Introduction to the course:
This course provides an introduction to the principal intellectual traditions and debates in what is loosely termed ‘planning theory.’ We will review the paradigmatic schools of thought that have informed planning scholarship and practice, and attempt to draw connections between currents in social science theory and planning theory. We will consider key questions in planning, such as, Should planning theory primarily be ‘practical’ or should it be ‘critical’? Should planning theorists focus their attention on improving the planning ‘process’? Or should they instead develop normative visions for the ‘good city?’ But beyond this review of planning theory, we will consider how planning theory informs, and is shaped by, broader intellectual concerns and phenomena associated with the contemporary urban. After all, planning can’t be separated from social context. Theories and practices both inform and are shaped by shifting political economies of the past and present, by a variety of cultural and intellectual traditions, and by multiple imaginaries of the City.

In the course we will examine how old and new imaginaries and conceptualizations of the urban articulate with planning theory, and how planning theory in turn informs and is shaped by planning and development practice. We will also read original social theory in order to examine the epistemological foundations of some of these urban and planning theories. The goal is for students to become familiar with the principal debates and intellectual traditions of planning theory, become conversant with principal concerns associated with the relationships between theory and practice, and develop the necessary theoretical skills to rigorously apply theory in their own research and pedagogy. Most importantly, the class will test the proposition that theory can be useful, interesting, and fun!

In addition to a significant amount of readings and active participation in class discussions, deliverables include five short reflection papers where students synthesize debates, schools of thoughts, and the like, and critically analyze the readings of the week. There is also a final “framing” paper where students develop the theoretical framework for their dissertation, a major research proposal, or a peer-reviewed article. Students will develop a series of outlines for this paper and give a presentation in class, where they also present their broader research interests in a format akin to a “job talk.” Students will also in pairs to lead the classroom discussion on two occasions during the semester. This will include giving a presentation to class and developing discussion questions and a summary of the readings for that week.
Readings:
The remaining readings can be downloaded from the class Canvas site.

Course requirements: Grade weight: Due date/time:
Participation: 10% (100 points) N/A
Reflection papers (5) 25% (50 points each) Monday Noon day before the relevant class
Summaries and facilitation (2) 10% (50 points each) Monday Noon day before the relevant class
Framing paper outline 5% (50 points) Friday, October 28 by 5pm
Revised outline 5% (50 points) Friday, November 11 by 5pm
Presentation 5% (50 points) TBD; starting October 4
Final framing paper 40% (400 points) Monday, December 5

Reflection paper instructions:
Reflection papers should be about 2 pages single-spaced. Use only a few sentences to summarize the main argument, and then devote the rest of the paper to your own analysis. Did you see any flaws in the argument, especially in light of the other readings? Do you feel the argument contradicts that of another article, and if so, why? Has the author made effective use of a certain theoretical framework, or not? Has the author presented sufficient data or examples, or drawn effectively on the work of other scholars, to support her or his argument? Also consider the “positionality” of the writer.

Class facilitation guidelines:
You and your partner will facilitate up to one hour of class discussion on two different occasions on selected readings/topics you signed up for in class. You are required to give a short presentation and provide discussion questions to the class, and you are also encouraged to suggest optional readings for your session. In addition, you will develop short summaries of the readings (about 1/3 page single-spaced for each reading). While you may select a more traditional seminar format, avoid simply summarizing the readings. This is your opportunity to practice your teaching skills, to experiment with different approaches to group facilitation, and to try out an in-class activity/exercise to engage the class in meaningful and lively interaction.

 Presentation guidelines:
Think of your presentation as a “job talk” where you lay out 1) your research agenda, 2) your specific research project, methods, and (anticipated) findings, 3) your theoretical position, and 4) your theoretical framework. Your presentation should be 30-45 minutes and you should use power point. Define who your audience will be and format your presentation accordingly.

Notice regarding Policy on Academic Dishonesty and Accommodations for Religious Holidays:
Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. See the University Honor Code at http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html and the Student Judicial Services website at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs. By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.
August 30: Course introduction; discussion of research and theoretical interests.

September 6: What is ‘theory’...and why do we need ‘planning theory’?

