Department of Urban Studies and Planning
School of Architecture and Planning

Spring 2022

Urban Design Seminar: Perspectives on Contemporary Practice

11.333j/4.244j 2-0-7 units

Instructor: Brent D. Ryan   bdr@mit.edu

In partnership with PhD candidates:

Sasha Durova; Alessandra Fabbri; Aarthi Janakiraman; Justin Kollar; Deni Lopez; and Andrew Stokols

Canvas site: https://canvas.mit.edu/courses/12549

Seminar meetings: Wednesdays, 9 to 11 AM Room 10-401

Public lectures: Tuesdays, 12:30 to 1:50 PM, online during Spring 2022

Course introduction and purpose

This is a dramatic moment for cities. Global pandemic, technological shifts, and social change have placed urban design in a critical position to impact city futures at multiple scales. Much of this innovation is occurring in the world of practice and built projects, both in the United States and around the world. With climate change, citizen participation, and rapid city growth on the increase, it is only natural that designers have responded with multiple urban design approaches and ideologies, from small-scale, incremental action to transnational infrastructure projects.

The Urban Design Seminar is intended to interrogate pressing issues in contemporary urban design through the examination of the work of innovative, leading practitioners in the professions of urban design, architecture, planning, and landscape. Projects and topics discussed will include the role of art and culture in building community, the design of global cities, concern for energy systems and sustainability, and design's accommodation of global investment- and disinvestment.

The Spring 2022 Urban Design Seminar features weekly seminar meetings interspersed with six public lectures by national or international practitioners, all of whom are major figures in the nonprofit, public sector, and private sector realms of urban design. Each of these urban design practitioners works at multiple scales and their presentations will focus on the content and strategies of current work in their practice.

These public lectures also comprise the Spring 2022 City Design and Development Forum of the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, itself part of the larger Spring 2022 Urbanism Lecture Series of the Leventhal Center for Advanced Urbanism (see schedule in this syllabus, and LCAU series at https://lcau.mit.edu/events).

Land Acknowledgement Statement

We acknowledge Indigenous Peoples as the traditional stewards of the land, and the enduring relationship that exists between them and their traditional territories. The lands which MIT occupies are the traditional unceded territories of the Wampanoag Nation and the Massachusett Peoples. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced occupation of these territories, as well as the ongoing processes of colonialism and dispossession in which we and our institution are implicated. Beyond the stolen territory which we physically occupy, MIT has long profited from the sale of federal lands granted by the Morrill Act, territories stolen from 82 Tribes including the Greater and Little Osage, Chippewa, and Omaha Peoples.

As we honor and respect the many diverse Indigenous people connected to this land from time immemorial, we seek to Indigenize our institution and the field of planning, offer Space, and leave Indigenous peoples in more empowered positions.

Inclusive Class and Classroom

MIT values an inclusive environment. I hope to foster a sense of community in this classroom and consider this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect. I welcome individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations – and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. If this standard is not being upheld, please feel free to speak with me.

Special Accommodations

MIT is committed to the principle of equal access. Students who need disability accommodations are encouraged to speak with Disability and Access Services (DAS), prior to or early in the semester so that accommodation requests can be evaluated and addressed in a timely fashion. If you have a disability and are not planning to use accommodations, it is still recommended that you meet with DAS staff to familiarize yourself with their services and resources. Please visit the DAS website for contact information.

If you have already been approved for accommodations, class staff are ready to assist with implementation. Please inform Professor Ryan at bdr@mit.edu who will oversee accommodation implementation for this course.

Academic Integrity

In this course, I will hold you to the high standard of academic integrity expected of all students at the Institute. I do this for two reasons. First, it is essential to the learning process that you are the one doing the work. I have structured the assignments in this course to enable you to gain a mastery of the course material. Failing to do the work yourself will result in a lesser understanding of the content, and therefore a less meaningful education for you. Second, it is important that there be a level playing field for all students in this course and at the Institute so that the rigor and integrity of the Institute's educational program are maintained.

