

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
GSAPP-GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING, AND PRESERVATION
Architecture
Fall 2015
Advanced Studio

Instructor: Frida Escobedo
T.A.: TBD

ESTATES OF EXCEPTION: **Vulnerability as a form of resistance in Mexico City**

The term *state of exception* defines the suspension of the whole juridical order by the state in times of emergency, as a means to somehow control these. It is also a concept in the legal theory of Carl Schmitt, based in the sovereign's ability to transcend the rule of law in the name of the “public good”. Any struggle to reconstitute power relations is, to a greater or lesser degree, a struggle to reorganize their spatial bases. Today, one of the most generalized and accepted forms of *state of exception* is *Eminent Domain*.

In Mexico, the notion of land and property ownership has a very strong political component. Since the days of the Revolution, land has been seen as an instrument of social justice. In this studio, we will analyze the concept of *Eminent Domain* in its spatial-territorial, historical, political, and ethical dimensions. We will question how this measure shifts and destabilizes the very idea of **property**, and how it renders the relation between private and public domains unstable.

Course Structure:

The first half of the semester will be research-oriented. We will study how *Eminent Domain* has worked as a tool for land tenure regularization, risk mitigation, infrastructure development and—more recently—as a security strategy. You will be assigned a specific case that falls under one of these four categories.

There is one class trip to Mexico City in the first week of October, where you will learn about the politics of Eminent Domain through seminar type. You will be asked to “make a case for the land” for the Midterm Review. You will need to establish your position on the conflict, and assess whether this measure is actually transforming effectively space into *appropriated territories*, fit for exchange and public utility, or if it is actually generating *dominated territories*.

The second half of the semester, you will develop a strategy for the transformation/restoration of the given case studies. We will use David Harvey’s *Grid of Spatial Practices* as point of departure for developing these strategies. Harvey proposes this grid as a matrix where the three dimensions identified in

Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (material spatial practices, representations of space and spaces of representation) intersect with four additional aspects:

- Accessibility and distancing
- Appropriation and use of space
- Domination and control of space
- Production of space

The final deliverables can range from symbolic representations of spaces to territorial organization, from imaginary landscapes to policing. We encourage you to reimagine the possibilities of land tenure as the source of a new spatial and political contract, where a contested territory can be understood as Judith Butler says: vulnerability can be a form of resistance.

Case Studies:

The Housing Act, a project by Daniel Fernandez Pascual, curated by José Esparza Chong Cuy within the New Publics – Clos Closer Lisbon Architecture Triennale 2013.

Narcourbanism, a research project by Guillermo Ruíz de Teresa, 2013.

Sol Goldman and Alex DiLorenzo Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971. Hans Haacke, 1971.

Piso Piloto: Medellin and Barcelona, between floor and ceiling. A cross-disciplinary, collective exploration to fulfill people's right to housing and the city. Josep Bohigas, 2015.

Old Construction Units, An Economic Contract, Plus Another One Possible. Tercerunquinto, 2012.

Basic Bibliography:

Harvey, David. 1990. "Individual spaces and times in social life," in *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Blackwell Publishing.

Sizek, Slavok. 2013. *Demanding the Impossible*. Polity Press.

Lefebvre, Henri. 2007. *The Production of Space*. Blackwell Publishing.

Agamben, Giorgio. 2005. *State of Exception*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Paz, Octavio. 1985. *Labyrinth of Solitude*. Grove Press Inc.



'Public Sculpture in Monterrey's urban periphery', Tercerunquinto (2006).

A 'grid' of spatial practices

	<i>Accessibility and distanciation</i>	<i>Appropriation and use of space</i>	<i>Domination and control of space</i>	<i>Production of space</i>
Material Spatial Practices (experience)	flows of goods, money, people, labor power, information, etc.; transport and communications systems; market and urban hierarchies; agglomeration	land uses and built environments; social spaces and other 'turf' designations; social networks of communication and mutual aid	private property in land; state and administrative divisions of space; exclusive communities and neighborhoods; exclusionary zoning and other forms of social control (policing and surveillance)	production of physical infrastructures (transport and communications; built environments; land clearance, etc.); territorial organization of social infrastructures (formal and informal)
Representations of Space (perception)	social, psychological and physical measures of distance; map-making; theories of the 'friction of distance' (principle of least effort, social physics, range of a good central place and other forms of location theory)	personal space; mental maps of occupied space; spatial hierarchies; symbolic representation of space; spatial 'discourses'	forbidden spaces; 'territorial imperatives'; community; regional culture; nationalism, geopolitics, hierarchies	new systems of mapping, visual representation, communication, etc.; new artistic and architectural discourses; semiotics
Spaces of Representation (imagination)	attraction/repulsion; distance/desire; access/denial; transcendence 'medium is the message'	familiarity; hearth and home; open places; places of popular spectacle (streets, squares, markets); iconography and graffiti; advertising	unfamiliarity; spaces of fear; property and possession; monumentality and constructed spaces of ritual; symbolic barriers and symbolic capital; 'construction of tradition'; spaces of repression	utopian plans; imaginary landscapes; science fiction ontologies and space; artists' sketches; mythologies of space and place; poetics of space; spaces of desire

A grid of Spatial Practices, David Harvey (1990).