I. What is ‘theory’ and how is it relevant in/for planning?

II. Schools and debates in planning theory.

OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS:

PRINCIPAL THEMES AND QUESTIONS:
   What is ‘theory?’ What relevance does ‘theory’ have for planning practice?
   What are the principal intellectual debates in planning theory?

September 13: Who are the ‘theorists?’ Knowledge, positionality, and the makings of theory

I. Knowledge production in planning
II. Theory of knowledge producion

III. Positionality and reflexivity

OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS:

PRINCIPAL THEMES AND QUESTIONS:
How is knowledge conceptualized, produced and deployed in planning theory and practice? What is the meaning, role, and significance of positionality and reflexivity?

DISCUSSION FACILITATION:

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**September 20: The City: Imaginaries, theories and representations**

I. Urban theory and planning theory
“Cities of imagination,” Chapter 1 in Hall, Peter, *Cities of Tomorrow.*
II. Representation in/of planning

OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS:

PRINCIPAL THEMES AND QUESTIONS:
How does planning theory relate to urban theory and critical development theory? What is the role of ‘representation’ in planning practice? How has hermeneutics challenged notions of objectivity in representation, and what are the implications for planning?

DISCUSSION FACILITATION:

September 27: The City/Body as Object of Reform...and the Prescriptive Planner

I. Imaginaries
“The city of dreadful night” and “The City of the Permanent Underclass,” Chapter 2 and 13 in Hall, Peter, Cities of Tomorrow.

II. Theoretical background
III. Planning responses...in theory and practice


OPTIONAL:


PRINCIPAL THEMES AND QUESTIONS:

What are the intellectual and social origins of advocacy planning? How does advocacy planning relate to ‘disciplining’ and ‘normalization’ associated with early city planning? How has imaginaries of urban problems continued to influence planning to this day?

DISCUSSION FACILITATION:

October 4: The City as System...and Planning as the Rational Instrument

I. Imaginaries

“The City of Bypass Variegated” and “The City on the Highway;” Chapter 3 and 9 in Hall, Peter, Cities of Tomorrow.


II. Theoretical background


III. Planning responses...in theory and practice

OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS:

PRINCIPAL THEMES AND QUESTIONS:
How has positivist science (empiricism) shaped planning theory and practice?
Does it continue to shape planning, and if so, how? How should we approach systems and rational theories in the planning process?

DISCUSSION FACILITATION:

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PRESENTATION:

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October 11: The Green City...and the Planner as (Sustainable) Designer

I. Imaginaries
“The City in the Garden” and “The City in the Region,” Chapter 4 and 5 in Hall, Peter, Cities of Tomorrow.
II. Theoretical background

III. Planning responses...in theory and practice

OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS:
PRINCIPAL THEMES AND QUESTIONS:
What is...or what should be...the relationship between planning and design? I.e. how should we balance concerns for material form and social process? Does the paradigm of “sustainability” adequately address social concerns?

DISCUSSION FACILITATION:

PRESENTATION:

October 18: The City of Rational Discourse...and the Pragmatic Planner

I. Theoretical background
James, William. 1904. “What is Pragmatism?” From a series of eight lectures dedicated to the memory of John Stuart Mill, A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking, in December 1904.

II. Planning responses...in theory and practice

OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS:

PRINCIPAL THEMES AND QUESTIONS:
Can the insights of Habermas be useful for planning theory and practice, and if so, how? What is ‘pragmatism’ and what has been the role of this concept in planning theory and practice? What are some of the assumptions behind communicative planning theory? What are some of the critiques of the ‘communicative turn’ in planning theory?

DISCUSSION FACILITATION:

PRESENTATION:

October 25: The Contested City...and the Critical Planner

I. Imaginaries

II. Theoretical background

III. Planning responses...in theory and practice
OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS:

PRINCIPAL THEMES AND QUESTIONS:
Can Foucault’s insights be useful for planning theory and practice, and if so, how? How useful are the concepts 'multiculturalism' and 'multiple publics,' and what are their significance for planning and planners? What is the relationship between knowledge, rationality and power, and how does this relate to planning?

