

2026 SECOND PRIZE

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LYCEUM

A traveling fellowship in Architecture

AGGREGATING CHINATOWN

Relational Infrastructures for Collective Urban Life

Architecture must no longer aestheticize fragmentation,
but organize new forms of collective urban aggregation.

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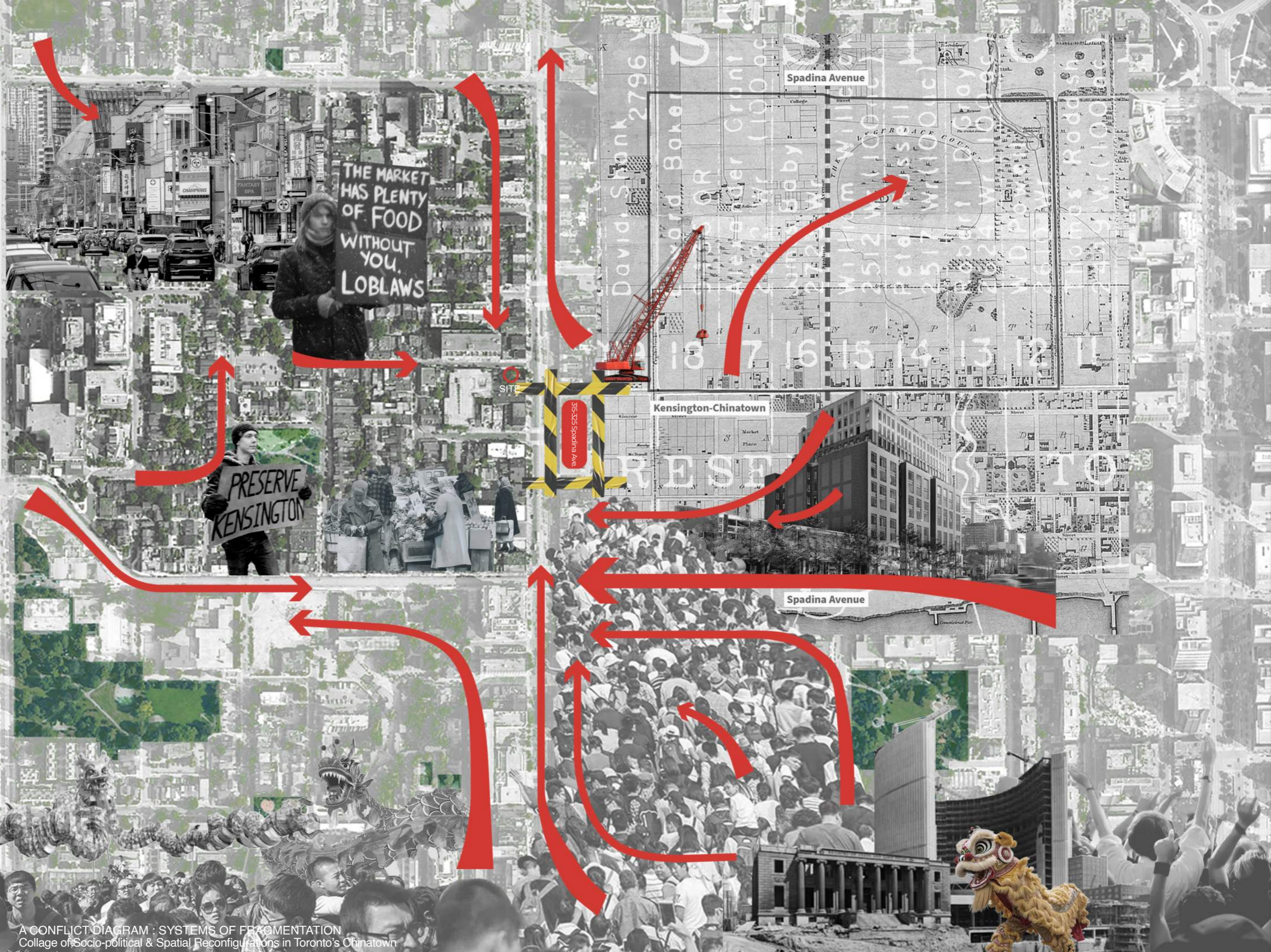


SYSTEMS OF FRAGMENTATION

How governance, capital, and redevelopment disperse collective urban life.

