

Architectural Association School of Architecture
PhD Programme

End-of-Term Presentations

Tuesday, March 29, 2022



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<https://aaschool.zoom.us/j/87570683542?pwd=SytlWl16bjZhanMvbk1KWkQ3ZjFzUT09>

33 Bedford Square, First Floor, Front Room

11.30 AM Yunshi Zhou

12.15 Claudia Nitsche

LUNCH

14.00 Shiyu Jin

14.45 Mathilde Redouté

15.30 George Jepson

16.15 Enrica Mannelli

Yunshi Zhou

Relations between Youth, Education and Countryside

Redefine the Concept of Countryside



General Chen's formal residence in Pengjia Village, Hong'an County, Hubei Province, China. Photo by Yunshi Zhou.

Chinese rural areas are facing problems such as cultural deprivation and outward migration. To address these issues, the Chinese government has introduced several rural regeneration policies that employ youth study tour to develop rural villages since 2010s. These policies aim to develop the rural economy, revive local infrastructure, and change villagers' lifestyles. Most of the projects introduced as part of these policies have been implemented in villages of historical significance.

By evaluating these policies and projects, the thesis reveals clash between homogeneous policies and differentiated adaptations in the rural communities, and the problems of the central, projected vision to redefine the countryside, the instrumentalization of youth education, the consequential emergence of 'new villagers' and the industry of tourism that contest existing social relations. The thesis selects four villages located in Hong'an county as case studies, drawing from governmental, planning, socio-economical, educational and anthropological sources, to examine implications of the current 'youth study tour' policies in relation to the historical production of rural subjects and the reconceptualization of rurality. These contemporary experiences reminisce the large-scale phenomenon of the mobilisation of youth from urban to rural and the production of 'new villages' in 1950-80s. Historical evidence and implications of China's 'down to the countryside' movement have been drawn to inform criteria of analysis on current case studies. In parallel, international examples of 'youth in countryside' movements are studied to connect intentions, from political ideology, militarisation of culture, to labour and territorial management, of embedding education in rural areas and agricultural communities. Based on these findings, the thesis aim to frame a critique on China's new rurality and to redefine, by means of a multiscale design proposition, the territorial and spatial relations between rural subjects, modes of production, youth education and forms of collaboration that may yield more inclusive relations of revitalisation.

Thesis Structure

I. Autonomous Youth Movement

II. Youth, Gender, Labor

III. Countryside and Youth 'Education'

IV. Autonomy, Youth, and Countryside

V. Production of Educational Space in Countryside in 2010s

VI. Redefine the Concept of Countryside

Abstract of Chapter IV.

which will be presented on Tuesday, March 29

Autonomy, Youth, and Countryside

This chapter is to revisit the 'Down to the Countryside' movement and the roles and relations of youths and villagers as various forms of collectives in concurrent para-movements, which formed a new terrain of settlements and unsettlements, as well as deterritorialization and subjectivisation, that characterised China's construction of 'rurality' across the latter half of the 20th. This well-known process of de-urbanisation and ruralisation in the early decades of Communist China can be understood through voluntary and involuntary forms of mobilisation and collectivity that resulted in contingent and temporal conditions of interdependency and autonomy. This relational and deterritorialised perspective is unravelled by tracing the differentiated presence and engagements of 'youths' as significant catalysts in the construction of rurality, both as instrumentalised labour force that is also the transmitter of skills and knowledge of agricultural modernisation, and as agencies of autonomy in their adaptation of villagers' ways of life and mentalities toward land and environment. 'Youths' are radicals in both senses: radicalised by the state ideology as highly mobilised and prized agencies of transformation; and radicalised by their hybrid identities that encompass their urban and educated background and being confronted by their new existence in the villages and process of becoming- villagers. Their catalysing roles are captured in the various movements – par/parallel, sub/secondary, co/collaborative or complementary, and re/recurrent – that confluenced across the decades of 'Down to the Countryside' movement, which are investigated in detail in this chapter.

Claudia Nitsche

THE GERMAN FOREST AS A CONTESTED TERRITORY

And the Idea of Wooden Form



August Macke: *Bathing Girls with Town in the Background*, 1913.

