Socio-political processes
Dissertation topics

• Sahera Bleibleh – "Everyday life: Spatial oppression and resilience under the Israeli occupation: The case of the old Town of Nablus, Palestine"

• Michelle Kondo – “Building political engagement in multi-ethnic communities: Toward a multicultural empowerment praxis for planning”

• Sarah Dooling – “The production of bare life and spaces of possibilities for alleviating homelessness in Seattle, Washington”

• Ming-Chun Lee - "An integrated model of community technology: An asset-based approach to community-based computer learning programs“

• Yue Gong (pre-candidate) – “Manufacturing Towns in China”
Everyday life: Spatial Oppression and Resilience under the Israeli Occupation
The case of the old town of Nablus, Palestine

Research Questions
1. How do the everyday human experiences of space and living in fear (trauma) generate themes that support people’s everyday life and empower their “ways of operating”, and particularly their resistance to the Israeli occupation with focus on the old town of Nablus, Palestine?
2. How do the physical changes of households’ damaged space during the Invasion of 2002 after being repaired affect their interpretation of the multiple meanings and values with regard to sense of place, attachment to place, identity, resistance, resilience?...
3. How do the repairing works of the old town damages after the Invasion of 2002 reflect and affect the interrelationships between households and involved parties and politics, and how do such processes continue to shaping city spaces?

Theories & Methodology
This research attempts to delineate, analyze, and interpret themes for the proposed research questions. It also aims to explore, describe, and explain the significance of “walking through walls” phenomenon, and to capitalize on its revealed latent tactics of interaction and “making-do” of the households on one hand, and for the involved institutions on the other hand. This serves the research goal of developing a local planning approach in times of war. This research follows an ethnographic research methodology due to: (1) distinctive real-life context and complexity; (2) to avoid alienating people from their reality and (3) to give them opportunity to hear and criticize it.

Following an anthropological approach, this research applies two layers of theories to understand the embedded relational and thematic perspectives of the research phenomenon. The first is the critical analysis that Paulo Freire (2000) suggests in a dialogical analysis of generative themes “Freire-ian discourse analysis of thematic investigation”. The second is the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) that Bruno Latour suggests to explain the “collective resemblances of the whole by the massing together of minute elementary acts—the greater by the lesser and the whole by the part” (Latour 2005: 14).
Some [Common?] Themes & Values

- Questioning ideas of the good city
- [Normative] theory and analyses of social, political and cultural change
- Accounting for cultures of planning practice and profession
- Defining participation and the role of conflict
- Examining the gaps between formal rhetoric [of place / planning] vs the lived experience of [place / planning]
- Emic vs. etic / qualitative approaches / action (-based) research
Abramson – Questions

How are plans made, what do they mean, and how do they relate to what actually happens?

Context:
- rapid urbanization (China) and translocal community
- data-poor, low-trust, highly politicized

Action ❰Knowledge
Abramson – published research

• Processes and dynamics of inter/trans-cultural community engagement in planning and planning pedagogy
  • North American immigrant communities (Chinatowns of “Pacific Northeast” Canada and US)
  • International field studios in China and Japan
• Formal and informal planning, community action and property rights in rapid urbanization & “market-transition”
  • Historic preservation, urban design and urban form in China, particularly in diasporic, transnationally-influenced contexts
  • Periurban development in China
• Methods: comparative, historical and longitudinal qualitative case studies
Abramson – emerging research and synergies across/outside the program

(still in context of rapid urbanization, social disruption and trans-location...)

- Valuing villages as social-ecological units in...
  - “Rural-urban integration” in China
  - Earthquake recovery and hazard mitigation
  - Food safety, health and agritourism

- Resilience and social-ecological systems
- Traditional ecological knowledge
- Role, meaning and manifestation of sense-of-place
Manzo – underlying themes

- place meanings, attachments and identity in low-income and marginalized communities
- public housing redevelopment – HOPE VI
  - rhetoric of severe distress vs the lived experience of place
  - place & displacement
  - socio-cultural processes of community building and maintenance
  - the implicit assumptions behind mixed income housing strategies
  - problems of mandated participation
- social (and spatial) justice, equity
Ongoing & emerging questions

- What is good, just and appropriate?

- How can a spatial approach enrich a justice agenda?

- The transcultural city – challenges, realized or an aspirational project?

- How can “oppressive geographies” create opportunities for resistance and creative responses of civil society?
Look man, we'd probably most of us agree that these are dark times, and stupid ones, but do we need fiction that does nothing but dramatize how dark and stupid everything is? In dark times, the definition of good art would seem to be art that locates and applies CPR to those elements of what's human and magical that still live and glow despite the times' darkness. Really good fiction could have as dark a worldview as it wished, but it'd find a way both to depict this world and to illuminate the possibilities for being alive and human in it.
The inferno of the living is not something that will be. If there is one, it is that which is already here, the inferno that we inhabit every day, that we create by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for most: accept the inferno and become such a complete part of it that you no longer know it is there. The second is risky and requires vigilance and continuous attention: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of inferno, are not inferno, and help them endure, give them space.
Industrial City  Urban Society | Heteronomy  Autonomy

Oligarchy  Democracy