Peace Spine - Unifying Walls within Belfast

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In a time in which conflict is expressed in the built environment through the erection of walls and the fortification of borders, an architecture that challenges division by inviting participants to change the space of that division over time, is one that necessarily calls into question the nature of the present state versus future becoming. This project takes on the question of borders by spatializing conflict, and proceeds by using that very architecture to anticipate change. It invites segregated communities to claim their space in a border in Belfast, Ireland, by turning that border into space, allowing participants to change the nature of the architecture and its use over time while attenuating the divisive nature it seeks to overcome.

This proposal inserts public programs in the former division lines erected throughout several kilometers Belfast. Replicating this architecture at key moments along the border produces a region-wide public spine inside of which the citizens of Belfast can claim their space right up against each other. There are two sides to any wall, and in this case the division is along the lines of Loyalists (Protestants) and Nationalists (Catholics). The public spine, which spatialize the border, becomes the third entity which absorbs both sides but only over time. This third becomes a place where difference is not evened out but is celebrated, a place where identity can be reinforced but in a public and inclusive manner. The programmed places will host public activities and ad hoc uses of the space: the Market area answers to the everyday needs of the residents and provides the exchange of goods from both sides; the school of transition is where the children will learn how to co-exist in an atmosphere far from the troubled sides.

Five programs along this border knit, over time, communities together by employing space as a political tool: overlapping and visible activities, common grounds, and a quasi-labyrinth of spaces all invite a weakening of the intensity of difference without outright negating identity. Form, holistic in plan but sheared in section, pays tribute to Roman Classicism. A bold formal experiment of spaces and voids is gently humanized in elevations and perspectives, allowing viewers to glimpse a uniquely architectural future of social reclamation and restoration.

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A contested boundary in Belfast, Ireland, becomes a new kind of public space in this careful and conscientious thesis project. All along the boundary spine, five programs knit communities together with overlapping and visible activities, common grounds, and a quasilabyrinth of spaces that invite a lessening of intensity.

