

**ECOLOGIES OF EXISTENCE** THE ARCHITECTURE OF COLLECTIVE EQUIPMENT



# ECOLOGIES OF EXISTENCE

THE ARCHITECTURE OF COLLECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Godofredo Pereira, Platon Issaias, David Burns



Outdoor pool of Philharmonic Society Artistic Union Piedense. Cova da Piedade, Portugal, 1980.

## **1 – INTRODUCTION**

ADS7 proposes an alternative way of thinking and designing architecture as a collective political practice. The studio encourages students to think simultaneously in multiple scales, proposing architectural models and strategies for a wide array of collectives that they will have to select by themselves. As in the previous year, ADS7's main research question is what kind of architecture could emerge when we think about and define ecology, subjectivity and living, as indispensable political and architectural categories.

## 2 – ON COLLECTIVE EQUIPMENTS & POPULAR CULTURE

In 2017 we will focus on a key object of architectural experimentation: <u>collective</u> equipment.

<u>Collective equipments</u> have a long history in architecture, traditionally understood as instruments of religious and military powers, as tools deployed by the modern nation-state or, increasingly today, by private entities. However, we argue that they are also part of a very important tradition of emancipatory and transformative politics. We are referring here not only to their importance during post-colonial nation-building projects, but also to more precarious experiments: we can identify multiple moments where these have emerged from movements of social and political organization and solidarity, as essential elements of struggle and products of conflict, from popular theatres and social clubs to healthcare centres or schools. Although their history is most famously associated with that of the state, it is also that of multiple forms of social organization.



Mike Anderson, Billie Cragie, and Bert Williams at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy. Canberra ACT Australia, 27 November 1972. Sydney Morning Herald.

<u>Collective equipments</u> are not just buildings that host public programs. Water distribution systems, land-use regulations or transport infrastructures are equally capable of constituting a collective around them. The focus here is not on the relation between infrastructure and a social group, or between a particular space and its 'users', but on the ways in which these are one and the same. We should underline the importance of an array of <u>protocols</u> that define all forms of social infrastructures: from the organization and distribution of labour, to all the juridical, political, technical, religious and habitual mechanisms of collective life. Collective equipments always have associated rituals, bodily and/or sexual conduct, proceedings and daily rhythms that make them unique.

As such, <u>collective equipments</u> are key devices in the formalization of popular culture. They are accompanied by a mixed-semiotics of icons, flags, symbols, letterheads, stamps, each with a colour-palette, sometimes even uniforms or dress codes. And yet, popular culture should not be confused with 'pop culture'. 'Pop culture' feeds constantly from popular culture in the sense that the image of the Virgin in Madonna's video-clips feeds from the Holy Virgin iconography of Italian-American neighbourhoods. Conversely, popular culture also feeds from 'pop culture'. A good example of this is dinosaurs becoming central to Indigenous autonomy in the housing Project of Alto Comedero, Argentina. Sometimes the circuit feeds endlessly back and forth, with Timberland work boots being appropriated by gang culture, later brought back to pop culture by mainstream hip-hop. Popular and pop culture feed from each other but they are not the same. Whereas 'pop' corresponds to a production of subjectivity that is characteristic to capitalist modes of production - it is deterritorialized by nature – popular culture is profoundly territorial, ingrained in habits, economies of production, social practices and modes of living. The semiotics of popular <u>culture</u> is part and parcel to the formation of collective subjectivity and collective political projects.



Aqueduct system at Quinta da Malagueira by Álvaro Siza. Évora, Portugal, 1973.

Forms of representation and communication are a key component of power and subjectivity. Let's think for a moment a series of semiotics of everyday life that we are constantly confronting: the colour of police uniforms, of public transport inspectors, the dress code of employees and employers, the colour and signs of sports clubs and associations, t-shirts of our favourite bands, the various sexualized objects, the various symbols and devices of gender or racial domination and oppression, the signs of left or right wing politics we could identify. In many cases these are the result of identity politics, as mechanisms that assign positions in society or that help enforcing certain hegemonic positions.

And yet, not all semiotics are those of control or consumption. In looking at popular culture we are searching for the signs, sounds and materials, which are deployed in the production of the most diverse existential territories. We aim to bring this extremely rich world of signs, colours, materials, symbols, emblems of collective practices and conduct into the foreground of architectural experimentation. We are looking for expressions of daily life, of collective endeavours and of the possibility of alternative modes of living, producing and imagining architecture and the city.

