Introduction
In cities throughout Latin America, and elsewhere in the world, informal settlements are often located within the interstices of more formal residential districts. This geographic juxtaposition underlines the rather stark duality between human settlements that fall within the purview of formal regulatory frameworks and those that do not. In Buenos Aires, such settlements are generally referred to as "villas" (pronounced "vishas"). The photo below is of Villa 31, which is close to where we shall reside.
The pervasive presence of informal settlements poses a quandary for local government officials. Existing policy approaches as employed mostly in developing countries can be roughly grouped into the following four categories: (1) neglect, benign or otherwise, (2) evictions and resettlements, (3) enabling policies, (4) self-help and in situ upgrading. Perhaps unsurprisingly, all of the above approaches take the emergence and persistence of informal settlements as given; accepting them as natural occurrences within the dynamics of urbanization in less developed countries. Accordingly, most of these policy responses focus on addressing the informal housing challenge after the fact, concentrating the search for effective policy action on what should be done for existing informal settlements. Another approach that has not received as much attention is to re-examine the role of urban land use regulations and other policies -- both as an underlying cause of informal housing settlements and as a possible solution.

**USC Price Argentina (Buenos Aires) Lab 2019**

This land use policy approach is one that derives from consulting work I did initially at the invitation of the World Bank in Brazil in 2003, and more recently for the Inter-American Development Bank. Through these and related institutional affiliations our Lab will work in parallel to ongoing efforts at the local, national and international level to examine the nexus between land use policies and housing outcomes in Latin American cities, using Buenos Aires as our case study. We are also fortunate to have as a local partner Professor Cynthia Goytia and her team of researchers at Universidad Torcuato Di Tella.

The methodological approach we will employ is based on a model introduced by Heikkila and Lim (2014) that views formal and informal housing outcomes within a single, unified conceptual framework. This approach has been refined further by Heikkila and Harten (2017) to allow for multiple jurisdictions within an explicit spatial geography. Two teams of faculty-led researchers – one led by Professor Goytia in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and the other by Professor Bastiaan Reydon in Campinas, Brazil – are currently employing this model as part of a policy research project under the direction of the Inter-American Development Bank. Their aim is to develop empirically rooted policy recommendations in their respective contexts.

Our work will supplement those efforts using the application framework depicted here. The focus is on the "golden triad" linking land use regulations (z), location (d) and housing (h). Put simply, lower income households are more constrained in finding...
neighbors (N) that provide affordable housing options within reasonable commuting distance to employment centers. The greater the shortfall in such places, the more likely it is that these households will be compelled to reside in informal settlements instead. Based on a review of best practices elsewhere in the world, and drawing upon pertinent scholarly literature, our team will make recommendations to key stakeholders in Buenos Aires regarding the policy options best suited to their specific local context. To this end we will organize ourselves into three cross-cutting groups corresponding to the key elements of the "golden triad" discussed above:

- **Housing / Land use** -- To what extent can changes to existing land use regulations provide more opportunities for lower income households to find suitable accommodation within the formal sector?
- **Employment / Income** -- Recognizing that there is a strong nexus between informality in the labor markets and housing markets, what measures might be taken to provide households with a more stable income basis to support a wider range of housing options?
- **Transportation / Infrastructure** -- Can transportation and other infrastructure improvements enhance access to more affordable housing options?

**Course Objectives**

As with all USC Price International Labs, the learning objective is to translate “classroom knowledge” into professional practice, and to do so in a setting outside the United States. The pedagogical model draws on a professional consulting paradigm, with a clearly identified client and terms of reference for the students’ work.

Specifically, the learning objectives for this two-part Lab include the following:

- Integration and application of classroom knowledge on housing, employment and infrastructure policies to the specified problem context – in this case informal housing settlements (“vishas”) in Argentina. Participants will have the opportunity to develop their skills associated with synthesizing existing research, finding and gathering data relevant to the project, and using the data to diagnose problems, design and assess various options, and develop recommendations that take into account the constraints facing the client.
- How to thrive as members of an international consulting team, paying particular attention to formulating and adhering to a manageable, client-oriented work plan. Students will gain valuable practice in presenting analyses of issues and recommendations in a concise, clear and interesting manner geared to the client’s perspective. Participation in the Lab also entails an affirmation of professional norms of conduct. Participants are expected to adhere to professional norms of punctuality, thoroughness, reliability, communication skills, professional appearance, integrity and ability to work well in multi-cultural teams.
- Personal growth in terms of teamwork, by developing a better understanding of how to function as part of an international team with diverse skill sets and areas of substantive expertise. Participation in the Lab provides participants with useful insights into the individual strengths they can contribute to a team effort, as well as how to resolve interpersonal and organizational issues within the team. Participants learn how their specialized knowledge fits within the broader framework of a complex, multifaceted project.
• Translation of professional practice in a cross-cultural setting. Professional practice pertaining to housing policy as developed in the United States is embedded in a particular social, economic and cultural context. A key objective of the course is for participants to gain a better awareness of how to adapt their professional practice to suit contexts such as Argentina that may be quite different from those in the US.

