Residual City: Decoupling Amenity from Capital through the Wedge

by

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi’kmaq’i,
the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi’kmaq.
We are all Treaty people.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the crisis of amenity and public space in the contemporary city, wherein neoliberal policies placed the needs of citizens onto the free market while divesting in public spaces and services. Today these services fail to meet the needs of more and more people, as may be seen in the many unhoused shelters in public parks. The project proposes that residual sites, and in particular wedge-shaped sites that are unsuitable for capitalist development, can be reclaimed to serve local communities and marginalized groups.

Focusing on the Halifax peninsula, the project proposes three speculative interventions on wedge-shaped sites that challenge specific norms of the capitalist built environment: private property, the upward concentration of profit, and over-consumption. In transforming conventional programs and typologies (the residential home, the market, the landfill) by decoupling amenity from monetary exchange, the interventions encompass scenarios where alternative economic practices become vehicles for reclaiming space in the built environment.

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This thesis is owed to you.

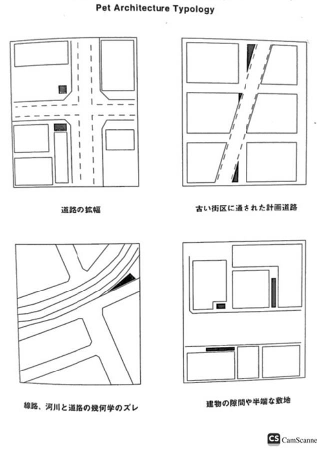
Chapter 1: Introduction

Summary

Production of Residual Space Through Capitalist-Colonialist Development

Photo of a residual site in North End Halifax

Throughout the Halifax peninsula are a number of wedge-shaped lawns breaking from the regular grid pattern of the surrounding fabric. These sites, while owned by the city and zoned as parks, are considered to be residual because they are inadequately developed and rarely used, requiring regular maintenance but providing little to no public benefit. Residual sites are naturally occurring spaces resulting from the expansion of the built environment (Berger 1998, 1) and are common to most cities, particularly in North America where cheap and available land, plus the proliferation of the automobile, has incentivised outward expansion over densification.

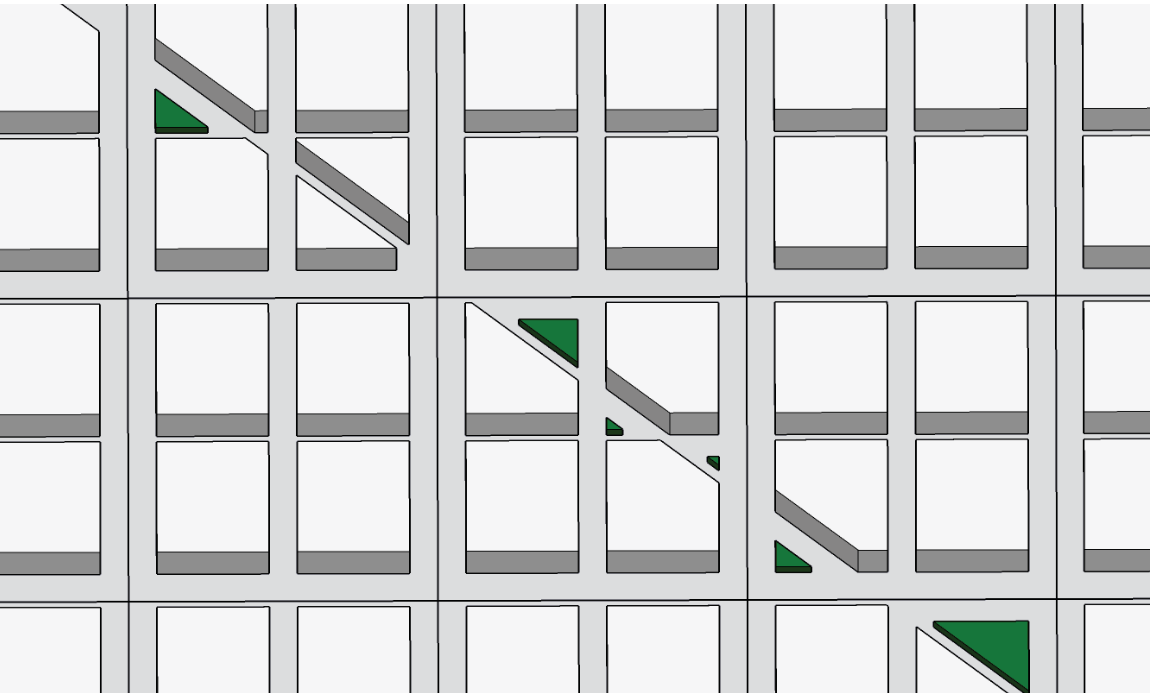


Residual typologies (Atelier Bow-Wow 2001, 7)

There has been significant research towards the production and categorization of these sites by Doron, Lovera, Villagomez, Trovato, Carmona, Khalil and more, but limited practical discussion on what is to be done with them. Case studies of pet architectures in Tokyo by Atelier Bow-wow and of the flatiron building in New York by Koolhaas have shown residual spaces to be viable as sites for significant private development under high land value conditions. Under low land value conditions, these sites remain residual, a stored value of capital to be developed under more favourable economic conditions (Berger 1998, 158). Though this is the case for the selected residual wedge sites in Halifax, their real value is in their potential for public use and ability to accommodate architectural interventions, breaking away

from the typical conceptions of ‘proper’ use of space within a built environment shaped by the search for and production of capital.

The formal quality of the wedge site is distinct from other residual spaces in that it stands in contrast to the rectilinear built environment around it. This rectilinearity is doubly enforced by capitalist building efficiency and the colonial gridiron plan, used to portion and commodify the landscapes beneath it. Residual wedge sites present breaks in the colonial grid where theoretical dominance meets opposition through natural, historical, and industrial conditions in real space. As the colonial grid and the capitalist land use values which it derives from facilitate programs geared towards the production of capital, housing, commerce, industry, and culture, opportunities arise in these residual sites for transgressive inhabitation and use.



Wedge as a distinct formal element in the colonial grid

Halifax, a Crisis of Space

Under capitalism, a number of dominant programs emerge such as industry, commerce, housing and culture, all aimed at the accumulation of capital and facilitated by conceptions of land value towards the “highest and best use” (Harvey 2008, 10). The incentives towards the maximisation of profit manifest in the monetisation and privatisation of public space, either in the wholesale co-option of land as happened with the CRA (Rutland 2018, 117) or through surveillance and conditional public amenities as discussed by Davis (1990). These practices, enabled by neo-liberal policy enacted on the peninsula, came with the belief that the free market alone could handle the needs of its citizens. Neoliberal values are spatially enacted in many ways, the commoditisation of housing has impacted the rise of homelessness, particularly exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Simultaneously a push from corporations to return to the office reflect a struggle for control over how workers engage with capitalism enacted spatially. Equally the push towards the endless consumption of consumer goods results in their accumulation after use, landing in facilities off the peninsula and perpetuating global systems of inequality at both ends of the product lifestyle. These conditions reflect a system of neoliberal habitus wherein the disengagement from systems of monetary exchange is no longer possible, at least in urban centers, except perhaps, on residuals. Contemporary understanding of free amenity at the time of their production took the form of pleasant open spaces, clean streets in which to circulate and the Olmstedian park as an urban break (Rutland 2018, 172). New understandings of amenity might be generated through the wedge not as an urban break but an economic one.

Map of the Halifax peninsula with the locations of HRM owned residual wedge sites.

What to Do with Residue

Towards this we might conceive of the wedge as a heterotopia, a space which suspends or inverts the socially produced normative values, in this case capitalist use value, making good on the wedge's potential to be a generative element towards the disruption of capitalist hegemony in the built environment.

PARK(ing) Day installation by Rebar (Merker 2010, 51)

Following Rebar, a radical firm focussed on critical installations in public space, we might insert our own system of values into the built environment, making them visible and leaving the user open to simultaneously observe these newly imposed values as a counterpoint to the old. These actions are subversive, pulling from opportunities in the urban and social fabric, reflecting a variety of strategies in resistance to capitalist values including generosity as a foil to notions of private property and resource scarcity, decommodification and repair as an antidote to overconsumption, and interchange economics as an alternative to hierarchical production structures and the accumulation of profit.

Structural Overview

Chapter 2, "Production of Residual Space Through Capitalist-Colonialist Development", discusses how residual spaces are defined and produced within a system of capitalist values manifesting in the colonial grid, and the residual site as a place which is resistant but not impervious to development.

Chapter 3, "Halifax, a Crisis of Space", begins with interrogating the crisis of public space and residual spaces and their historical production is conducted throughout

the peninsula, followed by a loose socio-economic framework for producing and maintaining new forms of amenity.

Chapter 4, “What to do with Residue”, discusses the methods of formal and programmatic subversion in the built environment, outlining a design approach for the production of critical amenity by realising the wedge as a heterotopia which suspends and inverts normative programmatic and formal relations of a given dominant program and typology.

Chapter 5, “Design”, proposes the three interventions as they challenge normative capitalist values through the wedge. These include a public housing project challenging how space is inhabited, a market and workspace operating without money, and a maker space extending consumer object lifespans.

Chapter 2: The Production of Residual Space Through Capitalist-Colonialist Development

Through interrogating the literature surrounding the definition, formation and production of residual sites, this chapter seeks to situate a discussion of use values in a built environment shaped by the forces of capital, as manifested by the colonial grid and examines residual sites under high and low market value.

Defining Residual Spaces

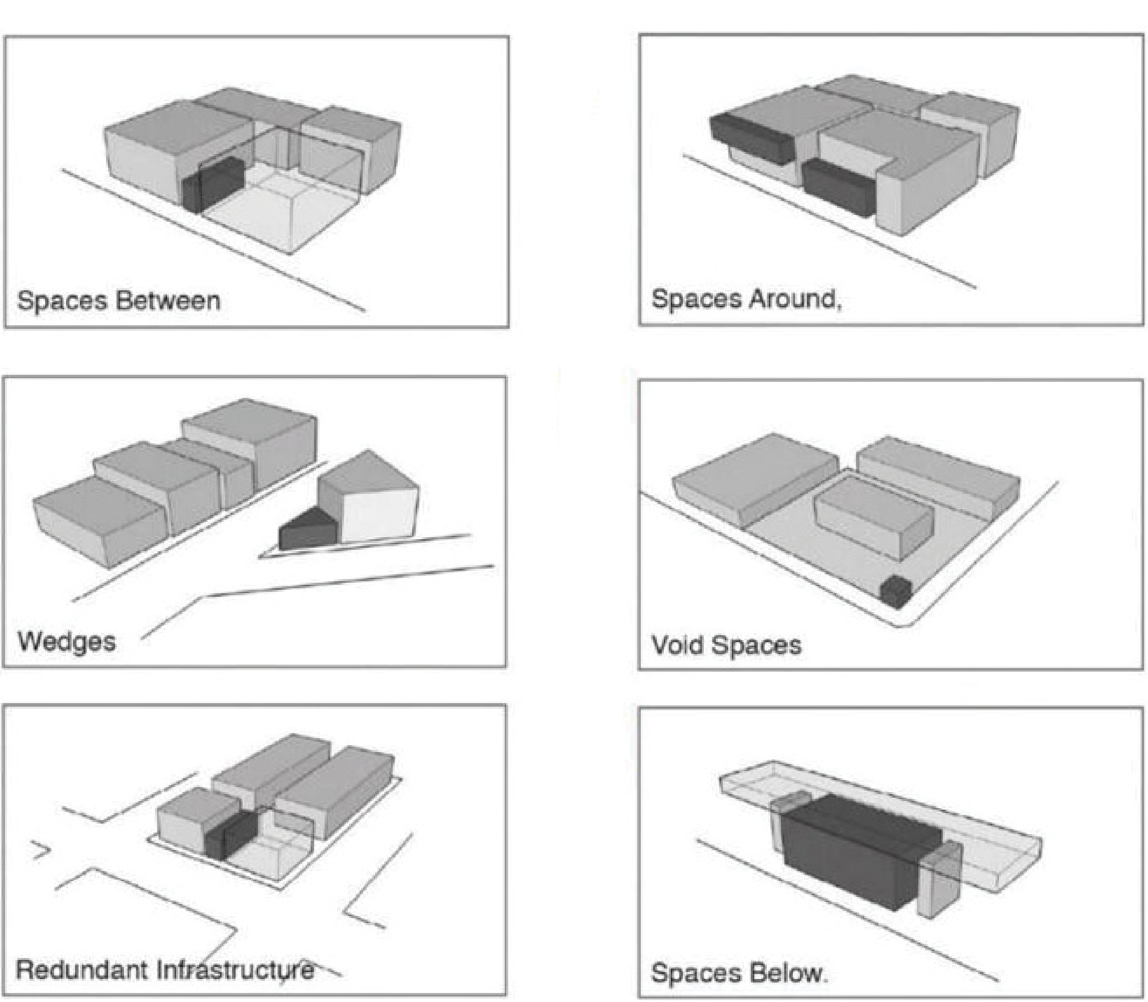
Definition

Residual spaces have been a subject of significant consideration and debate in architectural and urban discourse. Berger's dross, Van Dijk's Void, Koolhaas's Conceptual Nevada, Morales' Terrain Vague, and Doron's Dead Zones, all describe various spatial, formal, causal, and social characteristics of residual sites (Doron 2000, 248) defined as having the appearance of emptiness and disuse. Primary to this is the understanding of a site having limited or non-existent programs towards productive use. Further descriptions typically move towards understanding of residuality by their generative conditions and the temporal ranges of their use/disuse as a set of axes. Certain positions imply residuality which helps to situate a discussion of which residuum might accommodate amenity.

Typology

Generative understandings of residual space, such as Villagomez's categories of spaces between, around and below, wedges and voids (2010, 83) identify spaces made

residual by their formation as byproducts of designed infrastructures, buildings and roads. Similarly, a number of Berger's drosscapes, for example as buffers for housing developments (LOD's) (1998, 140) or highways (LIN's) (Ibid., 170) give credence to his notion that these spaces are a natural component in the urbanisation process (Ibid., 1). In these cases, the undesigned quality of the site is the defining factor of their residuality.



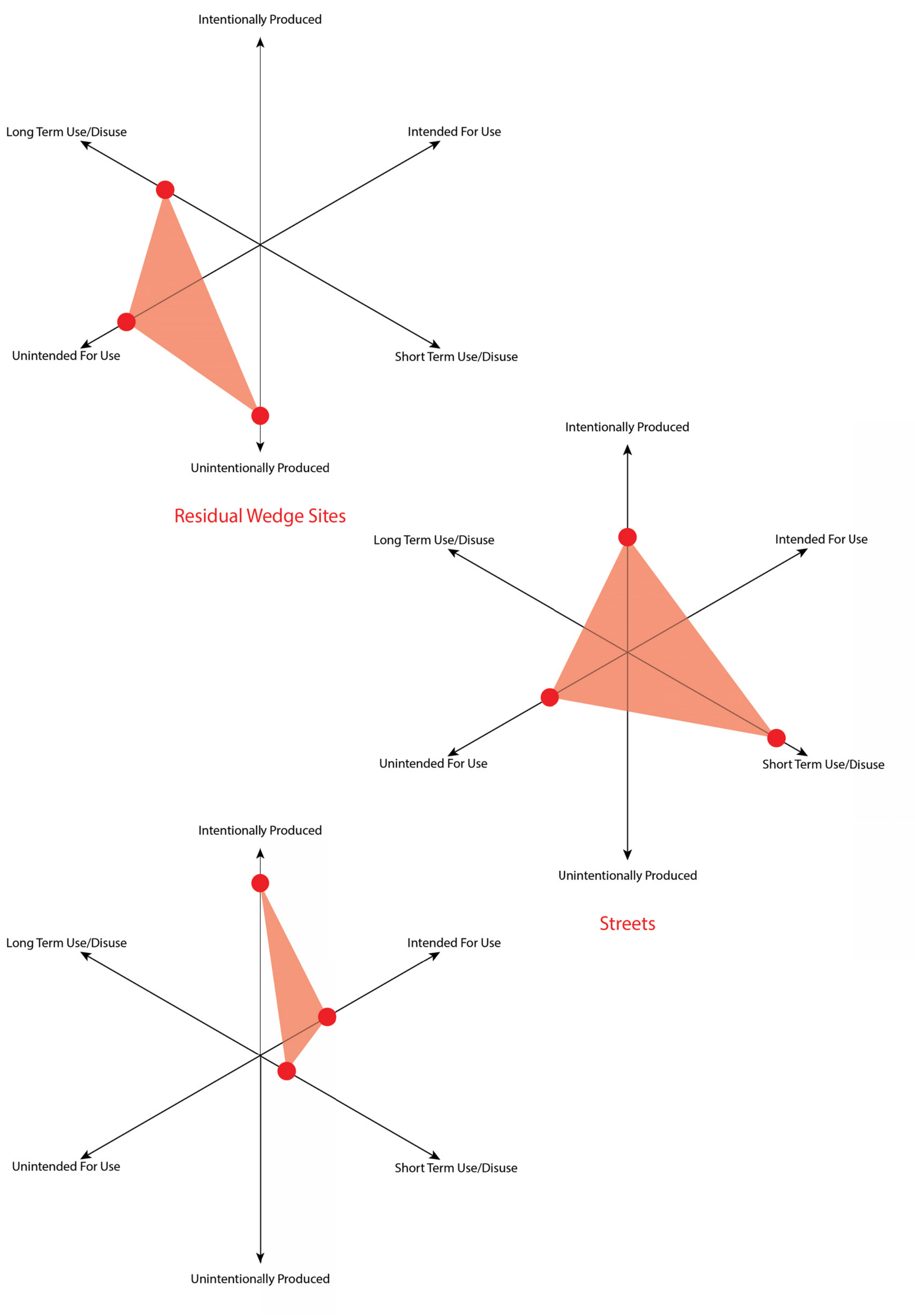
Diagrams of spatial characteristics of some residual spaces. (Villagomez 2010, 84)

Spaces understood to be residual in terms of their productive capacity, on the other hand are designed, just not for use. Rooftops (Villagomez 2010, 83) are an integral part of the building structure, but without inhabitation can be considered residual. Border areas contribute to their residuality by discouraging use, disrupting pedestrian traffic along the space (Jacobs 1992, 259), and favouring auto-transportation, while other residual spaces might be unproductive due to economic conditions. These are designed spaces which are unable to host a profitable program and therefore generate use, such as LEX's (Berger 1998, 204) and LOCO's (bid., 220), which are unprofitable due to underlying site difficulties, such as soil contamination and upfront expenses impeding reconstruction, or economic downturn. In each case, residual sites are presented as unproductive under extant conditions, while being full of potential for either new private enterprise or public leisure, typically with the implication of reforming their residuality through the installation or reintegration of normative programs. Questions of the restorative potential of residual sites segue into the final axis of a site's residuality, temporal.

Temporal residuality refers to the time scale of inhabitation, either as a short-term oscillation between use and disuse or as a long-term state of emptiness. Downtown and business districts which lack housing or late-night commercial spaces are typically turned into residual spaces at night, as a lack of programs enabling nighttime use and inhabitation forces the downtown workforce away for sleep or entertainment. These districts and other urban infrastructures such as railways, university campuses, and playing fields, are referred to as vacuums (Douvlou 2008, 367) and manifest a temporary residual status corresponding to the daily rhythms of their

users. Longer-term temporal residuality exists on sites which have no use designated to them, either through the decay of existing infrastructure or from a lack of defined purpose to begin with. This residuality is manifested in the time between the end of a site's designated use and the planning of a redevelopment, during which undesignated use constitutes a transgressive form of inhabitation (Doron 2000, 261) suggesting a multiplicity of programmatic directions beyond normative capitalist production.

With this understanding in mind we might look to identify possible sites for amenity with the specific conditions of their residuality determining the nature of that residuality. Pop-up hospitals, for example, might be well suited to a parking lot, being able to fill in temporally limited periods of disuse for social benefit. Streets by comparison invite longer term attempts at inhabitation which may be less radically minded, given the consistent flows of traffic through them. Lastly, the wedge site might be seen as the ideal situation for radical intervention, with long term disuse opening it up for significant reinvention. While this thesis focuses on the wedge, investigation into other residuals constitute valid paths toward public amenity, and how variable residual conditions inform that amenity.

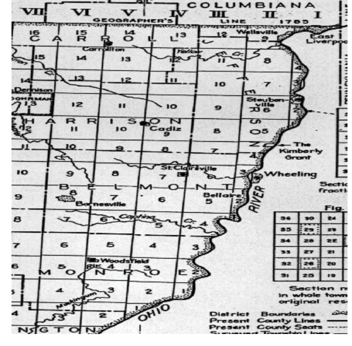


Graphing different residual spaces based on intentionality, use and temporal conditions can help to identify more promising opportunities for development, Wedges are more residual than streets which are more residual than parking lots, etc.

Grid as a Tool for Capitalism

In discussing residual sites in the built environment, it is necessary to understand the incentives of capitalist development and their expression in the built environment as the ‘normal’ against which residual sites are compared.

Shifts in Land Ownership



Jeffersonian Grid overlayed onto landscape, odd spaces created from interaction (or lack thereof) with coastline. (Linklater 2002)

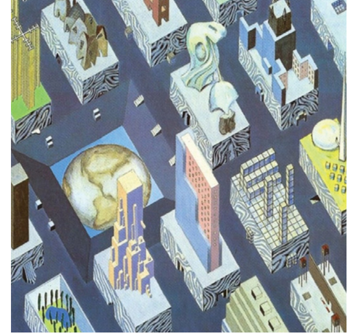
Our arrival at the current land use paradigm might only be understood through the long view of history. Following Cosgrove, the dominant model for land distribution stems from the shift between feudal and capitalist social organisation (Cosgrove 1998, 61), particularly as it reflects understandings of land use. Where, under feudalism, this value was linked to the inhabitation and exploitation of land towards sustaining human life, control over the land was primarily a measure of status among the nobility (Ibid., 61). With the rise of merchant classes and later early capitalism in Italian city-states, systems of exchange and accumulation began to emerge which would define early capitalist values, including land value through ownership and exchange (Ibid., 63). This would, in turn, produce the dominant model for urban land development today, the orthogonal gridiron (Ibid., 94). The gridiron model, stemming from rational, humanist ideals, was imposed upon the new world through colonisation (Ibid., 165), and in the case of the American landscape, as an agrarian tool for the distribution of land as a privately owned commodity (Ibid., 176).