From this perspective, collective equipments should be seen as archives of forces, of desires and of subjectivities, which they both express and reformulate. They are as much an intervention into the city and its living conditions, into people's' lives and protocols, as they are a way of giving form and material presence of all kinds of projects and aspirations. What kind of architecture could emerge from such understanding?



www.fatimashop. Luminous statues of Our Lady of Fàtima. Joana Vasconcelos, 2002.



San Ismaelito, Cortes Malandros. Maria Lionza Espiritismo. General Cemetery Caracas, Venezuela.

## **3 – RECLAIMING COLLECTIVE EQUIPMENTS**

Three key problems lie at the heart of collective equipments, each with its own sets of dangers:

1) problems of <u>provision</u> relating to a service that is lacking, but raising disputes over who provides, what is provided and how;

2) problems of <u>identity</u> that focus on the importance of a collective equipment for promoting the formation of a collective, but that risk over-determining the collective through the crystallization of power structures and hierarchies;

3) and problems of <u>organization</u>, related to the setting-up of protocols, structures, schedules, distributions of power-relations, with all that this implies in terms of re-inventing the collective itself.

Due to their location at the intersection of multiple interests and constituencies, in the 1960s collective equipments were object of important cross-disciplinary experimentation by the likes of Foucault and Guattari and the CERFI in France. Their purpose was to speculate on the transformation of equipments that were previously sites of governance by envisioning new alliances between institutions, spaces and practices. In ADS7 we want to recover this research. We see collective equipments as sites of radical institutional and architectural experimentation. This brief is all the more urgent in an epoch where all around the globe institutions are in urgent need of re-invention so they can address new forms of political and social organization.

# **4 – ARCHITECTURE AND ECOLOGY**

ADS7 has an ongoing concern defining an alternative approach to ecology that could inform a different way of thinking and problematizing space, architecture and the territory. As we have argued before, in order to achieve this, we should think of 'ecologies of living', a category that brings together material, environmental, technical, social and mental domains. In our point of view, to think ecologically is not so much a matter of protecting existing ecologies, but more importantly, a matter of generating conditions for different ones to emerge and affirm themselves. Only on these terms can a properly *ecological* project take place.

In our proposal, architecture is understood as a practice that has the ability to give consistency, or even to formalize, certain modes of living. An architecture of collective equipment would do precisely that: give form, project, represent, trace, and of course challenge ways, protocols and conditions of social organization. Students will be asked to identify multiple aspects of living from emerging modes of production, to types of social organization, of inhabitation or relations to nature, that do not conform to the ossification of social structures, familial relations and psychological imaginaries inherent to neoliberal forms of urban development.



Aymara woman dances in a ballroom. El Alto, Bolivia. May 17, 2014. AP Photo/Juan Karita.

The studio aims to investigate the possible role that architecture can play in giving both material and social consistency to these processes, sometimes by providing spaces for events to happen, other times by formalizing a specific program, and others even by giving visibility to certain communities and their particular ways of life. In our view architecture gains its political relevance precisely when it is able to think space and its configurations in terms of living. And it is in this sense that we argue that architecture is a significant category of *ecological struggle*.

The mixed-semiotics and spatial configurations of collective equipments call for a particular focus on modes of living and ecologies of existence that are most commonly ignored by the canonical teaching of architecture and other spatial practices. Often within the discipline, these are left on the margins of our discussions and concerns, or, even worse, package as 'alternative', 'underground', and in any case, too stubborn and undisciplined to become part of a proper architectural brief. In ADS7, we want to focus precisely on these peculiar yet emblematic forms of alternative ecologies: from religious, outlaw, and retreat communities, or more 'traditional' neighbourhood associations, to sex workers organizations, adult recreational collectives, fetish clubs or even urban gangs, underground music and bikers groups, all of the above produce not only their own subjects but, equally important for us, their spaces of action.

However, we aim to do so not from the paradigms of exodus that dominated the 1960s and 1970s discussions, such as self-excluded hippie communities in the US, or European community-based architectural experiments that often at the 'local' level replicated the existing power structures of enclosure and even a certain level of depolitization. In our view the idea of community or local scale as an alternative to capitalism is misguiding, by reducing the problem to a matter of local vs. global. Instead, to think ecologically implies to understanding that each collective constitutes its own scale, or its own perspective of the world. By collectives we mean both small and large groups, living together or at a distance, dozens or millions, alive or dead.

