



# DIPLOMA 14

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BARBARISM BEGINS AT HOME

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Diploma Unit 14

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## ***Barbarism Begins at Home***

Territory and Primitive Accumulation

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## **Introduction**

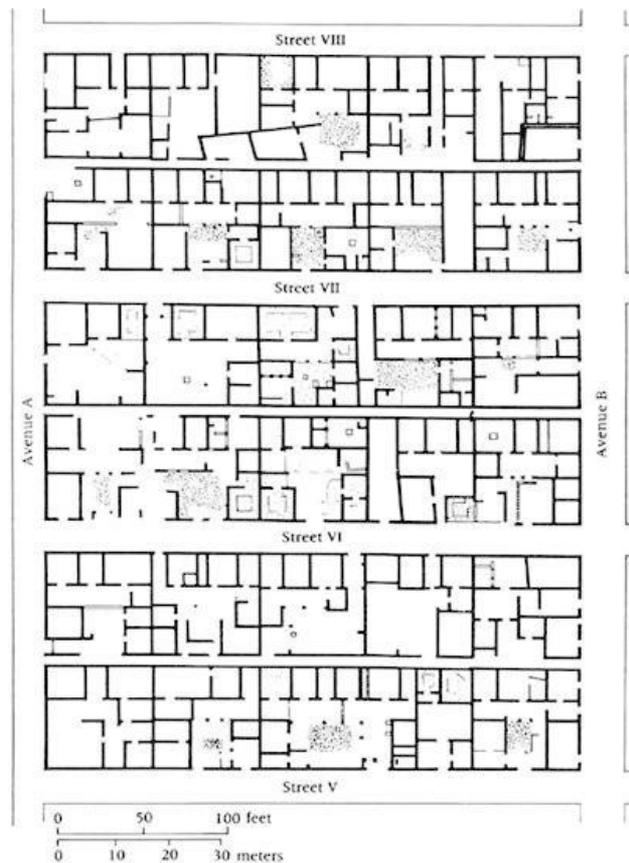
*In every stage of social life, in every economic order, in every period of legal history until now, things have somehow been appropriated, distributed and produced. Prior to every legal, economic and social order, prior to every legal, economic or social theory, there is this simple question: Where and how was it appropriated? Where and how was it divided? Where and how was it produced?*

Carl Schmitt, *Appropriation/Distribution/Production*, 1953.

If capitalism can be described as the asymmetrical relationship between possessors and non-possessors, primitive accumulation was the process through which possessors accumulated the wealth that formed the backbone of their capital. Classical political economy represented such a process as virtuous laboring activity of one part of society, while Marx emphasized how primitive accumulation was essentially a theft effected through the enclosure of land and the violent appropriation of resources that deprived large parts of the population of their livelihood.

Yet, the understanding of primitive accumulation as a specific moment in history can be a mistake, since capital is an apparatus that *constantly* dispossesses for the sake of accumulation. This process of dispossession takes a myriad of forms, which are often embedded in the way the territory has been historically constructed. What appears to us as territory is not just the given environment in which we live, but also a ‘machine’ whose goal is to extract surplus value from the totality of social relationships. Roads, railways, streets, infrastructure of all sorts, parks, houses, dams, public buildings etc. can be considered as gears of a gigantic and all-encompassing machinic apparatus built and transformed over time in order to reproduce and augment the asymmetrical relationship between classes. This year Diploma 14 will encourage students to critically read specific territories in order to put forward scenarios of transformation towards a gradual de-activation of processes of accumulation. These scenarios of transformation will be addressed from those simple moments of our existence – circulating, reproducing and dwelling – which also form the most crucial field for architectural design. We will question the role of architecture at different scales – from housing to landscape – as a fundamental locus where reproduction becomes one of the most powerful forms of primitive accumulation. The main question of the studio is: what sort of forms of life beyond accumulation are possible and what sort of spatial framework that goes from housing to landscape can be imagined in a post-accumulation territory.

## I. Appropriation



Three city blocks in Olynthus, Greece. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC each household occupied the same amount of land.

Last year in discussing the notion of ‘territory’ we have introduced the concept of *Nomos* as theorised by Carl Schmitt in his book *The Nomos of the Earth*.

For Schmitt the *Nomos* is the sense of orientation that comes from the division of the land. In this way the *nomos* defines the relationship between political order and the concreteness of the ground. This relationship is made explicit in the primary event of land appropriation, which is the action that, according to Schmitt, precedes any geo-political institution such as the community, the city or the state. The *nomos* is thus the basis for all the categories that define the life of a community such as sovereignty, justice and distribution of resources. *Nomos* identifies the act of settling within a territory, an act that should not be considered only as the moment of ‘foundation’ and conquest itself, but rather as a *process* that unfolds within the way any society is organized.

