

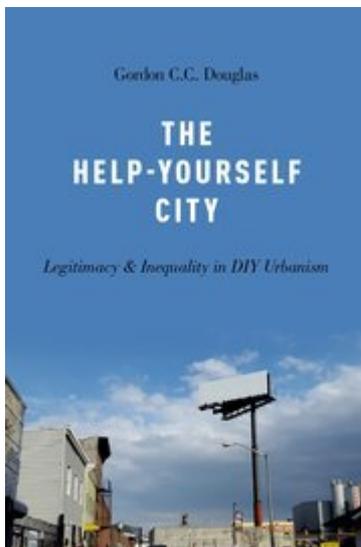
BOOK PRESENTATION SEMINAR

The Cosmopolis Centre for Urban Research is pleased to welcome you to the book presentation of:

The Help-Yourself City: Legitimacy and Inequality in DIY Urbanism

(2018, Oxford University Press)

By Dr. Gordon Douglas, San José State University in California



Abstract: When cash-strapped local governments fail to provide adequate services, and planning policies prioritize economic development over community needs, how do concerned citizens respond? In *The Help-Yourself City*, Gordon Douglas looks closely at the people who take urban planning into their own hands, dubbed “do-it-yourself urban design.” Through in-depth interviews with do-it-yourselfers, professional planners, and community members, as well as participant observation, photography, media, and policy analysis, Douglas demonstrates that many do-it-yourselfers employ professional techniques and expertise to enable and inspire their actions. He argues that many unauthorized interventions are created from a position of privilege, where legal repercussions are unlikely, while people from disadvantaged communities where improvements may be most needed face disincentives to taking such actions themselves. Presenting a needed social analysis of this growing trend, while connecting it to debates on inequality, citizenship, and contemporary urban political economy, *The Help-Yourself City* tells a street-level story of people’s relationships to their

surroundings and the individualization of democratic responsibility.

When? Monday the 25th of June from 12:00 PM -13:30 PM

Where? VUB Campus Etterbeek, Promotion Hall D2.01 (<http://www.vub.ac.be/en/campus/brussels-humanities-sciences-engineering-campus>)

Schedule:

- 12:00-12:05 Welcome by Dr. Eva Swyngedouw (Cosmopolis, VUB)
- 12:05-12:35 Book presentation by Dr. Gordon Douglas (San José State University)
- 12:35-12:50 Intervention by Pepijn Kennis (vzw Toestand)
- 12:50-13:05 Discussion led by Dr. Thomas Swerts (Erasmus University Rotterdam/OASes UA)
- 13:05-13:30 Q&A



Gordon Douglas is Assistant Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at San José State University in California, where he is Director of the Institute for Metropolitan Studies. Gordon received his doctorate in sociology from the University of Chicago and also holds degrees from the University of Southern California and the London School of Economics. Prior to joining the Dept. of Urban and Regional Planning at San Jose State, he was the Rebuild by Design Postdoctoral Fellow at New York University, where he also served as Associate Director of the Institute for Public Knowledge, a research center focused on publicly engaged scholarship. Born in England and raised in Northern California, he has also lived in Chicago, London, Los Angeles, and New York.

For more information, see: <http://www.sjsu.edu/urbanplanning/facstaff/GordonDouglas/> and

<http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190691332.001.0001/oso-9780190691332>



© Saskia Vanderstichele

Pepijn Kennis is coordinator at the Brussels-based organisation **Toestand**. He previously studied Sociology and he is an alumnus of the Urban Studies '4Cities' programme. Toestand is a temporary use organisation in Brussels, helping citizen activities and community groups access spaces at an affordable rent or for free. While the organisation undertakes the work of identifying buildings, negotiating with owners, renovating the spaces and recruiting tenants, it is also responsible for the daily management of the reactivated sites, bringing together different audiences. Working with private owners, municipalities and the metropolitan region of Brussels, Toestand has opened for temporary uses a variety of buildings and public spaces in different parts of the city, such as Allee Du Kaai, Marie Moskou in Saint-Gilles and Biestebroek in Anderlecht.

For more information, see: <http://toestand.be/en/>



Thomas Swerts is Assistant Professor in Sociology at the Erasmus University Rotterdam and a guest professor at the University of Antwerp. He previously received his PhD in Sociology from the University of Chicago. His research focuses on the nexus between irregular migration, social movements and urban citizenship. His book manuscript, *Citizen X: Undocumented migrants as activists*, under contract at the University of Chicago Press, is a comparative ethnographic study of undocumented activism in Chicago and Brussels. His research has been funded by the SSRC, NSF and the Mellon Foundation. He has published in *Global Networks*, *Mobilization* and the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.

Questions? Please contact Eva Swyngedouw: Eva.Swyngedouw@vub.be