Worlds, Cities and Urbanisation
Complex Cities/EMU Theory: Metropolitan Structure seminar and workshop

Stephen Read, Azadeh Mashayekhi, Jorick Beyer

Schedule:
24/09/13: Seminar
Urbanisation: historical territorialisation of an urban world.
9.15-9.45: A short history of an urban world: From The Perspective of the World to world-cities (Stephen)
10.00-10.30: Urban societies and economies: cities, modernities and organised urban complexity (Stephen)
11.00-11.30. Tehran’s 5 modernities (Azadeh)
11.30-12.00. Los Angeles’ 5 modernities (Jorick)

12/11/13: Workshop
Mapping urban societies: so what is a social territory exactly?
9.15-9.45: Cultural modernities and making urban worlds
10.00-12.30: Workshop: Make your own social territory

Aim:
This seminar and workshop aim to give an account of urban structure and its formation, and to develop skills and tools for the understanding and analysis of urban layouts and forms. It begins with a series of three presentations as background to the historical structuration of urban and geographical territories (the geography of capitalism). Two examples are presented to illustrate. It ends with a workshop in which students are asked to analyse their project regions and then deliver a critical comment on the public spaces involved. They are asked to produce simple maps and diagrams and a 3000 word text with proper citations and references in the form of an academic paper.

Main presentations:
A series of 3 presentations as background to the historical structuration of territory.

1. A short history of an urban world: From The Perspective of the World to world-cities:
This presentation approaches the question of ‘what the city is’ from an historical-economic perspective. In this perspective, long economic cycles are linked to episodes of globalisation centred on networks of cities. There have been by some accounts four and by others three of these episodes in which first an Italian, then a Dutch, then a British and then an American city and state stood at the centre of a world-economy, each during the course of a ‘long century’. The concepts of ‘modernity’ and ‘hegemony’ (the authority or dominance to set the agenda for the world-economy), are historicised by this means, each episode introducing a different ‘modern world system’, ‘world-economy’ and set of ‘world-cities’. The
contemporary ‘global city’ idea is discussed as a development in this basic paradigm, but criticised for forgetting the historicity of cycles of origination and decline and the specificity of the national centre of economic power. Arrighi argues our contemporary world-economy is in crisis and can expect some significant changes at the centre of the world economy, with a likely shift of some power at least to the far east. In the mean time future economic expansion and development is likely to be disrupted by further crises. The neoliberal agenda for business as usual is questioned on this basis.

2. Urban societies and economies: cities, modernities and organised urban complexity:
This presentation introduces an idea of urban complexity and creativity associated with Jane Jacobs and begins to link this with urbanisation – the ‘creation of the city’ – as an alternative to the idea of agglomeration. According to Jacobs cities are essentially network phenomena: cities originated in networks and there is no city without a network of cities. Peter Taylor has outlined his world-city network in terms of the mutual constitution of ‘world’ and ‘city’ in a network. He explains ‘citiness’ in terms of simultaneous intercity and intracity relations, with cities producing both goods and the demand which fuel a world-economy. Cities produce new work to meet this demand as well as an organised social complexity of specialisations and divisions of labour. However, too little attention has been given to other networks, for example the proto-national network of Dutch cities which Jonathan Israel argues was implicated in Amsterdam’s success in the long seventeenth century. The complexification of urban societies has to do with the way cities hinge or articulate world, national, regional and other networks and their associated productive systems. The logic of creative urban places is not that they are bounded spaces containing a lot of proximate or face-to-face relations, it is that they are the points of articulation of different local and translocal scales of network. Taylor emphasises economic and cultural differences between different world-city hegemonies and we see the way roles and forms of cities change through these cycles, from preindustrial city-state ‘containers’ of work and wealth to more complex industrial cities and nations and postindustrial metropoles and regions. These are ever larger social and functional organisations used to ‘fix’ accumulated wealth in space. The unit of this ‘fixing’ increases from mercantile cities to industrial national urban systems and to postindustrial metropoles and regional networks at continental dimensions. This progression has hit a limit at the scale of the world and Arrighi’s suggestion that population size and density will be the scalar logic of a last round of accumulation centred in east Asia is discussed.

3. Cultural modernities and making urban worlds.
Organised social complexity is a product of urbanisation. Cities and societies have become ‘modern’ together in a series of ‘steps’ of social modernisation-complexification and city building. The forms of each of these cities and their social forms are linked. As social forms change the cities that accommodate these are built around them. An industrial city is built to accommodate an industrial society; a postindustrial city is built to accommodate a postindustrial society. New technologies are enrolled in new urban spaces and networks at each step. These infrastructures are enormously costly but they embed modern lives and
economies and are considered necessities in successive hegemonic cultures of modernity. 'Hegemony' crosses political divides so that today for example governments of the left and the right regard national and global economies, highway and airport building and the power grid as technical rather than political matters. These built cities are also themselves a part of the strategy of 'fixing' accumulated surpluses of wealth. Contemporary denationalisation of strategic infrastructures can be seen as the economic elite reclaiming what they see as rightfully theirs. But the historic city also adds value, as forms of the city of the previous hegemonic cycle are ‘recycled’ into the logic of the new forms. Regeneration, gentrification, and renewal are processes by which historical urban places are returned not to ‘their former glory’ but to the economic spaces and social forms of the new hegemon.

_Workshop:_
In the workshop students will use the region and site they are currently working on and will be guided through the process of identifying successive urban societies and the cities they have occupied. These societies and cities can be traced through the costly sociotechnical infrastructures built at the time: water, drainage and electrical reticulation in industrial Amsterdam for example; especially housing and public transport in the industrial era and highways and suburban (highway related) developments in the postindustrial. These societies and their cities can be mapped by way of their centring spaces and ‘grids’ and the ways successive modern cities (industrial and postindustrial Amsterdam in the example) articulate with one another can be identified. The map produced can be used to ‘read’ the forms and spaces of social and urban development and this will be explained in class. Students are asked to develop their analyses to critically look at the public space in their study area. They are encouraged to find their own literature as a guide. Some possible texts are listed in the ‘supplementary reading’ list.

_Paper:_
A 3000 word paper on the structure of the region analysed. The paper should incorporate a critical comment on the public spaces involved. Students are asked to search for literature to do this: a recommended and supplementary reading list is included to help. Mentorship will be given at this stage to guide the student in their reading and in coming to critical conclusions. The paper will include the necessary simple maps and diagrams in a readable format. It is to include proper citations and references and be in the form of an academic paper.

_Hand-in:_
20th December 2013.

_Recommended and supplementary reading:_
Recommended in _bold_.  


• Kristiaan Borret, 'The 'void' as a productive concept for urban public space', from D. De Meyer, K. Versluys, et al. (1999) The Urban Condition: space, community and self in the contemporary metropolis (Rotterdam: 010).

• Peter Critchley 'The city of symbols' <http://mmu.academia.edu/PeterCritchley/Papers>

• David Harvey, 'The political economy of public space', from S. Low & N. Smith (eds.) (2006) The Politics of Public Space (London; Routledge)


• Doreen Massey, 'A Global Sense of Place', from D. Massey (1994), Space, Place and Gender (Minneapolis MN, University of Minnesota Press).


Extended bibliography:
Recommended in bold.