In an article published in 1953 and titled “Appropriation / Distribution / Production”, Schmitt further developed the concept of *nomos* by tracing its ramifications in the way a

social and economic order is established. According to Schmitt the concept of *nomos* can be interpreted in three ways: as an act of appropriation, as a process of division and distribution and as the way in which ownership and production are organised. As he writes:

*In every stage of social life, in every economic order, in every period of legal history until now, things have somehow been appropriated, distributed and produced. Prior to every legal, economic and social order, prior to every legal, economic or social theory, there is this simple question: Where and how was it appropriated? Where and how was it divided? Where and how was it produced?*

And yet Schmitt noted that while the meaning of *nomos* as distribution and production is widely acknowledged, *nomos* as *appropriation* has long been forgotten in jurisprudence. In the way juridical orders are presented, the moment of appropriation is usually concealed. So appropriation has certainly happened but it does not leave any trace or memory in the way a jurisdiction is formulated. If appropriation is a conquest of a specific region which implies – for example – the exile of communities that had previously lived there, this condition through which a community or a state is established is written off. This means that appropriation always implies a violent act, a ‘state of exception’ that cannot be ruled by any form of legislation. Schmitt’s essay reminds us that any social and economic order always conceal its violent origin made of conquests, and dispossession. This condition of violent appropriation is the origin of one of the pillars of the modern urban world: the act of appropriation as the concrete root of the legal concept of *property*. As Schmitt writes:

*The history of peoples with their migrations, colonizations, and conquests is a history of land appropriation. Either this is the appropriation of free land, with no claim to ownership, or the conquest of alien land which has been appropriated under legal titles of foreign-political warfare or by domestic political means such as the proscription, deprivation and forfeiture of newly divided land.*

What Schmitt describes here is a process that is at the basis of every social organization and that especially within capitalism has become not just the beginning but the ongoing mode of capitalistic exploitation. While the effects of capitalism are generally discussed in terms of production and consumption, it is appropriation – such as appropriation of land, resources, domestic labour – the moment in which capital seizes its power over its subalterns. It is not by chance that the critic who disclosed the *appropriative* nature of capitalism was Karl Marx.

## II. Accumulation

Towards the end of *Capital* Marx discussed the ‘original sin’ of capitalist accumulation. After he described how the accumulation of capital presupposes the extraction of surplus value and how surplus value presupposes a capitalist mode of production and in turn the latter presupposes large quantity of workers in the hands of those who produce commodities, he wondered how this chain of conditions may not become a vicious circle that obfuscates the very origin of capitalist power. In order to find the point of origin of capitalism he reworked Adam Smith’s concept of *previous accumulation*. Smith described previous accumulation as the outcome of the virtuous laboring efforts of one part of society. On the one hand we have a diligent and frugal elite whose hard work allowed them to invest and accumulate, and thus invest again, and on the other a mass of lazy people who spend their substance in riotous living.

In doing so Smith reflected the bourgeois assumption – still strong today – that the accumulation of capital is the product of the entrepreneurial initiative of those who take the risk to invest and generate wealth out of scratch.

Marx demolished this assumption by claiming that contrary to Smith’s idyllic historical vision, previous accumulation – or better as Marx defined it ‘primitive accumulation - is born out of the violent dispossession of large masses of people. As Marx explained:

*In actual history it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force, play the great part. In the tender annals of Political Economy, the idyllic reigns from time immemorial. (...) As a matter of fact, the methods of primitive accumulation are anything but idyllic.*

According to Marx the formation of capital depends on the confrontation of two kinds of possessors: on the one hand the possessors of money, the means of production and sustenance and on the other the ‘free laborers’, those who in order to earn their living sell their labor power in exchange for wage. It is for this reason that for Marx capitalistic production implies a fundamental process of *separation* between the producer and his/her means of production. Within the process workers were freed from their ties to the system of serfdom in which although obliged of giving for free part of their wealth produced, they were in control of their means of sustenance. The workers entered a condition in which they were no longer in control of their means of sustenance and thus

the only thing they could sell in order to earn their living was themselves: their labour power.

