Constellations of the In-between: Architectural Speculations in Contested Urban Interstices

LORINC VASS
University of British Columbia

The city, far from being a physical object with a coherent view, is a complex assemblage of material and immaterial events and unfolding in space and time. Against this complexity and formlessness, the capacity of architecture is commonly located in the imposition of limits. Yet amidst an increasingly trans-disciplinary field, and in an environment of uncertainty and change, the nature of architectural intervention and its sources of agency increasingly come into question. In this question-ing of spatial design practice today, the concerns of aesthetics, politics and ethics are inseparable. This is unmistakably mani-fest in urban conditions of interstitiality: the many overlooked, and often contested, in-between territories at large across the city. 'Constellations of the In-between' explores such marginal spaces, with an interest in the latent forms of agency found in the complex spatio-temporal topologies of material elements, social frameworks, and cultural practices.

The project comprises four architectural speculations in ter-ritories selected from across Metropolitan Vancouver: each a unique interstitial constellation, but together commonly char-acterized by ambiguous and contested relations between spa-tial jurisdiction and temporal occupation. Drawing on spatial indeterminacy and temporal flux as repositories of agency, a series of propositions respond to possible trajectories facing each site. (1) In 'Displaced Reserve: Acoustic Crossing,' a constel-lation of communication devices are deployed at the Kitsilano Indian Reserve no. 6, a historically contested aboriginal village site in Vancouver. By collecting, focusing and transmitting sound, the acoustic mirrors engender provisional connections across the multiple jurisdictions currently occupying the terri-tory. (2) In 'Assemblage Agriculture: Interfaith Silo,' a series of shared parking towers are constructed in Richmond's 'Highway to Heaven,' located on the edge of protected agricultural land specially zoned for religious buildings. Responding to the uneasy coexistence of assembly and agriculture, the new infra-structure allows both activities to expand beyond their conven-tional zoning boundaries. (3) In 'Mutable Habitat: Commuter Cover,' a series of canopies are installed in Burnaby's (in)

famous winter roosting site of northwestern crows. Deployed above street-front parking, the tensile constructions provide a series of civic amenities for both humans and crows, working around their respective daily and seasonal cycles of occupa-tion. (4) In 'Succession Infrastructure: Collective Clearing,' pub-licness and privacy become intertwined on the right-of-way of a natural gas pipeline in Surrey. Populated by a series of devices that facilitate spatial demarcation and communal gathering, the linear greenway becomes a mediating framework between personal and shared jurisdiction.
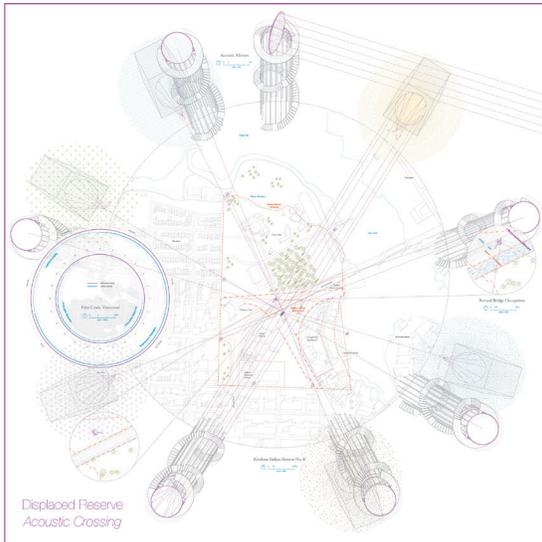
Positioned between realism and provocation, each speculation builds on the existing topological relationship found within its particular interstitial context, drawing forth its latent potential for new, productive spatial and temporal configurations. As such, each intervention encompasses both a localized catalyst and its system-wide effects on the landscape. Beyond trans-forming the territories onto which they are projected, these effects also become sources of agency for the very process of drawing. In this undertaking, 'constellation' constitutes both the subject and the method. It offers multiple, seemingly unconnected viewpoints, and allows for an open-ended yet constructive mapping of relations. It involves both looking at multiple points, and looking from those points. By offering alternative vantage points on the city, and proposing spatial arrangements conductive to communication, cohabitation, succession and negotiation, 'Constellations of the In-between' operates across the realms aesthetics, politics, and ethics.

