

Stress and Wellness: Design Guidelines for Rio de Janeiro



Studio Site and Rio das Pedras; Source: GoogleEarth



Pentagram, New York City Transit Authority Graphics Standards Manual, 1970

Studio Statement

This semester students will participate in an experimental research and design studio focused on the complex intersection between urban health, architecture, planning and development in the setting of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. As one of the most modern cities in Brazil, it has experienced contemporary health crises that have shaped their urban development and social and political landscape. As a studio, students will research typological and physiological forms within the stressed urban environment of Rio das Pedras. How has urban health both historically and through the contemporary shaped this vibrant favela and the overall city of Rio? And similarly, how has the form of the city shaped the health and wellness of its population? This studio is as much a record of a search as it is a forum for creating design guidelines and proposals. The themes of stress and wellness represent the content of the studio. With the aim to better understand situations of stress and wellness in relation to design and development. The studio will be structured through reading two scales; first students will focus on Rio's urban context, infrastructures, and building types and study the subject of design guidelines, and then focus on programmatic development in addition to environmental and material properties in designing a new health typology for the future, which includes, but is not limited to, proposals for schools, housing, infrastructures, parks, and opportunities for economic development particularly at the scale of microenterprises.

The studio begins with an intensive four week exercise into comparative research about urban and

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architectural typologies associated with health and cities including but not limited to Rio de Janeiro, New York City, among others. As a departure point for this research, students, working in pairs, will research the subject of design guidelines. The most well-known urban design guide-lines are found here in New York City. Starting by researching NYC's Active Design Guidelines, students will explore what it means to "design" design guidelines and what constitutes design guidelines. Similarly, what constitutes urban design guide-lines? Guidelines, standard manuals, and byelaws have been projects by architects throughout modernity. Alison Smithson famously wrote The Byelaws of Mental Health in defense of the Robin Hood Gardens Housing Estate. Students will be asked to create and design their own guidelines for a new urban development in proximity to Rio das Pedras.

By examining the history of design guidelines, urban sites, and contemporary urban plans and development proposals, students will gain knowledge into the intersection between urban development strategies and architectural proposals and techniques that underpin urban design guidelines. Based on the subjects of stress and wellness, each student pair will produce research through drawings and diagrams for their wellness design guidelines. The studio will engage with graphic designers. Each pair will produce a small handbook of their design guidelines and small model to take to Rio de Janeiro. Students will use their design guidelines in developing their urban and architectural projects. The studio asks students to question urban living and dwelling as both an infrastructural and architectural problems. Specific questions should be framed around issues related to health through demographics, density, wealth and poverty, etc... The projects will develop around three assignments: program, structure, and the building envelop/facade. For the final, students will be required to produce two models, one of the city at an infrastructural scale, and one at a building scale of a particular architectural project that exemplifies subjects of health and wellness. In addition, students will be required to produce a one minute video of their project.

Located between the neighborhoods of Anil and Gardênia Azul and in close proximity to the favela Rio das Pedras, is a large expanse of land that was once a bustling industrial site of a former factory that partially houses the distribution facility of AmBev. In preparation for the 2016 Olympics, several other parts of Rio de Janeiro have undergone redevelopment and repurposing of similar industrial sites, such as the Bairro Caricoa housing development which occupies a former industrial site in the North Zone of the city.

The studio will also collaborate with public health researchers from Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health.

The studio will travel to Rio de Janeiro during the week of March 17-21, 2014