

Credit: 3 units. Meets Tuesdays 9-12.

Bogota, Columbia. The city’s recent transformation through urban design, public space, public buildings and transit improvements has earned international recognition.

This course focuses on seminal urban design projects and programs in selected world cities. Case study cities are examined through research, lectures, discussion/debate, student presentations and a short theory-based urban design project. Critical discussion compares emerging theories of urban design.

Contemporary urban design practice is guided by both theory and professional experience. As a multi-discipline field, urban design takes place in the public realm where professionals from several fields, public officials and communities come together to guide future development of a district, city or region.

Seminar Format

Seven cities and regions for study have been pre-selected by the instructor as the among the most significant recent urban design success stories worldwide:

Copenhagen (Denmark), Barcelona (Spain), Berlin (Germany); Bogota, (Columbia); Curitiba (Brazil); The Emscher Valley (Ruhr region, Germany) and Vancouver (British Columbia, Canada). Significant accomplishments have also been recognized at the neighborhood and
district scale in many other cities and regions. Additional locations may be proposed by students and considered for study depending upon the number of people in the seminar, and student interest.

Each student/student team will select one city or region for research as a focus for her/his study. The research will thoroughly examine the physical setting, history, political and economic context, and environmental conditions of the project. The urban design process used to guide the project or program will be examined, including the relevant theories that influenced the project. An evaluation and critique of the outcome will be evaluated and compared with programs in other cities.

Design Project Charette

About midway through the research process, each team will select a specific design project and site for a short design charette that is rooted in the larger urban design framework of the selected city.

(Optional) San Francisco Study Trip. (April 18-21)

![Redevelopment of the historic Ferry Building and Plaza. San Francisco](image)

An optional study trip to San Francisco is planned for about 1/3 of the way into the quarter, tentatively April 18-21. We will examine recent and proposed urban architecture and urban design projects in the city, visit professional offices involved with these projects, and discuss some of the challenges facing the city and San Francisco Bay region.

Final Publication and Class Presentations

The research and design charette projects will be documented and discussed in class presentations.

A final illustrated publication prepared by the class as a group. Each case study team will contribute a section of the publication.

The Case Study Cities

The following five cities and regions have been pre-selected by the instructor. Other case studies may be added by students:

**Barcelona.** Barcelona’s recent transformation as the “City of Public Space” began with preparations for its hosting of the 1992 Summer Olympics and continues to this day. New urban districts such as La Villa Olimpica were designed and built with astonishing speed. Older barrios such as El Raval were revitalized with careful infill development and new public spaces
at several scales. The 22@ District is the most recent focus of revitalization, where Barcelona is building a new technology district to advance its economic development and job base.

La Villa Olímpica. Barcelona. The new city quarter built on the oceanfront site of a former industrial district. The project is one of several seminal urban design accomplishments of Barcelona’s recent urban design program.

**Berlin.** The case study of Berlin involves two initial efforts: The Berlin IBA (International Building Exposition) of 1987, and the rebuilding of central Berlin following the city’s reunification in 1989. More recent efforts have re-developed neighborhoods of the former East Berlin.

![The Berlin IBA and Potsdamer Platz](image)

Berlin’s rebuilding began before the city’s reunification following the collapse of the East German government. During the mid 1980’s, the western part of the city was the site of the Berlin IBA (International Building Exposition) which focused on the theme “Rebuilding the European City”. The Berlin IBA was influential in dismantling “modernism” as the prevailing urban design theory for redeveloping European cities. Several vacant urban quarters and sites were rebuilt based on international design competitions. Careful infill and rehabilitation projects filled sites that had remained vacant since the World War II bombing by Allied forces. The IBA re-established the validity of the historic European city of the pedestrian, street and public square as the urban model of choice, dethroning the “tower in the park” model proposed by Le Corbusier in 1923 and later followed in the post WW2 rebuilding.

After German reunification and the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, a massive rebuilding of central Berlin followed the German government’s decision to re-establish the city as the capital of the reunited nation. New urban districts such as Potsdamer Platz were built along with extensive public works and governmental building projects. The urban design philosophy established by the IBA, called “critical reconstruction”, was extended to guide the rebuilding efforts, although with some exceptions to accommodate special projects. Together, the IBA and central Berlin re-building comprised one of the most extensive and ambitious urban design and development projects in the world during the late 20th century.

**Bogota.** Columbia. Facing seemingly overwhelming problems of poverty, rapid growth and crime, Bogota has been transformed through the leadership of Mayor Enrique Penalosa. Its accomplishments in public transit, pedestrian districts, public places, street design and housing have been internationally recognized in making the city safe and livable.
Curitiba. Brazil. Curitiba was the first large city in the world to commit to a radically ambitious sustainability agenda. Under the leadership of former Mayor and Governor of Parana State Jaime Lerner and his colleagues, Curitiba developed a multi-layered agenda of education, social services, public transit, energy and land conservation, and recycling that began in the late 1960’s and continues today. Sustainability criteria are given first priority in guiding the city’s urban design strategy. The city’s seminal accomplishments have been achieved with modest means and limited resources.
The Emscher Valley / The Ruhr. Germany. The Emscher Park IBA was an ambitious effort to re-build Germany's historic industrial Ruhr region on the basis of environmental sustainability principles. Once one of the most polluted and environmentally-devastated regions of the world, the Ruhr and Emscher River Valleys have been reborn with an urban design and environmental restoration strategy that is one of the most creatively-conceived projects in the world. Vast abandoned steel mills, coke plants, mines and other industrial plants have been converted to recreational open spaces, incubator industry sites and economic development centers with relatively little new construction. The “industrial archeology” of the region has been preserved and transformed to new use in some of the most spirited and original design projects of the past half century.

