The Future of Cities in the 21st Century

By 2015, it is a cliché to point out that more than half the world’s population lives in metropolitan regions -- a figure that may rise to two-thirds of the world’s population by 2050. This flow to the city has produced in its wake massive conurbations or ‘megacities’ of more than 20 million people such as Tokyo, Delhi, Shanghai, Mexico City, Mumbai, and Sao Paulo. These megacities face major challenges in the supply of water, food, clean air, land, infrastructure, housing, energy, sanitation, transportation, jobs, hospitals, schools. On the other hand every 6th city in the world can be defined as a shrinking city, such as New Orleans, Detroit, Prague, Bucharest, Turin, Tbilisi, Odessa, St. Petersburg, Pittsburgh, Budapest, Manchester. Manufacturing shifts, demographic changes, technological innovations, wars and natural disasters are some of the factors leading to such shrinkage. Meanwhile climate change spares few cities, urbicide has become a military strategy, while inequality and uneven development disturb the process of financial globalization.

Be they dense in size or sprawled out, population growing or shrinking, small town or megacity, located in capitals of finance or bankrupted regions, belonging to emerging or industrialized nations – the equitable and inclusive management of urban areas is one of the most important challenges facing the 21st century. Cities confront climate-related risks of breakdown in their services and infrastructure that will affect other variables of the urban complexity unless bold planning and action are taken. Ineffective responses in areas of high urban growth rates often result in spirals of urban poverty and the formation of massive slums and informal settlements. Prosperous cities offer wide opportunities for businesses
and for its citizens an excellent quality of life. They may be artistic hubs, tourist attractors, high-tech centers, financial capitals, environmental innovators, and public transit providers. But fiscal austerity measures and private market investments in urban services often deliver uneven solutions even for well-off cities, neglecting some areas while benefiting others.

How should the problem of cities be approached in the 21st century? The urban problematic requires more than visualization of catastrophe and crisis, more than an analysis of big but often powerless megacities and global cities driven by finance capital. How do we arrive at a concept of a ‘just’ or ‘equitable’ city as the disequilibria and dislocations of the global economy are negotiated across the range and typology of cities? Is it possible to eradicate urban inequality and uneven development? To plan for growth as well as decline? Should cities become denser or multi-nodal, more suburbanized or more centralized? What are the environmental advantages of cities? Is the process of urbanization (linked to ‘factory farming’ and agribusiness) irreversible and rural shrinkage inevitable? Has a global network of cities managed by mayors replaced the network of nations and the specifics of locality? What are the challenges of communication technology on the future of cities? Are there governmental or institutional structures to mediate and manage urban conflicts over scarce resources, gentrification of communities, or vulnerability to risks? How does a city build bridges over social, political and cultural differences to become more equitable and inclusive?

The questions are complexly intertwined, the solutions offered multi-vocal and tentative.

This course will explore answers to these and other questions students may raise via six channels of analysis: 1/ documentary films and television broadcasts; 2/ the internet; 3/ published reports of UN organization, think tanks, non-governmental organizations; 4/ traditional print, newspaper accounts and atlases; 5/ lectures and precepts; 6/ interactive journals and shared reports. Working in small groups or as individuals sharing information, reacting interactively via blackboard or other posts, students will develop on-going journals culminating in reports on “What is to be done about the future of cities in the 21st century?”

**Weekly Assignments:** 1/ attendance in lecture and participation in precept discussions on assigned readings 2/ weekly posting of on-line journal via blogs and adding material to collective archive of global information 3/ completion of mid-term and final examinations.

**Mid-Term Assignment:** take home examination on topics of first six weeks

**Final Assignment:** take home examination on topics of last six weeks: “What is to be done about the future of cities in the 21st century?”
Week 1 What is a city?

*Required Reading


Background Reading:


Week 2 Informal City: Learning from Lagos

*Required Reading and Viewing


Films:

* Lagos Wide & Close: An interactive Journey into an Exploding City (Bregtje van der Haak, 2005)
  Lagos/Koolhaas [videorecording] / a Pieter van Huystee Film (Bregtje van der Haak, 2003).
  Welcome to Lagos Episode 1 & 2 (Will Anderson BBC producer of series, 2010

Background Reading:


**Week 3 Ruined City, Resilient City: the case of New Orleans and Detroit**

**Required Reading and Viewing**

**New Orleans:**


**Detroit:**


**Film:**

Burn (Tom Putnam and Brenna Sanchez, 2012)
*New Orleans: The Big Uneasy* (Harry Shearer, 2010)
Detropia (Heidl Ewing and Rachel Grady, 2012)

**Background Reading:**


Kristina Ford *The Trouble with City Planning What New Orleans can Teach Us* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).


