

Collaborations: Rethinking Architectural Design

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
Collaborative Pedagogical Practices in the Era of Radical Urban Transitions

Asma Mehan, Jessica Stuckemeyer

Abstract: Architectural research forms the basis of design in seeking a solution that considers the site's sociopolitical and spatial-cultural factors and the built environment surrounding it. In addressing industrial heritage, industrial revolutions, energy transitions, and technological innovation uniquely shape the city. The transformation and new discourse between similar heritage and different sites allows for a combination of ideas with transnational and interdisciplinary depth bolstering individual designs through a developed perspective on industrial architecture. This studio addresses the socio-political and spatial-cultural challenges of post-industrial cities. This article uses a critical, comparative, and analytical problem-based design research approach to examine collaborative pedagogical practices that can build a new image and identity through adaptive reuse strategies in the post-industrial urban landscape.

Keywords: Collaboration; Adaptive Reuse, Industrial Heritage; Architectural Studio Pedagogy.

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- I. Peer learning and correlation between heritage groups.
 - Fig. a: Emma H. Wallace High, Orange, Texas, Casey, 2022.
 - Fig. b: Piquette Ford Plant, Detroit, Michigan, Palady, 2022.
 - Fig. c: Linseed Oil Factory, Toronto, Canada, Gomez, 2022.

(Re)conceptualizing the Industrial Heritage: Peer-learning and Correlation

Over the previous centuries, powerful corporate and governmental actors have created a broad range of post-industrial imaginaries that have changed over time and are in line with local cultures. During deindustrialization and decarbonization, the term »industrial heritage« has recently emerged as a new subject in heritage studies (Hudson 1994; Hospers 2002; Berens 2010; Hospers 2002; Hudson 1994). To integrate the methodologies for the protection and adaptive reuse strategies, the »industrial heritage« itself needs to be divided into various categories (Bazazzadeh et al. 2022; Boodaghi et al. 2022). In its *World Heritage List*, UNESCO has begun including the increasing number of local industrial legacies like railways, mines, factories, assembly plants, agricultural production, and manufacturing production. In the process of their adaptive reuse however, the question of heritage meanings and values arises (Casey/Mehan 2023; Mehan/Abdul Razak 2022a; Mehan/Abdul Razak 2022c).

These collaborative design outcomes and selected projects are based on the fourth-year research-led studio »Adaptive Reuse of Industrial Heritage« taught at *Huckabee College of Architecture, TexasTech University* in the fall semester of 2022. Using a comparative approach and a transnational perspective, projects in this studio identify and study urban-rural buildings, infrastructures, sites, and contexts that can be categorized as industrial heritage (Mehan/Casey 2023; Mehan 2019). Projects may consider the United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs) as an overarching framework but may still go beyond them to engage with local communities and meet context-specific demands (Kincaid 2002; Mehan/Mostafavi 2022; Mehan 2023a). The legacy of various industries, such as oil, textile, and automotive, continues to reshape industry, society, culture, and politics (Hauser et al. 2023; Bonino/De Pieri 2015). With a significant focus on four industries, including automotive (auto and railway), technology, natural resources (oil and water), and textile, the projects' sites are distributed across various locations in North America, Latin America, Canada, Australia, and Asia (Mehan/Abdul Razak 2022c; Mehan 2023b). The group of two to three students was clustered thematically in the same industrial heritage group. Students were encouraged to take inspiration from their peers and the studio, working with each other to form a compressive analysis and design. Each selected case study and studio project targeted either an abandoned or malfunctioning

industrial heritage building or factory site and proposed an adaptive reuse framework and design strategies to revitalize post-industrial urban landscapes (Mehan/Mostafavi 2023) (fig. 1).

Morphological and Formal Design

Within the studio, students were prompted to begin developing morphological aspects and formal design through a list of considerations to be applied to the selected site. These include its physical aspects and the effects on a wider community and urban context (Khasraghi/Mehan 2023). This exploration focused on the existing building/infrastructure, extensions and parasitic additions, semi-open areas, and open urban platforms that culminated in a responsive zoning design and a collaborative exploration through the students (McPeck/Morthland 2010; Salama 2015). As each project progressed and the scope for design expanded, students became familiar with the various projects and the collective understanding of adaptive reuse and morphological considerations broadened.

