

**[IN]FORMAL:**

**FASCISM + EVERYDAY IN THE MERCATO**

**MERCATO, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**TYLER WESTRY**

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**SIGNATURE PAGE**

**ABSTRACT: ADDIS ABABA AS A HETEROTOPIA**

*“By contrast, the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity.”*

**-Michel Foucault**

Foucault argues that the accumulation of historical archives creates a “heterotopia,” removed from itself, existing outside of time, a space contradictory and incompatible to its surroundings. These elements create a distinctly Ethiopian culture, specifically in Addis Ababa; a space removed from its time, in the past, in the present, a combination of cultural and temporal experience. The Italian conquest of Ethiopia sought to apply a rationalist organization to Addis Ababa, grounded in a focus on new history making, ignoring the existing historical implications and conditions of the heterotopic context. The resulting modernist structures and planning abandoned in the city exist out of place in the sprawling, organic figure ground of Addis Ababa yet are absorbed seamlessly into everyday life. This thesis revisits the fascist plan of the Mercato neighborhood of Addis Ababa, proposing the resulting informal reality of the formal plan creates a heterotopia that is uniquely Ethiopian. Tensions between Christianity and Islam created a substantial population of traveling merchants while the Italian conquest of Ethiopia sought to apply a rationalist organization to Addis Ababa, ignoring existing historical implications. These foreign influences in Ethiopia created a heterotopic landscape in Merkato--the open-air market of Addis Ababa--that ignores the intent of the fascist plan it inhabits. Today, Chinese investors influencing the Ethiopian government to increase development and regulation in this regional market hub are met with heavy resistance by its residents as proposed developments continually ignore Merkato's history. Foreign investors should rather develop projects that implement new technologies to evolve the traditions of making and self-sufficiency to remain relevant as the national economy shifts away from its reliance on coffee exports toward production of manufactured goods. The expertise of China as a global leader in manufacturing and fabrication instead can provide a positive example for the future of Merkato.

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In the practice of architecture, the importance of site goes beyond the physical location of a project, taking in all aspects of its history, culture, and inhabitants. These elements profoundly influence the success and meaningfulness of a project much greater than geographic or climatic factors. The flawed world view under fascist occupation of Ethiopia ignores these and concerns itself with new history making. Plans proposed under the Italian occupation continually changed, developing disconnected and unconcerned with the reality of the city's existing history. A multitude of zealous modern architects saw in the fascist conquest the opportunity to test their radical experiments for the new modern city. Fascism, in its inception, tempted many with promises of new ordered cities—built form efficiency and rationalism.

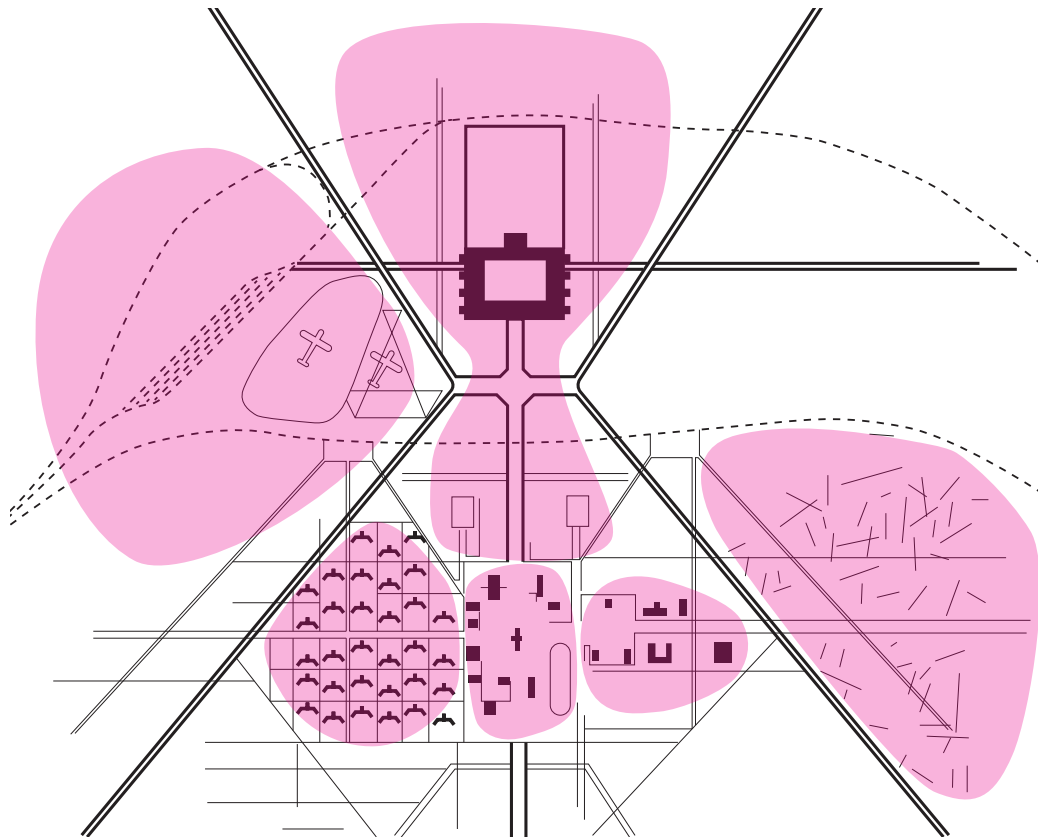


Fig 1: Le Corbusier plan for Fascist Addis Ababa (1936)



Fig 2: AIO Headquarters Model (1937)



Fig 3: Haile Selassie Plan (1954)

Immediately following the successful occupation of Ethiopia in 1936, Le Corbusier submitted to Mussolini a proposal for Addis Ababa (Fig 1). An evolution of his *Ville Radieuse* (1930), creating radial axes dividing the city into districts; housing, industry, civics, agriculture, parks, business. Le Corbusier's plan intentionally ignored any existing context as it would detract from the grand gesture of his vision. Though highly rational, it did not create a strong enough emphasis on the position and authority of the *Impero* to please the Duce, lacking the dramatic flair that the regime propagated in its image. After tireless debate over and review of submissions, the *Africa Orientale Italiana* (AOI) officials settled on a modified version of his plan, characterized by exaggerated scale and baroque curves (Fig 2). Under emperor Haile Selassie, Addis Ababa went through more city-wide planning changes in the 1950s focused on creating better circulation and access, protecting the roles of selected districts and redefining others (Fig 3).

