



THE HOUSEKEEPER

MEDIATING BETWEEN BODY
AND TERRITORY

SPACE, TIME, BODY

The juxtaposition of the two terms 'architecture' and 'migration' often implies opposing forces, with the former evoking principles of groundedness, stagnancy, and permanence, and the latter principles of uprootedness, mobility, and temporariness. Societal biases tend to privilege a sedentary lifestyle which casts migration as an exception rather than an accepted way of living. Consequently, migrants face suspicion and hostility as they enter or cross territorial boundaries (Cairns, 2004, pp. 1-2). Many scholars associate them with nomads, emphasizing their deterritorialization due to their perpetual mobility. However, migration entails cycles of deterritorialization and reterritorialization with the ultimate aim of settlement.

This paper seeks to challenge the common misconceptions about migration as a timeless and spaceless phenomenon. Instead, it argues that space and time are integral concepts to comprehending the process. The body of the migrant emerges as a dynamic actor in understanding the spatio-temporal experiences involved. The paper is divided into three chapters, each exploring a different

aspect of the relationship between space, time, and the body. Through the three, consecutively titled: Body in Space and Time, Space and Time in Body and Embodied Timespace, the paper aims to understand each of the nodes of the triad by analyzing how they influence, counter, and reinforce each other.

The paper aspires to draw lessons from migrants' strategies of confronting the challenges of "unhomeliness" whilst on the move. Through different conceptualizations of migrants' placemaking, termed "homemaking" in this paper, the objective is to explore the potentiality of a body-centric approach for an architectural project.

BODY IN SPACE AND TIME

Migration refers to the movement of bodies between two locations, from a departure point to a destination point. During this movement, space is transversed over a certain passage of time. Therefore, as the body moves, it manifests “a spatialization of time and temporalization of space” (Cresswell, 2006, p. 4). The line that connects the departure point to its destination is not simply direct, but rather one that is entangled with complex spatiotemporal relationalities along its course that either

deter or promote mobility. Through investigating the transitional territory of Panama within the context of the migratory flow from South to North America, this chapter aims to reveal the dynamic nature of relationalities that are not only generated but also evolve in response to the perpetual movement of bodies across its borders.

Amidst the intricate choreography of our globalized world, a continual movement expands across borders, one that is not restricted to the circulation of capital, goods, technologies, and information, but also that of people. Economic

transactions while fostering disparities among nations, propel large numbers of people into motion in the pursuit of stability, safety, and opportunity beyond the confines of geographical origins. One such prominent current in this global dance flows in Central America. Although the movement is characterized as south to north, departure points do not exclusively originate from South America, but from other countries that are often classified as part of the global south as well (Yates & Pappier, 2023).

As the landmass that connects the Americas, the Isthmus

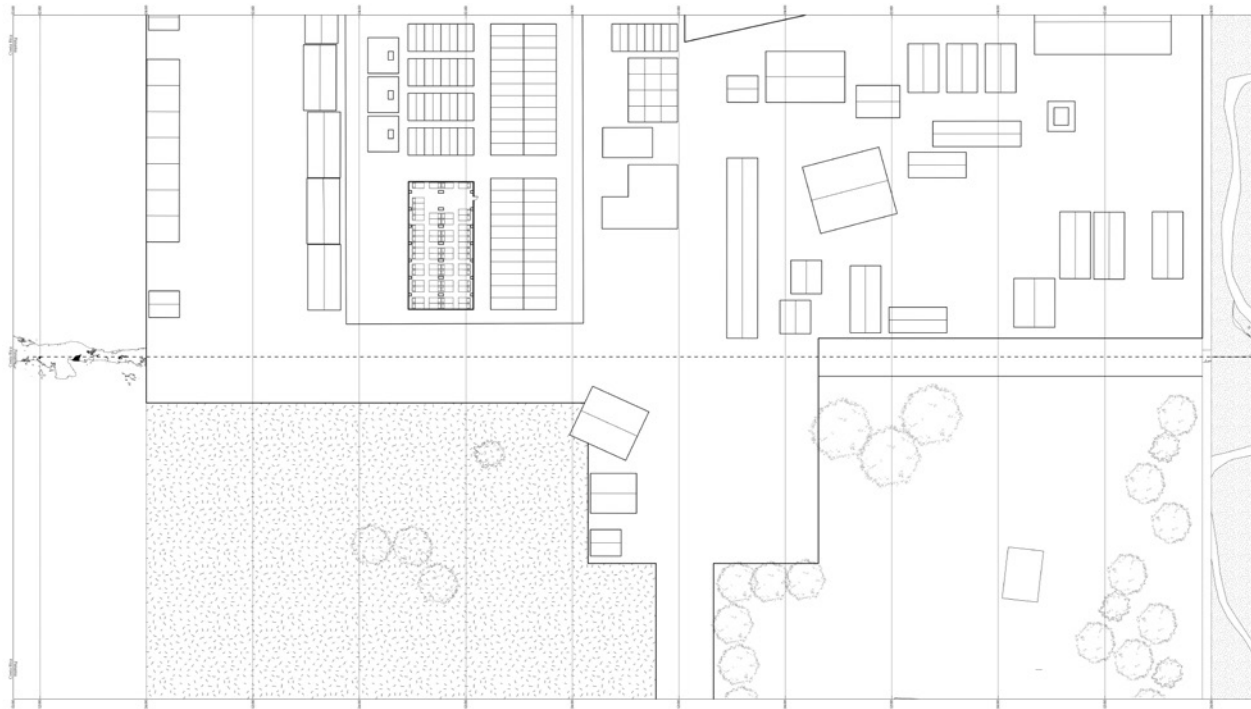


of Panama is considered a gateway territory within this movement. Geopolitical, social, economic, and environmental developments in departure geographies have instigated an increase in the number of bodies crossing Panamanian borders annually. From an average of 11,000 yearly crossers since 2010, the number drastically increased to around 130,000 in 2021, 250,000 in 2022, and estimated to be 500,000 by the end of 2023 (Yates & Pappier, 2023). The consistency and intensification of the movement of ephemeral bodies has led to the establishment of normality. This establishment

