

HEAD Socio-Political Practices in Architecture

Charles Heller, Spring 2021

The class “Socio-Political practices in architecture” introduces students to key spatial concepts that offer points of entry into contemporary transformations of space and spatial practices across multiple scales – from the planetary to the intimate – and into their social, political or ideological dimensions. The course is structured as an exploration of spatial ontologies – the different spatial categories and objects that make up our world – and their interrelations. This will lead us from concepts of space, place, and territories to those of the body and affect, but also networks and infrastructures, objects and matter. Students will be introduced to symmetrical ontological approaches according to which humans and non-humans exist on a continuum, enter complex assemblages and all possess a capacity to change the world. At the same time, we will analyse the way these spatial categories are shaped by multiple lines of conflict, including between capital and labour, migration and borders, race and gender relations.

The course seeks to offer students a series of conceptual tools that will help them look at space and spatial practices differently – and in particular be attuned to the way spatial concepts and practices are agentic and at once shaped by power relations and create potentials for resistance and subversion. They will familiarise themselves with spatial practices that have experimented with these conceptual tools in productive ways.

Each of the 7 sessions will be organised around a concept – or series of concepts – and will introduce key theorisations and debates (mornings) and related case studies (afternoons). The theoretical introductions will be offered as lectures, all the while introducing moments of dialogue with students based on readings and short reading notes prepared in advance. The cases will be partly presented by the students.

Students are expected to spend a minimum of 3 hours of preparation before each class, to keep up with the required reading and draft 1 short reading note per class.

Further requirements are that each student present at least 2 examples of practice relating to our readings and theoretical discussion and write a final paper.

The schedule of classes, reading list and details as to requirements will be given to the students on the first day of class.

Bio

Charles Heller is a researcher and filmmaker whose work has a long-standing focus on the politics of migration within and at the borders of Europe. In 2015, he completed a Ph.D. in Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, University of London. He is currently Research Associate at the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP), Graduate Institute, Geneva. Together with Lorenzo Pezzani, in 2011 Heller co-founded Forensic Oceanography, a collaborative project based at Goldsmiths that has developed innovative methodologies to document the conditions that lead to migrants’ deaths at sea, and which has generated human rights reports, articles and videos that have been exhibited internationally, including at the HKW, the Venice Biennale, the MACBA, the MOMA, the ICA and Manifesta 12.

Course sessions and readings/practices

1. Introduction: Critical Spatial Practices

Summary

This session introduces the course, and in particular the set of approaches in art and architecture associated with “critical spatial practices”.

Required Readings:

Jane Rendell, 2006. *Art and Architecture: A Place Between*, (London: IB Tauris, 2006). Introduction.

Keller Easterling 2005. *Enduring Innocence: Global Architecture and Its Political Masquerades*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005. Introduction.

David Gissen, 2008. *Architecture’s Geographic Turns*.

Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider, and Jeremy Till. 2013. *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture*. 1 edition. London; New York, NY: Routledge. Introduction.

Milica Topalovic, 2016. *The Architecture of the Territory?*

Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson. 2013. *Border as Method, Or, the Multiplication of Labor*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. See pp. 61-66 (The Heterogeneity of Global Space) ; 205-212 (Corridors and Channels)

Practices:

<https://www.geobodies.org/art-and-videos>

<https://vimeo.com/74185298>

<https://vimeo.com/156098465>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/program/rebel-architecture/2014/9/2/israel-the-architecture-of-violence>

<https://conquer-and-divide.btselem.org/>

<http://www.decolonizing.ps>

<http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/oush-grab/>

<http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/articles/>

<https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-bombing-of-rafah>

Consult websites

<https://spatialagency.net/>

<https://www.onomatopee.net/exhibition/diagrams-of-power/>

<https://thefunambulist.net/>

<https://research-architecture.org/>

<https://c4sr.columbia.edu/>

<https://hetnieuweinstituut.nl/en>

<https://criticalspatialpractice.co.uk/>

<https://www.sternberg-press.com/series/critical-spatial-practice-series/>

<https://www.arch.columbia.edu/books>

2. Space, Place, Territories

This session offers an intensive theoretical introduction to debates about space, place and territory.

Required Readings:

De Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume I*. Trans., Rendall, Steven. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp; 91-130. "Part III: Spatial Practices"

Foucault, Michel. 1984. "Space, Knowledge, and Power" in *The Foucault Reader*. Rabinow, Paul, ed. New York: Pantheon Books. Pp. 239-256.

David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development*. London and New York: Verso, 2006, read "Space as a key word"

Doreen Massey. (1998) 'Power-geometries and the politics of space-time', Hettner-Lecture, Department of Geography, University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg.

Mezzadra, Sandro, and Brett Neilson. 2019. *The Politics of Operations: Excavating Contemporary Capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books. See 17-32 (The Space and Time of Capitalist Crisis and Transition).

Azadeh

Anna Jackman, Rachael Squire, Johanne Bruun, Pip Thornton. 2020. Unearthing feminist territories and terrains. *Political Geography* 80 (2020)

Nour

Pickles, John. 2004. *A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping and the Geo-Coded World*. London: Routledge. Chapter 6. Mapping the Geo-body.

