“As scholars struggle to decipher current forms of urbanization, they are forced to confront the limitations of inherited approaches to urban questions, and consequently, to face the difficult challenge of inventing new theories, concepts, methods and cartographies that may better illuminate emergent spatial conditions, their contradictions and their implications.”
Operational landscapes of urbanization

Urban Theory Lab | Harvard GSD Research Studio 2013-2016 overview
urbantheorylab.net
Extreme Territories of Urbanization

Urban Theory Lab-GSD Research Seminar

12 MAY 2014
9.00am - 5.30pm

End-of-semester presentations
GUND124

SCHEDULE

9:00am - 9:30am
Planetary urbanization and the ‘extreme territories’—a theory-driven research experiment
Neil Brenner | Daniel Ibañez | Kian Goh | Nikos Katsikis

9:30am - 10:45am
Urbanization in the Arctic and Siberia
Grga Basic (Arctic) and Ana Maria Quirós (Siberia)

11:00am - 12:15pm
Urbanization in the Amazon and the Sahara
Leif Estrada (Amazon) and Dalal Alsayer (Sahara)

12:15pm - 1:30pm
Urbanization in the Chauhaus
Lunch Break

1:30pm - 2:45pm
Urbanization in the Himalayas and the Gobi steppe
Vineet Dwivedi (Himalayas) and Shirin Barol (Gobi)

3:00pm - 4:15pm
Urbanization in the Pacific Ocean and the atmosphere
Matthew Brown (Pacific) and Chris Bennett (atmosphere)

4:30pm - 5:30pm
Final roundtable on the extreme territories of urbanization
Reflections from Álvaro Sevilla Beltrago (Madrid)
followed by general discussion and debate moderated by Neil Brenner.

7:30pm - 11:00pm
Urbanization in Somerville
Urban Theory Lab end of the year celebration at Neil Brenner’s home

urbantheorylab.net
• A “lab” for theory? Inherited frameworks are increasingly inadequate; new theories needed.

• A theory-driven research experiment: goal is not only to illuminate sociospatial transformations, but to generate new concepts.

• This includes a critique of cartographic positivism + development new approaches to the spatial representation of urbanization.
URBAN THEORY LAB / UTL-GSD

• **Spring 2012:** seminar on theories of planetary urbanization; founding of UTL-GSD

• **Spring 2013:** project-based research class on “extreme territories of urbanization

• **Winter 2014:** *Implosions/Explosions*—elaborates a long-term agenda for UTL

• **Spring 2014:** stage 2 of “extreme territories” project, focusing on the regulatory geographies of planetary urbanization
Metageographies of urban theory

the bounded city
U = \frac{P_c}{P_t}

U = \text{urbanization}

P_c = \text{population of cities}

P_t = \text{total population}
THE ENDLESS CITY

The Urban Age Project by the London School of Economics and Deutsche Bank's Alfred Herrhausen Society

121 buildings over eight storeys in 1900 in Shanghai

14% green open space in New York

19 m people lived in Mexico City in 2000

47.5x more than in 1900

24.1% below the poverty line in Johannesburg

$1.3m average cost of an apartment in Manhattan

10% lived in cities in 1900

50% is living in cities in 2007

75% will be living in cities in 2050

4% of the population of Johannesburg reaches the age of 65

22.7% of all Johannesburg residents are younger than 14

65% of New Yorkers belong to an ethnic minority

56% of new residents in London were foreign born in 2001

16 m² living space in 2006 in Shanghai

2.5x more than in 1900

55% of New Yorkers use public transport to get to work

33% of all journeys made in Johannesburg are by foot

35% of all journeys made in Berlin are by foot or by bike

91% employed in the service sector in London

25x increase of privately-owned cars in Shanghai between 1990-2005

PHAIĐON
For the first time in history more than half the world's population lives in citi... SHUT UP!

Batman loses patience with global-urban spatial ideologies

Source: Jeroen Beekmans / The Pop-Up City (popupcity.net)
The Spectre of the Non-Urban Haunts Debates on the Urban Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban as Settlement Type</th>
<th>The Non-Urban as ‘Constitutive Outside’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Sociological</td>
<td>• Non-urban social conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Economic</td>
<td>• Non-urban economic conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Geographical / morphological</td>
<td>• Non-urban morphological arrangements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We need new theoretical categories—and cartographies ...
Beyond the bounded city

urban theory
without an ‘outside’?
“I’ll begin with the following hypothesis: society has been completely urbanized.”