When we talk about labour power we don't talk about one aspect of the worker, but of his/her totality. Marx explains labour power as the aggregate of those physical and mental capabilities that makes the living personality of human beings. Labour power is thus the life in potential of the worker: its past, present and future existence. By separating workers from their means of production, capitalists achieved the ultimate form of power: to make dependent the life of people to the process of capitalistic accumulation. Unlike the idyllic scenario depicted by bourgeois political economy, this process of separation was extremely violent – written, as Marx poetically emphasized, “in letters of blood and fire”. After all, who wants to work for long hours, in exchange for a miserable wage, performing activities that most of the time are repetitive and devoid of any finality from the worker's point of view? Who wants to depend from a master whose goal is to make profit regardless of *what* is being produced (it could be wool or paper) and *how* it is produced? The early populations that entered the wage system and thus the capitalistic mode of production were not at all convinced that they were starting a better life. They knew that by being deprived of their means of sustenance they would become poorer: they would sleep less, they would eat less and they would have much less time for their *own* life. In order to support his thesis on primitive accumulation Marx narrated with a great deal of details the vicissitudes of dispossession: people being thrown in the labour market without land or home; individuals being persecuted by the state, imprisoned, reduced to slavery or eventually killed because reluctant to find a job. This became the first bloody class war that capital waged against the workers by depriving them of any means of independence. This was war primarily aimed to the body of the workers, to their way of living and reproducing.

### III. Dispossession

Between the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe large masses of people were evicted from the land that until then was the natural provider of their wealth. Villages were destroyed and land was enclosed and made private, i.e. made subservient to capitalistic production, which demanded large rural areas to be cultivated according to the specific market needs. The privatization of land and the construction of a dispossessed proletariat was at the core of Marx's critique, but it was far from being the only explicit manifestation of primitive accumulation: colonialism was perhaps the most dramatic aspect of this process, complemented by the systematic degradation of the role of women to that of providers of unpaid reproductive labour. Yet dispossession which Marx describes for what it really is – a theft – was not just the sudden and aggressive initiative of a violent elite, but a process supported by states and enforced by law. Primitive accumulation was largely a state-driven process in which violence and coercion were organized within an institutional legal order that defended the right, *in primis* the right to private property. The history of primitive accumulation thus cast a long (and pretty dark) shadow on the way the modern world was constructed thanks to the violent theft of resources through which people in Europe and elsewhere could maintain their life.

As Marx noted, the 'parliamentary' forms of this theft were laws such as the *Bills of enclosure of Commons* introduced in England in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and which – from 1604 to 1914 – enclosed 6.8 millions acres of land and made them private property in the hands of few landowners. Dispossessed of their means of survival, the peasants had to enter a wage contract with the landowners or entrepreneurs who owned means of production – land, animals, or workshops. This process changed for good the structure of landscape as well as the lives of people. Here the role of the state in enforcing the wage system and the consequent law of profit is made evident by Marx when he wrote that:

*The bourgeoisie, at its rise, wants and uses the power of the state to "regulate" wages, i.e., to force them within the limits suitable for surplus-value making, to lengthen the working-day and to keep the labourer himself in the normal degree of dependence. This is an essential element of the so-called primitive accumulation.*

Although Marx refers to it only indirectly, one can imagine what were the consequences of this process in the development of the modern urban condition. Not just the

dislocation of great masses of people from the countryside to urban centers, but the radically re-organization of the rural territory was the outcome of primitive accumulation. The rural territory was made more and more interconnected and dependent of the major flows of trade and commerce. Moreover it is at this point that the idea of countryside is ‘invented’ as ancillary space whose function is to provide labor force and resources the center of accumulation: the city. The latter becomes bigger and bigger and in some cases – indeed – a *capital* city. Here Marx notion of primitive accumulation helps us to open up a different perspective on the history of modern city and its territorial ramifications. Major histories of the modern city and the ethos of what we call urban design are motivated by the ideology of progress, which is the will to ameliorate the city environment. Of course we know too well that this was not always the case and that the evolution of the modern city included moments in which the oppression of lower classes was the precondition for urban development (think of the often-mentioned example of Haussmann’s redevelopment of Paris in the 19<sup>th</sup> century). Yet these moments are often considered exceptions or, let us say, the acceptable evil in order to sustain the long term project of urban modernization. For example, within the discipline of architecture and urban design – with very few notable exceptions – there are very few texts that address the way in which the construction of the modern city and its disciplinary milieu were motivated by processes of primitive accumulation which demanded the restructuring of cities and territories something that required a plan or a *project*.

Think of how the formation of architect as professional figure between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> century was implicated in this process. Think of how the often idealized Renaissance ‘ideal cities’ imagined, projected and sometimes partially realized were ideological sublimations of a radical transformation of cities and territory in order to realize within all aspects of life the separation between producers and their means of production. Roads, infrastructure, bridges but also the places of ‘everyday’ life such as houses became part of a larger project of urban reform whose impetus was to advance and make increasingly ubiquitous the asymmetry between possessors and non-possessors, between the bourgeois and the proletarians, between capitalists and workers. The violence of this process was not always explicit but often disguised within sophisticated ways in which social behavior and even the fine grain of daily routines were formed in order to fit the vested interests of the ruling class. In order to dramatize his story Marx addressed dispossession in its most cruel and bloody forms. These forms were decisive to initiate primitive accumulation but the latter could only be made ‘sustainable’ (and thus even

more endangering) by constructing a whole apparatus that would enfold the totality of social life. It is in this respect that Manfredo Tafuri's famous description of the modern city becomes clearer to us: the city is a machine for the extraction of surplus value from the totality of social relationships.