Sebastian Cobarrubias and Maribel Casas-Cortes. 2009. Intervention: Mapping is critical! *Political Geography* 28 (2009) 332–342. See *Activist cartography: enabling alternative political spaces*.

Wainwright, Joel and Joe Bryan. 2009. "Cartography, Territory, Property: Postcolonial Reflections on Indigenous Counter-mapping in Nicaragua and Belize." *Cultural Geographies* 16: 153-178

Practices

Counter-mapping - general

<https://www.onomatopee.net/exhibition/diagrams-of-power/>

<https://www.countercartographies.org/>

<https://spatialagency.net/>

http://www.an-atlas.com/contents/contents_intro.html

Counter-mapping - Palestine

<https://www.kw-berlin.de/en/territories/>

<https://spatialagency.net/database/a.civilian.occupation>

<https://conquer-and-divide.btselem.org/>

<https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/destruction-and-return-in-al-araqib>

Counter-mapping - Natures

<https://www.paulotavares.net/trees-vines-palms>

<https://www.geobodies.org/art-and-videos/forest-law>

<https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/herbicide-warfare-in-gaza>

<https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/intentional-fires-in-papua>

Other resources:

Saskia Sassen, "Saskia Sassen: Space and Power", interview by N. Gane in *The Future of Social Theory*, pp. 125-142. London: Continuum International Publishing Group (2004).

3. Materiality, Actants, Aesthetics

This session introduces key theoretical debates that have highlighted on the one hand the agency of matter and objects, and on the other aesthetics, which has shaped debates on space and spatial practices.

Reading:

Latour

Delanda

Bennett

Gorz

Easterling

Braidotti posthuman glossary

<https://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/s/situated-knowledges.html>

Interscalar Vehicles for an African Anthropocene- On Waste, Temporality, and Violence - Gabrielle Hecht

Rancière

Bringenti

Practices

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Easterling

latour making things public, critical zones

Iorio Sudeurop

4. Networks, Infrastructures, Mobilities

Reading:

Biran Larkin

Deborah Cowen

Stephan Graham

Keller Easterling

Sheller
Mezzadra

Practices:

Sekulla Forgotten Space
Cases from Easterling
Lisa Parks on satellites, in relation to Trevor Paglen
Case on electrical infrastructures, pipes etc..
Alarm Phone
Sophie - calais

5. Borders and Social Boundaries

Reading:

Eyal Weizman – Hollow Land
Etienne Balibar
Sasskia Sassen
Sandro Mezzadra
Achille Mbembe
Fanon

Practices:

Eyal Weizman – Hollow Land
FO-Border Forensics
Anarchitektur
Fadaiat - Hacktitecktura
Teddy Cruz
Cases from After Belonging

6. Cities

Reading:

David Harvey, The Right to the City
Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid, "Planetary urbanization," in Matthew Gandy ed., Urban Constellations.
Berlin: Jovis, 2012, 10-13.
Mike Davis, City of Quartz and Planet of Slums
Abdoulalik Simone, Cities Global South
Fanon
Informal city
The architecture of the city
+ war in the city

Practices:

Project on the City (2002), "Lagos," in Mutations (Barcelona: Actar, 2002),
Matthew Gandy, "Learning from Lagos," N

OMA on Palermo M12
Kurgan – inequality cities

+ cities of global south (Teddy Cruz)

7. Bodies, Affect, Subjectivities

Reading:

Butler

Massumi

Mezzadra

Thrift, Nigel. 2008. Chapter 10 - "Turbulent Passions: Towards and understanding of the affective spaces of political performance" in *Non-Representational Theory: Space, politics, affect*. Oxford: Routledge. Pp. 220-254.

Bodies – seapages –viscosity: nancy tuana, Vanessa aga jones...

Michelle Murphy

Vanessa Agard Jones

New theories of seepage and leakage (or, how are bodies not contained)

Sonja Boon, Lesley Butler, Daze Jefferies - Autoethnography and Feminist Theory at the Water's Edge- Springer International Publishing_Palgrave Pivot (2018).pdf

Cf 8. water

Povinelli discussion of Thacker and Bennett in Geontologies

Gabrys on the Sink

Autoethnography and Feminist Theory at the Water's Edge: Unsettled Islands by By Sonja Boon, Lesley Butler, Daze Jefferies > chapter 8 on Water (they quote Toni Morrison > flood as memory; "I've long been fascinated by the liquid, the fluid, the stuff that resists borders, flows beyond them, and renders them obsolete") ...bursting at the seams

Astrida Neimanis on Water and bodies of water/ thick time

Dilip Da Cunha on the colonisation of rain and the invention of rivers

Practices:

Dilip Da Cunha

References

Jane Bennett, Systems and Things: A Response to Graham Harman and Timothy Morton

Manuel DeLanda, Space: Extensive and Intensive, Actual and Virtual.

Stuart Elden and Jeremy Crampton, Space, Knowledge and Power Foucault and Geography

David HARVEY | Frédéric DUFAUX | Philippe GERVAIS-LAMBONY | Chloé BUIRE | Henri DESBOIS, "On territorial justice, human flourishing and geographical strategies of liberation: an interview with David Harvey"

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