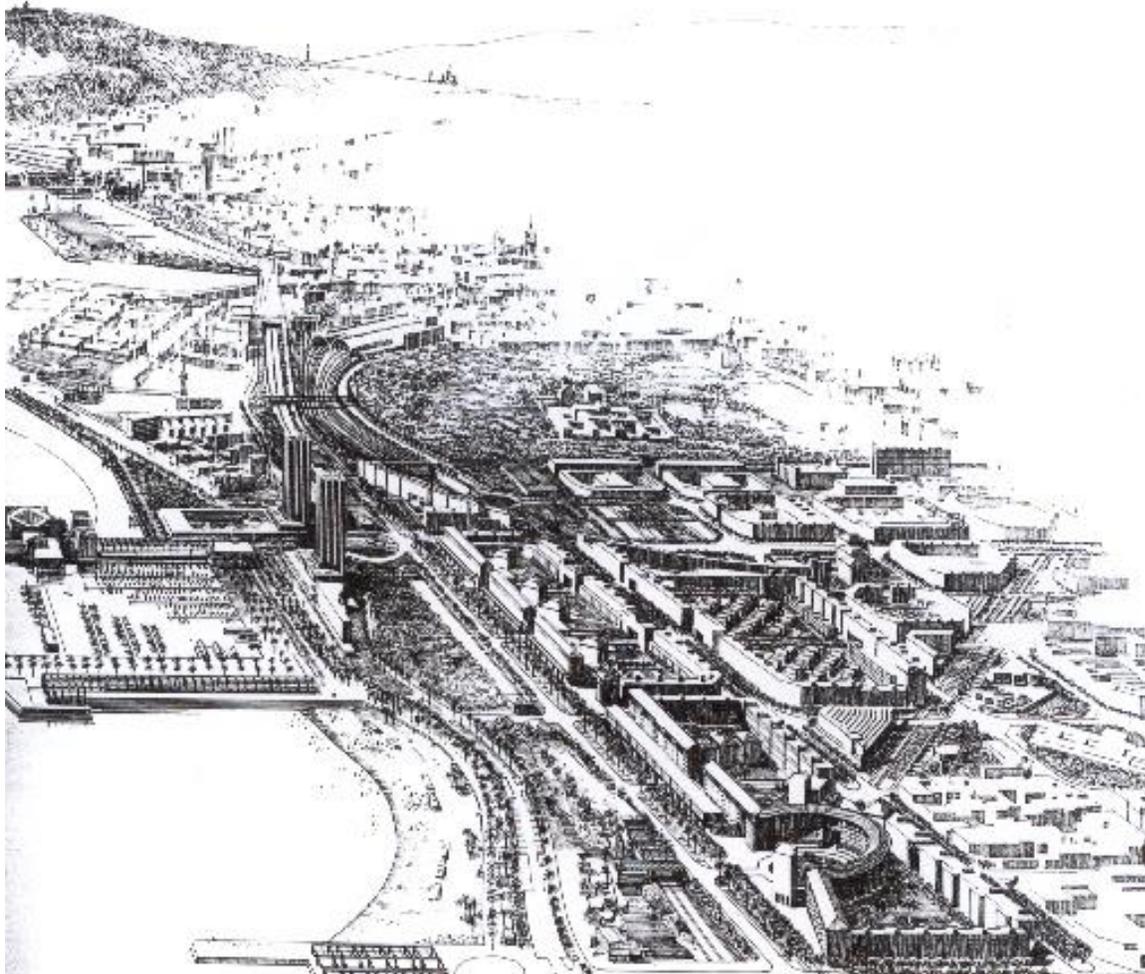


University of Oregon. Department of Architecture
Arch 407/507. Seminar. Research Seminar with Comparative Studies in Urban Design
Meets Tuesdays 9:00-11:50 AM in Portland.
407 CRN: 36839 507 CRN: 36840

**“Seminal Urban Design in Five Cities:
Barcelona; Berlin; Curitiba; Emscher Valley (Germany) and Vancouver”**

Instructor: Gerry Gast



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.

This course focuses on recent seminal urban design projects in five world cities: Barcelona (Spain); Berlin (Germany); Curitiba (Brazil); The Emscher Valley (Germany) and Vancouver (British Columbia, Canada). Additional cities may be considered for focus depending upon the number of people in the seminar, and student interest.

This research seminar is a multi-discipline perspective. Students in Landscape Architecture, Planning, Historic Preservation and other disciplines of the university are welcome.

