



Parallel session 3A-2.1

**Designing Urbanisms**

Tuesday 12 November, 11.30 – 13.00

IAS Common Ground

Chair: **Prof. Peg Rawes**, Professor of Architecture and Philosophy, The Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL

Discussant: **Dr Clare Melhuish**, Director, UCL Urban Laboratory

---

**Negotiating development in the fragmented metropolis: Architecture as territorial choreography in the Paris periphery**

Lara Belkind, Lecturer at Columbia University GSAPP, Paris

This paper explores urban innovation in moments of institutional transition – focusing on migrant neighbourhoods on the metropolitan periphery of Paris, France. As post-war technocratic regional planning institutions have been dismantled and slowly replaced with institutions promoting a neoliberal approach to regional development, this cycle of “creative destruction” has opened possibilities for experimentation in the interim. Here, architectural practice in particular, engaged with the implementation of new transport infrastructure, has emerged as a form of negotiated governance and planning.

Architecture can be a potent strategy to negotiate development in a complex global city-region. While on one hand, design may be used as a political tool to promote a state-driven global city economic development agenda, on the other, architects can help leverage this agenda to coordinate bottom-up regional planning processes, foregrounding local development priorities and coaxing collective action from conflicting urban actors.

The Grand Paris Express rapid regional rail project, which followed a 2007 Grand Paris international design consultation, reveals new tactics required in a fractured metropolis whose functions and governance have been dispersed (ceded to private capital and local authorities), whose boundaries are in flux, and which the state neither has the resources nor authority to control. Rather than prescriptive visions, consulting teams of designers and social scientists formulated systems-based strategies to confront metropolitan complexity. Such approaches are now being tested locally as architects engage territorial plans anticipating 68 new stations of the Grand Paris Express.

One illustration is the Est Seine-Saint-Denis process, coordinated by LIN architects, which includes Clichy-sous-Bois, an epicentre of 2005 social unrest in the Paris banlieue. It also includes Montfermeil, whose conservative mayor was elected on an anti-immigration platform. Here, architects have mediated consensus and grafted a local enterprise and landscape framework onto a state-proposed rail link to Charles de Gaulle international airport.

---

## **Geography and Identity – Designing for emerging cities**

Nicholas Choy, Associate, Allies and Morrison

Architecture has always been regional in its essence and character. Local customs, materials and knowledge have been discussed in theoretical writings since Vitruvius. But globalisation today is creating a new generation of urban centres replacing slowly developed traditions and resulting in more homogenous forms of urban development.

Challenging this 'new normal' requires examples that prove that cultural specificity is worth an investment in the masterplanning of places. Our paper will explore three contemporary examples from the Arab world, where the familiarity of elements that have defined places for centuries has been appropriated to address today's challenges.

After a long civil war, a new urban block in central Beirut assembles a chorus of buildings to create complex and rich spaces that reflect the city's character of al-fresco living and encounter. In Qatar, at the scale of a neighbourhood, Msheireb Downtown reintroduces compactness inspired by the original city's traditional narrow alleyways as a foil to the sprawling nature of urban growth in the Gulf. Now mostly built, it is defined by walkable shaded areas and routes, and a culturally sustainable approach to architecture. And, on the edges of Muscat, Madinat al Irfan is a vision for a new kind of city whose design is based on simple ideas that have worked well for centuries: cluster buildings tightly together, mix them up, create a comfortable walking environment for pedestrians, design with the climate and to a human scale, grow food locally.

At three different scales – block, neighbourhood and city – these examples demonstrate that places can grow and 'modernise' without having to forget where they are. In our contribution to this conference, we would expand on the existing dialogue on critical regionalism and explain how new developments can be contemporary while continuing urban traditions, using these examples as real case studies in practice.

---

## **Language as a Construction Site. Fictional Geographies and Urban Typologies of Real Estate Advertising**

Marija Maric, PhD candidate, Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture, ETH Zurich

The paper starts from the case of Belgrade Waterfront, the first large-scale real estate development conducted as a public-private partnership in the post-socialist countries of the former Yugoslavia. It proposes to view the project's built architecture as only one segment of a wider, "brand architecture" of its global developer and their branding team, thus helping to methodologically equalise the importance of built and fictional (narrative) spaces in urban research.

Occupying a position of an intermediary who communicates between all the stakeholders involved in the project-making, the role of a real estate branding expert has grown in

relevance over time, corresponding to that of an architect or urbanist. The “entrepreneurial shift” in urban governance, underway since the 1970s, accompanied by the globalisation of financial and real estate markets, has created conditions for the emergence of industries specialised in branding nations, places, cities, and – during the last decade – also global, large-scale real estate developments. Storytelling and language have become communication and design domains running in parallel with that of planning. The importance of the curated and total brand concept, followed by the self-referentiality of branding industries, gradually led to the creation of fictional urban typologies, such as “smart cities,” “lifestyle urban communities,” or “live, work and play environments,” existing only at the level of a branding language, detached from the actual urban “product” on the ground. With place-specific, but still standardised campaigns, real estate branding agencies have thus helped perpetuate globalisation of built environment on the one hand, but also collective urban imaginaries on the other. Examining the relationships between real estate branding industries and making of “global urbanisms,” the central question of the paper will be: what is the role of these “fictional urban typologies” in writing global histories of built environment, but also in rethinking its design tools?

---

### **Socio-environmental indicators and the role of the University as an anchor in the process of urban regeneration: the case of the Federal University of Southern Bahia’s (Brazil) rural campus**

Prof. Joel Pereira Felipe, Visiting Research Fellow, UCL Urban Laboratory

This paper analyses the choices defined by the Federal University of Southern Bahia (UFSB), created in 2014 in the cities of Itabuna and Ilhéus, northeastern Brazil, when developing its university campus outside the city, based on a Modern Movement model of architecture and urbanism from the first half of the 20th century.

The paper critiques the missed opportunity by the University to mobilise campus construction as an element of regeneration of unused public and private urban spaces and historic buildings, with the potential to improve urban mobility and reduce its carbon footprint, generate jobs and income, contribute to the improvement of the quality of life and reduce the inequalities of the population of one of the poorest regions of Brazil. It reflects on the model adopted by many university campuses created between 2003 and 2015, which will have repercussions in the coming decades.

It argues that universities have a responsibility to set an example of environmental sustainability in development in response to the emergent issue of global warming, and to promote the denomination ‘green campus’ or ‘eco campus’ to designate a university institution that follows a set of actions aligned to sustainable development. It proposes the creation of a methodology to analyse and monitor the implementation of measures by universities through Environmental Management Plans and Systems.