



**CDL MAGISTRALE IN ARCHITETTURA (+2) B018890
ARCHITECTURE AND TOWN LAB**

Teachers: Valerio Barberis, Carlo Pisano, Antonella Valentini

1. STRUCTURE AND PROGRAMME

The Architecture and Town Lab. (18 credits) is made of three distinct but integrated components of 6 credits each: Architectural Design II (Prof. Valerio Barberis), Urban Design (Prof. Carlo Pisano), Urban Landscape Design (Prof. Antonella Valentini), and. 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 public housing neighbourhood developing the different aspects related to the three disciplines with the three professors. The goal of the lab is to develop a complex neighbourhood 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 2019-2020 LAB

“Rehabilitation of a public housing neighborhood in the periphery of Prato”

Students of the Architecture and Town Lab will develop a project for the rehabilitation of a public housing neighbourhood in the periphery of the city of Prato. The topic will be developed in coordination with the municipality of Prato and with the managers of the public housing heritage 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. ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN II

(B018891 - Prof. Valerio Barberis)

3.1.1 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).

3.1.2 Why

The design topic of the course, that is the rehabilitation of a public housing neighbourhood in the periphery of Prato, 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 social/public housing neighbourhood, 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.

3.1.3 How



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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 public housing neighbourhood in the periphery of Prato that has been selected as the project site of the lab.



3.2. URBAN DESIGN

(B018892 - Prof. Carlo Pisano, teaching assistant Prof. Matteo Scamporrino)

3.2.1. Description

The course will face the topic of the regeneration of a public housing neighbourhood exploring approaches, techniques and tools that characterize the contemporary practice of urban design. Among these, the concepts of the fragment, congestion, void, density, distance and proximity, time and their variations and applications, as a whole, allow a radical reflection on contemporary living space and its new interpretation. During the course, will be analysed some design approaches that consider the physical space closely related to immaterial aspects: lifestyles, practices, economies, imaginaries, highlighting both the authors that animate the contemporary debate on the urban and territorial project, as well as the techniques, the cognitive strategies, the ways of describing and designing, at different scales, the contemporary city.

3.2.2. General Goals and Outcomes

The course of Urban Design aims to provide the theoretical and methodological basis and operational tools to address a contemporary urban intervention.

The goals of the course are:

- To give a theoretical framework to understand the complexity of urban design and the difficulty of foreseeing the ways in which designed space is lived.
- To give the instruments and tools to design the contemporary city.
- To develop a strategic plan for the study areas.
- To develop a master plan for the study areas.

3.2.3. Structure and content

The theoretical part of the course is organized around six themes-concepts:

a) Fragment _ As intrinsic components of modernity, the notion of the metropolis and that of fragmentation have always been connected. The accumulation or succession of fragments has been used as an interpretative metaphor for the complex and chaotic composition of the modern city. In the history of urbanism, especially during the twentieth century, various theoretical and design contributions were directed towards the acceptance of this condition and its transformation into a manifesto. From Ungers to Christaller, from Wright to Branzi, from Mumford to Soja, the various contributions will be subdivided and organized based on their traceability to three persistent figures in urban planning: those of the archipelago, the carpet and the mosaic.

b) Congestion _ The metropolitan congestion and its idealization as a design strategy are one of the key themes of the second half of the twentieth century which, from the end of the 1970s, found its programmatic manifesto in "Delirious New York". The lecture will analyse the first twenty years of activity of the OMA studio – starting from the Exodus project, Koolhaas' thesis, till the La Villette park competition –



highlighting the body of theories and interpretations that were being developed in those years in Europe.

c) Void _ The ways in which the urban phenomenon is manifested today have changed globally compared to the past. It is no longer represented only by the consolidated city, but by the entire environmental context, in its different historical, physical, ecological, morphological and aesthetic values. This awareness has led to a "reversal" of the design strategies, favouring the project of the void compared to the fullness of the building masses. From the Park System in Boston to Chandigarh, from the PRG of the Aosta Valley to the project of the isotropy for the Veneto plain, the lecture will highlight the different articulations of the figures of the void in urbanism.

d) Density _ The application of the concept of density in urban design has undergone considerable changes over the twentieth century: from analytical to prescriptive, density has become an integral and essential part of a coherent project. Starting from the studies of Baumeister and Howard, of Le Corbusier and Hilberseimer up to the recent Spacemate and Spacematrix techniques, the lecture will highlight the different methods and tools used to evaluate the density, highlighting both the logical relationships between density and physical properties of a specific urban environment as well as the capacity of density parameters to become an instrument for urban design.

