



URBAN STUDIES: SPATIAL AND STRATEGIC DESIGN IN TIMES OF POLITICAL, ECOLOGICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

2026/27

UNIRI

CITY — STATE

URBAN STUDIES

URBAN STUDIES ○ 2026—2028
CALL FOR APPLICATION

All terms used in this Call include all persons, regardless of their gender identity.

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1.

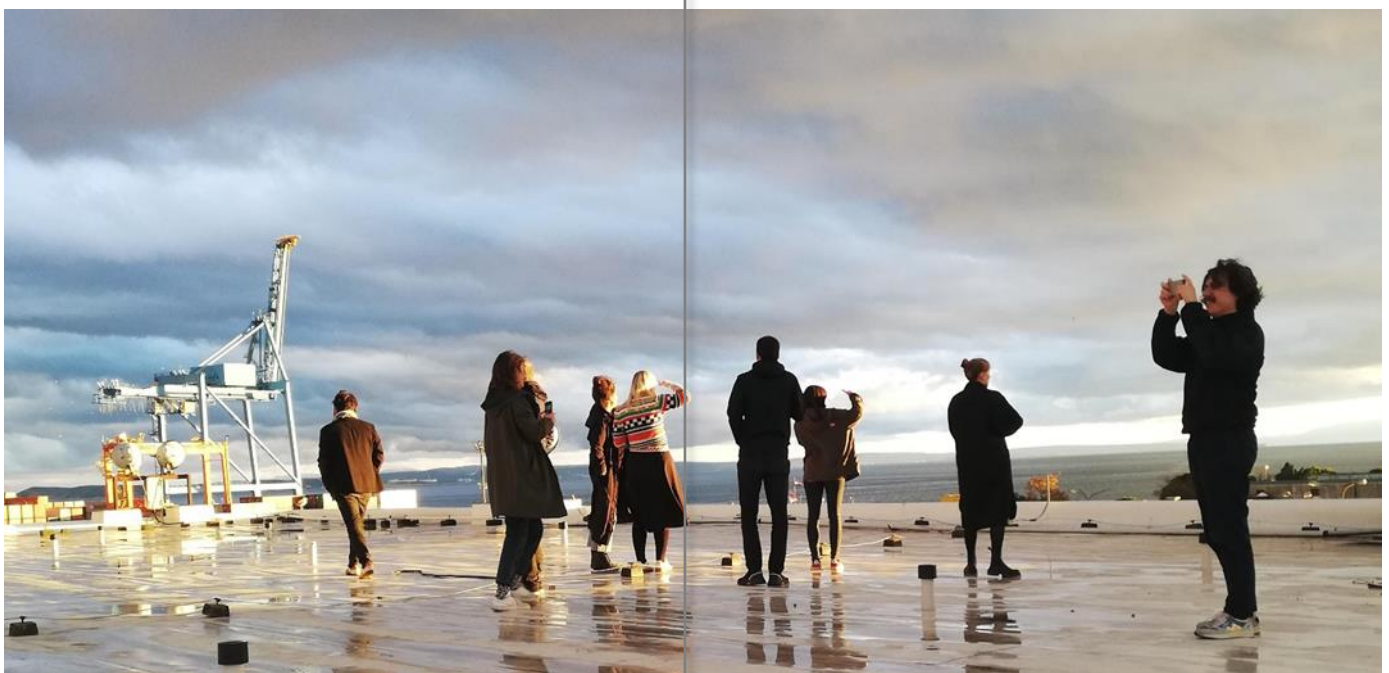
URBAN STUDIES INTRO

URBAN STUDIES are postgraduate study program of spatial and strategic design of complex urban systems, phenomena and transformations enrolled in the artistic interdisciplinary field of Science and Art.

Intended for everybody whose research or practice influences the built and programmed environment, strategic planning, infrastructural capacities, or collective imaginaries, URBAN STUDIES offer a comprehensive interdisciplinary education necessary for a meaningful contribution to the development of open, inclusive and resilient urban systems in the context of contemporary political, ecological and technological crises.

The innovative curriculum of URBAN STUDIES brings together experts from a wide spectrum of scientific and artistic disciplines in a dynamic educational process that combines lectures and workshops program, research and methodology practice based on a thematic focus of the generation, a rich program of guest lectures, and mentored development of the individual student's final project.

