Re-thinking Citizenship, Housing and Property: Border Neighborhoods as Sites of Production

While in the last years, the global city became the primary site of economic consumption and display, local neighborhoods in the margins of such centers of economic power remained sites of cultural production. These are peripheral communities and neighborhoods where new economies are emerging and new social, cultural and environmental configurations are taking place as catalysts to produce a new collective imagination, alternative urban policies and more inclusive housing paradigms.

This course will dwell on the specificity of the San Diego – Tijuana border, straddling two radically different ways of constructing city. At no other international juncture in the world one can find some of the wealthiest real estate, as the one found in the edges of San Diego’s sprawl, barely twenty minutes away from some of the poorest settlements in Latin America, manifested by the many slums that dot the new periphery of Tijuana. These two different types of suburbia are emblematic of the incremental division of the contemporary city and the territory between enclaves of mega wealth and the rings of poverty that surround them.

A different idea of ‘city’ and dwelling emerges here out of the many invisible trans-border flows, which are physically manifested by the informal land use patterns and economies produced by migrant workers flowing from Tijuana into San Diego in one direction, and by ‘infrastructural waste’ moving in the opposite direction to construct an insurgent, cross-border urbanism of emergency. This suggests a double ‘housing urbanism’ of retrofit by which the recycling of fragments, resources and situations from these two cities can allow new ways of conceptualizing dwelling and density. Through specific case study and scenarios we will discuss examples on both sides of the border that illustrate these socio-economic flows, while addressing particular approaches to re-imagine housing and its role in the contemporary city:
From South to North - Suburbs made of Non-conformity: Tijuana’s Encroachment into San Diego’s Sprawl. The shifting of cultural demographics in American Suburbs has transformed many immigrant neighborhoods into the site of cultural production, challenging the politics of discriminating zoning in San Diego. On the San Diego side, we will discuss the positive impact of immigration in the transformation of the American neighborhood, projecting that the future of Southern California’s urbanism will be determined by tactics of retrofit and adaptation.

From North to South - Suburbs made of Waste: San Diego’s subdivisions are Recycled into Tijuana’s Slums. As people move North to pixilate the large with the small, the waste of San Diego flows south-bound to construct an urbanism of emergency, as one city recycles the ‘left over’ of the other into a sort of ‘second hand’ urbanism. On the Tijuana side we will discuss issues of dwelling out of the relationship of shanty towns, emergency housing and the politics of cheap labor, as maquiladoras (NAFTA factories) settle in the midst of these slums.

Lectures, Readings and Discussions
Through a series of lectures, guest presentations, readings, dicussions and writings this course will engage the topic of dwelling across the interrelated scales of City, Border and Housing, and across three main lines of work and activity:

1. In-class lectures will focus on:
   a. Tuesdays: Lectures on the specificity of border neighborhoods flanking Tijuana-San Diego, conceived as experimental sites to re-think housing paradigms. These lectures will take students through specific housing case studies in San Ysidro, California and Los Laureles Canyon in Mexico.
   b. Thursdays: A series of guest speakers and lectures will contextualize the specificity of these case studies against a series of readings on the city.

2. Weekly readings* will help the students to contextualize the specific housing issues discussed during Tuesday lectures against a range of ideas in the shifting conceptions of the contemporary city. These readings will be discussed and elaborated briefly on Thursdays lectures through guest presentations and by professor Cruz.

3. The interrelated notions of City, Border and Housing will be the basis for a series of discussions in weekly section meetings, where students will focus on developing two main writing assignments, led by teaching assistants.

* A Reader containing all essays listed here will be available the first week of the Winter quarter.
Writing Assignments
The students will develop two main writing assignments:

Prompts

Essay 1
During the first 4 weeks of the course many of the lectures will focus on locating our current housing crisis across socio-economic and political relations, as well as through an understanding of environmental degradation produced by existing unsustainable patterns of urban sprawl. For this first writing assignment students are asked to focus on a particular interpretation of their own city. Students will immerse into a critical analysis of their immediate surroundings by comparing two different environments in San Diego. One of these will be the place itself where they live and comparing this to an urban block in the city of San Diego. The specific location of this place will be given in section meetings. Related questions regarding what makes a neighborhood? What constructs a community? What signifies private and public property and their different variations and negotiations will be important guides into this narratives.

Essay 2
During the second part of the quarter, the topics will begin to dwell on the specificity of trans-border urban dynamics and the issue of housing pertaining two small neighborhoods on both sides of the Tijuana – San Diego Border. While the first essay focuses on a critical analysis of existing places and urban conditions in San Diego, during this second writing assignment the students are asked to take a stand -a position- about how to improve their own city. Inspired by the cross-border case studies (Housing made of waste in Tijuana, and Housing made of human adaptation in San Diego), and using Jacques Tati’s film ‘Mon Oncle’ as point of reference, the students will be asked to speculate on what might be the conditions that construct the future neighborhood for San Diego. Based on a brief analysis of the two very different environments that serve as backdrop for this film’s story, the students will argue for the conditions, the qualities that make a physical environment be environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. The students are asked to fictionalize a community: How does housing and public space look-like and perform here? What kind of social relations are enabled by these spaces? Or can this imagined neighborhood be also shaped by ‘stitching’ together many existing small environments found across these border cities? Existing spaces and socio-economic relations you felt compelled by during the lectures?