Projects in the case study cities are examined through in-depth research, lectures, discussion/debate, student presentations and a brief theory-based design project. Critical discussion compares emerging theories of urban design and urban architecture.

Class Format

Each student / student team will select a city for research as a focus for her or his work. The research will thoroughly examine the physical setting, history, political and economic context, environmental conditions and urban design strategies of the selected case study city. Urban design theories that influenced the project will be identified and compared to programs and projects in other cities.

Design Project Charette

About midway through the research process, each team will select a specific design project for a design charette rooted in the larger urban design framework of the city. For example, in Barcelona an important oceanfront site near the entrance to the city's historic harbor exists as a prime opportunity for a future "signature" urban development. The person/team selecting Barcelona will develop a proposal for this site.

Final Report and Class Presentations

The research and design projects will be summarized in class presentations and an illustrated final report.

The Case Study Cities

Barcelona. Barcelona's recent transformation as the "City of Public Space" began with preparations for its hosting 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 sensitive new public spaces at several scales. Once persecuted by the repressive Franco dictatorship, Catalan Barcelona has effectively used urban design to achieve a new level of urbanity as one of the great cities of the Europe.

Berlin. The case study of Berlin involves two distinct efforts: The Berlin IBA of 1987, and the rebuilding of central Berlin following the city's reunification in 1989.

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.

Curitiba. Curitiba, Brazil was the first large city in the world to commit to a radically ambitious sustainability agenda. Under the leadership of former Mayor, now 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. The Emscher Park IBA is 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.

Vancouver. Vancouver, British Columbia 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.

Contemporary Urban Design Theories

Contemporary urban design is guided by a mix of theory and locally-grounded issues. Although international ideas and theories are often influential in guiding urban design approaches, local conditions - public values (politics), the socio-economic context, physical context, quality of place, and other factors ultimately play the most important roles 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,

and other theories, were influential in each case. 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, Christopher Alexander.

Projects: Pike Place Market, Seattle; Swan's Marketplace, Oakland; The Bologna, Italy Historic Preservation Program; *The Oregon Experiment*.

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

Writing: Oriol Bohigas (MBM, Barcelona), Alex Krieger.

Projects: La Villa Olimpica 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: Postdamer 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, Gordon and Richardson (USC).

Projects: Suburban and "edge city" North America; Worldwide urban edge city growth; South and Central American favelas and marginalized neighborhoods.

New urbanism and the "edge city"

Writing: Peter Calthorpe, Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Robert AM Stern.

Projects: Seaside, FL; Kentlands, MD; Celebration, FL; Bellevue, WA; Stapleton, Colorado; 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.

Environmentally-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.

Research Project Guidelines

Careful research and preparation for the class presentations are essential. The research projects and oral presentations should observe the following:

O The research projects may be individual or a team of two persons. Teams need to be formed and identified by the end of Week 1. You will be asked to select your case study city by the end of Week 1 and to begin your research work immediately. The investigation should be creative and rigorous.

O In the research effort, the important task is to critically review and understand the important ideas, theories and propositions advanced. You should provide your own interpretations and judgment.

O For your final class presentation:

Handout at least one relevant reading to the class one week in advance of your presentation. During the presentation, assume everyone has completed the advance reading. Prepare a summary of your major points and hand it out at the beginning of your presentation (or send in advance by e mail). This handout should be approximately 2-3 pages plus bibliography. May be outline or bulleted format.

Final Research Paper. *Suggested* areas of content.

- Table of Contents
- The case study city and its regional setting
- Brief description of the overall urban design effort or program
- Dates of key milestones and actions
- Major actors: public officials; planners, urban designers, architects; developers; public agencies; other actors.
- Influential forces (theories; local conditions such as history, politics, economics, environment)
- Influences on the urban design effort from other cities, people, sources.
- Brief critical appraisal critique of the project. Please be evaluative.

- Significance of the ideas and potential applicability to other places.
- Bibliography. All sources, including information and graphics obtained on the Internet, need to be properly cited and documented.
- Include as many visuals in the report and oral presentation as is feasible. The audience should be able to understand the spatial context.

A Note on Design Criticism

Although criticism is a vital element of urban design education, we seldom take time to consider methods of critical evaluation. As you study and review your theory and case study, give thought to the critical approach you use to evaluate the project.

You may find examples of good critical articles in selected journals such as The Architectural Review and Places magazine.

