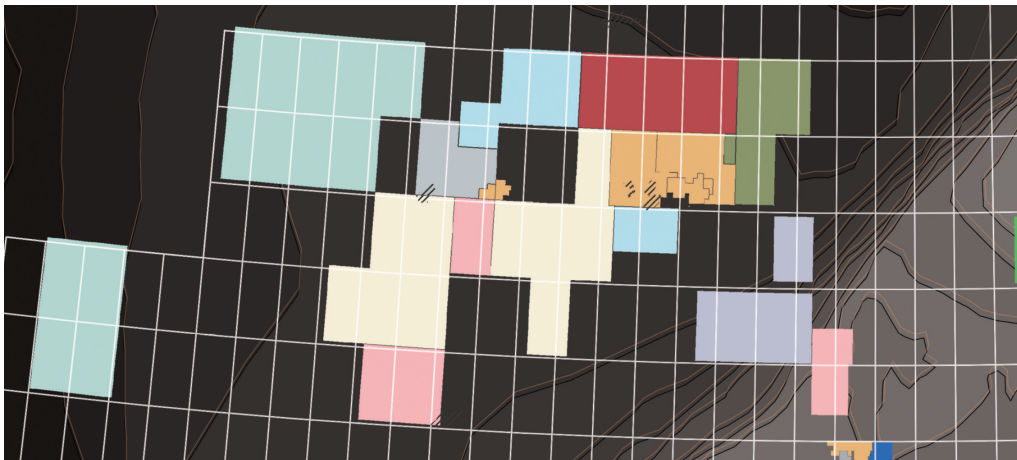


CONTEMPORARY URBANISMS

Tuesdays 10:00-12:30 | 3 Credit Hours



Transnational Urbanization of the Norwegian Sea, Stefanos Theodorou, 2014

If, roughly from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth, a coded language may be said to have existed on the practical basis of a specific relationship between town, country and political territory, a language found on classical perspective and Euclidean space, why and how did this coded system collapse? Should an attempt be made to reconstruct that language, which was common to the various groups making up the society – to users and inhabitants, to the authorities and to the technicians (architects, urbanists, planners)? —Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 1974

CONTEMPORARY URBANISMS addresses the urban structure of cities focusing on the relationship of the city's built environment to politics, economics, societies and cultures. The course presents the methodological approaches taken by theories, practices and discourses on the transscalar, transdisciplinary and intercultural phenomena of urbanization in the city, the countryside, the environment and the earth. Ultimately, the critical survey traces the evolution and eventual devolution of the Western architectural and urban canon, or master-narrative.

The trajectory of urbanism (from the genesis of the modern Western European city through the late 19th- and early 20th-centuries) institutionalized and instrumentalized a scientific urban practice. This master narrative was based on a series of select canonical events in modern movement architecture. (Here, master narrative may be substituted with the master plan.) The debates in architecture and urbanism during the post-WWII era were part of a wide-ranging series of deep interrogations into the legitimacy (and unmaking) of the master- or meta-narrative in philosophy, the arts and, eventually, the sciences. Such structures have proved to be evermore problematic when considering the much more complex and layered environments that constitute today's contemporary cities. The perceived inadequacies of Modernism preceding Post-Modernism and its aftershocks (e.g., political scientist Francis Fukuyama's end of history thesis in *The End of History and the Last Man*, 1992) informed various rational and irrational counter-directions in urban theory and urban cultural production that led to social, architectural, economical, cultural and environmental transformations of urban life.

Today, architects and urbanists are engaged with the increasing relevance of studying the intertwining of histories and cultures. Debates over strategies that might either loosely guide or tightly control the future of cities have addressed subjects such as growth vs shrinkage; de-colonial urban development; the interrogation of legal frameworks; historic preservation and the modern city; and infrastructures of energy, food, water and waste. Students are challenged to expand their literacy on urbanism in relation to architecture, planning, geography and environmental and cultural studies.

Textbook and Requirements

Required class textbook: David Grahame Shane, *Recombinant Urbanism: Conceptual Modeling in Architecture, Urban Design and City Theory*, London, Academy Press, 2005. Additional readings tba. Students are required to read intensively; write responses and lead discussion on the readings; and develop/present their work on a semester-long writing assignment.