



SCALES OF URBAN DESIGN

ARCH 575, Spring 2017: Contemporary Urban Design Theory*
Thursdays, 3:40 - 6:30, Room 130
Ross Exo Adams

Where does architectural design end and urban design begin? If urbanization today has become planetary in scale, can we now consider the entire surface of the earth as the site of urban design?

Somewhere between 'architecture' and 'region', the 'urban' has traditionally been used to describe a unique scalar octave amongst others that gives relevance to a given field of inquiry or practice of design. Yet with the rise and of 'smart' cybernetic technologies on the one hand and a clear planetary consciousness on the other, we increasingly find urban design practices operating outside of their apparent scalar confines.

In coming to terms with the increasing global demand for 'urban design', this class will look to situate these practices in the context of the urban seen not as a 'scale', but as a modern spatio-political order that operates through multiple scales simultaneously. We will attempt to understand the complexities and contradictions of this spatial order that has been restructuring the world for the last two centuries by examining the way architectural design has responded to it. Seen as a 'history of the present', we will interrogate the status of contemporary urban design by excavating a number of precedents from the twentieth century to the present, whose conscious or unconscious effects have been to engage with, transform or react against this space by directly operating across its multiple scales. What are the limits of urban design? How can urban design resist the reduction of urban space to a scalable? What radical new possibilities can it open up?

*Open to 4th year, 5th year and Graduate students and students with permission from the instructor.