DISCUSSION FACILITATION:

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PRESENTATION:

__________________________________________________________

October 28:  *Framing paper outline due by 5pm.*
November 1:  The Just City...and the Normative Planner

I.  Theoretical background

II. Planning responses...in theory and practice

OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS:

PRINCIPAL THEMES AND QUESTIONS:
What does ‘normative’ mean? Should planning theory be normative? Why or why not? What does ‘just’ mean and how can/should justice be conceptualized and operationalized in planning? Is the concept of a ‘just city’ useful; why or why not?

DISCUSSION FACILITATION:
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PRESENTATION:
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November 8:  The Insurgent City...and the Radical/Insurgent Planner

I. Imaginaries

II. Theoretical background
III. Planning responses... in theory and practice


OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS:

PRINCIPAL THEMES AND QUESTIONS:
Can Gramsci’s insights be useful for planning theory and practice, and if so, how? Is ‘insurgency’ restricted to cities in the ‘Global South?’ What should be the planner’s role in insurgent spaces? What is ‘radical planning?’ What can planning theorists and practitioners learn from the Global South?

DISCUSSION FACILITATION:

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PRESENTATION:

November 11: Revised outline of framing paper due by 5pm.

November 15: The Divided City... and Planning in Defense of Public Space

I. Imaginaries
“The City of Monuments” and “The City of Towers,” Chapter 6 and 7 in Hall, Peter, Cities of Tomorrow.

II. Theoretical background


III. Planning responses...in theory and practice


OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS:


PRINCIPAL THEMES AND QUESTIONS:

Can Lefebvre’s insights on the production of space be useful in planning, and if so, how? What has been the role of planning in producing ‘divided cities’? What should be the role of public space in social and political life? What is the future of public space and how should planning conceptualize this?

DISCUSSION FACILITATION:

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PRESENTATION:
November 22: The Global City...and the Planner as Regulator

I. Imaginaries
   “The City of Enterprise” and “The City of the Tarnished Belle Époque,” Chapter 11 and 12 in Hall, Peter, Cities of Tomorrow.

II. Theoretical background

III. Planning responses...in theory and practice

OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS:

PRINCIPAL THEMES AND QUESTIONS:
   How should planners engage with capital? What are ‘global cities?’ To what extent does culture and geography limit the ‘globalness’ of cities?

DISCUSSION FACILITATION:

PRESENTATION:
November 29: The (Post)-Postmodern City...and the Future of Planning.

I. Imaginaries

II. Theoretical background
“The City of Theory,” Chapter 10 in Hall, Peter, Cities of Tomorrow.

III. Planning responses...in theory and practice

OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS:
PRINCIPAL THEMES AND QUESTIONS:
How should planners and planning theory conceptualize knowledge production in the future? How will the virtual shape planning practice and theory? What will be the role of representation in future planning practice and theory? How should planners and planning theory approach pragmatism and normativity in the future?

DISCUSSION FACILITATION:
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PRESENTATION:
__________________________________________________________

December 6: Final framing paper due.
EXAMPLES OF REFLECTION PAPERS:

Example 1:

Today’s set of readings about boundaries, skateboarding, graffiti, and street children in Kampala are examples of much of the conceptual, theoretical material we’ve been reading this semester. In this discussion paper, I’d like to focus on the short Borden articles about skateboarding and boundaries. Specifically, I will write about how the counter-cultural elements associated with skateboarding hearken back to readings from Carmona, Németh, Sandercock, and others; and I will discuss how the boundaries discussed connect with those same authors, as well as Long.

In “Boundaries,” Borden discusses what a boundary is – that it can be physical, either “two-dimensional vertical planes” or a “momentary portal” (Borden, 21). But most importantly, boundaries are socially constructed. This connects back to my own background as sociology and philosophy undergraduate. Those fields have a strong sense that much of what we experience is socially constructed, especially among Postmodern thinkers; John R. Searle is a particularly helpful thinker along these lines, arguing that much is socially constructed. Searle, I believe would agree with Borden that boundaries that we face are “simultaneously the product of social relations and their control” (Borden, 21). Borden goes on to explain that boundaries don’t just control where we can and can’t go, but go beyond to provoke questions in our minds about whether we’re meant to be somewhere or not: “am I a welcomed guest, an ambiguous transgressor, or an unwanted trespasser?” (Borden, 21). This is something I am experiencing in my group’s research of public spaces, whether we’re being physically kicked out or don’t feel welcome because of subtle, socially constructed boundaries.

