

UC Irvine

Teaching and Learning Anthropology

Title

Teaching the City: Exploring Pedagogies of Urban Becoming

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6f05r3gf>

Journal

Teaching and Learning Anthropology, 7(1)

Authors

Panetta, Claire
Radonic, Lucero
Scheld, Suzanne
[et al.](#)

Publication Date

2024

DOI

10.5070/T37162216

Copyright Information

Copyright 2024 by the author(s). This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

ARTICLE

Teaching the City: Exploring Pedagogies of Urban Becoming

Claire Panetta¹, Lucero Radonic², Suzanne Scheld³, and Angela D. Storey*⁴

¹ Sewanee: The University of the South

² Northern Arizona University

³ California State University, Northridge

⁴ University of Louisville

*Corresponding author: Angela.Storey@Louisville.edu

Abstract

This article explores how teaching Urban Anthropology can engender new relationships between cities, students, and classrooms. We discuss the generative connections between these actors as processes of becoming, which connect students with practices and theories for understanding urban life. Serving also as an introduction to a Special Issue on "Teaching the City," this article introduces the issue's pieces, which discuss teaching and learning across three continents. It also reflects on their collective contributions as an opportunity to think anew about the city through teaching. The four authors of this piece contributed equal labor.

Keywords: *Urban Anthropology; Pedagogy; Becoming; Experiential Learning; Student-centered Learning*

Introduction: On the Timeliness of Teaching and Learning about Cities

In December 2021, a group of faculty and students involved in the Critical Urban Anthropology Association, a section of the American Anthropological Association, began talking about a digital workshop on teaching. When the idea of the Teaching the City Virtual Workshop was born, we imagined a small, informal event where people would share ideas about their experiences teaching urban anthropology. However, the response to our call for participants was overwhelming, conveying a thirst for a collective space to engage in pedagogical explorations of urban spaces and socialities.

In response to this interest, and thanks to the labor of many people, the workshop grew to include a roundtable discussion, two concurrent lightning talk sessions, and a keynote lecture. In total, 24 presenters shared their teaching interventions with over 150 attendees from three continents in a virtual workshop held in April 2022. This event was followed by two roundtables we organized for the 2022 American

Anthropological Association meetings, entitled “Unsettled and Unsettling Teaching of the City” and “Digital and Virtual Approaches for Teaching About, With, and for Urban Public Space.” Energized by these events and by the widespread interest in talking about teaching, we undertook this guest-edited issue, which represents our collective effort to extend the conversation and expand our community of practice.

Attention to teaching the city is critical. After all, cities are the most pervasive built form today, shaping the planet and the communities that inhabit it in fundamental ways. The United Nations estimates that 55 percent of the global population lives in urban areas and this number is projected to reach 70 percent by 2050 (United Nations 2019). This means living in cities will soon be an experience most people across the globe share. It is important, therefore, to learn about cities – how they develop and shape our lives, how they bring us together, and how they push us apart.

Cities are political and economic centers that shape both global networks and local negotiations of power. Just as urban areas are host to conflicts that result in dispossession and marginalization, they also hold communities who challenge the status quo and expand forms of belonging. Thus, for us, studying cities is a hopeful endeavor. Teasing apart the contradictions and demystifying ideologies that mask inequalities often help foreground the individuals and communities who challenge the status quo in an effort to create a more just, inclusive, and democratic way of life (see Brenner 2009). In short, exploring and understanding the city is instrumental for becoming an informed, engaged, and contributing member of a community.

Through our shared presentations and conversations over the past two years we kept coming back to one question: how do our experiences – and those of our students – in and through urban space influence the ways we teach about the city? The pieces in this issue approach this question from diverse perspectives. While some offer tools for university instructors and students to critically engage with the processes, problems, and institutions that constitute urban life, others reflect on the theoretical and practical stakes of different pedagogical approaches. The pieces also bring together the voices of instructors and students, creating space for the latter and putting them into dialogue with the former. These conversations are an important feature of this issue.

The teaching interventions shared in the issue come from university campuses in Canada, Germany, India, the United States, and Türkiye. Some of these campuses are located at the heart of megacities, while some are in medium-sized cities. Others are in what would be considered suburban or rural areas. When examined as a set, authors’ insights and teaching strategies help us to envision a generative pedagogical approach to teaching the city. Specifically, they encourage us to reconfigure our understanding of students, classrooms, cities, and the relationships between them, offering a way to approach these “actors” as fluid forces always in dynamic relationship to each other. Classrooms emerge here as spaces of critical engagement

and as a necessary corollary to experiential learning. Students of all backgrounds are seen as carrying the city with them into the classroom, with accrued knowledge, experiences, and perceptions of the city built through first- and second-hand experience. Finally, students are prompted to see cities not as static built forms that exist beyond the walls of the classroom, but as spaces that are perennially in flux, continually remade by shifting sets of forces, people, and institutions.

