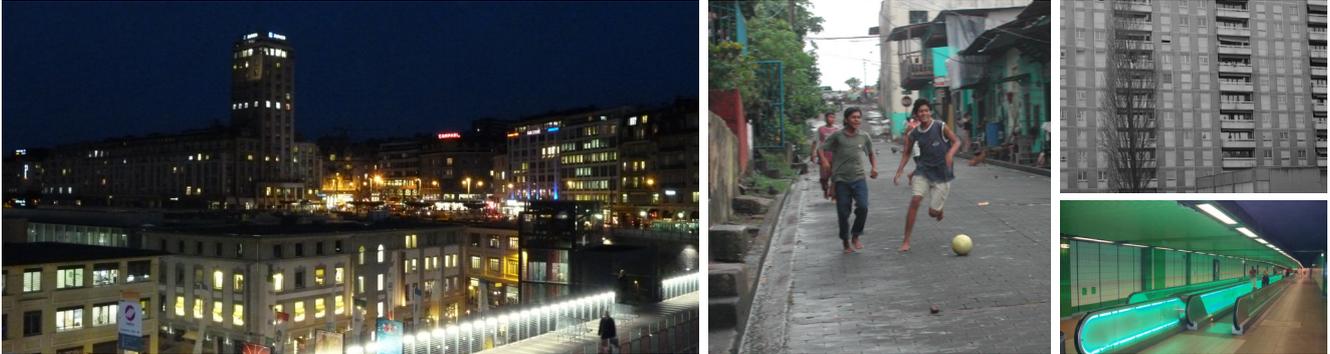


# Wassup, Cities

## An Interdisciplinary Approach to Contemporary Urbanization



### ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

Here in the 21st century, the city is at once manifest (given that more than half of the Earth's population is urbanized) and enigmatic. The reality that the word "city" describes today is multi-faceted, depending on the language and context. While globalization led many to believe in the triumph of a universal neoliberal model, local diversity reveals a much more complex reality. North or South, East or West, "the City" changes, even when its basic principles appear to be the same on a global scale. The city, the setting-world of modernity, is now accepted as the decisive norm of human settlement. Fragmented, divided, segregated, chaotic, violent, as destructed as it is constructed, the city is likewise a place of innovation, creation and cultural struggle—a space that architecture, urban planning and the social sciences (especially urban sociology, which was born of the need to understand the social dimensions of the advent of the major contemporary cities – London, Berlin, New York, etc. – more than 100 years ago) are striving to understand.

The Workshop organized by the Laboratory of Urban Sociology aims to question this heritage and to address some of the challenges the modern city poses. It will bring together specialists on urban issues from a variety of disciplines (architecture, sociology, anthropology, geography and political sciences) from around the world. This workshop will allow to compare diverse theoretical and methodological approaches to the urban phenomenon above and beyond the North-South divide and interdisciplinary barriers, and to create an interdisciplinary, comparative research network, of which the EPFL will be the driving force both conceptually and logistically. The project will likewise result in a collective work (to be published in 2012) based on the results of the workshop—a work that, among other things, will help us in the preliminary organization of an international symposium on the city to take place in 2013, during which many of the topics addressed in this first phase will be taken up and expanded upon.

Presentations by keynote speakers will be followed by debates, discussions and critiques, including LASUR senior and junior researchers, with the aim of interactively addressing the question of the meaning of the modern city. With its ambitious program schedule, this workshop will thus allow us to collectively engage in fundamental reflection and to lay methodological and theoretical foundations as well as to establish the institutional partnerships necessary for the 2013 symposium's success.

Organised by: Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne - Laboratory of Urban Sociology

Venue: Hôtel La Tour d'Aï, 1854 Leysin (VD) - Switzerland

With the support of: Cooperation@epfl and Swiss National Science Foundation

The Workshop will be held in English and French, with the help of Jessica Strelec and Sophie Lufkin for the translation.

## PROGRAMME

### Tuesday 22 November 2011

- 14:00 **URBAN WELCOME RITUAL.** Meeting in the main hall of Lausanne's Central Train Station  
Guided walking tour presenting some urban settings in the City of Lausanne
- 17:00 Departure for Leysin (Alt. 1200 mt.)
- 19:00 Arrival at Hôtel La Tour d'Aï ([www.hoteltourdai.ch](http://www.hoteltourdai.ch))
- 20:00 *Dinner*

### Wednesday 23 November 2011

- 9:00-10:00 **WORKSHOP OPENING**  
Vincent Kaufmann and Yves Pedrazzini, LASUR-EPFL
- 10:00-10:30 *Coffee Break*
- 10:30-12:00 Session 1: **URBAN ORDER AND DISORDER**  
Keynote Speaker: Rachel Coutinho, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro  
Discussants: Hanja Maksim, Yafiza Zorro and Xavier Oreiller, LASUR-EPFL
- 12:00-14:00 *Lunch*
- 14:00-15:30 Session 2: **SLUM AND CENTRALITY**  
Keynote Speaker: Rahul Srivastava, URBZ, Mumbai  
Discussants: Luca Pattaroni and Ning Liu, LASUR-EPFL  
*Coffee break*
- 15:30-16:00 Session 3: **CULTURE AND URBANITY**  
Keynote Speaker: Julie-Anne Boudreau, Institut National de la Recherche Scientifique, Montreal  
Discussants: Yves Pedrazzini and Maude Reitz, LASUR-EPFL
- 16:00-17:30
- 20:00 *Dinner*