The subtle, feeling boundaries that we experience in a space hearken back to Carmona and “soft controls” (Carmona, 142-143). The “symbolic restrictions that passively discourage undesirable activities” that Carmona (142) talks about, is something Borden, I believe, would agree with. Those symbolic restrictions are powerful sociological forces that do in fact control what we do, Carmona and Borden would agree. Németh also identifies the force of subtle social cues; in his paper proposing a method for scoring public spaces, he gives negative point values to sociological boundaries such as the presence of security guards and surveillance cameras (2486-2487). While a camera or security guard standing 100 feet away doesn’t present the barrier that a wall, or even a “no entry” sign, does, it has a social element that makes one question whether he or she is allowed there, Borden would argue. On the other hand, Carmona’s discussion of over-management of a public space through physical barriers to entry would fit with Borden’s physical boundaries that prevent passage. In Long, we read about Austin’s issues with affordability. The rising cost of living closer to acts as a boundary. Namely, the figure 3 in Long (16) shows a big fence around downtown Austin. Long (16) explains “local journalists have noted that increases in house prices and cost of living are occurring in an observable spatial pattern, resulting in an Austin divided along ‘concentric rings of affordability circling the city.’
In his piece “Skateboarding” Borden nicely lays out the history of the practice, how it began “in the 1960s on the sweeping roads of calm suburban subdivisions” (Borden, 227). Skateboarding was increasingly regulated, and skateboarders began appropriating various public spaces for their use. Ultimately, “since the 1980s, skateboarding has taken on a more aggressive, and more political identify and space” (Borden, 227). His paper then goes on to discuss how skateboarders create and impose their own values on space, for example “suggesting that use values are more important than exchange values” (Borden, 227). He concludes describing how skateboarders are essentially creating their own space, cities and architecture (Borden, 228).

Underlying the paper’s focus on skateboarding’s culture, I felt was Sandercock’s idea of storytelling. Namely, the story of skateboarders is important; they have their own story and act on it in practicing their sport. Skateboarders are in effect “planning” their cities: “Planning is performed through story” (Sandercock, 12). To enact change in a neighborhood, the story of skateboarders would be important, Sandercock would say. That is, the “Skateboarding is not a crime” campaign Borden (228) identifies connects with Sandercock’s idea that stories act as a catalyst for change (18-19). Furthermore, Carmona’s ideas of management practices, namely through “repression and legislation” (Borden, 228), come up. Skateboarding is often managed in public spaces, either through hard or soft controls or the creation of segregated space (Carmona, 130-131, 142-144). Skaters can also be discouraged through “sadistic” design elements, such as raised up pieces of metal on otherwise smooth concrete paths (Davis cited in Van Melik et al, 27-28). Jorge Rousselin even explained that such design elements are typically part of public plazas downtown to deter skateboarders. Németh, a critic of privately owned public space, would probably dislike such a plaza with deterrents meant to keep out skateboarders. The idea from Borden that skateboarders value use more than exchange value, I believe, also connects with Talen and Ellis’ idea of the importance of good urban form. While I’m not sure this may translate to Talen and Ellis saying all spaces should be appropriated for skateboarding, the idea that use value is more important than exchange value comes in their discussion of “a renewed focus on substance” (Talen and Ellis, 36). Just as skateboarders see the value of the substance of urban design, for example that a concrete ledge can be a nice space for performing tricks, Talen and Ellis are saying design needs to be valued as part of planning. Skaters see this when they appropriate a space for skating because they deem it as having good design. However, Talen and Ellis’ standard of democratic urban form (43) is at direct odds with the anarchistic sentiments of skateboarding (Borden, 228). The first chapter of Hou is also closely connected with Borden, as skateboarders are a clear example of insurgent users of public space. It would be interesting to take on a more detailed analysis of how skateboarding plays out in the different typologies of actions and practices in Hou (13-14): appropriating, reclaiming, pluralizing, transgressing, uncovering, contesting spaces.