is evident through the development of spatial strategies along the way. One such spatial strategy is its borderland. It is not merely the linear political border marked on geographic maps, but rather the 25,900 square kilometer Darien Gap, a thick jungle that spans both sides of the line between Panama and Colombia. Here is where the 30,600 km long Pan-American highway, a transcontinental road that threads through the Americas, is broken (Yates & Pappier, 2023). This incomplete project is an indication of concerns over the integrity of the border. In the absence

of infrastructure, houses, and streets, the unforgiving terrain, harsh climate, wildlife, Gaitanistas (Colombian neo-paramilitary group), border patrol, and other threats are used as devices to order and control the migratory flow (Awan, 2020, p. 50). Migrants enter into this realm of uncertainty and unfamiliarity forced to adjust to its spatial and temporal conditions. The jungle operates under the cyclical rhythms dictated by natural phenomena of days and nights, and wet and dry seasons. Migrants, haunted by the perpetual fear of death, must navigate these natural cycles and respond to arbitrary threats by

02 Alternative Mapping of Migration Routes through Panama



delaying or redirecting their movements.

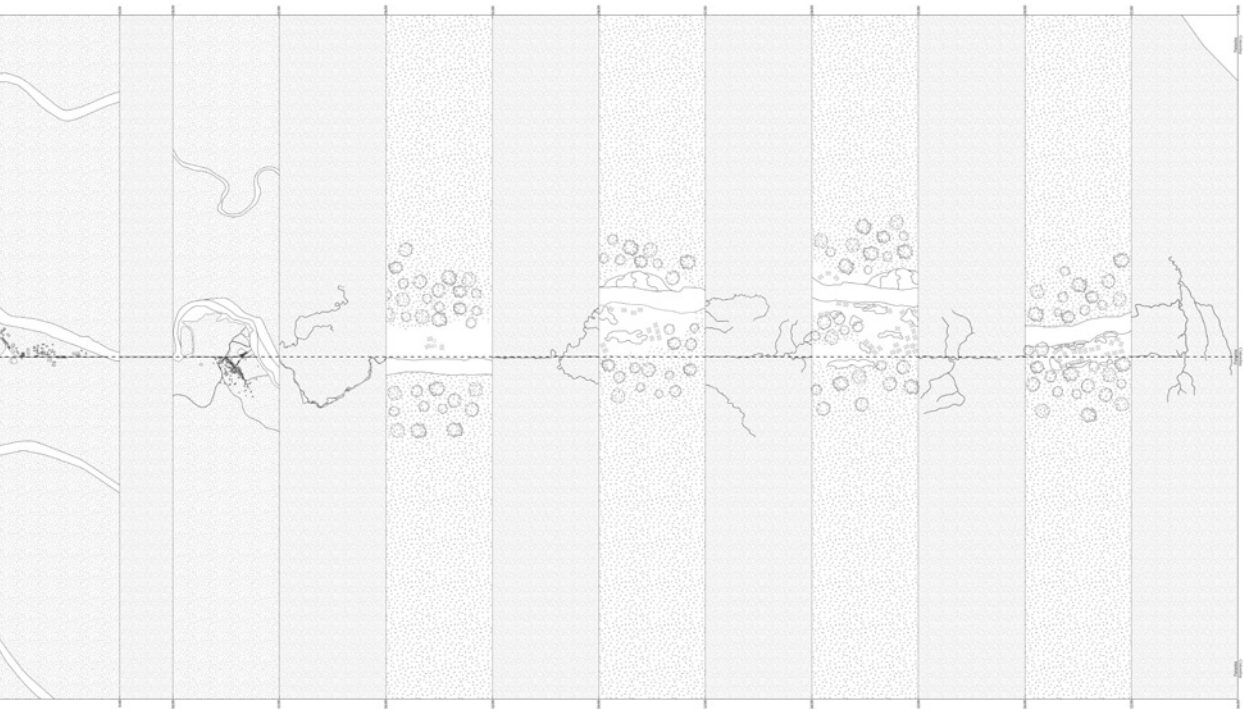
Apart from being subjected to relationalities, migrants are also generators of economic opportunities. Those with better financial means can secure safer and consequently faster routes through the jungle organized by guides and smugglers (Pons, 2023). In return, the mass movement of migrants becomes central to the livelihoods of the local communities (International Crisis Group, 2023, pp. 4-5), illustrating the complex power dynamics embedded within the Darien Gap.

