MSc Building and Urban Design in Development

Urban Design as a transdisciplinary practice to reshape our cities with radical spatial strategies based on care, solidarity and collective imagination.

dpu
Development
Planning Unit

UCL
THE BARTLETT

Overview

An intensive 12-month programme that immerses students in the intersection of critical urban theory, critical design studies and southern urban practice. It is designed to recalibrate mainstream practices towards a new mode of inquiry and action, one that centres on the political relevance and social processes of design towards a transformative, just and sustainable urbanism. It equips students with the practical and analytical skills needed to design holistic, place-based interventions that tackle conflicting agendas at different urban scales. Unique to this programme is its desire to immerse students into the field of spatial thinking through critical theory and philosophical reflections. It debates and analyses the political economy and power dynamics at play in the production of space through multiple lenses. In so doing, it allows students to a gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which such systemic processes reinforce or change engrained spatial issues. Students are encouraged to explore and identify actors' agency, entry points and positive forms of power that can leverage and realise desired urban outcomes. The programme in sum, aims to bring about socially sensitive and reflective urban designers that become politically grounded, practice transdisciplinary and critical thinking and engage horizontally with urban actors in an ethics of care.

Programme Leaders
Dr Catalina Ortiz
Dr Giovanna Astolfo

Graduate Teaching Assistant
Laia García Fernández

Other Members of Staff
Prof Camillo Boano | Dr Giorgio Talocci | Prof Cassidy Johnson | Tim Wickson | Jorge Fiori

Core and Optional Modules
Post Disaster Recovery (DEVP0001) | Transforming Local Areas: Urban Design for Development (DEVP0002) | Participatory Processes: Building for Development (DEVP0003) | Building and Urban Design in Practice (DEVP0004) | Disaster Risk Reduction in Cities (DEVP0005) | Housing Policies: Practical Dimensions and Alternative Options (DEVP0009) | Housing as Urbanism: Housing Policies and the Search for Scale (DEVP0008)

Structure

The programme is delivered through a range of seminars, workshops, case studies and action research engagements. Learning is delivered through reading, essay writing and interdisciplinary design project work. Students take three core compulsory modules (90 credits) providing the building blocks that cultivate interdisciplinary professionals who can engage holistically in building better urban futures; a choice of two optional modules (making up 30 credits) giving the opportunity to dive deeper into specific topics; and a dissertation report (60 credits), where students can explore their own research interests. The core modules are:

• Transforming Local Areas: Urban Design for Development (DEVP0002) explores the theoretical and philosophical basis for a critical repositioning of design and architecture in urban planning and offers students the opportunity to tackle a live case study.

• Participatory Processes: Building for Development (DEVP0003) encourages critical reflection on the relationship between people and design through the role and practices of participation and what this means for building new forms of agency, action and implementation approaches.

• Building and Urban in Design Practice (DEVP0004) is a studio-based module that enables students to connect the theory and put into practice methodologies and design research strategies to deliver their own urban design project in a collaborative fashion.

Careers

The programme attracts students from a wide range of disciplines with a passion for urban issues. This diversity fosters a cooperative working environment and opportunity to negotiate creatively with others. Students form strong networks and collaborative working relationships that continue after the programme has ended. Students are exposed to skills in critical thinking, action research, spatial analysis, design research and creative practice and go on to work in various sectors including: Aid and Development Agencies; Community-led Organisations; Government; Architecture/Urban Design firms and the programme has also inspired graduates to form independent practices. Alumni report how the programme has instigated transformational reflections that allowed them to explore new perspectives and foster innovative career paths: "*It was an important year of professional and personal reflection, marking the moment that design became an ethical as well as technical pursuit*" | "*It exposed me to various discourses on urban development, new design methodologies and communication techniques […] most importantly it included practical works to test this learning*" | "*We felt that there were fundamental issues with the practices of […] development agencies and we wanted to create our own platform through which we could drive positive change*".