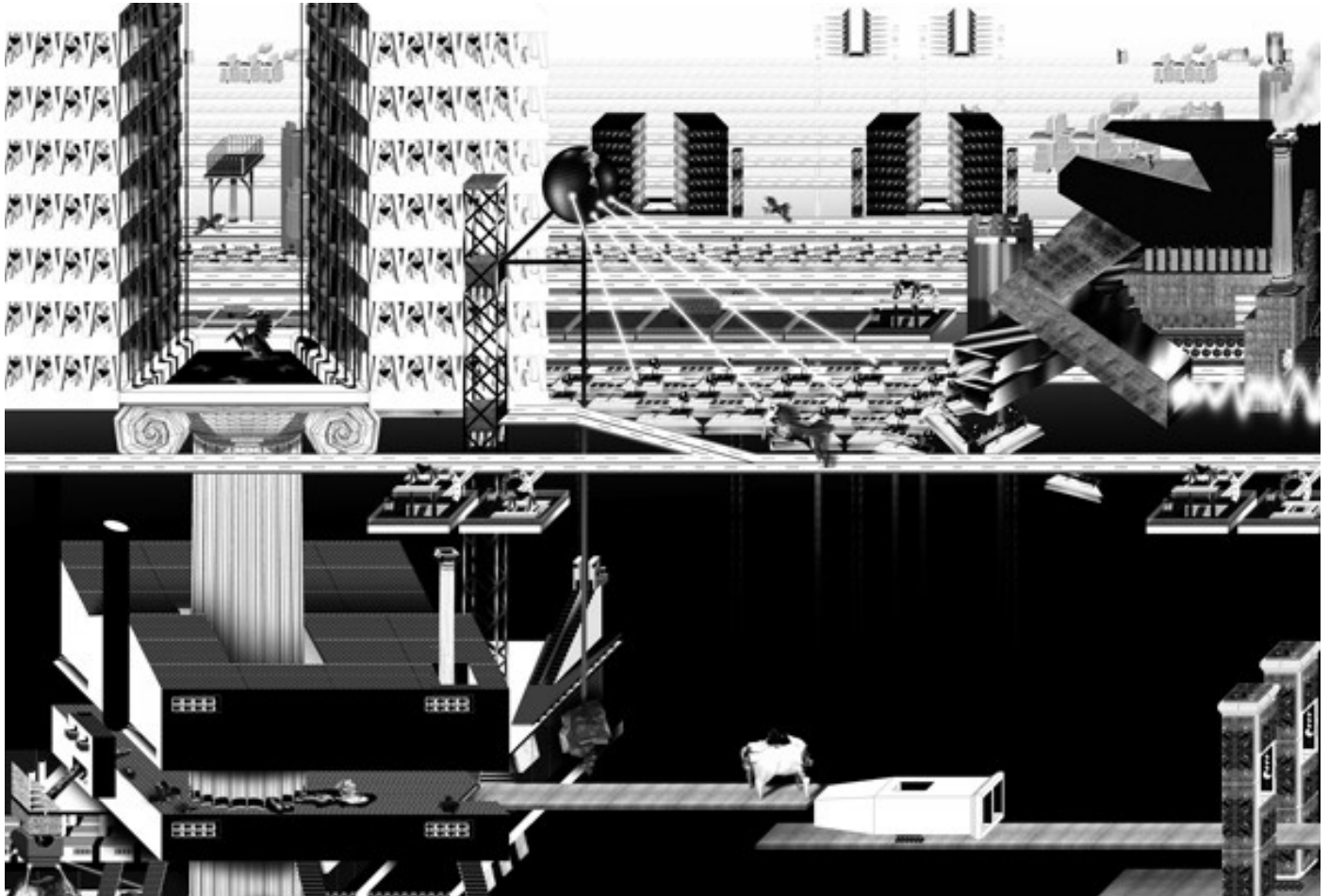


>>> TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

MArch Urban Design
Bartlett School of Architecture

BENV UD 2.0 / 3.0
Unit Tutors: Elena Pascolo | Darryl Chen



Horse and Pig, Speedism

We find strangeness in the city all around us. Often the strangest and most flawed cities are the most compelling. From crime-riddled New York of the '70s, class-segregated Rio de Janeiro, hyperdense Hong Kong, and the synthetically artificial Tokyo, all are conditions of **excess** - often excesses of things that were good to begin with, but have become corrupted. Yet something about these cities makes them perversely attractive. Is it here we glimpse the true essence of urbanity? While we want to act upon the city with good intentions, there is no avoiding its byproducts, ruins, and failures.