Indeed, critical urban anthropologists have long shown that cities are important nodes for the exploration of race, class, gender, immigration, and globalization. Drawing from this rich critical history, the pieces in this collection bring into focus additional areas of anthropological concern, such as Indigenous urbanism, climate change and adaptation, just urban design, political instability, and multispecies relationships. By attending to these topics, the authors demonstrate how a shift in student understandings of the city can transform their relationships to urban spaces.

In the sections below, we briefly discuss existing approaches to teaching the city and then look closely at the individual contributions to the issue to unpack this pedagogical reframing. In the conclusion, we reflect on the power we find in teaching the city through a consideration of the parallels between teaching *and* the city.

Approaches to Teaching the City

The approach of learning *from* the city and *in* the city has been at the core of diverse pedagogies that cross disciplinary specializations. Recent years have seen a de-emphasis on formal educational settings like the university classroom in favor of experiential processes of learning in everyday settings, from municipal offices to subway platforms. In the interdisciplinary field of urban studies, Cupers et al. (2022) detail the development of a pedagogy based on immersive learning in the city as a way to engage graduate students and instructors with the mediated production of urbanity. They reflect on how semester-long projects drew in the messiness and complexity of urban life to enable teachers and students to question their assumptions about the city. Critically, their pedagogical practice aligns with efforts to question the assumed loci of urban expertise by revaluing neglected forms and sites of knowing and experiencing the city (see also Lawhon 2020; Ortiz and Millan 2022).

A focus on experiential urban learning spans disciplines. In sociology, for example, a body of work has reflected on the opportunities and challenges posed by study-away courses where students travel to distant cities, often in other countries, to learn core concepts in urban sociology (Christiansen and Fischer 2010; Fobes 2005; Halsey 1990). While this scholarship highlights the value of experiential learning for simultaneously exposing undergraduate students to theory and research methods – specifically some ethnographic methods – it does not delve deeply into the *how* of student training (see Ocejo 2019).

This special issue on Teaching the City speaks to some of these interdisciplinary trends while also engaging a modest but inspiring stream of scholarship concerned with the theoretical and practical dynamics of teaching urban anthropology. Over four decades ago, a special issue of the journal *Urban Anthropology* framed sub-disciplinary-focused courses as uniquely positioned to provide fieldwork training for undergraduate students through hands-on learning (Miller 1981). Using diverse urban settings across the United States, authors in that volume highlighted how urban anthropology teachers could facilitate interactions in urban environments to sharpen students' observational and descriptive skills while engaging analytical models provided in the classroom (Middleton 1981; Miracle 1981; Portnoff 1981). In the years since the issue's publication, the city has emerged as a laboratory for learning anthropology, where teaching occurs in the city and through the city. This approach has taken myriad forms, including semester-long fieldwork projects in which students engage with local organizations to learn about the city in which their university is located (Guest 2011) or collaborative projects with local artists used as part of a multimethod approach to studying their urban environment (Truys 2018).

In this issue of *Teaching and Learning Anthropology*, authors acknowledge the importance of experiential learning, but they take the city-as-laboratory framework one step further by accounting for the pre-existing relationships that teachers and students have with the city. All members of a class are already part of the city and bring it with them into the classroom in some capacity, whether through personal experiences or pre-existing perceptions. As illustrated in the contributions to this issue, authors recognize how these relationships deepen student's understandings of the cities that surround our classrooms – and, sometimes, even in contrast to the classroom, for those set beyond the geographic edges of the city (Middleton 1981). By taking a global approach, by setting student voices alongside those of instructors, and by considering how theory informs our pedagogical forms, the pieces in this issue extend this conversation about teaching the city into a new generation of scholarship.

Re-Articulating the Urban Classroom

With an expanded emphasis on experiential learning both in pedagogical approaches and across university programs, many urban scholars have focused on getting students out of classrooms. The pieces in this issue draw from this literature on the power of primary experience for learning but argue for the necessity of pairing experiential learning with collective spaces for processing experience, encouraging reflexivity, and structuring links between ideas and practice. In other words, they call for the well-structured, thoughtful, creative urban classroom, and present some tools for realizing this type of space. As a site of praxis, classrooms offer a critical node in making the city a place in which not only experiences, but *useful, learning-focused* experiences can take place. The teaching tools presented by authors in this issue are ways to make the classroom a critical site in which students' urban worlds become

productive for learning. Authors reflect on experiences in traditional classrooms and in online courses and workshops, considering the variability of spaces of learning and the roles that a diversity of such sites can play in reflection and study.