Regarding adaptive reuse, the existing infrastructure acts as a set of guidelines for the purpose and functionality of the design, with additional restrictions forming from heritage-site considerations. The students were tasked with exploring the potential of their adaptive reuse idea through color – block diagrams, mind maps, and isometrics, and addressed limitations while exploring the precedents' structure, available space, and program. From this viewpoint, the concept of parasitic additions may be explored. Parasitic architecture is often synonymous with extension, and widespread definitions reflect this. The definitions broadly say »a new room or building attached to an existing larger structure,« but there is a difference between the two. This is limiting because the term »parasitic architecture« is thrown around to describe unusual expansions or to describe something that solely benefits the host building (Given 2021). By its very nature, this architecture increases diversity within the built environment, leading either to the host's extinction as the parasite drains resources or stimulating the host and increasing its growth rate. Parasitic architecture should be thought of as more complex, something that works in tandem with the existing building and community and has the potential to affect the entire city (Baroš/Katunský 2020). Students were challenged to consider this and incorporate parasitic addition into their design while maintaining the class-wide focus of eliminating excess information that is not beneficial to the project (Mehan/

Mostafavi 2023). After the basis for the morphological elements and program was finalized, the idea of semi-open areas and open urban platforms were explored to connect the structure of the surrounding site and community and increase circularity (Mehan et al. 2023).

Articulation and Materiality

The exploration focused on redefining adaptive reuse and inspired a new way of thinking. Adaptive reuse requires considering the existing built environment and how it can dictate a specific style, texture, morphology, and typology (Misirlisoy/Gunce 2016; Repellino et al. 2016). In contrast, contemporary requirements and a broader consideration of community needs may call for innovative methods and radical solutions (Mehan 2023c; Hatuka/Ben-Joseph 2017). In exploring adaptive reuse, form and material systems balance the contrast between the old and new and seek integrated solutions that address general concerns (Bazazzadeh et al. 2021).

Collaborative methods throughout the studio continued to develop through articulation and materiality, problem-solving and information sharing, and crucially, through the dissemination of previous studies and a set of collective points that every project had to critically respond to (Qureshi 2020). After several rounds of group discussion, we concluded that notions of form and materiality can be rethought and redefined in adaptive reuse projects. On the one hand, the very physicality of the built environment can dedicate a specific style, texture, morphology, and typology. On the other hand, contemporary requirements and challenges can demand innovative solutions in terms of form and material systems. Therefore, the contrast or harmony between the old and the new is a key factor to consider in an adaptive reuse proposal.

This being said, the following points and sets of questions have been collectively selected to be addressed in our project concerning the design of form and material systems:

- How do the additions to, and subtractions from, the existing buildings and infrastructures result in an integrated design solution?
- How will the ratio, contrast, and correlation between mass and void be redefined within the existing context?
- How does the project define the threshold between old and new?
- What is the function of the form in recreating a sense of place?

- What are the fundamental characteristics of the geometric systems developed and applied to blur the boundaries between the past, present, and future?
- How can the form of open space or the form of the void between old and new be defined and highlighted?
- How may the existing and new structural systems co-exist with each other?
- What are the functions of ornaments, relics of the industrial past, architectural tectonics, and patterns in defining the characteristics of old and new?
- How does the project define the form of added interior layers, and how is the continuity or discontinuity in the interior layer envisioned?
- How can we think of exteriority in interior spaces, and how do we extend the interior to the exterior and vice versa?

As students addressed their project-specific requirements, similar and different conditions were explored, thus creating unique solutions. Each person prioritized their project needs, while the collective atmosphere shifts into group thinking through collaborative discussions. A set of questions meant to inspire critical thinking and provide a bridge across student studies was distributed to facilitate this discourse. The students were also encouraged to find examples, previous projects, or sources of inspiration from sketches, drawings, images, and details that can address the selected points. The question supplied prompts covered parasitic additions and subtractions to the building, the transitions between old and new thresholds (Mehan 2019) and indicates how structural systems coexist between the original design and additions (Bazazzadeh et al. 2022).

Technological and System-Wide Studies

Adaptive reuse proposals begin on a theoretical, big-picture basis, exploring the site, and surrounding communities and programmatic needs. Still, when considering heritage buildings and sites that may have lain abandoned for years, the practical considerations amass quickly. At this point the studio had formed theoretical designs and deliberated over the practicality of their adaptive reuse as it relates to the city, people, and usage but delegated technological studies to a point in which specific systems and efficiency considerations could be cohesively designed (Varis Husar et al. 2023). After

exploring articulation and materials, the students were asked to focus on sustainability measures, regional concerns, and natural forces, the site's ecology and design efficacy. On a project-by-project basis, students explored the technical details of skylights, roof and wall systems, water management, and material longevity and possibilities for reuse.

