

THE GREAT CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

**OLD PROBLEMS, INVISIBLE PROBLEMS, NEW ACTORS:
CONCEIVING AND MISCONCEIVING OUR URBAN CENTURY –**
SHEELA PATEL

**REVERSING THE CURSE: THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN TO
FOLLOW THE MONEY PAID BY OIL AND MINING INDUSTRIES**
– GAVIN HAYMAN

**RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT: CAN WE PREVENT MASS
ATROCITIES WITHOUT MAKING THE SAME OLD MISTAKES?**
– JACLYN STREITFELD-HALL

THE STATE OF THE INTERNET GOVERNANCE REGIME
– DIXIE HAWTIN

**TRANSFORM GLOBAL GOVERNANCE TO DELIVER
SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE JUSTICE**
– KUMI NAIDOO AND DANIEL MITTLER

OLD PROBLEMS, INVISIBLE PROBLEMS, NEW ACTORS: CONCEIVING AND MISCONCEIVING OUR URBAN CENTURY

SHEELA PATEL

THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF
AREA RESOURCE CENTRES
SHACK/SLUM DWELLERS INTERNATIONAL

The 21st century is clearly an urban century. Local, national and global governance systems need to take account of the fact that more people are living and working in urban settings than ever before.¹ However, the global development apparatus, bilateral and multilateral agencies, foundations and philanthropists, academics and CSOs have yet to accommodate this reality. For example, the legal frameworks that guide our courts — and justice systems in general — have not yet woken up to the challenges that urbanisation pose in terms of rights to property, voice and dignity. Urbanisation is in the process of transforming basic aspects of social organisation. The question is whether these changes will produce peaceful and dignified co-existence, or a chronic war of attrition between what can be termed the formal and informal parts of cities.

In most cities in the global South, a significant proportion of the population live in informal settlements, which have grown and expanded outside any formal system — for example, land-use regulations and building codes. Many such settlements also occupy the land illegally. The proportion of city populations living in such settlements is often over 20% and can reach 70-80% in some cities.² Most settlements lack basic infrastructure (paved roads and footpaths, piped water supplies, provision for sanitation and drainage and often schools and health care). In addition, in most cities, a high proportion of the economically active population earn incomes in the informal economy, which operates outside of government rules and regulations — for instance small unlicensed manufacturing units, vendors, informal markets and service providers (many of whom spring up because of the inadequacies in formal provision).³ But the formal city also depends on these informal service providers. Those who live in legal homes and undertake legal jobs rely on this informal economy that provides them with maids, drivers, cooks and a range of services. City economies depend on the informal economy for labour and for many goods and services. Much of the construction in cities draws on informally employed construction workers. Yet most of those earning a living in the informal economy receive incomes that are inadequate in relation to the cost of food and other basic needs. In many cities such divisions have co-existed for a long time.

Indeed, perhaps almost all cities have relied on informal workers. But as cities grow and the formal parts of cities need more spaces for business, homes and infrastructure, clashes and conflicts have increased.⁴

This contribution is informed by the experience of the past two decades of federations of ‘slum’ or shack dwellers or homeless people that are now active in 33 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.⁵ These city and national federations came together to form the Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) network. Similar social movements on habitat and livelihoods have also sprung up in the global South — in Africa, Asia and Latin America.⁶ The formation of such networks reflects at least in part the inability of development agencies to incorporate the needs and aspirations of urban poor people into the development agenda.

URBANISATION, INEQUALITY AND INFORMALITY

There is a need to face the realisation that not only is urbanisation here to stay, but for low-income and most middle-income countries, the proportion of national populations living in urban areas is growing. It is also likely continue to do so for several decades before it stabilises. The UN Population Division anticipates that almost all the growth in the world’s population in the next few decades will be in urban areas in what are currently low- and middle-income countries.⁷

Development agencies, both international and national, face investment choices that will determine the costs to be incurred by current and future generations in their struggle to climb out of poverty and secure greater social mobility and equity in cities. The current position shows that at present our governance choices have put us on the wrong path. Capitalism has created great wealth, but not produced equitable distribution.

Some learning between regions is possible. Latin America, which is now almost 80% urban,⁸ can be a source of insights in interventions in urban governance, offering learning that could inform investments in Africa and Asia, which are still undergoing rapid urbanisation processes. Urban inequalities in access to infrastructure, services and safety nets have fallen in most countries in Latin America.⁹ When cities in Latin America were rapidly expanding those who lived in informal settlements were constantly facing evictions but could not move as they had no options they could afford in the formal housing market. With the wave of democratic transitions in the 1980s in Latin America and pressure from urban social movements, city mayors and elected governments came to accept informal settlements and to accept that it is a local government responsibility to upgrade them.¹⁰ This is evident in Brazil where large-scale slum or squatter camp upgrading became common, along with

other measures to reduce urban poverty including cash transfers and improved public services.

Such changes in attitude by city governments in Latin America towards informal settlements (and to a lesser extent to the informal economy) have relevance for Africa and Asia as these led to much improved health care and more integration into the respective cities. These shifts become all the more urgent as urbanisation (and especially informal settlements) is increasingly impacted by climate change and as some cities will need to accommodate those displaced from rural areas. The current political stances and financial flows that determine urbanisation processes today need to be taken into account.

Informality is the invisible elephant in the city. If the challenges presented by informality are not acknowledged, poverty cannot be addressed. Strategies that attempt to formalise the informal may fail. Production of goods and services in the global South often occurs in informal settlements, where work and home spaces coincide and where garments, embroidery and the assembly of products is outsourced on a piecework basis. For example in Karachi, Pakistan over 40,000 small businesses operate in the greater Orangi informal area, providing jobs to approximately 150,000 people, many of whom work from within their homes.¹¹

Informal populations are excluded by formal rules and regulatory frameworks that produce legal norms and standards. Over time, in cities, some people become excluded from institutions. Development interventions then struggle to address the challenges faced by those in poverty whose vulnerability cannot always be addressed within formal structures. Informal populations are excluded in formal approaches to basic amenities, services and security systems, while responses to informality deny the urban poor a safety net and sometimes destroy the meagre dwellings and work spaces that they have developed in response to their exclusion.

CONTEMPORARY URBAN CHALLENGES

The nature of the construction industry in many Southern cities has been changed by shifts in global capital and by local investment flows that finance construction. Capital transfers occur more easily within a market-friendly state, and economic liberalisation has seen the pace and scale of residential construction escalate in many of the larger urban centres. The profitability of larger houses increases with every 100 square feet of construction. As a result, the construction industry tends to build ever-larger houses and apartments, despite the need for smaller cheaper units to accommodate growing populations. This pattern exacerbates a housing crisis that sees growing numbers of

households stuck in dense slums/informal settlements that lack security and services.

These developments in the residential sector are accompanied by an increasing emphasis on cities as financial centres and policies that serve this end.¹² Public and private infrastructure priorities such as roads, bridges and flyovers can be seen as visible attempts to ease motorised traffic, although in most cases they are associated with increased traffic congestion and worsening air pollution. Policies for public and non-motorised transport and for pedestrians come as afterthoughts, even though in most cities, they remain the mode of transport used by 60% to 80% of the population.¹³ Traditional livelihoods that depend on cycle rickshaws, paths for walking, multi-purpose mixed-use habitats and historic city neighbourhoods now tend to be characterised as problems of crowded inner cities.

The dominant policy response is to 'clean' and 'empty' these to facilitate investment, favouring the corporate sector and displacing existing small enterprises and low-income populations.¹⁴

As cities grow, the need for water increases. Additional water supplies are generally drawn from rural areas, which may then suffer from shortages. As cities grow, inequalities in access to basic services often increase. Formal populations may enjoy access to

subsidised water piped to their homes, while informal populations pay several times more per litre for their water from vendors or kiosks.¹⁵ Sanitation remains a major crisis. Most urban centres in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia have no sewers or sewer systems that only serve a small percentage of their population.¹⁶ Lack of access to toilets means that some of the urban poor defecate in the open, which affects ground water, while untreated sewage pollutes all nearby water bodies and seas. Sanitation in both urban and rural settings remains a major crisis, with the problems particularly acute in the larger and denser informal settlements.

The nature of health challenges in the global South has begun to shift. While the impact of poor hygiene and infectious and parasitic diseases are well-known and some global strategies have been developed for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and diarrhoea, we now

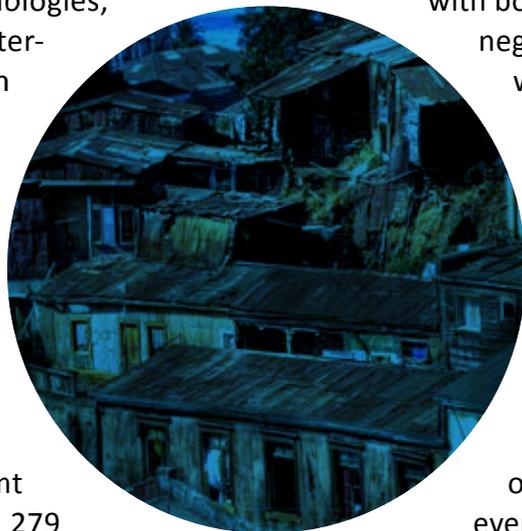
face the significant onset of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart attacks, hypertension and strokes. These continue to be perceived as diseases of older age and elite lifestyles, but given changing food habits, 80% of persons who die from these non-communicable diseases live in low- and middle-income countries.¹⁷ There is a divide between formal and informal access to food diversity and security. Yet the major preferred response to these health problems tends to be to set up specialised hospitals; preventive and public health approaches are given less attention, and links are not made to issues of access to land, shelter and food security.

Climate change and urbanisation are intimately connected as macro-forces of change, but potentially valuable connections are missed. Instead of linking climate change adaptation to an agenda to make cities work for all and ensure social justice, climate change often

In the global South, and particularly in urban areas, young people form a large part of the population, and this has not received adequate attention in public policy debates.

becomes part of a discourse that enables evictions to take place. This is especially so for informal settlements on valuable land sites on the coast or close to rivers and these are cleared in the name of safety (e.g. Old Fadama in Accra, Ghana; Kroo Bay in Freetown, Sierra Leone; and Badia East in Lagos, Nigeria). Possibilities of developing a response to climate change to create opportunities to develop 'green' economies that include new technologies, such as solar and other alternative energies, which can provide sources of jobs and security are overlooked. Technologies for tapping alternative energy sources mostly remain out of the reach of the poor while access through conventional energy providers is blocked (a recent estimate suggested that 279 million urban dwellers lack electricity).¹⁸ Research and development investments do not focus on what works for all.

In the global South, and particularly in urban areas, young people form a large part of the population, and this has not received adequate attention in public policy debates. Governments now have a very small window in which to invest in education, livelihoods and participation —



routes that can enable a productive and engaged youth force.

Urban space and urban transport so often neglect women's needs and priorities. It sometimes seems that the main streets are for men and the side streets for women. Public transport often serves men's mobility needs better than women. For women, urbanisation is a double-edged sword,

with both potential positives and negatives. What is positive is women can better explore options to work. In addition, the anonymity of large populations erodes class and caste restrictions and public transport can allow wider access to labour markets and locations. Health and education options also expand. However, cities can become sites of sexual violence in both formal

and informal neighbourhoods. There is a need to understand whether these incidents are increasing, or whether there is greater media focus and women are becoming more prepared to report crimes. Women's representation in political and administrative posts remains meagre. Similarly, women continue to be disadvantaged in livelihood opportunities and continue to play the major role in household support, work that is not

properly appreciated (in part because it is not assigned a monetary value). Childcare, which would help more women to work, is often lacking. When women work, they tend to have more informal, low paying jobs than men, and even in informal livelihoods, women's social mobility is lower than men's. Women's health and educational status also still need to be improved in most urban centres.

Investments in infrastructure are displacing populations, and most governments have no development frameworks to address displacement processes. While there have been many debates leading to the development of global frameworks for rural displacements due to dams and other infrastructure projects, the scale and impact of displacement in cities remains opaque in most countries. The World Bank has safeguard regulations for projects that it funds, but these tend to be diluted by some states, which see them as impediments to the swift roll-out of infrastructure. It is clearly not enough to have rules in place without associated institutional mechanisms that hold governments accountable to these rules.

Some human rights activists try to fight cases in courts, but face laws that support policies that drive inequality and uphold elitist, formal visions of city development.¹⁹ Others, including grassroots federations of slum/shack dwellers in the Slum Dwellers

THE ROLES OF DIFFERENT ACTORS IN BUILDING CITIES FOR ALL

International network, collect data and produce documentation to spark dialogue with city, state and national governments in attempts to change legal frameworks, while also continuing to help social movements to challenge evictions.²⁰ While both are essential, there is often conflict between different types of CSOs that pursue these particular strategies, with little understanding of how they could be complementary. Much of this is exacerbated by an external environment of donor agencies and foundations, and divergences between the value frameworks of such agencies and those of local movements.

City development plans are usually framed without reference to demographic projections. Even when there are published projections that show that city populations will rise as a result of internal growth and migration, development planning processes of

most cities do not address the implications of this data, which would imply a need for policies that enable access to homes and services for all. Development plans then form the basis on which legal systems make their judgements. Poor people who are living informally rarely obtain justice.

