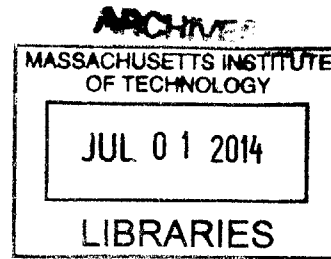


WORLD COURT

BY KYLE COBURN

B.A. Architecture
Miami University, 2009

Submitted to the department of architecture in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Architecture at the Massachusetts
Institute of Technology
June 2014



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Kyle Coburn
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Chair of the Department Committee on Graduate Students

WORLD COURT

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Submitted to the department of architecture on
May 22, 2014 in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Architecture

ABSTRACT

Eighteen billion gallons of toxic waste, nine billion dollars in damages, trials across five countries, hundreds of lawyers, millions of dollars in litigation fees, and a corporation with an annual revenue of two hundred billions dollars—this is the story of Texaco's drilling operations in the Lago Agrio region of Northern Ecuador, referred to by locals as "rain-forest Chernobyl". This thesis proposes that the Lago Agrio case, and others like it highlight not only environmental issues, but issues that fall under a much larger umbrella of International Law.

With its current cases myopically focused on crimes of African warlords, the International Criminal Court, seated in The Hague, has a latent capacity to work in a new set of crimes of international concern. There is a wide scope of environmental, technological, political and economic phenomena that are not yet part of our definition of International Law. To consider these issues as such, is to drastically rethink the institution of International Law itself, and with it, this thesis argues, the role of architecture in this new form of (highly contentious) universality.

Events such as: crimes against nature or shared natural resources, crimes against labor, crimes pertaining to uncoordinated attempts at geoengineering, the development of harmful synthetic biology and nanotechnology, would not only implicate Western and developed, but also corporations, special interest groups and individuals. The thesis is literally cited in the contemporary configuration of the International Court and its Hague reality but it is conceptually cited with a few towards this potentially changing landscape of international law.

These crimes, ones that we are all victim to, as well as implicated in, codify the new Global Collective centered around the activities of the Court, there is a multiplicity of vested interests, and one of the key disciplinary questions the thesis addresses is the form of monumentality that this architecture could take given both the multiplicity and scale of those interest—in a climate in which neither the Western and developed countries have the moral upper-hand nor the survival of the planet seems a given.

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This thesis in no way was produced single-handedly, it was the result something much larger than myself. I sincerely thank the faculty and my colleagues at MIT.

To Ana for your commitment to education above all else and for knowing what I myself did not. Your acute criticism was a true inspiration and it is something that will stay with me for many years to come. The way I think about architecture will never be the same.

To Meejin, your criticism at direction came at the most important times, the project would have not been the same without you.

To Kyle, for your insight and help in the final push. To Nico, Jason and Kristina for giving valuable time on the model. To Kyle, John and Karina for your continued friendship throughout our time at MIT.

To Elle and my parents, any attempt at thanking you proves insufficient.

To God, any ability is not my own.

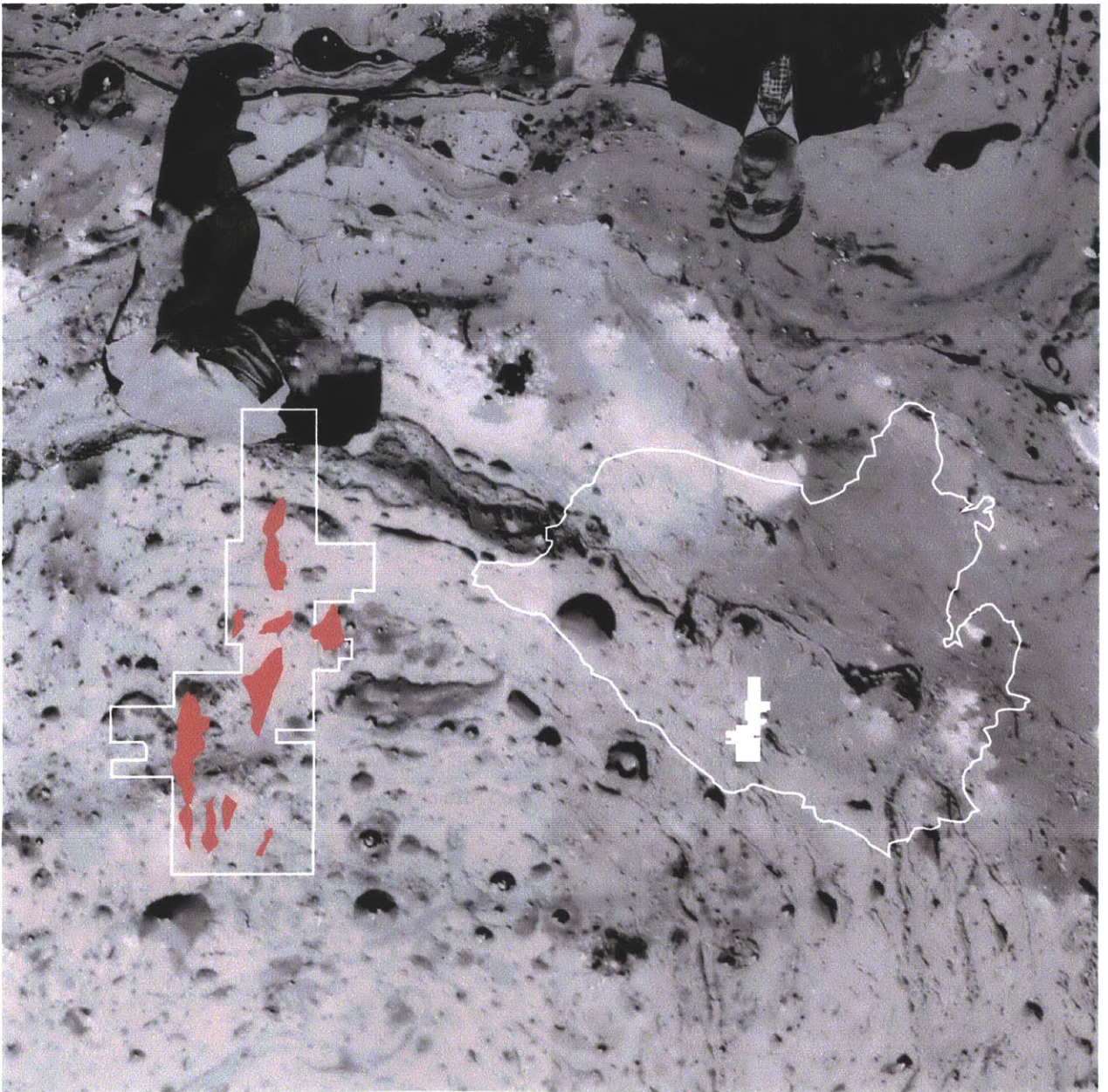
WORLD COURT





LAGO AGRIO

This thesis begins with Texaco drilling operations in the Lago Agrio region of Northern Ecuador where, over a period of 20 yrs, the company released 22 Billion gallons of toxic waste across 1,700 sq miles of protected rainforest. Obvious environmental impacts ensued: spikes in cancer deaths of the local people, miscarriages, birth defects, dead livestock and native animals, deforestations and the near-extinction of indigenous tribes.



This spawned a still ongoing 18 year litigation battle that has out-lived Texaco itself as well as several judges involved in the original trials. Overall, the case represented 30,000 plaintiffs, with hundreds of lawyers on both the defence and prosecution side, resulting in 400 million of dollars in litigation fees a year accruing by Chevron.

Allegations of bribery and corruption came from both sides, there were dozens of "environmental experts" providing information as well as disinformation, there was celebrity involvement, and a documentary entitled "Crude".

The first ruling of the case in Ecuador ordered Texaco to pay \$18 billion in damages to the local people, but this was later overturned in the United States when evidence of judge bribery by one of the lead attorneys surfaced. A truly international string of trials followed, with appeals from both sides in Canada, Argentina, Brazil and The Netherlands.

The thesis argues that the LAGO AGRIO case, and others like it highlight not only environmental issues, but issues that fall under a much larger umbrella of International Law.

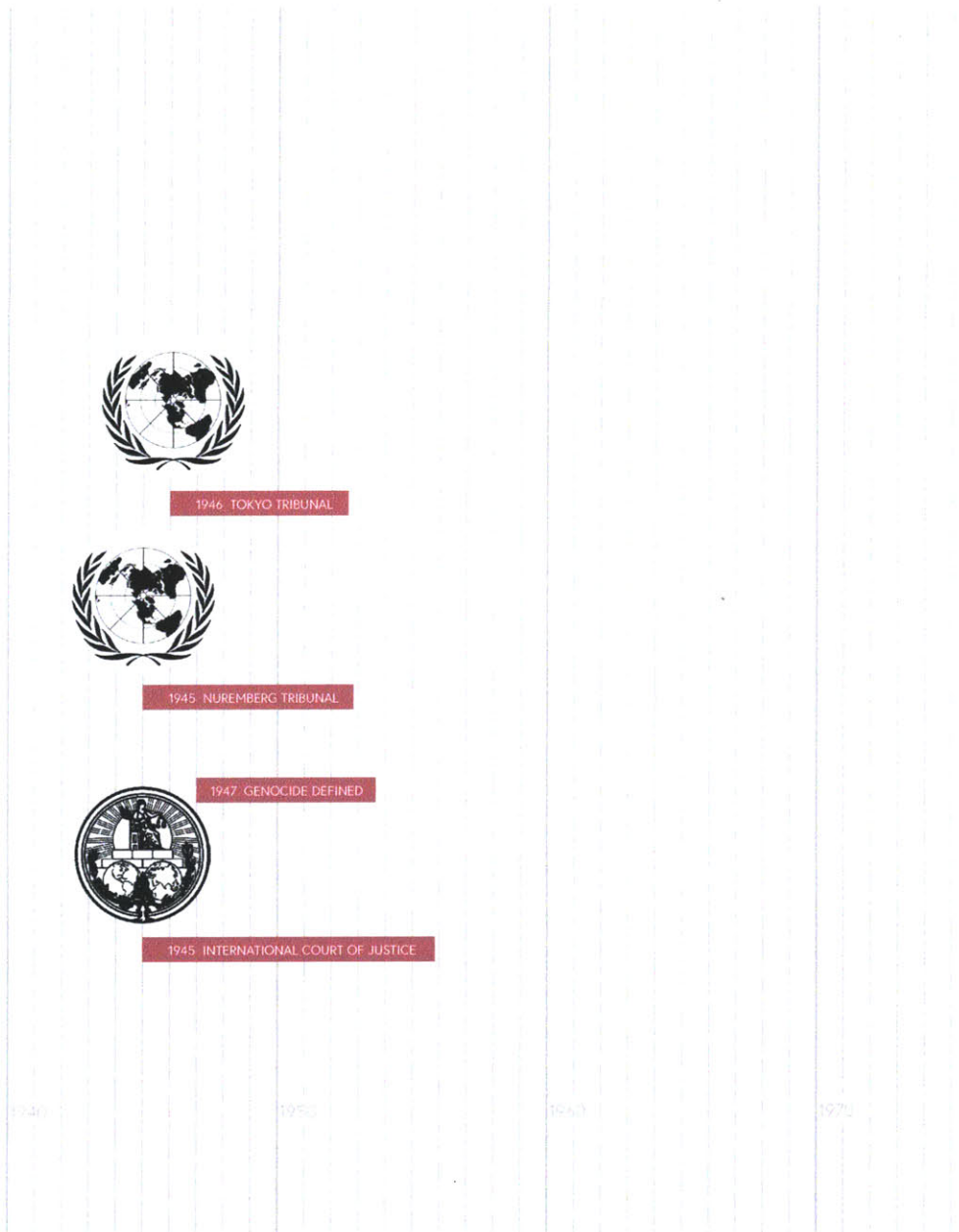


World Court

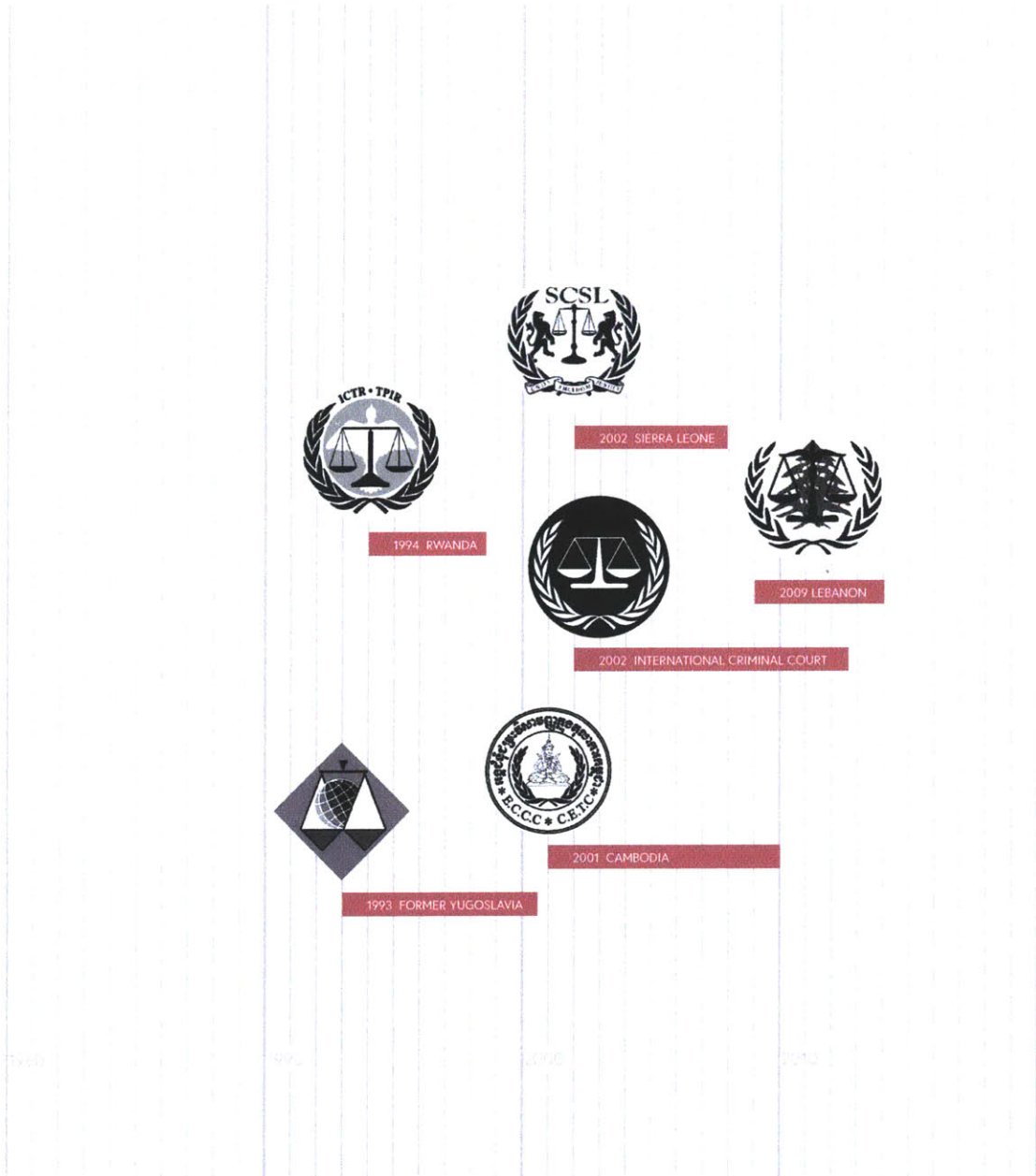
There is a wide scope of environmental, technological, political and economic phenomena that are not yet part of our definition of International Law . . .

To consider these issues as such, is to drastically rethink the institution of International Law itself, and with it, argued in this project, the role of architecture in this new form of (highly contentious) universality.

HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL LAW



The first instance of what now can be described as International Law came at the close of World War II with the Nuremberg trials tasked with the prosecution of twenty-three prominent members of Nazi Germany. This coincided with its mirror, the Tokyo Tribunals.

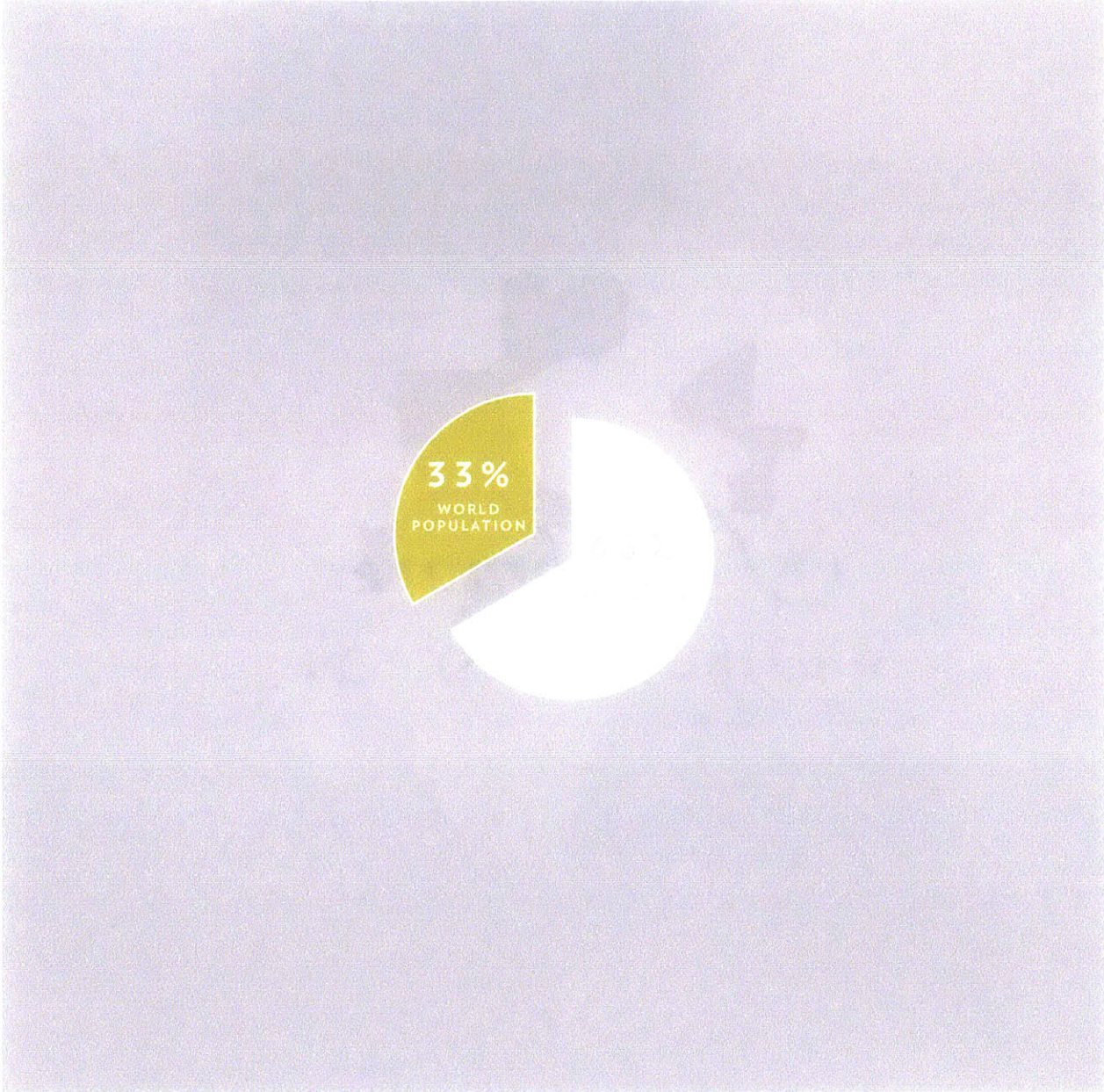


Then there was a fifty year gap before the next instance of an international court, the first was the tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, followed by Rwanda, Cambodia, Sierra Leone and Lebanon. The International Criminal Court, on which this project is based, was established in 2002 and is the first court of its kind not to be situation specific.



WHO'S IN?

The international criminal court has been critiqued extensively for its current and historical international representation.



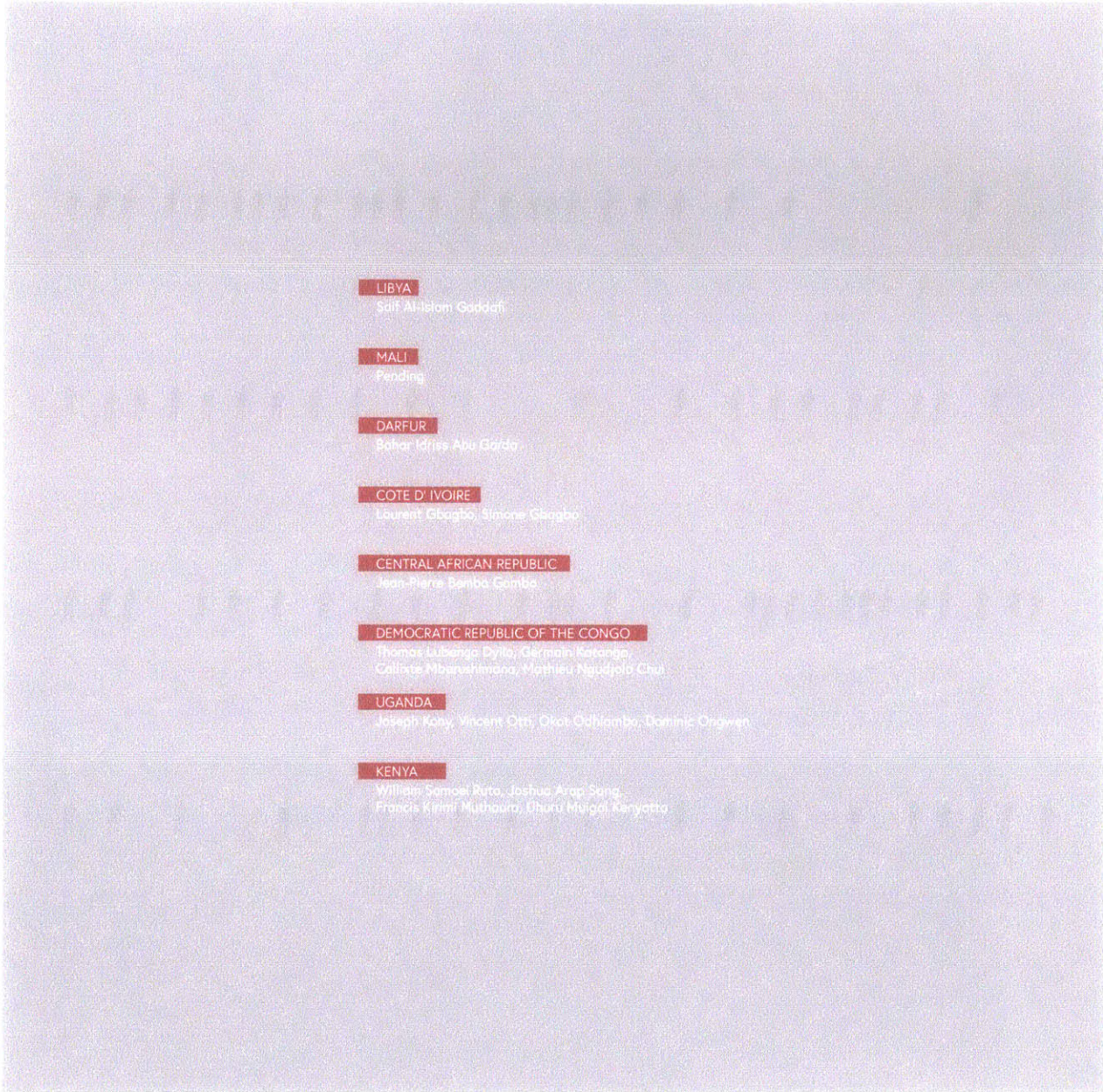
In order for a country to fall under the jurisdiction of the Court, a state must first ratify the ruling document of the ICC, The Rome Statute, which entered into force in 2002. Currently, 122 states have ratified the statute, however these states only account for approximately 33% of the worlds population. India, China, Russia and the United States do not recognize the Court and therefore are outside of its jurisdiction.