Facilitates Land Ownership/Private Property as an ideal

Distributing land in rectilinear parcels had many rational advantages towards the privatisation of formerly collective space, notably that it is easier to draw in two dimensions

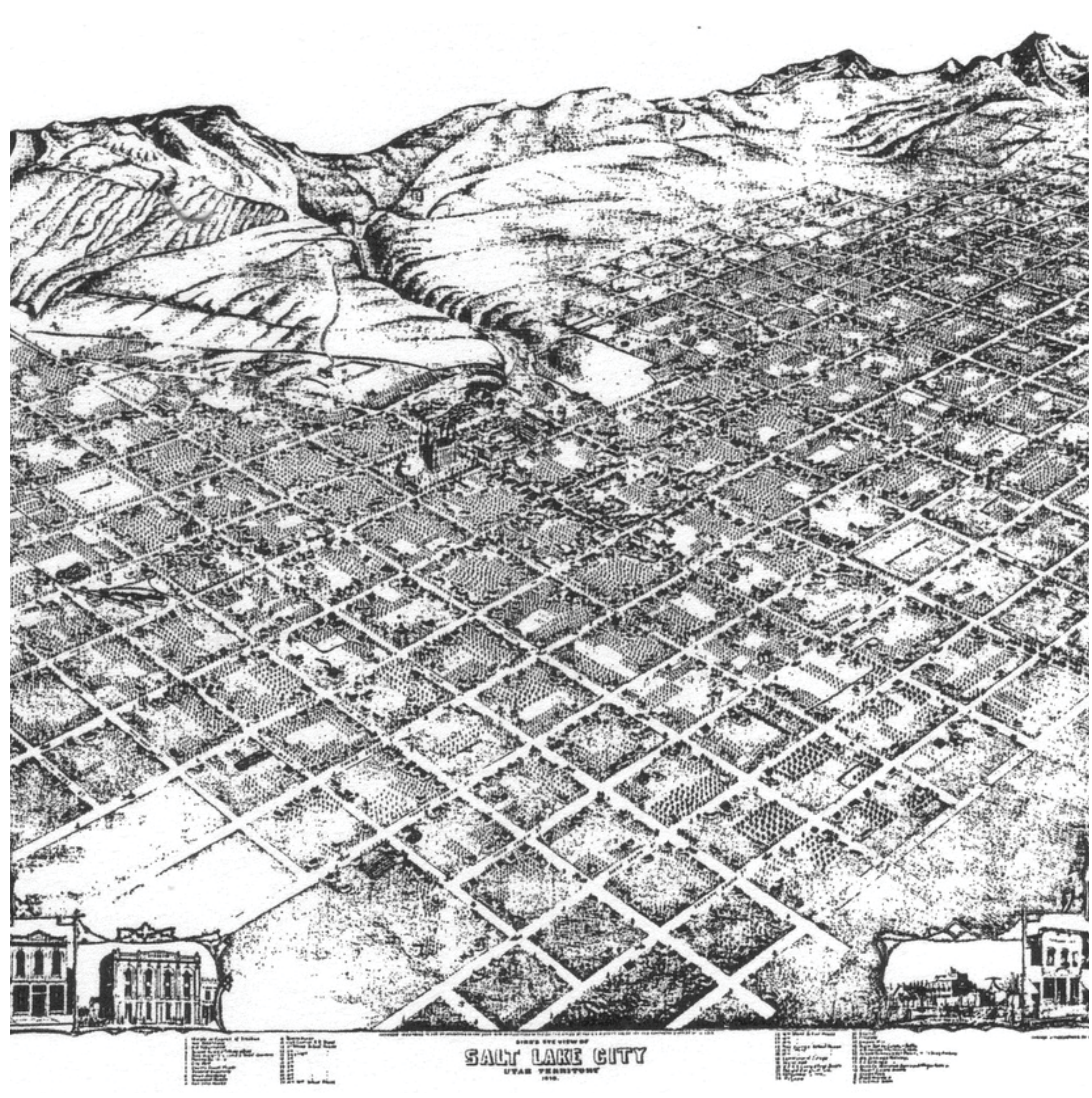
and assign as grid squares. Maps drawn prior to the shift between land use and exchange value exhibit this shift (Ibid., 1998, 8), with the former featuring more symbolic or narrative elements, and the latter being more accurate to the shapes and proportions of the spaces represented using a grid overlay. This can also be interpreted as the difference between the feudal understanding of landscape as a social product of collective intervention (Ibid., 14) and as an identifiable tract of land (Ibid., 16). In America, the Land Ordinance of 1785 established the Jeffersonian Grid, a tool for surveying and parcelling the American landscape (Hailey 2021, 38) which indiscriminately claimed and colonised the territories it covered while ignoring real indigenous and topographic conditions. The grid was intended as a tool for fostering democratic openness, but its failure to respond to underlying conditions instead produced a mandate for normative use even across ultimately inhospitable terrain (Ibid., 39). New York, from where the Land Ordinance was signed (Ibid., 38), was itself modelled under a colonial grid pattern of a smaller dimension (Koolhaas 1994, 11).

The Manhattan grid is, above all, a tool for real estate efficiency, promoting the development of square-sided housing blocks as the most comfortable, efficient and cost effective way to build (Ibid., 19). These blocks become islands for the speculative value of whatever program it can host, with the grid now functioning as an instrument for their development and privatization. Extending outwards the colonial grid imposes a rational net over the landscape until it finds a border, the Hudson or East River, over which it cannot extend (Ibid., 11). Stemming from these breaks, we might identify sites which exist between the paper dominance of the colonial grid and real topographies which



Every block is an island produced by the colonial grid. (Koolhaas 1994, 295)

would not be sublimated. These sites defy the regularising and rectangularization of the grid in as much as they disrupt the spatial efficiency of use mandated by capitalist land value, forming irregularly shaped developments of normative capitalist programs or else residual spaces.



A view of Salt Lake City, 1870. The grid plan dominates the landscape until it meets the irregular terrain at the base of the mountains. (Reps 1965, 743)

Generating Capital Through Dominant Programs

Following Harvey, we might observe that Halifax, like most cities, is composed of spaces which have arisen from the concentration of surplus product (2008, 2) founded on a number of programs which produced the greatest profit. These spaces are defined by commercial and industrial programs, with residential programs acting as the storage for labour (1978, 121). Even cultural spaces, perceived as altruistic or detached from commodity, might charge admission fees and place the gift shop at the exit. Landfills and other wastescapes equally emerge out of surplus product but at the other end of the life cycle, composed of materials whose value is deemed to have been extracted.

Values and behaviours which include private ownership, intellectual property, accumulatory modes of economic production, a continual need for growth and new markets, resource scarcity, overconsumption, and the commodification of knowledge, experience, and labour might be seen to be enacted through these dominant programs and inhabit the grid through specific architectural typologies. Growth and overconsumption manifest in the accumulation of waste at dump sites; the accumulation of capital through unequal systems of production the commercial/industrial facilities; and the desire for private property, while broadly applicable to all capital spaces, is most strongly linked with the space of the home as the most common use of urban land (Rodrigue 2020). The spatial arrangements of given typologies inform the modes of interaction, or program, within the political economy of late capitalism, so non-rectilinear forms might equally inform non-capitalist programs.

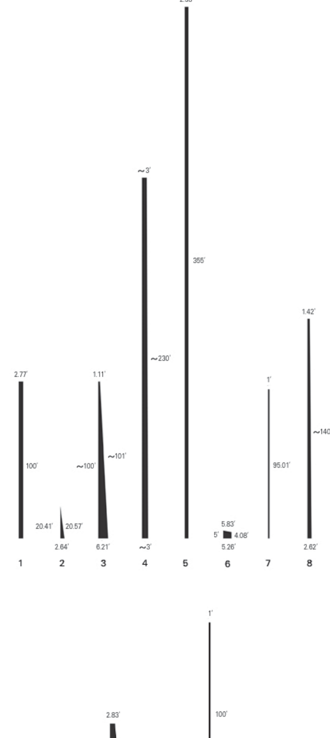
A parti for the capitalist-colonialist land value paradigm.

Residual Space Under Capitalism

In this section, we identify the characteristics of use on non-rectilinear residual sites under high and low land value conditions to understand the necessary conditions for, and limits of, transgressive use in a capitalist built environment. Though much of what is said is broadly applicable to all residuum, this discussion will focus specifically on the conditions of wedge-shaped residual sites.

Site Under Low Land Value Conditions

Primary to the development of an irregular site under capitalist incentives is the weighing of a site's features against its potential for generating profit. Here the wedge site poses its first problem, in the inefficiency of the triangle both spatially (Booth 2012, 228) and materially (Ibid., 229). The inefficiency of space denies the development of the maximum floor area, given acutely angled walls produce spaces which are less inhabitable than a 90-degree corner. Materially, the composition of structural elements at such angles are more complex to construct and far less durable. These spatial conditions create a higher upfront cost for development, resulting in a lower return on investment relative to a rectilinear plot. Issues of size might also deter development, with block sizes measured against a certain ideal floor area, a residual site may be too small to feasibly inhabit. Underlying topographic or natural conditions may also play a role in deterring significant construction efforts. Without inhabitation and infrastructure, the site exists as a residual space, dependent on external interventions by public or private interests. In this state, they may even be worth more as Landscapes of Transition (LOTs), minimally developed land used for real estate speculation (Berger 1998, 158).



Schematic drawings of all of Gordon Matta Clark's Fake Estates, residual sites distributed around Manhattan. (Krastner 2005)

Site Under High Land Value Conditions

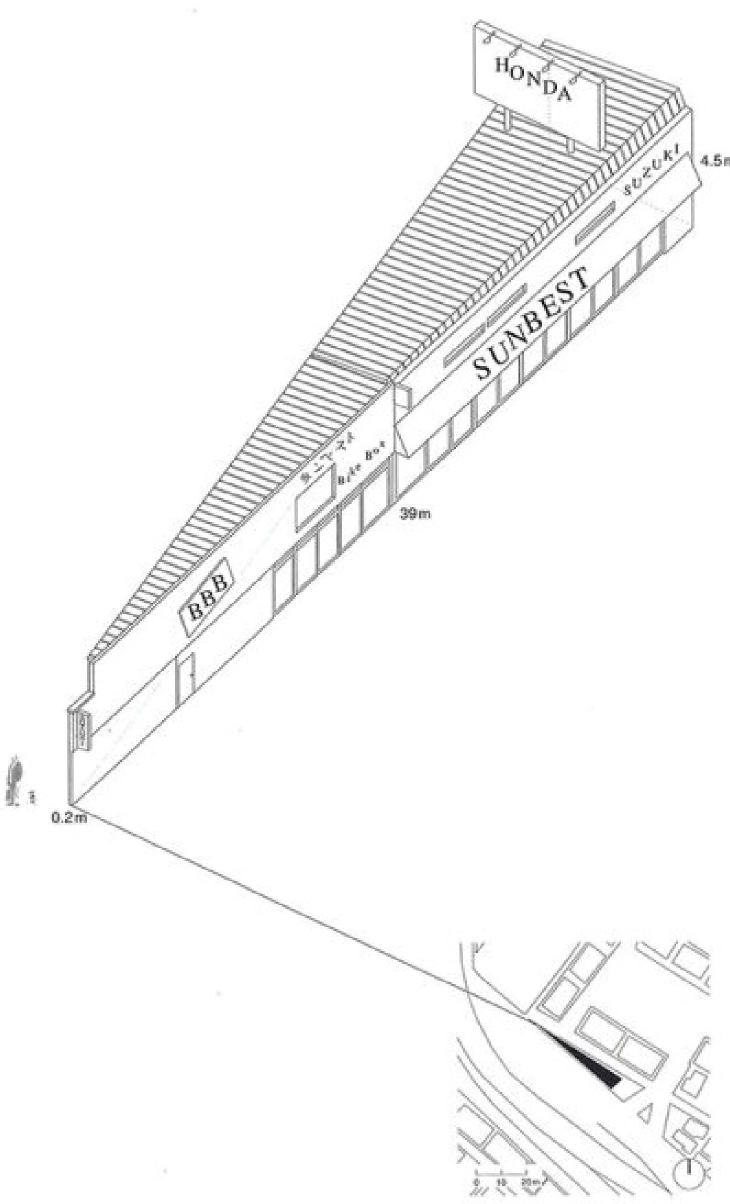
This understanding of real estate exemplifies capitalism's shift in land use value from production to exchange. While urban lots with income-generating structures are typically more valuable than lots without, leaving the site unused allows for speculation on its future value, and the ability to potentially generate more profit from its sale or development under better market conditions (Ibid., 27). Examples of such speculation and development are evident in urban environments with both high land values and demand for housing/ commercial space. The Flatiron Building in New York, as Koolhaas puts it, is

> The tool for the infinite generation of profit from a single parcel of land. Through the limitless upward extrusion of site, rentable floor space is created. The flatiron building stands as a testament to the commercial value of a leftover plot under the machine of the skyscraper. (1994, 98)

Similarly, the wedge-shaped "pet architectures" identified throughout Tokyo by Atelier Bow-wow signify the ability for normative capitalist programs to reshape themselves to occupy and extract value from small and irregular spaces.

From this we might conclude that the current disuse of residual sites in Halifax is not a fact, but a situation born out of land value speculation as part of an ongoing process of capitalisation and privatisation, and one which, given the significant rise of housing and land value over the last decade (Halifax Partnership n.d.), might at any time change.

Flatiron Building (History 2010)



川越街道によって切り取られた三角形の敷地に建つ、全長39mのバイク屋。20ｃｍから6mまで広がる道路からの奥行きに合わせて、浅い方から順に広告面としての壁、ショールーム、オフィス、整備工場として利用している。ミニバイクからナナハンまでが、奥行きに合わせて順に並べられている。

This is a motorbike shop 39 m long that stands on ground cut into a triangular shape by the Kawagoe Kaido Highway. The shop has a depth from 20 cm to 6 m according to the distance to the main road. The space of the shop is used as an advertising wall, a show room, an office and a repair shop from the shallow depth to the deep depth. According to the depth of the show room the motorcycles are displayed in an orderly fashion from the mini motorcycles to the big motorcycles of over 750 cc displacement.

An example of “Pet Architecture”, a small building inhabiting an irregular, residual site. (Atelier Bow-Wow 2001, 137)

Chapter 3: Halifax, a Crisis of Space

This section situates the distribution of amenity and public space on the peninsula through a historical analysis of urban development from the 1960s onward. Deeply rooted in neo-liberal values, the appropriation of public space towards material consumption reflects a set of values in line with the market as the solution to public services.

Privatisation of Space

Over the 21st century the government of Halifax has taken action towards providing public services as we would conceive them today. This primarily manifested during post-war urban renewal, and eviction and demolition of the slums of the Old North End, intended to provide higher, more hygienic standards of living to those (mainly African Nova Scotians) living there (Rutland 2018, 117). This reflected the same capitalist mindset of putting high-value land, such as that close to downtown, towards the "best use" (Ibid., 117) as under the original colonial settlement of the peninsula and its appropriation from the Mi'kmaq, forcing the majority of its population to relocate away from the downtown or off the peninsula entirely.

Scotia Square, 1970.
(Rutland 2018,133)

Other conceptions of what could constitute the public realm were taking shape through the expansion of the private public space, primarily through the shopping mall.

The production of the consumer citizen (Gosseye 2020, 345) is manifested in the rise of public facilities as goods accessed through material exchange. Malls here facilitate both amenity and mass consumption, but with the expectation

that the right to exist in space is contingent on your role as a shopper and consumer.

We might compare attitudes to park inhabitation within typical and consumerised conditions, such as the Garden Festival held at Victoria Park in 2018 (Groff 2018) and the subsequent tent encampment which has since inhabited the park on and off.

Where the former was broadly supported by the city as a normative commercial program, the encampment exists between begrudging tolerance and forceful removal. By inhabiting this space in a way other than that conceived of within the capitalist value system, the encampment challenges the inhabitation of public space as contingent on monetary exchange.

Map by Eric Leinberger showing 3 redevelopment areas, the Central Redevelopment Area, Uniacke Redevelopment Area, and Africville. (Rutland 2018, 142)

Victoria Park being used for the Garden Festival. (Groff 2018)

Victoria Park being used as a camping site (Munro 2021).

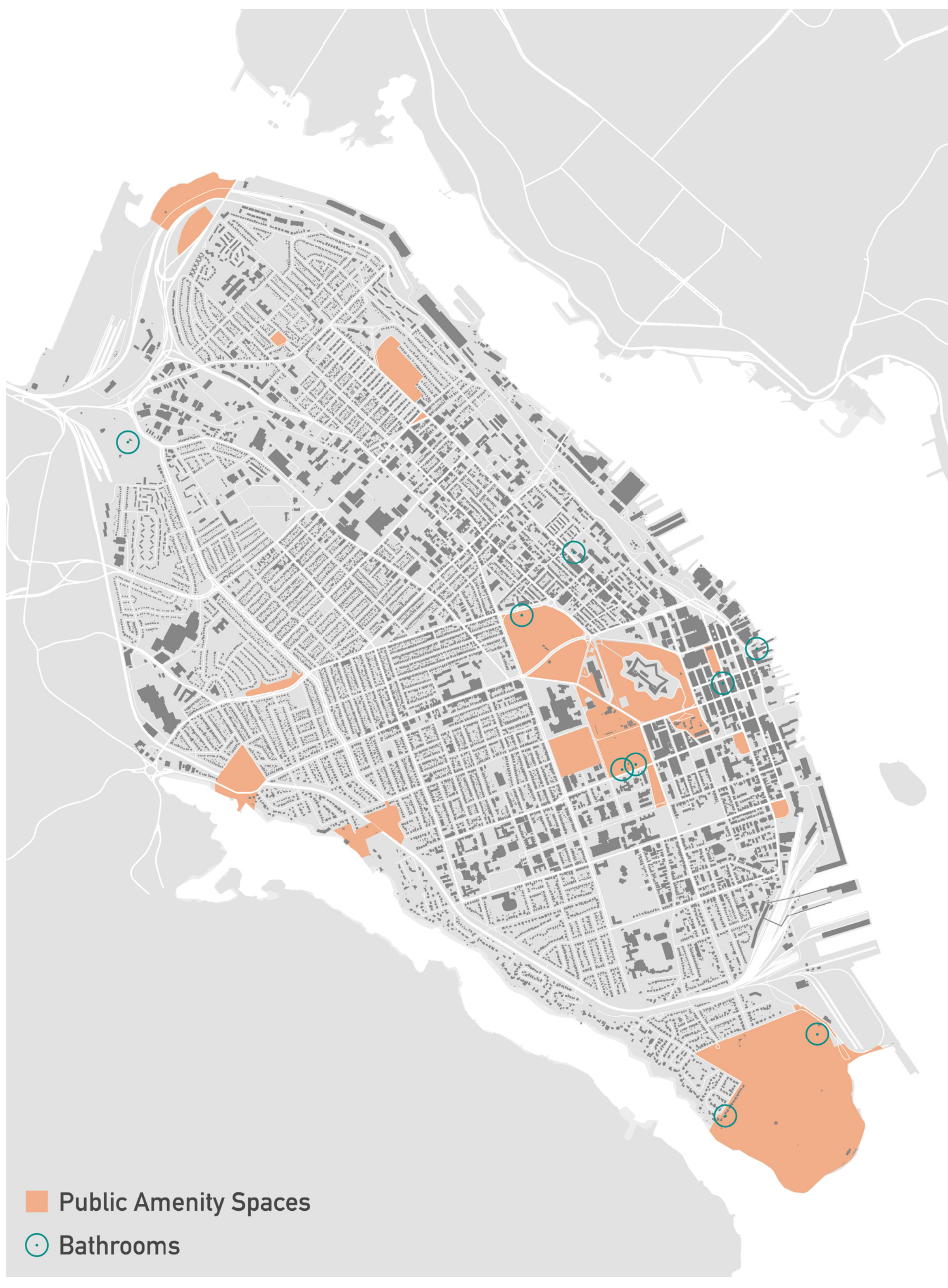
Conceptions of Amenity within Halifax Planning Discourse

Tied up in this are the conceptions of amenity within neo-liberal thought. Following Benjamin Higgins, amenity was a tool for attracting high-quality, knowledge economy based workers to the peninsula (Rutland 2018, 176) through Olmstedian ideas of streets, parks and the like as relief from the “nervous strain of city life” (Ibid., 172). Neo-liberal policy then sought to provide the conditions for residents to buy a better life on the free market rather than through government services (Ibid., 285). Left out of this were the many people outside the knowledge economy and outside the downtown core, who were further impacted by reduced spending on public infrastructure outside that core.

	Name	Age	Formation	Size (sqm)	Physical Characteristics	PID	Zoning Designation
	Dartmouth/Duffus North	1918	Historical	680	Steeply graded, significant solar access	00061630	ER-2
	Dartmouth/Duffus South	1918	Historical	560	Steeply graded, limited solar access	00086512	ER-1
	Devonshire/Vincent	1918	Historical/ Natural	1000	Steeply graded, moderate solar access	00104455	PCF
	Devonshire/Veith	1918	Historical/ Natural	730	Steeply graded, limited solar access	00104448	PCF
	Devonshire/Barrington	1918	Historical/ Natural	1000	Steeply graded, significant solar access	00104539	PCF
	Kaye/Gottingen	1906-1917	Natural/ Historical	3200	Gently graded, moderate solar access	00127084	PCF
	Kaye/Agricola	1918	Historical	625	Flat grade, limited solar access	00131706	PCF
	North/Oxford	>1841	Natural, Historical	870	Flat grade, moderate solar access	00133355	PCF
	Windsor/Quinpool	1841-1878	Historical	2975	Moderate grade, significant solar access	00140194	PCF
	Jubilee/Connaught	1907-1918	Natural, Industrial	730	Moderate grade, limited solar access	00012690	PCF
	Robie/Coburg	1907-1918	Historical	500	Flat grade, limited solar access	40930638	PCF
	Inglis/Barrington	>1869	Natural, Historical, Industrial	575	Flat grade, moderate solar access	00142133	PCF
	Oxford/South	>1841	Industrial, Historical	500	Moderate grade, limited solar access	00078527	ER-1

A spreadsheet of site characteristics for the 13 potential residual sites in Halifax.

Map of the Halifax peninsula showing publicly available washrooms, libraries, and gardens.



Bathrooms and amenity spaces (in the Neo-liberal conception of amenity), are distributed more generously towards the center and south of the peninsula. (Halifax 2023b).

Residual Production

Concurrent to the capitalist development of the peninsula, residual wedge sites were produced through moments of overlapping infrastructure or by friction between the colonial grid and existing historic or landscape features. In the case of existing conditions, waterways or otherwise unbuildable terrain posed a challenge to the colonial grid, such as the case of Hydrostone Park in the North End getting its diagonal following the former path of Freshwater Brook. In other cases, previous social or historical infrastructure may disrupt or shift the grid. The wedge at Windsor Street was produced by the grid overlapping a settler-age cow path to Windsor, likewise, Balcom Square was produced by an existing church meant to bookend Spring Garden Road, (Kent 1982) forcing the extension of the road south of the property, becoming Coburg Road.

Plan showing the age of roads in the North End. In pink are Devonshire Avenue and Duffus Street, which cut through the existing fabric.

