

# MODERN ARCHITECTURE FACES THE METROPOLIS



Architecture, wrote Walter Gropius in 1935, grows “from the house to... the street; from the street to the town; and finally to the still vaster implications of regional and national planning.” An unusual claim for today, but think of a modernist architect and the image of Le Corbusier’s hand mid-flight over a model of his radical plans for Paris comes easily to mind. This seminar will excavate and critically examine modern architecture’s quest for control over the urban fabric. While we will review some key urban proposals, advanced primarily between the 1920s and the 1950s in Europe and America (among these will be projects by Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Kahn, and the Smithsons), our main concern will be to trace how architects attempted to redefine and expand their professional role so as to encompass planning at all scales. We will set the theories of modern “masters” against the daily work of average practitioners, and pay close attention to turf wars among architecture, planning, and engineering as specialized disciplines. We will also consider how conceptual links between urban design and social engineering were invented and challenged in the context of broader developments in social, political, and economic history. Our goal will be to understand the metropolis as a focus of existential questions about architecture’s professional agency in a changing world.

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