

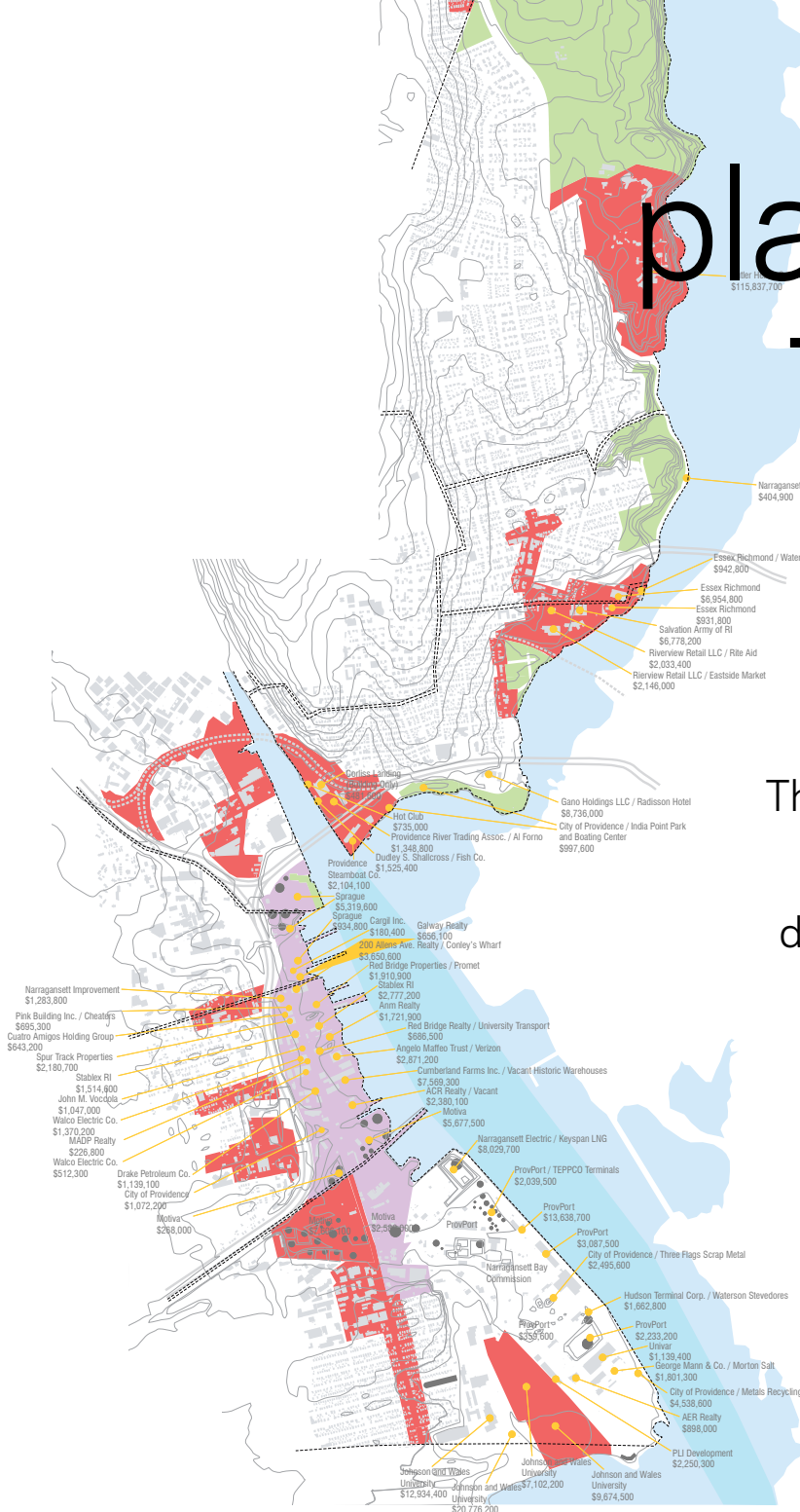
# plan-less-ness\*

## The Baycity Project

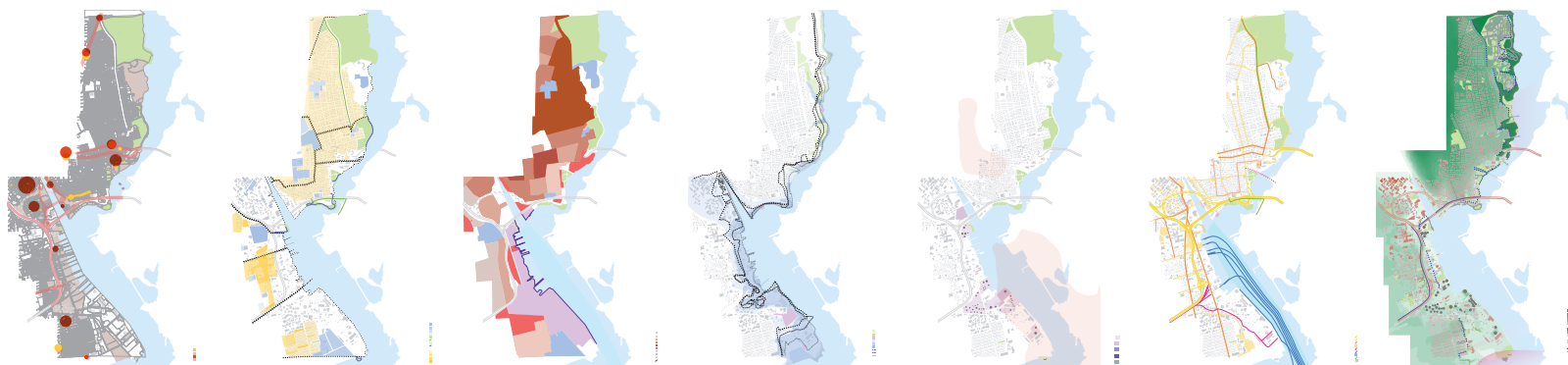