The study program is developed and led by DELTALAB - Center for Urban Transition, Architecture and Urbanism at the University of Rijeka (UNIRI).



1ST generation on the roof of Ivex, 2022

2.

STRUCTURE

2.1. TIME SCALE

- START OF STUDIES: October 2026
- END OF STUDIES: January 2028
- THESIS DEFENSE: February 2028

The program lasts one and a half year (1.5) and consists of three semesters. Teaching classes take place in blocks lasting 2 to 4 days with weekend included. Total of 90 ECTS credits is required to complete the study program (30 ECTS credits / semester).

The program begins with the start of academic year, for which this Call is open, in October, i.e. in winter semester, and concludes at the end of January, i.e., at the end of the winter semester of the following academic year. Final project thesis defenses take place in February, during the exam period of third (winter) semester.

2.2. ORGANIZATION

- 1ST SEMESTER > 6 x BLOCK
October 2026 - January 2027
- 2ND SEMESTER > 6 x BLOCK
March 2027 - June 2027
- 3RD SEMESTER > 3 x WEEKEND
October 2027 - January 2028

2.3. CONDUCTION OF CLASSES

– 1ST SEMESTER

It consists of lectures, a study trip, seminars, and design-based research on a selected topic that serves as the starting point for the development of the individual thesis.

– 2ND SEMESTER

It consists of lectures, seminars, and group methodological workshops in which students explore and refine a wide range of design-driven approaches to complex spatial challenges through practical assignments.

– 3RD SEMESTER

It consists of intensive group work sessions and mentored work on the individual project thesis. During this semester, students also visit the La Biennale di Venezia, the International Exhibition of Architecture or Art. The third semester concludes with a public presentation of the group project and the defenses of each individual project thesis. Both are required in order to obtain the degree of university specialist for urban studies.

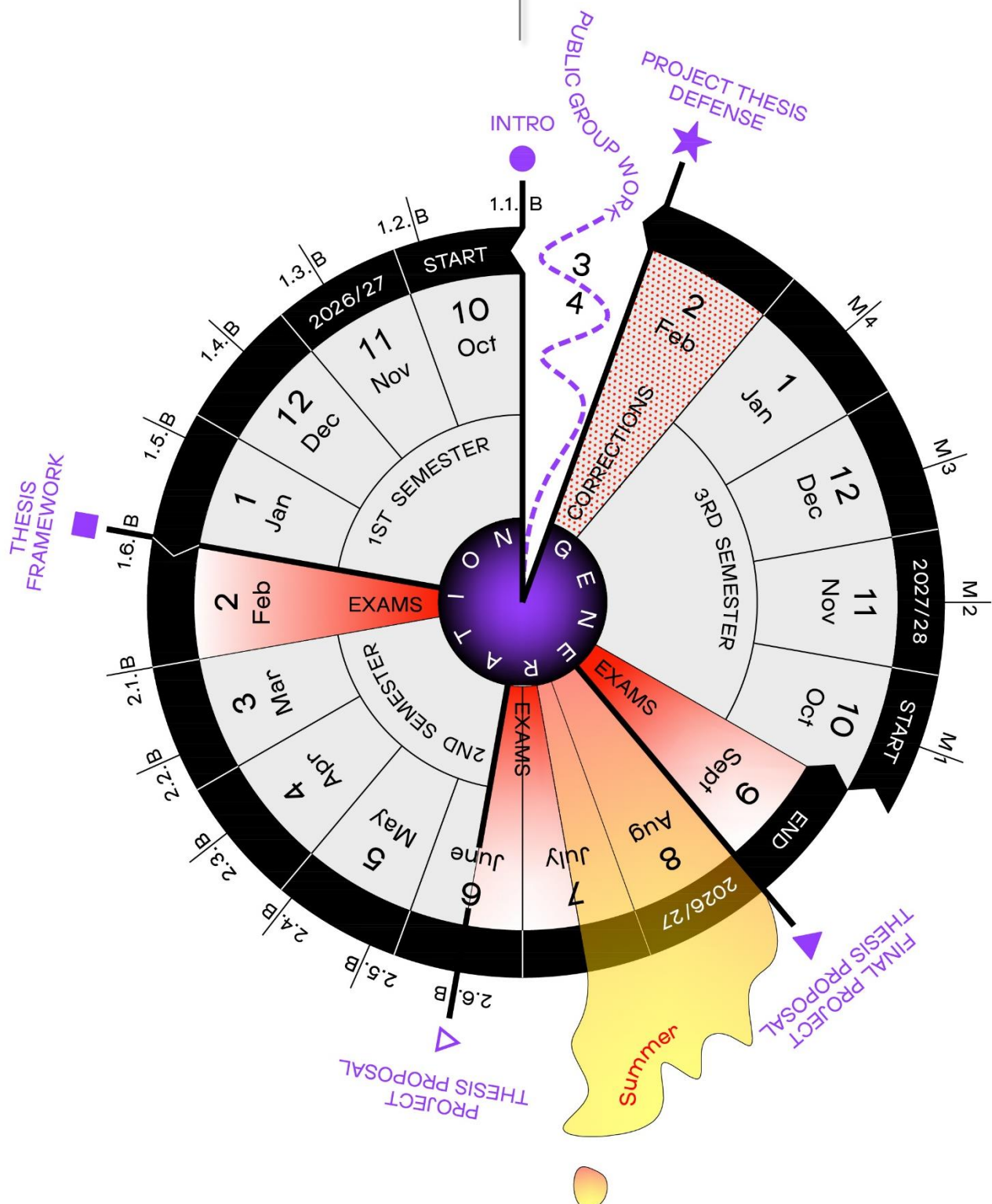
Most classes take place in person and are conducted in Croatian and English. The teaching schedule is illustrated on the following page.

