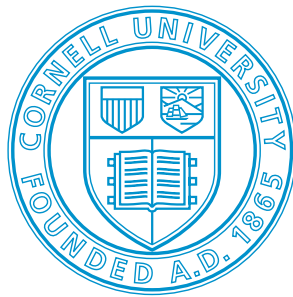


COLLEGE *of* ARCHITECTURE, ART & PLANNING  
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE

FALL 2014  
OPTION STUDIOS





# Water and the City

Instructors: Kunlé Adeyemi & Suzanne Lettieri

Expanded Practices Studio/Option Studio | Arch 7912/ Arch 4101/4102 & 5101

Fall 2014: Milstein plate | Studio hours: MWF 12.20 - 4.25pm

## Introduction

According to U.N. estimates, the population of Africa will double by 2050, growing at a rate that will quickly surpass the population of China and rival Asia as the world's most populous continent by 2100. With this explosive growth, African communities and cities are expanding rapidly and aggressively into uncharted territories. Africa's population surge coupled with the impacts of climate change - sea level rise, heavy rainfall, and flooding - frames one of the most significant and urgent contemporary global challenges. As a part of NLÉ's 'African Water Cities' research project and to further the NLÉ | Zoohaus' Uneven Growth: Tactical Urbanisms for Expanding Megacities exhibition with MoMA, the studio will expand on these premises as a basis of research, analysis and design.

'Water and the City' will explore the convergence of rapid urbanization and climate change in several African cities and communities. The collected regional intelligence will serve as a base, as we focus on a local context to investigate a specific city and its edge conditions, to understand its transformation and adaptation as a 'Water City'.

## Methodology

### 1. Preliminary Research Project – The Questions

We will begin with a broad quantitative analysis of the African continent that will structure a more selective analysis of coastal African settlements and cities. Students will sift through data across several disciplines, including studies of economic and population growth, geo-political opportunities, social tensions, and climate change, in order to uncover the facts that define urbanization in Africa. During this phase we will meet with a range of experts including city authorities, economists, environmentalists, planners and developers in an attempt to understand the key drivers, opportunities and challenges of formal and informal urban transformations in Africa.

The output will be a report – a concise publication – that illustrates the data, findings and rankings of the African coastal cities and waterfront settlements.

### 2. Midterm Field Trip - The Case of Abidjan

The studio will travel to Abidjan, the capital city of Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) in West Africa. An analysis of local practices, materials and techniques will clarify the underlying systems, and ultimately expand the network of the local collective intelligence. We will simultaneously consider the large scale, top down socio-economic and political forces that regulate these systems.

The output will be a comprehensive brief for the design and development of the project and will contain all relevant information required to develop the project remotely in teams.

### 3. Final Proposal – The Infrastructure

Upon return, the teams will develop their projects' relevant infrastructure to address specific issues of urbanization and climate change such as housing, energy, transportation, flooding, sanitation, etc. The project outputs will be a series of physical prototypes that draw from the local knowledge and regional research.

Proposed solutions will seek to adapt current models and account for social, cultural and political concerns while simultaneously addressing environmental challenges and economic opportunities to develop a collective vision for African water cities.

Selected works will be considered for inclusion in the MoMA Uneven Growth exhibition and other NLÉ related exhibitions.





## TOPONYMIES

visiting critics Ramon Bosch and Bet Capdeferro | teaching assistant Agustín Cepeda  
cornell university department of architecture | fall 2014 | arch 4101/4102&5101, arch 7912 | option studio

Since ancient times, people have named places based on physical characteristics (orography, hydrography,...) or on the events that take place there (daily activities, climatology,...) with the intention of giving them singularity and significance. **Architecture, as a toponymic discipline, takes root in the particular conditions and events of a place and transforms them to host old and new ways of life.**

The studio aims to become a frame of reference where geographic and human scales converge, providing a workspace that should allow us to overcome sterile dichotomies: artificial/natural, building/place, plan/map, static/dynamic, permanent/ephemeral, interior/exterior, individual/collective, past/future, architecture/landscape,...

