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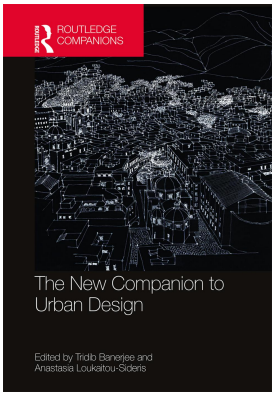

The New Companion to Urban Design

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1
COMPARATIVE URBANISM
Design in translation

Fran Tonkiss

Introduction

Thinking about cross-border movements in urban development and design frequently focuses on the "high end" of global urban processes – the typical forms created by the reproduction of capital across transnational space. A new international style of corporate headquarters, cultural centers, shopping malls, gated housing, and chain hotels marks the production of dispersed spaces in easily recognizable forms; whether in the premium brands of a coterie of "starchitects" or the banal gestures of the behemoths of Big Architecture. Less prominent spatial types play out around the morphology of back offices, call centers, and assembly and processing plants, where the routine service and production work of a transnational economy gets done. And at another level, the precarious infrastructures of sweatshops, workers' camps, and waste landfills sketch out the geographies of exploitation and despoliation that are produced on the jagged edges of an international economy of "flows." The iconic, the identikit, and the insecure are all spatial expressions of globalized urbanism. This discussion departs from such versions of homogenized, offshored, and extruded spaces to approach urban design as an art of incomplete translation. In their prevailing mode, orthodox urban schemes offer a kind of trade language for international design: limited in vocabulary, simplified in grammar, and geared to commercial exchange. These are powerful and pervasive models of spatial design and development, and their impact in shaping urban environments can hardly be understated. But it is also possible to think in different ways – and at different scales – about a transnational traffic in urban design that works through more idiomatic forms, and more minor practices.

In considering how spatial design travels between urban contexts, it is obvious enough to think about the duplication of dominant formats across disparate settings: from the common-language commercial developments seen in the serial reproduction of shopping malls, retail parks, corporate plazas, or gated residential compounds; to the signature moves of high-end international architects in museums and concert halls, stadium constructions, or airport buildings. There is nothing especially new in the replication of design styles in diverse locations, as histories of colonial architecture or of international modernism will suggest. But there *is* something particular about the scale, spread, and speed of contemporary design translations, enabled in various ways by digital technologies in design, the electronic outsourcing of routine design processes, the extended circulation of design imagery, and the increasingly transnational organization of

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the design, construction, and development industries (see McNeill, 2009; Sklair, 2017). Against such a backdrop, it can be professionally challenging to think about smaller-scale and lower-key exchanges of design ideas and idioms that are less capitalized and less high-profile, but nonetheless make urban space in inventive and persistent ways.

A critical impetus for focusing on these more muted design translations comes from a growing body of work in the field of "comparative urbanism." The latter has emerged from postcolonial interventions calling for urban studies to work across an expanded and more diverse range of contexts; to redress a long-standing skew towards work on (and generalizations from) cities in the Global North; and to engage with the particular features, as well as the passing resemblances, of dispersed urban processes and forms. It follows that the tasks of urban comparison may have less to do with narrowly defined and tightly controlled contrasts between discrete urban *cases*, than with an engagement with urban connections, overlaps, and divergences open to a range of translations (see, among many others, Jacobs, 2012; McFarlane, 2010; Myers, 2014; Peck, 2015; Robinson, 2011, 2016a, 2016b; Roy, 2009b). Taking up such an approach to urban design means being sensitive to local and minor practices in specific spatial settings; to the circulation of techniques and typologies through less orthodox channels of urban exchange; and to the array of actors involved in the purposeful making of urban environments. It means being alert, moreover, to movements of design discourse and practices which interrupt the direction of urban travel from north to south, the rolling-out or trickle-down of corporate and cut-and-paste forms across transnational space.

