

# Dryfo Urbanism: Urbanization through Forestation

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## Abstract

Self-constructed cities<sup>3</sup> do not lack housing solutions as much as they lack Informal Armatures<sup>4</sup> capable of bridging the gap between the formal and informal of cities around the world. (Gouverneur, 2015) In the near future, such phenomenon will be the main form of urbanization. (Lorena Zárate, 2016) Although shelter is considered a fundamental human right, one third of the global urban population suffers from inadequate living conditions, increasing social disparities. Dwellers of these areas are often denied natural amenities, infrastructure, and services by stakeholders and planners.

The continual growth of self-constructed cities will inevitably aggravate the human impact on our planet. From encroaching onto environmentally sensitive areas, to populating unstable territories with geological and physiological limitations, the citizens of self-constructed cities are rarely provided land suitable for development. Furthermore, inhabitants of such settlements suffer from “health hazards, social segregation, social unrest, and ineffective governance.” (Gouverneur, 2015)

This paper presents a novel strategy of planning for self-constructed cities which identifies land adequate for development and incorporates urban forestry as a green infrastructure. Instead of implementing the vision of any one individual, this strategy leverages the voice of the land, intertwining existing vegetation with a process of forestation, thus diminishing urban dichotomies. With landscape as the protagonist<sup>5</sup>, citizens would be able to preemptively shape their environment in a manner where nature isn't considered an impediment or afterthought, but integrated into the process of self-organization.

This method emerges from an academic study for the city of Cartagena, Colombia conducted in the Landscape Architecture Department at the University of Pennsylvania in 2017. With a steady population growth rate composed of 70% informal settlements, Cartagena epitomizes the global dichotomy of self-constructed cities lacking natural amenities. Such urbanization has historically not only encroached on fragile and invaluable ecosystems such as the dry forest, but lacked any semblance of defining the public realm using landscape as an amenity to moderate harsh environmental and social conditions.

“Dry Forest (Dryfo) Urbanism’ proposes an orchestrated planting of the dry forest as the Informal Armature for future growth. Leveraging the existing vegetation of the grazing land, Dryfo Urbanism extends these lines throughout the expansion zone of Cartagena incorporating a process of forestation to reserve future mobility corridors and provide severely needed public space. This proposal imagines a future Cartagena where the dry forest provides space for communal interaction and collective memory; a Cartagena where self-constructed citizens can enjoy their contextual ecosystem as a component of their daily lives.

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<sup>3</sup> Lorena Zárate (2016), They are Not “Informal Settlements” - They are Habitats Made by People, The Nature of Cities. <https://www.thenatureofcities.com/2016/04/26/they-are-not-informal-settlements-they-are-habitats-made-by-people/>

<sup>4</sup> David Gouverneur (2014), *Planning and Design for Future Informal Settlements*, Routledge; 1 edizione

<sup>5</sup> William Ospina (2013), *Pa Que Se Acabe La Vaina*. Planeta Colombia, 2013.