



Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture

By Justin McGuirk

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Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture By Justin McGuirk

What makes the city of the future? How do you heal a divided city?

In *Radical Cities*, Justin McGuirk travels across Latin America in search of the activist architects, maverick politicians and alternative communities already answering these questions. From Brazil to Venezuela, and from Mexico to Argentina, McGuirk discovers the people and ideas shaping the way cities are evolving.

Ever since the mid twentieth century, when the dream of modernist utopia went to Latin America to die, the continent has been a testing ground for exciting new conceptions of the city. An architect in Chile has designed a form of social housing where only half of the house is built, allowing the owners to adapt the rest; Medellín, formerly the world's murder capital, has been transformed with innovative public architecture; squatters in Caracas have taken over the forty-five-story Torre David skyscraper; and Rio is on a mission to incorporate its favelas into the rest of the city.

Here, in the most urbanised continent on the planet, extreme cities have bred extreme conditions, from vast housing estates to sprawling slums. But after decades of social and political failure, a new generation has revitalised architecture and urban design in order to address persistent poverty and inequality. Together, these activists, pragmatists and social idealists are performing bold experiments that the rest of the world may learn from.

Radical Cities is a colorful journey through Latin America—a crucible of architectural and urban innovation.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Provocative and beautifully crafted.”

—Richard Sennett, author of *Together*

“In this inspiring book, McGuirk goes right to the heart of the dilemmas facing architecture and cities today. With its powerful prose and deep insights, *Radical Cities* reboots the potential of architecture to have social and political meaning, taking us through an unforgettable journey through the contested spaces of Latin America urbanism.”

—Ricky Burdett, Director LSE Cities

“Fine and timely ... McGuirk takes a road trip to seek out not only the problems caused by rapid growth but also the most radical and influential ideas to have emerged in response over the past couple of decades ... an intriguing picture of an activist urbanism and architecture that has made a real difference.”

—Edwin Heathcote, *Financial Times*

“A series of remarkable interventions across Latin America that seek to align architecture, planning, and infrastructure with the needs of disenfranchised people who seek to live in decent, democratic, and functional environments.”

—Michael Sorkin, author of *All Over The Map*

“This is an engagingly-written, continent-wide introduction to the ways in which a couple of generations of Latin American architects and urban planners have contended with issues such as social housing, transportation and even the border.”

—Carolina Miranda, *Los Angeles Times*

“Makes the case for action in cities once again. This book is a generational call written without easy utopianism or fatal disillusionment about a new social consciousness in architecture and urban design.”

—Pier Vittorio Aureli, architect

“Clear headed, elegantly written, carefully observed, the book introduces us to flamboyant mooning mayors and revolutionary theme park builders. We follow McGuirk through the dark stairwells of Caracas’s squatted skyscraper, and the cable cars dangling above Rio’s favelas.”

—Deyan Sudjic, Director Design Museum

“Writing with verve and purpose, McGuirk explores how a new generation is developing strategies to build equitable communities in Latin America.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“An exhilarating tour of the continent—a collection of stories that demonstrates great ingenuity in the harshest of circumstances.”

—*Icon*

“The whole world over people move from the countryside into the city, but nowhere is this movement and its consequences so dramatic as in Latin America ... The architecture critic Justin McGuirk travelled the

continent and spoke with architects, politicians and campaign groups to try to understand how to respond to this threatening phenomenon. *Radical Cities* is the name of his book in which, with bitter irony, he first establishes that it is precisely in Latin America, where architects such as Oscar Niemeyer realised social-utopian architecture more than anywhere else, that the models of social building failed. And yet McGuirk is neither fatalist, nor dreamer. He points out problems, but also describes some fascinating approaches to try to mitigate them.”

—Hans Ulrich Obrist

“Justin McGuirk’s fascinating study shows that Latin American cities have much to teach the world’s architects.”

—*Observer*

“*Radical Cities* is a fast-paced journey across the region’s cities where the author meets the people who are moulding social change in suburbs across Latin America … A real strength of McGuirk’s analysis is its contextual and historical sensitivity, which takes into account the unique circumstances of each country, city and community … For those of us disillusioned by the current social housing … The lesson to be learned is the need to bring creativity and innovation to address the challenges of our cities.”

—Danielle House, *Latin America Bureau*

About the Author

Justin McGuirk is a writer and curator, and has worked as the *Guardian*’s design columnist and the editor of *Icon* magazine. He is also the director of Strelka Press and the design consultant to *Domus*, and his writing has appeared in the *Observer*, the *Times*, *Disegno*, *Art Review*, *Condé Nast Traveller*, *Form*, the *Architects Journal*, *Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*. In 2012 he was awarded the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale of Architecture for an exhibition he curated with Urban Think Tank. He is the incoming Chief Curator of the Design Museum in London.

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