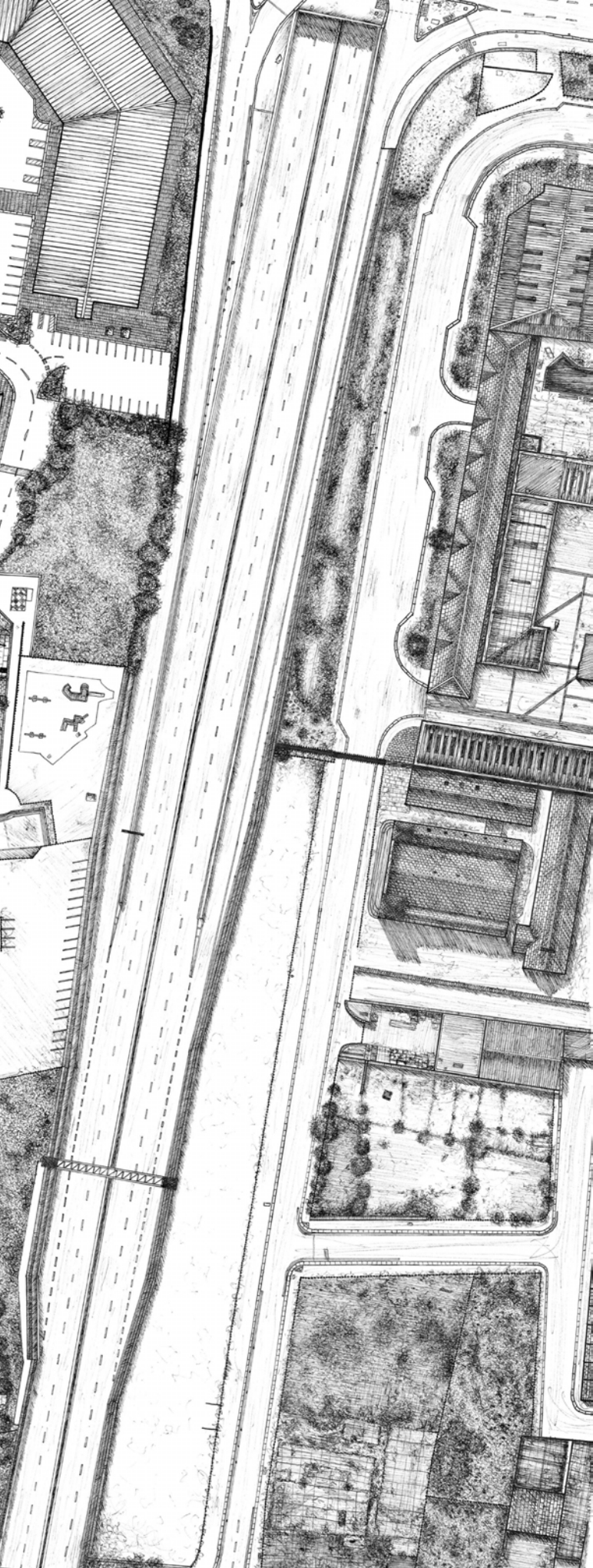




HIDDEN BARRIERS III

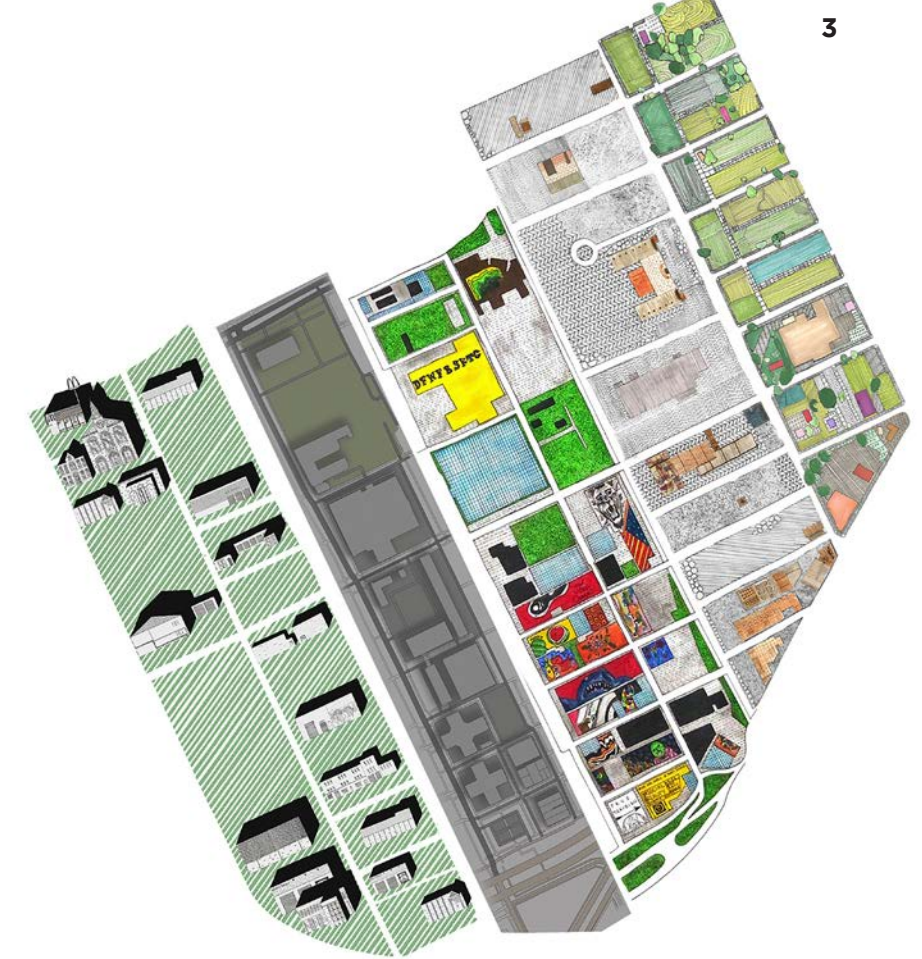
David Coyles & Eduardo Rebelo
Ulster University



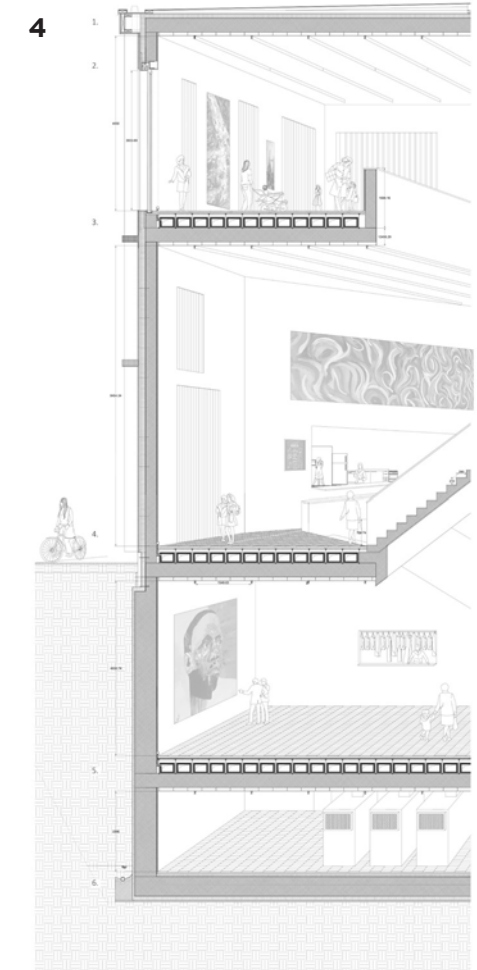
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Hidden Barriers 2020/21

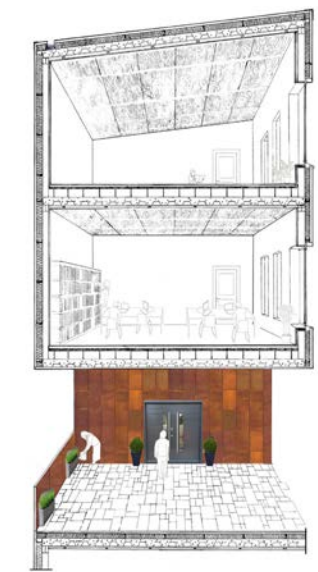
The Hidden Barriers superstudio examines how the processes of social, economic and political conflict shape urban space and community development. It presents students with a chance to participate in research investigations taking place as part of the Ulster University Hidden Barriers research programme, underpinned by a series of projects funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

The studio uses this multidisciplinary research base to explore innovative and cross-disciplinary methods of charting, analysing and mapping urban landscapes and proposing thoughtful architectural propositions. Where prevailing narratives tend to direct our gaze towards the symbolic material and spatial landmarks of conflict, such as Belfast's 'peace walls', Hidden Barriers considers architecture in its widest sense. In this respect, our examinations are particularly interested in the less visible ways that 'everyday' architecture and space can duplicate and reproduce the effects of conflict.

