Territory as Interior

Economies and Ecologies in the Barbanza Peninsula

MIT 4.154 Architecture Design Studio

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Studio 3-415

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Description

Territory as Interior is an architectural design studio that connects ecologies and economies. Our first step will consist of investigating the material resources and economic sectors of the territory where we will intervene: the Barbanza Peninsula, in Galicia, Spain. This initial research phase will help define two key aspects of each student's intervention:

1. Program: Students will define a program for a productive activity of their choice that can help reactivate the region's economic activity.

2. Construction: Students will use their knowledge of the area's material resources to define the building's construction system.

Ultimately, we seek interventions that condense territorial relations into a single artifact: buildings whose program and construction contribute to rearticulating and revitalizing the territory. The title *Territory as Interior* reflects a dual intention: on one hand, to create architectures that mobilize the internal resources of a geographical region, and on the other, to understand geographic and environmental systems through the experience of a building's interior spaces.

We will work in the site of a derelict building of a former fishing industry, with the aim of suggesting new economic possibilities. The site is located in Aguiño, at the very end of the settlement system that stretches along the southern shore of the Barbanza Peninsula. We will intervene upon a transitional geography, between the settlements, the landscape parts of the coast, and the water. We'll design the building and consider the landscape around it.

A Barbanza. Territory and territorial transitions

A Barbanza is one of a series of peninsulas that characterize the coastal geography of Galicia, in northwest Spain. These peninsulas are surrounded by *rias*, large bodies of seawater that penetrate inland until they meet the mouth of a river. *Rías* are a unique geographical phenomenon, comparable in Europe only to Norwegian fjords. Their succession creates an extensive, jagged coastline. As a result, despite Galicia's small land area, its coast spans 1,629 km, making up one-fifth of Spain's total coastline. The relationship with, and use of, the sea thus constitutes two of the region's key characteristics.

The confluence of a river, with the sediment it carries, and the protected, mostly calm waters of the *rias* has fostered diverse and rich ecosystems, which have historically supported settlement processes in the region. As evidenced by a series of prehistoric settlements and monuments, along with other historical landmarks, Galicia has been inhabited for millennia,. These architectural elements are only a manifestation of the intense occupation of the territory that characterizes Galicia. The region has 39.000 place-names, more than the rest of Spain, as well as an estimated number of 2,000,000 micro place names—a number almost as high as the total of Galicia inhabitants.

Settlements in A Barbanza are part of an urban continuum stretching from northern Galicia to Lisbon, Portugal. This urban formation has been described as a "città-diffusa" (diffuse city), a term coined in the 1990s by Italian architect and urban geographer Francesco Indovina. Indovina used the term to describe the Veneto region, where cities like Venice, Vicenza, and Padova are connected by a low-rise, almost continuous system of settlement that blends urban and rural typologies and land uses. The coastal urbanization in Galicia and northern Portugal shares these features. The main urban centers (A Coruña, Vigo, Santiago de Compostela) merge with smaller settlements, connected by an almost continuous urban fabric that blends housing, agricultural fields, industrial areas, infrastructures, and logistical facilities. The small settlements linking this urban continuum cannot be clearly defined as either cities or rural areas; they are a combination of both.

Italian architect Saverio Muratori theorized that settlements and territorial systems represent human "interpretations" of the surface of the earth. For him, each historical period understood its relationship with the land differently and created physical structures to reflect that understanding. In A Barbanza, the first level of territorial interpretation is closely tied to the coast. The placement of buildings, roads, and harbors occupies the littoral zone, underscoring the importance of fishing for the local population's subsistence. The sea is constantly used for productive activities and transportation, and it is populated by wooden structures ("bateas") for mollusk harvesting. This reliance on the water is not only productive but also cultural. Importantly, the use of the *rias* is not only economic: they are spaces of connection between villages, recreation, landscape value, and public activities, often reflected in cultural products.