My aim, in what follows, is to suggest several ways of thinking about urban design in this more open comparative frame that draw not on the design rhetorics of global urban development, but on the design idioms of less privileged spatial strategies. Rather than examining how iconic or airport or expat architectures come to be copied across very different urban sites in a kind of "design dumping," I am interested in design practices which are less obvious in their physical outcomes and often involve translations from low-income to higher-income cities. Such migrations disrupt the standard logic that repeats, across a leveled-out "global" geography, object forms conceived in the design centers of the Global North. These alternative design principles have less to do with how built forms and spaces *look*, much less with the recognizable mark of any architectural style or corporate designer, than with the conditions of their production and use. This is to foreground design as a mode of practice rather than as primarily a question of form. In this chapter, I set out five ways for thinking about such design in translation; in terms of spatial practices that are informal, incremental, improvised, impermanent, and insurgent.

Informality

It is easy enough, within contemporary design discourse, to focus on major players, spectacular forms, and grand designs. But it is important to temper such an approach to spatial design and development with a sense of the more mundane and certainly more typical ways in which urban spaces are made and remade. The global architectural styles with which I began this discussion may take a disproportionate share of capital investment in built environments, as well as dominating mainstream cultural representations of urban design, but they account for only a limited – if powerful – field of spatial production. A very substantial share of urban form emerges from the work of nameless "designers," unplanned development, and the everyday investments that shape informal urbanism. From the provision of urban housing to spaces of urban economic exchange to configurations of urban infrastructure: to a significant degree, basic morphologies of contemporary urban life emerge from non-expert practices of design, unregulated processes of

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development, and unofficial acts of planning (Roy, 2005; Roy and AlSayyad, 2004). This is well established in relation to poor-world urbanism; the necessary work of self-help spatial production that creates physical forms and meets urban needs in sites forgotten, ignored, or forsaken by the state and overlooked by mainstream markets. But urban informality is also characteristic of cities where state capacities are more developed and vigilant, capital more abundant, and planning systems more extensive.

Informality is endemic of contemporary urbanization: whether in the movement of populations, the building of physical environments, or the reproduction of urban economies, a major share of urban growth in the early 21st century is taking place outside the range of formal planning systems and the reach of government regulation. While it conventionally has been understood as an urbanism of the poor, informality "has become a primary avenue for home ownership for the lower-middle and middle classes" in cities of the Global South (AlSayyad, 2004: 20), as well as a key resource for a growing rentier class in any number of cities globally. The provision of housing, infrastructure, commercial, and common spaces through more or less informal means is a less visible but still pervasive element of cities in the Global North; long traditions of squatting in Northern and Western European cities run alongside patterns of irregular settlement in the transition economies of Eastern Europe, while informality is threaded through urban environments in the United States, notwithstanding "one of the world's strongest legal and governance regimes" (Durst and Wegmann, 2017: 294; see also McFarlane and Waibel, 2012; Mukhija and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014; Vasudevan, 2015a, 2017; Wegmann, 2015). Echoing accounts of informal settlement in poor-world cities, Durst and Wegmann (2017: 283) trace the ways in which "informal housing in the US is characteristically geographically uneven, or highly variable from location to location; interwoven with formal housing and land ownership; and hidden, both in a figurative, and sometimes literal sense." Informal shelter solutions in these highly developed planning systems reveal numerous cracks in the regulatory field: in vehicle living, tent cities, squatting, occupations and repossessions, *colonias* and *chabolismo*, informal and "wildcat" subdivisions, subletting, multiple occupation, beds in sheds, unpermitted uses, and an emerging economy of petty rentier capitalism enabled by room- and home-sharing digital platforms.

Incrementalism

A second principle for thinking about a common grammar of design is in the forms of incremental development that underpin emergent housing strategies across a range of urban cases. The design of building cores and provision of basic collective infrastructure, which allow residents to rework or build out their homes over time as their needs and their means change, represents a reinterpretation – often with a stronger accent on design – of the site and services model deployed since the 1970s in many low-income housing contexts, and particularly in South Asia (see Wakely and Riley, 2010). Such interventions are motivated by variable factors: in large part, they respond to financial conditions in which public subsidies, collective equity, or individual finance are more or less severely limited; but they are also driven by a commitment to user engagement and co-production in the making of urban living space. Incrementalism, after all, is at the core of what a great many people do who stay in the same home for any length of time (from getting rid of the landlord's paint-job or enclosing the porch, to adding a lean-to or building another story); this approach to housing development builds in such a principle at the design stage. Again, the gradual building-out and regular remaking of basic housing structures is a taken-for-granted element of the urbanism of poor-world cities. But this mode of spatial practice can also be seen in diverse housing histories, and in current strategies in higher-income