Across the pieces in this issue, classrooms are sites of opportunity and creativity. Despite their differences, the classrooms outlined here share a focus on the necessity of utilizing specific, intentional tools to bring the city into the classroom and to locate the classroom within the city. From ethnographic screenwriting to photo-based projects, digital games, and zines, the authors highlight the kinds of tools that make classrooms – both digital and physical – into shared, lived, vibrant places of learning. Contrary to the rote lecturing that many might associate with a tired view of classrooms, these pieces show how good pedagogical tools can make classrooms into spaces that harness our imaginations of the city and in which we experience urban belonging, attend to our arts of noticing, and identify opportunities for critical rupture. With these tools, the classroom becomes a lens through which to see the city as a space of becoming, fraught with contestation and possibility (Simone 2004).

Diverse and imaginative approaches to teaching about the city emerge throughout this issue. From plays about haunted apartments that uncover the complexities of housing development in Southeast Asia to self-made maps of COVID-19 lockdowns in the U.S. that showcase the importance of how we situate ourselves within the urban landscape, each author frames the classroom's potential to help us reimagine our individual and collective places within the city. Ethnographic "arts of noticing" (Tsing 2015) are on display in multiple pieces through the use of qualitative methods in and around the classroom, as are student-centered active learning techniques like class debates, structured discussions, and community-building among students. Importantly, though, these teaching techniques are not simply flashy attempts to make teaching look good, nor are they ways to fill students' time or to present flattened facts and figures. Instead, each approach is paired with critical reflection, curated readings, and collective interactions. This allows each teaching tool to highlight the lived experiences of students and their communities, and to embrace in the classroom the complexity, contradictions, and unknowns of urban life. As Mittal et al. (this issue) write: "Positivist frameworks of 'knowing the city' miss out on (a) nuanced conceptualization of the city when they adopt a neutral, fact-oriented approach to describe the various elements of urban space, built typologies, and present prevailing patterns in different context." Across this issue's contributions, the authors present evocative alternatives to this "neutral" approach to teaching the city.

Framing a novel, creative approach to using ethnography to explore urban lives and processes, Mittal et al. discuss the opportunities of screenwriting as a teaching tool. Written by the course faculty alongside two enrolled undergraduate students, this piece discusses a class focused on "Housing: Planning and Policy" that is part of the undergraduate degree in Architecture at the Jindal School of Art and Architecture

of O. P. Jindal Global University (Delhi, India). With a range of ethnographic and topical readings, students sought to understand the lived experiences of housing by exploring themes of uncertainty and urban becoming in fictional screenplays based on real sites of housing challenges. One case study, built from a controversy surrounding the demolition of two residential towers in the Delhi metropolitan area, prompted students to create scenarios exploring site redevelopment when it comes at the cost of displacing low-income communities. By writing out fictional scenes based on class discussions and creating plausible circumstances for development challenges, students were pushed to imagine social roles more tangibly, setting themselves up to see the potential experiences of the squatters and developers on opposite sides of a conflict. Another assignment, taking a spectral approach, looked at the pressures of navigating the housing market by setting up a tenant coping with life in a haunted micro-apartment. Building from ethnographic work by Tang (2017) on tiny apartments in Hong Kong, students collectively evoked the challenges of dense urban life through this unexpected plot device.

Looking to other forms of classrooms, Hyatt (this issue) explores the opportunities and challenges of online classes in a piece about teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indianapolis (Indiana, U.S.). Challenged by the shared experiences of lockdown, anxiety, and isolation during her urban anthropology course in the spring of 2021, Hyatt prompted students to engage with their urban experiences from those unique and uniquely challenging vantage points. Through photo essays, blog posts, and other creative approaches to evoking urban experiences of the pandemic, Hyatt explores what visuality offers for understanding urban experience. Reflecting upon the experience of teaching this course, she also notes the possibilities for expanding to a more multisensory approach to learning about cities, highlighting how students brought into their visual and textual work the sounds, smells, and feel of their urban worlds. The digital classroom, extended through blogs and other forms of outward facing products, became a way for students to record and process a uniquely challenging moment.