To conclude, the two Borden articles about boundaries and skateboarding are closely connected with many of the theoretical readings we’ve looked at this semester. Namely, the papers show examples of practices and acts that relate to issues of management of public space, equity in access to space, storytelling in planning, and other ideas.
Example 2:

Lefebvre’s right to the city is perhaps –alongside with Jacobs’ “eyes on the street”- one of the most used concepts in urban planning, or at least critical urban theory. Its appeal may lie in its amorphous definition rooted in the French philosopher’s convoluted writing style. Or one could also say that Lefebvre managed to capture both the zeitgeist of the 1968 Paris Student Revolt and a slogan for people to reclaim their place within and against the predominant capitalist urban development of the 20th century. For whatever reason this polysemic concept has certainly transcended its original setting: it has been codified into a law in Brazil named the “City Statue” (Fernandes, 2007), several organizations NGOs use it as is main banner (e.i the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City and the Right to the City Alliance (RTTCA)) and there is a growing scholarship of both the meaning of the concept (Harvey, 2008; Purcell, 2002) and how to apply it to empirical based research.

A good example of the former is Vasudevan’s The Autonomous City: Towards a Critical Geography of Occupation (2014). In this article the author makes a case that occupations such as Occupy Wall Street in New York City, the protests in Tahir Square in Cairo or the students demonstrations in Santiago de Chile all are ways of creating a different geography, one that is not governed by the capitalist logic of “creative destruction”. Interestingly, Vasudevan does a sort of literature review where he discusses the different ways in which scholars have deployed this concept, highlighting in this way the different meanings it has acquired since it inception. He then revisits the “original” meaning of the right to the city arguing that for Lefebvre this concept actually means three distinct rights: that of inhabitation, appropriation and participation. After his exegetic analysis of Lefebvre, the author then applies these three concepts in a historical account of different forms of occupation in the global north.

I think the way Vasudevan uses the right to the city is somehow more faithful to the radical nature of the original context. Indeed, Lefebvre’s famous dictum: “Change Life! Change society! These precepts mean nothing without the production of an appropriate space” (Lefebvre, 1992) is better suited to the anti-globalization and anti-neoliberal protests and occupation that Vasudevan showcases in his article. These occupations are in fact creating a new geography via an active embodiment of the right to the city: the occupations both create new physical infrastructures that are needed for the protesters who participate in them (bathroom, kitchens, media centers, etc) and show that a different urbanism based on solidarity and the notion of the commons is possible. They are ultimately not only claiming a right to be there vis-à-vis the State but are in fact creating a new and egalitarian space in the process.

In comparison to this radical notion of the right to the city in Leavitt, Roshan and Brady’s Right to the City: Social Movement and Theory (2009) go into the ways this concept has been “operationalized” within different organizations and social movements. They strongly emphasize one: the Right to the City Alliance in which the three authors are active members. The authors argue that the right to the city subsumes three rights: 1) that to participate in decision making process at all urban scales; 2) the right to security, which goes beyond personal security and include a proper education, healthcare and access to jobs; 3) and finally the right
to resist the current neo-liberal production of spaces. Despite this theoretical position most of the examples the authors highlight show us that the concerns of the RTTCA are more aligned to that of the right of inhabitation. So, for example, the City Life/Vida Urbana’s effort to stop evictions in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood in Boston or the RTTCA-NYC’s Picture the Homeless are all initiatives that directly target the lack of affordable housing within particular cities.

Indeed, the Right to the City Alliance is profoundly link to the fight for a dignified living for homeless people. As important as these struggles are I believe that by bypassing their own “legs” of the right to the city (resistance and security) the concept becomes less clear and at the same time dilutes the radical nature of Lefebvre’s notion. Having said this the merit of Leavitt’s article is that it shows how the right to the city might work as a unifying element that can bring different organizations (some of them outside the state, some of them within it and even maybe other against it) in order to create more just cities. That is, it shows how the right to the city allowed the RTTCA to scale up their goals and reach out to other organizations that might have different aims and struggles and thus creating a more complex organization that might have everlasting results.

Perhaps the RTTCA experience shows that it might be worthwhile watering-down Lefebvre’s original conception of the right to the city if it allows different social movements to coalesce and fight for a common ground. But then again it seems as if FIERCE, the RTTCA and other sister-organizations all are fighting against the uneven development of our cities so it might be necessary to radically reconceive the city in Lefebvre’s terms. And even then this might not be enough because the French man never included in his analysis issues of race and gender (See McCann, 1999) which significantly reduces its truly transformative potential.