Considered in this way primitive accumulation is no longer the beginning of capitalism but its ongoing law of accumulation. Indeed thinkers as Massimo De Angelis and David Harvey have extended Marx's concept of primitive accumulation as an ongoing process still at work within contemporary capitalism. Ongoing primitive accumulation is thus a process of constant colonization of places and conditions within which more and more refined forms of extraction of surplus value are introduced. It is for this reason that we must view capitalism through the refined abstraction of its vast apparatus made of money, algorithms, financial transactions as a system of relationships defined by appropriation.

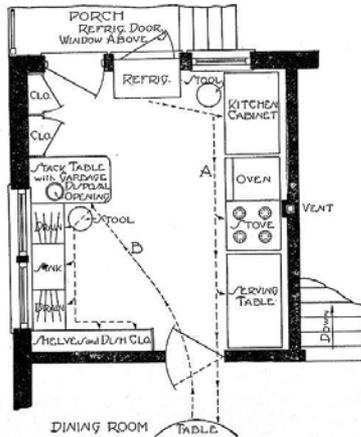
This system of relationships is, however, anything but immaterial. In fact, it is at the root of most spatial models we take for granted today; and, in turn, architecture has been a crucial instrument in its development. Therefore, our task this year will be precisely to expose and challenge the project of appropriation.

#### **IV. Home**

The unequal distribution of resources can perhaps be defined as the ultimate project of the modern capitalist era – and, as such, the endgame of much of what modern architecture has produced. In this process, architecture has been used as a tool to craft and spatially define asymmetry, be it based on social, sexual, or ethnic criteria. But more than that, architecture has also contributed to creating consensus and approval for the very models it produced. This consensus was not built through heavy-handed propaganda, but, rather, by making citizens feel comfortable with the asymmetrical power relationships they had to endure. The theft of appropriation was not hidden: it was naturalized, that is to say, it was culturally constructed as something logic, rational, and unavoidable.

In other words, we (1) REMOVE, (2) SCRAPE, (3) WASH, and (4) LAY AWAY dishes and utensils according to these definite steps, in this definite order at every meal.

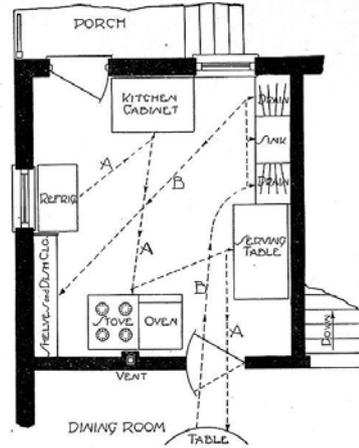
It therefore follows that the equipment connected with these two processes and their respective chain of steps should be arranged in a corresponding order. *This prin-*



EFFICIENT GROUPING OF KITCHEN EQUIPMENT  
A. Preparing route. B. Clearing away route.

...ciple of arranging and grouping equipment to meet the actual order of work is the basis of kitchen efficiency. In other words, we cannot leave the placing of the sink, stove, doors and cupboards entirely to the architect. The reason

why so many kitchens are work-making is solely because both the fixed and portable equipment are not placed in right relation to all kitchen processes. Instead, equipment is commonly placed wherever there happens to be space left after cutting in all the doors and windows.



BADLY GROUPED KITCHEN EQUIPMENT

Again considering the two kitchen processes, (a) PREPARING and (b) CLEARING AWAY, we note that a definite piece of equipment corresponds to each definite step, as follows:

Christine Frederick, Efficient and Inefficient Kitchen Plan, from *Household Engineering* (1919).

In fact, there is nothing natural or rational about primitive accumulation, but this large-scale appropriation mechanism has been bolstered by a powerful narrative apparatus that has made it almost impossible for us to see any alternative to its hierarchies. Architecture has helped build these narratives; many of the urban types we take for granted today were in fact constructions produced by the very specific system of power that we aim, this year, to examine and challenge. The apartment, the park, the road, the field, the institutional building are all spatial tropes that imply first and foremost forms of human relationships established precisely in the centuries that saw the emergence of ongoing primitive accumulation. It is for this reason that we do not envision a territorial project necessarily as a large project per se: typological inventions have shaped territories as much as infrastructural works, agricultural devices, and planning policies.

