

## 48-250 Urbanism and the Social Production of Space

Stefan Gruber

TR 10:10AM 11:30AM MM 103 IPE

This course introduces students to urbanism and explores architecture as situated and relational practice subject to broader social, political, economic, ecological and cultural forces. Investigating cities as sites of the encounter of differences and competing interests, the course sheds light onto the production and social reproduction of space—or how we shape the built environment and in turn it shapes us.

Beyond the mere aggregation of buildings, cities are made of spaces and life in-between buildings affecting our individual, community and planetary wellbeing. Cities mold our personal experiences, our sense of place and belonging, as well as the quality of our social relations. But a city's spatial syntax also functions as an operating system structuring the flow of people, goods, energy, water, food and waste—and as a result, its carbon footprint and economic performance, its sustainability and resilience. Thus, architecture and cities are never neutral, as they provide uneven access to opportunities and resources. Cities are contested sites of power struggles based on class, gender and race. Cities are inherently political.

But against the backdrop of sharpening systemic inequity and an escalating climate crisis, the transformation of our cities is also our only hope. After all, we live in an urban age in which by 2060, 75% of the world's 10 billion people will live in cities. We have lots of work to do and will need to learn to stay with the trouble.

In four modules we will discuss **cities as form, cities as experience, cities as ecosystems** and **cities as social and political construct** and learn or unlearn how to see, understand and represent an urban milieu, as well as engage, intervene in and design at the urban scale. In a fifth module, we will bring these perspectives on the city back together.

Our goal and the objective of this class is to acquire conceptual and practical tools to observe, document, analyze and understand diverse urban milieus, and in turn explore, test and fail, how to gain agency in urban transformations. We will do so through a combination of weekly readings, lectures and discussions, as well as careful observations, explorative drawings, critical reflections and radical imaginations.