

## MASTER THESIS HS 2021

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## WHAT IF? PROSPECTIVE HISTORIES FOR A FUTURE ENVIRONMENT

### SHORT DESCRIPTION

How do we live today and why do we live as we do? Because of its universal and enduring relevance, the question holds currency across the societal spectrum. Be it in academic circles, professional realms, or popular culture, virtually no one is immune from the charms and frustrations of this query, as accurate information about the future is still—alas—impossible. The onset of recent events, like the Fukushima earthquake or the current pandemic has only made the cogency of this question more evident, as witnessed by the boom of quantitative and qualitative forecasting with regard to economic and health issues. Today, more than in any other period, we speculate about possible futures. Yet speculating about future outcomes cannot be reduced to an extrapolation of existing statistics, but implies a critical investigation into the very basis of our present condition. In this query, history seems a good starting point, less because it delivers answers or even solutions, but because it proposes alternative models, on how the proper care of our environment has been dealt with in other times, in other cultures.

### ELABORATION PHASE

The elaboration phase consists in the formulation of a speculative condition apt to fundamentally alter our behaviours as well as our urban settings in order to uphold a lasting environment. As an embryonic step to a prospective understanding of our future, the method aims at imagining a sustainable way of living and depicts a series of salutary consequences of our actions.

Argumentative workshops where assumptions are formulated and debated among participants in order to critically assess the magnitude and extent of a parametric change in light of historical precedents. (*Transdisciplinary sources: literacy, imagery, films, drawings, statistics, prospective and retrospective studies*)

During the preparatory phase, students will be asked to produce a picture-essay.

## **ELABORATION PHASE**

This phase aims to explore the architectural manifestations of these possible presents. Students will be encouraged to imagine both incremental becomings based on existing condition and trends (expected presences) and systemic change (preferable presences). 'What if?' is the question underpinning all these possible presents. The course, therefore, places the counterfactual question in the future tense (like in the work of J. Gandy, G.B. Piranesi, H. Labrouste, C. Rowe and others). In that, the course expands on an existing tradition of so called counterfactual or virtual history and will expand it to the realm of architecture. This approach does not want to negate history, but rather to think of alternatives to any form of historical determinism.

In the course of the elaboration phase (Week 8-19), each master-thesis student individually develops a project around the chosen assumption formulated in the preliminary phase (Week 1-7). Hypothesis can be singular or combinatory. Trans-scalar means are to be defined by the candidate as the selected prospective path informs on the specificity of architectural notations.

## **GRADING RATIOS**

### **Preparation phase:**

Percentage GTA: 80%

Percentage IEA: 20%

### **Elaboration phase:**

Percentage IEA 80%

Percentage GTA 20%