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1. 1ST SEMESTER CLASSES
 - 1.1. B INTRODUCTION SESSION
 - 1.2.—1.5. B CLASSES IN BLOCKS
 - 1.6. B THESIS FRAMEWORK PRESENTATION
2. 2ND SEMESTER CLASSES
 - 2.1.—2.5. B CLASSES IN BLOCKS
 - 2.6. B PROJECT THESIS PROPOSAL

- M1 1ST MIDTERM WORKSHOP FOR GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PROJECT
- M2 2ND MIDTERM WORKSHOP FOR GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PROJECT
- M3 3RD MIDTERM WORKSHOP FOR GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PROJECT
- M4 4TH MIDTERM WORKSHOP FOR GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PROJECT



3.

CURRICULUM

3.1. COURSES

— INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIO

The aim of Project Studio is to learn to critically observe and devise steps towards the transformation of the city into the metropolis of the future. The study is dedicated to the interdisciplinary design-based research of complex forces that shape the Anthropocene environment and propose new theories and visions. The course combines group and individual work.

— METHODOLOGY IN PRACTICE

The course is conducted in coordination and complementarity with the Project Studio courses. The course is focused on working on the project research understood in two ways: as an intellectual problem, researching the relationship between design and theory for the purpose of knowledge production, and as a practical problem, learning how project research can influence urban development. Through course work, students will learn to recognize, interpret and use the various presented methods and approaches, situate them within different theoretical and scientific frameworks and systems, and identify their potential and limits for studying and working in complex urban environments.

— EVOLUTION OF ARCHITECTURE IN 20TH | 21ST CENTURY.

The course follows the evolution of 20th and 21st century architecture, from historical avant-gardes to the contemporary moment, with a focus on radical and experimental tendencies. The course analyzes the relations between architecture and the social context, and the ambitions and capacities of architecture with regards to shaping social reality, with the purpose of discerning the cultural, political, economic, technical and other circumstances that determine the architectural project. The goal of the course is to expand fundamental knowledge and develop skills necessary for research, interpretation and critical analysis of modern and contemporary architecture.

— ARCHITECTURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The traditional interpretation of urban infrastructure as built systems for support of human activity is changing in many ways. The goal of this course is to look at infrastructure not only as a general term that describes certain physical technologies, but more broadly, as a set of assumptions about the designed environment.

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— STRATEGIC PLANNING 1

The purpose of the course is to develop an understanding of the concept of strategic spatial planning and the evolution of planning systems in different countries, through lectures, discussions and practical work. The intention is to develop an understanding of planning systems and the relationship with other transdisciplinary fields. During the lectures, the students will acquire an extensive insight into the theories and practices of strategic planning. During the practical tasks, the students will compare strategic and spatial-planning documents from the national planning system, discuss the models for analysis of the selected area, and become acquainted with the methods of participatory planning, the method of scenario planning and the methods of producing ex-ante and ex-post evaluation of the strategic development document.