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Recently, a second layer of territorial interpretation has emerged, linked to the intensification of inland uses. Historically, the interior provided land for agriculture and forestry, often under communal regimes. Today, this is being complemented by monocultures of pine and eucalyptus, which fuel a growing wood industry. Additionally, Galicia has become one of the largest areas of wind energy production in Spain due to the intensity of the Atlantic winds. The wind farms in A Barbanza are located in the coastal mountain ridges, often on communal lands. These land uses are triggering a second layer of territorial interpretation with its own spatiality. While settlements continue to occupy the coast, new infrastructure, industrial areas, and logistical facilities are expanding into the interior of the peninsula. These developments follow a heavily industrialized logic, primarily focused on the circulation of people and goods, connecting the region to national and global production chains.

There is an ongoing tension between these two territorial systems: the historic coastal system, primarily oriented around fishing, and the more recent inland occupation, focused on industry and circulation. While still important, the fishing industry has been in steady decline over the past few decades. Meanwhile, the inland system is gaining economic significance, though it is often disconnected from the settlements. There is a need to imagine new economic models that don't necessarily rely on global industrialization, but instead use local resources and foster new forms of local knowledge. Such models could help strengthen existing settlement systems and mitigate the negative effects of the decline of the fishing industry.

The studio investigates this possible, complementary, economical model, linked to existing material resources and forms of knowledge. By placing the intervention in the context of a settlement, we are looking for productive activities that can activate and reinforce the urban fabric while creating positive synergies with the surrounding territory.

Territory and territorial design

A key goal of this studio is to explore how architecture acts as a tool for territorial articulation. Our objective is to see how specific buildings, with their associated programs and modes of construction, can help unfold new territorial logics aimed at producing an equilibrium between ecologies and economies.

This territorial project requires dealing with the different layers, or components, territory has. With that goal, we will approach territory through three main lenses, which have informed geographic and urban literature from the second half of the twentieth century on.

Strand 1. Territoriality

A first strand of literature approaches territory as a result of a previous process of territoriality. This is a position articulated in the late 1970s and 1980s by scholars such as Claude Raffestin, Robert Sacks or Edward Soja. The authors who developed the idea of territoriality understand that humans act as other animal species when they define and delimit the territories they occupy in relation to the resources that exist in them. In this sense, the organization of human territories is intrinsically linked first to the reproduction of life, and second to the structuring of economical systems.

In our case, this resource-based position can help us understand the two forms of territorial occupation we have described: a historic, coastal occupation revolving around maritime resources, and a contemporary, interior one that is built on the exploitation of forest, agriculture, industry, and renewable energies. This second territorial form promotes the connection between the Barbanza peninsula and global circuits of distribution.

Territoriality let us understand the relation between ecologies (as these inform which resources humans can use) and economies. Historically, this relation has been mediated by different modes of resource management which often had a collective nature. The maritime conditions that have been key for the development of the Barbanza were often managed as a common. The sea is not partitioned, and thus the control of sea food populations, captures, and preservation of habitats was treated as a collective question, in the hands of *confrarias* (literally, brotherhoods) of fishers. This communal form of resource management also informed the use of land. The Barbanza *montes comunais* (common woods) were used for forestry and grazing and managed through shared decision making processes.

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Communal structures were reduced or eliminated during the Spanish dictatorship (1936 to 1975). They were substituted by a process of land and resource appropriation that continues nowadays. Some of the new land uses, from wind energy farms, to monoculture forests do represent the current version of land appropriation, although in some cases they also establish positive agreements with the *montes comunais*. In this sense, while the approach to territory through the lens of territoriality seems to initially prioritize the economic prism, there's an inherently political question involving who owns the resources and how these are used and distributed. *Territory as Interior* invites you to explore how the territorial economies your building will reinforce can also promote collective systems of resource management and work outside of the logics of territorial and economic appropriation.

Strand 2. Territory as a cultural construct

 A second strand of territorial literature develops the idea of territory as a cultural product or, in other words, as a transformation of the natural world into a human artifact. This position relies heavily on the learnings of human geography and anthropology. Its strongest representation in architecture were the variegated territorial discourses developed in Italy during the late 1960s and early 1970s by authors such as Saverio Muratori, Vittorio Gregotti, Aldo Rossi, Franco Purini, Claudio Borradori or Antonio Palermo. While there are notable differences between these authors, we can highlight here some shared aspects of their discourses.

