

# HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN INFORMALITY

Slums, as considered by United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, are the physical manifestation of urban problems related to poverty and/or inequality. Despite the relevance of this problem, little effort has been placed on understanding the historical sequence of urban planning programs and design practices that, since the 19th Century, have addressed the challenges of informality. This lack of disciplinary attention to historical precedents has weakened the consistency of contemporary urban programs addressing slums, and epitomized the Modernist Project's aim to House the Masses.

To respond to this problem, the seminar will portray a historical sequence of urban planning, urban design programs, and architectural projects developed at precarious settlements, to unveil how spatial practices have historically addressed social problems. 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 also link the history of urban planning with real estate, politics, and migration events to question the characterizations of "informality," "housing deficit," "sub-standard living," and "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.

## Rationale

This seminar departs from the epistemological premise that urban projects and programs responding to informality can be analyzed as arguments structured similarly to research projects:

Existing Urban Problem	Premises
Design of Urban Program	Hypothesis
Assessment of Program	Thesis

This characterization allows students to problematize the epistemological structure of urban programs, and to investigate the structural conditions of those urban problems and programs beyond the analysis of cases' the soft published information.

## Sessions

### I Problems

1 **Introduction** (Jan 18). In this class the instructor will present the outline of the seminar, and will discuss about its overall theoretical framework.

2 **The Problem of Demarcation** (Jan 25). “What are slums?” remains a controversial and disputed question. During this session we will review the different characterizations of this concept, and the assumptions that these terms carry.

### II Slums

3 **The Great Transformation: from the English *Poor Laws* to the US *Housing Reform*** (Feb 1). This class will explain the origins of slums in 19th century Great Britain, linking the rural enclosure laws with the urban overcrowding of its industrial cities. It will also look at two early design-related solutions to respond to slums: model houses (in the UK) and tenements (in the US). It will explore two conceptual frameworks for understanding slums as physical and social issues: the one situating its cause as poverty, and another situating it in inequality.

4 **Addressing Slums’ Urban Scale: Urban Renewal Programs in the UK & US** (Feb 8). This session will situate the main slum clearance strategies produced during the first half of the 20th century in the US and the UK. It will also look at other design and planning strategies existing at that time: neighborhood rehabilitation, building renovation and slum prevention as alternative options to clearance. Finally, we will look at the dispute between the public and private agencies to take control over the debate on slums.

5 **The Paradox of Squatting and Segregation at Model Housing Developments** (Feb 15). US federalized slum clearance policies during the 1940s linked eviction and redevelopment, and lead to fully subsidized social housing developments that carry with the figure of the Master Plan. During this session we will overview some of the most significant projects of this period, as well as some drawbacks that lead to abandonment and squatting of these formally built settlements.

### III Squatting

6 **Shelter in an Urbanizing World: Housing and Habitat from the CIAM to the UN** (Feb 22). This class will discuss the shift in problems, strategies, and professional models that underwent at the aftermath of the WWII, when the problem of human settlements expanded from the developed to the developing world. At this time, the dispute between re-discovered self-help housing by John Turner, and the modernist architecture and planning of the CIAM conferences, lead the meetings and negotiations that lead to the creation of United Nations Habitat in 1976.

**7 The Implementation of the *Enabling Strategies*** (March 1). In the early 1970s the World Bank launched the “sites and services” program, a financing product to urbanize self-help like, poor areas at developing countries. In our class we will look at some instances of this program in Indonesia and India, and will discuss about the consequences of internationalizing, in political and economic terms, the discussions and proposals about shelter.

**8 The Third Sectors: From Housing Provision to the Right to the City** (March 8). Particularly since the HABITAT I conference, pro-shelter international organizations have spread to respond to housing and humanitarian crisis, yet it is unclear their overarching significance to resolve some of the root causes of slums beyond the provision of charitable support. In contrast, other grassroots and international institutions have advocated for the right to the city and the enactment of participatory, place-making processes. In class we will look at these two modes of interpreting citizenship and in their outcomes, and will analyze the disjunction between different forms of understanding the role of the “Third Sector” in regards to slums and squatter settlements.

#### IV Informality

**9 Land Titling and Regularization** (March 22). Despite public and third-sector efforts, the increasing growth of informal settlements lead in the late 1970s to the popularization of strategies that legalize and incorporate slum dwellers into formal city fabrics. In this class we will look at the controversial proposal made by Hernando de Soto, and will look at other examples of financial and legal action that attempt to integrate formal and informal city fabrics.

**10 Physical Upgrading** (March 29). Starting in the late 1970s, slum upgrading programs with a strong physical, visible component, spread from Taiwan to Brazil to Colombia, and reflect the relevance of the urban design physical approach to city making. In class we will look at some of these projects, and analyze their outcomes and assumptions. We will also discuss the concept and implementation of recent “integral projects” developed worldwide.

#### V Current Issues

**11 Special Session - TBC** (April 5)

**12 The Sustainable Turn** (April 12). Slums and their consequent reactions have not fully explored the incidence of sustainability in urban policy making and design standards. In this session we will look at some perspectives analyzing the environmental consequences of formal urbanization, and the controversies and potentials of informal settlements vis-à-vis sustainable urban development.

**13 The Normalization of Slums and the Architectures of Exception** (April 19). This class will serve to summarize the historical sequence created during the semester, and

to brief on two current issues: the fact that slums remain to grow regardless of previous planning and design ideas; and the recent cases of spatial interventions that attempt to redefine the professional boundaries of architecture and planning.