Violating the Academic Integrity policy in any way (e.g., plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, cheating, etc.) will result in official Institute sanction. Possible sanctions include receiving a failing grade on the assignment or exam, being assigned a failing grade in the course, having a formal notation of disciplinary action placed on your MIT record, suspension from the Institute, and expulsion from the Institute for very serious cases.

Please review MIT's Academic Integrity policy and related resources (e.g., working under pressure; how to paraphrase, summarize, and quote; etc.) and contact me if you have any questions about appropriate citation methods, the degree of collaboration that is permitted, or anything else related to the Academic Integrity of this course.

Graduate Students: GradSupport

As a graduate student, a variety of issues may impact your academic career including faculty/student relationships, funding, and interpersonal concerns. In the Office of Graduate Education (OGE), GradSupport provides consultation, coaching, and advocacy to graduate students on matters related to academic and life challenges. If you are dealing with an issue that is impacting your ability to attend class, complete work, or take an exam, you may contact GradSupport by email at gradsupport@mit.edu or via phone at (617) 253-4860.

Website: https://oge.mit.edu/development/gradsupport/

Course structure and requirements

Seminar meetings will be based on student presentations and on in-class discussions led by the instructor. Seminar meetings (Wednesday mornings) will alternate weeks with public CDD Forum lectures (Tuesday noontimes) as shown on the course schedule.

There are three primary course requirements. First are **readings associated with each lecturer**, representing coverage of that urban designer's work or literature related to that lecturer's approach to urban design. Since the seminar weeks alternate with lecture weeks, readings are required only once every two weeks and all students are responsible for completing readings.

Second is an **in-class 'reading presentation'** on the work and urban design approach of one of the lecturers in the week following the lecture. Presentations should both assess the designer's lecture in the previous week, as well as review a selection of the designer's written works provided as part of the course reading list. **This presentation can be either individual or group and should last 45 minutes to an hour.** The presentation should be accompanied by a **written** 2,000 word (approx. 5 pages) write up of the presentation. Presentation teams will be chosen by the instructor in the second week of class. Additional details about presentations are provided on page 6 of this syllabus.

Third is an **in-class final presentation** at the end of the semester on an approach to urban design on a specific site. Students will apply knowledge gained from presentations during the semester to develop this approach. **These presentations (individual or group) should last approximately 10 minutes.** The presentation should be accompanied by a 2,000-word (approx. 5 pages) **individual** writeup (one per individual student). Additional details on this final presentation will be circulated in March.

Participants are responsible for attending both seminar sessions and public lectures and participating in class discussions. Please note that **seminar sessions meet Wednesdays from 9 to 11 AM** and that seminar weeks alternate with public lectures, which occur on **Tuesdays from 12:30 to 1:50 PM**.

The Urban Design Seminar has a strict policy on class absences. The course load for the seminar is comparatively light, and given that the course meets only once per week, even one absence adversely affects students' learning. Please **do not miss any seminar sessions and please attend all lectures**! Accordingly, absence from seminar is **not** permitted except with **prior written (emailed) permission of the instructor for foreseeable events**. Legitimate excusable absences comprise illness, religious holiday,

or family emergency. Given the ongoing pandemic, MIT regulations apply regarding absences due to covid. In all cases, even if absence if not foreseeable, please notify the instructor via email before class if at all possible.

The lecture times of 12:30 to 1:50 will conflict with some scheduled studios in Architecture. Lectures will be recorded and can be viewed asynchronously if a conflict exists. All lectures will be streamed online at http://web.mit.edu/webcast/lcau/s22/lecture/. Please go to the LCAU events page for specific lecture link.

Please note that absences will adversely affect your course grade (-3% of total grade subtracted per unexcused absence). Arriving to class more than 15 minutes after the scheduled time also constitutes an unexcused absence.