# Constellations of the In-between
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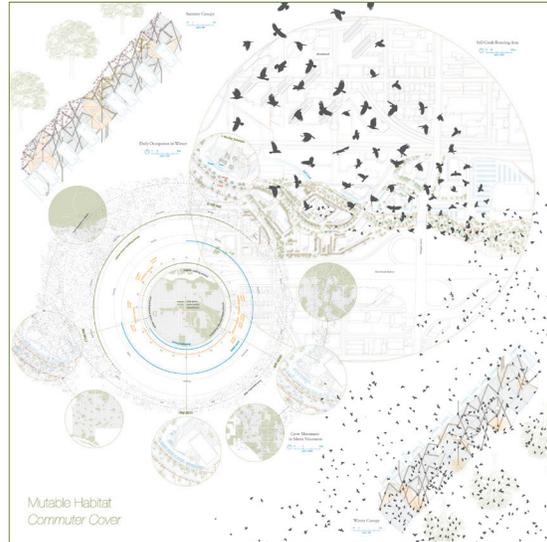
Displaced Reserve
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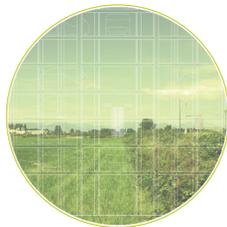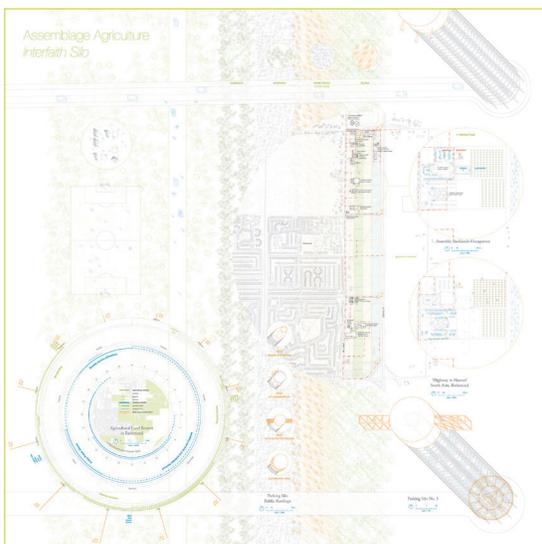
Mutable Habitat
Commuter Cover

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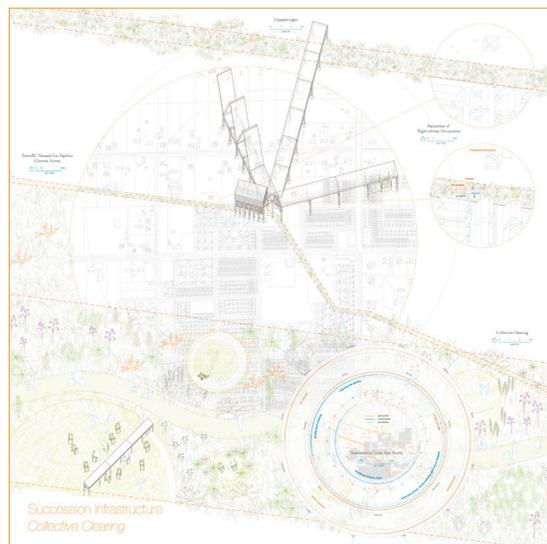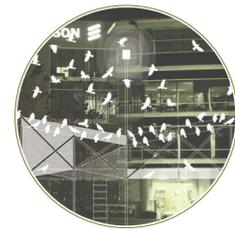
Assemblage Agriculture
Interfaith Silo

Succession Infrastructure
Collective Clearing

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