

## The Development of Urban Informality

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## Paradigms and Paradoxes from Urban Planning and Design

### Description

Slums, as considered by United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, are the physical manifestation of urban problems related to poverty and/or inequality. Yet, little effort has been placed on the historical sequence of urban planning programs and design practices that emerged in the 19th Century and have since evolved in methods and practices to address the challenges of informality. This lack of emphasis in historical precedents – in their success and failures – has weakened the consistency of some contemporary urban programs, which are often viewed as epitomes of the Modernist Project's aim to House the Masses. Furthermore, the very controversies around the characterization of slums and informal settlements question how spatial practices can address social problems.

This seminar will portray a historical sequence of urban planning and design programs, and architectural projects developed at precarious settlements. Policies and programs include eviction laws; Poor Laws in (Ireland and UK); Housing Acts (US), Social Housing (Brazil, Germany, Mexico, and Spain); Land titling (Latin America); Incremental Housing (Peru and Chile); urban upgrading (Brazil, India, Indonesia, Kenya and Venezuela); and building rehabilitation (Spain, Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Canada.) The seminar will propose the aforementioned sequence as suitable to encompass the physical and social nature of informal settlements. Also, it will link the history of urban planning with real estate, politics, and migration events to question the characterization of definitions such as "informality," "housing deficit," "sub-standard living," or "slums." The seminar aims to build a thread of historical precedents that link urban informality with mainstream urban planning and design history; and seeks defining the role of spatial strategies in proposing accurate solutions to urban poverty and inequality.

### Sessions

Sessions will be divided in three parts:

- a) Presentations given by students about their ongoing research (15' max. each)
- b) An introductory presentation given by the instructor about the topic of the class (30')
- c) Group discussion about the readings assigned for class (1h)

### Week Topic

W01 Introduction

W02 Settlements Under Question

W03 Poor Laws

W04 Clearance

W05 Public, Popular, Affordable, Social, and Collective Architectures

W06 Capital Projects

W07 Land Titling

W08 Incremental and Self-Help Housing

W09 Election Day Holiday

W10 Class to be defined

W11 Grass-root Movements and the Third Sector

W12 Acupunctural Buildings, Urban Upgrading

W13 Cultures of Sustainability

## W14 The Post-development Agenda

### **Requirements**

#### Attendance

Punctuality is required to cover all instructional materials. Also, it shows consideration to professor and peers. The class will start at 9am sharp each Monday; students with more than two unexcused absences (arriving more than 15' late or missing the class) will fail the course. Students are advised to attend office hours.

#### Participation in class

The discussion about assigned readings is the basis of each seminar session. Students will send one question addressing each of the assigned readings by Friday 5pm to the instructor and T.A. You can relate the question to current events, and include images or findings found by you.

#### Research Papers

Students will choose, by September 16<sup>th</sup>, two urban planning programs from the list below, and evaluate how they solve the social and/or physical problem they identify. For this assignment, programs will be taken as research projects that ask the question: "How to solve X urban problem?" At the end of the semester, students will present two independent papers assessing these programs. The papers should be at least 3000 words in length, and must include illustrations (diagrams, drawings, photos, charts, texts, tables.) Cites, references are very important. Student cases may be part of an exhibition occurring at GSAPP on Spring 2014.

#### Presentations

Students will prepare two short (15 min) presentations about their research paper. The deadline to choose readings is September 16<sup>th</sup>.

### **Grading**

Attendance and Participation in Class 40%

Presentations 20%

Research Papers 40%