THE DE-TERRITORIALIZED ZONE:

Ill-defined spaces and unclassified behaviors

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Abstract

This thesis deals with de-territorialized spaces, urban spaces in which ownership and responsibility are unclear. In such a zone we are not restricted to simply observing. A person can *handle* the environment; the potential exists to make changes with little fear of doing "damage" or infringing. You might kick a can, make stacks of cinder blocks, or drag a piece of metal along the ground to a new position. You may prop a lawn-chair on a pallet and listen to the game on the radio. Of course, the next day the chair may have been pulled off the pallet, or a pile of railroad ties may have buried the entire south-end of the lot. We only control the zone while it is actually under our hands, but although the internal conditions are transient, the zone itself persists.

When there is little space for any activity that is not either officially sanctioned, or commercially viable enough to "support itself", whole classes of endeavor are effectively forbidden. Within an urban milieu, the de-territorialized space becomes the sole venue for all behaviors which fall outside these boundaries.

My thesis involves intentionally creating and modulating such a de-territorialized area, potentially allowing such "transgressive" activities to take place. It will first attempt to identify aspects of the built environment that contribute to de-territorialization, then, working with an existing site which exhibits some sympathetic characteristics, the project will try to generate and modulate de-territorialization within that space.

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I. Investigating the Controlled Zone

A. Perception

As a first step in examining the condition of *de-territorialized* or *ambiguous* space, I decided to make some attempt to define the conditions that create its opposite. In other words, the factors that create a *well-defined, less permissive* place.

In looking at what determines the nature of *any* territory or place from an experiential point of view, we see that that there are various levels of perception that must be considered:

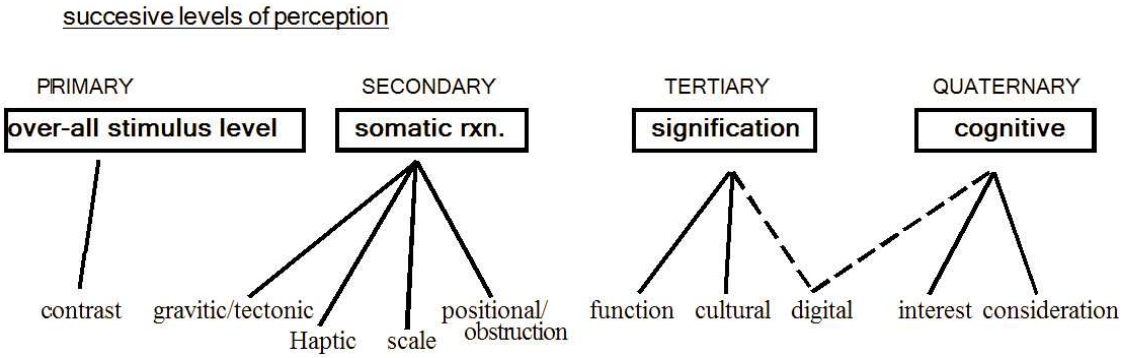

Figure 1

Essentially, perception at these different levels combines to create our knowledge of our surroundings, including a sense of place (or no-place, as the case may be).

The most basic level of perception is the primary, or total **stimulus level.** Insofar as eighty percent of sensory signaling in the neurological network of a human being is related to sight, the total amount of signal (at least from exterior sources) is often largely a product of the eyes. This signal is produced by contrast of one type or another, such as bands of shadow, color, surface texture, value changes, inflections of form. All successive levels of perception are born first from the total amplitude of signal, and second from the modulation of its individual components.

The next (secondary) level of perception is ***somatic.*** There is an immediate, phenomenological reaction that we have to any structure. Is it stable? Is it precarious? Is it light or massive? Could I run against it? Would it crash down across fifty feet of

ground or tip over like a step-stool? Additional impressions result from surface textures, and ground-plane surfaces. Is it slippery? Is it rough? Can I move and turn quickly on it, or would I fall? Intertwined with these gravitic considerations is a broader somatic understanding of all objects that are not our body. Is it sharp? Can it penetrate me? Can I penetrate it? Will it be cold? Hot?

The consideration of scale also acts at this level. Does what I am detecting relate to me directly? Could my hands feel the variations? Could I get inside them? Could they be inside me? These perceptions are so automatic that they occur partially beneath the level of consciousness. It is these perceptions that are appealed to when a designer works tectonically. An appreciation for how objects connect is based on our somatic feeling for mass and forces. We *feel* how an assembly resists a push from the side, or resists its own weight. Things *feel* precarious or *feel* stable. In most cases this is less a reasoned response than a sort of self-identification with an external object, much as when we unconsciously echo another person's gestures or facial expression.

The tertiary level is ***signification*.** This is largely culturally determined, or at least learned in some fashion. For instance, in some cultures the color red communicates excitement or danger. Large size communicates significance. A monumental portico tells us that the entrance is *here.* Smooth, hard surfaces may be read as clean, modern.

Functional aspects of form are also sometimes signifiers. We feel that a bowl shaped object will catch liquid. We know that voids can contain things, gaps are passages. There is some blurring between somatic sense and signification, but roughly, we can say one corresponds more to ones internal physical experience and the other is predominately born of cultural symbology.

The final or quaternary level of perception is ***cognition*.** There is also considerable overlap between signification and cognition, but in general, cognition extends beyond signification. Calculation of future events based on what is seen, personal interests, applicable knowledge that goes beyond symbolism, all of these take the initial sensory input and/or association, and amplify it to an unpredictable extent. A photo of a game of chess may generate additional signal for an expert chess-player. Although a non-player may be observing the same pattern of lights and darks, the expert will take in details that

would escape the non-player, and further conclusions will result (without volition). Both individuals are exposed to the same physical input, but in one case cognition effectively amplifies the signal generated.

