Private city is concerned with a collective urban argument that public space is dissolving, but that in Perth, as a modern city and one designed around the private vehicle, an emphasis on the public realm has to some extent never existed. In this context, the traditional role of the city and concepts of communal space are exchanged for the suburban city and the individuation of the private realm. Private city is concerned with an idea of disengagement inherent in both the private home and private transportation, coupled with a resultant high expectation for personal space.

In Variations on a Theme Park, Sorkin notes that the death of public space has been well documented since the gross suburbanisation of the 1950s and ‘60s, when ‘the alarm was sounded over ‘urban sprawl’ and ‘megalopolis’, the spread of an uninterrupted zone of urbanisation along the American northeast coast, a city become region. More recently, attention has focused on the explosion of so called ‘suburban cities’ on the fringes of existing metropolises. In this vast, virtually undifferentiated territory... homes, offices, factories, and shopping malls float in a culturing medium, a ‘non-place urban realm’ that provides the bare functions of a city, while doing away with the vital, not quite disciplined formal and social mix that gives cities life."¹ This is at work in Perth, and the warren typology of its fringe, indicative of the global spread described by Sorkin and many more. Its proliferation is evidenced by the planning of the amorphous periphery, with its single dwellings clothed in typical semiotic confusion.²

Yet the suburban scape here seems somewhat endemic; dwelling in the landscape seems a natural desire: to speak of the death or the end of public space would be a little hyperbolic. Habitation in Perth has never been so much about the city as the coastline; its public square is not in the city’s heart but in the parks and reserves around its edges. As Ian Molyneux wrote, the “central business districts have traditionally been devoid of street life during the weekends. Whilst Italians may promenade in their piazzas, Western Australians bask on their beaches. The functions of seeing and being seen are equally evident at both locations."³ It is true that the city centre failed to be nurtured during the critical period of its initial suburbanisation – it was provided with parking bays instead of amenity and saw its tram system removed – but the core of the city has not been so much affronted by the flowering of its suburban periphery as historically ignored by it. The growth of Perth’s suburban scape and the appearance of its satellites have stemmed from a deliberate

² “…this new urban realm is a city of simulations... this is nowhere more visible than in its architecture, in buildings that rely for their authority on images drawn from their history, from a spuriously appropriated past that substitutes for a more exigent and examined present.” Sorkin, introduction, Variations on a Theme Park, xiv.
³ Molyneux, Looking Around Perth, vii. This may well follow Jan Rowan’s assertion that “the right to choose where and how they want to live is clearly more important to Angelenos than the fact that they do not have a Piazza San Marco” published first in Progressive Architecture in 1968 and used as an opening quote in The Four Ecologies. Banham, Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies, xxxiv.
desire to decentralise the city; to keep its core from congestion. The situation here seems to be an elective scenario, in which the right of citizens to dwell freely has been historically privileged (unfortunately, it is assumed that the mode of dwelling choice is suburban, and this does not allow for a great deal of choice.) And the city centre is not entirely obsolete. A concentration on the core of the city, if anything, has been somewhat retroactive; it now has become the focus of several major urban projects and renewal schemes, and an interest in its cultural programme has seen a significant increase over recent years. So we aren’t really talking about the end of public space, but more of an enduring interest in landscape and the private home.

Despite this question of affront versus neglect of the core, privacy has inhabited Perth almost since its inception. Even the very centre of the city had privatised beginnings. The collection of streets that are now the axes of Perth’s economic activity were once disparate homes with large setbacks, and the city was characterised by a compartmentalisation of its functions rather than a mix.4 Felicity Morel identifies that the city was segmented not only into functional zones – governmental, military, bureaucratic and civilian areas – but organised hierarchically right down to a stratification of social groups into different city blocks, with Aborigines relegated to the lake system to the city’s north.5 Even before the mid nineteenth century the city’s privatisation was begun.

Enormous worth has been placed on the ownership of the private home and vehicle over the city’s planning history, and these teamed forces see a great deal more development occurring in the periphery of the city than consolidation or densification at its core. The market for individual property demands the constant expansion of the city’s physical limits into suburban fields in which the garage has become the front door, and here a new level of privacy is reached. The scouring set shows that the private city is legible at the scale of the masterplan, with the warren as a planning type that is less susceptible to through-traffic and more difficult to navigate, as well as less likely to adapt to a higher traffic flow; the very nature of this morphology is to privatise the street and preclude the incident of thoroughfare. In the periphery, a new level of surveillance is reached with the positing of gates marking the singular entries to the bundle of winding streets that comprise the new suburban establishment. The single house comprises the vast majority of dwellings in the region, with an average house envelope levelling at a sizeable 240 square metres.6 The multiple dwelling is not a

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popular choice for Perth’s residents or a popular interest for its developers. The regular growth of the footprint of the average dwelling might amount to the internalisation of programme previously public – studies and entertainment areas for example. Even in close proximity to the city’s core, residences amass in fairly low densities, indicative of the private city uniformly at work over the city’s history.

The private city begins within the drawn language of the scouring set, but moves from the computer drawing to paper space – from the scouring map set to the region set. This shift is coincident with the establishment of morphological ‘plates’ on which to read variations between the city’s major organisational structures. Land uses are projected onto these plates, revealing the vast majority of the city region to be residential in programme regardless of its morphological division. The mapping of programme onto these plates shows spatial (if not entirely functional) changes: in density, in the distribution of non residential programme, and a legible shift in the treatment of landscape. As the private city moves into the tabula set, we can see the contemporaneity of type expressed in the scouring set, with the language of the fringe entering newer developments in the city’s core.
2.1.2 SCOURING PODS
2.1.3 SCOURING DEAD ENDS
2.1.4 SCOURING NOODLE
2.1.5 SCOURING
DEAD END NOODLE
2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.1.5 SCOURING GRIDS, PODS, DEAD ENDS, NOODLE, DEAD END NOODLE

The process of searching through the city’s cadastre develops into a taxonomy of its parts, which in turn begins to illustrate the chronology of the city’s growth and its preference for particular morphological types. The cadastral image has here been classified; coded into types and layered separately as grids, pods, dead ends, noodles, dead end + noodle (warren). This layering reveals the simplicity of the city’s composition in accordance with its outward growth, revealing bands of common planning. The grid system occupies the central area, and the pods form an adjacent band. Dead ends enter this band, and accumulate in the periphery. Noodled types amass in the periphery also, and units that are both noodled and containing dead ends start to form distinct parcels around the edge of the city in the form of the warren type.

The centrifugal growth of the city, coupled with its limited revision, makes this map particularly legible; its planning types can be read in approximate chronological sequence from core to periphery. By separating the different characteristics of the planning subtypes into layers, experimentation and trends in planning morphology are revealed as a series of concentric rings around the city, each type becoming progressively more divorced from the free grid structure and engendering notions of privacy and impermeability. These shifts in planning type can be interpreted as bands of experimentation.
2.2.1 REGION
MORPHOLOGICAL PLATES

After creating this taxonomy of deviation and establishing particular criteria for each planning type, the cadastral map was treated as a text from which to draw out parcels of distinct morphology. The forming of plates of similar character enables a reading of the divisions and variations between different parts of the city region. The cadastral was read in two ways; one for tracing morphologies and the other for reading alignment or orientation.

The morphological plate mapping operates through stratification. If the grid is considered to be a rational system, then against it the other types can be seen as deviations from regularity. Blocks of the cadastral plan are layered in terms of their degree of deviation from the grid by characteristics of warping, dead ends, double tracking, or a combination of multiple distortions. This tectonic stratification becomes the system for reading programmatic distribution across the city region, and forms the basis for the regional mapping set.

7 Rational grids are set into the paper space, parcels displaying one type of deviation (pods, warping or dead ends) are set in with a shorter shadow line, those with two types of deviation (pods + warping, pods + dead ends etc) are fractured out of the picture plane and those exhibiting all types of distortions hover over the drawing.
2.2.2 REGION
ALIGNMENT PLATES

Similarly, lines were used to pick up axes and to connect aligned points through the cadastre, plotting the extents of the major grids through the region. Areas of loose alignment are picked up through the middle ring, and those areas showing no consistent orientation are shaded. A consistency in the parcelisation of the region is evident between these two drawings.
The current built-up area of the city becomes in these mappings a surface for the reading of programmatic distribution across the region. Various programmes, such as green reserves, road reserves, parks and gardens, golf courses, industrial areas, schools and institutions, and shopping centres have been mapped, and in this case layered together to allow for an inverse reading. With the reserves and industrial zones as uninhabited areas, and the remainder as public interface, the union of these layers represents an image of all that is not residential property.

These maps were drawn in 2006/07.
2.2.4 REGION
ALL THAT IS

And their subtraction offers a reading of all that is: the private city.
Golf courses are green openings in the city that also describe a desire for recreation. Within the private city, the golf course has become emblematic of suburban utopia; they are important for the marketability of new suburban lands releases, and in some cases form their heart. The simple mutation of the golf course’s shape over time hints at changing desires and expectations for suburban life and the image that markets it.
Towards the centre of the city, the majority of golf courses are patches worked into the gridded fabric. At the periphery a new plastic type of golf course emerges out of the folded streets, extending its surface area to form the frontage for more houses. In several cases, the golf course even engulfs parcels of housing, with the locals literally inhabiting the greens. ‘The Vines’, to the north-east, is an example of an entire suburb dedicated to the golf course utopia; the loops of its residential parcels and its fairways become indistinguishable in plan.
2.2.7 REGION
RECLAMATIONS: REGULARISED

Not unlike the golf course, manipulations to the coastline reflect change over time. Reclamations of both the river and ocean edges take on the language of their local planning morphology. For the most part the river’s edge has been left to its natural shape, but along the edges of its twin central business districts at Perth and Fremantle its edges have been straightened.

The central city’s foreshore has been reclaimed a number of times over Perth’s development history. Initially, the southernmost linear road of the city grid that runs parallel to the foreshore – Saint George’s Terrace – was only partly developed to its south, leaving a stretch of waterfront park. Subsequently, this land was encroached upon and subdivided, and in the early part of the twentieth century there followed a series of reclamations to reinstate the park, the edge of which was walled in a parallel axis to the terrace. Further reclamations were made to sculpt the eastern edge of the city’s foreshore, including the tidying of a dotted peninsula into a neat island that now bifurcates the river as a picturesque park, and again in the late ‘60s reclamations were made way for the freeway interchange and Narrows Bridge to the city’s west. So the streets were initially derived from the axis set up by the river, and this edge was then hardened to make the river conform more accurately to the grid.

9 See “Historical Background” in Gordon Stephenson, The Design of Central Perth: Some Problems and Possible Solutions (Nedlands, WA: The University of Western Australia Press, 1975), 1-11.
2.2.8 REGION
RECLAMATIONS: BEAKS

Along the northern coastline, ‘beaks’ appear. These two are harbours attached to suburbs developed during the ’70s and ’80s, reclaiming a little, engulfing a little. The first occurs within the warren plate, after a twenty-four kilometre stretch of unbuilt beach running northward from Fremantle Harbour.
In the Southern Region Scheme, canalisation is an ongoing practice that extends the water’s edge through the suburbs of the Peel region in some semblance of a European sensibility, water as street. Canals here are a device for extending a sea frontage that is naturally limited into an inexhaustible resource for the marketability of property. The structure of the canals mimics the cul-de-sac morphology of its context, and shares the priority of the hungry golf course – the use of surface area to multiply desirable frontage.
2.2.10 REGION
STRING PARKS

The string park is a type that inhabits the warren, where space left over from organic street patterns and property subdivisions generates parks that meander between housing allotments, sometimes jumping over streets, forming threads of communal green space.
2.2.11 REGION
HUNGRY SUBURBS

Within the warren, a propensity to manipulate reflects a shift in the relationship between development and landscape; assets once the privilege of few are here made available to many by the principles of extrusion. The structural freedom inherent in the warren plan extends to the easy manipulation of landscape and the result is the manufacture of suburban utopias; living in the golf course, living on the water. In this way the sinuous boundaries proffered by the warren plan bring the landscape to the front door.

And this hungry suburb type adds a temporal dimension to the privatised street layout of the warren, where the odd shapes of cadastral pockets effect a degree of permanency in the plan. Within the warren type, variability and flexibility take a backward step. In a cul-de-sac morphology, all is decided, all is designated: for each parcel a centre, and in each centre those civic and economic requirements of the parcel’s population find outlet.

The orthogonal axis is the expandable urban surface: just as the grid can be negotiated in any direction, so too can the programme it houses expand in any direction. Within the grid, any spine might emerge naturally or by policy as a centrifugal point: its land use might change, its density might increase, its road might widen, and any segment of the grid can be approached with a new proposition.

The warren is far less negotiable; its retail and civic centre is located on the straight edge of its primary or secondary access road, its school nearby, with its remaining roads spiralling into minutiae whose inaccessibility preclude any use other than residential. The curls of the suburban street and the curving limbs of the golf course; these are functions projected into the plan, made permanent by the determinacy of their shapes: everything is in its right place.
Within the superstructure of the city, rewriting takes place on a smaller scale through processes such as rezoning and redevelopment. The study at the regional level of deviations from the major grid structures revealed the river as a spine of deviation, along which warped grids emerge to flex around the joints of its edges. During the gold rush era, several riverine suburbs were planned to a 'city beautiful' model, adopting radial morphologies and directing their axes toward the prospect of the river.\(^\text{10}\) In recent years, redevelopment has taken place on various sites released from prior land use along the river, and it is at these instances that the language of the fringe enters the core in new urbanist pockets, with its pods and dead ends in tow.

The rectangular area at the centre of the map marks the tabula site, the study area on which further mappings will now focus.

\(^{10}\) Attadale and Dalkeith are two such suburbs, directly opposite one another at high points along the Swan (white figures without shadows).
2.4.1 TABULA
AERIAL

The research now shifts to the tabula site, represented here by its simple base layer, a photographic image onto which further mappings will be cast.

2.4.2 TABULA
EPRA

Along with this shift in scale is a movement of the research into the territory that comes under the planning jurisdiction of the East Perth Redevelopment Authority (EPRA). The white region on the plan represents the extents of EPRA’s collective space of operation.
2.4.3 TABULA
EXTRUDING EPRA

The tabula site has already seen some redevelopment, and it forms a legible new urbanist cluster adjacent to the central business district, called Claisebrook Cove. Here the typology of the fringe enters the city's core in the form of looped and truncated streets, and with it a manufactured inlet. The urban grid is exchanged for a more closed system, bringing a private morphology to a previously industrial site.
Legible in the private city is a pervasive residential
scape, which finds new levels of security in a
regular outward movement from core to periphery,
evidenced by chronological changes to planning
morphology from the grid, through pods and
dead ends, to the warren condition, where
the private city reaches its most explicit form.
These morphological types have been drawn
into tectonic plates, and they will continue to be
used as the base layer for further mappings. The
private city establishes a changed mentality at
work in the peripheral plates, in which the role of
landscape is made subservient to the operation of
placemaking in recent suburban developments.

The private city shows a morphological connection
between major operations in the periphery and
minor ones in the core. Contemporary modes of
development, and their attendant manipulation of
the landscape, find temporal connectivity between
the fringe and the core of the city, despite the
spatial separation of these places and their
existence within two structurally and historically
separate zones.

By looking at the programming of the city, and
of its morphological plates, the private city
leads to the wide city through the vacuoles that
perforate the region, and to the even city through
the differentiation of its tectonic parts, their
individuation and the meeting of their borders.
the universe of our eyes rests
upon a plain edged with horizon
facing the sky
let us consider the inconceivable space
hitherto uncomprehended.
Repose supine sleep
– death
with our backs on the ground...
but I am standing straight! Since you are erect
you are also fit for action.
Erect on the terrestrial plain
of things knowable to you
sign a pact of solidarity
with nature: this is the right angle
vertical facing the sea
there you are on your feet

le Corbusier, A3: Environment, Poeme de l’Angle Droit
Perth has two constant masses, two constant horizons. One mass overhead, the sky; one underfoot, the plain; one horizon to the left, the ocean; one to the right, the escarpment. These expansive axes place Perth within a set of crosshairs, both planimetric and sectional. Its vertical position is affirmed every day, by a sun falling perpendicular toward a horizontal ocean. Navigation in the plan takes place within a grid formed by its geography, by the parallel lines of coast and scarp, joined perpendicularly by the river: are we near the coast or near the hills? North of the river or south?

