
Progress Report on the Post-Storage City

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INTRODUCTION

Progress Report on The Post Storage City is a speculative architectural design project that considers the quality of life in a post-consumer city. The mass consumption of material goods has driven the economic, cultural, and physical development of cities in the developed world since the advent of the Industrial Revolution. This project contemplates a city in which the role of consumption is dramatically reduced by the removal of a critical apparatus from the consumer landscape: Storage. Progress Report on The Post Storage City envisions a world in which closets, shelves, attics, garages and even streets become obsolete. It conjures the image of stripped down, reduced, and re-focused city. The Post Storage City consolidates itself around new transportation and supply chain realities while halting expansion into suburban and exurban landscapes. Progress Report on The Post Storage City is a meditation on the prominence of mechanism in design. The project contends that by altering a simple apparatus like Storage, it might be possible to initiate a series of profound shifts that would radically transform the physical form of the contemporary city. Progress Report on The Post Storage City predicts that the next iteration of the contemporary city will not emerge from a centralized planning process. Instead, it will arise from an accumulation of individual decisions, coordinated by single actors acting primarily out of self-interest, motivated by economic restrictions, and severe ecological demands.

CHAPTER 1

In the first decades of the twenty-first century, a severe and unprecedented shortage in crude oil led to skyrocketing petroleum prices and continual interstate warfare over diminishing oil reserves. The United Nations, alarmed at the increasing hostilities, convened an Emergency Special Session in a desperate attempt to calm anxieties and engineer global peace. The resulting Resource Scarcity Act of 2012—known as RSA 2012—took direct aim at the burgeoning levels of petroleum consumption that lay at the root of the mounting hostilities. Since petroleum is critical to the manufacture of virtually all consumer goods, RSA 2012 targeted soaring levels of personal consumption in the Developed World with a single but severe restriction on the one thing that made consumer culture possible: Storage. The UN correctly predicted that curtailing the exponential growth of Storage would create a de facto tax on personal consumption, forcing economies to invent a post-petroleum consumer economy. The legislation was simple, but its effects sent shock waves across consumer landscapes around the globe. When the dust settled, lifestyles shifted, economies distorted and cities transformed. RSA2012 consisted of just one sentence: “People must store all of their stuff in a Cube© the size of a 2012 Honda Accord.”

This is the story of the Post Storage City. It all began on December 21st, 2012—a date the once marked apocalypse on the Meso-American calendar—a date that now denoted the

death of consumer culture in the Developed World. On this day national governments distributed a single storage Cube© to each and every adult over the age of sixteen.

Manufacturers, elated with the massive government contract, enthusiastically produced Cubes© by the hundreds of millions. This created an international spectacle normally reserved for moon landings and World Cup Finals. On Cube© Day, as it became known, a great white fleet of trucks left manufacturing plants across the Developed World and unloaded pristine white Cubes© into the front yards of people around the globe.

CHAPTER 6

When the dust settled, cities could no longer be described with a single image—the skyline panorama—but instead gained distinction through a diverse mixture of block configurations, Distribution Clusters, and transportation networks. The Post-Storage City of 2042 did not rise from a centralized planning process. Instead, it resulted from the accumulation of individual decisions, motivated by a single but severe economic restriction handed down by the United Nations. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s single white Cube© sent shock waves across consumer landscapes in the Developed World, changing the way that people stored their stuff, and ultimately, the way that they lived their lives.

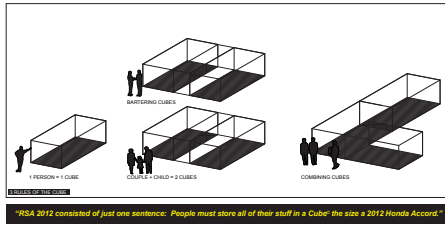
PROGRESS REPORT ON THE POST STORAGE CITY

Progress Report on the Post Storage City is a speculative architectural design project that considers the quality of life in a post-consumer city. The mass consumption of material goods has driven the economic, cultural, and physical development of cities in the developed world since the advent of the Industrial Revolution. This project contemplates a city in which the rate of consumption is dramatically reduced by the removal of a critical apparatus from the consumer landscape: Storage. Progress Report on the Post Storage City envisions a world in which closets, shelves, attics, garages and even streets become obsolete. It conjures the image of a stripped down, reduced, and re-focused city. The Post Storage City consolidates itself around new transportation and supply chain facilities while halting expansion into suburban and exurban landscapes. Progress Report on the Post Storage City is a meditation on the presence of mechanism in design. The project contends that altering a simple apparatus like storage, it might be possible to initiate a series of