The Mt. Cenis Academy (left) built over an abandoned mine site. Adaptive reuse of historic lumber warehouses with stormwater filtration ponds in foreground.

Vancouver. British Columbia. Canada. Vancouver began its current path toward urban design excellence in the 1970’s, with the process accelerating in the mid 1980s as the City hosted its highly successful World Expo. New high density residential and mixed-use projects in the city centre have pioneered new urban neighborhood and building types. New open space systems have created continuous linkages of parks and public spaces along False Creek, English Bay and the Straights of Georgia. Imaginative and sensitive infill development has been carefully sited in many of the city’s neighborhoods. As Vancouver faces enormous growth pressures, it has successfully used its growth as an opportunity to create an urbane and diverse city centre which transformed its stature from regional to world city in two decades.

Copenhagen. Denmark

Copenhagen first achieved urban design recognition through its “finger plan” for metropolitan growth in the late 1940’s. Its original plan was recently updated with a new regional growth concept. Throughout the years, the city’s public spaces, transit and public buildings have achieved unparalleled success in conserving the city center as a virtually traffic-free district with
a rich pedestrian environment. Copenhagen remains one of the most sustainable cities in the world.

Contemporary Urban Design Theories

Urban design in the modern world is guided by a mix of theory and locally-grounded issues. Although international ideas and theories are often influential in guiding urban design approaches in cities, local conditions: public values (politics), the socio-economic context, physical setting, quality of place, and other factors ultimately play the most important role in determining urban design outcomes. The study of urban design is complicated by the fact that most projects are influenced by a hybrid of international ideas and local issues blended into a complex “project chemistry”.

Some of the guiding theories that have influenced recent urban design strategies are listed below. The research projects and seminar discussions will attempt to assess which theories were influential in each case study. How were they applied and what was the result? Through
critical discussion, the case studies will help assess the value of the theories and their transferability to other cities and projects.

**The city as organic growth and generator of diversity.**

Writing: Jane Jacobs, Richard Sennett.
Projects: Pike Place Market, Seattle; Swan’s Marketplace, Oakland; The Bologna, Italy Historic Preservation Program.

**The city of public space / public space is the city.**

Writing: Oriol Bohigas (MBM, Barcelona), Alex Krieger.
Projects: La Villa Olímpica and recent projects, Barcelona; Bilbao Urban Projects, Bilbao; Schouwburgplein, Rotterdam; Historic Port Regeneration, Genoa, Italy; Waterplace Park, Providence, R.I.; Baltimore Inner Harbor; Portland City Center.

**Critical reconstruction of the historic city.**

Writing: Aldo Rossi, Rob and Leon Krier, Pier-Luigi Cervellati.
Projects: International Building Exposition (IBA), Berlin (1980’s); The Rebuilding of Central Berlin- Potsdamer Platz, Strasse Unter den Linden (1990s-present); Rebuilding of Nieumarkt, Amsterdam (Van Eyck and Bosch); The Bologna, Italy Historic Preservation Program; Battery Park City, New York; Mission Bay, San Francisco.

**Capital investment and economic development.**

Writing: Edward Glaeser, *Triumph of the City.*
Projects: Postsdamer Platz, Berlin; Canary Wharf/The Docklands, London; Concord Pacific Place and Coal Harbor, Vancouver, BC; Koop van Zuid (Rotterdam South), Rotterdam; Kampii Center, Helsinki; Battery Park City, New York.

**The Decentralized City**

Writing: Edward Glaeser, Joel Garreau.
Projects: Suburban and “edge city” North America; Worldwide urban edge city growth; South and Central American favellas.

**New urbanism and the “edge city”**

Writing: Peter Calthorpe, Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Peter Katz. Projects: Seaside, FL; Kentlands, MD; Celebration, FL; Bellevue, WA; Stapleton, CO; Playa Vista, CA.

**Landscape Urbanism**

Writing: James Corner (Field Operations), Charles Waldheim, Alex Krieger, Moshen Mostafavi, Topos 71 Issue on “Landscape Urbanism”
Projects: Parc de la Villette, Paris; NYC High Line, Fresh Kills Landscape Competition; Schouwburgplein, Rotterdam.
Sustainable cities

Projects: The City of Curitiba, Brazil; IBA Emscher Park, The Ruhr Region, Germany; the rebuilding of Byker, England and previous Swedish projects by Ralph Erskine; Southeast False Creek Sustainable Community, Vancouver, BC.

Course Information and Questions

Gerry Gast  geraldgast@gmail.com

Gerald Gast is Associate Professor in the University of Oregon Portland Urban Architecture Program and Visiting Associate Professor in the Program on Urban Studies, Stanford University. He is an architect and founding principal of Gast-Hillmer Urban Design in the San Francisco Bay Area.