In the city of Girona, there exists a paradigmatic space that exemplifies the dissolution of these boundaries: la Devesa. 2,600 hybrid plane trees, 150 years old, make up an arboreal tract of 40 hectares where the city used to unfurl its open air activities during centuries. The actual decadence of the place allows for an exploration to reinhabit it via reversible, flexible and transportable interventions inside and out of the vegetative building. Each student will draw a new map of this territory and will define the programmatic, spatial and constructive strategies necessary to conceive new and diverse toponyms for the city of the future.



# India: A Call to Action

## One Stop Crisis Center (OSCC) as a “Communal Incubator”

Iñiqui Carnicero, Visiting Associate Professor  
Anupama Kundoo, Architect, Strauch Visiting Critic (Cornell)

The role of the Architect has been frequently discussed lately in international debates as shifting from somebody obsessed in his/her personal aspirations to somebody who should provide a service to our society.

The studio “A Call to Action” will provide an opportunity for students to answer both questions by designing a multi-purpose space with the aim of provoking a social transformation in a local community in India. Materials, structure, construction details, and behavior in response to weather conditions will be particularly relevant. Documents generated during the semester could be used in the future to organize people to physically build these designs in India.

### PROGRAM

The activities that will take place in the building will respond to the direct needs of the community, particularly in redefining gender relations.

More specifically the OSCC will be divided in two parts: a main building with dedicated communal spaces developed for the sole purpose of redefining gender relations, and a mobile unit that will raise public awareness and also proactively lead interventions in communities where complaints have been received.

The program will include:

- Meeting rooms, classrooms/multipurpose rooms, and/or a gallery/performance space.
- A ‘tech learning-lab’ component to disseminate online learning content, and serve as creative platforms for the sharing of ideas and innovation.
- A first point of reference for urgent and comprehensive care.

Each center will be part of a 50 operative OSCC developed in strategically convenient locations within the vicinity of hospitals or other healthcare providers.

These programs may change in the future and adapt to other needs of the community. Flexibility, transformation, and reuse will be interesting topics to consider during the semester.

### SITE

Starting in the State of Kerala, these spaces will meet the demands of the community. Concepts should include both urban and rural models, with careful consideration to exteriors and landscape architecture. Nature should be an expressive part of these spaces where appropriate.

Above all, these engaging spaces need to be both cohesive anchors for the community and pioneering places of hope as we look to the future: supporting the next generations who will embark down a different path to shape a better future.

### OBJETIVES AND CALENDAR

We will begin by researching vernacular architecture, local materials, climatic considerations and participative experiences in construction in the State of Kerala, India.

A very detailed model should be finished within the first three weeks to test a structural concept that eventually will be physically built on the site.

During the field trip, the students will be asked to adapt their concepts and design to the materials, techniques and construction methods they find in the area and generate a prototype with the help of the community. This experience should inform the design for the rest of the semester. Anupama Kundoo will be participating actively during the semester and also bringing her experience with construction in India. The goal of the studio will be exploring the possibilities of designing a low cost architecture without giving up the opportunity of producing a contemporary solution. Low cost as a constraint to produce a high design.



# FLOATING CITIES: MEKONG

Lily Chi, Associate Professor  
Jeremy Foster, Assistant Professor

**Architecture and Indeterminacy.** How might common premises about program, space, and form be rethought when material, environmental, and socio-cultural conditions are dynamic, evolving, heterotopic, or undeterminable? Indeterminacy and questions of resilience in the built environment have arisen as topics of concern in the context of contemporary environmental and economic uncertainty: climate change, rising sea levels, and the effects of global economic systems on human practices and natural systems. A wider historical and geographic lens would reveal, however, that architecture's accommodation of indeterminacy is not new. In architectural traditions that work outside the expressive paradigm, buildings related to their internal and external conditions in varying ways. In place of unique or optimized articulations of site or program (which in turn require that "site" and "program" be fixed and normative), one might find loose-fit architectures, facilitative infrastructures, or operative frameworks: 'buildings' that act as adaptive and adaptable tools in relation to dynamic, multidimensional contexts. In this studio, we will study and draw from some of these architectures that index, and are completed by, the circumstances of their engagement.