Toronto's Chinatown is not disappearing naturally; it is being systematically fragmented through colonial governance, exclusionary legislation, labor exploitation, speculative redevelopment, and the financialization of urban land. Policies produce fragmentation, capital accelerates it, and condo urbanism monetizes cultural identity while displacing collective life. Under these pressures, dwelling becomes dispersed across compressed hybrid interiors where labor, ritual, commerce, and sociality overlap. This diagram maps fragmentation not as historical residue, but as an active urban machine.

In resistance to erasure, this diagram makes an argument for aggregation through relational infrastructures that reaggregate collective urban life through shared systems of inhabitation, exchange, memory, and civic participation.



PROVOCATION

Toronto's Chinatown is not a disappearing cultural enclave; but a contested urban condition continuously reorganized through displacement, speculation, exclusionary policy, and redevelopment. Fragmentation here is not accidental; it is institutionally produced through immigration law, labor exploitation, property regimes, and the financialization of urban land. As collective life is dispersed through policy and capital, cultural identity is increasingly extracted as consumable urban imagery detached from the communities, labor, and social infrastructures that produced it.

Under these conditions, dwelling no longer stabilizes through permanent ownership or singular domestic space. Instead, collective life persists through compressed, adaptive, and layered environments where commerce, ritual, labor, governance, and habitation are compressed into precarious forms of collective survival. Laundries, restaurants, language schools, joss houses, opera spaces, and gambling rooms were never merely cultural typologies; they were socio-spatial survival mechanisms forged under exclusion. These hybrid interiors enabled forms of collective continuity where formal systems denied permanence and belonging.

Rather than treating Chinatown as a heritage object to be nostalgically preserved, this proposal approaches it as an active geography of conflict and collective negotiation. Preservation alone cannot confront the political and economic systems that continue to fragment collective life. Instead, the project proposes a relational and cooperative infrastructure capable of reaggregating dispersed communities across space, time, and occupation.

The project rejects the singular architectural object and the fixed master plan. Instead, it proposes a relational framework organized through cyclical occupation, shared circulation, cooperative ownership, incremental growth, and mutual support systems. Heterogeneity is not resolved into unified form; multiple temporalities, economies, and cultural practices remain present without erasure. Architecture becomes less a complete object than an enabling field through which collective urban life can continually reorganize itself.

Chinatown is therefore reimagined not as a bounded ethnic enclave, but as a distributed network of social, cultural, and economic relations. The project introduces systems of cooperative residency, public exchange, cultural production, civic participation, and shared infrastructure that mediate between formal and informal economies. Inhabitation is reconceived not as an isolated occupancy, but as a relational condition embedded within systems of care, labor, education, and collective governance. Through these intertwined systems, fragmented urban residues are transformed into new forms of collective agency and civic participation.

