
Contingent Design of Post-Industrial Spaces

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Contingent design practice is a method of fusing together a narrative contingent of social, political, economic, and spatial issues surrounding a subject. The emergent narrative reveals interrelations otherwise undetectable under the lens of traditional architectural inquiry. These operations provide a translation from parts to whole, an overlap at the moment of crisis. This investigation focuses on the subject of the single industry city—a blind spot in 20th century urban narratives—as the practice matter for contingent design. Local and global issues interweave, revealing overlaps between sites as critical moments and leading to speculative scenario proposals. Latent extraneous conditions are mobilized toward emergent realities.

In framing the contingencies relevant to a subject, adjacent issues also become apparent. The narrative exposes these latent issues as actors that inform the future of the subject. Manfredo Tafuri's *Historical Project* questions the role of the linear narrative, Bruno Latour's *Actor Network Theory* manipulates these contingencies as new narratives, and Rem Koolhaas' *Paranoid Critical Project* considers the capacity of an attractor to redirect the narrative. The overlap between these methods becomes the means to investigate a new method that can pull contingencies from the past, adjacent and fringe of a subject and operate on their relations to develop a speculative project.

Contingent design explores the material, political, economic, social, and spatial issues surrounding a subject. The discovery of these terms and their implications to the subject become relevant when framed within the logic of the narrative. The architectural project aligns these issues through relations of cause, coordination and coupling. The speculative project begins at the moment of crisis between these compounded issues. The project is informed by the sequence of the narrative and overlap of contingencies.

This design practice tests its operations with the investigation of the 20th century single industry city, which finds itself geographically fixed to the demands of the industry and removed from, yet adjacent to, the flexibility of the mixed-use metropolis. The three sites selected—Jeffrey City, Wyoming; North Brother Island, New York; and Picher, Oklahoma—each present their own version of this condition. Each site reveals different industries, resources, community members, and issues at the contingent fringe. Larger contingencies prove to link between sites, informing the crisis. At these moments, the projects coalesce into a larger narrative of the single industry city.

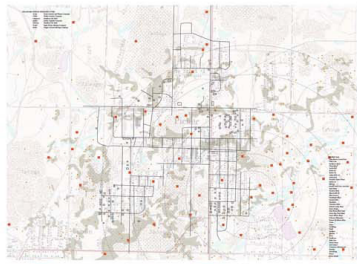
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Picher, OK

MAP + Goals

Most is served the state's large iron and lead production industry. The land was so intensely mined that much of the town rose on above mining shafts and sink holes. The US Army Corps of Engineers declared the site uninhabitable and forced all residents to evacuate the area. The land was then transferred back to the original owner, the Quapaw Indian Tribe, which is reserved from selling the mining, that be cause of a regulation by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

PROJECT

The mining subsidence volume below ground occupies more space than the buildings that rest above. The residual char from the mining could be used as concrete aggregate to pave a four-lane highway across the United States five times. Harnessing these opportunities from the abandoned site could amplify the residual issues to generate emergent processes.



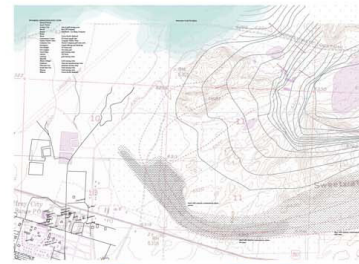
North Brother Island, NYC, NY

MAP + Goals

North Brother Island, along with its smaller neighbors, South Brother Island, does not exist on the New York City subway map and is hidden even from the locals. The island was established as a quarantine facility and during the typhoid epidemic housed the famous Typhoid Mary. A wading bird population began to settle on the site only to be disrupted by metropolitan contingencies, such as impinging predatory birds and shipping routes that pass along the shores.

PROJECT

1. This wading causes unnecessary interaction between the metropolis and the shoreline.
2. Relocation of the ferry routes induces loading imbalance, thus reefs and grasses are able to seed. This vegetation is an avian habitat for wading birds.
3. Reducing ground against encourages wading birds to nest on the island. Its path provides viewing points and a way to more closely measure the habitat to protect wading birds against predatory predators.



Jeffrey City, WY

MAP + Goals

The mining ponds used in the process of yellowcake and uranium extraction has led to intense contamination of the ground water surrounding Jeffrey City. This company town is now hazardous to residents because of the expanding plume. The city has been abandoned for these reasons but neighboring cities and their shared ground water is at risk for contamination.

PROJECT

The residual char from the Picher, OK mining could be used as concrete aggregate to pave a four-lane highway across the United States five times. Harnessing this resource the residual materials from Picher can be used to construct a ground water levee reducing contamination creep in other areas of Wyoming.

