

GSAPP - ADVANCED STUDIO - SPRING 2018
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THE PERIPHERY OF THE PERIPHERY

POST-OCCUPATION OF THE RURAL CITY

S Y L L A B U S

THE PERIPHERY OF THE PERIPHERY IS A RESEARCH PROJECT THAT SETS OUT TO EXPLORE THE TECHNIQUES –MODELS AND METHODS- WITH WHICH TO RE-THINK AND RE-DESIGN THE RE-OCCUPATION AND RE-HABILITATION OF SMALL RURAL SETTLEMENTS.....THE PROGRAMME GIVES THOUGHT TO THE FATE OF BETWEEN-CITY TERRITORY IF THE EXODUS TO MAJOR URBAN CONGLOMERATES CONDEMNS IT TO A PICTURESQUE READING AND A FEIGNED USE DRIVEN BY FASCINATION WITH AND NOSTALGIA FOR “THE AUTHENTIC” WHICH HAS BEEN LEFT BEHIND.....FROM THIS VIEWPOINT, THE RURAL AS A COUNTERPOINT TO THE URBAN, IMPLIES A PATERNALIST ATTITUDE WHOSE DARK SIDE IS TO BE FOUND IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF VILLAGES INTO SERVICE CENTRES FOR SPORADIC VISITING URBANITES, THEREBY ELUDING OTHER MORE CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF PROGRESS.....THIS SITUATION OF DEPENDENCE CALLS FOR A NEW SENSITIVITY THAT IMPLEMENT OTHER MODELS OF PROSPERITY IN ORDER TO REDEFINE WHAT WE UNDERSTAND BY QUALITY OF LIFE.....ARCHITECTURE HAS MUCH TO SAY IN THIS PROCESS OF RE-OCCUPATION BY ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LOAD-BEARING CAPACITY OF ENCLAVES, APPROPRIATE BUILDING TECHNIQUES, REVIEWING EXISTING AND NEW TYPOLOGIES, INCORPORATING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC EQUATIONS, AND SO ON.....THROUGH THIS, “THE PERIPHERY OF THE PERIPHERY” WILL EXPLORE FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL HERITAGE, THE LANDSCAPE AND THE INHABITANTS OF THESE TERRITORIES.....

SUBJECT

Those who predict the extent of foreseeable growth of cities' population seem to assume that the migration en masse of people from the country to urban conglomerates is a natural phenomenon endorsed by the offer of opportunities, knowledge and quality of life. Apparently, nobody today ponders the issue of how to make life far from the city a vital experience that draws equally from both rural and urban cultures. Large-scale agriculture, tourist exploitation, extensive solar and wind farms, dams or big factories, create the image of increasingly depopulated stretches of land that act as the city's rear-guard, ecological footprint or larder, a no-man's land crossed by infrastructures. Nonetheless, in recent years, the rise in environmental awareness, the appreciation of anthropological and landscape contents, and the need to invent ways to occupy the countryside, have called the attention of several disciplines. A number of different manifestos –ranging from the metabolist mega-

structures of the sixties to the large-scale peripheral housing estates at the turn of the century- have tried to fill this void. If we don't validate these projects today it's because systematically they respond to the architects-fantasy of the major-infrastructural-unitary, ex-novo project far from the contemporary sensitivity that projects of high complexity with many agents involved need to be produced on the basis of strategies and operative systems in which hybridisation, sustainability and uncertainty replace mono-functionalism, heroism and specificity.

Periods of economic prosperity are associated with better services in the city and the improved quality of life of its dwellers, something that is systematically accompanied by a politically correct reading of the trans-peripheral areas that have been left behind: a reading which sentimentally searches the rural context for certain forms of simplicity and authenticity. Under the guise of new economic activities, based fundamentally on tourism and on the phenomenon of the second home, incentive is given to a relationship of dependence on the big city which has limited and slanted development of these nuclei towards the services-for-visitors sector. Thus, while every small town or village in Europe strives to attain competitiveness in its 'rural' hotel offer, its local festivities and its natural or culinary resources, they cannot offer its permanent residents even the most rudimentary social, cultural, educational or medical facilities, given their small scale and limited clientele.

In our view, the rural structure based on very small villages in close proximity to each other allows for a broader, more imaginative reading that would pursue autonomy rather than dependence on the metropolis, more future values for the local young people, greater diversity among the resident population and less polarity between residents and visitors.

WORK AREA AND PROCEDURE

North of the city of Madrid, beyond the influence of the capital's industrial hinterland but less than 70 miles of distance, a large area spreads over the provinces of Madrid, Ávila and Guadalajara in which no town or village exceeds a population of 500. There, groups of three students will choose clusters of three urban nuclei as the targets for a strategic joint plan through which to optimize resources and offer local residents progress opportunities. The task will culminate with the design of a single facility executed either individually, in pairs or in groups of three, under the guidelines of a shared Integral Plan.

The course will begin with a research into the mentioned geographical area oriented to choose the working three-villages-triangle. The first weeks will be devoted to elaborate theme maps and data compilation on the basis of drawing up an Integral Plan that will propose a programme, a form of organisation, an economy (production and consumption), an image, and a time projection (obsolescence and flexibility). By the mid-term, the first architectural schemes of the architectural developments of the Plan should be outlined.

