

# History and Theory of Urban Interventions

## Harvard GSD

Urban Planning and Design  
*Lecture - 4 credits* (HIS 0411500)  
Monday / Wednesday  
11:30 - 1:00 / Gund 111

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This class provides a high-intensity introduction to the history and theory of urban planning practice under modern capitalism. Building upon an interdisciplinary literature drawn from planning theory and history as well as urban social science (geography, sociology, political science, history), we explore the emergence, development and continual transformation of urban planning in relation to changing configurations of capitalist urbanization, modern state power and sociopolitical struggle. We also explore (a) the changing sites and targets of planning intervention, from the neighborhood, city and regional scales to those of the metropolis, national economy and beyond, (b) the evolution of political and institutional struggles regarding its instruments, goals and constituencies, and (c) the question of which alternative (more efficient, equitable, socially just, democratic and/or environmentally sustainable) planning strategies and pathways of urban development were suppressed or bypassed during the course of territorial development. The course is organized in three main parts.

- Part One surveys several key intellectual perspectives on the nature of planning in modern capitalist social formations. Key questions include: What is planning, and how and why does it emerge? How are planning practices and visions linked to broader structures of economic and political life, including formations of social power? How are the sites and targets of planning constructed, and how do they change across time and space? Do planners serve private interests or the public good? How should we approach the history of planning under modern capitalism? How are cycles of planning intervention linked to processes of capitalist urbanization?
- Part Two explores some of the key episodes, movements and pioneering figures in the history of modern urban planning since the first industrial revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although we focus in some detail on the ideas, visions and practices of well-known urban, regional and territorial planners, we embed their activities within the historically and geographically specific constraints, opportunities and struggles associated with each of the major phases of modern capitalist urbanization and associated formations of national state power. In thus proceeding, we explore the conflictual interaction of capitalist firms, property developers (rentiers), political institutions and social movements at various spatial scales, and the consequences of that interaction for the institutional, legal, spatial and ideological terrains of “planning” and for the broader geographies of urban development. Here we also attend to the question of “roads not taken” during the history of urban and territorial planning in the US and beyond.

- Part Three offers a broad overview of some key lines of debate in contemporary planning theory. What is the appropriate role of planning in a period of heightened fiscal austerity and global financial crisis, in which dominant ideologies promote a reduced role of state institutions in reorganizing the social fabric and the built environment? We consider several approaches that attempt to illuminate the changing nature of contemporary urbanism and the possible role of planning in reshaping cities, regions, territories and the planet as a whole.

### **Teaching Fellow**

- Ling Fan: [lfan@gsd.harvard.edu](mailto:lfan@gsd.harvard.edu)

### **Teaching Assistant**

- Venkata (Krishna) Matturi: [vmatturi@gsd.harvard.edu](mailto:vmatturi@gsd.harvard.edu)

### **Office hours**

Monday and Tuesday, 3:30 to 5pm, by appointment only. Please schedule an appointment by emailing [neil.brenner.office@gmail.com](mailto:neil.brenner.office@gmail.com). The schedule is managed by Maria Moran of the GSD Advanced Studies Program. The schedule fills up rapidly during the semester; please send us your meeting request with plenty of advance notice. Your email will be answered as soon as possible.

### **Course website**

Unless otherwise noted, all course materials will be made available via the i-sites website:

<http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k87506>

Please print your own copies or download them to a device on which you can mark up / highlight the text and take appropriate notes. We will also try to arrange to make available a self-published course reader on Lulu.com. For any issues relating to readings or the i-sites interface, please contact Teaching Assistant Krishna Matturi directly.

### Books recommended for purchase

- Peter Hall and Mark Tewdwr-Jones, *Urban and Regional Planning*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. New York and London: Routledge, 2011 (available for purchase in the Harvard Coop).
- Scott Campbell and Susan Fainstein eds., *Readings in Planning Theory*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Blackwell: Malden, Mass.: 2003.
- Eugenie Birch ed., *The Urban and Regional Planning Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

### Course requirements

- (1) Regular attendance at all lectures and discussion sections. You are expected to have read all of the assigned readings prior to the lecture for which they are assigned. My expectation is that you will spend approximately two hours of reading time in preparation for each of our classes (four hours per week). Schedule of discussion sections with your Teaching Fellow to be announced.
- (2) A total of 6 short essays (up to 3 pages each) on key issues raised in the readings. These should be submitted at regular two week intervals until the end of the term. The essays are not summaries but critical engagements with key issues raised in one or more of the assigned readings. You may choose your topic but each of these essays should have a title and a main line of argumentation and/or questioning in relation to one or more readings assigned during the preceding two weeks.
- (3) Final project on “Excavating planning history for roads not taken” (12-15 pages including bibliography—additional images, maps and representational materials may be added). In this short paper, you will excavate an historical approach to a major urban planning problem (e.g., housing, transportation, infrastructure development, labor market development, democratic accountability, territorial organization, etc.) that was proposed at some point during the last 125 years but never systematically adopted on a widespread scale. Your task is to make a case for the reintroduction of some aspect of that approach in relation to contemporary urban and territorial conditions and challenges. In so doing, you should explain why the approach in question was never widely adopted and make a strong argument for its contemporary viability in relation to a key normative priority of your choosing—e.g., efficiency, democratic accountability, justice, environmental sustainability, etc.  
**Deadline:** 10 December.

