



Design Plan 5.0: **of Industry after the Fall**

Option Studio, SP'19

Aleksandr Mergold, Dept. of Architecture

Lori Khatchadourian, Dept. of Near Eastern Studies

“Design Plan” studios work with stakeholders across the globe to investigate and precisely define problems that can be solved with the input of designers and architects. Ranging from design of objects, buildings and cities, to strategies, organizational principles, and policies of reuse, the studios aim at enabling the local communities to make their desires and concerns positively affect their immediate constructed environment. A “design plan” is hatched from observing, empathizing and designing interactions with a given local situation, a critical alternative to top-down master plans.

Previous Design Plan Studios:

D/P 1.0 – of Fears and Desires in Trumansburg NY

D/P 2.0 – of Histories and Identities in Bziankow, Polish Silesia

D/P 3.0 – of Empathy and Possibilities in “Temporary” Refugee Settlements

D/P 4.0 – of P/Fast & Future Building in Ithaca, NY



This edition of D/P Studio will re-consider the fate of industrial complexes that had once been the backbone of a massive socialist experiment and the planned economy of the Soviet Union. Now, they are both monuments to the recent past, and a resource for the local populations that found themselves in newly-founded countries that once made up the USSR. People who live around these industrial wastelands are slowly beginning to repurpose the massively scaled and dramatically shaped spaces through practices of rebuilding, spoliation, curation, and rent extraction that variously accelerate or impede their decay. A situation not unlike medieval Rome, with the lore of the Soviet industry slowly fading, these massive, nearly cyclopean, brutalist structures stand amidst a new post-industrial post-soviet reality. Caught between their picturesque, nostalgic appeal and the extreme complexity of their permanent re-occupation rooted in deep environmental, technological, regulatory and preservation issues, these complexes are both places of the past and of the future. As such we will study them as ruins in formation, in collaboration with an archeologist, and as resources, in collaboration with a local architecture faculty and students.



The studio site will be one of the many factory complexes in the Republic of Armenia. Once a largely agrarian society before the Soviet takeover, under Stalin and his successors Armenia became one of the world's most rapidly industrialized countries. Armenia is a palimpsest of histories, mythologies, conflicts and struggles that stretches deep into prehistory, but is perhaps best known architecturally for its distinctive medieval churches. The Soviet period comparatively is a small blip in its long history, but it is perhaps the most palpable, because of the multiple social and physical residues that remain, including the massive remnants of the centrally-planned industry whose future remains unresolved. The fate of these ruins, now mostly empty and stripped of all salvageable machinery components, is uncertain – they are too large to reoccupy, and to demolish. What can they be? The studio will concern itself with timelessness vs temporality, locality vs globalism and lightness vs firmness within the context of an ensemble of existing buildings with complicated histories, geo-political situation, geography, environmental contamination, conflicting and contradicting perceptions. The studio anticipates a ±weeklong Field Trip* to Armenia February 16 to 22.

* \$500 field trip contribution per student is required.

The studio is a collaboration with Dr. Lori Khatchadourian, Department of Near Eastern Studies at Cornell and Dr. Zara Mamyan, Head of the Department of Urban Planning at National University of Architecture and Construction (NUAC) as well as a group of architecture students from NUAC.