In some instances residuals formed from the incision of new infrastructures over existing grid systems, such as the development of Devonshire Avenue and Duffus Street following the Halifax explosion (Nova Scotia Archives 2022) or incision of the H&SW railroad through the South End and along North West Arm in 1901 (Canada Rail n.d.). In yet other cases the interaction of infrastructures was driven by existing conditions, producing a hybrid condition. If we consider the colonial grid to itself be a sort of infrastructure, composed of interlocking streets set at right angles to each other, then any non-orthogonal interlocking of grids may produce infrastructural residual wedge sites. On the peninsula, as with most grids, the roads extend perpendicular to the main system of industry on which the town was settled, in this case, the coastline. The curve of the coastline necessitated a shift in the grid to follow its change in direction, with the

Site photo of Devonshire Avenue and Vince Street, with incising road highlighted.

intersection of these two grids uneasily mediated by a combination of Cogswell Street, Cunard Street, and Chebucto Road as they extend up from the water. The final intersection of these grids comes at the meeting of North Street and Oxford Street at Chebucto Road, where the skewed angle can no longer be attached to an adjacent block. The result is a small wedge-shaped site surrounded by major roads and which constitutes a site produced out of the collision of infrastructures (grids) as well as from the friction of the underlying landscape (the shape of the peninsula).

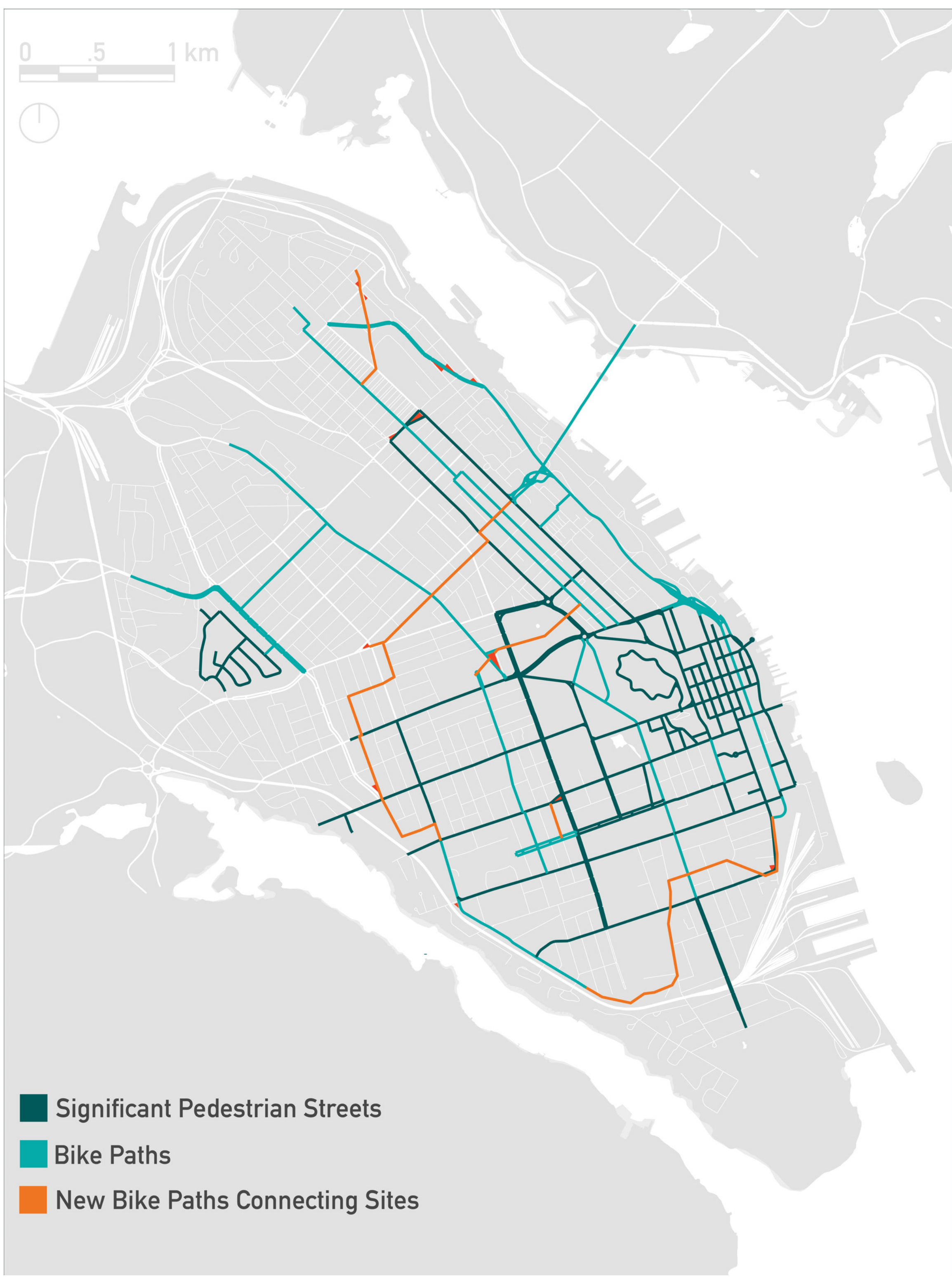
Plan highlighting the shift in the grid beyond downtown as a result of the curvature of the shoreline.

Collage of historical maps showing the expansion of the grid across the peninsula, and moments of friction which produced the wedge site.

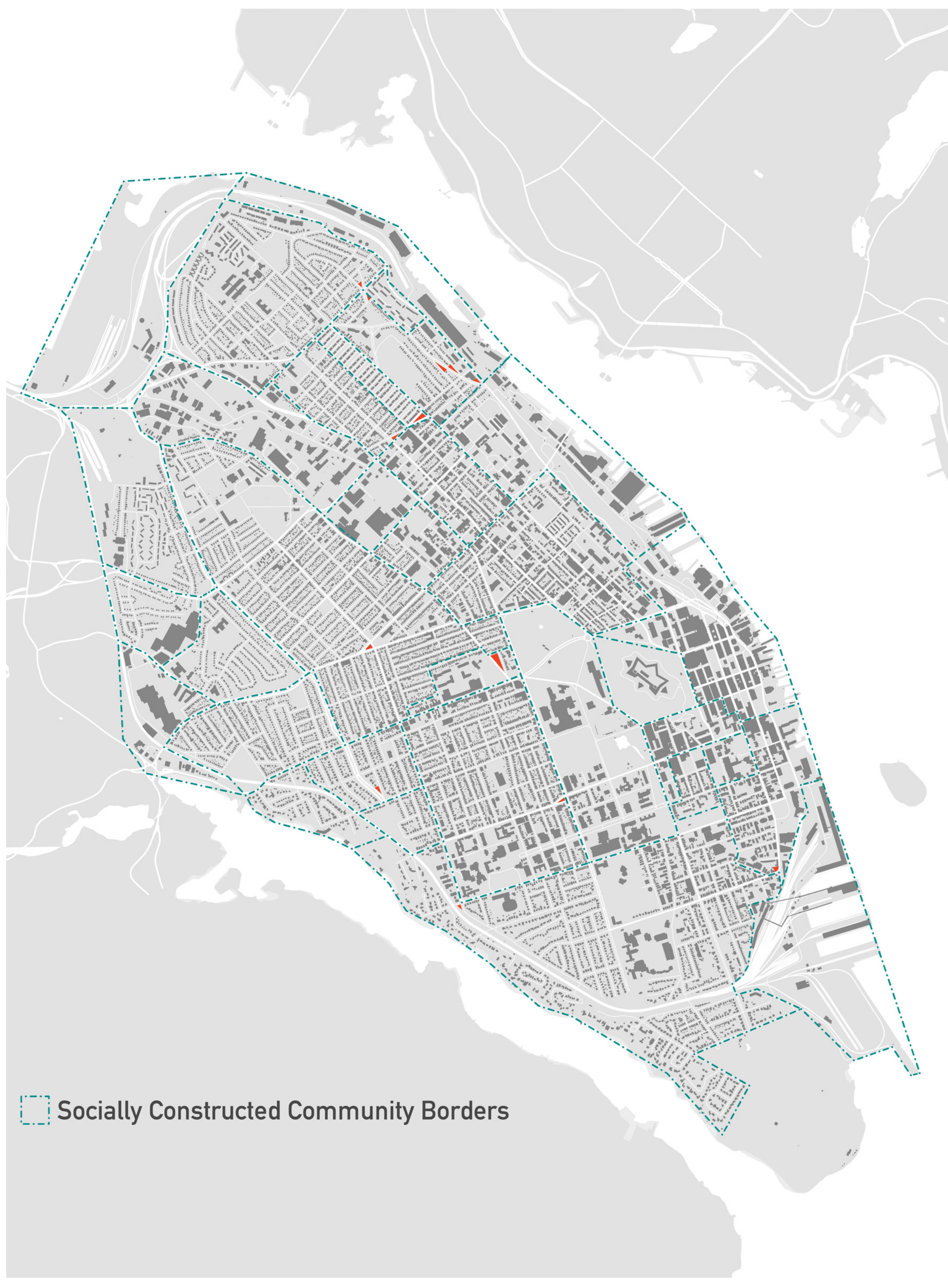
Residual as Amenity

Zoned as Parks and Community Facilities (PCFs) (HRM 2021), these residual wedge sites are designated spaces of amenity in the Olmstedian sense. The zoning allows for a number of cultural, agricultural, performance and historic uses which have not to this point come to pass. Their distribution around the peninsula, and their conditions as existing public places not competing with private interests, does give them some utility towards providing public benefit.

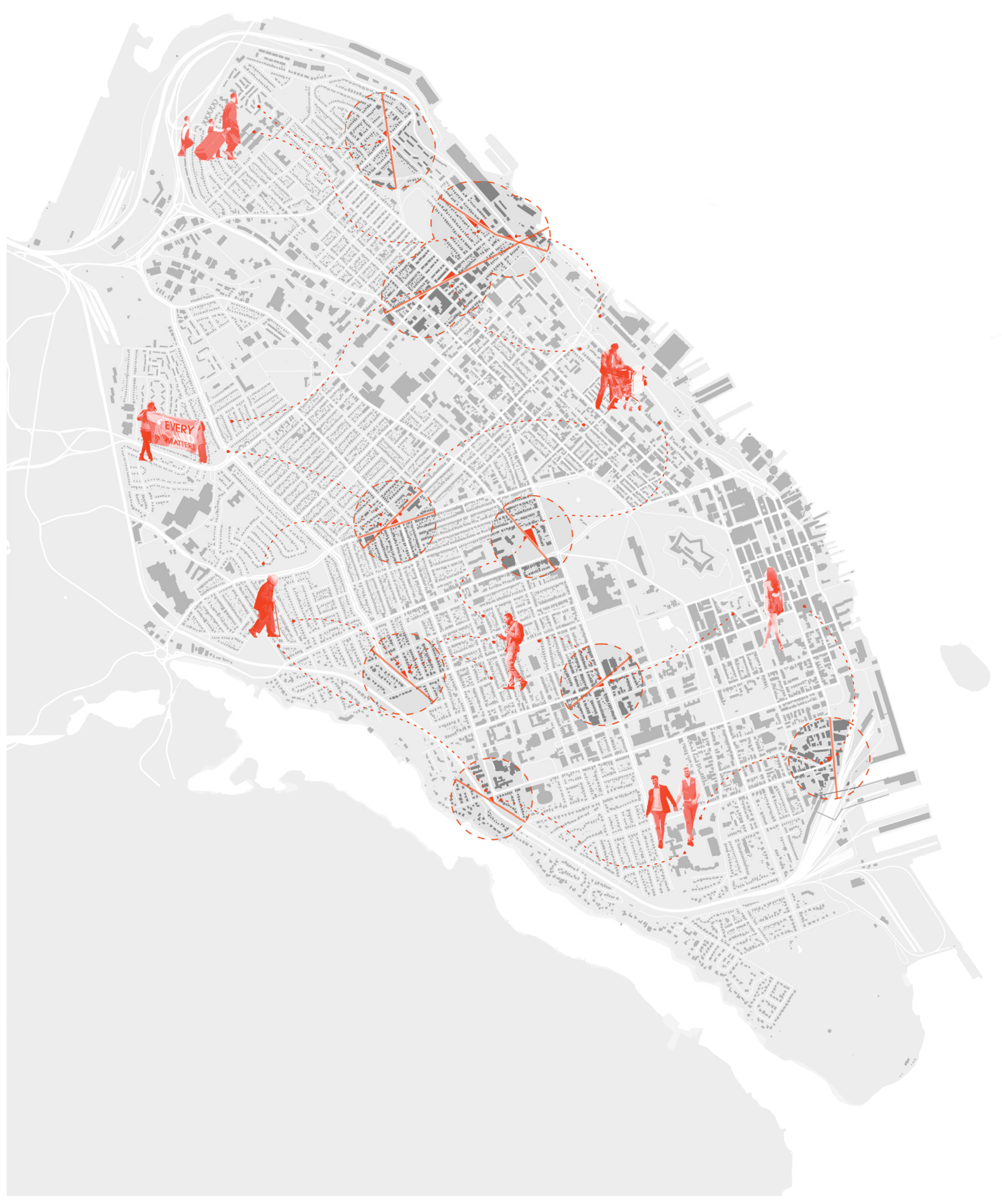
However, not all sites are ideally placed for maximum accessibility, their peripheral positions between communities or along major streets which disincentivise inhabitation (Jacobs 1992, 258), and the challenge of how to recenter communities around these spaces becomes clear. Using Jacobs's analogy of weaving together public spaces like fabric, improving the patchy bike network of the peninsula by connecting the sites to it is a step towards centering the wedge in the community, but not one which is likely to generate value in every instance. Instead of imagining these sites as public leisure grounds for which they are unsuited, they must aim towards providing significant amenity distinct from that available in the private sector, such that they are not a series of interchangeable greens but destinations in their own right. As infrastructure is incorporated and word grows, new amenity might be placed on more difficult to build sites, or even move off the wedge entirely, with the goal that each community have pedestrian access to one or more sites of amenity based on different projected timescales.



Connection between sites through walking and cycling, with additional proposed bike routes where neccesary. (HRM 2022).



Map of Halifax showing sites along border conditions and along major streets. (Data from Mason 2020)



Map of the Halifax peninsula showing sites as a network which knits disparate areas and identities together.

Current Crisis of Amenity

> In order to raise and make profits, capitalism and its financialized economy need to involve the poor under modified conditions of capital valorization, not just as exploited workers but also as over-indebted consumers and households lacking full legal protection. (Rossi 2018, 5)

The current crisis of amenity is twofold it is first a crisis of life under capitalism wherein the needs of citizens are unmet by the free market, and second a condition where the public sector doesn't sufficiently address the gaps. In addressing this crisis through architecture, we are required to both understand where and how neoliberal values are enacted spatially, and to recalibrate our understanding of amenity towards alternative practices.

Homeless fill Meagher Park for lack of affordable housing. (Seguin 2022)

With the provision of necessities such as food and housing left to the free market, economic shifts and downturns affect access for everyone, particularly low-earning and marginalised communities with limited savings. According to a recent CCPA report, the minimum wage in Nova Scotia is among the lowest in Canada at just $13.35 per hour, with the living wage of Halifax at $22.05 per hour (Maclean 2022). Combined with consumer price inflation following the Covid-19 pandemic (Storring 2022) and the current housing crisis pushing rents up 5.1% over 2021 and home prices up 30% (Krawec), there can be no doubt that these economic pressures have limited access to necessary services for a significant portion of low and middle-income earners. This bears out in the rise of the homeless population since the pandemic, which in the last 4 years has more than doubled, moving from 220 in April 2018 to 586 in April 2022 (Edwards 2022). This economic inequality also compounds across ethnic, racial and gendered lines (Maye 2019), placinging more pressure on already marginalised people. Right to

shelter is here contingent on engagement with capitalist systems of monetary exchange for which not all are included. The provision of shelter for the marginalised, those experiencing homelessness or otherwise unable to afford housing of their own would then constitute a valid redefinition of amenity towards unmet need.

Simultaneously, the push from businesses to return to the office following the switch to remote work reflects a struggle for control over how workers engage with the knowledge economy and use of the office building towards the commodification and spatial containment of intangible value such as knowledge, code, language and information (Enright and Rossi 2018, 53). Where previous conceptions of amenity worked to encourage the migration of elite knowledge workers to Halifax, particularly focussed on the downtown (Rutland 2018, 176), the decentralising of knowledge labour through online work resulted in significant social and economic benefits (Barrero, Bloom and Davis 2021, 31). Here the respatialising of labour and subsequent shift in engagement with systems of capital could be framed as another valid redefinition of amenity.

Equally core to the everyday engagement with systems of capital is the production, consumption and disposal of consumer goods which are more and more frequently built with planned obsolescence in mind, driving further economic engagement by encouraging disposal and replacement for all but the most expensive appliances (Gregson, Metcalfe, and Crewe 2009, 250). These disposed goods then accumulate in our processing facilities off the peninsula and perpetuate more global systems of inequality at both ends of the product lifestyle (Jackson 2014, 225). Subverting this, we might conceive of amenity as some process by which

consumer object lifespans can be extended and material waste cycles diverted.

Following Harvey's theory of the "Right to the City", public amenity is more than the right to access resources, but an expression of our collective desired lifestyles and social relations (2008, 1). Anecdotally, we might identify positive social outcomes from the appropriation of space towards community use, such as in community gardens, which, beyond the quantity of food produced, result in prosocial outcomes, such as community empowerment, psychological well-being, and environmental restoration (Lawson 2009, 205). That these outcomes are not measurable has, in the past, proved a deterrent towards their development, with their value unclear within a neoliberal economic system. The upside for this is the potential for public amenities to visualise and allow for public interaction with these other values, spatially disrupting the hegemony of the capitalist built environment and speculating on systems beyond it. Amenity within each of these redefinitions is not a separate challenge to the capitalist economy but different means by which values outside of capitalism can be practiced and normalised.

With such public amenities unlikely to see development over more profitable dominant programs, there is a need for community, government and activist groups to facilitate further expansion, as well as sites for this to take place.

Public Amenity on the Wedge

Users

Those most relevant to the discussion of amenity are the socially marginalised, those whose needs are currently

unmet and who stand the most to gain from public infrastructure. While everyone should have a right to access public amenities, the need for such infrastructures differs across communities, and the development and nature of amenities on chosen wedge sites reflects who takes priority.

Providers

While the UPFI definition takes amenity as government intervention, we need not limit ourselves to state institutions for the provision of amenity. NGOs and community organisations can equally contribute to the betterment of their community through collective action through self-managing joint ownership and control agreements (Scott 2017, 217), such as short-term leases (Lawson 2009, 207) or housing collectives.

Infrastructures

Infrastructure here is a twofold concept operating at multiple scales of amenity. At the larger scale, infrastructure encompasses the solid architectural volumes which are inhabited in the production of value and require regular maintenance and supervision by providers. At the smaller scale, infrastructure includes the furniture the user might interact with while on site. The infrastructure of a public bathroom for instance is both the solid enclosure of wall, floor and roof as well as the toilets, stalls and sinks which inform the meaning of what is being provided to the user. These furnitures can further extend the social realm, as William Whyte notes in his study of public spaces, the quality of a plaza's public life can be linked to both the quality and generosity of its urban furniture (1980, 28) and its ability to facilitate human interaction (Ibid., 94).

Sites

Sites are the physical spaces where infrastructure is located, where providers work and users gather. This thesis, which began with the identification of wedge shaped green spaces for their social and spatial potential for disruptive use, proposes their use for amenity as a first step. This decision, however, is an active choice to couple the provision of amenity with a radical challenge to capitalist hegemony in the built environment through an expression of their distinct formal character.

The provision of amenity need not limit itself within these bounds. Amenity can occur wherever it can be agreed to be produced, and some form of user, provider and infrastructure are present to enable it. The value produced by amenities is able then to extend beyond the bounds of site, impacting community culture, walkability and safety, raising land values for greater tax revenue, or lowering expenditure on environmental or emergency services, which can be reinvested into other areas of need.

Design for a public barbeque and shelter (Kimmel and Teitz 2020, 12)

Full site plan showing all residual wedge sites and their formational streets.

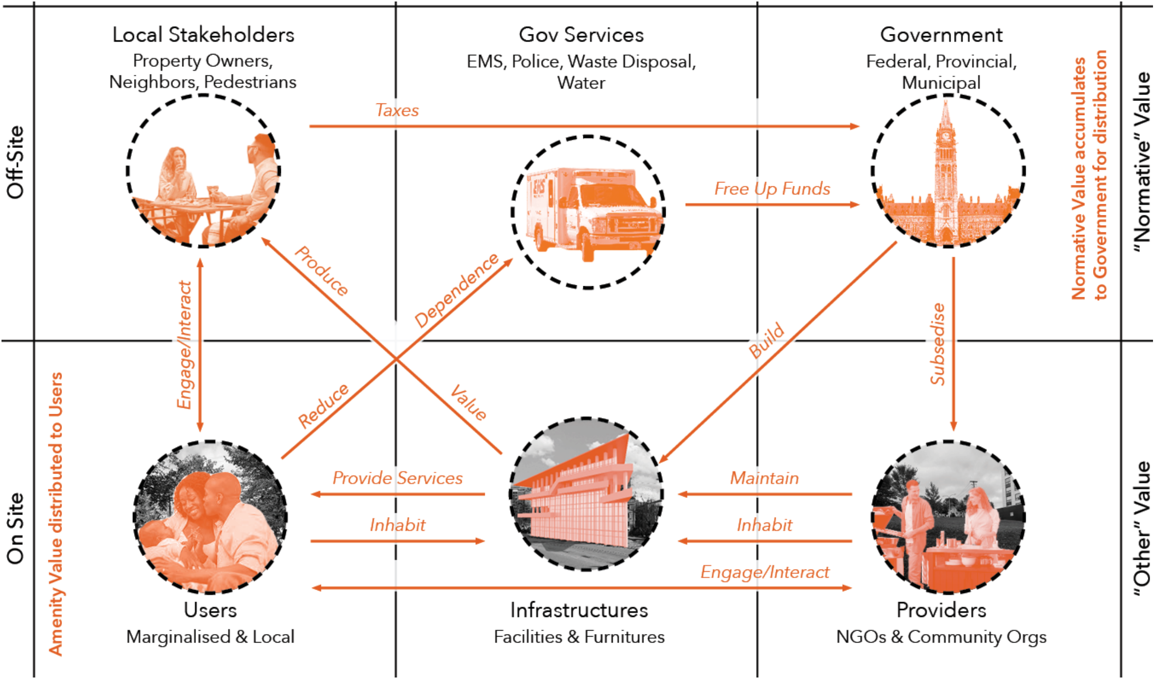
Process

With these actors defined, we might now develop a system whereby these amenities can be funded, produced and administered on the wedge. Starting with the user groups, who include marginalised people as well as nearby communities who benefit from the amenity, funds can be raised to build and maintain the infrastructures for amenity. These funds can be raised in a variety of ways depending on the community and infrastructures in question. Some amenities may be seen to be more normatively valuable to the community, raising property values of adjacent building, which can then feed into its construction. In other cases, such as in producing shelters for unhoused people, funds can be pulled from other services to make the difference. For example, government spending on the homeless alone accounts for over 7 billion dollars annually, spent on emergency services, time in the justice system, and other emergency shelter operations (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness n.d.). In a study on veteran homelessness run in Calgary, London, Toronto and Victoria, a housing-first policy for homeless individuals resulted in an estimated savings of half a million over normal shelter and drop-in use (Gaetz et al. 2016, 49). This means housing or other, less normatively desirable amenities might be enabled by their framing as a government aid measure which improves its efficacy at a reduced cost, allowing spending to be reduced or shifted to other relevant sectors, such as healthcare.

With infrastructures now in place it may be necessary for local governments to manage them directly on the site, but for others it is feasible that the infrastructure is maintained by community groups, NGOs or other charitable organizations who might be more sensitive to the needs of its user group.

The framework here engages with capitalist notions of value, partially out of necessity and partially as critique. To exist in real space the money must come from somewhere, so engagement with the systems of capital is a requirement for a viable amenity. This may seem to be a capitulation to these extant values, but is in fact an opportunity to challenge them by their redirection towards collective benefit.

Normative value is still produced by these infrastructures as elements in the public realm, which benefit the broader community without direct engagement in these other systems, even as transgressive social values are manifested on site.



System of amenity producing value through interactions of users, providers, and infrastructures on and off site.

Chapter 4: What to do with Residue

Having established the acute need for both significant public facilities and alternative socio-economic systems, this chapter pushes the question further to how a wedge architecture might subvert capitalist use values. Drawing on the theories of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, I propose the radical reconception of the wedge as a heterotopia which enables transgression against capitalist development by producing spatio-programmatic conditions which make visible the arbitrariness of core capitalist assumptions.

Wedge as Heterotopia

Moving beyond a formal and urban reading of the wedge, this section places the socio-political construction of the wedge as a site of transgression within an established theory for producing critical space.

Heterotopia

> Architecture, at least as traditionally conceived, is a stable structure, which gives form to permanent values and consolidates urban morphology. (Tafuri 1976, 53)

The production of all space is both material and social, defined by physical walls and by mutual agreement of program within them, and therefore the meaning of its inhabitation (Foucault 1967, 16). Working at the urban scale, Pierre Bourdieu poses the built environment as a mediator between an established order, which produces its own arbitrariness, or Doxa (1977, 164), and our means of operating within it, or habitus (1977, 79). These might, in plain language, be thought of as the base assumptions of

a given society and the physical and social infrastructure which produces and is reproduced by such assumptions. Heterotopias are spaces where these assumptions are suspended or inverted, and in doing so make visible their arbitrariness (Foucault 1967, 16). This is our opportunity for critical intervention.

From Residual To Heterotopia

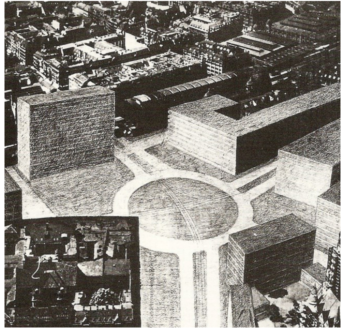
Wedge sites, though formally deviant from the normative gridiron plan, are not in fact heterotopic when left to be residual. A park which produces little economic value in a site perceived to be unsuited to profit generation is fully within the neoliberal Doxa of urban development. If the meaning of space is to be a joint social construction produced through inhabitation, then residuality and a subsequent lack of inhabitation prevent the formation of meaning. Any social consensus of ”proper use” is highly unstable, so the act of simply lingering in the wedge may be transgressive, inhabiting it as a space to “be in and not only move through” (Doron 2000, 254).

Halifax park sign outlines normative and non-normative uses.

This transgression can be further activated towards challenging not just urban scale use of space but entire economic processes through the suggestion of anti-programs, inversions of normatively produced habitus by the transformation of associated typologies for dominant programs which take form on the wedge.

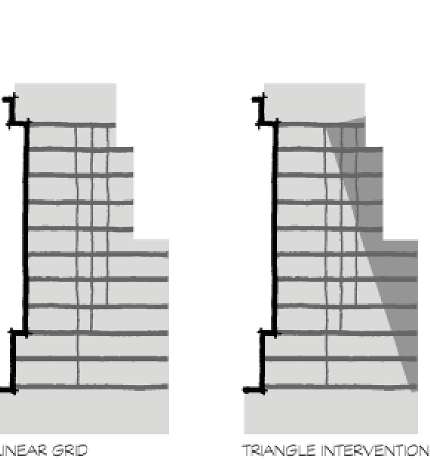
The Value of Formal Resistance

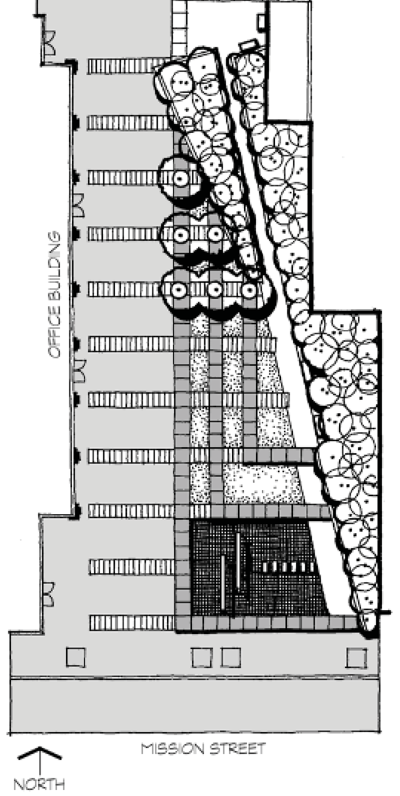
> Because of the triangle's pronounced differences with orthogonal and circular forms, it can readily be interjected as an intentional counterpoint that generates an obvious and perhaps even clashing imbalance within a site and/or its context (10.32). There is little attempt in this strategy to make the triangular form fit into the prevailing geometry other than seeking to eliminate connections with adjoining forms that can cause functional and construction problems. Rather, the triangle slashes through a design and directs energy in a divergent orientation. (Booth 2012, 224)



Mies' proposal for the 1929 Alexanderplatz redesign (Hays 1984, 21)

One method for the wedge to suggest transgression against normative values is through an expression of its formal difference. In an analysis of Mies' Alexanderplatz in Berlin, Hays notes the building's rejection of any formal logic beyond its own (1984, 10), in this obdurate refusal to acknowledge anything but itself, the platz is considered to be critical of both the classical spatial order of the city and the conditions for inhabiting it (Ibid., 10).





Triangular intervention into a rectilinear grid (Booth 2012, 225)

Sole formal critique of existing cultures is, however, entirely complicit within them, highlighting a key failure of architecture as a critical medium. Architectural form can be produced/interpreted as a result of existing socioeconomic, political and technological forces which reflect its surrounding culture (Hays 1984, 4), or as divorced from external conditions, acting autonomously and therefore unable to deliver critique. It maintains its purity by “acceding to social and political inefficacy” (Hays 1984, 5).

If we hold Hays’s critique to be true, and criticism cannot exist as an autonomous form divorced from context, then we might wonder if the wedge cannot be a point where context is assimilated, consumed, and reformed, the contortion of dominant programs building typologies which suggest a reformation of associated values. Earlier discussion of dominant programs noted their reflection of a broad set of capitalist values, but also their ability to embody specific values, like housing as a reflection of private property, dumps as the result of overconsumption, or offices embodying unequal systems of exchange. Typological reformations of these spaces and the suspension of their associated values towards new amenities give substance to their critical interventions where installations are formally distinct, but not wholly alien to the built environment. Transformations cannot then be arbitrary, but informed by a framework which identifies socio-economic meaning mapped onto physical space for any given program/typology and reassembles them towards radical architecture and transgressive programs.

Socio-Spatial Systems

This section outlines the social-spatial components identified in the production of amenity towards a transformation and transgression of normative programs/meanings.

Figure, Ground and Threshold

We might conceive of the built environment produced under capitalism as three spatial conditions, figure, ground and threshold. While the exact arrangement of these elements is variable, modernist, gridplanned, automobile-centric city planning has most often presented ground as primarily a space between figures, with figures given maximal articulation as sites of capitalistic liberty, the grid mediating only the dimension of and between figures (Tafuri 1976, 40). Thresholds exist between figure and ground, primarily as social constructions which are sometimes physically produced as visually or spatially distinct subspaces.

The distribution of solid, void and interstitial space in the built environment, visualized as a figure ground, is influenced by the economic, social and technological norms of the society which produces it. (Rowe 1978, 37)

This treatment of figure and ground as a binary division of space maps closely to a binary of meaning, as Lerup describes (Lerup 1977, 109) between the social and the personal.

> The social is disappearing in favor of a no man's land of managerial space, conceived as a protective cocoon around sanctuaries of privacy. A myopic defense of privacy has in a perplexing sense made it impossible to be private because the social is as essential to the private as day is to night. The emerging managerial space enveloping the private realms is largely utilised for transportation needs. (Ibid., 118)

The social space is here conceived of as ground where the private realm is a collection of figures. Under capitalism the figure is defined by the production of value/values, either as value storage and speculation as in housing, the production of value in industrial and commercial buildings, or repository for the spent value of consumer objects in landfill sites. Ground is the space between these figures and itself embodies little value or social meaning, lacking clearly defined modes or incentives for inhabitation beyond passing through.

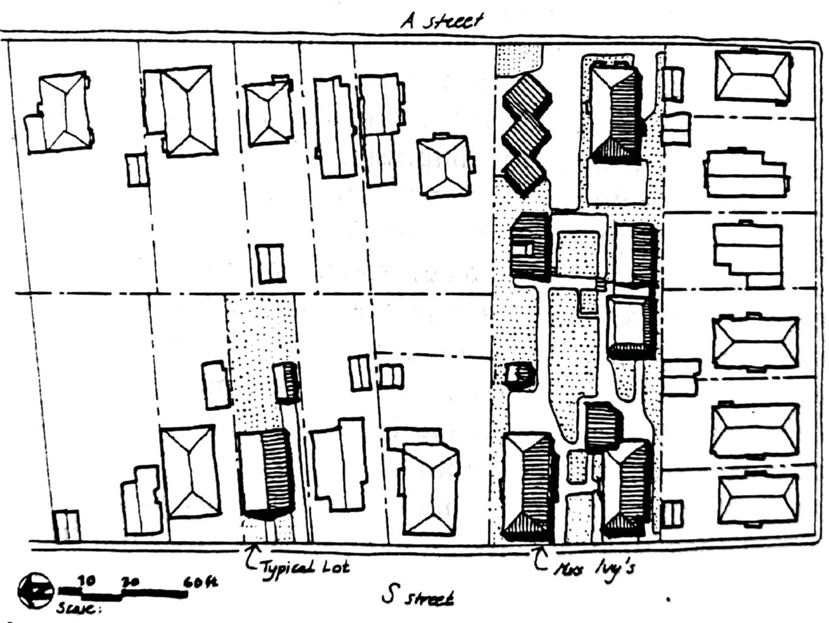
Lerup goes on to discuss a heterotopic backyard community in San Francisco, where "Ambiguous inter-space between social and personal is provided - where dwellers can assert themselves in the public eye" (Ibid., 109).

In this instance a socially meaningful space is able to be produced in the ground between figures by two conditions, a notion of acceptable inhabitation agreed upon and enabled by its users, and a threshold wherein this inhabitation is normal, suspended in the surrounding managerial space of transportation, in this instance a property line. Thresholds are not limited to property lines they constitute any social or material condition which separates figure from ground, spaces of meaning from space without, and, depending on

the particular figure, different conditions of value between space, user or object, based on the normative capitalist values embodied in its program. This leads to the condition where certain signifiers of threshold can be mapped onto their typologies. Property lines are near universal thresholds, but the expression of private property through the visual signifier of the lawn is particularly prevalent in the single family home. In industrial facilities the use of signage and fencing often denotes both the private ownership and programmatic function of the space beyond, with curtain walls and shop windows doing much the same with a more inviting or permeable condition in commercial applications.

Visual clues mark the threshold of private and public space imagined as the property line.

In some instances multiple thresholds can be put in place, a private home might use the lawn as an indicator of property, and also use a porch as a semi-public social space (Schroeder 1993, 37), creating interstitial conditions separating the private figure of the home from the public ground with different social norms for inhabitation.



Lars Lerup, Mrs. Ivy’s Lot in the Block. Beverly Hills, 1977. (Lerup 1977, 90)

In this framework, dominant programs are physically produced by an arrangement of figure, ground and threshold conditions to create common meaning, manifesting as typologies of built form. An intervention critical of the normative values of a given dominant program could then suspend or invert those values and create a heterotopic condition by the reformation, misapplication, or inversion of those standard arrangements of figure, ground and threshold to highlight the arbitrariness of their material and social construction, and facilitate new economic practices and social values transgressive of normative capitalist hegemony.

Heterotopic Thresholds on the Peninsula

As an example of understanding transgression through the subversion of figure, ground and threshold conditions, we might briefly study the existing heterotopia produced by a homeless encampment on the wedge at Windsor Street and Quinpool Road. Here emergency shelters constitute fully private figures without any perceivable threshold. These shelters are transgressive for a number of reasons, the first of which is that for the unhoused, a marginalised group, simply existing is a transgression. The second transgression is against ideas of public versus private occupation of ground under capitalism.

A heterotopia produced by homeless inhabitation of Windsor/Quinpool.

Formally there is no difference between the way a shelter and a house inhabit the landscape as they are both private figures within a public ground, but a distinction is made by an invisible, socially conceived threshold, the property line, which delineates the landscape into owned parcels. It is an agreement on paper which upholds private ownership in our normative conception of space which can be made visible

by things such as the edge of a lawn, fence, bush, etc.

The socio-spatial operation taken on by the shelters is one which leaves figure and ground conditions as normal but erases the property line and all its signifiers, removing the threshold between the two. This calls into question the assumption that the property line is required for inhabitation and exposes its arbitrariness, making us uneasy. This discomfort is intensified by a second threshold of social exclusion (Foucault 1967, 21). There likely is an interstitial space between figure and ground, some idea of projected personal space around the shelter which the unhoused inhabitants are privy to that we as outsiders are not. We get the feeling of intrusion because our normative conception of dwelling has this socially constructed boundary which can be picked out from context clues, allowing us to deduce roughly where the interstitial space begins and ends. These shelters, lacking a property line, also lack the social clues. In response, we draw back to the most obvious visual markers, the line of the sidewalk, and the shelters, with their tiny footprint, come to dominate the entire space because of the uncertainty of their threshold.

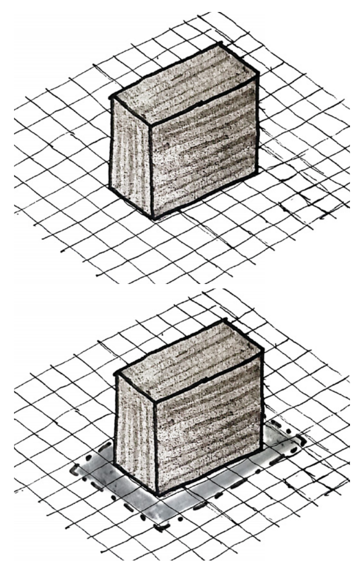


Diagram of Figure, Ground and Threshold for a shelter (top) and house (bottom) as they inhabit space.

Learning from this, we can conclude that because our normative built environment is socially and spatially produced as an agglomeration of figures, ground, and thresholds whose arrangements uphold values (Bourdieu 1977, 79), heterotopic spaces can suspend or invert these values with different, critical spatial arrangements.

Chapter 5: Design

This section describes three amenities, each suspending a core capitalist value embodied by a dominant program in the built environment. Critique is produced formally through a transformation of architectural typologies onto the wedge and economically through subversive social programming.

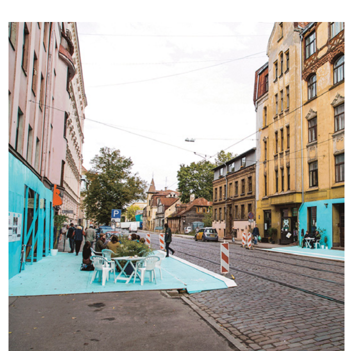
1. Halfway House

The halfway house is a public housing project taking its name from the interstitial character of its occupants, those between situations of secure housing, and from its site, the Windsor Street Wedge, a residual lawn between common and private use.

Generous Public Space

> Offering the public something without expectation of anything in return is at once subversive, suspicious – and potentially profound and transformative. Stripped of commercial adornment, the “generous” public act foregrounds its own assumptions: it says, this is possible, and it need not be bought or sold. (Merker 2010, 55)

Where we might at times consider a space to be held in private, given out at the owner’s discretion, disruption through generosity might prove a useful tool.



Mierīgi extends pedestrian space into the street (Public Space 2022).

Generous installations such as Park(ing) and Mierīgi reclaim public road space for pedestrian inhabitation. Through the insertion of social infrastructures, park space in parking spaces (Ibid., 56) and streetlife on streetscapes, they challenge notions of the private use/ownership of these spaces and expand conceptions of their proper use. By providing these installations without asking for anything in return, generosity is able to produce a heterotopia which embodies pro-social values in residual space.

An opportunity for similar generosity exists on the wedge site at Windsor Street, where a number of homeless shelters occupy what is ostensibly public park space, raising questions of private inhabitation in public space as a potential model for interstitial housing.

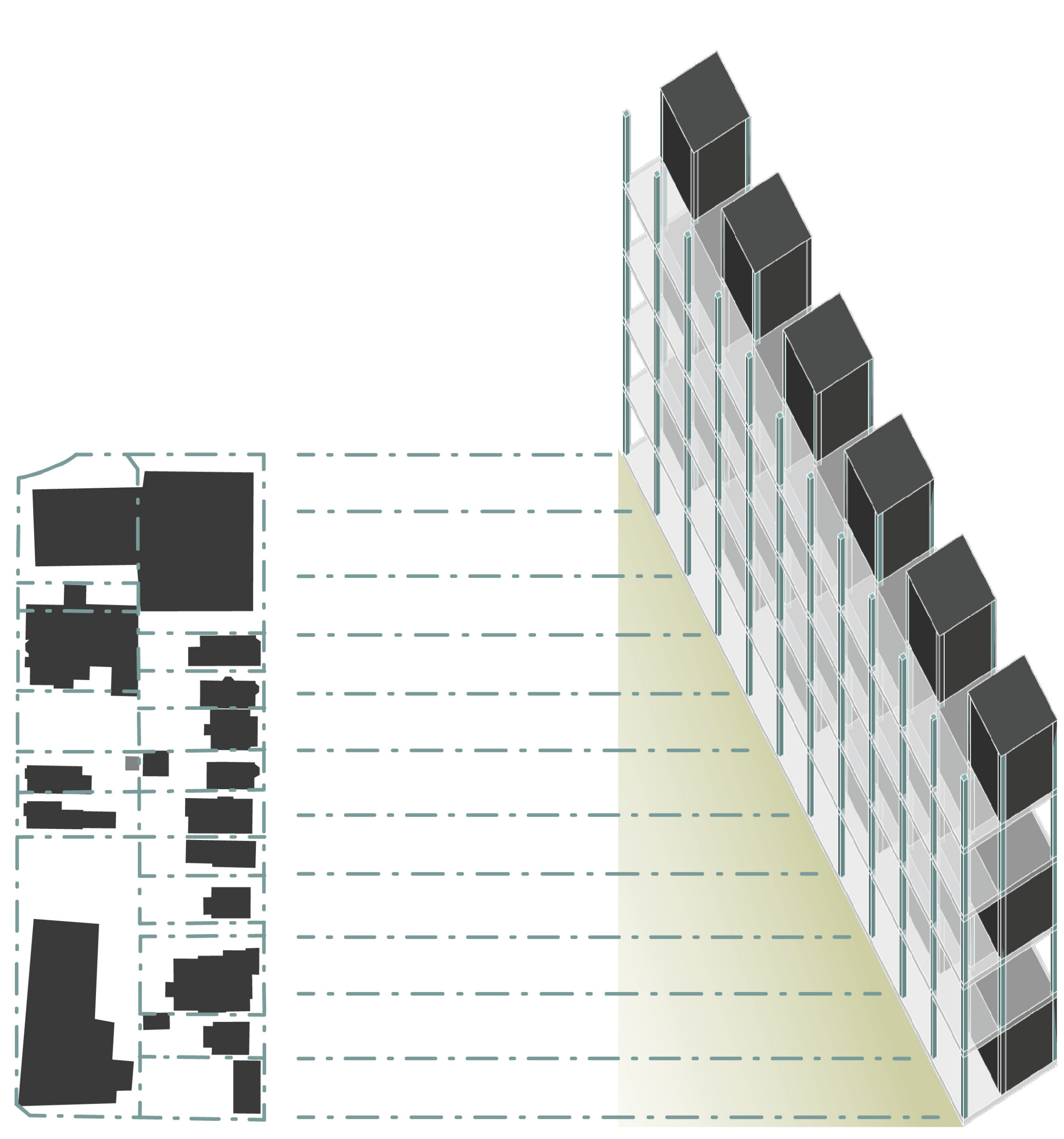
The need for interstitial housing is a significant and common social issue affecting not only the chronically homeless, but also the situationally and temporarily unhoused. Even though we might not consider them to be homeless, individuals who are between stable housing and prison, women fleeing domestic violence, and queer youth who have been evicted from their homes may all need interim housing. Interstitial housing for these people might be provided through generosity in public space rather than trying to provide housing within a property-oriented capitalist worldview.

Formal Critique

The Halfway House is a formal critique of both the skyscraper and the single-family home as means of inhabitation in the built environment. Produced as a series of private figures suspended in the air, it evokes normative patterns of suburban inhabitation in the grid. The empty volumes prompt the question, “How many more people could inhabit it if we endeavoured to fill this space, not simply in the structure but in suburbia?” The steel columns supporting the structure are placed from an extension of the true property lines along Parker Street, literalising the notion of property boundaries supporting socially acceptable inhabitation.

Simultaneously the empty volumes prevent the Halfway House from simply reproducing the normative spatial conditions of the skyscraper, wherein the site is extruded up towards its greatest productive capacity. These units are

accessed along the Halfway House's balcony. Imagined as one conjoined porch, it is the primary circulation space and secondary social space separating the private figures of the units from the social and public space of the ground below.

