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From Aztec to Médiathèque: Hybrid Contradictions

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By employing non-traditional building techniques using refuse, programming an equal green space to building space, as well as relegating an area to public space, will help an architecture manifest the ideas and philosophies of a transnational culture. The médiathèque will also provide education, entertainment, free internet access, public space, and green space as way to help build cultural and symbolic capital. As a result, it fulfills a necessary need for a community in desperate need of educational resources pertaining to technology and desire for green and public space.

This thesis project aims to create a Mexican Mid-Western architectural hybridity by integrating strategies and ideas of two different climates and cultures into an architectural identity for the Mexican Mid-West through the auspices of a médiathèque in Little Village, Chicago.

Chicago having the third largest density of Mexicans in the United States has fallen short in buildings that convey this transnational culture. Even with the rich history of Mexicans in the Little Village area of Chicago, and its current density of Mexican-Americans, there are no terms or concepts that convey an identity that is specific to Mexican Mid-Western architecture and contributes to the current creative efforts found in Mexican-Chicago.
# Table of Contents

Abstract iii  
Image List vi  

Introduction 00 1  
Chapter 01: De- and Re Territorialization 9  
Chapter 02: The Hybrid 13  
  La Raza Cósmica 17  
  Unpacking the Sonoran Hot Dog 18  
  Unpacking Duranguense 20  
  Reasons for the Hybrid 22  
Chapter 03: Border Architecture 25  
  American Conceptions 27  
  Tijuana 29  
  Plaza vs. Mall 33  
Chapter 04: Colonias Y Barrios 23  
Chapter 05: La Villita 49  
  Lawndale Crawford 50  
  Fear of a Black Lawndale 53  
  Česká Kalifornie 52  
  La Villita “Little Village 55  
  Mexican Diaspora into Chicago 56  
Chapter 06: Médiathèque 61  
Chapter 07: The Practice 65  
Chapter 08: Design Work 71
Fig-0.1 pg. 2
Relation of Mexico to the U.S.
Diagram by Author

Fig-0.2 pg. 3
Spanish Colonial Arch that greets visitors as they enter Little Village from the East along Twenty Sixth Street.
Photo by Author

Fig-0.3 pg. 4
Colonia Construction in the U.S.

Fig-0.4 pg. 5
Proposed project site in Little Village Chicago
Image by Author

Fig-0.5 pg. 6
Map of Little Village in Relation to Downtown Chicago
Map by Author

Fig-1.0 pg. 10
Wal-Mart projects a dual identity of being a large corporation with small-town sensibilities

Fig-1.1 pg. 12
Dog marking his territory.

Fig-2.21 & Fig-2.2 pg. 16
Fram Spanish and Black, Mulatto (De español y negra, mulata) & From Mestizo and Indian, Coyote De mestizo y de india, coyote

Fig-2.3 pg. 17
Vasconcelos saw the the indigenous memory as well as the Spanish colonial memory together as a hybrid as a way of establishing a Mexican identity.
diegoRiveraMuralBig.jpg (JPEG Image, 520x407 pixels), n.d. http://www.e-socrates.org/file.php/929/diegoRiveraMuralBig.jpg

Fig-2.4 pg. 18
Sonoran Hot Dog is served wrapped in a slice of bacon with toppings similar to a taco-- beans and guacamole, but with mayonnaise added as a typical condiment. This results in a good balance of warm ingredients and cold ingredients.

Fig-2.5 pg. 19
Diagram showing various influences of the Sonoran Hot Dog & Duranguense
Diagram by Author
Grupo Montéz de Durango is a Chicago based Duranguense band and are believed to be one of the first to have started this movement.

Diagram showing various influences of Duranguense
Diagram by Author

This is a Zorse

Little Village Context
Graphic by Author

U.S. Mexican Border

Spanish colonial influenced suburban tract home

Mi Tierra Restaurant in Little Village, Chicago
Photo by Author

‘SOME OLD FRIENDS I MET IN TIJUANA MEXICO’ postcard showing a bottle of Gordon & Co Gin, Hennessy Cognac and Straight Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey

Handicrafts sold along Revolution Avenue

On some corners of Revolution Avenue are painted burros with zebra stripes. They have become a tourist attraction with backdrop images of Aztec figures, the eagle with serpent representing the founding of Mexico, cacti and other American images of Mexican Culture.

Homogenous Tract housing

Inside Plaza Monarca one of Tijuana's many malls

Shopping mall in the U.S.

Shopping Mall in Tijuana

Flows of immigration North and South
Bimmigration.jpg (JPEG Image, 709x496 pixels) - Scaled (0%), n.d. http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_tEwpA8nFTxw/SSSXNbhAlfl/AAAAAAAAAm0/8lf8eptwNMo/s1600/Bimmigration.jpg.
Fig-3.12 | pg. 37
Collage showing the U.S. & Mexican factors
Graphic by Author

Fig-4.1 | pg. 40
Colonia Construction

Fig-4.2 | pg. 41
House/store in the Colonias

Fig-4.3 | pg. 42
How Mecalux can use their existing processes to produce a surplus piece’
http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_tEwpA8nFTxw/SSSZs89RzWI/AAAAAAAAAnk/SMqFGrtrlYIs/s1600/Bset-up-houses.jpg

Fig-4.4 | pg. 43
And added to, using commonly available material and typical building processes
http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_tEwpA8nFTxw/SSSZs89RzWI/AAAAAAAAAnk/SMqFGrtrlYIs/s1600/Bset-up-houses.jpg

Fig-4.5 | pg. 44
Painted house with decorations in Little Village
Photo by Author

Fig-4.6 | pg. 46
Metal Add-on in Little Village
Photo by Author

Fig-4.7 | pg. 47
Metal Stair going to the window
Photo by Author

Fig-5.1 | pg. 50
The 2200 block of Millard Avenue served as a downtown to the Lawndale subdivision. All of the amenities of the day could be found here. There were churches, a park, stores, a hotel, al library, and a laundry.

Fig-5.2 | pg. 51
Postcard booklet promoting the neighborhoods of Czechoslovak Chicago in 1925. The text states, “California or Lawndale are several square miles tenanted by Czechs. The main artery is Twenty-sixth Street where a person not speaking English could be fully understood. California is now the center of Czech communal life and business.

Fig-5.3 | pg. 52
Czech Children in Little Village

Fig-5.4 | pg. 53
Community members display a new light pole sign designating the neighborhood as Little Village in 1965.

Fig-5.5 | pg. 54
Diagram showing factories below Little village and Dividing Gang line running North to South.
Diagram by Author

Fig-5.6 | pg. 55
Portrait of Little Village Family

Fig-5.7 | pg. 56
"Traditional" Migrant Streams

Fig-5.8 p. 57
The camp cars varied greatly as did the amenities that the railroad company provided them. Some cars provided enough space for the family to have two separate rooms. There were several different rail lines that provided worker housing in this way, in and around Chicago.

Fig-5.9 p. 58
Little Village, Chicago Street Vendor

Fig-5.1 p. 59
Racial/ethnic self-identification in Chicago in the year 2000
http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_UHMQ5t6exvs/TJjIp5R5gLx/AAAAAAAACo/WVC8HcL0dT0/s1600/tumblr_l79fx4cPo51qc3cebo1_500.jpg; Accessed:2011-05-17 14:39:12

Fig-6.1 p. 62
Seattle Public Library

Fig-7.1 p. 66
Architectural Record Magazine November 2009

Fig-7.2 p. 67
Architectural Graphic Standards

Fig-7.3 p. 68
Villa Welpeloo, by Architecten 2012 made out of 60% post-consumer material

Fig-7.4 p. 69
Big Dig Building by Single Speed Design Diagram showing construction of apartment building using highway inverset panels

Fig-8.1 p. 71
Early Design Scheme
Image by author

Fig-8.2 p. 73
Diagram showing construction process and green space
Image by author

Fig-8.3 p. 74
Harvest Map
Image by author

Fig-8.4 p. 75
Stacked Brick, Concrete and Tile study
Image by author

Fig-8.4 p. 76
Assembly Diagram
Image by author

Fig-8.5 p. 77
Assembly from car and bike parts based on Aztec stone inlay
Image by author
One must act to convince the public that the contradictions, imbalances, and chaos typical of the contemporary city are inevitable—that such chaos in itself, in fact, contains unexplored riches, unlimited possibilities to be turned to account, bright and shining values to be presented as new social fetishes.

