

Brandon Marc Finn

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Website: [Google Scholar Page](#); [LinkedIn](#)

AREAS OF RESEARCH/TEACHING:

African urbanization; environmental justice; informality; urban history; urban sustainability and climate change; urban poverty; mining; supply chains and inequality; urban governance

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS:

Assistant Research Scientist

March 2024 – Present

School for Environment and Sustainability
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Postdoctoral Research Fellow and Lecturer

June 2022 – Present

School for Environment and Sustainability
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

EDUCATION:

PhD, Urban Planning

August 2016 – May 2022

Graduate School of Design
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA

- Dissertation: 'Rethinking African Urbanization: The Global Lineages of Informality and Spatial Transformation Across the Continent'
- Committee: Dr. Neil Brenner (chair), Dr. Diane Davis, Dr. Jean Comaroff, Dr. Sven Beckert

MSc, Urban Studies

August 2015 – August 2016

Department of Urban Studies
University College London, UK

- Dissertation: "Quietly chasing Kigali: young men and the intolerance of informality in Rwanda's capital city"
- Advisor: Dr. Tatiana Thieme

BSocSci (Hons)

January – December 2014

Environmental and Geographical Science
University of Cape Town, South Africa

- Dissertation: "Straining and innovating: young men working through waithood in Freetown, Sierra Leone"
- Advisor: Dr. Sophie Oldfield

Bachelor of Arts

January 2010 – December 2013

Environmental and Geographical Studies; Media and Writing
University of Cape Town, South Africa

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS:

1. **Finn, B.M.**, Forthcoming. Informality at the Heart of Sustainable Development. *Dialogues in Human Geography*.
2. **Finn, B.M.**, 2023. The Structure of Informality: The Zambian Copperbelt and the Informal/Formal Dialectic. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 0(0). [Epub ahead of print]

3. Hosseini, A., **Finn, B.M.**, and Momeni, A., 2023. The complexities of urban informality: A multi-dimensional analysis of residents' perceptions of life, inequality, and access in an Iranian informal settlement. *Cities*, 132, pp.104099.
4. **Finn, B.M.**, 2023. The Surrounds: Urban Life Within and Beyond Capture. *Contemporary Sociology*, 52(6), pp. 576-578.
5. **Finn, B.M.**, 2022. Pandemic Urbanization: How South Africa's History of Labor and Disease Control Creates its Current Disparities. *Journal of Urban Affairs*. 45(3), pp.616-629.
6. Cobbinah, P., **Finn, B.M.**, 2022. Planning and Climate Change in African Cities: Informal Urbanization and 'Just' Urban Transformations. *Journal of Planning Literature*. 38(3), pp.361-379.
7. **Finn, B.M.**, Cobbinah, P., 2022. African Urbanization at the Confluence of Informality and Climate Change. *Urban Studies (Selected as the Editors' Featured Article)*. 60(3), pp.405-424.
8. Hosseini, A., **Finn, B.M.**, Sajjadi, S.A., and Mosavei, T., 2022. Urban Disparities and Quality of Life Among Afghan Refugees Living in Informal Settlements in Mashhad, Iran. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 18(2), pp.1-25.
9. **Finn, B.M.**, 2021. The Popular Sovereignty Continuum: Civil and Political Society in Contemporary South Africa. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 39(1), pp.152-167.
10. **Finn, B.M.**, Kobayashi, L., 2020. Structural inequality in the time of COVID-19: Urbanization, segregation, and pandemic control in sub-Saharan Africa. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 10(2), pp.217-220.
11. Finlay, J., **Finn, B.M.**, 2020. Geography's blind spot: the age-old urban question. *Urban Geography*, 42(8), pp.1061-1078.
12. **Finn, B.M.**, 2018. Quietly Chasing Kigali: young men and the intolerance of informality in Rwanda's capital city. *Urban Forum*, 29(2), pp.205-218.
13. **Finn, B.M.**, Oldfield S. 2015. Straining: Young Men Working through Waithood in Freetown, Sierra Leone. *Africa Spectrum*, 50(3), pp.49-69.