“The poor who are living informally rarely get any justice in the legal justice system.”

Social movements

In the absence of inclusive regulatory frameworks that encompass and help the informal sections of cities and towns, urban social movements can be significant groups that create a critical mass of people seeking change. Some of these movements are gradually becoming recognised, and more are surfacing, in the absence of more formal mechanisms to serve informal populations. Peaceful resolutions are possible, when the demands

of social movements are validated and channelled into meaningful institutional mechanisms for deliberation. Sometimes this means that government officials have to accept a level of institutional uncertainty with which they may be unfamiliar. Alternatively, recent struggles in the Middle

East and many cities in Africa and Asia indicate that peaceful demonstrations of discontent, if badly handled, can often lead to violent reprisals and the prolonging of conflict.

Informal social movements are still not well understood. Very few formal institutions

have instruments, strategies or mechanisms to identify them, engage them in dialogue and attempt to channel their energy, ideas and resources into solutions that bring about sustainable inclusion of the informal into mainstream processes. This is particularly the case with movements initiated by the most disadvantaged citizens.

Local and national CSOs

Formal CSOs are often based in cities, even though many of them have a mission to work in rural areas. Those that focus on cities often work with particular slums to undertake projects which may provide public services such as health or education, but almost never address basic issues of land, security and access to water, sanitation and amenities. CSO professionals work hard to try to achieve impact on people’s lives, but there are few CSOs that work on the fundamental issues of accommodating informality and ensuring that the poor have access in cities. Discussions within CSOs indicate that addressing these issues would require long funding timeframes beyond those of any existing funding cycle of major donor agencies. Funding policies rarely support long-term exploratory work with no guarantee of success, while the structural conditions of exclusionary governance in urban locales makes uncertainty about outcomes likely.

CSOs in cities often operate in difficult contexts. The state may set governance

structures that are dismissive of the rights and welfare of poor people, and the political space for CSOs can be restricted. Both these make it difficult to bring out the voices of the poor to address issues of inclusion and equity.

National governments

Governments need to participate in addressing the challenges the urban poor face because secure habitats, basic amenities and access to livelihood opportunities are essentially the foundational elements of surviving in a city; it is hard to see these being tackled sustainably without the commitment of government. Often, national government leaders in Asia and Africa are elected on the basis of support from rural constituencies, and national and provincial administrations are therefore attuned to rural development in their constituencies of support.

SDI's experience of working in countries where urbanisation is still low suggests that impact on making cities work for all can be achieved when the informal population stands at 10% to 15% of the urban population. If the urban population is any higher, this becomes hard to achieve. Yet it is usually only when the numbers of the informal population are overwhelming that interventions are attempted.

Foundations and philanthropists

Grant-making institutions walk a fine line

between being activists and supporting activists. The social and economic processes of urbanisation have underlined the extent to which local actors need to be enabled to take the lead in seeking meaningful institutional change. However, grant-making institutions have a tendency to focus on short-term projects, and are less inclined to support long-term processes through which local actors — particularly those in poor communities — can determine their own agendas for change. A second risk of having a project focus is that it encourages a mindset of selecting countries, communities and cities, based on unaccountable criteria.

Criteria for funding should become more closely linked to principles of enabling processes that support and encourage low-income groups and their organisations, and much less oriented to demonstrable, outcomes. This is not to say that an outcomes-driven approach to funding is always irrelevant. But traditional paradigms of CSO-based service delivery are unable to deliver systemic change.

Global and multinational governance

Global governance institutions pay lip service to hearing the voices of civil society (especially representative organisations of the urban poor) and encouraging broad-based participation. Real decision-making continues to be concentrated in the hands of national governments and international

bureaucrats. The challenge should not only be to enable the development of alternative channels where the voices of the urban poor can be expressed, but also to demonstrate that those channels are able to exert meaningful influence in changing international institutions.

Conclusion

In most cities in the global South, those who live in informal settlements and work in the informal economy are at the core of what makes these cities work. Yet government policies and practices fail to recognise this. So too do external funding agencies. New channels and mechanisms of support need to be devised for urban poor groups and for local governments prepared to work with them. Without these, the Millennium Development Goals — and the new sustainable developmental goals and targets being developed to replace them in 2015 — will not work for urban populations.

¹The United Nations Population Division suggests that the percentage of the world's population living in urban areas was 34% in 1960 and will grow to 54% in 2015. See "World Urbanisation Prospects: The 2011 Revision, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs," UN Population Division (2012), available at: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/index.htm>.

²See R Kiunsi, "The constraints on climate change adaptation in a city with large development deficits: The case of Dar es Salaam City," *Environment and Urbanization* 25, no. 2 (2013), 321; See also D Mitlin and D Satterthwaite, *Urban Poverty in the Global South: Scale and Nature*, (London: Routledge, 2012).

³Above fn 2, D Mitlin and D Satterthwaite.

⁴See G Bhan, "This is no longer the city I once knew: Evictions, the urban poor and the right to the city in Millennial Delhi," *Environment and Urbanization* 21, no. 1 (2009), 127.

⁵For further information about Shack/Slum Dwellers International please see: <http://www.sdinet.org>.

⁶See O Fergutz, S Dias and D Mitlin, "Developing urban waste management in Brazil with waste picker organizations," *Environment and Urbanization* 23, no. 2 (2011), 597.

⁷Above fn 1.

⁸Ibid.

⁹L Gasparini and N Lustig, "The rise and fall of income inequality in Latin America," Working Paper Series, Society for the Study of Economic Inequality, (2011), available at: <http://econ.tulane.edu/RePEc/pdf/tul1110.pdf>. Also, the fall in inequality in the provision of infrastructure and services can be seen in the increased proportion of the urban population with water piped to their homes and connections to sewers when comparing data from the two most recent censuses. See also United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), *Basic Services for All in an Urbanizing World: the Third Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization*, (London: Routledge, 2014).

¹⁰T Campbell, *The Quiet Revolution: Decentralization and the Rise of Political Participation in Latin American Cities*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003).

¹¹A Hasan, *Understanding Karachi: Planning and reform for the future*, (Karachi: City Press, 1999): 149.

¹²J Manyika, C Roxburgh and A Restrepo, "Urban world: Mapping the Economic Power of Cities," (McKinsey Global Institute, March 2011), available at: http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/urbanization/urban_world.

¹³UN-Habitat, "Planning and Design for Sustainable Urban Mobility," (London: Earthscan Publications, 2013).

¹⁴See "Re-interpreting, re-imagining and re-developing Dharavi," (SPARC India, November 2010), available at: <http://www.sdinet.org/media/upload/documents/ReDharavi.pdf%E2%80%8E>.

¹⁵UN-Habitat, "Water and Sanitation in the World's Cities: Local Action for Global Goals," (London: Earthscan Publications, 2003).

¹⁶Above fn 3.

¹⁷World Health Organisation, "Non-communicable diseases," (WHO Factsheet, April 2013), available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs355/en>.

¹⁸G Legros, et al., "The Energy Access Situation in Developing Countries: A Review Focusing on the Least Developed Countries and Sub-Saharan Africa," (World Health Organisation and United Nations Development Programme, 2009), available at: <http://content.unpd.org/go/newsroom/publications/environment-energy/www-ee-library/sustainable-energy/undp-who-report-on-energy-access-in-developing-countries-review-of-lDCs---ssas.en>

¹⁹Above fn 4.

²⁰S Patel and C Baptist, "Editorial: Documenting by the undocumented," *Environment and Urbanization* 24, no. 1 (2012), 3; S Patel, C Baptist and C D'Cruz, "Knowledge is power – informal communities assert their right to the city through SDI and community-led enumerations," *Environment and Urbanization* 24, no. 1 (2012), 13; A Livengood and K Kunte, "Enabling participatory planning with GIS: A case study of settlement mapping in Cuttack, India," *Environment and Urbanization* 24, no. 1 (2012), 77; B Chitekwe-Biti, et al., "Developing an Informal Settlement Upgrading Protocol in Zimbabwe – the Epworth Story," *Environment and Urbanization* 24, no. 1 (2012), 131; A Muller and E Mbanga, "Participatory enumerations at the national level in Namibia: The Community Land Information Programme," *Environment and Urbanization* 24, no. 1 (2012), 6; J Makau, S Dobson and E Samya, "The five-city enumeration: the role of participatory enumerations in developing community capacity and partnerships with government in Uganda," *Environment and Urbanization* 24, no. 1 (2012), 31; and C Baptist and J Bolnick, "Participatory enumerations, in situ upgrading and mega events: The 2009 survey in Joe Slovo, Cape Town," *Environment and Urbanization* 24, no. 1 (2012), 59.