The layers of planning left behind by several regimes looking at the site as an architectural playground created in Addis Ababa a heterotopia, a place that is all things at once, removed from its proper place in time. The combination of cultural agendas in the heterotopia lead to a new culture characterized by conflicts and contradictions that in turn affect the built environment

(Fig 4). The Mercato, an Italian planned market in Addis Ababa under fascist occupied Ethiopia, exemplifies the heterotopic context of contradictory historical interventions; a conflict of formal and informal (Fig 5). The Italian plan for Addis Ababa and the Mercato “sought a novel meaning of human salvation and rebirth” to apply an idealist, rationalist organization to the city and its neighborhoods, ignoring the realities of historical implications in the heterotopic context (Kallis, 67). This “save the world” mentality justified the major changes they sought to force upon the city.

The original city market was located more centrally, adjacent to St George’s Cathedral, but the Italian vision for a fascist Ethiopia held no regard for much of the existing city and its cultural connectivity. This open—air market was wiped out along with much of the city center, moving the majority of the Ethiopian population and its needs to the northwest *Qartiere Indigeno*. The city center instead became the seat of the AOI government, sitting at the head of a central axis, connected via new roads to the other cities spread across the region. The intention of the Italian plan to move the market outside of the central city and segregate the population did separate the Ethiopians from the Italians but created a convergence point for all trade in the region.



Fig 4: Mercato Figure Ground

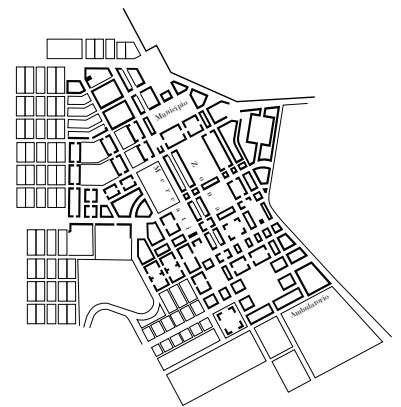


Fig 5: AIO Merkato Plan (1937)



Though projects progressed on a regional scale, Italian East Africa's designs for the new city plan to serve as a beacon of fascism's success were largely unsuccessful at the neighborhood scale.

*"Although ordered, the boundaries between various subdivisions are blurred by the casual unfolding of events, or simply by the way things go, for the quasi-formal market organization is persistently thrown off balance by informal market practices."*

-Marc Angélil

Plans for the Mercato set up a strictly organized open market to resemble the markets of Rome. The infighting and indecision in the AOI caused delays in implementation and before the plan could be realized WWII brought about the end of Italian occupation. The resulting modernist structures and planning abandoned in the city exist out of place in the sprawling, organic figure-ground of Addis Ababa, yet are integrated seamlessly into everyday life: another addition to the heterotopia. The layer of a strict, formal market only existed in the street layout, but provided a framework for the informal heterotopia of commercial activity, traditional and modern, existing in and simultaneously free from the street grid.

While in this case the heterotopia absorbed the Italian Mercato grid, it is not as "inaccessible" to the ravages of time as Foucault argues. New developer interest in the neighborhood threatens its future. Today the Mercato neighborhood—approximately one square mile—is home to over 200,000 people, sees 300,000 daily commuters, and is the region's center for coffee trade, the nation's largest export (Angélil, 11-12). It exists as a self-sufficient settlement, a micro city within Addis Ababa. These conditions present an ideal location for a business center for foreign investors to establish new international markets. This will not be an integrative addition to the heterotopia but ultimately change the fabric of the Mercato. New development must look to the neighborhood's history to create a relevant, impactful change for the good of the city. This project proposes to do so in the establishment of a hackerspace focused on new learning and making, accompanied by a public market portion that feeds into the main market center.

## ANALYSIS

The Mercato presents a unique opportunity to leverage a historic context to create a project relating to, reinforcing, and improving upon the layers left behind by the neighborhood's influential past. Addis Ababa has been the subject of multiple regimes throughout the 20th century, progressing from independent kingdom, to fascist experiment, to capital of an empire, center of a socialist revolution, and capitol of a parliamentary republic. It has seen several city wide plans that have left scars and artifacts throughout



Fig 6: Aerial Photo of the Merkato. Here one can see the old portion of the Merkato that is still untouched by recent development.



Fig 7: Layers of City Planning

its fabric (Fig 7). A particular element that has remained and evolved throughout these changes is the Mercato. Every plan that was implemented after the Italian segregation of the city has preserved the neighborhood in its current location. The importance of this location justified the construction of a light rail project connecting the city center, the national railroad station, and the Mercato.

The Italian occupation beginning in 1936 caused the segregation of the Ethiopian people from the Italian invaders (Fig 8). This movement of people saw a shift in the location of several amenities most notably the Mercato which became the national center of indigenous commerce. The intention of the fascist plan was to provide large open market halls but over time the informal use has led to these empty spaces filling organically. The main streets are the only location where the wide streets are preserved.