B. Examining Territorialized Places

With all of this in mind, let us consider some examples of well-defined, less permissive urban spaces with an eye toward causation. One example of a less permissive "place", perhaps the most extreme of all, is a prison cell. The **cell** acts at the somatic and cognitive levels to reduce the options of the person experiencing it. Barrier planes exist at the floor, walls and ceiling for the manifest purpose of obstructing passage. They are *massive*, *immutable* and clearly *intentional.* These three qualities are factors that act to reduce the permissiveness of the space. The fact of the *demarcation* itself, whether physically impassable or not, is another indicator of constraint. At the level of signification we have prison *bars* which do communicate "tight control", but are so specific to that environment that they can't really be generalized, other than to speculate that any intentional barrier to the passage of human bodies probably shares some of this quality.

Figure 2

At the level of cognition, we recognize design which incorporates sight-lines allowing *observation/supervision*, both by authority, and by "society" in general, (in this case other inmates). And of course, there is the cognitive realization that this place is specifically built to hold one in captivity.

All these things act collectively to reduce the number of perceived behavioral options within the defined area, creating the least permissive, least ambiguous environment imaginable.

Another less permissive place is the atrium of a publicly accessible building. Such a space shares certain territorializing qualities with the prison cell. It too is strongly demarcated, but the perimeter is permeable, being riddled with doors and stairs to shops and entries. Movement is constrained, but less completely. Although there is a "ceiling plane" of some sort, it is considerably higher and allows the option of some vertical motion via escalator or stair.

A new element is introduced: variations in floor textures or placement of fixtures to delineate different internal zones of activity, such as circulation or resting and dining. This is more of a suggestion than a command of course, but nevertheless implies that the physical layout is designed with the intention of influencing behavior. It's impossible not to realize that *somewhere*, *someone* is not indifferent to how you behave within this environment.

Figure 3, *Atrium, World Bank Headquarters, Washington D.C.*

Materials and finishes in this case are often going to be more decorative and "rich". With this, the prison cell's immutability is echoed not primarily through the massiveness (permanence) of the materials, although that may figure in to some extent, but because, everything is so clearly *intentional.* Someone built this space in a particular way, and is therefore presumably invested in *maintaining it as it is.* In other words, It's apparent at the cognitive level that whole classes of interaction with the environment, any leading to alterations or damage for instance, are probably not allowed. Additionally, the obvious intention to open clear sight-lines to almost every inch of the space and allowing large numbers of people to see and be seen, creates a certain panopticon quality, with society at large as the watching authority.

Figure 4

An open **courtyard** has essentially the same territorialization elements as an atrium, but is more permissive in that the ceiling plane is not there, and any ground-plane materials that endure weathering, or are themselves alive, are by definition less human-determined. Essentially, it would seem that to the extent the surfaces and textures of a space are determined by natural processes rather than human processing, the space is more permissive.

Places can be defined not only by boundaries and borders but also as a sort of zone of influence radiating from prominent objects standing upon the ground-plane. flag-poles and monuments both share this ability to define a place not by an edge or boundary, but as a condition radiating from a source. Unmodulated, this zone projects from the object in all directions, fading gradually with distance. It can also be modified or truncated by additional boundaries, which may even pass through the object itself, cutting its zone of influence from 360 degrees to 180 degrees or less.

Figure 5, *Flag-pole*

Figure 6, *Place-making Monument*

Figure 7, *Place-making Object, Penetrated by Boundary*

The building-plane, in addition to its possible function as edge or boundary to an enclosed space, can, in a free-standing condition, create a zone of *place* similar to what we see in a monument. This zone projects outward from the façade(s). If the building is a culturally (and physically) formal structure such as a church or bank, this place will be more controlled and constrained than would otherwise be the case, thanks to the cognitive and symbolic (signification) influence of the structure, as well as the *intentional* quality of the construct (as in the atrium). It's clear that the pavement in front of this Delaware bank is not a space that invites unusual activity or any sort of alteration.

Figure 8, Façade, *Delaware Bank*

As a related example I considered the area abutting the south façade of the Monastery of Batalha (Batalha ,Portugal, 1385-1585). The paved square is quite open and apparently uncontrolled .The building is no longer a functioning church, but it has such cultural significance as a historical and religious monument, and the complete physical environment is clearly so carefully determined, that as in the example of the bank one might expect behavioral options to be limited, reflecting culturally approved choices. And indeed, most of the people one encounters in this plaza dress relatively soberly, and behave in what appears to be a restrained, not to say scholarly, fashion. However, as a personal observation, I noticed that as one approached quite close to the walls and buttresses, it became much more comfortable to run around, raise ones voice, and essentially behave in a silly fashion for the camera. Out on the open plaza one felt more exposed, somehow. Close to the walls there was a quality of slipping into the recesses and projections, and being sheltered, almost a feeling of


Figure 9, *Mosteiro Batalha*

permeability (although there was no actual doorway near at hand).

It's interesting to consider this observation in light of the historical fact that in medieval France and other parts of Europe, cathedrals like this would often allow a narrow strip of ground just against the walls to function as a sanctuary or "parvis" (from *paradise*), for destitute, mentally ill, or otherwise outcast individuals. They were allowed to occupy the space between the buttresses and projections of the walls, and given latitude to exist as they could, building rough shelters and surviving on meager handouts from the church.

With this last example, we begin to turn from an examination of the characteristics of non-permissive, highly determined places, toward an exploration of the factors that help create the more permissive de-territorialized zone. One of these factors, identified at Batalha, would seem to be *projections or invaginations in vertical surfaces.* This and other permissive characteristics will be considered in the following section.

