Seeking Social Justice

Category 1: Outstanding Faculty Achievement in Engaging DEI Issues in the Classroom

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Statement of Impact

My teaching explores how a study of architecture can tell us more about the societies and cultures that produced them, in particular, how the design histories of buildings and cities can expose structures of power and dispossession as well as identify avenues for struggle and resistance. To achieve these objectives, I use three approaches to explore the built environment in my courses:

Firstly, I encourage my students to view the design of buildings and cities as not merely technical and artistic processes but also as products of political motivations and social hierarchies. Class discussions and lectures on past and contemporary works of architecture are organized around the themes of spatial equities, spatial organization as a means of attaining social control, and spatial practices as acts of subversion. For instance, my ARCH 561: Urbanism Themes and Case-studies lecture course is based on how access to safe urban environments is shaped by social determinants like class, ethnicity and gender, how local and global politics configure the competition over urban space and resources, and how any meaningful solutions to urban problems must be sought within their social, economic and political milieu. In my discussion-based seminars, “Slums and the City,” and “Architectures of Occupation and Resistance,” we examine how extremely vulnerable and marginalized urban populations find ways to act politically while remaining deeply entrenched within existing structures of dispossession.

Secondly, a related teaching objective is to trace developments and topics in the fields of architectural design across geographical and cultural boundaries. I ask my students to be particularly mindful of the places and people that are traditionally overlooked or given little attention in dominant architectural discourses. For instance, by incorporating examples from Euro-American and global sites and processes in my lectures and class discussions, I routinely present to my students both western and non-western cities as important places to understand major advancements in architecture and urban design. While discussing modern architecture and planning ideals of western architects and urban theorists like Ebenezer Howard, Clarence Perry, and Le Corbusier, I regularly include evidence of the circulation and practice of their ideas in many non-western cities in order to show how modern planning and architecture developed as a global enterprise. Additionally, I explore themes of urban informality and poverty in the US and other developed countries to emphasize that issues of socio-spatial inequalities are not limited only to developing countries but are of relevance to our local context. Moreover, my courses highlight the often-ignored categories of ‘slums’ in architectural and urban design discourses and assert the importance of informal spaces in contemporary urban design and development.

Finally, my teaching provides students a thorough understanding of important shifts in the design of urban built environments across time and place while introducing the discipline of History of Architecture as a construct. In particular, I encourage my students to be attentive to the various historiographical approaches in the assigned readings, and to understand histories of buildings and places not simply as factual accounts of distinct styles, periods, and movements but also as representative of political dispositions of the historian interpreting the past from a particular position in time and place. While I recognize the importance of chronological organization as an effective pedagogy for students of architectural history, I routinely remind my students to be conscious and critical of the linear construction of historical narratives. My survey courses are structured thematically to maintain rigor and generate stimulating discussions on critical issues across different cultures, regions, and periods, with an overall objective of imparting a non-homogeneous understanding of architectural histories.
ARCH 561: Urbanism Themes and Case Studies                                    Fall 2019

Course Description
What do our cities tell us about us, our values and belief systems, our modes of occupation, and our relationships with each other? What are the differences between imagining the city as an artifact, as a palimpsest, and as a social, economic, and political entity? What characteristics, viewpoints, and moments take precedence over others in the analysis of a city? This course will present an understanding of urbanism and urbanization from a global perspective by focusing on how cities have developed in dynamic relationships with various social, political, and economic forces across time and space. In particular, the course will show how the form of a city symbolizes dominant cultural values, how the nature of work determines the organization of a city, and how the income and race of people regulate their access to urban space. Ultimately, the course will pursue what can we learn about our present and possibly future urban conditions from an understanding of history and theory of urbanism and urbanization.

The course will be structured around key themes and moments in urban history to highlight how sophisticated urban patterns have existed in periods that may be categorized as ‘ancient’ or ‘medieval,’ or in societies that are considered ‘traditional.’ The course will also focus on both ‘ordinary’ and ‘extraordinary’ patterns of urban development that have emerged in different parts of the world. In the context of a city, these include monumental spaces and pedigreed planning paradigms associated with power and privilege, and everyday spaces of poverty and resourcefulness. These monumental and everyday spaces collectively represent how those with or without power influence and interact with the form of a city.

