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PROCESS

by Christophe Girot and James Melsom

Landscape architecture is probably one of the last disciplines left capable of delivering a comprehensive and unified design approach for a large-scale site while simultaneously integrating a broad palette of natural and urban factors.

The current watershed problematic in Switzerland is the point of departure of this particular design approach, because it underscores an unprecedented change in the cultural landscapes of this country. Major hydrological projects always require broad political support, and it is our belief that large-scale landscape architecture can contribute significantly to their integration and acceptance.

The 07/08 MAS LA program focuses more specifically on the watershed problematic of Switzerland and its associated landscapes. Recent events attributed to climate change have had a significant impact on the potential use of large-scale landscape environments at the periphery of towns. The efficiency of several centuries of water engineering projects have supported the continued sprawl of the fringes into landscapes now faced with an uncertain future.

Each site chosen for the course addressed issues of permanent transformations and seasonal variations through the perspective of future use and development. The departure point of the studio was to view

the current condition of the site as a frame in an evolving amalgam of elements comprised of hydrology, geology, agriculture, large-scale infrastructure, ecology, and dwelling. The goal was to generate and test various structural approaches to large-scale urban landscape design in situ to help establish a spectrum of possibilities for a given situation.

The Rhine River watershed, stretching from Italy to Lake Constance, where huge volumes of water and 2.5 million cubic metres of sediment are transported.

