INFORMAL URBANISM - Habitat Universities Thematic Hub
Hosted by: University of Hannover, Germany
Hub Coordinator: Christian Werthmann: werthmann@ila.uni-hannover.de

PART A: Description

1. Name of Hub: Informal Urbanism

2. Main UN-Habitat thematic priorities to which this Hub connect:
- *Urban Legislation, Land and Governance*
- *Urban Planning and Design*
- *Urban Economy*
- *Urban Basic Services*
- *Housing and Slum Upgrading*
- *Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation*
- *Research and Capacity Building*

3. Short description of Hub:

What:
Informal urbanism is defined as the production of urbanization independent from formal frameworks and assistance (if they exist) that do not comply with official rules and regulations. Informal urbanism emerged as an alternative path of city construction in the wake of massive migration from rural to urban environments and the lack of affordable housing and serviced land for some social groups. Informal urbanism comes in many forms, but in most cases emerges as a result of the inability of cities to absorb growth within a formal and planned urban framework due to the absence of affordable dwelling options, inadequate building and planning regulations and lack of suitable housing finance amongst other things that exclude low-income populations from formal sector urbanization. In many countries informal urbanism has become the dominant force of urbanization, and mainly the only alternative to access the city. Therefore, the binaries of "informal" versus "formal" cannot be understood as absolutes. These are working definitions of an urban reality that is much more complex and dynamic.

Informal urbanism ranges from poor rural migrants who build their homes in an emerging community through gradual processes of informal land occupation and consolidation to the developer who subdivides land without complying with all regulations. The "informal" cannot be simply equated to "illegal", since the "informal" may be the only possible way of urbanization in cities where no other options exist; the "informal" cannot be equated to "inferior" or "marginal", since there are many examples where informally developed communities become better place to live than dysfunctional public housing projects and housing estates produced by commercial developers. The "informal" cannot be equated to "poor", since increasingly middle class families (even millionaires) find their housing and place to live in non-formal neighborhoods. Informal urbanism is an urban phenomenon that defies clichés; its only common denominator is its origin. Typically it draws criticism from governments and its institutions, which frequently focus on its negative aspects and see it only as a liability in cities, but it also draws cautious praise by academics, practitioners and community members who look at these settlements as opportunities and see the hidden values, human capital and contribution they make to cities through closer study. Informal urbanisms has often been associated with the phenomenon of slums, informal settlements, squatters, favelas, bidonvilles and a variety of regional and national denominations.

This thematic hub on 'Informal Urbanism' takes a neutral stance—it solely provides a platform for exchange for academics studying the phenomenon of informal urbanization and the advance of

<u>knowledge and understanding in order to improve policies and responses in the future.</u> The 'Hub on Informal Urbanism' seeks an interdisciplinary perspective that views physical, social, cultural, economic, environmental, governance and policy issues as interdependent. The hub supports the development of research and education on 'Informal Urbanism' that can be generally categorized into two stream of activities:

1) studying and better understanding existing informal urbanization, including responses by governments, NGO's and academic institutions in the form of citywide upgrading programs, integration policies and redevelopment approaches

2) studying future informal urbanization, trends and anticipative approaches and strategies that include but not limited to the development of sustainable living strategies for arriving low populations.

Why:

<u>The goal of the hub is to enable academics to make a useful contribution to practices and policies that improve the lives of those living in informal conditions</u>. Currently, municipal attitudes towards informal urbanism range from eradication to neglect to grudging tolerance; sometimes to improvement and rarely to anticipation. This hub will investigate and propose appropriate processes of engagement for academics and professionals to improve and anticipate informal urbanization. This production of knowledge and empirical evidences will improve research and education methodologies on the topic of informal urbanism as well as provide a window for academics to work with and contribute to the improvement of UN-Habitat programs. This will help to mainstream the results of academic production and ideas into the global debate led by the United Nations to improve the lives of urban dwellers as outlined in the Millennium Development Goals.

Who:

<u>The hub embraces an inclusive, inter-disciplinary and inter-regional approach</u> to the investigation of informal urbanism. Many academics are working on issues related to informal urbanism from a variety of perspectives and much can be gained by sharing innovative practices across urban disciplines. For example, a sociologist working on new forms of community participation could engage with a landscape architect or urban planner to share best practices for participatory planning. Or, a civil engineer developing new sanitation systems could engage with an anthropologist to assess the cultural relevance of the proposed technologies. The phenomenon of informal urbanism is geographically diverse and the hub will engage with institutions from around the globe to exchange regional approaches and best practices.