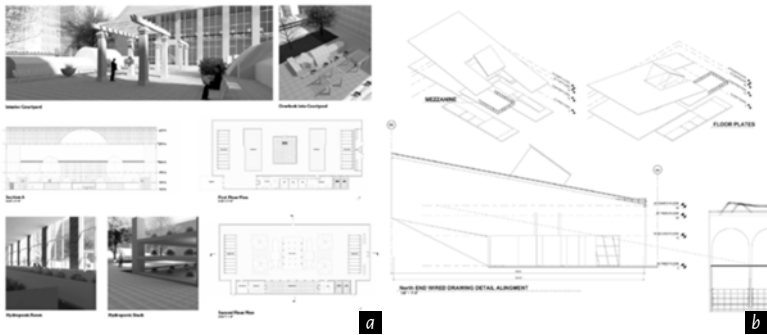
Redefinition of Studio Collaboration Through Adaptive Reuse Impact Groups

At the beginning of this studio's exploration, heritage groupings such as technological heritage, textile heritage, and transportation heritage were explored to create discussion among students with a similar industrial history and focus on the research as it applied to each project's unique requirements. Students continued their focus on industrial heritage and as the class developed an awareness of industrial needs and specific considerations across the heritage clusters, the separation through groups was lessened. At the stage where each project was well defined and had developed a particular identity, the second round of groupings was established to explore the impact of each student's adaptive reuse motivation and its eventual impact. The adaptive reuse impact groups were intended to create a new round of collaboration and function as an overarching introduction to a group of students during the final presentations. These groups were primarily based on, and categorized by, the design's intention and outcome through adaptive reuse and how that design affects the surrounding people.

The Genesis of Industrial Heritage in Post-Industrial Urbanscapes: Collaborative Design Research Practices

The class-wide exploration and innovation culminated in six distinct groups based on the »Adaptive Reuse Design« (ARD) strategies and approaches, with each project filling a niche within its overall impact. The first group dealt with outreach to the respective communities, addressing a direct problem and attending to people's needs, with designs such as a hydroponic greenhouse to combat food insecurity in Philadelphia, a mental and physical health clinic in Busan, and a plan for the rehabilitation of a gated dam and the surrounding built environment in El Paso (fig. 2).

Like the group mentioned above, three projects were clustered together as community-based, focusing on implementing support systems and



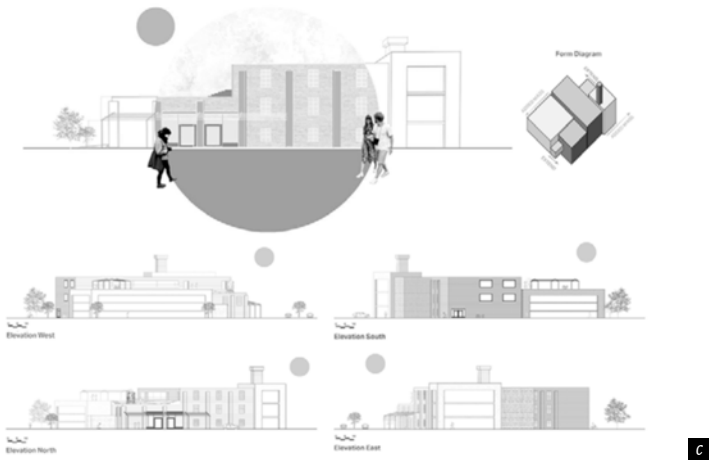
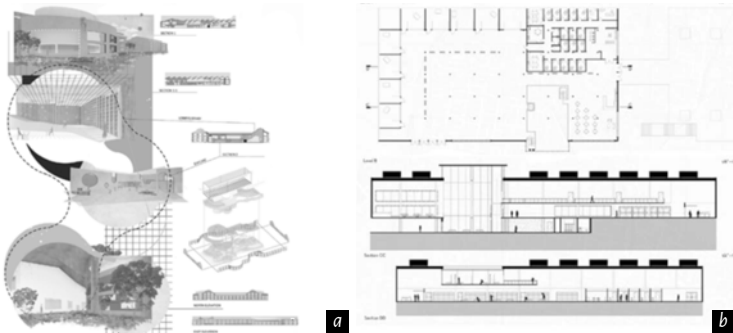
2.

