POST PRO STUDIO
Arch 1061
School of Architecture, Yale University
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Ed Mitchell edward.mitchell@emarchitects.net
Aniket Shahane
"There are no fixtures in nature. The universe is fluid and volatile. Permanence is but a word of degrees. Our globe seen by God is a transparent law, not a mass of facts. The law dissolves the fact and holds it fluid. Our culture is the predominance of an idea which draws after it this train of cities and institutions. Let us rise into another idea: they will disappear. The Greek sculpture is all melted away, as if it had been statues of ice; here and there a solitary figure or fragment remaining, as we see flecks and scraps of snow left in cold dells and mountain clefts, in June and July. For the genius that created it creates now somewhat else. The Greek letters last a little longer, but are already passing under the same sentence, and tumbling into the inevitable pit which the creation of new thought opens for all that is old. The new continents are built out of the ruins of an old planet; the new races fed out of the decomposition of the foregoing. New arts destroy the old. See the investment of capital in aqueducts made useless by hydraulics; fortifications, by gunpowder; roads and canals, by railways; sails, by steam; steam by electricity."

From “Circles” by Ralph Waldo Emerson
Overview
Boston’s larger metropolitan region, one of the United States oldest urban fabrics, is characterized by patchwork development of its old pre-colonial urban core and an expanding urban influence on its periphery. Boston is an interesting case study in the history of American urban development. In the 19th Boston faced typical problems of urban development – unhealthy climate due to poor waste management, an increasingly weak tax base, the disappearance of open space and an overburdened infrastructure that hampered the flow of commerce. The establishment of urban parks in most major cities was thought to be both beneficial to the health of the urban population but also attractive for new development. Boston, unlike New York, had little developable open space in its central urban core. Then, in the mid 19th century, the magnificent Back Bay district was initiated. This long, grided neighborhood centered by the beautiful greenery of Commonwealth Avenue, running from the Fens Eastward to engage the Public Garden and the historic Boston Common. This ensemble of green spaces is the initial component of the emerald necklace, one of the world’s great urban park systems. Then, from 1870-73 the city began to annex surrounding territories and plans for improve the regional plan were developed extending to Dorchester and West Roxbury – areas that later became part of the Emerald Necklace. In 1874 mayor Samuel Cobb outlined plans for peripheral parks united by parkways. That plan was developed by Charles Dalton leading to the design of Jamaica Pond, Franklin Park in Roxbury, designed by Olmsted, and the Fens, formerly on the site of a large marsh. Charles Eliot’s 1891 plan for the city embraced tidal lands, native forests and smaller urban parks into the overall infrastructure and helped establish America’s first metropolitan park system.

The legacy of stewardship of the urban parks informed the development of sub-urban areas of Boston, but not necessarily in productive ways. Today that periphery extends in concentric regions around Boston defined by the I195 and I495 beltways. These highways retrace the former rail network made up of other port cities and mill towns. Suburban commercial development has been unchecked resulting in the banal landscapes of Route 9 and 128, reviled by many but promoted by others as the landscapes of post-war pop culture. In hopes of thwarting the spread of commercial development large tracts of land are being put into public trusts and zoning laws restrict the scale and density of new development, resulting in an ever expanding push of the metropolitan area into the countryside and perhaps straining the ecosystem of the region as a whole.

The most likely targets for re-densification then become the older industrial centers around greater Boston. The three communities we will explore were important in manufacturing and coastal industries. The scale of these historic economies is often evident in the quality of public and the vast scale of the mill buildings that are part of the regional typology. By the early 20th century many of these industries went into decline, but the buildings’ continual presence still define the local physical character and have been subject to major renovation and rehabilitation over the last two decades.

Trends in sustainable design indicate that new infrastructures may develop new, complementary building typologies. New regional networks might also have formal and therefore architectural implications for invention. Buildings may not be thought of as separate or complimentary to the new urban “green” spaces but as engines working synthetically with the landscape. New ideas about work and the greater volatility of the job market may affect how these growth centers are populated and occupied.