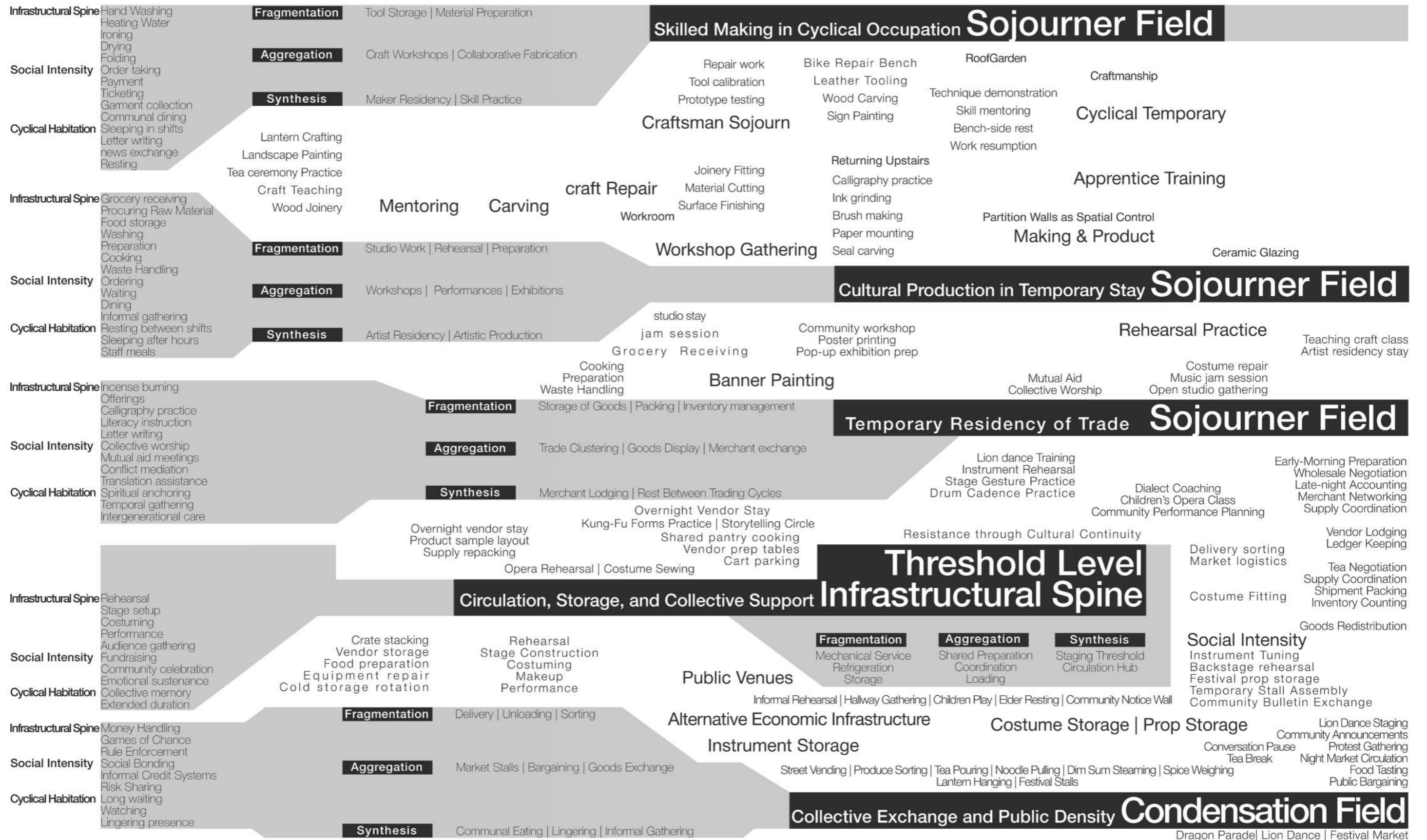
Against the privatized logic of condo urbanism, the project advances another model of city-making: one rooted in accumulation rather than replacement, adaptation rather than erasure, and collective inhabitation rather than isolated ownership. Architecture here does not complete the city. It establishes the conditions through which collective urban life can persist, negotiate, and continually reassemble itself through time.

DESIGNING POLITICAL + ECONOMIC PROCESS



ARCHITECTURES UNDER PRESSURE: Spatial Survival Under Racialized Governance
 This diagram traces how exclusionary law, labor exploitation, surveillance, and redevelopment produced Chinatown as a fragmented urban condition. Laundries, restaurants, language schools, joss houses, opera spaces, and gambling rooms are understood not as nostalgic typologies, but as adaptive socio-spatial infrastructures formed under pressure. These spaces condensed labor, ritual, exchange, and dwelling within conditions of legal and economic instability. Fragmentation is framed not as cultural disappearance, but as an active spatial process continuously reorganized through law, capital, and redevelopment. The diagram maps the genealogical transformation of collective inhabitation across time.

