

GSAPP Columbia University Fall 2012

Arch 4105 - Studio V

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Intelligent Incrementalism and Exhuberance

Re-envisioning the Legacy of the London Olympic Park

The challenge of the studio is to intervene in the existing post-games condition of the London Olympic Park and to radically re-imagine a new Olympic Park "Legacy". Unlike earlier host cities where the Olympic games and their attendant facilities were distributed within and around a large urban area recent Olympic games such as Sydney, Beijing or Athens have, as preferred and encouraged by the International Olympic Committee, hosted a majority of Game events within an Olympic Park specifically created for the purpose of the international Mega-event. While other narratives may be adopted as more official rationales by Host cities (regeneration of Barcelona's waterfront or London's East End for instance) the original impetus for the typology of the Olympic Park was borne out of a desire to maximize and facilitate not only visitor access to the Games but more importantly provide access by the media as well as provide the exposure of Official Sponsors to the widest possible audience.

Leaving behind the debate concerning whether the concept of the Olympic Park conceived mainly with respect to the unfolding of the Games and their mediated dissemination is appropriate or not, the focus of this studio is rather with the condition of the "aftermath" of the Games. Despite heavy promotion and lobbying of the London Olympic Games as the "Legacy Games" and the espousing of the commendable goals of 'regeneration' and 'convergence' with the surrounding City of London; the fact of the underlying rationale of the Park's current state and unpredictability of ongoing support, financially, politically or otherwise, the future transformation of the London Olympic Park remains uncertain. The studio thus proposes a critical re-interpretation of both the history of the former derelict site and the long terms goals of the current Park through highly speculative and radical new proposals.

While some former Host cities planned Olympic venues that were distributed and integrated in to the city as whole, in its bid for the Olympic Games the City of London promoted the selected site of the Olympic Park as future new 'city within a city'. However the mechanism for transforming the Park into a new 'city within a city' remains unchartered and elusive. Moreover, the trend of balkanizing the Olympic venues within an Olympic Park that has gained popularity post-1945, has all too resulted in the familiar White Elephants. While it is understood that several venues of the London Games were intended as temporary, and may therefore be removed or relocated, the studio will accept as givens the

'permanent' or 'remnant' facilities (stadium, aquatic center, velodrome etc.) as well as new permanent infrastructure and landscape as either points of resistance or points of departure for new proposals much like set pieces on a game board to be negotiated and integrated into a larger strategy or strategies.

Process:

To counter the broad strokes of the current masterplan and counterbalance the autonomous and disconnected nature of the remaining iconic Olympic facilities a methodology of Intelligent Incrementalism will be undertaken. The studio will first begin with creating digital collages representing individual approaches to the overall site to be followed by collective negotiation and collaboration to create a new joint Masterplan or a Conceptual LaunchPad.

This will generate any number of diverse conditions as potential sites to be selected and interpreted at the discretion of the student, and to be subsequently dismantled and dissected in further exploration at the scale of building. The process will entail incrementally zooming in to these sites at various levels of detail in order to generate, or discover, new relationships and levels of intricacy at increasingly refined scales. This would not be unlike the process of speculating on underlying structures and systems that one might discover examining matter with the use of a microscope.

Eventual explorations of the incremental aspects of the projects through parametrics or other types of digital processes are not intended to be ends in themselves but rather techniques and methodologies to provide consistency while enabling the complexity of a multiplicity of parts to coalesce into new formations. Here the "incremental" is both a formal and procedural device enabling the studio to dynamically negotiate and translate concepts from the urban to the architectural while proposing new programs, new relationships with the remaining iconic Olympic venues, landscape, infrastructure and waterways, reconnecting and recontextualizing the territory of the Olympic Park in radical new ways.

The studio aims to take risks and propose radical visions for the Park that will be compelling, contentious, provocative and exuberant.