— JUSTICE IN THE CITY

The course presents, discusses and explores the relationships between different political discourses and the built environment, analyzing the foundations of urban inequality, justice and politics through close encounters with diversity of the public. The course examines the issue of the management of the development of the state/the city, with the aim of introducing the students to new, advanced models of city legislation and public-private partnership. Given that political philosophy is at the center of the course, it will provide explanations of approaches to justice in the context of spatial planning, that are different from current models that emphasize competitiveness and reducing the intervention of the

government and local authorities in relation to private investments.

— PROJECT STUDIO

The course is dedicated to developing an understanding of diverse design methodologies that shape the contemporary built environment, as well as the implications of spatial decisions at both local and planetary scales. Its aim is to foster a deeper understanding of the relationship between ideas about the city and their materialization through technology, energy, ecology, and social and political positions. The course places particular emphasis on contributions from invited interdisciplinary collaborators. Project work on an assigned topic also helps guide the development of individual student's project thesis.

— URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY

The course introduces a multidimensional framework for exploring the city, urban space and everyday experiences, encompassing the following interconnected aspects: concepts of the social production and social construction of space; embodied, affective, discursive and translocal approaches; processes of identification; contested spaces; urban temporalities; and urban futures. Students will be introduced to qualitative methodologies in cultural anthropology (ethnography, participant observation, interviews, walking ethnography), with a particular focus on ethnographically grounded research and the analysis of space, which they will also apply as part of their own thematic research within the course.

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— PHENOMENA OF CONTEMPORANEITY

The course sets a problem framework for understanding diverse contemporary phenomena relevant to architecture. This course builds on the course Evolution of Architecture in the 20th and 21st Centuries, and, based on the premise of porous disciplinary boundaries, it expands the discussion of architecture and the development of the built environment into the areas of philosophy, sociology, theory and practice of visual arts and other disciplines. The aim is to strengthen the fundamental knowledge and skills necessary for research, historical interpretation and critical analysis.

— CITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The goal of this course is to expand and deepen the analysis and research of infrastructure systems of cities in a changing environment. The course includes a detailed examination of the concept of a "smart city", which connects various aspects of city management: construction, energy, government, life, education and, of course, mobility. The goal is to prepare students for the changes that this concept brings and to incorporate it into solutions for complex infrastructural challenges.

— STRATEGIC PLANNING 2

The course expands the discussion concerning strategic planning. The special focus of the course is on social welfare states and housing systems, but also on other topics such as spatial planning of the sea. The aim of the course is to strengthen the fundamental knowledge

and skills necessary for research, interpretation and critical analysis. Through the curriculum, students will acquire research skills and prepare for advanced academic work related to their project thesis.

— ART AND SOCIETY

The course examines the relationship between contemporary architecture, cultural heritage and the natural environment from the perspective of maintenance and temporary occupation. The course follows the development of the relationship of art to the object, whose significance is radically changing in a consumer society, which is opposed by the methods of ephemeral actions whose goal is the cultural appropriation of space without material objectification. The purpose of the course is to develop – through discussions and practical work – a methodology for understanding art as a key imaginative discipline.

— EPISTEMIC SYSTEM DESIGN

The course deals with the fundamental theoretical principles of epistemology of complex social systems, social and institutional technologies that instantiate the key insights of epistemology of complex social systems, and the application of insights and tools of epistemology of complex social systems on a practical task in system design. The aim of the course is to introduce students to the conceptual foundations and institutional technologies in the field of fundamental and applied epistemology of complex social systems and their application in the context of urban studies.

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— COMMUNICATION OF THE PROJECT

The course is based on the premise that the communication of a project or idea is not merely a form of representation, but encompasses the entire process of its conception, development, critical reflection, representation, implementation, and subsequent evaluation. Students are encouraged to explore and question conventional methods of project communication, with the aim of developing their own approach.