Architecture has always served colonization – after all, Vitruvius’ *Ten Books* is basically a treatise on how to control space and time. Architecture has also always drawn boundaries. In premodern societies, these boundaries were a matter of protection and ritual, but from the 1400s onwards subdividing space becomes a way to make it

productive: the boundary itself, rather than what is inside the boundary, becomes the project, all the more powerful the more they can be construed as ‘natural’. The task of architects becomes then to separate private from public, production from reproduction, family from family, and individuals from other individuals.

The act of compartmentalizing is crucial to accumulation: it is the way in which citizens are barred access to fertile land, water, and hunting resources. But compartmentalizing and establishing ownership is just the first step of a process of atomization that goes much further and of which perhaps the most ubiquitous example is the nuclear family flat. In premodern societies, the concept of family was, as it is well known, much broader and looser. This fact was reflected by the arrangement of houses; if today each mother has to have her own kitchen, this was not at all a common idea before the 1800s, when in most of the world cooking was a collective task for both technical and social reasons. The very meaning of the word ‘apartment’ is ‘to set apart’. When the term emerged in 1600s France, it was conceived as a sub-section of a household composed of several apartments, and many members. It was not at all a standalone element, as it relied on the house for the use of a kitchen, water closet, stables and so on.

To create apartments that contained all that was needed for the survival of a core family meant that all the activities that had previously been outsourced, paid, or shared now had to be handled within the family – specifically, by the wife. In 1864 César Daly will celebrate the rise of this type in *L'architecture privée au XIXe siècle*: privacy and comfort were the keywords of what was essentially a large-scale operation of compartmentalization. The Paris that Daly portrays is an advancement if we consider the terrible hygienic condition of the average XIX century city; however, what is striking about the invention of the modern flat is that technical progress did not necessarily entail the development of such an atomized model of living. This notwithstanding, Daly and countless other architects and authors linked inextricably comfort to privacy, as if one would not possible without the other. The fetishization of privacy was not essential to the development of better living condition, and 150 years later we can see how the flat was, as well as an improvement, also an instrument of control and primitive accumulation. By severing the ties that had always bound domestic workers to each other, this work was made invisible, and therefore unpaid. In this way the apartment fulfilled its role of separating device, making solidarity impossible, and inventing a ‘natural’ role for women – that of, as Mariarosa dalla Costa defined it, “the slave of a

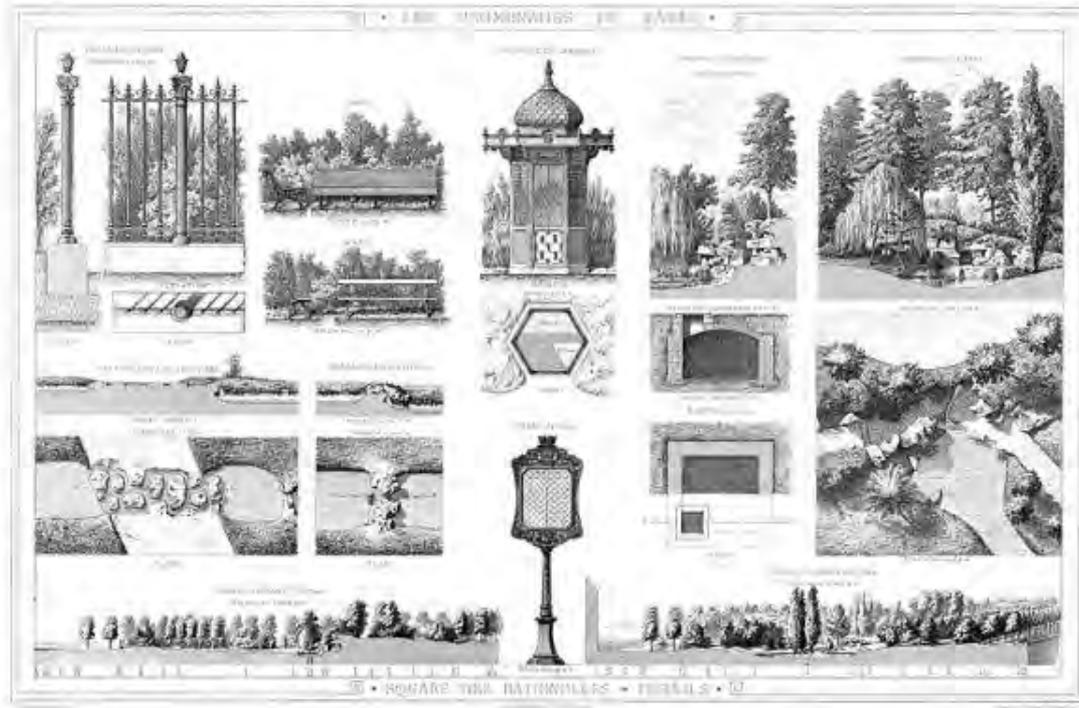
waged slave”. In fact, instead of challenging the typological convention that had cemented this unfair gender condition, most discourse focused on the way in which technology supposedly lessened the burden by making household chores more efficient. Christine Frederick’s 1919 book *Household Engineering* is a classic example of this attitude, an attitude that by and large architects adopted and still adopt today.

