

Master's Degree in Architecture Advanced Studies	
	Courses in English 2026-27
	ETSAB MBArch

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Welcome to ETSAB!

The origins of the Barcelona School of Architecture ETSAB date back to the noble School of Arts and Trades La Llotja, founded in 1775. The institution formed Master Builders by means of an official degree since 1850, the most immediate precedent of the future school of architecture. In 1875 the Barcelona School of Architecture would assume definitively its present name and almost a hundred years later, in 1972, the ETSAB became a co-founder of the UPC Barcelona-TECH.

The Barcelona School of Architecture ETSAB is the **largest and oldest university in Catalonia**, with 3,000 students, 400 teachers and more than 50 administrative staff. The school offers training in all stages of university education and plays a **leading role in research and doctoral studies in the Spanish and Latin American contexts**, through departments and research groups. The school is also a leader in the teaching of Landscape Architecture in Spain, in constant collaboration with the most prestigious schools in Europe in this field of knowledge.

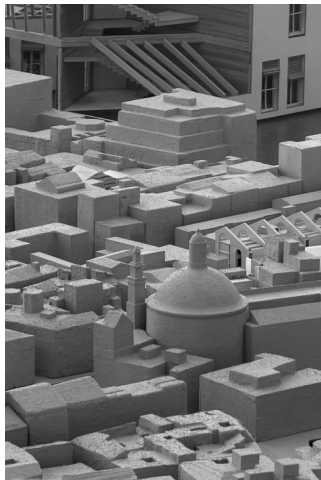
The Barcelona School of Architecture has a **continuous influence on the development and design of Barcelona**, a model of architecture and urbanism, and actively participates in the permanent dialogues generated by the city. The school is a world reference in planning, urban design and building. Attentive to debates on environmental culture, it also offers intense technical training, while promoting criticism and historical research through its important archive. As a result, the school is currently ranked among the top twenty schools in the world, according to the QS World University Rankings, and the second in Spain.

How to Read this Guide?

This guide should be viewed as a collection of elements that do not align perfectly: the images presented may not correspond to the same academic year as the detailed syllabuses, which may differ this year as courses are reformulated annually. However, when considered as a whole, these materials provide an accurate overview of the topics covered by the school's English-language courses.

This guide supplements the detailed information available on the school's website (<https://etsab.upc.edu/en/studies/garqetsab/syllabus>). These pages show the syllabus and results from previous years of the courses offered by ETSAB in English. You can find extensive information on this here: https://www.instagram.com/open_etsab. To make the most of your time at ETSAB, we also recommend looking at the courses taught in Spanish and Catalan, which are detailed and illustrated here: <https://etsab.upc.edu/ca/escola/cultura/publicacions/handbook-etsab/handbook-etsab-2018-2020> and here: <https://etsab.upc.edu/ca/estudis/garqetsab/guia-docent/guia-docent-grafica>.

For each course, symbols indicate whether the English group is in the morning or afternoon, whether it is in the first or second semester, and the track of the Master.



Fall Semester

Elective Courses	1	2	CP	UENG	GVUA
Public Space, Experiences, Projects and Policies					
Contemporary Architectural Topics					
Urban and Regional Economics					

Spring Semester

Elective Courses	1	2	CP	UENG	GVUA
Key Aspects of Urban Projects					
Cultural Landscapes, Heritage and Territorial Design					
Contemporary Residential Urban Project					
Design Scales					
Design and Thought					



Elective Courses

Fall Semester



Public Space, Experiences, Projects and Policies

Espacio público: vivencias,
proyectos y políticas



**Abstract:**

The city of Barcelona is an on-going urban laboratory. What role does public space play in the (re)shaping of this metropolitan city? This course aims to answer that question through a combination of lectures and on-site visits centered around the analysis and discussions of urban places and their landscapes.

