



THE  
**HAVANA**  
CREATIVE  
CITY

MSc3-4 COMPLEX PROJECTS  
HAVANA PROFUNDA  
**Kan Hok Yin**  
**Anthony**

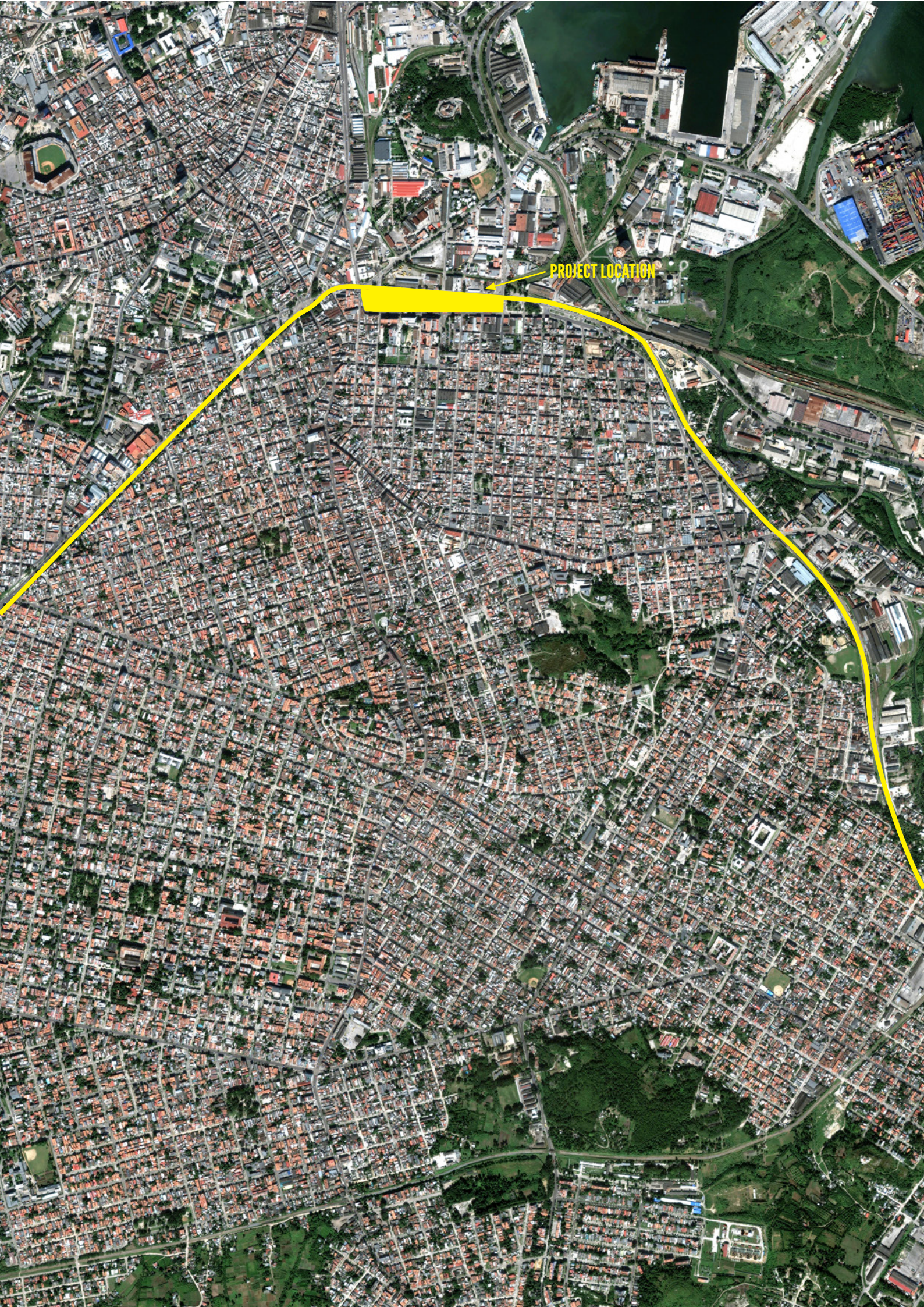
#### **P4 REFLECTIONS**

**Project: Creative Class as “New” Urban Developers, Cultural Interventions as means in revitalising decaying and marginal neighbourhood**

**Site: Diez de Octubre, Havana, Cuba**

**Tutor: Sebastian Janusz (Complex Project)**

**Student: Anthony Kan (4509323)**



PROJECT LOCATION

## **P4 REFLECTIONS**

**Project: Creative Class as “New” Urban Developers, Cultural Interventions as means in revitalising decaying and marginal neighbourhood**

### **Research Question:**

How should we respond to the post-industrial surface bordering between Havana Vieja (the historical town center) and Diez de Octubre (Havana's densest residential neighbourhood)?

