

Infrastructure as Organism: Self-Supported Buildings, Technologies, and Territories

URBANEERING UTOPIA, A NEW PROFESSION FOR THE DESIGN OF CITIES

Who is the primary authority in the making of utopia or any extraordinary future city? An Urbaneer is a burgeoning discipline based on urban design that can negotiate the complex mix of technology, theory, and practice that embraces the re-invention of the city to exceed the needs of the planet. Today, this nascent interdisciplinary field is in a state of radical development.

Sparks of utopian reflection throughout human history have been indispensable in evolved societies.¹ Utopias, for the most part, are a necessary paradigm. Utopias display maximal solutions to existing real-world problems. They tackle upheaval with orderly retribution. In nearly all variations, utopias are deliberately excessive. They overshoot the answer to a crisis to accentuate the problem.

Society needs a psychological frame of reference.² It's helpful to depict utopia like a personal membership to a health club. What is the perfect picture of a physique? Why do we need to exercise? Aspirations to appear like a certain idyllic athlete or super model sustain our work-out objectives. Many of us understand we cannot be converted into the unattainable airbrushed automatons that decorate voguish magazines. Yet these portrayals provide a common measurement to reflect on our inadequacy. And in some instances, this false imagery makes us admire the precious imperfections and confines of reality. Instead of aims to be grandiose and ideal, the goal shifts to be earnest and good.³

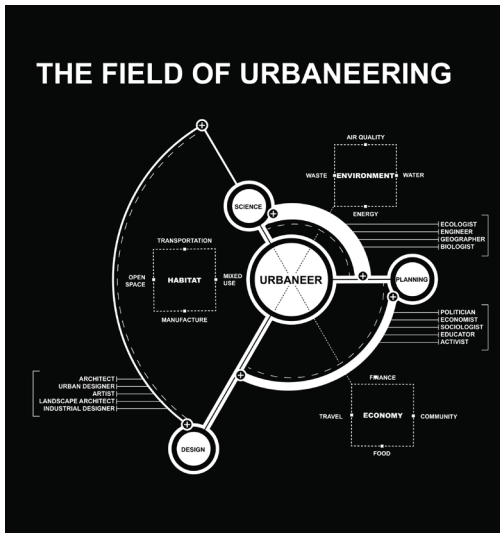
One catalyst to re-image the good city is based on the establishment of a patently new field that trumps the outmoded agenda of urban design. Kevin Lynch originally conceived urban design as "City Design" in the late 1950s at MIT.⁴ It has not been significantly upgraded to meet contemporary insights. Lynch could never have imagined more recent factors of change: Google, social networks, ubiquitous smart phones, climate dynamism, energy addictions, global economic calamities, among others.

Throughout the developed world, urban design is at an impasse, unable to mend the rift between theory and practice, and stuck in cryptic arguments,

