# Evasions of Power
## On the Architecture of Adjustment

Edited by
Katherine Carl, Aaron Levy, and Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss

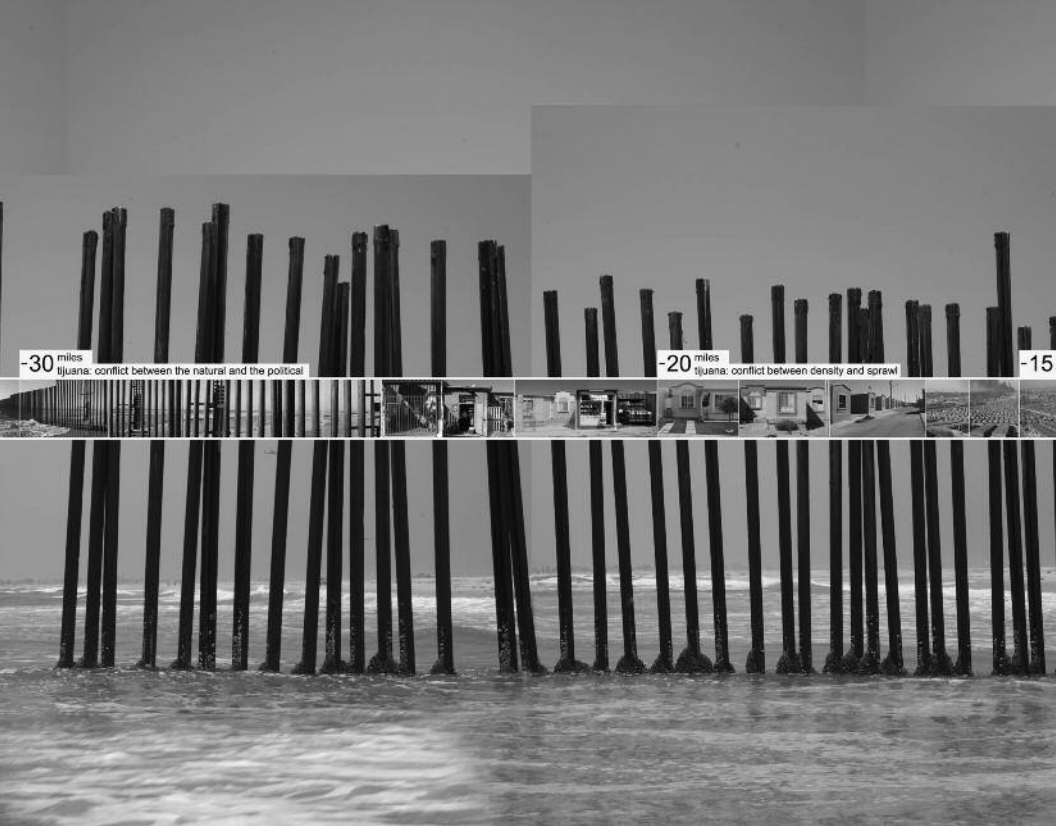
Contributions by
Carlos Basualdo, Lindsay Bremner, Eduardo Cadava,
Katherine Carl, Teddy Cruz, Keller Easterling, Anselm Franke,
Deborah Gans, Liam Gillick, Jeanne van Heeswijk, Manuel Herz,
David Kazanjian, Dennis Kaspori, Sean Kelley, Sanjay Krishnan,
Laura Kurgan, Thomas Y. Levin, Aaron Levy, Catherine Liu,
Jill Magid, Detlef Mertins, Markus Miessen, John Palmesino,
Nebojsa Seric Shoba, Taryn Simon, Samuel Weber,
Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss, Eyal Weizman

Philadelphia: Slought Foundation
contemporary theory series, no. 4

Novi Sad: kuda.nao
book series, no. 2

# Where is Architectural Practice?

Teddy Cruz


-30 miles
tijuana: conflict between the natural and the political
-20 miles
tijuana: conflict between density and sprawl
-15