-Manfredo Tafurri

The neighborhood of Little Village (officially named South Lawndale) in Chicago has begun to show signs of becoming the epicenter for the Mexican American culture in the Midwestern United States. This is expressed through the business signage around the community that is mostly written in Spanish and the murals that incorporate iconic Mexican imagery referencing the past and future ambitions of Mexican-Americans in the community. The uniquely Mexican Chicago music—Duranguense—can be heard playing in the streets from the cars passing by, and traditional Mexican food has spread from the street side carts to the finer restaurants downtown. The ease of accessibility to the food, prevalence of music, and proliferation of imagery and language offer proof that Mexican culture is shaping and influencing the tastes of Chicago and that Mexican Chicago is experiencing a maturation of a hybrid culture. "Right now, the most authentic Mexican food in the United States is probably in Chicago. There are more than a million Mexicans in Chicago, more than in Houston or San Antonio, and most of them are newly arrived. The Mexican restaurants I have visited in Chicago's Pilsen district are unconsciously authentic; the owners serve the same stewed goat and pork in chile sauce as they did in Mexico, simply because they have no other frame of reference..."When somebody from Mexico moves to Texas or California, the Chicano community is there to teach them how things are done," says Bayless. 'But that doesn't happen in Chicago. The Mexicans here are almost all first-generation, and they still cook the way they did in Mexico. There's nobody here to show them what Americanized Mexican food is supposed to be like.'


Due to their proximity to Mexico, many of the towns along the border, like El Paso, Tucson, and Tijuana, have dealt with this transnational culture for many years, and there one finds similar murals, signs in Spanish, and Mexican music heard in the streets. However, these places have benefited from this rich tradition going back to the Spanish colonial period, and this culture has matured with terms like Tex-Mex, Southwestern, and Chicano, to name a few that are used to express this hybridity found in food and the arts. Chicago, having the third-largest density of Mexicans in the United States3 (behind Los Angeles and Miami), has fallen short in an architectural identity that is an important element to a culture’s right to place. Looking at any architectural record, one can easily bring to mind the Hacienda, Spanish mission homes in California, or the tropical Cuban architecture of Miami. Even with the rich history of Mexicans in Chicago and its current density of Mexican-Americans, there are no terms or concepts that convey an identity that is specific to the Mexican Midwestern architecture that contributes to place-making found in the Chicago area.

Architecturally, Mexican Chicago’s distance from the border doesn’t afford it obvious relations to Mexico like in Tijuana or El Paso, nor does it conjure up concepts of a dual identity that is embodied in terms like “the Southwest.” However, Little Village is rife with the same cultural forms of expression, like the murals and food carts that are characteristic of other Mexican-American neighborhoods. The few buildings found in Little Village that have made an attempt to convey an architecture of the community have gone one way or another and have played up to commonly held assumptions of what is Mexican architecture, like the National Museum of Mexican Art, the Colonial gate given by Mexico as a gift in 1991, and Mi Tierra, a gaudy Mexican restaurant expressed through Spanish colonial architecture and painted in pink. Other than these buildings looking stylistically traditional, they end up trying too hard to reclaim a way of life that is not necessarily theirs, of our current time period and makes no mention to the nature of this hybrid community. They end up being flat oversimplified and kitschy. In Little Village, some of these expressions which might hint at establishing a hybrid architectural identity go unnoticed. This hybrid architecture which involves the prior Bohemian residents with a tame version of the add-on, or piecemeal, construction that is found in the colonias of the U.S.-Mexican border.

This add-on construction found in the colonias and barrios allows for the conversion of existing buildings into livable spaces and business storefronts to gain supplemental income. This patchwork or collage of construction is the way that Latin American communities are unknowingly identified throughout the country today. This type of construction results in hybrid cities where everywhere you go you are crossing borders and seeing various influences upon each other. Currently there exists no strong contemporary architecture that asserts a Mexican Midwestern (or Midwestern Mexican) architectural identity. What is there is the unconscious spirit that is created by the piecemeal construction that goes with the necessity to add more space.
This thesis project aims to create a Mexican American Midwestern architectural identity by integrating ideas of a hybrid culture into an architectural identity for Mexican Midwestern Americans. By employing non-traditional building techniques that are characteristic of add-on construction and of the colonias along the border, the urban landscape is reterritorialized with a type of construction that is outside the realm of typical western construction and highlights a type of construction that is already in place. Coupled with this building strategy, the building program will furthermore help to nurture the community by continuing the process of reterritorialization into a more permanent situation by simply providing those resources like education, social gathering space, and green space to build spaces that help a community to help itself. This program will thus coincide with the place-making that is happening. This architecture will manifest the ideas and philosophies of this transnational culture by way of a médiathèque acting as the anchor, which draws the community to this area for interaction and education. Mitigating the architectural design strategies of border town construction and the technological advancements of contemporary architecture, we are filling the void of an architectural expression speaking to two opposing climates and cultures as well as adding to the contradiction of being modern and traditional. As a result, it fulfills a need for a community lacking educational resources pertaining to technology and desiring green and public spaces. This in turn will allow the assembly of people to connect to nature and to help build cultural and symbolic capital.
Chapter 1 introduces de- and reterritorialization. Chapter 2 focuses on Mexican-American Hybrids today. Chapter 3 illustrates the hybrid identities that exist in border towns. Chapter 4 highlights outliers along border towns that are rife with inspiration from which to create a Mexican-American Identity for the Midwest. Chapter 5 discusses the history of Little Village and why Mexicans are there today. Chapter 6 makes a case for inserting a médiathèque into Little Village. Chapter 7 explains how the practice of architecture is territorialized and how building with refuse is a way of reterritorializing the practice. Finally, chapter 8 introduces early design work that begins to shape a Mexican-American architecture for the Midwest.
Deterritorialization and reterritorialization offer us a framework from which to understand what can be done to reverse a culture’s submission to dominance of another culture. Simply put, deterritorialization is an erasing or expunging of systems in place. It is when a dominant power comes into a territory and attempts to erase what has been laid out before. “For example, when the Spanish conquered the Aztecs, the Spanish eliminated many symbols of Aztec beliefs and rituals. Reterritorialization usually follows, as when the Spanish replaced the traditional structures with their own beliefs and rituals. Another example of deterritorialization and subsequent reterritorialization can be seen in Hitler’s propaganda campaign that led to World War II. He had books banned and burned which contradicted his values and then replaced them with his own.”

Deterritorialization and reterritorialization, according to Deleuze and Guttari, is the act of establishing new systems and signs upon a territory from which a new movement can spring. “To deterritorialize is to free up these fixed relations that contain a body, all the while exposing it to new organizations.”

7. ibid
Some popular examples currently in the social sector as well as in the field of music help to explain how this affects society and the arts. For Deterritorialization in the social sector, Deleuze and Guttari lean upon Karl Marx. They posit that labor-power is deterritorialized the moment it is freed from the means of production. That selfsame labor-power can be described as being reterritorialized when it is then connected to another means of production." An example of this is “Wal-Mart, for instance, can effectively de- and reterritorialize a given terrain by selecting areas of employment vacuum, offering the desperate multitude jobs, and effectively reinscribe and reterritorialize that region as yet another town that bears the indelible stamp of Wal-Mart, even to the detriment of local fledgling industries or environmental concerns." Wal-Mart projects a dual identity of being a large corporation with small-town sensibilities, and it can be said that this process creates a territory over which power is asserted.
In popular music, DJ Earworm offers the hybrid as a mash-up. A mash-up is “a song or composition created by blending two or more songs, usually by overlaying the vocal track of one song seamlessly over the music track of another. Here too the timbre and the tempo of the Beatles song is mixed with Lil Wayne; they are both changing and becoming one and for the listener it becomes a territory of different memories melding into a hybrid. For the DJ it shows an authority or sophistication solidifying his place in trying to get notoriety for next week’s gig and popularity on the radio.
Reterritorialization has historically worked out of favor for Mexico and the border towns as the following chapters’ examples will show us. It goes without saying that the economy of Mexico is dependent on the United States dollar, and though immigration has declined since the mid-2000s, there are still 11.5 million Mexican nationals living in the U.S. These same people coming from Mexico into the States make American money to send back home, as do those families who are here legally. Like large corporations the U.S. Early on has destabilized a Mexican country perhaps beginning with NAFTA, which allowed free trade and the non taxable goods to enter freely. Perhaps embracing territorialization and adding Mexican flavor to an architecture can help to counteract this dominance. Examples like the Sonoran hot dog give someone a way of repackaging the hybrid to work in favor of the Mexican culture and allow all types of people to come to relish the food and help to support those restaurateurs who are selling the hot dog. This process could be used to get them out of this problem. By employing the techniques or processes that those in power use, Mexican culture can appropriate a U.S. cultures methods and claim an identity that is neither American nor Mexican but Mexican-American, and in this way fulfill the destiny of what America is—a nation made up of many nations.

Fig-1.1
Dog marking his territory.

The idea of the hybrid is a manifestation of all cultures and offers us an example of how cultures advance or integrate foreign ideas into their societies. Early on in its colonization, Latin America had a mass influx of Criollos, people of full or part Spanish ancestry born in the new colonies; African slaves; the indigenous; and White foreign-born Europeans called Peninsulares. Socio-ethnic categorization created a hierarchy in which some people but not others were allowed to have certain rights, to vote, and to have slaves. Casta paintings “typically showed families of three, with each parent of a particular basic identity or mixture, and their offspring of yet another mixture.” These paintings illustrated the racial mixing that was occurring in colonial Spain concept, helped to reinforce these “social rankings”, and cautioned against race-mixing due to incompatibilities. “A sign of difficulty is seen in various series of paintings of casta done in eighteenth-century Mexico. The pictures typically show families of three, with each parent of a particular basic identity or mixture, and their offspring of yet another mixture. Indian and Black engender a zambó, for example; White and Mestiza produce castizo (“well bred,” but not quite white). In their striving after subtle categorization, these paintings may seem relics of a medieval mentality” or perhaps the painters sought to entertain to baroque excess. Early theory didn’t hold true, and varying results existed with a mestizo father mixing with a mulata mother and resulting in various hybridizes of a black-white-Indian triangle. It was widely believed that mixing caused sterility as evidenced by the mule and brought about ill effects like infecundity. However, “Mendel demonstrated the enrichment produced by genetic cross-breeding in botany: fertile hybridizations have been plentiful, taking advantage

13. ibid
14. ibid
of cell characteristics of different plants in order to improve their growth, resistance, quality, and the economic and nutritional value of foods derived from them. The hybridization of coffee, flowers, cereals, and other products expands the genetic variety of the species and boosts their survival in the face of climatic and habitat changes.\textsuperscript{15} And as the castas example shows, the Mexican people are hybrids of themselves with an extreme mixing of the Spanish colonial and the indigenous past. Everyone has that Indian grandmother that no one talked about. This comes as a caution looking at incestuous circumstances of social aristocracy wanting to keep their blood lineage pure and ultimately leading to health problems. The hybrid is a manifestation of health and allows for new possibilities and ways of realizing human potential.

\textsuperscript{15} Nestor Garcia Canclini, and Nestor Garcia Canclini. Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity. (University of Minnesota Press, 1995.) xxi
La Raza Cósmica

In Mexican History we find the Minister of Education, Jose Vasconcelos make a concession for a hybrid race. Through the arts he employed many muralist painters to educate the public by painting walls on public buildings throughout Mexico. These muralists painters included Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfar Siqueiros. "Broadly speaking the message that emerged from their often vast paintings was an 'indeginist' one, celebrating the perceived native identity of the country, whether pre-conquest or present." However, Vasconcelos saw the the indigenous memory as well as the Spanish colonial memory together as a hybrid as a way of establishing a Mexican identity. "He upend the centuries-old view of mestizos as being intrinsically inferior to the stocks of which they were a mixture. For him, rather, mestizos were a step on the way to the raza cósmica, a 'cosmic,' or fifth, race that he predicted would develop in Latin America, combining but transcending the qualities of the four existing races (white, red, black, yellow) to form a new and superior sort of human being...Whether Indian or mestizo, its cultural reference point was, and must be, internal.

The movie Time Machine from 2002 fast forwards to a time period when everyone has some shade of dark skin due to an eventual mixing of all races. Though it was fictitious, I think there is that forecast that everyone eventually will all be one mixed race.
Unpacking the Sonoran Hot Dog

The Sonoran hot dog is served wrapped in a slice of bacon with toppings similar to a taco—beans and guacamole, but with mayonnaise added as a typical condiment. This results in a good balance of warm ingredients and cold ingredients. This hot dog can be seen as a hybrid manifestation with the two cultures coming together and creating a new identity that is neither completely American nor completely Mexican. It is a hybrid identity. A recent New York Times article tried to explain this phenomenon and how one couldn’t pinpoint exactly how the Sonoran hot dog began. “A Mexican-American take on the hot dog aesthetic was relatively late to arrive. In 1940’s Arizona, tamales were known, at least among speakers of colloquial English, as Mexican hot dogs. By the 1950’s, true tamales were gaining mainstream status stateside, and American hot dogs had, more than likely, jumped the gate into Sonora and Baja and elsewhere. The date at which bacon-wrapped hot dogs became known as Mexican hot dogs is unclear...From the southern side of the border, numerous Mexico City origin tales emanate, some tied to feeding crowds at wrestling matches in the 1950’s, others to feeding skyscraper construction workers during the same decade... As is the case with most folk dishes, its true crucible may never be pinpointed, but folkloric suppositions aside, the answer may be a simple matter of salesmanship: By 1953, Oscar Mayer was running print ads, selling American consumers on the virtues of bacon-wrapped hot dogs. Perhaps Mexican consumers, inspired to emulate American dietary habits, took Oscar Mayer at its word, wrapping American-made hot dogs in American-made bacon, and claiming the resulting construction as their own.”

Establishing a new identity through the reterritorialization of the Hot Dog. Taking the commonly held idea of Hotdogs and then melding them with new ingredients that are characteristic of Tacos. This began with the hot dog showing up south of the border. By nature I think the natural xings resulted in a delicious food. This Results in a good balance of warm ingredients to cold ingredients. This is now a new territory, i.e. identity. The way that the Sonoran Hot Dog came about shows us that everything is in a constant state of territorialization and offers the possibility that the Sonoran Hot Dog could also be changed somewhere down the road.