Outreach ARD Group.

Fig. a: Richmond Power Plant – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Stuckemeyer, 2022.

Fig. b: Suyeong Factory – Busan, South Korea, Chung, 2022.

Fig. c: New Smellertown – El Paso, Texas, Arturo-Villegas, 2022.



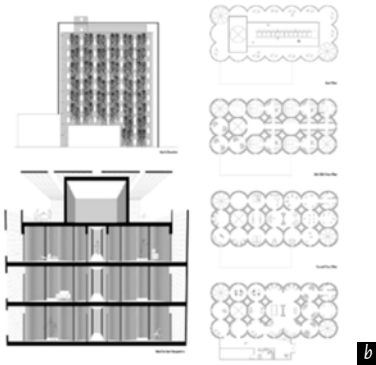
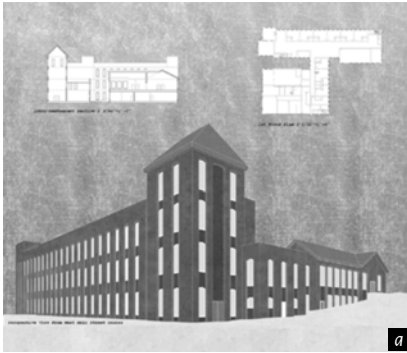
3.

Community ARD Group.

Fig. a: Ex Maestranza – San Bernardo, Medina, 2022..

Fig. b: Ford Motor Company, Geelong, Australia, Johnson, 2022.

Fig.c: Linseed Oil Factory, Toronto, Canada, Gomez, 2022.

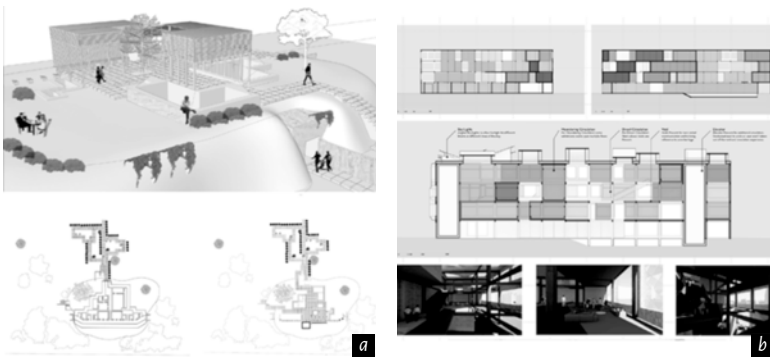
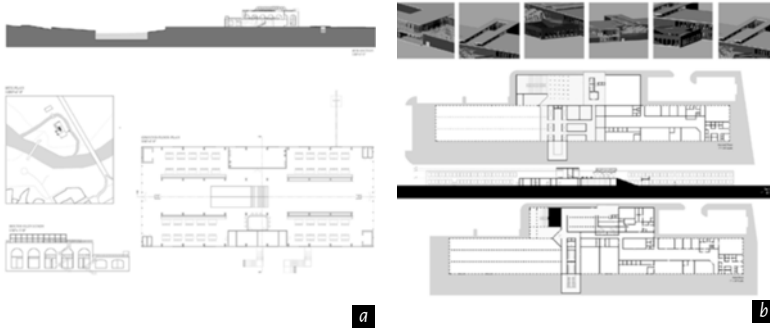


4.

Shelter ARD Group.

Fig. a: Lapham Woolen Mill – Millbury, Massachusetts, Wall, 2022.

Fig. b: F.P. Nielson and Sons Grain Elevator – Mesa, Arizona, Mccune 2022.



5.

Recreation ARD Group.

Fig. a: TXU North Power Plant – Fort Worth, Texas, Lopez, 2022.