\*systems-based urbanism

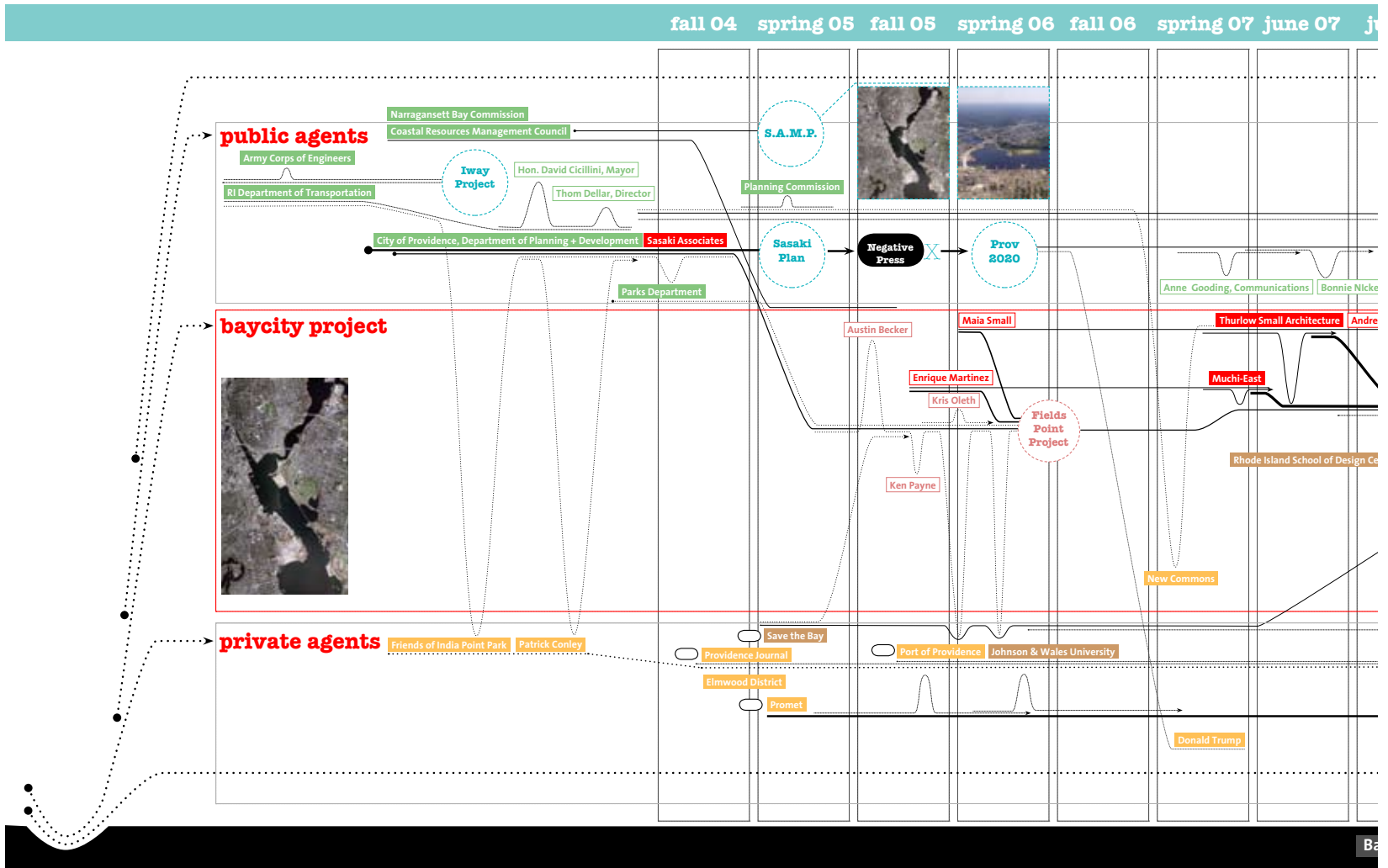
Thurlow Small Architecture with Muchi-East

