



CASE STUDIES

HANDS-ON URBANISM 1850 – 2012. THE RIGHT TO GREEN

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A GARDEN RULES ITSELF

Leipzig, Germany

In May 1865, the first Schreber association was opened in Leipzig. Criticism of the city's inadequate provision of open space and play areas led to the foundation of a school association. According to founder Ernst Hauschild, the association was modeled on self-governed communities in England, with the goals of encouraging "self-confidence, empowerment, and independence". The land for the initiative was leased from the City of Leipzig. Schrebergärten, or allotment gardens, are named after Daniel Gottlob Moritz Schreber, who published the essay "Die Jugendspiele in ihrer gesundheitlichen und pädagogischen Bedeutung" (The Importance of Games to the Health and Education of Children) in 1860. At the center of the association complex was a play area called the Schreberplatz. It wasn't until 1869 that small children's gardens were built around this area. These small garden plots were the beginning of allotment gardens, now widespread throughout Austria and Germany.

The housing situation for the children of the industrial working class was miserable: "dangerously paved streets, damp little inner courtyards, and tiny yards or gardens." The allotment area, organized by the association as a cooperative with limited liability, provided a long-term, collectively used open space beyond the reach of land and property speculation. Just as the self-organization of the middle-class can be discerned in these early stages of the allotment garden movement, so were the self-help initiatives arising in homeless settlements and the allotment gardens of Berlin, a sign of the pressures felt by the proletarian-peasant classes of modernist cities beleaguered by industrialization.

HULL HOUSE CHICAGO. RESPECT FOR VARIETY

Hull House Settlement, 800 S. Halsted, Chicago

In 1875, Chicago was the world's fastest-growing city. Social tensions swelled. Slums emerged. Ethnic conflicts were a daily occurrence. Employment conflicts, strikes, and riots marked the city. In 1900, 77% of people in Chicago were either first- or second-generation immigrants.



In 1889, Jane Addams, the feminist, suffragist, and peace activist who later became the first American woman to receive a Nobel Peace Prize, brought the settlement movement to Chicago. Together with Ellen Gates Starr, she founded the Hull House in the poor Nineteenth Ward district. The settlement movement, which is considered to be the start of community work, began in the slums of London's East End. In 1884, Toynbee Hall was founded as a new model of social reform. Three years later, Jane Addams travelled to London's East End on an activist research trip. The "Settlers in the City Wilderness", as contemporary Mark De Wolfe Howe described them in the Atlantic Monthly in 1896, were not conventional social workers. They moved into the poor and immigrant neighborhoods in order to, as Addams put it, "help people help themselves". For the construction of Hull House, there was no master plan, but instead a continuously interactive development process with the architecture firm Pond & Pond.

ZUKUNFT AUF DER SCHMELZ (FUTURE ON THE SCHMELZ)

Gardens of the Future, Vienna

From informal War Gardens to the Allotment Garden Association "Zukunft auf der Schmelz"

The Schmelz was where the country met the city of Vienna up into the 19th century, when the meadows and fields began to be used by the military. The Imperial spring and autumn parades were held on the Schmelz starting in 1864. During the Gründerzeit era, the entrepreneurial metropolis of Vienna decided to make a statement of architectural prowess. In 1898, Otto Wagner designed a monumental Academy of Fine Arts; in 1912, a civic museum; and in 1917, a peace church for the area – all of which went unrealized. What did succeed were the gardeners, with their plots and little huts. The large open area was the only open-air space in a district densely populated with the working-class, and regarded as highly dangerous at night. Not even the watchmen came here alone. In 1909, attorney Franz Dinghofer brought the allotment garden movement to Vienna from Leipzig. In 1911, the State Office of Military Affairs released sections of the Schmelz area, to be used for allotment gardening. During World War I, the supply situation became disastrous and "war gardens" were planted to combat famine. In 1918, there were 10,000 war gardens and 6,000 allotments in Vienna. Since the Allotment Garden and Small Lot Lease Ordinance for the Country of Austria was enacted, in July 1919, allotment gardens have become an integral part of Austria's social rights and laws.