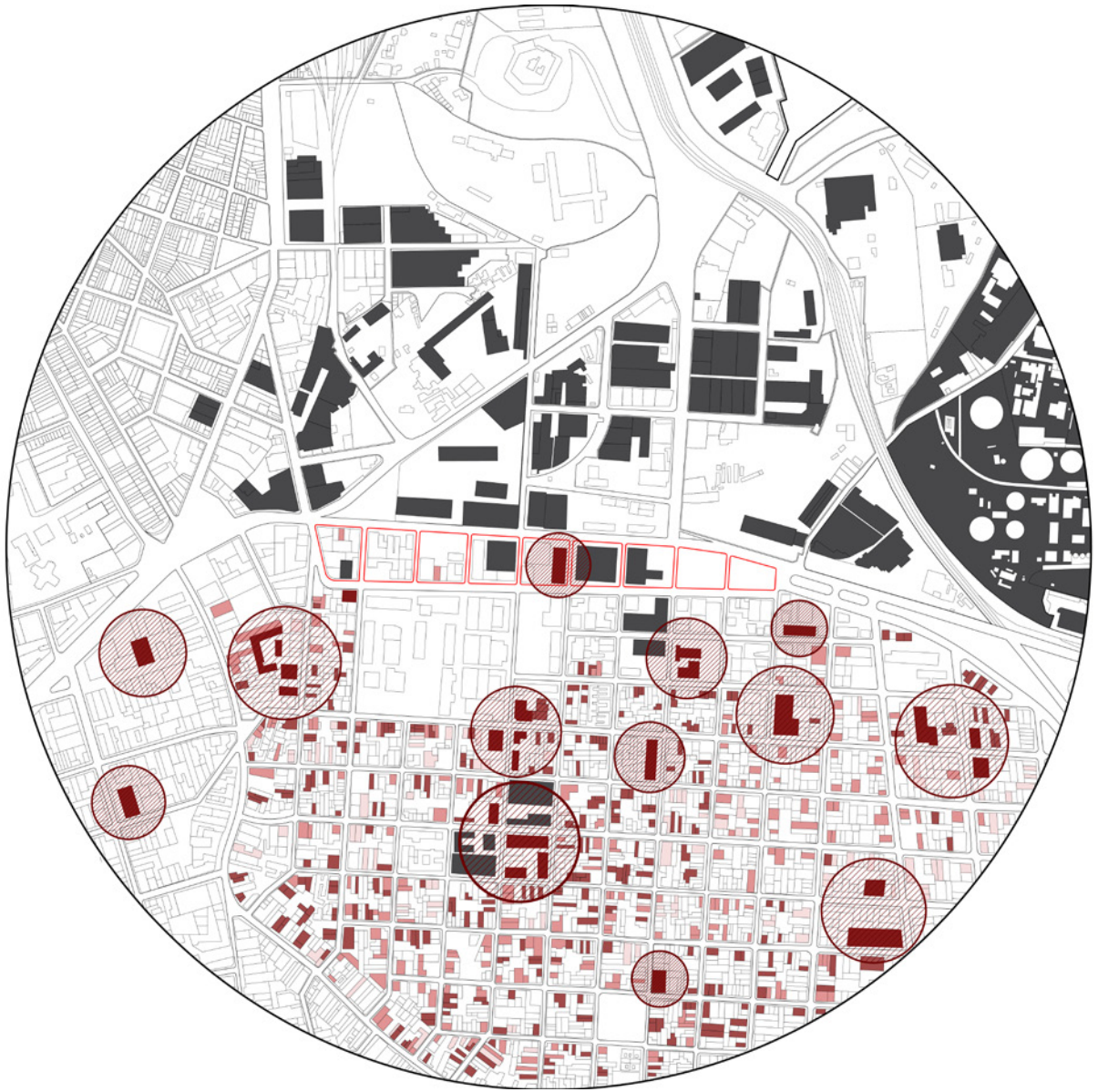
### **Design Statement:**

Intervention as structural means and Cultural activities as social means, to develop a bottom up scheme in reactivating leftover buildings on site in short run, and catalysing contextual development in long run.

