Differential Settlement
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The intent of this thesis questions the position of an architecture that resists. Mexico City was a good candidate to test this approach because it is sinking unevenly at a rate of 9-14cm per year. This is due to two factors, the population’s pumping of groundwater and because the city is built over a drained lakebed, soft silty ground that would rather swallow than support the buildings resting on it.

This project proposes that the settling ground levels can be incorporated into the design. The initial strategy will be to extend and expand the current activities of the Plaza by excavating a series of underground spaces. As the surrounding ground level shifts, these spaces are gradually revealed and reshape the urban topography over time.

The current identity of the Plaza - a space for concerts, art shows, performers, marketplaces, protests, celebration site, connection to subway and tourist attraction will remain. The spaces below will provide both an extension of, and because of the smaller scale of spaces, a reprieve from, these activities.

This system allows for the continual building of the new underground, creating a multi-level structure growing from the ground-down and over a series of epochs. The intent is for this to remain a functioning space on a day-to-day level, while also serving a symbolic reminder of the changes experienced over time.
The Flag

The flag pavilion is an example of a fixed space, it is anchored such that it will remain in places as the surround ground levels recede. The daily raising of the flag and the symbol of national identity correspond to the absolute nature of the structure.
The Pavilions

Zócalo: (Spanish) plinth, base, platform.

The square is nicknamed the “Zócalo” for the base that was erected for an Independence Monument that was never erected. The name stuck even after the base was taken down.

These upside down cones mark the locations of former monuments from previous eras. They serve as mini platforms for the current uses of the square. Ranging in diameter from 30 feet to 8 feet, the inverted cone shape is revealed over time, registering the change in ground level.

Each pavilion is anchored with end-bearing piles. The platforms are made of hollow cast concrete to minimize weight and blend with the ground plane. As the ground sinks, the inverted cone shape and rolled metal sides are revealed.
The Market
The marketplace is designed as a floating space - to shift and tilt with the sinking and splitting of the ground plane. The Zócalo has a history of formal and informal market places being cleared out by decree only to be persistently repopulated.