- **Territory is an autonomous spatial category.**
  The notable urban growth European and North American cities experienced during the 1950s and 1960s, led Italian architects to develop the notion of *città-territorio,* (city-territory). This notion proposed that cities had become so big that they had to be considered as a territory in itself, or rather, the territory had been converted into a city. In this sense, the category of territory was somehow equated to that of urbanization.

  The approach to territory developed by Muratori, Gregotti, or Rossi differed from this idea of *città-territorio*. They posited that architects had to consider "territory" in its own right, as an autonomous spatial category, different than city or urbanization. Territory hosted a diversity of elements. It certainly contained cities, but also other type of settlements. It included agricultural fields and a multitude of productive systems. It was characterized by natural forms and ecological systems. A territory was thus a specific cultural, spatial, and economic configuration of all those aspects.

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While the idea of *città-territorio* was fundamentally linked to urban growth, that of territory was above all connected to planetarization. For Muratori, for instance, the fact that humans had already occupied the entire surface of the earth through multiple settlements and infrastructural systems, meant that architects had to start designing at a geographical scale. Gregotti and the team he articulated for the special issue "The Form of Territory" of *Edilizia Moderna* argued that planetarization was also causing huge geographical transformations—from the deployment of massive agricultural areas, to the transformation of climates—which could only be addressed by territorial action.

This position is crucial for us. Importantly, it led to important explorations in architectural design. Also, it advocated for the need to go beyond the problems and scales associated to cities that had constituted (and still do) the core of architectural production and argued that to address the ecological, environmental, energetic, or productive challenges derived from planetarization requires thinking and acting upon territorial scales. In this sense, this group of authors argued for the relevance of designing territories, not cities.

- **Territory is shaped by human action.**
  All these authors sustained that human modification of geographical space and environmental conditions led to the definition of different types of territorial systems. These territorial systems could be understood as expression of human cultures and techniques. The notion of territorial interpretation we took from Muratori is perhaps the clearest expression of this approach. Each mode of territorial organization constitutes, in this view, a conscious interpretation, or elaboration of geographical space. This interpretation is spatialized through human artifacts: from systems of land division, to modes of cultivation and irrigation, to infrastructures, to land-marks. Territory is here an architectural question. Human artifacts structure the way territory works and our experience of it. They create systems of reference, means to orient ourselves in geographical space. Artifacts make geography human. In this regard, the work of Rossi, Muratori, or Gregotti is similar to the reticulation of geography by technical means described by Gilbert Simondon in his *On The Mode of Existence of Technical Objects.* Architecture and technical systems are both instruments to organize geographical space

The fact that territory is a human organization of geographic space into different spatial structures bring the question about how to represent those spatial

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systems. Mapping became a crucial tool for Italian thinkers about territory, who posited the need to develop systems of cartographic representation that could bring together different natural and land made elements. Cartographies could thus include rivers and water bodies; irrigation and productive systems; infrastructures and geographical features, in order to understand the relation settlements had with all of them.

This work of cartographic production was aimed at the identification of different territorial systems. Cartography showed their different spatial features, as well as the opportunities these provided for further development. The contrast between architects as Gregotti, Rossi or Muratori was not methodological (they all emphasized the value of cartography) but projective. Whereas for Muratori, cartographies could help us understand the stable dimensions of territory and factor a project of preservation, for Gregotti or Rossi, they allowed to understand temporal evolution of a territory, and the possibilities it offered for further transformation.

This approach to territory will inform our work. *Territory as Interior* will begin with a mapping exercise, which will connect the geographical features of A Barbanza to the different resources this territory provides. While the main object here is to map resources, we will also pay attention to the spatial structures at play in the Barbanza.