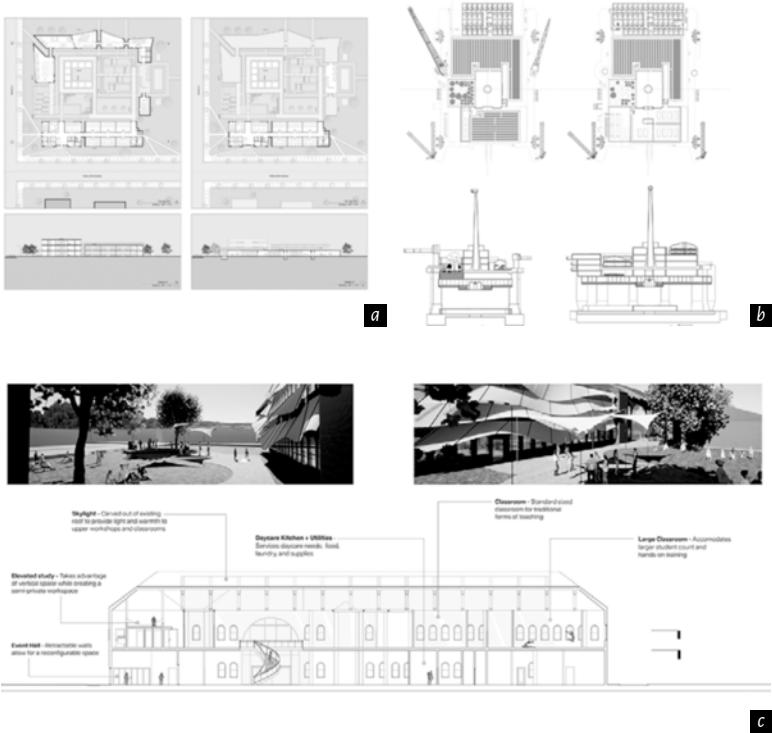
Fig. b: McKinney Cotton Mill–McKinney, Texas, Hanson, 2022.

6.

Knowledge ARD Group.

Fig. a: Fort Tilden, Queens – New York, Avila, 2022.

Fig. b: Ford Piquette Factory – Detroit, Michigan, Palady, 2022.



7.
Education ARD Group.

Fig. a: Emma H. Wallace High – Orange, Texas, Casey, 2022.

Fig. b: Kiddie Kloss Factory – Lansford, Pennsylvania, DeGrande, 2022.

Fig. c: MacKay Marine Station – Cromarty Firth, Scotland, Rice, 2022.

attracting local people to inhabit the space to improve the area. This group included a historic train station renovated as a celebratory space to uphold cultural values, a multi-purpose building to facilitate community events and large-scale house gatherings, and a community gymnasium and lounge (fig. 3).

The following groups contained projects with programmatic similarities, such as sheltering the local community by providing safe and affordable housing in Lansford and Mesa (fig. 4). In addition, the recreation group focused on helping the community by providing reliable and attractive areas to enjoy leisure time. The designs created a restaurant and bar in Fort Worth and an entertainment complex in McKinney, Texas (fig. 5).

The two final groups were concerned with knowledge, addressing the community through information sharing and rethinking known topics, and education, providing research and prompting the community to absorb new information. The knowledge group included a military history museum and a museum dedicated to different movements and learning styles (fig. 6).

In contrast, the education group established a specialized trade school for local industries, an adaptive educational center with childcare that can be modified to fit various programs as needed, and a self-sufficient mobile research base on an oil rig (fig. 7). In the final presentation, these adaptive reuse groups functioned as a comprehensive introduction to each group's designs and the culmination of their work across the semester.

Conclusions: Implications for Collaborative Studio Pedagogy

From the standpoint of our research-led collaborative studio, it's clear that architectural and urban studies encompass a broad spectrum, overlapping with fields such as history, cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, and urban planning (Mehan 2023c). The underlying intent of fostering such collaborations was to instill in students the understanding that architectural processes are iterative and rely on many disciplines, actors, and urban factors. This approach further emphasized the significance of gaining insights from others through rigorous self-reflection within a collaborative setting.

Contrary to a simplistic replication approach – transferring ideas from other urban projects or historical precedents into a selected context – this strategy advocated for adaptive reuse. This required an extensive, intricate process to comprehend the industrial heritage site's history, the prevailing

cultural, political, and urban situations, future community requirements, and a research/design process that is adaptable, responsive, and cooperative. Although this method is considerably more complex and time-consuming than conventional top-down, expert-driven architectural and urban design practices (as seen in sizeable international design firms), it results in a culturally focused, contextually grounded, and democratic approach that encourages collaboration.

This research-focused design studio encouraged students to tackle pertinent issues through collective exploration and interactive research, employing methods like illustrated exercises, group activities, guest lectures from various disciplines and locations, studio research seminars, and group critiques. The studio's design facilitated the students' transformation of architecture and urbanism through cooperative critical thinking, research-based design processes, and innovative practices. The studio's collaborative spirit allowed students to leverage conventional domains like architecture, urban design, and planning while forging new transdisciplinary relationships that stem from specific issues like adaptive reuse strategies and post-industrial urban landscapes.

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