e) Distance and proximity _ A large part of the modern and contemporary urban discourse has focused on the search for the "right distance" between us and others, between the workers and the place of work, between the city and the rural world. These relationships are often codified in the form of rules which, besides being legal instruments, are also powerful design tools. From the New York Zoning Resolution of 1916 to the theories and criticisms developed by Jane Jacobs, up to the 'Rule-based plans' elaborated by Kees Christiaanse, during the lecture will be analysed various case studies, contributions and methodologies able to offer a reflection about the operational capacity of urban design rules.

f) Time _ The inclusion of the temporal variable in all planning and design processes has made it necessary to search for alternative methods and a real disciplinary reformulation. In particular, landscape and ecology, polysemic and complex terms, have assumed a crucial position in the construction of the current urban project in defining new relationships with different disciplines and knowledge. Through the definition of Landscape Urbanism, Landscape Infrastructure and Ecological Urbanism, the lecture will highlight some of the most prolific and innovative trends in contemporary urban design.

These theoretical lessons will be interspersed by specific seminars held by prof. Matteo Scamporrino.

3.2.4. Evaluation

Midterm assignment

During the semester each student should develop a critical reflection about a topic, a book, an essay, an author or a project addressed during the theoretical lectures. The



final essay should not exceed the 2.000 words and should be delivered at the beginning of December (the exact deadline will be communicated during the course).

Final examination

For the final examinations, students are required to submit a design proposal for the public housing neighbourhood in the periphery of Prato that has been selected as the project site of the lab.

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 2018. The exam dates will be communicated later on.

3.2.5. Essential bibliography

Branzi, A., 2006. *Weak and Diffuse Modernity: The World of Projects at the beginning of the 21st Century*. Milano: Skira.

Choay, F., 1969. *The Modern City: Planning in the 19th Century*. George Braziller; 1st edition

Corboz, A., 1990. "Verso la città territorio" in Viganò, P. (a cura di), 1998. *Ordine sparso. Saggi sull'arte, il metodo, la città e il territorio*. Milano: Franco Angeli, pp.214-218.

Corner, J., 1999. "The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention". In Cosgrove, D. (a cura di), *Mappings*, London: Reatino Books.

Koolhaas, R., 1985. "Imaginer le Néant". *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* n°238, Avril 1985 (Special OMA)

Mumford, L., 1969. *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

Secchi, B., 2007. *Prima lezione di urbanistica*. Roma, Bari: Laterza.

Sieverts, T., 2003. *Cities Without Cities: An Interpretation of the Zwischenstadt, 1 edition*. London: Routledge.

Soja, Ed., 1989. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso Press.

Viganò, P., 2016. *Territories of Urbanism. The Project as Knowledge Producer*. Lousanne: EPFL Press.

More readings will be suggested during each lecture.



3.3. LANDSCAPE DESIGN

(B018893 - Prof. Antonella Valentini)

3.3.1. Description

Thinking on the term “Landscape”, we see that in English, Dutch and German the root is the same. It is based on a very strong tradition on naturalistic and ecologic studies. The term “Landscape” in Italian is quite similar to French and Spanish and it recalls a cultural approach based on an aesthetic perception. In Italy, this approach to the landscape as panorama has been strong in theory and practices, up to the year 2000, when the Landscape Convention was signed in Florence. From that date in academic world and in the professional practice, the meaning of landscape is changed. The concept of landscape, as indicated by the Convention, includes both a subjective component (human perception) and an objective component (the territory), giving to people a "landscape conscience". The Convention furthermore emphasizes the need to extend the focus from areas of greatest interest and environmental importance to all landscapes, standard or even compromised by the human settlement pressures. Thus, the design focus shifts from the protection of particular importance areas to landscape management and planning.

Therefore, the urban landscape design is one of the most important task for landscape architects. As landscape architects, we have to manage transformation in our cities, aiming at increasing qualities in the urban environment.

3.3.2. General Goals and Outcomes

The landscape design module aims to give a basic knowledge of the landscape architecture discipline, through lessons on general theory, concept and history and more “practical” lessons, by many landscape project examples. Furthermore, it aims to develop skills to integrate landscape architecture to different disciplines (urban and architectural design) as usually happens in the professional practice, especially at urban scale.

3.3.3. Structure and content

Landscape lessons are articulated into two linked parts:

1. “Lessons on theory” that 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. “Applied lessons” that aim to give practical information even if strongly based on theory, on some themes (roof garden, vertical garden, community garden...) that could also be useful for the Lab project.

The topics of the first part (history, theory, fieldworks) are:

- (very) Brief history of Landscape Architecture: from ancient Egypt and Iraq, Greek and Roman gardens and Islamic gardening, through Medieval period,



- Italian Renaissance gardens (15th 16th century), French gardens (17th 18th century), English gardens (18th 19th century), to 19th and 20th century.
- Concept of Landscape in Italy and abroad, and its application
 - Masters. Some protagonists of the 19th and 20th century as Pietro Porcinai, the greatest Italian garden designer; F.L. Olmsted the “father” of landscape architecture with his concept of park system and author of central park in New York; the colorful Brazilian Roberto Burle Marx; and many others (Jellicoe, Halprin...)
 - Reference Projects. Some urban landscape project of the late 20th century and contemporary examples: La Villette and Parc Citroen in Paris, rehabilitation of the Quai de la Garonne in Bordeaux, Superkilen in Copenhagen, High Line of New York...
 - Concept and examples for Green system/Green infrastructure. Linear open space systems allow penetration into the urban fabric and contribute to the environmental readjustment of settlement.
 - Concept of Boundary landscape. Instruments to plan peri-urban landscapes, for the readjustment and regeneration of the no-longer urban and not yet agricultural landscape.

The topics of the second part (methodology, design elements):

- Methodology: analysis – diagnosis - design. Identification of open spaces by environmental, historical, cultural, ecological and natural characters.
- Themes: urban farming, community gardens, pocket gardens, urban greenways, gardens in motion, guerrilla gardening, vertical gardens, roof gardens. Concepts and examples.
- Design principles and elements: soft-scape and hard-scape, vegetation, paving, furniture.

3.3.4. Evaluation

Mid-term examination:

During the course, there is one mid-term examination (one or two A3 sheets, pdf or power point, we do not need to print). This work is individual.

The works are presented to the rest of the class. We'll choose a date (in October).

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 project that the student considers representative of his/her idea of “a good contemporary landscape project example”. Students can choose freely the example, but it would be nice something of their own countries.

Final examination

For the final examinations, students are required to submit a design proposal for the public housing neighbourhood in the periphery of Prato that has been selected as the project site of the lab. Students must develop a vision of new structure of open spaces that combine the existing ones. After have 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 to a part of the neighborhood and they develop it through plans, sections, details, views (scales to be defined).

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3.3.5. Suggested books

- History

Maureen Carroll, *Earthly paradises: Ancient gardens in history and archaeology*, Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum 2003

Monique Mosser, Georges Teyssot (Editors), *The History of Garden Design: The Western Tradition from the Renaissance to the Present Day*, Thames & Hudson 2000

Chip Sullivan, Elizabeth Boult, *Illustrated History of Landscape Design*, John Wiley & Sons Hoboken New Jersey 2010

Mariella Zoppi, *The European Garden*, Angelo Pontecorboli, Firenze 2016

Mariachiara Pozzana, *The Gardens of Florence and Tuscany- Complete Guide*, Giunti, Florence 2011

- Themes

Patric Blanc, *The Vertical Garden, from nature to the cities*, Norton Press 2009.

Anna Lambertini, *Vertical Gardens*, Thames & Hudson, London 2007.

Whitney North Seymour, *Small Urban Spaces: The Philosophy, Design, Sociology, and Politics of Vest-Pocket Parks and Other Small Urban Open Spaces*, New York University Press, 1969.

David Tracey, *Guerrilla Gardening: A Manual* festo New Society Publishers, 2007.

- Projects (and theory) references

Gilles Clément, *"The Planetary Garden" and Other Writings*, University of Pennsylvania Press 2016.

Elizabeth Kugler, *Intermediate Natures: The Landscapes of Michel Desvigne*, Birkhäuser Architecture; 1 edition 2008

Philip Jodido, *Landscape Architecture Now*, Taschen Cologne 2012.

LAE, Landscape Architecture Europe, *Fieldworks*, Birkhauser, Basel 2006.

International Biennial of Landscape Architecture, various catalogue, ed. Paysage: "Remaking Landscapes" (1999), "Gardens in Arms" (2001), "Only with Nature" (2003), "Landscape: a Product / a Production" (2006), "Storm & stress" (2008), "Liquid Landscape" (2010), "Biennial versus Biennial" (2012), "A Landscape for You" (2014), "Tomorrow Landscapes" (2016).

PAYS.MED.URBAN, *Good Practices for Landscape. Catalogue of good practices for the landscape in periurban areas*, 2011.



4. ATTENDANCE

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5. EVALUATION AND GRADING SYSTEM

The final score will be so determined:

- Part 1 (Midterm assignments) 30%;
- Part 2 (Master Plan and detailed landscape and architectural design) 70%.