— COMPARATIVE HOUSING POLICIES

The aim of the course is to introduce students to the fundamental theories of welfare states and their relationship to housing systems, with particular emphasis on comparative approaches to the analysis of housing policies. The course provides an understanding of housing system typologies, the financialisation of housing, and contemporary transformations of housing regimes in Europe. An additional aim is to develop the ability to critically examine the relationship between land policy, spatial planning and forms of urbanisation in shaping different housing models.

— FINAL PROJECT THESIS

The third semester is dedicated to the development and completion of the final project thesis. The thesis consists of both individual and group components. The individual thesis synthesizes the knowledge and skills acquired during the first two semesters of the program, as well as each student's prior academic and professional experience, integrating both scientific and artistic methods. The group component is not constrained by conventional academic formats, but instead "steps out of the box" into the public realm—as a form, an action, or a combination of both as an active form (ref. Keller Easterling). It represents a collective artistic translation, or a collection of individual artistic translations of the project thesis, and stands as a key outcome of the program's interdisciplinary approach.

3.2. TUTORS AND ASSOCIATES

Academic staff at Urban Studies include: Ida Križaj Leko (Head of Urban Studies), Špela Hudnik (Head of DeltaLab); Ivana Katurić, Barbara Karleuša, Aleksandra Deluka-Tibljaš, Nebojša Zelič, Jana Čulek, Leo Modrčin, Maroje Mrduljaš, Emil Jurcan and Marko-Luka Zubčić. The program is further enriched by numerous visiting lecturers, listed at the following [link](#).

4.

THEME:

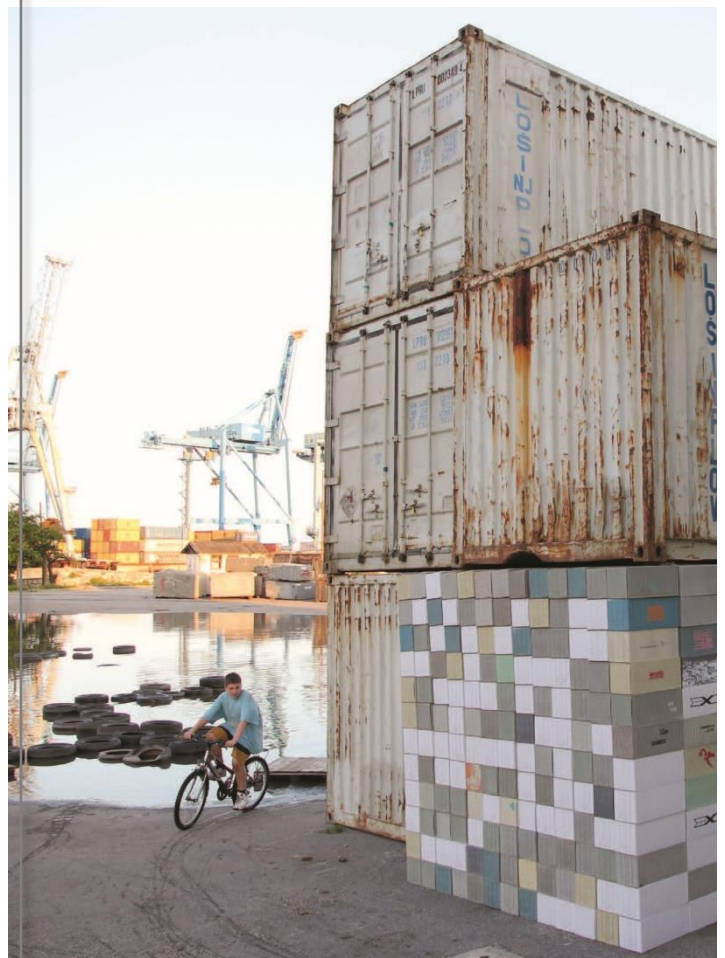
RETHINKING THE CITY-STATE

1. CITY–PORT TO CITY–STATE

The complex and sometimes conflicting duality of a portuary city remains the thematic framework for the third generation students of Urban Studies. Today, the transport infrastructure, mostly automated, unpeopled, and predetermined by the global trade and geopolitics as they are translated to the interests of the state, is often opposed to the quest by the local community for the quality of life and the right to make their own city according to the collective will of its citizens. City-State, a long-abandoned model of social and spatial organization, reappears as a relevant model for researching and designing cities. City-state is a possible ideal, but never an achievable city, a local counterpart to the global battle for dominance.