The parallel nature of the city’s topography – the banding of coast, plain and scarp – means the individual can relate their position to one of two geographical spirit levels, the ridge and the ocean. Rising out of the plain or leaving the shore makes clearer the view from each to the other. As constant reference points to a city spread with ubiquitous form, propinquity in Perth might be felt more surely to these datums than to the city centre.

The space between shore and scarp, generally flat in itself, is built with form spread out and generally low enough to keep a bowl of sky consistently visible overhead. Hinged to the coast, to the edge of a continent, hemmed in by a ridge, we are “upon a plain edged with horizon, facing the sky”.

Placed within these expansive constants and spread out horizontally, it is a matter of little wonder that dense development fails to be a primary objective for Perth; little wonder, too, that people sometimes feel compelled to drive along the coast to get home, even if it takes longer, or that the horizon is an infectious preoccupation for the city’s architecture.

The wide city derives from a notion that Perth, in its low density growth, tends to be made up of a vast quantity of open space. Lining its geographic features, permeating its built mass in the form of parks and reserves, these openings bring the horizon and the half-blue into the cityscape and into the minds of the city’s inhabitants.

The wide city is concerned with a second kind of openness, one that occupies the space between buildings in a city whose built quotient is spread thinly over vast quantities of land. A great deal of the space between forms in Perth is made up of inactive surfaces – asphalt, setback, lawn – and the investigation of the wide city moves into the description of this state of openness. As an exercise designed to illustrate the wideness felt in the thin city, a drawing has been devised

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to emulate the weight of sky and open space incorporated at the regional and focal tabula scales. Imagined as a piece of putty pressed against the figure ground and stamped on paper, it looks at the blank space left behind as a unified entity. With kerbs, walkways, fencelines and cadastral divisions drawn away, it sees a continuous and extensive site characterised by visual permeability.

A series of photographic transects shot across the focal site, joined end to end to form a continuous elevation, have been included in the wide city because of their exposure of this mass of sky and open space, and their overturning of a sectional relationship found between the open spaces located in the focal site. The wide city ends here, but its content rolls into an overlapping narrative: reserve city.
3.2.1 REGION
THE PHYSICALLY PERMEABLE

Green breaks comprise the first layer of the wide city as frequent and regular perforations in its built mass – parks, reserves, bushland, and recreational facilities such as golf courses. There are two types of green setback that extend the wide city; one operating at the urban scale, by which the city is separated from the coastline and river, and the other at the suburban, by which residences are set back from the street and from one another. Missing from this mapping is the latter type, which would extend the black figure further and incorporate within the wide city the expanse of unbuilt space attached to private allotments.

Layered into the wide city are the extents of the region’s road reserves as another type of permeable scape, designed from the city’s inception with a width capable of accommodating cars. These reserves become more differentiated in scale towards the periphery, and along the freeway reach an enormous berth that includes vegetated buffers and a rail reserve. Roadways create a collective wideness from street to verge to footpath, and again would thicken further with the addition of building setbacks that form their adjacency.
3.2.2 REGION
EXTENTS OF VISUAL PERMEABILITY

Added to the layers of physically permeable space are a set of visually permeable scapes; unbuilt fields, gaps. More significantly, water bodies are added to the figure, as spaces that press back the boundaries of the built. The open view afforded by the river is extended through open programme that gathers around it, in the centre of the city, golf courses, racetracks and various other grassy scapes add to this visual permeability. This collective mass represents the means by which the horizon – the half-blue – is invited into the thin city.
3.4.1 TABULA
CITY FIGURES

Shifting again to the tabula, wideness is a significant quality of the study area, in which the density of the city dissolves into a figure ground patterning that is remarkably sparse for a place in such close reach of the central business district. Within the boundaries of the EPRA site the built footprint begins a steady breakdown.

The imposition of a grid onto the landscape is a generic planning move, which, in a sense, has failed in Perth. The grid was laid out along the river’s edge as a singular urban entity, but, through the unchecked growth of the urban footprint away from the centre, it has not filled out, and the city’s density peters out towards its eastern end.

About half way along the city’s axial streets the footprint changes from a dense, predominantly black figure ground, to almost its reverse, where large footprint institutional buildings take over the grid. This inversion might be described as a shift from fabric blocks, in which the built edge reinforces or defines the block, to object blocks, in which footprints float independently within their sites.
3.4.2 TABULA

EPRA FIGURES

On the focal site the footprint thins out again. In the lower segment the built figure all but dissolves. The western limbs are gappy and vacuous by turn.
3.4.3 TABULA RASA

In reading both sets of footprints together, the EPRA site begins to be defined by white space: a virtual *tabula rasa*.
3.4.4 TABULA
PARKING

The openness of the figure ground is owing to several determinants. One of these is a relatively large quantity of ground level parking lots. These are wide, exposed surfaces that are generally inactive at night.

3.4.5 TABULA
PARKING, PARKS, RESERVES, RUBBLE

Added to the parking lots are parks and reserves, of both soft and hard landscape, a collection of rubbled sites leftover from large scale infrastructural operations unfolding within the city over recent years, and sand pads awaiting development.

3.4.6 TABULA
UNBUILT

Similarly to the regional mapping, when the mass of asphalt and sand and horizon of the road and rail reserve is layered in, a mapping of the unbuilt and visually open emerges.
And this massing is infilled once more with the blue and the unbuilt to describe the extents of visual permeability. The vacuity of the rail reserve is felt well beyond its borders, extended in its wideness by adjacent patches of sand and asphalt. The eastern end of the site becomes engulfed by black, and with this blackness comes a curious separateness from the city; this area is much more a part of the river ecology than the urban. Its physical separation from the city makes it eerily quiet, save for the wind.
3.4.8 TABULA
TRANSECTS

A series of photographic transects were walked across the site, the longest spanning three and a half kilometres. They reveal an immensity of open space, and despite being shot in landscape format still describe the condition of the half-blue, whereby even in the central city the sky owns half of the visual frame. They show the reserves, both green and transport related, and the tracts of post industrial land that remain within EPRA’s boundaries and under its jurisdiction. They show also the newly developed Claisebrook Cove. These transects tie the site to its context, occasionally leaving EPRA’s borders, with three of the transect lines traversing the entire tabula.
TRANSECT ONE: WITTENOOM STREET TO ROE STREET, SOUTH

TRANSECT TWO: ROE STREET TO WITTENOOM STREET, NORTH
TRANSECT THREE: EAST PARADE TO PLAIN STREET, EAST
TRANSECT FOUR: HAY STREET, SOUTH
TRANSECT FIVE: VICTORY TERRACE TO TRAFALGAR ROAD, EAST
Walking this transect, a peculiar condition becomes clear in which the north side of the street is consistently built out and the south predominantly open. It presents a consistent section of vertical versus horizontal, or of wall versus stage. The façades to the north approximate a continuous fabric, particularly in the western stretch, and the openings to the south behave as stages that open up the field of vision.

At the western end of the transect is a wedge shaped break in the city’s fabric that has the unique effect of allowing for an extraordinary depth of field for an urban setting, and this distance provides a reciprocal sense of spectacle across it, between the city to its south, and Northbridge to its north.2

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2 This field can be seen in transect one. The city is set so far back from the camera frame that its towers are constantly repeated in the background of the images, making them notional visual monuments.
3.4.10 TABULA
WALL AND STAGE, TRANSECT THREE

Again this sectional relationship emerges in the third transect, this time in an east-west direction. Here the stage breaks the wall and forms a continuous expanse through the riverside park at the feet of the city. In this transect, the division is felt between the hard edge of the city and the relatively open field to its east – this line articulates a perceptible edge to the urbanity of the city.
The wide city is found in breaks in the city’s plan and the space between its buildings. Sometimes made of grass, sometimes water, sometimes asphalt, the wide city is about the space left behind in thin development.

The wide city is bound up with visual relationships, with the incorporation of the constants of sky and horizon into the experience of the city. It reads the connectedness between different types of open space through the inverted figure ground drawing, and these images start to elucidate the openness felt in Perth and the pervasiveness of the wide city. At the regional scale, this drawing exposes individual blocks floating in a mass of open space, and although its scale cannot reveal the open space attached to lots and weaving between buildings, the tabula version offers an indicative view that can be applied to the whole. At this focal scale, the open figure is allowed to engulf individual built forms, showing private structures in a sea of negative space, which, in some instances, far outweighs the built in terms of mass.

The wide city, its inverse figure ground, and its walls and stages find extrapolation in the reserve city, where their inactive, or predominantly visual role, is called into question. But first to the even city, which is related to the wide city’s spatial thinness and the space between its buildings.
... the conditions for an architectural articulation with the city and the particular pleasure produced by it, are found neither in the extreme order of the grid, nor in the complete disorder of its loss, but in the meeting of the borders that separate order and disorder. These sites, where the articulation of architecture and the city can take place, are usually found in the space of failure that subverts the permanent traces of the geometric grid and not in the unrestricted spaces where the chaotic and violent forces are inscribed.

Gandelsonas, X Urbanism

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The even city is tied to the developmental thinness ascribed to the wide city, where forms are spread spaciously over an extensive field, and regularly broken with unbuilt spaces. This thinness – like butter over too much bread – sees the city as a continuous, low scaled surface, interspersed regularly with civic amenity, as opposed to a traditional structure with a condensed and pedestrian core serving a dormitory hinterland. The first drawing set applies the wide city’s gaze at the distribution of open space to that of programme such as schools and retail centres, intended to show a field of residences meted regularly with civil amenity. In applying these layers to the morphological plates generated in the private city, the even city finds instead an uneven core that bears traces of the city’s pedestrian beginnings in the form of scaled up “armatures”, and an even-more-even city occupying the periphery.

A further interest of this narrative operates at the level of built form. The even city stems from a notion of Perth as thin in terms of monotony, or a lack of variation in the scale and hierarchy of its built form, supposing that a certain architectural regularity is produced by widespread coding systems such as setback and plot ratio. It looks at the city as a site whose forms are heavily ordered by such rules, producing a built scape that looks as if it might have been governed by the sectional diagram for Gropius’ row housing, in which the imposition of larger forms is evened out through the inclusion of more ground space. This initial idea finds the core and its armatures as structures that break with regularity, generating again an opposition between a variegated core and a hyper-even periphery.

As an image of Perth as an undifferentiated terrain, the even city has already been challenged at the regional scale by the identification of the morphological plate structures that underlie its plan. The preservation of these structures though time hints at unevenness, and the even city moves further into the planning of these plates to find out whether spatial unevenness – thickenings in density and programme – accompanies their morphological differentiation.

The even city moves into the tabula to gaze more intently at the intersection of these plates, in order to raise the question of their autonomy and to examine their borders for tension or weakness. It looks at these structures and the spaces between them as urban entities with individual histories, configurations, and ideals, in order that discrepancies between them might offer opportunities for their strengthening, extrapolation, or usurpation. Tied to this activity is the notion that

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1 Gandelsonas, *X Urbanism*, 76.
2 The term “armatures” is borrowed from *Recombinant Urbanism*. “These linear urban assemblages bring people together in an axial space to form relationships, to make commercial transactions, be entertained, or to take part in ceremonial or casual communal activities.” David Grahame Shane, *Recombinant Urbanism: Conceptual Modelling in Architecture, Urban Design and City Theory* (West Sussex: Wiley Academy, 2005), 198.
individual urban entities ought to be recognised for their distinctiveness, and allowed to coexist in a heterogeneous whole; a notion that in itself prefers the uneven to the generic.

This chapter concludes with a set of diagrams that frame an approach to the study site, which, envisaged as a singular operation, masses itself in such a way as to firm two entities – to establish their division – and to extrude the structure of one over a weaker site in order to reconnect it with a forgotten morphological counterpart. These actions, contrived to establish and support unevenness in the thin city, form the basis for the projective schemes in the two following narratives, city of the immediate future and reserve city.
Conventional civic requirements like parks, shopping centres and schools have been mapped in order to reveal a presumed evenness in their distribution across the region.
4.2.4 REGION
SHOPPING MINUS MIDDLE GROUND
4.2.6 REGION
PARKS AND RESERVES MINUS MIDDLE GROUND

Following the generation of the morphological plates as a medium for reading differences, it became apparent that within the warren exists an even-more-even city where these components are meted out with predictable regularity. Within the grid system, there appears to be greater variation among the scale of these elements and greater differentiation in the distance between them, while in the warren they assume a level of consistency in both scale and distribution. The warren starts to look like a chocolate chip cookie.
4.2.7 REGION
RESIDENTIAL (all that is) MINUS MIDDLE GROUND

When the residential field is applied to the grid and warren plates, the grid system reads as a much more solid entity in terms of its black figure. Roads present comparatively slight cuts into the surface of the grid plate, and the weave of housing has a tighter grain. The warped grids of the warren’s feeder roads create much broader lines, and the gaps in its residential fabric are wide and regular.
4.2.8 REGION
AERIAL FIELD

A composite collage of bands of aerial photography has been desaturated in this mapping, and its contrast adjusted to form a more or less graphically singular image of the city.
4.2.9 REGION
WHITE PIXEL FIGURE GROUND

The white pixels in the collage were then sampled out, compiled into an individual layer, and inverted to read in black. For the most part the white pixels in the photographs are reflective roof surfaces and stretches of sand, and their extraction generates a rough figure ground. Because they are comparatively small, and because many of them are made from clay tiles, residential roofs do not read out with the same degree of clarity as industrial and commercial ones. Industrial parks, commercial agglomerations, scattered regional shopping centres and beaches form distinct figures in this map.

Of greater interest though is the way that the central part of the map starts to read almost as an infra-red satellite mapping; the core appears as a centrifugal figure and a set of linear strips arrange themselves around it. These strips, or armatures, constitute a shift in scale and programme from their suburban context. They are spines that have evolved through slower urban systems – pedestrian streets and ghosted tramways. Whereas freeways become white space in this strange figure ground, these armatures read out as thickenings. They indicate the presence of mixed use fabrics; retail strips, limbs of higher density residential types, streets behaving as both thoroughfare and destination.
4.2.10 REGION
BLOCKS AND ARMATURES

The even city grew out of a two storey perception of Perth. With most of its people occupying suburbs, the suburbs occupying the plain, and the majority of those zoned as single residential, Perth is a relatively low lying city. In this context, city blocks and armatures represent an approximation of fabric and a rare instance of verticality. They occur only within the gridded morphology of the core and become important spines for the city’s evolution, particularly in terms of its burgeoning growth.

It is worth noting that the rail system does not identify itself as an armature in the white pixel figure ground, although it might logically do so. It reads, in fact, as a void.
4.3.1 LOCUS
MORPHOLOGICAL PLATES

Low lying and sparsely spread, the even city is founded in a notion of Perth as a vast and tenuous blanket. The morphological plate mappings begin to break up the even city into parts that belie the ubiquity of its mass, revealing differentiations in density, consistency, orientation and programmatic distribution.

At this point the region reads no longer as a blanket but a structure made up of historically and physically separate parts, and a dialogue about urban entities is made possible by their identification. The question of the autonomy of these parts; and that of the friction generated by their collisions – shifts in scale, shifts in character – is raised by the simple tracing of their borders. The focal site lies amid the boundaries of four of the morphological plates, and might begin to utilise some of the friction released by their meeting.
4.3.2 LOCUS
BLOCKS AND ARMATURES

The site lies also at the juncture between the low, even city and the region’s only instance of consistent verticality: the cluster of towers in the central business district and the large scale blocks beside it.
4.4.1 TABULA
GRIDS: CBD AND NORTHBRIDGE

In its position at the meeting of multiple morphological plates, the EPRA site becomes characterised by moments of conflict and failure. In this sense it is a site of deviation from order, but also one of possibility.

Shown here are the neighbouring and offset grids of the CBD and Northbridge, both of which have a distinct stopping point at EPRA’s western edge. The subtle discrepancy between these grids is topographically wrought; the city’s grid was laid out in alignment with the riverbank and Northbridge’s in avoidance of a bygone wetland system.\(^4\) Supposedly through the selection of this between space for the urban rail system, the separation of the two grids was cemented and their speciation begun.