Due to the wide range of topics addressed under the umbrella term 'informal urbanism', it is expected that further topical and/or regional specialization/identity will be needed. As the hub develops and consolidates, its members may discover overlapping areas of research that might be translated into sub-hubs structures that may further develop incrementally and be transformed into a focused hub activity. For a list of proposed partnerships and connected projects, see point 5 below, and point 2 in part C.

How:

The hub <u>will serve as a platform for academic exchange and collaboration</u> on topics related to informal urbanism. It is important that the hub grow organically over time in response to the discussions generated by exchange between members. <u>A phased development approach is proposed</u> as a means to guide this development. <u>Phase 1: Academic Exchange</u> will facilitate member exchange and discussion through annual conferences. <u>Phase 2: Coordinated Research</u> will use coordinated research initiatives to further investigate research questions identified by member institutions and UN-Habitat in phase one. Depending on the outcomes of phase one and two, <u>Phase 3: Academic & Professional Collaboration</u> could progress to collaboration between academic institutions and UN-Habitat or other partner institutions on relevant projects.

4. Linkages to HPUI Pillars

Education:
The hub will serve as a platform to share knowledge and lessons learned regarding teaching methodologies and course content and components on topics related to informal urbanism. Connecting institutions across regions and disciplines will also facilitate exchange opportunities for students. Doctoral student working groups will serve as a platform for exchange between Ph.D students working on topics related to informal urbanism. Each annual conference will have a work session on education where educators not only compare notes, but also propose new concepts of training the next generation of professionals. Over time interested members of the hub could exchange students. In order to set up a two-way exchange of knowledge, the connections should occur preferably between universities of highly industrialized countries and universities of developing nations or emerging economies. In order to move towards better education in the field of urban informality, contributing universities could share current courses, at a later stage course modules and curricula could be jointly developed.

Research:
The hub creates a framework for connecting academic researchers across institutions, disciplines and regions on shared research topics related to informal urbanism. This framework consists of academic exchange through conferences in Phase 1, and coordinated research and collaboration in Phases 2 and 3. In addition to this academic research exchange, there should also be substantial coordination between researchers and professionals, with professionals sharing their needs with researchers and researchers sharing results with professionals. This will facilitate demand-driven research and ensure that researchers are not operating in silos.

Professional Development:
During Phase 1, the process of academic exchange and collaboration through conferences will help support professional development between academic institutions and different academic fields. Many disciplines are involved in research on informal urbanism—the hub will give them a platform to exchange and potentially form new collaborations.
During Phase 2, the results of coordinated research initiatives will be shared with relevant stakeholders and interested parties. Where appropriate, capacity development approaches will be used to disseminate best practices identified in research initiatives. In Phase 3, professionals will benefit from working with academic partners directly, and vice versa. For example, this phase could include capacity building for professionals with online training using research outputs.

Policy Advice:
In Phase 1, policy advice will be derived from reports from the proposed conferences where the research of hub members and non-hub members will be presented. A session will be organized at the end of each conference with a working group of conference attendees and representatives of UN-Habitat to discuss the range of best practices and policy advice emerging from the studies, research and empirical evidences assembled by the different hub members' works and researches, and presented during the conference, which can be incorporated in a concluding report summarizing the proceedings. In Phase 2, academic institutions and UN-Habitat will jointly identify research questions and initiatives to investigate and draw policy advice conclusions on specific topics in greater detail. A two-way approach of discussion will determine the supply and demand for research and education in the thematic concern of the hub. In Phase 3, direct collaboration between academic institutions and UN-Habitat or other partner institutions could generate policy and best practices advice for specific cases or projects. Depending on the pace and scope of the hub activity plan and its outcome, it is possible to envisage a contribution of the hub to the process of the Habitat III conference.

Knowledge Management:
Publication and dissemination of research and data on informal urbanism is a primary goal of the hub. The UN-Habitat HPUI website will serve as a central collection point where members can upload relevant research and documents. Members as well as UN-Habitat can also benefit from the dissemination of UN-Habitat's wealth of urban data and information on project precedents. Access to

this data would be a primary incentive for universities to engage with UN-Habitat on research questions and also allow UN-Habitat to maximize use of this important resource.

5. Possible linkages to related projects: UN-Habitat and other universities/institutions/ organizations

The below table lists possible linkages to the related projects of UN-Habitat and/or other universities/institutions or organizations.

Note that this is a proposed list by UN-Habitat, intended to facilitate communication from the Hub Coordinator to the listed contacts. The HPUI Office has introduced the contacts to the focus and aim of the Hub, and these have indicated their interest in discussing collaborations.

Kindly cc the HPUI Office at HPUI@unhabitat.org for the initial communications regarding collaborations on the below.

UN-Habitat Branch	Unit	Contacts	Current Projects
Urban Legislation, Land and Governance		Diana Lopez	
Urban Planning and Design		Laura Petrella	Planned City Extensions
Urban Economy		Douglas Ragan	Urban Youth Research Network
		Eric Luguya	Urban Youth Fund
		Mutinta Munyati	One Stop Youth Resource Centers
Urban Basic Services		Daniel Adom	Water and Sanitation
		Debashish Bhattacharjee	Mobility
		Vincent Kitio	Energy
Housing and Slum Upgrading		Mohamed El-Sioufi	Global Housing Strategy (overarching project for the below)
		Kerstin Sommer	Slum Upgrading (PSUP etc)
		Katja Dietrich	Housing Strategy and Policy
		Roberto Carrion	Housing Finance
		Emma-Liisa Hannula	Sustainable and Green Housing
		Jagoda Walorek	Housing Rights
		Christophe Lalande	Housing Culture and Diversity
		Jan Turkstra	Community Development
Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation		Dan Lewis	
Research and Capacity Building	Capacity Development Unit	Claudio Acioly	Habitat Universities, Street-led Citywide Slum Upgrading (Policy Paper, Practical Guide and Training Module)
		Fernando Cabrera	Training activities and linkages with other Training Institutions in LAC and Asia
		Asa Isacson	Online tools
Global Initiatives, Regional Offices etc.	Advocacy, Outreach and Communications	Christine Auclair	World Urban Campaign

PART B: Output

1. Description and frequency of outputs

<u>Phase 1: Academic Exchange</u>

Conferences. During Phase 1 the primary output will be a series of conferences that facilitate member exchange and discussion. At all conferences UN-Habitat personnel will be present for discussion purposes and/or to lead sessions on relevant topics. Conferences will be organized by interested institutions, or groups of institutions, in coordination with UN-Habitat. In November 2013 a two-day conference at the Technical University of Munich entitled "Metropolis Nonformal: Anticipation", coordinated by Christian Werthmann[1], will serve as the launching event for the hub. After this first conference, hub-member organized conferences will be held each year. Future conference topics could include, but are by no means limited to, the following:

(1) Infrastructure and informal urbanism—leapfrogging traditional models with eco-efficient infrastructure
(2) New forms of community participation especially digital, crowd-sourcing, mapping
(3) Connecting top-down and bottom-up, large and small scale, formal and informal
(4) Climate change risk and disaster management for informal urban areas
(5) New economies, connected to green technologies, food production or micro enterprises
(6) Anticipating informal urbanization, strategies, owner driven housing, land tenure models
(7) Citywide Slum Upgrading Programs
(8) Linking Bottom-up and Top-down Approaches
(9) Training the Future Practitioners
(10) Regularization of tenure and property rights – the right to the city

b. *Conference Reports.* At each conference a steering committee, composed of key academics from hub institutions and conference presenters and a UN-Habitat representative, will draw conclusions from the conference and produce a report summarizing the proceedings.

c. *Working Sessions.* In addition to hub-member organized conferences, working sessions will be organized in tandem with other topically relevant conferences where several hub members will be present. These working sessions can be proposed and coordinated by any interested member institution.

d. *Doctoral Student Collaborative.* Doctoral students working on issues of informal urbanism will have a platform for discussing their respective research topics with one another. In the first phase, these discussion sessions can be organized alongside the conferences and working sessions.

e. *Knowledge Sharing and Publication.* Member institutions are required to be active participants on the HPUI website. All institutions must maintain updated profiles describing their research work and interests. Relevant publications and data should also be shared on the website.

f. *Presentation of Informal Urbanism hub at WUF7.* Member institutions will present the work of research initiatives and collaborations developed by the hub. Depending on how developed the research initiatives are at the time of the conference, member institutions could also present their own work directly related to the hubs agenda. Members could also present any research work making use of UN-Habitat's data and/or project database. WUF7 would also provide the various hubs with the opportunity for exchange and the creation of synergies.