What ADS7 ultimately aims to explore is how these collectives can become constituent political and spatial actors of the city by affirming through architecture their radical difference. In our view, it is through architecture, that modes of living and the production of subjectivity can be best foregrounded as the essential political questions of today.



Evo Morales' 3rd Inauguration. Klasasaya Temple, Tiwanaku, Bolivia. photo: AFP. January 31st, 2015.

### **5 – STUDIO FRAMEWORK**

As in the previous year, ADS7 students are asked to start the year by identifying a specific collective they will be working with and for. In addition to this, this year students will be asked to frame their design research and proposals in relation to the overall focus on collective equipment. This, however, will be scheduled differently for each year:

**YEAR 1** - During TERM 1 the collective that will be the object of research will be the one addressed by the LIVE project. In the beginning of TERM 2 students might choose a new one. Students will be encouraged to work in groups.

**YEAR 2** - Year 2 students will start developing their own research from the start of the year. The research will be structured and scheduled according to each individual proposal following the academic calendar. Please see below for more information for crits, exams and deliverables.



Erez Crossing. Israel – Gaza barrier. © Independent photo-journalist Violeta Moura.

## 5.1 – WORKSHOPS AND SEMINAR SERIES:

### 5.1.1. WORKSHOP 1

#### BORDER/GROUND: The Architecture of the Gaza Strip (YR1 + YR2)

**TERM 1** will start by a 2-week workshop whose purpose is to acquaint the students with the studio's perspective and methods, as well as providing a strong background of technical, visual and drawing skills, in particular for the YR1 students. This workshop marks the beginning of collaboration between the ADS7 and the CRA, Goldsmiths University. The workshop will be mandatory for YR1 and YR2 students.

**Tutors:** Francesco Sebregondi; Platon Issaias; Godofredo Pereira; Lorenzo Pezzani; Susan Schuppli.

**Brief:** The workshop will ask what are the conditions of possibility of a meaningful, sustainable, emancipatory design proposal for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip? In order to respond, it will be necessary to unpack the spatio-political logic of the Gaza blockade – now in its tenth year – which will be understood as a particular mode of territorial governance. Participants will produce research along a series of proposed threads. Brought together, these research outputs will form a collective archive that will describe the present ground and border conditions in Gaza. Ultimately, the workshop will result in a robustly informed and politically engaged design brief for the Gaza Strip.

ADS7 students will focus in particular on Ground Conditions including:

Infrastructure/collective equipment (schools, hospitals, public facilities, water facilities); Land use / Land ownership / Land administration.

**Key dates:** The workshop runs daily for the duration of two weeks, starting on **Thursday**, **October 6** and finishes on **Wednesday**, **October 19** with a series of presentations.

**Objectives:** The workshop has a different purpose for different students, for example for YR1 should be described as a preparation for the LIVE Project; for YR2 it works as an exercise in fine-tuning research methods and critical perspectives.

#### **Expected outputs:**

- Map(s) and visualisation(s) describing the distribution, status, and evolution over the past decade of: collective equipment in Gaza; infrastructure facilities and networks; legal and administrative status of the land. In doing so students will highlight the processes of fragmentation of the territory and orchestrated dependency of the population.

- Setting up of an online platform that will host findings, research, visual material and the design propositions to be developed at a later stage.

- Specification of guidelines and brief for the design of key collective equipment in Gaza.



Mervyn Bishop, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam pours soil into the hands of traditional land owner Vincent Lingiari, Northern Territory (1975). Type R3 photograph. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Hallmark Cards Australian Photography Collection Fund 1991. © Mervyn Bishop. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

#### 5.1.2. WORKSHOP 2

#### The Mendacity Of Photography (YR1 + YR2)

Vincent Lingiari, I solemnly hand to you these deeds as proof, in Australian law, that these lands belong to the Gurindji people and I put into your hands part of the earth itself as a sign that this land will be the possession of you and your children forever.

Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam to Gurindji activist Vincent Lingiari, Daguragu, NT Australia, 26 August 1975

In 1975 Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam performed a ceremonial land transfer to Gurindji activist Vincent Lingiari in the remote Northern Territory community of Daguragu. The moment ended a 29-year strike lead by Lingiari against the Australian government and the British pastoral company, Vestys. This photograph captured by Mervyn Bishop became an icon in the land rights struggle in Australia and catapulted Bishop into celebrity. At the time, Bishop was the sole professional Aboriginal photographer, working at that point for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

The image, however, is a lie. It is a careful restaging of an event that occurred minutes before in a shady (not as photographic) setting. The look in Lingiari's eyes belies the strength and vigor of the towering Whitlam. Lingiari seems to be confessing to the lens that despite the importance of the gesture, the moment has passed.