While current American urban planning is driven by Victorian zoning logics, modernist planners and post-modern New Urbanism, contemporary American cities are Post-structural, driven by incremental infrastructure, development incentives and negotiated partnerships



# No wonder, plans don't work





The future of the Providence Waterfront rests in a negotiation between three forces: a neighborhood organization focused on expanding recreational and public space, marine and public infrastructure industries fighting to preserve industrial zones and access to the existing 40' deep waterway and the City of Providence determined grow its tax base by increasing higher density housing.

In this project, design is far more than determining physical locations and material means, it is the structure of the process itself, beginning with the inception of the Bay City Project, a public and private partnership between the City of Providence, two design firms, Thurlow Small Architecture and Muchi East, and the Rhode Island School of Design Center for Design and Business. The role of the Bay City Project has been to expand the conversation between all groups, to gain a global view of the possibilities that could not only satisfy the existing stakeholders, but arrive at options that engage a broader public and offer a new waterfront identity-- to elevate the project from compromise to opportunity. The organizing strategy is to thus develop a systems-based urbanism that does not result in a singular, static vision or plan, but rather projects inherent variability.

The process of planlessness requires four specific aspects:

1. NETWORKS: The project started way before we arrived in it-- the failures and alignments between political, economic and institutional forces shaped the nature of the design question itself.

Partnerships have and will develop from specific and anticipated needs. There are absent partners as well, as we've moved along the holes in this network tell us as much about where we aren't as much as where we are.

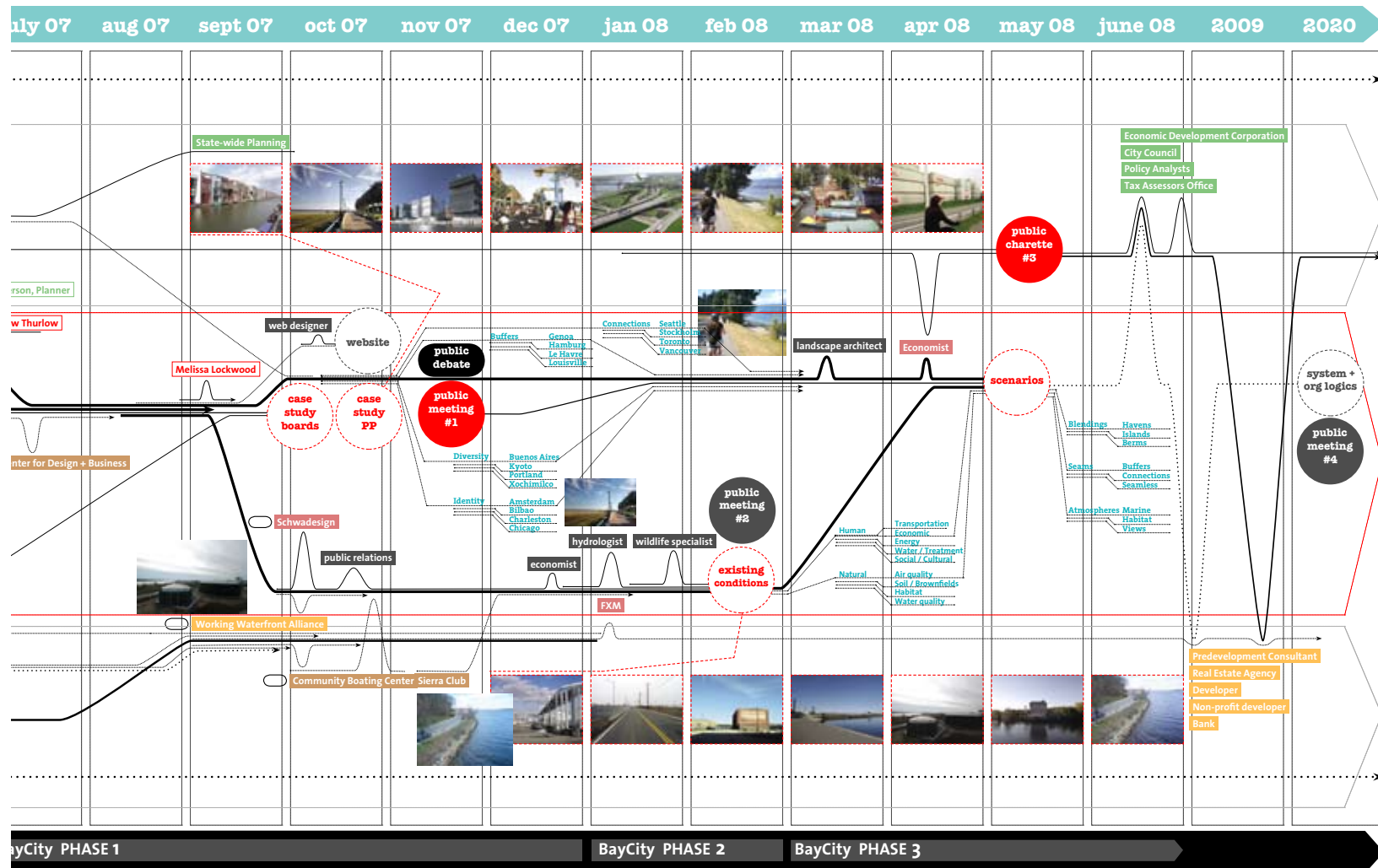
2. EXPERTISE: Design is the arrangement of ideas and structures from information; getting real information is key to having ideas and structures that work. Expertise for planlessness requires local and global study of the existing human and natural systems: transportation, hydrology, water infrastructure, energy, habitat, social, cultural, educational, air and soil quality, media, economic, and development. Getting funding for this is difficult; missing expertise tells us partner priorities.