<u>Phases 2 and 3: Education, Coordinated Research & Academic and Professional Collaboration</u>

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[1] This conference is to be jointly funded by the University of Munich (local costs) and the Habitat Partner University Initiative (international travel and DSA for participants from non-OECD countries). Participants from OECD countries are expected to fund their own travel. Further conference details will be elaborated in a separate conference concept note.

Two interrelated tracks, focusing on education and research, are proposed. The tracks will necessarily overlap and benefit from exchange with one another. (see section 3:Research Linkages to HPUI Pillars). Frequency of output for Phases 2 & 3 will depend on the initiative of member institutions and schedules determined on a case-by-case basis for each research initiative or collaboration within the hub.

1. The educational track can benefit directly from the ongoing "products" of UN-Habitat, e.g. (1) the working paper on the street-led citywide slum upgrading programme, (2) the practical guide for planning, managing and executing citywide slum upgrading programmes, and (3) the training module on designing and implementing citywide slum upgrading programmes. Further in the medium term the research track would directly feed into the education track. This could lead to 'formal educational' modules and be the seed for curricula development in this field.

2. Coordinated research between member institutions and academic and professional collaboration should grow organically out of shared research interests and objectives.   It is expected that the first conference will allow member institutions to identify areas of common interest for joint research initiatives and future collaboration. Outputs for these phases will be determined at a later date as research initiatives and collaborations develop.

TIMELINE						2013												2014								…
OUTPUT	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	..
1 Conferences											x												x		
2 Conference Documentation														x											
3 Working Sessions																									
4 Doctoral Student Collaborative													x												
5 Knowledge Sharing and Publication																									x
6 Presentation of Informal Urbanism hub at WUF7															x										

3. Expected accomplishments at end of term (Habitat3 2016):
- three conferences
- a seminal book
- an online course
- at least 2-3 joint research initiatives underway, with academic and professional collaborations in their formative stages.

PART C: Governance

1. Hub Coordinator(s):
Christian Werthmann, Christina Milos, Leibniz University Hannover

2. Hub Committee Members

REGION	COUNTRY/ STATE	INSTITUTION/ ORGANIZATION	NAME
Africa	South Africa	Center for African Cities	Edgar Pieterse
	Tanzania	Ardhi University	Alphonce Kyessi
	Ghana	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology	Daniel K. B. Inkoom
Arab States	Egypt	Cairo University	Sahar Attia
		Cairo University	Ahmed Shalaby
Asia-Pacific	India	Indian Institute of Public Administration	Kamla Kant Pandey
	Australia	University of Queensland, Brisbane	Sonia Roitman
Latin America	Colombia	Universidad del Rosario	Paula Quiñones Jaramillo
		EAFIT, urbam, Medellin	Alejandro Echeverri
Caribbean	Trinidad & Tobago	University of West Indies	Michelle Mycoo
North America	USA	Harvard Graduate School of Design	Rahul Mehrotra
		Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Phil Thompson Miho Mazereuw
Europe	Germany	Leibniz University Hannover	Christian Werthmann Christina Milos
		Technical University Munich	Regine Keller Andres Lepik

Note: Participating institutions are invited to set internal teams (all team members are part of the Hub). The local coordinator facilitates coordination, communication and local research.

5. Members:

Region	Country/State	Institution/Organization	Name
Africa	Ghana	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology	Rudith King
	Ethiopia	EiABC, Addis Ababa University	Gerhard Albert
	South Africa	University of Cape Town	Edgar Pieterse
Arab States			
Asia-Pacific	Australia	University of Queensland, Brisbane	John Minnery
Latin America			
Caribbean	Trinidad	The University of the West Indies	Deborah Thomas
	Trinidad	University of Technology	Jamaica-Carol Archer
North America	USA	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Reinhart Goethert
Europe	Netherlands	Erasmus University Rotterdam	Jan Fransen
	Netherlands	University of Twente	J.J. (Jeroen) Verplanke
	Turkey	Yildiz Technical University Urban and Regional Planning Department	Semra Atabay
	Switzerland	ETH Zurich	Hubert Klumpner

For more information and to engage in the Hub, kindly contact the Hub Coordinator (-s):
Christian Werthmann: werthmann@ila.uni-hannover.de
Christina Milos: milos@ila.uni-hannover.de

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