

THE HORIZONTAL METROPOLIS: A RADICAL PROJECT

VIII INTERNATIONAL PHD SEMINAR 'URBANISM & URBANIZATION' | SYMPOSIUM LATSIS EPFL 2015



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“The Horizontal Metropolis”: a radical project

The general theme for the 2015 U&U¹ Seminar is “*The Horizontal Metropolis: a radical project*”. Horizontal Metropolis is both an image and a concept, it is a lens through which to view the form of the contemporary city, conceptualizing it and constructing it as a project. It refers to a specific spatial condition characterized by a horizontality of infrastructure, urbanity, relationships, and by closely interlinked, co-penetrating rural/urban realms, communication, transport and economic systems. Contemporary urban figures such as *Città diffusa* in Northern Italy, *Desakota* in Asia or *ville horizontale* in Africa, fine grained settlement dispersion in Flanders, or *Zwischenstadt* in Germany are just some of the examples able to effectively describe this emergent urban condition, increasingly related to the dispersion of the urban fabric within the agricultural landscape. The Horizontal Metropolis concept considers these figures as beyond a simplistic center/periphery opposition, revealing the dispersed condition as a potential asset, rather than a limit, to the construction of a sustainable and innovative urban dimension.

Historically this specific spatial condition has provided test cases for the elaboration of original urban theories. Today the radical nature of the change underway is forcing these territorial constructions to face new challenges, paradoxes and crises, from a social, economical and environmental point of view.

The fundamental hypothesis of both the Seminar and of the Symposium is that the Horizontal Metropolis, as spatial capital and agent of transformation, may be supportive of a radically innovative urban and territorial project - and thus considered as an original urban ecology.

The U&U International PhD Seminars and the 2015 Latsis Symposium will investigate the “Horizontal Metropolis”, its space, its traditions, and its contemporary relevance as an energetic, ecological and social design framework. The dual aim of the event is to connect the specific questions arising in different urban contexts to larger international reflections and processes, and to valorize a multidisciplinary approach in discussing the Horizontal Metropolis.

- Three Sessions

The symposium intends to investigate the Horizontal Metropolis through three main fields of research:

1 The Horizontal Metropolis: spatial and natural capital

Different types of urbanity can be analyzed and compared starting from their measures, which are often the expression of deeply embedded rationalities. The session will concern those rationalities, such as: water management (natural systems, irrigation, drainage, drinkable water supply, waste water, energy); the productive landscape (qualities of soil, parcels and property size, presence of biodiversity, types of agriculture, mix of functions); accessibility (mobility networks, permeability and connectivity, exchange nodes, social infrastructures and amenities), potential and abilities of individuals and firms to move and to locate. The session will critically reflect upon the horizontal metropolis as a city-territory; the relation between natural and artificial rationalities; hybrid urban-territorial figures in relation to conditions of spatial and social justice. The objective of the session is to understand the different rationalization processes of the city-territory through an investigation of its measures, patterns and elements of coexistence. This session will focus on mapping, comparisons, typological reading, and environmental, social and urban analyses.

2 The Horizontal Metropolis: issues and challenges of a new urban ecology

In recent decades the city-territory has become a recognized and explicit object of policies and design: in academic research, but also in broader contexts where the awareness of this spatial, economic and social configuration is more mature. This session will critically reflect upon the radical nature of the changes underway and the emergence of new urban paradigms; scenarios and design strategies for re-cycling and upgrading the city-territory. The Horizontal

¹ The 8th edition of the U&U International PhD Seminar will be managed under the scientific direction of the Laboratory of Urbanism (Lab-U, EPFL) with the support of EDAR, EPFL's Doctorate School and Latsis Foundation.

Since 2004, the biannual U&U seminar has been inviting PhD candidates working on theory, history and practice of urbanism to present, confront and discuss themes and approaches coming from different PhD programs. The first seminar was organized by OSA-KU Leuven in February 2004 and was followed by others organized by UPC Barcelona, IUAV Venice, TU Delft and Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture Paris-Malaquais. U&U International PhD Seminars seek to promote the exchange of ideas, provoke debate amongst researchers, invite comparisons, cross-pollinate different disciplines and highlight the latest ongoing research topics. It is a rare opportunity offered to young researchers to meet with prominent scientists and build a critical argument.

Metropolis as a renewable resource will be the main hypothesis of the session. Proposals that investigate forms of order strengthening horizontal relations, as distinct from standard hierarchical forms, will be supported. In a space where polarization and hierarchization processes are weakening horizontal networks – disconnecting or marginalizing territories and populations - the Horizontal Metropolis challenges dominant paradigms. This session will focus on scenarios, concepts and prototypes.

3 The Horizontal Metropolis: a transcultural tradition

The Horizontal Metropolis has come to the fore at different times throughout the history of city and territorial design. A thick legacy of concepts and of interpretations of urban phenomena through projects has been accumulated. This legacy is also the result of influences and exchanges among the main authors and among situations and interpretations in very distant parts of the world. The final session of the symposium intends to elaborate and investigate the role of exchanges and references in constructing, by integration or differentiation, various conceptions of these urban phenomena. This session will focus on theories, images, and archives.

With the help of ongoing research and contributions from the participating universities, the Seminar and the Symposium aim at documenting and discussing the changes underway in urbanism and the urban condition. A wide variety of research forms and interdisciplinary approaches such as urban analysis, design research, case studies and theoretical elaborations, are expected to nurture and to critically develop the theme.

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