

AR-302(az)

Studio BA6 (Rolli et Schürch)

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Cursus	Sem.	Type
Architecture	BA6	Obl.
HES - AR	E	Obl.
Mob. AR	E	Opt.

Language of teaching	English
Credits	12
Withdrawal	Unauthorized
Session	Summer
Semester	Spring
Exam	During the semester
Workload	360h
Weeks	14
Hours	6 weekly
Courses	2 weekly
Project	4 weekly

Number of positions

It is not allowed to withdraw from this subject after the registration deadline.

Remark

Inscription faite par la section

Summary

Urban Mending will explore new approaches of careful repair within fragmented urban territories by working on public spaces. Focusing this semester on the disjointed fabrics of the Città Ticino, students will develop projects aimed at re-establish connections between places and their communities.

Content**Urban Mending will be understood as:**

* An attempt to heal and reconnect highly fragmented urban areas

Urban Mending is an approach to territories shaped by rapid and often violent transformations, where uncoordinated development and private interests have produced urban and social fragmentation as well as the destruction of shared reference points. The aim is to reconnect existing spaces, fostering new resilient places of encounter and collective belonging.

* A multiscale perspective on territory and the reality that surrounds us

By observing urban spaces across multiple scales - from architectural detail to territorial dimension - the studio aims to experiment with new perspectives to public space capable of bridging the gap between spatial planning, urban design and architecture. The goal is to build an integrated vision in which the specific small scale situation and the broader urban context are in constant dialogue, considering every public space as a place of opportunity.

* An act of care toward people and places

Care is understood as a design attitude: a way of engaging with places and communities through attention, responsibility, and proximity, emphasizing the relational nature of design practice. Rather than imposing transformation, the semester will focus on precise acts of repair and maintenance that restore value and dignity to everyday spaces, supporting the relationship between inhabitants and their surroundings.

* A strategy to improve the resilience of large-scale contexts with minimal resources

Through a deep understanding of the context - its potentials, qualities, and weaknesses - the studio seeks to develop design strategies capable of achieving broad impact through small-scale actions. By activating the intrinsic qualities of places and promoting subtle, sustainable transformations, the semester will propose targeted actions that address climatic challenges while strengthening the resilience of territories.

* A concrete case study for a *Città Ticino* that is not yet a city

The semester focuses on the densely populated areas of Canton Ticino, characterized by highly fragmented urban fabrics and lack of proximity public spaces. These territories, emblematic of many European urban areas, will serve as a testing ground where building density and population concentration - in the absence of a shared urban vision - have produced density without intensity, urbanisation without urbanity. Within this context, the studio will experiment with strategies that enhance quality of life and foster more cohesive and caring urban fabrics.

Città Ticino

The image of Ticino is often associated with a bucolic landscape of lakes, mountains, exotic trees, and villages deeply rooted in a long-standing tradition. Yet, alongside this picturesque image, another reality coexists. The urban areas of the *Città Ticino*, stretching along the valley floors, where transport infrastructures, mobility networks, and urban sprawl have woven the territory together from north to south.

This condition is the result of rapid, violent, and uncoordinated post-war development, guided more by building regulations than by an urban vision. In the process, most of the historical traces that once gave structure and identity to the territory have been erased and forgotten. The outcome is a landscape infrastructurally connected yet spatially fragmented, where the lack of shared spaces mirrors the absence of a shared project. Buildings stand as isolated objects; streets are lined with fences and retaining walls; vegetation is scarce; and public space, where it exists, is often residual or dominated by cars. It is a city that embodies the problems of many contemporary urban areas. And it is, in many respects, a city that is not yet a city. At the same time, however, 80% of the population lives within it, and for this reason its regeneration is both necessary and urgent. New approaches and new strategies must be developed in order to explore the possibility of more sustainable and supportive urban fabrics.

It is within this context that the semesters work will take place.

The studio in the spring semester 2026 will be primarily led by Tiziano Schürch, with the assistance of Blerta Axhija.

Keywords

A: Adaption - B - C: Care, Città Ticino, Collectivity, Collective memory, Communal - D: Dialogue - E: Ecumene, Encounters - F: Fragility - G: Grafting - H: History an histories - I: Identity, Inhabitants, Interaction, Inclusivity - J - K - L: Listening - M: Mending, Multiscalarity - N: Networks - O: Observation - P: Permeability, Publicness, Public Space, Proximity - Q - R: React, Reframe, Resilience, Reveal - S: Sociality, Sustainability, Sponge City - T: Territory - U: Urbanity, Underground - V - W: Water - X - Y - Z

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:

- Interpret a complex place, understanding its qualities and issues from the perspective of public space, conceived in its social and spatial dimensions
- Contextualise the essence of public spaces within a specific reality, highlighting their qualities, potentialities, and critical aspects
- Formulate an effective strategy for intervening in public spaces within urban contexts characterized by strong spatial and social fragmentation.
- Demonstrate and reveal the interdependencies between private and public spaces;
- Design specific interventions as part of a broader, integrated strategy capable of generating a positive urban-scale impact in terms of social exchange, climate adaptation, and spatial quality;
- Represent one's project through appropriate means that effectively convey its multiscalar dimension (both punctual and urban).
- Integrate the perspective of inhabitants and turn it into design input.
- Synthesize patial and social conditions across multiple scales, operating simultaneously at the architectural-detail and urban scales.

Transversal skills

- Demonstrate a capacity for creativity.
- Take feedback (critique) and respond in an appropriate manner.
- Use both general and domain specific IT resources and tools

- Make an oral presentation.
- Collect data.
- Continue to work through difficulties or initial failure to find optimal solutions.
- Set objectives and design an action plan to reach those objectives.
- Use a work methodology appropriate to the task.
- Plan and carry out activities in a way which makes optimal use of available time and other resources.
- Resolve conflicts in ways that are productive for the task and the people concerned.
- Take responsibility for environmental impacts of her/ his actions and decisions.
- Take responsibility for health and safety of self and others in a working context.
- Give feedback (critique) in an appropriate fashion.
- Negotiate effectively within the group.
- Demonstrate the capacity for critical thinking

Teaching methods

Revealing * Reframing * Reacting *

The semester is structured around three interconnected stages, each concluding with a review. Rather than separate units, they form layers of a single, evolving project, refined and deepened throughout the semester.

Stage 1: Revealing *

The semester begins with a close reading of the chosen territory. By immersing oneself attentively and sensitively in the context, it becomes possible to understand the place in all its different components.

This phase will lay solid foundations for designing interventions that are respectful and precise, capable of enhancing the specific qualities of the existing fabric and the surrounding territory. Students will explore, map, and document its visible and invisible structures - its physical, historical, and social traces - revealing both qualities and contradictions.

Stage 2: Revealing * Reframing *

Building on the observations and interpretations carried out in the first stage, students will define a mending strategy: a precise and forward looking series of interrelated interventions that enhances the identified values and potential while addressing the site's weaknesses. Students will develop a strategic framework that reinterprets the territory across multiple scales - from the detail to the urban system - seeking maximum impact with minimal resources.

Stage 3: Revealing * Reframing * Reacting *

In the final stage, students will translate their strategies into concrete design proposals. This phase focuses on developing selected interventions in depth - spatially, programmatically and materially - through drawings, models, and visual narratives that express the projects multiscalar dimension. The work should reveal how each intervention, no matter how small, contributes to a broader vision of Urban Mending as a way to strengthen social and urban fabrics. Projects are continuously discussed and refined until the final review, where they are evaluated both as individual works and as contributions to a shared studio vision.

Throughout the semester, students will engage with different design and representation strategies according to the specific needs of each stage. These include hand drawings, CAD drawings, large-scale mapping through CAD tools, written reflections, and the production of models and images.

The choice of representational media will depend on the stage of work and on the intended message, supporting a design process that moves fluidly between observation, interpretation, and projection.

Expected student activities

Atelier: working in the school's studio spaces - for design, drawing production, model making, and other forms of exploration - is fundamental to fostering a spirit of mutual learning and shared creation. Presence is mandatory.

Trip: study trip in Ticino (based in the Lugano area) from Friday, February 27, to Monday evening, March 2, with an approximate cost of CHF 350-450 per participant.

Inputs: through the sharing of experiences and perspectives offered by the teaching team, guest lectures, and invited contributors, the studio will enrich and expand its collective understanding of the semester's themes. Attendance is mandatory.

Reviews: two intermediate formal reviews and one final review will take place, with the participation of external guests. Attendance is mandatory.

Assessment methods

The final evaluation results from a combination of formal and informal assessments. It reflects the entire design process and is based on key criteria that consider both the quality of the architectural work and the students level of engagement. The final grade is weighted as follows:

- 20% first stage;
- 20% second stage;
- 50% third stage;
- 10% overall attitude and commitment during the semester.

Resources

Virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI)

No

Bibliography

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Random House, 1961

Augustin Berque, *Être humains sur la terre. Principes d'éthique de l'écoumène*, Editions Gallimard, 1996

Plinio Martini, *Il fondo del sacco*, Edizioni Casagrande, 1970

Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, Rizzoli, 1979

A more extensive bibliography will be provided in the semester reader.

Ressources en bibliothèque

- [Find the other recommended books at the Library](#)
- [Le fond du sac / Plinio](#)
- [Il fondo del sacco / Plinio](#)

Moodle Link

- https://go.epfl.ch/AR-302_az