Course grades will be based on reading presentations (20%); writeup of reading presentations (15%); urban design project presentations (25%) and writeup (25%); and general class participation, attendance, and engagement (15%).

Course Schedule and Calendar

Seminar sessions will meet on **Wednesday mornings**, 9 to 11 AM in 10-401. Public lectures will occur online on **Tuesday afternoons** from 12:30 to 1:50. Seminar weeks will alternate with lecture weeks.

Week	Month Date	Time/Place	Session	Details
1	Feb 2 Wed	9-11 AM 10-401	Seminar 1	Introduction to course
2	8 Tue	12:30- 1:50 PM online	Lecture 1	**Isadora Hastings, Cooperación Comunitaria:** *Participatory Design and the Resilience of Rural Communities*
3	16 Wed	9 – 11 AM 10-401	Seminar 2	Discuss Lecture 1 **Guest: Deni Lopez**
4	22 Tue	12:30 – 1:50 PM online	Lecture 2	**Adriana Chavez, Office of Urban Reslience:** *Recent Work*
5	Mar 2 Wed	9 – 11 AM 10-401	Seminar 3	Discuss Lecture 2 **Guest: Alessandra Fabbri**
6	8 Tue	12:30 – 1:50 online	Lecture 3	**Adam Chernick, SHoP Architects:** *Recent Work*
7	16 Wed	9 – 11 AM 10-401	Seminar 4	Discuss Lecture 3 **Guest: Andrew Stokols**
8				Spring Break- no class

9	31 Thu **note Th date**	12:30 – 1:50 PM online	Lecture 4	**Romil Sheth, Sasaki:** *Resiliency, Diversity, and Placemaking in Contemporary Urban Design*
10	Apr 6 Wed	9 – 11 AM 10-401	Seminar 5	Discuss Lecture 4 **Guest: Justin Kollar**
11	12 Tue	12:30 – 1:50 online	Lecture 5	**Dalia Munenzon, ONE architecture + urbanism:** *Climate Adaptive Cities*
12	20 Wed	9 – 11 AM 10-401	Seminar 6	Discuss Lecture 5 **Guest: Sasha Durova**
13	27 Wed	9 – 11 AM 10-401	Seminar 7	Discuss Lecture 6 (in advance) **Guest: Aarthi Janakiraman**
14	May 3 Tues	12:30 – 1:50 online	Lecture 6	**Tridib Banerjee, University of Southern California:** *In The Images of Development: City Form in the Global South* **(tentative)**
	May 4	9 – 11 AM 10-401	Seminar 8	Final Presentations

Seminar Readings

February 16 (Wednesday).
Discussion: Isadora Hastings, Cooperación Comunitaria: *Participatory Design and the Resilience of Rural Communities*
Guest: Deni Lopez, DUSP PhD

Cooperacion Comunitaria: "The Homogenization of Cultural Diversity in Housing". 30 September, 2015. Article available at : https://cooperacioncomunitaria.org/2015/09/la-homogeneizacion-de-la-diversidad-cultural-en-la-vivienda/. To translate to English, place URL in Google translate and click link.

Elis Martinez Hernandez and Isadora Hastings Garcia: "A Proposal to consider self-managed processes of housing production in rural environments, and their potential to tackle the climate crisis." *Vivienda Infonavit* 5:2, pp. 98- 105. December 2020. Available at: https://online.flippingbook.com/view/582522194/. PDF on course Canvas site. To translate to English, upload PDF to Google translate and click document.

March 2 (Wednesday).
Discussion: Adriana Chavez,: *Recent Work*
Guest: Alessandra Fabbri, Architecture PhD

Neil Brenner, "Theses on Urbanization." *Public Culture* 25:1, pp. 85-114. PDF on course Canvas site.

Kate Orff, "What is Design Now? Unmaking the Landscape." *Architectural Design* 90:1, pp. 94-99. January/February 2020. PDF on course Canvas site.