In exploring the pedagogical framing of a role-playing game, Siriwardane-de Zoysa et al. (this issue) look at the options for learning in ephemeral classrooms, in this case at a workshop. Their digital tool, Tidal Cities, utilizes ethnographic and wider data based on examples of development along urban coasts in Southeast Asia to prompt players to put themselves into the positions of multiple stakeholders. Like Mittal et al.'s screenwriting assignments, the game allows student-players to take on the roles of groups and individuals who live, work, govern, and profit from specific urban sites. Using data from Manila and Jakarta (the Philippines), the game pushes players to see the social, political, and economic complexities of urban sites where land meets sea. The authors reflect on what they learned about the game as a pedagogical tool in their test runs, exploring the limitations of using it outside of a course and the difficulty of pushing players to imagine an urban "otherwise" that went

beyond a performance of pre-existing understandings. By identifying a set of planning dualisms that were elicited by the game play, the authors posit how different frameworks for using the game might encourage players to make larger leaps of understanding about the littoral assemblages being explored.

Engaging a sister discipline, Kive (this issue) explores how students in an architecture course in Eugene (Oregon, U.S.) reacted to a series of assignments about the city's "hostile design," specific elements of architecture that seek to exclude unhoused individuals from public spaces. Based in the creation of digital maps and websites, students sought out and documented examples of hostile design in Eugene, from arms on benches that bar easy sleeping, to planters that prevent sheltering under a store awning. Scaffolding class assignments to concurrently build student's knowledge and skills, Kive explores how both a city and an urban university that position themselves as progressive institutions remain riddled with exclusionary design. Through the assignment series and classroom discussions, students began to see the sites around them anew, evoking an expanded empathy for those seeking shelter in this hostile environment. Despite what is now a common institutional focus on inclusion and diversity, Kive's students examined how the University of Oregon's spaces mirrored wider forms of exclusion, suggesting the importance of beginning at "home" in our experiential and critical pedagogical work.

Based at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton (Florida, U.S.), Widener (this issue) explores the potentialities of utilizing photovoice as a pedagogical tool, highlighting the importance of linked classroom discussions that attend to the dynamics of student experiences evoked through this teaching tool. Across the social sciences and humanities, photovoice has become a more frequently utilized research method in participatory and community engaged projects. By eliciting visual representations of specific kinds of experiences or places, photovoice puts the power of selecting exemplars and highlighting meaning into the hands of research participants. Widener looks at how this method can become a tool for teaching urban anthropology, discussing a series of assignments that prompt students to collect, present, and discuss images linked to class topics. Just as research participants are able to bring their own spaces and experiences into a project through photovoice, the method allows students to do the same. Widener explores the power of this method in expanding conversations but also underscores the necessity of the classroom interactions to prompt deeper discussions on difficult topics like urban inequality that can highlight students' own urban positions and privileges.

These and other pieces across this special issue suggest that the city's lessons can come through powerfully in classrooms by focusing on processing, reflection, and forging links between the student and the city. The classroom, though, always exists at the intersection of an instructor's plans and the students' contributions. The

following section picks up this thread, examining how students bring their own heterogenous, layered understandings of city life into the classroom.

The City in the Student

The contributions to the issue illustrate the durability of Paulo Freire's critique (1968) of the "banking concept of education," which framed students as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge and information by the teacher. In contrast, the authors in this issue collectively underscore the diverse perceptions, experiences, and "funds of knowledge" (Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg 1992) related to the city that students bring to the classroom: from their experiences living in cities of different sizes and on different continents, to their perceptions of cities as unique places or the academic knowledge they have cultivated from previous learning experiences. Several pieces help us to think more deeply about how this knowledge and experience might manifest in the classroom – as well as how instructors might incorporate it into the learning environment.

At a fundamental level, the articles and commentaries ask us to consider the city as already embedded in students. They suggest that no student enters the classroom as a "blank slate." This embeddedness, as the authors demonstrate, can take myriad forms: it can include an accumulation of lived and sensory experience as well as memories, histories, perceptions, and emotions. Yet the authors in this issue do more than simply highlight the existence of these different forms of embeddedness; they also suggest ways in which they might be engaged in class to expand students' understanding of the city. They show us, for example, how teachers might use students' affective or sensory understandings of the city as a medium through which to explore different facets of urban life. In so doing, they re-position students vis-à-vis both the classroom and the city.

Unsurprisingly, the student showcases bring this embeddedness to the fore. In her commentary on researching and writing a senior thesis in urban studies at Barnard College (New York, U.S.), Layfield (this issue) sketches the various threads of personal and academic experience that led her to research urban agricultural education in several U.S. cities. She notes that an opportunity to learn about container farming in her Boston high school served as a direct source of inspiration – and motivation – for the project. As she observes, "I found that looking at prior interests and experiences was key to driving my research. Because my thesis was derived from topics that I already found familiar and interesting, I felt that my research was fueled by a desire to know as much as possible about the topic."

