Occupy POMO | A Citizen's Guide to Urban Excavation

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OCCUPY POMO

CITIZEN’S GUIDE TO URBAN EXCAVATION

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INDEX

Q 1 Why did we make this guide?

C 1 Current Conditions of the City

C 2 Proposed New Conditions of the City

Q 2 Who is this guide for?

Q 3 What are the steps to get started?

Q 4 How do I use this guide?

S 1 Thickened FACADE

S 2 Thickened HALLWAY

S 3 Thickened STAIRCASE

U.S Urban Shortstories

B.B Bibliography
Why did we make this guide

Traditionally, architects’ definitions of solid-void conditions create a dichotomy between private, or built matter and public, or void, spaces. Yet, this notion is a missed opportunity to understand the complex society of the twenty-first century that no longer operates within the realm of open, public space nor does it act as a primal cohesiveness of culture and community. Rather than aggregating at instances of density it is lost within a new ghostly cosmopolitan substitute of mass consumption and globalized culture. This new public realm is a “phantom public sphere”, one comprised of “sub-publics” that feeds to tailored demands of a mass culture. But how can the public realm mediate between these emerging sub-publics without submitting to isolation?

By critiquing the role of park revitalization as a tool of neighborhood gentrification, as well as understanding the imbalanced opportunity cost of Floor Area Ratio (FAR) bonuses gained by private developers in return for oftentimes sterile Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS), “Occupy POMO” proposes to further deploy public space as a political mechanism, driven by Post-Modernist (POMO) discourse, it strives to reshape the city as it speculates on strategies for designing public spaces that can more truly reflect the public realm. It acts as an agent of infiltration. Infiltration into the vertical city, the city of tenants rather than the city of corporations. Through a series of interventions that juxtapose the culture of the sub-publics onto the existing site, it questions the traditional solid-void condition of the city and its high-rise typology. It explores beyond the adjacencies and collection of space and looks into moments and boundaries of intersection and posits a new notion of an urban cavity, through which the public realm infiltrates into the private sector.

A city as dense as the Manhattan real-estate grid will always be a space of agitation, where the private developments demands and biases will convolute the way the public domain operates. This thesis speculates, via the dichotomy between ownership and accessibility, on how politics and architecture might be equally complicit in the process of urban form-making.
“POMO of the 21st Century—serving low-culture with radical aesthetics!”

CONCEPT: Internal Network
C1

CONDITIONS
OF THE CITY

Q:
WHAT KINDS OF PUBLIC SPACES EXIST IN THE
CITY AND HOW ARE THEY A PROBLEM?
In 1850, the city designates 153 blocks in the Manhattan grid for the public. The notion of solid and void is deployed with a high rate of success in a highly dense and rapidly growing urban city.
Rem Koolhaas notes New York’s “exploding population is engulfing the remaining grid like a freak wave” and urgent plans are made to reserve sites that are still available for parks” and a conscious void or unbuilt space is reserved between Fifth and Eight avenue and 59th and 110th streets. In a fashion of taxidermy, preservation of nature is facilitated. Through an operation of artificial lakes, (trans)planted trees, and engineered accidental incidents are consciously orchestrated.
THE DOWNTOWN ATHLETIC CLUB

SOLID CONDITION OF THE PUBLIC

THE INVENTION OF THE ELEVATOR, ENABLES THE SOLID TO BE PUBLIC

Yet, the consumer of a cosmopolitan city wants something more specified to his taste...

‘The Wallstreet Bachelor’ prefers:

“Eating oysters with boxing gloves, naked, on the nth floor - such is the “plot” of the ninth story, or, the 20th century in action.”
Thus, a new solid void relation is set up. Built in 1931, “the Skyscraper is used as a Constructivist Social Condenser: a machine to generate and intensify desirable forms of human intercourse”. As Koolhaas points out, the 13 elevators power the 38 ‘plots’ of highly choreographed activities and transform the locker room to the size of a Skyscraper. Environments can be mechanically controlled and public spaces can be highly specific to the users need.
UNION SQUARE PARK

VOID CONDITION OF THE PRIVATE

THE VOID CONDITION FOR THE PUBLIC IS QUESTIONABLE AS IT BECOMES A TOOL FOR GENTRIFICATION

But in other instances, the reserved void is exploited.

“The public space’s “revitalization [becomes] an instrument of urban restructuring through oppressive program.” -Roslyn Deutsche
Roslyn Deutsche in her book *Evictions* points out that public spaces are no longer just about *accessibility* but also about *owenership*. Using the example of the revitalization project of Union Square Park in 1983, she argues that “by implication, redevelopment projects are employing architecture as a disciplinary mechanism, transforming city neighbourhoods into weathly enclaves”.

So even though it is a park meant for everyone, the “undesirables” and “undesireable market activity” is not welcomed and a sense of ownership over that park is implied.
Q1: WHAT KINDS OF PUBLIC SPACES DO WE PROPOSE?
SPACIAL STRATEGY CONCEPT: Pocket Activity

Internally networked public space that would mediate the citizen between the business and consumer realm.
SPACIAL STRATEGY CONCEPT: Hallway Take-Over

Internally networked public spaces that expose us to activity within the privatized city and at the same time provide a platform within which we can express ourselves.
Q 2 : Flaneurs of the 21st Century

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR

1. We are NOT PLEASED by air conditioned spaces of authority.

2. We DON’T CARE about what is happening on the streets, which lady is acting suspicious and which gentleman is acting extra ordinarily polite.

3. We DON’T WANT capitalist buffets of packaged lifestyles nor do we care for the generic broadway storefront kitsch.

4. WE WANT to know what is happening in the round rooms and on the 22nd floors of our vertical cities.

5. .................................................................
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6. .................................................................
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7. .................................................................
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8. .................................................................
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   ......................................................................
Walter Benjamin described the flâneur as the essential figure of the modern urban spectator, an amateur detective and investigator of the city. More than this, his flâneur was a sign of the alienation of the city and of capitalism. For Benjamin, the flâneur met his demise with the triumph of consumer capitalism. \[1\]

[...well with their demise it is our rise!]


**flâneur;**

[flah-noær]

an idler or lounger.
Q 3: What are few things you need to keep in mind to get such a project on its way?

1. WHAT MEDIA TYPE?

These excavations are meant to provide a platform for expression and urban debate:
- So are you a visual artist and want a communal atelier space?
- Are you a blogger and need wifi?
- Are you a talker and want help getting some air space?
- Are you a small time video maker and need a cool space to screen your videos without sensorship or gallery snobbery?

2. HOW DO PEOPLE ENGAGE WITH YOUR EXCAVATION?

If you are holding this we are sure you love to express yourself and want your opinions heard, but how do you engage others into your activity?

- Think about the kind of platform that would display your work and invite people to critique it.

- If you are a painter, is your painting on a canvas or in someone’s office. Is it a mural that tells a story about the vertical cities immediate site and socio political issues?

- If you are a blogger, create a gallery to juxtapose a virtual world onto the immediate world. Monitor screen galleries that run within the boardroom meetings and live stream your opinions onto their talks?
HOW WILL YOU FUND YOUR PROJECT?

Yeah that’s right, this is no charity case, you are occupying space in a corporate vertical city, it will always be a give and take. How can you offer them something that will interest them in your project?

- Are you a chef cook and could potentially offer evening cooking classes people can pre-book lessons for?

- Are you a blogger and within a bloggers community raise money through letting them reserve displayslots in your monitor gallery?

- Are you a writers community and will
Q 4:

HOW DO I USE THIS GUIDE
We put together *three strategies* how you can occupy a space in the vertical city. **PICK ONE THATS APPLIES TO YOU AND CONTINUE TO THAT PAGE**

1. **The Thickened Facade [p.25]**

   We think the facade is a placeholder for a city of the past. A city build by architects for the corporations of the world. Yet, the city of today is not about a single entity that rises 1000 feet from the ground. The contemporary city is the city for tenants. We hope by fragmenting the monolith facade, we also fragment the notion of scale and introduce the scale of the inhabitant [YOU] rather than the scale of the phantom corporations.

2. **The Thickened Hallway [p.47]**

   We see our vertical city not as an aggregation of large scale corporations that sit on the ground plane, but rather understand the city through the notion of the tenant typology. We understand the tenant typology not as a stacked condition, but rather as vertical infrastructure similar to that of a city. The elevators become the subways, the elevator lobbies become nodes of interaction and connection, the hallways the new street condition - a space we hope to convert from private ownership to communal public space that is rightfully that of the city.

3. **The Thickened Staircase [p.53]**

   We all have that spark of curiosity within us. That idler that is just looking for some sort of shortterm engagement. On the street that would be the food vendor, the singers and dance performers, etc. In the Vertical city, the notion of a building core reduces our circulation experience to that of location *a* with destination *b*. We hope to fragment the staircase into multiple site conditions *x*, *y* and *z* to allow for short term engagement opportunities.
S1
THICKENED FACADE
USE THE THICKEND FACADE TYPOLOGY:

1. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN LISTENING IN ON BOARD ROOM ACTIVITIES FOR
   - Blogging Activities
   - PodCasts or Radio Station

2. IF YOU ARE TAKING OVER A VACANT LOT
   - Atelier Spaces
   - Book Clubs
   - Event Spaces

3. IF YOU ARE PLANNING ON MAKING A POINT BY SETTING UP SHOP ADJACENT TO A CERTAIN EXISTING TENANT
   - Disagree with marketing policies (J-Stor limited user interface)
   - High prices on products due to market monopoly status
Pocket activity for performance artists, pocket activity for authors and book enthusiasts, ...
BLOGGER X

Sony's newest director seems a bit at odds with our generation's understanding of music. Maybe if the firm tried to do more market research they would know they need to support their artist a bit better rather than letting...
A. You can set up headphones and listen in instead of waiting for press releases.

B. You can set up laptops, use their WiFi, and set up a bloggers platform.

C. You can set up monitors and have your thoughts be displayed at places that matter.

Blogger X:
Sony's newest director seems a bit odd with our generations understanding of music. Maybe if the firm tried to do more market research they would know they need to support their artist a bit better rather than letting...
STRATEGY #1

ISOLATED BLOGGERS CAPSULE
STRATEGY #2

BENDED FACADE ROOM INSERTION
STRATEGY #3
ACTIVITY EXTENSION
STRATEGY #4
BETWEEN TWO MEETINGS
STRATEGY #5

CAFE TYPOLOGY

Do you want to get to know your own tenant community?
BY STEPPING INTO THE HALLWAY, THE EXCAVATION GETS NOTICED FROM WITHIN. BUT NOT PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE ENTRY FORCES PEOPLE TO EXPLORE OTHER FLOORS TO ENTER THE EXCAVATION.

INSTEAD OF EATING ON A LONELY BENCH NEXT TO SOME STREET VENDOR, GET TO KNOW YOUR OWN VERTICAL CITY COMMUNITY.
STRATEGY # 6

VACANT LOT TAKE-OVER
(allow entry from interior hallway, or close the entry by dry sheet rock)
STRATEGY # 7

ARCHIVE TYPOLOGY
(get noticed from the interior hallway)
CONSTRUCTION TYPE:
ADDITION

INTERIOR DRY-WALL PLASTER

WOOD FRAME STRUCTURE

PRINTED CONSTRUCTION MESH SCREEN

GRATE FLOORING

EXTERIOR GRANITE CLADDING

CHECK NEXT PAGE FOR MORE DETAILED CONSTRUCTION CONSIDERATIONS.
A

PARTS OF THE BUILDING ARE STRUCTURAL, THIS INTERVENTION IS ONLY ADDITIONAL MATERIAL, DOES NOT NEED ANY STRUCTURAL CHANGES

B

THE PLATFORM IS ADDED AT WINDOW LEVEL AFTER THE WINDOW IS DEMOUNTED FROM THE INSIDE. THE PLATFORM WILL BE USED TO SET UP A SCAFFOLDING SYSTEM THAT IS TIED BACK TO THE BUILDINGS STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS. NOTE: We ask you to spray paint the platform yellow to establish visual vocabulary throughout the city.