II. Factors In De-Territorialization and ambiguity

A. Surface Projection and "Machine" Quality

The amount of personal engagement one feels with any space has to do, at the deepest level, with an almost sub-conscious somatic feel for its relation, (or potential relation) to the self. Dr. Robert Damasio is famous for his assertion that the apparent dichotomy between mind and body is a false one, that our self (mind) *is* our body (and its reactions), to a greater extent than we realize. Certainly in the observation concerning Batalha, the sensation does not seem to operate at an intellectual level, but as a sort of feeling. Having said that, however, there is also a cognitive connection between body-scale variation in surface form/texture and the impression one receives of the surface as accessible to one's own intentions. For example, a surface with variation only at broad

intervals far beyond human scale (huge unitary panels, enormous platonic solids) seems unaffected by, or un-susceptible to, our intention. At the other end of the scale spectrum,

Figure 10, *the personally accessible textured surface versus the exclusionary slick-hard surface.*

there is a potential disconnect between an excessively smooth, "skin" and ourselves. A slick, blank surface shows a degree of articulation which is clearly *beneath* human scale; whatever surface variation the plane has is microscopic, reading as inhumanly pore-less and self-contained. It is other than body scale, we cannot enter it. As a wall, a hard, bright, vertical plane excludes us, pushing us out under the pitiless eyes of the sun and the world. By contrast, a textured surface, even if it only has a bit of roughness to the touch, allows one to conceptually sink into the small surface variations, to feel that they are related to (or accessible to) our self.

This affect seems rooted in our somatic body sense, but nevertheless is not necessarily dependent on articulation actually *created* by man. Texture created by weathering or by natural landforms and vegetation, as in the courtyard, can also produce a zone of engagement. In otherwise undistinguished architecture, patterns created by weathering, rust stains, or flaking plaster can create a sense of particularity which affects the place quality of adjoining spaces. In these cases, the scale of the surface variation simply places the surface in the realm of potential accessibility. By the same token, radical projections and relief in a building's ground-level exterior forms, like the buttresses projecting from a cathedral's walls, or the curves and ridges of a building like

the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, by the architect Frank O. Gehry, create a space that seems to give the human body more permission to act. Of course, they also indicate *intention* at the cognitive level.

As we saw earlier, in general, evidence of intention should operate to reduce the permissiveness of the space, but as it turns out there is a particular *sort* of intention which actually has the opposite effect. That is, instead of the kind of intention which has already determined the form of the environment and invites no changes, there is the intention of what I will call machine-quality. Machine quality exists in any crafted construct which implies direct manipulation by the user. Although by definition, a machine is itself something well thought out and well-determined, it is in fact specifically designed to give the user the power to create and alter some aspect of the environment, and in many cases, its own configuration.

Of course, the definition of *machine-quality* in the context of this exploration is a broad one, and in fact it needs to be if it's going to encompass articulations in a wall. Nevertheless, I think that it's reasonable to describe occupiable penetrations and projections in a standing object as the most basic machine of all, a simple shelter. We "operate" it by moving our physical selves in and out of its embrace.

Steven Holl's *Storefront for Art and Architecture* (New York,1992) typifies place creation using several of the qualities under discussion. Although in photographs showing its openings closed, the exterior texture reads as "blank", the concrete surface is rough enough to scrape the palm (texture). Setting that assertion aside, however, the apparent "blankness" of the closed exterior can be seen as a counterpoint which serves to point up the oddly shaped orthogonal outlines of the turning panels built into the walls. When opened or partially opened, the panels call out their nature as devices, products of

the builder's intention, but *subject* to the visitor's intention in their disposition.

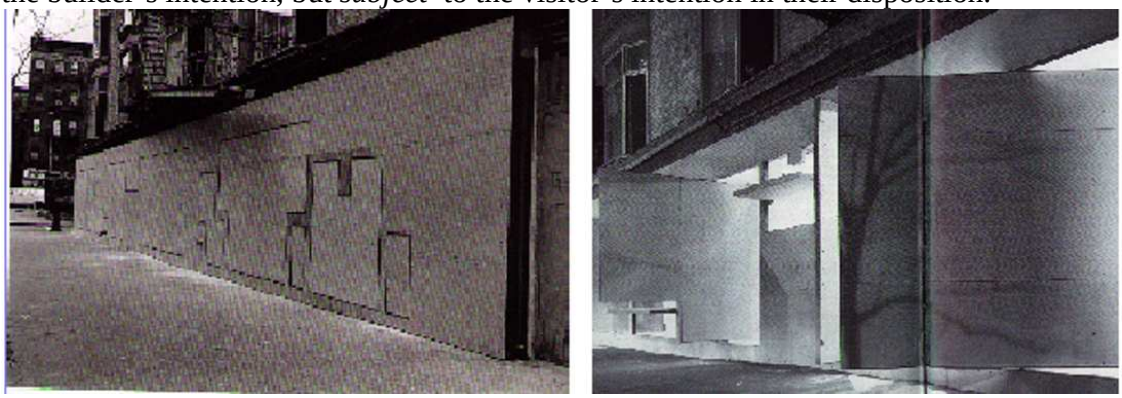

Figure 11, *Steven Holl's Storefront for Art and Architecture*

At the purely somatic level the panels project and recede across the line of the wall, creating an ambiguous zone of entry which extends the inside out, or perhaps, brings the outside in. With the panels thrown open, it is not at all clear where the sidewalk ends and the space begins, and vis-versa. The zone created is certainly a variation on the permissive space (with ambiguous authority) that we are interested in. How far one can penetrate, and what activities are appropriate inside the zone of influence (or indeed, deeper inside the space) are unclear to the person approaching this construct for the first time. Deep penetrations and reveals allow the body to move *into*, and *under*, creating place by suggesting shelter, while a penetration which reveals *thickness* in the wall, suggests massiveness and resistance. Permanence, in other words.