– **Territory is a space of transformation.**

Cartographic registers help unveil the temporal dimension of spatial structuring. They allow us to understand the different configurations a territory has had over time, and what propelled the transition between successive territorial models. Historic cartographies may reveal territorial invariants (features that remain constant, geographical elements that maintain a structuring presence, or systems of land division that remain hidden under changing architectural or urban configurations). But cartographies also reveal those elements that drastically changed how a territory worked and even its extents and relations. The introduction of novel infrastructural, energetic, or technical systems drastically alters previous territorial organizations. Human artifacts thus act as triggers for potential transformations, creating new systems and new scales of spatial relations. For example, the recent implementation of wind farms responds to national energy demands and is linked to global needs of decarbonization, energy transition, and fight against anthropogenic climate

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change. In this sense, the wind energy system operates at a scale that exceeds the Barbanza. This fact raises questions about how to ground wind farms in the area's specific geography, and also about how to make visible the new geographic scales of which A Barbanza now participates. Historically, buildings as fish markets, lighthouses or churches, helped to define systems of territorial relations. *Territory as Interior* investigates how the spatialization of new economic sectors can help us comprehend the territorial relations of which they participate.

Strand 3. Territory as a political construct

The last theoretical understanding of territory is perhaps the less explicitly architectural. It consists in the understanding of territory as a politically configured space, where a certain type of power exerts its political sovereignty. This idea has been recently, and successfully, summarized by Stuart Elden's definition of territory as a "political technology," but it builds upon previous formulations by German political theorist Carl Schmitt, French geographer Jean Gottman, or philosopher Michel Foucault. All these thinkers focus on the relation between the control of the land and the construction of political orders.

In this light, the structuring of a territory is enabled by the convergence of politico-legal and spatial mechanisms. This approach to territory seeks producing clear spatial delimitations and divisions, so that political power can be exercised "monopolistically" on a certain area, and on those communities living in it. Territory appears here as the spatial expression of power, which is then distributed at different scales. Administrative subdivisions from state, to region, to municipality corresponds to this political understanding of territory.

This last angle opens a question about the role architecture plays in helping articulate alternative scales of political organization. The traditional structure of settlement in Galicia was divided in *bisbarras* (Parishes). Currently, there is a municipal subdivision in small towns that is oblivious to the continuity of settlement, infrastructures, and productive uses. This municipal subdivision is ill-suited for managing the urban process, and also for addressing the new energetic and productive needs derived from global demands of decarbonization or materials. By reassociating buildings and systems of production, *Territory as Interior* seeks to investigate which what themes and scales should be politically articulated in the Barbanza.

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Internalities: Architectures for Territorial Equilibrium. Agenda of the Spanish Pavilion at the 19ᵗʰ Venice Architecture Biennale

This studio is linked to the agenda of the Territorial Design Lab and of *Internalities*, the Spanish Pavilion at the 19ᵗʰ Venice Architecture Biennale. *Internalities* explores how architects can (and should) limit the negative, environmental "externalities" often associated to the construction process. This requires articulating robust territorial ecosystems of production, capable of balancing the relationships between ecologies and economies. We call this territorial ecosystems *internalities*. Their emergence requires acting upon five key question: 1)materials, 2)energy, 3)labor, 4)residues, and 5)emissions.

Internalizing Materials urges us to see how decarbonization involves re-evaluating and utilizing locally sourced, regenerative materials with a low ecological footprint, often derived from nearby regional production ecosystems. This is the aspect where the resource-mapping in A Barbanza intervenes more directly.

Considering Energies requires addressing the various scales of the energy transition—from the building as a site of both production and consumption, to the territory as a key operational landscape in reducing historical energy dependence. A Barbanza is now immersed on a strong process of decarbonization, which should be reinforced at the architectural scale.

The internalization of Labor consists in taking advantage of the work cultures that use resources from the surrounding territory. By addressing the labor question, we can consider how to use or recuperate the resources of a given territory, but also how the use of those resources can lead towards alternative modes of labor organization.

The goal of working with Residues is to challenge the usual levels of waste production and by recovering, recirculating, and reusing discarded materials to extend their life cycle. In the context of the studio, this axis opens a question about the use of the existing building and the small infrastructures associated to it.

Finally, Emissions urges us to consider the entire CO_2 cycle—from operational emissions associated with the daily operation of a building to emissions generated during extraction, manufacturing, construction, and demolition processes.