RESEARCH FUNDING:

African Studies Center STEM Grant (\$10,000) May 2023 – February 2024
Cobalt and the Global Transition to Low-carbon Technologies: Towards an Equitable and Sustainable Supply Chain of a Critical Mineral
 Role: Co-Investigator
 University of Michigan

Bold Challenges BOOST Program (\$75,000) June 2023 – March 2024
Critical Minerals for Electric Vehicles and Decarbonization: Sustainable and Environmentally-Just Supply Chains
 Role: Co-Investigator
 University of Michigan

SEAS Themes Funds (\$25,000) November 2023 – July 2024
The Sustainable Mineral Supply Chain Research-Action Network
Role: Co-Investigator
University of Michigan

REPORTS:

African Centre for Cities. (2015) *Urban infrastructure in sub-Saharan Africa: harnessing land values, housing and transport*. Cape Town. African Centre for Cities.
http://www.africancentreforcities.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Full-DFID-Report_Web.1.1.1.pdf

AWARDS:

Dissertation Completion Fellowship August 2021 – July 2022
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University

GSD Real Estate Grant August 2021 – March 2022
Graduate School of Design, Harvard University

AAG Dissertation Research Grant July 2021
American Association of Geographers

IJURR PhD Studentship August 2020 – May 2021
International Journal of Urban and Regional Research

Mid-Dissertation Grant June – August 2020
Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University

Professional Development Fund June – August 2019
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University

Pre-Dissertation Award September 2018 – May 2019
Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University

Distinguished African Student Fellowship August 2016 – May 2018
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University

Kathryn Davis Fellowship for Peace July – August 2017
Middlebury College

Laurie Dippenaar Scholarship August 2015 – July 2016
FirstRand Foundation

Oppenheimer Scholarship August 2015 – July 2016
Oppenheimer Foundation

Abe Bailey Scholarship for South African Students August 2015 – July 2016
Goodenough College

Winner of the Global Development Network Essay Competition September 2014
Essay titled: "Urban Africa in 2025"

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

March 2024

Instructor of Record

Urban Sustainability (EAS 537)
School for Environment and Sustainability
University of Michigan

Fall 2022 – 2023

Sustainability and Society (Environ 207)
Program in the Environment
University of Michigan

Fall 2023

Instructor

Commodities, Cities, and States in Global Perspective
Special Concentration, Harvard College

Spring 2019

Teaching Fellow

Histories of Landscape Architecture II (HIS 4142)
Histories of Landscape Architecture (HIS 4141)
Theories and Practices of Landscape Architecture (DES 3242)
History and Theory of Urban Interventions (HIS 4115)
Graduate School of Design
Harvard University

Spring 2021
Fall 2020
Spring 2019
Fall 2018

Geographic Thought (EGS 3022S)
Contemporary Urban Challenges in the Southern African City (EGS 2014S)
Department of Environmental and Geographical Sciences
University of Cape Town

Spring 2014
Fall 2014

Guest Lectures

Urban Sustainability from a Global Perspective
Capstone Seminar (CRN 20571)
Wayne State University

Spring 2023

Climate Change and Informal Urbanization
Urban Environmental Policy and Planning
The University of Melbourne

Spring 2021

'Race' and Class in South Africa: The Evolution of the Urban
Histories of Landscape Architecture (HIS 4141)
Harvard University

Fall 2020

Urban Decentralization, Land Use, and Spatial Inequality
Land Use Planning (URP 610)
University of Michigan

Spring 2020

Informal Labor and Extractive African Urbanization
The Nature of Difference: Theories and Practices of Landscape Architecture (DES 3242)
Harvard University

Spring 2019

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Staff and Writer

African Studies Center
University of Michigan

June 2019 – December 2021

Research Consultant

African Centre for Cities – focusing on urban infrastructure in sub-Saharan Africa

March 2014 – July 2015

University of Cape Town

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

1. *Urbanism Interrupted: Informal Economy, National Reconstruction and Luanda's Urban Morphology*. Invited Discussant. African Studies Workshop. Harvard University, Virtual due to COVID-19, 8 November 2021.
2. *Pandemic Urbanization: 'Race,' Class, and South African Spatial Transformation*. American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting, Virtual due to COVID-19, 9 April 2021.
3. *Countering Narratives*. Invited Discussant. International Institute Conference on Migration. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 24 February 2020.
4. *Resource Cities in the Copperbelt and the Making of the Electric, Uranium, and Digital Ages*. Frontiers of Accumulation – International Conference. University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark, 13–14 May 2019.
5. *Extractive African Urbanization: Copperbelt Cities and Informal Mining in Global Perspective*. American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, USA, 3–7 April 2019.
6. *Extractive Urbanization and Global Urban Change*. Cambridge Talks: PhD Colloquium. Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Cambridge, MA, USA, 31 March 2019.
7. *Lubumbashi: Global City*. Colonial Cities in Global Perspective. Global History Network Annual Meeting, St Louis, Senegal, 7–9 December 2018.
8. *Capitalism: A Conversation in Critical Theory*. Invited Discussant. Program on the Study of Capitalism. Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA, 26 February 2018.
9. *Quietly Chasing Kigali: Young Men and the Intolerance of Informality in Rwanda's Capital City*. American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting, Boston, MA, USA, 5–9 April 2017.
10. *The Africa Land and Infrastructure City Scan: A Profile of 31 Cities in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Urban Infrastructure in Sub-Saharan Africa, Department of International Development, Cape Town, South Africa, 20 July 2015.
11. *Straining and Innovating: Young Men at Work in Freetown, Sierra Leone*. Urban Geography Commission, Dublin, Ireland, 9–16 August 2015.

WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS:

1. **Plenary Presentation:** *The upstream of global decarbonization: Advancing equitable and transparent commodity supply chains*. Workshop titled: Socio-economic challenges of copper and cobalt in the Katanga Copperbelt, University of Lubumbashi, Katanga, Democratic Republic of Congo, 21 August 2023.
2. *Contested Continuums: Civil and Political Society in Contemporary South Africa*. Urban Theory Lab, Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Cambridge, MA, USA, 7 November 2018.

3. *Urban Planning and Informality in Kigali, Rwanda*. Urban Theory Lab, Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Cambridge, MA, USA, 12 October 2017.

NON-PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS:

1. **Finn, B.M.**, 2022. Adapting and Expanding Urban Research on Informality, Sustainability, and Inequality. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, IJURR Foundation Community*. 7 October 2022. <https://www.ijurr.org/ijurr-foundation/ijurr-foundation-community/voicesfromthecommunity-adapting-and-expanding-urban-research-on-informality-sustainability-and-inequality/>
2. **Finn, B.M.**, Cobbinah, P., 2022. Climate change and informality as defining features of African urbanization. *Urban Studies Blog*. 27 June 2022. <https://www.urbanstudiesonline.com/resources/resource/climate-change-and-informality-as-defining-features-of-african-urbanisation/>
3. **Finn, B.M.**, 2017. *A New Middle Ground: Rethinking Formalisation in Cities*. Emerge85. 5 July 2017. <https://emerge85.io/Insights/a-new-middle-ground-rethinking-formalisation-in-cities/>
4. **Finn, B.M.**, 2017. *How Anti-Urban Bias Fuels Informal Settlements and Poverty*. Emerge85. 17 August 2017. <https://emerge85.io/Insights/how-anti-urban-bias-fuels-informal-settlements-and-poverty/>
5. **Finn, B.M.**, 2017. *Rwandan Government tightens its oppressive reigns*. Daily Maverick. 27 January 2017. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2017-01-27-op-ed-rwandan-government-tightens-its-oppressive-reins/>
6. **Finn, B.M.**, 2017. *Activism and Rwanda's Development Model*. Daily Maverick. 27 April 2017. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2017-04-27-op-ed-activism-and-rwandas-development-model-diane-rwigara-takes-a-stand/>
7. **Finn, B.M.**, 2014. *The Sand Miners of Sierra Leone: Working and Waiting*. UrbanAfrica. 14 August 2014. <https://www.urbanafrica.net/urban-voices/sand-miners-sierra-leone-working-waiting/>
8. **Finn, B.M.**, 2014. *Young men struggling for work in Freetown*. UrbanAfrica. 23 July 2014. <https://www.urbanafrica.net/urban-voices/young-men-caught-rock-hard-place-freetown>

SERVICE TO PROFESSION:

Ad Hoc Peer Reviewer:

Africa Development

African Identities

Africa Studies Review

Cambridge University Press

Cities

Cogent Humanities

Development Policy Review

Edward Elgar Publishing

Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement

Geography Compass

International Development Planning Review

International Journal of Urban and Regional Research

Habitat International

Human Geography
Journal of Regional and City Planning
Journal of Urban Affairs
Sustainability Science
Swiss National Science Foundation
Territory, Politics, Governance
Urban Geography

External Reviewer for African Cities Lab Grant March 2021
African Cities Lab
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology

External Reviewer for MSc Dissertation Projects September 2018 – August 2020
Graduate School of Design
Harvard University

External Reviewer for Undergraduate Senior Thesis May 2020
Special Concentrations
Harvard College

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP:

American Association of Geographers August 2016 – Present

PROFESSIONAL WORKING GROUPS:

Member, Urban Sustainability Research Group, University of Michigan August 2022
– Present

The Urban Sustainability Research Group at the School for Environment and Sustainability at the University of Michigan aims to foster urban sustainability and resilience, mitigate climate change, and address global ecological crises.

Member, Urban Theory Lab, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University August 2017
– May 2022

The Urban Theory Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Design is the base for an international network of researchers, promoting theory-driven research on historical and contemporary definitions, effects, and urbanization processes across multiple scales.

Affiliate, Center for Political Studies, U-M Institute for Social Research July 2019
– May 2021

The Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan forms part of the Institute for Social Research, and conducts broad, interdisciplinary research on politics and geopolitics.

Affiliate, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University September 2018
– August 2021

The Weatherhead Center for International Affairs facilitates the production of pathbreaking social science research on international, comparative, transnational, and global issues by faculty and students at Harvard.