While Layfield highlights lived urban experiences as a critical resource that students may draw on in class, Thomas (this issue) considers how such experiences and perceptions can be tapped and subsequently re-worked through coursework. In reflecting on their experience of writing an opinion essay for an urban sociology class

also at Barnard College, Thomas notes how not only their view of gentrification evolved but also their understanding of their own place in the urban landscape. Focused on Harlem (New York, U.S.), the neighborhood in which they grew up, the essay used primary source material and course readings to analyze recent redevelopment initiatives in the area. In the process of writing the essay (and, later, their contribution to this issue), Thomas underwent a profound shift in perspective. As they write, “In my own case, although I was able to learn about gentrification through class discussions and readings, applying these theories to a primary source document related to the neighborhood I grew up in, and then reflecting on my own thought processes and positionality afterwards, significantly enriched my own understanding of my relationship to my neighborhood and the privileges I hold.” Both Layfield and Thomas make plain the way that students frequently, and often independently, toggle between the academic context of the classroom and their own urban experiences, putting the two into dialogue.

Pivoting away from the student showcases, several pieces in the issue recount authors’ efforts to engage with this embeddedness through class discussion, assignments, and activities, thus providing us with tools and frameworks that can be used in other teaching contexts. Bhojvaïd’s commentary (this issue) about an in-class discussion in her “Sociology of Science” course at Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence outside of Delhi (India) is particularly illustrative in this regard. She describes a conversation that emerged out of an unsuccessful, student-led effort to have classes canceled due to high levels of air pollution, explaining how she used the students’ embodied experience of breathing – the most elemental of bodily functions – as a way to broach questions about what constitutes a city. More specifically, she used it as a provocation to consider how “airy materials” might allow for a re-envisioning of the city and its geography.

While Bhojvaïd drew on students’ sensory and bodily experiences of the city as a medium through which to shift their understanding of it, Akin et al. (this issue) underscore the way that emotions and affective experiences can be engaged and transformed within the classroom. In their commentary, the authors – six undergraduate students and their instructor – describe the experience of building a collective discussion about the deeply entwined experiences of politics, place, and time that shaped their course at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul (Türkiye) during the summer of 2022. As the authors explain, students’ personal relationships with Istanbul carried into the class, most poignantly in the form of frustration with the political upheaval and subsequent police siege of their school. However, their shared disillusionment with the political moment was transformed into feelings of catharsis, and even hope, through the collective experience of the course and their subsequent reflections generated by working together on this piece.

Collectively, these contributions encourage us to reconsider the role and place of the student vis-à-vis both the classroom and the city. The courses and experiences described in these pieces add nuance to the notion of “student-centered” learning. Rather than approaching student-centered learning in urban contexts as dependent upon sending students out into the city to collect “experiences” to be processed in class, these pieces reveal the myriad ways in which students bring the city with them into the classroom right from the start. Moreover, they offer insights into how we might weave these varied experiences of and associations with the city into the architecture of our classes. This is not simply, or exclusively, about developing novel teaching activities; on the contrary, some of the courses described relied on what we might consider to be “traditional” teaching methodologies in anthropology and social science courses, such as class discussion. These contributions ask us to attune ourselves to everything students bring with them into the classroom, and to use their personal, sensory, and/or affective experiences as the grounds from which to explore fundamental course questions.

Repositioning the City

Contributions to this issue describe coursework intended to challenge dominant conceptions of the city. Drawing on different theoretical frameworks and pedagogical approaches, authors show how they use course assignments and activities to guide students to identify – and then dismantle – common framings of the city that create partial or problematic understandings of urban life. By critically examining cities and urban socialities together, students begin to learn that hegemonic models for describing cities – particularly binaries such as urban/rural, built/natural, human/non-human, indigeneity/urbanity – are reductive, analytically limiting, and miss how the forces of urban life are fluid, interconnected, and complementary. Ultimately, by bringing these re-theorizations of the city into the classroom, instructors shift not only students’ perceptions of the city but their own relationships to urban areas as well.

The student showcase by Labadorf et al. (this issue), offers an explicit illustration of how pedagogical practices can help students in this regard. Focused on the authors’ experiences in an applied anthropology course at Purdue University in West Lafayette (Indiana, U.S.), the showcase details a research project that the authors, an interdisciplinary team of graduate students, developed in coordination with the local parks and recreation department. The aim of the project was to help the department build a new masterplan for the city’s parks by studying how one local park, Happy Hollow, was used and experienced by the community. As the authors explain, by bringing together students from diverse disciplines to engage in community-focused research, the project led them to reassess their perspectives not only on urban parks but on the city as a whole. They explain how, before the course, some of them thought of “the city” as the physical structures and boundaries on the map. But after engaging with community members, they understood that, as they write, “who and what makes up the city are dynamic and interactive.”