3. SCENARIOS: Systems-based urbanism lets existing motivations and rules cultivate desired incremental change with many partners creating a diverse and stable result. Logics, not objects, apply. Our directive for the providence waterfront offers three 100-year scenarios of urban systems that take each group's motivation to its most extreme:

BERMS: a system of water barriers and plateaus motivated by public space and a system of green links.

HAVENS: a system of water inlets and jetties that emphasize marine and industrial use.

ISLANDS: a system of physically independent yet linked zones that make new land to highlight mixed-use development and tax revenue



These are not plans; the proposal is a set of iterative blendings between these three motivations. Here adding together the logics makes three times the opportunity, not a distilled compromise. What happens when a haven pier is pulled up into a berm? Perhaps public and industry become compatible through section. Then, through a further set of sectional microblends, a strategic series of formal moves take the more specific needs of each site and adapts them for new uses.

4. STRUCTURES: In planlessness, policy shifts, development incentives, leverage and negotiation become design tools. Priorities, such as density, growth zones, and activity types, shape decisions; action mutual reinforces, becomes synergistic and catalytic.

While the developments in the project have taken the urban experiment far, our greatest conclusions in the political process have come through an experience of failure. The public is talking about zoning in five years; we want to talk about all urban systems in a hundred. In our network, there are key voids: little technical expertise in urban systems, few crossovers between community leadership and design, burdensome and ineffective public engagement and absent trust in process. We realized that if this was happening in Providence, that it was happening elsewhere. In a time of massive economic, resource, and environmental change on a global scale, this was terrifying. We also realized that the answers would not come from international debate or conference presen-

tations, nor from an exclusive set of remote power players, but instead from matching of global expertise and local knowledge through projects. Thus we've begun to take an even more macro look and instigated the Global Waterfront Project as an action-based knowledge network for urban waterfront projects. The Global Waterfront Project is a platform that supports a network of experts and information applicable to urban waterfront conditions. It originates as an enabler for active match making and capacity building amongst different experts, organizations, stakeholders and practitioners around the world, who have interests in urban waterfront projects. It facilitates new conversations, links and networks at different levels (urbanistic, architectural, economic, infrastructural, legislative and political, environmental, etc.) for the general benefit of urban waterfront design and implementation. Sea levels are rising. Public budgets are shrinking. Cities are more complex. Public process is simplified. We believe design and expertise are more important than ever.

above: Two earlier projects by Rocha reveal a strategy similar to that of the Programa Art Center: minimal interventions that dramatically transform existing spaces. In the 1996 *Galeria de Arte Contemporanea* (top three images), Rocha created a new visual axis at the spectator's eye level. In the 1999 *Ex Teresa Arte Actual* (bottom), a new platform was constructed out of the existing floor of a church.

