Claiming the City
Civil Society
Mobilisation by the Urban Poor
Claiming the City
Civil Society Mobilisation by the Urban Poor
Contents

Preface 1

Introduction 3
Heidi Moksnes

Towards an inclusive urban planning and practice 15
Diana Mitlin

The Right to the City: 33
Struggles and proposals for the urban reform
Lorena Zárate

The Right to the City: 53
Progress, prospects and challenges in Malawi
Siku Nkhoma and Sarah Jameson

Homeless People’s Federation Philippines, Inc: How we work 59
Ruby Papesoras

The Street Vendor Project 67
Derrick Wilmot

Waste pickers’ cooperatives in Brazil: 73
Social inclusion while recycling
João Damasio

Thematic perspectives

The visible and the invisible 86
Anna Erlandson

Securing local ownership, and the architect’s dilemma 95
Andrea Fitrianto

The Cuttac Ring Road resettlement project 105
Anna Vindelman
Waste pickers’ urban environmental services and sustainability 109
João Damasio

Municipal urban planning with the Right to the City approach: 117
Mexico City
Juan José García Ochoa

**Constested urban visions in the global South**

Introduction 129
Andrew Byerley

Forced evictions, off-city relocation and resistance: 133
Ramifications of neo-liberal policies towards the Philippine urban poor
Myra Mabilin

Contesting neo-liberal urbanism in Istanbul: The case of 139
Taksim Square and beyond
Onur Ekmekci

Offline dimensions of *favela* youth online reactions to 148
human rights violations before Rio 2016
Leonardo Custódio

From legality to an urbanism of reception in the informal city 155
Júlia Carolino and Ermelindo Quaresma

**Violence and urban politics**

Introduction 163
Steffen Jensen and Jesper Bjarnesen

The badass and the asshole: Violence and the positioned subjectivities of street youth in Mexico City 172
Roy Gigengack
Criminal bands and the future of urban Tanzania:
How life has been redefined
Colman T Msoka

Urban youth delinquency: Proliferation of criminal gangs and neighbourhood violence in Dhaka, Bangladesh
Reazul Haque and Ebney Ayaj Rana

Participants List
Preface

This volume is based on the conference *Claiming the City: Civil Society Mobilisation by the Urban Poor*, held in Uppsala, Sweden, April 16-17, 2013. The conference was the final one in a series of four yearly conferences, aiming to explore the formation of civil society internationally and its relation to democratisation and development. As such, it forms part of the project *Outlook on Civil Society*, which is a cooperation between Uppsala Centre for Sustainable Development, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation.¹

Over the past decades, civil society has been considered increasingly important to socio-economic development and in political mobilisation, perhaps especially so in developing countries. This is partly an effect of neo-liberal reforms that have decreased state responsibility in certain economic as well as political issues, instead increasing the role of not only private actors but also non-governmental organisations. Furthermore, the democracy reforms of the last decades and the heightened focus on human rights have strengthened the political agency of civil movements and organisations, which often have turned into driving critics of precisely the lack of democracy in governance. In an era of globalisation, non-governmental organisations, social movements and other forms of civil organisations have extended their contacts across national borders, in a process promoting the creation of transnational civil networks. Many are the hopes that this vitalisation of civil society will strengthen societal development in a democratic direction, with increased popular participation.

*Outlook on Civil Society* aims at advancing the Swedish research front on civil society in developing countries, and at strengthening research-based knowledge about civil society among Swedish actors within international development cooperation. Furthermore, the project strives to
be a bridge-builder between these two different spheres of expertise, and provide real possibilities for mutual exchange.

This final conference in our series focused on the rapidly growing civil society of urban poor, mobilising to claim rights to secure housing, to the possibility to earn a living, to safer environments, to adequate service delivery – in short to defend the interests of urban poor as legitimate claims.

The two-day conference had around one hundred and ten participants from all continents – researchers, development practitioners, policy makers, activists and students – who gave rich and comparative perspectives on the conference theme in presentations and discussions.

The chapters in this volume are based on the presentations given at the conference, in plenary as well as parallel sessions. They are contributions by representatives of organisations by or with urban poor, by representatives of urban governments, and by scholars. We are very pleased to be able to offer to our readers an exciting and important book which strikingly conveys the significance of including the voice of urban poor when shaping cities.

Uppsala, April 2014

*Mia Melin and Heidi Moksnes, editors and project co-ordinators*

**Note**

1. The project is based at Uppsala Centre for Sustainable Development at Uppsala University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. It is funded by Sida between 2009 and 2013. The formal project name is *Civil Society in International Development: Research and Practice*. 
Since 2010, more than half of the world’s population lives in cities (WHO 2014) – and an increasing portion of these are poor. Across the globe, poor people are moving to urban centres to find means to support themselves and create viable lives for their families. But usually, they meet cities that are not prepared, and often not willing, to receive them. Thus, they have problems in finding affordable housing as well as work places that offer dependable employment. Instead, they rent or construct their own homes and neighbourhoods in areas that are not yet clearly claimed for other purposes. Today, about one billion people live in urban slums and informal settlements – a third of the urban population in developing countries – and the number is rising (UN Habitat 2012). Commonly, they struggle with insecure tenure and continuous threats of eviction, houses that are overcrowded and offer little resistance against winds and heavy rains, scant access to basic services such as water, sanitation, schools and health care, and with insecure and underpaid jobs.

The growing number of urban poor has lead the international community to, although indirectly, address their situation in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), setting as one of the targets to significantly improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. However, not only is this target highly modest. The broader absence of urban poor in the MDGs reflects a widespread underestimation of the extent of urban poverty. As Diana Mitlin and David Satterthwaite argue in their recent book *Urban Poverty in the Global South* (2013), the global standard of the poverty line to be drawn at one-dollar-a-day is highly misleading for mapping poverty in urban settings, since to live in cities is usually much more costly than to live in rural areas. In order to learn about the extent and character of urban poverty, they argue, and what are the most urgent
needs to be addressed, it is essential to engage people that are living in urban poverty themselves.

The housing and income generating activities of urban poor are commonly described as ‘informal,’ sometimes even as illegal. However, the inhabitants of informal settlements and slums and their engagement in informal economic activities are an intrinsic part of the cities – economically, socially and politically. Next to building sites for high-rises, there may be slums situated where a large portion of the construction workers are lodged – with salaries insufficient for more costly housing – and where, once the buildings are completed, the lowest paid ranks of its personnel will find housing, as well as those doing various low priced services for the staff (cf Echanove and Srivastava 2012). Thus, although ultramodern skyscrapers and slums often are portrayed as stereotypical opposites, they are highly interlinked, as are the formal and the informal economies – public institutions as well as commercial companies drawing benefits from access to cheap and flexible informal labour.

The informal is often an integrated part of urban governance as well; a way for urban planners and governors to make room for manoeuvring, creating “grey spaces” (Yiftachel 2009) and “zones of exception” (Ong 2006), where the boundaries of legality can be moved depending on the priorities; legalising certain constructions and activities, while defining others as illegal, and ordering expulsion and destruction of homes and other sites, for example to keep attractive urban land on the property market (cf Roy 2009). In this context, impoverished housing areas are commonly not a desired part of the cities, slums regularly depicted as chaotic, terrible places, plagued by disease and social problems. Also the economic activities of urban poor, such as street vending, are often portrayed as unwanted, sometimes criminalised and subject to police harassment. As a result, urban people in poverty are not treated as legitimate urban residents.

Thus, an important question to raise in each urban setting is: on whose terms is urban planning done? Is the plan aiming for the clean, orderly city – slum-free, street vendor free, business oriented – or a city including all inhabitants? What groups are allowed to influence urban planning and urban governance? Certainly, the difference between urban residents lies
Introduction

not only in levels of wealth, but also in their legal and political recognition. Thus, are there ways to political voice and influence also for people living in slums and working in the informal economy?

Making claims on the city

Notably, there are different forms of counter-politics among urban poor; implicit as well as explicit. Poor and marginalised groups continuously contest the prevailing definitions, uses and designs of the urban space, as well as the conditions for urban membership and participation. This is acted out precisely in the floating sphere between legality and illegality as defined by the authorities, through land occupation, auto-constructed neighbourhoods, tapping into electrical wires and water pipes, and finding different means of income generation. What takes place is a massive, worldwide ‘urbanisation from below.’ As described by Faranak Miraftab (2009, p 42), the majority of urban poor “take into their own hands the challenges of housing, neighborhood and urban development, establishing shelter and earning livelihoods outside formal decision structures and ‘professionalized planning.’” She continues (ibid), “[t]he protagonists of urban development have thus shifted from planning agencies to community-based informal processes; from professional planners and formal planning to grass-roots activists and strategies.” This is the base for what she envisions as an “insurgent planning,” incorporating also oppositional activities.

There is also explicit political engagement among the urban poor. Not among all; some hold great distrust – or fear – of the state, and avoid interaction with official authorities and institutions. Others side-step the state in other ways, carving out their space in the city by engaging in gangs or criminal networks. However, many of the urban poor create collective strategies to secure their housing, earn a living and defend their interests. Some strive for results by way of clientelist alliances with political parties or persons with influential positions. Others mobilise and articulate their needs through neighbourhood-based associations, religious congregations, syndicates or social movements. And they present formalised demands vis-à-vis the municipal authorities on public services and legalisation of landholdings and work forms.
Authors such as James Holston (2008) and Teresa Caldeira (2000, 2009) have shown how poor migrants to the urban peripheries in Brazil have come to form neighbourhood groups that articulate political demands. This process has often commenced as struggles to legalise land holdings, evolving to demands on infrastructure and services. Importantly, the demands have increasingly been framed as demands of rights – the rights as citizens to equal access to resources. Holston (2008) calls this an “insurgent citizenship,” evolving outside the regular political arenas.

A similar development is found across the globe. The last several decades, many of the urban poor articulate their demands on resources and urban access in terms of rights and citizenship, referring to national constitutions and UN conventions. Thus, they are appropriating, like other marginalised groups, the global discourse on human rights to gain political and moral leverage.

A broadly shared experience in the urban peripheries, however, is that such demands are not easily met, but granted only after persistent negotiation and pressure, if granted at all. Often, the authorities may even respond with open repression and expulsion from certain urban areas. Squatters and other marginalised urban residents find the legitimacy of their demands questioned, their claims on urban membership deemed too costly by urban authorities and city planners. Obvious is also that their demands conflict with those of other urban groups for access to resources, space and power. Thus, through their presence and actions, urban poor challenge and upset official planning of the city, which makes all work to affect change slow and difficult.

But nevertheless, we witness today significant examples of advances across the world in the situation for urban poor, to a large extent propelled by their own work and mobilisation. This volume presents testimonies of this work and analyses of the various challenges.

**Volume contributions**

The volume focuses on the claims on the city made by urban poor; what the claims consist of, how they go about pursuing these claims through informal as well as formalised networks and associations, and what are the responses they encounter. Urban poor demand their presence in the
cities be recognised and acknowledged as legitimate, as also their need for housing and income generating activities. As stated by Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI 2012): “A recognition of informality and urban poverty as part of the urban landscape is the first step in creating pro-poor legislation and a framework for inclusive cities.” Furthermore, urban poor commonly emphasise that their own experiences and competence in creating housing and infrastructure must be recognised and allowed to direct the development and upgrading of their housing areas. Thus, there is a need for legislation and city governance that include all city dwellers, and to find ways to balance the claims from different groups of inhabitants.

In the first chapter, Towards an inclusive urban planning and practice, Diana Mitlin describes urban informal settlements as sites of multiple forms of resistance against states that do not assume the responsibility for poverty reduction and to provide inhabitants with access to land, housing, services and basic infrastructure. In her text, Mitlin describes the work by a range of associations and projects among urban poor, most of these in Asia, to accomplish states to invest in their neighbourhoods. Building up their own competence and mobilising across the city – and across national borders – they have been able to engage municipal authorities by seeking partnership rather than confrontation, aiming for large scale and long-term solutions.

The struggles to change the ways cities are governed have increasingly taken the form of a discussion of who has the right to the city. The idea of “the right to the city” has since Henri Lefebvre’s writings in 1968 become central also for scholars wanting to understand urban conflicts and struggles and to outline ideas of more just cities. The right, it is argued, should not only involve the right to share urban resources, such as land, water or public transportation, but also the right to political participation and social inclusion, taking active part in the formation of the city. In her chapter, Lorena Zárate describes – with particular focus on Latin America – how the Right to the City has become a guiding principle for social movements and non-governmental organisations, nationally and internationally. As described by Zárate, also a few governments and international agencies have, to some extent, adopted this perspective, especially the UN Habitat and UNESCO. An example is The World Charter for
the Right to the City (2005), accomplished through the influence of civil society organisations. Another example is the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City, which further develops the principles of the World Charter and, Zárate argues, profiles “the city that we aspire to and want to construct for future generations” (p 40).

The principles of inclusion and rights are central for the four ensuing contributions by authors representing organisations from different continents, by and with urban poor, that make claims on the city.

Siku Nkhoma and Sarah Jameson describe how in Malawi, the state does not recognise the presence of poor people in urban areas, although today 75 percent of the urban inhabitants in the country live in slums or informal settlements. In the eyes of the government, poverty is found in the rural areas. Thus, there is no urban policy, and no financing for development of the urban settlements. From their experiences in the Center for Community Organization and Development (CCODE) and the Malawi Homeless People’s Federation, Nkhoma and Jameson describe how they have worked to develop the capacities of urban poor to organise and claim their rights, and to take active part in the process to upgrade and develop their communities. Thus, tellingly, when the city council and institutions of Lilongwe, the Malawi capital, were not able to carry out a slum upgrading project of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the authority to handle the implementation was instead given to two informal settlements in the capital that CCODE and the Federation work with. This, Nkhoma and Jameson argue, demonstrates the competence and urge of poor communities to be included as active partners in both the planning and concretisation of urban development.

The importance of long-term work to develop informal settlements is demonstrated by Ruby Papeleras from the Homeless People’s Federation Philippines, Inc (HPFPI). This work has included savings programmes, to collect both the financial and social means to purchase land and construct houses; mapping and enumeration, to gather data on their communities that is central both for their own knowledge and when interacting with officials and other interest groups; and upgrading, taking steps to initiate and lead the development of paved roads, drainage and sewage systems, and assure the access to water and electricity. Through their work, Papel-
eras argues, although fraught with difficulties, the communities have been able to affect the approach of governments towards the settlements and the prioritisation of urban development. Throughout, she says, they have drawn strength from the cooperation with other groups, which increasingly has been an exchange on transnational level.

People struggle with poverty and marginalisation also in cities in the global North. In New York City in the United States, there are 20,000 street vendors who strive to make an income in a city that has many restrictions against their trade, such as restraining licenses and heavy fines for trespassing the boundaries set by the authorities. Derrick Wilmot describes how he himself became a street vendor and how he, as a member of the Street Vendor Project, has found means to better handle the many challenges that vendors face. Knowing their rights, he concludes, street vendors are able to resist undue harassment by the police and show that they indeed contribute to the city.

The struggle to make a livelihood for urban poor is the focus also for the contribution by João Damasio, who has worked closely with waste pickers’ cooperatives in Brazil. There are an estimated 800,000 waste pickers in Brazil, of which about 12 percent are organised in cooperatives or other forms of associations, and they struggle with highly insufficient access to infrastructure and equipment that could make their trade more viable and reduce their poverty. In several cities in Brazil, the role and work of waste pickers is acknowledged and integrated into the formal management system of solid waste, the pickers receiving remuneration directly by the municipality. However, Damasio argues, they are still commonly not taken sufficiently into account by urban planners and local authorities. In his chapter, he outlines the public investment in the infrastructure of waste pickers necessary to promote their social and economic inclusion in Brazilian society.

The volume’s first thematic section offers perspectives from persons who through their professional work strive to improve the conditions for urban poor. The section is opened by Anna Erlandson, an artist, offering a contribution based on one of her many visits to informal settlements across the globe. Through her text and her photographs, she reflects on the stereotypes that often keep us – the North and the South, the rich
and the poor – distant from each other, and invites us to see beyond such images.

Andrea Fitrianto suggests that professionals like himself, an architect, need to unlearn their common top-down approach and instead find ways to work with the communities they will serve. Describing his experiences from the Philippines, Indonesia and Aceh, Indonesia – which was severely hit by the tsunami in 2004 – he gives examples of his own learning process in this field. The work implied has extended beyond the field typical of architects, to include communal workshops, the support to establish saving groups such as those described by Papeleras, and the propelling of communal networks to govern the construction of houses and infrastructure. A central tenet throughout, Fitrianto emphasises, is that the ownership of the projects are in the hands of the community members themselves. This, he notes, poses various challenges for the traditional training of architects.

Also Anna Vindelman is an architect, active in Architects Without Borders-Sweden (ASF-Sweden), and she describes the collaboration developed with SPARC-India (the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres), to support their work towards affordable housing, secure tenure and sanitation for the urban poor. ASF-Sweden has been directly engaged in a series of slum upgrading projects, where they have contributed with design plans as well as methods for participatory planning. Through example field visits and interviews with the community concerned, Vindelman describes how they as architects are able to realise the great social and practical importance different spaces hold, which is reflected in their suggestions for the design of new housing areas. Also master students have been involved through field studies, thereby contributing to the broader professional community of architects.

In his second contribution in this volume, João Damasio, himself a researcher in economics, provides an analysis of how the work of waste pickers – if properly acknowledged and supported – offer valuable urban environmental services, contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emission. The work of waste pickers is specialised on recycling of valuable resources from waste that otherwise, at best, only is burned for the extraction of energy. In Brazil, which is in the forefront regarding
legislation and public policies directed towards the integration of waste pickers, state governments have recently started to pay waste pickers for these environmental services; the work remain for the implementation on municipal levels.

It is municipal governments that face the most direct challenges of integrating the needs and demands of urban poor. As a representative of the Mexico City government, Juan José García Ochoa describes how they started to discuss the notion of the Right to the City in 2007, “defined as a new human right that allows the equitable benefit of the cities” (p 120). Three years later, in 2010, this resulted in the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City, addressed also in the chapter by Lorena Zárate. In his contribution, García Ochoa offers an account of how the Charter was developed in exchange with social organisations, and the work undertaken to enable its formal and legal implementation. While the actual reforms to change public policies and the democratic structure of the city still are ahead, García Ochoa expresses much hope in the Charter’s potential, once it has become fully known by public servants and the city’s inhabitants.

The two ensuing sections contain contributions by scholars and activists with long experience of working among urban poor. In the first, under the heading Constested urban visions in the global South, introduced by Andrew Byerley, the authors discuss the competing perceptions of how cities should develop. Especially city centres tend to be planned with ideals that focus on economic growth and competitiveness, often leading to interventions that aim to ‘sanitise’ the areas from informal settlements. The authors show alternative and often novel visions of urban planning demonstrated by urban poor through the ways they organise their lives in settlements.

In the last section, with the title Violence and urban politics, the contributors discuss violence as a persistent and complex aspect of urban life. They address ways that violence and crime can be prevented and reduced by interventions of civil society and community members, offering alternatives to commonly violent state interventions with police or military forces. We also learn, however, how violence is used by different groups to claim resources, space and identity in the city. Thus, as is argued in the section introduction by Steffen Jensen and Jesper Bjarnesen, we can
better understand violence by seeing its productive role as a form of social practice, which, when performed by poor and marginalised groups, often concerns an attempt to enact “a sense of agency over their lives” (p 166) which otherwise might be sorely absent.

The future of urban centres and lives faces many difficulties. What we hope this volume makes evident, however, is that there are numerous sources for finding viable ways forward, involving the organisations of urban poor and the knowledge they have from daily struggling in the city.

Notes
1. This is Target D (or 4), included in Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability of the eight Millennium Development Goals (UN 2013). On this official UN website (ibid), it is also stated that “[t]he target was met well in advance of the 2020 deadline,” and that more than 200 million people “gained access to improved water sources, improved sanitation facilities, or durable or less crowded housing, thereby exceeding the MDG target.” However, it is added, the number of urban poor is nevertheless still growing because of the continuous migration to urban areas.

References


**Author affiliation**

Uppsala Centre for Sustainable Development, Uppsala University
Towards an inclusive urban planning and practice

Diana Mitlin

The contribution of citizens to urban development in the global South is widely recognised. In the absence of government, families find land, construct housing, invest in partial services and lobby for state investment. What is evident from these experiences is that many aspects of urban poverty reduction require a functioning state in each urban centre or district – a state that addresses its responsibilities, especially for bulk infrastructure, service provision and land-use management. What does it take to make the state act in ways that support at least some of the multiple routes to poverty reduction? And how, in particular, catalyse state agencies to work with and support representative organisations of the urban poor, and/or maintain relations of accountability with the low-income population?

The discussion in this chapter considers some of what has been tried in terms of approaches to urban poverty reduction, what has succeeded, what has failed, and some of the reasons that help to explain these outcomes. It focusses on the development of collective capabilities among grassroots organisations and their support agencies, including local government. And it describes how new initiatives have built the capabilities to strengthen a new pro-poor form of urban development that is able to transcend clientelist politics and/or elite interests. It in so doing suggests how a more equitable and inclusive urban future can be secured, the kinds of activities that are needed and the ways in which new strategies that respond to this have been defined and realised.

Context

The significance of power and politics in addressing poverty has long been understood, as has the importance of a continued commitment of
oppressed citizens to struggle for progressive transformation. Resistance to colonial rule and other forms of authoritarian control has been diverse, multiple and often successful. The waves of social protests in the 1980s and, more recently, from 2011 against autocratic states in the Middle East renewed global interest in the power of citizenship and citizen action. The themes of democracy and decentralisation have long been a part of the portfolio of activities undertaken by official development assistance agencies albeit, in general, primarily with a technical focus. Non-governmental efforts (including agencies in both the global North and the global South) have supported explicit and radical political agendas, including the movements for democracy, such as those in Latin America and southern Africa, as well as citizens organising to address exploitation, discrimination and voter education. The economic realities of the 1970s and 1980s challenged the priorities given by governments and many international agencies to economic growth. This created new difficulties for those arguing for state investment in low-income neighbourhoods. But the struggle of low-income urban dwellers for housing, services, inclusion and entitlements – or more broadly for well-being – continued, usually un-assisted and often opposed.

Urban informal settlements continued to be sites of multiple forms of resistance, particularly in nations in which the urban poor were seen as a source of political opposition by repressive and anti-poor governments. In addition, in many nations, demand for land for economic and urban growth – for instance demand from speculative construction or land for infrastructure – brought pressures to evict informal settlement residents from inner city land or other well-located sites. In some places, the use of democratic systems was seen as the best way to advance the needs and interests of the urban poor, both by their own organisations and by other agencies concerned with social justice and poverty reduction. Alliances were created between the more politicised residents’ associations and political movements to secure these. In other cases, democratic states had been in place for years or decades, but substantive pro-poor response and redistribution was lacking.

In the absence of formal alternatives, informal settlements provide accommodation for large sections of the low-income population. Low-
income groups need affordable shelter that is as well-located as possible in regard to livelihoods and access to services – which in large urban centres generally means a need for effective transport systems (as locations within walking distance of these are no longer possible). Investment in bulk infrastructure is needed to enable household connections at relatively low cost – for water, waste-water removal, sanitation, drainage, electricity, and all-weather roads and paths. In many cases, affordable shelter requires high-density accommodation options to reduce the scale of funds required for infrastructure (per person or household served), and to minimise the demands on the limited supply of well located (and thus valuable) land. But this does not mean medium or high-rise – terrace or row housing is often adequate. It also requires access to construction materials that can be used safely at high densities so as to prevent the shack fires that are a devastating but regular event in so many informal settlements. A comprehensive provision of affordable shelter also requires an effective response to over-crowded inner city formal homes, where one or more families or several adults rent a shared room because of their need for well-located space, and for lack of better quality and still affordable alternatives. In summary, new settlement formation and neighbourhood design have to be thought about and planned at the city scale, if they are to be efficient and effective (and housing prices kept down). In the absence of this, households have to find accommodation wherever they can and accept far from adequate solutions.

Prior to discussing political change, it may be helpful to emphasise the anti-poor nature of many political relations. There is an extensive literature on the outcome of clientelist political relations and the extent to which they do or do not benefit the urban poor. Whatever the merits of these relationships and the ways in which they provide an avenue for some resources to reach some low-income households, many development initiatives have sought to shift relations away from clientelism. Community networks emphasise the need for a shift towards relations between citizen groups and political leaders that provide a more predictable universalised flow of goods and services to households and neighbourhoods in need. However, this is a serious challenge in a context in which low individual incomes, minimal state budgets and resource scarcity pre-
dominate. It is the search for universalism as a counter to the selectivity and exclusion of clientelist politics that lies behind at least some of the strategies described below.

**Five interventions to address urban poverty**

Within the history of responses to needs and interests of low-income groups, there are many examples of important contributions made to address urban poverty in general and neighbourhood upgrading. In this chapter, I draw on five particular programme interventions, chosen because they help to elucidate the present generation of responses to urban poverty (see Satterthwaite and Mitlin 2014).

- The first of the five is the Indian Alliance of the National Slum Dwellers Federation, Mahila Milan (Women Together) and the NGO called SPARC (the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres); this is the first initiative that has since led to replications in many countries and a transnational alliance (Shack/Slum Dwellers International or SDI).
- The second is the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) in Karachi, Pakistan, which began in the early 1980s with redesigning approaches to sanitation. It has led both to additional programme activities within OPP itself, and replications of their sanitation work in other countries.
- The third is the Urban Community Development Office in Thailand, established in 1992 and which became the Community Organization Development Institute – a para-statal of increasing autonomy which has supported hundreds of savings-based community organisations across the country.
- The fourth is Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) itself, a network of over 30 national alliances of federations of the homeless and landless and support NGOs.
- The fifth is the Asian Coalition for Community Action (ACCA), a programme of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights that began in 2010.
Towards an inclusive urban planning and practice

These five interventions help provide an understanding of how strategies have evolved, why they have been effective within their particular social, spatial and political context and temporal moment, and how their evolution led to a more substantive framework of intervention. Together they include strategies that underpin the new generation of emerging poverty reduction programmes. Calling them ‘programme interventions’ is deliberate; this is due to the need to find a term that goes beyond programme and organisation to encompass both formal agency components and the broader set of social agencies that engage with them. The term intervention includes a broad array of structures, agencies, systems, processes and relations.

These interventions offer insights into what it takes to shift politicians, political parties, civil servants, state agencies and political institutions (with their norms, values and ways of behaving) to be more pro-poor. They are seeking to change politics from the bottom up. This includes both action on the ground to address needs, and renegotiating relations between citizen and state (and community organisations and the state). This is to secure political inclusion while taking account of the ways in which state agencies function and balance between representative and participatory democracy. It includes changing behaviours of both citizens and politicians, and redefining state politics, programmes and practices such that they nurture a more inclusive kind of politics. All five examples support the agency and collective capacity of low-income groups – as discussed below they have had to develop new capabilities, particularly within collectives of the urban poor. Many of these interventions are also notable for their tenacity – their sustained efforts to resolve problems that arise – more than for their immediate success. Their histories include many revisions to their approaches, as strategies are refined because circumstances change, or because a particular approach proved less effective than hoped.

**Strategies and modalities of action**

While development has brought some benefits for some low-income or otherwise disadvantaged people living in towns and cities in the global South, acute needs remain unaddressed for hundreds of millions. As
Towards an inclusive urban planning and practice

described in Mitlin and Satterthwaite (2013), the scale and depth of urban deprivation (and the multiple forms it takes) remain very considerable for individuals, households and communities. To address this and help citizens engage with politicians, political agencies and political institutions to address their needs and interests, numerous ideas have emerged.

The interventions that form the basis for this chapter are not identical, nor are their impacts the same; on the contrary, there are important differences between them. However, there are also notable similarities in the strategies that they are using, and particularly in the collective capabilities that they build and the strengthening among the urban poor – and this is what is discussed here. I argue that these agencies are successful because they produce and nurture five critical collective capabilities (Sen 1999; Ibrahim 2005). These five capabilities result in: productive local organisations, able to set priorities and work inclusively across local neighbourhoods; city-wide networks of the urban poor, able to share information and strategise to address the needs and interests of members; new alliances between organisations of the urban poor and the state, able to co-produce urban development programmes at scale; innovative urban development practices to develop an information base about informal settlements and to design new solutions to shelter upgrading, particularly the provision of infrastructure and services; and new learning institutions with and for the urban poor.

To reach all of those in need, ie to support a universalist approach to urban development, requires a rethinking of existing approaches. One of the things that has to change is the dependence on formal, approved, standard-compliant improvements; these need to be replaced by alternative designs that challenge current rules and regulations to enable greater scales (up to universal provision) through reduced unit costs. This, in turn, requires a serious engagement with alternatives to both formality and existing informal realities. And it requires a challenge to the vertical, personalised social engagements that characterise patron-client relations. In this context, current models of urban development based on the formal high-cost models of the global North offer little to most nations in the global South. Minor modifications to reduce standards are unlikely to
be effective in producing alternatives relevant for the numbers in need. Rather, emphasis is placed on developing new models that can be scaled up by local groups, who are able to negotiate changes with the political leaders that they engage with. Thus, the interest is in new models that spread from below because of their resonance with the on-going efforts of the urban poor to achieve development. And these interventions invest in local organisations able to realise such activities.

**Development of collective capabilities**

The core form of organisation within four of these interventions is the savings scheme, a local group that draws together residents (mainly women) in low-income informal urban neighbourhoods to save, share their resources, and strategise to address their collective needs. Savings addresses a critical immediate need for women (as they frequently lack the capacity to control finance within the household, but face multiple emergencies and other needs that require access to cash) and provides the opportunity to build collectives (Mitlin et al 2011). In the case of the Orangi Pilot Project, the core organisational form is the lane committee, established for sanitation investments. In all cases there is encouragement for these groups to aggregate and form a critical mass at city level and nationally – city networks and federations enable the urban poor to develop an identity and agency to address their issues at multiple levels, from settlement upwards.

**Working together in local organisations**

Savings practices develop a first collective capability, to work together, to trust each other with finance, to establish settlement level priorities for development and neighbourhood improvements. Organising among women has resulted in an emphasis on shelter-related activities for these city networks. Most savings-scheme members do not have secure land tenure and are at risk of eviction. They are without access to basic services, such as regular good-quality water supplies and toilets. In this context, improved shelter is a priority.
City-wide networking

The networking and federation emphasis is critical to building mass organisations, and this is a second capability. As they strengthen city networks, local groups participate in exchanges, as representatives from different savings groups visit each other to build solidarity and learn from experience. This process helps to ensure that ideas come from the urban poor and are not imposed on them by well-meaning professionals (Patel and Mitlin 2002). Learning, rooted at this level, consolidates individual and collective confidence among informal settlement residents in their own capacities (McFarlane 2006). Consistent horizontal interactions build strong relationships between peers, adding to the effectiveness of local negotiations. At the same time, these relationships help to ensure that existing political interests do not dominate – the work of city networks is critical in enabling strategic responses by the urban poor to adverse political outcomes. In Iloilo in the Philippines, for example, the communities struggled to deal with a chair of the urban poor committee who made anti-poor statements. They came together to develop a strategy. Together they made a resolution to ask him to resign as chair of the committee, which they passed to the urban poor communities; the resolution was signed by every group and passed to the media. This created a huge impact, because there was no protest demonstration (which was what was expected) – just a statement of four pages. The network was successful in its goal.¹ A further importance of such a network was demonstrated when local federation members in Kitwe (Zambia) presented the problems of sanitation in Kamatipa, a low-income settlement, to the council. The reaction of the deputy mayor was that conditions were so bad that the settlement should be closed and residents resettled. It was the ability of the groups to demonstrate that conditions were equally bad in other neighbourhoods (as a result of their work on profiling informal settlements) which shifted the discussion onto action at the city scale.²

Successful engagement with the state

A third capability is a successful engagement with the state. While city networks and federations enable the urban poor to be a credible political force (Moore 2005), to advance state planning and practice, however,
Towards an inclusive urban planning and practice

and make it more pro-poor requires them to realise their political potential. The strengthening of the networks is also important, because such mass organisations pre-empt conflict due to their scale and encourage governments to negotiate. This capability enables city networks to take an alternative approach to the “contentious politics,” highlighted by Tilly and Tarrow’s seminal works on social movements, towards the totality of engagement between citizens and the state (Tilly 2004; Tarrow 1998). The focus on contentious politics in social movement theorising has missed a lot that needs to be understood in any comprehensive analysis of the relations between citizens and the state (Goldstone 2004). The experiences of these interventions suggests that it detracts from an understanding of the importance of legitimacy for social movements and disadvantaged groups, and the different ways in which women and men respond to conflict because of their gendered roles and responses. The agencies associated with the programme interventions avoid being drawn into contentious politics, because they perceive it to be a terrain which is disadvantageous to low-income and vulnerable groups. Rather than confrontation they seek partnerships, in which they can work together to address, for example, infrastructure deficiencies. In the case of OPP, for example, organised citizens invest in lane sanitation, and the city provides secondary drains and the other bulk infrastructure that is needed. Arguably their political strategies are similar to the lobbying of the middle classes, in that they seek to have their demands viewed as reasonable and responsible (Harriss 2006). Being seen as having legitimate claims is, they believe, important to building political support and avoiding marginalisation. This is particularly significant in the context of seeking to engage the lowest-income and most disadvantaged groups. Simply put, vulnerable groups are less likely to be able to afford to enter into conflict; the threat of violence is too great. In particular, gendered roles are such that strategies that lead to contention will tend to exclude the very groups whose involvement is sought.

“We scare them because of our numbers. We must be listened to,” suggested one member of the National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda, from Jinja (Nyamweru and Dobson 2014, p 20). Nyamweru and Dobson (2014) argue that community led processes based on savings
Towards an inclusive urban planning and practice

overturn past practices, in which council funds were allocated by those with political connections: “The value of the federation approach is that it both convinces council they must be accountable to communities and also convinces communities that they have the right and the capacity to hold council to account” (p 18). The Ugandan federation members argue that their willingness to include rather than resist council involvement also lay behind their success – and these themes are repeated in cities across Asia in the work of the Asian Coalition for Community Action which has improved infrastructure and shelter in over a hundred cities (Boonyabancha et al 2012).

Information collection and shelter upgrading

A fourth capability (strongly linked to that of political negotiation in advancing the pro-poor state) is that of urban design both in respect of information collection and shelter upgrading. These local groups, and the larger federations to which they belong, are engaged in many community-driven initiatives to upgrade informal and squatter settlements, improving tenure security, and offering residents new development opportunities. Community-managed enumerations (surveys), settlement profiles and maps create the information base needed for mobilisation, action and negotiation (Weru 2004; Patel, d’Cruz and Burra 2002; Environment and Urbanization 2012). As improvements are planned, affiliates take on the job of profiling each and every informal settlement in the city – building up their networks as they undertake this work. Enumerations and residential surveys, in which each household is interviewed, are carried out, and settlement maps are prepared to show all buildings and infrastructure. From information-gathering, federations move on to projects that members take on to improve shelter options, including investment in tenure security and physical improvements, provide examples (or precedents) that can be scaled up if state support can be secured.

The precedents undertaken by savings schemes seek to demonstrate how shelter can be improved for low-income groups, and how city re-development can avoid evictions and minimise relocations. Through a set of specific activities related to planning of land, installation of services, and sometimes construction of dwellings, members of savings schemes
illustrate how to improve their neighbourhoods. As they are exposed to these activities, some city governments and national governments become interested in supporting these community-driven approaches, recognising their potential contribution to poverty reduction and urban development (*Environment and Urbanization* 2012). For example, in Mumbai, the enumeration of households along the railway tracks enabled entitlements to relocation to be unambiguously established, and hence the improvement of railways services to proceed (Patel et al 2002). Interventions develop new housing that low-income households can afford, and install infrastructure and services (including water, sanitation and drainage). They show the state how things can be done, and in so doing, they seek to strengthen their partnerships with government agencies to expand their work. This approach in both the Indian Alliance and the Orangi Pilot Project emerged from decades of struggle across the informal settlements of Asia. There was recognition that the outcomes of struggles for democracy, rights and entitlements had been limited – and a new approach was required.

These programme interventions develop both urban management practices and solutions that, simply put, shift from simple claim-making towards the state, to co-production in the broad area of collective consumption – ie goods that are consumed and/or produced collectively, and hence build and reinforce collective practices, and inculcate solidarity among the urban poor. Several reasons favour co-production, including the need to build strong local organisations able to demonstrate alternatives that have popularity and scale to local politicians; the need to draw in resources; and the need to strengthen local organisational capacity.

It has long been acknowledged that self-help in informal settlements can be used to reduce insecurity; housing consolidation becomes a way to secure tenure, because the settlement is looking more developed and authentically urban (Payne et al 2009). Co-production builds on such self-help activities to deepen and extend the political capability of organised communities. Co-production requires active citizens and – as they engage – also the building of additional capabilities in residents’ associations organising at the local level. Stronger organisations lead to greater capabilities as well as increased legitimacy for citizen movements.
in the face of social and political elites. The rationale for co-production lies more in the need for fundamental changes in political relations than in cost effectiveness.

Furthermore, co-production helps create and strengthen new roles that offer greater empowerment to women. As activities result in improved services, they attract activists who are concerned with using practice and mobilisation as a means to increase inclusion and deliver material benefits. Such activities are often particularly attractive to women who are uncomfortable with and/or disinterested in a more confrontational advocacy and lobbying approach. The interventions provide openings for women to take up leadership roles to address their needs and those of their families, because it is frequently women who have responsibility for services such as water and sanitation. In so doing, they are enabled to challenge their subordination within the home and neighbourhood. The local groups and collective processes of co-production reduce the vulnerability that women experience as private individuals within a domestic context that is frequently oppressive. Such collectivity also helps women address the more damaging psychological impacts of gendered discrimination and imposed associations of inadequacy and inferiority, and become active positive role models for each other and their girl-children.

Establishing new learning institutions

The fifth collective capability is that of establishing new learning institutions. This requires both the strengthening of learning practices within organisations of the urban poor, and alliance-building for professionals. All five programme interventions view political parties with some suspicion, as their experience is that most politicians are generally self-interested and/or concerned primarily with policies and programmes that benefit elites (if only because of the absence of alternative pressures for democratic and representative decision-making). All the programmes view political ideology and political statements promising commitment and support as unreliable, and they believe that it is at best only a part of what makes a difference to outcomes. Moreover, as suggested by Tilly (2004, p ix), they view a democracy reliant on sporadic elections as incomplete, due to its inability to support the kinds of participatory practices required at
Towards an inclusive urban planning and practice

the local level for democratic institutions to include the voices of low-income and disadvantaged citizens. In this context, one goal is to build local associations and local processes that are able to engage the state and associated political agencies from a position of strength, whatever its political complexion, nature and scale. Moreover, as noted above, the challenge is not simply to engender a positive response; rather, it is to change the nature of relations between citizens and the state, to enable the more effective realisation of state support for equity, social justice and the reduction of poverty. All of this requires learning as community activists to observe outcomes and reactions, and to re-strategise to be able to address the needs and interests of their members and other residents.

Working through networks and federations at the city level offers an important contribution to consolidating learning through collective observation and then action. For example, through network discussions, the Thai savings groups that first took housing loans from the Urban Community Development Office (UCDO) realised that best interests lay in negotiating for regularisation; they found that purchasing land far from the centre of Bangkok created livelihood difficulties and broke up their households (Boonyabancha 2004). Now, 63 percent of those who receive support from CODI (the government fund that is the successor to UCDO) find housing on their original site, and 10 percent are within 5 km of their original site.\(^3\)

However, as important as stronger relationships between organisations of the urban poor is the ability to link constructively to professionals. From the 1960s onwards, there has been awareness that the professionalisation of services had resulted in the creation of a group of experts with the social, and sometimes legal, status to define acceptable solutions (Escobar 1992). Professionals are able to use their social status and related authority to establish both ‘needs’ and ‘solutions,’ and consequently people are disabled from finding their own solutions because they cease to believe in their own capacities (Wilson 2006, pp 502-3; Illich et al 1977, p 28). The challenge for those concerned with empowerment is to counter such processes through establishing alternative professional practices, as well as associated relationships between, in this case, the organised urban poor and urban professionals. Bolnick (2008, pp 325-6)
Towards an inclusive urban planning and practice

reflects on these contradictions in the case of Slum Dweller International affiliates, highlighting the roles taken on by the support NGOs within SDI affiliates, and the consequential dependencies. He suggests that the model works best when the federations have a strong autonomous capacity and can link to the NGO professionals that they choose. Observation of SDI practice shows that several strategies have developed to manage the relationship between the organised communities and NGO staff, such that professionals do not dominate the process (Mitlin 2013). As the federations mature, they are able to change in the balance of power within relationships, holding professionals to account; engaging with them freely, but finding ways to challenge and renegotiate when difficulties emerge. Such changing relations also help community networks to acquire the skills they need to work with other professionals in local councils and state agencies.

Conclusions

This article has explored the strengthening of collective capabilities among the urban poor that emerge from five interventions with a recognised impact in terms of the scale and nature of outcomes. The achievements of these interventions have contributed much to our understanding of what encourages governments to be more pro-poor. As described above, critical ambitions for collective organisations are those of inclusivity and universalism, both for reasons of social justice and as a means to build a mass movement, to help to keep the state on track for substantive efforts to reduce urban poor, and shift it away from the partial and particular.

Analysing the achievements of these interventions highlights their contribution to the collective capabilities of the urban poor. The acquisition of key skills and experiences has resulted in new abilities that have helped community activists to improve their collective strategies, and hence influence underlying power relationships between the organised urban poor and the state, leading to more inclusive urban politics. The consolidation of local representative and accountable groups – and their collaboration in both formal and informal city networks – has helped to advance the search for solutions that are inclusive, and which avoid
competition in which one or two settlements benefit but there are no substantive improvements for most urban residents. Collaborative relations with local government where possible have helped to build effective citizen-state partnerships that address material needs and which, more fundamentally, legitimate the continuing contribution and presence of the organised urban poor in governance. New approaches to urban development based on co-production, the joint planning, financing and implementation of shelter improvements in ways that involve the residents of informal settlements (and their organisations) and local government, have helped to improve local living conditions.

A central concern of these interventions is to nurture the practice and potential of gendered empowerment. The focus on the immediate locality and the very practical orientation of activities encourage women’s participation in local organisations and city networks. As women engage in activities, they have opportunities to play a leadership role. The success of women achieving physical neighbourhood improvements is reinforced by a demonstrated capacity in financial (savings) management.

There is much that has been achieved – but much that still needs to be done. In the context of these five interventions, the internationalisation of local, city and national processes continues to be strengthened – and this is a new capability to be acquired. One reason why the development of strong transnational networks representing urban poor groups is key is because of the pace of economic growth and the similarity of urban development strategies; many city governments are looking to clear inner city areas and informal settlements, to allow for infrastructure installation and the expansion of commercial centres. The dispossessed and disadvantaged communities have to learn from others’ experiences how to prepare themselves for this. Stronger transnational learning can offer new solutions to shared problems, that in turn can be replicated by new alliances in their partnerships with governments. City networks need to learn from each other about likely responses of the state, and how they can renegotiate such outcomes and responses – and replace them with those that are more effective in secure pro-poor and inclusive urban centres.
Towards an inclusive urban planning and practice

Notes
1. Personal communication, Sonia Fadrigo, leader of the Homeless People’s Federation of the Philippines. Initial discussions in Iloilo, October 2008, and follow up discussions at a workshop at the Technical University of Berlin, May 2013.

2. Kitwe, meeting with federation members, local councillors, deputy Mayor, council staff and staff from Nkana Water and Sewerage Company, April 5, 2013.


References


Towards an inclusive urban planning and practice


**Author affiliation**

School of Environment and Development, University of Manchester, and International Institute for Environment and Development, UK
The Right to the City: Struggles and proposals for the urban reform

Lorena Zárate

[The Right to the City is] the right to change ourselves, by changing the city (David Harvey, 2008)

The urban phenomenon: The cities we have

During recent years, documents of all kinds (official reports, newspaper articles, essays and novels) keep repeating the same ground-breaking facts: for the first time in human history, half of the global population – around 3.5 billion people – now live in cities, and by 2050 it is expected that 70 percent of us will live in urban areas (albeit with many differences between and within regions and countries).

In Latin America, the high tide of urbanisation took place between the 1950’s and -70’s, and it was strongly linked to a prominent industrialisation process that produced mass internal migration. Today, the movement from the countryside and small villages continues, not only to the capital districts (many of these are in fact losing population) but to mid-size and big cities across national borders. In Africa and Asia the same process goes on, but even faster and under more difficult conditions – more precarious in economic, social and institutional terms. During the last 60 years, megacities from the global South have multiplied their populations by ten or even more. And by 2030, the urban population of Africa will exceed the whole population of Europe.

There is an abundance of pages dedicated to more or less detailed diagnoses and descriptions of a reality that, clearly, did not come out of the blue. But it is increasingly difficult to find analyses – which were prolific forty or fifty years ago – about the underlying causes of urbanisation. The tendency to population concentration is not only not questioned;
it is perceived as irreversible (our ‘urban future’). There are oscillating, extreme (polarising?) views that do not suffice to thoroughly explain our surrounding reality: from the aphorisms that strongly defend life in the cities and the role it plays in relation to rural areas (‘development engines,’ ‘hope magnets’), to the apocalyptic denouncement that we are on our way to having a ‘planet of slums.’ In both cases, there is little said about the distinct responsibility of various social actors, about the relation between the rural and the urban worlds, or about the nuances and possibilities to transform the process.

The concentration of economic and political power is a phenomenon of exploitation, dispossession, exclusion and discrimination whose spatial dimensions are clearly visible: dual cities of luxury and misery; empty buildings and people without a decent place to live; land without campesinos (peasants) who are subjected to agro-businesses; and private appropriation and accumulation of common goods, resources and wealth that were collectively created. The conditions and rules – explicit or not – that our societies have created are globally condemning more than one third of the world population to live in absolute poverty. The inequalities are increasing both in the so called developed and developing countries. Impoverished neighbourhoods (or: “urban slums”) are home of at least one third of the population in the global South (in some Latin American and African countries it could reach 60 percent or more).

What we see is a consequence of actions and omissions of many different actors – economic and political decisions taken for the few, affecting the life of the majority. At the same time, policies affecting land and space are a key tool to reproduce or change the huge inequities affecting our societies. What real opportunities are we giving to young people, the vast majority of the population in many of our countries, if 85 percent of the new jobs are created in the ‘informal’ economy? Not having a place to live, an address, is also a denial of other economic, social, cultural and political rights (education, health, work, right to vote and participate, and many others). What kind of citizens and democracy are we producing in these apartheid cities?

It is not new to anyone that, especially in the last 25 years, many governments have abandoned their responsibility for any urban-territorial
planning, leaving ‘the market’ to freely operate the private appropriation of urban spaces, almost without any restriction to real-estate speculation and exponential revenues. Indeed, on the contrary, states have played a prominent role in causing the last financial crisis that started in the North, then – still – urgently rescuing the big institutions’ private debts, operating a massive transfer of public resources (much of which, as we know, is money from people’s savings and retirement plans). Thousands of families have been put under the unbearable threat of eviction without any alternative – with particularly devastating effects for women and children.7

At the same time, many current regulations ignore, or even criminalise, people’s individual and collective efforts to obtain a decent place to live. In the South, between 50 and 75 percent of the available living space – not only houses but also entire neighbourhoods – is the result of people’s own initiatives and efforts, without any or with very little support from governments and other actors. In many cases, these initiatives go against many ‘official’ barriers – not only bureaucracy.8 Instead of supporting those popular processes (what we define as ‘social production of habitat’), our states have created conditions to guarantee that a few private housing developers make profits.

In Mexico, the housing policy (inspired by the Chilean model, also applied in other countries around the globe) is not improving the quality of life of the people but indeed making them poorer. The year of 1992 marked the beginning of a series of changes, including the Article 27 of Mexico’s National Constitution to allow larger land appropriation on sites that were once communal (ejidales). After almost 10 years of what was presented as a ‘successful’ housing policy – and as such exported to Central and South America – José Castillo (2007, quotes from p 184) writes that “the result in some of these planned neighbourhoods is the emergence of large amounts of units overnight, with developments of up to 13,000 units.” They are “usually built by a single developer and in many cases designed by a single architect, with very little state intervention.” In these new gated communities, usually located at least at two hours daily commute to the city centre, “there is no zoning, no planning for educational, commercial or civic uses, a very limited approach to
public space, no relation to metropolitan transport infrastructure, and, most importantly, no room for growth and transformation.” In other words, “urbanity is collapsed to the simple construction of housing, not neighbourhoods” (ibid).  

The cities we want: Struggles for the Right to the City and the urban reform in Latin America and the world

For a long time now, we have been talking about the urgent need of an urban reform that is in solidarity with the agrarian reform, the national programs for redistribution of land from large landowners to small-scale farmers and other poor people, inspired by social justice and poverty alleviation principles. The main elements of a democratic, inclusive, sustainable, productive, educational and liveable city have been part of the debates, proposals and concrete experiences of social movements, national and international civil society networks, trade unions, academic institutions and human rights activists in different Latin American countries for the last 50 years. The urban reform and the Right to the City are now present – explicitly or implicitly – both in theoretical and legal frameworks and as a platform for action, social mobilisation and articulation of alternatives in other regions as well.

The Earth Summit (Rio de Janeiro 1992), Habitat II (Istanbul 1996) and the First World Assembly of Inhabitants, Rethinking the City from the People (Mexico City 2000) were important moments for the articulation of actors and the development of concrete proposals. Undoubtedly, this process has gained new strength and expanded in size and content since 2001 in the World Social Forum (WSF). Thousands of people, and dozens of organisations and networks, UNESCO and UN Habitat included, have since participated in discussions, preparations, signing and dissemination of the World Charter for the Right to the City – defined as the equitable usufruct of cities within the principles of sustainability, democracy, equity and social justice. In its genesis and social meaning, this instrument primarily aims at strengthening the processes and collective claims against injustice and social and regional discrimination.

Although this may not be considered a ‘social movement’ on a global scale (does it intend to be?), it is certain that the various actors involved
in the process have been successful in different ways. On the one hand, they have given an urban dimension to the debates and proposals about territory, and on the second, they have broadened and ‘territorialised’ the reflections on progress and challenges regarding the struggles in defence and accomplishment of human rights – and they have done so in dialogue with other initiatives (feminist, African-descendant, indigenous and campesino movements, among others). Outside the WSF, nowadays it is not rare to see the motto of the Right to the City in marches, events, research work and publications of all kinds.

Parallel to these civil society initiatives, some governments at regional, national and local levels have created instruments to protect and realise human rights in the urban context. Some of the most progressive ones now in force include the European Charter to Safeguard Human Rights in the City (2000), the City Statute of Brazil (2001), the Montreal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities (2006), the Constitution of Ecuador (2008) and the Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City (2010) promoted by the network United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

At the same time, some years ago, the Heads of State in Ibero-America decided to instruct their Ministers of Housing and Urbanism to “promote the consecration of the Right to the City through the generation of public policies that ensure access to land, adequate housing, social infrastructure and equipment, and the financial mechanisms and sources that are satisfactory and sustainable” (Declaración de Santiago, point 29 of the Action Plan). Enthusiastic and, at the same time, concerned by this explicit inclusion, over 100 organisations and networks from 14 countries elaborated and promoted during 2008 a collective Declaration. It intended, on the one hand, to strengthen the strategic principles and guidelines that constitute the Right to the City (not just housing and proper infrastructure), and, on the other hand, to point out a number of measures to be launched at a national level and implemented, in coordination with states, provinces and localities, by various government offices. The focus of these proposals that were given to different authorities may be summarised in four fundamental points:
• strengthening of the production and social management of habitat processes;
• democratisation of territorial management and of access to land and real estate (i.e., empty buildings, public or private);
• legalisation of land possession and access to public services; and
• the harmonisation of national and local legislation with international standards and commitments regarding human rights.

At an international level, the Right to the City was taken up as official motto by the Fifth World Urban Forum, organised by the UN Habitat, which took place in Rio de Janeiro at the end of March, 2010, and offered a series of massive and multi-actor activities of promotion, reflection, debate and training. Simultaneously, in unprecedented joint efforts and thanks to the role played by the National Forum for Urban Reform (Brazil) at the local level, international civil society networks (including HIC) decided to summon the first Social Urban Forum. From both events came declarations (Cartas de Rio), which include a great deal of postulates and proposals. These achievements may certainly be considered important; at the same time, this is the moment to stay active and alert. In the many seminars, publications and projects that will follow regarding the Right to the City, the contents that have been defined in these collective processes must be protected and moved forward towards an effective implementation.

The Mexico City Charter

The government of the Federal District of Mexico City just joined the growing list of supporters after signing the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City on July 2010, as a result of an advocacy process led by the Urban Popular Movement (Movimiento Urbano Popular-MUP). This was supported by the Habitat International Coalition-Latin America (HIC-AL), the Mexico City Commission for Human Rights, and the Coalition of Civil Society Organizations for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Espacio DESC). Forming a promoting committee, they have during the past years encouraged the participation of an estimated 5,000 citizens in the elaboration of the Charter through various events and consultations.
Clearly inspired by the international debate and local documents already developed and implemented, this Charter nevertheless has characteristics that make it unique at an international level, both as regards the process of its elaboration and promotion, and its contents and proposals. One of those characteristics is that – just as in the City Statute of Brazil – it is not limited to demanding the accomplishment of human rights within the city. Taking up the proposals of Lefebvre, it demands the Right to the City, understood as political recognition of the need for a different society, profoundly humane, which has urban space as a relevant setting for social change. Condensed into a few words, that difference is crucial. As some have said, it has direct political consequences in many ways. In organisational terms, its demand includes all rights and may function as a coordinator for its respective defenders. In analytical terms, it is a unified vision that makes possible the understanding of the system as a whole – allowing for an understanding of its logics, weaknesses and strengths – thus making it evident that the interests of diverse sectors are opposed only at a superficial level while sharing the common interest of a city that is different. And finally, in terms of the construction of more ambitious hopes, it concerns not simply the solving of one problem in particular, but rather the building of a better world; another world that is possible, a world in which all worlds fit.

At the same time, this Charter not only retakes, but examines and broadens the principles established in the World Charter for the Right to the City, adding concerns and proposals from different actors regarding social production and management of the habitat, as well as regarding the responsible management of the common goods, and the right to the equitable enjoyment of public space in all its dimensions and attributions. In general terms, it proposes a series of public policy measures and commitments to be carried out by the various actors in society (the central local government, the sub-district governments, the Legislative Assembly, the Superior Tribunal of Mexico City, public autonomous organisations, educational entities, social movements and civil society organisations, the private sector and people in general). In other words, it gives details not only about what different social actors want, but also on how to move
forward in order to accomplish it, and about the responsibilities that different sectors should take on.

Its promoters agree that this instrument aims to confront the most profound causes and manifestations of exclusion: economic, social, territorial, cultural, political and psychological. It is explicitly posed as a social response, counter to city-as-merchandise, and as an expression of the collective interest. It is without any doubt a complex approach that demands the linking of the human rights theme in its integral conception (civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights) to that of democracy in its diverse dimensions (representative, distributive and participative).

As specified in its Preamble, the formulation of this Charter has the specific objectives to contribute to the construction of an inclusive, liveable, just, democratic, sustainable and enjoyable city. It wishes to stimulate processes of social organisation, to strengthen the social fabric, and to construct an active and responsible citizenship. Furthermore, it promotes the construction of an equitable, inclusive and solidary urban economy that guarantees productive insertion and economic strengthening of the popular sectors. In other words, the promoters of the Charter believe that the Right to the City can play a role in the social, economic, democratic and political strengthening of the population, and in support of sustainable territorial organisation and management.

In synthesis, it is possible to affirm that the Mexico City Charter conceives of the Right to the City in a broad sense. It is not limited to the defence of individual human rights in order to improve the living conditions of its inhabitants; rather, it integrates rights and responsibilities implicated in the management, production and responsible development of the city. From this perspective, it not only encompasses the construction of conditions that assure the access of all people – without discrimination – to goods, services and opportunities existing in the city, but rather poses a more radical approach, profiling the city that we aspire to and want to construct for future generations. This is a particularly complex challenge in a metropolis the size of Mexico City, though not limited to it.

The strategic foundations and proposals that are formulated – as they are being conceived – should be valid for human settlements of any size,
both urban and rural. Their contents are not only a catalogue of rights, more or less isolated, but show the enormous efforts to account for the complexity of a comprehensive view to and from the territory, deepening the interrelations between the city dreamt of and the six strategic foundations of the Right to the City:

1. Full exercise of human rights in the city

This creates a city in which all persons (children, youth, adults and the elderly, including girls and boys and women and men) enjoy and realise all human rights and fundamental freedoms, through the construction of conditions of collective wellbeing with dignity, equity and social justice. The cutting-edge exercise of participative elaboration of a Diagnosis and a Program on Human Rights in Mexico City (2007-2009) is an important step in this path. Nevertheless, in more general terms, as the Mexican State has been made to subscribe to the corresponding pacts, it will be necessary to adjust national, state and local legislation to the international standards of human rights, so that it becomes the general framework for all public policy.16

2. The social function of the city, of land and of property

This creates a city whose inhabitants participate to assure that the distribution of territory and the rules governing its use guarantee equitable usufruct of the goods, services and opportunities that the city offers. It is a city in which the collectively defined public interests are prioritised, guaranteeing a socially just and environmentally balanced use of the territory. Thus, specific instruments to stop speculation, urban segregation and exclusion must be generated. Various countries have made progress in legislation and programmes regarding progressive taxes to vacant or speculative land, expropriation with public purposes, prescription and regularisation of self-produced neighbourhoods. This process has been promoted by the Urban Reform Law of Brazil, the Territorial Development Law in Colombia and the agreements on public appropriation and reutilisation of the urban surplus value with a social purpose.17 This also includes credit and subsidy programmes for impoverished sectors to acquire land, controlling the cost of land and marking special public-
housing zones. During the last years, social organisations, NGOs and academia have thoroughly analysed the proposals for a new Housing Law of Mexico City, including new elements for a currently absent land policy in this sense (highlighting, among other elements, the possibility to create vacant land and real-estate banks for housing projects with social participation).

3. Democratic management of the city

This creates a city in which its inhabitants participate in all decision spaces – reaching to the highest level of public policy formulation and implementation – as well as in the planning, public budget formulation, and control of urban processes. It refers to the strengthening of institutionalised decision-making (not only citizen consultancy) spaces, from which it is possible to do follow-up, screening and evaluation of public policies. Various instruments have been recognised, but others must be laid out and deepened: round tables for consensus, referendums, plebiscites, citizen audits, territorial commissions, among others. In other words, a series of choices must be kept in mind to actually make an effective participatory management of the land, understood as a deepening of the practice of democracy. In this sense, the debate that took place in Mexico City during 2010 must be highlighted regarding the risks that modifications in the Law of Urban Development and the Law of Citizen Participation may be contrary to that principle, and may in fact cause incongruence, or, worse yet, significant setbacks.

4. Democratic production of the city and in the city

This creates a city in which the productive capacity of its inhabitants is recovered and reinforced, in particular that of the popular sectors, fomenting and supporting social production of habitat and the development of solidary economic activities. It concerns the right to produce the city, but also the right to an habitat that is productive, which will generate income and strengthen the popular economy, not just the pseudo-monopolistic profits of the few. It is not enough to have loose initiatives and programmes; rather, it is necessary to define and put into practice a series of juridical, financial, administrative, programmatic and fiscal instruments, as well
as practice promotion (formative, socio-organisational, technological). In recent years, social organisations at local level have been supported by HIC together with a team of professionals and academics in their elaboration and negotiation of a Community Project of Production and Social Management of the Habitat, which aims to demonstrate that it is possible to accomplish the Right to the City from this comprehensive and complex view. Nevertheless, once again, innovative and transformative propositions face a narrow and bureaucratic approach from the local authorities, and it is difficult to move forward in their implementation.

5. Sustainable and responsible management of the commons (natural, public heritage and energetic resources) of the city and its surroundings

This creates a city whose inhabitants and authorities guarantee a responsible relation with the environment, in a way that makes possible a dignified life for individuals, communities, and peoples, in equality of conditions and without affecting natural areas, ecological reserves, other cities or future generations. It presupposes stricter regulations, the use of appropriate technology, aquifer protection, rain-water collection, prioritising of multimodal public transportation systems etc – in other words, a series of basic measures that should tend to avoid or mitigate the environmental impact of our activities. But it also requires serious consideration of the social impact of new projects and investments. Whether the public and/or private sectors are involved, they rarely analyse the negative resulting transformations and losses on livelihoods of affected populations (in general, populations that are usually impoverished and in vulnerable situations). The recent debates in Mexico City regarding the construction of Line 12 of the metro on cultivated land, or the Supervía Poniente (West Highway) in natural ravines (woods and aquifer zones), show the serious conflicts implicit in the imposition of infrastructure projects without a preceding debate, consultation and agreement with the involved communities and the society in general.

6. Democratic and equitable enjoyment of the city

This creates a city that reinforces social coexistence, recovery, expansion and improvement of public space, and its use for community gathering,
leisure, creativity as well as critical expression of political ideas and positions. In recent years, a great part of those spaces, necessary for life in a community, have not been taken care of. They have been abandoned or left in disuse or, worse yet, have been privatised: plazas, parks, forums, multiple-use halls, cultural centres etc. Infrastructure and programmes to support cultural and recreational initiatives – especially those that are autonomous and self-managed, with strong youth participation – are needed. In short, the city as an open space and as an expression of diversity must be safe-guarded and taken care of. The Communitarian Programme of Neighbourhood Improvement (Programa Comunitario de Mejoramiento Barrial), in place since 2007, represents an important step forward in that direction; but today it faces several challenges to its continuity and strength.

To be able to advance in the realisation of its six principles, the City Charter outlines the commitments that should be assumed by the local Government, the Delegations, the Legislative Assembly, the Federal District Superior Tribunal, autonomous public bodies, educational entities, civil society organisations, the private sector and people in general. Among others, some of these actions include:

• Legal recognition of the Right to the City;
• Budget allocation of the maximum degree of available resources in order to gradually overcome conditions that inhibit equitable access to goods and services required by the population and offered by the city;
• Training of public functionaries regarding the Right to the City and the human rights it includes;
• Establishment of indicators to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Right to the City;
• Promotion of support and co-investment schemes to foment activities of civil society organisation in matters related to the Right to the City;
• Provision of a follow-up to the implementation of the Federal District Human Rights Program from the perspective of the Right to the City;
• Assuring the inclusion of themes linked to the Right to the City in formative, research, exchange and dissemination programmes and activities of universities and other educational centres;
• Broad dissemination of the contents of the Charter and the good practices derived from its application;
• Document cases of violations or incompliance of progressivity;
• Promotion of awareness and consensus regarding the responsibilities that must be assumed by citizens to construct a city for all.

As the Charter states in its final paragraphs, the effective fulfillment of these commitments implies dynamic processes of interaction and negotiation among the different actors involved, and it poses new challenges for public administration. Spaces and mechanisms to incorporate organised social participation in the management of the city are demanded. All of this requires a generation of new forms of inter-sectorial coordination of co-responsible actions, assigning a more active role to the communities and urban and rural organisations when public programmes in their territories are negotiated and articulated.

These implications are particularly relevant in the present context. Three years after the formal signature of the Charter, an intense debate goes on about the need for a political reform regarding the City’s legal status within the national framework – with its fiscal and financial implications – as well as its internal administrative arrangements and the urgent metropolitan coordination. The full text of the Charter is now at the heart of proposals for a new Constitution for Mexico City.

We have a long history ahead of us
At this point it is necessary to say it out loud, and firmly: there shall not be a right to live with dignity in the cities, as long as there is no right to live with dignity in the countryside. Considering that those categories are not static – and today, more than ever, they are being questioned by the juxtapositions, the coexistence and mixtures between them – the Right to the City compels us to look at the territory and the places we inhabit in a more comprehensive and complex manner. Although various analyses and policies insist on presenting the two realities as autonomous
and separated, the truth is that the countryside and the city cannot be understood – and thus cannot be transformed – one without the other. Environmental (ecosystems, watersheds, climates etc), social (migrations, family relationships, organizational forms), economic (production, distribution, consumer, reuse, recycling and final disposal circuits), political (legal framework, programmes and policies) and cultural (language, traditions, collective imaginaries) phenomena interweave relations and processes that bring them all together. Our struggles cannot be an accomplice to a dual vision that keeps the city and the countryside separated and in confrontation; or in a relation more of competition and exploitation than of complementariness and balance. At the same time, it is unlikely that overpopulated cities and the empty countryside is something that the planet is prepared to endure, nor is it the best alternative to the construction of a dignified life in more just societies. For decades, the lack of small-scale rural family production incentives, coupled with a more or less aggressive campaign praising urban consumerism, has expelled millions of youth from their places of origin, leaving them without any viable options. On the other hand, the alternative of ‘returning to the countryside’ has somehow become a kind of privilege, reserved for the sectors with greater resources.

Doubtlessly, much of the contents of this new Right to the City is found in cosmovisions and practices prior to capitalism. Many of them are, in essence, not only different from but contrary to capitalism. We must pick up this perspective again and deepen it, if we want the urban reform to move forward as a proposal for a paradigm change, to face what many call a ‘civilisational crisis.’ The values and proposals within the Right to the City have various points in common with the ancient world views of ‘good living’ (sumak kawsay in Quechua) and ‘living well’ (suma qamaña in Aymara), which have taken on political and programmatic relevance in the last decade.

Among other elements, it is worth mentioning that both the Right to the City and these indigenous world views:

- situate human beings and the relations among them and with nature (humans understood as part of nature, and nature as something sacred) at the centre of our reflections and actions;
The Right to the City: Struggles and proposals for the urban reform

- consider the land, housing, habitat and the city as rights, not merchandise;
- deepen the conception and the exercise of democracy (not just representative democracy, but, most of all, participative and communal democracy);
- foster collective and not only individual rights;
- conceive and feed an economy for life and for the community;
- exercise complementariness rather than competition (competitiveness); and
- respect, promote and guarantee multiculturalism and diversity.

In broader terms, it may be affirmed that in both cases an epistemological struggle takes place, because it involves collective construction processes of meaning (concepts and discourses, and, at the same time, practices) — and thus, they run the same risks, as many prior proposals, of being co-opted and emptied of their contents. At the same time, ‘good living’ and the Right to the City highlight the fundamental role of the State (at different levels) in the redistribution and construction of more just and egalitarian communities (regulatory guarantees, institutional capacity, public resources). They also emphasise the relevance and the right to strengthen self-managed processes and the construction of people’s power.

It is clear, now more than ever, that a radical cultural change is necessary as regards our ways of production, distribution and consumption, as well as in our symbolic referents and the values that direct our societal life, if we really want to make good living possible for all. One of the major challenges we face is to find the words and the places that allow us to keep bringing together these visions, deepening these debates and putting together diverse experiences that — in the countryside and the city — resist and, at the same time, construct new possible worlds, so necessary and urgent.

Together with other networks and social movements, *La Via Campesina* included, the Habitat International Coalition is now promoting a new phase in the dialogue about the Right to the City and the urban reform, aiming to build a global platform of learning, exchange and common actions. The process towards the Third UN Conference on Human
Settlements (Habitat III) in 2016 will certainly be a golden opportunity to keep working on this path and move forward on the implementation of this collective agenda.