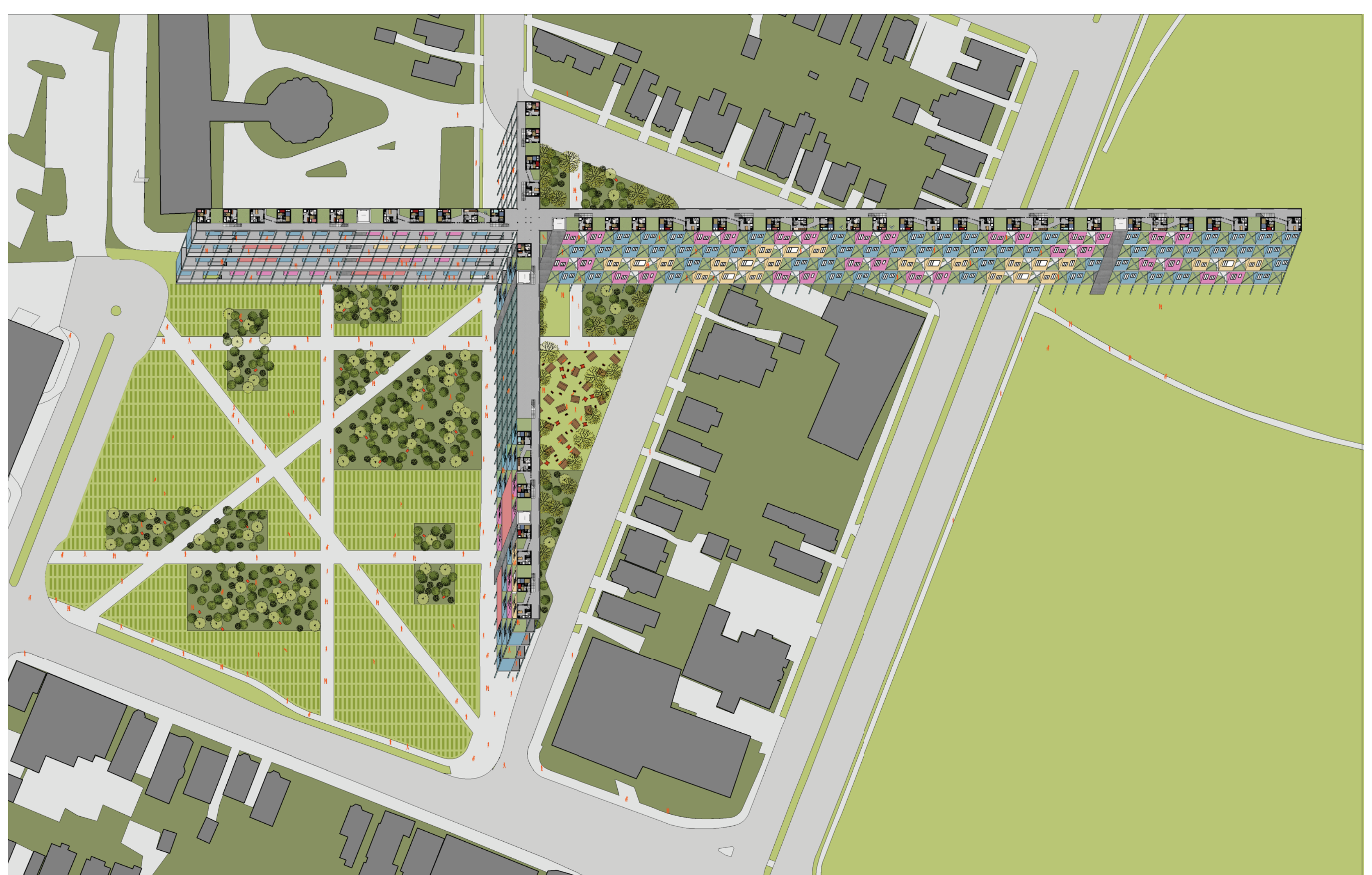


Halfway House parti

The Halfway House takes two axes across the site, the first one down the centre of Windsor St and the other perpendicular along a popular pedestrian route where an accessible ramp was just completed. This second axis extends beyond the wedge, spanning across the street to the former site of St. Patrick's High School on one end and to the Common at the other.

Normatively produced as its own grid structure, it plays on the notion of the relativity of diagonal conditions, that is that diagonals are only perceivable relative to an orthogonal norm. Rather than taking the diagonal condition of the site as a given, the Halfway House instead uses its size to reverse our perception of space, such that its diagonal is experienced as orthogonal, and normative, while the remainder of the grid is deviant.

Accessibility ramp constructed across the site.



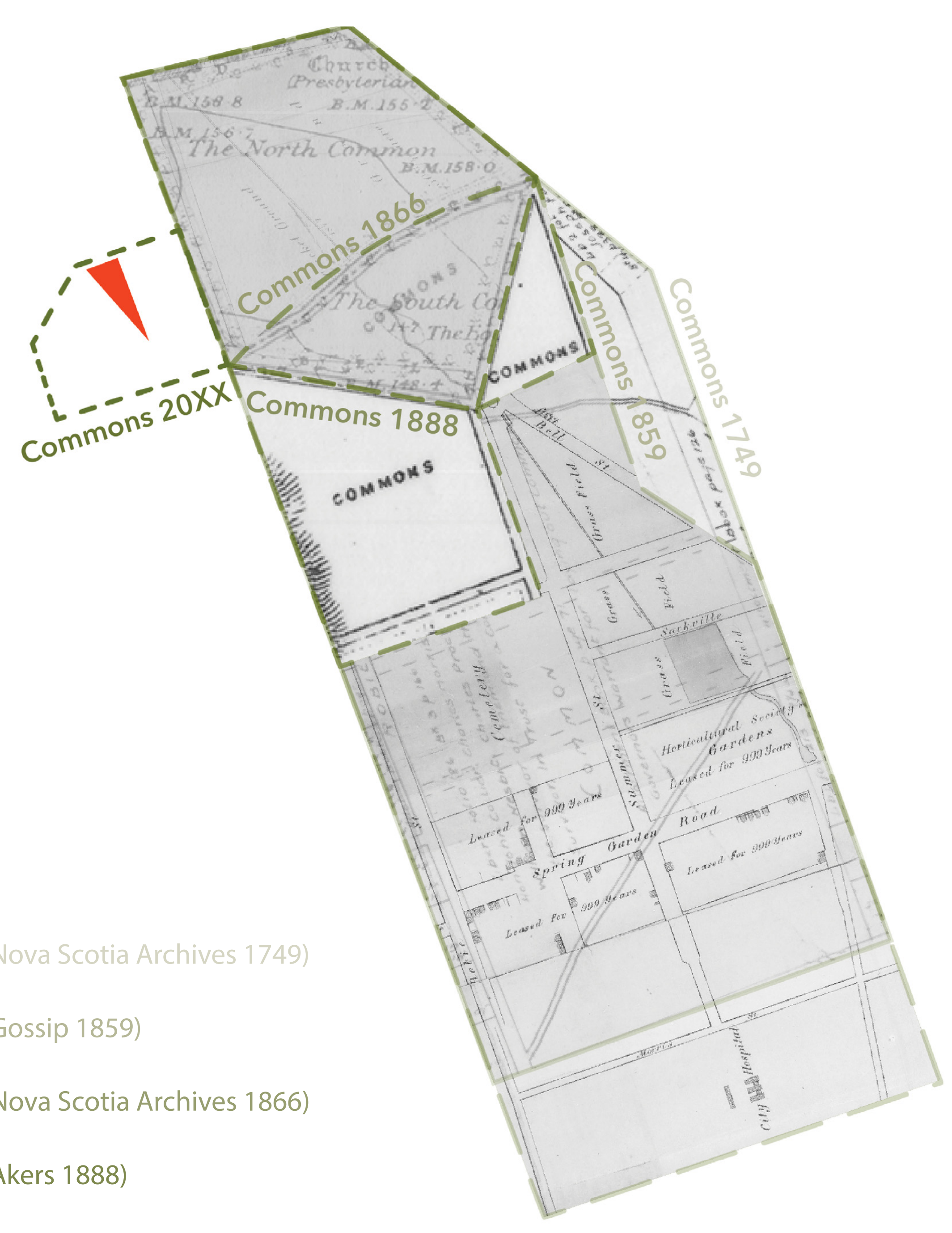
Halfway House plan/axo producing its own orthogonal condition.

Extending the Common

The decision to use the Windsor St Wedge was influenced by two factors: first, the existing homeless encampment, and second, the proximity to the Halifax Common. While the former gave a relevant starting point for the program, the latter provides an opportunity for the extension of the commons.

Over centuries of colonisation, the physical borders and social conception of the Halifax Common have ebbed and flowed following the needs of the public. Prior to colonisation, the indigenous Mi'kmaq would have regarded the entire peninsula as a form of public commons with its own construction of proper use. During early colonisation, the settlement of private buildings below Citadel Hill would stand in contrast to the Common beyond it, which would have been space for resource exploitation. During this period, a cattle path to the town of Windsor was established (Hicks 2017, 29), producing the diagonal condition which the grid would later extend to, forming the wedge site. As Halifax gradually expanded into and privatised this space, areas were left over around the Citadel which were formally designated as "The Common". These sites hosted military training as well as public athletics (Gossip 1859), later providing supervised playgrounds (Maritime Merchant Ltd 1945) and hospital facilities (Department of Militia and Defence, 1918). Green spaces beyond this, the Windsor/Quinpool wedge as well as the former site of St. Patrick's high school (Heintzman 2020) were privately owned but largely designated as institutional, schooling or athletic facilities, constituting a semi-public space. The Halfway House is implemented as a means of expanding the Common, both spatially by reconnecting the wedge to its surrounding greenery and socially, pushing the

notion of its proper use towards free inhabitation and the destigmatisation of those living in public.



(Nova Scotia Archives 1749)

(Gossip 1859)

(Nova Scotia Archives 1866)

(Akers 1888)

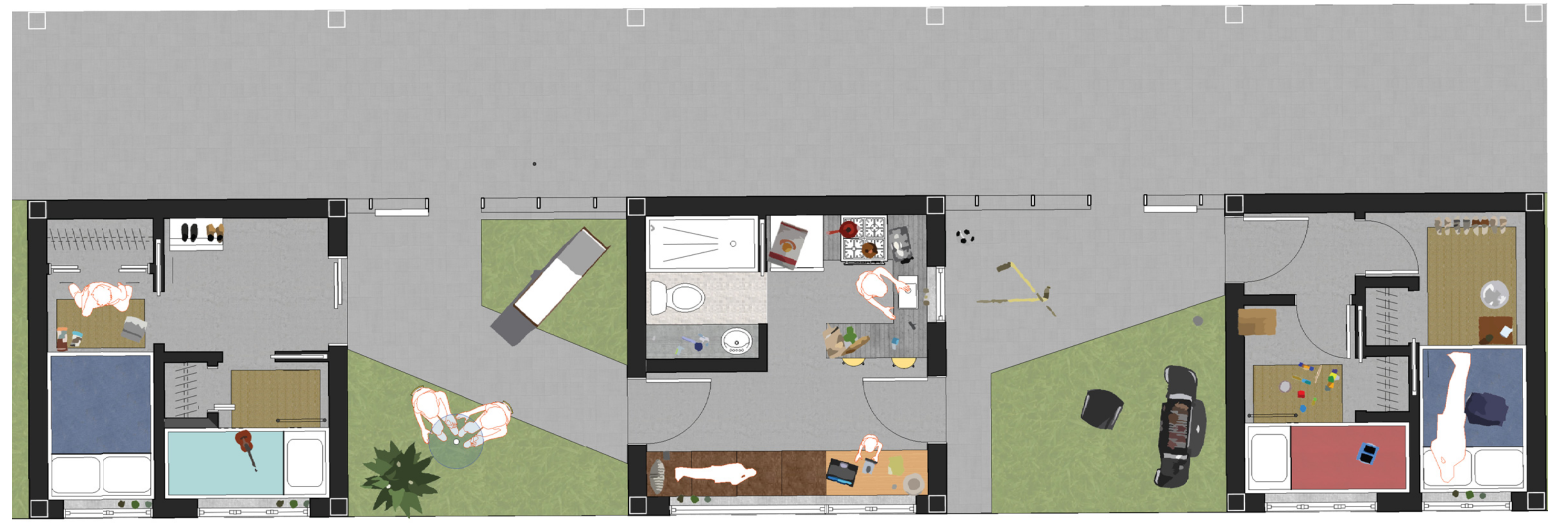
Changes in boundaries of the Common over time.

Social Life

The Halfway House features 3 different unit types which address different sections of the unhoused population. Single units include all services (washrooms and kitchenettes) within a single volume, giving needed security to those who might feel insecure in a shared space, such as the chronically unhoused or those between incarceration and independent housing.

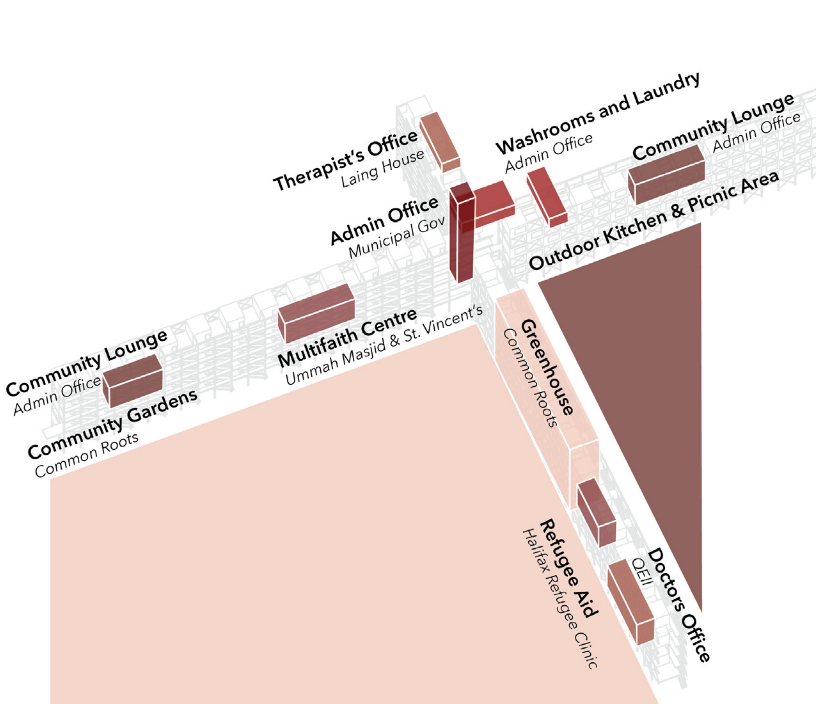
Double units comprise 2 volumes across a shared outdoor space, providing multiple bedrooms and shared services for small groups such as women with children, small refugee families, or queer folk fleeing unaccepting homes. Triple units comprise three volumes connected along two exterior shared spaces, providing several bedrooms, shared services and ample communal space. This accommodates potentially large groups of refugees and multigenerational families in need of housing. With the provision of these 3 unit types, a wide range of users and situations can be accommodated, without having to tailor to specific individuals. Inserted into this grid of units are larger figures which provide specific public services to inhabitants and the general public alike, with the more public services located on the ground floor and inhabitant-oriented amenities above, providing a safe and private environment away from the public while still having access to various services.

Administered by charities and community organisations, these modules bridge the social and economic gaps between marginalised people experiencing homelessness and the local community. These services include, among others, childcare, mental and clinical care, refugee legal advisement, and multifaith support.



Halfway House unit plans

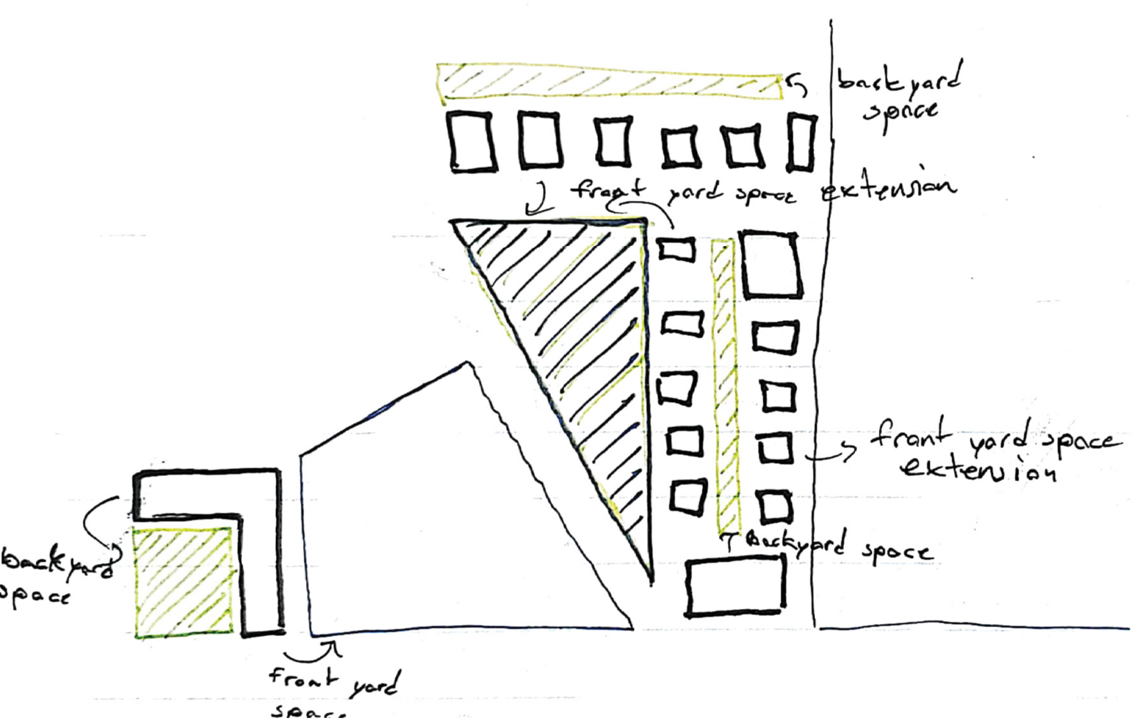
Public Amenities



Halfway House public facilities

Surrounding the site are a number of green lawn spaces, largely preserved by the narrow depth of the Halfway House, which, rather than being left residual, are used to further integrate the Halfway House into the urban fabric. These lawns, the Windsor St wedge and former St. Pat’s site respectively take an aim towards subverting the single-family house typology through the erasure of the yard. This begins with the observation of green spaces, and to a lesser degree the Halifax Common itself, as extensions of the front and backyards of the adjacent properties in their use.

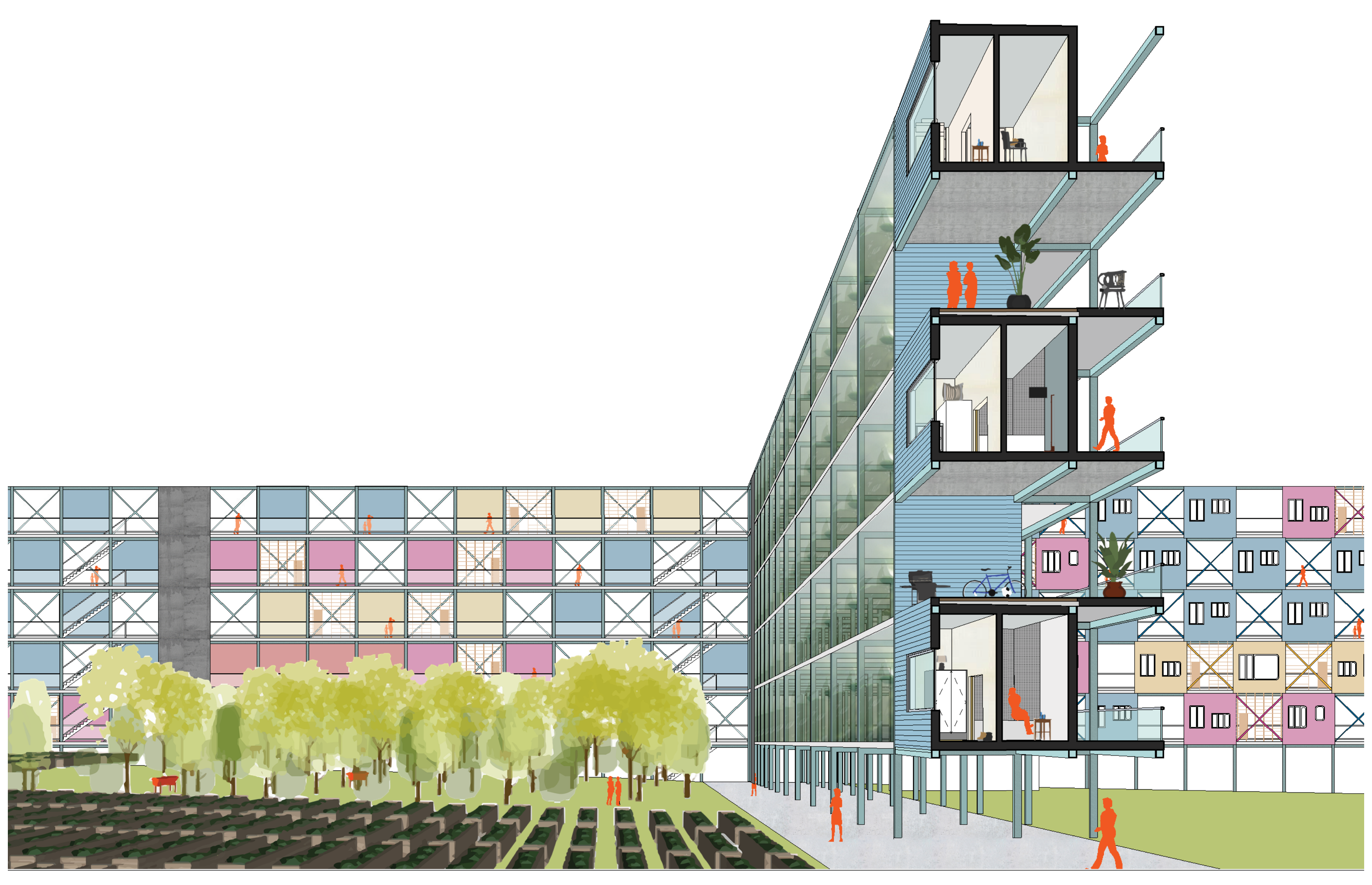
Conceptions of the lawn, like the Common, have shifted over time, and the Halfway House looks to push those conceptions forward. Normatively the lawn is divided into front and backyard space, with both having been primarily utilitarian spaces for clothes drying, gardening, and latrines before the proliferation of the money economy and the