above, right: Rocha left the Programa's facade

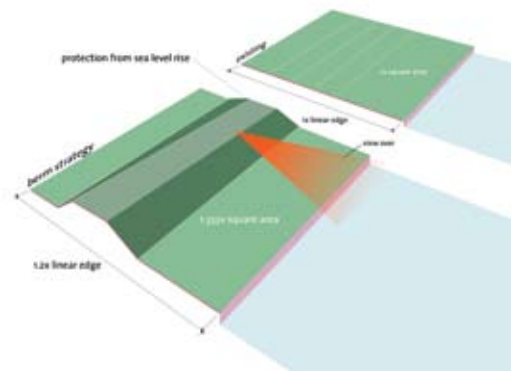
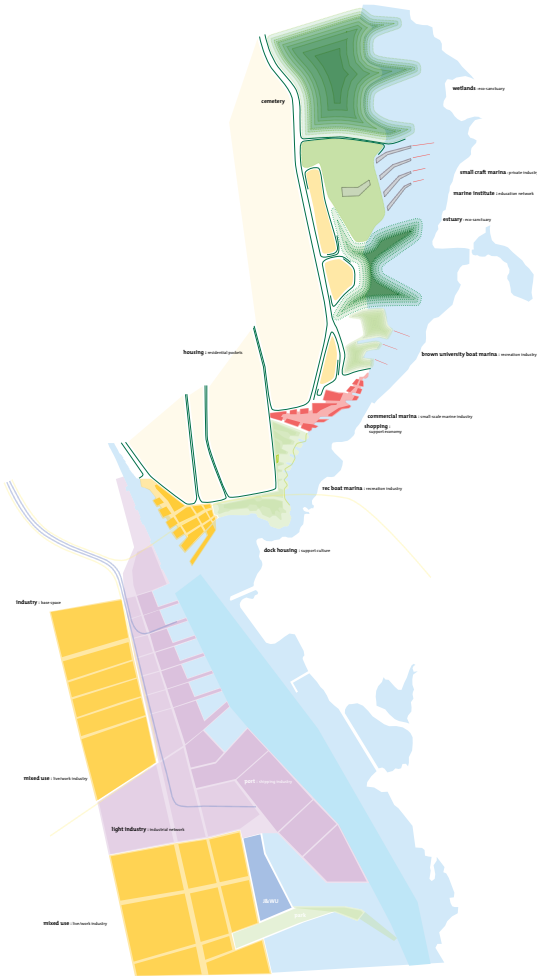


# Scenarios

At the Programa Art Center, architect Mauricio Rocha converted an existing supermarket warehouse into an art gallery. Rocha devised a series of precisely calibrated moves that radically transformed the space with a minimal budget. The upper level gallery (top) was created by demolishing part of the existing roof; it is visually and spatially linked with the main double height gallery.

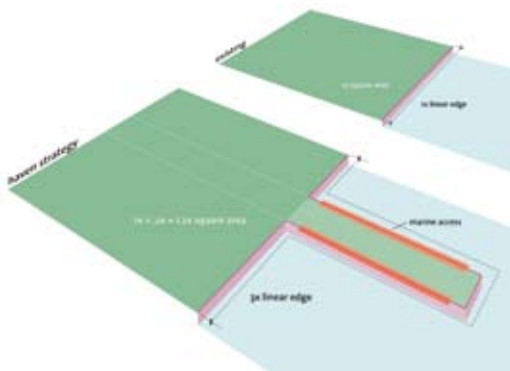
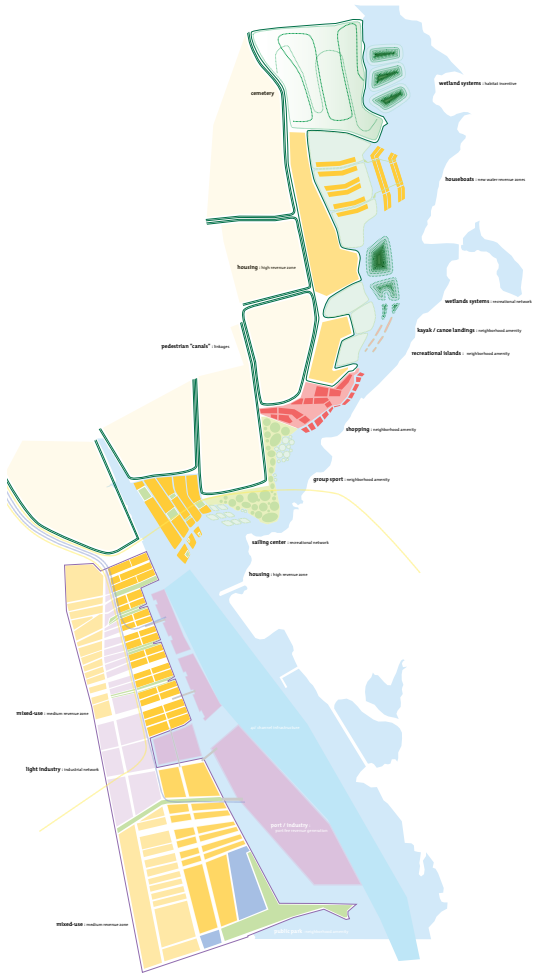
## Berms

