**Additional information on the fall semester of the academic year 2016/17 at FORM:**

**ARCHITECTURE WITHOUT CONTENT 20**  
**THE COMMONS**  
**APPIA NOVISSIMA**

**Professor:** Kersten Geers  
**Team:** Joris Kritis, Jelena Pancevac, Thibaut Pierron, Giovanni Piovene, Dries Rodet, Andrea Zanderigo, Séverine Sudre  
**Duration:** 1 semester. There will be a continuity between the fall and spring semester, but each semester can be followed independently.  
**Summary**  
*The Commons - part 1: Appia Novissima* will tackle the urgent issue of rebuilding the shared infrastructure of the European territory, with the Roman periphery as its case-study.  
**Content:**  
*The Commons - part 1: Appia Novissima*  
After a full year of research into *Metropolitan Architecture*, this time *Architecture without Content* will tackle *the Commons*.  
In the wake of Brexit and the current soul searching inside the European continent about both the amplitude of its territory and the essence of its shared culture, this issue appears even more urgent than ever.  

Of all possible cases we decided to focus our attention this year on Italy, because exactly there for a certain period of time public architecture has been a constitutional part of its civilization; i.e. the Roman machine. During a few centuries the standard urban infrastructure of any given Roman city (the theatre, the market, the agora, the baths, the temples, the basilica, the markets, the schools, the legion’s headquarters and so forth) was in fact the essential spine of public life. This architecture thus allowed the very existence of the cities in a way we got to know them. Since then, *the Commons* experienced ups and downs, were boosted by the pride of the city bourgeois in the Gothic cities, and were even carefully planned by the newly developed modern states. In the last century, both the totalitarian state and the welfare state, used *the Commons* to fulfill their own particular agenda thus producing the final incarnation of *the Commons* as a solid architectural apparatus for the cities.  

Since the eighties however, post Thatcher politics (i.e. the Empire) has been eroding *the Commons*. Today, *the Commons* we have left in our western society has a heavily transformed profile. In certain nations, as Italy, the phenomenon was particularly evident, as the investments on welfare had been drastically cut. No more social housing, no more schools, no more post offices, no more civic centers: the desert. In the far depths of the Even Covered Field, the suburban mall surreptitiously replaced some of the
functions, as such becoming the only possible stage for twisted remnants of anything public.

The reoccurring crisis of the current world-order asks urgently for a way out. Can architecture - common expression of power - enable such a rupture, or at least bring a contribution towards another equilibrium? We believe a possibility lays (again) in the formalization of the Commons. This year we want to investigate if the Commons can still be made and how they can be effective again.

We will design where the problem is more evident, in the endless extension of the Roman periphery, a nasty by-product of failed utopias and criminal real estate investments, and in the northern periphery of Milan where the planned city morphs into the informal accumulation of wildly individual choices. In Rome, during first semester, we will unfold a possible narrative following the lines of the Appia, a remarkable axis radiating from the city centre and pointing towards what is left of the Roman countryside. In the second semester we hope to repeat this ‘trick’ in Milan, using the Northern axis of Corso Sempione.

In the tradition of the Modern, we will locate and design schools, post offices, civic centers, police stations and more, expecting to be surprised by the students even at the level of the program. Success is not guaranteed, but the stakes are too high to be ignored.

**Methodology:** Since the beginning, the students will be divided into research groups, which will have to cooperate together as a unique team. The proper projects will be developed in groups (probably groups of two students).

**Lectures:** A series of lecturers will provide the students with the theoretical backbone to tackle the theme of The Commons.

**Field Trip:** The students will visit Rome and the Via Appia.

**Language:** The official atelier language is English.