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regions, where more and more people are squeezed out of overheated housing markets – from the precedent provided by the Mutual Self-Help Housing program in California, whose modest housing designs allowed for incremental expansion over time by householders (Mukhija, 2014); to the architect-led schemes of Berlin's *Baugruppen*, which combines design innovation with adaptable interiors and co-housing politics (see Ring, 2013); or the bare-bones designs of Naked House in London, which seek to further reduce costs by infill building on underutilized or void public land, including garages and parking spaces on council housing estates (see Wainwright, 2017).

The Chilean practice *Elemental*'s approach to incremental design – to draw on a well-known example in the Latin American context – has been much discussed in the contemporary design literature. Their low-income schemes provide "half a house" so as to allow residents to fill-in and enlarge the basic structure over time, redistributing the work of design – and the social relations of design production – between architect and inhabitants (see Aravena and Iacobelli, 2012; Iacobelli and Aravena, 2008). Just as notable is this model's reliance on the incremental co-financing of housing through combining government subsidies, private investments, and sweat equity. In projects in Iqique and Santiago in Chile and in Mexico City, for example, low-cost housing developments have pooled government funding to households to acquire land and finance collective infrastructure, and then provided the structural shell and basic facilities of a "middle-income house half-built" for lower-income residents to build out over time (Iacobelli and Aravena, 2008: 352). *Elemental*'s practice – like that of the *Baugruppen* in Germany's rather different development regime – is exemplary of a mode of design in translation, which draws variously on a low-cost site-and-services model, self-help housing strategies, the politics of architectural co-production, and an on-trend, camera-ready style. The mix of poor-world urbanism and design hipsterism is not to all tastes – *Elemental*, in particular, has been subject to a range of criticisms; whether for its incremental projects being too limited in scale and impact, or for taking too much corporate money and winning too many prizes. But architectural strategies such as these mark out a space for design between basic housing and infrastructure provision by development agencies in poor-world sites, and sub-standard or over-priced developer-led housing in rich-world cities – underlining how incrementalism might be understood as a common grammar of urban design in cities everywhere.

Improvisation

Both informal and incremental approaches to the design of urban space have an improvisational quality – in the sense of acts and interventions that have not been planned, and in getting by with resources and materials that come to hand. Orthodox modes of design tend to provide little room for improvisation, but reinvention is a common theme of everyday spatial practice. It includes the appropriation and adaptation of existing spaces for new or alternative uses – producing places of commerce, congregation, and civility in sites laid out for other purposes and to different designs. The work of design in these cases is most often undertaken by users themselves, repurposing shopfronts, garages, lock-ups, homes, and offices as places of worship, markets, dormitories, and social centers. Design, in this mode, concerns the way that spaces are made through practices of use, rather than how they are planned and produced around projections of future uses.

Acts of everyday urbanism (Chase et al., 2008), mixing opportunism, infiltration, and occupation in various parts, work within the formal morphology of the city to make spaces of commerce, care, shelter, information exchange, and social support. We might think, to take an example that travels widely across transnational urban contexts, of the improvisations of minority,

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migrant, and marginal religious groups in clandestine or commonplace spaces: unofficial mosques and prayer rooms in stores or restaurants; pop-up churches in strip malls or shacks; informal synagogues in private homes or – indeed – public bomb shelters (for the latter, see Aharon-Gutman and Ram, 2017; see also Finlayson, 2017; Hatziprokopiou and Evergeti, 2014; Kuppinger, 2011, 2014; Ribbens and De Beer, 2017). Similar strategies appear in relation to trade and commerce, as enterprising practices of design carve out retail and work spaces from holes-in-the-wall, underneath railway arches and overhead tracks, in garages, and on pavements. Money might be made where spaces can be created, and urban entrepreneurs in very disparate settings are adept at the annexations, adaptations, and accretions that support the generation of income through the production of space. Asef Bayat (2010: 15) points to the processes by which rural-to-urban migrants in large Middle Eastern cities "take over street sidewalks and other desirable public spaces to spread their vending businesses . . . turning the public streets into parking spaces for private gains, or use sidewalks as sites for outdoor workshops and other businesses." In her study of a "super-diverse" local street in south London, meanwhile, Suzanne Hall traces the many internal subdivisions of standard shopfronts to form "hybrid interiors" accommodating a range of trading and service activities: makeshift emporia combining mobile phone shops, money transfer, grocery stores, nail bars, and barbers (Figure 1.1). Attempts to map such ad-hoc economies, she notes (Hall, 2015: 31), were confounded by the manner in which they simply "defeated the standard land-use and retail categories."