C

USE CONSTRUCTION MESH ON TOP OF THE EXTERIOR FACADE ELEMENTS YOU BUILD. CONTACT US FOR CUSTOMIZED PRINTS FOR VARIOUS DIFFERENT BUILDING FACADES

D

PUT CLADDING ON THE INTERIOR OF YOUR EXCAVATION IN ORDER THE BREAK DOWN THE NOTION OF A FACADE AS A BARRIER BETWEEN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE
IN THE PLATFORM CAGE, MAKE SURE TO ADD CANTILEVER WEIGHTS, WE SUGGEST PLASTIC WATER BASE WEIGHT BOXES.
YOU CAN SIMPLY USE THE WATER IN THE BUILDING TO FILL THEM UP.
REUSE THE DEMOUNTED WINDOW FOR YOUR OWN EXCAVATION DESIGN.
USE DETACHABLE WALKWAY PLATFORMS FOR EASY MAINTENANCE AND FOR FLEXIBLE MESH SCREEN INSTALLATION.
USE EASY AND LIGHTWEIGHT FURNITURE AND PROPS.
MAKE SURE TO INCLUDE INSULATION INTO YOUR DRY WALLS, CLOSE THE AIR VENTS, AND JUST TAP INTO THEIR ELECTRIC OUTLETS FOR YOUR DIGITAL INSTALATIONS.
S2

THICKENED HALLWAY
STRATEGY # 8

HALLWAY ANNEX
(addition to the hallway circulation)
STRATEGY # 9

HALLWAY REROUTE
(forces the user to enter the pocket activity)
STRATEGY # 10

50 - 50 HALLWAY (aims for an equal amount of single tenant versus public FAR)
S 3
THICKENED STAIRCASE
STRATEGY # 11

STAIRCASE ANNEX
(breaks the staircase circulation)
STRAIGHT # 12

STAIRCASE REROUTE
(forces the user to enter the pocket activity)
U. S

URBAN SHORTSTORIES
Ferdinand Tönnies argues in 1922, that a “primal cohesiveness” of culture at instances of density, is lost to a new “ghostly cosmopolitan substitute”. He recognizes a shift from community to society that no longer operates within the realm of the open public space.
Bruce Robbins declares this condition as

“sub-publics”
that feeds to the specific demands of highly individualized sub-cultures of today.
SUCCESSIVE ARCHITECTURE

MEDIUM OF SKYSCRAPPERS (Preston Scott Cohen)

Stacked flooring in a skyscraper could be compared to the Andy Warhol’s 1963 film narrative “Sleep”. The static organisation of the successive floors lack programmatic dynamism. Usually a movie shows some sort of narrative through a succession of picture frames, yet skyscrapers are like the same picture repeated over and over, producing no narrative and thus not exploiting the full potential of a skyscraper.

By counterposing two types of endlessness, stacking and extrusion, the Hancock Tower brings into consciousness the most habitually
“Conical Intersect, Matta-Clark’s contribution to the Paris Biennale of 1975, manifested his critique of urban gentrification in the form of a radical incision through two adjacent 17th-century buildings designated for demolition near the much-contested Centre Georges Pompidou, which was then under construction. By destructuring existing sites, he sought to reveal the tyranny of urban enclosure.”
URBAN THEME PARKS
& CITY TABLEAUX

POLITICS OF PUBLIC SPACES
“PUBLIC BEAUTIFICATION IS A MINDLESS MARKETING FAD TO ATTRACT FOOTLOOSE CAPITAL.”

[Don Mitchell]
SUPERKILEN

NETWORKED DEMOGRAPHICS
Bibliography