\(^4\) Morel, “The Swamp Stealers,” 20. The grid of Northbridge was arranged so that its major streets took the shortest path through the configuration of the wetland system.
The autonomy of these places, in fact, precedes the introduction of the railway, and Northbridge’s smaller scaled, grittier character dates back virtually to colonisation. The swampy topography of Northbridge was responsible not only for the orientation of its streets but its land use, setting in motion the evolution of its programme, its scale, and its built character. As the CBD became the hub of commerce, Northbridge became a migrant hub, mixed in its range of functions and its demographic.5

City towers reside only in the CBD, while Northbridge remains mostly two storeys high to the street. While the CBD is comprised of retail and commerce; once home to brothels, tanneries, mosques, hotels and cafes, Northbridge maintains its mix of programme. It is Chinatown, club district, creative precinct, nightsoil. With topographic and social segregation causing the initial divide, and the acquisition of reserve land the latter, Perth’s segregation from Northbridge has manifested not just as a physical one, but through the individuation and independent growth of each part, a perceptual or psychological one as well.

The shard of land that separates these two grids has come to be known as the ‘link’ site, named after a current proposition by EPRA that would see the rail system buried and a ground level infill project connecting Perth and Northbridge. This site has been the subject of many proposals, none of which have been pursued and, in a way, this process of suggestion and inaction in itself seems to amplify the divisional quality of the site, to sharpen its perception as a gap. The current proposal involves a set of urban blocks with an allegiance in scale to neither entity; a mediatory project, a chamfer. Its very title, the Northbridge Link project, describes aptly its intent. Knowing the strength and separateness of its neighbouring entities, the question of whether they ought to be seamlessly ‘linked’ is a pertinent one.

OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT TO RIGHT
22, 23 Felicity Morel, Wetland System of 1883 over 1877 plan, and composite plan of changes to Northbridge’s grid system to 1885.
24 A Hillman, colonial draftsman, 1838 plan of Perth with wetland system.

THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE
25, 26 EPRA, plan and perspective over Northbridge Link.
27, 28 George Temple-Poole, view and plan for the ‘link’ site, 1911.
29 Hardwick’s City Beautiful plan for the ‘link’, 1911.
30 Stephenson and Hepburn, aerial view of scheme for central Perth with the ‘link’ in the foreground, 1955.
4.4.2 TABULA
EXTRUDED STREETS

The remainder of EPRA’s layout is characterised by a departure from the grid structures of the CBD and Northbridge. The axes that extend through the city break down within EPRA’s boundaries; truncating or looping back into the grid, stopping short of the river or folding away from its edge. The morphology of the newer development is at odds with the continuity of the neighbouring grids. Part cul-de-sac, part pod, it forms a set of concentric islands about a fabricated inlet.

This redeveloped segment sits on the north-south orientation of the inner ring suburbs: in orientation it belongs more to the suburbs than to either of the urban plates, and in morphology it belongs more to the fringe than the core. In this way it represents a point of conflict between the morphological plates and a breakdown of the structure of the urban grid.

Implicit in this segment of planning is a degree of independence from the entities of the city and Northbridge. The Claisebrook Cove redevelopment is morphologically distinct from its two neighbours, but it also holds a disparate ideal; a domestic one, evidenced by its scale, the nature of its planning and its built character. It is an arcadian entity, made up of compressed suburban forms with elevations that have a semiotic relationship with the Mediterranean villa.
The even city becomes bound up with entities; with the configurations that in fact belie its evenness. In dealing with entities, questions emerge about their cohesion, their limits, their division. In this way, the focus shifts to the uneven city and the differentiation of its parts.

The usual practice of dealing with sites such as EPRA's involves parcelisation; the division of the site into fragments and the individual release and treatment of each. An alternate approach is adopted in this research, in which the entire site is treated as a coherent and mutable mass.

4.4.3 TABULA
ACTION ONE: ASSIGNING A VOLUME

The necessity of applying a particular volume to the site represents its first action: the thickening of the site into a singular envelope which can then be allowed to shift in response to particular onsite forces, causing the envelope to shape itself in accordance with the character of those entities that form its body and its context.
4.4.4 TABULA
ACTION TWO: SUBTRACTION OF RAILWAY RESERVE

4.4.5 TABULA
ACTION THREE: STACKING THE LINK

For example, the volume sees the carving out of the rail reserve, with its subtracted mass being stacked on the southern side of the ‘link’ site in response to the greater scale of the city in comparison with Northbridge.
CADASTRE
MORPHOLOGICAL CONNECTION

The rigour of the city's grid weakens around the river, but it finds a morphological connection beyond it in the central suburb of Victoria Park.
4.4.6 TABULA
ACTION FOUR: GRID EXTENSION

The possible action of extending the grid is concerned with the regional connectivity of the site across the river, and with the city's morphological dissolution at its eastern end. In their extrusion, these axes would be allowed to encounter those curves and fragmentations ascribed to the plan at its weakened edges, and to engage architecturally with the resulting collisions. The potential emerges for the city and its morphological counterpart to behave as a singular figure that traverses the river, legible initially in plan but potentially by other means – in scale, in programme.6

4.4.7 TABULA
ACTION FIVE: SUBTRACTION OF COLLISIONS

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6 There are several large scaled blocks of flats in this area. Like most buildings of this type in Perth they were constructed during the 1960s and '70s, setting a precedent for the possibility of densification.
Again, the subtractions resulting from the collision of the city’s grid with the non-gridded are stacked onto the southern side of the link, causing a divisional figure to grow between the two entities of the CBD and Northbridge.

The expectations for density and the provision of residential quotas for each of EPRA’s precincts have similarly been treated as an overall requirement which can be distributed across the site in response to its volumetric differentiation. So these diagrams represent an approach which envisions the site as a singular body that exchanges content and mass through a series of site-based actions: the projected volume manipulates its form in such a way as to reinforce existing and nascent urban entities.
The morphological divisions identified in the cadastral image of the city region have presented the first possibility of rifts existing in its visually cohesive extents. Although vastly residential, these plates, in the examination of their programming at the widest scale, show differentiation in the size, shape and order of their perforations and their civic amenity. This shows that variation revealed in plan does carry some consequence for the built scape upon it; that the plates in operation at the largest scale of the city may indeed be considered as entities, or perhaps even ecologies of habitation.

The study of the core area reveals that upon closer inspection the plates uncovered at the regional scale bear distinct histories, distinct scales, ideals and modes of habitation. By extrapolation there may be similar frictions and tensions at work at the largest scale of the city also, for instance along the edge of the forty-five degree plate and its intersection with the north-south plate, or along the borders between warren and north-south superstructure.

The inquiry into the core moves the interest of the research into a discussion of entities. Among those identified are the armatures, the city grid, the Northbridge grid, the ‘link’ and the arcadian redevelopment. They can be seen as urban elements that derive their own delight; in heterogeneity, commerce, entertainment, visual reciprocity and domesticity in turn. These entities are already distinct, each operating independently of the others, and in the interest of amplifying the unevenness of the thin city, they will be encouraged to continue their individuation in the creation of a citiescape that fosters diversity in the independence of its parts, and intrigue in their overlap.

The concept of entities and the iterations outlined in the ‘actions’ set extend into the body of the remaining thin city narratives. The even city provides the foundation for the two major projective schemes of the research; it provides the tensions and failures in the plan in which the projects unfold and the system by which they trade mass and volume.
Observing the machines at work removing hillsides, bulldozing topsoil, blasting away reefs of rock, scattering swathes of gravel, concrete, tarmac in the still raw wounds of the levelled site, one might conclude that our culture was indifferent to the beauties of natural localities. Yet within a few weeks or months, the ochre-grooved and battle-scarred Martian surface has miraculously sprouted pavements, driveways, gardens and houses; emerald lawns and conifers grow up supernaturally young and bright... And before long, what the property developers promised in their brochures begins to feel true: the lucky new residents are proud to have a place they can call their own.

Paul Carter, the Lie of the Land
To look at all this from up here, you may not see much affinity between this ocean of houses and a city like London, yet the building history is really very similar. The famous Georgian squares are the true prototype for Los Angeles. Residential in intention, they were created by the breakup of big land estates like every suburban subdivision in Los Angeles. They were broken up for profitable investment, ditto in Los Angeles, and in both places the houses were as thinly spread as possible. In eighteenth century London that wasn’t very thin, the houses stand shoulder to shoulder because everything moved on foot, and distances measured in living feet have to be short. Bloomsbury ended on a precise line representing the furthest point the citizens were prepared to walk. In Los Angeles the citizens had wheels, and could travel further...

Reyner Banham, accompanied by a view over LA in "Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles"
“Los Angeles: City of the Immediate Future” is the name given to Anthony Vidler’s introduction to *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* three decades after its original publication, referencing Banham’s description of Los Angeles as “instant architecture in an instant townscape.” The city of the immediate future describes Perth’s relatively limited revision coupled with its quickness to build.

This narrative thread is related to the city’s youth and to its constant proliferation between coast and escarpment, where new parcels of land are developed over short periods of time using invented and imported morphologies and built form. Many buildings in Perth are the first for their sites, generating a built scape which – again to reference *The Four Ecologies* – is one hundred kilometres in length and possibly one hundred, but more likely fifty years deep.

The city of the immediate future is generated expediently and with little topographic or historical reference; it is concerned with sitelessness, with generic architecture and planning placed on sites with little acknowledgement of their specificity; with the treatment of site as tabula rasa. The city of the immediate future has two applications; one spatial and one temporal, the former operating at the fringe and the latter operating on the core.

In a spatial sense this narrative focuses on the frontier of the city’s expansion, the site of the region’s immediate (and seemingly constant) construction. The temporal consideration of the city of the immediate future lies with the quick decision and the half measure, the means by which existing city fabric is readily parted with in the encapsulation of new ideals. Both are operations that are granted a freedom from context, and each will be discussed at their resident scale. The city of the immediate future begins at the fringe, with a set of aerial images taken along the expanding edge of the built-up area.

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2 Banham, *Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles*, 18m00s/51m58s.
SKETCHED SUBURB: BURNS

SKETCHED SUBURB: BEELIAR
SKETCHED SUBURB: BUTLER

SKETCHED SUBURB: HARRISDALE
SKETCHED SUBURB: RIDGEWOOD

SKETCHED SUBURB: BURNS/ILUKA
TERRACING: TAPPING

TERRACING: RIDGEWOOD
STAGES OF THE IMMEDIATE: COOGEE

STAGES OF THE IMMEDIATE: TAPPING
FRONTIER: SOUTHERN RIVER

HUNGRY GOLF COURSE: SOUTH LAKE
HUNGRY GOLF COURSE: CURRAMBINE

END OF THE LINE: BUTLER
Like Los Angeles, the private vehicle has had a profound impact on the planning of the city, particularly on its breadth; having both space and a populace with wheels, the city has been allowed to follow the coast outward in the pursuit of the private ideal. As described in the ‘the easily buildable’ (1.1.4), suburbs have continually infilled the tenable plain between coast and scarp in all manner of planning languages. The scouring series shows legible responses to topography in the planning morphologies of the hills and along the river in the form of deviations from the gridded superstructures that organise the city. This photographic series focuses on the disorganised quotient; on the morphologies that reflect only the whim of the planner executed over terrain that is indifferently flat. The car that has enabled the propagation of these suburbs has marked its delirium on many of these sites; there are doughnuts carved into the sand pads in no less than four of the images – one almost perfectly marking the centre of the sketched roundabout in the first image, taken at Burns Beach (the white speck in the lower left may well be the car that drew it).

The images show aptly the process of suburban proliferation and the stages of its execution, from the razing of the landscape to the finishing of the edge of the new frontier. The ‘sketched suburb’ images show the border between the new suburb and the rural land the developments encroach on, they show the erasure of sites and the laying out of roads, some scraped, some compacted, some surfaced. They show the construction of public open spaces, often centred on fabricated lakes, in the wake of the complete removal of the pre-existing vegetation. The ‘terracing’ images show the system by which the topography is rationalised, where staggered, perfectly flat sand parcels await the reception of houses, sometimes requiring retaining walls that cast shadows across neighbouring plots. The ‘staging’ images capture a moment in the sequential construction of new homes in a variety of states from groundwork to formwork, to steelwork, to slab, to wall, to skeletonised roof, and finally tiles.

The city of the immediate future is about the wholesale demolition of the existing in preparation for the new. It involves the softening of the landscape from a threatening to a marketable form. Koolhaas describes “any process of colonisation – the graft of a particular culture onto an alien site – [as] in itself a PC [paranoid-critical] process, the moreso if it occurs in the void left by the extirpation of the previous cultures.” He describes paranoia as a “delirium of interpretation”, in which “the world can be reshuffled like a pack of cards whose original sequence is a disappointment.” Whether or not the manufacture of suburbs can be understood so drastically as a paranoia-critical behaviour, looking at its workings through these photographs,

5 Koolhaas, Delirious New York, 245.
6 Koolhaas, Delirious New York, 238.
7 Koolhaas, Delirious New York, 243.
which reveal the absolute nature of the taming of the landscape, there certainly is a sense of complete erasure about them.

Erasure may indeed be a response to disappointment with the landscape. George Seddon certainly described such a disappointment when he called the Jarrah a “grotesque parody of a tree”\(^8\); in fact, his initial disdain with Perth’s landscape is made plain: “the country was all wrong, and I felt cheated.”\(^9\) An extreme of this malaise, a shift from dislike to fear of the West Australian landscape and vegetation, is recorded in the semi-autobiographical novel by DH Lawrence, *Kangaroo*. Lawrence describes a panic attack induced by the sensation of the bush watching him. “And not a sign of life – not a vestige. Yet Something. Something big and aware and hidden! He walked on, had walked a mile or so into the bush, and had just come to a clump of tall, nude, dead trees, shining almost phosphorescent with the moon, when the terror of the bush overcame him.”\(^10\) In *The Lie of the Land*, Lawrence’s cognisant “something” is suppressed by erasure. Paul Carter equates the clearing of wilderness to the purging of unwelcome shadows and sounds.\(^11\) The “colonists’ eagerness to remove every vestige of vegetation cannot be explained simply as a mistaken theory of agriculture; it expresses as overwhelming need to clear away doubt – not to make the land speak in accents all its own, but to silence the whispers...”\(^12\)

Captured in the aerial photographs, the frontier is softened into a more acceptable form, provided with lawns and kidney shaped lakes. The true and disturbing landscape is reined back, made picturesque with comfortable distance.\(^13\) It is replaced with emulative parks, whose “fetishising... only contributes further to the ungrounding of the ground.”\(^14\) Streets here are ironically distributed with names derived from local vegetation, or associated with the accomplishment of its claiming – Success Way, Discovery Drive, Aspiration Court. Whether borne of fear, dissatisfaction or most likely simple economics, the landscape at the city’s edge is systematically tamed in the production of new suburbs. In the city of the immediate future it seems we have to soften, to condition the landscape to make Perth at least marketable and at best familiar.

This phenomenon is, of course, not confined to Perth. The proliferation of the city of the immediate future and the indifference of its construction toward the landscape it demolishes is typical of a worldwide process at work in the peripheries of cities, a banal and expansive operation discussed by Sorkin in *Variations on a Theme Park* and many others. The first mapping set examines the city of the immediate future at work on the region’s edges, and finds the morphologies associated with its operation comprising the vast majority of the cadastral plan.

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8 Seddon, *Sense of Place*, xiv.
9 Seddon, *Sense of Place*, xiii.
13 “the environment...must be seen as an ambiguous setting, picturesque when it backed off toward the horizon, recalcitrant when it opposed passage”. Carter, *The Lie of the Land*, 7.
5.2.1 REGION

HUNDRED YEARS: CORE

This map breaks the city into a set of strata describing the extent of the region’s built-up area at several points in time between 1900 and 2006.\textsuperscript{15} Each layer depicts the accumulated mass of the city region’s development within a particular time frame and, with the cadastral superimposed, the planning types associated with each phase. Stratified vertically, the layers show the extents of the city’s footprint in 1925, 1955, and 1970 in turn. The map describes an acceleration in the speed of the city’s development, with thirty years of growth taken to produce the second stratum and only fifteen accounting for the greater mass accumulated in the third.

This mapping demonstrates with clarity the concentric banding of the city’s growth outward from the riverine core, which mimics with the banding observed in the planning typology mappings of grids, pods, dead ends and warren in the private city.

\textsuperscript{15} Map layers up to 1970 borrowed from “progressive development” map, in Seddon, Sense of Place, 194.
5.2.2 REGION
HUNDRED YEARS: PERIPHERY

The remainder of the map shows the growth that has taken place between 1970 and 2006. The first thing worth noting is its extent: it represents approximately two thirds of the city's mass, having appeared only within the last third of its development, engulfing something like sixty kilometres of coastline in three decades. In comparison with the other thirty year stratum – the second tier of the core mapping – this image represents explicitly the city of the immediate future.