In this unit, we will be exploring what happens when our desire gets the better of

us, what happens when you have too much of a good thing. We will be exploring the **urban type as the seed of disaster**. Your urban fiction will be overlaid onto a future Los Angeles or London to turn it into a city of extreme dysfunction, a city on the road to ruin, a theatre of the grotesque, where an imbalance in the urban ecology leads to dystopia.

But don't worry if you're not the pessimistic type. After first taking a bitterly pessimistic view of the world, right at the brink of total meltdown, we will then attempt to recover a productive outcome and even a new society.

It would make for a killer plot twist.

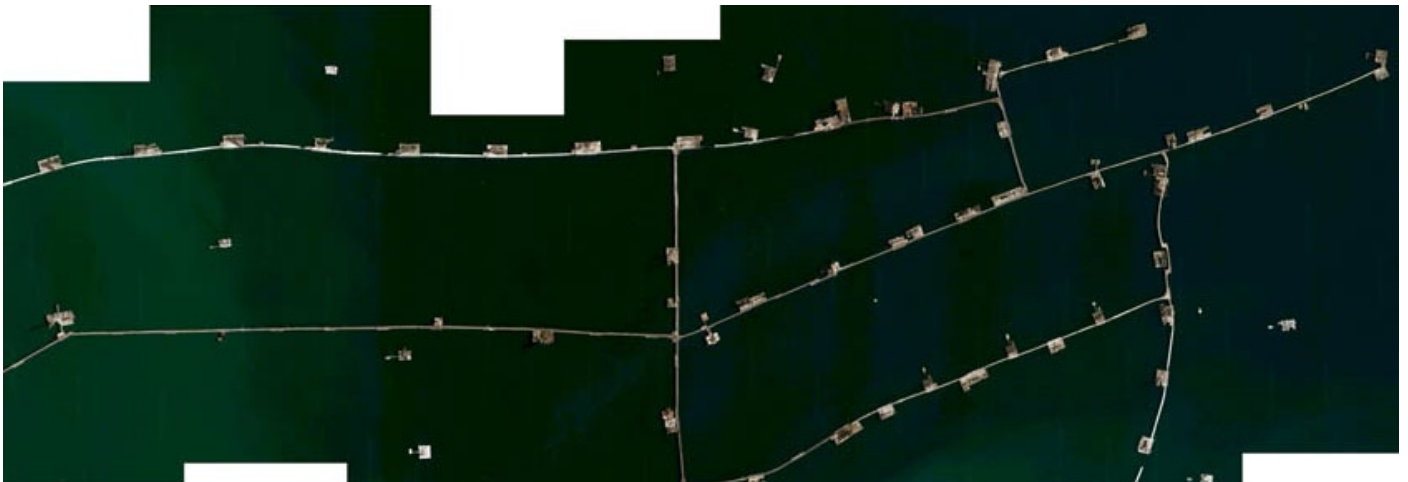
Term 1: Your Own Personal Dystopia

1 The Protagonist

You will identify strange moments within the form of the city that offer powerful consequences - good or bad - for an urban future. Your intuition will lead you to a place you shouldn't go, but is still strangely compelling. Often a DYS-topia is simply a U-topia gone wrong - and it only takes one fatal flaw to descend an idealistic vision into chaos. You will use work undertaken in the first three projects - LA/London comparison; Patchwork City and Recombinant Urbanism - as source material for a prolonged and focussed spatial analysis. From those projects you will identify **one fundamental**

piece of the city that you want to take forward in investigation, and distill as a prime example of a distinct **spatial type**.

A spatial type is an unstable element that forms a fundamental building block for the city. Neither good nor bad, it offers the potential for a spectrum of urban effects depending on how it is configured and recombined. In this first term, you will suspend your do-gooder impulse and unleash your dark side.



Oil Rocks [semi-derelict oil extraction infrastructure], Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan

2 Character Development

You will subject your specimen to a series of **diagnostic tests**. Laid on the operating table, you will seek to understand the specific peculiarities of your chosen type - to understand the forces that underpin its growth, what makes it so compelling, and the variables that will modify it. How far (wrong) could it go to defining a new world?