Thus the Mexican and American influences combine, and in the end, it emerges as its own thing: the commonly held idea of the hot dog melded with new ingredients that are characteristic of tacos. Understanding it through the filter of de- and reterritorialization, we see the hot dog (typically topped with American condiments like mustard and ketchup) deterritorialized, removed from its hotdogness, and reterritorialized with Mexican ingredients like beans and jalapeños, becoming a Mexican-American hybrid.
Unpacking Duranguense

Duranguense is a genre of Mexican music that originated in Chicago and has gained popularity throughout the Latin America and is extremely popular in the Mexican-American community in the United States. "Duranguense is closely related to the Mexican styles of Banda and Norteño, with Banda being a type of music that fused German polka music and the tamborazo drum. Norteño highlights the accordion, with examples of Flaco Jimenez, and the very popular Los Tigres del Norte. The main instruments in Duranguense, which are appropriated from Banda, are the saxophone, trombone, and bass drum. However, what sets the duranguense ensemble apart from Banda is the addition of synthesizers to play both melodies and the tuba bass line. The tempo is also noticeably faster than Banda or Norteño",\(^\text{19}\) due to the automation that comes from the synthesizer. This is programmed much like Chicago house music. A genre of electronic dance music, Chicago house is a style of house music, which emerged in Chicago in the mid-1980s. Stylistically, Chicago house has no widely accepted definition, but generally includes the first house music productions by Chicago-based artists throughout the 1980s, and any later house music, regardless of geographic origin, which more closely emulates the early Chicago artists’ styles more than any others. What was significant for Chicago House to come about was the affordability of Roland TB303 Bass Line drum machine, which sold for a couple hundred dollars at the time. The influence of the drum machine with programmable percussion elements of many Mexican musical

Establishing a new identity through the reterritorialization of the Hot Dog. Taking the commonly held idea of Hotdogs and then melding them with new ingredients that are characteristic of Tacos. This began with the hot dog showing up south of the border. By nature I think the natural crossings resulted in a delicious food. This results in a good balance of warm ingredients to cold ingredients. This is now a new territory, i.e. identity. The way that the Sonoran Hot Dog came about shows us that everything is in a constant state of territorialization and offers the possibility that the Sonoran Hot Dog could also be changed somewhere down the road.

traditions no doubt coincided with the affordability of these drum machines characteristic of Chicago House Music. Like the sonoran hot dog so too does a hybrid emerge that has Mexican and American influences.
Reasons for the Hybrid

It goes without saying that many Mexican communities struggle with assimilation. Creating hybrids is a way of assimilating or entering into the United States as foreigners. How can this be done with architecture? How can architecture become a hybrid Mexican American architecture that helps claim a right to place? Perhaps the hybrid is the way that a marginalized society uses what the dominant social class has created for itself and changes or adds to a territory to assert their right to that same territory. “The hybrid is a process of mixing what is compatible and securing what is incompatible”20 Perhaps “these figures arise on the contemporary scene as the result of the philosophies called postmodern...do they become visible just because of a particular theoretical focus?”21

Chapters 4 and 5 will reveal the complex nature of two countries influencing each other along the U.S. Mexican Border, which go through their own de and reterritorialization to form territories of power and architectural territories of necessity.

20. Nestor Garcia Canclini. Hybrid Cultures. xxxvii


Fig-2.8
This is a Zorse
Fig. 2.9
Little Village Context
The border between the United States and Mexico is approximately 1,969 miles and spans from San Diego, California and Tijuana, Mexico in the West to Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Mexico in the East. This is roughly the distance one travels to get to Chicago from the border town of Eagle Pass, Texas. The border provides the threshold from which goods and people come into and go out of the country. With the renewed focus on immigration, the border has become a big point of contention for the United States and Mexico. The Minute Men Project, a group that monitors illegal immigration along the U.S. Mexican border, attest to the belief that immigration exhausts the resources of the U.S, and our taxes end up paying for government programs and use of state-run hospitals by recent immigrants who are not paying those same taxes. Though this idea has its detractors, what is certain is the dependence the U.S. has on a cheap, unregulated labor force. Just as the U.S. seeks a cheaper product at discount centers—like Wal-Mart, filled to the brim with cheap, foreign-made products—so too, does our country look to a cheap labor force. Many immigrants harvest our food, clean our homes, and construct our cities for a low wage. While the border represents this ongoing conflict between the United States and foreign immigrants trying to make their way into the United States illegally for economic gains, However, there is no clarity when it comes to where the culture mixing begins and ends.

22. A small village along the Texas Mexico border where my mother is from.

23. Some cities, like Austin, do provide day labor centers, which are state sanctioned centers, that protect day labor wages.
In many parts of the South-Western United States one finds a perversion of Spanish mission homes and on the Mexican side of the border, in Tijuana, we see a city that relies on American preferences. The purchasing power, through a favorable exchange rate from the dollar to the Peso, allows the tourist an affordable option for the weekend or holiday. For Mexicans, the border crossing of agricultural workers and day laborers furthers these hybrid models as many of the immigrants adopt U.S. likes and dislikes. This is evidenced by American fast food chains, the way the residents use both English and Spanish, and of course, the way people build and think about the city by incorporating refuse, and in some case, complete buildings brought back to Mexico from the United States. These examples testify to the fuzzy physical delineation when it comes to culture.

24. On average the rule of thumb is 1 USD = 12 MXN. http://www.google.com/finance?chdpr=1&chdd=1&chdte=1&chv=Lin&chdeh=0&chdet=1305496833&chdm=27620&q=CURRENCY:USDMXN&ntsp=0
American Conceptions

Early Spanish colonial architecture was mandated by the Spanish crown in a document entitled The Laws of the Indies. In this document there was “Detailed administrative guidelines given by any mother country to its wandering colonizers who would settle upon the unknown frontiers of the world across the sea. The imperial system that Spain imposed upon the New World—a rigid set of codes and top-down administrative hierarchy in which all power emanated from the king and his appointed viceroys—left little room for local improvisation.” 25 Many of the royal architects in Latin American cities adapted to the local needs. There was a well known maxim for the colonists “obedezco, pero no cumplo” (I obey but I do not comply) Here “formal architecture and popular design meet”26 In New Mexico some of these Spanish ordinances required all these mission homes to have domed roofs and built out of fired brick. With the given resources the structures were adapted by the colonists from the local building techniques and merged them with the ordinances laid out by the Spanish aristocracy resulting in a hybrid of both the traditional building techniques of the indigenous as well as the modern technique using adobe construction. This Adobe brick broke the requirement that all churches have fired brick. The domed roofs also proved difficult fulfilling this requirement as a flat roof was the easiest to assemble in those conditions and helped to develop the hybrid identity known as the southwest.27 This colonial memory has evolved into a myth of Spanish-American Heritage. In 1881 Helen Hunt Jackson a writer and journalist from the East Coast wrote the novel Ramona, after touring the old mission

26. Professor Lawrence A. Herzog, From Aztec to High Tech, 98
27. Professor Lawrence A. Herzog, From Aztec to High Tech, 98
homes and ranches in the state of California. This novel highlighted the old Spanish-Mexican past in the most idyllic way, and as one observer has written, gave southern California "A myth by which to know itself."28 One border architect, Manuel Rosen, said "The average person in southern California doesn’t know what Mexican architecture is. It’s like putting jack cheese on something and calling it "Mexican food." There’s no jack cheese in Mexico. The same thing happens with architecture. Americans create what they call "Mexican" architecture. That’s what they like. That’s what they get."29

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28. Professor Lawrence A. Herzog, From Aztec to High Tech, 107
29. Professor Lawrence A. Herzog, From Aztec to High Tech, 91
**Tijuana**

Tijuana was founded in 1889 and then took hold as a tourist haven for the Hollywood stars and starlets, as prohibition laws during the 1920’s were nonexistent on the Mexican side of the border. When the stock market crashed, Tijuana lost its allure and coupled with the outlawing of casinos, Tijuana suffered a huge blow to its image. World War II and the recovery from the Depression brought Tijuana back to the large manufacturing and tourism industries and zonas de tolerancias we know today. When a group of university students was asked to identify images that most represented life and culture in Tijuana, two-thirds of the images they had chosen “linked Tijuana with what lies beyond it: Revolution Avenue, its shops and tourist centers, the minaret that bears witness to where the casino was, the parabolic antennas, the legal and illegal passages on the border...” Added to these anti-monuments are the sex/tourist zones, the border fence put up by the Army Corps of Engineers, and the maquiladoras and cartonlandias— the imposing factories and unplanned corrugated company towns that are, ironically, made of the same packaging materials used to export First World-ready goods.”