Henri Lefebvre
(1970)
La révolution urbaine

L'axe qui figure le processus se jalonne ainsi :

0 ----> Ville politique ----> Ville commerciale ----> Ville industrielle ----> Zone critique

basculement de l'agraire vers l'urbain

implosion-explosion
(concentration urbaine, exode rural, extension du tissu urbain, subordination complète de l'agraire à l'urbain)
...the specter of complete (planetary) urbanization
Lecture by Andy Merrifield
Henri Lefebvre and Planetary Urbanization
What If the Entire World Lived in 1 City?

EMILY BADGER  MAR 07, 2013  13 COMMENTS

It’s difficult to think about global urbanization at the scale of individual cities. There’s no such thing as the model metropolis that mirrors the development patterns and sustainability problems of urban areas everywhere. Isolating any one city is impractical anyway; they now increasingly spread into and impact one another, blurring the boundaries between urban and rural, between developed and natural land, between metros, megalopolises and mega-regions. And then there is the simple problem of definitions: “What’s considered ‘dense’ in Australia,” says Yale School of Architecture critic Joyce Hsiang, “is rural in China.”

How then do we begin to think about the consequences of worldwide urbanization, what Hsiang calls “the greatest design challenge we’re faced with”?

“It’s impossible to look at the city as a kind of discrete entity any more given the way financial networks, ecological networks, social networks work,” says Bimal Mendis, an assistant dean at Yale and a principal, along with Hsiang, of Plan B Architecture & Urbanism. “These systems have much larger footprints than the actual physical or political boundaries of cities.”
Alternative viewpoint: planetary urbanization as (capitalist) uneven spatial development
Avoid the fetish of urban form: there is no singular ‘urban’ morphology
Urbanization is generalized: supersede the urban / non-urban divide
Start with (capitalist) industrialization and its geographies.
Urbanization is mediated through regulatory configurations and strategies.
Key dimensions of urbanization as a creative destruction of social space (rather than as a morphological condition):

- Intensity
- Connectivity
- Metabolism
Concentrated / extended urbanization

a useful conceptual distinction for urban theory
Concentrated urbanization
the moment of implosion:
node, agglomeration, metropolis, region

Extended urbanization
the moment of explosion:
operational landscapes that support and result from agglomeration.
CONCENTRATED URBANIZATION
PERCENTAGE OF TRACT RESIDENTS COMMUTING TO CENTRAL CITY

- **50% or more**
- **5% or more**
- **Some**
EXTENDED URBANIZATION
Source:
Nikos Katsikis, Urban Theory Lab, Harvard GSD
CONCENTRATED URBANIZATION

EXTENDED URBANIZATION

... critical point ... ?
High-stress theory-building strategy: extreme territories of urbanization
EXTREME TERRITORIES OF URBANIZATION

- Amazon
- Arctic
- Gobi steppe
- Himalayas
- Sahara desert
- Siberia
- Pacific Ocean
- Atmosphere
NEOLIBERALIZATION AND THE LONG 1980s: PATHWAYS TOWARDS A NEW FORM OF (PLANETARY) URBANIZATION?
REPRESENTATIONAL STRATEGIES: BEYOND CARTOGRAPHIC POSITIVISM
“As scholars struggle to decipher current forms of urbanization, they are forced to confront the limitations of inherited approaches to urban questions, and consequently, to face the difficult challenge of inventing new theories, concepts, methods and cartographies that may better illuminate emergent spatial conditions, their contradictions and their implications.”
Extreme Territories of Urbanization

Urban Theory Lab-GSD Research Seminar

12 MAY 2014
9.00am - 5.30pm

End-of-semester presentations
GUND124

SCHEDULE

9:00am - 9:30am 
Planetary urbanization and the "extreme territories"—a theory-driven research experiment
Neil Brenner | Daniel Ibañez | Kian Goh | Nikos Katsikis

9:30am - 10:45am
Urbanization in the Arctic and Siberia
Grig Basic (Arctic) and Ana Maria Quiroś (Siberia)

11:00am - 12:15pm
Urbanization in the Amazon and the Sahara
Leif Estrada (Amazon) and Dalal Alsayer (Sahara)

12:15pm - 1:30pm
Urbanization in the Chauhaus
Lunch Break

1:30pm - 2:45pm
Urbanization in the Himalayas and the Gobi steppe
Vineet Dwivedi (Himalayas) and Shirin Barol (Gobi)

3:00pm - 4:15pm
Urbanization in the Pacific Ocean and the atmosphere
Matthew Brown (Pacific) and Chris Bennett (atmosphere)

4:30pm - 5:30pm
Final roundtable on the extreme territories of urbanization
Reflections from Álvaro Sevila Bultrago (Madrid)
followed by general discussion and debate moderated by Neil Brenner.

7:30pm - 11:00pm
Urbanization in Somerville
Urban Theory Lab end of the year celebration at Neil Brenner’s home

urbantheorylab.net