

Spring 2013
School of Architecture and Planning
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

11.302J/4.253J: Urban Design Politics

Units: 3-0-9 (H)

Prof. Lawrence Vale, Office: 10-497M, x3-0561, ljvale@mit.edu

Time: Mondays 3-6 p.m. in 10-401

Enrollment limited to 15 students, by permission of instructor

Office Hours: by appointment

This is a seminar about the ways that urban design contributes to the distribution of political power and resources in cities.

“Design,” in this view, is not some value-neutral aesthetic applied to efforts at urban development but is, instead, an integral part of the motives driving that development. Though many urban designers and architects often seem to regard “good design” as somehow independent from social and political factors affecting its production and use, design efforts are influenced by politics in at least two important ways. First, urban design proposals may be subject to challenge by a variety of groups during the planning process. Second, political values, whether tacit or explicit, are encoded in the resultant designs.

The class investigates the nature of the relations between built form and political purposes through close examination of a wide variety of situations where public and private sector design commissions and planning processes have been clearly motivated by political pressures, as well as situations where the political assumptions have remained more tacit. We will explore cases from both developed and developing countries.

Applying insights from architects, planners, political scientists, historians, anthropologists, and philosophers, we will analyze urban design from a variety of perspectives, including gender-based and class-based critiques. Cases discussed will include extreme examples of politically charged environments: Hitler’s megalomaniacal plan for Berlin and designs for new capital cities around the world (Washington, D.C., New Delhi, Canberra, Brasília, etc.). We will then explore less extreme settings for urban design-politics closer to home, by focusing on the origins and redevelopment of American public housing. Finally, the class will conclude with sessions exploring the design-politics of urban security and “urban resilience”—the attempt to rebuild (socially, politically, urbanistically) following sudden disasters.

The format of the class will be part slide lecture, part discussion. Participants will be responsible for four things: 1) Completion of readings in advance of each class (those marked with an asterisk will be assigned to specific seminar participants; all others are to be read by everyone); 2) Involvement in seminar discussions, including at least one short presentation; 3) A short paper that uses selected readings to extract the “design-politics” of a place or project; 4) A term paper on a topic analyzing both the design and political history of an urban design intervention, to be presented during the final sessions of the class.

February 11

Introduction: Urban “Design-Politics”: From MIT to “The Capital of the World”

February 19 (Monday Classes Meet on Tuesday)

Three Perspectives on the Politics of Design

1. Political Science: How is political power constructed through space?

Murray Edelman, “Architecture, Spaces, and Social Order,” in Edelman, *From Art to Politics: How Artistic Creations Shape Political Conceptions* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 73-90.

2. History: How is the past manipulated to serve the present?

Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” from Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1-14.

3. Philosophy: How is meaning conveyed?

Nelson Goodman, “How Buildings Mean,” in Goodman and Catherine Elgin, *Reconceptions in Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), pp. 31-48.

February 25

Four More Perspectives on the Politics of Design

1. Gender Studies: How does gender affect design?

Daphne Spain, “Space and Status,” in *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill, NC: U. of North Carolina Press, 1992), pp. 1-29.

Susan Fainstein and Lisa J. Servon, “Introduction: The Intersection Between Planning and Gender,” in Fainstein and Servon, eds., *Gender and Planning: A Reader* (Rutgers University Press, 2005), pp. 1-12.

Optional:

Helen Jarvis (with Paula Kantor and Jonathan Cloke) “Homes, Jobs, Communities and Networks” in *Cities and Gender* (Routledge, 2009), pp. 186-215).

2. Political Economy: Who benefits from urban development?

John R. Logan, and Harvey L. Molotch, "The Social Construction of Cities," in *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1987), pp. 1-12.

Optional:

Sharon Zukin, "Market, Place and Landscape," in *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 3-23.

3. Anthropology: Whose perspective matters?

Lisa Peattie, "Representation" in *Planning: Rethinking Ciudad Guayana* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987), pp. 111-152.

4. Geography: How does urban space affect justice?

Edward W. Soja, "On the Production of Unjust Geographies," and "Building a Spatial Theory of Justice," in *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), pp. 31-66 and pp. 67-110.

First Paper Assigned: Due in Class March 11, but presented to the class on March 18.

March 4

**The Political Extremes of Urban Design 1--
Berlin, From Pre-War to Post-Wall**

Stephen Helmer, *Hitler's Berlin: The Speer Plans for Reshaping the Central City* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), pp. 27-48.

Albert Speer, "Responsibility and Response," *Journal of Architectural Education*, 32, 2 (1978), p. 18.

*Leon Krier, "Forward Comrades, We Must Go Back," *Oppositions* 24 (September 1981), pp. 26-37.