March 16 (Wednesday).
Discussion: Adam Chernick, SHoP Architects: *Recent Work*
Guest: Andrew Stokols, DUSP PhD

Stefanos Chen. "How Virtual Reality is Augmenting Reality." *New York Times*, November 8, 2019. Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/08/realestate/how-virtual-reality-is-augmenting-realty.html. May be accessed via MIT library subscription.

Mike Plotnick. "Pocketing the Future: This Innovator is Making VR and AR more accessible." *Plotlines*, September 12, 2018. Available at https://www.elevateyourstory.com/stories/pocketing-the-future-this-innovator-is-making-vr-and-ar-more-accessible.

April 6 (Wednesday).
Discussion: Romil Sheth, Sasaki: *Resiliency, Diversity, and Placemaking in Contemporary Urban Design*
Guest: Justin Kollar, DUSP PhD

Dennis Pieprz and Romil Sheth. "Singapore and Mexico are Reinventing the 21st Century Campus." *Planning for Higher Education Journal*, 42:2, January-March 2017. PDF access TBA.

Caitlin Clausen and Romil Sheth. "University-Industry Collaborations are Driving Creation of Next-Generation Living Space." *Planning for Higher Education Journal*, 45:4, July-September 2017. PDF access TBA.

One additional reading TBA

April 20 (Wednesday).
Discussion: Dalia Munenzon, ONE architecture + urbanism: *Climate Adaptive Cities*
Guest: Sasha Durova, DUSP PhD

Matthias Bouw. "Designing for Reslience in Rich Coastal Cities (and Beyond)." Chapter Two, pp. 29-54 in *A Blueprint for Coastal Adaptation: Uniting Design, Economics, and Policy*. New York: Island Press, 2021. PDF on course Canvas site and Online access through MIT Library ProQuest Ebook Central: https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mit/detail.action?docID=6525087.

April 27 (Wednesday).
Discussion: Tridib Banerjee, University of Southern California: *In the Images of Development: City Form in the Global South*
Guest: Aarthi Janakiraman, DUSP PhD

Tridib Banerjee. Chapter One,"Looking Back from Vila Dunia" pp.1-20, and Chapter 13, "Looking Forward from Vila Dunia" pp. 325-256, in *In the Images of Development: City Form in the Global South.* Cambridge: MIT Press (2021). Online access through MIT Library https://direct-mit-edu.libproxy.mit.edu/books/monograph/5130/In-the-Images-of-DevelopmentCity-Design-in-the.

Speaker Biographies

Isadora Hastings, Cooperación Comunitaria. Isadora Hastings is a professor in Architecture from UNAM and the Polytechnic University of Madrid, 2007. She is a founding member of the non-profit organization Cooperation Comunitaria A.C. together with Eng. Gerson Huerta and, since 2010, director of said organization, where Habitat Social Production and Management projects have been developed, as well as Integral Reconstruction in rural communities of the most vulnerable states of Mexico. In the regions where she works, she has directed participatory and training processes with a comprehensive and systemic approach. For the comprehensive reconstruction work that it has directed, Community Cooperation has been recognized with 5 awards, including the Green Star Awards 2017, awarded by UNEP and OCHA, of the United Nations (UN) and the Transformative Cities Award 2019, in the category of housing awarded by the Trasnational Institute, in Amsterdam, Holland. Since 2003, she has conducted research on progressive self-produced housing processes, both in peri-urban and rural areas, and the impact of participatory social interactions on the production and social management of housing and habitat. In 2004 she was a FONCA fellow in the Young Creators program. She has been a judge at the Oscar Hagerman Awards, the IAP Social Foundation Share Awards, and the Transformative Cities Awards, TNI, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. She has published articles in the books Venandlungssache Mexiko Stadt and Städt im wandel, Berlin, Germany; in the magazine Informes de la Construcción and Traditional Architecture Journal, Madrid Spain and in the book La Vivienda Popular, Mexico. Since 2020 she is a full-time academic at the National Academy of Architecture of Mexico.