Other contributions to the issue focus more explicitly on how theoretical frameworks can be deployed in teaching. For example, Radu (this issue), explains how she used the framework of Indigenous urbanism in an undergraduate course at Concordia University in Montréal (Canada). Focused on Montréal, the course asked students to engage with the city through Heather Dorries’s understanding of urban space as neither “inherently Indigenous [n]or inherently colonial, but instead as continually contested” (Dorries 2023, 115). The class thus pushed students to reconsider the city as a space that has – since its founding – been co-produced by Indigenous and non-Indigenous forces. To advance this reframing of the city, Radu developed a series of assignments that foregrounded Indigenous activities and presence in the city, including an analysis of archival material from municipal archives and local museums, a meeting with Montréal’s Commissioner for Relations with Indigenous Peoples, and a multi-modal research project that enabled students to explore how Indigenous groups and community organizations have continued to shape the urban landscape. Through these activities, students were encouraged to push back against dominant understandings of urbanity and indigeneity as mutually exclusive, and to see them, instead, as intertwined.

Despite the radically different context and focus, Fadok’s contribution (this issue) describes a similar desire to render legible what is frequently illegible in the urban landscape. Building from the zeitgeist of the more-than-human turn in anthropology, Fadok draws this theoretically dense and critically important literature into the classroom. Reflecting upon a combined graduate-undergraduate course at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania, U.S.), he discusses the way in which design and anthropology met in student examinations of the city’s multispecies worlds. The city, he reminds us, is a space of multi-species co-habitation, and yet more-than-human animals tend to be illegible to urban-focused analytical frameworks, or all together absent. His class included a scaffolded set of assignments that worked from field visits, primary data collection, and design work to a culminating exhibit. Through this work, students developed proposals for reworked dog parks, urban turkey education, and feline-friendly residential architecture that centered the city’s more-than-human residents. In so doing, they reworked perceptions of who belongs to the city and made them into tangible responses to the urban places they also inhabit.

Drawing attention to everyday infrastructures, Ross et al. (this issue), detail how another pedagogical intervention revealed the complexity and hidden dimensions of what is too often taken for granted. Engaging with the robust literature on urban infrastructure, the authorial collective of undergraduate students and their instructor reaffirm the value of ethnography for helping students attend to the role of infrastructure in enabling the functioning of the city and their own daily lives. In a way they point to elements of the city often seen as legible and reveal how that is not necessarily always the case, with aspects that remain to be read. Based in Washington, D.C. (U.S.), this course was grounded in a series of creative ethnographic assignments – Infrastructure Fieldnotes – in which students were asked to attend to the places they lived in, passed through, or visited in the city

through the lens of different infrastructural theories. Ross's creative prompts for each fieldnote sparked new attention to existing spaces and brought those experiences into the classroom in rich, layered ways. The five student authors reflect in turn upon the fieldnote prompts that most impacted their own learning and thinking about the city, from Shah's discussion of creating a zine about modernist design to new insights on familiar places gained through Francis's reflection on taking an "ordinary" trip to campus. Collectively, this article makes the case for innovative approaches to using reliable ethnographic tools in the classroom as a way to encourage students to re-examine taken-for-granted aspects of the city.

The authors discussed in this section reflect on how pedagogical interventions and theoretical frameworks can lead students to a more nuanced understanding of urban life, and, in so doing, shift their relationships to the city. Labadorf et al. (this issue) speak directly to this when they note that their experiences in the applied anthropology class "deepened their commitment to the city." Similarly, Ross et al. reveal how a series of scaffolded assignments enabled students to cultivate new kinds of awareness or attention to urban infrastructure, expanding existing understandings of the city and their relationship to it.

These contributions point to how teaching the city can contribute to the scholarship on anthropology more broadly. By virtue of the work they do in the classroom, these authors are in conversation with diverse scholarly bodies of work such as multispecies ethnography, Indigenous urbanism, and the anthropology of infrastructure. For example, by reflecting on her pedagogical intervention, Radu is also contributing a case study that highlights the significance of Indigenous urbanism to Indigenous people in cities as well as to urban settlers and non-Indigenous people of color (Blatman and Mays 2023). Likewise, Fadok contributes to critical urban anthropology by further opening this scholarship to vital reflections on multi-species justice (Chao et al. 2022).

Conclusion: Positioning Teaching the City

The collection of papers in this issue reflects a new level of engagement with and recognition of the importance of teaching to studies of the city. More specifically, these pieces represent a valuable contribution to defining "pedagogical content knowledge" (Shulman 1996) for teaching the city. In studies of education, a distinction is made between content knowledge (the "what" to teach) and pedagogical content knowledge (the "how" to teach), and many argue that possessing strong content knowledge is not sufficient for being an effective instructor (Gess-Newsome et al. 2019). Pedagogical content knowledge is not universal, either, but should include content-specific approaches (Tuithof et al. 2023). It is therefore up to those who are generating theories of the city to define approaches for understanding this content.