Learning Objectives
This course offers:
1. an overview of how cities have developed in the past, what attempts have been made to improve urban life and for whom;
2. an understanding of the tools and vocabularies necessary to read and analyze global urban forms;
3. an appreciation of certain social, economic, and political conditions such as, poverty, inequality, capitalism, modernism, industrialism, colonialism and neoliberalism as important urban processes.
Urban Village in Shanghai, China

Shanghai is one of the most famous cities in the world; marks of high development, rich economy can be used to describe, but there is a lot nearby the most central area in Shanghai, is covered by low stories traditional village housing. With the fast development of urbanization, many zones have been transformed from rural ground to urban city, those rural buildings then gathered together and formed the so-called ‘urban village’ in China. Since they are not the part of the urban planning, lack of public service (water, electricity, garbage), low cost of living become their first identical image. But at the same time, since the low living cost in these areas, many outsiders from other cities who cannot afford regular housing choose to live here. According to the statistics by local government, 5000 people with local census or temporary stay registration live here; but in fact, more than 30000 people live in this single area.

The high density of population and lack of public service make this place into a hell nearby the heaven. Also the low level of living environment makes the local government to aim them as the first priority problem during urbanization. However, since it locates at the most central area of this identical major city in the world, the price of every lot in this city is hyperbolic high, government and
developers cannot afford to rebuild this area (much expensive than LA). And the property owners in this area all become ‘riches that will never come true’. But these landowners’ living standard can be judged as poor people.
The images above showcase a bus stop located in Birmingham, Alabama. On the edges of an affluent neighborhood, a pole and small sign indicates a bus stop at the curb of the busiest highway in the city. Temperatures in the South can easily reach over one hundred degrees for close to 7 months of the year and in the winter getting as low as twenty degrees.

Alex Jamroz
University of Southern California
Urbanism Themes and Case Studies
Faiza Moatasim
Course Description

How do the billion people in slums in cities live and work? What is the relationship of the slum to the city, and of slum dwellers to urban life and economy in cities around the world? In this course we will focus on the cultural, social, economic, and political processes that shape this particular urban housing form. The course will also investigate the effects of local and global policies and trends on the experiences of those living and working in slums and squatter settlements around the world.

This course focuses on both classic and contemporary scholarship, housing designs, reports, and documentaries that investigate slums and squatter settlements from architectural, policy, human rights, political, and economic perspectives. The course will cover general theories on urban poverty, architectural responses to low-income housing, and practical approaches towards the management of slums and squatter settlements in cities around the world.

Learning Objectives

This course offers:

1. a comprehensive understanding of slums as an important global housing type;
2. an exploration of important economic and political themes related to urban poverty and socio-spatial inequity;
3. a critical analysis of regional and global politics and economics from the perspective of slums and squatter settlements.
Short Exercise: Spaces and Typologies of Homelessness in Los Angeles

“Fantasy Vs Reality” RV Living
Kim Tashman

BY PERMIT ONLY
Emily Doyle and Chentian Lu
Description:
What does the architecture of buildings and cities tell us about systematic oppression and political control? What options for resistance exist in deeply entrenched structures of domination and dispossession? In this course, we will explore how the design of the built environment is shaped by social hierarchies and political agendas, in particular, how architectural and urban design can be used as a tool for modeling social behavior and maintaining political control. In addition, we will examine how occupation and resistance are in constant flux, and how the dispossessed manage to find ways to act politically and resist strategies of domination through their everyday spatial practices and tactics.

We will explore these themes by examining various theoretical frameworks and types of spaces in the modern era (from the nineteenth century) that developed under the influence of dominant economic processes (such as, industrialization, capitalism, and neoliberalism), and political developments (such as, imperialism, colonialism, post-colonialism and globalization) to control or dispossess large sections of the population. We will also examine the spatial practices and tactics developed by marginalized populations to subvert and resist dominant structures of power.

