

Improvised Cities in the Modern World: Between Design and Urban Informality

HIST-233/URBS-233

Spring 2016

Helen Gyger

Wednesdays, 2:00-5:00pm

Office hours: Wednesdays, 12:00-1:30pm

hgyger@design.upenn.edu

Course Description:

This seminar examines the formation of the improvised or “informal” city in historical context, considering this as a global phenomenon, whether framed as slum, shantytown, *bidonville*, *favela*, *katchi abadi*, human settlement, etc. It traces the shifts in design professionals’ conceptions of and responses to the improvised city, ranging from the confident assertions of order expressed by early reform housing and urban renewal projects, to experiments with self-help and design for progressive development, and more recent targeted interventions aimed at achieving incremental improvements or upgrading. While contemporary design projects are generally more modest in scale and more cautious in outlook than the bold gestures of earlier decades, they do not always escape the trap of oversimplified assumptions concerning the logistics, politics, and economics of planned interventions into the urban fabric of informal settlements. Accordingly, these design approaches are contrasted with initiatives that focus on community organization, mapping/enumerating, and land tenure. Finally, the course considers how designers can contribute to devising meaningful solutions for and with residents of these complex and ever-evolving urban environments.

The course introduces students to the varied material and spatial forms of improvised built environments, as well as the social and economic conditions underlying their formation and growth. The readings range from primary texts by designers and activists, to evaluation reports by development professionals and theorists, and historical accounts by scholars of architecture and the built environment. The course encourages students to critically analyze these textual and visual accounts of the improvised city, and to carefully assess the various proposals for planned interventions and projects.

Grade Distribution and Assignments:

Participation (25%)

Response Papers (25%)

Presentation of “Further Reading” Text (15%)

Final Project: Position Paper OR Research Paper (35%)

Participation:

As a seminar, this course will consist primarily of class discussion about the assigned readings. A seminar is a collective endeavour that is dependent on informed participation by all members of the group. Therefore, students must come to class having read and thought about the assigned texts both carefully and critically, prepared to pose questions and to respond to the contributions of other students. Attendance at every class session is mandatory, and any absences will be factored into the participation grade.

Response Papers:

Each student will write five succinct (2-3 page) papers in response to the required readings. Response papers should be submitted on Canvas by 12pm on Wednesday, in advance of the class meeting. Students may choose the weeks for which they write their papers, with the following stipulations: three of the five papers must be handed in before the spring break, and students should not write a response paper for the week of their in-class presentation. The response paper should summarize the main arguments of the readings and also engage with them critically. This could be done in one or more of the following ways:

1. Discuss the author's methodology: what sources are used, how are they used, and how successfully? Ultimately, how convincing is the author's argument?
2. Bring the texts into dialogue with each other. What common questions are they answering? Which arguments do you find most compelling and why?

Presentation of "Further Reading" Text:

Each student will give a short (10-minute max.) presentation on one (or more) of the "Further Reading" texts to complement that particular week's readings. The aim of the presentation is to provide a critical analysis of the text while putting it in conversation with the other readings for the week. To guide your analysis, consider questions such as: How does this reading alter our understanding of the week's topic? What new light does it shed—what new evidence or new perspectives does it bring to the discussion?

Final Project—Option 1: Position Paper:

Students selecting this option will submit a 10-15-page paper that thoroughly explores the themes from one week's readings (engaging both the required and "further" texts) and takes a clear analytical position. In contrast to a response paper, the aim is to explore the issues that you find most significant in greater depth, while narrowing the topic sufficiently to address it in a coherent essay that clearly articulates your position on the issues raised. The final paper is due on April 27.

Final Project—Option 2: Research Paper:

Students selecting this option will submit a 10-15-page research paper on a topic of their own choice that relates to one of the course's many themes. You are encouraged to think creatively in selecting your topic. You must meet with me no later than March 16 to discuss your proposed topic and to begin to develop a bibliography. Once your topic has been approved, you must submit a brief outline of the paper (1-2 pages) along with a bibliography no later than March 30. The final paper is due on April 27.

Paper policies:

All written work should be double-spaced, numbered, proofread, spell-checked, stapled and handed in on time. Papers handed in up to one day late will be graded down by one-third (eg. A- to B+); papers handed in up to a week late will be graded down one full grade; papers more than one week late will not be accepted. Computer meltdowns are not a valid excuse for late papers, so make sure to back up and save copies of all your work. All papers should articulate your own understanding and interpretation of the issues discussed, and should state a clear thesis that is supported with properly cited evidence from your sources.

PLEASE NOTE: Students in this course are expected to abide by the University of Pennsylvania's Code of Academic Integrity. You may find the code at: http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai_codeofacademicintegrity.html

Course Outline:

1. January 20—Introduction

2. January 27—What Makes a “Slum”?

Required reading:

UN Millennium Project, Task Force on Improving the Lives of Slum Dwellers, “Millennium Development Goals,” in *A Home in the City* (London; Sterling, VA: Earthscan Publications, 2005), pp. xx-xxi.

United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT), ch. 1 (“Urban Trends”), in *State of the World's Cities 2010/2011: Bridging the Urban Divide—Overview and Key Findings* (Nairobi: UN-HABITAT, 2010), pp. 4-10.

United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT), ch. 4 (“Social Dimensions”) and ch. 5 (“Territoriality and Spatial Forms”), in *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements, 2003* (London; Sterling, VA: Earthscan Publications, 2003), pp. 62-78, 79-95.

Alan Gilbert, “The Return of the Slum: Does Language Matter?” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 31, no. 4 (December 2007): 697–713.

3. February 3—Slum as Outrage

Required reading:

Jacob A. Riis, Introduction, ch. 1 (“Genesis of the Tenement”), ch. 2 (“The Awakening”), ch. 3 (“The Mixed Crowd”), ch. 4 (“The Down Town Back-Alleys”), ch. 6 (“The Bend”), in *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, ©1890; 1914 ed.), pp. 1-47, 55-70.

Robin Evans, “Rookeries and Model Dwellings: English Housing Reform and the Moralities of Private Space,” in *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), pp. 93-117.

Sophie Spalding, “The Myth of the Classic Slum: Contradictory Perceptions of Boyle Heights Flats, 1900–1991,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 45, no. 2 (February 1992): 107-119.

Further reading:

David Leviatin, “Framing the Poor—The Irresistibility of How the Other Half Lives,” in *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* (Boston; New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011), pp. 1-50.

Alan Mayne, ch. 7 (“Threshold”) and ch. 8 (“Slumland”), in *The Imagined Slum: Newspaper Representation in Three Cities, 1870-1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993), pp. 150-165, 166-187.

4. February 10—Slum Clearance

Required reading:

Charles Abrams, ch. 2 (“The Slum”), in *The City is the Frontier* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 19-39.

Jeanne R. Lowe, ch. 5 (“What about the People? Relocation from Southwest Washington”), in *Cities in a Race with Time: Progress and Poverty in America's Renewing Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), pp. 203-231.

Hilary Ballon, “Robert Moses and Urban Renewal: The Title I Program,” in *Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation of New York*, ed. Ballon and Jackson (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2007), pp. 94-115.

Further reading:

John Bauman, ch. 5 (“Race, Redevelopment, and Rehousing”), in *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920–1974* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), pp.79-117.

Eric Mumford, “The ‘Tower in a Park’ in America: Theory and Practice, 1920–1960,” *Planning Perspectives* 10, no.1 (1995): 17-41.

5. February 17—Rethinking Urban Order: Habitat for the “Greater Number”

Required reading:

Zeynep Çelik, “Learning from the *Bidonville*: CIAM Looks at Algiers,” *Harvard Design Magazine*, no. 18 (Spring-Summer 2003): 69-74.

Monique Eleb, “An Alternative to Functionalist Universalism: Écochard, Candilis, and ATBAT-Afrique,” in *Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture*, ed. Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 55-73.

Robert Oxman, Hadas Shadar, and Ehud Belferman, “Casbah: A Brief History of a Design Concept,” *Architecture Research Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (December 2002): 321-36.

Further reading:

Catherine Blain, “The CIAM Grid, 1948,” in *Team 10, 1953–1981: In Search of a Utopia of the Present*, ed. Max Risselada and Dirk van den Heuvel (Rotterdam: NAI, 2005), pp. 18-19.

Panayiota I. Pyla, “Planetary Home and Garden: Ekistics and Environmental-Developmental Politics,” *Grey Room* 36 (Summer 2009): 6-35.

6. February 24—The Self-Help Paradigm

Required reading:

Jacob L. Crane, “Huts and Houses in the Tropics.” *Unasylva* 3, no. 3 (May-June 1949): 100-105.

John F. C. Turner, “Lima Barriadas Today”/“Barriada Integration and Development”/“Minimal Government-Aided Settlements,” *Architectural Design* 33, no. 8 (August 1963): 375–380.

John F. C. Turner, “A New View of the Housing Deficit,” *Architects' Yearbook* 13 (1971): 115-124.

Lisa R. Peattie, “Some Second Thoughts on Sites-and-Service,” *Habitat International* 6, no. 1/2, (1982): 131-139.

Further reading:

André Loeckx and Bruce Githua, “Sites-and-services in Nairobi, 1973–1987,” in *Human Settlements: Formulations and (re)Calibrations*, ed. d'Auria, De Meulder, and Shannon (Amsterdam: SUN Architecture, 2010), pp. 82-91.

Danielle M. Rojas et al, “Rehab, ‘Los Aires’ and Densification of Consolidated Settlements in Lima, Peru,” in *Housing Policy in Latin American Cities*, ed. Ward et al (New York; London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 160-191.

7. March 2—Interventions: Organizations and Initiatives of the Urban Poor

Required reading:

Arjun Appadurai, “Deep Democracy: Urban Governmentality and the Horizon of Politics,” *Environment & Urbanization* 13, no. 2 (October 2001): 23-43.

Steven L. Robins, ch. 4 (“‘Civil Society’ and Popular Politics in the Postcolony: ‘Deep Democracy’ and Deep Authoritarianism at the Tip of Africa?”), in *From Revolution to Rights in South Africa: Social Movements, NGOs and Popular Politics after Apartheid* (Woodbridge, UK: James Currey, 2008), pp. 77-99.

Further reading:

SPARC (Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres), “In Search of Shelter: Women Pavement Dwellers Pursue a Better Housing Future,” *Architecture + Design* 4, no. 2 (January-February 1988): 70-73.

Sundar Burra, Sheela Patel, and Thomas Kerr, “Community-Designed, Built, and Managed Toilet Blocks in Indian Cities,” *Environment and Urbanization* 15, No. 2 (October 2003): 11-32.

Diana Mitlin, *Politics, Informality and Clientelism—Exploring a Pro-Poor Urban Politics*, ESID Working Paper No. 34. (Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre, University of Manchester, May 2014), pp. 2-26.

SPRING BREAK

8. March 16—Interventions: Enumerating, Surveying, Mapping—and Upgrading

Required reading:

Patrick Geddes, "Conservative Surgery" (1915–1917) in *Patrick Geddes in India*, ed. Jaqueline Tyrwhitt (London: L. Humphries, 1947), pp. 40-59.

Irene Karanja, "An Enumeration and Mapping of Informal Settlements in Kisumu, Kenya Implemented by their Inhabitants," *Environment & Urbanization* 22, no. 1 (April 2010): 217-239.

Arif Hasan, "Orangi Pilot Project: The Expansion of Work beyond Orangi and the Mapping of Informal Settlements and Infrastructure," *Environment & Urbanization* 18, no. 2 (October 2006): 451-480.

Further reading:

Diane Archer et al., "Facilitating Community Mapping and Planning for Citywide Upgrading: The Role of Community Architects," *Environment & Urbanization* 24, no. 1 (April 2012): 115-129.

ACHR (Asian Coalition for Housing Rights), *The Community Mapping for Housing by People's Process Handbook* (Bangkok: ACHR, January 2011). <http://www.achr.net/upload/downloads/file_13122013125107.pdf>

ACHR (Asian Coalition for Housing Rights). "Poverty Lines." *Housing by People in Asia (Newsletter of the ACHR)* 19 (September 2014): 1-28.

Cynthia E. Smith, "Urbanism Manual" (Argentina), in *Design with the Other 90%: CITIES*, ed. Smith (New York: Cooper-Hewitt, 2011), pp. 54-59.

Viviana Asrilant, *Manual de urbanismo para asentamientos precarios* (Buenos Aires: Secretaría de Acción Comunitaria, Facultad de Arquitectura Diseño y Urbanismo, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2009).

9. March 23—Interventions: Infrastructures

Required reading:

Jorge Mario Jáuregui, "Urban and Social Articulation: Megacities, Exclusion, and Urbanity," in *Rethinking the Informal City: Critical Perspectives from Latin America*, ed. Hernández et al (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 207-223.

Elizabeth Riley, Jorge Fiori, and Ronaldo Ramirez, "Favela Bairro and a New Generation of Housing Programs for the Urban Poor," *Geoforum* 32 (November 2001): 521-531.

Michael Webb, "Colombia," *The Architectural Review* no. 1368, special issue: Recent Work in Colombia (February 2011): 32-37.

Peter Brand and Julio D. Dávila, "Mobility Innovation at the Urban Margins: Medellín's *Metrocables*," *City: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action* 15, no. 6 (December 2011): 647-661.

Further reading:

David Gouverneur, ch. 4 ("Forces at play") and ch. 5 ("The IA as a system of components"), in *Planning and Design for Future Informal Settlements: Shaping the Self-Constructed City* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 143-201.

María José Álvarez Rivadulla and Diana Bocarejo, "Beautifying the Slum: Cable Car Fetishism in Cazucá, Colombia," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38, no. 6 (November 2014): 2025-2041.

10. March 30—Interventions: Housing

Required reading:

Peter Kellett, "The Construction of Home in the Informal City," in *Transculturation—Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America*, eds. Hernandez, Millington, and Borden (Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 2005), pp. 22-42.

Rodrigo Pérez de Arce, "PREVI, Lima 'as lived'" in *Human Settlements: Formulations and (re) Calibrations*, ed. d'Auria, De Meulder and Shannon (Amsterdam: SUN Architecture, 2010), pp. 114-119.

Fernando García-Huidobro et al, "Case Studies" (excerpt) in *Time Builds!* (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2008), pp. 64-89.

Alejandro Aravena and Andrés Iacobelli, ch. 1 ("What's the Point?"), ch. 2 ("Principles of Elemental"), ch. 4 ("Elemental's First Case"—excerpt), *Elemental: Incremental Housing and Participatory Design Manual* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), pp. 13-21, 23-51, 81-137, 142-143, 174-177.

Further reading:

Martijn Koster and Monique Nuijten, "From Preamble to Post-project Frustrations: The Shaping of a Slum Upgrading Project in Recife, Brazil," *Antipode* 44, no. 1 (2012): 175-196.

Florian Urban, "The Hut on the Garden Plot: Informal Architecture in Twentieth-Century Berlin," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 72, no. 2 (June 2013): 221-249.

11. April 6—Interventions: [In]Security of Tenure

Required reading:

Geoffrey Payne, Alain Durand-Lasserve, and Carole Rakodi, "The Limits of Land Titling and Home Ownership," *Environment & Urbanization* 21, no. 2 (October 2009): 443-462.

Flavio A. M. de Souza, "The Future of Informal Settlements: Lessons in the Legalization of Disputed Urban Land in Recife, Brazil," *Geoforum* 32 (November 2001): 483-492.