Seen architecture as part of an ecological and holistic system, this thesis investigates the relationship between resource management and built environment, examining the specific case of the historical relationship between the German forest and timber architecture. Within this process, the thesis seeks to unfold on the one hand a historical understanding for the cultural and economical usage of timber and on the other hand it seeks to construct a holistic perspective for the complexity of the current climatic crisis.

This thesis begins with the exploration of the existential dependency on the resource timber for the German culture. Here, it unfolds its theory on spatial conditions as the result of economic and social practices that are based on the use of energy resources. Before the fossil fuel era, the primary energy resource was wood and its relevance as fuel and building material led to the condition of “wooden form”. Analysing this condition, the thesis includes the cultural and ideological narration of the German forest as the typical entity of the German territory. Therefore the thesis aims to considerate the historical relationship between the territorial conditions, the materiality of the built environment and its cultural narration.

Additionally, in taking different paintings from the Renaissance, Romanticism, German Expressionism and National Socialism up to contemporary depictions in various interludes, the history of the German forest can be analysed and traced visually.

After describing the different parameters, the thesis chronologically shows specific cases that bring together the territorial conditions, the use of the material and its ideological narration, from the early ages up to the present situation although the main section of the thesis is the enclosure of the forest and its shift from common to private property and within the shift from feudalism to capitalism. Interestingly, this enclosure was argued with the need for sustainable forestry to prevent the threat of the wood scarcity in the 18th century.

Thesis Structure

I. The Idea of Wooden Form

II. The German Forest as a Contested Territory

III. A New Order, an Old Language

IV. Designing Heimat

V. Timber Matters

Abstract of Chapter IV.

which will be presented on Tuesday, March 29

DESIGNING HEIMAT

On Wilhelmine Life and Land Reformers and the Forest Grünwald

In 1871, Germany was eventually united as the German Empire and thereby became officially an industrialized nation state. In this time period the German cities changed rapidly: they consolidated tremendously and expanded unregulated in their peripheries. They were experienced as “Molochs” and their noxious living conditions led to the longing for an anti-urban world, to a “return back to nature” and to reforms of life, land and social conditions.

Within the existential need for healthier living conditions, the forest got attention and gained value as a space for recreation. At the end of the 19th century, not only the bourgeois class should benefit from the “health provider”, but rather the whole public sphere should profit from it - not at least to tackle the problem of the rising social unrest.

To illustrate the issue, the case study of the Grünwald forest will be examined: Grünwald was a coniferous state forest located on the western edge of Berlin. For many centuries, it was used as a royal hunting ground up to the term of Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1888 while it “got run down” with the image of a “Volkspark” for the public since the second half of the 19th century.

Because of the enormous increase of land property values in Berlin in the 1870s, real estate developers cast eye on the forest and the Grünwald was threatened to be capitalized. For the protection of the “public space for recreation”, the Berlin Forest Protection Association was founded in 1909. Together with a broad range of Berliners - along with Berlin’s political leaders, the city’s press and associational life - the heterogeneous group took action and protected the forest by pressuring the government not to sell state forests for real estate development. Eventually, the state abandoned its plan to profit from its extensive wooded properties around Berlin.

Known as the first environmental protection movement, this case offers not only an understanding of the forest as an environmental factor at the beginning of the 20th century, but will also show thoughts on land reform and land distribution in the Wilhelmine era.

Shiyu Jin
READING LILONG
A Postcolonial Approach to Typology



Aerial view of Calcutta in 1932, Source: Keystone/Getty images

Lilong is a distinctive housing typology in Chinese semi-colonial history with the features of both the Western terraced house and traditional Chinese courtyard house. While postcolonialism attempts to establish a new architectural framework to incorporate architectural discourse of the East, typology and the concept of type seem mainly discussed in the West. Lilong, without a deep investigation of socio-spatial production and typological evolution in the current literature, is typical to explore a new typology by postcolonial approach. The thesis aims to explore how the Lilong block, as the distinctive residence during Shanghai's semi-colonial period, was generated during the confrontation of China and the West and attempts to reconstruct a new typology based on a new concept of type that captures a commonality in architectures between the West and the East. The research exploits methods in typology and morphology to analyse physical forms and spatial structures of Lilong blocks and combines archive research and ethnographical methodology to examine the socio-spatial practice, performance, stories, and narratives in the Lilong neighbourhood. It also uses mapping to bridge the linkage between (im) materiality and socio-spatial practice to establish the socio-spatial production of Lilong. By the comparative study between different types of Lilong and its precedent domestic architectures in China and the West, the study establishes a typological development process of colonial architecture. In this way, the thesis quests for a new concept of type based on commonality in architectures between the West and the East and explores a corresponding typology that helps clarify the confrontation and acculturation in architectural development embedded in colonial history. Therefore, the research will contribute to the socio-spatial production of Chinese domestic space, inspire a new typology by postcolonial approach, and catalyse an architectural framework accommodating the plurality of existence between the West and the East.