Learning Objectives
The course aims:
- to demonstrate the relevance of architecture and planning perspectives to the study of power and resistance in modern society;
- to encourage students to think about the design of built environments not only as technical processes, but also as a product of political motivations and social hierarchies;
- to enable students to decipher social beliefs systems and political agendas underlying various architectural and planning schemes.
Spatial Strategies for Social Control

Spatial organization has been used as a tool for social control for centuries. Throughout history, planners have sought to balance the conflicting demands of our society—social equity, economic growth, environmental sustainability and aesthetic appeal. These varying needs of our society often lead to a rigorous planning process that may result in strategies such as a formal master plan for an entire city or metropolitan area, a neighborhood plan or a set of policy alternatives. While these urban planning solutions are directly aimed towards solving a particular problem, they are socially and politically deterministic and specifically target human behavior to change existing conditions. Since space and human behavior are inherently related, the core of these strategies is often geared towards changing society by modifying social behavior. These strategies that employ space to change human behavior have been implemented by men with power and resources in the past where their own personal agendas are often entwined with their proposals to improve social conditions. Hence, the aim of this paper is to discuss design strategies and approaches proposed by social reformers, an administrator and an architect and analyze how they sought to model human behavior by dictating the ways human population interacted with their spaces through radical institutions, regularization of cities, utopian city planning and defamiliarization tactics.
Social reformers in the past have established radical institutions to carry out their social agenda with the intent of uplifting the lower classes of the society by modifying their behavior. To show that human character was closely linked to one’s physical and social circumstances, social reformer Robert Owen initiated the Institute for the Formation of Character in 1816 to provide an environment where the character of the children of his factory workers could be “correctly” formed and further put on public display to demonstrate his philosophy. In “A New View of Society”, Owen states that people are a product of their surroundings and only if placed under the suitable environmental influences, people’s behavior would improve (Owen 31). Owen’s beliefs correlate to Mary Douglas’ *Purity and Danger*, in which she argues that dirt is the by-product of a system that is incompatible with the system, and while it may not be included in the system, it is still being controlled (Douglas 35). Owen’s approach is similar to Douglas’ theory in that it shows how, “if uncleanliness is matter out of place, we must approach it through order” (Douglas 40). The institute served as a test bed for these ideas– a building with a central ninety by forty foot room specially designed with galleries for spectators (Lambert 419). The children were taught dancing, group singing and military drills which they performed for the visiting audiences sitting in the galleries above the classroom. This public display was meant to show the results of an education that could shape human behavior, in this case of the “regenerated” paupers that shocked the public by defying the expectations and the norms that society set for them (Lambert 420). Through these performances, Owen’s main aim was to allow the visiting public to reidentify the pauper children as those with suitable character to be fit for their society. However, it is extremely problematic that Owen’s beliefs were based on correcting the behavior of the lower classes as though they were inherently
flawed (dirt) and could only be incorporated into the society (system) if they were taught to behave like those above them.

A popular spatial organization strategy is the regularization of a city with the main aim of imposing rational order to control social revolutions. The most relevant example is of administrator Georges Haussmann’s renovation of Paris in the 1850s under Napoléon III to specifically suppress uprisings and revolts against the regime. The narrow streets of the center allowed large numbers of people to assemble from the neighboring slums to carry out acts of violence as the mobs would block the movement of the military forces with impromptu barricades (Chapman 182). Without any roads for the troops to control violence, Paris was slowly succumbing to revolutionaries. Haussmann’s response to the problem was to destroy working class quartiers (Chapman 183), and several poor districts like Arcis and the Île de la Cité
slums were completely demolished, forcing the targeted people to relocate outside the city.