Photography has always walked this knife's edge. On the one hand it is the default documentation device, the witness bearer to history. But on the other, it is notoriously fragile and burdened with misinformation.

#### Tutor: David Burns

Key dates: The workshop will run from the 15th to the 16th of November.

**Objectives:** This workshop will investigate photography, and images in general, to uncover their biases, to expose their weaknesses, and to exploit their potential.

### 5.1.3. SEMINAR SERIES: The Architecture of Collective Equipment (YR1 + YR2)

During TERM 1 we will run a lecture series on precedents and case-studies of architecture and collective equipment. It will take place on Thursday morning, 10am.

October 20	On Collectives and Popular Culture.
October 27	On Laws and Protocols.
November 3	On Nation-building.
November 10	On Popular Modes of Production.
November 17	On Infrastructure.
December 1	On The Domestic as a Collective Equipment.
December 15	On Collective Equipment in Athens.

Selected bibliography for all seminars will be delivered at the beginning of term.



## 5.2 – YEAR 1:

#### 5.2.1. LIVE PROJECT

#### **Collective Equipment for Gaza**

The **LIVE Project** follows from the Workshop 1 as an opportunity to develop a design within a real-life context, and with specific clients and requirements, including budget and time-constraints. Students will gain an insight into a mode of practicing that is often forgotten: working not for private clients or developers but for and together with state institutions and non-governmental organizations concerned with architectural and urban issues. With this project we hope to widen the student's horizons of what the architecture profession is.

The **LIVE project** will be developed in collaboration with the CRA Goldsmiths and with NGO's such as Gisha. Its purpose is to set-up a long-term platform/research on collective equipment in Palestine in articulation with local NGO's. It has two key aims: 1) to expose and teach the students basic visual and research skills such as introduction to model making, 3d modeling, remote sensing and GIS. It will focus on bringing different kinds of information together, spatial, architectural, film, etc; 2) to train students in how to approach concrete cases, in terms of understanding culture, modes of living, particular legal-political-social conditions, how to develop research, etc.

**Brief:** As per above, the aim of the workshop is to develop preliminary design propositions of collective equipment in Gaza. This should follow from the main guidelines and research areas identified in Workshop 1.

**Partners:** Gisha; Al-Mezan; PCHR; Al-Shabaka; aidwatch.ps; Mada al-Carmel; Centre for Research Architecture, Goldsmiths University.

**Key dates:** The LIVE Project follows from Workshop 1 until the end of Term 1, and students could subsequently keep on working on it up to the WIP and then up to whatever dates are agreed with local NGO's/partners.

Students: working in groups of 2/3.

#### **Expected Output:**

- Developing a report on the current status of Collective Equipment in Gaza.
- Develop a series of design proposals up to scale 1/50. (in groups)



Kamil Hilmi Dalkir, Objects/Bodies/Territories, RCA – ADS7, 2016. Acrylic/HDF/Resin. 2500 x 5000 mm. photo © David Burns.

#### 5.2.2. SUBMISSIONS & DELIVERABLES

TERM 1: Gaza platform, LIVE Project

**Beginning TERM 2: Research Proposal** 

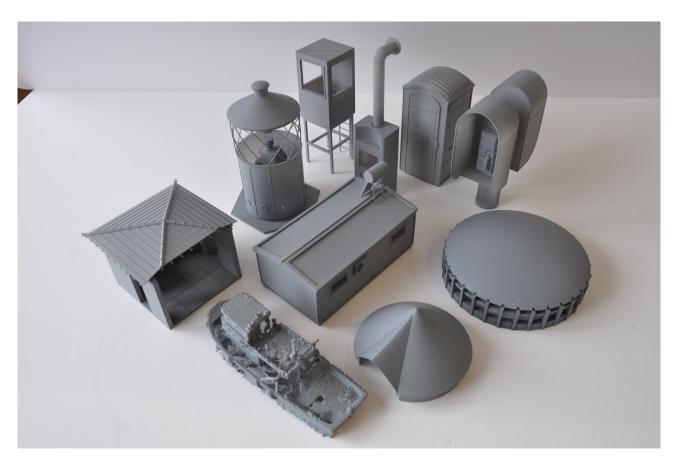
500w abstract, bibliography, 5 projects/precedents, 5 primary sources (related to the research proposal), 5 artefacts

