-Modernism, or, Up and Down from Orthodoxy*. 1976.

<sup>6</sup> Phillipe Barriere, Sylvia Lavin. Interview with Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi. *Perspecta Vol 28*. 1997.

ney and gable, creates an almost symbolic image of a house. Why can't a house look like a house? (see image 2)

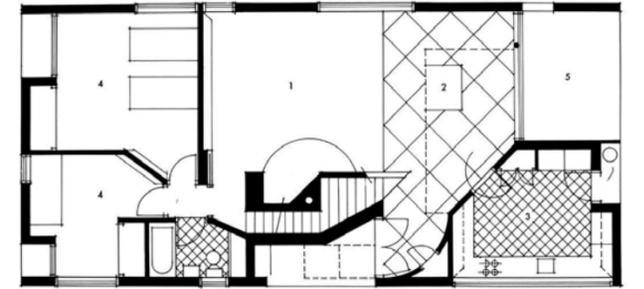


Image 2

Several concepts and notions are developed throughout the house, which directly link to his writings, the concept of contradiction and condensation is shown, ugliness or awkwardness achieved through moments of tension. Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour argue for ugly and ordinary architecture since it includes a denotative meaning, one derived from familiar elements. Architecture can be ordinary in the way it is constructed or in how it is seen, this means ordinary in its process or in its symbolism. The elements used act as symbols as well as expressive architectural abstractions. They are not merely ordinary but represent ordinariness symbolically and stylistically; they are enriching as well, because they add a layer of literary meaning.<sup>7</sup>

The scale of the chimney seems to be "too big" and the size of the mantel "too high". In the bedroom the lunette window is "too big" and dominates the space. Two vertical elements: the fireplace/chimney and the stair compete, for a central position. Each of these elements, one essentially solid and the other essentially void, compromise in order to create a unity between the two.

The consistent shape of the walls in the plan emphasizes rigid enclosure, yet the opening, often close to



Image 3

the corners, contradicts the expression of enclosure. This method of "layered" walls juxtaposes openings of differing size and position. Therefore the space can be understood as layered rather than interpenetrated.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Steven Izenour. *Learning for Las Vegas: The forgotten symbolism of architectural form. Theory of Ugly and ordinary and related and contrary theories*. The MIT Press. 1977

Robert Venturi was effective in recognizing to which extent the nostalgia for a consistent time had a chance of being materialized today. Iñaki Ábalos (2001) refers to how the different elements (centerpiece fireplace, the roof, and the door) manifest that reconciliation with memory and are proof of a positive attitude towards the presence of the past, yet with an ironic and distanced treatment devoid of any transcendental ambition.<sup>8</sup>

**Remarks on the Vanna Venturi House**

It called to my attention two particular references that Robert Venturi made whilst describing the house in Chestnut Hill. Firstly he makes a parallelism between his and the Palladian houses, referring to them as rigid and symmetrical. (see image 3)

*“Concerning the inside, the plan is originally symmetrical with a central vertical core from which radiates two almost symmetrical diagonal walls that separate two end spaces in front from a major central space in back. This almost Palladian rigidity and symmetry is distorted, however, to accommodate to the particular need of the spaces: the kitchen on the right, for instance, varies from the bedroom on the left.”<sup>9</sup>*

Colin Rowe’s (1947) refers to Palladio’s “rigidness” as a search for complete clarity of the plan and the most lucid organization of conventional elements based on symmetry as the most memorable form of order,<sup>10</sup> a characteristic which Venturi claims to exonerate through the prescription of specificity within spaces. Essentially we can see how Venturi accommodates for the specificity over the generic. These spaces become impossible to be reinterpreted, or changed in their use. In the complexity he has also positioned himself in a very rigid structure. The way the spaces are inhabited can only be carried out in the way he has prescribed them to be.

My second remark is in relation to the conception of the house as a pavilion, clearly a piece within an exposition. When referring to the position of the house in relation to its context, Robert Venturi refers to it as a pavilion. “The setting of the house is a flat, open, interior site, enclosed at its boundaries by trees and fences. The house sits near the middle, like a pavilion, with no planting at all near it.”

With this statement there is room for speculation on the intentions of the house, was it always to be appreciated as an exhibition piece? A piece within a confined context, an item within a collection, a construction that one can visit just as a pavilion where the time of transitioning through it is short. In a pavilion, there are clear intentions demonstrated by the artist, or architect in this case, making it obvious to the observer what must and what must not be seen. The visual impact from a distance would cause curiosity and generate attraction towards the object. If this house is referred to as a pavilion, why do we not treat it as such? A small construction with big intentions, oversizing of elements in order to

obviously catch the viewer’s attention, in this way it stands out from the rest of the exhibited pieces that conform an exhibition.

**Venturi to Venice**

1980 was the first year of an Architectural Biennale in Venice. Its title “The Presence of the Past” wanted to put visitors in contact with architecture, the observers literally walked down the symbolic “Strada Novissima” (see image 4) an active movement through the passage of two eras, from the modern to the post-modern. The exhibition was meant to emphasize communication and pluralism, as now, architecture had returned to the discourse, there were new stories to be told. It is no coincidence that Robert Venturi was one of the selected participants, who along with Hans Hollein, Rem Koolhaas and Charles Jencks argued for the urgent need to return to language within architecture. They introduced irony and promoted the past as well as the present. This radically plural group of designers were deeply committed to communicating their interest and beliefs through the exhibition.<sup>11</sup>

Concerned with revisiting themes, the curator, Paolo Portoghesi was already involved in developing

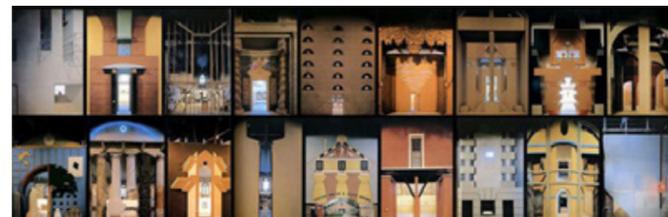


Image 4

key concepts such as; place, history and language within his work. In his manifesto *Le inibizioni dell’architettura moderna* (1974) he explained his aims in further detail and developed his understanding of space as a ‘system of places’, and form as a composition of ‘lines of force’. In general terms he wanted to reintroduce aspects of architecture that Modernism had excluded or forgotten.<sup>12</sup> (see image 5-6)

This exhibition was a turning point in the way architecture is exhibited and even produced. The media that evolved around the exhibition was crucial in promoting the order of things, it radically changed the way architecture is conceived and perceived, moving it towards a spectacle or performance architecture. This has shaped a generation, and produced a legacy of how architecture is conceived. Szacka claims that it is the most significant exhibition since the 1927 Weissenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart and the 1932 Modern Architecture: International Exhibition at NYC MoMa.<sup>13</sup>

Robert Venturi together with Rauch and Scott Brown’s participation in the Biennale consisted of a facade for the Strada Novissima, made to present a dazzlingly polychromos classical temple<sup>14</sup> which the viewer

<sup>11</sup> Lea-Catherine Szacka. *Historicism Versus communication. The basic debate of the 1980 Biennale.* John Wiley & Sons Ltd. 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz. *Portoghesi, Paolo.* Published 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Anmarie Brennan. *Review on the book by Lea-Catherine Szacka. Exhibiting the Postmodern. The 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale.* University of Melbourne. 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Robert A.M. Stern. *From the Past: Strada Novissima.* Originally written in 1980. Log No 20, Curating Architecture. Fall 2010.



Image 5



Image 6

could cross and then see three murals, one of them, off course the Vanna Venturi House. (see image 7) Together these create the only open space along the strada, evoking an American suburban lawn and shopping center parking lot. Venturi’s main street approach to architecture is what Portoghesi was interested in displaying. Since he claimed that architecture had lost the capacity to speak to the citizens, the common people, his reaction was to create something popular.<sup>15</sup>

It seems to be the perfect way for the facades to have been exhibited, by not being reproduced, but painted directly onto a wall. The Vanna Venturi house had turned into an iconography, a symbol of what is represented, the image is a manifesto on its own. Murals can have a dramatic impact on the attitudes of the passer-by. It is not coincidence that this technique was applied since throughout the United States this technique was widely applied, before the introduction of vinyl and digital posters. (see image 8)

This representation transformed the house and its meaning. After the Biennale the house became something else. What before the representation of a manifesto was a building had now been transformed into a poster. More than ever it became a symbol. The house was completed in 1964 but did it really only gain its true meaning after 1980? I question whether the Venice exhibition is the point of inflection, the moment in which it became a transgressive representation of an argument. Arguably

<sup>15</sup> Aaron Levy, William Menking. *Architecture on display: On the history of the Venice Biennale of Architecture.* Architectural Association London. 2010

going against the original intentions of making a house look simply like a house.

**Biennale proliferation**

Strada Novissima was a provocation, marking the beginning of the spectacularization of architecture and consequently what we are living in now with a proliferation of biennials and triennials around the world. Venice was crucial in terms of the theoretical discourse and positioning architecture at that particular historical moment. It launched the next generation of architects to incorporate these performance attributes of exhibition into architecture. If today we look at these platforms as performance stages, it is logical that architecture should shift towards a performance and introduction of a multiplicity of practices that use architectural tools to access other disciplines and develop certain research. The Biennials and Triennials are inevitably generating new attitudes and shaping new professions within the realm of architecture.

Since then new topics have developed around the world, many new locations have been introduced, now participants join into new discussions concerning local problematics as well as global ones. Some introduce a political agenda, or impacts of global technology as well as market economy, concerns of migration, and economic crisis, they address phenomena closely linked to a global situation rather than just architecture perse.

A common characteristic underlaid within all of them is that they are platforms for the exchange of ideas, tools to discuss politics, they question roles and understand that architecture goes beyond disciplinary boundaries. Architecture has the capacity to empower sectors of society, to introduce topics of discussion and to create new agencies.

I believe that a crucial question that must come into play now is that since the Venice biennale has transformed the way that architecture is produced, it seems the right time for architecture to transform the format of the biennials? As previously stated architecture has the capacity to introduce new forms of transgressive experiments, new ways of achieving a project, and the overlapping of disciplinary multiplicities. It seems necessary to incorporate these characteristics into the exhibition platforms, since today’s architecture is one of permanent performance. These exhibitions have transformed even the things that we produce as architecture.

**Thoughts on the future of Biennials and Triennials**

Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown displayed their thoughts, research and interests in Venice, they knew how to transform the stage into a personal show. It allowed them to strongly position themselves within the realm, theoretically as well as broadening their audience. Becoming prolific throughout Europe.

Before, architects would participate in competitions, today everyone is participating in biennials. Before you were developing a position, research, producing a well circulated, well polished project that could have a discursive and professional impact. The difference is that now you can actually build it. These

platforms are not only forms to test ideas, but also have an active participation in building a narrative of architecture which allows for the interaction of topics slightly out of the realm of architecture.

The opportunities embedded within the participation of these platforms create a space to position oneself within a network of exhibitors who are dealing with similar problems, create networks and expand the work of scholars and architects in relation to other institutions, activists and diverse audiences.

Oslo, Istanbul, Shanghai, Venice, Chicago, Palermo, Milano, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Rotterdam, Moscow, Shenzhen & Hong Kong, Lisboa, Sharjah, Seoul, are just a few locations where Biennials and Triennials take place today. As the number of exhibitions increase, the audience increases, but has the disciplinary importance of biennials increased? How do we deal with the oversaturation of these events? Architecture exhibitions continue to be extremely relevant. Exhibitions can trigger the understanding of what architects actually do. It seems very difficult to find moments that architecture can unfold in such a way, and address the different issues that are at stake in different parts of the world and dimensions.

Although repetitive and possibly in excess, it is these moments that architects are permitted time to reconsider the capacity to provide a platform in which space and the way space was dealt with politically and collectively could be entwined. Since we are in a time of change, it seems appropriate to question how an architecture exhibition challenges more traditional and unidirectional curator-artist relationships and outcome.<sup>16</sup> The expansion and migration modifies the terms and the capacities. These conditions are important for the shifting of the discipline, not necessarily through the process of creation but through the intelligence in the role of the curator and where biennials take place.

For example, a new model has been introduced, once again in Italy. A new engagement with the context has emerged in Palermo, where the Biennale studied the complexities of the city, its inhabitants, historical and contemporary connections between the city, the Mediterranean and Europe. It is important to note that this active participation and interest in the city made the Biennale to be seen as a partner, not as a foreign imposer. And because of this partnership they were capable of revealing Palermo as a node in an expanded geography of movements, people, capital, good, data, seeds and germs.

Therefore if the conditions of engagement, and the way we encounter biennials, such as through phones, apps and instagram has changed drastically since the type of interfaces in the beginning of these types of exhibitions. It is relevant to question the type of reception these exhibitions produce, locally and globally, because the proximity alters the condition in which biennials are perceived.

Are biennials a transformation of practices? Do

<sup>16</sup> Alex Brown and Lea-Catherine Szacka. *The Architecture Exhibition as Environment*. Architectural Theory Review. 2019.

more biennials offer the capacity for new types of practice to emerge or is it just the same mechanism of architecture that we know today?

If something does change, with the increase of biennials something would have to change relatively rapidly, meaning that biennials have some kind of historical relationship to each other. They develop in the way of how they are staged or how they are financed, or perceived.

As well as having some kind of critical relationship between each other, so in regards to what is happening this year is actually in response to something that happened last year. Therefore it's not just more of the same but it's something that evolves in its structure.