**Floating Cities** refers, on the one hand, to the fluid and temporal "forms" of cities as inhabited, adapted, and re-oriented by diverse users, and conditioned by material, environmental, and institutional forces. What agency architecture might have as a physical construct in a field of mobilities is one of the questions we will explore in the studio. More literally, **Floating Cities** refers to the distinctive amphibious architectures and adaptive practices of delta cities--in this case, the Mekong area of Vietnam--which will be both studio resource and study site for unpacking these questions.

**The Context.** The area around the delta city of Can Tho has become a popular tourist destination for its floating markets, water-based cities and villages, and lush working landscapes. The Delta itself has a long history as a bustling crossroad of merchants and traders from all around SE Asia, India, and beyond since as early as the first century AD. Over 100 different ethnic groups can be found in the lower Delta today.

**Absorbing the ebbs and flows of water and peoples,** as well as the social and political upheavals of French colonialism, the US-Vietnam war and its aftermath, the Mekong has become one of the region's fastest growing areas. The globally oriented development is driven by state planning and infrastructural investment in oil extraction and commercial aquaculture in the Delta. It is also dramatically challenging the longstanding environmental, socio-cultural and economic practices that have until now maintained a balance between the human and the bio-physical. Other challenges to the Delta include rising sea level, which threatens most of the Delta's low-lying cities, and the disruption of the Mekong River's hydrological cycles by developments upstream in Cambodia and China.

**All these dynamics make the Delta an ideal environment in which to explore new forms of urbanism--new urban quarters, building typologies and programs--that work with existing cultural-natural ecologies where possible, and promote new, more resilient ones where not.**

**The Studio.** Drawing from contemporary resources and from the Mekong's own urban, landscape and water traditions, the **Floating Cities** studio will explore alternatives to current development proposals in considering fluidity, mobility, and indeterminacy as points of departure. While the final project will be an architectural proposal, design exploration will draw on and integrate multiple spatial scales: environmental systems, urban infrastructures (social/operational) and the bodily. The studio will actively use drawing to study, analyze, synthesize, speculate, translate, and innovate.

**Field study in Vietnam (9/19-28)** will build on pre-trip research on the logics and the specificity of urbanization in the Delta. Subsequently, students will work with a primary critic to develop urban strategies and design components, initially in teams and terminating in individual efforts. The studio will also draw on the expertise of Kelly Shannon and other renowned experts on the region for the field study and for subsequent studio reviews on campus.



# FREAKED OUT

## INSIDE FREAKED OUT MARKERS

Eric Ellingsen, Visiting Critic

NUCLEAR MARKERS are material scenarios which must clearly perform what they communicate. Markers must perform in perhaps the most complex and twisted spatial material ecological messages in the history of humankind: the storage of nuclear waste. Metaphors must be spatial. Felt. Repelling, literally. NUCLEAR MARKERS communicate perform one message, for 10,000 — 100,000 years: DANGER INSIDE: FREAKED OUT

Knowing our inclination with Pandora's boxes. Knowing our desire to know why. Know we are the dead-center of shunned things. Taking into consideration geological time: the last ice-age was 11,000 years ago. Taking into consideration which language to leave our untimely message in. Taking into consideration "proto-literate" period spans roughly the 3,800 years.

This studio asks each student to design a nuclear marker. How to design an architecture one cannot enter? A space so sacred, so powerful, so resonating that an entirely new ritual and responsibility of experience informs the design parameters? Can we have a more emotional architecture? A more empathetic architecture? An architecture which really stinks? Social labyrinths for our necessary solitudes? This studio is about Feeling spaces. A dream, a day mare, a Danteum.

STUDIO OBJECTIVES: You will be asked to take advantage of the tools you have, the tools you have been learning, the experiences and things you are most interested in experimenting with. You being the keyword in this. The things you bring will be combined with the tools artists use today. This does not necessarily mean things the artists uses, it means a hyper critical sense of why's. However, you will be exposed to a radiation of contemporary sound experiments, video, performance, dance, sculpture, poetry. We will watch and listen and experiment and perform our thoughts together.