More specific information and guidance for the development of these written narratives will be discussed in class and sections.
Schedule on Papers

Week 2 - Assign Paper 1
Week 4 - Draft of Paper 1 due
Week 5 - TAs return draft with comments
Week 6 - Revision of Paper 1 due; Assign Paper 2
Week 8 - Draft of Paper 2 due
Week 9 - TAs return draft with comments
Week 10 - Revision of Paper 2 due

Instructional process and grading
This class will be organized around a series of in-class lectures, guest presentations, section discussions and writing exercises. On Tuesdays, Teddy Cruz will present the main lecture pertaining the topic of the week. On Thursdays, there will be a special visiting lecturer who will elaborate on the issues presented on the Tuesday lecture through other case studies and propositions. At the end of this guest lecture, Teddy Cruz will lead a brief summary of issues discussed during this visit and an elaboration on the assigned readings for the week. These guest lecturers will represent a wide range of specialists engaging the issue of housing and the city, including politicians, developers, architects, artists, activists and scholars.

In addition, each week, the students will read an essay included in a class reader. These essays will enable the students to familiarize themselves with the variety of forces that are at play in the construction of the city, represented by a variety of theoretical positions from diverse contemporary thinkers. These readings will be further discussed in section meetings led by Teaching Assistants. In addition to developing critical essays from this body of information, the students will be asked to present some of the content elaborated through the essays during section periods.

Grading:
30% Class and Section participation, including presentation
25% Essay 1
25% Essay 2
20% Final Exam
Schedule and Topics

Week 1

*Tue Jan 10*

**Lecture:**

**Intro 1: Locating the Crisis:**
**Housing the American Dream**

> List of READINGS ON THE CITY announced

*Thur Jan 12*

> Readings on the City 1:

**Locating the Rights to the City**

**Guest Talk:**
Mike Aguirre, Former San Diego City Attorney

Week 2

*Tue Jan 17*

**Lecture:**

**Intro 2: Locating the Crisis:**
**The Housing Crisis and The Shrinking Public**

*Thur Jan 19*

> Reading on the City 2:

**The Politics of the Small: The Jacobs Debate**

**Guest Talk:**
Andrew Ross, Urban Sociologist, Writer, NYU
Week 3

Tue Jan 24
Lecture:
Conflict as a Creative Tool:
How Does One Construct an Artistic Practice around Crisis?

Thur Jan 26
>Reading on the City 3:
The Visualization of Urban Crisis as Site of Intervention

Skype Talk:
Miguel Robles-Duran, Director, Co-Habitation Strategies, NY

Week 4

Tue Jan 31
Lecture:
Trans-border Housing Urbanisms

Thur Feb 2
>Readings on the City 4:
Between Density and Sprawl

In-Class Film:
Mon Oncle, by Jacques Tati

Week 5

Tue Feb 7
Lecture:
Marginal Neighborhoods as Sites of Production

Thur Feb 9
>Readings on the City 5:
On Re-thinking the Meaning of Infrastructure

**Skype Talk:**
Andrew Freer, Director, Rural Studio

**Week 6**

*Tue Feb 14*
**Lecture:**
San Ysidro: Housing made of Retrofit

*Thur Feb 16*
>Readings on the City 6:
**The Urban Left Over and an Urbanism of Adaptation**
-De Solá-Morales, Ignasi, “Terrain Vague,” in *Cuaderns* (Barcelona: Actar, 2,000)

**Guest Talk:**
Andrea Skorepa Community Activist, Director, Casa Familiar
David Flores, Director, Planning, Casa Familiar

**Week 7**

*Tue Feb 21*
**Lecture:**
Los Laureles: Housing made of Waste

*Tue Feb 23*
>Reading on the City 7:
**Informal Cities, Bottom up Urbanization**

**Guest Talk:**
Oscar Romo, Environmental Activist, Director, Alter Terra
Director, Tijuana River Estuary
Week 8

Tue Feb 28
Lecture:
Rethinking Housing:
New Politics and Economies of Dwelling

Thur Mar 1
Reading on the City 8:
The Rethinking of Urban Policy and the Public’s Domain

Guest Talk:
Ted Smith, Architect-Developer, San Diego

Week 9

Tue Mar 6
Lecture:
Locating New Models of Opportunity 1
Towards a New Civic Imagination: The Medellin Case

Thur Mar 8
Reading on the City 9:
The Democratization of City

Skype Talk:
William Morrish, Dean Parsons School of Constructed Environments, NY
Week 10

*Tue Mar 13*
Lecture:
**Locating New Models of Opportunity 2**
**Knowledge Exchange Corridors:**
**Towards a New Urban Pedagogy**

*Thur Mar 15*
Reading on the City 10: 
**We are all Urbanists in Disguise**

Final Discussion and Selected Presentations