The area was divided into lots and a water main was installed in 1919. In 1920, the gardeners founded the "Free Association of Gardeners of the Future". The great crises and transformations in politics and economics had their effects on the Kleingartenanlage Zukunft (Gardens of the Future) in the Schmelz, from the Habsburg monarchy to the strained welfare state of contemporary late capitalism. New regulations also came into effect, both those of the city administration as well as ones self-imposed by the gardening association and the changing demands of the users. Today, the 165,000-m² allotment garden facility is the largest of its kind in Central Europe in a densely built and populated urban landscape.



THE VIENNA SETTLER MOVEMENT

Hunger, poverty, housing shortages, and inflation marked daily life in Vienna after the First World War. The palpable housing shortage already underway since the mid-19th century increased dramatically, leading to a radical self-help movement emerging from the bottom up. Informal, “wild” gardeners and squatters organized themselves into cooperatives. Around 50 settlements with thousands of residential units materialized in an area beyond state and free market control. These settlements were characterized by D.I.Y. structures and gardening. Subsistence farming on the gardens became a means of survival.

The Viennese gardener and settler movement was a “poor people’s movement”. With the help of experienced politicians (Jakob Reumann, Gustav Scheu, and Adolf Müller) and committed educators of the people and social reformers Otto Neurath and Max Ermers, what started as a crisis project grew from below, blossoming into a project of societal change. Pressure from the squatters (in the form of three large demonstrations) and by Social Democratic parliament members forced the city into actively supporting the movement. However, by 1923–24, a new earmarked building tax made it possible for the administration to gravitate towards the construction of superblocks. Some of the settlements are now privatized, while others, such as Rosenhügel, continue to operate on the cooperative concept of solidarity to a certain degree.

LIVING ON LOTS

An Informal Settlement in Bremen, Germany

For over 65 years, a tradition of illicit informal architectural was carried out in the allotment gardens of Bremen. During the Second World War, 60% of the city’s residential buildings were destroyed, leading Bremen’s homeless to build provisional homes in allotment garden areas. Mayor Kaisen permitted people to live on the garden lots from 1945 to 1948, leading to the nickname Kaisenhäuser for the initially makeshift homes. In 1953, there were 12,000 Kaisenhäuser homes, housing 50,000 residents, or 1 out of every 10 people in Bremen. For the city building authority, the uncontrolled settlement of these areas was considered an eyesore and the ban on building on garden parcels was reinstated. Due to the massive housing shortage that persisted for 20 years, the ban had no real effect. Workers and refugees continued to build homes. In a second housing wave in the 1970s, abandoned houses began to be resettled. These new arrivals sought to live affordably in nature and to plant eco-friendly gardens. Interaction between the early settlers and new residents was not always entirely without conflict. The struggle for legal recognition and maintenance of their residences was part of the daily life of people living there. In 2002, the first occupants were given the right to residency for life. All others had to leave.

A VILLAGE IN RESISTANCE

Ma Po Po Farm, Ma Shi Po Village, New Territories, Hong Kong

There is much conflict in the village of Ma Shi Po. The political and economic power structures of Hong Kong's New Territories are reflected in the built environment, informal architecture, land use, and land rights of this village. The families who lived here prior to the 1898 occupation by the British Empire are considered natives, and cannot be forced to sell their land. After the Second World War, the conflict between the Communist Party and the Kuomintang caused waves of refugees to flee from Mainland China. Many settled here, leasing land from the natives, who gradually migrated into the center of Hong Kong, or even the United Kingdom, but retained ownership of their land. The settlers erected squatter houses on their rented land. In 1980, this type of informal settlement was prohibited. In 1982, and then again in 1984-85, all unofficially built homes in Hong Kong were registered by the Squatter Control and Clearance Office. The city's official urban development plan moves toward the urbanization and densification of the New Territories, designating the area as residential and industrial. The continued existence of traditional green areas, farms, fishponds, and rice fields is under threat. The Ma Po Po Farm in Ma Shi Po, recently founded by Becky Au, is resisting.