• Enhanced knowledge of housing, employment and infrastructure policies in a global context. Participants are challenged to understand the theoretical underpinnings of such policies generally and in the context of informal sector housing in particular. Additionally, they should develop lessons learned from a wide range of case studies and assess the applicability of those lessons for the Argentinian context.
Assignments and Determination of Grades

Spring semester (1-unit course)
Final grades for the 1-unit course PPD 613a are based on the following items:

- **Assignment 1 (Sector teams): Sector specific analytical frameworks (30%)**
- **Assignment 2 (Case teams): International case studies (30%)**
- **Assignment 3: (Individual): Assessing the Argentinian context (30%)**
- **Class participation.** The relevant metric here is how, in my judgment, each student’s participation enriched the experience of others in the class. (10%)

Summer semester (3-unit course)
While individual effort and initiative is essential, ultimately it is the quality of the group product that matters to the client. Accordingly, final grades for the 3-unit course (PPD 613b) are also based on both group and individual components.

Although each student will be contributing in her own way to the outcome, the written report will be evaluated as a single, integrated document. All students succeed or fail in equal measure, based on the quality of the group work. Similarly, the final presentation made to the client will be evaluated as a single, coherent effort. Accordingly, half of each student’s grade for this 3-unit course will be calculated as follows:

- **Final group written report.** This report will be addressed to the client, but should also be of interest to a wider audience. It should be a summative effort that states its purpose clearly while also explaining its findings and recommendations in a thorough, professional and persuasive manner. Arguments should be supported – as needed – with an appropriate range of data, graphs, illustrations, analytical work, appendixes and bibliographic references. The emphasis should be on clarity of thought, with a crisp writing style. Its length should be kept to a minimum, subject to fully accomplishing what it has set out to do. (15%)

- **Final group presentation to client.** The presentation made to the client should generally follow a parallel structure to the written report, but with appropriate adjustments to reflect the different medium of communication. Although each student should contribute to its content in some meaningful way, the presentation itself should not be cluttered with multiple voices. The emphasis should be on a single, integrated, coherent presentation on behalf of the entire group. (15%)

- **Interim group written report.** A full draft of the written report should be submitted to the instructor two days prior to the final. (10%)

- **Interim group presentation.** A practice run of the final presentation will be given two days prior to the final. (10%)

The remaining half of each student’s grade will be based more directly on individual effort, as indicated here:
• **Class participation.** This includes punctuality, professionalism, and regular participation in all aspects of the Lab. Ultimately, however, the value of each student’s contribution is based on how others in the class benefit from his/her involvement. **(15%)**

• **Professional journal.** This is intended to be the centerpiece of your individual effort, and it is weighted accordingly. At one level, it is a daily record of your activities in the Lab. More than that, it is a venue for you to reflect on the Lab activities as you are experiencing them. You should aim to produce a thoughtful set of daily observations and reflections of enduring value. **(25%)**

• **Photo contest.** Each student will submit three photos, one in each of the following categories:
  o Photo pertaining to the overall theme of this Lab (informal housing)
  o Photo revealing what it is like to participate in this Lab
  o Photo that shines with creativity and artistry.

Although the instructor will assign grades based on his own judgment, the three contest winners (one in each category) will be chosen by their peers through a ballot. **(10%)**

**Course schedule – Spring semester (PPD 613a)**

The first component of the Argentina Lab, PPD 613a, comprises four sessions held at USC during the Spring 2019 semester. Each of the following sessions is held on a Thursday, from 8:30 - 11:50 am.

**Session 1 (Jan 17th):** Self-introductions. Session content includes client background & introduction; terms of reference; course overview; travel logistics; and scholarly context of policy issue. Assignment 1 given out.

**Session 2 (Feb 7th):** Assignment 1 assignments (sector analyses) to be presented in class. Assignment 2 (city case studies) given out. Lecture based on related readings.

**Session 3 (Mar 7th):** Assignment 2 assignments (city case studies) to be presented in class. Assignment 3 given out. Lecture based on related readings.

**Session 4 (Apr 11th):** Assignment 3 (Argentina context) due. In-class discussion of assignment 3. Review of travel plans. Lecture based on related readings.

**Course schedule – Summer semester (PPD 613b)**

The second component, PPD 613b, will be conducted on an intensive basis in **Buenos Aires, Argentina** from **Monday, May 20th through Friday, May 31st**. A detailed daily schedule for this intensive component will be announced prior to arrival in Argentina. The two weeks spent in Buenos Aires will be highly intensive, with two main phases after arrival: **ingestion & digestion** during the first week, and **report and presentation production** during the second week. Students should arrive in Buenos Aires no later than Sunday, May 19th, 2019, ready to begin work Monday morning. The first week entails a full schedule of lectures and site visits designed to illuminate the policy issues within the local context. There is a one-day hiatus in the midst of this first week to allow students to begin to digest the vast quantities of information they will have received, and to reflect upon how their own report (due the next week) can incorporate these new findings.
The intervening weekend between the two intensive weeks is less structured but should be used productively. It also provides students with a much-needed opportunity to rest and recuperate so that they can continue working intensively the next week, which moves fully into production mode. Both the final written report and client presentation are due on Friday morning, May 31st. In order to allow for adequate review and feedback prior to this final day, a practice run of the client presentation is scheduled for Wednesday, May 29th. A full draft of the written report is also due that date. Students will be working in fluid teams with client presentation and written report being produced in parallel.

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**Statement for Students with Disabilities**
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to the TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

**Statement on Academic Integrity**
USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code. See Section 11.00 (under University Governance) for a description of violations of university standards and Appendix A for the recommended sanctions: [http://web-app.usc.edu/scampus/university-student-conduct-code/](http://web-app.usc.edu/scampus/university-student-conduct-code/)

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/)
References