Adriana Chavez, Office of Urban Resilence (ORU). Adriana Chavez holds a master from Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD) in Urbanism, Landscape and Ecology -and- Master in Architecture II (2014). She was recipient of the Harvard GSD: Urban Project Prize for the best thesis project in 2014. Since 2015, she has been working at the resilience office in Mexico City, closely to the CDMX Chief Resilience Officer participating on the creation of Mexico City's Resilience Strategy. She has been teaching Urban Design Studio at Columbia University, at Universidad Anahuac, and at the Architectural Association Visiting School in Mexico City. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Architecture from Universidad Iberoamericana (Mexico City) where she graduated with honors in 2008. In 2012 she was recipient of the Cemex Award: Marcelo Zambrano Architect in Mexico. She has collaborated as Research and Teaching assistant in Harvard Graduate School of for the Infonavit Social Housing Research in Mexico. She has also collaborated with the Urban Risk Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Opsys working as Research Assistant for "The Haiti Evacuation System Initiative" for the World Bank. She has also conducted research in Thailand, where she collaborated for the NGO: Design for Disasters in 2012.

Adam Chernick, SHoP Architects. Adam Chernick leads an applied research group at SHoP Architects, specifically focusing on AR/VR and adjacent emerging technologies. He thinks up and connects new combinations of technology to solve problems in AEC. He also loves to design and build intuitive applications that let users interact with space. He spends some of his time in Unity and Visual Studio solving user experience and interaction problems, while he spends another chunk of time creating partnerships and collaborations with technology companies. He has built a range of applications for clients and projects around the world and have launched applications for both iOS and Android. He is a frequent speaker on the implications of emerging technologies within Architecture, Engineering, and Construction (AEC). Some of his applications have been written about in publications including the New York Times, Architects Newspaper, and AEC Magazine, as well as featured in collaborations with MOMA PS1 and the Munich Architecture Museum. He previously designed, built and launched HOK's first mobile VR app, "HOK VR", for both iOS and Android, now live on both Apple App Store and Google Play

Store. Before his life in software engineering, he worked as a BIM Lead on several large-scale commercial architecture projects. Most notably, he led BIM strategy and coordination on the new GroupM Global Headquarters, in World Trade Center 3. He earned his Masters of Architecture from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY, where he emphasized studies in Design Technology.

Romil Sheth, Sasaki. Romil is an urban designer and architect with over 15 years of experience in both domestic and international projects. His work encompasses diverse project types including campuses, student housing, K-12 facilities, urban revitalization, innovation districts, and waterfronts. His multi-disciplinary background enables him to connect built work with visionary planning and urban design by engaging a diversity of issues, multiple constituents, and varying scales across a range of contexts. He adopts a collaborative approach to design, working with integrated teams that engage landscape, strategic planning, and architecture. Romil's projects consistently have been honored for their integration of implementable visionary ideas, programming strategies, and sustainability, by multiple national awards including the American Institute of Architects, Urban Land Institute, American Society of Landscape Architects, and the Society for College and University Planning. Romil holds a master of urban design and a master of science in architecture from the University of Michigan, and received his bachelor of architecture from CEPT University in India. He is a registered architect for the Council of Architecture in India and is an associate member of the American Institute of Architects.