Notes
2. According to UN-Habitat, between 2005 and 2010 Africa experienced the highest urban growth rate in the world (3.3% per year) and it is expected to maintain that tendency during the next 15 years (UN Habitat 2008, p 15).
3. Megacities are today the home of 4 percent of the world’s population and 9 percent of the global urban population. Meanwhile, 52 percent of the world’s population lives in cities with less than 500,000 inhabitants. Statistics taken from Davis (2006, Figure 2).
4. It is estimated that, out of all the private land in the world, three quarters are in the hands of only 2.5 percent of the world population. At the same time, 71.6 percent of rural families in Africa, Latin America and Asia (China excepted) are landless or have little land, while women own only an estimated 1-2 percent of all titled land worldwide, which is often explained by that women rarely can inherit property (Steinzor 2003).
5. According to UN-Habitat, a *slum* is the most degraded area of a city, characterised by inadequate housing conditions, lack of basic services and security of tenure. But the origins of the concept (during the first half of the 19th century) reveal very negative meanings, linked to a strong stigmatisation and discrimination of its inhabitants: it is a place of the “lowest class...occasional labourers, street sellers, loafers, criminals and semi-criminals”; “nests of ignorance, vice”; see Charles Booth, “Life and Labour of the People in London”, 1889, and description from Cardinal Wiseman Ward, included in Ward 2008, p 568. Those connotations are still present in the dualism ‘formal/informal’ frequently used by governments and academics to describe both the people and the places where they live, despite the fact that they can be as different from each other as Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) or Kibera in Nairobi (Kenya).
6. UN-Habitat 2008, op cit, p XIV.
7. For a detailed analysis of the financial and mortgage crisis of 2008, its links with the economic and housing policies, and the preliminary recommendations, see the Report of UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, Raquel Rolnik, presented at the Tenth Session of the Human Rights Council, A/ HRC/10/7 (February 4, 2009), Available at http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/10session/reports.htm As for the situation in the USA, the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty Report, presented before the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunities House Committee on Financial Services in March 2009, stated that “National estimates place at least 840,000 people as literally homeless – on the street or using temporary housing
The Right to the City: Struggles and proposals for the urban reform

– on any given day. Over the course of one year between 2.5 and 3.5 million people will experience homelessness. Approximately 1.5 million of those will be children, meaning one in every 50 children in America is homeless. Due to the current economic conditions, it is estimated that as many as 1.5 million additional persons may become homeless over the next two years.” Electronic version available at http://www.nlchp.org/content/pubs/HR_TestimonyforLA2.pdf

8. Habitat International Coalition (HIC) members have been analysing and supporting this process in different countries and cities of the world for more than three decades, promoting another ‘view’ on social production and management of habitat that has influenced programmes, policies, laws and constitutions, as well as relevant international documents. Among others, please refer to some of the following publications: Enrique Ortiz F. y Ma. Lorena Zárate (eds), 2002, Vivitos y coleando. 40 años trabajando por el hábitat popular en América Latina, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana y HIC-AL, México; Enrique Ortiz Flores y Ma. Lorena Zárate (eds), 2005, De la marginación a la ciudadanía: 38 casos de producción y gestión social del hábitat, Fundación Forum Universal de las Culturas, HIC y HIC-AL, Barcelona; y Rino Torres, 2006, La producción social de vivienda en México. Su importancia nacional y su impacto en la economía de los hogares pobres, HIC-AL, México.

9. Castillo 2007, pp 183-184. This policy was possible thanks to the profound transformation of the financial system and the promotion of individual private ownership as the only alternative (both being strong recommendations by the World Bank of the 90s (World Bank 1993). According to the latest Mexican National Census (2010), there are 5 million empty houses in the country.

10. The 1945 FAO Conference highlighted the need for agrarian reform as a means to economic and social progress, and bringing an end to land tenancy systems characterised by inadequate distribution of land, large terrains being put to little agricultural use, exploitation of labourers and extensive rural poverty (Monsalve 2008).

11. For a compilation of articles on recent struggles, achievements and challenges at global and local level see Sugranyes and Mathivet 2010.


13. “Activists repeatedly question themselves about what are the necessary conditions that a collection of movements – which broadly address issues of access, inclusion, citizenship and rights – need to consider in order to form a Right to the City movement. Further, some question the use of the word ‘movement’ while suggesting that lacking a central leadership or coordination and a shared agenda does indeed challenge the idea of the Right to the City as a coherent movement but at the same time opens up both analytical and activist opportunities. In this sense, concepts like ‘network’ are suggested to best describe the dispersed nature of the actors” (Caruso 2010, p 102.

15. See Marcuse 2010.

16. It should be noted that, according to the international human rights framework, the obligations of the state in this matter are grouped as follows: 1) Respect: to abstain from taking measures that obstruct or hamper the exercise of human rights; 2) Protect: to inhibit that third actors (private sectors, enterprises) affect or violate the human rights of populations and people; and 3) Guarantee and accomplish: to dedicate the maximum amount of available resources to achieve human rights, under the principle of non-retrogression.

17. Some of this material may be looked up on www.hic-al.org/psh.cfm?base=3&pag=instrumentosavances

18. The Council and the National Conference of Cities in Brazil, with a broad and very disciplined process of local and national participation, although not perfect, make up a good example of maximum authority and equal representation of all social sectors. The Council is composed of 86 representatives, 49 from civil society organisations and 37 from different governmental bodies. More information available at http://www.cidades.gov.br/index.php/o-conselho-das-cidades.html (accessed April 15, 2014).

References
Caruso, Giuseppe, 2010. A New Alliance for the City? Opportunities and Challenges of a (Globalizing) Right to the City Movement, in Ana Sugranyes and Charlotte Mathivet (eds), Cities for all. Proposals and experiences towards the Right to the City, Santiago de Chile: HIC, pp 101-113 (those are the pages in the English version).


Davis, Mike, 2006. Planet of Slums, Verso.


Marcuse, Peter, 2010. Rights in Cities or Right to the City? in Ana Sugranyes and Charlotte Mathivet (eds), Cities for all. Proposals and experiences towards the Right to the City, Santiago de Chile: HIC, pp 89-100.


**Author affiliation**

Habitat International Coalition (HIC), Mexico
The Right to the City: Progress, prospects and challenges in Malawi

Siku Nkhoma and Sarah Jameson

Malawi is one of the least urbanised countries but one of the fastest urbanising nations in the world. While only 15 percent of Malawi’s population lives in the city, the country claims an urbanisation rate of 6.3 percent. Estimates already glaringly point to the doubling of the urban population by 2030. This signals an era characterised by influx into urban spaces, and a resultant increased pressure on social services.

At present, 75 percent of the urban dwellers in Malawi live in slums or informal settlements, where living conditions remain appalling. Being a country where the government neither recognises nor appreciates that poor people also live in cities/towns, it becomes increasingly difficult to combat the upsurge of slums.

However, efforts are now being diverted to capacitating slum dwellers themselves by creating a critical mass that can engage state actors and negotiate for change to ensure participation and appropriation of urban spaces. At the fore is the powerful community movement challenging the hegemony, lobbying for fundamental systemic reforms through organised localised social struggles. The idea is to surrogate the present exclusionary approach with an inclusionary one, embracing a rights-based agenda where the Right to the City is embedded.

This chapter is one perspective of the Right to the City debate, contextualising Malawi in exploring how the rights-based approach can break the urban poverty cycle epitomised in slums. The chapter discusses the social exclusion of the urban poor in urban planning and policy reforms, before examining progress towards and prospects of an inclusive planning methodology.
Struggle against exclusion

The Right to the City, in Lefebvre’s conceptualisation, enfranchises all citizens to participate in the use and production of all urban spaces. This entails two rights: participation and appropriation. Ideally, the citizens are supposed to rigorously get involved in decisions that create urban spaces. In reality, however, development planning is an exclusive activity for technocrats, and it remains an elusive dream for the majority of the urban poor.

Most urban dwellers, particularly the poor, have no voice in the ownership and commodification of urban spaces. In fact, the majority of them do not own land; they stay in ‘encroached areas,’ and dwell in rented shacks. And city councils have been repetitively unwilling to upgrade these slums, because to them, poor people live in the village.

For years, the Center for Community Organization and Development (CCODE) and the Malawi Homeless People’s Federation have focused on capacitating the urban poor to claim their rights and challenge the erosion (or non-existence) of their participation in the development process. The organisations mobilise the informal communities to undertake slum upgrading projects in their settlements, and also to find space for engaging the state to institutionalise structures for involvement of the urban poor.

Policy vacuum

Despite the rapid urbanisation, Malawi has neither a policy nor an action plan that is geared towards creating space for the 6.3 percent that annually leave villages for urban centres. Fresh urbanites are finding a system and an urban setting that is not ready for them. Most worrying is the fact that the occurrence is repeatedly recycling itself; yet, no efforts are being made to institute a deliberate policy for regulating the urbanisation, nor to create room for the would-be urbanites.

Due to lack of an urban policy, there is no urban financing. Thus, while rural districts are allocated millions of Kwachas for development projects, the cities and towns get meagre values, not commensurate with the increasing urban growth. This entails that whatever the urban poor communities plan and design will remain in the same skeletal sketches, lacking financial allocation to enhance implementation.
Approaching inclusiveness: CCODE/Federation work

In contrast with other countries, where urbanisation responds and corresponds to the level of industrialisation, in Malawi, it is virtually different. The country lacks robust industries and has no job space to accommodate all new urban dwellers. So, individuals embark on a journey to town, either blank or without a proper plan of what to do in order to sustain themselves. This, in essence, is tantamount to urbanisation of poverty. As more people trickle to town, they not only contribute to an increase in the urban population, but also to urban poverty.

Unsurprisingly, most of the urbanites now live in slums, and the rapid urbanisation will only translate into mushrooming of slums. Though houses are relatively cheap in informal settlements, the swelling population exerts more pressure on land, housing and other social services. This calls for collective actions amongst state actors, NGOs and communities themselves, before the problem of slum development gets helter-skelter.

The CCODE implements slum upgrading projects to rectify deplorable living conditions in the informal settlements, and to alleviate poverty. The upgrading work uses community-driven designs that conform to the needs of the urban poor. The CCODE envisages a system that allows the city council to create a monetary basket, where informal settlements that have developed plans and designs can apply for slum upgrading funds. Once communities start building themselves, the central government will deem it necessary to support the efforts and seek ways of entrenching and scaling up the practice.

Slum upgrading and prevention: The approach

The process of slum upgrading starts with community mobilisation, beginning with chiefs who are the customary land owners in the informal settlements. In the initial phases, however, the chiefs express scepticism, especially because they consider slum upgrading as an eviction threat that would lurk their ownership of land. But with continued advocacy and civic education, the chiefs grasp the concept and play a crucial role in mobilising their subjects. The mobilised communities start challenging the status quo and investigating how the problems they are facing arose.
Suffice it to know that the city councils have no plans for these ‘unrecognised’ settlements, because to them, slums or informal settlements are non-existent; poor people live in villages. This perception even blurs the councils’ knowledge of slums, so that little or no attention is paid to the understanding of living conditions in such communities. The councils have no informal settlement units where communities can channel their grievances.

Over the years, the CCODE has established Informal Settlement Networks (ISNs) around the cities who lead the activism aimed at finding space for negotiations with the city councils. The ISNs have enabled the councils to unlock their padlocks and open rooms for engaging with the communities.

To surmount the information gap, communities are involved in a profiling exercise that documents basic socio-economic conditions in respective slums. Profiling provides a starting point in ensuring that councils understand the challenges that confront slum dwellers. It investigates the settlements’ social-economic conditions: educational, infrastructural, sanitation, health and energy, and it further explains the lives of the people living therein. It closes knowledge gaps by bringing into the fore the challenges that confront the inhabitants, thereby enabling councils to initiate development interventions tailored at remedying the shortfalls.

Further, inhabitants of the informal settlements have now taken it upon themselves to develop slum upgrading plans and designs that show and reflect their aspirations. Members of the informal settlements, where CCODE and the Federation work, meet in what they call planning studio sessions, in which the process of planning developmental initiatives for their communities takes place.

It is envisaged that improving living conditions in informal settlements will incentivise the city council authorities to incorporate the slums into the city fold, thus providing residents from these areas with social services such as good markets, improved roads, hospitals, schools and other social amenities. When the informal settlements are provided with such services, other people will be able to find job opportunities to sustain their livelihoods.
City councils versus ISNs

Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi, was included in the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) slum upgrading project. Owing to the city council’s stand on the issues of informal settlements, Lilongwe was not ready for such action. When the BMGF realised that the city would not successfully carry out the project, it pulled out its monetary support and gave the council three months to finalise the project. Fortunately for the city of Lilongwe, the communities of Chinsapo and Mtandire – which are some of the informal settlements that the CCODE and the Federation work with – expressed readiness to implement the project during the three-month closing stage to give it a face-saving exit strategy, which was accepted by the city council. Chinsapo and Mtandire ISNs took up the challenge, demonstrating that a lot can be achieved through the power of organised communities.

Even though the Lilongwe city council partly shoulders the blame for this episode, it actually all boils down to systemic problems. There is currently a lack of solidly instituted structures that allow for urban development, especially issues that address urban poverty. The case of the city council being saved by ISNs holds already in itself a symbolism that cannot be overestimated. And while it may sound ironic to others that the council was saved by ‘unrecognised’ informal settlements, it only vindicates and strengthens CCODE’s struggle for inclusiveness in urban developing planning.

Conclusion

For years, an expert-oriented approach to urban development planning has both negated the participation of poor communities and stripped them of their share of the urban space. However, experience has shown that urban development planning that includes organised communities in the process wears a sustainability badge and guarantees scalability of development projects. Attaining inclusiveness, though, means the adoption of a rights-based approach that promotes participation and appropriation. While the approach faces its own challenges and might not necessarily be a panacea to all current problems, it at least offers optimism
as regards communities solving their own problems. The involvement that the Chinsapo and Mtandire communities displayed during the BMGF project is in itself a testimony to the widespread appetite amongst inhabitants to develop their settlements.

Author affiliation
Siku Nkhoma: Center for Community Organization and Development
Sarah Jameson: Malawi Homeless People’s Federation
The work of the Homeless People’s Federation Philippines, Inc (HPFPI) began in a barangay or village called Payatas in Quezon City, the biggest urban city in Metro Manila in terms of population. Also, it is said that the city “houses the largest number of informal settlers in the country” (Habitat for Humanity Philippines 2013).

At present, HPFPI communities are mainly located in seven regional centres – the National Capital Region, Northern Luzon (Bulacan), South Luzon (Muntinlupa City), Bicol Region, Central Visayas Region, Western Visayas Region, and Mindanao Region.

Barangay Payatas is now a well-known landmark in the national capital region, among local and foreign nationals alike, not because the area is a tourist spot, but because in it arises an open dumpsite that in July 2000 became unstable and created an avalanche of waste that killed hundreds of poor families living around the area.

Mobilising communities through savings

Years before the trash slide, the HPFPI had already started to mobilise people in Barangay Payatas to save from their earnings, an activity which gave us a reason to meet together and communicate more frequently. The savings programme then became a tool for us to mobilise poor communities to respond to pressing issues such as eviction and their situation of living in danger areas.

It was in 1990 that the Vincentian missionaries, led by Father Norberto Carcellar, started their social development programmes in Payatas, Quezon City, focusing on the concerns of waste pickers. The Vincentian Missionaries Social Development Foundation, Inc (VMSDFI) introduced the savings programme along with other social welfare activ-
Reviewing international experience and lessons from Kossovo

ities, especially for children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. It tackled health and basic needs issues. *Misereor* (the German Catholic Bishops’ Organisation for Development Cooperation) came to support these activities in 1995, which further strengthened the community-based programmes, and started to mobilise volunteer mothers to help in the various programmes. The initiatives of the women who managed the programmes were so strongly felt that their work in Payatas became known and was shared with other parishes, all over the Philippines.

Payatas became a learning hub for all the other Vincentian parishes in the other regions. Through exchange visits, the participants learned about the programmes and went on to implement them, especially the savings programme, in their own areas. In 2001, inspired by the strong savings initiative, the parishioners decided to register as one national federation.

The savings programme involved a lot of change and development in the lives of the community people, especially those among us who lived in Payatas. We started the savings programme by forming our own small groups. But more than the money saved and pooled, the value of the programme was that it served as a tool to build relationships among the community members. Whereas earlier we rarely saw our neighbours, much less cared for each other in the settlements, after we started the savings programme, we linked our savings group with other groups. This made the community people stronger, especially when dealing with the threat of eviction, the most pressing issue besetting our community at that time. Moreover, we were able to build a system to manage our savings and develop financial policies to guide us.

As our communities implemented the savings programme, we also learned how to resolve the issue of land security. Years before, we started with small issues like food consumption, loan for livelihood activities, and other basic needs. But because there was a lot of pressure to evict the community members, we started our land and housing savings in 1995 and made our first land purchase in 1998. It was a 3-hectare lot located in Rodriguez, Rizal, that was purchased by members of the Payatas Scavengers Homeowners Association, Inc (PSHAI). The land is characterised by uneven terrain and is prone to erosion. Our first land acquisition activity may not have been a perfect process and we made mistakes. But
we learned a lot from it, so that we can truly call the acquisition process people or community-driven.

**Mapping and enumeration**

Eventually, our work caught the attention of friends abroad, opening doors for us to establish alliances outside the country. From our international alliances we learned important strategies on, for instance, enumeration and mapping activities of our settlements. Some of these processes we directly appropriated, and some we tried to develop, based on our own contexts and realities. But we do not just replicate the best practices with these activities; we also actually learn more about our own communities. The importance of gathering data is that it provides the communities with information about their own areas, showing a holistic picture of the settlements and their cities. In these processes, we learned the value of detailed information of the settlement, including the number of families residing in the area, the kind of work they do, their income levels, the issues they are facing, and how they are trying to address these issues. The mapping and enumeration processes have strengthened the communities because of the information they have yielded, information the communities can use to deal with the government and other interest groups and stakeholders in resolving issues they face.

**Disaster responses**

Our experience with the Payatas garbage avalanche disaster encouraged us to become proactive in our work. For instance, we realised the importance of gathering data in high risk or danger areas, where informal settlers reside. When organising, we would ask the community people to reflect on their present situation and think of long-term solutions to their issues. We would always introduce the savings programme to the community as a way to empower them, to give them a jumping board for their plans, such as when they intend to acquire or purchase land. It is important that they should have money and savings as a tool to secure it.

The federation wants the affected poor families to continue to manage their own lives. We do not treat them as victims, making them helpless in
the process. We believe that they know more about the solutions to their situation than others, and that they need support to rebuild their communities and their lives. The main role of the federation is to motivate the families to move forward and think of solutions to issues in the aftermath of the disasters. We rarely practice a relief operations approach, but we ask communities what their plans are to cope with the after effects. We also take this opportunity to negotiate with local authorities to provide better housing solutions for the people. Many NGOs undertake relief operations, but few of them even bother to know the long-term plans of the communities.

Upgrading and housing

When a community becomes self-reliant and has strong savings, the knowledge of their own problems and needs, as well as an organisation to manage activities, it is ready to attempt to initiate some developments on the ground, such as paving the roads, drainage and sewage construction, installing water and electric systems, and other major issues affecting the members.

In the Philippines, where land is not very accessible to poor communities due to its high cost, upgrading is an alternative option to buying land. If a community is given the opportunity to develop the settlement by doing the drainage or putting up the water system, it is already an important development for the community, because they themselves initiated and led the upgrading process. The communities will need the support of technical professionals such as architects and engineers to translate their ideas into formal designs, and, inversely, to translate technical language to the language of the communities. This process will eventually empower them and make them the architects and engineers of their own communities. The Technical Assistance Movement for People and Environment, Inc, or TAMPEI, which consist of architectural and engineering professionals, was created primarily to support HPFPI communities in their upgrading initiatives.

When upgrading, it is very important to link this community initiative with the work of other institutions and stakeholders, in order to demon-
strate and make others aware that poor communities are not problems, but actually important partners, to the city.

**Interacting with government**

When communities undertake upgrading activities, they are not undermining the role of the government but are actually demonstrating alternative solutions, such as community-led strategies that may be more effective than traditional, government-initiated approaches. The government usually considers poor people as eyesores, but this mindset can never work if the government truly aspires genuine change.

Our communities, however, are now slowly changing current government approaches in the delivery of services to the people. By collaborating with the government in community-led upgrading initiatives, the poor are actually teaching the government better ways to develop and improve its cities. For one, when communities deal with government agencies, they can suggest ways on how to better use government funds by enumerating or presenting what the people’s needs are. The communities can also prod governments to hasten implementation of community projects or activities which usually take a long time to start or complete. Finally, through upgrading initiatives and other activities undertaken in partnership with the government, communities are able to demonstrate that they are capable of developing their own communities, and that they need their government to support the people’s process to sustain these community-led initiatives.

**Regional networks**

In 2009, the Asian Coalition for Community Action Program (ACCA) was launched to support citywide upgrading initiatives by communities around Asia. These activities, as a result, were able to create space for communities to undertake their own development and make them aware that change is possible. To strengthen and sustain all of these, the implementers of ACCA three years later conceived and established a regional platform of poor communities in Asia, the Urban Poor Coalition Asia (UPCA). Through this regional platform, communities will be able to
continue the sharing and learning of ideas from different countries, build relationships among communities in different countries, and participate in global discussions pertaining to the lives and situation of the poor. Aside from UPCA, the HPFPI is also a member of the Slum Dwellers International network of countries in Asia and Africa, a network that similar to the UPCA is also a platform of urban poor communities coming together to make change.

Conclusions

Promoting the role of urban communities in the development of cities has not been an easy task for the federation. But it was this process that would eventually unite our communities, build our confidence to address the issues we face, and help us in the claiming of our communities and cities.

I believe that the initiatives we undertook and the projects we demonstrated emboldened us to engage with the local authorities and ask for their support. Our successes and track record gained the trust of the government, and they became willing to partner with us in dealing with urban poor concerns. These experiences also gave us credibility among other poor communities, something that was critical for building strong urban poor community networks in the city.

The change process is not the same, however, in all cities. While in some areas the initiatives of communities have earned the partnership of government units, in other cities, communities are still facing the challenge of how to get the local authorities to participate in the community-led process. But the communities have not lost hope, and strategies have been devised to encourage governments to partner with its people. Thus, it remains our goal to demonstrate our capacity to manage our own development, get the stakeholders in society – especially the government – to recognise our work and institutionalise the process of having the people participate in resolving their own issues in the cities.

Notes

1. According to the article, about 80 percent of the 200,000 families who live in danger zones in the city are informal settlers.
2. The Congregation of the Mission, commonly referred to as Vincentians or Lazarites, is a federation of organisations within the Catholic Church, dating back to the 17th century and dedicated to mission to the common people. Today, some 4,000 members of the congregation are found in 84 countries around the world.

References

Author affiliation
Homeless People’s Federation Philippines, Inc
Reviewing international experience and lessons from Kosovo.
The Street Vendor Project

Derrick Wilmot

There are as many as 20,000 street vendors in New York City - hot dog vendors, flower vendors, t-shirt vendors, street artists, fancy food trucks, and many others. They are small businesspeople struggling to make ends meet. Most are immigrants and people of color. They work long hours under harsh conditions, asking for nothing more than a chance to sell their goods on the public sidewalk. Yet, in recent years, vendors have been victims of New York’s aggressive ‘quality of life’ crackdown. They have been denied access to vending licenses. Many streets have been closed to them at the urging of powerful business groups. They receive 1,000 USD tickets for minor violations like vending too close to a crosswalk - more than any big businesses are required to pay for similar violations.

The Street Vendor Project is a membership-based project with nearly 2,000 vendor members, who are working together to create a vendors’ movement for permanent change. The project reaches out to vendors in the streets and storage garages and teaches them about their legal rights and responsibilities. Meetings are held to plan collective actions for getting the vendors’ voices heard. Reports are published and lawsuits filed to raise public awareness about vendors and the enormous contribution they make to the city. Finally, the project helps vendors grow their businesses by linking them with small business training and loans.

The Street Vendor Project (SVP) runs programs in the areas of outreach (going into the streets and recruiting new members), assistance (helping with tickets, licenses and any kinds of problems), media (talking to the press and writing reports before big rallies), education (meeting with police and community boards), and advocacy (working to pass laws and policies around vendors rights).
I was born in Panama and immigrated to the US, to New York City, with my parents in 1960; my mother worked in King’s County Hospital, and my father fixed beds on a cruise liner. My father taught me the tricks of the trade: how to hustle for tips, how to please customers, etc and shared stories and artifacts from all over the world. Both our parents really taught us to think big about life, and to use sports to better our futures. During the summers, I worked as an All Star Team basketball player, inspiring other kids to follow in my footsteps. I explored different campuses and universities, but I didn’t want to leave my city, and decided to study physical education at Manhattan Community College. However, I always wanted to be a leader and part of something bigger than myself, and I started leading the hip crowd that was selling drugs, stealing and street fighting. When I was eventually on trial for drug possession, just as the judge told me if I broke the law again I’d get five years, my dad – who saw something in me – popped up and said, “Wait, he’s been drafted, with a one way ticket, to Vietnam.” I chose the army over prison and was shipped out to Fort Dix the next morning.

I was trained in Los Angeles, got married in 1970 – and found myself with new responsibilities. I wasn’t scared to be shipped out, though, because I felt close to my New York brothers. However, when we arrived at the Vietnam airport and pulled out our rucksacks, the airport was being shelled and everything was exploding. I put my arms around the wheel of the plane and cried out for my mama; that’s when it became real: I was at war.

Forty-nine of us were sent out, and eight came back. That’s forty-one dead. They sent me back on medical conditions with heavy PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder); I was drinking and using drugs. I looked for work as a porter in shops or hotels, but no one would hire me; they would call me ‘baby killer’ and other names. It hurt that I couldn’t provide for my family or get rid of those memories, and I didn’t receive any benefits from the army. My wife left me; she didn’t understand what I was going through. I went through a period of being in and out of jail, selling drugs, fighting.

A preacher from an anti-drug program took me in as his own son, came to the Parole Board and told them to sign me over to him. I was doing really well in the rehab programs, got married again, but one day
I found my new wife sitting with her son, smoking crack, and I left fast. In 1989, I got into a Samaritan Village rehab program, started working as a weekend counselor in the Samaritan Village, and then became a youth and HIV counselor in the Bronx, where I worked for ten years. I could tell those kids what I had been through and help them make better choices than I had.

Then, my mom got sick, and I took her back to Panama. When she passed away, there was lots of fighting within my family. I couldn’t deal with this pain and ended up getting back into drugs. Since I couldn’t be a hypocrite to the kids I was working with, I had to leave. I went into detox in veterans’ hospitals, and for the first time ended up going to PTSD groups, getting diagnosed for my illnesses. After leaving the hospital – when I stayed at a shelter and received 85 USD per month from the government – I saw an advertisement about being a vendor, and I started selling CDs. Licenses for doing this are limited; you can only work in certain areas and on major streets, and there’s a lot of competition due to these restrictions. Also, there’s much police harassment, especially towards folks like me, with the police always trying to give you tickets for the tiniest infractions.

**Street vendor challenges**

It has always been a challenge to work as a street vendor because of natural conditions, such as rain or heat; there are fewer customers around for one, and if you don’t take care of yourself, you may well get sick. However, what makes it extra hard nowadays is the fact that you may get a ticket – with an increasing amount – for so many things: you don’t have your ID hanging around your neck, you have your stand too close to the doorway, or too close to the curb on the corner… You get these fines over and over again, and it gets ever more expensive – after six tickets, you are fined $ 1000 each time! Licenses have also become a constant bother; you now need permits for all kinds of things, and there is often a waiting list to get such licenses. With a license, you can work without being harassed; without it, you are committing felony for one thing or another. And knowing the rules is no easy task, since they are not written in every language.
Another problem is the overcrowding of certain blocks. With too many people working in the same area, it’s a big battle. Finally, there are lots of negative stereotypes about street vendors that one meets all the time: street vendors destroy the community; they themselves are dirty – or they leave a mess behind; they compete with local businesses; they cause crime; they’re trying to swindle people, and so on.

Working with the Street Vendor Project

I first heard about the Street Vendor Project when I got my tickets, and I started attending their monthly meetings. We learned about our rights, what to do if we had problems, that the project would go to court with you, and fight your tickets. One year I couldn’t get my license, because I owed too much money. I had a $12,000 ticket, a crazy amount, and we went to the New York Supreme Court with the case, and eventually we were able to drop it to $550 – and I realized that this organization really would support me.

I’ve been a member since then. I have been attending meetings, rallying the mayor, making speeches at City Hall. I was elected to the board, and I’m currently running the Veterans Group, which was started because few people in this country are standing up for veterans; the SVP is really going to change that.

We’re a coalition of Chinese artists, merchants, taco trucks, and peanut men. We need to join together, and get into the belly of the beast in order to find out what’s happening in New York City. Our members are trying to make a living in the streets, because the economy is broken and they cannot find other work. We’re trying to make money for our families – not for new cars or fancy houses – just enough money for our families here and in other parts of the world. Immigrants are working double. They’re trying to survive in the US and get more for their families in other countries.

I am 62 now, and I’ve stopped getting into trouble and started living the life so that my family and the little ones can look up to me. I’ve learned from the streets, and I’m trying to give it back here. There’s a right way to do it.
I haven’t gotten a ticket in five years, partly because there’s now a handbook given out by the SVP in five languages, with information about all the regulations – and anytime you feel attacked, we’ll come with TV crews and vendors from all different cultures, ready to fight. We have linked with movements in all five New York boroughs, have supported Sandy relief, and participated in Occupy Wall Street. We are part of something bigger!

The SVP board consists of people who speak different languages and represent different cultures, who work to strengthen the organization, going out to talk to people in the streets, inviting them to be members of our community. Our leadership meetings in the office are like a mini UN; they’re interpreting in every language, we are representing the whole world.

Different programs address different issues. For example, a women’s group deals with abuses by the welfare system, with domestic violence, with lack of access to resources and so on; a veterans group addresses issues about benefits, teaching veterans about vending and about getting back into life.

For many, vending is a reason for living. If we stop, a lot of us will wilt away; the work is what keeps us going. When you join the group of street vendors and win battles together, this puts you in a position of empowerment.

The great-grandparents of today’s street vendors built New York City, its beautiful churches, and the tall skyscrapers. If our ancestors could build the city, why can’t we continue to build it up? We put our heart, soul, our mind, our nationalities, and our parents’ backgrounds and history into our work. The art we share, or the food we sell in street carts, celebrates our different cultures and communities. We want people to taste the food and go home and share that cultural experience with their families.

We also contribute to business. We sell items for every season, but not the same items or foods that are being sold in stores. But, we feed the store shoppers, we bring people to the area to shop. We’re also the eyes and ears of the city. We can see everywhere at all times, like the police, to make sure the streets are safe. I stopped a robbery at a newsstand; other vendors have found lost children, or even stopped bombings in Times Square.
Our group is greater now than before and we are winning things. Once you know your rights, the police can't mess with you. We are fighting for the right cause and for the right people. This is what we can give to a world that believes in us.

Note
1. The Street Vendor Project is part of the Urban Justice Center, a non-profit organization that provides legal representation and advocacy to various marginalized groups of New Yorkers. (www.streetvendor.org)

Author affiliation
Street Vendor Project, New York City, USA
Waste pickers’ cooperatives in Brazil: Social inclusion while recycling

João Damásio

The recycling of solid urban waste currently presents itself as a short-run formula to mitigate the growing problems generated by the consumption standards of the societies in which we live. The production of goods through re-uses and recycling has already shown itself to be a technologically feasible, environmentally correct and economically efficient practice. Besides, it is a potent instrument of social inclusion and poverty reduction. This solution presents a set of characteristics, all of them individually considerable: economies in the extraction of natural resources; reduction or minimisation of environmentally negative impacts; reduction of public costs for the collection and treatment of these materials; incentives for jobs and income creation, and the ensuing positive impacts on the economy along the recycling chains.

The presence of recyclable materials’ pickers is a visible phenomenon in the great majority of the Latin American and Caribbean metropolis and big cities. It is a social segment immersed in a critical poverty condition, working in streets and garbage dumps, and selling its materials in economically subdued conditions. There are about 800,000 waste pickers in Brazil, occupied in the streets and garbage dumps, and only around 12 percent of this number is organised in 353 cooperatives, associations, or other groupings throughout the country (cf Damásio 2006).

This sector is articulated to the productive chain of dynamic industrial branches through the recycling of materials, generating wealth, resources conservation, and environmental sustainability. However, their participation in the resulting wealth is less visible. In other words, almost a million waste pickers live in conditions of extreme poverty in Brazil – nevertheless surviving – feeding what is becoming one of the most dynamic industries in the country, the recycling industry. The need for gathering information,
aiming at the formulation of public policies on an emblematic sector from the viewpoint of enhancing social inclusion on an environmentally sustainable society, has become apparent.

**Structural differences among waste pickers’ organisations in Brazil**

Qualitatively, in Brazil, it is possible to segment the waste pickers’ active groups into three big sets – with very heterogeneous levels of structural and productive organisation – alongside a fourth set, composed of groups of waste pickers that have no formal organisation. For lack of better names, I call these sets ‘Situations’, and number them from 1 to 4, in increasing order of organisation (Damasio 2006, pp 78-86).¹

*Situation 1: No or very low level of organisation*

These are formally non-organised groups – collecting together in streets or garbage dumps – without any equipment, and often working for middlemen and deposit owners under extremely precarious conditions. They have no access to sanitary facilities and/or building infrastructure. Nor do they own proper pushcarts – frequently obtained as a day lease. Except for the raw basic knowledge linked to the collection and selection of materials, they lack almost any other applied knowledge on the process of recycling. Financial support for the complete mounting of the equipment and for building infrastructure facilities is needed. The formal establishment of their cooperatives or associations would mean social inclusion through the creation of new labouring posts for waste pickers.

*Situation 2: Low level of organisation*

These are groups with some but loose organisation, with very few types of equipments – but some are owned by them. They have no sheds or warehouses of their own, and they frequently labour under overpasses and on vacant lands. They are in need of financial support to acquire almost all of the necessary equipment, besides for the building of their own sheds. They have little specific acquired knowledge and are in need of strong support in the form of training and learning. These groups, in general, do not even have the knowledge about the sources and means to demand financial and technical support, and are still subject to explota-
tion of middlemen and deposit owners. The formal establishment of their cooperatives or associations would mean social inclusion through the creation of new labouring posts for waste pickers – and the beginning of their rising to a higher step of knowledge and revenues.

**Situation 3: Medium level of organisation**

At this level, groups are formally organised in associations or cooperatives, possessing some equipment, makeshift sheds or warehouses and pushcarts of their own. Some of them own collective key equipment, such as trucks, power presses, and scales. They are able to circumvent middlemen but not deposit owners. Their organisations provide literacy classes and are able to perform pretty sophisticated triage and packaging. However, they are still in need of financial support for the acquisition of additional hardware and/or for the building of adequate sheds. These cooperatives are in an intermediate phase. They lack some infra-structure and training support aiming at expanding production – and are in need of infrastructure and knowledge strengthening in order to be able to increase the collection and selection processes, so they become strong enough to include new waste pickers.

**Situation 4: High level of organisation**

These groups are formally organised in quite advanced associations or cooperatives with power presses, scales, trucks and motor pushcarts, and their own adequate logistic skills. They have one or more warehouses of their own, and display the ability to amplify their physical structures and equipment endowments in order to absorb new waste pickers. They hold an appreciably high level of acquired knowledge, with possibilities of diffusion. They also display some necessary conditions to eventually introduce basic units of pre-industrial plants for *in loco* recycling. The cooperatives in this Situation – leaders on acquired knowledge – must be seen as important vectors of knowledge diffusion and social inclusion. These cooperatives are already mature and ready for the verticalisation of the production of recyclable materials. Their ability to sell directly to industries makes them the natural candidates to become the core of trading networks.
Distribution of waste pickers into Situations

According to the above mentioned criteria, it is possible to get a glimpse of how the cooperatives and associations of waste pickers in Brazil are distributed. In the sample on which my earlier study is based (Damásio 2006), the cooperatives in better-off conditions – as in Situation 4 – involve only some 7 percent of all the cooperatives – formal and informal – in the sample, and occupy an even lower proportion of all waste pickers, some 4 percent. When the cooperatives in the two better Situations (3 and 4) are coupled, we can still see that 28 percent of the cooperatives – the best equipped – congregate only 12 percent of the waste pickers in the sample.