While editing the papers in this issue, we could not help but wonder if and how teaching leads to generating both new forms of content knowledge and new forms of pedagogical content knowledge. By asking these questions together, we keep the focus

on the student experience. In other words, how might discoveries by students and instructors about how we teach the city also add to theoretical understanding of the city?

This question prompts us to consider parallels between theorizing cities and teaching and learning. Simone (2004) suggests that cities are spaces of negotiation, always in flux, in a state of becoming. They emerge as inhabitants attune to seemingly small and mundane acts of solidarity, which provide opportunities for creating connections that sometimes result in the development of improvised urban infrastructure. To provide an example from Dakar (Senegal), in the absence of municipality resources for providing the city with sanitation services, through word-of-mouth citizens informally organized to clean the city by sweeping the streets and painting murals with positive messages on the walls of highway ramps and in other spaces. This example attests to the ingenuity, networking abilities, and perseverance of urban residents as they make the city. It is also an expression of urban residents' ownership over the city.

Ellsworth (2005), a media studies scholar, speaks of pedagogy and the emergence of a "learning self" in terms that resonate with the relational, unscripted, and cumulative aspects of the making of a city and assuming ownership over it. Like the city, learning is conceived as taking place in a transitional space. Teaching is thought of as a set of "hinges" that engender impromptu pivots, opening doors for connections to be made between inner knowledge and past experiences in the world. The nuanced details of an experience and the environment potentially have major transformative significance for students (and instructors) as they co-produce what she calls "living knowledge." And, as the "learning self" emerges, it assumes ownership over the knowledge it has made (cf. Sojot 2018).

These theories of the city and teaching join others in challenging hegemonic notions of cities and learning processes. Theories of the built environment have moved away from characterizing architecture and urban infrastructure as static forms and instead lean into a view of them as in motion, dynamic, and enacted through relational shifts (cf. Anand 2017; Latour and Yaneva 2017). Likewise, theories in education have moved away from conceiving teaching as a unidirectional delivery and "compliance" process, conceived in terms of a transfer, acquisition, or banking type of action. They instead lean towards notions of teaching as facilitating reflection, recursive knowledge building, connection-making, and appreciating teaching as the production of living knowledge (see Ellsworth 2005; Sojot 2018; The Curriculum Collective 2007). While cities and selves are vastly distinct phenomena, they become integrated when teaching the city.

We use the city to think with as we develop approaches to teaching, and we use teaching to think with as we develop approaches to the city. In addition to offering tangible tools to teach with, the papers in this issue provide us with specific tools to think with. In this way, they offer us a chance to consider how teaching and the city co-constitute one another and how they might lead to new ways of theorizing in each domain.

Acknowledgments

Our sincere thanks to the board of the Critical Urban Anthropology Association for supporting our “Teaching the City Virtual Workshop,” the 2022 event that was the genesis for this special issue. Many thanks to the presenters and participants in that workshop, our wonderful co-organizer of the event, Megan Sheehan, and our excellent graduate student assistants, Hanadi Alhalabi, Cara Jacob, and Marwa Bakabas. We would also like to thank the presenters in our subsequent 2022 AAA roundtables, “Unsettled and Unsettling Teaching of the City” and “Digital and Virtual Approaches for Teaching about, with, and for Urban Public Spaces.” Finally, we extend our deepest gratitude to the authors in this special issue as well as to the editors of TLA and the anonymous peer reviewers for their generous feedback on this article.

Correction

This document is a revised version. It was updated two weeks after publication to correct the pronouns used to refer to a cited author.

References

- Anand, Nikhil. 2017. *Hydraulic City: Hydraulic City: Water and the Infrastructures of Citizenship in Mumbai*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Blatman, Naama, and Kyle Mays. 2023. “Indigenous Urbanisms.” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 47 (1): 106–9. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.13128>.
- Brenner, Neil. 2009. “What Is Critical Urban Theory?” *City* 13 (2–3): 198–207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810902996466>.
- Chao, Sophie, Karin Bolender, and Eben Kirksey, eds. 2022. *The Promise of Multispecies Justice*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Christiansen, Lars, and Nancy Fischer. 2010. “Teaching Urban Sociology and Urban Sustainability on Two Feet, Two Wheels, and in Three Cities: Our Experience Teaching Sustainable Cities in North America.” *Teaching Sociology* 38 (4): 301–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092055X10380669>.
- Cupers, Kenny, Sophie Oldfield, Manuel Herz, Laurra Nkula-Wenz, Emilio Distretti, and Myriam Perret, eds. 2022. *What Is Critical Urbanism? Urban Research as Pedagogy*. Zürich, Switzerland: Park Books.
- Dorries, Heather. 2023. “Indigenous Urbanism as an Analytic: Towards Indigenous Urban Theory.” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 47 (1): 110–18. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.13129>.
- Ellsworth, Elizabeth. 2005. *Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy*. New York,