THE COOK, THE FARMER, HIS WIFE AND THEIR NEIGHBOR

Lodewijk van Deyselstraat 61, Geuzenveld, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

People from many different countries live in Nieuw-West, the "New West" area of Amsterdam. Jobs are scarce, the neighborhood's image is bad, and it is regarded as a problem area that must be upgraded. Lower-income residents, among them many immigrants, are threatened with eviction. The Westelijke Tuinsteden, the Western Garden City, is a good example of the consequences of a modernist rationale. Lacking work opportunities, as well as social and cultural institutions, this residential area is a thoroughly economic interpretation of the garden city concept.

In 2008, the Wilde Westen, a group of architects, designers, and artists, developed different ideas for this commercial garden city. Its clients included government agencies, investors, and the Chamber of Commerce. The Wilde Westen group developed an approach aimed at the self-empowerment of local residents. Their proposal was rejected by their clients. In late 2008, Amsterdam's most important contemporary art institution, the Stedelijk Museum – being closed for renovations at the time – decided to take action in the neighborhood. The museum invited artist Marjetica Potrč to enact a site-specific interactive work. Potrč asked the Wilde Westen group to work with her in collaboration. The result was The Cook, the Farmer, his Wife and their Neighbor. The fact that the Far West housing cooperative made garden and kitchen spaces available to the community can be largely attributed to the reputation of the Stedelijk Museum.



MACONDO IN VIENNA

Macondo, Zinnergasse, Simmering, Vienna

This is a place that won't be found on any map of Vienna. It is called Macondo, named after the town in the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez. It lies at the edge of the city, tucked in between a highway bridge, allotment gardens, power lines, and waste disposal facilities. Almost 3,000 refugees from over 20 countries make their home here.

The effects of war, revolution, atrocities, torture, and persecution force people from all over the world to flee their homes. This transnational village is a community made up of refugees who have come to Vienna. The first refugees were from the Hungarian uprising of 1956, followed by waves of refugees from Chile and Vietnam in the 1970s, and from the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Colombia, Somalia, and Chechnya in the 1990s and later. In 2009, the Cabula6 artist group, together with Jeremy Xido and Claudia Heu, started a social art project in the village, unknown to the majority of Viennese, titled *Life on Earth*. They moved into one of the apartments for a year, set up a storage container, and started a recycling project and community garden. Gartenpolylog, led by Yara Coca Dominguez, continues to run the neighborhood garden project today. The goals are clear: arrive, plant, strengthen the sense of belonging, and work through difficult memories.

A GECEKONDU UNDER PRESSURE

Sarıgöl, Istanbul

Since 1950, Istanbul's urban expansion has been taking place overnight. Gecekondu, the name given to informal housing, literally means "landed overnight" – gece (night) and kondu (landed). Since the earthquake of 1999, top-down neoliberalism has been threatening these "self-service cities" (Orhan Esen), or "hand-made cities" (Özge Acikkol). Gecekondu residents are being forcibly relocated to newly built mass-housing complexes in outlying areas.

Istanbul's growth and industrialization are closely tied to informal land seizure by rural-urban migrants. Up until around 1960, one-story gecekondu houses were self-built from reclaimed materials on public lands. Tolerance by the government was based upon the awareness that urban development from below is very inexpensive. The city did not invest in infrastructure, food was grown in small gardens, and work was found in nearby factories. After 1970, informally built houses began to be rented and, after 1980, even built for profit.



In 2001, Turkey's impending bankruptcy was held off by a \$31 billion loan from the IMF, for the period of 2002 to 2004. In 2004, the construction of gecekondu was declared illegal. Istanbul's "Global City" was putting pressure on informal settlements. The application to host the 2020 Olympic Games is still underway. Residents, activists, architects, and artists are protesting the demolition of the gecekondu, mostly without success.