In the opposite extreme, 72 percent of all waste pickers in the sample pertain to Situation 1, with no or only little organisation, working under absolutely precarious conditions, where we find 35 percent of all the cooperatives, however all of them highly informal. As Situation 2 is not significantly different from Situation 1, it leads to the conclusion that a total of 72 percent of all the cooperatives in the sample – with about 88 percent of all the waste pickers – remain in an unassisted state as regards their minimum infrastructure and labouring conditions. Table 1 summarises these results:

Table 1: Number of cooperatives (formal and informal) and waste pickers in the sample and their respective Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situations</th>
<th>Number of Cooperatives</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Number of waste pickers</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Average waste pickers per cooperative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situation 1</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25,783</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>224,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation 2</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5,720</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>46,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation 3</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2,753</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>39,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation 4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation 5</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>35,637</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>107,6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Damásio 2006, p 85, table 5.1 (translated).
Public investment in waste pickers’ organisation infrastructure

How, then, could public policy support be directed to these waste pickers’ groups – without re-enforcing and reproducing the same structural situation? It may not be enough to enhance the possibilities for the creation of new labouring places through capital investment, if the waste pickers’ organisations are inserted in a subdued and undermined position – without any chance to escape the vicious circle of inefficiencies and low productivities – structurally dependent upon intermediaries, middlemen and deposit owners.

For improved economic efficiency and a better use of the available resources of recyclable materials a set of information is required, on the behaviour of total production vis-à-vis the increasing amount of recyclables, per type of materials – alongside a more detailed characterisation of the actors involved in the process. Without that information it becomes impossible to know the adequate and efficient operational scales. How can one assemble a pickers’ organisation facing such uncertainties?

Some very important and basic questions arise, and deserve an answer:

- What is the optimal size of a plant for processing recyclable materials, the optimal level of equipment, and the optimal number of associated waste pickers to be occupied in this plant?
- What are the adequate flows of production processing that allows for the optimisation of the plant, transforming recyclable materials into money in the shortest timestamp possible?
- What is the optimal capital/labour relation in a waste pickers’ plant, compatible with the highest efficiency levels?
- How can one measure the levels of physical, economic and market efficiencies for a waste pickers’ plant of recyclable materials?

These questions have been the object of study of GERI (Grupo de Estudos de Relações Intersetoriais) of UFBA (Universidade Federal da Bahia) and have involved the articulation of academic and scientific knowledge with the experiences of waste pickers’ associations and cooperatives in 22 Federal States in all of the Brazilian regions. This study has been instrumental for the creation of the Research Center on Waste Pickers Inclusion (Centro
Waste pickers’ cooperatives in Brazil: Social inclusion while recycling

de Pesquisas Para a Inclusão dos Catadores - Salvador-Bahia), and was supported and financed by the Brazilian Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome – MDS (Damásio 2006).

On public financing

The answers given to the above questions led to a proposal of a basic-unit module for cooperatives of waste pickers that would create the primary conditions for rupturing the vicious circle of existing inefficiencies in recyclable materials processing (Damásio 2006, pp 87-112). On the basis of these modules, it was then proposed a total investment of some BRL 169 millions in order to equip 244 cooperatives and associations of waste pickers in 22 Brazilian Federal States, most of them (112) in the south-eastern part of the country, very few (2) in the north.

The study proposed some blueprints and guidelines for the Brazilian Government’s initiative, through the Social and Economic Development Bank (BNDES), when launching a broad investment program on physical capital earmarked for the Brazilian waste pickers’ cooperatives. In 2007, the Bank issued a funding program for applications from waste pickers’ organisations, aiming at financial support to their capitalisation on equipment and labouring tools. On its web site (www.bndes.gov.br), an assessment of the results can be found (translation by the author):

There were 127 project submissions, from which 67 were considered eligible as fitting the framework. Among these, 44 projects were fitted, from which 34 have been approved, for a total value of BRL 23 millions. It is estimated that these operations will lead to an increase of about 2,300 workplaces at these cooperatives and of 45% up in cooperates’ average income. [...]

The support from BNDES to this segment was structured on the basis laid by the study Análise do Custo de Geração de Postos de Trabalho na Economia Urbana para o Segmento dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis in which it was typified the cooperatives and associations of waste pickers and advanced propositions on a basic unit of investments for each of the
types, according to its stage of development, aiming to the creation of new work posts and an increase in the segment efficiencies.8

Thus, more than USD 80 million was granted to the benefit of funding infrastructure for about 130 cooperatives across Brazil. It is worth noting that this was not lent money or budgetary costs; it was inscribed as social investment and taken out of the BNDES’ own profits.

It should be clearly stated that the fundamental question here is the insufficient or non-existing capital goods and tools in these organisations – in a single word, the de-capitalisation – of waste pickers. This question is central – a touchstone – to the waste pickers’ social exclusion problem, and in Brazil, as we have seen, it is being dealt with through BNDES’ foregone financing.

Social integration

This kind of projects are focused on the, arguably, most excluded human segment among all strata of our societies. Therefore, it becomes inevitable to discuss their organisation, formalisation, training and ways to improve their living conditions with implications such as an increase in their daily work earnings, in their acquisition of equipment and facilities for efficient operation, in their literacy and use of adequate equipment, as well as in their adoption of hygiene notions and sanitary conditions, and cleanliness of their working tools and uniforms.

But it also has implications for the transformation of the waste pickers as protagonists: in their taking part in the plants’ management and decision-making. In a nutshell, the decisions would generally include the following characteristics:

- Revenues are shared among waste pickers. No appreciable overheads for managers.
- Take home pay by accrued points on a previously agreed system.
- Democratic decision-making process: assembly on Friday nights.
- No gender discriminations. Lunch prepared on premises by men and women.
- Compulsory enrolment of children at schools and health system.
• Waste-pickers gradually become *protagonists* on their plants management.

**Trading networks**

It is apparent that waste pickers’ associations and cooperatives presently classified in Situation 4 display a higher level of organisation, greater economic, physical and market efficiencies, as well as better levels of revenues and social welfare. They also exhibit higher hygiene levels – with adequate bath and restrooms, cleanliness and uniforms wearing – and they even have a kitchen and dining room at their own processing plants. Many of these cooperatives also have classrooms – for literacy classes, adequate technical assistance, and training – and some even have computing rooms to induce digital integration.

There is an abysmal difference – in terms of knowledge, organisation style, logistics and commercialisation advantages – between the waste pickers in this group and the great majority that remain in the other three groups. However, the knowledge in these cooperatives could be a foundation that would potentially qualify them as centres in trading networks. Deeper and broader studies – as compared with the study here discussed – could lay an analytical ground for the understanding of additional problematic dimensions related to productive chains and sub-chains of the recycling process and to its efficiency.

**Market players in the recycling process**

The identification of the main actors in productive chains and sub-chains in the commercialisation of recyclable materials is a necessary first step. The main bottleneck for direct sales of materials from waste pickers to the recycling industries – besides correct selection – is scale and regularity in delivery. The recycling industries, as a rule, cannot accept irregularities in the supply of recyclable materials, nor will they be interested in buying little amounts of goods, averting risks to its productive processes. However, most waste pickers are unorganised and work in an isolated and atomised way. They pick out their recyclable materials by hand in the streets, or in the cities’ garbage dumps, and sell non-selected materials in small portions each day⁹ – to the advantage of the intermediating struc-
Waste pickers’ cooperatives in Brazil: Social inclusion while recycling

tures. Nevertheless, even when waste pickers do acquire some amount of equipment – and organise themselves in cooperatives or associations – the volumes of recyclables collected by them are still relatively small, when compared to the scales required by the demanding industries, and they remain subdued by commercial intermediation.

Trading networks introduce new organisational and logistic strategies in the short run, fully able to generate efficiency gains, with reasonable diffusion of power, and with a potential for improvement of the life standards of waste pickers who are affiliated to cooperatives and associations that are linked to these networks. In a trading network, one could find cooperatives that are structurally different: it puts together highly efficient cooperatives with groups of waste pickers who still work the streets and garbage dumps, displaying extremely low efficiency.

A trading network would also allow certain types of materials to be sold at better prices. The main objective is to group – and in some cases stack – recyclable materials until the required volumes are obtained that will satisfy the industries’ demand specifications. It is apparent that the returns would be higher than those obtained by individual, decentralised commercialisation. In this sense, a trading network puts together the efforts of different cooperatives and becomes an efficient management strategy by which to face a concentrated middlemen market. The biggest gains in economic efficiency through trading network sales are, not surprisingly, displayed by smaller and less structured cooperatives.

The characteristics of a trading network may thus become an entrepreneurial strategy for small, medium and big waste pickers’ organisations, by which they coordinate and perform systematic and simultaneous trading actions. If trading networks are efficient enough, they may also surpass the intermediating structures, selling directly to the recycling industries, getting better prices for the same aggregate volume of materials.

The structuring and operation of a growing number of waste pickers’ trading networks may eventually make possible the analysis of the consumer markets for recyclables materials on a regional and/or national basis. It would also become feasible to develop an information system about present and future trends of the productive chains and sub-chains – following the medium and long-run market movements.
Trading networks of waste pickers are new and recent phenomena, less than six years old in Latin America; still singular, almost restricted to Brazil – with much experience but still little academic knowledge about them.\textsuperscript{11} They imply a shift of strategic positioning of waste pickers in the productive chains and sub-chains, from mere isolated providers to the intermediating structures, to active suppliers of recycled raw materials to the demanding industries. A better understanding of the productive chains and sub-chains in the recycling process, and the adoption of measures to foster the organisation of trading networks for waste pickers, will certainly lead to opportunities as well as accumulation of critical knowhow for structuring a social technology to fight poverty and enhance social inclusion.

Conclusions: On municipal public policies

Poverty, marginalisation and unemployment are still key factors in the degradation of the environmental quality of life in most Brazilian cities. At this point, it should be clear and evident that the only way to promote the economic inclusion of waste pickers is through the organisation, formalisation and, particularly, the capitalisation of their cooperatives and associations. A project aiming at their social inclusion (ie better urban environmental quality coupled with poverty reduction and the creation of more stable job positions) through the above-mentioned set of measures would clearly ask for additional public policies at municipal level.

Unfortunately, waste pickers daily face many aspects that impede, impair or limit their access to the recyclable materials that are part of urban waste. In some municipalities, institutional interference bans their access to garbage dumps and/or sanitary landfills. In other cases, third-party private garbage collection businesses will not allow previous screening and collection of recyclable materials. Obviously, the measures here described cannot solve problems arising from marketing structures, or remedy institutional aspects in the field of local municipal government. However, the work of waste pickers’ cooperatives must not remain hidden in what seems to be a ‘blind spot’ for urban planners and local authorities.

Simple appropriation of equipment and facilities by the cooperatives and associations – a \textit{sine qua non} for the onset of waste pickers’ economic
integration – shows itself to be a necessary but sometimes insufficient action. The complex structure and concentration of markets for recyclable materials require a decisive level of municipal governance in addressing the bottlenecks that currently exist and prevent the full activity of the waste pickers. An indifferent municipality may, for example, promote the burial of materials that could be reclaimed through recycling. Such an obstacle contributes to cumulatively negative urban environmental impacts; it reduces the mean lifetime in the areas of dumps and landfills, while limiting possible levels of recycling as well as the scope of social inclusion of the mass of waste pickers currently in the streets.

Overcoming obstacles such as the ones described above – some subject to legislative regulation – tends to enhance the positive effects resulting from the introduction of programs focused on social inclusion while recycling. In most cases, this would require that municipalities and waste pickers’ cooperatives establish partnerships – the best solution already implemented by a few but increasing number of mayors in Brazil.

Notes
1. From an analytical perspective, these sets could be treated as organisations’ typologies, although they were originally aggregated through statistical multivariate analysis.
2. About USD 105 million at the exchange rates of 2006.
3. About USD 14,375,000 at the exchange rates of 2007.
4. Author’s version.
5. The daily survival time-horizon of the majority of waste pickers implies the continuous selling of small amounts of non-selected recyclables. This precludes inventories building, reduces the prices of all of the materials and permanently subjugates the waste pickers.
7. Please see Damásio 2007, 2008, 2009. In Rio de Janeiro the first Recycling Central for waste pickers’ cooperatives was begun to be built in January 2013 in the place suggested in the latter of these works.
References


Author affiliation

Federal University of Bahia (UFBa) and the Research Center on Waste Pickers Inclusion (CEPIC).
Thematic perspectives

The visible and the invisible  
Anna Erlandson 86

Securing local ownership, and the architect’s dilemma  
Andrea Fitrianto 95

The Cuttac Ring Road resettlement project  
Anna Vindelman 105

Waste pickers’ urban environmental services and sustainability  
João Damasio 109

Municipal urban planning with the Right to the City approach:  
Mexico City  
Juan José García Ochoa 117
The visible and the invisible

Anna Erlandson

Some years ago in Quezon City, Manila, Ruby Papeleras from the Homeless People’s Federation of the Philippines took me to see the situation for slum dwellers at Agham Road in the barangay of San Roque. This big slum was located just where the local government of Quezon City had decided to establish a central business district. The decision came after a long planning process with all involved sectors of investors, builders, architects and politicians; all sectors except the approximately 20,000 directly affected slum dwellers that were living on the location, many since generations back. The local governments resolute solution was, as always, eviction to Montealban. Outside the city, up in the mountains, forcing people to live urban lives where there is no transportation, no livelihood and no city.

I had been in Manila for two weeks by then, meeting up with people living under, by, between, beside, behind, on, at or wherever no one would choose to live.

As always, the slums are located on the dangerous sites, the contaminated land, the wetlands, in the danger zones, or where the grey water streams rise fast when it is raining – and the rains are heavy and getting more frequent and ever harder with the changing climate. This slum area followed the same pattern, dangerously located by a grey water creek, coiling through the area. Narrow alleys in all directions, not different from other places; a dense, dirty, dark place full of people living their normal lives. Cooking, washing, playing, watching TV, talking, eating, resting.

In the end of one ally lived a woman that Ruby knew. We shook hands. She showed us in to her tiny shack and offered me a stool to sit on. Tea? Yes please. Behind me, a small room where a TV was on too loudly, some kids playing in there. A wooden board in the doorway separated it from the backroom.
I sat on this only stool in this very small shack. Suddenly I saw myself as a figure in a children’s book – someone who is too tall to fit in, whose role it is to represent the opposite of the ‘normal.’ I was big, white, rich and educated, and here I sat on a small chair in this woman’s everyday life. She told me parts of her story: a mother of three, one child with a brain dysfunction and physically disabled. At an age of twelve this child was bound at home. We looked into the backroom with the TV, and I was introduced to her children. They looked at me, and I looked at them. Hello. Hello.

Her husband was not around; I cannot remember why now. Either he just left, or he was working somewhere far away. The point is: she was running this family by herself, everyday, subsisting by her sari-sari store, a small kiosk where the poor sell small foods, candy and cigarettes to other poor. She had to travel far to come the store and left her children behind. Once back, she had to cook, wash, clean, comfort and care.

I looked at her from the stool. She was around thirty, hard to say. Her thin body had already become an old woman’s reticent holder of sorrow and tiredness. Her story was not very different from many others’ here. Split families due to the work situation, where many migrate abroad to work as maids, construction workers or sailors; years away from family and children. Children born with different kinds of dysfunction, often because of an unhealthy environment, and with no access to medical treatment. No financial margin at all. From hand to mouth, every day. All of these stories, as many as there are people. The magnitude struck me. All of us born to this thin surface of a planet miraculously rotating in space, and all of us with only one go.

She looked at me, waiting for a question. I looked around, but all questions just failed me.

What on earth would I do with the answers? Peal her off and sort out the facts, put them into a grid, a diagram, make a number of her life? Should I now take out a folding rule and start measuring her home. 14,8 square metres, two rooms on the ground floor, small staircase to one upper room. Approximately 160 cm to ceiling; I hit my head, she does not. Take photos of her disabled child, her cooking set, the newsprint wallpaper, the family portraits, the poverty. My camera grew into a thick black shield.
against personal contact, giving the owner a powerful distance. I am the subject, you are the object. I wanted to throw it away. Who was I really, in this woman's home? A guest in her reality. Or rather an intruder. Our obvious representations were chafing. I represented the Northwest and she the Southeast. I – the rich, she – the poor. We were both the Other.

In the awkward silence, Ruby and the woman were talking Tagalog to each other again, when I suddenly transformed into a tiny, ugly and very angry little creature that took a fast jump up onto a beam under the roof, hiding in the dark, refusing to come down. Here it would hide until the day when it would transform back again, but now equal, with no representation and I could come down and wash the dishes. We would do it together in silence, until all the dishes were clean and stored away.

But nothing special happened. Ruby and I said goodbye, and I was left at my hotel. I had a glass of wine in the restaurant, crying. Pathetic. What was I crying about? Soon I was going to sit with a drink on a well-tempered safe flight back to clean, democratic, welfare-Sweden. It was the same-timeness, the blazing insight that the world is not there to show me the world. The woman at Agham Road is not a story to be told as a moral message. She is a woman, waking up every morning being herself, dealing with her life. There is so much more behind the numbers, statistics and stories we know so well how to tell; all people living at the same time, this very day and this very moment, whether I see it or not.

In the book The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the Fox tells the Little Prince:

‘And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart you can see rightly: what is essential is invisible to the eye.’ ‘What is essential is invisible to the eye,’ the Little Prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.
Captions

Page 87: Payatas, Quezon City
Two women organizing the HPFP saving scheme in their neighbourhood.

Page 88: Quezon City, Manila
Everyday life in an alley in one of the uncountable slums of Quezon City.

Page 90: San Isidro, Montealban
Marietta and her daughter in their new home, after being evicted to Montealban.

Pages 92-93: Mindanao Bridge, Quezon City
Almost 350 people lived in a hanging construction under the bridge at Mindanao Avenue, now evicted to Montealban

Author affiliation
Artist; Architects Without Borders, Sweden
Securing local ownership, and the architect’s dilemma

Andrea Fitrianto

The problem of the poor inhabitants of the Code Riverside was evidently not architecture, but... the common feelings of people that were rejected and abandoned; the everyday feelings of people that lived with permanent fear of being swept away one day by the capitalistic policies of development and modernization (YB Mangunwijaya, in accepting the Ruth and Ralph Erskine Award, 1995).

Architects and community

There are new forms of urban governance emerging in Asian cities. Ongoing slum upgrading projects and disaster rehabilitation work is currently driven by community needs and initiated by grassroots groups. Over time, community upgrading has evolved in scale from small individual projects to providing city-wide solutions, leading in some cases to systemic change in urban development, an inclusive practice which involves local governments and civil society groups. Unlike commonly perceived development work, these projects and communities are globally connected through transnational networks of community activists and architects. This is evident in the networks of the Asian Coalition for Community Action (ACCA) and the Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) which operate across the global South (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2012).

The urban poor have shown their ability to drive change in their own communities. They were able to share lessons amongst themselves and learn from each other. The ongoing process demands stronger support from professionals, including planners and architects. What can we contribute to this movement? There are no instant answers. One of the reasons is that today’s architects belong to the group of professionals which are...
not well-equipped to work with communities. Architecture education is more accustomed to a top-down delivery system; such is the character of the industry. Planners are trained to work with formal institutions or with the authorities. However, firsthand experience in unconventional situations – such as in the aftermath of a disaster, at evictions, or other instances of housing crisis – may provide hints on the ways of working with the community. From his early career working with poor communities in Peru, John FC Turner reflects on a process called deschooling and re-education (Turner and Fichter 1972). Such personal experience often had long-term impacts on the architect’s career path.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest among architecture schools and firms to respond to the three areas of today’s housing crisis: proliferation of slums in urban areas; communities affected by disaster; and the energy or resource crisis. Many from Europe put Asia in their itinerary. Their peers in the region have also used their technical expertise to work in communities, diverse in scale and context, covering issues from heritage conservation, appropriate technologies, participatory planning, to urban upgrading (ACHR 2010), even going further to contribute to community-driven change in cities (Luansang et al 2012). A regional platform for exchange and collaboration between community architects, builders, artisans and other professionals is the Community Architects Network (CAN), which for the last three years has been actively organising exchanges, workshops, documenting processes, and publishing practical guides.

Indeed, recent attention to community and towards a more democratic architecture and urban planning is perhaps the highest since the debates started almost four decades ago, in the context of third-world development and post-colonialism. Down to fundamentals, the debates were mostly around two things; ‘which architecture’ will work for the poor (Fathy 1976)? And how to let the poor have ‘their own’ house and architecture (Turner 1976)? Nearly four decades later, architecture has barely gotten any closer to the poor, while the main context has shifted from post-colonial development to globalisation and the expansion of the neo-liberal economy.
A common goal among architects, if there is such a thing, is that we want the work to be grounded in the local community, that the built environment will function as intended, that it will be taken care of, that the building will last, and that it will be appreciated and loved. A sense of belonging in the community would ensure the best future for the built structure – which has led to the very question: how to sow and nurture ownership? *The loftiest towers rise from the ground*, says a Chinese proverb. Therefore, the following illustrations were drawn from early processes of intervention, with focus on the aspects of community and social capital.

**Critical needs in Aceh after the tsunami**

In the Aceh province of Indonesia, on the morning of December 26, 2004, a tsunami wiped coastal cities and fishing villages to a level of *ground zero*. In the worst hit areas, such as in Banda Aceh and its periphery, less than 40 percent of the population survived. Many survivors lost the entirety of their family and were left solitary. Weeks after the catastrophe, many of them still lived in refugee camps away from their home village.

In March 2005, the national government promulgated a ban that prohibits reconstruction within a 2 km strip along the shore. The policy created insecurity among survivors about whether they could go back to their village or not. Suspicion grew amongst them that the policy was driven by the private sector’s lobby. Indeed, land that is near the sandy beach of Banda Aceh is vulnerable to become prey to commercial speculation (Klein 2007). The survivor’s sense of tenure security was aggravated.

The non-governmental organisation of Urban Poor Linkage³ (UPLINK) accompanied survivors to return to their village to secure their land. A far-sighted objective materialised through cleaning, enumerating, and mapping all that was spared from the tsunami; they collected demographic and spatial data together, and built a database. Unlike most NGO officers, UPLINK community organisers were casual in their dress and familiar with the lifestyle of the community they served. Instead of riding SUVs, big four-wheels that sometimes intimidate, they would go by motorcycle. Together, they shared meals, pitched tents, opened common kitchens, and built temporary shelters from materials scavenged from tsunami debris. While the work fulfilled the basic needs, the time spent together created trust amongst each other.
Although tsunamis in coastal Aceh is a periodical event with a three to four centuries cycle, fisher-folk communities are settled, cultivate economic networks and social life. It is also common for them to bury deceased family members within their family compound. Sense of belonging to the place is strong. Thus, it is unthinkable to expect these fisher-folk communities to follow the new regulation and willingly relocate to a higher area. Not to mention that it would be ridiculous to see fishermen commute every day to go fishing. Due to lack of support from the other areas, the policy was then revoked.

After the tsunami in Aceh, the common critical need is clear: a replacement house for each family. It is human nature to survive, but these fisher-folk communities wanted to regain their life just as before the catastrophe and as soon as possible. To let this happen, UPLINK helped the 23 villages to create Jaringan Udeep Beusaree (JUB), or the ‘living together network,’ within which in two years more than 3,500 houses and village infrastructures were built (Fitrianto 2011). When external organisations were able to provide support for these goals, reconstruction and rehabilitation could happen fast, debunking the myth which says that participation is a slow and painstaking process.

Participatory sessions with UPLINK architects, among others, were community mapping, house design, and village planning. House reconstruction was conducted by owners or village construction committees. Thinking ahead, the group decided to provide the construction material themselves. The stabilised soil-cement block is an alternative to the traditional red brick; it is produced with a manual press machine, thus making burning unnecessary. The production thus largely avoided pitfalls caused by material scarcity, which occurred during the construction boom in the following year. Self-provision of blocks was a smart solution, locally based and labour intensive. It effectively addressed social, environmental and practical needs.

Among the key factors to the success in Aceh was the sense of trust that grew between and amongst community members and leaders. Decision-making was decentralised to the lowest level, while inter-coordination was maintained through JUB. JUB managed to establish self-control mechanisms and strengthen ownership of the overall project. The community
process respected and capitalised on existing social institutions, both religious and secular: mosque councils, fisher guilds, women’s groups, youth groups etc. In Aceh, with a sense of ownership sowed and nurtured since the beginning, there was no ‘exit strategy’ required.

De-mystifying the ridge in Davao City

The Matina community is an informal settlement on a riparian enclave in Davao City, the Philippines. The community was in need of upgrading their access bridge, a makeshift bamboo bridge. They filed a request at the local government unit, known as the barangay. However, after a year there was still no clear answer from the barangay. It seemed that their proposal was lost in the maze of bureaucracy. In November 2009, the community therefore turned to a people’s organisation, the Homeless People’s Federation Philippines, Inc (HPFPI). The community became a member of the Federation through its local chapter in Davao City, and started their community savings project.

On a weekend in February 2010, a workshop on participatory design was held in the Matina community, organised by the HPFPI and as part of the ACCA program. Aside from community representatives from across the country, participants included local students, professors, and technical professionals. There were also community architects from Cambodia and Indonesia, who were made available through CAN, the Community Architects Network. After a brief introduction, there were presentations on topics of community savings and finance, structural basics of footbridges, and recent developments in bamboo technologies. It provided an extended approach to the community project. Afterwards, participants were divided into groups and requested to design a bridge. A scale model and posters were the media, without any restriction of materials to be used. The groups worked throughout the evening.

On Sunday, the second day of the workshop, we were surprised by the diverse materials used for the bridge models; plastic cups for the bridge’s foundation, popsicle sticks for the balustrades, banana leaves for the roof, barbeque sticks for the trusses, and so on. In the afternoon, six designs were ready and presented and vigorously scrutinised by their peers, the community members. The discussion spanned technicalities such as
Securing local ownership and the architect’s dilemma

materials and construction methods, but also costing and budgeting. Every aspect of planning and design was practically covered within that weekend workshop.

At the bridge design workshop in the Matina community, engineers and architects took a step back to provide space for freedom to design. Two things emerged: firstly, the norm of a bridge as solely an engineering product under authorship of professionals was challenged; secondly, creativity was expressed through freedom in using methods and media that were familiar to the participants. After the workshop, a small team of local architects was formed to carry out technical support. Together with the HPFPI savings promoters, this group maintained the relationship with the Matina community. A sense of belonging to the project was created during the workshop, paving the way for the actual work which began with the construction of the bridge’s foundation in November 2010. The bridge was completed in April-May 2011 and became the first modern bamboo bridge in the Philippines (Fitrianto 2013).

Planting seeds in Yogyakarta

The city of Yogyakarta is the cultural capital of the Javanese, an ethnic group making up the majority of Indonesians. The tourism industry and educational institutions have been the main features of Yogyakarta, constantly attracting visitors and migrants to the city and increasing land prices. There are informal settlements, kampungs, predominantly at the banks of the three main rivers of the city.

In late 2010, Arkomjogja was founded by some community architects and social workers. The group believes that the best way for the kampungs to secure their land is that residents themselves invest upon it through building physical facilities. A momentum to start the groundwork was shared with the ongoing ACCA (Asian Coalition for Community Action) phase-one that began the same year. Since then, kampung upgrading has been ongoing, including activities such as surveying and mapping, house repair, building a walking path, drainage improvement, provision of community latrines and the construction of community centers. The programme has been implemented irrespective of the residents’ tenure
status, but with a vision that improved physical conditions would eventually lead to the regularisation of the community. Thus, it deliberately neglects ongoing legal uncertainties.\(^4\)

To ensure and strengthen participation within the programme, we assisted 31 communities along River Gajah Wong and River Winongo to establish *Kalijawi*, a city-wide federation of savings groups driven by women in the communities. Indeed, the concept was adopted from the Federation in the Philippines, as well as from *Baan Mankong* or ‘secure housing,’ a successful national upgrading programme in Thailand (Boonyabancha 2009; Fitrianto 2008). The regular activities of *Kalijawi* include daily saving, community mapping and house design exercises. Occasionally, *Kalijawi* interacts with municipal agencies, is invited by universities, visited by international researchers and students (Hersh 2013) and engages in public activities, from the Yogyakarta Art Biennales to post-volcanic eruption cleaning campaigns and street demonstrations.

Among the architectural work completed within *Kalijawi’s* first year are the renovation of 75 houses and the construction of three community centres made out of bamboo (Alperovich 2013; Arkomjogja 2013). The community centres were constructed through community work carried out by 7-10 volunteers, with support from the women who prepared food for the workers in group shifts. During construction activities, whether it was a drainage repair, path walk improvement or construction of a community centre, the rest of the community members witnessed the work and became convinced that they can be providers for their own development when they work collectively.

**Concluding thoughts**

Early processes of the intervention were about efforts to recapitalise local resources, including existing social capital, for fruitful interaction between and amongst civil society organisations, local government units, local academic groups and professional communities. Obviously, skills and knowledge of how to engage in the process are not within the default property of someone trained in architecture. But, it may well be conducted by anyone through on-the-ground experience. However, it is imperative for every architect who goes to communities to acknowledge
whatever work has been done earlier in the process. In that way, one may work seamlessly and ingrain in the collective process until the time one has to leave.

The case of Aceh shows how important it is to show support and solidarity with the community, especially when the current policy climate does not support the community’s critical needs. In Aceh, the group strengthened the sense of togetherness that was already innate among the community members in the aftermath of the catastrophe. In urban slums, however, the risk of eviction is often an invisible threat in the daily lives of the residents. There, the presence of an active and functioning community platform is essential in order to bring about togetherness, and to let solutions emerge on how to overcome problems. In the two cases of Davao City and Yogyakarta, it has been the women’s savings federation that has served as a platform for participation.

The unfortunate part of participatory planning begins when professionals, having collected data from the community, return to their studio to process, analyse and synthesise. This process often becomes poor, lacking perspectives and potentials that may appear off-studio. When the professionals return to the community with some kind of solution, they often arrive so late that the community has managed to solve their problem in their own ways. Therefore, on-site and real-time barefoot-styled decision-making, both at events like workshops and during the construction phase, has proven to be an effective forum for participatory design and planning.

To enhance their services, architects have to equip themselves with community-friendly technical solutions, such as expertise on alternative construction materials and technologies, as well as vocabularies and an aptitude to design methods and media that are familiar to the community. The dilemma remains with the architects themselves: are we willing to change our habits and at the same time gradually reform the profession, so that graduate architects are more familiar with working with communities? That exposes us to another challenge: who will pay the community architects? And it leads us to question the current limited access to local public funding – but that merits another discussion.
Securing local ownership and the architect’s dilemma

Notes

1. Architecture and planning schools and firms come and work in the South. To mention a few, some of them are focused on research and studio works, such as HDM Lund which brought its students for field work in Manila in early 2011. Others are confident enough to carry on an intervention, such as the architecture firm TYIN from Norway which works in Thailand and Indonesia; DPU-UCL from London, which is in cooperation with ACHR and have post-graduate planner interns in local organisations in Cambodia, Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia; and the Swedish chapter of Architects without Borders, in cooperation with SDI allow architects to work in slums in India as well as other SDI countries.


3. Through coordination by its Jakarta chapter called Urban Poor Consortium (UPC), UPC-UPLINK works with communities in Indonesian main cities to address the poor’s basic rights as de facto citizens.

4. A legal perspective on the urban poor’s tenure situation in Indonesia can be found in Reerink 2011.

References


Securing local ownership and the architect’s dilemma


Author affiliation
Community Architects Network
The Cuttac Ring Road resettlement project

Anna Vindelman

Architects Without Borders (ASF-Sweden) is an organisation without political party or religious affiliation, working for a sustainable, equal and fair housing development all over the world. It is the Swedish branch of the international organisation Architecture Sans Frontières (ASF). Together, we comprise eighteen member organisations in four continents, standing behind the joint programme, the Hasselt Charter. ASF-Sweden was formed in 2006.

ASF wishes to support a long-term sustainable development of the human-built environment, where the people most in need are made central. It works within four areas of priority:

- **Disaster and conflict management** – re-building after natural disasters, as well as with restoration and site development;
- **Overpopulation and urbanisation** – support from architects and planners in slum up-grading and issues about land usage;
- **Hands-on projects** – concrete and functional projects that quickly may better people’s living conditions;
- **Development and dissemination of knowledge as well as lobbying** – presentations, seminars, education, exhibitions, actions etc.

**ASF-Sweden and SPARC**

Since 2008, Architects Without Borders-Sweden collaborates with the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres, SPARC-India. SPARC works in alliance with two community-based organisations (Mahila Milan and the National Slum Dwellers Federation) in order to find solutions for affordable housing, secure tenure and sanitation for the urban poor. The aim of the collaboration is for members of both
organisations to gain knowledge and experience by working together in ongoing projects.

More specifically, for ASF-Sweden the aim is to learn how to practically apply enabling housing and urban design strategies, and to creatively work out alternative models for affordable spatial and physical solutions together with SPARC and local professionals. The learning processes are to be shared locally through workshops and seminars at both ends, involving students, professionals and civil society.

For SPARC, the aim is to profit from ASF-Sweden’s skills and knowledge with respect to sustainable and socially responsible design and planning, as well as from its international network, which includes academic institutions, professionals and non-governmental organisations working on development aspects of the built environment. SPARC also hopes that the collaboration will familiarise students, professionals and civil society from abroad with the local Indian context and learn how to work effectively with the urban poor.

Since 2010, ASF-Sweden has been involved in a number of different slum upgrading projects in India, especially in Odisha, together with the Urban and Development Resource Centre (UDRC), an allied partner to SPARC. In these projects, Swedish architects and planners have, among other things, been able to contribute in the work with plans for area layout, house drawings and methods for participatory planning. ASF-Sweden has also linked up a number of master students from universities in Sweden with SPARC. As a result of this, a number of field studies linked to some of SPARC’s projects have been carried out since 2009.

An important part of the collaboration is for knowledge and experience gained by visiting students and professionals to be shared, accumulated and institutionalised within ASF-Sweden. Therefore, the ambition is that all work will be presented and documented by and for both ASF and SPARC in order to develop the collaboration.

