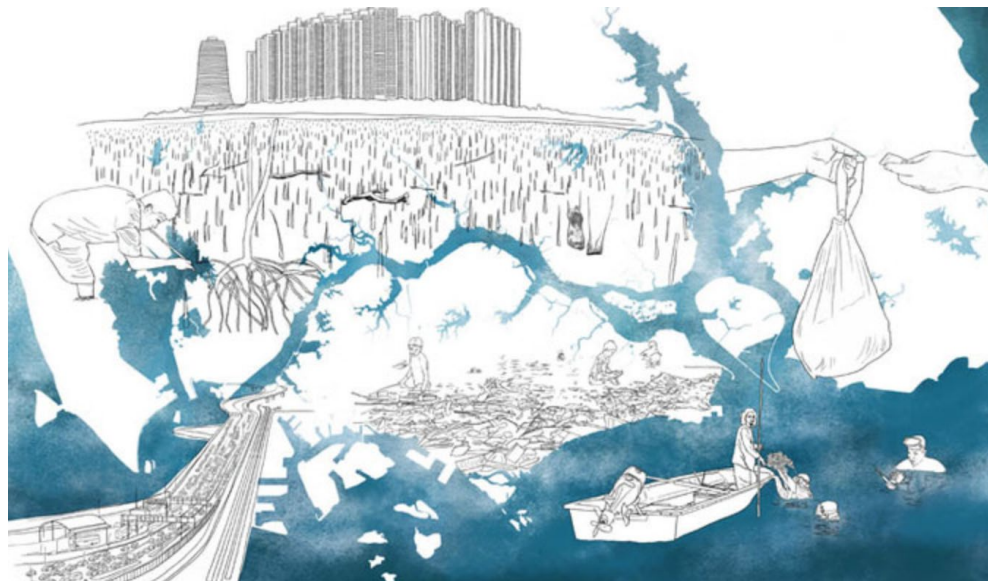


LARC505 Urban Water / Urban Nature

Recalibrating socio-ecological relationships in the Still Creek Watershed

University of British Columbia School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture
LARC 505 Option Studio
Tuesdays & Fridays 13:30 - 18:00 @ MCML 3
Instructor: Natalia Echeverri/ Assistant Professor/ necheverri@sala.ubc.ca



Feifei Zhou in collaboration with Zahirah Suhaimi and Jefree Salim, "Shifting Porosities", 2022.

Acknowledgement

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

Course Overview

This studio builds on a contemporary body of work in landscape, urbanism, geography, and sociology, that asks us to consider the city as not something different from nature, but rather as something that is embedded in and part of it. Where we once modeled nature and ecological processes in terms of their fragmentation, scientists are increasingly modeling urban systems within greater ecological, social and political systems. As these models are inherently anthropocentric and prone to bias, designers and theorists have increasingly asked that we consider alternative perspectives of the city, including non-human experiences. Mathew Gandy, an environmental geographer working on these issues, has called on planners and designers to imagine the city as an "ecological pluriverse" (Gandy, 2022).

Our site is located within the Still Creek watershed and is situated adjacent to the recently approved Rupert and Renfrew Station Area Plan. Still Creek, though confined and isolated—is still considered one of only two day-lit streams in Vancouver (City of Vancouver, 2023). Despite its altered state, this visibly natural

fragment (and others like it) has become a focal point for narratives around green infrastructure, nature-based development, and urban regeneration. However, these narratives often overlook the complex ecological challenges, environmental risks, socio-political externalities, community initiatives, and the rich cultural and material histories embedded in the area. The studio seeks to critique existing development plans and develop new frameworks to guide future scenarios for this industrialized watershed, its fragmented natures, and its inhabitants, whether human or non-human, existing or potential.

The work in the studio will be animated by three spatial and conceptual themes: *Fragmentation*, *Displacement*, and *Assemblage*. These terms are each linked strongly with ecological processes, especially in urban environments. But we will also consider how these terms carry social and political dimensions.

Fragmentation refers to the patchiness of a habitat as a result of disturbance and subtraction. Fragments are isolated, with their processes interrupted. But fragmentation may also contain important reserves of diversity, increased edge-effect, and distributed risk resilience.

Displacement is additive, involving the intentional or unintentional relocation of species, habitats or ecological processes from the outside into new areas. Ecological displacement is often linked with invasive species and destabilized ecosystems, but the concept may also relate to heterogeneous landscapes and novel urban ecosystems, climate-induced adaptation, and regeneration.

