Towards Regenerative Urbanism

"Fire Land" Research Studio 2020-21 powered by xLAB @ Department of Architecture and Urban Design, UCLA

MSAUD 401 Studio (IDEAS Urban Strategies)
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Schedule / Location: Mondays and Wednesday (7-9a) and Fridays (TBD) @ZOOM
Office Hours (by appointment): (@ZOOM)

0. What is Regenerative Urbanism?

"The planning of new cities, as well as the retrofit of existing cities, needs to undergo a profound paradigm shift. Mere 'sustainable development' is not enough. To be compatible with natural systems, cities need to move away from linear systems of resource use and learn to operate as closed-loop, circular systems. To ensure their long-term future, they need to develop an environmentally enhancing, restorative relationship between themselves and the natural systems on which they still depend."

Regenerative Urbanism* is an aspirational term that encourages the reframing of conventional urban design and planning techniques through contemporary models more dynamic, more elastic, and more faceted than conventional static plan-based ones. A catalyst for a holistic, evolutionary approach to metropolitan development - in this instance one focused on risk management and resilience in the face of natural disasters like fire - it underlines an approach that synchronizes and synthesizes information flows through simulation and forecasting of multiplex forces within an ever-developing intelligence network.

Always learning, the targets and outcomes of Regenerative Urbanism resonate with the research concerns of developmental neuroscience. Analogous to the nervous systems of complex organisms and their pathologies, regenerative urban morphologies and behaviors are conceived with anticipatory views toward adaptability, flexibility, and mutation. Physiologically, the organizational components and systemic, structural interrelationships of Regenerative Urbanism aspire to operate with a similar attitude to martial arts, particularly those that mobilize soft and malleable techniques of absorption and redistribution as a response, or even as a preemptive avoidance, of the hard impact of external forces.
Soon to be tested at the fiery interfaces between nature and artifice, between ungovernable wilderness and governable constructs, the combinatory design and planning techniques of a Regenerative Urbanism will flicker between software and hardware. As information in formations, our applied research on Regenerative Urbanism will reinvigorate visionary ideas of and influences on urban design from cybernetics to Metabolism.

* See the global ArcDR3 Grand Syllabus for more on Evolutionary Regenerative Systems (ERS) definition and the lenses of ecology, science and technology.

1. Establishment of International Studio Platform to pursue Regenerative Urbanism: ArcDR3 Initiative (Architecture and Urban Design for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience)
Website: https://xlab.aud.ucla.edu/irides-tohoku-arcdr3/

ArcDR3 (Architecture and Urban Design for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience) Initiative is a 3-year global interdisciplinary architecture education project organized by xLAB at UCLA, IRIDes at Tohoku University in Sendai and Miraikan National Museum for Emerging Science and Innovation in

Tokyo. It proposes the study and design for resilience and risk reduction in our contemporary environment. ArcDR3 Initiative is launched as a part of the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU) Multi-hazard program and involves participation from 11 APRU Universities: UC Berkeley (USA), University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong), University of Melbourne (Australia), National Cheng Kung University (Taiwan), National University of Singapore (Singapore), Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (Chile), University of Tokyo (Japan), Tohoku University (Japan), Tsinghua University (China), University of Washington (USA) and UCLA (USA).

The purpose of the Initiative is to create a more effective integration of theory (research) and practice (design) by creating an international platform for producing and exchanging the knowledge that reduces the risk of recurring disasters and enhances resilience. With the key objective of addressing the theme of "Regenerative Urbanism" and its implications for architecture and urban design, 11 participating Universities have developed their context-specific design studios for the 2020-2021 academic year. With the urgency of establishing new strategies for designing buildings, cities and environments, ArcDR3 Initiative proposes an International Studio Platform, where research findings will be shared among all the participants. The 3-year long initiative includes a series of symposiums and exhibitions where the results of the research will be shared, as well as concluding publication, scheduled to be released at the end of the program.

02. "Fire" as Local Context

"Our study will be situated in Los Angeles County, an area prone to wildfires naturally, but also experiencing dramatic increases in catastrophic wildfires likely due to a combination of climate change, increasing development at the urban-wildland interface, and a lack of preventive measures and public education."

Prof. Dr. Ali Mosleh, Excerpt from the Research Proposal on
Risk-Informed Integrated Approach to Assessment and Community Engagement

The Los Angeles Metropolitan Region is naturally predisposed for wildfire activity with its abundance of dry fuels in chaparral and woodland ecosystems, hot and dry Mediterranean climate, and rugged topography in and around the region's multiple mountain ranges. The Santa Ana Winds also contribute to the particularly explosive nature of fires in Los Angeles. These basic components of wildfire ecology are exacerbated by climate change, which has contributed to drought conditions and above-average temperatures in the entire state. The history of wildfires in Los Angeles has been dangerous since the beginning, starting with the Griffith Park Brush Fire in 1933 that was the deadliest in the state until the 2018 Camp Fire in Paradise. Since then there have been an estimated 60 large wildfire events in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Region. Their frequency has increased since the turn of this century, where three or more major wildfires occur every year. Wildfires cause damage to residences (typically

single-family homes), commercial buildings, and infrastructure such as highways and power systems. Human activity causes the majority of wildfires. Recent significant wildfires in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Region, including the Woolsey, Saddle Ridge, and Getty Fires, were started by power lines or other electrical infrastructure. Wildfires have societal consequences, including loss of life and the disruption of social processes. They also expose and exacerbate existing social and economic inequities, such as the vulnerabilities of poorer and rural neighborhoods lacking infrastructure, and the threats to domestic and essential labor working in evacuation zones.

In pursuit of Regenerative Urbanism as part of the ArcDR3 initiative, UCLA A.UD will lead simultaneous synergistic design research studios, focused on the twin topic of fire-risk-reduction and fire-resilience, at Perloff Hall and the IDEAS campus. These synergies will also form and be informed by interdisciplinary collaborations on campus with other UCLA departments including Engineering and Planning as well as with 11universities participating in the ArcDR3 initiative. With a focus on the fire-risk-reduction and fire-resilience, both at Wildlife Urban Interfaces (WUIs) and within interstitial multi-hazard zones within the Metropolitan Los Angeles region, design research studios will contribute a vital array of design visions and knowledge to the ArcDR3 initiative and help to establish the conceptual framework of Regenerative Urbanism.

In adopting and modifying the global ArcDR3 Grand Syllabus to the Los Angeles regional context, and engaging with relevant authorities and experts both within the UCLA community and beyond, the studios will operate as a combined think tank whose culminating projects will be shared and discussed at international conferences, displayed in international exhibitions, and disseminated through globally accessible publications.

Although the recent destructive fires burning millions of acres of California forest have captured the headlines, the greater more sober reality is that fires will have a lasting effect on California urban life. This growing fire problem in what is called the urban-wildland interface will plague state and municipal leaders for the foreseeable future (Agee, 2006, 12).

Fire is a complex physical phenomenon that affects a larger ecosystem. The nature of a fire is a function of the local topographical conditions, the air temperature and humidity, wind speed and direction, level of precipitation, soil and vegetation types. All of these play a role in its spread rate and area, compromising the greater ecosystem, including the area's water quality and quantity, soil stability and erosion, and plant and animal mortality (Sugihara and Barbour, 2006).

Firefighting is a technical issue, but also a social, economic and political one. The institutional realities of reducing the occurrence and spread of fire include the fact that: much of the affected land is owned by a combination of federal, state, and county governments who must coordinate their fire fighting and management resources. There are jurisdictional differences in zoning policies that determine what and where buildings are constructed. The insurability of property will have a great impact in the years to come as fires are more frequent and intense along WUIs. The number of agents involved in the controversy is so great that the big picture of the "ecosystem" needs to be updated. Just as architecture is a technical pursuit that shapes social, economic, and political life, we will look at fire in both its technical dimension and its impact on civic life. Witnessing before us the consequences of the climate crisis on the lands we inhabit, we will explore the effects of fire on the multi-agent ecosystem of Greater Los Angeles, including natural resources, geography, human social networks, laws and codes, and non-human inhabitants.

3. Course Objectives

1. To contribute the knowledge above to a collaborative global network of designers focused on contemporary approaches to Regenerative Urbanism.

2. To produce informed inter- and multidisciplinary scholarship and related design proposals that expand creative approaches to systems and infrastructures for fire resilience in several Wildlife Urban Interfaces in the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

3. To lead the network above toward establishing new formats and protocols for international graduate-level educational models in resilience-focused architecture and urban design.

4. Studio Structure

In order to strengthen collaboration with authorities, experts and colleagues and to create an enhanced studio environment, the ArcDR3 Regenerative Urbanism Studio comprises three unique structural components.

Parallel Design Research Studio

The parallel design research studios will coordinate efforts to develop diverse proposals based on shared findings. Because architecture yields insights through both research and design, the studios are organized to take the best advantage of both modalities of exploration. The parallel structure is intended to share AUD's cross campus intelligence through a feedback loop of collaboration and dialogue. It will provide students with access to presentations by fire, city

planning, and urban design experts in local regeneration efforts, architects and researchers working on regeneration across the 11 universities, as well as to the ongoing development, peer comments, and faculty directions of the studio projects.

The Perloff Hall based graduate-level studio, led by Hitoshi Abe, will focus on long-term research before formulating design proposals, allocating two academic terms to assess the cultural challenges, layers of governance, economic impacts and opportunities, required expertise and specialization, and spatial relationships of exposure, infrastructure, and settlement. After summing up the work from the first two quarters, the studio will dedicate the final term to design responses. The IDEAS campus-based postgraduate studio, led by Jeffrey Inaba, will dedicate three terms to design-based investigations, starting in the fall with an ecological diagram that is the basis of a "vision" plan for Greater LA, then in the winter a master plan of a selected area, and finally in the spring zooming in to develop a building design. The collective work of the design research studios will be coordinated and developed through a series of regularly scheduled joint meetings. Studio outputs will be shared to enable cooperative learning and accelerate discoveries and insights.

Interdisciplinary Research and Collaboration

In order to address the question of fire-risk-reduction and fire-resilience in Los Angeles across a range of perspectives, the joint initiative draws from a diverse network of educational partners and researchers. Furthermore, to strengthen the research and to cover various angles of inquiry, the team of experts from UCLA's faculty will be joined by colleagues outside of the campus. With its twin focus on fire-risk-reduction and fire-resilience, the ArcDR3 Research Group at UCLA has invited Distinguished Professor and Evelyn Knight Chair in Engineering, Director of the B. John Garrick Institute for the Risk Sciences at UCLA, Dr. Ali Mosleh to be the advisor to the design research studios. Joining Dr. Mosleh is Dr. Saeed Nozhati, a postdoctoral scholar at the Institute. Expert advice from members of the B. John Garrick Institute for Risk Sciences will play a critical role in fire hazard assessment and development of designed network strategies to prevent, mitigate, prepare for and recover from fire-based disasters. Also joining the team in an expert advisory capacity is a faculty from the UCLA Department of Urban Planning, Kian Goh, Assistant Professor of Urban Planning, who will provide insights through which to address fire threats at a strategic metropolitan level. Additionally, the participation of Adjunct Assistant Professor Chandler McWilliams of UCLA Design Media Arts will provide expert direction in the visualization of research through the lens of advanced technology and cutting edge story framing and storytelling.

ArcDR3 Global Studio

The Regenerative Urbanism Studio aims to embrace the changes in learning and teaching processes, redefined by the recent global crisis, and take full advantage of the online format for its studio environments and the network of ArcDR3 initiative that will equip the next generation of practitioners with new forms of working.

As such, the studio will be in regular communication with many agencies involved in the ArcDR3 Initiative, inviting them to take part in studio seminars and reviews. Additionally, studios from other universities - founding partners of the ArcDR3 Initiative - will work together as an international online research community. Because of the reach of these frameworks, the exchange of ideas, the development of research projects, and participation in studio reviews will be accessible to all ArcD3 participants, students will be able to expand research skills and research and professional networking by way of this unprecedented international studio format. Studios running this innovative model will serve as a test ground for new studio environments that reinvent modes of work and workplace for coming generations.

5. Studio Flow (Research / Simulation / Speculation; Strategy / Scenario and Action / Design)

By responding to both the ArcDR3 Grand Syllabus and 'Key Priorities for Action' identified in the 'Sendai Framework For Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030', the research will expand on the theme proposed by the initiative through production of new forms of contemporary knowledge and its applications for fire-risk and fire-resilience in architecture and urban design. The design studio program addresses ERS-driven fire-risk-reduction and fire-resilient design through a three-fold analytical and projective approach structured and distributed over three stages during the year:

1st Quarter: Research / Simulation / Speculation

The first research phase of the program commences with an analysis of the theme within context-specific ecological, sociological and technological dimensions. This phase incorporates existing research on fire-risk and fire-resilience. The research process will be initiated by student teams and will become the basis for generating the matrix of parameters that define the fire as a disaster hazard in the Los Angeles Metropolitan area. This matrix will lead students to the simulation process - simulating the spread and effects of a hypothetical fire. The simulation of regional fires will establish a platform for students for the second phase of research activities during the winter quarter.

Research in Fall Quarter includes the following phases:
1. **Research on disaster and risk reduction and resilience:**

This research component becomes the basis for generating the matrix of parameters that define fire as a disaster hazard;

2. **Defining Regenerative Urbanism through a set of keywords or forms**
   MArch1: Students are invited to answer the main question: What does Regenerative Urbanism mean?

   MSAUD: Students will explore Regenerative Urbanism by developing key forms - prototypical elements that are based on topography. They are:

   1. Pools or cavities - concave depressions below grade that provide shelter or store resources

   2. Shells or envelopes - convex protrusions above grade that enclose and protect

   3. Paths - linear elements that connect paths, or create contours or living networks

   4. Slopes - inclined surfaces that protect or regenerate urban settlements

   Each of these forms should be considered for their potential to protect and regenerate infrastructure, public space, and mixed-use communities.

3. **Research about fire in LA**
   Research about fire in Los Angeles will be the basis to develop the simulation of disaster phenomena.

These research steps will lead to an ecology diagram describing the mechanism of fire as a disaster in Los Angeles.

Deliverables:
1. Ecology Diagram of Fire Simulation in LA
2. Definition of Regenerative Urbanism: Keywords that define it based on the precedent studies
3. MSAUD: Apply the key form to create a regenerative response to fire - video format
4. Publication co-authored by MArch1 & MSAUD editorial team (2 MArch1 & 2 MSAUD students); draft for year-end book

Guest Lectures:
- State Fire Representative: Introduction to the theme and processes behind, the progression of the fire as it happens and institutions involved in its mitigation TBC

- UCLA Risk Sciences Institute: Prof. Ali Mosleh, Dr. Saeed Nozhati
- Resilience Officer, Mayor's Office LA: Aaron Gross
- IRIDeS Tohoku University: Prof. Dr. Fumihiko Imamura, Prof. Yasyaki Onoda, Prof. Liz Maly
- School of Urban Planning at UCLA: Prof. Kian Goh
- PLANRED, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile: Prof.Roberto Moris and Prof.Renato D'Alencon

2nd Quarter: Strategy / Scenario

In the second research phase each team will develop a counter-disaster scenario that addresses fire from the point of view of prevention and/or mitigation. The counter-disaster scenarios will be based on simulations the teams generated during the 1st Quarter. The goal of developing counter-disaster strategies is to test levels of resilience across a network of complex, interconnected relationships between stakeholders and conditions in affected contexts. Thus students will be able to track such connections and propose potential new approaches for addressing them at the level of a master plan, or in this case a fire-resilience plan. By the end of this phase, students will have a defined ERS-based fire-risk & resilience systemic strategy. With this systemic strategy, they will proceed to the third phase – a prototypical design. A resilience plan will be based on the strategy that will further the project by bringing in a specific systemic approach, design methodology and technical specification(s).

Research in Winter Quarter includes the following phases:

1. Work on simulation of the fire scenario, projected in one of the selected by sites

2. Work on counter-disaster scenario that affects the community that students are interested in, or the facility, or the infrastructure

3. Development of ERS-informed fire-resilience plans

Deliverables:
1. Disaster simulation
2. Counter-disaster scenario & master plan leading to design brief of Final Project
3. Abe Studio: Scholarly essay on "Regenerative Urbanism" by using keywords and precedents related to the students' research activities

Guest Lectures: (TBD)

3rd Quarter: Action / Design

By employing prior research, simulation studies, counter-disaster scenarios, and ERS-informed fire-resilience plans, students will design a site-specific project that responds to fire-risks through strategies for fire-resilience. Students will identify the role that the proposed project typology adopts within the systemic node for the effective instrumentalization of fire-resilience. With this in mind, students will develop their projects to become a prototypical design proposal that takes a stance on fire-risk and fire-resilience under the framework of ERS and Regenerative Urbanism. This phase will incorporate the process of refining the ecological, sociological, and technological dimensions that connect the proposed prototype to a broader system. The proposal may address one of the following: civil engineering infrastructure, residential community or public, or cultural facility. Consequently, students will develop strategically-equipped designs that will underline the significance of their project as a node within the smart fire-risk and fire-resilient network. This will equip students with tools to clearly articulate anticipatory and evolutionary forms and forces that emerge in the face of the threat.

Deliverables:

By employing prior research, simulation studies, counter-disaster scenarios, and ERS-informed fire-resilience plans, students will design a site-specific project that responds to fire-risks through strategies for fire-resilience.

FALL QUARTER SCHEDULE

MArch 1
LOTTERY / 10.02

WEEK 1 / 10.08
Studio Intro + *Research categories about the Fire
Introduction of smaller group and larger group format.

MArch1
    Group Work:
- **Smaller group (2 students):** the group will develop key concept for Regenerative Urbanism
- **Larger group (combining 2 small groups):** the group will develop a fire ecology diagram and fire disaster simulation and counter-disaster scenario.

    Infrastructure:
- Groups pick one of three ecosystems: residential, public, infrastructure

WEEK 2 / 10.15
Lecture1: UCLA Risk Sciences Institute: Prof. Ali Mosleh, Dr. Saeed Nozhati Thursday, Oct 15, 2-5 PM PDT
Lecture at IDEAS: Jeff Brown Friday, Oct 16, 8 AM PDT

WEEK 3 / 10.22

Presentation 01: Precedent Analysis

Presentation of the key concept of Regenerative Urbanism by using precedents as evidence

Lecture at IDEAS: IRIDeS Tohoku University: Prof.Fumihiko Imamura, Prof. Yasyaki Onoda, Prof.Liz Maly.
Friday, Oct 23, 6-9 PM PDT

WEEK 4 /10.29

Lecture2: School of Urban Planning at UCLA: Prof. Kian Goh Thursday Oct 29, 2-5 PM PDT
Lecture at IDEAS: Greg Kochanowski: Friday Oct 30, 8 AM PDT

WEEK 5 /11.05

Presentation 02: Precedent Analysis

Presentation of the key concept of Regenerative Urbanism by using precedents as evidence

Lecture at IDEAS: Resilience Officer, Mayor's Office LA: Aaron Gross Friday, Nov 6, 8 AM PDT

WEEK 6 /11.12

NO CLASS (Mid Review Week)

WEEK 7 /11.19

Presentation 03: Fire-ecology Diagram -

WEEK 8 /11. 26 (THANKSGIVING WEEK)

NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Week)

WEEK 9 /12.03

Presentation 04: Fire-ecology Diagram

WEEK 10 /12.10

Lecture3: PLANRED, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile: Prof. Roberto Moris and Prof. Renato
D'Alencon Thursday, December 10, 2 pm-5 pm PDT.

WEEK 11 /12.17

FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Final presentations of key concepts of Regenerative Urbanism by using precedents as evidence and
Fire-ecology Diagram

MSAUD

Studio Presentation / 10.02

WEEK 1 / 10.05
Studio Intro + *Research categories about the Fire
Introduction of group format

Group of 2-3 students: the group will develop a key form for Regenerative Urbanism
The group will develop a fire ecology diagram and fire disaster simulation

WEEK 2 / 10.12
Presentation 01: Precedent Analysis
Presentation of the key form of Regenerative Urbanism referencing precedents as evidence

Lecture1: UCLA Risk Sciences Institute: Prof. Ali Mosleh, Dr. Saeed Nozhati Thursday, Oct 15, 2-5 PM PDT
Lecture at IDEAS: Jeff Brown Friday, Oct 16, 8 AM PDT

WEEK 3 / 10.19
Presentation 02: Precedent Analysis
Presentation of the key form of Regenerative Urbanism referencing precedents as evidence

Lecture at IDEAS: IRIDeS Tohoku University: Prof.Fumihiko Imamura, Prof. Yasyaki Onoda, Prof.Liz Maly.
Friday, Oct 23, 6-9 PM PDT

WEEK 4 /10.26
Presentation 03: Fire-ecology Diagram
Lecture2: School of Urban Planning at UCLA: Prof. Kian Goh Thursday Oct 29, 2-5 PM PDT
Lecture at IDEAS: Greg Kochanowski: Friday Oct 30, 8 AM PDT

WEEK 5 /11.02
Presentation 04: Vision Plan based on the Fire-ecology Diagram
Lecture at IDEAS: Resilience Officer, Mayor's Office LA: Aaron Gross Friday, Nov 6, 8 AM PDT

WEEK 6 /11.09
Presentation 05 Mid Review: Vision Plan based on the Fire-ecology Diagram

WEEK 7 /11.16
Presentation 06: Vision Plan based on the Fire-ecology Diagram - Storyboard of Video

WEEK 8 /11. 23 (THANKSGIVING WEEK)
Presentation 07: Video narrative draft

WEEK 9 /11.30
Presentation 08: Video narrative draft

WEEK 10 /12.07
Presentation 09: Video narrative draft
Lecture3: PLANRED, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile: Prof. Roberto Moris and Prof. Renato D'Alencon Thursday, December 10, 2 pm-5 pm PDT.

WEEK 11 /12.14
FINAL PRESENTATIONS
Final presentation of videos: key forms of Regenerative Urbanism referencing precedents as evidence, Fire-ecology Diagram, Vision Plan

Bibliography

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Course Requirements

+ All assignments must be completed by their stated deadlines.
+ Complete all readings before the correlated class meeting and be prepared to discuss them.
+ Students must attend all scheduled class meetings and trips, unless excused for department approved reasons.
+ Three or more absences during the quarter will result in automatic failure.
+ Students will present proof of progress at all scheduled reviews.
+ Course materials must be submitted digitally by the end of the quarter per department procedure. It is a requirement of this course that all students submit course materials digitally by the end of quarter. Failure to do so will result in the loss of one letter grade. Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310)825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. When possible, students should contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. For more information visit www.cae.ucla.edu.
+"This program uses video recording or other personal information capture for the purpose of facilitating the course and/or test environment. Pursuant to the terms of the agreement with UCLA, the data is used solely for this purpose and any vendor is prohibited from disclosing this information. UCLA also does not use the data for any other purpose."
"Students may not distribute recordings or other instructional materials provided as part of remote learning by faculty, teaching assistants, or invited guests."