GLOBAL METROPOLITAN STUDIES

ANNUAL REPORT 2020–21

The Global Metropolitan Studies (GMS) program at UC Berkeley was established to address major transformations in cities around the world. Urbanization brings a range of new physical and political configurations and challenges—ecological crises, processes of democratization and de-democratization, urban marginality, and emergent strategies of recognition and resistance. The expansion of digital data and tools now provides new opportunities for study of transportation, housing, infrastructure, environment, and other critical aspects of urban form and process. GMS is a community of scholars across disciplines at Berkeley that investigates these challenges and politics of the new urban century. GMS trains young researchers to collaborate with one another to study the urban condition through its administered Designated Emphasis (a PhD minor to support scholarship on urban systems). It also facilitates interdisciplinary exchange on these topics by organizing a lecture series on international urban themes in partnership with multiple departments across campus, and hosting small workshops and sponsoring student groups. Finally, GMS works to catalyze interdisciplinary research initiatives by organizing interdisciplinary faculty workshops focused on specific external funding programs.

2020–21 GMS Co-Directors:
G. Mathias Kondolf, Professor of Landscape Architecture & Environmental Planning
Joan Walker, Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering

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General inquiries: globalmetrostudies@berkeley.edu
Follow us on Twitter: @gmsberkeley
New Core Faculty

The GMS program is thrilled to welcome a new core faculty member, Sai Balakrishnan. She will participate in GMS’ research initiatives and the core classes in the GMS Designated Emphasis.

Dr. Balakrishnan joins UC Berkeley from the Harvard Graduate School of Design. Balakrishnan focuses on urbanization and planning institutions in the global south, and on the spatial politics of land and property. Her recent book, *Shareholder Cities: Land Transformations along Urban Corridors in India* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), looks at urbanization along economic corridors in India, and the agrarian-urban land conflicts in these new spatial forms of urbanization.

Berkeley Lab for Speculative Urbanisms

The Berkeley Lab for Speculative Urbanisms (BLSU) is dedicated to the study of urban geography, encompassing inquiry on the web of relations among cities, regions, and metropolitan areas. The lab itself is a representational/conceptual and material experiment in feminist mentoring and incubating the work of graduate students and community partners. Members of the BLSU are currently working on a project titled “Care and the Politics of Reclamation”, which focuses on the collective occupation of a vacant, investor-owned Oakland home by Moms 4 Housing, a group of Black mothers. Grounded in the lived experiences of Black women and their relationships with Oakland, Moms 4 Housing is the antithesis of finance-driven transformations of cities, which necessarily abstract away from history and lived experience in order to produce investable urban futures. In enacting a speculative urban politics of care that asserts claims to place rooted in the Moms’ specific interdependencies with Oakland, Moms 4 Housing calls forth a reparative urban future that undoes capitalist dispossession and racial domination.

The BLSU recently facilitated a workshop on collaborative research and co-authoring journal articles with graduate students in GMS and geography. The Moms 4 Housing project was used to demystify the process of writing a journal article, discuss the politics of co-authorship, and model practices of sharing work in progress.
Their next project, titled the “Archive of Urban Futures”, will assemble a database of material about Oakland and visions of and for its future over time. The Archive of Urban Futures will enable engaged scholarship on how narratives about Oakland emerge and circulate, competing visions for the city’s future and how these evolve over time, and the urban imaginaries that have been forgotten or sidelined in favor of more entrenched interests.

Lecture Series

GMS organized a series of lectures and workshops this year in collaboration with a wide variety of academic units on campus. Our aim was to encourage research communities that might not normally showcase scholarship on international urban studies to do so, and to encourage our faculty and graduate students to attend events in departments or research centers they might not usually visit.

Lecture series:

• Sept 17, 2020: Slow Harms and Citizen Action: Environmental Degradation & Policy Change in Latin American Cities — Veronica Herrera | UCLA (Co-sponsored by City & Regional Planning)

• Oct 19, 2020: What Civil Engineers and Planners Should Know About Building Infrastructure in the Real World: Lessons from Rwanda — Patricie Uwase | Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Infrastructure, Rwanda (Co-sponsored by the Center for African Studies and the Department of City & Regional Planning)

• Nov 6, 2020: Modeling Access and Equity in the Design of School Districts and Related Transportation Decisions — Karen Smilowitz | Northwestern (Co-sponsored by the Institute for Transportation Studies)

• March 17, 2021: The Apocryphal Gospel of Oakland: (Im)permanence, Improvisation, and Our Absurdist Future — Olalekan Jeyifous with Brandi Thompson Summers | Independent Artist (Co-sponsored by the Department of Architecture)

• April 28, 2021: Abolition Infrastructures, Alimentary Infrastructures — Deborah Cowen | Toronto (Co-sponsored by the Department of Geography)

We list here the events where we provided significant monetary or organizational support. We also co-sponsored other events on campus.