Example 3:
Space is both a concept and a material element; it includes organization of things (the material) as well as social relations (abstract). Space is an essential concept for planning, since the practice of the discipline is directed to, first, the visualization (imaginary) and understanding of spaces – representation of space – and second, to their material construction and placement. These top-down imaginaries of space – abstract space – follow the prescriptions and visions of the dominant classes, where a particular ordering, conduct, and assimilation is expected. In contrast, and in ongoing contestation with abstract space and representation of space, Lefebvre posits representational space and spatial practices. The first includes the imaginaries of lived life, the “space experienced through the complex symbols and images of its ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’ ” (Lefebvre, 33). The second corresponds to lived experiences, practices, everyday activities and routines.

With these complex and interrelated analysis of ‘space’, Lefebvre opens new opportunities to think about the implications of the material (buildings, infrastructure, etc) and the imaginaries (be it for representation of space or representational spaces), which are not accidental representations and/or organizations of space, but follow complex social processes that give spaces particular social meanings. Holston’s, Caldeira’s and McCann’s articles illuminate in particular ways Lefebvre’s theoretical conception of space. These three texts, in my
perspective, represent different scales of space-creation: bottom up (McCann’s), intermediate (Caldeira’s) and top-down (Holston’s).

Caldeira’s article discusses the ways in which imaginations and understandings of safety in Sao Paolo have created a new organization of space based on exclusion, individualism, and homogenization. Here, difference is avoided because it portrays insecurity. Imaginations of safety have been inscribed with the help of advertisements: images and texts that depict a particular arrangement and ‘adequate’ livability of spaces. These advertisements – what I refer to as the intermediate agents of space-creation – follow a particular abstract space conception that annihilates public spaces for a new constitution and re-arrangement of the city. Spatial practices are unavoidably affected, since physical arrangements impede a ‘natural flow’ between the private and the public. It is interesting to ‘read’ Lefebvre’s contradiction inherent in abstract spaces versus spatial practices in Caldeira’s article. Even though there is an increasing tension between the ‘lived-imagined’ (representational space)’ and the lived (spatial practice), which can also be understood as an anxiety to transform the ‘informal’ into the ‘formal’, the text shows how a new type of contradictory ‘space’ is created, a space that satisfies the imagined, but which boundaries are blurred in the lived space. I am referring here to the example of the maid and the guard in Caldeira’s enclaves. The physical separation of services (elevators for maids, different entrances, and the sort) satisfies the imagined anxiety of safety and ‘formalizes’ a distinction and differentiation with ‘the other’. Nonetheless, this separation line is continuo usly re-shaped in the everyday dependence of the maid’s services and her presence in the ‘intimate’ (internal) house-space. Hence, in this case, the representational space and the spatial practice is in a constant process of construction and deconstruction, where the ‘formal’ and the ‘informal’ are increasingly dependent on one another.

Holston’s article I place at the top-down space-creation process, where new architecture understandings of space give meanings to codes, illustrations, and creation of cities (again Brazil as the example) with a particular order and vision, that ends up defining and altering social relations. In this particular case the focus is on streets, an essential element in the spatial practice space of the city’s residents. Nonetheless, and similar to Caldeira’s fusion of imagined and lived spaces, people are trying to take back public space and “resuscitate its semantic code” (Holston, 271). The tension results in the creation and contestation over uses and meanings, where abstract space is challenged (Lefebvre) and linked again with the informal realm of public relations, heterogeneous contact, and mixture.

Lastly, I place McCann’s article at the bottom-up space-creation scale. In relating race and space-creation, this text accentuates the relevance of public participation in the contestation and challenge of abstract spaces and the ‘formality’ they excerpt. Race is, inevitably in most societies, part of the imagined, part of the ordered, and part of the organizational – for the most part in exclusionary terms. Nonetheless, opportunities arise for redefinitions and visibility, like the article presents, but how long-lived are these instances lived? What impacts can they produce in the imagination and materialization of abstract spaces? Can these moments affect
representations of space in a way that inclusion is considered fundamental or do they have greater impact, and stay, at the representational space level?