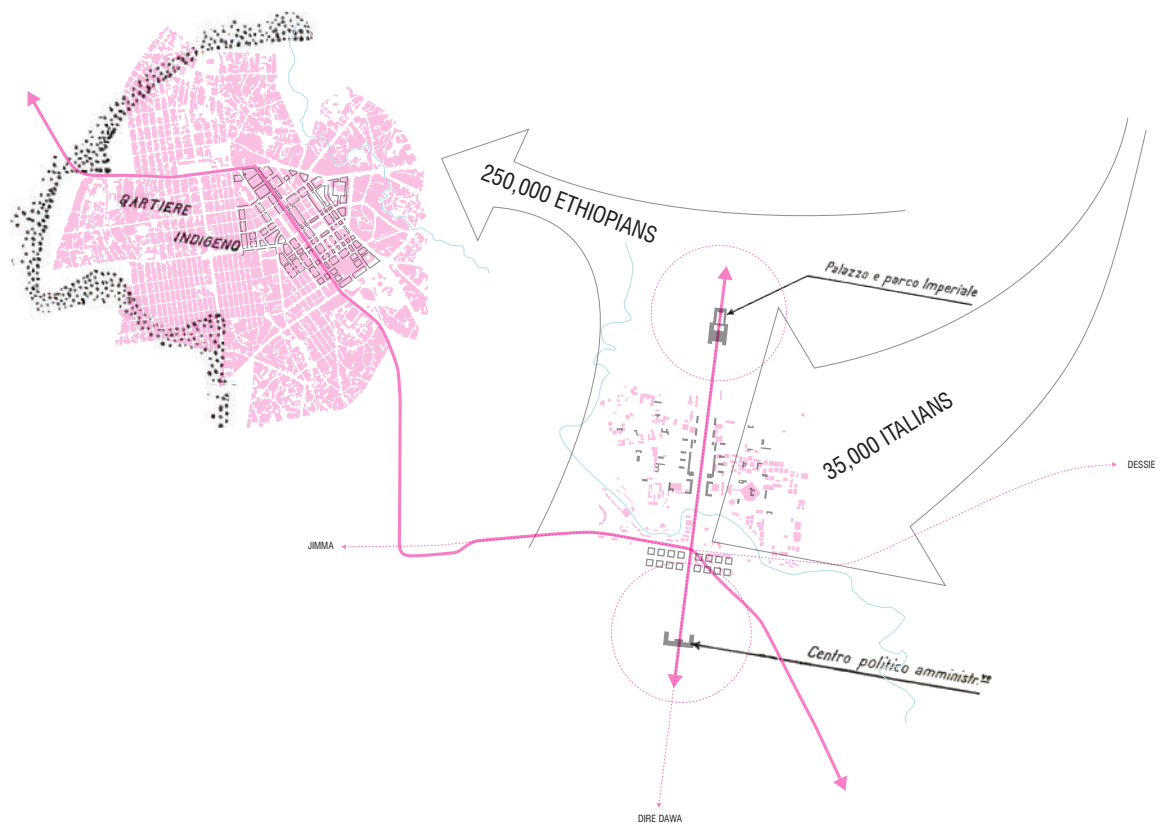


Fig 8: Fascist Occupation (1936)

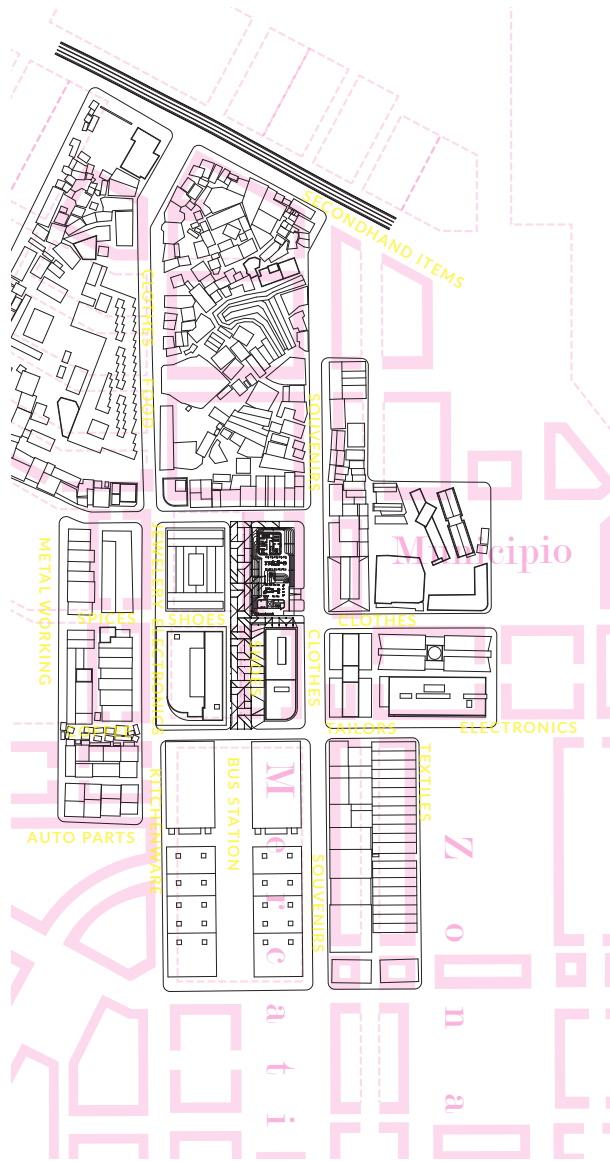
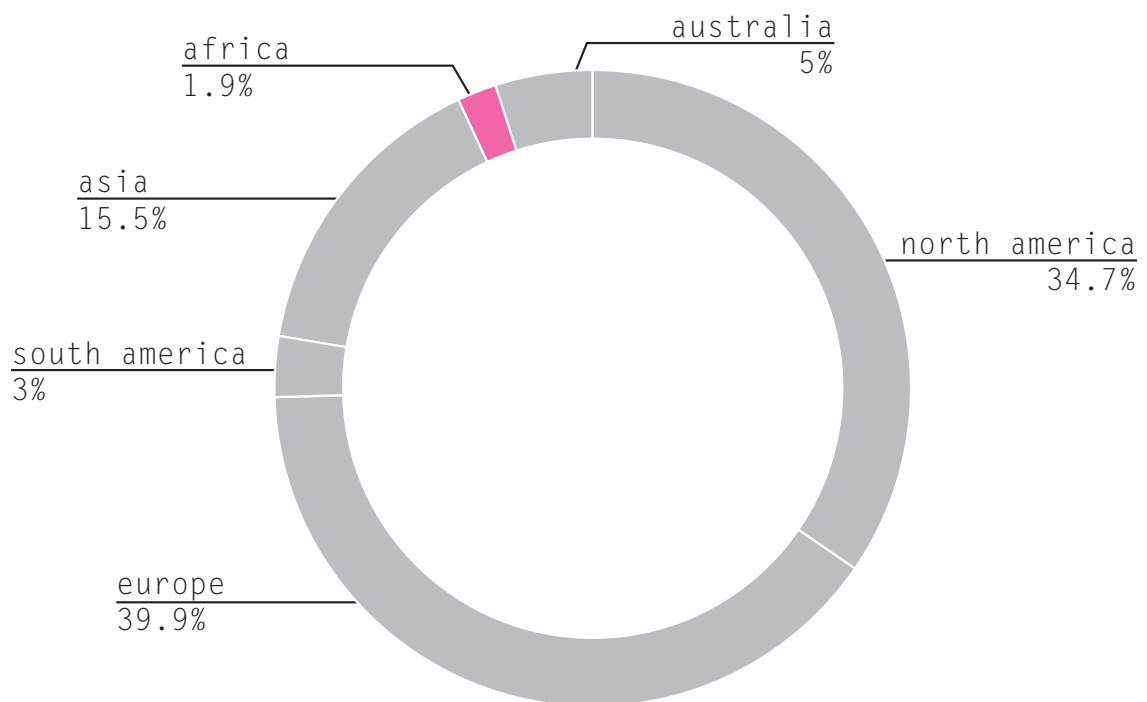


