1. INTRO
In a world where more than 4.2 billion people live in urban areas it is shocking to know that approximately a quarter of them inhabit informal settlements.
Urban life is not only about dwelling standards, and informal settlements of any kind often lack another fundamental urban trait: quality public space. In an effort to reduce the breach between the formal and informal city, the improvement of public spaces is a key factor to generate a more inclusive and equal society.

The Studio will take Argentina's Villa 31, the most emblematic informal settlement in Buenos Aires, as a case study to reimagining informality through the creation and improvement of public spaces.

The aim of the studio will be:
First: to analyze and understand this incredibly complex site, its physical and social context, the desires, aspirations and interests of a myriad of very different stakeholders.
Second: to understand the potential of the public space to unleash its possibilities to create a more balanced society, a better connection to the existing city, a more healthy and democratic environment and a more inclusive and resilient community.
Through the exploration of design tools, new protocols and policies, the "public realm" is to be studied and reimagined to become a catalyst of the new era that is about to start in Villa 31.
2. LEARNING OUTCOMES AND DELIVERABLES

This studio course aims to assist students in developing:

- Analytical skills relating to local factors in informal settlements, spanning social, economic, environmental, morphological, infrastructural, climatic, political, governmental and other site considerations.
- Knowledge of the particularities of informal settlements in comparison to more standardized forms and modes of urbanizations.
- Understanding of the complex processes related to temporariness and temporality involved in planning and designing within a context of informality, both in the near-future and for the long term.
- Understanding of the larger scale of the issue of informal settlements in a globalized world.
- Skills to assimilate and synthesize complex urban situations through the design of strategies and action plans that will develop new and inclusive paths.
- New ways of seeing and creating "The City as a Commons", thinking about how citizens can exercise their right to the city.
- Criteria for understanding the importance of promoting citizen empowerment through urban transformation processes.
- Ways to understand "The City as a Commons" and how the collective action of a community can create common wealth from a shared resource.
- Technical planning skills, particularly as related to site and stakeholder analysis, redevelopment visioning, and public space design.
- Sensitivity to the needs of the client and the human impacts of planning decisions with particular attention to social justice consequences.
- Analytical, research, field work, and communication skills, the latter including both visual and written components.
- Synthesis skills beyond the use of the conventional planning communication tools, incorporating other media and exploring new ways of presenting and communicating ideas.
- Teamwork skills, showing how collaborative work goes far beyond the addition of individual efforts.
- Ability to perform effectively in a team situation and under time constraints.

The final product will include a written report with an executive summary and a video presentation outlining key elements of the project, which should include at least the following:

- A critical review and assessment of the current conditions of the study area.
- The identification and some understanding of critical issues of concern to key stakeholders.
- The identification of opportunities and the definition of actions and strategies.
- A vision for the study area.
- Options to achieve that vision, and their likely costs and benefits.
- An outline of the process.
3. METHODOLOGY AND TIMELINE

About the process:
We believe in the importance of the process, and how a specific and intense one can shape the outcome. Through a combination of research, field trip and critical analysis, the process involves various complementary skills vital to the exploratory nature of the course. Indeed, the development of proposals is intimately linked to the discoveries made on site through an immersive experience in the context, but also to the knowledge accumulated through intensive and continuous research and exploration and its critical analysis.

An active process implies constant change and iteration, and involves a progressive adding of new layers of information and new links between them. Working in the real world also means that the results cannot be predicted or controlled. Students therefore have to take risks during the process and may experience successes, frustrations and uncertainty. The instructors become supporters and advisors who guide students through a maze of difficulty and serendipity. In this process, network building, communication, and dialogue become essential elements.

Ten steps open process:

01 Framework
The process starts with an initial overview of the situation in the informal settlement of Villa 31. This includes the conduction of a primary round of research to start recognizing the general context of the Villa 31 and its challenges, gathering background information and understanding the objectives of the process.

02 Exploration
The class is divided into working groups in order to undertake a broad exploration of the various layers that compose the complex urban fabric of Villa 31. This exploration encompasses a kaleidoscopic array of factors that are specific to the place, spanning social, economic, environmental, morphological, infrastructural, climatic, political, governmental and other site considerations.

03 Research
The research is conducted on both individual and group levels, by determining and refining key questions that are raised through the exploration phase. A more focused approach is taken and choices of interest are made.

04 Development - phase 1
The development consists in a deepening of the chosen approach, further investigating and strengthening the understanding of the issues at hand, while producing material to be presented in a later phase.

05 Mid Term Review
The review brings together the different perspectives developed into a first general pooling, where the work developed is presented to the Department. Key questions, progress and findings are shared, allowing to broaden and interweave the understanding of the context and challenges.

06 Feedback - Studio Trip
The core of the process is the studio trip, an essential moment where the theoretical and the imagined encounters the reality of the Villa 31. It is an intense and critical phase of observation and interaction with the place and its people, where the research will find some answers and pose new questions, providing crucial feedback at this point of the process.
**07 Development - phase 2**
The phase following the trip hinges on the first-hand experience of the Villa 31 and allows to gain a foothold on the work undertaken prior to the site visit. The development of the work continues with a clearer vision, and proposals for the improvement of Villa 31 should start taking shape.