- multiply surface area + create barrier
- ideal for public space and environmental conditions



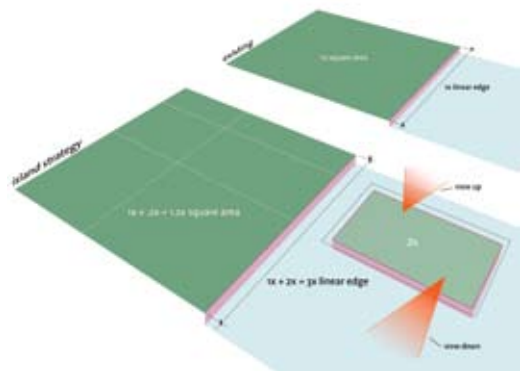
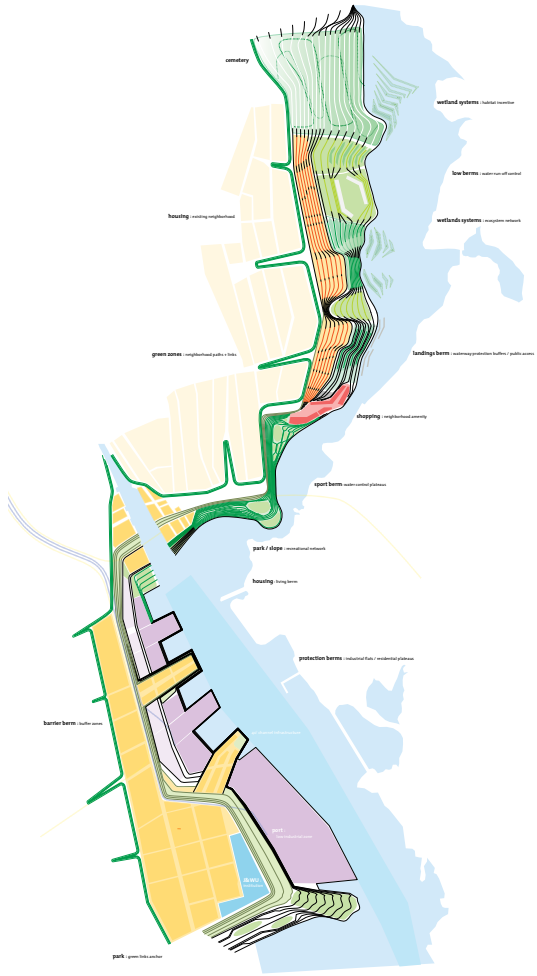
## Havens

- multiply linear edge + surface area
- ideal for marine and industrial uses



## Islands

- multiply linear edge + surface area
- ideal for increasing tax revenue by increasing land