Fundacion RIA

Territory as Interior will work in collaboration with Fundacion RIA, an initiative by architect David Chipperfield that is studying and working in the Barbanza. Fundación RIA also approaches the convergence between economies and ecologies this studio explores. Their aim is " to develop a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute towards quality of life beyond conventional economic assessments such as GDP, " thus exploring how Galicia "can set a European benchmark for sustainable development." In this sense, the Fundacion is interested in an alternative approach to economics.

The studio will benefit from this collaboration throughout the entire term and, in particular, during the studio trip to A Barbanza. We will be hosted in the headquarters of the Fundacion, Casa RIA, in Santiago de Compostela, and will engage the Fundacion during workshops and review sessions.

Deliverables. *Adjustments to scales may be done during the term.

Our intention is to develop the argument of Territory as Interior through a series of design documents.

Resource mapping of the Barbanza. Scale TBD. This is a collective document, but that will be particularized to reflect the layers every student is investigating in their own project.

Site model. Scale 1/500. This is a collective model, which will allow us to test each student's proposal at an urban scale.

Site plan. Scale 1/500. This is an individual document reflecting the relation your building maintains to the site.

Building plans, sections, elevations. Scale 1/200. These are individual documents about your building.

Interior models. Scale 1/50. These are individual documents explaining the materials and construction systems you are using in the project, and thus the resources you are internalizing. The models should reflect the building interior and capture the most significant areas of the building.

Schedule

Week 1. Introduction.

Fr February 7 — Introduction to the studio. Questions. Beginning of research phase and resource mapping.

Week 2. Research & Preliminary design phase. Territorial internalities.

Tu February 11 — Decisions about collective site model scale 1/500. Development of resource mapping.

Fr February 14 — Discuss first programmatic and material ideas and design approaches to the site.

Week 3. Research & Preliminary design phase. Territorial internalities.

Tu February 18 — Finish resource mapping and finish collective site model.

Fr February 21 — Discuss programmatic and material ideas, with possible quantification. Site strategies.

Week 4 Research & Preliminary design phase. Territorial internalities.

Tu February 24 — Work on your program and building strategy.

Fr February 28 — Program defined and quantified. Preliminary plans scale 1/200. First approach to construction systems.

Week 5. Preliminary design phase. Territorial internalities.

Tu March 4 — Building design development scale 1/200.

Fr March 7 — Building design development.

Week 6. Preliminary design phase. Territorial internalities.

Tu March 11 — Building design development scale 1/200. Model explorations 1/500.

Fr March 14 — Building design development scale 1/200. Model explorations 1/500.

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Week 7. End of preliminary design phase.Territorial Internalities.

Tu March 21	Mid-term review. Building plans & sections 1/200. Model & site 1/500.
Fr March 21	Refine work before travel to Galicia.

Week 8. Site visit and workshops with Fundación RIA in Santiago de Compostela

Week 9. Design phase. Territory as Interior. Plans and construction.

Tu April 1	Design re-evaluation after visit. Session with Sam Owen.
Fr April 4	Development of construction system. 1/100 to 1/50 studies.

Week 10. Design phase. Territory as Interior. Plans and construction.

Tu April 8	Development of construction system. 1/100 to 1/50 studies.
Fr April 11	Revise plans and sections in light of construction systems.

Week 11. Design phase. Territory as Interior. Plans and construction.

Tu April 15	Development of construction system. 1/100 to 1/50 studies.
Fr April 18	Revise plans and sections in light of construction systems.

Week 12. Design phase. Territory as Interior. Plans and construction.

Tu April 22	Interior. Revise plans and sections in light of construction systems.
Fr April 25	Review. Plans scale 1/200. Updated site model 1/500. Interior models 1/50.

Week 13. Design phase. Territory as Interior. Plans and construction

Tu April 29	Remote session. Interior. Revise plans and sections in light of construction systems.

Fr May 2	Remote session. Interior. Revise plans and sections in light of construction systems.

Week 14. Design phase. Territory as Interior. Plans and construction

Tu May 6	Remote session. Interior. Updated site plan, plan, section, construction model
Fr May 9	Session with Sam Owen. Interior. Revise plans and sections in light of construction systems.

Week 15. Final review

Mo May 12	Presentation. Plans and sections 1/200. Site plan and site model 1/500. Interior models. 1/50.