World Court



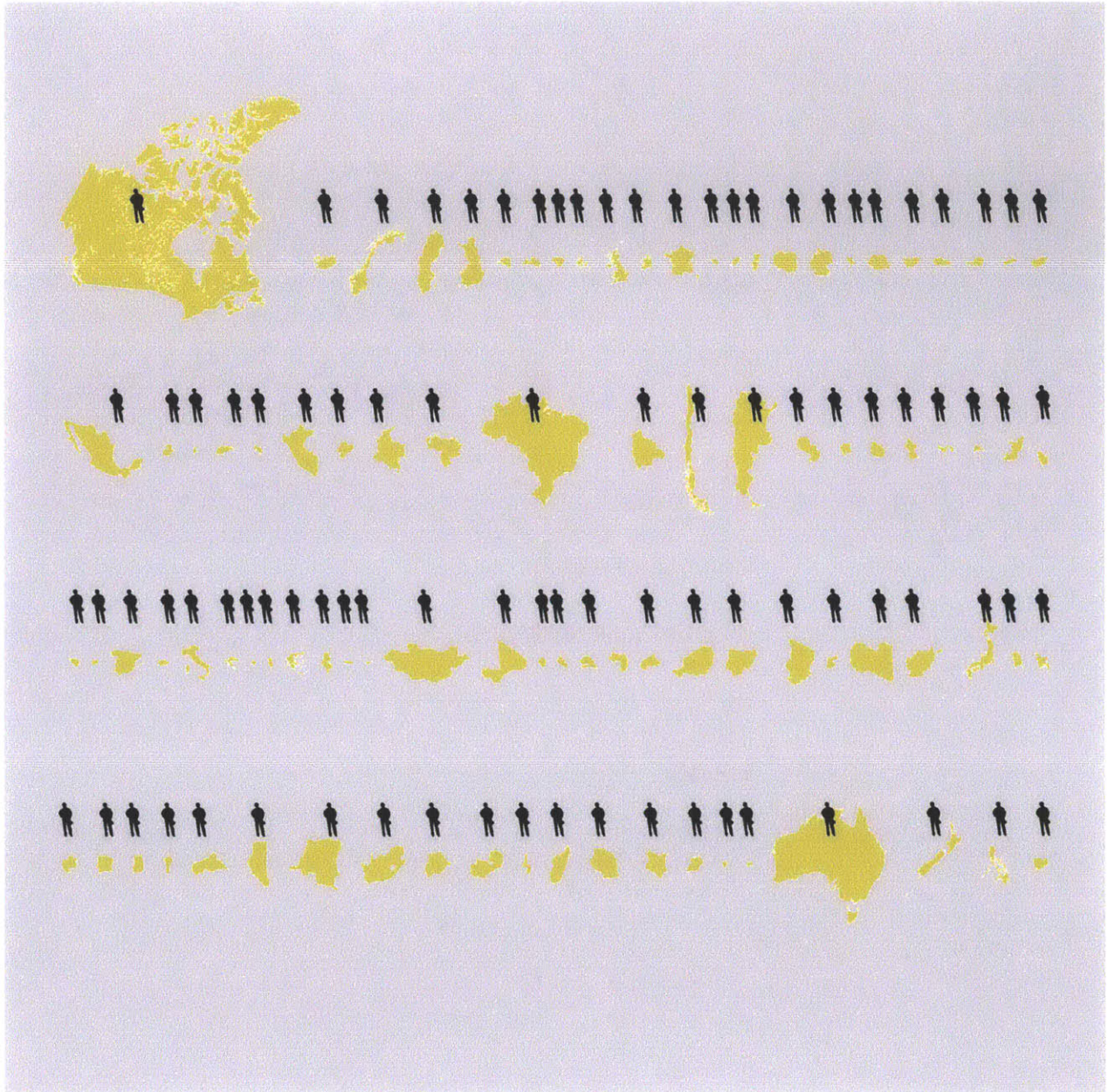
CURRENT ICC SITUATIONS

Severe problems with the ICC emerge in the location of the current cases, all of which are in Africa. These cases are for crimes of "utmost international concern" including crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.



A clear instance of Western colonialism.

World Court



REPRESENTATION

Changes have been attempted by the Court in light of accusations of Western biases. Each member state is allowed one representative to form a General Assembly tasked with the election of the Chief Prosecutor, Judges, President and Head Registrar. Fatou Bensouda, a lawyer from the Gambia, was elected in 2012 to act as the second Chief Prosecutor for the ICC. This marks a small improvement considering 53% of the current judges still come from European Union countries.



PROSECUTOR
FATOU BENSOUDA
The Gambia

JUDGES

PRESIDENT OF THE COURT
SANG-HYUN SONG
Republic of Korea

REGISTRAR
HERMAN VON HEBEL
Austria



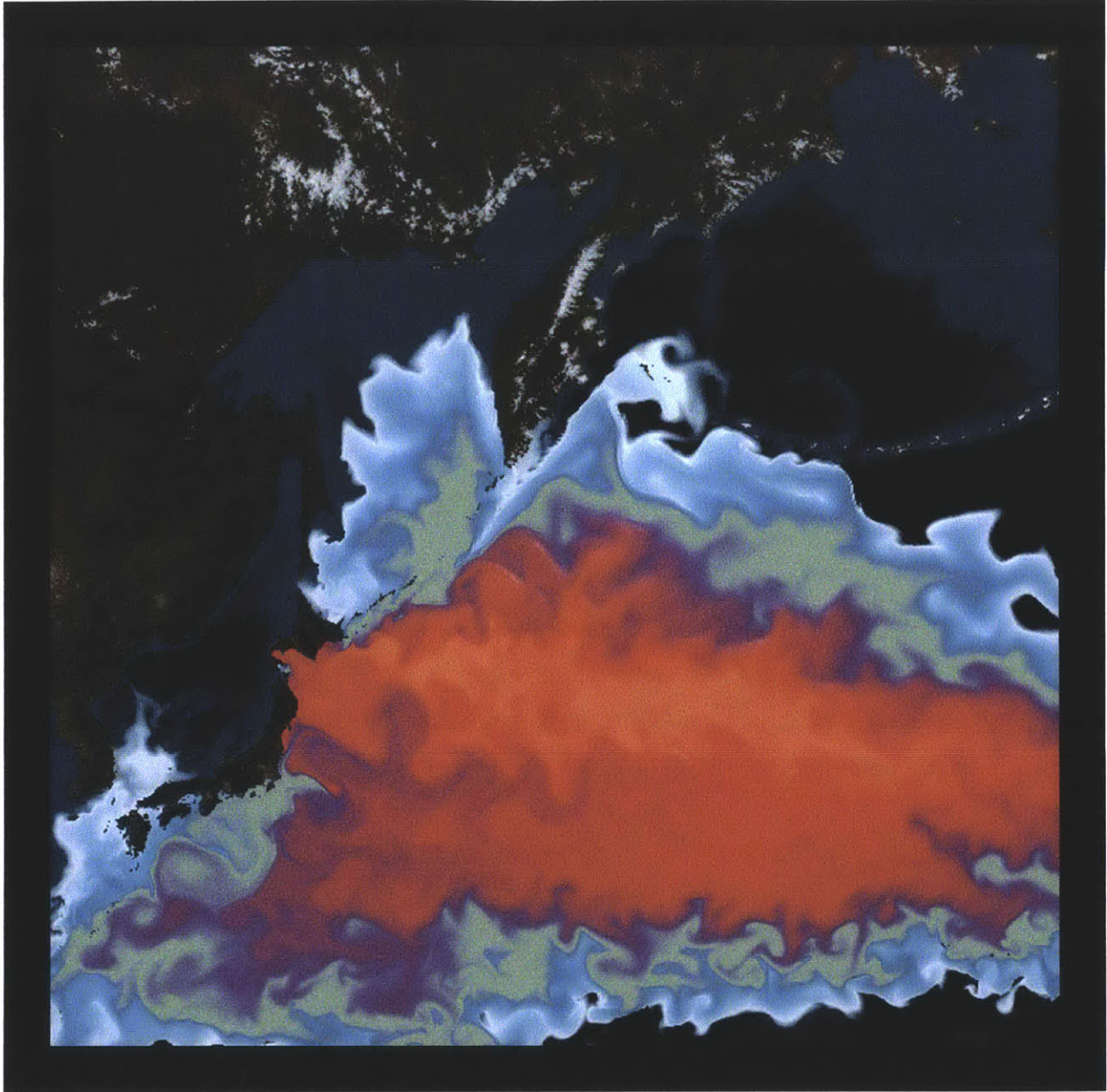
FINDING /
CASE REFERRAL

Primarily Western funding continues to question the nature of the institution, as does the means by which cases are referred to the Court—one of which is the UN Security Council where the United States, Russia and China are permanent members, yet these countries themselves are not party to the Court and are therefore outside of its jurisdiction.

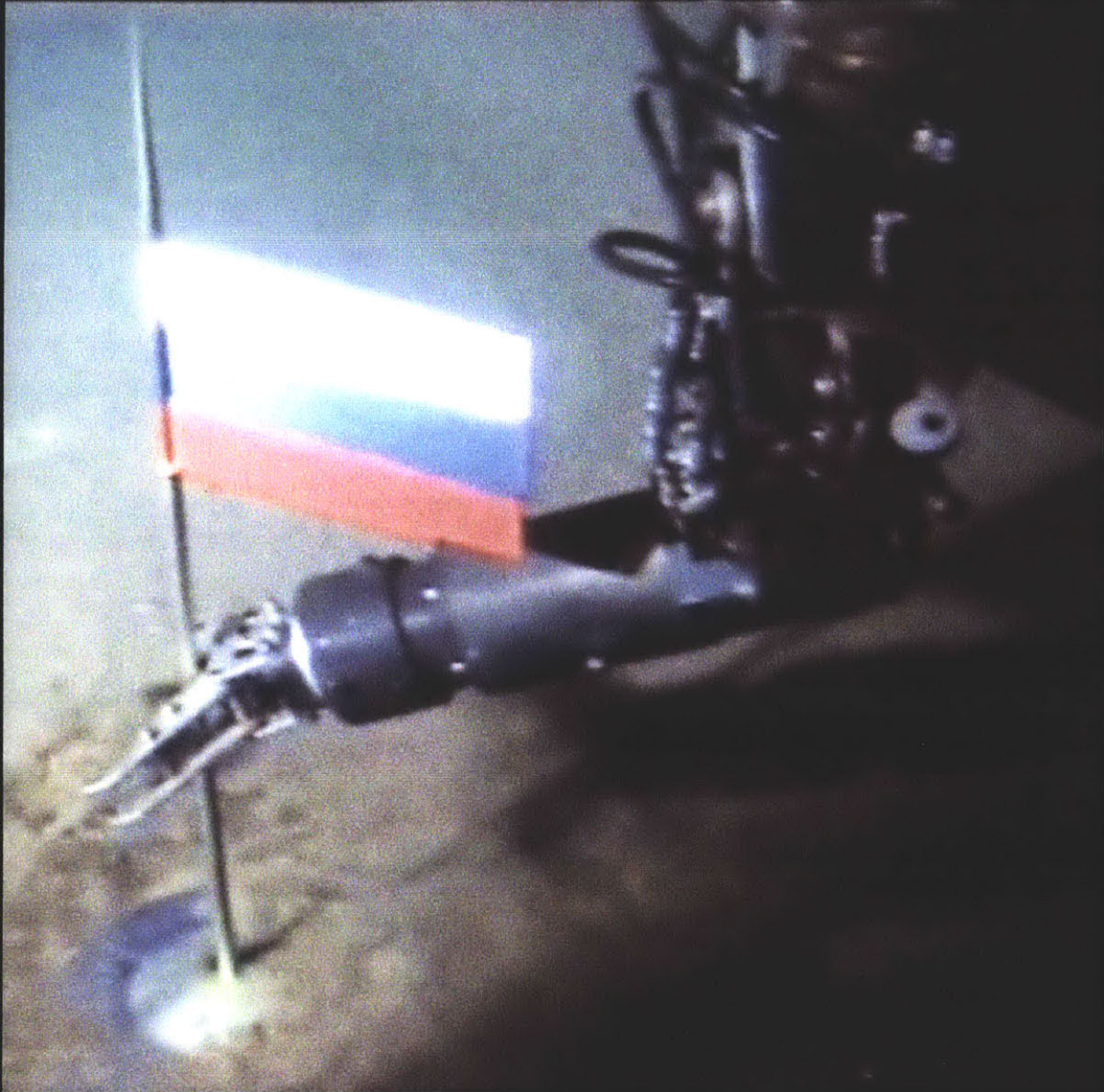


World Court

This thesis
proposes a new
set of crimes that
should fall under
the jurisdiction of
the International
Criminal Court:



New Crimes FUKUSHIMA
NUCLEAR
NEGLECT

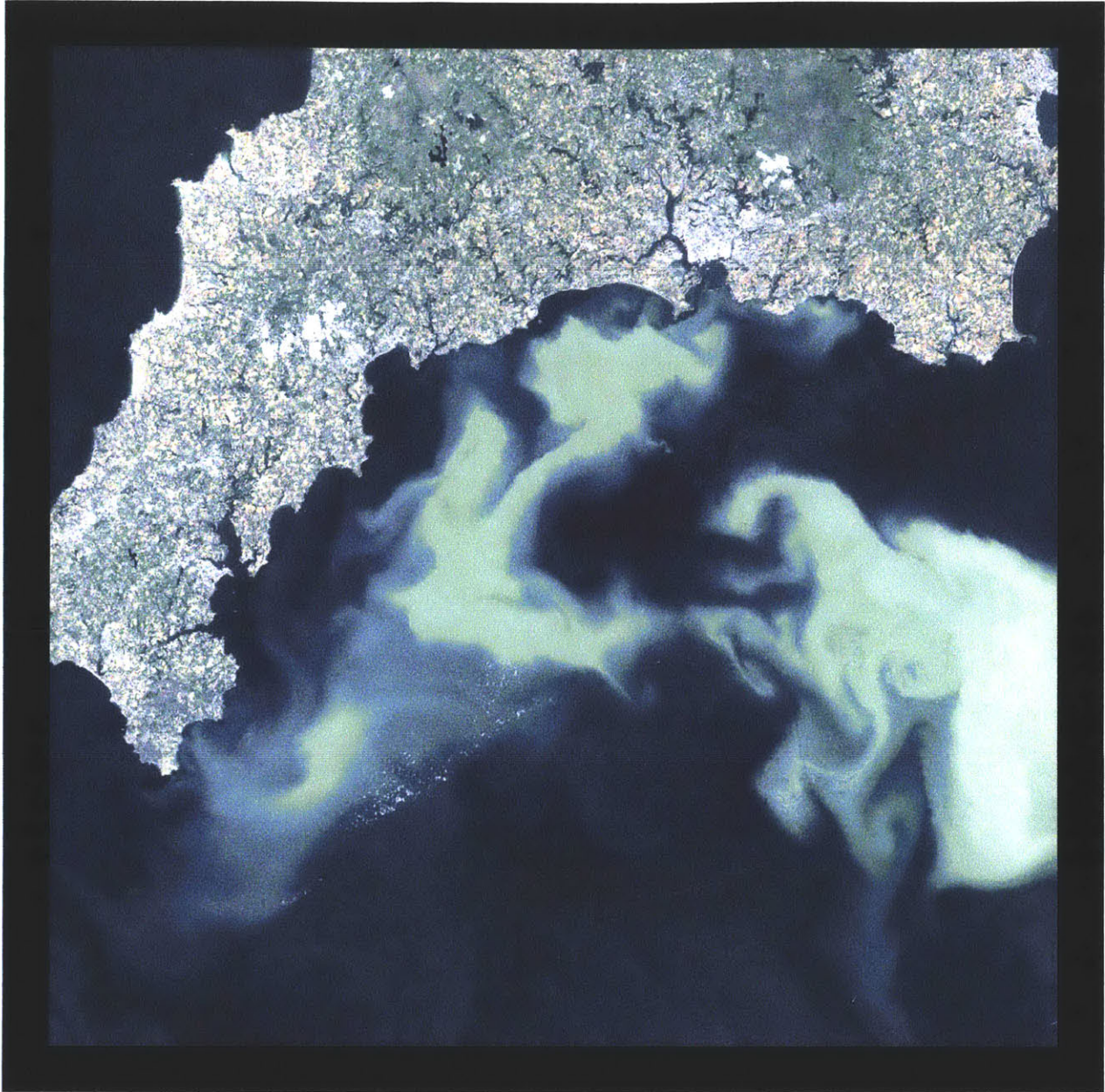


RUSSIA'S CLAIM
TO THE NORTH
POLE SEABED

World Court



New Crimes
BANGLADESH
FACTORY
COLLAPSE



UNCOORDINATED
ATTEMPTS AT
GEO-ENGINEERING

World Court



New Crimes

ALBERTA CANADA
TAR SANDS



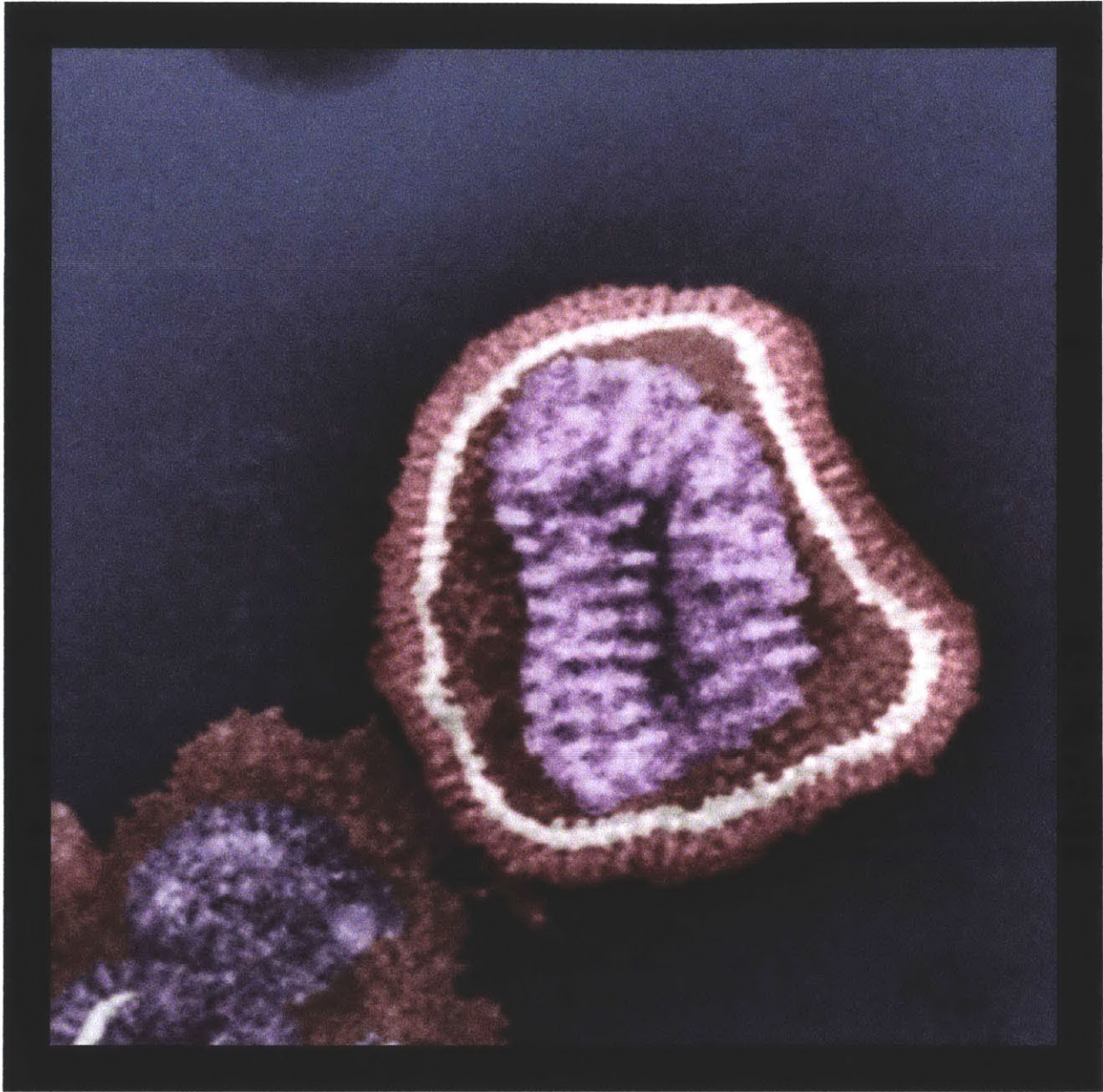
BP GULF OIL SPILL

World Court



New Crimes

UNITED STATES
DRONE ACTIVITY

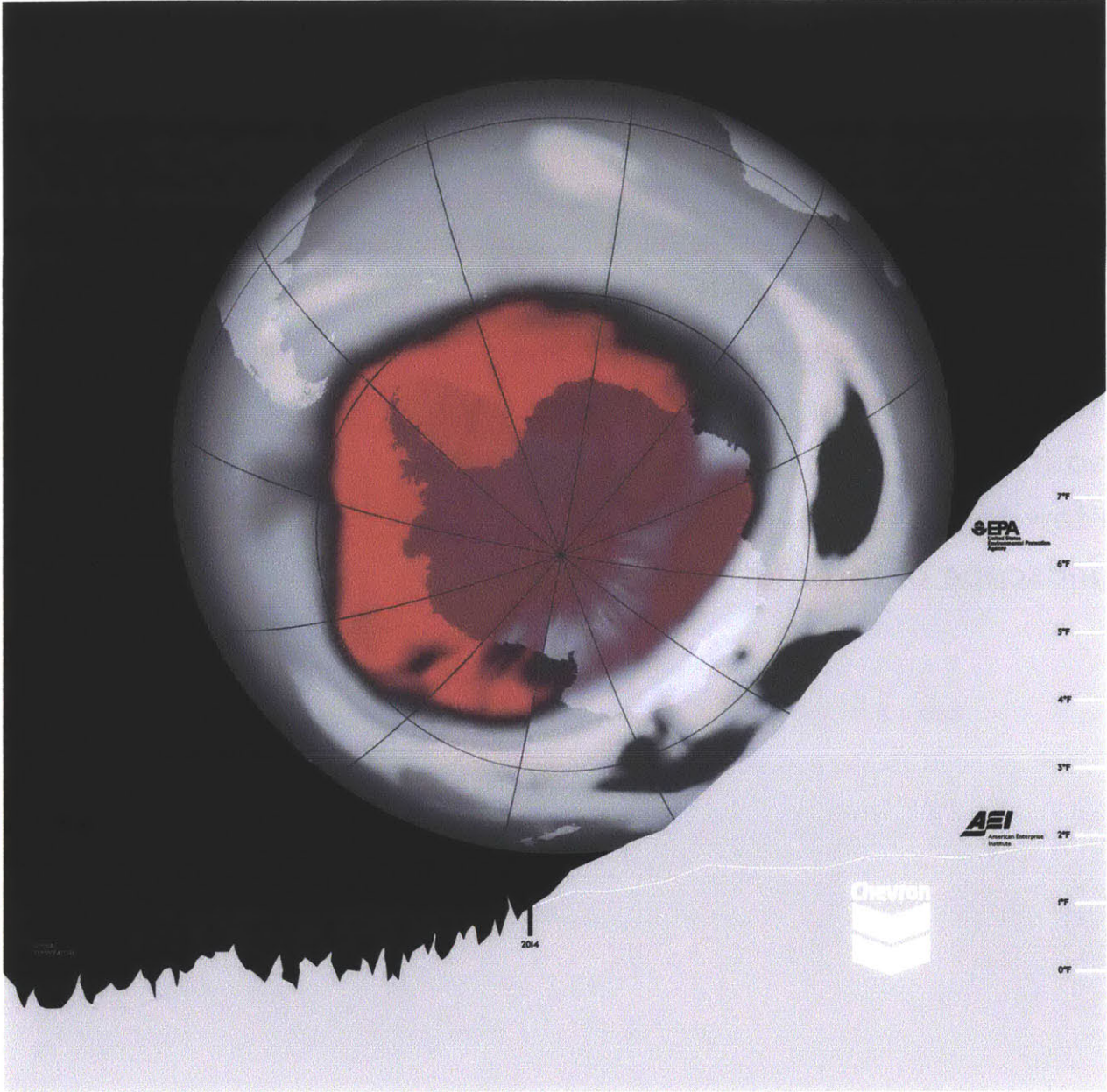


RESEARCH AND
DEVELOPMENT OF
SUPER-VIRUSES

World Court

If seen as crimes
these events would
not only implicate
Western and
developed, but also
corporations, special
interest groups and
individuals.