Tijuana has embraced the tourist culture and has become a carefully choreographed tourist experience. “Here Revolution Avenue is a place of “carnival buildings decorated like zebras or Moorish castles, flags and colorful blimps floating overhead. Revolution Avenue belongs to the tourist. Its architecture ranges from romantic to gaudy to silly to downright hideous...Americans are tired of seeing everything so perfect and well made on their side of the border; they want to have a moment of relief...They come here to feel rich, to spend a little, because here, even with what little they might earn over there, here they are like millionaires.”  

31. Robert A. Gonzalez “¿Ensalada Tijuana?, 208
Among Revolution Avenue’s many bars is Bananas-Ranas Bar with a yellow American school bus on the second story. Clearly this markets to those Americans aged 18-20 who are within drinking limits in Mexico. ‘Now get on your school bus where you can drink.’ They can make fun of it. It’s all an exercise of border craftsmanship—all the buildings on Revolution Avenue are carefully crafted. On some corners of Revolution Avenue are painted burros with zebra stripes. They have become a tourist attraction with backdrop images of Aztec figures, the eagle with serpent representing the founding of Mexico, cacti and other American images of Mexican Culture. “Faced with the lack of other types of things, as there are in the south where there are pyramids, there is none of that here…as if something had to be invented for the gringos.”

32. Nestor Garcia Canclini. Hybrid Cultures, 236
“One landscape scholar claims that “the essence of places lies in the largely unself-conscious intentionality that defines places as profound centers of human existence.” Authentic places must be contrasted with “placelessness,” a condition that makes it less and less possible to have a deeply felt sense of place or to create places authentically. Tourism development in Mexico, especially along the border, often is noteworthy for its tendency to create homogeneous architecture and synthetic landscapes. What we might term “placeless tourism” becomes a strategy to remove the tourist as much as possible, from the actual geographic and cultural setting.” 33

33 ibid
PLAZA VS. MALL

Mexican public space is one of the many urban elements that one can readily identify as being Mexican. They are characteristic of many Mexican towns. The ancient Aztecs left us with an urban plan that is still in use to this day. “Built urban artifacts are always the history of architecture of the ruling classes.” The first instance of a plaza or square layout was said to be in Tula. Who from Bernardino de Sahagún, The Catholic Priest sent to convert the Aztecs, reported that there were shrines and a platform put up at the ancient site of Tula. It is here in Tula that Aztec kings most likely looked towards Tula for inspiration for building plazas around their kingdom as a way of giving claim to their right to power through the emulation of a prior kingdom and a place for their subjects to congregate. What is consistent with the layout of these different plazas is that the buildings were arranged formally around a plaza. That plaza is approximately a square in shape with largest temple located on the east side of the plaza, and its stairway and entrance facing the plaza. This public space was important, as we will see it consistently show up throughout the years. Some of the great pyramid structures were relegated to the select few who could ascend these symbolic structures and look down on the people. They were a clear way of asserting an authority and claiming a right to place. As well as letting the public know who was in control. Their monumentality helped to emphasize this notion and employed a complexity of perspectives.

36. Michael E. Smith. Aztec City-State Capitals, 87
37. This arrangement also aligns with the sun during the solstice perhaps announcing that it was time to plant new crops. This offers to us that the sun played an important part of Aztec life as it will for the Mexican architects to come.
Fast Forward to today, “In the second half of the twentieth century, the town squares, pedestrian street spaces, and other public spaces would begin to lose their primacy as the city became dominated by amorphous highway sprawl. Sociologists have noted that in modern U.S. cities, people lose their incentive to utilize public spaces—town squares and parks—because of reports of increasing crime and gang-related violence. People retreat further and further into the private realm and into the perceived safety of the automobile and the home. Public life slowly disappears.” 38 In many U.S. cities the public space has been replaced with the Shopping Mall. By design, these spaces are promote consumption and discourage public life. “For example, entrances, escalators, fountains, and benches are carefully designed to heighten consumer access to retail establishments, particularly larger anchor stores. Time space, and even weather can be altered or suspended to ensure consumer comfort. Noise from the “real” city is neutralized by the ubiquitous white noise—Muzak.” 39

38. Professor Lawrence A. Herzog, From Aztec to High Tech, 166
39. Professor Lawrence A. Herzog, From Aztec to High Tech, 167
Today the plaza in Northern Mexican border towns and cities is next to not existent. The new public plaza is in the shopping mall. In the 1980’s Baja California followed the fashion of the United States and began their freeways. Tijuana followed suite and began to implement the shopping mall and called it a plaza with “mini-and mega plazas with names such as Plaza Rio Tijuana Plaza Fiesta, Plaza del Zapato, Pueblo Amigo, and Viva Tijuana, all built in a feeding frenzy of commercial real estate expansion.”40 These malls mostly cater to Mexican upper and middle class shoppers with many American owned businesses like Sears, Pizza Hut, and other typical stores found in malls in the United States. Furthermore, these malls offer the kind of goods and services that many Mexicans have come to expect after shopping in malls across the border in the United States.41 The postmodern hyperspace that has evolved on the Northern Mexican border jeopardizes a culture’s memory of an urban planning. Perhaps it can be seen that these malls stand as a testament to what needs to be enacted in the Mexican-American public spaces. The space needs to be reclaimed by borrowing some of those traditional building techniques. Techniques that look towards making the use out of every available resource.

40. Professor Lawrence A. Herzog, From Aztec to High Tech, 170

41. Professor Lawrence A. Herzog, From Aztec to High Tech, 171
The U.S. has had a dominant influence in border architecture. Many of these influences are bleeding south. Border towns are thus a symbiotic relationship with economic integration. In a way, the border is its own type of country as Herzog suggests with its own rules. A Mexican scholar visiting the border at Tijuana reported...the border as a “postmodern” place; it follows neither the strict cultural rules of the United States nor Mexico. It is something in between, or something beyond, a new form of identity. It calls for a new way of looking at the world.  

Due to this stark difference between these social and ethnic classes. Outlying models of living emerge from this relationship. The next chapter will discuss these living situations known as colonias and barrios. Today they are places normally associated with poverty and oppression, however architecturally what is emerging from these communities are forms of expression that can be used as architectural precedents for creating an architectural identity for the Mexican Midwest.

42. Professor Lawrence A. Herzog, From Aztec to High Tech, 206
Fig-3.12
Collage showing the U.S. & Mexican factors
Mexico is a country of architects. We Mexicans are builders; we are all architects.
—Ricardo Legorreta

The Mexican culture has exhibited a rich history of urban planning that goes as far back as Pre-Columbian civilization. Modern economic systems have ushered in a shift in the organization of the city and suburbs when it comes to Mexican cultures. The current economic model along the border has shown to not only stimulate wealth and variety in some cities but it also creates urban situations which have no formal precedent. The colonias and barrios expose a way of life that many choose to ignore. However, a closer look reveals a creative energy that can be harnessed and implanted in the way that architects think and build cities.

43. Professor Lawrence A. Herzog, From Aztec to High Tech, 177
Colonias are subdivided land legally owned and leased to illegal migrant workers without running water, electricity and other necessary infrastructure. Problems arise with “developers buying up cheap unproductive agriculture land, or land in floodplains subdividing and selling plots to Mexicans through a ‘sweat equity’ contract. The developer retains ownership during a ten-year payment period until the last payment is made. The Mexicans literally ‘sweat’ over loss of their property if they are unable to make even one payment before the end of the payment period.”