In the studio and during our field trip we expect to analyze the historic development of the metro region of the city of Boston, studying these sites that are both products of contemporary infrastructure and possible paradigms of urban futures, research new developments in green and sustainable urban design.
and building technology, and examine the conceptual development of the idea of both the urban “parkscape” and the urban “workplace” relative to the need for increased density in the communities.

**Imagine Boston 2030**
The *Imagine Boston 2030* plan calls for comprehensive evaluation of new housing, education and job opportunities throughout the region. Over the last decade urban cores that are home to higher paying jobs in high tech, finance, and service jobs, have been repopulated. Boston has proven to be highly desirable not only for its cultural amenities but also because density appears to foster greater commercial interaction between members of different professional fields. In our era of high rate information exchange, the city appears to be one of the better structures for fostering the so-called ‘creative industries.’ This demand on the core coupled with the preservation pressure brought on by politically strong neighborhoods and historically significant fabric is pushing development back out to the near periphery.

The historic town and city network of the surrounding area was once an efficient technical outgrowth of early industrialization. These outer regions, historically independent yet working in concert with the central hub of Boston have a slightly less successful recent history. Industrial communities, once vital cogs in manufacturing, became the locus of job losses and deterioration. As evidence in the goals set out in the plan *Imagine Boston 2030*, today’s more centralized economic focus to Boston proper and its related suburban real estate patterns are proving untenable. In recent decades Boston had become nearly unaffordable while suburban development is often reduced to a compromise between public anxieties associated with our urban realities (crime, high taxes, etc.) and a pastiche of agrarian ideals. There is a perceived need by public officials to increase density as the demand for housing and services spreads out from the center city. The industrial towns, neither center city nor suburb, are a unique third condition, waiting to be re-invented. As of today, they are, at best, envisioned as mere extensions of Boston’s bedroom communities.

**The Region Today**
These older communities, once vital nodes in a complex industrial, maritime and agrarian economic systems, have lost aspects of their unique qualities due to reduced employment opportunities, diminishing regional tax bases and the resulting loss of funding for public infrastructure and programs. New opportunities are now in place.

The state’s plans are looking at a twenty to thirty year scenario. We feel that the region is at a tipping point where its physical assets might contribute to an inventive renaissance. Our desire is to re-imagine the architectural, cultural and economic networks of these communities, keeping in mind that the historic complexity of New England’s 19th and early 20th century economies bears some consideration as to their future. We propose that there is potential for new urban forms that might identify civic practice in an extended and decentralized urban system. A new small town and city network might offer vital opportunities for localized economies and shared resources linked by mass transit.

The studio will examine three formerly industrial towns north of Boston – Gloucester, Lowell, and Lynn. These towns have very different characteristics and significance within the greater regional system. Gloucester is an historically important fishing town. Lowell, which is home to a branch of the UMASS system, is the most significant historic mill town in the United States and is the end of the commuter rail line to the northwest. Lynn is a coastal community with historic links to shoe manufacturing and General Electric, and its large tract of underutilized industrial waterfront property is potentially a prime target for long range urban speculation. Lowell is directly adjacent to National Parks. Lynn is on what
might become a new public waterfront. All three communities are connected by mass transit to the greater Boston area.

**Proposition**
Though the interstate highway system might have produced a more complex regional network reinforcing the historic strength of small town New England communities it contributed to the drain on these towns. The same can be said of the negative potential of the commuter rail system. The most visible vestige of growth is in the service industry -the big box retail centers located at the periphery of these communities adjacent to the interstate –products of the global economy and federal and state fiscal policies that are reinforced by automobile culture. Similarly, the well intentioned plans for TODs, based around rail, have been too often reduced to banal outposts of chain restaurants and unmemorable residential architecture.

One of the complex and contradictory theses of this studio is that mobility is both a contributor to the historic demise of these towns but also a concrete and conceptual ideal of American culture. We will look at how these values are critical in understanding developments in American architecture. While these communities could be great for speculation, upgrades in real estate values do not guarantee any richer thinking about how architecture and new ways of living and working might contribute to making unique and memorable places. Relocating growth centers in these transit cores is logical. But our vision should extend beyond simple statistical models supporting slightly denser, bedroom communities. Reconnecting and re-inhabiting these communities might foster a new and more vital urban network, still dependent on the central core, but with the potential to develop its own form of inventive urbanization and more intricate relationships with its landscape and regional resources.