Assemblage describes the dynamic and continuous interplay between humans and non-human organisms, materials and technologies, and natural processes. (Durose 2022: Li, 2007). From an ecological perspective, this theme reminds us of the multiple origins of agency, and the importance of flexible and open-ended strategies capable of engaging existing and future systems.

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Beyond the theoretical aims of the studio, we also hope to develop your skills of observation, analysis, and documentation in urban contexts like Vancouver. Through a series of exercises, students will learn to identify, analyze, and document the key aspects (physical, ecological, economic and social) that shape an urban context; to build a vocabulary that communicates process, and to propose appropriate ways to intervene in this context.

Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this course, students are expected to be able to:

- Discuss urban form and process as they relate to public space and open space
- Represent engineered, hybrid ecologies and advanced spatial assemblies
- Visualize complex design strategies through drawing and model
- Relate land, hydrology, climate, policy, and historical conditions to observations about the development of Vancouver
- Speculate on new forms of landscape, infrastructure, and settlement that take into account the dynamic and unpredictable conditions of a rapidly changing environment
- Explore forms of representation that describe dynamic landscape and urban systems

Assignments

Detailed briefs will be delivered at the start of each project, but the course is largely structured around three interrelated exercises.

[P1] Flood, Forest, Flats: Environmental Imaginaries in the Brunette River Basin

Working in groups and individually, students will examine a range of nature/development discourses as they are evidenced in a wide range of texts, proposals, practices, policies, campaigns, stories, movements, maps, and media. These discourses will intersect with our site, but may also be driven by larger scales of influence. Students will build on Mathew Gandy's definition of the "urban ecological imaginary"--which combines material and ecological dynamics towards critical and projective expressions--to create a narrated map and timeline that illustrates a particular imaginary.

[P2] Traversing the Creek

Working in groups of three, students will create a series of annotated sections along Still Creek. The site's temporal states, physical processes, key ecological relationships, and habitat conditions will be documented through fieldwork and observational methods.

[P3] Design Interventions

The final design exercise calls on students to synthesize finding from P1 and P2. This will create the basis for the development of a design intervention on a specific site or set of sites within the Rupert and Renfrew Station development area. These interventions will propose new assemblages of nature, community, and environmental processes, and project alternative visions for living with nature in Vancouver.

Studio Format

Student work in the design studio should advance primarily through independently initiated explorations supported by dialogues with your instructors and colleagues. The dialogues will take the form of *desk critiques*, *pin-ups/lay-out/exhibitions* and *reviews*. These explorations will be supplemented with readings, lectures, and site visits. In the spirit of developing healthy work habits, students are expected to develop their projects during studio class times. Students are to remain in attendance during the entire class period. Please use digital devices respectfully at all times.

Desk Critiques (Desk Crits): As scheduled, the instructor will review student progress and provide critical feedback and direction in a one-on-one or small group format (on Conceptboard or F2F). Conversation will always be based on visible work and tested ideas (Digital work shall be printed) as a demonstration of the student's progress and methodology.

Pin-ups / Lay-outs / Exhibitions: The various means of informal, and often impromptu, individual or group displays of the student's work to classmates, instructors, and occasionally to invited critics. The purpose of pin-ups is to solicit individual feedback from your classmates and guest critics. Lay-outs are utilized to conduct a conversation about the direction and results of the work in general, with some (but not all) students asked to present their projects. Exhibitions are edited bodies of work intended to communicate the outcomes and methodologies of the studio to the public.

Reviews: Formal presentations of each student's project to the studio members, instructors and guest critics. These typically occur at the conclusion of project, or for longer projects, at key milestones. Students must prepare a succinct and

organized verbal presentation to accompany a complete graphic description of their project.

Evaluation & Assessment

The instructors will evaluate student performance continuously on the basis of the quality of interaction and production evidenced during desk critiques, pin-ups and project reviews. Assessment will be based on both individual and collaborative work and will consider student growth throughout the term. This evaluation includes consideration of the following:

- Continuous progress of design project and evidence of working through iterative process of critique and revision;
- Clarity and originality and completeness of project outcomes;
- Rigor and depth of research material and analysis;
- Clarity and precision of verbal and graphic representation;
- Participation and contribution in all course activities;

See specific assignment briefs for further details on grading criteria and expectations on each assignment.

Assignments are weighted as follows:

<i>Assessment Task</i>	<i>Weighting</i>
P1: Flood, Forest, Flats	15% mixed
P2: Traversing the Creek	25% group
P3: Design Interventions	60% Mixed