Student Group Activities

GMS sponsored three student groups this year, the Asian Cities, the Latin American Cities, the Urban Dynamics working groups. The Asian Cities group is co-led by GMS DE students Meiqing Li and Liubing Xie (both City & Regional Planning). The Latin American Cities group is co-led by GMS DE students Laura Belik (Architecture), Priscila Coli (City & Regional Planning), Giselle Mendonça Abreu (City & Regional Planning), and Francisco Trejo Morales (Anthropology). Finally, the Urban Dynamics group is led by GMS DE student Chris Chan (Anthropology). The groups organized talks and supported research initiatives remotely this academic year. More information about the groups can be found at https://metrostudies.berkeley.edu/about/student-groups
Designated Emphasis

There are currently **46 students** in the GMS Designated Emphasis, from the following departments: Anthropology; Architecture; City & Regional Planning; Civil & Environmental Engineering; Computer Science; Education; Energy and Resources Group; Geography; Landscape Architecture & Environmental Planning; Political Science; Social Welfare; and Sociology.

We are particularly pleased to have welcomed the following **new students** into the DE this year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department/Group</th>
<th>Research Interests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cristina Crespo</td>
<td>Energy &amp; Resources Group</td>
<td>Energy poverty, coping with unreliable energy services, urban resiliency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salma Elmallah</td>
<td>Civil &amp; Environmental Engineering</td>
<td>Development engineering, water infrastructure and machine learning, lead contamination, water treatment tech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bavisha Kalyan</td>
<td>City &amp; Regional Planning</td>
<td>Sustainable transportation, Asian cities, travel behavior modeling, urban spatial analytics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meiqing Li</td>
<td>City &amp; Regional Planning</td>
<td>Sustainable transportation, Asian cities, travel behavior modeling, urban spatial analytics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Lloyd</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Urban transportation infrastructures, mobility justice, racialized space, uneven development, narratives of place making, gentrification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra Pan</td>
<td>Civil &amp; Environmental Engineering</td>
<td>Transportation equity, shared mobility, spatial mismatch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Ramiller</td>
<td>City &amp; Regional Planning</td>
<td>Residential mobility, gentrification and displacement, urban property markets, housing tenure, neighborhoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juleon Robinson</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Black geographies, urban political economy, housing justice, dispossession &amp; displacement, New York City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura Schmahmann</td>
<td>City &amp; Regional Planning</td>
<td>Urban economics, geography of innovation, employment lands, property markets</td>
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During the 2020-2021 academic year, GMS offered its two core classes. **GMS 200**, the gateway class, was taught by Professors Desiree Fields (GMS/Geography) and Joan Walker (GMS/Civil Engineering) during the Spring semester to a group of 9 doctoral students from a variety of fields (City & Regional Planning, Civil Engineering, ERG, and Geography). **GMS 201**, the dissertation writing seminar, was taught by Professor Sai Balakrishnan (GMS/City & Regional Planning).
Funding Awards

GMS was pleased to award funding for research and conference travel to students enrolled in the DE.

This year, the winners of 2021 research awards were:

• Heba Al Najada (Architecture)
  150 Years of Refuge into Jordan: Land Tenure, Camps, and Hospitality (1878-Present)

• Laura Belik (Architecture)
  Temporary Structures of Hope/Permanent Spaces of Power: Socio-spatial reflections from Northeast Brazil in the early 20th Century drought periods

• Chris Chan (Anthropology)
  Politics and Poetics of Techno-Aesthetic Ecologies and the Green Urban Future in Taiwan

• Salma Elmallah (Energy and Resources Group)
  Infrastructure, planning, and spatial differentiation in California’s gas to electric residential heating transition

• Justin Greene (Anthropology)
  Excess and Noise: Evangelical Churches and Funk Parties in São Paulo

• Beki McElvain (City and Regional Planning)
  Planning in the Mud: Making and Unmaking Resilience in Mexico City

• Giselle Mendonça Abreu (City & Regional Planning)
  Soybean Cities: Hinterland Urbanization in Mato Grosso, Brazil

• Catherine Park (Education)
  Towards the Global: Aspirations and Schooling in Shenzhen

• Ángel Ross (Sociology)
  Surveilling the Suburbs: Racial Inequality and the Rise of Big Data Policing in Suburbia

GMS also typically awards grants to students to defray the cost of conference travel expenses. This year these grants were suspended owing to the virtualization of academic conferences; however, we look forward to again supporting students with these grants in the future.

Accomplishments by DE Students

During the 2020–21 academic year, students from the DE in Global Metropolitan Studies received prestigious fellowships from outside institutions and published articles in peer-reviewed journals, showcasing a diversity of exciting research interests. We congratulate them on their accomplishments!

Students and respective fellowships/awards included:

• Heba Al Najada (Architecture): Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship

• Savannah Cox (City & Regional Planning): National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant

• Jessica Lazarus (Civil & Environmental Engineering): Dwight D. Eisenhower Graduate Fellowship

• Ettore Santi (Architecture): Carter Manny Award Citation of Special Recognition
Students and respective peer-reviewed articles and books included:

- Alexandra Appelbaum (City & Regional Planning)
  

- Laura Belik (Architecture)
  

- Gustavo Capela (Anthropology)
  

- Savannah Cox (City & Regional Planning):
  


- John Elrick (Geography):
  

- Jessica Lazarus and Juan Caicedo (Civil & Environmental Engineering):
  

- Brenda Mathias (Social Welfare):
  

- Manuel Santana (City & Regional Planning) and Francisco Trejo Morales (Anthropology):
  

- Anneliese Sytsma (Landscape Architecture & Environmental Planning):
  