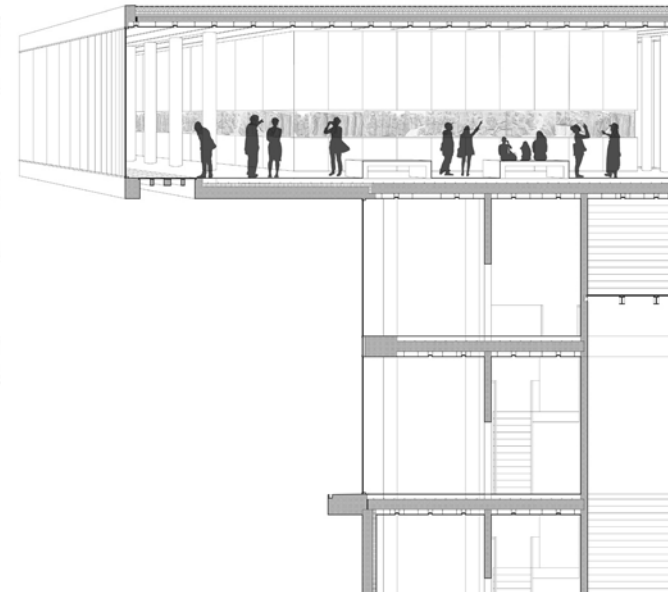
The third iteration of the Hidden Barriers superstudio places the analysis of the legacies of conflict in Belfast alongside the analysis of the legacies of conflict in Detroit, USA. These examinations explore how architecture has the capacity to encourage both mechanisms of separation and mechanisms of cohesion, by looking in detail at two geographically comparative areas: the Belfast 'Westlink corridor' and the peripheral communities along its edges; and the historic 'Eastern Market' district of Detroit.

In both cities, diverse manifestations of spatial, material and psychological 'Hidden Barriers', evolving from a mix of social, economic and political forces, persist as fundamental barriers to post-conflict recovery.

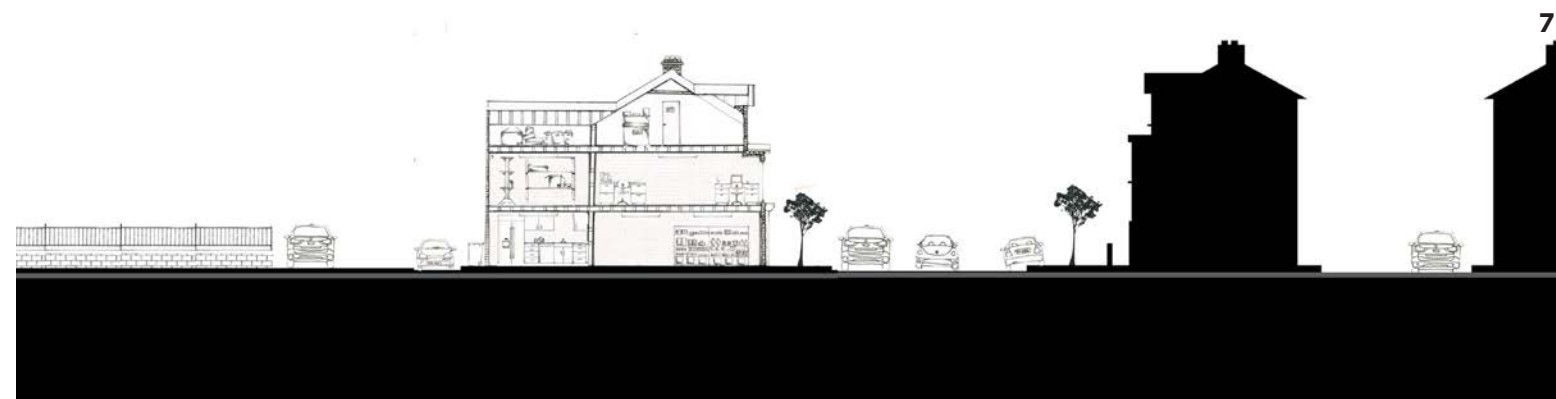
- 1: Townsend Street Cartography, Y5
- 2: Belfast Terrain Map, Y3
- 3: Detroit Terrain Map, Y2
- 4: Detail study, Y5
- 5: Detail study, Y3
- 6: Detail study, Y3
- 7: Duncairn Gardens section, Y1
- 8: Peace Wall documentary, Y3
- 9: Belfast Trauma Respite Centre, Y3
- 10: Belfast Homeless Outreach Centre, Y3
- 11: Detroit Detention Centre, Y5
- 12: Detroit Park-Mart, Y5



