



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
FIRENZE

DIDA
DIPARTIMENTO DI
ARCHITETTURA

CDL MAGISTRALE IN ARCHITETTURA (+2) B018890

ARCHITECTURE AND TOWN LAB

Teachers: Giulio Giovannoni, Jacopo Ammendola, Valerio Barberis

1. STRUCTURE AND PROGRAMME

The Architecture and Town Lab. (18 credits) is made of three distinct but integrated components of 6 credits each: Urban Design (Prof. Giulio Giovannoni), Urban Landscape Design (Prof. Jacopo Ammendola), Architectural Design II (Prof. Valerio Barberis).

This is the only lab of the master program to work on the urban scale.

Each component of the course is made of a series of theoretical and practical lectures. The students of the course will work on the re-design of a neighbourhood of the city of Prato developing the different aspects related to the three disciplines with the three professors. The goal of the lab is to develop a complex project which works at different scales and mediates between different problems. We believe that a good design is also the output of a good theoretical and critical awareness. Therefore, students will receive reading assignments throughout the course and will be asked to actively participate to the class discussions. The course is intended to be a research lab aimed at simultaneously increasing theoretical awareness and practical experience.

The lab will be held in the first semester.

2. DESIGN TOPIC OF THE 2022-2023 LAB

“Rehabilitation of a neighborhood in the periphery of Prato”

Students of the Architecture and Town Lab will develop a project for the rehabilitation of a neighbourhood in the periphery of the city of Prato, focusing on the theme of the rediscovery of the ancient water tracks: the “gore”, that were so important in the past for the industrial activities of Prato and that now could be reused for ecological purposes.

The topic will be developed in coordination with the municipality of Prato.

The Lab final project is a team work (max 3/4 students per group, different nationalities).



3. ACTIVITIES OF THE THREE COMPONENTS

3.1. URBAN DESIGN

Prof. Giulio Giovannoni

3.1.1. Description

Although Tuscany is world famous for its preserved historic centers and its beautiful countryside, most Tuscans live in the *campagna urbanizzata*, a patchwork of voids, factories and homes – the typical Italian version of suburban sprawl. These areas are the productive and social heart of the region and its most dynamic frontier. While certainly not famous for their aesthetic qualities they are highly active socially and economically. The studio will explore the link between theory and action using urban design to develop an urban project that can transform the *campagna urbanizzata* in Prato into a real city, equipped with services and facilities, living spaces, and a system of interconnected public spaces.

Some of the techniques used throughout the studio will be stratigraphic analysis, multisensory public space analysis, social life analysis, strategic visioning, decision-making games, master-planning, design zooms aimed at verifying the feasibility of the overall urban project. If possible in consideration of current restrictions, students will take a study trip to Prato to explore the site and meet with local administrators, scholars and business people.

3.1.2. General Goals and Outcomes

The main goals of the Urban Design Studio are the following:

1. deconstructing the complexity of urban space to build a manageable design and operational dimension;
2. building an urban spatial strategy by working at different scales;
3. working on the urban project in its spatial, symbolic and social dimensions;
4. positioning urban design in current trends of societal and urban change;
5. building a spatial policy agenda by integrating different visions and interests;
6. masterplanning 'a la carte';
7. thinking of the urban project as an opportunity for the experience of space and time.

3.1.3. Course Structure, Content and Schedule

The course is structured into the following five sections.

Section 1. Urban Design between Theory and Practice

Learning Objectives: 1) identify the specificity of urban design with respect to architectural design and landscape design; 2) evaluate how urban theory impacts urban design; 3) identify the social role of the urban designer.

Summary. Urban design can be defined as theory in action. Different theoretical frameworks produce different outputs. Urban design impacts the life of people in many different ways and can be socially just or socially inequitable. The urban designer plays an important role in the society and needs to be socially and ethically responsible.

Section 2. Disentangling Urban Complexity

Learning objectives: 1) disentangle urban complexity; 2) select information relevant to the urban project.

Summary. The city, and more generally the territory, is a complex text whose understanding is made difficult by the overabundance of information and of 'signs'. In this section of the studio we will learn to disentangle such complexity and to understand and select information which is relevant to the project.

Section 3. Designing for the People

Learning objectives: 1) evaluate how urban space is used and perceived by different social groups; 2) define design criteria that take into account the needs of different social groups.

Summary. The city is inhabited by different groups with diverse needs and (often conflicting) goals. In order to develop a socially sensitive project it is necessary to have a good understanding of the social dynamics which happen in space. This will be done applying anthropological and observational methods.

Section 4. Envisioning an Urban Strategy

Learning objectives: 1) outline, explain, and justify an urban design strategy; 2) represent and communicate that strategy.