WIP: Presentation of Gaza platform + selection of case studies of collective equipments. (group or individual, tbc)

MidTERM 2: Research, territorial map, site plan, object/technical aspect/material study (1:1) of equipment (1:50 and less)

TERM 2: 1:200, two images, model, research report draft (plus material from midterm submission)

TERM 3: final exams (RIBA criteria), research report final



Kamil Hilmi Dalkir, Objects/Bodies/Territories, RCA – ADS7, 2016. detail. photo © Kamil Hilmi Dalkir.

### 5.2.3. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

In accordance to RIBA's learning outcomes and criteria, YR1 students should be able to:

1. Show a deep knowledge of the history and theory of architecture, relating their research proposal to an array of references, design and research projects and practices that expand the field into art, material technology, media, anthropology, etc.

2. Understand the role of the architect as an active and operative intellectual and researcher within society, someone that has to address space and design as a radical and transformative practice with a social and economic context.

3. Re-invent architectural design for collectives of living by radicalizing law, planning policies and constraints, building technology and materials, or any other protocol and regulation that affect the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

4. Study in depth the relationship between architecture, as a material/intellectual practice, and people, communities and their environment.

5. Radicalize what architectural representation is. Architectural design for ADS7 is primarily a platform of social and political experimentation. Aesthetic but also technical/material aspects should be thought and challenged primarily as issues of conflict and dispute.

6. Experiment with different media and means of representation, relating architecture with other design, creative and research practices.

The above two points are extremely important for YR1 students. At the completion of their first year at the RCA, they should be able to achieve a proficiency in different media, explore the school's workshops, try different materials, communication and material techniques. These would construct a knowledge platform and a series of very important skills that will be further explored in their final year.

- 7. Understand the different stages and scales of architectural design.
- 8. Communicate the technical/technological/material aspects of their project.
- 9. Show how the above are related to their theoretical and research interests.

## 5.3 – YEAR 2:

#### 5.3.1. THE RESEARCH BRIEF

After the first workshop, Y2 students should start framing their year-long research brief. The following constitute the deliverables for TERM 1:

YR2 Submission of 1st draft brief: 750 words, including research question, methodology and site, integrated with the framework of collective equipment research. The setting-up of a convincing research & design method, including scheduling will be a key factor of assessment.

YR2 Final brief submission: 1500 words, including, site, type, and inventory of outputs. Assessment will value strongly the student's ability to reinterpret the ADS7 brief according to their own research interests; the attention to the aesthetics of each selected case study, the development of a particular visual language, modelling of specific architectural types, spaces, prototypes, etc.

YR2 TERM 1 final Reviews: draft research report (archival material, media, bibliography, etc); Territorial map; Site plan up to 1:200; artefacts, draft submission of visual language strategy (one image, one axo, one model)



Adrian Yau, Ruptured Ecology: The Coca Leaf Growers of Bolivia, RCA – ADS7, 2016. Landing, Impasse, Captive. Digital Collage. 210 x 297 mm each.

#### 5.3.2. SUBMISSIONS & DELIVERABLES

TERM 1: The Research Brief.

WIP: The Image of Collective Equipments (visual language strategy, research archive)

MidTERM 2: territorial strategy; site plans up to 1:200; object/technical aspect/material study (1:1) of equipment (1:50 and less); clear visual strategy

TERM 2: At this stage, all key design elements should be defined and presented.

**TERM 3: Final Design Thesis** 



Georgia White, LOT 17, RCA – ADS7, 2016. Window Cling on perplex. 600 x 500 mm.

### 5.3.3. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

In accordance to RIBA's learning outcomes and criteria, YR2 students should be able to:

1. Show deep knowledge and understanding of the history and theory of architecture, specifically the genealogy of design experimentation and critical research on collective equipments and transformative spatial politics. This includes the specific interest of ADS7 in art, anthropology, and both traditional and contemporary technologies of architectural, spatial, artistic and anthropological representations.

2. Relate their work with contemporary political, social and economic issues. For ADS7, the role of the architect as an active and operative intellectual and researcher is of outmost importance.