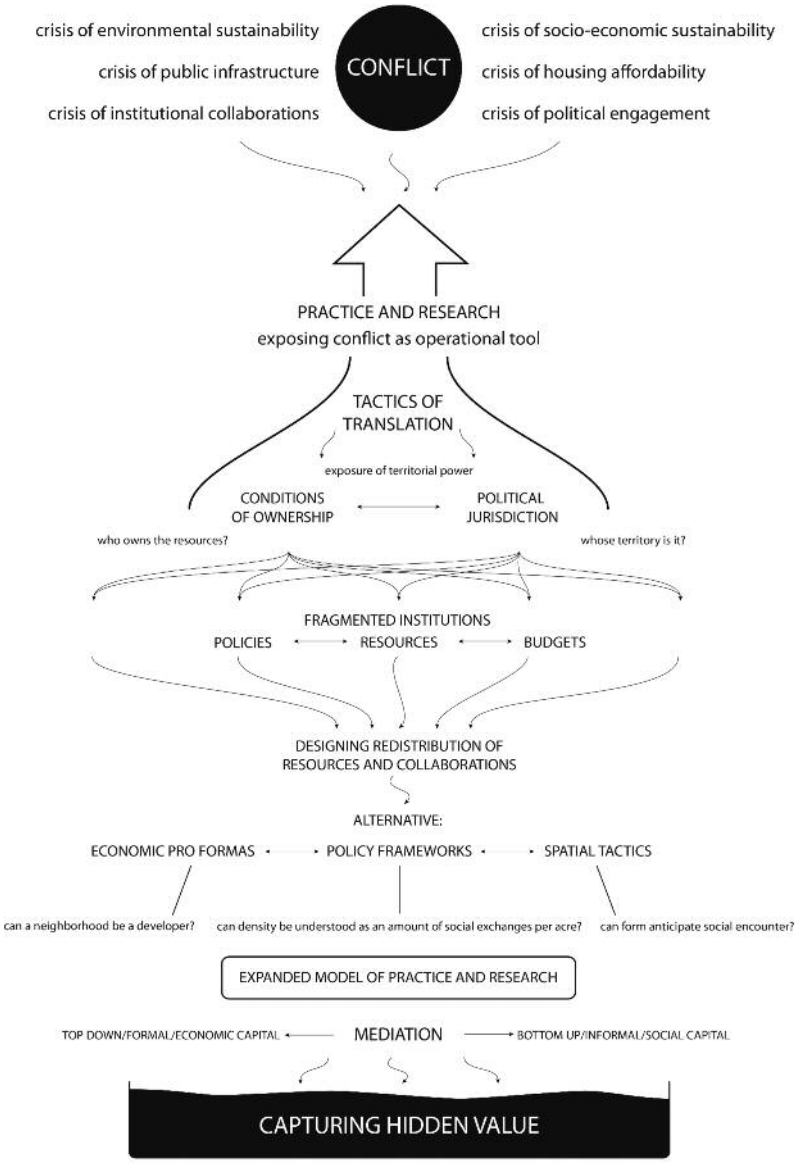
miles
border: conflict between two border cities
+15 miles
san diego: conflict between the formal and informal
DANGER
OBJECTS
UNDER
PILEGRO
+20 miles
san diego: conflict between military base

miles
tijuana: conflict between factories and emergency housing
-10 miles
tijuana: conflict between the informal and natural ecologies
-0.5 miles
tijuana: conflict between river and border

s and environmental zones
+25 miles
san diego: conflict between gated communities and everyday life
+28 miles
san diego: conflict between

1.
The transformation of our practice in recent years, in terms of our own interests, motivations, and procedures, has been inspired by a feeling of powerlessness, as our institutions of architectural representation and display have lost their socio-political relevance and advocacy. We have been increasingly disappointed by the futility of our design fields in the context of pressing socio-political realities worldwide, as conditions of conflict re-define the territory and practice of intervention. It has been unsettling to witness some of the most "cutting edge" practices of architecture rush unconditionally to China and The Arab Emirates to build their dream castles, and in the process reduce themselves to mere caricatures of change, by camouflaging gentrification with a massive hyper aesthetic and formalist project. We hope that in the context of this euphoria for the "Dubais" of the world, and the limitless horizon of possibilities for architecture that these centers of economic power provide, that practice can also be inspired by a sense of dissatisfaction, and a feeling of "pessimistic optimism," that can provoke us, head on, to also address the sites of conflict that define and will continue to define the cities in the twenty-first century.