Summary. An urban design project is a complex operation which affects the life of many people and which impacts the economy, the society, and the environment. The development of an urban design strategy aims to mediate between different economic, environmental and social needs and to find a balance between the goals of the different social groups.

Section 5. Translating the Strategy into an Urban Project

Learning objectives: 1) develop a masterplan; 2) develop design zooms for the most relevant parts of the masterplan.

Summary. Although being related to space and to specific sites, the strategy developed in section #4 is conceptual and must be translated into a proper project. The project usually crosses different scales with different levels of detail. The scales of the project depend on the issues/topics being developed and can range from a maximum of 1:5000 (for large open areas) to a minimum of 1:500 (for urban design zooms).

3.1.3. Assignments and grading

Assignment 1: Stratigraphical Analysis. The assignment consists in developing the 'stratigraphical analysis' of the urban area assigned for the analysis/project, following instructions provided during the lectures. A pdf booklet will be delivered. The assignment is intended to be developed in small groups. Weight on the overall evaluation: 20%. Grading system: score 18-30.



Assignment 2: Lived Space Analysis. The assignment consists in developing the 'Lived Space Analysis' of the urban area assigned for the analysis/project, following instructions provided during the lectures. A pdf booklet will be delivered. Findings will be collectively presented and discussed during the class. The assignment is intended to be developed in small groups. Weight on the overall evaluation: 20%. Grading system: score 18-30.

Assignment 3: Strategic Plan. The assignment consists in developing a Strategic Plan for the analysis/design area. A Strategy panel will be delivered. The assignment is intended to be developed in small groups. Weight on the overall evaluation: 20%. Grading system: score 18-30.

Assignment 4: Urban Design Project. The assignment consists in developing an urban masterplan for the analysis/design area (1 board, scale to be decided, to be developed in small groups, weight on the overall evaluation 20%, grading system: score 18-30) and some design zoom areas (1 board, scale to be decided, to be developed individually, weight on the overall evaluation 20%, grading system: score 18-30).

3.1.4. Readings

Readings will be provided to the students on the Moodle platform on a weekly basis.

Suggested general purpose readings are the following:

- Giovannoni G., *Tuscany beyond Tuscany. Rethinking the City from the Periphery*, Didapress, 2017.
- Ingersoll R., *Sprawltown. Looking for the City on Its Edges*,
- Makeower T., *Touching the City: Thoughts on Urban Scale*, Wiley, 2014.
- Meeda B. et al., *Graphics for Urban Design*, Thomas Telford, 2006.
- Lang J., *Urban Design: A Typology of Procedures and Products*, Architectural Press, 2005.
- Sheppard M., *Essentials of Urban Design*, Csiro, 2015.
- Sieverts T., *Cities without Cities: An Interpretation of the Zwieschenstadt*, Spon Press, 2003.

Suggested readings on specific topics are the following:

- Ben-Joseph E., *Rethinking a Lot. The Design and Culture of Parking*, MIT Press, 2012.
- Dreiseitl H. and Grau D. (eds.), *New Waterscapes. Planning, Building and Designing with Water*, Birkhäuser, 2001.
- Duneier M., *Sidewalk*, Macmillan, 1999.
- Institut pour la ville en mouvement, *Passages: Espaces de Transition pour la ville du 21^e siècle*, Actar, 2017.
- Ivers C.B., *Staging Urban Landscapes: The Activation and Curation of Flexible Public Spaces*, Birkhäuser, 2018



3.2. LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Prof. Jacopo Ammendola

3.2.1. Description

The Urban Landscape Design module will deal with the manifold aspects of the planning and design of urban 'open' and outdoor spaces, considered together with infrastructures and buildings, as one of the fundamental components of the urban phenomenon. Given the specific nature of open spaces, the module will focus on the existing connections and relationships between the physical and non-physical qualities of contemporary urban open spaces, between the living and non-living components urban realities, between human beings and 'nature' in cities.

The main focus of the module will be on the relevance of **urban open spaces as public spaces**, dealing with the various meaning of the concept of 'public' (accessibility, ownership, cultural and emotional appropriation, collective bonding, freedom of use...) and with the contradictions and ambiguities that the concept inevitably brings along.

The module will be conducted as a collective research on the links and connections between the physical and non-physical (emotional, social, psychological, aesthetic..) qualities of contemporary urban open public spaces. The outcome of the course is not pre-determined in advance but will be strongly influenced by the individual contributions that all the students will bring to the collective discussion.

3.2.2. General Goals and Outcomes

The landscape design module aims to give basic practical instruments to understand, question and design the open spaces of the contemporary and near-future cities, reflecting on the ever-changing role that these spaces have in the current time and on the possibilities that could unfold in the next decades.