CHAPTER 1: THE POST STORAGE MANDATE

In the first decades of the twenty-first century, a severe and unprecedented storage in crude oil led to skyrocketing petroleum prices and continual interstate warfare over diminishing oil reserves. The United Nations, alarmed at the increasing hostilities, convened an Emergency Session in a desperate attempt to calm anxieties and engender global peace [1]. The resulting Resource Scarce Act of 2012—known as RSA 2012—took direct aim at the burgeoning levels of petroleum consumption that at the root of the mounting hostilities [2]. Since petroleum is critical to the manufacture of virtually all consumer goods, RSA 2012 targeted scaling levels of personal consumption in the Developed World with a single but severe restriction on the one thing that made consumer culture possible: Storage. The UN correctly predicted that curtailing the exponential growth of storage would ultimately result in a de facto ban on personal consumption, forcing economies to invert to a post-petroleum consumer economy. The legislation was simple, but its effects were stark: access to consumer landscapes around the globe. When the dust settled, lifestyles shifted, economies distilled and cities transformed. RSA 2012 consisted of just one sentence: "People must store all of their stuff in a Cube® the size of a 2012 Honda Accord [3]."

This is the story of the Post Storage City. It all began on December 21st, 2012—the date the stock market reopened on the



CHAPTER 3: INDIVIDUALS ADAPT

Happily, angry, agonized gave way to ingenuity as people began to make friends with their Cubes®. Storage audits became public events and people began to form Storage networks to ease the pressure of RSA 2012. Communities soon realized that Storage was contained—there was real power in numbers. New Storage groups formed, motivated by a desire to eliminate redundancy in the Post Storage world. Blenders and barbecues became shared infrastructure. The act of buying was soon replaced by the act of exchanging. Cube® space became a precious commodity as each purchase was contingent on one's ability to free up space. People began to methodically curate their possessions, taking pride in their ability to make wise and thoughtful decisions regarding consumption. A public culture of Storage began to emerge in a world where having stuff was suddenly as expensive as not having stuff.

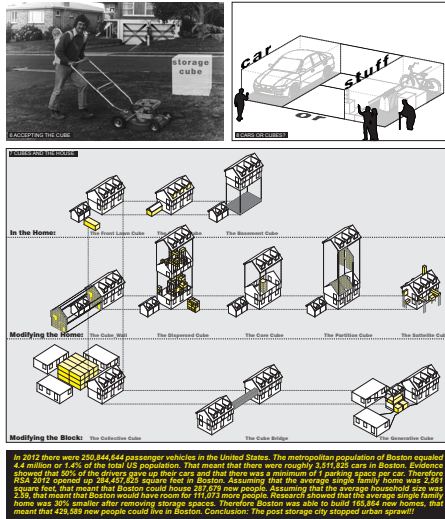
The Post Storage landscape began to dramatically transform the physical space of the city. Simply put, cities began to feel very empty. The single-family house, once the primary site of personal Storage, regained one-third of its capacity as residents purged garages, basements, attics, cupboards and closets [7]. Additional public building typologies such as shopping malls, libraries, warehouses became immediately obsolete. A campaign of radical retrofitting soon took place.

While the ultimate success of RSA 2012 relied on people's ability to re-think their patterns of consumption, its viability hinged on the flexibility of the Cube® system and people's ability to adapt to new domestic spaces. The types of adaptations were as diverse as the heterogeneous lifestyles that they accommodated. Still, three dominant patterns seemed to emerge. Some people chose to retrofit their existing basements, garages and attics to accommodate the Cube. Others utilized the Cube to produce more extensive modifications to the single-family home.

P Perhaps the most dramatic transformation, however, came from neighbors who decided to collectivize selected possessions. This typically occurred at the scale of the block while allowing neighbors with similar interests to share equipment and resources.

Over time, new Post Storage constituencies emerged as people adapted to life in the Post Storage City. People who argued demographic divide came when people realized that they did not have enough space to store their car and their stuff. Since UN officials originally designed the Cube to store a 2012 Honda Accord, people were faced with a decision of Solomonic proportions: Cars or Cubes [8]. The choice between car and Cube proved difficult for many. Life circumstances saw a dramatic increase in business as citizens across the globe reconsidered their life's priorities. Ultimately, half of the citizens chose to maintain their car and sell the majority of their stuff; the other half chose to keep their stuff and get rid of their car. The latter half committed to travel by train, bus and bicycle.