### Thursday 24 November 2011

- 09:00-10:30 Session 4: **URBAN PLANNING AND SEGREGATION**  
Keynote Speaker: Susan Parnell, University of Cape Town  
Discussants: Marie-Paule Thomas and Alexandra Thörer, LASUR-EPFL
- 10:30-11:00 *Coffee break*
- 11:00-12:30 Session 5: **BEHAVIOURS AND INFORMALITY SPACES**  
Keynote Speaker: Yasser Elsheshtawy, United Arab Emirates University  
Discussants: Stéphanie Vincent-Geslin and Hossam Adly, LASUR-EPFL
- 12:30-14:30 *Lunch*
- 14:30-15:30 **FINAL WRAP-UP**  
Yves Pedrazzini and Vincent Kaufmann, LASUR-EPFL
- 15:30-16:00 *Coffee break*
- 16:00-18:00 **OUTLOOK ON THE 2013 CONGRESS**
- 20:00 *Dinner*

### Friday 25 November 2011

- 9:00-12:00 Debriefing breakfast and meeting on further collaborations
- 12:00 End of the Workshop

## LIST OF ABSTRACTS

### Session 1: **URBAN ORDER AND DISORDER**

Wednesday 23 September, 9:30-11:00

Discussants: Hanja Maksim, Yafiza Zorro and Xavier Oreiller, LASUR-EPFL

Keynote speaker: **Rachel Coutinho**, School of Architecture and Urbanism, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

#### **Urbanism in a risk society: a theoretical and methodological approach to analyse socio-spatial segregation and conflict in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.**

This brief lecture intends to stimulate the debate about some of the issues confronting the contemporary city in Brazil. I choose for this presentation to discuss the issue of urban violence and socio-spatial segregation, because these are the most visible aspects of a long-term process of uneven urban development and unequal access to urban land markets for low-income classes. I will also discuss the issue of order and disorder in urban space, its relationship to processes of corruption, to land use controls and to the production and reproduction of informal space in Brazilian cities. The dimension of order is present in many contemporary urban designs and plans as well as in the discourse of public officials, not only in Brazil but also in many cities in different countries. Confronting this ideal of orderly city is the real city, formed by a maze of non-orderly informal spaces enmeshed between the formal city fabrics.

My analysis is based on the theoretical propositions of four authors: Anthony Giddens' concept of reflexive modernity and Ulrich Beck's notion of risk society; Henri Lefebvre's notion that everything in a capitalist society has a monetary value and also his discussion between form and content; Michel Foucault's discussion on order as an expression of power and his notion of power network. My current research about planning and design strategies to integrated conflict zones between favelas and the formal spaces of Rio de Janeiro uses the methodological propositions of Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault.

### Session 2: **SLUM AND CENTRALITY**

Wednesday 23 September, 14:30-16:00

Discussants: Luca Pattaroni and Ning Liu, LASUR-EPFL

Keynote speaker: **Rahul Srivastava**, Urbz, Mumbai

Paper written by Matias Echanove and Rahul Srivastava; presented by Rahul Srivastava, Urbz

#### **The Slum and the Forest: Ancient Rhetoric and Contemporary Urban Reality**

The rhetorical use of what constitutes slums, the city and wilderness has shaped our urban realities in very intense ways. The city has historically looked at the enemy outside (the forest) and the enemy within (the slum) in very definite ways and the relationship between the three continues to shape the way in which a city like Mumbai understands itself. In this presentation we focus on the presence of the slum and the forest in the city of Mumbai in the context of contemporary urban practice and politics. Along with having the largest proportion of slum habitats to non-slum urban precincts, Mumbai also has the largest designated forest area in the country - within its municipal limits - with vibrant wildlife, complete with the spilling over of a leopard population into the settlements bordering the city.

The points of interaction between the slum and the forest have been part of much discussion about the nature of civic life and the place of nature in contemporary urban spaces. Surprisingly, nature and wilderness has often triumphed in terms of narratives of preservation, while slum dwellers have had to relocate, move and be rehabilitated. Thanks to strong preservationist legislation, the threats to the forests by human encroachment have been controlled even though dangers through organized large -scale exploitation continues. For example, many slum habitats that had entered into the forests were relocated but big building projects have managed to legislate themselves. Organized exploitation of forest produce continues for timber and sand mining in rivers.

One can say that the forest and the formal city have both played their role in making sure that slums have become endangered habitats. We find this worthy of a detailed inquiry since what is a slum and what is not is often not clear. Villages, working class settlements, settled habitats on hills, sometimes even middle-class but shabbily constructed buildings are all lumped together under the category of the slum. Spaces which are not clearly villages nor rigidly and concretely urban in nature are the most vulnerable.

