ARCH 484/584 Spring 2023
RAPID SHELTER HEALING LANDSCAPE
CRN 31167 / 31213 - Monday Wednesday Friday 1:00-4:30pm
Instructor: Earl Mark, emark@uoregon.edu  https://blogs.uoregon.edu/rapidshelterhealinglandscape/

“Once we had a country and we thought it fair, Look in the atlas and you’ll find it there: We cannot go there now, my dear, we cannot go there now.”
— W.H.Auden, Refugee Blues, 1939

OVERVIEW _ A SANCTUARY FOR FORCIBLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

When someone is forced from home, traumatized, separated from loved ones, in severe need of food, medical care, sanitation, and protection from the weather, time is critical. The speed of the response may save lives. In many cases it seems self-evident that providing a flexible, rapidly deployed shelter within a secure perimeter may be an essential first step to the survival of forcibly displaced people in danger. Similarly, a site design that therapeutically engages the natural environment can contribute to healing from physical and psychological trauma.

The studio will explore adaptive light-weight rigid and tension membrane fabric collapsible structures that are rapidly deployable, and that can be customized over time to meet the evolving needs of a community at risk, its culture, and pattern of living. Each student will also explore the healing power of the natural and built environment through the design of the site for a specific group of forcibly displaced people.¹ We will work in tandem with a landscape architecture studio, exchanging expertise, perspectives, and experiments at the Fuller Land Lab. The studio project hypothetical site will be based on oceanfront state parkland on the Oregon Coast.

STUDIO PROGRAM FOR A UNHCR DEFINED COMMUNITY

The studio program starts with a single household unit. By the mid-term we expand our focus to 16 household units for a total of 80 residents: a particular number of units and size population identified as a “Community” by the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) and a few common use structures. By the end of the quarter some students may wish to add a second unit.

¹ Reuben Rainey, Emeritus Professor of Landscape Architecture, asserts that “There is no such thing as a generic healing garden”. Panel Discussion, UVA,2013. It is to be designed for a specific group’s needs.
“community” to their interpretation of the program. However, we will limit the building size so as to investigate more thoroughly the details, such as connection joints, materials, and water drainage.

Settlements that spring up in urgent conditions may last years longer than expected. The initial footprint may become obsolete with respect to supporting the health, agency, food supply, religious practices, cultural activities, and sense of hope needed. We will consider how structures can be set up to retract and unfurl, change spatial enclosure and clustering by a community to better serve its needs. Similarly, we will consider how the therapeutic healing of a forcibly displaced people can be linked to their agency in the responsible stewardship of the natural environment.

FIELD TRIP

A field trip sketching exercise at two state parks on the Oregon Coast will occur on Friday April 7th with a funded overnight stay at the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology (OIMB). A walking tour is tentatively planned with an environmental scientist State Park Ranger.

LIGHT WEIGHT STRUCTURE METHODS

Hands on workshops will borrow from wooden boatbuilding and sailmaking traditions. Studio techniques will also engage physically tensioning fabric models and learning about contemporary high strength tension membrane fabric materials. We will investigate connection joints with up to six degrees of freedom to permit unfolding and retraction of the structures. Techniques of computer simulation, geometrical modeling, digital terrain modeling, sewing and CNC fabrication will be taught as needed. No prerequisite coursework in these subjects is required.

SELECTION OF A NARRATIVE

Readings and discussions within the studio include profiles of forcibly displaced peoples, their varied circumstances, cultures, and particular needs as described by humanitarian aid organizations, experts, and providers and by displaced people’s own writings and films. Each studio participant will independently select, research, and respond to the discrete narrative of a particular group of forcibly displaced people.

FABRICATORS

The Eugene area is home to innovative makers of tension membrane fabric structures and sailmakers. The studio may gain a direct understanding of production, structural problem solving and systems through shop tours and demonstrations similar to how this studio was taught in 2019. However, due to Covid, this is subject to conditions during the spring 2023 quarter.

RESEARCH AND STUDIO LINK

Visiting Professor Earl Mark’s home institution is the University of Virginia. This studio builds upon two similarly themed studios he taught at UO in 2019 and 2022. He collaborated on related research under a UO Global Justice grant, 2020 -22, with UO and international partners. His present research is focused on forcibly displaced refugees in Greece. Questions may be sent to emark@uoregon.edu. See also https://blogs.uoregon.edu/rapidshelterhealinglandscape/ and https://faculty.virginia.edu/mark/.