## macrobiends

1 degree : hard edge

havens



havens 100%



h50 i50



h75 i12.5 b12.5



h50 i25 b25

islands



islands 100%



i50 b50



h12.5 i75 b12.5



h25 i50 b25

berms



berms 100%



h50 b50



h12.5 i12.5 b75



h25 i25 b50



3 degree : soft edge

havens



havens 100%



h75 i12.5 b12.5

islands



islands 100%



h12.5 i75 b12.5

berms



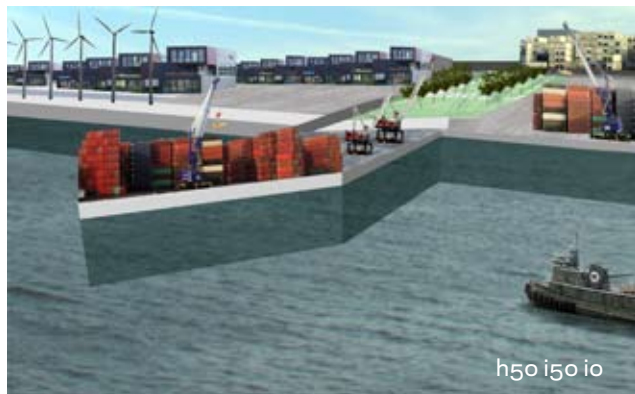
berms 100%



h12.5 i12.5 b75



h12 i75 i12



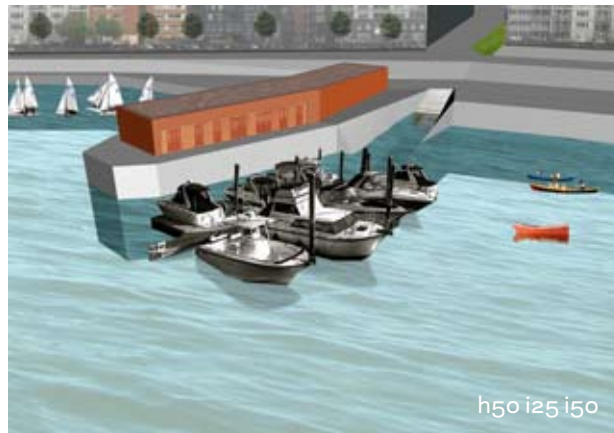
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h50 i0 i50



