

POST-EMPIRE URBANISMS

SCIArc
FreshUrbs & Options Studio
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Parallel Realities, Trans-national Archipelagos, New Urban Ambiences

"Are there still borders? More than ever! Every street has its border line. Between each plot there's a strip of No-man's land, disguised by a hedge or a ditch. Whoever dares will fall into the booby traps or be hit by laser rays. The trout are really torpedoes. Every home owner, or even every tenant, nails his name plate on the door, like a coat of arms, and studies the morning paper as if he were a world leader. ...Everyone carries his own state with him, and demands a toll when another wants to enter. So much for the border... but one can only enter with a password."
Himmel Uber Berlin, Wim Wenders and Peter Handke

Throughout history cities have formed as entities in response to a local richness of resources- whether water, oil, agriculture, mineral deposits, or the like. Cities without these riches have had to discover ways to bring the resources to the city. Los Angeles as a case study demonstrates the second modus operandi, through its parasitism on aquifers and watersheds reaching hundreds of miles north and east.

Geopolitics are driven by oil availability. However the development of sites like Jebel Ali freeport and the relatively oil poor tourist/economic center growth of Dubai showcase another range of symptoms in the relationship between cities with resources and cities without. Today a city can demonstrate its resources by showing its willingness to curb its carbon emissions, just as historically it could have done so by siting in proximity to a mine or river.

Similarly, the global landscape allows a kind of growth unprecedented in scale, when such possibilities of global virtual resource exchange combine with the transnational reach of port cities and large free trade and special economic zones. Some analysts suggest that globally we are near or at 'peak oil'. This would indicate that the world must transition to other forms of energy, and would also indicate that cities directly or indirectly feeding on the oil economy for their growth and subsistence will need to look elsewhere for engines of development.

As cities grow and mutate in this new economic landscape, energy is generated and consumed at a frantic pace. Every city is a layering of time, materialist history providing traces of events and bringing the past into constant contact with the present and the future. Overlap of multiple realities. Infrastructure can be seen as a metastatized organ for the global city: what forms of life emerge along these

veins of connectivity, circulation, delay, desire, economy, production and consumption?

Special Economic Zone:

An increase in foreign investment, or increase in new models of distributed ownership? In the landscape of virtual resource trade which ever more drives cities and reframes their political and passional borders, how could we design a city today, as a special economic zone, a free port that took advantage of the new emerging world landscape- the transition from oil economy to another economy? How can the model of a city that can survive without resources work towards this?

Typically a special economic zone exists outside a country's normal economic rules to attract foreign investment or heavier trade. What other models can we suggest for the free trade zone which reorient the traditional models of ownership, exchange and power?

PROGRAM:

The program will be to design a Free Trade Zone for Los Angeles, in proximity to LAX and the Port. The site is the once oil rich area of Baldwin Hills, south of Culver city.

In the program, we suggest a mixture of SMLXL (the L aspect) - the Barcelona 2004/Olympic Plan, Las Vegas, Brasilia, and EdKeller JuanAzulay SimCity World.

Students will work initially in teams of 2-3. Each team will pick two components from the program list and develop these components,

Remote LAX Terminal
Oil Office City
Government Offices
Sports Blocks (Pools, Golf, Gym, Track)
Rec. Blocks (Theaters, Mall, Restaurants)
Parking [? Mil]
Convention Center
Cultural Network
Television, Film and Digital Broadcasting Studios
Infrastructure
Hotel
Church/Mortuary/Cemetery
Park One
Park Two
Housing
Zoo

SITE:

Like an atrophied organ, the territory of the oil wells in Baldwin Hills between LAX and Culver City are a relic, a phantom limb stage set, revealing a territory where LA attempted to infuse its moribund resource status.

Reading Baldwin Hills and Ladera as a site within a global network, there are a range of resonances we can identify. The boundary of the site itself within Los Angeles has a history as predominantly African

American, but more recently [timeframe??] has received an influx of white, latino and asian residents.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baldwin_Hills,_Los_Angeles,_California

Google Earth:

34° 00' 28.58" N
118° 22' 31.76" W

Terraserver:

http://www.terraserver.com/imagery/image_lv.asp?ulx=371333.804&uly=3765622.775&zone=11&res=8&provider_id=512&t=pan

Mapquest:

<http://www.mapquest.com/maps/map.adp?searchtype=address&country=US&addtohistory=&searchtab=home&formtype=address&popflag=0&latitude=&longitude=&name=&phone=&level=&cat=&address=la+cienea+and+stocker&city=Los+Angeles&state=CA&zipcode>

SEMINAR:

There will be an accompanying seminar which will provide an urban mapping and theoretical component to the studio. Film and text references will be drawn from seminar research and deployed in the studio.