



University of the  
West of England

## Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

White trash architecture: Spatial informality and unhealthy lifestyles in the American rural south

- **Format:**

Written paper / in-person Presentation

- **Author(s) Name:**

Dr David Franco

- **University or Company Affiliation:**

Clemson University

- **Abstract (300 words):**

In her book 'White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America', Nancy Isenberger unfolds the history of exclusion that the Southern poor rural whites have undergone in the United States, from the 1700's to the late twentieth century. The original meaning of the expression 'white trash' referred to "squatters, vagrants, and informal occupants of the land": a social group characterized by their unstable and chaotic ways of inhabiting and transforming the built environment. Challenging the ideals of health, cleanness and productivity—consistently promoted for rural America—, it was their idleness and lack of morality, as perceived by the upper classes, what led them to live in shacks and junkyards that, in the words of Harper Lee, "looked like the playhouse of an insane child".

This paper studies the correlation between built space, social inequality and unhealthy lifestyles, which has become intrinsic to the white poor in the rural American South. Rooted on Isenberger's research on the history of class and poverty, as well as on Michael Katz's notion of the 'undeserving poor', this it outlines the account of the architectures conceived, built and inhabited by the Southern white underclass. I propose the interpretation of this history as a biopolitical confrontation arising from the subjugation of a group and their efforts to resist through material practices that alter their environment. With that end, I will discuss how the idiosyncratic ways of using and transforming architectural space by the white rural poor, which in Trump's America have acquired a new political significance, relate to the increase of obesity and drug addiction among this social group. Finally, I propose a reformulation of Jeremy Till's notion of architectural scarcity, as a term that acknowledges the complex processes of invention and production of space that occur outside established cultural and economic patterns.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

David Franco is an architect who has performed both as practitioner and academic achieving international recognition in both fields. He holds a PhD and a MArch from the Universidad Politecnica de Madrid. He was appointed Associate Professor on Architectural Design at the Escuela Politecnica Superior USPCEU of Madrid in 2006, becoming in 2010 Director of the Architecture Thesis Program of the same University. In 2013 he moves to the US after being appointed as tenure-track Assistant Professor of Architecture at the University of Idaho. In 2014 he becomes tenure-track Assistant Professor of Design, History and Theory of Architecture at Clemson University.

His work has been awarded more than 16 prizes on International Architecture competitions such as European 6 and 7. He has been nominated for the prestigious Iakov Chernikov prize of contemporary architecture from the ICIF Foundation in Moscow. Recognized international magazines, books and peer-reviewed journals, such as A10 A+T VLC Arquitectos European Generations, Arkitektur or Bauwelt, among others, have published his projects and articles. His work has been displayed on exhibitions, such as the 10th Venice Biennale, or the 2nd Architecture, Art & Landscape Biennial of the Canary Islands.