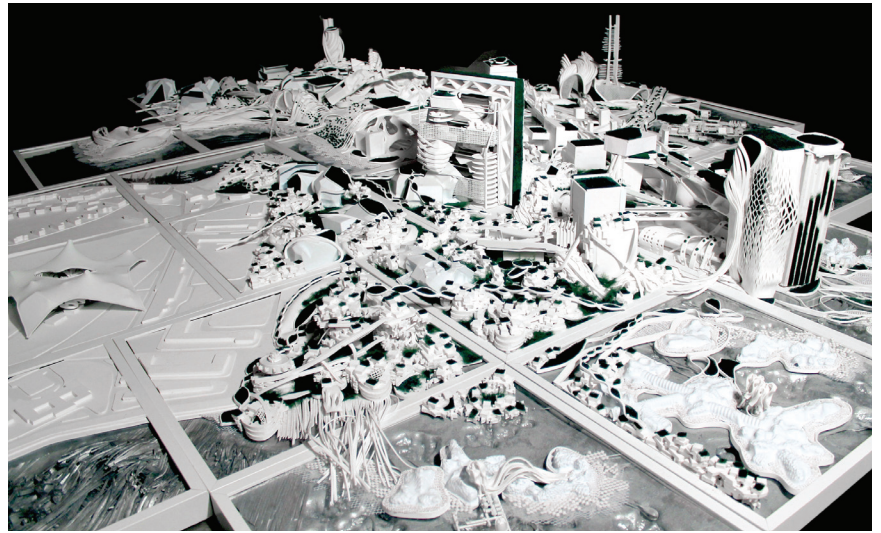
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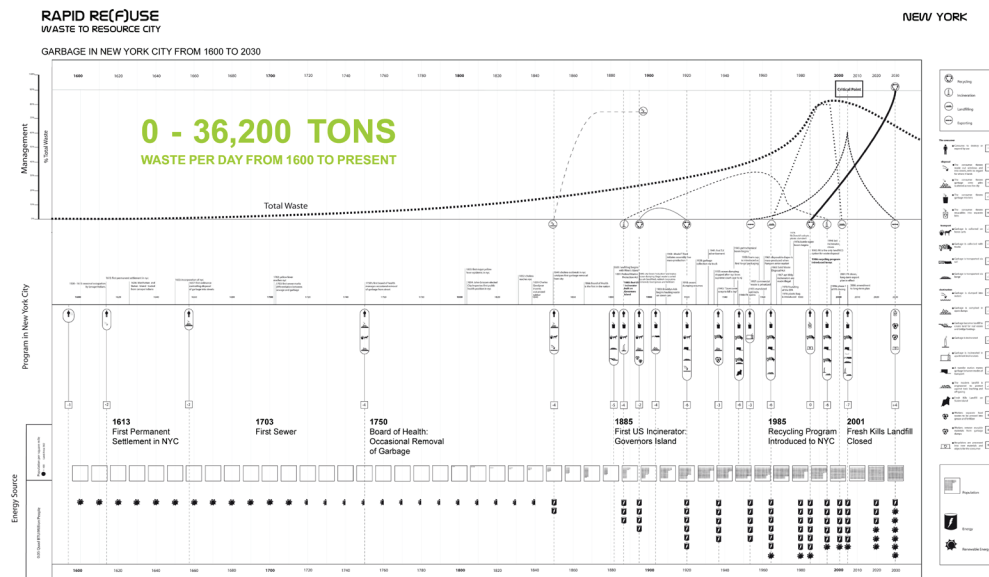
such as the one between “Landscape Urbanism” and “New Urbanism”. Landscape Urbanists deploy concepts that favor the landscape over architecture in order to plan a city.⁵ On the contrary New Urbanist schemes promote historical pedestrian-centered neighborhood developments.⁶ The dissimilarity between the two approaches is of interest to almost no public body beyond architects, planners, and their ilk. Think of the neo-traditionalist town extension of Poundbury near Dorchester endorsed by New Urbanist; Prince Charles versus the high-tech interactive open space zone of Schouwburgplein in Rotterdam of the Landscape Urbanists; West 8. Both of these urban factions have their merits yet fail to coalesce on a holistic idea of the future city. Moreover, the public—every day citizens who occupy these spaces—invests precious little time in understanding the minutiae. For them, the arguments pose an archaic clash between tradition and newness. Urbaneering embraces both and more.

Urbaneering undertakes a diverse range of projects as a prescription for maximal design. It practices totalized schemes that rethink all scales of involvement from doorknobs to democracy. Its projects can range among new materials, transportation systems, open spaces, buildings, cities, and surrounding regions. Currently, a few Urbaneers have shaped phyto-remediation ponds, living woody plant structures, rooftop farms, soft cars/buses, urban junkspace, and city-wide action plans. To inspire interdisciplinary innovation, Urbaneers encourage people to switch roles; architects must design cars, automotive engineers must devise eco-systems, and ecologists must draw up buildings.

At the core of Urbaneering is a variety of utopian agitation that dispels the defunct myths of modernism with equitable objectives. An Urbaner replaces implausible rules and master planning with suggestive memes and polemical models. It is hard to argue with amorphous memes like;

Figure 01: Various Qualities of an Urbaner: Interdisciplinary Activities.

Figure 02: Urbaneering Brooklyn 2112: City of the Future.



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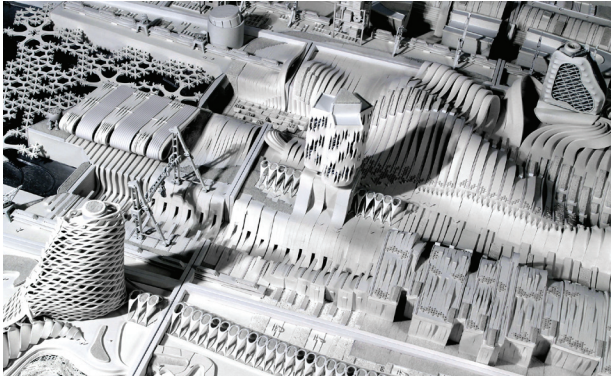
“city beautiful,” “garden city,” or “smart growth.”⁷ The public can rally themselves around these open-ended symbolic gestures and phrases. Because the meme is not fully explicit, the concept leaves room for broad cultural interpretations. This is almost exactly what communities yearn for: freedom to define their own urban spaces.

