

The Right to the City

'Sometime in the next year or two, a woman will give birth in the Lagos slum of Ajegunle, a young man will flee his village in west Java for the bright lights of Jakarta, or a farmer will move his impoverished family into one of Lima's innumerable *pueblos jóvenes*. The exact event is unimportant and it will pass entirely unnoticed. Nonetheless it will constitute a watershed in human history, comparable to the Neolithic or Industrial revolutions. For the first time the urban population of the earth will outnumber the rural. Indeed, given the imprecisions of Third World censuses, this epochal transition has probably already occurred.

(Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums*)

'Boy ... wondered just exactly what kind of city it was that he was living in'.

(Neil Bartlett, *Ready to Catch Him Should He Fall*)

This course explores art works and theory that engage with urban space and contemporary experiences of cities. It addresses artists' creative and political interest in how the rhythms of everyday life, migration, globalization, violence, notions of utopia, fantasy, aspiration and desire impact upon the urban fabric and how people live together in different cities around the world today. Henri Lefebvre argued that the 'right to the city' is the right 'to appear on all the networks and circuits of communication, information and exchange.' According to Mike Davis, however, the future form of cities will be shaped through the tension between enclaves of privilege and massive urban slums. What kinds of tactics are emerging through which city dwellers negotiate these new conditions? What kind of city might be created if inhabitants were able to exercise their 'urban freedoms' in diverse spaces of encounter and creativity? Can 'the right to the city' be understood not as something known or naturally given, but as 'a right in the making'?

Some of the questions we will consider include:

- How can the city be understood as a shifting space that is socially produced?
- How can we read the city and what kinds of concepts and practices might this demand?
- How are other times, places, memories and fantasies folded into the urban fabric?

Week 1 The Production of Space

Week 2 Spatial Practice

Week 3 Utopias and Heterotopias I – Ruins and Reinventions

Week 4 Utopias and Heterotopias II – Colonial and Postcolonial Inflections

Week 5 What is a Camp?

Week 6 The Precarious City: Fragments, Mirrors, Screens