Is such a city always a collateral city, with its identities, futures, and ways to govern itself predicated on the external powers? Is such a city a mere byproduct of invisible flows of data and goods outside of the democratic will of its citizens? Without the physical borders of a traditional, walled-off city-state, we explore the possibility of such a city to overcome its collateral nature, to define

its own territory, urban rules, identities, as well as the making of its physical space, its own rebuilding as its home-grown profitable industry negotiated on the margins of the global repositioning.



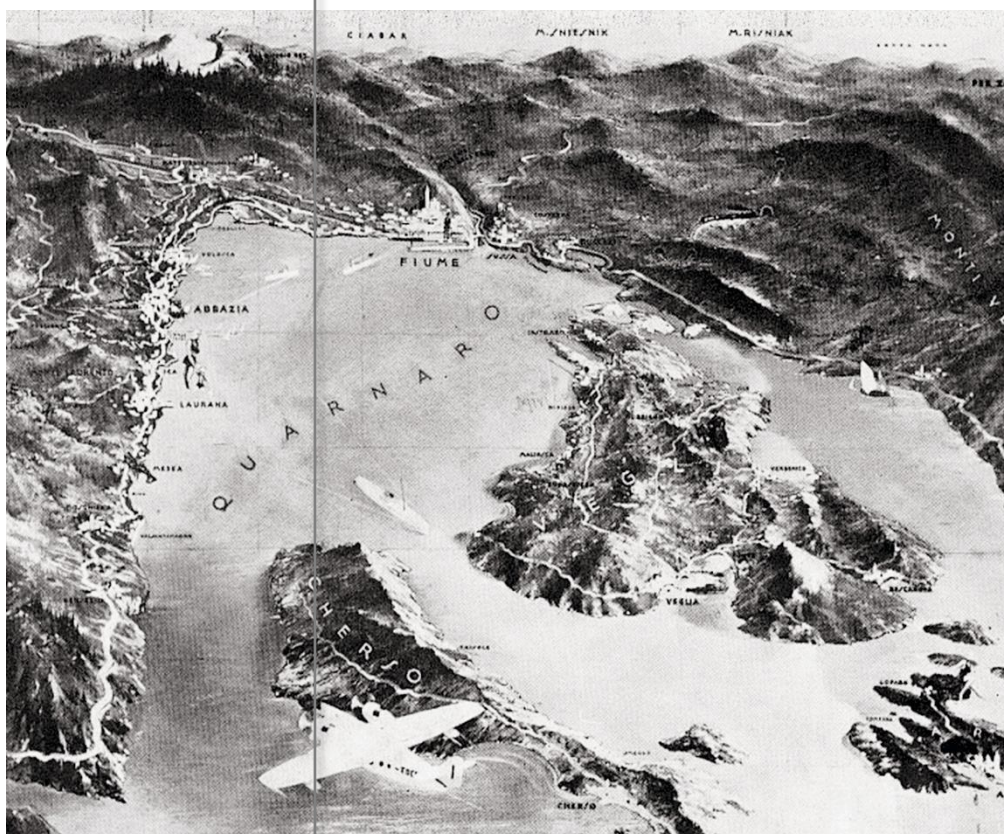
Rijeka's Delta, 2017 / photo: Tanja Kanazir

2. CITY-STATE TO CITY-TERRI(AQUA)TORY

The term city-state is an ambiguous, if metaphorical, term. Nobody would profess a return to the obsolete forms of social organization, a city as the sovereign form of territorial and political organization, particularly not in Rijeka, which has lived through multiple forms of such experiments. However, the unique duality of the city and the state – very physical with its fenced-off territorial division between the city and the port might be akin to the contemporary radicalization of the will to power related to territories, oceans, and flows of data and goods that is detrimental to the ideal of democratic coexistence on a given physical land and maritime space. Reduced to a single spot or the

stretch of the waterfront where goods change modes of transportation or physical state, such as from liquid to gas, the metaphoric city-state is inseparable from its immediate land and sea surroundings.

In the immediate vicinity of Rijeka, the formal seat of the coastal and mountain county, centered on the bay of Kvarner, there has been such a recent resurgence of energy hub-related facilities right next to the still pristine landscape and medieval "shining city on the hill". Our task is to further the newly acquired knowledge on landscape and natural forces that shape contemporary understanding of the world within our studies as they confront both global and local social and political orders.