The Cuttack Ring Road resettlement project
The slums along the Ring Road in the city of Cuttack in the North-Eastern state of Odisha are frequently hit by floods. They are situated in waterlogged areas or by the river-bed and therefore flooded every monsoon.
After seven years of discussions, the municipality has finally provided land so that 14 informal settlements with a total of approximately 5,000 inhabitants may move to a new area inside the town. Helena Ohlsson and I (Anna Vindelman), both urban planners from ASF-S, have, together with the people in the areas, SPARC and UDRC, participated in the planning of the new area.

As a basis for the planning, an inventory and an analysis of existing conditions were carried out and plan components were developed. The inventory and analysis were important, not just to find out how many people are living in the settlements etc, but also to identify and understand the existing qualities of the settlements, so that these qualities could be designed and implemented in the new area. The inventory, the analysis and the plan components were jointly carried out by the women’s federation Mahila Milan, UDRC, SPARC and ASF-Sweden.

The base of the inventory was a socio-economic survey, hand-drawn maps and GPS-mapping of the areas. For the analysis, the data was compiled and complemented with field visits, interviews and dialogues with community leaders and people living in the areas. The settlements were also documented through photographs and measurements of houses and outdoor spaces etc.

One important finding of the analysis was not only the great use, but also the great importance of so-called semi-private and semi-public spaces. A space used for private purposes, where you also interact with close neighbours – such as a veranda – is called semi-private, whereas the semi-public space is a space shared between a limited number of households; it is a place where one interacts with or meets neighbours, such as a shared courtyard, a space with a shared water tap, or outside a limited group of houses. All such places have the multi-purpose of serving both as a place for domestic work and a place to meet friends. They are therefore of major importance to social life in these areas. The analysis showed that they were especially important to the women who more seldom left the vicinity. In slum upgrading and slum re-development, focus is often on houses, whereas the space in-between the houses is neglected. Thus, in this project we tried to point to the importance and design of these spaces.
The Cuttac Ring Road resettlement project

The plan components that were developed included recommendations for:

- plan structure,
- livelihood,
- architecture,
- environmental aspects,
- social aspects,
- maintenance and
- process.

ASF-Sweden has presented and handed over its work to Mahila Milan, the UDRC, SPARC and local architects that are to continue the work. ASF-S has plans for a return visit to the project in the spring of 2014, in order to follow up and evaluate the joint work, learn from the evaluation, and hopefully contribute to the continuation of the project.

Author affiliation
Architects Without Borders-Sweden
Waste pickers’ urban environmental services and sustainability

João Damásio

This chapter reflects on and underlines some of the topics discussed concerning waste pickers’ cooperatives and associations under the label of Urban Environmental Services as introduced and argued in IPEA (2010) and Damásio (2011). From a broader perspective of climate change, the discussion relates to urban disaster risk prevention, in so far as the results of its widespread application would contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emission. In this sense, it deals with the problem of curbing emissions at its urban origins – thus benefiting from a macro view – as opposed to the necessary urgent measures to remediate for impending disaster risks.

In this direction, the chapter tries to highlight one of the so-called ‘blind spots’ of some urban planning, calling for the local authorities to exert effective municipal governance as to minimise those deleterious negative environmental impacts right at their sources.¹

It concludes with a note advising against the growing proposals for the incineration of solid urban waste, which breaks the chain of material recycling and contributes to an increase in greenhouse gas emission.

Waste pickers’ urban environment services and recycling

The urban environment presents successive layers of historical anthropogenic interventions that chronologically has changed environmental determinations to the extent that any approach to the collection and disposal of solid urban waste rests on rather broad assumptions – customarily taken as a given. Although the subject might be complex and sometimes controversial – since the degradation of urban ecosystems remains a universal challenge – it is possible to target actions and types of agents that are clearly linked to the mitigation of harmful effects of urbanisation on the environment.
The problem of collection and proper disposal of municipal solid waste (MSW) is a Siamese twin to the one generated by the dynamics of swelling cities and the relative emptying of rural areas around the world. In general, there are visible improvements in the collection of household, commercial, hospital and industrial wastes. Due to increasing awareness and direct municipal action, rising volumes of MSW are now destined for landfills, as opposed to deposition in open dumps, a change in a direction that is essentially rational and correct.

In this framework, the recycling of increasing portions of MSW gets a highlighted importance, since it enables economic appreciation of what was formerly discarded by society. The very existence of industrial recycling activity shows its economic viability. Recycling also increases periods of useful life spans for sanitary landfills. Nevertheless, environmental impacts – and potential social impacts – of fostering recycling processes are less visible and not always explicitly discussed.

For every ton of recyclable materials – potentially replacing a portion of virgin raw materials and industrial inputs – a considerable amount of natural resources, water and energy are saved or not extracted at all. From this viewpoint, recycling has a double effect: a) it contributes to the improvement of the urban environmental overall quality; b) it reduces the pressure on natural ecosystems in which virgin materials originate. A correlative effect is observed in the abatement of emissions and effluents, whether through the mitigation of waterways and air pollution resulting from poor disposal or burning of MSW, or through the measurable economies which can be observed in the production processes of these recyclable materials.

The social effects are less evident, and even less perceived. The modern cooperatives of waste pickers give a living testimony to the fact that it is possible to escape the vicious circle of poverty and abject social exclusion. The former waste paper collectors, who could be seen roaming major urban centres in Brazil, and the waste pickers who used to populate the municipal dumps, are, in fact, gradually organising themselves, and increasingly constitute a genuine occupational category of urban labourers. However, waste pickers’ collection activities in urban centres still need to be supported by comprehensive and stable public mechanisms.
of municipal governance. As their organisations are the main actors in this process – and the base of the pyramid of the recycling productive chains – they constitute the multiplier link throughout the process of macroeconomic value aggregation in this emblematic sector.

**Payment for environmental urban services as a municipal public policy**

The recognition of the role that waste pickers play, from a macroeconomic, sanitary, and especially environmental point of view, begs for a reorientation of municipal action. It should go well beyond the traditional social assistance programs, as a new strategy towards sustainable social inclusion of this labouring stratum. A public policy at *municipal level* concerning their activities – collecting and processing more than 90 recyclable materials – should establish regular payment to the cooperatives for performing urban environmental services. Policy lines to this end for Brazil were first outlined by IPEA, the Institute for Applied Economic Research (2010)\(^2\) and fostered as a national demand from waste pickers’ organisations in Damásio (2011). Generally, this payment should display the following characteristics:

- The payments should be focused on promoting the creation of new cooperatives; on expanding the number of organised waste pickers; and on the increasing productivity and efficiency in collecting, sorting and packaging of recyclable materials. It would be desirable to set up an administrative body to manage the program – linking it to other initiatives of the local government.

- The payments should be understood as an incentive to rational practices that simultaneously generate economic results, environmental sustainability and the effective social inclusion of waste pickers.

- Based on these assumptions, it is suggested that a) the public policy would be exclusively focused on the organisations of waste pickers, excluding middlemen and deposit owners; and b) it should only consider the processed portions of MSW that can be destined to the recycling industries – which excludes domestic reuse and any incineration of urban waste – but also include local transformation of materials that is carried out in the waste pickers’ own cooperatives.
The payments proposed include three integrated components: i) they are upward scaled from floor basic values – weighted by the per capita physical productivity; ii) graduate and countercyclical bonuses may be added – as instruments of price control and discretionary intervention; and iii) an incentive should be added if the cooperative is affiliated to a trading network. Given these three components, such a municipal mechanism will contribute to the stabilisation of waste pickers’ incomes, while simultaneously making it possible to formulate parametric profiles to encourage the improvement of environmental quality.

Recent developments

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the implementation of a municipal program with this profile would lay the foundation for a profound structural change in the underpinnings of the entire recycling chain, inducing enduring and continuous effective social inclusion of waste pickers. In the long run, it would also contribute to permanent good practices to prevent disaster risks deriving from climate change.

The above presented propositions are now being subject to discussions in the Brazilian federal government – and other administrative spheres – aiming at devising appropriate legislation to discipline this public policy intervention at municipal levels. In at least one instance it has already been implemented at state level, as Dias (2013) relates:

Brazil has been in the forefront of progressive legislation and public policies geared to the integration of its informal recyclers. In the last 12–15 years, Brazil has seen the enactment of laws supporting the social inclusion of these workers and the implementation of public policies designed for cooperatives and associations of informal collectors of recyclables […] a major development occurred: the state of Minas Gerais became the first to implement a scheme for payment of environmental services. Although the State Parliament approved a law in November 2011 whereby waste pickers who belong to cooperatives are allowed to receive a monetary incentive called bolsa Reciclagem (recycling bonus), the scheme was only implemented in December 2012. The law establishes a monetary incen-
tive paid by the state government to waste pickers who are members of cooperatives. The first law approved in the country that authorizes the use of public resources to compensate waste pickers for their work on an ongoing basis, the law aims to improve recycling rates, to encourage the reintroduction of raw materials into the industrial circuit, and to compensate the catadores for environmental services rendered. This is also a redistributive mechanism—informal waste workers are at the lowest end of the recycling chain [...] The first payments were made in December 2012, and the innovation was received with great enthusiasm from the waste pickers [...] Also, IJgosse (2012, p 23) from WIEGO seems encouraging in his concluding remarks in a recent evaluation of the premises advanced in IPEA (2010):

Finally, as was stated at the outset of this section, the study of the IPEA analyzed in this Urban Policies Technical Brief is an important contribution to the current discussion taking place in Brazil on how to formalize the involvement of the catadores. The analysis and building of scenarios discussed serves as an important tool at the national level in Brazil. At the same time, they can be of benefit to the discussion taking place in those countries that are also seeking to create formal financing mechanisms that recognize the valuable work of the informal recyclers.

Conclusion with a counter punch: Recycling versus incineration

What is commonly called the recycling chain, in reality corresponds to a whole set of specific productive sub-chains for each different type of collected recyclable material. That includes several different qualities of plastic materials: PET, PEAD, PEBD, PVC, PP, PS, and plastic film, among others. It also includes papers (white – type 1, 2 and 3, magazine papers, newspapers and catalogues), cardboards, aluminum, different types of scrap metals, styrofoam, tetrapaks (which combine three recyclables materials in a single product: aluminum, polypropylene and cardboard) – and many other types of recyclable materials frequently found at the industrial market place. Many of them must be handled and
stored with care since they are highly flammable and combustible. Pulp and plastic materials provide about 80 percent of waste pickers’ revenues.

A final observation seems relevant. Although still very limited, Brazil has recently seen investment initiatives directed towards the incineration of municipal solid waste. It is insistently argued that the recovery of its energy content is a form of recycling. In other words, incineration is being touted as an energy recovery alternative, a new style of recycling.

Is incineration then an acceptable way to recycle plastic materials? Is it sound from the viewpoint of sustainable resource management? Is that a good destination for domestic waste selective collection? Granted, fossil energy dependent economies could find it reasonable to generate power through this alternative process. After all, one ton of plastic waste is, in average, equivalent to about one ton of raw petroleum, if used as an energy source. Fair enough. This is, however, not to argue or to dispute on the issue of recyclable materials’ energy content! There must be no doubt that current or fossil biomasses – in the form of wood, paper, cardboard and thermoplastics in general – have high enough available energy to be reduced and captured, according to the principle of entropy in physics. Actually any biomass can be reduced to heat via incineration. Just light up some coal...

However, incineration reveals itself – under the second law of thermodynamics – as only a partial and pretty inefficient use of the energy content in a process that intentionally degrades complex materials through combustion. Incineration destroys recyclable plastics, wood, paper, cardboard and other materials present in MSW in an environmentally prodigal and thriftless way. It breaks the chain for reusing materials, while at the same time increasing the entropy of the ecosystems. It entails the extraction of new resources, renewable or otherwise. The incineration of recyclables gradually eliminates the ‘raw materials’ that could be a positive factor for economic and social inclusion of waste pickers, as it eliminates job opportunities. It is not necessary to argue about the deleterious effects of such development on their activities.4

Recycling of urban waste through the replacement of virgin raw materials, by contrast, seeks to keep the energy content of each different piece in its composition, providing means for re-use with reduced overall
energy costs. It does not degrade materials. It preserves their energetic content, and it is instrumental to a conservative environmental use of natural resources that reduces the synergetic impacts on the ecosystems. Besides, considering that combustion of complex materials causes increased levels of emission of greenhouse gases – and other gaseous and solid effluents which display poisonous and biocides features – it becomes evident that, far from being a form of recycling, incineration has the imprint of a wasteful use of natural resources. In general, as a rule-of-thumb, the process of incineration and burning should only be reserved for biohazardous waste, or for substances which decompose into non-harmful components.

It seems that it is not possible to continue ignoring the manifesto of the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternative – GAIA (2013), also dubbed the Global Anti-Incinerator Alliance:

We recognize that our planet’s finite resources, fragile biosphere and the health of people and other living beings are endangered by polluting and inefficient production practices and health-threatening disposal methods. Because of this, we oppose incinerators, landfills, and other end-of-pipe interventions. Our goal is clean production and the creation of a closed-loop, materials-efficient economy where all products are reused, repaired or recycled.

Notes

1. It is argued that the labouring of waste pickers’ cooperatives and associations go frequently unnoticed – sometimes challenged and repressed – by the municipal authorities in Brazil and elsewhere. This would be a relevant portion of the ‘blind spot’: the urban waste’s final destination. The other significant blind spot relates to the final destination of urban sewage, which does not concern us here.

2. I personally had the opportunity to lead the group that formulated the IPEA (2010) document, as a PNPD research scholarship’s recipient.

3. In Brazilian Portuguese, waste pickers are generally referred to simply as *catadores*.

4. Incidentally, although it is not a specific topic of this article, it should be added that recyclable urban waste should not be buried in landfills before triage – as it is not presently uncommon in Brazil – but actually recycled.
References


Author affiliation

Federal University of Bahia (UFBa) and the Research Center on Waste Pickers Inclusion (CEPIC).
Municipal urban planning with the Right to the City approach:
Mexico City

Juan José García Ochoa

Mexico City – due to its demographic, political, economic and social characteristics, as well as the presence and participation of social organisations – is today a good example of the collective construction of what it is known as the Right to the City.

In population terms, Mexico City at the beginning of the 16th century housed 30,000 persons. At the dawn of the 20th century the number had risen to 541,000. Currently, we are more than 8,851,000 inhabitants (INEGI 2013). This means that we inhabit 5,290 people per square kilometre. In other states of the country, for instance the state of Chihuahua, the population density is only 14 persons per square kilometre (INEGI 2013). This growth, coupled with other factors, has of course had an impact on the pressure to gain access to the goods and services of the city, such as education, housing, health, water, transportation and so on.

In economic matters, Mexico City contributes more than any other entity of the country to the production of national wealth. It contributes with 23 percent of the gross domestic product, and it collects 60 percent of federal tax revenues. However, in a situation of deep fiscal inequity, it receives only 8 cents of each peso contributed to the federation by concept of stakes and federal contributions. For instance, in the 2012 federal budget, Mexico City’s budget allocation was reduced by 0.4 percent in comparison to 2011; on the other hand, entities such as the State of Mexico, Jalisco and Nuevo Leon received increases in their shares of 6.6, 2.8, and 5.5 percent respectively. Moreover, Mexico City isn’t taken into account by federal programmes of local strengthening or by programmes to fight poverty (Mexico City Government 2007).
Nevertheless, in spite of unfair treatment, the capital city has the best indicators in terms of life expectancy at birth and adult literacy, as well as in indices of health and income. A detailed analysis of the level of access to a healthy environment and to an adequate standard of living – the rights to water, housing, work and health, among others – identifies situations that affect the way in which people can exercise such rights in an urban context (PDHDF 2009).

From a political and social point of view, Mexico City has had a particular political configuration. From the colonial era and to 1997 its regime took various forms, but subordination of its inhabitants was a constant factor in all of them. For instance, from 1928 to 1997, the city was ruled by a one-party regime. All decisions about the city depended on the President, and although there were some forms of guild and union participation, the city inhabitants had no possibility to elect their authorities.

In spite of this context of centralism and authoritarianism, the Mexico City inhabitants have built a democratic and participatory culture. They have done so through diverse social movements, such as the teachers movement in 1958, the movement of the medical community in 1964, the students movement in 1968 – whose main demands were political freedom, democratic openness, public dialogue and wider and legitimate spaces of social participation – and through protests by the popular sectors in the eighties against economic adjustment, unemployment and the loss of salary value.

In 1985, after one of the worst earthquakes in its history, and due to the ineptitude of the government to face this catastrophe, society organised itself and took charge of the tasks to rescue survivors and rebuild the city, highlighting the urgency of a political reform that would give the inhabitants full rights and democratically elected authorities.

The strong social pressure from the citizens, as well as new forms of social organisation, sparked off a political reform of the city in 1986. A new body for citizens’ participation was created, called the Assembly of Representatives. This was the beginning of an unfinished process in order to restore the political rights of the inhabitants, so they will be able to freely elect their authorities and take part in decisions concerning the course of the city.
In the 1988 federal elections, the ruling party was defeated by the leftist opposition in Mexico City. However, given the fact that the president of the republic by law was to appoint the head of government of this city, an unprecedented situation was created; a society mainly opposed to the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) was ruled by an authority from that party with a questionable legitimacy.

The need thus arose for institutional changes in response to the growing demand for democratisation of the political system. In 1993, a civic plebiscite was convened by social organisations, urban movements and political parties, so the inhabitants of the capital city could elect their authorities. From that plebiscite, the federal government was pressed to put in place popular and democratic elections of the Mexico City authorities.

This was the background to the political reform that started in 1993, a reform that finally, in 1997, culminated in the election of the Head of Government of Mexico City. The opposition, represented by the candidate of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), won the elections in the city with 47 percent of the votes, and the legislative body of the city as well was formed by a majority of members of this party.

So, from 1997 the democratic governments of the city have committed themselves to social policies and the participation of social movements and citizens’ organisations. This has outlined a particular profile for the city. It has become a space of freedoms and citizen’s rights, with governments that have listened and incorporated into their policies the demands of the citizens.

For 15 years now, the governments of the capital have established a broad system of social protection and have allocated more than 30 percent of the public spending to its support. This social policy has had as an overall objective to generate opportunities that allow all the people to have access to education and health services, to support the more vulnerable social groups and to keep important subsidies for working families, so they can purchase housing, for transportation and so on.

In the legislative field, important laws and reforms have been promoted by the local representatives. They have given to the inhabitants of the city legal basis to expand, protect and exercise the rights and freedoms of the people, such as same-sex marriages and the possibility to interrupt a
pregnancy during the first 12 weeks of gestation. Also, different laws have been homologated according to the highest standards of rights protection.

It was in this context that in 2007 we started to debate about the Right to the City. It was defined as a new human right that allows the equitable benefit of the cities. The government’s acts should be based on the principles of sustainable democracy, equity and social justice for the development of public policies.

This collective right claims that people enjoy an inclusive city, where services and rights can be exercised without discrimination or exclusion due to gender, economic or social position, or any other reason. At the same time, the Right to the City gives to its inhabitants legitimacy to act and to organise themselves in order to require and demand the full exercise of the right to free self-determination and to have an adequate standard of living.

**Participatory process, spaces of dialogue**

A promoting committee was formed to begin the talks and debate on the contents of the Right to the City. This was the body in charge of this topic. It was formed by the Urban Popular Movement-CND, the International Coalition for Habitat in Latin America (HIC), the Commission on Human Rights (Ombudsman) and the Government of the City. And this is where the idea of writing the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City arose.

The process of writing the Charter was marked by social participation, exchange of information, collective negotiation and agreements. It implied the debating of very different ideas about the city, but consensus was achieved between social organisations and public authorities that took active part in it. On the side of the government, more than thirteen governmental units participated. They contributed with their expertise to the development of the contents of the Charter. Additionally, since 2010, a process has been initiated in order to involve the 16 political delegations into which the city is divided, so they can also contribute to the debate on this new right.

The process of dialogue between civil society and government took place through forums with members of the academy, in fairs and in coor-
dination and follow-up meetings, among others. The promoting committee members began the work of integrating the contents of the Charter, making use of different documents and international experiences, such as the World Charter for the Right to the City, the results and proposals of the First World Assembly of Inhabitants (that took place in Mexico City in 2000), and the Diagnosis and Human Rights Program of Mexico City, among other planning documents of the city government.

Finally, after all the collective work of analysis and discussion, the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City was publicly presented on June 13, 2010. In that act, the preceding Head of Government from Mexico City, Marcelo Ebrard, the Ombudsman, the Legislative Assembly, the Superior Court of Justice, and the social organisations ratified their responsibility to develop actions in favour of the Right to the City.

It is important to point out that more than 200 organisations of very diverse nature have joined the initiative, from urban organisations to university programs on Urban Sociology and Studies of the City, as well as organisations of indigenous people and women, peasants, merchants, and street vendors, as well as unions, cooperatives, architectural colleges and other sections of civil society.

**Main content and objectives of the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City**

The Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City backs the transformation and construction of the city as a collective right and the expression of collective interest, and it suggests the comprehensive and articulated care by diverse public authorities, as well as the active participation of its inhabitants.

The Charter is arranged on the basis of aspirations that shape the city we want: democratic, inclusive, sustainable, productive, educative and habitable. It emphasises the full exercise of human rights and the processes of democratisation, as well as the fulfilment of the obligations that derive from them.

The Charter is also structured on the basis of a series of intersections with the above aspirations and six strategic foundations.
The first foundation of the Charter is “the full exercise of human rights in the city.” It stresses the obligation of the governments to ensure the fulfilment of all human rights without discrimination of any kind, in order to guarantee dignity and collective wellbeing.

The second foundation is based in “the social function of the city, the land and the property.” This core idea represents a fundamental change. It guarantees the right to private property, though not conceived as an absolute right, since limits are established because of general interest of city inhabitants and the public use. Should there be a conflict between private and public interests, public interest will prevail.

The third foundation addresses the need for “democratic governance of the city.” It involves citizen’s participation in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies.

The fourth foundation refers to “democratic production in the city.” This is to ensure its inhabitants’ access – and in particular that of the youth – to the labour market in the urban economy.

The fifth foundation refers to “responsible and sustainable management of natural assets, cultural heritage and energy goods of the city.” It impels developers to look for the best environmental conditions, so that urban development does not occur at the expense of rural or ecological reserve areas, nor compromises future generations.

The sixth and last foundation outlined by the Charter is “the enjoyment of a democratic and equitable city.” In order to strengthen social harmony and equitable access to public spaces, such as squares, community centres, green areas and so on, its main objective is to make possible a recreational life in the city.

So by crossbreeding the strategic foundations of the Charter with the aspirations of citizenship, a series of guidelines and recommendations to be observed by public entities have been generated. They point as well to the corresponding actions expected by city inhabitants, showing the complexity of planning, management and administration of the city.
Implications and challenges of the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City in the public policies

For Mexico City, the Charter has implications and challenges in three important dimensions: 1) the construction of a Right to the City culture; 2) a change in legal framework; and 3) the promotion of a city constitution that integrates and is based on this new right.

A Right to the City culture

Promoting a culture of respect, advocacy and law enforcement as regards the Right to the City implies that public servants should be aware of, understand and use the principles, concepts and strategic foundations of the Charter in their actions of government, as well as in planning of public policies. It also requires that citizens take ownership of the Charter, so they can demand that authorities obey it.

In this sense, different efforts are being made in Mexico City in order to promote public servants’ knowledge of the Charter. Meetings with the servants of political delegations have been held, so they will be able to include in their planning actions their commitment to promote and guarantee the Right to the City. Last year, processes to train the inhabitants of the different neighbourhoods and communities were started in order to make citizens take ownership of this new right.

Some actions that have helped to consolidate the Right to the City in public policies are:

1. The diagnosis and the Human Rights Program of Mexico City as participative processes between government institutions and civil society. Through dialogue and consensus, conditions that concern human rights have been identified as well as necessary actions to guarantee and further their exercise.

2. A budget with focus on human rights and gender is used to translate rights into programmes and other government activities.

3. In the neighbourhood improvement programme, citizens have direct influence on the recovery of the public spaces of their communities, so that living conditions in the most marginalised areas can be improved. In 2010, 199 citizen’s projects were
approved (to a cost of 95.2 million pesos) to improve sports or community centres, for lighting, drainage and urban image as well as some other needs that they identified in their communities (Mexico City Government 2010).

4. Another result of the implementation of the Right to the City relates to reforms and the broadening of the Law on Citizen Participation. Nowadays, each neighbourhood or town has citizens’ committees or peoples’ councils, who can learn about and give their opinions on plans, programmes, projects, and actions in the fields of social development, public safety and crime prevention, economic development and employment, urban services as well as the fields of equality and the eradication of gender discrimination.

5. Yet another action addressed to promote the Right to the City is the implementation of the participatory budget. Here, citizens can decide on the works and priority actions that they want executed in their neighbourhoods. The authorities of the delegations mostly carry out the chosen programmes or actions. Hence, they should always respect the decisions of the citizens.

6. Also, the Law of Developing Planning and the Law on Urban Development of Mexico City both include forms for direct citizen participation.

Legal framework changes

The second challenge is related to the change in legal framework, a change necessary to allow progress in the implementation of the strategic Charter foundations expressed in the public policies. To this effect, the under-secretariat of government in collaboration with social organisations have made a series of proposals to reform different laws – such as the Housing Act, the Law of Urban Development, and the Law of Development Planning of Mexico City. The intention is to include principles and guarantees in the field of social production of habitat and housing, and to see the Right to the City transform the work of the public administration.

The set of legislative reforms proposes to:
a) provide a frame of reference for the actions of the government in order to make it consistent with the principles of Mexico City’s Charter for the Right to the City;

b) establish the obligation of the government to monitor that the principles of human rights and the Right to the City be included in the elaboration of the different planning programmes; and to

c) consider direct democracy mechanisms for the elaboration of government plans.

Promotion of a city constitution

As has been previously pointed out, Mexico City has a long history of collective construction of laws and institutions that recognise the rights and freedoms of the people, as well as the rights of the city, as a collective space facing federal powers. Nevertheless, the day is still pending when our city will have its own constitution, just like all other federative entities of the country. This is the third challenge that we have identified. The current statute that governs us was approved by the Federal Congress.

The Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City acquires special importance in the present moment when political reform is under debate in different spaces. Thus, it could lead to Mexico City finally having its own constitution, something that would put an end to its limitations in legislative, budgetary, political and governmental responsibilities, as well as in the restrictions on the political rights of its citizens.

Within this context, a dialogue process has therefore been initiated with civil society organisations in order to incorporate rights of the people, collective rights and the Right to the City into the dogmatic basis of this potentially new constitution.

To this end, a Citizens’ Council for the Political Reform of the City has already been installed. It will have the task to drive reforms for the democratic re-founding of the City from below. And the basis for all this will be the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City.
1. Among these units were: Social Attorney, Secretariat of Health, Secretariat of Labour and Promotion of Employment, Secretariat of Education, Secretariat of Culture, Institute of Science and Technology, Secretariat of Urban Development and Housing, Secretariat of Transport and Roads, Secretariat of Environment, Municipal Water Utility of Mexico City, Secretariat of Treasury, Secretariat of Construction and Services, and Secretariat of Public Security.

**References**


**Author affiliation**

The Mexico City Government, Department of Internal Affairs
Contested urban visions in the global South

Introduction 129
Andrew Byerley

Forced evictions, off-city relocation and resistance: 133
Ramifications of neo-liberal policies towards the
Philippine urban poor
Myra Mabilin

Contesting neo-liberal urbanism in Istanbul: The case of 139
Taksim Square and beyond
Onur Ekmekci

Offline dimensions of favela youth online reactions to 148
human rights violations before Rio 2016
Leonardo Custódio

From legality to an urbanism of reception in the informal city 155
Júlia Carolino and Ermelindo Quaresma
Contested urban visions in the global South

Introduction

Andrew Byerley

The African urban present provides a suitable juncture to examine important issues concerning competing and often antagonistic urban visions in the global South. However, bracketing this as a problem that is specific to the global South – as this amorphous term is more usually thought and defined – is misleading. Not only do these issues increasingly preoccupy urban researchers, urban planners, urban managers and not least urban populations in both North and South, but so too is perhaps the analytical utility of the North/South distinction losing any sharpness.¹

Prevalent in the Northern context has been a critique – especially among critical urban theorists – of the complicity of neo-liberal urban governance regimes (often private-public partnerships) in ‘reclaiming’ and ‘sanitising’ central city areas and public spaces from groups deemed detrimental to the task of attracting global capital; that which Neil Smith (1996) has influentially termed ‘revanchist urbanism’ (see also Brenner et al 2012). In the Southern context, a dominant theme in recent diagnoses of the African urban condition has been the claim that the continued hegemony of Western urban planning models precipitates ‘conflicts of rationality’ between the dictates of formal planning and land-use management and the rationality of ‘making do under conditions of poverty and inequality’ (Watson 2009, p 187; see also Simone 2010). More recently, these two bodies of research – both essentially homing in on fundamental issues of socio-spatial justice and contestations over how and by whom urban space should be planned and used – have begun to coalesce, as the quickening pace of displacement of traders, slum dwellers and other ‘undesirables’ from central urban areas in the South is seen as evidence that ‘Revanchist urbanism heads South’ (Swanson 2007; see also Crossa 2009). However, this invocation of revanchist theory in the Southern context, just as some have claimed for the Northern context, does risk reading all urban displacement as an effect of a neoliberal rationality (Van Eijk 2010).
What can be said with some assuredness is that cities in the Global South continue to be widely represented as sites of disorder, decay and lack. Irrespective of the accurateness of such claims, this doggedly perseverant narrative has important consequences, not least in terms of circumscribing the respective range of urban visions that get implemented, especially in centrally located urban areas (see the chapter by Myra Mabilin in this volume section, p 133). More specifically, these visions tend to be informed by Western planning ideals and to emphasise economic growth and competitiveness. Internationally circulating ideas of best practice in, for example, the fields of urban planning and governance, articulate with state actors’ rationalities and set into motion interventions aimed at modernising and (re)ordering or displacing the informal city. Investments in high-profile infrastructure and urban renewal projects seek to attract investors and are seen as the means to materialise ‘world-class city’ aspirations (see the chapter by Onur Ekmekci, p 139).

Indeed, it is not difficult to see why urban solutions based on urban and economic theories that do not seriously question the heavy-handed involvement of the West in guiding and building the South’s urban futures are attractive to many Western governments. Black and white statements, such as those voiced by the prominent national economist Paul Romer at a recent symposium organised by the Swedish Ministry of Aid – such as ‘Bangkok and Kinshasa are badly planned, New York is well planned’ – are as simplistically attractive to some as they are simplistically Eurocentric to others. But, as James Scott (1999) – among a great many other scholars – has been at pains to argue, urban plans that rely entirely on technical rational knowledge (techne), and which bracket out local lived and practiced knowledge (metis), seriously risk creating even more Brasilias and cementing deeper spatial, socio-economic and political fragmentation of cities and their populations.

Here it is important not to lose sight of the manner in which the terrain of power relations, discourse and urban politics and planning is, at least according to some commentators, changing in ways that may seriously constrain the potential for the spokespeople and practitioners of local lived and practiced knowledge to successfully mobilise, promote and actualise alternative urban visions. Indeed, recent theoretical contribu-
tions by, for example, Li (2007) and Mouffe (2005) raise crucial issues pertaining to the ‘post-political moment,’ arguing that alternative visions are foreclosed by appealing to consensus, the common good or, as Iverson (2007) has argued, by appealing to the ‘good of the city.’ In for example my own research on contested urban visions in Uganda, it was palpable how resistance to a government discourse that seemingly legitimated the redevelopment of any state-owned land (and displacement) was trumped by discursively labeling such resistance as being against societal ‘progress’ and national ‘development’ (Byerley 2013).

However, as was indicated above concerning the need to avoid uncritical applications of concepts such as ‘neo-liberalism,’ care is needed to avoid reifying and/or misreading causes, consequences and challenges pertaining to current processes of urban transformation and city visio-
ning. The chapters by, for example Custódio (p 148) and Carolino and Quaresma (p 155) offer examples from both North and South – depending on whose definition one follows – on how informal and formalised networks and associations of the urban poor mobilise to circumvent, alter or challenge powerful urban visions, often in novel ways.

Notes
1. On the increasing eviction and displacement of urban populations, particularly from slum and degraded urban areas, see United Nations 2007.
2. On ‘mobile urbanism’ see Ward 2010.

References


Crossa, Veronica, 2009. Resisting the Entrepreneurial City: Street Vendors’ Strug-


Contested urban visions in the global South


**Author affiliation**

Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University, and Department of Human Geography, Göteborg University.
Forced evictions, off-city relocation and resistance: Ramifications of neo-liberal policies towards the Philippine urban poor

Myra Mabilin

The Philippines has one of the highest rates of urban growth in the developing world. The United Nations (UN) estimated that 23.9 million individuals belonged to the urban slum population in 2007, amounting to half of the total urban population (UPRC 2011). In Metro Manila, 556,526 families – or around one out of every four Metro Manila residents – was officially identified as an informal settler in 2010 (DILG 2011). They live in deplorable situations along riverbanks and waterways, streets, train tracks and under bridges, with inadequate access to safe water, sanitation and other infrastructure, substandard structures and congestion. This overwhelming ‘housing problem’ is felt even more in recent history, as natural disasters such as typhoons hit major cities in the country, claiming hundreds of lives and displacing thousands more with severe impacts on urban poor communities.

In a context of accelerated globalisation, urban poverty in the Philippines has worsened because of the government’s decades of adherence to neo-liberal policies, specifically privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation (IBON Foundation 2009).

Unemployment and the urban poor

The Philippine economy, recently dubbed a ‘rising tiger’ by the World Bank, remains underdeveloped and unable to create sufficient jobs for its rapidly growing population. The surplus and huge army of unemployed
workers keep wages low and further drives a growing informalisation of labour, including informal wage employees and workers in private households, unpaid family workers and the informal self-employed, who receive less than the minimum wage.

In July 2011, 10.9 percent and 14.4 percent of the urban labour force were unemployed and underemployed respectively, despite a 5 percent economic growth and an adjustment in the definition of unemployment that resulted in moderated figures (UPRC 2011). The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in 2009 estimated a 51.8 percentage of urban, non-agricultural employment in the Philippines as informal.

The problems of massive unemployment and underemployment, depressed wages and salaries, falling income, and price hikes push poor workers and the unemployed, or the urban poor, to live in slum areas in Metro Manila and cities.

Landlessness and the lack of agricultural development in rural areas lead to greater rural-urban migration, further driving thousands into city slums.

**State response**

Government’s solution to this ‘housing problem’ has been limited to community mortgage programmes (CMP), off-city relocation and worse: forced evictions.