Peter M. Ward et al., "Self-Help Housing Policies for Second Generation Inheritance and Succession of 'The House that Mum & Dad Built'" *Habitat International* 35, no. 3 (July 2011): 467-485.

Further reading:

Geoffrey Payne, "Urban Land Tenure Policy Options: Titles or Rights?" *Habitat International* 25, no. 3 (2001): 415-429.

Ann Varley, "Gender and Property Formalization: Conventional and Alternative Approaches," *World Development* 35, no. 10 (October 2007): 1739-1753.

12. April 13—Slum Fetish?

Required:

Waste Land, directed by Lucy Walker (2010; New Video Group, 2011). [93 mins.] [\[On reserve; available on Netflix\]](#)

Bianca Freire-Medeiros, "The Favela and its Touristic Transits," *Geoforum* 40, no. 4 (July 2009): 580-588.

Further reading:

Raffi Khatchadourian, "In the Picture: An artist's global experiment to help people be seen," *The New Yorker* (November 28, 2011): 56-63.

Anna Dezeuze, "Thriving on Adversity: The Art of Precariousness," *Mute* 2, no. 3, Naked Cities: Struggle in the Global Slums (October 2006). <<http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/thriving-adversity-art-precariousness>>

João H. Costa Vargas, "When a Favela Dared to Become a Gated Condominium: The Politics of Race and Urban Space in Rio de Janeiro," *Latin American Perspectives* 33, no. 4 (July 2006): 49-81.

13. April 20—Slum as Model: Architecture Embraces the "Informal"

Rem Koolhaas and Harvard Project on the City, "Lagos" in *Mutations* (Barcelona: ACTAR; Bordeaux: arc en rêve centre d'architecture, 2001), pp. 651-719 (excerpt). [\[On reserve\]](#)

Urban-Think Tank, ch. 2 (“Present”—excerpt) and ch. 4 (“Potential”), in *Torre David: Informal Vertical Communities* (Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2013), pp. 130-149, 164-165, 178-179, 208-227, 330-331, 360-381. [On reserve]
MVRDV and t?f (The Why Factory), ch. 1 (“Introduction”), ch. 3 (“The Properties of Communities”), ch. 11 (“SuperKampung”—excerpt). in *The Vertical Village: Individual, Informal, Intense* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2012), pp. 4-9, 38-65, 294-309, 326-333, 374-375. [On reserve]

Further reading:

Matthew Gandy, “Learning from Lagos,” *New Left Review* 33 (May-June 2005): 37-53.

Rem Koolhaas, *Lagos Wide & Close: An Interactive Journey into an Exploding City* (2004; online version, 2014).
<<http://lagos.submarinechannel.com/>>

Junta Directiva Nacional del Colegio de Arquitectos de Venezuela, *Declaración sobre La XIII Bienal de Arquitectura de Venecia* (September 7, 2012). <http://cav.org.ve/cms/index.php?option=com_flexicon-tent&view=items&cid=162:notas-de-prensa&id=1559:declaracion-sobre-la-xiii-bienal-de-arquitectura-de-venecia&Itemid=62>

14. April 27—Rethinking Urban Informality

Required reading:

Ann Varley, “Postcolonialising Informality?” *Proceedings of the N-Aerus XI Conference: The Production, Use, and Dissemination of Urban Knowledge in Cities of the South*, ed. Brunfaut and d’Auria (Brussels, 2010).

Marie Huchzermeyer, Introduction, *Cities with “Slums”: From Informal Settlement Eradication to a Right to the City in Africa* (Cape Town: University Of Cape Town Press, 2011), pp. 1-19

Marie Huchzermeyer, “From ‘Contravention of Laws’ to ‘Lack of Rights’: Redefining the Problem of Informal Settlements in South Africa,” *Habitat International* 28 (2004): 333–347.

Lisa Björkman, “Becoming a Slum: From Municipal Colony to Illegal Settlement in Liberalization-Era Mumbai,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38, no. 1 (January 2014): 36-59.