



### Politics of the Big Block in São Paulo Heterogeneous Grid

Intermediate Unit 8 will continue to work on the design of a block in a Latin-American metropolis. This design will interrogate the civic role of large buildings in vast poliocentric cities and consider the coexistence of public and private premises. The block will be located within the São Paulo heterogeneous grid, and its size will range between 90 and 150 metres on each side, depending on the chosen neighbourhood. As one of the first countries opposing the neoliberal policies that are widespread in Latin America, Brazil has come to refer to an alternative model of economic and social development.

As a consequence of rapid economic and social growth, the economic centre of São Paulo has a fragmented urban configuration full of contrasts. These fragments are the result of negotiations between government and private investors, and each one has left a disjointed urban grid with no continuous street wall; São Paulo is full of interior borders and without urban cohesion. This unit proposes to work within the heterogeneous grid to explore a poliocentric city model and the fundamental role large urban blocks play in bringing centrality to urban fragments through civic performance.

The structure of the academic year will be divided in three interrelated parts: Firstly through 'Field', which deploys maps, photographs, indexes and observations on social, cultural and economic issues in the city to inform the programmatic brief of the block and its civic role within the city. In the second part – 'Form' – analysis will be conducted of formal spatial configurations that will articulate the block programmatic content. Some examples of Paulista School architects, such as Vilanova Artigas, Bo Bardi and Mendes da Rocha, and large urban block proposals by other contemporary authors will be studied. Third, 'Interface' will investigate the responsiveness of the block, focusing on the relationship between the city and the block. Qualities such as porosity, permeability and interaction will be explored through model-making on a wide range of scales and larger material tests of building envelope. The unit will also give primary attention to portfolio development and a holistic understanding of the design as students investigate different possibilities of the axonometric view.

**Unit Staff**  
Francisco Gonzalez  
de Canales  
Nuria Alvarez  
Lombardero

Francisco Gonzalez de Canales studied architecture at ETSA Seville, ETSA Barcelona and Harvard University, and worked for Foster + Partners and Rafael Moneo. He is codirector of the award-winning office Canales & Lombardero. An active architectural critic, he has previously lectured in England, Mexico, Spain and the USA, worked as AACP coordinator and collaborated in different architectural publications. He is currently an AA HTS tutor and has recently published the book *Experiments with Life Itself* (Actar 2012), which is based on his PhD research into the radical domestic self-experimentations of the 1940s–50s.

Nuria Alvarez Lombardero studied Architecture and Urbanism at ETSA Madrid and the AA. She has worked for Machado & Silvetti Associates in Boston. Since 2003 she has codirected the London-Seville based office Canales & Lombardero. She has previously taught in the University of Cambridge, TEC Monterrey and University of Seville. After working as a researcher at Harvard University, the University of Cambridge and the AA, she finalised her PhD on the dissolution of boundaries traced by modern urban planning. She is currently writing at *La Ciudad Viva* magazine and working as urban consultant in Spain.