These readings have also made me think about the relations between creation of space and insurgency, and the role of planning within these. If planning is part of the creation of abstract space and representations of space, where does the insurgent planner fall? Is the insurgent planner an agent in altering conceptions and imaginaries of the lived (representations of space) that can then re-shape abstract space in a way that spatial practices are more readily incorporated in the planning process? How is the creation of ‘new spaces’ (enclaves, annihilation of streets and public spaces) a form of destruction of the city and city life?

Example 4:
Bayat makes the plausible argument that global restructuring in the third world contributes to a “double process” whereby the urban subaltern (his chosen term) integrate into some formal socio-economic conventions and contracts of modernity while simultaneously remaining excluded, or autonomous, from other formal conventions. In leading up to this argument, Bayat surveys the different theoretical paradigms that, over the years, scholars have employed to examine the issue of urban marginality. Across these different paradigms the dialectics of power/resistance and structure/agency are both the focal points as well as the issues of contention between different paradigms. Bayat’s own argument seems to surface with a critique of the resistance paradigm, which he suggests tends to see political acts of resistance in actions which otherwise may simply be coping or survival strategies. Instead Bayat offers the notion of the “quiet encroachment,” which seems to blend elements of the survival and resistance paradigms. A good example to illustrate “quiet encroachment” would be an act of illegally constructing a domicile on public land in the urban periphery. This quiet act of encroachment would be undertaken out of necessity (survival paradigm); however once the state intervenes to rectify the illegal action, the situation may then evolve into one of a power/resistance struggle between the state and the individual – or social group, should the entire neighborhood of illegal squatters decide to collectivize due to the sudden commonalities of their claims against the state or power elites.

Bayat’s notion of “quiet encroachment” is provocative and, in my opinion, substantive in many regards. First, this notion avoids the essentialist trap of constructing artificial and uniform social groups, such as the “urban poor”, where none really exist. Reminiscent of actor-network-theory, Bayat does not see grand acts of social resistance or collective action where none may exist. It acknowledges that individuals often act in their own best interest, which may or may not be in conflict their neighbors. Secondly, I find Bayat’s focus on the dialectic tension between integration and exclusion, and how this tension is part-imposed, part-selected, to be fascinating. It reveals a socio-psychological schism, or schizophrenia, between individuals’ desire to modernize and formalize their lives, on the one hand, yet resist and remain autonomous, on the other. This final point brings me back to ideas of actor-network-theory and how ‘non-social’ entities such as the street, electricity, water, land and public space often serve a critical social role in that they link together individuals into new social networks or political relationships. For instance, the act of illegally tapping into the city’s water supply suddenly
creates a new social relationship between the individual and the city. Similarly, the act of taking up a unoccupied plot in a favela links one into a social network with those around him or her. As Bayat remarks, this social network may never be acknowledged, activated, or ‘collectivized’; however by virtue of the land they share (illegally), they share a social relationship vis-à-vis the power elite who owns the land.

Like Bayat, we often use the dialectical terms “integration” / “exclusion” and “formal” / “informal” without giving much thought to their meaning. In Bayat’s article, for example, what exactly is the urban subaltern “integrating into” or “being excluded from”? Can we identify this beyond abstract notions of some “social order”? Similarly, what exactly is "formal" versus "informal"?

READING SUMMARY TEMPLATE:

Student 1 and Student 2
Planning Theory
Date of class

I. Imaginaries


In this chapter, Rutheiser examines the revitalization of Atlanta’s urban core, and how the power elite of the city aimed to transform this space into something that resembles their ideas of what “traditional urbanity” should be. He traces the changing images the city has aspired to be, from the “Gate City,” to what it has endured in its indisputable harsh and complicated past, especially Urban Renewal and it’s effect on the built environment in Atlanta. The most recent major period through which the urban core was changed was the competing for, winning of, building for, and hosting of the Olympics in 1996. With many of the temporary structures removed after the Olympics, many permanent brick and mortar structures, such as Centennial Park in downtown, remained vacant as of the writing of this text. Since then, the incongruous state of the urban core, with the vision of the elite as the traditional urban space emphasizes, as Rutheiser argues, is not uncommon to other medium and large sized cities. However, this “in-betweeness” of (p.340) the changing built environment, both as a result of major planning interventions and as a result of its social history, and its envisioned state, is the most stable part of its identity.