

# **Theories of City Form**

Fall 2019

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## **Location**

209 Fayerweather

## **Time**

Friday 11 am - 1 pm

**“The city is not the manifestation of some iron law  
but rather part of changing human culture and aspiration.”  
-Kevin Lynch**

Theories of City Form is a survey course that examines the myriad forces and factors which directly govern or indirectly influence the size, shape and nature of cities. The class will cover explicit theories regarding the form of cities as well as explore many interdisciplinary, critical approaches to understanding urban outcomes that can loosely be categorized under the broad umbrella of “Urban Studies.” Grades are based on attendance and participation (40%), a mid-semester project (30%) and a final paper (30%).

## **Acknowledgments & Participatory Pedagogy**

Theories of City Form by its very title, takes a pluralist stance on theory that places it within a broad discourse on cities, one which is as dependent on the comments and contributions of students as it is the writings of published scholars. Starting with a strong foundation inspired by courses developed by acclaimed professors Julian Beinart and Ananya Roy, Theories of City Form was conceived as an open and evolving exercise, where students are encouraged to engage the material by constructively critiquing the structure of the course itself. In addition to the lively discussion and participation of all students in the past three years, the current iteration of this syllabus owes particular acknowledgement to past students Michael (Jong Won) Choi, Julie Pedtke, Leonardo Tamargo Niebla, Britta Ritter-Armour, Mayrah Udvardi, and Luis Sebastián Ugás for their contributions.

## Overview

### Part 1 - Introductions

- 9/6 **Week 1**  
Introduction to Theories of City Form
- 9/20 **Week 2**  
Models: What is a City?
- 9/27 **Week 3**  
Mechanisms: How do Cities Work?

### Part 2 - Modernity / Modernism / Modernization & The City

- 10/4 **Week 4**  
Industrialization and Reformism
- 10/11 **Week 5**  
Control and Anxiety
- 10/15 **Week 6 (MAKE-UP CLASS 11a-1p in Wood Auditorium)**  
Film: "Pruitt-Igoe Myth"
- 10/18 **Week 7**  
Colonial Technocracy  
**Assignment Due @ 11:59 pm**
- 10/25 **Week 8**  
Decolonizing Modernism

### Part 3 - Postmodern Urbanisms, Complications to the Modernist Ideal

- 11/1 **Week 9**  
Heterotopia
- 11/8 **Week 10**  
Exclusion and Informality
- 11/15 **Week 11**  
New Universalism: Globalization and Climate Change  
**Paper Abstract Due @ 11:59 pm**

### Part 4 - Conclusions

- 11/22 **Week 12**  
Debates and Conclusions
- 11/29 **Thanksgiving Break**
- 12/6 **Week 13**  
Final Reviews No Class
- 12/13 **Week 14**  
**Paper Due @ 11:59 pm**

## Week 1: 9/6 Introduction to the Theories of City Form

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What do we mean when we talk about city form? Why do cities look the way they do? What explains differences in the way different cities look? Is a general theory of city form even possible? How could a critical understanding of the factors which drive urban form influence practitioners in the allied urban professions? This introductory class will include a discussion of the precedents of this class, as well as the backgrounds and expectations of students in the class.

### Readings

- Lynch, Kevin. "Is a General Normative Theory Possible?" Ch. 5 in *Good City Form*. MIT Press, 1990, pp. 99-108.
- Krugman, Paul. "Why Can't We Get Cities Right?" *The New York Times*. Sept. 4, 2017.
- Chakrabarti, Vishaan. "A Country of Countries: of Highways, Houses and Hedges." in *A Country of Cities: A Manifesto for Urban America*. Meropolis Books, 2013, pp. 19-43.
- Chakrabarti, Vishaan. "America's Urban Future." *The New York Times*. April 16, 2014.

## Week 2: 9/20 Models: What is a City?

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Despite the classic materialist argument that the first cities arose after the first Agrarian Revolution with the advent of surplus goods, the archaeological record shows the importance of cosmic considerations in ancient city planning. The materialist counterpart to the supernatural city is the mechanical one, where the city must be created quickly with no specific intended outcome and where the forces driving growth are unstated or unknown. Such cities are guided by a few simple rules to govern continuous urban growth. A priority is placed on convenience, speed, flexibility, legibility, equality and speculation. A third normative model city draws heavily from the formal development of biology during the 18th and 19th centuries. The city as organism is considered to be a singular as self regulating whole. Formulations spoke of homeostatic dynamics in urban systems, excessive growth was considered analogous to cancer and other urban maladies were attributed. Basic units of growth are defined around specific activities, likened to metabolic processes. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century sociologists began to discuss cities as products of collective imagination, in some ways bringing the discourse full circle to its ephemeral roots.

### Readings

- Jacobs, Jane, "Cities First—Rural Development Later," Chapter 2 in *The Economy of Cities*, 3-48.
- Rykwert, Joseph. "The Parallels." Chapter 5 in *The Idea of a Town: The Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World*. MIT Press, 1988, pp. 163-87.
- Sennett, Richard. "The Neutral City." Chapter 2 in *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1992, pp. 41-68.
- Howard, Ebenezer. "The Town Country Magnet," "The Revenue of Garden City, and how it is obtained—The Agricultural Estate" and "The Revenue of Garden City—Town Estate." Chapters 2-4 in *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*. MIT Press, 1970, 50-69.
- Wilson, Elizabeth "Looking Backward: Nostalgia and the City," Chapter 7 in *Imagining Cities: Scripts, Signs, Memory* ed Sallie Westwood and John Williams, Routledge, 1997, 125-136.
- Wirth, Louis. "Urbanism as a Way of Life." *The American Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 1 (1938): 1-24.

## Week 3: 9/27 Mechanisms: How do Cities Work?

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Throughout the second half of the 20th century, many urban theorists became less concerned with the derivation of totalizing theories of urban form and began to outline meta-theories which examined specific mechanics in the production of the built environment more abstractly. These mechanics range from purely material dynamics of urban economics to the historical and sociological “production of space” explored by Marxist and other critical modes of critical urban theory. The hierarchical models of structuralist designers stake out a middle ground with their formal propositions, material controls for design of spaces that are imbedded in social processes.

### Readings

- Krugman, Paul. “Geography Lost and Found.” Chapter 2 in *Development, Geography, and Economic Theory*. MIT Press, 1997, pp. 31-59.
- Alexander, C., S. Ishikawa, and M. Silverstein. *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*. Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. ix-xl.
- Habraken, N. John. ”The Control of Complexity.” *Places* 4, no. 2 (1987): 3-15.
- Koolhaas, Rem, "Introduction," "Prehistory," and Excerpts from "Frontier in the Sky" and "Skyscraper Theorists" in *Delirious New York*. Monacelli Press, 1994, pp. 9-27, 82-89, 110-125 .
- Rose, Damaris, " Rethinking Gentrification: Beyond the Uneven Development of Marxist Urban Theory." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 2, no. 1 (1984): 47-74.

## Week 4: 10/4 Industrialization and Reformism

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Reform in the face of worsening living conditions has long been a driver of urban formal thought. This lecture traces the twin history of Industrialization and Reformism from the dawn of the Industrial Revolution in England through to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century post-industrial United States. Traditional English settlement patterns characterized by communal ownership of productive land and shared responsibility for rural poverty were challenged by the labor demands of the new factory system in Manchester and London and the emergence of a new, politically empowered capital class. Despite some tellings of this history, it was not a gradual evolution but rather a violent political struggle.

Responding to the plight of downcast workers who can no longer count on traditional communitarian social safetynets, new Utopian Socialist urban proposals emerge to counter the rising urban strife.

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### Readings

- Engels, Friedrich. “The Great Towns.” Chapter 3 in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Translated and edited by W. H. Henderson and W. O. Chaloner. Stanford University Press, 1958, pp. 30-87.
- Williams, Raymond. “Enclosures, Commons, and Communities.” Chapter 10 in *The Country and the City*. Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 96-107.
- Haden, Dolores, “Socialism in Model Villages,” Chapter 2 in *The Grand Domestic Revolution*. MIT Press, 1982, pp. 33-63
- Wiebenson, Dora, “Utopian Aspects of Tony Garnier's Cité Industrielle.” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 19, No. 1 (Mar., 1960): 16-24.
- Bauer, Catherine, excerpts from *A Citizens Guide to Public Housing*, Vassar College Press, 1940, pp. 9-34.
- Castells, Manuel, “Dimensions and Processes of the US Urban Crisis in the 1970s.” Chapter 17 in *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach*. MIT Press, 1977, pp. 402-420.

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Reformism gains becomes a significant force in the public consciousness, buoyed by the increasing awareness of the living conditions of the working class enabled by photography. A more ambitious role for the state in dealing with the plight of the urban poor is formulated in new public housing programs as well as in nascent modernist planning.

Fast forward to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the collapse of the manufacturing employment base combines with racial strife, the flight of the upper and middle classes from cities and decades of violent urban renewal policy to create a new urban crisis. The response to this new challenge was deeply imbedded in the free-market discourse that still governs our politics today, yet was wrapped in much of the same reformist language of past state efforts to intervene in urban process.

