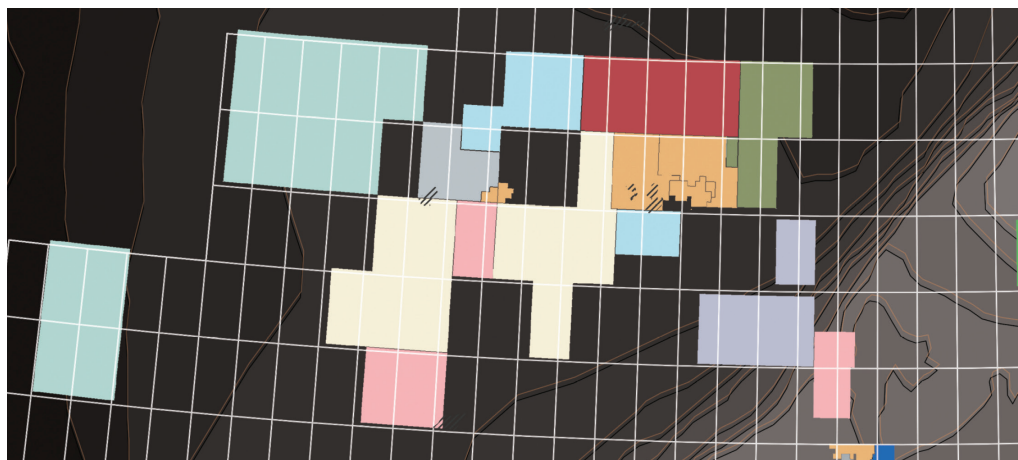


CONTEMPORARY URBANISMS

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 growth and structure of cities focusing on the dynamic relationship of the urban spatial environment to politics, economics, societies and cultures. The course presents the analytic and cross-cultural approaches taken by theories, practices and discourses on the transscalar and transdisciplinary urbanization of 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 city in northern Europe 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) led to numerous rational and irrational counter-directions in urban theory and urban cultural production determining the social, architectural, economical, historical and environmental transformations of urban life.

More recently, architects and urbanists have engaged in debates over conditions that might either loosely guide or tightly control the future of cities, including arguments on growth vs shrinkage; de-colonial urban development; interrogation of legal frameworks; contradictions of historic preservation and the modern city; infrastructures of energy, food, water and waste. Students are challenged to expand their literacy on urbanism in relation to architecture, planning, geography, environmental studies and cultural knowledge.

Textbook and Requirements

Required class textbook: David Grahame Shane, *Recombinant Urbanism: Conceptual Modeling in Architecture, Urban Design and City Theory*, London, Academy Press, 2005. Recommended readings by Pierre Bélanger, Lieven De Cauter, Michel Foucault, Kevin Lynch, Walter Mignolo, Rem Koolhaas, Anthony Vidler. 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.