Special focus will be given to the following topics:

- the role of public spaces as fields of political confrontation and social encounter, dealing with the multicultural and multi-ethnic character of the contemporary city
- the current researches in the way urban projects are conceived in relation with the temporal dimension, confronting with strategies of temporary projects, pop-up interventions, short-term and step-by-step designs, dynamic plans
- the relationship between the urban project and the currently unfolding climate and environmental crisis, stressing the capabilities and at the same time the limits of the design disciplines in their ability to intervene and react to the changing needs and perspectives
- the aspects related to the communication of the project, starting from the conceptual definition and landing with the graphical and visual features of the design elements.
- relationship between the open public spaces and the contemporary transformations related with the digital and virtual representation and interaction, focusing in the interaction between digital and physical public spaces.



3.2.3. *Structure and content*

Landscape lessons are articulated into two strongly linked parts:
1. Theoretical Lessons: History, Theory, Fieldworks. These lessons aim to give some basic information about Landscape Architecture. Starting from a short historical review, we want to discuss on the concept of Landscape, reflecting in particular on the changes in the contemporary approach design after the Landscape Convention (2000).

2. Collective analysis and discussion about selected cases and projects. These lessons aim to give “practical” information strongly based on theory. The students will be involved in first person in this part and will in turns lead the research and the discussion. The projects will be selected during the course in relation to the particular characteristics of the selected area and the specificities of the student group.

3.2.4. *Evaluation*

Mid-term

examination:

As students attending the course are coming from different countries, this first exercise is thought to share this cultural heritage. The mid-term exercise is a brief research on a garden/park/public-space project that the student considers representative of his/her idea of “a successful example of contemporary landscape architecture”. Students can choose any example, but it is strongly suggested to work on a project of which they have a direct knowledge.

The exercise is made by one or two A3 sheets (pdf) to be delivered by e-mail (date to fix, in October).

Final examination

For the final examinations, students are required to submit design proposals for the area of Prato that has been selected as case-study by the lab. Students must develop a vision of new structure of open spaces that combine the existing ones. After having done the analysis to identify the key characteristics of the landscape (**open spaces survey**), students define the strategy and the main goals and draw the **master plan** of the area (scale 1:2000, 1:1000). Then, they go deeply develop it through plans, sections, renders, details, views (scales to be defined).

Attendance to the Lab is mandatory. A minimum of 75% of attendance is required. Students who will not attend the course properly will be excluded from the lab and will be prevented from holding the exam. Regularly enrolled students are asked to hold the exam in the winter sessions in January and February 2023. The exam dates will be communicated later on.

3.2.5. *An arbitrary list of fundamental books*

- Beveridge, E. e Rocheleau, P. (1998), *Frederick Law Olmsted: Designing the American Landscape*, Universe
- Raumlaborberlin, Julia Maier, Heidelberger Kunstverein (ed.) (2008) *Acting in*



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public, Jovis

- Lichtenstein, A., & Alice, M. F. (ed.) (2015), *Gleisdreieck: Parklife Berlin*, Transcript Verlag
- Mohsen Mostafavi, Gareth Doherty (ed.) (2016) *Ecological Urbanism*, Lars Müller and Harvard University Graduate School of Design
- Steiner, B. (ed.) (2016) *Creative Infidelities: On the Landscape Architecture of Topotek 1*, Jovis
- Interboro (ed.) (2017) *The Arsenal of Exclusion & Inclusion*, Actar



3.3. ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN II

Prof. Valerio Barberis

3.3.1 What

The Architectural Design component of the Lab aims at providing students with the conceptual, theoretical and practical tools that are necessary to help them develop an understanding of the complexity of urban and architectural design and the challenges that it has to face in our contemporary society. More specifically, in order to cope with the recent and current developments of some of the key concepts on which social/public housing ideas and models have so far been based (such as the same meaning of “social”, “public”, “collective”, “domestic”), students will be asked to get engaged with a deeper understanding of the changes triggered by the economic and social crises which make it even more important, critical and urgent to focus the architectural debate and discourse on the social/public housing issue, which deals with concerns and questions that go beyond its traditional role (as dwelling facilities).

3.3.2 Why

The design topic of the course, that is the rehabilitation of a neighbourhood in the periphery of Prato along the *gore* network, will be used as a pretext to develop a reflection on the (often conflicting) relationship between the partiality/specificity of an (architectural) project (and design solutions) and the incomplete (and therefore changeable and sometimes unpredictable) character of the city.

The relationship between buildings and urban space plays a key role in the rehabilitation of urban neighbourhoods, where the urban spaces in-between buildings can become activators of social practices. For this purpose, in the first phase of the course, a series of lectures will be held to provide a theoretical and practical framework to a design approach based on observational methods, and intersectional (age, health situation, gender, ethnicity, class, wealth, etc.) and multi-scalar focuses on the ways domestic and urban spaces are used and appropriated by their inhabitants, taking account of different user profiles. Given the importance of the influence of architecture and all the other spatial configurations of the (domestic and urban) environment in the construction of identities, the basic principles of a gender-sensitive and process-oriented methodology will be taught in order to make students aware of the fact that architecture with a capital “A” is more than buildings, more than beautiful objects and design solutions: an expanded agenda is required not only for the sake of the environment and a long-term sustainability, but above all in order to step up efforts in the pursuit of better and more equitable life conditions for everybody. The starting point of these arguments is that space is a social and collaborative production, and that architecture’s main commitment should be to find a response to the needs of everyday life.