While it is easy to think – and perhaps hope – that technical progress can mean social progress, the nuclear family flat is rather proof of the opposite. It is because housing blocks could contain a more complex system of chimneys that every unit got a kitchen, but it is the single-family-kitchen that ties every woman to a hearth. In the last decade, this conjecture has proved itself correct again, with the rise of home work. It is because it is possible to work off-site that we can never stop working and have to be always available. It is also because of this that employers do not have to face the cost of premises or equipment – since our computers are conceived as extensions of ourselves if we work from home or freelance.

The unpaid labour of these subjects – the housewife, the ‘creative’ worker, the student – trapped within the walls of their homes, is a clear proof of the fact that accumulation never ended with the Enclosures, but is an ongoing process.

The very architecture of the trickiest of the workplaces – the house – is also clear proof of the fact that a territorial project sometimes begins with small-scale gestures, that repeated thousands and millions of times construct our cities, landscapes and continents.

## V. Public Space



Jean-Charles Alphand, *Details of the Park of the Square des Batignolles* (circa 1862).

‘Public space’ is widely assumed today to be an unquestionably good concept, and a simple one at that. In fact, the reason why certain spaces are declared public – in terms of ownership and jurisdiction – is to protect their dialectical opposite, that is to say private property. The very idea of public space as a juridical construct only surfaces in Renaissance Europe precisely as a way for the authority to claim control over certain spaces, and to define the ownership of other spaces. Not by chance the birth and definition of formalized public space matches step by step the rise of capitalism in Europe, from Tuscan piazzas to the French Royal squares. A project that wishes to rethink appropriation should therefore not forget that public space and infrastructure are not at all neutral elements, but on the contrary the first tools through which we can challenge and reshape the distribution of resources.

Perhaps the most controversial but fascinating case of a new type of public space introduced as a support of ongoing accumulation is, ironically enough, the most ‘natural’ of all archetypes: the park.

Regent's Park stands today as one of the most beautiful and loved urban spaces in London; so does, in Paris, the Bois de Boulogne. However, both of these parks were the results of projects marred not only by an aggressively speculative rationale, but also a questionable social agenda. In the Regent's Park case, John Nash's design, developed between 1811 and 1835, became the trigger for the real estate exploitation of a formerly suburban area, making it attractive and establishing a value gradient with its very presence. The Bois was similarly used by Haussmann in the 1850s as a tool to establish the western Right Bank as ideal ground for the rising middle and upper-middle classes. In both cases, the speculative side was offset by an agenda that passed itself off as socially engaged: the park represented a compensation for the hectic and polluted city tissue, open to the enjoyment of all classes. In fact, this compensation was only a token gesture vis-à-vis the hardships working people had to face. What these parks actually did, on the other hand, was to give the lower classes a glimpse of other lifestyles, contributing in a crucial manner to establish aspirations and desires that are fundamental to a consumer society. That this did not happen by chance is testified by the minutes of the British Select Committee on the Health of Towns, which throughout the 1830s and 1840s insisted on the need to create more parks not as a service, but rather as an instrument to produce a consumer class.

As well as in the case of the apartment, then, the invention of the modern city park works as a strategy to divide and conquer. Cutting leisure from work, the park is meant to give the illusion of being a public service, while in fact establishing all kinds of asymmetries – first and foremost, in terms of land prices.

This is another example of the way in which primitive accumulation continued with a spatial device that seems, funnily enough, the opposite of the Enclosures, but which in fact works much in the same way by defining rules of conduct, ownership regimes, and rights of exploitation. Also in this case, the invention of the park as architectural type meant the invention of a new urban form that impacted the territory well beyond the scale of the metropolitan areas of London and Paris. The separation of functions and rudimentary zoning created by the real estate value gradient around the park herald a logic of programmatic subdivision that would influence most XXth century citymaking: the very idea of park sets forward a specific project for the territory at large.

It is evident that the park per se, seen just as a large, green public space has the potential of being an extremely positive addition to a city: and nevertheless by and large parks

developed in the last two centuries have adhered to the old recipe and unwittingly become instruments of speculation, appropriation, and ultimately accumulation.

To rethink a park today would therefore mean to rethink the urban territory beyond zoning, beyond the asymmetries created by land value, and especially beyond the ever-thinning divide between leisure and production.

## VI. Logistics



Lewis Baltz, Photo from *The New Industrial Estates of Irvine, California* (1974).

The home, the workplace, and public space have all been, in different ways, reshaped and reinvented by the logic of accumulation. In all these cases, as we have seen, architecture has been called to invent types, narratives, and languages that would make the new spatial and social asymmetries natural: that would make accumulation invisible.

