

Fragile state(s):  
lines, walls and  
the possibility of  
interrupting processes  
of privatisation

*Reflection*

This thesis has evolved as an exploration into architecture as a practice of negotiation and disruption. Situated in the uncertain context of Brexit, the project is a critique of how architecture, a profession that often claims to mediate and resolve socio-political and economic issues through spatial intervention, is a vehicle that continuously drives marginalisation, embodied state violence and power. Buildings make visible conflict, control and prejudice and in the context of late-capitalism and Brexit, will continue to perform as a means through which income is produced for the wealthy. An architecture that can instead unfix and destabilise lines and edges, as opposed to fix and define, acting at fragile moments uncovered within oppressive socio-political processes, is a relational practice through which collectivity and publicness can be maintained that I am interested in and have been learning how to position myself in relation to throughout this process. This concerns an architecture that is not physical (static / fixed), that composes and aestheticises, but that is collectively negotiated, practiced, choreographed, enacted, evolving, fragile (dynamic / unfixed).

This exploration into a subversive architecture that exposes and interrupts or disrupts the manifestations of political and state violence has been formative for me in terms of understanding my position as an architect, designer, person. The process has questioned what this 'role' is or could be - how I can perform as both a designer concerned with the built environment and activist is complex and presents itself with a multiplicity of contradictions. Design in light of this, for me, refers to finding ways of acting together in order to be able to negotiate, disrupt and in turn enact a continuously evolving / changing publicness.

In parallel to the theoretical research of the project, I have undertaken in many ways, a generic architectural design process that realises form in relation to inhabitation. This has been a means through which to be critical of the redundancy of the aestheticised architectural process in dealing with socio-political issues of the city. The project discusses how materialisation and aestheticisation of spatial intervention is arbitrary in relation to what space can facilitate, evolve and emerge as in terms of its social function or political expression. Architecture as form is generally limiting, but can at least intermittently manifest as a result of the spatialisation of use, care, activism and a refined construction that accommodates temporalities, changing use and inhabitation: characteristics of publicness(es) and notions that the state cannot capitalise on and in turn facilitate. Finding ways to make visible our means of stalling, interrupting and intervening within these processes in relation to understanding the contradictions of the profession I am entering, is at the crux of what I have been analysing with the project.

The thesis has evolved as three chapters, titled but not defined as:

## 1 Lines, 2 Walls and 3 Interruptions

Together, these parts should be understood as an evolving process of research and design, that have informed one another back and forth. Separately, they set up a series of realms that the project attempts to navigate and bring together in support of one another.

The thesis speculates on how post-Brexit, Scotland may become an independent country with a renewed relationship with the EU and global market. Subject to intensified privatisation of the built environment in order to generate lost income, the ongoing Clyde Waterfront Regeneration Scheme in Glasgow becomes a case study of the political context. The (re)branding of Scotland's largest city as a global capital ensues a process of fixing identity and marginalisation of local communities. However, the collapsing quay walls of the River Clyde are stalling the regeneration process, opening up opportunities for socio-infrastructurel intervention to subvert market forces, unfix identities and claim back public land.

Place is characterised by the circumstances that allow for relation. Places, and their identities, emerge and evolve as result of dynamic relationships between people coming and going, being and inhabiting in diverse and ever-changing ways, in relation to the other (person or environment). Identity is produced and extended in relation to the other, through the meeting (and clashing) of cultures:

*What is the role of architecture in unfixing predetermined identities that are imposed on the city?*

*What is the role of architecture in disrupting regeneration timelines that aim to (re)brand places as generic, homogenised and economically exclusive?*

*How, by unfixing and disrupting, can architecture facilitate the emergence of inclusive, public spaces in the city that are characterised by an evolving identity?*

*By initiating an infrastructurel network of spaces that subvert the neoliberalist transformations of the city, producing a set of realms that are able to support local communities and evolving relations between people and place, how can the relationship between politics and the city be made more visible, and in turn, accessible and intervenable?*

## 1 Lines

The political context of Brexit was a vote to preserve an archaic and fixed identity of the United Kingdom, as well as to reestablish itself as an island distinct from Europe, within the world and global market. Globalisation and the privatisation or branding of space and cities will intensify post-Brexit. Both Scotland and the UK, following the axing of trade links with Europe, will become more dependant on industries such as tourism as well as on generating capital from the built environment through privatisation and global investment.

The uncertainties initiated by Brexit have not only put the United Kingdom's relationship with Europe into question, but also Scotland's relationship with England, further highlighting the disparities and disconnect between the north and south of the United Kingdom. Scotland unanimously voted to remain part of Europe and is now striving for another referendum for independence.