Dalia Munenzon, ONE architecture+ urbanism. Dalia Munenzon has a decade of professional experience in architecture and urbanism, focusing on adaptive strategies and resiliency methods. She leverages experience in urban systems design, environmental planning, and architecture to work with local communities across scales towards resilient cities and urban environments. Munenzon serves as the Boston associate for One Architecture & Urbanism, leading the firm's projects in the greater Boston area. Her work on resilience is focused on waterfront design and long-term strategic planning. She has led such high-profile, award-winning projects as the Climate Ready Boston Downtown, East Boston and Charlestown; Moakley Park Vision Plan; Peddocks Island Masterplan; Fourth Regional Plan, Triboro, Lower Manhattan Coastal Resiliency Project; and the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project. Dalia received a Master's in Architectural studies from MIT and a Bachelor's in Architecture and Town Planning from the Technion Israeli Institute of Technology. Her undergraduate thesis, which looked at the future coastal cities, was awarded the Raiskin Award in 2012. Dalia has been a guest critic at Harvard GSD, MIT, UC Berkeley, CCA, Northeastern, Boston Architectural College, University of Pennsylvania, RISD, Wentworth Institute, and The Cooper Union. She hopes to carry forward her knowledge and experience to promoting healthy, inclusive and resilient cities in the 21st century.

Tridib Banerjee, University of Southern California. Tridib Banerjee (Ph.D., MIT, 1971) is a Professor and James Irvine Chair of Urban and Regional Planning at the School of Policy, Planning and Development, University of Southern California. He specializes in comparative urban development, political economy of planning, and urban design. His research, teaching, and writings focus on the design and planning of the built environment and its human and social consequences. He is interested in the political economy of urban design and development, and the effects of globalization on transitional urban form and urbanism from a comparative international perspective. His current research includes changing uses of public space, sustainable urban form, transit-oriented development, and design of walkable communities. His publications include: *Beyond the Neighborhood Unit* (with William C. Baer, 1984); *City*

Sense and City design: Writings and Projects of Kevin Lynch (co-edited with Michael Southworth, 1990); *Urban Design Downtown: Poetics and Politics of Form* (with Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, 1998); and *Companion to Urban Design* (co-edited with Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, 2011). He has recently completed *In The Images of Development*, and co-edited a revised edition of the *Companion to Urban Design*.

On The Presentation of Readings (Guidelines for presenting in class)

Seminar meetings will be organized around student individual or team presentations. Presentations will center on student understanding and assessment of an urban designer's course readings as well as their lecture. Each week's readings are either authored by or are related to the lecturer. For example, the team presenting Dalia Munenzon should present an assessment both of Munenzon's lecture as well as the Munenzon-related reading or readings in the course bibliography.

Presentations should be between 45 and 60 minutes long. Each presentation should contain around 40 to 60 slides. For each presentation, a student should read and assess a speaker's works in the above bibliography. Unless otherwise noted, read a work in its entirety. The length of 'works' varies; for those speakers with shorter works, students will be required to identify, and read, additional works.

Each student can present individually or in a team with multiple students, depending upon class numbers. Students should submit their top three choices for a reading team by **5 PM on Monday, February 7** (students need choose only their top three urban designers, not potential student partners!) and teams will be assigned by Tuesday, Feb 8 at 5 PM. Student preferences will be taken into account, but first choices cannot be guaranteed. The works in the above bibliography have been posted to Canvas, or are available online.

Student presentations should not only summarize the readings/lecture, but provide a team's opinion (assessment) of the designer's urban design argument/work being presented. The student's opinion and assessment should not be a brief add-on at the end of a long summary, but should comprise approximately half of the presentation. **Make sure your presentation includes both an assessment of a designer's work as well as a summary, otherwise points will be deducted!** For instance, if Adriana Chavez presents "resilient codes", do not just tell us what a "resilient code" is (although demonstrating that you understand it is important), but tell us what you think of it. Some questions that you must answer in your presentation and writeup:

- Does the designer have a coherent 'argument' or theory for or of urban design, or are they just summarizing projects?
- Does this 'theory' address critical issues in urban design as you perceive it, i.e., sustainability, technology, justice, public participation, etc.? (You must articulate your own position on urban design in order to answer this. Spend some time answering this question.)
- If you agree with the designer's 'theory', how and where do you think this theory should apply to the contemporary city, or to a city that you know well?
- What are some shortfalls or improvements that you can imagine to this theory?

I will have office hours available on Wednesday afternoons, 2-4 PM, for students that wish to discuss their presentations beforehand.