Thesis Structure

- I. Postcolonialism and Colonial Built Environment*
- II. Typology and Type – from the West to China*
- III. Socio-Spatial Production of Shanghai Lilong*
- IV. Reading Lilong: Toward a Typology*

Abstract of Chapter I.

which will be presented on Tuesday, March 29

Postcolonialism and Colonial Built Environment

From the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, this chapter will review essential concepts and criticisms of postcolonial theory. Despite the abundant literature and sometimes mutually conflicting theories in the postcolonial theory itself, the chapter will attend to some critical aspects as to how to recover the subject of the colonized in the dialectical relationship between dominance and resistance, how to avoid the threat of Eurocentrism and Orientalism, and how to deal with cultural specificity and capital universality. These aspects will open a broader horizon for reflecting on the theoretical and historical writings in architecture, especially in those previously colonized parts of the globe, and inspire new understandings of cross-cultural typological transformations in architecture. Then, postcolonialism in architecture and urban study will get examined in both theoretical and practical aspects. Theoretically, the research will focus on the significant aspects of the postcolonial theory mentioned above and explore architectural writings and urban studies that embody these thoughts and critiques of postcolonial theory to respond to the relevant theoretical issues or reconstruct some architectural frameworks. The research will also explore if any ideas and concepts discussed in the current postcolonial theoretical framework are already introduced or appropriated in architectural frameworks. If so, further examine their validity and reflect on their critiques. Practically, it will give a basic view of the overall built environment in the colonial periods and further focus on some typical areas to investigate the architecture and urban landscape since the colonial periods. The research will pay more attention to colonial settlements and their transformations during the confrontation with the colonizer and explore how these architectural transformations verify or criticize some ideas of postcolonialism.

Mathilde Redouté
ESTOVOIR

Understanding the idea of *polis* through commoning



Bodleian Library MS. C17:48 (9): A plat and description of the whole manor & Lordship of Laxton.

The thesis seeks to understand the meaning of “Common”, as a term being overused over time, and thus, emptied of its meaning. By beginning with the historical and philosophical roots of it, the research will look at when and how this term rebirthed and became a possible alternative to the two implemented models of organization: Market and State. Indeed, on October 2009 Elinor Ostrom received the Nobel Prize in economic science for her work on the “Analysis of economic governance, especially the commons”, and by doing so became the first woman winning this honor. The choice is not trivial as it occurred one year after the 2008 housing crisis confronting the flaws and the finiteness of our ways of living. It marked a milestone forcing financial markets to think differently about financialization, enclosure and global economy.

Originated from the Greek *oikonomia* meaning “household management”, the field of economy contemporary defines the management of scarce resources, or all the human behaviours related to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. These last actions, historically located inside the house in the Greek polis, have been externalized and made possible through combinations of market transactions and collective or hierarchical decision making, that has been extended to the whole planet. Faced with the exponential growth of the population leading to increasing consumption of natural resources that can't be originally produced, the question of cohabitation through the right to access to its resources have changed the geography of the world. In that sense, architecture, as an organizational apparatus, participates in a history of techniques and means by which the concrete shaping of our societies has taken place.

“How to live together” is thus one of the oldest but most relevant and pressing questions humans have asked themselves. Having defined Common as an active debate, the thesis will investigate the role it plays in the three spheres of existence: territory, work and labour.

Thesis Structure

- I. Commons, Common, Commoning*: From a noun to a verb
- II. Commoning the land*: From being to owning
- III. Commoning the production*: From commodification to cooperation
- IV. Commoning the reproduction*: From invisible to valuable

Abstract of Chapter II.

which will be presented on Tuesday, March 29

COMMONING THE LAND

Enclosure is the historical nemesis of the commons in its destructive way leading to expropriation and privatization becoming the norm in Europe. Even though the French contest was the most striking one in the absolute course of its actions, the logic of enclosure could historically be traced back to England where the market-based system tackled feudal society first. But it is far from being a single absolute autonomous process. On the contrary, by separating the worker from the means of production, evicting labourers from their homes and removing the grass from the herd, enclosure movement forced the landless population out to the city, opening a breach to urban industrialization.

What lay in the background are dominant historical trends suggesting a change in perception led by utilitarian and liberal beliefs to keep the working-class under surveillance. Even though leading political figures emerged to protest, their voices and actions were powerless against the immense state machinery triggered by fear of demographic development and the growth of trade. The notion of capitalist value slowly replaced the one of used value embodied by customary rights and deeply rooted in local culture. The manifolds of commoning (right of way, gleaning, grazing area...) was slowly dismantled and eliminated to establish an efficient and rational exploitative system, supported by the ratification of legislation and tax applications.

Through enclosure, commons became visible, as well as commoners that represents an entire class structure deeply dependent on the products of these natural resources. The fight for subsistence revealed the direct link spatial and social system plays in the (re)production of a large part of the population. By comparing the causes and effects of this phenomena in England and France, I will trace the spatial and social history of enclosure, accompanied by agrarian experiences of which we must understand both the hesitations and a growing radicalism that has reshaped Europe to establish private property as the norm.

George Jepson

SHINING STEEL TEMPERED IN THE FIRE

The Architecture of the Factory, Manchester 1760-1915



The Thirteen Factories at Canton, Guangzhou. 1805.

This project seeks to theorise the architecture of the factory as an origin of the spread of the logic of industrial production across Britain, Western Europe, and eventually globally. By beginning with the contained scale of the factory, my research will evidence how it acted as a node upon which different political and socio-economic agencies endemic to the development of capitalism into an entirely global system intersected.

As an architectural object, the factory embodies generic reproducibility par excellence, its form and structure over time becoming subject solely to the whims of capital and its need for flexibility and fluidity. In theorising the spread of industrialised modes of production alongside technological developments in both machinery and structural engineering, I will show how this radically shifted contemporaneous understandings of the human relationship to both production and its coextensive forms of labour.

The research examines this history initially through an interrogation of the antecedents to the 18th century mechanised factory followed by an analysis of the subsequent legislative interventions into the development of Britain's global trade relations and of the 'factory system' across Britain and its colonies. Following this, the chapters three through five develop a site-specific analysis of Manchester, England, a city which sat at the forefront of widespread social change during both the 1st and 2nd Industrial Revolutions, and the architectures fundamental to the spread of the systems of value that ran parallel with the technological developments of industrialisation, and fomented radically new and complex class relations.

Thesis Structure

- I. A Genealogy of the Factory: From the Mediterranean to Manchester.
- II. Legislation and Law: The State and Crown as Agents of Industry
- III. Early Mills: 1760-1800
- IV. Cottonopolis: The Rise of an Industrial Powerhouse, 1800-1890
- V. The Second Industrial Revolution: Infrastructure and Decline, 1890-1915

Abstract of Chapter II

Legislation and Law

The State and Crown as Agents of Industry

The second chapter of my research outlines a series of preconditions necessary to the British industrial revolution. Through this I seek to reveal the role of both the state and crown in the active construction of the conditions that allowed for England, through the consolidation of its naval power, its colonial empire and the capital accrued from trade across the Atlantic Triangle, to industrialise first and most widely.

These precedents include theories of medieval agricultural industrial revolutions, which themselves presaged the organisation and distribution of labour integral to the logistical efficacy of the industrial revolutions proper and the emergence of the trades corporation as a agent within the race for global trade monopolisation. Particular focus is paid to the introduction of a body of legislation - including the early Navigation Acts of 17th century, the Factory Acts of the 18th and 19th centuries, and the series of 'Poor Laws' that buttressed them both - that entrenched both the process of land enclosures that had been taking place across Great Britain for centuries as well as the consolidation of a new proletarian class on whom the ruling classes were entirely reliant to spin and weld and weave their way to a level of wealth the world had scarcely seen before.