- NY: Routledge.
- Fobes, Catherine. 2005. "Taking a Critical Pedagogical Look at Travel-Study Abroad: 'A Classroom with a View' in Cusco, Peru." *Teaching Sociology* 33 (2): 181–94. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092055X0503300205>.
- Freire, Paulo. [1968] 2012. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Gess-Newsome, Julie, Joseph A. Taylor, Janet Carlson, April L. Gardner, Christopher D. Wilson & Molly A. M. Stuhlsatz. 2019. "Teacher Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Practice, and Student Achievement." *International Journal of Science Education* 41 (7): 944–963. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500693.2016.1265158>.
- Guest, Kenneth. 2011. "Sparking Student Scholarship Through Urban Ethnography." In *Making Teaching and Learning Matter: Transformative Spaces in Higher Education*, edited by Judith Summerfield and Cheryl C. Smith, 269–278. New York, NY: Springer.
- Halsey, John. 1990. "Teaching Sociology in an Overseas Program: The Uses of Marginality." *Teaching Sociology* 18 (2): 203–08. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1318491>.
- Latour, Bruno, and Alben Yaneva. 2017. "'Give Me a Gun and I Will Make All Buildings Move': An ANTS's View of Architecture." *Architectural Design Theory* 1: 103–111. <https://doi.org/10.17454/ARDETH01.08>.
- Lawhon, Mary. 2020. *Making Urban Theory Learning and Unlearning through Southern Cities*. New York: Routledge.
- Middleton, DeWight R. 1981. "Teaching Urban Anthropology in a Small Town." *Urban Anthropology* 10 (4): 331–43.
- Miller, Charlotte I. 1981. "Introduction." *Urban Anthropology* 10 (4): 305–7.
- Miracle, Andrew W. 1981. "Teaching Urban Anthropology: An Experiential Approach." *Urban Anthropology* 10 (4): 309–17.
- Ocejo, Richard E., ed. 2019. *Urban Ethnography: Legacies and Challenges*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Ortiz, Catalina, and Gynna Millan. 2022. "Critical Urban Pedagogy: Convites as Sites of Southern Urbanism, Solidarity Construction and Urban Learning." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 46 (5): 822–44. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.13119>.
- Portnoff, Lynn Dumond. 1981. "The Internship: Taking Urban Anthropology Out of the Classroom and Into the Field." *Urban Anthropology* 10 (4): 345–51.
- Simone, AbdouMaliq. 2004. *For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Life in Four Cities*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Sojot, Amy N. 2018. "Pedagogical Possibilities of Becoming and the Transitional Space." *Policy Futures in Education* 16 (7): 893–905.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210317751265>.

- Shulman, Lee. 1986. "Those Who Understand Knowledge Growth in Teaching." *Educational Researcher* 15 (2): 4–14.
- Tang, Wing-Shing. 2017. "Beyond Gentrification: Hegemonic Redevelopment in Hong Kong." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 41 (3): 487–499. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12496>.
- The Curriculum Collective (Theodore Christou, Jennifer Davis, Christopher DeLuca, Rebecca Luce-Kapler, and Laura McEwen). 2007. "The Pedagogy of Hinges." *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies* 5 (2): 62–89. <https://doi.org/10.25071/1916-4467.17044>.
- Truyts, Carina. 2018. "Trash, Teaching and the City: The 'Big Hole Counter Narrative' Project and the "Urban Anthropology: Research Methods and Fieldwork" Course at Sol Plaatje University." *Anthropology Southern Africa* 41 (1): 55–65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23323256.2018.1442732>.
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 2015. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Tuithof, Hanneke, Jannet Van Drie, Larike Bronkhorst, Leen Dorsman, and Jan Van Tartwijk. 2023. "Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge of Two Specific Historical Contexts Captured and Compared." *Educational Studies* 49 (4): 686–711. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2021.1877621>.
- United Nations. 2019. *World Urbanization Prospects - The 2018 Revision. Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Population Division*. New York, NY: United Nations.
- Vélez-Ibáñez, Carlos, and James Greenberg. 1992. "Formation and Transformation of Funds of Knowledge among U.S. Mexican Households." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 23 (4): 313–335.