

## INTERMEDIATE 8

### *Politics of a Transformative Block*

#### *Understanding scale through the Buenos Aires city grid*

This year Intermediate Unit 8 will be working on the design of a mix-used city block that will be shared by a private corporation and a public institution in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In Latin-American cities, rapid socio-economic changes are spawning unprecedented city block configurations with radical programmatic assemblages, reversibility between inside and outside and interchange between public and private domains. However, the possibility of these transformations that change our understanding of cities as politically controlled entities through policy-making, lies in its attachment to a generic urban grid. Being that the 100x100m grid in Buenos Aires is one of the densest in Latin-America makes it a perfect scenario to showcase the potential value of the block to generate the city today. This implies a complex form finding process reassessing the tension between block and grid, a gradation between permanence and change in buildings.

Students will work on a 100x100m urban block using an empty or built plot within the city grid. The structure of the unit will be divided into three interrelated parts. **1. Operational fields:** research on socio-cultural and economic aspects that will inform the programmatic brief of block proposals. This research will also be accompanied by a reading of the city through a collection of maps, photographs and city fragments that will be used for filling the block with content.

**2. Spatial Organisations:** architectural examples of Clorindo Testa in Buenos Aires and urban block proposals by Rem Koolhaas, Hans Kollhoff and Rafael Moneo will be analysed to understand their formal and spatial organisations, and will be extrapolated as preliminary systems of spatial relations of block proposals. These axonometric diagrams will articulate and structure the programmatic content of the block. **3. Active Interfaces:** studies on the transformation, adaptation and responsiveness of the block, reflecting on its relationship with both the grid and the passersby, will be studied through a 1/5 mock-up of the building envelope.

#### Unit Staff

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Francisco González de Canales studied architecture at ETSA Seville, ETSA Barcelona and Harvard University, and worked for Foster + Partners and Rafael Moneo. He is co-director of award-winning office Canales & Lombardero. An active architectural critic, he has previously lectured in England, Mexico, Spain and the US, worked as AACP coordinator and collaborated in different architectural publications. He is currently AA HTS tutor and has recently published the book *Experiments with life itself* (Actar 2012) based on his PhD research on the radical domestic self-experimentations of the 1940s and 1950s.

Nuria Alvarez Lombardero studied Architecture and Urbanism at ETSA Madrid and the AA. She has worked for Machado & Silvetti Associates in Boston and for Neutra Magazine on the editorial board. Since 2003 she co-directs the London-Seville based office Canales & Lombardero. She has previously taught in the University of Cambridge and TEC Monterrey and lectured on Urbanism in the University of Seville. After working as a researcher in Harvard University, the University of Cambridge and the AA, she finished her PhD on the dissolution of boundaries traced by modern urban planning.



Fragkiskos Konstantatos, Intermediate Unit 8 (2011/12) – a new transportation hub in Tlatelolco site that combines spontaneous *peseros*' network with regulated transportation system as a response to the acceleration of Mexico City's socio-spatial fragmentation