Land Acknowledgement Statement

We acknowledge Indigenous Peoples as the traditional stewards of the land, and the enduring relationship that exists between them and their traditional territories. The lands which MIT occupies are the traditional unceded territories of the Wampanoag Nation and the Massachusett Peoples. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced occupation of these territories, as well as the ongoing processes of colonialism and dispossession in which we and our institution are implicated. Beyond the stolen territory which we physically occupy, MIT has long profited from the sale of federal lands granted by the Morrill Act, territories stolen from 82 Tribes including the Greater and Little Osage, Chippewa, and Omaha Peoples. As we honor and respect the many diverse Indigenous people connected to this land from time immemorial, we seek to Indigenize our institution and the field of planning, offer Space, and leave Indigenous peoples in more empowered positions.

Inclusive Class and Classroom

MIT values an inclusive environment. I hope to foster a sense of community in this classroom and consider this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect. I welcome individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations – and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. If this standard is not being upheld, please feel free to speak with me.

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Special Accommodations

MIT is committed to the principle of equal access. Students who need disability accommodations are encouraged to speak with Disability and Access Services (DAS), prior to or early in the semester so that accommodation requests can be evaluated and addressed in a timely fashion. If you have a disability and are not planning to use accommodations, it is still recommended that you meet with DAS staff to familiarize yourself with their services and resources. Please visit the DAS website for contact information. If you have already been approved for accommodations, class staff are ready to assist with implementation. Please inform Professor Ryan at bdr@mit.edu who will oversee accommodation implementation for this course.

Grading definition

A. Exceptionally good performance demonstrating a superior understanding of the subject matter, a foundation of extensive knowledge, and a skillful use of concepts and/or materials.

B. Good performance demonstrating capacity to use the appropriate concepts, a good understanding of the subject matter, and an ability to handle the problems and materials encountered in the subject.

C. Adequate performance demonstrating an adequate understanding of the subject matter, an ability to handle relatively simple problems, and adequate preparation for moving on to more advanced work in the field.

D. Minimally acceptable performance demonstrating at least partial familiarity with the subject matter and some capacity to deal with relatively simple problems, but also demonstrating deficiencies serious enough to make it inadvisable to proceed further in the field without additional work.

F. Failed. This grade also signifies that the student must repeat the subject to receive credit.

NE. No record will appear on the external transcript.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

MIT's expectations and policies regarding academic integrity should be read carefully and adhered to diligently. Plagiarism is a major academic offense. Read: http://integrity.mit.edu.

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Writing and Communication Resources

The WCC at MIT (Writing and Communication Center) offers free one-on-one professional advice from communication experts. The WCC is staffed completely by MIT lecturers. All have advanced degrees. All are experienced college classroom teachers of communication. All are all are published scholars and writers. The WCC helps you strategize about all types of academic and professional writing as well as about all aspects of oral presentations (including practicing classroom presentations & conference talks as well as designing slides). No matter what department or discipline you are in, the WCC helps you think your way more deeply into your topic, helps you see new implications in your data, research, and ideas. The WCC also helps with all English as Second Language issues, from To register with our online scheduler and to make appointments, go to https://mit.mywconline.com/. To access the WCC's many pages of advice about writing and oral presentations, go to http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/. Check the online scheduler for up-to-date hours and available appointments.

Student Performance Criteria. NAAB

Realm A: Critical Thinking and Representation

• A1. Communication Skills: Ability to read, write, speak and listen effectively• A2. Design Thinking Skills: Ability to raise clear and precise questions, use abstract ideas to interpret information, consider diverse points of view, reach well-reasoned conclusions, and test alternative outcomes against relevant criteria and standards.• A3. Visual Communication Skills: Ability to use appropriate representational media, such as traditional graphic and digital technology skills, to convey essential formal elements at each stage of the programming and design process.• A5. Investigative Skills: Ability to gather, assess, record, apply, and comparatively evaluate relevant information within architectural coursework and design processes.

Communication with the instructor

I will reply to your emails promptly, usually within 24-48 hours, excluding weekends. Office hours are by email appointment.

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