This decision had the impact of segregating groups, but not along typical racial, ethnic or social divides. In the Post Storage City, the primary demographic split occurred among those who chose their cars and those who chose their stuff. Since 50% of citizens rejected car ownership, there were 50% less cars on the road. With 50% less cars and drivers, the tax base immediately underwent dramatic



CHAPTER 5: SYSTEMS ADAPT

The most visible impacts of the RSA 2012 came in the form of architectural and urban transformations. The Act also had widespread and largely unseen effects on the existing processes of manufacturing and consumption. The supply chain historically relied on Storage as a lubricant to maintain a smooth and efficient flow of goods. The Post Storage supply chain relied on Just-in-Time Delivery technologies. Manufacturers processed goods in smaller quantities and shipped them closer. They used resources more efficiently and reduced overall waste. Traditional retail outlets which relied heavily on Storage became obsolete as RSA 2012 placed severe restrictions on stock levels.

Distributors bundled orders for consumers at local Distribution Centers and made these orders available for pick-up or delivery. A new architectural and urban typology emerged within the new supply chain: the Distribution Center. Previously, retailers stored goods on showrooms floors across the city. In the Post Storage City, the Distribution Center replaced the showroom floor, becoming an ultra-efficient delivery node for consumer goods [14]. Citizens no longer browsed and shopped on showroom floors in the Post Storage City; they entered items online and waited for their delivery at the Distribution Center. The Distribution Center became a critical hub in the Post Storage economy—the place where goods were bundled, delivered and staged for pick-up. Land prices around the Centers increased dramatically and dense infill emerged on surrounding blocks. Soon Distribution Centers became the preferred locations for restaurants, schools, public institutions and mass transit.

With increased density around the Distribution Center, programmatically diverse clusters emerged adjacent to existing transportation networks. These Clusters became the center of public life in the Post Storage City and important nodes for new public transportation systems. These nodes provided car-less residents with an efficient means of traveling between the dense clusters of the city.

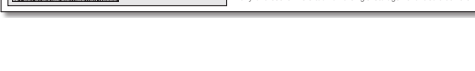
CHAPTER 6: THE POST STORAGE CITY

Where the traditional city sprawled in concentric circles from a dense center, the Post Storage City existed as a polycentric form of diverse clusters accommodating intense economic activity and dense housing [20].

By the year 2017, the dissemination of Storage Cubes® led to widespread requests within blocks and neighborhoods. Streets began to deteriorate as half the population abandoned driving as a primary means of transportation. The relative decline of the automobile meant that existing transit lines took on increased importance. During the first five years of the Post Storage City, people without cars began to cluster around existing transit stops [21]. New investment in the city therefore became concentrated along existing transportation spines. Soon developers, seeking to gain access to emerging markets, strategically located the first wave of Distribution Centers adjacent to transit stops. Residents who had moved to Distribution Centers responded by taking on Storage Tenants to increase their storage capacity. Blocks began to refill. Distribution Centers grew, and a feedback loop emerged [22].

This is how the transformation of the Post Storage City began [23]. Once neighborhoods surrounding the first wave of Distribution Centers filled up, the public began to demand increased transit options. There was simply not enough room around Distribution Centers to accommodate all the people without cars. In 2027 municipal governments responded by funding additional transit lines, typically bus or light rail, to serve peripheral population centers. These transit lines linked to existing transit lines and spurred development of a fully integrated and efficient transit network [24].

By 2027, clear districts materialized between portions of the city served by car mobility and portions of the city served by mass transit [25]. People without cars lived with walking distance to transit and carless Distribution Centers [26]. These areas typically had medium densities and accommodated a mix of Home Tenants and Storage Tenants. Neighbors who programmed themselves abandoned streets to accommodate public transport. People who lived in more traditional low-density areas were largely unaffected by these Owners took to single-use public transit so that



CHAPTER 2: DESPAIR SETS IN

Unfaded citizens gathered to inspect the novel stacks of storage Cubes® which now covered their neighborhoods. Most people had assumed that Cube® Day was a myth that would pass without event, much like Y2K. But as millions awoke to an alien landscape littered with plastic Cubes, a further crested with the hashtag #WTF??

