

Name - Felipe Becerra Gómez
Advisory Group - Architecture after Sharing
Advisor Professor - Marcos Parga
Title - Decentralizing the Common Border
Subtitle - Shared Collective Domesticities

The shared border region that segregates the cities of El Paso in the United States and Ciudad Juarez in Mexico, reveals a drastic social fragmentation and polarization that exposes inequalities, vulnerabilities and dissimilarities. These contrast the domestic methods of collective interactions and communal sharing on both sides. This thesis investigates the ideals of urban structure, development and social manifestations across the border in order to understand the effects that the border has historically represented in the region at differing scales.

Several historical, economic and political factors have contributed to the formation of an artificial yet disruptive physical border. Although the border is a completely feigned political division, the responses on both sides are evident through the ways people interact, share and expose their values, fractured by walls that represent political intentions.

Through a comparison and definition of the physical border condition, the proposal reorganizes and classifies prevalent systems of collective sharing particular to the border cities of Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, where the manifestation of communal sharing is defined by different interpretations relating to identity, history and culture. There are innumerable perspectives and realities concerning the division between the Mexican and American border which have materialized in the expression of different forms of collective living. Therefore by comprehending and applying these diverse systems across the border, new means of domestic environments can emerge, displaying alternate proposals that reflect and engage the diversity across communal strategies in both countries.

By introducing systems of sharing particular to each city, the thesis will make evident the distinctions and similarities shared throughout the cities, especially those concerning housing, communal living and collective efforts of organic, urban expansion. The implementation of sharing strategies also correlates to resource availability, government structures and political principles that have prevailed in the distinct cities. The proposal encompasses a communal living space, recognizing that the core of domestic life begins in the housing models developed on the border. The commune proposal is projected on both cities, reacting specifically to existing systems of sharing, city boundaries, household characteristics, ownership and power strategies and resource availability, differentiating the clear division exemplified by the border restrictions. In El Paso, the commune prototype will advocate for the usage of vacant private lot areas in the suburban residential regions, creating and presenting strategies of sharing experiences in Ciudad Juarez. A communal strategy where land colonization, participatory and incremental design, commercial activities on the street and appropriation of the public realm can start to transpire into the suburban realm, which has historically been perceived through a neoliberal, institutional value of private ownership. In the different units, distinct amenities can be found, allowing neighbors to share bathrooms, laundry spaces and kitchens found across the dwellings, complementing interactions that usually occur and are particular to Ciudad Juarez. Similarly,

the dense environment of Ciudad Juarez would be utilized to consolidate systems prevalent in El Paso. The emergence of the front suburban porch would be represented as a continuous vertical line that extends the vibrant activities of the sidewalk and street, serving as a transition between private life in the household dwelling and the public activities of the city. The American backyard, experienced in El Paso, would also be incorporated in the communal strategy of Ciudad Juarez, through the highrise of the backyard, which connects different courtyards that neighbors can utilize in a more intimate manner.

The shared informalities experienced on both sides of the border are explored throughout the proposals to suggest new ways of living, perceiving the border cities as a plural region and revealing the inequalities and distinctions produced by an artificial border that intentionally segregates society. Instead of altering the physical border wall, the proposals configure and merge communal living to create a new borderless perception.

Image Caption - Shared informalities and domestic borderline