Crisis: Journal of Architectural Education, 69:1

“Is it even possible to offer a description of our contemporary moment that is not fundamentally defined by the experience of crisis? Financial crisis, environmental crisis, urban crisis—these are now inescapable markers that direct thoughts and speculations about late modernity, its past and its future. Indeed the present confluence of crises, both acute and chronic, is felt to be so encompassing as to perhaps signal an epochal shift, with the epoch whose demise seems to be presaged that of modernity itself.

…For if crisis is in fact the consummate experience of modernity, then design, as an anticipatory discipline, is surely implicated. At a moment when the experience of crisis is felt to be fully enclosing, when to be modern is to be not just ‘in crisis’ but inside crisis, what are the salient characteristics of design practices? What are the obligations and opportunities, the possibilities and impossibilities that confront the architect, the landscape architect, the urban designer? What, finally, is the value of aesthetic modes of experience in historical situations that are, like the present, enclosed by crisis?”

Theme Proposal for JAE 69:1

Life and Beauty on Earth: “The purpose of all architecture, the purpose of its spatial-geometric organization, is to provide opportunities for life-giving situations. The central issue of architecture, and its central purpose, is to create those
configurations and social situations, which provide encouragement and support for life-giving comfort and profound satisfaction – sometimes excitement – so that one experiences life as worth living. When this purpose is forgotten or abandoned, then there is indeed no architecture to speak of.”

Battle, p. 2.

1. Introduction of Project Topic: Life and Beauty on Earth
The idea for this advanced architecture studio or thesis design studio is to understand and analyze major large-scale world-wide problems on earth and connect them to particular problems and locations in urban structure and buildings. The combined perspective of these two features will form the basis of your thesis research and your thesis design studio project. The main purpose of the studio is to contribute and help to preserve life and beauty on earth in a way that also our children and children’s children will be able to continue to enjoy life and beauty for a long time in to the future.

World-wide problems on Earth and Urban Building Projects
When we look at a number of large scale problems in the world that need to be solved, we also should ask the question how we can contribute to solve these large problems with urban design and urban architecture projects. Here are some large problems and potential projects as examples:

- Population Growth - Incremental Housing for 3000 People in India (Sri Balaji)
- Urbanization - Densification of Old City in Budapest (Arpad Takacs)
- Climate Change - Floating Buildings for Rising Sea Levels (Emily Steen)
- Economic Collapse - Re-Invest, Re-Use and Re-Store in Athens (Alina Prassas)
- Poverty/Hunger - Urban Farming for Kumasi, Ghana, Africa, (Ericka Brendel)
- Terrorism and War - Berlin Reichstag (Norman Foster) Ground Zero (Liebeskind)
- Depleting Resources - Sustainable Buildings and Neighborhoods, Guasare (CES)
- Water and Oil - Water Preservation Building, Honduras (Emily Russel)
- Species Extinction - Turtle Preservation Buildings, Nicaragua (Andrea Mohr)

Selection of Projects
For the selection of your own project, you should be able to connect your particular project to a larger world wide problem, i.e. your project is rebuilding a town that was devastated by a Tornado, your large problem is Natural Disaster and Tornados. Or you can also start with a large-scale problem you are interested in and then find a project within that topic, i.e. your large-scale problem is how to save energy, your project maybe the design of a walkable urban neighborhood and a zero net building within the neighborhood.

2. Urban Architecture Portland
The Urban Architecture Program in Portland focuses on urban architecture, urban design, and urban sustainability in Portland and other cities in the US and abroad. This is a thesis studio with the general topical focus, and the overall project selected by the instructor. The design studio is preceded by a mandatory fall term thesis preparation research seminar 407/507 with the studios in the winter quarter 2015 and spring quarter 2015. Also a few preparatory exercises in the summer of 2014 are required. The emphasis of the studio is to design an urban project that contributes to the solution of a larger problem in the world, and to develop a comprehensive urban architectural project within this context, backed by rigorous research efforts, theoretical explorations, and creative work. Students will select a problem and project location, study it, and redesign all or part of it. There are three components to this design thesis. The first part is a research seminar on your thesis topic and project. The second part is an urban design effort of your project that can be done either in groups collectively or individually. The third component deals with the design of an individual building project within
the developed urban design context. The building needs to be designed fully and comprehensively by the individual student.

3. (Re)Generative Design: Seminar Arch 407/507 (Fall 2014 required)
The fall seminar will focus on the theoretical and conceptual issues of the studio. The overall design theme is to explore (re)generative processes and their potential application in planning, design and building processes in cities, urban districts and buildings. All thesis students will participate in the seminar by investigating particular aspects of generative and regenerative urban design and responsive urban architecture in different experiments, tests, and simulations of design processes following particular principles, set rules, criteria and parameters. Each student will study one particular case and present it in the seminar. A ‘Thesis Statement’ and a ‘Program Document’ are produced as part of a ‘Research Report.’