### **Introduction:**

Modern Cuba had come from complex evolution in social change since colonial periods and in particular the previous century. Since liberated from Spanish Government, Cuba has been living under the shelter of USA's imperialism, reconstructing it as a resort for Americans and thus triggering Fidel Castro's revolution in achieving true liberation. And yet in less than half a decade Cuba had failed to prove itself as an independent island country and began to adhere to Soviet Union's political and resources support. Until 1990s, after the fall of Soviet had Cuba truly began to revolutionize itself to be an independent country, with struggles in dealing with the lack of technologies, construction material and most importantly information. Under such circumstances the country began to prioritize in developing touristic attractive zones in order to absorb foreign capitals with its long history historical town.

The prioritisation of development has made the contrast between the historical center and its neighbouring decaying fabric apparent. Unable to distribute resources to these areas, government relied on its population to DIY their own living places, leading to huge problems relating to safety concerns and lack of planned amenities.



- CATEGORY I**  
Extended- Building in Fair Condition
- CATEGORY II**  
Poor Extension on Decent Building
- CATEGORY III**  
Improper Extension on Deteriorated Building  
Improper Constructed Temporal Building
- CATEGORY IV**  
Adapted Post-Industrial Structure
- CATEGORY V**  
Functioning Factories

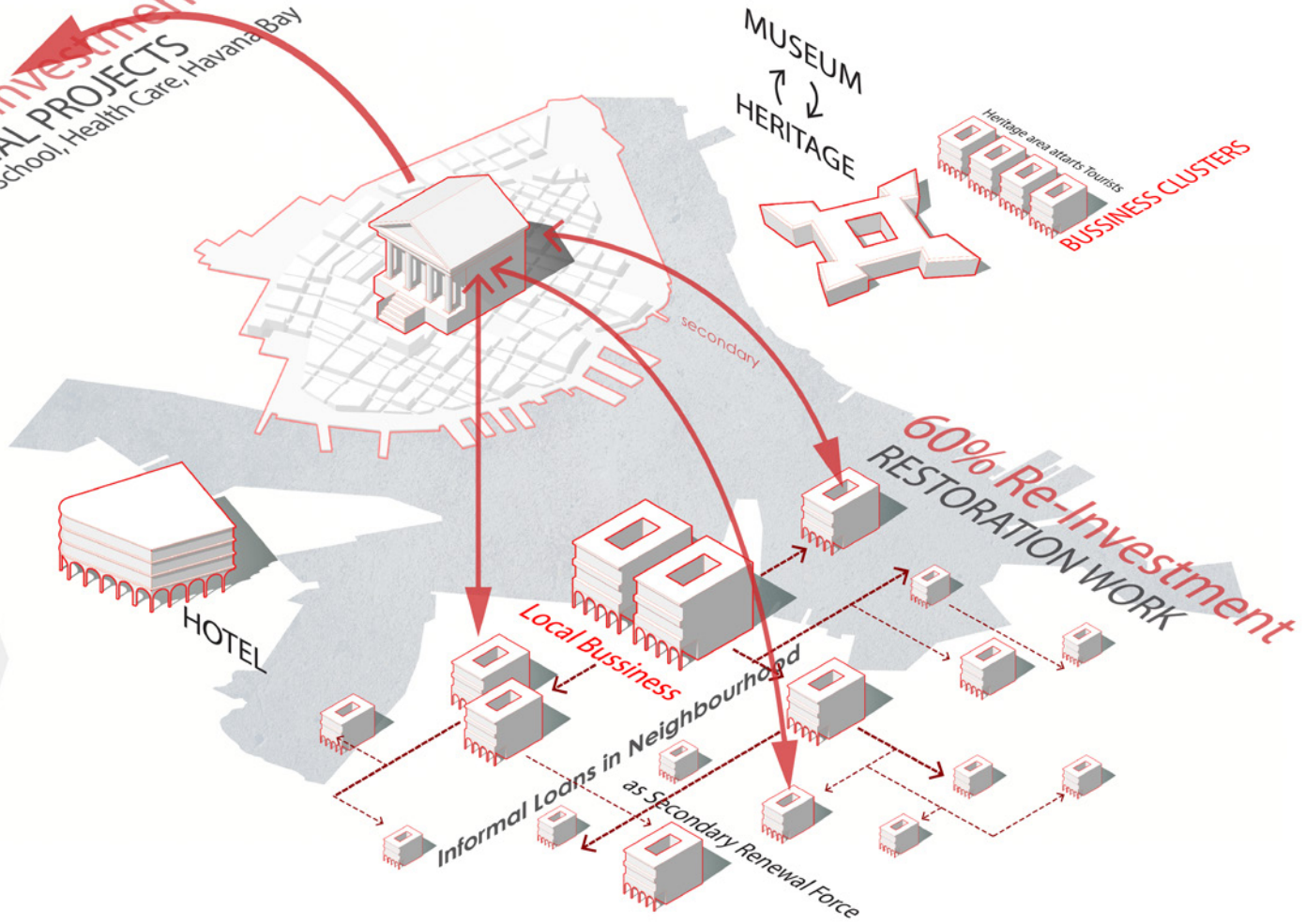
## **METHOD OF ANALYSIS**

### **The relationship between research and design:**

The studio employs a methodological process of research, to discover a topic of interest and further developing it into various architectural programmes in response to site requirements and experience from typological studies, a streamlined way of thinking. The ways of applying this method is different among groups. In one group, students began researching with a strong ambition or topic in mind, further specifying it in first semester and have strong references in contemporary world to support their arguments already, a top down approach in influencing the site. Others may began their project with specialities of Havana, using cultural heritages as the core of their scheme and develop programmes around its functionality, again it is a very top down and subjective approach in responding to the site conditions.