The CMP, targeting organised associations to own lots they occupy, have not reached out to the bottom segments of the urban poor. Beneficiaries of this programme do not come from the poorest of the poor, as security of housing and tenure comes secondary to their immediate needs for food, health, education and employment (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2004). The small number of successful CMP cases becomes greatly insignificant in relation to the burgeoning number of informal settlers belonging to the poorest in urban areas over the years.
Off-city relocation and resettlement

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) has identified 125,000 families living in waterways in Metro Manila, and 60,000 to 70,000 on waterways around Laguna de Bay (outskirts of Metro Manila). The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) pegs 556,000 families to be displaced in order to give way to various government development projects including the construction of new business districts, infrastructures, and expansion of roads.

To begin with, the housing backlog alone is huge. The DILG admits in its Technical Working Group (TWG) December 2010 Report that the supply of housing units, based on the current relocation scheme, is not enough even for relocating informal settlers sitting along waterways.

This large-scale relocation framework has caught the eyes of the private sector real estate developers, seen by the government as partners in facing the ‘housing problem.’ Considered an untapped growing business, construction of housing for informal settlers has become profitable for private developers. An Asia Development Bank survey in 2012 revealed that the mass housing market has become part of the portfolio of private sector real estate developers, while it previously was dominated by government initiatives (Lowe 2012).

On the other hand, urban poor communities are generally adamantly opposed to being relocated. The Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor’s (PCUP) own assessment of concerns of relocatees on monitored resettlement areas include (DILG 2011):

- the shortage or absence of accessible employment opportunities, posing a problem in the payment of monthly amortisation;
- non-reliable or inadequate access to potable water and electricity;
- distance from school and other facilities; and
- defects in housing structures.

The DILG Report’s (2011) finding states that resettlement, mostly off-city, has been the default option but proved to be not pro-poor. “Economic and social displacement in terms of loss of livelihood, uprooting from communities, and other hardship conditions are faced by the beneficiaries
at their relocation sites,” the report states (ibid, p 5). Concretely, this displacement results in the inability to pay monthly amortisation and the migration back into the cities to live once again in informal settlements.

Forced evictions

In 2006, the government of the Philippines was named one of the Housing Rights Violators of 2006 by the international organisation Center of Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) based in Switzerland. Under the current Aquino administration, major forced evictions in Metro Manila dominated the national headlines, as demolition teams and police forces were met with resistance by the residents. These incidents include the forced demolition in San Roque, North Triangle in Quezon City on September 23, 2010; the clearing of the gutted Laperal Compound in Makati City on April 27, 2011; Corazon de Jesus in San Juan City on Jan 11, 2012; the Silverio Compound in Makati City on April 23, 2012; the Guatemala Compound in Makati City on September 24, 2012; the BIR Road in Quezon City on November 28, 2011 and October 15, 2012; and Agham Road in San Roque, North Triangle on January 27 and 28, 2014.

All of these incidents turned violent as residents stood their ground, setting up barricades to stop armed government forces from demolishing their houses. These clashes claimed the life of one resident, injured hundreds of them as well as of government forces, and resulted in the arrest of many others.

Standing their ground

For many reasons, the urban poor in the country are relatively organised in the context of securing their housing. Homeowners’ associations are a requisite in the implementation of the CMP for one. Many urban poor communities have also been organising themselves to resist evictions and defend their homes and livelihood in many ways, from legal battles to the setting up of physical – including human – barricades during actual eviction attempts.

The Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA) of 1992 actually legitimised massive eviction of homes. While the law discourages evictions without due process, it allows for it in certain areas and situations
that include danger areas, where mostly urban poor communities reside; the implementation of government infrastructure projects; and if court orders for eviction are issued. While the UDHA lists mandatory requirements during demolition, non-compliance with the standards is not monitored. Violations are also committed without reprimand. The case of the Silverio demolition in Makati City, 2012, during which heavily armed police forces shot resisting residents, killing one young man and injuring several others, remains unprosecuted.

Highly organised residents, on the other hand, have resorted to barricading as a last resort to defend their homes and livelihood, as illustrated in the clashes in San Roque, Silverio, and Guatemala, among others. This form of protest is carried out at national level by the most militant network of mass organisations, such as the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (KADAMAY), an alliance of urban poor associations and individuals with corresponding regional and provincial structures.

Conclusions
Forced evictions in the name of economic development cannot remain a standard practice of the government. While harping on aiming for ‘inclusive growth,’ the government implements policies that are discriminatory by nature, such as the relocation of informal settlers to far-flung locations without livelihood opportunities and services. Housing production that mainly benefits the private real estate sector as the government’s response will not solve the problem of informal settlements. With a high rate of unemployment, depressed wages, increasing informalisation of labour, soaring prices of commodities, and the privatisation of social services, security of tenure and ownership of lot and housing units are not the primary questions. Merely relocating informal settlers to far-flung areas, where they lack jobs and sources of livelihood, only perpetuates the vicious circle.

The framework for how the Philippine society views the urban poor and the ‘housing problem’ has to be changed. The overarching problem is not to provide them with housing, but to resolve unemployment, depressed wages and falling incomes, as well as high prices and landlessness in rural areas. Genuine agrarian reform and agricultural development,
leading to modern local industries, will ultimately resolve the problem of rural and urban unemployment and, subsequently, the question of ‘housing problems’ in the cities.

The role of people’s organisations – CSOs in and/or working for the urban poor sector – becomes extremely important when it comes to sending across the message and to work towards a change in the policy framework and direction of the national government.

References


Author affiliation
Urban Poor Resource Center of the Philippines, Inc.
Contesting neo-liberal urbanism in Istanbul: The case of Taksim Square and beyond

Onur Ekmekci

In the last three decades, cities have become central to the reproduction, mutation and extension of neo-liberal policy experiments. However, they also happen to be the quintessential places where the contestation of neo-liberalism may take place in various forms and intensities. David Harvey (2012) asks, “how else and where else can we come together to articulate our collective cries and demands?,” referring to the crucial positioning of cities in urban movements. And this is exactly what people did in 2011; they came together and tried to raise their voices to construct new forms of solidarity, from Zuccoti Park in New York to the streets of Athens and London. One commonality that lies beneath these various urban resistance movements is the belief that the current materialisation of the capitalist system and its projection as a neo-liberal design for the city is fundamentally flawed.

Istanbul, as one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world, has gone through a radical transformation in the last decade. While the position that the city enjoys on the global arena undoubtedly makes Istanbul a more attractive place to visit and experience for an outsider, the same cannot be said to hold true for the majority of residents, whose rights to their city are challenged by the numerous top-down planning decisions implemented continuously by the Istanbul municipality and the national government. This raises a crucial question: At what cost has the city become a major attraction point?

Neo-liberal policies of the last 20 years, standing out as the major component of the globalisation process Istanbul has experienced, has created an environment where the informal public realm – “crucial for
survival in the over-crowded, under resourced crossroads city” (Sennett 2011) – is eliminated or tremendously weakened on a daily basis. From government-driven, top-down, controversial, gigantic infrastructural projects, to an incredible number of shopping malls standing side by side, and further to the so-called social housing projects (that in many cases destroy historical, poor neighbourhoods to open up space for private real estate developments), as well as the presence of a strong tabula rasa approach, Istanbul embodies the issues of neo-liberal urbanisation in the most extreme ways possible. However, at the same time, these developments generate their own adversaries, and the reactions towards the dominant top-down planning policies are manifested in various forms, ranging from civic platforms, to occupation movements in Istanbul.

One can say that for the most part, Lefebvre’s notion of the Right to the City seems, in the Turkish context, to be strongly associated with resistance movements against urban regeneration projects and evictions of inhabitants. In many of these cases, short term results (such as property ownership, construction opportunities, or bargaining on deals) seem to be the overriding outcome, rather than long term goals that would affect larger segments and collective rights in the city. However, it should be noted that the last decade, especially, saw a growing number of groups and alliances that deal with broader, urban projects. Efforts to alter neighbourhoods and attempts to find a new identity for the city have caused regeneration projects to dominate the agenda of urban movements in Istanbul.

As can be understood from this focus on anti-regeneration, neo-liberalism in Istanbul has been experimented with, modified, implemented and – most importantly – contested in locally specific and uneven ways. In many cities around the world, contestations display contrasting characteristics and interests of different groups while coexisting with emergent neo-liberalism. Thus, in order to understand the correlation between the workings of neo-liberalism and reactions against it in Istanbul, one needs to look beyond neo-liberalism, to see the importance of alternative imaginaries and varied practices.

The cases for this chapter are deliberately selected to reflect the different aspects of current urban movements and resistance in Istanbul. Most of them emerged as direct responses to the Taksim Redevelopment project,
currently implemented by the Istanbul municipality with an ultimate top-down approach in the heart of the city, while others deal with urban transformation schemes taking place in other parts of the city.

**Civic platforms and protests – the Taksim Platform**

The way in which current civic platforms have organised themselves in Istanbul, especially as a response to the Taksim Square Redevelopment project, constitutes a good example of a sub-political entity. The Taksim Platform\(^1\) is a citizens’ initiative that raises objections to the current state of the project, arguing that the project should have gone through more transparent consulting, regulation and supervision phases (Aktar 2012). The platform consists of people from a wide spectrum of fields: concerned citizens, urban planners, architects, lawyers, academics, NGOs, political party representatives, artists and so on. It provides a much-needed political platform where people can put their ideas forward and create political synergy, in itself an extremely curial factor in the contestation of the project.

The Taksim Platform differs from numerous other civic movements in that it is structured as a constructive opposition movement, not merely involved in obstruction or prevention of the project. Platform members work with a group of 150 professors from three universities in the city to come up with alternate plans for making simple adjustments and improvements in the Taksim Square, and the platform slogan reinforces this: “A better project… A better Taksim… A better future.”\(^2\)

**Herkes icin Mimarlik – Architecture for All**

Independent, student-led organisations that attempt to establish a more holistic, overarching approach to urban issues are increasingly present in Istanbul. *Herkes icin Mimarlik* (Architecture for All), is one of them. It defines itself as “a non-profit and independent architecture organisation based in Istanbul” and its primary goal is “to offer architectural solutions to social problems which are faced in Turkey and beyond and promoting participatory design process in architecture education.”\(^3\) The organisation strives to involve students of architecture; however, it also wants to become a diverse platform, where everyone, regardless of background,
is invited to propose inputs. By providing a platform for architectural students to collaborate with experts (and non-experts) from other fields, one hopes to transform the understanding and the practice of the field into a socially constructed one.

The organisation gained increasing recognition after the announcement of the Taksim Redevelopment project. In its first public campaign – entitled *Sana Soran oldu mu?* (“Did anyone ask you?”) – it tried to bring attention (and here it followed in the footsteps of the Taksim Platform) to the fact that no one in the city was asked for their opinion on a project concerning one of the most important squares in the city. People, especially young design students, were in the campaign asked to come up with ideas concerning their future visions for the square, ideas that also reflected their understanding of the square and what it has come to mean for them.

*Herkes icin Mimarlik* has also been organising picnics and concerts every Sunday at the Gezi Park, adjacent to the square, which is currently being destroyed by the municipality to open up space for a shopping mall. The main target of these events has been to point out the park’s unutilized potential and its importance for the city. Each event has included a variety of activities with different artistic groups, such as dance shows, juggler performances, artistic interventions, and even a swap event by an artist collective, thus making the park itself a platform for performing arts. In this way, *Herkes icin Mimarlik* has generated a new identity for the park, in which people who were not aware of the place have begun to use it continuously and claim ownership by actually just being there.

*Ekumenopolis: A City Without Limits*

In the last few years, Istanbul’s increasing number of shopping malls and the city’s urban transformation projects have gained wider media coverage. Media activism, blogs, digital communication, and cultural artistic events have been vital in the creation of a public sphere that can fight against main populist discourses and urban transformation projects carried out by municipalities. Documentary practice has also been used to portray Istanbul’s urbanisation problems in a project called *Ekumenopolis: A City Without Limits*. This documentary questions not only the neo-liberal transformation of the city itself but the dynamics behind it as well. Its
approach is holistic in the sense that its director, Imre Azem, talks to a wide range of people, including experts, academics, writers, investors, city-dwellers, and community leaders. The movie follows Kasim Aydin in his struggle to find a permanent home for his family after having lost his home in a demolition by TOKI (the Housing Development Administration) three years earlier. The documentary portrays the intriguing processes of commodification of the land, destructive urban transformation, and revanchist projects that basically exclude people like Aydin and send them to TOKI projects in the periphery. The movie also revolves around the potential negative outcomes that the 3rd Bridge on Bosphorus would bring to the city, providing illustrations, animated maps, graphics and impressive aerial views of the city.

A project such as *Ekumenopolis* becomes essential in contesting neoliberalism by the method it employs. Complex issues like the neo-liberal city, gentrification, and urban transformation projects are described in the most comprehensible and easily understandable way, making it possible for people who lack extensive knowledge of the urban problems Istanbul is facing to relate to the issues the movie describes. The film’s informal premier took place as part of the Gezi Park Festivities of *Herkes icin Mimarlik*, exemplifying the strong solidarity between two different, but related, urban movements. *Ekumenopolis: A City Without Limits* not only achieves a ‘visual-spatial critique,’ but also pushes its audience to question the transformations happening in their city. This awareness alone is extremely valuable in the discourse of contesting neo-liberalism within the city.

**The Kitchen Project**

One of the problems that the urban movements encounter in their strivings to achieve urban alternatives to the neo-liberal agenda is the lack of permanent grounds and spaces to be used as meeting points and platforms for activists. The Kitchen Project is a community-based project that tries to provide a permanent solution to this problem. It is run by an Istanbul-based, horizontally organised, activist network, the Migrant Solidarity Network (MSN), which has been active since September 2009. The network considers itself part of the transnational and internation-
alist ‘no border’ movement, defending everyone’s right to unconditional freedom of movement and to dwell wherever they choose. Moreover, the network sees rights to residence, work, health and education as basic rights that everyone should be entitled to, regardless of where they come from or whether they are ‘documented’ or not. In this context, the Kitchen Project is proposed as a space for close interaction between members of the project and migrant groups in Istanbul.

The location chosen for the project is Tarlabasi, an area close to Taksim Square, where the population consists of Roma, internally displaced Kurds, refugees from Iraq, and undocumented African migrants. This area is also included in the so-called Urban Transformation Project, along with 50 other neighbourhoods throughout the city. The space is planned to function as a kitchen, where migrants and local activists come together for cooking and eating together. According to the organisers, the Kitchen Project will serve not only to grow stronger ties between activist groups and the migrants themselves, but also to provide a platform for developing grassroots resistance to displacement. Some of the neighborhoods where the gentrification project is introduced, showed solidarity, organised local protests and resisted neo-liberal urban policies, whereas the others, lacking a platform for self-organisation, were swept away. Learning from these experiences of grassroots resistance in the other neighborhoods, the Kitchen Project intends to open a space of solidarity where different groups can build alliance against the deleterious effects of the gentrification projects.

The Kitchen Project, with its social and inclusive role, is an example worth mentioning in the overall struggle and contestation of the neo-liberalisation of Istanbul. Despite small scale, it goes against the individualistic, profit-based, commercial, and segregating land-use strategies of neo-liberal urbanism. It not only opens up an alternative platform and a counter-public space, but also provides a good example of a ‘soft form’ of activism that creates collectivities on the micro and neighbourhood level (Tan 2011).

Concluding reflections

One of the planning experts interviewed in the Ekumenopolis project points out that the urban transformations Istanbul is experiencing will most
likely in a very near future result in a city-wide “chaos.” In this context, in an arguably crippled democracy like Turkey’s, how people resist these processes and mobilise to generate alternative practices and imaginaries, will gain crucial importance, regardless of their scale or power. There is no doubt that a Turkish version of the Right to the City needs to emerge rapidly, which could inform the large population of the city about what actually is happening to their city. Although grassroots organisations and urban movements in Istanbul so far have not been very influential in pushing the municipality to revise its plans, there is no doubt that such campaigns will gain more momentum as people of Istanbul start to see the consequences of neo-liberalisation processes with their own eyes. We are witnessing social unrests all over the world against the imbalances and inequalities between different segments of society, and it would be wrong to assume that the Turkish public will be immune to these current news. For this reason, both the Turkish government and the Istanbul municipality need to understand the dynamics of the city and try to integrate perspectives from different segments of the society before it is too late.

Post-Script 2014

In June 2013, Istanbul saw the largest and most influential democratic protest in her history, less than two months after this paper was presented at the “Claiming the City” conference at Uppsala University. As a result of the brutality shown by the police force towards the protesters, what started out as a peaceful protest to save Gezi Park – located next to the Taksim Square – and its trees from destruction, turned into a countrywide movement that rejected the ever increasing autocratic tendencies and actions of the Turkish Government, and mainly of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The Taksim Solidarity Network, which consisted of more than 120 highly varied groups, including the Taksim Platform, played a major role in these events by initiating the protests in the first place, and by acting as the umbrella group throughout. People from different ends of the political spectrum gathered together, without a centralised leadership or political party affiliation, and they raised their voices against issues ranging from environmental ones (including the redevelopment plans over Taksim), to freedom of expression and assembly, as well as the
government’s interference in their lifestyles. In a similar fashion to the Occupy Movement, they formed their own camp at Gezi Park, with tents, medical facility, food distribution, and even a library. Decisions on how to move forward with the protests were taken in public forums, involving all the participants, who profoundly exemplified the characteristics of a direct democracy, and generating what one might even call a commune.

One of the major problems that surround struggling democracies like Turkey’s is the notion that democracy is solely about organising free elections. One could argue that a healthy democracy is, or should be, more than that. Presence of well-established state institutions, checks and balances, free media, but most importantly an effective civic society are the prerequisites needed to make democracy work effectively. In the case of Turkey, the current government has fallen deeply into majoritarianism, with its perverse belief that winning an election gives the governing party the authority to implement anything they want, regardless of any opposing view. On top of this, recent restrictions – though no longer in place – on accessing social media platforms like Twitter and YouTube (of which the former played a major role in establishing communication between the people taking part in last year’s protests) display the signs of a crumbling democracy in Turkey.

Within this stark context, the Gezi protests nevertheless marked a new era for civic and grassroots protests in Turkey. It redefined the notion of democratic participation in politics, especially the part concerning the role people could play in the quest of claiming rights to their city, beyond the casting of votes every fourth year. The young generation, wrongfully assumed to be careless and apolitical, got together, took to the streets, risked their lives in the face of police brutality, and organised collectives to raise their voices in a context where traditional political institutions chronically failed to represent or comprehend the ideals of these people (this is especially true in regards to opposition parties).

One prominent journalist in Turkey described the Gezi protests as the best thing that happened to Turkey in recent times. Needless to say, I strongly share that sentiment in a belief that it profoundly changed people’s perception of urban movements, and inserted the idea that there
is more to democracy than elections. This shift alone is great news for the struggle towards constructing an effectual Right to the City movement.

Notes
1. The word platform in Turkish is used to express the alliances of different groups on a specific topic.

References

Author affiliation
Singapore University of Technology and Design
Offline dimensions of favela youth
online reactions to human rights violations before Rio 2016

Leonardo Custódio

Claims on the city refer to individual and collective actions meant to demand rights, quality of life and fair opportunities in the urban spaces most of us live in. With this broad definition in mind, the purpose of this chapter is to reflect upon how urban poor people – especially the youth – have used online platforms to claim the city of Rio de Janeiro during the preparations for the 2016 Olympic Games.

To claim cities, people primarily need to be able to speak up and have their voices heard (Couldry 2010). For these purposes, the Internet and connectivity devices have become important platforms for citizens to voice demands and articulate actions (see Dahlgren 2009). Certainly, we cannot ignore the limitations of the Internet (see Curran et al 2012). The world is still divided in digital, social and economic terms. However, neither can we ignore that access to digital technology is increasingly popular also among the urban poor across the globe. This paradox has generated important dynamics of Internet use in contexts of social inequality.

Rio has seen many examples of Internet use by urban poor youth. A recent survey conducted in favelas (Brazilian kinds of slums) showed that 90 percent of the 2,000 respondents connected everyday to the Internet. At the same time, an ongoing research project conducted in Rio has investigated the use of the Internet by favela youth for demanding rights and denouncing different forms of right violations. One preliminary result of this project motivated me to write this chapter. Souza explains how part of those who use new media with the purpose of denouncing violations and demanding human rights are not only involved in virtual...
social networks, but also participate in (offline) groups, organisations, collectives and so on (Souza 2013).

In this article, I look at the interplay between civic actions of favela youth on the Internet and their offline dimensions of interactions. I will argue that one cannot understand these online actions without paying attention to the interactions in which these young actors are involved. Based on Herbert Blumer’s (1986) symbolic interactionism, my reasoning seeks to understand how these interactions influence the favela youth’s decisions to use new media for civic action. I describe a recent example of how online platforms have been used to denounce human rights violations before the Rio 2016 Olympics, and present three dimensions of offline interactions related to the online actions.

**Human rights violations before Rio 2016**

Rio’s preparations for the 2016 Olympic Games have been marked by human rights violations against favela dwellers. Similarly to other forms of slums across the world, favelas are characterised by high population density and low quality of both urban infrastructure and public services. In addition, favelas are known for high rates of criminality and violence (see Perlman 2010). To make matters worse, favelas have historically been stigmatised and discriminated. For instance, the word favelado – which designates someone who is born or lives in a favela – is often used as a derogatory term, synonymous to dirty, impolite, disorderly people who are involved in or supportive of criminal activities.

The discrimination against favelas has been reflected in some of the pre-Olympics governmental actions concerning housing and security. Arbitrary evictions of houses have been conducted in order to build venues, roads and other facilities for the 2016 Games. Independent watchdog organisations have reported irregularities: decisions have been made in secrecy, without any public consultation and sometimes without warnings in advance. Evicted families have been relocated to remote areas lacking proper access to public services (e.g., schools, hospitals and transportation). Independent reports show that, if the official plan will not be changed, over 7,000 families will have been evicted by 2016. The pattern of these evictions is not new in history; the 20th century has seen several waves of
Reviewing international experience and lessons from Kosovo

Contested urban visions in the global South

eviction in which poor people have been swept away from areas surrounding fancier quarters so that these could be explored by high-income real estate markets (see Perlman 2010).

As for security policies, the main governmental action is the creation of the Pacifying Police Unit (UPP), a security program from 2008 to combat drug trade. The government’s plan is to occupy and settle in favelas, to prevent drug trade – but also to build a new relationship with local communities, based on dialogue, friendliness and trust. So far, 37 UPPs have been installed. The plan is to have 40 units by 2014. However, civil society organisations (e.g. RioOnWatch) have pronounced that the UPP program seems rather to be meant for protection of the formal city than the favelas. The constant cases of excessive police force, abuse of authority and violence (sometimes lethal) against citizens indicate that favelados are still dealt with in ways which are based on the prejudicial assumption that they are somehow involved in crime, just because they live in a favela. The pacifying program resembles administrative actions to keep surveillance over the villages of evil, as favelas were known when city representatives called for the control of criminality in the early 1900s (Mattos 2007).

Online reactions of favela youth

The access expansion and the growth in popularity of the Internet in Brazil has had an important impact on how stories from and about favelas are told. Historically, news and representations of favelas in the dominant private mainstream media have reinforced discriminatory stereotypes (Ramos and Paiva 2007; Penglase 2007). The emergence online of especially young urban poor has led not only to self-created forms of representation, but also to efforts to react and denounce arbitrary governmental actions often not disclosed by mainstream media, and thus unseen by the eyes of society outside the favela.

The period before the 2016 Olympics has seen different kinds of online reactions to human rights violations against favela dwellers. For instance, short web-documentaries have been made to denounce irregularities of evictions. One such video was a photo-essay published on the video-sharing website Vimeo in early March 2013, showing images from
the daily life of a family about to be evicted from their home in a small *favela* close to one of the Olympic venue clusters. This and other similar well-produced videos are statements of the people that challenge the government’s justifications for performing the evictions – that people do not own the land or live in hazardous areas – as well as the official claims that evictions are being done in a respectful and transparent manner.

Similarly, videos, photos and texts have been used to denounce police truculence and violence within the pacifying program. One example from early April, 2013, was when dwellers of a recently pacified *favela* accused the police of shooting a 21-year-old man dead. A young photographer living in the *favela* was informed minutes later and went to the place where the murder had taken place, taking photos of and video-filming the body and the heated demonstrations against the police. In interviews in mainstream media, police officers said the young man was caught in crossfire between the police and drug dealers. They also affirmed that the shooter was unknown. However, the young *favela* photographer had already published his photos on Facebook with information about the police officer who had executed the victim. He and other *favela* eyewitnesses also wrote articles in their blogs, thus challenging the official version of what had happened.

These two briefly described cases may not yet have had any greater impact on society; evictions and police violence continue in the *favelas*. However, they are lucid examples of how different forms of media productions are published and circulated as forms of civic action. Both the anti-eviction video and the murder multimedia counter-versions were instantly shared, and they remain circulating within civil society. I could see my contacts in Rio circulating the stories, and notice how individual and collective actors both inside and outside the *favelas* used Facebook and other social networks as a tool and space for making their voices heard, and to create support. My field trips, with interviews and observations, also allowed me to see how the production and circulation of these online productions relate to at least three crucial dimensions in the offline social world.
Offline dimensions of online *favela* youth civic action

I chose to describe the two cases above – the video against the evictions and the multimedia stories denouncing police violence – because they have three important dimensions of interaction that enable me to illustrate the interplay between online and offline civic actions.

The first dimension is seen in the interactions and relationship between the two young photographers. I know that they are both among the founders of a collective group using photography and the Internet as ways to create different representations and to struggle against human rights violations in *favelas*. The fact that they had been involved in a group, sharing ideals, ideas, strategies and goals, may explain their interest and courage to tell the stories as they did.

The second dimension of interaction takes place between *favela* youth in collective groups and local civil society organisations. The collective in which the photographers participate was formed at the end of a media education project promoted by a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in a *favela* in Rio. Since the 1980s, NGOs have conducted different forms of pedagogical projects to promote cultural forms of civic and political actions among *favela* dwellers (Gohn 2011). These pedagogical projects usually combine critical studies of mainstream media, technical studies of media technologies, and human rights awareness especially among young people. Thus, the knowledge the young favela photographers acquired through these classes and interpersonal interactions in the NGO project may explain the way they exercised their media skills, their ‘journalistic eye,’ and their human rights when reacting to human rights violations in Rio before the Olympics.

Finally, the third dimension of interaction concerns the relationship between the photographers and civil society. In my field observations of these dynamics, I have seen struggles against human rights violations before the Rio 2016 Olympics motivating a significant increase in articulation of action by different and often isolated individual citizens and collective actors. Many of my contacts, belonging to different groups, have shared each others’ counter-information online. They have also promoted and participated in events (eg demonstrations, protests, exhibits of milit-ant art and media production). These online-offline networked
actions may explain how information created by individuals in a favela can be considered trustworthy to the point of being shared almost instantly without questioning the veracity of facts. Such demonstrations of support and, not least, trust may have an important impact on the motivation of young favela dwellers to act, seeing that they are more often victimised and criminalised rather than being treated as active citizens (Oliart and Feixa 2012).

Conclusions
This chapter briefly reflects on the interplay between offline dimensions of interaction and online civic actions among favela youth in Rio de Janeiro before the 2016 Olympics. It constitutes part of my ongoing research (2009-2015) about the uses of media for civic action among young people from favelas. Based on very early observations, the online reactions to the human rights violations described here nevertheless demonstrate how the democratic potential of new media for civic and political actions among the urban poor must be investigated and understood by taking into consideration the interpersonal, organisational and societal relationships in which these civic actors are involved.

Notes
1. The report has not yet been published, but the author has presented results in interviews. See, for example: http://www.ihu.unisinos.br/entrevistas/517801--a-multiplicacao-da-internet-nas-favelas-e-a-visibilidade-social-entrevista-com-jorge-luiz-barbosa (accessed March 12, 2014).

2. An extended version of this chapter was published as a chapter in a recent edited volume about popular culture and politics in Brazil (Wood 2014).

3. See the report by the Comitê Popular da Copa e das Olimpiadas do Rio de Janeiro (2013) in References.

4. See the official page of the UPP project: http://www.upprj.com


References


**Author affiliation**

School of Communication, Media and Theatre, University of Tampere, Finland
From the 1950’s on, Portugal’s capital Lisbon grew quickly, in the context of the late-industrialisation period and a massive exodus from poor rural areas. Since 1974, with the end of Estado Novo’s authoritarian regime and the independence of the former African colonies, the inflow of expatriates, political refugees and, later on, labour migrants, has added new elements and complexity to the expanding urban landscape. The urbanisation of the city’s new metropolitan area included the expansion of the informal city, in a context of acute housing shortage.

Cova da Moura, the neighbourhood (bairro) this chapter is about, is a migrant squatter settlement, the result of occupation of farming land, available in the interstices of the expanding Greater Lisbon Area. As a result of occupation of both privately and state-owned land, and of building without permit, the bairro is neither constructed on legally acquired plots, as is the case in many areas of illegal genesis, nor a result of occupation of exclusively publicly owned property, a fact that makes it unique in Lisbon.

Nowadays, Cova da Moura is located centrally, at the doorstep of Lisbon’s municipality (the central area of Greater Lisbon), with easy access to public transportation networks and to the main highways. However, an impasse as to how the status of illegality should be overcome keeps the bairro particularly vulnerable to reproducing dynamics of spatial segregation and social exclusion.

On the other hand, deeper acquaintance with Cova da Moura reveals what Alain Bourdin designates as ‘an urbanism of reception’ (accueil), both regarding the dynamics of space appropriation and the multi-scaled solidarities that are involved in those processes, and regarding the set-up and development of local organisations and cultural expressions by
residents. After a brief presentation of the first kind of approach that we have identified, we will focus on less visible practices of accueil (reception), which create room for habitation and identities alternative to those most conveyed by the dominant, stigmatising representation of the place.

‘The problem-ridden neighbourhood’ (‘um bairro crítico’)

I arrived [in Portugal] from Cape Verde in 1975, along with my parents, because things had changed. [...] Here the revolution of the 25th of April had already taken place, we were in 1975. At that time the government had much to do, because the country was full of problems. And, also, thousands and thousands of repatriates and refugees had arrived to Portugal. Those who were out, in Angola and so on, all came here [Portugal].

[...] [T]he owner of a bar [...] told me, in private, “Look, I heard that over there at Cova da Moura there’s land.” [...] The following weekend we went [to Cova da Moura], to see what was going on. By chance, I met a man that I knew from Sal [in Cape Verde]. He had a shack there, at Rua do Moinho, a wooden shack, 7 by 3.5 meters, and he wouldn’t mind selling it, because he wanted to leave and join his children. This was the best that could have happened to us, since there was in fact available land, but we did not live here and were not acquainted to anyone. I said to my brother: “Look, the best thing to do is to buy this shack, we get the materials and we build a small house” (interview with Mr T, February 2012).

This account by Mr T reveals the sort of circumstances faced and chosen by the settlers who built the first houses. Among other aspects, it indicates the role played by social relationships in accessing information and, also, land. For the construction of the house, as well, it was important to rely on family and friends. Houses needed to be built quickly, often over one weekend, in order to evade police control and the risk of demolition. In this process, the sort of mutual help that Capeverdeans designate as Djunta Mon, in which family and neighbours gather to build each house quickly, played an important role.
Soon enough, on the other hand, a Residents’ Commission was created in Cova da Moura in an attempt to regulate the settlements situation. It functioned, to some extent, also as an extension of local authorities in its attempts to discipline construction work so as to ensure a regular urban structure. In the late eighties, however, an ambivalent relationship between public authorities and the settlement evolved into clear antagonism between residents – fighting for their right to stay and keep their houses – and the municipality that in 1994 targeted Cova da Moura as a strategic area for urban development. In 2002, the first studies for a master plan indicated the demolition of most of the bairro (circa 80 percent) and were met by fierce opposition from three local associations and residents in general.

Cova da Moura and an ‘urbanism of reception’

According to Alain Bourdin (2011), contemporary cities – as part of today’s cosmopolitism – need to consider ‘the right of reception’ (accueil), linked to the interlocking of different ways of life and habit within one and the same city. Bourdin suggests that peripheric neighbourhoods, where most migrants find their first city residence and, with that, a way into urban life, could be approached as localities well suited to fulfil the right of accueil as part of their right to the city. In these places, immigrants find access to information, provisory protection, whilst also becoming able to move beyond them and relate to the city more widely. They may also work in ways similar to a centre of interpretation for the city, through which the newcomer may get attuned to the urban life s/he encounters (Bourdin 2011, p 86). Should these vocations be encouraged, as part of an ‘urbanism of reception,’ through which a person’s right to reception in the city is operated? In many ways, Cova da Moura displays characteristics of the kind indicated by Bourdin.

In the 1970’s, Cova da Moura offered an opportunity related to the availability of land in the interstices of the expanding formal city, allowing migrants to find a place for themselves, not far from the centre and from working places. Also, it enabled access to ownership of a house and some degree of social mobility in a rather difficult context. Connections to acquaintances from the places of origin or other places inhabited in
the past (as narrated by Mr T) and – in a place characterised by intense forms of public sociality and the cultivation of kinship ties – to the extended family and/or new neighbours, provided a valuable resource for residents and newcomers, which contrasted to what migrants found available in other locations in central Lisbon. Hand in hand with house construction, especially once the urban tissue was consolidated, house tenancy also became significant in Cova da Moura. It allowed newcomers to find accommodation and make their first social connections, especially important as opposed to the discrimination exercised by landlords in other areas of the city, where tenants of African origin could still be subjected to discrimination.

Such connections have contributed, in the past and today, to the access of income through economic exchanges in the *bairro* (many within the informal economy), and to jobs outside Cova da Moura, along a network that may extend from Lisbon and other locations in Portugal to several countries in Europe and the United States as well. Therefore, whilst having been the largest migrant enclave in Portugal during the mid-eighties (Horta 2000, p 163), and despite structural effects of spatial segregation, social exclusion and lack of sufficient economic opportunities, the *bairro* has never been an isolated reality. Relationships beyond Cova da Moura as well as intrinsic relations to the kind of sociality that characterises the *bairro* have always been a crucial resource for its inhabitants. This extended social network configures an ‘urbanism of reception’ (*accueil*) as a space of opportunity that also finds expression in the physical shape of the neighbourhood. Although constantly approached as a case of chaos by the disciplining authorities, the shape of the *bairro* (buildings, public space etc) presents a ‘flexible space’ (Letria and Malheiros 1999, quoted by Cordeiro 2007) able to accommodate arrival, departure, movement, change.