DESIGNING COALITIONS OF CARE:



INFRASTRUCTURES OF SOJOURN: Mediating Formal and Informal Urban Life

This diagram maps the distribution of collective activities, social intensities, and cyclical patterns of inhabitation across the urban field. The condensation field organizes spaces of exchange, ritual, gathering, and market activity, while the sojourn field supports recurring patterns of migration, residency, labor, and return. Vendors, performers, artisans, residents, and informal support networks are assembled through shared systems of circulation, mutual aid, and cooperative exchange. Rather than producing a singular architectural object, the diagram establishes the relational conditions from which the Sojourner Infrastructure emerges. Infrastructure is therefore understood not as a fixed form, but as an evolving framework that aggregates fragmented urban life into collective systems of inhabitation and support.



Semiotic Economy: Collective Inscription

Red signage, layered posters, and graphic surfaces operate as recurring acts of claim-making and collective authorship. Like seal imprints across a handscroll, successive inscriptions continuously overwrite the street through cycles of occupation, exchange, and memory.



Temporal Register: Perpetual Construction

Scaffolds, repairs, retrofits, and infrastructural interruptions render Chinatown as a field of continual adjustment rather than completed form. Urban time emerges through maintenance, adaptation, weathering, and incremental transformation.



Logistical Register: Circulation and Access

Transit infrastructure, service lanes, loading zones, and pedestrian flows organize fluctuating patterns of arrival, exchange, and occupation. Movement operates as a spatial framework through which access and social interaction are continuously negotiated.

Ecological Register: Persistent Ground

Shadow, humidity, airflow, vegetation, and seasonal recurrence persist beyond cycles of demolition and redevelopment. Ecology operates as an environmental continuity through which memory remains materially and sensorially embedded within the district.



Material Register: Survival Through Rupture

Fire-surviving masonry, exposed party walls, and residual structures persist as active matter within ongoing transformation. Fragments remain operative not as static heritage artifacts, but as adaptive carriers of urban memory.

Relational Register: Inhabitation Through Use

Spill-outs, shared thresholds, informal extensions, and overlapping domestic-commercial interiors produce negotiated forms of collective dwelling. Social space emerges through reciprocity, appropriation, and repeated acts of inhabitation beyond formal enclosure.



SITE STRATEGIES: JURISDICTIONAL

The project proposes six operative registers through which collective inhabitation reorganizes rigid property boundaries and privatized urban space. Rather than preserving Chinatown as a fixed heritage object, the project treats the city as a continually negotiated field shaped through use, exchange, repetition, and adaptation. Semiotic, temporal, logistical, ecological, material, and relational systems operate simultaneously across the urban field without resolving heterogeneity into unified form. Collective life emerges through overlapping patterns of circulation, inscription, assembly, and shared occupation. Architecture functions as an enabling framework for cooperative and time-based urban life.



Urban Scroll: Temporal Infrastructures of Collective Dwelling

The Urban Scroll reinterprets Chinatown as a temporal field of overlapping social, ecological, logistical, and spatial systems. Fragmented urban conditions become legible as interconnected networks of migration, exchange, ritual, labor, and collective inhabitation unfolding across time. Rather than resolving difference into coherent urban form, the scroll sustains multiple temporalities and cultural practices simultaneously. Infrastructure is reconceived as a relational system that supports collective dwelling through accumulation, adaptation, and shared occupation. The city becomes an unfolding field of negotiation, reciprocity, and continual reassembly.



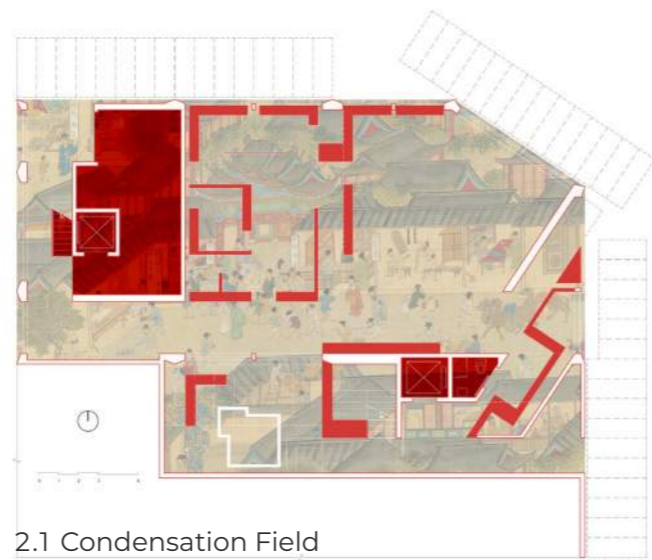
Architectural Scroll: Spatial Frameworks for Collective Urban Life

The Architectural Scroll reimagines fragmented urban residues into a foldable framework for collective inhabitation. Platforms, thresholds, circulation spines, scaffolded structures, and shared interiors organize evolving relationships between dwelling, labor, exchange, gathering, and leisure.

