



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet  
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

# SLUkurs

## Syllabus

**PNSo183 Justice Theory Lab, 7.5 credits**

## Syllabus approved

2019-06-11

## Subjects

Landscape Architecture/Other Social Science/Rural Development/Landscape Planning/Environmental Assessment/Environmental Communication

## Education cycle

Third cycle

## Grading scale

Pass / Failed

The requirements for attaining different grades are described in the course assessment criteria which are contained in a supplement to the course syllabus. Current information on assessment criteria shall be made available at the start of the course.

## Language

English

## Prior knowledge

The course is open to all phd students from planning and design disciplines, social sciences, arts and humanities.

## Objective, including learning outcomes

The concept of social justice has become very fashionable in urban policy documents as well as in urban development projects in the national and global context (or

at national and global level). However, how it is conceptualized, operationalized and sustained is often obscure, meanwhile there is growing empirical evidence pointing at an increase in negative urban social phenomena (increasing segregation, exclusion, and inequalities). From socio-spatial theories and empirical studies, we know that social and spatial phenomena are co-constitutive; and planners and designers as decision makers have roles in formations of those phenomena and of the asymmetrical power structures (those resulting in segregation, exclusion, and inequality, as well as in those offering solutions to these problems) in space. The difficult questions about how we (policy makers, academics, practitioners, citizens) understand justice; how we build chains of reasoning and make decision; and how we interpret our own subjectivity in our roles in planning and design processes are seldom asked. Mindful of these gaps, this course will explore these fundamental questions tracing back to the theoretical histories of the concept of justice in different fields (political philosophy, law, sociology, cultural studies, psychology, literary theory, semiotics, urban studies, geography, planning and design) and it will examine them using the materials and knowledges related to a real project.

Upon completion of the course, the students shall be able to:

- critically discuss how the concept of social justice is constructed in different theoretical paradigms in different fields and the theoretical sources of the concept that we use in planning and design;
- understand the pitfalls and potentials of theoretical constructions in capturing and reflecting on social inequalities both in theory and planning/design praxis;
- strategically and dynamically instrumentalise the concept synthesizing theoretical constellations that enable to capture and reflect on.

## **Content**

The course content is built around three components:

### 1. Exploration of theories of justice

This stage involves intensive readings about theories of justice in different fields (political philosophy, law, sociology, cultural studies, psychology, literary theory, semiotics, urban studies, geography, planning and design) and contemporary critiques.

In this reading phase, the concept will be elaborated at its deeper level as much as possible. Inferences will be made through analyzing the limitations and potentials in the conceptualizations in different disciplines and theoretical paradigms. The question of how the concept might become oppressive (obscuring or bypassing) or

emancipatory (enabling to capture) will be addressed. Philosophical propositions or statements about social justice will be produced through debates and discussions and visualized through mappings and analytical frameworks. Consequently, its translation into and interpretation in planning and design will be problematized through an analytical argument based on this deep exploration of the concept.

The stage will be in form of seminar-debate-visualisation studio. The readings will be explored and discussed during seminars, higher level inferences and problematique will be formulated through debates, and visual mappings and texts will be prepared to make complex reasonings visible.

## 2. Analyzing situations

Students will shape groups (3, max 4 for each group) and work on case study, Uppsala, to analyze situations. The case study research should take an urban development policy, analysis and plan and projects. However, to establish a basis for analysis, the urban reality should be captured through a review of basic layers of analysis; scientific publications about socio-spatial phenomena about the place or other places that show similar patterns, and also about consequences of similar development projects in similar contexts; opinions, critiques and arguments raised in academia, public debates and media; and visits to the place; and conversations with scientists working on the place/or other places that show similar patterns, politicians, practitioners, dwellers, proactive groups and activists.

We take Uppsala as case study for studio group works in 3rd and 4th weeks and as the excursion place. The purpose of the excursion is to combine theory with real world through a case study. Students will have opportunity to experience the physical and social developments in the built environment themselves. It will provide students with first hand contact with actors (planners, politicians, activists, community spoke persons etc.) at the different poles of the debates and to enable them to observe situatedness of the arguments.

Particular planning and design situations will be framed through elaborate argumentations on philosophy of justice deriving from the first component of the course. Imaginary conceptual frameworks and chains of reasoning will also be constructed and tested. Which conceptualisations, or chains of reasoning in planning and design decisions produced which specific inequalities, or equalities, or which oppressive or emancipatory societal consequences will be specified analytically.

## 3. Sense of 'self', 'others' and 'society'

This component will give the group a space for reflecting on their own subjectivity (socio-cultural backgrounds, ideologies, influential life experiences ...), their imaginaries for society, and the agency they see in themselves as researchers/practitioners in those imaginaries. The group will discuss what an ethical subjectivity is and how we can construct an ethical subjectivity in search of social justice.

The course will be held with seminars, studio works and workshops, and excursions.

### **Requirements for examination**

For successful completion of the course the student must attend to meetings, excursion and group works on 2nd, 3rd and 4th weeks, complete assignments (1st week: reflections on readings; 2nd , 3rd and 4th weeks: reflections on seminars, theory mappings, reflections on excursion, and theory-praxis mappings and theoretical projections) and write a final essay of approximately 4 500 words that synthesize assignments during the 5th week.

### **Additional information**

The course is given as part of the post graduate research school ‘Society and Landscape’ at the Department of Urban and Rural Development, in collaboration with the LTV faculty.

Participating teachers:

Burcu Yigit Turan

Johan Pries

Adele Lebano

Erik Jönsson

Time table:

- 1st week – reading assignments (self-study) 40 hours
- 2nd week – seminars and studio work (theory mapping) (group work) 40 hours
- 3rd week – case study: excursion and studio work (data analysis) 40 hours
- 4th week – case study: presentations of theoretical projections and discussions (theory-praxis mapping) 40 hours
- 5th week – writing the final essay (self-study) 40 hours

### **Responsible department**

Department of Urban and Rural Development