



Public Works

An architectural index of services in London from A to Z.

A proposal by FIG Projects (Fabrizio Gallanti and Francisca Insulza)
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The objective of the research is to describe and study the buildings and facilities that constitute the public infrastructure of London.

Even within the rapid processes of privatization in Great Britain today, the unassuming skeleton of collective life is still and almost entirely controlled and managed by public institutions that operate across different scales and activities. The provision of innumerable citizens' necessities is articulated through an intricate system that operates daily and across the entire metropolitan area. Security, health, education, waste disposal and mass mobility are subtracted to the stringent logic of capitalist accumulation and respond to wider objectives: they are the concrete basis of democratic co-existence of nine million inhabitants.

The research intends to understand how the labour and work associated to the functioning of these interrelated systems are performed across London and, therefore, what spatial and architectural configurations are necessary to their deployment. The proposal is inscribed within the current line of inquiry focused on the relationship between architecture and labour that FIG Projects is currently undertaking through different media and formats. As has always been the case within the historical trajectory of architects and urbanists' observations and representation of the city (Kevin Lynch or Venturi, Scott-Brown and Izenour), the proposal will operate within a mechanism of feedback loops: while observing and dissecting specific case studies it will further explore and refine the tools for analysis and representation.

The projected outcome is inspired by three main references. The first is the major oeuvre "Paris Ville Invisible" by Bruno Latour and Emilie Hermant (2006), a visual journey and cartography that reveal the systems that make the city function ("service des eaux, Préfecture de police, périphérique"). The second is the taxonomical indexing of discreet architectural objects as developed by the Japanese architectural practice Atelier Bow Wow, especially in the volumes "Made in Tokyo" (2001) and "Pet Architecture



Guide Book” (2002). The third is the CIAM grid (1949), a system of graphic notation devised to uniform information between different urban projects and allow comparative analysis.

The result of this endeavour will be both a portrait of contemporary London and an experiment on the analytical and narrative apparatuses that can be employed to understand our urban territories, overlapping writing and graphic manipulations in the form of cartographies, diagrams, drawings and photography. Architectural artefacts are to be interpreted as physical evidence of wider economic, social and political processes.

Proposed phases

Identification of 33 case studies. Based on existing databases and public records, we will identify the largest public employer within the administrative boundaries of each of the 33 boroughs composing the Greater London, from Barking and Dagenham to Westminster (from statistical data from 2015, a total of 545.800 public employees vs 4.146.600 in the private sector). Prior to the residency.

Preparatory inquiry. For each of the identified public body (the Royal London Hospital in the Borough of Tower Hamlets, for instance) we will select a specific building or facility and source archival material, historiographical records, bibliography, architectural and engineering drawings, etc., identify local contacts and study the proper administrative steps for accessibility and permission to document and record.

During this period we will establish the protocols and rules of subsequent visits to each case study as well as tentative layouts and editorial principles for the search and organization of materials. Prior to the residency.

An urban journey. During the period of residency, each of the 33 selected buildings or facilities will be visited to retrieve further information and material, to produce visual documentation (diagrams, video and photographic records) and to register oral histories with the local contacts (historians, personnel, users). The visits will be realized, possibly, within the initial two months of the residency.

Editing. Each visit will generate content that will be incorporated, almost in real time, within the established graphic and narrative framework. The final period of residency and a subsequent time will



be dedicated to the editing and layout of the material with the goal of producing a mock-up exhibition and publication, that will allow a comparative reading of the entire content.