**14 The representation of the social** (April 26). The last class of the semester will deepen on the complexities of the production of design and planning knowledge. The topics discussed will include the aesthetics of poverty in mass media, and the embedding of uncharted rhetoric into visual argumentation.

## **Class Paper**

During the semester you will evaluate if and how implemented urban programs at slums respond to the social and physical urban problems that they address. To do so, you will first need to identify the set of urban problems that are stated and presumed in the program of study, to then evaluate how the design provides a solution to that problem.

The final outcome of this evaluation will be a paper, and encompasses the following deliverables:

A Bibliography Background Research (Due Feb. 21). This list of bibliography that is related to your case study is an important base for the development of your research paper during the rest of the semester. It will be expected that you search for bibliography not only online, but also through Columbia University libraries. After your submission, the instructor will suggest additional sources of information or, if sources are too scarce, adapting your paper topic to them.

B Short Class Presentation. During the semester you will make a short presentation (7') related to your case study. At the presentation, you will conceptualize the urban problem that has been declared or presumed at your case study, and describe one concrete outcome that the urban program under study uses as a solution.

C Midterm Progress Report (Due Mar. 19). This document is an outline of the argument that you are preparing for your final paper. It should schematically describe and analyze the problems and solutions embedded in your case study. Additionally, your report should outline a tentative assessment of the program, vis-à-vis the problem identified. While there is no predetermined length established for your midterm progress report, it will need to include graphic evidence (photos, plans, sections, renderings, tables, diagrams, etc) of the program that you are evaluating. In this sense it is important that the relevance of the image is explicated in the text, and that the size and quality of images allow easily understanding its relevant components.

D Final Paper (Due May. 3). Your final paper will use your research findings to formulate your own assessment of an urban program dealing with slums, and provide suggestions for its improvement. Final papers should be at least 3000 words. (Arial 11pt, line spacing 1.5) and must include illustrations (diagrams, drawings, photos, charts, texts, tables) at the right size and quality; they should be sent by email. Your paper will be evaluated based on the use of a clear structure; a convincing argument with warranted conclusions; and correct and appropriate referencing. For additional

information and suggestions about your paper and urban programs to choose, please read the “Evaluation Layout” and “Case Studies” below; and feel free to ask me.

## **Participation**

In addition to paper requirements, participation in class discussions will be evaluated. Indeed, class discussions are the base of our seminar.

E Readings. Each Wednesday by 8pm before class, students will upload to Canvas at least one question or comment addressing the discussion created by assigned readings. The student(s) leading that week's class discussion will review the comments made by their peers and use them, along with class readings, as the basis for class discussion.

F Punctuality. Please arrive sharp in time to class. Punctuality is not just required to cover all instructional materials, but also shows consideration to professor and peers.

G Office Hours. Students are encouraged to attend office hours at least twice during the semester to discuss the midterm progress report and the final paper. These one-to-one sessions intend to help you structuring your argument, finding the right bibliography, and commenting your midterm report progress.

## **Grading**

20% Participation, Readings & Punctuality

20% Class presentations (2)

20% Bibliographical Research + Midterm Progress Report

40% Final Research Paper

## **Schedule**

Each session will be divided in three or four parts:

30' Instructor introduces the topic of the class

20-40' Students present their ongoing research (7' each)

40' Students and instructor lead a group discussion about the readings assigned for class, with Q&A

## **Case Studies** (Suggested, list not comprehensive)

Workhouses, the Building Reform and Slum Clearance 1800s

Parsontown workhouse

The Hull House (working house), Chicago

Dumbbell Housing tenement competition

New York State Tenement House Act of 1901

Clearance Plan, Kowloon City, Hong-Kong, 1990s

### Slum Clearance and Urban Renewal, 1930s-1960s

First Houses, NYCHA, 1930s

Harlem River Houses

The Williamsburg Houses, Brooklyn

Queensbridge Houses, NYC

Neighborhood Gardens, St. Louis, 1950s

Pruitt-Igoe Housing Development, St. Louis

Cabrini-Green Housing Project, Chicago

The Magnolia Projects, St. Louis

Robert Taylor Homes, Chicago

### Self-Help and Mutual-Help

Architecture for Humanity early projects

UN PREVI Competition, Lima

UN Tondo Competition, Philippines

Kampung Improvement Programme (KIP I, II, and III), Indonesia

Housing Micro-Loans, various locations

World Bank Site and Services Programs

### Slum and Urban Upgrading

Slum Network in Indore, India, 1980s

Favela Bairro & Morar Carioca Programs, Rio de Janeiro.

Demetre Anastassaskis, Housing in Nova Maré, Rio de Janeiro

Urbanização de Favelas, São Paulo

Edson Elito, Housing Block in Paraisópolis, São Paulo

Praca Cantao, Favela Painting Project, Rio de Janeiro

Urban Think-Tank: Metro Cable in Caracas

Kibera-Soweto pilot project, Kenyan Slum Upgrading Programme

Metrocable Urban Think-Tank, Caracas

Giancarlo Mazzanti: Biblioteca Parque España, Medellin

### Renovation and other Programs

Programa Novas Alternativas (Brazil-Present)

Slum redevelopment project & Recycling Program (Dharavi), 2000s

Programa Mananciais (São Paulo)

Program Renova Centro (São Paulo)

Micasa, Progressive VOnstruction of Low-Income families, Peru

Incremental Project in Iquique, Elemental, Chile

Minha casa, Minha vida Mass Housing Program, Brazil

UPP's unidades policiais de pacificacao, Brazil

Mapping and upgrading process in Mathare, Nairobi

INFONAVIT Mass Mexican Housing

Carriere Centrale housing development, Casablanca