

# BORDER VERSUS BARRIER

THE CHAMIZAL STADIUM: BUILDING AND ENCLAVE

Thesis self-reflection

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COLLAGE OF STADIUM AS EXPERIENCED FROM BORDER HIGHWAY

## INTRODUCTION

The border between El Paso (USA) and Ciudad Juárez (Mexico) is acting as a barrier. Exchange within the community of border people is undoubtedly obstructed by this militarized divider. The Chamizal Zone, a peculiar piece of land formed by the meandering Rio Grande border-river sitting in between the two cities, has the potential to function as a threshold. Emphasizing the distinctive 'city island' character of the Chamizal and making a third nation can change the perception and experience of the barrier. This third nation could come in the form of a binational stadium, that can be realized on the US side of the border at present, with the financial aid of American private investors. This enclave serves the entire community of border people, both Mexican and American.

## RESEARCH

The main research topic of the project is the relation between border and barrier. Conclusion of the research is that borders and barriers are closely related and often mistaken for each other. Borders are the place where two entities meet and where curious exchange of people, information and culture takes place. However, on account of the interaction of the border actors, the border can transform into a barrier. Barriers in greater or lesser extent obstruct exchange and will divide or exclude. A special form of an enclosing barrier is the enclave or the city island. These city islands are generally a special place within cities in regard to function or symbols and as such the Chamizal Zone shares characteristics with them.



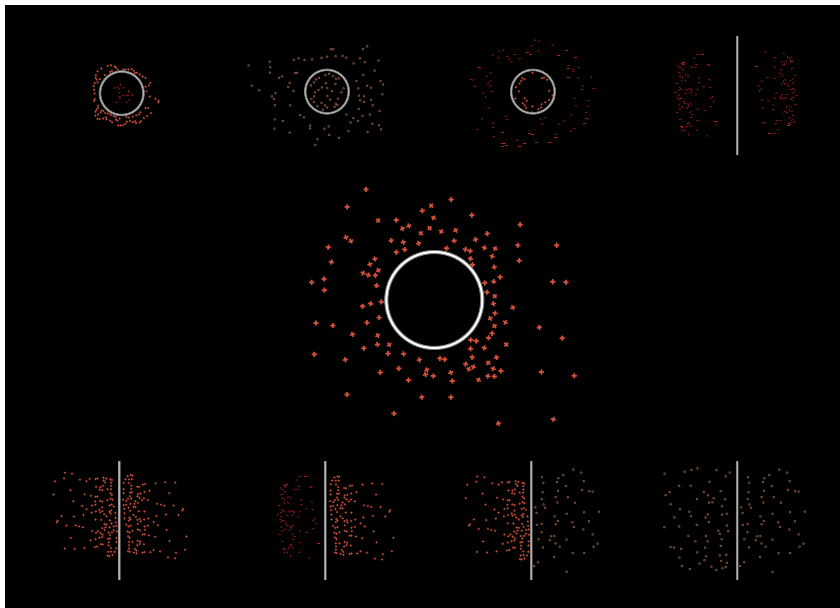
THE BORDER BETWEEN EL PASO AND CIUDAD JUAREZ CURRENTLY ACTS AS A BARRIER

## DESIGN TOPICS

The main design topic is the building as an enclave and its perimeter as a border. The design will investigate how this border is subsequently experienced outside and within the building and what effect the enclave has on the position of the building. Entrances have become border crossings; entering or exiting the building will therefore have the same sensation of crossing a border. As the building is an open structure, being inside it is as being in a third nation. The building is in fact an enclave within another country. Therefore it will serve as an outpost with a panoramic view, besides being used as a conventional stadium. The facade of the building plays with its role as barrier, by allowing for visual and auditive interaction, but preventing people of physically crossing.

## REFLECTION ON APPROACH

The initial approach was to create a building that had a division within itself: a border going throughout the building in a horizontal and vertical direction. However, this approach proved not to be working as this was not addressing the larger issue at stake. Instead the thesis project had to align along the different scales. The initial approach was an interesting design approach on the scale of the building, but did not match the urban strategy. The approach was changed into focusing on the building as an enclave. The stadium in the end forms a neutral entity: a third nation between the U.S. and Mexico.



SCENARIOS OF BORDER INTERACTION

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND DESIGN

The design implements many of the outcomes of the research. The strategy for the area relies on its identification as a city island from the research on interaction of border people. Furthermore, the materialization of the design makes use of weathering steel elements that refer to the U.S. border fence and clearly indicate the stadium as an extension of the border to anyone passing by. On the level of materialization, the stadium itself is making use of local qualities in building technology, such as the openness of the structure, the use of cast-in-situ concrete for the main loadbearing elements and cinder blocks for the secondary structures.

#### THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE THEME OF THE GRADUATION LAB

The thesis project builds upon a larger body of knowledge that was set out by the first Border Studio in the fall of 2014. Where the first group took the U.S.-Mexico border as a case study for border situations worldwide, the Fall 2015 studio zoomed in on the situation at the bordertown of El Paso - Ciudad Juárez. The research of the studio and its thesis projects concentrated on the spatial conditions of living in a border region. Whereas other projects focused on practical themes such as water, waste and production, this project looked into the reasons behind the forming of the border fence barrier and its spatial implications.