The intent of this chapter is to outline the political conditions that fomented the transition from a mercantile, monopolistic approach to global trade to a free market liberalism, spearheaded by the Manchester Liberals and Abolitionists, that came to define the conditions of trade for the next two centuries.

Enrica Mannelli

The Social Factory: architecture and social movements from autonomy to precarity. Italy 1899-2020



A wall of the Forte Prenestino, Rome, photo by the autor, 2022

This research examines the evolution of the city as a *social factory* and the social movements' protests related to this evolution, focusing on the Italian case study. The city as a social factory is understood as a system driven by capital and profit in which *production* is not limited to the workplace but is instead extended to the whole society. This extension occurs through the commodification of the spaces in which urban life takes place in order to fulfil the main goal of reproducing the labour force – that is, of making people productive.

This thesis argues that, in order to understand the social factory, it is important to focus on the passage from Fordism - when the city was produced according to the factory - to Post-Fordism, when that city became the space of production, resulting in the social factory. Within this shift, creativity played a pivotal role: it was the way in which workers reclaimed their autonomy, their own space of action during the 1970s. Later it was co-opted by the system that happily dismissed Fordism and embraced all those values that were put forward by the creative workers resulting in spaces dedicated to its production having a key role in urban planning as well as in the related exploitation of freelance workers.

Within this framework, Italy represents a fast-paced laboratory while the Italian movement of Autonomy produced extensive theoretical and political contributions on this topic. Over the decades, the pursuit of autonomy, both by capitalism and by political organizations, took many forms: the mass-worker strikes in the 1960s; the refusal to work and the project of self-valorization of the 1970s; and, in the 1980s, the act of squatting in abandoned buildings and the establishment of the *Centri Sociali* - the self-managed occupied spaces - where culture, politics and creativity could be supported.

Ultimately, this thesis investigates the role of urban policies within the Roman area in enabling a system of social factory workshops. The latter imagined as a critique of the *Centri Sociali* and an opportunity to challenge the relentless nature of capitalism.

Thesis Structure

- I. The factory and the city: Fiat in Turin and the rise of the mass-worker
- II. Working Slowly: the rise of the socialised worker in late 1970s Bologna
- III. From the benches to the *Centri Sociali*: the autonomous subjects and their *islands* of desire
- IV. The creative district: the freelancer and the commodification of creativity
- V. The social factory: a project for Rome

Abstract of Chapter III

which will be presented on Tuesday, March 29

From the benches to the *Centri Sociali*: the autonomous subjects and their *islands* of desire

The kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades in 1978 is the event that marks the end of the most politicized years of the Italian country. The difficulty of dealing with such an escalation of violence resulted in the State's strong response in order to guarantee stability: what Virno defines as a proper *counter-revolution* consisted of the repression of social insubordination and in the restoration of traditional values that have been questioned during the 1970s such as the central role of work and the nuclear family within society. In a few years, the fight for collective values has been replaced by individualism, consumerism and the slow rise of the *entrepreneur*.

Within this framework, the research looks at the emergence of the *Centri Sociali* as the antagonist appropriation of the 1950s leftist project of the social condenser as an institution. The *Centri Sociali* arose as self-managed, squatted *islands* for the independent production of culture: throughout the 1980s and 1990s this phenomenon gave rise to a movement that led to the illegal occupation of over 250 vacant buildings - schools, monasteries, factories and fortresses. The *Centri Sociali* were, at the same time: a set of services at the scale of the neighbourhood; the repository of the 1970s anti-capitalist protests; and a space for social, political, and cultural events, de facto promoting a public sphere not filtered by the State apparatus. In the late 1990s the *Centri Sociali* acted as political workshops of the *Tute Bianche* movement - the biggest Italian social movement since the 1970s claiming for freelance workers rights in the Neoliberal era - opening up to the multitude of independent workers and participating in the G8 protests in Genova.

The research questions the *Centri Sociali* - as the *islands* out of which emerged an extensive independent cultural production - as proper enterprises, alternative to the capitalist system. Therefore it questions the concept of *entrepreneur*, so deeply linked to the capitalist system, in order to reclaim it as a role that can be acted in a more equal - if not antagonistic - perspective.