Next, he laid out a network of wide boulevards and roads that made militaristic sense by cutting through the city’s impoverished areas associated with insurgence to control the populations. This network of roads connected the center of the city to the outer ring of barracks that were meant to seal off the most dangerous parts as well as allowed troops to be rapidly deployed to the center (Chapman 183). In *Seeing Like a State*, James Scott argues that this reconstruction of Paris bears a resemblance to the logic behind the transformation of old-growth forests into scientific forests designed for unitary fiscal management. There was the same emphasis on simplification, legibility, straight lines, central management and a synoptic view of the ensemble that led to the redevelopment of Paris (Scott 59). Legibility was achieved by the segregation of the population, in this case by class and function. In doing so, Haussmann’s strategies allowed for control of the “problematic” populations of the city.
Modern utopian planning emerged as a direct response to the rise of industrialized cities, and alternate models of cities were proposed to deal with issues of overcrowding and deteriorating living standards of the working class population. Social reformer Ebenezer Howard proposed the idea of the Garden City that combined the ideals of town and country to create town-country in order to provide the working class with an alternative option to the squalid living and working environments in the city (Butcher par. 2). The design was a deliberate departure from the individualistic capitalist system and leaned towards the rising ideals of socialism based on tangible ideas of communal land ownership. Howard, who closely aligned himself with the cooperative movement, sought to provide the working class with a decent home and aimed to reduce their alienation within the society (Clark 87). He proposed self-contained communities that were surrounded by greenbelts that were planned on a concentric
pattern with six radial boulevards. Each city would radiate outwards from a central garden surrounded by civic institutions, public parks, schools, churches, housing and finally heavy industrial and warehouses would be situated at the edges (Howard 1). The main focus was on collective land ownership where every citizen would be a shareholder of the community. Rather than being exploited and controlled by the capitalist economy, the profits would be reinvested in civic facilities to improve the overall quality of living (Wainwright par. 4). Hence, by providing the workers with a substitute to living in dilapidated conditions in the city bound by capitalist ideals, Howard sought to alter the declining social conditions by creating a new way of life that was founded on collectivism and socialism.

Planners have employed defamiliarization tactics such as standardized architecture in modernist cities to evoke homogenous responses to the agenda of creating a new way of life. In an attempt to encourage collective living, architect and urban planner Lúcio Costa proposed an unfamiliar type of residential organization in Brasilia, called the superquadra, that attempted to

*Plan for Garden City by Ebenezer Howard (Howard [Garden Cities of Tomorrow])*
create a more egalitarian Brazilian society by greatly reducing the private residential sphere. Through experimentation with a standardized type of living type for all citizens, Costa believed that the unequal society could be transformed. Superquadra or superblocks are a type of collective dwelling that was heavily influenced by Soviet constructivist apartments that serve as self-sufficient neighborhoods (Holston 164). Each superquadra, 240 by 240 meters consisted of 8 to 12 uniform apartment buildings along with commercial, educational and recreational buildings to serve the needs of the community. Through these standardized apartment buildings, Costa envisioned the integration of all classes in the residential areas with equal access to public facilities which would ultimately flatten social hierarchy. The plan attempts to reduce the social spaces within the private apartments and encourages interaction through the collective spaces shared by the apartment buildings. Perhaps the most drastic feature of these apartment buildings was the large glazed façade opening into the central square where the private domain would be exposed to public scrutiny (Holston 184) as a form of social levelling. The standardization and transparency of the apartment facades can be seen as an ideological and political tactic as it denies an individual expression of status and wealth in architecture (Holston 183) to represent an “egalitarian, rational social order” (Holston 173) through the elevation of the building. This hypervisibility achieved through the glass façade can be seen as an example of how discipline can be achieved through manipulation of space. Similar to Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon, Michel Foucault’s critique that human behavior and power can be automated and internalized if people are made the object of viewing rather than hiding are extremely relevant to this example. Hence, Costa employed the tactic of defamiliarization in the
realm of residential architecture to create a new way of life in Brasilia that promoted the physical intersection of all classes.

Glazed façade of the apartment building in a superquadra (Fonck)

To conclude, the examples mentioned above demonstrate how various key players of the society have sought to introduce and implement design strategies to bring about change and reform the declining social conditions by targeting specific groups through social control. While the aim of these strategies is almost always to improve the declining living conditions of the impoverished, they are often tainted with larger personal agendas. The extent of the success of these strategies can also be argued— for instance, in the case of Haussmann’s Paris, social control by demolition of areas prone to insurrection had detrimental consequences on the poor who had to forcefully relocate to the outskirts of the city. Robert Owen’s Institute for the Formation of Character has also been heavily criticized for modelling socially accepted
human behavior at a superficial level by exploitation of the children of Owen’s poor factory workers, despite the inherent good intent in theory. Howard’s proposal of the Garden City, while carefully planned to replace capitalism by mutual cooperation, proved to be unsuccessful after the failure of two cities created on his model. Similarly, Costa’s concept for the superquadra proved to be ineffective as the layout of the apartment blocks decreased socialization and people covered the exposed glass façade with curtains, blinds and even bird cages. Hence, while design strategies may solve issues in theory, the consequences might not be the same in reality as the targeted groups may respond differently than anticipated.
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