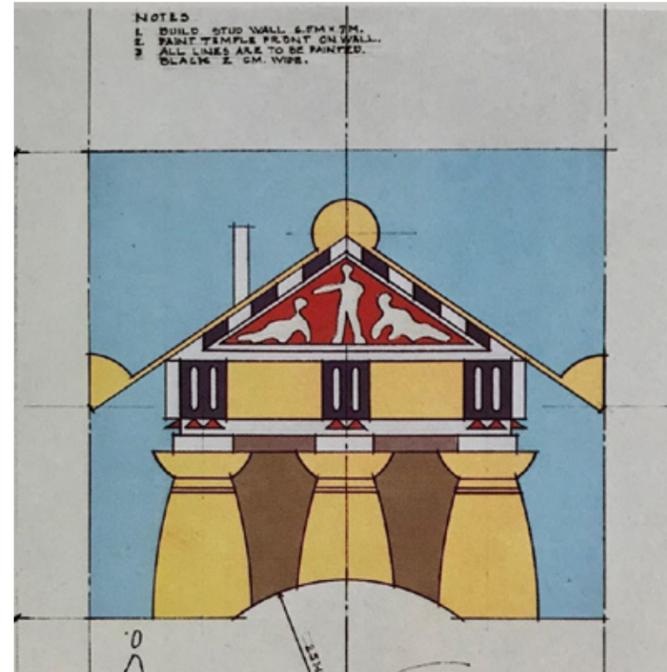


Image 7

Images:

1. Moma Vanna Venturi house. Scheme III A
2. Plan Vanna Venturi House
3. Front view image Vanna Venturi House
4. Façades of the Strada Novissima at the 1980 Biennale Architettura
5. View along the Strada Novissima
6. Fragments of the Strada Novissima
7. Drawing of Facade presented at the 1980 Venice Biennale
8. Mural of the Vanna Venturi House being painted on to a wall at the 1980 Venice Biennale.



Image 8

# GARDEN OF COLUMNS

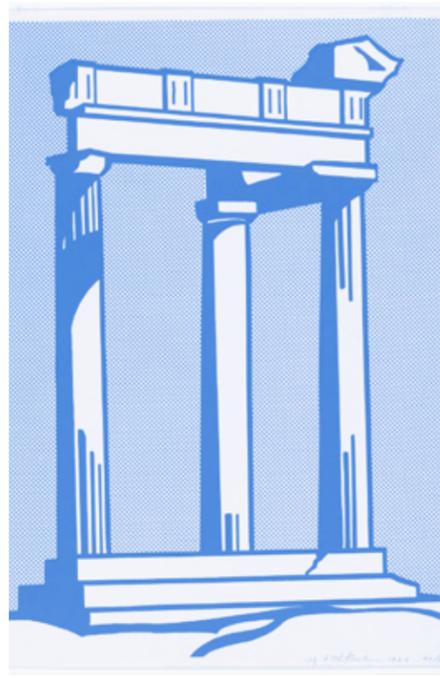
*Paul Preissner*

*TA: Melissa Frost*

In the Garden of Columns I worked on the integration and combination between, clay and concrete. In this process I learned to manage and work with unpredictability. During the modeling I was able to control the stacking technique, height, thickness and overall composition, but in a way, I could not control the end result. There always seems to be an alteration, due to the material compressing, drying and reacting when in contact with another material such as concrete. I found out that the “unwanted or unused space” between the clay bricks can have a purpose and allow for new possibilities. As the clay bricks shrink, decay, or in some cases are even removed from the column, new spaces are created, and here is where insects, birds, animals and plants can start appropriating it.

The column and its representation created a language of change within our realm. That is why I believe that the column is a way for us to think about a new integration, and a new commitment to architecture. Columns enable different situations to happen around them, they can be seen as objects that organize the movement of people, compress and open up spaces and allow for elements to be placed on top.





# COLUMNS



# CLAY



# CLAY



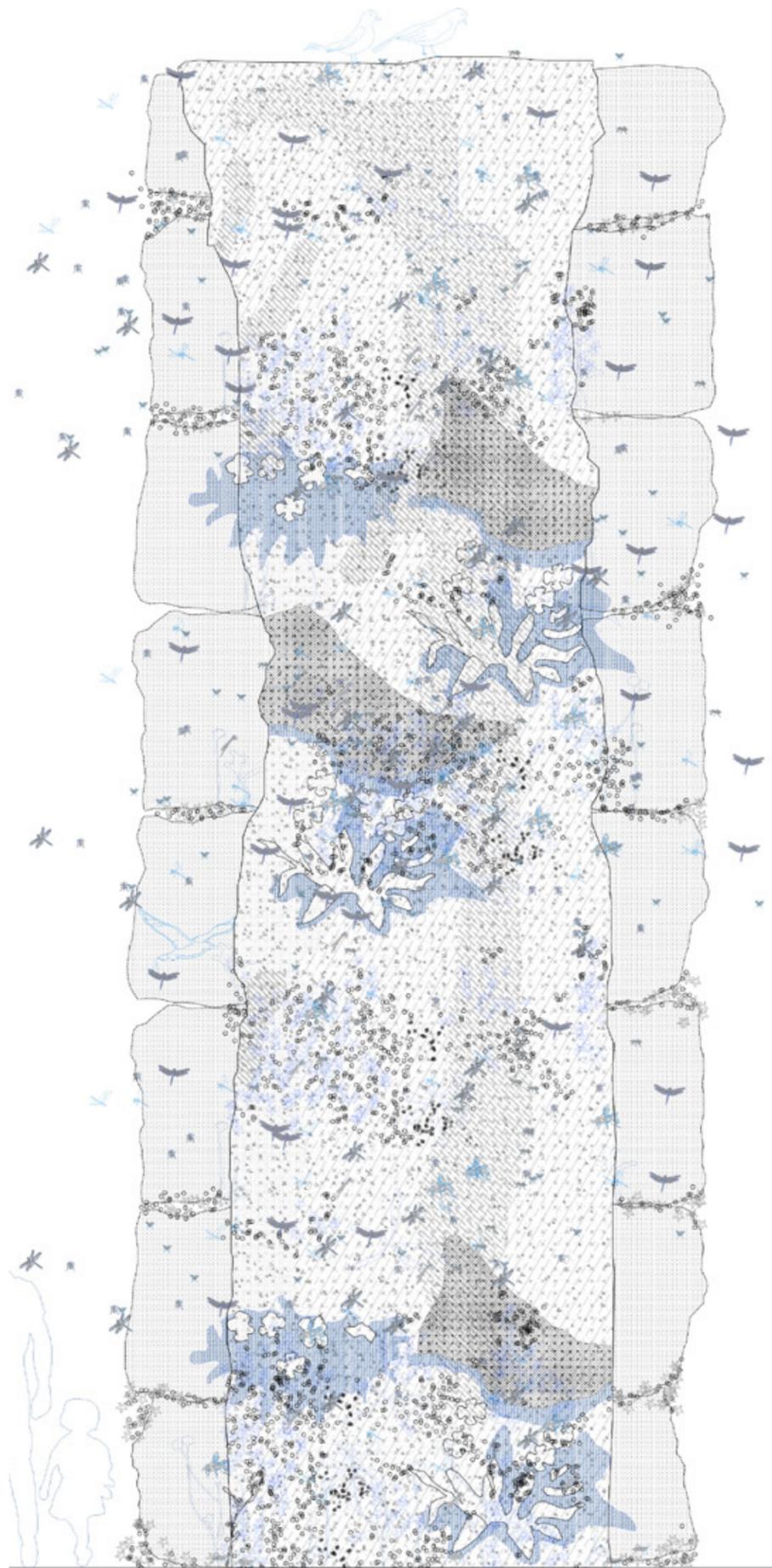
# COLUMNS

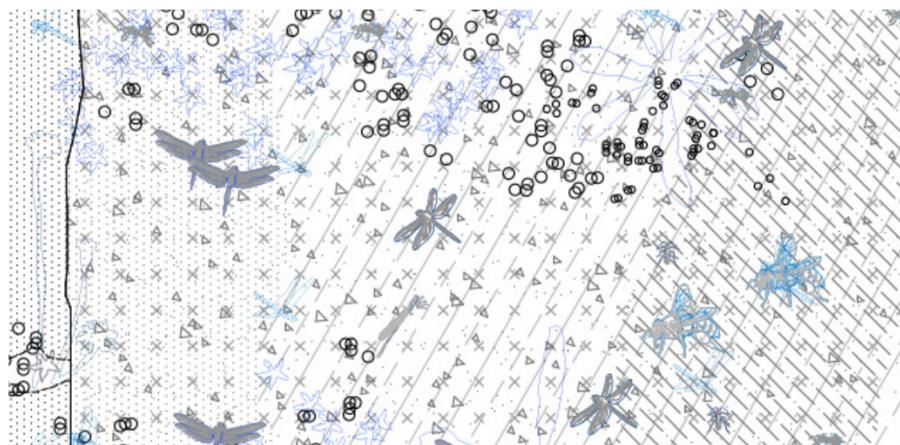
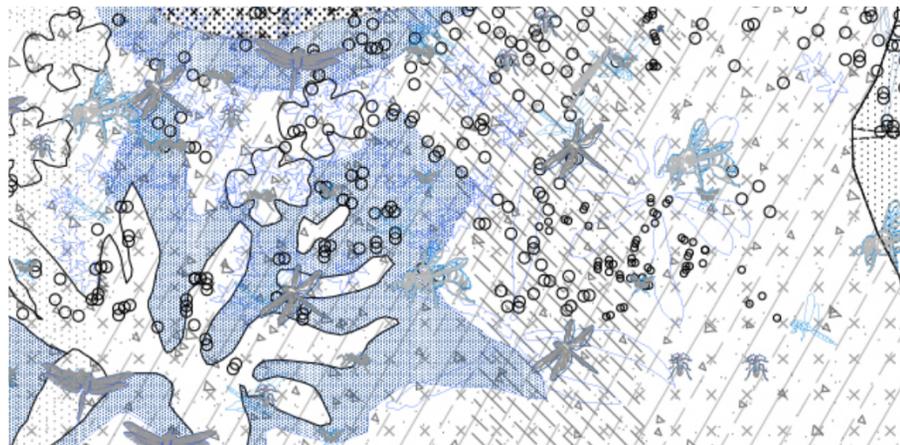
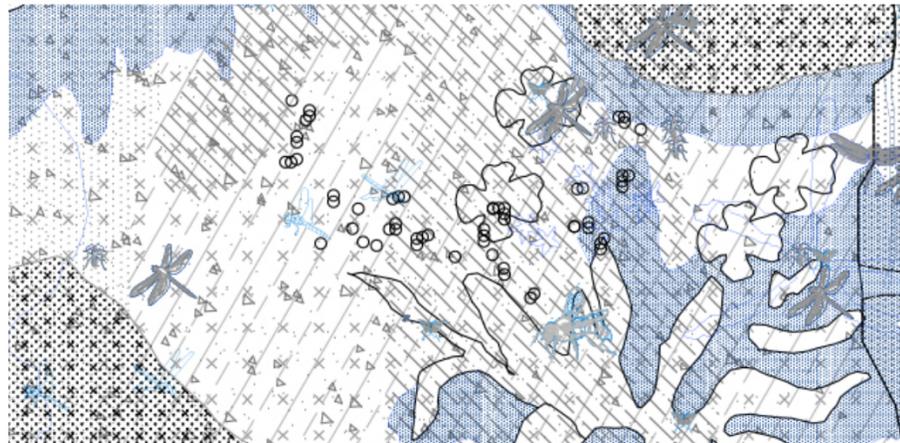
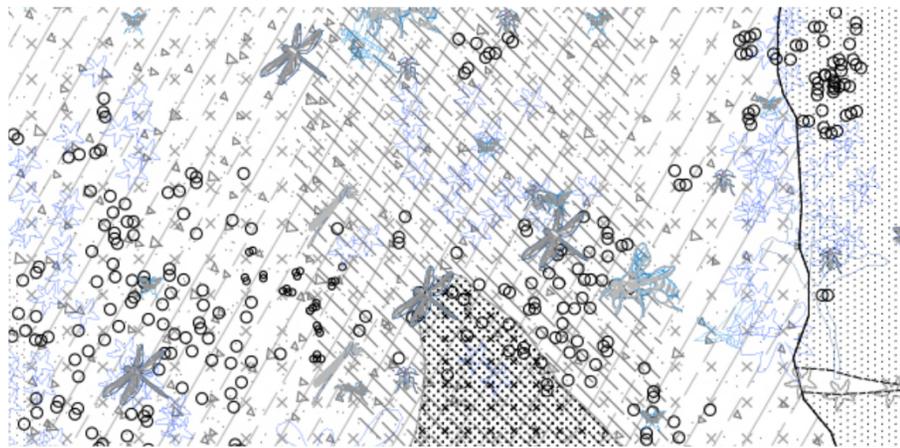
# COLUMNS



# CLAY









Clay is a shapeless material, it is versatile and acts as a modeling agent that absorbs, adopts and changes into any role. It seems to be a material with no personality. The scientific terminology of "clay" is a natural earthy material with plastic properties when moist, of very fine grain and composed largely of hydrous aluminum and magnesium silicates.

Clay is composed of several minerals such as; phyllosilicate minerals containing variable amounts of water trapped in the mineral structure. Clays are plastic due to particle size and geometry as well as water content, and become hard, brittle and non-plastic upon drying.

The first use of clay was for sun dried bricks, which then evolved into good quality ceramics. Much of the economic importance of clay in the modern world is due to its plasticity and fired strength. Today, clays are used to bond sand used in foundations, grouting, drilling fluids employed in the petroleum industry, as well as a catalyst for paper fillers and coatings, in the rubber industry and in the pharmaceutical industry.

Working with clay also seems to imply to work with unpredictability. In this process I seem to be able to control the stacking technique, height, thickness and overall composition, but I cannot control the end result. Due to the materials compression, dryness and the reaction when in contact with a material such as concrete there seems to always be an alteration.

The combination of opposites, a material that seems to be controllable (clay) and a material that is uncontrollable (concrete) once the interaction between the two is made their roles seems to invert. The clay becomes uncontrolled, allowing for the rockite to drip in between spacings, and the rockite hardens creating a rigid and structured surface.

What interests me about this process is that the original unwanted spaces, create new possibilities and allow for an uncontrolled expression of the material.