**Conclusion**

While acknowledging an imbalance between the central and the peripheral city, Bourdin asks whether we could find in the periphery what he designates as ‘stimulating places,’ able to challenge such an imbalance. Cova da Moura constitutes in the Great Lisbon Area a sort of quintessential social
construction of migrant otherness and has too often been framed negatively as a stigmatising location, associated with precariousness, poverty and delinquency or, ‘positively’/romantically,’ as a place of exoticism. As this paper shows, it may better be constructively characterised as part of an urbanism ‘of reception.’

References


Author affiliation

Júlia Carolino: GESTUAL, CIAUD, Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal

Ermelindo Quaresma: Associação Cultural Moinho da Juventude, Alto da Cova da Moura, Buraca, Portugal
Violence and urban politics

Introduction 163
Steffen Jensen and Jesper Bjarnesen

The badass and the asshole: Violence and the positioned subjectivities of street youth in Mexico City 172
Roy Gigengack

Criminal bands and the future of urban Tanzania: How life has been redefined 185
Colman T Msoka

Urban youth delinquency: Proliferation of criminal gangs and neighbourhood violence in Dhaka, Bangladesh 193
Reazul Haque and Ebney Ayaj Rana
Violence and urban politics

Introduction

Steffen Jensen and Jesper Bjarnesen

Violence has always been central to the understanding of urban life as seen in the literary exploits since Dickens and Zola and sociological accounts of the Chicago school. Increasingly, as well, urban violence is beginning to be seen as an important field of intervention within development discourse. A recent World Bank report (World Bank 2011) thus concludes that violence takes its toll on the possibilities of many urban residents, and that they often find it hard to cope with the consequences of violence. Within Peace and Conflict Studies, similar conclusions have been reached; for instance Carolyn Nordstrom and Antonius Robben (1995) have explored the consequences of violence in terms of the loss of the ability to reproduce culture. Hence, there is a growing awareness that violence disrupts, an insight that becomes ever-more important as the cities around the world are growing.

However, violence is (and is sometimes wrongfully perceived as) an integral part of politics and governance. This points to the productive side of violence. That violence is productive does not necessarily imply that it is ‘good,’ simply that it also enables and forces particular forms of sociality rather than disrupts it. In this brief introduction, we will attempt to balance these two different interpretations of urban violence. In the first section, we will focus on the productive side of violence as we – departing from the three other chapters of this section – explore how different actors claim the city through violence. In the second section, and in keeping with the overarching theme of this conference volume, we will shift focus and explore how civil society groups try to reduce or cope with violence. By looking at urban violence from both sides, we are able to arrive at a clearer understanding of urban violence and politics.
Claiming the city through violence

In order to understand urban violence as productive rather than only disruptive of lives, we need to locate violence within social relationships, which we can study and try to understand, rather than seeing it as anti-social behaviour, outside or antithetical to the social order. In the anthropological literature on violence, this is sometimes also expressed as the productive capacity of violence; violence and aggression are not just meaningless and antisocial behaviours but a kind of social practice that communicates between specific actors and groups and which not only produces and reproduces such relationships – but also may be productive in a range of other ways. Clausewitz’ famous (1832) assertion that war is the continuation of politics by other means extends to the small-scale kinds of violence we are interested in here; violence, in other words, is the continuation of social relatedness by other means. In order to understand this, we propose exploring different ways in which the city is being claimed by groups through violence, asking: What are violent actors claiming through their acts of aggression? In other words, what are the intended effects of acts of violence, and what relationships enable and facilitate these social practices? Without alleging to have produced a complete list, we suggest that there are at least five different kinds of claims that violent practices in the three following chapters, as well as and in other examples, express. They comprise claiming resources, claiming place, claiming community, claiming rights and claiming the future.

Perhaps the most obvious question raised in the chapters is: How are violent actors claiming resources? Through theft, corruption and other forms of more or less explicitly violent kinds of delinquency, violent actors – both within the state (police, public officials etc) and outside it (gangs etc) lay claim to resources, such as money and consumer items. But a more fundamental aspect of that claim is the claim to livelihood; of doing something rather than doing nothing. As one of the gang youths in Roy Gigengack’s chapter puts it: “We love to struggle for our lives” (p 176)! Claiming livelihood through violent practices is arguably a search for a socially meaningful role and an ability to look out for oneself, albeit through illicit means.
Secondly, how are violent actors claiming place? In several ways, violent actors – again both actors within and outside the state – lay claim to particular places within the city; gangs occupy street corners or entire areas or neighbourhoods, and other non-state actors take charge of their own security, for example by fortifying their houses with walls and barbed wire, as in Colman Msoka’s example from Dar es Salaam below.

A more social dimension of such claims may be posed as the question: How are violent actors claiming community? Violent actors organise collectively in networks that may or may not be related to specific places, in order to achieve a feeling of belonging, to identify with others. Organising collectively in criminal networks may be understood as a similar kind of mobilisation as we know from other parts of civil society – a way to respond to structural conditions that make it difficult for people to get by on their own.

This leads to a fourth category of claims: How are violent actors claiming rights? While it might sound counter-intuitive, violent actors lay claim to their right to make use of public spaces; to conduct different kinds of business; to affect the decisions that are made about their neighbourhoods and their livelihoods, etc. Claiming rights is a way of being acknowledged, of having a voice, of gaining influence – a kind of recognition that may not otherwise be available to marginalised parts of the urban population. These claims are of course not only articulated in relation to the state but to other powerful actors in the city, including NGO workers, neighbourhood associations, etc. In this way, violent practices may be understood as an integral part of urban politics: not Politics with a capital P, but the everyday negotiation of access to participation in the social life of the city. One entry-point for marginalised actors, however, is indeed Politics with a capital P. National political parties are well aware of the importance of mobilising especially the younger generations, in order to perform or demonstrate their popularity and of course to assure their votes, as research in especially West Africa illustrates (Utas 2012; Bjarnesen 2013; Christensen and Utas 2008).

Finally, violent practices are also geared towards making something happen in the future and we might ask: How are violent actors claiming
the future? Arjun Appadurai (2004) has argued that poverty may best be defined as the deprivation of what he calls “the capacity to aspire”; in other words, the ability to envision a future for oneself and one’s family. Getting involved in violent practices may be some people’s only way of enacting a sense of agency over their lives, and therefore of envisioning their future, for example to avoid the sense that the young people in Reazul Haque and Ebney Ayaj Rana’s chapter (p 193) have of being “stuck in a position of youth,” unable to attain social adulthood.

Civil society responses to violence

Clearly violence is taking its toll on many cities around the world, affecting adversely the economy and multiple development initiatives. In a number of cities, violence and especially the fear of it has turned whole areas into no-go zones for outsiders, as well as seriously limiting the mobility of the residents there. As Jensen has described in Cape Town (Jensen 2008), violence marks out terrains that few people dare to challenge or ignore. In this regard, violent actors are no differently positioned, often stuck in very small territories inside their turf where no outsider can enter and from where they can hardly exit.

These areas that are associated with crime and violence – townships, favelas or ghettos – are often targeted by states wanting to end the violence. Often these interventions are inherently violent themselves in the form of raids, counter-insurgency and military-style policing, including sometimes extra-judicial killings and expansive imprisonment regimes, affecting significant parts of the young, male population. Other forms of interventions are less directly violent but often as intrusive, as when mothers are being asked to report on the criminal activities of their sons or face being lumped in with the latter as complicit in the violence. In this way, we might say that residents of these affected areas carry the burden of violence in several ways: their livelihood is affected adversely, and they are often caught between the proverbial rock and the hard place, between the violent practices of some of their fellow residents, often young men, and the state.

So how do they cope with this tension? As the World Bank (2011) reports, most of these coping mechanisms are highly individualised
and comprise *inter alia* “keeping silent, buying guns or acquiring other weapons, or relying (many times coerced) on extra-legal security groups for protection” (ibid, p xiv). The World Bank rightly laments the individualisation, noting that it might deepen violence even further. Instead, they argue for a stronger role of communities and civil society. While we concur with this recommendation, our research indicates a number of barriers to civil society intervention. Let us briefly discuss those before we end on a more positive note.

Much literature on civil society and community intervention rests on a number of implicit assumptions about the nature of community. Firstly, there are assumptions about communities and residents as being assailed from all sides. Contrary to this assumption, communities and residents are often implicated in violent structures and in what Janet Roitman (2006) calls ethics of illegality, in which legal codes are broken but where the acts are still legitimate. Examples of this abound across the globe. As one informant in Cape Town during Jenen’s fieldwork said, “Here there are no banks, only the (drug) merchant.” Furthermore, the violent actors are not, as the articles illustrate, outsiders to communities; often they are sons and neighbours. Finally, communities are often riddled with conflicts, in which some see their neighbours as those who bring violence – by informing the police, by supporting and defending their boys, etc. In this way, community or neighbours are often used as ideological markers in internal power struggles within a given area, as Helene Risør’s (2010) analysis of neighbourhood association and lynching in El Alto, Bolivia, vividly illustrates. Hence, we cannot assume the coherence or natural benevolence of the community.

Violence is in itself also a difficult issue around which to organise. As an example, Jensen (2010) has identified five consequences of violence on the ability to do local politics and community organisation in Cape Town. Firstly, the city government possessed the legitimacy and resources to define crime and violence in the townships as the perennial problem of Cape Town. As a consequence, many organisations, despite their often strong anti-state ideologies, had to follow in order to access resources. Contrary to issues of sanitation or education, the blame for crime and violence was located within the communities, not within the state. Hence,
organising around crime was organising against internal enemies, often intimate to one self. Secondly, in order to obtain state resources, civic organisations had to prove that they had a worthy case, that is, that their area was more violent than the next area, thereby reproducing the notion of the area as particularly problematic. Thirdly, as most people in the townships knew of people with connections to a variety of violent networks – gangs, police, vigilante groups – organising around crime was often tantamount to organising against family, friends and neighbours. Fourthly, while many anti-crime policies are designated as pro-poor and pro-women, they come to problematise both groups when they cannot play a part in the state’s attempts to curb crime. Finally, and most problematically, these policies sometimes even reproduce the very thing they were designed to combat, as gangs and politically radicalised segments of the urban population feed on the violence of the state (Keen 2006).

While it is often difficult to organise around issues of crime and violence, there are multiple interesting examples to be learned from (see Jessen et al 2010; World Bank 2011; Ward et al 2011). Rather than rehearsing these many examples, let us provide one illustration again from Cape Town on community activism in relation to what became known as the xenophobic violence that rocked South Africa in 2008. Briefly, the xenophobic violence consisted of a number of attacks that spread from Johannesburg townships to urban areas in the rest of the country against people in different ways defined as foreigners and outsiders. The horror of the attacks aside, this also became a moment of huge resurgence of civil society. Academics met and discussed the implications (Worby, Hassim and Kupe et al 2008); research institutes went into the field to study the phenomenon (IOM 2009); after a while, the police tried as best they could to protect people (Hornberger 2008); relief agencies went onto the ground to assist people; churches opened their gates; thousands of people in the townships around the country defied their neighbours to assist and protect (Hadland 2008); and social movements organised mass meetings across nationality to signal the centrality of multi-lingual approaches. Despite the wealth of information from the ground, many explanations of the violence focused on general issues like poverty, xenophobia, border control, inequality and sense of superiority. However,
as an IOM report (IOM 2009) argued, these factors could not explain why some areas were more severely affected than others. The report went on to identify the most important predictors for attacks as the absence of legitimate leadership groups, along with the emergence of vigilante groups and powerful development mafias who instigated and legitimated the attacks. Combined with historic use of forced removals as a tool of power; a lack of credible conflict resolution models, and an inability of local government to exercise authority in multi-party constituencies, this constituted a powerful mix leading to the violence.

These largely local modes of explanation resonate well with Jensen’s research in one ethnically mixed area of Cape Town called Vrygrond (Jensen et al 2011). When the reasons for Vrygrond not falling prey to large-scale communal and xenophobic violence were explored, a number of interesting and even surprising forms of civic responses seemed to have stemmed the violence. These included, among others, a presence of a relatively plural civil society that raised their voice against the violence. Hence, no single group was able to unopposed identify foreigners as problematic. This plurality was also supported by a number of women, often mothers and sisters of those threatening to perpetrate violence, who stood between the young rioters (often belonging to gangs) and the foreigners. Finally, faith-based organisations and other networks engaged in a number of practices that seemed to break the isolation of those targeted in the violence. These practices included, for instance, praying together and organising shopping for those confined to their houses because of the violence. What these localised practices all point to is that the violence could be prevented if the intended victims were not seen to be isolated and victimisable; rather than being alone and unprotected, the practices illustrated that someone cared.

By way of conclusion
In this brief chapter, we have discussed what animates violent claims to the city as well as the possibilities and challenges of civil society action against violence. Partly based on the chapters that follow in this section, we identified five claims to the city, including claiming livelihood, space, community, rights and the future. Focusing on these claims allowed us to
understand the extent to which violence is productive of social relations. However, recognising that violence also disrupts, we briefly explored how civil society organisations can and do organise against violence. Violence is often difficult to organise around because blame tends to be ascribed internally to the community itself. This difficulty of organising against violence also pervades the three chapters that follow this brief introduction. While they are more concerned with explaining the violence, the accounts are riddled with references to civil society endeavours, like for instance Colman Msoka’s analysis of the rurally-based Sungusungu that never managed to make inroads into the cities; in Reazul Haque’s and Ebney Ayaj Rana’s discussion of the role of families and communities in reducing violence in Dhaka; or in Roy Gigengack’s description of the impotence of organisations in helping the street kids. However, our case from Cape Town – and indeed from multiple endeavours around the world – still illustrates that civil society can play a role and with significant success reduce and prevent violence in ways that states would be hard-pressed to accomplish.

References


Hadland, Adrian, 2008. Violence and Xenophobia in South Africa: Developing Consensus, Moving to Action, Pretoria: HSRC.


Violence and urban politics


Author affiliation

Steffen Jensen: Danish Institute Against Torture (DIGNITY), Denmark

Jesper Bjarnesen: Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology, Uppsala University, Sweden
The badass and the asshole: Violence and the positioned subjectivities of street youth in Mexico City

Roy Gigengack

Understanding street youths in Mexico City as emergent practices, in this chapter I set out to understand a) how street youth embody and perform their identities, which subtly diverge from those of similar groups of urban poor, such as gang youth; and b) how violent practices shape who street youth are and what they do. Based upon long-term ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in streets and institutions in Mexico City throughout the 1990s and regular follow-up visits thereafter (most recently in 2010-2011), the chapter presents impressionist “tales of the field” (Van Maanen 1988). These tales illustrate that, far from merely being destructive, violence constitutes and reinforces street youth’s positioned subjectivities.

Street youths and gang youths as emergent practices

Handy Boy, who owed his nickname to a congenital deformation of his right hand, grew up in the centre of Mexico City in the eighties and nineties, where he lived in a series of wastelands and shelters. I had not seen the lad for more than a year, when I bumped into him in a governmental Program for the Street Child. When I asked him what kind of being ‘the street child’ would be, he answered:

Mira, hay chavos de calle y chavos de casa. Look, there are street boys and home boys. The difference is that the first ones do not live with their family. They live in a banda and the others don’t. You can easily recognise a callejero, a street boy, as he anda mugroso y va malvestido. He looks dirty and is slovenly dressed.... Not all the lads of the street take drugs but there are very few que no les ponen, who do not do drugs. A street boy sniffs, but so do the home boys. I have mates who are de casa but sniff
un chingo, a fucking lot.... To me, ser de la calle, being of the street, does not sound ugly.

The flow of meaning exposed in the quote above is typically absent in writings about street children. Unlike most academic definitions, which usually focus on what ‘the street child’ allegedly lacks, such as a home or a family, Handy Boy underlined that street children are to be recognised by the concrete aspects of what they do have, such as their group life, appearance and sniffing. Handy Boy also associated street children with youth (chavos) rather than children.

Handy Boy contrasted the chavos de calle (street boys/youth) with chavos de casa (home boys/youth). From his assertions it is clear that the latter category referred to what in Mexico are known as chavos banda. This term is sometimes translated as ‘youth gangs’ (eg Feixa 2006, p 158), but strictly speaking ‘gang youths’ would be more correct. Mexico City’s gang youth are similar to street youth in terms of age, class and urban background. They also speak almost identical versions of Mexican street slang (caló) (cf Hernández 2002), and engage in similar practices, notably the use of inhalants and other drugs. Both gang youths and street youths see themselves as belonging to their respective peer groups, both of which are called bandas.

Handy Boy perceived overlaps between the street and the gang youths: the home boys could sniff “a fucking lot,” just like the street boys, and they could be mates with each other. Notwithstanding the criss-crossing overlaps and porous boundaries, however, the two categories evoked different prototypes. Handy Boy noted that these could relate to the materiality of street and gang youth’s diverging living conditions, but that was not necessarily always the case. In fact, as I will discuss shortly, with changing living conditions sometimes the only difference between street and gang youth was that the former were callejeros and the latter chavos banda.

This consciousness of difference and similarity is my point of departure in thinking about street youth as emergent practice. Although essentialism must be avoided, these youths have distinctly positioned subjectivities, divergent experiences and life stories. Street and gang youth also constitute subtly divergent social formations, as came subtly to the fore in their
Violence and urban politics

totem systems: whereas the street children’s bandas were always named after the particular streets or metro stations where the groups dwelled, the bandas of the gang youth typically bore the names of animal or human animal species. Style, such as street children’s dirty and slovenly appearance, further performed the respective identities.

To adopt and adapt a famous distinction, one can think of the groups of gang youths and street youths as bandas ‘on’ and ‘of’ the street. These groups were positioned in different figurations. Typically, they sought access to different resources, identified with different places, and related primarily to groups similar to themselves. The gang youths I have known typically sought to align themselves with a street politician living a few blocks north of Plaza Garibaldi. The street youths living in the same area, however, rather sought help from charities and other institutes targeting street children. They had no contact with the politician, and when I told them about her, they were eager to meet her. They needed someone like me, who could act like a broker and bring them in contact with street-level politicians – whereas the gang youths had such contacts already.

Intervening agents reify the differences between the categories. Most NGOs target street youths only, while others only gang youths; state correctional centres differentiate between children with and without families. The young may find pride in the labels attributed to them. These practices of differential treatment and their subsequent appropriation further reinforce the differentiation: in the institutes street children meet, and seek to meet, other street children (and gang youths other gang youths). Compared to the gang youths, then, the street youths may have lacked the contacts with street level politicians, but they did have many more contacts with institutionalised inmates. “It is important that you have banda when you’re new [in a prison],” as it was explained to me. Also, it is typically in the shelters and prisons that young street people learn about other places where they can dwell. The circulation of street children through the institutions shapes their flow through the streets.

Seeing street and gang youths as emergent practices complicates structuralist variables such as class, generation and gender. These variables are certainly relevant, if not self-evident (as evidenced by Handy Boy’s references to impoverishment, youth and the whereabouts of specifically
violence and urban politics

boys). But to see the fine-tuned dynamics of street life, one must bring in street children’s “authenticity” (Ortner 2006), with which I mean that their politics and culture are not merely reactive to dominant structures, but are woven together through their own locally and historically evolved logic (Gigengack 2014).

Differentiation through talking about violence

The seven corners of the street where I lived in Mexico City were claimed by different groups of chavos banda, successively called los Warriors, los Lobos (the Wolves), los Thunder Cats, los Tópos (the Moles), los Piojos (the Lice), los Nazis, and los Hijos de Puta (the Sons of Bitches). While I always had to avoid the Piojos and the Nazis, I was on friendly terms with the Lobos. The building in which the Lobos had lived with their families was damaged in the 1985 earthquake, and ten years later it was pulled down. The families were lodged in huts of tinplate and cardboard across the street, and this situation continued for years. The Lobos gathered in what they called los escombros, the messy remains of the former dwelling. In the debris they placed iron beds, put blankets over the rocks and a dart board on the remains of a wall. Sometimes I saw a youngster defecating among the dust. At night the place was illuminated with candle lights, but notwithstanding all these attempts to furnish it, the escombros remained damp and moldy, especially in the rainy season. The degradation in which the Lobos lived had become very similar to that of the street kids. In fact, whenever I walked by, the smells of the Lobos’ filthy poverty reminded me of the young street people living in the nearby Marroquí Street – also because they consumed a similar toluene-containing inhalant.

Once I visited five young Lobos in a bus wreck left behind in their street, where they liked to sit. As always, they wanted to know where I lived, where I came from, whether I had children, whether I was married, and what I did for a living. When I remarked that I wrote about street children, the following conversation evolved:

Yolanda (17): Ay, ¡nosotros somos de la calle! Gee, we are of the street!
Aroncito: Are you going to write about us?
Yolanda: In that case, write that we are angry at the government! They took our homes away!
Roy: And why do you say you are callejeros?
Yolanda: Because we are bien desmadrosos. We are pretty good destroyers!
Tomás: ¡Nos gustan los putazos! We like beatings!
Yolanda: We love to struggle for our lives!
Roy: I know the ones [the street children] from Metro Hidalgo and Guerrero. They are often visited by street educators who want to bring them to a shelter.
Yolanda: Nope, we don’t like that! We have a cantón, a home.

Upon my subsequent question of which bandas the Lobos knew, a vivid discussion followed about the Piojos, the Topos and the Hijos de Puta. The kids disagreed about who was who and who lived where. “I don’t care!” exclaimed Yolanda finally, “¡Yo soy una Loba! I am a Wolf girl!”

Boasting about their capacity to destroy, Yolanda described herself and her mates as “of the street.” Nevertheless, in her mind, too, street and gang youth remained different categories. The girl stressed that the Lobos did not like the educators who visited the street children in the two nearby subway stations, and she thus distinguished her group from those who were not in the position to do the same. Yolanda further underscored the categorical differentiation when she explained that the Lobos were domiciled. Yet, however relevant, being homeless and living without the family hardly constituted essential characteristics distinguishing street children from others – factually, the Lobos were homeless as well, as they spent more time in the escombros than with their families.

Rather, the Lobos differentiated themselves from street children through their enactments as gang youths: whereas they were indifferent to the street children nearby, they emphatically contrasted themselves to the other chavos banda in my street. These other gang youths triggered their self-pride, even if the Lobos did not know them very well either. Their logic followed what Gregory Bateson (1973, p 41) called “the principle of symmetrical differentiation”: through boasting about their collective violent selves, the Lobos were able to distinguish themselves
Violence and urban politics

from those who were most like them. Bragging about their own violent abilities fostered the unity of the group vis-à-vis these others; it was also a performance in front of each other.

In the emergent practices of street life, then, violence encompasses more than merely perpetrators and victims: it involves performers, targets and audience.

**The gandalla and the culero: narratives of violent and enduring selves**

Identity talk intertwining fact and fiction was common among the street youth as well. Their narratives of collective violent selves followed the same principle of symmetrical differentiation as that of the gang youth – but with the crucial difference that in their case the target and audience consisted principally of street rather than gang youths. The Plaza Garibaldi kids could for example say that they hated the *chemos* or glue sniffers, with which they basically meant that they hated the street youth from the peripheries (who sniffed glue rather than *activo*, the solvent the Gari kids consumed). In addition, the street youths’ performances and their narratives of self brought themes to the fore, which I found rather peculiar to the practices of street youth.

The following story took place in Metro Tacuba, a violent neighbour- hood in Mexico City. Together with Héctor, alias El Loco or The Madman (19 years), I was looking for disinfectants to treat the gash in his hand. Four of his friends sauntered behind us. Héctor recounted how he was stabbed in a *lucha callejera*, a street fight. When I asked what he meant with that, he looked at me. “Do you want to know, Roy, what *ser de la calle* means? I’ll show you.” He accosted a passer-by, and the five boys stood around him. Words were exchanged, the passer-by ran through his pockets and showed a handful of pesos. Héctor snatched them away, and wanted more. I said I understood now and pulled him away.

In the mindscape of these street youth, Héctor performed as a *gandalla*, that is, a badass. Being violent remained morally reprehensible, as was also suggested by Héctor’s nickname *El Loco* or Madman. At the same time, the violence begot a positive connotation. In the evil street, things were serious, and that made it attractive for a badass. *Ser de la calle*, being of the street, enabled Héctor to show the world that his life was not a
joke. The mugging was a performance, to himself, his peers, the victim, and not in the last place, of course, to me. Héctor conveyed he had the power to overpower, and that he was prepared to use it. Speaking with Katz (1988, pp 98-102), he meant to be mean.

But because of the structural position of relative powerlessness, a street youth can never succeed in performing as a badass all the time; at some point the gandalla will inevitably fail. The flawed badass is known as culero or asshole. Both the badass and the asshole deserve punishment, but whereas the badass cannot be punished, for he’s a badass, the asshole can – and he deserves it all the more so because he’s an asshole. The failed victimiser thus becomes the victim who asked for it. Commonly, the asshole sees himself as such: he blames himself for his situation.

Oscar, another 17-year-old Tacuba boy, stared straight ahead and mumbled. We sat together in a little park, and the whispering was audible to me. “I’m a damned dog. I’m a son of a damned and whorish bitch of a mother. Rubbish, that’s what I am. Worthless. I only roam the streets. A nasty, whorish vagrant of that bitch of that mother of mine.” Oscar said it so many times and so fast that he seemed to know the formula by heart. When I asked Oscar why he said what he said, he explained that it was así nomás, just like that, and por culero, for being an asshole. He was puro terapiando, “merely talking therapy.”

Oscar trivialised his self-mortification by convincing me, and perhaps himself as well, that he just mimicked therapy. Symbolic suicide attempts are indeed accepted treatment in many self-help groups of the Anonymous Alcoholics and the Anonymous Drug Addicts, and it is possible that Oscar had learned the text he recited in one of these centres. The self-blame of the asshole springs from experience of humiliation – but at the same time Oscar’s seeming self-hate and self-derogation were a rehearsal of resentment, frustration and, above all, stubbornness. For what characterises the true asshole, apart from the self-blame and the humiliation, is his persistence to remain what he is. That is why the asshole is definitely part of the policeman’s world too (Van Maanen 1978).

I do not imply, of course, that street children are just badasses or assholes. Rather, my point is that the Mexican street youth I have known were utterly familiar with these poses, and understood what was being ‘said’ through
them. Indeed, the recognition that in the street there are badasses and assholes was often such that street youth felt obliged to say that, contrary to the *gandallas* and the *culeros*, they were *tranquilos* or quiet ones. At the same time, the quiet street children applauded the badass and the asshole. The other Tacuba boys sauntering behind Héctor or listening to Oscar were neither *gandallas* nor *culeros*, at least not at these moments, but they knew what was going on: they were the audience enabling the performance.

Both the badass and the asshole are instances of Goffmanian “shameless scoundrels,” who bear their stigma but do not seem to be impressed or repentant about doing so. Goffman (1986, p 6) suggests that these stigmatised youth may have a separate system of honour, which seems to be the case here too. The ways of the badass gain respect; applying violence is a vector to gain self-esteem. This finding is in line with Katz’ (1988) reading of violent practices documented in urban ethnographies in the USA. Mexico City’s street youth, however, also find self-esteem in their failure to be a badass: the asshole obtains respect among the peers as well.

The twin stereotypes of *gandalla* and *culero* open a window on values of street culture. With this I mean an analytical perspective rather than a primordial entity (Hastrup 1995): these values are not endorsed by all street youth – hence the *tranquilos* – and they resonate with values prevalent in other sectors of Mexican society. To begin with, and although the terms may refer to women as well, the *gandalla* and the *culero* share a notion of masculine toughness. Both distinguish themselves from the ‘true’ losers of street culture, the vulnerable street children, pejoratively termed *chillones* or cry-babies. But the two differ in logic. The *gandalla* is, in a sense, still a moral being. His goal is to take advantage; at the cost of others, he takes care of himself. The *culero*, in contrast, is beyond morality; he is indifferent to good and bad. As the saying goes *todo le vale madre*, “he doesn’t care a damn about anything.”

The celebration of indifference thus emerges as a collective narrative of self. Central to this narrative was the notion of *aguantarse*, that is, being able to endure violence. One of my tutees in the correctional centre where I did fieldwork once confided, “When the others hear that I have lived in the street for seven years, they say ‘Wow, so you must know a lot of *trompones*, beatings.’” In such a narrative of a glorified victimised
self, taking a beating is converted into a source of pride (cf Jackson-Jacobs 2004). Indifference towards one’s own pain then pays off.

¡Pinche vicioso!: the roundabout route of indifference

Kids who could not endure, who constantly cried or neglected themselves severely, were excluded. Showing weakness was suppressed through beatings; one could not ‘open oneself’ (no abrirse). Learning to endure, or acquiring feelings of indifference, found an ideological support in the hidden transcripts of the group (Scott 1990). Amongst themselves these youths could give sometimes cynical and provoking comments on themselves and the society that treated them as street children. The term street child and all its synonyms could get the status of a Beggar’s title. The smaller kids from Plaza Garibaldi called themselves “the gang of the forgotten children” (la banda de los olvidados), a term that subsequent cohorts copied. They also sang a song of the Mexican hard-rock band TRI, titled “Child without Love” (Niño sin Amor). The group of Metro Tacuba made graffiti saying that they were la banda de los chemos, the gang of the glue sniffers. Sometimes they also appropriated institutional language. Once I took the metro with two 11 or 12-year-olds. They waited until the doors of the train closed and then spat and beat against the windows, shouting to the startled and angry passengers that they were “the naughty glue sniffers” (los chemos cábulas) and “nobody’s children” (los hijos de nadie). The latter was a slogan often used in the fundraising campaigns of a Christian charity.

Some street youths expressed the pose of cultivated indifference through an ostensible identification with inhalants. Boys and also girls could boast about their being pinches viciosos, “damned vicious ones,” and provokingly show the sniffing paraphernalia in hand. It could have a dimension of defying, for example when the intended audience was a passing police patrol, but these performances of self were also, and especially so, made within the seclusion of the group. Some kids quite frequently asked me to take pictures of them in their wasteland, so that they could pose as sniffing street children, and in fact thus play who they already were (Gigengack 1999). It is true, of course, that I formed part of the audience as well, and so did the world that would eventually see the photographs. But
the performance of indifferent, viciously sniffing selves was fun mainly because it was a collective activity of the group.

The following conversation took place among the turpentine-sniffing *banda* of the Taqueña Bus Station. It illustrates how these boys not only suffered from violence and self-destruction, but also identified with it. They had come to regard violence as an intimate part of their selves:

Lucho (17): Do you like it if they call you a street child?
Pérez (17): The plain truth (*la neta*): yes.
Lucho: But don’t you think all people are equal? We all breathe, eat and shit, and we all have our problems. I would say we are no street children. And if we were, we should all be of the street because we all pass through the street… I think it is wrong they call us children of the street.
Pérez: But someone who is already of the street, who stayed on the street for years, says ‘so what.’ *Le vale madre.* He doesn’t care a fuck about what they say to him.
Lucho: So now you don’t care if the people say you’re a street child? Or don’t you mind to be a street child?
Pérez: I do mind, and therefore I tell them to fuck off (*se las miento*). But then there are some who attack me…
Lucho: Why?
Pérez: ¡Por pinche vicioso! For being a damned addict, what else? And *un majadero,* a pervert, because on the street I pinch the girls in their butts.
Lucho: And you Savage, are you a street child?
Savage (12): Yes. Because I have no home and live in the street… I mean not all people live on the street. Street children are we who have no home and do it on everything. That’s being a street child!

Before this fragment, Pérez spoke about the abuse he suffered from his father, the running away, his intentions to go to a shelter once more, or otherwise to go into therapy again, the maltreatment he had endured in the youth prison, and the aggression he released during glue sniffing sessions. This boy seemed to match the traumas and frustrations of his childhood
with indifference towards others. Savage Boy, in contrast, had previously categorically denied to have ever used drugs. He then admitted to have used inhalants, and said that quitting depended upon God. He exclaimed that “the city of the glue sniffers needs help!,” and also that street children would be helped by seizing and destroying glue, turpentine and *activo*. Savage Boy, too, transformed his frustrations into indifference: towards himself and his slowly disintegrating body. For both boys, however, the indifference made a difference. It represented a source of self-esteem.

**Conclusion**

Violence, it has been noted, is a notoriously slippery concept (Riches 1986). In the Northern world, violence is often understood as the antithesis of social order, and closely associated with ‘bad’ or unlawful conduct. Such a conception of violence is intrinsically connected to the state formation processes prevalent in Northern Europe, where the state has traditionally obtained a successful monopoly on the means of violence (Elias 2000). The irenic understanding of violence is in other words bound to a specific cultural and historically determined understanding (Blok 2001).

The assumption that violence is unacceptable and illegitimate invites to explain it through structural terms, such as notably class, gender and generation. These notions are certainly relevant, as shown throughout in this chapter. But the ethnographic vignettes complicate the picture as well. The street youths and the gang youths are similar, if not identical, in structural terms. Yet they embody and perform diverging practices, which suggests we need to bring in acting subjects with their consciousness of inner states and cultural formations, that is, their “positioned subjectivities” (Ortner 2006).

Violence imagined features in identity talk, differentiating groups and fostering collectivities. As any other predatory group, mugging street youth obtain their livelihood through violence or the threat of it. Their violence is expressive as well. The *gandalla* or the badass gets what he wants and gets away with it, and through violence he obtains a sense of self. The *culero* subsists, and has little option, but though endurance even he maintains a sense of self. The *vicioso* is also part of this family.
Not only does he endure the violence he commits against himself, he also enjoys and celebrates it.

As a politics of representation (Bourgois 1996), it may be attractive to present violence as not intended or even ‘senseless.’ But violence is meaningful to perpetrators, victims and witnesses. Even a violent act as street children’s self-destructive inhalant use is covered with meaning. Violence, then, cannot be reduced to purely utilitarian functions; the acting subject forces us to look at the communicative and expressive dimensions too. It may be attractive as well to think that violence is an aberration or an excess compromising livelihood and identity. But then we risk overlooking that violent practices are constitutive of positioned subjectivities. Violence creates as well.

References


Author affiliation
Department of Rural Development Sociology, Wageningen University and Research (WUR), the Netherlands
Criminal bands and the future of urban Tanzania: How life has been redefined

Colman T Msoka

Life in urban Tanzania has changed profoundly in the last two decades, following growing activities of criminal bands which are common in some cities and rapidly emerging in the rest of Tanzania as well. Cities are not as safe as they used to be 40 years ago, and the situation is worrying for the future of urban Tanzania. During the 1970s and early 1980s, when Tanzania was under socialist regime (*Ujamaa*), communal ties were relatively strong. This could be seen in urban areas as well, where sociologists otherwise tell us that social ties are weak because of city anonymity. At the time, efforts were made to make sure that neighbours knew each other – and even monitored and reported unclear developments. There was a system with ten cell leaders to whom all new arrivals were required to report. This, unfortunately, has changed; currently very few people care to know their new neighbours. Following the switch of political orientation – from socialist to market regime – some of the old, good collective values were left behind. The social fabric in urban areas has eroded with the growth of individualism and private attitude. The situation was made worse with the abolition of the ten cell leadership system when multiparty politics were introduced in 1992. Residents now do not know each other; neither do they question new residents or strangers.