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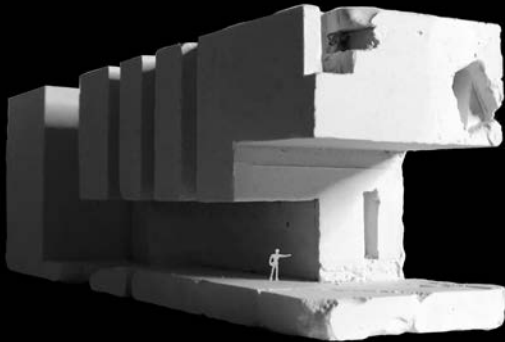
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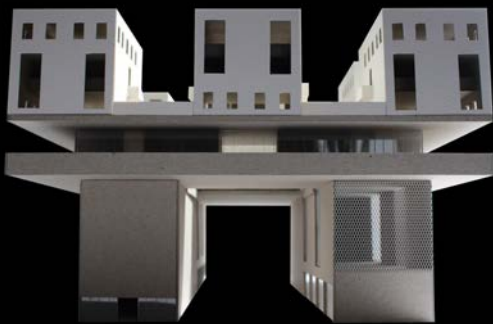
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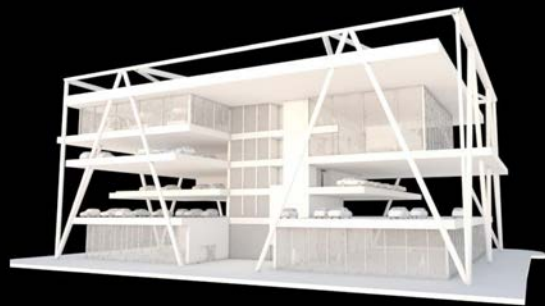
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Vertical Teaching

Through the use of practice-based fieldwork techniques such as interviews, film-making and photography, alongside architectural modelling and analytical drawing, the superstudio works to explore and understand how Hidden Barriers impact at the level of 'the city', 'the site' and 'the building'. Different year groups work in different ways to collaborate and compile a coherent body of evidence pertaining to their research contexts. Year 1 students focus on examining the complexities of historic terraced housing in Belfast and its Troubles-era transformation into a mosaic of fragmented streets. They are supported by Year 3 and Year 6 students undertaking research-led thesis investigations within the wider study area. Year 2 students focus on understanding the forces of socio-economic growth and decline playing out within the Eastern Market district of Detroit. These exercises are undertaken alongside landmark redevelopment projects proposed by Year 5 students.

Through these comparative studies, tracing the overlooked, 'everyday' architectural legacies of violent military and political conflict in Belfast provides a provocative mirror to understanding the legacies of savage social and economic decline in Detroit. Taken together, this fosters a collaborative superstudio learning experience where architectural education is deeply rooted in an acknowledgment of the complex ways in which social, economic and political forces indelibly shape our urban spaces.

Student Reflection: Courtney McIlkenny, MARCH

Throughout previous years, students within the Hidden Barriers superstudio have delved deeply into the physical Hidden Barriers that still remain embedded within the fabric of Belfast today. These investigations have explored, at length, how the affected areas can perhaps be redeveloped and reconnected with the wider city network. This year, in an effort to further examine the multifarious meanings of Hidden Barriers, the superstudio was split between Belfast and Detroit, USA. Student teams worked together to map the respective cities, comparing and contrasting findings in order to understand their histories and current contexts. The information gathered generated a series of design projects addressing specific social, economic and material Hidden Barriers. Through our research and discussions concerning both cities, we found that these Hidden Barriers impact the sites on which they stand and have influence that goes further to impact upon the wider environment that surrounds them. This presents significant ramifications for any future regeneration and redevelopment of the afflicted sites.

These barriers sit still in time, untouched and unchanged, having grown so deeply into the footprint of the urban environment that not only do they physically impact their spaces, but they can also be seen to influence how people within the surrounding communities engage with their surrounding environment and one another. ○