While the variability of this form, this machine-quality, certainly equates with

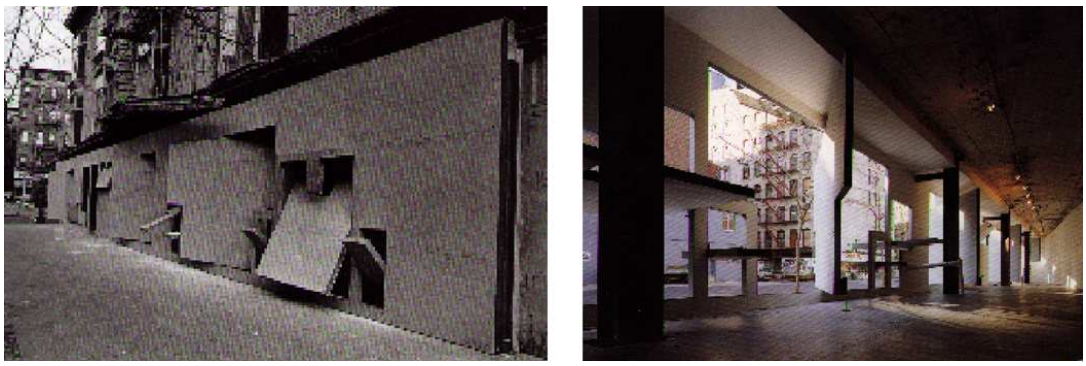

Figure 12, *Steven Holl's Storefront for Art and Architecture*

permissiveness (necessary for de-territorialization), what is the role of permanence, which in the prison-cell was associated with constraint?

B. Permanence

Sociologists have observed that traditional Australian Aborigines carry their home-place with them, that the "place" is the family group. Not, in other words, their physical environment. Other Nomadic peoples can be brought forth to illustrate the same assertion. But it is interesting to note that a popular aboriginal aphorism says that "home *is* the fire", which is to say, home is the one *constant feature* of the encampment. It seems from this observation that place is directly linked to a quality of persistence or constancy. Evidently this need not be a construct or even a specific, singular, object. It may be a repeated ritual or a recurring condition, but nevertheless, it is associated with permanence or at least with persistence over time. If we accept the assertion that persistence over time is important in signaling "place", then there are two obvious ways of "signaling" place through the building arts. One is to create structures, which give an impression of tremendous robustness and therefore, permanence. The other is to create

Figure 13, Robust and Anti-robust structures

structures which clearly require constant attention to exist, and therefore imply a constancy of behavior (an ongoing ritual of upkeep). I call these structures *anti-robust.* Tents, fabric structures, structural glass, all of these share aspects of this category of construct. An example of this type of permanence of *behavior* rather than permanence of object might be the Shinto temples at Ise (Japan). The structures, made of wood, are completely remade every twenty years and have persisted in this fashion for seven centuries. In this case, it is the form (and the ritual) which are permanent, the actual material of the temple is always replaced.

Figure 14, *Shinto Temples at Ise*

Although in this example a physical construct (or its pattern) has, in fact, persisted over centuries, it is not necessary in this scenario for an anti-robust structure to *actually* survive for an extended length of time. Sufficient delicacy of construction implies a need for ongoing attention, and therefore strongly indicates the necessity of direct manipulation of the object (much as does the *machine-quality* examined earlier). Whether the object actually survives the forces of entropy in the long term, or even in the short term, may be irrelevant. If hands are often re-making it, than it *must* be subject to their intention during that process. At Ise, of course, the social constraints limiting what actions are allowable in remaking the shrine are overwhelming, so in that regard it's not the best example of machine-like permissiveness in anti-robust structures. But better examples abound: tents, tensile structures, pavilions of all sorts. Any kind of fragile object or shelter.

C. The Permissiveness of Decay

In regard to this investigation, it is the permission (or lack of hindrance) to act directly on an environment that one does not, ultimately, "own" that seems to be the key. We've discovered several factors that can play a role: *Machine-like quality*, *Ambiguous zones of authority*, *freedom from social oversight*. But one related consideration that we haven't looked at yet is the phenomenon of urban decay. The prototypical example of the de-territorialized zone (much as the prison cell is the prototype of the controlled zone) is the vacant lot. The phenomenon of visible neglect and visible decay carries multiple signifiers for de-territorialization: it creates the human-scale texture that allows one to anticipate interacting with the environment, and it signals the opposite of the intention to resist alteration that we see in tightly controlled environments. For those who wish to alter their surroundings, the appearance of urban decay communicates freedom from outside control, an opportunity to engage the environment without negative consequence. This opportunity is not necessarily without its dark side, however. An environment that is behaviorally permissive, by definition leaves open the potential for harmful or dangerous behaviors. Less control is less control. Of course, as Bernard Tschumi has written, there is an attraction to the "pleasure of danger", but in saying this he is probably referring more to the pleasure of dislocation from traditional understanding and assumptions about the built environment than the possibility of experiencing (or inflicting) actual, physical harm. Be that as it may, a de-territorialized zone can sometimes move beyond ambiguous authority, beyond even *no* authority (wilderness) and into a condition of inimical anarchy. Hobbes' "war of each against all".

By becoming the focus of significant anger, or the setting on which that anger plays out, it becomes *anti-territorialized*, a wasteland reflecting active danger rather than qualified indifference.

Figure 15, *Carlsen-Reges residence*

In Michael Rotondi's Carlsen-Reges residence (Los Angeles, 1995), the larger site surrounding the project has some of the characteristics of this anti-territorialized wasteland. The project itself is a residence designed with the machine-like quality discussed earlier, and also resembling a machine in the vernacular sense, perhaps echoing the "rough" nature of the site. In this case, the residence was constructed on the edge of a salvage yard within a larger region of similar yards and moribund industrial properties. The site is surrounded by train-tracks and scrap-yards and is almost aggressively non-residential. It is arguably somewhat anti-territorialized. The machine-like house acts to modulate this condition in its immediate vicinity. As in the Stephen Holl project, the exterior shell seems to demonstrate an uneasy interpenetration of inside and outside environments, but in this case everything actually exists within the sharp perimeter of an exterior fence. An area of *somewhat* ambiguous control results, although in this case the variation is really more binary than diffuse, because the different options are ultimately contained by this unchanging perimeter. Even this fence however, is attempting to signal some ambiguity in the boundary it creates: The central panels approach the posts but don't quite engage them.

