

Brandon Marc Finn

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

AREAS OF RESEARCH/TEACHING:

Urbanization; environmental justice; informality; urban sustainability and climate change; urban poverty; mining; supply chains; 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.** and Bandauko, E., 2024. Dwindling funds and increased responsibilities: Decentralization, unfunded mandates, and Harare's infrastructure crisis. *Habitat International*, 148, p.103087.
2. **Finn, B.M.**, Cobbinah, P., 2024. Pandemic Urbanization: Colonial imprints in the urban present. *Cities*, 153. [Epub ahead of print]
3. Cobbinah, P. B., **Finn, B. M.**, 2024. On Pedestrian Accessibility: Spatial Justice and Progressive Planning in African Cities. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 0(0). [Epub ahead of print]
4. **Finn, B.M.**, 2024. Informality at the Heart of Sustainable Development. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 0(0). [Epub ahead of print]
5. **Finn, B.M.**, Bandauko, E., 2024. Dwindling funds and increased responsibilities: Decentralization, unfunded mandates, and Harare's infrastructure crisis. *Habitat International*, 0(0). [Epub ahead of print]
6. **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]
7. 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.
8. **Finn, B.M.**, 2023. The Surrounds: Urban Life Within and Beyond Capture. *Contemporary Sociology*, 52(6), pp. 576-578.
9. **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.
10. 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.
11. **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.
12. 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.
13. **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.
14. **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.
15. Finlay, J., **Finn, B.M.**, 2020. Geography's blind spot: the age-old urban question. *Urban Geography*, 42(8), pp.1061-1078.

16. **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.
17. **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 (\$6,000) May 2024 – February 2025
Geospatial Data Pilot Study in Old Fadama, Accra
 Role: Principal Investigator
 University of Michigan

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.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:

Instructor of Record
Urban Sustainability (EAS 537) Fall 2022 – 2024
School for Environment and Sustainability
University of Michigan

Sustainability and Society (Environ 207) Fall 2023 – 2024
Program in the Environment
University of Michigan

Instructor Spring 2019
Commodities, Cities, and States in Global Perspective
Special Concentration, Harvard College

Teaching Fellow
Histories of Landscape Architecture II (HIS 4142) Spring 2021
Histories of Landscape Architecture (HIS 4141) Fall 2020
Theories and Practices of Landscape Architecture (DES 3242) Spring 2019
History and Theory of Urban Interventions (HIS 4115) Fall 2018
Graduate School of Design
Harvard University

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

Guest Lectures
History and Theory of North American Urban Planning Winter 2024
Urban Theory and Planning
University of Melbourne

July 2024

Navigating PhD Research Winter 2024
PhD Seminar
University of British Columbia

Urban Sustainability from a Global Perspective Spring 2023
Capstone Seminar (CRN 20571)
Wayne State University

Climate Change and Informal Urbanization Spring 2021
Urban Environmental Policy and Planning
The University of Melbourne

'Race' and Class in South Africa: The Evolution of the Urban Fall 2020
Histories of Landscape Architecture (HIS 4141)
Harvard University

Urban Decentralization, Land Use, and Spatial Inequality Spring 2020
Land Use Planning (URP 610)
University of Michigan

Informal Labor and Extractive African Urbanization Spring 2019
The Nature of Difference: Theories and Practices of Landscape Architecture (DES 3242)
Harvard University

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Staff and Writer June 2019 – December 2021
African Studies Center
University of Michigan

Research Consultant March 2014 – July 2015
African Centre for Cities – focusing on urban infrastructure in sub-Saharan Africa
University of Cape Town

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

1. *The Geographies of Informality: Assessing the Negative Externalities of 'End-of-Life' Circular Economies*, Imagining Just Environmental and Climate Futures in Africa, Cornell University, New York, 3-4 May 2024.
2. *Informal Decarbonization Supply Chains*, Association of Geographers Annual Meeting, Honolulu, Hawaii, 15-20 April 2024.
3. *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.
4. *Pandemic Urbanization: 'Race,' Class, and South African Spatial Transformation*. American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting, Virtual due to COVID-19, 9 April 2021.
5. *Countering Narratives*. Invited Discussant. International Institute Conference on Migration. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 24 February 2020.

6. *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.
7. *Extractive African Urbanization: Copperbelt Cities and Informal Mining in Global Perspective*. American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, USA, 3–7 April 2019.
8. *Extractive Urbanization and Global Urban Change*. Cambridge Talks: PhD Colloquium. Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Cambridge, MA, USA, 31 March 2019.
9. *Lubumbashi: Global City*. Colonial Cities in Global Perspective. Global History Network Annual Meeting, St Louis, Senegal, 7–9 December 2018.
10. *Capitalism: A Conversation in Critical Theory*. Invited Discussant. Program on the Study of Capitalism. Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA, 26 February 2018.
11. *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.
12. *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.
13. *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

July 2024

External Reviewer for Undergraduate Senior Thesis
Special Concentrations
Harvard College

May 2020

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP:

American Association of Geographers

August 2016 – Present

PROFESSIONAL WORKING GROUPS:

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

August 2022

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
– May 2022

August 2017

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
– May 2021

July 2019

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
– August 2021

September 2018

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.