

Camp(site): Vernacular Spaces/Territories of Itinerancy

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This research seeks to develop methods for understanding paradoxical constructions of place within conditions of itinerancy and begins with a reconsideration of the vernacular in architecture. Rather than being framed in terms of the formal, typological, or stylistic analysis of buildings, the vernacular built environment is studied as a spatial negotiation of detail and territory. This recalibration allows for the investigation of the vernacular as a dynamic situation, a complex network of relations, a process. Revisiting the etymological origins of the term 'vernacular' provides additional focus: the Latin word *vena* refers to a slave born abroad (similar to *criollo*). Thus, in addition to vernacular's conventional denotation of the indigenous or local, its derivation connotes two themes of this research: an exteriority incorporated from within and a temporary presence in the process of becoming permanent. To explore these themes, research focuses on the place-making practices of camps, including iterations such as ad hoc urban enclaves, military encampments, tourist campgrounds, and semi-permanent camp-towns. The projects associated with this research seek to document these paradoxical inversions by developing apposite methods of mapping and making. Procedures of mapping open with what Michel Serres has termed 'local interpretation and global demonstration,' and inquiries into making begin with the ideas and work of Giuseppe Zaibonini and Tadashi Kawamata. This research utilizes three situations: urban camping in Old Havana, rural camping in Florida, and coastal camping within Louisiana's platform communities. As a result, this dissertation generates an operative definition and theory of what can be termed 'camp space.'

With housing problems and increased tourism, the social and cultural situation in Old Havana requires a mode for understanding place and its paradoxes. Two trajectories of urban camping are mapped: the movements of tourists within districts where the unstable is returned to a degree of permanence (districts of renovation by *Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de la Habana*) and the internal 'migration' of Old Havana's inhabitants within an urban fabric that shifts from permanence

to a temporary condition (zones of *derribo* and *ciudadelas* modified by *artesanostas del espacio*). This mode of mapping reworks the Situationist methods of *dérive* in terms of Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier's discussion of *lo real maravilloso*.

Similarly, though in a rural context, Florida's architectural vernacular is also reconceived as a situation of spatial paradox. Investigation focuses on the following four zones: Ruskin – the town and college campus based on John Ruskin's social and educational ideas, Masaryktown – an agrarian settlement named for Czechoslovakia's first president, Gibsonton – the fishing camp adopted by carnival performers in the winter season, and Sarasota's Tourist Park – headquarters of the Tin Can Tourists of the World. Relating both to the conditions studied and to the methodologies developed, the premise for this section is that camp(site) involves a negotiation of disparate elements such as distance and proximity, mobility and fixity, standard and non-standard, local and global, and permanent and impermanent.



Fig. 1. Giants Camp Restaurant in Gibsonton, Florida.

Platforms along Louisiana's Gulf Coast serve as additional sites for the study of place, territory, and itinerancy. Analysis focuses on two shrimp drying platforms, associated with Manila Village in the Mississippi Delta's Barataria Bay, that were worked by shrimpers of French, Malay, Chinese, and Filipino backgrounds. With their peripheral (coastal) siting, these campsites allowed for an intersection of myth, culture, and commerce that was simultaneously urban and rural – a space located conceptually between Michel Foucault's heterotopia and Vittorio Gregotti's residual atopia. Mapping of these 'camp spaces' proceeds from the etymological origins of *plate-forme*, Old French for 'diagram,' and proposes the construction of the 'asymptotic territory.'

In its approach to place and territory, this research can be framed as a critique of critical regionalism. Kenneth Frampton's interpretation of Heidegger's *Bauen Wohnen Denken* as concurrent qualities becomes problematic by not accounting for contemporary situations of difference, mobility, and fragmented identity. Alan Colquhoun has recently noted that potential regionalist unity has been replaced by an internalized condition of 'unstable difference.' In addition, this study follows Massimo Cacciari's suggestion that Heideggerian place is characterized by desertion – with implications of movement and temporality (at odds with Frampton's project of restorative stability). Operating within a theoretical fissure between phenomenology and post-structuralism, Ignasi de Solà-Morales has established

a working definition of place: "Place is not a ground.... Place is, rather, a conjectural foundation, a ritual of and in time...."¹ Derived from Serres' work on local-global synthesis, methods of mapping are employed to expand on this understanding of place. In terms of making, Zambonini contends that form's constitution is embedded within the process of composing, and Robert Morris' 'phenomenology of making,' locates potential forms in the activity of constructing. How the camp spaces are made thus informs the development of an operational mode for architectural practice that addresses paradoxes of contemporary experience. Oscillating between territory (mapping) and detail (making), this research seeks to understand the vernacular as process.

A theory of 'camp space' (closely tied to elements of both ancient and contemporary philosophies of 'place') is thus proposed as a method for comprehending and operating within the contested ground of the shifting relationships between detail and territory, the ephemeral and the permanent, the local and the global.

NOTES

- ¹Ignasi de Solà-Morales, "Place: Permanence or Production," *Differences: Topographies of Contemporary Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 104.