Sprawl, post-industrialisation, rapid urbanisation and 'natural' disasters all pose significant challenges to normative design practices, demanding a response that operates beyond the quick fix or the local solution. In this context Landscape Urbanism has emerged in North America and Europe as a new design discipline where ‘landscape’ is understood not as a scenographic art (beautifying, greening or naturalising the city), but rather as a model of connective, scalar and temporal operations for conceiving and engaging with the urban. With this model the urban is diagrammed as a landscape, a complex and processual ecology that can be connected to local, regional and global scales and understood in terms of its future orientation and performative potential (as opposed to the nostalgic and socially divisive strategies of the ‘new’ urbanist enclave).

Landscape Urbanism is, by definition, transdisciplinary. It draws on the legacy of landscape design to address the dynamics of contemporary urbanism but also integrates knowledge and techniques from environmental engineering, urban strategy and landscape ecology. It employs the science of complexity and emergence, the tools of digital design and the thought of political ecology. Through all these means, it projects new material interventions within an urbanism conceived as social, material and ecological – an urbanism continually modulated by a network of spatial and temporal forces.

The Landscape Urbanism MA programme is a 12-month studio-based course designed for students with prior academic and professional qualifications. A design studio forms the core of project development, supported by interrelated workshops and a series of lectures and seminars.

**Prototypical Urbanities 02: China**
China’s economic boom, combined with migration from rural areas to the cities, is fuelling a high-speed urbanism that is producing entirely new cities in the shortest imaginable time and completely changing the face of older towns. This directional urbanisation, propelled from the coastal zones into the countryside, has brought even the smallest villages face to face with the generic architecture of globalisation.

At the same time, the pace and scale of the development, particularly in the mega-cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Shenyang and Wuhan, has highlighted the interrelated problems of industrial pollution, rural depopulation and the loss of arable land. These problems have been made worse by China’s short-sighted strategy for urbanisation, which has failed to produce either a cohesive vision of the country as a whole or, at a local scale, a mechanism for negotiating between economic interests, cultural traditions, development pressures and natural ecologies. This increases the risk of a severe fragmentation of the urban and the loss of any local capacity to articulate a socio-ecologically sustainable future.

**Framework 08/09: Pearl River Delta**
Building on last year’s body of research, LU will again take China’s ambition to build 400 new cities by 2020 as the basis for its brief. According to this plan, 20 new cities are to be built each year to contain the huge numbers of people – around 12 million annually – who are leaving the countryside for urban areas. Far from resisting this development, we will opportunistically generate ‘proto-strategies’ for new large-scale agglomerations as a means of critically addressing the phenomenon of mass-produced urban sprawl.

Our testbed will be the Pearl River Delta, where students will focus on the emergence of...
four benchmark conditions identified by our previous research: the underlying dysfunction and creative potential of industrial ecologies in the rapidly urbanising rural hinterland; the rapid deindustrialisation and disintegration of second-cycle city cores; the emerging resistance of traditional and informally grown urban cores to top-down planning procedures; the terms by which a new sprawling state engages with existing agricultural land.

We will operate critically, seeking to produce alternative templates of urbanisation based on strategies that stem from embryonic processes seeking the integration of cultural tradition, regional ecological systems and economic globalisation.

**Design Studio**

1. **Indexical Models: Mediation between Typical Organisational Paradigms and Local Conditions Autumn Term**

The Design Studio begins with a series of intensive workshops that explore ways of applying the acquired techniques to the development of new organisational models, based on a sensitive reading and analysis of existing conditions as well as various city structures. The models will be derived from a parametrically controlled internal logic with a latent capacity to incorporate further external information.

2. **Sensitive Systems: Development of a Prototype, Spring Term**

A field trip to China at the start of the second term will provide an opportunity to engage at first hand with a live large-scale urban project and local planners and architects. Following the field trip, the organisational models acquire a sense of local ‘urgency’ that informs top-down strategic intentions but also allows for a fluid negotiation with bottom-up local conditions. Central to this phase will be the development of a prototype, a malleable model capable of continuous transformation. Responsiveness to variation and differentiation will be progressively tested in relation to assigned assessment criteria.

