

In the Studio's continuing research to explore the sustainability of the European City and to seek definitions for a sustainable architecture, we now divert our gaze 'inside the block' - to the inner spaces of the urban blocks that define so many cities including Munich. They offer good potential for an intensification of use and inhabitation while minimising the need for an expansion of the city or its infrastructure. While inner city blocks provide opportunities, they also require a sensitive approach addressing privacy and daylight and to the cultural aspects of residents' expectations. Projects located within the block are often distanced or invisible from the street, as only a limited facade expression is possible in relation to their scale. Accessed through passageways or courtyards these projects unfold to reveal their scale and it is only from the inside that they can be fully perceived. The interior elevations are often the primary public face of the project. They are primarily experienced as 'inner worlds' and it is interesting to consider what this means for their architectural identity.

What would the expression be of these structures? Would they be considered as long-term structures or short-term installations that land lightly on the ground and can be removed or relocated easily? How do we achieve density and proximity while also bringing dignity and the comfort of distance to day to day living? Can we find qualities from the restrictions imposed upon these spaces, governed by building codes protecting rights for light and air?

Within this exploration the consideration of the 'room' becomes paramount. How to bring about a sense of generosity despite close proximity and density. The proportion, scale and interconnectivity of rooms can be a defining aspect of these inner structures. Palladio's villa plans show an artful combination of rooms of different sizes within a rigidly rectangular plan. In his Quattro Libri he wrote that "there should be large, medium-sized and small rooms, one side by side with the next, so that they can be mutually useful." We can learn from this discipline of working with rooms of related proportion and spatial coherence to offer both a transforming scale to the inner block and a flexible long-term use.

This semester therefore we shall explore how a residential development could be organized within a deep urban block. We wish to propose scenarios that offer characterful daylight and special moments of communal engagement. Our motivation is to create a collection of fine rooms and interior spaces that invite rather than prescribe use. In preparation of this work we will travel to the Veneto and pace through the noble villas of Palladio, measuring and speculating as to the usefulness and appropriateness of a collection of well-defined and finely proportioned rooms to modern-day city living. We shall consider the interfaces between the very public character of urban space and the more private domestic space. The role of a courtyard or multiple courtyards, stairways and landings act as catalysts around which a community may thrive. Our task is to offer insights into how to make architecture that is dignified and humane in scale, rooted in place and metropolitan in character, based on an economy of means and an economy of energy, prepared for an unknown future, while at the same time confident with a powerful presence.