In this scheme, the research has been conducted in various stages. Firstly, is to try extracting most imminent problems of the city, and try to compose them together as a solution or supplement of each other in urban development. For example, a neglected post-industrial area might be a headache for the new Havana Master plan, but it provided necessary cheap rental spaces for start-ups and creative classes. While these new accommodations might further attract social activities and slowly regain the value of the land. The second research phase involves research on urban scale development projects, to understand how architectural scale interventions could lead to larger social changes gradually, and what elements are required for these reactions. Thirdly, typological studies is about finding a language from contemporary projects that could unite the found elements from the urban scale research into building forms that could function independently.

**40% investment**  
**SOCIAL PROJECTS**  
e.g. School, Health Care, Havana Bay



## **CASE STUDY**

### **The relationship between studio and research:**

VEF was the biggest manufacturer of electrical and electronic products in the former USSR. After the re-establishment of Latvia's independence in 1991 these developments left a massive abandoned territory in Riga's urban space. Today Totaldobže, created in 2010, is a private multifunctional cultural centre with a main focus to create an ongoing platform for interdisciplinary art and educational projects. This cultural reintervention project is a non-planned urban growth activity initiated by individuals, which later introduced private sector in financing its daily function and in later stage, the private sector detaches from the institute body and began to grow independently around the context and redeveloping the decayed post industrial site through collective investment and market force.

This research serves as a spinal structure of this thesis. Riga has a very similar social background to Cuba in the recent decades. The country struggled as a communist country detached from Soviet Unions alliance, electrical products that once monopolized by them within the Communist realm were now challenged by open market, leading to bankruptcy of their industrial quarter. At the same time economic downturn had pushed creative classes to start accommodating in abandoned structures for work.

By reflecting on the solution this project embodies and borrowing it to Havana, we could start formulate a spatial proposal to the problems that are discovered in the previous stage.