*Joan Ockman, "The Most Interesting Form of Lie," *Oppositions* 24 (September 1981), pp. 38-47 (Response to Krier).

Brian Ladd, "Nazi Berlin," "Divided Berlin," and "Capital of the New Germany," in *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp 127-235.

Michael Z. Wise, "Master Plan for a Government District," "Choosing a Chancellery," and "Norman Foster's Reichstag: Illuminating Shadows of the Past," in Wise, *Capital Dilemma: Germany's Search for a New Architecture of Democracy* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), pp. 57-80, 121-134.

Jennifer Jordan, "Blank Slates and Authentic Traces: Memorial Culture in Berlin after 1945," in *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond* (Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 23-58.

March 11

The Political Extremes of Urban Design 2--Capital Cities

Required reading:

Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (London: Routledge, 2008, 2nd edition), Chapters 3-5.

Lawrence J. Vale, "Mediated Monuments and National Identity," *Journal of Architecture* (Winter 1999), pp. 391-408.

*Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

*Charles T. Goodsell, *The Social Meaning of Civic Space: Studying Political Authority Through Architecture* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1988).

March 18: **Discussion of Exercise 1**

March 25: **No Class: Spring Break**

April 1: **The Design-Politics of Developing Public Housing**

*Walter Gropius, "Sociological Premises for the Minimum Dwelling of Urban Industrial Populations," and "Houses, Walk-ups or Highrise Apartment Blocks?" from *The Scope of Total Architecture* (1955), pp. 104-35.

Lawrence J. Vale, "Building Selective Collectives," in *From the Puritans to the Projects: Public Housing and Public Neighbors* (Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 162-266

Lawrence J. Vale, "Standardizing Public Housing," in Eran Ben-Joseph and Terry Szold, eds., *Regulating Place: Standards and the Shaping of Urban America* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

April 8: **The Design-Politics of Redeveloping Public Housing**

Karen A. Franck and Michael Mostoller, "From Courts to Open Space to Streets: Changes in the Site Design of U.S. Public Housing," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 12,3 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 186-220.

*Oscar Newman, "Housing Design and the Control of Behavior" and "Site-Planning Guidelines for Housing," from *Community of Interest* (1980), pp. 48-77 and 193-213.

Peter Calthorpe, "HOPE VI and New Urbanism," in Henry Cisneros and Lora Engdahl, eds., *From Despair to Hope: HOPE VI and the New Promise of Public Housing in America's Cities* (Urban Institute Press, 2009), pp. 49-64.

April 15: No Class—Patriots' Day

April 22: **The Design-Politics of Urban Security**

Reading:

Setha Low, "Unlocking the Gated Community," in *Behind the Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America* (Routledge, 2004), pp. 7-26.

Robert H. Nelson, "Introduction: A Constitutional Revolution," in *Private Neighborhoods and the Transformation of Local Government* (Urban Institute Press, 2005), pp. 1-18.

Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Site and Urban Design for Security: Guidance Against Potential Terrorist Attacks, FEMA 430* (Washington, D.C.: FEMA, December 2007). *Skim chapters 1 and 4, downloadable from <http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=3135>.*

Jon Coaffee, David Murakami Wood, and Peter Rogers, "Controlling the Risky City" and "The Intensification of Control: Towards Urban Resilience," in *The Everyday Resilience of the City: How Cities Respond to Terrorism and Disaster* (Palgrave Macmillan 2008), pp. 67-109.

April 29:

The Design-Politics of Urban Resilience

Lawrence J. Vale and Thomas J. Campanella, “Introduction: The Cities Rise Again,” and “Conclusion: Axioms of Resilience,” from *The Resilient City: How Modern Cities Recover from Disaster* (Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 3-23 and 335-355.

Jon Coaffee, David Murakami Wood, and Peter Rogers, “States of Protection and Emergency: The Rise of Resilience,” in *The Everyday Resilience of the City: How Cities Respond to Terrorism and Disaster* (Palgrave Macmillan 2008), pp. 110-132.

Naomi Klein, “Blanking the Beach: The Second Tsunami” and “Disaster Apartheid: A World of Green Zones and Red Zones,” in *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Metropolitan Books, 2007), pp. 385-422.

May 6

Student Presentations 1

May 13

Student Presentations 2

Departmental Note on Disabilities and Academic Misconduct:

Disabilities

If you have a documented disability, or any other problem you think may affect your ability to perform in class, please see me early in the semester so that arrangements may be made to accommodate you.

Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism and cheating are both academic crimes. Never (1) turn in an assignment that you did not write yourself, or (2) turn in an assignment for this class that you previously turned in for another class. Please see me if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism.