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FOR URBAN FUTURES

## Urban Pamphleteer

### WE ARE DELIGHTED TO PRESENT URBAN PAMPHLETEER #5

In the tradition of radical pamphleteering, the intention of this series is to confront key themes in contemporary urban debate from diverse perspectives, in a direct and accessible – but not reductive – way. The broader aim is to empower citizens, and inform professionals, researchers, institutions and policy-makers, with a view to positively shaping change.

### #5 GLOBAL EDUCATION FOR URBAN FUTURES

This issue aims to stimulate a critical discussion about the future of higher education focused on cities and urbanization. In a world that is both rapidly urbanising and globalising, it is widely acknowledged that it is crucial to facilitate urban education that is cross-, inter- or trans-disciplinary; based on global knowledge addressed towards international issues; and engaged with live projects or taught through approaches defined as practice-oriented or laboratorial. Yet it is not always clear how these ambitions can best be achieved, especially to ensure higher education plays a constitutive role in addressing issues of urban exclusion or inequality, and global disparities in the production of urban knowledge and application of expertise.

What challenges do trends in global urban theory, policy and development pose for contemporary educational practice? What are the origins, institutional contexts and futures of international approaches to urban higher education? What good models exist that best facilitate working across different geographical contexts? These are the questions our contributors address. The issue features projects that document, contextualise and comment on existing pedagogies and teaching, as well as critiques of existing models, and suggestions of future challenges and opportunities. It highlights innovative, critical and speculative pedagogies that are inter- and trans-disciplinary, practice-oriented, and comparative; and which help to facilitate international collaboration through visual methods and digital platforms.

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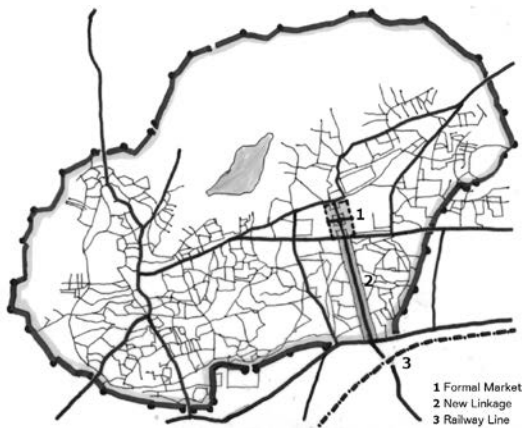
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Study of the nature of urban governance, both traditional and modern, can be a valuable entry point for evolving a relevant pedagogic direction in the field of urban studies in the Asian context.

## URBAN GOVERNANCE AS A PEDAGOGIC TOOL IN THE ASIAN CONTEXT



The sketch shows a map of Jodhpur walled city area. One can see the formal market being linked by a linear linkage from the railway line, which happens to be a planning decision taken in post-independence India. The sketch is hand drawn by the author.

If we look at a brief historical chronology of the multilayered traditional urbanism in India, the Harappan civilization (2500 BC to 1900 BC) shows evidence of a decentralized model of authority, which controlled ritual performance, economic activities and urban cohesion, allowing for a socially and economically diverse population to co-exist.<sup>1</sup> Evidence of urbanism in the Ganga valley (500 BC to AD 300) shows several small kingdoms and republics ruling, and towns, which probably started appearing and growing around villages specialized in certain crafts. The town displayed diversity in form internally as each neighborhood was locally governed by a particular guild. The Gupta period (AD 300 to 700) shows the existence of several different financial sources, which made donations to religious institutions to ensure that the kings and rulers did not have absolute control over economic activities. A sophisticated governance existed which enabled much more participatory control. The Mughal period (AD 1200 to 1700) showed the existence of *mohallas*,<sup>2</sup> which were largely self-regulat-

ing in terms of provision of basic services.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the colonial period saw the beginning of a much more centralized nature of governance, intended to make cities easier to read and manage. There was a conscious effort to put 'order' in cities by sanitizing them, through formal urban interventions.<sup>4</sup> English schools were introduced to induce a Western lifestyle, which created an elite class with segregated amenities and housing for them. This nature of governance had several repercussions. For instance, in the case of Jodhpur, with the introduction of a water supply system, the water bodies in the inner city area, which not only served as sources of drinking water but also as vital public spaces, started getting neglected, degraded and even reclaimed in some cases. Several parts of the inner city areas in Allahabad were cleared as an immediate reaction to the uprising of 1857. Urban markers in the form of formal institutions were inserted and emphasized by linear linkages, which cut through an organic urban fabric. In other words this nature of governance disrupted traditional linkages. Furthermore, it still exists across post-independence India.

Despite the acclaimed advantages of decentralization of



Jodhpur in Rajasthan. Photo by Lala Deen Dayal, 1890s. Curzon Collection. This is a general view of the city from the fort which shows its organic morphology. © The British Library Board, Photo 430/21(42)



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City view Jodhpur

1 Annapurna Shaw, *Oxford India Short Introductions: Indian Cities*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012. 1–5.

2 A 'mohalla' is a ward or a neighborhood, usually walled and gated.

3 Shaw, *Oxford India Short Introductions*, 6–10.

4 Pranabranjan Ray, 'Urbanization in Colonial Situation: Serampore – A Study in Method.' Simla, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1969: 252–274.

5 T. M. Thomas Issac, and K. N. Harilal, 'Planning for Empowerment: People's Campaign for Decentralized Planning in Kerala.' *Economic and Political Weekly* 32 (1997): 53.

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planning and repeated commitments made in its favour, the planning process in India has remained a highly centralized affair.<sup>5</sup> This top-down approach leads to a leveling out of subtle nuances and causes generalization and homogenization. Urban planning standards, which are a byproduct of a centralized nature of governance, are grossly applied across all contexts. The manner in which governance existed in pre-industrial cities was much more community based, organic and mutual. This clearly resulted in a certain kind of settlement pattern and urban form which was incremental, compact, mixed-use, walkable, climate sensitive and sustainable. If one has to bring these qualities to our cities, one needs to seriously question the kind of governance and hence the resultant planning methods which are currently adopted.

Though not everything can be planned from below, it is worthwhile to put a pedagogic framework in place, which is responsive to local needs. The pedagogy of urban planning and design in India can play a pivotal role in prioritizing those areas which fall within the purview of bottom-up planning.

This framework can then be tested out in different contexts, made watertight and used to inform planning practices.



As an internationally-trained junior faculty member I teach urban anthropology in small groups of mainly humanities students.<sup>1</sup> Having personally experienced how education systems, disciplinary establishments, funding and

## TOWARDS A REFLEXIVE CRITICAL URBAN PEDAGOGY

visa regulations influence life transitions – such as migrating to a new country, and dealing with precarious work conditions in and outside academia – my pedagogy is shaped by this evolving history and geography of overlapping personal and social contingencies.

As a researcher and educator whose main focus is urban Turkey, I am familiar with how concepts, paradigms and curricula unfold in a hierarchical geography of cities, where certain terms of social change can either be less applicable and/or yet to be discovered. In my teaching I address this divide by incorporating content and formats that help to make sense of the global/local/place-specific interlinkages without either particularizing (places, contexts) or reproducing existing hierarchies of knowledge. I argue that this

*Ethnography both as a metaphor, and in my case as reflexive awareness, is a powerful tool to perform teaching as a place specific interaction which interweaves the abstract, imagined, discursive landscapes of existing knowledge categories, repertoire, and personal history*

requires a place-specific, reflexive and ethnographic approach to urban education as well as recognizing students' (and my own) multiple positions and place dynamics, which shape class interaction. I identify three main threads in my evolving practice as a teacher (also my frustration as a student) in this direction.

The first is not field-specific and has to do with a commitment to teaching as an indispensable, critical aspect of public, academic, intellectual life and transformation. The second is to educate students on the historical, intellectual foundations that reiterate urbanisms within geopolitical hierarchies and generalizations (e.g. first, third-world, the East, West). The third is related to the second thread: I observe institutional determinism as a persistent discourse which operates in national and regional scales and shapes our interaction and imagination of cities in the classroom. By institutional determinism in urban education, I refer to positioning the nation or the state as the 'natural' context to address urban issues. This in turn leads to the assumption that cities function and urbanisms develop within a scalar, institutional hierarchy, reaching from transnational to local with the state as centre. As such, institutional determinism in urban education (re)produces static assumptions on cities and futures.

Equally important at this point are the limits between complexity and particularism. By particularism I mean reducing learners' ability to think through patterns and relations between contexts. I find engaging systematically in the teaching setting an effective strategy so as to cultivate a learning environment where participants articulate multiple positions (educator, learner, resident, worker etc.) in their interactions. For a better explanation of what I mean by 'knowing the teaching setting' I draw on Michael Burawoy's 'ethnographic approach' to teaching social theory.<sup>2</sup>



Burawoy explains students' position as 'participant observers' in encountering and engaging theory through text, self-reflection, and interactions with peers, instructors and authors. Given the vast, abstract and anachronistic landscape of theory education, the ethnographic approach constructs concepts, biographies and social relations that leave space for the learner to relate to knowledge subjectively through his/her own experience. Burawoy is criticized for his selective approach to the building blocks of such an architecture.<sup>3</sup> Yet, ethnography both as a metaphor, and in my case as reflexive awareness, is a powerful framework to perform teaching as a place-specific interaction which interweaves the abstract, imagined, discursive landscapes of existing knowledge categories, repertoire, and personal history.

In my own attempt to provide a sound basis for the context-specific colonial, imperial, capitalist relations that positioned cities in global, national maps, I soon realized that students did not consider Munich (where we were based) as part of the 'connections' that we were trying to reconsider within a wider understanding of urban space and function. Students were more attentive to content related to 'elsewhere' and found it difficult to reflect on urban processes in their own locality.

I could make sense of this tendency by referring back to the teaching 'field notes'. Navigating the issue was interesting in terms of showing the unexpected urban boundaries shaped by unique historical and cultural processes – in this case Munich's entangled history of political and capitalist integration, lack of a 'lively subculture scene' and subordination as a 'culturally isolated Southern' city. Most class participants found the 'urban question' applicable to Berlin, Istanbul and Cairo but less so to Munich although, to give one example, students suffer much from the notorious housing market in the city (like the majority of Munich residents). I addressed the problem by revising the course literature, including place-sensitive visual assignments and auditing walks around Munich-related themes such as tenant issues, food environments and immigration in order to re-establish engagement with the immediate setting of our lives.

My prefigured strategy of relying less on Euro/American content and more on the underrepresented contexts of research impeded 'unlearning' the existing urban repertoires. This experience led me to realize that an ethnographic approach to students' subjective positions in the learning environment is key to understanding what constitutes the 'alternative' towards a critical urban pedagogy. Both in terms of content and class mechanics, an ethnographic approach to teaching based on a close examination of the assumptions and categories that are in effect may sustain a dynamic, critical urban education.

1 I teach at Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, Germany.

2 Michael Burawoy, 'Living Theory' [Special Commentary]. *Contemporary Sociology* 6 (2013): 779–783.

3 Alan Sica, 'What is Living and What is Dead in Theory Teaching' [Special Commentary]. *Contemporary Sociology* 6 (2013): 783–786.

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## GETTING THE EDUCATION FOR THE CITY WE WANT

Human beings are a force of nature, and nowhere is this more evident than in sprawling building sites around the world.<sup>1</sup> ‘The Future We Want’, invoked at the 2012 Rio+20 Conference, will depend on the cities we want, and these in turn will be shaped by the knowledge and skills we inherit from higher education.

As current urban planners, architects, geographers and engineers engage with the almost unthinkable dimensions of scale and speed of urbanisation, academics around the world seek to equip their next generation with the skills and wisdom commensurable to the challenge.

This challenge was the focus of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2004–2014) advocating the need for universities to embed sustainability<sup>2</sup> in all learning areas across the curriculum.<sup>3</sup> We therefore look at the specific case of urban studies education and how this embraces the challenge of sustainable urban development (SUD), asking:

- 1 what topics and themes are considered essential for teaching and research aimed at the promotion of SUD?;
- 2 what are the factors that enable the effective design of education programmes aimed at the promotion of SUD?;
- 3 what challenges persist?

The answers come from a review of literature and a comparative study of 25 urban postgraduate master’s programmes from Europe, China and the Rest of the World – covering five continents – completed as part of the URBACHINA project.<sup>4</sup>

### SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION BUILDING BLOCKS

We identify 4 building blocks and 36 topics that constitute the basic components of education aimed at the promotion of SUD, based on international literature and policy: (a) planning, design and governance; (b) environment and resources; (c) society; and (d) the economy. Their order, from (a) to (d), reflects the weight of each block in the analysis of course material for our 25 top educational programmes. Looking at *core* courses, planning topics (a) are at the top of the list around the world. Next come environment and society themes (b) and (c), and here programmes in the rest of the World are slightly less focused on environment, while Chinese programmes are significantly less centred around social topics. Economic themes (d) come last, with European programmes appearing relatively more keen on prioritizing them. Arguably the selection of core courses is a statement of what matters most, and we found that analysing *electives* did not change the overall picture.

### ENABLING SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Three elements appear to be essential in delivering an education capable of promoting SUD. *First*, overall programme orientation, which depends on the balanced mix of three pillars for SUD:



design, management and policy. These reflect the shift from physical design to policy and societal topics in urban studies programmes, which have been

*As current urban planners, architects, geographers and engineers engage with the almost unthinkable dimensions of scale and speed of urbanisation, academies around the world seek to equip their next generations with the skills and wisdom commensurable to the challenge*

gradually integrating social science and sustainability policies into spatial planning.<sup>5</sup> The three pillars are listed in the order reflecting the weight given to each in the analysis of our 25 programmes. Comparing regions: China privileges design, Europe policy, while management receives a balanced attention from all our samples.

*Second*, the range of skills taught needs to combine analytical, technical, and experiential/communication/negotiation capacities. We identified 25 skills overall and found that analytical ones were considered the most important everywhere. Significant regional differences were found between China and Europe: while programmes in China prioritized technical skills, programmes in Europe prioritized experiential/communication/negotiation skills.

<i>EDUCATIONAL SKILLS ENABLING SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT</i>	
<p><b>ANALYTICAL</b></p> <p><i>Interdisciplinary</i></p> <p><i>Systemic thinking (holistic and integrative)</i></p> <p><i>Theoretical and critical reflection</i></p> <p><i>Integration of theory and practice</i></p> <p><i>Rapid urbanization and urban informality (including the global South)</i></p> <p><i>Global/Regional/local interdependencies</i></p> <p><i>History of planning/urbanism (movements and theories)</i></p> <p><i>Methods (quantitative, qualitative, spatial analysis)</i></p> <p><i>Visual literacy</i></p>	<p><b>TECHNICAL</b> (<i>specifically aimed at enabling SUD</i>)</p> <p><i>Spatial planning instruments (plans and projects)</i></p> <p><i>Design-applied technologies (e.g. GIS)</i></p> <p><i>Engineering and construction</i></p> <p><i>Management and strategic planning/urban futures</i></p>
	<p><b>EXPERIENTIAL, COMMUNICATION &amp; NEGOTIATION</b></p> <p><i>Field work and contact with real life practice</i></p> <p><i>Cross-sector collaboration</i></p> <p><i>Participatory/deliberative approaches</i></p> <p><i>Team work</i></p> <p><i>Direct international experience</i></p> <p><i>Community work</i></p>

*Third*, the role of ethics and interdisciplinarity is considered an essential condition for enabling SUD education. Overall, based on the material introducing the programmes, ethics fares less well, although when asked, programme directors emphasized its importance and the need to do more to promote it. Interdisciplinarity was acknowledged more frequently, and the four building blocks listed above, provide a formidable platform for practice. However, here too, much more needs to be done to make meaningful interdisciplinary inquiry possible. Resilient disciplinary boundaries, discreet epistemologies, methods and discourses all stand in the way.





1 Frank Biermann *et al.*, 'Navigating the Anthropocene.' *Science* 335 (2012): 1306–1307.

2 Here we rely on the definition of Stephen Wheeler and Timothy Beatley (eds.) *The Sustainable Urban Development Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

3 UNESCO, *Shaping the Future We Want: UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014)*. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002301/230171e.pdf>

4 Project description and results: <http://www.urbachina.eu/index.php/en>

5 Elena Dimitrova, 'The "Sustainable Development" Concept in Urban Planning Education: Lessons Learned on a Bulgarian Path.' *Journal of Cleaner Production* 62 (2014): 120–127.

6 Yosef Jabareen, 'Towards a Sustainability Education Framework: Challenges, Concepts and Strategies – The Contribution from Urban Planning Perspectives.' *Sustainability* 4 (2012): 2247–2269.

7 Klaus R. Kunzmann and Martina Koll-Schretzenmayr, 'Introduction: Planning and Planning Education in 2015.' *disP – The Planning Review* 51 (2015): 16–17.

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Works for the New Library, Renmin University Campus, Beijing, 2009. Photo by Olivia Bina.

### SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION: THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development has come and gone. There has been progress. However, it has been slow and education for sustainability still lacks a consistent interdisciplinary conceptual framework, and a coherent curriculum.<sup>6</sup> Our proposal of four building blocks of SUD topics, three education pillars and sets of skills to enable SUD, is a contribution towards providing a common language, if not a framework.

This study confirms that the role of Urban Studies Education and SUD objectives are understood differently from country to country as a function of national university systems, planning institutions and regulations, political milieus, and professional requirements.<sup>7</sup> To move from academic knowledge to planning, urban higher education needs to adapt to regional characteristics. Yet there are some areas that need 'universal' attention to reduce global disparities in the production of urban knowledge and application of expertise:

- Paying even more attention to the SUD-dimension of core courses;
- Addressing the ethical dimension of key urban themes;
- Putting more weight on the relation between the economy and the built and natural environment;
- Stressing the importance of interdisciplinarity in the curricula.

Responding to these persistent challenges, possibly combining the different traditions from Europe, China and the rest of the World, would promote a more comprehensive understanding of urban processes and urbanization dynamics, advancing an academic culture of sustainability, leading to a more sustainable urban development.



## FINDING 'COMMUNITY', AND OTHER CRITICAL WORDS

Some of our most-used words in understanding city life are those that are least understood. In spaces where we think we agree, the most interesting differences and possibilities for dialogue arise. We listen for the overlaps and divergences in the language people use to say what we imagine to be true, or important, or impossible, or inevitable. People don't always mean the same thing when we talk about 'non-profit' or 'home', just as we don't always mean the same thing when we say 'queer', 'community', 'power' or 'racism'. 'Collaboration', 'the urban', and 'global' require

actual conversations, rather than assumptions of shared reference points.

This is nowhere more crucial than when engaging students in, and preparing them for, 'real world work'. How do we do project-based, partnered work from the privileged position of the university in ways that value divergent experiences and engage differences in access to resources, in rights

*Our goal is not simply to raise ideas, but to support participants to use them: to act, undo and unlearn, acknowledge positions of power, make things when uncertain, and, especially, to listen*



Dilenia and Wesly making video definitions of 'community' together. Photo by Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani, 2014.

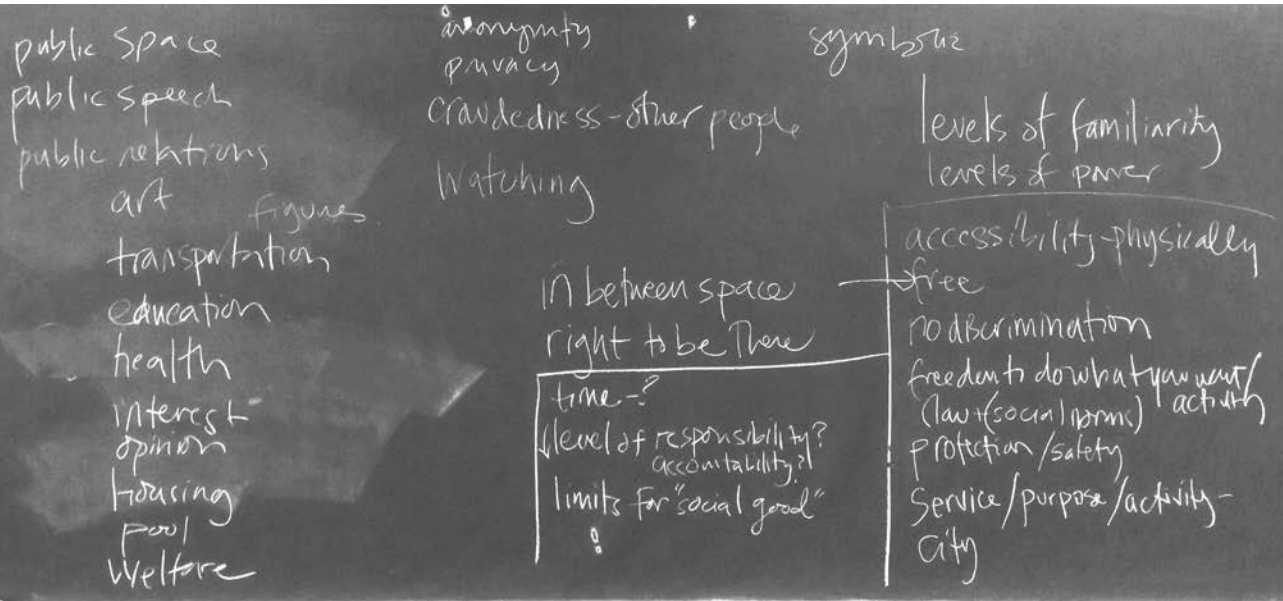
to produce knowledge, in capacities to make things, systems, and futures? How do we do this in a way that moves the work forward? How do we truly begin working with people?

Creating the 'Working with People' (WWP) project has helped us comprehend the potency of words, and their negotiation, as the basis for action.<sup>1</sup> WWP is a curriculum, online interview series, and participatory media project framed through the keywords that originally brought us to this work. The words we chose, while not an exhaustive list, represent some that we heard with frequency but without much investigation in partner-based classes and projects – like 'public', 'human', and 'community'. Others seemed conspicuously absent yet critical to the work, like 'power', 'representation', or 'economy'. The project's resources grouped by keyword include texts, films, radio shows, and short online interviews in which people of

many disciplines, backgrounds, ages and fields, define keywords in relation to their own work.

Exploring the complex and even contradictory nature of the words and meanings we bring to the work we do, the project aims to collaboratively generate knowledge about what Avery Gordon calls 'complex personhood', which insists that 'people's lives are simultaneously straightforward and full of enormously subtle meaning'.<sup>2</sup> Our pedagogical goal is not simply to raise ideas, but to support participants to *use* ideas: to act, undo and





Defining public together at the New School. Photo by Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani, 2015.

unlearn, acknowledge positions of power, make things when uncertain, and, especially, to listen. We use WWP in our own classes, teach workshops for students and faculty, and host public gatherings.

We think it's a success when our workshops leave participants with more, and more productive, questions about their work than they had coming in. In a recent workshop, spurred by watching several divergent video definitions, students went from discussing a complex idea of 'community' – what is it? who defines it? how does one become a part of it? – to talking about how these questions could guide their approach to mentoring young people in community centres based in New York City's public housing developments. In another workshop, discussions seeded by videos on 'collaboration' led to an exercise in which students defined the forms of 'collaboration' in their proposed project, necessitating that they consider their own power and position in projects of 'social innovation'. Finally, in a workshop for students poised to begin fieldwork with international NGOs, students' definitions of 'community' allowed them to both query notions of expertise and to ask 'what happens if you're seen as part of a community you don't identify with?' These questions provided a crucial framework for their understanding of themselves and their partners in their upcoming work.

Our longest-running use of the project has been within a co-design collaboration between three very different educational institutions in New York City – the Fortune Society, the New School and the Washington Heights Expeditionary Learning School (WHEELS) – called 'The Ship's First Shape was a Raft'. There, we began by asking, 'What does it mean to make a thing for ourselves?'. At each stage of this two year project, students from all institutions engaged in conversations about defining keywords



## Finding 'community', and other critical words

Thalya Casado : Collaboration  
July 8, 2015  
*Collaboration Thalya Casado WHEELS*

**Keywords**  
Collaboration  
Community  
Difference  
Empathy  
Ethnography  
Featured  
Human  
Participation  
Politics  
Power  
Public  
Representation  
Sustainability

**The WWP curriculum**  
The Working with People : Keywords curricular framework builds a foundation for establishing reciprocal relationship-building through student and faculty interactions with community-based groups and non-profit organizations by exploring the complex and contradictory contexts in

Thalya on defining 'collaboration' on the WWP online video archive ([www.working-with-people.org](http://www.working-with-people.org)).

for this work. By making media together, interviewing each other about these keywords, in conjunction with the work of putting those meanings into practice as we learned to collaborate and make things together, students came to redefine the words. By the time of their final video-making, they truly owned words for which, in our earliest sessions two years prior, some had asked 'what the *right* definitions might be'. The project helped support, and reflect back, their reimagining of the world and their power within it. As Yarlin Gomez, a student from WHEELS, defined it, community is something that 'allows happiness in a time of struggle'.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.working-with-people.org>

<sup>2</sup> Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1997. p. 5.

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Catastrophe management and the reconstruction of built heritage have long exceeded the technical and financing dimensions, to include social, cultural

## RECLAMATION OF BUILDING MATERIALS:

DESIGN-BUILD EDUCATION, COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT AND HERITAGE IN  
POST-CATASTROPHE RECONSTRUCTION

and environmental elements, and have recently begun to be reconsidered as a multi-dimensional challenge. While emergency practices attempt to respond to the most pressing needs, several other issues arise such as: the appropriate regeneration of the urban fabric and use of fitting buildings materials; the social acceptance and participation in the reconstruction; the cultural

pertinence to specific social contexts; and the huge loss of a valuable built and intangible heritage, thus increasing the effects of alienation which is suffered by the victims. In this article, we describe how our experiences – based on design-build research and teaching methods – articulate the enhancement of identity preservation, by re-valuing domestic cultural heritage and the engagement and empowering of the affected community by means of local organisation towards economic, social and material resilience.

Reclaiming Heritage is an initiative focusing on post-disaster reconstruction that includes social and cultural values through the reuse of building materials, first triggered by the 2010 earthquake in Chile. In 2014, an international group of volunteer architects and students continued the work near Port-au-Prince where the consequences of the 2010 earthquake were still to be dealt with. Working with 30 families and an organised cooperative composed of 20 Haitian volunteers, the team set to recover and refurbish 30 houses in the outskirts of the city, a semi-urban area in Croix-des-Bouquets, funded by the international NGO SELAVIP (Latin American, African, and Asian Social Housing Service), and by DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service). The houses, originally self-built between 2006 and 2009, had suffered diverse degrees of damage, from light to complete destruction. The work assumed that the existing, destroyed houses were an asset of the families that needed to be recovered and consolidated in order to avoid further damages and losses. The student team could experience the whole life cycle of the buildings, an abstract, if not altogether, absent concept in their education, by closing the loop from a destroyed to a rehabilitated building. The main materials recovered and reused were the destroyed houses themselves. In the worst-case scenarios, the foundations and the floor slabs, but also concrete blocks and rubble, timber beams, tin roofs, doors and windows were reused.

### DESIGN-BUILD

The intervention was based on a comprehensive evaluation of 136 houses in the Villages of Galette, Dignerons, Roche Blanche and La Ferronais. Based on this evaluation and on the situation of the families, 30 cases were selected for intervention, while at the same time a local cooperative of volunteers was organized. The work was based on 'design-build', an already established method, and widespread as a pedagogic tool for architecture students to learn



## Reclamation of building materials



Reclaiming Heritage is a worldwide collective team founded in 2011 at the TU-Berlin that works on exploring the potentials of using reclaimed building materials for a sensitive post-disaster reconstruction. See: <http://www.reclaimingheritage.org>

building construction by building themselves. The 'European Design Build Knowledge Network', a platform documenting many experiences subscribing to the method and its results, defines Design-Build Studios as 'a teaching and research model enabling students to take responsibility for developing balanced future living environments, undertaking architectural projects from design to realization'.<sup>1</sup> An additional emphasis was put in our case on the enhancement of identity preservation by re-valuing domestic cultural heritage and on the engagement and empowering of the affected community by means of local organization towards economic, social and material resilience.

Departing from the engagement of students, previous experiences in Chile and in Haiti showed the relevance of engaging the community in the reconstruction work in order to increase not only the relevance and

<sup>1</sup> European Design Build Knowledge Network (EDBKN). <http://edbkn.eu>

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acceptance of the built result, but also the quality and impact of the process of construction itself in social contexts struck by catastrophes. Usual reconstruction practices, in their urgency, tend not to involve the community appropriately, resulting in unsustainable and alienated products, and undermining the identity and quality of life of the inhabitants. This questions the role of the user, of foreign aid organisations (as our own) and the appropri-

Tottenham Delivery Off  
53 Moorefield Road N1  
**Saturday**  
**12 noon**  
**Other Collections**  
Additional collections may be made through the last time shown.

ateness and acceptance of the technical solutions. The loss of valuable built and intangible heritage occurs widely and is part of the effects of the damage and loss suffered by the victims. While most of the sanctioned heritage is repaired, the valuable domestic, non-monumental sites are unfortunately often neglected. This raises questions of how to recover not only the material but also the cultural assets damaged or lost with a broader scope at a domestic level, in order to prevent the uprooting of the community.

*Our experience suggests an enormous potential is available from an engaged building site experience for the education of young architects in developing understanding of the user's perspective, and others' expectations*

#### OBTAINED EXPERIENCE

The hypothesis the project supports is that an increased value can be attained by recovering the cultural and identity value embodied in materials in addition to their material value, in particular for non-monumental buildings. Reclamation is explored as an alternative to the existing practices of building social housing in a post-catastrophe context because it has the potential to retain architectural and cultural traditions while being economically attractive in existing social networks. Building exercises by architecture students usually remain bound to the construction and structural problems, emphasizing the study of a prototype. In this case, we sought to articulate these problems with the question of local context by means of building with a community and not for a community. Our experience suggests an enormous potential is available from an engaged building site experience for the education of young architects in developing the understanding of the user's perspective, the cultural background and expectations in a specific context situation. The relevance and impact of this experience can be multiplied when the work is shared with an involved community, provided the appropriate incentives and funding exist; and when the work bears transverse objectives, encompassing the community's direct needs and the students' disciplinary aims. In Haiti in particular, the role of international aid is problematic and regarded with skepticism by the locals. The engaged, practical role of the students while building with their own hands contributes substantially to build trust and a positive work atmosphere. At the same time, material requirements, time, budget, etc., impose constraints to the scope and feasibility of the work, which – being a necessary problem to address – entails a substantial responsibility when working with a community.



In a world more globally integrated than ever before, the built environment disciplines face the challenge to address both local and global phenomena

## PERFORMATIVE URBAN EDUCATION



Observation of pedestrian movements, Cuenca, 2014.  
Photos by María Susana Andrade, Karen Delgado,  
Juan Cristobal Alvarado, Daniel Tello and Alexis Parreño.

as well as their reciprocal dynamics. During the last decades, these dynamics changed drastically, responding to different logics. A simple and linear relationship between need, demand, and offer, and their resulting production and consumption processes is turning into a complex matrix of strategies and policies in increasingly specialised and fragmented urban environments. Urban education needs to adapt to equip students with appropriate knowledge and multiple sets of tools to encounter these challenges.<sup>1</sup> This knowledge needs to incorporate not only theoretical insights but also locally applied knowledge, and especially increasing the social and political commitment to these local cases.<sup>2</sup> Scholars have argued that this kind of acquisition of urban knowledge requires an education beyond the classroom, which examines the margins of its own disciplinary protocols, and which is less informative and more performative.<sup>3</sup> More specifically, a pedagogy that allows students to acquire knowledge not only as passive recipients of information but also as active constructors of knowledge through engaging in lived space situations. While first lessons are learned in several test cases, to date little attention has been paid to models of performative teaching across different contexts and backgrounds.<sup>4</sup>

How can we tackle the margins of disciplinary protocols and bridge learning and acting on an international level? In what way can we profit from a performative teaching approach to open up academic frameworks?

### MARGINS OF DISCIPLINARY PROTOCOLS: BRIDGING LEARNING AND ACTING

The need for, and the challenges of, international urban education are shaking prevailing teaching approaches. One core aspect is that international urban education cannot only be based on mediating disciplinary facts and understandings as a linear accumulation of isolated competencies, but has to enable students to iteratively construct knowledge through action and reflection *in-situ*. Hence, educational models are needed which





allow for the flattening of disparities between abstract – international – bodies of knowledge and concrete socio-spatial environments and their specific

*Facing the challenge of internationalizing urban education, action-based teaching approaches open a valuable test field for reflecting on the correlation of urban thinking and practice, rather than putting a focus on the production of new theoretical knowledge*

urban parameters. As a test case the Bienal Iberoamericana de Arquitectura Académica (ARQA) 2014 offered an international platform for teaching architectural and urban design as well as a public forum for reflection and debate on international teaching approaches.<sup>5</sup> During one week, local and international professionals from various disciplinary fields introduced a plural set of methods experimenting with performative teaching, ranging from field research to 1:1 installations. However, the common denominator was the envisaged commitment of scholars, teachers and professionals to a specific site and theme. All outcomes were oriented towards action and reflection, more than pronouncing discourses or defining conceptual approaches. At different scales, on-site explorations and real live interventions lead to a critical discussion among the international participants – professionals and students alike – about local as well as more global phenomena of urban environments.

Hence, the ARQA '14 offered a possibility to identify a series of local paradigms through engaging in specific urban set-ups and to reflect global commonalities as well as disparities against a wide body of international expertise. These experiences and insights obtained from them seemed to be more related to questioning than to producing knowledge, tackling not only the detected and studied phenomena of space production but also, more importantly, their changing reciprocal dynamics.

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Local dynamics of urban space, market hall in Cuenca, 2014.  
Photo by Kris W. B. Scheerlinck.

#### INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES:

##### OPENING-UP ACADEMIC FRAMEWORKS

Higher education is still relying on traditional boundaries, be it the discipline or the socio-cultural background. International education approaches require dismantling these boundaries. Against this backdrop, the format of the ARQA '14 is considered an auspicious

approach to step-by-step opening-up academic frameworks: the very multiplicity and simultaneity of the international event enriched the overall pedagogic experience. By bringing together multiple teachers, each from a different background or discipline, and inviting them to implement specific educational techniques, coherent with their expertise or interest. The academic event resulted in cross-learning dynamics, obtaining additional insights in the different themes and sites. This way, the premise to discuss the multiple approaches and outcomes was coherence and relevance,





Site visit, Cuenca, 2014. Photo by Daniela Konrad.

more than pursuing right or wrong. Ultimately, a model of process-oriented knowledge creation has been tested, which embraces the application of an international body of knowledge(s) rather than the mere acquisition of isolated and often disconnected facts. In that sense this format is not only allowing discussion and reflection over existing approaches, methodologies and tools for teaching, but is also an experimental approach to test novel academic education constellations – and get international professionals and students into common learning situations.

1 Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies. The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. Bristol: Verso, 2001.

2 Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: University Press, 2005.

3 Beatriz Colomina, 'Radical Pedagogies in Architectural Education'. *Architectural Review* 1138 (2012): 78–82; Peter McLaren, 'Revolutionary Pedagogy in Post-Revolutionary Times: Rethinking the Political Economy of Critical Education.' *Educational Theory* 48 (1999): 431–462.

4 Examples of academic action-teaching at higher education institutions exist across the globe, e.g. Urban Research and Design Laboratory at TU Berlin or Streetscape Territories at KU Leuven. There are also relevant examples of non-academic groups involved in action-teaching, e.g. Centre for Urban Pedagogy, New York.

5 Bienal Iberoamericana de Arquitectura Académica (ARQA), Universidad de Cuenca, Ecuador, March 2014.

**Maria Augusta Hermida** is an architect and full time Professor in Architecture and Sustainable Cities. She is Director of the Environment and Population Research Department and the Sustainable Cities Research Group at the University of Cuenca, Ecuador, and partner at *Duran&Hermida arquitectos asociados*.

**Daniela Konrad** is an architect, Senior Lecturer and Researcher in Architecture and Urban Design. She is co-founder of the *Urban Research and Design Laboratory* at Technische Universität Berlin, and partner of the architecture and engineering practice, *Büro KL*.

**Kris W. B. Scheerlinck** is an architect, spatial planner and urban designer. He is Program Director of the International Masters in Architecture at KU Leuven.



An intercultural educational approach aims to facilitate dialogue, exchange and reciprocal understanding between people of different cultural back-

## CONSTRUCTING CULTURAL TERRITORY

grounds. We are interested in the spatial attributes of interculturalism, and not just the social phenomena. Territory is never generic; it is always cultural, embedded in the politics of space and identities, pro-

duced, and in flux. Therefore we speak of cultural territory.

Our three labs, as part of the Urban Lab+ network of urban laboratories, are investigating methods of mapping cultural territory, negotiating specific contexts. Each lab attempts to put together a palette of mapping tools to construct cultural territory. KRVI A looks closely at local practices and sub-cultures towards formulating alternative futures. Their tools include mapping narrative geographies, histories, actor-networks, and spatial typologies. LABA employs maps to construct an intercultural terrain of relationships and establish a territorial commons. UNICAL develops participatory methods to map shared space through the creation of a collaborative digital platform.



The Dharavi Nagar Map.

### *KRVI A – Mapping subcultures: The Dharavi Nagar Map*

In the mapping of Dharavi, a large informal settlement in the centre of Mumbai, KRVI A's urban lab redrew territories over the official sectoral planning wards. These territories were formed by local community groups in their efforts to organise themselves. The map served as a counter map to the government plan for urban renewal allowing for a recasting of the notion of the planning unit from the sector to the Nagar.<sup>1</sup> This opened up avenues for mobilizing community-based planning methods.



Iceland's Central Park.

### *LABA – Mapping territorial commons: Iceland's Central Park*

Lab a's territorial constitution for Iceland maps one of Europe's most valuable resources: common ground. Within the evolving and paradoxical relationship between urban and nature, which is the focus of lab a's research, the largest continuous unsettled area of Europe in Iceland's wild heart, becomes an 'Icelandic commons' – both a land of production and a place of desire. An artificially preserved piece of nature, which is however, common property. Lab a's constitution states that this area can be developed providing construction fulfils the criteria of diversification, industrial synergy and multi-functionality as well as demands of ecology and locality. Our exploration of the cultural territory has revealed a relationship between 'inclusion' and such spaces where natural and cultural resources are closely aligned, even indistinguishable. The Icelandic commons aims to provoke this condition.



### *UNICAL – Collaborative mapping: Calabria's spaces.*

The students of the University of Calabria Urban Design Lab are participating in an experimental project of building a collaborative

map of the territory. The project, using a territorial communication platform of collaborative mapping, builds a collective map that plots a new, shared vision of the territory.<sup>2</sup>

*Thinking about intercultural urban education requires attention to the spatial as well as the social. Territory is never generic, always embedded in the cultural politics of space and identities, always produced, always in flux. Therefore we speak of the cultural territory*

This collectively-built map has the ability to represent not only the morphology and shape of the space, but the territory as perceived by those who live within it and experience it every day. This map locates different kinds of shared spaces, which could constitute a new intercultural territory.

Two conceptual frameworks emerge from these three mapping projects with students: everyday cultural negotiations of urban individuals and the common ground of shared resources. These negotiations form intercultural territories that challenge and transgress the hardline boundaries of administrative territories and official plans. These maps are alternative maps in the sense that they attempt to understand how conflicts, experiences of urban individuals and their shared resources constitute territories.



Calabria's informal space: a bowling green in a street.



Calabria's user-built space: a thermal bath.

**1** In the context of the slum, the Nagar refers to a small neighbourhood unit, formed by the residents. In the case of Dharavi, these nagars registered themselves as housing societies to actively negotiate with the plans for urban renewal.

**2** <http://www.mappi-na.it>, CEO Ilaria Vitellio – Città Open Source.

**Nancy Couling** is an architect and doctoral assistant at Laboratoire Bâle in the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland.

**Paola Cannavò** is an architect and Associate Professor at the University of Calabria in Italy, working in the UrbanDesignLab with engineer and PhD Researchers **Alexandra Middea** and **Silvia Paldino**.

**Shweta Wagh, Sonal Sundararajan** and **Rupali Gupte** are Assistant Professors at Kamla Raheja Vidyavidyalaya Institute for Architecture and Environmental Studies, Mumbai, working on projects through its Urban Lab, and the Design and Research Cell.



## LET'S PLAY DINNER: A BOARD GAME AS A LEARNING PLATFORM BETWEEN POLITICS, ACADEMIA AND EVERYDAY LIFE

The streets of Johannesburg are supposed to be changing. From an urban layout that blueprinted the apartheid ideals of segregation and racial discrimination in space, 'Joburg will [...] become a model city where all its residents will have equal access and prosperity [...] irrespective of race and gender'.<sup>1</sup> Executive Mayor for the City of Johannesburg, Councillor Mpho Parks Tau announced this in May 2013 with the introduction of the *Corridors of Freedom (CoF)*, a strategic series of transport arteries linked to mixed-use development nodes with high-density accommodation.

**ROSETTENVILLE** Along one of the future arteries of change lies Rosettenville, a suburb 5 km south of Johannesburg Central. It was founded in the 1890s after the early discovery of gold and soon became home to white Portuguese migrants, followed by a wave of Mozambican and Angolan arrivals in the 1970s and other African Nationals, in particular after 1994. Today 'Rosettenville exemplifies many of the issues and concerns faced by low income suburbs in Johannesburg, with poorer and quite transient populations, often with no consistent income.'<sup>2</sup> Working situations remain grey, statistics opaque, research anecdotal and deeper explorations dangerous.

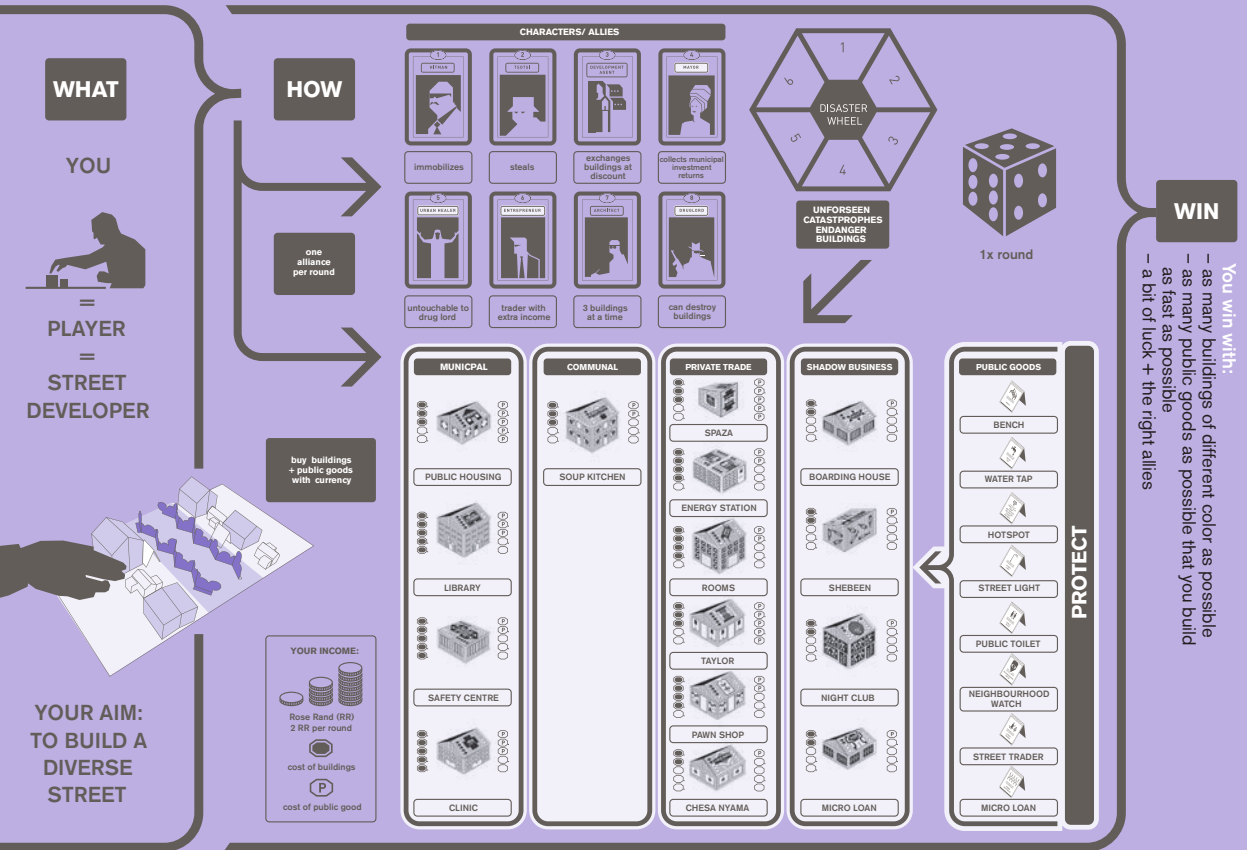
**CITY STUDIO** Parallel to the realities of the Corridors of Freedom project – deadlines linked to capital budget timeframes rather than contextual planning – students and researchers of the Rosettenville Studio had the opportunity to study the self regulation of everyday life in the area.<sup>3</sup> They moved between load-shedding, xenophobic attacks, drug deals, informal spaces, illegal Compact Discs, African spinach, parks, churches, and clubs, and into backyards and rooms. And while the traditional educational outcomes – the design of public spaces, housing proposals, transport systems and urban safety – were seemingly met, the larger aim remained challenging: to produce research that was relevant for local communities and based on actual findings about their every day lives. One of the enduring mysteries of the area was the lack of understanding of the broader communities due to access and communication issues. The gap between top-down planning (by the city) and bottom-up research (in the city studio) became obvious and conflictual. Channels for discussion and exchange were often dangerously blocked. Who was supposed to be learning from whom? How? And what exactly?

**GAME CHANGER** It is against this background that *Street Wise Six* is being developed – a game as an alternative reporting structure in the disguise of a dinner set up.<sup>4</sup> Selected invitees play 'how to build a diverse street' – the purpose being to end an academic studio and begin a conversation on urban access and layers of diversity along the Corridors of Freedom. The pedagogy of the



## Let's play dinner

Rosettenville Studio stretches from the street, beyond the classroom onto the game board into the boardroom, and back onto the street. Densification, new urban alliances and protection against unforeseen catastrophes through private investment in public space are the rules of the game.



Streetwise game manual.

*The set up:* three tables, eighteen players, three moderators and advisers. The table cloth on each table is the larger game board and includes six portions of a street, with eight properties each, serviettes with instructions, a pack of colour-coded cards that turn into buildings, local currency (Rose Rands), public goods, urban allies and a disaster wheel. Each player is a property developer for one portion of the street. The aim is to increase the street's prosperity by increasing its density, equipping its public space and building new, diverse buildings, found in Rosettenville or proposed by the Corridors of *Freedom*: examples include Spaza Lounge, Boarding Rooms, Soup Kitchen, Brothel, Job Centre, Pawn Shop or Urban Vegetables. One game ends after one player has re-developed all eight properties. The winner is determined by adding up the points of diversity, which is measured through color



codes on buildings and the furnishing of the public space. The making of a multifaceted street needs many partners. Only by connecting with influential

characters of Rosettenville like the Urban Healer, Hitman, Tsotsi, Drug Lord, Mayor, the Entrepreneur, Architect and Activist will success be achieved.<sup>5</sup> In each round, the players build different alliances, to speed date with a variety of characters and use their different abilities.

The power of the public good, like benches, streetlights, water tabs, informal trade is significant. Their placement can stop the destruction of buildings and protect from unforeseen catastrophes like the Election Year or Service Delivery Protest. The game can be played with three different sets of rules, to be able to respond to different groups of players (residents, students, academics, professionals, politicians, gamers) and degrees of complexity regarding strategic decision-making and alliances. One of main aims for the development of the game was to literally get different stakeholders around one table and create a platform of learning in urban higher education between academia, politics and every day life.

The first public pilot game was played with city officials, property developers, professional architects and urban designers, academics, students and Rosettenville residents. As a result, the local business

association and developers/activists plan to use the game for a fundraising event in the area and for the demonstration of policy developments. In the meantime the students are meant to improve their knowledge of strategic planning and coalition formation with this active-learning tool. The next game will take place in Rosettenville itself where pilot projects of the future development in the area are currently being realized. The Corridors of Freedom implementation deadline is 2040: who is supposed to be learning from whom, and what? Let's continue to play and see.<sup>6</sup>

*One of the enduring mysteries is the lack of understanding of the broader communities due to access and communication issues. The gap between top-down planning (by the city) and bottom-up research (in the city studio) became obvious and conflictual, channels for discussion and exchange were often dangerously blocked. Who was supposed to be learning from whom? How? And what exactly?*



Streetwise game on 26 June 2015, property development.



## Urban Pamphleteer

1 Corridors of Freedom, [http://www.joburg.org.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&id=8623:corridors-of-freedom&Itemid=114](http://www.joburg.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&id=8623:corridors-of-freedom&Itemid=114)

2 Margot Rubin, 'Rosettenville through the Safety Lens', Final Report Rosettenville Studio, 2015, 8.

3 Rosettenville was the location of a City Studio of Wits University, School of Architecture and Planning, in 2013/14. Rosettenville Studio was a 2-year engagement programme between the people of Rosettenville and surroundings and Wits University, School of Architecture & Planning, under the auspices of CUBES (Centre for Urbanism and Built Environment Studies). The city studio entailed training Architecture and Planning students to work with communities, and to locate their professional practice in real-life situations to disseminate findings to Rosettenville residents in a way that enables them to use them for advocacy and sustainable development. The GIZ and Rosa Luxemburg Foundation financed the Studio.

4 'Dinner' is a reference to business or casual meals as a common format for executive decision making.

5 The initial game development was based on the existing board game 'Citadels' by Bruno Faidutti. It has been amended to the Rosettenville Studio/CoF context and test played with professional gamers and academic advisers. What has remained is the role of each player as devel-



Streetwise game, cards for investment strategies, 26 June 2015.

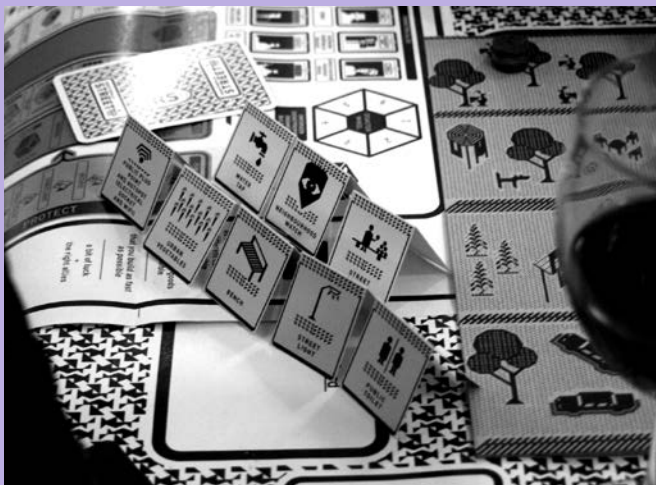
oper of a specific area, the request for diversity and the alliance with given characters.

Street Wise Six Development: Kirsten Doermann, Jenniver van Den Bussche, Kevin Goncalves, Graphic Design: Fred Swart, Game Advisers: DIng Evan Hurvitz, Adam, Marie Huchzermeyer, Sarah Charlton, Margot Rubin, Neil Klug.

6 The game was publicly played on 26 June 2015, as a presentation of the format of a Rosettenville Studio production, and published together with an academic report and booklet, with selected student projects and a 5 min film screening of urban scans.

**Kirsten Doermann** is an architect and Lecturer at the School of Architecture & Planning, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. She was Head of the Rosettenville Studio in 2014.

**Solam Mkhabela** is an urban designer and Lecturer at the School of Architecture & Planning, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. His studio projects in 2013/14 were located in Rosettenville.



Streetwise game, cards for the public good, 26 June 2015.





*The Babel Project* is a 'backyard dialogue' amongst an international group of PhD and Master's students who are part of a wider network of scholars and

## THE BABEL PROJECT: TOWARDS AN URBAN EDUCATION STARTUP

practitioners.<sup>1</sup> During a meeting of the network in Santiago in December 2013 we reflected on what, for postgraduate and research students, being together in an international workshop might enable. Despite our diverse urban programmes (in, for example, Hong Kong, Chile, Berlin) we shared

a particular interest in experimenting with new ways of conducting projects together. We were asking, how could we meaningfully collaborate as students working in very different cultural and geographical contexts? How could we create and share public content within our various urban laboratories, as a form of experimental urban educational practice?

At the same time, we felt that this condition of *working together* and even the word 'project' itself needed more study. In terms of collaboration, what

*We were asking, how could we meaningfully collaborate as students working in very different cultural and geographical contexts? How could we create and share public content across our various urban laboratories?*

we saw ahead was a scarcity of resources, but an abundance of digital possibilities for networking. So we turned our eyes towards social media and mobile devices, which most people readily use daily and which have become native parts of the urban landscape – but which are often considered distracting or unproductive, rather than

having the potential for creating new knowledge, such as they might do in the context of urban education. We observed that in our daily lives we spend a lot of time online, posting and contributing, willingly sharing with others. Anyone with a smartphone is technically capable of producing content, evaluating space, commenting and documenting. And yet, paradoxically, getting people to participate in a project is much more difficult.

When first presenting our aim to use social media and mobile technologies in our experiments, we received a sceptical response about doing something on Facebook or Instagram and reactions like: 'Why don't you start a student blog? There are some really nice examples at my university.' But the idea was never to blog together. The idea was to think further how the *babel* of instant communication around us was changing the act of producing projects, learning, and collaboration between disciplines, engaging with the public or sharing information at school or elsewhere.

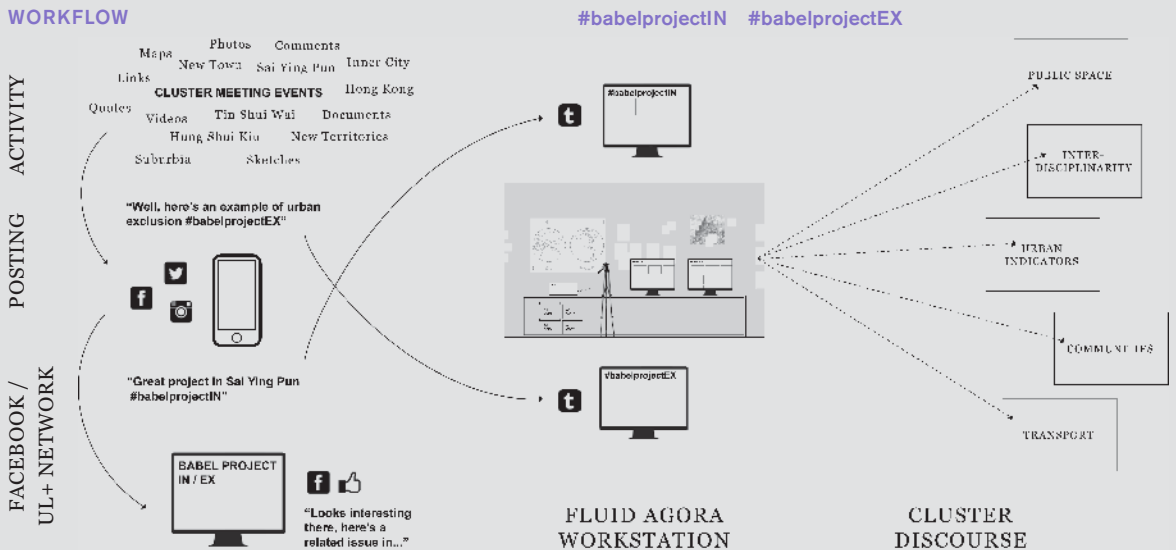
Instead, we thought about the possibilities in digital publishing and manual-making processes as project outputs for any group of people. We discussed curating and designing flows of digital content, ways of hosting interdisciplinary discussions and the modes of their representation, as well as generating spaces in the processes and seeing the processes themselves as potential spatial interventions. But we lacked institutional and financial support, technical capabilities, and even committed participants. To use a tech startup analogy, there existed a *convention* to be



disrupted, but we had no investors for our *app*. Hence we began by simply doing what we could immediately start doing, producing what we could produce at that moment. We started planning and writing manifestos and collaborative documents, designing posters, printing booklets, collecting free reference material, and testing existing popular free digital tools to study their purposeful use as a means of international collaboration, and the everyday accumulation of content by students working on cities in different contexts.

*Maintaining the energy of any educational collaboration is hard without incentives. Similar to the economies of tech startups, the ideas that are pitched do need to get picked up, developed, financed and spread on larger public platforms*

WORKFLOW



Flow chart from the Fluid Agora experiment booklet.

As a first step towards a new form of digitally-mediated collaboration an experiment was run in Hong Kong in April 2014, presenting contested urban spaces for study using 15-second *Instagram* videos. An experiment in Santiago followed in May, utilizing *Facebook* events as a platform for discussions on waste in the city through invited photo posts and commentaries. In December 2014, again in Hong Kong, we attempted a more complex experiment *Fluid Agora* focusing on the themes of urban inclusion and exclusion. By utilising

a multitude of online platforms, we set up a system of collecting content such as Facebook posts, Instagram photos, emails and Tweets created by the workshop participants into curated *IN* and *EX* streams in real-time. In addition, we provided various stamps and stationeries for manual production on

**Mika Savela** is an architect, designer and curator. He is completing PhD research on the cultural and curatorial representations of contemporary urban China at The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

**Mo Kar Him** is a practicing architect and designer living and working in Hong Kong. He is currently conducting his PhD at The Chinese University of Hong Kong.



1 The Babel Project / 巴別塔計劃 / El Proyecto Babel / Das Babel Projekt was initiated within the global URBAN LAB+ network's *interdisciplinarity cluster*, involving scholars and students from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and the Technische Universität Berlin. All collaboration produced by the Babel Project is freely accessible on the project's website: <https://sites.google.com/site/thebabelprojectsite>

site, trying to harness the momentary energy of the agora into a method of fluid, instantaneous, yet concrete production.

What have we learned so far? Firstly, the plain *doing* highlights the challenging nature of interdisciplinary and internationally comparative urban student work. Mostly, the project has turned into a platform of learning to do and learning to try the so-called new ideas. While we have realised any future steps need institutional backing to address urban education, the most exciting part has been the widening of the project's speculative scope. *Backyard Babel* has evolved into a potential model for relevant educational inquiries and methods of



Design sketch from the Fluid Agora experiment booklet.

producing urban projects, certainly of interest to future urban pedagogies and laboratories. We are now asking, what could be achieved by a better understanding of the *Babel* in terms of pedagogical parameters? Who can be teaching or initiating 'urban education startups'? How could we start designing set-ups for these kind of practices, even outside traditional academia? As individuals, we have also learned that maintaining the energy of any collaboration is hard without incentives. Similar to the economies of tech startups, the ideas that are pitched do need to get picked up, developed, financed and spread on larger public platforms to achieve demand. Through such learnings, it is perhaps possible to re-orient what started as an anti-project into a project.



## E:STUDIO: VIRTUAL CITY > FUTURE CITY, A BLENDED EDUCATIONAL PLATFORM

*The city is a model for education: collective, stimulating and never complete. Could online workspaces simulate this environment so that the production of urban knowledge is like the production of the city itself?*

The city is a model for education. It draws people and things into it, it proliferates interaction and endeavour. It shapes and is shaped by actions individually and collectively over time, sometimes through massive change and mostly through incremental accretion. The city builds itself over time, produces knowledge, and is never finished, like education. Academic practices strive for this level of interaction, collectivity and engagement. Knowledge is built through experiences, formal and informal, isolated and collaborative, discrete and continuous. Academic activities are by contrast predominantly planned and controlled; fragmented components of a broader institutional framework. While many forms of cooperative engagement between academic and external groups exist (e.g. work placement, industry-sponsored teaching, study tours), the boundaries between them typically persist. How might education align more closely with the mechanisms that shape and transform the city, especially programs that are directly focused on shaping the city? How might the city itself be a model for design education rather than the repository

for or appendix to it?

e:Studio is a 'blended' – virtual and physical – platform that links academic and professional practices.<sup>1</sup> Striving to simulate the spatially dense and heterogeneous environment of the city and the myriad interactions it engenders, e:Studio identifies productive spaces of 'the city' and reassembles them in a virtual environment. The goal is to curate a range of educational, professional and public modes of engagement around urban projects. Using the city as its structural, spatial, social (and pedagogical) model, the e:Studio is designed around a series of virtual 'portals', or spaces/windows within the online platform, each dedicated to a specific design activity and mode of interaction, but cohabiting within the e:Studio platform (or virtual city). A close proximity of the student workspace to the industry consultation space to the public exhibition space, for example, endeavours to foster new ideas, projects, disciplinary alignments or critiques between the participants. The (work

within the) e:Studio site thus builds discretely and collectively, incrementally and rapidly, as in the city.

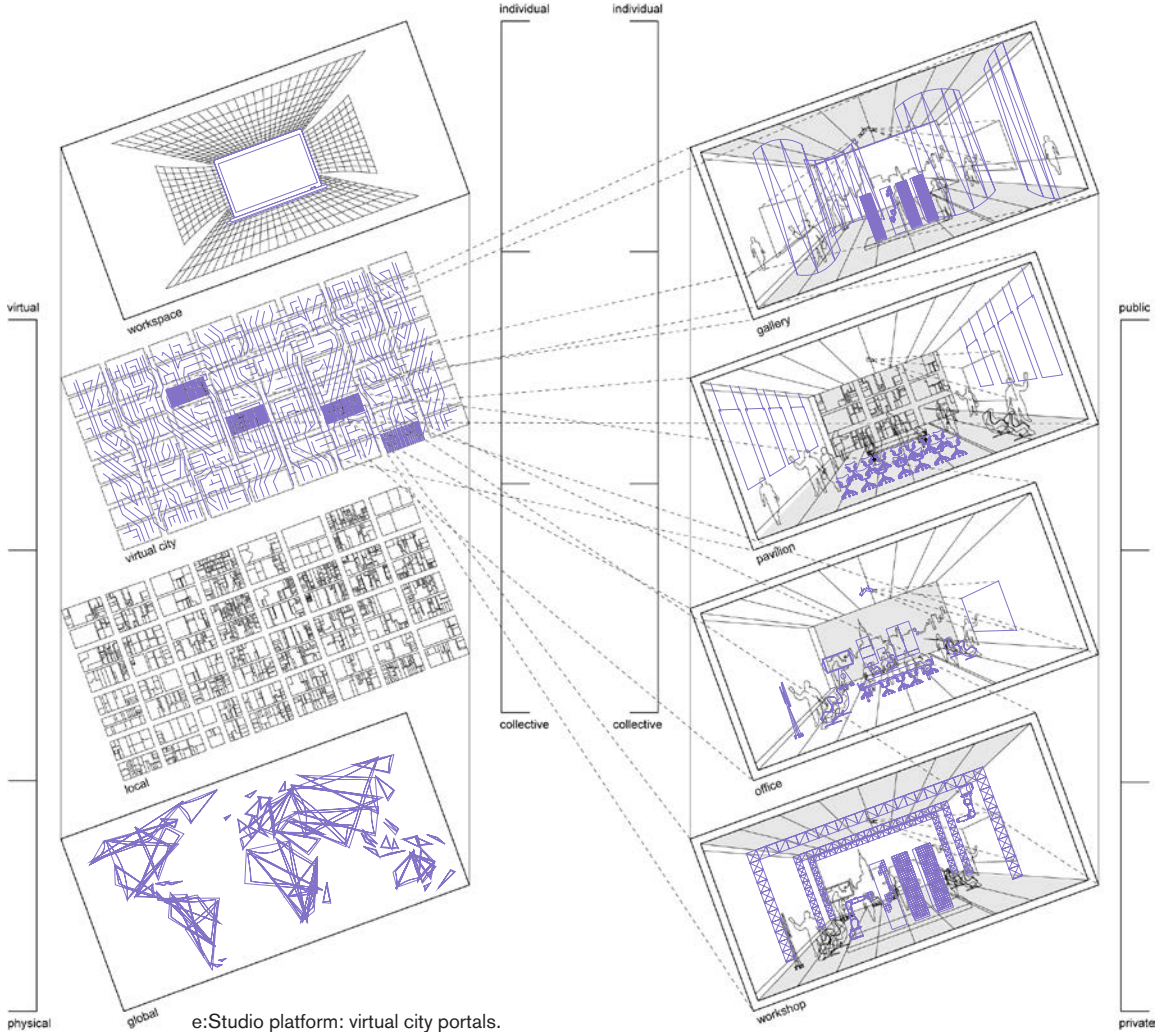
Indeed the key attribute of cities that e:Studio aspires to is the condition of urban proximity – that is active, dense conglomerations of people, spaces and activity. The vitality and identity of cities is pro-

<sup>1</sup> The development of the e:Studio platform for the Master of Urban Design program at RMIT University was supported by Global Learning by Design through the Office of the Dean, Learning and Teaching.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Sorkin, 'Advice to Critics.' In *All Over the Map: Writings on Buildings and Cities*. New York: Verso, 2011. 149.



# Urban Pamphleteer



e:Studio platform: virtual city portals.

duced through proximity – of spaces to other spaces, and people to other people. Proximity establishes the mechanisms through which cities are ‘designed,’ as relationships between spaces and people in a dense environment are constantly shifting, bifurcating, and consolidating. As spaces and urban communities grow, reconfigure and otherwise change, the city is perpetually emerging and permanently incomplete. As the architect and critic Michael Sorkin describes it: ‘Our convention (after Alberti) is to understand the city as a big house, but this is wrong. Scaling up, more meanings are absorbed and more perspectives available; the city emerges. Just as our own personalities are formed in interaction, so architecture [and the city] is forged in the crucible of collectivity.’<sup>2</sup>

The e:Studio platform samples spatial types dedicated to specific activities: office/professional, creative/productive, social/municipal and public/event. These spaces are linked to traditional design teaching activities: individual desk crits, group pin-ups, formal reviews and public exhibitions. Academic, professional and

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community participation is invited and curated within each virtual-urban space and across them, locally and globally. Each 'portal' is thereby designed for a particular type of engagement and aimed at a specific cohort, described below.

*The Workshop* is a space of daily production. This is where peers collaborate, ideas are produced and tested, processes experimented with, and skills and projects are developed. Like a design studio, students, instructors and invited academic guests work within this space.

*The Office* is where projects are presented, discussed and developed with professional colleagues. It is a virtual work-integrated environment, where projects are situated within practice. The Office integrates students within the multidisciplinary world of built environment professionals – alongside architects, planners, council authorities, developers, clients. Like an intensive workshop or pin-up, students, instructors and invited professional colleagues have access to this space.

*The Pavilion* is where projects and ideas engage the public through structured discourse. Projects are presented within a community forum, including stakeholders, users or residents. This is a space for debate and discussion, to present ideas and gauge social impact. Like a symposium or public lecture, students, instructors and stakeholders attend events in this space.

*The Gallery* is a public exhibition of selected work. Projects are curated and framed within the agenda of the studio and programme, as well as within a local and global discourse. Like a semester exhibition, this space is open to the public and launched twice per year for a two-week show.

The e:Studio platform is designed to allow design students to engage with practitioners and those that influence, regulate, use, construct, finance or otherwise participate in processes of design and urbanisation. As a workspace, the platform is ultimately about production – of ideas, projects, design, methods and public discourse. The platform aims to augment existing pedagogical models by broadening networks and modes of collaboration online, ultimately to stimulate (or at least simulate) approaches toward shaping future cities. It is confronting the silo-isation of knowledge and practice – the separation of players and controlling of information between them – by constructing an inclusive, laboratory-type space for the production of urban knowledge, collaborative techniques and unplanned interactions. By integrating academic, professional and external participation, the e:Studio platform intends to flatten hierarchies across built-environment specialists or the processes that

influence design. The more knowledge it creates, the more valuable it becomes, not just educationally but in seeding new projects or initiatives within the city. And given it is online, participation is not limited to a local community. Comparative debates around similar initiatives globally dispersed can take place, cities in conversation with each other.

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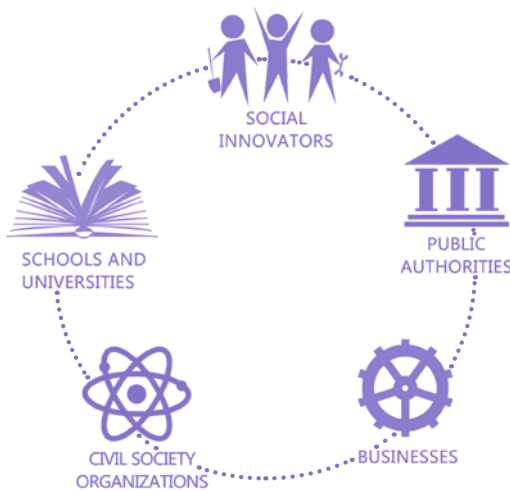
Institutions, designed in a historical era in which the government handed out basic services to citizens, are nowadays required to design new types of

## THE COLLABORATIVE AND POLYCENTRIC GOVERNANCE OF THE URBAN AND LOCAL COMMONS

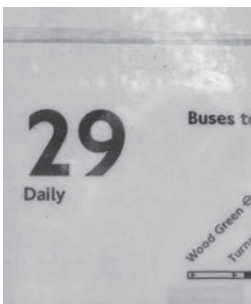
services in collaboration with citizens. In order to define better forms of urban and local governance, it's necessary to study and elaborate a new paradigm, to find new theories, policies and development models. A new institutional and economic system based on the model of collaborative/polycentric urban governance in which citizens, the community, local businesses, knowledge institutions, and civil society organisations take care of and manage the commons together with public institutions could be a solution worth exploration. Trends in global urban theory and policy show that collaborative ways to manage urban and rural space and common/collective goods, might be a valid theoretical and research investment.

*Universities should establish laboratories of urban collaborative and polycentric governance inspired by the theory of the commons*

Traditionally the mission of universities has been two-fold: (i) training young minds; and (ii) carrying out research activities to deepen knowledge and understanding of social, natural, and economic phenomena. In recent times, universities have started to liaise with their surroundings. In the beginning, it was just the business and industry sectors. This was inspired by the triple helix approach to foster the role of universities in technological and economic innovation processes. The concept of the Triple Helix of university-industry-government relationships was initiated in the 1990s by Etzkowitz (1993) and Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (1995), and built on the work of Lowe (1982) and Sábato and MacKenzi (1982).<sup>1</sup> It interprets the shift from a dominating industry-government dyad in the Industrial Society to a growing triadic relationship between university-industry-government in the Knowledge Society. Now,



building on Elinor Ostroms' work on rural and environmental commons, the work of Christian Iaione has shed light on the need to (a) develop at the urban and local level forms of collaborative and polycentric governance of the urban/local commons in order to foster transition towards a COLlaborative, COgnitive, COMmons-based society and economy in an increasingly congested and urbanising world;<sup>2</sup> (b) the necessity that universities start to get involved in community organising and social and



1 C.U. Lowe, *The Triple Helix—NIH, industry, and the academic world*, 1982.

2 See Christian Iaione, 'The Tragedy of Urban Roads'; Id., *City as a Commons*, 2012; Sheila Foster, *Collective action and the Urban Commons*, 2011.

3 LabGov – The LABoratory for the GOVernance of the Commons (<http://www.labgov.it>) was founded in 2011 at the LUISS University Guido Carli in Rome with the intent to create an educational and research platform able to train a brand-new breed of scholars, professionals, experts in the governance of the commons: young women and men able to create forms of partnerships between citizens, NGOs, public authorities and local businesses and the industry fostering the smart specialization of urban and local communities.

4 <http://www.labgov.it/governancelabs>

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economic development processes and become the engine of the economic and social transition of urban and rural areas towards CO-cities and CO-territories. With the specific intent to establish the 'fourth mission' of universities, Iaione initiated and developed the educational and research programme LABORatory for the GOVernance of the Commons (LABGOV) at LUISS Guido Carli University in Rome, later joined by other scholars such as Sheila Foster from Fordham University and Paola Cannavò from University of Calabria.<sup>3</sup>

The Lab predicts an experimental approach, directly in the field, could be propaedeutic to the construction of new instruments of collaborative and polycentric urban and local governance, new rules could be written only as a result of direct experience in cities and on the territory. Students are therefore trained through practical experience in the field. In the case of LabGov innovation consists in the renewal of the role of public authorities, citizens and the way they interact. The new collaborative instruments to achieve urban transformation can generally be found in the existing rules and therefore through a collaborative eyeglass re-reading those rules. When necessary, the LabGov process foresees the establishment of new regulatory tools but only through co-design prototypical sessions, and after an experimentation phase of the prototype on the ground.

Thus LabGov could be framed as a place of urban and local experimentation. Rome, Bologna, Mantova, Palermo and Battipaglia are the current experimentation ground. In particular, in Battipaglia, a city where the City Council was dismissed on allegations of mob infiltrations, *LabGov* is testing a prototype of a collaborative process to build a commons-

based urban master plan to transform the city and the territory into a collaborative commons and a 'collaboration pact for organized legality' leading towards the incorporation of a Community Land Trust (CLT). All the social innovators (i.e. active citizens, makers, digital innovators, urban regenerators, urban innovators, etc.), public authorities, businesses, civil society organizations, knowledge institutions (i.e. schools, universities, cultural academies, etc.) are involved in the process through an institutionalizing and federalizing process leading towards the establishment of a public-private-citizens/commons/community partnership. This partnership will give birth to a local peer-to-peer physical, digital and institutional platform with the aim to accompany and safeguard the correct implementation of the 4 strategic guidelines of the master plan: Creative Battipaglia (collaborative culture), Reclaimed Battipaglia (recycling soil and buildings), Public Battipaglia (reconstructing public spaces), Ecological Battipaglia (environmental issues for a







Roundtable discussion, Battipaglia, Italy, 2014.

sustainable development of the territory). The Organized Legality CLT should act as a democratic, non-partisan, and community-based urban commons watchdog and urban commons organizer.

The LabGov education and research protocol is structured in workshops, interactive co-working sessions that are held at LUISS Guido Carli and field-work that is developed in all the governance labs open in different cities and territories in Italy.<sup>4</sup> Fordham University will soon open a LabGov in the Bronx, in New York City. Students are trained to be leading figures for public administration and policy makers; they develop collaborative processes for the management of the commons and then get involved in real life commons-based projects in cities and territories. The implementation of this educational and research model requires specific inter-disciplinary competences and students working side-by-side with the most prominent scholars and professionals in the field.



In the past decade, grassroots organisations, as community-based and self-organised movements, have emerged in Brazil to deal with existing massive

## LEARNING WITH AND FROM EACH OTHER:

LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS IN TERRITÓRIO DO BEM, VITORIA, BRAZIL<sup>1</sup>

as to analyse the role universities are playing. Since obtaining and creating knowledge often means moving within complex or competing social settings, feeling supported or overwhelmed by complexity can be a similar experience. The key lesson that can be learned from this study is that navigating the complexity was made possible by close cooperation among municipality programs, NGOs and academic partners.

### TERRITÓRIO DO BEM

Território do Bem is a typical Brazilian favela, built on hills, situated in Vitória, Espírito Santo, in south-east Brazil. About 10% of the city's population – almost 35,000 people – live in the area, which is located near central and middle-income neighborhoods, but has significant negative social and economic indicators. Brazilian favelas resulted from economically disadvantaged people and rural immigrants struggling for space in cities from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. Although there are still areas with significant numbers of disadvantaged inhabitants, they contain plural identities in terms

of material and symbolic existence.<sup>2</sup> The area has been subject to federal and municipal public policies aimed at poverty reduction. Since 2000, NGOs have been working in the area. However, the processes of segregation and social exclusion are still prevalent.

### THE EMERGENCE OF COOPERATIVE WORK

In 2003, the NGO Associação Ateliê de Ideias (AAI) started its activities in the area, aiming to promote local development. Its most relevant project is a community bank that opened in 2005 and supports the conservation of wealth within the community by circulating and providing micro-credits in a local currency. The need to empower the community to engage and drive the community bank led to the constitution of the community forum *Forum Bem Maior*, where community leaders and dwellers meet regularly to evaluate the loan applications

and to discuss the community's endeavours. *Forum Bem Maior* acts as a political forum achieving a

1 This work was conducted from 2011–13 as part of the 'Housing-Manufacturing-Water for the Urban Poor' project. See <http://www.hmw.tu-berlin.de>

2 Jailson de Souza Silva, *O Que é Favela, Afinal?*. Rio de Janeiro: Observatório de Favelas do Rio de Janeiro, 2009.

3 P. Borgatti and G. W. M. Rauterberg. 'LivingLab: A White Paper.' *IPO Annual Progress Report*, 2000. <http://www.idemployee.id.tue.nl/p.markopoulos/downloadablePapers/LivingLabWhitePaper.pdf>

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consistent and fair dialogue. In 2006, AAI launched the housing programme, *Bem Morar*, with housing credit and technical assistance for the renewal and

construction of houses. As the program included technical assistance and the production and use of an environmentally friendly soil-cement brick, it encouraged the participation and interaction of the local state university, Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (UFES) that was facilitated by two factors: geographical proximity and the community's internal organisation.

*The quality of cooperation of varied actors, and the existence of effective arrangements to facilitate collective learning and knowledge transfer at regional or local level, are critical for success*

The first is a contingency but the second is due to persistent work. In 2009, community leaders, AAI representatives and professors from UFES came in contact with the living lab methodology.<sup>3</sup> The group thought that having a European Network of Living Labs label could open up possibilities for obtaining funds and support through international partnership. The application made the group formalize as Habitat Living Lab. The group network structure has emerged and continued to evolve, with the objective of organising the search for new technological and social solutions for the pressing problems, with an interdisciplinary approach.

#### LEARNING FROM ACTORS, PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS

*Long lasting cooperation* The collaboration between specific actors has been stable for a long period (more than a decade). The Habitat Living Lab brought together partners that were already active, organising them around formal projects. The commitment to achieving compromises in the projects is an important element for all parties involved to overcome the difficulties that often occur when different organisations are working together.

*Heterogeneous learning network* The quality of cooperation of varied actors, and the existence of effective arrangements to facilitate collective learning and knowledge transfer at regional or local level, are critical for success. Stimulating collaboration based on formal projects and flexible network structures can be considered as an effective knowledge facilitator in this case. Today, the community estimates to have more power in dialogues with relevant players, such as the municipal government. Its involvement in many projects, during a long period, makes it more attractive for future projects, creating a positive, reinforcing cycle.

*Knowledge creation and dissemination* Both the NGOs and the University have acted as effective local knowledge promoters. A public university, like UFES, represents for the network a ground for knowledge creation and dissemination. UFES' more removed view of daily life in the region allows different perspective considerations inside the projects, decreasing conflict situations and enhancing a learning dialogue among the actors.

Therefore, stimulating networks that link community-based movements to academia, government programmes and NGOs through formal projects emerges as an effective way to produce positive change.



# URBAN GROWTH 2005-2010

3.2%

Africa

2.8%

Arab States

2.4%

Asia

1.7%

Latin America  
& Caribbean

1.3%

Oceania

1.3%

N America

-0.3%

Europe

The world's urban population in 1900 220,000,000

The world's urban population in 2013 3,307,950,000

The high rates of urban migration across the globe will create demand for city building and all the related professions that make up the built environment.

Source: Guardian / UNFPA

# GOAL 11

MAKE CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS INCLUSIVE,  
SAFE, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

More at [sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal](http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal)

Adriana Allen, Camillo Boano, Alexandre Apsan Frediani, Caren Levy,

Over 60 years the UCL Development Planning Unit has been collaborating with its partners internationally to enable learning in the field of development planning and urban design through its masters programmes, as well as through action-research, short courses and workshops. A shared goal of advancing social and environmental justice and inclusive development in the global South has led the DPU to develop a pedagogical ap-

## FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR DE-CENTRED URBAN LEARNING

proach that involves learning flows within and between local and global scales. This collective contribution aims to articulate five key principles that underpin this pedagogical approach, which has at its core a commitment towards knowledge co-production. These are that learning is *active, relational, collective, embedded* and *reflexive*. We believe that these principles emphasise the need for a decentred, open approach to global education for urban futures, which emphasises the possibilities for progressive change and critical

*De-centred learning implies that meaning-making theory and practice are constructed during learners' journeys between their previous experience and background knowledge and their encounters with the experiences and knowledges of others*

endeavours. Decentred learning implies that meaning-making theory and practice are constructed during learners' journeys between their previous experience and background knowledge and their encounters with the experiences and knowledges of others. When applied to how we 'learn cities', such interaction enables learning through a co-exploration of the city, under-

pinned in our approach through the five abovementioned principles.

Our commitment to practice seeks to integrate the notion of being *active* in our teaching that is, in an on-going balancing act between withdrawal and engagement, cultivating a collective imagination sensitive to the potential of transformative action. Questioning predefined agendas, our research and learning attempt to outline a practice-based agenda that is critical and inclusive, whilst negotiating complex, unstable and often conflictive development processes and practices. This entails enabling learning that focuses both on activist/insurgent approaches and on methods for institutional development that seek out the construction of a periodic consensus between government, business and civil society actors. Postgraduate students engage in real and on-going claim-making processes, in London as well as in cities of the global South. Their assignments are embedded in processes of urban change and their work aims to interact with on-going efforts to bring about more social, spatial and environmental justice.

Our approach to urban learning is also *relational*, as it acknowledges that the conceptual categories and situated realities through which we make sense of the urban are predicated on relative positions in existing discourses, material processes and socially constructed identities, meanings, spaces and ecologies. This approach highlights power relations at the heart of development and planning, making visible both constraints to transformative





Field trip activities in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, MSc Building and Urban Design in Development. Photo by Camillo Boano.

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change as well as new spaces of possibility. In Kisumu, Kenya, for example, we have been partnering with the international NGO Practical Action, local NGO KUAP and the Kisumu Informal Settlement Network (KISN) to investigate the constraints and opportunities for more democratic urban governance produced by the 2010 constitution and the decentralisation process. In doing so, we have needed to negotiate our position as members of a 'global university', working in Kisumu through established linkages to an international NGO (Practical Action). This presents a particular problematic in relation to working with KISN on issues of city level democratisation, as KISN's role in representing informal settlements in Kisumu to public institutions already has a history of being mediated by 'external' development institutions, in ways that at times have displaced their relationships with city level government.

The history of our own institution has led to a strong emphasis on the need to reflect on development planning as a collective enterprise. In terms of our pedagogical approach, learning that is *collective* implies that knowledge production is understood as a common endeavour pursued by networks of individuals, community organisations, NGOs, as well as public, private and academic institutions that share a progressive axiology. This is an approach that starts by questioning the role of the expert and how discourses of expertise are constituted in particular contexts. Such a partnership has, for instance, enabled the co-creation of field trips as strategic learning moments for the various actors involved. For students, they consolidate students' understanding of being strategic, reflexive and collaborative in their approach to urban practice. At the same time, field trips and the research and preparations that underpin them contribute to our partners' knowledge and methodologies in support of communities' mobilisation towards more socially and environmentally just urban futures.

We prioritise the establishment of action-learning platforms with local partners in a way that allows the assignments addressed by learners to be socially and spatially *embedded* in local concerns and contestations over urban change, while contributing to challenge exclusionary processes and constructing more just futures. Learning is embedded when approached as a process inherently related to the practices, lived experiences of concrete social groups as well as to their abstract conceptions of what the city is and ought to be, in specific settings and locations. This means recognising urban



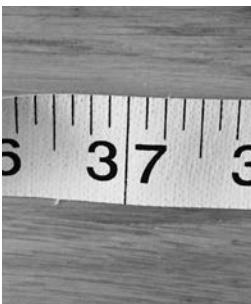
Field trip activities in Lima, Peru, MSc Environment and Sustainable Development. Photo by Rita Lambert.



development planning as a situated practice, building on critical engagements with material and discursive processes that work towards or against transformative alternatives.

Finally, following the need to question the epistemological paradigms that influence development planning practices, we emphasise a pedagogical approach that is *reflexive*, acknowledging that our learning is influenced by internalised world views. This leads to an inherent questioning of theoretical and methodological apparatuses, with a view to developing new understandings and creatively producing renewed possibilities of thinking and action.

These principles underpin a position on critical urban learning in the field of development planning and design that hopes to de-centre learning by enabling counter-hegemonic spaces and practices of knowledge production. This position has been shaped in collaboration with colleagues beyond the DPU, and we aim to continue our collective engagement with our partners in learning journeys that create multiple possibilities for progressive change.



## STRATEGIC URBAN PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHANGE

When it comes to urban practice, governments, civil society and the private sector face quite different challenges globally. It is not just that by 2050 an estimated 75% of the world's population will be urbanised. It is that the highest proportion of such rapid urbanisation will take place in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, in which cities confront very diverse political economies and socio-cultural contexts. These are also places where planning models from the global north, inherited through colonial and post-colonial development processes, have been least able to offer all citizens a decent quality of life.

The uneven geographies of urban change pose at least three critical challenges to the internationalisation of planning education as it is offered in the global north. Firstly – and it is worth restating – internationalisation of the curriculum does *not* mean imposing northern theory and practice on increasing numbers of international students. The multiple challenges of uneven

*Internationalisation of the curriculum does not mean imposing northern theory and practice on increasing numbers of international students*

urbanisation and urban development demand the deconstruction and reconstruction of theories and methodologies at the intersection of urban, planning and development studies and practices. Secondly, such a reconstruction calls for a transdisciplinary approach. Planning education and the research supporting it must be active, relational, collective, embedded and reflexive.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, these principles translate into substantially different urban planning pedagogies than those usually practised in traditional European and North American contexts: pedagogies that engage with ‘translocal’ learning processes in which the learning experiences and cultures of an international body of students, steeped and grounded in diverse, complex and unequal urban realities, are woven into innovative learning practices in other urban contexts.<sup>2 3</sup>

Field trips, which are increasingly prevalent in built environment education, offer one such opportunity for such learning to take place. They can provide a powerful learning moment for students, enabling the critical and active application of theory and knowledge acquired in the classroom to real-life environments and processes. But they can also take on an unpalatable and extractive dimension. And when the trips involve the crossing of global north and global south, the risk of development tourism becomes particularly acute.

We respond to this pedagogic dilemma through the co-construction of field trips within a broader transdisciplinary and ethical approach to education for global urban futures. Central to its approach, is the embedding of annual fieldtrips within multiple layers of engagement between the faculty and students and the community groups with whom they work ‘in the field’. Student’s work – and indeed their presence – in the field represent





1 See 'What kind of knowledge production for transformative planning?' *dpu*news 58 (2014): 2–5; <http://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/latest/publications/newsletters/58.pdf>

2 Adriana Allen Adriana and Caren Levy, 'Constructing Translocal Learning for Planning Practice', a paper presented at the African Association of Planning Schools Conference, *South-South engagements: new Southern perspectives on urban planning* (Cape Town, 17–19 November 2014).

3 There are between 50–55 different nationalities in the DPU in any one year.

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particular moments within long-term partnerships committed to communities' quests for socio-environmental justice – partnerships which span teaching and learning exchanges, research and training and advocacy work. Such moments, shaped in collaboration with community groups and their partners, become strategic sites for catalysing urban transformations through knowledge co-production, knowledge sharing and, often, advocacy. Through mapping work, focus group discussions, time-mapping and other field methodologies rooted in thorough classroom-based diagnostic preparation and development, students learn from and co-construct strategic collective action with communities in response to their pressing urban development planning challenges. These jointly-developed strategies invariably entail increased recognition of communities excluded or ignored by dominant planning practices and, as such, field trips become strategically woven into community groups' tactics: the presence and work with international students acts as catalyst for often hard-to get engagement with decision-makers and the demonstration of alternative modalities of doing urban development and planning.

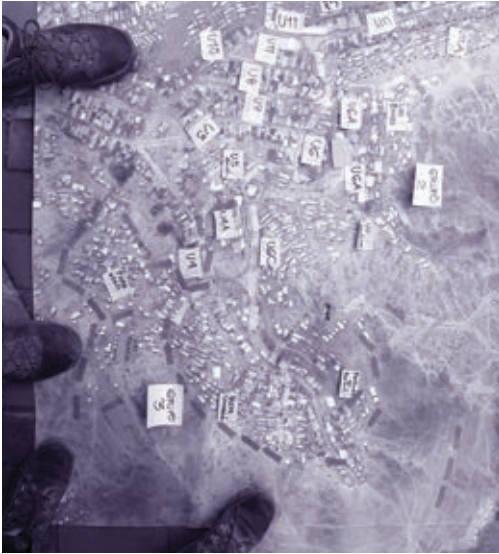
Such embedded and co-constructed approaches to field trips are powerful, creative moments of learning and action.

They provide a space, unrivalled in the curriculum, for students to explore and revisit their role as grounded, ethical and reflexive future development practitioners. Yet such rich learning is only possible through the careful crafting of field trips within a transdisciplinary approach to urban development planning pedagogy. Innovative, socio-economically just approaches and responses to particular, locally specific urban development challenges need more than sporadic interventions implicit in constructed learning spaces like seminars and workshops. They require nesting within gradual and cumulative learning trajectories, combined with long-standing and nurtured relations of equivalence with local partners. In turn, such learning pathways with a wide range of international students and the enduring but ever-changing relationships with local partners, constantly challenge and push the frontiers of our pedagogy. Internationalising planning education needs to learn to dance through such intricate demands if it is to remain relevant in our fast-changing, unevenly urbanising and globalising world.



Like geography, urban planning relies on all sorts of spatial distinctions, conceptualizations and assumptions to construct its knowledge. However, how we go about this knowledge construction, and when we focus on the pedagogy of urban change, is rarely discussed, either in geography or planning circles.<sup>1</sup>

## LEARNING THROUGH MAPPING



Fieldwork involves the constant moving back and forth between the reading of the map and the territory and the writing process. Photo by Rita Lambert.

Our central contention is that the co-production of planning knowledge, which relies on an equal and reciprocal relationship between various stakeholders such as ordinary citizens, policy makers, non-governmental organizations and academics amongst others, is intimately linked to the activation of co-learning through space and 'in place'. Moreover, we also deem this kind of learning important for gaining a greater understanding of how social and spatial relations produce one another. Pedagogically, we use maps and mapping, not as mere representations of what is 'there' or 'here' but as a means to reconfigure the framing of urban change, linking epistemological, ontological, axiological and methodological questions on how we learn the city with others and with what consequences.

This discussion draws from the experience gained through the three-year journey of *Learning Lima*, a collaborative action-learning

platform established by the authors in 2013, together with various institutions and collectives of the urban poor in Lima.<sup>2</sup> The platform aims to understand urban trajectories which produce or reinforce injustices in the city. Thus, interrogating the city spatially offers an entry point for understanding how and where these urban injustices need to be disrupted.

In this article, we explore three critical and interrelated sites of mapping: the *reading*, *writing* and *audiencing* of maps,<sup>3</sup> and how these are used within the learning process of a one-year Masters programme.<sup>4</sup>

### LEARNING SPATIALLY: FROM 'HERE' TO 'THERE'

Lima, the second driest metropolis in the world, is first apprehended from

London by an international and multidisciplinary student body through the questioning of who maps, what is mapped, why and with what consequences. At this stage, maps are taken as statements that frame the city in a particular way. Their critical analysis makes visible the hierarchies established,

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and the relative agency attributed to different human and non-human actors, such as the natural environment.

*Mapping is used to foster critical reflection and awareness, helping to grasp the spatiality of problems at various scales*

The reading of maps also makes evident the processes that shape the territory and the actions they justify; whether by portraying nature as a threat that needs to be controlled and tamed through large infrastructural projects, or the urban poor as

invaders of public land, settled in high risk areas and deserving to be evicted for their own safety. Thus, the overlaying and critical analysis of a range of maps, produced by various institutions, becomes a means to capture the spatiality of injustice. These representations are useful tools because they show who and what is left 'off the map' and why. Therefore, they facilitate an examination of the socio-environmental power struggles at play, helping to position the actors and agencies involved in driving them.

This process also allows the identification of maps that need to be written, in order to contest hegemonic representations which foster exclusionary socio-environmental processes. Although at this stage, the interrogation of maps is undertaken through a desk study, this first diagnosis is later subjected to further scrutiny in the field with those who map and those who are mapped. As the year progresses, the scale of interrogation shifts from metropolitan Lima to specific case studies and from secondary to primary research, enabling not only the reframing of existing diagnoses, but also the development of strategies for intervention.

#### **LEARNING THROUGH THE WRITING AND AUDIENCING OF MAPS**

The site of writing of maps, or their production, focuses on the collective decision of what to map, how to map it, and towards what end. It also encompasses the actual process of data gathering in the field and its representation.

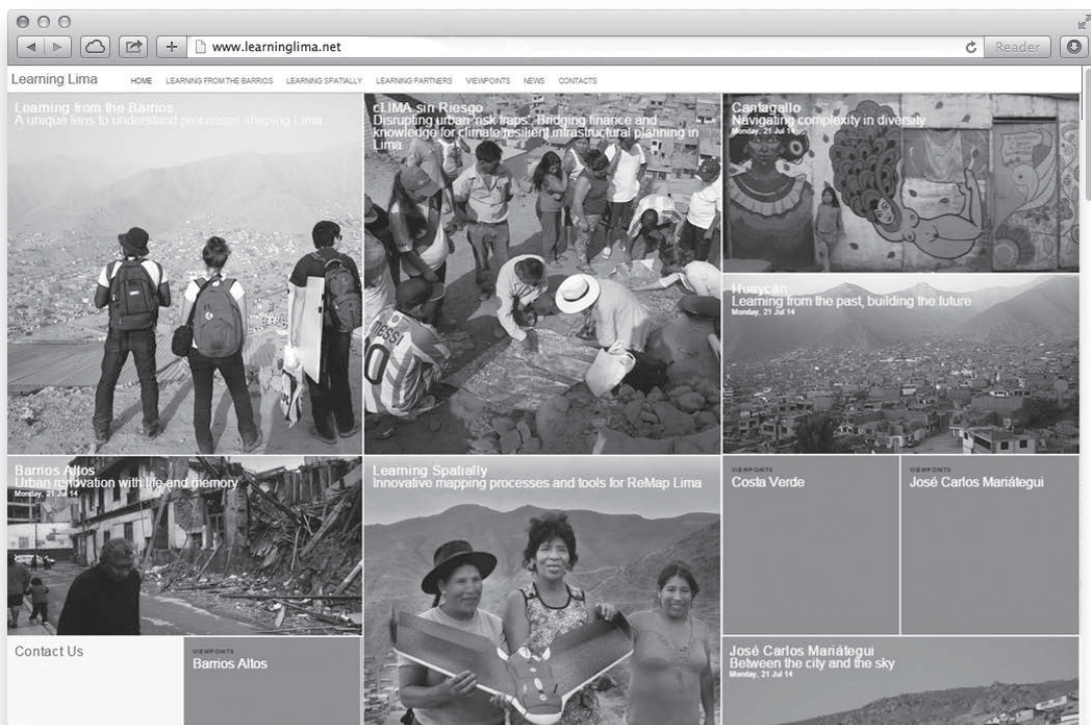
Adopting a participatory action-learning approach once in the field, the reading and writing of maps is opened to wider groups, thereby bringing forth a multiplicity of voices, particularly those that are often excluded from the decision-making processes.<sup>5</sup> Mapping is hereby used to foster critical reflection and awareness, helping to grasp the spatiality of problems at various scales.

Finally, the audiencing of maps by a wide range of actors, including community-based organizations, government institutions, academics and activists, is sought through the research process as a means to reframe dominant

discourses. The inclusion of otherwise marginalised knowledge in the writing of maps raises its visibility, moving it from a more local scale to gain greater legitimacy and authority. This becomes a means to contest exclusionary representations of particular people and territories, opening-up and expanding the space for dialogue, negotiation and action towards more just outcomes.

The process involves making collective decisions on who should see the maps, where they should be displayed, and the discussion of new interpretations emanating from the contrast of existing





Learning Lima website: [www.learninglima.net](http://www.learninglima.net)

- 1 Adriana Allen, Rita Lambert, Alexandre Apsan Frediani, and Tatiana Ome, 'Can Participatory Mapping Activate Spatial and Political Practices? Mapping Popular Resistance and Dwelling Practices in Bogotá Eastern Hills.' *Area* 47 (2015): 261–271.
- 2 The research platform has many forms of *operandi*, which also includes bringing staff and international students from the DPU's MSc in Environment and Sustainable Development, together with marginalised communities in selected neighbourhoods in Lima in a participatory action-research process.
- 3 Here we adapt from Gillian Rose, 'Teaching Visualised Geographies: Towards a Methodology for the Interpretation of Visual Materials.' *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 20, no. 3 (1996): 281–294.
- 4 MSc in Environment and Sustainable Development, DPU, UCL.
- 5 A participatory action-learning approach is based on collective reflection and data collection, together with communities from the case study sites, to determine what actions should be taken.

and newly-written maps. A cyclical process is thereby established as one moves back to the site of reading, evaluating the meanings that emerge. The tactical audiencing of maps allows a transversal reading of different sites of injustice and a scalar jump in the possibilities for advocacy and action. That is, beyond the local site, expanding the network of allies and advocates is used strategically in order to strengthen strategies that contribute towards positive change, and indeed can interrupt the cycle of urban injustices.

The sites of mapping – reading, writing and audiencing – are not only interrelated but also iterative. They show different possibilities for how one can learn the city and provide a spatially and socially grounded way of producing knowledge for action. Moreover, they play a role in facilitating co-learning and the co-production of knowledge through an incremental process of network building of researchers, planners and advocates. In the words of one of the participants from our project:

*'I have learnt that the construction of a map is part of the social construction of knowledge... this for me leads to the power to get things done.'*



Contemporary challenges such as rapid urbanisation and spatial injustices, have to be investigated and tackled by embracing a new and radical mode of

design research. We consider design not as a noun or a set of objects, but rather as a verb and a series of processes that engage with political and social realities.' In doing so, we suggest a shift in design education – that is, the way of thinking, researching and practising design. Design, we argue, must necessarily be collective, active, embedded, reflexive, relational and trans-disciplinary. These six pedagogical dimensions, explored in the paper, foster a constitutive role for urban education in addressing exclusion and inequality, and global disparities in the production of knowledge and space. Our approach is immersed in the ethical and practical tradition of action learning which has been advocated by the Development Planning Unit. The Unit is a leading centre for the education of professionals and practitioners to develop socially responsive, critical and transformative practices to challenge urban poverties, informalities and inequalities.

Focusing on how people shape and reshape urban space, and social relations in their everyday life, with a critical per-

spective over conflicting narratives, students are taken through a 'learning-by-doing' journey in several places across different countries. Such a journey unfolds either metaphorically, through the exploration of remote case studies within the confines of the Studio in London, or literally, by embarking on a field-project (recent destinations include India, Turkey, Thailand and Cambodia). Here, students work with relevant urban actors, to frame strategies of transformation at multiple scales. In both stages, and incrementally, students develop a critical understanding of the ways that the social and the spatial are entwined in urban space through devising and conducting action-oriented and people-centred acts of design research. Students actively engage with the resilience of local communities, and the material conditions and socio-political complexities of a place.

Such an engagement is, by its nature, a collective one, since space and knowledge are recognised as a collective production. Our educational approach starts by questioning the role of the expert and the way in which discourses of expertise are constituted in particular contexts. The Studio unfolds through a continuous dialogue within workgroups – often through role-plays – whereby design is understood as a non-linear process, influenced by the

## **A SIX-FOLD MANDATE FOR AN ENGAGED URBAN DESIGN – RESEARCH EDUCATION**



Dhavari map, MSc Building & Urban Design in Development, Urban Intervention Studio 2007/08.





Socio-spatial construct workshop. MSc Building & Urban Design in Development, Urban Intervention Studio 2014/15.

*Design can frequently produce sterile stylistic exercises, if the system that sustains it is geared towards or complicit in social inequality. A new social and political framework for design education must be imagined and practiced*

1 This urban design research approach is developed through the MSc Building and Urban Design in Development at the Development Planning Unit, UCL.

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multiple and often divergent aspirations of different parties. Students will experience this first-hand in the field, working in close contact with an array of actors, and encountering their disagreements and the different kinds of knowledge they possess.

Knowledge production and learning are necessarily defined within relative positions, in conversation with existing discourses, material processes and the socially constructed and mediated structures of power. It is through unpacking these relational dimensions that students make sense of urban objects and

processes, and identify opportunities for positive transformation.

To say that design research must be active or action-oriented refers to the activation of such potentialities, seeking out possibilities for negotiation. This

attitude is constantly practised in the Studio and boosted in the fieldwork. Here, students engage with people-driven processes of slum upgrading working closely with communities and learning from 'people's technologies', their ability to adapt, resist or change in adverse conditions. Such action entails a reflexive dimension too, especially with regard to the role and position of designers working within

people-driven processes. It is in the apparent tension between the active and reflexive approach that an on-going balancing act between withdrawal from taking action and engagement plays out. While the action-oriented approach promotes a full engagement with a specific place, the reflexive attitude helps to resist from intervention at any cost. Students are encouraged to move away from any solution-focused vision of urban design, and to deal instead with precariousness and informality as constituent parts of urban reality.

The design interventions that emerge from this process are not static design solutions, straightforward or conventional answers but rather flexible, investigative and open-ending narratives. In this sense, our mode of design-research is embedded in the practices and lived experiences of people in specific settings and locations; and relates to multiple subjectivities, emotions and ways of engaging with the world.

Finally, trans-disciplinarity is fundamental to our approach. Not simply as an expansion of focus, but rather as the recalibration of





Bridging Newham art installations, 2014/15. MSc Building & Urban Design in Development.

the research itself, towards a trans-design research that does not fixate on elements, images and forms, but rather on their processes and their potentialities. Design can frequently produce sterile stylistic exercises, if the system that sustains it is geared towards or complicit in social inequality. A new social and political framework for design education must be imagined and practiced.



Studio Global Praxis experiments with architecture and urban design as they intersect with critical theory and a live engagement with the processes of urban change. The studio pedagogy is based on three principles: groundedness, trans-local learning, and trans-disciplinarity.

## CRITICAL LEARNING IN THE STUDIO. A PEDAGOGICAL NOTE

*Groundedness* refers to the immersive engagement with the processes conditioning uneven urban development – bringing learning closer

to local communities, and situating creative design explorations within existing debates and contestations around urban space. This positioning of the process of learning closer to local groups stresses the fundamental value of local knowledge and social participation in the transformation of the built environment, as well as the complementarities between different forms of knowledge.

*Trans-local learning* focuses on the construction of multiple sites of engagement, within and beyond the UK, and the cultivation of peer-to-peer links with institutional partners as well as students across localities. These processes of collaboration are centred on the recognition and strengthening of each constituency's own knowledge, whilst fostering communities of learning that are enriched by the comparison of different interpretative frameworks, visions, strategies, and practices.

*Trans-disciplinarity* involves the exposure of design thinking and practice within a wider range of knowledges – including that of communities as well as urban practitioners and professionals beyond the field of architecture. The aim is to capitalise on design and architecture as methods, while simultaneously emphasising the combination of different disciplines and forms of knowledge needed to address the complexity of contemporary urban transformations. These principles translate into design-based research and international collaborations that develop through immersive activities within the communities involved; which are designed in collaboration with a diverse range of partners; and where learning exchanges are fostered with urban dwellers, as well as practitioners and students from different institutions and disciplinary fields.

