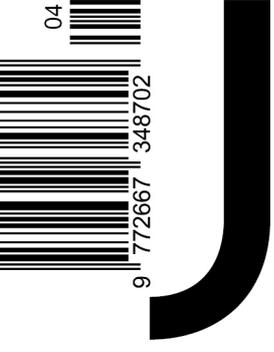


Fall | Winter 2023

Issue #04 Prospects



DU

Journal of Delta Urbanism
Delft University of Technology

Urbanism



London, England, taken by ESA astronaut André Kuipers from the International Space Station with NightPod.
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Urbanism (noun) /3..bðn.l.zðm/ ¹

- the type of life that is typical of cities and towns
 - the process by which more and more people leave the countryside to live in *cities and towns*
-

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- 2 Kevin Lynch (1981)
- 3 Michel Foucault (1967)
- 4 Choay (1969)
- 5 Eric Hobsbawm (1968)
- 6 Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (1898)

Urbanism is an amorphous term that includes many contradictions and associations, like the ocean with its energetic waves, sudden impulses, tides and storms, calms and tornados. The term itself was born of imperial waves of colonization as humans moved out of Africa, up the Nile, developing a water-based, agri-urban revolution across the eastern mediterranean basin and into Asia, in the great river valleys of India and China. Europeans trace urbs back to the Greek and Roman cities in the archipelago of trade routes between Europe and Asia. Similar urban energy clusters and settlement patterns emerged, all based on enslaved populations, plunder and war while in the Andes mountain valleys and Amazon basin, in the Caribbean basin and archipelago.

These early urban waves of settlement described by Janet Abu Lugod¹ pictured a world in which India and China dominated the world economy as trading in Asia created cities of 1 million as in Beijing. These rich, slave-based cities, called "Cities of Faith" by Kevin Lynch² (1981), produced power centers with armed urban actors ensconced in forts and castles with rich cultures, temples and palaces, fairgrounds and recreations, with plagues at regular intervals eliminating up to a third of the population.

French theorist Francois Choay, following philosopher Michel Foucault³ saw the stone castles and cathedrals as heterotopias, "the space of the other", for their "diachronic" long duration in contrast to the constant "syntagmatic" replacement of the wooden dwellings of serfs, slaves and the shophouses of merchants. Foucault identified an epistemological transformation in basic living patterns as these "heterotopic" structures transformed into the architecture of prisons, hospitals and asylums enforcing a new industrial code exemplified for him by the unbuilt example of Bentham's Utilitarian Panopticon, intended by the modern state to create a new industrial "urbanism". This term, coined by Cerda in his 1860's plan for the extension of Barcelona, exemplified for Choay⁴ (1969) a new model built around the armatures of hygienic, scientific streets, forming healthy, garden city blocks.

This new form of industrial urbanism, powered by coal and steel was Lynch's² second urban model, the "machine city" that still dominates contemporary urbanisation. The British historian Eric Hobsbawm⁵ in *Industry and Empire* identified the Atlantic slave trade as one of the sources of capital for British industrialization, as did the Quaker Robert Owen whose hydro-powered New Lanark of the 1780's provided the industrial model for countless other new factory Mill Towns. Owen became a millionaire in 5 years operating the factory 24 hours a day and providing housing, a school and social club, training many social reformers of the British Labour Party, before leaving to found New Harmony in America. Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*⁶ drew on this new town tradition to propose a ring-radial system of repetitive urban fractals around London set in a Green Belt, a model employed at a still larger scale in Moscow in the 1935 plan, and Beijing in the New China of the 1950's. This Central Place model was like a stone dropped in a pond sending forth concentric rings of urban waves.

Looking back as a child born at the end of the World War II, I grew up in the ruined city and region of London replanned by Sir Patrick Abercrombie and the London County Council, with its careful surveys, ring and radial green belts and 28 new towns. Abercrombie called for a new design discipline between planning and architecture, coining the term "urban design" in 1943, echoing the Civic Design program founded at his Alma Mater, Liverpool University in 1909, deeply

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influenced by the Garden City movement. Abercrombie supervised the replanning of many British towns, as well colonial Crown properties, like Hong Kong with its new towns in 1947. But in Third Year I confronted the unbuilt megastructural project for Hook New Town Center (1961) with its raised pedestrian decks, as our Year Master, Roy Landau, introduced us in 1966 to the Pop neo-Futurism of Archigram⁷, supported by Reyner Banham's Architecture in the First Machine Age⁸ and the later Los Angeles; the architecture of the 4 ecologies⁹.

The pond was turning into a regional lake, a network of urbanism as the last British new town of Milton Keynes¹⁰ was deeply influenced by this auto-oriented, megablock shift with its shopping mall replacing the community center of old. The oil-based highway system transformed the metropolis ring radial model into the "megalopolis" form of linear corridor development, first identified by Jean Gottmann¹¹ in the American north-east corridor from Boston to Washington with a population of 32 million, now 52 million.

Banham's love of Futurism¹² implied that there was a second machine age on the urban horizon, and Lynch² had proposed the Ecocity as his third model, whose outlines were not clear, associated with the oceanic, recombinatory systems of Christopher Alexander in Berkeley and Landscape Ecology of Ian McHarg at the University of Pennsylvania. While James Corner at Penn later did succeed in creating a far more ecologically based approach to urban design in the 1990's and 2000's. In Europe Paola Vigano's Horizontal Metropolis¹³ in its Geneva version might also include the self-built city of the future, including new forms of land ownership and community.

Meanwhile the world's rate of urbanization increased exponentially especially in Asia, where the population of France, 350 million, moved into Chinese cities in 15 years after Reform in 1990. Asian urbanists adapted traditional and modern models to their needs creating new hybrids, like the Japanese urbanism based on high-speed rail and high-density transport nodes with modern handheld communication systems (Transport Oriented Development) a pattern replicated later in many European and even American recent city region developments.

While Lynch's three models provide a way of categorizing an oceanic urbanism with reefs, clusters and tides, Choay cautioned against the use of fixed models that outlived their usefulness. Choay placed emphasis on Foucault's temporary and shifting heterotopias as a method to track and accommodate urban change. In the contemporary megacities the UN estimates that 30% will be self-built, whereas Dr Janice Perlman¹⁴ found that 60% of the housing in Rio was self-built coining the term "megacity" to describe Rio with a population of 10 million. Few designers have studied the waves of the self-building process as a planning strategy for Landscape Urbanism, like Professor David Gouveneur¹⁵ at Penn, anticipating its corridors of growth. Other examples in Latin America, like Medellin in Columbia, provide temporary glimpses of an alternate, hybrid future of sky lifts and new public institutions servicing an oceanic self-built communal urbanism floating across the landscape.

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JDU is a project by Delta Urbanism Research Group and DIMI Delft Deltas, Infrastructure and Mobility Initiative Delft University of Technology

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Graphic Layout

bruno, Venice (Italy)

Typefaces

Union, Radim Peško, 2006
JJannon, François Rappo, 2019

Publisher

TU Delft OPEN
<https://www.tudelft.nl/library/openpublishing>

Frequency: 1 volume per year

Publication Funding

TU Delft Delta, Infrastructure and Mobility Initiative

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*N.4 | Prospects | Dictionary
Fall | Winter 2023*

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Citation

Grahame Shane, D. (2023). Urbanism. *Journal of Delta Urbanism*, (4). <https://doi.org/10.59490/jdu.4.2023.8086>

Type of license

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ISSN: 2666-7851
p-ISSN 2667-3487