

After displacement: living outside the city

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Keywords

Displacement, Living outside the city, Small-scale settlement, Production and space

In the context of large-scale internal displacement caused by the war in Ukraine, western cities have absorbed a significant influx of population, leading to infrastructural overload and an intensified housing crisis. This condition prompts a fundamental question: can living and working be reorganized outside the city, not as a temporary escape, but as a sustained spatial condition?

This paper presents a design studio developed within an architectural design program in Ukraine, based on a real rural site near Lviv. The studio departs from the familiar model of living outside the city while remaining economically and socially dependent on it, and instead explores the possibility of living, working, and producing locally.

Students were asked to design a small-scale settlement of 9-10 households structured around forms of small production, including cultivation, animal care, and food processing. The project required them to engage with the spatial implications of production processes, seasonal cycles, and land use, as well as to develop models of co-existence based on shared resources, collective infrastructures, and new forms of neighborhood. The studio approaches the rural not as an abstract or pastoral condition, but as a real context shaped by the tension between individual needs, collective organization, and environmental constraints. Particular attention was given to the relationship between landscape and ways of living, and to the question of how production shapes spatial organization at both the scale of the dwelling and the settlement.

Working outside the city reframes architectural scale and agency. Small-scale settlement is not a reduced version of the city, but a condition with its own spatial logic.

The paper positions this as a shift from expansion to redistribution, and from abstract models to situated practice, where living and producing are inseparable.