

HYBRID RESIDENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURES IN RIO DE JANEIRO: URBAN OCCUPATIONS & TYPOLOGICAL CORRECTIONS

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Architects are responsible not only for the construction of new architectures, but also for the management of existing structures and the built environment at large. This agenda demands going beyond conventional architectural strategies—normally operating on one building at the time—and developing more comprehensive, integrated, and open big scale strategies, without falling into the glib fascination with megastructural conceptions. In previous studios we have selected a series of case studies located in central and consolidated areas of the city that are either in bad condition, infra-utilized or significantly vacant to offer them a second chance. This semester, we will operate on a number of squatted structures in Rio de Janeiro. Projects will probe the potentials of this form of intervention as one form of addressing the housing deficit of the country, currently estimated in 6 million of dwellings.

TYPOLOGICAL CORRECTIONS: In contexts where it seems that architecture has nothing else to say, we propose recycling solutions seeking to operate within existing structures and to address the city's current challenges. We will consider both the potentials of occupying existing building as well as the possibilities derived from their transformation. Dealing with the characteristics of the current structures, their relations, and their underlying potentials, each project will design a series of typological corrections activating process of re-programming, re-densifying, re-scaling, re-signifying, etc. These architectural operations will seek not only to transform the physical reality of the existing buildings, but also to operate upon the social, economic and cultural networks they host and articulate. Students will operate in one of the urban areas where the squatted buildings are located, and will both directly address the challenges of these structures and understand their potentials to re-think the future of the city. The squatted buildings include Manoel Congo, a vertical structure in the very core of downtown, and Mariana Criola, a warehouse in the Port of Rio.

URBAN OCCUPATIONS: The intervention within existing structures and areas of the city requires a critical understanding of the way in which they are occupied along time, appropriated with different programs, and mobilized with different meanings, in order to suggest alternative connections between inhabitants, programs and meanings, and to explore new processes of signification. Considering these links, we do not aim to establish deterministic relationships between existing typologies and their uses or meanings, but rather precisely to demystify them. After their design (and many times in the absence of additional authorial intention) buildings operate in relation to different agents, institutions and technologies, and become meaningful only in relation to other circulating messages. Squatted structures are a particularly relevant case to consider this critical agenda. Rather than any celebration of anarchic interventions or a fascination with a supposedly organic condition of their occupation, we will address the goals and ideology of the squatting movements developing after the democratic transition in the late 1980s, the spatial organization and resulting configurations of their occupation, the architectural and planning projects already ongoing, as well as the ambitions of the occupants.

HYBRID RESIDENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURES: Projects will aim to respond to the need of housing production that the squatting movements manifest in order to define a new future for the city. While the housing deficit is paradigmatically represented by the precarious living condition of *favelas*, and most attempts to address it have concentrated in the periphery of the city, these squatted structures allow considering alternative roles for architecture in which the pressing need for housing is simultaneous to considering the opportunities of dense, programmatically hybrid, socially diverse, integrated, and accessible projects. These locations within the city center or strategic areas result both in particular benefits for the occupants as much as in a tool for political pressure. Operating within these particular contexts, our projects should be as far from the shiny future offered by real estate renders as from any fascination with the problematic conditions of current structures. Each project will need to define its own agenda, and should emphasize the social and political content of disciplinary explorations regarding density, building systems, and the programming of the project's occupation, among others.

TOOLS AND METHODS: The analysis of the relations between the architecture of the city and its occupations will be fundamental as a point of departure for the studio. The selection or invention of the systems of representation will be crucial both to reveal and analyze the existing conditions, as well as to explore the opportunities offered by new typologies within the new city. Each student or group will define their own work protocol, which should particularly address the links between architecture's organization, image, and building systems with the social, economic, and cultural processes it hosts. Throughout the semester, we will operate with different abstractions of these links suggesting continuities and ruptures between the observations of the existing structures and the designed reality.

GLOBAL PRACTICE: Operating in a global context results in rich exchanges and networks of collaboration but also in mechanisms of dominance and oppression. Rio, just as Mumbai, Cuzco, New Orleans, or Tel-Aviv, is the result of interventions that are typologically and stylistically detached from any local tradition or an idiosyncratic way of living, and have their character shaped by imports and exports transforming their physiognomy and their living conditions. Considering this, we will be equally weary of strategies of mimesis as of uncritical impositions on the context.

PRACTICALITIES:

- The Studio is linked to GSAPP's global initiative "Housing the Majority" launched in 2015. We will work with Studio-X Rio, and will join their ongoing research on organized squatting movements in Rio, São Paulo and Belo Horizonte, "Guerrilla Urbanism: Investigating Urban Squatting Movements in Brazil." Studio-X Rio director Pedro Rivera will coordinate this collaboration and will join the studio in NYC at key moments throughout the semester.

-We will travel to Rio, will visit the areas of intervention, and will meet with different urban actors relevant to the project, including representatives of the Movimento Nacional da Luta pela Moradia (MNLN). We will additionally visit architecture offices, buildings, and public spaces, both in the city and in the surrounding region.

-Juan Herreros will be in class for half of the studio sessions and Ignacio G. Galán will be there for all sessions. Any exception to this regular schedule due to unforeseeable circumstances will be notified to the students.

-We will start working in couples with an initial analysis during two weeks. After this period, students will be invited to work individually or continue in couples until the midterm.