Everyday improvisations such as these provide a low-key counterpoint to the design-savvy tactics at the boutique end of DIY urbanism, with its repertoire of urban parklets, book booths, and guerrilla gardens. If the informal mosque or the impromptu emporium represent a kind of tactical urbanism "from below," these more "vogueish" urban interventions are typically the tactics of a certain fraction of the middle. Douglas (2018: 14) notes that the "privileged

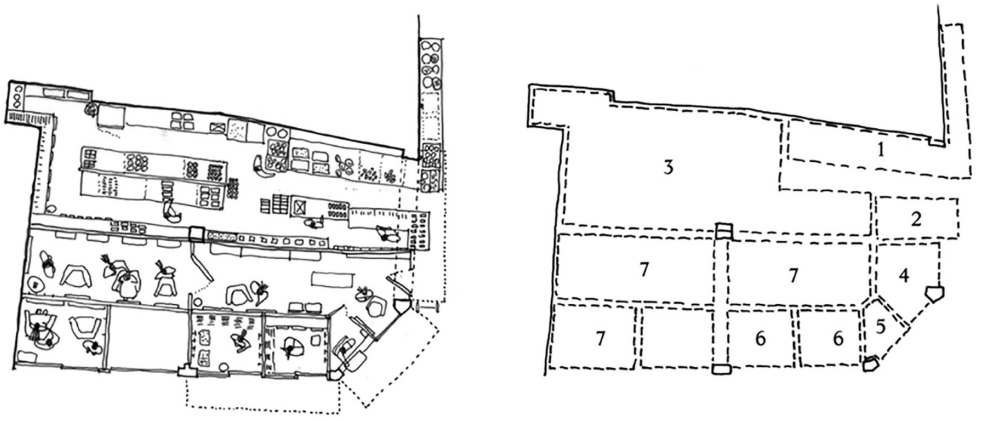

Figure 1.1 The improvised emporium: hybrid store interior in South London.

Source: Hall (2015); image by Nicolas Palominos (2015)

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do-it-yourselfers" he studied, mainly in US cities, often "employ sophisticated knowledge of professional planning and scholarly urbanism" (as well as decent design software). Moreover, they may be more ready to risk the sketchy legality of closing a street or occupying a vacant property than others who feel more vulnerable in making claims to public space, and in their interactions with urban authorities; who are less middle class, more female, or less white (Douglas, 2018: 13). This is not to dismiss the spontaneous civic urbanism of AstroTurf-ed parking spaces, pallet pavilions, or stealth greening, but a preoccupation with these photogenic typologies – which are often intended as spatial *statements* – can obscure the mundane and more muted urban tactics that routinely remake space but show up less readily in the design literature. Different modes of improvised urbanism, however – while they vary markedly in terms of their aesthetic, their uses, their demographic profile, and their social media reach – share certain basic elements. Most simply, they put into question a distinction between the designers and the users of space, as use itself becomes the instrument (rather than the outcome) of urban design. This is to think about design as a form of direct action in the city; one in which agency is distributed and expertise may be democratized (see, for example, Deslandes, 2013; Douglas, 2014, 2018; Finn, 2014; Iveson, 2013; Talen, 2015).