The course aims to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of how Barcelona's geographical location, historical influences, and cultural heritage have influenced its urban design, spatial organization, and overall development. From its ancient Roman origins to its latest urban transformations, participants will gain valuable insights into the city's urbanism and its development over time. Additionally, contemporary urban challenges, such as sustainable development, mobility, and preserving cultural heritage, will be analyzed, providing students with a comprehensive perspective on the city's ongoing evolution.

Structure:

1. Introduction to Barcelona · The foundation of the city · Ciutat Vella
2. Walking tour to Ciutat Vella
3. The extensive plain · Project and reality · Eixample
4. Walking tour to Eixample
5. The city made of squares · Gràcia + Barceloneta
6. Walking tour to Turó de la Rovira and Gràcia
7. The hidden delta · Updating the grid · Eixample 22@
8. Inhabiting the periphery · From informal to mass housing
9. Final presentation + Concluding lecture

Assessment:

Students are requested to elaborate drawings and notes on A5 horizontal blank paper.

The field trips are part of the theoretical background of the module and try to provide a close-up view of the city of Barcelona. During the visit, students are invited to take photographs of the places we visit.

The final assignment consists of the paper + digital presentation of a neat A5 horizontal booklet of all the drawings and the final version of all the photographs made during the tours. The booklet will be preceded by a short introductory text. The evaluation will take into consideration this booklet (70%) and the participation in in-class assignments (30%).

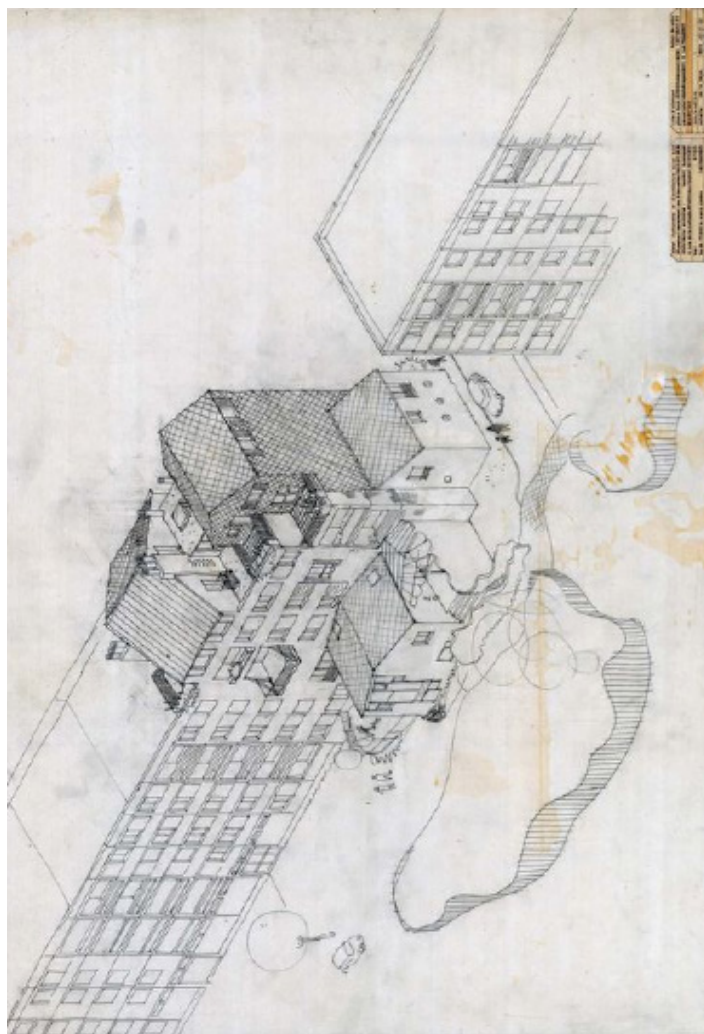
Faculty:

Miquel Martí Casanovas
Alejandro Giménez Imirizaldu

Contemporary Architectural Topics

Temas de Arquitectura

Contemporánea



**Intentions:**

The ideas of architectural modernism, which have conventionally been interpreted as an adaptation and update of the positivist, universalist and technocratic approaches of the Enlightenment project, have had unquestionable influence on our cities, our understanding of buildings in relation to technology and the human being, and on urban culture of developed societies during the 20th century.

But as it is also known, their ideological basis, social ideas, political views and their derived design methodologies have been increasingly contested since the end of the Second World War. As the presence of modernist practice has become common and mainstream in globalised cities, the problems, limitations and inconsistencies of such positions have also become increasingly evident. Just as 19th century cities had to deal with problems such as urban hygiene, urban functionality or rights of the working classes when adopting industrialisation, the current metropolis, partly built on modernist ideals, now faces its own challenges, a significant part of them emerging from the problems laid out by the modernist dream of systemised mass production and mechanisation. Consequently, some of the trending topics in architectural and urban planning discussions nowadays may be how our cities should react to political and social imbalance, cultural complexity, heterogeneous globalisation processes, ecological challenges, pollution and planetary warming, pre-existing built heritage, acceleration in social changes, lack of dwelling facilities and public services, appearance of new functional needs, the effects of digitalisation, growing or shrinking population, or even gender issues, among others. Definitely, the CIAM years seem to have fallen far behind our present, and their visions and theories to be mainly unfit to solve our current worries.

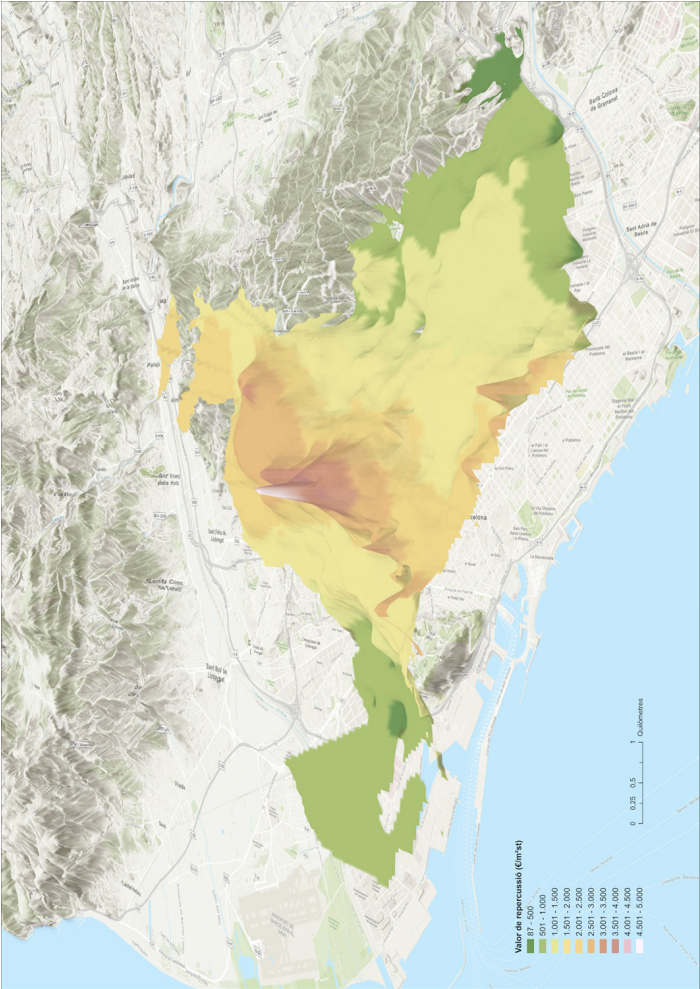
Furthermore, the second half of the 20th century gave birth to an epistemological revolution in globalised societies: So, the postmodern philosophical and ideological contributions of trends like new aesthetics, structuralism, post structuralism, deconstructionism, phenomenology, existentialism, situationism, formalism, semiotics, etc. have been seen as an attempt to update, confront or correct modernist mistakes. How did all this influence dwelling culture and the practice and conceiving of architectures as a tool for shaping habitats in the last fifty years in Europe? When discussing residential contemporary architecture, can we even use the same concepts, categories and words as we did with modernist buildings? The course aims to explore these last questions by taking advantage of the wide catalogue of the Mies van der Rohe Foundation (1988-2022). By focusing on the analysis of relevant real residential buildings, it intends to let students become familiar with the current problems, discussions and dilemmas around housing nowadays, while providing them with intellectual tools and methodologies which they can apply in their own master thesis, but also in their future professional careers, when facing and trying to understand and interpret ...contemporary architectural issues.

Faculty:

D. Hernández

Urban and Regional Economics

Economia Urbana y Regional



**Intentions:**

Urban Economics for Architects and Planners explores one of the most important—and often overlooked—dimensions of architecture and urban planning: the economic forces that shape cities. Every urban intervention, from zoning regulations and housing policies to transport infrastructure and public space design, influences how cities function, who can access opportunities, and how urban value is created and distributed. Understanding these relationships is essential for architects and urban professionals who aspire to design cities that are not only beautiful, but also efficient, inclusive, resilient, and socially sustainable.

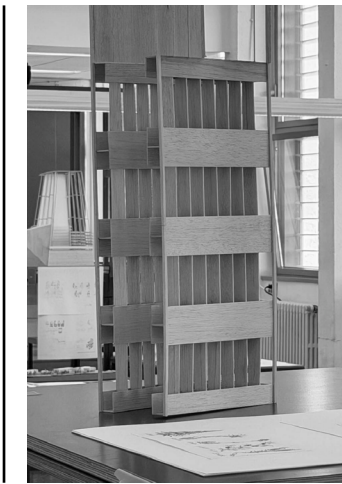
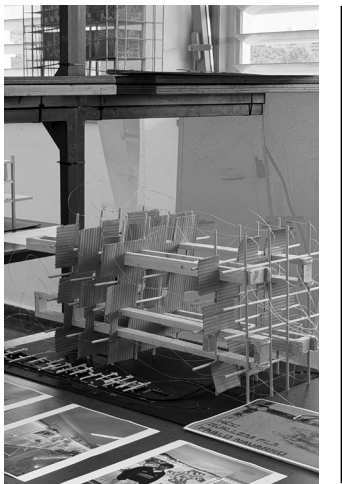
The course provides students with a solid understanding of the economic mechanisms underlying urban development. It examines how land values are formed, how they influence land-use allocation and building typologies, and how planning decisions affect housing markets, investment, accessibility, and urban transformation. Students also explore the economic and spatial drivers of segregation, exclusion, and inequality, together with the policy instruments available to mitigate these challenges. Particular attention is devoted to the interactions between urban structure, mobility, social cohesion, environmental performance, and the long-term efficiency of urban development.

Learning is based on an active and engaging methodology. Students prepare selected readings before class, which are then discussed through lectures, debates, and applied exercises that connect theoretical concepts with practical decision-making. A distinctive feature of the course is its close integration with internationally funded competitive research projects. Rather than relying solely on textbook examples, students work with real case studies investigated using rigorous scientific methods, gaining firsthand insight into how academic research informs contemporary urban policy and professional practice.

Although many examples are drawn from European cities, the analytical frameworks and concepts developed throughout the course are universally applicable. The economic principles governing urban development transcend national contexts, making the course particularly valuable for international and Erasmus students interested in understanding the dynamics of cities worldwide. Whether students plan to pursue careers in architecture, urban planning, public administration, real estate, or urban management, the course provides a powerful conceptual toolkit for interpreting urban phenomena and making informed, evidence-based decisions in an increasingly complex and interconnected urban world.

Faculty:

Carlos Marmolejo
Pilar Gacía Almirall
Paúl Espinoza Zambrano



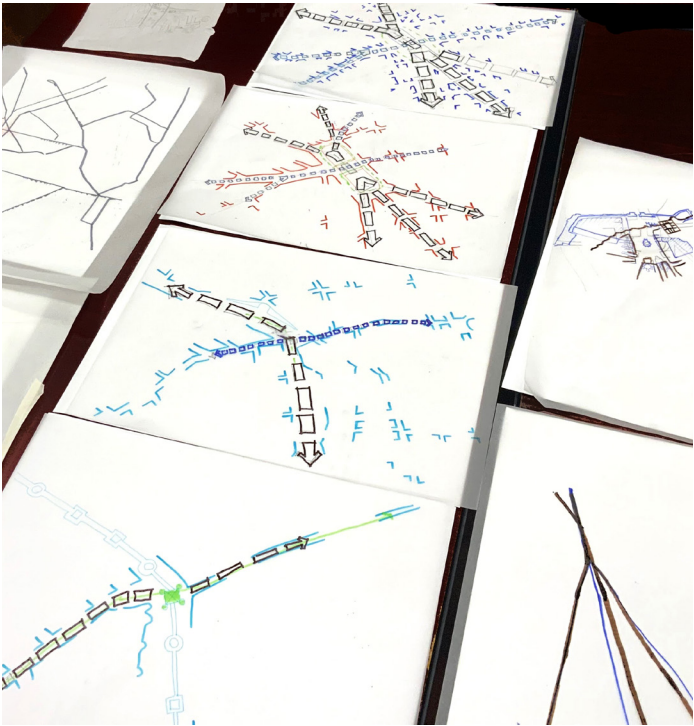
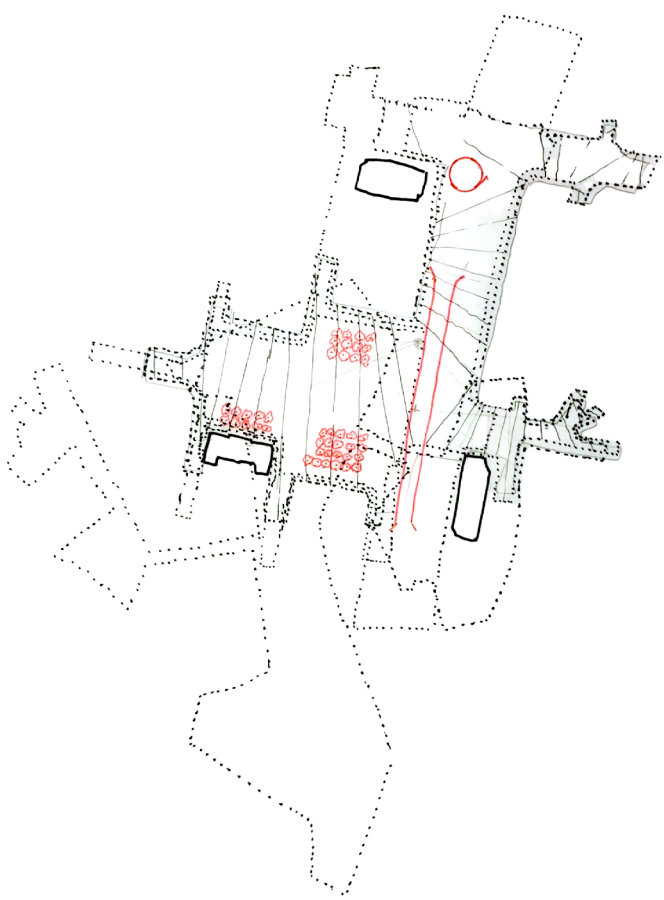
Elective Courses

Spring
Semester



Key Aspects of Urban Projects

Claves de los Proyectos Urbanos



During the 1980s, Barcelona led the urban debate on the so-called 'urban project' as a design strategy focusing on proximity to architecture, public space and infrastructure. On one hand, with the outstanding theorization of Professor Manuel de Solà-Morales (UR-Revista), and on the other, with a number of successful mid-scale urban transformations that illustrated an internationally renowned practice. Since then, new approaches and new paradigms have appeared on scene, in Barcelona and abroad, composing all together an interesting design practice that is the core of this course.

