URBAN_ISMS Designing the Metapolis

1995, when Rem Koolhaas published his article "*What Ever Happened to Urbanism*" he pointed at the "*paradox that urbanism, as a profession has disappeared at the moment when urbanization everywhere – after decades of constant acceleration – is on its way to establishing a definitive global 'triumph' of the urban condition*"[1]. He further stated that the city with its traditional hierarchical order disappeared and that this concept would be replaced by a multiplicity of cities that exist simultaneously within urban aggregations.

Koolhaas's speculations of a new emerging urbanism had been accurate but instead of the predicted disappearance of the discipline a multitude of urban approaches had been generated in which the traditional understanding of the a city dominated by urban form had been extended by theories and design strategies generating a wide range of urbanisms.
Charles Waldheim's Landscape Urbanism for example, addresses Koolhaas's idea of uncertainty, hybridization and infrastructure to suggest process above form; Stan Allen's Infrastructural Urbanism understands architecture as a site specific system enabling a dynamic response to its environment; Ecological Urbanism by Mohsen Mostafavi and Gareth Doherty considers the city as a place with multiple instruments and with an approach that is fluid in scale and its disciplinary focus. Tactical Urbanism on the other hand though rooted in the ideas of the Situationist City describes an urbanism that is nurtured through a hacker mentality allowing citizens to take back the city and to shape their environment through direct involvement, while Typological Urbanism, pursues and develops the strategies of typological reasoning in order to re-engage architecture with the city in a critical and speculative manner. In these varied contexts the architectural object and urbanism are no longer seen as opposing domains but as synthesizing devices in which the architectural typology operates to integrate and control the city and its environmental effects.[2]

Urbanism is expanding. It blurs with natural landscapes and creates hybrid places in which cities and geographies converge in a multiplicity of narratives, identities and values. Contemporary urbanization – as described by Nikos Katsikis in Geographical Urbanism – today shapes our planet's surface[3], which is a radical shift from former theories that claimed that natural geography shaped urban patterns.
Rather being limited only to the design of objects, our discipline is expanding into the field of strategies, methods and processes that are restructuring the city, the territories that it occupies, the networks that circulate through it, the fabric that is generated by it and the spaces we will occupy on a daily basis.[4] As such, the design of urbanism is not a question of scale but defined by its relationship to the urban and its capacity to transform and understand the systems, networks and places of the city.

This Thesis R+D studio seeks to engage students interested in the agencies of urbanism to develop new tools, methods, and design strategies that address the contemporary city. Designing Metapolis is based on the understanding that the Metapolis according to Gausa is a type of urban agglomeration made of multiplied, heterogeneous and discontinuous spaces and relationships[5]. Metapolis investigates the political, economical, cultural, ecological, infrastructural and social reality that lives beyond the production of the urban. It seeks opportunistic cartographies and uncovers a new set of theoretical frameworks and design interventions that shape the urban locally and globally. Thesis projects in this section might range from networked small-scale interventions in public spaces designed to harvest data for the smart city, to infill projects transforming urban fields, the design of architectural hybrid typologies, time-based master plans or regional design strategies. The studio will support the discussions around multiple scales of urbanism or architecture within

[1] Rem Koolhaas, *What Ever Happened to Urbanism*, in S, M, L, XL, OMA, Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, 1995, p. 122

[2] Sam Jacoby and Christopher CM Lee, AD *Typological Urbanism: Projective Cities*: Architectural Design, Wiley Publisher, 2011

[3] Nikos Katsikis, *On the Geographical Organization of World Urbanization*, in Geographical Urbanism, Monu 20, April 2014

[4] Manuel Gausa, *Architecture*, in The Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture: City, Technology and Society in the Information Age, M. Gausa, V. Guallart, W. Mueller, F. Soriano, F. Porras, J. Morales, Susanna Cros, Actor Publisher, Barcelona, 2003, p. 56

[5] Manuel Gausa, *Metapolis*, in The Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture: City, Technology and Society in the Information Age, M. Gausa, V. Guallart, W. Mueller, F. Soriano, F. Porras, J. Morales, Susanna Cros, Actor Publisher, Barcelona, 2003, p. 430

urban context and will invite students to test alternative narratives and new realities. These discussions will be supported through seminar like sessions dedicated to critical readings and GIS workshops in the second half of the semester.

The class intends to establish a set of critical investigations dedicated to the development of emerging urban strategies. Themes investigated in this Thesis Research + Design studio are not defined by a specific topic or scale, but will be provoked by the described paradigm shift defining the city as our ultimate habitat.