This part to the research began with an investigation in to the lines that separate, depicted through cartography. Physical lines organise occupation into territories, and alongside the architecture that enhances or acknowledges them, have a role in defining one place from another. This 'fixed' distinction between places produces nationalism, prejudice and xenophobia. By exposing the ancient lines that have fixed an archaic idea about identity and made concrete prejudiced relationships between places, the Clyde (i.e the line of water that connects the east and west of Scotland, but that also separates the north and south of Glasgow) becomes a point of focus.

Historically, Glasgow via the Clyde, has had a key role in connecting the UK with the global market. Due to the city's location on the river, it has been intermittently subject to a legacy of (re)branding, through which imposed generic identities on the built environment have caused more destruction than income. The River Clyde is currently undergoing a 30 year long regeneration scheme, again intending to reactivate Glasgow's role as a global city through the privatisation of space. The commercialisation of the Clyde will intensify post-Brexit, characterising Glasgow as the new global capital city of an independent Scotland. The investigation into the Clyde as a dynamic, everchanging and unpredictable line when considered spatially, projects the next to chapter to the research.

## 2 Walls

In various locations along the Clyde river's edge, the quay walls are collapsing. At these points, the regeneration process is being stalled as nothing can happen to the associated or affected land until the walls have been structurally reconfigured. Glasgow City Council has allocated public funding to regenerate the walls, in order for the subsequently re-stabilised land to be sold to private developers to generate income for the city. The thesis explores these moments of fragility and a type of architecture that can exploit these destabilising processes as an opportunity to curate edges, choreograph surfaces and inhabit spaces within and from the wall that can emerge and evolve over time: creating connections between people and places as opposed to occupying or defining territory. This evolving infrastructural network in turn subverts the corrupt distribution of public funding alongside market speculation, initiating and sustaining a process of unprivatisation. The fragility of the walls, and in turn their fragile inhabitation (a process of fixing and unfixing) also draws a conceptual parallel to the uncertain prospects of Brexit as an opportune moment for action.

This chapter explores how when the condition of or prospects for land is made intermittently and cyclically fragile or uncertain, the process of opening up the system to financialisation can be disrupted. Pre and post-Brexit privatisation and the spiral (accumulation) of capital could be disrupted by the hydrological cycle: a self-sustaining process of un-privatisation. By making Glasgow more wet, embracing its climate and the role of the Clyde as a continuous flow of water and movement, facilitated by infrastructure, public land can resist market forces for longer.

### 3 Interruptions

The final chapter presents the design proposal of the thesis: a fragile infrastructural network of social spaces that will emerge, evolve and deteriorate as part of the ongoing changing state of the walls, in relation to flows of water and the hydrological cycle. Together, flows and spaces have a larger infrastructural role in disrupting the transformation processes of the city. Inhabiting the wall will facilitate a socio-spatial and infrastructural relationship between the city and river whilst challenging and subverting what happens next as part of the regeneration process. This analyses how what is added as infrastructure becomes public land, instigating a process of unprivatisation.

The evolving counter-network explores flooding as a process of unprivatisation (embracing Glasgow's climate: making the city wetter), inhabiting infrastructure (claiming back public land / creating public access), the emergence of fragile productive / evolving landscapes and edges (other public, practiced forms of inhabitation) alongside appropriating surfaces (fragile, simple floor plans that can facilitate changing and evolving social functions). At the point in which the interventions could increase in scale, i.e accumulate and become swallowed up by capital, they collapse, leaving residue infrastructure (in the form of 'plinths') that can be intermittently appropriated and inhabited. Adaptability is a notion within 'fragility' that characterises each floor plan - as long as use can evolve and change in relation to the needs of a place, spaces can avoid commercialisation and homogenisation. The exemplary social spaces explored in the project periodically support local communities, creating spaces that share the relational characteristics of collectivity, productivity and intimacy in emerging ways. Their illusion of certainty draws public funding, expressing a facade of regeneration, but then their embedded uncertainties / fragilities / curated life span ensures that they will not grow beyond their locality, become attractive to market forces and privatised. This process of collapse has been elaborated on in terms of deteriorating materiality, facilitating a critique of the limits of material and form.

As a result of these temporal and emerging inhabitation(s), a multiplicity of unstable and unprivatised spaces throughout the city evolve, allowing for the subversive cycle of socially (re) productive spaces to continue at a larger scale and across a breadth of realms. The temporal inhabitation of the wall is a process whereby infrastructure is reactivated and extended as a means through which the city can be kept as wet as possible.

Inhabiting walls and facilitating emerging (re)productive landscapes, allows landscapes to become public, practiced and dynamic, as opposed to fixed, speculated upon and privatised. As the quay walls collapse, the global city post-Brexit expands: public land can be claimed back, lines become unfixed, identities and place can emerge and evolve, north, south, east and west become more connected and our relationships with people and place can continue to evolve.