The Studio-trip will be to Madrid and its hinterland. It will include visits to historical and contemporary architecture masterpieces; encounters with students and professors (review) from the Madrid School of Architecture who are working on the same subject; visits to emerging practices; and meetings with regional politicians with authority over the subject.



Hiendelaencina's mine



Peñalén's mine



Poveda de la Sierra's mine



Anquela del Ducado's wind park



Langas's solar park



Fontiveros's solar park



Burguillos's reservoir



Pálmaces de Jádraque's dam



Fuentes clara's reservoir

THE ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE

If we make the effort to recall interventions of a certain scale in the trans-peripheral landscape, what comes to mind are isolated high-impact operations, segregated from populated nuclei, standing hard by major highways and designed with absolutely no Character and clear apathy.

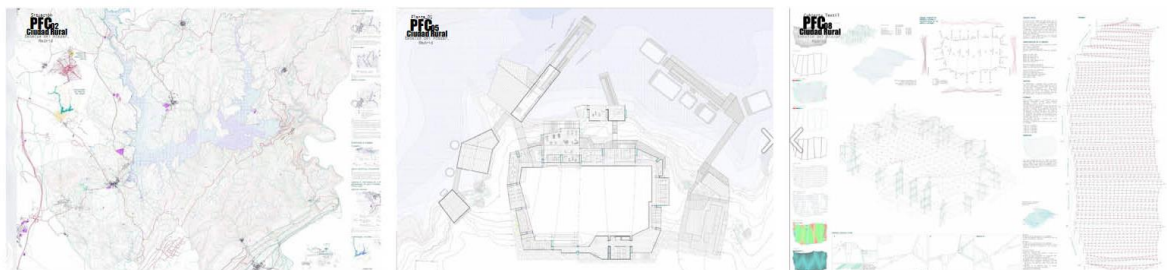
If we imagine a new generation of low-impact clean industry nurseries, research centres, pedagogical institutions or any project designed to equip these villages in an endeavour to redefine their character, we realise that such projects will have to take into account the tiny size of the rural nuclei and their delicate relation with nature or agricultural landscapes. We are also aware that if such interventions are of a significant scale, their capacity to transform and enhance present-day conditions is a two-edged sword that might convert these nuclei in small theme parks or sterilised complexes overshadowed by a facility that will map out their future life.

In order to address these contradictions, we set out to explore the possibilities of the architectural project as an instrument with which to read, interpret and describe existing conditions and plan strategies by which to extend the radii of everyday action of the residents of these new complexes. Furthermore, we want to look on what exists –nature and built complexes- as valuable support from which to develop programmes of recycling in the literal sense of the word; we want to build a new 'rural city' that would take advantage of the independence of the inhabited site from homogeneous access to information and culture.

A number of aims may be established from the outset: to go beyond the programme that focuses exclusively on the visitor or weekend resident and enrich it other complementary uses up to the load-bearing limit of the nucleus and its surrounding area; to develop the programme on the basis of true environmental demands; to introduce an increase in the presence of nature beyond any obviousness; and to work on the hybridization of collective and individual productive and residential programmes, exploring new forms of work, leisure and socialisation.

We are not interested in the architecture of isolated buildings but rather in the kind of architecture that proposes the hybridisation of the existing and the new, thereby generating a new reality in which sophisticated and elementary technologies, density and porosity; collectivism and individualism, may live together. Concepts associated with prepositions (before, below, with, between, without, on...) will develop into architectural operations of occupation, superimposition, infiltration, delimitation and so on.

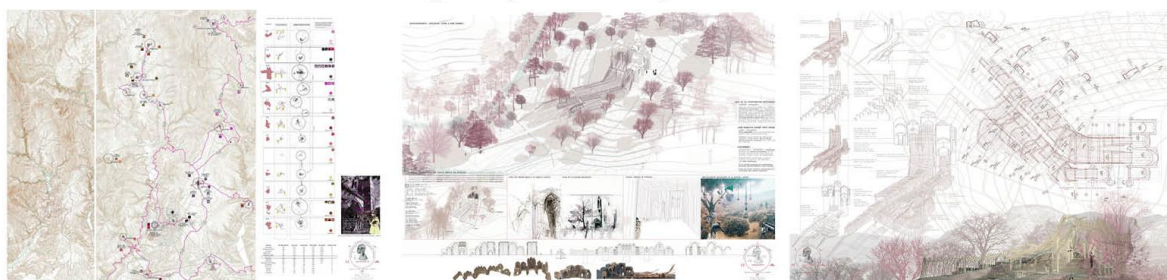
Production of graphic material, scale models or audio-visuals, will constitute an essential part of the task. The choice and/or design of instruments and methods of representation constitute projects in themselves and, consequently, the object of reflection and criticism regarding their appropriateness to the quests and objectives of the project. In this context, especial emphasis will be laid on the communicative capacity of the portfolios as documents through which to convey the suitability of the project to third parties.



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