h0 i50 i50



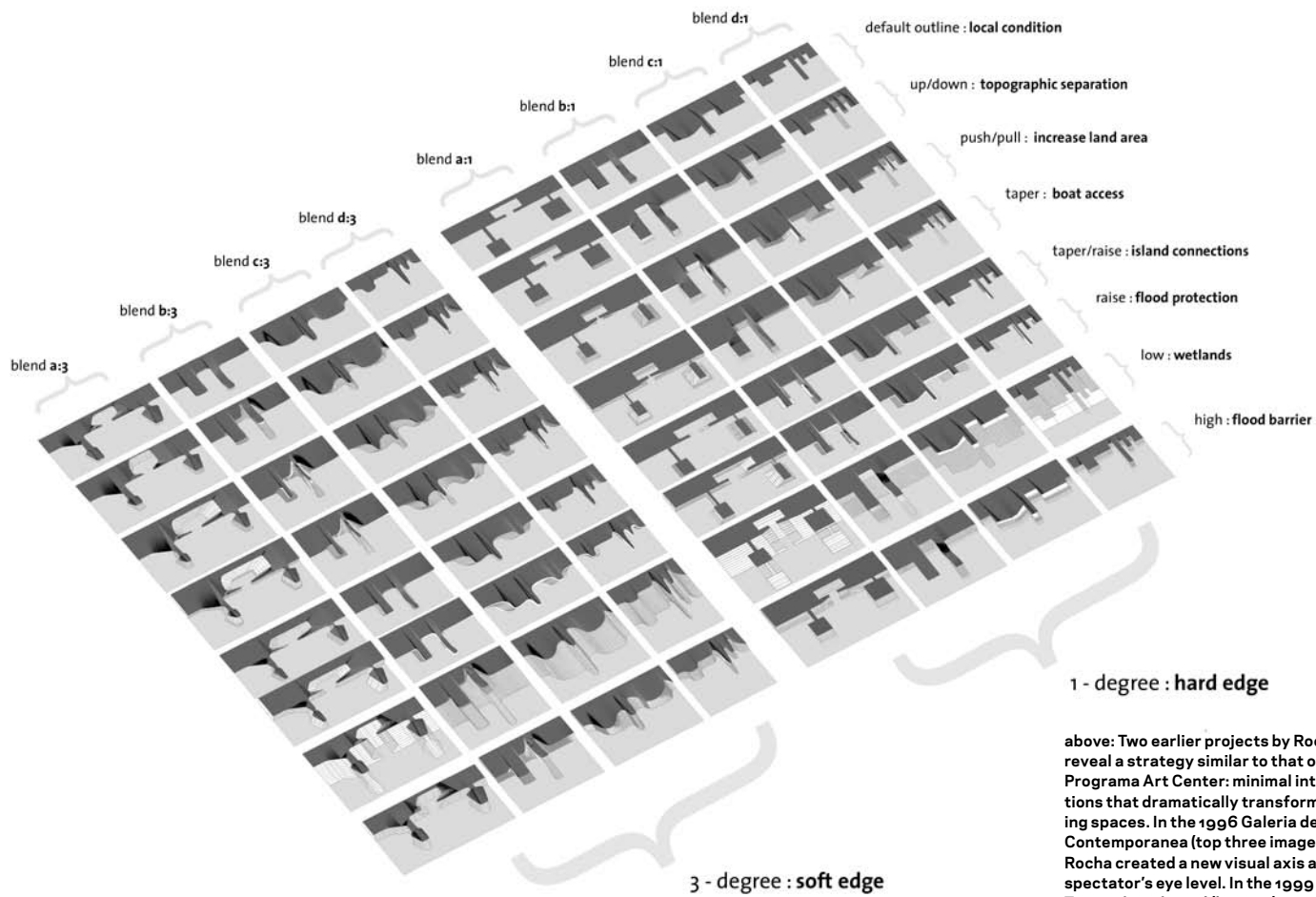
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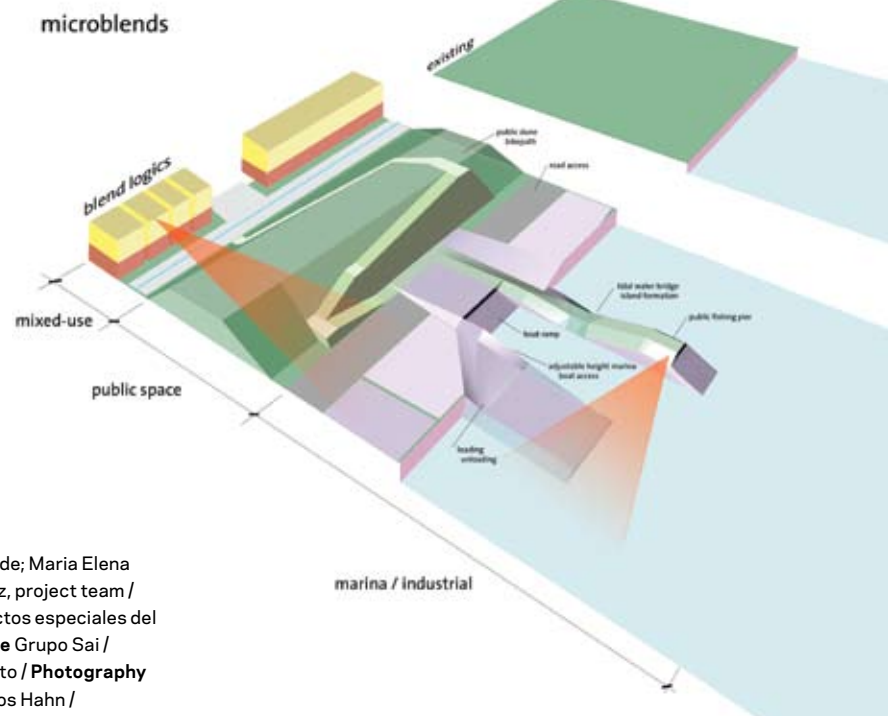
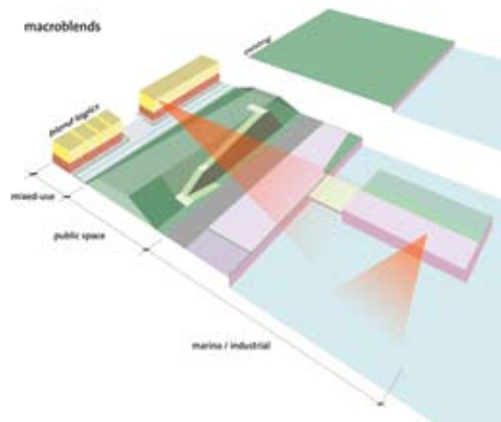
This is a parametric process: form has direct programmatic, spatial and infrastructural effects. When the three strategies are blended the result is not a reductive compromise, but rather an amplification of each. a singular percentage is never chosen, but rather evolves over the 100 year period of time as the needs for industrial, public, and residential zones shifts.

# microblends



above: Two earlier projects by Rocha reveal a strategy similar to that of the Programa Art Center: minimal interventions that dramatically transform existing spaces. In the 1996 Galería de Arte Contemporánea (top three images), Rocha created a new visual axis at the spectator's eye level. In the 1999 Ex Teresa Arte Actual (bottom), a new platform was constructed out of the existing floor of a church.

above, right: Rocha left the Programa's facade relatively blank, articulating the entrance as a void, which then trans-



**Architect** Mauricio Rocha Iturbide; Maria Elena Reyes, Iris Sosa, Francisco Ortiz, project team / **Client** Ciudad de México, Proyectos especiales del gobierno de la ciudad / **Structure** Grupo Sai / **Exhibition design** Fernando Nieto / **Photography** Luis Gordo, Iñaki Bonillas, Carlos Hahn / **Completion** 2000 / **Budget** \$1 million