

Design IV: Rural Revitalization

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During the past few decades of unprecedented urbanization, there was little attention for the countryside. Recently, this has started to change. Rem Koolhaas held a major exhibition on the future of the countryside at the Guggenheim Museum. Especially the countryside near big cities is changing rapidly, with many (small-scale) architectural initiatives, usually small-scale acupuncture architectural interventions such as bookstores, museums or artist studios. How can we deal with these new developments, and how can they add to existing villages without neglecting existing landscape qualities? Are there any alternatives? That is what we will investigate during this studio.

During this design studio we will start to analyze the site in small groups. The next phase we carry out individual design assignments based on this research. The location is a rural setting, a remote village that struggles with, among other things, vacancy, lack of facilities, and accessibility. We will regularly visit and explore this small settlement near Shanghai. During the analysis we take stock of the local problems and opportunities. Based on existing qualities of the area we will make suggestions and design proposals to improve the situation.

The goal of this design studio is to give students knowledge about working in small communities in a rural setting. Conditions in rural areas are different from urban settings, not only in terms of scale, but also in terms of viability, local needs, landscape requirements, environment, transport, social and cultural factors. We will meet with local residents to exchange ideas. Although it is a small-scale assignment, the circumstances are complex. Dedication and in-depth knowledge of the subject is required to get good results.