The invisible work of the housewife, the erasure of class consciousness prompted by the easy presence of green parks, the concealed workings of speculative interests behind public projects are all part of this attitude. And yet, this apparatus is not at all incorporeal but rather it finds its root in the exponential growth in scale and complexity of logistic infrastructure. Highways, airports, pipelines, data centres, warehouses are the actual spaces that allow for ongoing accumulation. Infrastructure escapes the scale of the state, reshapes the ground with criteria that have nothing to do with the visual logic of traditional 'landscape'. As it can be construed as something necessary, infrastructure is often produced by passing any ecological criteria, be they social or environmental.

It would be simplistic to say that it is the explosion of infrastructural works that has made architects once and for all obsolete in the definition of the territory; however, it is true that while contemporary discourse on infrastructure is rife, it is very rare for architects to dare to make proposals. Even more than the moments of production, reproduction and consumption, it is perhaps circulation that should be radically rethought in light of a different, less exploitative subdivision of resources. The logic with which we design logistic infrastructure today, if at all, is still the same of colonial architecture.

In 1974 photographer Lewis Baltz published *The New Industrial Estates Near Irvine*, California, a small book whose text is perhaps even more implacable than its black-and-white pictures. Baltz chronicles the construction of a repetitive landscape built as the result of a ruthless algorithm of land value, construction prices, and lifecycle of the businesses hosted. The striking thing about the text is its ability to read this process not as a random occurrence but rather as a project. Baltz does not stop at the formal aspect of what he portrays, although, clearly, he believes that there is a profound link between those forms and their economy: he discusses the material and techniques used, the labour needed to build these sheds and to make them function.

After forty years, the territory Baltz exposed in the book has become ubiquitous, and it is all the more urgent to rethink circulation and distribution as architectural questions: where do the goods go, and how, and how are they produced, and how it is possible to make accumulation not more invisible, but, perhaps, more readable, more open to challenges.

## VII. Project

The goal of this year's unit work is to trace how appropriation has affected specific territories. Each student will select a specific territory and will analyze it through an in-depth study. The main goal will be to answer this simple but fundamental question: *Where and how was this territory appropriated? Where and how was it divided? Where and how was it produced?* By historically tracing back the process of appropriation of a specific territory, students will disclose how the present social and political system has been established.

Whether we talk about the housing crisis, gentrification, refugees, desertification or air pollution, these conditions can be all explained as the outcome of specific processes of appropriation whose consequences unfold within our present social and political order. This analysis will be conducted by writing and drawing.

We will consider mapping and cartographic representation a crucial means of research and we will assume that there will be no difference between analysis and *project*. Within Diploma 14 we have always believed that the architectural project cannot be narrowed to the 'creative' moment of design. The latter is certainly important and it is not our intention to frustrate it. Yet we insist that not only architecture as a *project* cannot be reduced just to the moment of *making*, but that an inventive and critical study can be considered as *projective* as the moment of design itself. Even if we expect each student to deliver a piece of design at the end of the year, we want to clarify that mapping, describing, and articulating a situation in unprecedented ways can be already in itself a project.

We believe that such approach will allow us not only to rethink the terms of design in relationship with the scale of territory, but also to formulate alternative scenarios in which design may not serve its prescribed goals. The first conclusion of this analysis will be the drawing of an 'analogous map' of the territory itself which will attempt to disclose the political and social conflicts of its historical development. The analogous map will compose cartographic and narrative representation in order to give form and visibility to the history traced.

The analogous map will work as both project and introduction to the design work, which we expect to be formulated at first as a policy, and then as a tool box of actions. The goal of the project will be the de-activation of processes of appropriation after having made

clear their (illegitimate) historical background. We are particularly interested in the concreteness of this process, so we expect students to constantly link the legal, economic and political order of things to the actions through which the territory is materially constructed. For example, we are interested in exploring how the introduction of alternative housing typologies can alter the way in which home ownership has been constructed and reinforced; or how the removal (or the introduction) of specific infrastructures can alter the way the distribution of specific resources has been managed. We believe that architecture even within its disciplinary limits can be a valid instrument to make legible how processes of appropriation have been constructed. Architectural elements or even concepts can function as heuristic devices to disclose the ways in which power relationships have been established – and, also, made socially acceptable by constructing consensus.

### **VIII. Unit**

At the beginning of the year each unit member will select a specific territory. Although the architectural proposal might be a small scale artifact, we do ask that you choose a large territorial sample of at least 100x100 km as a starting point. This will help us detach ourselves from too immediate questions of architectural and urban form, while trying on the contrary to understand broader dynamics. The very framing of the sample – its precise size and boundary – will be our first design decision. There are no restrictions on the choice of the target area. However, everybody will have to be able to explain and argue how and why the choice came about. Also, it is crucial to be able to access documents and data relative to the site, so the selection has also to take into account language issues and availability of literature.