ACTIVIST GARDENERS

Liz Christy Garden, Bowery and Houston Streets

New York in 1973 was a New York beset with the two-fold crises of the oil shortage and the real estate crash. 1973 was also the year the Community Garden movement began. Artist Liz Christy, a local resident, initiated New York's first community garden. The Nuyoricans, the Puerto Rican community in New York, also played a central role in the establishment of an informal gardening tradition on the Lower East Side, with the Loisaida Casita Gardens. In the 1970s, the Council on the Environment of New York City counted 783 community gardens. From 1994 to 2001, under Mayor Rudy Giuliani, a publicized battle took place over community gardens. The gardens of poor urban migrant populations were the foremost targets of destruction. Miranda J. Martinez presented this previously unwritten history of the city in her 2006 book, *Power at the Roots. Gentrification, Community Gardens, and the Puerto Ricans of the Lower East Side.*

The Community Gardens create an oasis of green that defies the logic of capital intensity by withdrawing valuable land from the market and yet, paradoxically, continuously contributing to the rising values of surrounding land and homes.

Together, a vacant lot was secured, cleared, and finally rented out for a symbolic one dollar a year. Liz Christy founded the Green Guerrillas, a group that is still in existence today. Christy passed away in 1985, and the garden was renamed the Liz Christy Garden in remembrance.

MEXICALI EXPERIMENTAL PROJECT

Colonia Orizaba, Mexicali, Mexiko

The period from 1940 to 1976 is called the El Milagro Mexicano, the Mexican miracle. An agricultural economy became an industrial one. Tremendous economic growth led to massive urbanization, as well as to a lack of housing and infrastructure. In 1976, El Milagro Mexicano was over. Despite the unearthing of large oil reserves, due to mismanagement the peso had to be devalued by 58%.

In 1976, Christopher Alexander's Mexicali Experimental Project, which relied on the participation of future users, was completed. Low-cost housing was a major issue in the 1970s and informal self-help practices started to convene with the first comprehensive governmental programs and supranational declarations,



like those of UN-HABITAT. In 1975-76, the time in which the Mexicali Project was constructed, Mexico developed its first national housing guidelines.

In 1975, the government of Baja California invited Christopher Alexander to implement his long-term research on housing to construct a project aiming to ease the Mexicali housing shortage. Mexicali, located in the border region between Mexico and the United States, is characterized by a multi-ethnic border culture. In the 1980s, Ana Laura Ruesjas explored the informal changes to the Mexicali Project undertaken by its residents.

SETTLERS IN THE RAVINES

Sloping Fields

Quito is a city with an extreme topography. In the 16th century, Spanish colonizers established the city center on the horizontal plateau. In the vertical ravines above, the air begins to thin. Here, informal settlements have taken root, and farming takes place even on the steepest slopes. Quito, the “city in the clouds”, lies on a high plateau 2,850 meters above sea level, at approximately the same latitude as the equator. The long and narrow north-south extension of the city is flanked by the Avenue of the Volcanoes. Internal migration from rural to urban areas is high here. In 1950, over 70% of Ecuadorians lived in the country; today, this number has dwindled to just 39%. The newcomers, many of them young women working as domestic servants, build informal huts and houses from recycled materials. These domiciles are precariously located in the canyons and grow gradually. Vegetable gardens and fields are cultivated and livestock are raised in this steep setting.

Currently, the fragile ecosystem of the ravines is endangered by the imposition of official city planning measures. Sports fields are built, and the complex water system is disturbed, threatening life in the ravines with landslides and collapse.

NO OIL, NO SUGAR

UPA (urban and peri-urban agriculture) can be found in all 159 municipalities of the island of Cuba

Lightless nights. Refrigerators, but only a few hours of electricity. Streets filled with bicycles. Fruits and vegetables grown on football fields, in schoolyards, parks, gardens, and even in front of the Cultural Ministry in Havana. In 1991, the Período Especial en Tiempo de Paz began in Cuba, the Special Period in Time of Peace. On December 21, 1991, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was dissolved, resulting in Cuba losing 75% of its imports and exports. At the same time, the United States also strengthened its embargo.



These extreme supply shortages resulted in all 159 municipalities of the island developing the world's most sophisticated system of urban agriculture, also called UPA, or urban and peri-urban agriculture. Only in Havana's historic city center are there no fields or beds. Top-down and bottom-up were coordinated in the common effort to tackle the crisis. Since there was no fuel for farm machinery and transport, production was manual and located near consumers. A transition from the industrialized agriculture of sugar plantations to a labor-intensive agriculture with locally developed alternative methods for pest control and fertilizer took place.

RAINHA DA SUCATA / TRASH QUEEN

Avenida Joaquim Porto Vilanova, 143, Vila Pinto, Bairro Bom Jesus, Porto Alegre, Brazil

In the 1950s, Brazilian cities began to explode. Their modernization and the failure to carry out land reform – just 10% of landowners controlled 80% of the country – led to a rural exodus. The poor were pushed to the outskirts of cities. Investments in sewer systems, schools, and hospitals failed to materialize. The military dictatorship (1964–1985) aimed for economic growth.

In 1970, Doña Marli Medeiros migrated from the countryside to urban Porto Alegre. Vila Pinto was, says Doña Marli, the second-worst slum in Latin America. Unemployment, drugs, crime, rape, domestic violence, and sexual abuse were high; income and education levels were low. Doña Marli, now respectfully called Rainha de Sucata, or the "Trash Queen", became active in women's rights. In 1996, she founded the Centro de Educação Ambiental (CEA) and established a cooperative recycling plant, which has become Vila Pinto's revenue base. The CEA is run by women and supports literacy, education, environmental awareness, and participation in the City of Porto Alegre, the first city in the world to implement a full participatory budgeting process (since 1989). The waste utilization plant was self-built from recycled materials and a Community Center was constructed with the resulting profits.

At a 2010 conference on sustainability and social housing at the local PUCRS university, Doña Marli took the microphone and appealed to the architects in attendance there. She didn't want a spectacular favela intervention, but instead, consultation and advice on controlled growth, green space, and infrastructure. This is where she met Felipe Hernandez, lecturer at the University of Cambridge and researcher of informal settlements in Latin America. Since then, Doña Marli, Rosane Bauer (PUCRS), John Motloch (Ball State University), and Felipe Hernandez have been working together.



WHAT WILL THE HARVEST BE?

The Abbey Gardens, East End, London

The Olympics, the World Cup, and the World's Fair are all mega events that cities use to attain global visibility – and the competition is high. For 1992, 20 cities applied to host the Olympics; in 2004 over 40; and in 2008, more than 50. The pressures of profitability, investment, and security are enormous; the image and media campaigns intensive. The political rhetoric emphasizes the sustainability of objectives such as jobs and infrastructure improvements. The real estate market goes crazy. The homeless and marginalized are often banished based upon newly changed laws. Subsequent uses often remain unclear, sometimes forever. In 2012, the Olympics will take place in London.

The British Olympic Association applied to host the Olympics in 1997. In July 2005, London was awarded the contract and, in 2007, began work in the East End. The Olympics are touted as part of a comprehensive upgrading strategy for the Lower Lea Valley in the East End. In 2011, the new Abbey Road station on the Docklands Light Railway in Newham, Stratford was opened. The station is named after the Langthorne Abbey. The ruins of the abbey's 12th-century gatekeeper's house are not far from here. The 1,600-m² grounds lay vacant. In 2006, local residents, among them architect Andreas Lang, banded together to form the Friends of Abbey Gardens community garden, including an Honesty Stall in the public park.