Impermanence

Urban improvisations work to their own timescales. The kinds of tactical urbanism that transform city streetscapes with rogue signage, seed bombing, or pavement art appear suddenly and last for as a long as they can get away with it. The many makeshift forms in which everyday users rework space as places of congregation, worship, livelihood, or residence have a more durable – if still precarious – presence in the urban environment. The temporalities of tactical design are uneven and often unstable, but they share impermanence as a basic condition. This has a number of senses. Urban designs may be time limited as a matter of intent: figurations in space that are also interventions in time. In unofficial road closures, flash retail, mobile gardens, or urban beaches, temporal formats are key to producing spatial forms. For design tactics such as these, making space is itself a *matter* of time. In a slightly different mode, impermanent design is about using up empty time as well as occupying vacant space. The spatial projects associated with interim or "meanwhile" uses offer a temporal infill on underutilized land, in derelict buildings, or in becalmed development sites. Such spatial appropriations, despite their debt to histories of urban squatting (see Vasudevan, 2015a), have become preferred tactics of both city governments and private developers, who are happy to see free-issue or low-cost design provide services, secure property, clean up lots, and generate buzz on underused public land and dormant developments (see Lydon and Garcia, 2015; Madanipour, 2017a, 2017b; Tonkiss, 2013). In these design strategies, impermanence is a matter of the brief. For the greater part of everyday urbanism, however, the provisional nature of design and use is a common feature of spatial life. Where uses are unlicensed, adaptations are unpermitted, and tenures are irregular, impermanence may be a long-term condition. This is less about "meanwhile" uses than *mean-to-stay* uses, which are embedded in the urban environment but subject to legal precarity and temporal contingency as standard states.

If these designs on space – some more visible and some more illegal than others – have various timeframes, they all run counter to conventional models of urban design, planning, and development that are geared to the long term. Viewed from another standpoint, however, impermanence appears as the *normal* urban condition. Rahul Mehrotra has written suggestively of Indian urbanism, and that of Mumbai in particular, in terms of a "kinetic city"

Figure 1.2 The "city in motion" – Kolkata: the kinetic city is characterized by movement, in contrast to the static city of monumental and architectural form.

Source: Image by Claire Mookerjee

(Figure 1.2); temporary in character and inventive in its use of recycled materials and repurposed spaces (Mehrotra, 2008, 2011). Such a concept refers to the dynamic transformations of urban space that take place during festivals and ritual processions, but also to the more regular modes of city-making created by bodies on the move – the street vendors, delivery runners, cart pullers, rickshaw drivers, and waste-pickers, who compose mobile systems of everyday infrastructure to serve a complex and expansive city. This "city in motion" is produced around the *static city* of fixed material form: the latter is the city that shows up on official plans and is mappable in two dimensions. The kinetic city is not so easily captured in this way; it is a "three-dimensional construct of incremental development" (Mehrotra, 2008: 206), which takes spatial chances and builds where it can, with what it has, for as long as it holds. Its primary physical domain, in this sense, is the field of urban housing, given the share of populations in developing cities (estimated to be from one third to almost half in urban India) living in informal settlements or unauthorized structures. The fact that so much housing in contemporary cities might be classed as a kind of temporary shelter underlines the fact of impermanence as an urban condition, the provisional nature of everyday urbanism, and the

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extent to which it is persistent use and sustained occupation – as much as built form – that establishes degrees of permanence in the city.

Insurgency

The point, however, is not simply to celebrate the contingency of spatial form in the city, given the precarious hold so many city dwellers may have on their urban environments and livelihoods. Mehrotra's account of the kinetic city, while alert to its adept and inventive qualities, is clear about the ways in which colonial and modernist planning legacies intersect with the deepening inequalities of a neoliberal urban economy to produce the conditions of kinetic existence. The spatial sorting and functional divisions carved into the urban landscape by these earlier planning histories are overlaid by economic segmentations, splintering infrastructures, and environmental inequities as more people seek to make their lives and livelihoods in increasingly polarized and poorly served cities. Improvised and interim designs on space are not simply the signal moves of experimental designers in more privileged urban contexts, but part of a much broader, more "ordinary" and less expert set of spatial practices that cut across distinctions between low- and high-income urban settings. In situations of widening disparity, state withdrawal, or punitive austerity, urban actors in many rich-world cities also draw on the repertoires of poor-world urbanism to advance claims to space in insistent and insurgent ways. (Holston, 1998, 2009; see also Bayat, 2010; Dikeç, 2018; Hou, 2010; Miraftab, 2009; Roy, 2009a; Vasudevan, 2015b).

