

{ urban

mending }

for the Città Ticino

Urban Mending will explore new approaches of careful repair within fragmented urban territories by working on public spaces. Focusing this semester on the disjointed fabrics of the Città Ticino, students will develop projects aimed at re-establish connections between places and their communities.

Mending

- 1 * to free from faults or defects: such as
 - a * to improve in manners or morals: reform
 - b * to set right: correct
 - c * to put into good shape or working order again: repair
 - d * to improve or strengthen (something, such as a relationship) by negotiation or conciliation
 - e * to restore to health: cure
- 2 * to make amends or atonement for.

{source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary}

Urban Mending

Urban Mending will be understood as:

* An attempt to heal and reconnect highly fragmented urban areas *

Urban Mending is an approach to territories shaped by rapid and often violent transformations, where uncoordinated development and private interests have produced urban and social fragmentation and the destruction of shared reference points. The aim is to reconnect existing spaces, fostering new resilient places of encounter and collective belonging.

* A multiscale perspective on territory and the reality that surrounds us *

By observing urban spaces across multiple scales – from architectural detail to territorial dimension – the studio aims to experiment with new perspectives to public space capable of bridging the gap between spatial planning, urban design and architecture. The goal is to build an integrated vision in which the specific small scale situation and the broader urban context are in constant dialogue, considering every public space as a place of opportunity.

* An act of care toward people and places *

Care is understood as a design attitude: a way of engaging with places and communities through attention, responsibility, and proximity, emphasizing the relational nature of design practice. Rather than imposing transformation, the semester will focus on precise acts of repair and maintenance that restore value and dignity to everyday spaces, supporting the relationship between inhabitants and their surroundings.

* A strategy to improve the resilience of large-scale contexts with minimal resources *

Through a deep understanding of the context – its potentials, qualities, and weaknesses – the studio seeks to develop design strategies capable of achieving broad impact through small-scale actions. By activating the intrinsic qualities of places and promoting subtle, sustainable transformations, the semester will propose targeted actions that address climatic challenges while strengthening the resilience of territories.

* A concrete case study for a Città Ticino that is not yet a city *

The semester focuses on the densely populated areas of Canton Ticino, characterized by highly fragmented urban fabrics and lack of proximity public spaces. These territories, emblematic of many European urban areas, will serve as a testing ground where building density and population concentration – in the absence of a shared urban vision – have produced density without intensity, urbanisation without urbanity. Within this context, the studio will experiment with strategies that enhance quality of life and foster more cohesive and caring urban fabrics.

* The punctuation of a fragmented territory *

Città Ticino

The image of Ticino is often associated with a bucolic landscape of lakes, mountains, exotic trees, and villages deeply rooted in a long-standing tradition. Yet, alongside this picturesque image, another reality coexists. The urban areas of the Città Ticino, stretching along the valley floors, where transport infrastructures, mobility networks, and urban sprawl have woven the territory together from north to south.

This condition is the result of rapid, violent, and uncoordinated post-war development, guided more by building regulations than by an urban vision. In the process, most of the historical traces that once gave structure and identity to the territory have been erased and forgotten. The outcome is a landscape infrastructurally connected yet spatially fragmented, where the lack of shared spaces mirrors the absence of a shared project. Buildings stand as isolated objects; streets are lined with fences and retaining walls; vegetation is scarce; and public space, where it exists, is often residual or dominated by cars. It is a city that embodies the problems of many contemporary urban areas. And it is, in many respects, a city that is not yet a city. At the same time, however, 80% of the population lives within it, and for this reason its regeneration is both necessary and urgent. New approaches and new strategies must be developed in order to explore the possibility of more sustainable and supportive urban fabrics.

It is within this context that the semester's work will take place.

* Revealing * Reframing * Reacting * Engagement

The semester is structured around three interconnected stages, each concluding with a review. Rather than separate units, they form layers of a single, evolving project, refined and deepened throughout the semester.

{1} * Revealing *

The semester begins with a close reading of the chosen territory. By immersing oneself attentively and sensitively in the context, it becomes possible to understand the place in all its different components. This phase will lay solid foundations for designing interventions that are respectful and precise, capable of enhancing the specific qualities of the existing fabric and the surrounding territory. Students will explore, map, and document its visible and invisible structures – its physical, historical, and social traces – revealing both qualities and contradictions.

{2} * Revealing * Reframing *

Building on the observations and interpretations carried out in the first stage, students will define a *mending strategy*: a precise and forward-looking series of interrelated interventions that enhances the identified values and potential while addressing the site's weaknesses. Students will develop a strategic framework that reinterprets the territory across multiple scales – from the detail to the urban system – seeking maximum impact with minimal resources.

{3} * Revealing * Reframing * Reacting *

In the final stage, students will translate their strategies into concrete design proposals. This phase focuses on developing selected interventions in depth – spatially, programmatically and materially – through drawings, models, and visual narratives that express the project's multi-scale dimension.

The work should reveal how each intervention, no matter how small, contributes to a broader vision of urban mending as a way to strengthen social and urban fabrics. Projects are continuously discussed and refined until the final review, where they are evaluated both as individual works and as contributions to a shared studio vision.

Throughout the semester, students will engage with different design and representation strategies according to the specific needs of each stage. These include hand drawings, large-scale mapping through CAD tools, written reflections, and the production of models and images.

The choice of representational media will depend on the stage of work and on the intended message, supporting a design process that moves fluidly between observation, interpretation, and projection.

* Atelier * working in the school's studio spaces – for design, drawing production, model making, and other forms of exploration – is fundamental to fostering a spirit of mutual learning and shared creation. Presence is mandatory.

* Trip * study trip in Ticino (based in the Lugano area) from Friday, February 27, to Monday evening, March 2, with an approximate cost of CHF 350-450 per participant.

* Inputs * through the sharing of experiences and perspectives offered by the teaching team, guest lectures, and invited contributors, the studio will enrich and expand its collective understanding of the semester's themes. Attendance is mandatory.

* Reviews * two intermediate formal reviews and one final review will take place, with the participation of external guests. Attendance is mandatory.

Glossary

A: Adaption – B – C: Care, Città Ticino, Collectivity, Collective memory, Communal – D: Dialogue – E: Ecumene, Encounters – F: Fragility – G: Grafting – H: History an histories – I: Identity, Inhabitants, Interaction, Inclusivity – J – K – L: Listening – M: Mending, Multiscalarity – N: Networks – O: Observation – P: Permeability, Publicness, Public Space, Proximity – Q – R: React, Reframe, Resilience, Reveal – S: Sociality, Sustainability, Sponge City – T: Territory – U: Urbanity, Underground – V – W: Water – X – Y – Z

Biographic inputs

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Random House, 1961
Augustin Berque, *Être humains sur la terre. Principes d'éthique de l'écumène*, Editions Gallimard, 1996
Plinio Martini, *Il fondo del sacco*, Edizioni Casagrande, 1970
Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, Rizzoli, 1979

A more extensive bibliography will be provided in the semester reader.

Urban Mending for the Città Ticino

The studio in the spring semester 2026 is conceived and will be primarily led by Tiziano Schürch, with the assistance of Blerta Axhija.

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The course will be held in English.