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 state, 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, films, 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 and presentations:
   a. Tuesdays: Lectures on a variety of topics, raging from a general introduction to issues on the City, informal urbanization, public infrastructure and urban density, to the specificity of border neighborhoods flanking Tijuana-San Diego, conceived as experimental sites to re-think housing affordability today. These lectures will take students through specific housing case studies in San Ysidro, California and Los Laureles Canyon in Mexico.

   b. Thursdays: Thursdays will be used to contextualize the issues presented on the Tuesdays lectures via a series of films and guest presentations. Thursdays meetings will be also used to answer questions and open the conversation between students and professor Cruz and visitors.

2. Weekly Readings: Texts will be brief and act as provocations to be discussed in sections with Teaching Assistants. These provocations will help the students to further contextualize and elaborate the specific issues discussed during Tuesday lectures.*

3. Two main writing assignments: The material discussed during Tuesdays lectures, the series of films and guest presentations, the reading-provocations and the weekly section meetings and discussions will be the basis for developing two main writing assignments. The process and methodology to develop these
writing assignments will be led by teaching assistants in sections. Two main prompts (included in this syllabus) will be armature for the development of these two required essays.

* A Reader containing the list of provocations in the shape fragments of texts extracted from a variety of selected readings will be available the first week of the Winter quarter.

**Writing Assignments**
The students will develop two main writing assignments taking the following prompts as points of departure:

**Prompts**

**Essay 1**
For this first writing assignment students are asked to focus on a particular interpretation of their own city. Students will immerse into a critical comparative analysis of two San Diego Blocks in San Diego. The specific location of these urban environments will be given in class. 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 narrative.

**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), the students will be asked to speculate on what might be the conditions that construct the future neighborhood for San Diego. 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?

**Schedule on Papers**

Week 2 - Assign Paper 1
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 to the topic of the week. On Thursdays, there will be special film presentations or visiting lecturers will elaborate on the issues presented on the Tuesday lecture through other case studies and propositions. At the end of these Thursdays events, Teddy Cruz will lead a brief summary of issues discussed during the screenings or visiting lecturers and an elaboration on the assigned readings for the week. The guest presentations 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 a text included in the class reader. These text-provocations 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 participate in discussions during section meetings. A final exam will be performed at the end of the quarter. Students will choose from and respond to a variety of questions or topics provided by Professor Cruz.

Grading:
30% Class and Section attendance and participation
25% Essay 1
25% Essay 2
20% Final Exam

Schedule and Topics

Week 1

Tue Jan 7
Lecture:
Radicalizing the Local:
60 Linear Miles of Trans-Border Conflict

> List of provocation-readings announced

Thur Jan 9
> Provocations:
Urban Conflict as Site of Artistic Intervention

Film:
Mixed Feelings, Phillip Rodriguez

Week 2

Tue Jan 14
Lecture:
The Political Equator:
Urbanities of Labor and Surveillance

Thur Jan 16
> Provocations:
Global Conflicts across Local Borders

Film:
Maquilapolis, Sergio De La Torre, Vicky Funari

Week 3

Tue Jan 21
Lecture:
Locating the Crisis:
Where is our Public Imagination?

Thur Jan 23
> Provocations:
What is the Public and where is it today?

Guest Talk:
Fonna Forman, Professor of Political Science, UCSD
Week 4

_Tue Jan 28_
Lecture:
**Informal Urbanization:**
Citizenship as a Creative Act

_Thur Jan 30_
>Provocations:
Transforming Urban Policy with Bottom-up Intelligence

Film:
Wasteland, Lucy Walker

Week 5

_Tue Feb 4_
Lecture:
**Border Neighborhoods as Sites of Cultural Production**

_Thur Feb 6_
>Provocations:
From Consumption to Production:
Activating Socio-economic Agency at the Scale of Neighborhoods

Guest Speaker
Gaby Posada, Camino Verde, Tijuana
Carmen Romo, Calidad de Vida, Tijuana

Week 6

_Tue Feb 11_
Lecture:
**San Ysidro: Housing made of Collaboration**

_Thur Feb 13_
>Provocations:
Re-thinking Sustainability: Urbanizations of Adaptation

Guest Talk:
Andrea Skorepa Community Activist, Director, Casa Familiar
David Flores, Director, Planning, Casa Familiar
Week 7

Tue Feb 18
Lecture:
Los Laureles: Housing made of Waste

Thur Feb 20
>Provocations:
Re-thinking Infrastructure: Urbanizations of Retrofit

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

Week 8

Tue Feb 25
Lecture:
Medellin is the Future:
Public Space and the Spatialization of Citizenship

Thur Feb 27
>Provocations:
Action Cities: Confronting Socio-Economic Inequality

Video:
Interview with Sergio Fajardo, former Mayor of Medellin, Colombia

Week 9

Tue Mar 4
Lecture:
Civic Innovation Lab:
Bi-national Citizenship Culture

Thur Mar 6
>Provocations:
The Democratization of the City and the Cross-border Citizen

Guest Talk:
The Civic Innovation Lab Team: Colloquium

Week 10
Tue Mar 11
Lecture:
Cities on Speed: Rethinking Utopia
Film:
The Bogota Transformation

Thur Mar 13
Provocations:
We are all Urbanists
Final Discussion, questions and summaries