In recent years, some of the most striking reframings of urban space have occurred in sites of protest, as movements in response to political repression, financial crisis, and worsening inequality have taken shape in street-based demonstrations and spatial occupations in numerous cities. Much of this spatial activism has reworked the architectural formats of urban order – claiming parks and plazas as arenas of occupation, using roads and roundabouts as "infrastructures of insurgency" (Davis and Raman, 2013). These movements on the streets and the squares have also translated into more sustained incursions in urban space. Anti-austerity protests in European cities – in Spain, Italy, and Greece, most notably – are the visible expression of more dispersed movements, which have occupied vacant property and "activated" public space to provide infrastructures of information, informal welfare provision, social clinics and pharmacies, housing, migrant services, education, and social care. Against a backdrop of ongoing crisis and government incapacity, the protests in the squares of cities such as Athens and Thessaloniki have connected up with networks of social centers, providing local bases of solidary provision and self-organization (see, for example, Arampatzi, 2017; Hadjimichalis, 2013). In the Italian case, such initiatives build on a radical urban tradition of *Centri Sociali*, which frequently make use of the abandoned architecture of the state, and employ spatial tactics of trespass and occupation with the aim of "producing rights by means of illegality" (Mudu, 2018: 450; see also Montagna, 2006; Mudu, 2004). The politics of urban occupation are seeded through these urban environments, composing a social architecture of welfare, services, and support; making spatial claims through appropriation and persistent presence, as well as through larger statements of protest in public space (see Vasudevan, 2015b; see also Benjamin, 2008). Insurgent urbanisms in this sense involve different designs on space. They are most visible when they bring the politics of dispossession, exclusion, and inequity into public sites of occupation and demonstration. But they rework the spatial fabric of the city in more stubborn and often more surreptitious ways, disrupting urban logics of over-regulation, privatization, or dereliction as they make spaces of autonomous action, common access, and resourceful reuse (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3 Je So' Pazzo (EX-OPG), Naples: In this *centro sociale*, which occupies a former secure psychiatric hospital, a visiting room has been remade as a library/reading room.

Source: Image by Fran Tonkiss

Conclusion: the arts of incomplete translation

This discussion has been concerned with how precepts and practices of spatial design travel across urban settings. It has tried to "aim off" the most dominant and highly capitalized movements of international urban design and development, placing emphasis less on the ways that mobile capital remakes space at a distance, than on how mobile bodies reconfigure it *in situ*. Its focus has been on design migrations that subvert a conventional direction of travel from Global North to Global South, and with seeing resemblances across cities based on suggestive connection rather than strict comparison. This is to approach design in terms of an iterative rather than an "imitative

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urbanism" (Clarke, 2012; Robinson, 2006), parsed not in the simple "idiom of emulatable cities" (Ong, 2011: 17) but in borrowed phrasings and partial translations. Two critical points emerge from such an approach: a focus on urban design centering on practices rather than forms; and an extended sense of the actors involved in the work of designing the city.