The thesis is literally cited in the contemporary configuration of the International Court and its Hague reality but it is conceptually cited with a few towards this potentially changing landscape of international law.



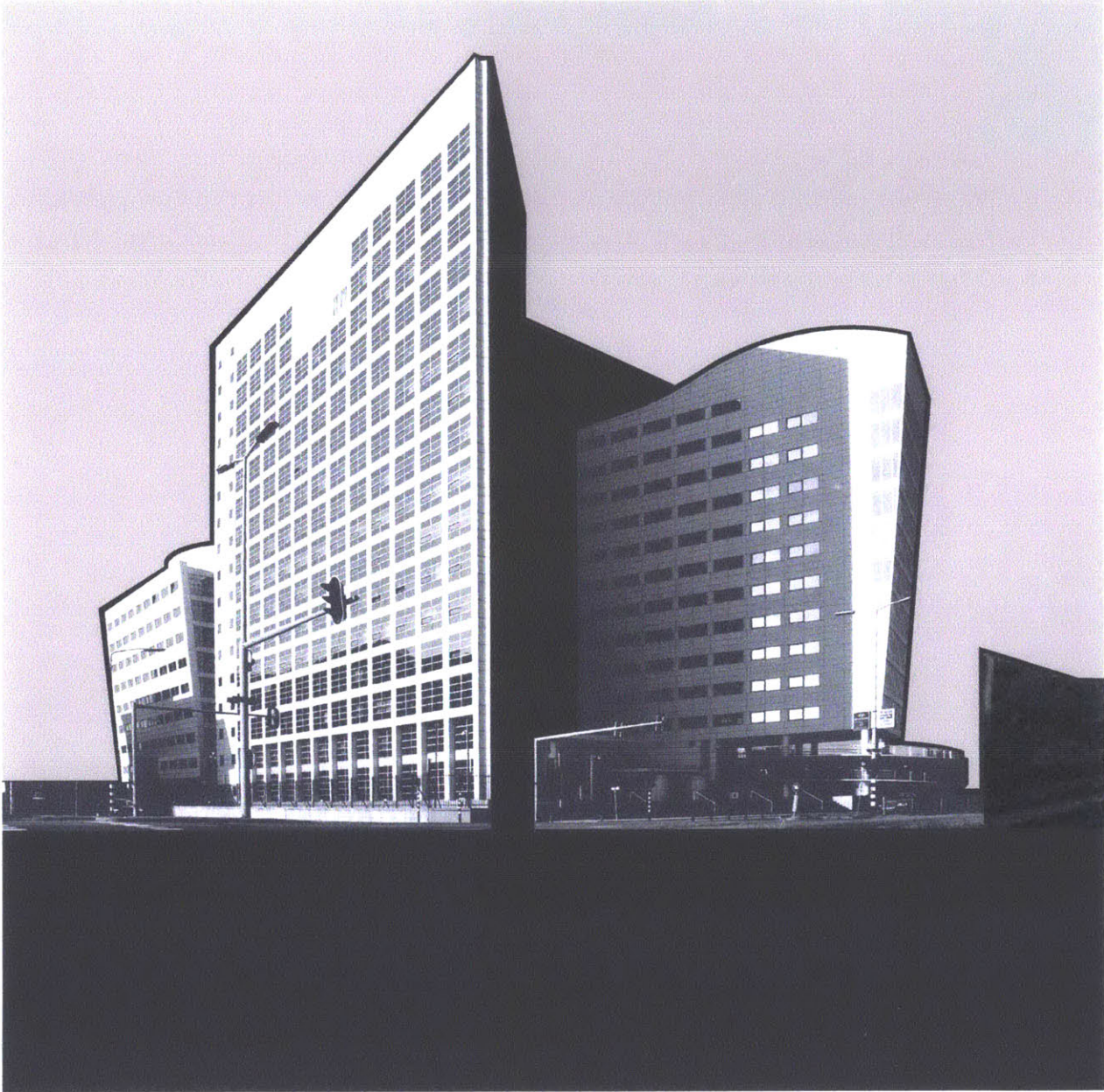
A Scenario



vs



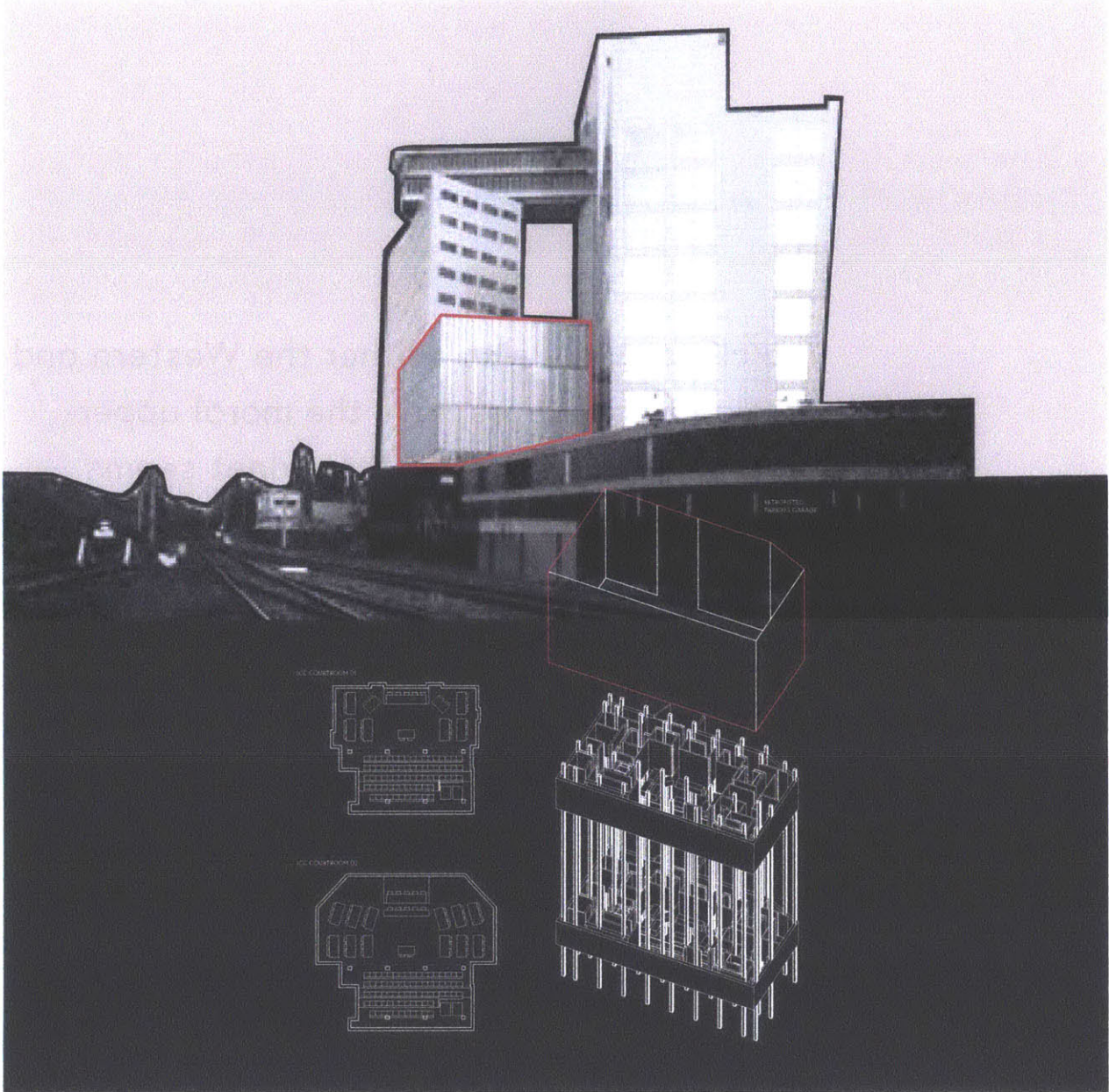
If Chevron, or a similar multi-national corporation, was one day in the near future held responsible for its environmental crimes, what exactly would be the nature of this trial?



A Scenario

**CURRENT
CONFIGURATION**

Since its establishment in 2012 the ICC has temporarily been housed in a banal office building in the Hague. This building in no way is suited to the specific needs of the court with the courtrooms occupying a retrofitted parking garage located in the back of the building.

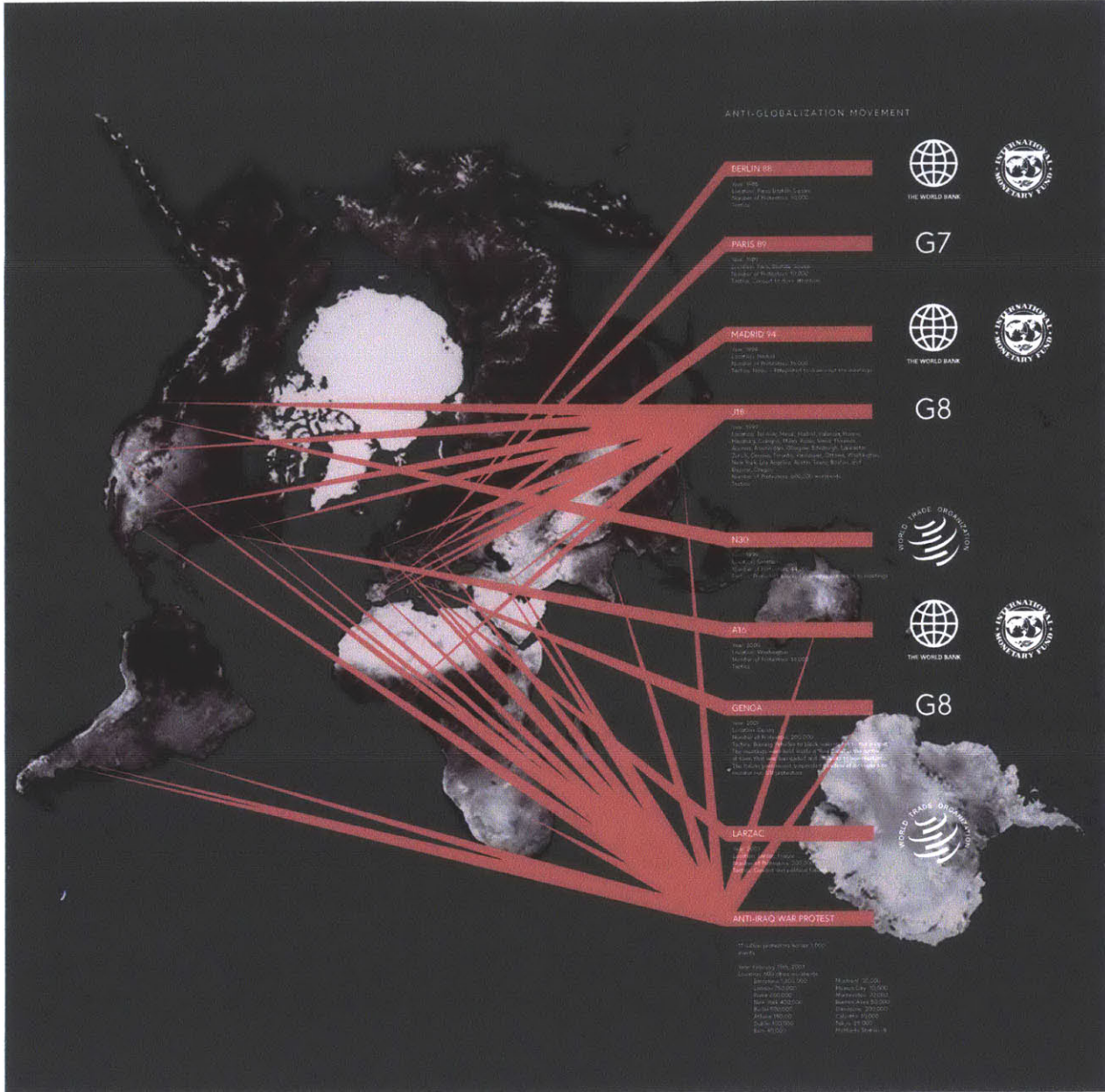


Nothing about the current ICC configuration accounts for the huge defence teams, high profile CEOs, hundreds of "experts", public protests, international public interest, broadcasting requirements, decade-long trials, biased interests the could be expected in these new types of international trials.

World Court

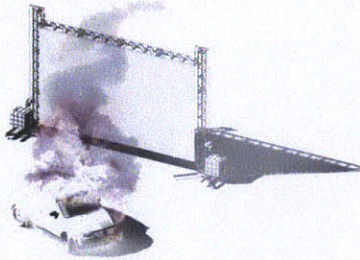
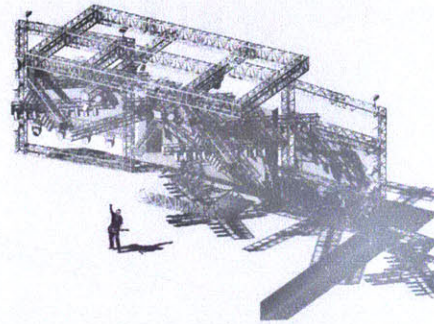
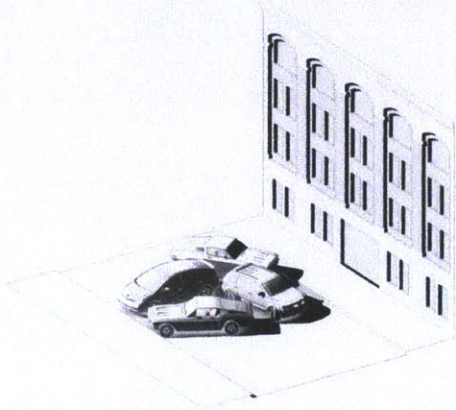
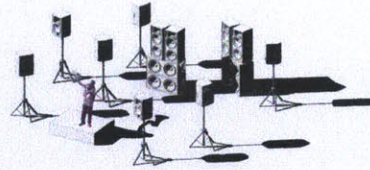
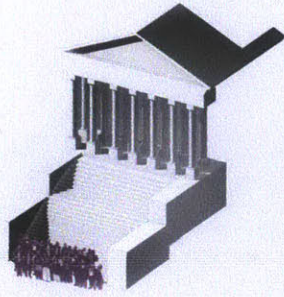
In a climate in which neither the Western and developed countries have the moral upper-hand nor the survival of the planet seems a given—these crimes, ones that we are all victim to, as well as implicated in, codify the new Global Collective centered around the activities of the Court—there is a multiplicity of vested interests.

One of the key disciplinary questions the thesis addresses is the form of monumentality that this architecture could take given both the multiplicity and scale of those interests.

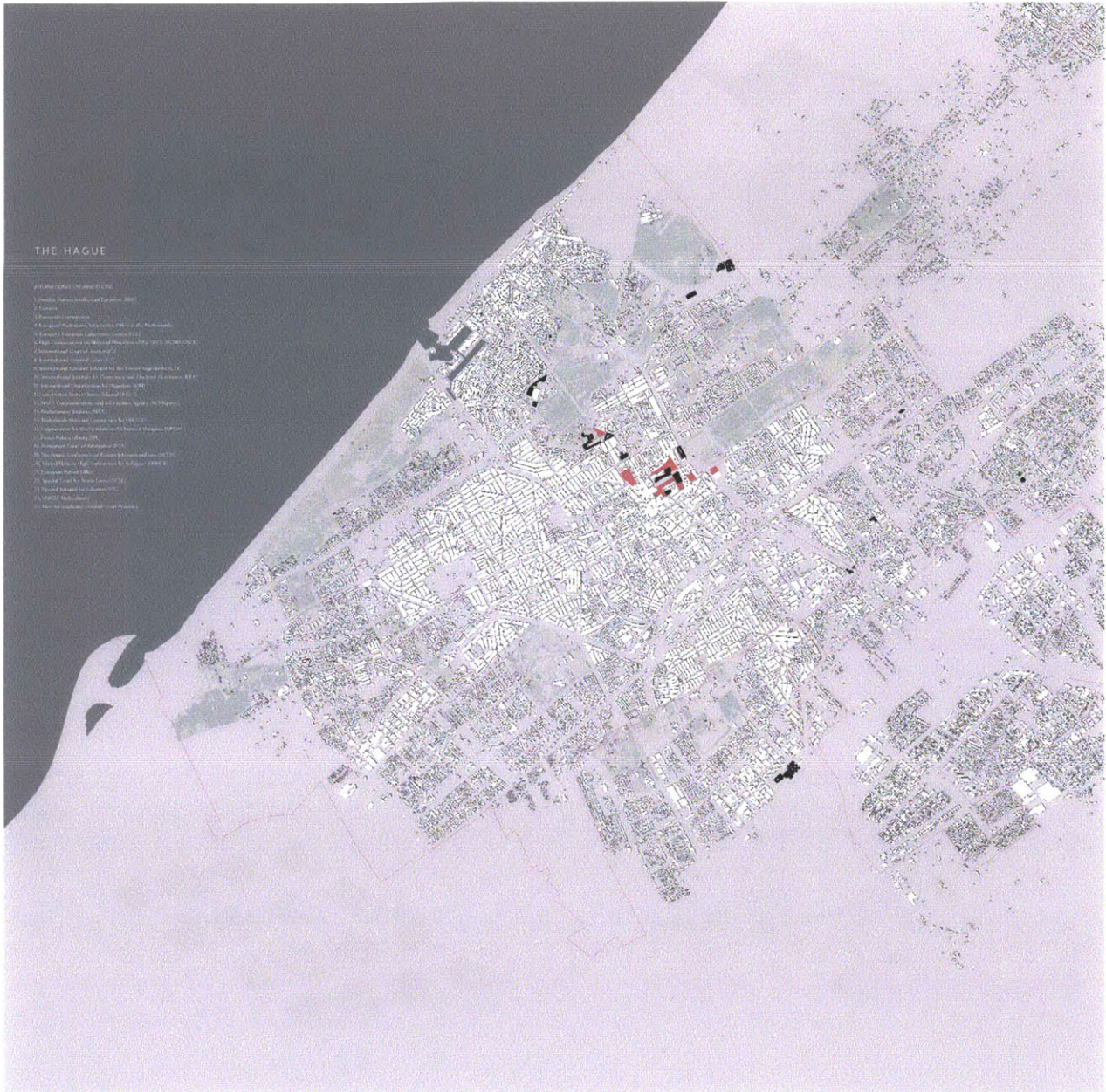


Global Collective THE ANTI-GLOBALIZATION MOVEMENT

In trying to gauge who might physically make up the collective that would visit ICC's current but perhaps soon to be anachronistic location in the Hague, the key precedent was the Anti-Globalization movement, which involved a series of protests in the early 2000s executed against meetings of the G8, World Trade Forum and World Economic Forum. The Anti-Globalization movement was an example of both a physical and networked global public.

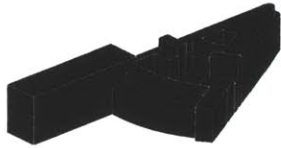


There could be extracted a number of common characteristics in the way these people gathered in terms of numbers, but also how they produced effects: street blockades, sound disruption, volume/mass of people blockades, spectacles (burning cars, banners), extended protests (camping, sit-ins), cultural draws (concerts, speakers, public forums).

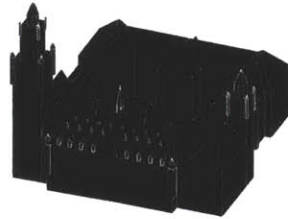


Site THE HAGUE

The site remains in the Hague where there exists an unusually high concentration of international institutions, not all associated with International Law. International tribunals located in the Hague include: Former Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone and Lebanon—each occupying their own building. Also in the Hague is the UN Judicial branch, the International Court of Justice, which holds jurisdiction in state-to-state disputes.



INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL
FOR THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA



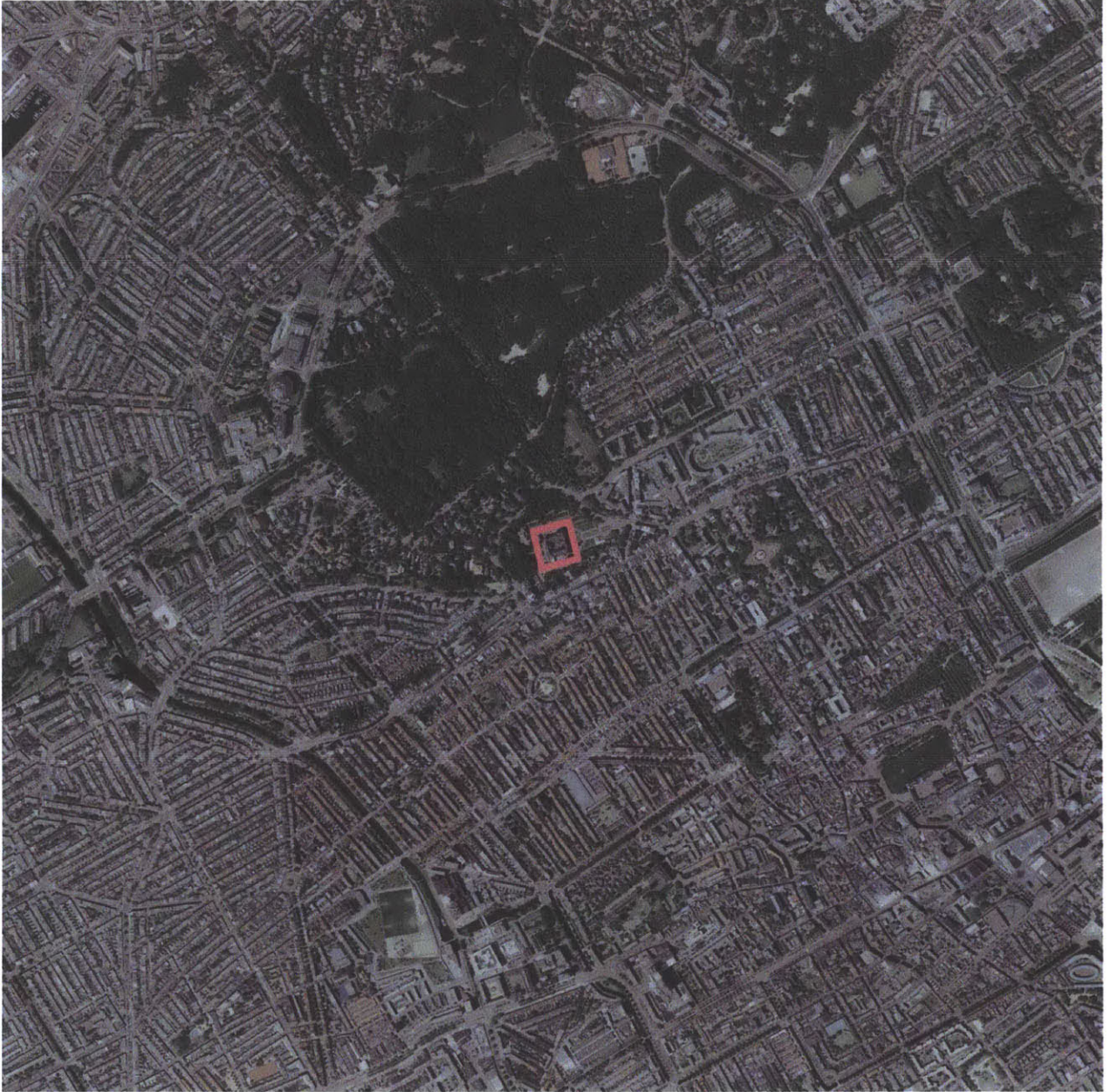
INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE
PEACE PALACE



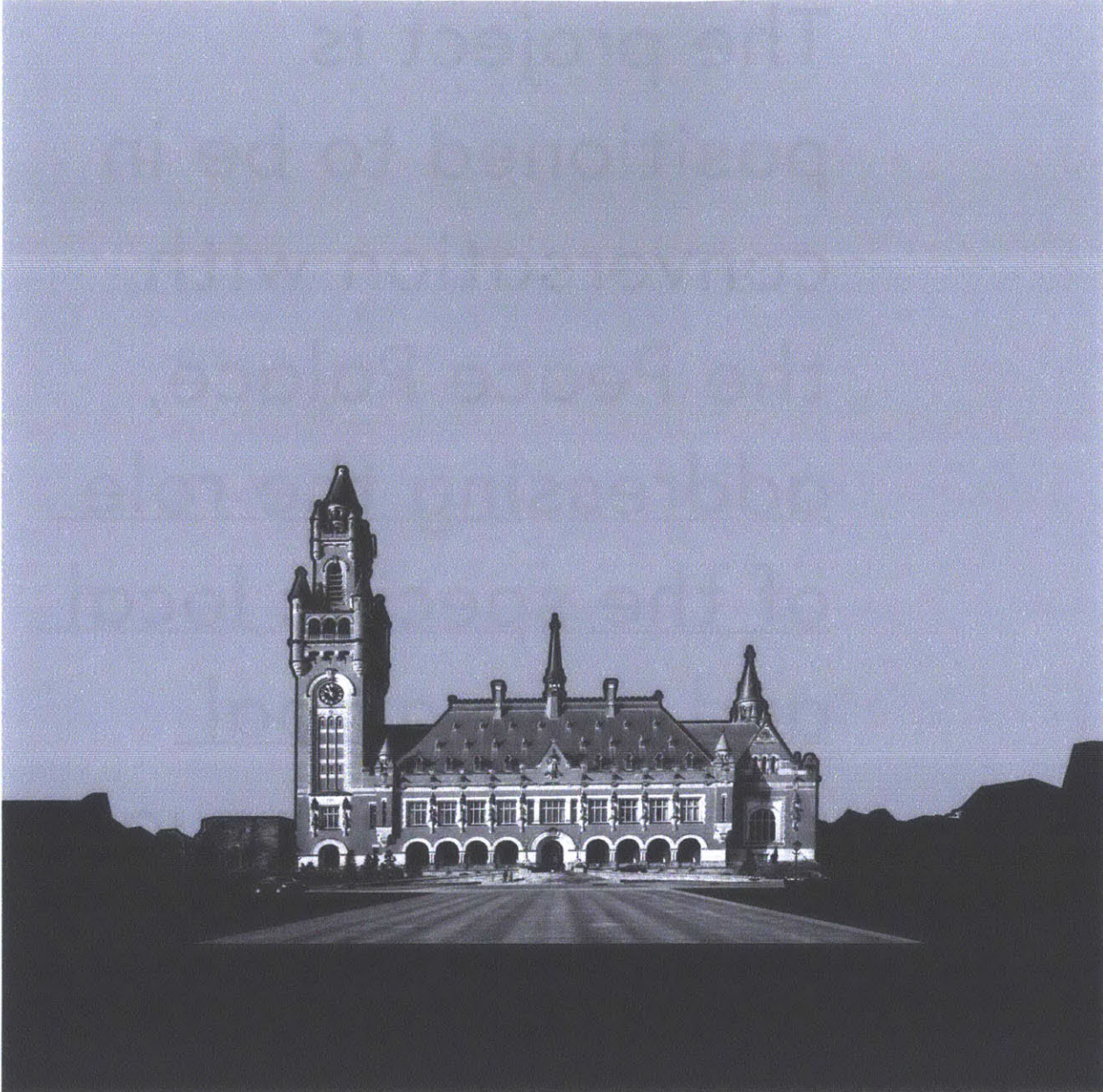
INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT



INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL
FOR SIERRA LEONE & LEBANON



Site



THE PEACE PALACE

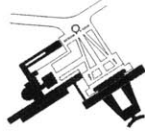
The ICJ is housed in the Peace Palace, which was constructed in 1913 by Andrew Carnegie, described as a "temple of peace . . . a holy place . . . an outward and visible sign . . . and a tangible existence known to the ends of the earth." Peace as totalizing object.

World Court

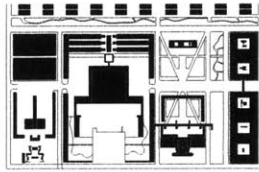
The project is positioned to be in conversation with the Peace Palace, addressing the role of the specific local and more global notion of the square, both as a form and as a place of gathering.



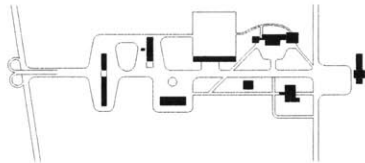
UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS
NEW YORK CITY
1946-1952
Le Corbusier



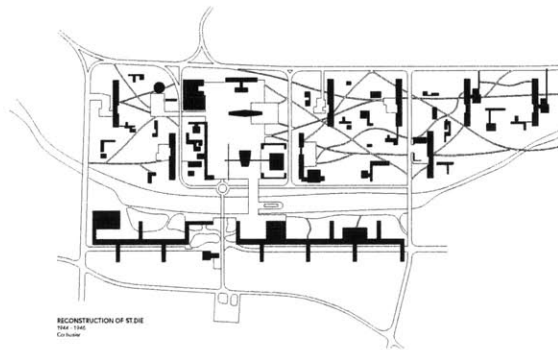
LEAGUE OF NATIONS PROPOSAL
GENEVA, 1929
Le Corbusier



MUNDANEUM
BRUSSELS, 1931
Le Corbusier



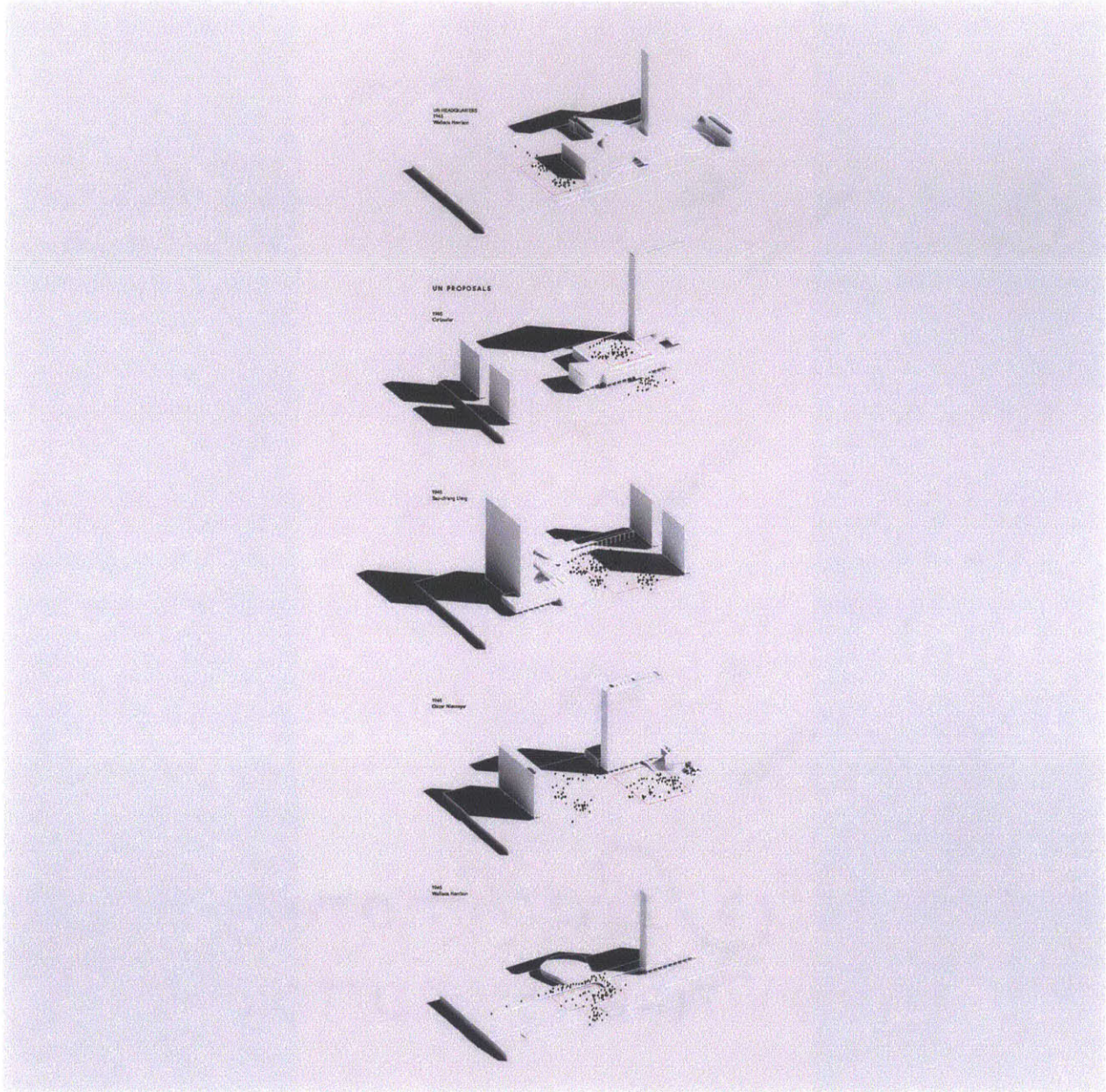
FERME RADIEUSE
LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS, 1935
Le Corbusier



RECONSTRUCTION OF ST DIE
1946-1966
Le Corbusier

CORBUSIER

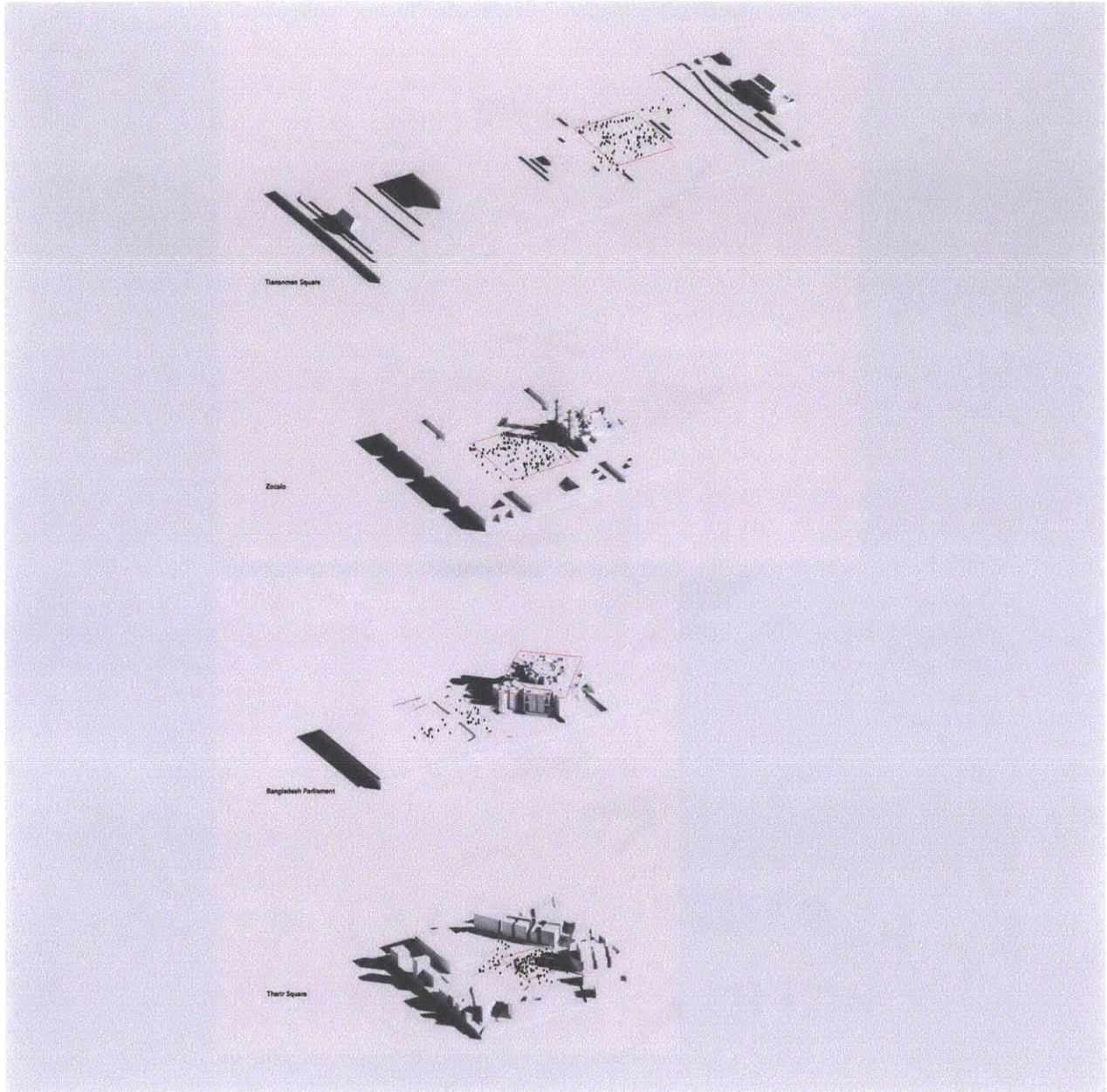
The project situates itself within the lineage of Corbusier, particularly in his changing attitudes towards form. In this progression from his proposal for the UN Headquarters to the reconstruction of St. Die, there is a shift in an attitude of civic space being defined by means of totality, a clear single object (in the UN) to an increasingly loose composition of buildings, where civic is defined more by fluid space than by a single totalizing perspective.



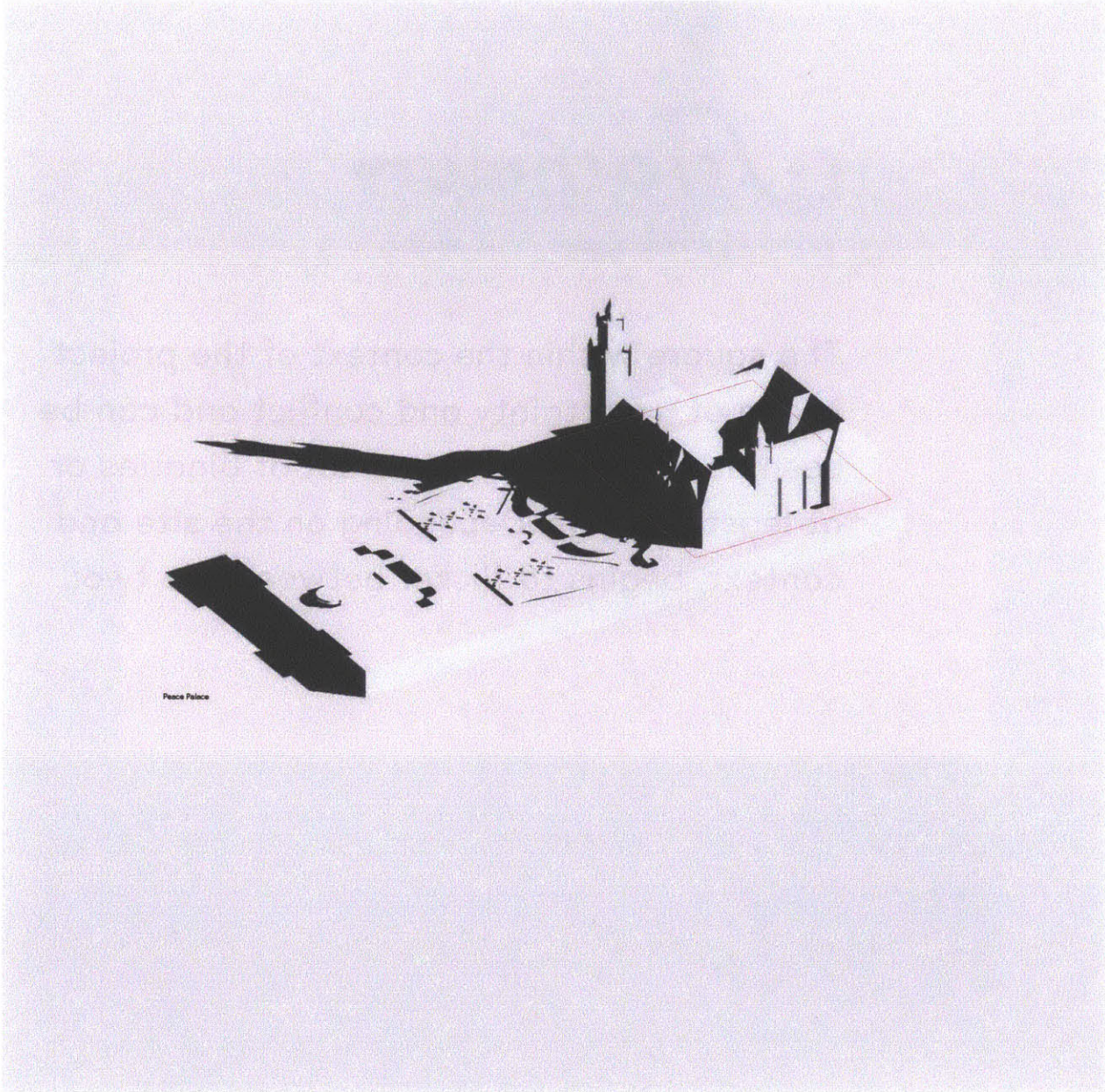
UNITED NATIONS
HEADQUARTERS

In relation to this are the design proposals of the UN headquarters in New York, where there is again, a certain totality being represented with relation to the square.

World Court



Under the idea of totality can also be positioned a number of historic squares and sites of gathering, Tiananmen Square, Zocalo Mexico City, Tahrir Square (produced as voids) – or, Kahns Parliament in Bangladesh and the Peace Palace (monumental square as massing).