**08 Focus**
The development boils down to the concretization of the vision and the proposals are focused to become comprehensive, coherent responses to the questions raised throughout the process. The material produced approaches its mature, finalized form.

**09 Communication**
The penultimate step is to gather the work produced and to process it for communication purposes. This entails a refinement of the material into formats that can be understandable by a wide audience. The format is flexible and should explore new ways of presenting and communicating ideas.

**10 Final Review**
The last step of the process is to present all the work that was produced and processed for communication in a public presentation to the Department. The aim is to ultimately bring the work to a large audience, raising awareness about the broader topic of informal settlements and presenting critical perspectives and potential solutions for the present and near future challenges.

**Timeline:**

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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| week 01 | January 24 | Framework  
Course framework / Opening     |
| week 02 | January 31 | Exploration  
Scoping / Topic session  
Individual work     |
| week 03 | February 07 | Research  
Acquiring knowledge / Bibliography  
Teamwork     |
| week 04 | February 14 | Research  
State of the art / Shake session  
Teamwork     |
| week 05 | February 21 | Development 1  
Opportunities and Strategies / Conceptualization and definition  
Teamwork     |
| week 06 | February 28 | Development 1  
Action Plan / Midterm session  
Teamwork     |
| week 07 | March 04  | Mid Term Review  
Public presentation  
Individual+Teamwork     |
**Feedback - Studio Trip**
Studio Trip to Buenos Aires / Fieldwork: collecting data, getting feedback
Individual + teamwork

**week 08 - march 09-13**

**week 09**

**Spring Break**

**week 10 - march 27**

**Development 2**
Tipping Point / Feedback session
Individual + teamwork

**week 11 - april 03**

**Development 2**
Opportunities, Strategies and Actions / Further definition
Individual + teamwork

**week 12 - april 10**

**Focus**
Detail / Zoom session
Individual + teamwork

**week 13 - april 17**

**Focus**
In depth development of an aspect
Individual + teamwork

**week 14 - april 24**

**Communication**
Workshop / Final review session
Individual + teamwork

**Week 15 - may 01**

**Communication**
Final review production
Individual + teamwork

**week 16 - may 06**

**Final Review**
Public presentation of proposals
Individual + teamwork

**Forms of Communication:**
In addition to concept and plan development, we place a strong emphasis on communication, as students will be asked to synthesize their ideas and proposals beyond the use of conventional planning communication tools. Students are also encouraged to incorporate other media and explore new ways of presenting and communicating their ideas. Indeed, in tackling the challenges of Villa 31 in Argentina, the students are also addressing the timely and global issue of informal settlements. In that perspective, the research and findings are not only to be used and exposed in the context of the class, but should also have the potential to reach a larger public audience, on the local and international levels.

**Evaluation:**
The process is considered as important as the final results, for which students are expected to register the development and progress of their work and share it throughout the different sessions. Proactivity is highly encouraged and will positively influence the final grading.
4. BACKGROUND

Informal Settlements: the challenge for planning futures

In 2007, we crossed an important statistical threshold. For the first time in human history, over 50% of the world's population was living in cities, ushering in what some have called the "urban age". This urban age has a geography, both global and localized. Much of the urban growth has and will occur in cities of the South. Furthermore, much of this growth has been and will be occurring in informal settlements.

If Chicago was the paradigmatic city of the early 20th century and if LA was that of the late 20th century, then it is the city of the South and the issues of informality and inequality that can be said to be paradigmatic challenges for planning futures.

Informal settlements are a fundamental part of urbanism in Latin America. These settlements are known by different names in different countries: favelas in Brazil, campamentos in Chile, pueblos jóvenes in Peru or villas miserias in Argentina. Each of the names encapsulate similar conditions: poverty, hardship, sense of temporariness, precariously...

In Argentina, 4,000 villas miserias exist across the country, many of them in Buenos Aires. Villa 31 is one of the most visible and most central of the informal settlements in the city.

Buenos Aires Villa 31

Villa 31 has a long history of serving as an arrival neighborhood for newcomers to the city. It was founded in the 1930s by Italian and Polish immigrants who built their shacks and houses on underutilized land near the railroad tracks. These initial residents were joined by migrants from rural Argentina during the mid-20th century and Villa 31 grew. More recently, immigrants from Bolivia, Paraguay, and Peru have settled in the area. Villa 31 used to be one of many villas miserias in central Buenos Aires, but during the military dictatorship of 1976-1983, most slums were razed, and residents displaced to the periphery. Villa 31 is one of the few informal settlements left in the central city.