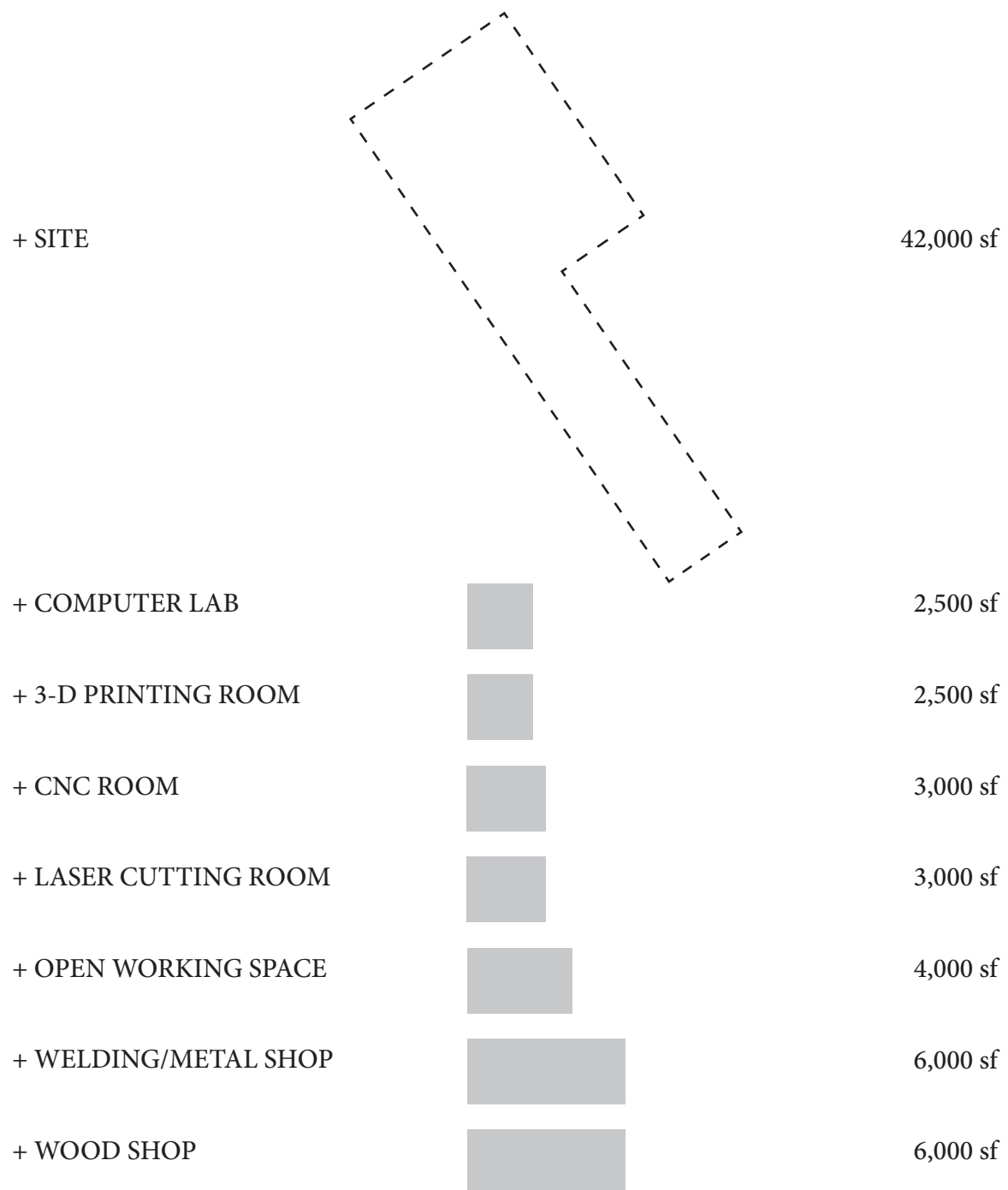
Fig 9: Heterotopic Merkato








The Mercato is divided up according to the different market groups with one large market hall that sits in the center of the original *Zona Mercati* (Fig 9). The chosen site sits in the Mercato's central area of development, along the axis of the market halls. This project explores how to extend the main market hall into the center of the Mercato where new development is focused. The proposed program then becomes integrated into the existing structure of the market.



Global access to hackerspaces /spaces dedicated to making, learning, access to tools, machinery, computers, and retail/ is largely centered in North America and Europe. Access to these spaces in Africa is practically non-existent, with a per capita distribution of **1:46,774,230**. These services are vital to a region like Mercato, a city of makers.





+ LOBBY/CHECK-IN		3,000 sf
+ CLASSROOMS		$350(20) = 7000$ sf
+ MARKET		15,000 sf
+ MECHANICAL		8,000 sf
+ RESTROOMS		2,000 sf
+ TOOL STORAGE		5,000 sf
+ LOADING		2,000 sf

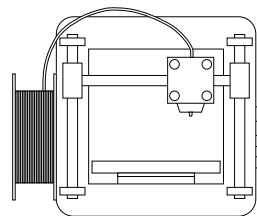
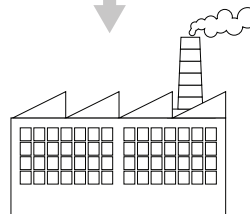
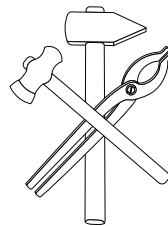


## MERCATO HACKERSPACE:

A center for

peer learning /  
knowledge sharing /  
workshops /  
presentations /  
making / machining /  
prototyping /  
computing /  
programming /  
building /

to keep the inhabitants of the  
mercato relevant in a changing  
global economy.



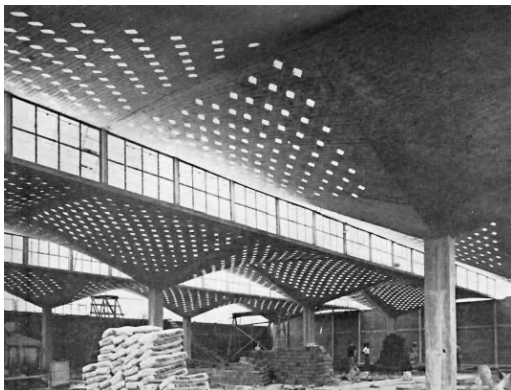


# STREET MARKET WORKSHOP LIVING

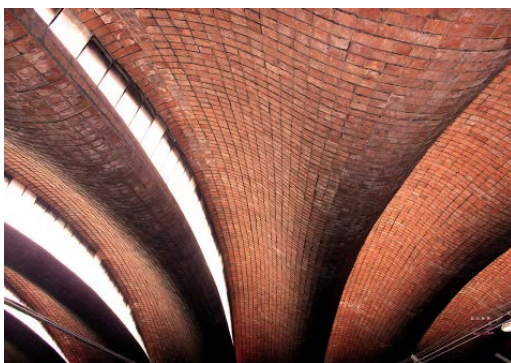
The existing structure of the markets primarily consist of ad hoc, single family residences of one story, constructed of readily available material. The layers of privacy increase the farther one goes within the home. This method has resulted in widespread neighborhoods that are sprawling into the surrounding districts. The densification of residence and market into a joined program is necessary to keep the Mercato efficient and sustainable.