Figure 16, *Exterior/Interior Space*

They almost appear to be free-standing, and the barrier reads as though it were unsupported and filled with voids.

Figure 17, *Perimeter Fence*

III. Observational Summary

A. Causative Factors

The causative factors that have been uncovered up until this point can be listed as follows:

Qualities That Create A Defined-zone	Qualities That Create De-territorialization
-Immutability	-Machine-ness
-Massiveness	-Anti-Robust Construction
-Strong Intention (Static)	-Social Indifference
-Demarcation	- Ambiguous Zones of Control
-Active Oversight	-Concealment From Oversight
-Social formality	-Projections/permeability In Vertical Surfaces And Objects
-Non-human Scale	-Textured Surfaces/weathering
-Innacessible Surface Quality	- Persistance
-Permanence	

Table 1, *Causative Factors of De-territorialization*

B. Conclusions and Plan For Investigation

By examining precedents I was able to identify various qualities that seem to create, or at least associate with, de-territorialization as a phenomenon. Some of them are directly determined by social/economic/political conditions that are perhaps outside the scope of an architectural exploration, but others are qualities of the built environment that could potentially be experimented with in a project setting in order to further test their effects. I decided to identify a suitable site and attempt to introduce, and modulate de-territorialization, exploring the possibility of making the condition a more systematic and perhaps permanent, condition.

IV. The Project

A. Site

The site of my project is a two-block area along Tyler Street, in the old industrial district of north Minneapolis. Tyler Street is in fact, only three blocks long in its entirety, terminating at cross streets that continue out to much more heavily traveled Marshall Avenue.

Figure 18, *the project site*

Automobile traffic on Tyler is almost non-existent, and the city has let the street decay to such an extent that it's difficult to see where the edge of the pavement ends and the mud begins. There are no sidewalks on Tyler Street. The buildings to the east have direct access to a rail-line on their non-street sides, and the whole area is part of a larger industrial neighborhood that flourished in the mid forties with war production.

One of the narrow warehouses at the center of the block (currently housing a towing company) was originally an assembly line for Sherman tanks. Several buildings still have massive overhead cranes. Some of the buildings are in good repair, but sixty to a hundred years of alteration, accretion and decay have left some of them only marginally weather tight. Of mostly brick or galvanized steel construction, they are currently occupied by various small machine shops, art studios and quasi-legal residential tenants. Activity from the buildings seems to sometimes spill out of the warehouse doors into the valley between the facades. In late spring I saw a partially disassembled motorcycle out on the "sidewalk", clearly being worked on over a period of days, and there is a building salvage business whose goods routinely make their way out the door and occupy the space around the shop. The road itself is in such disrepair, blended with mud and rubble, that the ground between the buildings essentially becomes one material. It's hard to tell what is road and what isn't. Cars park against the buildings on either side, which leaves the majority of the street open, but occasionally swept by low-speed vehicle traffic.

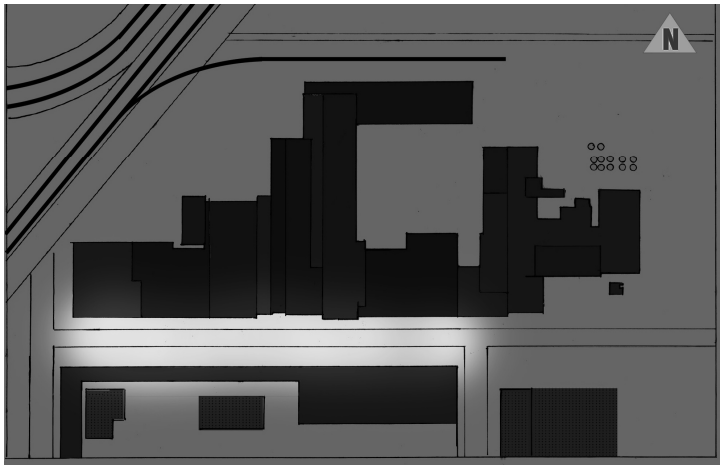

Figure 19, *The Site (Tyler St.)*

Taking the open area between the facades as the primary project site, we have an area that seems like a good candidate for intentional de-territorialization. It has a vertical plane along one edge with a fair amount of texture. There is general decay and weathering, and a certain ambiguity of control (indifference) as one gets out into the road. On the other hand, the construction of the buildings is largely masonry, massive and

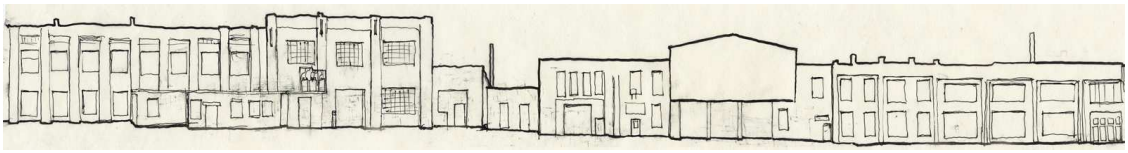
Figure 20, *South Facing Building Wall*

immutable. Forty or fifty tenants are routinely passing through the space as they come and go, not to mention a small number of customers for various businesses, creating quite a bit of oversight, and the center of the space is in fact, a functioning roadway, albeit one with only limited vehicle traffic.