The second spatial strategy

adopted by Panama is the allocation of the reception centers in Bajo Chiquito and Canaán Membrillo with their respective campsites in Lajas Blancas and San Vicente. In these spaces, migrants are provided with emergency services to tend for the damages imposed by the treacherous crossing of the jungle. The four locations are funded and operated by governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental entities. The first service they encounter is the security check and registration conducted by the National Border Service agents. The migrants are thus channeled from the vast

territory of the jungle into two entry points beyond which they are escorted into fenced camps. There, migrants’ daily experiences and routines are governed by linear institutional and legal rhythms. Sociologist Isabel Gil Everaert describes such camps as “waiting territories” that operate through bureaucratic violence by the restriction of migrants’ movements to a particular space and the imposition of delays (Everaert, 2020, p. 28).

Due to recent overcrowding of camps, some infrastructural upgrades have been implemented. The upgrades include the UNHCR-provided

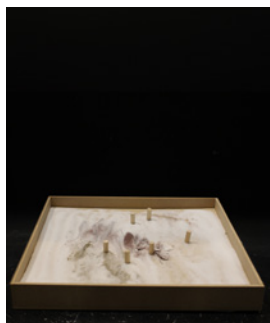


water filtration systems (UNICEF Panamá, 2024) and electrical wiring networks (Lee & Espinosa, 2023). However, these systems were installed above ground without any digging procedures. In regards to the temporality of the camps, these along with the new, IKEA-designed Better Shelter tents that plug into them suggest transiency. As architecture and urban planning scholar Stephen Cairns suggests, migrant architectures are conceived with technical parameters of economic, logistical, structural, and material efficiencies above all other qualities as the discourse surrounding them is disciplined by what are anticipated to be temporary disasters (Cairns, 2004, pp. 24-27).

Once the migrants have been processed through all administrative processes, they are transported directly to the Temporary Attention for Migrants in the southern part of Costa Rica. Besides brief stops in Chepo, Anton, and Guabala the buses transverse 750 km within 15 hours later quickly passing through populated regions (Lee & Espinosa, 2023), systematically isolating the migrants from locals.

In conclusion, the complex relationship between space and time is a powerful agency

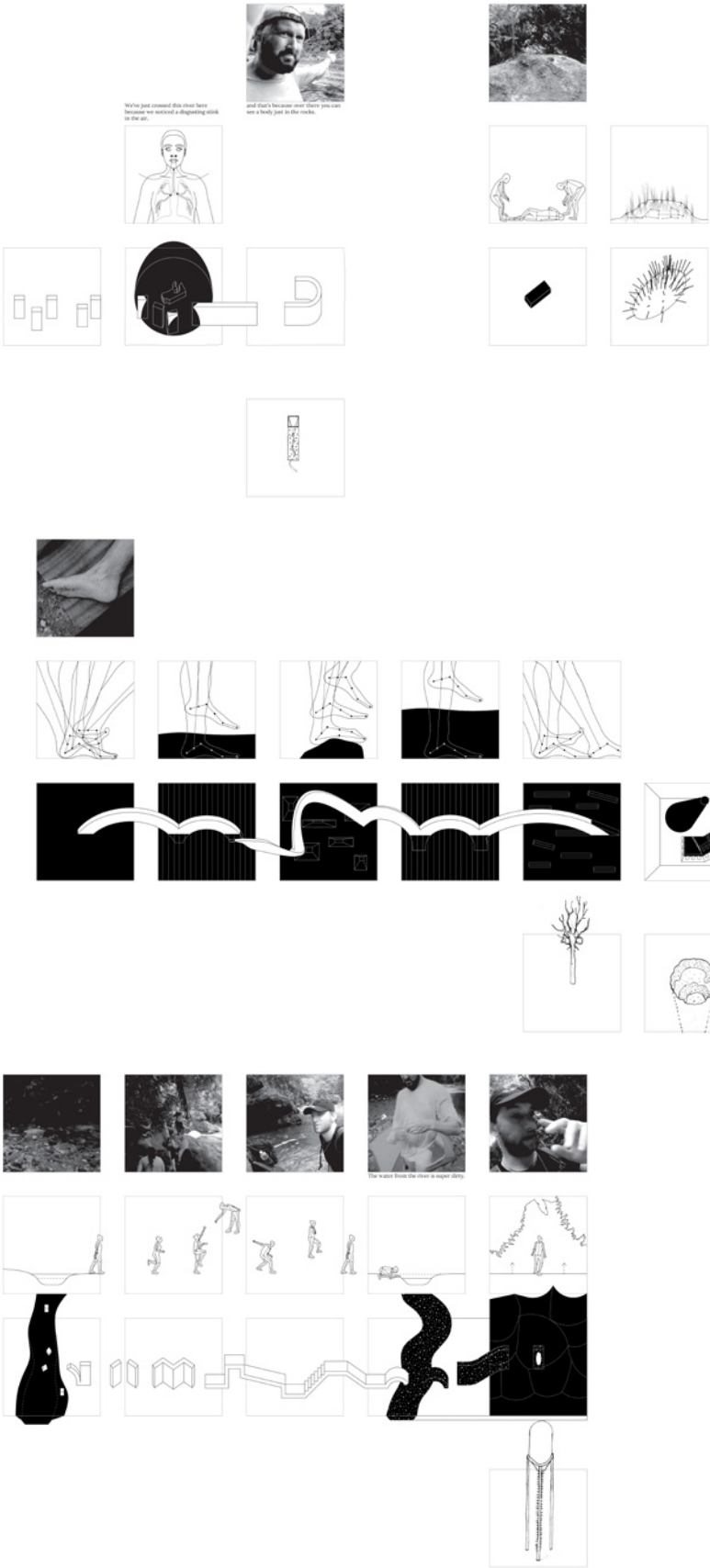
in regulating the mobility of bodies across the migratory terrains of Panama. The borderlands, camps, and transportation means serve as spatial barriers that regulate the temporal experiences of migrants. The evolutionary trajectory of these strategies unveils another aspect of migration, wherein the conceptualization of the body transcends the individual crossing in a particular period in time. Instead, the migrant body represents a continuum of bodies that have and will transverse the territory.