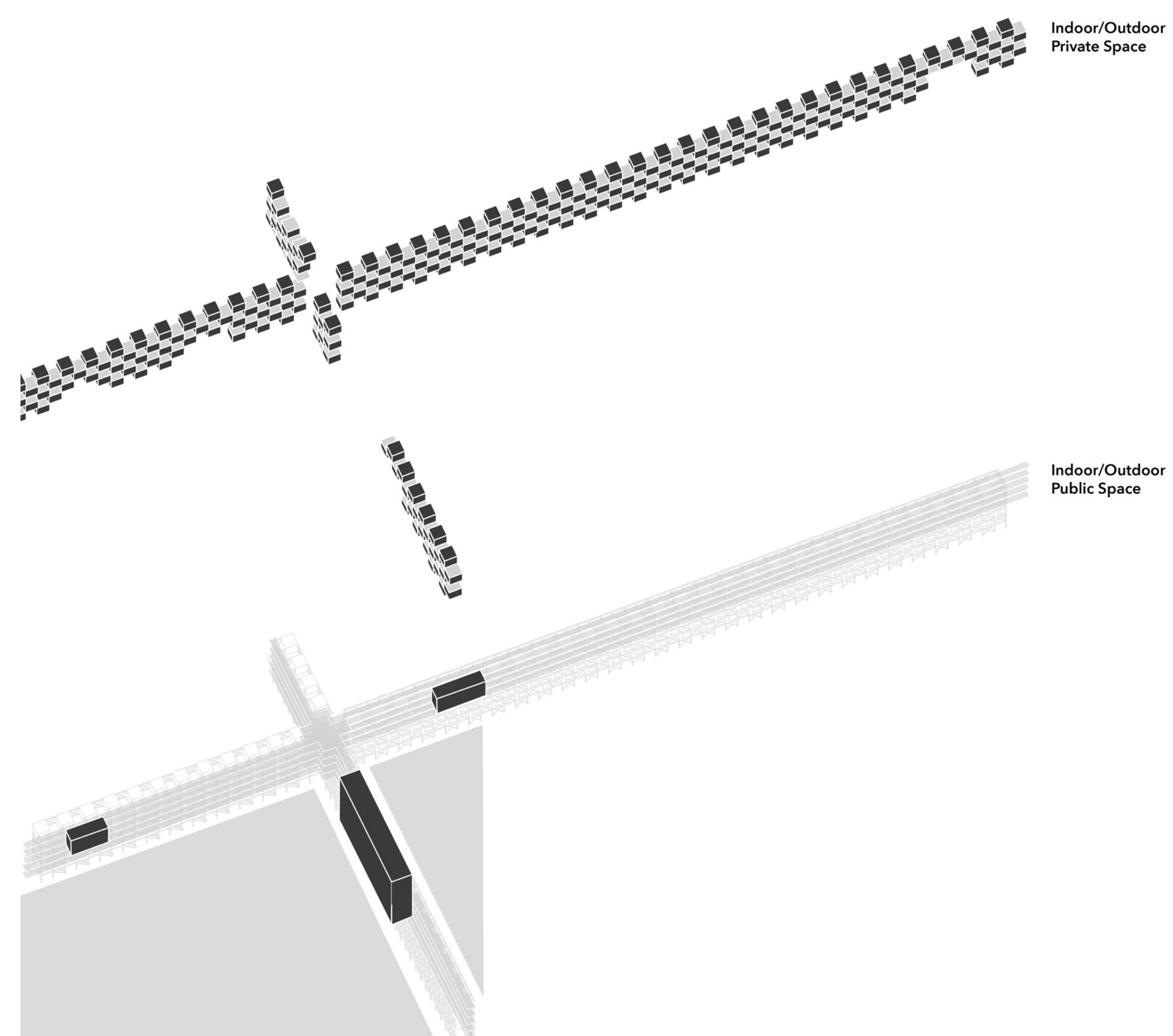
Surrounding public lawn spaces

automobile (Schroeder 1993, 37). Over time the backyard has moved towards use as a private outdoor living room space and the front as an ornament (Ibid., 2), not meant to be inhabited but simply to define the bounds of the property. Any inhabitation that does occur in the front is typically done on the porch, itself a semi-public threshold between privately and publicly inhabited space. Towards the reconception of lawn use, the Halfway House uses the balcony of each axis to face a different lawn, creating a hybrid front yard and backyard condition where the distinction is dissolved, and use can be redefined.

Looking to integrate the Halfway House into the neighborhood, the proposed uses are large public-scale versions of the lawn's original utilitarian programs: a public laundry and washroom on one, another for gardening, a third dedicated to cooking and eating, and lastly a space for play and socialisation where the Halfway House intersects with the Common. In this way productive meaning is imparted in both the figure and ground of the Halfway House, with variable indoor and outdoor public and private spaces suggesting the possibility of inhabitation beyond the typical urban arrangements of figures on grounds. The non-existent threshold between private and public, which was so discomforting in the homeless encampment, is eased by the production of many nested but socially permeable thresholds which would hopefully promote more use of the green space and encourage interaction and connection between economically disparate populations, humanising a previously marginalised group, leading to a stronger sense of community.



Halfway House section



Indoor/outdoor, public/private space

2. Refactory

The Refactory seeks to produce an alternative space for joint social-economic relationships which generate and distribute value equitably, subverting the normative capitalist assumption of necessarily accumulative value production.

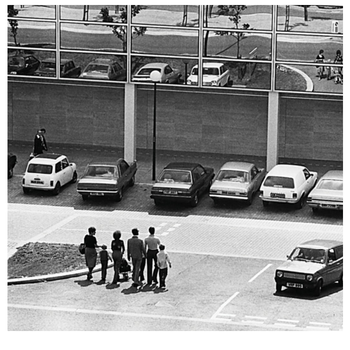
Harnessing Capital Flows

Deleuze and Guattari identify the generation of surplus capital as a non-essential flow of surplus value, produced through an affirmation of inherent difference between the worker and owner which accumulates to the owning class (Gough 2018, 106). Marxist critique of surplus capital might broadly consider these as “flows of labour, urbanity, property and money” (Ibid., 107) and conclude with a negative conception of all flows of exchange. From this standpoint, criticism is useless as it remains on the same level as that which it attacks. Instead, we might interrogate the underlying positive flows which capitalism co-opts but does not produce, and harnesses them towards a more equitable distribution of their surpluses (Ibid., 107). Practically this means facilitating symbiotic, mutually beneficial relationships between urban actors moving beyond monetary exchange. Araujo gives a great example of this relationship in practice, discussing the Anarcho-Feminist heterotopia of El Cambalache in Chiapas, Mexico (2018, 149). Focusing on non-hierarchical interchange value-based economic activity, the community is able to supplement inadequate access to resources on the free market by merging social and economic relationships (Ibid., 158). An example of this might be the exchange of dentistry services for language lessons or a home-cooked meal. Knowledge and skill sharing are only a small sample of alternative capitalist practices, including cooperatives,

Book exchange at El Cambalache, an alternative economic community space in Chiapas, Mexico. (Trejo 2023)

self-employment, fair trade systems, and community-supported agriculture, as well as non-capitalist practices such as gifting, volunteering, sharing, and mutual aid (Ibid,. 150) which harnesses non-capital flows towards distributed surplus. To that end, I propose the creation of a Refactory, named as a play on the word “refractory”, meaning unmanageable, and which suggests the subversion of production value in factories. This is a non-hierarchical workspace where value is created by the social-economic interaction of ordinary people at a flat equity of exchange.

Formal Critique



Exterior view of the Milton Keynes center, 1979 (Gosseye 2020, 348).

The Refactory appropriates the socio-spatial production of late capitalism’s dominant production and exchange venues, the office, bank, market, and mall. For all their differences, similarities do exist in their use of windows and curtain walls as threshold conditions. They invite economic exchange while enforcing the private ownership of space, goods, and knowledge production within, but remain permeable to the consumer so long as they are willing to engage in accumulative capital exchange. As Gosseye points out in her discussion of the production of the consumer citizen through the first mall in Milton Keynes, the use of grids and mirror glass, intended to allow people freedom in their shopping, instead creating an institutional, uneasy feeling (2020, 347) as people perhaps felt the immensity of corporate power and wealth enacted spatially, as a barrier between sites of exchange and non-exchange.

The mall was quickly outfitted with doors soon after opening, having originally been intended as an extension of the city grid without proper doors to separate it from the street. (Ibid., 352). Through this addition control and ownership of

Superstudio, Continuous Monument, 1969 (The Radical Project n.d.)

Superstudio, Continuous Monument, 1969 (The Radical Project n.d.)

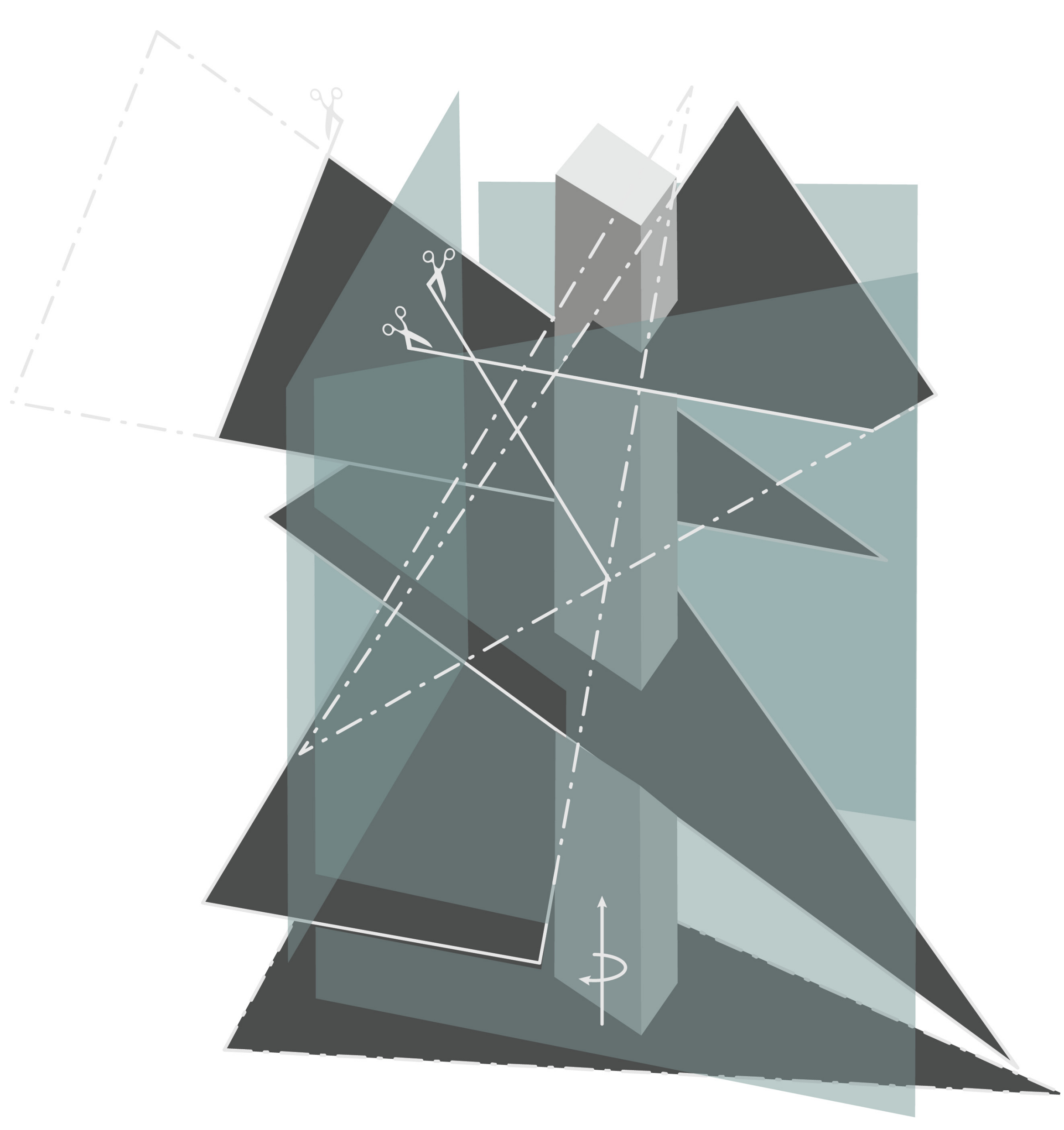
Superstudio, Continuous Monument, 1969 (The Radical Project n.d.)

the nominally public space of exchange were maintained through the building envelope, a thin and transparent material assembly expressing economic differences across it. This is parodied in Superstudio's "Continuous Monument" drawings, which hyperbolise the curtain wall architecture of capitalist exchange as a globe-wrapping superstructure (Ibid., 249). Interestingly, the monument is only ever shown as an opaque/reflective solid volume or as entirely transparent planes, with no suggestion of inhabitation. Rather, they focus entirely on its exterior and the "compromised position in which such capitalist forms forced urban residents to live" (Ibid., 349).

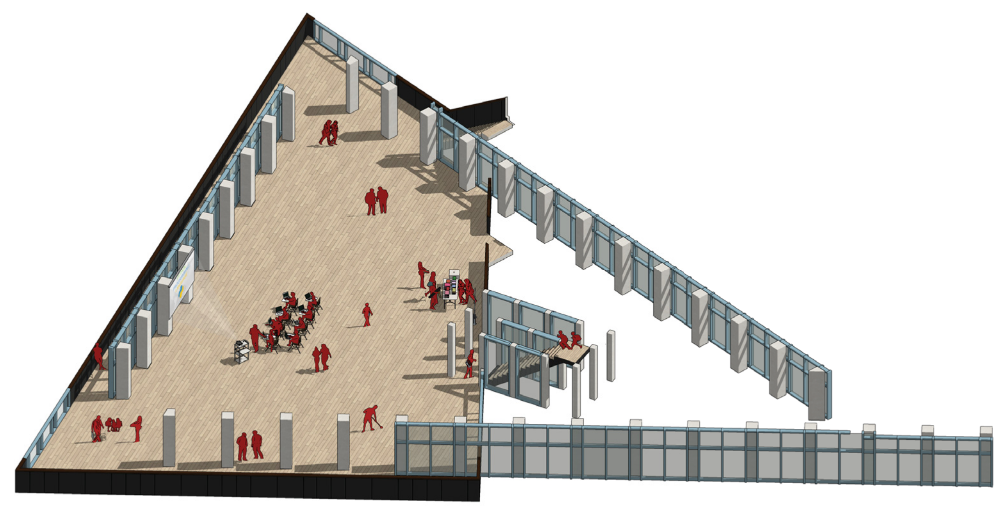
In the interest of subverting this socio-spatial arrangement towards non-hierarchical exchange, the Refactory deliberately misuses the curtain wall assembly as a social and material structure. The curtain wall marks the bounds of the site as normal but is made incomplete through missing panels, transoms and mullions, opening large gaps for circulation and views into the space and connecting where necessary to provide shelter from wind and noise. A series of floor plates ascend through the curtain wall, taking the site's base dimensions and flipping, rotating, and bisecting them around a central circulation column. These floorplates penetrate the curtain wall, allowing for inhabitation and exchange on both sides of the glazing.

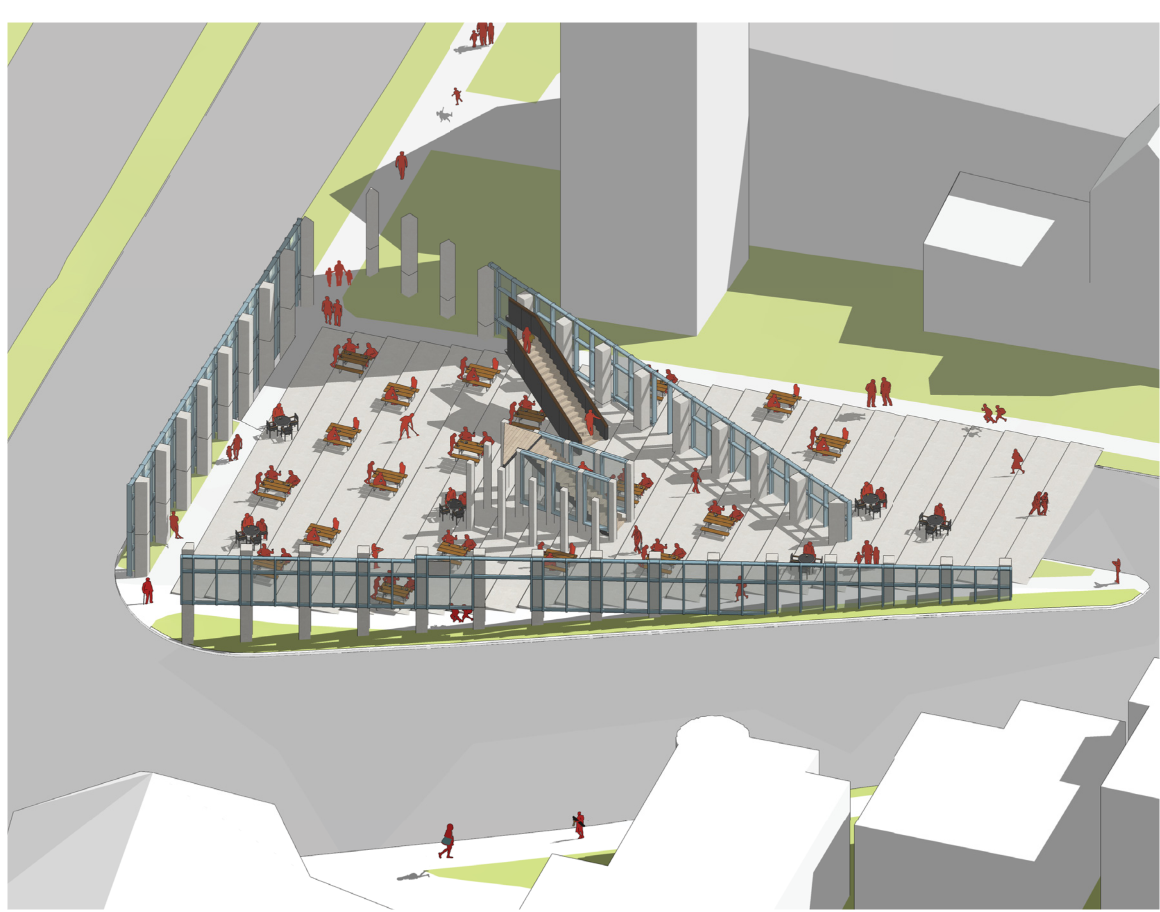
This also allows for easy passage across the glass, revealing the material thinness and transparency, their physical weakness as thresholds as compared to the socio-economic power they embody. The arrangement of floor plates further challenges the base construction of productive spaces of capital like the office, where floors are treated as socially and spatially isolated planes connected by a circulation

core, and vertical position reflects social authority. Instead, the floorplates shift and create adjacencies to one another, forming multi-story atrium spaces emphasising the visual and vocal communication, creating an appreciation of the different activities and interchanges happening concurrently in the space.

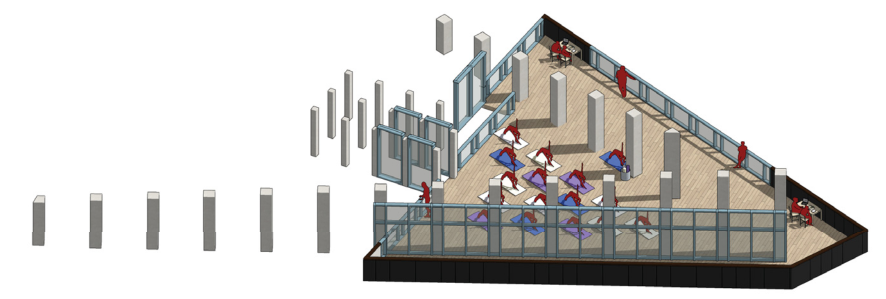


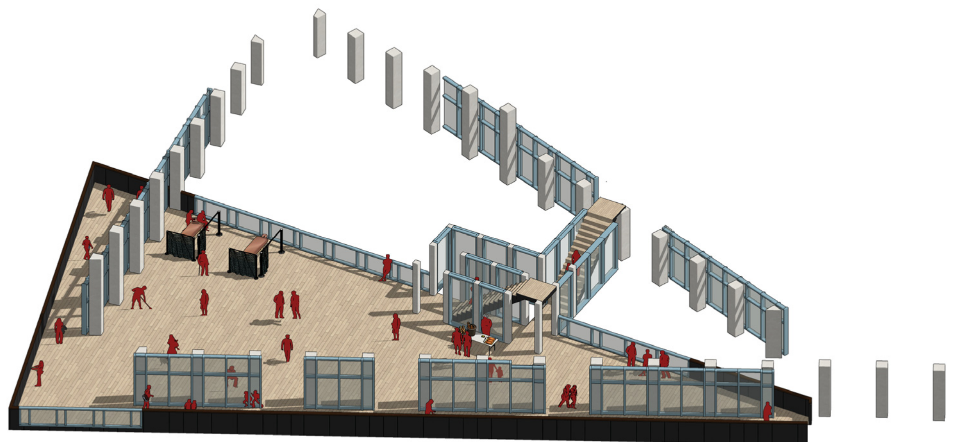
Refactory parti

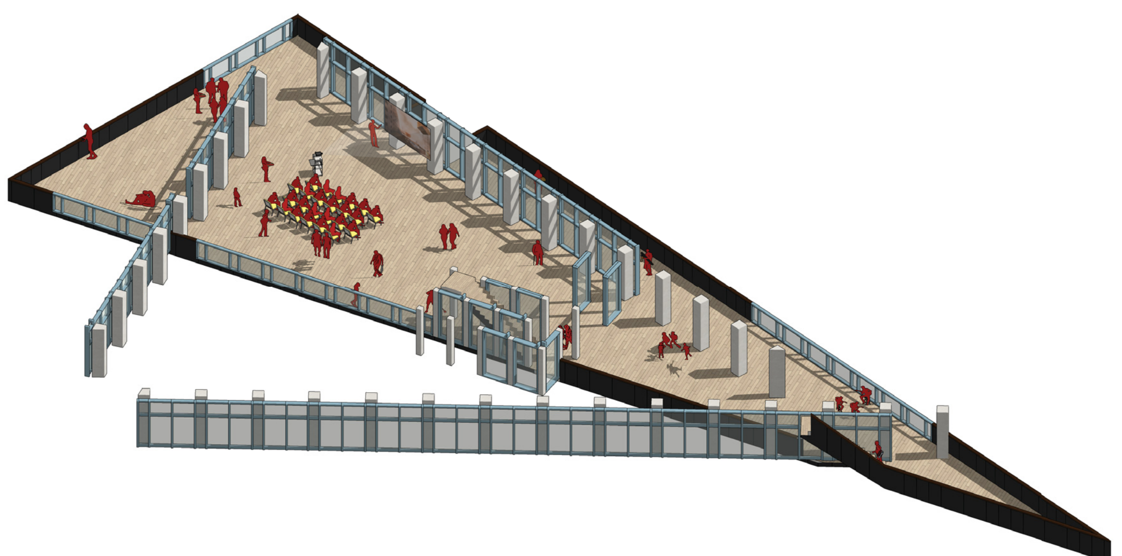




Refactory 1st and 2nd floor axos



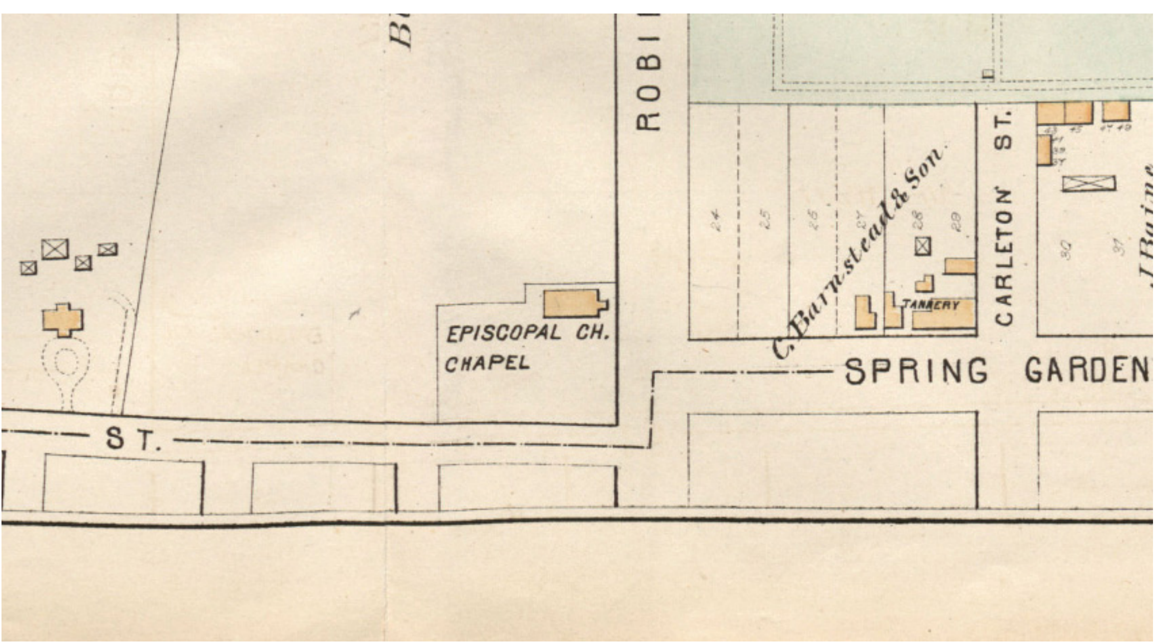




Refactory 3rd, 4th and 5th floor axos

Thin End of the Wedge

We locate the Refactory at the end of Spring Garden Road, which since colonisation has been inhabited by socio-economic structures reflective of their broader context. St. Luke’s was the first structure to occupy this space, followed by St. Stephen’s Chapel of Ease (Kent 1982), which was intended to mirror St. Mary’s Cathedral at the opposite end of Spring Garden (Tuck 2004, 77). This cathedral, completed in 1886 (Archibald 2018), spatially brackets the street between Christian sects, reflecting the normative social values of the time, while also disrupting the formal logic of the grid by forcing Coburg Road to continue Spring Garden’s trajectory south of the chapel. Later, between 1910 (Regan & McAlpine 1910) and 1918 (Department of Militia and Defence 1918), a road was inserted to ease traffic flow at the intersection of Spring Garden, Robie, and Coburg Roads, resulting in the formation of the wedge site. This was indicative of the rising anxiety in urban planning at the time regarding traffic from automobiles.