Generative or Regenerative Design is an applied form of generative science that tries to understand and conceptualize the world and its complex structure as a generative or regenerative process. Generative Design attempts to formulate limited parameters, principles, and rules that interact with each other to create richness of life and behavior, and endless variation of form, shape and place. Generative design explores the design process also as an (re)emergent process at several levels, including but not limited to physical, artistic, and social cultural factors. Communal or community generative processes are of specific interest here. These kinds of processes might be more and more important in solving our world processes in the future.

Illustration: Ground Zero New York – 9/11 Memorial and Museum; Tribute Center
4. SCHEDULE: Summer 2014 Over the summer students will start to investigate large scale problems and potential projects that go together with the larger problem. In this context students will consider and select their thesis design project by specific topic, type and site. For example a student might select the larger problem of earthquakes and natural disasters, and as part of this larger problem he/she might select one of the devastated urban areas in San Francisco/Oakland destroyed in 1989 for a specific project. Students can study ‘Regenerative Design after War, Terrorism, Natural Disaster, and Human Failure’ in relation to their own possible project. By the beginning of fall each student will have a 3-5 pages description of an urban architecture project within the studio topic (due at the end of summer, beginning of fall).

Fall 2014: Arch 407/507: Advanced Architecture Design Seminar - Thesis Preparation. During this seminar students will address relevant urban architecture design aspects of core thesis topics and how these relate to one’s own particular topic and building project.

- Explore the topic of ‘Large World-Wide Problems’ and how they might relate to your urban architecture building project
- Explore the topic of ‘Generative and Regenerative Process and Design’
- Find a city and site and possibly a group of people (client, agency) as a resource group that you want to work with. (NGO's and other organizations)
- Develop a program (project language) for your individual project based on The Programming Class Arch 4/508 and the thesis seminar.
- Deliver Project Book I (thesis statement) at the end of the fall quarter that includes your research and initial design ideas and sketches.

Books and articles to read over the summer: (to report on in the fall seminar)

- Expanding Architecture: Design as Activism
- Beyond Shelter: Architecture and Human Dignity
- Design Like you Give a Damn
- Studio at Large
- Regenerative Design
- Battle for the Life and Beauty of the Earth
- When Technology Fails
- The Ten Biggest Problems in the World (website)

Winter 2015: Arch 485/585: Advanced Architecture Studio Projects
In the winter quarter students will start to develop their individual urban building designs and develop their urban design component with particular project challenges of site, city and group of people (users and client). Demonstrate how your project will (re)generate the city, district or neighborhood and make the place whole again. By the end of winter quarter the urban and architecture project design need to be complete in essence and substance. Students will spend half of the quarter on exciting new generative urban design concepts, methods and projects. During the second half of the quarter students will focus on their individual design project, and develop rigorous design studies that include supporting building systems for this project such construction systems, tectonic structures and models.

Spring 2015: Arch 486/586: Advanced Architecture Studio Projects
In the spring quarter, students will fully develop their design to completion, including detailed sets of drawings, models, and presentation boards. Students will integrate urban design and the architecture project in a coherent fashion demonstrating aspects of the generative design process. Students will continue to work on their architectural individual building projects by focusing on specialized aspects such as urban landscape
and building system aspects. Most importantly, students will focus in the last month of their work on comprehensive project presentation including presentation panels, models and a project booklet as monograph.

Hans Joachim (Hajo) Neis, Ph.D.  Director of Portland Architecture Programs and Associate Professor. He is also the Director of Portland Urban Architecture Research Lab PUARL. Professor Neis teaches urban architecture and urban theory with emphasis on city building and the art of building. He has previously taught at the University of California, Frankfurt University, the Prince of Wales Urban UDTF, the Technical University of Dresden, the University of Duisburg-Essen, and Meiji University in Tokyo. His main interest in research and design include, the question of quality and value in architecture and urban structure and the question of process and sequence that create quality in buildings and the urban fabric. He is also one of the founding directors of the ‘Collaborative for Inclusive Urbanism CIU. As a practicing and licensed architect and planner for over 30 years, he has designed more than 200 buildings and built 50 buildings. He works together with CES and also heads his own architecture office Hajo Neis Atelier (HNA) in Berkeley, and Germany with projects in the US, Japan, and Germany. Dr. Neis has published in English, German, Japanese and Greek Journals, and he is also a co-author of several books: ’A New Theory of Urban Design’, Oxford University Press, NY 1987, Schule des Sehens, Fachhochschulverlag, Frankfurt, 2000, and ‘Battle for the Life and Beauty of the Earth. Oxford University Press, NY, 2012. Related to Studio Topic: Neis also taught the Fukushima Summer Workshop 2013 in Japan with Meiji University.

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Associate Professor Dr. Hajo Neis, May 2014

Oxford University Press, New York, 2012