In numerous of our writings we have mentioned how Mumbai's so-called slums are complex habitats that need to be understood carefully in terms of infrastructure needs and typologies.

In this essay we locate these habitats on the scale of urban to wilderness and show how their ambiguity can help us re-evaluate our understanding of urban habitats as counter-points to forests and wilderness. In a city like Mumbai this relationship is key for a holistic and integrated urban life in which people and nature can find ways of negotiating each other's presences in a productive way. In these negotiations the so-called 'slum' will be a key feature. The relationship of the mangroves and the rivers of the Mithi tributary with the inhabitants of Dharavi and the way the city's administration understands this equation is one of the examples we use. The other main example is the Borivili National Park, the tribal communities within them and the imagined and real threats to the borders of the park from human presence of all kinds.

Our vision of urban habitats – the natural city as it were - is predicated on a strong critique of creating pure urban habitats in which nature is controlled and disciplined. This often accompanies a strong preservationist agenda, to conserve wilderness in nature through segregating its presence. We feel that habitats like Dharavi and others like it, are key to a reimagining of the meaning of both, the urban and the forest. This will have a strong impact on urban practice in the context of environmental debates.

### **Session 3: CULTURE AND URBANITY**

Wednesday 23 September, 16:30-18:00

Discussants: Yves Pedrazzini and Maude Reitz, LASUR-EPFL

Keynote speaker: **Julie-Anne Boudreau**, Institut national de la recherche scientifique, Centre Urbanisation Culture Société

#### **Reflections on urbanity as an object of study and a critical epistemology**

This paper is about urbanity, understood as a historically-situated and geographically unevenly distributed condition, that affect modes of action and interaction. Urbanity, in other words, is a concept that cannot be restricted to what happens in cities. It is a mode of social relations that has developed with the transformation of the global economic system and the unfolding of modernity. Urbanity, in this perspective, would be analytically equivalent to other umbrella concepts such as modernity or globalization. It covers processes of concern to most social scientists, from the unfolding of interpersonal relations to the construction of identity, from economic practices to power relations, from geographical unevenness to the management of emotions in everyday life. What are the consequences -for social sciences and urban studies more particularly- of defining urbanity in such an encompassing manner? How to operationalize such as broad concept? What critical potential would it yield? Based on various case studies with "at-risk" youth in Montreal, "creative" workers in Toronto, and domestic workers in Los Angeles, the paper investigates the unfolding of an urban logic of action stemming from the urban culture characteristic of the contemporary period.

**Session 4: URBAN PLANNING AND SEGREGATION**

Thursday 24 September, 9:00-9:30

Discussants: Marie-Paule Thomas and Alexandra Thörer, LASUR-EPFL

Keynote speaker: **Susan Parnell**, University of Cape Town, African Centre for Cities

**Understanding the 21st century crisis in cities of the global South: a critical review of the historiography of modern planning and segregation**

How history is conceived matters for cities today, not least because this is how we frame contemporary urban problems and how students and practitioners are taught to 'read the city'. The dominant themes that receive empirical and theoretical attention from urbanists are the related issues of city planning and residential segregation. The scale of the current urban crisis, especially in Africa but also in Asia and Latin America, makes it impossible for these scholars of urban history to assume that the analysis they present is a useful informant for effective urban management. The burden of the paper is to expose why current thinking about post-colonial planning and segregation is failing. Specifically I explore three myths: that modernism is an enduring force perpetuating the dualist structure that characterises most poor cities; that modern urban planning is universally oppressive and divisive; and that urban elites only use modern planning and racial segregation as their instrument for perpetuating urban privilege.

**Session 6: BEHAVIOURS AND INFORMALITY**

Thursday 24 September, 11:00-12:30

Discussants; Stéphanie Vincent-Geslin and Hossam Adly, LASUR-EPFL

Keynote speaker: **Yasser Elsheshtawy**, UAE University – Faculty of Engineering, Dubai

**Informal Urbanism & Limited Mobility: Lessons from Dubai**

My main aim in this presentation is to identify the relationship between Dubai's urban form – defined here as the morphology of its streets and open spaces – and social interaction; and to define the degree to which this enables socio-spatial inequalities. Additionally I am seeking to present a different view of Dubai that transcends and goes beyond stereotypical and shallow representations. To that effect the study adopts a mapping methodology through which I am identifying a series of spaces with the potential for informal interactions. With that in mind I will be summarizing previous research done with respect to mapping the city's informal gathering spaces as well as presenting results related to an ongoing research study in the Hor Al Anz district of Dubai. In this study I am using advanced methodologies involving high resolution photography, time-lapse video and behavioral mapping, integrated with GIS technologies. This cartography of Dubai, through the generation of maps, will form a narrative atlas, that addresses the need for a better understanding on how city residents navigate through the city's spaces and the degree to which their everyday experience could be enhanced. This could also be of benefit for issues pertaining to mobility, livability and social sustainability in rapidly urbanizing centers all over the world.