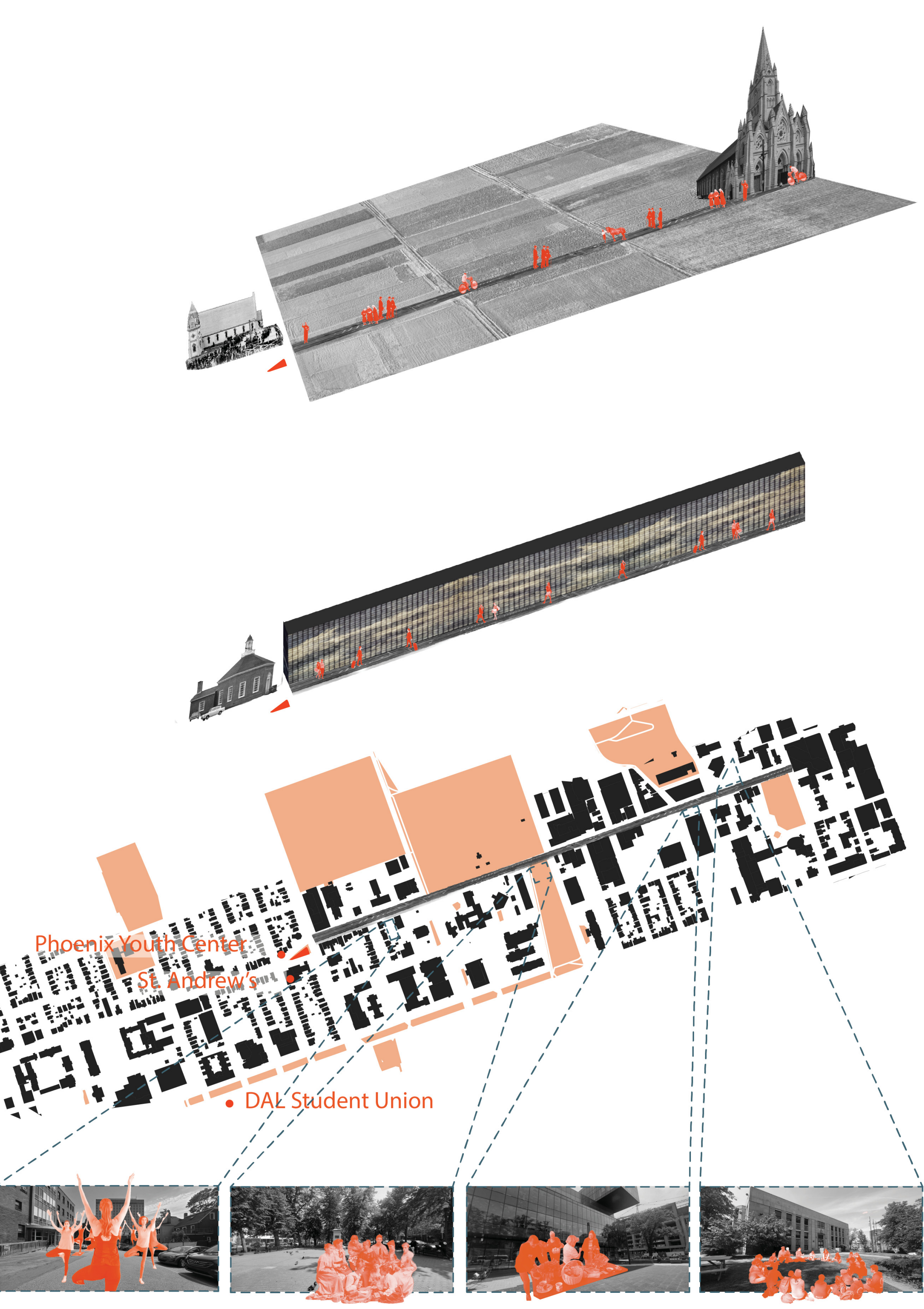


Episcopal chapel at the end of Spring Garden (Hopkins 1878).

Bank approach coming from Spring Garden Road.

Years later in 1964 St. Stephen's Chapel would be demolished and replaced with a new branch of the Bank of Nova Scotia, now Scotiabank (Archibald 2018). The replacement of a holy edifice with a financial institution itself represents a significant shift in the social production of values, but what's particularly noteworthy is the bank's octagonal plan making it visible as a distinct volume from all perspectives, thus separating it from its former context. Its walls produce a quasi-wedge condition wherein each face is oblique from almost any approach, while the silhouette of the building remains static. The in-turned nature of these walls, relating only to each other while disregarding the street, produces a strongly internal, seemingly hostile space from the street which the Refactory, with its interest in public engagement, may look to contrast.

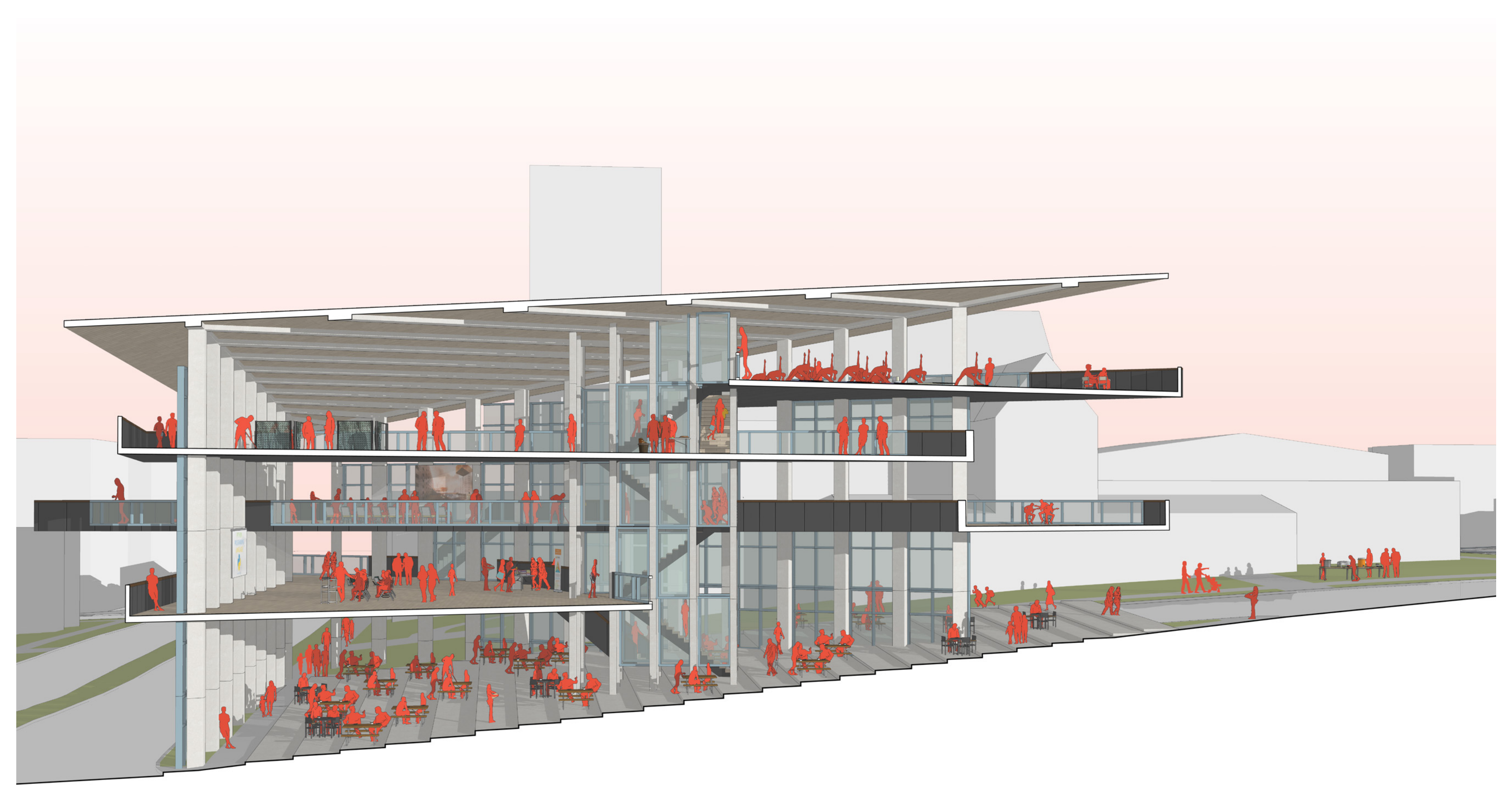
The insertion of a radical heterotopia on the wedge as a reflection of broader values suggests the reversal of such operations, whereby social actors begin at the wedge site, engaging initially in transgressive economic systems which may then become normalised and proliferate through the built environment. The Refactory's main goal, beyond hosting its own micro-economy, is making these systems normalised and visible beyond the social and spatial bounds of capitalist exchange. The extrusion of the wedge floorplate through the curtain wall, more than just a signal to economic operations outside normatively defined space, uses its sharp corners as a point of focus which holds attention (Booth 2012, 208) and directs attention to a point beyond itself (Ibid., 198), suggesting the possibility of interchange economies off site, in community centres, churches, parks, plazas, and elsewhere.



History of the site and the extension of interchange economies through the peninsula.

Social Life

According to Araujo, the production of non-capital systems of exchange is reliant on the production and maintenance of social relationships to make exchange possible (2018, 158). Simultaneously, we might recognise that "cities are ... full of strangers" (Jacobs 1992, 30). Given the great number of individuals who traffic the site every day, there will undoubtedly be a great deal of talent and knowledge available for exchange. However, the involvement of pre-existing social ties and community organisations is necessary to promote use at the start of operation. Just neighbouring the Refactory site are St. Andrew's United Church, the Phoenix Youth Centre, the nearby Dalhousie Student Union, and other university-affiliated groups. The involvement of these organisations could be as simple as hosting an event or motivating local residents to engage in recreational pursuits, all whilst spreading the word across the community. These events and uses are layered vertically across the floors in descending order of infrastructurally demand. A soup kitchen might operate on the first floor while a labour rally takes place upstairs. On a given day there might be a lecture given by a local professor of architecture on one floor, but just below a coding class is barely audible, while above a local baker is trading bread for an art commission from an aspiring sculptor. Within this system, social connections are enabled by a shared facility, materially and socially dedicated to upholding interchange economics. Users and programs change daily, producing continually evolving flows of non-capital value, which can then be stabilised and focussed towards meeting specific community needs through their proliferation across the peninsula, inhabiting the more temporally or use-limited residuum.



Refactory section

3. De-Cycler

The De-Cycler is a formal/spatial attempt to reduce consumption under capitalism by incentivising the recycling of existing objects within a shortened material value cycle.

Decommodification

Rossi argues that within late capitalist societies, there is a tendency towards the financialisation of life through the placement of consumption at the centre of economic function (Rossi 2013, 3). If, as Enright and Rossi suggest, the end goal of capitalism is the commodification of life itself through economising intangible social values such as knowledge, ideas, etc. (2018, 53), we might find resistance in the reevaluation of commodities and consumer objects in relation to their intangible social and sentimental value.

This would mean both a renewed focus on objects as vessels for use value, but also personal and social meaning produced by systems of interchange, repair and reuse, following from this a degree of autonomy from global economic systems of production. For example, in El Cambalache a form of interchange exists as trade, maintenance and repair of things one no longer needs. Xbox games are interchanged for a used laptop, or an old sweater for repairing a part of a fence (Araujo 2018, 147). In this trade what was old becomes “new” again. Seen with fresh eyes, objects are imbued with value equal to when they were newly made. In other instances, the act of repair imbues objects with new sentimental value, with personal meanings generated having to do as much with previous bumps and blemishes as with a restoration to an ideal form (Gregson, Metcalfe, and Crewe 2009, 258). Operations such as these dramatically extend the life cycles of objects and generate surplus value without the need for

continual production and consumption of goods. Though we likely cannot transition to a society without any new production or consumption, decommodification can supplement consumption in a socially and environmentally conscious way and challenges the position of consumption at the centre of capitalist life.

Consumer Object Value

If a Marxist critique of commodity fiction might look to connect a given object backwards to its production "discovering the congealed forms of human labor, power and interests that are built into objects at their moment of production" (Jackson 2014, 230), a critique concerned with consumerism under late capitalism based in the developed world might focus more on the consumption and disposal stages of an object's life cycle with an eye towards the production of meaning and value.

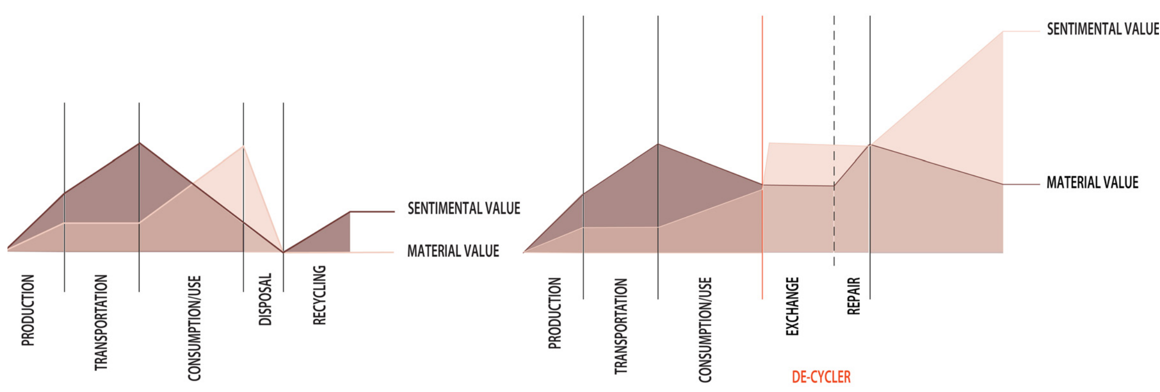
As objects are produced they are imbued with a certain degree of meaning through the act of making, but the primary operation of the labourer is the creation of use value in a consumer object through the transformation of raw materials. Under systems of global capital, these goods are more often produced overseas, and transported to consumer markets, which increases their economic value. From here objects are bought by consumers, exchanging their money for the perceived and actual use value of a given good, which most often deteriorates over time. Simultaneously, personal meaning and sentimental value are imparted onto the object through continual use (Gregson, Metcalfe, and Crewe 2009, 256). When the object's use value is determined to have been spent it is disposed of and a replacement is brought in. Until the object is scrapped, recycled, incinerated or otherwise transformed, it retains some material or use value

but any existing sentimental value is destroyed.

Halifax has landfills, recycling plants, composting sites, incinerators and dangerous material storage facilities, all located off the peninsula, wherein any lasting material value is buried or recycled. A key part of the maintenance of consumer capitalism is the obscuration of its material consequences, that the devalued object is not readily visible at the end of the process and the purchase of a new good is not challenged. Going beyond locating these facilities away from densely populated areas such as the peninsula, many wealthy nations export waste to developing nations (Winters 2021). The material processes which go on from here, salvage, reuse and recycle raw materials, typically feeding back into the production of new consumer goods perpetuating inequitable cycles of globalised economic practices (Jackson 2014, 225).

“Shipbreaking #4”, 2002, photograph by Edward Burtynsky (Jackson 2014, 224).

Shifting this flow of object values onto, through and off the peninsula, the De-Cycler stores, restores and recycles object values within the community, limiting the need for object disposal and replacement by offering a facility for object interchange, repair and recycling.

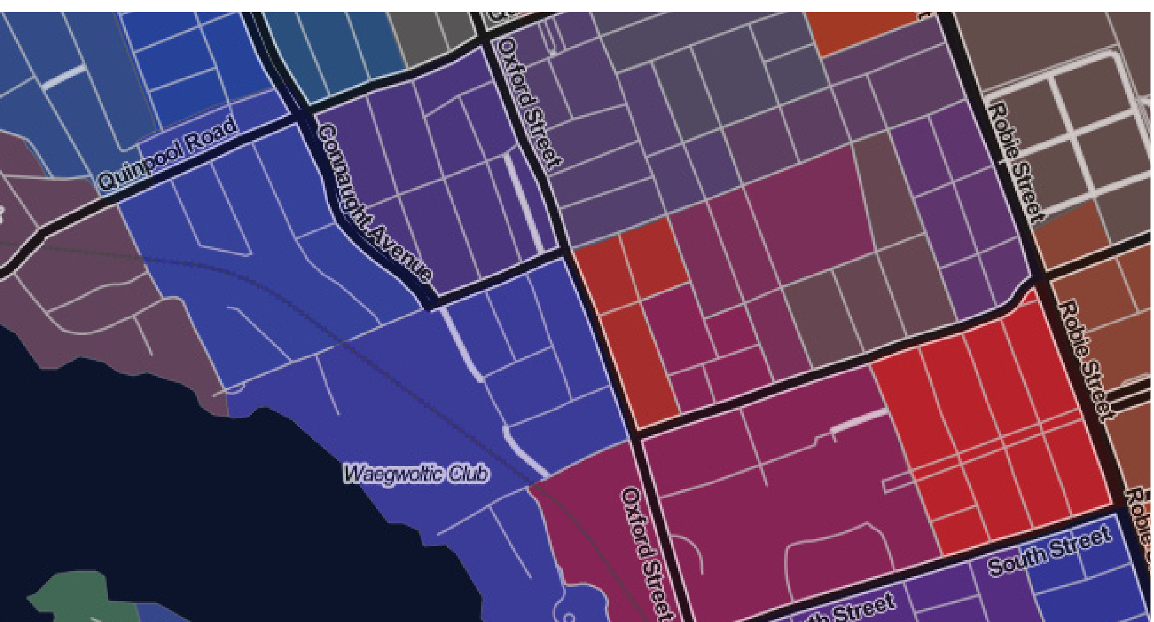


Object value chart before and after the De-Cycler.

Site

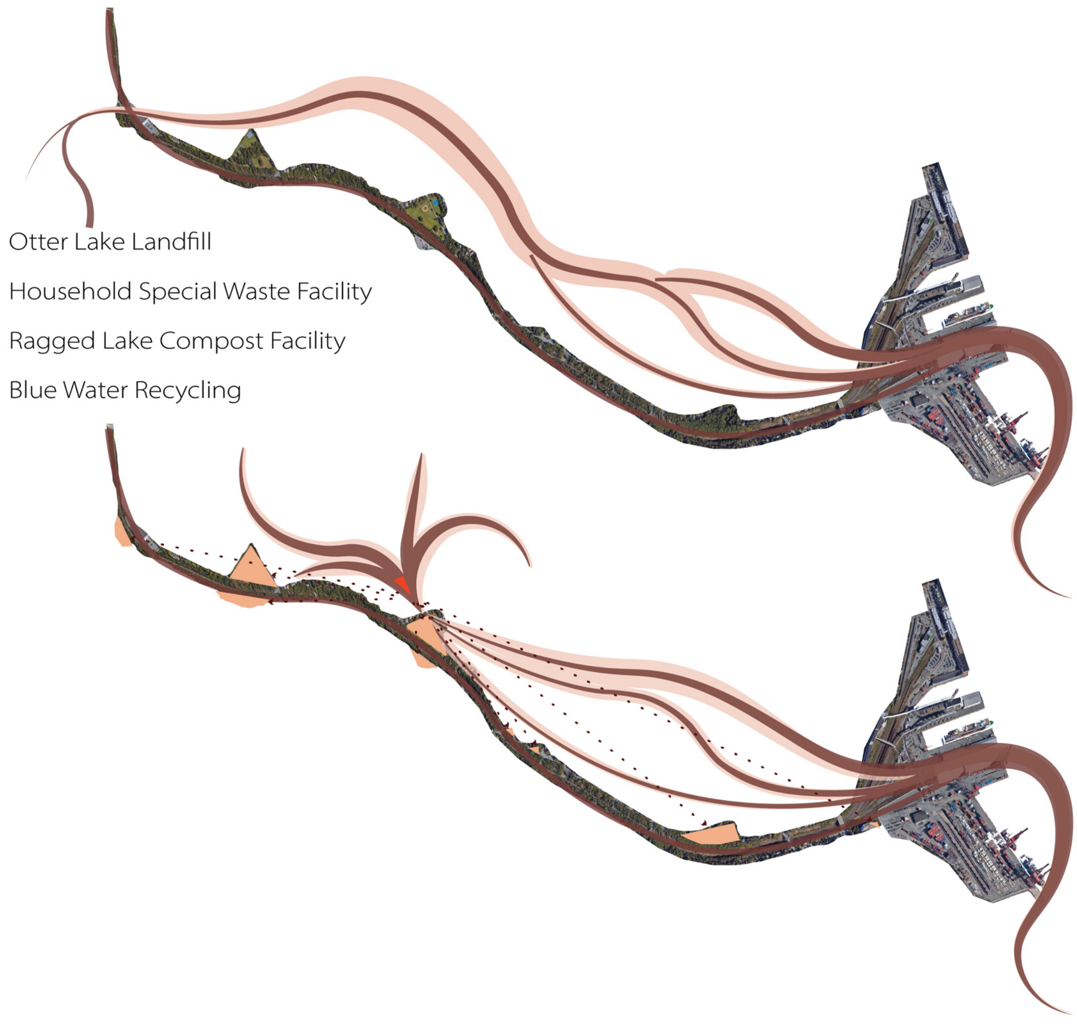
Connaught Avenue light show extends onto the wedge (Ramesar 2022).