I decided to use this site to introduce several interventions incorporating the causative factors identified earlier, both as a way to test them, and in an attempt to intentionally *create* de-territorialization and experiment with making it a more or less permanent condition, not dependent on transient institutional neglect.

B. Hollow Structural Spars

Initially, I began to look at occupying the ground between the buildings with a group of man-portable *assemblies*, something that an individual could move easily, and perhaps combine in different ways to create flexible "places" or objects for unspecified activities (to be defined by the user). Part of the intention with these would be to occupy

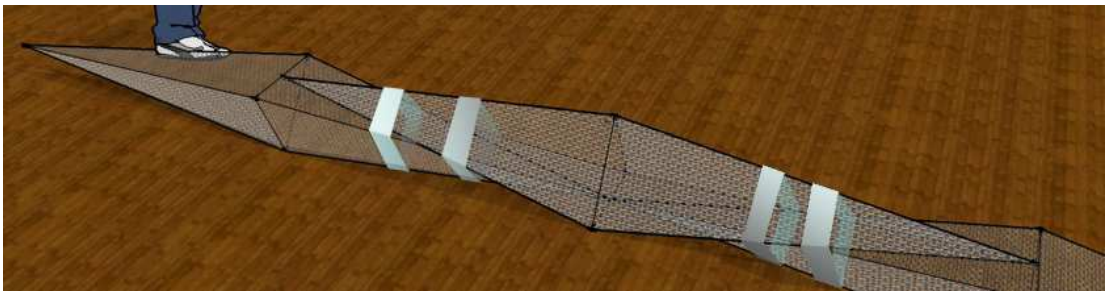

Figure 21, *Three spars, band-clamped together*

much of the current roadway, claiming it as a human space by turning it into a jumbled field, impassible to vehicles. The spars would also serve to mediate the space from the open area up to and into, the surrounding permanent structures. Most of the roadway would be transformed into something

Figure 20, *Occupying the Street*

analogous to one of our de-territorialized precedents: the junk-filled, vacant lot.

Any assembly made with these spars would exhibit anti-robustness because of its temporary nature; the user does not have long-term control of the space the assembly occupies, and therefore has limited ability to preserve his work. As soon as one walks away, other forces may take control. Assemblies are also anti-robust in that the spars themselves, although stiff, would be relatively flimsy in comparison to more traditional construction systems. Lying about outside, they would become corroded and shopworn, of little intrinsic value, clearly not "owned", therefore available for direct manipulation and use. These qualities should encourage the desired class of activity by reducing any concern for ownership or damage

In keeping with the industrial character of the site, the design also exhibits *machine-quality* in both the definitional sense discussed earlier and in appearance. Each unit is made of perforated aluminum sheeting, folded into a tri-faced volume either eight or twelve feet in length. From a depth of one foot at the center, each spar tapers towards the ends.

Multiple units could be lashed face-to-face using band-clamps, to create a longer member. Structurally this is potentially a very strong yet simple joint, with the units locked together by the rough surfaces. It is also easily reversible, like lashing, again emphasizing the impermanent quality of any assemblage. Insofar as use of these constructs will be uncontrolled, it's quite likely that other methods of connection such as bolting or even welding would be used, and other materials attached or incorporated, but for extending a straight or gently curved member, strapping will be the strongest method of connection. I built several scale models to demonstrate the strength of this joint and of the form itself.

Figure 23, *Spar Model, 3 units*

Analysis:

The spars are at least potentially successful in establishing de-territorialization in the designated area. If people choose to use them in the manner

intended, the space between the street-walls will in fact take on much of the character of a vacant lot, one in which various unusual and probably uncommercial activities are taking place. And as the spar assemblies (which will no doubt begin to incorporate other materials and objects as well) encroach on or butt-into the building facades, the existing structures will tend to be drawn into the mild chaos on the street.

The question is, will people in fact use this space and these objects as intended? I can certainly imagine that if one were to get the word out that there is an area of town in which what amounts to a giant Erector-set and an unmonitored space are freely available to all, the concept might catch on. On the other hand, the spars are *so* completely minimal, so undetermining of their own use, that it's not possible to know for certain what would be done with them. They might end up occupying very little of the open area. They might be ignored in favor of materials that people bring themselves. Or they might all be stolen.

C. Ground Pods

Next I decided to explore the creation of a second construct, something that would encourage de-territorialization as the spars were intended to, by occupying the exterior plane, but be slightly less open-ended in terms of possible uses. In other words, I would try to come up with a construct that has a more deterministic effect on behavior (and thus will more certainly produce the desired condition) bearing in mind that the goal is de-territorialization, which is at least partially based on *lack* of outside control.

I decided to create something not anti-robust, but rather its opposite. In other words, is being massive *really* an impediment to personal control of ones environment? Does it *necessarily* preclude the feeling that one can make alterations with impunity? In light of the fact that machine-quality has been shown to relate to de-territorialization, and machines are not often constructed in an ephemeral way, it seemed that there might be another approach to intervening on Tyler street.

The result of this exploration was a portable steel shell, configurable into a sort of work-shop or shelter or storage pod, that could potentially sit outside for years without maintenance or attention, and yet be dragged to a certain spot, configured and used in several ways. But of course, the fact that it *is* a shelter, and that its internal structure implies a shop or work area, means that the uses these devices will be put to are more determined by their form than was the case with the spars. Also, the pod could be closed up at the end of the day, then opened in the morning and work could continue. This is significant in that personal control of the space over a period of time is creeping into the project, a form of individual ownership (although again, ownership can only be transient in that the user does not ultimately own the pod, or control the ground that it occupies). In this case, the construct itself is not itself the material that can be worked, but rather a *machine* that can be configured by hand for various purposes (the most likely, a work space for altering something *else*).