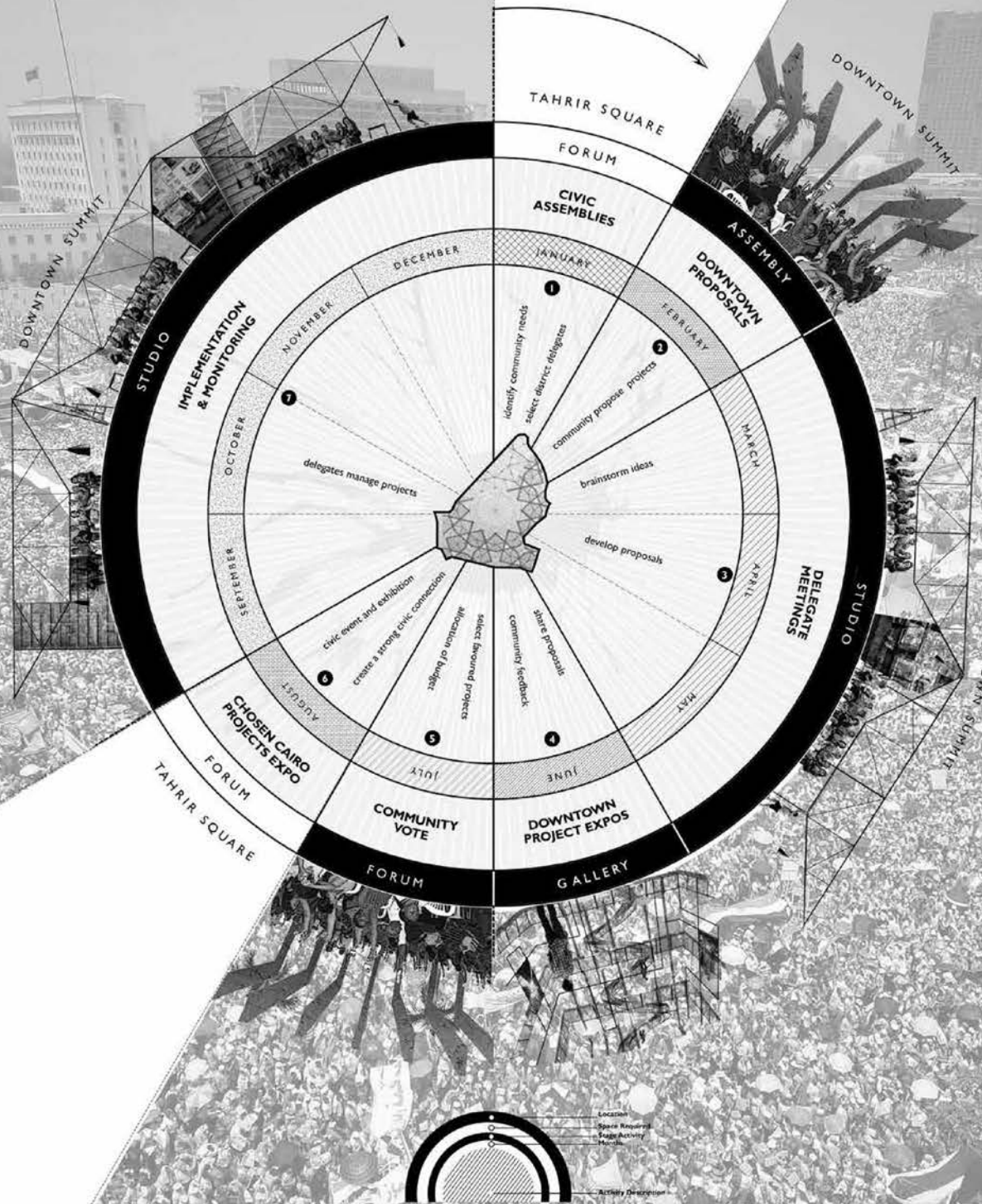
**Global Praxis** is a postgraduate studio at the University of Sheffield, School of Architecture. In 2014/2015, the studio was coordinated by Beatrice De Carli and Teresa Hoskyns and included students from the MArch, MA in Architectural Design (MAAD) and MA in Urban Design (MAUD) programmes.

**Beatrice De Carli** is a Lecturer and Course Leader of the Urban Design MA at the University of Sheffield, and an Associate at Architecture Sans Frontières UK.





'Participatory budgeting plan for the Downtown Cairo Revival Trust: Spatialising the annual cycle'. Image by Paul Bailey, University of Sheffield School of Architecture, Studio Global Praxis 2014–2015, tutor Teresa Hoskyns.



DOWNTOWN REVIVAL TRUST  
Participatory Budgeting Plan  
Spatialising the Annual Cycle

Ben Campkin, Paola Alfaro d'Alençon, Neil Klug, Daniela Konrad,

As an international network of academics and students linked to urban laboratories involving various disciplinary and professional intersections, we

# PRACTICE ORIENTATION IN URBAN EDUCATION:

A CALL FOR A CRITICAL APPROACH

have been collaboratively investigating 'practice orientation' and 'laboratorial' approaches in urban education.<sup>1</sup> We are situated in very different contexts: Johannesburg, Berlin and London. But these cities are also interconnected, with shared histories and professional traditions. In their contemporary forms they also have strongly related manifestations of global real estate and development trends

which contribute to social exclusion and injustice.

Our activities have necessitated not only discussion of how practice-oriented approaches can be realised, but of what is driving the desire for them. What are the political, economic, societal or technological contexts that are pushing the institutions that are setting built environment educational agendas to promote practice-oriented education? Why are specific universities following suite? We have also been debating the potentials and limits, ethical frameworks and challenges, and institutional barriers that arise.

The challenges and barriers are different, but not as different as might be imagined, from those Henri Lefebvre remarked upon writing in Paris in 1968:

The urban phenomenon, taken as a whole, cannot be grasped by any specialist science [...] While it is true that the urban phenomenon, as a global reality, is in urgent need of people who can pool fragmentary bits of knowledge, the achievement of such a goal is difficult or impossible [...]<sup>2</sup>

The laboratories in which we work grapple with this in diverse ways. They share a commitment to experimental, adaptable and engaged approaches to urban education. If the global urban reality presents problems and complexity, it also engenders new forms of collaboration. In relation to cities as distinct entities this fundamental laboratorial quality is captured by Jane Jacobs when she writes that 'cities are an immense laboratory of trial and error, failure and success, in city building and city design'.<sup>3</sup>

## THE DEMANDS OF LIVE PROJECTS

Our project has provided a rare and privileged opportunity to think across the contexts and traditions of our own disciplines, institutions and cities *in situ*. This has enabled us to gain insight into the ways that built environment pedagogies are embedded in, and informed by, the histories of those specific educational and professional institutions, and indeed cities and built environments themselves. Live studios in architectural and urban education – with projects linked to current urban development situations – feature in all of the contexts that we work, but with varied motives and drivers that reflect individual and institutional values, positions and imaginations.



*In what ways can laboratorial or practice-oriented urban pedagogies contribute to more just and inclusive cities?*

on-going evaluation.

In examining such collaborative projects across our labs and beyond, we note that the tangible and less tangible processes and outcomes involved were often multiple and messy. Faculty and students had to take risks, face ethical dilemmas, and balance their own desires, needs and skills with those of other urban agents. There was an importance attached to the creation of public outcomes, and ones that would have a constructive role within the development context. In developing critical pedagogies engaged with live issues and development contexts, a foremost

*There is an urgent need to increase the structural incentives to encourage inter-institutional collaboration and the sharing of research and teaching content, methods and experiences*

lesson has been that educators must be attentive to the potential of cities and citizens to actively shape urban education (rather than being passively shaped by it).

In the turn towards increased practice orientation in built environment education, we ask: in what ways are laboratory or practice-oriented pedagogies contributing to more just and inclusive cities (or, conversely, where do they risk contributing to injustice and exclusion)? This is a primary question for anyone designing urban syllabi. Recently engaging in a debate about urban education sociologist David Madden has remarked that ‘urbanization and urbanism are, in some sense, ruling the day, but critical urbanism is not’.<sup>4</sup> At the level of governments and other powerful institutions there is a hype about cities and urbanisation, and the urban future. But that does not equate to critical urban practices. In universities, contradictions are made evident when, for example, commercially-oriented estates’ strategies do not align with critical urban teaching and scholarship, or actively undermine it. Madden was responding to an analysis of urban education by the geographer Alex Schafran who has recently given a call to arms with which we concur:

The production of urban knowledge is not the future of or the hope for progressive urbanism; the production of the knowledgeable is. Yet educational reform has only scratched the surface over the past few decades; nothing close to the type of revolutionary reform in the mass study of cities and regions has occurred. Certain exciting initiatives are underway [...] however, this is but a fraction of what is needed. Urban citizenry will not simply be claimed as a right by insurgent actors [...] it must and can be developed through an urban education system, which recognizes that the 20th-century academy—which is brilliant at developing knowledge and the knowledgeable in the sciences and humanities—is not constructed to produce urban citizens in the 21st century.<sup>5</sup>





African Planning Schools' field trip to Makoko informal settlement in Lagos, Nigeria. Photo by Neil Klug.

As educators we have been keen to ask how practice-oriented approaches can contribute strategically to producing new knowledge that will help to address the most critical urban challenges: long-term, deeply politicised issues which necessitate inter- and transdisciplinary approaches to issues of social justice related to resources, ecology, infrastructure, wellbeing and health, housing and services, livelihoods and education. These all present 'wicked problems', with multiple answers, sensitive to changing conditions, and which require governments, international agencies and higher education institutions – even if highly competitive – to strategically share resources internationally.<sup>6</sup>

There is an urgent need to increase the structural incentives, as well as create change at faculty, departmental and individual levels, to encourage inter-institutional collaboration and the sharing of research and teaching content, methods and



1 The Urban Lab+ initiative is funded by the European Union's Erasmus Mundus programme and includes eight urban laboratories from across the world: Technische Universität Berlin (Germany), École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (Switzerland), Università della Calabria (Italy), Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (Chile), Wits University (South Africa), Kamla Raheja Vidyaniidhi Institute (India), Chinese University of Hong Kong (China), University College London (United Kingdom). We have convened the symposium in partnership with the Urban Lab+ network.

Urban Lab+ runs under the Erasmus Mundus Programme Action 3 from 2012–2015. <http://www.urbanlab-plus.eu>

2 Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003 [1970]: 53.

3 Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Vintage, 1961: 256.

4 David Madden, 'There is a Politics of Urban Knowledge because Urban Knowledge is Political: A Rejoinder to "Debating Urban Studies in 23 Steps".' *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 19 (2015): 297–302. doi: 10.1080/13604813.2015.1024056.

5 Alex Schafran, 'Debating urban studies in 23 steps.' *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 18 (2014): 321–330. doi: 10.1080/13604813.2014.906717.

6 Although the contexts of urban higher education in which we work are all 'international' to different degrees, there is a necessity in all of them to address a diverse international student body and ensure that positionality and difference are acknowledged and productively drawn upon in the educational process.

experiences. Scholarships and strategic student exchange programmes are also urgently in need of investment. In this endeavour the varied operational contexts and traditions, and differential resources available within institutions, have to be acknowledged and addressed. These are requirements in order to strengthen the capacities of education in the built environment disciplines to contribute effectively to addressing critical urban challenges now and into the future.

Addressing the 2030 Sustainable Development goal to 'make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and successful' necessitates vigorous rethinking of global partnerships in education whereby experimental, experiential, collaborative and comparative pedagogies are properly resourced.<sup>7</sup> Are such endeavours encouraged, or even possible, within the restrictions of tightly programmed professionally-accredited architecture, planning and built environment syllabi? We have found that systems for the evaluation of academic research outputs and academic promotion criteria can discourage collaborative pedagogic research, as well as creating challenges for certain kinds of practice-oriented teaching such as where communities are involved through partnerships with community-based organisations. It is important for such challenges to be proactively addressed at a structural level.

Different national research foundations for example in the UK, South Africa and Germany have recently prioritised funding for research on urban transformation, broadly conceived.<sup>8</sup> Yet the separation of 'research' funding from that made available for teaching innovation or public engagement is problematic if there is a need to move towards more engaged modes of research-based and community-engaged education. The divisions between these different kinds of knowledge production are particular to specific places and times rather than universal. In our investigations, the most successful teaching linked to live urban development relied upon highly situated, bespoke or *ad hoc* configurations of educational practice and knowledge production that would not be easily accommodated within the formal requirements put in place by universities, or the funding or auditing bodies that shape their activities. The studios or laboratories which organised such work often had a precarious status in the context of the institutions in which they are housed. This included, to different degrees, financial insecurity (mixed, inconsistent and project-centred funding sources, lack of long-term strategic funding); limited resourcing in terms of staff hours and space; tension with or isolation from existing or traditional departmental structures which are hierarchical in ways that are in tension with collaborative cross- and- interdisciplinary working.<sup>9</sup>



**7** Nancy Odendaal. 'Experiential Learning in African Planning Schools: Reflections on the Association of African Schools (AAPS) Case Study Project', *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Urbanos E Regionais* 15 (2013). See also Jennifer Robinson's arguments for new comparative methods to support understandings of the urban which are open to insights from any urban context: Jennifer Robinson, 'Comparative cross-disciplinary methods in urban studies'. In *Engaged Urbanism: Cities, Methodologies*, edited by Ben Campkin and Ger Duijzings, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, forthcoming 2016.

**8** See for example calls from the UK's Economic and Social Research Council, the South African Government's National Research Foundation and the German Research Foundation.

**9** This is based on findings from the Urban Lab+ survey of urban laboratories. More details will be posted at <http://www.urbanlabplus.eu>

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## HOW TO ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION

Assuming that educational structures do begin to accommodate and even encourage more comparative and collaborative approaches across institutions internationally, how should educators working on the frontline of urbanism approach practice orientation, and what might be the benefits?

Firstly, there is a need to critically reflect on the drives and motivations for such approaches, and the distinction between engaged urbanism as a critical educational endeavour that prioritises more inclusive cities and one that is primarily benefiting professions or higher education institutions themselves, or the built environment industry as a commercial endeavour.

Secondly, comparative approaches are most successful – indeed are only possible – where there is a sufficient understanding of local peculiarities and global processes – with globalisation understood as an historically formed contemporary condition.

Thirdly, it has been vital to consider not only content but also method and pedagogy. Our most productive discussions have involved negotiating commonality and difference in our terminologies, institutional cultures, professional and educational practices: suggesting the need for a critical global urban pedagogy which is situated and adaptable. Furthermore, while awareness of difference has been important in our discussions, the naive position of 'outsider' has also been helpful in terms of revealing and challenging existing models and practices which unreflexively reproduce established professional identities and structures. The ensuing discussions, which are intrinsically difficult, and comparative and practice-oriented approaches as a whole, are not easily accommodated, and are scarcely resourced, within intense pressurised models of contemporary built environment education which focus on product or solution, over process, critical discussion and complexity.

The ultimate question facing critical urban educators – and one we have encountered first hand in our network – is of how to operate within institutional restrictions and creatively use limited resources. Institutions are often notably

risk averse, with unhelpfully standardised or overly bureaucratic approaches to ethics and practice engagements. Yet if the rigidity of neoliberal educational institutions is one of the barriers or intractable challenges working against critical urban education – which often seems to be the case – then there is also energy to be found in recognising and collaboratively addressing this by sharing resources of a practical and intellectual nature.



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