I believe there is a dialogue between construction of value, labor, and material exploration. Where it allows for wondering and multi-

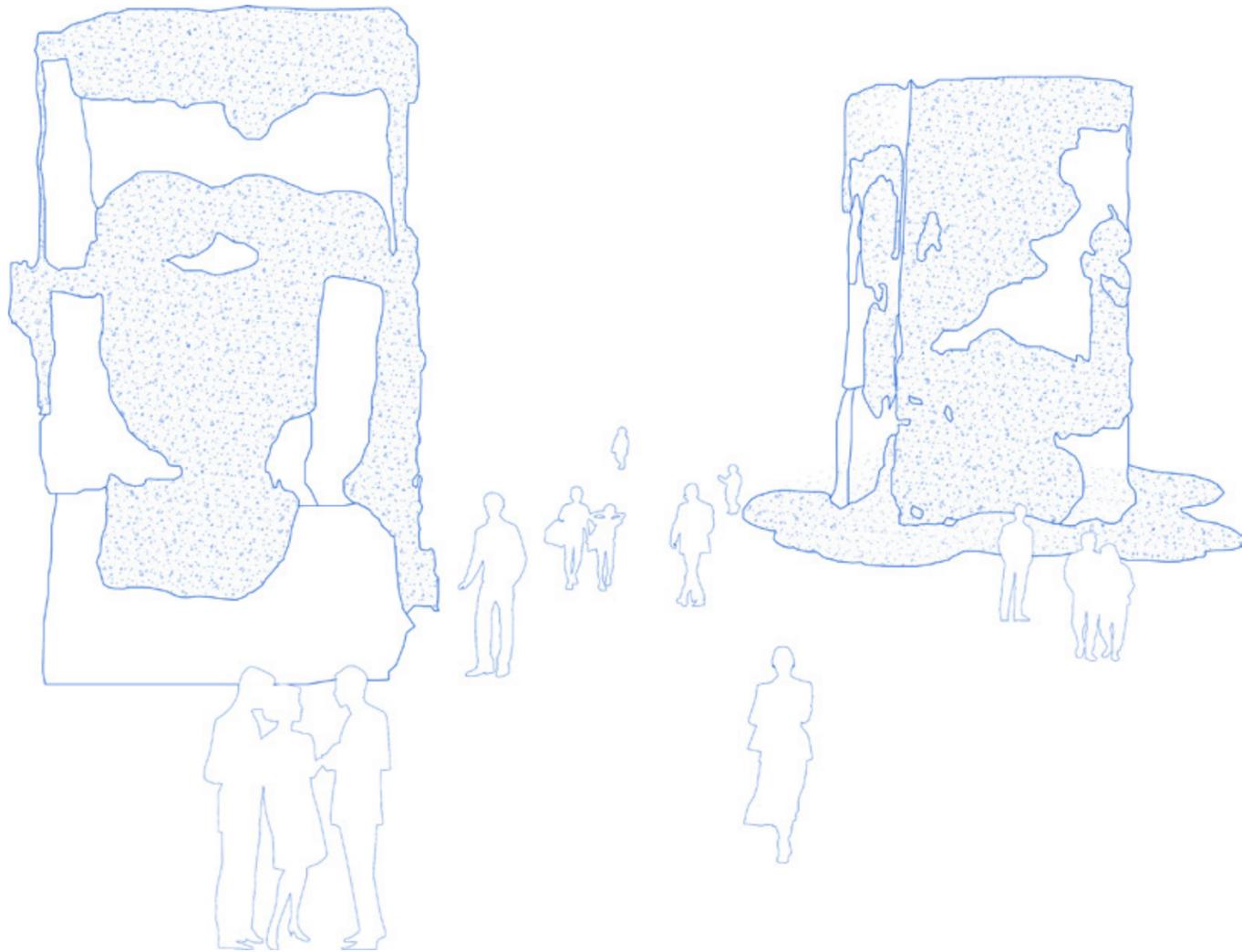
layered compositions layered into the form of a columns gathering space, creating atypical use of scale, and destabilizing existing preconceived expectations. Finding value in the materials weakness, and fragile properties as well as texture and irregularity combined into a composition of positive characteristics. The clay forms part of a material performance.

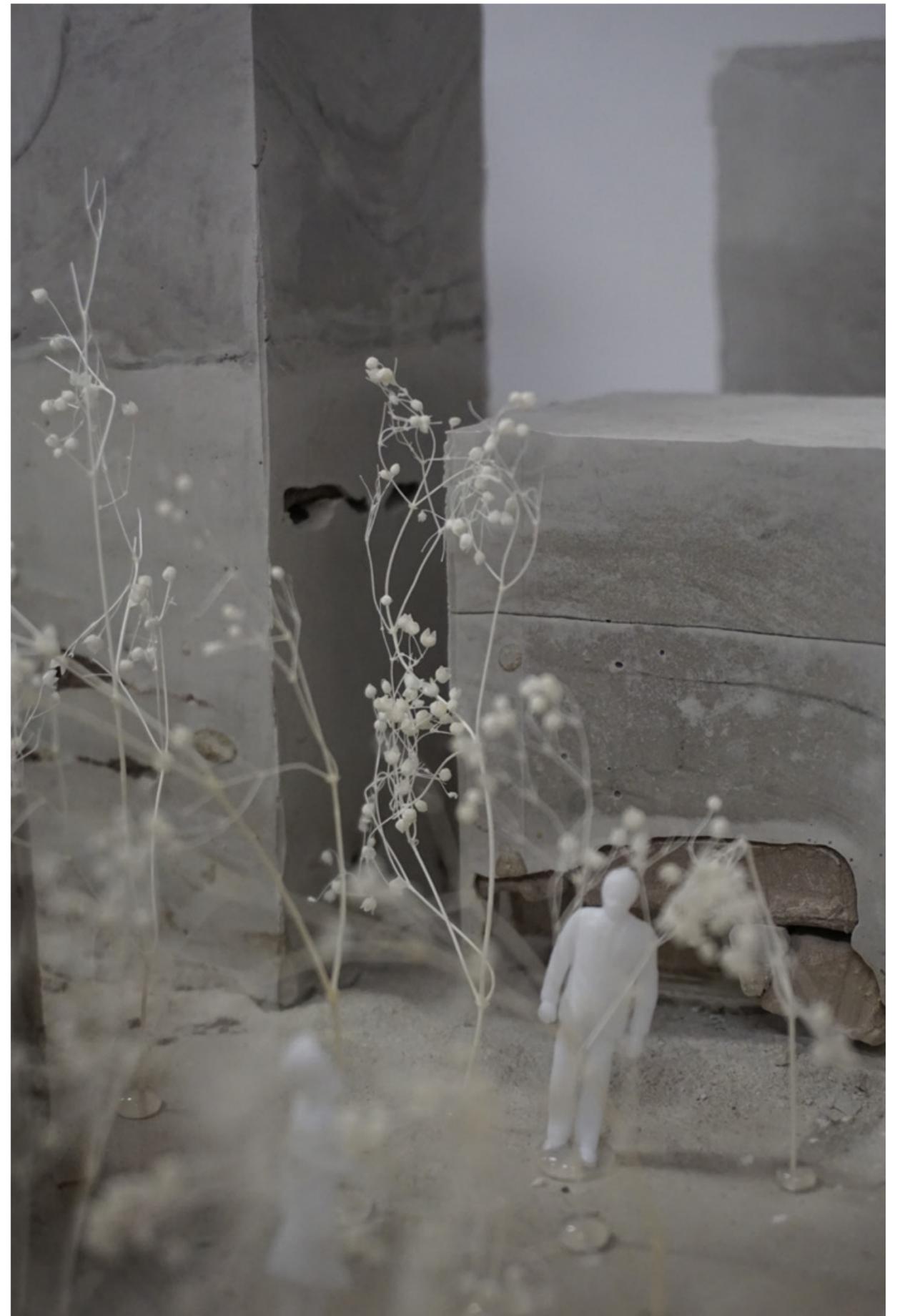
Introducing a dual relationship between the garden and the column. The Column enables different situations to happen around them, objects that organize the movement of people, compress and open up. This relationship between the garden and the column, having a site which is in between the organized city and a formal garden I choose to present the possibility of having an informal garden and space where a diverse amount of situations may occur simultaneously.

The garden of columns is a space activator. It calls for a multiplicity of uses, an undefined program that enables various civic activities, such as sports, expositions, interactions, gatherings, informal gatherings.

I am interested in the properties of clay that I talked about earlier, unpredictability and change, with this in mind, and the different composition of the columns in the ratio of clay and concrete. We can speculate on a future image of the columns. A new landscape will be created with time, decay is introduced and accepted, welcoming the appropriation of biodiversity. As the clay bricks shrink, or in some cases are even removed from the monolith, spaces are created between them, there is space for insects, birds, animals and plants to inhabit this uncontrolled and "unwanted" space.

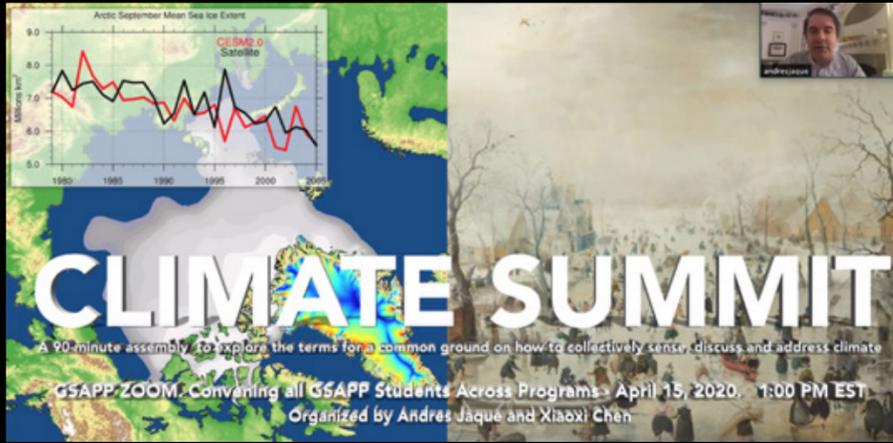
This transformation allows for diverse uses and appropriation to be incorporated, therefore the appearance, use and influence of the column will change over time.











WE TALKED ABOUT  
CLIMATE STORIES  
AND PROPOSALS.



Garden of Columns  
Azul Klix



Sette Colonne con capitelli corinzi al Tempio di Giunone.  
Giovanni Battista Piranesi

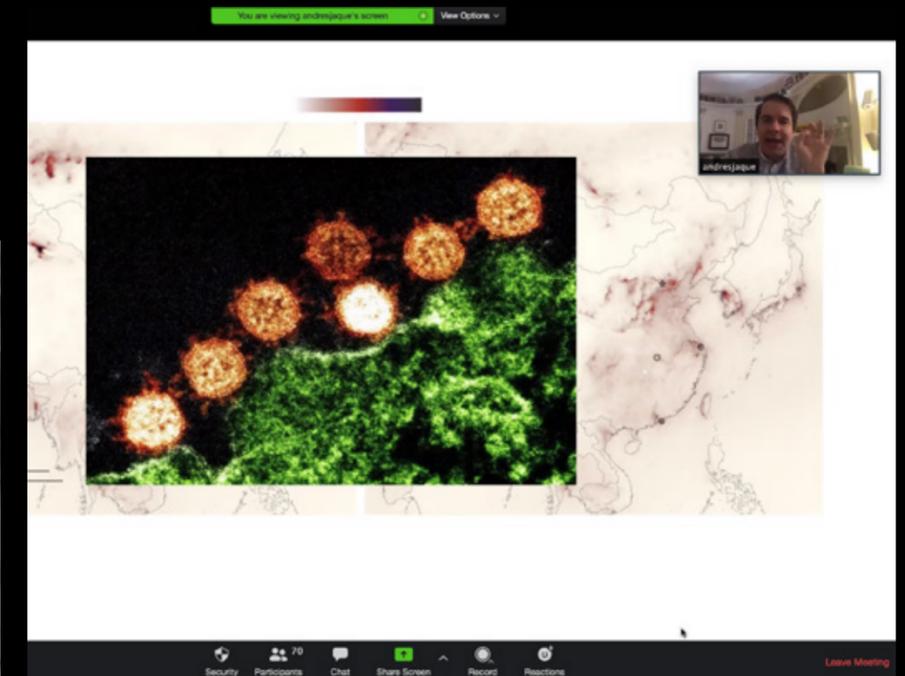
REVITALIZING A  
DISCOURSE

A material's performance holds a history, a technological evolution and an acquired knowledge of use. For instance; clay acts as a modeling agent that absorbs, adopts and changes into any given role. This is why its performative transformation allows for diverse uses and appropriations to be incorporated, therefore the appearance, use and influence will change over time.

I would like to use the column presented as a metaphor to allow us to speculate on a material's future transformation from its original state, anticipating the material's trace. With time, a new landscape will be created. Decay is introduced and accepted, welcoming the appropriation of biodiversity. I believe that a materials trace is important and necessary to accommodate for climate transformation.



THE HUMAN TRACE



# SOUND STRATA

*Gabriela Etchegaray + Jorge Ambrosi*

*TA: Hector Antonio Castillo*

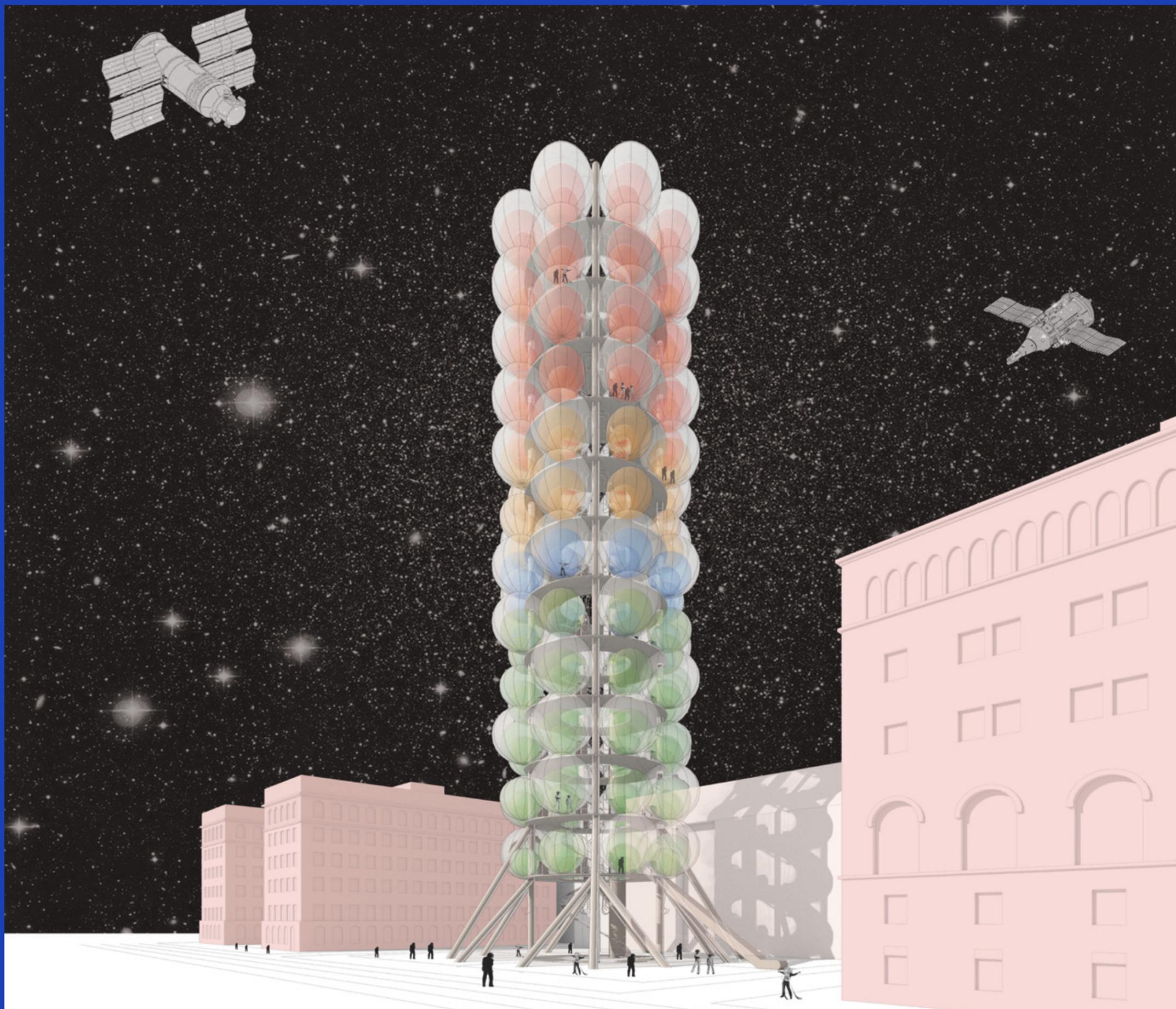
*Group partner: Guillermo Hevia*

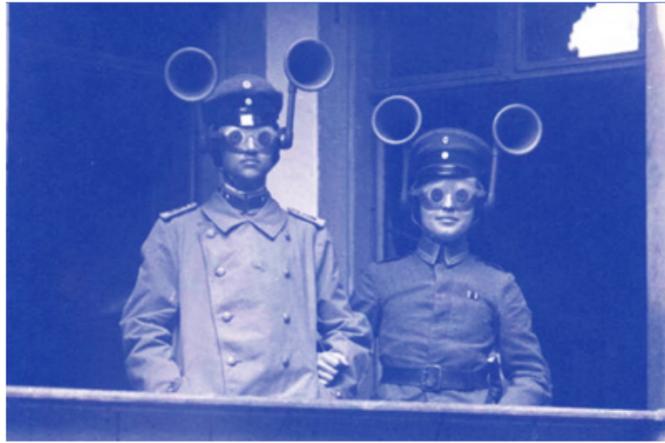
## Sound Tower

The tower can be understood as a sound lab, having simultaneously an urban and an interior scale. The urban scale is understanding the project as a visual broadcasting device of the city sounds, rendering the surrounding soundscape, by making visible the invisible. The tower is ordered through a series of layers of spheres that make visible the proposed taxonomy of sounds. These bubbles are inflated and deflated in relationship to the sound levels of the city, translating it into a visual sound experience.

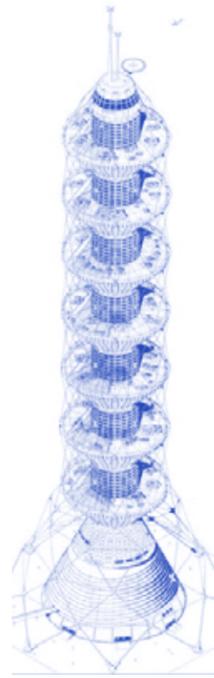
The interior scale is a soundlab, understood as a collection of sounds and situations encapsulated in every bubble. This gives the possibility to have a collective perception of sounds, related to a series of public unfixed programs and layouts, enabling to experience a specific activity with a completely different sound, understanding the sources, decibels and frequencies simultaneously.

This building is in constant transformation and adaptation, producing a collective awareness of sound and evidencing that sound is in constant change.





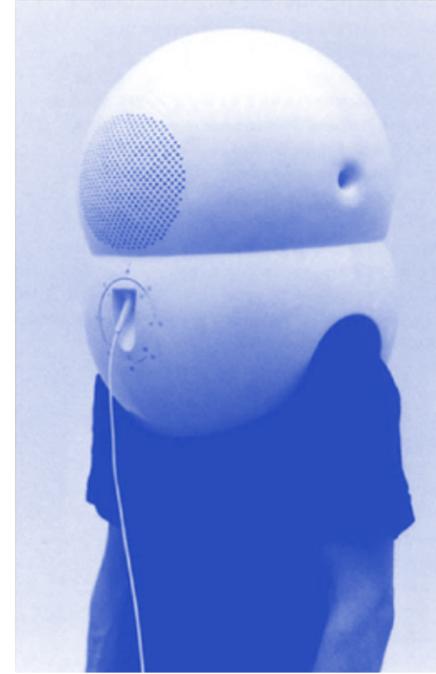
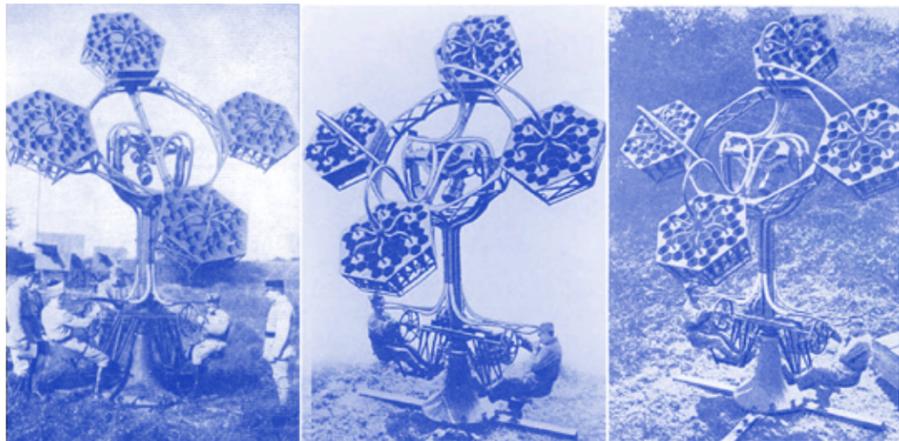
**SOUND**



**VISUALIZE**



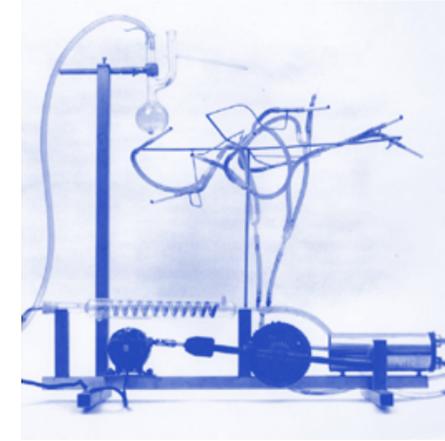
**STRATA**



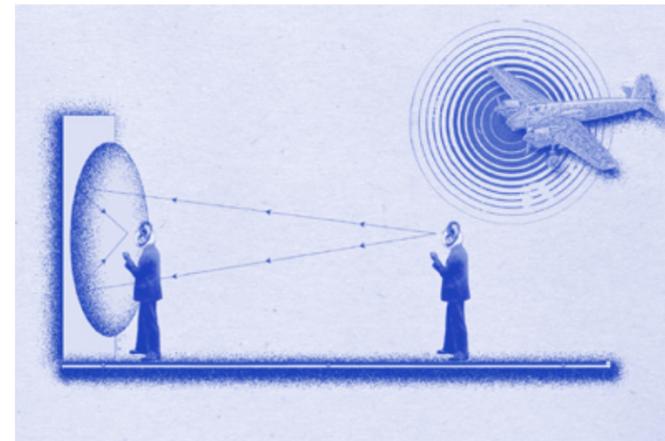
**SOUND**



**VISUALIZE**

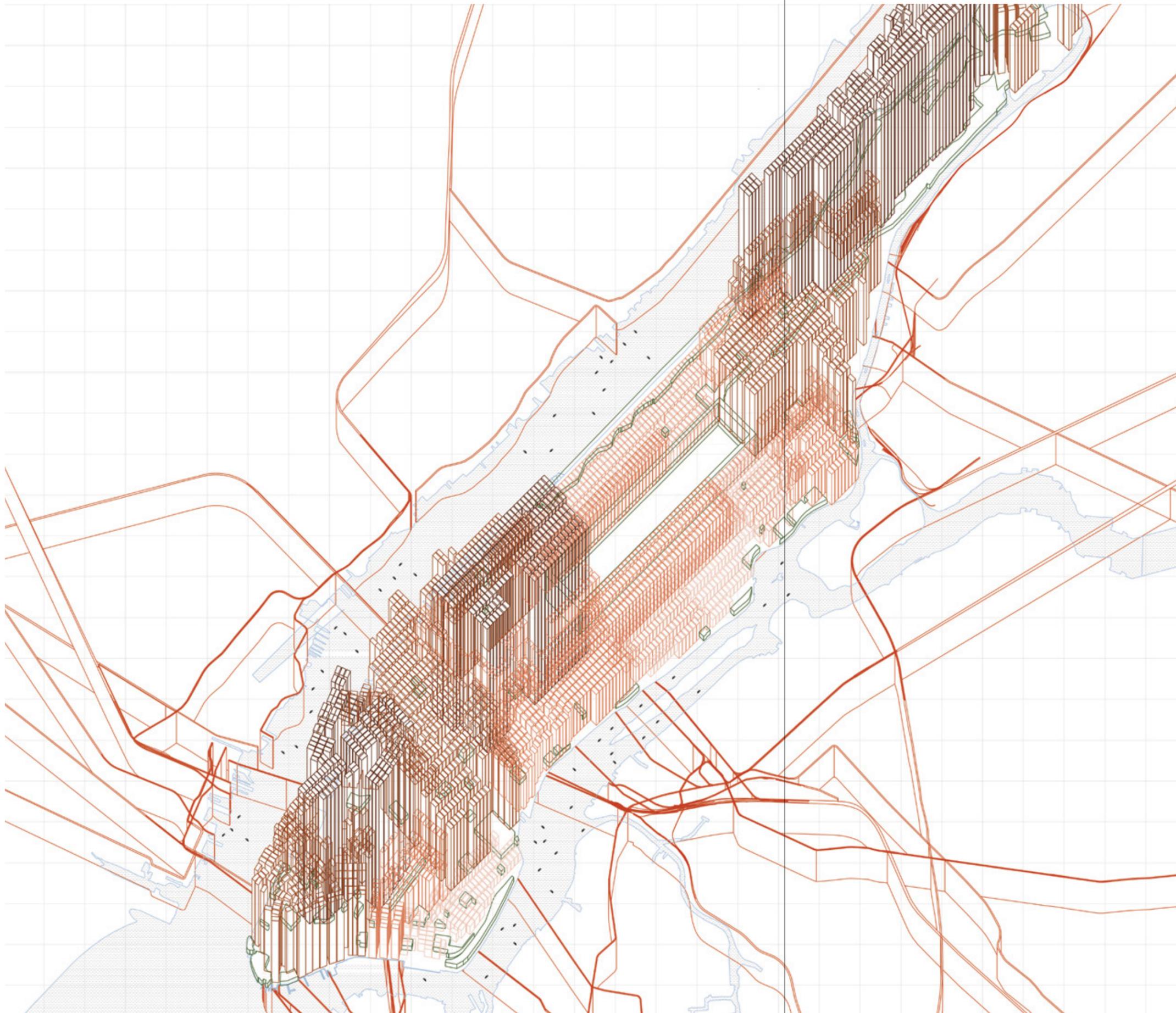


**STRATA**



**SOUND**

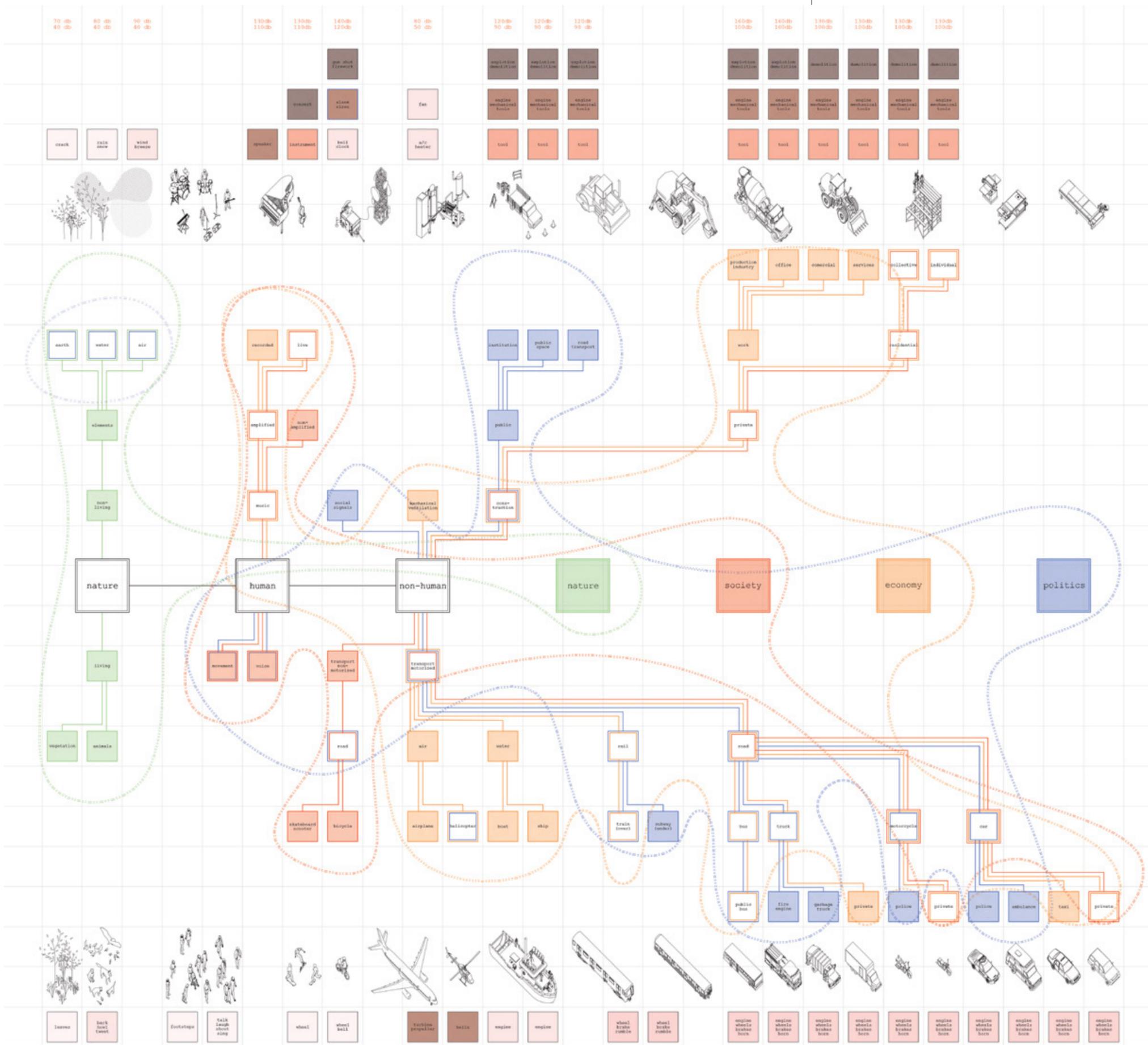




### Mapping of Manhattan Noise Levels

This map visualizes the sound data collected through live recordings and telephone complaints, showing a range of sound from 70dB to 120dB.

The most amount of complaints made in NYC are in regard to noise, including vehicles, sirens, loud music, and construction. The facts are increasingly alarming and 9 out of 10 adults in New York City are exposed to excessive noise levels, this information is corroborated with recording devices.

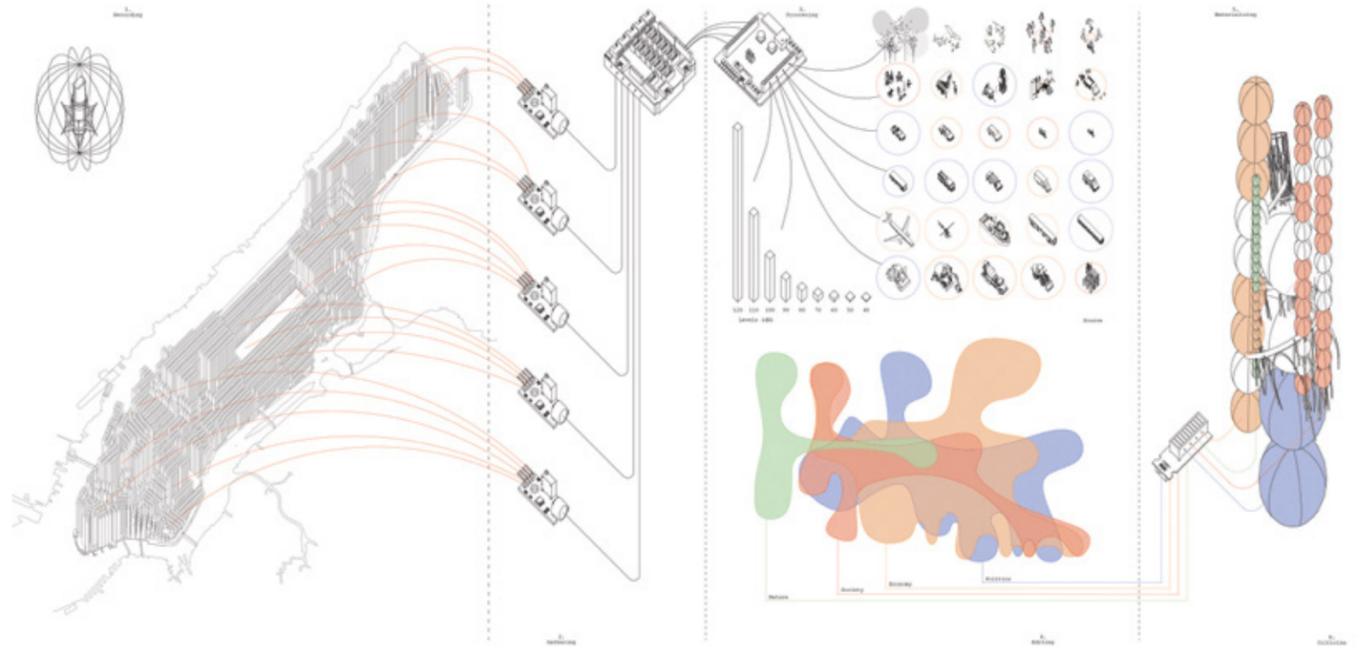


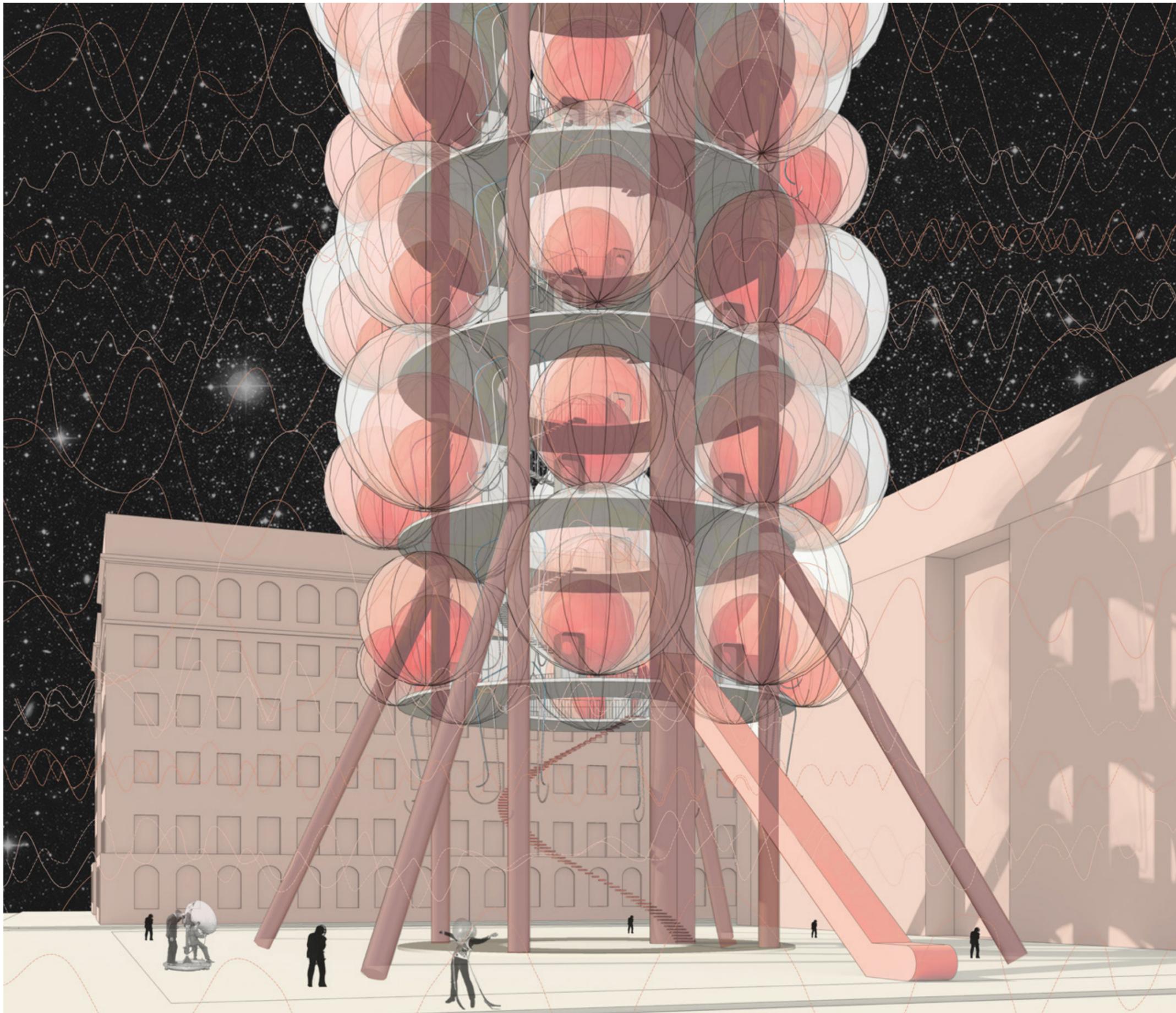
**Mapping of sound taxonomy**

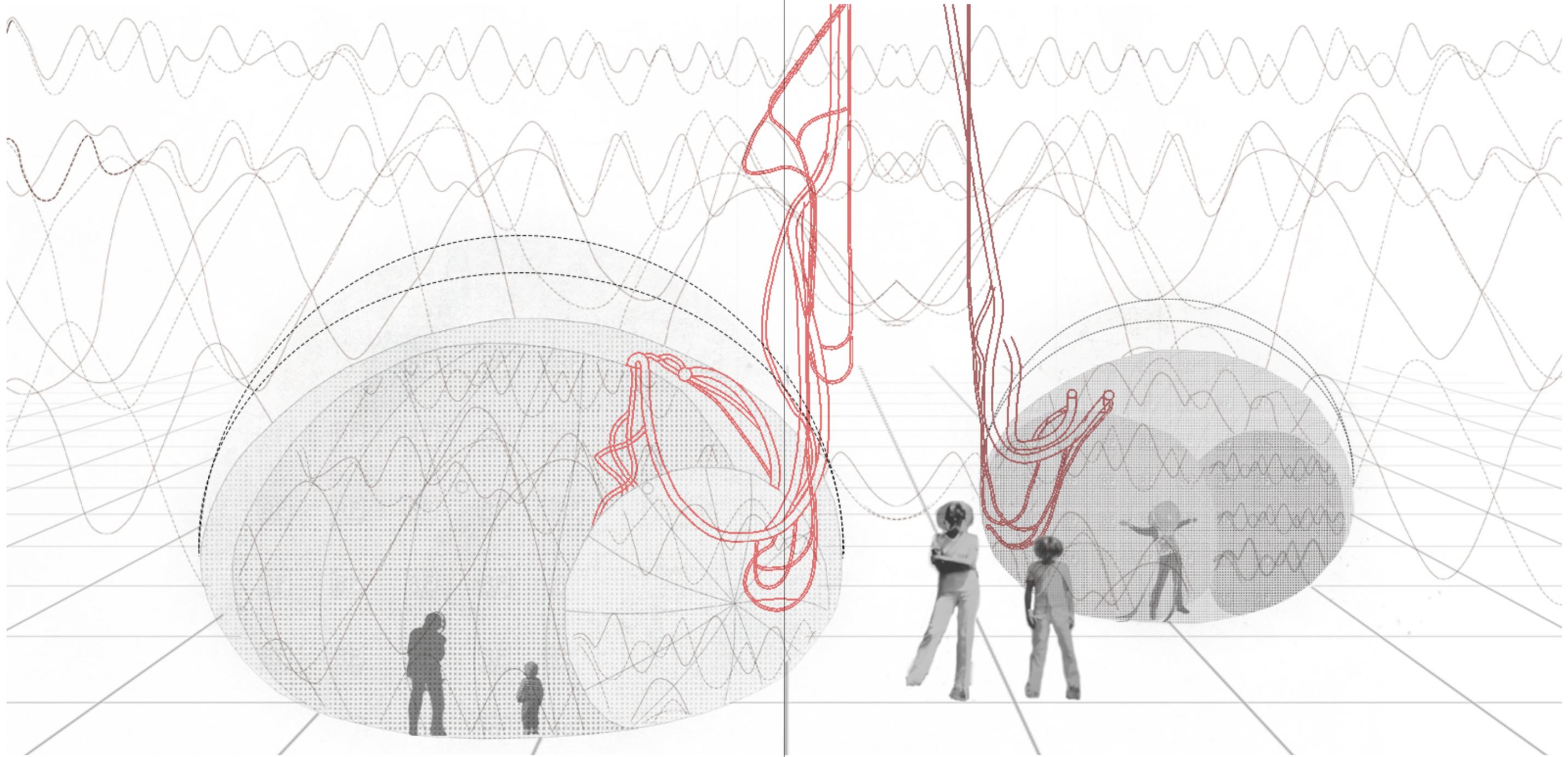
With a critical taxonomy of sound as a project, the mapping pursues us to understand and visualize the sound reality in the city and its actors, with this data we make visible the various stratas of sound, unfolding the source and its level or loudness (dB).

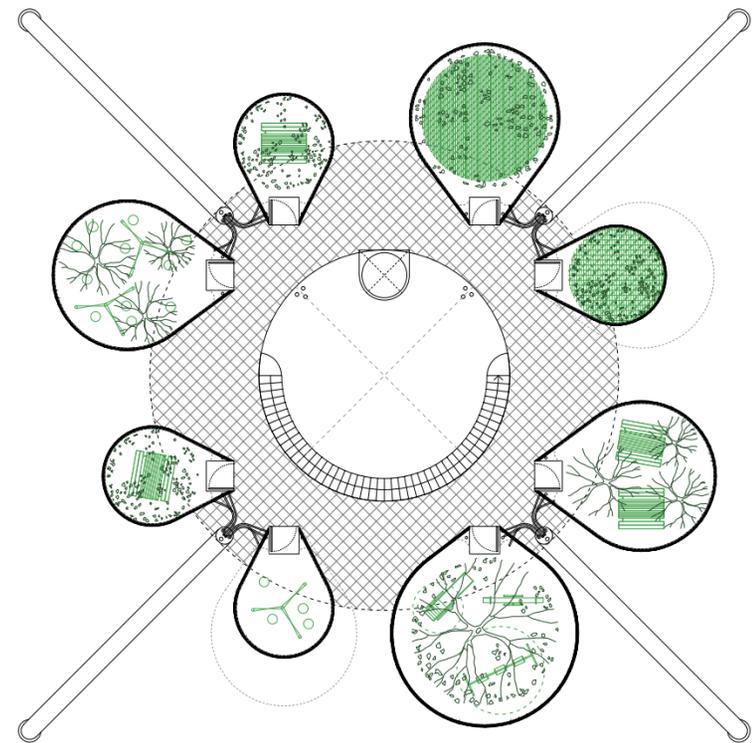
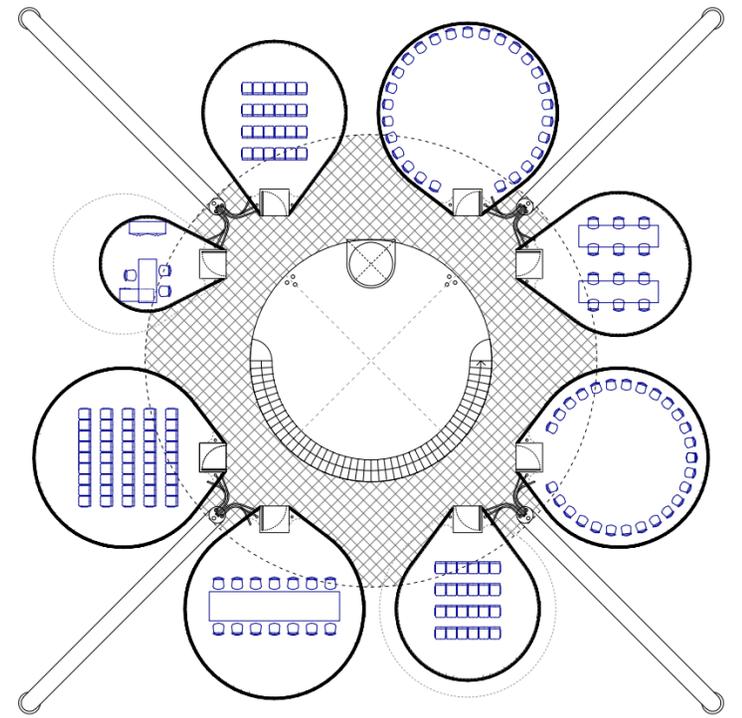
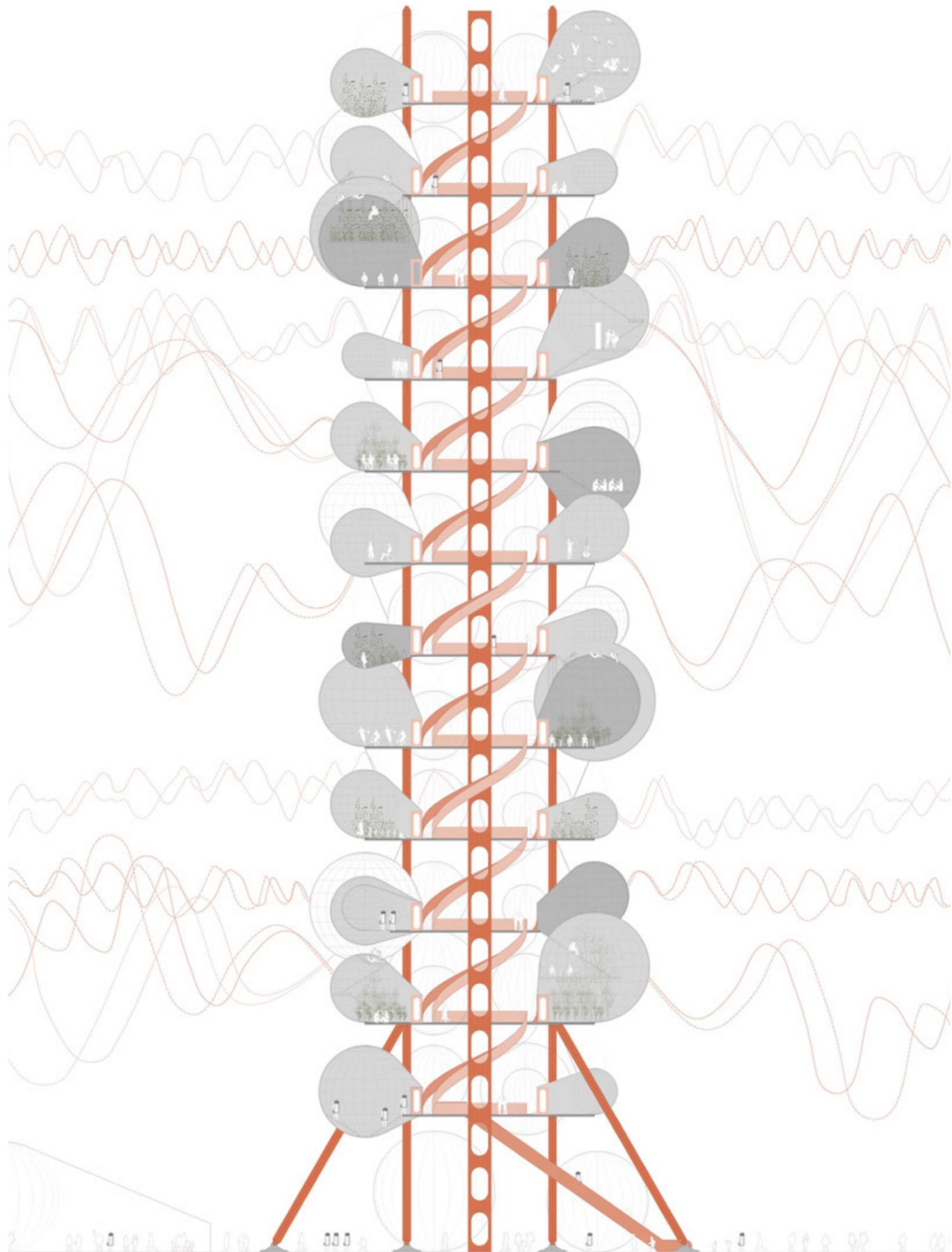
This taxonomy is the first step to having a real approximation that can be turned, by its criticality, into the facts that the project renders, exposes and responds to. The project presents information and facts in a critical way, being able to expose the role that politics, economy, society and nature play in the city sounds.

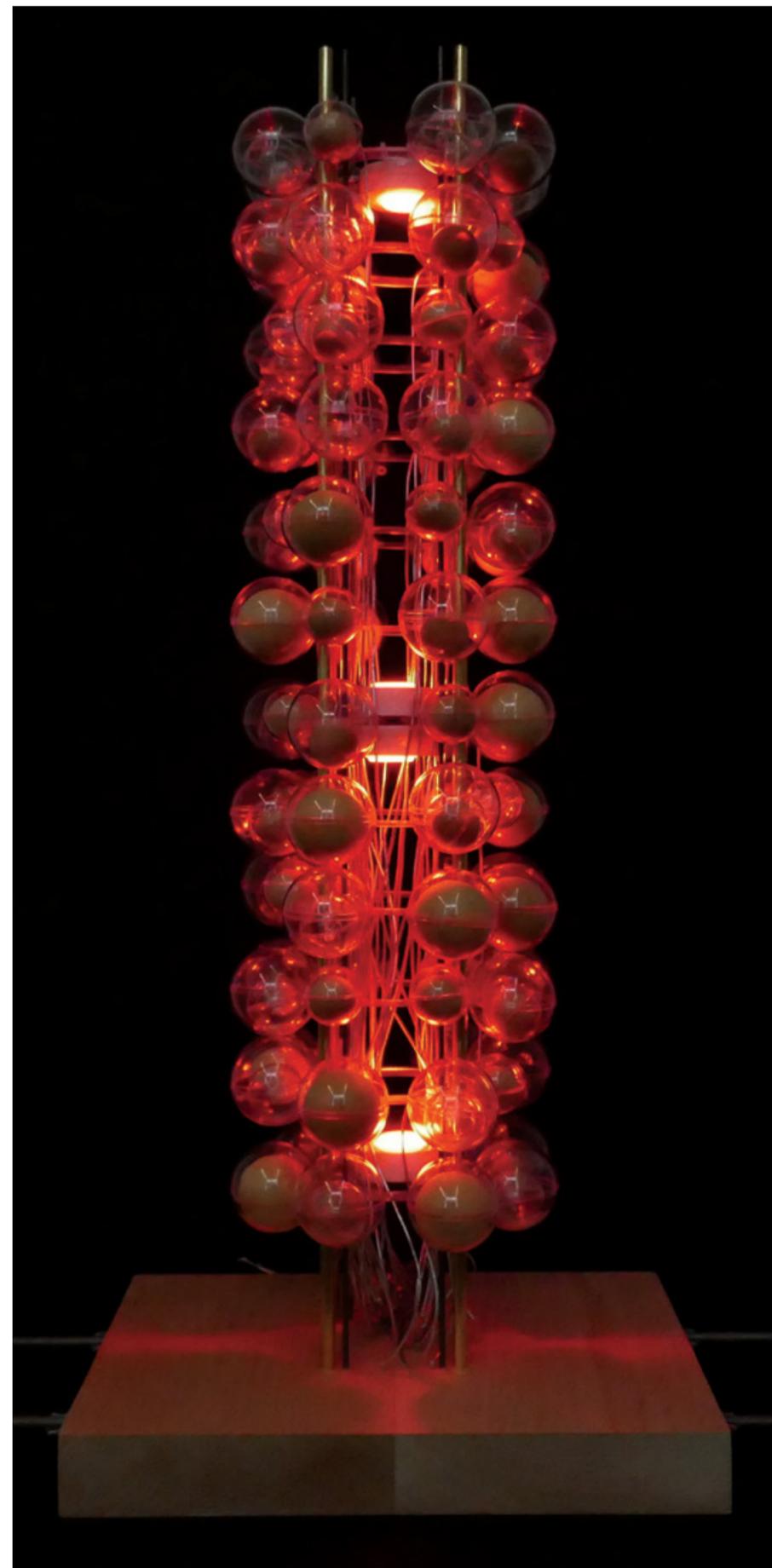
As a consequence, this research is the input that inform and give sense to the architectural devices that we propose. The research project and design goals are making visible the invisible in a new way.