**Valsts Elektrotehniska Fabrika, Riga**

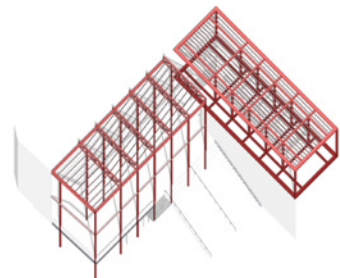
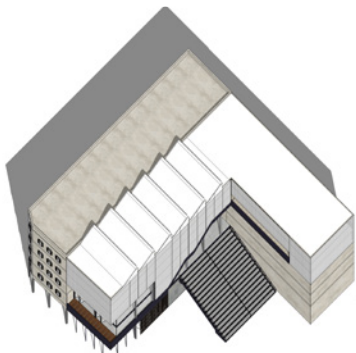
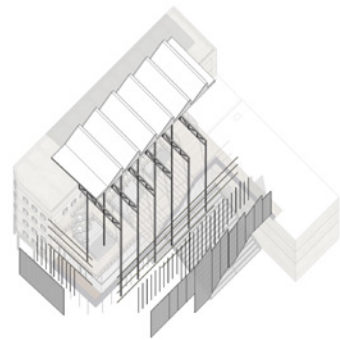
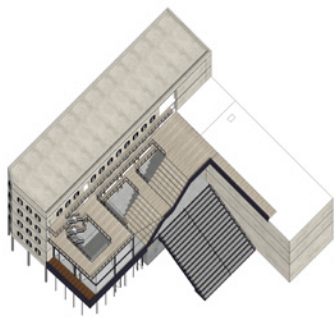
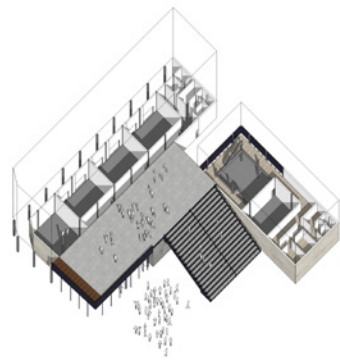
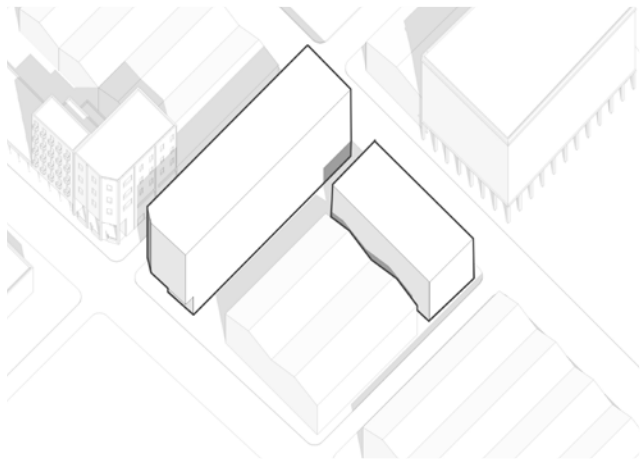
## **ARCHITECTURAL APPROACH**

### **Intervention as means in reactivating abandoned structures:**

The question is how to re-develop the post-industrial surface in Havana in affordable and humble manner. Land is so precious in Havana and yet leftover structures are difficult to be dealt with, or at least not cost-effective for developers to 1) Demolish 2) Build and 3) responsible for social amenities that are seriously lacking in the site. The power of creative class and the social activities they bring upon is believed to be an effective tool in reenergising the site. With interventions injecting new functionality and quality in performances for old buildings, the cultural quarter could quickly elaborate itself and later further affect the master plan issued by the government in expanding the historical quarter.

The intervention project is not only looking at a specificity, a sharp response to particular need of site, but also a language of elaboration, that allows it to reproduce around the district. Learning from the local DIY extensions did by residents, a category of applicable form was designed to rationalize the process of designing, into fundamental units that could be composed/re-composed according to any different situations.

The programmatic composition of the border strip was carefully studied and a series of spots were selected for implantation in order to complement what the site could not provide on its own, a plastic surgery. The thesis progressed further zooming into one particular plot in designing a cultural institute mixed with social facilities in ground floor and a community theater in an original gas station.