Coyoacan Market, Felix Candela



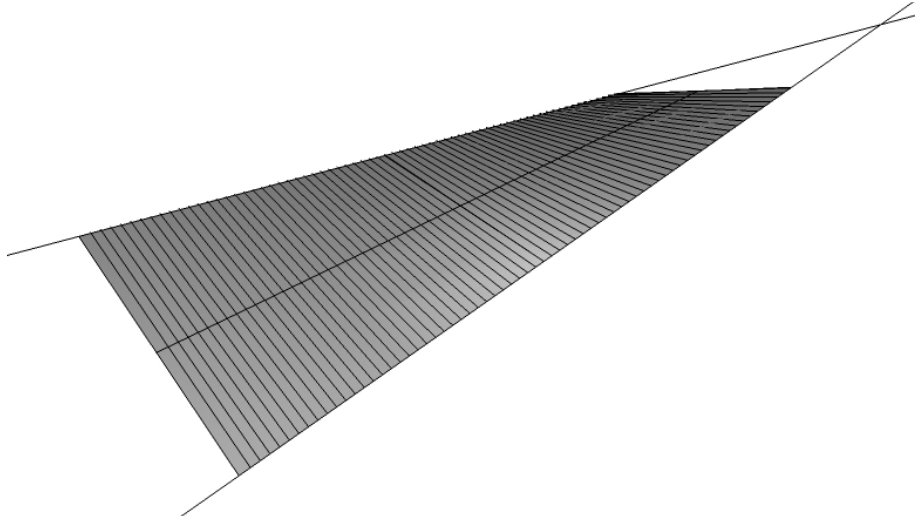
Coyoacan Market, Felix Candela



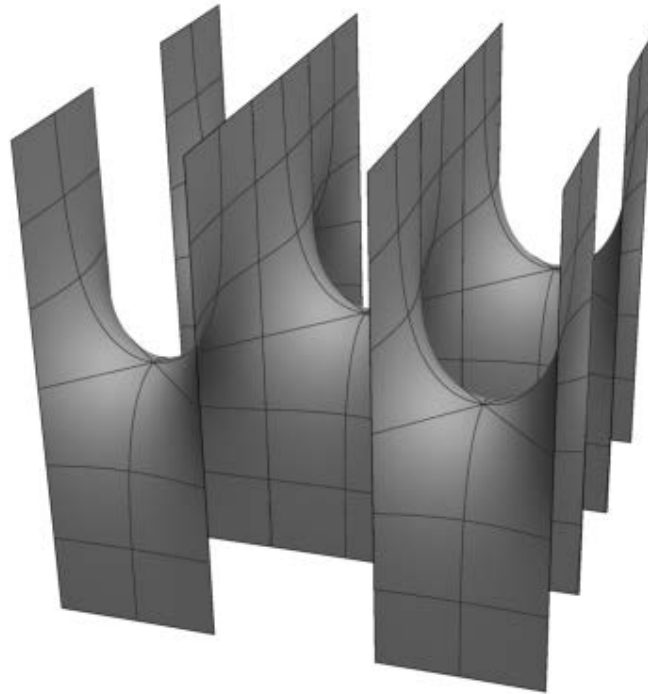
Montevideo Shopping, Eladio Dieste

TX/RX Labs is a hackerspace that provides services to makers for learning and innovating. It has services based in wood working, metal working, digital fabrication, rapid prototyping and computer programming and coding.

The open market plan of these markets creates the freedom for artisans and vendors to fill in the space as necessary. Architectural experimentation of modularity occurs with manipulation of material in the roof structure that shades the market and provides controlled lighting. The experimentation and innovation that occurs in these projects is vital to the mission of the hackerspace, pushing the limits of the available materials to create a unique space.



Example of a ruled surface

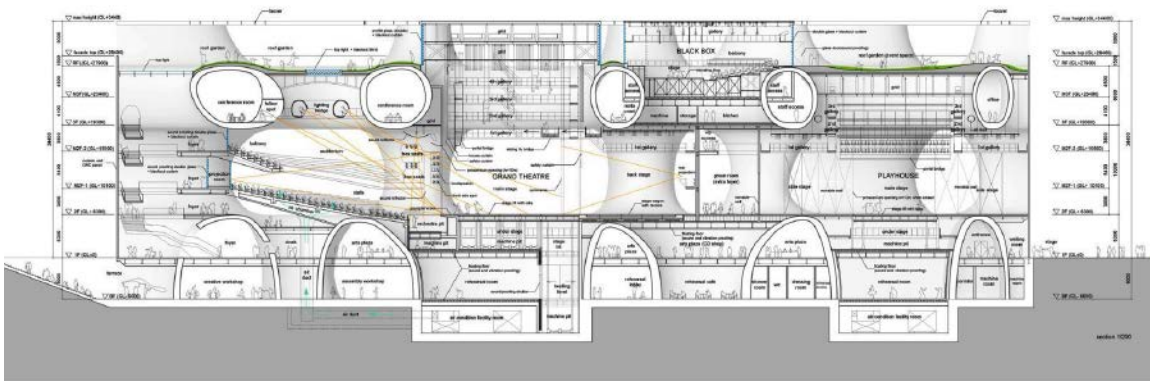


Example of a minimal surface

The experimentation in these projects points towards the study of ruled and minimal surfaces. Exploration in these forms can result in unique structures and sectional qualities that will begin to define the new typology of the hackerspace.