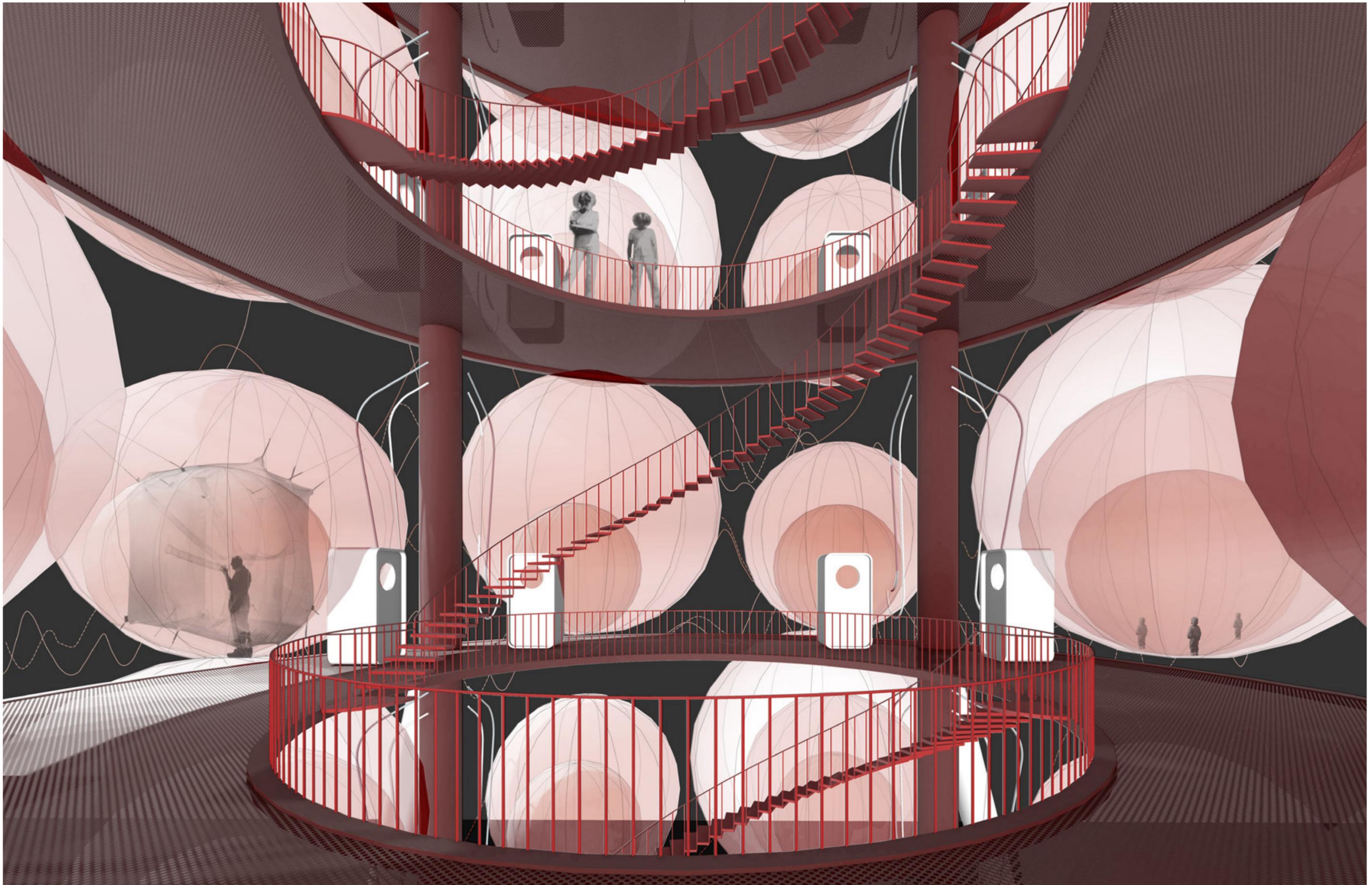












### Sound Device

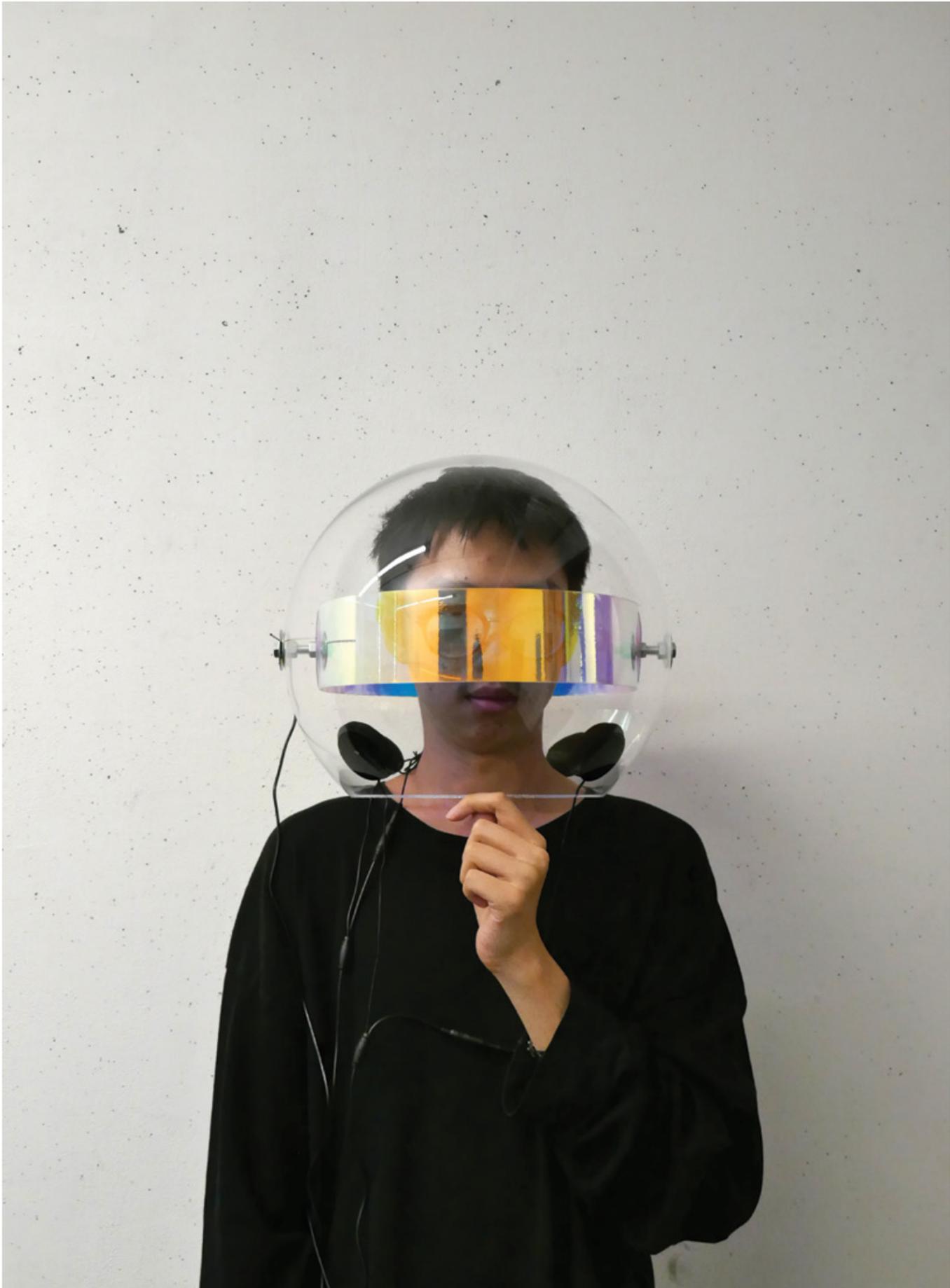
The project of the individual scale device is to create an experience of contrast and immersion. By generating a sense of isolation within the surrounding environment, the device provides the opportunity to generate a new perception of the cities' imaginary, understanding that architecture operates not only in terms of buildings.

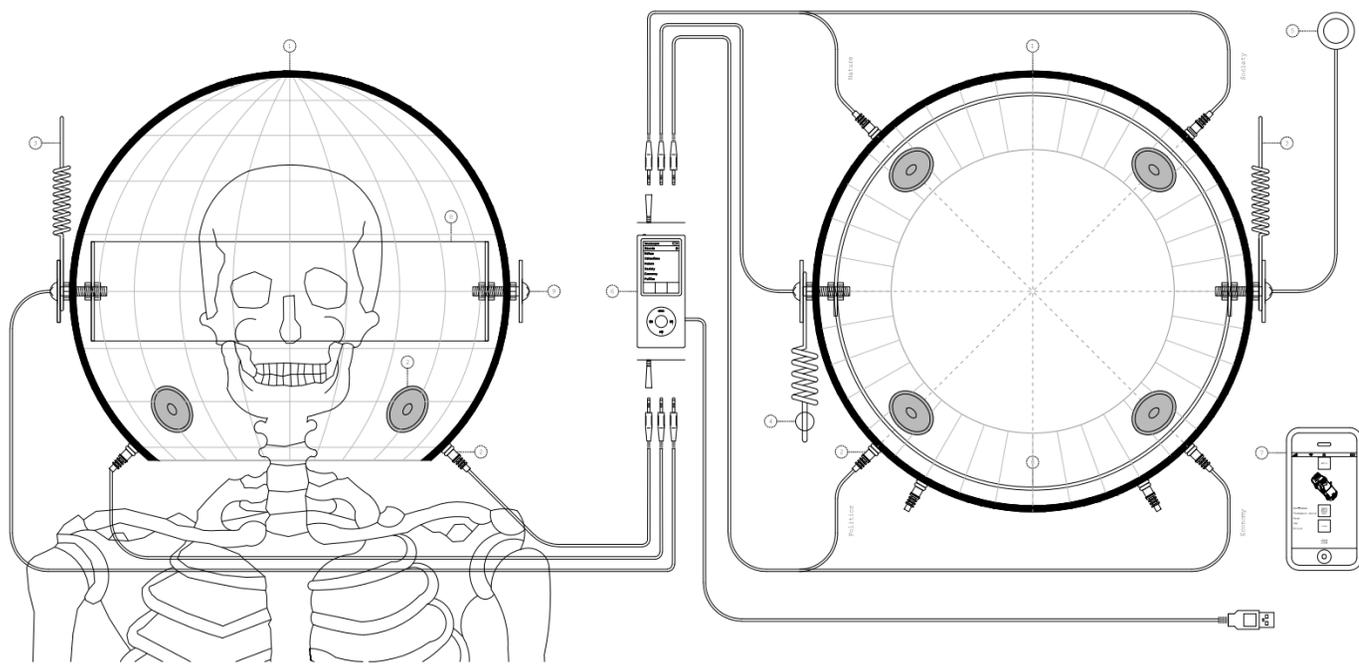
The device has two features, one able to invert the real sound perception of the surrounding, and transforming it into an inverted soundscape. If we are in the city, we can be perceiving a nature soundscape, and when we are in nature, we can be perceiving a city soundscape. The device is about proposing new experiences.

The other feature is to understand that there are many sounds that we, as humans, can't perceive, so we don't have a complete experience of the city. The device allows to perceive invisible or unhearable layers of sound, by enacting our hearing sense as other non-human creatures, so we can have different experiences, related to different frequencies. There is a whole strata that we are missing due to our limitations that we want to present.

These experiences are achieved through an acrylic bubble that isolates us acoustically, but not visually. An antenna or receiver collects the surrounding sounds and is able to invert these and at the same time change our perception by proposing new soundscapes. These sounds are produced by different stereo speakers connected to a system converter. At the same time a non-human hearing enhancer and probe allows us to perceive a whole new strata of unhearable sound.







- 1. Translucent Acrylic Sphere 14" 1/8"
- 2. Stereo Speakers 1-1/2"
- 3. Antenna / environment receiver
- 4. Microphone / non-human enhancer
- 5. Hand probe enhancer
- 6. System receiver/ converter
- 7. Sound/Noise Taxonomy device
- 8. Acrylic filter/ screen
- 9. Fixation system

# EXTREME DESIGN

Prof. Mark Wigley

## On Dan Graham and TV

Television has gone. But what has it transformed into? A question that comes up with regards to this initial statement is; "Are we living inside television rather than simply watching it, if watching TV was ever simple?"<sup>1</sup> I would like to add a second question, one that I will attempt to develop throughout this essay; We once thought that we were looking into a device, but does this actually mean that we are watching an image of ourselves, therefore have we become what television has transformed into?

In order to pursue an answer to this question, I would like to present a general reflection in response to a variety of works by Dan Graham and the film *Playtime* by Jaques Tati. In order to do so, I will not detain myself on each piece of work individually, but rather mention a few and comment on the different stages within his work and how these relate to television. Why is it still relevant to talk about such issues today, or of such artists and filmmakers, that were evidencing the modern world or the person that was transformed by this modern world in the 1960s? There seems to be an intimate connection between the screens, projections, and reflections both in Tati and Graham as well as the medium itself, which today have been transformed into new ways of TV.

Dan Graham's use of a mass media to communicate his work, such as magazine publications, or the use of worldwide products such as glass and mirrors, even through the connection with other internationally recognized artists in order to produce a general broadcasting of, what we would call today, a collective of artists. Graham chooses to communicate with his peers as well as with his audience through a network, either physical or intangible. A network implies there to be a system, a system that is beyond a simple understanding or literal interpretation. Considering Graham's work, we could argue that in order to encounter this system and recognize it we must be presented with the image of our own reflection.

During the 70s and 80s, Graham was questioning and reflecting on the movement of daily images, how these were framed, and viewed from several different positions. Just like the glass window, which is used as parallelism towards the technology of the television, the picture window represents; "The world, held at a distance, frames a conventional view which

<sup>1</sup> A question prompted by Prof. Mark Wigley for the class Extreme Design.

is defined by the specific size, shape, and direction of orientation of the opening of the window frame."<sup>2</sup> The introduction of the TV screen into homes have generated a specific interaction and domestication of society. Graham's 1978 "Video projection outside home" critiques and responds towards the introduction of broadcasting screens into our homes is by counteracting, and rather than placing the TV set within a home, he chooses to place it outside. The provocation of allowing the rest of the community to view what the homeowner is 'privately' consuming is now exhibited and exposed.

Graham is not only interested in the meaning of TV or broadcast but also the reflection of one's self, a viewer can find within his work, both literal and metaphorically. Which brings me to my initial question and interest in this topic. In order to be able to discuss the relationship and influence of Television, art, and architecture through the work of Graham we must look into his writings from 1979 ("Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television."), in which he touches upon several topics in relation to the notion of authorship within a piece. Does the involvement of the spectator transform the spectator into the author? As well as the notion of limits and totalization, the notion of environment and finally presenting TV as the commodity, where he questions whether the TV "completes" the consumer, therefore the television is a reflection not only of our interests but also of what we are lacking.

There seems to be a consistent dialogue between several artists at the time that Dan Graham was producing his work and developing his interests. Dan Flavin, Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, Robert Smithson, write and comment on Graham's work as well as Graham does on theirs. These writings show the development of new forms of aesthetic work, incorporating the notion of the environment, the notion of place, and the notion of presence. Influenced by Flavin, Andre and LeWitt, and their understanding of place and presence Graham writes; "notion of place, the fact that the work referred to the gallery as a spatial container, along the notion of presence, which had meant in Flavin's work and installation was contingent on its present situation and therefore always specifically conceived for on particular architectural context"<sup>3</sup> Graham was the first artist to exhibit the work of Dan Flavin, they understood each others questions and connected through their work and modes of exhibition. Is visiting a gallery, or reading an article in a magazine or experiencing an exhibition, something similar or the same to watching TV? Possibly the most effective way to reach any conclusion or even enable a reflection on his work is simply by comparing and evidencing the parallelism between Graham's works and the chosen mass media devices.

<sup>2</sup> Dan Graham. Conventions of the glass window. Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television. 1979.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin H.D. Buchloh. Moments of history in the works of Dan Graham,



In 1976 Graham makes notable his interest on the notion of environment, and does so by writing; "Despite the fact that the idea of using the 'real' outdoor environment as a 'site' on which to construct 'conceptual' or 'earth works', I think the fact that Homes of America 'was, in the end, only a magazine article, and made no claims for itself as 'Art', is its most important aspect."<sup>4</sup> Graham is not only mentioning his interest in the environment but also implying that by means of a magazine article the piece had been exposed. He is referring to the publication of "Scheme", 1965. As he himself explains later-on by stating that putting it in magazine pages meant that it also could be read in juxtaposition to the usual second-hand art criticism, reviews, reproductions in the rest of the magazine and would form a critique of the functioning of the magazine (in relation to the gallery structure).<sup>5</sup>

His interest in exposing, both his relation to an audience as well as the manner that the audience is uncovered to the art piece can be understood by the use of a specific medium. The importance of the medium used, many times of mass consumption such as magazines, and TV devices, create a familiarity as well as an impact on the viewer. Since now the spectator is presented with the possibility to view through this 'ordinary' medium a message that is not easily transmitted. This transforms and informs the spectator on the behavior developed towards the medium presented.

