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SPRING 2019 NAHYUN HWANG STUDIO

KNOWLEDGE TERRITORIES

R/URBAN ECOLOGIES

Continuing the past years' investigations in the new formats of architecture of knowledge in the collective realm, the Spring 2019 Hwang Studio utilizes the sites in and around the city of Newburgh, NY in the mid Hudson Valley region shared across the year, to explore the ideas of hidden continuum and networks in the built environment, and the agency of knowledge and its architecture in the milieu. Exploring the open-ended notion of "R/Urban Ecology" as a primary framework, the studio aims to articulate the hidden associations and the possibilities of new assemblages framed by the collective production and sharing of knowledge.

R/Urban Ecologies

The city and the countryside have been often placed at the opposite poles, dynamic and densely populated vertical metropolises with maximum productivity on one side, and the timeless and restful countryside that promises simple lives surrounded by pristine nature on the other. However, the constructed vision of two separate worlds often not only fails to correctly represent the complex reality but produces and maintains the spaces of "uneven development"[1] and the tendencies of colonization, appropriation, and the insistently increasing precarity that shapes both realms and beyond. As the social, political, and environmental challenges *and* potentials of high-density cities in the "Urban Age" are investigated more vigorously than ever, and the discipline's renewed attention to the countryside begins to articulate the realities of the "new rural," the studio centers its investigation on the conceptual "elsewhere," on the space beyond the dramatic binarism of bucolic (or simultaneously "hyper-cartesian"[2]) hinterland and the endlessly growing vertical city. Engaging the concept of "R/Urban" as an open, working framework, the studio explores the often inscrutable yet expansive territories of spectra, of in-betweens, overlaps, and intersections. From the concepts of "rurbanization" in the early 20th century to the recent discussions around the concept of the planetary, while evading a consistent definition, the ideas of "R/Uban," or the notion of the multitudes of open relationships between, or beyond, the imaginaries of absolute rurality and the absolute urbanity, serves as a productive apparatus that may construct a more accurate picture of the world and articulate more effective agency and opportunities of architecture within.

In this context, the sites of "ecologies" prompted by the semester's theme "environment" offer a fuzzy yet productive zone of focus for the work of the studio, overlaying layers of constructive complexities on the discussion of the "R/Urban." Similarly open and multitudinous in its definitions and demanding of one's own interpretations and agenda, the concept provokes and expands the considerations of multitudes of physical and temporal scales and interconnected processes and actors, and foreground the relationships between the all - human as well as non-human- inhabitants of our largely post-natural, anthropocenic environment. Exploring sites of "R/Urban Ecologies," the studio aims to investigate the spaces of fluid promiscuity and quiet yet sometimes violent entanglements that occupy much of our contemporary landscape.

[1] See Smith, Neil. *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*. (Cambridge, MA, and Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984.

[2] See Rem Koolhaas' discussion on "Countryside Architecture" in Icon Magazine, September, 2014.

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Territories and Knowledge

Engaging the year-wide topic of education, the programmatic experiments of the studio focuses on the exploration of new relationships between knowledge and territory. While aspirational examples exist, the topologies of the contemporary spaces of knowledge more than often resemble that of islands or camps."[3] With the implicit or explicit architecture of protection and separation, rather than building *in* the territory, camps construct their own (extra)territories, that often erase the immediate common grounds but cultivate and strengthen the connections across and within.

While pursuing the same goals, historically and still today, the connections between territory and knowledge spaces that are constructed outside of the conventional boundaries of "the city" have been much more complex yet highly formulaic, as high tech campuses, private schools, military industrial research complexes, and other powerful spaces of knowledge employ the environment itself, often in the simplified forms of "nature" or "pastoral," as the primary apparatus of isolation.

In this respect, the zones of "r/urban ecologies" - with its messy realities and the plural interpretations - become effective experimental grounds to explore new institutional and spatial formats of knowledge and/in the territory. Framing the concerns of knowledge and territory together, the studio aims to reconsider the false divide between culture and nature, the man-made and the natural, human and non-human, and the social and the technical, and envision the possibilities of a new spatial framework of knowledge within our intertwined bio-techni-socio-political milieu.

Approaches and Course Structure

As an advanced studio, the emphasis of the studio is on the production of rigorously articulated research and architectural propositions that each engages the critical inquiry of the studio topics with a distinctive thesis and position. The course is structured as a series of interconnected research, analysis, and design assignments. While the semester can be summarized as follows, all works are considered reciprocally informed and simultaneously developed as much as possible.

The studio will start with an overview of relevant discourses to establish the common ground for the semester's effort, followed by work on the collective catalogue "Taxonomy of R/Urban Ecologies" that begins to bring forward the shared characteristics of the studio site zone and the unique aspects of the specific sites of interests. The studio then conducts a brief survey of the wide range of institutional frameworks and actors of knowledge and territories in the educational and environmental realms of Newburgh and beyond, to begin exploring possibilities of new alliances and associations in the final projects' context.

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[3] The contemporary term "campus" originates from Latin *campus* "a field," as well as English *camp* which is closer to the actual spatial and operational structures of contemporary institutional campuses. See also Easterling and Agamben's reading of camp and campus.

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Simultaneously with this survey, the studio initiates site-specific investigations and highly analytic documentation on the selected locations from the "r/urban ecologies" catalog, articulating their immediate material manifestations as well as hidden networks and connections. This work aims to instigate the individuated agendas and project trajectories for the design work, and help begin identifying basic framework and potential strategies prompted by the site conditions. The design work, revised through an iterative process in response to the ongoing investigations and dialogue within the studio, will be developed articulating the rationales and intentions at multiple scales and time frames -from global and regional scales of intersecting networks and operations; and the urban scales of the newly defined and connected collectives; to the architectural scale of buildings, systems, configurations, and their interfaces.

* Group work for some portion of the semester will be encouraged but students will have options to work individually if necessary.
* Studio will go on a day trip to Newburgh, date t.b.d.

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