POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DESIGN

Team:      Paolo Tombesi
Duration:  Spring semester 2018-2019

Content:  Political Economy of Design seeks to position and discuss architecture in relation to the world of production, economic interests and community benefits, at a local and global scale. By integrating yet moving beyond the stylistic, technological or sociological aspects of the discipline, the discussion reviews the industrial elements that are likely to affect programmatic objectives, formal directions and technical outcomes of building projects. Such discussion has a strong comparative bent, and is coloured by the notion of innovation - what it means from a social, technical and cultural point of view, and how it enters and affects different building markets. Attention is directed at understanding the distinction between innovation on one side and invention and technological change on the other. In this context, architecture's connection with planning and building disciplines is examined and criticised in the attempt to formulate a strategic framework for its use as an environmental policy instrument.

The subject has a lecture component and a research component. The lecture component provides a general theoretical framework largely borrowed from political economy, industrial theory, innovation theory and labour studies literature, but adapted to the analysis of the design and building sector. The research component seeks to apply the elements of this framework to a specific situation providing opportunities for applied research.

On completion of the subject students should be able to: 1) identify and engage with the various types of environmental conditions that have an impact upon the role of the design professions, the configuration of the building industry and the nature of its products in any given region; 2) demonstrate a critical understanding of the relationship between design practice, cultural values, spatial needs and industrial landscapes.

Resources:  General references provided by the instructor in the course of the semester.

Language:  English