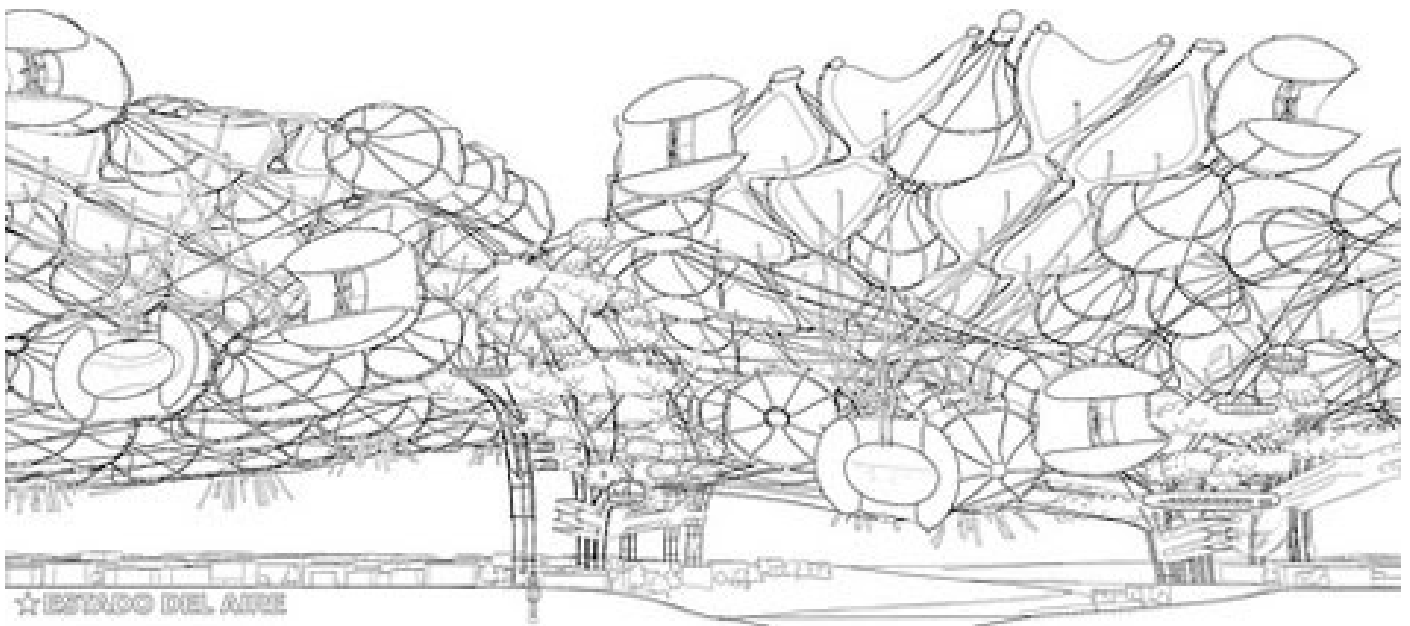
Political, economic and social factors are always evident in urban spatial configurations, and it is through various

means of **instrumental drawing** that we can uncover these hidden truths. Over the remaining six weeks of Term 1 you will produce three extraordinary drawings that will form the perfect groundwork for your Term 2 propositions. You will draw the **Plan**, the **Fragment** and the **Panorama**. Detailed briefs and workshops for each of these will be issued separately in the following weeks. These exercises will first cause you to look at a part of the city in detail, before zooming out to explore its consequences at an urban scale.

3 The Scenario

Your drawings will have led you to an intimate understanding of your spatial type, but also to a series of questions about its limits, its variabilities and its incongruencies. Not only have you analysed its functionality, but you have let its dysfunctions run wild and explored its potential for creating a glorious new **dystopia**. Your endgame will be a scenario where its dysfunctions have reached a breaking point. An imbalance of cosmic proportions.

Your folio will primarily comprise these three exquisite drawings that together describe your own personal dystopia within social, political and economic contexts. Think about presenting these as a captioned storyboard to sell to a movie studio boss. This is your scene setter. An urban fiction of a dystopian future. Is this the end? No, there's a sequel!



Richie Gelles, Nafta Land

Term 2: Urban Friction

Your investigations will have laid the setting for an encounter with a mutated future. Your detailed design project will be part of this continuum as you imagine a response to the dysfunctional world you created in Term 1. Your dystopia is a door through which you glimpse a **strange new urbanism**. One where the characters of the past move and dance in intriguing formations. Where the rubble of your spatial type has been reconfigured to gain its functionality, but now in ways you could never have expected at the outset of your journey.

Your diagrams and drawings from Term 1 provide a springboard into investigating

this new world where friction - the rubbing together of different parts - is welcomed and nourished as a necessary condition of vitality.

We will now ground your work in a detailed urban design proposition (sited in LA or London) that strategically addresses the concerns of your first term's dystopia. It will leverage the diagrammatic analysis of your spatial type to give a springboard to your critical imagination.

And the city lives happily ever after.