2.
While international development in major urban centers has defined the economic and political recipes through which architectural practice decorates, new and experimental practices of intervention and collaboration will emerge from zones of conflict and from the margins. It is in the periphery where conditions of social emergency are transforming our ways of thinking about urban matters, and matters of concern about the city. The radicalization of the local in order to generate new readings of the global will transform the neighborhood–not the city–into the urban laboratory of our time. In this context, the task of architectural practice should not only be to reveal ignored socio-political and economic territorial histories and injustice within our currently ideologically polarized world, but also to generate new forms of sociability and activism.


crisis of environmental sustainability
crisis of public infrastructure
crisis of institutional collaborations
CONFLICT
crisis of socio-economic sustainability
crisis of housing affordability
crisis of political engagement
PRACTICE AND RESEARCH
exposing conflict as operational tool
TACTICS OF TRANSLATION
exposure of territorial power
CONDITIONS OF OWNERSHIP
POLITICAL JURISDICTION
who owns the resources?
whose territory is it?
FRAGMENTED INSTITUTIONS
POLICIES
RESOURCES
BUDGETS
DESIGNING REDISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES AND COLLABORATIONS
ALTERNATIVE:
ECONOMIC PRO FORMAS
POLICY FRAMEWORKS
SPATIAL TACTICS
can a neighborhood be a developer?
can density be understood as an amount of social exchanges per acre?
can form anticipate social encounter?
EXPANDED MODEL OF PRACTICE AND RESEARCH
TOP DOWN/FORMAL/ECONOMIC CAPITAL
MEDIATION
BOTTOM UP/INFORMAL/SOCIAL CAPITAL
CAPTURING HIDDEN VALUE

3.
The future of architectural practice depends on the re-definition of the formal and the social, and the economic and the political, and also understanding that environmental degradation is a direct result of social and political degradation. No advances in urban planning can be made without redefining what we mean by infrastructure, density, mixed use, and affordability. No advances in housing design, for example, can be made without advances in housing policy and economic subsidies. As architects, we can be responsible for imagining counter spatial procedures, political and economic structures that can produce new modes of sociability and encounter. Without altering the backward exclusionary policies constructing the territory–the socio-political ground, our profession will continue to be subordinated to the visionless environments defined by the bottom-line urbanism of the developer's spreadsheet.

4.
We are interested in a practice of intervention that engages spatial, territorial, and environmental conditions across critical thresholds, including global border zones of local sectors of conflict, that have been generated by discriminatory politics of zoning and economic development in the contemporary city. This suggests operational urban practices that encroach into the privatization of public domain and infrastructure, the rigidity of institutional thinking, and the current obsession with an ownership society. This also opens the idea that architects, besides being designers of form, can be designers of political process, economic pro-forma and collaboration across institutions and jurisdictions.

5.
Architecture practice needs to engage the re-organization of systems of urban development, challenging the political and economic frameworks that are only benefiting homogenous large-scale interventions managed by private mega-block development. Instead, we believe the future is small, and this implies the dismantling of the LARGE by pixilating it with micro: an urbanism of retrofit. No intervention into public domain can begin without

first exposing political jurisdiction and conditions of ownership. Clearly, this points out the pressing need for architectural practice to re-engage the invisible forces and vectors of power that shape the territory. This is the main topic of conversation and exchange that needs to take place across disciplines, but not from the isolation of the classroom or the design studio.

6.

In my studio we move from these broad conceptual meditations into the specificity of the San Diego-Tijuana border, where our practice is located. Here, we oscillate back and forth between two radically different ways of constructing city. At no other international juncture in the world one can find some of the wealthiest real estate as the one found in the edges of San Diego's sprawl, barely twenty minutes away from some of the poorest settlements in Latin America, manifested by the many slums that dot the new periphery of Tijuana. These two different types of suburbia are emblematic of the incremental division of the contemporary city and the territory between enclaves of mega-wealth and the rings of poverty that surround them. We are interested in processes of mediation that can produce critical interfaces between and across these opposites, exposing conflict as an operational device to transform architectural practice. The critical observation of this locality transforms this border region into our laboratory from which to reflect on the current politics of migration, labour and surveillance, the tensions between sprawl and density, formal and informal urbanisms, and wealth and poverty–all of which incrementally characterize the contemporary city everywhere.