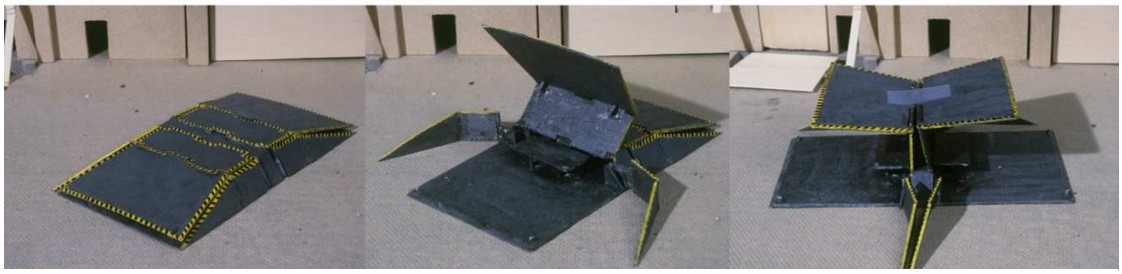

Figure 24, *Pod Model, ¼" scale*

Multiple pods are scattered about the open plane creating a field of potential activity, and it's important to note that unlike the spars, the pods are intended to occupy *all* of the street. The height of a closed pod is 3'-6" and its ramp-like form allows a vehicle to actually drive over it when closed, or even park on top. Each unit can also be repositioned by dragging (behind a suitable vehicle).

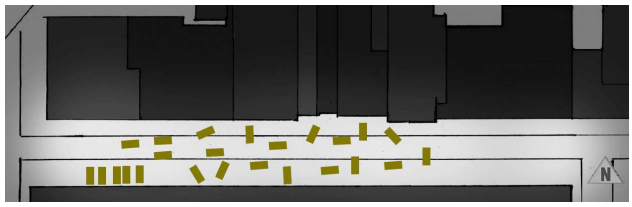

Figure 25, *Site Plan with Pods*

The pods are more robust and somewhat harder to move; the intended functions are more apparent (and thus more control stays with the designer rather than the end-user). On the surface this seems to be a less permissive concept than the spars. And this is part of the

exploration; to what extent is it possible to rationalize the de-territorialized zone? Can activities be knowingly compelled by built form? How much predetermination still encourages the condition?

Analysis:

Insofar as their form and design are more proscriptive, the pods are more likely to be used in exactly the way they are intended to be used, so in that way they are successful. But over-all, they seem to create (or allow) less de-territorialization, or perhaps a milder type of de-territorialization. More like the precious-ness of a *makers-space*^{TM} public work-shop than like the controlled anarchy of Burning Man.

It seems that machine-quality alone, without sufficient spatial ambiguity and the consequent uncertainty of authority, may yield a diminished effect. The pods, in spite of their multiplicity of potential configurations, are perhaps too self-contained, too evidently bounded, to create indefinite zones of authority. The potential for some form of ownership, both by the user (and by the designer through over-determination) seems to be interfering with de-territorialization.

D. Engaging Massiveness and Penetrating the Facade

At this point I decided to test the idea of robust construction when specifically combined with spatial and boundary ambiguity. I envisioned taking the existing building-walls and adding mechanisms/structures similar to overhead doors but overwhelmingly massive, as if to allow one to take direct control of the huge masonry walls of a cathedral, and open or reposition them. This would both create *projections/permeability* in vertical surfaces (identified earlier as a causative factor of de-territorialization) and

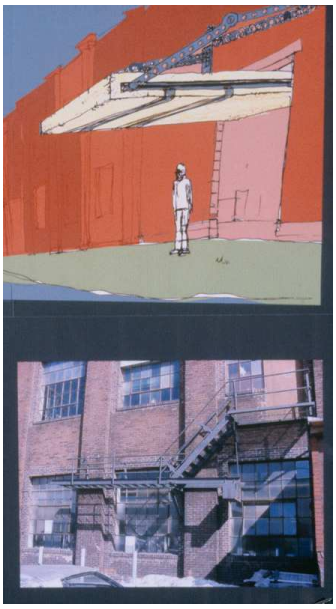

Figure 26, *Developing the Massive Door Concept*

obfuscate the boundary between Building-space and street-space.

By its mechanistic nature, it would also create an intensely exaggerated *machine-quality*. The door/walls would be counterbalanced in such a way as to be completely movable by one's own muscles.

Figure 27, *Working Model, Counterbalanced Door*

Over time, the design evolved to include massive stone counterweights that function as the "handle" one would use to actually shift the door. The rough stone surface, with its human-scale texture is another factor allowing the user to identify with and freely manipulate the building.

In terms of space, the design increases the permeability of the street-wall by opening large sections of a building to the central space and raising what is essentially an entire wall to form a massive awning. As in the architect Stephen Holl's *Storefront for Art and Architecture*, the opening and the movable mass work together to create ambiguity about the delineation between inside and outside. Furthermore, the experience of shifting such a mass with no more than the pressure of a hand causes one to perceive the heavily built masonry structures as mutable, directly subject to the intention of the individual.

Analysis:

The movable slab construct seems to be particularly effective at creating an area of ambiguous responsibility along the face of the building(s). As one encroaches on the interstitial zone created by the suspended masses and large openings, it's not clear at what point "intrusion" is taking place. One can imagine that if a group of people were chatting just inside the opened "wall", passing along near the buildings facade might be somewhat uncomfortable. Does one ignore them? Say hello? Feel sheepish for intruding?

As in the Stephen Holl precedent, this ambiguity seems to be a direct result of confusion in the perceived zones of authority between building and exterior. The effect is limited in regard to physical extent and also to scope (obviously many behaviors will still effectively be proscribed in spite of a mildly ambiguous line of authority between "inside" and "outside"), but is nevertheless strongly felt. It is also notable that the effect seems to flow directly from the spatial quality of the built environment, instead of requiring that some kind of additional social compact be agreed upon.