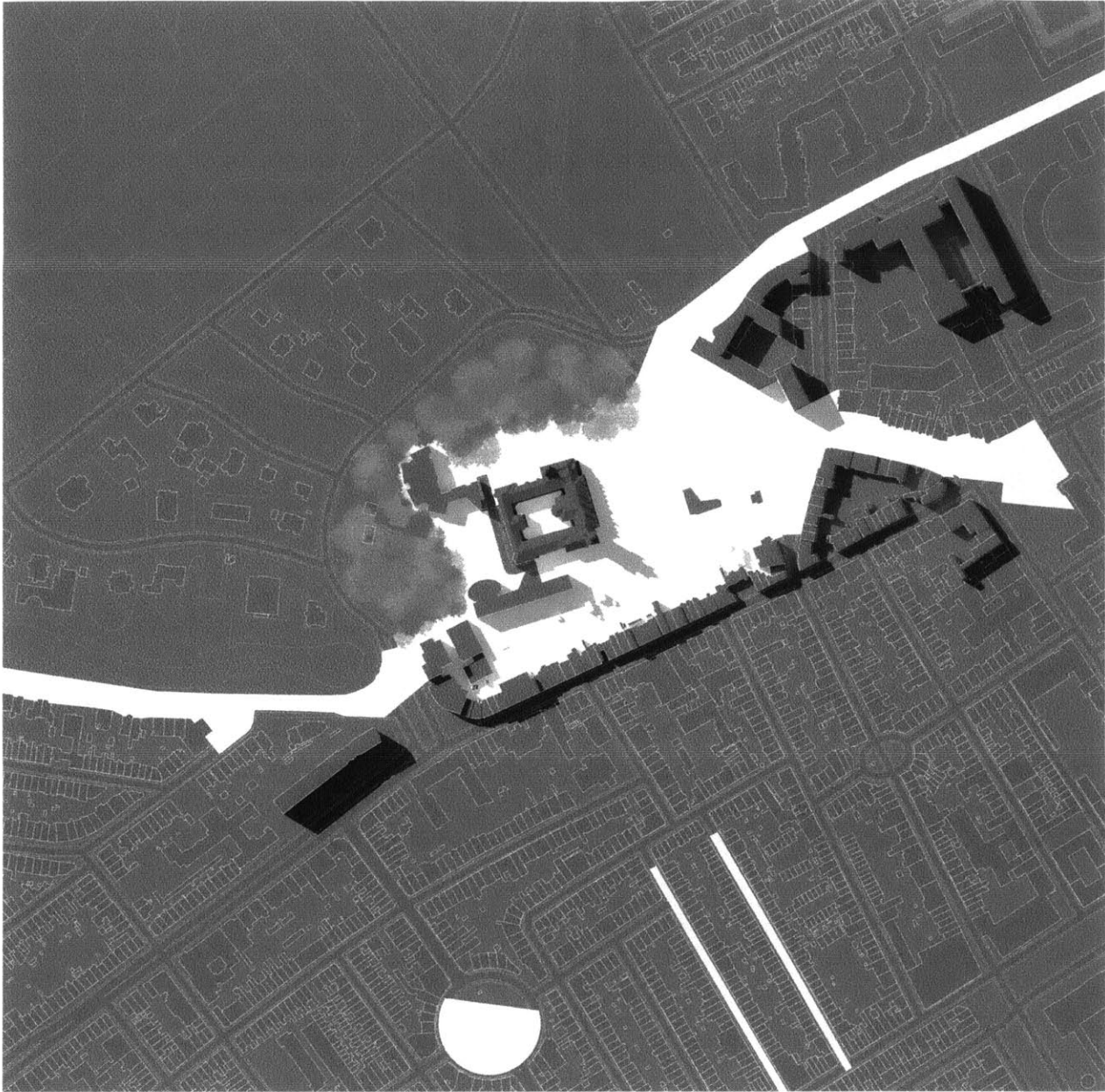


Peace Palace

The project operates somewhere in between these precedents, not re-cooperating the square in the historical sense, but also not resorting to the Modernist plaza.

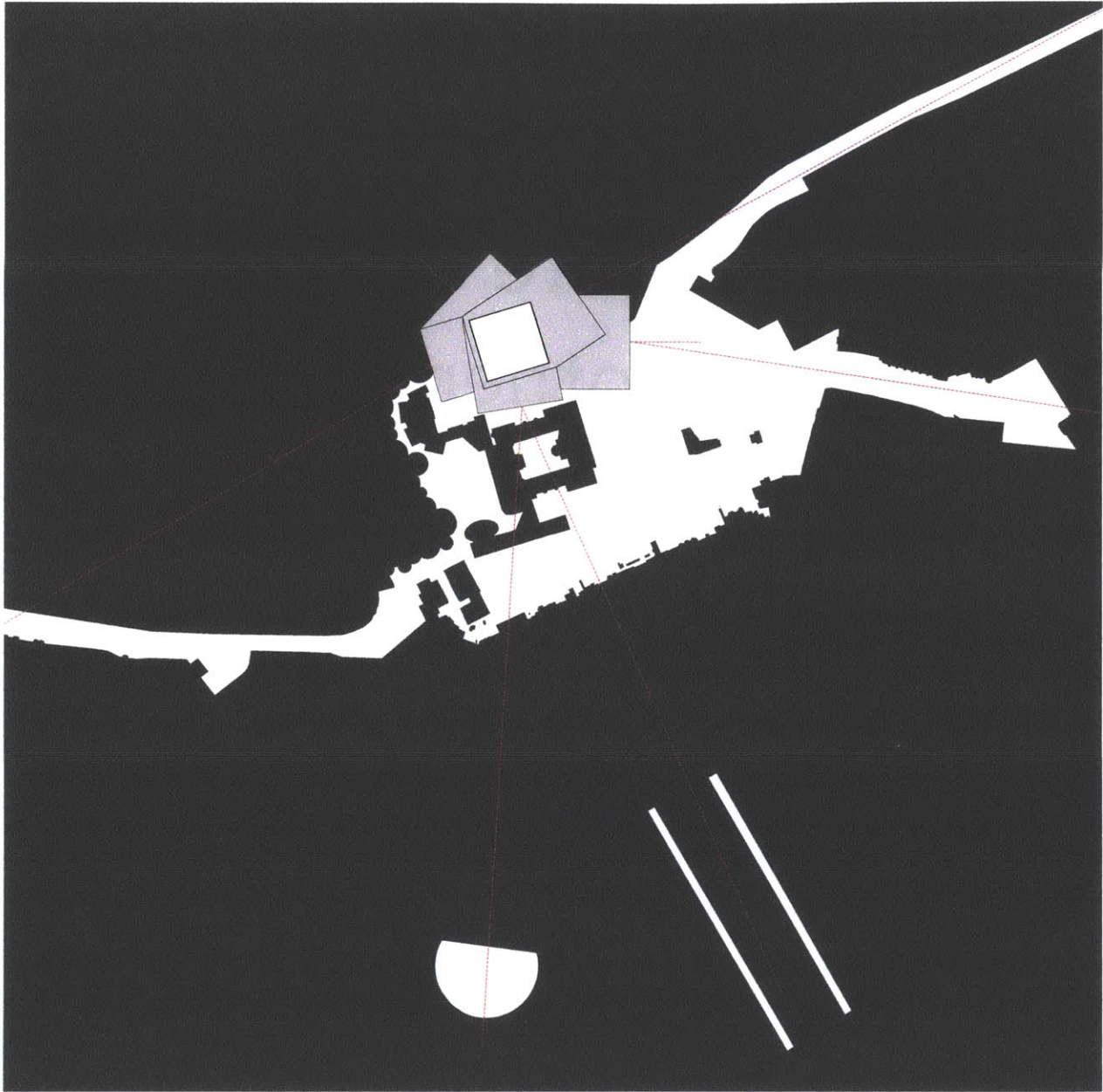
The square within the context of the project is one of uncertainty and conflict and can be seen as operating within a set of binaries or at least pairings. Depending on the site and context, begins to flicker between the two:

Irrelevant and
Monumental
Commenting and
Re-cooperation
Stand-In and Object
Discharged and
Charged
Networked and Local
Present and Empty



Massing

The project operates as an object in response to other objects, playing with the inability or ability so understand its totality.

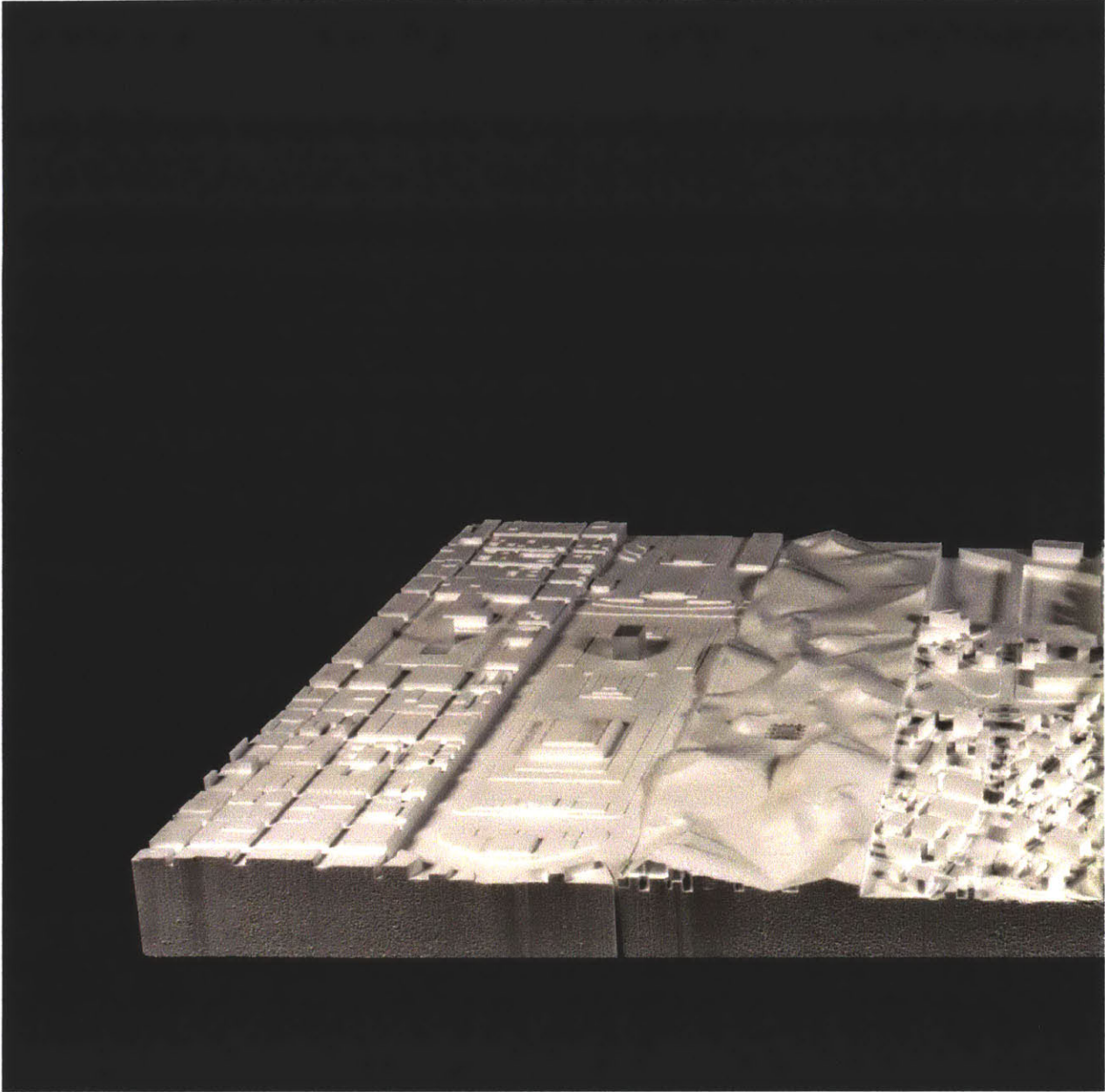


SITE STRATEGY

On the outside, the massing responds to its context as a series of rotating volumes strung off of a central void. Any notion of a constitution as an object from the exterior is completely undermined by the void. The project is much less definitive and certain object than its predecessors.

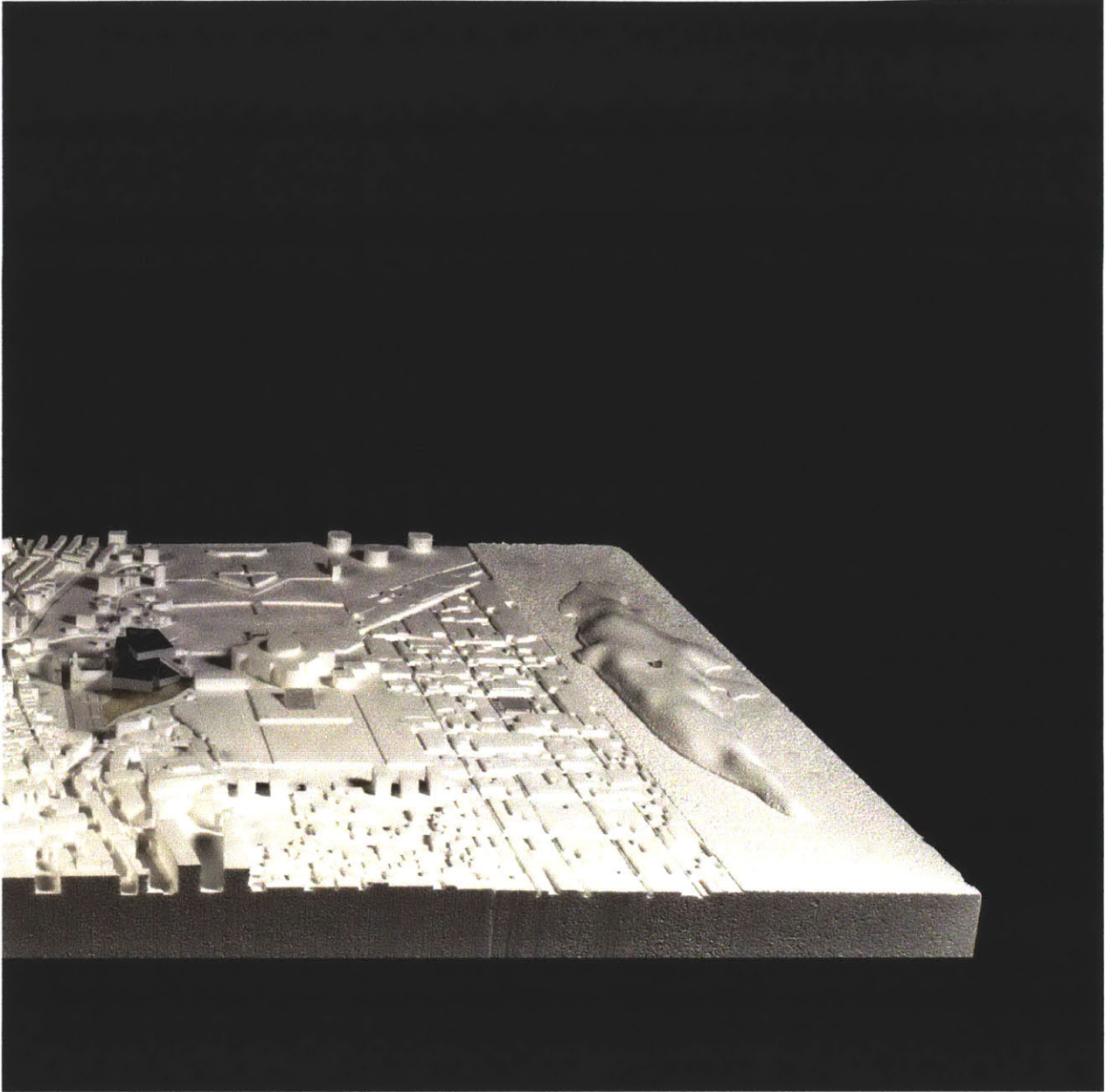
World Court

The void is
meant to
resonate
with other
things like it
globally.



REMOTE EVENTS

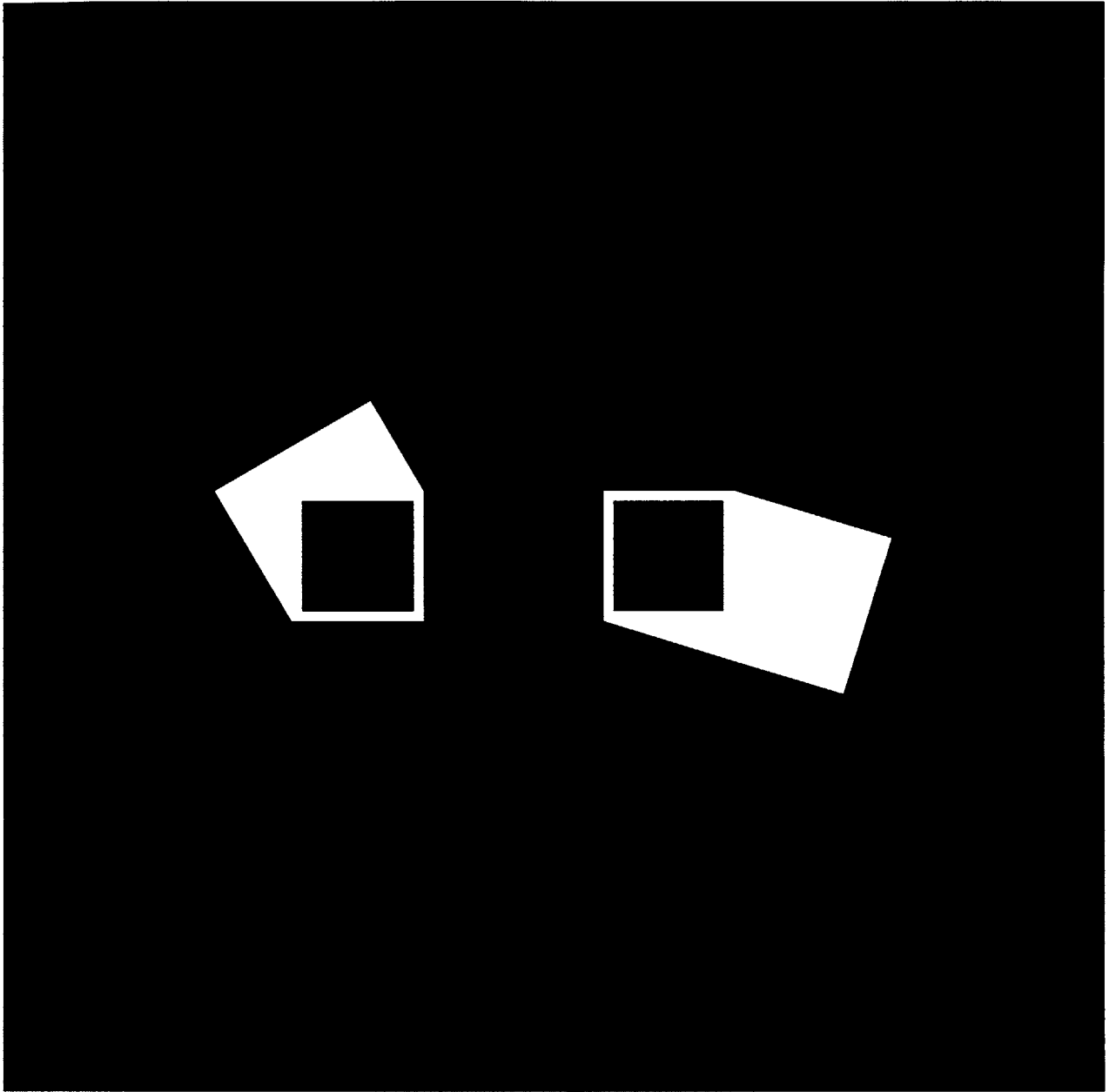
The void could literally help set up a network of remote events happening somewhere else with respect to the court. In some cases, the urban fabric already has a history of gathering or it inherently provides this site of gathering. In others sites, the delayed square is what allows for gathering and enables the capacity to produce effects.



World Court

The Void

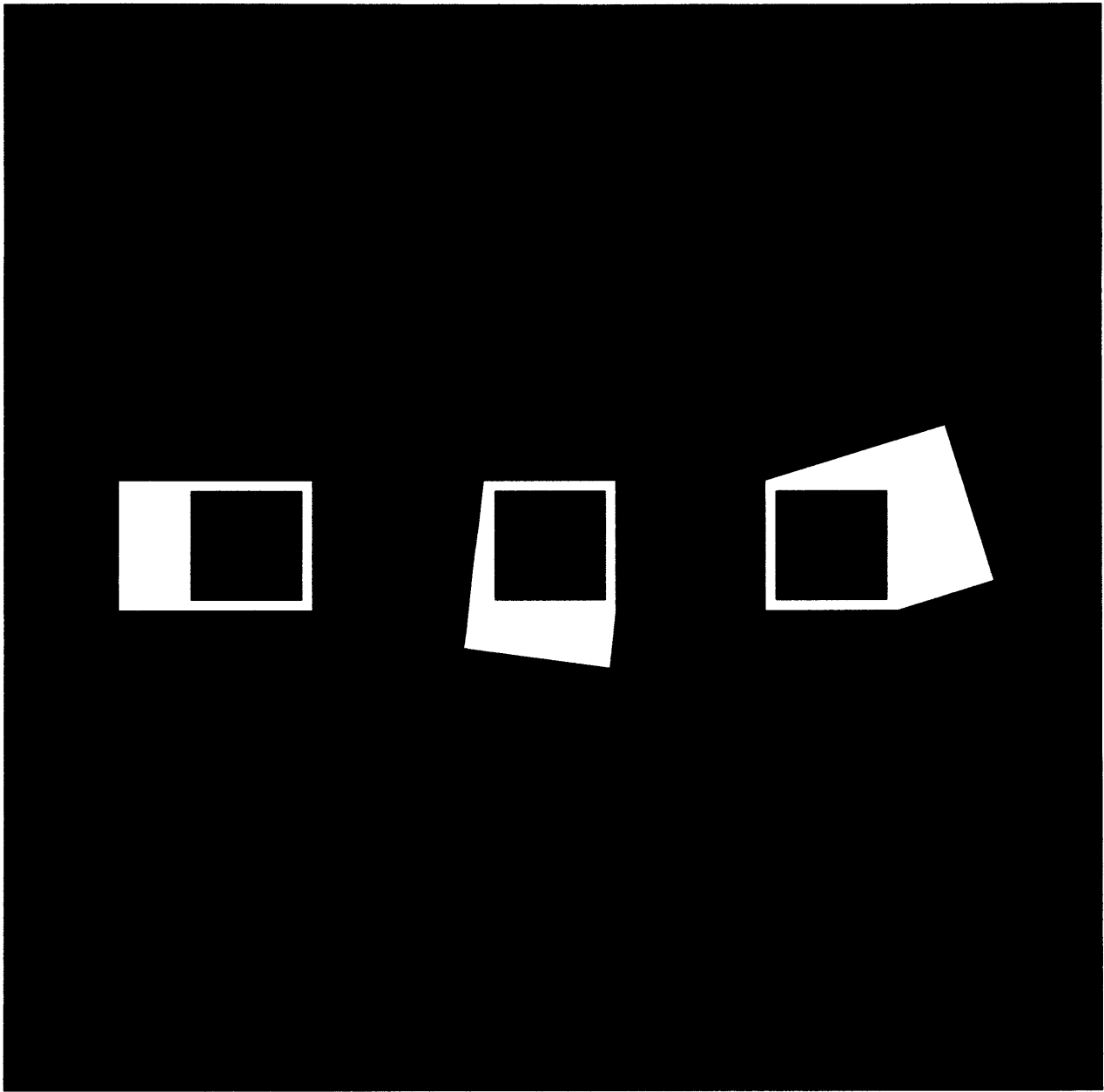
The network,
and forms of
organizational
and architectural
redundancy is an
inevitable dimension
into which the ICC
would have to move
post its Hague
phase.