3. Re-invent architectural design for collectives of living by radicalizing law, planning policies and constraints, building technology and materials, or any other protocol and regulation that affect the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

4. Study in depth the relationship between architecture, as a material/intellectual practice, and people, communities and their environment.

5. Radicalize what architectural representation is. Architectural design for ADS7 is primarily a platform of social and political experimentation. Aesthetic but also technical/material aspects should be thought and challenged primarily as issues of conflict and dispute.

6. Experiment with different media and means of representation, relating architecture with other design, creative and research practices.

7. Combine and coherently communicate research positions, archival material and their design approach.

8. Develop a multi-scalar understanding of architecture and spatial politics.

9. Present the project in different ways according to the different constituencies it wants to access or/and bring together. This is an extremely important communication skill as much as a methodological one. The use of drawings, models, media and other devices have to make the project accessible to different audiences, as much as presenting a clear and radical take on a given problem or dispute.

## 6 - FIELD TRIP (YR1 + YR2)

In 2017 ADS7 will travel between **Monday, January 9** and **Monday, January 16** to Athens, Greece. Its main purpose will be to investigate the way the recent economic crisis allowed for, if not necessitated, the rise of alternative networks of collective equipments of various kind as a humanitarian public infrastructure, operating within, parallel or even against state institutions. Healthcare centers run by volunteers, solidarity facilities for refugees and the urban poor, the rise of new, democratic, community-based politics, has significantly changed the political and social reality of Greece. At the beginning of the economic crisis, Site visits, lectures, and roundtable discussions with selected guests will be organized. Short design exercises and research tests tbc.

**Partners:** School of Architecture, National, Technical University of Athens, MA Instead (Parapoesis), Department of Architecture, University of Thessaly, Union of Greek Architects (SADAS – PEA), Antonas Office.

**Key Dates:** Students should arrive to Athens by Monday morning, January 9. Site visits, lectures and workshops will take place from Monday, January 9 (evening) to Friday, January 13. Venues, timetable tbc.

The students will be provided with working spaces at the School of Architecture in Athens for these days. Weekend (January 14, 15) is free of studio related activities.

\* YR1: Research Proposal Submission Draft: Monday, January 9.



Yiorgis Yerolymbos, *Athens Spread*, July 2012. Photographic documentation of Athens for the *Made in Athens*, Official Greek participation in 13th Biennale d'Achitettura, Venice, Italy. Curators: Panos Dragonas, Anna Skiada. © Yiorgis Yerolymbos.

# 7 – OVERALL SCHEDULE

## Term 1 Key Dates

October 6	Year Starts / Introduction
October 6	Gaza Workshop Starts
October 19	Gaza Workshop Presentations
October 20	Seminar: On Collectives and Popular Culture
October 24	LIVE project starts
October 25	YR2 Draft Brief submission
October 27	Seminar: On Laws and Protocols
November 3	Seminar: On Nation-Building
November 10	Seminar: On Popular Modes of Production
November 14	YR2 Brief Submission
November 15-16	David Burns Workshop
November 15-16 November 17	David Burns Workshop Seminar: On Infrastructure
	·
November 17	Seminar: On Infrastructure
November 17 November 22	Seminar: On Infrastructure YR2 brief Feedback
November 17 November 22 November 24	Seminar: On Infrastructure YR2 brief Feedback 8x8x8 Cross-Crits
November 17 November 22 November 24 December 1	Seminar: On Infrastructure YR2 brief Feedback 8x8x8 Cross-Crits On The Domestic as a Collective Equipment
November 17 November 22 November 24 December 1 December 6	Seminar: On Infrastructure YR2 brief Feedback 8x8x8 Cross-Crits On The Domestic as a Collective Equipment YR2 Updated Brief Hand in
November 17 November 22 November 24 December 1 December 6 December 8	Seminar: On Infrastructure YR2 brief Feedback 8x8x8 Cross-Crits On The Domestic as a Collective Equipment YR2 Updated Brief Hand in YR1 LIVE project Jury

## Term 2 Key Dates

January 9-16	Field trip to Athens
January 9	Research Proposal Draft Submission (YR1)
Jan 30 - Feb 7	WIP Show
March 15	1:1 Show Day
March 31	END of TERM

## Term 3 Key Dates

April 24	Beginning of Term
May 1-3	Pre Exam Pinups (YR2)
May 8-10	Interim Exams (YR1)
May 21-23	Final Exams (YR1)