The second significance of this set is the simultaneity of its content: it is at once a chronological and a typological mapping. It affirms those assumptions made about the chronology of the city's planning types as concentric bands of experimentation, with the core adhering to the grid, the middle ring showing the beginnings of deviation in the plan, and the periphery adopting the warren type. The plates generated in this mapping resonate with the shapes of the morphological plate mapping. It is a temporal taxonomy.
5.2.3 REGION
ALIGNMENT PLATES + FWY

5.2.4 REGION
MORPHOLOGICAL PLATES + FWY

The inclusion of the freeway into the paired examinations of the city’s morphology and orientation demonstrates the freeway as a thread through the city, distributing and hinging together pockets of irrational planning. The freeway, which has had a longer presence to the north of the region, can be seen as enabling the unbound extension of the city and distributing the warren type pockets along its length. In this way the warren type and the freeway can be seen as the paired mechanisms for the expansion of the city over the last few decades; in effect, the partnered forces driving the development of the private city.

The freeway bisects the region and offers a section through its planning types. It behaves as a sliding scale of distortion in its traversal from the regular grid to the chaotic warren. The spines of the freeway are lengthening yet; perhaps the next part of the transect will return to a semblance of regularity in the form of new urban planning types.
5.2.5 REGION
STRINGS OF VILLAGES

The development pattern of the region can similarly be read as hinging to the highway and freeway system. At its extremities these roadways form appendages to the region’s plan that string together its satellites. To the north of the region, in which the combined freeway and rail system has had a longer presence, there is greater solidity in the city’s cadastre, with the built-up area almost unbroken between coast and freeway. This raises the question of future expansion for the south along with the establishment of its freeway and rail system and the likelihood of a similar massing occurring between its two spines of coastal road and freeway.
5.4.1 TABULA RAZED SITES

The relationship between transit arteries and development inhabits the core of the city as well. Whereas in the periphery this relationship is generally one of construction, in the core it is one of revision, with both scenarios resulting in the generation of immediate townscapes.

Infrastructural change has been responsible for a great deal of the white space that makes the EPRA figure ground a virtual tabula rasa. The lower of the two western limbs comprises rail reserve land that was previously an extensive and vacuous car park, but which has since become the receptacle for the Northbridge Link project, which would see the railway buried and residential and commercial tower blocks introduced to the site. The gaps in the upper western limb owe their presence to large scale demolition associated with the construction of a freeway tunnel below. Much of the whiteness of EPRA's figure ground is unbuilt land, but erasure is precisely the reason why areas like the land above the tunnel – the New Northbridge project – come under EPRA’s jurisdiction at the outset.

5.4.2 TABULA REDEVELOPED SITES

The precinct already redeveloped by EPRA is known as Claisebrook Cove, in which houses, streets and inlet were grafted onto expansive sites previously occupied by industrial and commercial buildings and a vague collection of sites surrounding them. This redevelopment forms a tidy archipelago of compressed suburbia; right down to its paved streets a revision both clean and total.

The mapping of the razed and redeveloped sites describes a rate of change – a mutability – at work within EPRA's boundaries, with the legibility and singularity of the redeveloped mapping as the likely outcome for the razed.
Progress, it seems, is built on the ruins of process; in order to stand erect, man must, it seems, stamp the earth flat, turning it into a passive planisphere.

Paul Carter, *The Lie of the Land* 16

Revision brings about the second concern of the city of the immediate future: the clean slate. It is often the case that renewal projects are, in fact, erasures rather than renewals at all. In the same way as peripheral suburbs are placed upon sites first levelled and cleared of vegetation, urban projects that have taken place over the city’s history can also be seen as involving the wholesale clearing of their contexts.

In “Gentrification, an Overview”, Stefan Metaal looks at gentrification as a process that has varied results in different circumstances, but one whose literature adheres to a generic set of stages. These are summarised as follows: The first is the ‘artistic phase’, in which degraded urban areas, often ones with a ceased industrial programme, come to be populated by young and creative individuals and couples “who want to distance themselves from the status competition and exclusion processes they say are taking place in the suburbs.” 17 This group takes advantage of low rents in degraded and disused shells, and their influx is associated with programme such as galleries and cafés. The second or ‘mixed phase’ sees the upgrading of the area in tandem with an inflow of a “socially minded middle class”, who might renovate the area to a greater extent and provide a sufficient population to sustain shops and restaurants. 18 The third and final stage is

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the ‘fashionable phase’, in which the complete overhaul of the neighbourhood is formally and programmatically sealed. Unlike the second group of residents, who “remain sympathetic to the original inhabitants”, the appearance of this final group relates to the stylish status now ascribed to the area, and signals the financial failure of the original group and its businesses in favour of “high culture and historicising architecture.”

These are, as Metaal recognises, only loose categories and as such find variation between the cities from which they were derived. Metaal questions the total applicability of these phases to actual cities and he particularly doubts the legibility of the ‘fashionable phase’ in terms of visual homogenisation. Metaal acknowledges that few cities undergo all of the stages in a complete manner: “some working-class neighbourhoods retain their artistic character, with a highly prescient cultural fringe or alternative scene, while others remain known as stable mixed city neighbourhoods for a long time.”

Claisebrook Cove might be seen to have done the inverse of this; it has effectively skipped the first two stages of gentrification and gone straight for the third by constructing a new neighbourhood for an affluent class in the space left behind by the removal of industrial programme, without allowing for the emergence of a creative class or the visible presence of the prior land use in the clean new streetscape. This is in fact the difference between gentrification and redevelopment; but it is worth mentioning for two reasons, firstly because both processes have the same outcome – the arrival of a ‘gentry’ in place of a degraded programme – and secondly because the area in question might well have been allowed to develop in a more natural manner, or at least have retained some legibility of its prior life. There is a sense of absolute newness about this area, strangely incongruous with the traditional formal language required by its design codes.

The current picturesque, grassy scene masks a shady history. East Perth’s prior role as an industrial zone was associated with the availability of unskilled labour and cheap housing, and the area housed a substantial migrant community during the ‘50s and ‘60s. It was also the locus for several programmes for Aborigines, including the Native Welfare Department and Bennett House hostel, and it played a significant role in the “town housing project”, whereby an Aboriginal populace was deliberately, and forcibly, integrated into the city. Dislocated and underprivileged, the Aboriginal community became estranged by clashes with the European migrant population, and was subjected to abuse and molestation from visiting degenerates. And the site has a

22 Gregory, City of Light, 162-164.
23 Gregory, City of Light, 165-168.
longer significance for its displaced Aboriginal community. Several plaques are positioned in the landscaped edge of the Claisebrook Cove redevelopment, relaying stories of prior indigenous occupation, and the twice beheaded statue of Yagan stands on Heirisson Island. Aside from these designed documentations of the significance of the estuarine area to Aborigines, a genuine trace can be detected at the river’s edge, where striations of mollusc shells are revealed in cross section, layered into the landfill perimeter of the shoreline.

Blighted and contentious, a site scarred by social disadvantage and tarnished – physically and notionally – by industry, East Perth was something of a ghetto before its redevelopment. Some 350 dilapidated houses, as well as numerous hostels and lodging houses, continued to accommodate migrants and low income households into the ‘80s, buildings laid waste by the district’s reservation as freeway land. This demographic was not catered for in the redevelopment plan, for fear the provision of a significant proportion of low cost and public housing would affect its marketability. The East Perth power station, located directly north of the rail and freeway reserve, stands as a monument to this neatly razed past.

The city of the immediate future involves a sense of planning with the near future in mind, a relative ease in dispensing with the past, and perhaps a readiness to pursue projects that serve the needs of the near future as opposed to the more remote. It looks at planning in Perth as a phenomenon of half-measures and quick decisions.

Visions to improve the city and assert its character have often had broad and total effects. There is no shortage of ambition for ‘modernising’ Perth in its relatively short history. Its car dependency, for one thing, is an enduring record of this ambition. The inefficiency of Perth’s public transport system owes its heritage to an assertion that Perth would absolutely be a modern city, and in that sense privilege the car entirely. This imperative for private mobility disengaged the city from its foreshore, gave it more parking spaces in the central city than any other Australian capital, and saw its tram system removed and its rail system threatened with the same fate.

The decentralisation discussed in the private city, and its attachment to the car, have long been attributed to a sole planning scheme, brought about in the 1950s and solidified in the 1960s and ‘70s: the Corridor Plan. As a planning methodology for the growth of Perth, the Corridor Plan is a model that falls into the category of

24 Gregory, City of Light, 318.
25 Initially allocating a third of its housing programme as affordable, later plans allocated a meagre 3 per cent. Gregory, City of Light, 319.
dispersed development, identifying from the outset an intention to focus on developing the outskirts of the city. This plan was brought about by a study called the Stephenson Hepburn report, which predicted that by the turn of last century 80 per cent of the region’s population would be living in the inner areas around Perth and Fremantle. The agenda to disperse Perth’s development away from the core of the city has been the most extensive decision for the region and remediation of this scenario is the enduring focus of current planning strategies.

Among the recommendations of this plan were the introduction of a regional highway system (the arms of development for the corridors) and the incorporation of a freeway ring around the central area, involving the removal of the Barracks for road construction, and the provision of parking spaces for 12 000 cars in the city. This proposition was vehemently opposed by Paul Ritter who published extensive arguments against both the Corridor Plan as a decentralised planning strategy and the freeway “noose” to be implemented around the core. His recommendation was a “directional network” of routes “for pedestrians, cars, trucks [and] public transport” that would operate on a grid system and evolve with changing land use as reserves that could be “built up when and how the need arises.” He was not alone in his unrest; others documented their opposition to the scheme and in particular the freeway ring. All concurred that the southern arm of the ring, which was intended to lie between the city and the foreshore, would completely disconnect the city from the river.

The Metropolitan Region Planning Authority, in defence of the Corridor Plan, rejected Ritter’s plea, arguing that he had not considered “the merit of some form of decentralisation of the Perth central area activities” and that his proposition to uphold the grid system would not work and would abandon “the regional road system to which the MRPA and MRD are heavily committed”, as well as flout “The existing financial commitments that have been entered into by the government and private developers.” Ritter and the MRPA described each others’ proposals as, among other things, “unscientific.” The freeway system was eventually constructed, but its southern leg, Riverside Drive, was downgraded from six lanes and connected to the interchange by ramps. It formed an access way past the city which, until it was relieved by the northern leg in 2000, was arguably more congested as a result, and it still divides the city and the river.

The removal of the Barracks for freeway land identified in the Stephenson Hepburn report

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26 The Metropolitan Region Planning Authority, Metropolitan Region Scheme Report (Perth, WA: Town Planning Department, 1962), 9.
27 The Metropolitan Region Planning Authority, Metropolitan Region Scheme Report, 9-10.
28 "the freeway noose tightens on Perth. The recently published recommended programme would literally choke recreation on the south, and take the puff out of business life in the north." Paul Ritter, Perth in Peril (Perth, WA: Ritter Press, 1968), 2. Ritter expressed his opposition to these schemes during his appointment as Chief Planning Officer, and published this document after his removal from the role in 1967.
also ended in a compromise. Once housing the Pensioner Guards, it became the headquarters for the Public Works Department, and as Jenny Gregory remarks, its demolition became a democratic totem for a public already resentful of wanton destruction. The compromise involved the removal of the wings of the complex, leaving behind its arch as a freestanding monument. As Premier Brand remarked at the time, “‘the tendency to be influenced by our emotions’ should be out aside for the sake of town planning and the demands of the car”. Somewhat ironically, a public demonstration was planned for the first day of demolition in 1966, in which participants were to drive past the site in their cars and toot their horns.

The same desire for modernity saw the Post Verandahs and Balconies By-law passed a decade earlier, a scheme that saw 191 of 194 balconied buildings in the city denuded – their gold rush excesses forcibly removed to reveal barer façades. This aesthetic change to the face of the city met with considerable public opposition – hence the three balconies that remained – and according to Gregory this turn of events marks the beginnings of large scale demolition to the city, but also the beginnings of its protest, whereby Perth’s defence of its heritage fabric preceded the other capitals.

Some time after these battles, the need for the concern of planning to shift from the realms of road design to the cultural heart of the city was expressed by architects and planners alike. A series of seminars was held by the Australian Institute of Urban Studies in 1979 and its discussions published in a document called Who Plans the City? The resounding notion among its contributors was that the city – the quality of its spaces and its cultural value for Perth’s citizens – would suffer as long as the focus of planning remained on roads and zoning issues.

The burying of the Northbridge Tunnel, a far more recent example, is another process that has seen vast demolition of existing fabric; it is responsible for the gaps in the north-western limb of EPRA’s site. The tunnel belongs to the Graham Farmer freeway system, completed in 2000, which slips underground through the study area. Its construction involved the removal of many buildings in Northbridge, creating gaps that are now being filled out by new projects. Northbridge has a distinct built character, and speculation (however inaccurate) endures that had the level of the tunnel been dropped, demolished buildings may have been saved. The idea of legibility for renewal sites has been raised through the example of the Claisebrook Cove redevelopment scheme, and this is a pertinent

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33 Gregory, City of Light, 118.
34 Gregory, City of Light, 122.
35 This rally was prevented by the police. Gregory, City of Light, 121.
36 Gregory, City of Light, 114.
37 Gregory, City of Light, 114.
38 Australian Institute of Urban Studies, Who Plans the City? A series of seminars presented in 1976 (Perth, W.A: Extension Service, University of Western Australia and the Institute of Urban Studies, 1979). John Fitzhardinge’s foreword, 1, describes an emphasis on infrastructure and zoning. His mention of the freeway interchange as the main contribution of the Stephenson Hepburn plan to the city is elaborated by Paul Ritter in “Perth City and the Region,” 4-6. Ralph Stanton’s introduction, 2-3, acknowledges a need to focus on the role of the central city to the region, and this theme continues in Julius Elischer’s contribution, “the Validity of the City,” 22-31.
concern for the sites that have not yet undergone renewal, sites whose fates have already been sealed by demolition but which reside in the midst of rich urban fabric. These gaps left behind in Northbridge by the burying of the tunnel hold an opportunity for an architecture that articulates their razing.

These stories of the city’s developmental history are only fragments of much larger processes that have shaped the city’s physical structure and its built language. Regardless, they frame the city of the immediate future as a narrative that looks for an alternative to expedient and devastating measure. The projections that emerge in this research are founded in the notion of extrapolating the physical and perceptual characteristics of the existing city; they respond to both the spatial and the temporal dimensions of the city of the immediate future. Both are sited in places that are about to undergo massive change, and the first has a particular mode of use that has existed in the city for decades.
5.4.3 TABULA
FIRST FLOOR DATUM

The immediate future is burgeoning in the city’s gaps. The land that comes under EPRA’s planning jurisdiction is land awaiting proposition. That wedge of open space between the city and Northbridge lies in wait of a proposal that would see the city returned to the ground, and forego the potential of its current mode of navigation which is unique, and, ironically, somewhat modern.

Around this wedge (the “link” site) exists an unusual condition in which pedestrian movement is removed from the obstacles of railway and vehicular congestion, and shifted to a first floor datum that joins the two places from north to south. The rail reserve has long separated Perth and Northbridge, and to date it has been negotiated sectionally. It is breached at several points by footbridges and at William Street by an iconic traffic bridge. With its platforms at ground level, the upper floor of the train station connects the first floor of the city’s arcades to its south with the plenum of Northbridge’s heart – the cultural centre – to its north. The Cultural Centre is a landscaped plinth, partly paved, partly planted, with parking below, which binds together the State Library, the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, the WA Museum and the Art Gallery of WA. Bridges, platforms and plenum – Perth, Northbridge and the railway station – all meet each other at the first floor.
5.4.4 TABULA
DATUM SECTION

This relationship stretches south almost to the river, as the datum strikes street level at Hay Street and St George’s Terrace, and is again lifted through an arcade and met by the first floor of the bus station. In this way, the pedestrian traversal of the city traces a level line through its section, irrespective of changes in the ground terrain.
transect one: wall condition along Roe St formed by parking complex and Perth railway station
**5.5.1 PENCIL TABULA**

**DATUM AND WALLS**

Along Roe Street, parallel to the rail reserve, this datum relationship is not just accommodated by the first floor, but precluded by the ground. Taking the stairs from the plenum of the cultural centre to street level moves you through the stairwell of a parking lot and lands you, via a service door, between two lengths of blank façade and a few feet from a barricade of traffic. This condition extends for some distance, where both train station and cultural centre turn their backs to the street, forming extensive and impermeable walls.
SKETCHES: ROOMS OF THE UNDERBELLY,
FALSE BASEMENT

Through these mechanisms, the traditional experience of openness and enclosure around the cultural centre is turned on its head. The ground level is a cordoned interior, and the upper an exposed and traversable terrain, marked by stairwells poking up from the ground. For the pedestrian, visiting the ground level here is a matter of dropping into rooms concealed from the street; the ground becomes a false basement, perceptually subterranean.
photographic panoramas of the upper floor level of the Cultural Centre, showing the footbridges connecting the first floor datum and the stairwells leading to the enclosed ground level.
5.5.2 PENCIL TABULA II
FIRST FLOOR DATUM EXTRUSION

In this projection the first floor datum has been extended out over the link site, not returning habitation to the ground, but leaving the ground to the vehicles that own it today in a spatial monopoly of car parks and access ways. It instead accepts within its mass a set of depressions; rooms entered from the first floor as subterranean urban programme.