3.3.3 How

For the final examinations, students are required to submit a design proposal for a set of collective spaces – capable of hosting a variety of activities related to training, interaction and social participation – by implementing the methodological framework of a gender-sensitive approach, within the neighbourhood in Prato that has been selected as the project site of the lab.

3.3.4. General bibliography

Prato Urban Agenda

V. Barberis, E.C. Cattaneo, Prato Factories Nature, Skira, Milan 2019
<https://www.skira.net/books/prato-factor-nature/>

Harmonic Innovation

F. Cicione, L. Filice, D. Marino, Harmonic Innovation, Springer International Publishing, 2022, <https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783030811891>
F. Cicione, L. De Biase, Innovazione Armonica, Rubbetino Editore, Soveria Mannelli, 2021, <https://www.store.rubbettinoeditore.it/catalogo/innovazione-armonica/>

3.3.5. General sitology

New European Bauhaus

https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/index_en

SDG – Agenda 2030

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>
<https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

C40 Cities

<https://www.c40.org/>

ForestaMi

<https://forestami.org/>

Handbook: Sustainable & Circular re-use of spaces and buildings

https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/sustainable_circular_reuse_of_spaces_and_buildings_handbook.pdf
https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/rest/cms/upload/18102019_025822_2_cristina_ace_presentation_incas_l_prato.pdf

General sitology- Prato urban policies

sustainable urban mobility

<https://www2.comune.prato.it/pums/pagina732.html>



urban planning documents – Piano Operativo

<https://www2.comune.prato.it/piano-operativo/pagina1139.html>

<https://po-online.comune.prato.it/po-onlinebinj/>

Urban Forestry – Action Plan on Urban Forestry

<https://www2.comune.prato.it/documenti-po/piano-approvato/media3091.php>

NBS – Prato Urban Jungle

<https://www.pratourbanjungle.it/home893.html>

Circular economy – Prato Circular City

<https://www.pratocircularcity.it/home1486.html>

Urban Agenda – Prato Urban Agenda 2050

http://pubblicazioneatti.comune.prato.it/doc/prato/CC_2020_0000080_2.pdf

Action Plan sustainable energy - PAES

<https://www2.comune.prato.it/paes/pagina555.html>

participatory process – Prato al Futuro

<http://www.pratoalfuturo.it/>

Next Generation EU – Next Generation Prato

<https://www.pratocircularcity.it/it/tavoli/tavolo-governance/next-generation-prato/pagina1942.html>

general sitology- themes

Atelier(s) Femia – New concept schools

https://www.atelierfemia.com/en/2021/03/scuola-social-impact-2/?noredirect=en_US

MVRDV – Rotterdam rooftops

<https://www.mvrdv.com/news/3875/rooftop-catalogue-launch>

Tactical Urbanism

<http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/portfolio/asphalt-art-guide-2/>

Soccorso Disctrict - Projects

Prato Urban Jungle

<https://www.pratourbanjungle.it/en/siti-pilota/quartiere-soccorso/pagina924.html>

Parco Centrale



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<https://www.cittadiprato.it/IT/Sezioni/515/Parco-Centrale/>
<http://www.ilparcocentrale diprato.it/en/>

Declassata Tunnel – Soccorso Park

<https://www.cittadiprato.it/en/Sezioni/content.aspx?XRI=245>

<https://www.comune.prato.it/it/muoversi/viabilita/sottopasso-soccorso/pagina242.html>

Start Park

https://www.startpark.org/#pll_switcher

<https://www.facebook.com/startpark.project>

Soccorso District - Associations

CUT

<https://cutcircuiturbanotemporaneo.com/laboratorio-soccorso-un-modello-di-rigenerazione-urbana/>

quartiere soccorso

<https://quartieresoccorso.it/>

Cieli Aperti

<https://www.cieliaperti.it/>

Studio Corte 17

<http://www.sc17.it/>



4. ATTENDANCE

Attendance to the Lab is mandatory. A minimum of 75% of attendance is required. Students who will not attend to the course properly will be excluded from the lab and will be prevented from holding the exam. Regularly enrolled students are asked to hold the exam in the winter sessions in January and February 2023. The exam dates will be communicated later on.

5. EVALUATION AND GRADING SYSTEM

The final score will be so determined as an average of the scores gained in the three components of the Lab.