Urban Project is an instrument of mediation between the city and architecture, and at the same time, constitutes a way of acting and doing research. A design tool that is different either from the conventional planning or the macro-architecture, and that is driven to conceiving projects for operative fragments of the city well-delimited in space and time. The urban project reformulates the architecture of elements and public space in order to generate a new and more efficient urbanity characterized by its greater clarity and emotion.

The course reviews the concepts and praxis of Urban Project through the analysis of some local and European projects and design-oriented assignments.

Programme:

The course is organized in a series of theoretical lessons, on-site visits and assignments focused on the analysis of complex urban projects and urban design strategies.

First part: The place before the project

Before the project is the place. Before the connection, the interstice. The first part of this course addresses a reading of urban fringe spaces from three different dimensions: space, time and activities.

Second part: Urban design strategies

This part addresses how designers can work complex projects in interstitial places, by comparing the multiple design strategies and mechanisms used in order to give form to those sites.

Visit. Guided visit to Manuel de Solà-Morales' Archive (COAC).

Third Part: Resonances: from the project to the city

Cities can be understood as a combination of multiple parts and projects. In this chapter we debate about the capacity of some urban projects to transform the whole city. The systemic vision of urban projects will be discussed and analysed.

Fourth Part: Urban projects in time: evolution and decay

Cities are not static, but the constant evolution in time. Urban projects are also dynamic and they are used by citizens in multiple ways. In this part of the course, we address the interaction between design and real use of the projects.

Assessment:

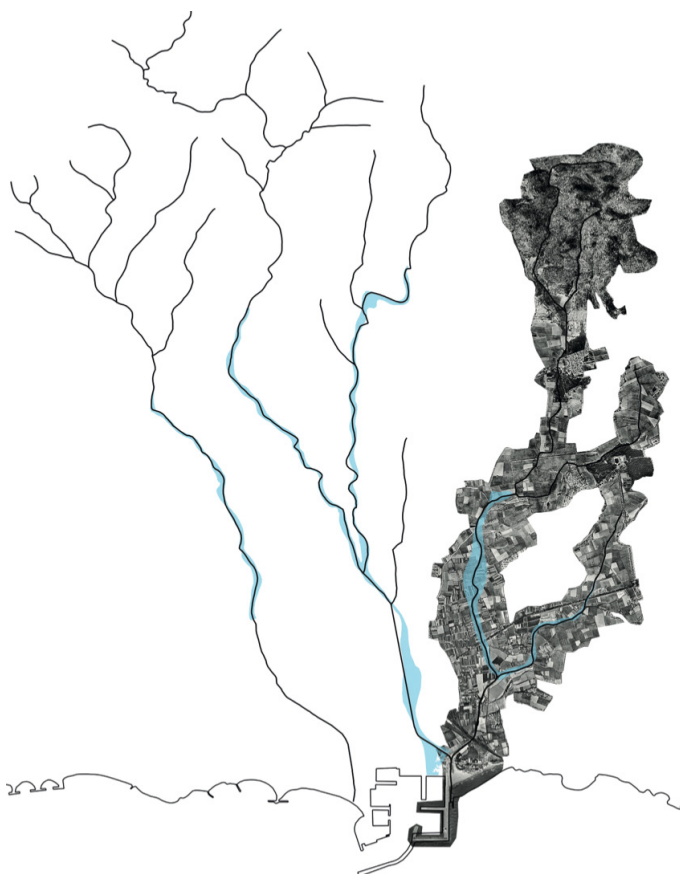
Each theoretical lesson will be preceded or followed by weekly assignments to be mainly developed and discussed during the class (40% of the total assessment). Assignments will be elaborated in groups of 2 students or individually. Finally, the course will be evaluated by two exams along the course: a partial exam and a final exam

Faculty:

Álvaro Clúa

Cultural Landscapes, Heritage and Territorial Design

Paisajes Culturales, Patrimonio y Proyecto Territorial



**Abstract:**

This course focuses on the research and project of the processes and forms of urbanization on the contemporary territory. For this, we will study the landscape, the heritage, and the shape of the territory as planning criteria based on local resources and on the identity of the place. Throughout the course, we will explore the concepts of landscape, “cultural landscape”, heritage, and the operationalization of the territory in the current context through the study of theoretical references and case studies. Likewise, we will develop a methodology for analyzing the territory using the drawings as the main tool for the analysis and development of interpretive hypotheses. This opens up a broad field of reflection on the diversity of territorial patterns and intervention strategies and projects on the contemporary territory.