Villa 31’s central location makes it hard to ignore. It is located a few blocks from residential and commercial areas of high real estate value, but it has long suffered neglect by the city. In its 72 hectares, approximately 43,000 people live in an urban environment with great inequities in relation to the rest of the city, lacking city services like water, sewage, regular electricity or formal title to land and homes.
Identity
This same urban environment also represents urban qualities that are now considered highly sustainable. The structures built by its inhabitants are often incorporating commercial and work spaces in conjunction with living spaces. People move through the streets walking and by bicycle and those same streets are spaces for coexistence and recreation. In many ways, Villa 31 is the traditional neighborhood praised by the mother of urbanism, Jane Jacobs.

A stroll through Villa 31 can show how spontaneous this neighbourhood is. A mixture of experimentation, genius loci and collective creativity has led to unique and profoundly identitarian results.

Besides the physical configuration and appearance of the neighborhood, the public realm of Villa 31 includes the networks, synergies and economic relationships that happen in this environment and how the public space and its dense layout has enhanced and multiplied the interaction and connectivity.

Resilient Community
Villa 31 is free of bureaucratic logic, yet full of shared knowledge. It is home to an active and resilient community: people who are used to managing their own public space and dealing with its conflicts. They are a participatory community, with more than 100 associations running in the neighbourhood, collectively designing and deciding their own rules and protocols. It is an urban environment based on citizen initiatives rather than institutional power.

From Villa 31 to Barrio 31
Villa 31 is now the subject of a $250 million redevelopment plan by the city government. This is probably the most ambitious redevelopment project for an informal settlement in the world today.

The plan aims to integrate the neighbourhood into the city’s service infrastructure and is funded by the City of Buenos Aires, the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank.

Project Goals include:
- Improving living conditions and housing safety
- Promoting social integration
- Formalizing all businesses
- Supporting mobility and urban integration
- Providing paid-for utilities
- Relocating a number of the residents to 1,200 newly built homes
- New public facilities like schools, health centers and public spaces.

While the area has had long-running issues with poverty, violence and crime, the plan is nevertheless highly controversial.

Many questions remain unanswered.
Can it retain its spontaneity when subsumed into the formal city?
Can it preserve its values and identity? Will the transformation normalise the relationship between Barrio 31 and the rest of the city of Buenos Aires? And how will these changes impact the community?
4. READINGS AND LINKS

BACKGROUND READINGS

Social Justice and the city
https://goo.gl/xNPAfM
Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution
https://goo.gl/8QBWZG
Architecture and Participation
https://goo.gl/tVNrDz
The Penguin and the Leviathan: How Cooperation Triumphs over Self-Interest
https://goo.gl/LwMKvA
What's Mine Is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption
https://goo.gl/WS2A3i
Networked: The New Social Operating System
https://goo.gl/SMDCeA
Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations
https://goo.gl/2wDLRq
Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age
https://goo.gl/qTz88Z
Public Parts: How Sharing in the Digital Age Improves the Way We Work and Live
https://goo.gl/33aaEE
Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action. Elinor Ostrom
https://goo.gl/XdYPB4
How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality, and the Fight for the Neighborhood
https://goo.gl/c1hvtn
The New Urban Crisis: How Our Cities Are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class—and What We Can Do About It
https://goo.gl/Lqm2ar
DIY Citizenship: Critical Making and Social Media
https://goo.gl/uX9Ad9
The Arsenal of Exclusion & Inclusion
https://goo.gl/TT3bAf
City Unsilenced: Urban Resistance and Public Space in the Age of Shrinking Democracy
https://goo.gl/THxFeF
Sharing Cities: Activating the Urban Commons
https://goo.gl/TygyYr
Planet of Slums
https://shorturl.at/dkuO2
Favela: Four Decades of Living on the Edge in Rio de Janeiro
https://shorturl.at/gFSt7
Cities From Scratch: Poverty and Informality in Urban Latin America
https://shorturl.at/mrvZ1
Planning and Design for Future Informal Settlements
https://shorturl.at/ivDR1
ACADEMIC ARTICLES RELATED TO BARRIO 31 AND VILLAS MISERIAS IN BUENOS AIRES


LINKS

Official Websites

IADB Project Page
https://www.iadb.org/en/project/AR-L1260

Official Page of Buenos Aires Department of Social and Urban Integration (BA Integración) *in Spanish*
https://www.buenosaires.gob.ar/jefaturadegabinete/secretaria-de-integracion-social-y-urbana

Official YouTube Page of Buenos Aires Department of Social and Urban Integration (BA Integración) *most videos in Spanish*
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCR0ZgIp7_wnGPj83XBtyutg/videos

Official Twitter of Buenos Aires Department of Social and Urban Integration (BA Integración) *in Spanish*
https://twitter.com/ba_integracion?lang=en

In the News

Urban Sustainability Exchange Case Study
detail

The Seattle Times

The Guardian

World Bank News

CityLab

Huffington Post
https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/jonathan-duke/villa-31_b_1624080.html

NACLA

El País (in English)
https://elpais.com/elpais/2016/02/01/inenglish/1454324322_595911.html

The Bubble (English Language Buenos Aires News Site)
https://www.thebubble.com/new-ibd-hq-buenos-aires

Urban Data

Assorted Villa 31 GIS Data
https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=34606f993cb54a14b921ebcf992d2154

Population