

BUILT ENVIRONMENT DISRUPTION: PARTNERSHIPS & URBAN TECHNOLOGY

PLAN6613-1 / Spring 2025

[Kate Wittels](#), [David Gilford](#)

During the second half of the 20th century and accelerating to the present, the financial, institutional, legal, political and conceptual boundaries between public and private have become less distinct, with public and private roles in urban development and governance overlapping. Developers and public authorities alike think of their work as social (i.e. mission-driven) and entrepreneurial. Meanwhile, companies like Uber, Airbnb, and WeWork have disrupted established economic and socio-spatial patterns, influencing the choices that people have and make in the realms of housing, work, consumption and travel. Finally, entities in the so-called “third sector” - civic organizations, cooperatives, and non-profits - have proliferated, assuming a large role in shaping urban built environments. In this context, the definition of a public benefit is often contested, as is the question of who should be responsible to define and defend the public interest in citymaking.

This course relies on a series of cases to illustrate and explore the ways in which cities - and planning - have changed with the acceleration of entrepreneurial activity across sectors in recent decades. Students will be exposed to both academic thinking on important questions of ownership and public responsibility, as well as best practices in planning and policy designed to encourage successful integration of new technology and business models to improve how we live, work, consume and play in cities today and into the future.