Due to the nature of these contracts and lack of capital, the buildings begin as shacks or trailer homes and evolve into creative construction assemblies. These workers-by-day and pseudo-architects-by-night go off to work and come back with leftover material from the construction site or recovered material from a dumpster. Houses are assembled at a rapid pace with some of the main structures being raised in about 4 hours. What is also missing from these communities is the social infrastructure, like schools, hospitals, paved roads, and public gathering spaces. “We architects have little to teach migrants about housing. They have shown they can build, even on steep embankments. We can guide them on how to maximize the use of plywood, or how to design a latrine, but they have demonstrated that they have a capacity for the spontaneous construction of housing.” Colonias are a manifestation of the U.S. culture of consumption. This results in a unique urban situation that is mostly comprised of trash or surplus. It’s a testament to these residents creative expression and harkens back to indigenous traditions of making the most out of all available resources, whether they be natural or man made. This attention given to the colonias is not meant to romanticize poverty.
instead I think they gives us a look forward that this could be reality for everyone in the future - a possible future which discourages the production of new products due to depleting energy resources. This method of construction encourages a new way of looking at landfills for harvesting rather than places of decomposition. Furthermore, this process of assembly relies on human creativity and looks back to a time when the architect did not rely on capital interests and magazines to guide their design decisions. Chapter 6 will reveal how the current architectural practice is simply picking off-the-shelf components resulting in buildings which are driven by product manufacturers.

48. It could be said that the future is now with this need for temporary construction at low cost.
The Guatemalan architect Teddy Cruz is interested in challenging the conceptions of the architecture practice. “We need to reorient architecture towards sectors of precariousness that are habitually left out of the scope of our practice. An important segment of the current architectural avant-garde has aligned itself with homogenization, privatization, and economic neoliberalism. As architects we are simply dressing-up these conditions, we have stopped challenging them. We continue to work in the sanctity of the property line, inserting beautiful artifacts within fixed and accepted conditions…To design a good building is very hard; to build it is more difficult; for me, the greatest interest lies in the challenge of redefining the terms of the practice.” Cruz sees the Border as an opportunity where this notion of homogenization can be challenged. In the project Manufactured Sites, Cruz’s Studio devised a prefabricated system of construction that makes use of the factory’s production of shelving frames in large warehouses. Coupled with other materials, this then becomes an easily dispatched system for inhabitants of the colonias.
Like colonias, barrios are a product of U.S. having political and economic dominance over a region. Unlike colonias, barrios exhibit a more developed infrastructure and function more in the realm of the law when it comes to ownership. Much of the barrios were spurred by The Treaty of Hidalgo, which granted the majority of land to the U.S. after the Northern War of Aggression. The railroad brought with it foreign interest and capital and began the process of marginalization for Mexicans in the United States. Towns that were once dominated by Mexicans began to cater to “Anglo economic development (oriented toward capital-intensive agriculture, irrigation, railroads, etc...) Urban space was commodified— land became part of an intense market system, and real estate speculation began.” With little political power, many of these small communities were split up and new technologies allowed infrastructure like water and roads to tear at the very existence of these early communities. These residents moved into the ghetto with a continued lack of political representation. From 1900 to 1945 urban labor was in great demand and labor markets emerged with industrial progress in countries throughout the world. Industrialized cities, like Los Angeles, began to attract Mexican labor with a better wage than México and low-rental housing in the least desirable parts of town. Ethnic discrimination emerged with many landlords not renting to Mexican tenants due to the typical number of people in those living arrangements, which might be as much as 8 people to a house.
In the barrios of East Los Angeles today “everybody is a proprietor of the street. Children control the street by playing in it. Teenagers (gang members) exhibit physical control of the street, which can be read by other gang members. Adults control the street by knowing who lives around it.”

The street vendor is also a character in these communities who is characteristic of all barrios throughout the country. In one study, the street vendor was categorized into 7 different types based on what they sold. For example the “‘pushcart vendors’ roam the streets of East L.A. selling exotic fruit cocktails and other food (tamales, ice cream, etc.)... these same kinds of vendors can be seen in Tijuana or Mexicali.” and “‘Auto vendors’ sell out of their vehicles which they move from location to location, often parking their trucks or vans near key roadside sites and setting up their temporary markets for new items like Mexican ceramics or home made objects.”

Latinos use many different devices to personalize their neighborhoods and help to identify the barrio. “Gas stations are converted to taco stands. Balconies and front porches on turn-of-the-century homes are vividly personalized with family items ranging from potted plants to furniture, toys, and barbecue equipment.” Mexicans bring a new way of looking at the front yard as there are essentially no front yards in Mexico. “Anglo homes typically utilize the front yard in a decorative way that tells outsiders something about the social status of the occupant. The front lawns are neatly mowed, and there may be flowers in the garden beds, but as landscape writer J.B. Jackson argues, the front yard is often an impersonal space. In East Los Angeles, the front yard is highly personalized, an active space that is decorated
for everyday use (fountains, play space for children, etc.)… The ultimate function of the Yard is that it provides a way for individual residents to connect with the larger community.” 54 The fence decorations also act as a way of integrating it with the rest of the home and harkens back to the idea of the courtyard or inner patio which is a part of the Spanish colonial memory in the Latino community. 55 These spaces exhibit a great deal of artistry and customization which is unlike many of the nearby Anglo homes. In many cases, remodeling the homes would be too expensive leaving the homeowners to transform their homes with inexpensive and creative solutions.

54 ibid
55 Ibid, This manifests as a hybrid which had its roots from Moorish architecture which later had direct influence on southern Spain
Groups exist now who try to voice concern for these communities in the barrios and colonias. They attempt to Mexicanize bland spaces in many of the Latin communities found throughout the country and Midwest. Most of these projects take the shape of mural projects that can be seen in many of these communities. These murals help to reinforce the idea of Mexicanidad, Mexicaness, so as not to erase that part of the memory for the children that are born on the U.S. side of the border. I think, like Teddy Cruz, these groups are generating cultural capital that community members can use to have their voices heard. Many challenges that barrios face today are the gang culture, proximity to factories that spew fumes and airports with noise pollution.
What then for barrios far removed from the border? Like the barrios in the Midwest? Cities are made up of many borders with many different ethnicities and perhaps due to these transnational communities the border has begun to extend farther north. What is clear now is that the Mexican community has emerged as a dominant racial group in the Midwest. If architecture has been shown to assert power, how then can we help to create an architectural identity and generate cultural capital through architecture in the Midwestern Mexican communities? If we accept this then why can’t we exploit the primitiveness and build like in the colonias, elevating it to a state of popularity and ‘high architecture’. In what way can that influence be pushed back against the homogenized influence that is so pervasive, not only here, but throughout the world.

“Architectonic spaces whose silent dictates are directly addressed to the body are undoubtedly among the most important components of the symbolism of power, precisely because of their invisibility…”
—Pierre Bourdieu

56. Kim Dovey, Becoming Places: Urbanism / Architecture / Identity / Power. (Routledge, 2009) 31
Presently there are various Mexican communities in the Midwest from as far north as Des Plaines, Illinois, to as far south as the Calumet region of Indiana and Illinois. Little Village, however, leads as the absolute center of not only Mexican Chicago but the Midwest region as well. The main road, West 26th Street, which cuts through Little Village, “is said to be the second-highest grossing retail sales district in the city of Chicago next to Michigan Avenue.”\(^{57}\) However, with all the place-making, the built environment alludes to Eastern European construction popular during the early 1900s, and an applique of Spanish words which creates a combination of Latin and Bohemian cultures. Naturally one asks how did all this come about? How did Little Village become an unofficial center for Mexicans in the Midwest? For me it brings about a confusion with place: What would possess someone to move to a colder climate than they are normally used to? How does this affect the built environment? Understanding the Diaspora helps to get at the root and cure for these ills.

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The 2200 block of Millard Avenue served as a downtown to the Lawndale subdivision. All of the amenities of the day could be found here. There were churches, a park, stores, a hotel, a library, and a laundry.