3. **Network Urbanism: Global Behaviour Summer Term**

During this term, work is directed towards developing the different logics of proliferation and thereby mastering degrees of self-differentiation, specificity and responsiveness. These properties will then contribute to the robustness of strategically integrated systems of transformation of the territory at various scales and times of implementation. By this point, the projects will have acquired a certain relevance based on a tangible argument and will be clearly positioned within the field, thus initiating a clear contribution to the (re)definition of Landscape Urbanism as a discipline. The maturity of the proposals should be reflected in the *Projects Review* publication and exhibition at the end of the term.

4. **Actualisation**

Over the summer, students will establish and communicate the expanding rationale by which their projects must operate. Mechanisms of validation will be sought in a direct feedback loop between the projects and their localities, which promotes a continuous reassessment of the strategies deployed. During this period the work will develop an underlying logic directly related to the existing political framework, so that it acquires the character of a time-based plan. The final Design Thesis – a summation of the year’s investigations – will be presented in a public review at the end of September.

**Seminars and Lectures**

**Landscaping Urbanism**

*Douglas Spencer, Autumn & Spring Terms*

This new course – the theoretical core of the programme – is designed to synergise LU’s workshops, projects and field trip. It introduces Landscape Urbanism’s transdisciplinary origins whilst defining its unique configuration and potential in the context of contemporary urban conditions.

The first term traces the origins of ecological and metabolic urbanism, critically explores the contributions of systems theory, and examines the thought of figures such as Patrick Geddes, Felix Guattari and David Harvey. Students will be introduced to the historical development of grid-based, cartographic and prototypical methods and will be required to critically assess these alongside a range of specific case studies.

The second term will address the programme’s engagement with the contemporary conditions found in China, focusing on the Pearl River Delta. This will involve an introduction to the infrastructural analyses of figures such as Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, theories of networked space and mobility from Manuel
Castells and Saskia Sassen, and studies of transitory settlement such as Li Zhang’s *Strangers in the City*.

**Ecology & Environment**  
*Ian Carradice & Ove Arup Associates*  
*Autumn Term*

This lecture series by experts from the Ove Arup Environmental Unit addresses environmental concerns, introducing a wide range of techniques aiming to ensure sustainable management and design. Water management, environmental architectural principles, energy provision, water and air pollution, the impact of transport networks and climate are some of the processes that will be studied. Opportunities will be provided for students to meet with specialist consultants to discuss problems that arise during their study of the site.

This year we will also benefit from the expertise of Ove Arup as direct consultants to the projects.

**Contemporary Landscapes**  
*Sandra Morris*,  
*Autumn and Spring Terms*

This series of lectures focuses on ways in which landform, hydrology and climate determine the development of urbanism. It looks at a series of projects in which the methods and techniques of landscape have been used in combination with those of engineering and biology to create more sustainable urban environments. The first term’s lectures will concentrate on landscape issues relevant to the chosen site: physical and cultural diversity; the politics and management of water and its recycling; the management and recycling of waste; the possibility of a sustainable city for growing populations. Projects undertaken in other parts of the world will serve as case studies, providing a broad platform for consideration. The second term will focus more specifically on topics chosen by students after visiting the site. As preparation for developing those topics in essay form, students will be expected to make presentations to the class.

**Landscape Urbanism Series 08/09**  
*Spring and Summer Terms*

A broad range of practitioners and academics from around the world will give a series of informal presentations addressing the most relevant and pressing issues for the discipline from a number of perspectives.