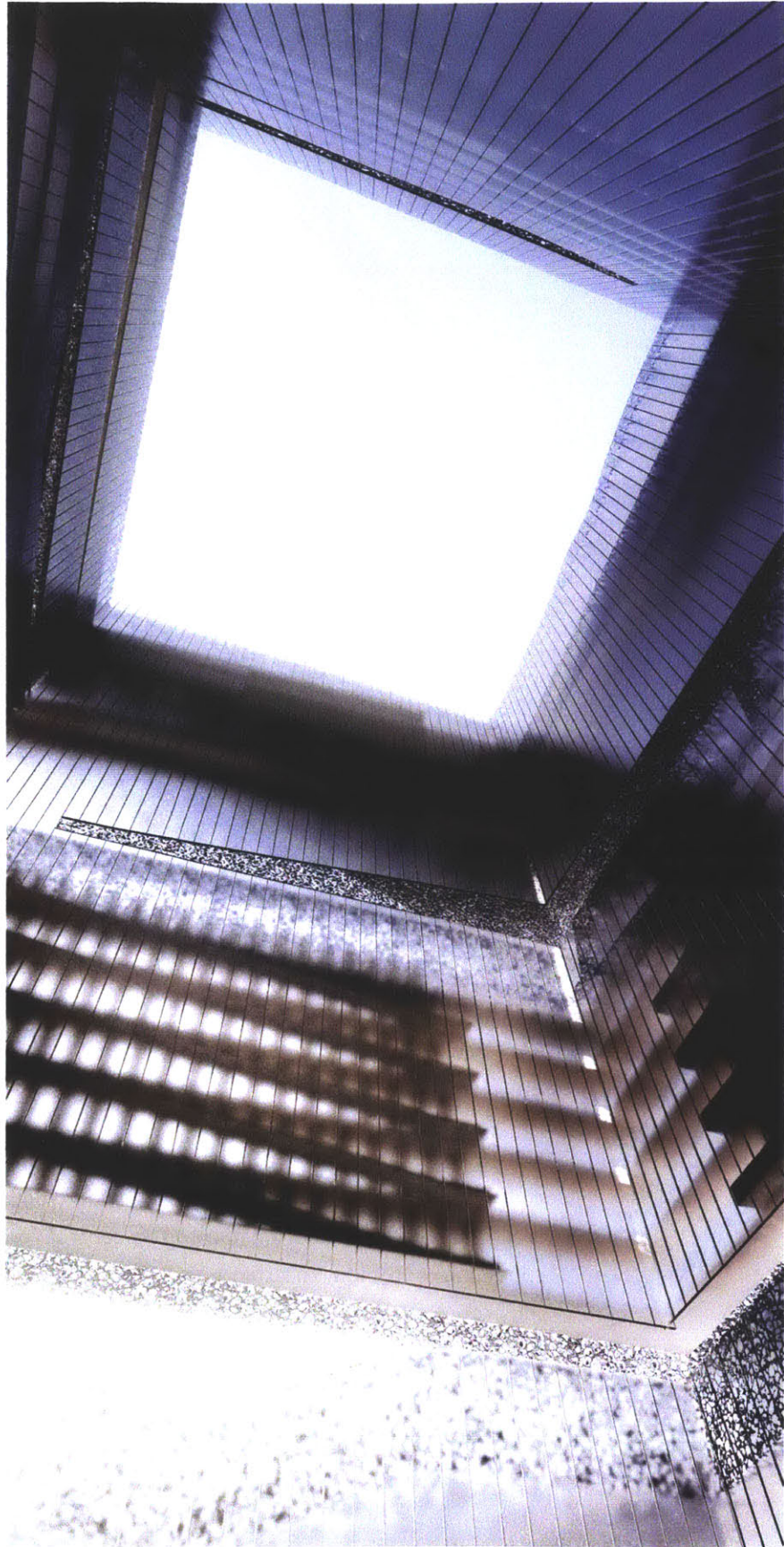
The Void

FIGURE / GROUND
PLANS

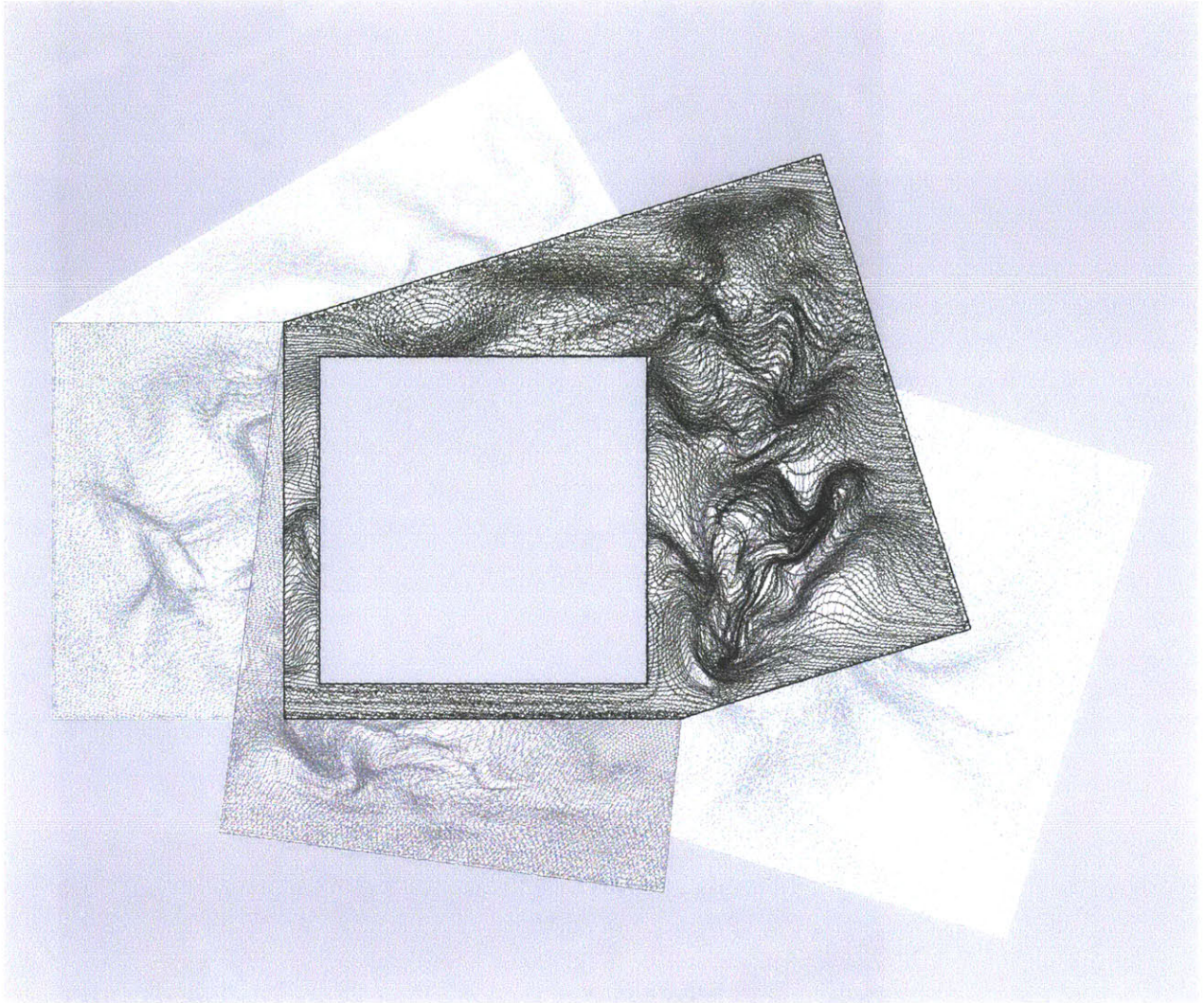
In each individual plan a tension is produced between void and program volume—the void that anchors them also completely undermines them. The rotations occur in opposing directions to produce differing effects. Although The plans are stacked, they produce very different elevations, again, to undermine the certainty and totality of the object.



The Void

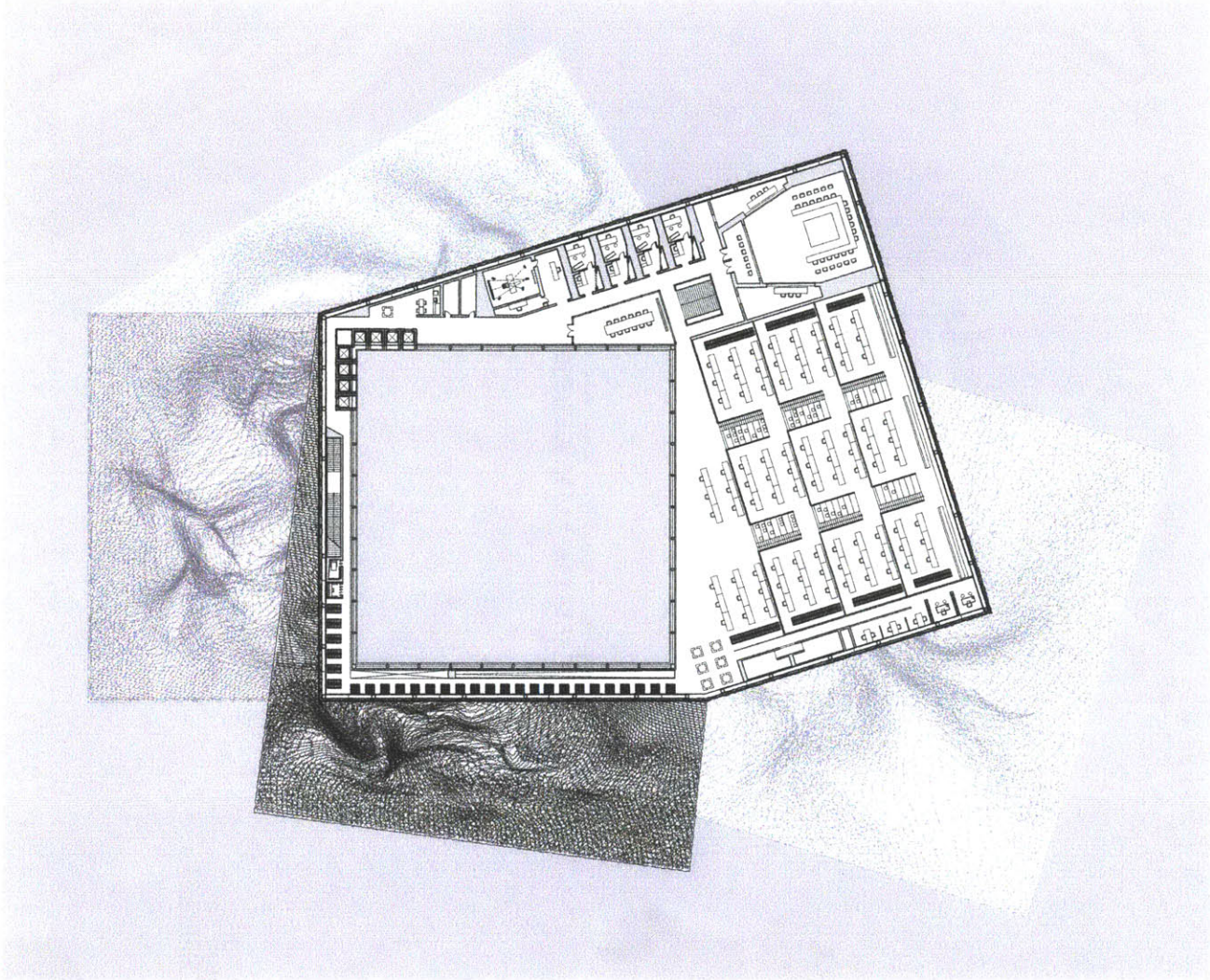


World Court



Plans ROOF PLAN

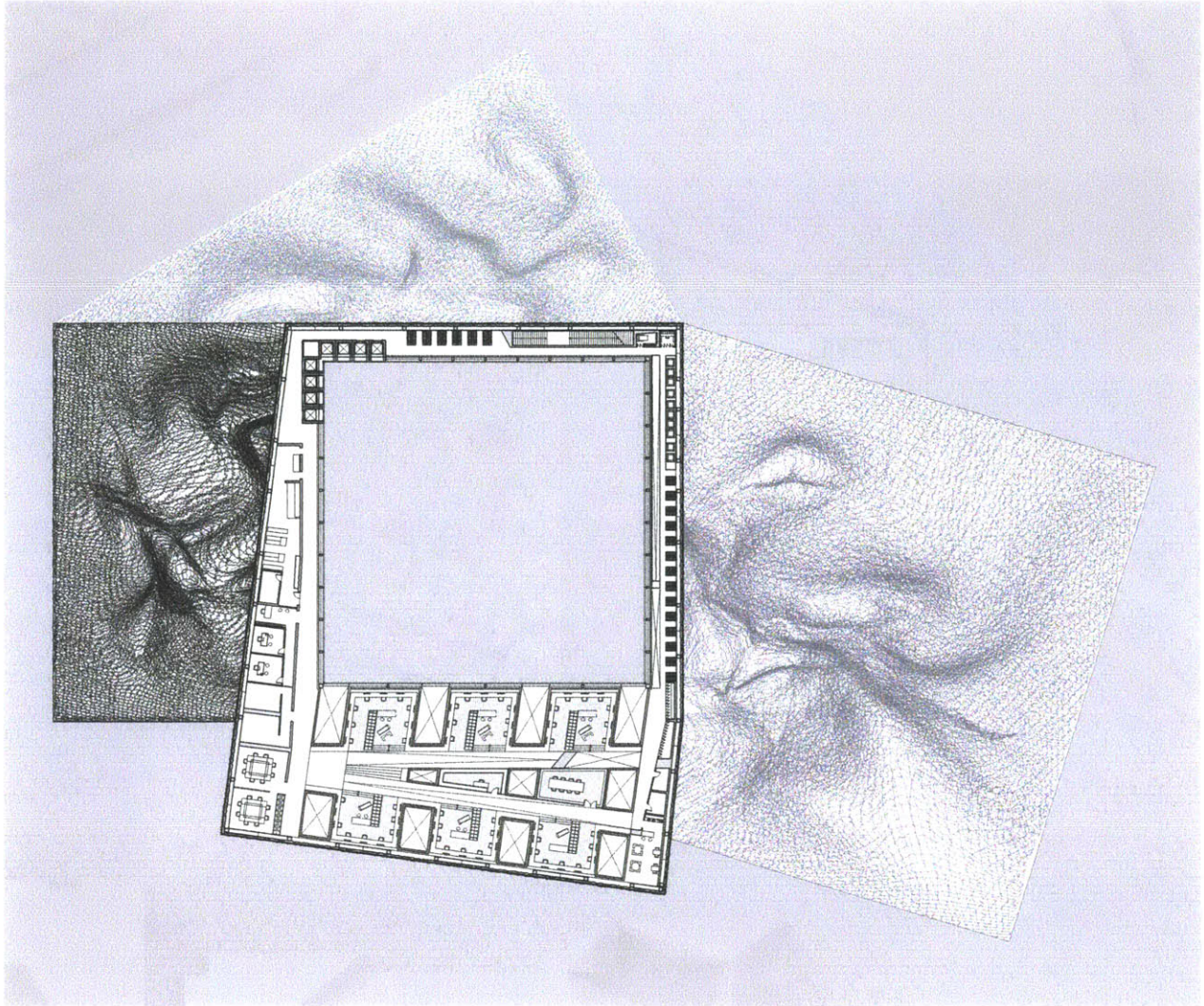
The plans are organized according to a series of transactions for which they contain: Security/Entrance, Gathering (Courtrooms), Waiting, Administration and Research. The relationship to the central void establishes a strategy to space make in plan, the thin band along the void extends and expands into the program volume to serve as a primary organizer. This establishes a certain grain to which the plans become organized against.



RESEARCH

This plan holds both the judge and prosecutor offices. There maintains a central shared "War Room" used as an overview space for current and future situations. The prosecution is organized as a series of trays that can be occupied by various teams working on separate situations. The judges are organized as a series of individual offices, which a central "Skype" room for networked meetings.

World Court

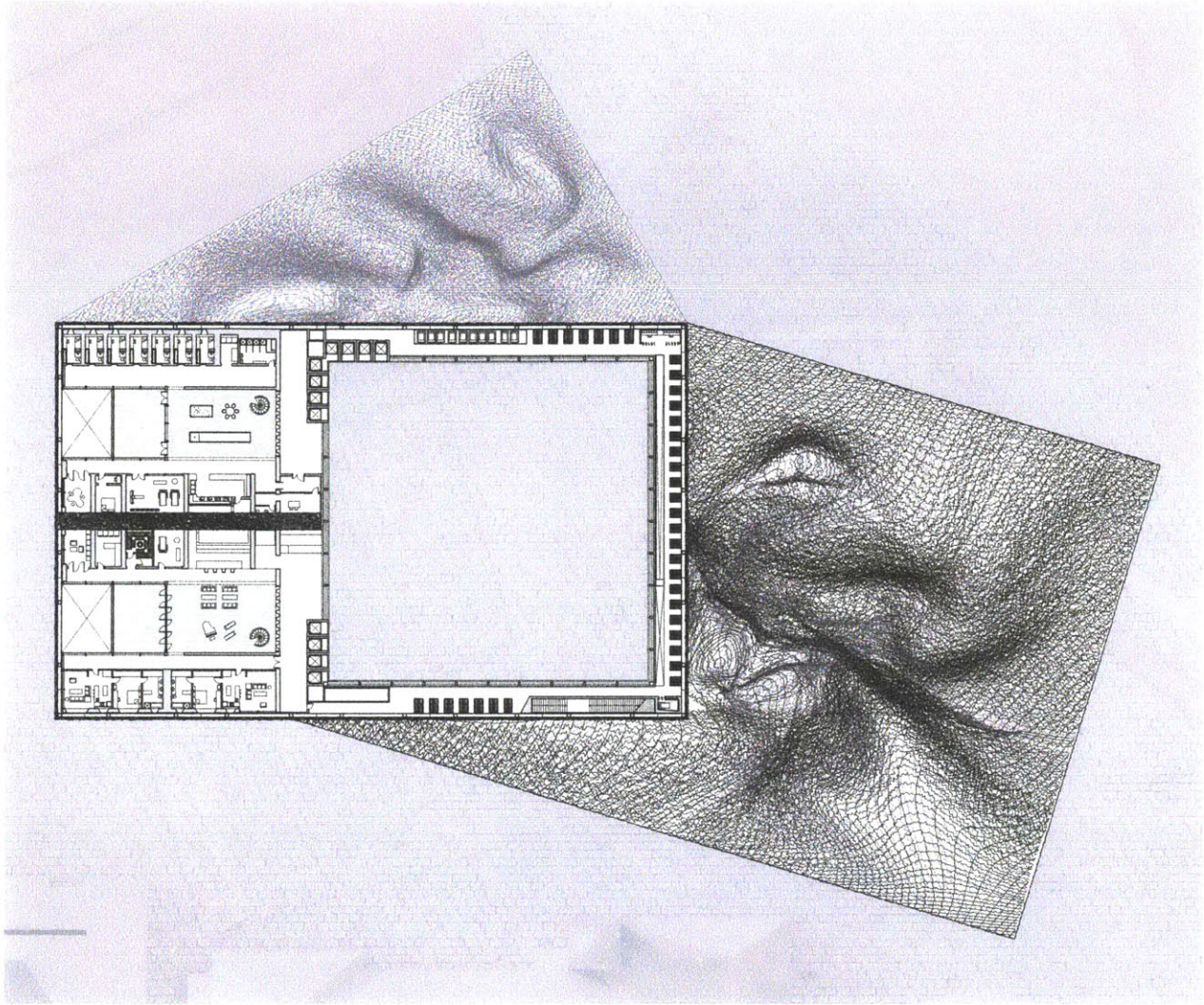


Plans

ADMINISTRATION

This plan is punctuated by a series of light wells and is stitched together with one continuous desk corresponding to the ramped central circulation.

Also occupying this plan are the archival support spaces. The archive occupies the this band lining that central void, assuming a sort of monumentality. All programs require access to the archive, and it is continuous across the entire project volume, rotating in relation to the plans. The archive is seen as a place of research and memory, with facilities for researchers to come research and document the proceedings of the court.

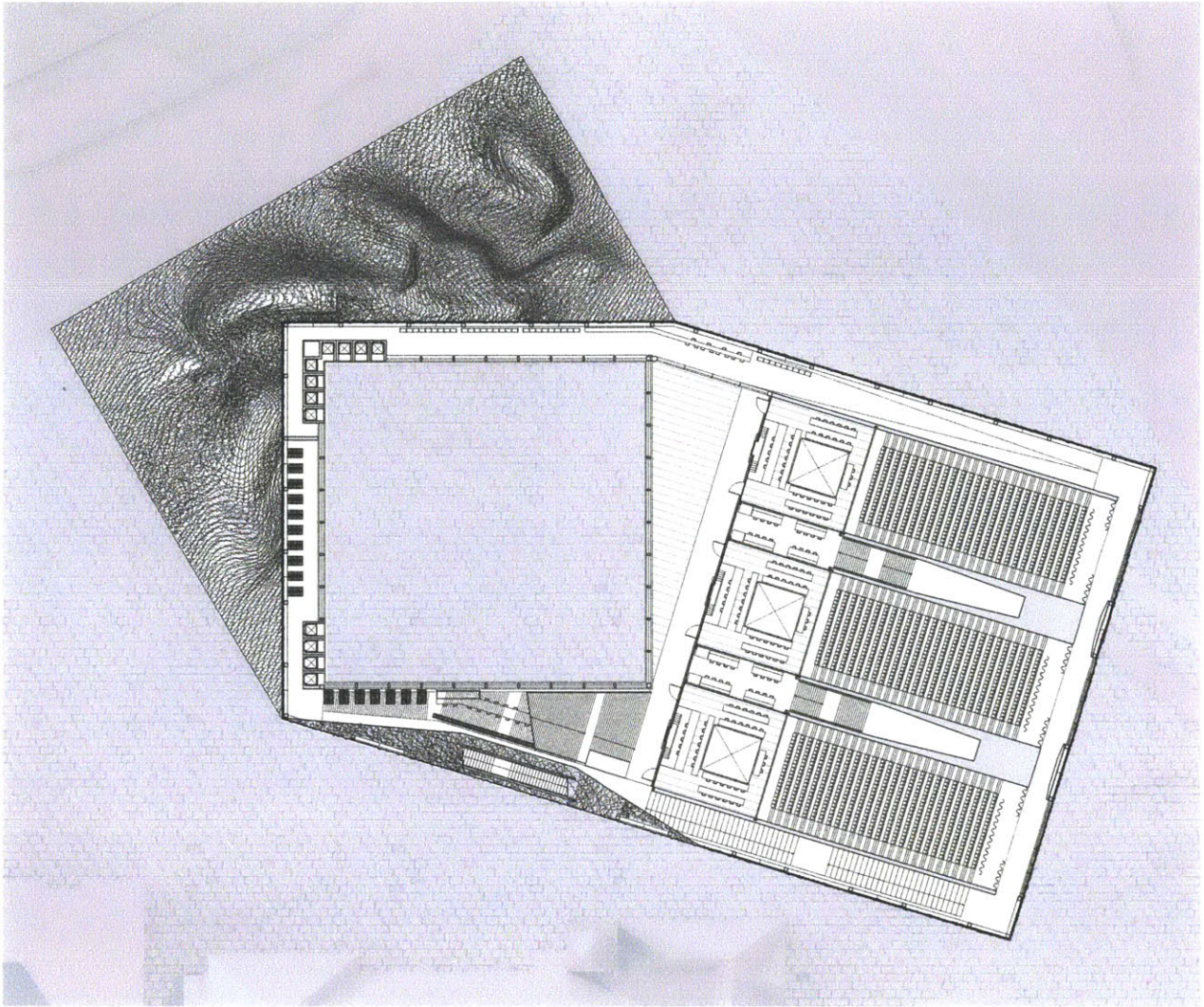


LIVING

This plan supports life and speaks to the extended temporal nature of the trials, with the potential to continue for months and even years. Accommodations are provided for both judges coming on specific cases, as well as for the subjects on trial. These two living quarters are self-similar in volume and massing, with each one providing specific programs for the persons occupying them:

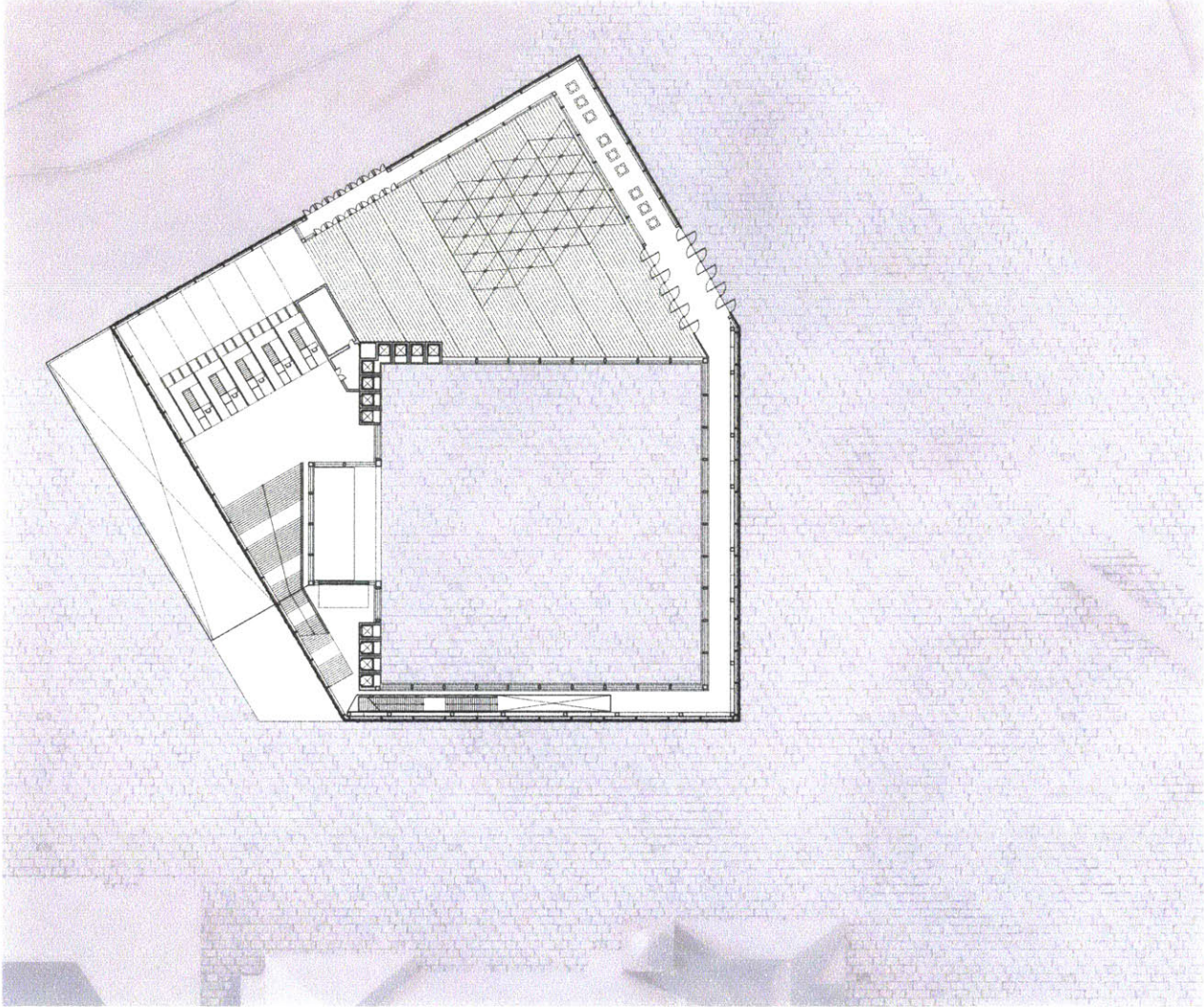
Judge Quarters: Bar doubling as VIP room, sauna, exercise area, library, access to the archive, full apartments, concierge.

Criminal Quarters: Putting green, shared kitchen, common area, security guards, conjugal room, visiting children's room.



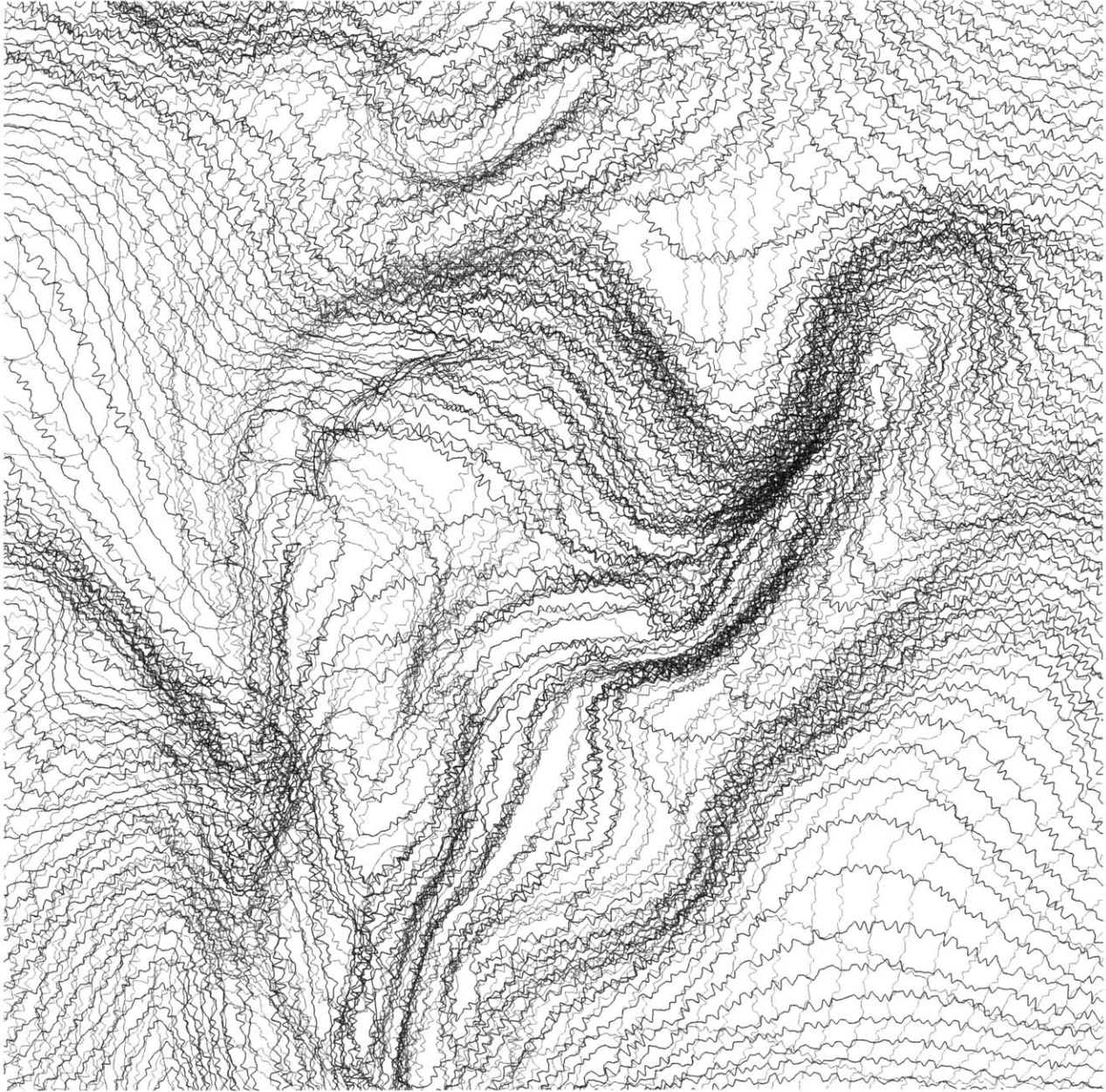
Plans COURTROOMS

The three courtrooms are given as identical volumes, taking an ideal form that is part of a larger historical lineage. The public viewing extends out from courtroom and can be occupied to various capacities depending on the size of the trial.

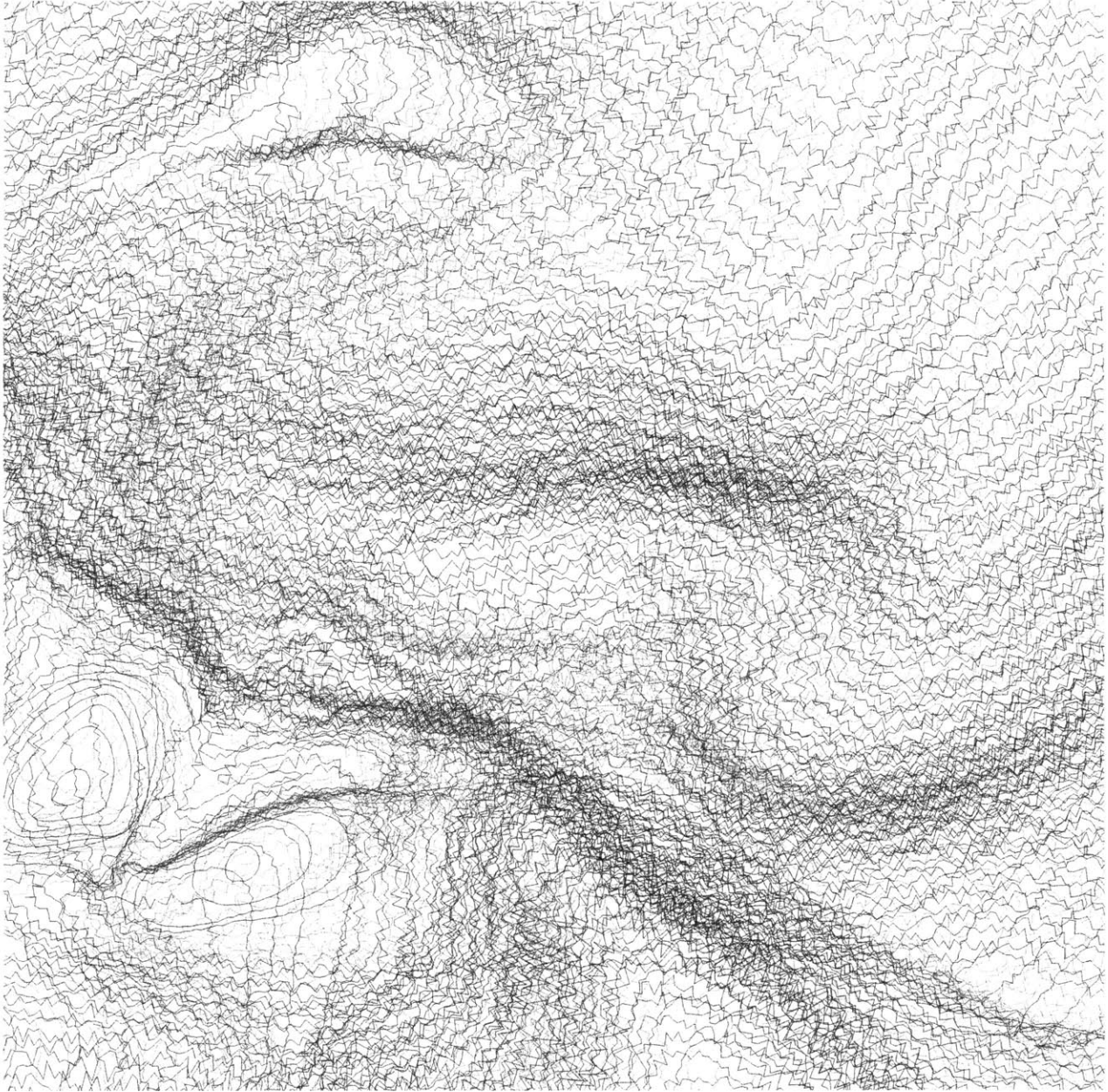


SECURITY /
ENTRANCE

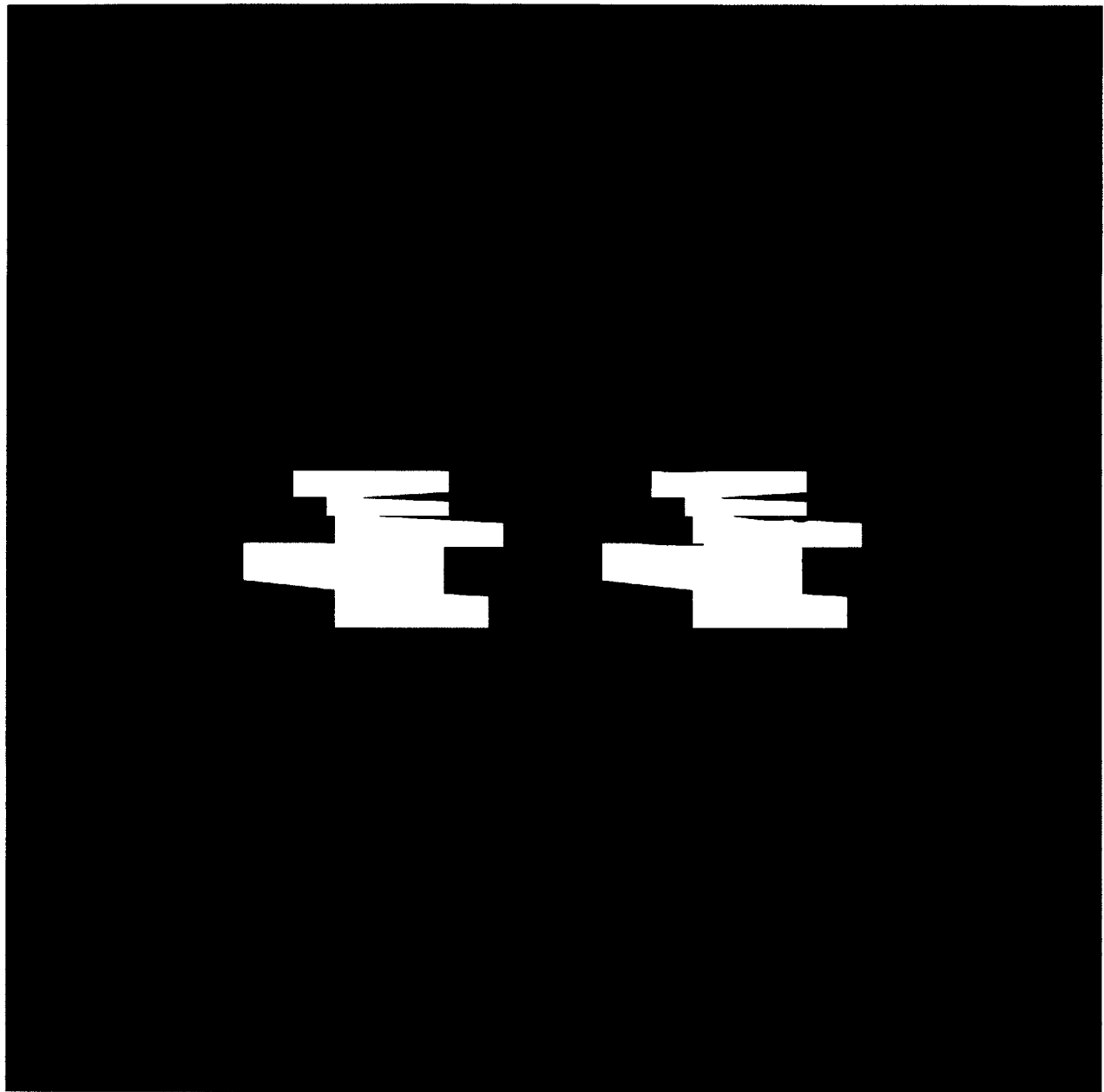
Occupying the ground plan are the security facilities and main public entrances to the Court. A large portion of this plan is evacuated in order to facilitate a public gallery of the current situations on trial. The gallery is organized as a series of bands that correspond to each case, both the prosecution and defence curate a wall of this exhibition space providing grounds for both information and disinformation.



Erosions



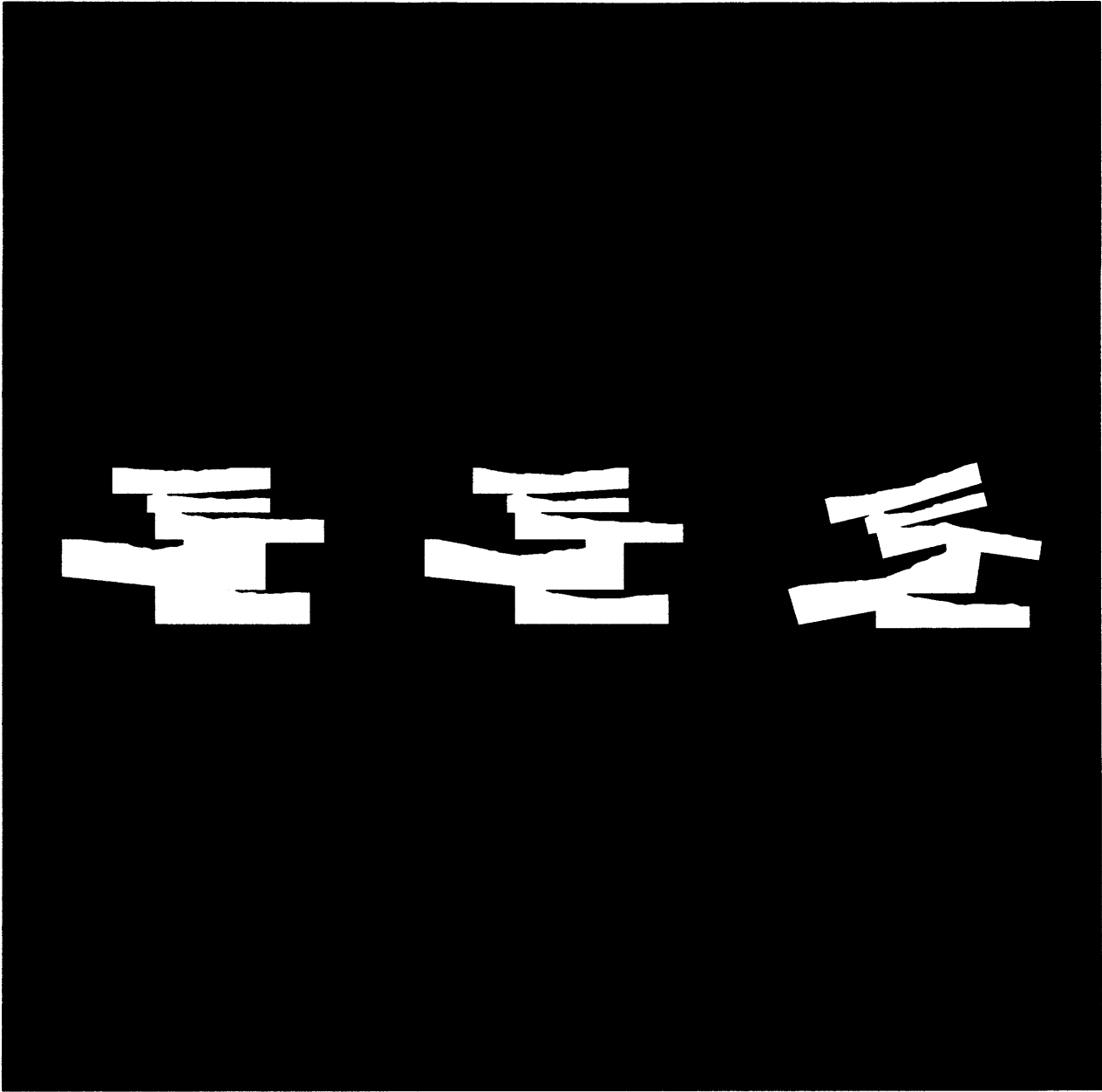
A series of erosions are planned to destabilize the project over time sectionally.



Erosions

FIGURE / GROUND
SECTIONS

The erosions are facilitated by a material uncertainty that allows the project to become eroded and undermined throughout the occupation of the project. These erosions are considered temporally and increase in severity the longer the building is in use—the erosions occur as a result of the occupation of people as well as through the increasing toxicity in the air. The erosive surfaces are also where the public enters the project, they are entirely unmediated by the court and provide a space of irresolution and conflict, allowing the public to produce effects, learning from the examples of the Anti-Globalization movement.