Included in this drawing are a set of laneways to the north of the link site. These lanes form an important aspect of the autonomy of Northbridge, as they have a bearing on the current experience of Northbridge as an interior: cutting between streets and parking lots, they form an intimate circulation network that strengthens Northbridge’s perception as the rear of the city.

Coursing through these interventions laterally are the armatures of the regional mapping. These heterogeneous spines are brought through the city, behaving as potential limbs of circulation, infilling, and densification, dragging the city’s programme outward to inner suburbia.
5.6.1 LINK
BASEMENT

The following set focuses its attention solely on the link site, imagining how it might negotiate the intersection of regional, morphological attritions with local peculiarities. This project synthesises at the large scale the collision of the even city with the central business district and the friction between the autonomous entities of Perth and Northbridge, and, at the local scale, such onsite readings as the first floor datum and its enclosed underbelly, the perforations of Northbridge, and the visual relationships that traverse its currently vacuous surface. These drawings need to be understood as diagrams, as projective frameworks that articulate the characteristics of the site, rather than suggestions for specific built form.

This projection operates within the assumption that the railway will be sunk below ground level along the length of the link site as planned. The drawing shows the railway line and platforms incised, with the potential for development dropping down to this true basement level adjacent to the tracks.
5.6.2 LINK GROUND

The ground floor remains in the custody of vehicles, of roads and parking, but receives those pockets of programme extending down from the first floor datum. This subterranean scape then becomes the underbelly of the project site, populated by programme that has an introspective nature, little need of sunlight, or a requirement for concealment. It might forge a relationship with the nocturnal programme of Northbridge by relating to the system of laneways and parking lots that support it. Slices through the ground programme form a visual connection with the mouths of Northbridge’s lanes, creating potential connections between introduced programme and a level of permeability across the site.

The groundscape is bifurcated by the railway line below, tracing the scar of its tracks. Given this gap, the proposition could as easily maintain the rail system at ground level, leaving the cars and trains to occupy the ground as they have, and adding subway programme to the perceptual basement.
5.6.3 LINK

FIRST

As the plenum level of the link site and the dominant pedestrian interface, the first floor becomes a false ground extending out from the existing datum fabric, an open terrain that maintains through itself the reciprocal visual relationship between the upper floors of Perth and Northbridge, and the vacuous and vague character of its previously asphalted site. Like the pad of the Cultural Centre, it might be a public landscape both hard and soft, dispersed with retail and civic programme, and punctuated by the circulation wells that lead to its underbelly.\(^\text{39}\)

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\(^{39}\) Recently, the Cultural Centre hosted a national touring music event called Saint Jerome’s Laneway Festival (fig 42). This is the first time such a large show has been staged on this site, and it represents the kind of coalescence of event and setting that was probably envisaged when it was designed (the building visible in the background is PICA). It indicates a critical mass of interest in the city and its arts programme, and a potential shift for the site from thoroughfare to stage. Although the site is used regularly for markets and demonstrations, this order of event is rare and its success is promising.
Cut Off Your Hands play St Jerome's Laneway Festival, Cultural Centre, 2009.
5.6.4 LINK
UPPER

The upper level becomes the main, centralised reservoir of EPRA's new population, forming the divisional wall that separates Perth and Northbridge. It masses itself to the south of the link site in conversation with the greater scale of built form that resides in the city, leaving a single storey of terrain to relate to Northbridge.
5.6.5 LINK
PANORAMA

The first floor datum becomes the repository of that mass of visually permeable space previously attached to the ground plane, and draws into itself the expanse of prospect currently experienced at points throughout the existing datum fabric. It has a subsequent action of relating the link to the secondary streetscape that exists at this upper level – where the gutted and commercialised glass scape of the ground floor gives way to a horizon of historic form. The activities of the central business district and the doormat beyond form the front garden to the upper reaches of the project.

This proposition maintains the awkward and interesting pattern of experience; an interior ground floor that harbours an imperceptibility of scale and propinquity, and an open first from which the breadth of the city can be seen and felt. It is capped by a vertex of housing programme that divides the historically diverse entities of Perth and Northbridge, and marks the collision of the capital with one hundred kilometres of two storey, even city.
In the first part of this chapter we have seen the city of the immediate future as the site of the manufacture of a banal suburban scene, distanced from the core spatially, and attached to it tenuously by the cambered limbs of the regional communication system. It is a site where the existing landscape is sooner removed than incorporated, and one that accounts for the vast majority of the region’s plan and only a fraction of its history. If the existing is constantly slated for the production of a suburban ideal, perhaps there are other ideals that could be pursued here. We have already seen the city’s plan grow more divorced from rationality in the chronological banding of the grid/pod/noodle set housed in the private city. Later in that chapter, in looking at the programming of these belts and particularly that of the warren plates, a certain looseness was exposed in the treatment of the landscape that associates the warren morphology with the synthesis of idealised urban scenarios.

Looking at the banal nature of the fringe in the photographic excursion of this chapter, its similitude, its consistency, and knowing the way the city unfolds in bands of experimentation with planning morphology, it is possible that this system could be perceived as offering a much greater experiment. If an entire suburb can be melded in accordance with the curves of a golf course’s greens, surely this field could facilitate the production of suburbs dedicated to multiple and alternate utopias. Steven Holl’s *Edge of a City* projects forego the contested and tired territory of the core for the opportunity inherent in the incredible ordinariness of the fringe. His are imaginative propositions for a domain that currently bears very little association with architecture. Somewhere in between Holl’s fascination with the fringe, Rowe’s concept of a utopia of bricolage, and Koolhaas’ perception of Manhattan and Coney Island as an urban laboratory, lies a project that sees the potential of the peripheral city of the immediate future as a field of experiment, a laboratory for the production of urban utopias. This is an opportunity implicit in the history of the plan but not yet recognised for its performative potential.

The second aspect of the city of the immediate future tells a story of the city’s core as a place readily adjusted in the service of such experiment. The proposition for the link has several relationships with the ahistoric nature city of the immediate future. Its attitude toward the privilege given to the vehicle over the city’s history is one of acceptance: the ground floor is given away willingly, but instead of just receiving stairwells from the first, it has now been required to provide ‘rooms’. The premise of erasure that frames the
city of the immediate future has formed the main concept, and the main public interface, of the scheme: a desire to maintain and extend the first floor datum rather than demolish it. The upper floors are given to the project by the even city, as marking the impact of a regional condition on a local site.

In describing Rossi's Modena Cemetery, Raphael Moneo remarks on how the slant of the window cuts "allows one to be continuously with 'the blue of the sky'". The link project is a giant divisional figure, a volume, an idea. It could be shaped and permeated in any number of ways, but it is a form that has one important and immutable cut: a deep slice whose ground plane connects the disparate pieces of a consistent platform, and whose missing walls preserve the half-blue panorama of the city and sustain the visual exchange between Perth and Northbridge; the vastness of the former gap is not lost. It is a project that at once divides and joins the fabric of the city and Northbridge: a permeable wall.

The city of the immediate future makes a significant contribution to the next chapter, in which the research enters the city's gaps: reserve city. The concept of doing (almost) nothing creates a connection between these two cities, in which the reserve is the site for a design approach that is antithetical to the city of the immediate future in both a spatial and a temporal sense: an architecture of dotted lines...

Sited in the gap between two narratives, between city of the immediate future and reserve city, is a proposition that dwells in the city’s gaps. Doing (almost) nothing is an image that was left out of the ‘actions’ set of the even city, both because it promotes inaction – or small, or slow action – and partly because it occupies the theoretical overlap between city of the immediate future’s concern for avoiding spatial and temporal finality and reserve city’s concern for spaces that are in between the city’s spatial and temporal development activity.
Doing (Almost) Nothing is the title given to an edition of Volume that celebrates doing nothing, or doing very little, as an opportunity for architecture as a discipline whose usual approach is totalising, "leaving neither questions open nor the least gap unfilled. Architecture is fond of the complete makeover, of retouching reality rather than adding a subtle touch. Architecture always wants to strategise, even if tactics are obviously a better option."\textsuperscript{41} The difference between strategies and tactics implies a difference in the scale of architectural intervention, and this is a text that promotes an idea that doing very little makes for an architecture no less meaningful than architecture that does almost everything. Framed in a city where architecture is perceptually secondary to landscape, doing (almost) nothing suggests that architecture might give up its mission to decide the city’s character and become subordinate to the wideness and the openness that define it.

Reserves are sites that in themselves do almost nothing, sites that are set aside, either set aside for future development or set outside of the possibility of development. The city of the immediate future, in questioning expedient and total development, offers up an alternative; a strategy for slowness, for staging, for minute projects. Although it was considered in the same breath as the iterative actions identified in the even city, and is capable of unfolding within their structure, this diagram belongs here in the context of usual, immediate, practice.

The action of doing (almost) nothing is a strategy for the city’s unbuilt spaces and reserves, a proposal that might be called an architecture of dotted lines. It signals the possibility that meaningful projects might emerge within the city on an acupunctural scale. The (almost) nothings in the earlier image might involve adaptation, for example the appropriation of structures such as above ground car parks as the public transport system evolves. They might be temporal operations, such as a second use of diurnally deserted spaces like car parks. They might involve the provision of intrigue and amenity to spaces like parks and reserves, or form discreet interventions to the river’s edge.

An opportunity for transience grows out of the severity and finality of the city of the immediate future, and begins to be projected onto reserve spaces, those that are protected from development, upon which architecture might play a benign but opportunistic role. Doing (almost) nothing derives from the prior chapter and has implications for the next; as reserve sites are left out of development, they might as well be left out of the swiftness and totality of the act of development.

Reserve city grew out of the wide city and the plotting of green spaces throughout the region’s built fabric. It is a chapter that shifts the focus from the built to the unbuilt, that invites architecture to become subservient to the landscape which so heavily defines Perth.

Throughout the process of mapping the city for its programme, its wideness, its visual permeability, arose a recurrent piece of terminology: reserve. Green spaces in the city, linings of river and ocean, fringes of the suburban archipelago: all reserve. This word describes more than just open space; inherent in its nomenclature is a second meaning, one of expectation, of deferral, of preservation. In this second meaning, the significance of the reserve site is amplified, and the observation shifts from simply a profusion of open spaces to a certain level of attachment to their openness. The reserve became first a totemic concept within the thin city and then a thin city narrative itself, describing not just a spatial attribute of Perth but a cognitive one: a delirium for the unbuilt. The reserve city recognises the delirium of not-building, and examines the nascence of the urban blank as a locus for the city’s delight.
A collection of green spaces line the river and separate it from the built fabric of the city. Directly in front of the central city’s grid lies a stretch of rectangular grass, a ‘doormat’ to the city, on which little construction has taken place in the city’s history and little can be expected to take place. This strip of landscaping was reclaimed from the river and set aside as a series of reserves and, although many projects have been proposed for the development of the doormat by architects, planners and students alike, it is a site which to date rebuffs permanent intervention.

As a project for Perth, doing (almost) nothing finds its best approximation, and perhaps its greatest potential, in the doormat of the city; this band of green that separates it from the river. While Perth has been vastly shaped by the pursuit of imposed ideals, in the case of the foreshore, indecision has been in fact its greatest asset. As various proposals are put forward, slighted, defended and deferred, the doormat takes care of itself: it plays host to the staging of many events and stands vacantly green after their passing.

This doormat site, and the collection of green spaces that stem from it, form the basis for the second projection of the research. The indeterminacy of reserve sites invites the strategy of doing (almost) nothing, in which the reserves are invited to remain unbuilt but to accept some augmentation for an appreciation of their setting. As land that is set aside, doing (almost) nothing presents a potential for their treatment as a means of negotiating their unknown future and augmenting their present.

The chapter begins with mappings that could as easily have formed part of the wide city, mappings of various types of reserve spaces that puncture the regional plan and invite the half-blue into the perspectival view of the city. It then travels into similar mappings of the study area, overturning different incarnations of reserve sites within the tabula and offering opportunities for their treatment. Reserve city examines the vastness of the city’s doormat in terms of a delirium for open space, and finds both its openness and its temporal use to be historically wrought.

Finally, reserve city focuses on the easternmost edge of the city’s plan, in which grid structures dissolve and the figure ground of the city is inverted, a site that is vastly open but faces inevitable development, and imagines a project that might unfold within the two demanding and opposing constraints of impending construction and a delirium for the unbuilt.
Views over the central rail reserve that divides Perth and Northbridge, shot from a footbridge that forms part of the existing first floor datum fabric.
6.2.1 REGION
PARKS AND RESERVES

The regional map is regularly broken by parks and green reserves. Sometimes these reserves are earmarked as unbuildable; spaces preserved or protected from development, sometimes named after a local figure. The term is often associated with green spaces that contain programme such as ovals, ethnic and municipal clubs and sporting fields. In other instances, green sites are labelled as reserve in lieu of the introduction of new programme, for instance, land set aside in new developments that might find a later conversion to school grounds. Many reserve sites lie somewhere in between the two states; marked for future development that does not arise, making them spaces of indefinite openness. The term reserve also has a nationwide significance – it was the term given to land set aside for Aborigines, sites of exclusion thinly veiled as protection, a term now associated with Aboriginal land rights. So there is ambiguity in the terminology of the reserve, and also in its programme.
6.2.2 REGION
ROAD AND RAIL RESERVES

In planning vocabulary, streets and their adjacencies form another type of reserve, built of pedestrian paths and bike lanes, building setbacks and verges. The suburban verge is an ambiguous terrain, rich in the frictions of its colliding borders. Challenged by the street and defended by residents whose level of concern is legible in its treatment, their eventual control lies with a local authority who might repossess them at any time.

Of an entirely different scale, and finding no easy treatment, is the freeway reserve, in which the verge has quite literally reached new proportions in the extension of the city. The relationship between houses and the street is reversed in the case of the freeway, where generally a buffer of green separates the freeway from the rear wall of suburban outcrops.

The road reserve mapping formulates a view of the city in which a singular black mass extends through the region to wrap each cadastral block. In this sense, each unit becomes an archipelago within an extended network of asphalt, lined with pathways and verge spaces.
SNAPSHOT: RAIL RESERVE

The rail reserve takes a wide berth through the city. Generally filled with sand and occasionally landscaped, the rail is fenced well beyond its tracks, devoid of built form save for its platforms. In relation to the prior regional mappings and the set derived from the white pixel figure ground, the rail reserve presents a void that courses through the city’s plan rather than an armature.

However, instances of obscure and heterogeneous programme appear within this undesirable terrain, potentially freed from the certainty of market constraints that rule the remainder of the city’s cadastre. In this sample segment that runs through the western suburb of Daglish, there are pockets of commercial and light industrial programme marooned within the reserve, as well as a nursery. This is typical of the east-west rail line; other examples include a police station, a market garden and several other nurseries.
6.2.3 REGION
STRING RESERVES

The city’s geographical features tend to be lined with open space; private occupation is set back from the ocean and river and generally relegated to the far side of a parallel roadway. These green adjacencies to the city’s water bodies are generally protected from development entirely. It is democratically appropriate that they remain in the custody of the public, but their preclusion from development limits the level and type of engagement that can be experienced by the individual. For the most part they are left to a picturesque state, with stands of trees, playgrounds and car parks. They provide a green counter to the sky in a region-long framing of the horizon.