**Week 4 Contested City, Immigrant City**

**Contested City**

*Required Reading and Viewing*


**Film:**

5 Broken Cameras (Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi, 2011)

*House/A House in Jerusalem (Amos Gitai, 1979, 1998)*

**Background Reading for Contested City:**

Ralf Brand and Sara Fregonese *The Radicals’ City Urban Environment, Polarization, Cohesion* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).


[www.frieze.com/issue/article/the_art_ofwar/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/the_art_ofwar/)

**Immigrant City**
*Required Reading and Viewing

*Etienne Balibar, "Uprisings in the Banlieues"

Film: *93 The Memory of a Territory Yamina Benguigui, 2008)  
24 Days: The Truth About the Ilan Halimi Affair (Alexandre Arcady, 2014)

Background Reading for Immigrant City:


Week 5 Parched City, Hungry City

Parched City:

*Required Reading and Viewing


Film:

* Watermark (Jennifer Baichwal & Edward Burtynsky, 2013)
Blue Gold World Water Wars (Sam Bozzo, 2008)
Gasland Can You Light Your Water on Fire? (Josh Fox, 2010)
Tapped (Stephanie Soechtig and Jason Lindsey, 2009)

Background Reading:


Hungry City:

*Required Reading and Viewing


Film:

*The Garden (Scott Hamilton Kennedy, 2008)
Growing Cities (Dan Susman and Andrew Monbouquette, 2013)

Background Reading


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Week 6 Sprawl City, Automobile City

*Required Reading and Viewing


Film:

*The End of Suburbia (Gregory Greene, 2004)
  Reyner Banham Loves LA
  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wlz0NbC-YDo>

Background Reading:


SPRING BREAK

Week 7 Austerity City, Neo-Liberal City

The Politics of Austerity and Debt


**Austerity and Popular Resistance: the case of Athens, Greece**


**Films:**

*The Square (Jejane Noujaim, 2013)
The Pruitt-Igoe Myth (Chad Freidrichs, 2011)

**Background Reading:**


Antonnis Vradis and Dimitri Dalakoglou (eds.) Revolt and Crisis in Greece Between a Present Yet to Pass and a Future Still to Come (London: AK Press and Occupied London, 2011).

**Week 8 Green City, Dense City**

*Required Reading and Viewing*


Film:

*Wasteland (Lucy Walker, 2010)
Addicted to Plastic (Ian Connacher, 2009)
Elemental (Gayatri Roshan and Emmanuel Vaughan-Lee, 2012)

Background Reading:


Mike Hodson and Simon Marvin “Urbanism in the Anthropocene Ecological urbanism or premium ecological enclaves?” City 14, 3 (June 2010): 299 - 313.


**Week 9 Smart City, Information City**

*Required Reading and Viewing*


*Zachary P. Neal “National: The Action is in Cities, but also Between them” and “Global: Nylon holds the World Together” The Connected City: How Network are Shaping the Modern Metropolis (New York: Routledge, 2013): 125 -166, 205 – 214.


**FILM:**

CitizenFour (Laura Poitras, 2014)

**Background Reading:**


Byron Reese Infinite Progress How the Internet and Technology will End Ignorance, Disease, Poverty, Hunger, and War (Austin Texas: Greenleaf Book Group Press, 2013)

**Week 10 Tourist City, Equitable City**

*Required Reading and Viewing*


**Film:**

*Havana: the new art of making ruins (Florian Borchmeyer and Matthias Hentschler, 2006)
Slumdog Millionaire (Danny Boyle and Loveleen Tandan, 2008)*

**Background Reading:**

Mark Frank *Cuban Revelations Behind The Scenes in Havana* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 2013).


**Week 11 Gentrified City, Creative City**

*Required Reading and Viewing*


FILM:
*Gut Renovation (Su Friedrich, 2012)
Ekumenopolis/City without Limits (Uucu Olmayan Sehir, 2011)

Background Reading:


Andrew Harris and Louis Morens Creative City Limits Urban Cultural Economy in an Era of Austerity http://www.ucl.ac.uk/urbanlab/news/urbanlab/docs/creativecitylimits


Peter Marcuse, "The Right to the Creative City- Talk”


Week 12 Future City: the city yet to come

*Required Reading and Viewing


*AbdouMaliq Simone, Chapter 1 “The Near South: Between Megablock and Slum” and “Conclusion: Reimaging a Commons,” Jakarta: Drawing the City Near (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014): loc 495 – 1491, loc 4465-loc 4585.


Film: *24 City (Jia Zhang-Ke, 2008) 2057 City of the Future (Discovery Channel, 2008) Episode 2 The City

Background Reading:


