

**Urban Studies: Social Inequality and the Prospects for Equity and Sustainability in
Southeastern Michigan:
An Interdisciplinary Faculty Hiring Initiative**

(Full proposal approved by President & Provost, May 2011)

Rationale

The Department of Afroamerican & African Studies (DAAS), the Department of Sociology, the Urban and Regional Planning Program in Taubman College, and the School of Social Work, in conjunction with the Residential College (RC), propose a cluster in urban studies with particular attention to social inequality and the prospects for equity and sustainability. The cluster, representing a combination of disciplines in the liberal arts and professional schools, will nurture an interdisciplinary research team working on issues relevant to the urban condition broadly defined – such as community infrastructure, sustainable development, and the built environment– but with a particular focus on questions of inequality, including unequal access to goods and services ranging from education and health care to transportation and employment, to intangible forms of social capital, and to the relationships between the urban core and the suburban ring.

While the specific research topics may vary widely, we propose that this cluster focus its primary attention on Detroit and the southeast Michigan region, both urban and metropolitan. We believe that a *regional* emphasis on the conditions and problems confronting populations in southeast Michigan will provide much of the glue for this cross-disciplinary and cross-school cluster. Detroit and the penumbra of communities surrounding it have long been at the forefront of urban developments – as the paragon of heavy industrial concentration, as the seat of racial conflict and white flight, and now, as a pioneer in the landscape of post-industrialism.

Yet the region also has broader relevance. It is an extreme case of a global condition that confronts – and will challenge – many regions around the world whose economies have relied primarily on heavy industry as they grew and now face decline. How to negotiate a post-industrial terrain and the new conditions of urban life in the 21st Century is an intellectual and scholarly challenge for which the Detroit area is perhaps a harbinger. The industrial era created extreme inequality between labor and owners, factory workers and service workers, African Americans and whites; mass production and consumption left a degraded and polluted environment. These conditions persist and constrain, indeed determine, the ways that the region can adapt to its changed economic circumstances. In bringing together researchers and scholars to address problems endemic to this urban environment, we can imagine the generation of both knowledge of and proposals for the region that are fully exportable to other urban locations, nationally and internationally.

Indeed we envision the creation of a “Detroit School” of urban studies. For if this region is, in many ways, paradigmatic of new conditions of urban life, it also poses questions that older schools of urban studies no longer adequately address. The major breakthroughs in urban studies have tended to occur when groups of scholars work together in loose association but with a focus on the cumulative

understanding of a particular geography. The “Chicago School,” arising from the work of scholars from the 1920s through the 1940s, produced research that became classics in urban studies as well as in urban geography, urban sociology, urban anthropology, social work, and urban planning. The scholars associated with this school did much of their primary research in Chicago, focusing on urban communities¹ and cultural formations² that they could study first-hand, assessing conditions door-to-door and exploring neighborhoods to assemble empirical findings that underwrote powerful theoretical generalizations that shaped urban scholarship for several generations. Every urban planning and urban geography student, for instance, still reads Burgess’s work on the development of concentric zones of differentiated social areas of a city and Hoyt’s sector theory of urban spatial structure about how variations in land use that develop near the center of a city persist as the city grows.³ A number of the Chicago School scholars built on the settlement house model of urban surveys, and collaborated with Jane Addams’ Hull House in their research.⁴

By the 1980s a new group of urban scholars emerged, centered in Los Angeles and concerned with megacities, postmodern geographies of suburban regional development, the trans-national pull of the Pacific economy, and the processes by which regions sustained economic viability by transforming themselves into “global cities.”⁵ As in the case of the Chicago School, this group of scholars has learned from a particular city and region, investigating concrete conditions, theorizing their findings, and staking a claim for a particular “Los Angeles School” of urban studies.⁶ Yet the distance between the experience of Detroit and the West Coast is huge, and the generalizations coming out of the Los Angeles School, concerned with the burgeoning growth of suburbs and the pull of the Pacific rim, sound decidedly inapplicable to historically industrial cities such as Detroit. Just as L.A. School scholars found the urban theory of the Chicago School an increasingly uncomfortable fit, so too do efforts to understand the experience of cities like

¹ Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess, and R. McKenzie, *The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1925).

² William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki. *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (Boston: Gorham Press, 1918-1920); St.Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *The Black Metropolis* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1945)

³ Ernest W. Burgess, “The Growth of the City,” in R. E. Park, E. W. Burgess, and R. McKenzie, *The City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925); Homer Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933).

⁴ Martin Bulmer. *The Chicago School of Sociology: Institutionalization, Diversity, and the Rise of Sociological Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

⁵ Edward Soja. *Postmodern Geographies* (New York: Verso, 1989), *Postmetropolis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Allen J. Scott and Edward Soja, eds., *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the end of the 20th Century* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1996); Mike Davis. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in L.A.* (New York: Verso, 1990); Jennifer Wolch, Manuel Pastor, and Peter Dreier, eds., *Up Against the Sprawl: Public Policy and the Making of Southern California* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004) and Michael Storper, *The Regional World: Territorial Development in a Global Economy* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997).

⁶ Michael J. Dear (ed). *From Chicago to L.A.: Making sense of Urban Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002).

Detroit feel unaligned with the theory emerging from research related to southern California.

The problems of post-industrial regions require new scholarship. An accumulation of challenges face the southeast Michigan region in the early 21st century - in the loss of employment and population, the vacating of residential spaces, the closing of urban businesses and amenities, the widening of income inequality, the collapse of infrastructure and public schools, the attenuation of public transit, environmental degradation, and racial segregation and antagonism. None of this is news, although these troubles have a history that needs continual excavation. But their implications and effects on the ground are numerous and untoward: how to make urban spaces liveable without the promise of growth; how to govern without developmental coalitions in the traditional sense; how to cope with abandonment and empty space; how to sustain infrastructure and service logistics or maintain public education on a shrinking tax base; how to tackle the racial, class, and cultural chasms that separate regional populations in a context of sustained contraction, how, in grappling with the challenges, communities can nurture alternative imaginings of an urban future. Such questions confront scholarship with a different set of challenges for theorizing the city and for engaging in efforts to address its problems.

The Appropriateness of this Initiative to UM Interests and Strengths

University of Michigan scholars are in an ideal place to generate a cumulative body of research that might come to constitute a “Detroit School” in urban studies, addressing the condition of the post-manufacturing region. A research agenda focused on Detroit and southeast Michigan that aims to advance the field of urban studies, to open perspectives on a global condition and alternative strategies for a sustainable urban existence must rely on ready access to the city itself, because many research questions require data that are only available through personal relationships, interviews, and field observations in neighborhoods, or access to archives in Detroit and Ann Arbor. Many current faculty have developed – and those recruited in this cluster hire will be expected to cultivate – close reciprocal collaborations with organizations and agencies in the region – extending the best practices of mutual benefit that have increasingly guided University work in the region. Moreover, the ability to interact with other scholars in the region – at the UM’s campuses in Dearborn and Flint as well as at Eastern Michigan University and Wayne State University – and the ability to put students, both graduate and undergraduate, on the ground as researchers are also potentially distinctive features of this proposed cluster.

Furthermore, this proposal for an interdisciplinary cluster hire aims to congeal scattered, often unconnected projects into a sustained conversation that combines empirical research, theory building, professional training, and undergraduate teaching while also contributing to solutions to the region’s challenges. As a public institution, the University of Michigan has long provided scholarship and expertise to various constituencies and agencies in the state of Michigan in an effort to address problems and concerns pertaining to urban conditions and social inequality. From the creation of the Detroit Center and the founding of the Center for Educational Outreach, to the work of groups such as the Center for Local, State and Urban Policy based in the Ford School, Public Health’s Urban Research Center,

Social Work's Technical Assistance Center, Taubman College's Detroit Community Partnership Center, and the RC-Ginsberg Center's Semester in Detroit, the UM has become more involved in efforts that partner campus and community, bridging academic scholarship, community collaborations, and educational opportunities for students. The cluster will also foster new synergies among scholars already on campus who work on urban issues, but not necessarily on southeast Michigan.

Impact on Undergraduate and Graduate Education

The cluster hire will add to opportunities for graduate students to undertake dissertation research on the condition of the post-industrial city with particular emphasis on the causes and consequences of inequality and on ways to achieve greater social equity and sustainability. Some UM departments are now destinations for students who want to do research in these areas, and the cluster hire will add to the breadth and depth of teaching and advising in this area. For professional students in urban planning and social work, many of whom wish to work on the issues facing cities with high rates of poverty and inequality, University of Michigan has become a draw because of its strong connections to Detroit. The cluster hire will add to the teaching strength in this area with courses that involve community-based projects in the city. It will also offer unique opportunities for graduate students in social work and sociology who engage in fieldwork and community-based data collection.

Although this is first and foremost a research cluster, it has implications for cultivating approaches to undergraduate education that are also important. The partner units expect that those hired would commit to service learning and community-based pedagogy in some of their teaching. This could take the form of innovative departmental courses, work with Sociology's Project Community or other initiatives supported by the Ginsberg Center, teaching in the Semester in Detroit program, sponsoring UROP projects that involve students in community-based research settings, or associating with the various RC (and other) language-based community engagement projects. Both professional schools involved in this initiative are connected with academic minors for undergraduates (*Urban Studies* and *Community Action and Social Change*), and DAAS expects to make a senior appointment joint with the Residential College, adding strength to existing collaborations among these units, especially in the Urban Studies minor, Semester in Detroit, and other RC initiatives in civic engagement.

Potential Impact of this Cluster

The potential impact of this initiative would be several. In *the academic world* we expect the development of a body of innovative and cutting-edge research and scholarship that advances theory and empirical investigation on the post-industrial city. The research would also strengthen approaches to policy for addressing the challenges facing such cities. The *state of Michigan* faces an urban crisis where nearly all of its older, formerly manufacturing cities now confront the same issues as Detroit. Therefore, a greater focus on old manufacturing centers and the challenges of race, class, and income inequality associated with them will contribute to

understanding and addressing Michigan's problems and moving toward a more sustainable future for the state's urban areas.

For the *University of Michigan*, this cluster hire would reinforce and strengthen the institution's capacity to address the challenges of the region; develop a more coherent and integrated intellectual rationale for the University's engagement with surrounding communities in the region; advance the University's stated commitment to the people of the state and the region who support it; and provide educational programs for students – many from the state of Michigan – that may deepen their commitment to their own communities and to necessary agendas of social change. By combining a broad theoretical problematic with a regional focus of research and a commitment to innovative teaching, this cluster fosters the production of new knowledge, the well-being of the state, and the education of our students.

Group Mentoring Plan and Statement on Institutional Collaboration

In order to facilitate collaboration between and among the units in this proposed cluster, each unit will appoint a representative to serve on an urban studies cluster coordinating committee. First, this committee will consult on the search and hiring process within each unit. Although each unit must conduct its search in accordance with its individual needs and regulations, members of the coordinating committee will be invited to comment on the selection process, meet with candidates, attend talks and offer feedback and assessments with the needs of the cluster in mind. This level of involvement in each of the searches will also be useful for spotting potential for dry appointments, especially for junior faculty, across the cluster units.

To facilitate these collaborations and to insure due diligence in each hiring process, we propose to do two searches in 2011-12 and two in 2012-13. The new faculty hired in the first round will participate in the second round of searches. All candidates for each of the positions, moreover, will be directed to a cluster website where a version of this cluster rationale will be posted; they will be required to view and discuss their own candidacy in light of the needs and potential of working with other scholars in this context. This mechanism, we expect, will give us some idea about how the people and the positions will interact at the close of the hiring process and the full institutionalization of the cluster.

Second, the urban studies cluster coordinating committee will meet, individually or collectively, with the Chairs/Directors of the units in which the hires are made to discuss a coordinated mentoring plan for the cluster faculty. At that point, the coordinating committee will be reconstituted as a mentoring committee. These senior faculty, again one from each unit along with tenured cluster hires, will be expected to continue to play an oversight role for the cluster and to coordinate

mentoring activities. Oversight in this instance may include discussions about course development and team-teaching; about individual and joint (within the cluster) publication venues; attending conferences outside of the UM and initiating internal conferences and symposium on topics relevant to the cluster as a whole.

At the same time, each of the partner units will also pursue internal mentoring within their units. For junior faculty this may include assigning a second mentor, meeting annually with the Chair or Director to review teaching, research and service, as well as participating in unit-specific mentoring activities and manuscript workshops (see each unit's discussion of departmental mentoring). We also strongly urge the Chairs and Directors of the cluster units to meet once a year to discuss issues related to the cluster, including mentoring strategies, assessment of progress in research and publishing, and general progress toward tenure.

Wherever possible and appropriate we intend to pursue a strategy of dry appointments, not only to increase the internal cohesion within the cluster but also to allow for a formal avenue of cluster participation in the tenure and promotion process. Dry appointments should give a second unit or the cluster organizing/mentoring committee a chance to contextualize a cluster faculty's research, teaching and service, and to speak to his or her record from this vantage point.

This multi-layered strategy is designed to encourage mentoring at the level of the unit and across the cluster. It locates mentoring both within established disciplines and individual institutional cultures while simultaneously fostering cross-disciplinary experimentation and feedback.

Outside of these formal mentoring structures, the urban studies coordinating/mentoring committee will seek to establish less formal interactions, including special seminars and symposia involving other urban studies faculty and faculty in related fields; CRLT workshops on interdisciplinary and team teaching; team taught courses as appropriate; and a Michigan Meeting about the framing of a Detroit School of urban studies. Finally, we expect that collaboration and cohesion will be created within the cluster – and with other faculty working in related areas – by involvement in UM programs such as Semester in Detroit, in which each of the new hires will teach.

Position Descriptions

Note: The exact nature of these position descriptions is subject to change as the positions are officially posted. The searches for the positions in Urban and Regional Planning, Social Work and DAAS-RC are scheduled to begin in the 2011-12 academic year. The search for the position in Sociology is slated for the 2012-13 academic year.

School of Social Work

The School of Social Work will seek to hire a junior scholar, with expertise in community based social work practice in urban settings. We would like an interdisciplinary scholar who will engage in research and scholarship that can address the challenges and opportunities facing urban communities in the 21st century. Our priority is for a faculty member who has an interest in and experience with community based research, teaching, and practice. We have particular interest in a candidate with a focus on issues related to inequality, including unequal access to education, health care, transportation, and employment, and approaches to addressing inequality. Candidates should also have experience with and interest in the Detroit area or a similar urban environment and a strong interest in interdisciplinary work. Applicants should have an established research agenda and a record of publication, preferably in peer-reviewed journals.

The new hire will join an active group of senior faculty engaged in community based teaching, scholarship, and research in Southeast Michigan; she or he will help to address an impending, retirement-driven cohort turnover in the school. Dean Lein has made a major investment in strengthening community organization as an area of excellence in the SSW, in response to a strategic plan from faculty members with commitment to this work. The prospective cluster hire faculty member would thus complement the faculty and dean's priorities and will have a structure for advancing his or her own work in relation to the region. The School of Social Work educates MSW level practitioners through the MSW degree. Our MSW program, ranked 1st among public institutions in the United States, also partners with a number of other professional master's degree programs, including Urban Planning. Our Joint Interdisciplinary PhD program in Social Work and Social Science is the most selective PhD program in our field and has an established track record for educating significant scholars and educators. One of our partners in this program is the Sociology Department. The school has recently begun to offer an undergraduate minor in Community Action and Social Change, which in its first two years has attracted almost 80 students from across campus. The new faculty member would contribute to our education and scholarly missions on all three levels.

Click here for more information on the School of Social Work:
<http://www.ssw.umich.edu/>

Urban and Regional Planning Program

Urban and Regional Planning will seek a junior faculty member with expertise in areas that will likely distinguish a "Detroit School" of urban studies while addressing

“place,” the theme central to urban planning. These areas of research may include, for instance, the political economy of race and income inequality across metropolitan areas; the uneven adjustments across geography to losses of manufacturing employment and gains in new kinds of jobs; the socio-political challenges of adjustment to disinvestment in places; the barriers to municipalities in providing services and infrastructure under state and regional revenue systems developed during prosperity and growth; the legacy of race and class divisions that create difficulties in finding solutions to urban problems today; the political economy of addressing contamination of soil, water, and air in ways that lead to greater equity; explanations for the persistence of sprawling development at the fringe of metropolitan areas even in the absence of growth as central areas experience abandonment.

The interdisciplinary scholar should have background in urban planning and strong interest in the professional field’s concern about how planning and policy changes can lead to solving problems related to inequality in places. The scholar may hold a Ph.D. in a range of other fields including, for instance, geography, American studies, African-American studies, environmental studies, or urban design or a law degree. Prior scholarship related to urban challenges in former manufacturing regions is desirable. Experience or interest in conducting research that learns from a particular city or region and contributes findings to the solution of urban and regional challenges is required.

The examples of areas of research above would connect the new faculty member to existing departmental strengths and strategic directions. The department has articulated social equity and urban sustainability as themes now integrated throughout the curriculum and into student and faculty recruitment. The new faculty member would contribute to these central themes. Further, the department’s 15-year-old Detroit Community Partnership Center connects faculty and student teams to community partners in Detroit to address urban planning issues that partners identify. Much research in the department has contributed to and grown out of these partnerships. The new faculty member would readily become integrated into these faculty and student efforts with support from faculty immersed in related literatures and interested in reading each other’s research and collaborating on large research projects. A cluster of Ph.D. students has joined these faculty in working on issues of housing populations in poverty, planning in the context of abandonment and decline, the role of race in urban development and planning, environmental injustice in old industrial cities, and transportation access in settings of high poverty and inadequate public transportation. A new faculty member would also be attractive as a dissertation committee member for these Ph.D. students. Many master’s students now choose to come to the department because of the opportunities to work on projects in Detroit and would form an energetic, interested constituency for a new faculty member in this field.

Although the new faculty member would enter an environment of strong urban and Detroit-related research, he or she could bring important perspectives on theory

and empirical approaches from another discipline or disciplines. The new faculty member's presence could also provide opportunities for more connections with the urban research elsewhere on campus, which will stimulate new ideas in urban planning research. Although some urban planning programs across the nation hire urban studies scholars, the small Urban and Regional Planning program at Michigan has not been able to do so because of needs in teaching professional master's students. This cross-fertilization of ideas is essential to enabling urban research at the University of Michigan to coalesce into a Detroit School.

The new faculty member will teach an undergraduate course in urban studies each year, a course in the Semester in Detroit every third year, and two or three graduate courses in urban planning with a full load of four courses per year. Interest in urban planning has grown significantly among University of Michigan undergraduates. The addition of another undergraduate course to the few already offered would help to meet that demand in association with the Urban Studies undergraduate minor coordinated through the Residential College. Semester in Detroit serves as an important program for immersing undergraduates in issues related to urban studies and planning, and the department sees the reinforcement of that program as very important. The specific graduate courses in urban planning will depend on the faculty member's area of expertise; these could address the structure of the metropolis, planning for places without growth, or topics related to housing, economic development, transportation, the built environment, or land use.

Click here for more information on the Urban & Regional Planning Program:
<http://www.tcaup.umich.edu/>

The Department of Afroamerican & African Studies/The Residential College
(Note: The Center for Afroamerican & African Studies (CAAS) officially becomes the Department of Afroamerican & African Studies (DAAS) on September 1, 2011.)