In combination with the rail and freeway reserves, these create unbroken stretches of unbuilt terrain through, beside, and across the city; they are continuous and potentially variegated sites that hinge together disparate parts of the region as singular recreational ecologies.
ON THE VERGE: A DIVERSION INTO THE SPACE OF THE RESERVE

Before following the story of the reserve from the region into the focal site, a moment is taken to ponder the reserve and the performative possibility it could hold if it were recognised as positive rather than leftover space. Where possible, the discussion is illustrated using maps of a sample site, the beachside suburb of Cottesloe – one that encompasses multiple types of reserve and sits outside the central core which has been the usual focal point of the research. The Cottesloe study is used in the discussion of the role of the verge as a reserve space that exists in every suburban parcel in the city region. This is a short excursion into the multiple types of reserve and a gaze at their behavioural potential.

The band of space called the road reserve comprises a collective wealth of space between street and front fence, and its usual arrangement involves a kerb line defining the street, followed by a verge of grass or paving, and a footpath in front of the street boundary of the private plot. This arrangement makes every cadastral plot, whether conforming to a grid or fitting between cul-de-sacs, part of an asphalt archipelago ringed with grass and paving.

The verge is potentially a permeable site in both suburban and urban contexts. In an urban setting, small markers can be seen policing the line between café and footpath, breached all too rarely by a piece of stray furniture. In the suburb it is an idiosyncratic space. The lines made by a change in grass species, or the stopping point of a lawn mower, mark the workings of the private city in a terrain that in fact lies in the public realm.
Sometimes laid waste, other times defended with sign posts and bits of string, bore stained, paved, or cultivated, the verge might somehow be embodied in a project that rehouses some of the communal programme made defunct by privacy, and embrace entrenched suburban behaviours. The verge is the home of the great social practice of anonymous trade. Although local council confines the verge collection to two weeks of the year, objects are placed constantly on the verge and collected by passers-by, saving the effort of transporting unwanted goods to the tip or donation bin. In the wake of water restrictions, an impetus for the use of suburban bus services, and the decline of the role of the town centre, the potential to redress the verge is immense as an architectural border that toes the line between public and private in a vastly private city. Whether worm farming, mulching, clothing exchange or verge trading, most councils have strategies that form part of the identity of their locality. The verge has not yet been considered as a site that might accommodate these programmes, although its proximity to the individual might offer them the greatest degree of success.

The practice of exchange could be extended and formalised in a system that is similar to a mailbox, where objects, books and clothing are deposited and collected through a membrane that doubles as suburban fence; both supporting and breaching the line of privacy. For those who occupy upper floors, they might be offered a patch of earth. Bus stops, bike paths, skating obstacles, benches; these might all conceivably form a kit of parts for the future of the verge.

Should the road surface itself be considered a part of this mass, the entire expanse of space between private properties could be addressed as an entity that incorporates changing patterns of road use and public transport in a space of transience.

The usable reserve mass now stretches from one street elevation to the opposite, engulfing all remainder as a projective site. The mass of asphalt that makes up street, public transport
systems and expanses of car parking could be conceived of as a changing urban surface, incorporating transport and parking with the exercise paths that run along the street verge and the recreational role of the front lawn in patterns that shift diurnally or weekly.

The usual types of reserve found in suburban settings – in this case rail reserve, ocean reserve, sporting field and golf course – can be added to this mass in an unfolding of their role into the collective of the road reserve and its verge system. In this study the rail reserve reaches more than seventy metres in depth. The white strip denotes the area occupied by the railway tracks, and the rest is broken by a few small footprints, one of which is a police station. The ocean reserve is similarly unbuilt, save for a surf club. These represent the usual circumstances for the ocean and rail reserves; grass for the ocean strip and sand for the rail, they are predominantly open. The ocean reserve universally contains a running and cycling path along the dunal ridge, looking out over the ocean. These linear reserves, usually bereft of programme, join the archipelago in the inverse figure ground.

The drawing type applied to the wide city – the extents of permeability – has again been used to produce a rubber stamp that sees open spaces combined as a singular, positive entity. The inverse figure ground drawing dissolves the borders that govern the reserve, showing the expanse of space that could be managed by a project that sees this space as a collective mass. Should the lines of separation between street, verge, path and fence begin to be subverted, the design space of the reserve can unfold.
This reaction to the reserve and the generation of the inverse figure ground finds an exemplary point of reference in the work of Manuel de Solà-Morales: “it is my surmise that the poor functioning of modern planned suburbs is linked to the poor use of architectural distances, to the syndrome of defensive architecture, where all the effort goes into setting the distance between objects to avoid conflicts and the creation of unexpected possibilities”.1 Reserves indeed set appropriate and safe boundaries between individuals on foot and in cars, between individuals on the street and in the home, between the safety of indoors and the dangers of the street.2

The firmness of reserves; the rigidity of their lines and the invariable nature of their surfacing, allows for no deviation. But, “if size and measurement are the fundamental objects in the practice of architecture and city planning, would it not be possible to make use of them, looking at urban distances in the periphery not as a problem, but as a positive quality to be measured and moulded? Would it not be possible to design the void as a quality of space?”3 Such an approach could apply to the limitless free space of the reserve the notions and practices usually constrained to the back yard, the 1200 mm footpath, or the designated communal centre. Should the cadastral lines that divide objects be allowed the least bit of flexibility, should the dimensions of verges and pathways be able to change in plan and in section, should fences shift and kerbs thicken or flatten, this enormity of space that currently has little purpose beyond visual setback would be lent the possibility of encounter.

2 Murcutt describes the building setback as the “fear line” in Philip Drew, Touch this Earth Lightly: Glenn Murcutt, In his Own Words (Sydney: Duffy and Snellgrove, 2001), 145.
6.3.1 LOCUS
PARKS AND RESERVES

The focal site is surrounded by a collection of reserve spaces, including rail, freeway, park and riverine reserves.
6.4.1 TABULA
PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

The site has a large quantity of public open space attached to it; green spaces of the river reserve and Heirisson Island, parks, hard landscaping fringing the Claisebrook Inlet and the medium of hard landscaping that binds the Cultural Centre. These begin to define the wide city that resides in and around EPRA’s territory, the half-blue.
6.4.2 TABULA
ROAD RESERVES

Road reserves also comprise a significant portion of the site, with the freeway system entering the eastern field and dropping below ground in Northbridge.

6.4.3 TABULA
RAIL RESERVE

The rail reserve reaches broad proportions within EPRA’s boundaries. Fenced along both edges and party abutted by the freeway culvert, it forms a significant barricade through the city. Toward its eastern end there is a depot space, which thickens the reserve to a depth of 150 metres, and, where it sits abreast of the freeway and the northern train line, it forms a separation in the city’s built fabric of 250 metres from north to south.

Again, although it does not incorporate any programme within its fencelines, the rail reserve attracts to its edges some eclectic functions, forming a heterogeneous band through the city’s core. Amongst these are a nightclub, gentlemen’s club, a tertiary college campus, a defunct and iconic power station, and City Farm – an urban community garden and permaculture centre. The gentrified Claisebrook Cove development turns its back to this expanse: the power station can be seen in the first still of transect five, a cyclone fenceline dividing redevelopment from wasteland, the frontier marked by a Victorian streetlamp.
6.4.4 TABULA
PLAYGROUND

The entire city is set back from the waterfront by the riverine string reserve. The regular stretch of lawn that runs along the southern axis of the CBD – the doormat at the feet of the city – continues to wrap the river’s edge in a virtually unbroken band, varying in depth, from coast to scarp. Within the tabula, and almost everywhere else, the role of this urban setback is that of playground. In this urban circumstance, the reserve becomes the house of numerous public events, all of them transient, and sets them against the backdrop of the city. It begins to operate as a phantasmagoric site, of spectacle and passing event.
The doormat is a site that resists development. Despite countless propositions at various points in the city’s history, the doormat enduringly says no to the permanent. In this sense, the site holds a distinctly un-urban ideal that has allowed the riverfront and its adjacencies to remain unbuilt despite their inner city location. The first major structure to be assigned any level of longevity in this place is a Ferris wheel, erected early this year at the bottom of Barrack Street. The wheel of Perth.

The doormat has been retarded by its own image. The intention of the river’s edge to incorporate waterfront activities has been reiterated a number of times without pursuit, firming a false idea that it was never intended to be developed. The collective space of the river’s edge and the doormat was the site of a national design competition in 1991, with some of its entries published in *Backlogue*. The contemporaneity of this competition with Manuel de Solà-Morales’ project for Barcelona’s Moll de la Fusta is significant for their shared challenge of negotiating waterside road systems. In Barcelona, this was managed sectionally, and his project is ingenious for its subtlety. It comprises a fraction of the building elements of these proposals, and augments a still vague edge condition by deftly overcoming its infrastructural impediment. This site has formed the brief for many university design studios, and its western end has also seen the proposal of multiple schemes, including a recent competition for a high density waterside development won by Melbourne’s ARM. Not unlike the link site, the continual process of projection and inaction serves to heighten the emptiness of the site. Not-building has monumentalised the doormat, made its openness sacred and defensible.

The doormat accepts instead a flux of construction and deconstruction across its surface; it endures the passing of thousands of people and even more infrastructure, and in its largeness withstands great lengths of desolation. It is motorway, skyshow, air race, circus, concert space, theatre, helipad, sporting ground and windswept lawn in between. This site encapsulates the theme of reserve, where reserve becomes not just a spatial state but a cognitive one – a delirium for the unbuilt.

There is historic significance in the notion of this site as a playground, and particularly in the placement of the Ferris wheel. During the 1920s, on a site just one block to its east, stood a semi-permanent fairground called White City, an amusement park replete with lurid gates. “In its heyday it had all the fun of the fair – merry-

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4 The freeway ring was intended to “give access to a continuous waterfront park containing sailing and boating clubs, restaurants, and other waterfront activities”. Stephenson, *The Design of Central Perth*, 75.


7 Gregory, *City of Light*, 4.
go-rounds, a roller coaster, hooplas, coconut shies, billy goat races, log-chopping competitions, boxing matched and band concerts. It mainly raised money for charity. Entry was sixpence and people enjoyed going to White City on a summer evening.8 White City was overshadowed by moral and political friction; prostitution, brawls. It was a site of amusement for both Aborigines and whites, “even some of the respectable members of the community were known to sneak in for its entertainments.”9 But, “when the Aboriginal people of Perth and the country started to frequent White City too much, it was time to step in and regulate”10, and, ironically, White City was associated with the baseless Proclamation of 1927 that saw Aborigines prevented from entering the city without permits.11

The playground character of the general river reserve endures today. Its current use involves recreation: parks, barbecue structures, play and exercise equipment, yacht clubs, rowing clubs, function centres. Included in the playground illustration are the sports venues that sit aside the river reserve; one a racetrack and the other a stadium. Golf courses as well form part of this mass, and these functions form a notional extension of the recreational edge condition.

The last two years have seen the relocation of many of the events associated with the Festival of Perth to the doormat; the majority of musical performances have shifted to the Music Box, a temporary stage and bandstand erected on the riverside esplanade, making the river reserve an integral component in a celebration of the city. Performance, recreation and hedonism have long been associated with the doormat and its extensions about the city, and are finding new outlet to make the river reserve a locus for delight.

Not only is there a history of entertainment affiliated with this site, but a precedent for its role as a place of assembly. It has been the podium for the staging of various social and political performances over the city’s history, “ranging from military parades, especially the Anzac Day parade, to demonstrations like the Depression rallies of the 1930s. On Sunday afternoons, ‘soapbox’ speakers have also used the esplanade. The Communists used it as a radical forum for years.”12 Perth’s history has played out on this communal front garden, from the day the city was claimed to the annual celebration of the nation’s claiming.

8 Gregory, City of Light, 5.
10 White, Finding Theodore and Brina, 75.
11 White, Finding Theodore and Brina, 75.
12 Gregory, City of Light, 124.
PICTURESQUE: HISTORIC IMAGES

The theme of spectacle describes not just the use of the doormat as an event site but some qualitative experience of the city at large. Visual relationships come to define the city, afforded by its wide sites and accompanied by a sense of physical openness. As reciprocal visibility has become an entrenched attribute of the link site, so too is detachment part of the city’s postcard.

Perth’s earliest and most enduring imagery is taken from the remote vantage points of Kings Park’s eastern ridge and the banks of the southern foreshore. In the latter, the doormat affords a view directly into the city’s heart. In this sense the city becomes something to be looked at, to be viewed from a distance, rather than inhabited. The spectacle of the doormat extends outwards from its boundaries, along the ridge of Kings Park where coloured lights illuminate the trees, again a show designed for the remote viewer.

Discussed in the private city was an idea that public space is dissolving, but that in Perth it has never really existed. The same might be said for Perth’s urban ideal, and how the riverfront and its adjacent pieces of open programme have come to remain unbuilt despite their centrality. From its outset Perth has been conceived as a gappy place; its wide character is historically wrought. In these early photographs little urban ideal can be seen. Their pictorial sensibility lies with openness and horizon: equal attention is paid to city and setting.

In the story of Perth, as in the story of Los Angeles and their shared ecologies, the city might equally be considered a footnote. For many the city is not an essential or even occasional destination; here the role of town square is usurped by the ocean, the river, and perhaps the private yard. In this sense, the picturesque is probably a greater preoccupation than the urban. So this idea of the city as backdrop with temporary architecture passing at its feet is something that becomes historically meaningful with the weight of the picturesque behind it. The emergent architectural opportunity for Perth in this context has less to do with the rescue or remediation of the city and more to do with the nascence of its gaps and its forecourt: the architectural focus might accordingly shift from the solid to the void. This framing lends a degree of historic significance to the openness of the doormat, and goes a little way to explaining its avid defence.

13 Banham, Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies, 183. The chapter concerning the Los Angeles CBD is entitled “A Note on Downtown”; the tenth chapter of thirteen.
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT
54, 55 White City: entrance gates by night and aerial view.
56 Jim the Flying Greyhound at White City in 1927.
57 Saint George's Terrace looking west towards Mount Eliza, 1862.
58 Panoramic view south over the Swan from the site of Royal Perth Hospital, c1870.
59 Perth city from Mount Eliza with the Pensioners' Barracks in the foreground, 1872.
6.4.5 TABULA

DISSOLVING FOOTPRINTS

Should the axes of the city’s structure be continued through the EPRA site in accordance with action four (wide city), a reading of the figure ground displays an eastward disintegration from fabric buildings, through object buildings, to a scattering of forms over white ground.

6.4.6 TABULA

LINE OF INVERSION

An abrupt transition from urbanity to playground occurs here at the border of EPRA’s jurisdiction, with Plain Street forming a conceptual line of inversion between the two states, in which the ground becomes the figure.
Looking at the distinctiveness of this diametric relationship, and knowing the significance of the picturesque incumbent on the blankness of its figure ground, the belly of EPRA’s site is envisioned as a project that sustains its visual openness and its playground character: in order to populate this end of the city, the wide city could be thickened, and allowed to become an inhabited landscape.

Through an extrusion of the site into a deep ground, the programme required of the site could be accommodated without obscuring the legibility of its openness. Although the sparseness of its figure ground would be affected sectionally, the site could incorporate wideness and the continuity of its horizon in planimetric datum cuts; tolerating density but defending its delirium.
6.5.1 PENCIL TABULA
MAT

So arises a mat-project, in which the ground is reappropriated at the site of the dissolution of the urban footprint. This mat site fractures into an extension of the city's grid and begins to integrate built programme, lifting the ground plane upward and allowing itself to be perforated by existing built structures.
6.5.2 PENCIL TABULA
DOORMAT

The doormat is drawn here as a stage for its events to unfold on, with the city as its backdrop. It is depicted as a volume, as the sky forms part of its performance space, whether aeroplanes, fireworks or soundscape. It is recognised as the urban performance space that it has been functioning as for so long.
6.5.3 PENCIL TABULA II
RAIL RESERVE

The void of the rail reserve emerges as a potential thickness. As a place currently residing in the city but excluded from its habitation, the opportunity arises for the railway to behave as an armature rather than a void, a repository for the incorporation of mixed and incongruent programme into the city’s divide. It retains its current, laissez-faire state, but its fenceline might begin to be more frequently breached.
6.5.4 **PENCIL TABULA II**  
**DOORMAT, WALLS AND STAGES**

The wall and stage relationships identified in the photographic dérives might be actively promoted, with activity and amenity as architectural pursuits for this network of gaps. While the walls that form the elevation facing these vacuoles grow, the parks can form their garden. Laurie Anderson’s Aichi garden installations from *Doing (Almost) Nothing* come to mind as interventions to a park that present no physical interruption to the unbuilt space but offer points of repose, a scripted walk.\(^\text{14}\)

This narrative function might have a particular applicability to the park near the middle of the map – Wellington Square – a site used by local Aborigines as a meeting place, located on the network of long removed wetlands.