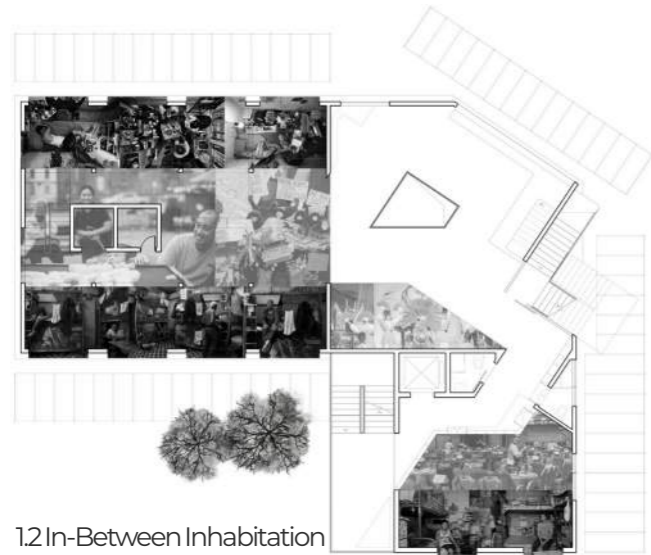
Patterns of occupation position architecture not as a finalized object, but as a set of spatial conditions open to negotiation, modification, and repeated use by heterogeneous actors. Architecture operates as a relational event-field through which collective urban life is continually assembled, inhabited, and renewed.



1.1 Common Ground



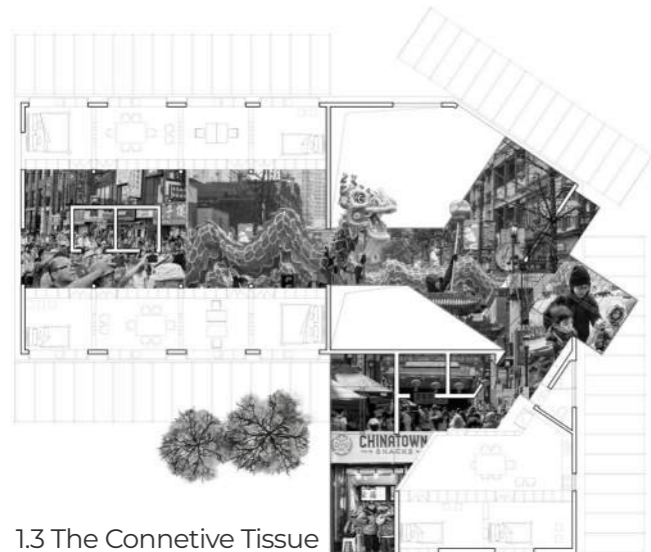
2.1 Condensation Field



1.2 In-Between Inhabitation



2.2 Sojourner Field I



1.3 The Connetive Tissue



2.3 Sojourner Field II

1.1 Common Ground

Condensation field of market exchange, where collective activity organizes spatial occupation

1.2 In-Between Inhabitation

Transitional field mediating individual and collective dwelling through layered thresholds

1.3 The Connetive Tissue

Infrastructural spine as a thickened field of circulation, organizing relational encounters

2.1 Condensation Field

Event-based aggregation of exchange activities, where temporal intensities condense and disperse across the field

2.2 Sojourner Field I

Field condition of cyclical inhabitation, organized through patterns of return, occupation, and small-scale exchange

2.3 Sojourner Field II

Reconfiguration of inhabitation patterns while maintaining relational continuity across the field



A relational field held in provisional assembly.