## **FUTURE IMPLICATION**

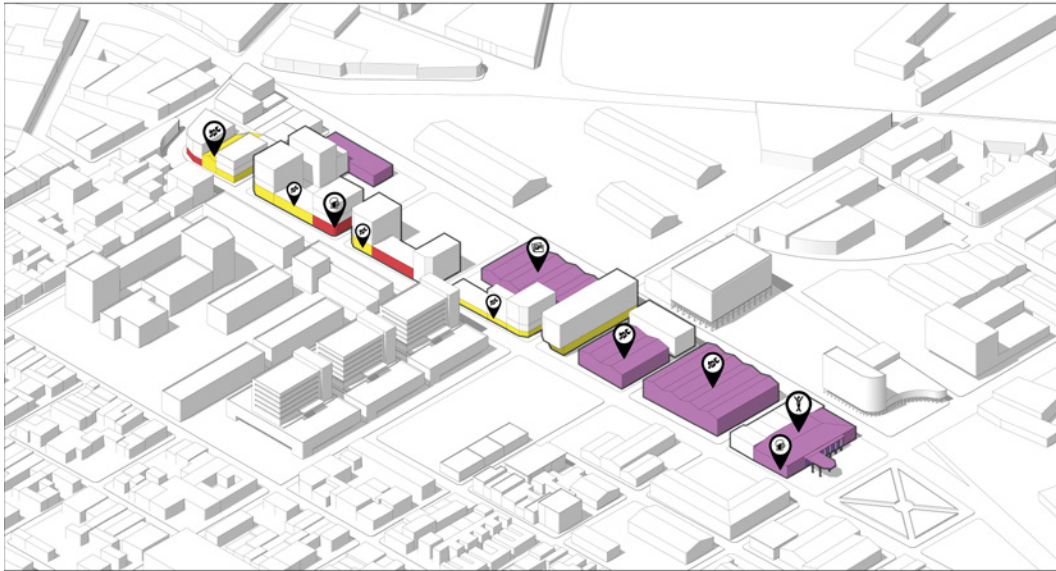
### **How the project would manifest itself around the context in the future**

As mentioned the core part of this thesis is regarding it's ability to reproduce and elaborate itself to a wider context. Rather than proposing one single design in a specific site, a set of language is designed to be ready and respond to different situations.

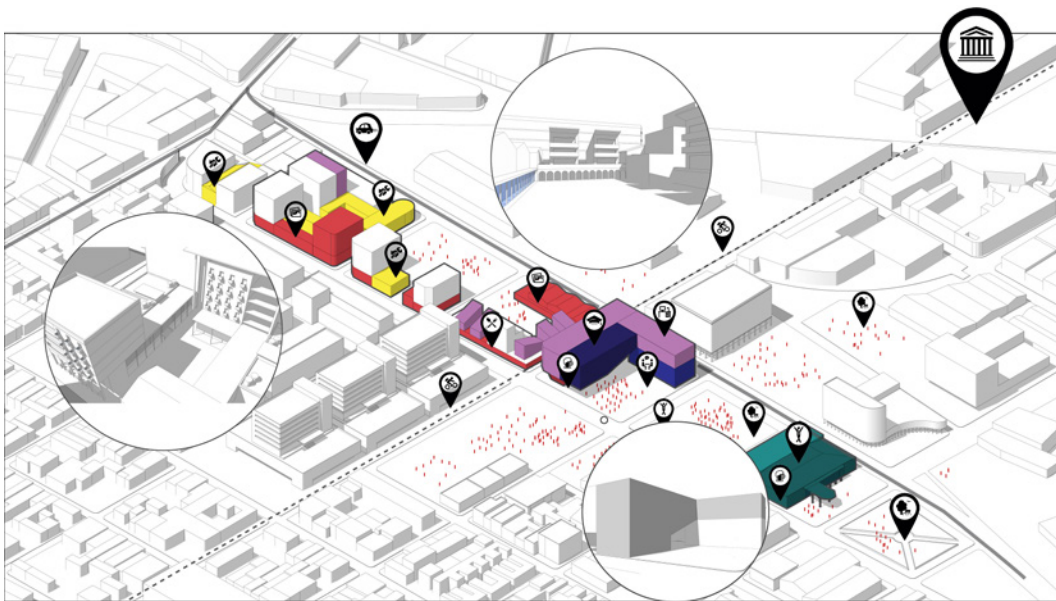
The urban renewal process starts by re-occupying street levels of the district as gallery and retail, as well as vacant warehouses as workshops and studios, immediately composing social activities and practicality. In the next decade, the warehouses could be used as immediate stations in foavor to revitalising old buildins. The interventions could grow in vertical directions.

Once the development is mature, the site could start to host public events or even a sufficient surface to host Bienale. It would have a systematic categorisation of zones, such as community workshop quarter, artist vil-lage, market square, insitutions and performance square. The strip has the potential in becomeing an exciting urban space that catalyse new master planning development on the north, providing them with necessary amenities and at the same time linking the neglected Diez de octubre to the development process.

2020



2025



2065