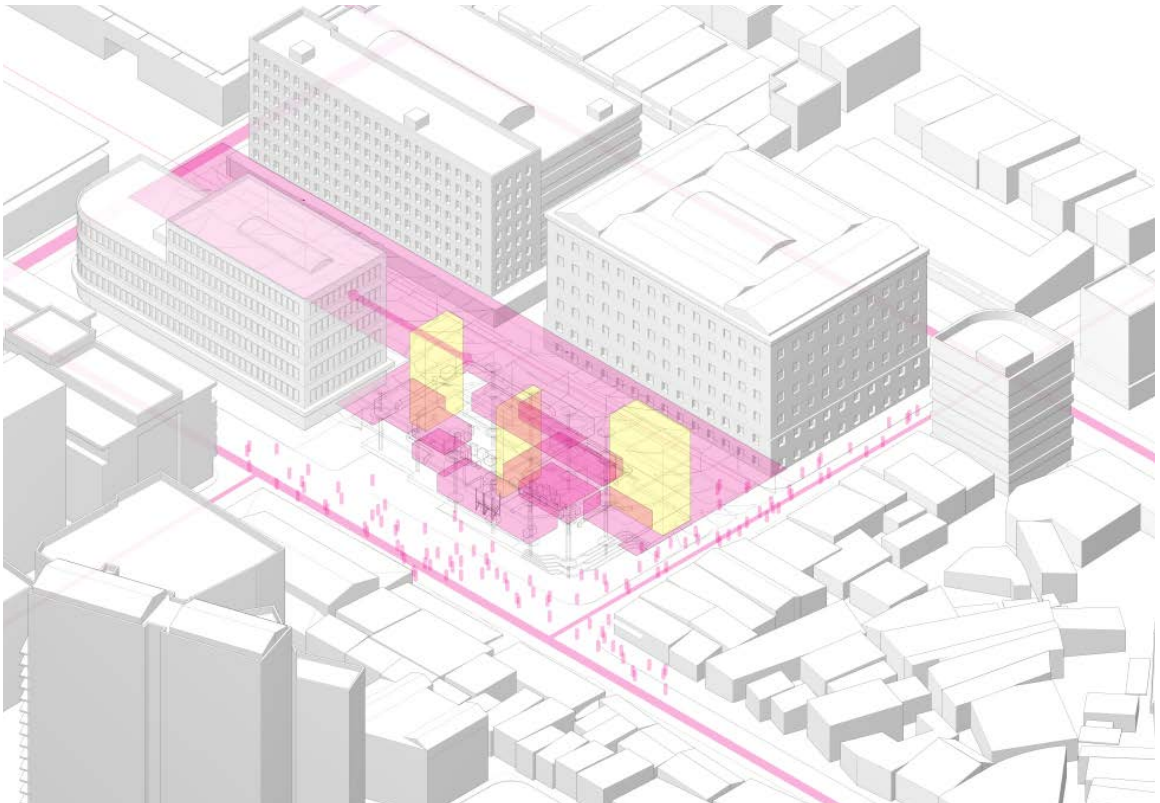


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The Taichung Opera House in Taiwan, designed by Toyo Ito in 2016 takes advantage of the properties of the minimal surface. The volumes created are interconnected by the continuous surface. While the interior of the building is interesting, the relationship to the exterior is lacking.





The design strategy for the makerspace begins with addressing the needs of the site. Looking at the surrounding context, one can see that the new market halls dominate and restrict the site. Lifting as much of the program off the ground as possible allows for more activity of the Merkato to bleed into the site. The supporting programmatic elements are gathered into two vertical cores that elevate the conditioned spaces over the site.



Progress model 1



Progress model 2

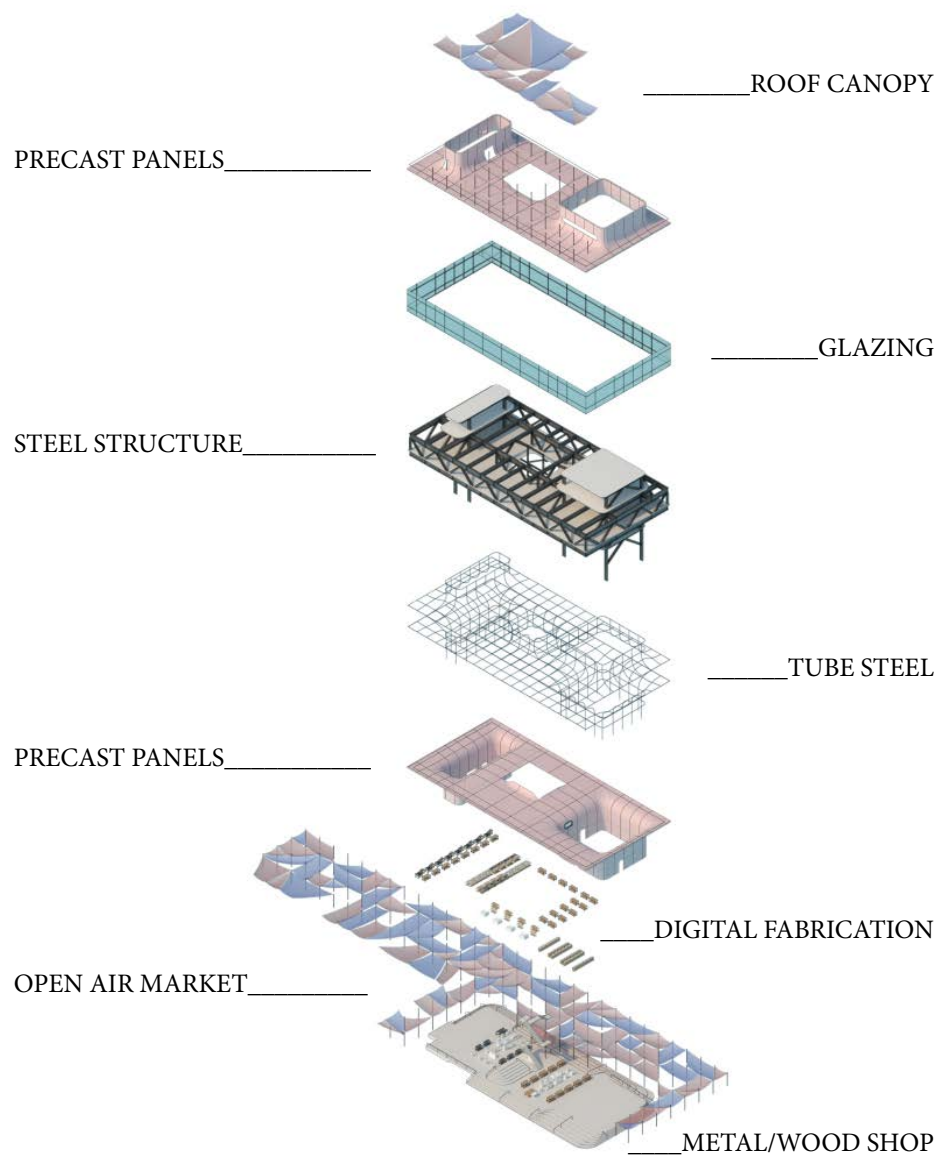


Progress model 3

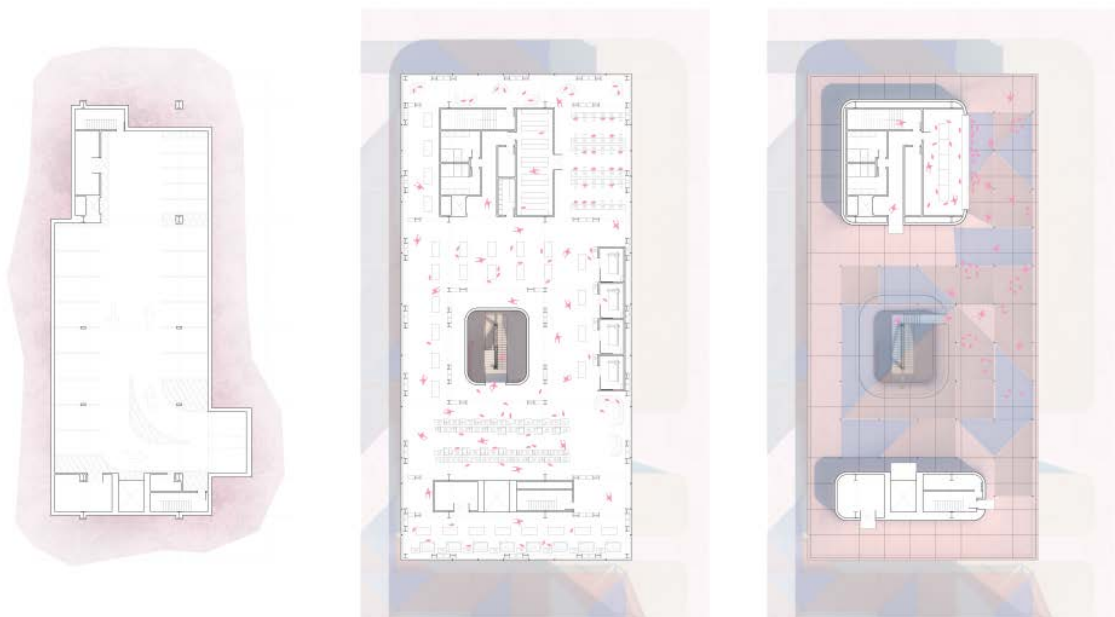
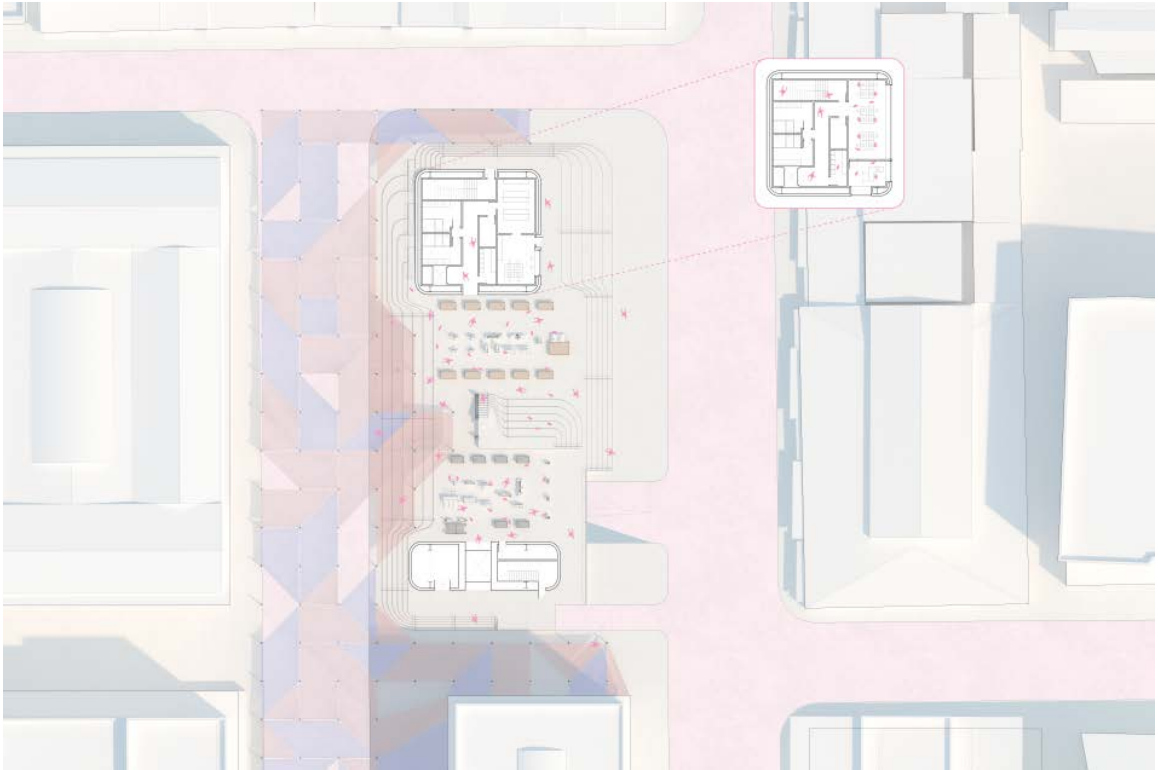