Structure:

1. Introduction to the course. The Mediterranean coast: territory, landscape & heritage
2. Site visit
3. Drawing the territory
4. The Agrarian Park of Llobregat River
5. Workshop MBArch
6. 1st Presentation
7. The territory of Ibiza
8. The structure of territory as a tool for design
9. Cultural landscapes & Heritage
10. 2nd Presentation
11. Three Ideas for the Project of contemporary landscapes
12. Operational Landscapes
13. Final presentation

Assignments:

Exercise: proposals for Mataró from the structure of the empty spaces of the territory.

Assignment 1: Propositional analysis, selection of topic to address. Group presentations.

Assignment 2: Development of selected topic. Group presentations.

Assignment 3: Dossier A3, including analysis, project, references, plans and memory. Final group presentation.

Assessment:

- 1st intermediate assignment: 20%
- 2nd intermediate assignment: 20%
- Final assignment: 40%

Faculty:

Melisa Pesoa Marcilla
Stefano Cortellaro

Contemporary Residential Urban Project

Proyecto Urbano Residencial Contemporáneo



Site Visit / La Borda



Site Visit / Casa Bloc



The course is divided into two parts: one focused on the study of the contemporary residential urban project in new developments, and another oriented toward the study of contemporary interventions in existing residential fabrics. Both parts share a common reflection on residential urban fabrics/frameworks and the issues related to housing, spaces for everyday life, and urban habitability at the local scale.

One aim of the course is to introduce research on the Residential Urban Project as a specific subject of urban design, through the analysis of relevant case studies and the application of analytical methodologies that allow for the comparison and evaluation of projects and their implementation. The starting point is to improve design methods and tools by incorporating variables of sustainability and energy efficiency into the analyses. Based on the study of significant cases (residential projects or executed fragments) from recent years, the course seeks to identify different design strategies and the instruments employed in their development. The objective is to evaluate the outcomes and establish useful, generalizable, and systematizable taxonomies, while always acknowledging the individuality of proposals and their specific contextual situations. Particular interest is given to structural, compositional, and organizational aspects related to the formation of the residential urban fabric in contemporary urban transformation processes.

Another component of the course will promote reflection on the obsolescence and updating of the residential forms characteristic of twentieth-century urban construction (mass housing, suburban growth, marginal areas, traditional neighborhoods, and residential fabric in historic centers) through their analysis and projective study. Conservation, transformation, or substitution as basic intervention strategies—at different scales and through diverse (sometimes complementary, sometimes conflicting) models of action—will be analyzed using cases that allow for the systematization of methods and tools. The study will be guided by a design-oriented approach, its methods and instruments, and the objective of evaluating urban efficiency and user satisfaction as key principles of quality.

The main reference contexts will be Europe and Latin America within the broader Western culture, with particular attention to Barcelona and its metropolitan area, while also considering the global dimension of the housing problem, its implementation processes, mass programs, and contemporary challenges in developing countries.

Faculty:

Kathrin Golda-Pongratz
Rosina Vinyes

Design Scales

Las Escalas del Proyecto





Throughout architecture's history, working on different and simultaneous scales is a constant. In 1977, Charles and Ray Eames, with their film "Powers of Ten" recalled the power of the relativity of scale, depending on the frame of observation, different realities are revealed. Considering the journey as a whole activates a holistic view that allows us to establish relationships between scales, linking concepts or realities.

At the Stanford's Commencement Address lecture, Steve Jobs indicated the importance of connecting the dots by looking backwards to build our future. A series of theoretical classes will complement the process carried out by the students from examples of architecture relevant to the approach to the project, its thinking and communication, from multiple scales and dimensions.

Rafael Moneo, "Comments on drawings of 20 contemporary architects", indicates that the first construction of architecture is the drawing. Each student will address the issues of spatial scale (from millimeter to kilometer) and temporal scale (past, present and future). It is also intended to add at least one extra dimension extracted from its own research theme or case study (construction, use, phenomenology...).

Class work will be based on a combination of theoretical classes and comments by teachers and students on the proposals under development. This course aims that students deepen their own research from a polyhedral and multiscale point of view. The result of their work will be an open document, with the possibility of being further developed in the future, reflecting the specific time dedicated during the course and added value to their Master Thesis.

The different lessons will be structured in workshop time in the classroom, weekly review of assignments and theoretical classes. In addition, there will be an intermediate and final submission with critical sessions.

In the course, the entire academic term's work is centered on the development of a single 'drawing of drawings', an exploration of explorations, in a vertical 210x2970mm format. Upon this sheet, the developing drawings from the students' ongoing thesis research are laid out in a structured manner. The objective is to conceive this paper space as a project that simultaneously explains and helps consolidate the research underway. In each session, students must articulate the material, its purpose, relationships, and decisions, as well as assign it a title. This single exercise aims to foster both criteria and critique simultaneously, yielding an unfinished, stratified document whose layers grow increasingly complex day by day, as a testament to the weight and clarity with which the research establishes itself as a project. Within this framework, graphic exploration is defined as a methodological procedure for research. It distinguishes itself from design projects and built works as forms of architectural research, insofar as its primary purpose is the validation of non-inductive hypotheses.

Faculty:

Pablo Vilallonga

Design and Thought

Proyecto y Pensamiento



Theoretical Framework:

Every action of architecture is an action on materiality. We might face a decaying terrain vague, a strongly defined historic environment, a beautiful natural scenario, a smart and modern urban area or a wasted suburban slam: we will always act on materiality and we will do it in a material way, regardless of the level of abstraction of our start.

Such observation could make us think that architectural space could be intended as incapsulated within the boundaries of a materiality which determines the width of possibilities for design. What we propose in the course is to look at the apparently irreconcilable struggle between ideas and matter with a vision which combines complexity, unorthodoxy, disciplinary secularism and ludic awareness.

During the course, technical and material considerations are, therefore, integrated with others of social, urban and ecological nature, within the framework of a more sustainable vision of the reality of our cities and landscape. History never reaches a defined ending and each new project does nothing but add another layer and, maybe, move one further step. Therefore, we will also play with the concept of “heritage” as a structural component of any materiality and we will try to investigate through all the complexities intertwined within such a concept.

The subject proposes a theoretical journey through the most recent evolution of the debate, with specific approaches on concrete architecture and public space projects.

Syllabus:

The course is structured through lectures, discussions, visits and the individual assignment. The idea of architectural heritage will not be studied in a conventional way, since we want to develop the participant’s skills in terms of architectural intelligence, rather than provide some specific technical knowledge on the topic.

In order to do so, we will explore some fundamental antinomies particularly important for the general theory of architecture and beyond: past-future; destruction-construction; urban-rural; intimate-collective. Each concept will be examined both from a theoretical point of view and under its practical applications. We will observe the existing architecture in urban and rural territory and we will discuss its possible development playing with the abovementioned concepts. Like in many aspects of human life, the balance between these antonymies is crucial in order to acknowledge and, maybe, understand the dynamics of reality around us. In other words, our philosophical journey through architecture will be successful not because of a certain destination we will reach, but because of how we will be able to properly set and enjoy the journey.

Therefore, we will also encourage watching movies that forecast some kind of light onto our concepts and we will discuss them in class. We will also examine and visit some significant places in the area of Barcelona. The texts we will suggest to read won’t be taken as a learning tool in the classical way, since they shall be considered as a source of theoretical inputs.

Faculty:

Alessandro Scarnato