In challenging consumerism, the De-Cycler can only take place in one of the most consumptive neighbourhoods on the peninsula, the Connaught/Jubilee wedge. This site exists at the border between the wealthy and very wealthy, across Connaught Avenue (Stamen Design 2022) or alternatively across the nearby railroad tracks. Studies by the federal reserve show a direct correlation between the relative income bracket and consumer goods spending, with the top 20% of earners spending nearly as much as the bottom 80%, totalling \$3.43T and \$4.22T per year respectively (Federal Reserve n.d.). A visible example of overconsumption might be observed today during the ongoing Christmas light competition between two neighboring houses, wherein the decorations and spending become more obscene every year (CBC 2022). Christmas lights from the adjacent house currently span between the trees of the wedge site as this consumption has long crept into the public realm.



Colour graded map of average family income, blue=top 30%, green=middle 40%, red=bottom 30%. Grey areas occur where incomes are mixed without a large majority income, but leans to the top 30%. Brown similarly indicates mixed incomes skewing to the middle 40%, and purple to the bottom 30%. (Stamen 2022)

The rail line running along the coast of Halifax also produced the wedge condition of the site, where the transportation stage of consumer goods from Halifax ports to interior markets came to produce multiple residual sites along its length. While some of these sites have been transformed into park and leisure spaces, several, including the Connaught/Jubilee wedge, have seen little use or development. With the De-Cycler aiming at a redirection of flows of consumer objects and values back into the community, these related residuals may find new value as secondary spaces of value storage.



De-Cycler value flows along the rail line before and after the De-Cycler.

Formal Critique

Formally, the De-Cycler inverts normative spatial constructions of disposal sites towards this end. Landfills, composting sites and recycling plants have no set composition, but are typically produced as a series of figures facilitating material value extraction/storage within variably permeable thresholds.

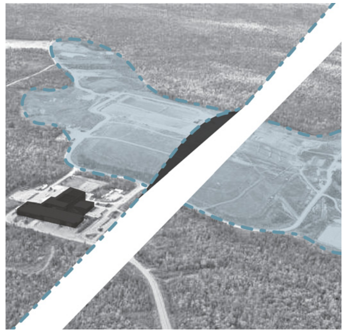


Diagram of Figure, Ground, Threshold based off photograph of Otter Lake Landfill (Sundancer Photo n.d.)

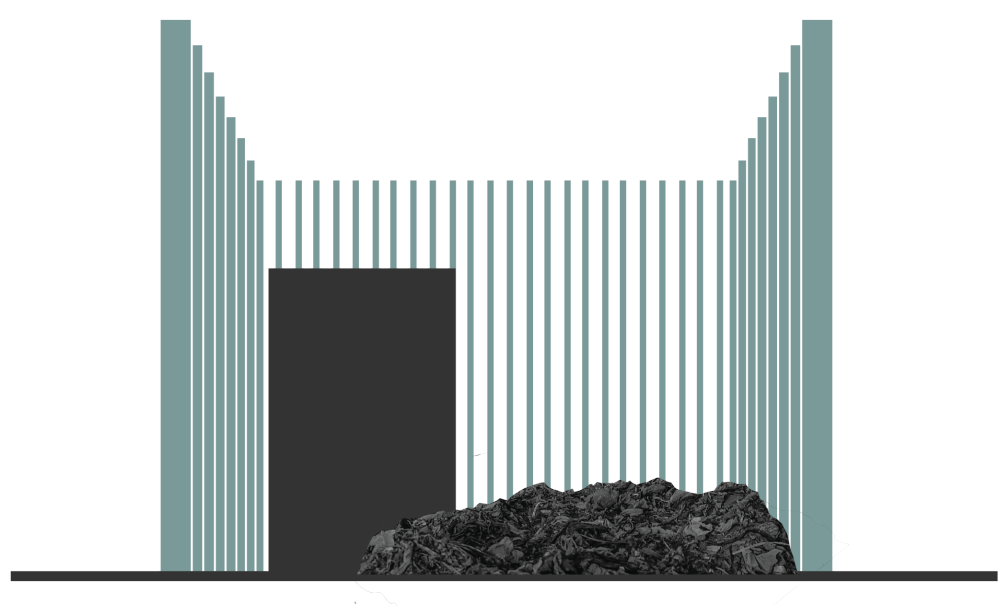
Otter Lake Landfill, for example, uses signage as a first threshold, conveying the facility's control and purpose within. From here, significant figures include a processing plant and landfill area beyond. Within the landfill are vertical layers of figure, ground and threshold, as discarded objects accumulate into great mounds and become trash. These landfills constitute the material consequences of consumer capitalism and the passage through the thin grass and topsoil layer, moving from ground to figure, is the final decision on an object's value as it is stored out of sight and out of mind.

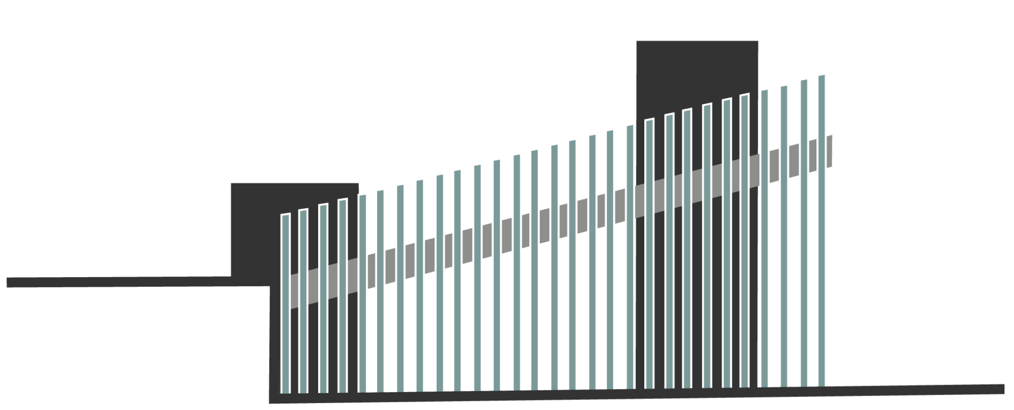
Diagram of Figure, Ground, Threshold based off photograph of HRM Household Hazardous Waste Depot (Google Earth 2022)

At the HRM Household Hazardous Waste Depot, similar spatial and programmatic operations occur, though the main figure here is a storage and decontamination facility which fronts onto a fenced-in yard. This fence reflects another threshold which is permeable to decontaminated objects and staff workers, but which denies entry to consumers.

The De-Cycler seeks to make these material processes visible and accessible to ordinary consumers, with scrap, reuse and recycling processes brought forward in the consumer object lifecycle, keeping them on the peninsula and recycling through the neighbourhood. This is produced as the inversion of the landfill by the extension of the topsoil layer high into the air on pseudo fence post conditions. The would-be figure of a garbage mound is made inhabitable as a space for object interchange. Populated by both people and

objects, the would-be consumer is made to exchange the object they seek to dispose of for another object left there previously, so the value of the discarded object is not lost but instead only temporarily suspended, latent until it is picked up by someone else. Objects are grouped into a few conditions, undamaged and ready for exchange, repaired and on display, and open to reuse. Beyond these categorisations there are no further attempts at organising the objects, moving from a value and goal oriented search to something more exploratory.



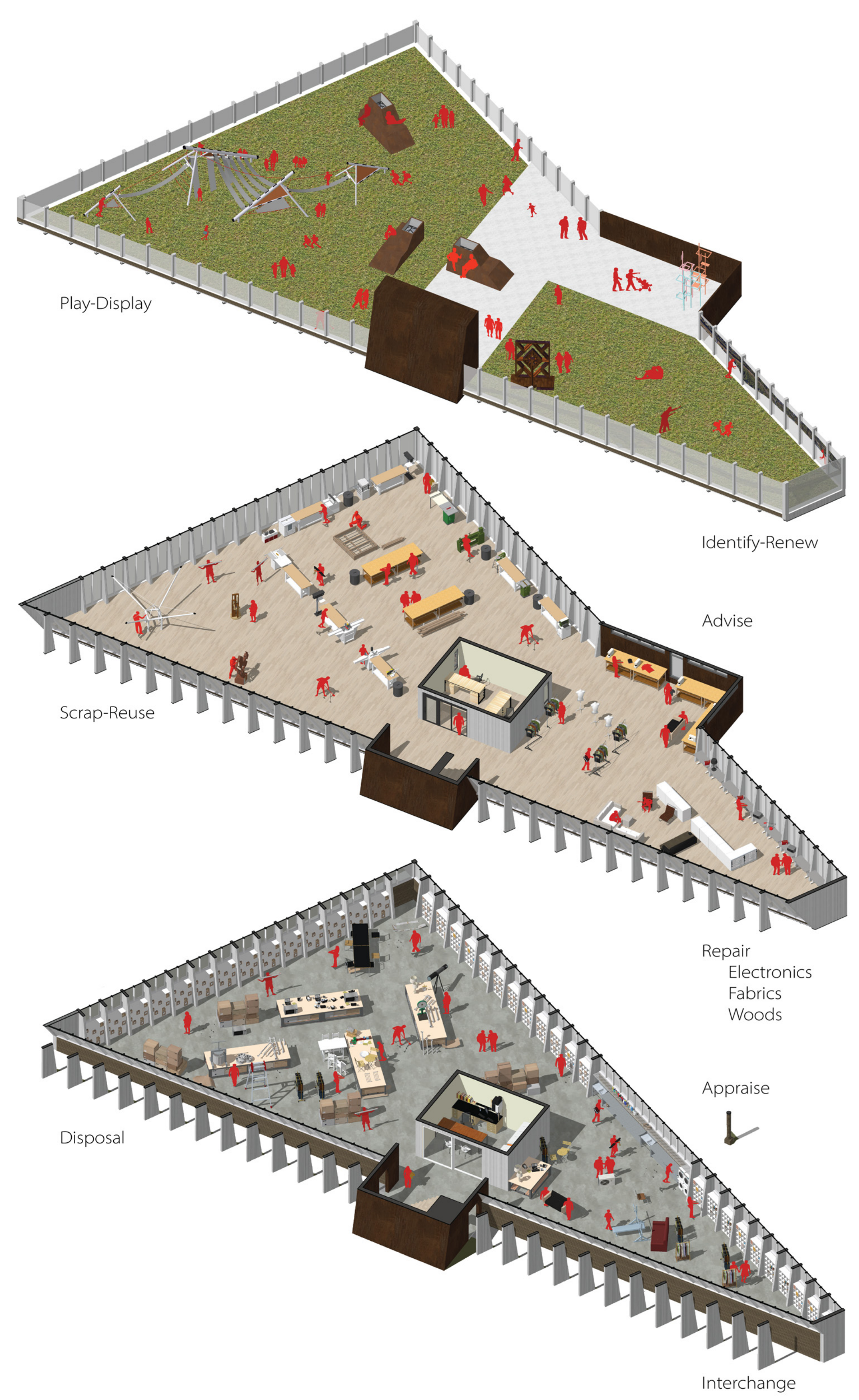


De-Cycler parti

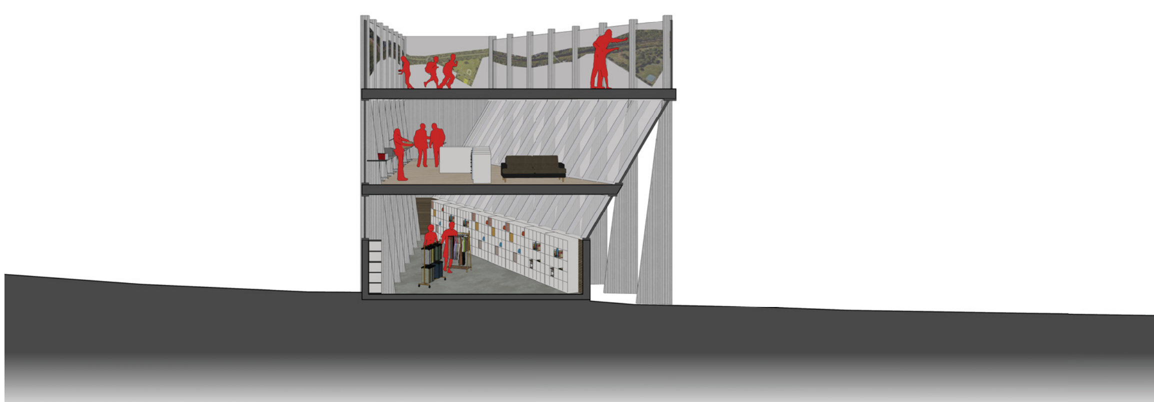
Repair and salvage are facilitated through solid figures which transgress the fence threshold, becoming the circulatory and administrative centres for exchange, scrap and repair processes, overseen by the newly located Nova Scotia Centre for Craft. In addition to organising stored items, maintaining the facility, and operating a quick drop-off desk for material donations, they supervise and impart knowledge on repair, scrap, and assembly practises. Through the act of repair, an object's use values are restored, and social meaning is created, allowing newly acquired objects to be recirculated back into the community.

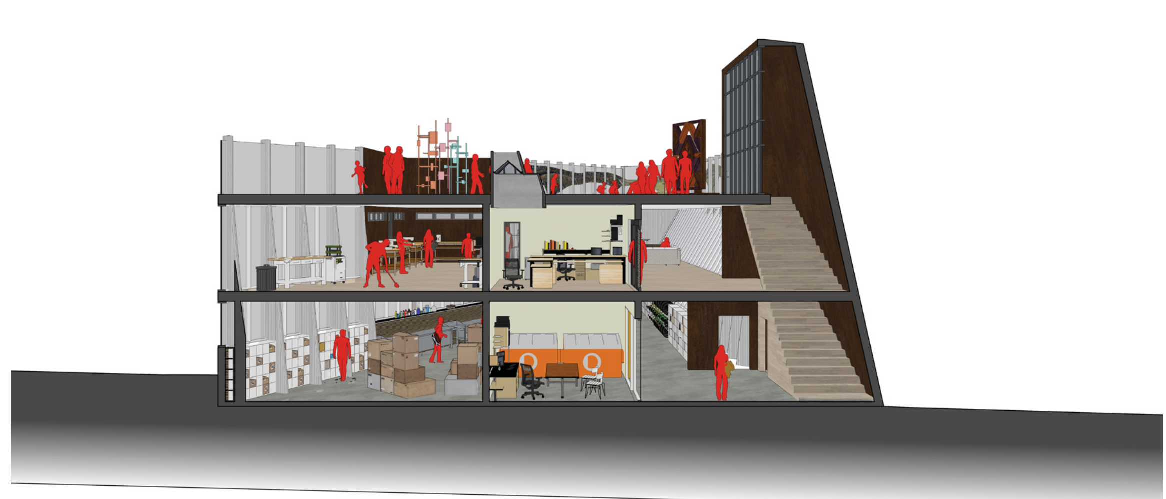
Objects beyond repair might be further scrapped for raw materials and reassembled into sculptures and other works, co-opting value production through the manipulation of raw materials from commodity production and using it as a means of artistic expression. On the roof, the extruded topsoil preserves the original green space of the wedge and draws connection between the residuality of waste landscapes of obsolescence, the landfill (Berger 1998, 186) and waste landscapes of transportation, those along rail lines (Ibid., 170) as both are produced as consequences of consumer capitalist infrastructure, just at different points in the process.

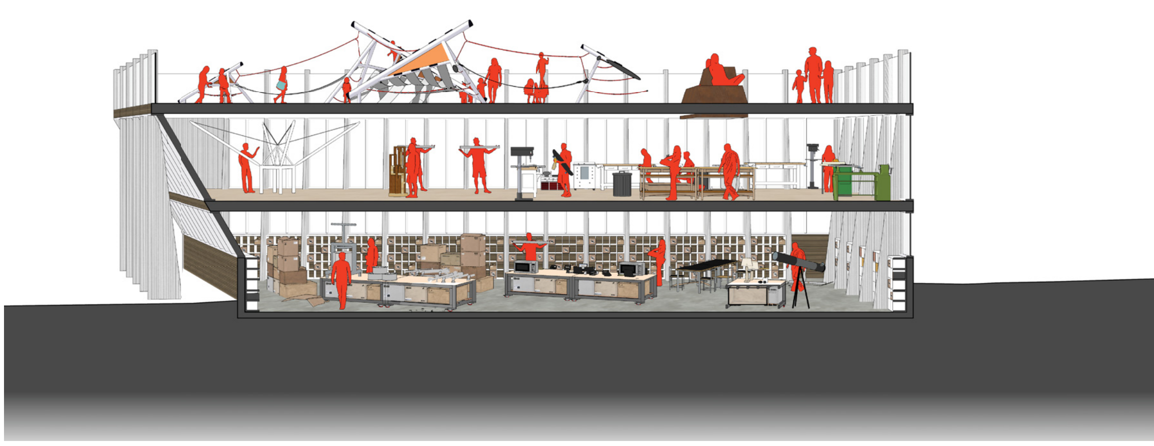
The scrap sculptures are resurfaced for display here and in other residuals along the rail line, with glazing between the fence threshold acting as inverted signage. Rather than displaying programmatic functions within, it projects out to identify and discuss possibilities for waste landscape repair. This is achieved through the glass between posts, which visualise different residuals, and on which people can draw ideas for use, call out sculptures which they have installed there, or highlight new areas for renewal.



De-Cycler axos showing the material and social processes taking place.







De-Cycler sections

Rail line residuum restoration through scrap art installations.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Though architecture is fundamental to how we live our daily lives, government policy, social norms and economic structures equally shape our built environment and our means of inhabiting it. The problems of capitalism will not be solved by architecture alone, but solutions born from holistic, multidisciplinary approaches to policy, economics and community engagement may produce their own architectural forms and practices with time.

The interventions discussed here are part speculation on how those forces might impact architectural form and part critical reflection on the ways capitalism has produced certain typologies for dominant programs. While the critical transformation of typology onto the wedge seems a useful device, there can be no certainty in the accuracy of these speculative forms. The interventions proposed jump from the observation of empty sites to fully realised permanent infrastructures, skipping the temporary installations, instances of collective action, and process of community building required in moving from one to the other.

Such temporary installations such as PARK(ing), Merigi, etc. were researched in the production of these projects, but this was towards the application of their critical strategies in permanent infrastructures, not as studies of how temporary installations can gain traction and move towards permanence. This was both to avoid further study of temporary installations, where much good work has already been done, and also as a justification for claiming the wedge site. Most other temporary installations take place in contested space, road infrastructure, derelict lots, and other residuum, where conceptions of proper use are

solidified, and the installation of permanent infrastructure might be disruptive in a way which negatively impacts some portion of the public. Conversely, the wedge is typically a fully public site nearly devoid of any prior use, installations there could only be additive. However, this lack of prior use also opens the site up to potential sale and private development, thus the installation of permanent infrastructures is a claim to the space for public benefit.

This prevents private development of these sites, but also means the project traffics in some of the same rhetoric of ownership and control as the capitalist-colonialist doxa it looks to criticise. This is perhaps inevitable, we cannot criticise what we do not engage with, to do so risks disarming any point we as architects wish to convey (Hays 1984, 5), but it is also relevant to acknowledge that by developing these sites, even for public amenity, we limit how they might be used in the future. This may be the next step in developing public amenity. Building a method for moving from temporary, flexible installations to more permanent infrastructures while allowing additional growth and change. Further study of the timeline and processes of building these infrastructures looking into participatory design practices would have had the greatest impact on the final product.

Flipping Properties, a temporary installation focussed on community participation in how it is inhabited. (Bureau Spectacular 2013)

Also discussed in the thesis was a system of actors producing amenity, which points to a serious question looming over the profession, the notion of expanded stakeholders. As the AIA code of ethics has expanded to include obligations to the Environment (AIA 2020, 5), the number of groups and competing viewpoints needing consideration on a given project is likely only to grow. Practicing in the free market heavily incentivises the service of the client, with the voices of the poor and marginalised rarely sought out and unlikely

to see implementation. This happens equally when the client is a private individual and when the state is working in service of those poor and marginalised, as might be seen in previous attempts at social housing projects in the post war period (Souza 2022, 95). More than just hoisting more obligations and responsibilities onto the architect for mediating these different groups, new strategies for public participation and community building might better mediate private practice and public production.

The system of actors also points to a question of how amenity is provided, which was here situated in the realm of NGOs and community groups rather than in elected government. This is to me not a question of one or the other, but of imperfect solutions and tradeoffs. Where local governments are democratically elected and have access to expanded funding, community organizations and NGOs offer more immediate availability and specific services to local users. The proposal of amenity through NGOs working under government oversight is a compromise between the two, which provides greater funding and immediacy of services at the expense of public control over amenities and the flexibility of NGOs operations. No solution is perfect, but the least perfect solution is no solution at all.

Beyond these practicalities are questions of other, non-wedge residuals in the built environment. From derelict buildings to parkades to road verges, there is a great deal of space, public and private, that is barely designed and used even less. As populations continue to urbanise, the way we consider these spaces, both producing new and retrofitting old will become more and more important to the daily lives of the people around them. This is not a call for the development of all space towards some ideal use but

rather a more robust consideration for how already developed space might produce benefits for all. To this end the earlier categorisations of public space based on residual qualities might provide a starting ground for further research.

Diagram of conceptions of figure and ground inverting through the reconception of residual space.

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