

STUDIO 4: Urban Design 2011-2012

Theme of the studio

The theme of this year's urban design studio is a key one to the growth, repair and sustainable survival of our cities: the impact that large infrastructures have had and continue to exercise on the quality of life of its inhabitants and on the general performance of the city. One case of large scale decisions having profound local impact is that of infrastructures such as motorways, railways, electroducts .. Glasgow is an important example of how local dynamics have been affected in different periods of the city's development by the construction of such infrastructures (the railway towards mid-end of the XIX cent, and the motorways from the 1960s to today, expressways ...). As a result of these implementations, Glasgow is today a city of parts, often disconnected by physical and social barriers, where unclaimed land offers little incentive for use, investment and ultimately growth. The connective role that this land could offer is nevertheless critical to the successful life of a city; recent experiences have demonstrated how intervention to re-establish links where these have been broken is possible and more than ever necessary.

The course, with reference to successful international experiences, will study how to deliver urban sustainability with a focus on reclaiming the lost spaces generated by and around the M8 motorway. In particular, our aim is to study and apply appropriate urban design strategies and tools to reconnect the communities that have been separated, moved, cut at a local scale by decision taken at a global scale. Our investigation will concentrate on the M8 motorway, from Kingston Bridge to Townhead but will consider its wider impact as well.

Taking part to this course are students from the PgDipl/MSc in urban design and students from the Advanced Architectural design course. We also have a number of International exchange students. Students belonging to the PgDipl/MSc in Urban Design arrive from a variety of background, planning, geography, engineering, social sciences and do not have a design background; they pick up during the year basic graphic skills as well as theories, principles and techniques in urban design.

Students work together mixing and sharing their reciprocal expertise – urban design is multidisciplinary. We value group work, and work, at least in Semester 1 is done in groups.

The structure of the studio is as follow:

Phase 1. Weeks 1-5: analysis of the study area through 5 different perspectives: drawing the city; histories and stories; the planning framework, experiencing the study area; multi centrality assessment. This work is done by 5 groups of students – MSc, AAD and International, designers and non designers. Each perspective is essential, and they are all complementary, therefore it is essential that all students share what found.

Phase 2. Weeks 7-11: strategies. Students form 'strategic groups', made up of experts from each analysis group and work on 4 different scenarios for the development of the city centre and M8 in the next 25 years. They start with a vision statement, they then identify projects and actions to deliver it, and formalize them in space, through concept plans, which discuss problems and aspirations in relation to densities, provisions of nodes of activities, infrastructure, and barriers. Their aim is to rectify issues in the provision of services, access to urban requirements.

Phase 3. This includes two main outputs:

1. **Detailed study or typical street fronts** in Glasgow, to use for the development of a **local urban code**, that is a set of principles to guide the design development of detailed portions of each strategy. Each student will have for the reviews a draft of an assigned street front, studied and represented in two maps each, one at ground floor with uses, one a typical upper floor to understand its layout. All the streetfronts will then be grouped and tuned into the LUC by tutors. This will be available mid February, when we expect Foundation masterplans also in their completed format.
2. **Draft of the foundation masterplan**, that is the project site which the student will work on from now on. At this stage, the FM is a portion of one of the 4 strategies (or a combination of two or more), indicating: intervention and conservation areas; a more detailed definition of the nodes of activities (local or district or global) which includes specific densities by block or even street front, a finalized street hierarchy, the location of main projects to then explore in more detail at the final masterplanning phase.

Forthcoming Phases. 4. Detailed masterplans. They will use the Local urban code in this design phase.

Phase 5. Detailed design of special places in the masterplan.

Whilst work is listed in **phases**, students move across scales through the year, using precedents, formulating visions etc so they are not following a strictly linear process.

The **focus** of the studio is on the structure of the ordinary city, that is where the vast majority of our experiences unfolds, and how this accommodates special events, buildings.