**Important note on plagiarism:**

- Please familiarize yourself with the Harvard College policy on plagiarism:

<http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&pageid=icb.page355322>

<http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&pageid=icb.page342054>

- In my classes, I adhere to a zero-tolerance policy on cases of plagiarism: failure to adopt appropriate citational practices, as outlined in the website links above, will result in an automatic failing grade for this class. Do not hesitate to ask us if you have any questions about a citation-related question.

**Background texts**

The intellectual terrain covered in this class is vast, complex and controversial. Weekly reading assignments correspond to those texts I will be discussing in the lectures. Rather than list supplementary readings on a weekly basis, I also recommend the below texts, which offer a broad and deep overview of the major issues covered in this course. I will often refer to sections of these texts in framing our lectures and discussions. These texts also contain bibliographies that point towards more detailed investigations and lines of inquiry. Students are strongly encouraged to use the below list as a starting point for exploring the issues that most closely correspond to your own research interests and practical agendas.

*History and theory of modern capitalist urban / regional development*

- Lewis Mumford, *The City in History*. New York: Harcourt, 1961.
- Richard LeGates and Frederick Stout eds., *The City Reader*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Susan Fainstein and Scott Campbell eds., *Readings in Urban Theory*, 3rd Edition. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 2011.
- Phil Kasinitz ed., *Metropolis: Center and Symbol of our Times*. New York: NYU Press, 1995.
- Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000.
- David Harvey, *The Urban Experience*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.
- Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson eds., *The Blackwell City Reader*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 2010.
- Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*. New York: Basic, 1987.
- Robert Fogelson, *Planning the Capitalist City*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, N.J., 1986.
- John Friedmann and William Alonso eds., *Regional Policy: Readings in Theory and Application*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1975.

*Theoretical issues and debates in urban planning and the production/regulation of the built environment*

- John Forester, *Critical Theory, Public Policy and Planning Practice*. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1993.

- Mike Douglass and John Friedmann eds., *Cities for Citizens. Planning and the Rise of Civil Society*. New York: Wiley, 1998.
- Peter Evans ed. *Livable Cities? Urban Struggles for Livelihood and Sustainability*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Peter Marcuse et. al. eds., *Searching for the Just City*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Neil Brenner, Peter Marcuse and Margit Mayer eds., *Cities for People, Not for Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City*. New York, Routledge, 2011.
- Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore eds., *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in Western Europe and North America*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 2003.
- Leonie Sandercock, *Making the Invisible Visible: Towards a Multicultural Planning History*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998.
- Leonie Sandercock, *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities*. New York: Continuum, 2003.
- Planetizen, *Contemporary Debates in Urban Planning*. Washington DC: Island Press, 2007.
- Susan Fainstein and Lisa Servon eds., *Gender and Planning*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005.
- Tridib Banerjee and Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris eds., *A Companion to Urban Design*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- James DeFilippis and Susan Saegert eds., *The Community Development Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

#### *History of the planning profession in the USA and beyond*

- M. Christine Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City. The Myth of American City Planning*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1986.
- Mel Scott, *American City Planning since 1890*. Chicago: APA Planners Press, 1995.
- Robert Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1991.
- Robert Fishman ed., *The American Planning Tradition: Culture and Policy*. Washington, D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2000.
- Leland Roth ed., *America Builds: Source Documents in American Architecture and Planning*. New York, 1983.
- Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design*. New York: Basic Books, 1982.
- Anthony Sutcliffe, *Towards the Planned City: Germany, Britain, the United States and France, 1780-1914*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1981.
- Peter Newman and Andy Thornley eds., *Urban Planning in Europe*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Anthony D. King, *Colonial Urban Development*. London: Routledge, 1976.
- John Reys, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965.
- Mary Corbin Sies and Christopher Silver, eds., *Planning the Twentieth Century American City*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

## OUTLINE OF TOPICS

### **Part 1: Conceptualizing ‘planning’—theory, practice, power, history**

1. Day one: introduction to the class
2. Planning and capitalist urbanization (1)
3. Planning and capitalist urbanization (2)
4. How planning constructs its target
5. Terrains of debate in planning theory (1)—from master plans and comprehensive planning to advocacy and participation
6. Terrains of debate in planning theory (2)—post-1970s elaborations on empowerment, utopia and critique
7. Planning and power/knowledge—feminist and postcolonial critiques
8. Towards a critical genealogy of planning and urbanization
9. Urban form, planning strategies and long-term cycles of capitalist urbanization

### **Part 2: Historical geographies of planning and urbanization**

1. Industrialization, planning and the production of a new urban form
2. Hausmannization and the reconstruction of Paris
3. Parks, green spaces and the urbanization of nature
4. City Beautiful and monumentality
5. Roads not taken (1)—garden cities and territorial development
6. Authoritarian high modernism
7. Critiques of high modernism—neighborhoods and community action
8. The fourth migration—suburbanization and the great tidal wave of postwar decentralization
9. Roads not taken (2)—metropolitan governance and territorial development

### **Part 3: Contemporary debates and challenges in planning theory**

1. Industrial restructuring, local economic development and the globalization debate
2. The fifth migration: gentrification and the politics of urban redevelopment:
3. Austerity urbanism and the end of planning?
4. Roads not taken (3)—possible urban worlds in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century
5. Guest Lecture by Susan Fainstein—The Just City
6. Final class / wrap-up discussion