SPACE AND TIME
INBODY

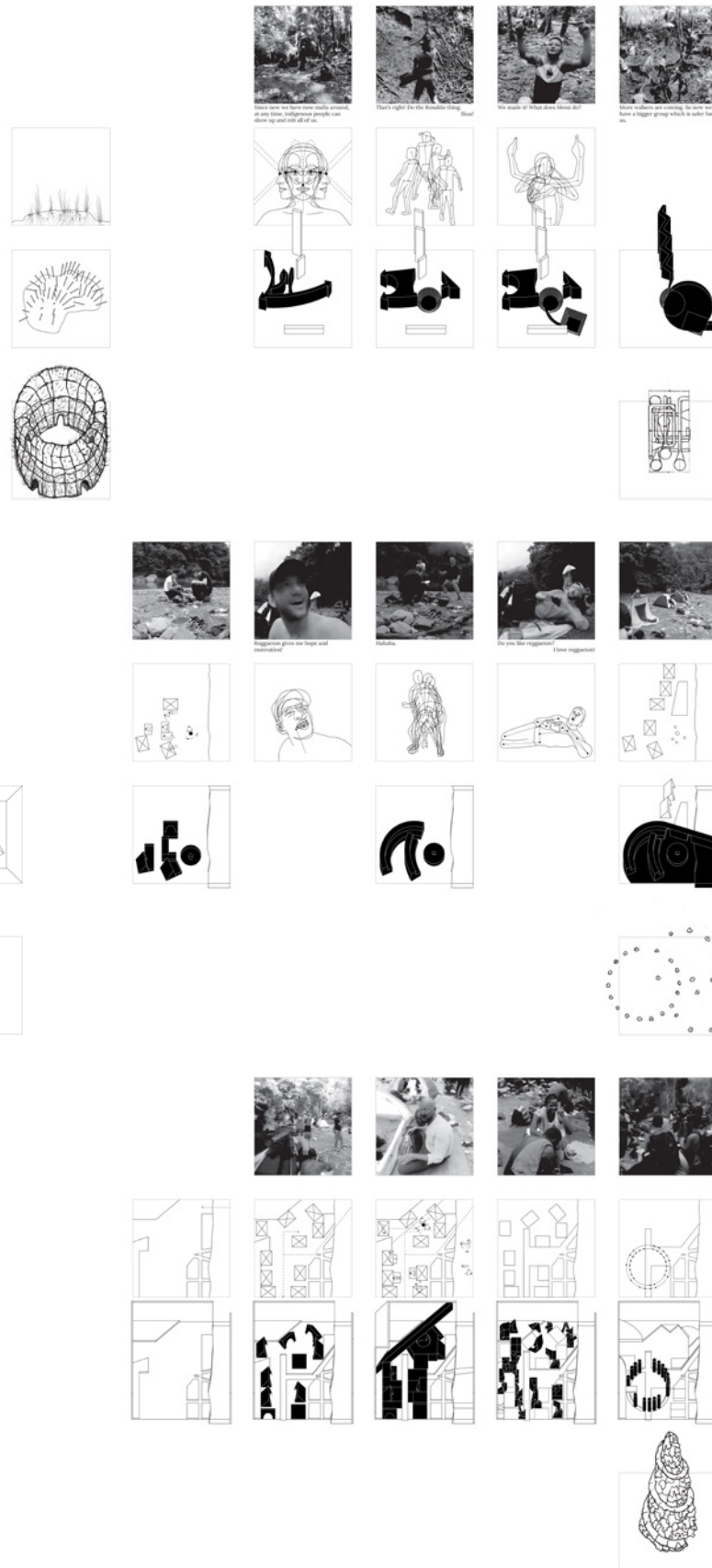
On their journeys toward their destinations, as we have established in the first chapter, migrants' movements are dictated by linear, cyclical, and syncopated space-time structures. Building upon philosopher Martin Heidegger's thinking on the situated being-in-the-world (Dasein), migration studies scholar Sergei Shubin proposes a new understanding of these relationalities beyond the reductionist framework of spaces marked by lines and points on a map and time marked by calendar dates. Instead, they represent "moment-sites" where migrants come into presence with the spatial constitutions of their surroundings (Shubin, 2015, pp. 352-353). Through his lens, the migrant ceases to be a passive body controlled through spatiotemporal agencies, but rather a body that encapsulates time and space through active engagement with the happenings of the world.

This engagement is a form of transgression used as a tool to cope with the uncertainty or the trauma of the sedentary body being on the move. Architect and artist Sam Grabowska refers to the outcomes of these



"moment-site" engagements as "casitas" or "little homes" (Grabowska, 2016, p. 127). Through this line of thought, I will refer to the migrants' performed transgressions as acts of homemaking. In this chapter, I will analyze the ways homemaking is practiced temporally through openness of successions of time, and spatially through attunement to other objects and persons.

Shubin highlights an alternative temporal realm adopted by migrants amidst the difficulties of navigating the transitional phase between deterritorialization and reterritorialization. This realm is composed of the past as the origin home that is not under a person's control, the present as the transitional context, and the future as the possibilities of the destination home. Rather than being sequential, Shubin suggests that the three coexist and influence each other (Shubin, 2015, pp. 351-353): the past looms into the present and triggers movement, the future expectations inform the present decisions, the identity formed in the past is reflected in the future home, the future home resents the past home, the present opportunities adjust the envisioned future home, etc. Thus, homemaking occurs as the three open up to each other.



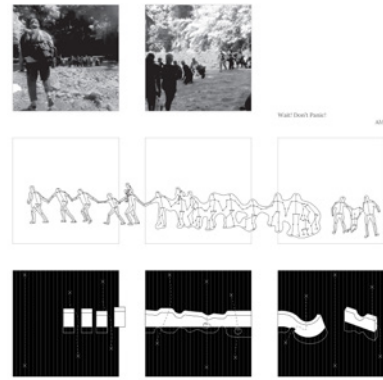
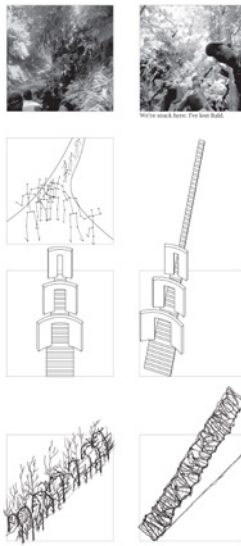
For most migrants, the American Dream awaits at the destination. The promise of the endowed rights to “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” (Jefferson, et al, 1776) fuels them to transcend actuality and comfort themselves with possibility. Of the three dimensions, the pull of the future is the most relevant and what makes the migrant a futural being.

In the spatial practice of homemaking, migrants best exemplify what Heidegger calls “dwellers” (Shubin, 2015, p. 352) Despite being a spatial tactic driven by anxiety from unfamiliarity, migrants mindfully engage with their surroundings to cultivate a sense of belonging. Of the spaces traversed by migrants in Panama, the jungle stands out as a prime arena for this exploration as a space that presents the furthest departure from the commonplace landscapes of everyday life. With particular gestures, bodies use available items such as shrubs, stones, branches, tents, backpacks, and clothes with the help of tools such as limbs, eyes, and language to transform the “moment-sites” of the jungle into “homely” spaces (Simonsen, 2005, p. 2). There is a certain domesticity about what they make. Just as any house, they create private spaces to rest, sleep, clothe oneself, and defecate,

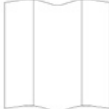
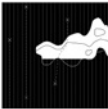
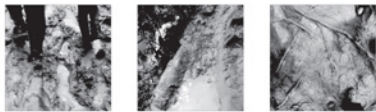
and public spaces to cook, wash and socialize. Through homemaking, they satisfy the need to create an interior setting to isolate themselves from the chaos of the wilderness whether through individual-oriented spaces or collective settings (Grabowska, 2016, p. 115). Once the jungle allows them mobility, remnants of their homemaking are left behind. These traces of past crossers cease to be a part of the homemakers’ realm, but rather, another “happening” in the world of the future crossers.

Although the migrants situate themselves in “homely” spatiotemporal settings, they never truly feel “at home” since the spatial and temporal “happenings” are not of their own choosing. However, home is something built over time. The gradual process of becoming accustomed to a

specific way of living contributes to the increasing homeliness of their surroundings. It’s a journey where, over time, the unfamiliar transforms into the familiar, creating a profound sense of home that is nurtured through temporal progression and sustained engagement.



Shady?



04 Moments of Intensity in the
Darien Jungle



05 Modi Operandi 03 'Spatial Situation'

EMBODIED TIMESPACE

Continuing on Heidegger's mid-to-late thinking on time and space, Shubin highlights the intersubjectivity of migration. He claims that the "presencing" of the migrant is not granted by the human experience alone, but constitutes a spatiotemporal opening of the world of things, persons, and their own (Shubin, 2015, p. 352). In the same vein, according to philosopher Henri Lefebvre's conception of the generative and creative social body, as discussed by social geography scholar Kirsten Simonsen, during

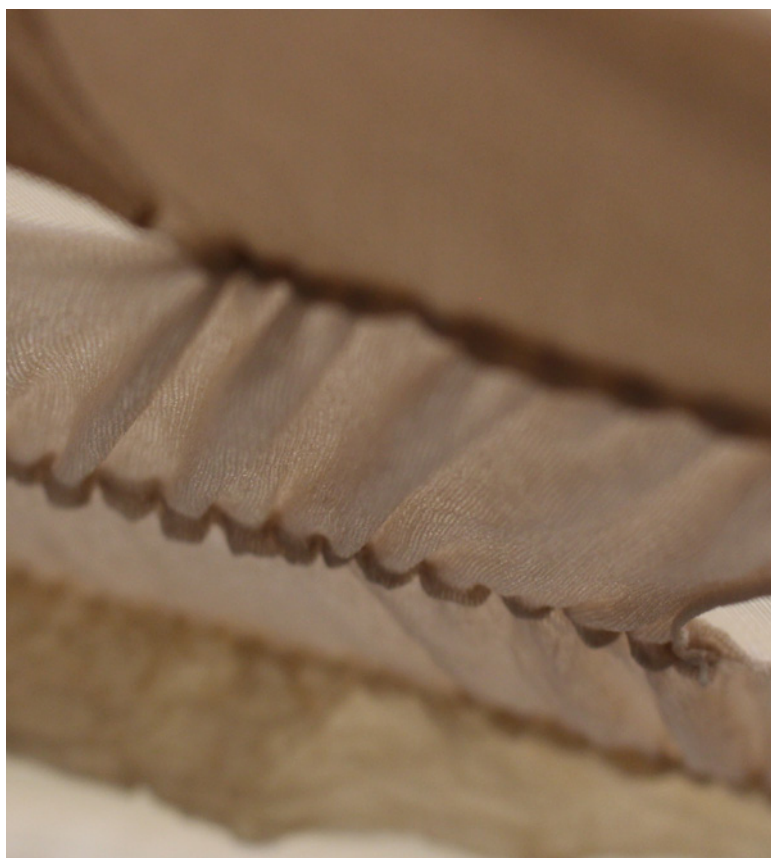
the production of its world, the body is also produced in the process (Simonsen, 2005, p. 4). This perspective challenges the human-centric discourse surrounding migration, transforming the understanding of the body beyond mere human anatomy to encompass all entities involved in the process of homemaking.

The title of this chapter, Embodied Timespace refers to a concept that integrates the notions of the body, time, and space into a cohesive framework. To embody is to contain or include an other as a constituent part of the

body in a tangible form. As one body with its own internal processes engages with other bodies, it forms a symbiotic relationship that harmonizes its diverse timespaces. The other bodies, in turn, become part of the one's extended self, blurring physiological boundaries and conceiving a unified totality.



In this context, the sense of touch out of all others becomes a vital mediator between bodies. For centuries, the heightened dependency on optics in architecture has fetishized the world into abstraction. This has inherently led to man's estrangement from his surroundings. As part of the lived experience, touch becomes a crucial aspect of affirming existence in other worlds (Simonsen, 2005, p. 2). The act of touching is reciprocal: the hand that touches is simultaneously touched by the other. Therefore, it becomes a vehicle through which the body perceives and is perceived. Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty further expands on this intersubjective relationship by terming the embodied conception of the body as "flesh." Through engagement, the "flesh" of the body, the "flesh" of the other, and the "flesh" of the world intertwine (Simonsen, 2007, pp. 171-172).





The “flesh,” referring to the body’s outer protective layer, contains and protects the body’s structural elements as in its bones, and functional elements as in its organs. Openings in the flesh serve as portals that facilitate the insides to communicate with the outside. If we extend the analogy of the “flesh” to the world, it implies that any other that the body engages with also has an inside. Besides the direct contact through touch, bodies communicate via excretion, absorption, penetration, and vibration. These stimuli are perceived through all senses: smell, taste, sound, touch as well as sight. Through this lens, the other, whether it is an object, a being, a person, or a terrain, is no longer seen as static, but rather animated, and its animation calls for a response (Simonsen, 2007, p. 172).

The acknowledgment and awareness of the limits of not only the other but also oneself is necessary for this engagement. Excess or insufficient stimulation can lead to deterioration, such as the wear and tear of the flesh through excessive friction or exertion, the breakdown of tissues due to inadequate nourishment, the compromise of structural integrity due to over-manipulation, etc.

THE HOUSEKEEPER

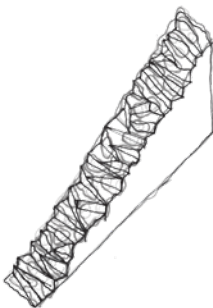
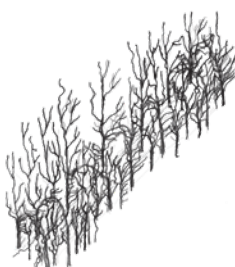
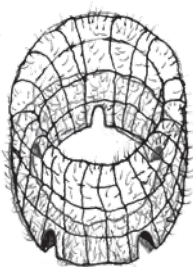
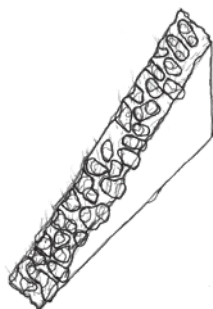
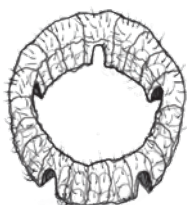
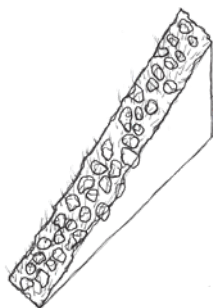
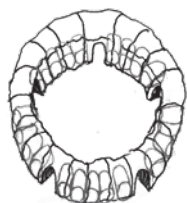
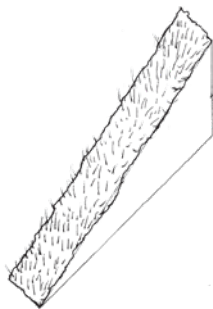
In the pursuit of unraveling the interplay among Space, Time, and Body within the realm of migration, this paper navigates through three distinct states that encapsulate the migratory experience. The initial chapter highlights how the systematic control of time and space affects the mobility of the migrating body. This phase defines the interaction of the body with time and space as systematic, establishing a foundation termed as relationalities. In the second chapter, the exploration of time and space takes on a different dimension as migrants engage in acts of transgression against the established relationalities. Here, the concept of relationalities is reconceptualized as "moment sites," acting as dynamic settings which allow migrants to practice temporal and spatial homemaking. Finally, the third chapter

marks a shift in focus, as the investigation places the body at the forefront, leading to a renaming of the constituents of moment sites as bodies. This phase delves into the embodiment of a multiplicity of timespaces, highlighting the physiological nature of these temporal-spatial interactions.

Expanding on these conclusions, the body emerges as the central node within the triad of Space, Time, and Body. Through movement, the body not only traverses but also catalyzes a profound spatialization of time and a temporalization of space. The interactions between migratory bodies intersecting with static transitory territories create a new dimension, characterized by an exchange between both parties that materializes through imprints.

How can the body be used to frame a architectural outcome?

How can architecture respond to a constant state of crisis?



07 Hedge

07 Welcome Mat

07 Buffet

07 Stairs

The design assignment involves the creation of a "Housekeeper" who assumes the role of a mediator within this dimension. By habitually organizing imprints, it strives to establish

a harmonious equilibrium between the migrant body and the surrounding territory, fostering a reciprocal inhabitation. This orchestrated ordering of imprints materializes through

a series of interventions, strategically placed along the Tuquesa and Membrillo rivers, which are central features in the two migratory routes through the Darien jungle, forming a closed-circle

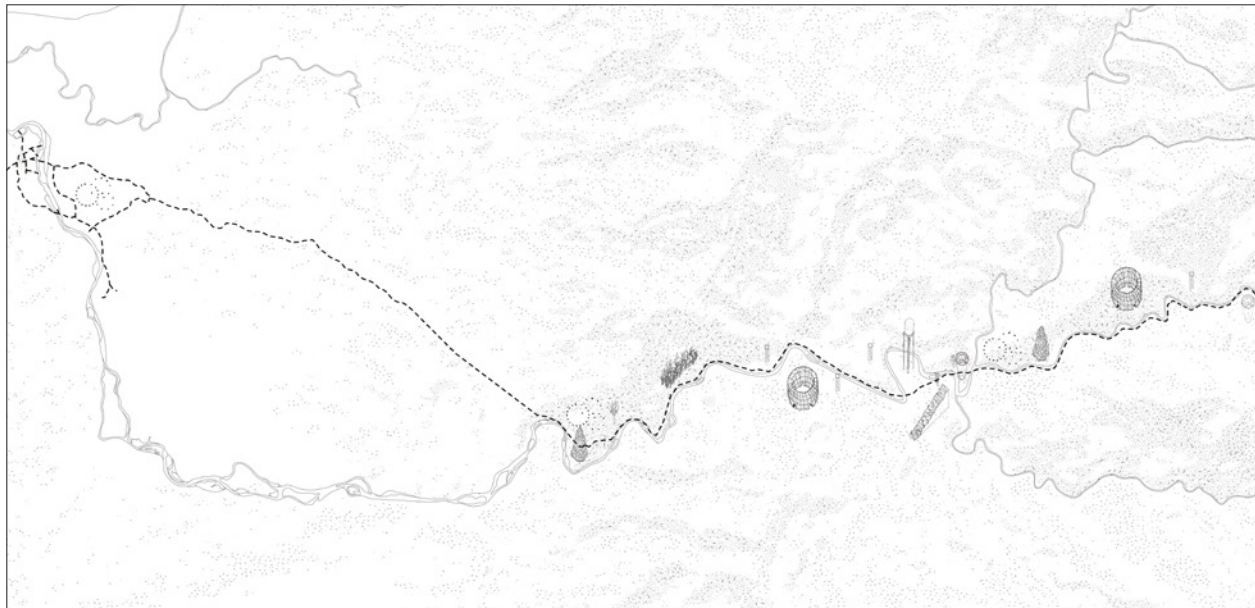


08 Modi Operandi 02 'Assemblage'

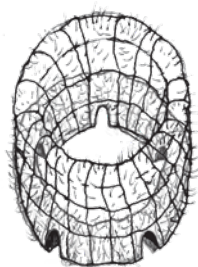
exchange. The continuity of these interventions relies on the active participation of both territorial elements and migrant bodies, sustaining the dimension. Once the exchange ceases, the

architectural assemblages undergo a self-destructive process, marking the end of that particular dimension.





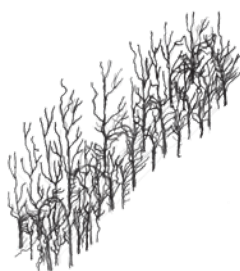
07 Hedge



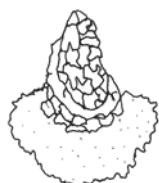
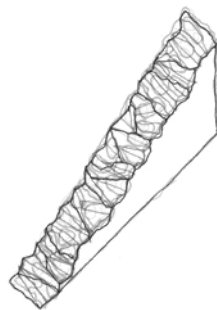
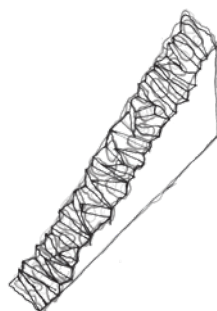
07 Welcome Mat

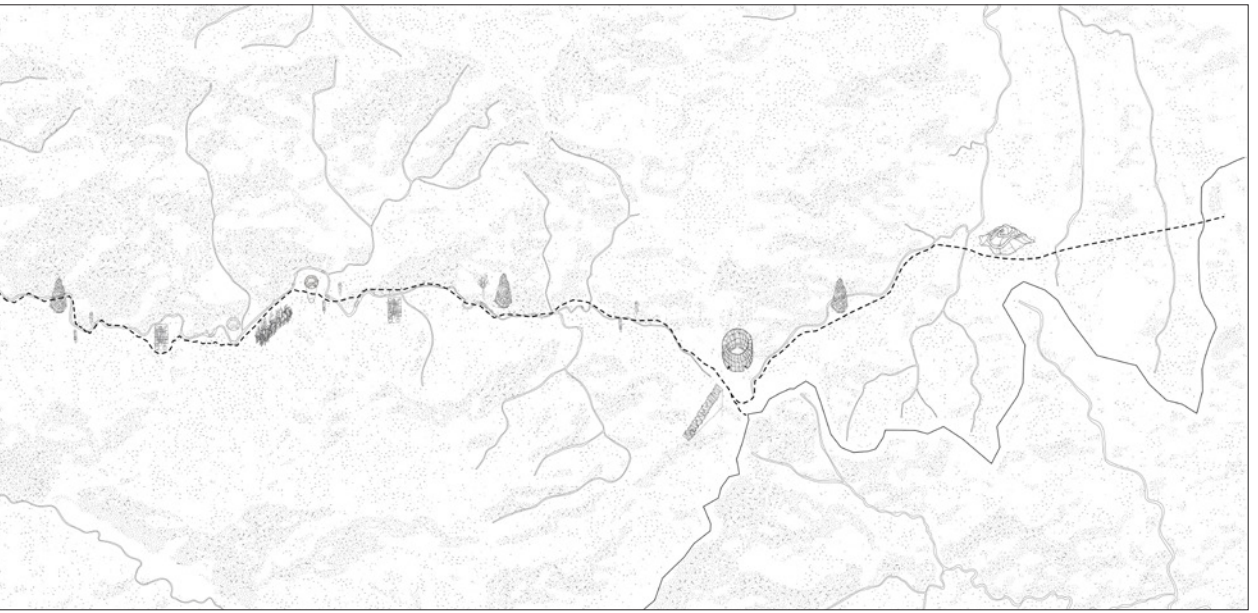


07 Buffet



07 Stairs





This approach embraces migration as an inevitable and dynamic process and, therefore, avoids creating systematic and permanent solutions. The architecture in this context is not static but rather evolves and disappears in response to the temporariness inherent in migration. Aligned with the project's exploration of migrants' placemaking strategies the project explores the potential of a body-centric approach for architectural endeavors.

09 Architectural Intent

REFERENCES

- Awan, N. (2020, January). On Navigating Horizonless Worlds: a countergeography of border regimes. *The Large Glass*, 29(30), 49-54.
- Cairns, S. (2004). Drifting. In S. Cairns, *Drifting: Architecture and Migrancy* (pp. 17-47). London: Routledge.
- Cresswell, T. (2006). *On the Move: mobility in the modern western world*. New York: Routledge.
- Everaert, I. G. (2020). *Migratory Timescapes: Experiences of Pausing, Waiting, and Inhabiting the Meanwhile of Migrants and Asylum Seekers in Migratory Timescapes: Experiences of Pausing, Waiting, and*. New York: CUNY Academic Works.
- Grabowska, S. (2016). *Anxious Architecture: Sleep, Identity, and Death in the US-Mexico Borderlands*. *Footprint*(19), 115-136.
- Indiana University Press.
- International Crisis Group. (2023). *Bottleneck of the Americas: Crime and Migration in the Darién Gap*. Brussels: International Crisis Group.
- Lee, K., & Espinosa, J. (2023, November 3). *Migrants in Panama*. (H. Jamkojian, Interviewer)
- Pons, M. (2023, November 10). *Recounting of Encounters with Migrants and Members of the Local Indigenous Communities in the Darien Gap*. (H. Jamkojian, Interviewer)
- Shubin, S. (2015). a Heideggerian approach to understanding the mobile being of Eastern Europeans in Scotland. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 40(3), 350-361.
- Simonsen, K. (2005). *Bodies, Sensations, Space and Time: The Contributions from Henri Lefebvre*. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 87(1), 1-14.
- Simonsen, K. (2007). *Practice, Spatiality, and Embodied Emotions: An Outline of a Geography of Practice*. *Human Affairs*, 17, 168-181.
- UNICEF Panamá. (2024, January 8). *Delrin, the migrant who supplies water to the Darien*. Retrieved from UNICEF: <https://www.unicef.org/panama/delrin-migrant-who-supplies-water-darien>
- Yates, C., & Pappier, J. (2023, September 20). *How the Treacherous Darien Gap Became a Migration Crossroads of the Americas - Panama*. Retrieved January 8, 2024, from ReliefWeb: <https://reliefweb.int/report/panama/how-treacherous-darien-gap-became-migration-crossroads-americas>

FIGURES

01 UNHCR. (2023). Map of Routes: Mixed Movements through Darien, Panama. ODP. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/100506>

02 Author. (2023). Alternative Mapping of Migration Routes through Panama

03 Author. (2023). Modi Operandi 01 'Ground'

04 Author. (2023). Moments of Intensity in the Darien Jungle [Drawing]. Adapted from screenshots from "Surviving the World's Deadliest Cartel Route! THE DARIEN GAP!" by Timmy Karter (2023). Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zft-0wAPxZnc&ab_channel=TimmyKarter

05 Author. (2023). Modi Operandi 03 'Spatial Situation'

06 Author. (2023). Modi Operandi 03 'Spatial Situation'

07 Author. (2023). Evolution of Imprints

08 Author. (2023). Modi Operandi 02 'Assemblage'

09 Author. (2023). Architectural Intent