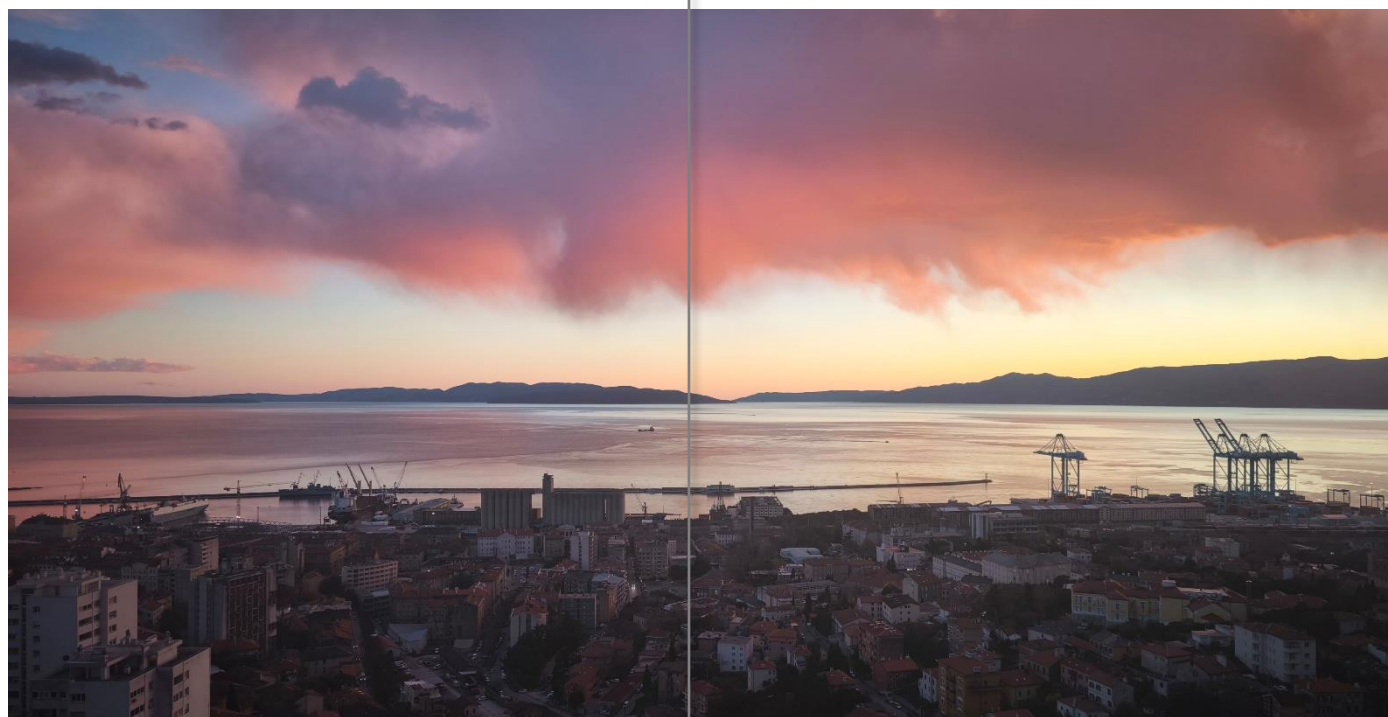


Kvarner bay / source: PPMPH

3. CITY-STATE TO IDEAL CITY

The never fully realized but keenly exercised task of the planning a city and the landscape as the ultimate goal of the disciplines of architecture and urbanism, urban design, urban planning, management and engineering, strategic planning and urban and architectural philosophy that we unite under the umbrella of urban studies, remain relevant as ever precisely in the times of profound changes as postulated by the digital and AI humanities, or as some would call it, digital feudalism.

As the maps of cities, states, and the world at large are redrawn, we propose the city-state as an icon, emoticon, and perhaps a meme of the new fluid and threatening global order we now find ourselves in. We confront it with our urge to study and comprehend it, be the actors in the spectacle of change that is unfolding as we speak, and be the protagonists who can translate the often-peripheral, local position into useful, globally relevant knowledge and skills. We want to discover how, if not to save the world, to shape it into a more livable, just, humanist, even artistic collage of cities, land, and sea.