PRINCESS GARDEN

Moritzplatz, Kreuzberg, Berlin, Deutschland

“In a high-density district with little green space and many social problems, children, youth, adults, neighbors, interested lay people, avid gardeners, and outdoor enthusiasts come together in this social and ecological city farm to learn how to produce local food while creating a new urban space for life.”
(www.prinzessinnengarten.de)

The Moritzplatz reflects the history of Berlin like no other place. In the mid-19th century, the Moritzplatz was seen as the epitome of Berlin urbanity. In 1880, Georg Wertheim opened his first department store in Berlin on the Moritzplatz, arranging for the U-Bahn line 8 to stop there. In 1938, the store was Aryanized, then devastated in a 1945 bombing attack by the U.S. Air Force. The devastation of the Second World War, demolitions, and the construction of the Berlin Wall turned the space into a wasteland surrounded by traffic. In 1961, this was the last open subway stop in West Berlin. The planned expressway, which was never realized, blocked change for decades. Initiatives to green and otherwise use vacant areas started as early as the 1980s. High unemployment, particularly among young people, child poverty, and large immigrant communities characterize the Moritzplatz today.

In June 2009, over 100 volunteers cleared the vacant lot of over two tons of garbage. This was followed by the foundation of the non-profit Nomadisch Grün company, run by Robert Shaw and Marco Clausen. The

6,000 square meters of unused space was leased from the City of Berlin and subsequently transformed into a social and ecological urban farm. The first 100 beds were planted and, in August 2009, were collectively harvested for a feast of garden vegetables. The lease granted by the City of Berlin for interim agricultural use is granted for just one year at a time.

The emblematic radiance the farm emanates is derived from its location – a vacant lot – and its status – temporary.

DANIEL KERBER: MORE THAN SHELTERS

morethanshelters by Daniel Kerber

On a global scale, the expansion and development of cities generally occurs on an informal level. For decades, architects and urban planners have been intensively researching, intervening, planning, and engaging socially with urban informality, as well as with the problems of natural disaster, homelessness, and refugee populations. Instead of talking about “Learning from the Informal”, one could call it “Learning from Everywhere”. Exemplary approaches to spontaneous urban evolution can be seen in Rem Koolhaas’ work in Lagos, Teddy Cruz’s commitment in Tijuana, Philipp Misselwitz’s work on developing informal urban refugee camps for the UN, and Louise Cardoso Ganz’s interventions in Belo Horizonte.

The “slumming” phenomenon can also be found in contemporary art, tying into tourism and the big city. As early as 1880, it became fashionable to tour the slums of Whitechapel in London, and in 1910, the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, as documented by Austrian photographer Alice Schalek.

For Daniel Kerber, the motivation to closely examine the aesthetics and knowledge inherent to informal architecture was initially an artistic one. Researching informal accommodations through photography is an integral part of Kerber’s design process. This interest grew into the development of a mobile housing system that can be folded like a tent. His project is called morethanshelters.

R-URBAN IN COLOMBES, NEAR PARIS, 2012

In Colombes, not far from Paris, the architecture collective atelier d’architecture autogérée (aaa) is testing a new model of urbanism focusing on sustainability and urban community in the face of the peak oil and climate change crises.

In 2011, the aaa architecture collective was awarded the Curry Stone Design Prize. Founded by Romanian immigrants to Paris Constantine Petcou and Doina Petrescu, aaa developed a practice of urban renewal based on solidarity and resubjectivizing that goes far beyond just the physical built environment.

R-Urban, as the name suggests, combines city and country into one, building on the ideas of the Garden City (Ebenezer Howard), the urban region (Patrick Geddes), and also on Rob Hopkins’ book on energy



policy published in 2008. aaa is currently working with prototypes in Colombes. Together with residents and existing eco-networks, socioeconomic clusters, an organic market, fields for urban farming, a recycling plant for construction materials, and a cooperative housing complex built from these recycled building materials are being jointly developed and self-managed. This sustainable city is based upon local closed ecological systems with a social and cultural impact.