## **Week 5: 10/11      Control and Anxiety**

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From another angle, the history of modern planning is less about benign reformism than a narrative of control and anxiety. The example of Vienna will illustrate the modernist remaking of the city—most notably the conversion of its medieval fortifications into a space of leisure and consumption called the Ringstrasse—and its driving factors: both the “modern, urban subject’s” new relationship to the built environment and the desire of the state to project modernity through built form.

Modernism, as it relates to urban form, gives rise to the notion of professional planners. This new form of expertise is concerned not only with the rationality of the plan itself but also with the development of effective techniques for implementing such plans. Two of the clearest examples of modernist planning early in the Modern Era can be seen in the works of Baron

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- Dunham-Jones, Ellen, “New Urbanism as a Counter-Project to Post-Industrialism.” *Places* 13, no. 2 (2000): 26-31.
- Hanlon, James, “Success by design:HOPE VI, new urbanism, and the neoliberal transformation of public housing in the United States.” *Environment and Planning A* 42 (2010):80-98.

### **Readings**

- Wilson, Elizabeth. “Architecture and Consciousness in Central Europe” in *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women*. University of California Press, 84–99.
- Harvey, David. “Materializations: Paris 1848–1870.” Part 2 in *Paris, Capital of Modernity*. Routledge, 2005, pp. 88-100.
- Aibar, Eduardo, and Wiebe E. Bijker. “Constructing a City: The Cerdà Plan for the Extension of Barcelona.” *Science Technology Human Values* 22, no. 1 (1997): 3–30.
- Berman, Marshall, “In the Forest of Symbols: Some Notes on Modernism in New York” Chapter 5 in *All that is Solid Melts in to Air*. Simon and Schuster, 1982, pp. 287-329.
- Campanella, Thomas, “Jane Jacobs and the Death and Life of American Planning.” *Places* (April 2011): [placesjournal.org/article/jane-jacobs-and-the-death-and-life-of-american-planning/](http://placesjournal.org/article/jane-jacobs-and-the-death-and-life-of-american-planning/)
- Gold, John R. “Creating the Charter of Athens: CIAM and the functionalist city,

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Hausmann in Paris and Ildefons Cerdà in Barcelona. These master-planners set the stage for Robert Moses's work in New York and the resistance he faces from community interests embodied by Jane Jacobs. The trend towards direct, aggressive action in planning policy is contemporaneous with the development of totalizing, "blueprint planning" of cities in modernist architecture and design circles as encapsulated in CIAM's seminal Athens Charter and realized in Brasilia, Brazil's iconic modernist capital.

1933-43." *The Town Planning Review* 69, no. 3 (1998): 225-247.

- Hoston, James. "Blueprint Utopia," Chapter 2 in *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. University of Chicago Press, 1989, pp. 31-58.

#### Film

- [Metropolis \(1927\)](#), directed by Fritz Lang.

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### Week 6: 10/15 "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth" MAKEUP CLASS 11a-1p in Wood Auditorium

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The story of the Wendell O. Pruitt Homes and William Igoe Apartments, known collectively as Pruitt-Igoe, captures much of the drama of last week's class. Best known for the photos of its demolition—which critics have said heralded alternately the death of mid-century social policy or the death of modernism in architecture and planning—Pruitt-Igoe was one of the largest public housing projects in the country at the time of its construction and was initially considered a great success. How it came to be demolished less than 20 years after it was first occupied encapsulates much of the controversy and dashed hopes of the modernist social project.

#### Film

- If you can't attend the make-up class you can rent the film to stream online. *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* (2011), directed by Chad Freidrichs  
<https://www.amazon.com/Pruitt-Igoe>  
<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/thepruitt>

#### Readings

- Catch up or read ahead!

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### Week 7: 10/18 Colonial Technocracy

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The history of modernism and urban form is intimately intertwined with the history of colonialism. Modernist notions of "best practice" and rationality align perfectly with both the colonial drive to "improve the colonized" as well as the efficiencies demanded by carrying out an Imperial administration. The ideas put forward by vanguard modernism and its allies in the

*(continued on the next page)*

#### Assignment Due @ 11:59 pm

#### Readings

- Wright, Gwendolyn, "Colonial Opportunities." Chapter 2 in *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, University of Chicago Press, 1991, pp. 53-84.
- Çelik, Zeynep. "An Outline of Urban Structure", in *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations*. University of California Press, 1997, pp. 58-86.
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nascent social sciences were, at first, not widely accepted in the Western centers of power, while colonial administrators were much more willing to experiment with these new ideas given that they had little-to-no accountability to their colonized subjects. Thus, colonial cities became the sandbox for modernist explorations. Examples are taken from French colonial exploits in North Africa.

- Abu-Lughod, Janet. "The Origins of Modern Cairo" Ch. 7 in *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious*. Princeton University Press, 1971, 98-117
- Eleb, Monique, "An Alternative to Functionalist Universalism: Écochard, Candilis, and ATBAT-Afrique." in *Anxious Modernisms*, MIT Press, 2001, pp. 55-74

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**Week 8: 10/25      Decolonizing Modernism, Humanizing Modernity**

The history of Modernism is often presented as the development of ideas in the West and their export to the wider world, which is precisely why it fits so neatly with the colonial narrative. But this picture, in its Eurocentric orientation, entirely misses the viewpoint of the non-western subjects and in doing so perpetuates colonial power structures. The concept of "Alternative Modernities" suggests that modernism is always experienced contextually, embedded within specific cultures and histories, making the Western perspective only one among many. This heterogeneous approach expands the breadth of modernist theory, allowing for the development of relevant theories in and for non-western sites, but it also complicates the universality of modernist discourse in ways that will be further explored in subsequent classes. Specific cases of modernist planning from the Soviet and Non-Aligned blocks during the Cold War provide a useful departure from the tired narrative a modernism defined by a universalizing discourse of capitalist ingenuity or corporatist/statist dominance in the West, defined instead by the specifics of their contexts. These developments were happening contemporaneously with an increasing unease among Western modernists about the dehumanizing tactics of contemporary urban practice.

**Readings**

- Levin, Alaya, "Haile Selassie's Imperial Modernity: Expatriate Architects and the Shaping of Addis Ababa," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 75, no. 4 (December 2016): 447-468.
- Hoston, James. Excerpts from "Premises and Paradoxes" and "The Brazilianization of Brasilia" Chapters 1 and 8 in *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. University of Chicago Press, 1989, pp. 3-5, 14-23, 289-299, 308-314.
- Vidyarthi, Sanjeev, "Inappropriately Appropriated or Innovatively Indigenized?: Neighborhood Unit Concept in Post-independence India," *Journal of Planning History* 9, no. 4 (2010):260-276.
- Le Normad, Brigitte, "Modernity Redefined, The 1972 Master Plan." Chapter 7 in *Designing Tito's Capital: Urban Planning, Modernism, and Socialism in Belgrade*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014, pp. 213-242.
- Sit, Victor F. S., "Soviet Influence on Urban Planning in Beijing, 1949-1991," *The Town Planning Review* 67, No. 4 (Oct., 1996): 457-484.
- Smithson, Allison, "Team 10 Primer 1953-62." *Ekistics* 15 no. 91 *Modern Cities: A Jungle of Buildings* (June 1963): 349-360.
- Davidoff, Paul, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 31, no. 4 (November 1965):331-338.



Coined by Foucault, the notion of a Heterotopia, broadly defined, refers to spaces that have multiple layers of meaning above and beyond a purely superficial understanding. In the early 1980's theorists in Los Angeles began to put forward new models of urbanism that explained their hometown in ways the older, modernist Chicago School of Urban Sociology couldn't. The resulting Los Angeles School of Geography was postmodern in its structuring: cities were understood to be heterotopic rather than having a singular linear notion of social mobility relative to urban growth. Notions of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism complicate the universalist ideas of the modern subject. Infrastructural inventions with modernist roots can lead to unintended, divergent outcomes when overlaid with other issues such as race and class, like what rapper Ice Cube calls "bourgie traffic" on Interstate 405 versus "gangster traffic" on Interstate 110. Heterotopic phenomena can be sinister, like the privatization and militarization of public spaces described in Mike Davis's seminal *City of Quartz*, or the endemic sprawl and resulting exurban enclaves often attributed to cities like Los Angeles, while others are more empowering, like the urban experimentation found in contemporary barrios and other equivalent "ethnic suburbs" or "ethnoburbs."

As eluded to in many of last weeks readings, the notion of "Heterotopia" is hardly egalitarian. Readings that cover spaces of exclusion will address the issues of urban marginality and informality. The concept of Splintering Urbanism will address the role of contemporary capitalist logic of privatization in developing these spatial patterns. We will see similar

*(continued on the next page)*

### Readings

- Dear, Michael and Nicholas Dahmann, "Urban Politics and the Los Angeles School of Urbanism," *Urban Affairs Review* 44, no. 2 (2008): 266-279.
- Davis, Mike, "Fortress L.A." Chapter 4 in *City of Quartz*. Vintage Books, 1992, pp. 223-260.
- Crawford, Margaret, "The World in a Shopping Mall," and Soja, Edward J. "Inside Exopolis: Scenes from Orange County," in *Variations on a Theme Park* ed. Michael Sorkin. Nonday Press, 1992, pp. 3-30, 94-122.
- Wolch, Jennifer, "Intransigent LA," *Geoforum* 39 (2008):543-545.
- Wei, Li "Anatomy of a New Ethnic Settlement: The Chinese Ethnoburb in Los Angeles," *Urban Studies* 35, no. 3 (1998):479-501.

### Film

- Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles (1972), directed by Julian Cooper for BBC. <https://vimeo.com/22488225>
- Crash (2005), directed by Paul Haggis <https://www.amazon.com/Crash> (free with prime, \$2.99 on other sites.)
- Ice Cube Celebrates the Eames (2012) directed by Dave Meyers for Pacific Standard Time <https://vimeo.com/42052949>

### Readings

- Graham, Stephen and Simon Marvin, Excerpts from "Social Landscapes of Splintering Urbanism," Chapter 6 in *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities, and the Urban Condition*. Routledge, 2001, 217-242, 253-266, 92-93, 301-303.
- Wilson, Mabel O., "Mine Not Yours," *Dimensions of Citizenship*, United States Pavilion at the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale and e-flux Architecture, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

phenomena emerging out of more explicit conflicts such as Johannesburg in the aftermath of Apartheid and the history of Israeli West Bank Settlements, embedded in Israeli politics, racial and religious anxiety, as well the familiar suburban impulses about security and consumption. The San Diego/Tijuana border illustrates a hybrid of these conditions, where conflict both explicit and implicit plays out across the border region, defining complex networks of interdependencies. Finally we will explore ways to deconstruct these power dynamics through collective action and professional recognition of the potential of informality.

- Roy, Ananya, “Civic Governmentality: The Politics of Inclusion in Beirut and Mumbai,” *Antipode* 41, no. 1 (2009): 159-179.
- Segal, Rafi and Eyal Weizman, “The Mountain: Principles of Building in Heights,” *A Civilian Occupation, The Politics of Israeli Architecture*. Verso, 2002, pp. 80-93.
- Simone, AbdouMaliq, “People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg.” *Public Culture* 16, no. 3 (2004): 407-429.
- Dovey, Kim, “Informalizing Architecture: The Challenge of Informal Settlements,” *Architectural Design* 83, no.6 (Nov/Dec 2013): 82-89.

#### Film

- The Informal as Praxis (2012), Teddy Cruz. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOWP2v\\_PPoM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOWP2v_PPoM)

Week 11: 11/15

New Universalism: Globalization and Climate Change

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By way of conclusion we will examine the contemporary urban universalism embodied by globalization and climate change. Saskia Sassen’s seminal accounting of the “Global Cities” concept will foreground our discussion, complicated by Jennifer Robinson’s provocation of what it means to be “off the map.” Harvey Molotch’s classic notion of “City as Growth Machine,” underscores the policy and development reality presupposed by global urban competition. In an era of increasing climate change awareness, the possibility and paradoxes of sustainable development as means of sustaining growth is hotly debated, as is the role of global urban leadership in solving environmental problems. We’ll close with a look at the collision of sustainability, marginality and the shrinking cities flip-side of the global cities through the story of the Hantz Woodland’s in Detroit, and how creative approaches to ownership, planning, design and development might begin to untangle some of these issues.

#### Assignment Due @ 11:59 pm

#### Readings

- Sassen, Saskia, “Locating Cities on Global Circuits,” *Environment and Urbanization* 14, no.1 (2002): pp. 13-30.
- Robinson, Jennifer, “Global and World Cities: A View from Off the Map,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 26, no. 3, (2002): 531-550.
- Molotch, Harvey, “The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 2 (Sep. 1976): 309-332
- Mapes, Jennifer and Jennifer Wolch, “Living Green’: The Promise and Pitfalls of New Sustainable Communities,” *Journal of Urban Design* 16, no. 1 (2011): 105-126.
- Davidson, Kathryn and Brendan Gleeson, “Interrogating Urban Climate Leadership: Toward a Political Ecology of the C40 Network,” *Global Environmental Politics* 15, no. 4 (Nov 2015): 21-38.
- SAGRANSKY, Sara “Rethinking Land Struggle in the Postindustrial City,” *Antipode* 49, no. 4 (2017): 1079-1100.
- Bisom-Rapp, Skylar “Ownership Unpacked,” *ARPA Journal*, (May 2018).

#### Film

- Land Grab (2016), Sean King O’Grady. <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07FYVPZCZ>