Any undertaking as substantial as the construction and subsequent operation of a building naturally consumes considerable natural resources; the question is, ‘how can we, in our privileged position as architects, create buildings which place decidedly less strain on our environment, whilst improving the quality of the city?’

Studio Description
In terms of the built environment, ‘sustainability’ is really about acknowledging, rather than denying or restricting the diversity of patterns of use and the role of the individual in contemporary society. However, this is not only a design and construction issue, it challenges certain preconceptions about the city and questions how people perceive their built environment.

Designing an energy efficient building is often a challenge in itself. Numerous hurdles need to be cleared; many of them having apparently little to do with ‘architecture’. No matter at which scale, it is quickly apparent that it is daily behavioural patterns of the users of a building which have the greatest influence upon its ecological value. It is therefore imperative to appreciate the subtle differences in the human condition and the role that ‘lifestyle’ can play. Individual ecologically sensitive buildings and environmentally responsible occupiers place less strain on the environment. Unfortunately this is highly localized and could be perceived as being of negligible benefit unless the subservient infrastructure evolves in a manner which actively promotes a manner of living which make the best possible use of resources, whilst also contributing towards a greater standard of living for the community as a whole.

This studio will, using urban agriculture as a vehicle, seek to identify and subsequently promote mutually beneficial relationships between the city and the individual. Environmental, social and economic goals will be pursued as equally important concerns.

Methodology
The studio will be split into two interrelated periods; 1. Research, 2. Design Proposal.

1. The initial three weeks provides an investigative period combining; site identification / analysis and brief development with the development of ‘playful theoretical models’ which caricature how certain daily processes which define urban life may evolve.

Drawing upon the writings of Bill McKibben and the fantastical illustrations of Heath Robinson this period will serve to provoke a discussion between the respective studio members on how such processes are currently related to one another; their present-day relevance to the city, the latent potential they often possess and how they could be used to influence the future form of the city. The studio will adopt a deliberate ‘hands-on’ style with a combination of physical modeling and cartoons providing the prime method of presentation.

2. With the above in mind the studio will then ask how the existing urban fabric of a chosen city - rather than staring with Carte Blanche - can be adjusted to actively support a form of urban agriculture which offers opportunities for all members of the community to be engaged. This work will be pursued through the form of an architectural design proposal for a singular piece, or ‘hub’, within this new urban infrastructure.

Works will be developed in both model and drawn form, the design process / the ‘making’ of architecture will be documented throughout, in the form a diary. It is intended that there will be regular studio ‘pin-ups’ for informal review with other faculty members and guest critics in attendance.