In the 1980s, serious criminal bands emerged, mainly in the cattle keeping zones of Tanzania. At that time, cattle rustling was a problem that affected not only the livelihoods but also the lives of people, and it was organised by criminal bands, some of whom were part of cross-border networks. Armed criminal bands raided villages at night and drove the cattle away. This situation pushed villagers, particularly in the *Sukuma* zone, to introduce traditional security guards – known as *Wasalama* or *Sungusungu* – who provided collective security in their villages (LHRC
Reviewing international experience and lessons from Kosovo and ZLSC 2011; Hangaija 1989). These collective traditional security groups were initially considered social bandits, but later on the system was formalised by the state (Hangaija 1989). The approach proved to be strong and reduced crime substantially, and it was thought to be useful in controlling emerging crime patterns in different areas.

Following the success of Sungusungu and its spread in many rural areas, the model was replicated in urban areas in the early 1990s. Although the response was good and several police posts were established along the line, the model did not fit this context. Life in rural areas is very different from life in urban Tanzania. In rural areas families know each other, have lived close to each other for a long period, and thus their ties are very binding. Incidences of crime were able to bring families together to form their own ways of protecting their wealth, and their families. In urban areas, ties are very different, and people have different commitments. Individualism is rather high, which keeps people from volunteering to do the night patrols.

After the initial period of bliss in urban areas 1991-1992, when people joined the groups to safeguard their homes and properties, the Sungusungu movement in urban areas went down, paving the way for crime to resurface. Subsequent to the decline of the collective security, private security companies – at the time slowly developing in the country – gained rapid momentum. Today, private security companies are common in major urban areas in Tanzania, and it is no longer considered a luxury but an important aspect to most businesses and upper income households to employ them.

Although gun control regulations in the country are tight, in most of the violent incidences criminals conducted their illegitimate acts with modern sophisticated arms. This began to send signs of the trouble that was going to face the country in the near future.

Criminal bands in urban Tanzania

Beginning in the mid-1990s, criminal bands emerged in urban Tanzania, using names such as *Tukale wapi kumi ndani kumi nje; Mbwa Mwitu, Simba mkali, Ubaya ubaya* and *Toto Tundu*. Others are *Mbwa Kachoka* and *Komando Yoso* (LHRC and ZLSC 2011; Nsanzungwako 2014). The
Reviewing international experience and lessons from Kosovo

Violence and urban politics

groups operate in particular territories and are found in Dar es Salaam, Mtwar and Zanzibar, as well as in Arusha, Iringa, the Lake Zone and the western part of Tanzania. The emergence of these groups reflects a weakness of the state in providing security to its people. The *Sungusungu* security system did not emerge by design but by default, and the state accepted it when noting that it filled a gap (Hangaija 1989).

The reasons behind the growth of these groups are difficult to map, as several situations are likely to explain the pattern. The first one and one that easily comes by is unemployment, particularly among youth. Job creation in Tanzania is lagging far behind demand; thus, lots of youth are in need of not only food but also money to pay their bills. It is now common in Tanzania to see groups of youth sitting around all day. Some have given their groups foreign names, sometimes from globally troubled areas, such as *Kosovo* and *Torabora*. This is not a healthy sign; these groups are likely to engage in criminal work in the absence of clear sources of income.

Laxity of the people is another reason that we can point at. Emerging young criminals and their cells are part of the larger society. However, presently a new culture of uninvolved citizenship has developed in Tanzania, the consequence of which is that issues that should be reported to the police are not. Some people argue that reporting is a waste of time since the people committing the crimes would, no matter what, be released in the next day or two.

The use of drugs and the level of alcoholism in the country is a problem particularly in Dar es Salaam. Drug users cannot find meaningful jobs as they are not trusted in society. Youth who consume substances end up as criminals as a way of solving their cash problems. They are of course easily absorbed by these criminal groups and at times used by people with particular intentions.

The national police force complains of a shortage of police officers to provide adequate services in the country as one of the reasons for the growing levels of crime. The few police officers present lack adequate means to reach many areas for surveillance purposes or to respond to calls by ordinary citizens. As noted before, the presence of the bands is a reflection of a gap, and this is a risky terrain for the government to tread.
in. The cost of redressing the situation in the future would be relatively dear, and the damage done by then would be beyond reparable limits.

**Effects of criminal bands on the lives of the citizens and development**

Several effects of the growth of criminal crews are evident in urban Tanzania. Businesses, particularly the big ones, close early to avoid vandalism; businesses that have to remain open at night have an armed guard all the time; people hire rickshaws and motorbikes to transport themselves even small distances; and people have learned to return home early to avoid clashing with the bands. They leave home late in the morning to avoid being robbed on their way to bus stops, a fact that eats into their productive work time. In some neighbourhoods, residents avoid big crowds in pubs and markets since these are risky areas. Some families have opted for private security guards, currently a common business in Dar es Salaam. Employing security companies naturally increases the cost of living and doing business. A new concern is that some of the security company employees collude with criminal bands and share information on what is available for stealing. This has forced the national police to consider tightening rules and regulations concerning people employed as private security guards.

The police force has responded by creating a Rapid Response Unit (RRU), with police officers who are deployed on motorbikes to respond quickly to people's calls. Motorbikes are not only cost effective and quick, but they fit the condition of Dar es Salaam which is jammed with cars. On top of having security guards, some residential areas have homes that are fortified with tall walls and barbed wire electric fences. Doors and windows are secured with grills and metal bars as a way to stop or rather slow down crime. In some homes, the magnitude of fortification has gone to the extent that it is difficult to rescue people in times of fire, one of the chief complaints of the fire fighting brigade in the city of Dar es Salaam.

Criminal bands in towns, cities, or in a country even, are detrimental, prohibiting people from enjoying life, accumulating properties, going to their workplaces or homes, and from using certain public places. Individuals cannot concentrate on their work as long as they are not sure what is happening to their families, property or how to get home. Similarly,
an unsafe city will not attract certain types of business. Looking at the situation holistically, crime repels multiple opportunities for business investments as well as other opportunities, such as hosting world games, major conventions, tourism and the hosting of company head offices. These are short-term effects, but in the long run, the country faces a substantial risk of a growing number of gangs.\(^3\)

In the context of Tanzania, criminal bands are also operating in the border regions, and in some of these areas there are active rebel groups (Ministry of Public Safety and Security 2007). The presence of organised criminal groups can provide space for regional rebel groups or criminal bands as well as for terrorists to penetrate and operate in the country,\(^4\) which in turn makes it easy for the gangs to receive modern arms training, find strategic areas to invade, and learn how to terrorise the larger community to amass wealth.

The networks of criminal groups will over time mature, and wealth obtained through criminal practice may be invested into the economy as a way of cleaning dirty money (money laundering). It is also easy for mature regional networks to join global networks that are known to be powerful – networks that actually make up a threat to the judiciary, the executive and even the legislative systems. Powerful networks plant their own people or may bend rules and regulations due to their strategic positioning. I would therefore argue that the police force and the government as a whole need to take this issue very seriously and monitor the growth of criminal bands within an improved national intelligence system.

**Criminal bands and the future of urban Tanzania**

The future of urban Tanzania as it now stands calls for critical examination. The emergence of gangs suggest that there is need for a leadership that is sensitive to the different problems facing urban residents. Not only economic and social forces explain the emergence of criminal bands; there are spatial explanations as well. The spreading of the city, urban morphology, residential areas, recreational areas, provision of public services and security needs explain part of the problem. Local authorities must be able to look at the problems holistically and develop solutions with big pictures in order to bring on board different parts of the problems
and their respective explanations. Thus, all sectors in urban areas should be integrated in the solution of the emerging problem of criminal bands.

Good urban order is a very important aspect of dealing with crimes of all kinds. Local governments need to consider putting streets and neighbourhoods in order and avoid uncoordinated developments. It is difficult to enforce law, reach people and help them if there is no clear address – and in such situations, criminal bands can easily put a neighbourhood under siege, before the police can reach them. There is also a need to modernise the police force in Tanzania so as to catch up with the new developments in the criminal sector. Inefficiency here would prove expensive, as it will provide space for the gangs to root themselves in the country soil. Also, the inability of the police force to apprehend members of different criminal bands in the country sends a powerful message on the ability of the country to identify global bands – and their operations in the country – as investors or even criminals in the Tanzanian economy.

As noted before, it is very easy for criminals from abroad to move in swiftly to Tanzania by joining existing bands. With some dirty money, their path becomes very smooth and clean.

The development of criminal bands is, as we have seen, explained by a number of factors, working independently and collectively. To prevent this type of crime, the country must thus look at the problem from a multi-perspective approach: the development of a national character and values, community ties, patriotism, policing and unemployment. Nor should the options of globalisation, and the spread of new norms and values that goes with globalisation, be left out. Perhaps a new kind of education is necessary, allowing youth to acquire the skills necessary to create jobs for themselves and others. Skills-based education could reduce unemployment, which is one fundamental reason for the appearance of these bands.

Border security must be improved to prohibit the spread of firearms from bordering states. In the recent past, a new kind of trade has also appeared, in which active bands of Tanzanians collaborate with counterparts in neighbouring countries to facilitate illegal transfer of immigrants to a third country. Some of these illegal immigrants on transit are caught deep in the country, alive or dead, confirming that borders are porous
and that there are bands involved in illegal trade in Tanzania, and – most importantly – that these have partners or belong to networks in a number of countries. These networks are worth worrying about.

Despite the sudden increase in the number of private security guards in the country, the responsibility of the national police remains unparalleled. It is the responsibility of government to provide security to its citizens. Private security companies have limitations in dealing with criminals. Along these lines, national intelligence must be improved, particularly to monitor drugs and firearms entering the country. The growing amount of drugs and number of illegal immigrants nabbed by the police suggest a well-functioning network of unknown bands operating in the country, posing a critical threat to the safety of the communities as well as to the nation-state as a whole. Corruption is another security problem in Tanzania, which left unchecked provides room for multiple problems to take root, such as human trafficking, drug trafficking, money laundering, spread of firearms, counterfeit products and even unqualified experts.

Notes
1. I would like to acknowledge the financial support received from URBTAN project at the Institute of Development Studies University of Dar es Salaam sponsored by DANIDA.
2. LHRC and ZLSC notes that during the peak period of Sungusungu operation, the country experienced a drop in crime of about 60 percent.
3. Gangs are difficult to fight once they begin to germinate in a country. In some cities, police departments are preoccupied with gangs due to the nature of what they do and the way the network is sabotaging different segments of the population.
4. This is already a problem in Kenya; Al Shabaab cells are claimed to have penetrated into this country and they are a threat to national security.

References


**Author affiliation**

Institute of Development Studies, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Urban youth delinquency: Proliferation of criminal gangs and neighbourhood violence in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Reazul Haque and Ebney Ayaj Rana

Youth are supposed to be the agents of social change and development in a nation. Unimpeded development of today’s youth will foster a country’s development in terms of proficient human resources and increased national output. On the other hand, misled youth pose potential threats that may hamper a nation’s development, thus making it imperative for a state to ensure that its youth is guaranteed the conditions necessary to promote its positive development.

There is no universal parameter of age to define youth. The United Nations’ General Assembly defined youth as those aged between 15 and 24, while the age range varies from 12 to 35 in different countries (Hilker and Fraser 2009, p 9). For practical purposes, then, youth is better considered as a transitional stage of life between childhood and adulthood, rather than a rigid age group. This transitional stage of life is a period of autonomy, when young people experiment with adult roles in the family and/or society but do not fully commit to them (World Bank 2007). In addition, several heterogeneous constructs, such as gender, class, ethnicity, disability, education and provenance, provide contextual definitions of youth (Hilker and Fraser 2009, p 9). For instance, in some societies young males, who are believed to pose a potential threat to society, are seen as youth, where as young women who are not considered a threat therefore are not seen as youth (ibid, p 9). So, while the maturity of a male encompasses the stages of boy, youth and man, the maturity of a woman only encompasses the stages of girl and woman.

According to the National Youth Policy of Bangladesh from 2003, the population aged between 18 and 35 years is considered as youth. In
Violence and urban politics

This regard, although one third of its total population is youth, Bangladesh is still far from offering what is needed for their development. Although Bangladesh has achieved noticeable economic growth in a sustainable trend throughout the last decade, it has been lagging behind many developing countries in terms of social and political dimensions of development. In addition, rampant incidences of urban crimes and violence (notably fraud, larceny, pick-pocketing, snatch-and-grab, armed and unarmed robbery, carjacking, rape, murder, burglary and politically motivated assaults and homicides) are posing major threats to human security and development in the country. The marginalised and poverty-stricken youth are at an alarming level involved in these violent activities through forming criminal gangs which are mushrooming in the country, particularly in urban areas.

Nevertheless, youth participation and leadership in social and national movements are very conspicuous throughout the nation-building process of Bangladesh. The major historical events of the country, such as the language movement in 1952, the mass movement in 1969, the liberation war in 1971, and the anti-autocratic movement in 1990 witnessed youth in strong roles.

This chapter aims to investigate causes and patterns of criminal activities committed by urban youth in their neighbourhoods. A survey was conducted among the youth of Tejgaon industrial area in Dhaka city, employing purposive and snowball sampling methods. Seven males from the Tejgaon industrial area, aged between 19 and 27, were interviewed, using an unstructured interview method. We use pseudonyms in order to keep respondents anonymous. Furthermore, relevant literature has been reviewed.

Conceptualising ‘youth criminal gangs’ and ‘neighbourhood violence’

Youth criminal gangs, as mentioned earlier, have no commonly accepted parameter of age range to separate them from other criminal gangs. Howell and Decker (1999) considered youth criminal gangs to include adolescents and young adults aged 12 to 24 who commit criminal activities. The term ‘youth criminal gang’ is often used interchangeably with ‘street gang,’ referring to street-based or neighbourhood youth criminal
groups that comprise individuals aged under 24 (Howell and Decker 1999, p 1). However, it is also argued that ‘street gangs’ may refer to both youth and adult criminal gangs (ibid, p 1). Miller (1992, p 21) made the following definition of youth criminal gangs that has become well-accepted in youth studies literature:

A youth gang is a self-formed association of peers, united by mutual interests, with identifiable leadership and internal organization, who act collectively or as individuals to achieve specific purposes, including the conduct of illegal activity and control of a particular territory, facility or enterprise.

This definition encompasses several factors – such as association, common interests, leadership and internal organisation – that render the debate of a rigid age range rather trivial for the definition of criminal gangs. A youth criminal gang may therefore be defined as a group of peers with common interests, who commit such crimes as burglary, pick-pocketing, rape, snatch-and-grab, homicide etc, either individually or collectively.

The construction of youth criminal gangs may generally be viewed from two distinct perspectives: on the one hand, they are viewed as a social fact, on the other, as a cultural construct (Jensen 2006, pp 275-276). The former perspective investigates the characteristics of criminal gangs and the reasons for their involvement in criminal activities. The latter explores the dominant discourses and state institutions that categorise particular forms of life, and here it is argued, the construction of criminal gangs as a category does not derive from any public consensus, but from the way systems of authority represent and maintain themselves (Greenhouse 2003, p 276).

Apart from these two perspectives, Jensen (2006) argues that gangs and criminality are co-produced by state institutions such as local government and police, ordinary residents of the neighbourhood and young men’s practices. Thus, social stereotypes of deviant youth and counterinsurgency strategies of the state against the criminal gangs, waging a war on them, together lead to an unequal inclusion or differentiated citizenship in the neighbourhood (Jensen 2010, p 78). That is, the categorisation of criminal gangs can be construed not only as social facts or cultural constructs
but also as the outcome of regular practices among young people, state institutions and neighbourhoods, resulting in a multi-layered and complex configuration of social space.

Generally, the concept of ‘neighbourhood’ refers to a specific, geographically bounded region that potentially includes the concept of ‘community’ (Coulton et al 1996). ‘Neighbourhood violence,’ therefore, indicates the incidences of violent and criminal activities within the community. However, Joy Ososky (1999) argues that neighbourhood violence often correlates with high rates of domestic violence, which – as a result – overstate the incidences of violence in the neighbourhood. Thus, the difficulty in characterising neighbourhood violence causes significant errors in measurement of its patterns and dynamics in society.

The rates of incidence of neighbourhood violence are highest in the areas where the number of unemployed or underemployed urban youth is high (Hill and Jones 1997; Boney-McCoy and Finkelhor 1996; Hilker and Fraser 2009). A number of macro-level contextual factors of neighbourhood violence have been identified in several studies (Anderson 1999; Earls 1994; Speer, Jackson and Peterson 2001), factors such as neighbourhood disorganisation, dilapidated and vacant housing and physical environment, decreased social support and limited resource availability for youth.

**Theories of youth engagement in violence and criminal gangs**

There is no singular reason behind youth involvement in criminal gangs. Different individuals may join in the same criminal gang for different reasons (Weinstein and Humphreys 2008). Youth engagement in violence and criminal gangs, therefore, needs to be understood in terms of a specific, contextual analysis. Despite the limited amount of systematic evidence of youth engagement in violence, a number of overarching theories, which are broadly based on economic, biological, social and political contexts, have emerged in literature. These theories can be categorised into the following four perspectives (Hilker and Fraser 2009, p 14).
Violence and urban politics

‘Greed’ or ‘opportunity’

The ‘greed’ or ‘opportunity’ perspective examines what incentives prompt the youth to engage in violence and criminal gangs. High potential gain from and low opportunity cost of criminal activities instigate the urban youth to engage in violence and criminal gangs rather than to seek alternative income-earning activities (Urdal 2007). Others argue that urban youth are motivated to join criminal activities for both material and non-material reasons (Weinstein and Francisco 2005; Weinstein and Humphreys 2008). Material incentives include access to money, diamonds, drugs and other luxury items, while the non-material incentives comprise physical and psychological gains such as protection and status.

‘Grievance’

The ‘grievance’ perspective emphasises the exclusion or marginalisation of youth as a cause for them to engage in criminal activities (Hilker and Fraser 2009, p 16). Relative deprivation or exclusion of youth from economic, political and socio-cultural opportunities is believed to spread grievances among young people and make them prone to violent and/or criminal activities. Economic grievances include poverty, economic recession and inequality, while political grievances include lack of democracy, lack of minority rights or political participation, vindictive political activities etc. Socio-cultural grievances comprise lack of language rights, destruction of cultural tradition etc.

Frances Stewart (2008) argues that ‘horizontal inequalities’ (referring to inequalities in income, and to social, political or cultural inequality between culturally defined groups) are the most important causes for youth to engage in violent and criminal activities. The likelihood of violent and criminal activities committed by youth to occur is higher in regions where socioeconomic horizontal inequalities are high, and especially where these inequalities are consistent with political inequalities (Stewart 2002; Ostby 2007). In addition, Moser and Rodgers (2005) argue that people, especially the youth, become aggrieved at unequal access to employment, education, health and basic physical infrastructure. These inequalities prompt the youth to engage in different forms of criminal activities, ie
economic-related gang violence, politically motivated identity conflict and domestic violence. From the ‘grievance’ perspective it is, therefore, emphasised that deprivation and marginalisation of youth cause them to act in violent ways and commit crimes which, as a result, balloon the incidence of neighbourhood violence.

**Developmental (biological, psychological) and social perspectives**

Youth involvement in violence and criminal activities may also be explained from a biological, psychological and/or social perspective of how young people grow up. Literature on criminology and psychology emphasises these developmental factors in determining the propensity of youth engagement in criminal activities. For instance, Cauffman et al (2005) found that psychological factors, such as ‘self-control’, biological factors, such as heart rate, and neuropsychological factors, such as various measures of ‘spatial memory’ were the significant predictors of an individual’s criminal behaviour. In terms of social aspects, Pratt and Cullen (2005) argue that an individual may be prone to get involved in violence and criminal activities for such social reasons as racial composition of population, family disruptions, economic deprivation, incarceration rates etc. It is, however, further argued that, the period of ‘youth-hood’ is a transitional stage of life, characterised by strong physical and emotional transformations that prompt the youth to find their identity and place in society (Hilker and Fraser 2009, p 17). Therefore, at this particular stage of life, individuals seem to be strongly influenced by peers, and, the behaviour of an individual will be determined by the process of socialisation through which he or she grows up. For instance, the emotional development of a child, who grows up in a violent neighbourhood will often be restricted, resulting in aggressive behaviour, depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, learning problems, truancy etc. – all factors that may impede a proper ‘youth-hood’ development (Aizer 2009, p 275).

** Blocked transition to adulthood**

Literature on criminology and youth studies substantially emphasises the problem of a ‘youth crisis’ in many parts of the developing world. This problem is understood as a result of a high level of youth discontentment
and grievances (Hilker and Fraser 2009, p 18). UNDP (2006) proposes that if ‘youth’ is understood as a transitional period, during which an individual moves from childhood to adulthood, a ‘youth crisis’ may be defined as a blocked or prolonged state of transition, caused by a complex interplay of personal, institutional and macro-economic changes. These changes encompass, as Curtain (2001) argues, the setting up of new living arrangements, finishing full-time education, forming close stable personal relationship resulting in marriage and children, and settling into a stable source of livelihood. A disruption of this transition causes individuals to end up in a ‘youth crisis’ which, in turn, may prompt them to engage in criminal activities. An individual’s transition from childhood to adulthood may become distorted by unemployment or underemployment, poor educational opportunities, lack of voice, gender constraints etc, and in this respect, the ‘blocked transition to adulthood’ perspective is found to overlap with other perspectives discussed above.

However, the basic argument of all these perspectives remain the same: structural exclusion and lack of opportunities for young people substantially block or prolong their transition to adulthood, and as a result, the youth suffer frustration and disillusionment leading to an identity crisis, and thus become violent and/or get involved in criminal activities (Hilker and Fraser 2009, p 19).

**Youth criminal gangs and neighbourhood violence in urban Bangladesh**

The incidences of criminal activities in urban areas of Bangladesh, especially in the metropolis, are alarming. The most frequent criminal activities include theft, hijacking, robbery, violence against women, narcotics, murder, blackmailing etc. Crime statistics from the Bangladesh Police (2012) show that these incidences are increasing: from 130,578 in 2006 to 162,889 in 2010. As a result, especially the neighbourhoods in low-income and congested commercial areas experience frequent violence and criminal activities. Nevertheless, criminal activities in Bangladesh can further be ascribed to the conflict and violence between political parties and their vindictive attitudes toward each other. Internal conflicts in the political parties also cause such violence, ie political killings and injuries. As a result, youth engagement in party politics tends to be highly
associated with their engagement in violent activities through forming criminal gangs. For instance, statistics show that a number of 158,211 incidences of political violence, of which incidences of killings are 3,926 and injuries are 154,285, occurred in Bangladesh during the period from 2001 to August, 2013 (Odhikar 2014).

However, in order to determine causes and patterns of criminal activities committed by urban youth in their neighbourhoods, we, as mentioned earlier, interviewed seven respondents. Among these respondents, three lived with their parents. All seven respondents were involved in party politics, and none of them had completed their secondary school certificate examinations. Five respondents had committed some forms of violent activity, such as extortion of money, politically motivated physical assault, eve-teasing and motorcycle-hijacking. The main reasons for them to join in such violent activities included no employment opportunity, poverty and the aspiration to become rich quickly. To explain the causes of his involvement in party politics that caused him to do some forms of violent activities, Simon, a 26-year-old respondent said:

I have been living in Dhaka since I was 14. My parents live in a village. I have one elder brother and three younger sisters. My father was a farmer. Although my father was able to manage our daily meals, we were in need of cash money. Therefore, I have come to Dhaka to manage a job and earn money. Initially, I managed a job at a metal workshop and used to get 500 taka per month. While living here, I got acquainted with many people and involved in a large peer group. Later on, I joined in the local unit of a political party through one of my friends. I used to go to meetings and processions of the party with my friends and thus I became known to senior local political activists. Now, I feel secure because if I face any problem, I let my seniors know and they take care of that issue. Once I got arrested for threatening and asking for money from a wealthy businessman of this area, but I did not have to stay in jail. I am satisfied with what I am doing now and I think I could have not been better off than my present situation if I did otherwise (authors’ interview, Dhaka, 2013).

The case of this young man indicates that he got involved in violent activities because of his need for money. The propositions of the ‘greed’ and
‘opportunity’ perspectives may explain this case in terms of incentives and low opportunity costs. It is common that one continues with an activity as long as one gets a better life from that activity. Developmental and social perspectives may also be used to explain the behaviour of this respondent. He was passing his transitional period of life in an environment where proper psychological development easily gets blocked. It is also clear from his quote that his behaviour was strongly influenced by peers with similar socialisation. As a result, his transition from childhood to adulthood became thwarted and he suffered a ‘youth crisis.’

Another respondent, Tonmay, who was 23 years old and addicted to drugs, said that he belongs to a peer group that consists of 13 members who are also addicted to drugs. He said that his peers provide him with narcotics, ie marijuana, to which he has become heavily addicted. He said:

Although I am not engaged in violent activities to a large extent, I know who do this kind of activities in this area. I am not from a poor family. My father earns nearly 20,000 taka per month. As my parents know I am addicted to drugs, they do not give me any money. So I need to depend on my friends for managing drugs. A few days ago, some of my friends hijacked a motorcycle and then we had a great time. I know taking drugs is not good for health, but I cannot refrain from taking it (authors’ interview, Dhaka, 2013).

The case of this respondent indicates how developmental and social perspectives influence the behaviour of an individual. He knew he was going astray, but could not refrain from engaging in these activities, as his ‘self-control’ is weak. His situation is further aggravated by such social factors as family disruptions and attachment to peers who obviously also experience a ‘youth crisis.’

The study also showed that all respondents had some kind of exposure to the use of arms. This made them potentially more harmful to society, causing increased incidences of neighbourhood violence. Their involvement in party politics was also taking forms that caused them to become violent. Three respondents said that they committed physical assaults on opposition party members during a period of political turmoil.
(strikes) in order to draw the attention of their seniors and reach a higher position in the party.

However, it is conspicuous that the transitional stages of life of these respondents were blocked by structural exclusion or marginalisation, which was further aggravated by dysfunctional and unjust economic, social, psychological, biological, cultural and political factors. In addition, youth engagement in criminal activities in urban areas of Bangladesh can also be traced by looking into the relationships between deviant youth, state and social institutions. People’s stereotypical attitudes, together with the strict counterinsurgency strategies of the state against criminal gangs often exacerbate the incidences of criminal activities in the neighbourhoods. It has, therefore, become imperative for the actors on youth development to take immediate measures in order to ensure unimpeded development of youth in the country.

**Conclusion: Policy responses**

The present crisis of youth involvement in urban crimes and violence in Bangladesh needs to be addressed through immediate remedial measures. Proper policy responses may be grouped according to the following.

**State-level responses**

1. Poverty and income inequality are the most influential factors that prompt youth to engage in violent and criminal activities and need to be addressed through approaching toward the achievement of pro-poor or inclusive growth and egalitarian distribution of resources in the country.

2. Vocational education and effective training arrangements for youth are needed, and employment and entrepreneurship opportunities should be streamlined in order to involve youth in income-generating activities.

3. Effective urban planning, governance, criminal justice system and policing will strengthen urban safety. The present counterinsurgency strategies of the state are ill-reputed, violent and inherently political. The political parties have to shun their vindictive agendas.
Family and community-level responses

1. The family plays a key role in the socialisation process of an individual, and unimpeded development during the transition from childhood to adulthood greatly depends on the relationship between the individual and other family members. Youth must be given space in the family.

2. Social capital within a community should be strengthened through developing good relationships among residents, rather than stereotypical attitudes towards deviant youth. Educational arrangements, employment opportunities, cultural and sporting activities and strict legal action should be employed to prevent the youth from doing misdeeds.

3. Youth participation should be ensured in community development, giving the youth space and opportunity to share views and ideas. They should be taught the value of leadership and assisted in their personal growth, aware of their roles in community development.

References


Cauffman, Elizabeth, Laurence Steinberg and Alex R Piquero, 2005. Psychological, Neuropsychological and Physiological Correlates of Serious Antisocial Behavior in Adolescence: The Role of Self-Control, Criminology, vol 43, no 1, pp 133-176.


**Author affiliation**

Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
Participants List

Claiming the City.
Civil Society Mobilisation by the Urban Poor

Conference, April 16-17, 2013, Uppsala, Sweden

Adam, Achamyeleh / Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia / Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm
Akuno, Emily / Technical University of Kenya, Nairobi / Nordic Africa Institute
Alemu, Belachew / Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia / Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm
Ambaye, Daniel / Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia / Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm
Andersson, Kerstin
Andrae, Gunilla / Stockholm University
Archipovaite, Elena / Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway
Aschenbach, Nadine / Architect
Avrahami, Dina / Södertörn University
Banning, Chris / CSD Uppsala Intern
Berg, Erik / Shelter Norway
Bjarnesen, Jesper / Uppsala University
Bjerén, Gunilla / Stockholm University
Bjuremalm, Helena / International IDEA
Bojsen-Møller, Thora / Uppsala University Student
Braathen, Einar / Norsk institutt for by- og regionforskning, Oslo, Norway
Bray, Jamieson / Uppsala University Student
Byerley, Andrew / Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala
Candan, Canan / Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm / Student
Carolino, Júlia / Technical University of Lisbon, Portugal
Castell, Olle / Plan Sweden
Claussnitzer, Marco / Uppsala University Student
Custódia, Leonardo / University of Tampere, Finland
Damasio, João / Research Center on Waste Pickers’ Inclusion in Salvador/Bahia, Brazil
Danu, Corina / Uppsala University Student
De Boeck, Evelyne / Institute for Security and Development Policy / Stockholm University
Dimayugo, Val / KADAMAY, Philippines
D’Urso, Alexandra
Echanis, Amanda / Urban Poor Resource Centre of the Philippines
Edgren, Anna / Plan Sweden
Ekmeckci, Onur / Singapore University of Technology and Design, Singapore
Enqvist, Johan / Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University
Erlandson, Anna / Architects Without Borders, Sweden
Fitrianto, Andrea / Arkom Jogja, The Philippines
Fonseca, Claudia / Malmö University
Garcia Ochoa, Juan José / Mexico City Government, Mexico
Gasimelseed, Abdalla / Uppsala University Student
Gigengack, Roy / Wageningen University and Research Centre, The Netherlands
Gjedde-Nielsen, Flemming / Networking Consultants, Copenhagen, Denmark
Gurao, Rajendra / Brihan Maharashtra College of Commerce, Pune, India
Haag, Göran / Sida
Hansen, Christina / University of Malmö
Haque, Reazul / University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
Hedström, Jenny / International IDEA, Stockholm
Hejazi, Banafshe / National Touring Theatre of Sweden
Hiltunen, Anssi / Sida
Hlalele, Dipane / Qwaqwa Campus, South Africa / Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala
Howard, Zara / Uppsala University Student
Iglebaek, Odd / Journalist, Oslo, Norway
Jakobsson, Petter / Diakonia
Jameson, Sarah / Malawi Homeless People’s Federation
Jensen, Steffen / Danish Institute Against Torture (DIGNITY), Copenhagen
Karimnia, Elahe / Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm / Student
Participants List

Kjellén, Marianne / Stockholm International Water Institute
Lager, Susanne / School of Architecture, Lund University / Student
Ledinek, Dorothea / Uppsala University
Lindell, Ilda / Stockholm University
Lindh de Montoya, Monica / Gothenburg University
Löfstrand, Alma / Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala / Student
Mabilin, Myra / Urban Poor Resource Centre of the Philippines
Madsen, Erik Junge / Sustainable Energy, Århus, Denmark
Mahanandia, PK
Mannerberg Selimovic, Johanna / Swedish Institute of International Affairs
Melber, Henning / Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala
Melin, Mia / Organiser / CSD Uppsala, Uppsala University
Mills, Marianne / Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala
Mistry, Indra-Jeet / WWF Sweden
Mitlin, Diana / University of Manchester, UK
Moksnes, Heidi / Organiser / CSD Uppsala, Uppsala University
Montoya, Miguel / Stockholm University
Moreira, Gracil / Federal University of Bahia, Brazil
Msoka, Colman T / University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Mukand, Rahul / University of Delhi, India / Oslo, Student
Navratilova, Hana / Stockholm University / Student
Nitsch, Katarina / Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm / Student
Nkhoma, Siku / Centre for Community Organisation and Development, Malawi
Nlandu, Thierry / University of Kinshasa, DRC
Osarenkhoe, Aihie / University of Gävle
Owen, Ben / Uppsala University
Papeleras, Ruby / Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, The Philippines
Poggio, Carolina / Plan Sweden
Quaresma, Ermelindo / Associação Cultural Moinho da Juventude, Portugal
Ramström, Elinor / Uppsala University / Student
Rawal, Chandrakant / Brihan Maharashtra College of Commerce, Pune, India
Salih, Mohamed
Satterthwaite, David / International Institute for Environment and Development, UK
Participants List

Shirali, Nima / Stockholm University Student
Sjöborg, Sofie / Sida
Skotte, Hans / Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim
Smellie, Claire / Sida
Strandenhed, Linda
Strange, Anja / Plan International Denmark
Sverker, Joel / Swedish Mission Council
Torres Santos, Domingo / Diakonia
Trovalla, Erik Ottoson / Institute for Housing and Urban Research
Trovalla, Ulrika / Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala
Vindelman, Anna / Architects Without Borders, Stockholm / Tyréns, Malmö
Vinterhav, John-Olof / Sida
Wang, Xue / Uppsala University Student
Westin, Martin / University of Gotland, Sweden
Widmark, Charlotta / Uppsala University
Wiking, Mikael / Swedish Mission Council, Stockholm
Wiking, Staffan / Swedish Red Cross
Wilmot, Derrick / Street Vendor Project, NYC, USA
Zárate, Lorena / Habitat International Coalition, Chile
Half of the world’s population lives in cities, and a growing proportion – today one billion – lives in ‘slums’ and informal settlements. Many of the urban poor engage in collective strategies to secure their housing, earn a living, and defend their interests. Their claims often conflict with the demands of other urban groups over access to resources, space and power. They also challenge the definitions of urban authorities and city planners regarding which claims are to be seen as legitimate. Thus, the work for change is slow and fraught with difficulties, but nevertheless has seen significant advances across the world.

This volume focuses on the informal and formalised networks and associations of urban poor and their significance for strengthening people’s political, social and economic position in the city. The authors are representatives of organisations by urban poor, of organisations working in support of their claims, of urban governments, and scholars. Together, they emphatically display how urban poor today are claiming their right to the city.