Nearly familiar form-making, holistic in plan, but sheared in section create a contemporary update to Roman Classicism. A bold formal experiment of spaces and voids is gently humanized in elevations and perspectives, allowing viewers to glimpse a non-violent, and uniquely architectural, future of repair..
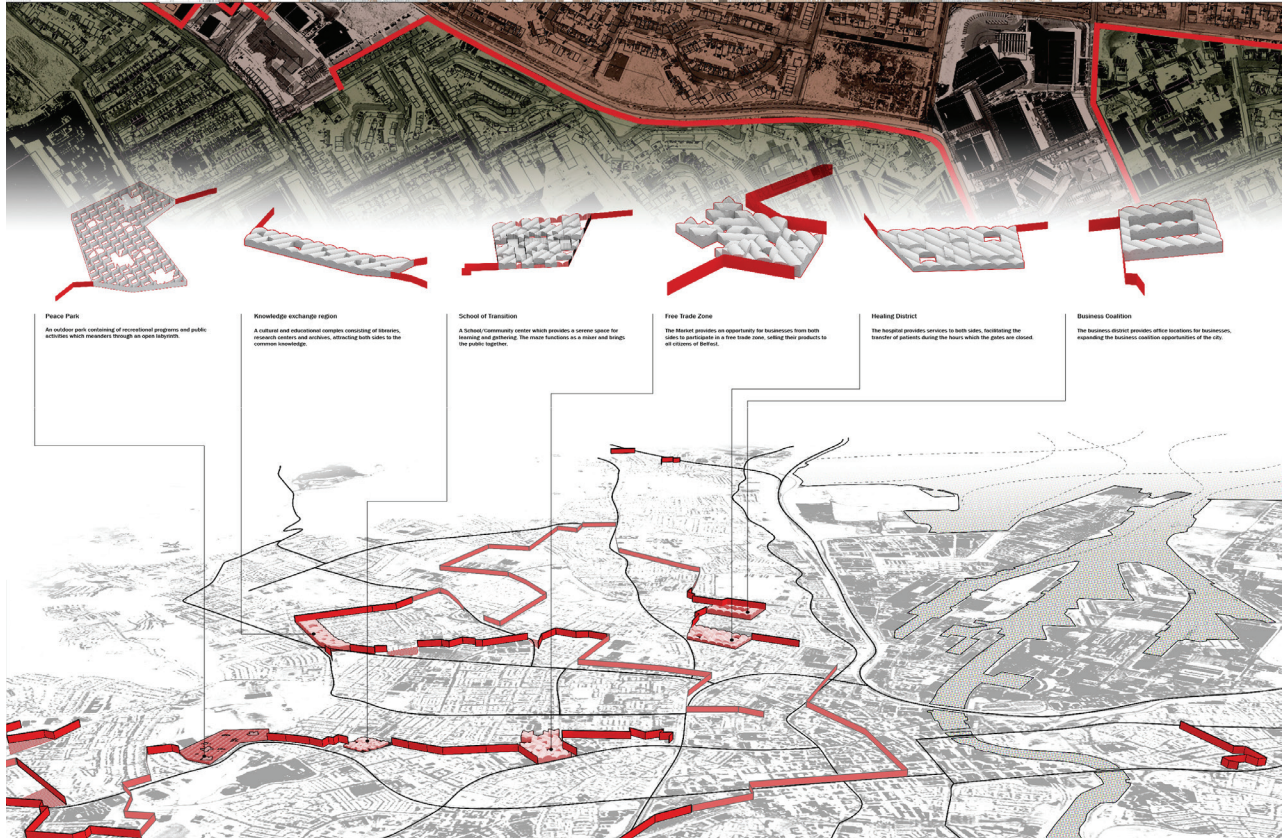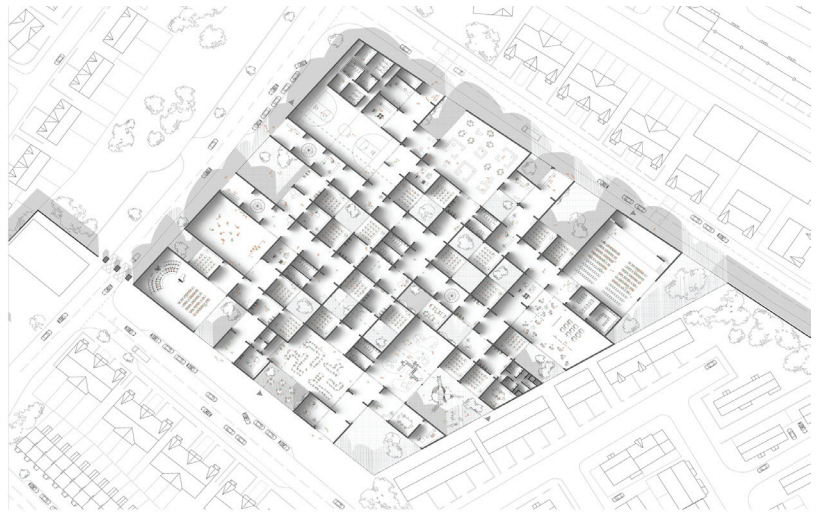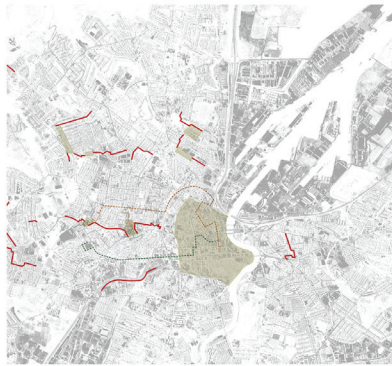
Peace Park
An outdoor park containing of recreational programs and public activities which meanders through an open labyrinth.

Knowledge exchange region
A cultural and educational complex consisting of libraries, research centers and archives, attracting both sides to the common knowledge.

School of Transition
A School/Community center which provides a serene space for learning and gathering. The maze functions as a mixer and brings the public together.

Free Trade Zone
The Market provides an opportunity for businesses from both sides to participate in a free trade zone, selling their products to all citizens of Belfast.

Healing District
The hospital provides services to both sides, facilitating the transfer of patients during the hours which the gates are closed.

Business Coalition
The business district provides office locations for businesses, expanding the business coalition opportunities of the city.