How might more formal design practice and pedagogy respond to these ways of making urban space? Let me pose four propositions which extend design thinking towards these everyday interventions without simply incorporating them into the field of professional practice. The first is to treat design as provisional. There is no contradiction in seeking to create forms that are durable, sustainable, and robust while at the same time assuming these will be open to translation, adaptation, and addition at different scales and over various timeframes. The sustainability of built forms, indeed, depends in large part on the degree to which they lend themselves to adaptations over time. The formal work of the designer represents a phase in the production of urban space that necessarily remains unfinished, as the work is taken up by other actors who augment, transform, or undo it through processes of use and reuse. It follows, second, that collaboration is open-ended. Collaborative principles are fundamental to urban design as a field that mediates architecture, planning, engineering, and the social sciences; they are also crucial to a design politics that seeks to engage potential users in processes of spatial design. Such collaborations go beyond the design and build stages, and the formal repertoires of user consultation or co-production: collaborative work continues long after the expert designers have left the scene, as everyday practitioners inhabit, build out, and re-fit their spaces of work, residence, commerce, culture, and encounter. The third proposition is to see planning in terms of affordance rather than prescription. This is to focus on the kinds of spatial interventions and occupations that urban planning systems promote or permit – whether as part of a positive planning agenda to encourage temporary uses, interim structures, *pro tem* leases, *de facto* tenures, or informal exchange; or on the basis of a permissive planning attitude that tolerates or overlooks such practices, due to a liberal orientation or to a lack of regulatory capacity (Tonkiss, 2013: 313–314). The making of spatial forms, fourth, is about creating conditions of possibility rather than composing fixed spatial scripts. Urban planning and design, understood in these terms, seek to provide opportunities for use rather than to prescribe them. This is particularly relevant to the design of open and shared spaces, which seek to accommodate a diversity of uses and users at different times and for various purposes: the idea of design as affordance means that physical forms support and suggest a range of possibilities for use, but do not over-determine them. The political thinker Michael Walzer (1986: 470) once wrote in simple terms of the qualities of "open-minded" urban spaces that are "designed for a variety of uses, including unforeseen and unforeseeable uses, and used by citizens who do different things and are prepared to tolerate, even take an interest in, things they don't do." More recently, the sociologist Richard Sennett (2018) has argued for urban design geared to the principles of an "open city" in which spatial forms (like the city itself) remain permeable, porous, and incomplete.

The design "principles" that have been outlined above – informality, incrementalism, improvisation, impermanence, and insurgency – are not objectives to be laid out in advance of making a plan or conceiving a space. They arise, rather, from spatial practice; as means of achieving certain spatial ends – accessing shelter, enacting faith, setting up shop, finding refuge, claiming identity (for diaspora in particular), exercising freedom of expression, opposing hegemony of power – rather than ends in themselves. These modes of design are not typically articulated around proper names, but via practical idioms. Although more "expert" designers may play a critical role in translating spatial practices between urban contexts – and while city governments, planning agencies, and private developers may seek to appropriate the uses of "guerrilla" tactics within their own development strategies – the place of everyday social actors

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in the making and remaking of urban space puts into question any narrow sense of design as a specialist field or an authorized activity. Concepts of informality or insurgency have been strongly associated with the urbanism of cities of the Global South and low-income populations, but these design idioms run across disparate economic and political situations, and they underscore the ways in which poor-world urban strategies speak to the design dilemmas found in many rich-world cities. Consider, for example, low-tech or low-cost design, incremental housing solutions, de-motorized streets, and unconventional trading spaces: rather than being urbanisms of last resort, these means of making space are premised on alternative circuits of capital and a design language that departs from the dominant rhetoric of "global" urbanism. Such practices are *minor*, not necessarily because they are small in scale (informal housing and irregular economies, after all, take a significant share of urban settlement and livelihoods), but because they are marginal within mainstream design discourses. Yet, in the colloquial common language of informality, the piecemeal grammars of incremental development, the urban slang of improvised solutions, and the battle cries or quiet witness of insurgent urbanism, more people may get to have a spatial say in the making of their cities.

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Further reading

Davis, D. and Raman, P. (2013) "The Physicality of Citizenship: The Built Environment and Insurgent Urbanism," *Thresholds* 41: 60–71. This piece includes examples from Cairo, Manama, and New York to consider how physical spaces in the city provide sites for "insurgent collective action," both in the architecture of public squares and in the infrastructure of roads and roundabouts.

Mehrotra, R. (2008) "Negotiating the Static and Kinetic Cities: The Emergent Urbanism of Mumbai," in Huyssen, A. (ed.) *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 205–218. An examination of the idea of the "kinetic city" in relation to Mumbai, exploring impermanence as a basic feature of urban forms and everyday urban life.

Miraftab, F. (2009) "Insurgent Planning: Situating Radical Planning in the Global South," *Planning Theory* 8 (1): 32–50. This piece draws on anti-eviction struggles in South Africa's Western Cape to consider how critical planning approaches might respond to insurgent citizens' movements and spatial claims.

Roy, A. (2005) "Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71 (2): 147–158. This piece addresses informality as a general mode of contemporary urbanization and examines how urban planning and policy might work with conditions of informality in the interests of distributive justice in the city.