Distribution teams deposited the Cubes® each 500 cubic feet in volume, onto front lawns and driveways around the world. Each Cube® came with a set of instructions and a pamphlet full of admonitions from the UN.

The instructions, scathingly to the Cube®'s interior, informed Owners of the new rules and regulations. As families gathered to read over the details of RSA 2012, they soon realized that the restrictions of a Post Storage City would change their lives forever. One common and surprising discovery involved the percentage of residential space devoted to Storage. In June 2011, an MIT research team estimated that the average American household dedicated 20% of their homes to Storage. When MIT released this data, many researchers questioned the veracity—and relevance—of the study. It turned out, 30% was a conservative estimate. The painful reality of life in the Post Storage City began to set in.

The Cubes® themselves were delivered to every citizen over the age of sixteen. Couples received two Cubes®, but children under the age of sixteen were not allocated a Cube®, forcing families to invent creative Storage options. The instructions informed Owners that Cubes® could be broken down into modules to maximize flexibility. Owners were free to locate, aggregate or move the modules in any way they saw fit.

The instructions further explained that Owners were allowed to share their Cubes® with friends, move their Cubes® to another location or sell them to the UN. The ACLU launched legal suits. People began to pack and re-pack their belongings in multiple configurations, and soon creative packing became a critical life skill. "Closing the Lid" on the Cube® became an important evening ritual: something one did before brushing their teeth and going to bed. Storage parties replaced Tupperware parties, and sports-packing became a semi-pro sporting event. Instructions also warned of inevitable Inspection Days which would bring auditors from the newly formed Storage Unit.

These Units were composed of former I.R.S. workers, now unemployed because of the stimulation of luxury taxes. The Storage Units showed up unannounced at the home of unsuspecting citizens and required them to deposit all of their belongings into Cubes® to verify that each household fell within approved Storage limits.

As first citizens wondered whether the Storage Units actually existed or whether their existence was just an urban myth, in 2013 Storage Unit patrols commenced and the dozzens had their answers. Violators of RSA 2012 weren't subject to fines or criminal prosecutions. Instead Storage Units asked violators to host Storage sales [4]. At these sales, neighbors were free to take whatever they desired as long as they had room to Store it in their own Cube.®. Particularly needy neighbors might tout onto important heirlooms until the Storage scofflaws were able to put their Cube® affairs in order.

The year 2012 proved highly chaotic. Discarded automobiles littered roadways, streams and fields. Neighborhood associations organized massive garage sales as desperate residents tried to rid themselves of unwanted possessions. Sales were slow, however, and soon barges of stuff left the Developed World for off destinations where material need, not material excess, was the issue. As the reality of the Post Storage City set in, chaos erupted in the streets. Protestors demanded the right to consume and Store [5]. They felt that their basic human and consumer rights were under assault by the UN. The ACLU launched legal suits against the UN and governments across the world convened more emergency meetings to contemplate the crisis.

CHAPTER 4: GROUPS ADAPT

Ultimately, road infrastructure in the Post Storage City fell into disrepair. As a result, those with cars began migrating towards the remaining roads, those without cars began to re-inhabit territories previously occupied by roads and Storage infrastructure. This pattern soon led to the emergence of large mixed-use super-blocks. The resulting decline of the automobile and its related infrastructure had a profound impact on the physical fabric of the city. The emerging empty space included surface parking, street parking for bicycles, driveways and garages. Of these changes, the most profound transformation involved the decline of the driveway and garage. This is not surprising given that 50% of the city was composed of housing. Planners were elated by the thought of exploring this new vacant asset. They immediately went to work curving numbers, soon realizing that if they converted 50% of all parking spaces in the city to housing, they could reverse urban sprawl. Over time, new architectural typologies emerged and began to infill vacant space in the No Car Zones.

With Storage space in limited supply, the sharing of common goods became a necessity. Residents realized that it was to their advantage to have more neighbors as it maximized the capacity for shared goods. This led to new public programs within the block which helped mitigate the hardship of Post Storage life. Common block improvements included agriculture, "stuff-less" play structures for kids and space for collective recreation. Additionally, new ownership and tenant arrangements emerged. One common arrangement involved the swapping of Storage space for land. In this scenario, home Owners agreed to let tenants build a home on the Owner's lot in exchange for a share of the tenant's Storage Cube. This arrangement became known as Tenant Housing [6-16]. The following block typologies represent some of the most popular collective arrangements in the Post Storage City.