Simply returning to a nostalgic *image* of these downtowns, though a powerful motive and a guiding principle, would seem to be insufficient. These towns once developed as independent communities. During their heyday they were often exotic, international global centers, places of invention, and sites of emerging civic politics and, at times radical subjectivity as evident by the historic importance of labor unions and significant groups like the Mill Girls. These town demand consideration of what their new occupants and audiences might be. And, though these towns have a number of architectural attractions, including grand public buildings, stately homes and open space, the need for reinvention of both the *idea* and operation of the small town is a vital component for consideration in the studio. The older economy is currently inoperative; a new one is emerging.

**Studio Themes**
We will look at historic models of urbanization, examine their ideological values, investigate local and regional models that mirror those urban paradigms, study the regional and local scales of the respective sites, develop parcels in the network and begin to look at technical inventions in infrastructure and construction to formulate a design project.

Student will initially work in rotating groups to produce shared research documents, then break into small teams of two to three students to develop regional and local planning concepts, and finally work individually to develop architectural scaled resolution to one of the design sites.
SCHEDULE
Mondays, Thursdays 2:10 – 6:10

WEEK 1
Thursday, September 1
COURSE INTRODUCTION
Friday, September 2
ASSIGNED EXERCISE 1: HOMETOWN ANALYSIS / INSTANT CITY

WEEK 2
Monday, September 5
No class
Thursday, September 8
PIN UP EXERCISE 1
ASSIGNED EXERCISE 2: CITY RESEARCH

WEEK 3
Monday, September 12
Reading Discussion
Desk Crit
Thursday, September 15
PIN UP EXERCISE 2
ASSIGNED EXERCISE 3: RESEARCH TEST

WEEK 4
Monday, September 19
Desk Crit
Thursday, September 22
PIN UP EXERCISE 3
ASSIGNED SITE MODEL

WEEK 5
Monday, September 26
ASSIGNED EXERCISE 4: RESEARCH 1: PROGRAM
Thursday, September 29
Desk Crit

WEEK 6
Travel Week
Monday: Site Model 1:200
OCTOBER 3 - OCTOBER 6 (tentative)
FIELD TRIP TO BOSTON AND RESEARCH FOR CITY ANALYSIS

WEEK 7
Monday, October 10
PIN UP EXERCISE 4
ASSIGNED EXERCISE 5: RESEARCH TEST2: FORM
Thursday, October 13
Desk Crit

WEEK 8
Monday, October 17
Desk Crit
Thursday, October 20
WEEK 9  MIDTERM WEEK  
Monday, October 24  
Desk Crit  
Thursday, October 27 (Tentative Date)  
MIDTERM REVIEW: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH  

WEEK 10  MIDTERMS REVISITED  
Monday, October 31  
PIN UP: MIDTERMS REDO  
ASSIGN EXERCISE 6 CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE  
Thursday, November 3  
Desk Crit  

WEEK 11  
Monday, November 7  
PINUP EXERCISE 6 CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE  
Thursday, November 10  
Desk Crit  

WEEK 12  
Monday, November 14  
Desk Crit  
Thursday, November 17  
Desk Crit  

WEEK 13  THANKSGIVING WEEK  
November 21-27  

WEEK 14  
Monday, November 28  
Desk Crit  
Thursday, December 1  
DRAWING PRE-REVIEW  

WEEK 15  
Monday, December 5  
Desk Crit  
Thursday, December 8  
Pin Up  

WEEK 16  FINAL REVIEW WEEK  
TENTATIVE REVIEW DATE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15
For information of Boston and the sites:
http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/
http://imagine.boston.gov/

Regional Resources:
http://www.srpedd.org/

Lowell:
http://www.lowellma.gov
http://www.hamiltoncanal.com

Gloucester:
http://www.gloucester-ma.gov/

Lynn:
http://www.cityoflynnoecd.net