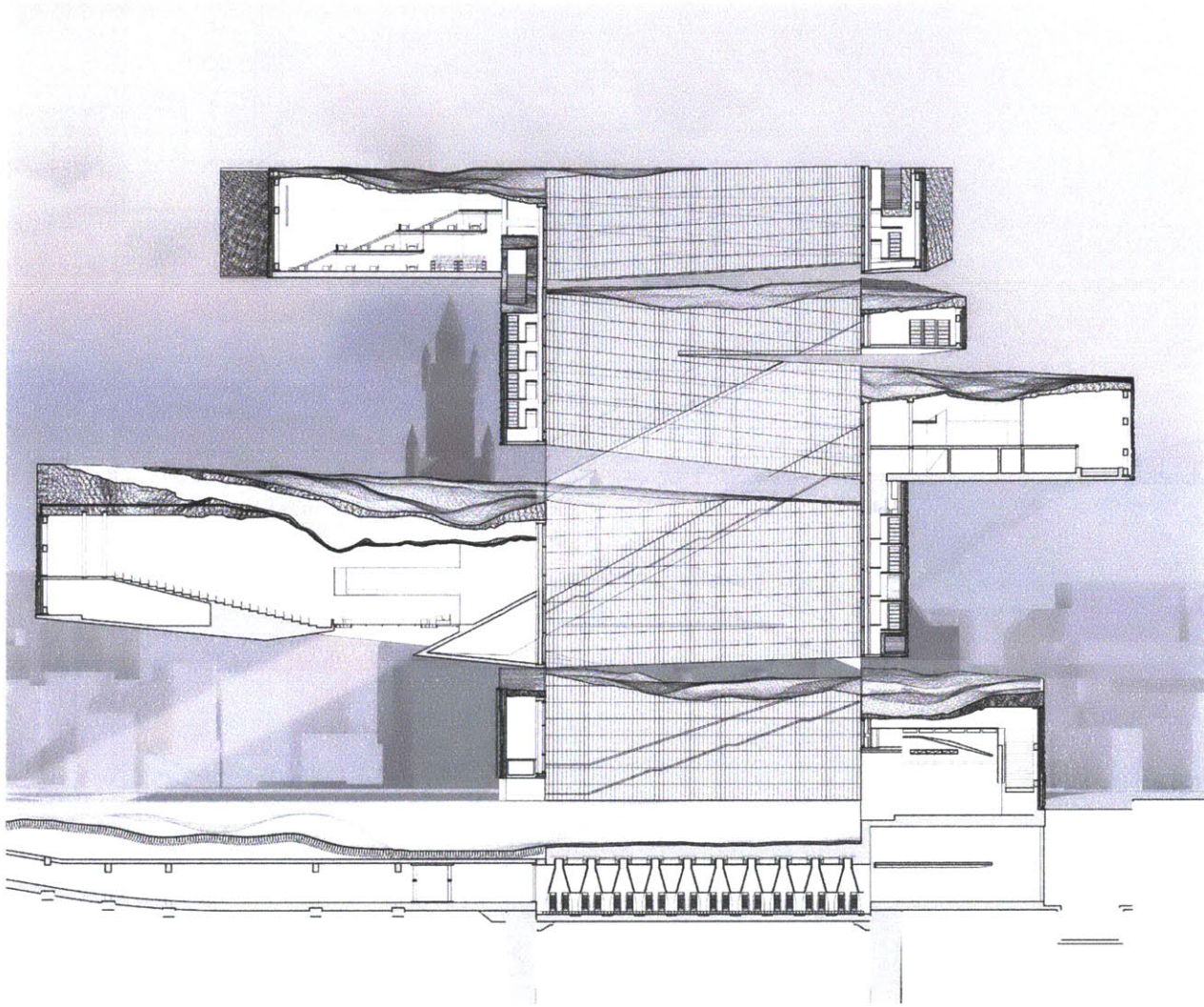
World Court



Erosions

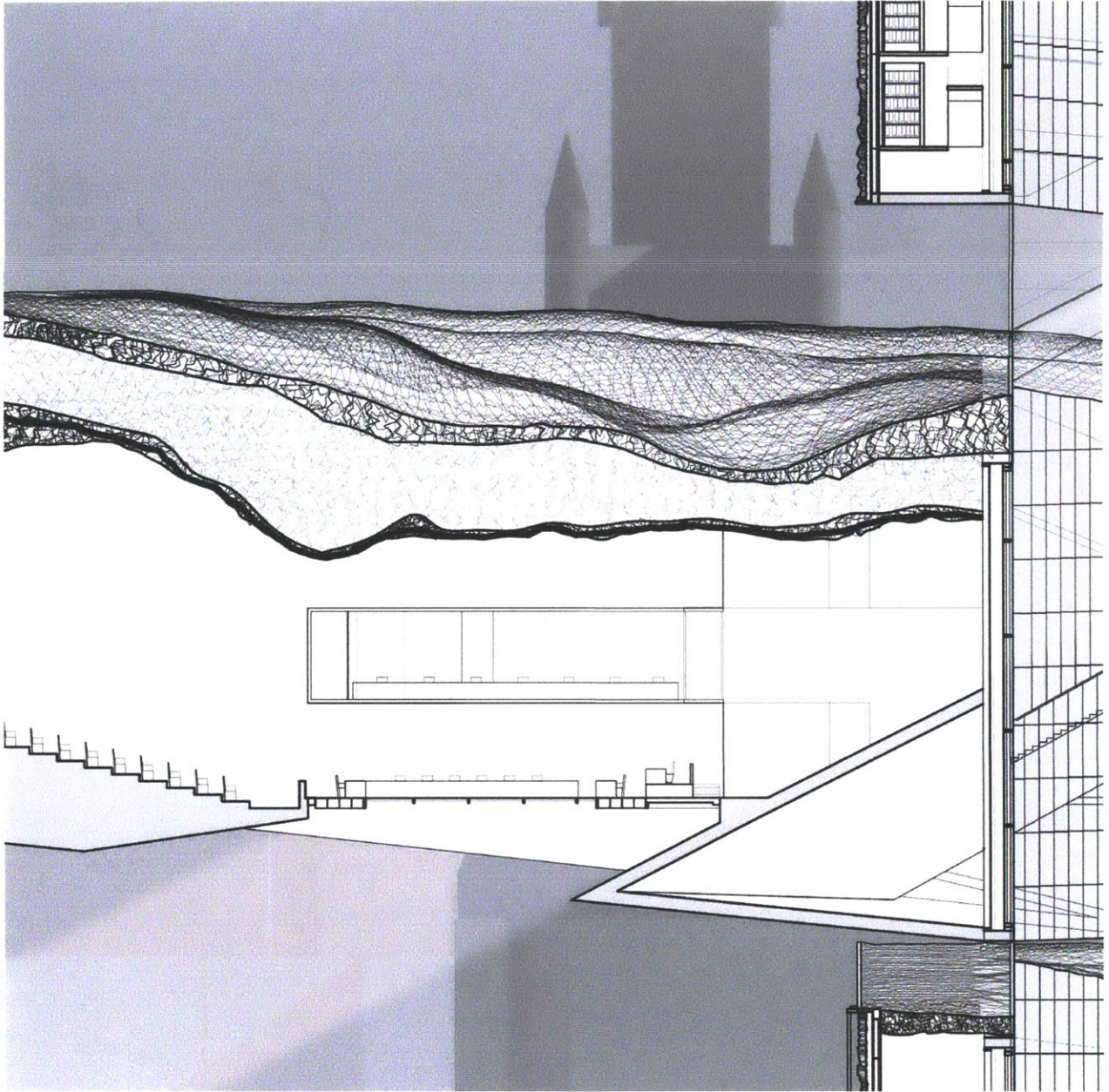
PRIMARY SECTION

Seen here is the central erosion occurring over courtroom and the corresponding erosions on all subsequent volumes. The underbelly of the courtroom volume is carved away as to allow for views directly into the courtroom from the outdoor public plaza. This view corridor continues to link with the public surface on the opposing volume. Lining the void, public circulation links the stacked public erosion planes, this coincides with the archive occupying same narrow portion of the plan.

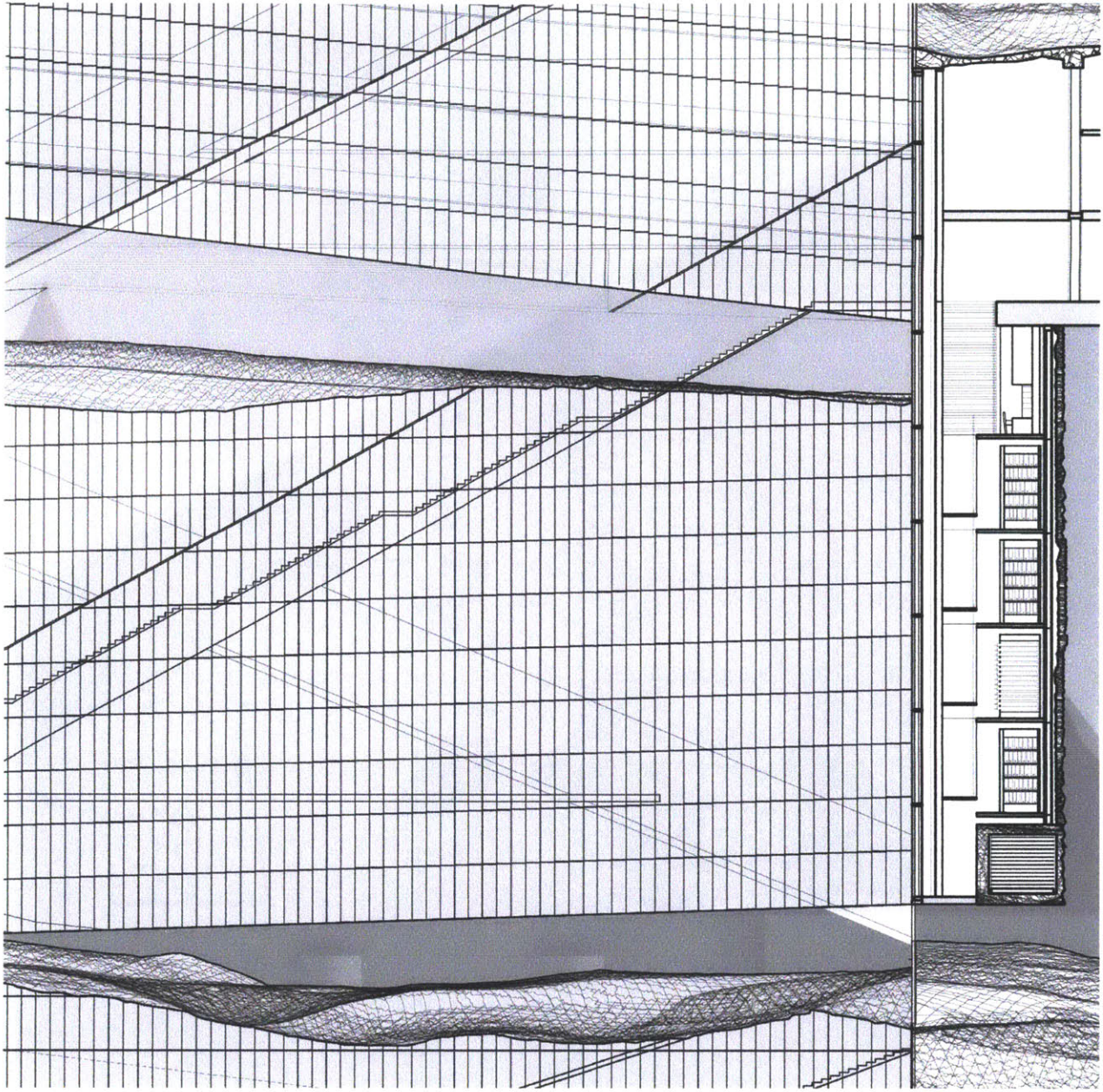


Servers are positioned under the plaza heating the surface in the winter and the underground portion also serves as the primary entrance for the various subjects of the Court accessed by car. The building concedes a portion to allow for the occupation of a public stage addressing the plaza at the base of the void.

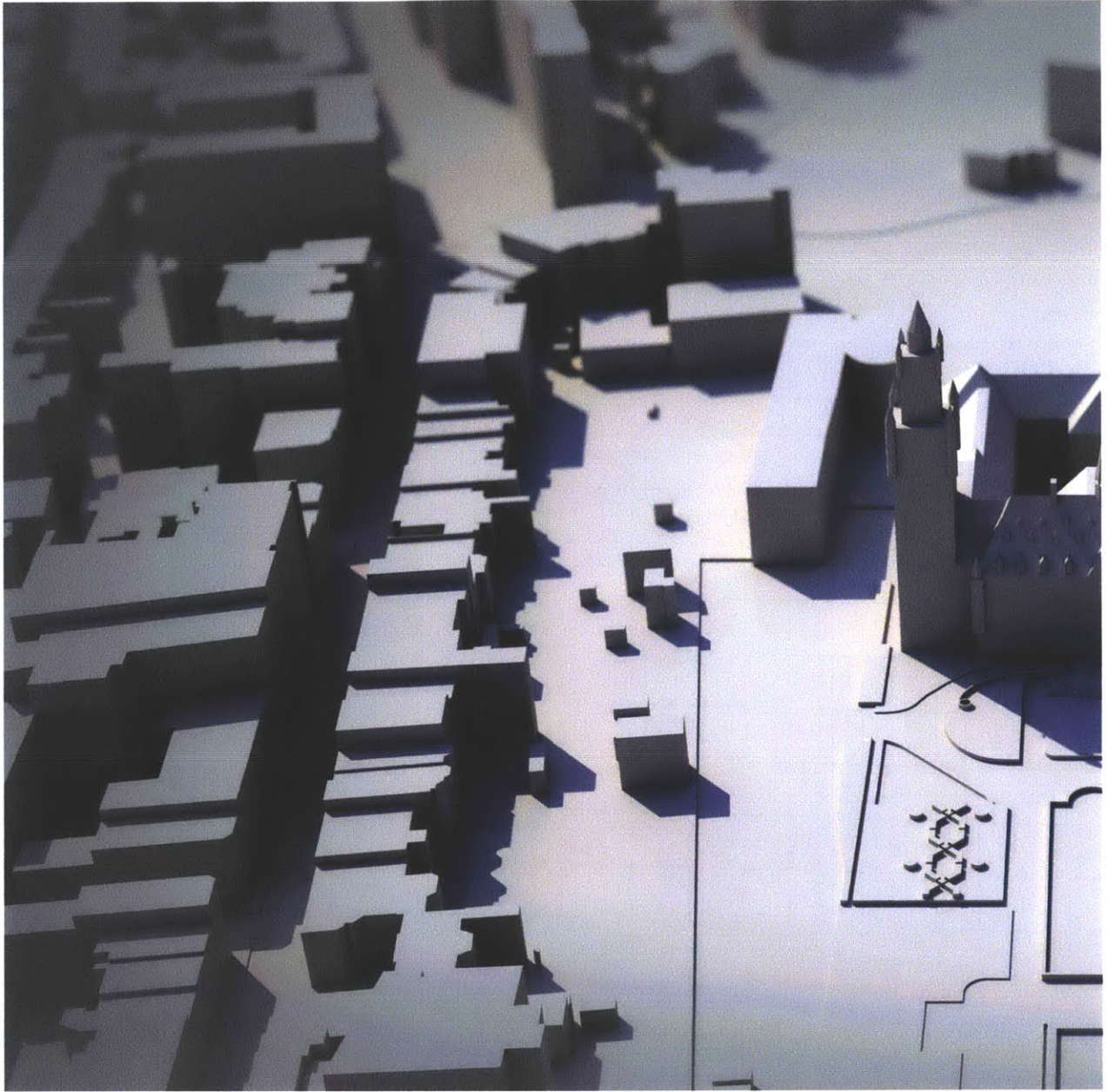
World Court



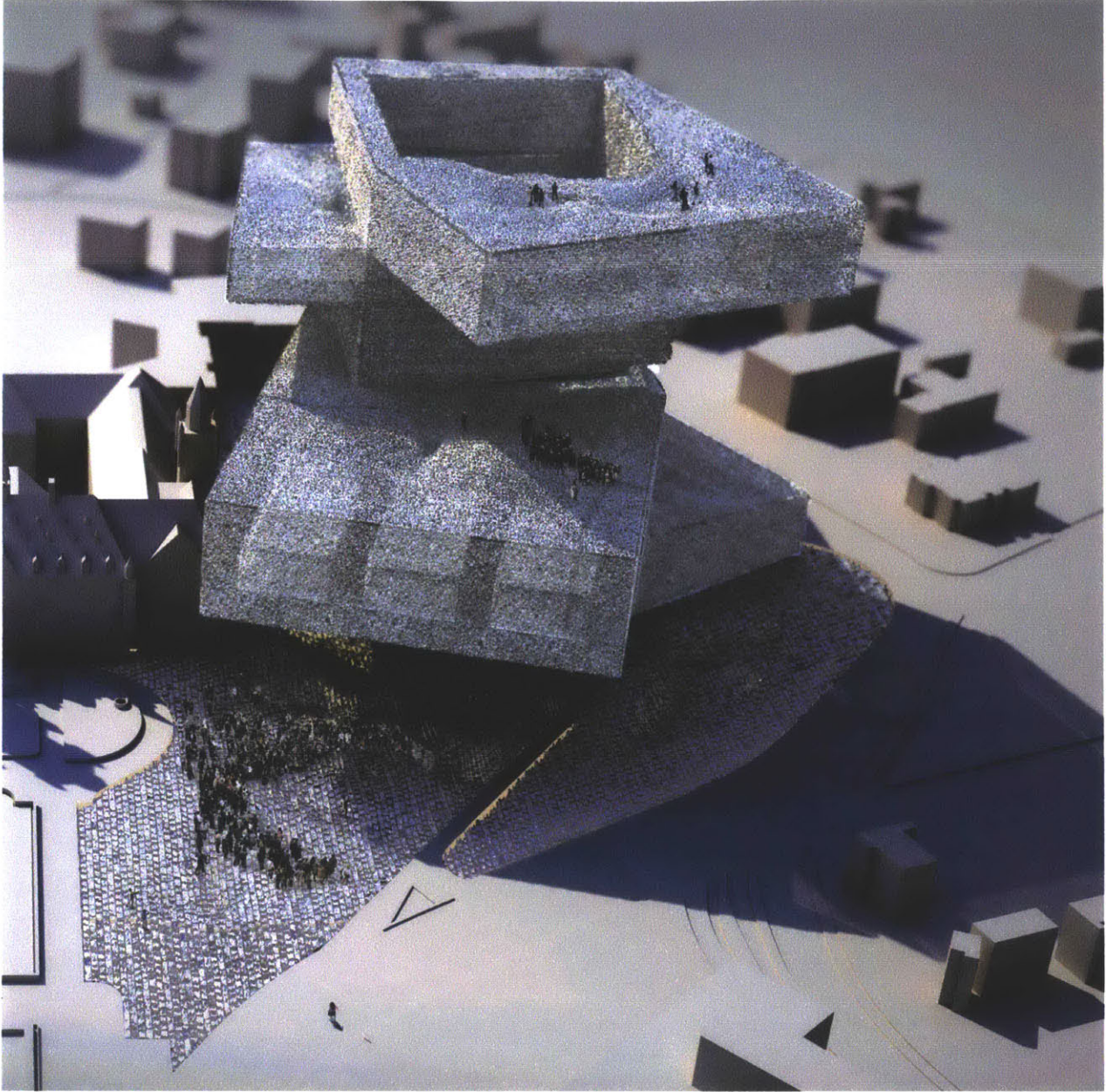
Erosions



World Court



Erosions



World Court



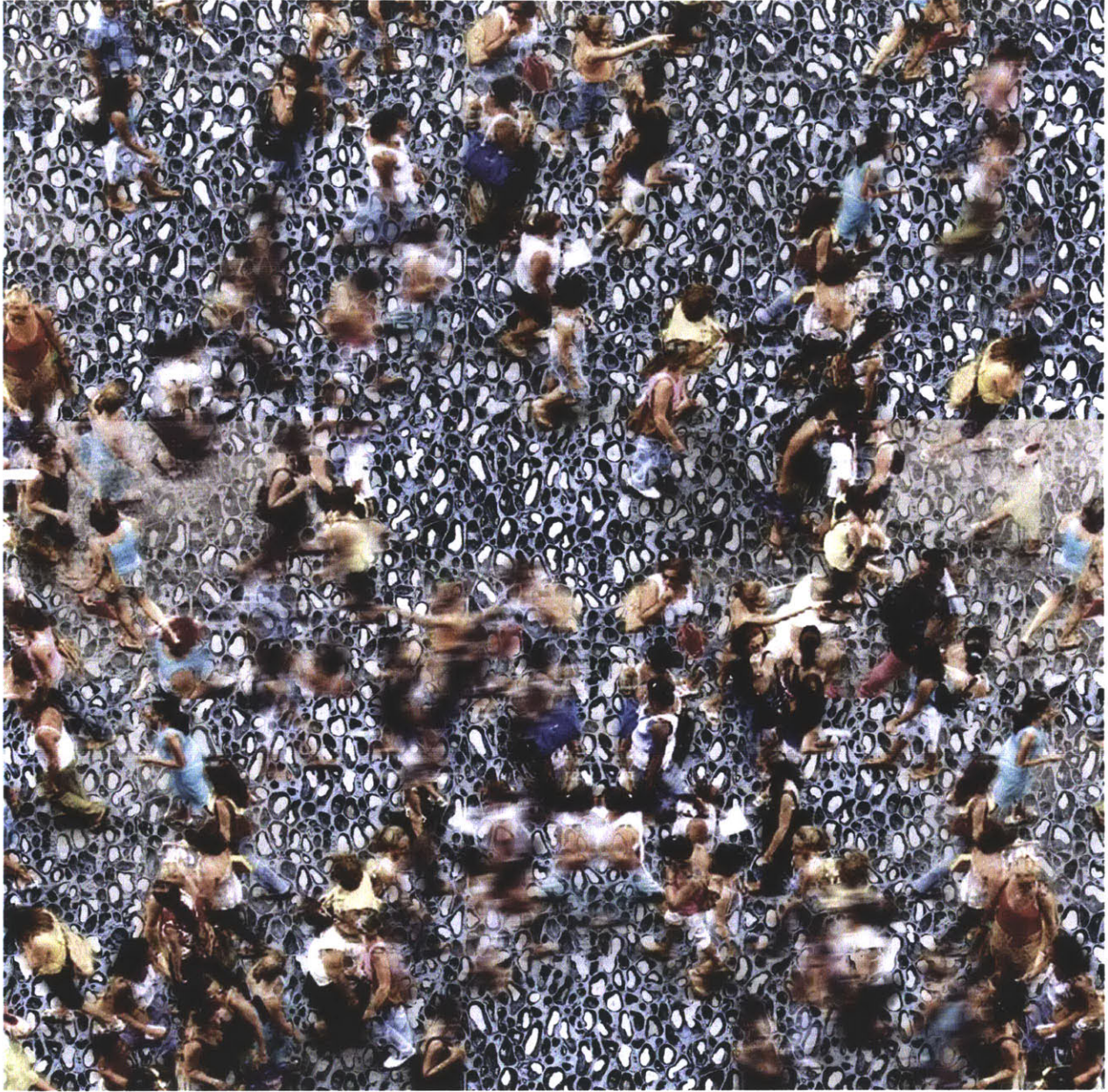
Erosions



World Court

The erosions
allow
architecture
to respond to
the entropic
dissolution of
the planet.

The very act of the public coming to the court, as well as the environmental toxins that the court is attempting to abate, ultimately aid in the Courts architectural destruction.



Erosions



The project
ends with the
building in its
dysfunctional
state –
whether
the Court
succeeded
to failed is
unclear.





World Court

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