You will be strongly encouraged to experiment and take risks in these mediums.

(1) You will have to design and fabricate a spatial environment which communicates your thoughts through the experience of the ideas. You will be asked to design spaces using language without talking, perhaps even to design spaces which can be felt without entering. Can you sing your space?

(2) You will have conduct intensive speculative research on very real nuclear waste sites, twisted sites of ecological and social concern to all species and relational systems today, freaking out spaces tomorrow.

(3) The final review will be an immersive spatial exhibition. Architects are space experts. Our eyes are our skin too. Our body is a brain. We will feel it out.

(4) Together, we will make a book that is a nuclear marker. We will aim to publish this book with a small press. In this way, one of our goals is that you consider your work not an exercise which experiments within the safety of the studio, but a real work in the world.

To build a book, to make an exhibition, to sharpen our critical blades, means that over the semester we will work with excellent poets and material scientists, philosophers of science, artists, curators, people with skills in words and how the earthworks and complex systems.

Marshall McLuhan says the medium is the message. Admirable try.

ALL OF IT IS MESSAGE



# THE POST-DEVELOPMENTAL CITY

Nahyun Hwang, Visiting Critic

David Eugin Moon, Visiting Critic



## Introduction

The production and maintenance of the “developmental city” often depends upon a set of spatial typologies of “progress.” Growth and expansion are not only supported, but shaped and symbolized through the common architecture and infrastructure of the developmental – state highways, housing blocks, manufacturing quarters, administrative and commercial edifices, and the systems of control and security. Often in the language of the “modern,” the “new,” and at times the “other,” the spaces of the developmental city and its leftovers largely constitute the vast geography of the contemporary city.

Modern Korea and Seoul’s exponential growth since the end of the Korean War engaged the same spatial apparatus of development aggressively, only to its inevitable perfection. Not only did the city structure itself with robust monuments to the ideals of production, exchange, and movement, it successfully established a system of perpetual growth through its housing supply mechanism, and construction projects. Seoul has been one immense site of continual “improvement” and accumulation, imploding from its dizzying density and vibrant productivity, producing 23 similarly dense satellite cities. Covering an area relative to the size of metropolitan Detroit but 14 times its population, Seoul seemed to continue in a trajectory of unstoppable growth, until recent confrontations with the realities of a city that is, in many regards, already “developed.” Having sustained its development through its redevelopment solely for past decades, Seoul is the ultimate post-developmental city.

The conditions of a “post-developmental” city and its future urbanism are the focus of the studio. As the current City of Seoul administration attempts to reduce “redevelopment” zones in the city, and redirects its attention to the possibilities in a different set of urban project typologies that “goes beyond the development-centric paradigm,” the studio aims to explore the potentials of the projects of post-development to reshape the city, beyond its apparent post-developmental desires. Seoul, one of the first “developed” cities in Asia, is a testing ground for redefining the future contemporary city, an opportunity to consider notions of the different publics and their needs, while carefully challenging accepted and ubiquitously applied familiar rules of amelioration through the (re)invention of typologies that reintroduces the civic to the urban.

## Sites

The studio will engage a set of selected sites in Seoul that represent proto- or archetypal post-developmental conditions and desires. Each site’s typicality as post-developmental sites are corroborated by their distinctive yet familiar histories, contexts, and roles in the city. These sites, which will undergo changes (in one form or another) in the coming years, include the following, among others. Together the projects instigate the redefinition of “development.” Investigating the socio-political, economic, and spatial specificities of the common renewal typologies through the projects, the studio aims to consider the possibility of new architecture that supports different growth.

**PostIndustries: Changsin-dong** – An historical sewing district adjoining traditional garment districts and new clothing markets in the city center, which “must retain its industry and identity yet requiring alternatives in how to progress.”

**The Inaccessibles: U.S. Army Garrison Yongsan** – The charged, immense yet inaccessible 620 acre site in the exact center of Seoul, soon to be returned to the city. Current headquarters for the U.S. military presence in South Korea, also a site of the Imperial Japanese Army headquarters from 1910 to 1945.

**Infrastructural Remnants: Seoul Station Overpass** – One of the first vehicular overpasses in the city center from the 70s adjacent to the historic Seoul Railway Station and Seoul Station Square. Currently considered for reprogramming.

## Studio Trip and Guest Speakers

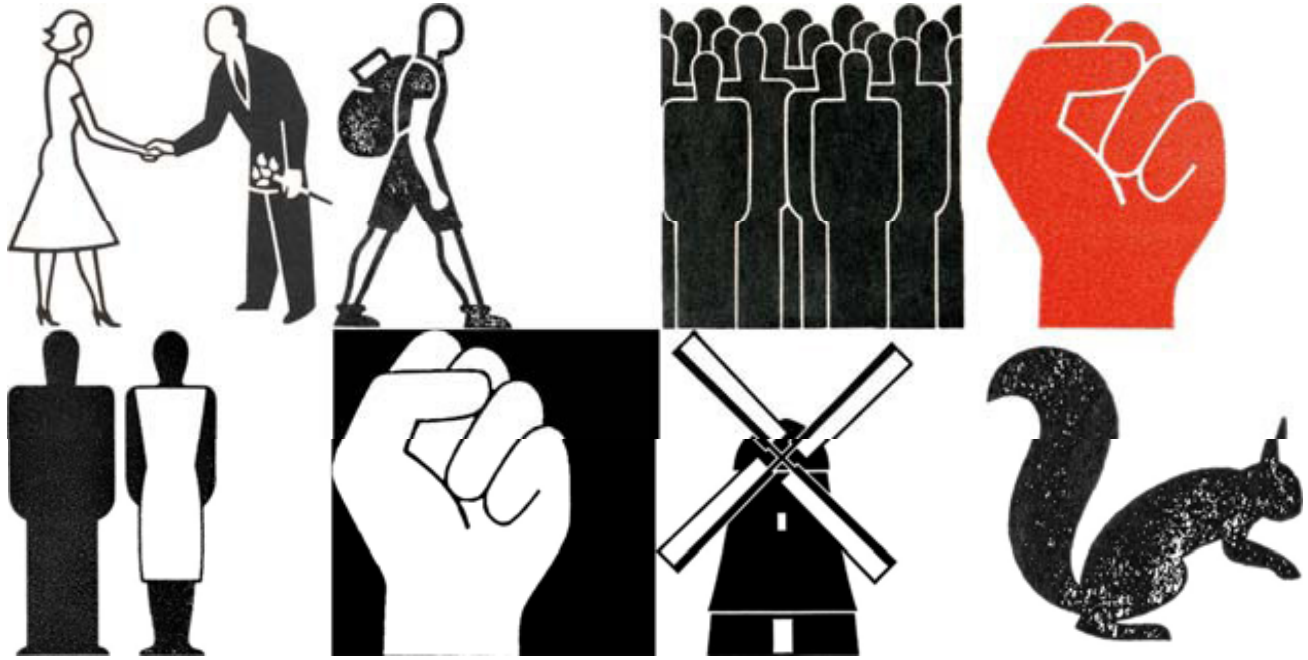
The studio will include one sponsored trip to New York City for a workshop with experts in related topics, and include sessions with notable guest speakers.



# DESIGN PLAN

Design + Desires / Design + Living / Design + The City

Aleksandr Mergold , Assistant Professor  
Droog Design (Amsterdam, Netherlands)



The program responds to the paradigm shift caused by the communication revolution and its impact on design, architecture and urbanism. The professional scope of the designer is broadening. The boundaries between the various disciplines in the creative industry are fading. Designers are engaged in creating and re-considering processes, scenarios and services. The designer now is a curator and facilitator, an anticipator of global developments, an interpreter of how we experience the world around us.

Digitization equally creates possibilities for the user. Technologies stimulate collaborative initiatives and services, enabling individuals to share and exchange. Smart operations, such as Airbnb and Greenwheels, give the user opportunities to collaborate, earn and thrive. These developments have an impact on how we live our lives and how we make our living. Yet the organization of [urban] living has more or less remained the same since the first settlements in Mesopotamia millennia ago, untouched still by the possibilities offered by new technology and new design. Cities are still largely abstract entities, mapped and subdivided into physical districts, neighborhoods, streets, and addresses. As such, they are starting to fail under the new pressures that exceed the design limit of the traditional urban organization (i.e. Detroit).

The aim of the studio is to re-think a conceptual model for an urban master plan. We seek to explore the possibility in which the city is not approached top-down, where city dwellers are an abstract “population” and “tax base” (the Robert Moses model), or as a nodal organism (the Lynch model), or a new urbanism total experience (the Celebration FL model), nor as a pure urban form (the Nolli model). Nor do we intend to be involved in the bottom-up through initiatives of residents, such as life-hacking (the Hipster model) in which case there often is no role for design and architecture. Instead, from the diverse set of needs, scales, aspirations and desires of city dwellers, resulting in a range of spheres, places, services, images and connections, a new radical Design Plan for a (small) city will emerge.



# *US and Them: Architectures of National and Global Identity*

Caroline O'Donnell, Richard Meier Assistant Professor

Michael Jefferson, Visiting Critic

"The embassy building program was, and remains, part of America's larger effort to define its world role. Like the Fulbright educational exchange program—designed to promote international understanding and widely praised as a goodwill gesture—new embassies have been hailed as evidence of American goodwill and commitment.... Embassies are symbolically charged buildings uniquely defined by domestic politics, foreign affairs, and a complex set of representational requirements."

-Jane C. Loeffler, *The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America's Embassies* (2010), 3.

Despite Rem Koolhaas' 1990s provocation to "fuck context," his announcement of *Fundamentals*, the theme for the 2014 Venice Architectural Biennial, laments the sacrifice of national identity to modernity that he himself propagated, and calls for an acknowledgement of the "process of the erasure of national characteristics in favor of the almost universal adoption of a single modern language in a single repertoire of typologies." The exhibitions, he proposed, would demonstrate the evolution towards the global, but at the same time celebrate, "the survival of unique national features and mentalities that continue to exist and flourish even as international collaboration and exchange intensify..."

The option studio *US and Them* will be one of the outposts of OfficeUSi - the US Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale. Using Office US's repository of 1000 works of American architecture abroad as a starting point (and also contributing to it), the studio will analyze the building typology most charged with the task of representing the nation: the embassy. The studio will focus on questions of expression of US identity in tension (whether love or anger ii) with the local. This will involve, on one hand, the synthesis of many versions of American-ness being exported, and on the other, an in-depth understanding of the multiple 'locals.' Beyond a superficial understanding of context, the studio will ask what are the invisible aspects of both the Americo-global and the local, from weather to culture, in order to operate on deeper structures than the purely visible or architectural.

Students will analyze a number of embassies and their sites through a particular set of criteria. These findings will be presented, discussed, and advanced in OfficeUS at the Venice Biennale during the studio field trip. Following these reviews and our own critique of the trajectory of embassy behavior, students will develop a rule-book for new and radical US embassy design. These rules will be used as a starter kit for the (re)design of select embassies which at once express USness and aggressively embed and transform themselves into their sites. A selection of this work will be featured in the Office US publication following the Biennale.

The studio will be underscored by ecological theory, in which species diverge throughout the globe, changing in size, color, material depending on location and climate (see Bergson and Allen's rule). Through this theory, non-typical analyses will be encouraged— i.e. beyond a formal or architecture-obsessed method of diagramming, the analysis will look to the outside for motivations for architectural moves.

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[i] [www.officeus.org](http://www.officeus.org)

[ii] One of 25 themes put forward by Office US, the studio's topic is ANGER-LOVE MANAGEMENT, which explores the spaces, typologies and protocols of the architectures of diplomacy.