4 ECOLOGIES
of HOUSTON
In the 1970s, Reyner Banham constructed the four ecologies of Los Angeles as a way to explore the city’s architectural characteristics. When describing Los Angeles, Banham could have described Houston 50 years into the future as both cities share a vehicular-dominant lifestyle. However, as of 2021, Houston is to undergo transportation changes with the NHHIP’s proposal to merge I-45 and 59. The “kinetic experience” Houston and LA share will drastically change (Banham 72). Without the romance of a vehicular-dominant ecology, Houston must establish what its own four ecologies are. The purpose of this thesis is to study the new four ecologies of Houston and reveal their presence within one site: Bayou Place, a mass forced to become a void through the changing cityscape.

BANHAM’S EYE

“One can most properly begin by learning the local language; and the language of design, architecture, and urbanism in Los Angeles is the language of movement. Mobility outweigh monumentality there to a unique degree... and the city will never be fully understood by those who cannot move fluently through its diffuse urban texture, cannot go with the flow of its unprecedented life.”

Reyner Banham
Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies

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FLOOD PLAINS OF ID + MEGASHAPES + CANOPY + WEATHER
"Houston is the most unexamined of big American cities. Like the edges of civilization on medieval maps of the earth, there the unnameable begins."

Edward DimeTndberg, OMA&NZ
"The denizens of the free have become its product, users transformed into victims. Commuter on a subway train passively submit to the indignities of underground life, while drivers on the freeway enact the very form of the network. No longer kibitzers, they are performers in the theater of mobility."

Lars Lerup, *One Million Acres & No Zoning*
FLOOD PLAINS OF ID
& WEATHER
Hurricane Harvey, 2017
Houston's flood of 1935
Although a diffuse megashape must be imagined and constructed in the minds of denizens, the pillard roominess of the zoohemic canopy in Houston promises a beyond.

Lars Lerup, *One Million Acres & No Zoning*

The third ecology is both natural and foreign. The pine trees Houston is known for are human-made relics that changed natural ventilation's efficacy across the moist plains. In *One Million Acres & No Zoning*, Lars Lerup disapproves of this intervention:

> The complex risk in manipulating the prairie: the canopy which appears perfectly natural is almost as artificial as the technology that replaces a cool breeze (Lerup 141).

Now an identifier of wealthier neighborhoods, the broad trees stretch towards each other, commonly meeting in the middle of a path. The natural arch encases the passerby, creating an interior room in the middle of the flat Houstonian landscape. Much like Central Park, Buffalo bayou utilizes this canopy to create space between humans and the city.