Our own little Coney Island, but perhaps not delirious enough, the doormat might be recognised for its unique behaviour of abhorring the permanent and tolerating the transient and allowed to host more and more varied events of diverse duration. An (almost) nothing project is proposed for the doormat, in the form of ports or plug-in amenity for the passing of events.

As a collection of stages, these projects transfer the field of concern from the built to the unbuilt in an engagement with the perforations in the city’s fabric. The doormat already behaves as a stage, but the network of gaps might as well.

6.5.5 PENCIL TABULA II
RAIL AS ARMATURE

Thickening the rail reserve could involve the adaptation of existing structures, utilising ready-made containers such as rail sheds or car park stacks. Vacuoles might see the introduction of new envelopes; car parks might begin to be temporarily inhabited. There could be adjuncts or extensions to existing businesses such as City Farm.

There is an opportunity for habitable bridge structures to hurdle the railway. The pedestrian armatures from the regional mapping are brought through the city and over the rail reserve as spines of potential densification. The bridge structures make use of the pads already built up to support these traffic bridges, or connect to existing footbridges that cross at the first floor datum. The undesirability of the rail reserve becomes its attribute; whereas new releases of land have become immediate neighbourhoods for the wealthy, this central terrain could be a repository for the other, undergoing a slow transition into an urban armature.

6.5.6 PENCIL TABULA II
FRACTURING THE MAT

Breaking down to a constrained set of plates, the mat project is carved out by various forces of site. It sees the subtraction of streets and unbuildable sites such as cemetery, construction sites, stadia and riverine playground. Its open ground plane is maintained and doubled through its roof terrain; it becomes a thicknessing of the wide city and an extension of the reserve.
Again, like the link set, this set serves to elucidate the relationship of the mat site to the thin city narratives and to regional and local observation, to incite opportunity, not to propose conclusive built form.

Looking at this mat site, where the rigours of grid and city block have given way to an urban playground, projection becomes a tectonic game of figure and ground, one that toys with the history of reclamations imposed on the river’s edge.
6.7.2 MAT
BASEMENT

The city’s street grid is pulled into the basement as the underbelly of the project, maintaining the ground level as an unrestricted field. Two car parks sit below ground, interrupted by the root space of spoils of existing trees. Adjacent to the axial ramps of the street are a set of subterranean culverts, dealing with the process of water clarification as an expressed intersection of river’s edge and introduced density. This is imagined as a staged process, from decantation at the western edge to reed beds in the river, eventually forming pools within a series of jetty-plates along the bank. The shoreline, and Heirisson Island opposite, form part of a string of naturalistic reclaimed sites along the river; but within this projection clear edges form a more legible intervention to the riverbed.
6.7.3 MAT  
FALSE GROUND

Basement and ground, as anticipated in earlier drawings, become conceptualised as a thickened ground, an augmented landscape\(^{15}\), a retention of the subversion of figure ground experienced on this site, but potentially injected with amenity, to become both wide and permeable. With the programme of the basement residing beneath, the ground level becomes a false ground, a set of hovering plates cut through by existing trees, some with their roots in the water culverts, the sound from below audible through slices in its surface.

The ground is a surface of incorporation, capable of supporting moments of built form, but for the most part a landscape of columns and surfaces, inviting the horizon into the site. Heirisson Island is made accessible by a footbridge. The current recreational role of this site and the part it plays in the temporal activities of the river’s edge become part of this deepening of the wide city.

In this scenario, cadastral boundaries and their association with streets, footpaths, kerbs and fencelines are rejected in favour of the singular entity of visual openness offered up by the inverse figure ground. The planning devices that usually divide individuals are abandoned in the proliferation of an existing pattern of freedom and inclusion inherent in the playground as a public open space.

6.7.4 MAT 
UPPER

Removed sectionally from the ground is a blanket of dwellings, potentially freeing built form from the cadastral margins in place on the site and extending the city’s grid structure towards the water, and towards its morphological counterpart on the opposite shore.

The cohesion and extension of the project at the upper level breaks with the current system of residential development around the site, in which tracts of land are parcelised and subdivided, with singular buildings placed on each lot. Both through the incorporative surfacing of the ground plane and the fluid blanket of housing at the upper level, the mat becomes antithetical to this suburban development practice.
6.7.5 MAT
ROOF RESERVE

The roof terrain forms a new ground, an upward displacement of the green space previously occupying the ground. This surface might be irrigated and tie in with the grey water system occupying the basement through the column system of the open groundscape. This soft roof could be made up of communal spaces, individual garden plots, permaculture gardens, a collective back yard.
In this way, the existing mass of the reserve is multiplied, the soft green surface of the ground is relegated to the roof datum, leaving in its wake a variegated landscape imbued with public programme. With the open, windswept site being thickened and injected with programme, the reserve is made habitable and the figure ground maintained at the level of public interface. The wide city becomes permeable and sectionally variable. The greenness and horizon attached to the previously desolate site are augmented and compressed in turn.
Alternately, the mat’s dwelling component could become entrenched in the thickened ground and basement layer, reading as a tectonic extrusion of the city’s grid and an upward displacement of the carpet of the reserve.
Thus the surface of the mat remains open to the sky, incorporating as it currently does the mass of blue above. The ideal of projections onto this territory is to encapsulate the reverie attached to the reserve but to reconsider its lack of engagement. Included in both of the sectional images is a project by Smout Allen. These structures are kites fitted with stereoscopic cameras that capture a three dimensional panorama of the landscape. Immersed in water, the kites rise and fall with the movement of air currents, relaying to the ‘pilot’ at their base the sensation of flying. This is a project that seeks to heighten the experience of the landscape, an example of an (almost) nothing project appropriate to the reserve. An unbuilt architecture.

16 Smout Allen, Augmented Landscapes, 35.
Relayed to the spectator on the ground or on the roof then, whether compressed through a matrix of columns or unobstructed, is the half-blue panorama so bound to the reserve. This is an imagined architecture that privileges its setting; that arranges itself around the horizon.
Reserve sites are indeterminate sites. Sites of indecision. They are sites into which two characteristics of Perth can be read, one spatial and one cognitive; firstly openness, and secondly a reluctance to construct. In this way reserve comes to describe not only a spatial condition, in which sites are unbuilt, but a pervasive attitude: that they ought to remain so.

Given that reserves line the best of the city’s geographical attributes, its sea and its river, this seems an understandable but unfortunate approach. It is little wonder reserve sites are not built out; such an action would obscure the accessibility of the ocean and river to the city’s inhabitants and would constitute an affront to the half-blue experience of the city. However, the utter preclusion of intervention into these sites could be seen as limiting the individual’s engagement with the landscape. In the stretches of land that surround the river and ocean, should the kit of parts for addressing the reserve extend beyond the current options of bike paths, barbecue structures and playgrounds, the experience of the city’s setting could be deservedly enhanced.

In the case of the doormat, in which a premise of event is already established, its use ought to be amplified and recognised for its delirious value to the city. An odd preamble for the doormat can be found in a ‘colloquium’ held by the MRPA in 1966. “What is our concept of the region? Here we are on the threshold of a very difficult question. Various other cities have asked this question from time to time and not all the answers have been the same... the best for Perth must be based on an analysis of the situation here on our own doorstep, so that we can arrive on a workable solution.” While various proposals for the doormat of the city have been argued for and against with predictable vehemence, the site quietly suggests its own method; one of impermanence, of not-building, that could be applied to the reserve system at large. Whether set aside temporarily or permanently, reserves offer proximity to the sky, to the wind, and to the horizon. In a city praised more often for its climate and its quality of light than its architecture, the gaps in the city’s fabric can be seen to house the best of its experience; they may indeed become the city square.

Reserve sites are ambiguous spaces deserving of ambiguous treatment. The reluctance to construct that is paired with their openness invites a mode of architecture concerned with minimal intervention, with slowness, smallness, and temporal staging.

In the case of the mat site, the existing terrain is caught between an open, sparsely populated and recreational past and a maximal, densely developed future. The approach this research brings to the study area – a model that bundles up its schedule of accommodation and distributes it in response to existing entities and contexts – allows for the individuation of its two main study sites. In behaving as a unified body that arranges its volume in this way, this model enables the mat site to become a relatively low extrusion of the reserve while displacing its mass to a site deserving of greater volume. In this exchange, the mat belongs to the flatness of its site and the link scheme articulates its divisional role by extruding itself upward. The mat is then permitted to be envisioned as a project that embodies the delirium attached to its site – a desire for a space that is physically permeable, and one that sustains the legibility of its traversable, recreational land use and its expansive horizon.
ABOVE
66 le Corbusier’s plan for Saint-Dié, figure ground: object blocks.

BELOW
67 Parma, Italy, figure ground: fabric blocks.
City of form fixation derives from a dominant spatial condition in which buildings are consistently separate, each owning a piece of ground proportionate to the scale of its built footprint. This makes for a scape of segregated buildings arranged over a plane of open space. The city of form fixation is heavily linked to the wide city, in the sense that this continuous but partitioned medium of unbuilt ground adds to the mass of accumulated openness in the city region.

If the urban field can be perceived notionally as fabric or object, then the individuation of built form resulting from the city’s design codes makes for a profusion of the latter type – building as object, plot as plinth. For the most part the space between buildings is comprised of negative surfaces: of asphalt and lawn, a setting as opposed to a site. In this context, architectural production shifts away from the incorporative surface of differentiated fabric – plural façades tracing the length of streets, divided into multiple elevations unified in a vertical plane – toward an emphasis on the singular: the objectification of the independent building. This is the ruling condition across suburban Perth, but also inhabits inner areas. The party wall is a relatively rare feature in the palette of the city’s development.

The armatures identified in the even city present a departure from this trend, bringing continuous scaled up walls through the inner city suburbs.

The condition of form fixation finds a historical connection in the research of Felicity Morel, in which the very core of the city was conceived in this objectifying manner. She discusses how along St George’s Terrace, now the major spine of the central business district, real estate was allocated to the wealthy, divided into large allotments and marked with buildings directed to align to the centre of their plots, set back nine metres from the street boundary.\(^1\) She finds a comparative critique of the effects of this codification in Brian Shaw’s analysis of Fremantle in *Western Landscapes*. Shaw sees the attenuated length of Saint George’s Terrace – which has still not filled out – and the depth of its setbacks as responsible for the disparate grain of built fabric between the two centres. “The enforcement of this ordinance, considered appropriate for the capital but waived in Fremantle, resulted in a more open rustic appearance in Perth, which persisted for some years.”\(^2\)

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2 Brian Shaw, “the Evolution of Fremantle”, in *Western Landscapes*, by J Gentilli (Nedlands, WA: the University of Western Australia Press, 1979), 333.
While Shaw sees this looseness of form as rustic – a backward sort of approach for an urban scene, Morel discovers a fonder interpretation in the writing of Janet Millett, who moved to Western Australia from London in 1863 and documented her experience of the city as an “immigrant guidebook”. She gives a near perfect description of the city of form fixation as it existed in the core and as it now exists elsewhere. “When strolling about the streets of Perth for the first time, the stranger will notice a certain unconnected look about the different houses and government offices. Most of the buildings are handsome and well arranged; but each one seems to stand alone... Moreover, since almost all the houses in the best parts of town stand in their own gardens, no actual streets can be said to be formed by them, and the general appearance of the whole is rather that of one of those suburbs to which the businessmen of our large towns at home retire after their day’s toil is over, than that of the working hive itself.” Mrs Millett identifies here the notion that the slack between built form generates object blocks as opposed to fabric blocks: buildings float in a green medium instead of defining the street. She goes on to surmise that this “makes the place much prettier than it would probably be if a larger trade were carried on there. There is a cheerfulness and brightness about the many gardens which surround the houses and the avenue of trees which lines each side of the main road passing from one end to the other of the town, that makes the new-comer feel that a home there might be a very pleasant one.

This stretch has, of course, since been urbanised, yet this condition and the attachment to its ‘pretiness’ certainly endures on sites within close proximity. The singular is still very much part of the city region’s design codes, with restrictions

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3 Rica Erickson, introduction to An Australian Parsonage, or, the Settler and the Savage in Western Australia by Mrs Edward Millett (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, facsimile edition, 1980).
4 Millett, An Australian Parsonage, 26.
5 Millett, An Australian Parsonage, 26.
often incumbent on side setbacks, street setbacks and also building height and plot ratio, leaving buildings that stand alone to be seen, criticised, and celebrated as objects.

Form fixation relates to the private city, as the objectification of the singular building derives from the ownership of individual plots in which the private house sits on a plinth of private garden. Form fixation does indeed, as Mrs Millett points out, amount to a suburban outcome. In this sense, this narrative is concerned with the triumph of a suburban mode of development that takes place even within an urban context.

In the Claisebrook Cove redevelopment, although stretches of its plan can be seen to connect buildings with party walls, both figure ground plan and photographic transect evidence a suburban approach to the design of buildings as independent forms. The figure ground of this area shows no cohesion in the planimetric arrangement of positive and negative spaces, and the photographic transects reveal elevations that do not cohere in style or datum. The masterplan zones, it designates stretches of houses, but they are not considered at the scale of the ‘stretch’, merely at the scale of the individual building through design codification.6 This is simply compressed suburbia: individual designs for individual parcels, sometimes touching, sometimes not. So a usual approach of parcel-lot-building is at work here even in the most urban of proximities. Through such means of division and coding, the city region is predominantly suburban in land use, but also in aesthetic.

The two focal projects abandon subdivision and the practice of positing separate forms. Neither pays more than incidental heed to cadastral boundary, amalgamating multiple plots that are conjoined not by code but visual and spatial cohesion. They occupy figural gaps in the plan. As their sites have been perceived as connected fabric, their built form has been dealt within the same way. The units of their accommodation have been viewed as a collective, and plied in collective space, shaped by the pressures of its context. This is a holistic approach to both site and form, opposed to the fragmentation of usual development practice.

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6 EPRA’s design codes have been changed during the period of research. In 2008 the online “Core Common Design Guidelines” required 30 degree roof pitches, disallowed “blank walls” and encouraged a palette of “corrugated iron, steel and timber features, recycled brick and limestone”. New guidelines are available online, but such codes would have been in place during the development of the Claisebrook Village. The new guidelines are more flexible, but still involve aspects like “traditional relationship of residence to street”. [http://www.epra.wa.gov.au/documents/epra_planning_policies_all.pdf](http://www.epra.wa.gov.au/documents/epra_planning_policies_all.pdf)
FIELD OF UNITS

Although the projects are highly speculative, and relate much more to the spirit of their context than the reality of their development, they have served also as an experiment in numbers. The projects have been dealt with as hypothetical volumes, and this chapter toys with the stacking and exchange of units between the two major sites as an exercise in the scale of the proposed forms and their density.

EPRA has a schedule of accommodation that amounts to a total of 7720 dwellings across all of its sites, but does not stipulate an area requirement for each. They do, however, assume a household size of 1.8 people per hectare.

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7 This process is overtly pragmatic, but is designed to illustrate that a level of comfort and expectation for individual space can be catered for within a model that is atypical to Perth’s usual method of subdivision.

8 Something like the modelling of MVRDV in Metacity Datatown, in which house and garden allotments are sized and arranged in the creation of a hypothetical urban scape for the world’s population. Winy Maass, Metacity Datatown (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1999).
INDIVIDUAL UNITS

To test the sites, a module has been contrived as a starting point that reflects the housing trends concurrent with this research, in order to encapsulate something of the expectations and desires of the Perth market. A shell has been derived as a generous starting point by averaging the size of single dwellings and multiple dwellings in proportion with the ratio of the population that occupies them. An average new single house size of 237.5 square metres (x 78% of the city’s population) and an average new non single dwelling size of 139.6 square metres (x 22% of the city’s population) gives an average proportionate dwelling size of 215.9 square metres.\(^9\) Added to this is an equal area of garden space. In this way, the volumetric study reflects both the region’s ideal and EPRA’s agenda.

