

Agadir, Morocco: *Extending the Synthetic City*

After being destroyed by an earthquake in 1960, the coastal city of Agadir, Morocco was completely reconstructed according to **CIAM Athens Charter** principles. Today Agadir is one of the least known, but most uniquely important sites of modern architecture and urbanism in the world. The architecture of Agadir **synthesized** the hybrid culture of a newly independent nation still rooted in Islamic tradition, but also irreversibly transformed by its ties to France. By exposing students to this North African version of modernism, we expect that this studio experience will invite them to develop a broader and more critical understanding of the legacy of modern architecture and the diversity of its global influence.



Projects will focus on strategies for **reanimating and extending** the modernist urban core in ways that address the urban and ecological challenges of current tourism-related coastal development. This will be an **interdisciplinary studio**, including students from architecture, landscape, and planning. Students will also visit other cities in Morocco en route to Agadir in order to develop a sense of its unique urban characteristics as compared to traditional North African cities. We have also already established collaborative connections with architects and urban agencies in Morocco who will provide valuable input and assistance during the studio, thus creating a unique opportunity to engage the recently revived interest in CIAM urbanism as well as current global cultural exchange between the Islamic and Western Worlds.



From Top:

1. Agadir reconstruction master plan
2. Agadir municipal complex
3. Traditional North African *medina*
4. Coast of Agadir circa 2001



**Post-Tabula Rasa:** On February 29, 1960, four years after Moroccan independence and two months before the inauguration of Brasilia, the southern coastal city of Agadir, Morocco was completely destroyed by an earthquake. Only five years later, Agadir was resurrected as a radically modern city, planned on the principles of the CIAM Athens Charter and symbolizing the new forward-looking and independent Morocco. The reconstruction was the culmination of fifty years of bold urban design experimentation by French trained architects and planners in Morocco. The architects of Agadir created a **hybrid urban vernacular** that could synthesize the complex aspirations of a nation still deeply rooted in Islamic tradition, but also irreversibly transformed by its ties to Europe.

**Tourism as Research:** Students will study the principles of inhabitation behind Morocco's unique strain of modern architecture by traveling to several cities. During the trip they will be asked to document the inhabitation of these places as it occurs today. To provide them with a framework for this effort, we will study the innovative **GAMMA Grids** of Michel Ecochard, Georges Candilis and Shadrach Woods, who researched Moroccan modes of inhabitation in the 1950's. At the same time, students will also be asked to document and critically assess how their personal experience as foreigners and tourists produces its own unique mode of inhabitation. The students will maintain written, graphic, photographic, and video journals, thus transforming the travel into a form of research that can be fed into the design exercise.

Our journey will begin in Casablanca where we will visit early projects by the architects who eventually led the 1960's reconstruction, in order to understand the preliminary research that contributed to their successes in Agadir. We will also travel to Marrakech where the students will experience contemporary life in a traditional Moroccan **medina**, giving them context for how the traditional North African city was blended with modernist urbanism to produce the hybrid spatial typologies that one finds in Agadir. Finally, we will arrive in Agadir to closely survey the condition of the 1960's urban core in order to understand how it operates in the current context of the city's rapid transformation into a global tourist destination. Excursions will also be taken to new coastal tourist developments to foster an understanding of Agadir's strategic position in the region. Tours will be organized with the assistance of **Abderrahim Kassou, a local architect and expert in Moroccan modernism** who founded the organization *Casamemoire*, which is dedicated to the preservation and study of Moroccan modernism. Partnerships are also being arranged with M. Chaoui at the National School of Architecture in Rabat and the *Agence Urbaine d'Agadir (Département des études)*. These individuals and agencies will help us gain access to all of the necessary buildings and sites, provide lectures and orientations for the students, and assist us in obtaining the necessary documentation and data for conducting our design exercises.

**Invigoration + Integration:** The master plan of Agadir was for a city of 50,000 people and it now supports a population of 200,000. Plans are currently being made for a major expansion of tourism in Taghazout, which is 15km from the center of Agadir and will add 20,000 beds in the next ten years. Therefore, **extending Agadir's urban core** toward new tourism related development at the periphery will be a major challenge. After the 1960 cataclysm, the strategy for Agadir was to create a more concentrated city where typically urban and other activities could be mixed together to create an intense and rich social life. Current developments threaten the future viability of this model by dispersing density and creating privatized enclaves far outside the city. Boasting one of the best beaches in the country, Agadir now supports more than one quarter of the hotel capacity of Morocco. **Our projects will focus on two major challenges:** The first is **invigoration of the 1960's urban core** by capturing some of this increasing density and activity. The second is developing strategies for **integrating new coastal development** in ways that enhance the architectural heritage and manage ecological impacts. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the studio, students will work at the **variable scales** of master planning, landscape and architecture.

Candilis + Josic: research on Moroccan inhabitation in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*

## Use of Funds

Airfare (13 people @ \$1000 round trip)	\$13,000.00
Lodging (13 people @double occupancy for two weeks)	\$3,000.00
Ground Transportation in Morocco (13 people)	\$1,000.00
Exhibition Design and Production	\$3,000.00
<b>Total Request</b>	<b>\$20,000.00</b>

