Decoding and Recoding Informal Settlements: 

The World Studio

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ABSTRACT

The World is experiencing significant growth in population and fast urbanization particularly in the regions in the global south. This rapid “uncontrolled” development puts an enormous pressure on cities giving rise to numerous political, social, infrastructural, and ecological, problems. The formal sector does always not always accommodate people immigrating to urban centers, forcing them to be entrepreneurial and develop alternative settlements, with varying forms of governmental engagement. This studio investigates these complex problems of people, place, and property using a computational design approach. In this advanced studio, we will consider rapid urbanization in Ahmedabad, India. The desire is to create neighborhoods that are socially and economically viable for residents and ecologically resilient. Students will be given the opportunity to use computational technology including advanced geometric modeling and algorithmic design. This collaborative studio focuses on settlement patterns in existing complex urban environments with the goal of introducing students to relationships between place, urbanism, and design. The sites are in metropolitan areas with high levels of population and diverse socio-economic conditions. In contrast to projects that assume access to capital and property, this studio focuses on occupation of unused or undesirable territories by marginalized peoples. We will be addressing the difficult lives of people who have been displaced and had to resort to migrating to urban centers looking for work. Our goal is to speculate how new communities might be located and articulated using a rule-based approach
based on local conventions. This will require that we think forward while working backwards—using the digital tools we have at hand to propose scenarios to peoples with considerably less access to the resources we have available in the studio.

BIOGRAPHY

Marc Miller’s research examines technology, images, and people with two areas of interest. The first of these look at how site conditions and other constraints are used to create design proposals, and how these processes can be simulated using computers to research and emulate historical design styles as ways of making landscapes and spaces. The second topic considers how landscape architects communicate their environmental concerns to public at large. Miller looks at these two areas with a fundamental interest in the relationship between image-based practices like drawing and painting, and how they relate to image production in landscape architectural design.

José Pinto Duarte is the Stuckeman Chair in Design Innovation and director of the Stuckeman Center for Design Computing (SCDC). After obtaining his doctoral degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.), Duarte returned to Portugal where he helped launch technology-oriented architecture degrees and programs at two different universities.

Duarte has a record of uniting academic research and industry, as well as fostering multi-national partnerships. He has served as president of eCAADe, a European association devoted to education and research in computer-aided architectural design. He also helped establish the M.I.T.–Portugal program, and created the Design and Computation research group, which fosters interdisciplinary and collaborative research efforts.