Evaluation

Case Study Research Project and Class Presentations, 75 %
Participation in class discussions, 25%

Each member of the class is expected to attend every session on time. This class has only nine class meetings, therefore every session is important.

Course Information and Questions

Gerry Gast ggast@uoregon.edu

Gerald Gast is Associate Professor in the University of Oregon Portland Urban Architecture Program and served as Visiting Associate Professor in the Program on Urban Studies, Stanford University, where he authored and taught the core course in Urban Design for several years. He is an architect and principal of Gast Hillmer Urban Design in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Schedule of Seminars

***This schedule will be revised after we finalize the case study assignments.**

Week I.

Course Objectives and Framework.

Methodology of Comparative Studies.

Introduction to contemporary Urban Design theories and their role in contemporary urban development.

For Week 2:

- Project selection: Preferences due by e mail. Please list 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice. Identify teams if you plan to work as a team.
 - Begin search of sources. Submit preliminary Bibliography (list of journal articles, books, internet sources and other potential resources). Hard copy or e mail.
 - Reading: Reader provided by Instructor.
-

Week 2.

Overview of Urban Design Theories, I. G Gast

Week 3.

Overview of Urban Design Theories, II. G Gast

Week 4.

Initial Reports on Case Studies. Brief overview of the cases.

Week 5.

Initial Reports on Case Studies (continues)

Week 6.

Urban Design Charette: Discussion of Proposals

Week 7.

Final Case Study Reports (continues)

Week 8.

Final Case Study Reports (continues)

Week 9.

Final Case Study Reports

Week 10.

Summary Session. Comparative Evaluation of Cities and Urban Design Approaches

Final Reports Due

Urban Design Charette (Week 6)

Objective. The charette is a 1-week design exercise that enables you to test and apply the urban design theories and concepts from your case study city. By taking what you have learned through the readings and applying it to a hypothetical project, you will better understand the theory from the viewpoint of the designers, city officials and other actors. This should help you develop a critical perspective of the approach: how it works on a real site, how it could be improved.

Although you may not have reached conclusions about the urban design methodology of your project, you should have initial ideas about the general approach taken, and its strong and weak points.

Process. A charette is a short, intensive design project that forces design decisions within a defined time frame. It is similar to “brainstorming” in that one tries to generate creative ideas in a limited amount of time. The process is often used in community design workshops such as AIA Regional Urban Design Assistance (RUDAT) Teams, by professional offices who want to generate design options in a short time, and by design teams who want to make progress on difficult projects that have stalled. In education, charettes are helpful to learn specific concepts and theories: “learning by doing” rather than simply by reading.

Suggested steps (adjust this to your particular project as you wish).

1. Briefly identify and list the **problems and key issues** faced in your overall case study. (For example, Barcelona’s seafront edge was consumed by aging and polluting industry and railroad tracks, separating most of the city from the sea. There were few public open spaces in the city and little or no seafront open space nor beaches for the public). Summarize the problems in a brief bulleted list.
- 2 Identify how your case study project addressed the project. What did the city accomplish? (Bulleted list).
- 3 What was the urban design approach? Theories, values, urban design principles. (The article “Ten Points to an Urban Methodology” is an example). (Bulleted list).
- 4 Since few urban design projects are ever “complete”, there are opportunities to extend your case study by adding another project. Find a specific site (Google Earth or other data source) in your overall study area that is opportune for development. The site can be large or small as long as it exemplifies the overall urban design program.

5 Formulate a reasonable development program for the site. (For example, 500 units of housing with ground floor retail and community services).

6 Identify your design objectives (bulleted list) and develop a sketch design proposal. An illustrative site plan and 3-D sketch are recommended. You could design your proposal in one of two ways: (1) Use the urban design theory or approach as it was used in your case study. In other words, follow the same process the city used. Or (2) Take what you have learned from the city's approach, modify it based on your critical review of the process, and design your project with a revised / modified process. If you do this, briefly describe (bulleted statement) how you changed the approach.

Final drawings should include a (sketch) Illustrative Site Plan and 3-D sketch (freehand or digital, axon or perspective). Edit and incorporate the exercise in your final report (3 or 4 pages).

Initial Case Study Reports

Presentations (about 20-30 minutes + discussion)

- Introduce case study and its regional setting (geography , cultural context, socio-economic context, existing urban fabric.
- Brief description of the overall urban design effort. What did the city set out to accomplish? What were the problems faced, objectives?