**Workshops**

**Diagramming Cities**  
*Alfredo Ramirez, Alejandra Bosch, Arturo Lyon*  
*Autumn Term*

This workshop initiates an in-depth discussion about the critical role of drawings and diagrams in city planning and design. Students will be introduced to the conceptualisation of urban conditions through diagramming. The underlying logics, singularities and complexities of urban networks will be revealed and various representational techniques explored in order to establish clear and specific readings of the urban supra-organisation. The workshop will start with research on a set of case studies proposed by the staff, followed by individual tutorials discussing the use of the diagram in each specific case. It will conclude with individual presentations by each student to an external jury.

**Indexing Territories**  
*Eduardo Rico, Alejandra Bosch, Arturo Lyon*  
*Autumn Term*

The workshop understands mapping and diagramming as both exploratory and propositional, having an active and crucial role in the design process. The aim is to develop students’ capacity for reading information from fields and
then decoding, synthesising and systematically processing it into indexical models. Introductory sessions will look at different techniques of mapping territories, focusing on networks, fields, dynamic behaviours and topographic conditions. Students will attend tutorials on different software packages (Maya, Rhino, Land-desktop, Space Syntax, etc) enabling them to process and diagram such information.

Scripting Prototypes
Alejandra Bosch, Arturo Lyon
Spring Term
The purpose of the workshop is to explore different scripting techniques as a means of creating flexible design tools that are able to accommodate change and a degree of indeterminacy within the design process. Paradigms of self-organised systems, distributed networks and emergent complexity will be introduced through rule-based design techniques, setting up counter-models to conventional urban planning. In this workshop students will be asked to generate variations of material components and to link them to research on infrastructural, environmental and other spatial performance. There will be intensive scripting tutorials and individual reviews leading to a public presentation of results.

Relational Urbanism
Eduardo Rico, Spring Term
This workshop will deal with the mediation of bottom-up readings and strategic decision-making concepts. The overall arrangement of the material components produced in the previous workshop will be adjusted and further articulated to respond locally to specific conditions and globally to relational strategies. This phase of the design studio will proceed with an introduction to the software (Excel scripting and para-cloud coding), followed by individual tutorials and a final public presentation.

DFC (Digitally Fabricated Cities)
Eva Castro, Eduardo Rico, Alfredo Ramirez
Spring Term
This workshop goes beyond the representational capacity of digital fabrication techniques, exploring their creative potential. As students acquire an instrumental deployment of these tools, they will be able to create a feedback loop between the digital and the physical that will overcome the conventional two-dimensional reading of the city.

Metropolis 08/09
Eva Castro, Eduardo Rico, Alfredo Ramirez + Fundación Metrópoli
Easter Break
An intensive workshop during the Easter break will provide an opportunity to apply techniques to a live project in a new political context. LU will develop the work along with a multidisciplinary team of local experts and consultants. The workshop will conclude with a final public presentation to the client body.

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LU Director
Eva Castro (ec@plasmastudio.com) studied architecture and urbanism at the Universidad Central de Venezuela and subsequently completed the Graduate Design programme with Jeff Kipnis at the AA. She is cofounder of Plasma Studio and the collective Groundlab.

LU Staff
Douglas Spencer has taught history and theory at a number of architectural schools and has written on the themes of urbanism, utopian architecture, film and critical theory. He is currently researching a critical analysis of architecture’s engagement with the ‘network society’.

Sandra Morris is a landscape historian. In addition to teaching in Landscape Urbanism she has been lecturing in the History and Theory Studies programme on landscape topics for many years.

Eduardo Rico studied civil engineering in Spain and graduated from the AA’s Landscape Urbanism programme. He has acted as consultant and performed research in the fields of infrastructure and landscape in Spain and the UK. Currently he is involved with the Arup engineering team in the development of infrastructural strategies for large-scale urban projects as well as being part of the collective Groundlab.

Alfredo Ramirez studied architecture at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City and Landscape Urbanism at the AA. He has worked in several architectural offices and institutions in both Mexico City and London and is involved in the London 2012 Olympic Park design as well as being part of the collective Groundlab.