E. Stair-pods

The fourth and final construct was a different type of pod, one less self-contained and pre-determined in function than the street-pod, and able to engage directly with the street-wall by creating "penetrations" (permeability) to the buildings above the level of the doors. The pod can be combined in multiples to create something different, and therefore takes on some of the building-block quality of the spars.

There are several possible configurations: a unit can be flipped and partially buried, with the doors transferred to the back side; this creates an underground space complete with short, descending stair. It can be used as-is at ground-level like the street-

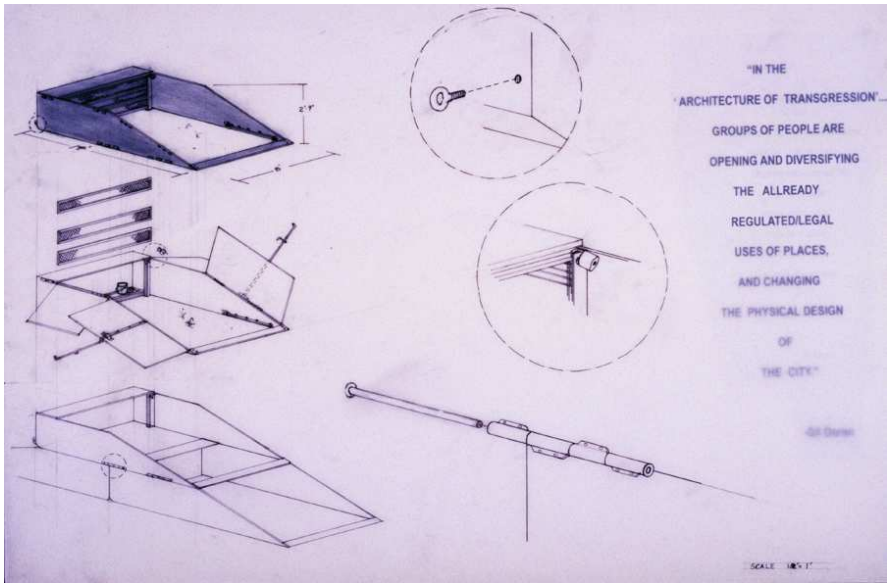

Figure 28, ***Stair Pod Details***

pod. Or it can combined with other units and redeployed internal shelving panels to create a variety of rising stair forms.

Analysis:

When configured as individual units the stair pods seem to create no more de-territorialization than the ground pods, in spite of having arguably more machine-quality (in that they are built to be reconfigured). They are less mobile and more clearly bounded when in below-ground mode. When above ground, they are functionally identical to ground-pods, but in fact allow for slightly more metaphorical "ownership"; it would be even easier for a single person to maintain control of the unit over an extended period of time in that, unlike the ground-pod, no car can come along and park on top of the unit, locking you out until its owner decides to move on.

When assembled into stairs the thinking was that they would provide more permeability, but this is really only the case if an upper-level opening is also punched into the façade, and even then would largely rely on the character of that opening.

Figure 27, Stair Pod Model, Engaging the Building

Where the stair assemblies do contribute somewhat to de-territorialization is in the area of *projections* from a vertical surface. By reaching out from the face of the buildings to the ground below the stairs have some of the spatial quality of the flying buttress around a cathedral, and like the historical parvis that once existed against those walls, the projection of the stair produces a more protective, permissive space close to the faces of the buildings.

V. Conclusions

With this thesis I put forth the argument that there is a type of urban place that occurs naturally under certain conditions, a place that allows for the kinds of human activity that fall outside the relatively narrow boundaries of "commercially self supporting" and "socially mandated" behavior. It seemed to me that understanding the nature of this kind of de-territorialized or permissive-zone, and what factors in the built environment either encourage or discourage it, would be a useful thing for the field of architecture as a whole.

It was my intention to investigate conditions in the built environment that encourage such a place to exist, and then go on to experiment with the possibility of creating and maintaining it intentionally.

At the Tyler Street project site, I envisioned four discrete interventions based on causative qualities that I had identified such as *projection/permeability in vertical surfaces, anti-robustness, machine quality, persistence over time, and ambiguous boundaries/zones of control*. I found that while it was easy to imagine the project site being used in a de-territorialized way, it was more difficult to design physical constructs that would actually *cause* this to happen, because the nature of de-territorialization is actually an outgrowth of a *lack* of control, (obviously making designing something that will essentially compel it to occur, a bit of a contradiction).

On the other hand, one of the factors in the built environment which was identified in the precedent study and was not explored thoroughly in the project itself, suggests itself (after working through the five listed above) as perhaps the most likely to do just that: *concealment from oversite*. If one could design an environment that, by its nature, conceals each occupant from every other occupant, this might directly produce unusual and unconstrained behaviors among people in much the same way that we are said to often behave in unaccustomed ways when wearing masks, or interacting on the internet (with "real" identities concealed). This would seem to be a potentially fruitful area for further investigation.

Another possible area of future investigation might be an examination of the relationship of the de-territorialized zone to actual wilderness (i.e., a place with no outside constraint whatsoever.).

Of the four constructs created for this thesis project, arguably the most effective was the movable-walls, but effective in a narrow way: by creating an ambiguous zone of control between inside and outside this design yields only a very limited form of de-territorialization, but one which seems quite strongly marked. Of the three other interventions the portable spars appeared to generate the broadest and most complete de-territorialization, but without real-world testing, conclusions about their effectiveness are necessarily somewhat speculative.

Over the course of this investigation I've learned that there is an inherent tension between designing an environment and encouraging unprogrammed activities. It seems clear that in general a less "complete" design, may leave more space for individual determination at the user-end, and that an extremely detailed conception may ultimately be limiting or even self-defeating in creating real world engagement. This has interesting implications for my work, going forward in the profession.

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