

## Hip-Hop Urbanism

Wednesdays, 9:00-12:00

Instructor: Sekou Cooke

Much like hip-hop architects, hip-hop urbanist must first ground themselves in the core concepts of Hip-Hop Architectural theory before proposing their own practical applications in urban contexts. When the logic of Hip-Hop Architectural thought is extended into the realm of urban design an intricate relationship between hip-hop and constructed environments becomes more immediately apparent. A respondent at one of my recent lectures put it this way: “There can be no urbanism without hip-hop and no hip-hop without urbanism.”<sup>i</sup> Or, said less simplistically, the design of contemporary urban environments and the cultural narratives latent in hip-hop culture cannot and should not be understood independent of each other. The tenets of Hip-Hop Urbanism build on Wilkins’ assertion that “the study of hip-hop culture in general and rap music in particular is essential to the new generation of urbanists.”<sup>ii</sup> Additionally, in explaining the spatial imperatives embedded within rap music and hip-hop culture, Murray Forman explains that “urban spaces and places have figured prominently in various studies of African-American culture.”<sup>iii</sup> To make this case he cites John Jefferies who declares, “The city is where black cultural styles are born,” and Tricia Rose who states, “Hip Hop gives voice to the tensions and contradictions in the public urban landscape.”<sup>iv</sup> For example, when considering that residential playgrounds and school yards are as fenced in as prison yards, or that bars on residential balconies and classroom windows recall the bars on prison cells, the expressive nature of hip-hop form can be better understood and predicted.

This course will explore the many histories and trajectories of Hip-Hop Urbanism including lectures, readings, and small design assignments that test its core precepts.

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<sup>i</sup> Anonymous comment, “Hip-Hop Architecture: Urbanism + Performance,” lecture, July 27, 2017.

<sup>ii</sup> Craig L. Wilkins, *The Aesthetics of Equity: Notes on Race, Space, Architecture and Music*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007): 174.

<sup>iii</sup> Murray Forman, *The ‘Hood Comes First*: 7.

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.