The Urbaneers aim is to support people to become part of an advanced intellectual initiative framed on the recalibration of the city. Projects such as; Canary Wharf, Potsdamer Platz, NYC Highline, Masdar UAE, and Tianjin China already demand fresh directives. The new profession of Urbaneering provides them in astonishing collaborative ways.

In the past, Urban design has mostly been interdisciplinary, but it has not been revamped since its formal inception. Urbaneering will involve city design in a huge range of new ideas, including crowd-sourcing, DIY projects, localized energy, shared transport, e-government, high-throughput computation, biotechnology, and ecology. Urbaneers focus as much on city ecosystems and infrastructure—areas ripe for improvement—as well as on more conventional subjects such as buildings and parks.

What does Urbaneering look like? Form follows anything as long as no shape is unmotivated. Diagrams that combine ecology and urbanity, called “Ecograms,” serve to prioritize design directives. Light and air are one of many causal factors that respond to context in such Ecograms. Equally, encapsulation of program is correctly orchestrated via any low-energy embodied volumes or dense generic loft spaces. Highly malleable, these spaces support growth, with elaboration and magnification of character at its limits. These are Ecograms of rampant plurality in which lifestyle is elective and fluid. Depending on the nerve with which the Ecogram pressures, the reinvention and re-privatization of consequences could prove to be illimitable.

Figure 03: *Rapid Re(f)use: Waste to Resource City. History and Future of Garbage.*



04

Figure 04: All Necessities for the population are provided within the accessible physical borders.

Figure 05: Governors Hook: Recombinant Neighborhoods of Governors Island + Red Hook.



05

ENDNOTES

1. Thomas More, *Utopia*, 1516.
2. Harold Lasswell, *Psychopathology and Politics*, 1930.
3. James C. Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't*, 2001.
4. Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, MIT Press, 1960.
5. Waldheim, Mostafavi, Corner, Geuze et al., 1997.
6. Calthorpe, Duany, Plater-Zyberk et al., 1993.
7. Burnham, Daniel H., and Edward H. Bennett, *Plan of Chicago, the Commercial Club*, Chicago, 1909.
8. Beveridge, Charles E; Paul Rocheleau, *Frederick Law Olmsted: Designing the American Landscape*. New York: Universe Publishing, 1998.

Beyond use of the Ecogram, Urbaneers have a set of proficiencies that merge previously disparate occupations. The discipline is home to almost any recombined professional activities, as long as they meet the constantly changing needs of urbanization. An excellent historical example of someone who now would be an Urbaneer is Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903), the nineteenth-century activist who combined journalism, social action, and landscape architecture to a single political end.⁸

The next city needs a new breed of communicator. A person skilled in the art of cities beyond the typical utopists, planners, civil engineers, and architects in the present day. These fields need a multifaceted filter of reason to incorporate a profound knowledge of place. An Urbaneer posits the solutions to municipal problems that normally take multiple disciplines to solve. Urbaneers look to merge the edification and expertise needed to reform the city of today for the utopia of tomorrow.

BROOKLYN URBANEERING

What is the key objective for ecological cities? A primary assertion for the next city is that all necessities are provided inside its accessible physical borders. In this intensified version all vital needs are supplied for its population. In this city, food, water, air-quality, energy, waste, mobility, and shelter are radically restructured to support life in every form. Infrastructure is celebrated as the new center.

The strategy includes the replacement of dilapidated structures with vertical agriculture and housing merged with road networks. Former streets become snaking arteries of livable spaces embedded with: renewable energy sources, soft-cushion based vehicles for moving, and productive green rooms. The plan uses the former street grid as the foundation for up-to-the-minute networks. By reengineering the obsolete streets, we can install radically robust and ecologically active smart pathways. These operations are not just about a comprehensive model of tomorrow's city, but an initial platform for discourse. Urbaneers expect the future will necessitate marvelous dwellings coupled with a massive cyclical resource net. ♦