

Big Ball of Mud

Context

- Big, ugly systems emerge from throwaway code
- Well-defined architectures subject to structural erosion

Forces

- Time - insufficient
- Cost - pressure to minimize
- Experience & Skill - may be insufficient
- Visibility - problems can grow unseen
- Accidental complexity
- Frequent change without refactoring

You need to deliver quality software on time, and under budget.

Discussion

["Shantytowns"](#) are squalid, sprawling slums. Everyone seems to agree they are a bad idea, but forces conspire to promote their emergence anyway. What is it that they are doing right?

Shantytowns are usually built from common, inexpensive materials and simple tools. Shantytowns can be built using relatively unskilled labor. Even though the labor force is "unskilled" in the customary sense, the construction and maintenance of this sort of housing can be quite labor intensive. There is little specialization. Each housing unit is constructed and maintained primarily by its inhabitants, and each inhabitant must be a jack of all the necessary trades."

– Brian Foote and Joseph Yoder, Pattern Languages of Program Design 4

Therefore, focus first on features and functionality, then focus on architecture and performance.

<http://www.laputan.org/mud/mud.html#BigBallOfMud>

See also: "Worse is Better", Richard Gabriel
Aliases: Shantytown, Spaghetti Code

Question: Is this just cynicism? Is Big Ball of Mud an antipattern?