THE EXTENSION OF THE CHAMIZAL BORDER AROUND THE STADIUM, FORMING AN ENCLAVE

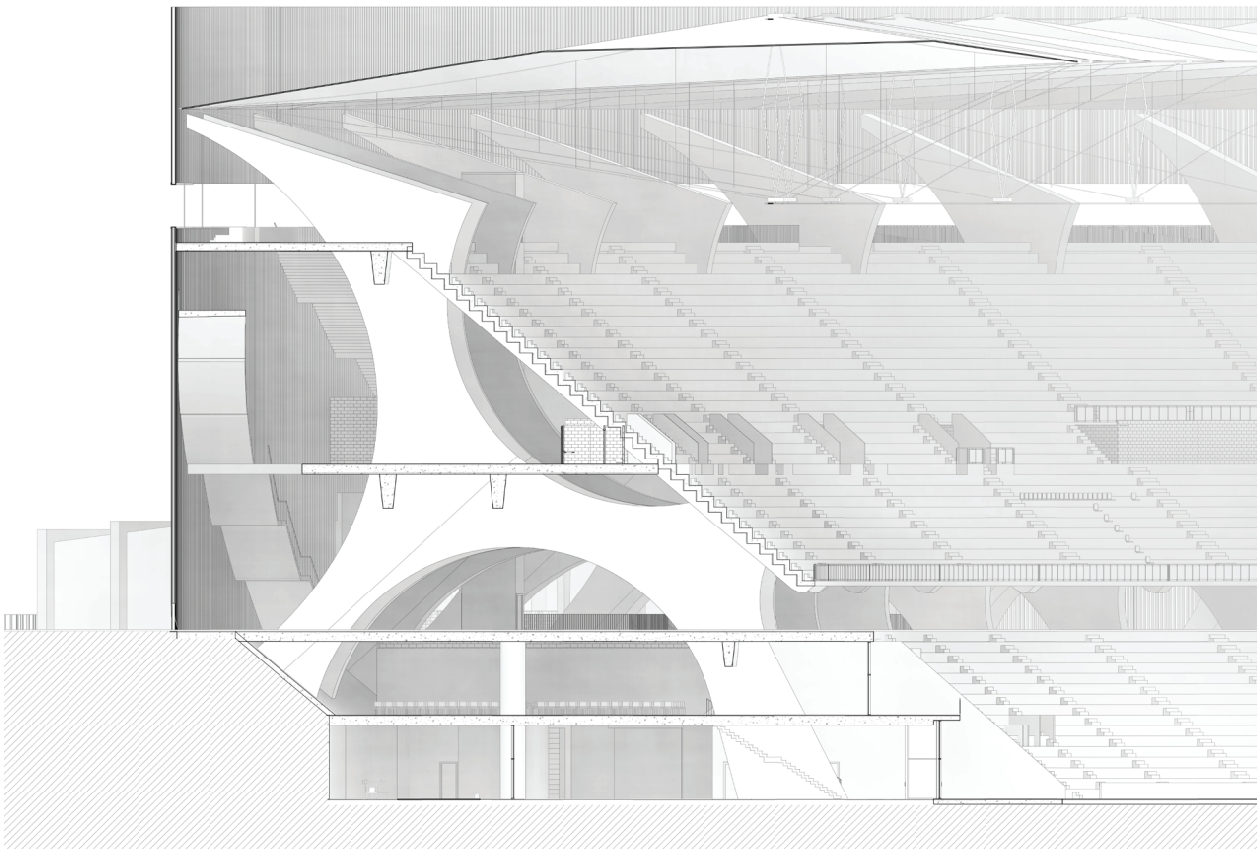
#### THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE METHODOLOGICAL LINE OF APPROACH OF THE GRADUATION LAB

The Chair of Complex Projects strives to assess issues with a nature of high complexity by performing extensive research and designing a project brief that is a reaction to the results of this research. The Border Studio took on the US - Mexico border as the topic of research in a wide variety of fields, from the political situation to ecological issues. This thesis project extended on this research and, in line with the methods of Complex Projects, came up with a brief as part of the design solution. The development of the binational Chamizal Zone by the insertion of large and mainly infrastructural buildings is a direct result of this method of assessing a problem without a brief and with an open mind.



#### THE PROJECT IN A WIDER SOCIAL CONTEXT

The Border Studio in general and this thesis project in particular addresses the sociopolitical issues of the US - Mexico border and through this equivalent border issues worldwide. In the contemporary world a trend can be seen where nation states close their borders and put up militarized barriers. These divide people that long have been living along these borders. Often the militarization of such borders happens in a fashion that makes the process of division go unnoticed. This thesis project makes a statement on this issue and shows the unnatural way these barriers are put up within communities of border people. By creating an extension or diversion of the barrier, the thesis project shows the world what the spatial and social implications of such barriers can be and how they divide communities of border people. Along with the stadium, the other thesis projects within the Chamizal Zone are a way of putting this region on the map by development and investment from outside.



PRELIMINARY SECTION OF THE STADIUM WITH ITS FACADE AS BORDER