

GSAPP Spring 2016 | Advanced Studio VI

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What if...? Then...

Urban-scaled Architectural Speculation in Tokyo



Uyen Pham, Spring 2015

Can we invent an urban-scaled architecture that is both formally compelling and ecologically sound?

The studio will engage and explore the formal and programmatic possibilities of invented large-scale architecture in the city. In a back-and-forth process with key historic projects we will develop a series of design-based scenarios that leverage specific qualities of the city, and will seek to mine these scenarios for their formal possibilities. Formal and spatial invention will be our goal. Sites will be chosen for their latent possibilities. Ecological, economic, and political justifications will be employed as necessary. Programs will be pushed beyond their logical extremes.

First we will speculate on what might have been. To look back at projects of the past and interrogate them for what they might have been. Through a process of collage and montage (old fashioned, but

dependable), we will speculate on how the introduction of difference might have changed these projects. The studio will operate in a “slack space” to allow us freedom from the historical and theoretical significance of the key historic projects. For example, we will ask questions such as: What if Superstudio’s Continuous Monument had an interior? And, what if Yona Friedman lived in Tokyo (instead of Paris)?

Our speculations will not be supported by any hard evidence, nor will they be able to be proven. They will be imaginary and factually questionable. But we will create coherent and precise (graphic) arguments for our speculations. We will develop a formal language. We will pursue multiple possible scenarios, compiling a catalog of speculations.

Although we will look carefully at megastructure projects of the recent past, our references will also include the Tower of Babel and the Ponte Vecchio. We will appropriate and hybridize. We will play with megabuilding types like mat buildings, wall buildings, and mound buildings.

The studio’s site is within the megalopolis of Tokyo, both famous and infamous for its density. A reconsideration of the megastructure seems appropriate in the city that gave us Kenzo Tange’s Tokyo Bay project as well as Kisho Kurokawa’s Nakagin Capsule Tower — the city is the perfect site for macro and micro architectural experimentation. The speculative projects we develop will be both tiny and enormous. We will anticipate and design scenarios for both scales.

With the addition of program, we will imagine new forms of collective associations as promised by Modernism. But, whereas Modernism proposed rationality and singularities to deal with the problems and potentials of the city, we will play with irrationality and multiplicities. We will engage density directly. But heeding the predicted future of the “Generic City” in which cities become indistinct from one another, this studio will begin with a contrary hypothesis: we will view globalization as reinforcing differences in patterns of localized urban behavior, formal uniqueness and infrastructural specificity.

With the addition of infrastructure, we will posit that architecture can be both/and — it can be both about growth and about the environment — through the manipulation of form and the tactical deployment of ecologically based systems.

Travel

We will travel to Tokyo for our Kinne trip to conduct lifestyle, formal, programmatic, infrastructural, and site research.

Individual studio project

You will work individually on your own studio project.

Two exercises of one week each will be conducted in small groups: one week devoted to Infrastructures and Programs in which you will conduct research together for greater efficiency; and the week of our Kinne travel to Tokyo, during which you will explore and document Tokyo in small teams. During both of these exercises you will continue to work on your own individual project.

Teaching Schedule

I will be in studio every Thursday of the semester. George will be in studio every Monday. (On each Sunday evening you will upload your work progress to our studio Google drive, and I will review it and provide feedback for you to discuss on Monday with George). I am always available by email for any questions you may have throughout the semester.

Protocol

Part 1

Scenarios

3 weeks

In this phase we will develop a set of formal attitudes to the urban-scaled building or megastructure. Starting with historical, mostly unbuilt, projects we will endeavor to invent difference in the megastructure through collage and montage. The following list is just a start — other projects are possible. You will do at least three complete collage series. Projects to interrogate:

Wall Buildings

Algiers Obus Plan, Le Corbusier, 1931

Continuous Monument, Superstudio, late 1960s – 70s

Wall City, Kisho Kurokawa, 1960s

Plug-in-City, Archigram, 1964

Exodus of the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture, Koolhaas & Zenghelis, 1972

Mat Buildings

Tokyo Bay, Kenzo Tange, 1960

Agricultural City, Kisho Kurokawa, 1960

Venice Hospital, Le Corbusier, 1966

No-Stop City, Archizoom, 1970

Ocean City, Kiyonori Kikutake, 1960s

Ville Spatiale, Yona Friedman, 1960s

Mound Buildings

Aircraft Carrier Project, Hans Hollein, 1964

Walking City, Archigram, 1964

Artic City, Frei Otto & Kenzo Tange, 1971

Dolphin Embassy, Ant Farm, 1974

Tower of Babel

First Collage Series, due Thursday, January 28

Second Collage Series, due Thursday, February 2

Third Collage Series, due Thursday, February 11

Take one image of an unbuilt project from the list above (or an approved alternate) and analyze it. This is the only information about the project that you have. For example if you have the following Superstudio Continuous Monument image, this is the entire extent of your knowledge of it. You will invent what you cannot see in the image.



A good way to start is: Ask yourself a series of “What if” questions. For example: What if this Continuous Monument had a section?

Then, invent a section for the Continuous Monument “leg” near the village on the left. Invent a section for the Continuous Monument “leg” that lands in the water on the right. Invent the other two leg sections. Each one can be different, especially as each one has a different relationship with the site. Invent several sections for different parts of the “X” that spans the lake. Think about what might happen under the water line.

As you work, think sectionally. Embed reference forms — like other architectures (embed small buildings from the little village on the left) or other architects. Try really figural shapes. Try programs with extravagant sectional requirements like a scuba diving tank or a theater or a climbing wall. Throw in some “generic” section for some visual relief. Keep going!

Part 2

Infrastructures & Programs

1 week

In “Scenarios” we started to develop a formal language for ourselves — we needed a certain amount of freedom before we get tied down to infrastructure, program, and site. Now, however, we will start to fold in ideas of infrastructure, program, and site. Even so, collage and montage work should still continue on the side.

We will look into typical urban conditions in Tokyo and its environs. Initial site research is necessary in order to develop and test your concept. Look to the neighborhoods. Look for farmland, parks and natural preserves. Look at Tokyo Bay. Start to think about what your initial Scenario work could do in each of these conditions?

We will research existing lifestyles in Tokyo. We will build a catalog of programs that we can imagine might support these lifestyles. We will add programs to the catalog that might be leveraged to create new possible lifestyles.

We will research potential infrastructures that can be leveraged: water, transportation. What are the requirements for the infrastructure that you research? Start to think about what your initial Scenario work could do with water infrastructure? With transportation infrastructure? With other infrastructures?

We will work in groups to research and present lifestyles, programs, and infrastructures.

due Thursday, February 18

Part 3

Concept: What if...? Then...

1 week

Pulling together your scenarios and your infrastructures and programs research, you will create a conceptual framework for your project. Formulate your own “What if...? Then...”

Our goal is to hybridize architecture, infrastructure, and landscape.

due Thursday, February 25

Part 4

Project Development / Mid Review

1 week

We will continue to develop our concept, scenarios, site, infrastructure and program.

Deliverables (minimum, drawings to be added as necessary):

Scenario collages

Infrastructures & Programs catalog

Concept diagram(s)

Axonometric / Isometric

Site plans

Site sections

Other drawings that we determine are necessary to communicate your idea.

Physical model, probably 3-d printed and painted. We are interested in the figure of the project.

due Thursday, March 3

Part 5

Kinne Trip / Site

2 weeks

We will travel to Tokyo for a week (or more as you are interested and able) to further develop your concept and research your site.

We will research Tokyo lifestyles that you can absorb into your project. Working in teams, we will explore the day and nightlife of Tokyo, documenting and presenting our findings daily. We will incorporate this field research into your project.

Over Spring Break we will integrate lifestyle and site findings into your project.

Part 6

Project Development

3 weeks

We will develop the form of your project so that it, in its figure, is highly specific to individual site conditions. We are interested in the project reading different ways at different scales: at the neighborhood scale, it is a figure; at a building scale, it could be a field; at the interior, there are figures embedded into the field.

We will drill down to the interiors of your project in as many instances as we can. More is better. We are pushing for difference between the parts of the whole.

Part 7

Recapitulation and Presentation Preparation

1 week

Analyze your project for any weakness in argument or underdevelopment of the project. Adjust. Refine. Reconstruct as necessary the concept diagram series that you will use to present the project.

Part 8

Final Review

2 weeks

Deliverables (minimum, to be added to as your project develops):

One large drawing that communicates the ambition and scope of the project. This might be an axonometric, isometric or section perspective. It should have a graphic style that you have developed over the semester. The style may be influenced by such references as traditional Japanese landscape painting, etc.

Concept Diagram(s)

Site plans

Site sections

Zoom plans

Zoom sections

Other drawings that we determine are necessary to communicate your idea.

Physical model of whole project

Zoom model of part of the project

Your project in chapter form (PDF) for the class book

Site

We will find our sites in Tokyo.



Schedule

Week 1

Monday, January 18 – **HOLIDAY**

Wednesday, January 20 – Lottery

Friday, January 22 – Discussion of “Scenarios.” Please bring two drawings that you really like to studio—one that you have made and one made by someone else.

Week 2

Monday, January 25 – Desk crits, work in studio, upload work

Thursday, January 28 – First “Scenarios” pin-up, desk crits

Friday, January 29 – Transfer Series

Week 3

Monday, February 1 – Desk crits, work in studio, upload work

Thursday, February 4 – Second “Scenarios” pin up, desk crits

Friday, February 5 – Transfer Series

Week 4

Monday, February 8 – Desk crits, work in studio, upload work

Thursday, February 11 – Third “Scenarios” pin up, discussion of “Infrastructures & Programs,” desk crits

Friday, February 12 – Transfer Series

Week 5

Monday, February 15 – Desk crits, work in studio, upload work

Thursday, February 18 – Review of “Infrastructures & Programs,” discussion of “Concept,” desk crits

Friday, February 19 – Transfer Series

Week 6

Monday, February 22 – Desk crits, work in studio, upload work

Thursday, February 25 – Review of “Concept,” pin-up DRAFT of Mid Review presentation

Friday, February 26 – Transfer Series

Week 7

Monday, February 29 – Desk crits, work in studio, upload work

Thursday, March 3 – **MID REVIEW**

Friday, March 4 – Transfer Series

Week 8

Monday, March 7 – Friday, March 11 – **TRAVEL TO TOKYO**

Week 9

Monday: March 14 – Friday, March 18 – **SPRING BREAK**

Week 10

Monday, March 21 – Slide show presentation of travel research, work in studio, upload work

Thursday, March 24 – Review of “Project Development – part 1,” desk crits

Friday, March 25 – Transfer Series

Week 11

Monday, March 28 – Desk crits, work in studio, upload work

Thursday, March 31 – Desk crits, work in studio

Friday, April 1 – Transfer Series

Week 12

Monday, April 4 – Desk crits, work in studio, upload work

Thursday, April 7 – Review of “Project Development – part 2,” discussion of “Recapitulation,” desk crits

Friday, April 8 – Transfer Series

Week 13

Monday, April 11 – Desk crits, work in studio, upload work

Thursday, April 14 – Review of “Recapitulation,” desk crits

Friday, April 15 – Transfer Series

Week 14

Monday, April 18 – Desk crits, work in studio, upload work

Thursday, April 21 – Desk crits, pin-up DRAFT of Final Review presentation

Friday, April 22 – Transfer Series

Week 15

Monday, April 25 – Charette

Thursday, April 28 – Desk crits, pin-up DRAFT of Final Review presentation

Week 16

Monday, May 2 – **FINAL REVIEW**

Tuesday, May 3 – Produce chapters for book, send to printer, collect work for archive

Friday, May 6 – **PROJECT ARCHIVE DUE**

Week 17

Work together as a studio to create End of Year Show exhibit

Saturday, May 14 – **END OF YEAR SHOW**

Readings

Reyner Banham, *Megastructures: Urban Futures of the Recent Past*

Martin van Schaik and Otakur Macel, *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations 1956-76*

Peter Lang and William Menking, *Superstudio: Life without Objects*

Hashim Sarkis, *Case: Le Corbusier's Venice Hospital*

Rem Koolhaas, *S,M,L,XL*. "Generic City" and "Bigness"

Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*. "The Lives of a Block" and "Definitive Instability"

Stan Allen, *Points + Lines: Diagrams and Projects for the City*. "Infrastructural Urbanism"

Stan Allen, "The Thick 2-D: Mat-Building in the Contemporary City"

Stan Allen, "From the Biological to the Geological"

Dana Cuff and Roger Sherman, *Fast Forward Urbanism*

Mohsen Mostafavi et al., *Ecological Urbanism*

For graphic reference

Atelier Bow-Wow, *Made in Tokyo* and *Pet Architecture Guidebook*

Alex Lehnerer, *Western Town* and *Grand Urban Rules*