

Marginality as productive condition: a case study in situated practice

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How can architectural practice engage in remote rural settlements shaped by abandonment and infrastructural scarcity, and what forms of spatial and material engagement do such conditions enable? What if we could reframe marginal rural contexts not as sites of deficit, but as productive environments for alternative architectural approaches, generating distinct ways of making, inhabiting, and maintaining? This question is explored through a project in the small inland village of Dol on the Croatian island of Hvar, situated within a context of long-term depopulation, the decline of agrarian livelihoods, and limited accessibility. The project originates from two realities: traditional stone houses persist as partially abandoned structures, and conventional building methods are challenged by the island condition. Exploring prospects of temporary dwelling in a remote Mediterranean village, this casestudy investigates self-building as both a historically rooted and a contemporary form of spatial agency. The House in Dol, developed over ten years through an openended self-building process, is grounded in the immediate experience of making, in a continuous relationship with material, site, and their constraints. Rather than resolving the ruin, the intervention works through its incompleteness, maintaining partial emptiness as an active spatial condition. Construction relies on incremental building, seasonal reoccupation of the site, and continuous adaptation. Embedded within existing social and material networks, the project depends on reciprocal exchange with the community, established in shared knowledge and collaborative construction. It proposes marginality as a productive condition shaped by cycles of use, decay, and transformation, and positions self-building as a practice that reworks rural territories through sustained, incremental acts of making.