DAAS seeks to hire a senior scholar, joint with the Residential College, with expertise in racial and ethnic stratification and urban/metropolitan studies. More specifically we seek an interdisciplinary scholar whose work speaks to questions of mass incarceration and how urban spaces are compromised by police and punishment practices. We seek a colleague whose research and teaching focuses on how the patterns and structures of inequality in declining urban environments bears upon patterns of crime and law enforcement and how popular responses – drug laws, no-tolerance enforcement, sentencing guidelines – create patterns of incarceration that are, like poverty, spatially concentrated and are destructive of community and family cohesion in especially vulnerable urban neighborhoods. We are, accordingly, interested in a scholar who will engage the theories and practical applications of restorative justice and prisoner re-entry programs in urban communities affected by mass incarceration (40% of Michigan prisoners, upon release, return to eight especially marginalized zip code areas in Detroit). Such a

scholar, with an additional specialization in African-American Studies, would add strength both to the cluster in general and to DAAS and the RC in particular.

In terms of the cluster, linking research on urban inequality to a critical engagement with the workings of law enforcement and the structured inequalities of criminal justice, on the one hand, and with the individual and community effects of mass incarceration – the separation, loss of family cohesion, strains of re-entry, limited employment prospects, and loss of personal dignity – on the other, will contribute a key element to the understanding of how urban inequality is structured and reproduced. In a post-industrial urban environment marked by job losses and human evacuation, how inequality produces mass incarceration and mass incarceration, in turn, produces inequality is critical to understanding the history of the urban crisis and to devising new theoretical and practical solutions to 21st Century problems of urban existence.

For more information on DAAS click here: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/caas>

For more information on the Residential College, click here:

<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/rc/>

Department of Sociology (Searching 2012-12)

The Department of Sociology seeks to hire a junior scholar with expertise in racial stratification and inequality, with a particular emphasis on urban health and/or employment issues, or the social conditions and circumstances that affect outcomes pertaining to one or both. The department has great teaching and research strengths in social stratification, health, and the effects of under and unemployment on health. This is evident by the fact that a small number of departmental colleagues do conduct research and teach in the area of social inequality. Although their work involves discussion of the implications of race, by their own admission little of it includes theoretically saturated analysis of the role of race and/or racism in the social outcomes that they study. At present, therefore, race is an underdeveloped point of emphasis in such inquiry. Aside from the chair of the department, no member of the faculty explores how racial theory and race relations pertain to such inequalities in the urban sphere. Furthermore, the chair is the only faculty member in the department whose teaching expertise is in *racial* inequalities in that sphere (and his administrative service prevents him from providing substantial teaching on that topic). Hence, a hire for sociology in the proposed cluster would enrich the department's contribution to race and urban sociology by extending the well-developed and robust area of inequality into the under-emphasized area of racial inequality.

Applicants should demonstrate promise in establishing a strong research agenda and publication record in racial inequalities as they concern health and/or employment. The hire would contribute to the interdisciplinary effort to advance an emerging Detroit School of urban studies through research and teaching on the significance of race in 1) the structure and functioning of social institutions (families,

schools, etc.) relevant to health and employment in southeastern Michigan, and 2) the varied patterns of social experiences that affect access to social resources and institutions necessary for attaining good health and/or employment. The Detroit region is a particularly rich setting for this type of research because of its long history of racial inequality and extreme residential segregation. The separation by race in residence continues to assure inequality in access to quality schooling and employment. It guarantees unequal access to health services and unequal exposure to environmental conditions that harm health.

The department's capacity to make such a hire would strengthen a critical area of interest for our students (graduate and undergraduate) while simultaneously contributing to the University of Michigan's mandate for investing in research efforts that focus on the immediate geographic region. The faculty member would teach courses on theories and systems of race relations, and racial inequities in employment and/or health status (which at present are taught only sporadically by tenured and tenure-track faculty in the department). This hire would contribute to the Joint Ph.D. program in Sociology and Social Work through service on dissertation committees that are relevant to this area of research. Finally, this faculty member would contribute to the Semester in Detroit program either by teaching a course in it every two years or so (and which would include the very content previously stated) or by collaborating with Project Community such that this endeavor, which is formally housed in Sociology, would gain a stronger faculty presence.

Click here for more information on Sociology: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/soc/>