Benjamin Buchloh states, his concern for the "immediacy of perceptual experience" shows an interest for the people and their actual practice of perception (the subject), instead of a concern for their behavior in relation to a perceived sculptural object. But in his projects, Graham is consistently interested in the awareness of group behavior versus individual behavior. "There's always a reflection in my work between the work as an object in itself and the idea of people seeing themselves as perceiving and being perceived."<sup>6</sup>

His interest in the behaviour of society and how we interact within out context, cities, homes and in particular in regards to certain materials that compose our modern world.

<sup>4</sup> Dan Graham. Letter to Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, August 1976.

<sup>5</sup> Dan Graham. Letter to Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, August 1976.

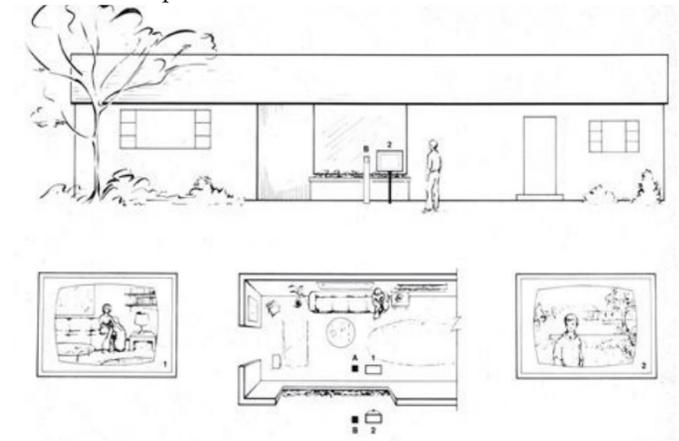
<sup>6</sup> Dan Graham interview with Mike Metz, 1994.

Through the design of his pavilions "Pavilion / Sculpture for Argonne" 1978-81, "Two adjacent pavilions" 1978, and "Two way mirror cylinder inside cube and video salon" 1989-1991 he chooses to decontextualize a fragment of a building and place it within a new context, enabling for new visions and perceptions that may not always be seen in our daily lives.

But this could also happen walking through any financial district in the world, where the abundance of glass, mirror, reflections and transparencies is absurd. "The glass's literal transparency not only falsely objectifies reality, but is a paradoxical camouflage; for a while the actual function of a corporation may be to concentrate its self-contained power and control by secreting information."<sup>7</sup> His fascination and obsession with this topic has allowed for several types of works to be created around this medium. Always focusing on the reaction of the audience, the close-up of consumer and viewer, and how the intentions transform.

In an interview with Mike Metz he explains; "There were video projects that took place within showcase windows that were between two glass office buildings and displayed picture window of houses. So you have all the possibilities using real, urban, and suburban architecture, consumer-oriented, showcase window architecture, office buildings (...)"<sup>8</sup> Graham is referring to projects such as "Projections on a gallery window", 1979 and Video project for two shops selling the same type of goods 1978-1980.

This isolation of the inside and outside world through the medium of glass is a statement highlighted especially during the first part of Jaques Tati and his film, "Playtime" produced in 1967. His explanation and exposition of the modern world and the confusion that comes with it is definite. When are we inside or outside a building? Is it truly defined by a 2cm glass? Or is it the noises of the city that are forgotten once we have passed that barrier. There is an inherent contra-



diction within the world of transparency and reflection, which is perceived as an elimination of a barrier, and an inclusion or open-ness towards the environment, where both sides are mutually influenced, as well as the introduction of new

<sup>7</sup> Dan Graham. Glass buildings: corporate 'showcases'. Essay on Video, Architecture and Television. 1979.

<sup>8</sup> Dan Graham interview with Mike Metz, 1994.

possibilities and new visions. I question whether we are truly interested in these possibilities or is it rather the opportunity to encounter upon our own reflection and accomplishments that encourage us to live in a world of images, not only in our cities, but also by introducing a new screen or window into our homes where we sit, only to broadcast our own perceptions.

Playtime, seems to be about the people's behaviour around architecture. It explores how the movement of the bodies follow the architecture of their surrounding spaces. Tati chooses to emphasize the sterility of glass and steel in modern architecture as well as the spatial confusions brought through the glass reflections. A similarity found in the work of Dan Graham, who also introduces the notion of confusion into his work. Found both in his mirror and glass projects as well as his video tape recordings.



Rosalind Krauss argues that the grid is absent in the 19th century paintings, although it is not absent from the study of optics, the analysis of light and its motion, and the psychology of the perceiving mechanism. This was usually represented through grids, "By its very abstraction, the grid conveyed one of the basic laws of knowledge - the separation of the perceptual screen from that of the "real" world."<sup>9</sup>

The representation of the window, a transparent medium that admits light - or spirit - into the initial darkness of the room. "But if glass transmits, it also reflects. And so the window is experienced by the symbolist as a mirror as well - something that freezes and locks the self into the space of its own reduplicated being. Flowing and freezing; glaze in French means glass, mirror, and ice; transparency, opacity and water."<sup>10</sup>

The study that Graham undertakes in several projects that include the picture window, as we have previously seen, its meaning can allow us to understand Graham's work as the work of a symbolist. Is he using glass and mirror to represent what we cannot see, or we choose not to see? Is the intention to show the reflection of our environment or the projections of our own expectations that we want others to see? Graham is a great connoisseur of architecture, largely influenced by figures such as Robert Venturi and Mies Van der Rohe. He is interested in the theory as much as the practice, and has introduced himself to this world since the beginning. Although he observes and comprehends this world very closely, he chooses to operate from a distance. This distance allows for actions that not many architects are willing to take, he is not sceptical of the introduction of TV into space, instead he embraces it and is rather waiting for the audiences reaction.

"The emergence of this architectural activity to prominence

<sup>9</sup> Rosalind Krauss. Grids. October Vol 9, 1979.

<sup>10</sup> Rosalind Krauss. Grids. October Vol 9, 1979.

## FALL

represents for Graham at once an indirect confirmation of his earlier insights about the conditions for critical cognition of the symbolic meaning built into the environment, and a new stimulus: to build."<sup>11</sup>

In his project "Alteration to a suburban house" (1978) the removal of the facade replaced by full length transparent glass and the positioning of a mirror parallel to the glass facade, reflects the interior of the house as well as the environment. Which in effect makes the passerby transform into the movement of images once to be seen in the mirror, and therefore incorporated into the home as part of a domesticated scene. The mobilization of the viewer as well as the image refers to the notion of limits and totalization. Alex Kitnick refers to this project by saying; "Alteration refers at once to a home, a television set, a section of an office building, and a fragment of a modernist glass house."<sup>12</sup>

"On the other hand, the composition of many of the Venturi houses was derived from the composition of the adjacent house or the one across the street. So, the facade of the house has been destroyed, but what you see in the mirror are people outside, people on the inside, and the houses across the street. I'm doing the same thing I'm imploding it all onto one surface. The surface of the mirror behind and also the semi-surface of the glass window in front."<sup>13</sup>

As Beatriz Colomina mentions "All of Graham's work is media-architecture--from the very first works for magazines, like Homes for America, to the house designs like Alteration, to the pavilions that currently dominate his work. It is not simply that he deals with architectural subjects, the tract house, the picture window, the corporate office building, etc., or that he uses the media traditionally deployed by the architect, but that he understands the building itself as media."<sup>14</sup>

In this respect, understanding the building itself as media, and in the works presented we are the reflection imposed on the buildings, therefore we are the media, but that can only exist through a medium, Birgit Pelzer refers to this as; "the existence of a medium like video transforms our notions of space and communication. This transformation must be articulated. Graham often underlines video's abstract possibility of the autodetermination of information."<sup>15</sup>

His pavilions, video recordings and the intervention of the natural environment we are used to acknowledging, all of these works introduce the notion of authorship. Who is the author? The use of mirrors invert the position of the spectator, who was once and traditionally looking forward to view an image or painting, but now, that image is reverted, the movement of the image is televisual, once again we are back at the initial question.

We once thought that we were looking into a device, but does this actually mean that we are watching an image of ourselves, therefore have we become what television has transformed into? The 1974 Installation of "Opposing Mirrors and Video Monitors on Time Delay", responds to the movement of the human through a mirror and a projection of these movements on a screen with a delayed signal. Graham was interested in the distinction between the performance and the spectators, only for them to realize that they were complying with both roles. "Graham re-defines the invisible boundary historically separating the spectator from the spectacle."<sup>16</sup> Graham's work always involves the audience and the occupancy of the viewer in order for the existence of the design to perform as a piece of art. "The spectator of the work is the spectator in the work, both an

<sup>11</sup> Jeff Wall. Excerpt from Dan Graham's Kammerspiel.

<sup>12</sup> Alex Kitnick. What's Your Type?

<sup>13</sup> Dan Graham interview with Mike Metz, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> Beatriz Colomina. Double Exposure: Alteration to a Suburban House,

<sup>15</sup> Birgit Pelzer. Vision in Process.

<sup>16</sup> Anne Rorimer. Dan Graham, An introduction, Buildings and Signs, 1981.

object in it and his image reflected"<sup>17</sup> We could argue that perception is an essential essence in order to engage with the audience or the subject. The subject only acknowledges himself, not by perceiving but by being perceived, or rather by seeing that they are being observed; as an object.

Therefore we could question who is the author of the installation, does it become the originally intended-passive viewer, or has the role of the viewer transformed and moved into a new position, of active viewer. We could argue that without the spectator, there would be no existence of the work. Graham's proposition would be simplified and only looked at with a distance, but by positioning these pavilions, and installations within a context, it being a gallery, a house garden, a rooftop, there is an intention to be inhabited, to be transformed. I believe that the author of the work continues to be Graham, since he is the one enabling the performance and situation.

Graham's awareness and incorporation of the surrounding context, where his designs transcend the modernist conception of glass, as seen in "Playtime". He acknowledges the social dimension in art, and that without this interaction it would not exist in its maximum capacity to express and engage with that audience. By permitting this interaction between the material and the spectator he completely redefines the traditional relationship between the viewer and the object. He welcomes confusion between the interior and exterior as well as perceiver and perceived. Graham was able to distance himself from the museum, a space that his colleagues were still bound too. This has permitted an engagement with the architectural discourse which includes the expression of problems other than those commonly identified with art institutions.

With the use of projection and by seeing yourself reflected in the image, this takes us back to the initial question, where the body is seen as being the transporter of images, therefore the body being the television. Buckminster Fuller referred to the brain as a TV studio, it has an number of images that are organized and then go through an editing process. Once again we could think that rather than belonging to the TV world we are the TV. We are the projection of what we look at. But not many times may we encounter this situation, maybe only when we are moving in front of Dan Graham's work may we be struck with the topic. This would lead us to conclude that the body is itself a TV screen, therefore I carry a TV with me wherever I go.. Mobilization of vision, and visibility, and seeing myself through glass and mirror and now seeing myself through the TV.

Even before TV, the existence of the picture window was domesticating the human eye, in order to frame the environment. Being taught how to see, is choosing to prioritise through the framing, in the same way a painting is framed. This technique is then introduced into television. "Video in architecture will function semiotically speaking as window and as mirror simultaneously, but subvert the effects and functions of both. Windows in architecture mediate separated spatial units and frame a conventional perspective of one units in relation to the other; mirrors in architecture define self-reflectivity, spatial enclosure and ego enclosure."<sup>18</sup>

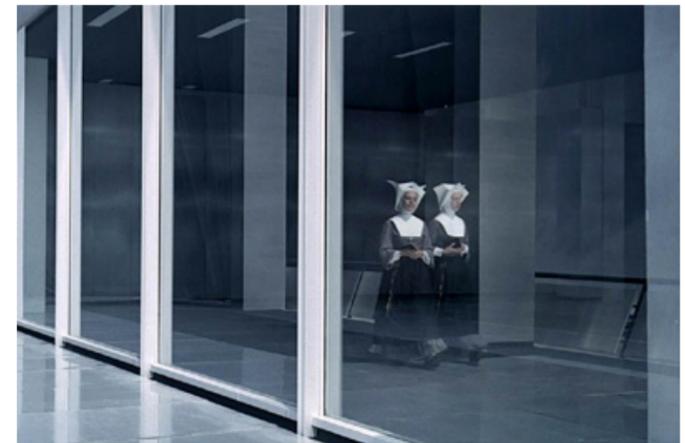
Architecture presents itself as the medium and Graham's installations deal very much with the architecture within our cities and transporting certain elements into new forms and locations, in order to create a contemplation of the intentions behind the materials. The thoughts of the architect are com-

<sup>17</sup> Anne Rorimer. Dan Graham, An introduction, Buildings and Signs, 1981.

<sup>18</sup> Dan Graham. The architectural code / the video code.

municated through drawings, even Graham's sketches are very architectural, by showing plans and sections. Although Dan Graham is usually seen as an artist, I think in this particular case and due to many of his architectural type installations, we can also refer to him as the architect. The thinker and designer of space.

Birgit Pelzer understands the mirror nature of the screen, projections and glass, and he asks "Who, finally, is seeing? The subject from which we begin, or that to which we come? And what is the subject supposed to see? to know?" Is the underlying issue and subject addressed within a major group of Graham's work in relation to ego, presenting essentially that the self-recognition identified within his reflective surfaces, renders the recognition of the other, therefore it is the recognition of what both negate. The following quote sums up Graham's mirror works extremely well: "The mirror, according to Graham, opens onto nothing if not the spatial enclosure where the ego perceives its illusory eternity."<sup>19</sup>



<sup>19</sup> Birgit Pelzer. Vision in Process.

# THANK YOU

To my family for encouraging and supporting me.

To my husband for accompanying me every step of the way.

To my professors for challenging me and introducing a fascinating energy into every class, seminar, lecture and conversation.

To my colleagues for helping me learn from them and making every day exciting.

WORK IN

PROGRESS . . .