

Preliminary Course Description: 2nd year, Autumn 2014

Third semester studio (twin studio with AHO Tromsø, AHO, Oslo)

Urban Design, Arctic Cities: New spaces in Tasiilaq, East Greenland.

Tasiilaq is a community of about 2000 people in the Southeast of Greenland, which makes it the capital of the east coast. It is growing due to immigration from settlements in the region, and faces several challenges with regards to sustainable growth. It poses emblematic challenges for an Arctic urban development that is not connected to resource extraction. With a good airplane connection to Reykjavik and a spectacular landscape of mountains, icebergs and wildlife, Tasiilaq could potentially grow as a tourist destination.

The city has infrastructural challenges: the airport, presently located in Kulusuk, on an island off of the mainland, is about to be relocated. The harbor freezes over in the winter, posing a general problem for goods and people transportation.

At the same time the city has a series of urban spaces that need upgrading both with regards to physical design and structural logic. A particular focus will be on the universal design of these meeting places. As a growing city, Tasiilaq has a lack of housing, an asset provided by the state, and the studio will look into the location and design of new dwellings.

In collaboration with the municipality, the studio will develop long-term strategic plans for the community, and students will propose specific landscape, urban design and buildings designs. The final results will be made available to the local community in the form of a joint publication.

The studio will be conducted in collaboration with the Urban Design studio at AHO in Oslo.



photo: visitgreenland, <http://www.greenland.com/en/explore-greenland/oestgroenland/tasiilaq.aspx>

The Arctic is changing rapidly, and nowhere is this more so than in Greenland, a country undergoing radical political, social, economic and demographic changes. In Greenland, urbanization affects the capital Nuuk, but also regional 2nd tier towns like Tasiilaq.

Working with Tasiilaq, the studio stresses the fact that contemporary changes in Arctic cities are not necessarily connected to resource exploration and exploitation, but to a general social structure change.

The studio also challenges conceptions of Arctic communities as non-urban. Concepts of urbanity in the Arctic are largely imported from other urbanized regions. Most recent attempts to develop specific approaches to Urban Design have essentialized landscape relations in design, focused narrowly on mitigation of local climate or reduced urbanity to an engineering issue.

The studios will attempt to develop sets of strong, but complementary logics of urban design that focus on a wide range of issues: social, cultural, infrastructural, ecological, etc. It is the complementarity of these approaches that first and foremost promises sustainability in the future thinking of cities in the arctic.

Specific issues to be addressed in Tasiilaq involve:

- development of a new airport as part of the city
- redevelopment of harbor facilities
- location and design of new housing
- strategies for long-term sustainable urban development with a focus on inclusive (universally designed) urban social space
- development of tourism infrastructure
facilitation and redevelopment of social, commercial and retail services



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Approaches and tools:

In the studio a comparative approach will be adopted. This will be based on a theoretical seminar on sustainable Arctic Urban Design, comparative studies of relevant urban situations. On site, students will perform a wide range of surveys, meet municipal administrators, and engage with members of the local community.

Students will work collaboratively in early stages of the semester. In the following phases of the semester, they will develop programs and design based strategies on an individual basis or in teams of two.

The studio will involve a number of workshops:

- Urban design
- Arctic ecosystems and vegetation (UiT)
- Universal Access in Winter Cities, workshop for 1st and 3rd semester studio in Tromsø in September

Fieldtrip: Late August. 6 days in Tasiilaq, 3 days in Reykjavik, Iceland. Students from both AHO, Oslo, and AHO, Tromsø will participate on the fieldtrip. There will be two collaborative workshops, one in Oslo, and one in Tromsø during the semester. In addition there will be to interim reviews and a final review with an external censor. Students will develop separate exhibitions in Tromsø and Oslo.

The research and final design proposals will be published in a joined studio publication and made available to the local community of Tasiilaq

Literature: will focus on arctic urbanism and arctic urban landscape design. In addition particular readings on the social, landscape and cultural context of East Greenland will be provided.

Learning outcomes

Students will acquire theoretical and practical experience with urban and territorial design in an Arctic context. They will be acquainted with established and experimental approaches to urban, landscape and community mapping. They will acquire skills in collective knowledge building and individual or team based programming and design development.

Literature list to follow