View of Rijeka from Rastočine, 2026 / DeltaLab

5.

APPLICATION AND ENROLLMENT

5.1. APPLICATION DEADLINE

The deadline for application is October 15 2026, until 12:00 PM.

5.2. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

The right to enroll in the study program is awarded to applicants who:

- have obtained at least a master's degree, i.e., have completed a relevant graduate university program or an integrated undergraduate and graduate university program
- actively use the English language, in speech and writing

5.3. APPLICATION DOCUMENTATION

Application consists of the following documents that the applicant must submit:

- 1 — EXTENDED CV
(In Europass CV format)
- 2 — PROOF OF IDENTITY
(Copy of identity card or passport)
- 3 — PROOF OF QUALIFICATIONS
(Copy of the completed master's degree diploma - applicants who have obtained a foreign diploma must submit a copy of the decision of the competent authority concerning the recognition of the foreign higher education qualification)
- 4 — STATEMENT OF PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE
- 5 — PORTFOLIO
(Portfolio of selected authored (or coauthored) works / projects in a format by applicant's choice (including the possibility of submitting a web link))
- 6 — MOTIVATIONAL LETTER
(a motivation letter up to 1,000 words, in which the applicant presents themselves and their previous work, outlines the fields of study in which they identify their research and/or project interests, and describes the goals they wish to achieve through the study)
- 7 — 1 LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION
- 8 — SIGNED *APPLICATION FORM

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5.4. EVALUATION PROCESS

After the application deadline, all submissions are reviewed to verify eligibility. Only valid applications those that meet the prescribed requirements and include all required documentation are considered in the evaluation process.

The evaluation of valid applications includes a preliminary review of the submitted materials:

- portfolio of selected individual and/or collaborative works or projects,
- motivational letter,
- letter of recommendation.

Based on this evaluation, candidates who meet the criteria are invited to an admission interview.

Admission is based on a positive outcome of the interview, which assesses:

- engagement with interdisciplinarity,
- the applicant's motivation and clearly articulated ambition to expand their disciplinary knowledge
- experience in professional, scientific, or artistic projects, as well as professional and research interests

The final admission decision is made after the interview.

5.5. APPLICATION PROCES

Application documentation must be submitted digitally to the following e-mail address: info@deltalab.hr

The application e-mail subject must have the following form:

[NAME and SURNAME of the Applicant]

Applicants whose submissions are positively evaluated by the Admissions Committee will be notified within three (3) days of the application deadline. They will be granted candidate status and assigned an interview time. Interviews are conducted either in person or online. All applicants will be informed of the final outcome of their application within five (5) days of the interview.

5.6. TUITION

The total tuition fee for all three semesters is 5,400 EUR (1,800 EUR per semester).

Tuition may be paid:

- in full upon enrollment in the 1st semester
- in three installments, paid at the time of enrollment in each semester

Students are also required to pay an enrollment fee in accordance with the decision of the Senate of the UNIRI. This fee is paid once, upon enrollment in the academic year.

Tuition fees may also be paid by a third party on behalf of the student.

6.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

6.1. ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

– YUFE VIRTUAL CAMPUS

All students of the University of Rijeka have the opportunity to enroll, free of charge, in courses, language classes, or professional development programs offered by one of the ten European universities within the YUFE network.

– ERASMUS (BLENDED) MOBILITY

As part of the program, all students of the University of Rijeka may apply for and participate in Erasmus mobility opportunities, including study exchanges, traineeships, and blended mobility (a combination of physical and virtual mobility).

In the summer (2ND) semester of the 2026/2027 academic year, Urban Studies students will have the opportunity to participate in the international Erasmus BIP program CLIMA TREK, developed and organized by the DELTALAB.

6.2. LINKS AND CONTACTS

1 — ADDRESS: Delta 5, 51000 Rijeka

2 — EMAIL: info@deltalab.hr

3 — WEB

4 — FACEBOOK

5 — INSTAGRAM

6 — LINKEDIN

7 — VIMEO

8 — SIP: URBAN STUDIES IN RIJEKA

9 — IDA KRIŽAJ LEKO, Head of the Study
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— JOSIPA LAKLIJA, Coordinator of the Study
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2026.-2028.: Leo Kirinčić & Mia Radić