7720 units, with 1.8 people per hectare, gives each person in this module 1008 cubic metres of personal space. Needless to say, this is an exceptionally large figure and one that deserves to be challenged, particularly considering the urban setting of the project. The two focal sites – the link and the mat – are required by EPRA to house a combined figure of 5175 units. With this in mind, further experiment can take place within the projective drawings.


7.6.1 LINK
WIREFRAME

The link has been divided into units of 280 square metres, each with a stacked ‘house’ module of 215 square metres and a double volume garden of 65 square metres – matching the proportional average and accounting for a potential minimum of 3960 dwellings, including a ratio of 20 per cent circulation space. This module could potentially house a family, or, by varying the housing typologies within the volume of the link, the dwelling total could significantly increase. Alternately, excess space afforded by smaller housing types or the coagulation of garden spaces could ply the form in a number of ways:
7.6.2 LINK
VERTICAL Voids

for instance, the incorporation of vertical garden spaces or voids, which could perforate the mass in the vertical,
7.6.3 LINK
HORIZONTAL VOIDS

or striate it horizontally.
Again, a housing module with 215 square metres of dwelling, and 65 square metres of garden, has been used to test the density capabilities of the mat site. In this case the model has two layers of single level house and garden units of 280 square metres, providing a total of 1214 dwellings. Should the roofscape become green, as suggested in the projective drawing set in reserve city, that mass of court space could again be traded.
7.7.2 MAT

**INSERT OMA**

The insertion of a model such as OMA's Agadir hotel and convention centre suggests that green space might coalesce as:10

7.7.3 MAT
PUBLIC PROGRAMME

communal or public programme, in OMA's case a lounge/foyer, dressing rooms, swimming pool and gymnasium,
7.7.4 MAT
VOIDS

or again be traded for voids that would light
the public ground terrain below.

In this experiment, by incorporating the
total of the schedule of accommodation for
the link and mat schemes in one system
rather than separating it into parcels, the
5175 units has not only been matched
but, through a generous household size,
it population significantly increased. By
simply making the link out of the single
level modules used in the mat scheme,
the dwelling total rises to 9136 and the
population might so much as triple.\textsuperscript{11}
By looking at the link and mat schemes as a singular volume that exchanges mass and density through onsite specificity, an outcome emerges that broadens the potential for their development. This excursion shows that the ideal size of individual dwellings can be provided for in a model that breaks with the current mode of subdivision and form fixation that the city is accustomed to, and in doing so can provide accommodation for a much greater population. The research, then, raises the question of what atypical modes of parcelisation can offer to a city whose practice of development often adheres to a suburban process even within an urban context.
The redrawing and gazing sets place the projections back into the map. They return the observed and the projected first to the tabula, and then to the region. In the redrawing of the city, the cohesion of the projections with their context becomes explicit. The exploration of morphologies, entities, structures, and reserves see the implications of their investigation; not answers so much as scratchings at the surface of the city. These images are significant for viewing what has been exposed – for viewing the extracted and the projected again in its field, but, equally importantly, for reviewing the field itself for all that was left behind. Gazing at the region brings the research back to where it began, to a vast and vastly opportune text. As the final chapter, reflection on the map accompanies a reflection on the research.
8.8.1 REDRAWING BASEMENT

Across the tabula, redrawing takes place as a set of datum cuts through the focal sites.

These are the true basement levels of the mat and link sites, with the link containing the railway and its station platforms, perhaps adjunct retail, and the mat accommodating car parking and water treatment.¹ The link basement is an active underbelly, and the mat a concealed one, and both are audible to the ground level above via a set of incisions.

¹ The footprints of the tabula are drawn only from ground level. They are not completed drawings of the whole city but singular cuts through the multiple project sites, designed to show the alternation of their stratification of solid and void.
8.8.2 REDRAWING GROUND

In the link, the ground level is a false basement, maintaining in part its previous role as an open car park. It sees the footprints of concealed programme; it is the underbelly to the first floor, a simulacrum, a shady underground.

At the mat site the recreational plane of the ground runs unimpeded through the project, sustained as a public open space but afforded some amenity, partly earth, partly platform.

At this point in the redrawing, conditions of figure and ground begin to alternate between the two focal sites.
The link forms a new ground surface at the first floor and at this level still forms a gap between the city and Northbridge in the drawing of the city’s figure ground, while the mat becomes figure, where housing floats above the ground terrain.
8.8.4 REDRAWING
UPPER

At the upper level, the link emerges as a divisional figure, and the mat returns to a ground.
8.8.5 REDRAWING
FIRST FLOOR DATUM

The link joins the network of the first floor datum as a major public platform. A surface for communal activity, for social engagement, potentially for performance, public demonstration and retail. While the ground extrudes the wall condition identified along this strip, the views across and out of this open site are rehoused at the first floor where they gain greater prospect through a lift in datum.
8.8.6 REDRAWING ARMATURES

The armatures run through the city to the doormat, providing the pads for habitable bridges and behaving as spines for a thickening of existing built form through the inner suburbs.
8.8.7 REDRAWING
GRID EXTRUSION

The grid of the city is brought through the unstructured eastern end,
8.8.8 REDRAWING
EMBODIED GRID EXTRUSION

and fractures into the rooftscape of the mat site,
dragging the city’s axes to the opposite shore.
The historic separation of the autonomous entities of the city and Northbridge is embodied by the habitable mass of the link site, a momentous articulation of the hundred kilometre even city with its scaled up urban opposite.
8.8.10 REDRAWING
RAIL AS ARMATURE

The rail reserve is recognised as an armature,
8.8.11 REDRAWING
EMBODIED ARMATURE

and becomes a parafunctional receptacle for undesirable and incongruous programme, potentially carving a heterogeneous corridor through a city usually neatly segmented.
**8.8.12 REDRAWING**

**RESERVES, WALLS AND STAGES**

The playground, doormat and the stages of the wide city remain in(altered)tact.
8.9.1 GAZING
MORPHOLOGICAL PLATES

All mappings, readings, and speculations on the core have grown from the thin city codes and from their regional mapping. Although the EPRA site and the city’s centre have been the focus for project-based study, their implications move beyond the study site along with the contexts of their morphologies and the ecologies to which they belong.

Occupying the gap between the morphological entities of the city and Northbridge is the inhabited volume of the link project. The mat carries the plate of the city across the river, extending outward from the river’s edge and across Heirisson Island to the far shore.

The doormat defines the edge of the river, seen as a stage for the events and performances that have been acted out on its surface and on the river’s edge since the city’s earliest days.

Feeding the city inwardly or dragging its programme outward are the spines of the armatures, extending along the forty-five degree and north-south plates. Perpendicular to them, the railway joins their ranks as a spine through the city rather than a void.

Hovering unaddressed by the focal project are the great morphological warrens, in wait of future experimentation at their edges.

So, in arriving back at the region, we do not finish exactly where we started. The region is no longer a grey, undifferentiated cadastral expanse but a territory made up of ecologies and entities, some of which have found articulation and others whose borders and bodies remain unexplored and opportune.
8.9.2 GAZING
RESERVES

The reserves remain virtually unaffected by the projects, but are greatly altered in their role. The ocean string reserves are the likeness of the river, grassy flats and car parks, equally inviting amenity and acupunctural programme. Sliding through the first floor plate and the basement of the link, breached by the rail bridges, thickened into the ground plane of the mat, the reserves continue on their meander through the region.
8.9.3 GAZING
RESERVE STRINGS

A cadastral map is one that is concerned with boundary, with marking the distance between. Reserve city exists here in these distances, from the suburban verge to the city’s front doormat. It represents a collective territory made up of expectations and assumptions, and might as easily be seen as an enormous resource; a positive and opportunistic mass. In Manuel de Sola Morales’ words, “what is involved here is the desire for a dynamic space that would appear to flow along the edges of the buildings and the horizontal boundaries of the sky, that would be perceived as the notion of all-encompassing territory that can be applied to an unlimited urbanisation of the territory itself”.2

2 de Solà-Morales, A Matter of Things, 120
Common to the rail reserve, the link site and the mat site, the stages and the doormat – all unbuilt, all residual, all reserve – is a desire to lend volume and pliancy to sites that were previously marginalised within the city region, but which provide it with some of its most unique and distinctive character. With this activity comes a mode of offering up architectural possibility within the city that favours spatial or perceptual boundary over cadastral border; ambiguity over regularity.

The cadastral map is one preoccupied with zoning, ownership, security; lines cast from fictive drawing to indifferent ground. The cadastral map has formed the base layer of investigation for the research and also its point of departure. Lines generated in the projective schemes have deliberately crossed over, divided and joined such boundaries. In doing so, so they have set out to privilege spatial legibility over imperceptible division, allowing sites of opportunity and distinctiveness to leave the horizontal plane of the map. There is potential here for the thin city to subvert its invisible boundaries, and to develop new means of parcelising and conceptualising sites that honours the distinctiveness of place and allows for its extrapolation in the architectural project.

And how are these projects to be interpreted beside the precedents described in the introduction? Next to Solà-Morales and his gentle Moll de la Fusta they are somewhat obtuse, but they rely on the same loyalty to the autonomous city and its differentiation that he and the others – Gandelsonas, Sorkin, Rowe – collectively support. In scale they sit a little easier beside a project such as Solà-Morales’ collaboration with Raphael Moneo, Barcelona’s Illa Diagonal; a project that derives logically and robustly from a long, wedge shaped gap in the city’s fabric. In the architects’ words, “It is difficult for this scale, with all of its implications, to be contained by the subdividing mechanisms of frontal lots, or by systems of closed blocks with internal courts, or by the arrangement of high rise buildings with formless open spaces. What has been chosen, therefore, is a type of building that does not presuppose breaking up the area into separate parts, but rather the strengthening of its completeness.”

In the Diagonal project, the architects’ first obligation is to the site. And this is certainly the preoccupation of this research, in which both the link and mat schemes are speculations that engage with strengthening the implicit character of the sites they occupy. With regard to the avoidance of subdivision in the Diagonal, the architects remark that “this choice, in appearance

2 Of the Diagonal, Monestiroli says “Moneo and Solà-Morales are old friends and have in common a quality that is highly unusual for architects: that of being able to give knowledge of places precedence over their point of view.” Antonio Monestiroli, “The Idea of the Diagonal Block,” Lotus International 82 (1994): 9.
related purely to composition, will in the end turn out to be the one that best answers to collective interest." Similarly in the mat and link projections, volumetric unity serves both to articulate the completeness of their sites, and also to bind their programme.

It may be said that the projects are as deterministic and totalising as the strategy of development they rebuff. They might, in fact, be more decisive for the largeness of their scale. But, as a city whose usual approach is somewhat conservative, these projects cannot be so with the weight of regional observation behind them. That said, their intention is to operate as frameworks for the city’s speciation; they are no more buildings than one of Gandelsonas’ walls or canyons. In the same way that the focal projects have been plied at the large scale – cut through, pressed and indented by streets, laneways and blocks of morphology, they might be honed further by more acute forces. They may be made up of one thing or multiple things; should they break up, break down, their legibility would not suffer. Just as the Diagonal project staggers and breaks, singularity in these projections needs to be associated with their punctuation, their gestures, not with their form.

The ethos behind the synthesis of these projects is not one of singularity or exclusion; this research does not seek to deny any one notion or image of Perth in order to privilege another. The narratives themselves are not hypotheses, they are not proved or disproved, but as willingly supported as questioned. Multiplicity only serves to generate greater thickness for the thin city, and the actions to be derived from the narrative themes are no doubt variable. The projects are designed simply to demonstrate possibility – to articulate there-ness – one expressing a vertice, the other a flatness, a horizontality, and both arranging themselves around the prospect that keeps Perth navigable. The smaller projects – for the doormat, the rail reserve, the walls and stages, the present and not yet present armatures, similarly remain as diagrams of latencies – inviting distinctive interpretations of a city that points to its own variation.

This research seeks to liberate the thin city by allowing it to offer up its own thicknesses, and in doing so reveals that it is not too thin at all: that within those presumably sparse and tenuous places, whether the chaotic warren, the cadastral blanks of the reserves, or the bemoaned doormat, are ideas and practices that are unique to the city and worthy of elaboration. The fictive gaze cast at

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the city, with mappings as its medium, has allowed for the natural emergence of sites of nascence within the thin city and at the same time offered an internal logic for their treatment. Private city, although perhaps a pessimistic view of Perth and its suburban nature, has identified an operation of experiment at work in its periphery; one which, brought into the realms of a utopian strategy of incorporation, could allow for the generation of unique and delirious suburbs in the hyper-private fringe. Like the city of form fixation, private city has been called into question as an appropriate ideal for the creation of a metropolitan core, and together they offer up their own antithesis in the form of collective design.

The wide city has come to be understood less for its visual gaps and more for its opportunity to function as a communal urban stage, exposing the possibility of activation rather than passivity through the doing of (almost) nothing. Wideness is found to be a condition that has inhabited the city from its very early days. Perhaps the most positive quality of the wide city is its fostering of visual relationships across the city’s gaps and towards its horizon. Relative to this, the wide city has had a profound bearing on both the link and the mat sites, where the transition from diagram to focal drawings have seen both projects completely rearrange their mass in order to privilege openness and prospect. Both conserve the panorama of the wide city, its horizon, and, sectionally, the vacuity of their former sites. The wide city has also brought about the identification of reserve city – a delirium for no-architecture – the site in which each of the projects has found themselves to reside. The readiness of reserve sites to break with cadastral boundaries — to subvert the borders of division and surveillance — opens up a possibility for developers to confound the drawn line in the conceptualisation of projects that are both unique and unified. Reserve city, although frustrating for its unwillingness for change, has made its own recommendation through the autonomy of the doormat and its tolerance of performance and an architecture of transience, softness, slowness.

Through the study of the phenomenon of empty sites it becomes clear that the space of opportunity lies in the city’s gaps. At first, looking at a city full of gaps is disconcerting — where is the interest? Then somewhere amid the duration of the research arose a notion that the gaps are the interest; that the vacuity that defines the city can also provide its architectural intrigue. From the project sites comes the impression that development in the thin city can occur, but might
do so in a way that maintains the city’s peculiarity, that can incorporate those qualities that make the city unique: prospect, spectacle, openness, horizon.

The even city has uncovered borders and divisions, collisions and disturbances; friction in the core and an even-more-even city in the periphery. This diametric itself is one of happy unevenness. The city of the immediate future provides a prospect of building outward from the existing; a theme very close to the intent of the research itself. It also may find resistance in the reserve, where the logic of staging and slow release can form a new premise for the role of architecture in an engagement with the transient.

Collectively, the interwoven thin cities have been generative; not condemnations of the city of Perth but endemic conditions that could be amplified, thickened, and utilised as directives for architecture that look not outside the city, as its inhabitants so often do, but in. To again reference de Solà-Morales: “Today, the city’s or territory’s most important representation is one that embodies detailed precision; this ‘fiction’ might effectively be its proposal.” The thin cities have performed precisely this role. Initially critiques of the city, they have emerged as the possible means of its progress. As a set of codes they have been variously amplified and challenged. While some of the codes can be seen as positive attributes of the city and others somewhat negative, they are all positive in the sense that their investigation brings about reaction and opportunity. The thin cities themselves, initially loose observations, have found strong relationships with the spatial and historical peculiarities of Perth exposed in the mapped field. A certain degree of pleasure is produced by each of the thin cities – and in this way each is a little delirious. With the thin cities directing the mapping process, the maps are at once readings and writings, they simultaneously interpret and propose: the relationship between the recorded and the projected is one of reciprocity. The same reciprocity has been affected by the role of the thin city narratives. They have been projected towards the map in questioning critique, and have returned embodied with improbable and opportune delight.

In a sense, the conclusion is happily inconclusive. What has been uncovered here is a series of possibilities for the city: possible readings, possible writings; an open and optimistic future. The research uncovers multiple rather than irrefutable speculations; and, for the thin city, multiplicity is a gratifying outcome.

In the midst of all this comes a suspicion that condemning interpretations of Perth derive from weak understanding. The temptation to reproach the city for its peculiarities clouds their potentiality. The thin cities have been optimistic fictions; they have given rise to an understanding of the city through misunderstanding. The notion of utilising such observations, of testing of their merit, and of formulating mappings as a descriptive text, can be applied to any city in order to culture forgiving and specific architectures.
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