In the first term drawing, mapping and writing will be at the core of our work, ending with the production of an ‘analogous map’. The map will not only contain geographic elements, but also iconographic references of a broader cultural nature; to this end, the construction of a specific bibliography will be very important. The idea is to use the first term to find the ‘problem’, the urgent issue or potential that should become the theme for an architectural proposal. In fact the first term should end with the drafting of a specific architectural brief which will be different from student to student depending on the theme we will have exposed during the term.

In the second term, we expect everybody to put forward a concrete spatial proposal for the chosen territory. The scale of this proposal will vary from case to case, depending on the logic of the theme and the brief set forward at the end of term 1. We want to stress the fact that it would be wrong to say that the project is ‘made’ in term 2: in fact the project starts from the very first day of term 1. What we expect from term 2 is rather a design conjecture that fleshes out the project. This conjecture will be explored through a set of conventional architectural drawings: plans, sections, elevations.

We do believe the design should target a space. However, what that space is, and how you will modify it or create it, will be entirely dependent on the individual ambition. As we tried to make clear in the previous pages, we believe that housing types, transport infrastructure, agricultural strategies, public space, and many other kinds of spaces are all able to influence the construction of a territory. The proposal needs to be consistent with the starting thesis, and it needs to address it through space: beyond that, we look forward to discussing a broad range of responses to the brief.

In the third term we will craft a visual apparatus for the project, as well as a written essay that will attempt to unfold and problematize the issues unearthed during the year.

We always maintained that communicating, arguing, writing, rethinking, challenging, and discussing are as fundamental – and as creative – as the actual act of designing: for this reason we see the last term not just as the chance to illustrate the thesis, but as the actual moment in which all the different issues, aspirations, and intuitions should come together in a portfolio able to convey complexity in a clear, readable, and simple way.

Although the fourth year students do not have to submit a technical study report, we hope they will want to follow the work of their fifth year colleagues as this year in particular we believe that technical studies will be a fundamental part of the strategic thinking behind each individual project.

## IX. Technology



Andreas Gursky, *Happy Valley 1* (1995).

Discussing the techniques of primitive accumulation means to open up our technical understanding of architecture well beyond mere tectonics: this year we would like to challenge Diploma 14 to rethink all the technical implications of the projects as something that has an economic and social *form*. As we will be dealing with the distribution of resources, issues concerning the politics of fabrication, the cost and quality of building materials, and more importantly the impact of large-scale environmental issues will be at the core of our agenda.

Pollution, cost of water, quality of soil, availability of specific minerals are all issues that we usually deem outside of the grasp of architects, and yet, it would be a mistake not to acknowledge the fact that all these factors not only influence our future, but have always been at the centre of our practice in the past. The Confucian classics and Vitruvius made it explicit how the work of architecture is first and foremost to create, or to manipulate, an environment. This environment is made of air, humidity, wind, light as much as it is defined by solid built elements. Fast-forward a couple of millennia, and to those concerns we need to add the obvious impact of human activity. Contrary to what it might seem, there are still forms of agency to be found even in this condition.

Environment and politics are two faces of the same question, as one influences the other and vice-versa. If we want to try to question the way in which modern territories have been appropriated, colonized, exploited, and unequally distributed, we need to be able to understand the technologies that have made that appropriation possible.

The question of technology is for us twofold, though. On the one hand there are all the technologies that pertain building, settling, and maintaining; these are issues that we will explore in depth with the technical report in fifth year, but which we still expect the fourth years to take into account.

On the other hand there are all the cultural technologies that allow appropriation to happen from a social and political point of view: law, first and foremost, but also art, philosophy, and religion. This is an aspect we believe every unit member should study in depth; the drafting of a policy, in particular, will be an important part of the individual portfolios. Which are the institutions you need to create, or undo? Which are the cultural tropes you want to dismiss, or to create? What kind of legal framework do you need to initiate change? Who is the political subject that could support such a framework? These are all questions that we deem crucial. Imagine how influential could the legislation on pollution be in terms of reshaping our cities. Or think back at the way centuries of ethic and ritual rules have shaped mainland China as the earthly translation of an ideal.

Texts have constructed territories just as much as buildings: laws as the infamous Law of the Indies or the Jeffersonian Ordinance, architectural treatises as Palladio's *Four Books*, or even contemporary essays such as Koolhaas' "Generic City". Texts can expose an existing dynamic, or impose a new one. For this reason, the text will be a key component of the thesis, and a way for the individual students to take a position vis-à-vis the challenge we are proposing with this brief.

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