Progress model 4





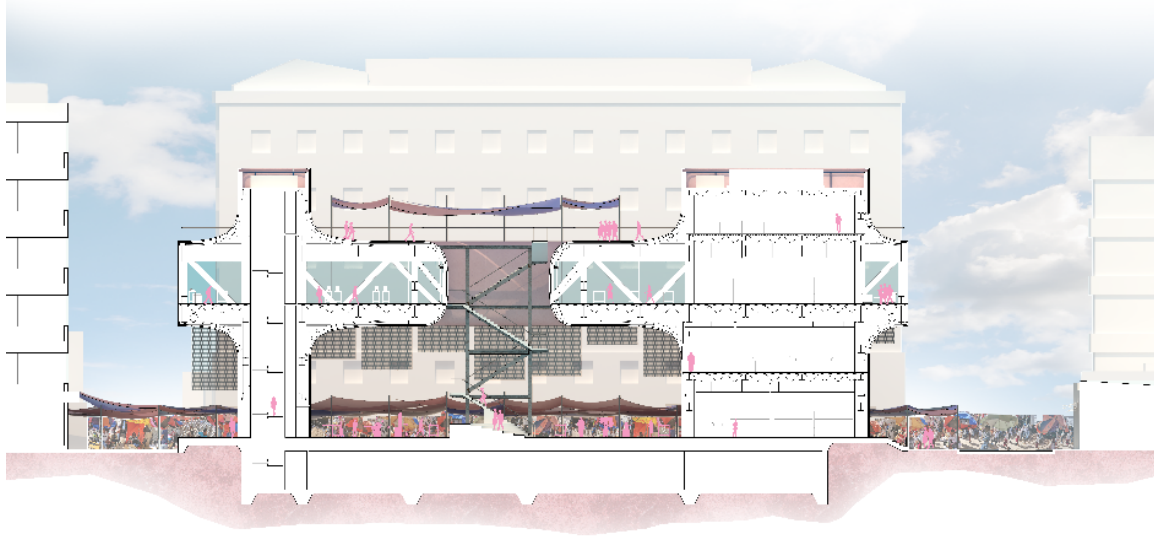
## DRAWINGS AND MODELS



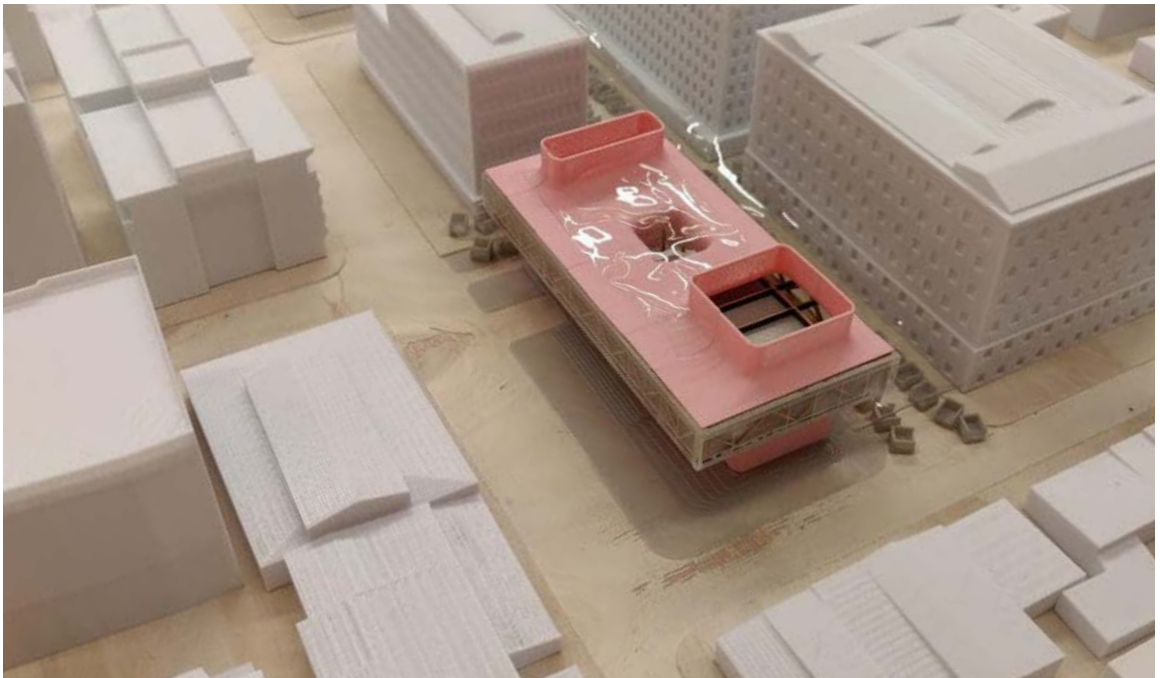
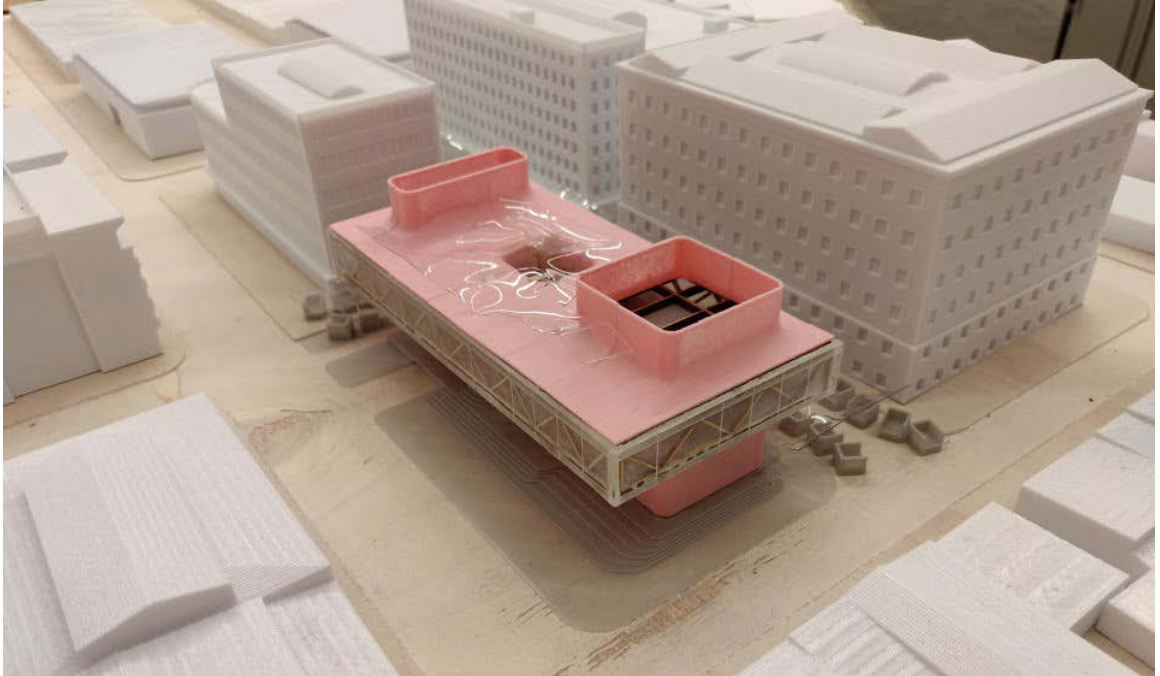








Section model photo



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