Lawndale-Crawford

Present-day Little Village was originally a part of the Cicero Township acquired by the city of Chicago in 1869. Alden C. Millard and Edwin J. Decker, previously stationery salesmen, began the planning of an upscale neighborhood and marketed it as a place with close proximity to Chicago, accessible by a 20-minute train ride, and a place where one can purchase inexpensive land. The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 destroyed many homes, so Millard and Decker realized their vision and created the town of Lawndale. The first residents were mostly professionals who formed an elite community made up of white Anglo-Saxons, and the earliest planning of the city was complete with amenities like a park and a central building that had a hotel, laundry and other services. This area was called the Miller Decker Block. Finally, the Western-most section of Little Village was called Crawford. The Scottish landowner, Peter Crawford, purchased 160 acres of land bounded by Pulaski Road to the East, Kostner Avenue to the West, West Cermak Road to the North and Twenty-Sixth Street to the South. Crawford divided the land and then sold it off to other families and business owners.
The year 1876 brought cheaper houses around the area, and Millard and Decker's endeavor was a bust with industrialization finally taking hold in the area in the 1890s. Industrialization brought with it many immigrants who were willing to work the hard hours and earn good pay in factories that were popping up in the area. These early immigrants were mostly Bohemian (from what is now the Czech Republic), Polish, Hungarian, and German. The city of Pilsen to the East helped spur Lawndale-Crawford into a predominately Czech community. Second-generation Czech immigrants wanted to be homeowners in the spirit of the American dream. The nearby factories in Lawndale-Crawford promised physical jobs with good pay and the chance to further their upward mobility. These newer residents built a “more working class-style cottage or two-flat apartment building as opposed to the stately residences built by Lawndale’s early wealthy settlers. The idea of an affluent, exclusive residential suburb would never be realized, and Lawndale as it is now known was born.”

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58. Magallon, Chicago's Little Village, 11
By the early 1900s many from the Pilsen area continued to move west toward Lawndale to what became known unofficially as Česká Kalifornie (Czech California) by its majority of Bohemians. The coming of the 20th century saw many empty lots fill up with residents in two- and three-story flat brick buildings, which at the time were state-of-the-art homes and the best these residents had ever lived in. There were still immigrants who were not wealthy and created a lower class. Most of these people lived along 26th and Millard in a mix of single-family homes to three-story apartment buildings with a variety of styles and occupant densities. World War I saw many of Lawndale-Crawford's residents show an interest in the war as it involved many of the Czech lands. Many posters were put up in the neighborhood to call the youth to arms. In May of 1918 the Czech president visited Chicago and drew a large audience of American Czechs. After the return from war, many resumed the jobs they had and returned to factory work. By 1924 Czech culture had already filled 26th Street, and 26th Street was the life and blood of the Czech community.

59. Magallon, Chicago’s Little Village, 53
60. Magallon, Chicago’s Little Village, 62
Fear of a Black Lawndale

The late 1960s plagued the city with race riots, and the civil rights movement was underway along with the Vietnam War. From the 1950s to 1960s, cities around the country suffered from white flight and ever-expanding suburbs. Little Village was not that different, with many people moving from the Little Village area into the city areas beyond. At the end of the 1950s, there was a big building boom which led many to leave the Lawndale-Crawford area. The Czech community continued to prosper and dominate for 50 years. The political rise of Anton J. Cermak offered proof of the Czech community’s stronghold in Chicago until the move west into Cicero and Berwyn eventually led to the shrinking of the Bohemian population in the Little Village area. However, there are still those who have not left and you can find them living in some buildings throughout the neighborhood.
Typical of the barrios in western United States, construction of highways and expansion of the nearby university also factored into the displacement of the Mexican population into Little Village. The other factor was the White flight which plagued the nation. Many of the Blacks from the South had moved north to take jobs in Chicago, so much so that the black communities in the South were bursting with blacks leaving the Southern United States into Northern and Midwestern States. When blacks began to move west, many of the whites panicked and caused the migration to the suburbs. This resulted in Little Village losing 90% of its white residents. North Lawndale became predominantly black. Real estate owners began to raise the price of homes of black-owned properties, which resulted in the decay of homes around the area, as the home owners could not see to home improvements. South Lawndale-Crawford saw the problems that were beginning to happen to North Lawndale. The 26th Street Community Council and 26th Street Chamber of Commerce had an interest in the area and did not want to see the area go the same way.

Fig-5.5
Diagram showing factories below Little village and Dividing Gang line running North to South.

61. Magallon, Chicago’s Little Village,
La Villita “Little Village”

The Little Village Chamber of Commerce began to re-market the community and wanted to attract new businesses. In 1964 the name Little Village was initiated as a way of describing all the different communities the residents came from. At the end of the 1960s Little Village was attracting new immigrants, and Mexicans began arriving. For the first half of the 1960s, Mexicans began to trickle in to Little Village for the same reasons the Bohemians did--the promise of good jobs and good pay. Leaders aggressively reached out to the Mexican community, and by the mid-1960s Mexican business owners became commonplace.
Mexican Diaspora into Chicago

The shortest distance between Chicago and the nearest Mexican border--1,300 miles--can be covered in 21 hours by car and 18 days by foot. During this trip one crosses eight different climatic zones and, depending on where you are traveling from, three different time zones. This journey asks the question “Why are there Mexicans in Chicago?” The vast majority of Mexicans who later found their way into the States during the early 1900s were simply looking to escape religious persecution, seek economic opportunity, and flee the uncertainties of the Mexican Revolution that came with forced enrollment in the Mexican army. Most of these men planned on being in Chicago temporarily and once jobs were established the path to Chicago involved a circuitous route by way of jobs and networks of friendships. Strengthening those reasons for some to return to the U.S. and continuing their life as a Mexican-Americans.


Mexicans first appeared in Chicago in the 1850s, where it was reported in the 1850 census that there were 50 Mexicans living in Chicago. A dignitary at the Chicago World's Fair in 1850 recalled a Mexican man selling tamales from a street side cart with a sign that read “Mexican Tamales for 1 cent.” However, the majority of Mexican migration began during the early 1900s. Most agricultural work in the Midwest was due to the increasing demand of sugar extracted from sugar beets. With the beginning of railroad construction, many of the workers were scouted out from Mexico and brought to places like Gary, Indiana. Slowly this influx of people moved to cities where they were promised less back-breaking jobs. The camps set up for the railroad-construction workers continued to act as cities in which the Mexicans would arrive and ultimately live during the hot and cold months. Villages lined the streets of Chicago. From here on many hardships plagued the new immigrants, like prejudice and discrimination in the workplace. This prejudice from other immigrants was a result of many native residents leaving the Little Village area and the Mexicans taking the jobs in what was originally an area full of Bohemians and Czech immigrants.

64. Arias and Tortolero, Mexican Chicago, 8
By the mid-1970s Mexicans poured into Little Village and were the dominant ethnic group by 2000. The neighborhood population grew by 50%. It is now referred to as La Villita, and the residents are very proud of the community. It is primarily working class but will see a rise in the professional class as many are going to school and becoming upwardly mobile. Arch was given to Little Village from Mexico in 1991. In 2000 27% of Little Village residents were children. Religion and family remain in a place of importance to the community. During 9/11 many went to a memorial on the courthouse to demonstrate solidarity. Pushcarts are everywhere. Rodeo happens at place Garibaldi. Final hours of Jesus Christ are enacted during Lent. Murals Still some Czech people and signs in Czech many of the little cues like brick work and shops have been bricked over erasing those social cues. Local businesses that were once for Czechs are now shipping things to Mexico. Mexican independence day parade has become a big event and attract a half million people. Just as the Czech president visited Little Village the recent visit of Vincente Fox, the former president of Mexico, also arrived in Little Village to usher in a movement of Mexican American dominance in the Little Village area.

Still there are problems that plague the Latino communities like the lack of technology incorporated by the Latino community. The next chapter will explain the reason building a médiathèque in Little Village would be beneficial.
Fig-5.1
Racial/ethnic self-identification in Chicago in the year 2000
A recent report from the Pew Hispanic Center, a project of the Pew Research Center, showed that “Latinos are less likely than whites to access the internet, have a home broadband connection or own a cell phone. Latinos lag behind blacks in home broadband access but have similar rates of internet and cell phone use... While about two-thirds of Latino (65%) and black (66%) adults went online in 2010, more than three-fourths (77%) of white adults did so. In terms of broadband use at home, there is a large gap between Latinos (45%) and whites (65%), and the rate among blacks (52%) is somewhat higher than that of Latinos. Fully 85% of whites owned a cell phone in 2010, compared with 76% of Latinos and 79% of blacks.”

A building program which encourages use of technology would help to bridge this gap. What is a big topic for libraries today is the need to stay current and relevant, which is why some have started to integrate e-readers into their circulation. A médiathèque would not only fulfill the need of a library but it would also help to stay relevant with the e-reader main check-out item.

In this médiathèque internet labs would play a key role in giving instructions on how to use the internet as well as provide educational night classes that might assist, for example, with uploading a resume to a prospective employer. A main problem with libraries today is the overcrowding of the internet stations and the need for people to fill out on-line job applications. Additionally, this médiathèque would help to build cultural and social capital that the community can use to help educate the following generations of people from Little Village.
Many different product manufacturers have inundated the current architecture profession with their products. Picking up any architecture magazine, we are greeted with many different advertisements by manufacturers claiming that their product is the one architects choose most. They even go so far as to claim that they meet LEED certification and comply with specific industry standards. These examples are the stock of architectural resources from which architects are currently choosing within a stringent system of rules and guidelines. But what of the lower class? This offers little hope for those who can’t afford this system. “Although mass production and marketing of architectural components was a nineteenth-century development, techniques of construction perpetuated through the building trades had been slow to change. World War I revolutionized all that. When Herbert Hoover became “Secretary of Commerce in President Warren G. Harding’s administration, Hoover set about an ambitious program of implementing ...the Bureau of Standards. He established the Division of Simplified Practice, charged with encouraging industry to reach consensus toward the elimination of superfluous variety in product lines, thereby saving in both production and distribution costs. In addition, a Division of Building and Housing was established to improve the overall quality and affordability of housing through the development of uniform building codes and a model zoning ordinance.”66 These standards unified the practice in the States and became the guidelines that the allied professions followed when designing and constructing buildings. This was a situation that Capital made use of to further promote its product. Architectural Graphic Standards was a book of conventions that was the go-to source for draftsmen during this time.67 Eventually, the


67. and somewhat to this day. (with new software it could be outdated with parametric modeling software, like Revit)
Architectural Graphic Standards began to feature many drawings that were mostly culled from “Catalogues, Sweet’s, Kidder’s and existing handbooks....The return to peacetime production and technical innovations in printing processes encouraged the adoption of these catalogs as a prime means of advertising to builders, architects, and the public in general... By the turn of the century, architects were being inundated by these catalogs. A necessary part of the architect's practice-selecting and specifying materials for the construction of buildings required staying abreast of emerging products and technical innovations. Specifications writers were bombarded by visits from salesmen, leading one architect practicing in the twenties to observe, “They are a part of the architect's education and they must be heard—but they can take his entire time if he will allow it. A salesman who tells his story briefly and keeps his cigars in his pocket makes good progress with us.. To address the “catalogue problem,” the journal Architectural Record began publishing “Sweet's” Indexed Catalogue of Building Construction in 1906. The venture sought to assemble all available trade catalogs within a standardized format, condensed to only the data most pertinent to the needs of the architect or builder, and arranged and indexed in order to serve as a ready reference to the specifier.”68 This excluded a vast majority of people and created a homogeneous building system.

In Europe, Corbusier too had a great influence in solidifying the territory that architects chose from with *L’esprit Noveau*, a catalogue like our current architectural record that recounts current architectural projects and advertising. In *L’esprit Nouveau* Corbusier paired many of his essays with new products to further promote the modernist agenda that the machine can solve humanity’s building woes. Corbusier knew the effects advertising had and purposely placed essays next to advertisements to further a concept he was trying to convey. “The strongest effect is achieved though the impact of the visual material. When a low-pressure centrifugal ventilator form the Rateau company is placed on the page opposite the opening of the chapter ‘Architecture ou Révolution’...the Rateau ventilator puns on the meanings of mechanical revolution in a literal sense and industrial revolution. In the article one reads, “modern society does not recompense its intellectuals judiciously, but it still tolerates the old arrangements as to property, which are a serious barrier to transforming the town or the house.” Le Corbusier here is defending public property and the need to address the housing problem through mass production—directing his critique, that is precisely where a “revolution” in the position of the architect in an industrial society is at stake.”

Along with stringent building standards and an influx of manufacturers, we find ourselves now in a situation where architects are merely assembling different products and matching them to create a building; they are bricoleurs. The manufacturers are essentially making the building. As time has passed, it has become increasingly difficult to challenge these notions or deterritorialize these notions. However, some Mexican architecture out of necessity offers an alternative: what is one to do when you don’t fit into this system yet have one foot in it?

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Repurposing of non-architectural materials, like trash and refuse, into architectural components offers a way to deterritorialize the architecture profession that is at the behest of architectural-component manufacturers and building standards. Through Deleuze and Guttari’s concept of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, we lay a framework to better understand the current situation in which architecture has found itself. Teddy Cruz is challenging the profession by reterritorializing what is possible and offering an alternative to what is normally expected to be architecture. This idea of transforming an object of refuse transcends the ideas of what an architect is and what one does—a reorganizing, if you will, of systems in place. “Intense Political, economic, and cultural interactions are the result of the imbalances and interdependencies between the two countries.”

Deterritorializing and reterritorializing the architectural practice is a possible solution to help relinquish these imbalances, much like corporations using them to take over a market. How then is architecture deterritorialized and then reterritorialized to create a hybrid? What can we free up? We can free up those things that are not architecture in and of themselves. Corbusier set out to reterritorialize the profession by sending letters to corporations and showcasing their ideals of a new capitalist society. This, in turn, created a new territory from which to choose architectural products. For an architecture to relieve itself of this stifling problem, turning to an assembly of refuse offers an alternative that speaks to a culture that has intuitively been doing this for years. The result can be good architecture that critical analysis will reinforce. An architecture that does not buy into a system built historically on dominating people’s poor wages will create an architecture that is not made at
the hands of the people who can't purchase the products. This is exactly what is characteristic of Mexican architecture in the colonias that, in its own way, is doing this already. There is an inherent power in making refuse and trash look better than it was and that process goes through a process of reterritorialization. There is a power in removing them from their context and looking at them as building components; furthermore, these products act as the subconscious of a place: if they are in a given area, they become a part of that region's experience. Naturally, a lack of code and building requirements allows for this type of experimentation, and what I suggest certainly does have its limitations. The examples given will hopefully offer some argument to initiate this type of building where these things are actually getting built. I propose a hybrid of the colonia and the refuse and trash of the Midwest, combined with the passive building strategies adopted in the Midwest. This borrows from the indigenous spirit of making use of everything that is around and usable. If it exists in the world, why can't everything be used as building material? Like graffiti and street food, which previously identified with a marginalized group and are now accepted by the bourgeoisie, a hybrid architecture of refuse can evolve in the same fashion.
Fig-8.1
Early Design Scheme

From Aztec To Médiathèque

Program

Reuse
Construction

Construction Process below ground: reusing concrete and formwork for highway construction. And 36 x 36 Boxbeams

Fig-8.2
Diagram showing construction process and green space
Fig-8.3
Harvest Map
Fig-8.4
Stacked Brick, Concrete and Tile study
Assembly Diagram

Fig-8.4
Assembly Diagram
Fig-8.5
Assembly from car and bike parts based on Aztec stone inlay


